

26 Battalion Association

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

President
Colin Block

Vice President
Alan Preston

Editor of Newsletter
Colin Block

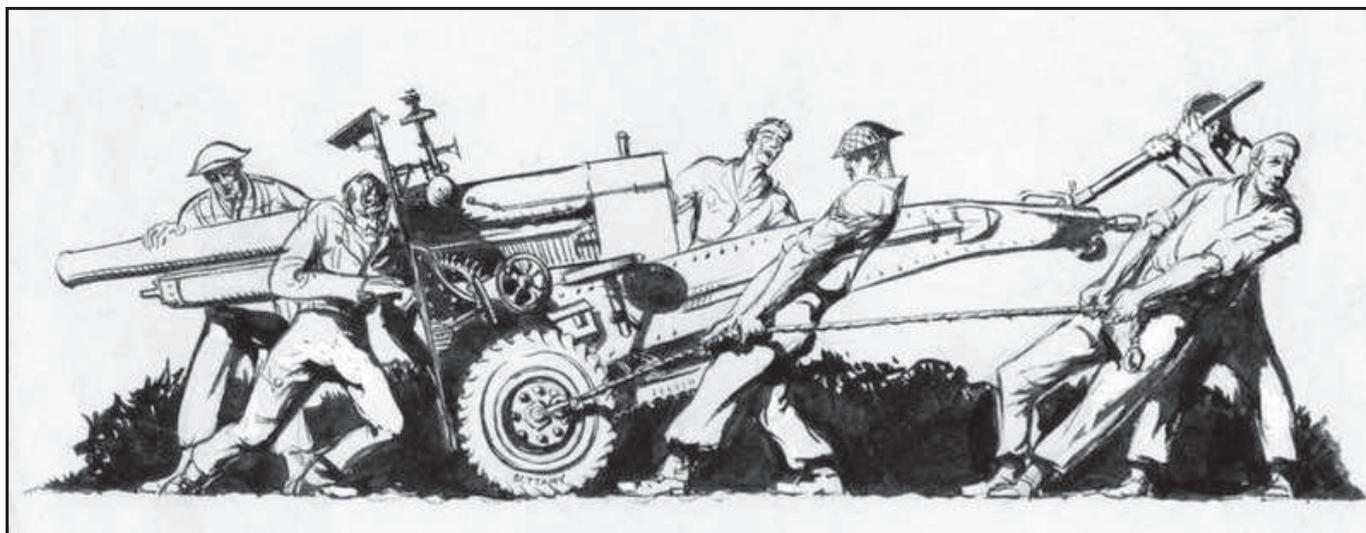
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NEWSLETTER

November 2016

ISSUE 29



Above: This image by Des Bettany was used as a backdrop to the Battle of Porton poster at Mt Isa, as reported in the last issue (No. 28, April 2016). To see more of his images, refer to www.changipowart.com

Welcome to Newsletter No. 29

WELCOME to the latest issue
of 26 Battalion Association
Newsletter.



Pres. Colin Block

Colin Block
(pictured) is
now our new
President and
our new Vice
President is
Alan Preston.

Alan's father **Bob Preston**
attended the last three Anzac
Day marches in Melbourne.

Our former President,
Jeff Collings has stepped down
to focus on his growing business,
Sleep Assist located in Ferntree
Gully, Vic, however he continues
on as a committee member.

We thank Jeff Collings so
much for volunteering his

services of President over the
past seven years.

Even during his many years of
post graduate studies, Jeff
managed to represent our
Association regardless of his
busy schedule.

Jeff has ensured that all
Anzac Day proceedings and the
reunions were run smoothly and
efficiently. We appreciate the

special efforts he made whilst liaising with the ANZAC Day Commemorative Committee, organising cars for our veterans and arranging tables at the reunion luncheon. Jeff is very passionate about 26th Battalion and made the banner we now march behind. He will continue to bring it along to future marches.

On a sadder note, regretfully our past Vice President, **Bob Gaudion** passed away peacefully just prior to Anzac Day last year. Our condolences have been passed onto Bob's family. He was one of the inspiring veterans who saw the need to hand over the reins to a younger generation so that our Association still continues on today. His tribute appears Page 6.

