

**55/53 Australian Infantry Battalion Association—
Support Group
ORDERLY ROOM REPORT
October 2018 (2-2018)**



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

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Ray Gentles: ANZAC Day 25 April 2018

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Presidents Report

What a great year we have had with a lot going on behind the scenes.

The Great news is We have purchased the Battalion Laptop and the new website isn't far away. Big thanks to Peter for his time on this huge project. You will all definitely be impressed once you see what has been put together for you our members. Exciting times for all descendants.

Plans are pressing on for our Sanananda Day reunion on Saturday December 1 at the Martin place cenotaph at 11 am.

If you would like to attend and are attending lunch at the Great Southern Hotel please RSVP with our secretary Peter Dowling or treasurer Arthur Perry ASAP. cost is \$35 and \$7 children.

I have spent a lot of this year on our Mice of moresby Tour of New Guinea and devising our travel itinerary that we have attached here in the orderly report.

I'd like to thank Dave Howell from Kokoda historical for his help arranging this tour please see the attached info sheet for details.

Payment plans are available with weekly, fortnightly, monthly payment plans available.

We will be unveiling a new plaque in memory of our fallen mice on the beachheads of the north PNG Coast so would appreciate as many members as we can on this trip.

It's now necessary for us to have everyone who wishes to march with us on Anzac Day next year register with our committee. this will be to also carry a flag or banner with us.

Registration Forms will be available at the December reunion.

Should you have any queries about any of the above I am available on phone and email 7 days a week.

Rob Denny
National President
55/53 Mice of Moresby
0437 818 834



Forming-up on ANZAC
DAY 2018

Secretaries Report

Anzac Day in Sydney was well attended. Despite the misty rain in the morning a large contingent arrived at the Form-Up place in Phillip Street. Rob ordered electric wheel chairs for Ray Gentles and Fred Denny. We had lots of help from volunteers to carry the battalion banners. We had so many people wanting to carry the banners that we will probably have to have the job allocated to people in advance in future so that everyone can have the opportunity.

49 people attend the **Anzac Day Lunch** at The Great Southern Hotel, including 3 children. On behalf of everyone special thanks to Margaret Perry for her hard work in arranging the occasion. We cannot thank the staff of The Great Southern Hotel enough for the excellent food and service provided. The Hotel was presented with a framed photograph of over 30 members of the Association who attended an ANZAC Day lunch at the hotel in the early 1960's. Thank you to Kay McKinnon who provided a copy of the original photograph which we had enlarged and framed. The photograph has now been placed in a prominent position in the main bar, where the diggers met for many years on ANZAC day to reacquaint with old friends and remember those who have died.

Committee Meeting 8 September 2018

The Battalion Association held a committee meeting on Saturday 8 September at Granville R.S.L. Club.

New Treasurer: Bryan Matthew is moving home and as a result he has passed on the role of Treasurer to Arthur Perry. Unfortunately up-to date financial reports were not available. We sincerely thank Bryan for his extraordinary work in keeping the finances under control and his work in answering questions asked on face book. He has an encyclopaedic memory. The balance of the battalion association account was \$ 9110.63.

Matters considered were as follows:

- **8 day tour to Papua New Guinea:** there has been an excellent response to join the tour. Details of the itinerary and cost are to be found later in the Newsletter. Book your place soon. The tour will include placing a new memorial at Sanananda. Sanananda is a war grave and many of the men who died there have no known grave. We are seeking quotes for the casting of a new memorial plaque. We will be asking members if they may be able to help pay for part of the cost of the plaque.
- **Web Page Design:** The committee has approved a quote for \$1000 to develop the site. The drawing of a cheque for \$500.00 was approved as a deposit. At present all Bn Association files are on my PC and to enable autonomous establishment of the Web-site the committee approved the spending of \$1500 to purchase a Lap-Top computer to manage the site.
- **Battalion Assoc. Constitution:** The last constitution was developed in the 1990's and is now in urgent need of revision. There are recommendations by some professionals who advise that the new Constitution for the Bn Association be incorporated. The advantage of incorporation is that the committee would no longer be the subject if any litigation if this ever did arise. This would involve additional costs of the association such as various insurance. If incorporation did occur we will have to introduce annual renewal fees to cover the costs. We expect to have a new constitution available by the AGM in February 2020. The constitution is a complex issue and must be carefully crafted, so any comments or suggestions from members are very welcome.

