



*55/53 Aust. Inf. Bn. Association
("The Mice of Moresby")*

*(In Association
with the 55th and 53rd Infantry Battalions 1st A.I.F.)*

SECRETARY'S NEWSLETTER

2001 Vol 1

LEST WE FORGET

S L BARTER
W HALDANE
A C RAISON
R J SULLIVAN

P J CODY
E J LAMPE
F RITCHIE
M TEEN

F N DEZIUS
H M LENNOX
K T SMITH
C A WARDEN

F M DUROSS
H R PAFF
G W STEELE
A H WILSON

To the families of our "Fallen Comrades" we extend our sincere sympathy and assure them that when we gather together

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

At this time, we look back over the last year and contemplate the changes that have taken place. After more than twenty years Alex Bell resigned as president and the committee's recommendation to the members gathered together at the last annual general meeting that he be invited to be patron of the association was enthusiastically endorsed by the members and graciously accepted by Alex. It was very pleasing to see that he was granted an award, O.A.M., in the Queen's Birthday Honours list and since and congratulations to him. A fitting reward for all that he has achieved for this association and in other endeavours on behalf of the community.

Peter Wright who was confirmed as our president at the ANZAC Day reunion reports in a separate letter and the election of Clyde Parsons of the Support Group as Deputy President was also confirmed and your committee feels that the association is in good hands.

CONSTITUTION The motion that the committee be empowered to make whatever necessary alterations to the constitution as necessary to comply with the regulations of the Dept. of Fair Trading was also passed at the ANZAC Day meeting and these alterations are being reviewed. When finalised any member wishing to obtain a copy of the amended constitution may obtain one by writing to the secretary.

FINANCE The finances of the association at present are in a satisfactory position

because of the wonderful response to the last appeal for donations in lieu of yearly fees. It is pleasing to be able to report that a majority of members responded in a most generous way, some perhaps forgot. The costs of running the association are an ongoing expense and your committee is confident that further donations will be received following the distribution of this letter and "Orderly Room Gossip".

A copy of the summarised financial report will be available to members at the annual general meeting, others unable to attend are welcome to write for a copy.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE. As a result of the proposed on constitution change outlined earlier in this letter, the next election of officer: and committee of the association will be held at the annual general meeting in December 2002, such elected persons serving for a period of two years. It is also being considered that future annual general meetings be held at a time near to but other than our traditional Cenotaph Parade in December, thereby making that day a time of reflection and mateship without the intrusion of business matters. This will only be possible if agreed to by members and if the necessary quorum for the annual general meeting be filled. This means that fifteen members **MUST** attend such a meeting to meet the requirements of the constitution.

CENOTAPH PARADE will be held on Friday 7th December at 1100 hours and Alice Kang, Project Manager of the Kokoda Memorial Walkway has been invited to lay the wreath. Your committee was trying to arrange a catafalque guard to enhance the solemnity of the ceremony; but in view of the terrorist attacks in America, and the subsequent Australian Force commitment is not possible.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the NSW Leagues from 1130 hours on 7th December. The club is located in 165 Phillip Street. Luncheon cost will be \$20.00 and our ladies and partners are invited to attend. **AS OUR GUESTS.** As previously mentioned formal business will be kept to a minimum so as not to interfere with the social aspect of the occasion. however, we will observe the customary toast as follows:

LOYAL TOAST

BATTALION TOAST

FALLEN COMRADES TOAST

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD
FRIDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2000 AT PETERSHAM RSL CLUB
FINANCIAL REPORT

As we near the end of another year, we must reflect on the state of the world and count our beings, that we live in a country mainly free of the turmoil and strife of so many other countries. It behooves us to be ever vigilant to protect our way of life - of "tolerance and a fair go for all". The events of the 11th September will never be forgotten; but must not be allowed to destroy our tolerance of others.

For the support of the committee and members over this year, my thanks, and may I on behalf of the president and committee wish all members and their families a **MERRY CHRISTMAS** and **A HAPPY NEW YEAR** and best wishes for good health.

Don't forget, **NEWCASTLE LUNCHEON**, Hamilton RSL Wednesday 7th

November.