Our most distant member **Louden Cochrane** from Duranillin, (250km South of Perth) passed away a couple of

days after Bob. A tribute of Loudon is on page 5.

Vin Frawley was unable to participate in the March but managed to make it to the last reunion luncheon. He was well supported by his extended family.



Veterans Bob and Vin with their families at the 2016 Anzac Day reunion luncheon.

Once again **Keith Bettany** shares with us some artwork of his father, Des. All of **Des Bettany's** artwork in the Newsletter is reproduced with kind permission of his family and we thank them for that.

As always, your contribution to this Newsletter would be gratefully appreciated.

Colin Block, Editor

EMAILS

From Robert Dooley, looking for any relatives of Sgt Neelsson:

Hi Colin

As I do most ANZAC days I get my copy of the book *Never Unprepared* off the book shelf and go through the pages. My Dad was a member, **Neville George (Scotty) Dooley**, he passed away in 1996.

I often wonder just how many of those brave men are now left. Is there a way I can find out? They held a reunion in Rockhampton each year, which my dad attended until health stopped him. Are the reunions still held and where, as I would like to attend on behalf of my dad?

I live at Mt. Warren Park, which is near Beenleigh in Queensland. It is a pity there are no reunions up this way.

A member of Dad's battalion, from Townsville, was **Sergeant Howard Neelsson**, he died of wounds received. As my brother Howard is named after him, I have been trying to locate his relatives. I cannot find anyone with the surname spelt that way. Maybe a Newsletter reader may know of someone.

Kind Regards

Robert Dooley



Left: With a pair of pliers in his hand, Jeff Collings makes some on-the-spot repairs to the 26 Battalion banner prior to commencement of the Anzac March, 2016

EMAILS



Hi Colin,

Your Newsletter No 28, April 2016 made for extremely interesting reading, thank you to all who put so much effort into putting it together. Great to see the cards from 70 years ago and what a surprise to see my dad's painting he did as a POW under the Japanese on the sign describing the 25 pounder (Pg 4) in Mt Isa.

Recently we have had scanned and emailed back to us some more paintings he did of

his beloved guns. I think one may have been going to be used as a banner for a newsletter or something similar. They were discovered by a friend in the Imperial War Museum, London!!!

Keep up the good work, always look forward to receiving the Newsletters.

I've attached these paintings and also one with the *Gunners Coat of Arms*. Can any members give me some insight as to the message it bears? Also on the *Gunners Banner* painting, can members name articles from left to right for me. A good competition.

The inscription reads, 'We who are left of the Royal Regiment of Artillery inscribe this book in proud remembrance of forty eight thousand nine hundred and

forty nine of our comrades, who cherishing our brother hood, glorying in our good name, when the call came in the great war followed the path of duty and self sacrifice and laid down their lives for their king and country in many strange lands faithful unto death in the service of THE GUNS.'

