

A Christmas Tribute to Cecil Stephen Kelly:

Born in London 14 July 1916. Cecil moved to Australia, via Malaya with his father and older brother Bill in 1920

Cecil is my Father, he passed away in 2006 after a bout with cancer.

He served in the Second AIF, enlisting in 1940, and completing his service (discharge) late 1945.

He was a signals man in the 2nd/5th Infantry.

Ces (Cecil) or Ned served in the Middle East, The Defence of Ceylon, and New Guinea, twice.

In the Middle East, stationed in Palestine, he saw his first action in Syria (Lebanon) against the

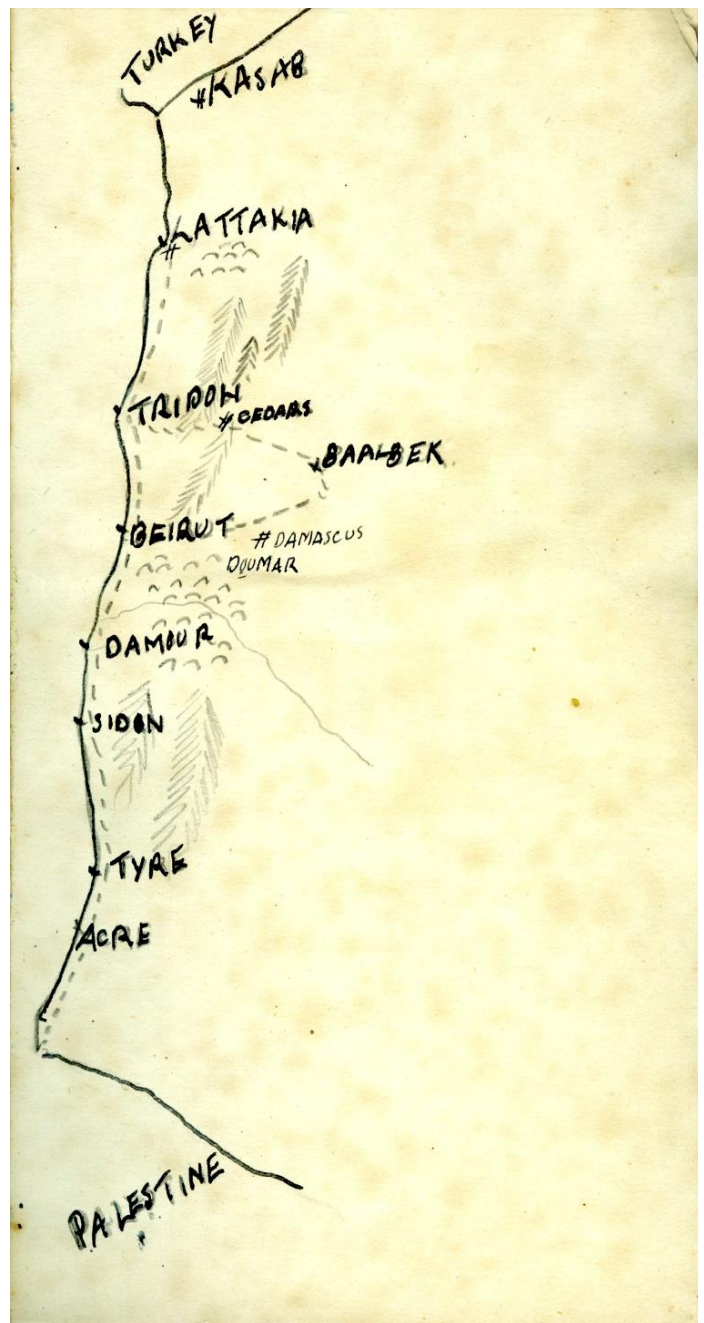
Vichy French at Darmour in July 1941.

