



Issue 2/2002

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This year we are remembering that it is sixty long years since our lives were thrown into turmoil, and as young eighteen year old boys, we were obliged to fight for our wonderful country. Looking back on records, it is noted that this was done bravely against a determined force, and what a tragic and costly price we paid in those encounters. The tole from those years is never ending, the loss of members every year increasing, sometimes due to the injuries and stress of those years and the inevitable march f time. We find ourselves now counting each day as a bonus, and trying to make the most of them all.

Changing the tone, Trevor Harper and myself were nominated to go on a mission back to New Guinea in Isurava for the dedication of a memorial to mark the action which resulted in the only V.C. awarded during the Kokoda campaign; but for reasons unknown, we missed out (very disappointing).

Recently I wrote personal invitations to over twenty members, inviting them to a bar-be-cue day on 31st July at the Kokoda Walkway at Concord. I received four apologies

NEXT OF KIN

It is a long time since members were asked to supply details of their next of kin so that

families could be contacted when that inevitable time arrives when we make our last parade. Your committee makes every endeavour to have members of the battalion attend the last rites of our mates to support their families and to show our respect for them. When because of distance and short or no notice we are unable to do so, we try to send a card to the family. It is necessary to have up to date information to do so and you are asked to advise the secretary of your changing circumstances and address of those to whom these respects could be addressed. A few minutes of your time to do this would be much appreciated. Also, families are urged to include in obituary notices the battalion identity, and to advise the secretary of final arrangements.

The battalion had many great sportsman and enviable reputation on the rugby league field. The following may bring a few memories to come to mind.

BOUGAINVILLE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Patron: Brig. L G Binna President: Lt T Pedrazzini Secretary: WO1 R Connor

INTERSTATE MATCH
(1400 hrs 16 September 1945)

At MEDCO GROUND

REFEREE: F Ballard LINESMEN: S R Boyd, J Rees

QUEENSLAND (Maroon)		NEW SOUTH WALES (Blue)	
1	F McLennan	1	J Hobson (V Capt)
2	K Brennan	2	D Sinclair
3	M Thompson (V Capt)	3	H Freeman
4	M Tresedor	4	Charlie Smith
5	T Craft	5	V Love
6	H Bradshaw	6	H Taylor
7	R Williamson	7	R Miller
8	N Hoare	8	H Marjoribanks (Capt)
9	E Lade	9	W Peachy
10	C King	10	D McRitchie
11	L Ashmore	11	T Briggs
12	J Christopher	12	H Dhu

13	J Barnes (Capt)	13	H Parkinson
RESERVES		RESERVES	
14	J Nolan	14	J Sweeney
15	K McInnes	15	B Walsh
16	W Mayo	16	H Keene
17	M Kirkwood	17	N Keene
18	T Dickson	18	A Hahn

EARLY GAME

26th Bn (Sky Blue)

V 55/53 (Black)

Referee H Gilbert

Band of 31/51 Bn be in attendance by permission Maj CHA Titley

Does anybody know the result of this match?

M.V. MACDHUI

Ollie Hardy sent Peter a couple of extracts from newspapers and members may find these of interest, especially those who worked on this ill-fated ship in the early days in Port Moresby.

Lionel Abeshouse was called up in January 1942 Aged 19, he was sent from his family's grocery shop in Forest Lodge to Greta training camp near Newcastle and assigned to Vickers MG Company, 55 Battalion. He went to New Guinea where he served in Port Moresby, Milne Bay and Wewak. Between July 1942 and September 1943, he suffered one bout of dengue fever and six bouts of malaria. He served until 1946, then went into real estate business and now lives in Sydney. An extract from his diary provided to the Australian follows:

“As we unloaded stores from SS Macdhui a fleet of Japanese bombers passed overhead out of reach of our “ack ack”. They flew out to sea, turned and bombed Macdhui on the way back. Realising their intention, we raced back to terra firma looking for shelter. As the ship endeavoured to steam away from the wharf, took a direct hit, much damage and many casualties. Ship returned to wharf for help. Cabin boy raced off the ship and

said to us, “No way I’m going aboard that ship again. Advised four killed – six missing. This ship was to take us on next step”.