Trevor Harper
 Hon Secretary/Treasurer
 68 Rotherham Street
 BATEAU BAY NSW 2261
 Phone (02) 43235348

October 2001

PRESIDENTS REPORT

This being my first report to members of our association I wish to thank you all for your vote of confidence in me. It is my firm endeavour to strengthen and maintain the comradeship that we have enjoyed over the last fifty odd years.

I think most members are now aware the out past president and now patron, Alex Bell, was awarded an O.A.M. on the Queens Honours list. Congratulations have been extended to him from all quarters to which he has acknowledged.

It is saddening to read of the passing of so many of our members in the "Reveille: To the wives, and families I extend my most sincere condolences in their time of sorrow. In the meantime, life must go on for those few that God has chosen to carry the burden.

The numbers on ANZAC Day were down considerably this year, and as we all get closer to that big 80 it is inevitable that numbers will diminish further. Arrangements are underway to provide wheelchairs and pushers for next year. We already have a few contenders, so if you want to be in the march; but feel you wouldn't make it, let us know beforehand, and we will try to arrange a wheelchair for you.

Speaking of marches, the Reserve Forces of Australia celebrated their centenary of formation with a march from Hyde Park to Victoria Barracks on the 1st July. As our unit was initially a militia unit we were asked to participate. Our banner "The Mice of Moresby" was proudly carried, and cheered along the way. What a spectacular day this was with contingents from America, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada and of course our own Navy, Air Force and Army. Several bands and Scottish Bagpipes galore. It was a pleasure to witness such a colourful display of flags, banners, costume and the performance of our serving defence force.

On a personal note, as president I was invited by the American Consul to meet members of the American contingent at the American Embassy in Canberra - what a wonderful experience, no expense has been spared with the furnishing and decor there and what a great bunch of young folk, both male and female.

Despite the cool conditions, how pleasing it was on the drive to Canberra to see the rest areas names after V.C. winners. A MUST visit is to the new ANZAC HALL at the War Memorial.

A Reminder to all members. There are still some memorabilia items available. Please try to help your association by purchasing these items – bookmarks, key rings, lapel pins, photo holders, unit profile book etc. Also, if you have any items of interest to members please let us have them for inclusion in Orderly Room Gossip.

We only get together on two occasions these days. Have you any suggestions for activities to encourage our families to get together?

In closing, one last request. Keep in touch with your army mates! A letter, card or

telephone call will keep the contact close, and we all know how much a letter means when you are feeling low.

Good luck and good health to all and I look forward to sharing your company again in greater numbers on 7 December, and every best wish for the coming festive season.

Peter Wright (President)



Issue 1/2001

"THE MICE OF MORESBY" MEMBERS BULLETIN

THE WONDERFUL OWEN GUN

(The following very interesting letter is the result of an article on the Owen Gun in the November/December 1998 issue of "Chocolate & Green", which has been passed on to the writer of the letter, Bill Guest, by his brother-in-law.)

In 1951, after having served with the 39th (Original) and 2/10 Battalions, I rejoined the Regular Army and after a period of five year with the Pacific Island Regiment (PIR) totally different to what they are now, was posted as Regular Army Warrant Officer, (WO2) to the PNGR Company, in Lae. This happened in February 1960. One day in 1962, one of the Government Patrol Officers, (Aust. Mandate) returning from a long-range patrol with native police, came into the Army Depot and gave me what was without doubt, a rust encrusted OMG.

I examined same and could not see how the object could be broken down into its component parts in any way. There was a thin piece of metal fixed in the barrel which was curved in an upright direction.

To me, it was something which had no further possibility of use. I calculated that it had been in action by somebody from either the 7th or 9th Division, in the 1944 assault on Lae, it would have to be 18 years old.

I had a PIR driver on staff by the name of Tomawa (Rabaul District) and he asked me if he could attempt to strip the object, a request to which I agreed without giving him much chance of success.

He first of all got hold of an old 44 gallon drum and filled it with discarded sump oil. He immersed the Owen in it, leaving it for a couple of days. Then, squatting on the floor he proceeded to lightly tap away at the barrel, delivering the blows equally to both sides. After the first hour had passed, I was firmly of the opinion that the whole effort was a waste of time. At the end of another hour, he gave a grunt of satisfaction and stood up with the barrel in his hand.

