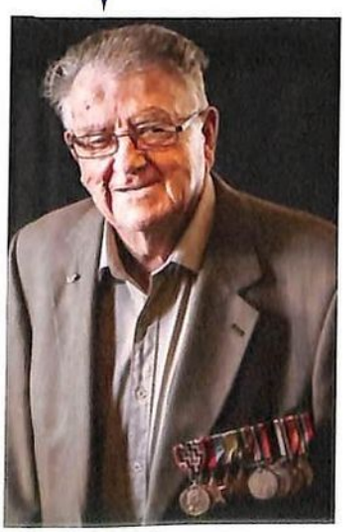
Napier RSA

Stories to Tell:

The effect of wars on people in the services and civilians



To those involved

This publication is what comes from that which can be best described as a fledging of ideas amongst a few people who have shown perseverance, comradeship and courage over almost 12 months of weekly meetings and engagements with our Veterans across a broad base of conflicts.

Literacy Aotearoa and the many volunteers from the Napier & Taradale RSA who have spent an untold, un-tabulated number of hours, interviewing, compiling and composing the following stories.

They, like the people they write about have shared in an intimacy that is rarely, if ever experienced by others and will never be forgotten.

To all the Veterans, Volunteers & Support People who have given their all to ensure living history, the good, bad, funny and not so funny is never lost by the passing of a much loved family member.

Albeit trite, I sincerely 'thank you' all on behalf of the Napier Returned and Services Association

John Purcell QSM J. P.

First printing March 2015

About this project

During 2013, Christopher Finlayson, as Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, announced the launch of WW100, a project to commemorate the centenary of New Zealand's four-year involvement in World War 1. Promotional meetings were then held around the country.

Committee members from both the Napier Returned Service Association Inc. (RSA) and Literacy Aotearoa Hawke's Bay attended one of these meetings. Afterwards, they discussed collaborating in an effort to gather stories from the public to relate people's true-life experiences of war. The Taradale & District RSA also joined the project while the guidelines were still being worked out.

After the outbreak of World War 1, author H G Wells wrote an article for the London newspapers titled *The War That Will End War*. Wells later used the phrase, "the war to end war", which was widely quoted, and commonly believed. Sadly, that hope was not realised, and WW1 was not to be mankind's final war. The cautionary lessons which should have been taught by this devastating event weren't learned.

Over the last century, there have been countless hostilities, from localized uprisings and rebellions to another all-out global conflict. Even to this day, populations continue to wage new wars. We persist in inflicting loss, pain and suffering on one another.

We salute the courage and sacrifice of all those currently involved in these attempts to improve their world and conquer tyranny. We believe that these inspiring personal stories need to be preserved. For the sake of future generations, people need to know about the past to find better ways of improving the future.

The story gathering process

It began with weekly sessions at the Napier RSA, held to orient the new participants. Would-be storytellers attended to learn writing skills, if they didn't already know how to craft their work. There were also some who wanted to share, but were unable to do the actual writing and they worked with our literacy volunteers. And the wonderful volunteers learned new skills such as interview techniques, and brushed up on any rusty points of grammar and punctuation.

Sometimes, we backed up faulty memory and sketchy narrative with a bit of research. For the most part, we have written down each story exactly as the teller remembered it. While we strive to present an accurate account, the occasional error is inevitable, largely due to the length of time which has elapsed since many of the experiences included here. All particulars are as accurate as possible, but some finer details (e.g. a date) may be slightly out. Some tales were collected from the journals of the departed, so were left unedited.

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A Charmed Life

John Dallin Dunlop, Q.S.M.
RNZAF and RAF NZ4214088

I was always interested in astronomy. My knowledge of the stars, along with good math skills, served me well when I joined the air force.

Some of my early training was done in Canada, before I was sent to Stranraer in Scotland in June 1944. Here we worked on familiarisation flight training. From November 1943 until April 1944, I trained to be a navigator. On 7 April, 1944, I became a Qualified Air Navigator. Then I was stationed in England in May of 1944.

From 29 November 1944 until 23 April 1945, I served as a navigator with the RAF. By the beginning of December, I was part of the crew of a Lancaster bomber in Squadron 166, and flew with her during 29 operation sorties over Germany, clocking up 67 day and 188 night flying hours.

On these flights, one of our main targets was the city of Nuremberg, located in the very centre of Germany. It is the second-largest city in Bavaria, after Munich. Nuremberg held great significance during the Nazi Germany era. This city was a symbol of German pride, having in the past been the site of the Nazi party conventions. In addition, there were major industries in the Nuremberg area.

Because of the city's relevance, its destruction would have an important psychological significance for the Allies. Air raids were intense. A number of raids took place from 29 August 1942 until 5 April 1945. In 1945, large-scale attacks were relentless. My squadron participated in a highly significant attack towards the end of this campaign, when on 2 January every 100 square meters was hit by 38 tons of bombs.

The following description of the bombing of Nurnberg is from the "Campaign Diary 1945" on the web site of the British Royal Air Force Bomber Command:

> ***2/3 January 1945***
>
> *Nuremberg: 514 Lancasters and 7 Mosquitos of Nos 1, 3, 6 and 8 groups. Four Lancasters were lost and 2 crashed in France. Nuremberg, scene of so many disappointments for Bomber Command, finally succumbed to this attack. The Pathfinders produced good ground-marking in conditions of clear visibility and with the help of a rising full moon. The centre of the city, particularly the eastern half, was destroyed. The castle, the Rathaus, almost all of the churches and about 2,000 preserved medieval houses went up in flames. The area of destruction also extended into the more modern north-eastern and southern city areas. The industrial area in the south, containing the important MAN and Siemens factories, and the railway areas were also severely damaged . . . It was a near-perfect example of area bombing.*

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http://www.scrapbookpages.com/Nurnberg/Nurnberg01.html

There were more hazards to our flying than being taken out by enemy fire. With so many planes involved in the attacks, mid-air collisions were one of the biggest risks. Other dangers we faced included the risks of collapsing due to lack of oxygen, or of the plane icing over. Sometimes we had to break ice in the tube.

Aiming at your target is very challenging. While we flew at an altitude of 20,000 feet in most cases, we would have to go down to 8000 feet over a target, and whilst in Transport 78th Squadron, navigation was basic. It might take 20 minutes to get a fix on a target.

What with the physical exertion, the mental concentration and emotion, this was very tiring work. We hardly ever socialised with the other flying crews.

During these early sorties, while we were still an inexperienced crew, we were very lucky. Once I had a bit of flak come at me, but all in all, we had no problems.

After the war, I transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 9 July 1947, and was asked to stay on in the RNZAF when I returned to New Zealand.

A Full Hand

Stanley Robert Douglas

This is Stan's full hand of medals. There is a General Service medal as well as five stars, one for every finger in his hand. These were earned over the various campaigns in which he served during WWII.

The 1939-45 Star, The Battle of the Atlantic ribbon with the France and Germany star, The Arctic Star (awarded belatedly in 2014),The Africa Star (1942) with clasp and The Pacific Star

The following story focuses mainly on events in the Arctic region, for which Stan earned the Arctic Star. Clearly, there are many other stories relating to the other awards.

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Middlesbrough, where I grew up, is an industrial city. Before the war began, it was busy with iron works, and steelmills, building ships and making munitions. I remember the night bombings which began when I was sixteen years old, too young to enlist. In order to volunteer to join the navy, you had to be eighteen. There was nothing for it but to wait. We lived in Captain Cook's country and our family had always been sea-farers, so I knew it was the navy for me. Besides, I'd heard my older brother's stories of his experiences in the Territorial Army. Nothing he had to say when he came home would have persuaded me to join another branch of the services.

I did not tell the family I had enlisted until the letter arrived with details for my departure. This was in May 1941, and I was 18 ½ years old. Although this was my first time away from home, I wasn't frightened. I just wanted to get there.

Training was in Portsmouth. Black-outs were taking place every night, so it was dark on the night of my arrival. A Royal Navy truck collected twenty of us from the train station for the ride to the barracks. We were all young men, coming from all over the country, of different classes, and destined to go our separate ways after training for our different naval careers.

The city of Portsmouth was in chaos, and the barracks had been hit under a night bomber attack. We were each provided with a hammock to sling in the cycle shed, our home for the first week. Training there lasted three months, marching from Portsmouth Barracks to the former Portsmouth Grammar School. All the children had

been sent away from the city for their own safety, and their school was set up as a ship for training purposes.

Here I learned everything I needed to work as a ship's engineer. It was a quick apprenticeship, giving me everything except hands-on experience. You really have to learn your job at sea.

Then we had a pleasant surprise. We were drafted to Skegness, a former Billy Butlin's holiday camp, renamed HMS *Royal Arthur,* class 125, where we were to finish our land-based training. Here we got away from old Portsmouth and her barracks for 1000 men; away from the night bombings and air raid sirens. The idea of holiday camps was quite new, and this specific camp had only started just before the war had begun. The facilities were new and spacious, and we had fitness training that included some very enjoyable activities such as boating and swimming.

The Mediterranean Front

My first ship was the HMS *Bagshot*, a minesweeper based in Alexandria. I was aboard her, and the HMS *Speedy,* in the Mediterranean in 1942 and 1943. After two years in the Med, participating in many naval operations, I finally got a chance to go home on leave, just a month after my twenty-first birthday.

I enjoyed the train trip home, although there were many devastating sights of destruction along the way. Due to the strict censorship of the day, there were no phone calls home to announce your pending arrival. You just turned up on the doorstep, day or night. The time went quickly, spent in the normal manner, catching up with the locals, visiting cousins and eating in pubs. On Sundays, we still had a roast with Yorkshire pudding and veggies, thanks to Dad's allotment. To be able to sleep in a bed once again was heaven; I said my prayers and thanked God that, so far, I had survived.

But, now my time at home was up. The war ruled all of our lives as I left for Portsmouth once again.

The HMS *Javelin*

My next draft from Portsmouth was to the J Class Destroyer HMS *Javelin*. She was new compared to the *Bagshot*; I went aboard the *Javelin* in November, 1943. She had everything; the speed, the firepower and a fine wartime record. At the age of twenty-one, it was all I desired.

I spent four weeks as a member of a working party, getting to know the ship and my new team. We had to test every aspect of the ship to assure all was in working order, and that we knew how to operate everything. After these working-up trials,

Javelin set sail in December, joining the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow. We had no Christmas celebrations at sea. In fact, the last time I'd enjoyed a proper family Christmas feast was in 1940, and it wasn't until I was in Canberra in 1945 that I had the chance to eat another Christmas dinner.

<http://www.naval-history.net/Photo10ddJavelin1DFeatherS.JPG>

Scapa Flow

Throughout January of 1944 we continued with sea trials aboard the *Javelin* at Scapa Flow, north of Scotland. It was very isolated. There was no mail, just a desolate naval base. The only reasons to go ashore were to stretch your legs or go to the 'wet canteen', so called because to get to it, you had to wear your oilskins. There was nothing else to do there on Stornaway Island.

Up here in the North Sea, we had to contend with the elements. The most challenging aspect of life aboard became simply coping with the weather. We encountered fierce winds, strong currents and high seas. The seas were so rough that the big waves would easily knock you down. I still suffer with crook knees as a consequence of the rough treatment we got from nature.

While we were stationed in Scapa Flow, we frequently went on patrol. When you are on patrol, each ship is independent, free to come and go, without the backing and support of other craft. The reason behind this arduous task of patrolling the sea off Norway and Iceland was the German Battleship *Tirpitz*. Anchored in the Norwegian port of Narvik, it remained a constant threat to the shipping lanes to the Atlantic. This priority was not an easy task to achieve, but it was necessary. Because of all this Allied activity, Hitler thought we would land in Norway. Consequently he diverted troops from Russia, making that front vulnerable.

We would leave for a patrol, which lasted about twelve days at a time; our endurance was tested to the limit. The most urgent need was to refuel etc. This brought the crew a welcome respite.

Russian convoys

From Scapa, we also did Convoy work, working in a coordinated movement, to protect vital shipping. There would be thirty of our destroyers escorting the Aircraft Carriers 3000 nautical miles to Russia through northern waters, including the Arctic. Our escort duty was to act as an outer defence, using our own initiative to move and protect other ships in the convoy. We did this by screening for any approaching U-boats and enemy planes.

Operation Tungsten

At the end of April we formed part of the covering force for the fleet in Operation Tungsten.

On the second attack by the Fleet Air Arm, the *Javelin* was in a position to retrieve any downed pilots. This mission brought us into the Land of the Midnight Sun - a most rewarding experience.

While escorting the aircraft carriers, we had to sail at the outer limit of the German pilots' flying range. This extra travelling distance caused us to risk fuel shortages. One day in early May, *Javelin* ran out of fuel and found herself left stationary in the Arctic Circle. We were stalled there for three days, which proved to be a nice quiet time. We actually enjoyed the break, knowing we were safe for that time because here, *Javelin* was far away from the action.

I woke up one morning to find snow on deck. The ship, covered in a mantle of snow, looked dramatic and dangerous.

Operation Veritas

During Operation Veritas, the Home Fleet's Air Arm conducted reconnaissance flights off Narvik, Norway to verify that the *Tirpitz* was no longer a threat to the planned invasion of Europe.

The disabling of the *Tirpitz* was accomplished by the aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious*, and four CAMS (carrier armed merchant ships, which had been converted for the war effort). The result of this encounter was that *Tirpitz* was prevented from participating on D-Day. If she had still been active, the outcome of that operation might have been quite different.

On our return to Scapa, King George VI paid a visit to the Home Fleet. This was a rare occasion, but the buzz on the mess deck was that we had been earmarked for the upcoming allied invasion of Europe, 'OPERATION OVERLORD'. This designation would be replaced by the more common, D-Day, Tuesday, 6 June 1944.

Operation Neptune

In May the *Javelin* joined the 10th Destroyer Flotilla, Plymouth Command, for patrol and covering duties connected with Operation Neptune - the planned landings in Normandy. The main task of the 10th Flotilla was to protect the western flank of the invasion force from attacks by the German Navy. We numbered eight ships, being four British, two Canadian and two Polish destroyers.

By 6 June, we were off Alderney which was in occupied France, headed toward Normandy. There, pillboxes lined the cliffs; we looked for visuals from the enemy fire and trained our guns to take them out.

