

PIONEER NEWS

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

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EPIC STORY OF FAMOUS "PIONEERS"

Excerpts from this article have been reproduced using a Kyogle newspaper published 9th July 1943 and sent to us by Mavis Blanch, widow of the Ray "Joe" Blanch mentioned in the article.

"This is a story of 18 boys from Kyogle. The story of boys who, torn by war from peaceful homes, became such soldiers that not only Kyogle, but the world could be proud of. Inextricably woven with their story is the epic story of their battalion, now an integral part of the history of the A.I.F.

The Kyogle boys were posted to 2/1st Pioneer Battalion. To the layman this doesn't mean much. "Pioneer Battalion" he says to himself and imagines a lot of men digging. Yes, the pioneer is a digger all right. But he is infinitely much more. He is the jack-of-all trades of the army. Must you move a cargo in the middle of a bombing raid? The pioneers will do it. Do you want a bridge built - a bridge destroyed - trenches dug - barbed wire entanglements? The pioneers can do all these jobs and many others.

But do you want a soldier who can fight on, as well as build a road or dig a hole? That IS a pioneer. Their battalion was no exception.

Among the many Kyogle boys who sailed with the unit was a group who had already brought soldierly fame to the district. Between them they had formed part of the crack troop, of the 15th Light Horse, which trained in the district in days of peace. But their fame went further than that, for as well as being the crack troops of their regiment, they were also the crack Vickers machine gun team of all Australia.

Nowhere in Australia was there a better-drilled Vickers troop and there were none to beat them as marksmen or in stripping their guns. They also won the Beaver Cup for five years in succession. The men in that team in the battalion were: Lieut. Ray Smith, Lieut. Leo Ferris, Sgt. Albert Brown, Privates Brian Gray, Jack Boyd, Bruce McNaughton, Marshall ("Scotch") Aitken, Tom Welch, Ray Blanch and Jack McMahon.

Their first taste of fighting was on the roads in North Africa between Tobruk and Derna. However, by April 1941 they were back in Tobruk and there they stayed for seven long and bitter months. No pick and shovel now - they took the rifle, hand grenade and bayonet and hit back hard at the Germans as they hammered the perimeter. Then the Germans began to hammer from the air - the men in Tobruk had no ack-ack guns and no planes - so had nothing to stop him. The men of Tobruk went underground - they dug themselves trenches and holes and caves.

By night the Kyogle boys and others from their unit had their revenge. The German pilots came so low they could be seen laughing at the "Australian rats" burrowing into the ground, but by night the Germans on the perimeter didn't smile. They listened and listened for the Australian patrols, but it didn't matter how much you listened, you never knew when out of the pitch-black dark came the swinging sandbag which could break a neck without a sound, the bayonet stabbing from nowhere, the noisy life shattering grenade. The Aussie boys got their own back.

Not only by night, either. Famous throughout the battalion are two stories which show that the winning of the Lord Forster Cup was no fluke. Idly one day when they didn't have much to do, Leo Ferris and Albert Brown and others rigged up a mounting for their anti-tank gun, known amongst all infantrymen as the "elephant gun". Made to be fired from the lying position, it had never been considered as an ack-ack gun. However, this didn't deter Ferris and Brown, and by the end of the day there it was, pointing into the air ready for anything.

They didn't have to wait long. Droning in at the usual 2,000 feet came a flight of nine Junkers twin-engined bombers. Without much

interest the pioneers watched them pass on and drop their bombs. But a German pilot had seen their position and he peeled off on his way out to do a little strafing for good measure.

Ferris went to the anti-tank cum ack-ack gun and Brown to the Bren gun on its ack-ack stand. The old drill with the Light Horse in Kyogle steadied them against the Nazi. Down came the great Junkers and when about 150 feet from the ground Ferris let him have it with the hard hitting 55 plugs. Brown let go with the Bren, giving him magazine after magazine. Ferris got the port engine, Brown got the starboard and the instrument panel. The Nazi crashed hundreds of yards away. That was one Nazi that didn't get away.

It wasn't the first the Kyogle troop had got that way. A few weeks earlier, they had been posted with Brens on the roofs of Derna to fight off the strafers. This time a Messerschmitt dived from right to left across their zone. The troop reacted as a troop, the fire from the Brens converged on the hurtling Nazi. He flew lamely out to sea, smoke pouring from under his cowlings.

A fortnight before Tobruk was relieved, the Pioneers, despite their entreaties to stay and see the siege to a finish, were evacuated. After a brief stay in Palestine they were on the boat again. Like all soldiers they didn't know where they were going, and were happy when they arrived back in Australia. The boys from Kyogle were home for seven days, then off again to New Guinea."

2/1 BAND CONDUCTOR - OAM

Michael Butcher who is the conductor of the 2/1st Band on ANZAC Day was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List.

We congratulate Michael on his award and we appreciate the effort he puts into the Castle Hill RSL Youth Band and his attendance every year on ANZAC Day for the 2/1st march.

PIONEER ACTIVITIES 2001

WREATH LAYING - Tuesday, 24th April

On Tuesday, 24th April the Association will conduct their Wreath Laying Service at 4.10pm, and all members are to assemble on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, on the G.P.O. side at 3.45pm. Wreaths will be placed on the Cenotaph at 4.10pm.

ANZAC DAY MARCH - Wednesday 25th April

On Wednesday 25th April the march will be held and the forming will be the same as last year - 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 the march by Gavin Todd for the 2/2nds, and Don Crawford for the 2/1sts, who will also accept subscriptions at the Occidental Hotel.

