

# PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

Official Organ of 2/1 and 2/2 PIONEER BATTALIONS ASSOCIATION

Per Annum: \$5

Registered under the Charitable Collections Act, 1934-41 - Certificate No. 10462 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Arncliffe

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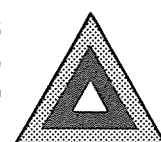
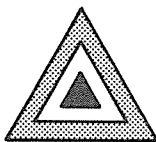
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Vol. 45 No. 1

APRIL 1999

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## THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER - CANBERRA

We kindly acknowledge the following address given by Warrant Officer, M. A. Caughey to the 7th Division Association Reunion at Singleton in October 1998 as printed in "Purple Diamond" 7th Division Engineers news sheet.

Thank you for this invitation to speak to you tonight on the topic of "The Unknown Soldier", who, as you know, is buried in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial. But first a little background information. In late 1993 a contingent was formed with soldiers from most Corps in the Army, both male and female soldiers were selected. The Bearer party consisted of two sailors, two soldiers and two airmen. The contingent was commanded by Major Warren Young and I was fortunate enough to be appointed as the Regimental Sergeant Major.

The task was to collect an Unknown Australian Soldier, and following ceremonial duties in France and Belgium return the remains to Australia for interment in the AWM on Remembrance Day, 1993.

From Ypres in Belgium to the Somme River in France and beyond, lies a landscape strewn with graves. Here, as all who have visited the area know, lie in cemetery after cemetery, the remains of Australia's first AIF dead from Passchendaele, Fromelles, Bullecourt, Peronne, Villers-Bretonneux and a score of other Great War battles. Of all the headstones so carefully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, few have the power to move the Australian visitor more than those with the simple inscription: "An Australian Soldier of the Great War Known Unto God". From under such a headstone on 2 November 1993 at a small cemetery named after the city of Adelaide near Villers-Bretonneux, the remains of an Unknown Australian Soldier were exhumed and placed in a simple coffin. Even the toughest of hearts softened a little as our unknown soldier began his journey home.

The idea for the tomb was first proposed 78 years ago, in 1920. It was suggested that an unknown soldier be buried in a place of prominence in each of the world capitals. The difficulty was the AWM had not been built. As a nation, we were content to be represented by the remains of an Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey. The idea dropped away; but at regular intervals was mooted by veterans' groups.

### WHAT/WHO IS IN THE COFFIN?

At this point I will answer the most commonly asked question. What/who is in the coffin? Before I answer that I must admit to being a little sceptical before the exhumation took place. It would be too easy to place some French soil and remnants of clothing in the coffin and claim to have the remains of an Unknown Australian Soldier. Fortunately, I can tell you that the remains in the coffin are definitely those of an Australian soldier. I can confirm that there are substantial skeletal remains, his uniform is in fair condition, the boots appear good enough to walk in and around his waist is a web belt with a gas mask still strapped to it. He was someone's son, perhaps a young farmer from the country, full of the spirit of adventure. Or perhaps a clerk from Sydney with two young children who felt obliged to "do his duty" for King and country.

The Unknown Soldier was officially received by the Australian Guard at the Australian National Memorial near Villers-Bretonneux, itself a significant Australian battle site. On the hill where the memorial and cemetery now stand, Australian troops were instrumental in halting the German Spring Offensive in 1918. Being a member of the guard was a double thrill for myself, my own grandfather was a member

of the Guard when the site was consecrated at the end of WWI.

The Guard also conducted other ceremonies after the handover on November 2, at sites significant to Australian involvement in WWI. These ceremonies were watched by numerous local people and tourists from many countries including Australia. The young soldiers of the Guard performed magnificently. After the Villers-Bretonneux parade, an American tourist could not be convinced that the Guard was not a Ceremonial unit. After a night ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ieper, Belgium, an elderly German asked what the parade was commemorating, when told the Unknown Soldier story, she completely broke down sobbing uncontrollably and had to be attended to by a local doctor. At the Menin Gate ceremony, four buglers from the local community's Last Post Association played the Last Post at 8pm - an act that has been performed every night since the end of WWI, except during the WWII German occupation.

It has been said that every Australian soldier who fought in Belgium in WWI marched through the Menin Gate on his way to the front, and farewelling the Unknown Soldier from there was significant. Other smaller ceremonies conducted by the Guard, such as the Dawn Service at Tyne Cot and Polygon Wood cemeteries, were particularly moving for the contingent.

### A WEEKEND WITH BERNIE

When returning to Barracks at Noyon in France after the Ieper ceremony (3 1/2 hour trip), an incident occurred that made me aware that Australian soldiers still have a warped sense of humour. It was around 11pm, after a very long and eventful couple of days of ceremony after ceremony and much bus travelling with little sleep, so I was nearing the end of my tether, as RSM's are prone to do, on very rare occasions. A group of young soldiers, male and female, sitting behind me were joking, laughing and carrying on, I could not help overhear them, the butt of their joking appeared to be centred around the Unknown Soldier in the coffin that we were parading everywhere with us. I listened for a while and decided, like all good RSM's would, to put a stop to this irreverence. I jumped up and seriously reprimanded the group and left them in no doubt that I had had enough of their disrespectfulness. There was stunned silence, I'd achieved the aim! Then one bright young lad answered in a serious voice, "Sir, we aren't being disrespectful, haven't you seen the movie, 'A Weekend with Bernie'?" He explained - a group of old friends are having a weekend reunion when the host, a fellow named Bernie, dies. Rather than ruin the weekend, they decide to take their friend with them to all their outings and escapades. "So you see Sir," he continued, "We have decided that our Unknown Soldier is called Bernie and we are calling our activity 'A Week with Bernie!' From that moment our Unknown Soldier was named Bernie and to this day when we meet we still discuss Bernie, maybe our Unknown Soldier is not as unknown as we thought.

The Unknown Soldier spent his last night on French soil lying in State at the Villers-Bretonneux memorial, guarded by two Australian sentries. A little after 1am, shrouded by a thick fog, I marched out to check the sentries. I found two female soldiers on duty and both were obviously very jumpy and

uncomfortable with their predicament. The body of the Unknown Soldier in a coffin only one metre away and surrounded by literally thousands of graves. Assessing the situation, I endeavoured to put them at ease. I told them that over 75 years ago, Bernie most likely spent many a long night just like this, standing sentry in a freezing trench and probably dreaming about being in the company of an Australian woman, and now, 75 years later, he was spending the night in the company of not one, but two Australian ladies. This obviously worked, as both volunteered to do the last shift before dawn.

The Unknown Soldier was farewelled from the battle fields of the Western Front in a very moving ceremony at the French Air Force base at Cambrai. As a French helicopter carrying the simple coffin, and the Australian Bearer party took off from Cambrai, the rotor blades caused the mist to swirl around in a mystical fashion, creating a lasting memory for the Australian and French dignitaries and guards on parade. The Unknown Soldier was on his way home.

Flown back to Australia aboard the Qantas flight "Spirit of Remembrance", and from Sydney to Canberra by RAAF Hercules, the coffin lay in State at Old Parliament House.

On the morning of Remembrance Day 1993, the Unknown Soldier was removed from Old Parliament House, placed on a gun carriage and taken to the War Memorial where, at 11 o'clock on 11th November, the coffin was entombed in the Hall of Memory. The Governor General at the time, Bill Hayden, cast into the tomb a sprig of wattle, and the final scene was played out by WWI veteran Robert Comb, who pitched a handful of soil into the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The soil had been collected by the guard from the Pozieres battle-ground in France. As he cast the soil, Comb said, "You're home mate." We will never know who this Australian was. We do know that he is one of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who have laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war. In the words of the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, "He is all of them and he is one of us."

## ANZAC ACTIVITIES 1999

### WREATH LAYING - Saturday, 24th April.

The Wreath Laying Service will be held at 4 pm on Saturday, 24th April and all members are to assemble on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, on the G.P.O. side at 3.50 pm and will place wreaths at the Cenotaph at 4 pm.

### ANZAC DAY MARCH - Sunday 25th April

Forming up will be the same as previous years for both units - 2/1st in Phillip Street, head on to King Street and rear of 6th Division - 2/2nd in Phillip Street near Martin Place and rear of 7th Division.

Pioneer News subscriptions will be collected prior to march by Gavin Todd for the 2/2nds and by Don Crawford for the 2/1sts.

Subscriptions will also be accepted at the Occidental Hotel by Don Crawford, our new Association Treasurer.

### ANZAC REUNION - Sunday, 25th April

The ANZAC Day Reunion Dinner will be held at the Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street, Sydney, so after the march board the train at Museum Station and travel to Wynyard Station. Proceed up escalator, turn right into York Street and hotel is on next corner.

Costing will be: Meal \$15; Beer - Middy \$1.70, Schooner \$2.20, Jug \$6.90.

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The first issue of the year, and I hope all readers and their families spent a happy and healthy Festive Season. For some it would be a time of rejoicing and for others a time of sadness for those who had lost loved ones during the year. Let us never forget yesterday's memories, tomorrow's dreams or today's laughter – an old saying that says it all.

**CYRIL AMIES** 2/1, Thornleigh, with Christmas greetings and a note, per Doris, of their doings for 1998. They enjoyed a year in which they travelled to Queensland, including the Carnarvon Gorge, and a trip to Kangaroo Island enabling them to see seals and fairy penguins and the surprising "sink holes" in South Australia.

Earlier in the year, Cyril was able to attend the opening of the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord, where serving units of the war zone known as the Kokoda Track are commemorated, and found it a very touching experience.

Doris has continued her bowling interests and as President of the Women's Club says her energies and brain power are well exercised.

Thank you both for your good wishes to all Pioneers and may the coming year see you once more on your travels to parts of our lovely country. Hope to see you both on ANZAC Day.

**"SNOWY" ANDERSON** 2/2, Aspendale Vic., with greetings from Isabell, Julie and himself for Christmas, also a donation from Julie which is being used as a gift to the City of Sydney Youth Band on ANZAC Day. Julie is very fond of music, particularly band music, and in phone conversations with "Snowy" it was decided that her donation be presented to the 2/1st band on ANZAC Day. Your gift was a very generous thought, Julie, and much appreciated. Hope you received the "chocs" and badge for Isabell and look forward to maybe seeing you in Lismore in September. In the meantime, keep well and best wishes to all.

**REG ARMSTRONG** 2/2, Baradine, with a welcome donation to funds and greetings from both Coralie and himself for a healthy and happy 1999 to all Pioneers, both 2/1sts and 2/2nds. They are both keeping fairly well at present, but Reg says his eyesight is failing and writing is beginning to be a problem. Good to hear from you Reg, and rest assured your donation will be put to good use. Best wishes to Coralie.

**ROBYN BELL**, Harkaway Vic., daughter of the late Leo Morris 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and says how pleased she was to have made the Wagga reunion. All being well, she hopes to make Sydney for ANZAC Day.

Good to hear your mum has settled into the Linton RSL Aged Care Home at Yass and it certainly won't be so far for you to travel to visit. From all accounts Linton is a credit to all concerned in its establishment and maintenance and a good example of the RSL's commitment to the care of the aged veterans and widows. Hope to see you soon, best wishes.

**MAVIS BLANCH**, Beaudesert, widow of Joe 2/1, with plenty of news, as usual, and her greetings for Christmas. She had been in touch with Ron Cross 2/1 of Ballina regarding the death of his wife, Joyce, also with Clancy Scholes of Casino, 2/1, who lost his wife Irene recently. Clancy had broken his leg and had 12 days in hospital before Irene passed away. Gloria Gray (widow of "Paddy" 2/1) is progressing after her stroke, but still hasn't the full use of her right arm and not yet able to drive.

Mavis had a very enjoyable Legacy trip to Coffs Harbour in October and had day trips to Nambucca Heads, Bowraville, Dorrigo and Bellingen and saw a lot of attractions. Has also booked on another to the opening of the Nurses' Memorial in Canberra in September this year. (You're certainly not letting the grass grow under your feet, Mavis, which is good to see.) She still plays bowls and works for charity, so leads a fairly active life.

Thanks for all the news, Mavis, all the best from your old friends here in the "big smoke" and do hope you can make Lismore in September. Perhaps Gloria may be well enough to come, too.

**MARJ BOYLE**, Moama, widow of Keith 2/1, with a welcome sub. and greetings. 1998 was not a good year for Marj healthwise – operations on both eyes, operations for removal of skin cancers and heart and lung problems. However, she is still doing Meals on Wheels and Respite and says things are picking up.

For sure you can't keep a good "girl" down and with your disabilities, Marj, you put a lot of folks to shame. Hope 1999 is better for you and many thanks for the sub. and glad you still like to receive the News and keep in touch. Our very best wishes to you.

**LES BRITT** 2/1, Cairns, Qld., with a short note enclosing a cheque to the Association and the sad news that his wife had passed away during the year with a heart attack, aged 76. Our condolences to you, Les, on behalf of the Pioneers and best wishes for the future.

**JACK COATES** 2/1, Umina, with another lengthy note and books of stamps for the Association. Many thanks, also for the used stamps for me – I often find one or two I have found hard to get. Glad you enjoyed the article "Now it can be told". I did my best to keep to your notes and so far no one has picked you up on the No. 5 Wharf incident. (Jack remembered the incident with the No. 5 Wharf was in Tobruk in March – says they were too busy once the Siege started to be repairing wharves). As soon as "my boss" has a few lines to spare I will see what I can do with the rest of your notes. Some issues get a bit tight and no space available.

Thank you for the calls re the passing of Jim Hall 2/1 – we have heard from his daughter Ann and Max has included her notes in Last Post. You have lost a good mate and he will be sadly missed by a lot of friends.

Good to hear Lex is still doing well and able to keep up her physical culture. You both deserve a lot better health in 1999. Your ever-growing family keeps you busy – must be handy having a few policemen amongst them. Glad they are doing well, but don't really envy them their jobs these days.

All the very best to you both. Despite some "near misses", with a little more luck, you'll surely make the year 2000 yet. Keep well.

**BETTY CREASY**, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and a donation to funds. Hope you had a restful Festive Season, Bet, and perhaps may be able to make ANZAC Day this year. All the best, and thanks for the sub.

**RON CROSS** 2/1, Ballina, with a welcome donation to the Association, for which many thanks. Ron's wife, Joyce, passed away in September and he now lives on his own in the Ballina Ex-Services Complex. He has two sons, one in Perth and one in Japan and both have intimated they will not be returning to the area. It's good that you will have your North Coast Branch work, Ron, to keep you busy and it would be good if you can make Sydney for ANZAC Day. If not, hope to see you, come September, in Lismore. Kind regards and look after yourself.

**ALLAN CRUTE** 2/1, Woolgoolga, per pen of ever-faithful wife Beulah, with a long letter of doings in their part of the country. Don't know how you found the time with all your Red Cross functions and cooking, but so good to hear all your news. Still, as in every club, it's only the busy people who turn up to help.

Trust by now Allan is fully recovered from his fall and the skin grafts have healed up well. (Better tell him to put more water with it next time). It was lucky he had no broken bones, but guess the stitches were bad enough. Everything takes so long to heal, too, when you're older. It was good you had a lot of support from "rellies" and good friends to drive him to doctors, etc, and I know how you would appreciate the help when you don't drive.

