

Banner & the Drums

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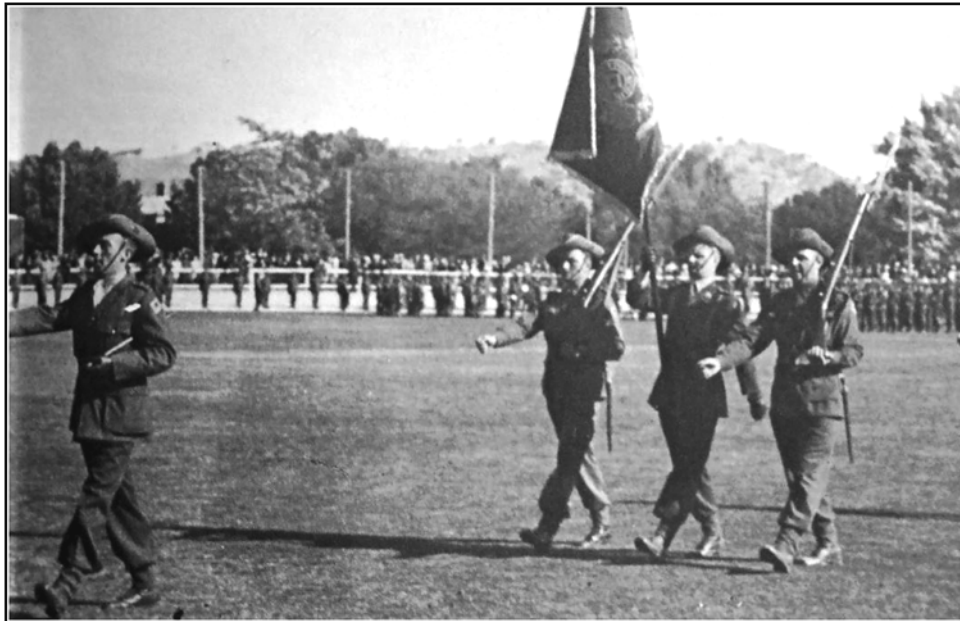
At the Albury Showground on August 20, 1940, the 2nd/23rd Infantry Battalion (Albury's Own) came into being.

Some of the soldiers were Albury boys, but most came from other parts of Victoria.

On November 3, 1940, at the Albury Sportsground, the townsfolk of Albury presented a battalion banner to the unit which was soon to go overseas.

Following the presentation, the battalion marched to the town hall where Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Evans handed the banner to the mayor, Alderman Dudley Padman, for safekeeping till the end of the war.

Earlier in the day the Albury Commercial Club had presented the battalion band with a set of 15 drums.



The 2/23rd Battalion (Albury's Own) Colour party pictured marching at Albury Sportsground, November 3, 1940

In the following months, the drums resounded in the streets of Albury, the lanes and paddocks of Bonegilla and the training fields of Palestine.

When the battalion moved into action in North Africa the drums were taken as a matter of course.

In danger of being cut-off, the battalion was ordered to withdraw from Derna to Tobruk.

During the move on April 5, 1941, a truck carrying the drums was destroyed by Stuka dive bombers. Only three drums survived.

On April 26, 1947, veterans of the 2/23rd Battalion assembled in Albury to perform three acts.

First they received back their banner from the town hall and in return presented the mayor, Alderman Cleaver Bunton, with the drum-major's mace in thanks for the banner's safekeeping.

The mace sits in the council chamber today.

The veterans then marched to St Matthew's Church and handed over the banner to be laid up as a silent testament to the battalion.

There it remained till the fateful 1991 fire which destroyed the church and reduced the banner to ash. In the rebuilt church the banner now takes the form of a stained glass window.

The final act of the 1947 Anzac Day weekend was to return the three surviving drums to the Commercial Club, where they are on display near the board honouring the 2/23rd Battalion (Albury's Own).