Early in the morning of 9 June, the flotilla intercepted three German destroyers and one torpedo boat of the German 8th Defence Force, which were being sent from Brest

to Cherbourg, with the objective of striking at the heart of the Allied supply lines across the Channel. First we sank one destroyer, then another. The third German casualty was driven aground on the Isle de Bas where she was wrecked. Only the fourth ship escaped to go back to Brest, but had sustained damage which kept her out of action until July. These actions saved the whole operation, as this was the first and last attempt by German destroyers to interrupt the invasion.

We carried on fighting until 2 July, when we had a collision with the HMS *Eskimo* which was out of control. She hit the *Javelin* amidships. After a few hours were spent assessing the damage and exploring possible ways to safely disengage the ships, we attempted to separate them by cautiously easing the *Eskimo* toward the stern of the *Javelin*. Unfortunately, during the manoeuvre, some of our ammunition exploded in the hold, blowing the bow off of the *Eskimo*. The two ships were both badly damaged but able to return to Plymouth; the *Javelin* continued under her own power, but the *Eskimo* had to be towed back to England. Casualties on board the *Javelin* were three men killed and one injured.

With *Javelin* out of commission from 24 July until 31 December 1944, the crew members were all reassigned to other ships and other duties.

Meanwhile, the war had moved on. Victory at El-Alemein had brought the army to Italy. The Battle of the Atlantic was turning in our favour. Our next enemy, Japan, seemed to be the obvious new target. As the fleet was assembled, rumours became fact.

At Malta, I joined MHS *Camperdown*, a modern Battle Class Destroyer and she transported me to my next adventure.

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Never again

Never again a dawn will see

Those ships that day at Normandy.

They have sailed into history

With all our dreams and memories.

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A Spitfire Fighter Pilot

Max Collett

Waiting until he was 21 years of age to enlist with the army was not easy for a young dynamic Max Collett. He enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Air Force on his 18th birthday, and actually joined up on 1st April 1942. He'd followed his brothers, both already in the RNZAF. Their father (a great military man, a lieutenant in the Boer War and a captain in World War 1) was badly wounded at Passchendaele. Service to one's King and Country was held high in the Collett household.

Max's training began in New Zealand in Tiger Moth aircraft, in which he completed 82 hours before leaving for further training in Canada. Here Max was introduced to the Harvard and Yale aircraft in which he undertook 149 hours of training.

Following the training in Canada, he was shipped to the UK where his training continued flying the Miles Masters aircraft. From here he was posted to OTU (Operational Training Unit), and then to the revered Spitfire aircraft. Then he was posted to 485 (NZ) Spitfire Squadron, which was then at rest at Drem, Scotland, after a very hectic time in Eleven Group in South England.

Operational flying began from Hornchurch, escorting medium bombers over France. Then his squadron became the first Spitfire squadron to become a dive-bombing squadron. Here, there was either a 500-pound bomb under the belly of the aircraft or two 250-pound bombs, one under each wing.

The squadron then became part of the tactical air force in preparation for the invasion of Europe. Max missed the actual D-Day operation, having broken his ankle two days before the invasion, but re-joined the squadron in time for the move to France.

The NZ 485 Squadron landed in France, at Carpiquet Airfield in Normandy, on 26th August, 1944, as part of 145 Wing, attached to and giving close support to the Canadian Army. By this stage the Luftwaffe had been defeated, and 485 Squadron spent the rest of the war bombing and strafing at the Army's request.

On 20th September, Max received his own aircraft, naming her 'Waipawa Special' after his hometown in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. On the fuselage were the letters OUD, being that aircraft's registration.

The Canadian Army would capture an airfield, to which his squadron would fly, and then operate from that field. In some cases, when a large area was captured, Anderson netting was laid out to form a runway, and that would become their interim base.

During their 18 months in France and Holland, the squadron slept and lived mainly in tents – three men to a tent.

In Max's time on the squadron he was involved with 36 dive bombing missions, and many, many, strafing occasions. Several of these strafing sorties were on different sized 'bowser' trucks carrying petrol and other fuels, both at airfields and in convoys. Known as 'flamers', they made a very memorable sight, Max recalled. As part of the strafing they also successfully knocked out aircraft on the ground at the German airfields.

On other occasions the 485 Spitfires would seek out vehicle convoys, from small to large. His logbook shows a number of sorties where the staff cars of the German army, lorries and other vehicles were knocked out.

One morning, with the heavy fog seemingly as close to the ground as it could get, F/O's (Flying Officers) Terry Kearins and Max were scrambled, literally just metres above the sea in heavy fog. Their two Spitfires completely surprised three midget submarines on the surface outside Flushing Harbour, Holland. They attacked, and sunk all three. While these were designated 'midget' submarines they were in effect fairly large, as was to be seen at the close of the war when this type of submarine was viewed by allied officers.

To the best of Max's belief, this is the only recorded occasion of a Spitfire of the RAF or RNZAF sinking a submarine in the whole of the war. He was also involved in dive-bombing bridges over the river Rhine. On one of these occasions Max was hit by anti-aircraft fire and had to bail out. Fortunately being over allies lines, he was not captured.

At Bodenplatte on 1st January 1945, Hitler made one last attempt to drive the allies out of Europe. The Army attacked through the Ardennes and the Luftwaffe attacked many airfields in use by the allies. Six ME109's attacked the airfield of 485 (NZ) Squadron. Thirteen Spitfires were lost. During this period, Hitler's air force lost over 200 pilots, whom he could not afford to lose.

The squadron was to be converted to Tempests, so Max and the squadron went back to England to undertake a conversion course. But because of heavy losses due to mechanical problems and losses from anti-aircraft fire, there were not enough Tempests to equip the squadron. So they went back to Spitfires with a Packard Merlin engine. The Mk9b they had was the most advanced Spitfire of that time.

Some months were spent as part of the occupational forces in Germany, where the squadron would fly most days in wingtip-to-wingtip formations, indicating to the German people that they were there in a resolute way.

During some of the time in Germany, they were quartered in former Luftwaffe mess. As Max was about to leave, while checking he had not left anything behind, he pulled a German Luftwaffe logbook from under the bed. He packed this and returned to New Zealand with it. About 40 years later, through the German Embassy, Max was able to trace the owner of the logbook (a navigator of JU88's and ME110's), and return it to him.

Max commented, "You can imagine the German person receiving his logbook from 'some bloke' in Waipawa in New Zealand." They corresponded with each other through the sending of Christmas cards for some years. Sadly the card exchange came to an end about three years ago. It would seem that logbook's owner has passed on.

Max left Germany on the 6th May 1945. The 485 (NZ) Squadron was in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, overseeing the end to World War 2.

Max was awarded an MID (mention in dispatches) before he left the squadron to come home. Three days before his 22nd birthday, on 22nd October 1945, he returned to New Zealand. He had been serving, well and truly, for three and a half years.

Postscript: Max is an RSA Gold Star recipient, almost immediately becoming a member of the RSA on his return from active service and serving as secretary to the Waipukurau RSA. In his professional role as an accountant, he also 'did the books' for Napier RSA for around 30 years.

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Anecdote

Even in wartime amongst the horror and trying times that all endured, there were moments of humour and interest. Two such events, in which Max was involved, are shown below (taken from the Summons). Both are dated 30th October 1943.

Refer to 'Summons' at Alnwick in the county of Northumberland,' to appear before the Court of Summary Jurisdiction. - Maxwell A Collett, Sergeant Pilot. How do you plead?

1 – Statement of offence: More than one person carried on a bicycle, contrary to Sec 20 of the Road Traffic Act 1934.

On a certain road called Bondgate Without, was one of two persons unlawfully carried on a bicycle not propelled by mechanical power and not adapted or constructed for the carriage of more than one person.

2 – **Statement of offence:** Bicycle not displaying lights, contrary to Road Transport lighting Act 1927 and Lighting (restrictions) order 1940 made under Defence (general) Regulations 1939.

Unlawfully during the hours of darkness to wit at 10.55pm did cause a bicycle to be on a certain road called Bondgate Without, which did not display the front light required by and under the Road Transport Lighting Act 1927 and a red rear light, contrary to the Lighting (Restrictions) order 1940. Paras.31 and 52(4).

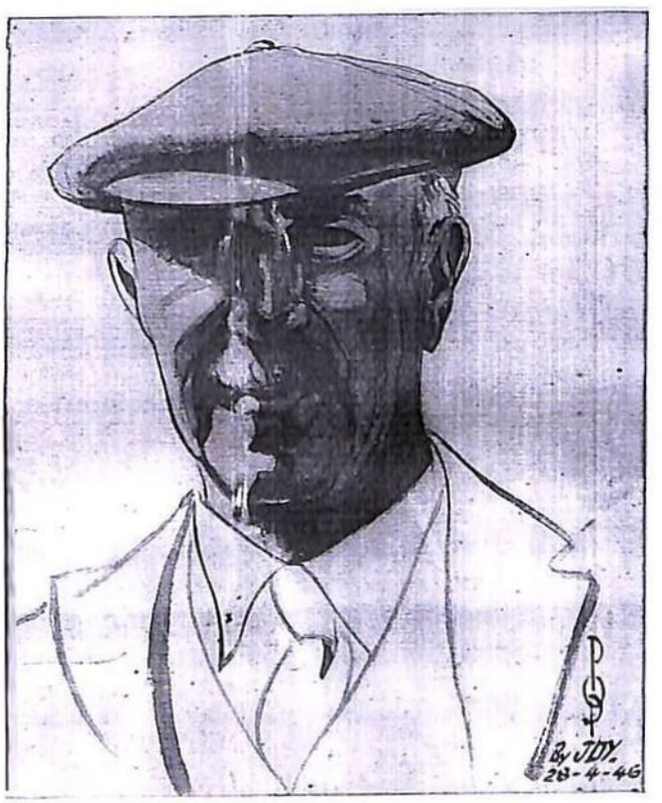
Outcome? 485 NZ Squadron moved back to frontline combat. Hence the case did not proceed.

An Artist in Wartime

William Guy Harding
As told by his daughter, Judy Rogers

William Harding was originally from Auckland. He became a professional artist, both a portraitist and one of our country's top draftsmen. When the Second World War broke out, he worked for New Zealand as a cartographer, drawing maps for the Lands and Surveys Department.

As he was already doing an important job, and because he had a family to support, it wasn't until the last year of the war that he was called up to serve overseas.



While on the troop ship, William made some extra money by doing portraits of the servicemen with whom he sailed.

His daughter Judy inherited her father's artistic talents. This is her portrait of her father, drawn in 1946.

Balloons of a Different Kind

Ruby Cook née Ruby Bull
Women's Auxiliary Air Force - 2093791

Ruby lived in the East End of London with her mother, sister and brother-in-law. Her ambition was to become a qualified dressmaker and she duly obtained employment with a Jewish family firm. Ruby's new adult world was looking promising, but her carefree days came to an end with the outbreak of WW2, and the subsequent bombing of London. Her employers were now required to have the staff sew uniforms for the forces.

Ruby's mother was deaf. She could not hear the air-raid sirens when home alone, and did not realise the urgency to rush to an air raid shelter. The family decided to move to Leicester. The only employment available to Ruby after the shift was in a biscuit factory, a placement Ruby found somewhat tedious. Ruby, hoping to find other work, was dismayed when she found that she could not leave because work in food-producing establishments was considered to be essential employment.

It was then that Ruby made a life-changing decision. She enlisted in the WAAFs (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). She was assigned to a Barrage Balloon Command, one of the many situated in strategic parts of the country. This occupation was earlier handled by officers and men of the Royal Air Force. It was suggested in the House of Commons that women could do this work which would release the men for heavier work. The men were appalled, being of the opinion only physically fit men were up to handling the balloons. An extract from The Star newspaper on 12 July 1941, follows this story.

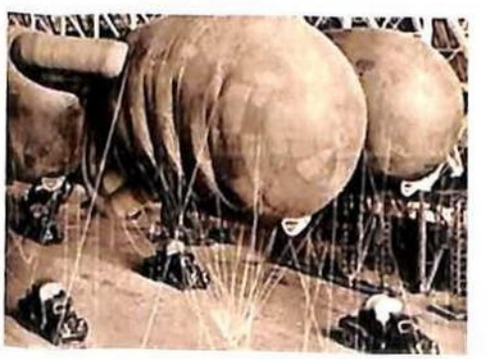
What Was the Purpose of Barrage Balloons?

Many people thought their purpose was to ensnare aircraft in their metal cables, like a spider trapping unwary flies, but this was not so. However, if an enemy aircraft did become entangled, this was considered a bonus. Their main object was to deny enemy aircraft low level airspace forcing them to fly higher, and thus decreasing their bombing accuracy.

What Were Barrage Balloons?

The balloons, which averaged 62 feet in length and 25 feet in diameter, were made of a very close woven fabric which consisted of several panels.

They could be likened to "blimps". The top of the balloon was filled with hydrogen while the bottom was left empty. The balloons, which were capable of flying to 5000 feet, were held by cables fixed to winches on trucks.



Ruby was very excited about returning to London, although a little apprehensive about her new venture. She shared a three-storied house, situated on the edge of the Commons, with ten to twelve other WAAFs. The roster for household duties was the least of her worries. But then came the training, engaging the WAAFs in the numerous so-called seemingly impossible tasks for the fairer sex. Ruby was quite determined. One of the first things to learn was how to drive a vehicle. She also had to become skilled at operating winches, and to familiarise herself with equipment and devices previously unknown to her. The repairing tasks were not so difficult.

When word came through that an attack was imminent, it was time to man the balloons. The trucks were driven to the desired spot and the women could commence their routines. The winch, which was like a steering wheel, was hard to manoeuvre. In fact in wet and windy conditions it was extremely hazardous.

Care was also needed when the balloons were brought down. They had to be lowered to a concrete base and anchored with very heavy concrete blocks. Then an inspection of the hydrogen level was taken and any damages noted. It took a real team effort to successfully launch and lower the balloons.

Ruby did find the manning of the balloons physically strenuous, but the satisfaction of a job well done was very rewarding. As Ruby would be the first to admit, "It was your job and you just got on with it". This in turn enhanced the camaraderie between the WAAFs. Ruby felt so at home, she even planted tomatoes.

But not all the WAAFs were happy with their situation. Two women from the northern parts of England, referred to as "the comedians", made it quite obvious they were disgruntled with their circumstances. So much so that they stated that when next on home leave, they would get pregnant. This they managed to do and were duly discharged.

Life was not all work and no play. Ruby was sometimes able to take a two-day home leave. As there was a library and a pub just down the road, there was plenty of scope for socialising; perhaps at the pub more so than the library.

The precious balloons had to be guarded throughout the night and the roster specified shifts of two hours on and four hours off. At first there was only one woman on duty but it was then decided two women would be a better arrangement. Could this be because there was an army training college further down the road and soldiers, including those from the Unites States, would be passing by? The women would often see them on training exercises and marching drills.

