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

## BATTALION NEWSLETTER

D Clifton-Bassett  
L J Jones  
D Noble

R J Dale  
C J King  
R Sandland

R Davis  
L Madden  
W E O'Donoughue

K A James  
H Matthew  
R Rowlinson

### **LEST WE FORGET**

To the families of our "Fallen Comrade "we extend our sincere sympathies and assure them that we are gathered together

### **WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

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### **PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008**

First and foremost, I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the committee for their support during the year. Secondly to thank the member of the Battalion for continual efforts to attend the Anzac Day March and reunions also for their generous donations. Let me not forget to thank the members of our support group whose fathers were members of our Battalion their numbers are slowly increasing due to the hard work of Clyde Parsons, Arthur Perry and Beverley Dawson.

This year has been a sad year for our Association with loss of so many of our member. I find it hard to realise that all those young fellas who were brought together at Greta in January 1942 are now aged 85 years. I hope you have all passed your driving test!!

### **ANZAC DAY**

A sign of the times our rank and files are becoming smaller last year on Anzac Day the loss of our members was quiet apparent. But those who march did us proud and held our banner high. The joining to our ranks of the 36th and the 31/51st members were welcomed and increased our numbers.

It is great to see our banner flying high amongst the field of others as it would be a saddened day when our banner was no more in the field. With the help of the support group and their members it will still be a long way off.

Luncheon was held at the NSW Leagues Cub where those who attended or observed the march did partake in the fare that was supplied NOT what we anticipated but till enjoyable. Thanks, are extended to the 2/17 "Echo Coy" members who formed our banner party. It is expected that the same coy will provide us with a catafalque on the 5th December 2008.

On the Subject of Anzac Day, Arthur Perry and myself, attended a seminar that was conducted by the RSL Australia and the main topic was to discuss and solve the problem of the descendants marching and out numbering the veterans. After a very long discussion and several ideas discussed a vote was taken and most of the units attending this seminar agreed on a final plan. The Plan:

Veteran will march behind the battalion banner WHILE the descendant march behind their own banner representing the veteran banner BUT the title " Descendant " will be displayed. This of course means that we will need a new banner before next Anzac Day.

**CENOTAPH PARADE**

The annual cenotaph parade will be held on the 5th December 2008 at 1100hrs for a wreath laying ceremony followed by a luncheon at NSW Leagues club with 2 courses lunch being served at 1230hrs. We have still been able to keep the luncheon costs to \$20 per person. All are welcome to this luncheon but it is essential that we know who will be attending so please complete the accompanying form and return to the secretary by the 21st November 2008.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM will be held in conjunction with the cenotaph luncheon the 5th December 2008. All positions will be declared vacant as this is a full election for all office bearers and committee and an invitation is extended to all members of the association to nominate for these positions I am asking all members to give this day special consideration, not only because it may be our last AGM but to let your voices and opinions be heard and the opportunity to share special time with your mates.

**KOKODA WALKWAY**

A few of our members Ray Gentles, Jack Stevens, and Charles Jennings our heavily involved in the walkway and the interest is continually growing and our members are kept busy taking school children and other interest groups around and explaining the significance of the walkway and their personal experiences. This walkway is a living memorial for all that served and for other generations to be reminded of their sacrifices.

(not published: – a section containing information about the Rose Garden.)

A Plaque of remembrance from the 55/53 Battalion has been laid in the rose garden to immortalise the memory of our members. It has place of honour as you enter. However, it is regretted that nor all members of the public are respectful as vandalism is rife in the walkway and clean up is ongoing and expensive.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish every member and their families A Happy and Healthy Christmas and Good times for the New Year,

P. C Wright  
President

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**COMMITTEE REPORT 2008**

The committee held several meetings throughout the year and made appropriate decisions on your behalf.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM will be held in conjunction with the cenotaph wreath laying parade at the luncheon that will be following the parade at NSW Leagues Club  
A Notice of Motion as been received by the committee, and will be presented to the members consideration.

Notice of Motion  
That the existing position of (1) Secretary/ Treasurer be divided into (2) separate positions  
(1) Secretary (2) Treasurer

Please send your completed nomination forms to the secretary by the 21st November 2008.

