



President: Clyde Parsons
14A Seaview Crescent,
Stanwell Park 2508
02 42944367 (H)
clyde@bigpond.net.au

2 - 2015

Secretary: Beverley Dawson
22 Fay Street
Lake Munmorah 2259
02 43581998 (H)
miceofmoresby@live.com.au

NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

LEST WE FORGET

M Browne, W McLeod, S Bourne, J Dickson, H Wearne, R Symons, K Breen, JW Firth, W Tomlin,

The Association / National Support Group Bi Annual General Meeting held on the 27th June 2015 at Granville RSL.

President's Report:

Results of Annual General Meeting:

Battalion Members: Ray Gentles – Charles Jennings – John Pringle – Fred Denny – Reg Chard

President: Clyde Parsons

Secretary: Beverley Dawson

Treasurer: Bryan Matthew

Historian: Mark Edwell

Banner Holders: Damian Dawson / Kevin Dawson

Communication Liaison: Rob Denny

RSL Delegate: Arthur Perry

Committee: Maureen Perry, Margaret Perry, Carole Matthew, Ross Berghofer

Secretary's Report:

It was a heart-felt feeling that I experienced on ANZAC Day to see so many of our descendant's present to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Gallipoli. Our diggers travelled in style, in an escorted jeep, and those veterans who could still march following with a stride of their young youthful ness.

Our banner was flying high behind them followed by a good representation of descendants showing their support. After an arduous wait (1½ hours late in marching off) our well-disciplined members maintained a good stride. After the March luncheon was well attended (66 in all) at the Great Southern Hotel where the fare was abundantly served and with all reports received favourable.

We would like to encourage the descendants to return and be part of our ongoing support in future times and it would be helpful if we could be notified in passing of any of our members as it can be distressing to the remaining family members if I send them mail.

We have initiated a membership drive to allow more descendants to be part of the Support Group so far it has received a great response and interest from the descendants who have joined the group. We also have created a face book page where photos and memorabilia can be shared by members so send some photos or upload them to the page: 55 53 battalion on Facebook.

Support Group Report:

The support group has just initiated a membership drive endeavouring to contact the descendants of the 55 /53 Battalion to join and become an active participant in event. By doing this with are hoping to ensure that the Battalion is never forgotten and prosper in the future.

The interest was very favourable with an increase in our membership but we are sure that there are a lot more descendants out there who may have forgotten to send in their membership forms. The form can be obtained online on our Facebook page 55/53 Australian Infantry Battalion (Mice of Moresby) or by contacting the secretary.

Our next event is the wreath laying ceremony on the 4th December 2015 at 11:00 at Sydney Cenotaph followed by a luncheon at the Great Southern Hotel 717 George Street Sydney just down from Central Station. Luncheon forms and money need to be completed and returned before the 19th December 2015 to the secretary.

This is required for catering and seating is limited

Treasurer's Report

Our centenary medal was well received and I have placed an order for some more as I had run out. They will take about 5 weeks so I will let those who placed an order, when they are available.

Medal \$10 Members – Non-Members \$15

If we have missed anyone who has donated please except our apologies as we appreciate all that is given as it helps us to maintain the association and assist with postage and maintain membership at a minimal cost of a one off payment of \$20. Donations are the only way that we become financial.

Donations: J Firth, P Beacroft, B Dawson, J Thorburn, B Budden, P Dowling, C Twomey, A Perry, N Covey, D Dawson, K Covey,



ORDERLY ROOM *Gossip*

Issue 1 - 2009

THE KOREAN WAR



In the aftermath of the Second World War (1939-1945), communities were still coming to terms with the devastation which that conflict had caused, and the millions it had killed. Yet only five years after the end of this war, another was to break out, and again Australia would commit its forces. It was the Korean War.

Korea was a place that few Australians knew much about, until 1950. From 1950-53, 17,000 Australians in the Army, Navy and Air Force fought as part of the United Nations (UN) multinational force, defending South Korea from the Communist force of North Korea. After the war ended, Australians remained in Korea for four years as military observers. Since then, Australia has maintained a presence, discharged by the Australian Military Attaché.

Australia's involvement in the Korean War won much praise from other nations. Awards and decorations given to Australians during the war totalled 615, while awards given to Australians by other countries numbered 173. Australia also gained many political and security benefits, the most important being the signing of the ANZUS Treaty with the United States and New Zealand.

The cost of the war in Korea was immense, particularly for its people. The attempt by the Communist North to unite Korea under its rule had been stopped, but it had killed more than two million people, and turned many Korean civilians into homeless refugees. Today, Korea is still divided into North and South.