ANZAC REUNION - Wednesday 25th April

The Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street Sydney is the venue for the ANZAC Day Reunion Dinner, so after the march board the train at Museum Station and travel to Wynyard Station. Then proceed up the escalators, turn right into York Street and the hotel is on the next corner.

ANNUAL MEETING - Friday, 25th May

Redfern RSL Club, corner of Redfern and Gibbon Streets, Redfern is the venue for the Annual General Meeting on 25th May 2001 at 1pm. A cordial welcome is extended to all Pioneers.

THANKS TO FINLAY FAMILY

As we prepare for ANZAC Day our thoughts turn to members on whom we depend to make the day a success. Therefore it is only fitting that a vote of thanks be extended to Gordon and Olive Finlay for the work they have carried out in past years for the Association.

Since the move of venue to the Occidental Hotel in 1994, Gordon had always been on duty in the foyer with the late Bob Lake. With Bob's death, Olive has been helping out until Geoff Finlay arrived to help his dad, and over the last few years has been assisted by Gordon's grandsons, Craig and Darrin Reynolds. They have carried out the duties of collecting fees for the luncheon and issuing name tags. Last year was the first time Gordon and Olive were not on deck, due to Gordon's ill-health.

Gordon has been a committee member for many years - Vice-President since 1963 and Social Secretary from 1985 to 1990. Together with Olive he has also been on the Pioneer News wrapping committee for nearly 40 years.

On behalf of all Pioneers, we extend our sincere thanks to Gordon, Olive and family for their service to the Association.

LAST POST

BILL HODGES 2/1 of Greenacre passed away on 12th August 2000 but we were not informed of his passing until 27th November so no Pioneer attended his funeral. However, upon notification a sympathy card was sent to his wife Irene from whom we received a "thank you" card.

BRUCE CHAMBERS 2/1 of Turramurra passed away in hospital on 22nd Sept 2000 at the age of 81 years. The private funeral service was conducted at Northern Suburbs Crematorium.

Bruce was a regular correspondent always with a generous donation together with all the news of his family and of his business as an Estate Agent. He was a keen golfer and played with Pymble Golf Club right up to the time of being hospitalised.

While in the unit he was a close friend of the late Bill Gamble, in fact Bill was godfather to Bill's son Ian, to whom we are grateful for passing on these details.

VALDA PEARCE, wife of Committeeman Jack 2/1 passed away in hospital on 9th November 2000 at the age of 94 years. Sincere sympathy was extended to Jack from the President and Executive of the Association.

DAVE DENNY 2/1 of Lismore, passed away at the age of 84 years on 1st January 2001 in Lismore Base Hospital and the funeral was attended by the following Pioneers - Terry McGuire, Alec George, Bob Barraclough, Ossie Carter, Dick Walker and Neville O'Connor to whom we are grateful for supplying these details. Neville also expressed sympathy to wife Joyce on behalf of the Association.

BILL FALLON 2/2 of Barraba passed away on 6th January 2001 and the funeral was conducted at the Barraba Anglican Church on 9th January. The Poppy Service was carried out by the local RSL of which Bill was a member.

Sympathy on behalf of the Association was extended to wife Daphne and her family by Bill Lewis, whom we thank for supplying these details.

SID KENT 2/1 of Narrabeen War Veterans Home passed away on 17th January 2001 at the War Veterans Nursing Home. A private funeral was conducted at Dee Why Funeral Parlour on 19th January.

MUFTI of Victoria, reported by Eric Causer - Deceased: 2/2nds, Basil Pugh, Leogatha; Albert Reid, Box Hill.

REVEILLE - Deceased: Bill Lanyon 2/1, R. Miller 2/2, Ted Wilcox 2/1, Alec Rossiter 2/1.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The first Mail Bag for our Centenary of Federation year and, despite age catching up with most of our readers, quite an influx of letters and cards from far and near. Not all our members are enjoying the best of health as time marches on, but we are glad to hear from those who are still able to put pen to paper. We also extend our thanks to the widows of both 2/1sts and 2/2nds who keep in touch regularly, and to the wives who so often write on behalf of their husbands.

CYRIL AMIES 2/1, Forbes, with Season's Greetings and a long letter from their new home four kilometres outside Forbes. Cyril and Doris moved to the West in July and have settled quite happily into a fairly new home on a five acre property (along with four sheep), with daughter Wendy and husband living just around the corner. Cyril is having a ball. He loves the country life and has a ride-on mower for the extensive lawns around the house. He has met up with three other Rats of Tobruk members and has been introduced to the local bowling club. Doris is relishing the peace and quietness and says she does not miss her old regime.

Much of their time has been taken up with planting and watering the new trees and shrubs and say their drive is slowly becoming a picture with the alternation of its pink and white crepe myrtles. Water is no problem for them as they are on bore water which is very soft with the special treatment plant that they have.

Good to hear from you both and your best wishes are passed on to all fellow 2/1sts for a happy and rewarding New Year.

ISABELL ANDERSON Aspendale, Vic., widow of "Snowy" 2/2, with greetings for Christmas and her thanks for the Pioneer News, and for the friendship we shared with "Snowy" before he passed away. Good to hear from you, Isabell, and our love to you and to Julie. Do keep in touch.

PHYL ANDREWS Charnwood, A.C.T., widow of Neville 2/1, with a welcome letter and cheque and her thanks for the Pioneer News which she still enjoys receiving. Is still happy with their move to Canberra and has made some good friends through the Laurel Club (presume similar to Legacy). They meet for a luncheon one day a month and have a meeting also once a month. The Labor Club in Belconnen are very good to them and let them have a room free for their meetings and supply cups and saucers and hot water for a "cuppa".

