



ORDERLY ROOM



ISSUE 4/95

"MICE OF MORESBY" - MEMBERS
BULLETIN

'AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS' 1945-1955

VETERAN PILGRIMAGE TO PAPUA-NEW GUINEA (by Alex Bell)



Following the association's endorsement of my nomination for the pilgrimage to PNG due notice was received by letter that it would be in order for me to make final arrangements for participation in Preparation from that time until sailing date 29th June included:-

1. Receiving the necessary clothing issue for the trip.
2. Completion of medical requirements.
3. Tour itinerary to study.
4. Completion of passport and visadocumentation
5. Attendance at a briefing session for NSW veterans.

The diary presented at this stage is in summary form which I believe acceptable too much too soon could cause some confusion and maybe for some a little boring ...however I am more than happy to go into more detail if requested.

At the International Terminal Sydney during the morning of Thursday 29th June with the winter sun gleaming, 117 members comprising 'Australia Remembers' P. .G. War veterans pilgrimage group gathered to be 'checked aboard' the Russian cruise ship 'Mikhail Sholokov'.

A wonderful send off ceremony featuring the N.S.W. Police Band and supported by an impersonating 'Andrews Sisters' trio belting out the tunes of the 40's provided stirring entertainment. After a number of necessary speeches some of the older veterans

danced with youngsters dressed in the uniforms and fashions of that era. At the stroke of noon the 'Mikhail Sholokov' slipped its moorings and in the presence of the 'Bounty' and 'Krait' and under escort of fire boats with helicopters overhead made its way out through the Sydney Heads.

Interestingly the pilgrimage group of 117 included 7 ladies and in all represented a fair mix from all states of Australia as well as an equally fair proportion of the three services -- Anny(80), Navy(10), Air Force(14). Added to these numbers was a special group (13) comprising War Widows, Angau, AWAS, Coast Watchers, Mariners , Hospital Ship Staff, AANS, together the Pilgrimage Chaplain none other than our very own Rev. Roy Wotten (53 Bn) from Blue Bay who was without any doubt a very popular member of the group and a good friend to all.

Nine days of this well planned thirteen day pilgrimage period (29th June - 11th July) were spent in travel to and from New Guinea whilst the other four days were occupied in consecutive daily port visits to Pt Moresby, Milne Bay, Oro Bay and Lae (in all 32 hours spent ashore).

During the forward six day sea voyage from Sydney to Pt Moresby the itinerary featured three important stops.

30th June - Event 1- late afternoon :- Veterans assembled on the observation deck for a ceremony to commemorate the tragic sinking of the hospital ship Centaur on May 1943. The ship had stopped 9.3 miles due east of Cape Moreton lighthouse directly above the Centaur resting on the seabed. The stationary ship heaves in the swell and veterans stand in silence with the last rays of the sun slanting across the deck. As the final note of the Last Post fades into the silence the ship's siren wails in mourning for her sister lying in the depths below.

1st July - Event 2- 11 am:- The ship berths at Hamilton St Wharf, Brisbane to take on board our Queensland contingent of veterans. We are given a farewell luncheon at Eagle Farm, returning to the ship, departing to the tune of well wishers singing "There'll be Blue Birds over the White Cliffs of Dover", whilst vintage World War II aircraft flying overhead in noisy tribute.

3rd July - Event 3- am:- This morning the ship stops out at sea off Townsville to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea. Considering the limited Australian involvement in this engagement the occasion is understandably less emotionally charged than the Centaur ceremony. However, we were well aware of the importance of this sea battle which denied the enemy the opportunity of gaining possession of airfields in Southern Papua and thereby the probability of regular bombing of the coastal towns of North Queensland.

Much of the remaining time on board as we approached PNG was spent with veterans getting to know each other, being interviewed by the media & the War Historian, having final medical checks and being briefed by administrative support staff on forthcoming events associated with the pilgrimage.

5th July. It is 7am and the ship has already tied up at the wharf at Pt Moresby. From the observation deck we are aware of a number of new buildings 7 and 8 levels higher than

the surrounding bungalow type residences on the hillside and so it seems that in all other ways very little has changed since 1942... From the other side of the ship we note that the harbour still sparkles crystal clear and the Macdhu still displays herself above the waterline almost in an attitude of defiance ... The heat is already beginning to envelope us like a wet blanket. Once ashore under police escort we proceed in mini busses towards Bomana Cemetery, on the way passing Murray Barracks and Jackson airfield . . . Still the same potholes in the road ... clouds of dust ... smelly open drains . . . plastic bottles and other rubbish littering the roadside. NOTHING HAS CHANGED. Bomana is, by contrast, an oasis of tranquility and beauty, with rows of white headstones, carefully trimmed lawns and huge shady trees. The ceremony is extremely moving and later we have time to move among the graves ... and I find time to identify many of the hundred or more 53rd, 55th, 55/53 members who rest here in peace ... Afterwards we adjourn to the residence of Australian High Commissioner for a luncheon reception and at precisely 2pm we are once again on board and under way bound for Milne Bay.