SANANANDA DAY

Sanananda Day Commemoration this year will occur on Saturday 1st December at the Sydney Cenotaph at 1100 hrs followed by the annual reunion lunch at the Great Southern Hotel. Lunch will be served at 1220 hrs. On the back page of this newsletter there is an application form to complete if you can attend. We would like you to return it to me before 16th November. Phone Rob, Arthur or Peter if that is more convenient.

Mice of Moresby - Secretaries Report (cont)

In the past year we pay tribute to members of the battalion association who have died.

Frank Rogers, NX193358 who died 27.11.2017

Len Turner, NX194483 Died in November 2017

Peter Williams, NX194483 who died on October 2017

Keith John Shepherd, V34886 Died on 25 August 2018

Joy Thorburn, wife of Earl (Barney) Thorburn died 21 April 2018

Allan Stewart, NX143735 who died in March 2018

John Gumbleton, N247482 who died 12.10.2017

Sadly our former bugler, Jeannie Hope died earlier this year from cancer.

Progress with transcribing service record files held in the National Archives of Australia is progressing well with Carole Matthew doing a first rate job. We have records for about 1500 soldiers, of which 280 soldiers files have been transcribed with 85 remaining available. 12 months ago a change in the pricing for obtaining copies of service records has made it very expensive at approximately \$4.70 per page for a 18 page file. The means that the cost is prohibitive. I have enquired as to the cost through NAA and my local Federal Member. No response. I suggest anyone interested in obtaining a copy get a quote and then contact your local federal member.

Kind regards Peter Dowling, Secretary.



Some photos from Anzac Day

55/53 BATTALION ASSOCIATION (MICE OF MORESBY) TOUR

\$4,749 (includes international flights) 8 Day Fully Australian Led Tour Visiting Kokoda, Buna, Gona & Sanananda & Bomana War Cemetery.

Dates: 11-18 May 2019

The physical challenge of trekking in Papua New Guinea is not for everyone. Therefore, we have created a special non-trekking tour that will allow you to visit the key areas of the campaign without having to trek.

Join historian David Howell of Kokoda Historical as we visit the key points of the Kokoda campaign. Through a unique blend of adventure, master story telling and living history, David will bring to life the events of the Kokoda campaign with a particular focus on the 55/53 Battalion, as you undertake this once in a lifetime pilgrimage.

This tour will visit Port Moresby, Owers' & McDonalds Corners, Sogeri, Koitaki Showgrounds, Kokoda Station (village) and drive part way up the famous Kokoda Track. We will also visit the Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

Visit Kokoda in comfort and without trekking!

A special highlight of the tour will be the unveiling and dedication of a new memorial at Sanananda village.

Itinerary

Day 1: 11 May 2019: Today we will travel to PNG. On arrival you will be met by your Kokoda Historical guide and historian, David Howell. We will then travel to the Crowne Plaza Hotel, our Port Moresby Base. In the evening our group will gather in the main function room and over dinner David will give a detailed presentation on the battles fought in Papua during 1942. **(D)**

Day 2: 12 May 2019: After a buffet breakfast we will begin our tour of Port Moresby. We will visit the PNG National Memorial, PNG National Museum, PNG Parliament and the wreck of the M.V. MacDhui along with many other places pertaining to the 30th Brigade. Lunch will be served back at the hotel. In the afternoon we will travel out to Bomana War Cemetery, the last resting place of many who paid the ultimate sacrifice during the hard-fought battles in Papua. At Bomana we will also hold a commemorative service with representatives from the Port Moresby RSL Sub-Branch. We will then return to the hotel for free time, relax by the pool before dinner. **(B, L, D)**

Day 3: 13 May 2019: Today we will travel up to the Sogeri Highway to Owers' Corner via McDonald's Corner, the start of the Kokoda Track. David will bring to life the story of Kokoda. We will look out into the Owen Stanley Range to Imita Ridge and beyond. We will then travel to the Koitaki Showgrounds the site of the infamous 'Rabbit that Runs Speech' before making our way to Sogeri Lodge for a buffet lunch. After lunch we will visit the PNG Flora & Fauna Park, a great chance to view the unique plants and animals PNG has to offer. Dinner will be back in the hotel. **(B, L, D)**