Thanks for the news of Eric and Joyce Reynolds 2/1 of Macksville. We hear from Eric now and again, but he admits he's very shaky, and copes with Meals on Wheels and home-help.

Good to hear your family news and hope that Pete enjoyed the cricket when they came

to Sydney – it's great to see the young ones interested in sport.

Even if Allan has lost desire to travel too far from home, perhaps you may be able to make Lismore in September by train. The committee there are very supportive and are happy to look after the Pioneers who come by train. Do hope you can make it.

Our very warm wishes to you both. Thanks for all the news, Beulah, and keep well.

**NORMA FITCH**, A.C.T., widow of Harold 2/1, with a sub. enclosed with her Season's Greetings. Do hope you have settled into life in your new city and are keeping well. Thanks for the donation, Norma.

**GRACE FOWKES**, Wentworthville, widow of Dick 2/1, with greetings to all Pioneers for the coming year. A donation to funds was also enclosed to keep the Pioneer News rolling and passed on her thanks for all those who keep up the good work. Thank you, Grace, and our best wishes.

**STAN GAVAN** 2/2, Greystanes, with a short letter enclosing a News sub. and apologies for being so late. Still enjoys reading the doings of the "boys" and sends his best wishes to all for a healthy and happy New Year.

**DR. STAN GOULSTON** 2/1, Chatswood, with a letter expressing his sorrow at the death of Vic Whiteley late last year. Says the proud men of the 2/1st are being markedly reduced in numbers, making it all the more important for the "oldies" to march on ANZAC Day to remember them.

At the grand old age of 83, Stan is involved in showing the very bright, mature medical students in the Medical Faculty at Sydney University how literature can deepen their understanding of fundamental life situations such as death and dying, suicide, drug addiction and suffering.

Keep up the great work you are doing, Stan, the younger people can learn a lot from our older generation. With best wishes for your continued good health and hope you will be able to make the march on ANZAC Day.

**ANN HEALEY**, Edgecliff, daughter of the late Jim Hall 2/1, with a letter of thanks for the note and card sent to her on her father's death in November. The family were able to spend time with him some weeks before his death and Ann said he was in excellent spirits and had them all on the hop as usual. He is sadly missed and Ann says she is grateful for his life and example, and his love, and glad to have had him for a father. A lovely tribute, Ann, and the men of the 2/1st have lost a good mate.

Our thanks for the donation to funds and Max has paid the Association's tribute to Jim in Last Post. Fond wishes to you, Ann, and hope to meet up again one day.

**CLIVE HARRIS** 2/1, Aberdeen, with a welcome donation to funds and no apologies needed for late payment of subs. He leads a fairly quiet life these days since being on his own – gets around the family as much as possible and as they are not too far away travelling is no problem. Good to see, Clive, and to hear you are battling on fairly well. Hope we may meet again one day – until then best wishes and keep well.

**JOHN HAYDEN** 2/1, Orange, with a card of greetings for Christmas and the New Year from both he and Wyn. Their best wishes are passed on to all old friends of yester years and trust that 1999 will be a healthy and happy one for all. Good to hear from you both and all the best for the coming year.

**ELAINE HENDERSON**, Epping, niece of the late Ron Clarke 2/1, wishing the "Pioneer Veterans" a truly wonderful year of good health and happiness. Thank you, Elaine, and trust you have been able to see the Rose Garden at Concord and the Kokoda Track Walkway in which Ron was so interested.

**PAM HERRICK**, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with a note and greetings for Christmas. Her mother, Dorothy, was well and Pam and Patrick are interested in attending the next Lismore reunion. Full details are printed elsewhere in the News, Pam, and you have until 30/8/1999 to get your application in. Best wishes and maybe see you ANZAC Day.

**GLORIA HUTCHINSON**, Caringbah, widow of Bill, 2/1 with a donation to the Association and passes on her best wishes to all for a

healthy and happy 1999. Many thanks, Gloria, and hopefully may see you at lunch on ANZAC Day.

**MARIE JENSON**, Doonside, widow of Ted 2/1, with a note and card for Christmas and her good wishes passed on to all Pioneers. Marie was going to her son's home for Christmas – first time ever – as Ted liked to be in his own home for Christmas. She misses him a lot, but is managing and going along OK. All the best, Marie, and may see you at the luncheon on 25th April.

**JACK KEMPNIH** 2/1, Fingal Bay, a letter once again per pen of good wife, Maisie – you'll soon have to increase her pay, Jack, after so long on the job. Mais has at last had her total shoulder reconstruction and says it's still very painful 24 hours a day, but hopes after three months she can expect better times. Trust by the time the paper reaches you things will be on the brighter side.

They are looking forward to Lismore in September, but Mais needs a new replacement of her right hip before then so is saving up to afford another expensive operation. No end to it once the joints start to wear out. Jack is going along OK after a few hiccups earlier last year and sends his best wishes to all old mates.

Mais and Jack still look forward to the Pioneer News which certainly keeps them in touch and says it must bring pleasure to the "old boys" who don't get about much anymore and the News the only line of communication with old mates.

Their kind regards for the coming year were passed on to all old friends and hope to make Lismore in September. Keep well and hope to see you later in the year.

**ALISTER KENTWELL** Narangba, Qld., formerly QX58077 of H.Q. 7th Aust. Div., with a very welcome letter to Max so many years after their service together in Balikpapan. Alister wrote to Max with congratulations on the 2/1st Pioneer history book which he had seen recently and was very interested in the photo of the signing of the surrender for all Jap forces in the Tempadeong area. Apparently Alister was the linguist in Japanese who acted as interpreter at the surrender table and at the time the history went to print we were unable to identify the young soldier with the pistol on hip in the photograph.

He goes on to say that the 2/1st Pioneers were a superb body of men and he spent a couple of weeks with them at Tempadeong and for his work with them and later with other units was "Mentioned in Despatches". From Balikpapan, Alister went on to Macassar with 21st Bde., then to B.C.O.F. where he served for 13 months with the 22nd N.Z. Inf. Bat. He deemed it an honour to have served with two units who had fought in the Western Desert and Tobruk.

Max has written you, Alister, and your letter brought a lot of memories flooding back of those last days in Balikpapan and he was delighted to hear from you so long after the cessation of hostilities. Thank you for taking the time and trouble to write to him. (Incidentally, I have often asked him over the years "who was the young good-looking soldier in the photo" – that will surely make *your* day).

**DIANE LANDERS**, Glenfield, granddaughter of the late Harry Everett 2/1, with Christmas Greetings to all. Diane has often joined the ladies of the Association at the march on ANZAC Day and has been very interested in the history of the unit. Her daughter, Janelle, works at a solicitor's office in the city and was lucky enough to spend time in September in Paris and Beirut with her job, all expenses paid, too. Latest reports from Diane are that Janelle has won a place, as a mature age student, to study Law at Sydney University. We wish her all the best, Diane, and hopefully may see you ANZAC Day.

**JOYCE LAW**, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with a welcome note with lots of best wishes to all for the New Year. Joyce had a few days in St George Private Hospital for a hernia operation in November and says she could have enjoyed the luxury longer. (Max said it was like being in a 5-star hotel). Glad to hear you are now well and trust you enjoyed the trip to Queensland with Karen, Greg and the children. Hope you made it to Hervey Bay, a lovely spot, and were able to see the whales. Keep well, Joyce, and hope to see you soon.

**DON LINTON** 2/2, Tuncurry, with a donation to funds, for which many thanks. Being unable to travel further than the mail box these days, Don really appreciates the good old Pioneer News and is full of praise for those who keep it alive. He misses the ANZAC and country reunions, but being able to read about it in the News helps to fill the gaps and he often sees a name he hasn't heard of for many years. Thanks for the kind words, Don, will endeavour to carry on. (Age though is catching up.) Best wishes to yourself and Nancy.

**ERNIE LUNN** 2/2, Dubbo, with a note advising us of the death of Tom Culkin 2/1 of Dubbo, in early December. Tom was a member of the Association for many years and assisted the Executive in organising the first reunion in Dubbo. Thanks for your letter, Ernie, all the best.

**HARRY MOWBRAY** 2/1, Thornlands, Qld, with a card for Christmas and the news that 1998 had been a "shocker" for both he and Dorothy. Dot had been laid up with a broken leg and Harry off to Greenslopes Hospital for a heart operation. Do hope it went well, Harry, and Dot back on deck again – 1999 must be better for you both and we send you our best wishes.

Glad you enjoyed the article on the late Wally Thompson, 2/1 in last issue on notes supplied by Jack Coates. Everyone who mentions Wally's name has a story to tell. Harry remembers Christmas Eve in July when Wally (on the grog) went to the officers' mess looking for Col Macgillicuddy to ask him "*could he see the lions jump through the hoop as he was sick of the clowns running in and out of the tents.*" I'm sure Wally would have copped his fair share of pack drill for this incident.

Thanks for the donation to funds and hope you are feeling a lot better. Better get yourself on the mend for Lismore in September.

**GEORGE MURPHY** 2/2, Secretary 2/2 Vic., with kindest regards to Max and I and all NSW Pioneers for Christmas and the New Year. Always good to hear from you, George, keep well.

**JEAN MCINTYRE** Warrimoo, widow of John 2/2, with a cheque for the treasurer and praise for the News which she still likes to receive. Many thanks, Jean, always good to hear from you.

**JOHN McKNIGHT** 2/2, Dundas, was unable to attend the reunion in Wagga after paying his deposit, so requested the money be sent to the Association as a donation to funds. This has been passed on, John, by Bill Lewis, and we thank you for same. He was disappointed he could not make the reunion in Wagga, as his home town of Coolamon is 18 miles north of the City and he was going to pay a visit.

Trust your back is on the mend, John, you missed a good show, but better luck next time. Best wishes for the coming year.

**JOYCE MCGREGOR**, Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, with a sympathy card to the Association re the passing of good friend Vic Whiteley, also greetings for Christmas to all Pioneers and their families. Many thanks, Joyce, and I enjoyed your little prayer. Love from your old friends and a healthy and happy year to you and the family.

**NEVILLE O'CONNOR** 2/2, Tintenbar, per pen of wife Betty, with good wishes to all for 1999. Bette says it has been "catch up" time since coming home from Wagga, but at time of writing it's so hot and hard to get anything done. Her family will be home for Christmas and the Bundaberg family will stay for a few weeks.

Both she and Neville were well and looking forward to the Lismore reunion. All going well, should see a few visitors from the "big smoke". All the best.

**ROY PARRETT** 2/2, Scarness Qld, with a donation to funds and best wishes to all Pioneers and the staff of the News. Thanks, Roy, your good wishes are appreciated.

**JOHN PITMAN** 2/1, Moree, with a cheque for the treasurer to keep the News on the road, many thanks. John has been living in Moree for about 18 months and is really liking town life – guess it is much easier than on the farm.

He and his wife Betty have had a trip to Cairns and the Atherton Tableland and sent Max a photo of a plaque outside one of the army huts with colour patches attached – the first being the purple and white patch of 2/1st

Pioneers. Gave John quite a thrill to see it. Max has placed the photo in the Pioneer album and, although when we visited Atherton ten years ago and found markers and two of the Nissen huts, the plaque is something new. Many thanks for sending it on and Max sends you his personal good wishes – from one old sig. to another (not too many of you left.)

**MONA REINERS**, Corryong, Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with thanks to Max for sending her some pension information which she received some time ago. She has been holidaying in Perth with daughter Mandy and family and would write later when she had more time. Mona thanked Max and I, and Marj and Jack Kerslake for the visit to see her on our way from the Wagga reunion and enjoyed the company. The country around Corryong was really a picture and a lovely trip. Love from both of us Mona and to the family.

**CHARLIE RICHARDSON** 2/2, Manly West, Qld., with greetings to all Committee and Members for a bright and healthy 1999. He looks forward to the News which keeps him in touch with old comrades of both 2/1 and 2/2, originally being an officer in 2/1. Charles was sorry to miss the Wagga reunion, but was just out of hospital with a knee replacement and unable to make the long trip. Thank you for your good wishes, Charles, and we'll try to keep up the good work.

**HARRY SPREADBOROUGH** 2/1, Alexandra Hills, Qld., with his usual long newsy letter and a cheque for funds. Has been a tough year in the "Spready" household, both he and Jean down with a "wog", recovered from that and, even with their flu shots, a new strain of nasties hit them both and at one stage didn't know which one was helping the other. Not content with sickness, termites invaded the house and when Jean asked Harry to take down some curtains, down came curtains, rods, surrounds and the lot. What a kerfuffle!! You know life wasn't meant to be easy.

Harry was very interested in the article in last News on the late Wally Thompson 2/1, and as mentioned before everyone has a story on Wally. Harry remembers that Wally was in strife very soon after the unit was formed. Coming from the Permanent Forces, Harry, now a C.S.M., was given leave to return his uniform and kit to P.M.F., and arrived back in camp to find Wally in strife. He was told Wally, with too much to drink, had started an argument with someone and drew his bayonet, with the end result that the young private was placed under arrest and a Court Martial ensued. Had Harry been there he felt he could have quietened him down, put him to bed (you know, "kiss me good-night S.M."), but all too late. Harry tried to do the best for him, but to no avail and Wally was sentenced to time in a field punishment centre. Says he was a darn good soldier, and Harry had often wondered what had happened to him.

Good letter, Harry, and hope all your troubles are over. Many thanks for cheque and good wishes and all the very best to Jean and yourself.

**GWEN STRODE**, Yagoona, sister of the late Keith Jones 2/1 (K.I.A.) with Christmas greetings to all and expressing sympathy on the death of Vic Whiteley. Thank you, Gwen, also for the donation enclosed in your note.

**BILL THIELE** 2/1, Pt. Hughes, S.A., per pen of good wife, Betty, with some cash for the treasurer and best wishes to all for the coming year.

Last June Bill and Betty celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary and says their son Geoff reckons you don't get that long for murder. Congratulations, we hope you have many more happy years together.

Bill is still enjoying a game of golf and "Night Owl" bowls – presume that is bowls played at dusk, a new expression to me, but I could be wrong. If he can do all this, Betty, you'd better give him the pen next time for a change.

Keep well and all the best to both of you.

**GEORGE TOLMIE** 2/1, Canley Heights, with a short note re the condition of old mate of D Coy., Jack Lamerton, who was very ill in hospital after having his leg amputated. Unfortunately Jack passed away on New Year's Day and, as reported in Last Post, quite a few Pioneers were able to attend the service and the burial. Thank you for your letter, George, and for the friendship you have shown Jack over so many years.



**DICK WAKELY** 2/2, Merewether, with Seasons Greetings and very best wishes to all Pioneers for the coming year. Take care, Dick, and keep well.

**HARRY WEST** 2/2, Lane Cove, with a change of address from Gordon and a generous donation to funds. In Harry's words, not generous – just overdue.

Harry was with 2/2 – D and then H.Q. Coys., from early 1942 till late 1944 at Trinity Beach when he transferred to ANGAU and remained in Papua New Guinea until 1975. Finally in Sydney, alive and well, he spends ANZAC Day with the ANGAU/PNGVR survivors because of his long association with New Guinea. He enjoys the News and seeing old friends' names – Allan Stone, Cec Sloggett and Norm Le Cornu.