6th July. We enter Milne Bay to dock at idyllic Alatau ... Once on shore we climb into 12 seater busses for the short drive to the Sacred Heart Cathedral . . . the heat is stifling . . . on arrival we are given a warm welcome from the locals as we enter the dim interior of a most sensible uncathedral like building where the fanning breeze drifts through the open sides to help cool the locals and the sweaty guests ... a brief service is held to unveil three stained glass wall panels installed as a memorial to those members of units who served in the area and did not return. We then went on to **Turnbull airstrip** arriving at the memorial which marks the end point of the Japanese advance. This area is fringed by kunai grass and shortly beyond that the jungle ... after a wreath laying ceremony we returned to the John French V.C. memorial located approximately 1 km east of Alatau, again we paid our respects with a wreath laying ceremony. We then managed a 15 minute break into our itinerary to visit the local native market place ... An odd mixture of local vegetables, artefacts, etc and would you believe popcorn, fairy floss, and plastic packets of lime powder, the latter to add flavour to the ever popular beetle nut. We had feelings of regret in leaving Milne Bay so soon ... A somewhat charming place and the natives so friendly.

7th July. An early morning arrival at Oro Bay from where we were quickly moved by motor transport to Popondetta ... Another wonderfully colourful welcome by locals in their spectacular national dress. It was here that I met up with that wonderful Fuzzy Wuzzy Raphael Oembari who in addition to wearing his service medals also had pinned to his chest his Hon . Member 55/53 Mice of Moresby badge. Now 83 he is very frail and has to be supported wherever he moves , added to which he has a heavy continuous cough. He was delighted to meet me and in his own way of communicating passes on his greetings to all. After another very special service in the presence of a tremendous crowd we moved into groups nominated for visits to Kokoda, Buna, Gona, Rabaul, and Sanananda ... I opted for Sanananda. The 45 km motor trip from Popondetta to Sanananda took approximately 1 hour. Fortunately, the army had already been along the track and cleared it sufficiently for the mini to veer, tumble and rock its way to the village, where we were greeted with a ceremony that could only be described as a "ritual spectacular". Dramatic, colourful and obviously enacted to display their loyalty and friendship towards their Aussie brothers. The missionary choir sang for us ... including their National Anthem followed by us joining them in the Australian National Anthem ... and would you believe it they upstaged us by continuing with the second verse singing it beautifully whilst we mumbled and choked our

way through it.

The ceremony of remembrance here at this spot in New Guinea indeed had a deep and profound effect on all present We had lunch with the villagers ... distributed gifts around ... and the children as always ... bright, cheerful and pleasantly cheeky ...they had a real ball with us.

On our return from the village we stopped at Huggins Road Block Memorial for a few moments of serious contemplation during which time I examined a rough sketch map (repeat a rough sketch map drawn 12th Dec. 1942) that was the C.O.'s copy of the area. I then determined roughly where our positions during December '42 possibly could have been, and on my own I silently offered a prayer on every member's behalf Once more we went aboard the Mikhail Sholokov and set sail for our next and final port of call.

8th July. Early morning the ship ties up at Lac where it is raining. Again the veterans group is broken up into two main parties to proceed to Madang and Wewak ... Our group stayed in Lac to visit memorials in town. Two of which commemorate the victory raising of the Australian flag by the 25th Brigade, 18th September 1943. Later that afternoon all veterans assembled at Lac Cemetery where again a large group of locals joined for this special service, which was a fitting finale for the time we had spent in New Guinea. The wreath laying ceremony was another unforgettable experience.

9th July & 10th July. This was our sailing time from Lae to Cairns.

11th July... We docked at Cairns early morning, cleared customs without any hassles while our heavy luggage was taken care of by our ever attentive service support group. We were then taken to Cairns RSL for an arranged local tour followed by a luncheon. Last minute telephone nos and address details were quickly exchanged between veterans, who were then moved in groups to the airport for flights to their separate destinations.

