

26 Battalion Association Victorian Branch

26 AUST. INF. BN (AIF) "NEVER UNPREPARED"

President
Mr Jeff Collings

Vice President
Mr Colin Block

Editor of Newsletter
Mr Colin Block

Web: www.26bn.org

Email: WebMaster26Bn@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE 17



Melbourne veteran Norman Turrell pays his respects at the 26 Battalion plaque in Perth. Norm said on his return, "I am delighted to see that our memorial plaque now enjoys a prominent location adjacent to the main path through (Kings) Park"

Welcome to Newsletter No. 17

WELCOME to the latest issue of 26 Battalion Reunion Association, Victorian Branch newsletter.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this Newsletter.

I am always seeking original articles to include in future editions and I would appreciate any items you would like to share.

- Colin Block, Editor

NORM GOES WEST

IN September this year, **Norm Turrell** visited Western Australia. He made contact with **Bob Froome** but due to Bob's poor health they were unable to spend any time together. Norm visited Kings Park and located the 26 Battalion plaque. He said he was delighted to see that our

plaque now enjoys a prominent location adjacent to the main path through the Park. This is due to the persistent efforts of our old mate Bob who deserves a word of thanks for his efforts. Best wishes to you Bob from all your old mates and from the association members too.

Message from the President

Hello to all. I hope you are all doing well. This year in Melbourne we experienced a cold winter which with today's mod cons, I presume did not affect you too much and I hope the incessant rain did not spoil any plans you had.

This year's ANZAC Day was down on numbers, but I'm guessing it was because it fell on the Easter break, and pray it was not due to illness or loss of interest. The weather was kind and the meal and socialising was great at the Bells Hotel but was a little more informal this year. Not only was our unit affected by low attendance, it seemed to me that in every unit had low numbers.

I note that ANZAC day falls again at the next Easter break, so we will see if my hypothesis is correct.

As usual Colin Block is doing a sterling job in keeping the media aspects going for the association.

Norm Turrell, the former president could not make it to the ANZAC day and I really respect his courage in denying himself the privilege of attending a very important day that has meant so much to him.

Knowing the effort Norm has put into the 26th over the years, I'm sure his heart was saddened. Even when he told me face to face, I could see the disappointment. I'm sure he will have a go at me about not mentioning the others, (Norm will always defend his troops), however, I haven't spoken to the others, but I am sure they feel the same about missing out on the day.

Anyway I hope to see as many as you as possible at 2011 ANZAC Day reunion.



Regards, **Jeff Collings**, President,
26 Australian Infantry Battalion Assn.

Letter from veteran

On behalf of members of the 26th Battalion I would like to pay tribute to Norm Turrell and Bob Gaudion for the work they have put into making our ANZAC Day what it is today. Also a note of thanks must go to the sons of former members who are carrying on from where Norm and Bob have left off; they are doing a great job.

It's nice to catch up with old mates and all the family members that come along to our great day.



I have two daughters Julie and Megan.

Julie has three sons, Trent, Matt

and Mitch all of whom march with me and Megan has a daughter Maddie who is nine years old and a son Josh who is eight years old. They are desperate to march and keep asking their mother when ANZAC Day is. Maddie and Josh wear their miniature medals to school the first school day after ANZAC Day and Josh explains to his class mates all about what they do on ANZAC Day. He also explains why his Grandfather wears his medals on his left shoulder and Josh must wear his on his right shoulder.

His teacher asks him to tell the story to some other classes, which he is happy to do.

I have to wait until they are 14 years old and I may not be here to see them march, so I hope I can sneak them into the march next year as I would love to march with all my family.

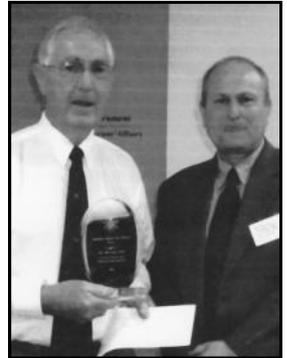
It is the sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters that I hope will keep up the good work started by Norm and Bob, in this way they will keep the 26th Battalion alive and well for the future.