You will find a box to tick to retain you name on the database / mailing list. Please take the time. This has come from necessity with the ever-rising cost of stationary and postage updating our data base and mailing list is a wise and prudent decision

**SUPPORT GROUP**

Slowly are numbers are increasing but it would be appreciated if you could encourage your descendants to join as this is a way of as long as possible that we can ensure that the Men of the 55/53 Battalion are forever in our thoughts and that their sacrifices allowing us to free will prevail for generations.

Contact: Beverley Dawson 22 Fay street, Lake Munmorah 2259 or miceofmoresby@live.com.au

**RESERVES FORCES DAY**

It was unfortunate that we were unable to send representation this year to participate, hopefully next year.

**NEWCASTLE LUNCHEON**

Due to our loss of Harry we have no future dates for this event.

**BANNER**

Thanks go to Charles Jennings, Kevin Dawson and Damian Dawson for their constant presence and banner display at all our parades. The carrying of the banners to the parades is a feat on its own, let alone the upkeep and the storage, which are included in the care of the banners.

As mentioned in the President’s report the need for a new banner may be avoided with a slight change to one of our existing banners by adding the word " Descendants ". This slight change will still hold the significance of the banner intact while complying with the new ruling without a great outlay of expenditure.

**DONATIONS**

It is time again for your generous thoughts and donations to the battalion to be considered. All donations no matter the size are always accepted and appreciated to ensure that we stay a viable association.

Please complete the attached form and send to the secretary.

**CAN YOU HELP**

John Nalder, 51 Lionel Street, Nudgee QLD 4014 has requested if any of our members are aware of any aboriginal members who were amongst our companies. A grave has been identified by the natives, stating, it was of a “Black Man” they had buried after the Australians had left Aburai".

The committee takes this opportunity to thank all members for their support over the year and wishes you and your families a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



55/53 Infantry Battalion Committee

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**SECRETARY'S REPORT ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES**

During the year the Association members have, together with family members and friends celebrated our traditional Anzac Day march and Luncheon and Cenotaph parade and luncheon. Both functions were well supported and the assistance of the members of the 217 NSWRR much appreciated. Despite our falling numbers, 54 attended the Anzac Luncheon and some members of the 36th Battalion marched with us. The weather was not the best' but into each life some rain must fall" to recall the words of a

well-known song.

Some of our members are acting still as guides at the Kokoda Memorial Walkway and are congratulated for their dedication. Those who do not visit the walkway are missing a unique experience. The area is serviced with picnic / barbeque facilities and a kiosk is on site for memorabilia and light refreshments. When visiting the walkway don't forget to visit the 'Centaur' memorial in the grounds of Concord hospital.

Special mention must be made of our support Group member's contribution to our continuing participation as a unit on Anzac Day and in December. The time will come when they' pick up the step' on our behalf and the committee is confident that the battalion's future is in good hands.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT DONATIONS**

Received since the last newsletter acknowledgement in March this year A Cameron, C Cover, C Dennis J De Jager, L Firth, W Flynn, H Fox, O Hardy, C Harris, E Johnson, G Johnson, S Lockyer, H Lowe, R Milbank, R Nosworthy, K Richards, R Spottiswood, J Symonds, G Ritchie, V Piper.

If you have sent a donation since March and your donation has not acknowledged please contact the Secretary / Treasurer so that notification can be rectified.

### **A PERSONAL REPORT**

About twenty odd years ago, I felt a hand on my shoulder and heard a voice saying, " I have a job for you, the hand and voice belonged to our late president Alex Bell, my platoon commander in my early days in Port Moresby.

The job was secretary / Treasurer for the association and it was with a good deal of reluctance apprehension That I agreed. Little did I know how rewarding it was going to be. I have had willing support without which it would have been an impossible task.

Now has come the time to hand over to some one else. I have handed in my driving licence and my mobility is restricted and dependent on others which places travel restrictions on me and stops me from attending to association business affairs. My sight is restricted to peripheral vision which fortunately is good. Therefore, reluctantly I advise that I will not be putting myself forward at the coming AGM as an officer but am willing to be a committee member.

I am proud of my battalion and it's service, proud of those I served with and wish the association and it's members continuing success and will do all I can to assist the incoming secretary.