In regard to the listing of members, Harry, Max had discussed the possibility of publishing names and addresses with Committee, but they decided space in the News would not allow for the listing of over 600 odd names. However, he has published the fact that when members are going on holiday in a certain area, names and addresses can be supplied, with a little notice. Our address system is in postcode order, so not a problem.

Thank you for your letter and best wishes.

**GEORGE SAUER** 2/1 and 2/2, South Australia, a note for Christmas with best wishes to all Pioneers and thanks for Max's help during the year. Hope you are well, George, all the best.

**DYLANE WHITELEY**, Altona, Vic., only grand-daughter of the late Vic Whiteley 2/1, with a note of thanks for the copies of the News Max had sent her after Vic's death and for photos of Vic taken at various Pioneer functions.

She misses her grandfather very much and was very happy to receive the photos. Our best wishes to you, Dylane, and glad to help.

**BILL GAMBLE** 2/1, Chermerside, Qld., with a cheque to keep the News afloat and his congratulations to all who keep the Association active. Bill says it's a marvellous publication, packed full of news, good and sad, and a great pity the Last Post continues to grow.

Reading of Cyril Morahan's passing, it took Bill's memory back many years ago when a few of them were posted to the 2/1 at Wondecla. It was about 9 p.m. and they were taken to that famous log cabin mess and were introduced all round. Imagine their surprise when they came to the evenly matched pair of Morahan twins, John and Cyril, standing either side of the open fireplace like a well-matched pair of book-ends. And Bill said they were stone cold sober!!

Roy Law, son of Jim 2/1, rings now and again and keeps him posted, and says we are fortunate to have such an active group of sons and supporters.

Good letter, Bill, and thanks from the Mail Bag editor for your kind words.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and the Committee look forward to a good roll-up to the Wreath Laying on ANZAC Eve, the March and the Reunion at the Occidental Hotel on ANZAC Day. You are assured of a warm welcome. Best wishes to all and stay healthy.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday, 21st May, 1999 at 1 pm at the Redfern RSL Club, corner of Redfern and Gibbon Streets, Redfern and a cordial welcome is extended to all Pioneers to attend.

## 7th AUST. DIVISION PLAQUE

On Sunday, 14th February, 1999, at 12 noon, the unveiling and dedication service of four plaques for units of the 7th Division was conducted by Reverend Seers at the Holy Trinity Garrison Church, Sydney.

One of the plaques was for the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion which had been organised by Roy Levy, our delegate to the 7th Division. Pioneers in attendance were Mary and Allan McInnes, Bert Neasby, Bob Ginnane, Roy Levy, Gavin Todd, Bill Robertson, Don Crawford, Ian Willmore, Jack Allison, Peg and Max Herron.

Prayers for Association members were delivered by Reverend Wotton and an excellent address on the 7th Division was given by Sir Frederick Chilton, C.B.E., D.S.O. and Bar.

## VALE – LEN PREEDY, 2/2

It was sad to hear that Len Preedy, President of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Branch in Western Australia had passed away on 15th January, 1999, after a long stay in Hollywood Repatriation Hospital, Perth.

Len will always be remembered as "Mr Pioneer" of W.A. as he had kept the 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneers together for the past sixteen years.

On 13th September, 1994, a special meeting was convened at Anzac House, Perth where Secretary, Max Herron, on his visit to WA, presented Len with his Association Life Membership Certificate.

Len has had wonderful support in all his Pioneer activities by wife Joy and we are pleased to hear she has indicated she will endeavour to carry on the work Len loved so much. Thank you, Joy, we appreciate your effort.

A large crowd of about 150 gathered at the funeral to say farewell to Len. The service was at St Aloysius Church, Shenton Park with the last rites at Karrakatta Cemetery. The Ode of Remembrance was recited by Joy's brother Kevin Watson, a Korean Veteran.

Pioneers in attendance were Hugh Sorley, Tom Crean, Hugh Vincent and Jack Stewart who, on behalf of the Association, extended sincere sympathy to Joy and her family.

## LAST POST

**JACK GLENN** 2/1 of Condell Park passed away on 17th November and the funeral on 20th November was attended by Roy Jardine who extended to the family the Association's sympathy.

**JACK CLEMENT** 2/2 of Baulkham Hills passed away on 14th November and the funeral at Castle Hill on 17th November was attended by Roy Levy and Bill Tasker who gave the Eulogy.

**JIM HALL** 2/1 of Kyogle passed away on 20th November while in hospital. For the funeral he was taken from "Greenwood", the property where he lived since his wife died, to "Flemington" on a wagon drawn by a draught horse and buried on this property alongside his wife.

There were 250 people including Pioneers in attendance and the local RSL did a sterling job with the Service and Last Post.

Jim will be sadly missed in the community as he carried out a lot of work, including teaching saddlery, to the young people of the surrounding district. Pioneers will fondly remember Jim as the person who organised and ran so smoothly the wonderful Pioneer Reunion in 1979 at the Kyogle Golf Club.

We thank daughter Ann for giving us the details and we have extended to her and Margaret and their families our deepest sympathy.

**IRENE SCHOLES**, wife of Clancy 2/1, passed away on 27th November and the funeral on 1st December at Casino was well attended by Pioneers from Casino, Lismore and Kyogle. We thank Ken Wilson for notifying us of the details and also for extending the Association's sympathy to Clancy and Wendy at the funeral.

**TOM CULKIN** 2/1 of Dubbo passed away on 28th November and we thank Ern Lunn 2/2 for giving us the details.

**JACK LAMERTON** 2/1 of Liverpool passed away on 1st January, 1999 and the service was held at All Saints Catholic Church at Liverpool and thence to Liverpool Cemetery. Pioneers in attendance were Bill Hodges, Ken Oliver, Jim Gray, George Walker, Peg and Max Herron and Bill Tasker.

Jack had been in poor health for a few years and then in November he had a leg amputated, because of a vascular problem. George Tolmie, 2/1, who could not attend the funeral because

of a health problem, had been a regular visitor to Jack when he was in hospital and even on ANZAC Day each year George would spend the day with Jack watching the March.

The Eulogy on behalf of the Association was read by son Harry at the Church. The Poppy Service at the graveside was in the capable hands of our Welfare Officer Bill Tasker, who extended to Marie Lamerton and her family the sincere sympathy of all Pioneers.

**STAN HALLOWELL** 2/2 of Warrnambool, Vic., passed away on 26th December, 1998 at the St John of God Hospital, Warrnambool, at the age of 87 years. He had served with the 2/2 Pioneers at New Guinea and Borneo. After the war he went back to his job as a Composer with "The Standard" which is the local Warrnambool newspaper.

We thank Eric Causer 2/1 for sending us the newspaper cutting of the details.

**REVEILLE** and **MUFTI** of Vic. report by Eric Causer 2/1 – Deceased – N. M. Buckpitt 2/1, H. D. Jackson 2/1, A. E. Mitchell 2/2, D. J. Ferguson 2/2, A. Griffiths 2/2, R. W. Kenny 2/2, L. R. Saddington 2/2.

## 2/1-2/2 LISMORE REUNION

**Saturday 11th, Sunday 12th September, 1999**

NSW North Coast Branch invite all Pioneers and their Ladies to their Country Reunion at Lismore and Ballina with details as follows:

**WREATH LAYING – Saturday 11th Sept.**

5pm at the Lismore Memorial Baths Cenotaph, corner of Market and Molesworth Streets. Medals to be worn.

**REUNION DINNER – Saturday 11th Sept.**

7.30pm. Smorgasbord Dinner at the Lismore RSL Club, Market Street. Cost \$25 per head. Drinks at own expense.

**BARBECUE LUNCH – Sunday 12th Sept.**

12 noon. Lunch at the Ballina Ex-Servicemen's Home Complex, 71-73 Morton Street, Ballina. Members invited to inspect complex. Cost \$10 per head. Drinks at \$1.50 per can or stubby of beer.

**ACCOMMODATION – LISMORE:** Olympic Motel; Ph. 02 6621 9900, Single \$50; Double/twin \$60; Triple \$70; Four \$80. Karinga Motel: Ph. 02 6621 2787, Single \$50; Double or twin \$60. Centrepont Motel: Ph. 02 6621 8877, see NRMA Travel Guide for rates. These three motels are in Molesworth Street, within walking distance to RSL Club and central Lismore.

**BALLINA:** Motels: Ferry Boat, Fun and Sun, Coast Inn, Heritage Palms Motor Inn and El-Rancho – see NRMA Guide for rates.

Ballina is 27km from Lismore, so own transport is needed.

All accommodation is to be booked by you and to obtain prices quoted mention attendance at Pioneer Reunion.

**TRANSPORT:** Planes from Sydney to Lismore and Ballina daily; Country Link trains from Sydney to Lismore (1) Departs Sydney 4 pm, arrives Lismore 4 am next morning. (2) Departs Sydney 7 am arrives 7 pm. Train travellers will be met at station and taken to accommodation. Plane travellers to Lismore will be met if notified to Ken Wilson. Plane travellers to Ballina not met.

On Saturday morning, 11th September a bus trip is proposed to leave Lismore Cenotaph at 8 am to O'Connors Cane Farm to see Cane Harvesting. Return 11.30 am – trip free.

**DEPOSIT OF \$10 PER HEAD** is required with application form below to reach Ken Wilson before 30th August, 1999 for catering purposes. Deposit is non-refundable.

**CHEQUES** etc, for deposit to be made out to K.A. WILSON, NOT the Association and posted, with application form to: KEN WILSON, 9 ROSEDALE SQUARE, LISMORE, NSW 2480. Ph 02 6621 4762.

LISMORE REUNION - Fill in particulars: CUT OUT

Surname: ..... Known Name: .....

Ladies Name: ..... Phone: ..... Unit: .....

Address: .....

Attendance Tick: ☐ Dinner ☐ Barbecue ☐ Car ☐ Plane ☐ Train

# PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

Official Organ of 2/1 and 2/2 PIONEER BATTALIONS ASSOCIATION

Per Annum: \$5

Registered under the Charitable Collections Act, 1934-41 - Certificate No. 10462 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Arncliffe

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Vol. 45 No. 2

JULY 1999

Welfare: BILL TASKER, Phone 9718 6658

## 1999 PIONEER ANZAC ACTIVITIES

### WREATH LAYING SERVICE

Martin Place was drawn to heed a solemn moment as the Wreath Laying by the Association took place on the afternoon of 24th April. Memories were recalled as the thirty Pioneers and eighteen Ladies were marshalled by Bill Tasker and marched to the Cenotaph by Jack Tooker. The banners were carried by Ron Webster 2/1 and Jack McDonagh 2/2.

Wreaths were laid by Allan McInnes, Assoc. President and for the Ladies Auxiliary by Ann Healey, daughter of the late Jim Hall 2/1. The Ode to the Fallen was recited by Allan McInnes.

Memories ran deep as Aub Brasier raised his bugle for the 39th year to sound Last Post and the Reveille.

Among those who travelled long distances were Alf Bentley, Yokine WA, Jack Stewart, Floreat Park WA, Phil Cramsie, Buderim Qld, John Hunt, New Farm Qld and Robyn Bell, Harkaway Vic. daughter of the late Leo Morris, Nev O'Connor, Kevin Raward and Ken Wilson both of Lismore

The occasion, as well as a stirring remembrance was a renewal of deep comradeship

Reported by JACK ALLISON

### ANZAC DAY MARCH AND REUNION

After a miserable week of wind and showers, Anzac Day turned out cool and clear which was ideal for the march. For the 2/1st Jack Tooker acted as marshal, John Gilchrist as march leader with Tim Lloyd carrying the banner and Ray Law the Australian flag. Allan McInnes did the honours for the 2/2nds with Mark Neasbey carrying the banner and John Collins with the Australian flag.

The 2/1st members were very appreciative of Don Crawford 2/2 who came over and collected subscriptions before the march and was assisted by Doug Shearston. Gavin Todd collected subs. for the 2/2nds.

At the Occidental Hotel, lunch fees were collected by Olive Finlay, Ray Law and David Herron, while name tags were issued by Geoff Finlay assisted by Gordon Finlay and his grandsons, Darryn and Craig Reynolds.

### REUNION TABLE TALK

The far north coast was well represented by Ken Wilson, Nev O'Connor, Kevin Raward, Snowy Dodd, Jack Crouch and Peter Priest. There were many from other country areas and interstate, and those we talked to were Jack Stewart from Floreat WA who has been making the trip for 25 years and with him was Alf Bentley from Yokine WA on his sixth Anzac Day visit. Noel Grant was there from Melbourne who was going further north and intended visiting Winston McKibbin at the Ballina nursing home. From Queensland came John Hunt of New Farm and Phil Cramsie, Buderim. Jack Griffith and Jack Bertram came down from Newcastle, both being Assoc. Country Vice Presidents. Nev Moane was sitting with Alf Bentley and claims a mention, having come a fair way from Curl Curl.

Jack Griffiths who organised a recent Rats of Tobruk dinner in Newcastle, brought with him one of the few Rats of Tobruk medals, made by the 2/1st Workshop Platoon, from shell cases and duralium, taken from a shot down German plane. It is inscribed "Presented by Lord Haw Haw to the Rats of Tobruk". Also at the same table was Noel Schomberg who mentioned he had recently visited Colonel Adrian Buckley - a fit 83 years.

Among many younger members we sighted were Mark Neasbey, son of Bert (many thanks Mark for your substantial shout of beer to

members at the start of proceedings) - Gordon and John Collins, sons of Pat - Brian Hemmings, son of the late Snowy, with sons-in-law, Allan Moore and Graham Buchan - Gary Lewis, son of Sam, who came down from Forster - Anthony Jamison, grandson of the late Ernie Jamison - Tim Lloyd, son of the late Jack Lloyd - Ken Finlayson, son-in-law of Alec George, down from Lismore - Neil Whiteley, son of our late great friend and Treasurer Vic Whiteley who would have been very proud to see Neil marching in naval uniform with 2/1st members. Neil marched with Reg Ward a Scouting mate of Max Herron. Reg was an artillery man - David McInnes son of Allan, was seated at the head table with his father.

In his welcoming speech, President Allan McInnes had thanked the sons for being with us and for those who had carried out duties on the day. Allan also paid a tribute to all those Pioneers who had passed on in the past twelve months especially Vic Whiteley. He was supported by a short address from Patron John Gilchrist.

It was good to see Bill Robertson in good form in his early nineties, and Padre Steele not far behind, and Jack Pearce 94 years. As Jim Gray is fond of saying "When you're over the hill, it can still be a long way down the other side."

An interesting visitor was Stephen Darmody. His grandfather Bill Darmody was a member of the 1st Pioneer Battalion formed in early 1916. They arrived in Marseilles in April, proceeded to Fleur Baix and Fromelles, then Pozieres where they suffered heavy casualties. Stephen showed our members a pair of lapel badges, made of brass with a rifle crossed with a pick. This was British issue, but apparently prized by the Australians as a non-regulation accessory.

Committee members and their helpers are to be thanked for another well organised and enjoyable reunion.

