



**Obituary**  
**VX 41453 Private Keith Charles Lynn**  
**37/52 Battalion**  
**21 January 1919 - July 2003**



We're here today to mourn the passing of a special man – a devoted husband to Mum - a loving father to myself, Peter, Sandra, Gary, Debbie, Terry, Rod and Keith – father-in-law to Jill, Vossy, Maree, Jo, Pommy, Ray, Cheryl and Helen - grandfather to Sharon, Terri, Tracie, Tony, Kelly, Wendy, Michael, Brett, Brad, Paula, Dale, Benjamin, Rebecca, Jarrah, Cassidy, Madison, Jamie, Samantha and Aaron the wrecker - and great-grandfather to Tom, Ben, James, Dillon, Angela, Taylor, Casey, Kayla, Gemma, Indiah, Jackson, Tess and Beth – and good mate and dear friend to everybody in Orbost.

When a veteran passes on a message is flashed around the various battalion associations. It simply says:

*'The world is a little poorer – a soldier died today'.*

Dad was born in Orbost on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1919, the second child and first son of Nan and Pop Lynn who were among the first of the pioneering farmers to the district. Dad's grandfather, Sam Lynn had arrived in Australia from his home in Northern Ireland when he was just 16. He only had a few shillings and a swag to his name but with a big heart and a lot of hope he worked his way to Bruthen where he met his future wife, Elizabeth Warren. He then came on to Orbost and built a bark hut on a part of the Snowy which is now known as Lynn's Gulch, and started his family. Times were tough and hardships were many.

Dad was just 10 years of age at the start of the Great Depression but he well remembered the hardships of the times.

As a young boy he went to a small school on the banks of the Snowy at Bete Bolong which used to be called Pumkin Point in the early days of settlement.

He left school towards the end of the depression to help Pop out on the farm – and together with his eldest sister Cora, brothers Max, Sammy, Jimmy, Ian and younger sister Susie they worked, played and sang together – Susie on the piano accordion and the rest on the spoons! Their friends in the Jarrahmond area – the Nixon's, Cameron's, Boucher's, Cowell's, Trewin's, Russell's, McLeod's and Mundy's cleared the land and grew the first crops on what came to be recognised as some of the most fertile farming land in Australia. They were hard times but they were good times.

In Dad's late teens he met a worked at Moran and Cato's – youngest of the McColl trifecta – she was pretty, a the London School of Music, dancer. They had a happy himself pretty well because wouldn't have missed much.



very attractive young girl who her name was Melva and she was the sisters. Dad thought he had won the talented pianist with an award from and an accomplished Scottish folk courtship and he must have behaved we all know that Nan McColl

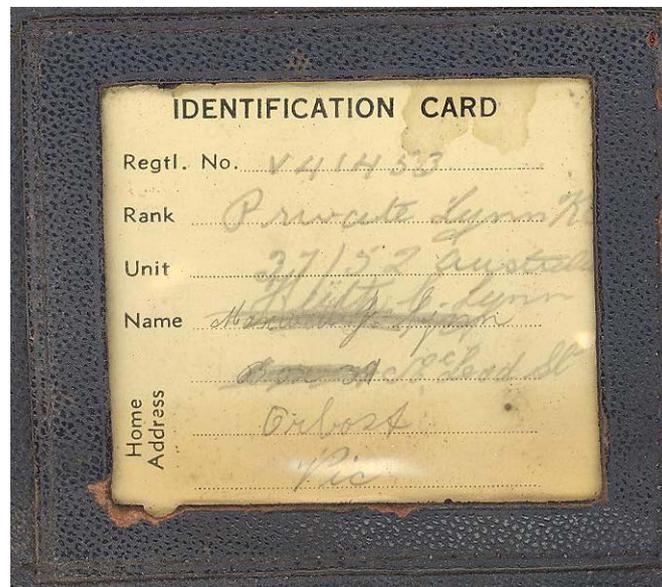
These were really happy days for Dad. He started playing football for Orbost and it was the beginning of a life-long relationship with the Club – he loved the Green and Golds and served them loyally as a player – as a member of the committee – and as a goal umpire. I have heard it said that even though he was a great player for the club he was far more effective as a goal umpire – some say he prevented more opposition goals than Mocca ever did. I also understand that he always gave Bob Marthick the benefit of the doubt when he lined up the goals!

Unfortunately his playing days were to be cut short as the stormclouds of war began to gather in far off Europe and the menace of Japan's expansionist ambitions were becoming apparent. They were uncertain times which culminated when Hitler rolled his tanks into Poland and plunged Europe into the abyss of war. Bob Menzies announced Australia's commitment to Britain and the first of our Diggers were dispatched overseas to make our contribution to empire defence.

