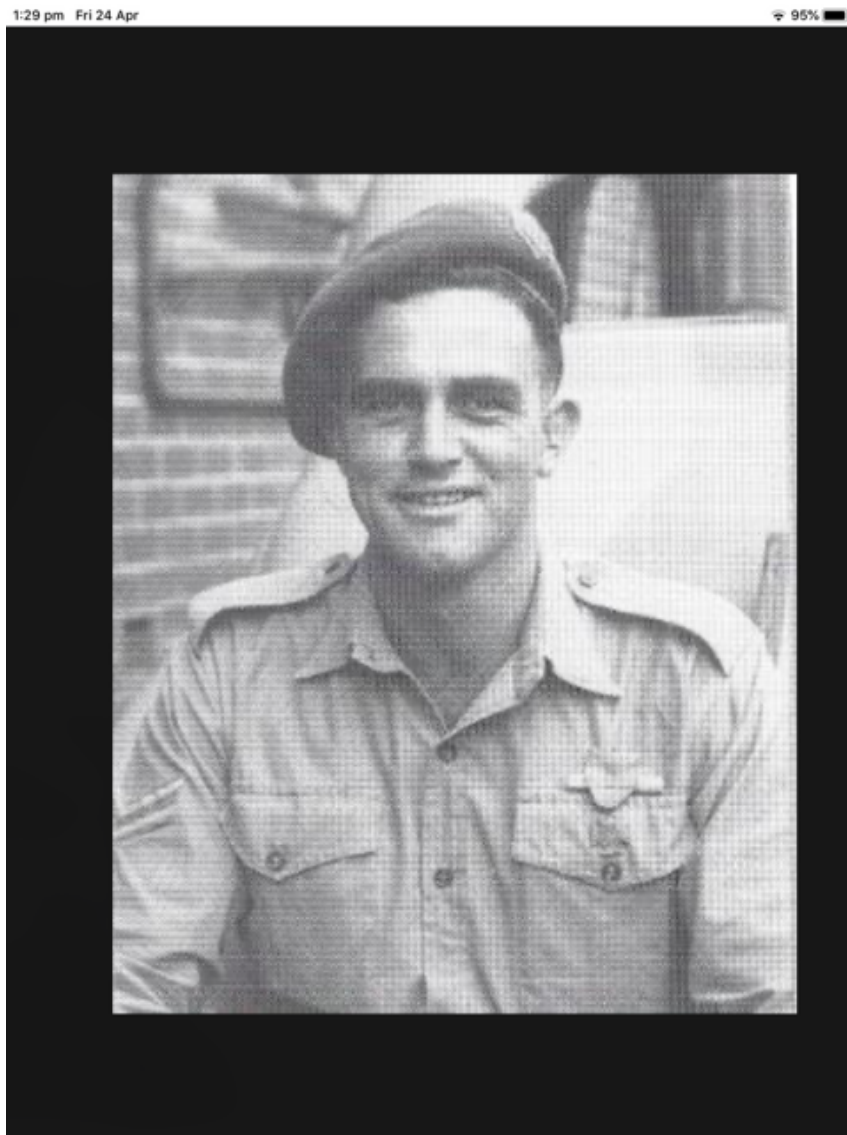


PRIVATE JOSEPH WILLIAM POYNTON (WX12552) – 1922-2004

NO 2 SECTION, A PLATOON

<https://doublereds.org.au/history/men-of-the-22/wx/joseph-william-poynton-r10/>

BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES



Cleary, *The men who came out of the ground*:

.....

ON 19 FEBRUARY 1942 at 10 a.m., Japan's advance through Asia arrived on Australia's doorstep when 188 planes attacked Darwin, killing an estimated 250 people. The raid was designed to knock out Allied air power in Australia's sleepy northern outpost so that Japan's plan for simultaneous landings in east and west Timor could be carried out later in the evening.

.....

The battle-hardened 228 Regiment under the command of Colonel Sadashichi Doi, which had fought its way down through China and was fresh from conquering Allied troops in Ambon, was marching in three columns towards Dili. Two companies of the 228's 2 Battalion were heading east into Dili, while 7 Company was moving south-east towards the mountains in order to block the retreat of the Allied troops in Dili town and at the airfield.

.....

Privates **Joe Poynton**, 19, and Herbert Thomas, 30, used their Tommy guns to good effect, while Private William Hudson, 22, used his rifle and Curran lobbed grenades.

.....

As dawn approached, McKenzie realised that his situation was hopeless. His men would be completely exposed by daylight and the section was likely to suffer more casualties, if not be wiped out completely. McKenzie decided that he could not follow his orders; he prepared to blow the runway with charges which had been set for some weeks and then make a run for the town. Just as McKenzie's men prepared to depart the airfield, about a dozen Japanese troops charged their position, crossing the footbridge over the canal. The Australians returned fire and stopped the advance. Firing at a range of 50–100 metres, and despite having little protection other than the corner of a tin shed, **Poynton**, Thomas, Hudson, and Curran held off 'streams of Japs who were trying to force their way across the little bridge'.

Of the four men, it was **Poynton's** firing that proved to be the most accurate and prevented the position from being overrun. The men from the section saw **Poynton** 'fill the ditch' with Japanese as they pressed their attack over the footbridge. **Poynton** had fitted a 50-round drum magazine to his Tommy gun; so intense was his firing that the gun became too hot to handle and **Poynton** had to ask his mates to help him change the magazine. During a lull in the fighting, a single shot rang out from the middle of the airfield. Two engineers who were positioned in a slit trench had seen a figure trying to crawl out to cut the wires to the explosives. One of the engineers, Corporal Rex 'Tex' Richards, stopped the infiltrator. Just before dawn, McKenzie gave instructions to Corporal Curran to blow the airfield while McKenzie and a party of four would cover their retreat, all of them meeting at the south-east corner. To make their escape they would first have to cross 600 metres of the airfield's open ground. As they prepared to leave, still more Japanese pressed the Australian position but they were held back by the party of just four men.