Regards,

Vin Frawley.

Laurie Hill wins writing award

Back in 2008 Laurie Hill had a bit of luck with a story he wrote for the Veterans' competition, it was about the 26 Battalion capturing Soraken Peninsula. Laurie won the *Australian Defence Force Journals* award which was a cash prize and an inscribed plaque. We hope to get copyright clearance for our next Newsletter to reproduce it for you.



Research by Wayne Parker

Wayne Parker has summarised the history of 26 Battalion that is reproduced on Page 3. Although it is still a work in progress, we are sure you will appreciate the time and effort Wayne has put into this research.

Wayne lives in Queensland and was a former Sapper (i.e. military engineer) between 1975 and 1981. He made contact with our Association through our web site.

Whilst researching his family history he discovered that his father Joseph Parker (Q30977) served with the 26th Battalion. All he knew was that he had enlisted in Longreach, Qld, near where he was working at the time, and that he had been promoted to the rank of Corporal at some point, and that at one time, he had been at Sellheim, near Charters Towers.

Wayne said. "Dad never spoke much to us about his service: I knew very little. I have no idea why he was discharged at the end of 1942, prior to the Unit going overseas. His service number (without the "X") indicates that he never transferred to the AIF. He died in 1980."

A Brief History of 26th Battalion:

Research by Wayne Parker

Before 1915

Three Military Districts

From the *Queenslander* newspaper of Saturday **12 December 1891** (digitised copy held at the National Library of Australia), and as per the Government Gazette (Qld presumably), Queensland was to be broken into 3 Military Districts:

“Within the Southern military district there are to be the following regimental divisions: 1. The Moreton division, comprising the electoral districts of Brisbane North, Brisbane South, Fortitude Valley, Woolloongabba, Toowong, Enoggera, Oxley, Toombul, Nundah, Bulimba, Moreton, Ipswich, Bundamba, Stanley, Lockyer, Rosewood, Fassifern, Logan and Albert.”
No details of Units at that time have so far come to hand.

Prior to Federation -

March 1898: 1st (Moreton) Regiment of Infantry: G Company - Southport, and I Company - Nerang.

May 1904: following Federation, 9th Australian Infantry Regiment (Moreton Regiment). This Regiment became the 7th Infantry (Moreton) Regiment on 1 July 1912.

1 July 1912: the 9th (Logan and Albert) Regiment was formed from trainees available following the introduction of

compulsory military training on **1 January 1911**. The new Regiment came from the Logan and Albert defence division: Brisbane's south to northern New South Wales.

With advice from Mr Bill Woerlee, Director of the Australian Light Horse Studies Centre, and from <http://alr-research.tripod.com/LightHorse/index.blog/1838380/militia-distribution-in-australia-1914-1st-military-district-part-4/> :- **1913-14**, the 9th (Logan and Albert) Infantry was attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade for training. Its Headquarters were at Annerley, South Brisbane, apart from the Signallers, who were at Junction Park (current suburbs and localities in Brisbane). A machine-gun Section was at Annerley. By 17 September 1913, the Unit was commanded by **Lt-Col G.A. Ferguson**.



Lt-Col. George Andrew Ferguson, 26 Battalion's first CO, from 4 April 1915 Photo: No. 66963 from John Oxley Library, State Library of Qld.

The Companies were dispersed around south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales as follows:

A Company - Junction Park, Corinda;
B Company - Wynnum, Manly;
C Company - Lismore;

D Company - Grafton, Maclean, Ulmarra, Lawrence;
E Company - Bulimba, Coorparoo;
F Company - Yeronga, Southport, Beenleigh, Beaudesert;
G Company - Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Ballina, Bangalow; and
H Company - Casino, Kyogle, Coraki.

1915-18 Active Service

In April 1915, 26th Battalion AIF was formed at Enoggera, Qld (perhaps drawing some men from the 9th Logan and Albert Infantry, or at least from the same geographic area, as well as Tasmania), under the command of Lt-Col G.A. Ferguson from the 9th (Logan and Albert) Infantry.