PS ... Grateful thanks are extended to Minister for Veteran Affairs Mr Con Sciacca and the administrative and service support personnel for their many kindnesses which far exceeded our expectations and made our pilgrimage tour an outstanding event of a lifetime never to be forgotten.

PSS Personal research included;

- [1] Obtaining of Unit grave data for Bomana Cemetery
- [2] Contacts with our schools at Popondetta and Wewak
- [3] Our Memorial plaque for Sanananda
- [4] Our Interest with Memorial plaque at Buna
- [5] Contacts with 39th, 49th Inf and 7 Div Cavalry Assns

PSSS Finally I express my personal thanks to Mr Geoff Pryor of the Media Liaison group for certain diary reference material.

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

(Issued in Recognition of Wartime Service to Australia) This rather handsome certificate (20" x 12" approx.) is available to all members. Application forms are available from your Federal MP on request ... A simple form to complete, and it is well worth the effort to follow up to

obtain this very attractive 50th Anniversary Certificate ... We thank Harvey Blundell for sharing this information with us.

NETLINK

OVA Newsletter for Veterans ... Issue June/July 95 reports ... A WW2 Association has been launched and one of our Transport boys Roly Ahem is President. This association, with a membership already exceeding 100, has been formed to specifically cater for WW2 veterans only. For further information you can contact the Secretary Dave Thomas (02)557-4792 or Roly on (02)558-4398. Congratulations Roly.

REVEILLE SEPT/OCT 1995

How well do you read your Reveille? ... Did you pick up the following?

Parade of Banners (page 10) Two members of the unit committee, Ray Gentles and Norm King carried the Mice of Moresby Banner on Sunday 17th September from Observatory Hill to the Garrison Church ... A most worthwhile event which will be repeated next year during the month of AUGUST.

Always VP Day (page 16) Lt/Col Thompson, a good friend of the battalion (and who served with Fred Travis after the war), puts the records straight in his article. Mention is also made of the 14th Field Regiment which was part of the original 14th Brigade ... and whose 53 Battery fired the first Artillery rounds (25 pounders) on the Japanese from Ioribaiwa Ridge in 1942.

Major General Fittock (page 18) has been appointed a member of the Repatriation Commission as from 1st October 1995 ... members will remember the inspiring address given by the General at the service of Laying up of the Unit Banner at St John's Glebe, *Sunday 7th May 1989.*

Last Post (page 21) It is always sad to read the names of members of our Unit when published ... Two names noted were J.R. Allman and G.E. Churchill both 55/53 Bn ... These names do not appear on the Unit Nominal Roll and if any member can provide sufficient details the committee would hasten to have a message of condolence passed on to family members without delay.

Committee Member Peter Wright (page 8) Peter is wanting any news of the whereabouts of his old mates of 14 Platoon "C" Coy way back in Greta (Photograph provided) - Peter struck oil with his enquires - 4 positive contacts have been made to date.

PITWATER HOUSE SCHOOL CADET UNIT

The Pittwater House School Cadet Unit was founded in 1972. When cadets were disbanded by the government in 1975 Pittwater House immediately established THE PITWATER HOUSE SERVICE TRAINING UNIT in order to continue a semi military activity to train young people in community service, and leadership and to include girls and younger pupils previously banned by the army. Then during 1977 the government re-introduced official cadet training for boys. In 1979 the Army decided to appoint female Officers of Cadets and Pittwater House produced the first in Australia to be so appointed. There is no issue of army uniforms or equipment to the school ... however there is some limited support activities from various army agencies which is greatly appreciated ... Members of the unit are taught skills such as first aid, orienteering, bush and field craft, survival, fire fighting, water safety, civilian rescue, navigation, signals and

communication. The cadet unit is often called upon to perform specialist duties such as ceremonial parades including the involvement of the school's award winning band. Annual camps are at the school's expense and membership of the Unit is entirely voluntary ... Ray Gentles and Alex Bell represented the Association at the 23rd Annual Ceremonial Parade on the 5th September when Sir Roden Cutler, VC, former Governor of NSW was in attendance as the Special Guest.

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

39th Inf. Bn Assn.

It has been our good fortune in making contact with Jim Hardie the Secretary of the 39th who has already supplied us with a copy of the unit's 88th newsletter "The Good Guts" (July 95). The 39'ers are, as you would expect, a close knit group with interests very similar to 55/53 Bn Assn. If any 55/53 members have mates of past years in the 39th let us know and Jim will if need be assist with contact arrangements.

49th Inf. Bn Assn.

