

Graham Leigh Dolton

1945



2005



WESTERN AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS

"TELL US YOUR STORY PROGRAM"



***Graham Leigh Dolton
W.X.28219***

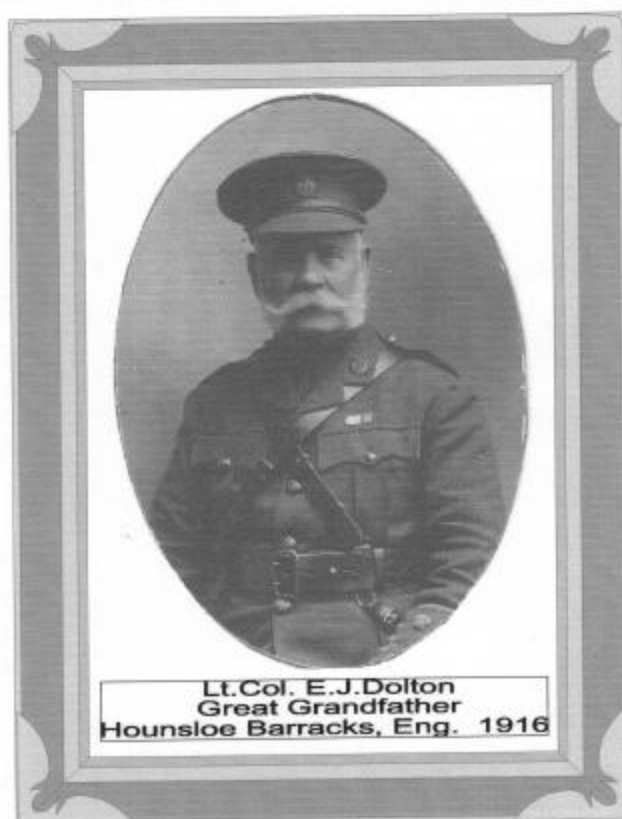
***1st. March, 1924
Merredin W.A.***



Graham Dolton
Northam 1942



Leslie Dolton
my father
Applecross 1943



Lt.Col. E.J.Dolton
Great Grandfather
Hounsloe Barracks, Eng. 1916

Graham Leigh Dolton

Eldest Son of Leslie and Winifred Dolton

Was born at the Merredin District Hospital on the 13 1924. My Father parents were the first family group to settle in the Totadgin District 1909, their block being 30 km south of Merredin. I attended school at the local district hall for a few years it eventually closed down through lack of numbers owing to the depression at that time, my next school was at Belka Siding school 13 km. It also closed for the same reason, I then had correspondence up until a school bus started up from Merredin, I peddled a bike 18km. To catch it at that time I was 12 years of age, I had to milk cows and separate before leaving which wasn't that bad except on cold wet or frosty mornings. I left school at 14 to help on the farms. I then had to get up earlier to feed and broom horses before sitting on a plough that was something I didn't enjoy. We purchased a gas producer to attach on a tractor, which made life much easier I enjoyed that and spent many long hours driving it. World war 11 started during this period, my father joined up so was on my own for some time. Just after turning sixteen I put my age up and joined the AMF, [Militia] May 1940. My unit 25th. Light Horse M.G. Reg. Which had a troop stationed in Merredin we trained at the weekends. Our first Camp was at Canning Dam, we were billeted in houses built for the workers that built the dam, after three months camp I went back to the farm, which by this time had been leased to our next-door neighbour so worked for him. Melville was our next camp training for another three months. From here I tried to enlist in the AIF with a couple of pals being in uniform I thought I might get away being under age, that didn't stop them from asking for a birth certificate that was it. Some of my friends with me were able to join and were sent to Singapore in a way I guess I was lucky as I would have been in the same unit as them the 2/4 Machine Gun Regiment. This meant I had to find a job, was able to work for a structural Engineering firm in Welshpool who were building hangers for the RAAF in Merredin. Japan raided the Philippines so was called up full time and went into Northam Army Camp. Having had experience driving Tractors and Trucks was drafted into training on Bren Gun Carriers became a driver and also went to a Sig. school on radios and signals. Our units name was changed to 25th Machine Gun Regiment. We sent to Moora Gin Gin, Muchea, Irwin River, back to Dandaragan Moora then up to Northampton, Tenindewa, Nabawa, so was able to see lots of the country in this part of W.A. Our Unit was disbanded at Nabawa and trucked back to Bellevue Race Course in Midland Junction, here we were given leave. After reporting to Claremont we were placed on a troop train and sent to a place called Rooty hill in N.S.W. spent some time there, Yeerongpilly Qld. While there was able to meet up with my Grand father was able to spend some time with him. Our next stop, after several weeks there then off to Jungle Training Camp at Canungra south of Brisbane not far from the Gold Coast. By this time we were pretty soft and very much over weight since leaving Nabawa some six to eight weeks earlier, as we hadn't done any Army exercises what so ever I will never forget getting off the train at Canungra in the middle of summer in full Army kit and having to march into camp we were buggered when we got there, allotted tents and then called on to parade with packs for a route march up a small mountain, for two months we marched up and down hills across creeks and gullies and next day we did it all over again, I became tired of it all so volunteered to join a commando sqn. Guess what I was doing it all over again, thought to myself if you get through this training and survive you could be bloody lucky, but survive I did and came out very fit and very much lighter, I never did put my hand up to volunteer again after that. At the end of my training and completing the Commando course did a revision school in signals was then transferred to the 2/9 Commado sqn., which was attached to 2/6 Aust. Div. Cav. Regiment up at Wandecle near



