



Issue 2/96

"MICE OF MORESBY" - MEMBERS BULLETIN

**Progress-Reports**

**Refer to '96 Special Issue of Orderly Room Gossip**

**Kokoda Walkway Appeal** - An encouraging response to date . - Be assured that any excess to the \$1,500 basic contribution amount will be directed to the appeal in an appropriate manner . Hopefully a majority of members will contribute before 31st December closing date .

**55/53 Bn. Support Group** - One only likely member recommended to date. Please don't neglect to ask around your children and grandchildren. Surely the committee's achievements to date fully justify membership support. Their efforts are of great importance and if the very small committee we now have should "fold" through lack of support we will only have ourselves to blame.

**Memorabilia** - Interesting material received from Ron King, Alex Bennett, Adrian Nall, Harvey Blundell, Keith Shepherd, Stan Carlon, and Bill

Tomlin. Remember photographs, documents and the like only at this stage - no tin hats, water bottles and haversacks or "woodpeckers".

### **THE STORY OF MOLLY MORGAN**

Molly Morgan (nee Jones) the Ratcatcher's daughter, was born in Shropshire, and as the result of pilfering a few yards of hempen yarn, was transported to the colonies for 5 years.

Pert, rosy cheeked, venturesome, good looking and well sought after, Molly's personality brought her much good fortune. Three years after her arrival in the colony William Morgan, (himself a prisoner) earned by his record of good behaviour the opportunity to marry Molly. There followed a separation because of Molly's reluctance to mend her ways, and without bothering to properly dissolve her marriage to William she then returned to England and married Thomas Mares. After quarrelling with Mares 'Mad' Molly burnt his home which resulted in a second transportation to the colony. Still good looking and much admired Molly was able to acquire much land and stock and further prosperity followed. However, some stock was noted as stolen and Molly found herself in a convict camp.

Now in her 44th year and still a handsome woman she soon earned another 'ticket of leave' then determined to amass riches and indeed to do so very quickly.

Molly opened a Grog Shop (The Angel's Inn) and with new coal mining areas in the Hunter continued to do well. (Wallis Plains now Maitland area) The buxom, bold-eyed proprietress bought up large blocks of river frontage land, etc and a third marriage to a handsome garrison soldier followed.

Sprightly and shapely in her 60's, and forever a shrewd and clever business woman, she was known as the "Queen of the Hunter Valley".

Molly eventually sold most of her property and retired to a 200 acre farm at Anvil Creek near Greta where she died in 1833 .

### **GRETA OUR PRE-EMBARKATION CAMP**

Did you know!

- At one time there were 14 hotels and wine shops in Greta.
- That Greta railway station was extended during WWII. This was no doubt to accommodate the troop trains.
- Between 50,000 and 60,000 soldiers passed through Greta Army Camp.
- That after the 1949 floods the Army camp was converted to a migrant hostel with a population of 10,000.
- That the army/migrant area presently privately owned is expected to be sold shortly.
- That it is rumoured that the area will be taken over as a vineyard development.

Who knows! That sometime in the not too distant future we may experience the joys of a wine blended from this area. And raise our glasses to toast.

"To Greta and Molly Morgan."

### **The Legend of the Grave of William Harper (No relation of our worthy secretary)**

#### **The records show that:-**

"William Harper arrived from Edinburgh in 1820 and worked as an Assistant Government Surveyor.

He was retired by the Governor because of a severe illness and obtained a 2,000

acre grant at Oswald. In repayment for his theodolite and his water colours and drawing instruments, which he left behind him at head office, Harper received a grant of an additional 200 acres, which he selected on the eastern boundary of the site of Greta. William Harper died on May 10th 1836 at Greta."

**The story has also been recalled as follows:-**

"It was William Harper's wish to be buried at Oswald. On the day of the funeral there was a severe electrical storm and the horses , drawing the hearse from Greta to Oswald, bolted in fear. They raced down the hill (the first gully out of Greta) and the hearse overturned, throwing the coffin out onto the hillside . Mrs Harper, Williams widow, declared that it was God's will that William Harper be buried where the coffin landed. The mourners stood in the pouring rain while the grave was dug and the graveside service was held there and then. The gravestone, now lying flat on the ground and worn almost smooth by time and the elements, still indicates the location of the grave."

FOOTNOTE A small section from one corner of the gravestone was removed at one time. It was allegedly cut away by a Greta lad, about 60 years ago, to be used for a sharpening stone. It was customary at that time for the local boys to have their own knives and tomahawks and a sharpening stone was essential.

Memorable Incidents with a memorable Man.

Name-	Lt. Colonel Ward
Unit-	53rd Btn (Militia) Port Moresby N.G.
Period	Early February 1942 to approximately May 1942
Present -	Lt Colonel Ward, Major Spring ,Private Lew Scott, Private Thompson (interloper)

To me the Colonel was an outstanding officer. Very much a disciplinarian firmly

in control. A believer in what he was doing, he did that and most things effectively, quickly and well. He was a fearless man of strong character who cared for the welfare of his troops above all else. Enemy bombing raids held no terror for him.

The battalion H.Q.'s were in a government house, overlooking the harbour. On notice of a Japanese bombing raid, as best as he could, he advised most areas of possible activity. (At that time there were few communication installations). That done, in an old car that could be seen or heard, sat the Colonel heading toward where his most exposed troops were or where bombs may fall or had already fallen .

#### Incident 1.

In Moresby on this February day I was in charge of the huge fuel tank used by the navy.

