

# WILLIE 'Blow Fly' KILLICK



Peter Adamis Abalinx 5 May 2011

I wrote this article with much help from Rebecca Killick, the Killick family, Michael Hardless, Gus Guthrie and Wikipedia. In fact most it would be attributed to Rebecca who provide much of the background to our mate Willie. A bloke who left us enriched in more ways than one and each bloke who met Willie will certainly have his own story to tell. The remainder is based on my discussions and meetings as a young digger with Willie.

Please note that as a young digger I was not immune from learning new ideas, concepts and the ways of what was expected of me, from blokes like Willie; and despite the age differences, I and many others would be left richer by the experience. I do hope that today's current Army has similar examples to speak of.

**Disclaimer:** I apologise to the readers as I inadvertently lost photographs when my servers were hacked and much of the information lost. However I am more than happy to include them again if any reader has kept copies of the original article with the images. May his story of service to the Australian nation be remembered along with those who served before him, with him and those who are to serve after him? Any errors are mine and mine alone.

Our mate Willie was a bloke that you could always count upon to do the right thing whenever he was called upon to do a task no matter what it involved. Those who had the pleasure with meeting him would often go away feeling that they had just been made a part of history. That is how well known and respected Willie was to the many young soldiers who entered military service. Many of Willie's peers of his early years who rose through the ranks, Willie would be on first name basis. He is one of many soldiers whose career is known to many but few have survived him to tell the tale. It is often heard that old soldiers never die and that is how we should always remember them.

They threw away the mould of Willie when he was born as there could never be another bloke like him. Only those very close to him who had shared his joys, laughter, disappointments, and the hard yacka, listened to his tales, humorous or otherwise can truly say that they knew him. This article does not do him justice and many are welcome to add to the story about Willie. If errors appear and they are brought to the attention of the author, they will be corrected. My thanks to Rebecca Killick, her family and many others for providing most if not all of the material. Peter Adamis



## WILLIE KILLICK

**Date of birth.** 2 August 1930 - Passed away: 27 October 2010.

**Place of birth.** Pemberton WA - timber country 220 miles from Perth.

**Father.** George Albert Killick. **Mother.** Isabel Killick (nee Campbell). 30th November 1906 – 2 May 1998 Born at Newcastle-on-Tyne in England to Ann and Bill. Isabel immigrated to Australia (Sydney), from the cold rain of North England at the age of 21. It was in Sydney that Isabel met George Killick; romance blossomed and was in Western Australia, at Pemberton that they were married December 1929 settling in Northcliffe.

It had been a good marriage between two loving caring people, a marriage that stood the test of time, their lifetimes. Life in the timber town of Northcliffe was not easy, they lived in tents and then a humpty with the walls lined with newspaper to keep out the cold. Their three children (Willie, Margaret and Lesley) were born at Pemberton/ Northcliffe; it was a hard but happy life they coped and made do everything was used, such as the baby's bath being a kerosene drum cut in two.

It was the time of the great depression, followed by the Second World War. During those tough times Isabel's work often kept the family. She was a good mother for not only were the material things in life provided for her children, they were also taught by example, honesty, decency and most important of all the ability to laugh and the courage to fight adversity, the values and virtues that are so important to mould the characters of young people.

**EARLY YEARS.** Willie lived a long full life, I have no doubt that many parts of it were not easy however it was rich with the experiences that a soldier, husband and father values. Willie was born the eldest of three children followed by younger (surviving) sister Margaret Heather Susnette then by their late youngest brother, Lesley Killick. Willie was born in Pemberton WA, raised in Northcliffe until the age of 8 relocating to South Perth attending the South Perth State School until 14 years of age. Leaving South Perth State School at 14 years of age to take up a position as a delivery person, moving up to level 3 packing crockery for the Boans Ltd Department Store in Perth WA dad held this position up to the age of 21 years.

