

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

### **Denis Alfred (Denny) Atherden**

**By Colonel A. R. Burke, OAM (Retd)**

Denis Alfred (Denny) Atherden left this mortal world in Perth on 13 June 2018

A sandgroper born 20 March 1930 at Subiaco, Denny joined the CMF 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment in Perth as an 18-year-old and then enlisted in the Australian Regular Army when he turned 19. He was initially posted to "A" Field Battery in the fledgling 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment at North Head, Sydney. However, a year later he was transferred to the Long Range Weapons Establishment Range (later the Army Guided Weapons Trials Unit) at Woomera South Australia for four years.

Returning to "A" Battery, he served with its 1957-59 tour of Malaysia rising to sergeant before coming home to 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment, now at Holsworthy NSW. Denny was posted to the School of Artillery in 1963 where he was appointed a special messenger to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her tour of Australia in 1964.

Promoted warrant officer class two in 1967, he became the Battery Guide of 105<sup>th</sup> Field Battery where he was a key figure in training up this revitalised unit for its second tour of Vietnam in 1967-70. Denny's technical abilities saw him as a regular duty officer in the command post and he was a tower of strength to the battery captain and on the gun line – handling six rather disparate detachment commanders and young section commanders in his stride. Den was always dressed immaculately, even under the most adverse field conditions. He was appointed Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) in June 1969 and completed his tour in that position.

On return to Australia, WO2 Atherden was granted a home state posting to the ARA staff back at his old 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment in Perth. Den discharged after 21 years' service on 2 January 1971 and worked for some time at a local TAFE. Early onset dementia forced him into retirement. He went downhill and was eventually committed to a nursing home. Sadly, his beloved wife Rosemary passed away at this time.

Vale Denny Atherden – a gentleman warrant officer of the good old breed, meticulously and technically competent, nothing was too much trouble for him to help others, loving family man and always a proud Gunner. Gone to the Great Gun Park to join his old mate, Tom Banfield at

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

88 years of age.

### **Acknowledgements:**

- First published in 'Tiger Rag' Issue 50, July 2018