In an open and exposed shed, wind in the face, head down, writing, a voice behind me said, "who is in charge here". Without looking up I said, "I am" "who is". On glancing around, the Colonel (it was he) got, "I am". Quick as a flash, "you were-Major (his aide) take his name and number and reduce him to the ranks.". There was not a glimmer on the C. O.'s face when I answered to rank "Private". The fact is I knew not why I was to remain a private.

Cause- Main gate guard, shut off, hat same, pants rolled up, rifle on the ground, and he sitting on an upturned 44 gallon drum, pruning his toe nails. The Colonel's was the only raid for the day. The other (not announced) turned up the next day. To his credit, so did the Colonel. Most of the bombs hit the water or the hill behind the tank.

#### Incident 2.

Battalion gathering. Field Practice.

Exercise - subdue a machine gun post.

Area - Moresby.

Period - before Mid Year 1942. Start Time - 10.0 am.

Somehow from 10.00 am start time someone changed it to 11.00 am. Not everyone got the message, thus causing confusion. Result was some unknowns

confiscated the 'whippie' and the machine gun which was brought back to the assembly area.

Enter the Colonel.

From the Major to lowly Lieutenant every officer was called into line In front of most of the Battalion the Colonel in dead silence slowly and clearly asked each officer.

"Order, Counter Order, what comes next. Each replied "don't know sir". Calmly he stood them to attention. Clear as a bell he stated "Order , counter order, what comes next?" - Lengthy pause . - "TOTAL BLOODY DIS-ORDER." - Pause again of some lengthy seconds . - "DISMISS".

Belittling, though it was, it is doubtful of any of the officers would ever again join in an Army games without full knowledge of how to play to the rules

### Incident 3

Plan and prepare defence posts in the event of Jap invasion from the harbour. Our lot - to build a defence facing the harbour behind the native village of Hanuabada Period - April or May 1942.

Present at defence inspection; the Colonel, Major Spring, Private Lew Scott (for interrogation). Later an intruder - Private Thompson. Note:- the Colonel was never one to discuss Military Matters with other ranks. Hence presence of the Major.

The three of us in triangle formation about two and half feet apart. Colonel to Major, "Ask the corporal (in relation to the defence) questions on selection of position and why and so on."

Questioning went on for quite some time. The whole of it. Colonel to Major. Question to me - answer. Self to Colonel to Major and so on. I gave a summary on uncompleted work. Major asked the Colonel had heard? Yes, he had. Then, "Major tell the Corporal (Private) it is the best installation in the area and to call his soldiers together to convey my congratulations ". Major repeats it all to me. Self to Major, "Inform the Colonel I am a private and happy to do as he asks.". Colonel dropped

the Major and came straight back at me, "I am not here to ask, I commanded. (re-enter the Major) Tell the soldier if he can't follow orders he will always be a private." I learned a bit. It was really good stuff. I'll swear he said it with a half smirk on his face. Thus ended the defence discussion.

#### Incident 4

Area - same place.

Present - same trio, plus an intruder Private Thompson.

Action - Enter Private Thompson; a scarecrow of a man, part dressed. Felt hat with service badge attached, boots and socks and little else.

With rifle at the slope he presents himself, slaps the butt of the rifle in respect of the Colonel - waited. No response from Colonel or Major. Butt gets slapped again. Fronting the Colonel, say he "I saluted you." Colonel to Major, "What's the meaning of this?". Thompson to Major, "Tell the Colonel I saluted him, he had to acknowledge it." Colonel - "No! Major tell him to get dressed." Thompson - "I am wearing the badge of authority and you must salute it." The Colonel complied.

#### Incident 5

Same place, same day, same trio. Enter, Thompson again.

He addresses the Colonel, "Complaint Sir." "It's him Sir, he works us too hard."

Colonel - "Who is him?"

Thompson - "The Sergeant Sir."

Colonel - "Sergeant who is he?"

Thompson - "Him Sir.(pointing to me)"

Colonel - "Why are you dressed as you are?"

Thompson - "It's the Sarg Sir. He works us like horses, so we may as well look like one." He take his leave and wanders away.

#### Notes

Of these soldiers mentioned here, only two survived the war, Major Spring and myself.

Lew Scott - Sergeant - 23/9/96

### **A Gallant Flight of Our Fine Feathered Friends**

The Australian Pigeon Service was formed by the Signal Corps as part of the communication network in New Guinea and Bougainville .

' D' Coy of 47th Battalion was in trouble .It was under savage attack by Japanese forces who had consolidated on Southern Bougainville and looked like being overwhelmed and annihilated. Ammunition was running low and the heavy rain had rendered the radio useless .Pigeon 3863 D/D was released with a request for ammunition and covering artillery fire. Flying through the tropical storm and over Japanese positions the hen survived heavy Japanese rifle and after completing the 22 mile journey in four hours delivered her message. The Artillery then swamped the position with covering fire and tanks escorted a reinforcing party to receive the encircled company.

A cock bird was released shortly after the hen bird and both were awarded the DICKEN MEDAL, an award to recognise outstanding acts of bravery. The two pigeons were the first to receive this Animal V.C. in the Pacific.

Editor :- This story was related by Captain Bill Phillips who is the author of "Fighting Patrol". A tribute to the Infantry Soldiers. A booklet recommended for reading. Price of \$50 (including postage) as shown in the last 'Orderly Room Gossip' issue . Bill's telephone number. 9644-3441

### **Peter Jones '96 Pilgrimage To Belgium**

Members will recall that an initial amount of \$100 (March '96) followed by a further \$75 (April 96) was donated towards the cost of Peter's recent pilgrimage to Belgium to participate in a very special commemorative service.