Korean War, 1950-53

Only five years after the end of the Second World War, Australia became involved in the Korean War. Personnel from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and the Australian Regular Army (ARA) were committed soon after the war began and would serve for the next three years in the defence of South Korea.

Prelude to war

The origins of the Korean War can be traced back to the end of the Second World War, when the Allies were entrusted with control of the Korean peninsula following 35 years of Japanese occupation. The United States and the Soviet Union accepted mutual responsibility for the country, with the Soviets taking control of the country to the north of the 38th Parallel and the Americans taking the south.

Over the next few years, the Soviet Union fostered a communist government under Kim Il-Sung and the US supported the provisional government in the south, headed by Syngman Rhee. By 1950 tensions between the two zones had risen to the point that two increasingly hostile armies had built up along the 38th Parallel.

In the pre-dawn hours of 25 June 1950 the Korean People's Army (KPA) launched a massive offensive across the 38th Parallel into South Korea. They drove the Republic of South Korea's (ROK) forces down the peninsula, capturing the capital, Seoul, within a week. South Korean and hastily deployed United States Army units fought delaying actions as they were forced further down the Korean peninsula, which allowed defensive positions to be set up around the port city of Pusan.

Australia commits

Within two days of the war's beginning, US President Harry S. Truman committed US navy and air force units to aid South Korea. By the end of the month, he had authorised US ground forces to be deployed to the peninsula. The United Nations Security Council asked its members to assist in repelling the North Korean invasion.

The Security Council was further aided by Russia boycotting the UN over the lack of recognition by the Security Council of the Communist Chinese government: with the Russian delegate absent and unable to veto any resolution, the UN was able to act decisively and commit forces from willing nations to the aid of South Korea.

In all, 21 nations committed troops, ships, aircraft, and medical units to the defence of South Korea. Australia became the second nation, behind the United States, to commit personnel from all three armed services to the war.

Australia, with its commitment to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, had two readily deployable RAN vessels, HMAS Shoalhaven and HMAS Bataan (which was on its way to Japan to relieve Shoalhaven), as well as No. 77 Squadron, RAAF. The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) was also available, but it was understrength and ill prepared for a combat deployment.

On 28 June Prime Minister Robert Menzies committed Australia's RAN assets to the Korean War, followed several days later by No. 77 Squadron. It wasn't until 26 July that 3RAR was committed to ground operations in Korea.

First to fight

On 1 July HMAS Bataan and HMAS Shoalhaven left Japanese waters escorting US troop ships to Pusan. The following day, No. 77 Squadron, led by Wing Commander Lou Spence, flew the first ground support operations over Korea, becoming the first British Commonwealth and United Nations unit to see action in the Korean War.

Over the next few weeks, No. 77 Squadron flew numerous sorties against KPA forces and, along with other allied air units, greatly assisted in slowing the North Koreans' advance.

3RAR deploys

In mid-July General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander of United Nations forces in Korea and wasted no time in requesting the deployment of 3RAR to the peninsula. The Australian government agreed, but stipulated that the battalion would deploy only when fully ready.

The battalion was brought up to strength over the next month with reinforcements from K Force, an Australian government initiative calling for volunteers to serve a three-year period in the army, including a year in Korea. In late August Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green took command of the battalion and put his men through an intensive training program.



Troops from C Company, 3 RAR, watch for the enemy while a village in the valley below burns in November 1950

In a brilliant master stroke, General MacArthur landed marines of the 1st Marine Division at Inchon on 15 September. Two days later, ROK, US, and British troops took part in the breakout from the Pusan perimeter. One week later, Seoul had been recaptured and UN units began their advance towards the North Korean border.

On 27 September 3RAR embarked from Kure, Japan, and arrived at Pusan two days later. The Australian battalion was taken on strength of the British 27th Brigade, joining the 1st Battalion, Argyll and Southerland Highlanders, and 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. The brigade was renamed the 27th Commonwealth Brigade to reflect its colonial roots.

3RAR's first battle

As UN forces neared the North Korean border, China warned them not to cross into North Korean territory, and that such an incursion would not be tolerated. General MacArthur received permission to pursue the fleeing North Korean forces and shortly after crossed into North Korea. The capital, Pyongyang, fell soon after.



Members of 3 RAR move forward in 1951

As part of the 27th Commonwealth Brigade 3RAR advanced north of Pyongyang to assist the US 187th Regimental Combat Team, which had encountered heavy resistance after being dropped behind enemy lines in an attempt to rescue American prisoners of war. On the morning of 22 October 1950, 3RAR was the lead battalion leaving the town of Yongju when it came under fire from enemy troops within a nearby apple orchard. The ensuing fight was swift and brutal, with the Australians routing a numerically superior force and suffering only seven wounded.