The assault wave runs ashore at Dove Bay. (Photo, Australian War Memorial).

Landing craft disgorge 2/9 commandoes at Dove Bay 0830 hrs 10 4 45



Landing craft disgorge commandoes at Dove Bay. (Photo, Australian War Memorial).

Herberton. This Regiment had seen service in the Middle East and were sent back to Australia to defend the top end, they were a Bren Gun carrier unit also, they were very much different to us in as much as being a lot older, their average age being in the middle thirties some a lot older if they had of gone through Canungra most of them would not of made it, as it turned out after jungle training in north Qld 50% eventually did, we as reinforcements only being in our late teens and early twenties and Canungra behind us they couldn't keep up with us. The Regiment had another name change this time inserting Commando before Regiment the Reg. Was made up of three Sqn. The 2/7, 2/9, 2/10 Commando Sqn. and that forming the 2/6 Australian Division Cavalry Commando Regiment.

We were given embarkation leave, I think W.A. personal left for home in the first batch I was away six or seven weeks being held up in Adelaide through massive troop movements from Darwin area at that time. Any threat to Australia had passed and was not expected, the War had changed its course, the Japanese in the Pacific had been pushed back somewhat, and Japaneses supplies to N.G. cut off. After getting back to my unit and within days we were trucked to Townsville on the 15th October for embarkation north on the Katoomba too where? Who knows a secret, as we slipped through the harbour in the middle of the night up through the barrier reef heading north rumoured possibly heading either Timor, Phillipines or even China, but as the Ship changed its course and headed North East New Guinea seemed the next guess, two days later we entered Milne Bay where the U.S. had a gigantic supply base. We spent the night there and were informed that Aitape was our destination and that we were taking over from the Americans and to be prepared for patrolling almost immediately, at this stage there was still over two thousand sea miles to go, after two weeks on the water we finished up in Aitape. The Katoomba anchored off shore, after breakfast we scrambled over the side of the Ship in very rough seas as a strong wind had blown up, down rope nets into landing barges supplied by the Americans. General McArthur's strategy was to blow the living daylights out of the Airfields at Aitape and Hollandia to isolate the Japanese 18th Army of Lieutenant General Hitazo Septic Adachi, between us and Alexishaven where other Australian Division were operating. The Japanese were completely cut off, their Aircraft grounded as all airfields had been destroyed, and their sea supplies cut off by U.S. Navy, but at no stage were they going to surrender. The U.S. Forces were assembling at Aitape for their big push on the many Islands in the mid Pacific. Thousands of troops were at Aitape when we arrived there and many more coming each day plus troop and war ships of all descriptions. On our arrival we relieved the U.S. forces in the area and started mopping up and clearing that part of N.G. from Aitape to the Sepic River. The 2/9 Sqn after a few days headed up the Torricelli Mountain to deserted Village called Sekum B. troop remained here for some time as a base and patrolled the many tracks in all direction to try to establish in which direction the Japaneses were heading, through contact with local natives it seems as though they were heading towards their main base in Wewak. We did have some contact with stragglers they were mainly setting up ambushes to slow down our pace, which kept us well and truly on the look out as we did have some fatalities on some occasions which affected us, you can do all the training in the world and any way you like, but you come to terms that you are not playing war games any more but this is for real, the worst part is in the thick jungle and not being able to see where your enemy and when they might turn up next. There were pockets of Japanese everywhere; some were along the coast mainly in some sort of places where they could obtain some sort of food supply. These small groups were most resistant and tried to hang on and became a pain in the butt, in the mean time we trudged up and Mountains along rivers creeks mud and slush thick jungle mosses leaches and



