



Issue 2-2005

“THE MICE OF MORESBY” MEMBERS BULLETIN

PRESIDENTS ANNUAL REPORT

As we approach the end of another year, I wish to extend my thanks to the members of the committee for their involvement and interest shown in the activities of our association. This year we have had several changes, the resignation of Ray **CHAPMAN** and the untimely demise of Warwick Davis; but we have gained the services and expertise of Clarrie **JAMES** and John **PRINGLE**, both are warmly welcomed.

The dedication of the battalion plaque at Canberra War Museum on 2 February was a momentous occasion and members who took part were congratulated and those attending enjoyed a very pleasant day.

On 8th February along with secretary Trevor, I presented a cheque to the Sydney Hospital from the sales of the “Remember” booklet, in the presence of Lord Mayor Clover Moore, as guests of members of the Sydney Lions Club at CTA Rooms MLC Centre, Martin Place. It was a strange day, the meal was excellent and the contribution was acknowledged in the Hospital’s in house magazine.

ANZAC DAY, and unfortunately our numbers are decreasing, it is to be expected of course with our members now being in or near their eighties, I believe that the crowd that were watching and cheering were in record numbers; but for some reason of other George Street is not getting any shorter.

On a personal note I was interviewed by a TV reporter after the march and although brief as it was, the number of people who saw it was amazing including members of my Lodge, who were surprised to learn that I was an ex-servicemen and asked me to give them a story of my experiences. Reluctantly I did this and the first instalment was published in the Lodge journal this month.

On Wednesday 20th July, Ray Gentles and I attended the 100th birthday party of Sir Frederick Chiltern, retired Brigadier, what a wonderful old guy he turned out to be, didn’t look a day over 70 (probably because he never married).

At Victoria Barracks on 30 July it was 90th birthday celebrations of the 2nd Australian Division. Massed bands, precision marching, parade of Banners and Guidons and the Colours and culminated with the Feu-fe-Joie, the firing ripple volleys which included two guns from each of the 7th and 23rd Field Regiments. Battle honours won by the division are too numerous to be reported here. Strange to hear the female NCO’s voices calling out their orders, an enormous crowd attended.

Now we come to the 60th Anniversary March for WW2 personnel, what a disgrace, no publicity, no crowds, despite a ring-a-round to all our members in the metropolitan area we managed to have only 14 members on parade plus a few others who asked if they could join us as their unit was not represented. Thanks to Charlie Jennings family who acted as Flag and Banner bearers.

What a contrast the next day at Kokoda Walkway, record crowd, delightful service, lovely young girl sang "Ave Maria", the release of about 20 white doves who circled above area for quite some time, Gov. General and the Premier mingled with the crowd after the service and shared the magnificent 60th Birthday Cake made by the staff.

The Battle for Australia Day on 7th September was an emotional day, the governor Prof. Marie Bashir and her husband Sir Nick Shehadie were the guests of honour, several Papuan natives and school children were present. Roy **WOTTON**, Ray **GENTLES** and wife Ina also attended. Ray was interviewed and later appeared on Channel 2.

Finally, we will be holding our AGM at Auburn RSL on Saturday 19th November at 11am and hoping for a good roll-up.

Peter Wright, President

NEWS

HUGH EADIE ("D" Coy) was a member of a party which travelled to Hawaii to celebrate VP Day with the Americans at the historic memorial, the US Missouri sunk by the Japanese on 7th December 1941 during the attack on Pearl Harbour. This pilgrimage was undertaken by the Department of Veterans Affairs and left Australia Saturday 27th August at 2030 hours, after the previous days medical, briefing and dinner. Arriving in Honolulu at 0930 on Saturday 27th August (isn't the time differential interesting?), following dinners, briefings, sightseeing around the island, tour including Wheeler Army Airfield and the Missouri tour on Wednesday 30th. This evening Hugh was taken ill late at night with a peptic ulcer bleed in which he lost a third of his blood. Attended by Dr Killer ?????