It was the first combat action fought by a battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment and the men of 3RAR had acquitted themselves well. In the following week those men would fight two more battles; at Kujin, known as the battle of the broken bridge, and Chongju.



Australian soldiers firing a Vickers machine-gun

At the beginning of November, 3RAR's commanding officer, the indomitable Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green DSO, was mortally wounded by shrapnel as he rested in his tent. Several North Korean artillery rounds had been fired into 3RAR's position but Green was the only casualty. He died of his wounds two days later.

China enters the war

The battle of Pakchon marked the furthest point that the Australians reached into North Korea. It was also the first time Chinese forces were encountered in large numbers. Unbeknownst to UN intelligence sources, Chinese troops had been infiltrating North Korea across the Yalu River, and in late October they began an offensive against, annihilating several UN divisions and badly mauling others before seeming to melt away. The ensuing weeks saw an eerie quiet settle over the battlefield.

In November, buoyed with a false sense of security, UN forces under MacArthur's direction once again began to advance north towards the Yalu River. On 25 November the Chinese launched the next phase of their offensive and by January 1951 had pushed the UN forces back across the 38th Parallel. During the retreat, the 27th Commonwealth Brigade had fought many rear-guard actions, allowing formations from the US and South Korea to pass through their positions. The brigade was the last formation out of Seoul before the city once again fell to Communist forces in January 1951. At the UN headquarters in New York ceasefire negotiations between the UN and the Communist coalition broke down before any real progress could be made.

The Chinese sought to renew their advance in February, but were halted and forced to retreat by UN troops. Seoul was recaptured by UN forces in March and the Chinese were pushed back towards the 38th Parallel. Opinions were divided amongst the UN commanders whether to pursue Chinese forces across the 38th Parallel or to push for a ceasefire at the border. General MacArthur pushed for the advance to continue and on 11 April 1951 he was relieved of command by President Truman.



Chinese soldiers captured by Australians, 24 April 1951.

A New Warhorse

No. 77 Squadron, RAAF, flew their last operations in Mustangs in early April, after which they returned to Japan to begin conversion to the Gloster Meteor F8. Four RAF pilots had been sent to Japan to train the Australians and were taken on strength of the squadron. In all, 37 RAF pilots would fly on operations with the squadron, six of whom were killed and another of whom was shot down and taken prisoner. The squadron returned to combat operations in July and after some disastrous air-to-air battles with MiGs the squadron reverted to its former role of ground attack, carrying out many successful operations during the next two years.

Kapyong

On 22 April, the Chinese launched their spring offensive, routing the South Korean 6th Division and driving them back down the Kapyong Valley. The 27th Commonwealth Brigade advanced forward of the town of Kapyong. The 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and 3RAR dug in on the high ground on either side of a seven-kilometre wide valley. The following day, the Chinese were engaged by the Australians and Canadians as well as a troop of US Army Sherman tanks and New Zealand Artillery.

Two nights and days of close fighting followed and on the evening of 24 April the Australians were forced to withdraw from their positions and, with the support of the New Zealand artillery, fought their way down a ridge, re-joining the brigade in the valley. The Chinese were stopped in their tracks and Seoul was saved from being attacked once more. The men of 3RAR suffered heavy casualties, with 32 killed, 53 wounded, and three taken prisoner.

Following the battle, the 27th Brigade was withdrawn from Korea and 3RAR was taken on strength of the 28th British Commonwealth Brigade, part of the newly formed 1st Commonwealth Division.

Negotiating the peace

On 10 July peace negotiations began between the warring powers in the town of Kaesong. Negotiations were suspended in August after the building used was reportedly bombed. Talks did not resume until October, and from then on were held in the village of Panmunjom.

Maryang San

On 3 October, as a part of Operation Commando, a large UN offensive against a Chinese salient, 3RAR advanced north of the Imjin River, attacking two key high points: hills 317 and 355. After five days of heavy fighting the Chinese were forced to withdraw off both objectives, and on repulsing several counter-attacks the men of 3RAR were firmly in control of Hill 355, known as Maryang San. The Australians suffered 20 men killed and a further 89 wounded during the fighting.



U.S. General James Van Fleet inspects members of 3 RAR after awarding a Presidential Unit Citation to the Battalion in December 1952

HMAS Sydney commences operations

HMAS Sydney arrived in Korean waters in early October and began operations immediately. On board the carrier were three squadrons of the RAN Fleet Air Arm, Nos 805 and 808 squadrons, flying Hawker Sea Furies, and No. 817 Squadron, flying Fairey Firefly aircraft. The Sydney undertook numerous patrols in Korean waters during its deployment and its aircraft flew over 2,000 sorties, including ground attacks, artillery spotting, and escort missions.