This Unit saw active service during the War, at Suvla, Gallipoli, Egypt, and in France. In **1915**, 26 Battalion was part of 7th Brigade, along with 25 (Qld), 27 (SA), and 28 (WA) Battalions.

A minor part of the Unit's war involvement is that on **14 July 1918**, 26 Battalion captured the first German tank to fall into Allied hands - No.506 - "Mephisto". This tank was sent to Australia, has now been restored, and is on display at the Queensland Museum, Brisbane, along with a couple of photographs of the time.

Homecoming

In **1918**, the Militia unit was known as the 2nd Battalion, 26 Infantry Regiment, (Logan and Albert) Infantry whereas the 1st Battalion was that mobilised with the AIF.

26 Battalion AIF returned from Europe and was disbanded in **May 1919**.

The military structure was set to allow for mobilisation to occur again. After WW1, responsibility for defence of Australia was given to the Militia, which was organised along the same lines as the 1st AIF.

The change in Militia Unit name in 1918 arose because men who served in the AIF in a particular Battalion which was raised from a specific geographic region were able to carry that Unit number from the AIF to the Militia. This occurred from October 1918. Many of the men from the 26 Infantry Battalion AIF came from the same catchment area as that of the Logan and Albert Infantry, and so the name was applied to that Battalion/Regiment.

Between the Wars: 1922-29

Conscription ceased in 1922 and the various Militia units were allowed to run down. By 1927, most of the Gazetted companies had been stripped from them. Amalgamation of Battalions was the watchword, to save money.

A Scottish link

The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), a British Army unit, maintained an affiliation with the 26 Battalion from 1928 to 1951. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameronians_\(Scottish_Rifles\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameronians_(Scottish_Rifles)). That link may explain the "saltire cross" in the Regimental badge of 1931. The Cameronians existed under that name from 1 July 1881 until 14 May 1968.

In the *26 Battalion War Diary* on the Australian War Memorial (AWM) website



Badge reads: "26 "
Written on the scroll below:
"LOGAN & ALBERT
REGIMENT"

www.awm.gov.au for **March-April 1944**, there is a Christmas card from **Maj-Gen. Sir Eric Girdwood** and the Officers of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). It is on Pages 27 and 28 of the electronic PDF file.

Between the Wars: 1929-39

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Army_Reserve Between 1929 and 1937, the number of soldiers within the Militia who could provide effective service was well below the force's actual on paper strength as many soldiers were unable to attend even a six day annual camp out of fear of losing their civilian employment. Also it has been estimated that up to 50 per cent of the Militia's other ranks were medically unfit. The numbers situation had become so tenuous that it was rare for a Battalion to be able to field even 100 men during an exercise, so Units accepted men that would not normally meet the medical requirements, indeed it has been stated that men who were "lame and practically blind" were allowed to join in an effort to improve numbers.

Financially the Militia was neglected also. Despite the upturn in the economic situation in the early 1930s there was little financial respite

for the Militia in this time. As the situation continued to improve, however, the defence vote was increased steadily after 1935. Indeed, in 1938 the Government decided to double the strength of the Militia as war clouds began to loom on the horizon. Nevertheless, despite this when World War II broke out in September 1939 the Militia was by no means an effective fighting force and the nation as a whole was not as well prepared for war as it had been in 1914.

Unit motto

In 1931, the *Queenslander* newspaper published a series of articles about military badges and other matters. The article of 7 May 1931 described 26 Battalion's motto in its Latin form, "**Nunquam Non Paratus**", which was translated in the *Queenslander* as "**Never Unready**" - slightly different from the later "**Never Unprepared**".

Unit badges

The *Queenslander* article of 8 October 1931 includes a description of the Unit's new hat and collar badges, and describes the badge as "just issued" and replacing previous badges. A ram's head and boomerang badge, possibly from 1939, are shown below:



1934: Amalgamation

In 1934 26 (Logan and Albert) Battalion was merged with the 15 (Oxley) Battalion to become 15/26 Battalion. The companies

from 15 and 26 Battalions retained their territorial names. The 15/26 Battalion was subsequently delinked on 16 June 1939.