Peter Jones, a Vietnam veteran, through persistent research established that his grandfather Lance Corporal Wallace Alfred Jones along with Privates Mears and

Pendleton (WWI 53Bn) until recently numbered among thousands who died in the leper Salient, and who had no known graves were now able to be positively identified as buried in Somer Farm War Cemetery WYTSCHAETE - Belgium. The Commemorative Service format was as follows:-

3.00pm Somer Farm War Cemetery

1. Address by Ambassador of Australia, Mr E. R. Pocock AM. (This address covered Peter's research efforts and the importance of his presence on the day.).
2. Prayers led by Rev. Alan Brannagan, Chaplain St Georges Memorial Church leper.
3. Bugler "Last Post" - minutes silence.
4. Wreaths laid by Ambassador, Mr Ron Wilson - Director Northern Europe Area Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Mr Malcolm Mears.
5. Statement of thanks from Mears and Pendleton families.
6. Bugler - Reveille.

**A covering letter from Peter included a final paragraph**

"As I bring this letter to a close, Marilyn and I wish to thank you personally Alex as well as the 55/53 Bn for all communication and financial support that you gave us during our time of need to participate in this honoured ceremony at Somer Farm." Editor's Notes - The donation of \$100 was paid from 53 Bn WWI Association funds earlier transferred to 55/53 Assn and the balance of \$75 was part of the proceeds of a special raffle held Anzac Day '96.

**Yves Fohlen of France**

Yves Fohlen of France who has already dedicated himself to army research of Australians in WWI, particularly 53 Bn WWI recently attended the 80th commemoration of the Battle of Fromelles and our Secretary Trevor 'entrusted' him with Bill Davies' 'sash' to wear for the occasion. Yves tells us he was indeed very honoured and proud to wear such an important emblem.

This enthusiastic Frenchman is the co-author of a book of the 15th Yorkshire

Parachute Bn history in conjunction with Eric Bailey. This publication has been followed up with a manuscript of a 2nd Lieut. Percy Edward Ralph MM, 5th Reinforcement, 53 Bn 14 Inf Bde (WWI).

Our own association's friend, guide and counsellor John Richardson has kindly agreed to write the forward to the manuscript at the particular request of 'Brig' Ralph of Cambooya Qld, nephew of Percy Edward Ralph.

(Editor - The two articles 'Jones' and 'Fohlen' highlight the wonderful reputation of 53

Bn WWI with the proud motto: , "USQUE AD FINEM - All the way to the end" and with the equally famous 55 Bn WWI history provide great examples of the real value of keeping the name and history of the 55/53 Bn on record.

## **Our Contacts With Other Units**

### **36th Battalion**

Keith Irwin, President of the 36th Bn Assn was kind enough to allow a reprint of the following which appeared in the June issue of 'Marching On'.

#### **The First Infantry battalion To Serve In New Guinea**

On the 5th October 1939 the 9/49 Battalion went into camp at Enoggeria, Brisbane for 30 days and the troops were given T.A.B. and Tetanus injections . At the conclusion of the 3 months a call-up was made for men to serve full-time on specific duty in the tropics. On 25th June 1940 the 15th Detachment of 60 volunteers was formed. Their service numbers were 1 to 60. They were drawn from 49th, 15th and 61st Battalions. Two members were seconded from the 25th Battalion, Machine Gun Platoon and a Lieutenant came from the 9/49 Battalion to command the Machine Guns. During 4 hectic days and nights they were issued with totally new equipment, pay books, completed their wills and received further injections. Two short leave periods were given, Saturday evening from 6pm until midnight, and Sunday afternoon from 3pm until 10pm. There were no defaulters. On the 1st July

1941 movement orders came through and at 2000 hours the 160 members and 6 officers who retained their enlisted numbers boarded the SS Drungal in convoy with the SS Zealander, and sailed for Port Moresby. Escorting the convoy for part of the way was MV Manoora which at that time was an armed merchant cruiser. This role was later over by Sunderland Flying Boats.

On arrival at Pt Moresby, vaccinations had to be completed on board ship before disembarking. The troops were then informed that their duties would be unloading ships, establishing a campsite at 3 mile, road making, sighting gun emplacements and defending Pt Moresby. This was against any raiding party which may decide to land and disrupt the orderly running of Papua. Their introduction to Pt Moresby was unloading the ship to have material to start building huts. Rumour on board ship was that there was provision for the troops to be housed in brick buildings. Actual fact was that there was one corner of a corrugated shed on site. It was raining heavily at the wharf and lunch was eaten in the wet. The idea was to unload the tents and erect some for cover here, and at 3 mile. Where were the tents? At the bottom of the hold with all the heavy materials on top of them. This took quite a time to unload, considering that 3 x 15cwt ford utilities and 9 x 3-ton chev trucks had to be unloaded to enable the goods to be transported to the 3 mile.

Gradually things started to take shape. Duties of building a camp, roads, observation posts, defence emplacements, fire plans and barbed wire entanglements which were hand-made were carried out. Water was scarce and had to be brought out from Moresby by water truck and severely rationed. Water was not laid on until August 1941 and showers were connected in December. No fresh vegetables were allowed to be purchased locally because of hygiene. The diet for the first year was M & V herrings and tomato sauce, (gold fish), haricot beans, dehydrated potatoes, powdered eggs and tinned butter, sort of brings back memories. There was no doctor and the hospital at Konedobu, Port Moresby was not available, except for extreme emergencies. Any medical attention was carried

out by a chap who was doing chemistry before joining the army. He was helped by another who learned First Aid in his civilian life. He would stitch up any cuts or take out teeth without anaesthetic. The chemist (?) had his own recipe for Dhobies Itch. As one private said, after sampling the treatment, "If you could not yodel before the treatment, you would certainly be able to after." Sickness was plaguing all ranks. Fever, boils, skin eruptions were difficult to heal. Later a visiting doctor attributed this to diet. Whenever Japanese ships came into port, soldiers were dressed as civilians and had to keep trace of the movement of anyone who came ashore. The first issue of quinine to counter malaria, and lime juice to counter lack of fresh food was given 24th September 1941. On the 15th October, the Detachment was told they would no longer be known as the 15th Detachment but would be absorbed into the 49th Bn.