.....

The explosion created a huge diversion for McKenzie's men, who were quickly making their way towards the corner of the runway. As **Poynton**, Thomas, and Hudson covered the withdrawal amid a crazy scene of smoke and dust and bullets, they found time for one last gesture for a

brave and dying comrade. They saw that Private Gannon lay wounded next to his signal lamp and so they raced over towards him. Hudson, who like Gannon had enlisted in the outback mining town of Kalgoorlie, realised that Gannon was so badly wounded that he could not be moved. Hudson grabbed Poynton's water bottle and left it with Gannon, bidding his dying mate a heartfelt farewell before moving off with the rest of the party.

.....

At 8.30 a.m. McKenzie's party made haste towards the mountains, joining a convoy of Dutch soldiers in a car and a truck. After passing the governor's residence McKenzie spotted a Japanese soldier on the road. He went to fire on him but his gun jammed. This was a lucky mishap because McKenzie soon realised that the Japanese soldier was a member of an ambush party that had been set up to wipe out the retreating soldiers. McKenzie looked for a better location to approach the Japanese position undetected. As they moved above it, they saw that it was manned by eight Japanese soldiers armed with two light machine guns and six automatic rifles.

Poynton and Private Fred Growns, 21, a tractor driver from Ballidu, WA, moved close to the ambush post and Growns shot one soldier with his rifle. Poynton took out a machine-gun crew with his Tommy gun and then, after a Dutch soldier handed him some grenades, darted towards a tree that was near the enemy. Using his skill as a bowler on the cricket pitch, Poynton's first grenade missed its mark, his second failed to explode, but his third landed next to the second machine-gun crew and took out four men.

.....

That night, Callinan slept in the hills before moving on to Aileu and then to Railaco, above the company's former base at Three Spurs, which he reached after an exhausting two-day march on mountain tracks used by people, ponies, and goats. They marched up and down, across an endless series of 'false crests' that made up the mountain range. At Railaco he was reunited with more men from the brave section, including McKenzie and his party. McKenzie and Poynton were highly decorated for their actions at the airfield and at the ambush above Dili. Poynton was awarded the DCM, and McKenzie was awarded the third highest honour for an officer, the Military Cross.

Poynton had proved himself to be the perfect candidate for an 'independent company'. While Poynton was physically tough—he boxed at middleweight and captained the Western Australian rugby union side—he was emotionally fragile. Like many others in the unit, Poynton had endured a difficult childhood that followed his father's desertion of the family when he was 13. The experience had 'left a hole in him', said his younger sister, Ann Creswell-Beasley. Though he was a man's man, women liked him because they sensed his vulnerability. By joining the 2/2 Company Poynton had gained a new family and perhaps the father figure he had sorely missed in his childhood. That night on the airfield, Poynton was holding up a family tradition from his mother's side that spanned a millennium. His mother's family, the de Creswells, could trace their lineage back to William the Conqueror, who led the Norman conquest of England in the Battle of Hastings of 1066. Poynton's middle name was William. He had certainly served

lived up to his lineage during his first brush with vastly superior enemy numbers at close quarters.

.....

It wasn't only the men directly under Veale's command who wanted to get off the island. Even Private **Joe Poynton**, the hero of the battle for the Dili airfield, found himself part of a group wandering aimlessly along the Timor coast looking for a boat to sail to Australia. A few days after the airfield encounter, **Poynton** had made it all the way over the Dutch border to Atamboea, where he met Lieutenant Colin Doig and three other 2/2 members. The six decided to attempt to sail to Australia.

.....

At this time, some of Veale's senior officers, Majors Cape and Chisholm, attempted to sail back to Australia in two makeshift vessels which they acquired on the north coast of the island. The two boats soon lost sight of each other and after three days at sea Cape's party gave up when their boat capsized, causing them to lose everything other than the clothes they were wearing. To survive they begged and scavenged for whatever they could find. ... when the two parties were reunited they headed for Portuguese Timor. Along the way they met some Dutch soldiers and three Dutch Timorese boys who were very helpful to them and 'settled with us'. After a harrowing journey taking almost two months, moving through 'very heavy tropical rain each day', Cape and Chisholm found Spence's headquarters in Bobonaro.

.....

Dexter was not satisfied that the threat had passed and so he ordered Corporal Foster to mount a reconnaissance patrol. When Foster asked for volunteers, Privates **Joe Poynton** and John Darge stepped forward. Poynton, who had fought heroically in the 2/2's first action against the Japanese in Timor, was to bookend his service by taking part in its very last mission. At around 6 p.m., just after sunset, the three-man party departed with orders to search for the enemy and return by midnight that evening in time for the evacuation. Following the coast for about 20 km, Foster's party finally reached the Japanese force near Beco, where they could see that the enemy had dug in on the beach with artillery. They were anticipating an invasion, rather than an evacuation, perhaps as a result of the intelligence report received via the Italians on 10 November

.....

Gerry McKenzie was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his leadership at the airfield, while **Joe Poynton** went one better, earning the DCM.

.....