Phyl sends best wishes to all for 2001. Thank you for the cheque and it will be put to good use. All the best and good to hear from you.

REG ARMSTRONG 2/2, Baradine, with a cheque for funds and Christmas greetings to all. Both he and Coralie were well at time of writing, but Reg says his sight is failing and writing is becoming difficult. Still good to hear from you, Reg, and hope the New Year is kind to you both. Many thanks for the sub.

MAVIS ASHTON Murwillumbah, widow of Wally 2/1, with a request to Max for a copy of the history of the 2/1sts for her daughter. As Max has written you, Mavis, there are no copies available but there is a slight chance of a reprint later this year. If so, we shall publish an article about it in a future copy of the Pioneer News. Kind regards and best wishes to you and your family.

MAVIS BLANCH Beaudesert Qld, widow of Joe 2/1, with greetings for the Festive Season and a change of address for the News. Mentions she has been busy with Christmas break-up parties in the various charities she works for – always going to give some up, but never does. Has had son Bill up for a few days from Wairoonga after retirement from the C.B.A. after forty years.

Mavis had intended going to the 60th anniversary of the Rats of Tobruk Association in Brisbane, but found it too expensive. Even if you only wanted to go to two dinners you had to pay full price. She had a card from Ted and Mary Carter of Tamworth (2/1st) to say they were going. Good to hear from you Mavis.

EVELYN BOOTH Wagga Wagga, long-time friend of the late Jack Morgan 2/2, with a donation to funds, for which many thanks. Ev has been having eye problems, but has a new lens in one eye and now able to drive the car again. Says instead of sitting two feet in front of the T.V., can now see three metres away. Sends her best wishes to all the "Pioneer family" for a healthy 2001. Always nice to hear from you, Ev, both send our best wishes.

MARJ BOYLE Moama, widow of Keith 2/1, with a cheque to Pioneer News which she still appreciates getting regularly and passes on her thanks to all those who keep the show on the road. The last few months have not seen Marj in the best of health – spent two weeks in Intensive Care in Bendigo Hospital with heart and lung problems, but is slowly coming good. She is still managing Meals on Wheels when she is well and keeps busy. Says the years fast catching up with us.

My thanks to you, Marj, for your congratulations on my Life Membership award last year – it was indeed an honour and for once I was lost for words (Max says never). Take care and always good to hear from you.

BILL BRACKLEY 2/2, Urangan Qld, per pen of good wife Rose, with a sub. for the News and writing on Bill's behalf as he was recovering from a spinal operation to remove pressure on a nerve. Good to hear he was improving, Rose, and able to have an occasional game of bowls. Bill sends his best wishes to all Pioneers, especially the original 2/2nds. Trust the back continues to improve.

VERA BRADLEY Cairns, a former member of A.A.M.W.S., and author of a book "I Didn't Know That" with lots of news from the Far North. Max and I met Vera several years ago in Cairns not long after the 2/1st history was published and when she began her book on Cairns and District, Tully to Cape York 1939-1946 we agreed to help her with her chapters on army life on the Tablelands. Max also supplied her with several photos for inclusion in the book and asked the late Padre Albert Pitt-Owen of 2/1sts for his help in regard to the religious side of army life.

Since then Vera has kept in touch and hearing of our involvement in the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer plaque to be erected in the Rocky Creek Memorial Park on the Atherton Tableland has kept us up to date on the project with newspaper cuttings etc.

Many thanks for your help and interest. Vera, and all going well we should be able to make it for the dedication on V.P. Day. Will keep you posted.

Good to hear all the family news and hope Ron is still doing well after the pacemaker operation. Our best to you both and hope to see you soon.

RON CALLAGHAN 2/1, Main Beach Qld., with news of a change of address to the Sunshine State and apologies for his non-attendance last ANZAC Day. He and Jan have moved up north to be close to family for support in later years. He misses having a day out with the "boys", but keeps in touch by phone with quite a few. Ron says Don Barraclough 2/1 lives close by and they do get together often, although Don has not been in the best of health lately.

Ron sends best wishes to all and hopes to catch up with old mates one of these days. Many thanks for the donation to funds, Ron, and our best wishes to Jan and yourself.

CLAUDE CAMPBELL 2/1, Inverell, per pen of wife Dot, and passed on to the Mail Bag by Jack Bertram of Newcastle RATS. Many thanks for the donation to Pioneer News and good to see you still enjoy reading news of the old battalion friends. As you say, Dot, sad to see so many passing away but time marches on and there are not too many 2/1sts now under 80, just a few of those who joined the unit in later years.

Do hope Claude is still battling on and legs improving and the scotch twice a day is "good medicine". (Hope he enjoyed his 87th birthday in November). Our best wishes to you both and trust you were not in the flood area of Inverell over the past weeks. Your good wishes are passed on to all Pioneers for a healthy and happy 2001.

LES BRITT 2/1, Gordonvale Qld., with best wishes to all Pioneers for the New Year and a donation to the News. Trust your move back to

North Queensland has been a wise decision. All the best, keep well.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and a cheque for the News. Do hope you were able to get to Narrabri to Ken and family for Christmas Lex, but the floods in their area could have caused a change of plans. The north-west have certainly had their problems the last few months.

Pleased to hear you have at last heard from the War Graves Commission that Jack's headstone has been finished and in place. I guess with so many veterans passing away, it just takes time.