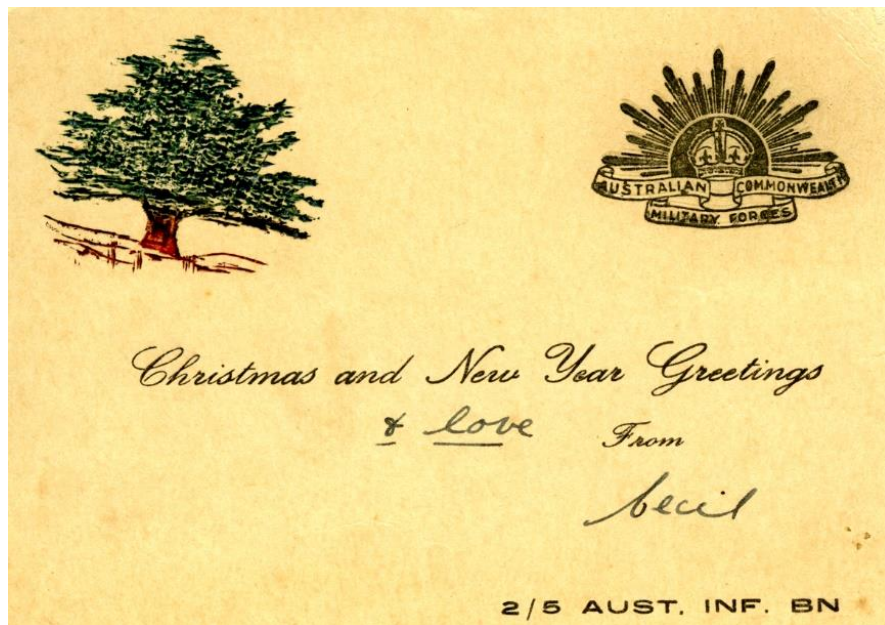
Later that year the 2nd/5th were stationed at Doumar, near Damascus and Beirut; See map sketched by Ces.

Here the 2/5 spent their first Christmas away from Home.

Ces kept a Diary of daily life throughout his term in the Middle East.

The following are excerpts from the build up to Christmas and New Year's activities.





DECEMBER 1941

Monday 22

Last day of Beirut leave, urk. Meandered up to canteen P. Reville.

Met many chaps came over with also from S.T.B. Had a great morning, a little bit merry. Canteen orchestra very pleasant to hear.

At 14:00 began our trip home. Rained solid. Snow and hail coming over mountains. Home 17:30, 2 letters for Ned, thanks darling.

Rained heavily all night. Change back to C. Coy. in the morning.



Tuesday 23

Rain stopped but very muddy underfoot. Sully on leave,

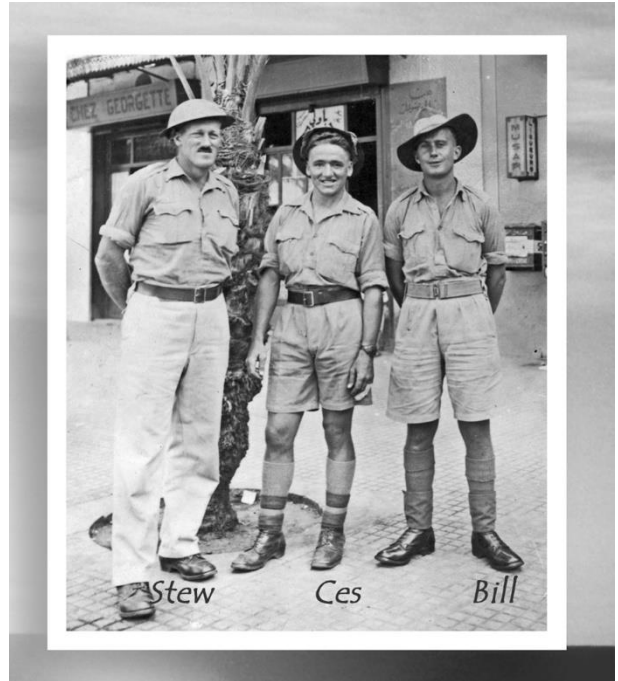
*Bill on exchange, Sgt Jacobs at school,
Ern over to B. Coy. To sort out chaos
caused by fire, Sigs. lost everything.*

News fairly heartening.