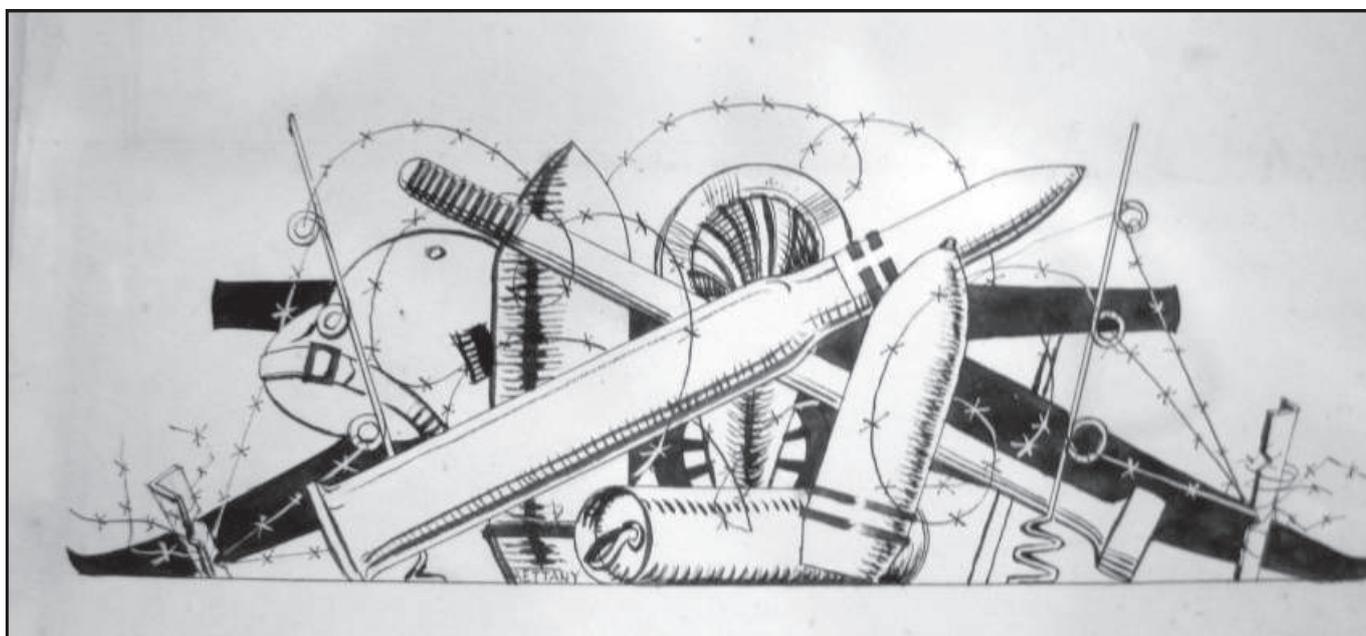
Cheers,

Keith Bettany



Above: *The Gunners Coat of Arms*

Below: *Gunners Banner*. Can you name the items depicted?



Historical connection

Our new President, Colin Block and new Vice President, Alan Preston have an unusual connection with both their fathers featuring in an historical photo of a section from *A Company*, c.1945.

Colin, son of veteran Ray Block, is now retired but formerly a telecommunications technician with Telstra Research Laboratories and later an audio-visual technician with Monash University. He and Ruth have two sons with each having two children of their own.

Alan, son of veteran Bob Preston, is now retired and was a secondary school maths teacher and lives in Ballarat, Vic. He has three children, two boys and a girl.