Glad everything is going well with you and your activities keeping you busy. Keep well and always good to hear from you. Our love and best wishes.

BETTY CREASY, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with a cheque for the Association enclosed with her greeting card and best wishes to all Pioneers from both herself and family for the New Year. The weather in Portland has been unseasonably cold and she was looking forward to some warm days. All the best to you, Betty, and many thanks for the donation to funds.

ALLAN CRUTE 2/1, Woolgoolga, per phone this Christmas as Beulah, his good wife, has not been in the best of health. Beulah has been having chemo treatment in Coffs Harbour Hospital and at time of writing, was still undergoing further therapy. Hopes to have some results by the end of February and we certainly hope they show a lot of improvement. Miss your usual long letter, Beulah, and we wish you all the best. Kind regards to Allan and will be in touch by phone with you later.

EILEEN DICK, Hamlyn Terrace, daughter of the late Bob Lake 2/1, with a note of thanks on behalf of mother Joan and sister Gail to all those involved in organising transport for them at the Lismore and Ballina reunions. Says it was wonderful to catch up with old Pioneer friends again. Eileen also sent along some photos taken over the weekend, many thanks. Great to see you all again.

Gail and Eileen have said they are only too willing to visit any Pioneers in hospital etc. on the Central Coast where they both live, so Max has promised to keep that in mind. Many thanks to you both, will keep in touch.

"SNOWY" DODD 2/2, Forster, with Xmas greetings to all Pioneers for a healthy and happy 2001 and many thanks to both Max and I for our efforts over the years in keeping the News on the road. Thanks, Snowy, will endeavour to keep up the good work.

ALEX DURIE 2/1, Coffs Harbour, with a very generous donation to funds (which he calls "conscience" money) and several sketches by Tom Morrow 2/1. Many years ago the late Larry Robson called on a lot of northern Pioneers on his travels and collected subs from some of our members. Alex was one so when Larry no longer called in he did not get round to writing, but has continued to receive the News. Many thanks, Alex, for the cheque and it will be put towards keeping the News posted out regularly.

Alex was in the "I" Section attached to B.H.Q., except for a short time in H.Q., so did not get to know many of the other fellows in the 2/1sts. He had kept in touch with Tom Morrow and Fred Wheaton, but has even lost touch with them over the last few years. With family commitments and advancing years time gets away, but he continues his work for legacy.

Max has already thanked you for the sketches by Tom Morrow, Alex, and they will be filed away in our Pioneer memorabilia. I have one he drew for Max whilst on the Tablelands – Max on the sig. phone and me on my office phone – and it was very well done, in colour too.

Good to hear from you, don't leave it so long next time. Max sends his best wishes.

RON EDWARDS 2/1, Wantirna South, Vic., with two letters to Max re army medals to be mounted and I see he has written you in this regard. Glad to hear the latest Aust. Service Medal 1945-75 has been approved and received, and he would like to thank you for your kind remarks on his efficiency and helpfulness. (All goes with the job, Ron).

Thank you for your donation to the Association and glad you still derive much interest and pleasure from stories of unit members. This can only be achieved by letters

from our members, so always good to get lots of mail for our Mail Bag.

As time is flying, a visit to a reunion in Sydney must be soon given top priority. I'm sure you would find the trip well worth while.

Kindest regards to you and wife, Joan, and hope to see you in Sydney one ANZAC Day.

NORMA FITCH, Calwell A.C.T., widow of late Harold 2/1, with cheque for funds and Season's Greetings to all. Thank you, Norma, and our best wishes to you and your family.

GRACE FOWKES, Wentworthville, widow of "Snowy" 2/1, with a card of greeting with her love and best wishes to all Pioneers for our Federation year. Says it's great to catch up with the News and to keep up the good work. Many thanks for the donation enclosed in your card, Grace, and our best wishes for a healthy and happy 2001.

STAN GAVAN 2/2, Greystanes, with a short note of thanks for the Pioneer News, which he receives regularly, and enclosed a cheque towards production costs. Also sent his best wishes to all for a healthy and prosperous New Year, which is heartily reciprocated. Many thanks for sub.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, once again per his loving wife Wyn, with Christmas greetings to all and many happy blessings for the New Year. Also enclosed with their card was a newspaper cutting from their local paper with photos of John and Wyn celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on 16th November. Our hearty congratulations to you both, and may you have many more happy years together. They were married in 1940 before John sailed for the Middle East, and the cutting showed both their wedding photo and present day. Both very good snaps too. Couldn't help wondering, John, why the 2/3rd Pioneer colour patch on your uniform, you must have transferred to 2/1st later after your marriage? They had a wonderful celebration with family and friends and lots of greetings from the Queen, Governor-General, and Members of Parliament. Quite a celebration!!

Do hope your physio has resumed at the hospital again, Wyn, and your hand and shoulder much better. Old age is fast catching up with us all and not too many now who haven't got aches and pains. I notice from the Mail Bag there aren't too many old Pioneers who aren't suffering some kind of disability, but I guess with those years of being outdoors in all kinds of weather, sleeping on wet ground, in trenches and mud, it is only to be expected.

Has John applied for a leave pass for ANZAC Day, yet? It's just around the corner again – and time is marching on. Fond love to you both and hope we may see you in Sydney soon.

CLIVE HARRIS 2/1, Aberdeen, with a short note with his Xmas greetings to all. He has been having a leg problem and supposed to have an operation early this year – hope by now things are on the improve, Clive, and you are much better. Kindest regards from all.