Trevor Harper Secretary / Treasurer



Issue 2/2008

It is with great sorrow submitting this issue to inform you all that we have lost one of our active committeemen, Harold Forbes Matthews known to most of us as "Skeeter" or Harry".



Harry was a member of many other associations and group with his tiresome energies been widely shared:

55/53 Australian Infantry Battalion Association  
 Australian Armed Forces Re-enactment Heritage Unit  
 Friends of the 2nd Infantry Battalions  
 Fort Scratchley Historical Society  
 Battle of Australia Newcastle Commemorative committee  
 Reserves Forces day Hunter Regional Council  
 Shortland RSL Sub Branch  
 Adamstown RSL Sun Branch  
 Eastlakes Probus Club  
 Pensioners Concert Group  
 NSW Volunteer Fire Brigade Charlestown  
 St John Ambulance Brigade (Life Member)  
 Cadet training at Newcastle Grammar School  
 Coal Mine Rescue  
 Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Concord

Eulogy- Harold Forbes Matthew

By Gordon Matthew, 6 August 2008

My brother Harold was born at home in Jerilderie NSW on 4 September 1925.

He was the eldest of eight children born to Forbes and Ruby Matthew.

Harold had an amazing Start to life as there was a prolonged heat wave soon after his birth. The mothers in the town took their newborn babies to the creek and bathed them in the cool water. Apparently, Harold was the only baby in the town to survive that ordeal. He was dehydrated and ill for some time.

I will try to paint a small picture of my early memories of Harold as I was only a spectator of my two elder brothers in their early years. Harold and Keith were just one year apart in age and there was a lot of "I can do better than you" although they were good mates and both very determined and competitive.

Harold was given the nickname "Skeeter" by his schoolmates because he was considered smaller than them.

They were big kids who could drop kick a bag of wheat over a six strand fence.

The nickname has stuck with family and friends through time but he seemed to be known by the name "Harry" in recent years.

All through he was considered small by his peers, he has a secret weapon which kept him out of trouble. He has an affinity with dogs and could tame a savage dog immediately they met. He used his pet dogs to his advantage when needed.

I recall one day Skeet and Keith were having a debate on which as the better service to join when they grew up. Keith was going to join the air force (which he did) and Skeet as going to join the navy (but finally chose the Army). To settle the dispute, for some reason, they decided to make parachutes out of chaff bags and string. They jumped off the roof, hit the ground hard and realized their home made parachutes were not a good idea. In all the confusion Keith was bitten by Sleet's dog.

Another time they were out on the wood heap debating on who had the quickest reflex. To prove the point Keith put his foot on the chopping block and dared Skeet to hit it with the axe. This went well for about three times, but on the fourth time Skeet reflexes were quicker than Keith's so it was everybody over the road to hospital to see Keith' foot being sewn up.

After Skeet finished school he went to Wagga to learn the trade in a plaster factory which made plaster sheets, cornices and ceiling mouldings. He also learnt to be a Saw Doctor.

Whilst in Wagga he joined an athletics club. I recall him coming home to take part in an athletic carnival.

Changing for the 440 yard race, he was wearing satin shorts, singlet and running spikes. The rest of us were in khaki shorts, Jackie Howe singlets and bare feet. We decided that we would box him in at the start. The only problem was that he shot off like a hare and won the race by 100 yards.

Skeet was one of five boys in the Matthew family who played Aussie Rules Football for the local club and was a handy wing man. He was a keen AFL man ever since and a keen Swans supporter.

When Skeet was serving overseas in the army, the family would write letters to him. We did not know where he was or the extreme hardships he and his unit were experiencing. I remember mum getting very nervous when the Minister visited as he was often the courier of dreaded news during the war. Fortunately for us, Skeet was demobbed after the war in reasonable health. The discipline of army life and his army mates played a large part in the rest of Skeet's life.

He settled in Jerilderie and worked with a local road construction contractor as a plant operator and sharpened saws for the locals on weekends

We lived close to the Presbyterian Church and next to the church lived a family who kept about 30 Guinea fowls. They made a very loud screeching noise and when Skeet sharpened a saw the fowls probably thought it a mating call and would all screech in unison.