Wewak War Cemetery 1945 - Relocated to Lae



**A Pal killed
17.6.45**



what ever the jungle had to offer, you were for ever wet you would put on dry clothes and socks over night to sleep in if you were lucky enough to be able to dry some out, next morning within a short time you were saturated through sweat and rain, I don't think my boots ever got dry until we rested at the coast. We had lots of contact with the Japanese and lost a few men, on one occasion we were trudging through the jungle came to a river it had been raining fairly heavily almost dark so decided to camp down for the night it rained and still more rain after a while the Danmap river started to rise our section was between two large creeks leading into the river most of us climbed trees or sort higher ground, one of our comrades floated off on a tree and was rescued a mile out to sea, being pitch black it was impossible to see what was happening we all lost most of our equipment, this was towards the end of January, after being re-equipped in Suian a day or two rest we then headed back up into the Mountains to a village called Walum. After trudging through the jungle for some time eventually we finished up on the coast at an air strip built by the Japanese called But, resting there and training for beach landing which was going to take place on the 11th of May 1945. We assembled on the beach for a church gathering by our Chaplain Padre Bottrell, after which we were equipped with extra ammunitions and hard rations had a hot meal and waited to board naval ships for our over night trip to a beach called Dove Bay between Forok Point and Cape Moem, we were code named Fardia and were led by the sloop H.M.A.S. Swan under light rain. General Stevens had his headquarters on a corvette H.M.A.S. Colac Commandoes laid their weary heads in the rain on hot steel decks others bedded down on H.M.A.S. Dubbo, some time after midnight two cruisers H.M.S. Newfoundland, H.M.A.S. Hobart with a pair of Australian destroyers, H.M.A.S. Warramunga and Arunta plus Fairmiles Sub. Chasers and landing barges. A naval bombardment assisted by heavy aerial bombing and strafing by the RAAF. The troops had a hot breakfast of bully beef stew bread and apple jelly jam with hot coffee. At around 0630 hrs we were transferred to our barges ready to land still raining cats and dogs, passing the Colac, General Stevens did not camp all night on a steel deck but in a cabin in which to kip. "Their's Ocker" some one shouted. "Hooroo", you old bastard, the General gave a wave and wished us fair well, for some time we sailed around in circles to recoup while further strafing was carried out on the beach, it was thought our landing was going to be at a coconut plantation, our landing barges must have been a little off course as we landed on a narrow strip of beach and beyond a dirty stinking mangrove swamp up above our waist we spent most of the day with little progress had to spend the night there having to build some sort of frail platform above the swampy water, not a pleasant night, very early in the morning we were able to advance to the old German road and were encountered by a small group of Japanese who were waiting in ambush to of men were killed and two or three wounded one of which later died, we remained in this area for some time doing patrols into Mt Tazaki; it was in this part of our campaign where we received most of our casualties, mainly through ambushes and raids, we had to set booby traps around our camps each night and in our camping areas it became very dangerous when walking around at night and on some instances killing our own through neglect or lack of concentration, the booby traps were set each night, this was a system of grenades with instantaneous fuses set in rations tins with trip wires connected to lever pins one trap for every twenty meters or so, very dangerous to handle Lance-Corporal E.D.O. Blom a close friend was killed setting such a device only one person was allowed at a time to set them and each man had to take his turn. We were heavily supported by the 2/11 Btn and they cleared the area on the 22nd June, it was reported by this Btn. that a large number of Indian P.O.W. were locked up in a cave and left to die. [More about that later]. Wewak was cleared of Japanese on the 19th Aus. Inf. Bde. On the 20th May 1945. The Japanese garrison retreated to the



Padre Bottrell conducts a service at But Beach
before the Dove Bay landing.
(Photo. A.E.Bottrell)



