

Colin Ambrose Vears

9 December 1921 – 17 February 1992

SX17665



Figure 1: Colin Vears Wedding Photo, (Vears, 1942)

Premiers ANZAC Spirit School Prize 2025

Part A

Life Before the War:

Colin Ambrose Vears, born on the 9th of December 1921 (Virtual War Memorial, 2025), was the youngest of 8 children; 3 girls and 5 boys. He was born and grew up in Mount Gambier, attending Saint Paul's (figure 2 and 3) (now Tenison Woods College) for 5 years, before leaving school in just Grade 4 to work in a Dairy with one of his brothers, Kenny, demonstrating his commitment to his family. Colin grew up riding horses, riding his first at the young age of 3, contributing to his love of animals. Before enlisting, Vears' also worked alongside his father, who at the time drove



Figure 2: Image of Saint Pauls' Catholic Boys School (1916), Mount Gambier (Tenison Woods College, 2025)



Figure 4: Image of the Vears Horse and Cart 1920 – (Public Library Services, 2022)

Hansom and horse cabs (figure 4) for the local family business known as 'Vears Taxi's'. (L. Vears, 2025). This business is still running to this day, reaching over 125 years old; making the company one of the oldest Taxi companies ongoing in Australia (Vears Taxi's, 2007). This demonstrates that Colin, along with the entire Vears' family were committed to the Mount Gambier community and had strong connections with those living in the Mount Gambier area.



Figure 3: Saint Pauls' Scholars, Mount Gambier 1930 (Public Library Services, 2022)

Figure 5: Attestation Form where Colin lied about his age (National Archives of Australia, 2025).

War Service:

By the young age of 19, on the 8th of January Colin Vears, better known as Collie, had lied about his age on his attestation form in an effort to join the war (figure 5), (National Archives of Australia, 2025). Born on the 9th of December 1921, his enlistment papers were scribbled with the date, born 22nd June 1919 – claiming he was 21 years old. On the 15th of July 1940, he was officially enlisted and taken on strength in the 2/9th armored regiment (Virtual War Memorial, 2025). A mere seven months later he was posted to duty, meaning he had completed his training. Colin began serving in Australia, working in transport and driving tanks (fitting,

Figure 6: Service and Casualty form that shows hospital visits (National Archives of Australia, 2025).

considering his family's transport history), remaining in the 2/9th A.R located in Victoria. After Japan joined the war, the fear of invasion in northern Australia was a concern, so to prevent this, the 2/9th A.R base became Australia's main armored training base as it was more inland (Australian Army Research Centre, n.d.). On the 30th of May 1942, Colin was taken to C.H Wayville. This facility was where soldiers (often young recruits) would receive a mental evaluation as stress levels were high and army life was known for being a major shift. On the 12th of November in 1942, Colin took just over a week's leave, and in that time married his wife, Eileen Joyce Vears, who he would spend another 50 years of his life with. Over the next two years, Colin continued serving in the 2/9th Armored Regiment, but he was admitted and then discharged at Brigade Hospital approximately 8 times due to minor injuries, illnesses, etc. (figure 6). This was common for soldiers during this time, as life in the army was often quite harsh on a soldier's body.

After continuous time serving in Australia, on the 19th of July 1943, Colin boarded a troopship in Townsville, beginning the multi day journey to New Guinea (National Archives of Australia, 2025). A troopship, often referred to ships used by the Australian Military during WW11, transported soldiers, supplies and equipment (Department of Veteran's Affairs DVA, 2025). Just days later Colin, along with many other soldiers, arrived in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2025). This date marked the beginning of Colins' operational Overseas service. Generally, trips of 1 week or longer on these boats were quite harsh, soldiers were packed tightly amongst each other, and meals were quite bland and repetitive (Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2025). Just weeks after Colin arrived, he was hospitalized for a fractured knee and an unknown disease that he contracted in the tropical conditions (National Archives of Australia, 2025). He was temporarily transferred to the 2/9th Australian General hospital (A.G.H) where he would spend just over 2 weeks recovering. The A.G.H's main role was the medical treatment of soldiers, which included receiving wounded soldiers, emergency surgeries and treatment (Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2022). On the 28th of December 1943, Colin was diagnosed with Malaria, a severe and potentially life-threatening disease, that in some areas caused more deaths than enemy action (Army Heritage Center Foundation, 2025). Over the month and a half, Colin was transferred between the 106 C.C.S and the 2/6 Australian general hospital before eventually being cleared to return to the 1st Reinforcement Depot in New Guinea. Colin was then granted proficiency pay on the 28th of May 1944, as a financial recognition of a certain period of service. On the 9th of June 1944, Colin was medically assessed and marked as

"B2", meaning he was unfit for some tasks. Despite this challenge, Colin continued to serve for another 2 months before being evacuated to the 2/1 Aust Gen Hosp recorded as a Malaria relapse on the 4th of September 1944. Colin was released to his unit 6 weeks later for a short period of time, before attending an A.H.Q Det conversion school. These were often where soldiers were sent to learn new roles within their units. However, on the 19th of November 1944, Colin was announced medically unfit for the tropics and sent home giving Colin a total of 272 days of overseas service (Figure 7).