One night when Ruby was dozing between her two hour rosters, she was a bit grumpy on being woken. She was told not to grizzle because "there is a smashing looking man out there". Ruby did find him smashing, and so began a friendship, a courtship and then an engagement. Ted Cook was sent abroad and did not return until the end of the war, when they married.

At the end of the war, Ruby was demobbed and worked in an office while waiting for her husband's return. He was assigned to further duties in Italy. After hearing glowing reports of Napier, from the woman in the adjoining flat, they decided to immigrate to New Zealand.

An article from The Star - Monday May 12, 1941

BALLOON JOB TOO STRENUOUS FOR WOMEN

By our Air Correspondent

Men employed in the air barrage are disturbed by stories that women are to take over their jobs. The allegation is not true because the work is too strenuous for women. This very fact has caused the Barrage Balloon boys much embarrassment as there is a feeling on board that the work they are doing could be done by girls. The trouble arose over questions asked in the House of Commons last week suggesting that women could do the work and that officers and men engaged on it would be released for more important and heavier work.

A MISTAKE

In reply to the question it was stated that the intention of the RAF was to employ many WAAFs as possible in balloon command. Many WAAFs are already employed, and ways and means of extending their employment is now being considered. It is a mistake however to assume this means women will "man" the balloons That would not be possible.

HEAVY WORK

Most of the balloons of these sites are in exposed places, living conditions are very rough and to handle a balloon in a breeze is heavy work even for a physically fit man. An unfit man would be entirely incapable of doing the work. It is definitely a man's job and the men engaged on it have no reason to be self-conscious about their task. The women who will be employed will be employed on electric duties, repairing balloon fabric and such similar work.

Images used in this article:

360 x 240 retronaut.com - balloon/trucks in hanger
780 x 520 the times.co.uk - mending the balloon
1280 x 960 pinterest.com – pulling down balloon

Blow out

George Rogers

When Winston Churchill declared that his country would enter into the War, George Rogers promptly volunteered to serve.

Then while he was waiting to be posted, one night his bedroom wall was blown out by a bomb and he was thrown outside, still in bed. Luckily, though there was plenty of damage done to the building, not much harm came to George.

Most young men longed to fill the glamour positions, to become generals and flying aces. When he enlisted, George had aspirations to be a fighter pilot. But high-flying glory was not on the cards for George.

George was a plumber by trade, and had also worked underground on the tube trains. So when he was asked what he knew about Lancaster bombers, being such a practical hands-on man, George replied, "I can take them to bits and put them back together again". This skill was far too valuable for the Air Force to allow him to fly; George was needed on the ground to keep the precious bombers air-worthy. And so it was that George worked on the planes flown by the now-famous Dam Busters.

They say that lightning never strikes twice. Obviously the same adage doesn't apply to enemy bombs. George's next personal encounter with one was when he was a Flight Sergeant. One night an injured plane returned through thick fog from a mission. She landed with her tail on fire, and George saw that there was still a bomb under her wing. He ordered his men to get that bomb off, but it blew up before they could remove it. He was thrown, and his ears bled from the percussion. George simply stuffed some cotton wool into his ears and carried on, but from that day on, his hearing has been affected.

Eventually George came to New Zealand as a plumber on a warship. He liked what he saw, and decided to stay.

From Millinery to Military

Thea Lister
Women's Auxiliary Army Corps
As told by her cousin, Jenny Vierkotten

When Thea left school, she worked at the Harris Hats factory in Napier.

Along with her extended family, and many other Napier citizens, she gathered at "Siberia" to wave goodbye to the troop train that was carrying an older cousin as he left for war. Siberia was the colloquial name for a small grass reserve near McGrath Street. Only immediate families of the departing soldiers were permitted on the railway platform.

It was then that Thea felt moved to contribute to the war effort and joined the WAACs (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps). This meant a move to Wellington where she was stationed at Trentham Military Camp throughout her service.

After initial training, Thea was assigned to the Quartermaster's Store. The WAACs worked in pairs receiving and preparing artillery for either storage or reissue to different units. They also serviced the Bofors guns while soldiers looked after the 3.7 inch guns, this latter work deemed too heavy for the WAACs. Both these were anti-aircraft guns.

Whenever the WAACs were able to obtain a leave pass, they would go by train to Wellington for some social activity, mostly attending the cinema or the Saturday night dance.

On waking one morning, Thea noticed a rash and after reporting to the medical centre was questioned, most thoroughly, by the Matron. Matron's first reaction was to ask, "Have you been out with any Americans?" Because the Americans, after being on combat duty in the Pacific, were now on Rest and Recreation leave in Wellington, Matron feared they may have brought small-pox or some other tropical disease into the country.

Thea emphatically replied that no, she had not been in contact with any Americans, and besides she had a boyfriend, Roy, serving in Europe. Thea was ordered to return to Napier where she recuperated from a common, although unpleasant, bout of chicken pox!

At the end of the war Thea married Roy Lister. Because of the coincidence of the surname she did not have a name-change. Although the couple lived in various places in the North Island, the bond between the WAACs was always strong even if they had served in different companies. This was confirmed by the number who attended Thea's funeral so many years later.

In Uniform

Author Unknown

Ngaire Rowe found the following poem in the personal effects of her late step-father. It is possible that he wrote it, but she can't be sure.

In Uniform

Summer after winter
And hope that follows fear
Sunshine after shadow
And some time you'll be here
Laughter after sorrow
And blossoms after frost
Joy and compensation
For all the months we lost.

Military Exploits of the Natusch Family

Guy Natusch
DSC RNZNVR (Rtd)
MNZM for services to Architecture

Guy's family served with distinction in the First World War, and this patriotism followed into the Second World War with both Guy and his brother Roy serving with the same Natusch excellence. Roy has an unbelievable, yet wonderfully courageous series of true tales to tell of his exploits for which he received the Military Medal.

The commitment of Guy, his brother and before that, his family, can best be summed up in a comment made by Guy at the time of providing the Oral History (referred to below) when he said; "You felt in your youth that what Germany was doing was wrong and that what we were going to have to do, very simply, had to be done. So I think it is as simple as that."

The first short story is as he told it to Ron Rowe.

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How I came to join the Navy against the wishes of the Army

It began in the army in December 1941, after a year at university in Auckland where Guy was studying for his architectural degree.

His unit was the Hawke's Bay Regiment guarding the Manawatu Gorge. However, he had earlier applied to the navy for scheme B, which was an officer selection programme. During his brief time with the army he received an invitation to attend the Naval Selection Board and physical medical inspection in Wellington within seven days.

As all good servicepersons do, Guy applied for leave, so as to attend the selection board. This was refused! The grounds given were that the army were losing too many of their personnel to navy and air force.

Guy felt then and still does, that this decision was wrong. What to do? Simple, really . . . he was going to accept the invitation and attend, no matter what.

Without the knowledge of the army, Guy left the camp the night before the Selection Panel. He did so by going out under the flap of the Bell tent, through the pine trees and down to a railway crossing with the road. He stood in the darkness waiting for the train that he knew went through about this time. As the train came abreast with the crossing he leapt out and boarded it. *It seemed a sensible thing to do . . .* even if he could not buy a ticket because the army would not grant him a 'leave pass.'

To avoid being caught by the military personnel on the train; Guy made use of the toilet any time a Military Marshal came into sight. And so his journey from Woodville to Wellington took place. On arrival in the capital he leapt off the train and disappeared into the crowd.

Appearing before the Navy Selection Board, Guy was horrified to see his family doctor at the head of the table. In his childhood, Guy had suffered somewhat severe asthma and a troubling tendon in his right foot that still gave him bother. The doctor asked him about these two possible difficulties to which Guy replied in a very candid, but courteous fashion that his tendon issue would not be helped with long distance marches with the army and that his asthma would be greatly assisted by the sea air. It seemed that the doctor agreed.

Once clear of the selection panel, Guy returned to the army camp at Woodville in the same manner to that by which he had left it. On arrival he asked others if he had been discovered as missing. The army hadn't missed him, primarily through the help of friends at the camp.

A few days later he received a letter from the navy stating that he had been successful for the scheme B commissioned officer programme and would leave NZ in ten days' time, embarking on the *Rimutaka*. Obviously the army now needed to know about this and the CO summoned Guy to explain himself after having been denied permission to attend the selection panel. Guy's reply was, 'I've no idea Sir, evidently they must have selected on the information to hand.'

Just before his 21st birthday at the end of January, he, along with twenty nine others, set sail for the UK. Candidates for Scheme B were required to be 21 years of age, prior to or during their training. They all joined the Navy as ordinary seamen for basic training with at least six months sea time before qualifying for officer training school.

That's how Guy Natusch joined the navy – quite a story, but true. "It seemed a sensible thing to do" - for if he had not made the very real effort to attend the selection panel he would not have taken part in some interesting exploits during the war on Motor Torpedo and Motor Torpedo Gun Boats (the two small ships are different) nor earned the Distinguished Service Cross. But that is all for another story . . .

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Two convoys that changed my life

Guy tells this story in his own words.

Joining the Navy as a Scheme B candidate – i.e. candidate for officer training, required a short period of land-based training before one could be drafted to a ship. I was one of six New Zealanders who were fortunate to crew on HMS *Tartar*, a fleet destroyer of the Tribal class. *Tartar*, of around 2000 tons with 200 personnel had the latest in technology at the outset of World War 2. It had a twin, quick firing 5-inch anti-aircraft gun in a turret mounting, along with other armaments.

HMS *Tartar* and her sister ships of the Tribal class could do well over 30 knots and were used to great effect. Yet sadly several of *Tartar*'s sister ships suffered the ultimate fate of being sunk.

The first convoy that I and the other five New Zealanders on scheme B were involved with was when HMS *Tartar* was part of convoy Pedestal, to that wonderful and courageous island, Malta.

The convoy was escorted by two battleships, four air craft carriers, seven cruisers, thirty two destroyers and a number of smaller craft; all this to protect fourteen merchant ships that had to manage 15 knots. A very slow speed when one considers the many submarines lurking in wait, but fast for a convoy.

This convoy, Pedestal, was a 'must get through at all costs' as Malta and the military, mainly RAF, would have been lost if the convoy failed to deliver critical supplies of aero fuels and other necessities.

And the costs were extraordinarily high. The enemy threw in all of their resources to stop what they knew would be the making, or the undoing, of the strategically placed island.

HMS *Eagle*, a middle- to large-sized aircraft carrier, was sunk by four torpedoes on the first day out. Eagle couldn't fly off her aircraft quick enough to offer further cover. This sinking was followed by another aircraft carrier being badly damaged also. HMS *Kenya*, a larger cruiser had her bow blown off and HMS *Nigeria*, of the same class, had her rudders blown off through a torpedo 'up the stern.' A destroyer, HMS *Foresight* was crippled, so *Tartar* took her in tow during the battle; but eventually had to sink her as *Tartar* herself became the target.

Such was the carnage that only five of the merchantmen got through. One was a NZ ship, the *Port Chalmers*, and another was a petrol tanker, the *Ohio*, which came into harbour with her decks awash and with a destroyer lashed to either side in order to keep her afloat. *Ohio* was only able to travel at a mere two knots. Courage and fortitude? You bet!! This was said to be the convoy that saved Malta. It was between attacks that I said to my shipmates, "Let's hope that this is the war to end wars." One of my Kiwi shipmates, five years my senior replied to me, "Guy, you must study the history of mankind – man does not learn from past events."

To put this significant event into perspective, it is said that Germany dominated the straits and Rommel's Africa Corps was only losing a small percentage of supplies across the Mediterranean. Once Malta was saved they lost thirty percent of supplies which contributed largely to the defeat of the Afrika Corps.

This was my first experience of sea time and experiences of what war was really like. As soon as we were able to be released, the *Tartar* sped at over thirty knots back to Gibraltar so as to escape the submarine threats. From Gib we went to Scapa Flow for a boiler-clean.

While at Scapa Flow Naval Base undergoing essential repairs and maintenance, sporting events were arranged including rugby and sailing. The six Kiwis all took part in the team for HMS *Tartar* against all the other destroyers, cruisers and battleships. *Tartar* won five out of six rugby matches and thanks to the Kiwis, *Tartar* was victorious in sailing as well. Recreation, including organised sporting events, was very important to help us forget the horrors of war and prepare us mentally for the next battle.

Then to the second precarious convoy that my fellow Kiwis and I were involved in: Leaving Scapa Flow, heading to Iceland to join convoy PQ18 was cold and rough. The convoy PQ17 (the one before ours) was a complete disaster. So again the convoy that we were part of, PQ18 was critical, but this time from a political point of view to pacify the Russians, who, desperately short of supplies, needed the convoys to succeed.

The composition of the convoy, too, was of course markedly different. This time there were about forty merchant ships with the attendant escorts of a smaller number than the Malta convoy, Pedestal. Yet the losses again were high with, from memory, something in the order of thirty to forty percent losses. Forever etched in my memory are the tankers and freighters being blown apart. The other terrible factor was our having to steam past the seamen in the water from the sunken or foundering ships, because submarines were waiting for any other ship to stop and pick up survivors and then they too would more than likely receive the deadly torpedoes. Nevertheless, if we could pick them up, we did, by stopping momentarily, literally scooping them up. We did what we could, hoping the slower small craft could reach others in time.

And so I was part of two momentous and important convoys which played a major role in the war effort and also gave me and my Kiwi mates the sea time, and experience we needed in order to move to King Alfred Barracks for our officer training. After that, I was commissioned as a Sub- Lieutenant.

Again, another story.

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Acknowledgement is made to the Royal NZ Naval Museum for providing the Oral History of Guy Kingdon Natusch, from which the genesis of stories has been taken.

Morse and Motors

Eileen Mogridge, née Eileen Faulknor
Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, No 804702

Eileen Faulknor was brought up in Napier South, Napier. She was a member of the St. Augustine's Church and joined the Brownies and later the Girl Guides. She had no idea that the Morse code and semaphore, which she had studiously studied, would eventually be put to good use. When her brother joined the navy, he left behind his prized car, which Eileen was instructed to take care of. She was delighted and jumped at the chance to get her driver's licence, another useful accomplishment.

In 1940, German raiders (and later Japanese naval boats) were invading Pacific waters as far south as New Zealand. They had attacked and sunk various vessels. Blackouts were in force by April, and householders were warned against leaving doors open. Because of her knowledge of signals, Eileen joined the team at the Drill Hall and Bluff Hill look-out stations where they listened for signals from any boats that might be patrolling in the Bay.

