

INTRODUCTION

On 20 December 2017 Jack Bell celebrated his 100th birthday; a great achievement for any person but very special when that person was seriously wounded in the Second World War and survived over three years in Italian and German Prisoner of War camps.

Even at this senior age Jack maintains his parade ground posture, dresses smartly and has a razor sharp mind. He looks much younger than he is—and when he relays that he fought in the Second World War the first reaction is usually one of disbelief.

Jack's experiences as an airman and Prisoner of War (POW) in the Second World War make a remarkable story. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force at age 22. He saw active service in North Africa during one of the great Allied offensives. His aircraft was shot down by the Germans and he was badly wounded. After recovering in hospital and surviving for over three years in three POW camps he was liberated by the Russians. When Jack was demobilised in early 1946 he had just turned 28—another seven decades of his life still lay ahead of him.

This book was written as a tribute to Jack's service to the nation and the community. It was produced in partnership with the Camberwell City Sub-Branch of the Returned and Services League of Australia.

I would like to acknowledge their financial and moral support in producing this book. It drew material from his personal files, interviews, archives and open sources. I would like to thank Jack and his family for their support in producing this book. While all due care has been taken to research the material for this book any errors remain mine.

Marcus Fielding