I quote his report: -

31st August – 8th September Hospital with tests and mention of perhaps \$US50,000 for heart/lung tests – would have been covered by Vet Affairs but I don't want outside Australia. Vet Affairs were excellent. They flew my son Malcolm out (business class) and put him up in my hotel room. They left a Vet. Affairs nurse as liaison between Vet. Affairs consulate and SOS Insurance Company. Only problem I had in hospital was they never got my medication right. Consequently, I am not breathing as well as when I left home. Doctor was with me on way home and I needed oxygen in the reduced atmosphere of the Aircraft. (Dr Killer is John Howard's doctor when travelling).

What a great venture to be part of, what a disappointment to finish up in hospital and the resultant problems. However, it is an experience Hugh will always remember.

ANGAU- ONE MAN LAW written by Clarrie **JAMES** has been reprinted and Clarrie was invited to address Tattersalls club on 19th October on his story. He is also writing a book on Australian Light

Horse. Clarrie's late wife, Sue, a talented artist, used that subject matter as the inspiration of many of her pictures and his history should be interesting reading.

DIAMOND WEDDING: Trevor **DENNY** and wife Joyce of Cairns celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary on 22 December and we wish them many more happy years together. Have any other members reached this milestone?

MILNE BAY: Bill **MCLEOD** sends an extract of his experiences during his caper and I reproduce a couple of paragraphs that will no doubt stir a few memories for others. Sorry the whole is too long to include it all, anyone who wants a copy has to send a dollar to cover postage and copying etc. etc.

"All the troops involved had to attend a special dental parade was given instructions to extract any suspect teeth and no fillings were to be carried out. Now, we realised that we were destined for some isolated area. It might be appropriate to mention that the dental surgery consisted of an eight-man tent with wooden plank floor flooring. The tent housed the dentist, who was always a commissioned officer, and his assistant, a soldier with one or two stripes. The tent was furnished with a dentist chair and cabinets and what amused me in my army days, was the dentist drill which was operated by foot pedal by the dentist myself.

The troops with sound teeth left the line in inspection whilst others, like me, received a needle began instructed me remain in the circle. I waited so long the effects of the needle began to wear off so I pulled out of the line. But I was caught and so left the ten minus one tooth"

(Thanks for the memory, Bill, I remember that tent at Alligator Creek.) Bill writes on;-

"Lined up ready to go to the wharf, the battalion padre decided to say a few words of comfort and his final prayer went something like this – "Please God, look after these young men wherever they are going. We know, oh Lord, that some may never come back etc. etc." I had my head bowed in respect in respect for the prayers and when he said those words, I glanced up at my mates, met their eyes, and many of them frowned but did not say a word. The majority of us were only eighteen."

39th Battalion and 18 Battalion Associations keep us up to date with their activities and sadly we must report that **36th Battalion Association** is winding up their activities. **7 Division Association** hold their last function "The Lars Farewell" at Narrandera 20-21 October. Time is taking its toll on all of us.

REVEILLE Our members in other states do not get this interesting and informative magazine and if you have a mate over the border and you have finished with your copy, how about sending it on – and you interstate fellows doing the same thing and send a copy of your state magazine. It would help to keep us informed of other states affairs and especially of the passing of old comrades, and a big help to the secretary.

ALL SHIPSHAPE and BRISTOL FASHION WHY?

The port of Bristol in the UK has a rise and fall of tide about 40 feet. Ships in harbour often settled on the harbour floor and of course tilted to one side. If everything was not secured and stowed properly – what a mess!