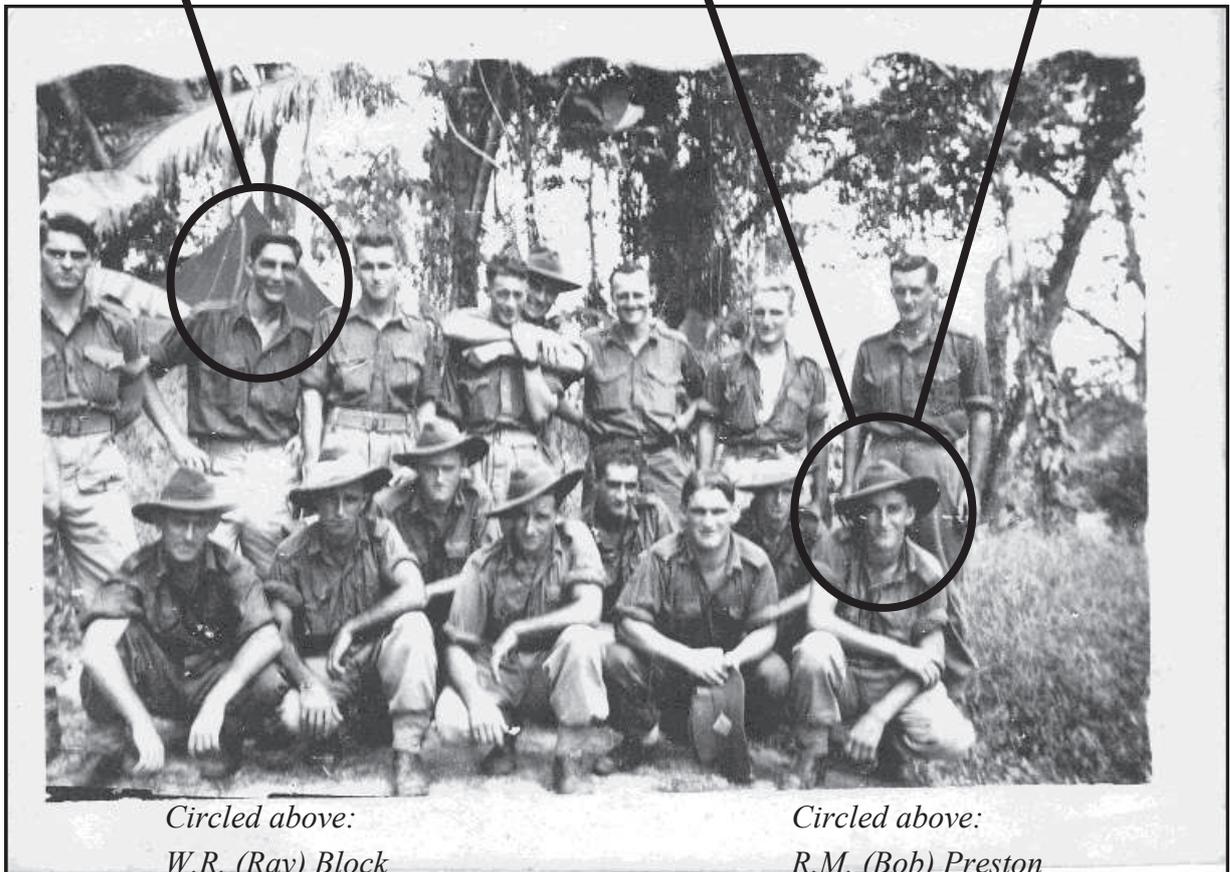
*President, Colin Block
son of Ray Block*



*Vice President, Alan Preston
son of Bob Preston*



*Bob Preston on
Anzac Day 2016*



*Circled above:
W.R. (Ray) Block*

*Circled above:
R.M. (Bob) Preston*

EMAILS

From Kevin Cochrane:

Dear Colin,

It is with sadness I notify you of the passing of our father Louden Park Cochrane WX41166, a member of the 26th Battalion who saw service with the Battalion on Bougainville Island and after at Rabaul on guard duties.

After the war he went back to the land and was a successful farmer with our mother by his side.

They retired 25 yrs ago and stayed in the country to enjoy family, bowls etc Dad passed away peacefully on Thursday the 21st April.

Prior to joining the 26th he was in the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment until it was disbanded at Wanneroo Camp in WA, being the last mounted unit to do so.

Dad was named after an uncle killed in WW1, also in the 10th Light Horse, in Palestine.

As a family we would like to continue our association and receive the newsletters etc.

Kind regards,
Kevin Cochrane



Louden Park Cochrane WX41166

Tribute to Corporal Louden Cochrane

*From 26 Bn Assn Newsletter No. 14,
April 2009*

L OUDEN tried to join the Army as a 17 year old but eventually joined up when he turned 18. In 1943 he enlisted in 25 Aust Cav Trg Sqn and after a series of moves from training battalions went to 10th Aust Light Horse Regt.

After this unit was disbanded he was sent to Canungra for jungle training and finally joined 26th Battalion in November 1944 and sailed with the unit to Bougainville.

He served in the Vickers gun P1 and remembers men like Arthur Ennis, Tony Murray, Ernie Hill and Bob Backhouse. Louden served in all the



campaigns in Bougainville and went to Rabaul as part of the occupation force. While there he studied wool classing and achieved his certificate.

Promoted to Corporal in 1945 he was among the last men to leave Rabaul and arrived in Sydney in June 1946. He was only 22 at the time of his discharge in July and he was able to obtain a farm at Duranillin in the wheat-belt region of Western Australia, 200km from Perth.

