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2016 – 2

LEST WE FORGET

Private Ivan Murray Glover: NX80940 (21.9.1920 - 13.4.2016)
Sergeant Robert Aubrey Douglas McCracken: NX155474 (N18663) (29.8.1923 - 25.3.2016)
Private Frederick Edward Nelson: NX171530 (5.12.1923 - 2016)
Private John (Jack) Frederick Dunn NX154663 (19.9.1920 - 29.9.2016)

NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

**The Association / National Support Group General Meeting held on the 27th February 2016 at Granville RSL.
Report**

The meeting was held to elect a new President and Secretary; all other positions remain unchanged. the meeting was well attended by battalion members and members of the support group.

Arthur Perry was elected President and Peter Dowling was elected Secretary

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

President: Arthur Perry

Secretary: Peter Dowling

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

Presidents Report

Since our last meeting things have been very quiet. The ANZAC Day March took a new route, starting in Phillip Street along Elizabeth Street and finishing in Liverpool Street end of HYDE Park. It was shorter than the old March. It did not seem the same as marching past the CENOTAPH and along George Street. I would like to thank the Veterans and descendants who took part in the March. We also had a good number who came to the lunch. I hope to see you all at the December Service at the CENOTAPH and at the lunch afterwards.

Arthur Perry

Secretary's Report: Sharing of the Story

Just the other day I travelled to Dorrigo to spend a few days with my mum, who lives at Dorrigo on the mid north coast of New South Wales. She was a member of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) - 1942-1945. She undertook training at Newcastle and Williamstown before being posted to Townsville whereby during the Battle of the Coral Sea she was part of the RAAF control room staff.

She is one of three remaining veterans of WWII still involved in the Dorrigo sub branch of the RSL. Now 93 years plus. Out of her unit she is the only one left. Binks has no mates left to share the stories. She is fit as anyone say 70 years or so. Tough, I would say and in 100 % control of her faculties, and continues to talk to school children in the Dorrigo district all about her experiences during WWII.

Our battalion association support group contains many family members, (wives, widows, daughters, sons, grandchildren and lots of great grandchildren, and other extended family), who may have not been able to have the story of the soldier who enlisted to fight for this country in 1941-42 passed onto them. The family members of those soldiers who often were maimed or so disabled by illnesses (physically or mentally), were unable to live a productive long and happy lives. They were so traumatised that they were not able to talk to their families about their experiences. The families of these diggers often have a very negative attitude toward the army and army life. This is one reason why the 55/53 Battalion Association come into being and has continued as it was a safe place for the diggers to get together have a few drinks and a yarn, without being judged harshly by those who frankly had no idea what they went through or even cared (this may have included family members). These veterans did care and sought to support each other in the only way they knew - mateship through shared experience. This role of the Battalion Support Group continues, but it has another additional important function; That is to educate this new generation and future generations about the story of the Battalion and other battalions who fought against a superior enemy in Papua New Guinea and defeated him. That is your job too. (Peter Dowling)

Support Group Report:

We continue to contact descendants of diggers families and descendants of the 55/53 Battalion to become members of the support group. We encourage members also to contribute biographical stories and photographs to be included in a permanent web site. By doing this with are hoping to ensure that the Battalion is never forgotten and prosper in the future.

The interest in membership has been very encouraging so far 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 02 4945 0927.

SANANANDA DAY COMMEMORATION

Our next event is the Sanananda Day wreath laying ceremony on the 2nd December 2016 at 1100 hrs at Sydney Cenotaph in Martin Place followed by a luncheon at the Great Southern Hotel 717 George Street Sydney just down from Central Station. Luncheon forms are attached for your attention and returned before the 20th November 2016 to the Treasurer. If you are depositing directly in the Bank, the details are on the form. **This is required for catering and seating is limited**



Eleanor Chambers of Redcliffe in Queensland recently sent us a poem written by Lance Sergeant Ernest Clyde Cook (NX115103). To younger members; these are how many soldiers felt about their experiences at war. We make no apologies for the sentiments expressed here by Corporal Cook as these feelings were understood and not easily expressed by all who survived the bloody battles at Sanananda.

THE FIGHTING FIFTY FIFTH

Slipping and stumbling and staggering along
Through filth and slush and mud
A curse on lips where once was a song
Bandaged and stained with blood.