Our contact man Fred Cranston advises that the 49'ers of WW2 have their membership tied in with the serving 49th Royal Queensland Regiment and do not produce a regular newsletter of their own. Fred however he too assures us that he will contact us once each year to keep us up to date with any relevant news.

55/53 BN ASSOCIATION - SUPPORT GROUP

John and Angela Richardson convey greetings to all from India, which is the first leg of their overseas trip which we believe was planned to help Angela fully recover from a recent upsetting illness which was thought to be aggravated by an unfortunate imbalance of prescribed medication.

Let us, meanwhile, endeavour to encourage some further enrolments for the 55/53 Assn Support Group for which John and Angela put so much effort to establish on our behalf ... for as we get further on in years to come, this Group will I believe help to put into effect many of our hopes and aspirations for the continuance of the association's future - which as yet we have not achieved ... Let us once more look at the support group aims in brief.

1. To preserve and honour the history of the 55/53 Battalion.
2. Assist in the preservation of battalion memorabilia.
3. Support and care for the survivors of the battalion, widows, etc.

A list of eligible members is attached ... Can you help us on this list? If so please advise without delay.

ABC-4 CORNERS 14/15 AUG. '95 THE MEN WHO SAVED AUSTRALIA

Concern was expressed by a number of members with regard to a program ... "The Men Who Saved Australia", which was shown on Channel 2..14 August 95 ... when certain uncomplimentary comments regarding 53 Bn were made by a member of another unit during interview ... without rehashing the whole story these remarks have been challenged and are the subject of current correspondence.

KOKODA WALKWAY

This Memorial project is designed to provide an educational experience on our heritage for current and future generations. The 55/53 Committee has pledged \$300 towards the cost of a plaque commemorating the unit's involvement in the Sanananda campaign and now awaits the Memorial Committee's instructions for the payment of this amount together with some advice on approved "wording" details and any additional cost if a logo is approved. The opening of the first stage of the overall memorial plan is currently scheduled for February 1996.

V.P. CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

This event held at the Good Fortune Village Restaurant, 12th August after the RSL March was a most enjoyable occasion. The 135 present included members partners and some grandchildren. In addition to our close Sydney members, we were pleased to have join us Jack McDonald (West Wyalong), Stan Carlon (Cootamundra), Jim Hocking (Narrandera), Fred Bilson (Eungai Creek), Clem Pagett (Macksville), Jim Loneragan (Macksville), Ned Kelly (Gunnedah), together with 3 South Coasters and 6 from Central Coast... Interstate we had Bill Brown (Sth. Aust.), Keith Shepherd and Ken Richards with Ollie Hardy from Queensland.

REPORTING FROM THE REGIONS

NORTH COAST Clem Pagett (Macksville) ... Clem phoned during August to mention difficulties in contacting members in his area due to his own personal problems ... The story goes that Clem in his usual helpful style agreed to accompany his Macksville mate Garry on a trip to Adelaide where Garry's daughter was about to bless Garry with his first grandchild ... During their 11 day absence Clem took ill ... spent 3 days in the emergency ward Queen Elizabeth Hospital followed by 5 days in Ashton Hospital. As a result this predicament he had to promise to fly home in order to obtain his hospital clearance ... Clem arrives home to discover Dorothy had been admitted to hospital in Pt. Macquarie with a blood clot in the leg ... Clem himself still has a critical breathing condition ... It most surely is the time for his mates to give him a cheerio call. While about to do just that I picked up the phone, dialled in error to discover that I was speaking to Des O'Dell (South West Rocks) ... Des was originally 'E' Coy 53 Bn then transferred over as coy commander 'A' about the time 53rd were committed to action on the Kokoda Track August '42. He became a member of the 7 MG Bn and is in fact Patron of that Assn ... Ord Rm Gossip is assembling names of 'A' Coy boys for Des to contact.

SOUTH REGION Fred Denny (Thirlmere) sends his personal thanks to the Association members (and their wives) who attended the 75th anniversary of the Thirlmere RSL coupled with the Australia Remembers celebrations and helped make that particular weekend a success ... Old mates of Jim Jenkins and Harold Richard will be saddened to hear of

their passing. The family members of both Jim and Harold expressed their appreciation for the presence of those members who attended the funeral services . . . Other southern region members contacted have reported in OK, sending best wishes and hope to attend the December re-union. Fred Denny is too modest to tell the following but Ray Gentles can . . . Fred in his position as Welfare Officer of the local RSL obviously gives 100% . . . His particular responsibility is to look after 6 old diggers. He drives them to their medical appointments, keeps a careful watch over their Meals-on-Wheels service and is honoured to handle their betting at the local TAB . . . Well done Fred.