## **ARMY CAREER.**

**BASIC AND INFANTRY TRAINING 1951.** Willie signed up for the Australian Army at Gillford Recruitment Perth WA on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1951 at the age of 21 years. After completing the recruitment service of 3 months he was then posted to B Company 2RAR Puckapunyal Army Base in northern Victoria. Willie remained there until being shipped to Korea on the "New Australia" berthed in Sydney departing on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1953.

**KOREA 1953.** Swimming in a sea of people at the Port of Sydney, Willie is one of 1200 soldiers from 2 RAR that set sail to Korea. Willie unfortunately had no one there to farewell him. Sailing for 12 days they reached Boo San (Japan). Arriving to an American brass band playing tunes collecting packs and weapons they boarded a train travelling to Saigon Japan, once arriving Willie was immediately changed officially from 2RAR to 3RAR where he remained during the Korean War Campaign 1953-1954.

Korea was a place that few Australians knew much about, until 1950. From 1950-53, 17,000 Australians in the Army, Navy and Air Force fought as part of the United Nations (UN) multinational force, defending South Korea from the Communist force of North Korea. After the war ended, Australians remained in Korea for four years as military observers. Since then, Australia has maintained a presence, discharged by the Australian Military Attaché.

Australia's involvement in the Korean War won much praise from other nations. Awards and decorations given to Australians during the war totalled 615, while awards given to Australians by other countries numbered 173. Australia also gained many political and security benefits, the most important being the signing of the ANZUS Treaty with the United States and New Zealand. The cost of the war in Korea was immense, particularly for its people. The attempt by the Communist North to unite Korea under its rule had been stopped, but it had killed more than two million people, and turned many Korean civilians into homeless refugees. Today, Korea is still divided into North and South.

## **BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OCCUPATION FORCE 1954.**

Leaving the Korean Campaign in 1954 Willie was then posted to Japan for 12 months with the Australian Army's Signal Corp where he worked as a senior courier travelling by train every second day from Kure to Tokyo. Willie armed with a 9mm gun was the senior courier overseeing two other soldiers who were (US and NZ). In 1946 Australian Armed Forces and support Arms as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force joined with United States of America Forces to begin what was to become a long and distinguished history of occupying the homeland of a former enemy.

The occupation continued for over six years, with Australia providing the major component of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, known colloquially as B.C.O.F. Together with forces of the United States, the role of the occupying powers was to demilitarise and to initiate the rebuilding a vanquished nation in a way which exemplified the calibre of the occupiers and the superiority of the democratic way of life. The Army provided the major part of the Australian Component of B.C.O.F.

Troops of 34 Infantry Brigade, with appropriate Headquarters and support groups, were initially volunteers from various units serving in the South West Pacific Area when war ended on 15th August 1945. Preceded by advance parties, the main body of troops landed in Japan on 13 February 1946 at the port of Kure near Hiroshima, from the troopship 'Stamford Victory'.

Royal Australian Air Force personnel arrived some ten days later to form 81 Fighter Wing, with three Squadrons of Mustang Fighter aircraft, and were stationed initially at Iwakuni. Ships of the Royal Australian Navy from the East Indies theatre arrived in early February as part of the allied naval Task Force with Headquarters at HMS (later HMAS) Commonwealth, and by the end of the month had taken over the operations of the Kure Port.

By the end of April, the Australian Component had increased to about 12,000, soon increasing to the full strength of 16,500 including headquarters and logistic support personnel. Together with the New Zealand Component, the area of occupation covered the Prefectures of Hiroshima and Yamaguchi with a population of some 20 Million people.