It was also the year Dad proposed to Mum and they were married here in Orbost on Boxing Day in 1941 – three weeks after Japan bombed Pearl Harbour and entered the Pacific War.

Darwin was bombed soon after. Midget submarines crept into Sydney Harbour and created panic throughout the country. Epic sea battles were fought on the Coral Sea and at Midway and desperate land battles were fought at Milne Bay and along the Kokoda Track. The Japanese were on our doorstep. Fear was endemic.

Dad was 23 at the time and joined the Militia to do his bit against what was seen to be an invincible Japanese war machine. He joined up on New Years Eve in 1942 and was posted to the 37<sup>th</sup> Battalion - The East Gippsland Regiment.



ID Card - VX41453, Private Keith Lynn, 37/52 Battalion

His Battalion later combined with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion which was known as - The Gippsland Regiment. An extract from their battalion diary gives a good feel for their preparation for war:

*'14 Dec 42. Bn moved to a mosquito infested area at foot of Mt Buderim. Unit took over campsite and operational role of 2/16 Bn which was then on active service un Buna. BHQ was established on Mt Buderim and companies widely dispersed. As Xmas approached first 70 men from Bn marched on 16/12 for home leave – remainder envious but content in knowledge that their turn was coming. Xmas dinner in camp 1942 served by officers from 200 quid drawn from regimental funds and a special Xmas allowance of one shilling per head. Celebrations continued on Boxing Day at Maroochydoor with a swimming and sports comp organised Capt. Clapperton. On 27/12 a squad of U.S. Army personnel demonstrated various phases of infantry training and a display of precision drill. Dawn of New Year 1943. Peace and tranquillity of camp shattered by haunting sounds of Major MacFarlane's bagpipes.*

*'Fortnight later troops travelled to Bne for photographs, x-rays and final leave of 12 days was granted in batches. Bn band organised dances at Buderim and Maroochydoor halls and 3<sup>rd</sup> Div concert party entertained troops at Jazzland Hall, M'chydore. Final leave for 500 sent wouth on 18/1/43 and preparations for our dep for N.G. continue. Warning Order for Bn to move to N.G. issued on 9/2/43 and khaki uniforms and equipment dyed jungle or cow shit green. 14 Feb tents were struck and we slept out in open. Reveille 3AM – 9.30 AM embussed for Palmwoods Rly Stn. Boarded 2 trains for Mercantile Sharf in Bne and by 2PM the Bn was on board S.S. Both for our trip to N.G.'*