ACT Stan Sly (Our Worthy Patron) has passed on news that Peter Coffey is now home after a 5 week stint in hospital and no doubt would welcome a telephone call or a visit from old mates . . . (06) 247-7491. After attending the '95 Anzac re-union Stan and Phil Hobson did a tour by train around the Northern Suburbs before journeying home . . . Stan has been fitted with special walking shoes and hopes he will be joining with Phil soon on a walkabout (seems Phil is an experienced mountain trail walker).

(Ed. Does this item suggest that we could be planning to start up a walkers club? . . . What's the potential? 300 members or ??? Better not be too hasty . . . give it a little more thought fellows . . . or maybe a lot more thought).

WESTERN DISTRICT Charles Cover (Mudgee) has been a contributor to the memorabilia cabinet at the RSL at Mudgee . . . he has been influential in having our association bannerette on display along with the service uniform of Colin Myers, who was an official of the sub-branch up to the time of his death . . . Chas reports that the memorial clock on the corner of Church and Market Sts was built by Ivan Adams who owned the Regent Theatre and it carries the names of those killed both WW I and WW2. During this 50 year commemorative period the local Probus Club arranged for a peace plaque to be added to the memorial . . . Chas goes on to say that Bill Suttor the grandson of Ivan Adams is now the owner of the Regent Theatre . . . he wishes everyone well and looks forward to the December re-union . (Editor . . . Perhaps some of our other country members can uncover similar stories like the one from Mudgee.)

Norm Coady has moved into his new home . . . Unit 511 Orana Gardens, Charles St, Dubbo (Ph. 068-82-5193). Recently he just went there to collect the mail and make a couple of phone calls before going back to join his sons who are in the motel business in Grafton. Norm spoke to Stan Carlon(Cootamundra) who is an old sig man, now in top spirits having had good results following a recent operation. Norm discovered something interesting when visiting his sister in Trangie . . . he had reason to visit the cemetery and was surprised to read a headstone . . . Roley Wolf 55/53 Bn WWI (this is somewhat baffling and Norm will endeavour to find out more when he gets back home).

NEW ENGLAND REGION . . . 'Ned' Kelly of Gunnedah reports that Merv Kelty and his wife have moved to Bathurst to be nearer their daughter . . . Merv has been the local bandmaster at Narrabri for many years and in recognition of his great services he has been made a life member and patron of that group . . . a special concert has also been planned in his honour. Well done Merv . . . The new address is 'Bernita' Limekilns Rd, Bathurst (Ph 063-37-6538)... Ron Sefton (Boggabri) paid a recent visit to Wagga Wagga to a Light Horse re-union and spent a great time with his old mates . . . He was disappointed that his cobbles the Beazley brothers did not show up there . . . Ron wishes to be remembered to his old mates of "D" Coy, his telephone no is (067) 43-4244.

HUNTER AREA "Skeeter" Mathews (Whitebridge) The Army Re-enactment Group led the Parade of Banners from Observatory Hill to the Garrison Church on Sunday 17 September ... and as usual their turnout was immaculate ... "Skeeter" on the day was debarred from driving the coach from Newcastle to Sydney but did however enjoy some consolation in being entrusted with the "parking" of the vehicle on arrival.

CENTRAL COAST. Eric Gresham continues enthusiastically with his efforts in sifting out news from that area. The recent picnic at Lions Park Long Jetty was a most pleasant outing, and was attended by Skeeter Mathews and Nancy, Rex Marsden, Tom and Grace Delbridge, Ralph Johnson, Peter and Joyce Wright, Trevor and Joan Harper, and of course Eric and Marjorie Gresham. Eric and Tom Delbridge recently called on Val and Joan Mitchell at Budgewoi to deliver a copy of "The Chocos" and found them both in good spirits. Eric wants to know if anyone remembers *Des Banner* who originally came from the Artillery to join 55/53 at Rabaul ... he played football with Pat Niven and Mousey Ball ... If you can help contact Eric on (043) 88-2025 ... Tom and Phyllis Wrench, both fit and well after a trip via the coast down through Victoria. Tom is still a very keen bowls player ... Roy Chapman who joined the unit at Strathpine is anxious to learn the whereabouts of J Dickens of "D" Coy, last known to be living at Granville ... Ron and Betty Nosworthy are both well after an enjoyable holiday in South Australia. Ricky and Elaine Rand (Umina) joined with a small group from the Central Coast to attend a church service held at St Johns, Glebe on 6th August. This service was arranged at short notice by Leichhardt Councillor Mr Evan Jones as part of this years Australia Remembers celebrations ... Ken Coomber (Ettalong) who later transferred to 7 MG Bn has been contacted and at 79 enjoys the information he receives concerning his old unit activities ... Les and Elaine Royston of Green Point both reported to be in good shape ... Charlie and Margaret Renouf are also well and wish to be remembered to all ... Rajah and Elaine Jones are experiencing a little downturn in health ... both popular members and no doubt would appreciate a cheer up call [(043) 92-1443] from friends ... it's the best therapy known. Rajah has also unearthed a poem which has been added to a number of others in band which will be included in a supplement issue at a later date ... Our Eric mentioned that he saw a very interesting show 7th August - Channel 7 concerning the Bougainville campaign. He also reflected on the NRMA Australia Remembers booklet recently published which includes reference to Gracie Fields visit to the same area during the war period. Perhaps others did and shared his pleasure in this trip back in time.