I immediately took a new interest in what he was doing. He was using only a mall hammer. I cannot recall what the object stuck in the barrel was, but; it came away quite easily. Tomawa then took up the hammer and started on the body to try to

loosen the bolt, which he did after a considerable period of time.

We were now looking at the weapon which was now stripped to its component parts, except that the butt was still firmly attached to the body. Tomawa ignored this and started working on the barrel.

He obtained some small tins and a couple bricks and using the latter to support the barrel, he pushed the tins which he had filled with cotton wool and petrol, under the barrel and ignited the tins' contents.

He lay on the ground with his hammer and after his objective had been subjected to prolonged heating, he proceeded to gently tap away at its length. Every few minutes he would stop and inspect his progress from his prone position.

Finally, after a very long time) he asked me to inspect his work after it had cooled off. This I did and after using the normal barrel cleaning procedure, I looked through and saw daylight. I then assembled the weapon. The next thing to do was to see if it worked.

In the Armoury, we had our unit stock of MG's, and I went out to the magazine and obtained some 9mm ammunition. The next day was training day for the cadets of the Lac Technical School, all natives. Their training was my responsibility. I took them out to the rifle range to test our new addition to The Armoury.

There was no way I was going to hold and attempt to fire it, so I lashed it firmly to a tree, tied a cord to the trigger, and moved well back to the rear. I tugged the cord and it fired a burst.

On inspection, it showed that all the rounds had gone through the barrel. The old weapon became an object of interest to most Army people who passed through Lae and when I left in 1963, it was still there on top of the arms rack. I do not know what became of it.

I fully agree with those who are of the opinion that, had this weapon been utilised when it would have been, the war would have been over well before it was.

Although limited to a killing range of about 30 yards, it filled every requirement needed to carry out offensive actions.

There would be many who agree with me, that its use quickly decided the outcome of the final attack on Gona by 39th Battalion in December 1942.

(Re printed from the May 2000, "The Good Guts", the official News letter of 39th Australian Infantry Battalion.)

THE FIRST DAWN SERVICE

Eightyseven years ago, on 1st November 1914 the ANZAC Tradition began in Albany King George Sound, Western Australia when at 7.00 am a convoy of twenty six Australian and ten New Zealand ships sailed for the Middle East and WWI. It was the first of many.

Before embarkation at 4.30am the Rev Arthur White, padre of 44th Battalion A.I.F. conducted a service for soldiers and relatives, he sailed with the convoy, and returned to Australia in 1919.

The memory of the service five years previously inspired him to honour permanently the valiant men - dead and alive - who had fought for their country. He conducted the first Dawn Service on Mt Clarence overlooking King George Sound on ANZAC Day 1923 with about twenty men. A man in a boat cast a wreath into King George Sound at Sunrise and as it floated out to sea, Padre White quietly recited the words "*As the sun rises and goeth down, we will remember them*".

A striking memorial is erected on the site, replacing a memorial erected in Port Said, which was destroyed by rioting Egyptians in 1956, the stone pedestal of which was rescued and form part of the memorial which was dedicated and unveiled by Sir Robert Menzies on 11th October 1964 with the following inscription: "This statue is a copy of one originally forming part of the memorial which was erected at Port Said and unveiled by the Rt. Hon William Morris Hughes KC."

Padre, Re Arthur White after leaving Albany, served in several parishes, finally at Herberton, Queensland and passed away on 26th September 1954. He is buried there in a simple grave, no epitaph, just a cross and a mere two words "A PRIEST".

Harvey Blundell while on holiday in Herberton visited the site.

ANZAC DAY SERVICE

From Victoria George Nolan ("D" Coy) writes:

"I don't know if you know of the Memorial Cross on the top of Mt Macedon. It is 20- 30 metres high and the dawn service on ANZAC Day is astounding. There would be over or more there at 5.30am and as I am a delegate on the 12th District RSL Board get a reserved position. It is not warm at that hour but that does not deter them. It is great spectacle with the guards, the rituals and the bugle, Last Post etc. with the breaking of the day and the sun rising, (weather permitting)."