BEAU HANNAFORD 2/1, Umina, per pen of wife Jean, with a cheque for funds. Many thanks. Beau has severe arthritis and has not been able to make ANZAC Day the last couple of years, but is hoping he will be able to make it this year. All the best to you both.

LEO HEALY 2/1, Mentone Vic., also per pen of good wife Mercia, with greetings to all for the New Year and a donation to the News. Leo has not been in the best of health with legs and lung problems, but the spirit is still willing. They had seen Eric and Doff Causer earlier in the year and very pleased to see them looking well. Thank you for the cheque, and best wishes to you both.

ELAINE HENDERSON, Epping, niece of the late Ron Clark 2/1, wishing all Pioneer veterans a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy 2001. Good to hear from you again, Elaine, and hope by now your good husband has settled down in the nursing home in Ashfield. My elderly neighbour has dementia and I know first-hand of the problems.

VERDIE HUMPHREYS, Punchbowl, a long-time friend of the late Vic Whiteley 2/1, with greetings to the Pioneers for the coming year and enclosed a news cutting "Just a Common Soldier" which Max will endeavour to print when space permits.

Thank you for the thought and trust you can make it for ANZAC Day. Kindest regards.

GLORIA HUTCHINSON, Caringbah, widow of Bill 2/1, with a donation to funds and best wishes to all for the New Year. Many thanks, Gloria, and hope to see you at our ANZAC Day luncheon.

JOAN LAKE, Brookvale, widow of Bob 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and the news that she had become a "Greatgrandie" for the fourth time.

Congratulations, Joan, one thing about them they can be handed back. Hope mum and new baby are doing well.

BILL JOHNSON, 2/1, East Bentleigh Vic., with a letter of thanks for the November issue of the News and a cheque to help defray expenses. It seems as if each issue brings memories back to someone, or an instance of army life they have shared with a mate.

Bill joined the 2/1sts on the Tableland before Borneo and after the Jap surrender a few were transferred to the 2/14th Bn. and went over on the "Gascoyne" to Macassar in the Celebes and occupied the old Dutch Barracks. They had to oversee the building of holding compounds until the Japs were eventually sent home.

Agree with you, Bill, about Maj.-General Peter Cosgrove and his wonderful speech at our 50th Anniversary at Gosford, who would have dreamed in those days that he would one day hold the position he does. A very warm and compassionate man and a very good soldier.

Sorry Mavis is still suffering from the car accident and with the osteo arthritis restricted in her activities. However, your hip replacement has certainly kept you mobile. What did we do before all those ops. came into being? Just sat around in wheel-chairs I guess.

Max has written you about the Dutch Medal, Bill, and given you details about the new Australian Service Medal 1945-75, to which you are entitled, so hope you have received same by now. All the best to you both and thanks for your kind remarks re the Pioneer News.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, Castle Hill, with a very generous donation to funds and his warm wishes for Christmas and New Year to all. He was going to his family in Castle Hill for Xmas. Kindest regards and keep well.

JACK KEMPNIH 2/1, Fingal Bay, with a card of good wishes to all Pioneers for the Festive Season, per good wife Maisie. It was good to meet up again at the Newcastle Rats luncheon, but not much time for a long chat. Hope both are well and you have a healthy year ahead.

MARIE LAMERTON, Liverpool, widow of Jack 2/1, with sincere greetings to Jack's old mates for Xmas and the hope that 2001 will be a healthy, happy one for all. All the best to you and your family.

ENID LANNAM, Forster, daughter of the late Ron Hay 2/1, also sends greetings to her dad's old Pioneer friends for the coming year. She enjoys reading the News and says to keep up the good work. Many thanks, Enid, for the donation to funds.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with her best wishes to all Pioneer friends for a healthy 2001 and we look forward to seeing you at our ANZAC lunch.

JANINE LEMBO, Shepparton Vic., daughter of the late Rex Francis 2/1, with many thanks to Max for sending her the history sheet of the 2/1st Pioneers, which is now amongst her collectable items. Over the years her dad spoke highly of his fellow mates in the battalion and Janine sent a copy of a poem she wrote for the T.P.I. publication "Chin Up" which we will try and publish when space permits. Many thanks and good to hear from you.

DON LINTON 2/2, Tuncurry, with a welcome donation to funds and his best wishes to all for a healthy Festive Season. Many thanks, Don, and our good wishes to both Nancy and yourself.

H.L. LOCK 2/2, Renmark S.A., with a cheque for News and in reply to the query by Sid Booth 2/2 of his whereabouts. We apologise for the mistake, H.L. (have not your Christian name) and because your name was not familiar to me I mistakenly thought you were not on our mailing list. (Know most of them off by heart after over 40 odd years). My apologies. Sid will no doubt read this and know you are still in the land of the living. Many thanks for the sub.

H.L. joined the 2/2nds at Trinity Beach and was appointed Lieut. in Charge of 16 Pln. He served in both the Tarakan and Balikpapan landings. He keeps in touch with Allan Olson in South Australia and has attended some of their Pioneer functions.

An original 2/48th Bn. member, he served with that unit in the Tobruk, Alamein and New Guinea campaigns. Was a Sergeant with V.C. winner Tom Derrick and they lived close by before the war.

Your regards are passed on to Bill Robertson and Ray Harris and old mates from "D" Coy, and next letter please sign your Christian name for our records.

ERN LUNN 2/2, Dubbo, with a couple of letters just prior to Xmas with the news that Bill (Colt) Barnes had passed away in a nursing home in Canberra. This news had been passed on to Ern from Joyce Tomlinson, widow of George 2/2. Ern did not know Bill in the army, but met him when he was in Warren working for the Water Conservation Commission. We are sorry you and Norma had to miss the Lismore reunion, but hope to catch up again one of these days.