HMAS Sydney, which served off Korea during 1951



RAN Firefly aircraft on board HMAS Sydney off Korea

Static war

Following the Chinese retaking of Maryang San in a bitter encounter with the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, the fighting became static. Trenches, tunnels, and redoubts reminiscent of the Western Front became the norm. Patrols and trench raids became common-place, as did set-piece artillery battles.

In April 1952, 1RAR arrived in Korea and joined 3RAR as part of the 28th Brigade. During its service, 1RAR took part in many patrols of no-man's land and several operations against Chinese positions. The Australians' reputation for patrolling and raiding from both the First and Second World Wars was further enhanced by the efforts of the men of 1RAR and 3RAR during 1952. 1RAR was replaced by 2RAR in April 1953 and quickly established itself as a formidable patrolling and raiding force.

An Armistice at last

On 19 July an agreement for an armistice between the UN and the Communists was reached. The date for the signing was set for the 27th of July.

The Samichon

The last three days of the Korean War saw the Chinese mount one last offensive on Australian and US Marine positions in the Samichon Valley. The Chinese attacked in waves with heavy artillery support. However, the combined arms of the US and Commonwealth forces halted the Chinese attacks with heavy losses. This final battle cost 2RAR six killed and 24 wounded. The Marines suffered 43 killed and 316 wounded.

Is it really over?

The armistice was signed at 10 am on 27 July 1953. Sporadic fighting continued throughout the day, but as evening fell the guns fell silent. The armistice came into effect at 10 pm, ending three years, one month, and two days of war in Korea. The end came so suddenly that some soldiers took some convincing that the fighting was really over.

The former belligerent nations each withdrew two kilometres in accordance with the armistice agreement, forming the Demilitarized Zone which still exists today. Australian Forces remained in Korea as part of the multi-national peacekeeping force until 1957. Over 17,000 Australians served during the Korean War, of which 340 were killed and over 1,500 were wounded. A further 29 had become prisoners of war.

Why is this day special to Australians?

At 11 am on 11 November 1918 the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years continuous warfare. The allied armies had driven the German invaders back, having inflicted heavy defeats upon them over the preceding four months. In November the Germans called for an armistice (suspension of fighting) in order to secure a peace settlement. They accepted allied terms that amounted to unconditional surrender.

The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month attained a special significance in the post-war years. The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. This first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilisation of over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead, perhaps as many as one-third of them with no known grave. The allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war dead.

On the first anniversary of the armistice in 1919 two minutes' silence was instituted as part of the main commemorative ceremony at the new Cenotaph in London. The silence was proposed by Australian journalist Edward Honey, who was working in Fleet Street. At about the same time, a South African statesman made a similar proposal to the British Cabinet, which endorsed it. King George V personally requested all the people of the British Empire to suspend normal activities for two minutes on the hour of the armistice "which stayed the worldwide carnage of the four preceding years and marked the victory of Right and Freedom". The two minutes' silence was popularly adopted and it became a central feature of commemorations on Armistice Day.

On the second anniversary of the armistice in 1920 the commemoration was given added significance when it became a funeral, with the return of the remains of an unknown soldier from the battlefields of the Western Front. Unknown soldiers were interred with full military honours in Westminster Abbey in London and at the Arc de Triumph in Paris. The entombment in London attracted over one million people within a week to pay their respects at the unknown soldier's tomb. Most other allied nations adopted the tradition of entombing unknown soldiers over the following decade.

After the end of the Second World War, the Australian and British governments changed the name to Remembrance Day. Armistice Day was no longer an appropriate title for a day which would commemorate all war dead.

In Australia on the 75th anniversary of the armistice in 1993 Remembrance Day ceremonies again became the focus of national attention. The remains of an unknown Australian soldier, exhumed from a First World War military cemetery in France, were ceremonially entombed in the Memorial's Hall of Memory. Remembrance Day ceremonies were conducted simultaneously in towns and cities all over the country, culminating at the moment of burial at 11 am and coinciding with the traditional two minutes' silence. This ceremony, which touched a chord across the Australian nation, re-established Remembrance Day as a significant day of commemoration.

Four years later, in 1997, Governor-General Sir William Deane issued a proclamation formally declaring 11 November to be Remembrance Day, urging all Australians to observe one minute's silence at 11 am on 11 November each year to remember those who died or suffered for Australia's cause in all wars and armed conflicts.