Joe Poynton returned to a hero's reception in 1945, with his deeds on the Dili airfield and in the mountains above having made their way into a wartime comic strip. The following year, he was invited to represent his unit in the Empire Victory celebrations. In May 1946, he left for England on HMAS *Shropshire*. While on the ship, Poynton won a boxing tournament, but on his return he got into an altercation while stopping in the Suez. Poynton was left with a scar above one eye to show for it. He eventually settled down, worked as a builder, and remained a fit and

powerful man in his later years, playing club rugby union until he was in his early 40s. He died a two weeks before his 83rd birthday.

Don Murray.

~~Joe~~ Joseph Poynton

Born Claremont when we made our first contact. Joe's gang seldom came down to joust with ours. They didn't have a great deal of success because one look at their size & we retired to the relative safety of the bamboos.

However we met on a more permanent basis when in April/May of 1941 we both enlisted & were camped at Northam for some initial training.

My father & no doubt Joe's entreated us to go along with things but NEVER volunteer for anything. SO in a very short time there was a heap of officers and NCOs wandering around camp calling for volunteers in some hush hush matter. You had to be efficient at football, handball, head ball and hard ball. Be able to run walk & dance. Be able to swim back stroke, front stroke, breast stroke. (yes certainly) under water over water but not drink water. Ride a horse, a cow in fact anything. This applied to our Joe so soon he was on his way to Caulfield Race course when he and his mates were accommodated in stalls marked Ajax and other champions *HORSES OF THE TIME*

It was widely accepted that we were going to be paratroopers. This seemed so when after a long train journey into the Victorian Outback we finished up at a gate in a reinforced fence alongside an airport down on Wilsons Promontory, the A end of Victoria.

[The second Independent Company] was formed. Joe excelled in the hard training dished out by English Officers and Warrant Officers who intensely disliked Australian recruits. *SO RESISTED THEM*
It was commonly accepted that we were going to England/ Europe & were abundantly kitted out with thick woolen jumpers and socks etc. Home for a quick preembarkment leave then reformed at Woodville Showgrounds in Adelaide.

29.
It appeared about this time that the Japs were getting cheeky so Joe & his mates were stuffed onto the old Ghan^{RAIL} to Alice Springs then onto trucks to Katherine in the Northern Territory. More heavy training & suddenly one day, the camp had not even been finished- PEARL HARBOUR. Some 12 hours later Joe and his mates were into cattle trucks to rush to Darwin to be shipped away on the very old ship ZEALANDIA. Unshipped at Koepang in w Timor then a couple of days later onto the SOURABAYA a Dutch gunship. Disembarked at Dilli (now a famous town) and set up camp again, this time on the aerodrome. This was late December 1941. I'll leave the political ramifications alone at this time.

In about three short weeks the unit was stricken badly with Malaria. There was not even Quinine at this stage. Only about 26 men ~~OK~~. ^{ON THEIR FEET AT ONE TIME}

The bulk of the unit was moved inland into the mountains with only a garrison of one ~~platoon~~ ^{SECTION} on the airfield on the coast. This was rotated and all went well till Feb 19th 1942.

Destroyers and troopships bombarded Dilli with a force of some thousands said varyigly from 2500 to 25,000.

The airport was surrounded by a very deep ditch with coconut logs ~~logs~~ across for bridges.

This was first contact for Joe and his ~~A troop~~ ^{NO 2 SECTION} who valiently held the drome from 10pm till daylight. Contact with the unit failed as an Aldis lamp was not effective because of low cloud cover.

The signaller was shot & badly wounded. When others were crawling along the ground to avoid being hit. Joe boldly walked upright to the Sigs pit to provide aise. ^{SECTION} All night ~~troop~~ ^{2 SECTION} blasted hundreds of Japs as they continually tried to cross over the bridges, tommy guns and Brens and rifle fire kept them at bay.

^{ALL THIS FROM ONLY 20 MEN.}

As dawn approached it was obvious that ~~A troop~~ ^{TWO SECTION} would be overrun so an orderly evacuation was ordered and most of a ~~troop~~ ^{the boys} reached the main force. The drome was blown up.

3

For his actions that night Joe was awarded the Distinguished Conducyt Medal. A very high award. The Dutch Govt contributed the Dutch Bronze Cross.

I have only singled out one action of Joe's story there too many more to tell this day.

After 12 months on Timor Joe was evacuated to Australia, given medical attention and home leave.

IN a matter of weeks, the unit was on a train heading for Atherton Tableland when another job cropped up and the train was reversed back to Townsville and onto a ship to New Guinea. Onto Douglas aircraft to be dropped into Goroka up in the mountains, then over a more than 10,000 ft range into the Ramu Valley.

This campaign lasted 15 months, & was in fact even harder than Timor. Countless patrols across the Ramu river into densely populated Japs between Madang and Weewak- were vicious foes.

Joe and A troop were right in the thick of things for many months. Typical of this gallant fighter was one occasion when on patrol his great mate Tony was about a chain in front of the rest when firing broke out up ahead. No cover for Joe. In what seemed like two seconds he was side by side with Tony to help protect him.

This tedious campaign went on, seemingly forever.. PATROL PATROL, Rescue downed American airmen- always on full alert, very arduous.. Met 2/16th Battalion cautiously making their way up the Ramu valley.

3 months recuperating up in Bulolo and Wau. Back home for short leave- on a boat again to New Britain. Mountain patrols to keep 35,000 Japs bottled up in Rabaul.

No rest, no rest no rest. Finally peace.

4
While everyone fought to get home, Joe's unit was put on guard over the Aust General Hospital. Our nurses were still not safe from the thousands of Japs and still very few Australians. Then at last home to Australia and discharge in Dec 1945.