THE "C" COMPANY FIREBUG

The battalion had just moved into Simpsons Gap outside Moresby. Everyone that could went into Moresby that night for the two-up game. Ted **BUNSWORTH** from 13 Platoon; had a nice win over 100 pounds, (\$200.00). The next day the platoon sergeant decided he would burn off the grass as it was long and dry. With a good breeze behind it the fire raced out of control and burnt down Ted's tent destroying all within. Ted was most annoyed as among his personal gear was his winnings. In no uncertain terms he told the sergeant anyone should have been aware from where he lit the fire and the direction of the breeze Ted's tent was in a direct line. He finished up saying "a man ought to burn your tent down". The sergeant replied "well what's stopping you, go ahead". About five minutes later there was a cry of "FIRE", 13 Platoon headquarters was going up in flames. Ted was charged and appeared before Captain Griffith (**Hugh William Powell Griffin**) [Uncle Hug]. When it was explained to him, Ted was let off with a caution on the grounds of provocation. From then on, he was known as "C" Company firebug. Ted was killed at Sanananda on 7th December 1942.

Another Len Brown Memory

On arriving back from Milne Bay, 14 Platoon was placed in some isolated spot at the back of Bootless Inlet. In a couple of days malaria took its toll and there was only a few of us there, the bulk of the platoon in hospital. Our officer would details duties for the day and take off soon after breakfast and we would not see him before tea. This particular morning, he was showing everyone a bottle of whiskey he had got from somewhere. After placing it back in his tent he was off for the day as usual. Lining up for tea that night the cook's offsider, Norm West, was blind, he had carefully removed the top off the whiskey and had a nip, topped the bottle up with water and replaced the top. Apparently, this has been going on all day and the whiskey bottle became pure water. Norman, a very quiet mild mannered bloke normally was very boisterous and we were all having a good laugh when the officer drew up in his truck. He took one look at Norman, ran to his tent and came out waving his bottle of water. The expression on his face is one I will never forget. Norman was charged and appeared before Captain Griffith (Griffin). The charge was dismissed, Uncle Hug saying "I get a bottle of whisky too, but I don't go around showing everyone and then take off for the day".

VP COMMEMORATION SERVICE organised by the RSL Hunter Valley District Council of Sub-Branches at Greta War Memorial on 27 August. Stan Cannon has sent a copy of the order of service and I am sure that they will not mind if I use the following; -

1. We've nineteen dead on the Buin Road. Ten more on the jungle track and all day long there's a broken line of our wounded streaming back, we've fought all night by the Hongai. With ne're a bite or sup. And tomorrow's back page news will quote Our forces are 'Mopping up'.
2. As dawn awakes with a jaded eye, discarding its misty pail. White crosses mount on the Numa Trail. For fellows who gave their all. In Isimba ridges, Sorokin's groves they drained to the dregs hell's cup. But the blood they gave as a trifling thing they were only 'mopping up'.
3. The screaming silence of ambushed swamps. The horrors unseen bogs. The villainous foe in filthy league. With blanketing rain and fog.
4. Are trifling things the critics know. Should never hold heroes up, Good God! Why! This isn't war at all- We are merely "mopping up".
5. We make no claim to the heroic mould. But this little boon we ask -. Those armchair critics just sent up here. To share our simple task.

6. When they've tallied the blood cost up. Perhaps they'll coin a more adequate phrase. Than casual "Moping up".

Australian Armed Forces Re-Enactment Heritage Unit – Trip to Sandakan 12-25 August 2005; Commemorating The 60th Anniversary of the Sandakan Death March.

On Friday 12 August 2005 we flew out of Mascot at 12.50 pm and arrived at Brunei at 6.20 pm/ After a short stay we transferred to another plane to fly to Kota Kinabalu, where we stayed overnight. We then flew to Sandakan and settles in at our hotel.

That evening we were guests of the Sandakan Tourist Association at a lovely restaurant on the waterfront.

On Sunday morning we were invited to participate in a church service at St Michaels Church of All Angles to commemorate a beautiful stained glass window that had been made and installed by the efforts of Lynette Silver. Lynette is the author of 'Conspiracy of Silence' a publication about the Sandakan Camp and the death march.

