

VALE

MAJOR JACK QUANTRILL RAA

A well liked and highly respected elder of the Gunners made his last deployment at the age of 91 years on 18 October 2012 from the rest area at the Queanbeyan Hospital near Canberra to the Great Gun Park up above. Major John Martin (Jack) Quantrill had earned these attributes during 35 years of devoted and loyal service of devoted and loyal service in the British and Australian Armies.

Born at London, England on 1 September 1921 to a mechanical engineer father, he enlisted in the local Territorial coast battery on 6 inch guns at Canvey Island in the Thames estuary as a boy soldier of 16 years. His patriotic response to the Third Reich's threat to the Mother Country was to take his coastal gunnery experience into Regular Army in 1939, serving at first in Essex and then in the north of Scotland at Wick. His abilities were quickly recognised and by 1940 he was a gun sergeant at 19 years of age.

Commissioned and with the threat of invasion over, Lieutenant Quantrill was assigned to the Pioneer Corps and deployed to France just after D Day in June 1944 and spent 14 months clearing German minefields in France and Belgium. Though losing many of his platoon during this dangerous work, his outstanding leadership earned him a Mention in Dispatches. As the war drew to a close in Europe, he was posted as assault pioneer platoon commander to the 2nd Battalion of the Dorsets then at Imphal before invading Burma as part of Slim's 14th Army.

By the end of the war, Jack held the rank of captain and was posted to Ceylon assisting with the repatriation back to Europe of the many internees, mainly the Dutch. He was discharged in England in 1946 and transferred back to the Territorials as adjutant of one of the battalions of the Essex Regiment.

By 1951, the Australian Army was recruiting British non commissioned ranks in their build up of K Force for service in the Korean War. Seeking a better life for his family away from struggling, war torn England, Captain Quantrill reverted to a gunner (temporary sergeant) and took up this Australian gauntlet. He packed up his wife and three children, disembarked in Melbourne on 4 November 1951 and moved straight to Puckapunyal for service with 14th National Service Training Battalion as a platoon sergeant.

Now Jack might have been a Pioneer during the war and accepted the challenge of moving to the colonies, but this first seven months living in a tent through the Pucka summer was a challenge to even the strongest heart. To his credit, he threw himself into his new career and was rewarded with both a married quarter and a commission within 12 months of settling. He was appointed adjutant and became a company commander by 1955.

1956 saw the Quantrills redeploy to Melbourne where Captain Jack took up the appointment of adjutant of the Southern Command Personnel Depot before moving to adjutant of 19th Light Anti Aircraft (LAA) Regiment (CMF) at Ripponlea. His final posting in Southern Command was as Staff Officer Grade 3 on the Royal Australian Artillery Cadre at Batman Avenue.

Next came the appointment of adjutant of 17th LAA Regiment at Padstow in Sydney followed by adjutant of 18th LAA Regiment before becoming General Staff Officer Grade 3(Training) on Headquarters 1st Division under the new Pentropic Division reorganisation. In 1962 Jack was promoted major and assumed command of Headquarters Company of the 1st Division at Moore Park Barracks. This was the time of large exercises in the Nutcracker and Ice Breaker series and Major Quantrill found his headquarters deploying for extended periods.

He became a Quartermaster Instructor in Eastern Command before the tempo of the Army's expansion for the Vietnam War saw him as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General on Headquarters Eastern Command, the organisation responsible for the logistical support to units deployed in Vietnam.

The Gunners then called Major Quantrill back to their fold of Headquarters RAA at 2nd Division to be the Staff Officer Grade 2 (Administration). His terminal posting was Staff Officer Grade 2 (Logistics) at Headquarters 2nd Military District from which he resigned on his 53rd birthday in 1973.

In retirement, Jack became a stalwart of the Air Defence and RAA Associations in Canberra. His knowledge and experience as a Gunner, quartermaster and administrative staff officer was often sought for many years afterwards. After his beloved wife, Bobbie passed away in 2004, John Quantrill moved into a purpose built flat at his daughter, Vicky Jauncey's place at Carwoola near Queanbeyan, NSW.

I have been honoured by being accepted 'in retreat' for several weeks each year at the Jauncey's property where I relax in the delightful country peace and quiet to carry out my serious writing tasks. Jack and I became very good mates and would look forward to seeing him as much as escaping from the 'big smoke' each year. I have lost a friend, Vicky has lost her Dad and the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery has lost another great tribal elder.

Major Quantill was awarded a Mention in Despatches, 1939–45 Star, France and Germany Star, Burma Star, War Medal 1939–45, Defence Medal and the Territorial Efficiency Medal by the British Army and the Australian Defence Medal by the Australian Regular Army.

Jack is survived by his son, engineer Colonel (Retired) John Quantrill, his daughter Vicky who is married to Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jim Jauncey RAA, his daughter Angela, his seven grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. Jack Quantrill was cremated at a private family funeral on 24 October 2012 and a memorial service to celebrate his life will be held on 12 November at 11 am at the Weston Creek Presbyterian Church, ACT.

Vale Major John Martin (Jack) Quantrill RAA—beloved family man, loyal and devoted professional officer, and respected tribal elder of the British and Australian Regiments of Artillery, on terminal posting to the Great Gun Park up above at 91 years of age.

Colonel (Retd) Arthur Burke OAM

Queensland Member

RAA History Sub Committee

25 October 2012