

THE ORIGINS OF "CAVALRY NEWS"

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During the six years of World War 2, over 2,000 men served in the 6 Division Cavalry Regiment. Some of them enlisted in the earliest days of the war in 1939, and a handful were to stay till the "cessation of hostilities" in 1945. Our Regiment had the distinction of being the senior unit of the 6th Division, by virtue of its being Cavalry, the first in line from the old Light Horse days of WW1. Among its lists of firsts was the fact that some of its men were the first into action in the Libyan desert, and in having one of its members, Buster Tope, being the first to be wounded in action. Tope however, recovered from his wounds, and later became the Regimental Armourer. Our first CO was Lt Col Fergusson, a hard but fair man, who led the Regiment until he was severely wounded by shrapnel in the desert, and was airlifted to hospital in Egypt. He was succeeded by Denzil MacArthur-Onslow, later to be knighted by the King. Denzil led his squadron in action at Bardia, Tobruk, and Benghazi, his troops being responsible for the capture of thousands of Italian troops. On his return to Australia he was promoted to Major General, and as such led the Australian Armoured division. Our 3rd CO was Lt Col John Abbott, who had the difficult task of holding the Regiment together during the long period of being out of action in the Northern Territory. Our 4th and final CO was Eric Hennessy, who, as a young Lieutenant had taken the surrender of the Italian Admirals at Tobruk. A splendid photograph of this event is shown on page 61 of our unit history "To the Green Fields Beyond" written by Shawn O'Leary, a former journalist. This book was written 30 years after the war, in 1975, and was the product of much research by O'Leary and a few others. Long since out of print, it has become one of the well known "collectors items". Before long after the war, each state in Australia had formed its State Association, the one in NSW being led by President Frank Harley, who was to dedicate 20 years of his life in this important position. I served for 6 years in the capacity of the Association Secretary, and during this period it was decided that our state print a magazine, so that members could be informed of the activities of their former wartime comrades. The Victorian Association were first into print with their paper "Cavalry Capers", so we were then prompted to do likewise with a paper of our own. I agreed that it was a good idea, and asked Frank who the Editor was going to be. I was more than a little surprised when he replied "You are Fred". As I had never edited anything before, I was a little dubious at first, but agreed to give it a go. That was in 1964, over 37 years ago, but under the title of "Cavalry News" it has survived to this day in 2001. Our first issue was in the form of an 8 page booklet, but over the years it has developed into a handsome 24 page booklet, with a green cover to remind us of our days in the jungle. The earlier issues had a sandy cover, as a reminder of the early desert days in Libya and Syria. "Cavalry Capers" has long since ceased publication, so "Cavalry News" has the task of keeping members informed of the movements of members' activities in each state. Cavalry News comprises an Editorial, then a message from the President, then stories and articles from various sources, plus photographs of excellent quality, due to the efforts of the printer, an old friend of mine from the old Light horse days prior to the war. The paper is well received in each state in Australia, according to letters received from our readers, and even though most of them never put pen to paper, there are a few others who contribute frequently with articles, photos etc. Our first CO Lt Col Fergusson, later to become a Brigadier, before his death supplied some interesting articles about his days in WW1 as an O Pip Officer, some of them being very droll indeed. As editor I have the final say as to what will be and what won't be printed, and I am heartened by the fact that some members state how much they look forward to the paper in its bi-annual appearance. I am well aware that all of the men who passed through our Regiment, to me has been given the single honour of being able to express my thoughts and ideas in Editorials over a long number of years. The first 50 issues have been bound into 2 separate books, and if I survive that long, I would like to have the following 25 bound into a book also.

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