(Editor - Things didn't seem to be much different over a two year period in New Guinea from June 1940.)

### **3rd Battalion**

While we have not a recent 3rd Battalion Newsletter to refer to, members can be assured the Association is "alive and well".

In fact we understand that plans are in place for a new, more reliable, publication covering the Kokoda Campaign (Moresby to Buna, Gona) with the 3rd's involvement more accurately recounted.

### **14th Australian Field Regt**

In recent times the 14th have produced a Newsletter/Journal titled "Gun Blast".

The August 1996 issue includes the following and how appropriate it refers to our own association members. - It's headed:-

#### **An Appeal To Members**

"Keep the mateship going

It's more important than before  
For comradeship and memories  
And treasured days of yore  
Remember times when things were rough  
And remember times of play  
But don't give up the real chance  
Of reliving our youth of yesterday  
Camaraderie bonded us together  
And it's just as strong today  
So forget about your aches and pains  
And help us commemorate and celebrate  
The AGM Dinner and Anzac Day

As with the 36th, Betty and Alex Bell enjoy invitations to meeting with 14th Assn members as guests on special occasions and value the friendships that have been established.

### **7th Machine Gun Bn**

Wooglemai Field Studies Centre (Dept. of Education) located at Oakdale caters for a range of students , " Kindergarten to University level, providing activities relating to natural environmental studies and skills.

Acting on their President, Les Rudd's suggestion the Assn proposes as special acknowledgment to the school staff for printing their newsletter "Gunners Gossip" to present a flagpole with plaque as a permanent memo rial. WELL DONE!  
7th Machine Gun Bn.

Here again I enjoy the privilege of meeting socially with this association and look forward to 6th November.

### **7th Div Cavalry Regt Bn**

The Regiment has a NSW and Queensland Association

The NSW Bulletin No 80 Dec 95 reports Frank O'Sullivan's involvement with the pilgrimage to Papua-New Guinea, June/July '95.

During the visit Frank noted incorrect inscriptions on the headstones of KIA comrades buried at Bomana Cemetery and has arranged follow up action to be taken with the office of Australian War Graves. Frank Sullivan and Alex Bell shared each other's company on a number of occasions during (t)he New Guinea tour.

### **39th Bn Newsletter "The Good Guts"**

Interesting to note that the 39th Bn Assn, as did the 55/53, responded to the recent appeal for funds to buy football guernseys for P.N.G. footballers in the Kokoda area. (This appeal was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Sydney.)

**A True Irish Story** - At the Anzac March in Melbourne as quoted :-

"We cracked it for a band again. This time an Irish Pipe Band. Quite satisfactory , but some of us were curious as to how one piper could forever be out of step with the band tune.

### **Another - Anzac Day March '96 - Brisbane**

The march leader endeavoured to arrange some order in the wearing of hats, stating that he would remove his hat at the saluting base, the rest to leave hats on and give eyes RIGHT (this being done by other marchers) . This bought a flat refusal by the 39th - they voted all would remove hats. Well Done Fellows!

### **49th Infantry Bn**

Our contact man Fred Cranston of Wavell, Qld reports that the association membership is less than 40. After the initial shock, it is not too difficult to understand. The 49th suffered battle casualties for in excess of most other units and furthermore its identity was relinquished soon after Sanananda without the

benefit of a reasonable flow on of reinforcements. However small in numbers and with advancing years taking their toll, the gutsy 'spirit' is still there with the old vets, strongly supported by family members .

They hold barbecues - support the 39th at their Kokoda Day Remembrance gathering and still maintain their own Sanananda Day.

(Editor :-They Are Proud As Ever And Holding On!)

## **VETLINK**

### **March/April '96**

True to his word, Mr R Armstrong - Editor of Vetlink, did what he promised on the 8th December '95 55/53 Assn meeting by helping to promote the "Remember" booklet. The distribution at the time of reporting has passed 20,000 copies.

### **June '96**

Available on request through the DVA officers is a publication Planning Ahead a guide to putting your affairs in order. Veterans, War Widows, or dependants can apply. The guide is in kit form giving information about making a will - an outline of eligibility for bereavement payments - coping with grief and loneliness as well as other useful assistance from DVA and from ex-serviceman's organisations. (Recommended Reading)

### **July '96 issue (page 8)**

This page carries the story "Fuzzy Wuzzy Hero Dies ". - Raphael Oimbari OBE Honorary member 55/53 Bn Assn died at his village near Kokoda in the Oro Province of PNG.

### **August '96 issue (page 5)**

Members no doubt have recognised Major-General Arthur Fittock's recent participation in the Vietnam pilgrimage.

Our own Rev. Roy Wotton's photo also appears on page 8 with the story of the PNG Pilgrimage re-union held in Sydney late July '96.

## **REVEILLE**

### **May/June '96 issue (page 14)**

Leslie William Lee won the DCM in WWI with 55 Bn. He later married Miriam Evelyn Minett.

### **July/August '96 issue**

The history of our ancestral units 55 and 53 Bns WWI lives on!

Page 5 reports Cpl Ernest Alfred Corey MM and 3 BARS enlisted in March 1916 and joined the 55th as a stretcher bearer.