The minister, Mr Lawson, was also our scout master. He came to an agreement with Sleet which ensured that saw sharpening did not occur during church services. Skeet was a Boy Scout for many years and had earned many badges.

He was popular in town. When growing up, he had worked in the grocery store after school and during holidays. He was well known for his yarn telling, mouth organ playing and town activities.

Skeet was always the most colourful and best dressed one in our family. We boys would turn up to a dance, tidy and wearing a tie but Skeet would always manage to look smarter than us by obtaining some colourful material and making his own ties. This paid off for him as he met, courted and married Hazel, the prettiest girl in town.

They married in Jerilderie. They moved to Newcastle to pursue his career path. He built their home and they

produced three children. Carol, Eric and Bryan.

Over the years there were many exchange visits and reunions between his family and ours. He was a keen photographer and would always carry his projector and boxes of slides. He would insist that we have a slide night or two. I must confess that the clunking of the slides going through the projector was known to lull spectators to sleep on many occasions.

I used to think that he was living the life of at least three men with all his work commitments and the community work and organizations with which he was involved.

I recall once phoning him and he complained of having a bad back. He said that he'd had a parachute jump. I asked if had a bad landing. "No, he replied, "I landed on the wrong side of the fence and climbing over the fence I fell and hurt my back." He also enjoyed flying and was able to see a lot of Australia close up.

The passing of his son Eric and later Hazel was a great loss to all the family. Happily, as years went by, he met Nancy. They had a wonderful partnership for many years being involved in a lot of travel and community work together.

Some years ago, my wife Judith and I were privileged to join Skeet, Nancy, some of his Probus friends, and some ex army mates on a coach tour through Victoria and New South Wales. Each evening during happy hour and at the dinner table, we would listen with great interest to the stories his friends would relate of Skeet's many achievements and his charitable work.



Let us remember our individual experiences of times spent with skeeter and in true Australian tradition.

## LEST WE FORGET

### This Month in Australian History

October 1918 Australian Light Horse take Damascus

The Light Horse advances into Damascus, the Syrian capital, at the end of the long and victorious advance that ended the First World War in the middle East

October 1943 9th Division Captures Finschhafen

Finschhafen, in New Guinea, subsequently becomes the base for the protracted Huon Peninsula, campaign. 1943 - 1944

October 1918 Lieutenant J Maxwell VC

From Sydney awarded the Victoria Cross

October 1992 Dedication Australian Vietnam Veterans' National Memorial

The Australian Vietnam Veterans' National Memorial opened in Canberra to honour those Australians who served and died in war in Vietnam

October 1917 Sergeant L. Mc Gee VC

Awarded the Victoria Cross Posthumous

October 1918 Lieutenant G Ingram VC

From Victoria awarded the Victoria Cross

8 October 1942 Templeton' Crossing  
25th Brigade 7th Division contacts Japanese rear guard at Templeton's Crossing. The pursuit of the Japanese retreating along the Kokoda Trail involved hard fights

October 1944 Australian land at Jacquinot Bay, New Britain  
The Australians arrival opened the successful New Britain campaign in which a small Militia force successfully contained the large Japanese garrison holding Rabaul

October 1917 Captain C Jeffries VC  
34th Battalion NSW Awarded the Victoria Cross Posthumous

October 1942 Templeton' Crossing  
25th Brigade 7th Division Drive Japanese attackers back from Templeton's Crossing

October 1967 Royal Australian Navy Helicopters deployed to Vietnam  
RAN helicopters join the US Army at Vung Tau South Vietnam

21 October 1944 HMAS Australia Damaged by Kamikaze aircraft  
The Japanese first used suicide attacks on warships in the allied fleet supporting the American landings in Leyte in the Philippines

24 October 1942 Eora Creek Kokoda Trail  
The 16th Brigade, 7th division continued to drive the Japanese back along the Kokoda Trail but met heavy resistance

29-30 October 1950 Australian reach Chongju  
Australian troops of the 3rd Battalion RAR reach Chongju in North Korea.  
In two days of fierce fighting against determined North Korean opposition the Australians clear Chongju and the surrounding ridges