CARD E2/G/VY:
 MY: 130
 Ext: 688

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES
 Central Army Records Office,
 1st Flade,
 Albert Park Barracks,
 MELBOURNE, S.C.3.

This is to certify that Army No. : *Sr 17665*
 Rank : *Private* Unit: *127 Gun Art Coy*
 Name : *Colin Ambrose VEARS*
 served on Full Time duty in the :-
AIF 25 Jul 42 to 12 Jul 44

Total Effective period of Service *1428 days*
 Overseas Service : *272 days*

War Badge : *RMS No A 249868*
 Certificate of Discharge No. : *327443*

Colonel,
 CIG CENTRAL ARMY RECORDS OFFICE,
 26 JAN 1960

National Archives of Australia NAA: B883, SX17665

Figure 7: Australian Military Service Record (National Archives of Australia, 2025).

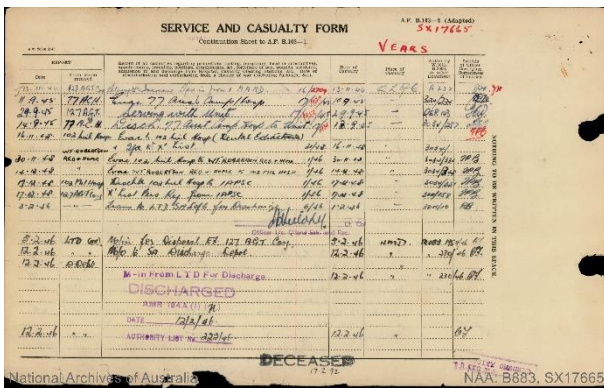


Figure 8: Service and Casualty form with date of discharge (National Archives of Australia, 2025).

After days at sea, Colin, tired and ill, arrived home in Australia. Upon his return, Colin was immediately hospitalised at the 77th A.G.H and already receiving medical help. He remained there for an extensive period before returning to service in light duties. Colin was returned to duty in Knuckey Lagoon camp, Dawin, where he would spend another 2 months before being admitted to the 122 A.G.H. Colin spent the next 7 months moving between 4 main hospitals and his unit. On the 6th of February 1946, Colin was moved to the Leave and Transit Depot Company in

Maribyrnong, Victoria to begin his discharge process. Finally, one-week later Colin was discharged and declared medically unfit for service (due to Malaria) and allowed to return home. This concluded Colin’s Military service, ending with a total of 1428 days of active service, including his overseas time (figure 8).

Life After the War:

Upon Colin’s return, not only did his body undergo trauma, but his mind also suffered. When Colin returned home, along with his 2 older brothers that served as well, they soon discovered that they had lost everything. All properties that the 3 boys owned and their shares in the Vears’ family business had been signed over to their only other brother that didn’t go to war due to alcoholism, Algie (F. Vears, 2025). Colin’s Father had passed during his service, leaving his wife who suffered with dementia the task of looking after the boys’ assets, ultimately resulting in all properties and shares being signed over to Algie. This led to Colin experiencing battles with his mental health due to the trauma he faced, resulting in some legal troubles (figure 9). These were excused due to exemplarily military services that were recognised in court. Two years after Colins’ court case, him and his wife Eileen

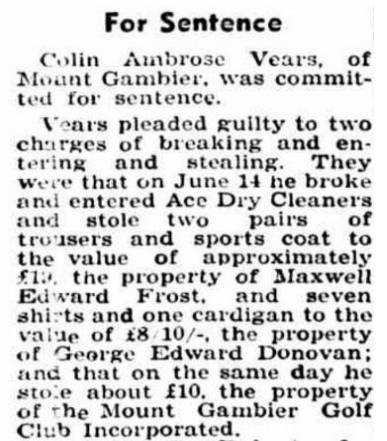


Figure 9: Image of Legal Case Involving Colin Vears (Border Watch, 1952).

had their youngest son, Lawrence. After the war, Colin continued working as a timber mill benchman, still living in his hometown, but now, years later with 4 children of his own. Colin didn’t meet his eldest daughter, Lorraine, until she

was 2 years old, due to him serving in New Guinea when she was born. This was a contributing factor to Colin’s struggles and heartbreak upon his return home. He went on to live a long life, even having many grandchildren of his own, before his passing in 1992 at 70 years of age. Colin is buried in his hometown at Carinya gardens alongside his wife (figure 10), where some of his children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren still reside. His memory lives on even now, through stories with his children, speaking very highly of their father and describing him as honest, kind, gentle and loving (L. Vears, 2025).