His awards:-

April 1917 MM Bullicourt

October 1917 Bar to MM Polygonwood

January 1918 Bar to MM Peronne

September 1918 Bar to MM Bullicourt

Outstanding bravery on 4 occasions is certainly unique. Ernest Corey survived the war and returned home to live in Queanbeyan.

Norman Parker 3/165 Lyons Rd Drummoyne has a Chinese coin smooth on one side with the details "743 Leslie William Lee A.I.F." Mr Parker would like to locate relatives of Mr Lee, so they can claim the coin.

## **WARATAH RIFLEMAN (Royal NSW Regt)**

The December '95 Issue contains a message from His Excellency, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair AC (then Governor of NSW and honorary Colonel to the Royal NSW Regiment) .

As a farewell message to the regiment, he commented, "That the Regiment has a fine history - that there will be frustrations ahead it is certain -

Reorganisations will come and go, but as long as you do not lose sight of your aim to become highly skilled and efficient in your job. These finally will be passed as minor irritations in a soldier's life."

The 'One Army' concept continues to gain in importance and, if Australia is to served best by its Defence Force regular and reserve soldiers together must operate as one, irrespective of the differences in their backgrounds. His Excellency then concluded with his best wishes to all.

(Is the Defence force 'cultural' aim finally getting it right some 57 years on in time? Remember when there was a strong AIF/Militia difference in existence.)

### **SERVICE PROFILES -55/53rd members.**

Since the appeal was made for concise service resumes the following 5 submissions have been received.

**Resume 1 - Vince Finnigan (Nambour) 53rd Bn** Some few months after arriving at Pt Moresby in 1944 Vince was seconded to a motor pool with his civilian drivers licence then being adequate - his AB83 came later.

With the last batch of civilians being evacuated the drivers set themselves up in a house on Ela Beach with their regular meals shared with the yanks in the wharf area. In July '42 Vince returned to 'B' Coy and served with Cpl Doug Haywood's section on the track. He tells of meeting with the 53 CO Lt/Col Ward and the IO Lt. Roly Logan just before they were both killed. A short time later Vince was transferred to 141 A.G. Tpt.

In later years Vince returned to PNG as a Loss Assessor for an Insurance Company (1973-77) with his wife Pamela serving as his reliable

office 'back-up' staff. (Pamela went on to qualify as an Articled Clerk.) Work commitments involved much travel and Vince explains how much "Place Talk" was spoken during these trips (There are 700 languages spoken in PNG). With the RSL located along Ela Beach Rd well stocked with ice cold cartons of SP Moresby during these times was not such a bad place. Later in January '89 their daughter and son-in-law moved to Goroka in the highlands and managed a supermarket. At one stage 2 nationals were detached to take some 'old' stock to the tip and dump the lot - which they did - the truck included!

This précis of Vince's letter closes with this advice. If you go to PNG, take in the highlands, (Mt Hagen) where they still walk about town wearing ARSE grass, carry Hagen axes, and bows & arrows. Thank you VINCE!

### **Resume 2 - Jim Loneragan (Macksville) 55th Bn**

Jim enlisted March '39 and in September '39 did V.P.(Vulnerable Point) Duties allocated to the Radio direction beacon for Mascot which was located at Holsworthy for a short period - then attended unit camps at Dapto '39 and Liverpool '40. He was then Bn Ord Room Sgt and during that time enlisted in the Permanent Forces AASC (Australian Army Services Corps). Later in '40 transferred to Eastern Command Training School, Studley Park, Narellan and remembers a serious accident involving 'students' carrying out a simulated river crossing on the local darn - 1 killed, 4 injured (killed was L/Cpl Gordon - 55/53 Bn - can any other member recall this incident?). The school was then relocated to Cowra and later to Redbank, Qld. In '42 Jim was transferred to 1st Advanced Reinforcement Depot at Kleiton, Toowoomba as a Sgt/Platoon Commander. A period of illness followed and

after many months Jim was classified 'B' class and sent on to serve at Victoria Barracks until discharged May '45. Thanks Jim for your story!

### **Resume 3 - Bill Moses (Corrimal) 53rd Bn**

Bill commenced his service with 56th Bn (Riverina Regiment) as a Bandsman December '40 - July '41, and went to Moresby with the 53rd as Bn Orderly Room Sgt and bandsman. In July '42 he joined ANGAU as a patrol officer with the rank WOII and duties took him to Tufi, Wanigela and Baniara. In January '44 he was evacuated on the hospital ship Manunda, medically boarded unfit for further duties in the tropics. Offered a posting, with promotion, to the RMC Duntroon he elected to obtain a manpower release, returning to Leeton Cannery as Paymaster, April '44.

A 1942 Leeton newspaper clipping accompanying the service record of Bill and his close friend Sgt Harold Jacks reads in part - "Harold and myself being enthusiasts and discovering that there was a brand new set of band instruments laying idle in 53rd Bn Quartermaster's Store took it into our own hands to organise a band and already we have fourteen players able to knock up 'Colonel Bogey' and a few more good old favourites." Their efforts included a number of open air concerts always appreciated by the troops.

(Editor - It never ceases to surprise me what could be found in the Q. M.'s store - like the story goes, 'There was beer lots of beer' etc etc - Good Show Bill!)

### **Resume 4 - Herbie Ward (Veterans Village Narrabeen) 53rd Bn**

Herbie's service commenced with the 1st Bn Mortar Platoon early '41 and as he puts it playing 'silly buggers' in the surroundings of Ingleburn camp. Then with the 53rd Bn later in the year Herbie and many others were destined for service 'Darwin or Elsewhere'. Aboard the 'Aquitania' there was a lucky break for Herbie - he landed the job on board ship as Bn Runner - his title being the password to

virtually have the run of the ship - the Bridge - the Officers area where he bathed daily in the Al Bathrooms set up. Herbie never being a selfish bloke arranged some of these fringe benefits for a few special mates. Like every good thing it came to an end on arrival at Moresby and Herbie in two foolscap pages describes months playing 'silly buggers' with the only redeeming pastime in his memory being the great friendships he formed particularly in the mortars.