The Commander-in-Chief of B.C.O.F was Australian Lieutenant-General John Northcote CB MVO who, on being appointed Governor of New South Wales was succeeded on 24 June 1946 by another Australian, Lieutenant-General H.C.H. Robertson CBE DSO. At this time, in addition to Australians, B.C.O.F. comprised units of all three services from the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

The immediate tasks of the occupation force was the destruction of all Japanese war equipment and stores which involved extensive patrolling and searching, processing over 500,000 returning Japanese military personnel, repatriating forced labourers to Korea, Formosa (Taiwan) and the Ryukyu Islands, controlling the distribution of food, smuggling and the supervision of the first democratic elections in May 1947. Relief from these duties were the regular ceremonial parades including mounting guard at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

Details of the Royal Australian Navy ships, the Australian Army Order of Battle and the Royal Australian Air force Squadrons are set out under the separate website button. Support with supply and replacement personnel from Australia was carried out mainly by merchant ships operating under Navy control such as Manoora, Manunda, Merkur, Duntroon, Westralia and Kanimbla. Reductions in the forces began in late 1947 with the withdrawal of Indian troops following the granting of independence of India and partition with Pakistan.

In February and March 1948, the United Kingdom Component withdrew due to the Malayan Emergency, and when New Zealand withdrew in July 1948, only the Australian Component remained. Reductions continued until interrupted by the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950, which resulted in redeployment of the remaining Australian forces. In November 1951, Lieutenant-General E W Bridgeford CBE MC took command. On 28 April 1952, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force ceased to exist with the ratification of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. B.C.O.F. Headquarters was then replaced by Headquarters British Commonwealth Forces Korea.

The occupation of Japan began after six long years of war, and many veterans of the Occupation have felt that an apathetic Australian public understandably intent on resuming their peacetime lives, largely ignored its importance and outstanding success. Yet duty was well done in this, Australia's first time occupation of a defeated nation. There were difficult conditions and considerable dangers with the loss of many lives. Corporal J R Sewell was awarded the George Medal in October 1946 for exceptional bravery, only to be killed one year later while delousing a mine. Some 82 Australian B.C.O.F. personnel are buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Yokohama.

In the final assessment, Australians demonstrated their high standards of drill and discipline to their Allies, to Australian as well as the Japanese people. Those who participated in this great venture are proud of the significant Service traditions they carried on, and to the new ones they forged.

**ENOGGERA – AUSTRALIA 1955.** Returning home to Enoggera Army Barracks Brisbane Qld he was then transferred back to 2RAR remaining at Enoggera until leaving in 1955 to fight in the Malayan War Campaign in Delta Company 2 RAR until 1957.

**MALAYASIAN CONFLICT 1957.** In June 1948 the British colonial government in Malaya declared a state of emergency in order to combat violence and unrest, set against a background of political, racial and industrial conflict. Over the next 12 years, British, Malayan and Commonwealth armed forces were to fight against an insurgency led by the Malayan Communist Party, which was to become known as the Malayan Emergency. The state of emergency was not completely lifted until 1960, three years after the Federation of Malaya had achieved independence.

Australia's involvement began in June 1950 with the contribution of six Lincoln bombers from No. 1 (Bomber) Squadron, RAAF, and a flight of Dakotas from No. 38 (Transport) Squadron, RAAF. The first Australian ground forces arrived in Malaya in 1955; the last left in 1963, more than three years after the Emergency had been declared officially over. As well as air and infantry forces, Australia contributed artillery and engineering support, an airfield construction squadron and signals personnel, as well as a number of Royal Australian Navy ships.

Fifty-one Australian servicemen were killed in Malaya, and 27 were wounded. During the Malayan War in 1957 Willie asked his then pen friend Dulcie Margaret Brunner to marry him sending her an opal engagement ring in the mail from Malaya. Once returning to Australia Willie married one of two identical twins. Marrying Dulcie Margaret Brunner in Toowoomba on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1957 honeymooning on Cavil Av the Gold Coast.

**NSW — AUSTRALIA 1958.** After honeymooning Willie was posted to Holsworthy Army Base with his new wife Dulcie relocating to Sydney in the suburb of Strathfield remaining there until 1958.

