



Issue 2/2003

THE "MICE OF MORESBY" MEMBERS BULLETIN

PRESIDENTS REPORT

As we come to the end of each year, unfortunately we say "Farewell" to more of our members; but more importantly to our mates. Special mention of the passing of Alex Bell, OAM, his wife and Harvey Blundell is in the secretary's newsletter. Our condolences are with the families members who have lost a loved one in these last months.

Our **ANZAC DAY** venue, unfortunately was very crowded, but bear in mind that the committee work hard to find suitable accommodation in the city area.

THE GOOD NEWS is that we have booked the "Shark Hotel, 127 Liverpool Street, for our reunion on 5th December, when our guest of honour will be Jim Wallace representing the RSL on behalf of the state president Ken Hall who is unable to attend.

At the Anzac Day gathering when members were asked to respond to an appeal for committee support, four hands "UP" responded and we welcomed to the committee, Ray Gentles, Hugh Eadie, Ray Chapman and Harvey Blundell.

The CANBERRA WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE proposal is under way and further details are in the secretary's newsletter. The proposed details of text and graphics have been accepted by the Department and we now await details of costs etc.

RESERVE FORCES DAY. Being originally a militia unit, we are asked to take part in this celebration. Unfortunately, we don't get much response from members. The march itself is not very long; but gives us the opportunity to display our "Mice of Moresby" banner which I can assure you is very well received. It also affords the opportunity to meet other service personnel from America, Canada, New Zealand and United Kingdom.

KOKODA WALKWAY is to host a several very important functions throughout the year. On VP Day, 15 August, the "Battle of the Beaches" was the main theme. Governor Marie Bashir gave a very inspiring address. Our friend Roy Wotton added his comments to the service.

Several of our members are workers for the "Track" and conduct tours for bus loads of children who visit with their school.

A BAR-BE-CUE was held on 10th September at the walkway attended by 25 people and unfortunately many apologies were received due to illnesses and other commitments. This event was paid for by the committee and those who were able to attend had a most enjoyable day.

Ray GENTLES gave a most informative talk on the way the "Track" was formed and future plans for expansion. Over fifty invitations were sent out, it was not possible to advise everybody; but if you would like to take part in future occasions, register your name with the secretary so that you can be advised of dates etc.

WEB SITE Beverley DAWSON daughter of Sgt. "Bulla" Jim HAYES, "C" Coy, (one of our unit cooks), has created a web site in her spare time dealing with the action and information of the unit "The Mice of Moresby", Beverley, who is a nurse, and family have been very supportive over the years and carry our "Fallen Comrades Banner" with pride and dedication. Regrettably we have to note that Bulla's wife, Madge, Bev's mum is not travelling too well these days and our thoughts and prayers are with them. For details of the web site call mymum70@hotmail.com

I thank the committee for their dedication and I would like at this stage to wish each and everyone "A JOYFUL, HAPPY AND HEALTHY CHRISTMAS AND MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING THE REWARDS that we all justly earned.

Peter Wright, President

ORDERLY ROOM REPORT/ SECRETARY'S REPORT

Reverend ROY WOTTON

known to us all as Padre Roy of 53rd Battalion celebrated his ninetieth birthday on 26th March with many friends at St John's Anglican Church Gordon. After service on the Kokoda Track with the 53rd and after Milne Bay with 2/12 Bn served with 18th Brigade at Buna Soputa, Sanananda, Shaggy Ridge and in the Borneo, campaigns attached to 2/12th, 2/9th and 2/10th. After the war he has remained a stout supporter of many unit associations and his friends of the 2/12 write, "*There are few who could match his service" and his CO Brig (Rtd) Sir Frederick Chiltern, of Avalon. added: " He is indeed an unforgettable man. The Padre as he is among, we old comrades still, was in our thoughts on March 26, his 90th birthday. Members will be pleased to know that he is still as sharp as ever and attends the meetings of his local RSL, Tuggerah Lakes and the local World War II Veterans 1939-1945 branch, and we place on record our affection and gratitude for his support at so many of our functions.*

