

## Lance Bombardier William Raymond VENEY NX9015 - Australian Army 2/1 Field Regiment

### Biography:

William Raymond O'Malveney was born on 26 Jul 1920 at Cumnock, and registered at Molong as Raymond William O'Malveney. However, he always registered his Christian names as William Raymond during most of his life, and was known as Ray.

Ray's parents were William Dennis and Stella O'Malveney. William Dennis O'Malveney's parents were James and Ellen O'Malveney who lived at Glendaruel, Camden. They had 12 children - 7 sons and 5 daughters. They moved to Cowra around January 1899, where James became a carrier and farmer.

William Dennis O'Malveney married Stella Chappell at St Thomas Church, North Sydney, on 4 Mar 1910. Stella was a daughter of William Chappell and Elizabeth Rosetta Meurant, of "Kurrajean," Eurimbla. They had four children: Dorothy Stella (Dot), born 1910 St Leonards; Cyril James (Jim) born 1911 Parkes; Ellen Elizabeth (Nell), born 1913 Peak Hill; and William Raymond (Ray), born 1920 Cumnock.

William Dennis (known as Dennis or Denny) and Stella O'Malveney were living in Cumnock around 1920. The family shortened their surname to Veney soon after their arrival in Cumnock, as did many other members of the O'Malveney families. Dennis Veney played football as a forward for Cumnock in 1921 and was employed by the Amaroo Shire Council in 1925 and 1926, working on gravelling and installing concrete culverts along the Eurimbla Road. In 1928 Dennis was working at Loombah.

Ray Veney enrolled at the Cumnock Public School in 1925. In 1931 Ray was reported in local news reports as having played tennis at a school match against Eurimbla, and also participated in a concert in aid of St Matthew's Church in the Whiworri Theatre. At a social held in October 1931 for the Cumnock branch of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows Friendly Society (M.U.I.O.O.F) held at the Whiworri Theatre, which was organised by the Secretary, Dot Veney, Ray was reported to have won a prize playing Euchre.

Ellen Elizabeth (Nell) Veney married Keith Bloomfield at the Eurimbla Church of England on 25 Jul 1934. Keith was the son of George Bloomfield and grandson of William Bloomfield, who settled at "Glenwood," Eurimbla, in 1870. The couple lived at "Ringwood," Eurimbla.

In January 1938, Stella Veney and her daughter Dot were farewelled at Cumnock to go to Sydney to "take up business in the near future." They returned to Cumnock often thereafter for visits with Nell Bloomfield.



Ray, also known as "Skeet" to his family, joined the Navy after leaving school. The photo shows him with the cap with *HMAS Cerberus* on it. *HMAS Cerberus* is a Navy training establishment located on the Mornington Peninsula, south of Melbourne. Family have reported that he was only in the Navy for about a year. His later enlistment details do not state his time in the Navy.

Ray enlisted in the Australian Army on 8 Dec 1939 in Marrickville. On his enlistment form he stated he was born in Cumnock in 1918, instead of 1920, stating he was 21 years old, when he was in fact 19 years old. His occupation was a labourer and he was single. He gave his mother's name as his next of kin, whom he was living with in Marrickville at the time of enlistment. He was 5 feet 8½ inches tall, had brown eyes, black hair, a dark complexion and was of the Church of England religious denomination.

*The Wellington Times* - 4 Jan 1940, p4, reported on a SEND OFF TO AIF:

*"On Thursday evening of last week, a large and representative gathering of Cumnock and district residents assembled in Leary's Hall for the purpose saying farewell to Sergeant John Black, and Private Ray Veney, who sail with the 2nd AIF in a short time... The two men were presented with fountain pens after the toast to their health had been drunk."*

After training in Ingleburn, NSW, Pte Veney, with members of the 2/1 Field Regiment, assigned to the 6th Division, embarked on *HMT U5* at Sydney on 10 Jan 1940. During the voyage on 2 Feb 1940 he was fined 2/6 for "Failing to appear at place of appointed parade." He disembarked at Kantara on 13 Feb 1940 and then moved to Palestine for training.



Gunner Veney sent his sister, Nell Bloomfield, a postcard of Mordecai's corner, Tel-Aviv, Palestine, on 10 May 1940, on the back which he wrote:

*"Dear Nell, We are are at a temporary camp in the desert. Dust feet thick covers everything including blankets and clothes. Every morning a wind springs up at about 10 am and blows dust everywhere till about sunset, then drops. Nice nights and mornings. We don't get much chance to any washing as it is caked in mud as soon as it is hung out. We received mail last Sunday. I got 2 bundles of papers and 3 letters from home but none from you. The censor's had opened Mum's letter and they chopped out about half of it - all about Lynn joining the Army. We are on night manoeuvres now and I think that after we do a couple more, we will be going back to our proper camp. Will write as soon as we get out of this dust. Have sent one to Mum. Tons of love to all. Skeet."*

Gunner Veney's war record states that he was in Haifa on 17 Aug 1940. He was charged with being Absent Without Leave (AWL) for 12 hours on 2 Sep 1940 and was "Confined to Barracks (CB)" for 7 days and forfeited 1 days pay. He was appointed Lance Bombardier (L/Bdr) on 30 Nov 1940 in Egypt.