By 1942, the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps was founded, and Eileen was ordered to report to headquarters at Mirimar, Wellington. Because no uniforms were available, the women were initially issued with men's attire. Eileen adapted well to army life, sharing a hut with three other women. Having both driver's and heavy vehicle licences was a definite advantage as that enabled Eileen to leave base on various missions. Although a confident driver, she admits that driving in blackout conditions was quite scary.

It was not long before Eileen was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, with one benefit being that she shared a hut with only one other woman. When asked what it was like being a Sergeant, Eileen smiled and replied, "My word was law!"

Working in Signals was an exacting job. The women did shifts throughout the night, and any intercepted messages were reported to the co-ordinating office.

Because the work was so intense, firm friendships were established. Just for a bit of fun, when out socially, they would greet a soldier with verbal dots and dashes, such as –

dot,dot,dot,dot	**(H)**;
dot	**(E)**;
dot,dash,dot,dot	**(L);**
dot,dash,dot,dot	**(L)**;
dash,dash,dash	**(O).**

When Eileen received a welcome weekend pass, she returned home on the midnight train. The luggage racks were made of a type of rope and looked a little like hammocks.

Most times Eileen was able to leave her luggage on the seat and climb onto one of these racks, managing to have a bit of a sleep before arriving in Napier in the early morning.

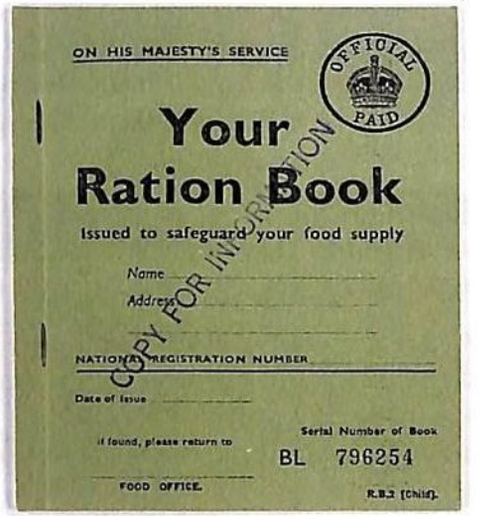
Eileen preferred to wear trousers when she travelled, and remembers very clearly how distasteful this was to one of her aunts.

When the war ended Eileen remained in Wellington for a little longer, as there was still work to complete. Finally, she returned to Napier and was reunited with her fiancé, George Mogridge, who had been stationed in the Pacific.

A . –	J . – – –	S . . .	2 . . – – –
B – . . .	K – . –	T –	3 . . . – –
C – . – .	L . – . .	U . . –	4 . . . . –
D – . .	M – –	V . . . –	5 . . . . .
E .	N – .	W . – –	6 – . . . .
F . . – .	O – – –	X – . . –	7 – – . . .
G – – .	P . – – .	Y – . – –	8 – – – – . .
H	Q – – . –	Z – – . .	9 – – – – .
I . .	R . – .	1 . – – – –	0 – – – – –

My Earliest Recollections of the War

Eric Rogers



As a child I grew up in a village called Cogan, near Penarth in Wales. Behind our house was a hill, and on the top of this was a recreational field. This was near the border of England and Wales.

I was nearly 11 years old when war was announced by Neville Chamberlain. We had a Cossar battery radio to which we listened. I remember being issued with an identity card (which I still have) and a gas mask.

My mother was also given a ration book. Mum asked me to go to the shop, and as we had a ration book I said we would not have to pay. I was so wrong.

My father was an ARP Warden (Air Raid Precautions) and he came home one day and said to go outside. The recreational field was lit up with incendiary bombs which had been dumped by the German planes because of ack-ack fire. The whole field looked as though it was on fire.

The German planes would fly over from France, over the Bristol Channel, and either the river Thames or Severn. Our village was under their flight path.

Another time, Mr. March, who was an ARP Warden, saw a parachute coming down on the recreational field. He rushed up and found it was a landmine, which exploded. He was injured and rushed to hospital. He was very lucky to survive.

I joined the Royal Air Force on the 12th February, 1947, at the age of 18. I was kitted out at Padgate in Lancashire and then went to Yatesbury in Wiltshire for basic training.

Then I was sent to Melksham, which was also in Wiltshire, to start my schooling for my trade, which was an instrument repairer. I worked on all sorts of things, but they found out I was good on instruments, so I was sent to St Athens where I was put on the bench repairing instruments.

In late 1948, I was due to be de-mobbed, but owing to the Berlin air drop, I could not do this. I went into the Reserve for two years, and was still in this when I emigrated. I came out to New Zealand, leaving in October 1954 on the Captain Cook, and arrived in Dunedin in November 1954.

My Family, Air Raids and Bomb Shelters

Christine Hough

We were prime targets for getting bombed because we lived at Elm Park, Hornchurch in Essex, one mile from a Spitfire Aerodrome.

We had gone to stay with Mum's sister who lived in North London at Palmers Green. My uncle earned more money than Dad did and he and my aunt had no children, so they were not eligible for a free Air Raid Shelter. As a consequence, they did not have one of their own. Every night, we took food and drink, and bedding including our pillows to the Underground station. Then we slept on the platform with lots of others.

An example of a backyard air raid shelter < https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSr1f_9vA7hgQ5RldDiJD1xFzbZMB8S-9Zy-cauLXWvu2-ZrbDcQw>

My favourite war-time memory is of sleeping on the platform of Wood Green Railway Station. At that time, I was 10 years old, and thought it was cool.

Sleeping at the station <https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSDUPppO4X0nplmiRgSinkqcZvYSEecicKPam313A8HyOYWcRtoIQ>

After four weeks, we went home as the bombing where we lived had not eventuated at that time.

Once home, we had to sleep in our air raid shelter, something I'd rather not ever have to do again. I saw that Mum was absolutely terrified. We could feel the bombs explode in the ground and the shock waves met us from about a mile away. What an awful feeling!

Then a big gun we used to call Big Bertha would come round the streets and fire at the German planes in the sky overhead. They used this mobile gun so that the Germans could not pin-point it and bomb it, like they could have done if it was in a stationary position. The noise was unbearable.

In the morning Dad and I got out of our air raid shelter; me to get ready for school and Dad to go to work in London. Business as usual!

After the first night of the Blitz, Dad told me to look down the road, where you could see London on fire. We were twelve miles away. The sky was bright red with yellow and green flames coming from all the goods in the dockyards.

I will never forget that sight,
I will never forget that night.
Many, many people lost their homes,
Their places of work as well.

☼☼☼☼☼

My Auntie Doll was killed in the Blitz on London in one of the biggest disasters of the Second World War. On 13 October 1940, German bombers attacked the city. One of the heaviest bombs they dropped hit a block of flats called Coronation Avenue. The bomb penetrated five floors of the flats above the basement shelter where 154 people sought shelter. Damage from the bombing included the bursting of the building's water mains and gas pipes. This caused people to be drowned or be poisoned by the escaping gas.

It took nearly two weeks of digging to find the victims' remains. In all, there were only 128 of these people whose bodies were later identified. Identification was not easy. Many identification cards and other papers had been ruined by the water. The rescue workers gathered what personal effects they could from the corpses. Some personal items had become embedded in the bodies.

Coronation Avenue plaque
http://assets.londonremembers.com/images/big/49789.jpg?1319394792

Auntie Doll had said that she felt safe in the shelter although it was unpleasant to be amongst so many people. Ironically her house was relatively unscathed and still stands to this day.

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Footnote:
Christine's memories of her Auntie Doll, as printed here, are adapted from her article *Killed in the Blitz* which was published in the North West Kent Family History Society Journal, Vol. 6 No 4, January 1993.

My Korean Experience

Excerpts from the memoirs of
Second Lieutenant Colin Herbert Stansfield
New Zealand Army – No 5608084
Overseas Services
08 April to 03 September 1953
29 December to 04 November 1954

It was in 1952 that I decided to answer the Government's call for volunteers for the New Zealand Forces to be sent to Korea. I thought it would be an adventure, so decided to sign up. I was 20 years of age and entered the training camp at Waiouru.

The military training consisted of marching, general discipline, small arms training, unarmed combat and obstacle course tests, followed by Corps training where you are drafted into sections, artillery, transport, and supply to name a few.

After aptitude tests, I was selected for officer training but as I was not 21, this was deferred in the meantime. Because of my age, I was not eligible for an overseas posting until I had my parent's written permission. My mother would not agree, so I waited until my 21st birthday and a few weeks later I left for South Korea.

Our flights took us first to Sydney, where we spent a few days at the Marrackville, Eastern Command Army Barracks.

Our Qantas DC6 flight took us via New Guinea, to Guam Island, an American air base, where we stayed overnight. The next stop was Hiro Base Camp, Japan, staying a few days to be fitted out with combat gear. Then it was on to Seoul in South Korea.

We were met by a convoy of vehicles, and travelled some 60 miles, over very dusty clay roads, to our camp, known as the 38th. I was handed a pick and shovel by Corporal Jim Canning and ordered to dig a trench for an air raid shelter. It was late into the night when we finished, but it was a good introduction to my new life. The next night entailed more digging.

My section was required to dig trenches up the valley, away from the camp, which would be a light machinegun post. The digging was easy. The following day when inspecting our work we found out why. There had been an old toilet on the hill, and the area was full of maggots.

Climatic conditions in South Korea presented a challenge. In summer months the heat was very uncomfortable, and the troops had to rest for two to three hours in the middle of the day. Salt tablets as well as Paludrine tablets for malaria were supplied.

Then along came the wet season with spectacular lightning displays and thunder storms.

Deep trenches around the tents had to be dug. More digging!

Winter brought snow, and everything froze. The clothing issued to the troops for the cold climate was good, so that coupled with our young age, meant we found the cold not too difficult. Woollen long-john underpants, string singlet, woollen ski trousers, woollen shirt, dark green nylon over-trousers and jacket, and then a fur lined parka, with hood, made up the winter clothing. Heavy socks and commando boots kept the feet warm. To keep cosy when sleeping, we wore either our first layer of clothes or even the first and second, inside two sleeping bags topped with four or five thick blankets. Before the winter set in, the army had to lay pipes deep into the river, so that they could draw off water for the troops.

Apart from deer, oxen and a few horses, there were few animals. But there were snakes. The most dangerous was the poisonous Bootlace snake; very thin, black and about two feet long. This snake liked to crawl into your boots at night. Rats carried a virus which caused the deadly haemorrhagic fever, and they seemed to be attracted to our sleeping bags. Although our Company was free from this infection, there were a few deaths among other units.

Driving was tricky, and the speed limit for trucks was 15 mph (25 kph), and for jeeps 25 mph (ca 40 kph). I drove a jeep in winter time, over one of the largest rivers in the country, which was covered in ice, estimated to be four feet thick.

I had only been in Korea five months, when I was sent back to New Zealand to join an officer cadet training unit. This was a very intensive course, attended by 14 cadets of which 10 passed to become officers. I did not want to fail as I was keen to return to Korea. My final leave coincided with Christmas and the Tangiwai train disaster.

After receiving my commission I was given command of the Headquarters Platoon in 10 Transport Company. Although the company was in a static position for some time, there was always the concern that we may have to move camp at short notice. Most of the troops had collected or acquired many items that were not issued by the Army. How would they manage?

'Curly' Askew, from Gisborne, solved the problem by acquiring a trailer for each of the platoon jeeps. Originally the trailers had belonged to the American forces, which benefited by the exchange of cans of butter and some Kiwi boots. Apparently Kiwi boots were well sought after, as they stood up to the harsh conditions remarkably well.

The ceasefire came in July 1953, and I was sent to the Camp at Inchon for R&R (Rest & Relaxation). This camp was under the control of the British Army and was fairly dilapidated. The tents leaked and the food was very mundane. However, the camp speakers blared out the latest music, and we heard the great news that Edmond Hillary had conquered Mount Everest.

One part of our recreation was to organise a motor rally, teams from the various units of the Commonwealth Divisions competing. Our team of three included a mechanic. We drove nonstop over a 24 hour period, from one side of Korea, over the Taigu Mountains, to the coast. The roads were in a shocking state. Mud slips and driving rain combined to make it a perilous journey. We did not win the rally, but enjoyed the challenge.

After the ceasefire, a number of the local Korean farmers returned to their former land, and with their oxen and ploughs started to cultivate their rice fields. Unfortunately, the American forces had laid a lot of anti-tank mines which were not clearly charted. In the summer, some mines became corroded or overheated, and exploded.

Before returning home in November 1954, I spent some time on liaison duties at the Base Camp in Hiro, Japan. I visited Miajima Island, close to Hiroshima, and saw the devastation that the atom bomb had caused.

My previous job at the New Zealand Electricity Department was waiting for me, but I found it difficult being tied to a desk and each day was somewhat boring. I then decided to join the Police Force.

My Lucky Dancing Shoes

Bill Walker, DJX569685
Royal Navy, 5th Support Group
With thanks to David Russell, who helped Bill to sort out his story.

Bill was born and raised in England. When he was a young man, he was employed to help build the Syerston Aerodrome (part of the bomber network). With the same firm, he went on from there to work on another aerodrome, and then a wireless station. It was at this time that he volunteered for the navy, having finally reached the age of eighteen. He was called up in August 1943.

By January 1944, Bill was serving on the HMS *Mourne*, a near-new 1370 tonne River Class frigate with a crew of 135. The *Mourne* was part of the escort for a convoy crossing the Atlantic. They were headed to St. John's, Newfoundland, and set off in agreeable weather.

The following is in Bill's own words, as he described his first mission:

"Then in mid-Atlantic a storm struck with a vengeance. Mid-winter is notorious on this run, and soon the waves reached gigantic proportions.

"With the atrocious weather pounding the ship, our living conditions up front soon became, one could say, "HELLISH". The storm lasted for seven days and tested even the most experienced of the crew. By the time we reached St. John's, we had suffered enough from the elements.

"Once in port there was no rest, just the usual hive of activity, as we cleaned up the mess decks and made our accommodation habitable. It was a bloody shambles, to say the least. The upper deck was a disaster area. We had lost all the life-saving gear and all the immovable gear had been damaged or blown away."

The US Navy supplied and fitted-out the ship, allowing it to depart with a homeward-bound convoy.

Bill could be forgiven for hoping that negotiating terrible weather was behind him. But as for travelling through the Bay of Biscay, when the *Mourne* was on outer defence screening duties for the D Day fleet, Bill could only describe the passage as 'VERY ROUGH'.