JOE HAD ACCUMULATED ALMOST 1200 DAYS ON ACTIVE SERVICE

By this time Joe had been promoted to Lance Sargeant. He was really hardly settled in when he was asked to re-enlist to go to England for the Commemoration Parade. This was a contingent of soldiers from all ranks and services in Aust Military.

During the main parade the salute was being taken by the king and Queen. As the Australians approached they pushed forward the young Princesses Elizabeth & Margaret who were about 8 & 9 years. As the boys gave 'eyes right' they all winked to the girls who giggled madly & winked back, typically Joe. So home about July 1946 and finally discharged.

So Joe Poynton, larger than life was in circulation again, but he has never ever forgotten his army mates. Reunions were a must to be enjoyed. For many years Joe and his wife Helen put on wonderful crab, fish and bun parties on long w/ends, wonderful parties, wonderful Joe and Helen.

Rest well old mate we've loved you as much as you loved us.

Poynton, Joseph William

Private

WX12552

Distinguished Conduct Medal

“During the operations at Dili Aerodrome on the night of 19/20 February 1942, Pte POYNTON, together with three others, fiercely attacked Japanese troops crossing a small bridge leading to “DILI” aerodrome, and by his example, coolness and daring, and total disregard of the danger he very materially prevented two attempts to take the aerodrome hangers.

He fought the Japanese at close quarters with his tommy gun, inflicting several casualties.

In subsequent action on the following day when Privates POYNTON and GROWNS took up an ambush position, GROWNS very quickly inflicted one Japanese casualty. POYNTON, with great determination and daring went into action and silenced a Lewis gun nearest him with the Thompson machine gun. He then obtained some hand grenades from a Dutch soldier, rushed forward to a nearby tree, threw three grenades, the third of which blew up the gun and four of the crew. This resolute and daring action enabled Lt McKenzie to continue the manoeuvre.”

Note 1. The third soldier was Fowler, John Frederick, WX11366. Mentioned in Despatches for this and other actions.

Note 2. Grows, Frederick William, WX13530

Poynton, Joseph William

Private

WX12552

Dutch Bronze Cross

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Note: The other two soldiers were

Fowler, John Frederick, WX11366

Grows, Frederick William, WX13530

GUERILLA
ance in Timor.
ouncement from GHQ
yesterday
AJH

BRONZE CROSS.

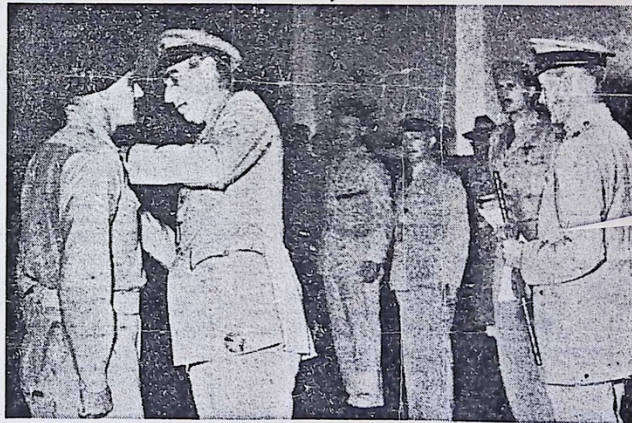
CEREMONIAL PARADE.

Award to Perth Commando.

Cpl J. W. Poynton, DCM, AIF, of Claremont, was a proud soldier yesterday afternoon when before troops on parade and his own mother he was decorated with the Dutch Bronze Cross by prominent Dutch Army officers, one of whom, Col N. L. W. Van Straten, actually led the NEI forces against the Japanese in Timor. The citation for the award of the Bronze Cross to Poynton, read out at yesterday's ceremonial parade in Perth was as follows:—

By personal, courageous action both under fire and in hand-to-hand fighting with the superior enemy during the battle at Dilli (Portuguese Timor), on February 20, 1942, having considerably contributed to the action of an Australian section with the NEI troops. This action prevented the enemy from disconnecting electrical cables, thereby assisting in the timely demolition of the airport. Furthermore, during the retreat from Dilli, Cpl Poynton took courageous action by harassing a Japanese section at close quarters with hand grenades, which section threatened to cut off his party.

The citation was signed by Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, and went with another of the Bronze Crosses to be personally presented to recipients in Perth. On the previous occasion this Dutch award for gallantry was presented in Perth

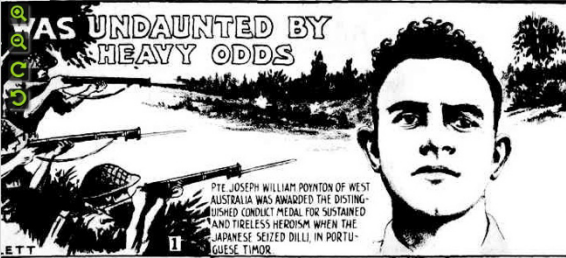


Colonel N. L. W. Van Straten presenting the Bronze Cross of the Dutch Government to Corporal J. W. Poynton, DCM, of Claremont, for bravery during the Timor and New Guinea campaigns. On the right is Lt-General L. H. Van Oyen, GOC Royal Netherlands Indian Army.

the medals were given to seamen who took part in a notable sea action. Vice-Admiral Sir Conrad Helfrich, RNN, made the presentations in Perth before leaving by flying boat for Ceylon.