**"2/1st Field Regiment (Australia) - Wikipedia:** *After several months of arriving in the Middle East, part of the regiment's personnel – the regimental headquarters and the 1st Battery – were used to form an anti-aircraft (AA) regiment, designated as "Y Anti-Aircraft Regiment", along with elements of the 2/4th Infantry Battalion, to provide light air defence around Haifa. Later, the infantrymen returned to their battalion and the regiment was redesignated as the "2/1st Field Regiment (Anti-Aircraft)", with three AA batteries designated "A", "B" and "C". These batteries were sent to Egypt and occupied Aboukir, Sidi Bisr, Port Fuad and Helwan.*

*At Helwan, in September 1940, the regiment was re-assigned once again as a field regiment, and re-equipped. The following month, the 6th Division began large scale exercises in preparation for its commitment to the Western Desert campaign. In January 1941, the Australians went into action against the Italians for the first time, attacking Bardia. The 2/1st supported the 16th Brigade at this time, before switching to support the 19th Brigade's advance towards Tobruk. The regiment's headquarters then assumed control of a number of Australian and British artillery units as they pushed towards Derna, Barce and then Benghazi."*



**The photo shows 2/1st Australian Artillery men in their camouflaged emplacement, Libya, Bardia area, 29 Dec 1940. AWM 004915.**

*"Following this, the 6th Division was deployed to Greece to defend against a German invasion. The regiment deployed in support, but the 2nd Battery [which Pte Veney was assigned to] remained in Egypt. By the time the regiment arrived, the invasion had begun and Allied forces were already in retreat; several rearguard actions were fought as they withdrew from Domokos towards Kalamata. The regiment's personnel were evacuated, but they lost most of their guns. The regiment concentrated at Khassa, in Palestine, where they were joined by the 2nd Battery in May. "*

Ray reverted from L/Bdr to Gunner on 15 Feb 1941. *The Wellington Times* - 26 Jun 1941, p4, reported:

*"During the week Mrs K Bloomfield received a letter from her brother, Pte Ray Veney. Private Veney stated that he was well. His only regret was that he missed both the Greece and Crete campaigns."*

*"A third battery was raised for the regiment in September, designated as the 51st Battery. The regiment remained in the Middle East until February 1942 when the 6th Division was recalled back to Australia in response to the growing threat posed by Japan's entry into the war. En route to Australia, the 16th and 17th Brigades, including the 2/1st Field Regiment, were diverted to Ceylon where they formed a defensive garrison amidst concerns about a possible Japanese invasion."*

Gunner Veney embarked from Suez on 12 Mar 1942 and disembarked at Ceylon, Colombo, on 28 Mar 1942.

*"As there were no artillery staff within the divisional headquarters on Ceylon, the regiment came directly under the command of the 16th Brigade at this time, and was based around Horana where they undertook defensive duties in the south of the island; the 1st Battery was detached to support the 2/1st Infantry Battalion around Katukurunda at this time. The 2nd Battery relieved them in May. The regiment remained on Ceylon until July 1942, when the 16th and 17th Brigades completed their return to Australia."*



Gunner Veney disembarked at Melbourne on 7 Aug 1942. The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser (WDA)* - 4 Sep 1942, p3, reported a welcome home to Gunner Veney at Leary's Hall, Cumnock, by a large crowd of friends and well-wishers.

Gunner Veney's time at home didn't last long though, as the 2/1st Field Regiment embarked from Brisbane on 15 August and disembarked at Port Moresby on 24 Aug 1942.

**"2/1st Field Regiment (Australia) - Wikipedia:** *The 16th Brigade was subsequently deployed as the Australians began a counter offensive to push the Japanese back to their beachheads around Buna–Gona. The 2/1st Field Regiment was assigned to the defence of Port Moresby initially, but in November detached elements of the 51st Battery to support the US 32nd Infantry Division's attack on Buna, while the remainder of the battery was assigned to support the 7th Division's attack on Gona. In January 1943, the 2nd Battery, and regimental headquarters, moved forward to Buna. Meanwhile, the main part of the regiment was used to raise X Field Battery around Pari, to crew 18-pounder field guns near the newly established port facilities at Buna, before being sent to Oro Bay. By February 1943, they were relieved by the 2/6th Field Regiment and moved back to Port Moresby."*

On 23 Feb 1943, Gunner Veney was hospitalised at the 2/5 Australian General Hospital with Malaria. He was discharged on 12 March and then convalesced until 18 March. He was again promoted to Lance Bombardier (L/Bdm) on 18 May 1943.

The 2/1st Field Regiment 2nd Battery embarked from Port Moresby on 13 August, and arrived in Townsville on 16 Aug 1943. After leave, the unit was reconstituted at Narellan, New South Wales. L/Bdm Veney was hospitalised with another bout of Malaria at the 113 Australian General Hospital, Concord, Sydney, from 22 Sep - 6 Oct 1943.

