

# A Story about two Mountain Guns captured during WWII by 31<sup>st</sup> / 51<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF)

By John Hardy, Walkamin

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## Frank's gun found at RSL

### Same weapon veteran fired

THERE are many untold stories of war but the Japanese Mountain Gun that guards the doors of the Mareeba RSL has close ties to veteran Frank Hammond.

The 89-year-old grandfather served five years in World War II as a corporal in the Australian Army serving in Townsville, Torres Strait, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.

The gun was captured on January 1, 1945, by units of the 31/51st infantry battalion at Tsimba Ridge in Bougainville.

Mr Hammond said he never realised it was the exact weapon from his war days until a friend read him the inscription on the gun.

The gun is believed to have been sourced from members of the battalion.

"It's amazing that it ended up here," Mr Hammond said.

"The gun has a bulge from one of the boys dropping a grenade down the barrel and it couldn't be used again because that neutralises the gun."

Mr Hammond and his wife Marjorie have lived at Mareeba for five years and are both originally from Charters Towers.

He had not spoken much of the

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war years because of the horrid stories that are still etched in his mind are too raw to speak of. He said it was the letter writing to family that he most cherished.

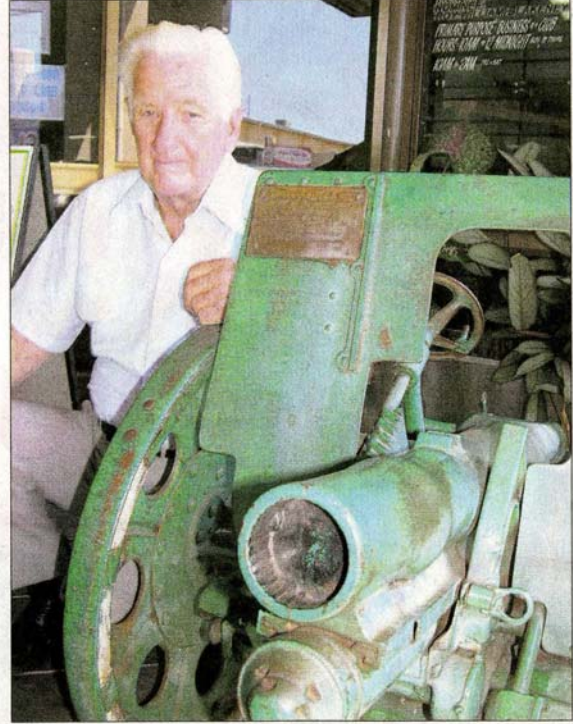
"I still have the letter I wrote my mum, dad and sister back then," Mr Hammond said. "I thought it was the last letter I'd write because I didn't think I'd see them again."

"I remember feeling bullets skimming my back. One memory that I can still see today was one of our men had trouble being away from home and wanted to go sleep beside another mate's tent so he moved in the night but his mate thought he was a Jap and shot him."

Mr Hammond's battalion Commander Lt Kelly ordered his return to Canungra in Queensland to instruct troops at the jungle school.

"Lt Colonel Kelly said I could go back in three months but that's when the atom bomb was dropped," he said.

Mr Hammond was discharged from the army in 1946 and made the trip home to Charters Towers.



Frank Hammond, 89, beside the Japanese Mountain Gun that his battalion captured in Tsimba Ridge, Bougainville, in 1945. It now sits outside the Mareeba RSL.



There is also a similar mountain gun sitting outside the Charters Towers RSL captured by 31<sup>st</sup> / 51<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF).



The Type 92 was issued at the usual rate of two per Infantry Battalion, though this could be doubled for specific units.