SYDNEY METROPOLITAN (Norm King) Bob Rowlinson has made good progress after his stroke reported last year (stairs are a problem still). Bob hopes to be with his mates in December ... Doug Neill recently spent part of a holiday break in the Port Stephens area ... visited Bob's farm site and claims the old bake house is still standing. He also is looking forward to a chat session with his cobbers in December.

Ray Gentles reports, 'Champ' Lyons (Smithfield) recently met up with Ray on the golf course and has offered to give two free lessons to the first four "A" Coy boys who contact him ... 604-2546. Ken Fitzsimons (Auburn) passes on his best wishes to his "A" Coy mates ... Ken still attends his local bowling club each Thursday where he is in popular demand for his racing tips. Norm and Nancy King (Picnic Point) were out dining recently and had the waiter curious when they ordered peaches out of a can and later left him completely amazed when paying the bill. Norm asked him could he have the can (can't guess why). How many other members share Norm's lust for peaches?

Paul Rees (St Clair) became involved with the VP celebrations of The Oaks school when he

was asked to address his grand daughter's class. The school principal was so impressed that he invited Paul to repeat the address to the whole school assembly. Following the ceremony Paul and the school captains planted a tree of remembrance in the school grounds in the presence of many parents and friends. Well done Paul!

Warwick Davis (St Ives) reports having received an invitation from Harvey Blundell to join with him at the "Australia Remembers" Luncheon, arranged by Harvey's old unit the 18th Bn, to be held in February '96 ... Harvey is very proud of his connection with the 18th ... Warwick himself served with the 30th Bn prior to joining the 53rd Bn as was Tom Cole, Jack Ryan, Geoff Valentin, Vince Laggin and many others ... It would be interesting to receive from other members some details concerning their unit identifications before they joined the 55/53 Bn.

Bob Quinn reports on his area which takes in Earlwood, Bexley, Bardwell Park, Beverly Hills and Kingsgrove.

Roly Ahem ... After a recent stint in hospital is now up and around and he in turn reports that Doug Boake and Murray Wilson are both OK and they too would like to hear from their mates. Vic Piper has now been in hospital for 10 weeks. He too is always pleased to have visitors (contact Bob Quinn for hospital directions). He is good company to share a yarn with ... Has plenty of personality as well as courage and can introduce you to a team of very nice nurses if that's your style ... Norm Harrang has now retired from the Board of the St George Motor Boat Club having given sterling services over many years ... Has now taken up walking the dog as occupational therapy... Ralph Hipkins is recovering from a bout of the virus which is getting around and wants to know if Norm King still cuts hair (for free I presume) ... Hec Lowe has cut back on his bowling activities having completed a stint as Club President. ... Ray Penhey (Bexley ph. 502-2290) would also like to hear from old mates ... Bob on his annual trip up north contacted Ron (Spottie) Spottiswood who seems to be making too many regular trips from his home base at Magnetic Island to Brisbane for eye operations. Thanks Bob for your reporting.

SYDNEY REVISITED (by Stan Sly)

In the earlier years of my business and sporting life, I had regular visits to Sydney in the pre and post-war years and I considered that I knew Sydney reasonably well. I could arrive by train at Central at 6am after 12 hours journey from Wagga - hop on a tram - there pay my "tuppence" down to Circular Quay - board a ferry - perhaps the "DEE WHY" or "SYDNEY" - over to MANLY and catch a bus up to my brothers home only a few stops away.