Day 4: 14 May 2019: Today we will fly out to Kokoda. An early continental breakfast will be served before going down to the Domestic Airport. We will fly over the Kokoda Track and be able to look down at the very ground upon which the fighting took place. Lake Myola, Brigade Hill & Isurava can all be seen from the air. We will land on the same war time strip at Kokoda. A helicopter will accompany our charter flight. Once at Kokoda we will then use the helicopter to ferry people up and back to the Isurava Memorial. At the Isurava Battlefield, David will detail the gallant stand that both the 53 & 39 Battalions against the Imperial Japanese. We will also hold a commemorative service at the Memorial. The helicopter will then return people back to the Kokoda Plateau. From here we will see the Bert Kienzle Museum and the Kokoda Memorials. In the afternoon we will take a short 4WD ride up the Kokoda Track. Those who are able may wish to accompany David for a short walk along the actual Track before we make our way back to Kokoda and our night's rest. **(B, L, D)**

Day 5: 15 May 2019: Today we will say goodbye to Kokoda as we make our way north to Popondetta and on to the Beachheads. We will stop along the way to see Oivi & Gorari, the mighty Kumusi River and the place where the first contacts happened between the Japanese and the Papuan Infantry Battalion. We will then call in to Popondetta supermarket where we will grab a quick bite to eat and our staff will take on supplies. We will also see the Popondetta War memorial before heading to Gona. At Gona beach David will bring to life the fierce fighting that took place in the area as the battle of the Beachheads began. Boarding our boat, we will take a short ride down to Haddy's Village before continuing by boat to Sanananda. On arrival in Sanananda we will be treated to a traditional welcome dance before checking into the Sanananda Guest House. You may swim in the warm waters of the Solomon Sea before our evening meal. **(B, L, D)**

Day 6: 16 May 2019: Today we will wake up to the sound of waves as we make our way to the mess hut. Pancakes anyone? This morning we will take a ride up to Buna where your historian will take you on a guided tour of the village. In Buna we will see both the Australian and US memorials and walk along the same road depicted in the famous George Silk photograph. We will also see the only example of the last known Japanese bunker complex before returning to Sanananda for lunch. In the afternoon we will tour Sanananda Village taking in the 55/53 Battalion memorial, the Wirraway wreck and the Japanese hospital. Those who are feeling up to it will walk along the road to view Huggins Roadblock. A craft market will be on in the village before dinner. We will then hold a special dusk service at the 55/53 Battalion Memorial. **(B, L, D)**

Day 7: 17 May 2019: Up early as we make our way by road to the Girua airport. We will drive along the Sanananda Road. At the airport we will visit the B-25 wreck before returning to Port Moresby. We will then return to the comforts of the hotel to relax and have free time. In the evening we will then have a farewell dinner and toast the memory of all those who served and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. **(B, L, D).**

Day 8: 18 May 2019: Sadly, our tour comes to an end. We will transfer to the Port Moresby International Airport for our return to Australia.

Inclusions:

- International airfare from Brisbane
- Australian Historian
- Experienced Local Guides
- Charter airfare Port Moresby to Kokoda
- Return flight from Popondetta to Port Moresby
- 4 nights twin-share hotel accommodation at the Crowne Plaza with transfer to/from airport
- Communications and safety equipment Inc. Satellite phone
- Public liability insurance
- Kokoda Historical Shirt
- All meals as indicated on the itinerary **(B=Breakfast, L=: Lunch, D=Dinner).**

Exclusions:

- Personal travel insurance (we can provide a product if required)
- Hotel extras, drinks, laundry etc

Booking:

Please find enclosed a cheque (payable to Kokoda Historical) to the value of:
\$500 pp _____

OR

Pay by internet banking details below

Account name: Kokoda Historical

BSB: 193-879

Account number: 455 857 326

Please send your booking form to PO BOX 8014, Camberwell North, VIC 3124 or

david@kokodahistorical.com.au

This is an all-inclusive package of transport, meals & accommodation ex-Brisbane or Sydney.

