

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

### **William Wallace (Bill) McMillan**

**21 September 1938 – 27 May 2018**

**By P. J. Bruce, OAM**

William Wallace 'Bill' McMillan was born in Melbourne on 21 September 1938. He enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on 8 January 1957, not long after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in Sydney. Bill completed his recruit training at 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Kapooka and was allocated to the RAA. He marched into the School of Artillery at North Head on the 9 May 1957 and was bunked in room two on B Wing with John Butler, Blue Nicholls, Trevor Sherwood, and Peter Doorey. They were later joined by Kevin Salter and were all used on general duties while waiting for enough recruits to make up a gun course. By late July they all completed a basic gun course on the 25 Pounder Gun. At the completion of the course, Bill and the others were all posted to 1st Field Regiment which at that time was at Holsworthy. They were allocated to 102nd Field Battery which was equipped with 4.2-inch mortars, so a conversion course was organised and completed by the new arrivals.

In August 1959 Bill joined 101st Field Battery which had been warned out for service in Malaya and due to replace "A" Field Battery. 101 Battery was commanded by Major Peter Norton and deployed to Butterworth Base in Malaya in September/October 1959. Bill's earlier training with the mortars was put to good use as the battery used both 25 Pounders and 4.2-inch mortars although his main employment was as the driver of 'Ammo One' for the Battery Sergeant Major, Eric Morris. In late 1960, 101st Field Battery joined 26th Field Regiment RA and moved to Terendak, Malacca. Prior to deployment, Bill had married Jan and she with other wife's joined the members of the battery in Butterworth in early 1960.

Bill returned to Australia in October 1961 and was posted to 4th Field Regiment which had recently taken over the old 11th National Service Training Battalion barracks at Wacol in Brisbane. During 1962 the regiment commenced using the new 105mm L5 Pack Howitzer and the  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton Land Rover. Bill at this stage had trained as signaller, driver and was also trained in the new L5s. It was during September 1962 that Bill was given his first stripe and became Lance Bombardier McMillan. His second stripe came the following year in July. In September 1964, the regiment sent a composite battery to New Zealand for and exercise and Bill was a member of that battery. This was the first time an Australian Artillery unit had visited New Zealand.

By January 1966, Bill's experience and knowledge saw him posted to as an instructor to the School of Artillery at North Head. He was also promoted to Sergeant and worked on Regimental Training Wing. He remained there until May 1969 when he was posted to 4th Field Regiment which had since moved to Townsville. Bill was posted as the Battery Guide of 106th Field Battery which was in training for deployment to Vietnam the following year. The Battery was now training with the American M2A2 Howitzers, and this meant another notch in Bill's gun proficiency record. In February 1970, 106th Field Battery arrived in Vietnam to relieve 105th Field Battery and Bill was one of the first members of the Battery to deploy. Bill remained as Battery Guide of the Battery and returned to Australia in February 1971 after 373 days in Vietnam.

On return to Australia, Bill was posted to the then 8th Medium Regiment in Holsworthy. Bill spent time as Battery Guide of both 102nd Field Battery and 103rd Medium Battery before his promotion to Warrant Officer Class Two (WO2) and appointment as Battery

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Sergeant Major (BSM) of 103rd Medium Battery. Both batteries at that stage were integrated into the combined 8th/12th Medium Regiment in November 1973.

In December 1974, Bill was to return to the North Shore of Sydney with a posting to Gunnery Wing at the School of Artillery, North Head. With his experience in a variety of equipment, Bill became involved in the trials conducted by the re-raised 106th Field Battery of the new medium gun, the M198 Howitzer. This was American equipment of 155mm and trials were conducted mainly in North Queensland. In January/February 1976, Bill accompanied several RAA personnel to the United States for formal training and evaluation of the M198. During this time at the School, Bill and Jan were active supporters of the School's Touch Footy Team. Two of their boys, Larry and Glen, were often signed on to the School Team but with hair too long for soldiers, they were recoded as "gardeners" on the School Staff.

May 1980 saw Bill posted to 2 Army Recruiting Unit. His ready smile and ability to tell a great yarn, together with professionalism, made him well suited to the recruiting role. After nearly three years with Army Recruiting, Bill was posted, on promotion to Warrant Officer Class One (WO1) to the Army School of Instructional Training at Middle Head. In this posting he travelled often to various training establishments, exhorting the virtues of the new Methods of Training system.

Bill took discharge from the Army on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1986 after 29 years plus, service. His Honours and Awards included:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps Malay and Vietnam
- General Service Medal with clasp Malaya
- Vietnam Medal
- Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasp SE Asia
- Defence Force Service with First and Second Clasps
- National Medal with First Clasp
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal
- Pingat Jasa Malaysia
- Returned from Active Service Badge.

Bill and Jan were great supporters of their family and of Army reunions, especially with members of 101st Field Battery from Malaya times. Bill's ready smile and wonderful sense of humour remained with him until the end. He will be forever in our hearts and minds.

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