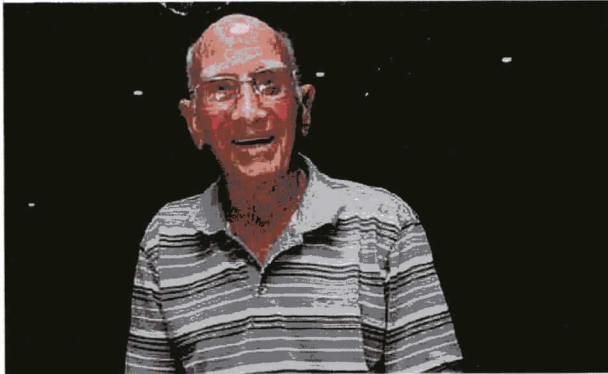


George turns 99 years young today

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Former Widgee Shire councillor George Burtenshaw is 99 years young and still going strong.

Contributed

He enlisted from Toowoomba in 1940.

"I was serving in the 2nd camp field regiment artillery," Mr Burtenshaw said.

He was there for the fall of Singapore and spent three-and-a-half years as a Changi POW.

"It's not something I talk about and it's not something you want to hear about," he said.

It was six years before he was well enough to return to civilian life.

When he did, it was back to farming.

"I never wanted to work in an office," he said.

He bought his first farm in the Mary Valley and farmed pineapples there for seven years. On selling that, he purchased another farm at nearby Brooloo and spent 30 years pineapple farming.

"I sold most of them to the Golden Circle cannery – and if I filled my quota, some went to Sydney," he said.

The small community of Brooloo saw leadership qualities in their neighbour and when he turned the ripe old age of 60, they asked him to run for the local council. "I started when I was 60 and retired when I was 81; I was a councillor for 21 years and went through seven elections."

Mr Burtenshaw retired to Laguna Retirement Village with his wife. His family is made up of four children, 16 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Tewantin Noosa RSL club threw a special birthday party and also celebrated Mr Burtenshaw's 28 years of RSL membership.

ON December 23, 99 years ago, George Burtenshaw entered the world in Newport, on the border of Wales and England.

Last week the Tewantin Noosa RSL sub-branch gave the former Mary Valley identity an early birthday party.

Remarkably fit, Mr Burtenshaw showed off his keen mind, when he reminded his birthday orator of a few facts.

He spent three-and-a-half years as a prisoner of war on the Burma railway, 21 years as a councillor on the then-Widgee Shire Council and 30 years as a pineapple farmer, and he was a mere 16 years old when he left Newport for Australia.

"If there had of been a road home, I would have walked it," Mr Burtenshaw recalled.

"I was so lonely.

"I was on my own and I was just a bloody Pom.

"And I still am a bloody Pom," he joked.

But within 12 years Mr Burtenshaw was part of an army of men serving in the Second World War

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