

BOWN Reginald Frederick

10 December 1923 to 17 October 2014

WX36268 2/9th AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION

*The official Service records from the DVA Nominal Roll and the National Archives of Australia record Reg's last name as **BOWEN**, however the spelling should have been **BOWN**.*



Reg was born in Boulder, WA, on 10 December 1923 to Fred and Bernice with a younger sister Fay. Bernice's mother also lived in Boulder in a very tough conditions in a tough town just out of Kalgoorlie and lived there all her life. Reg's family left Boulder when the Mining Riots started around 1934 and moved to Perth.

Reg and sister Fay continued their education at the Claremont Practical School, later to become East Claremont Primary School. Reg loved sports and involved himself in as much as possible. He grew up in the Claremont area and would spend many years of his married life in the same area until moving to North Beach in 1991.

He joined the Army on 23 December 1942 at the age of 19. He had to get his father's permission to serve overseas.

Reg's initial training involved time in the Northampton region of WA where he was to meet his future wife, Maud. He was then shipped to Queensland for further training, in particular jungle warfare.

Reg joined the 2/9th and was shipped to Milne Bay and then Buna.Gona in New Guinea.

The 2/9th Battalion was originally formed in Queensland and served in the United Kingdom in 1940, forming part of a small Australian garrison sent there to help defend against a possible German invasion, before being transferred to North Africa where it took part in the Siege of Tobruk. It then undertook garrison duties in Syria following the Syria-Lebanon Campaign in 1941.

In early 1942, the 2/9th was brought back to Australia where it was re-organised for jungle warfare and took part in the New Guinea Campaign. Throughout 1942–1944, the Battalion was committed twice to the fighting against the Japanese in New Guinea.

In 1942–1943, the 2/9th fought actions at Milne Bay and Buna Gona before being withdrawn to Australia for rest prior to returning to New Guinea to take part in the advance through the Finisterre Range where the Battalion took part in the Battle of Shaggy Ridge in 1943–1944.

The Battalion's final involvement in the war came during the Borneo Campaign in mid-1945, when it took part in the Landing at Balikpapan. It was disbanded shortly after the war in early 1946.

Following Buna Gona, Reg returned to Australia for further jungle training. The 2/9th then returned to New Guinea and he was involved in the Battle of Shaggy Ridge, an historic battle. During his final service overseas he was in Balikpapan, Borneo, when the war was coming to an end. He was still fighting the Japanese in the Borneo jungles for three days after the war had ended until his unit finally received communications it was over, and the Japanese had surrendered. The 2/9th was involved in the repatriation of POW.s.



Reg, when interviewed by our Member David House, said that the highlight of his period with the 2/9th was his marriage to Maud, who he had kept in contact from their meeting in Northampton in 1942.

Maud, at the time of deciding to get married before Reg went overseas, was serving in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS), in particular, the top secret Australian Special Wireless Group.

She was based in Melbourne at the time and was given 24 hours leave in order to get married in Sydney. As this was not enough both agreed to go AWOL. Reg said that, "I was caught up with and had to spend a lengthy period in the slammer, it was well worth it though." He was caught AWOL three days over time and finished up with Field Punishment in Queensland before shipping out. Reg said, "It was bloody tough but got me very fit having to give up the fags at the same time."

Maud on the other hand, escaped penalty.

Reg was discharged following the end of the War on 30 January 1946

Following his discharge, like many ex serving personnel, he found it difficult to gain employment and started by carting bread for Naylor's Bakery based in Reserve Street, Claremont, using the horse and cart method. His faithful horse Bessy died in what was a sad time for him during that job.

Following that he worked in the local corner store, virtually running the place for the owners. He finished up working in plumbing supplies - originally starting as delivery truck driver and

eventually becoming the Sales Representative dealing directly with clients. He retired in 1984. Reg also played football for Claremont Football Club at Reserves level and A Grade cricket for Nedlands Cricket Club as wicketkeeper / batsman. One of his proudest moments in cricket was stumping Bob Simpson, the Australian Captain, who was playing in the A Grade competition at the time.

Reg was a Member of RSLWA North Beach Sub-Branch up to the time of his death, and at the date of writing Maud remains a Member.

Reg contributed significantly to the service of Australia and for that, we salute him.