Figure 10: Colin and Eileen’s Gravestones (City of Mount Gambier, n.d.)

Anzac Spirit Characteristics: 500 words

Figure 11: Colin's War Medals

Colin Vears consistently reflected perseverance throughout both his experiences within the Australian Military and his life after the war. Whilst serving, he often battled disease and injuries but never allowed this to prevent him from returning to his unit (figure 6). Rather than remaining behind, each time he recovered he continued serving alongside his comrades, demonstrating a strong level of perseverance, unwavering commitment to duty and mateship. Furthermore, Colin demonstrated perseverance upon his arrival back to Australia, where he dealt with mental struggles, many years after the war (L. Vears, 2025). Even though Colin struggled, this didn't stop him from being an active parent and a devoted husband to his wife, Eileen. His involvement in the War and perseverance is recognised through the 4 medals he received from his time in the War (figure 11).

Another ANZAC Spirit characteristic that Colin embodied was mateship. Through interviews conducted with Colin's youngest son (L. Vears, 2025), it was highlighted that Colin always supported his friends, during, before and after the war. He supported his brothers through their mental anguish after returning from the war and losing their properties, as well as supporting his brother, Kenny through issues with gambling (L. Vears, 2025). Another example of his mateship was that Colin named some of his children after his friends, as he valued the



Figure 13: Vickers Gun troop, third light horse company, Mount Gambier, 1940. (Colin is 2nd row from top, 3rd in from right) – (Public Library Services, 2022)



Figure 12: Colin with friends at the Sawmill, Penola Road Mount Gambier (Public Library Services, 2022)

strong connection they shared. Colin also developed strong friendships during his time in the War and after (figure 12, 13 & 14). Ultimately, Colin demonstrated perseverance, courage and mateship throughout his whole life, and during the second World War.



Figure 14: Colin second row, second from the left in the Third light horse machine gun troop Mount Gambier 1938 (Public Library Services, 2022)

Words: 1488

The word count does not include referencing, bibliography, and brief captions under photographs/tables/maps etc as per guidelines

Part B

I chose Colin Vears as he is my Great-Grandfather. I felt it was important to choose someone from my family, especially someone that I felt connected to. I didn't have to think twice when the opportunity arose, as I had grown up with my mother always speaking of my Great Grandpa, Poppa Collie, and his loving nature. Also expressing the fact that he had served in World War 2. I knew instantly that Colin was someone that was worth researching, and whilst he didn't have much of a digital footprint, he made a huge impact on many people's lives.

To begin my research, I first utilized my online sources, beginning with the Virtual War memorial as it was quick and easy to navigate. From then on, I learned very quickly that his documented time in service was limited, with much information not available or basic knowledge that I had known prior. My next steps involved reaching out to the War memorial's research center by email, in an attempt to gain more knowledge about Colin's service. Within days, the center had responded, directing me towards the National Archives of Australia and the Department of Veteran's affairs, to find the information I was looking for. Deeper research into the NAA's records on Colin I soon discovered 20+ pages available on their website. With this I was quick into learning and piecing together parts of his life. I spent many days attempting to translate the army codes and cursive handwriting, before I had a complete written out version of Colin's time away. I also found many photos of Colin and his ancestors on Libraries SA.

It wasn't long before I realized I wouldn't be able to obtain all the information I was gaining, nor would I be able to write it all into my final report. I soon made the decision to create a portfolio that I could extract information out of when needed. By the end of my research, before I began writing, this folio reached over 3500 words. It was full of my research both online, and through multiple interviews held with Colin's youngest son, the last remaining of his kids, and one of his granddaughters, Paula. Another website that helped me find information about Colin's service and life after the war was Trove. I dug through the many newspapers and reports on Colin to discover more about him and his experiences.

As for the less formal side of Colin's life, as mentioned earlier, I conducted many interviews with Colin's son and granddaughter to gain a deeper understanding of Colin's life and how he was viewed by those around him. This helped me see into what life was like around the time and the observations made by his close family. I also reached out to the current owner of 'Vears Taxi's' to capture an insight on details to do with the company and how it runs now, considering the fact that the company is no longer in the family.

There were many challenges that arose with this project, I struggled especially with the service period, as it was revealed to me by Colin's close family that he didn't like to talk about the war. In fact, no one from his family knew that he had suffered with Malaria or any of his injuries he obtained.

Words: 554

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Appendix

A) Screenshot of Emails received from Australian War Memorial, 2025.