Leaving H.M.A.S. "Dubbo" to enter landing barge before
the Dove Bay assault.
(Photo. Australian War Memorial)

Alexandria Mountains. It was on Mt Tazaki foot hills area that I got a type of foot rot where the skin of your feet just peeled away it was impossible to walk any distance so had to return to the coast and wait for a barge to take me back Boiken our Regimental base for treatment by soaking my feet in some sort of brine and drying them in the sun it was caused by continuous wet feet similar to trench feet in the first War, my job from then on was doing radio duty. I had no further part in the jungle, what a relief just sitting around in a tent for the first time since leaving Australia only twenty paces from the beach. The 2/9 Commando Sqn. Was relieved by the 2/3 Machine Gun Btn. And lifted by barge back to Cape Karawop on the 11th June, the 2/9 Sqn reported to have killed 32, Japanese confirmed unconfirmed unknown. The Sqn. was deficient in strength by 100 men. The 2/9th sqn, wastage by malaria, tropical skin ailments and other diseases were severe. Exhaustion and hard rations contributed to their fighting ability. As no local carriers were landed at Dove Bay all supplies had to be carried forward by carrying parties ammunitions, food etc. It was impossible to drop by air the jungle was too thick, carrying heavy loads up and down steep hills was no party believe me one step up and two down when it was very wet and muddy. Japanese shelling on Mandi Plantation was spasmodic but intensified when barges came ashore with supplies the mystery gun was never detected it was thought somewhere up Mt Tazaki, it was discovered in the jungle near Soarin, by locals in 1972 to be a 105 mm artillery gun. I was at Boiken when the 2/9 returned after a short spell they were sent back into the jungle to Walum and Danmap to clear that area they were supported by the two other Sqn the 2/7 and 2/10 that meant the whole Regiment were together for the first time since arriving at Aitapi as each Sqn. Had been attached to a Bde., the 2/7 to the 16th Bde, 2/9 to the 19th Bde and 2/10th 17th Bde. We all remained at Boiken until the War ended large numbers of Japanese surrendered in this area they seemed to be in good condition so were given the job of building their own compound all Japanese were sent to a island POW camp on Muschu Island just off shore until deported back to Japan. I was on radio duty when a report came through that a radioactive bomb had been dropped on Japan. If I can recall correctly it was over radio Australia I reported it to somebody or other on duty much merriment for a while. The Regiment took count of their casualties. Forty-eight of them K.I.A. in N.G. campaign and one hundred and nineteen W.I.A. All told they killed 778 Japanese and taken 23 prisoners and found 363 all ready dead. It was reported and confirmed later that several hundred Indian P.O.W. who were locked up in that Cave most had died it appears some survived. I was able to attend war trials while there, one interesting case involving murder and cannibalism with Indian prisoners, a Japanese sergeant major involved was let off through lack of evidence. It appeared that the Indian soldier who was an eyewitness who first told the story died before the case could come to court.

The 6th Australian Division paraded on Cape Wom Point Auster Air strip for Lieut General Adachi, Commander of the 18th Japanese Army in New Guinea for his surrender to G.O.C. Robinson at 1030 Hrs on 13th September 1945.

Australian troops were allotted Points for their return to Australia so many for length of service, marriage, children etc. As I was single with no children was well down the list and those of us left behind had a job of collecting army equipment and loading ships. I waited almost six Months before my points came up to say fair well to Wewak New Guinea, when a ship became available, can't remember the exact date but mid February but I had my 22nd birthday on board ship off Qld. Coast. We left on a bulk carrier MV Nordnes which had been carrying cement, who cares we were going home you could not sleep in the hold too hot and stuffy so had to make do with the hot deck, two weeks later we entered Sydney heads stayed one night at Sydney Show

grounds, next morning on train to Melbourne, my Father was still in the Army and stationed at east Oakleigh. I was able to transfer into his unit, and got a job driving staff cars for the next eight months. During that time I was able to stay with a favourite Aunt and Cousin Ross Simmons who was still in the Army and stationed at Albert Park he introduced me to a Army lass we became very good friends and before I left Melbourne we became engaged. I was able to come through N.G. without contracting Malaria. While in Melbourne I had two bouts of Malaria and spent both times in Heidelberg Military Hospital, knocked the stuffing out of me for a while, I also had two recurrences just after being back on the farm, no more attacks since. In October my father and I left Melbourne for Perth and discharge. I was away two and half years, from my mother, sister and brother they had all changed. I was discharged on the 25th of October 1946. After One thousand seven hundred and two days in the A.I.F., plus seven hundred and fifty six days in the Militia. Some years later my Wife and I had two trips to N.G. On one such trip we visited Lae Cemetery a sight I will never forget mostly very young in their late teens and early twenties and lets not forget all those Indian Solders, rows upon row of Unknown Indian Solders P.O.W. slaves to the Japanese who had to build Air strips in N.G., which took my memory back to Wewak and those poor buggers locked in that Cave



