WW2
1939 - 1945

Shaving set given to the Diggers before going to Second World War

ERIC JOHN WADDELL

24 August 1920 Born to Lynn and Dora Waddell

1925 John's parents moved to Newdegate. John did all his schooling in Newdegate, travelling by horse and cart. He left school at the age of 13 to start work on the land. Shepherding sheep was one of his first jobs.

30 October 1940 John enlisted in the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion training at Naval Base Northam

July 1941 Crossed to South Australia on MV Duntroon to Camp Woodside

October 1941 Headed overland to Darwin

2 January 1942 Left Darwin for Singapore

27 January 1942 Arrived in Singapore and was sent straight into the front line and first bombing raids

15 February 1942 John was taken prisoner and marched to Changi Barracks along with the others prisoners of war.

April 1942 John left Changi along with a working party of 3,500 Australian and English, and was sent to Adam Park to build a memorial in Johore Beru. It was at this time the Japanese attacked Singapore.
During John's time in capture, he suffered from cholera, malaria and malnutrition and was hospitalised in August 1942 with Beri Beri and general complaints.
John returned to the working party at River Valley Camp. The work was hard but the food was better.

December 1942 Returned to Changi

4 April 1943 John left for Bangkok via Singapore, being transported by steel rice trucks with 24 others and a guard.
Then transferred by rail to Kamburi. 500 Australians including John were formed into a battalion and marched the 30 miles to Tarsoe to build native style huts for accommodation.
After three weeks in a cholera compound in Ton Cham, John returned to Tarsoe on maintenance.
John spent the rest of his POW days in Thailand.

30 September 1945 Released, he returned to Bangkok airport and was transferred to Singapore by air DC3, sailing home on M.V. Tamaroa

10 October 1945 Arrived in Fremantle.
Following the war, John returned to the farm in Newdegate. He married his wife Betty in 1949, and together they had three children. John was a tireless worker for the Newdegate district and a driving force behind many community projects including the hall, swimming pool and new Sports Pavilion. John served on the Lake Grace Shire for 15 years representing Newdegate. He was also a Justice of the Peace from 1972, President of the RSL, Secretary of the P&C and Director of the local Co-op. John was responsible for resurrecting the local football in Newdegate.

15 September 2002 15 September 2002 John passed away in Mandurah.

The above includes information from John's hand written notes and his family's recollections and memories.

Vietnam
1962 - 1975

LEN ARMSTRONG

1946 Born 1 January, in Kellerberrin, Len is the 2nd oldest of eight children.

1965 At 19 years old, Len decided that farming wasn't going to financially support his family. He enlisted six months before "National Service" came in, with the plan to get ahead in training and move up the ranks before the influx of soldiers came through.
Len would be the 3rd generation to serve from his family, with his grandfather who was the 232nd person from Australia to ever enlist serving in WW1, and his father in WW2. And following Len would be his nephew who served in Timor.
Len went through the application process in a group of 12 men, after a demanding selection process involving medicals, psychological evaluations etc. Len was 1 of only 3 who were accepted.
Heading to Wagga Wagga, he completed three months of Recruit Training, followed by six months of Corpse Training in Transport.
This training landed him in Air Supply, flying helicopters.

1967 Len relocated to New Guinea where he drove a train for Pacific Island Soldiers.

1968 (Sept) Relocated to Vietnam, Len was promoted to Corporal where he served for 10 months. The rules for serving in Vietnam prevented more than one person from immediate family to serve at any one time, therefore it was a surprise when Len was enjoying a day of R'n'R in town when he ran into his brother! His brother had enlisted 18 months after Len, and had "left out" any information regarding Len already serving when going through the recruitment process. If their mother had wished, she could have demanded one of them be sent home, but she did not.
During his time in Vietnam his helicopter was shot down twice and experienced engine failure three times. The third engine failure had Len Medevac'd to Hobart, Tasmania for six months of rehabilitation.

1971 (May) Len was sent to New Guinea where he was promoted to Sargent and moved into a clerical role within Transportation. Part of his job at the time was teaching people to type.