Limited places, book early to avoid disappointment.

Contact David Howell owner/operator on (03) 9781 5509 or by email:

david@kokodahistorical.com.au if you would like to discuss further details about the trip.



Continuing from the last edition here are some excerpts from various Orderly Room Reports and Fifty-Fifty Editions. The following is from the December 1995 Edition.

REPORTING FROM THE REGIONS

NORTH COAST Clem Pagett (Macksville) ... Clem phoned during August to mention difficulties in contacting members in his area due to his own personal problems ... The story goes that Clem in his usual helpful style agreed to accompany his Macksville mate Garry on a trip to Adelaide where Garry's daughter was about to bless Garry with his first grandchild ... During their 11 day absence Clem took ill ... spent 3 days in the emergency ward Queen Elizabeth Hospital followed by 5 days in Ashton Hospital. As a result of this predicament he had to promise to fly home in order to obtain his hospital clearance ... Clem arrives home to discover Dorothy had been admitted to hospital in Pt. Macquarie with a blood clot in the leg ... Clem himself still has a critical breathing condition ... It most surely is the time for his mates to give him a cheerio call. While about to do just that I picked up the phone, dialled in error to discover that I was speaking to Des O'Dell (South West Rocks) ... Des was originally 'E' Coy 53 Bn then transferred over as coy commander 'A' about the time 53rd were committed to action on the Kokoda Track August '42. He became a member of the 7 MG Bn and is in fact Patron of that Assn ... Ord Rm Gossip is assembling names of 'A' Coy boys for Des to contact.

SOUTH REGION Fred Denny (Thirlmere) sends his personal thanks to the Association members (and their wives) who attended the 75th anniversary of the Thirlmere RSL coupled with the Australia Remembers celebrations and helped make that particular week-end a success ... Old mates of Jim Jenkins and Harold Richard will be saddened to hear of their passing. The family members of both Jim and Harold expressed their appreciation for the presence of those members who attended the funeral services ... Other southern region members contacted have reported in OK, sending best wishes and hope to attend the December re-union. Fred Denny is too modest to tell the following but Ray Gentles can ... Fred in his position as Welfare Officer of the local RSL obviously gives 100% ... His particular responsibility is to look after 6 old diggers. He drives them to their medical appointments, keeps a careful watch over their Meals-on-Wheels service and is honoured to handle their betting at the local TAB ... Well done Fred.

ACT Stan Sly (Our Worthy Patron) has passed on news that Peter Coffey is now home after a 5 week stint in hospital and no doubt would welcome a telephone call or a visit from old mates ... (06) 247-7491. After attending the '95 Anzac re-union Stan and Phil Hobson did a tour by train around the Northern Suburbs before journeying home ... Stan has been fitted with special walking shoes and hopes he will be joining with Phil soon on a walkabout (seems Phil is an experienced mountain trail walker).

(Ed. Does this item suggest that we could be planning to start up a walkers club? ... What's the potential? 300 members or ??? Better not be too hasty ... give it a little more thought fellows ... or maybe a lot more thought).

(More on page 9 — Peter)



L to R: PTE EA Freeman, Unknown, Unknown, PTE EO Graham.
L to R: PTE "Tiny" Blair, SGT AJ Scott, PTE Rainford, PTE O "Minx" Hillman (KIA).

Thank you to Lachlan Booth one of our youngest members who provided this photo of soldiers from the 53rd battalion in New Guinea circa. 1942. Lachlan sent me this photo with caption telling us that the photo belonged to his relative then WO2 (then CPL) FT Greenshields. Lachlan thought that this could go up on facebook. I thought that is better way to tell the story of the photo. Of the men in the photo here are some interesting facts. (Lachlan says that Ernie Graham, Arthur Scott and Robert Rainford all transferred out of the battalion just prior to the amalgamation of the battalions after they were offered positions with ANGAU).

Francis Thomas Greenshields NX113291 (N400041) who took this photo was born in Parramatta NSW. Enrolled at Parramatta 16.7.42. Served initially with the 45 Bn and transferred to 53rd Bn 27.10.41. Served in the 53rd at the battle of Isurava, Aug-Sep 1942. transferred to the 55/53 Bn 26.10.42 a fought with the battalion at Sanananda, and returned to Australia with the battalion 2.3.43. Served with the battalion at Thursday Island, Bougainville & Rabaul. Mentioned in Dispatches at Sanananda Recommended for award 27.1.43. Discharged on 16.5.46 with the rank of Warrant Officer Class 2. Died 4 August 2000.