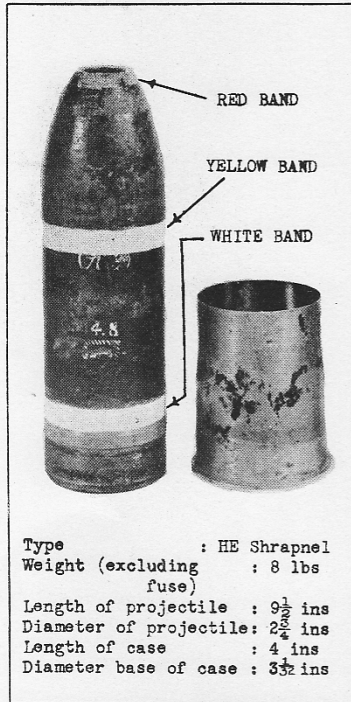
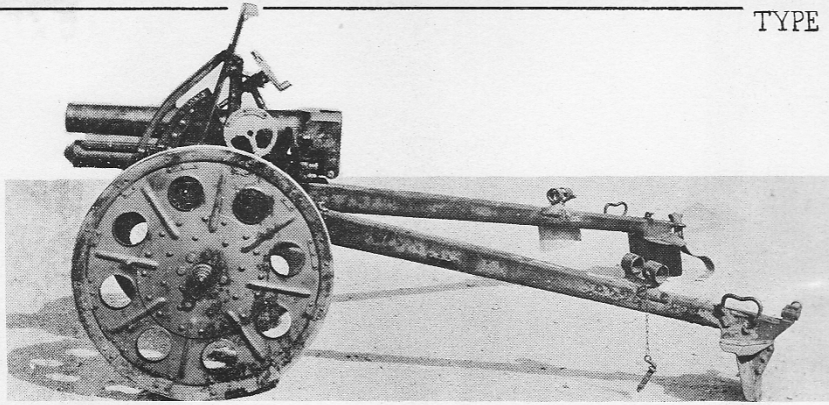
The need to transport equipment by hand was due to the lack of motorisation and hostile terrain. It was a much lighter weapon by comparison to the German 7.5 cm gun, important as it was manhandled or towed by horses wherever the Japanese Army fought. It benefited from a relatively long range, though it was also deployed at much closer ranges. By firing at a higher elevation, it was possible to engage targets just 100 metres distant. This also meant the shells impacted at a much steeper angle, more akin to a mortar than a gun. Manpower wise it was a very expensive weapon to maintain in the field, but its flexibility more than compensated.

**Type 92 (70mm Battalion Gun)**

Weight        212 kg (gun only)  
Range         2745 metres  
Elevation    - 10 to + 50 degrees  
Traverse     90 degrees  
Bomb         High Explosive (HE)  
Bomb weight 3.8 kg

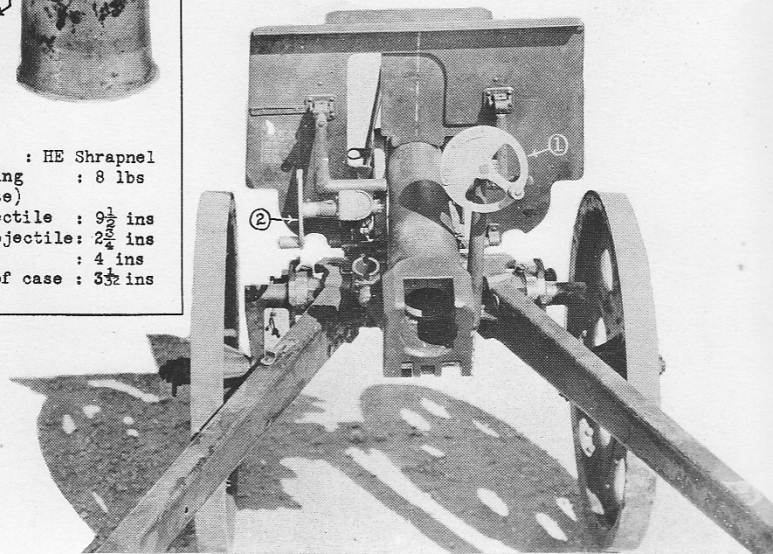
# JAPANESE 70MM BATTALION GUN

TYPE 92



REAR VIEW

Elevating Hand Wheel.....①  
Traversing Hand Wheel.....②  
Protective Shield:-  
Dimensions -  
Width at top : 23 ins  
Width at bottom :  $24\frac{3}{4}$  ins  
Height from axle :  $19\frac{3}{4}$  ins



GSI(a) ADV LHQ 19 MAR 43