**WA – AUSTRALIA 1959.**

Willie was then posted to Swan Barracks WA transferring to SAS Stewards, Officers Mess. Dulcie heavily pregnant with their first child was relocated to a unit in West Perth where Willie joined her, later they both moved into an army house in Swanbourne WA. Stewarding for 2 years, during that period of time their first daughter Jennifer Robyn Killick was born 10<sup>th</sup> October 1958 with second daughter Deborah Ann Killick being born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 1959

**ENOGGERA — AUSTRALIA 1960.**

Willie was then transferred back into 2 RAR, he was then posted back to Enoggera Barracks Brisbane in 1960, becoming the pool attendant at Enoggera Army Pool for two years. Once Willie's health was classed A1 he was transferred to the Hygiene Section in 2RAR Infantry. Relocating the girls during this time wife Dulcie, daughters Jennifer and Deborah relocated to Toowoomba staying with Granny Brunner for 12 months until they were given an army home in Grovely to live in 1961 joined by Willie.

Willie was then transferred into A Company 3RAR in 1962, during this year an exchange occurred with the New Zealand Army Willie was one of 250 men involved in the exchange travelling to the South Island of New Zealand, staying 10 weeks at the Army Camp on the South Island of New Zealand. Returning to Enoggera Army Barracks Willie continued to work within the Hygiene Section of 3RAR the family continued to live in Grovely. In 1965 Willie became one of the original members of 6 RAR transferring from 3 RAR into the newly formed Battalion, 6 RAR Administration Company in 1965 at Enoggera Brisbane, Queensland.

**VIETNAM 1966.**

Australian support for South Vietnam in the early 1960s was in keeping with the policies of other nations, particularly the United States, to stem the spread of communism in Europe and Asia. In 1961 and 1962 Ngo Dinh Diem, leader of the government in South Vietnam, repeatedly requested security assistance from the US and its allies. Australia eventually responded with 30 military advisers, dispatched as the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV), also known as "the Team". Their arrival in South Vietnam during July and August 1962 was the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. In August 1964 the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) also sent a flight of Caribou transports to the port of Vung Tau.

By early 1965, when it had become clear that South Vietnam could not stave off the communist insurgents and their North Vietnamese comrades for more than a few months, the US commenced a major escalation of the war. By the end of the year it had committed 200,000 troops to the conflict. As part of the build-up, the US government requested further support from friendly countries in the region, including Australia. The Australian government dispatched the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), in June 1965 to serve alongside the US 173d Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa province. Willie was then posted on his 1<sup>st</sup> tour of Vietnam 1966 – 1967 in 6 RAR Support Company, requested by George Chinn. Willie first met George Chinn in Perth in 1951 marking the beginning of a long friendship.

**ENOGGERA – AUSTRALIA 1967.**

Willie returned home to Enoggera Army Barracks with 6 RAR in 1967 from the 1<sup>st</sup> Tour of Vietnam, continuing to live with the family in Grovely Brisbane.

**TOWNSVILLE – AUSTRALIA 1968.**

In 1968 Willie was posted to Lavarack Barracks Townsville Queensland with Dulcie, Jennifer and Deborah travelling with him, relocated to a new family home in the suburb of Vincent, Townsville. Willie continued to work as a Hygiene Corporal in 6 RAR.

**VIETNAM 1969.**

In 1969 Willie was posted to his 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour of Vietnam with 6 RAR Support Company remaining there until 1970.

**TOWNSVILLE – AUSTRALIA 1968.**

Returning to Lavarack Barracks Townsville the following year his third daughter Andrea Maree Elizabeth was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1971.

**CHANGI — SINGAPORE 1971.**

When Willie's daughter Andrea was 6 weeks old he was posted to Changi Singapore with 6 RAR. Dulcie, Jennifer, Deborah and Andrea accompanied Willie to Singapore being relocated in Changi Singapore with other expatriate families of 6 RAR. Willie continued to work as the Hygiene Corporal in 6 RAR, Singapore.

**ENOGGERA – AUSTRALIA 1973.**

Posted back to Enoggera Army Barracks Brisbane with his family in September 1973 where Willie's fourth daughter Rebecca Louise Elizabeth was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1973.