In the more recent years and particularly since retirement, my visits to Sydney have often been "up and down" in the day or at best an overnight stay to see CATS or PHANTOM of the OPERA Anzac Day Marches and Reunion functions were normally "one daysers". Not until the first week of September recently did my wife Mae and I have occasion to fly down to Sydney and stay for 3 nights for the AGM of the Australian Flag Society. No - nothing at all with the changing of our National Flag or in any way associated with Republicanism - far from it. The work of the society is known as VEXILLOLOGY - coming from the Latin word VEXILLUM meaning flag - and its function is the study of the history and symbolism of national flags.

Our meeting was held in one of our Directors office up on the 16th floor of a

George St building from which was a wide view of the harbour which embraced the BRIDGE, CIRCULAR QUAY, and the OPERA HOUSE. We stayed at a most modern hotel down at the ROCKS just off George St within 11cm from Circular Quay. However, we had to taxi even that distance to the Quay from which we took a ferry ride over to Manly - Yes our first ferry trip for us to Manly for over 30 years. We found the harbour the same but little else. We also found time to take a train ride round the underground circuit and another ferry trip up under the bridge and beyond the Gladesville Bridge - a very pleasant little trip and new territory for us.

A special service held at the historical Garrison Church at the Rock where our National Flag was paraded with appropriate ceremony brought the business of the occasion to a fitting conclusion.

Mrs June Kirby widow of NX91742 Walter Kirby

June has been kind enough to give us the background of how she met Wal ... quote ... In 1943-46 Wally as he was called was driving the leave truck and the CO around town. I was in the AWAS signals in Townsville and some of our girls were going out with 55/53 fellows. Three of us married 55/53 Bn members ... one Pearl married Alby Wilson now living in Queensland (a banana plantation I believe) and the other Marion married Sgt Rex Frazer and now lives in Sydney ... Another fellow I remember was Ron Bacon who lived in Inverell ... Wal's movements were New Guinea, Townsville, Cape York, Bougainville and Rabaul ... I really find it incredible that all this happened 50 years ago. Best wishes to the Association ... etc June Kirby.

RETURN TO CANUNGRA

On a recent (t)rip to Queensland's Gold Coast I paid a visit to the Jungle Warfare Centre as we knew it ... now known as "Kokoda Barracks" Australian Land Warfare Centre or some similar title says Tom Delbridge of Central Coast:-

"On arrival I reported to the orderly room and found the staff friendly and co-operative. When asked who I was looking for I stated I was paying a visit 51 years down the track and was it possible to have a look around ... No problem, it's a very low security area ... there is a guard post at the main gate but it is not manned. After a brief conversation was allowed to drive my car around the camp area (with camera if you please). Buildings replace the tented areas and roads are named after World War Two zones ... There is a small museum which was officially closed but I was allowed to take a peek. I then drove down the slope and the memories flooded back ... the tower, the water crossing, the obstacle course, the cargo net, ... The thing I saw really different was the drill squad males and females with a drill procedure that seemed to be an endurance test of doing weapon exercises while standing on the one leg and then the other."

The camp is easy to find and Tom recommends making a visit.

DID YOU KNOW

The very first prisoners of war held by the Japanese were released from Santa Tomas in the Philippines on 3rd February '45. The First US Cavalry smashed through the walls

surrounding the camp in full darkness and took the Japanese commandant and staff into custody and released the starving prisoners. Documents seized confirmed that the Japanese had orders to liquidate all prisoners at the time they left the camp. The camp held 3,000 Americans, 90 Australians, 50 Canadians, 600 British, 8 Dutch, 25 Polish, plus women and children .

A THANK YOU

The editor wishes to record his personal thanks to Norm Grinyer, secretary of the 7th Aust. Cavalry Regt Assn for the generous gesture of a much-appreciated copy of the unit's pictorial history covering both Middle East and New Guinea campaigns - many thanks Norm.



The following poem written by a POW was passed onto Wal Molloy by one of his mates when he was a patient at Lady Davidson Repatriation Hospital.

MATES

by Cliff Burkitt

I've travelled down some lonely Roads,
Both crooked Tracks and straight,
An' I've learned life's noblest creed,
Summed up in one word 'Mate'.

I'm thinking back across the Years,
(A thing I do of late),
An' this word sticks between 'me 'ears, You've got
to have a "Mate".

Me mind goes back to '43.
To slavery an' 'ate,
When Man's one chance to stay alive,
Depended on 'is "Mate".

With Bamboo for a Billyo-Can,
An' Bamboo for a Plate,
A Bamboo Paradise for Bugs,
Was Bed for me an' me "Mate".

You'd slip and slither through the Mud,
An' curse your rotten fate,
But then you'd 'ear a quiet word,
Don't drop your bundle "Mate".