The ceremonial opening of the museum was nothing short of spectacular. The Malaysian girls in their traditional dress were a sight to behold. The Malaysian Patriotic Song was played with traditional musical instruments as the Chief Minister entered and passed through our Guard of Honour. He then requested to meet us all individually and be photographed with us. We were then escorted to the front of the hall to be seated with the officials. Our wives and partners had already been escorted to their seats beside us.

One of the speakers was a nine year old child when the Japanese killed her father for helping the PsOW.

The Chief Minister's speech, among other things, he praised our Australian Armed Forces Re-enactment Heritage Unit for our participation.

At the conclusion of the service, we were escorted to an area where a lot more photos were taken. Then we formed a guard of Honour as the Chief Minister laid a wreath on a memorial in the Museum. All too soon we had to leave as we had a plane to catch. It was a time of sadness really. We had made a lot of friends, and everyone seemed genuinely upset to see us go.

Besides at official duties, we did have time to see the local attractions.

On Thursday morning 18 August 2005 we visited a water village. These are houses built on stilts in the harbour. Some were veritable 'mansions', while some are less than desirable to look at and probably to live in. The amazing thing is that everyone is so spotlessly clean, both adults and children. The toilet facilities in these places leave a lot to be desired, and there is rubbish floating everywhere in the water.

On Saturday 20 August 2005, we flew to Laban to visit World War II sites. We visited, among other places, the landing area, the surrender point and war cemetery. At the cemetery there are 3984 graves, and sadly, a lot of them are inscribed "Known Unto God" as their bodies have not been identified.

Monday 22 August 2005, we visited the hot springs just out of Ranau and then visited Kandasang War Memorial which was established in 1962. Located at the foot of Mt Kinabalu, it honours the Australian and British PsOW who died in Sandakan and on the death marches to Ranau and the people of North Borneo who risked their lives and some of whom were tortured and died

for helping PsOW. It has four gardens to represent the different nations – the Australian Garden. The English Garden, the Borneo Garden and the Contemplation Garden and pool.

We also visited the site of the end of the Death March at Ranau where the survivors of the march were eventually killed at the end of the war.

It is interesting to note that there are numerous monuments in Sabah, dedicated to Australians.

On another day we had the occasion to visit Gomantong Caves, which are described as “the best managed edible bird’s nest cave in the world”. The main cave has a roof up to 90 metres high.

Twice a year, licenced collectors risk their lives climbing to the roof on rattan ladders, ropes etc, to collect the birds nests.

We also had the occasion to visit the home of the Proboscis Monkeys, a very unusual animal. They are indigenous to this area only. The male has a very prominent abdomen and nose. The nose being more prominent. It is thought that the prominent nose.

The two weeks were very busy, very enjoyable, very tiring and certainly very memorable, one in a lifetime experience. The Malaysian people are so gentle, kind and considerate and it was n honour to be with them.

The Sandakan and Sabah Tourist Association could not d enough for us during our stay. They even presented us with two disks and photo albums containing all the official photos taken during the ceremonies.

This is only a brief report on what was an experience of a lifetime, as space does not permit to give a full account of the time we spent in a most beautiful and interesting place.

Regards, Harry **MATTHEW**

CLARRIE MEREDITH writes from Mermaid Waters: - *“Peter Wright was in touch with me whilst on a holiday at Ballina an I was telling him about a group on the Gold Coast who organised a walk in remembrance of the Kokoda Episode and the A.M.F. first contact with the Japanese army on the weekend 16/17 July. The walk was on the hinterland of the Gold Coast in rugged country a distance of 96 kms the same distance of the Kokoda Track and 36 hours to complete the distance. Besides remembrance the entry fee was to raise money to organise trips to take 16-22-year old’s to walk the track. My part in this was, I was approached by a mete of mine in Legacy to be a sponsor of a team in the walk so it was called the 53rd Bn Team.”*

Thanks Clarrie, accompanying newspaper articles too large for this newsletter- will keep for the future.

Another year has almost passed, so I take this opportunity to wish all a happy Christmas, great New Year and good health.

The Editor