Reported by BILL LEWIS

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 1999

This is the last Annual Meeting of this millennium for our Association, which was formed at a meeting on Wednesday 13th March 1946 with an attendance of 118 Pioneers and chaired by Bob Egan. This showed great zeal and foresight, and I wonder if anyone present would have thought our Association would survive over all these years and that we would enter the 21st century very strongly.

I would like to thank our executive and committee members for their support and co-operation to help our Association to run like clockwork. Special thanks to Max Herron who for many decades has given a full 100% as Secretary. To Peg Herron for stepping in as Editor of the Pioneer News mailbag when Bob Lake passed away. The Pioneer News is our lifeline and Peg is doing a wonderful job keeping Pioneers in touch.

Also thanks to Don Crawford, who is our new Treasurer, having taken over when Vic Whiteley passed away, and this was certainly a hard act to follow. We are grateful to Bill Lewis who organised the Wagga Reunion in October 1998 and to Ken Wilson for organising the Lismore Reunion in September 1999.

We thank Aub Brasier who brought his bugle to the Wreath Laying Service for the 39th time. The Wreath Laying on 24th April this year was well attended by Pioneers and Ladies. This is a very important event on our programme and I thank all who attended and to Jack Tooker who was the march leader and to Bill Tasker who acted as Marshal.

Our Anzac Day was as always a very successful part of our programme and although both Battalions were down in numbers all who were able to march kept going with the stirring music from "our" wonderful Band. Those unable to march because of health reasons came to the dinner which was voted a great success. Our venue, the Occidental Hotel is both convenient and private and I hope you all agree that having the first floor to ourselves and with drink waiters and catering supplied is excellent and gives our Committee members more time to enjoy the company of their mates.

For the Anzac Day march it was fine and sunny which brought a very large crowd of enthusiastic spectators and notably a large proportion of children from the very young through to teenagers. It was noticeable that there were more Australian flags being waved than in past years, and the marchers received plenty of cheers. I was impressed by the articles and letters in the press concerning Anzac Day, praising the continued commemoration and strongly suggesting that Anzac Day be made "The Australian National Day". This shows how Anzac Day is thought of and appreciated by all Australians.

Thanks to Steve Clarke and Bill Jollie for keeping the Committee up to date with the news from the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway. Congratulations to the 2/1st members for such a fine response to the call for donations to put a 2/1st plaque at Imita Ridge Station and two more plaques in the Rose Garden as part of the Kokoda Track Walkway. They have also donated seats along the Track. This is a very fine Memorial and is not just for the present generation but will be there for our descendants to visit.

In conclusion I wish the incoming Executive and Committee another wonderful Pioneer year.  
President ALLAN McINNES

### 2/1st BAND - WELL DONE

At the Anzac Day march the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion were led by the City of Sydney Marching Band, usually fielding at least 70 members and standing out in their distinctive blue and white uniforms. Judging from the reaction of the crowds, it was the quality of their playing which was remarkable. The real appreciation comes from the returned men who march behind the band for playing music to which they can march.

Prior to marching off, our march marshal congratulated the Band Director, Squadron Leader Mike Butcher (Ret.) on the turn out of the band. Mike was an ex-Director of Music of Australian Army, Air Force and Police bands, so has had plenty of experience with marching music.

The Youth Band first marched with the 2/1st on Anzac Day in 1994 when Bill Jollie and Max Herron seconded them when the unit stopped at Castlereagh Street on the way down King Street. They have marched with the 2/1st ever since.

At the Annual Meeting the secretary announced that he had received word from Graeme and Carolyn Gould, band secretaries, that the band was awarded "Best Brass and Concert Band" for their performance on Anzac Day. Later Max received a Castle Hill newspaper article also reporting on the award on Anzac Day. This award topped off a number of marching achievements including the "Best Drum Corps" in the 1998 Anzac Day parade and "Grand Champions" and "Best Band in Parade" at the 1999 Holroyd Family Festival.

The Association have sent a letter of congratulations to the Band secretary on the award and thanking them for providing the 2/1st members with such stirring music at the Anzac Day march.

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The first issue since ANZAC Day and once again a good roll up for both 2/1sts and 2/2nds, in fine weather and crowds of onlookers along the streets of Sydney. A shortage of marshals caused a few hiccups at the start of the march, but it is hoped that this problem may be overcome by next year. Plenty of letters in the mail since last issue, so on with the show.

**FRED ALWAY 2/1**, Beaumaris Vic., with his thanks for the recent copy of Pioneer News and, as always, a pleasure to receive it. Fred says he is another who is unlikely to suffer writer's cramp, but enclosed a donation to the News and sends warmest wishes to all Pioneers. Many thanks, Fred, and all the best.

**ALBY BARTON 2/1**, Gulgong, with a welcome donation to funds and some kind words from both he and Gwen to all those who keep the Association going. His good wishes are passed on for ANZAC Day to all his old mates of 2/1 and hopes not too many aches and pains. Gulgong, although a small town, had quite a lot of activities commencing with a Dawn Service, breakfast at the RSL, the main march and then lunch, also at the RSL Club. Everyone seems to get involved in the activities and he and a couple of other returned men were going to the local schools for their ANZAC services.

All the best old mate and warm regards to Gwen.

**DON ANDERSON 2/1**, Merimbula, with two letters both per pen of good wife Dora. Don has been on the sick list for some time and unable to write. Dora is looking after him at home with the help of the wonderful nursing service in their area and aim to keep him as comfortable as possible in his own home. Not being able to read, Dora has to be his "eyes" and reads the news of his old mates from the Pioneers. Dora was full of praise for the wonderful team who keep the Association still rolling along after so many years and wonders how many other battalions are blessed with those who keep their members abreast of news of former comrades.

In regard to the query re the Dutch Medal, Dora, Max has written you with the information also re the latest Australian Service Medal 1945/75. Trust the information was of help and that you receive both in due course.

Our best wishes to Don and many thanks for your letters on his behalf.

**"SNOWY" ANDERSON 2/2**, Aspendale Vic., with a very generous donation to funds and for your kind words to both Max and myself. Also many thanks for the cutting from the "Herald Sun" on the official opening of the Australian War Memorial's Second World War Gallery. It tells of a small stuffed toy, a red camel, which sits in pride of place in a display cabinet in the War Memorial. It was donated to the Memorial by the daughter of the late Geoffrey Wheeler, 2/2nd Pioneers, who was killed in action in Syria, and buried there. The little red camel was sent back with his belongings and has been in the proud possession of his daughter, Maxine, until she decided to donate this precious family keepsake to the Memorial. A very interesting article, Snow, and it made good reading.

Our very best wishes to Isobell and Julie and we are endeavouring to get a tape of the City of Sydney Youth Band to send on to Julie. Hope you are able to make the Lismore reunion in September, would be nice to see you and the family once again.

**ALF BALLARD 2/2**, Monterey, with his dues for the News and very best wishes for ANZAC Day. Alf sends his apologies for non-attendance as the years have caught up with him, but would be with his old mates in spirit! Thanks for the donation, Alf, and your good wishes.

**PHIL BARNETT 2/2**, Alstonville, with a short note of congratulations to all committee members for a job well done and his cheque to keep the News on the road. Thanks, Phil, and best wishes.

**TOM BLAINEY 2/1**, Noble Park Vic., per pen of wife Vi, as Tom's sight is not the best due to glaucoma. Vi has also had cataracts,

needing an operation, and hoping her troubles are now behind her.

Tom and Vi have celebrated their Golden Wedding and had a quiet evening out with friends. Congratulations – getting to be a rare occasion in these times.

Getting to Sydney for the march on ANZAC Day now presents a problem, so Tom has to make do with the RSL in Dandenong. They both appreciate the News when it comes and it helps them keep up with folks they have met at the reunions in earlier days.

Good to hear from you both, hope this year will be a healthy and happy one.

**EVELYN BOOTH**, Wagga, friend of the late Jack Morgan 2/2, with a letter of thanks for the Pioneer News and to say how pleased she was to once again meet up with old friends at the last Wagga reunion. Passes on a big hello to all those who "camped" at the William Farrer Hotel – it was great to see them all again. All the best, Ev, keep well.

**KAY BURTON**, Springwood, daughter of the late Bert Rayner 2/1, with a note asking that the News be sent to her instead of to her mother, Margaret Rayner who lives in Kyogle. Kay says her mother can no longer read it, so Kay passes on the relevant news to her by phone. Kay was taking three of her grand-kids to the march this year and says her son, who is a captain in the army, flew his Super-King Air in the fly past over the Dawn Service in Toowoomba in 1998 and was in Sale, Vic., this year. Thanks for your good wishes, Kay, and the paper will be sent to you as requested.

**LES BRITT 2/1**, Laurieton, with a change of address from Cairns. Since Les lost his wife last year, he has decided to return down south. Perhaps you may meet up with fellow Pioneers in Laurieton as we have quite a few now living in that area. Best of luck in your new home, Les, and best wishes.

**COL CAMERON 2/1**, Campbelltown, per pen of good wife Jean, with a donation to funds and the news that she was taking Col to the RSL for Anzac Day. It is the first time for many years that he has been able to go to the service. Both send their best wishes to all the boys for ANZAC Day.

**TED CARTER 2/1**, Tamworth, with congratulations on a very interesting April issue of the News. He found the report on the Unknown Soldier, Canberra, an extremely interesting article and something about which Ted has always had a "soft" feeling. Enjoys reading the Mail Bag, particularly news of those who were in the 2/1sts in their early days and with whom he has lost contact. He and Mary would not be in Sydney for Anzac Day as they would be away touring up north, but sent best wishes to all who attended.

Ted was sorry to learn of the passing of Jack Glenn 2/1 – they were always pleased to see each other whenever they were lucky to meet.

All the best to Mary and yourself and hope you enjoyed your holiday.

**JACK COATES 2/1**, Umina, with two long newsy letters, a cheque enclosed for News, and books of stamps to help cover secretary's postage. Many thanks, Jack, also for the used stamps for yours truly. With so many new issues coming out by Australia Post, it is sometimes quite hard to obtain all copies. I'm sure Ann Healey (Hall) would have realised you could not make her father's funeral in Kyogle and she intimated on ANZAC Eve that she would ring you. Ann joined us at the wreath laying ceremony and took part in the march on ANZAC Day.

Your letter contained news of your intended trip to North Shore for your third by-pass and happy to say that, at time of writing, you were back in Brisbane Waters Private Hospital and had come through the operation fairly well, with a minor problem with leg infection. Hope by now you are home with Lex and well on the road to recovery. Good to see you on our recent visit.

**RICHARD "SNOW" COBBLE 2/1**, Banora Point, with a cheque for the News and a change of address from Ballina.

Snow was sorry to hear of Major Morahan's passing – met up with him while Snow was serving in the Regular Army in the 50's and 60's. He often notices names of old friends that crop up from time to time in the Mail Bag and said to keep up the good work. Will try to do just that. Max has made a note of your new address.

**TOM CROSSMAN 2/1**, St. Ives, with a cheque for funds and his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day. He had the opportunity to have a couple of weeks away with friends and it happened to include the 25th. You missed a good day.

Tom is still able to play golf and bowls and as Chairman of his bowls committee he keeps himself very busy.

Sends regards to all those who keep the Association functioning and hopes to be on deck next year. All the best to you both.

**ALBY DEAN 2/1**, Shepparton Vic., with a short note enclosing his subs and says apart from complaints associated with old age he and his wife are reasonably fit. Good to hear, Alby, and your kind regards passed on to all old members of the battalion.

**DAVE DENNY 2/1**, Lismore, apologising for lateness with his sub, but blames the "boss" for not reminding him. Says he was disappointed in not making Sydney for the "big day", but emphysema has got its claws into him and he wasn't well enough to come. However, he hopes to make the reunion in Lismore in September. The Northern Rivers Branch are holding a good rally each couple of months at their meetings with an attendance of 15 to 20, but says the 2/1sts are a bit outnumbered. Not so many of them living in your area these days, Dave, seems to be more 2/2nd country. Looking forward to seeing you both in September.

**JOHN DOWD 2/2**, Wagga, per pen of his wife Daphne, enclosing a sub for the News and John's best regards to all. John is also suffering from emphysema and on oxygen at home so doesn't get around much these days. All the best to you, John, and thanks for your letter. Have to give Daphne more pay!!

**ANNE DYNON**, Woodhill, daughter of the late Frank Dynon 2/1, with a very nice letter on behalf of her mother, Billie Dynon, to say that her mum was in the process of moving to Toronto and would be pleased to receive the News at her new address at Carey Bay. This shall be done, Anne, and copies will also be forwarded to you at Woodhill, which I take to be somewhere on the South Coast. Thank you for your subscription for both Billie and yourself.

Pleased to hear that you passed the article on the Unknown Soldier on to the history department at the school where you teach – we have had quite a few readers who found it most interesting.

In closing, Anne said the 2/1sts have a treasured place in her memories, from the days when the post-war ANZAC Day reunions were held in the Goulburn Hotel in George Street, run by her father, to the kindness and concern shown when he was dying in hospital. From the eulogy spoken by one of the 2/1st at his funeral they found out more about her father than they did during his lifetime.

Thank you for your letter, Anne, and we hope Billie has settled down in her new home. Our best wishes to you both.

**SAM GARDINER 2/1**, Oak Flats, with a donation to funds and the news that he had recently had his appendix removed and although very sick at the time is now on the mend. Good to hear, Sam, and hope your eye problems have also cleared up. All the best.

**STELLA GRANGER**, Schofields, widow of Bill 2/1, with best wishes to all for a fine and happy ANZAC Day and a welcome donation to funds. Good to hear from you, Stella, and hope you are keeping well.

**RUSS HARRISON 2/2**, Stirling S.A., with a cheque for worthy treasurer and very best wishes to all Pioneers for ANZAC Day. Can assure you, Russ, they enjoyed their day and meeting up with old mates at the Occidental.

Russ and Rona celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in November and were pleased to have all their Sydney family, plus daughter Kate who lives in Adelaide, with them for the big day. Barbara Cheal (widow of Frank 2/2) from Melbourne and Ronnie and Geoff Lloyd 2/2 were also in attendance. Russ attended the Lloyd's wedding in 1944 during army leave after service in New Guinea.

All the very best to you both and may you have many more happy years together.

**IAN HODGE 2/1**, Evans Head, with a short note enclosing his sub. and says not too much



to report from his part of the country – except the rain. Ian had recorded 52" to the end of April, only 10" short of their annual rainfall.

He does not see anyone from the unit but spends his time in retirement, playing golf, crab fishing and gardening. Not a bad pastime, Ian, and good to see you are still young and healthy enough to enjoy it.

**MOLLIE-JEAN HUNT**, New Farm Qld., wife of John 2/1, with a short letter to yours truly and her thanks for the company on ANZAC Day. She and John had been in touch with Nell Laughren, widow of Pat 2/1, and Nell was very happy to see them. As we had not heard from Nell for some time, we had wondered if she was O.K. (Nell still gets the paper, Mollie). Thank you for your visit to her and for taking the time to let us know. Kind regards to both you and John.