POSTSCRIPT: The Japanese returned to finish off the Macdhui the following day. War correspondent George Johnson, wrote in his diary, held at the National Library of Australia. “June 18 1942: Eighteen Japanese bombers raided again today and this time they made sure of the Macdhui. She suffered three direct hits and was ablaze from stem to stem when she drifted into a reef near Fairfax Harbour and rolled over. She will be a total loss.”

ALSO

David Horner was a seaman gunner who had joined the navy at 17. He had spent the early part of the war on Corvette HMAS Bendigo, on escort, rescue and mine sweeping duties, but the war moved down the Pacific, things were hotting up for Horner and his fellow sailors. He had escaped capture after he was left behind by his ship in Singapore. He escaped the island just before it fell. By this time of year, he was stationed in Port Moresby. Horner provided his diary to ‘The Australian’, June 18 1942 at Port Moresby.

“Orders are for us to escort the Macdhui via Great N.E. Passage to Townsville when she has finished unloading. If we are to go south after this is unknown. The possibility of a raid was becoming stronger, so when Cobras were seen leaving the dromes all eyes were on the signal station for the first of the yellow warning. 20 planes were seen leaving on a northern direction. Soon after, the Yellow flag was run up and Repel Aircraft sounded. We weighed and steamed about a mile south to get away from the harbour. Ballarat had shifted earlier in the forenoon well away from the harbour. About five minutes later 18 Heavy twin-engined bombers were sighted at about 20,000 feet coming from the north. The AA batteries opened fire and soon got into their target. The burst were right among the bombers and two started to smoke. The flash of bombs leaving the planes were seen followed by in seconds by their explosions as the around the freighters. Two gouts of flame from the Macdhui showed two had found their mark. No evidence of our fighters was seen during the raid so everyone concludes they ran into Zero opposition and we are eagerly awaiting news. We entered harbour again at full speed followed by the Ballarat in order to render assistance to Macdhui who was

burning fiercely amidships. On approaching she appeared to be a total loss. Our orders came through and we weighed at dusk and are proceeding to Townsville. During the Dogs 15 Flying Fortresses were sighted coming in so the Japs will be having a nice time tomorrow somewhere.”

These diaries are reproduced by kind permission of News Limited publishers of the Australian in Queensland.

Ollie wrote of his experiences that day

“Ken Wood’s 16 Platoon was unloading the Macdhui on this day, I was platoon sergeant and 16 platoon was at this time designated ‘Unloading party’. We were camped at Ela Beach in a previous Boarding House. I was in Moresby a couple of years ago. The block is now vacant. Indications are that the old building had been burnt. The coconut palms and paw paw trees are still there. The shade of the paw paw is now a sort of Social Clun for the locals.

My recollections is that the Macdhui was circling in the gap in the reef when it was hit. Some of the 16 platoon had stayed on board for the ride. The bomb burst in the crews quarters and made a hell of a mess. As I recall there were no joy rides the next day.” Any other members recollection to expand on this story would be welcome for our next issue.

EDITORS NOTE. Ollie writes that Lionel should be a candidate for associate membership; but as a once time member of the battalion we would be very pleased to welcome him as a full member and if anyone could supply any details of his address or phone number I will be very glad to do so.

KOKODA WALKWAY

On ANZAC Day at our reunion a raffle was held to support the above project and it is very pleasing to let you know the excellent result. A letter of acknowledgement has been received by the president as follows:

“Dear Peter,

I wright on behalf of the Kokoda Track Memorial Board to thank you and the members of your association for your generous donation of \$174.60 raided during your ANZAC

Day lunch.

As you know we are always very appreciative of all donations received as it all goes towards the upkeep of the Memorial and activities such as drink for the school kids when they visit.

Members of your association have always been dear to the Memorial and we cannot thank you all enough for both your generosity and time.