At Herbie's very comfortable home No. 76 at Narrabeen Village his next door neighbour at No. 77 is Viv Nightingale, also an ex-Mortarman. Good stuff Herbie, Always knew you were happy in the service!

### **Resume 5 - Keith Mason (Metford) original 55th/53rd Bn**

Keith was with the 55/53 prior to joining the Darwin Infantry Battalion A.I.F. 1940. Early '43 he embarked for PNG and later in New Britain attaining the rank Quartermaster Sgt.

Recently Alex Bell was delighted to visit Keith's home, meet his wife Yvonne (ex service background) and talk over old times of V.P. duties when both were at the oil depot Hunters Hill - very young soldiers and most impression able. - With a few chuckles they recalled how the thousands of empty 44 gallon drums, with the temperature changes, would expand and contract simulating rifle fire and often they would Jump to' ready to 'chase off enemy intruders at this vital station. Also remembered was the sparse conditions under which we camped and the generous hospitality of the local residents who opened their home to allow us bathing facilities and often a very welcome afternoon tea served with the best family china. What a brave gesture to give young clumsy soldiers, who were likely to leave tell tale marks from heavy boots on polished floors and hard to move, excessively black, marks on bath towels, etc. (Great people who are still remember for their kindness.)

As a quartermaster during his later service life Keith had the interesting

job of computing load weights for plane movement of troops and tells of amusing times, particularly at Popondetta when he would have a fully equipped soldier dangling by ropes from a tree in a peculiar manner to improvise the weight calculation etc.

Alex looks forward to meeting Keith's son, Bruce who at the time of his visit was on his return from PNG where he has worked as part of a Rotary Service team on the Kokoda Hospital project.

(Keith's chest expands with pride when he talks of Bruce. Thank you Keith. - Until our next happy meeting!)

### **WHISPERINGS OVERHEARD FROM THE OFFICER'S QUARTERS!**

During a week-end visit in Sydney Les and Gwenyth Marchant entertained Laurie Brebner and wife Gladys who were on their return to Geelong, having visited their son recently posted to Hervey Bay. Later joined by George and Faye Wearne for dinner one evening, photos of 'D' Coy taken at Bougainville and Rabaul were produced and a 'trip down memory lane' was thoroughly enjoyed by all Thanks Les!

Irvine Richards (Killarney) Irvine who has extremely difficulty in writing made a much appreciated effort to drop a line to recall with great pride his association with the unit. Particularly does he hold dear the memories of a guard he commanded in a Brigade competition that responded with 'unbelievable enthusiasm' to win through the various levels to take final honours. Although he was a Lieutenant when the competition started and was promoted Captain before the final start he obtained special dispensation to lead his team all the way through. (Funny what a competition will do - most times guard duties were not the 'in thing' to volunteer for!)

Irvine remembers his Milne Bay service period when he was O.C. of that special contingent - 'A' and 'C' companies with a platoon of machine gunners under command of Max Beveridge. Again glowing references of the support he received

and how he valued the great effort of the 'boys'. - Your efforts of KEEPING IN TOUCH greatly appreciated. Irvine in later times (1992) was fortunate to be selected to participate in a pilgrimage back to New Guinea which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Vic Hunt (Parkdale - Victoria) Most of Vic's letter is produced 'verbatim' for obvious reasons. - - -

"I was reminded on reading some reminiscences in a recent issue of Orderly Room, including one from our old mate Stan Sly, of a couple of now humorous occasions of my own which may be of interest.

One was when we welcomed a new CO, on Bougainville (I won't mention his name but he was great guy). As the 1.0 . of the Battalion I was asked by him to take him on a recce north to the Laruma River.

We set off in the little HQ jeep with his driver and got to the river. The CO said it looked pretty fordable and he wanted to go over and walk up to the top of the hill on the other side.

I explained to him that Brigade orders prohibited us from crossing the river as it was Jap territory on the other side; and furthermore, it was mid-afternoon and the river rose considerably higher later as a result of the nightly rain up in the hills

Fordability getting back as a result would be suspect. He looked quizzically at me said, "Well never mind, we'll still give it a go regardless.". Despite my reiteration he insisted and away we went bumping over a hundred or more metres of bouncy rocky bottom. We parked on the other bank and climbed the escarpment to the top. Naturally we saw nothing but tree tops and forest when we got there and perspired our way back to the river.

Well, you've guessed it, when we got down the river was starting to

run a banker. We got half way over with the water pouring over the floorboards and the jeep would go no further. The time came to jump into the flood and half swim half hop the remainder of the way half drowned. On struggling to the bank we looked back and saw the jeep tumbling its way over and over a long way down the river and round a bend to its watery grave.

It was(s) a long walk back to camp and I never learned how the poor old jeep was accounted for - 'Lost in action no doubt '?

Another failure I experienced was much earlier at Jacky-Jacky on Cape York when the Battalion was 'resting'.

Being an avid fisherman I thought of a way of keeping the Battalion in fresh fish. I had read in a British Army pamphlet how in very high tidal areas fish can be trapped when the tide runs out.

I persuaded HQ to advance me a large quantity of star pickets and many coils of chicken wire.

In this area of the strait the tide rose up to 27 feet so with the platoon we erected a compound a couple of hundred metres square with an opening on the beach side with fins to guide fish into the opening as they moved along the shore line .