**JEAN JAMISON**, Gladesville, widow of Ern 2/1, with a kind letter of thanks to the Association on behalf of herself and family for the kindness shown to Ern during the last days of his life. She said the day the Pioneer News arrived was the highlight in his life. Jean and her family are putting a plaque for Ern in the Rose Garden at the Kokoda Track Walkway – his wish to be with his mates. Thank you for your note, Jean, and your kind message to Max and Bill Tasker. Keep well, and the paper will continue to be forwarded to you as long as you want to receive it.

**JOAN JENSON**, Rydalmere, wife of Allen 2/1, with letter enclosing sub on Allen's behalf. Allen is in his fifth year at Fernleigh Nursing Home and still wheel-chair bound, but goes home once a week by taxi for the day. Joan says he is allowed a beer or two before lights out and a nip of sherry. Must be good for him, Joan, and certainly doesn't seem to be doing him any harm. All the best to you both and thanks for the sub.

**BILL JOLLIE** 2/1, Castle Hill, with a generous donation to funds and best wishes to Max for his "special" birthday in February. Many thanks, Bill, and good to see you were able to make ANZAC Day. Keep well and our best wishes.

**JACK KEMPNIH** 2/1, Fingal Bay, once again pen of the ever-faithful Mais. Don't know what you would do without her, Jack. Maisie's shoulder reconstruction has knocked her around a lot and her doctor expects it to be at least 12 months before it will be as good as expected. Jack has been a great help during her recovery, not so much time for fishing, and the fish have been few and far between.

They hope to make Lismore for the reunion by train and perhaps go on to Evans Head and stay for a few days with Jack's brother. Finding the distance by car getting to be a problem. Hope you can make it, we look forward to seeing you again. Best wishes to both – keep fit.

**FRED KILLEN** 2/1, Warners Bay, a very short note enclosing his donation to funds. Can't make much out of your brief letter, Fred, but many thanks and best wishes.

**DIANE LANDERS**, Glenfield, with a letter with Easter greetings and very best wishes to the Pioneers for ANZAC Day. Sorry you weren't able to join us at the march this year, but hope you made it to Canberra and the War Memorial.

Apologies for the mistake in your grandfather's name – I should have remembered it was Harry Barton 2/1 and not Everett. I was getting it mixed up with your maiden name. Trust Janelle is doing well at her Law course – should make it a little easier after working at the solicitor's office. Many thanks for the sub. to the News and best wishes to you both – keep in touch.

**KIM LATHAM**, Warriewood, daughter of the late Jack Howie 2/2, with a welcome donation to funds and best wishes to all Pioneers for ANZAC Day. Kim sends a special message to Allan McInnes and Gavin Todd from the Howie family. The News will continue to be sent to you, Kim, and many thanks for the sub.

**JOYCE LAW**, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with cheque for the Treasurer and a note to say she would be lunching with the Pioneer ladies on ANZAC Day, together with Rita Trefoni, widow of Noel 2/1. She sent regards and best wishes to all the "boys" and hoped they enjoyed their reunion at the Occidental. Many thanks, Joyce, and keep in touch.

**ERN LEE** 2/2, Glen Innes, with his apology for lateness in sending his sub, but has had quite a few medical problems and has only just got round to writing. Is at last back on his feet with grateful thanks to Veterans' Affairs. Ern has just been elected as President of the RSL Sub-Branch in Glen Innes and hopes to make it to Lismore for the reunion in September. He sends his regards to all Pioneers for the coming year.

**SAM LEWIS** 2/1, Forster, with a request for the News to be sent to the daughter of R.C. Hay, NX50881, now deceased. The daughter, Enid Lanham, lives in Forster and Sam has loaned her his copy of the 2/1st history to enable her to read of the unit's part in WWII. Max has put her name on the mailing list, Sam, and sent her some back numbers of the News. Trust you received the badges he sent on to you too. Best wishes to Margaret and yourself.

**GEOFF LLOYD** 2/2, Prospect S.A., with a change of address to Labrina Village and a donation to funds. Glad you were able to make the march, even if in a wheel-chair, and I guess you were proud of your four generations being represented. Good for you. Geoff tells of Russ Harrison being elected to the position of Vice-President of the Adelaide Pioneer Committee and all the executive members returned to their positions. Very best wishes to Ronnie and yourself, Geoff, keep well.

**JACK MCGREGOR** 2/2, Shortland, with a short note enclosing his sub. for the year. Says both he and Doris are keeping well although arthritis gives him a "nibble" when he tries to write. Better get Doris on the job, Jack, and pay her more money for services rendered. His kindest regards are passed on to Allan McInnes and all the other workers who keep the Association going. Thanks, Jack, all the best to you both.

**TOM MCGUINNESS** 2/1, Laurieton, sends his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day as his health isn't the best and encloses a cheque for the News. Trust all the "boys" had a good day and keep up the good work on the Pioneer News – the life line of the Association.

**PETER PEILE** 2/1, Caringbah, once again from good wife Erika, with Peter's dues for 1999. No one is ever taken off the mailing list unless they request it, Erika, so you have no worries if late with your subs. Trust you enjoyed your ANZAC Day in Melbourne and that the weather was as kind as it was here in Sydney.

Sorry Pete's back has been still giving him problems – bad enough with his eyes as they are without anything else. However, he still loves listening to his music and sports, so can make the most of his health problems. Let's hope the coming year may be a little better healthwise. Very best wishes to you both.

**PETER PETERSON** 2/2, Broulee, with his donation to funds for which many thanks. At the time of writing Peter was off to Nowra for a second knee replacement and says with what he has already he's just about a walking ironmonger. (Not too good when you go to the airports these days through the "checkers" – alarms seem to go off and it's always people with knee or hip replacements). Trust all went well and you are home and able to hobble about with a cane. Keep fit and hope you continue to enjoy reading the News.

**JACK SHARP** 2/2, Goorambat Vic., with a long newsy letter forwarded with his cheque for the News. Still looks forward to receiving the paper and often sees names of members he knew well during the war years.

Jack passes on news of fellow Pioneers who have passed on including Eric Hooper and Frank Caulfield both 2/2. We were saddened to hear of Frank as he was for years a regular attendee at our reunions and wrote regularly to the paper. Max has included a note re Frank in Last Post. Eric lived near Jack at Goorambat all his life and most 2/2 Pioneers would know his record as a POW, being on a ship that was torpedoed on the way to Japan. He finished up in a prison camp close to where the atom bomb was dropped in Hiroshima.

Jack also gave news of another original 2/2 Pioneer who is in the Lindell Wing of Beechworth Hospital, Sam Wright, also formerly of Goorambat. Sam is over 90 but still keeping reasonably good health. He also mentions that it was good to see Don (Bluey) McClelland down from Queensland to the

Melbourne reunion on ANZAC Eve as Don operated a barber shop not far from Jack prior to the war.

Both Jack and his wife Myrt still live on their property, in the old home on the farm managed by his son and his wife. Says his wife has had a rough time during the last 12 months, but has made a good recovery and they are keeping their fingers crossed.

Thank you for your letter, Jack and the news contained therein and good to hear from you. Says it's the longest letter he has written for some time. Don't leave it so long next time – and when I finish the Mail Bag I'm going to get a map and see just where Goorambat is located – have never even heard of it!!

**BRYAN SMALLHORN** 2/1, Armidale, with his usual brief note enclosing his sub. and the sad news that he lost his dear wife just before Christmas and now having to adjust to a new life after 53 wonderful years together. Our sympathy, Bryan, to you and your family in your sad loss. Fortunately Bryan keeps well and leads a fairly active life, so can't see himself leaving Armidale after living there for 47 years.

In conclusion he passed on his best wishes to all his old C Coy. mates and to all those who keep the News afloat.

**RAY SMITH** 2/1, Glen Iris Vic., with just a few lines enclosing his sub. and donation to funds and his best wishes. Sorry can't make any news out of your letter, Ray, perhaps next time.

**BONNIE SNUDDEN**, Dubbo, widow of Cecil 2/2, with greetings for ANZAC Day and a donation to keep the News coming. Apparently Bonnie spent ANZAC Day in Melbourne as she mentions the march was great and the weather too. Says it was fantastic to see so many onlookers and there were men up and down amongst the crowd explaining what happened years ago – a great idea. Good to hear from you again, Bonnie, and trust you are still happy in your Legacy Village.

**DUDLEY STANIFORTH** 2/2, Wagga Wagga, enclosing a cheque with his letter and his best wishes of good health to all Pioneers. He looks forward to getting the newsletter and keeping up with all the news. Thanks, Dudley, all the best.

**ALLEN STONE** 2/2, Raymond Terrace, with apologies for a belated note and his sub. for the News which he enjoys reading with news of old mates. Allen has had a few health problems, including a triple by-pass, but was feeling fairly well at time of writing. Says he's now 81 and can still have a glass of the "brown stuff" which he enjoys. He also had a trip to Perth last year and said it was well worth the effort of getting there. Closes with best wishes to all, and his thanks for the News.

**GEORGE TOLMIE** 2/1, Canley Heights, with a short note of special thanks to Max and fellow Pioneers for their attendance at the funeral of George's old mate Jack Lamerton. George was very sorry he couldn't attend as he would have dearly loved to have met up with his old Don Coy. mates again. Says his legs stop him from being on parade each ANZAC Day. Many thanks for your note, George, and very best wishes from your mates in D Coy.

**LES TUNKS** 2/1, Mareeba Nth Qld., with a few lines for the paper and the news that he had spent a week in Cairns Hospital and that he is slowly coming good.

In regard to the plaque at Rocky Creek, Les, the Association felt that the 2/1sts had committed enough funds to the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord, so were not prepared to fund a plaque at the hospital.

Thank you for your donation and hope your health continues to improve.

**RON WEBSTER** 2/1, Bass Hill, with some kind words of praise to the editorial staff and to all those who keep the Association going. Says we are lucky to have so many who give of their time and energy to give pleasure to others. Thanks, Ron, and for your donation.

Max has already written you with thanks for the tape you sent him and it was certainly enlightening. Your son, Stan, looks as if he's "following father's footsteps" as far as music is concerned and I'm sure you and your wife are very proud of his achievements. The music on the tape was very good and made excellent listening. You'll be interested to hear that the City of Sydney Youth Band who led the 2/1sts

were awarded Best Band of the March – quite an achievement and well deserved.

Trust you had no ill effects from your fall on ANZAC Day – only to your pride. All the best and keep well.

**TOM WOOD** 2/2, Nowra, with a change of address from Bomaderry. This has been noted, Tom, and trust you and Renee have settled in to your new unit.

**NEV WOODHAM** 2/1, Cleveland Qld., with some news from up north and a cheque for the Treasurer, for which many thanks.

He is still secretary of the Tobruk Rats in their area and average attendance is 12-14. Harry Spreadborough is a regular when well, also Harry Mowbray, who has not been in the best of health for some time. Hope the treatment for your lung condition is being successful, Harry. John Keegan 2/1 is in a nursing home at Wynnum and did not know Nev on his last visit. Ken Franks, one of the 2/1st bandsman, is still a member of the Rats but as he lives a long way from Cleveland, Nev does not see him very often.

The Cleveland RSL Sub-Branch has very good membership, over 900, and Neville is still secretary. They had approximately 3,000 at the Dawn Service and the march getting longer each year, a very good roll-up for a small place like Cleveland.

Nev and Bill Chisholm 2/1 keep in touch by phone and an occasional letter. Bill is practically house-bound, but has not lost his sense of humour and still enjoys a few beers every day.

Bett and Nev still enjoy a game of bowls but not as often as they used to. They don't know if they will ever get to Sydney again, but their thoughts are still with us and those who keep the Pioneer News going after so many years. Both send their very best wishes to all their friends here and hope old mates had a great ANZAC Day.

**MARIE LAMERTON**, Liverpool, widow of Jack 2/1, with a welcome note enclosing a photo of son Harry taken while on holidays on Norfolk Island. Harry was there for ANZAC Day and took part in the local march, proudly wearing Jack's medals, and attended a dinner at Government House. Nice to hear from you, Marie, and hope you enjoyed your holiday in Moss Vale.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue with plenty of letters and interesting news from around the country. Trusting the winter months will be kind to all the aching joints and hoping to see a lot of old friends at the Lismore reunion in September.

## LAST POST

**FRANK CAULFIELD** 2/2 of Benalla Vic., passed away on 10th February 1999, after a long period of sickness, and we are grateful to George Murphy for sending us the details. Frank was a regular attendee to our Country Reunions and was always a regular letter writer with plenty of news. He will be sadly missed by all his mates.

To his wife Betty and family we extend our sincere sympathy.

**ERN JAMISON** 2/1 of Gladesville passed away on 30th March 1999 at the age of 90 years, and the funeral at Northern Suburbs Crematorium was attended by our Welfare Officer Bill Tasker. Gladesville RSL carried out the Poppy Service while the Eulogy was read by the grandson of Ern.

To his wife Jean and family our sincere sympathy was extended by Bill Tasker, who together with Jack Tooker had visited Ern regularly when he was in hospital.

**IVOR GARNON** 2/1 formerly of Charmhaven passed away on 30th April and the funeral on 5th May at Northern Suburbs Crematorium was conducted by members of the Masonic Lodge of which Ivor was a member. Ivor was 81 years and had resided at Frank Widdon Homes Glenfield since his wife Ena had passed away.

Pioneers in attendance were Jack and Marj Kerslake, Max and Peg Herron, Laurie Kelly, Harry Shiels, Bill Tasker and Roy Jardine who also represented the Rats of Tobruk Association.

Bill Tasker extended sincere sympathy, on behalf of the Association to daughter, Lorraine Howlett.

**BILL DONEY** 2/1 of Belrose passed away on 21st May 1999 at the age of 87 years and the funeral at Northern Suburbs Crematorium on 27th May was attended by Sam Lewis, Roy Jardine and Bill Tasker who read the Eulogy.

**BILL SUTTON** 2/1 of Wangan Hills W.A. passed away in May and we are grateful to Joy Preedy for sending us the details.

**REVEILLE** and **MUFTI** of Vic report by Eric Causer. Deceased. 2/1 – L. Myers; R.W. Pepper; J.J. Smith. 2/2 – A. Taylor.

## SICK PARADE

**JACK COATES** 2/1 of Umina was in North Shore Hospital in May for his third heart bypass operation. His first by-pass was in 1975 and the second one in 1985. After North Shore he was transported to Gosford Hospital then after a brief stay he was transferred to Brisbane Waters Private Hospital. While there he was visited by Peg and Max Herron who found him very eager to get home to Lex.

**JACK PEARCE** 2/1 of Harbord was in Manly Hospital on 1st June for an operation to repair a broken bone when he fell at home. Jack at the age of 94 years recovered quite well and was quite cheery when visited by Jack and Marj Kerslake and Harry Shiels.

**GEORGE MURPHY**, Secretary of the 2/2nd Pioneer Assoc. in Victoria was in hospital in June, so by the time Pioneer News arrives hope you are well George and back to the desk for more Pioneer work.

## 2/1 – 2/2 PIONEERS W.A.

Dear Pioneers, As promised I went to our March meeting. We had Joan Monger, Ethel McDougall, Mile Matex, Neil MacPherson and Hugh Sorley. Neil very kindly picked me up on his way through from Mandurah. We had an apology from Jack Murray, he was in hospital with Len and is not very mobile these days.