*Japs still having a pretty
good trot tho'.*

*Stew knocked by car while on leave in
Palestine*

Snaps from Beirut not bad.



Wednesday 24

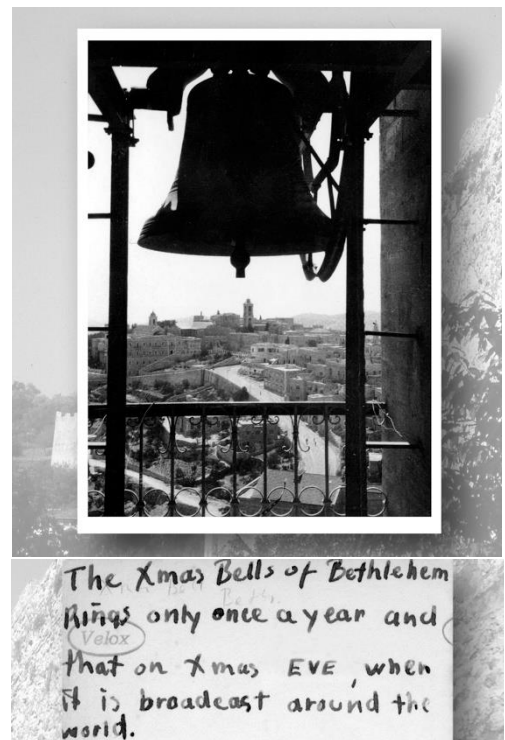
*Bert Preen seen in Damascus,
must go in and see him.*

Raining solid today.

*Received a nice C.F. Parcel
and new blanket.*

Drew up fixtures for sports.

*Donkey Races, Hockey Donkey,
and numerous other events.*



Beer issue 2 a man, 1+1. Waiting in que for an hour - Wouldn't it.

Had a great night tho', music, grub, sing-song and a card from number 19 (home).



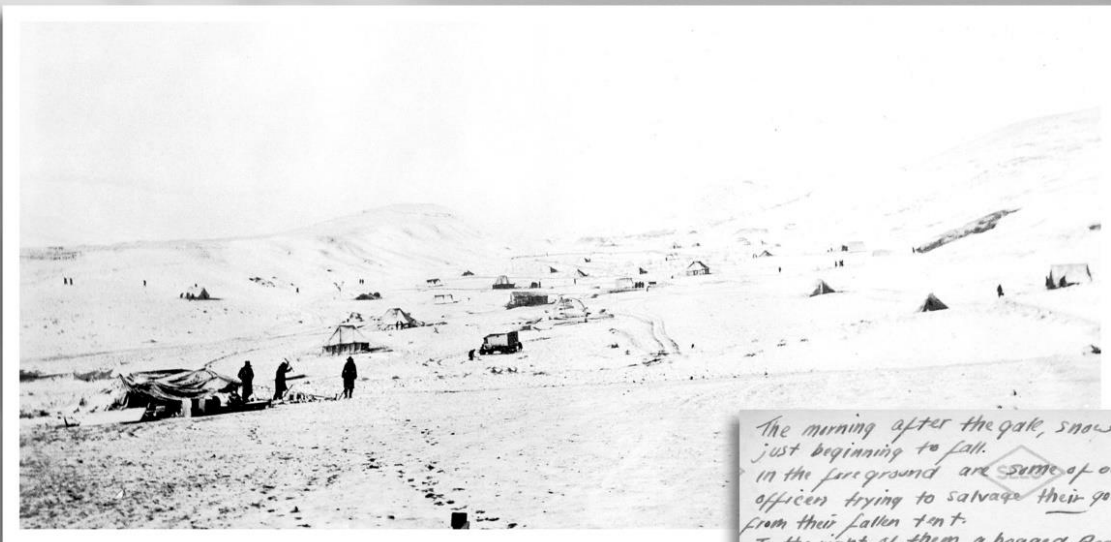
This photo could be the origin for the term "Legless" !?