Please find attached a receipt for the amount and we look forward to seeing you again, perhaps at our next school excursion.

Yours sincerely, Alice Kang, Hon Secretary KTMW.”

(There is much debate about the “Track” or “Trail” Did you notice the statement in the first line of Alice’s letter?

KOKODA WALKWAY

Those members who are on the internet may be interested to know that there is an address for the Walkway website

KOKODAWALKWAY.COM.AU (kokodawalkway.com.au)

and Jack Stephens and Henry Pearce are among those whose interviews are featured.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL WEBSITE is www.awm.gov.au

For information on the 1st AIF click on to "biographical databases." Then go to World War 1 nominal roll for the basic records of all who served overseas during that war.

To view details of those who are classified as having died on active service click "roll of honour". For details on a soldier known by name, type in the name at the box provided and click search. The soldier's records will show up. A PDF (if one exists) will appear as a small box beside the military record. Click on and by using Acrobat Reader the form can be enlarged, read and downloaded.

To search for casualties by unit, type the unit's title into the box marked "keyword/phrase". For example, 7th AFAB should be typed in as 7th bde Australian Field Artillery. After entering that reference click search. A list of the

121 men deemed to have died on active service with the brigade will appear. Attached PDFs can be read and downloaded.

To search other unit may become a matter of trial and error. Just as the 7th AFAB can only be found by using what in essence is computer language, it may be necessary to try various combinations of words to find a unit whose generally known title does not open data relating to it.

This item is published with the kind permission of the War Memorial and I thank them for this opportunity to do so Hopefully it will be helpful to members and their families.

(Article – FACT OR FICTION NOR TRANSCRIBED)

Len Brown writes from Nelsons Bay to say:

"My wife and I have just returned from a trip to Cape York where I was visiting my son and I thought the following may be of some interest to our members. The airstrip operating in wartime (Huggin's Field) is still operating as a civil strip today. A small plane with a capacity of about 12-14 people does a return flight from Cairns every day except Sunday. It is about a two hour flight.

At the airport, there is a small plaque and it states Jacky Jacky was an aboriginal from the Hunter Valley who stayed loyal and was speared to death in that rea with the Kennedy expedition in 1847.

There is a small town, Bamaga about 6-7 mile south of the airstrip. This is the main centre with a high school, post office and small hospital, also a hotel and supermarket. There are other mall villages, Inganoo, Siesa out from this centre but Bamaga seems to be the main town."

Len's son Peter, works for the Queensland Forestry Commission and is engaged on an ambitious project in the Jacky Jacky area. The object of the project is to create a nursery for mangrove propagation, providing simulated tidal condition through a series of ponds, powered by solar generated and battery 12 volt system as a 240volt system would be too dangerous. in a watery environment. This is believed to be a world first.

EDITORS NOTE. Thanks Len, I wish lots of other people would send me snippet

like this to pass on to member through "ORG", it gets very difficult to find item of interest rest. The holiday and wartime experiences of members help to make "ORO" of general interest.

Also from my schooldays I was taught that Kennedy was speared to death and Jacky Jacky brought back the new of his death, having stayed with Kennedy after Kennedy had been left alone by the death of or separation from his companion???

GROWING OLD.

Everything hurt ... what doesn't hurt won't work.

The gleam in your eye is the sun hitting your bifocal.

You feel like the morning after, hut you haven't been anywhere.

Your little black book contains only names ending with M.D..

You get winded just playing cards.

Your children look middle aged.

A dripping tap cause an uncontrollable urge.

You know all the answers but nobody asks the question.

You need glasses to find glasses.

You turn off th light for economy in lead of romance,

and you it in a rocking chair but you can't make it go.

Your knee buckle but your belt won't,

your back goes out more often than you do.

You put your bra on back to front and it fits better.

Your house is too big and your medicine chest is not big enough

You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there and

your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.

Oh well as Ned said "SUCH IS LIFE"

On this cheery note. it is time to send all members. greeting from the committee and best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

EDITOR

T HARPER

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