Thanks to the following for their kind donations: Bob and Norma Sefton – Hazel and Bill Sutton – Neil MacPherson – Joan Monger – Mile Matex – Ethel McDougall – Hugh Sorley. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Pioneers who attended Lens funeral and the numerous cards we received from you. I felt very proud. To our Victorian, Sydney and South Australian friends also, you have all been so caring. Even though Len had been in and out of hospital for the last two years and his mobility had got worse, his death was very unexpected. In fact, a few days before they were talking of letting him come home with extra help to see if we could manage before going into a nursing home. It just all happened in one day. I was lucky to have spent all that day with him and was there.

Anzac Day has come and gone which was hard. Four of our ex-POW Pioneers flew up to Thailand for this year's Anzac Day Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass, they are Tom Cream, Ted Rowe, Owen Heron and Neil MacPherson. Following the 9 day tour of the Death Railway, Owen and Neil travelled into Burma for a six day visit to the Thanbyuzagat War Cemetery where many Pioneers are buried. Len and I were lucky enough to go to Thailand and retrace the steps of those brave boys. Len's brother was in the 2/4 M.G. and is buried up there.

I enjoyed reading the address given by W.O. Caughey on the Unknown Soldier in our last Pioneer News. How typical of young soldiers to give him a name, made him more of a person. I think this is all I can manage this time. To our friends on the other side of the Nullarbor, keep up the good work, we all enjoy our correspondence very much. To my Pioneers here thank you and I hope to see you on the 16th July. – Yours sincerely **JOY PREEDY**

## DUBBO CAMP REUNION

On Sunday 21st November 1999 a Back to Dubbo Army Camp Reunion will be held at the Western Plains Zoo, formerly the army camp which was established by the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion in 1940, before sailing for the Middle East.

At the Reunion the Lions Club will hand over to the RSL Sub-Branch a project to permanently recognise the presence of the camp and its contribution to the war effort. The

project is an area set aside, containing a flag pole and the plaque which was left by the army at the camp entrance.

Following the handover ceremony, the Reunion lunch will be held at the Zoo Function Centre. The cost is \$25 per head, which includes entrance to the Zoo. Buses will leave at 10.00am for the Zoo from the RSL car park. Accommodation to be arranged by persons attending.

To obtain an application form write to – The Reunion Committee, c/o Dubbo RSL Club, Brisbane Street, Dubbo NSW 2830.

## STH AUST PIONEERS

On Anzac Day 1999 in Adelaide, Alan Olson and George Sauer attended the Dawn Service held at the National War Memorial at 6am. Wreaths were laid at this ceremony and previously at the Pioneer Battalions Monument. The weather was cool and the crowd estimated at 5,000.

The Anzac Day march through Adelaide saw eighteen Pioneers in attendance. After the march the Reunion at the Duke of York Hotel saw an attendance of sixty six Pioneers for lunch. In all a most satisfying occasion.

– Reported by **GEORGE SAUER**

## 53rd ANZAC DAY MARCH

We are grateful to Country Vice-President Doug Shearston of Forster for sending us a news clipping of an article which appeared in their local paper in a series of the International Year of Older Persons. It featured Sam Lewis 2/1 who, with his wife Margaret, lives in the Golden Ponds Retirement Village in Forster.

Sam kept an enviable record intact on ANZAC Day 1999 – it was the 53rd consecutive time he had taken part in the Sydney march with the 2/1 Pioneers. Enlisting in the A I F on his 19th birthday in 1941 he served with the unit in the Middle East, New Guinea and Balikpapan in Borneo before being discharged in January 1946.

He has been a regular attendee at our ANZAC functions and country reunions since his discharge. Sam is also on the Committee of the Memorial Service Club in Forster. He has been a keen sportsman, playing rugby league, cricket and golf and even to this day he is a competition snooker player, once winning the NSW RSL Minors.

## 2/1-2/2 LISMORE REUNION

**Saturday 11th, Sunday 12th September, 1999**  
**WREATH LAYING – Saturday 11th Sept.**

5pm at the Lismore Memorial Baths Cenotaph, corner of Market and Molesworth Streets. Medals to be worn.

**REUNION DINNER – Saturday 11th Sept.**

7.30pm. Smorgasbord Dinner, Lismore RSL Club, Market Street. Cost \$25 each.

**BARBECUE LUNCH – Sunday 12th Sept.**

12 noon. Lunch at the Ballina Ex-Servicemen's Home Complex, 71-73 Morton Street, Ballina. Cost \$10 per head.

**ACCOMMODATION** – is to be booked by you. See NRMA Accommodation Guide.

**TRANSPORT** – Train travellers will be met at station and taken to accommodation. Plane travellers to Lismore will be met if notified to Ken Wilson. On Saturday 11th September a bus trip is proposed to leave Lismore Cenotaph at 8 am to O'Connors Cane Farm to see Cane Harvesting. Return 11.30 am – trip free.

**DEPOSIT** – \$10 each, with application form, by 30th August to Ken Wilson, 9 Rosedale Square Lismore NSW 2480. Phone: 02 6621 4762.

CUT OUT – Fill in particulars: LISMORE Reunion

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FULL NAME

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LADIES NAME

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PHONE

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UNIT

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ADDRESS

Tick ☐ DINNER ☐ BARBECUE  
☐ CAR ☐ PLANE ☐ TRAIN



# PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

Official Organ of 2/1 and 2/2 PIONEER BATTALIONS ASSOCIATION

Per Annum: \$5

Registered under the Charitable Collections Act, 1934-41 - Certificate No. 10462 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Amcliffe

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Vol. 45 No. 3

NOVEMBER 1999

Welfare: BILL TASKER, Phone 9718 6658

## 2/1-2/2 NORTH COAST BRANCH REUNION

On 11th/12th September 1999 the North Coast Reunion was held at Lismore, with an attendance of 77 for the dinner on the Saturday and 60 at the Ballina barbecue. It was evident that there was still in existence the strong atmosphere of mateship that was generated fifty nine years ago.

On Saturday 11th September at 8.30am twenty two members boarded the bus for a tour to the cane fields at Empire Vale. Kevin Raward gave an excellent commentary on the route through the outskirts of Lismore all the way down to Empire Vale, near Ballina. His talk covered the lush green country travelled through and he pointed out how in his young days the whole area was very heavily timbered and was a grand sight to see.

On arrival at Empire Vale the group was met by Michael O'Connor, son of Neville, who gave a talk, firstly on the method of cutting cane by hand in days gone by, then proceeded to explain the working of the very expensive machinery, which was on display, used now to harvest the cane.

The group then climbed aboard (walking sticks included) a high open backed, converted army truck and travelled around the numerous cane fields adjoining the O'Connor property. The climax of this cane fields tour was to actually witness a huge cane truck come in from one of the fields fully loaded with harvested cane and tip his load into a twenty tonne bin, for transport to the sugar mill for crushing.

On return to the large storage shed, Michael proceeded to give an excellent talk on marine biology which, as the Science Master at Ballina High, he teaches. In conclusion, he extended an invitation to any one interested to visit the High School on the Monday, which six of the group did, and found it most interesting. Many thanks was extended to Michael for a most enlightening tour and talk.

### WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

The assembly at the Soldier's Memorial at 5pm on Saturday 11th September was marshalled by Kevin Raward who then called upon Reverend Peter Playstead, Lismore Presbyterian Minister and Chaplain at the Amberly RAAF base, to conduct the proceedings. He spoke on the exploits of the two battalions using their respective unit histories as a guide.

The branch banner was displayed by Dave Denny and Peter Priest. Jack Allison attended to the lowering of the National Flag while Anneke Withers sounded Last Post and Reveille.

Wreaths were laid by Peg Herron (Ladies Auxiliary) Ken Wilson (North Coast Branch) and Max Herron (Assoc.) After the Benediction by Reverend Playstead the gathering proceeded to the RSL Club.

### THE REUNION DINNER

On arrival at the RSL Club, name tags were issued by Dot Priest and Mona Barraclough, while the collection of fees was carried out by Alec George, who stood in for Treasurer Ron Cross holidaying in Japan, and assisted by Bob Ginnane, Don Barraclough and Dave Denny.

Kevin Raward, who acted as Master of Ceremonies opened proceedings by calling on Reverend Playstead to say Grace. The Royal toast was in the hands of Allan Olson, while Ken Wilson proposed the Toast to the Guests, and the Toast to Departed Comrades was proposed by Kevin Raward. Response was capably handled by Assoc. Vice President Jack Griffiths who stated he was pleased to be among such a fine group of Pioneers and pay homage to the comrades with whom he served. Raffle winners were, Rug by Jean George and Kettle by Robyn Bell.

After an excellent meal by the RSL staff the

gathering settled down at each table, to reminiscing about old times after which they started to move around the various tables, but all too soon it was time to return to their motels and prepare for the next day at Ballina.

### BARBECUE AT BALLINA

Pioneers and their ladies then descended on the Ballina Ex-Servicemen's Home Complex on Sunday 12th September for the final activity of the Lismore Reunion. The bar was opened and naturally the cans flowed quite freely, with soft drinks available for the ladies. Many thanks to Robyn Bell for supplying two boxes of chocolates for the ladies.

The gathering was then called on to move up into the new large eating area and it presented a very happy atmosphere with the group enjoying a well prepared barbecue.

Jack Tooker, Association Vice President, on behalf of the members, thanked the two ladies from the complex, who prepared the barbecue, for their wonderful effort. He also thanked the complex officers, Paul Morris and Reg Ewing for the use of the complex. At this stage the raffle was drawn and the winners were - Pewter by Lil Bettens and Camera by Fred Wheaton.

A vote of thanks was extended by Max Herron to Ken Wilson and his committee for the work they put into the organising of this Reunion and they were to be congratulated on producing such a most successful gathering. Max also thanked all the ladies for their attendance and for their wonderful support over the years.

Then came the time to say farewell and gradually the members drifted away but the general consensus of opinion was it had been a great weekend.

### ATTENDANCE FOR WEEKEND

Long distance runners were Allan Olson S.A.; Eric/Doff Causer and Robyn Bell, Victoria; Bill/Beris Cunneen and Don/Mona Barraclough, Qld.

Full list of Pioneers were:- 2/1sts Eric/Doff Causer, Dave/Joyce Denny, Alec/Jean George, Max/Peg Herron, Jack/Marj Kerslake, Jack/Maisie Kempnich, Len/Alma O'Connor, Peter/Dot Priest, Jack/Flo Shearman, Fred/Jean Wheaton, Bert/Lil Bettens, Don/Mona Barraclough, Winston McKibbin, Les Patterson, Jack Bertram, Jack Griffiths, Jack/Kath Tooker, Noel Schomberg, Vi Flynn, Pam Herrick/Pat McLaughlin, Robyn Bell, Olive Richards, Mavis Blanch and Gloria Gray.

2/2nds: Don/Val Crawford, Jack/Betty Crouch, Bill/Beris Cunneen, Ern/Norma Lunn, Nev/Betty O'Connor, Ken/Ida Wilson, Dick/Alison Walker, Ray/Ruby Harris, Ossie/Betty Carter, Jack Allison, Snowy Dodd, Bob Ginnane, Roy Levy, Bert/Mark Neasby, Kevin Raward, Gavin Todd and Allan Olson. Also David McInnes, son of Allan, attended the Wreath Laying Service as representing our President.

### KOKODA TRACK WALKWAY

On Sunday 15th August a VP Day Service and the unveiling ceremony of four more stations was held at the Memorial Centrepiece in Rhodes/Rotary Park at Concord.

The Master of Ceremonies was Rusty Priest AM who is Chairman of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Committee. The prologue

was delivered by John Murphy MP, Member for Lowe, which was followed by the VP Day Service, conducted by three Padres. The opening prayer was to honour the memory of all whose lives were sacrificed for our freedom, and who died for our country by sea, by land and air in the Great Wars and other conflicts which Australia had been called to serve.

As Chairman of the Kokoda Track Walkway Committee, Rusty Priest then laid a wreath on behalf of all who served in World War II and did not return.

At the conclusion of the VP Day Service the dedication of the four stations was carried out and these are listed, with their gold sponsors as follows: Station Deneke - Penrith RSL, Station Coastwatchers - Fred Archer Trust, Station Oivi - 2/1 and 2/3 Infantry Bns, Station Gorari - 2/3 Infantry Bn.

Also unveiled were the two bench seats sponsored by the generosity of the 2/1 Pioneer members, as part of the money raised by them for the sponsoring of the Imita Ridge Station plaque and the two Rose Garden plaques. These two bench seats, which was a suggestion by the late Vic Whiteley, are situated near the Imita Ridge and Kokoda Stations.

The following Pioneers were in attendance at this service: Steve Clarke, Bill Jollie with son-in-law John Tyler, Jack/Marj Kerslake, Roy Levy, Noel Schomberg, Bill Tasker, Allan/Mary McInnes and Peg/Max Herron.

### 1999 SCIENCE TEACHER

The most prestigious BHP National Award for the Science Teacher of the Year was granted recently to Michael O'Connor, son of Neville O'Connor 2/2.

Those Pioneers, who were present at Michael's sugar cane property, while attending the Lismore Reunion, and heard his talk on marine biology would realise how dedicated Michael is to his work. All present were intensely interested in his talk on whales, dolphins and other marine life, and therefore plied him with lots of questions. They would also say this was a most deserving case.

A letter of congratulations has been sent to Michael from the Association, together with a word of thanks for his talk to our members and for his organised truck tour of the sugarcane fields.

### WEST AUSSIES JOIN 2/1

Following upon a letter from Bert Woodhouse 2/1 of Karridale W.A., he mentions that, at Hill 69 in Palestine, 90 West Australians were drafted from the 24th Inf. Training Battalion to the 2/1st Pioneers at the request of Colonel Arnold Brown.

At Wondecla in January/February 1944 twenty of the above groups left the Pioneers to join the 2/11th Bn, a Western Australian unit, and Bert has passed on the following information which may interest former members of the 2/1st:- WX12572 S.H. Alliss (W.I.A.) deceased; WX10492 J.R. Aitken (accidentally drowned) 4/6/1944; WX14405 H.E. Cable (W.I.A.); WX14293 D.E.L. Caporn (K.I.A.) 14/6/1945; WX12858 A.J. Clark deceased; WX12561 T.H. Culbertson; WX14325 R.W. Dean; WX13054 R. Henry (W.I.A.); WX12419 C.J. Lawrence deceased; WX15405 J.V. Leese; WX14380 G.L.T. Casey (W.I.A.) deceased; WX15637 A.J. Machen deceased; WX11398 J.W. Slee; WX14218 F. Pratt; WX14731 E.J. Taylor; WX14976 E.M. Williams deceased; WX12708 T.W. Wenmouth deceased; WX12790 B. Woodhouse (W.I.A.); WX12600 J.J. Wright (W.I.A.); WX15065 P.S. Wright (discharged 1944).

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The last Mail Bag for the year and rather a shortage of letters compared with previous issues. Perhaps the weather has been too cold and wet in most areas and it has been much easier around a warm fire than letter writing. However, we are grateful to all those who have taken time and trouble to keep the show on the road.

