New Year Greetings and Reminiscences from World War II

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As we welcome yet another New Year, we share happy greetings here with old 3/11 Regiment gunners and friends but also take the opportunity to reflect on some of our own personal war experiences. An old friend recently described to me his wartime close encounter with an enemy plane.

The nearest that I have been to an enemy plane was in February 1941 when, as a very raw 2/Lt, I was detailed to pick up the propeller of a Stuka - an incident I described in my book. It included the lower jaw of one of the crew among the ashes!

We, HAA gunners were very restricted in our movements - restricted to being no further than a couple of hundred yards from our guns!

Incidents worth remembering were of many enemy planes - and unfortunately many friendly ones too - being shot down. One particular incident is unforgettable - four Italian bombers flying in perfect formation at constant height and speed from west to east. A perfect HAA shoot. Two were shot down before they were half way across the Island and we were later told that the other two did not make it home unscathed!
My own unforgettable scene is from my Bizbizija L/O Mosta gun position during one of many 50 enemy bomber raids on Ta’Qali which the gun position overlooked from less than half a mile away. It is still a clear picture in my mind. More than halfway through the raid a JU88 lost a wing and one of the crew baled out but his parachute got entangled with the plane’s tail.

More next time!

POSTSCRIPT: Major Maurice Agius, now 96, lives on his own near Kappara, Malta. Sadly, his wife Sheila (nee Chalmers) passed away some eight years ago.

Maurice was born in Sliema, Malta in 1921, educated at The Lyceum and at the Royal University of Malta. He was eighteen years old when World War II broke out in September 1939 but had already been in uniform two weeks, as he had joined the Territorials in June of that year.

He was discharged from the Army after a few months on compassionate grounds to attend university but was back in uniform two days after Mussolini joined the war in June 1940 and soon afterwards was commissioned and served in 2nd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Malta Artillery, right through the siege 1940-1943.

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Edited 23 January 2018
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