#### A THOUGHT

Proudly they march be ides their mate Slough hats and jaunty caps  
Cast shadows on lined faces  
Medals glinting in the April sun

What dreadful secrets Lie behind those eyes  
As they remember friends Whose bodies lie in foreign lands  
o that we might live in freedom

For those who never knew the joy of youth  
What pain guilt and glory do their cheerful smiles disguise?  
When they see their country poisoned by corruption, lies greed  
and young cowards free to steal vandalise, spoil desecrate and maim

Do they wonder as they march or in private moments if their youth, peace of mind and mates were sacrificed in vain?

excerpt from the book of thoughts

#### A DISTANT THOUGHT

A seagull passed by my way and perched upon my shoulder for a friendly chat

“I seem to think you have lost a mate” he stated as he seems to think he is a sailor. From what I have observed this suave fellow sailing the open seas is advancing on the bird life if you get my seaward drift, so to be fair to us seafarers it would be best if this wayward mouse returns to land and leaves the sea life to us.

Anonymous 2008



Medical Fact: Viagra long term is bad for your eyesight

Citation of Bravery

Awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal

Ref No 57613 53rd Battalion A.I.F. Regt No 3546

5th division 14th Brigade

Pte FRANK LESLIE CROFT

Near Fromelles in the action of the 19th / 20 th July 1916, Pvte Croft a signaller, accompanied his C.O (The late Lieut Col Norris) into the German trenches and on Col. Norris being wounded Pvte Croft with others attempted to bring him back to our own lines.

A German machine gun was turned onto the party, and the C.O Adjutant and two others were killed.

When the remainder were ordered to disperse, Pvte Croft, after taking an enemy prisoner, went on and reported himself to the O.C advanced company and remained with him maintaining communication with the adjoining battalion and trying to get in touch with our guns. Before leaving he cut all wires in the German trenches, thinking they might lead to a mine.

Lieut. Myers has brought this man' s name to a notice as being particularly cool and brave throughout stating that his clothes and equipment were riddled with bullets.

As a signaller before and after this action he had very frequently laid and repaired telephones lines under heavy fire and in difficult circumstances has always been outstandingly cool and brave.

The gallantly displayed by Pvte Croft on the 19th/20th July has only recently been brought to notice otherwise he would have been recommended an earlier for immediate reward.

Recommended by C.J. Hobkirk Brigadier General Commanding 14th Inf. Brig

This is a copy of the original citation(s) from the Australian war memorial research centre. Every word is exactly as was written on the original citation. Kevin Boxsell J.P. Grandson



### Distinguished Conduct Medal

This is only one of many citation(s) that have been awarded and justly deserved by our gallant and heroic man.

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Anzac Day 2008

Dear Trevor,

Following is a message to all our members regarding Anzac Day at Bomana war Cemetery this year.

First a brief introduction of myself- My name is John Nalder and I am a Trek leader with Adventure Kokoda, a company which takes people over the Kokoda Trail with a focus very much on the War History. Several years ago, I had the opportunity of meeting one of your members on the Gold Coast.

Mr. Clarrie Meredith. This meeting sparked an interest both in joining your association and further research on events on the Kokoda trail which left the 53rd a much maligned Battalion.

Suffice to say my feelings could be summed in those few words. - "Guts, but no Glory"

In 2007, I spent Anzac Day at Isurava and quietly laid a wreath on behalf of the 53rd Battalion. This was a personal thing and other than Clarrie Meredith no one knew who the wreath was for. In 2008, I was going to be at Bomana for the Dawn service and decided to lay a wreath on behalf of the 55/53 Infantry Battalion and was able to make organizers aware of this

As the service progressed. I waited in the gathering light as names were called out for the official wreath laying.

As usual the politicians went first, with the Australian Government having Ministerial representation for the time in memory. Ministers, High Commissions, the PNG Governor General and then- "the 55/53 Battalion represented by Mr John Nalder."