While in East Oakleigh my father asked me if I had any plans as to what I intended to do when I was discharged I think my reply was I haven't a faintest idea, after being looked after for so long in the Army I didn't even think about it. Not having any training except what I had been schooled at in the services I didn't think I would get much in the way of a civilian career. After a while he made a suggestion that I apply for a war service farm through land settlement scheme as he had done after the first world, thought that's not such a bad idea and left it in abeyance till I was back in Perth as it turned out, wheat farming land was pretty scarce and not much available in the early stages. I made application but was wanted two to three years may be longer before any large-scale development. Next step going into partnership with my father, there was some virgin country adjoining which I applied for and was granted seven hundred acres. Getting finance was not a problem was able to War service, Bank and Stock firm loans, which helped, pay for seed wheat, fertiliser, fuel, living expenses and some spare parts. Getting enough to purchase farm machinery, which was very scarce and expensive just after the war, so had to have to do with what little bits and pieces we had and scrounge from scrap heaps around areas. We went back to "fort Hill" name of property in an ex Army vehicle which we purchased from Army surplus stores late in November not a good sight everything badly run down, old house falling apart not liveable sheds, stock yards and fences in need of repair, we did have a two room camp that we could make do and lived in for two years. Our first crop quite reasonable, wool prices very good at that time so was able to cover stock firms debt. In-between farm work making cement bricks for a new house, my younger brother Phil came onto the farm so had plenty of labour. Moving on my wife Shirley and were married in Melbourne on the 29th March 1948, a garage was built while I was away and we lived in that for quite some time until house was finished. We have four children one daughter married to a local farmer two sons who are also farming, Peter who is on the family property Ian purchased farming property adjoining the third son Ross lives in Perth and works in the bank. And between them we have nine grand children. After leaving the farm my wife and I went to Libya for a while through Dept. of Agriculture to teach the Libyans dry land farming. After Libya we went touring England and Europe, away almost two years. On our return built a house in Dudley Park Mandurah for our retirement, have lived here twenty one years, both have joined Dudley Park Bowling and Recreation Club, which helps and keeps me occupied, in between all that have done lots of travelling.

WX 28219 Graham Leigh Dolton

I have lots of memories some good some sad some I would like to forget.

I don't think I will ever regret the experiences

Lieut General Adachi Surrender to G.O.C. Lieut.General Robertson 6th Aust Div Wewak N.G



This is how we came home on a bulk ship Nordnes. Not pleasant.



Home
North Sydney Heads
7th. March, 1946



THE CANUNGRA LAMENT

"Tramping up hills, with your pack on your back
Over the hills to buggery and back
The bloody instructors they pelt you with lead
I'm sick of Canungra- I wish I was dead.

Up at reveille and out on parade
Race down the hills and back up the grade
I'll be happy to say farewell to Canungra
To a bloody sore back and the last of my hunger

Twelve hours track up a strenuous track
Bodies perspiring, no chance of a bath.
Loaded with packs that would stagger a mule
Oh I'll never return here once I've finished the school.

One- rest days a week with twenty parades
strip the Bren and throwing grenades.
Parading for pay, for church and for beer
I would murder the B!!!!!! who sent me up here.

No time to answer letters I've received from the wife
I'm covered in blisters and always in strife.
Climbing rope ladders, like Tarzon the apes
Who said Canungra would put you in shape"

Author unknown

For a bonus after completing the course there was a bonus a few days at the Coast down close to N.S.W. Qld. Border which was great, the catch was you had to march there with full packs over the McPherson Ranges, I don't remember how far it was but I do recall it took us two days to get there and the same back. I wonder if it was worth it.?

Self-Graham Dolton with Ross Simmons
Anzac day Melbourne 2004