L/Bdm Veney attended the 2/3 Railway Construction Coy Tractors and Dozers School from 8 - 24 Apr 1944. On the 29 April, he was admitted to the 2/2 Aust General Hospital, Rocky Creek, Nth QLD, with his third episode of Malaria and didn't return to his regiment until 24 May 1944. He attended the Land Headquarters School of Mechanisation Diesel Tracked Tractor Course from 24 Jun - 21 Jul 1944. He had 24 days leave from 5 Oct 1944 before embarking at Cairns on 4 Jan and disembarking at Aitape, New Guinea, on 11 Jan 1945. L/Bdm Veney was hospitalised at 104 Aust Casualty Clearance Station with an Upper Respiratory Tract infection on 6 Feb and returned to his unit on 20 Mar 1945.

**"2/1st Field Regiment (Australia) - Wikipedia:** *The regiment was reassigned to the 1st Division on return to Australia, and undertook labouring duties on the Sydney wharves before moving to Ravenshoe, Queensland in February 1944. Here they were assigned as corps artillery to the 1st Australian Corps. A further move to Mapee, Nth QLD, followed in May 1944, before the regiment was reassigned to the 6th Division, as the number of artillery regiments assigned to the division was increased. In September 1944, the regiment moved to Wondecla, Queensland, where it began preparations for deployment overseas. Arriving in January 1945, the main body of the regiment remained around the airfield at Aitape, undertaking defensive duties. The regiment moved forward to Naguib in May, where they supported the 19th Brigade's push towards Wewak, and then final operations around Mount Shiburangu. The regiment was out of the line, resting at Wewak, when the war came to an end in August 1945.*



**Wewak area, New Guinea, 14 Jul 1945.**  
**AWM 094011. The 2/1 and 2/3 Field Regiments fired 4.500 25-pounder shells over a period of 45 minutes.**

L/Bdm Veney embarked at Wewak per *HMT Katoomba* on 1 September and disembarked at Brisbane on 20 Sep 1945. He was discharged from the Australian Army at Sydney on 12 Oct 1945. He was entitled to the 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Pacific Star, the Defence Medal and the Australia Service Medal 1939-1945. He is honoured on the Cumnock Memorial Gates WW2 Honour Plaque.

The *Molong Express & WDA* - 12 May 1950, p6, reported "WEDDING VENEY -CLIFFORD  
*" Saint Michael's Church of England Wollongong was the scene of a pretty wedding on Saturday 29 April, when Valma Jean Clifford, youngest daughter of the late Mrs Clifford and Mr P Clifford of Tasmania, was joined in Holy Matrimony to William Raymond Veney, youngest son of Mr and Mrs WD Veney of Cumnock and Marrickville..."*

Ray's father, William Dennis Veney died, aged 71 years, at Molong Hospital on 20 Dec 1952. His mother, Stella Veney, died aged 87 years, on 18 Aug 1976. They are buried in the Anglican portion of the Cumnock Cemetery.

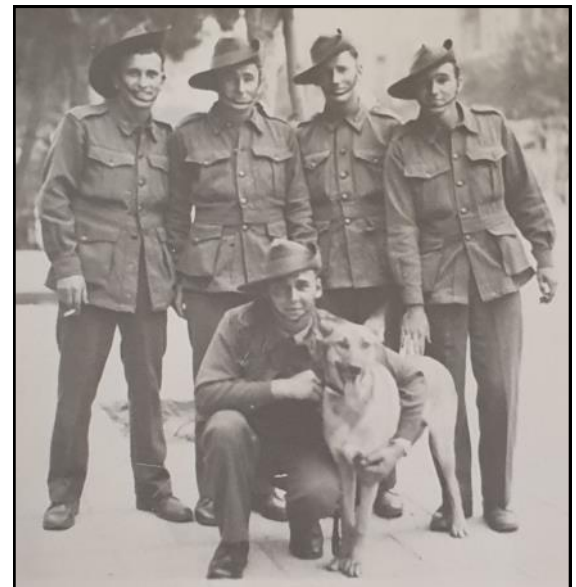
Ray and Valma settled in Wollongong where Ray worked as a taxi driver, and in his later years, as a plant operator. They had 3 children: Lorraine, Allan and Ralph. Ralph died aged 13 years from a ruptured appendix.

William Raymond Veney died, aged 66 years, on 14 Jan 1987 at the Wollongong Hospital. His remains were interred in the Wollongong Crematorium.

Valma Jean Veney died, aged 95 years, on 27 Jan 2023. Her funeral service was held at Bulli, Wollongong.

*Thank you to David and Ron Bloomfield (children of Nell and Keith Bloomfield, Eurimbla) and also Jann Mitchell (daughter of Zena Veney, granddaughter of Ralph Wilfred Veney who have assisted with photos and information.*

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***Above right: Pte Ray Veney on far right with unidentified "mates" and perhaps the regiment's mascot dog. 1940, at training camp, NSW.***

***Below: Ray, Nell, Jim, Dot, Denney and Stella Veney. 1940 Eurimbla.***

***Below right: Cumnock Memorial Gates***