**DORA ANDERSON**, Merimbula, widow of Don 2/1, with the sad news that Don had passed away in August after a long battle with cancer. (Max has included details of the service in Last Post). Dora passed on her thanks to Max for the information on the Dutch Medal, which she has received, and for the recently issued Service Medal which she had applied for and will be issued in due course. They are taking some months to be processed and delivered. As Don was on an E.D.A. pension, Dora is grateful that she will be cared for by Veterans' Affairs and the local Sub-Branch and Legacy.

In regard to copies of the 2/1st history, Dora, we shall keep your request in mind should copies ever become available.

Our best wishes to you and your family and many thanks for the book of stamps enclosed with your letter. The News will continue to be sent to you until you request otherwise.

**"SNOWY" ANDERSON** 2/2, Aspendale Vic., sent along a parcel of tapes recorded by daughter Julie, which arrived just as we were leaving for the Lismore reunion. So far we have only had the spare time to play some of them, Julie, but loved some of the music – music of "our time" and a pleasure to listen to. (Can see Max and I are not rock and roll fans). We were sorry you were unable to make the trip to Lismore, a long way from your neck of the woods, but hopefully will catch up once again in the near future. Our very best wishes "Snow" and fond regards to Isabell and Julie and many thanks for the tapes.

**BOB BALLY** 2/1, Balga W.A., with a short note enclosing his dues and the news that he has been in and out of hospital of late. Trust by now things have improved, Bob, and your regards are passed on to A. Coy. 2/1 mates who are still about.

**TED CARTER** 2/1, Tamworth, with apologies for non-attendance at the Lismore reunion, but he had another long standing engagement for that week-end. However, he and Mary have booked for the Dubbo Camp Reunion and hoping to meet up with some of the 2/1st boys there. As Max has mentioned to you, Ted, quite a few are going with their wives, and it should be an interesting weekend – a long cry from September 1940. Max has spread the word on the 9th Div. reunion in Muswellbrook in October, but don't know if any of the 2/1sts are able to attend. So many are unable to travel these days, even if the spirit is willing.

Looking forward to seeing you both again in Dubbo and thanks for your good wishes.

**GEORGE CATCHPOLE** 2/2, Northgate Qld., with a welcome donation to funds and his apologies for not writing sooner. He has been in and out of hospital with various complaints but at time of writing all seemed to be O.K. and hoped it stayed that way. George has just been re-elected as President of his local R.S.L. for the next 12 months, making it 25 years in office. Good record, George, you must be doing a good job. It is only a small branch and despite losing a few of their older members have been gaining a few new ones which is good to see. Thanks for your good wishes and glad you look forward to the News.

**JACK COATES** 2/1, Umina, with three letters since July Mail Bag – you would have to be our No. 1 correspondent, Jack, and always so full of news. Many thanks for the books of stamps enclosed in latest letter, also the news cuttings on the passing of Charlie Rock 2/1. Unfortunately our funeral committee were not able to be present due to other commitments. We are unfortunate in not having members on

the Central Coast who we can call on now to attend hospitals and funerals in your area. Those who are left are unable to be of help due to ill-health and lack of transport.

Glad to see the wedding of your granddaughter, Vanessa, and her policeman husband Anthony, was a great day for Lex and yourself and that you were well enough to make the trip to Narrabri. Anthony was lucky to get a posting so close to Narrabri and a police house to go with it. We wish them well.

Jack had a good look at the old 2/1 camp site at Greta, both ways on the XPT to and from Narrabri and reports nothing on it now only cattle grazing where the "rookies" were knocked into shape all those years ago. Brought back a lot of memories of some fine men who have passed on – surely ghosts of the past.

Trust by now the worst of your problems are behind you, Jack, and that Lex got a good report from her visit to St George in October. Best wishes to you both.

**DOFF CAUSER**, Hamilton Vic., wife of Eric 2/1, with a note of thanks to Max and I for help and support while at the Lismore reunion, which was very much appreciated. Train delays on the line from Melbourne resulted in Eric and Doff missing their connection in Sydney, and a very late arrival in Lismore. And to make matters worse their train to Brisbane after the reunion was also delayed a couple of hours and they had to finally go by coach to Brisbane, arriving well after midnight. (What some people will do to go to a reunion). However, they assured us they enjoyed their weekend, despite our railways!! Trust you enjoyed your visit to family and friends in Queensland and many thanks for the pens you so kindly sent – mine is being christened on the Mail Bag, Doff. All the best to you both.

**RON COYTE** 2/1, Wentworthville, with a cheque for the News for which many thanks. You've certainly had your share of family problems the last 12 months, Ron, and trust by now the days are a lot brighter. Do hope your wife's health has also improved.

Max has written you re Harry Corby and Ross Dagger – we have no addresses, but perhaps one of our readers may know of their whereabouts. We did have Harrys until early this year when his paper was returned "Left Address".

Ron passes on his thanks to all those who give so much of their time to keep the Association and Pioneer News alive and says that with old age catching up it must take up a lot of time keeping members informed. It certainly does that, Ron, and we thank you for your kind thoughts.

**BILL CUNNEEN** 2/2, Burleigh Waters Qld., with a welcome donation to funds and his appreciation for the weekend at Lismore. Was glad to finally put a face to names he only reads about in the News. Says like all old soldiers he has mellowed a lot, but it was nice to see Roy Levy after fifty odd years. It was a good weekend and we are glad Beris was able to join with you in the activities.

Bill says not too much to report from his part of the world – has been dragged back into the pennant side in bowls. He tries to retire every year, but keeps getting calls for help. Keep playing as long as you can, Bill, time enough to retire when you have to give it away. Helps to keep you fit.

Best wishes to you both, may meet up again one of these days.

**BILLIE DYNON**, Toronto, widow of Frank 2/1, with a letter notifying of a change of address from her old home in Mona Vale to a self-care unit at Toronoto. Thank you, Billie, also for the donation to funds. Your daughter Anne had already told us of your intended move and had included a sub. with her letter earlier in the year. Trust you are receiving the News at your new address. It will be nice for you to be close to your son and his family in a much smaller home.

It was interesting to read in your letter of the Toronto Hotel and your memories of it when Frank was at Greta in 1940. I'm sure it must have brought back a lot of memories – happy as well as sad – to find it still there after nearly sixty years. How time marches on.

Trust you have settled happily into your new home and look forward to hearing from you again one of these days.

**BILL FLEMING** 2/1, Mittagong, with a welcome letter and a donation to funds. Good to hear from you again after so many years, although have noticed your name in ROTA as attending meetings at Port Kembla.

Like the rest, Bill says old age is catching up, with eye problems and bad knees. However, takes a keen interest in the local Lions Club and bush walking. His home is on two acres of land and it takes most of his time keeping it tidy.

He has been living in Mittagong since 1947 but did go away to Gunning and Milton as postmaster until he retired in 1982 and came back to Mittagong. A very nice town to spend in retirement.

Bill mentions that he married John Dologhan's sister Maureen and raised a family of twelve, most of whom live in the Mittagong district. Max and I visited John when he was in Lady Davidson Hospital with his shoulder problem. There were other Pioneers there at the same time, and a Scout friend of Max, so he had plenty of company.

Many thanks for your good wishes and don't leave it so long before you drop us a few lines.

**JACK HORE-LACY** 2/2, Moss Vale, with his thanks for the Pioneer News and a welcome donation to funds. Says it's good to read and catch up on all the news. Owing to his daughter's ill health, he mentions his mountain climbing has been on hold for some time and he's a bit out of condition, but hoped to do a small climb late in August. Trust you were able to make the effort. John, all the best.

**JOHN HUNT** 2/1, New Farm Qld., with a note advising us of the passing of Neil Davenport (widow of Fred 2/1) in June and that he and Mollie-Jean attended the funeral service on behalf of the Association. They joined with Nell's family after the service for refreshments.

John and Mollie-Jean had a good trip home after ANZAC Day, taking a couple of weeks to get back to Brisbane. Both are well, just a little older and slower, and send their best wishes to all "down South".

Many thanks for the cuttings of the funeral service, John, and for your attendance. Max has included a note in Last Post.

**STAN JONES** 2/1, Dee Why, with notification of a change of address. The move was dictated by the need to get away from hills and steps, close to shops and public transport, and this has been achieved. He and his wife, Peg, are both pleased with the move and happy in their new surroundings.

Stan sends his best regards to all who work so hard to keep members in touch with old friends and passes on his kind wishes to any Pioneers with whom we come in contact. Our thanks, Stan, and your new address has been recorded.

**JACK KEMPNIH** 2/1, Fingal Bay, once again per faithful wife Mais, with her usual newsy letter from their part of the country. She and Jack were hoping to make Lismore for the reunion and as this paper goes to print, we are happy to say they were able to do so. Mais has had a rather traumatic year with a shoulder reconstruction and a hip replacement done again and at the time of the reunion was just starting to feel the benefit of the operations. Trust by now you are feeling ever so much better, Mais, and it was good to meet up again. Guess Jack would have been happy to be able to spend some time with his family too. Our very best wishes to you both and good fishing, Jack, if the weather improves.

**TOM MORGAN** 2/2, Forster, with a long newsy letter and a cheque for the treasurer. Tom was full of praise for those who give of their time and energy to keep the Association and News going and says how much pleasure it gives those who receive the paper regularly for so many years. All we ask, Tom, is for letters from members of their doings and families, because without these, and their financial help, the paper would cease to exist. The ranks of members of both units are getting very thin, we are only sending out half as many papers as we did ten years ago.

Good to see so many of the names in recent issues bring back lots of memories for you. Tom played bowls with Doug Shearston 2/1 occasionally and made mention of the story of Sam Lewis 2/1 in the local paper. He also mentioned a photo and article in the local news

of Snowy Dodd 2/2 for the effort he puts into work in Darawak Park in Tuncurry. Tom keeps in touch with Snowy who had recently had hip replacement surgery. (Snowy was at recent Lismore reunion and picking up after his operation) and Don Linton who doesn't keep the best of health.

Other names he is pleased to read of are Bill Robertson, Allan McInnes, Jack Crouch, Bert Neasbey, Bob Ginnane, Alf Ballard, Bill Fallon, Nev O'Connor, Kevin Raward, Ray Harris, John Dowd, Russ Harrison and Geoff Lloyd from South Aussie (Geoff lost his wife Ronnie early in September). Good to see a line from Jack McGregor too – his brother Roy was best man to Tom and Mary at their wedding 53 years ago. (A letter from Roy is also in this Mail Bag). Not too much wrong with your memory, Tom, as you mentioned so many in your letter – sorry we haven't Max Dickens on our filing system. Perhaps other members of 2/2 may know of his whereabouts or whether he is still in the land of the living.

Good to see Vet Affairs have been good to you in regard to health care at home and the local nursing service when required. Along with your good wife Mary, full time carer and driver, I guess you can count your blessings even if confined to your villa. Makes all the difference if you have someone to share the load.

Many thanks for your letter, keep well and write again some time. Your best wishes are passed on to all Pioneers.

**DON MCCLELLAND** 2/2, Bundaberg, with a short note accompanying his dues for the News. He mentions he was in Melbourne for the reunion and March on ANZAC Day and had a good time. Drove down from Bundaberg and away seven weeks altogether. Does not regret leaving Burrigana where he lived before moving north to the warmer climate, has no regrets on that score. Healthwise he's pretty good – says the hardest job is putting his socks on – arms must be getting shorter. Your best wishes passed on to old mates, Don, and thanks for the donation to funds.

**ROY MCGREGOR** 2/2, Rothbury, with a cheque included in his short note. Apologises for lateness, but says he's a bit tardy when it comes to letter writing – you're no Robinson Crusoe in that regard Roy. They are having glorious weather in their part of the country at time of writing and says the lush grass is keeping him busy mowing, just over an acre, but of course he has a sit-on mower. Roy has been eight years now as an amputee but still manages to do a bit of cultivation and has the ride-on mower to do his lawn. Good to hear.

Best wishes to Marion and yourself, Roy, keep well and your best best wishes passed on to the "boys".

**FRANK RAY** 2/2, Mont Albert Vic., with a cheque for funds and, as a new member on our roll, a letter introducing himself to the Pioneer family. Frank enlisted in May, 1940, and was posted to 2/2 Pioneer Bn and assigned to A Coy. However, in March 1941, on embarkation parade, was pulled out with several others to train with reinforcements and did not take part in the Syrian campaign. He later did a course at Duntroon and was promoted to Lieut. in October 1941. Frank regrets that many of the boys he trained with at Pucka lost their lives in Syria and many became P.O.W's.

Later he served with the reformed unit in New Guinea and Borneo and keeps in touch with Mick Smith, Bob Philpots and, of late, with Cal Mitchell.

From back numbers of Pioneer News sent to him by Max, Frank remembers well Bill Robertson, Allan McInnes, Charles Richardson and George Murphy. Many other names are familiar to him, but he has difficulty in recalling when and in what area he served with them. He was never with the same group of men for any length of time during the N.G. and Borneo campaigns and regrets the strong bond that develops when a group lives, fights and suffers together over a long period.

Our thanks to George Murphy for requesting that you be placed on our mailing list, Frank, and this has been done. You will receive copies regularly in future in April, July and November. There is no joining fee but the News subscription is \$5 per annum. Your cheque enclosed in your letter covers you for several years. Best wishes and keep in touch.

**MONA REINERS**, Corryong Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with a long newsy letter to the Herrons, mostly of a personal nature as we have been long-time friends since Max and Bern were in 2/1 Sigs together. Many a holiday both families spent together when our children were growing up and our friendship has remained strong over so many years.

Since Bern passed away Mona has been able to visit some of her widely scattered family, and has just recently returned from a trip to Adelaide to see a brother who has had both legs amputated. Mona says at least Vet Affairs look after these old soldiers pretty well. She is due to fly to Perth early December to visit her daughter and family and usually has her sons Brian and Lex and families home for Christmas. Want to get all the odd jobs lined up for them, Mona, guess there is always plenty to do around the garden.

Your kind regards are passed on to Marj and Jack Kerslake – they are both well and Jack is very proud that he was able to climb the Harbour Bridge arch – a birthday gift. Marj was happy to stay firmly on ground.

Lovely to hear from you and our fond wishes to you and the family. Many thanks for the donation to the News and receipt will be sent in due course.

**OLIVE RICHARDS**, Lennox Head, widow of Jack 2/1, with a donation to funds and the hope that she will be able to make the Lismore reunion. (Good to see you there, Olive, at the B.B.Q. at Ballina).

The weather in their part of the country has been dreadful – have had as much rain in the first five months of the year as they usually get in a year.

Olive has just recently celebrated her 80th birthday, so has now joined the exclusive "O.B.E. Club". Certainly getting a lot of mates, Olive, but as long as you can stay healthy, why worry about age.

All the best from your friends down south and our thanks for your subs to the News.

**GIL SHORT** 2/2, Caringbah, with a short note enclosing his subs for the year. He has been in hospital for a knee replacement and his wife has been ill – apologises for not writing sooner. Hope things have improved in your household, Gil, thanks for the dues and hope to see you next ANZAC Day. Thanks also for the poem on Balikpapan, which Max has published on page four of this issue. Best wishes from all.