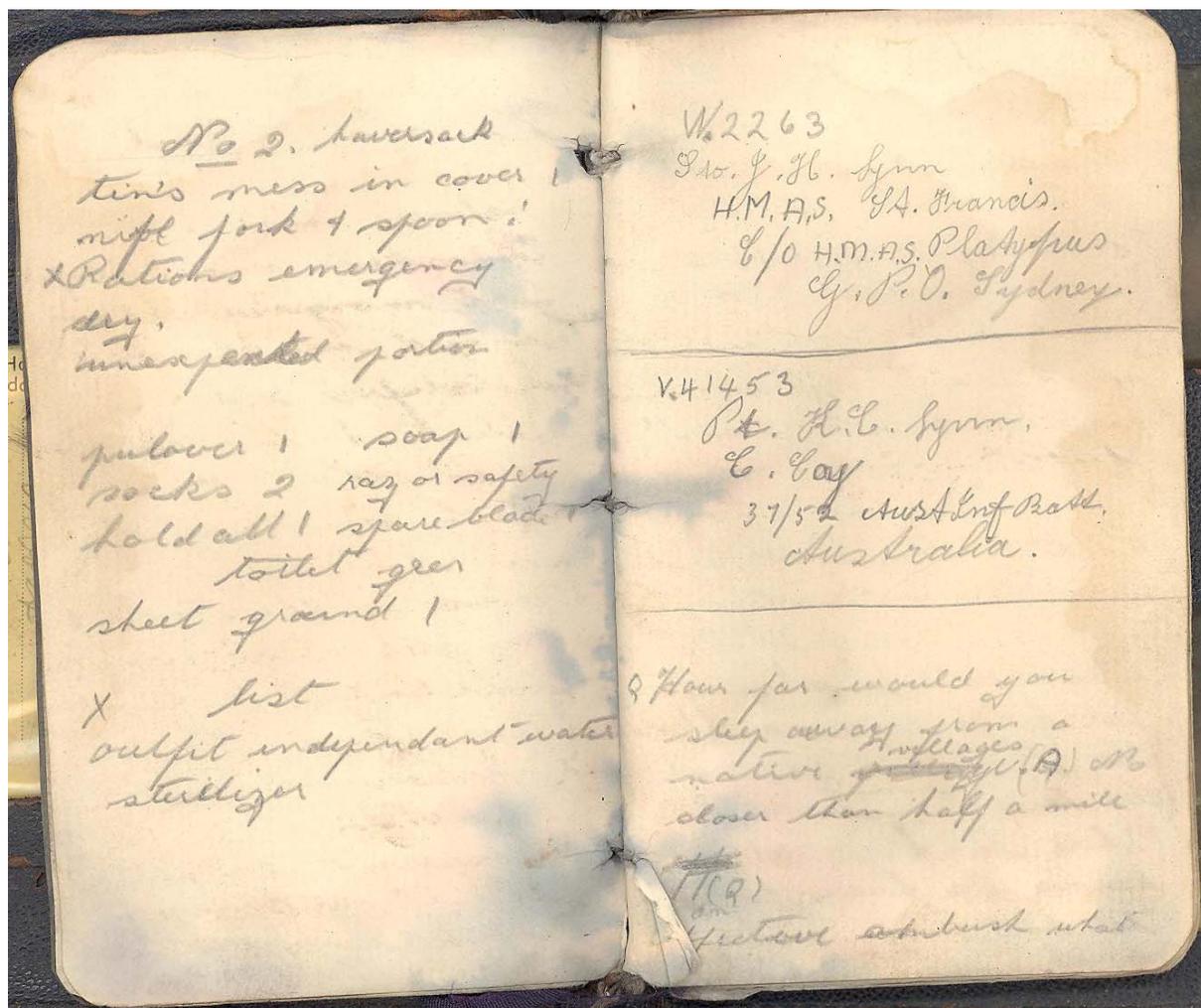
The Gippsland Battalion were a tough and close knit mob. If it had been a football training camp they would have been regarded as a formidable inter-league force to be reckoned with. They truly were a magnificent bunch of men. The Regimental March of the Gippslanders was called 'The March of the Cameron Men'. The first verse established their creed:

*'There's many a man of the Cameron Clan,  
That has followed his chief to the field;  
He has sworn to support him or die by his side,  
For a Cameron never can yield.'*

The final verse was their inspiration for battle:

*'The moon has arisen, it shines o'er the path,  
Now trod by the gallant and true;  
High, high are the hopes, for their chieftain hath said,  
That whatever men dare they can do.'*

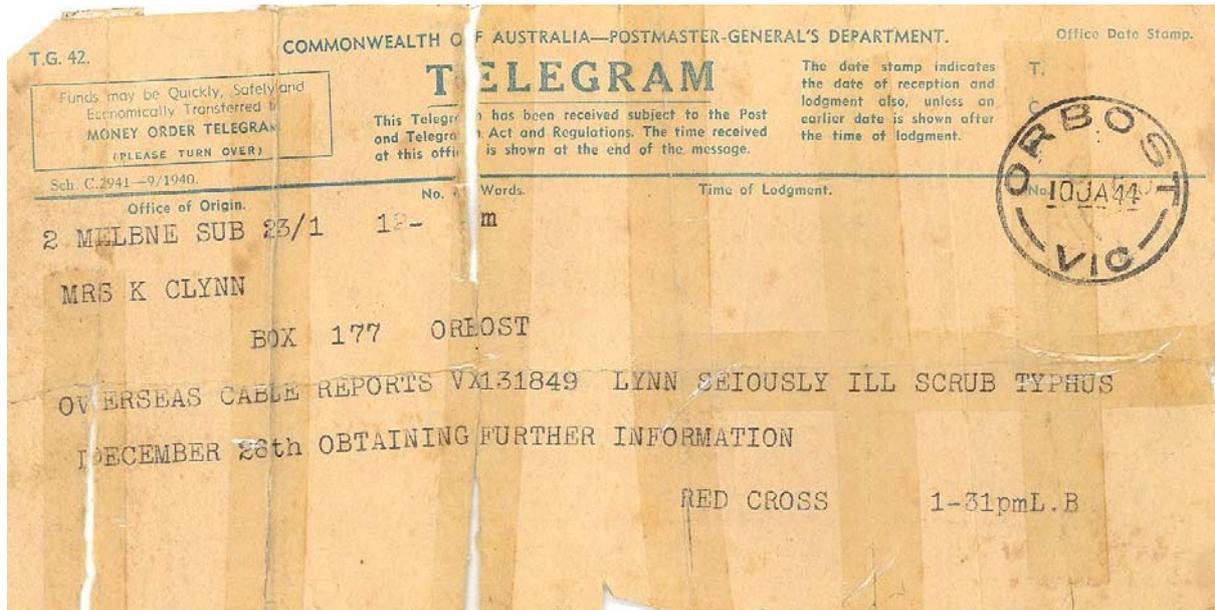
These stirring words would have sustained them through endless 20 mile marches, gut-wrenching training exercises and finally the fields of battle in Milne Bay, Lae, Sananada and Finchafen which are now proudly emblazoned on the battle honours of the 37<sup>th</sup>/52<sup>nd</sup> Gippsland Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment.