Good to hear you did not suffer any damage during the big floods in Dubbo and that Norma's health has improved. The Kerslakes join me in sending you both their very best wishes. All the best, and hope the coming year is happy and healthy.

JACK McDONAGH 2/2, Condell Park, with a note to Max re one of the 2/1 bandsmen, Jock "Scotty" Armour, who was listed in Australia's Band World as one of those great players of earlier eras. The 2/1st band was formed at Greta camp in July 1940, under the direction of Jock, as bandmaster. After "Scotty" was wounded in Tobruk, Sergeant Bill McCarter took over as bandmaster. Many thanks for the cutting, Jack, and best wishes.

TOM MCGUINNESS 2/1, Laurieton, with a cheque for funds and sends many thanks to the Committee and editors of the News for the work they do for the Association. Thanks, Tom, and best wishes.

ROY MCGREGOR 2/2, Maitland, per pen of Marion, with a contribution to the News and to say that they are both getting over their winter health problems. Trust you haven't been affected by the floods in your area. Best wishes to you both.

JOYCE MCGREGOR, Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, with greetings to all for the Festive Season and some family news. Seems no time, Joyce, since Jill and Lynda were babes in arms at Kingsgrove – how the years have flown. Joyce still "soldiering on" says eyes very bad, feet bad and all in between not wonderful, but surviving. True Pioneer spirit, Joyce, always good to hear from you.

ALLAN MCINNIS 2/2, North Sydney, with a card of greeting for Christmas and his best wishes to all for 2001. Says Mary is on the improve and they are managing to overcome the difficulties. Good to hear and hope the New Year brings better health to you both.

Mac also sent along a photocopy of a write-up in the back of award winning book "Soul Mountain" in reference to Trevor Shearston's latest book "A Straight Young Back". Trevor (son of Doug Shearston 2/1) taught in New Guinea for several years and since his return has published four novels, all based on his interest in Papua New Guinea and the effects of colonial rule. He now lives in Katoomba with his wife and young son and is working on his latest novel. Many thanks, Mac, must see if it is available in our local library. Love to Mary.

OWEN MILLS ex 7th Div. Sigs, Springwood, with a note to Max for the information on Drs. Stan and Eric Goulston in the last issue. As Owen was from Maclean and school friend of several of our 2/1st Pioneers, he often drops us a note on his "doings". In latest letter, Owen mentions the late Alec Cameron, ex-2/1st, who had a younger brother in 2/2nd Pioneers who answered to the name of "Pommy". Thinks his true name was Errol and believes he rose to the rank of corporal during the Markham and Ramu Valley shows. Perhaps some 2/2nd may remember him?

Owen and wife Molly still roaming around to army reunions since they sold the caravan and four wheel drive – they let someone else cook the breakfast and make the beds. Have had

several this year – to Albury, Coffs Harbour, Taree and lots of stops in between. Still fortunate to have reasonably good health and have one another. All the best to you both, keep well.

ELEANOR NEWCOMBE, Glen Iris Vic., daughter of the late Cal Mitchell 2/2, with thanks to Max for sending her the Pioneer News, and enclosed her sub for the year. No reminder is sent, Eleanor, but the sub is \$5 per annum. Most pay around ANZAC Day, but not compulsory, and your sub will cover this year. Good to see you still keep in contact with your father's old friends and I'm sure they enjoy your visits. All the best for the coming year.

ALLAN OLSON 2/2, Netherby S.A., with his kindest regards and best wishes to all from the Pioneers in South Australia. Many thanks.

NEVILLE O'CONNOR 2/2, Ballina, with greetings and fond wishes to all for a happy and healthy 2001 from both he and Betty. Thank you, Nev, for your phone calls and the cuttings you have sent with News from up north. Our best wishes to you both.

ROY PARRETT 2/2, Scarness Qld., with a cheque for Treasurer, many thanks. Your subs have been paid regularly over the years, Roy, so no worries. Sorry to hear your good wife has been in hospital so long after a stroke, but a blessing she has no memory loss and can still read and do crosswords. I'm sure she looks forward to your visits twice a day and hope her health improves in the next 12 months. All the best to you both and kindest regards.

PETER PEILE 2/1, Caringbah, once again per pen of Erika and with her note a cheque for the News. Many thanks. Erika mentions a great time at the Olympics – Peter going twice, once to the basketball and then to baseball. As you say a wonderful atmosphere and certainly something to remember for a long time.

Peter has not been in the best of health and Erika says they are amazed at the age of some of the Pioneer men seeing all they experienced during their service life. Not too many of them under 80 and really remarkable how they "battle" on.

Thank you both for your kind remarks on my award – won't be able to give the job away now. I'm sure Max will make sure of that!! Best wishes to you both.

BOB PHILPOTTS 2/2, Woodend Vic., a new member on our list, courtesy Frank Ray 2/2. Frank passed on his copy of the News and Bob found it very interesting and says it brought back lots of memories of former comrades.

He sent special regards to Ray Burroughs, Ray Harris and Allan McInnes and says Bill Robertson is a marvel at his age. (Certainly agree with you there). Thank you for the sub and hope that you find future issues of interest. Kind regards and best wishes.

CHARLES RICHARDSON 2/2, Manly West Qld., with a greeting card to Committee and members for a happy and healthy New Year. Many thanks.