Ernest Alfred Freeman NX141422 (N43003) born at Mungindi Qld 24.5.1914. Enlisted in the 53rd Bn and served in the Kokoda Track Campaign. When the 53rd Bn was disbanded/amalgamated to was transferred to another unit. The nominal roll states that he was killed in action on 22 August 1943 serving with the A.I.F 16 Ordnance Ammunition Company.

Robert Alexander Blair N15427 born at Wallsend NSW on 6 September 1915. He enlisted in 17th August and served with the 53rd battalion in Papua New Guinea on the Kokoda track. In October 1942 he was transferred to 19th Ordnance Ammunition Section. On discharge 21st May 1946 he was serving with the 6th Aust. AD (AAOC). 62 FAD. He died on 22 June 1959.

Robert James Rainsford; (NX16499) born at Nowra NSW on 28 April 1921. served wit the 53rd battalion until the unit was disbanded. He was transferred to ANGAU (Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit). He was discharged on 10 April 1946 with the rank of sergeant.

Arthur James Scott NX113290 (N40114): Was born in New Zealand 9 July 1920. He enlisted on 16 July 1942 and served with the 53rd Battalion in New Guinea and probably at the battle of Isurava. Transferred to ANGAU in October 1942 where he served until we was discharged on 18 Jan 1946 with the rank of Sergeant.

Oliver Alexander (Minx) Hillman N21531: Was born in Sydney on 10 March 1919 son of Oliver Hillman and enlisted at Rozelle NSW on 5 January 1940. He was posted with the 53rd Battalion to Port Moresby and fought at the battle for Isurava where he was killed in action on 30 August 1942 between Aola & Eora Creek. A search for his body were abandoned. He has no known grave. There is no record at Bomana War Memorial Cemetery indicating he was buried there. This photo was the last photo taken of him.

Ernest Oliver Graham NX166505 (N93615): was born in Wollongong in 1922. Enlisted in 1941 as a private soldier and posted to the 30th Battalion. He was transferred into the 53rd Battalion on 28.10.1941. He then sailed on the Aquitania to Port Moresby with the 53rd battalion. He rose through the ordinary ranks and was part of the 53rd Bn when ordered as part on the 30th brigade to march up the Kokoda Track, and was part of the battle of Isurava Aug—Sep 1942. When the 53rd Bn was amalgamated with the 55th Bn, he was transferred to ANGAU. Where is first became Warrant Officer and later Lieutenant. Ernest was discharged 27 June 1946. According to his Service records he died before 18 May 1982.

More from the 1995 edition of the Orderly Room Report. (Reports from the Regions)

WESTERN DISTRICT Charles Cover (Mudgee) has been a contributor to the memorabilia cabinet at the RSL at Mudgee ... he has been influential in having our association bannerette on display along with the service uniform of Colin Myers, who was an official of the sub-branch up to the time of his death ... Chas reports that the memorial clock on the corner of Church and Market Sts was built by Ivan Adams who owned the Regent Theatre and it carries the names of those killed both WW I and WW2. During this 50 year commemorative period the local Probus Club arranged for a peace plaque to be added to the memorial ... Chas goes on to say that Bill Suttor the grandson of Ivan Adams is now the owner of the Regent Theatre ... he wishes everyone well and looks forward to the December re-union. (Editor ... Perhaps some of our other country members can uncover similar stories like the one from Mudgee.)

Norm Coady has moved into his new home ... Unit 511 Orana Gardens, Charles St, Dubbo (Ph. 068-82-5193). Recently he just went there to collect the mail and make a couple of phone calls before going back to join his sons who are in the motel business in Grafton. Norm spoke to Stan Carlon (Cootamundra) who is an old sig man, now in top spirits having had good results following a recent operation. Norm discovered something interesting when visiting his sister in Trangie ... he had reason to visit the cemetery and was surprised to read a headstone ... Roley Wolf 55/53 Bn WWI (this is somewhat baffling and Norm will endeavour to find out more when he gets back home).