In 1948 he married Laura, had four sons and one daughter. He worked his farm for 42 years and retired in 1989 and his sons took over the farm. Louden and Laura lived nearby.

He was a keen bowler and has bowled for 60 years representing WA State side level and RSL teams.

Younger generation continues to honour

Right: In 2009 President Bob Gaudion handed over the reins of the 26Bn Assn to the younger generation Jeff Collings (centre) and Colin Block.



Ray Block's NZ grandson, Nathan visited the 26Bn plaque in Sept 2016.

VALE

Louden Park Cochrane
Robert Thomas Gaudion

Tribute to ROBERT GAUDION

ROBERT THOMAS (Bob) GAUDION
(17/2/1924 to 18/4/2016)

passed away just before last Anzac Day.

Bob was the eldest in the family and grew up on a farm in Wandin. He had two sisters and three brothers.

He had a hand in producing material for the official book *Never Unprepared*, that inspired the creation of this newsletter and later the website. Author **Norm Turrell** wrote in *Never Unprepared* a deserving acknowledgment and special thanks to Bob for his help during the construction of the manuscript.

Past President, **Jeff Collings** remembered when he first met Bob, "For a couple of years I was marching with a 26th Battalion banner that my brother and I made. On the third year I noticed a man holding a laminated piece of paper with *26th Inf Bn* written on it. I approached the man who turned out to be Bob Gaudion and asked him about the sign he was holding. Bob then introduced me to the 26th Battalion Association"

Bob had a never ending commitment and allegiance to his fellow soldiers and mates of the 26th Battalion. In his interview with the Australians at War Film Archive, Bob said of his army training, "So at 18 years of age I was called up, did medical examinations, spent my first night in the army sleeping in the grandstand at Caulfield Racecourse. They were still training horses back in those days and they woke us up in the morning. It was March 1942 and from there I transferred to Watsonia which was a training camp. Training was for three months of basic training, drill and weapons training and so on, teaching you to do what you were told. Discipline is the principal thing that the army works on. I know that now, probably I didn't realise it then."

Bob continued, "I've never been so fit in all my life when I came out of that place. The last exercise we had to do there was in full kit, that's all your possessions, 60 pounds of possessions. Your rifle, all your pack, your clothing, two pair of pants and whatever, cross country run 15 miles through the



bush. They were tough people up there but they got us trained and they got us fit."

During his time in the army he was sent to serve at Tanah Merah and Bougainville.

Whilst in the there Bob fell from a bridge and later underwent a back operation. He recalled, "It happened after heavy rain and the bridges that the natives made were just a log across the river, with a [length of] cane tied on to hang onto. I happened to be carrying the Bren gun. I was in the middle of this log and my feet slipped on the log and luckily one leg went each side of it. I landed flat on the back of my spine, it hurt a fair bit. But I managed to hang on to the Bren gun. I later had two operations on my back" During his recuperation was encouraged to learn cross-stitch and with his keen eye for detail he excelled in producing many quality works. He

continued with this as a hobby over many years.



As a young man, Bob was quite ambitious. Prior to joining the army, he was interviewed by the manager at Dunlop tyre company in Melbourne where he was asked at the interview what his plans were. He said he aspired to be the manager. He got the

job working as an office boy

After the war, Bob and his mate, decided to go for a motor bike ride and ended up in Adelaide – and stayed there. That's where Bob went on to be the manager at one of the Dunlop tyre and battery firms in Adelaide. He was well liked and respected and stayed on with the company for 41 years until he retired to Warragul, Vic.

Bob was a proud man who loved wearing his service medals. He had a sense of duty to help others. For example, he was a blood donor giving more than 100 donations, an enthusiastic member of the Warragul historical society and the 26th Battalion Association.

Bob handed over the reins to the younger generation in 2009, Jeff Collings and Colin Block (see picture page 5). At his funeral celebrating Bob's life, President Colin, in his new role, represented the 26 Battalion Association.

Bob's legacy lives on through the younger generation supporting and remembering those who served their country or made a final sacrifice.