Soon enough though, the weather became the least of his worries, pushed to the back of his mind by the demands of battle. Besides, the fateful day of the 15th of June 1944 was a beautiful sunny day.

The previous day, the petty officer had pointed to Bill's boots. He said that they were too heavy, and would hold a lot of water, sinking a man if he landed into the sea with them on. It made Bill think about his personal safety, and he decided to take a few further precautions.

Because his station was located on the bridge, loading one of the six-pound guns, Bill realised that he was relatively far from the locker which held the lifejackets. On the day of 15 June, he took his safety into his own hands. "I pinched a lifejacket and stowed it in the locker next to the gun," he says. "You weren't supposed to do that, but I had, and it saved my life."

Taking the twin precautions of having a lifejacket in hand and changing his footwear (Bill came on deck that historic day wearing his black patent-leather dancing shoes instead of his regulation boots) proved to be the wisest moves of his life.

At 11am the *Mourne* was hit by an Acoustic Torpedo, fired by the submerged German U-boat 767. This type of torpedo is accurate and lethal, homing in on the throb of a ship's engine.

"I remember well the vivid and enormous explosion. Fortunately for me my watch-keeping station was on an open platform, open to the elements. Situated just below the bridge, the fact that I was thus exposed, and wearing a lifejacket saved my life. I was blown vertically and out, away from the ship. I landed in an oil-covered sea feet first. That is when my injuries (two broken legs) occurred," says Bill.

The ship had been broken in half and she sank within 45 seconds from impact. When Bill came up to the surface, after being thrown into the sea, he was just in time to see the stern going down.

The only sign of life on the horizon was one Carley float with a single oar. The sole occupant, one of the ship's stokers, called out to him. Bill swam up to the float, but couldn't pull himself in. That was when he first realised that his legs were broken. The two men managed to strap Bill's wrist to the rope that runs around the outside of the raft. There he stayed until rescue arrived.

"My lifejacket kept me afloat for the next seven hours. Although the sea was cold, it was bearable. Dusk was closing in, and with it my chances of being seen and rescued, would be nil. Then fate took a hand. I was picked up by HMS *Aylmer*, who had followed our drift from our last position."

"Never again a dawn will see

Those ships that day at Normandy."

Post script: Of the thirty or so souls who were on the bridge when the torpedo struck, Bill was the only survivor.

Packing food parcels

Judy Rogers

During World War II, many servicemen were sent food parcels from home. During the conflict, over 20 million standard food parcels were sent. These were always welcome, supplementing rations and renewing the connection with those who were left to carry on everyday life at home. Many parcels were prepared for the troops by women's groups, but sometimes loving families would send off individually customised food parcels, which could also include hand-knitted socks and hats, books and recreational materials.

Judy remembers that back then she packed such parcels for Norman, who was her husband at that time. She always baked him a fruitcake and shortbread, and included some cigarettes, no matter what else she managed to gather up for him. Sometimes goods were scarce because of rationing, and selections were limited. The whole parcel would be the size of a big plum pudding. "We tried to pack as much as possible into it," she says.

Her parcels would be sent by sea to Norman, who was stationed in Egypt and Italy, with the New Zealand Army Driving Corp. Parcels took a long time to reach their destination, so could only include foods that kept very well. Sometimes ships were lost at sea, and the cargo was never delivered.

Some of the information about food parcels comes from:

http://n-zealandandaustraliaww2.e-monsite.com/pages/new-zealand-during-world-war-2.html

Perils of the Merchant Navy

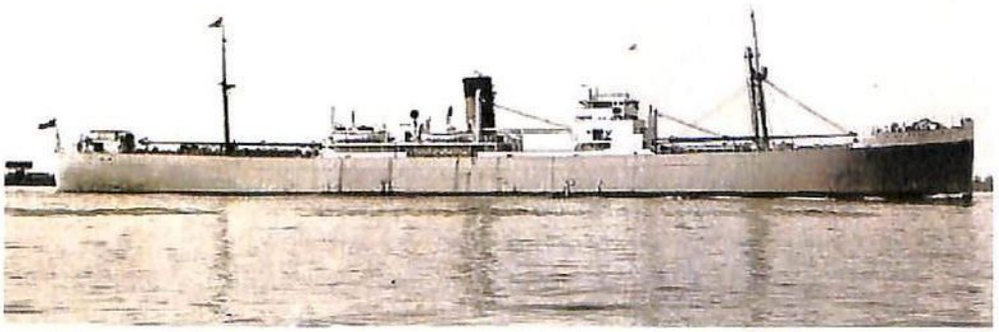
Amongst the Action with Richard James Blundell

In September 1939 King George VI gave the following speech:

> I would like to express to all Officers and Men and in The British Merchant Navy and The British Fishing Fleets my confidence in their unfailing determination to play their vital part in defence. To each one I would say: Yours is a task no less essential to my people's experience than that allotted to the Navy, Army and Air Force. Upon you the Nation depends for much of its foodstuffs and raw materials and for the transport of its troops overseas. You have a long and glorious history, and I am proud to bear the title "Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets". I know that you will carry out your duties with resolution and with fortitude, and that high chivalrous traditions of your calling are safe in your hands. God keep you and prosper you in your great task.

Jim worked for the County Council, Napier, and had hoped to join the Army. Dr J J Foley had given Jim a full physical medical examination checking him in as A1. Unfortunately, a boyhood accident had left him with impaired vision in his left eye and scuttled his chances of joining the forces.

So Jim did the next best thing and signed up for the Merchant Navy. On 11 May, 1943, at the Napier Wharf, he boarded the MV *Port Fairy*, a cargo ship belonging to the Port Line Shipping Company. Jim was quite elated when Mr O'Connell, his boss, gave the staff permission to farewell him at the wharf. Jim would now be getting closer to the action.



MV Port Fairy

http://www.redbubble.com/people/roynz/works/6449159-m-v-port-fairy-a-blast-from-the-past

Jim maintains that the heroic catch-phrase that men joined up for God, for King and country was all bull-s . .t; they joined up purely for the adventure.

The Master of the ship, Captain John Lewis from Wolverhampton, England, was thoroughly respected by the British officers and crew. He was very fair-minded and would listen to both sides of a story, should any issues arise. One order which crew members always obeyed was to wear life jackets when on deck.

The Merchant Navy ships were of great importance to the Allies, sailing through dangerous enemy waters, loading and unloading much-needed provisions from ports world-wide. The cargo would mainly consist of rations, radio parts, ammunition and drums of high-octane petrol for the Royal Air Force, to name a few.

On 9 July 1943, a convoy comprising the MV *Port Fairy*, HMS troopships *Duchess of York* and *California* with HMS escorts *Iroquois, Douglas* and *Moyla*, sailed for Freetown, Sierra Leone. Two days later, near the Bay of Biscay, there was a sustained attack by three German Focke-Wulf aircraft.

The bombing left both troopships blazing. Ropes from the MV *Port Fairy* were thrown overboard in the hope of rescuing some survivors. The damaged vessels were torpedoed by the escort ships in the hope that the blaze would discourage further attention from the U-boats.

Jim commented that the Luftwaffe pilots were masters of their trade. It was reported that more than 100 of the seamen were killed.

The MV *Port Fairy* was lucky to be left unscathed, but only for a further day, when it was damaged in a second attack. The HMS *Swale*, a frigate returning from Gibraltar, became the escort vessel as the MV *Port Fairy* made her way to Casablanca, but this was not to be smooth sailing. The two ships were attacked and the MV *Port Fairy* was hit on the port quarter by a 50kg bomb which breached the hull and disabled her steering. Jim, who was both the refrigeration engineer and fireman, was now really amongst the action. Ammunition in cargo spaces was jettisoned and compartments flooded. The crew set up a bucket chain to douse the fire.

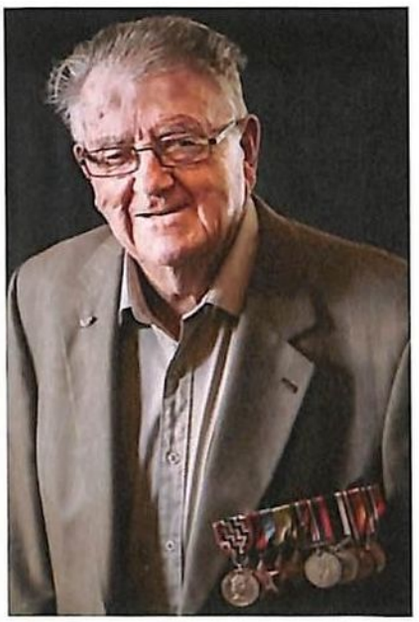
Many cabins had been destroyed and when it was safe for Jim to return to his cabin, another surprise awaited him. There he found a sailor on his bunk that had spotted the bottle of whisky Jim had bought for his dad. His words to Jim were "Come on Kiwi, open the bottle because we won't be here tomorrow!" Obviously they were still there "tomorrow" and Jim's dad missed out.

The MV *Port Fairy*, with only partial steering, was able to limp in to Casablanca, now under American control. It was first estimated the ship would be ready for sailing in three weeks but it was actually three months to the day.

One evening Jim and some of his mates, returning to base, missed the curfew, which according to Jim was ridiculously early – something like 9.30 or 10pm. This meant an appearance before the Officer-in-Charge and a reprimand. Jim thought it was all a bit of a joke until he was confronted by the officer whipping out a gun from his holster and slamming it on the desk, remarking "You beat this and you beat me."

The MV *Port Fairy* was still in port on Bastille Day. Unbeknown to all other crews, apart from those of the French and the United States navies, permission had been

given for the French to fire off a gun salute to mark the occasion. This caused a great deal of alarm as it was first thought the harbour was under attack.



At last MV *Port Fairy* was able to sail to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to load beef. Their stay in port was longer than anticipated as the ship had to undergo more repairs. Jim remembers this port very well. No curfews here. The night clubs and bars did not start "rocking" until 11pm. But it could also be dangerous. After a bit of jostling in the crowded room, a woman, making her way to Jim's table, tripped and fell down some stairs. The crowd did not take kindly to this and Jim, sensing trouble, slid down the drainpipe and ran as fast as he could back to his ship. He reckons Roger Bannister had nothing on him! (Roger Bannister was the first man to break the 4-minute mile.). Not the sort of action Jim was hoping for.

The vessel also returned to Napier from time-to-time. Jim's friend, Edgar Berry, a well-known Napier barber, became the happy recipient of some barber shop equipment. Naturally, when in the States, the crew had stocked up on nylon stockings, Max Factor and Helene Rubenstein make-up, as well as Ronson cigarette lighters.

Jim eventually left the Port Line, and in February 1945, signed up with the United Fruit Company. Their very modern fleet of ships was registered in Panama and traded mainly with the Central and South American countries. The ships were generally referred to as The Great White Fleet or more commonly as banana boats. The name of 'The Great White Fleet' refers to the boats all being painted white, while 'banana boats' refers to the lucrative trade in bananas.

Vessels from the United Fruit Company fleet were commissioned as supply ships. Jim was happy with the conditions on board and, although there was a lot of military action in the Pacific, Jim's vessel did not have any trouble. A huge American aircraft base, built on Tinian Island, part of the Mariana Group, housed approximately 40,000 personnel. The 5th and 7th Fleets of the USA Navy were regular visitors, so enormous amounts of rations had to be delivered.

After the war Jim returned to Napier and to his old job at the County Council.

When reminiscing, seventy-plus years later, Jim was still amazed at the efficiency of the postal service in those formidable years. Wherever he was, there was always a letter waiting for him.

Jim was quite willing to admit that at times he was afraid, but after a while became somewhat fatalistic. The question that haunted him the most, was would he ever see his mother again.

Recipes for Food Parcels

Arthur Hughes

Here, Arthur provides a few old recipes for treats that were most welcome additions to the food parcels shipped to our veterans posted overseas.

The first recipe was used to bake cakes which were long-keeping. He says that they would first be packed into individual tins, and then each tin sealed with solder for even better results.

Back then, milk needed to be boiled before it was used in this recipe. Today, our milk is well processed and it is no longer necessary to observe this step.

Xmas Custard Cake

500 gm flour	1 kg mixed fruit
250 gm butter	2 eggs
250 gm sugar	2 teaspoons baking soda
325 ml milk	Essence of any sort

Rub butter into flour, sugar and soda. Add mixed fruit.

Lightly beat egg, pour milk over the eggs. Add essence and mix well.

Pour into flour mixture. Mix well.

Bake 2 hours at 350^0F or 180^0C.

Kiwi Crisps for Soldiers' Parcels

115 gm butter	1 teaspoons baking powder
170 gm flour	2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk
50 gm sugar	1 cake of chocolate, in small pieces

Cream butter and sugar, add milk and chocolate. Lastly, add the flour and baking soda.
Roll into balls, place on cold, floured baking tray, flatten and mark with a fork.
Bake in moderate oven 10 to 15 minutes.

Royal NZ Navy Radar and a Right Royal Leave

Johnny Barham (RNZN 5275 AB - Radar)

I grew up with the sea at my door in Hardinge Road, Ahuriri, Napier. I spent many happy hours sailing in the Bay and, at 16, crewed on a yacht to Wellington. You could say I had salt in the brain! It was always going to be the navy for me.

In late 1941 aged 17, I enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Navy and trained as a radar operator. Of course, I enlisted to sail the seas and for adventure, but nearly three years were spent on shore before it happened. The first two years were at either Tamaki or Philomel Navy bases in Auckland, or on coastal NZ Radar Stations monitoring shipping traffic. Where was the adventure in that?

Going 'Troppo' in the Tropics

It was then a gruelling eleven months in 1943 with a land based NZ Navy Radar Unit of twelve, attached to an American Ack Ack Unit on various islands in the Solomon Islands area of the Pacific. At this time the radar was used to monitor aircraft activity. It was heavy, tiring and sometimes dangerous work clearing the jungle in order to erect portable tubular steel towers 60 feet high. These were used to give the antennae of the radar sets a clear range over the jungle and coconut groves. As each island was secured by the American Army, we moved in behind to places, such as Munda, Guadalcanal, Lombari, and Savo to name a few. Conditions were miserable there, with poor quarters, extreme heat, daily thunderstorms, lack of sleep and constant bombardment by clouds of mosquitoes, ants and other creepy crawlies. Concentrating on the radar screen was very distracting especially on night watch, with the high humidity and intensified jungle noises. The humidity and coral dust played havoc with the radar equipment.