1973 Len lost his wife to pneumonia, leaving him the sole carer of their three year old daughter. To provide his daughter with a more stable life they moved to Perth for two years where Len could have the support of his parents.

1975 Len relocated to Melbourne where he would travel to other countries including New Zealand, Thailand and Canada to conduct military exercises.

1977 Relocated to Brisbane.

1978 Relocated back to Melbourne.
During this time Len was one of the first in the army to begin using computers, and running transport systems. Although they were kept busy, there was a lot of down time too, and the men would get bored and lonely; Len used this time to take night classes. Some of the classes included English, Commercial Law, Gold Prospecting, Chinese Cooking and Bricklaying.
Len joked "I took cooking on the Tuesday and bricklaying on a Thursday, at least then if the cooking was bad I could hide it in the bricks on Thursday."

1985 (Mar) Len was discharged and took up residence in Albany, where he lived for 20 years doing various jobs including, truck driving, concreting, lawn mowing/maintenance, building and cladding. The skills and knowledge Len had gained in his time serving led him to many alternative job opportunities too, including Police Cadet training and being invited into workplaces to advise them on becoming more efficient.
For 17 years Len was a member of the Albany Rotary, he was a Shire of Albany Councillor and was an office bearer for the NASHS P & C for five years; and an instigator of mass fundraising for the school.
Len's father had a saying "If every citizen volunteered 10% of their time to their community, communities would be a lot richer and stronger."
This saying has long resonated with Len, who lives his life giving his 10% and more. Len's efforts where recognized when he was awarded the "Paul Harris Fellow" for outstanding service to the community.

2005 Len was given some work by Wally Newman in Newdegate, where he met his partner Sandy and to this day, has remained. He has been the gardener for the town maintaining gardens and sports ovals, gardened for the school and is running a successful business. Len has also been a Shire Councillor for past 6 years.

Weekend Warriors
Citizen's Military Force
Northam – 1972

"Compulsory military training was brought back in 1951 by the Liberal government as the National Service Scheme. The scheme was criticised as being irrelevant to modern defence needs, and for being a drain on the Regular Army's finances and manpower. In 1959 the scheme was abolished. National Service was re-introduced in 1964, and in May 1965 the Liberal government introduced new powers that enabled it to send national servicemen to serve overseas. From 1965 to 1972, 15,381 national servicemen served in the Vietnam War, with 200 killed and 1,279 wounded. The National Service Scheme was abolished on 5 December 1972 by the newly elected Labor government." www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/conscription/

BILL LLOYD

Each time we went away to these camps we were picked up by a Road Coach from the Newdegate Post Office.

The 1st camp we were taken to Perth, then transferred onto an Army Truck and taken to Northam Army Camp, where we were supplied with our uniforms, boots, rifles, etc. Almost every day of this camp we were trucked to Swanbourne Army Barracks to practise our marching drills to receive the Queen's Colours. I vividly remember the weather being stinking hot and the drills so boring and monotonous … not a good impression of Army life!

The 2nd camp was in winter and it was raining and freezing cold. We slept in skinny sleeping bags on canvas camp stretchers and went to bed fully clothed, boots and all, because it was so freezing cold when we got out of bed before sun-up … the theory was that we didn't have to get cold getting out of our PJ's! This is when we were introduced to helicopter drills, range drills, grenade drills and machine gun drills. We had to carry our rifle with us at all times, even going down to Swanbourne. One of the nights we were camped out in 2-man tents, with barely 6" between our faces, and it poured with rain. Everyone and everything was soaking wet … not a pleasant experience at all. During the helicopter drills the pilots scared the living daylights out of me the way they threw the machine on its side and then on the other side and almost every-which-way except upside down! And … these manoeuvres were all done with the doors wide open … supposedly showing us that we wouldn't fall out! I refused to get back in and walked back to base.

The 3rd Camp we went out to the Bindoon Training Ground and Target Shooting Range. We practised communication skills, hand grenade skills and stabbing straw-stuffed dummies with the bayonets on our rifles!

I still wonder what was actually in our tucker as there were possums living in the rafters of the Mess Hall! Volunteering to go to CMF was a far better option than going to fight the war in Vietnam.