XMAS MORNING
(oooh - my head!)
Taken in the rain
on plain film.
Not a badie eh?
love / Ned.

Thursday 25

Up at 7:00, raining still, church parade cancelled.

Cooks very drunk but spent the night cooking turkeys.



The morning after the gale, snow just beginning to fall. In the foreground are some of our officers trying to salvage their gear from their fallen tent. To the right of them a bogged Red Cross ambulance. The ~~tent~~ tent immediately above the officers, way back, is our platoon tent. This was a very dark morning.

Sgts. Tent struck in the night, got absolutely soaked, not very funny tho'.

All the boys very happy in spite of the weather. Band playing on footy ground.

Slept thru rain in the afternoon.

Had a party at night and what a party! Great time.

Friday 26

Not too well today?

Wrote off this morning. This afternoon called out this wet, drizzly, sniffy afternoon to mount an Ack.Ack. Gun.

Gawd help any Hun we saw.

Back late wet and in a bad mood----- Hitler-----the weather-----the army.

Getting near the end of the book (diary) Tch!

Saturday 27

Must write home.

Guard mounted to Bagpipes tonight.

Damascus out of bounds for three days!

Beirut leave, personnel to go by train. Snow.



Sunday 28

Quiet day in the office, writing home. Bed early.

Monday 29

Freezing weather, how the Russians can fight in this beats me.

Well the rumours flying around the place make for action early in the New Year.

Still busy on our positions tho' Sig duties fairly light. Spent afternoon on lamp in Comm. with Froggie pill box.

Papers came in from home.

Quiet day. Arabs decorate their cemetery. Dying average one per week.

Tuesday 30

Burial is a great turn, drums and wailing from tower.

News only fair, Uncle Joe holding and desert boys still going strong. Pacific not so good.

No Mail of any kind. Applying for leave tomorrow.

Finn going to Alexandra for school, lucky cove. Having leave together.

Very wild and windy night. Got in a bit of beer for tomorrow night.

Fraught with memories of last year's night. Ah me.

Tuesday 31

Off to Damascus
on leave. Had a
fair time.

Town full of
Arabs on their
Christmas
Festival.