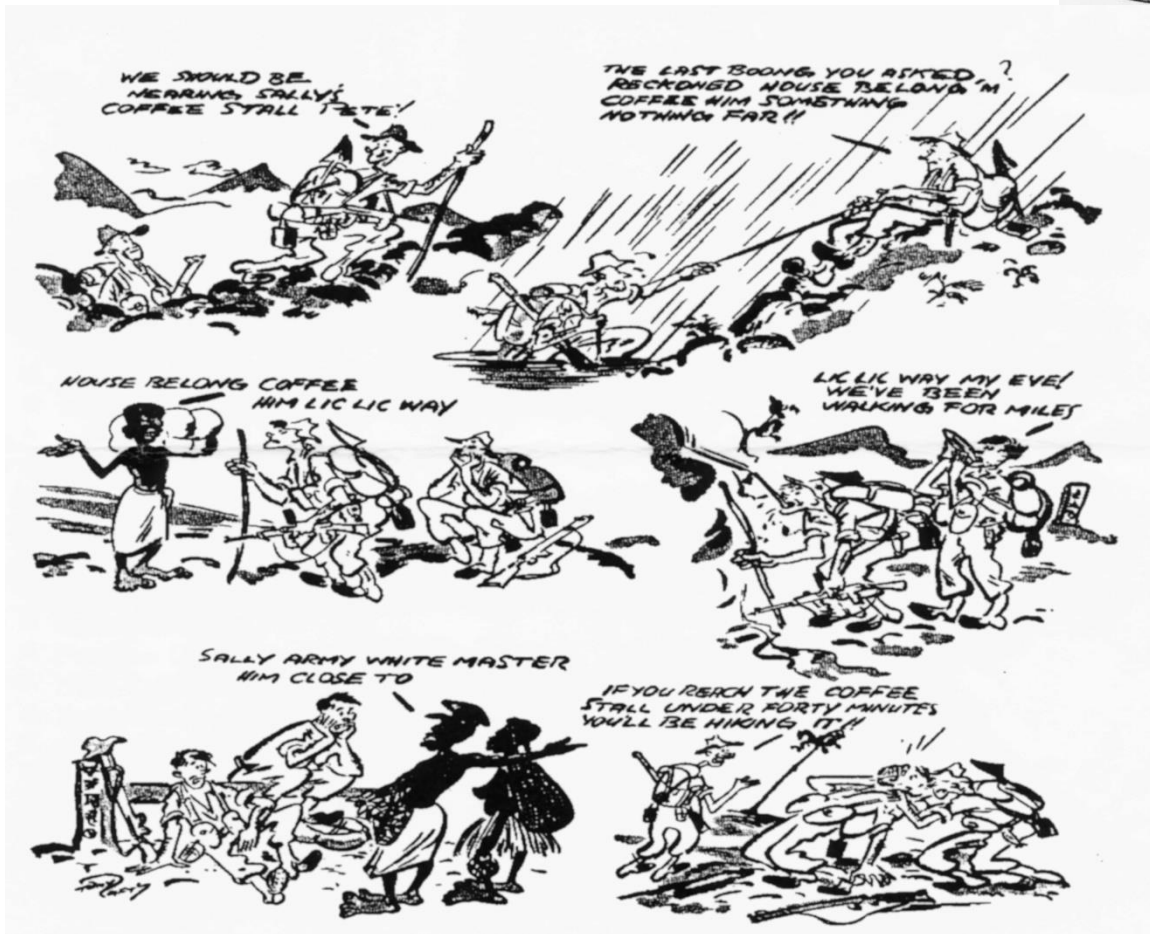
I took the first steps somewhat hesitantly, with the question of whether I was worthy of representing these men in my mind. The following 30 meters became easy as somehow, I believed that I was not walking alone but truly representing the members of this Association and their Fallen Comrades. As I returned to my position the first thought that came to my head was "The Mice of Moresby have roared again".

This was the only Battalion officially recognised at the service and I felt enormous pride at being a small part of this recognition. I will continue to tell the story to the increasing number of Trekkers who are coming to gain an understanding of what our soldiers faced and achieved in the Papua New Guinea campaigns.

On my return to Australia I rang Clarrie Meredith to let him know about Anzac Day. After hearing the story, he replied - "I Don't know how to thank you."

My reply to Clarrie, and to all Veterans of this association, was "You don't need to say thanks; it is us who don't know how to thank you."

KOOKAS CORNER



.. Anyone who wants coffee give them tea