

OBITUARY:

Lieutenant Colonel A. T. (“Bushy”) Pembroke, MC

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Thomas (“Bushy”) Pembroke, MC, a Korean War veteran and long-standing member of the Institute in New South Wales, has died in Sydney aged 93 years.

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Thomas Pembroke, MC, was known throughout the Australian Army and more widely as “Bushy”. He entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, on 22 February 1947, excelled at his military studies and, when he graduated in December 1950 as the top staff cadet, was awarded the Sword of Honour.

Bushy was commissioned as a Lieutenant into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and was posted to 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), to be Platoon Commander of 9 Platoon, C Company. He joined 3RAR in Korea on 06 August 1951 where 3RAR, an infantry battalion of 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, was fighting Chinese Communist forces in the vicinity of the Imjin River some 50km north-west of Seoul.

In late September, United Nations forces commenced a general offensive against the Chinese defensive line. 3RAR was ordered to capture the Maryang San complex, key terrain west of the Imjin. The Battle of Maryang San lasted from 2 to 8 October 1951 and involved a series of battalion-co-ordinated company attacks to seize features that were protecting Maryang San, occupy Maryang San itself, and then exploit forward to capture a feature called The Hinge.

C Company conducted three of these company assaults. In the second one, on 5 October, it captured Hill 317, the highest point of the Maryang San complex. The next day, Bushy’s 9 Platoon attacked at dawn to seize a wooded knoll (Feature Sierra) located half-way along the spur leading from Maryang San to The Hinge. In heavy mist, 9 Platoon seized the knoll with hand-grenades, bullets and bayonets. Then, for the next two days, it withstood intense Chinese artillery, mortar and heavy machine-gun fire and successfully repelled numerous Chinese counter-attacks. For his cool planning and leadership during the attack on Feature Sierra and the personal risks that he took under Chinese small arms, artillery and mortar fire to encourage and direct his men during resolute defence against Chinese counter-attacks, Bushy was awarded the Military Cross.

Following the Korean War, Bushy’s career reflected the usual series of regimental, staff and training appointments of a junior officer. Highlights included two, two-year periods of overseas training in Britain culminating in attending the British Army Staff College, Camberley. They were interspersed by three years as Adjutant of the 6th Mounted Rifles, a Citizen Military Forces infantry battalion based in Orange, NSW.

In 1964, Bushy was posted to 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, as Officer Commanding B Company, an appointment that he found very satisfying. His men did, too. One of his then soldiers, George Mansford, who would later become a brigadier, says: “Those who served under [Bushy’s] command, no matter when or where, held him in the highest regard as an outstanding leader.”

During Australia’s commitment to the war in Vietnam, Bushy served in various staff appointments in senior headquarters, most notably Headquarters, Far East Land Forces, Singapore. Australia’s military commitment to that war was



The Queen with Colonel Pembroke and his granddaughter at an Australian Defence Force Academy graduation ceremony.

small – three infantry battalions at its peak – and there were far more infantry Lieutenant Colonels available to command those battalions than there were jobs available. Nevertheless, Bushy was very disappointed he missed out on commanding a battalion in Vietnam. He decided in 1971 to transfer to the part-time Citizen Military Forces (CMF). After some three years as a tactics instructor in the Eastern Command Training Group, he was given command of an infantry battalion of the Royal New South Wales Regiment – 17th Battalion (17RNSWR).

Bushy became Commanding Officer of 17RNSWR in August 1974. As part of the CMF, the Battalion’s role was to contribute to the Australian Military Forces’ strategic reserve by providing the organisational and command structure for one infantry battalion of an expeditionary force which could be raised within nine months of call-out. The principal task was to produce the commissioned and non-commissioned officers for that battalion and for the training organisation that would provide the battalion’s reinforcements. Bushy focused on teaching the officers and NCOs how to conduct collective training and succeeded in raising the standard of both collective training and staff work in the Battalion.

In July 1975, Bushy returned to full-time service in the Regular Army. He became a staff officer on Headquarters Training Command and served in that role for a further three years before retiring from the Army on 06 March 1978 after having served for 31 years as an Australian soldier.

Following his military service, Bushy served for a term as President of the Defence Force Welfare Association’s New South Wales Branch. As well, he became an active member of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies in New South Wales. He also was a Patron of the Association of 17th Infantry Battalions and was a keen attendee at the annual regimental dinners of the Royal New South Wales Regiment and of the Regiment’s 17th Battalion and its successor, the 2nd/17th Battalion.

David Leece