An' though it's all so long ago,
This truth I 'Ave to state,
A Man don't know what lonely means,
Til 'e 'as lost 'is "Mate".

If there's a 'Golden Gate',
The Welcome that I want to 'ear,
Is just 'Good on y' 'Mate',
An' so to all who ask us why?,
We keep these special dates.
Like Anzac Day, I answer Why?'
We're thinkin' of our "Mates".

An' when I've left the Drivers Seat,
An' handed in me plates, I'll tell ol' Peter at the Door,
I've come to join me "Mates".

Remember Us Now

by **Tyson** Gofton

(continued)

Once proud soldiers
survey the field.
They face a foe who
will not yield.

Poppies abound
exploding blood red
honour and glory
belong to the dead.

Battles at Dieppe
and Passchendale.
Killed and were killed
under moonlight pale.

The wind softly whispers
"We died for you
your freedom and your
happiness true."

Death is their friend and
adversary.
Love and terror will set
their souls free.

Death for peace is the
price we must pay
remember us now
on Remembrance Day.

Alone stands a man
amidst all the crosses, he
remembers the glory the
unforgettable losses

With tears in his eyes
the man looks away.
One cold November
Remembrance Day.

The poem 'Remember Us Now' by Tyson Gofton, Canadian born grandson of Warwick and Joyce Davis was entered in a school competition by the Canadian Government for Remembrance Day '94 to honour a Canadian Division which was almost entirely wiped out at Dieppe in 1942 ... Neither of Tyson's grandfathers had ever discussed their war experiences or associated feelings to develop Tyson's obvious deep respect and understanding in such a way ... The poem was selected best through all stages up to national level ... I know that Warwick and Joyce have a special soft spot in their hearts for Tyson and we can readily understand why after such a fine effort.

The Committee of "ORDERLY ROOM GOSSIP" continues to be encouraged with the favourable comments received and accordingly thanks all those who have contributed with news items for publication.



**55/53 Aust. Inf. Bn. Association
(The Mice of Moresby)
NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP**

Your support for 1996 developments, please

Frederick J Bastock,

Carlingford, nephew of Le lie Bastock who died of wound , Sanananda 19/12/42.

Joan Bourke (and son

Robert) Granville, widow of the late Kevin Bourke, "D" Coy.

Brian Budden , Woronora Heights, son of late Lieut Frank Budden, author of "That Mob" and "Choco ".

Noel Bernasconi

(Mosman) **and Eddie**

Bernasconi (Umina), both ex-Servicemen and keen supporters of 55th and 53rd Bn veteran.

Barry Howard,

Paddington, son of the late William (Bill) Howard.

Bryan Matthew, Double Bay son of Harry (Skeeter) Matthew, President of the Re-enactment Group.

Paul Laycock, son of late Walter P Laycock. G L Louttit, Kellyville, son of Stan Louttit now living in Parke .

Garry Markham,

Penshurst, grandson of WW 1 member of the 53rd Bn.

Geoff Martin, Riverwood,

grandson of Arthur G Martin and grandson of Eric Charles Martin, members of WW I 53rd and 52nd Bn .

G Perry, Matraville, son of late Geoff Perry RSM 55/53 Bn. **Margaret Hayes** , Darlington, widow of James (Buller) Hayes and daughter, Beverley Dawson.

With the completion of the project - **REMEMBER,** Lest we forget, the Battalion Association' National Support Group in 1996 plan to concentrate on moving from a "provisional" to a formal structure and to develop a programme

to further the Support Group' aims and objects:

- > to support the association and to preserve and honour the tradition and of the 55/53 Battalion.
- > to support and care for the survivor of the Battalion and their offs pring.

The Support Group already has the backing of those on the left and others, the RSL and the Department of Veteran 'Affairs.

Our next step is a general meeting of all supporters, the election of office bearers and committee and the development project for 1996-1997.

The Support Group is confident that Association members know other - they *could* be your children, grandchildren, your friend or friend of the association - who would like to be invited to the meeting.

Please take a few minutes to fill-in the following and either hand it in at the annual lunch on December 8 or post it to Trevor Harper, PO Box 201, The Entrance 2261

I..... would like the 55 /53 Support Group to invite the following to attend its general meeting of supporters -

Name.....

Address
Relationship (son, daughter, grand on/ daughter, friend etc).....

Name.....

Address
Relationship (on. daughter, grandson/ daughter, friend etc).....

Name.....

Address
Relationship (son, daughter . grandson/ daughter, friend etc).....