I looked proudly at our handiwork when it was finished on the dry bed of the strait and waited with confidence . At high tide the whole structure was under 27 feet of water.

But would you believe it! I had overlooked the possibility of tidal harmonics. Next morning the bed of the strait wasn't dry a low tide but had about 3 feet of water in it.

The compound was full of fish of all types swirling around but beyond our reach. However, I wasn't completely disappointed for I knew it

was only a matter of time before the tide would ultimately get back to its cycle with a dry bed in the compound.

But even more unbelievable! The next day we got urgent orders to pack up, go home on leave and assemble at Strathpine for our stint on Bougainville.

I often wonder if the aborigines in the area enjoyed their feeds of free fish and what finally happened to the biggest fish trap in the world. - Thank You Vic - First Class!

## **JOTTINGS FROM AROUND THE REGIONS**

### **New England**

Nev White (Singleton) gives a good report from those contacted and also mentions Clem Pagett (report later covered in North Coast news)

'Ned' Kelly (Gunnedah) has been touch with Ron Sefton (Boggabri) just out of hospital following a prostate operation and now with eye problems . - These personal concerns do not diminish his own concerns for the wel(l)being of his mates (How about a call to him from his mates ?).

(Editor - To 'Ned' - a question! If I read your writing as I see it then it tells me you are 'riding' for 'disabled'. - Should I read this as "driving" for the 'disabled'. (If not please tell me more!) .

### **North Coast**

Dorothy Pagett (Macksville) tells me that Clem has had asthma

and heart problems, but he is following doctor's advice with tablets and inhalations to ward off further bad turns. He remains cheery and as mentioned earlier Nev White is checking him out from time to time (Clem we all send our best wishes!) .

Frank Bilson (Eungai Creek) Returning from a 3 weeks trip overseas is pumping pennies into his 'piggy bank' to make another trip ASAP.

Bob Ellis (Crescent Head) is settling into new surroundings getting involved in bowls and golf (a 'model' guy for 'how to cope with difficulties' without taking to the drink **too often that is!**).

Bill Tomlin (Nambucca Heads) attended the 11th Brigade reunion luncheon at Kedron/Wavell Services Club, Chermside Brisbane. - Also in attendance Lionel Herbert (Cooparoo), Neville Eyre (Lamb Island), Ivan 'Cracker' Home (Cooparoo), Bob Laminga (Banora Point), also Clarrie Meredith ('Mermaid Waters) making a total of 6 members with several ladies. Apart from a good meal, free drinks for one hour, left with a lasting impression of great day well spent.

Alex Batts & Harry Mill (both Nambucca Heads) are well and I must not forget Bill (Tojo) and Dawn recently spent a very enjoyable week at Bribie Island.  
(Thanks Tojo for a good report!)

### **Central Coast & Hunter Region**

Our reliable newshound Eric Gresham recently sent out a signal to several Central Coast locals to help out with reporting as he has been detained at R.A.P. for a short time and I must say his band of merry helpers have done well!

Bill Elliot (Mayfield) has just completed a ten week tour of

Australia with his brother and shortly plans another trip back to Queensland. Other members planning something similar should contact Bill for his itinerary, town maps and info probably on the best 'watering holes' along the way. Those who were close friends of Bill Evans (Coorabong), a reliable transport member, will be saddened by the news of the passing of a good mate (28.4 .96). Bill was very actively involved with the Sydney Adventist Hospital and the Sanatorium Health Food Company . It is with further note of sadness that we advise Bill's wife Nora died within weeks of Bill's passing.

'Skeeter' Mathews (Whitebridge) and Nancy were in Melbourne recently for the Grand Final of the Swans. Commiserating afterwards at a local pub they by chance met Pat Burkett who did some soldiering at Greta with 55th. Pat and Len Brown were also workmates for many years.

Bill Fordham (Mallabulla and his wife recently celebrated 50 years of marital bliss - (congratulations from all) and Skeeter's report above closes off with the invitation:-

THE USUAL LUNCHEON AT NEWCASTLE WILL BE HELD  
AT THE HAMILTON RSL ON WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER  
AT 12 NOON - ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE  
MOST WELCOME.

Tom Delbridge (Berkley Vale) and wife Grace recently

made a trip to the Sunshine State and did the natural thing by contacting Clarrie & Olwyn Meredith (Mermaid Waters) also Nev & Dorothy Flynn (Elanora Heights). Tom warns, that if you are giving Nev a call to dial 075 and then add in 95 before the usual number . Olwyn as usual produced a beautiful batch of pumpkin scones (her own recipe not Flo's). Clarrie is fast recovering from his knee operation, playing bowls once more and taken on a new challenge of helping to form a new RSL Sub-branch. Greetings come from that area to Alex Bell, Trevor Harper, Bill Pearce, Bob Lawrence, Nick Riotto and other fellows of 13 & 15 platoon. - Neville in turn passes on his best wishes to Bob Davies, Len Brown, and Peter Wright.

This is an appropriate time to relate:-

### **The Riotto Saga**

Nick (Mick) Riotto's family migrated from Italy when he was just a 'bonny boy'. His family took out Australian citizen early and settled down to be a typical Australian family. Nick joins the Army at 18 and served with 'C' Coy at Bougainville. When war service was dispensed with Nick marries Nola and with their children later planned to take a trip to Italy. When applying for a passport Nick was informed that because he has not declared at age 21 his desire to formalise Australian citizenship his status was in fact Italian. The fact he was serving in the Australian forces at Bougainville when 21 didn't exempt him from the required procedure. - Stop here and consider with the fighting going on in North African campaign. Nick could have been considered a potential spy, and WE could have shot Nick ourselves! Fortunately a trip to the local member gets things sorted out.