Extract from Dad's Army Notebook

After serving in Milne Bay, Lae and Finchafen, Dad contracted malaria and scrub typhus. The mortality rate from scrub typhus at the time was 100 per cent – if you got it you died. Incredibly if you contracted malaria at the same time there was some hope – I can only assume that the parasites fought their own battle for supremacy. But his health deteriorated rapidly and he lost more than half his body weight to a mere six stone as tropical fevers wracked his body. Mum told me that the army doctors used to send her telegrams and say that he was sitting on a fence and they didn't know which way he was going to fall.

I can only surmise that the last lines of the Regimental March were impregnated in his subconscious 'that whatever men dare they can do.' He dared to recover - and he did – against all the odds.



Telegram received by Mum on 10 January 1944

Dad returned from the war and settled down with Mum in a small hut on the banks of the Snowy at Jarrahmond, near Pop's farm. His football career was over but his love of the game and his dedication to the Green and Golds was stronger than ever. He returned to the farm and enjoyed the company of the family he had missed so badly while he was away. The work was still hard but he looked forward to the re-unions with his army mates, his days at the footy and the Saturday night dances in Pop's barn.

When he decided to have a family he didn't hold back – I came along first, then Peter, Sandra, Terry, Gary, Debbie, Hot Rod and Bub – to this day I can't understand how we all fitted into that small two bed roomed house in Forest Road – I can't understand how Mum had us all fed before Dad arrived home from the Club – and I can't understand – looking back – how much we enjoyed that phase of our lives. I can only remember much love with great humour and lots of laughter.

My earliest memories of Dad were on the farm at Jarrahmond. Peter was about three when he tried to climb the wheel of the milk dray and the horses moved on my command of 'giddy-up'. The wheel circled with Peter as its centrepiece causing him to fall and jam his thumb beneath it. When Dad reached him his thumb had been severed. Dad stuck Peter on the front of the horse and me on the back and off we went to the Orbest Hospital – by the time we got there Pete's thumb looked like a barbecued chipolata. After checking him in we rode back to the farm where Dad finished the milking. All in a day's work.

Soon after we moved in with Nan McColl for awhile and he brought Eric Steed's house in Forest Road – Dad was pretty excited about this and I can remember him telling me that our new house had a

shower in it. I didn't know what a shower was at the time - but I knew that if Dad was excited about it - then so was I!

He brought an old red Commer Pug nose truck and became the local carrier. I don't think any of us kids took much notice of his work until years later when we had to do our bit to help out – 500 butter boxes three times a week, groceries for the stores, grog for the pubs, cement for the brickies, fuel, produce and livestock to local farms, the railhead at Bombala and the markets in Melbourne – and all he had was a trolley, a bag hook and a couple of planks! I still don't know how he did it full time for all those years because it is the hardest work I ever did when he called on us to give him a hand. He wasn't the only one committed to hard physical work in the town in those days so when I think back I can understand why he had to go to the Mens Club to whet the whistle with his mates before he came home for tea each night.

I have great memories of Dad on Saturday's. He would work to about mid-day then come home, shower, change and get ready for the footy. *'Where's me shoes Bloko?'* he would yell out to Mum as she was chasing one of us out of something. Finally, all spruced up, he would be off to join his brothers and his mates at the sheds to watch the game and have a few coldies.

After the match it was back home and then off to the Barn at Pop's farm for the dance with Mum on the Piano, Uncle Rob on the banjo or the sax and Susie on the piano accordion.

The next day we would go to church and Dad would be off to the barrel to replay yesterday's game.