TOM COLE

writes an interesting letter after reading the eulogy for Henry Pearce In the last Orderly Room Gossip and advertising that there were a couple of incorrect comments regarding dates and enclosed an extract from his diary of the time as follows -

- 21/12/41 Packed stores and finalised issues prior to moving out of Ingleburn, much speculation as to where we are going and when.
- 25/12/41 Leave from 2pm to 12pm Saw Kit, but no one at home. Xmas dinner in camp, very nice too, poultry and plum pudding.
- 26/12/41 All ready to move, received embarkation cards.
- 27/12/41 Moved out after breakfast. By train to Darling Harbour and ferry to Woolloomooloo Bay. Boarded H.M T. "P.A." (Aquitania) moved into cabin B54 with CQMS McGoldrick, Sgts Hill, Emslie, Walker and Scott.
- 28/12/41 Sailed to Doub1e Bay about 4 30am, sailed out about 9am.
- 29/12/41 Fine weather and calm sea.
- 30/12/41 Ditto but warmer.
- 31/12/41 New Year's Eve Very warm but calm, lounge open until midnight.
- 1/1/42 Same as usual. Beautiful day and slight swell. The weather has gradually got hotter as we proceed north and we reckon we are now, in the Timor Sea. Every precaution being taken to ensure our safety. Did not worry about daylight saving. Shorter twilight.

- 2/1/42 A very hot day and night, but a gorgeous moon shone and lit up the sea. Clocks all advanced one hour or daylight saving.
- 3/1/42 Sighted land and on starboard side at 8am. Packed ready to disembark. Anchored in very pretty bay and were invaded by natives selling spears and diving for money. Landed by means of destroyer and after marching about two miles, in full kit. Slept in open on various stones etc.
- 4/1/42 Very easy day and I spent most of it looking for something cool to drink and had a swim in the ocean.
- 5/1/42 A very warm day and I worked no harder than I had to. Had another look through the town and found something cool to drink.

SO TOM WENT TO WAR - DOES THIS RING A BELL FOR OUR 53rd MEMBERS?

Tom writes that as far as the mortar platoon NCO's are concerned 3 Sgts and 3 Cpls were sent to a school at Mona Vale for about 2 weeks and were trained on the latest 3" mortars and had several "shoots" with dummy bombs. Their expertise so impressed their instructor, Sgt Kevin Innes -Kerr that he transferred to the 53rd as Mortar Platoon Sgt.

The mortars at Sanananda fired about 2000 bombs. After Gona Tom walked back to Sanananda to their target area and remarks that he doesn't think they would have had much effect as the Jap positions were so strongly constructed. However, from the number of mortar tailfins strewn about, must have made life uncomfortable for them. After returning to Australia and leave and back at Townsville, Tom and Sgt. Les Chin were summoned to the Orderly Room to go on a SECRET mission. With two others they were transported to the Movement Control office and on entering were greeted with, "yours the blokes going to Thursday Island". So much for secrecy.

Going back to the unit that night he saw Capt. Griffin who was flabbergasted "*We were sworn to secrecy*", he said. After some time at Thursday Island they were asked if they wanted to go back to their battalion wisely said "NO Thanks", and Tom saw out the war in that peasant island, until October 1946.

Tom writes that he has been back to Thursday Island about, six times since war's end and recommends the island as an excellent holiday spot. Anyone interested could perhaps contact Tom or more detail or contact Vanessa Seekee, Gateway Torres Strait Resort at (07) 4069 2222 or Fax (07) 4069 2211. *(I have stayed there about 10 years ago and highly recommend it – Peter Dowling March 2019)*

L/Cpl PETER HAYMAN has lent me a copy of his diary and details of his time with the 53rd on 'The Track' and was transferred to the 36th after the 53rd returned to Port Moresby. I have found it fascinating reading and I am sure Peter will not object if I reproduce his reminiscences under the heading of "KOKODA"

"Five o'clock and we were on a train, finally off but who knows where; we had said our goodbyes like a lot of kids going on a picnic well, that's what we were!

Huge liners waiting - we wondered which one, up the gangplank still excited; but wait - there's not enough men - grab a few extra - give them a gun.