So when did Nick become an Australian?

When aged about 5 years? - No!

Aged 18 when he joined the Army? - No!

When then? - Answer; in the early '80s when he signed the application form! Don't worry, Nick's medals and Army discharge are not going back. (He says he BLOODY WELL EARNED THEM!)

Keep smiling Nick!

Lew Scott (Wyong) turned 84 in October, recovered from an eye operation in July and doing well. In fact he is off to Corryong, Victoria to visit his son who in his spare time runs what is best described as a 'hobby farm'. (See Len's earlier article on Colonel Ward CO 53rd Bn)

Peter Wright (Summerland Point) has sent in a piece from "Reveille" headed 'Just a Reminder'; maybe suitable for a later edition of 'Gossip'. Peter is also recovering from a recent bypass operation.

Two special cheerios from Bob Lawrence (55/53 'C' Coy) and Tom Shannon (Sigs) of Booker Bay to their old mates who they sincerely hope have not forgotten. them. (Both would like to receive a note or a telephone call occasionally.)

### **Mice of Moresby Poems**

A letter was received recently from a Cec Graham of Pearce

Ave Belmont ex 4 Squadron Army Co-operation Group. (An old navigator/wireless operator) who has a book of poems entitled "Memories of Moresby". Having done him a favour we arranged as a 'pay back' to have access to the poems - when received we will tell you more .

Elaine Rand (Umina) reports that Rick has become the typical doting grand father, spending lots of time with the youngest grandchild aged 2. Rick & Elaine's youngest son Michael and his wife Karla (who have attended a few of our outings) have a new grand-daughter Courtney who they will be taking to Karla's home town, Werris Creek to be baptised. (Sounds like a real Champagne & Pavlova occasion to me - that is after the meatballs and sausage rolls entree.)

Barbara Jellyman (Trevor Harper's daughter) along with her husband and children recently attended a Jellyman clan re-union in New Zealand. A large number of approximately 300 enjoyed the occasion. (Tossing the caber was out - a 'wee drop' now and then perfectly acceptable .)

Ray Chapman (Woy Woy) has taken up board surfing and claims he has never been fitter . (He has been warned several times - to keep his eyes on the waves and not on the girls.)

Bill & Delcie Franks (Lakehaven) have decided on a 12 day Fairstar Cruise to celebrate their 50th anniversary - Eric & Marjorie Gresham 46 years, Peter & Joyce Wright 50 years. (Congratulations to all - certainly proves they made an excellent choice in the first place as so many others did. How about a 'roll call' on all with 50

years up! - Congratulations to them too!)

### **Metropolitan**

Keith Sandland (Sans Souci). Our ex "1" Sgt is well and active - regular Probus Club attendance, involvement with 'hands on' tuition, for several sessions weekly with 'slow readers' at Ramsgate Public School, Meals-on-Wheels and squeezing in a round or two of golf each week. One of his; 'four' at golf is an ex 2/33rd man keeping him honest. Incidentally the 2/33rd were among the early units to sponsor a Remembrance Station (Myola) at the Concord Kokoda Walkway project.

Larry Scanlon ('B' Coy). Members will be sorry to hear of the passing of Larry in Perth recently. His remains were brought to Sydney, as was his wish to be placed with those of his wife Mavis at Pinegrove Cemetery.

Keith Niland (Dolans Bay) was 'snooped out' recently at the Kirribilli RSL Club by Alex Bell who was with a separate luncheon group. Keith's service was originally with Corvettes (12 months) and wanting a transfer to be with mates in the 61st Bn, landed himself with 55/53rd, when he was immediately put on transfer to the 55 camouflage re-enforcement group in Moresby, and later shipped to Borneo Xmas '44 where he remained until discharged in 1945.

### **Western District**

Did you know that the three grand-daughters of Eric 'Poppa' Day (Orange) were christened at St John's Church Glebe?

## Queensland

Clarrie Meredith (Mermaid Waters) gives an identical report as 'Tojo' on the 14th Inf Bde Re-union and the move afoot by the organisers now is to seek out members of 31 /51st & 26th Battalions to be included in this fellowship gathering.

'Ollie' Hardy (Golden Beaches) chased up some statistics on 7th Div. Cavalry which was greatly appreciated and at the same time informs us that Ernie Welham of that unit living close by is the father of Judy Bush, a nursing sister for Lady Davidson Hospital. Judy was responsible for the medical overview of the 38 NSW veterans on the PNG pilgrimage 1995, (which party included Alex Bell). - Thank you 'Ollie' for this information.

### Books That Are Good Reading

1. Shifting Sand and Savage Jungle, by George Tarlington, a front line soldier and an elder brother of one of our own members Cecil Tarlington who was killed at Sanananda (7.12.46). George dedicated this book to Cecil and it is available for \$15 including postage by contacting George on phone (02)9523-3443.
2. World Warn Wasn't All Hell, by Keith Smith. Try your own local library - it's hilarious!. Keith was a young radio announcer and writer, who was called up for compulsory service in 1940. He records his progress from civilian to soldier, at home and abroad, recapturing the funny, the frustrating, and often touching moments during HIS war when troops were beset not only by the enemy but often by the Army itself. (Editor would like to hear the opinions of any members who bothers to read it.)

### **Not Receiving All Signals**

No feedback of news in any form from Riverina, he issue (Editor).

and South Australia for

### **Xmas Greetings**

Alex, Trevor and committee extend warmest greetings to all members and hope that the contagious Xmas spirit is very much alive in your own homes and those of your families at this special time of the year.