**INSPECTIONS.**

From Corporal to Brigadier and back to Corporal – all in one day. Corporal Killick or 'Willies' was he is known throughout the Battalion was the Hygiene Duty man with Administrative Company 6RAR. "It was all because of my moustache." said Willie. He sported a bushy moustache that a villain from any melodrama would be proud to twirl. Suffice to say, things were getting a bit dull around 6 RAR's B echelon area during Exercise STRIKEMASTER so some bright spark decided to break the monotony and give the troops a bit of a laugh. Willie was dressed up to represent a senior officer, complete with swagger cane, and with his offside Lance Corporal Paddy Pollock, they set off undaunted on an inspection of the latrines. Naturally enough everything was found to be in perfect order. "If it hadn't been I would have had to fix it myself anyway," said Willie.

**TRAINING EXERCISES.**

It has been estimated that Willie participated in more than 120 Australian Army Defence Force Exercises not including those on active duty during a 33 year career. Willie clocked up 19 years in 6 RAR with the remaining 14 years in 2 RAR and 3 RAR. Willie completed a total of 33 year in the Australian Regular Army.

**CYCLONE TRACEY 1974.**

When Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin, Willie as part of the 6 RAR clean-up contingent was there helping out to clean up the after effects of the cyclone. Cyclone Tracy was a tropical cyclone that devastated the city of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day, 1974. It is the most compact hurricane or equivalent-strength tropical cyclone on record in the Australian basin, with gale-force winds extending only 48 kilometres from the centre and was the most compact system world-wide until 2008 when Tropical Storm Marco of the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season broke the record, with gale-force winds extending only 19 kilometres from the centre.

After forming over the Arafura Sea, the storm moved upward and affected the city with Category 4 winds on the Australian cyclone intensity scale, while there is evidence to suggest that it had reached Category 3 on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale when it made landfall. Tracy killed 71 people, caused \$837 million in damage (1974 AUD) and destroyed more than 70 percent of Darwin's buildings, including 80 percent of houses. Tracy left homeless more than 20,000 out of the 49,000 inhabitants of the city prior to landfall and required the evacuation of over 30,000 people. Most of Darwin's population was evacuated to Adelaide, Whyalla, Alice Springs and Sydney, and many never returned to the city.

## **MENTORING REINFORCEMENTS AND NEW CHUMS.**

Memories of Willie are seeing him in the Battalion, with a “fag” (cigarette) on the side of his mouth, huge handlebar moustache, black hair, wiry body, with two hooks on his arm, always with a smile on his face. When you approached him, his face would light up and a grin would appear, g’day digger he would say as you went by. I’m good “Corp”, I’m good and we would smile back. If you were like me who had only just marched into the Battalion from 1 RAR, it was a warm welcome by a bloke I did not even know. Willie met thousands of young diggers like me and I was no different others that had served the Battalion.

There was only one Willie “Blow fly” Killick he belongs to all of us. Life has a way of remembering the contributions of men like Willie. He was a very humble man, not afraid, unassuming, well loved by many who met him and had a smoke, a beer or shared a joke with him in the “boozer or on patrol. There will always be a little of Willie in all of us who met him.

## **GEORGE CHINN MUSEUM.**

During one of his visits to the Battalion, Willie was approached by Colonel D’Hage who asked him, “Willie, What do you think we should call 6 RAR museum”? Without blinking an eyelid, Willie replied “The George Chinn Museum Sir.” “The George Chinn Museum it is” said Colonel D’Hage.” “Blow fly was pleased as punch that day and his chest was puffed out and his chin was jugged out knowing that he had paid his long-time friend from the past his final tribute. It was not long after that Colonel D’Hage went directly to his officers where an “O Group” was being undertaken and in front of everyone, he notified all present, “that from this moment forward the 6 RAR Museum would be known as ‘The George Chinn Museum’; and that he made it known that he did not want to hear another word about it. From that moment on it was known as The George Chinn Museum.