The main event for the year in those days was the Orbost Show - sideshow alley, boxing troupes, great walls of death, freak shows, horse events, country music - and the bar. It was a great mix and Dad just loved being part of it. We always knew where to find him when we wanted a couple more shillings to see the next fight in the boxing tent.

When I look back on those days they were just fantastic. As a father he was just the greatest of blokes. He only ever had good things to say about people and he was always willing to give a hand – he used to lend the truck out to anybody who needed a job done – and no matter how bad things got he could always laugh about it with that great chuckle.

There is no doubt that we tested him a bit during our teenage years but I can never remember him losing faith in any of us or going real crook at us – even when he came to the lock-up at Lakes to bail us out! He always gave us the impression that whatever we did he would stick with us and help us through no matter what.

We saw this compassion emerge when Mum suffered a stroke about 11 years ago. Mum was never quite the same after that and needed more and more care. Dad became her nurse, her soul mate, her cook, her protector. He was just fantastic. He was on duty 24 hours a day and was as attentive as any trained nurse would have been to her needs. He got some great assistance from some great carers here in the town but we could only marvel at his devotion to her. There was a deep love and a strong bond that we could never fully appreciate.

Dad never had much money but he had a different type of wealth – one that money can't often buy. I used to see this on our annual pilgrimage back home for Christmas each year. Over the years we all married and there was soon a small army of grandchildren and *'outlaws'* around the house. I remember one Christmas Dad and Mum were sitting back in their chairs and Brett had been designated as Santa. Nan McColl was with us – there was an abundance of stubbies, ripping yarns and much laughter. Brett was trying to carry out his role amongst the bedlam in the house and I remember looking across at Dad and thinking *'money just can't buy this sort of joy'*.

The other day when I was driving back from seeing him for what turned out to be the last time I was trying to think what Dad would have wanted most in life. The answer was fairly obvious. He would

just have wanted all of us to get along well – to be good mates, to be happy for each other, and to help one another out. That would have been Dad’s measurement of success and I think we can proudly report that he can rest in peace knowing that this wish has been fulfilled.

The only other thing Dad would have wanted would be a couple of good footballers in the family. Apart from his beloved Green and Gold’s he was a lifelong Carlton supporter. When he learned David Parkin flew to Adelaide to recruit Tony from Central Districts he grew about a foot. He never bragged about it but you could just see the pride.

A few years later he was sitting in his favourite chair watching the Brownlow Medal count when he saw Michael receive the ultimate accolade in Australian football. Over the past two years he saw his young Lion King lead his team to victory on the hallowed turf of the Melbourne Cricket Ground. While this achievement might well be beyond the wildest dreams of every aspiring footballer in Australia I don’t reckon that Dad would ever have doubted Mike’s ability to get to the top. He would have just reflected on the last bar of his old regimental song ‘*whatever men dare, they can do!*’ Mike has dared to be the best and there was no prouder grandfather in Australia than Dad in acknowledging this.

A couple of weeks ago he saw Mike and Brett line up against each other when the Lions played the Saints. Now while Sandra might have been sending threatening text messages off to Mike about roughing up his brother, Dad would have appreciated that Brett would acquit himself well because he had years of practice of handling that sort of treatment from Mike. Again I thought to myself – he must be so proud.

Just as he would have been when Jarrah sailed off on active service in HMAS Kanimbla. One of the other great attributes Dad had was his sense of equality – he didn’t really care what any of us achieved or didn’t achieve – he was just happy in the knowledge that we would always come home, have a yarn and a beer, and hang around for awhile.

Dad wanted for nothing in his final few years. His house was warm, comfortable and full of wonderful memories - and then he won the jackpot when Debbie and Ray brought his favourite seaside pub at Marlo. He now had a flash car with a glove box full of country music tapes - a gold card - a few dollars in the bank for the first time in his life - and he didn’t have to shout at the bar. It just didn’t get any better!

When he had his fall last week we were all able to get to Sale to see him – and he could see that we were there because we wanted to be there and because of our love and respect for him. When Bub was sitting with him he looked across and said ‘*You know Bub, I’ve had a good life*’.

I agree with that sentiment. He has had a good life because he was a good man. We’re all going to miss him dearly – I’m sure everybody in the town will miss him dearly.

I was really touched on Sunday when I heard that after Mike goaled for the Lions he pointed towards the sky and said ‘*This one’s for you Pop.*’ Dad would have smiled back, turned, walked through the pearly gates, met Mum and Terry, to begin a well-deserved eternal life of peace and happiness together. We know he has left a wonderful legacy of memories and that his job here has been well done.

**Lest we forget**



The Lynn Family



The Extended Lynn Clan