Though they're tired and wounded and weary
They'll never halt for breath
And their eyes are bloodshot and bleary
With the sickening sight of death.

There's many a cobbler they've left back there
On that grim and frightful road
There's many a mile of its edges lined
With the crop that death has sowed



They buried them there with a choked back tear
Where the guns have taken their toll
And there's many a name not answered "Here"
On the old Battalion Roll.

By God we'll see that the yellow scum pays
In anguish and blood and tears
The debt that owe us for those days
They'll pay throughout the years.

And when its paid we'll call their name
And our glasses upward lift
To toast the lads whose death brought Fame
to the fighting 55th.

By Cpl Cook 55/53 Aust Inf Bn

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In the last edition of the Orderly Room report Bev provided us with a very enlightening overview of the important roll of Indigenous soldiers played in the service of this country. In this edition we include a story about Warrant Officer Leonard Victor Waters (a flying officer) of 78 Squadron he flew P40 Kittyhawk's in PNG during WWII. His story was published by Toronto RSL sub-branch earlier this year. This story is based upon a article published in Wikipedia, (the free encyclopaedia.) some years ago. Please read the full article by visiting the Wikipedia website. Len Waters as a fighter pilot stands with other famous pilots of the P40 namely Bluey Truscott and Peter St. George Turnbull.

WARRANT OFFICER LEONARD VICTOR WATERS

BORN: 20 Jun 1924 DIED: 24 August 1993

SERVED - RAAF - WW2

WARRANT OFFICER PILOT KITTYHAWKS

Leonard was born at Euraba Mission near Boomi in northern NSW. He was the 4th child of 11 children. He grew up in Nindigully (Queensland) and left school at 13 years of age to work along side his father as a ring barker (cutting the bark from trees eventually killed the tree); to help provide for his family during the depression years. He then began working as a shearer in 1939 and continued in that work until he enlisted in the RAAF at the outbreak of WW2 on 24 August 1942 at the age of 18 years.

Although the military had officially barred or restricted the recruitment of Aborigines in earlier periods, these impediments were significantly relaxed after Japan entered World War II, and Australia came under direct attack for the first time. Waters volunteered for service in the RAAF on 24 August 1942, at Brisbane, and was accepted. He began training as an aircraft mechanic, but later volunteered for flying service, and commenced initial training at Somers, Victoria, in December 1943. The aircrew interviewer thought he looked "a bit rough" but "should make a fighter". Waters believed his lack of education would be a disadvantage, and studied nights to make up for it. Keen to be a pilot, he was concerned that he would be allocated to duty as a wireless operator because he showed an aptitude for Morse transmission early on. He was also asked to imagine himself as the tail gunner in a Lancaster or Halifax heavy bomber, to which he replied, "I had a very disappointed look on my face, sir!" So convinced was he that he would not achieve his dream of becoming an aviator, Waters made three separate bets against himself being selected, and had to pay out £15 when he was nevertheless chosen.



I was terribly keen to prove myself in the elite ... The flying part of the Air Force was the elite. I might add that there were 375 [students] on that course and 48 of us finished up as pilots...and the end result when we got our wings...there were only three blokes ahead of me on average." Len Waters.

Waters undertook his basic flight instruction at No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School in Narrandera, New South Wales, where he flew De Havilland Tiger Moths. He completed his training on CAC Wirraways and received his wings as a sergeant pilot at No. 5 Service Flying Training School in Uranquinty. Posted to No. 2 Operational Training Unit at Mildura, Victoria, he converted to P-40 Kittyhawk fighters. Once, while he was on leave, Waters was reportedly gaoled in Moree, New South Wales, for not carrying an identity card, which was one of the racially discriminatory institutions affecting Aborigines at the time. On 14 November 1944, he was posted to No. 78 Squadron, a fighter unit based on the island of Noemfoor, off Dutch New Guinea. When he arrived, he was allocated a P-40 Kittyhawk. By chance, a previous pilot had nicknamed the plane "Black Magic" and painted those words on its nose. Waters found the name of his plane an amusing coincidence and chose to retain it.