NEW ENGLAND REGION ... 'Ned' Kelly of Gunnedah reports that Merv Kelty and his wife have moved to Bathurst to be nearer their daughter ... Merv has been the local bandmaster at Narrabri for many years and in recognition of his great services he has been made a life member and patron of that group ... a special concert has also been planned in his honour. Well done Merv ... The new address is 'Bernita' Limekilns Rd, Bathurst (Ph 063-37-6538)... Ron Sefton (Boggabri) paid a recent visit to Wagga Wagga to a Light Horse re-union and spent a great time with his old mates ... He was disappointed that his cobblers the Beazley brothers did not show up there ... Ron wishes to be remembered to his old mates of "D" Coy, his telephone no is (067) 43-4244.

HUNTER AREA "Skeeter" Mathews (Whitebridge) The Army Re-enactment Group led the Parade of Banners from Observatory Hill to the Garrison Church on Sunday 17 September ... and as usual their turnout was immaculate ... "Skeeter" on the day was debarred from driving the coach from Newcastle to Sydney but did however enjoy some consolation in being entrusted with the "parking" of the vehicle on arrival.

CENTRAL COAST. Eric Gresham continues enthusiastically with his efforts in sifting out news from that area. The recent picnic at Lions Park Long Jetty was a most pleasant outing, and was attended by Skeeter Mathews and Nancy, Rex Marsden, Tom and Grace Delbridge, Ralph Johnson, Peter and Joyce Wright, Trevor and Joan Harper, and of course Eric and Marjorie Gresham. Eric and Tom Delbridge recently called on Val and Joan Mitchell at Budgewoi to deliver a copy of "The Chocos" and found them both in good spirits. Eric wants to know if anyone remembers **Des Banner** who originally came from the Artillery to join 55/53 at Rabaul ... he played football with Pat Niven and Mousey Ball ... If you can help?

KYRAN NOLAN, FINAL LEAVE PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR ACTIVE SERVICE IN NEW GUINEA, DECEMBER 1941. AGED 21 YEARS 6 MONTHS.

Full Name: Kyran Joseph Gilbert Patrick Nolan

Born at West Street, Casino, NSW on 9/6/1920.

Best known and will always be remembered as Kip

Parents: Joseph and Margaret (nee, Auckram) Nolan

Military Service: Enlisted for Service 8th August 1940, called up for full time Citizen Military Forces 23rd October 1941 to 2nd March 1945 & Australian Imperial Force 3rd March 1945 to 3rd July 1946.

Enlistment Numbers: N22559, NX 194798

War Badge Number: A304569

Unit: 7th Division, 53rd Battalion (later disbanded and integrated into the 55/53rd Battalion, (Mice of Moresby)

Active Service: New Guinea, Port Moresby, Treasury Islands, Rabaul, New Britain, Kokoda trail, Sanananda, Buna, Torakina & Bougainville.

Wounded 24th December 1942, double compound fracture of the right upper arm. GSW (Gun Shot Wound), treated at field hospital, Soputa. Suffered bouts of Malaria BT October 1943 & Dengue Fever.

Medical examination at time of discharge at Rabaul on the 20th June 1946, weight 128lbs or 58kg.

Acting Corporal at time of discharge. Length of Active Service: A total of 1,714 days. Australia: 647days. Overseas: 689 days. Final Discharge 3rd July 1946.



In August 1940 Kyran was called up to do 3 months national service, and then back to civilian life before being called up for full time service in the army on the 23rd October 1941. He was drafted into the 53rd Battalion, stationed at Greta, NSW followed by time at Ingleburn. At the time of Kyran's enlistment, he was accompanied by a couple of mates, Kevin and Jack Morrissey from Casino. They were all drafted into the 53rd Battalion and served together throughout the war in New Guinea.



A Company of the 53rd Militia Battalion on parade at Ingleburn NSW 1941.

The 53rd Battalion was originally raised as a militia unit on the 1st November 1941 for service in Darwin (militia units were only to be used for the defense of Australia on Australian soil but because New Guinea was at the time an Australian territory this allowed the Government to divert these troops to New Guinea to defend Australia).