## **RETIREMENT 1984.**

From 1974 to 1984 Willie soldiered on continuing his duties as Hygiene Corporal with 6 RAR at Enoggera Army Barracks Brisbane. During this time Willie again was helping clean up the city of Brisbane which had been inundated with the worst floods for almost 100 years. Furthermore, Willie was there when the back of the barracks and the homes in the hills were threatened with a raging bushfire. Willie along with other members of 6 RAR were called in to put out the fires threatening the homes. Without the support from 6 RAR, many of the homes would have gone up in flames. This is one of many instances where the public were not always aware of the support provided by the Australian Defence Force. After so many encounters with the elements and years of service to the nation, Willie decided to call it a day and finally separated from the Australian Defence Force in 1984.

<b>MILITARY SERVICE 1951-1984</b>	<b>MEDALS</b>
1. Puckapunyal VIC	1. BEM British Empire Medal
2. Sydney NSW	2. 1945-57 Australian Active Service Medal 3 bars Korea Malaya and Vietnam
3. Korea	3. Korea June 1950-10pm 21/07/1953
4. Japan	4. United Nations Medal June 1950-April 1954
5. Malaya	5. British General Service Medal Malaya
6. South Island of New Zealand	6. Vietnam Medal 1966-1974
7. Townsville QLD	7. Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 2 bars Korea and South East Asia
8. Vietnam	8. Long Service Medals
United Kingdom 1976	9. Australian Defence Medal
9. Thailand 1956	10. Good Conduct Medal
10. Singapore	11. South Korean Government Medal 1960-1974
11. Brisbane QLD (retired)	



It is of interest to note that Willie was also awarded The National Medal and clasp, two overdue long service clasps and the AGSM Australian General Service Medal Korea Post Armistice making a grand total of 13 service medals 12 clasps. Willie failed to receive recognition sooner due to Canberra having only recorded him as completing 20 years and not 33 years with the Australian Army since his retirement on the 28th November 1984. Can you believe how a dying man who sacrificed his whole life for the Australian Defence Force feels to receive that blow? Rebecca, Willie's daughter said that her prayers were answered.

Sergeant Major John Franklin from the Reserve Army Gallipoli Army Barracks Enoggera recently heard Willie's medals and was able to mount Willie's medals two days before ANZAC Day. During Rebecca's meeting with Sergeant Major John Franklin they discussed Willie's wishes to present 6RAR with his original miniature medals which are to be laid to rest in the George Chinn Museum at Gallipoli Army Barracks.

Sargent Major John Franklin has now donated his time and money to frame Willie Killick's miniature medals which will be presented to Brigadier Paul Mc Lachlan Commander 7th Brigade next Tuesday 11.05.10. A ceremonial parade has been organized for Willie Killick on Tuesday 11.05.10 at 3.00pm Gallipoli Army Barracks Enoggera. Everyone is welcome. Diggers are asked to wear medals to the event.

# Special gift for museum

THE longest-serving foundation member of 6RAR was honoured at Long Tan Lines when former corporal Willie Killick presented his miniature service medals to the battalion's George Chinn Museum.

Family and friends joined Mr Killick as he presented his 13 miniatures and Infantry Combat Badge earned during a 33-year career.

An honour guard of 16 current 6RAR soldiers stood at attention as stories of Mr Killick's colourful exploits were passed on by 6RAR Association members.

6RAR's longest-serving member, former sergeant Gus Guthrie, also spoke about his service with this best mate.

During his military career, Mr Killick served in Korea, Japan and Malaya. He became an original

member of 6RAR on its formation at Enoggera in 1965, deploying on operational tours of Vietnam in 1966 and 1969.

Just before taking his discharge on November 27, 1984, he was recognised for his military service with the British Empire Medal.

The old soldier said the military was his life and his 19 years with 6RAR were memorable.

He said he could think of nothing better than having the medals housed at the George Chinn Museum.

His youngest daughter, Rebecca, said it was a day for the family to celebrate his life.

"I would like to thank you all very much for joining our family on this most special day in honour of our dad as he makes a most heartfelt presentation to his other significant family, 6RAR," she said.



**Celebrate: Willie Killick**  
Photo by LCpl John Bonnick



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