MONA REINERS, Corryong Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with a long newsy letter to Max and I for Christmas and family doings over the past 12 months. Mona has had a good year, but has had her travels restricted after her family gave her a King Charles Cavalier, which she can't really leave. Says it's like having a baby to look after, but really beautiful.

Son Brian of Shepparton had his 50th birthday in April and Mona did have a few days down with the family for the big occasion. Daughter Mandy with her son and daughter flew over from Perth to spend a few days, and were back again in October while the cheap fares were on for the Olympics. Brian was a volunteer worker at the Games and really enjoyed the experience. He was able to sit in on lots of the athletic events, as well as the Opening and Closing ceremonies, an opportunity of a lifetime.

Good to hear all the news of the family, Mona, and to see all the "grandies" doing so well in their exams. Bern would have been so proud.

Many thanks for the stamps enclosed with your letter and hope we may be able to one day find ourselves down your way. Our love and best wishes to you, also a big hello from the Kerslakes. Keep well and I'll be in touch soon.

GEORGE SAUER 2/2 and 2/1, Lower Mitcham S.A., with Season's Greetings to all and his thanks for the help Max has given the South Aussies over the year. Kindest regards.

GIL SHORT 2/2, Caringbah, with a cheque for the News and apologies for the lateness. He has been in and out of hospital and has only just got round to sending it. Hope your health has improved, Gil, and glad you look forward to receiving the News. Says it was great to see Jack Westwood of Bradbury joining the Association.

HARRY SPREDBOROUGH 2/1, Alexandra Hills Qld., with a lengthy letter of "doings" over the last 12 months and a cheque for the Treasurer. Healthwise not too bad, although during the winter Jean contacted a virus which left her with a weakened heart. However, as long as she doesn't try to do too much she keeps fairly well.

They have been tripping around by coach during the year, mostly fairly close to home, but have been dogged by wet weather on nearly every trip. (One thing we can't control, Harry). Made a trip to the Flanders Poppy Festival at Stanthorpe and lots of wineries, so that made up for some of the bad weather.

Many thanks for your kind greetings to all and your cheque and hope 2001 will be kind to you and Jean healthwise. Always good to hear from you.

GWEN STRODE, Yagoona, sister of the late Keith Jones 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and a donation to funds. Gwen also informed us that at a meeting of War Widows she met the daughter of John Westacott 2/1, who earlier members of the unit would remember. Thank you for the sub.. Gwen, and your good wishes.

BILL THIELE 2/1, Port Hughes S.A., per pen of wife Betty, with money order for New's costs and their best wishes for the coming year. Bill is keeping well, still enjoys winter golf on the Yorke Peninsula and during the summer months plays night bowls under lights.

Thank you both for your good wishes on my Life Membership Award last year and will try and keep up the good work. Has been a very heavy Mail Bag this issue, I've been getting writer's cramps. All the best to you both and good health in the coming year.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba Nth Qld., with the latest news on the plaque to be erected at Rocky Creek on behalf of both battalions. Lesley, his wife, took photos and has sent them on to Max for his records, and to send to Veterans Affairs.

So far the dedication date is not known, but as Max has informed you by letter, Les, he hopes it can be arranged for V.P. Day in August. Will be in touch with you when final arrangements are made. Max has given you the names of the only Pioneers we have in the North – Les Britt 2/1 and Vic Norman 2/2, and of course Bert Huttley 2/2 in Bloomsbury whom you have already been in touch with.

Trust by now the pacemaker has settled down and you feel better. Our thanks to both you and Lesley for the time and trouble involved with the plaque and all going well we may meet up with you at the dedication. Kindest regards.

DICK WAKELY 2/2, Waratah, with a cheque for the News and your change of address from your unit at Bar Beach. During the past year Dick has not enjoyed the best of health so in November moved to a hostel in Waratah. He is settling in well and finds that he knows many of the residents from his young days in the area. Many thanks for your cheque, Dick, and for your kind words to the editorial staff – much appreciated. Enjoy your new surroundings and hope your health improves in the coming year.

RON WEBSTER 2/1, Bass Hill, with greetings for the Festive Season and the copy of the "Soldiers Bible" which Max hopes to print one day when space permits. I'm sure an American, Phil Harris, made a recording of the story many years ago, entitled "A Deck of Cards". Many thanks and all the best for the coming year.

JACK WESTWOOD 2/2, Bradbury, with a cheque for the Treasurer and his thanks for the Pioneer News which he was happy to receive. Jack enjoyed the reunion at Lismore and thanked Ken Wilson and his Committee for a good weekend. Hope by now your leg problems are not causing so much trouble and that you may be able to make it to town for ANZAC Day. All the best to Joyce and yourself.

XMAS GREETINGS were also received with thanks from the following Pioneers and widows: Bugler Aub. Brasier, Robyn Bell, Eric Causer, Alan Dunstone (2/4th Pioneers), Nita

Ferris, Gordon Finlay, Pat Gavin (2/3rd Anti-Tank), Bob Ginnane, Pam Herrick, Marie Jensen, Jack Kerslake, Mary Lloyd, Doug Shearston, Kathleen Simmonds (England), George Walker, Doug Waters and Dylane Whiteley.

• In conclusion, we extend our congratulations to our Treasurer, Don Crawford 2/2, who recently won the 2000 Major Singles for Concord Bowling Club for the fourth year in a row. Well done, Don.

That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and thanks to all those who took the time to write over a busy Festive Season. It has taken me many days to get it all on paper. Hoping to see a good roll-up to the Wreath Laying on ANZAC Eve at the Cenotaph, the March and the reunion dinner at the Occidental Hotel. You can be assured of a warm welcome.