Yesterday the presentation to Cpl Poynton, who was with a commando unit in Timor, was made by Lieut-General L. H. Van Oyen, of the Dutch Army and the actual pinning of the medal with its orange ribbon and blue stripe, was carried out by Van Straten.

address before the handing of the medal. Lieut-General Van Oyen said: "Courage in war is one of the greatest qualities a soldier can possess."



PTE. JOSEPH WILLIAM POYNTON OF WEST AUSTRALIA WAS AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL FOR SUSTAINED AND TIRELESS HEROISM WHEN THE JAPANESE SEIZED DILLI IN PORTUGUESE TIMOR.



PALAU HAD BEEN OVERGUN SINCE SHE HAD FALLEN AND AT MIDNIGHT ON FEBRUARY 19, 1943, THE JAPANESE DESCENDED ON DILLI, CAPITAL OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR. APART FROM THE PORTUGUESE THERE WERE A FEW DUTCH TROOPS AND SOME AUSTRALIAN COMMANDOS TO OPPOSE THEM.

DEFENDERS WERE PREPARED TO SELL THEIR LIVES. FULL PREPARATIONS WERE MADE TO DESTROY DILLI AIRCRAFT. THEY WERE PROUDLY ATTACKED BY POYNTON AND OTHERS WHO OPENED FIRE ON THE JAPANESE CROSSING A SMALL BRIDGE THE AIRCRAFT AND CAUSED MANY CASUALTIES.



DURING A SECOND ATTEMPT BY THE JAPANESE TO CROSS THE BRIDGE, POYNTON USED HIS TOMMY-GUN TO DEADLY EFFECT. AND THE EFFORTS OF THE LITTLE BAND UNDOUBTEDLY PREVENTED THE ENEMY FROM CAPTURING THE AIRCRAFT HANGARS.



WHACKO, YOU LITTLE BEAUTIES!

IN ANOTHER AMBUSH NEXT DAY POYNTON AND A COMPANION CAUSED MANY FURTHER CASUALTIES. SINGLE HANDED POYNTON SILENCED A LIGHT MACHINE-GUN POST.

5



WITH FURTHER TROUBLE AHEAD, HE ENCOUNTERED A DUTCH SOLDIER WITH A SUPPLY OF GRENADES.

LET US HAVE SOME OF YOUR GRENADES, SPORT.

DOL GRAAG, JONGE.

6



STEALING FORWARD TO THE SHELTER OF A TREE TRUNK, POYNTON USED 5 OF THE GRENADES TO SUCH EFFECT THAT HE PUT ANOTHER MACHINE-GUN OUT OF ACTION.

7



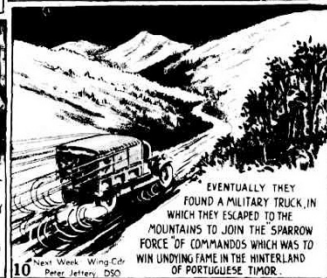
MEANTIME SAPPERS HAD BEEN WORKING FIERCELY TO PLANT DEMOLITION CHARGES ON THE AIRCRAFT. DUTCH HEADQUARTERS HAD GIVEN ORDERS FOR ITS DESTRUCTION BUT THESE HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVED AND THE AUSTRALIANS WORKED ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE.

8



THEIR WORK DONE IT AUSTRALIAN SURVIVORS WITHDREW. LEAVING MORE THAN 100 ENEMY DEAD, THEY HAD TO FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH AMBUSH, WHERE POYNTON AGAIN DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF. BUT.....

9



EVENTUALLY THEY FOUND A MILITARY TRUCK, IN WHICH THEY ESCAPED TO THE MOUNTAINS TO JOIN THE SPARROW FORCE OF COMMANDOS WHICH WAS TO WIN UNDYING FAME IN THE HINTERLAND OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR.

Next Week: Wing Cdr. Percy Jeffery, DSO.

10

TIMOR HEROES GET ROUGH SPIN

Not many weeks ago "The Mirror" told the story of Cpl. Joe Poynton, of Perth, who, in addition to winning the DCM in Timor, was decorated at a special parade here with the Dutch Bronze Cross, equivalent of DSO, for the grand work he did as a Commando.

With a number of his WA pals, Cpl. Poynton, when he returned from Timor, was given leave to WA. By some mischance or other, they lost their combined leave-and-rail passes back to Queensland.

And what does a grateful country do for them?

Astonishing as it may seem, each of them was charged almost £10! In other words, they had to pay their own fares back to their Unit in Queensland. It should be remembered that, while it was a military offence to lose their passes (and no one is supporting them for such negligence), it does seem that the sum they are expected to pay is out of all proportion to the harm done.

All these men had taken part in a very fine show: all had seen much active service under difficult conditions. That was not apparently taken into consideration. They were all mulet the same amount.

Protests have been unavailing. Since the time they were ordered to refund the amount for their lost passes, many have paid the supreme sacrifice. One man told "The Mirror": "We had the amount of £13/15/9 deducted from our pay when we reported back to Claremont Camp. For more than 15 months we have tried to get a refund.

"My best 'Cobber' is one of those who had to pay. Since then he has lost his life in New Guinea. We do not suggest that there should not have been some punishment for our carelessness.

"But surely the authorities could have taken into account the feelings of men who, after a pretty rough spin, got leave, maybe were a trifle light-headed.

"What we feel all the more is that this fine was imposed, not by our own Unit commander, who did know something of what we had gone through, but by a WA transit unit which knew very little about us, seemed to care less."