World War 2

1939-42: Lt-Col Murray

On **28 June 1939**, approval was given to form a new Battalion, the 26th, under the command of **Lt-Col Harry Murray VC**, CMG, DSO and Bar, DCM, CdeG, DSM(US), (13) MID, Australia's most decorated soldier from WW1. The new Unit's first headquarters were at Hughenden, with companies based in Julia Creek, Winton, and Longreach in central Queensland. Murray was born in Tasmania, and had farmed at Muckadilla near Roma, and at Richmond, Queensland between the Wars. He left 26 Battalion on 17 August 1942, to be replaced by Lt-Col J. N. Abbott DSO.

Second AIF

PM Menzies announced, on **15 September 1939**, the formation of a 'special force', the Second AIF, an expeditionary force of 20,000 for service 'at home or abroad as circumstances permit', to consist of one infantry division and any auxiliary units that the Australian Army could fit into it.

Lieutenant General Thomas Blamey was given command of the Second AIF on 13 October 1939. On **15 November 1939**, Menzies announced the reintroduction of conscription for home defence service effective from 1 January 1940. Although the Government hoped that half of the new force would be drawn from the Militia, it was soon clear that this would not be achieved.

After an initial rush, enlistments quickly tapered off. The Second AIF was raised in isolation from the existing military structure and had its own conditions of service, unit establishments and seniority lists.

For these reasons, the Second AIF possessed only one division, the 6th Division, for nearly a year. A huge surge of enlistments—some 48,496 in June 1940—provided enough personnel to fill not only the recently formed 7th Division, but to form the 8th Division and 9th Division as well, and the Government ordered units to the United Kingdom to assist in its defence.

2/26 Battalion not the 26th

According to Bill Woerlee, the **2/26th Infantry Battalion**, part of the Second AIF, was drawn from the same catchment region as the original AIF 26 Battalion and thus retained that name. 2/26 Battalion was raised at Grovely, Brisbane, in **November 1940**, under the command of **Lt-Col Arthur Boyes**.

This Unit is not 26 Battalion.

11th Brigade

In **December 1941** 11th Brigade was reformed under the command of Brigadier F.R. North CB, MC, ED and comprised 26 Battalion, 31 Battalion, and 51 Battalions. In 1941, 26 Battalion was placed on full-time active service.

Transfers to AIF

From http://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_13201.asp :

In order to preserve the strength of the Militia for home defence, in June 1940 its members were prevented from joining the AIF.

In **February 1942** regulations were changed to allow members of the Militia to volunteer for service with the AIF, which meant being able to be sent anywhere in the world, but they would stay with their existing units. Further, if 65 per cent of the establishment strength, or 75 per cent of the actual strength, of a unit volunteered for the AIF, that unit then became an AIF unit. On **9 June 1942**, the Federal Government announced that soldiers aged between 19 and 40 years, could transfer from the CMF to the AIF, with the addition of an "X" to their number. Those under 21 needed their parents' permission. (Reported on Page 7 of *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June 1942.)

From <http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/doc/overview.asp> :

"...militiamen could transfer to the AIF, but stay in their unit, at least initially. If more than half a unit transferred it could b e c o m e a 'brackets AIF' unit - for instance, the 7th Field Company (AIF)...."

From late 1942, reinforcements for units came from a central pool, rather than from reinforcement depots in each State, so the regional 'identity' of many units dissipated. For instance, the 2/9th Battalion AIF was raised in Queensland but from late 1942 included men from every State."

The usage of brackets around AIF – (AIF) – occurs several times in the book *"Never Unprepared..."* by A.N. Turrell, and appears to be the correct usage of "AIF" in relation to 26 Battalion. 26 Battalion gradually lost its "Queensland" flavour, as men

from Interstate, and from the AIF, were transferred in. It also gradually moved towards having the required makeup to qualify as an (AIF) Unit.