No goodbyes for them!

We land in the tropics and march into the dark, the lights ahead were not meant for us we dosed down on a barren hill with our gear at the bottom of the hold.

What clever planning, we worry for the future.

*Plenty of training unloading boats – we'll be well prepared.
 a trench here, one over there in solid rock. and plenty of barbed wire on the beaches.
 Have they forgotten Singapore? AND IN THE BACK, THEY CAME!
 Off we trudged - so many hills - mud and slush then into the fray without our tea night fall and we
 crouch among the slimy roots but where's the foe?
 Jungle fighters from campaign s past - One dare not move and the whispers start 'Where are you
 Bill?' but we are wise, so a grenade or two into the dark.
 Down in the south the strategists plot
 What's the problem? - stop them at the Gap!
 Shades of Horatius but if they only knew - and did they come to see?
 This was not "advance in line across barren plains"- nor was it text book laid down. We Just couldn't
 see and Generals came and went in shame.
 Men down with sickness, lack of sleep and food - cold and wet they carried on and the Big White
 Chief says 'There's not enough dead!'
 Fifty years ago - our memories live on.
 Peter (**HAYMAN**) and a few others, a couple from the 53rd included, cut off by the Japanese on 29th
 August battled their way through the Jungle, hills, rivers and creeks, helped on occasion by the
 natives they came across, managed to get to Port Moresby on 21st September There, Peter
 discovered that his family had been advised that he was "Missing ", but fortunately was able to
 quickly reassure them that he was OK. This Is Just one instance of the things that happened, and
 Peter has been very wise to put his experience into a history for his family and generations to come.*

Have you put your experiences on paper for your families? Time Is running out for us to do so.

SOME MILITARY YARNS

During training exercises, the lieutenant who was driving down a muddy track encountered another
 car stuck in the mud with a red-faced colonel at the wheel "Your Jeep stuck sir?" asked the
 lieutenant as he pulled alongside "Nope," replied he colonel, coming over and handing him the keys
 "Yours Is."

Having just moved into his new office, a pompous new colonel was sitting at his desk when an
 airman knocked on the door. Conscious of his new position, the colonel quickly picked up his
 phone, told the airman to enter then said into the phone, "Yes, General, I'll be seeing him this
 afternoon and I'll pass along your message. In the meantime, thank you for your good wishes sir".
 Feeling as though he had sufficiently impressed the young enlisted man, he asked, 'What is it you
 want?' "Nothing important sir," said the airman. "I'm Just here to hook up your telephone."

A note from Len Brown:

"Stan Sly our fate patron was also an excellent cricketer. The grandstand at Wagga Wagga cricket ground Stan's home town is named the "Stan Sly Stand".

The 6th December (2003) Remembrance and Reunion brought together some old mates who had not made contact for many years, among them Trevor Denney from Cairns and I have received a letter from his daughter Kay Lalley and with her permission I reproduce It here, paraphrased in part:

"Dear Trevor, 'Here is our thank you letter for the lovely time we had at the reunion. It was a shame that we never got to meet you and the others that could not make reunion because of the bush-fires. Because of the new banner fires and comrades that couldn't make the reunion dad and mum (Trevor & Joyce) were going to make a special effort to go to Sydney for Anzac Day in April - you'll never guess we had a bit of drama - 10th April dad had a stroke and is getting much better every day. I Kay his daughter had to fly to Cairns urgently to help out.

Everything was going fine, booked to go home after 10 weeks going to get a paper for dad the car slid out of control in the heavy rain into a telegraph pole and the fire department cut me out and I spent 2 days in emergency. I'm home now, dad is doing fine and so am I. I take his opportunity to thank you all for the invite to the ceremony wouldn't have missed it for the world I was proud of my dad seeing him lined up with his comrades the 'Mice of Moresby." without men like these we would not be here today. A day to remember for the rest of my life. Dad met men he had not seen for 55 years, Len Brown, Bobby Lawrence, Neville Flynn, Bobby Davis. but Carrie Meredith couldn't make it. My partner for lunch was Len Brown and it was an honour to have his company, seeing dad so happy and totally surprised was all that was needed to make the day for me dad and mum. Please tell everyone how pleased and honoured I was to meet so many great people and share some of their sad and happy memories. Trevor, it was a pity that we were unable to meet after all the effort and help you gave me once again and to all again, I say THANK YOU".