I found it cooler to sleep outside at night, with my jungle hammock slung between the palm trees. The hammock was attached by zips to mosquito netting sides and a plastic roof. I'd often be woken by a tap, tap, tapping, to find land crabs trying to get in. They were huge, with very large pincers. Dysentery was rife. Also malaria struck down me and others, requiring a spell in the Island Mobile American Field Hospital.

We were operating during active bombing by the Japs, so there were plenty of 'Condition Red' sirens and frantic dives for the foxholes, sometimes at night. It was an amazing sight to see the sky lit by 22 searchlights, and if the planes were Japanese, the Ack Ack and PT boat guns would be blazing. Not conducive to a good night's sleep! We witnessed four PT boats hit on Lombardi, with some of their crew killed and wounded. I swam out to retrieve one of the boat's Stars and Stripes flag and kept it for years as a souvenir. One famous PT boat 109 was stationed on Lombari when we were there, with its crew and very popular Commander, John F. Kennedy. We all met him and I can say I have shaken the hand of an American President. To us then, though, he was just another good looking Yank.

The Yanks were good blokes. They kept us well supplied with cigarettes and their food wasn't too bad. It was hot cakes and maple syrup for breakfast and if you didn't like it, then you soon did, as that was all they served. Life on the Islands also had a lighter side, with the odd movie screened on the airstrip, although it was nigh on impossible to see the screen for all the cigarette smoke. Morale was certainly boosted when an occasional American Concert Party entertained. Of course we all appreciated one group of four women; they were given one hell of a reception. Lifelong friendships were forged on those islands between both us and the Americans.

I certainly got adventure here alright, just not the seafaring one I was longing for.

This poem by one of our Kiwi radar mates, Tom Mills, pretty much sums up life during our term in the Solomon Islands.....

TROPICAL MADNESS

Somewhere in the Pacific where the sun is like a curse
And each day is followed by another slightly worse
Where the coral dust blows thicker than the shifting desert sand
And we all dream and curse and pray, for a better land
Somewhere in the Southwest Pacific, where a woman is never seen
Where the sky is never cloudy and the grass is evergreen
Where the planes rattle overhead and rob man of his blessed sleep
And there isn't any whisky or beer, only the briny deep
Somewhere below the Equator, where the nights were made for love
Where the moon is like a searchlight, with the Southern Cross above
Where the silver stars twinkle, adding romance to the night
'Tis a shameless waste of beauty, when there's no one to hold tight
Somewhere in the Pacific, where the mail is always late
And a Christmas card in April is considered up to date
Where we seldom sign a payroll and never have a cent
But we never miss the money, 'cause we would never get it spent
Somewhere in the Southwest Pacific where the ants and lizards play
And a hundred fresh mosquitoes replace the ones you slay
So take me back to NZ the place I love so well
For this Godforsaken outpost is a substitute for HELL!

☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼

Kamikaze in the Pacific

At last in November 1944, I had my wish of finally going to sea, as a radar operator on the heavy cruiser RNZNS *Gambia*. The *Gambia*, with a crew of 670, became part of the British Pacific Fleet in March 1945 (totalling over 100 ships of all classes). *Gambia* was involved in all major actions with the Fleet in the Pacific and, it's said, fired the last shot of the war.

Gambia was New Zealand's only ship present at the signing of the Peace Treaty by the Japanese in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. I was proud to have been part of these events.

Experiencing concentrated Kamikaze air attacks and the possibility of submarine torpedoes, life was pretty dangerous at this time in the push to secure the Pacific against the Japanese. Our radar observation post (called 'The Director') was a small hub perched up above the bridge about 80ft from the deck. The only way to and from it was via a ladder.

It was very cramped with six of us on watch, plus the radar and plotting gear. When the forward guns were blazing, the noise was deafening even with earplugs, and the vibration was such, we fully expected equipment, us and housing to blow apart. It's no wonder so many of us now have hearing problems.

I can't say I felt great fear; I know some did. I guess being young and bullet-proof, or something akin to that, kept us going. But I wasn't the only one bloody relieved after that sort of watch. It was a bit close for comfort, when I witnessed one of the Fleet's aircraft carriers *Indefatigable* get hit by a Jap suicide plane, with 14 killed and several wounded.

A Right Royal Leave

You can imagine how elated we felt, when in late May 1945, *Gambia* sailed to Sydney for repairs and replenishments and for us six mates, four days long awaited leave; my first break since joining the ship.

Ray Church, one of the six said, "We don't want to hang about Sydney for four days, let's go somewhere else". He suggested and we all agreed to put names in a hat and go to the place drawn out first. I was expecting somewhere like Canberra, the Gold Coast or Newcastle, but Bathurst came out of the hat. So Bathurst it was. Where the hell is Bathurst? We were soon to find out.

So, off six young excited sailors went, dressed in our No 1's, determined to make the most of four days on land away from the confines of ship life, navy rules and the uncertainty of war in the Pacific. After stopping off at a pub for a much overdue pint or two, we were in high spirits as we boarded the train.

It was a troop steam train taking Australian soldiers back to camp. A group of half-tanked Kiwi sailors and Aussie soldiers are not a great combination at the best of times, so naturally a bit of 'borax' (jeering) was thrown about. With one thing and another and a bit of aggro on both sides, this resulted in a couple of 'stoushes' (skirmishes) on the way. A good start.

We arrived in Bathurst around midnight with nowhere to hang our hat. After eventually locating a taxi driver, we enquired if he knew somewhere for us to stay. The driver asked "Where have you boys come from?" "New Zealand", we replied, and one of the guys added, "We're on survivors' leave from the Pacific". (Theoretically, survivors leave was when your ship sunk and you were rescued). A slight exaggeration but it had a surprising response. "Hop in boys, I'll get you a bed alright", the driver said and took us to the best hotel in Bathurst. Great, no hammocks here! He must have had some influence and good connections as news of our visit quickly spread. Before long we were being hosted here and there and 'shouted' drinks around town. We didn't pay a penny.

Bathurst then was about the size of Dannevirke, and before the building of the now-renowned international motor racing circuit.

I had toothache and made a forced visit to the dentist, who said I needed a filling and he could do the job there and then. When asked the cost, he insisted I be treated free of charge. Jack and Barney, keen golfers, were guests of the Bathurst Golf Club. Deacon was a guest of the Tennis Club. We were taken on a visit to the Edgell's Canning Factory and each of us was interviewed at length by the 'The Western Times' Newspaper. We were reported as being members of *'a famous New Zealand cruiser'*. We obviously made a good impression for the newspaper's detailed write-up titled, *'NZ SEAMEN ON VISIT TO BATHURST'*, concluded by saying..... *'What a very fine lot of fellows they are. The closest approach of anyone to an Australian is the New Zealander with whom we have so much in common".....*

Of course we didn't let on about the fracas on the train!

The town's generosity and hospitality was quite over-whelming. We didn't pay for a bloody thing and were treated like royalty for four days.

I've kept in touch with those five sailors over the years, all a great bunch of blokes. None of us will forget our four days on 'survivor leave' in Bathurst; Free board, free food and booze. What more could a sailor want?

And the women? Well, we could have married any girl in Bathurst during those four days!

Sergeant Gregory George Chapman

15618, 23 Platoon, F Company
Excerpts from his 1916 Diary
Courtesy of Roger Bull

We left Trentham Military Camp on 25th July 1916 for embarkation on the troop ship *Waitemata No 59*, a distance of 20 miles, marching to the wharf in Wellington. We have now been at sea for several weeks and today another ship the *Wimaroa No 60* is abreast of us and our bagpipe players came to light and played for quite a long time. A band of pipes and drums sound lovely on the water. We are a long way from New Zealand now; I would say about six thousand miles and looking forward to arriving in Durban.

We arrived off Durban at three o'clock. The tug *Sir David Hunter* came out and the pilot came aboard. It was not long before we were going in the pier heads, then we were soon near the wharf and there were a lot of people to welcome us, oranges flying in all directions as they had sacks of them to throw to us. What a reception we got. Before we reached the wharf I had caught a dozen oranges and a pack of cigarettes. We did get a lively time when we got alongside, what with oranges and cigarettes and the greetings, a reception that will never be equaled.

We were surprised to hear that we were to get leave right away. I was one of the lucky ones, as soon as I got on the wharf I had an invitation to go to tea. They had a car with them and three of us got in; Sergt. Randall, L/Cpl. Primrose and myself, with three lovely ladies, called Johnstone. They took us to their home, a magnificent building with properly laid out gardens and walks. We were invited inside where we talked over what New Zealand was like and what was going on there. We had a lovely dinner served to us where it seemed strange to have black servants waiting on us.

The next day we went on a route march to the Town hall and then to a park where the Mayor of the town gave a very good speech. After the Maori Company had given a number of hakas, we were dismissed. The people over here cannot understand our natives at all and that they are treated as equals. I had several long conversations and they seemed very interested.

There is one thing I must mention, and pleased to do so, that the people of Durban are the most sociable I have ever met in my travels, and cannot do enough for visitors. I am more than taken up with this beautiful city, the lovely buildings and the people. Every soldier you meet is of the same opinion. It does not matter where we go on land; it would be impossible for us to be better treated than we have by the people of Durban. I think they should re-name the town Sociable Durban. I will never forget my stay here as long as I live.

We are now leaving for Cape Town to pick up a lot more transport and our escort home. We finally arrived in Cape Town and had to wait for a while before being allowed to dock. There are no people on the wharfs, just a few police and some South African soldiers.

We had been there for two days when we were to go on a picnic in the tram cars to Camp Bay and go by the famous mountain ride. The mountain (with the clouds having shifted from the summit) and the peak called the Lions Head, also look lovely. A great

formation and the different colours of rock add to the appearance of the shape. The Devil's Point is very clear too, and the Twelve Apostles very plainly seen. After a week in Cape Town we set sail, sailing down the West Coast of Africa.

One afternoon, ten of the best rifle shots out of each platoon were picked out for a rifle brigade for watch and guard duty of the ship, in case we were attacked by submarines. There are two hundred of us, one hundred to be on each side of the ship. We are going through a course of instructions during the week and will be allotted stations to take up when on duty.

We are now about a week off the danger zone; another alarm today for practice, riflemen only. It is very hot and will get hotter. We are getting ready for Monday, as they reckon we will cross the line then, so there will be some ducking and we will make some fun of it.

The day has finally arrived to cross the Equator and it is very hot and fine for the dipping. Everybody is ready, Father Neptune and Lady Neptune are on the scene and all the Police, about twenty, are dressed and painted up to take part. The bath is filled to about four feet of water. Certain individuals are charged with various charges, those who have not crossed the line before. They sit on a seat with their backs to the bath, and are lathered with the paste and given a shave with a big wooden razor especially made for the purpose. A few dabs of the jam mixture and before he knows it, he is in the bath and six men give him a great ducking. It is fun to hear the different charges read out. Some are very funny. Officers and all go in, and I was in my uniform when I was caught and went through. There will be fun getting clean again, as a lot of the paste is flour and all. Talk about a mess, but is the best afternoon's fun I have ever had. Everyone took the ducking in good part.

We arrived in Port on Tuesday 3rd October 1916 without mishap, and are now off to the city of Plymouth. We arrive at Salisbury Station just before dark and got to our destination later; the name of the camp is Sling Camp. There is great fun here I can tell you. The best here is looking at the aeroplanes. There are dozens of them flying everywhere. It is great to see them coming down like a dart.

Hoping that we will be off soon from here to our next assignment.

Service in British South Africa Police Bush War

(AKA Second Chimurenga)

Robert Gillett
Field Reserve 22833
Inspector 9926

After returning to South Africa from New Zealand with my wife and family, I joined the British South Africa Police (BSAP) as a Police Reserve on 9 December 1975. I served as a reserve until 25 February 1977, having been appointed to the BSAP Pioneers Branch from the beginning of February 1977, until I retired on 29 May 1981, with the Commissioned Rank of Inspector, under the Lancaster House Agreement.

Police Reserve service consisted of attending lectures on police duties and serving in the Operation Area where the Bush War was in full swing; doing road blocks and general patrols around Salisbury while holding down fulltime employment. As a Reservist I had full powers of arrest, etc., and could be called up for duty at any time.

MTOKO TRIBAL TRUST LAND

My first call up was for 18 days in Mtoko, where there was a base camp for air force and army etc. Mtoko was a very hot area with contacts going on any hour of the day and night.

We were doing escort duty, as nobody could leave the gates without us escorting them in a mine-proofed Hyena (V- shaped underneath to deflect blasts, and tires which had water added to cool any mine blast).

SAP Landmine-Protected Hyena on the right of the picture

A Hyena team consisted of the driver and four reservists, armed with FN rifles (Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre SA of Herstal Belgium .308 Self Loading Rifle) and 100 rounds of ammo each. One hundred rounds don't last long in a heavy-fire fight.

Our first escort was taking a white patrol officer (P/O) and black sergeant around the very active tribal trust area, serving arrest warrants and other police duties. Our young P/O was later KIA (killed in action) when the police camp he was stationed at was attacked. This was the loss of a very fine young man.

We often escorted the army into contacts with the Communist terrorists (CTs, also known as 'Charlie Tangos'), before returning to base camp on our own through the operation area. Quite scary! The CTs were local tribesmen who had left to train in Russia and China before coming home to be Freedom Fighters against the Smith Government. They were operating in our patrol area, which they knew much better than we did. When we asked the whereabouts of suspects, the locals would point and say, "Duzzi Lapa" (over there) and the higher they pointed the further away it was.

On one occasion, just on nightfall, our Hyena got stuck in some loose sand. We had to leave it behind, but returned the next morning to recover it, after checking for booby-traps and ambush.

Another time, when we were picking up suspects, we came across an African store that had been booby-trapped by the army as it was supplying the CTs with goods. When they entered the store at night, the trap blew up. Result, one CT with broken jaw. Then a rocket was fired into it and it was levelled to one metre above ground. All the goods were hanging on the trees.

CMED

I remember another situation that nearly turned bad. This was when another escort went way out into the bush. We were going to CMED (the central mechanical engineering department) in an army camp called Fort Desolation. We were to tow a truck back to base. When we arrived at the army base, the CMED mechanic had to work on some of trucks etc. One of them had a faulty carburettor gasket with no gasket paper. I had to make a new gasket out of cardboard from the back of a writing pad, and with plenty of 'goo' on the gasket we managed to get it going.

On the way to the army camp the driver showed me where an African bus had been ambushed at one end of a wooden bridge, with a mine laid either side in the road. This was one of the enemy's favourite methods of booby-trap for the reaction "sticks" (teams of ten men) coming to the scene. The wooden bridges only had beams and planks but no up-stands on either side. These bridges were only wide enough for a bus to go over.