Unit Colour patches

The *Canberra Times* of **15 May 1942** advised that Mr Frank Forde, the Army Minister had announced that: “... *A.I.F. reinforcements, who had returned from overseas and were posted to the Citizens' Military Forces, would wear the colour patch of the C.M.F., to which they were posted and a miniature colour patch of their A.I.F. unit. This would also apply to former members of the A.I.F. now on the strength of the C.M.F. A.I.F. personnel who had remained in Australia would retain their A.I.F. colour patches, but if posted to C.M.F. units would wear the colour patch of that unit and also the miniature A.I.F. patch. Personnel accepted as A.I.F. reinforcements but not sent overseas but attached to C.M.F. units, would wear the patch of the C.M.F. unit with the A.I.F. battle grey background....*”

Purple over Blue - and more

26 Battalion used a “purple over blue” diamond in WW1. This was retained by the Unit at the outbreak of WW2, and it seems that the “AIF” battle grey border would not properly have been added to the Unit patch for all members until after 14 November 1944, when more than 75% of the Unit strength was comprised of members of the AIF. The earlier exception was those members “...*accepted as A.I.F. reinforcements but not sent overseas but attached to C.M.F. units, would wear the patch of the C.M.F. unit with the A.I.F.*

battle grey background...” as announced by Mr Forde on 15 May 1942. Other AIF members joining 26 Battalion before 14 November 1944 would have been entitled to wear a miniature AIF Unit patch (from their previous AIF Unit) above the CMF 26 Battalion patch. 2/26 Battalion’s Unit patch was a purple over blue diamond on a grey oval.

Militia becomes CMF

Mr Forde, Army Minister, confirmed on **16 October 1942** that the proper title of the “Militia” was the Citizen Military Forces (CMF).

“*AMF was an abbreviation for Australian Military Forces, which included the whole of the military forces of the Commonwealth. The AIF was part of the AMF, as was the CMF, and the Volunteer Defence Corps was included in the CMF.*” (From *The Argus* (Melbourne))

An amendment to the Defence Act 1903-41, the Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Act **1943**, allowed members of the CMF to serve outside Australian territories (including New Guinea) – anywhere in the South West Pacific – south of the Equator and between 110° and 159° east.

Moving towards the AIF

In the *26 Battalion War Diary* for **January-March 1943**, the Field Return of Officers for 6 March 1943 contains the notation that there were 31 AIF Officers with the Unit (out of 34), and the Field Return of Other Ranks for the same date contains the notation that there were 165 AIF other ranks serving with the Unit, out of 861.

In the *26 Battalion War Diary* for **July-September 1943**, the

percentage of AIF men was carefully calculated at 50.91%, on Page 3 of the Routine Orders of 9 July 1943. This confirms the statement in the book “*Never Unprepared...*” that “... *by July 10 the Battalion was 51 percent AIF numbers.*” (P.16). In the Routine Orders of 26 July 1943, the percentage had increased to 56.88%, with a further 5.5% “awaiting consent”.

In the *26 Battalion War Diary* for **October-December 1943**, the percentage of AIF men was down to 55.92%, as shown in the Routine Orders of 9 October 1943.

The next count (and the crucial one in relation to the Unit as a whole joining the AIF) takes place in 1944. The *Unit War Diary* for **September-December 1944** contains the following counts of Unit strength:

4 Nov 1944: Posted strength 28 Offrs, 647 OR’s: Attached 1 Offr, 28 OR’s: total 704

18 Nov 1944: Posted strength 29 Offrs, 645 OR’s: Attached 1 Offr, 30 OR’s: total 705.

14 Nov 1944 @1400: Unit A.I.F. percentage 76.5%. The Remarks column refers to an “Appx E”, which contains a full nominal roll of all Unit members, by Company, on that day.

The entry for **14 November 1944** occurs on Page 55 of the PDF file on the *AWM website*. “Appendix E”, which lists all members of the Unit, starts on Page 83 of the PDF file.

Thus, it appears that 26 Battalion, on **14 November 1944**, reached the necessary criterion of “...*75 per cent of the actual strength of a unit were part of the AIF, that unit then became an AIF unit*”, as set out in the February 1942 Regulation.

It seems to have qualified as (AIF) as early as **9 July 1943**, when 51% of Unit members were calculated as belonging to the AIF.