(Note; Thank you George, has anyone else got a story or anecdote your mates may care to hear about.?)

PITTWATER SCHOOL

Several of the committee attended the school observance of ANZAC Day and it was certainly a day to remember. The obvious dedication of the cadet corps and the whole atmosphere of reverence for the occasion was very obvious and we felt it a privilege to share the day with them.

53rd BATTALION CENOTAPH PARADE

To mark the 60th anniversary of the formation of the 53rd Battalion, it was proposed by Clarrie James that some special effort be made to mark the occasion. At the time of writing this short advice it seems that approx. 20 of the known 53 members of the 53rd accompanied by wives/partners/minders will meet at the Cenotaph at 1100 hours on Wednesday 24th October and following the wreath laying ceremony proceed to the Masonic Club Castlereagh Street for lunch. Supported by other members of the association it promises to be very special day. Rusty Priest has been invited and will attend subject to other commitments. It is hoped that a catafalque guard will be available from Pittwater School but if this is not possible, 233 RCU will be able to provide the guard.

FAMILY ENQUIRIES

An enquiry has been received from the family of our late member: Corporal Kenneth Malcolm COVEY. Has anyone any information, anecdotes or photographs showing Ken? The family would like to hear from you. Replies to Ken Covey (son) 1 Kwani Place Narraweena 2099, phone (02) 9401 4677

WAR GRAVE

Stan Cannon advised that the headstone on the grave of Private HARROLD GALE
A.C.M.F. 55/53 Bn. Australian Infantry
Died 12th June 1946 aged 27

In the Newcastle Sandgate War Cemetery was damaged. Following a letter sent to them on 24th May, advise has been received from DVA, Dept. of War Graves that an inspection of the grave has been carried out and an order has been places for replacement of the headstone.

Thanks Stan for bringing the matter to our attention.

RESERVE FORCES DAY 1st JULY 2001

This day was held to mark the 100th Anniversary of the formation of the Federation armed force and as an original militia unit we were invited to participate. Peter Wright, Trevor Harper, Jack Symonds, Harry Mathew, Charles Jenkins, Clarrie James met in Hyde Park and marched to Victoria Barrack ably assisted by a few young cadets who carried our banner. The massed parade of present and past uniformed members of the Australian forces, contingents from America, Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada (and apologies to anyone left out) was a magnificent spectacle. It was an unforgettable experience. On the verandah to the right of the central archway, 100 Australian flags were draped and the participating units march banners were displayed between the pillars of the covered walkway underneath.

Attending dignitaries included Her Excellency Prof. Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, Lt General Peter Cosgrove AO MC, a representative of the Prime Minister and other Service Chiefs. It was a pleasure to meet the Governor and Lt Gen Cosgrove and to speak to them just prior to the official ceremony

GARRISON CHURCH – THE ROCKS

A plaque was dedicated in the Garrison Church on Sunday 6th May, and is now displayed in the attached museum of the church. A special plaque has been prepared for erection in the attached museum proper. This dedication ceremony was in lieu of our traditional annual church parade at St John's Glebe. It was attended by approx. 25 members and partner and afterward we were invited to morning tea in the museum which has a very interesting display of memorabilia. Alex Bell arranged to display some of our memorabilia on the day. If in town with an hour or two to spare, you won't be wasting your time if you make a visit to this most interesting museum.

VP DAY KOKODA WALKWAY

A most impressive service held at the Kokoda Walkway on 15th August to commemorate the cessation of hostilities in the war against Ja pan, was attended by a crowd estimated to be in the vicinity of 300, and were welcomed by Rusty Priest and address The Hon Dr. Andrew Refshauge MP Deputy premier NSW. The catafalque guard was mounted by members of the 233 Regional Cadet Unit, St. George and they did a grand job. NSW Corrective Service band provided the music and the day was supported by many other sponsors, volunteers, and the friends of Kokoda who are to be congratulated on a job well do ne. The afternoon tea provided after the ceremony was to parody Billy Bunter, "SCRUMPTIOUS."