



North Beach Sub-Branch

RYAN Kevin Bernard

WX25906 (WX50734)

2/28 AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION

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The official Service records from the DVA Nominal Roll and the National Archives of Australia record Kevin's date of birth as 04 Jan 1923.



Kevin was born in Donnybrook, Western Australia on 15 March 1924.

He enlisted in the Citizens Military Force at Bushmead as part of the 35 Australian Infantry Training Battalion on 23 February 1942, showing his date of birth as being 4 January 1923. Although records on enlistment showed he was 19, he was not yet 18.



On 13 July 1942 Kevin transferred to the AIF and was allocated Service Number WX25906.

He served in various units in Western Australia and on 12 August 1944 was transferred to NSW to 1 Australian Base Depot as a reinforcement. He underwent training at Canungra in Queensland and joined 2/43rd Battalion. In April 1945 he embarked the ship "Frederick Sykes" at Townsville, Queensland, for Morotai. On arrival, was taken on strength with the 2/28th Battalion on stand by for service in North Borneo.

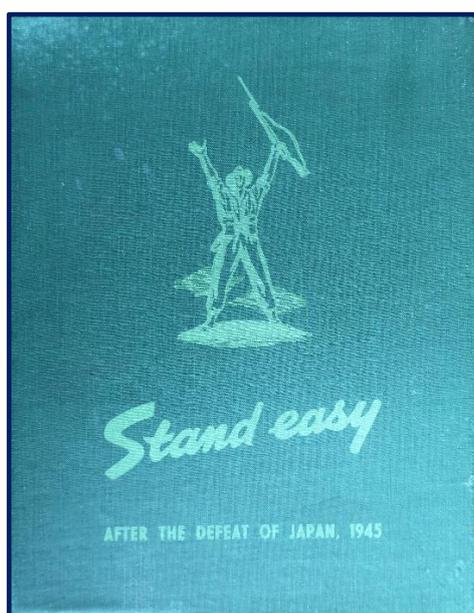
On 30 May, the 2/28th departed Morotai for British North Borneo.

In June 1945, the 2/28th, along with other units of the AIF and Defence Services, participated in Operation Oboe, the last major Allied campaign in the South West Pacific during the War to liberate Japanese held British and Dutch Borneo. This was a multi force operation planned primarily by General McArthur, with combined forces of the navy, air and army invading from multiple directions, forcing the Japanese to relocate inland.

Morotai was being used as a staging area in preparation for the 7th and 9th Divisions amphibious operations on Borneo. The 24th Brigade landed on "Brown Beach" on Labuan Island on 10 June. It took the 2/28th and 2/43rd 11 days to clear the island. The strongest Japanese resistance came from the area called the "Pocket". The battle began on 15 June and, after almost a week of shelling, air strikes, and naval bombardment, the 2/28th captured the position. The Pocket was captured on 21 June and the 2/28th moved to Beaufort, on the opposite side of Brunei Bay, spending the final weeks of the war patrolling the surrounding area.



*Kevin (looking over his right shoulder) in the Brunei Bay area, Borneo.
Photographed by VX18229 F. G. Hodgkinson and published in "Stand Easy".
For A.M.F. by the A.W.M. Canberra 1945.*



Following the end of the war and Japan's surrender, the ranks of the 2/28th thinned, as men were discharged, transferred, or volunteered for the Occupation Force for Japan.

Battle Honours of the 2/28th were:

- Beaufort
- Borneo
- Busu River
- Defence of Alamein Line
- Defence of Scarlet Beach
- Defence of Tobruk
- El Alamein
- Finschhafen
- Gusika
- Labuan
- Qattara Track
- Sanyet el Miteirya
- Siki Cove
- Tell el Makh Khad

Individual Honours were:

- 2 x Distinguished Service Order
- 6 x Military Cross
- 4 x Distinguished Conduct Medal
- 15 x Military Medal
- 51 x Mentioned in Despatches

The Australian war memorial in Canberra honours the 2/28th with this plaque:



In December 1945 Kevin was transferred to HQ of the 9th Division pending his return to Australia on 16 February 1946. The return to Australia was staggered, and first priority given to those with family commitments and longer overseas service. Following the return of the troops to Australia the 2/28th was disbanded. On his return to Australia Kevin was transferred to Western Command for discharge.

Kevin's records show that he served for a total of 1580 days (4.3 years), of which 296 days was in the South West Pacific operational area.

In May 1946 he was diagnosed with clinical malaria, and by 19 June 1946 was transferred for demobilisation. Kevin was discharged on 21 June 1946.

Following the occasion of his 100th Birthday on 15 March 2024 Kevin was presented a framed Certificate from RSL National to recognise not only the occasion, but his service to country.



Kevin being presented with his Certificate by Doug Simpson, RSLWA Trustee representing the Board.



Kevin (right) with fellow WW2 veteran Bill Fielding (left) at our 2024 ANZAC Dawn Service

Kevin is a long term member of the North Beach RSL Sub-Branch and is a regular attendee of our commemoration events, and when able at our monthly meetings. He is also a participant at his gym on a weekly basis.

The North Beach RSL Sub-Branch ANZAC Dawn Service and Remembrance Service always has Kevin's chair waiting for his attendance.

The North Beach RSL Sub-Branch is proud to have Kevin as a member, and we honour his service.