He flew 95 sorties/missions being based at Noemfoor Island, off Dutch New Guinea, Morotai Island in the Halmaheras and Tarakan Island in Borneo - the campaign of 1944 World War 2.

No. 78 Squadron's main roll was ground attack, bombing and strafing enemy positions. During one mission, his aircraft was hit by a 37 mm cannon shell that embedded itself behind him in the cockpit without detonating. He flew for another two hours, the possibility of the shell exploding at any time, a situation he likened to "having a loaded gun against his head". "I'll tell you what". he said after returning to base "That's the best landing I ever made."

Following the end of the war he was discharged from the RAAF on Demobilization. After returning to Australia he attempted to start a regional airline serving South West Queensland. However he was not able to secure finance or bureaucratic agreement. Leonard reportedly wrote four letters seeking government approval, but never received a reply. He never flew a plane again.

Four weeks after leaving the Airforce Leonard married Gladys Saunders, with whom he had six children. He worked as a automotive mechanic, but was forced to cease under union rules, which required him to serve an apprenticeship. He was then briefly employed by the local council before returning to shearing. It was estimated that during Leonard's life as a shearer he sheared over one million sheep.

Leonard applied for Housing Commission Accommodation and was allocated a house at Inala, Brisbane in August 1956. He eventually bought the property and lived there for 33 years.

He died in 1993 at the age of 69 in Cunnamulla and was buried in St George Cemetery. A park in the town of St George has been named after him and a memorial plaque has been erected in that park.

Editor. The prominent roll of the P40 Kittyhawk in the defeat of the Japanese at Milne Bay cannot be underemphasised. The pilots of the 75 & 76 P40 squadrons provided for the first time, first rate air support including the interception and destruction of a large Japanese invasion force which may have changed the direction of the war in PNG. Soldiers of the 55 Battalion including A & C Company plus one Vickers Machine section. as part of Milne Force., to help in the construction of Gilli Gilli airstrip. A number of soldiers from the Bn. were attached to New Guinea Force [H.Q. Machine Gunners], served at Milne Bay and some remained behind after A & C Coy returned to Moresby and were present at the decisive battle at Milne May in defence of what was to be come known as the battle for Gilli Gilli strip; later renamed Turnbull Field.



Some interesting facts about the 55/53 Australian Infantry Battalion

A recent survey undertaken into the servicemen who served in the between 1942 and 1946 has revealed in some interesting facts. It should be noted that the places from which the initial intake of soldiers was from the Sydney Metro area, Illawarra, Southern tablelands A total of 1060 soldiers names were found as at 31 August 2016. Of this 1036 soldiers have been correctly identified. The remaining soldiers or the families determined not to have their records published. More are being found as research continues.

The oldest soldier who enlisted was born in 1887 and the youngest born in 1926. 84 Soldiers or 8.11%. Between 1910 and 1917, 239 soldiers were born (23%.) In 1918 110 = 10.66%; 1923 174 = 16.86% they were nineteen years of age.

The place of birth is rather interesting it shows that were they born in almost every major city and town in NSW and many from Queensland and Victoria. Those born in NSW comprised of the majority of the troops who

went to New Guinea in 1942. Those born in other states were mainly joined the battalion as reinforcements commencing May 1943: when the battalion began to rebuild after the disasters of Sanananda.

One additional factor was that of the Great Depression. The lack of work opportunities, meant that young men moved to larger centres to find work. A significant number of men from NSW country areas enlisted at the Cenotaph - which was then the major enlistment centre in Sydney. This enlistment was run by personnel based at the Sydney Showground. In the Nominal Roll the Sydney Show Ground is called Paddington.

In 1942 the Newspaper press presented to their readers a different story. They chose to denigrate rather than support these brave boys who went off to fight with out adequate training or equipment against a highly trained and well supported enemy who had little respect for basic human rights contained in the various conventions of war signed by the Japanese government. For this reason as beneficiaries of the country we have inherited, we are obliged to continue to pass on to the next generations the stories of our fathers, husbands, children and grandchildren defence of Australia during 1942.

