

Bill Franks 13.8.1923 – 1.7.2023



William Frederick Franks "Bill", son of John and Annie Franks, was born on 13 August, 1923 at Newtown, New South Wales. Growing up in Newtown, he was a keen hockey player and played for the Glebe Hockey Club.

In December 1941, Bill enlisted in the Australian Military Forces, originally in the militia, at Forest Lodge where he was posted to the 55th (55/53) Australian Infantry Battalion. He trained at the Greta Army camp, then spent some time in Port Stephens before departing for New Guinea. He recalled walking from Greta to Port Stephens in a day and being caught falling asleep with a tin of lollies on his chest whilst patrolling Stockton Beach.

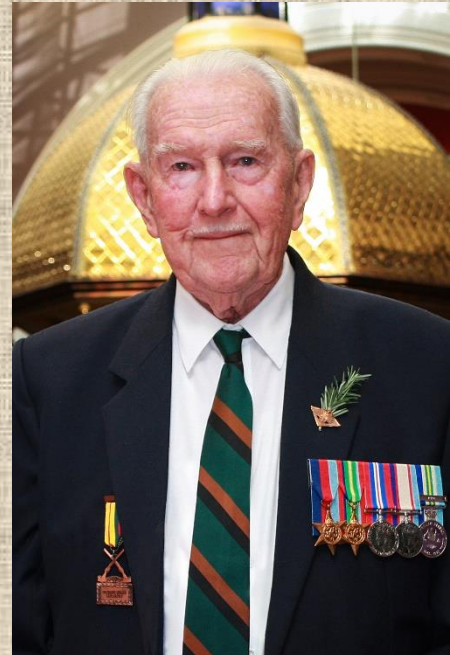
Bill spent his 19th Birthday in New Guinea. He wasn't one to share many war stories, mostly reflecting on the camaraderie with mates, the rations, and muddy trenches. He was a keen cook and was known to whip up a meal for the officers when the cook wasn't available.

He counted himself lucky on one occasion where he was sent as a runner to deliver a message, but reaching his destination found the troops had all been killed. He followed the communication lines back, but discovered they were the Japanese lines when he walked into their den. He caught eyes with the soldiers but didn't stick around very long and managed to find his way back to his battalion.

Bill's battalion mate Dick had a cousin he wrote to during their time in New Guinea. She said she didn't mind if Bill wrote to her, so they became pen pals. Her name was Delcie Janet Taylor "Janet".

On his discharge from the Army as Private in June 1946, Bill worked as a Die Setter and worked at Rheem for many years. Bill and Janet married at Top Ryde on 10th October 1946. Bill built a house at Wentworthville for himself and Janet where they raised 3 children. Bill enjoyed gardening, fishing and cooking and he and Janet moved to the Central Coast after Bill retired.

In 2005, Bill received the book "Kokoda" by Peter FitzSimons as a gift from his daughter. Bill read of Joe Dawson from the 39th Battalion who had assumably lost his wristwatch given to him by Elaine Colbran, following an explosion when the Macdhui was bombed at Port Moresby in 1942. Bill had been unloading the ship's supplies around that time. Bill had, however, found a watch out of Port Moresby, somewhere



between Bootless Inlet and the 7 Mile Drome. On the back was an inscription "To Joe, from Elaine 1941". Joe had also been camped in the area around that time. Thinking it was too much of a coincidence, Bill contacted Joe and returned his watch, still in working order, after more than 60 years.

Sadly, Bill's wife Janet passed away in November 2019, aged 94 and Bill passed away on 1 July 2023 at Lake Haven, New South Wales, aged 99 and six weeks shy of his 100th birthday.