TIM LLOYD

Australia entered the Vietnam war in 1962. By 1964 it became clear that Australia's involvement required more personnel than was first thought and our government introduced a national service scheme that conscripted young men into the army for a period of two years. Many of these conscripts served in Vietnam.

The scheme required all 20 year old men to register. A lottery was held every 6 months and if your date was drawn from the barrel you were drafted into the army for 2 years. For the 8 years that national service ran, 804000 men registered and 64000 were drafted to serve in the army. Of the 64000 in the army 15400 served in Vietnam.

There was an alternative to the lottery. If you felt that the risk of being drafted for two years was too high you could, prior to the lottery, elect to join the Citizen Military Force, (the CMF). This required your attendance at two fortnightly camps each year for six years. It was considered that this 24 weeks of training would be the equivalent to the six months basic training that the national servicemen were getting.

In 1970 as a 20yo farmer I joined the CMF and attended my first camp. Our bus started at Ravensthorpe and traveled through Newdegate, Hyden, Narembeen and Merredin before delivering us all to Northam army camp. All told there were about 1000 men in the 28th Royal West Australian Regiment and we came from all parts of W.A. Our ages ranged from 20 to 25 years.

We mostly had a pretty good time and met a lot of people from all over W.A. The army life was very strict, which of course didn't fit well with us farm boys but fortunately the camps were only for two weeks at a time. There was plenty of marching and drills which we found quite boring, but the weapons training, range practice and war games were much more to our liking. There is nothing quite like cutting down a man size target at 25 meters with a heavy machine gun.

There was growing public opposition to the Vietnam war and by 1972 the government announced an end to conscription and this made our involvement in the CMF voluntary. Subsequently most of us applied for and were discharged from the CMF, but took with us with some hopefully not to be needed skills and lots of good memories.

Afghanistan
2001 - present

Terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC on 11 September 2001 prompted the United States of America to declare a 'war on terror'. Australia invoked the ANZUS treaty to support the US effort and Australian military personnel joined the forces of 'the coalition of the willing'.

Under the leadership of the US, in October 2001 the coalition forces invaded Afghanistan.

Australia's first contingent of Special Forces troops departed Australia as part of "Operation Slipper". Australia's support continued at this level until November 2002 when the shift was made from being a combat mission to reconstructive activities and the 200 members of the Special Task Force were sent home.

Australia has continued its support, with more than 26,000 Australian soldiers serving in Afghanistan on Operation Slipper between 2001 and 2014.

As of October 2013, a total of 41 Australians had been killed serving in Afghanistan with 249 being wounded.

Army.gov.au

KAREN SULLIVAN

My name is Karen Sullivan and I was a student at Newdegate primary from 1980 – 1986. My husband Matt is a soldier in the 1st artillery regiment and at present 2 months into a nine month deployment to Afghanistan. It is his fourth deployment, the third since we have met and everyone has been different. It is definitely harder now with three kids to parent alone than it was in the first deployment when I just had to worry about myself and the cat. However we are lucky that through the improvements in technology our ability to communicate has improved from those earlier times. My daughter Katelyn is 12 and when she was born Matt was in East Timor. We talked about once every two weeks and it took a week for him to get a faxed photo of Katelyn. Now we manage to Skype a couple of times a week making it easier to keep him aware and included in what we are doing as a family.

One of the hardest times we have is saying goodbye at the airport. I think moments like that make you realise how truly important your partner is to you. Knowing how long they will be away, hoping they will be ok and hoping you will be ok. Reality that they are going starts about six months before they leave, during their pre-deployment training. We watch them get fitted for body armour, do weapons training, get multiple injections to protect them from things I have never even heard of. Then when they finally return we help them adjust to living off a secure compound and not having every minute programmed by others and trying to fit into the family routine. I think as a family we feel the effects of a nine month deployment for about 2 years.

Last year I watched Matt march through the centre of Brisbane with the rest of his brigade and the sight was truly breathtaking. To see so many soldiers marching proudly representing what I think is some of the best aspects of being Australian, standing up and being willing to make your life count. Protecting not only your country but willing to go in and defend the freedom of people in other countries too.