The following is a summary of areas where soldiers were born including from Commonwealth countries:

<i>Location</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Unknown		18	1.74
<i>Queensland</i>			
Rural Queensland	55		
Brisbane	9		
Total Queensland		64	6.17
South Australia		22	2.12
Tasmania		7	.0067
Victoria		42	4.05
Western Australia		25	2.41
NSW			
Sydney/Inner Sydney	368		35.52
Sydney /Eastern Suburbs	13		1.25
Northern Suburbs	48		4.63
St George/SW Sydney	44		4.25
Western Sydney	45		4.34
<i>Total Sydney</i>		518	50.00
Hunter/Central Coast	35		3.38
Mid/North Coast	39		3.76
New England Tablelands	32		3.08
Riverina/Sth. Tablelands	41		3.96
Illawarra/Southern highlands	45		4.34
Far South Coast	6		.5791
South West NSW	3		.2895
Central West NSW	83		8.01
Western Districts	8		.7722
Northwest	5		.4826
<i>Total Country NSW</i>		297	28.66
<i>Total NSW</i>		815	78.67
Commonwealth Countries etc			
Ceylon	1		
England	21		
Greece	1		
India	1		
Ireland/Nthn Ireland	2		
Italy	1		
New Zealand	4		
Scotland	8		
South Africa	3		
Wales	1		
<i>Total Commonwealth and other countries</i>		43	4.15
<i>Total</i>		1036	

Locality of Enlistment (The area in which the Soldier lived at the lime of enlistment.)

<i>Location</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Unknown		95	9.17
<i>Queensland</i>			
Rural Queensland	49		
Brisbane	9		
Total Queensland		58	5.60
South Australia		10	.9652
Tasmania		4	.39
Victoria		54	5.21

Western Australia		10	.9652
New South Wales			
Sydney/Inner Sydney	250		24.13
Sydney /Eastern Suburbs	34		3.28
Northern Suburbs	81		7.82
St George/SW Sydney	121		11.68
Western Sydney	90		8.69
<i>Total Sydney</i>		576	55.60
Hunter/Central Coast	41		3.96
Mid/North Coast	37		3.76
New England Tablelands	13		35.71
Riverina/Sth. Tablelands	25		2.41
Illawarra/Southern highlands	41		3.96
Far South Coast	6		.5791
South West NSW	5		.4826
Central West NSW	47		4.54
Western Districts	1		.0965
Northwest	5		.4826
<i>Total Country NSW</i>		297	28.67
<i>Total NSW</i>		815	78.67
<i>Total</i>		1036	

Place of enlistment (The location of the recruitment centre in which the soldier enlisted.)

<i>Location</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Unknown		25	2.41
<i>Queensland</i>			
Rural Queensland	89		
Brisbane	5		
<i>Total Queensland</i>		94	9.07
South Australia		4	.3861
Tasmania		3	.2895
Victoria		32	3.09
Western Australia		9	.869
Australian Capital Territory		1	
<i>NSW</i>			
Sydney/Inner Sydney	374		36.10
Sydney /Eastern Suburbs	10		.965
Northern Suburbs	27		2.61
St George/SW Sydney	65		6.27
Western Sydney	22		2.12
<i>Total Sydney</i>		498	48.07
Hunter/Central Coast	22		2.12
Mid/North Coast	18		1.74
New England Tablelands	5		.4826
Riverina/Sth. Tablelands	22		2.124
Illawarra/Southern highlands	38		3.667
Far South Coast	2		.1930
South West NSW	5		.2895
Central West NSW	22		8.01
Western Districts	1		.7722
Northwest	5		.4826
<i>Total Country NSW</i>		134	28.66
<i>Total NSW</i>		632	60.00
Field			
New South Wales	60		
Northern Territory	2		
Queensland	79		
South Australia	4		
Victoria	12		
Western Australia	3		
Papua New Guinea	76		
<i>Total Enlisted in the Field</i>		236	22.78
<i>Total</i>		1036	

These figures are distorted due to the enlistment date recorded on the Nominal Roll. Soldiers who firstly enlisted into the Australian Military force where they were given an 'N' number and or a second enlistment on joining the Australian Military Force (2nd AIF) and given a 'NX' number. About 100 AIF personnel joined the Bn at Greta, not long before the Battalion headed to Port Moresby. The remaining battalion soldiers were predominantly Militia. If you want to know more about the historical reasons for there being two Military forces in Australian leading up to WWII we recommend that you visit the Australian War Memorial Web site. (<https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/>).