Cpl. Joe Poynton, DCM

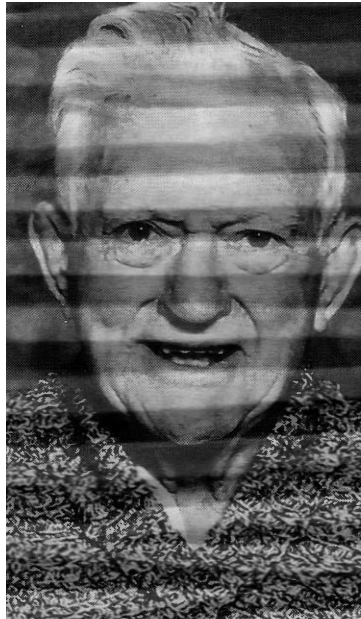
SOURCE: 'The West obituaries' / edited by Patrick Cornish *West Australian* Monday, June 14, 2004

Victories in war and peace

JOSEPH WILLIAM POYNTON

Born: Ballarat, Victoria, April 1922

Died: Mandurah, March 2004



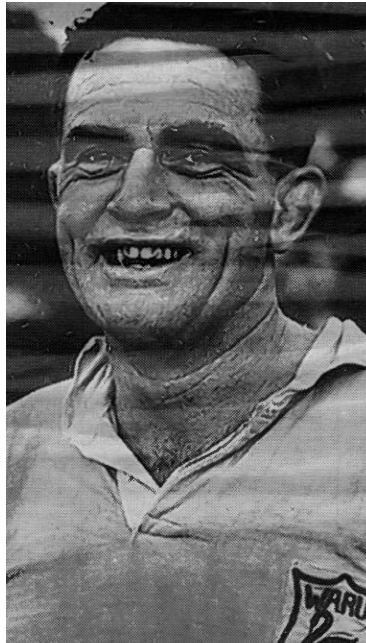
Battles on the rugby field were on Joe Poynton's mind as he helped Nedlands become premiers in the winter of 1940. The final whistle blew and the cup was brought towards the pack of champions. A camera was produced; film was not that easy to come by in wartime but this was a special occasion.

Joe, then 18, was not going to hang around and wallow in triumph. He had another occasion, another duty, another battle to head for. That year — a northern-hemisphere summer of battering and bruising from the Luftwaffe - had been bare of triumph for Australia's allies.

He joined the army and became part of the Second Independent Company, which heard that "special missions" were on the cards. The kitting-out procedure included thick jumpers and socks. They must be assigned to Europe, surely? In fact, Joe and his mates went to Timor, soon after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor had made the conflict truly global.

"Stealing forward to the shelter of a tree trunk, Private Poynton used three of his grenades to put another machine gun out of action," said a comic-strip caption in the *Argus* newspaper in April 1943, when something of the true heroics of the Timor commandoes could be trumpeted in public. "Their work done, 17 Australian survivors withdrew, leaving more than 100 enemy dead. They had to fight their way through ambush, where Poynton again distinguished himself."

For his 80th birthday two years ago, his wife, Helen - known to their family and many friends as "Nen" - had rounded up forwards, backs, shovers and shakers.



Over a few beers at home in Mandurah on the day, the courageous old soldier preferred to talk about Nedlands rugby heroics and his pride at representing WA over many seasons. In 1957, by then a carpenter and builder, his forward play had helped Neddies to another championship.

However reticent Joe Poynton was about war days, the facts are hard to bury under a rugby scrum. He won a Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery that, had he been an officer, would have garnered a Military Cross. Another newspaper feature on the Timor commando action, published in Melbourne in 1962, mentioned Lance-Corporal Poynton as "among the bravest of the brave . . . a demon with a tommy-gun".

He won the Dutch Bronze Cross, presented by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, which then owned the western half of the island as part of the Dutch East Indies.

Joe's first battle had been with the track running alongside the Trans-Australia railway line. In 1928, when he was six, his parents brought their five children from Victoria to settle in WA. The terrain and heat were terrible, he remembered, though the tasty meat pie bought in Kalgoorlie partly made up for the ordeal.

His father's departure from the family shortly afterwards brought further struggles for Joe's mother Amy. Somehow she stayed afloat, emotionally and parentally, and Joe was to feel protective towards her for the rest of her life.

His carpentry apprenticeship at Midland railway workshops was interrupted by war but he was eventually able to forge a strong building career.

Having met Helen O'Brien, a trainee nurse, in January 1946 he said goodbye for a while after being selected to sail to Britain on the *Shropshire* for the Victory Parades.

Carpentry at the Woomera rocket range in South Australia allowed him to save money for their marriage in 1953. Those construction skills were to last a lifetime. His daughters' homes have plenty of evidence of his practical creativity.

The naming in 2001 of Poynton Way, in the Silver Sands district of Mandurah, was testament to his handiwork.

When the Mandurah Offshore Fishing Club got into development mode, he was the first man chosen for the building committee.

Some mates wondered what he meant by his common turn of phrase, "It's a moral". A sure thing, is what he was referring to.

"Great man, great commando, great friend, great loss" was among the comments in newspaper tributes after Mr Poynton died in March.

He is survived by Helen, their daughters, Julie-Ann Jackman and Rhiann Gosper, and six grandchildren; and by his sister, Ann Beasley-Prior.

Among the music at his memorial service was the Skye Boat Song, a favourite with him. As a rugby forward there were sleeker team mates who sped "like a bird on the wing". Poynton power, however, encompassed determination, strength and — for a man who played his last game for WA as a 39-year-old — lasting the distance, on the fields of war and of peace.





The following article was taken from the "Mandurah Mail" June 28th 2001.

Street Honours War Hero.

Poynton Way is Mandurah's newest street, named in honour of long-time resident and highly decorated soldier Joe Poynton.