To war

26 Battalion sailed out of Brisbane, to Bougainville, on **3-4 December 1944**. The Unit's *War Diaries* at the AWM give a detailed account of the Unit throughout WW2 (except between June 1941 and May 1942 – the Diaries are missing or not yet on the website), and the Association's book "*Never Unprepared: A history of 26 Australian Infantry Battalion*" by A.N. Turrell is especially strong on the period 1944-46. They are recommended reading.

The Leaders at the end

Lt-Col B.J. Callinan MC MID assumed command from **Lt-Col Abbott** on **7 February 1945** at Torakina. On **14 December 1945**, **Lt-Col A.G. Cameron** DSO and bar assumed command. On **29 March 1946**, **Lt-Col P.G.C. Webster** DSO took command from Lt-Col Cameron. On

23 May 1946, the last CO of 26 Battalion, **Lt-Col E. Barnes** was appointed, replacing Lt-Col Webster.

From A.N. Turrell's "*Never Unprepared...*" Page 121:

"...Lt-Col E. Barnes assumed command of the 26th Battalion until the Unit was disbanded on August 28, 1946.

A Company remained as the holding unit until September 25, 1946. Capt Austin ("Austy") Foers who was the Quartermaster arranged for the unit's stores to be packed and shipped home. Thus ended the life span of the 26th Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF)."

Author's Footnote:

Wayne Parker acknowledges that his research may not be perfect in every detail. The history presented here is his "best effort" to date. He hopes that the certainty of the story can be improved as more and better information becomes available. He apologises for, and retracts without reservation, any error that may cause embarrassment or offence to any person, living or dead.



Brisbane, Queensland, 26 April 1945: 26 Infantry Battalion veterans in Adelaide Street during the ANZAC Day March. The salute was taken by the State Governor in King George Square.

Photo: AWM 089062

Email From Julie Ward

My name is Julie Ward and my grandfather Louis Arthur Ward (Q109074) served in the 26th Battalion. I recently received my Granddads service records from the Australian Archives and very quickly found your website.

Thank you so much for creating and maintaining this web site and giving me the chance to understand his (and all the soldiers) story. He never spoke of his service and he passed away (2001) before I had a real interest in my family history.

If you are aware of any other information to do with my granddad directly, I would be soooo pleased to



Pte L.A. Ward's bullet memorabilia

hear about it? I am also interested in the book that has been published and will look for a copy in Brisbane libraries.

I have one piece of memorabilia from him. It is a small bullet case which appears like a handle with a small piece of metal attached to the top with Tanahmerah and 1945 etched on it. It is shaped like a Machete. I wonder whether other men had one of these?

From the Editor

Julie, I suspect that the item in your photo is a bullet letter opener. I am not sure whether this war antique would have been a souvenir that was purchased, a special gift or a trophy. It is a very interesting piece of memorabilia indeed.



Close up of the inscription that reads:

* TANAH-MERAH *

- D. N. G. -

- 9 . 7 . 44 -

Photos from the Years



L to R: Jeff Collings, Beryl Frawley, Vin Frawley and Gary Bradshaw on ANZAC Day 2010



Bob Froome from Perth in Melbourne on ANZAC Day 2004



*Members of Sig Platoon.
Standing L to R: Dave Watts,
Frank Norton, Laurie Hill, Con Bogiatsis
Sitting: Doug Willmont, Alan Burke,
Keith Locke
Bougainville 1945*



L to R: John Maschmedt, Frank Norton and Jack Robertson with a Japanese 37mm anti-tank gun that had a range of well over 2 miles. The sign on the field gun reads:

*“Captured by 26 AUST. INF. BN. (AIF) MARCH 1945
PRESENTED TO TOWN OF JULIA CREEK, QLD”*



*Grandfather of Julie Ward,
Pte Louis Arthur Ward (age 25)
Enlisted 16 May 1941, Longreach,
QLD (age 24)
Discharged
7 April 1946*

VALE

John Kane (VX125619)

John joined 26 Bn in January 1946 as a reinforcement for service in Rabaul.

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