

Piecing war recall together

By Blair Corless

ANY RSL sub-branch should have a wall or two devoted to a collection of war memorabilia.

Whether it's a set of faded photos of diggers surrounded by spent ammunition shells or captured helmets from a vanquished enemy, it all tells the story of more than 100 years of conflict involving Australia.

But the Upwey-Belgrave RSL has several pieces in its collection that president Rob Ferguson believes warrant a closer inspection.

The first is a World War II Allied sea mine, which sits menacingly in the sub-branch's back yard, its black surface dotted with deadly protrusions.

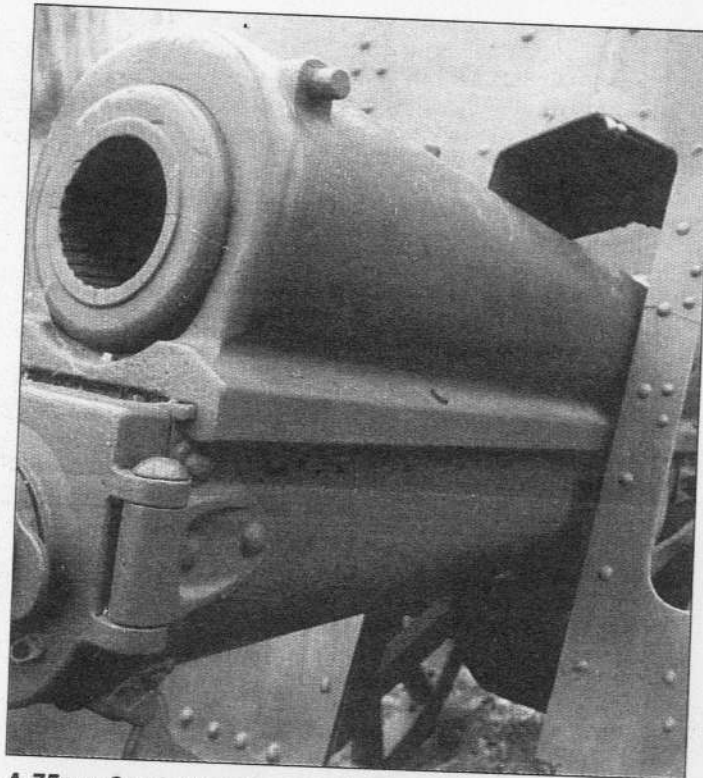
"The mine was tied to the seabed and it floated just below the surface," Mr Ferguson said.

"We purchased this from the Stawell RSL, which had three of them. We paid \$400 for it six months ago."

In a slight twist, the next item in the collection is an airscrew, or propeller, from a B-25 Mitchell bomber that crashed into the sea, killing three of its five crew members.

"The plane this airscrew came from was used by the Dutch East Indies Airforce before it was removed following the Japanese advance and taken into the service of the RAAF," he said.

"When the plane crashed in the sea, the airscrew remained at the



A 75mm Czechoslovakian Skoda mountain gun.

bottom until it was caught in a fishing net.

"The damage you can see was made by the impact with the water."

The Upwey-Belgrave RSL plans to mount the airscrew with a plaque, making it a memorial to the aircrew who were killed in the crash.

The third substantial piece is a Czechoslovakian Skoda 75mm mountain gun, used by the Germans during World War II in

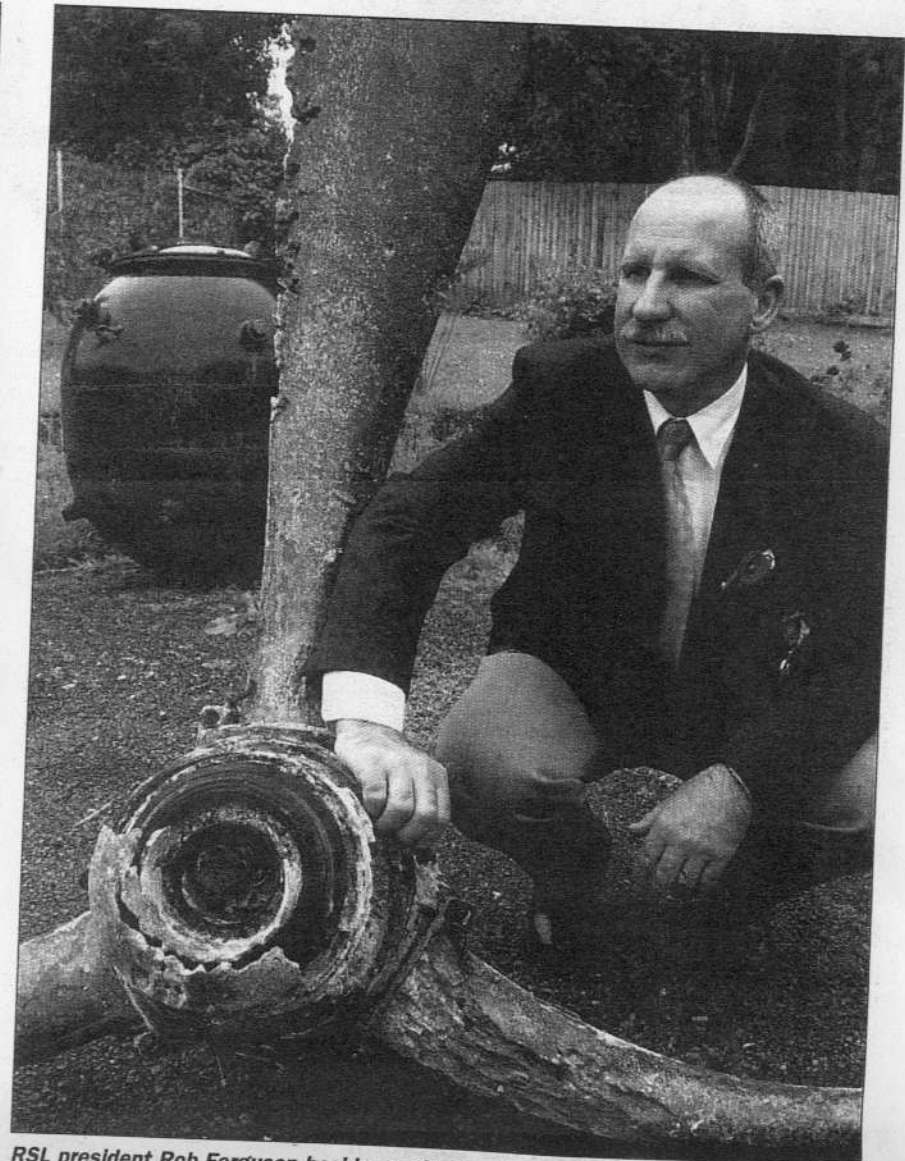
mountainous conditions because of its shorter barrel and collapsible track.

But Mr Ferguson said the piece didn't always look so tidy.

"The gun was found in a junkyard without any wheels," he said.

"It was in a really bad way and had to be restored."

Mr Ferguson said the sub-branch was looking to add to its collection of war memorabilia. Anyone with anything of interest is asked to phone 9752 5072.



RSL president Rob Ferguson beside an airscrew (propeller) from a World War II B25 bomber, with an anti-ship sea mine in the background. Pictures: STEVE TANNER, N21FP105