

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Colonel William AS Whyte MC 1918- 2018

By Tim Ford



Born in County Donegal, Northern Ireland on the 26th August 1918, Bill Whyte was a child immigrant to Australia, a brave Gunner soldier and commander, a long serving Legatee, a centenarian and a loving father and grandfather. He died just a few days after his 100th Birthday on the 31st August 2018 and his life was celebrated in a well-attended Service in Sydney on the 7th September.

A comprehensive Memoir to Bill's life has already been published in the Spring 2014 Issue (No 88) of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company journal 'Cannonball'. This Memoir outlines in some detail many of the military and personal experiences of his long and eventful life. It describes how Bill joined the Australian Army in 1937 and, after honing his gunner skills on coastal artillery in Victoria, he volunteered to join the Darwin Mobile Force and was a Gun Sergeant in an 18 Pounder Field Gun Battery when the War broke out in September 1939.

Subsequently, Bill was selected for officer training and then posted to the 2/4 Field Regiment AIF as a Lieutenant in July 1940. He served with this Regiment throughout the War, both in Australia and overseas. This included operations in Palestine, the Western Desert and Syria; and then later in Lae, Markum Valley, Morotai and Balikpapan. Captain Whyte was awarded the Military Cross for actions as an artillery forward observer in Balikpapan.

Bill Whyte attended Staff College in 1948 and completed a range of postings as a training and logistics officer over the next fifteen years including two in England as the DAQMG Australian Army Staff. His final three postings were as the Colonel Admin at the Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon, Defence Attaché in South Korea and finally as the Commanding Officer of 19 Composite Regiment RAA at Holsworthy. This unit converted to 8th Medium Regiment RAA during his tour as CO.

I first met LTCOL Bill Whyte at RMC as a Staff Cadet when he hosted all the future Gunner graduates to lunch at his home, and I subsequently served under him as a young officer at Holsworthy. I remember him to be a most professional gunner, mentor and leader admired by soldiers and officers alike.

Bill left the Military in March 1970 to take up an appointment as the Chief Administrative Officer with the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority. He was granted the military title of Colonel. He remained with the Authority for over 13 years retiring in August 1983.

Soon after leaving the Army, Bill Whyte joined Chatswood Legacy and had a continuous and active involvement in assisting and supporting Legacy families for almost 50 years, volunteering as a Legatee and a mentor to new members. He was an active fundraiser and every year he could be seen selling Legacy badges at the Willoughby shops during Legacy week.

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Bill would also proudly parade in Sydney every Anzac Day with the 2/4 Field Regiment AIF contingent. Vale William Alexander Sheldon Whyte, a life well lived and a fine example to so many.