Thank you, Kay, for your lovely letter. It is response like this that makes the efforts of the committee worthwhile. Kay also enclosed a poem given to her by Dave Chalk, "Chalkie", in the office of the RSL who gives permission to reproduce it here!

I AM A VETERAN

A veteran speaks his mind I am a veteran and I'm probably different from you.

I don't care what you do today, because I know that what I did yesterday gives you the freedom to do it. Just don't tell me it's your "right."

I've listened to non-veterans tell me "how it was" just because they once read a book. I kept my mouth shut, because it's rude to call someone names to their face I have feelings about this country that you cannot and will not understand either. I am a veteran.

I answered when I was called put on a uniform, travelled away from home and did what was told to do I didn't hide, I didn't run I didn't look for some excuse or some way out. I still have that uniform in a storage box and I will put it on again if the need arises. Some call me stupid. Some call me brave. Some call me uninformed. Some call me a hero I call myself a veteran, and I am different from you.

In the morning when you see me at work, you should thank me. In the evening, when we're sitting in a bar together, you should buy me a drink. On Sunday, when we are sitting in a church, you should thank your God for me I don't need parades Walking makes me tired I don't want any medals or ribbons. I have enough already stored in a dresser drawer. I don't want any monuments or memorials. They only cause controversy. Don't call me a patriot. Don't call me a criminal. I only did what you wanted done. I did it and you didn't. THAT MAKES ME DIFFERENT FROM YOU.

With thanks to the unknown author

DRILL HALL PLAQUES.

The developers of the site of the drill hall in Hereford and Alfred Streets Glebe. have complied with the requirement of the Department of Defence to commemorate the site as arranged by Alex Bell who when president made representation to the Department for some permanent recognition of the role played by this and other drill halls during their use by the defence forces over a period of many years. A plaque has been fixed to the "Eternity" development front and above it a garden planted with native Australian bottlebrush

On behalf of all service personnel, we thank Harb Enterprises and especially Marina Huna who was most helpful. The other drill halls, namely Addison Road and Belmore are being checked to see if similar recognition had been made by the developers of those sites.

A copy of the text and layout of the plaque is attached

WIDOWS OF OUR FALLEN COMRADES

are invited to join us as our guests on 5th December at the Cenotaph and later for luncheon at the Shark Hotel, 127 Liverpool Street.

LADIES, if you are going to attend our function could you please complete the form below so that catering arrangements can be controlled.

.....

The Secretary,
68 Rotherham Street
BATEAU BAY NSW 2261

I,.....will be attending the luncheon on 5th December as a guest of the
(Please print)

association I will be accompanied byfor whom I enclose \$
(\$25 00 per person) (Please print)

RSVP 25th NOVEMBER 2003



This plaque commemorates the memory of the Service men and women of the Commonwealth of Australia Military Forces who occupied this site in the Parish of Glebe between Hereford Street and Alfred Street. in various forms from 1915 through to the late 1990's.

Between 1915 and 1916 the land was purchased by the Commonwealth for Defense purposes under Land Acquisition Act, 1906. Specifications were drawn up by the N.S.W Works Director, for erection of a drill hall with attached latrine block, mobilization store, fencing, gates and electric lighting. Through the drill hall passed many members of the 55th and 53rd Battalions Of WWI and WWII

In the early 1970's the training depot was used by the Army Reserve (previously Citizen 's Military Forces) as a training depot, 2nd Ordnance Services unit and Engineers Depot - Regional Engineer. This location provided a steady flow of recruits for the Army Reserve unit and ease of access for the engineers to all metropolitan army units. In 1986 the drill hall was handed over for use by Field Ambulance unit who occupied the premises to the end of the 1990's when it was eventually disposed of by the Commonwealth Government for residential use.