The Silver Sands side street leads off Creon Way to Ormsby Terrace and until yesterday was nameless.

The idea to name the street in honour of Mr Poynton came from Silver Sands resident Coralie Ford.

"He is such a gentleman and has done so much for the community during his life," Mrs Ford said. "I thought it would be lovely to show our appreciation for what he has done to symbolise what all the other soldiers have done for this country."

A morning tea at Helen and Joe Poynton's house marked the special occasion after family, friends, RSL members and local councillors witnessed the street naming.

Mrs Poynton said the new street was the sixth street in Australia named after the family.

We have skipped a couple of generations between the last one and this one which is now named after Joe," she said.

"We are both absolutely thrilled and honoured that this street has been named after him. Nobody deserves it more than he does."

Mr Poynton was a member of the 2/2nd Commandos and served in Timor, New Guinea and New Britain.

He received a Distinguished Conduct Medal and Dutch bronze cross for his bravery during the war and marched in London at the celebrations when the conflict ended.

After the war Mr Poynton went to night school and became a registered builder. He was also a state representative in rugby union.

But for the last 25 years Mr Poynton has been

totally incapacitated due to war injuries.

He said he was thrilled to have the street named after him. "I am very honoured." He said.

Beginning in November 1958 a series of articles under the title of "Historically Yours" written by our then editor Colin Doig, appeared in the Courier. Here are two humorous events from that series.

The Rum Rebellion.

Wayville abounded with much in the way of amusing incidents. Foremost was the Rum Rebellion. The Unit rum issue was packed with the cook house stores and was under the charge of the Sgt. Cook and Q.M. Sgt. With thirsts running high and pockets running low it was not long before the rum issue was broached and slowly at first but more rapidly towards the finish, it was "totted" away. All we had to show for many demijohns of rum was quite a few shickered cooks and others and about half a bottle of rum. The C.O., Major Spence, reckoned it was about time an inquiry of sorts was conducted into the "loss" of the rum issue. One of the most obvious culprits was Signaller "Taffy" Davies, a raw Welshman who had been a regular British Army soldier serving in India, Hong Kong etc., between wars. "Taffy" had been a machine miner at Wiluna before joining up. He had been in state of permanent intoxication for a couple of days or so and had been seen in the vicinity of the cookhouse. The Major had the Orderly Officer parade Sig. Davies, along with a couple of the cooks before him and proceeded to question them on the source of their liquor supply. He held up the half bottle of rum salvaged from the wreckage and asked Davies, "Sig. Davies, can you buy this type of rum in Adelaide?" An unabashed Davies reached out and grabbed the bottle, took a deep swig, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and said;

Vale Joseph William POYNTON DCM WX 12552

Joe passed away peacefully at the 'Greenfields Nursing Home', Mandurah on the 17th March last, three weeks short of his 82nd birthday. So died one of the greats of the Unit.

Joe was born at Ballarat on the 4th April 1922 being one of 5 children. In 1928 when he was six, the family moved by car to the West. The drive over the Nullarbor with its rough roads was a great adventure for Joe. A big meat pie on reaching Kalgoorlie topped off an exciting trip and from that time on a meat pie was always a favourite of Joes.

The family settled in Claremont. Joe was a bright student and did well at school. A well-built youngster there was never a dull moment in his boyhood days. On leaving school in 1937 he obtained an apprenticeship as a carpenter at the Midland Railway Company which he completed before enlisting in the AIF in early 1941. Joe became an original member of the 2/2nd and served in the Unit from go to whoa. He took part in No. 2 Sections gallant stand at the Dili Drome on 19/20th February 1942 when the Japs invaded East Timor and was awarded a DCM and Dutch Bronze Cross for bravery in that action. Strong, tough and fearless, his courage became a byword among members of the 2/2nd. Joe was a member of the Unit's boxing team and knew how to look after himself. He attained the rank of Lance Sergeant and retired from the army early in 1946. He was selected in the AIF's London Victory March Contingent in mid 1946, an honour well deserved for a man with such a fine war record.

A handsome man, Joe saw Helen O'Brice on a bus early in 1946 and kept on winking at her every time he caught her eye. A few days later he ran into her again at North Cottesloe Beach and asked for a date. So began a loving partnership which lasted 58 years. A young journalist (female of course) described Joe as "An answer to a maiden's prayer" in an article in the local paper when Joe was awarded his DCM in Feb. 1943. Few of the girls around in those days would disagree with her!

Joe was a good sportsman becoming involved in snorkelling, waterpolo and horseriding. He excelled at Rugby Union and played for the Nedlands Club for many years including in their grand final won in 1940. After the war he resumed with his old club, played in several WA sides, and was Captain and Vice-captain on a number of times. A tough but fair player, he played with Nedlands in 1957 in their grand final win with a nose guard having sustained a broken nose in a game a week earlier. He was 35 at the time and retired four years later in 1961. A loyal clubman was Joe.

In 1949 he worked as a carpenter at the Woomera Rocket Range for 2 years and built up a bank running a two-up and dice game with his mate Max Tomilson. Returning to Perth in 1951 he and another mate Bert Kelly, became partners building homes in Innaloo, White Gum Valley, Hyden and Merredin. He attended night school and got his builders ticket, building his own first home in Claremont prior to marrying Helen in 1953. In 1959 Joe and Helen moved to Fremantle and established the Skye Hospital. Under Helen, a capable matron, the hospital flourished while Joe built extensions to cope for the demand for more beds. Joe and Helen were blessed with their much-loved girls Julie-Ann in 1958 and Rhiann in 1964. Joe was a devoted dad and thought the world of his young daughters. After 12 years at the Skye they moved to their holiday home at Ormsby terrace, Mandurah which Joe had built. It was a big

comfortable home with lovely ocean views. Here the family spent their next 31 years. 2/2nd members have many happy memories of those wonderful outings on the Sunday of the Australia Day weekend. Helen's catering was really something while Joe, an expert fisherman, made sure there were plenty of crabs on hand, topped off with a barbecued sheep provided by the Campbells. They were good times.

