

Gordon G. R. Fellows

The Miracle of the Coin

In 1941 I was evacuated to the Alexandria Civilian Greek Hospital from Tobruk. There I was placed in a bed next to a Greek Sub-mariner with whom I soon became friendly. We swapped an Australian shilling coin for a Greek Drachma coin. A few days later, I was transferred to the 6th British Hospital outside Cairo, where I had the Greek coin engraved with my name and army number – Gordon G R Fellows VX45773. After drilling two holes in it, I wore it around the neck with my identification discs.

Later on I met a Roman Catholic Padre, who, on learning that I was a “believer”, presented me with a little medal and suggested that if anything would get me back home to Australia this medal would.

I replaced the Drachma coin with the medal given to me by the Padre and wore it continually. I lost the Drachma coin soon after in either Egypt or Palestine, and the Padre’s medal too was lost just two years ago in Kununurra.

About eight years ago my son, Geoffrey, unexpectedly received a telephone call from a lady living in Bayswater, Western Australia. The lady, a Mrs Bartlett, had found a “medal” engraved with “G Fellows” and a service number on it.

When asked how the “medal” had come into her possession the lady said that her mother-in-law had recently passed away and the “medal” was among a box of all-sorts she had purchased at an auction in Sydney. When I eventually got hold of the “medal” I was amazed to see it was the Greek coin that I had last seen in Egypt or Palestine over 50 years previously.

Two years ago, once again I misplaced the Drachma coin. And then about 6 weeks ago I received a telephone call from George Howat of the 8th Battery, 2/3rd Lt AA Regt. George is an old friend and Army mate who lives some 70 kilometres away, but has never visited me in my home. George said that he had found “a Greek coin with your name and army number on it” and he had “got it amongst change from a taxi driver”.

So the coin had been in circulation for some time and had “miraculously” ended up with an old friend. Quite bizarre. What tales that coin could tell!