**PAT TATTAM**, Tamworth, widow of Jack 2/1, with a change of address to 12 Marshall Place, Tamworth. Pat changed homes in 1998 and her mail is still being redirected. It was hard leaving the old home after so many years.

Thank you for your donation to funds, Pat, and hope that you continue to enjoy reading the News which will be sent to your new address.

**RON WEBSTER** 2/1, Bass Hill, with a welcome letter and details of a book he had posted to Max called "Salvos with the Forces". This has arrived, Ron, and Max has written you in the meantime. The book covers the period of W.W. II from North Africa, Tobruk, Syria, New Guinea and Borneo and all places where the "Salvos" made their presence felt. Max is already reading it, Ron, and when I have finished it we shall pass it on to any Pioneers who are interested – Jack Kerslake and Gordon Finlay are great readers and I'm sure they will find it of interest. Many thanks to you for sending it on to us and we shall be only too pleased to pass it on to any Pioneer who may be interested. Kind regards to you and your family.

**TOM WELCH** 2/1, Tuncurry, with a change of address from Mackay and I trust you have received the back numbers of the News Max has sent you to your new address. Guess you will find it hard for a while to adjust to the weather, but from all accounts Tuncurry/Forster is a nice place to live. We have quite a few Pioneers in that area.

In regard to the article in your local paper, Tom, on Sam Lewis 2/1, we had also noticed the error about the Pioneers being in Darwin on their way home from the Middle East. This was probably a reporter's error as when the unit arrived in Adelaide, the hospital ship "Manunda" was tied up at one of the wharves awaiting repairs, following a direct hit by a Japanese bomber while the "Manunda" was in Darwin Harbour. As you say, you were on the

"Westpoint" along with the rest of the unit and you knew you were never in Darwin. Reporters do tend to make mistakes at times.

Pleased to see you can still make the ANZAC Day march and, as you say, it doesn't get any easier every year.

Talking of Kyogle, I don't think you'll find too many Pioneers up there anymore. We saw Jack Shearman at the Lismore reunion, and to my knowledge there is only Cecil Blanch, Jack Shearman and Bill Hoffman left in the town since Jim Hall passed away last year. My daughter-in-law comes from Kyogle so we keep a close eye on what goes on amongst our Pioneer family.

Hope your heel is improving after your car accident. Your driver will need to get a hearing aid. All the best and many thanks for the donation to funds.

**TEMPLE WOOD** 2/2, Terrigal, with a welcome letter enclosing his dues for the News which he always looks forward to receiving. He only wishes he was able to take part in some of our activities, but he is unable to walk very far after a hip replacement and both knees done and is looking at another operation on his spine. However, is still able to drive – getting in and out is the problem.

Last year Temple was able to drive up to North Queensland to look at some of the camps where the unit was stationed during their time on the Tablelands, areas like Ravenshoe, Millstream Falls, Atherton and Port Douglas. He stayed at Trinity Beach for a week and says he liked Cairns much better as he remembered it in the early 40's to what it has become present day. Says he was glad he made the trip when he did as he wouldn't have a hope of doing it now.

Sends his best wishes to all members of 2/2nds and we thank you, Temple, for your donation to funds.

**NEV WOODHAM** 2/1, Cleveland Qld., with the news that we have lost another two 2/1st members in the last couple of weeks – John Keegan and Harry Mowbray, both early members of the unit. (Max will include these in Last Post). Harry and Dot were regular attenders at our reunions and Harry will be sadly missed. Our sympathy is extended to Dot and her family.

Nev and Betty are fairly well, with the usual ailments associated with age, but still able to have an occasional game of bowls. Bett is into Mahjong every Saturday and plays cards on Wednesdays to keep her out of mischief. Nev is still Secretary of the Redlands RSL Sub-Branch which keeps the old brain working. Says they have a "happy half hour" every evening and thinks it is the beer that keeps you fit – will take your word for that Nev.

He still keeps in regular contact with Bill Chisholm 2/1 and says Bill's attitude to life is still the same even though he is far from well.

Nev sends best wishes to all down south and perhaps may get to Sydney next year for the march.

We had hoped you may have made it to Lismore for the reunion – quite a good roll up of 2/1sts, which was good to see. Maybe next time. Our very best wishes to you both and many thanks for your letter.

**JACK COMERFORD** 2/1, Elwood Vic., met up with Eric Causar 2/1 in Melbourne recently and Eric reports Jack is waiting on a trip to hospital for a hernia operation. Jack is now Secretary of the Elwood RSL Club and sends greetings to all former members of 2/1sts.

**JOYCE MCGREGOR** Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, sent us a little prayer, which speaks for itself:

*"Dear Lord, so far to-day I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, over-indulgent or selfish. However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes and I will need a lot more help after that. AMEN."*

**NORMA LUNN** Dubbo, wife of Ern 2/2, rang in answer to a request by the secretary to see if Ern could find any details of a Norman King who had donated a mace to the 2/1st band in September, 1940, while the unit was in the Dubbo Camp. Max is taking the mace to the Dubbo Camp reunion and was anxious to find out particulars of the donor. Ern appealed to readers of the local newspapers and had quite



of lot of replies, which are being followed up. Thank you both for your help in this matter.

**LES BRITT** 2/1, Laurieton, with a donation to funds and to say how disgusted he was to hear that vandals had damaged the centrepiece at the Kokoda Track Walkway. The repairs have been made, Les, and we are happy to say that our Imita Ridge station was not damaged.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and thanks to all those who put pen to paper to keep us up with the news from around the States. As this is the last Mail Bag for the year, Editor Max and myself would like to wish all Pioneers, their wives and families all the very best for the coming Festive Season and to those who have lost their loved ones during the year our thoughts have been with you.

President Allan McInnes and Treasurer Don Crawford also join in wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## LAST POST

**GEOFF LUVIS** 2/1 of Dorrigo passed away on 6th June after a long stay at Dorrigo Hospital.

**KEN MORGAN** 2/2 of Dorrigo passed away on 17th July. Ken was the brother of Jack Morgan (deceased) of Wagga.

**NELL DAVENPORT** of Albany Qld., passed away on 20th July. Nell was the widow of Fred Davenport 2/1st and had been residing at the Albany Nursing Centre. John and Mollie-Jean Hunt represented the Association at the funeral.

**DAVID WELLER** 2/1 of Bomaderry passed away at Shoalhaven District Hospital on 22nd August at the age of 78 years. The funeral service was conducted by Reverend Burton at St Andrews Presbyterian Church.

David was wounded in Tobruk on 14th April 1941 and suffered an injury from which he never fully recovered. The local Nowra paper, sent to us by Tom Wood 2/2 contained an excellent article on David's life and indicated David was a real community person. He was Secretary of the Cambewarra Cricket Club, Shoalhaven Cricket Assoc., Cambewarra Progress Assoc. and School of Arts as well as Auditor of the local Red Cross and Childrens Auxiliary and Nowra Branch of the Bible Society.

Sincere sympathy from the Association is extended to David's wife Jean and her family.

**DON ANDERSON** 2/1 of Merimbula passed away on 8th August after a long battle with cancer.

The family had a private cremation and wife Dora and her two sons scattered Don's ashes on the outgoing tide at the entrance to the lake, followed by red poppies, a very moving time. In the afternoon a memorial service was held at the Merimbula RSL attended by 150 people.

Don saw service with the 2/6th Field Coy. on enlistment and served with them in New Guinea. He was later transferred to 2/2 Pioneers for a short time before again being transferred to 2/1st Pioneers.

Sympathy from the Association is extended to Dora and her family.

**LINCOLN E. WILSON** 2/2 of Leederville W.A. passed away in Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital on 25th May 1999 at the age of 84 years.

**CHARLES QUINN** 2/1 of Beaumaris, Victoria, formerly of Balmain NSW passed away on 9th September. He was aged 83 years and passed away at Epworth Hospital. Thank you to George Murphy for sending the details.

Sincere sympathy is extended to Charlie's wife Dulcie and her family.

**CHARLIE ROCK** 2/1 of Toukley passed away at the age of 86 years on 20th September at Woy Woy Private Hospital, and the funeral service was conducted at Palmdale Crematorium, Ourimbah.

Charlie would be remembered by all 2/1sts as one of the big forwards in the Units League Football team which won many of the inter-unit matches on the Atherton Tablelands.

Sincere sympathy has been extended to Charlies wife Margaret and her family.

**JOHN KEEGAN** 2/1 of Wynnum West Qld., passed away early October and the funeral was attended by Harry Spreadborough, and Betty and Neville Woodham, to whom we thank for sending the details.

**HARRY MOWBRAY** 2/1 of Thornland Qld., passed away in early October and at the funeral, the Association was represented by Harry Spreadborough. As a Tobruk Rat, Harry Mowbray was involved in a lot of charity work in his area. Together with Harry Spreadborough he was involved in the Victoria Point State Schools Anzac Day and Remembrance Day Commemorations over a number of years and also provided a bursary for one of the students, selected by the school. Thanks to Neville Woodham for the details.

**MUFTI** of Victoria report by Eric Causer – Deceased, 2/2: Tom Gaisford, Balwyn; John Donald, Werribee; Kevin Young, Lakes Entrance

## TOBRUK RAT MEDAL

*Editors note: On Anzac Day this year, Stephen Darmody, grandson of the late Bill Darmody, 1st Pioneer Bn, 1st AIF showed around a pair of lapel badges made of brass, with a rifle crossed with a pick. This prompted Jack Griffiths 2/1 to display the Tobruk Rat Medal which had been presented to him by the late Major Norm Neal. This in turn, prompted me to publish the letter below, sent to me by the nephew of the late Major Geoff Graham.*

### HISTORY OF THE TOBRUK RAT MEDAL

There was a supreme ass in Germany, who brayed over the ether, tirades of abuse of the allies, who had named him "Lord Haw Haw". Nothing escaped his vitriolic tongue, and any who stood against the might of the axis powers, were at once subject to his wrath.

So it was in the Garrison of Tobruk, where numbers could not escape him, and they were so much a thorn in the side of the Haw, that they were dubbed by Lord Haw Haw – "You Rats of Tobruk".

This he used to bray –

*"Hello You Rats of Tobruk. – I believe you had no eggs for breakfast today, never mind, we will be send you some over" (they arrived that afternoon in the form of bombs, popularly known as "eggs")*

*"Wives, mothers and sweethearts of Australians, who are among the Tobruk Rats, do not worry about your men. They are quite alright. They are digging like rabbits, and are down 15 feet and still digging"*

*"How go the Rats of Tobruk today? Might I tell you that you are the worlds only self supporting prisoners."*

One day after the ass had finished his braying, Lieut. Len Barlow of the engineer platoon turned to his company commander and said; "This fellow likes his jokes, so do we, let us have a better one at his expense, and strike a medal to commemorate the occasion". The idea of the joke caught on and the two officers collaborated to design this original medal, which has been the unusual distinction of being the only medal to be struck within a battalion. Lieut Barlow made one from his design and presented this, the original to his company commander, (Major G. Graham).

Designed in the shape of a ribbon and medal, the "ribbon" was of brass with a half inch wide central stripe of copper, sweated on, and made from the driving band of a shell. Suspended from this "ribbon", by a brass ring, was the "medal" made to represent the triangular battalion colour patch. The grey background was represented by brass, the next triangle of white represented by aluminium, and surmounted by a third triangle of copper, representing the purple centre piece of the colour patch. Over the centre of the patch is mounted what represents a "rat rampant", which is cut from brass.

On the "ribbon" and "medal" there appear the words "Presented by Lord Haw Haw to the Tobruk Rats 1941".

But perhaps the best part of the joke, was, that all materials used, were parts of captured enemy tanks, Stuka planes, shell cases and furthermore, the medal was manufactured in a captured enemy mobile workshop. Only a limited number were made.

After the war, because he was an Englishman, Lord Haw Haw was tried and hung as a traitor to his country. These medals which began as a joke, at the expense of a traitor to

his country, have become more than that. Not only as being unique and a valued souvenir but something that is tangible to typify the humour and spirit of the 2nd AIF.

## OFFICE BEARERS 1999

At the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 21st May at Redfern RSL Club the following Office Bearers were elected for 1999-2000.

President: Allan McInnes. Patrons: John Gilchrist and Bill Robertson. Vice Presidents: Gordon Finlay, Bill Robertson, Jack Tooker and Bill Jollie. Secretary: Max Herron. Assistant Secretary: George Walker. Treasurer: Don Crawford. Welfare Officer: Bill Tasker. Reporter: Bill Lewis. Editor: Max Herron. Mail Bag Editor: Peg Herron.

The Balance Sheet which was prepared and audited by Mr Arthur Watson A.A.S.A. was read to the meeting by the Treasurer and adopted and carried on a motion by Don Crawford.

## SICK PARADE

**JACK PEARCE** 2/1 of Harbord was transferred to Lady Davidson, Turrumurra after his stay at Manly Hospital, and was visited by Steve Clarke and Jack/Marj Kerslake. Latest report via Jack Kerslake is that Jack is home and getting about.

**KEN STUART** 2/1 of Turrumurra is still at Nazareth House Turrumurra and had been visited by Steve Clarke and Jack Tooker. We are grateful to Steve for doing the visiting on the north side especially as he spends every day with wife Joan who is now in a nursing home.

**CYRIL AMIES** 2/1 of Thornleigh had been in hospital in August with a prostate problem but was home again when last reported in. From all accounts he is still hard at work on his computer and is in the process of mastering the internet.

## WAR GRAVES BALIKPAPAN

*Will you walk with me in the heat of the day  
Till we come to the crossroads on the way  
To a hill on war torn Balikpapan  
The scene in the scheme of the world's mad plan*

*There are soldiers their in a little square,  
Who will breathe no more of the dust filled air,  
On the trails they died, on the hill they rest,  
With the foreign soil on each manly chest.*

*On the crosses which mark the little mounds  
Are the tales of courage which knew no bounds;  
"Killed in Action" and "Died of Wounds",  
But the wasted lives are the world's worst ruins.*

*You can see their mates at the graveside stand,  
Quietly, slouch hats held in hand,  
And you will grieve, as they have too,  
For hopes and dreams that will not come true.*

*In death those men have but simple needs,  
No separate tracts for different creeds,  
For the shoulders which were never cold in life,  
Are together in death, as they were in strife.*

*You may gaze at the flags that hang from the mast  
To honour the men who were staunch to the last,  
And fancy you hear a quiet voice say  
"Australia – my country – will you repay*

*Will you warm my heart, give daily bread  
To the hungry mouths which once were fed  
Through the sweat and toil of the fallen man,  
Who sleeps on the hill at Balikpapan?"*

*So when you return, by the dusty road,  
You may bear your share of a Sacred Load,  
With a pride whose flame ignited them,  
Will burn to the sound of the last AMEN.*

Editors note: Many poems have been sent in for publication, but as most are lengthy, space has not been available. This poem I have prevailed upon the printer to set in a slightly condensed type so as to fit it in, line for line. This poem would have been sent in by at least seven members and the most recent from Gil Short and Les Tunks, who on his copy stated it was handed out to 2/1 Pioneers, 7th Division Balikpapan 1945. I think it was a memorial service at the War Graves Cemetery at Balikpapan about October 1945. Correct me if wrong.