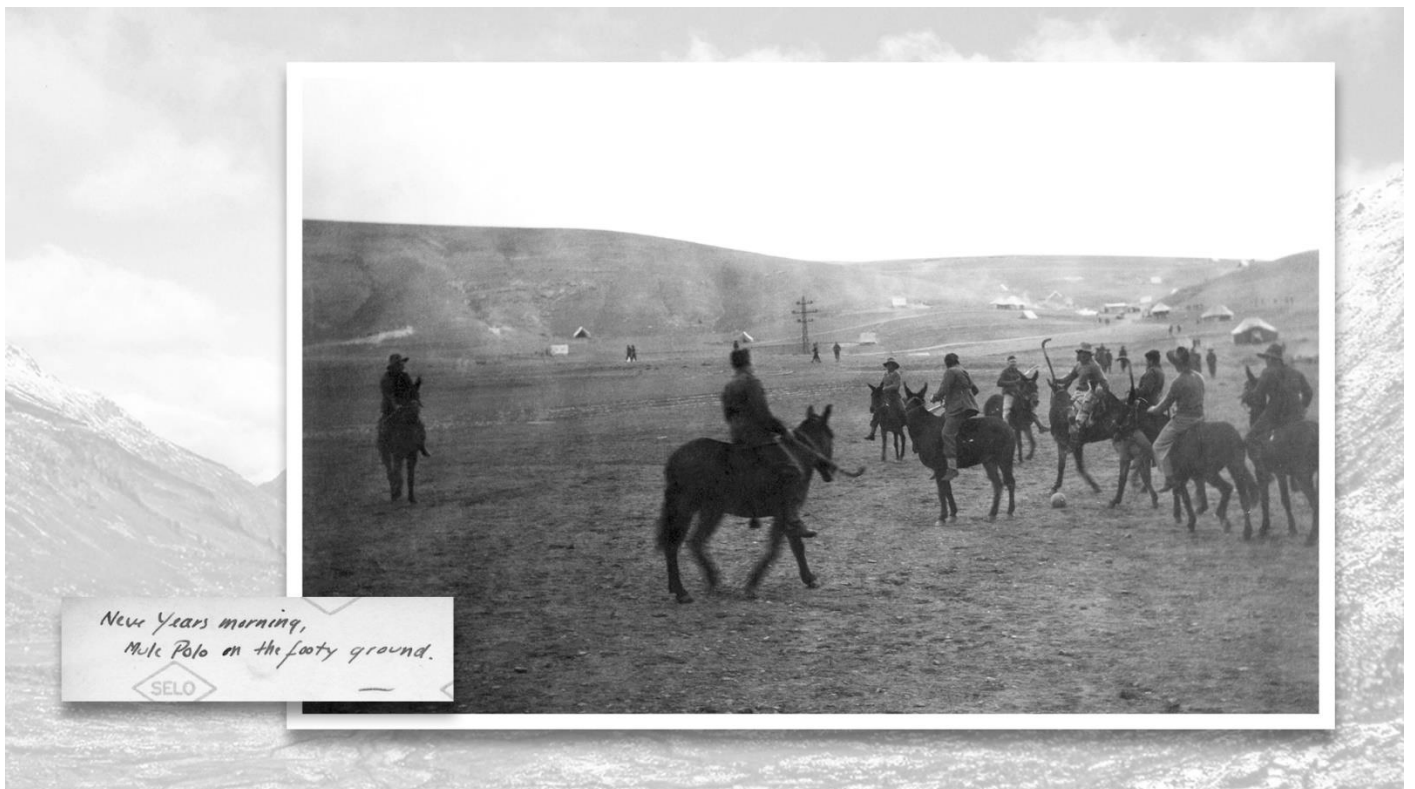
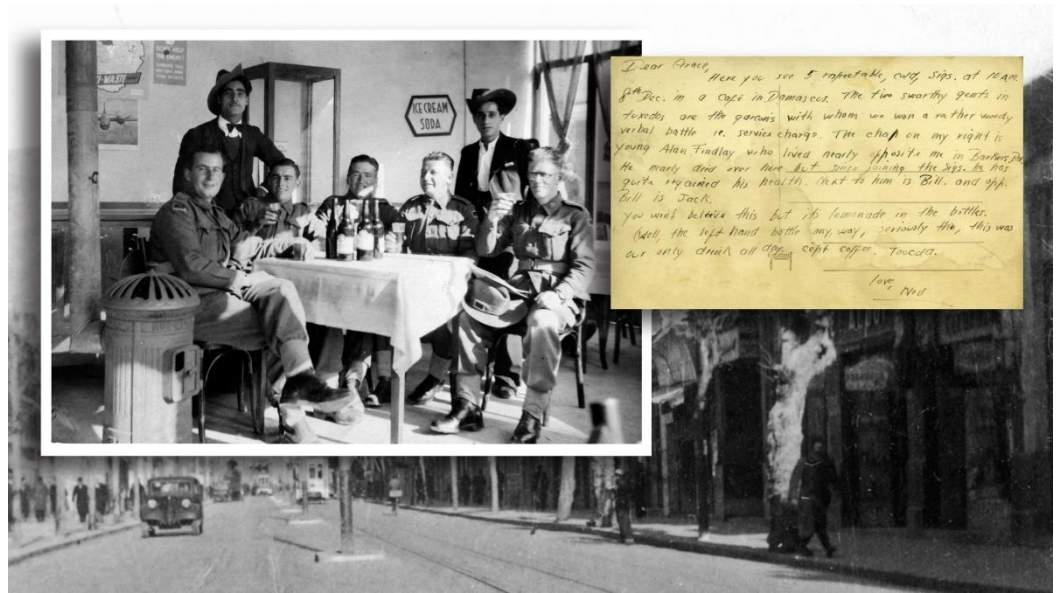
Somewhat chaotic.

