

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: SX 14076
Name: Springle William BREED
Nickname: Bill or Spring



Medals and Decorations

1939 - 45 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939 - 45

Australian Service Medal 1939 - 45

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 16 Aug 1941
Discharged: 8 Jun 1946

Bill was born on 26 Apr 1904 at Abbots Langley (UK) to Squire William Breed and Annie Breed. He was the eldest son. His father was a nobleman. In this era children of wealthy parents did not go to school, they were schooled at home by a governess. When Bill outgrew the classroom he was not required to work as other children were, he was left to his own devices. Consequently he was always in trouble, as were most of his mates. It was courtesy of the scouting movement that Bill and his siblings were "straightened out".

In 1922 Bill and his brother, Ron, came to Tumby Bay to work as farm hands for the Stirling family; four years later the remainder of the family arrived at Tumby Bay and share farmed for the Stirling family, where they remained until 1931 before moving onto a scrub block in Hd of Nicholls, near Karkoo.

In Feb 1932 Bill married Ann Parker from Butler and went share farming at Moody. They had 5 children in this location before moving to Ungarra in early 1941 where Bill worked on the railway, before joining the Army. The Military recorded his locality of enlistment as Ungarra, but his place of enlistment as Wayville. It was here that he undertook his basic training with 3rd Training Battalion (Bn) before being allocated to 2/27th Bn and sent to Woodside for further training.

The 2/27th Bn was raised at Woodside (SA) on 7 May 1940 with volunteers from SA. On 19 Oct 1940 the Bn deployed from Woodside by train, for Melbourne where it sailed for overseas. After a stop in India, the 2/27th disembarked in Egypt on 24 Nov and located to Palestine to complete its training.

The 2/27th first operational assignment was to bolster the defences along the Egypt-Libya frontier against an expected German attack. It occupied positions at Maaten

Bagush and Matruh throughout much of Apr - May 1941. The Bn first went into combat on 8 Jun 1941 against the Vichy French in the Syria - Lebanon campaign around Sidon and Damoud; it was here that Bill joined his unit in Dec 1941. The unit remained in this location until its withdrawal back to Australia to fight against the Japanese, arriving on 28 Mar 1942.

After reorganisation and retraining the Bn arrived at Port Moresby (PNG) on 14 Aug 1942; by 6 Sep it was in position at Mission Ridge on the Kokoda Track preparing to meet the advancing Japanese. The Bn held its positions for two days before being forced to pull back by a Japanese outflanking move that cut the Track behind it. A grim 2 week withdrawal through the jungle, with little food, followed. Sick and exhausted, the 2/27th rejoined the main Australian force at Jawarere, 40 km east of Port Moresby, on 22 Sep 1942.

After a period of rest and retraining the 2/27th returned to action at Gona on 28 Nov 1942. It suffered heavily in a series of rushed and ill-conceived attacks and was further ravaged by disease. By the time it was relieved on 6 Jan 1943, it was only 70 strong. The Bn was then withdrawn to Australia and reformed.

The 2/27th returned to PNG in Aug 1943. After a month training near Port Moresby, it was flown to Kaipit (PNG) to take part in the advance along the Ramu Valley and into the Finisterre Ranges. The 2/27th occupied several key features during these operations and bore the brunt of a major counter attack launched by the Japanese at Shaggy Ridge on 12 Oct. Thereafter, the 2/27th operations were principally patrol actions until it returned to Port Moresby on 3 Jan 1944, and then to Australia on 1 Mar.

The Bn final action was in the Borneo campaign in 1945 when it took part in the landing at Balikpapan on 1 Jul 1945. At the end of the war on 15 Aug 1945 it formed part of the occupation force in the Celebes Islands. The Bn sailed for Australia on 4 Feb 1946, arriving in Brisbane on 14 Feb and was disbanded there on 18 Mar 1946. Bill remained with the Bn until this time and then returned to Adelaide for discharge.

After discharge he returned to Ungarra and rejoined the railway gang. He remained in this employ for almost 20 years. In the 1960s the family sold the house at Ungarra and moved to Preece St, Tumby Bay.

Bill died in 1978 and is buried in the Tumby Bay cemetery. His wife continued to live in the Tumby Bay house until her death in 1985. She is buried beside her husband.

