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ADELAIDE, FINAL

City: Early rain at times, 20°C

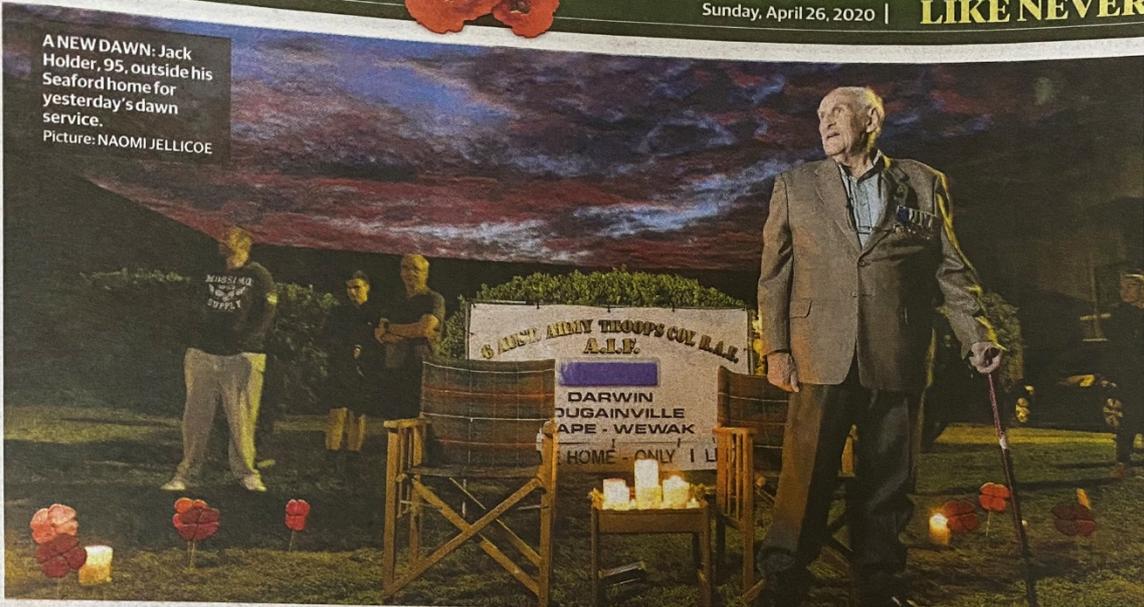
SWEET TRIBUTE: World War II veteran Jack Holder, 95, and his great-grandchildren, Edie, 7, and Alfie, 6, tuck into Anzac biscuits at dawn on the driveway of his Seaford home yesterday.
Picture: NAOMI JELICOE



A new dawn

WORLD War II Digger Jack Holder was not going to let a pandemic stop him reflecting on the loss of his comrades. Mr Holder was yesterday joined across the country on Anzac Day by Australians who stood at the end of their driveways to pay tribute to those who selflessly served to protect our country.

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A NEW DAWN: Jack Holder, 95, outside his Seaford home for yesterday's dawn service. Picture: NAOMI JELICOE

Jack, 95, still fit to serve

STEVE RICE

EVERY morning, Jack Holder walks five laps inside his house and then jumps on the exercise bike for 10 to 15 minutes.

Once a week, he will do a 30-minute weights session using a homemade pulley contraption set up in his shed. He is 95 and has had part of his right lung removed.

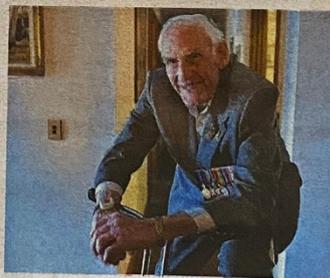
The fitness regimen is all about keeping the World War II Digger in peak condition for Anzac Day – but coronavirus restrictions meant he couldn't march this year. Instead, Mr Holder dressed in his suit and medals and made the short walk to the end of his Seaford driveway to commemorate his fallen mates and the Australians and New Zealanders who died serving their country.

"It was nice for the neighbours to drive by and thank me," Mr Holder said. "I wasn't expecting it and it was a lovely surprise."

"It's important for people to be able to commemorate from home. I miss the mates I used to have. It's a special day." The father of four, grandfather of



LIFE OF SERVICE: Jack Holder as a young soldier and, right, at home on the exercise bike he still rides every morning to maintain his fitness.



Pictures: SUPPLIED/MARK BRAKE

eight and great-grandfather of 11 is believed to be the last living member of the 300-strong regiment of the 6 Australian Army Troop Coy RAE.

He joined the army at 17 and was deployed to Darwin, where, on February 19, 1942, 242 Imperial Japanese navy aircraft bombed the city and harbour.

The two air raids on ships, buildings and infrastructure resulted in 237 deaths. Darwin bombings continued until November 12, 1943. Mr Holder was part of the North Australia

Observation Unit, nicknamed the Nackerooks, which was given the task of patrolling northern Australia to look for signs of enemy activity.

"I spent three months in Wyndham (WA) and they put me on a 70-foot (21m) ship called the *Pat Cam* with no guns," he recalled. "After two days, we were going to Darwin Harbour and an air raid commenced and they shut the boom gates. We had to zigzag all night and submarines were lurking there. They opened the boom gates and let me out at

daybreak and loaded three crew and two passengers and they were sunk by the Japanese submarines just out of Darwin Harbour. Four of them were beheaded so I was lucky that I wasn't sunk. The captain of the submarine was hanged after the war for that."

Mr Holder also served in the Solomon Islands, and Aitape and Wewak in New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea). He spent six months in the jungle when the war finished in 1945, waiting for ships to take him and his fellow troops

home. Mr Holder was granted TPI – totally and permanently incapacitated – status after an engineering training exercise mishap damaged his lungs and required surgery. He was installing underwater explosives on bridges in Liverpool, NSW, and air pumped down to him from a road compressor damaged his lungs.

Mr Holder said walking, riding his exercise bike and doing weights had kept him "pretty fit".

He praised English veteran Captain Tom Moore, who has raised more than \$55 million for National Health Service charities by walking 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday. "He's on a walker," Mr Holder joked. "I've got a walker and stick but I don't use it in case I trip over."

There is also another secret to his fitness success – no alcohol until late afternoon unless he is out for lunch.

"I don't drink before 4pm and then I have a stubby – Coopers Sparkling Ale," he said. "It's Coopers o'clock."

WATCH JACK'S STORY: bit.ly/meetjackholder