It rained so Finn and I did a show (cinema), mungaree, then home.

All the boys came up to our tent, Tom, Bill, Jack, Ern, Clarrie, Charlie,
Sully and C.S. and Drum.

Had a champion night, 21:30 Tom, Bill and Jack passed out. We kept
going till 12ish. Woke 'em up and Auldlangsyned it till 00:30.

600 shots fired, GREAT DAY.





New Year's morning,
one of the races



Part of  happy one

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Well 1841 closes. Ends a year wherein every month seems a year.

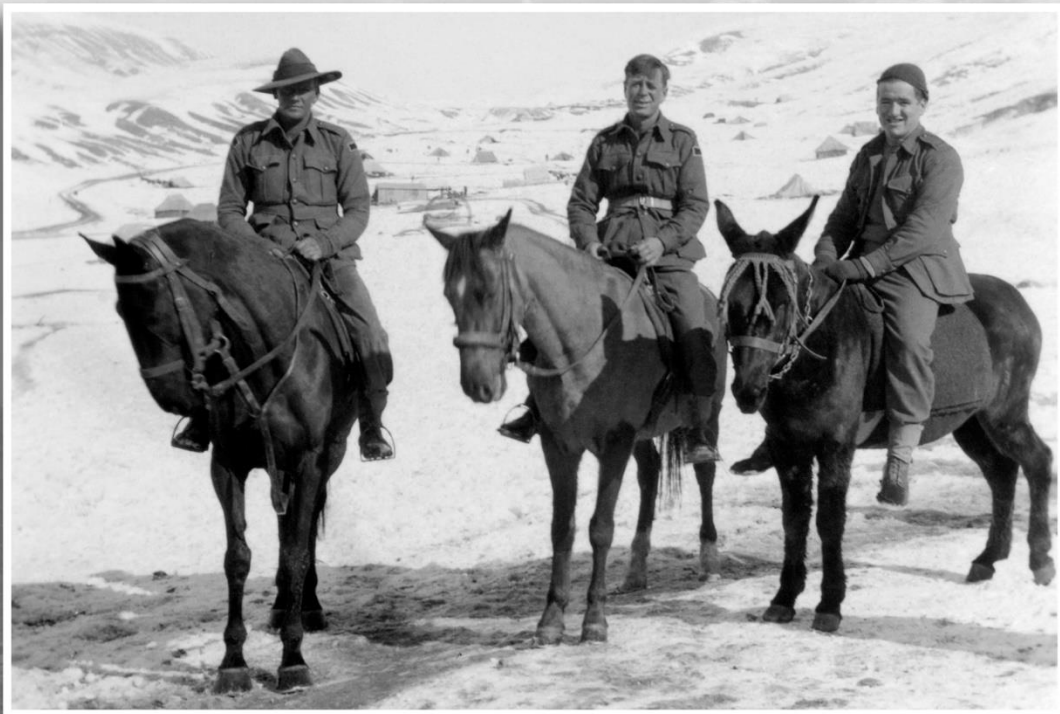
Health has been very good indeed. Compared to the many evacuations to Hospital that the Bn. has suffered.

Have received many parcels, thank you Darling.

Have not seen much action but little as it was it was pretty hot and many lessons that only actual combat can teach were learnt.

I don't think living as we have been has had any great influence, for the worse, on the lads characters, not apparent to us, anyway.

Now for 1942.



‘Ces’, on the right in this photo, never sat on a horse, mule, donkey again in his life, to my knowledge at least.

Tribute to Cecil S Kelly from his loving son; Stephen Kelly