After looking into the hole, from which the mine had already been recovered, we drove over the hole and to the base. We were late and it was rapidly getting dark. We were towing one of the trucks back and managed to get both wheels of one side of the towed vehicle over the edge of the wooden planks; they were stuck there. By then it was pitch dark and we could hear a big beer drink going on in the native kraal close to us. The CTs were most likely there enjoying plenty of free native-brewed beer, too drunk to come and attack us.

We managed to get the truck free after a few hours. When we finally arrived at our base camp, mess was closed so no food!

The CMED mechanic told me the next morning that the Pookie (Rhodesian-made mine sweeper) picked up a new mine out of the hole we had driven over, so it was laid in the dark after we had passed through.

We were later called to bring in the body of the chief of the area, who had been murdered by the CTs. His family had been removed to the base camp, and when we arrived there his brother started to cry, and women to wail. When he cried as was expected of him, the tears were shooting from his eyes at least two to three metres, like water from a hose pipe. This was something none of us had ever seen before, but it seemed to be expected from him.

Every Wednesday was 5 cent night for any drink in the air force bar, but we had to limit our drinks. We could be called out to escort somebody at any time, so had to keep our wits about us.

Of course, it wasn't only the Field Reserve needing to retain a state of relative sobriety. Flying at night and getting into contact is not for the faint hearted. One night they even had to carry the helicopter gunner and strap him behind his machine gun.

The bush war was conducted to maintain law and order, and everything had to be by the Law book. War can be very basic and not pleasant, but some of the things I saw that black people did to their own people still haunts me today. We are all savages under that thin layer of skin and it does not take much to expose it.

LUNDI
During this 18 day call up we were patrolling between the convoys from Beit Bridge to Fort Victoria. The convoys usually travelled at the speed of 120 kph and some of the cars being escorted complained they had trouble keeping up.

We were patrolling between the convoys from 0600 hrs to 1800 hrs at 35 kph. We called it the "Bait Run" as we were a sitting target if the CT decided to have a go at us. Thankfully they did not take us on, but had done so to some others before and after us.

Two petrol tankers with trailers from South Africa were ambushed and burnt on the main road near our camp one night. I did not attend as I was on guard duty by the radio and Bren Gun, and only saw them the next day. They were full of bullet holes from AK 47 rifles. The tar road was burnt out for approximately 100 metres.

We were staying at a motel where the owners had left as it was too hot an area to stay in. There were two 'sticks' (ten men) and two Utes being used, travelling in opposite directions. Times varied so not to set a pattern of being in the same place at the same time. One man from each 'stick' stayed behind to man the radio by the Bren Gun, and another to heat the hot water so that we could bathe each day, as it was low veldt area with very hot weather up to 40-50 deg. There was an old African man who cooked our meals and two women who washed our clothes, paid by us and re-employed by the next 'sticks' when our duty was over.

Even here at rest, it was a case of being alert because if you switched off, you would not go home to your family. No doubt, this was the most eventful period of my life, and a time that I will never forget.

The Black Coat in the Closet

Marjorie Katherine Moore's story
820748 – NZWAAC 3rd DIV - RED CROSS NURSE WW2

A plain black coat with an astrakhan collar hangs in Marjorie's closet. Of special significance for her are the six medals pinned to the left lapel. Every year without fail, on ANZAC Day, with the black coat donned, medals proudly displayed and poppy pinned, Marjorie joins the now dwindling number of returned servicemen and women at the local ANZAC service. This special day evokes many memories of the faces and places, the highs and lows of her war service as a Red Cross nurse with the NZ Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (NZWAAC).

Born in 1919 and now aged 96, Marjorie believes she is the oldest and possibly the only surviving NZ Red Cross Army nurse who served overseas. Growing up in the small rural South Island community of Ruapuna, 25 miles from Ashburton, she enjoyed an idyllic, although fairly sheltered childhood, amongst a tight-knit farming community.

Encouraged by her patriotic aunt, a registered nurse, and egged on by her best friend Gwen, who had already volunteered as a Red Cross army auxiliary nurse, Marjorie also signed up. She was quite unaware of what she was letting herself in for.

A short period of basic training followed at Burwood Military Hospital, Christchurch.

The 29th of January, 1943, is a day forever etched in her memory. It was the day she signed up to serve overseas. It was also the day of her father's sudden death, for which Marjorie required special dispensation from the army to attend the funeral. Within days, her mother had become a widow and bade farewell to a daughter who was soon to embark overseas to an unknown destination and an uncertain future.

Marjorie's war adventure began with the long journey by train and ferry from Ashburton to Wellington, then by train to a base in Auckland.

After filling in numerous forms, she was supplied with a nurse's white uniform, a white organza veil and a large red cape. From there she was put to work at the Army's Raventhorpe Convalescent Hospital.

Having little time to regret her decision to enlist, or to fret about leaving a bereaved family, Marjorie was soon caught up in the activity and excitement. Along with her fellow WAACs, her thoughts were given over to an impending sea voyage and putting

nursing skills into practice to do their 'bit' for the war effort overseas, as part of 3rd Division, 1 Kiwi Coy.

As they waved Auckland farewell on the deck of a troop ship, the nurses had no idea of its destination, due to security precautions. Rumours abounded it would be somewhere in the Pacific, where NZ forces were involved in the struggle to control the Japanese advance. After a few days finding their sea legs, the nurses were put to work for the rest of the voyage, performing first aid medical duties and attending to sick army personnel.

The destination was finally confirmed as New Caledonia. Where that was in the Pacific, Marjorie did not have a clue. One thing was certain; it would be a far cry from the green pastures of Ruapuna.

Shortly before arriving in Noumea, Marjorie was standing on deck when a torpedo was spotted heading for the ship. To this day, she doesn't know how they managed to avoid being hit. What did hit home, though, was the realisation she was now in a war zone.

Ashore at Noumea, the nursing contingent then travelled 200 km north by army truck over a tortuous, dusty, potholed route. They arrived hot, tired but relieved at their destination of 2 Convalescent Depot at Kalavere. Here they treated the troops convalescing from skin infections/diseases, battle wounds, intestinal problems and a variety of tropical diseases contracted whilst fighting in the pacific, such as, malaria, jungle rot, dengue fever. Patients were graded according to their disability.

The climate of New Caledonia was sub-tropical. High temperatures were reached in summer but, for the most part, humidity was low. Nights were comparatively cool, facilitating sleep. These conditions were ideal for the military hospitals and medical stations on the Island. There was no malaria as the Anopheles mosquito was not present on the island, unlike other areas in the Pacific. Other mosquitoes, however, were pests (especially during the rainy season from January to April) and interfered with work and morale.

In a letter Marjorie wrote to her mother, she describes the hospital: *"The wards comprise of five open tents with concrete floors, each holding an average of 20 patients. Our work is somewhat similar to Raventhorpe, though there isn't the cleaning! The mess and administration blocks are tents, although the Y.M.C.A (recreation area) and officer's quarters are bures (native buildings with thatched roofs and plaited grass around the sides). The area is surrounded by Niaouli trees, somewhat like the appearance of blue gums at home. The Niaouli, we are told, have*

a tendency to ward off mosquitoes, but they tell us all manner of things, to be believed or not!.....There's no need to send cakes or biscuits as we get plenty, although shortbread will go down well, BUT, all I want is for you to keep your letters coming."

At the hospital, many from the local population were treated for a variety of mainly tropical diseases. As most lived in primitive conditions, the Red Cross parcels distributed amongst them certainly helped make their lives more bearable.

The nurses slept dormitory-style, under mosquito netting on camp beds, in tents initially, then in tropical huts. Free time was spent doing personal washing, ironing (no joke in the heat), writing letters and swimming. Bathing was in the river, except Monday which was hot-shower day. This was a mobile shower set up beside the river. A tarpaulin was placed around it and 16 at a time, the WAACs enjoyed the luxury of hot water. 'Ready?' said the man at the pump. 'Here it comes!' One minute to get wet, one minute to soap and one minute to rinse!

The motto for the staff was 'The patient comes first' and 'Work hard and play hard'. Evening entertainment was part of the 'get fit' campaign and all members of the staff were expected to take part in all activities. These took various forms – pictures, concerts, debating contests, community singing and dances. And how those girls danced! They danced on concrete slabs with the niaouli trees overhead, lighted with coloured hurricane lamps; they danced hundreds of miles with men who could dance, couldn't dance, and those who hadn't seen a white woman for 12 months.

While stationed in Kalavere, Marjorie met her future husband, a handsome New Zealand Army Staff Sergeant, Ernest Watson. Ernest contracted malaria and was eventually invalided home to New Zealand. They kept in touch through their separation by letters, which during the war years were subject to strict censorship. These letters are still in Marjorie's possession today.

Marjorie returned to New Zealand in August 1944. There she spent a short time on leave, before being recruited with other army auxiliary nurses bound for Italy. After a lengthy sea journey, they arrived at their destination of Senigallia, on the Adriatic Coast of Italy.

They were assigned to No. 1 NZ General Hospital, which had become the forward area for the reception of casualties before they were shipped off elsewhere. The hospital was on the beach and had been a health resort for children and, latterly, a German military hospital. On the pale blue walls of one ward, were bright paintings of Pinocchio, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and other cartoon characters. The patients enjoyed the rejuvenating atmosphere these created.

In Senigallia, Marjorie experienced some hostility from the locals and in one incident, when out walking, stones were thrown and abuse hurled. They may have been hurled by Fascist supporters or just people fed-up with having another foreign army take over their town.

When the war ended in 1945, however, Marjorie's adventure was far from finished, as she and other medical colleagues stayed on to help with the treatment and evacuation of the sick and wounded. This task finally completed, she sailed back to New Zealand on the HMS *Orion* from Ancona, via Bombay in India.

During her time in Senigallia, Marjorie and her good friends from 'home' went on leave to Rome, which had been spared the damage inflicted elsewhere. This was unlike London, where Marjorie also visited. Damage to buildings there was quite horrific, and they were sad to see the long lines of people queueing for food.

With their adventures over, Marjorie and Ernest settled down to family life in Timaru, war memories unspoken. But, every ANZAC Day, they donned medals and joined fellow ex-servicemen and women to pay tribute to those who did not return. Marjorie's medals include the Italy Star, Pacific Star and Red Cross medal.

The black coat with the astrakhan collar may not survive in the future, but Marjorie's six medals and their special significance will be treasured for generations to come.

The End of the Road

Ian John (Scotty) Burton
806467 Pvt NZ Army Infantry – J FORCE 1947-48

In 1947 I was living in Clive with my parents and working around the area as a farmhand. By this time, most of the NZ fighting force had returned home anxious to settle down to normal life and steady employment. I, on the other hand, at 20, was eager for change. When I heard the NZ Army were seeking personnel to assist in peacekeeping and rebuilding in Japan as part of The British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), I jumped at the opportunity to learn new skills and of course find adventure in a foreign land.

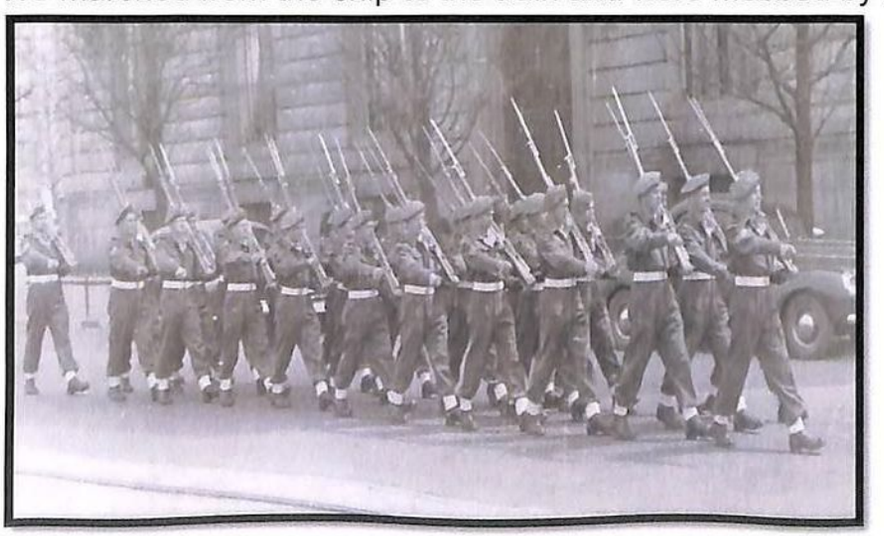
I signed up at the Drill Hall, Napier, on 19 March 1947, was duly accepted and assigned to the Infantry.

I vividly recall the long, slow, hot, overnight steam train journey from Napier to Palmerston North, and then up through the central North Island to Auckland, and finally the army camp in Papakura. It was suffocating on the train due to all the coal and cigarette smoke. We arrived early in the morning, smelly and dishevelled. On arrival we were given a large hessian sack and our first task was to stuff it full of straw for sleeping on. These were called palliasses.

I was posted to the 3rd Infantry Battalion C Coy. Over the next three months we were up at the crack of dawn. The day was taken up with parade and rifle drills, gear and weapon checks; also route marches of up to four hours duration.

We left Auckland in June 1947 on the Troop Ship MV *Duntroon*. We were the third NZ J-Force deployment to Japan and the last to return to NZ. On board also were women - nurses, shorthand typists, welfare staff etc. We arrived in Japan at the Port of Kure. Although J-Force and other countries' forces had been in Japan since 1945, there was still a staggering number of sunken ships in the harbour.

We marched from the ship to the train and were mobbed by black-marketers trying to buy anything and everything. It was certainly a culture shock; So many desperate people. More shock was to come travelling through Hiroshima, where they were still clearing up. There were whole families begging, people with lost limbs, others disfigured.



People were still living in patched-up shacks and lean-tos built out of rubble. I felt a deep sympathy for them.

Our destination was Camp Canterbury in Yamaguchi, where J-Force was responsible for the largely rural Yamaguchi Prefecture. Our duties involved guard duty, patrolling for weapon caches and 'bull ring' (drill and other training). The weather was extremely hot when we arrived, but a few months later it was snowing and freezing cold. Over the next year, with all the drill training in the 'bull ring' and detail to uniform and weapons, we looked very smart when marching, patrolling, or on parade. This always drew a large crowd of onlookers. I wonder, what were they thinking?

We had an easier life there than the earlier conscripted soldiers, with better living conditions (real beds, no palliasses!) and better food. We also had more freedom and were able to see a bit of Japan. Non-fraternising rules had been relaxed, resulting in friendships with the locals. As they got to know us, I think they realised we weren't the monsters we had been portrayed, but ordinary people doing our best to help them.