I know when I see the flag at half-mast this Anzac day I will be in awe of those soldiers who have served this country in the past and those who continue to serve. I will remember and thank those who made the ultimate sacrifice and their families who loved them enough to let them go and now live without them. My heart will also hurt for those who are away from their families at present and praying that they all make it home safely and that my husband is among them.

Artillery Training Advisory Team - Kabul
Branch Schools Training Advisory Group
KABUL MILITARY TRAINING CENTRE

Dear Josiah,

Thankyou for your wonderful letter just after ANZAC Day this year, it is really nice to hear that the students of Newdegate Primary School are thinking of us as we carry out our mission here in Afghanistan.

My unit is the Artillery Training Advisory Team – Kabul and our job is to train new soldiers for the Afghanistan National Army as Artillerymen to operate their new howitzers (really big guns). We are a multi-national unit with soldiers from Australia, Great Britain, America, Singapore, Mongolia and Canada. As you can imagine, with that many countries all working together it is lots and lots of fun and many memorable times.

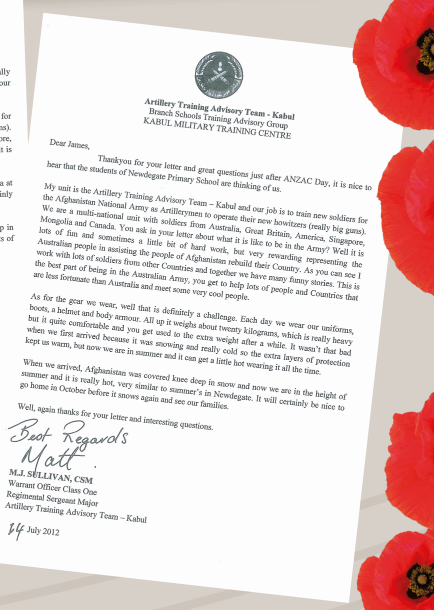
We have been in Afghanistan since February this year and will be heading back to Australia at the end of October, so all up we will have been over here for about eight months. It will certainly be nice to go home in October and see our families.

Well, again thanks for your wonderful letter I know the Newdegate Field day is coming up in early September and I hope your brothers, your sister and you have a great time and do lots of fun stuff, I know I used to look forward to and enjoy the Field Day as a boy.

Best Wishes,
Matt.

M.J. SULLIVAN, CSM
Warrant Officer Class One
Regimental Sergeant Major
Artillery Training Advisory Team – Kabul

14 July 2012



Artillery Training Advisory Team - Kabul
Branch Schools Training Advisory Group
KABUL MILITARY TRAINING CENTRE

Dear James,

Thankyou for your letter and great questions just after ANZAC Day, it is nice to hear that the students of Newdegate Primary School are thinking of us.

My unit is the Artillery Training Advisory Team - Kabul and our job is to train new soldiers for the Afghanistan National Army as Artillerymen to operate their new howitzers (really big guns). We are a multi-national unit with soldiers from Australia, Great Britain, America, Singapore, Mongolia and Canada. You ask in your letter about what it is like to be in the Army? Well it is lots of fun and sometimes a little bit of hard work, but very rewarding representing the Australian people in assisting the people of Afghanistan rebuild their Country. As you can see I work with lots of soldiers from other Countries and together we have many funny stories. This is the best part of being in the Australian Army, you get to help lots of people and Countries that are less fortunate than Australia and meet some very cool people.

As for the gear we wear, well that is definitely a challenge. Each day we wear our uniforms, boots, a helmet and body armour. All up it weighs about twenty kilograms, which is really heavy but it quite comfortable and you get used to the extra weight after a while. It wasn't that bad when we first arrived because it was snowing and really cold so the extra layers of protection kept us warm, but now we are in summer and it can get a little hot wearing it all the time.

When we arrived, Afghanistan was covered knee deep in snow and now we are in the height of summer and it is really hot, very similar to summer's in Newdegate. It will certainly be nice to go home in October before it snows again and see our families.

Well, again thanks for your letter and interesting questions.

Best Regards
Matt.

M.J. SULLIVAN, CSM
Warrant Officer Class One
Regimental Sergeant Major
Artillery Training Advisory Team – Kabul

14 July 2012

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