A side street was named Poynton Way by the Council in their honour in 2001, a fine tribute indeed.

Joe and Helen were great travellers heading up North in the winter months and did trips around Australia with their great friends Peter & Pat Campbell. Joe was always willing to help out and was on the building committee of the original Mandurah Offshore Fishing Club. He loved fishing and always brought home good catches. He enjoyed nothing better than having a few drinks with his old mates, Wattie, Huddy, Tiger and Tony. They would reminisce on old times. Joe being an ardent Eagle supporter, footy was a popular topic.

In 2002 with their old home now too big for the two of them and Joe beginning to suffer from memory loss, they moved to a smaller but comfortable home in Cuvier Place, Mandurah. Joe's condition gradually worsened and with Helen not enjoying the best of health, Joe went into "Greenfields" where he died peacefully on the 17th March. Helen and the family were always first in Joe's life. He loved his six grandchildren and delighted in watching them grow and was proud of their accomplishments. His fighting spirit never waned and remained strong until the very end.

A large crowd attended his funeral service held at Bowra & O'Dea's Chapel at Mandurah. Present from the Association were Clarrie & Joy Turner, Dot & Rodney Maley, Eric & Twy Smythe, Bart & Loris Mavrick, Bernie & Babs Langridge, Keith & Val Hayes, Doc Wheatley, Ray Parry, Bob Smyth, John Burrridge, Vince Swann, Jack Carey, Peter & Pat Campbell, Dick Darrington, Tony Bowers, Don & Ida Murray, Len & Betty Bagley, Jim Lines, Laurie & Sheryle Harrington, Pip Dunkley, Elvie Howell, Mary & Paddy King, Vera, Leonie, Coralie, Lexie & Graham Watson.

Don Murray, George Horsham and Aaron Gosper all paid fine tributes to Joe in what was a very moving celebration of the life of a very special person.

Joe's ashes were scattered in the ocean off his former Ormsby Terrace home.

The Association extends its deepest sympathy to Helen, Julie-Ann and Rhiann and their families.

Lest We Forget.

Jack Carey.

Mr dear friends of old, thank you sincerely for your messages of love and sympathy and those who attended the service for the celebration of his life. Joe would have been so honoured at the love and respects extended to him and the caring love you have shown to my family and me.

Please accept this as our personal thanks.

"It is hard to walk the road that two have trod,

But the way becomes easier with the care of special angels, better known as friends."

Thank you all, Helen.



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WARU Rugby Bulletin

8 June 2002

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Headgear

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Moncrieff
EXCELLENCE IN ELECTRONICS

Joe Poynton

Nedlands Stalwart Honoured

When Joe Poynton was helping Nedlands to the 1940 premiership, his thoughts were probably on another battle.

So quickly did he leave the team that before the photograph was taken commemorating the event, Joe had joined that other battle.

Joe, who just celebrated his 80th birthday recently with a get-together at the rugby club, brought credit on his club and country, not only winning in 1940 premiership but also captaining Nedlands to the 1957 premiership and in the meantime, emerging from Timor as the most decorated soldier in that theatre of World War II.

Joe's history is legendary, winning a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) among others, storming Japanese machine gun nests and raiding Japanese encampments in an escapade which defied belief.

Joe, who played three times for the State between 1946 and 1958 before retiring in 1959, was a member of the elite Sparrow Force unit (later to be named Commandos) dropped into Dili with 240 others, having to contend with 6000 Japanese troops in February 1942 at the time Darwin was being bombed.

Joe was involved in the successful raid to destroy the airfield, which was vital to the Japanese in the assault on Australia. For repeated acts of heroism he won the DCM.

Many survived the attack but the retreat meant they had to take to the hills and hide to avoid capture.

They harassed the Japanese for months and were thought to have been wiped out by the high command until nine months later when they fashioned a rudimentary radio and managed to get a message through to Darwin.

After a round of checks to make sure they weren't Japanese spies, supplies were dropped to the beleaguered troops to help them continue fighting.

They asked for ammunition, medicine and boots but when the supplies arrived there were no boots but a huge carton of boot polish!



Joe Poynton celebrating with Nedlands and left in 1940.



Alongside his DCM, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands awarded him the Dutch Bronze Cross as Timor was then owned by the Netherlands.

After Timor, Joe went to fight in New Guinea and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) before returning to Australia.

As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill remarked on the assault at Dili: "They alone did not surrender."

Joe left the army in 1945 but was called back in 1946 for the victory ceremonies in England. It was the same year he met his wife, Helen, and the two have been a unit ever since.

He became a carpenter after the war and helped build the northern suburbs (Innaloo in those days) and now the couple lives in Mandurah with Joe making only occasional forays to his Perth battlefield.

Age may have wearied him but Joe's memory will live on as he is probably the oldest surviving WARU premiership winner.

At a special reunion of the 1957 premiership team at Neddies two weeks ago, Joe was joined by his teammates Jim Casey, Don Higgins, George Horsham, Bill Lenke, Peter McDonald, Ernie Probert, Ron Smyth, Jim Stitfall and John Timson.

Prepared by Ed Willis

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