On Christmas day 1941, each company of men was given a 5-gallon keg of beer to share amongst themselves with their Christmas lunch, after lunch they were given leave to travel into Sydney where Kyran and three mates took the ferry across to Manly. Prior to traveling across to Manly, they had asked a taxi driver where they could get a beer and he had taken them to a woman who was selling home brew for 2/- shillings a bottle, they bought a couple of bottles and headed into the city. Upon arrival at Manly, they observed a large group of people gathered outside a building, they went across to have a look and at that time a fellow in a white coat opened the door and upon sighting the four men shouted out over the top of the crowd for the four soldiers to come forward, he escorted them inside, told them to sit down at a table and they were shouted beer on the house. They went back to camp and were told to clear their bunks and pack their gear in preparedness for departure the following day for Darwin. Little did they know their final point of dismemberment would be Port Moresby. **(Thank you to Kip's son Gary Nolan for this story).**

BOB McCracken's WAR DIARY

The following was provided by the family of Bob McCracken. It is his War Diary. Due to space available we have included the first portion up to 29 August 1943.

“Movements as from 27 Dec '41”

War diary of my father Robert Aubrey Douglas McCracken (enlisted as Robert Douglas McCracken NX155474) written on the pages of a Bank of New South Wales passbook. On the cover is written “Diary of events.

N180142 Pte R Harding ? 13PL C Cmy 55 Bn”

So someone else has given him the book and he had started the diary on a different page. Dad has crossed these few pages out and begun his own at the beginning of the book.

These events take place after Dad joined the AIF 55/53 Battalion. Prior to this he was in the Militia as he was too young to go overseas. Theoretically in Dec 1941 he was still too young, being 18 (not 19 as legally required) as he had put up his age by a year to enlist. He was still only 18 when he first saw action in July 1942.

Note: I have kept all the punctuation errors as they are without correction. It is interesting to note that the writing starts off as not much more than a log of events but by the Bougainville campaign of 1945, he has become much more expressive. At the back of the book are lists of men killed, wounded or sent home sick as well as lists of weapon numbers for his platoon and lists of men detailed for working patrols , random number additions etc.

27 DEC 41	Left Ingleburn to embark
28 “	Passed through Sydney heads at 0910. Destination Moresby Boat S.S. Sarpedon. convoy consists of Aquitania, Motor Ship Hirstine, H.M.A.S AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, PERTH, SWAN. ADELAIDE. H.M.N.Z.S. ARCHILLES.
3 JAN 42	SIGHTED PAPUA approx. 0600. Entered Moresby Harbour at 1100. Natives dived for coins.
4 JAN	DISEMBARKED and moved to Simpson Gap one hell of a place. No nets or protection for many days.
JUN 42	First Japs landed on Buna.
JUL 42	Battalion moved up to action.
JUL 42	First Bully Beef flight over mountains.
AUG 42	Five ...flights up to date one in which I saw Kokoda, Samari (sic) (Samurai?) Wai (?), ..., ... Buna.
7 DEC 42	Our battalion once more goes into action lots of mates lost in this show.
3 MAR 43	Leaving Moresby for Cairns. On SS DUNTROON. 106 air raids seen all total.
5 MAR 43	Arrived in Cairns. Disembarked at 1900 moved to Ravenshoe by truck. Detoured to Innisfail.
17 MAR 43	Entrained at Ravenshoe for home. Sydney.
20 MAR 43	Saw Brisbane for first time. Spent 1 ½ days.
22 MAR 43	Arrived at Central at 1210 hrs. after 14 ½ months away.
5 MAY 43	RETURNED from leave and entrained.
6 MAY 43	Arrived in Brisbane and spent 2 days.
10 MAY 43	Destination Townsville. Alligator Ck.
1 JUN 43	Detached from unit to Airforce for five weeks good job. Offered commission in Airforce as Identification Officer. Transfer refused.
7 JUL 43	Returned to unit.
27 JUL 43	Vern arrived in Townsville.
9 AUG 43	Left unit to become an instructor at F.A.A.W.T.S. Redbank. Brisbane.
11 AUG 43	Arrived at new job and given a good time.
29 AUG 43	Spent birthday here very lonely day.