Although Yamaguchi was largely away from the industrial targets that had been strategically bombed, most of the area's inhabitants were living in a state of subsistence. There was little infrastructure, a lack of food and staple goods, and few jobs. Health standards were low and sanitation poor (human waste was used as fertiliser).

The Camp hired many of the local people giving them a source of employment; women to maintain the barracks and the men for outside chores.

We did experience some hostility, mainly from the older generation. The younger ones generally were eager to mix and we were occasionally invited to their homes. Their houses had rice paper doors and windows. I felt like a bull in a china shop and I worried I might stumble through one. My impression of the Japanese I knew was of a mainly friendly, decent, hard-working people who had been dragged down by defeat.

Entertainment was usually in the camp canteens where we played cards, smoked and drank the local beer or watched a movie. When hot, we swam in the local river and often games of cricket or rugby were organised amongst the units. Sometimes we went to the dance halls in town.

The rate of monetary exchange was so low that most used it to make money on the black market. Sugar, soap and cigarettes, to name a few, were all in great demand. At the railway station where there were swarms waiting to buy goods, a few of our guys would offer up a tin of 50 cigarettes, name a price, take the money, hand over the tin and scarper. It was a cruel trick as the tin would be empty! Soap was another item in demand. Letters home requested supplies, and quantities of soap soon appeared in parcels for 'needy' soldiers who promptly sold it on at grossly inflated prices.

For a period of a month we provided a guard battalion to Tokyo. This was based at Ebisu Barracks and we took part in ceremonial guard duty at the Imperial Palace and the British Embassy.

The undamaged Palace was quite unpretentious and not grand by Western standards. Not that we could see much, as the buildings and grounds were hidden behind a wall, surrounded by a moat.

It was exciting being in such a huge city as Tokyo. Bomb damage was still evident, but Tokyo was starting to recover, with new buildings, parks and gardens scattered through the area. We visited the hundreds of Ginza stalls and shops where (so they say) you could buy everything from a pin to an elephant. They were open 24 hours daily and always teeming with people. There were also clubs run by the military where we spent a good deal of time being entertained.

In late July 1948, it was the end of the road for NZ J-Force. We were the last to leave. On board the *Duntroon* on our way home, we were given a souvenir edition newsletter titled 'Home Stretch'. In it was a message titled ……..'*The End of the Road*'…….

"It's been a long road we've travelled together; by no means an easy one. Each of us is richer in experience as a result of our stay. We've made many friends in Jayforce and collected a wealth of memories to look back upon in the years ahead……The Japanese have fought a war and lost……They have a tremendous job now to reconstruct their economy, rebuild their world, revolutionise their thoughts, enter a new way of life. There is no point in falsely praising or criticising……Our comments, individually of little consequence, collectively of great importance, will decide whether or not national hatreds will continue as in the past, or whether hate can be buried and honesty and goodwill take its place. To spread falsehoods about Japan would be to undo the work we have been trying to do in the past two and a half years"……..

Those 18 months in the NZ Army J-Force certainly matured me and the experiences in Japan taught me valuable life skills. I made many wonderful friends. It also gave me the opportunity as a returned serviceman to gain a carpentry apprenticeship.

It was the end of the road for me in the army, but just the beginning of the unknown journey ahead.

The Malayan Emergency of the 1950's

Peter Gibsone

I was in the 1st Battalion NZ Infantry. My rank was 2nd Lieutenant when I was asked if I would go to Malaya by my Commanding Officer. In 1957, the battalion set sail on the HMNZA *Captain Cook,* although I flew over a little later.

Chinese Communist Terrorists invaded Malaya via Thailand, en route to Singapore. The Special Air Service (SAS) were sent to stop this, which they did to a large degree. Then troops from New Zealand (Infantry), Australian (Infantry) and England (Armoured vehicles) relieved the SAS. It was the first time the New Zealand Army was actively involved in jungle warfare.

Apart from the enemy, there were other problems, e.g. malaria, snakes, poisonous spiders, leeches and festering body wounds, (nothing heals in the tropics). Large leeches can kill you in a short time. There were tigers and one of our men was taken by one. Our man survived after shots were fired and the tiger took off. Your clothes would rot off you after ten or so days.

Fresh supplies (food, etc.) would be airdropped in, including rum replenishment.

Weapons that we carried were FN rifles, Bren guns, Stirling sub-machine Carbines. Apart from our personal firearms, we carried individually: a machete, 40lb backpack, water bottle, etc. I carried an extra water bottle of rum to give the boys a tot at stand-down.

The 1NZIR (1st NZ Infantry Regiment) delivered the following Communist Terrorists eliminations: 12 killed, 5 captured and 14 surrenders.

The Emergency was declared over by the end of 1959. It was the only warfare of its type (jungle) that we totally won, and it did not resurface.

When I returned to New Zealand I was fully involved in training army personnel in the art of jungle warfare.

Would I do it again? Yes I would.

Two's Company, Three's a Crowd

Angela Harford

I was three months old when Dad went to war in 1939. I don't remember much, but I do remember that when I was four years old, Dad came back home for his first and only leave.

I was in hospital with Scarlet Fever and this required, in those days, being in isolation. I could only look through a window when Mum and Dad visited.

I remember how 'poorly' I felt with this fever and a whitlow (an infection of the tip of my finger).

When I put my hand on the glass to touch Mum's hand, I just knew this man was my father, as he put his hand on the window too.

Two years later, when the war was over, Dad returned home to us. I said to Mum, ". . . Is that man going to sleep in OUR bed? . . . "

War Bride in Bomber Command

Joy Thornton née Joy Pilkington
Women's Auxiliary Air Force

Sunday, 23 September 1939, in St Helen's, Lancashire, was a lovely summer morning spoiled by the announcement, "We are at war with Germany". Although this was anticipated, we were stunned. The first air raid siren came as Gran was serving the Sunday roast. She was most annoyed. As the raids intensified, more time was spent in our air raid shelter. Our siren suits, used for extra warmth, always lay at the foot of the beds, ready for us to jump into.

As expected, our family became involved in doing their bit. Father joined "Dad's Army", mother drove an ambulance, Joan joined the A.T.S. (Air Traffic Service) and George became a volunteer firefighter before joining the Navy. My younger sister, Marie, and I were rostered on fire-watching duties from 9 pm to midnight. Whenever the siren sounded we patrolled the street to watch for incendiary bombs.

One night, whilst Marie and I were watching a film in St Helen's, the air raid siren sounded, and that was the end of the evening's entertainment. As the electrical buses were out of order, we had to walk home. Things got a bit noisy and we started to run as flares were dropping. A Government Department officer told us to "get under cover" (silly little b.....s).

At last I turned 17 ½ and my WAAF acceptance came through. My first two weeks were spent in Gloucester getting kitted out and undergoing tests. As a shorthand typist I was posted to Headquarters Bomber Command, at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, to work in Operations. The Headquarters, not too far from London, was well camouflaged. We had to walk through the surrounding beech woods, and at the entrance of the tunnel we had to identify ourselves to the RAF policeman on duty, before descending approximately 60 feet underground. Some of us did shift work, and were not too keen on walking to our billets through the woods at 2 am.

'The Hole', as our work area was referred to, consisted of a very large operations room and a maze of passages and offices. All the planning for raids over Germany was prepared there, and we had to deal with files marked "Top Secret". I still have a vivid memory of the blackened sky filled with hundreds of Lancaster bombers on their way to Germany. You became very aware of the losses, but needed to see it all as a set of figures. It was imperative you separated yourself from emotional involvement.

When Sir Arthur Harris, the Colonel-in-Chief, came down each morning we kept out of the way. It was here I met my first two New Zealanders, Dennis Barnett (later to become Air Chief Marshall) and Sam Elworthy (who later became Marshall of the Royal Air Force).

We were excited when we learnt that King George and Queen Elizabeth would be visiting. We received our instructions on how to address the royal couple. Most of us got it wrong, but the Queen did not seem to mind. Although we had air-conditioning, the King looked uncomfortably warm. It was after their visit that the rules changed and we were given a couple of weeks' work above ground every so often.

Another visitor was James Stewart, the film actor, and needless to say we all hung around to see the dashing United States Air Force Colonel.

Joy is on the right of the front row.

We did have dances and concerts at the Bomber Command Station, situated above ground, and were delighted when Glen Miller's orchestra played on a visit to Britain. When off duty, we would congregate at the nearby farm of Mrs Lord to make soft toys for the RAF Benevolent Fund. An old barn on the property was where we gathered for Sunday services conducted by the RAF Chaplain. At Christmas we would decorate the barn with holly, and the choir sat up in the loft.

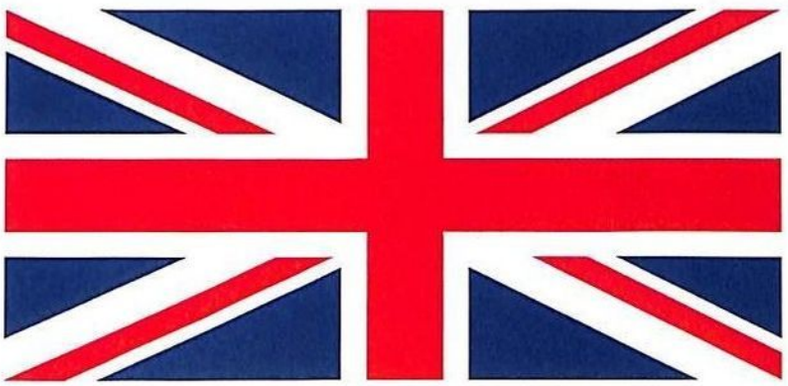
Returning to base from leave, I saw a poor boy limping along the platform. We happened to be in the same compartment and the "poor boy" offered to stow my suitcase for me. His name was Sam Thornton, from Tolaga Bay, New Zealand, serving in the RAF. His plane had crashed in Italy. We chatted, and the four-hour journey went by so quickly. He offered to buy me lunch, but I'd like to let it be known I declined and I bought my own. However, I did give him my postal address and when he was next in London we arranged to meet. We were having coffee at the Forces Club when in walked three New Zealanders whom Sam had not seen since he left home. Sadly this was the last time he saw them. All three were killed.

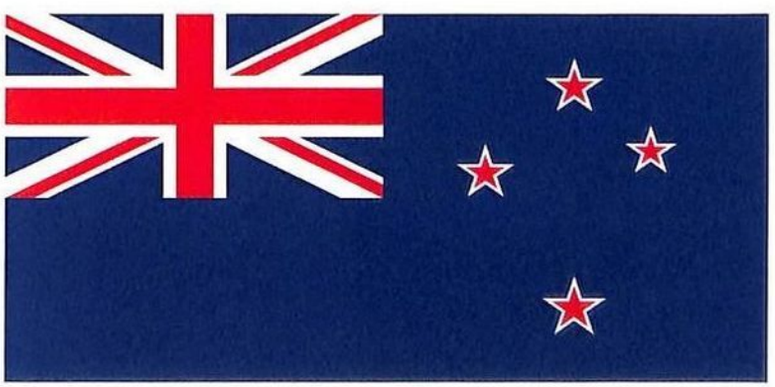
From then on we corresponded fairly regularly – like every day! Our wedding was very much a war-time affair. Happily my parents and sister were there. After a week's leave, I returned to London and Sam to Lossiemouth, Scotland.

About six weeks later, Sam made a brief visit to London and through some air force mates, hitched a plane ride to get back to base in Scotland. The plane never made its destination, though. It crashed en route, and Sam was the only survivor from the 7-man crew. After a lengthy convalescence in hospital, he was stationed at Deal on the South Coast of England to work on Oboe Control, a radio-based system for blind-bombing of aerial targets. The flying bomb era had started and the Germans were lobbing shells across the Channel.

By this time, I had left the Air Force and was at home awaiting our first child. This was the first time I can recall feeling really afraid of the war. Sam was given leave when our daughter arrived.

We planned to make our home in New Zealand. Sam returned first on the RMS (Royal Mail Ship) *Andes,* and I followed on a troop ship with other war brides. It was hard leaving England, but I was pleased that my parents had seen their first grandchild. Sam's family made me very welcome, and with a growing family I had no time to be homesick.





Abbreviations used in these stories

ARP	Air Raid Precautions
ATS	Air Traffic Service
CAMS	carrier armed merchant ships
CMED	central mechanical engineering department
CT	Communist terrorist
FN	Fabrique Nationale, a firearms manufacturer
F/O's	Flying Officers
KIA	killed in action
MID	a mention in dispatches
OTU	Operational Training Unit
PO	Patrol Officer
PT	Patrol Torpedo
R&R	Rest & Relaxation
RAF	Royal Air Force.
RSA	Returned and Service Association
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
WAAF	The Women's Auxiliary Air Force

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go firstly to all the storytellers for taking the time to share their experiences. They have provided many wonderful insights into the huge cost of any armed conflict, often by dredging up their most painful memories.

Grateful acknowledgement must also be made to the hard-working volunteers who have helped individuals get their message down on paper. Special efforts were made by Maxine Wilson, Jenny Vierkotten, Margaret Davies and Ron Rowe, who each donated an enormous amount of time to skilfully shaping and honing the stories they gathered.

Many staff and volunteers from both RSA branches and of Literacy Aotearoa Hawke's Bay have also willingly donated their time and knowledge to this project, and their help is very much appreciated.

Looking forward

We have purposely kept each contribution as a stand-alone short story, but it would still be possible to relate several short stories about certain individuals, as some personnel had long and active service careers. We acknowledge that a lifetime of service may exist behind any vignette related here.

As one of our volunteers wrote when reflecting on an interview, "I am in no doubt that there should be several short stories written to best capture the exploits, not sought by, but actioned by, this man." Therefore, we see this edition of 'Stories to Tell' as our 2014 yearbook, the product of our first year's collective efforts. In it we feature all of the stories collected so far, but there is more to come.

For 2015 we will continue this project, and we encourage everyone to contribute, either by providing your own story, or volunteering to help others.

To this end, all members are encouraged to share some of their memories, not only of the battlefield, but of life in general. Contributions are welcome from anyone who has had wartime experience: service or civilian, at home or overseas, as an adult or a child, happy or sad. We would like to get as full a picture as possible of how armed conflict affects people.

Free assistance is available to all new storytellers and volunteers. If you are interested in taking part, or would like more information, please get in touch with Wendy McKenty at Literacy Aotearoa Hawke's Bay.

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