2/1 TRANSPORT PLATOON

At the Lismore Reunion Jack Griffiths and Noel Schomberg were reminiscing about their days together in the Transport Platoon so sat down and compiled the names of the Platoon, as far as they could remember, as follows: Jack Allen, Joe Barker, Joe Bird, Cec. Blanch, Joe Blanch, Harry Brown, Ken Bowden, Harold Buckland, Col Charker, George Cosgrove, Norm Curley, Jim Donnelly, Pat Dwyer, Ted Felton, Wal (Mick) Flynn, Jack Green, E. (Wagga) Grice, Jack Griffiths, Harry Hamer, Roy Jardine, Bob Lake, N. (Mick) Marshall, Jack Martin, D. McCallum, Ken Newling, Jack Pearce, E. (Nap) Pelgrave, Clarrie Pike, Jack Richards, Ralph Rootham, Noel Schomberg, Ted Simpson, Ken Stuart, Mick Tassell, Joe White and Vic Whiteley.

SICK PARADE

ROY LEVY 2/2 of Revesby had another visit to Bankstown Hospital in December with an infection in relation to the pacemaker that had been fitted, Don Crawford who had been visiting him reported Roy was now home and progressing slowly.

JACK PEARCE 2/1 of Narrabeen, at the young age of 94 years had a spell in Mona Vale Hospital, because of a bladder infection. Jack Kerslake who regularly visits him reports he is now back in the Narrabeen Salvation Army Hostel.

BALLINA MARINE CENTRE

Ballina High School Marine Discovery Centre won \$15,000 as first prize in the Reader's Digest Environment Award 2000 in October last year, so marine head teacher Mick O'Connor (son of Neville O'Connor 2/2) and 30 students, went to Sydney to accept the award at Taronga Zoo.

Our members who attended the 1999 Lismore Reunion will remember Mick taking us for a ride in the school's army blitz buggy through his cane fields. He then took us into his large shed and gave a talk on the method used to cut cane. He also spoke of his school's marine studies, and invited Pioneers to attend his science classroom the next day.

Congratulations to Mick and we wish him well in his push for marine science to become a Board of Studies subject.

KOKODA TRACK WALKWAY

Following is the Calendar of Events for 2001 as supplied by Secretary Alice Kang.

ANZAC DAY SERVICE – Tuesday 24th April
10am at the Rose Garden

SOCIAL EVENT – Saturday 5th May
12 noon a lunch fanfare to receive Granny Kay who is running from Central Coast to the Kokoda Walkway in aid of Alzheimers Research.

VP DAY SERVICE – Wednesday 15th August
2.30pm The major event for the Walkway in the presence of the Premier of NSW.

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE – Thursday 8th November
10.30am at the Rose Garden.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON – Monday 3rd December
12 noon for Friends of Kokoda – Venue to be confirmed.

For further information contact
Alice Kang on Ph. 9767 8488

PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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2/1-2/2 PIONEER BNS ANZAC DAY

A perfect autumn day for the march. For the 2/1, Bill Tasker acted as marshal, Stan Goulston and John Gilchrist as march leaders, with Tim Lloyd carrying the banner and Ray Law the Australian flag. Allan McInnes led the 2/2, with Padre Steele accompanying him. Mark Neasbey carried the banner and Gordon Collins the Australian flag. Young Tom Smith, grandson of the late George Smith, came from Wauchope to march with George's medals.

At the assembly points, Gavin Todd homed in on new arrivals for annual subscriptions (some unrelated passers-by were lucky to escape). Meanwhile, Don Crawford made the short walk from the 2/2 area to collect subs from 2/1 members, assisted by Doug Shearston.

REUNION AT OCCIDENTAL HOTEL

At their usual table were Noel Grant from Altona, Vic. and from Western Australia, Jack Stewart (Woodlands) and Alf Bentley (Yokine). Alf and wife Pat are meeting Gordon and Eunice Chrystal at Katoomba for morning tea before heading back to Perth. George Neilson (armourer 2/1) was marked absent but Neville Moane made it this year, and was joined later by his friend Heather Shane, a WW 2 army nurse. Ken Oliver from Earlwood had an excuse for being late – he had to watch his WAAF wife march!

It was hard to get a word in around the room, but John Hunt (Qld) held his own – even before the Parramatta Caledonian Pipe Band raised the decibel level late in the day. Other country and interstate travellers were Phil Cramsie (Brisbane), the usual contingent from the North – Ken Wilson, Alec George and Kev Raward (Lismore), Nev O'Connor (Ballina), Snow Dodd (Tuncurry), Sam Lewis (Forster), Ivor Balmain (Soldiers Point), Jack Bertram from Newcastle, Fred Wheaton (Sawtell). Pat Egan came from Queanbeyan, and from the South Coast Frank Locane and George Walker. Nearer to Sydney, but still needing 02 prefixes to phone them, were Bert Neasbey (Davistown) and Bob Ginnane (Leumeah).

ON WITH THE SHOW

President Allan McInnes recited the Ode, welcomed members and thanked the helpers. He was followed by Patron John Gilchrist who made his usual thoughtful contribution.

The first drinks at the bar were free – courtesy of Mark Neasbey (son of Bert) who again shouted for the mob. Mark's brother Rodney was there, with many other sons and other relatives – Bill Tasker's son John, Jeff Purse (grandson of Jim), Ken Finlayson (son-in-law of Alec George). A "mate" of Alec said he (Alec) was back down bludging on his son-in-law before heading west. Gordon Wheaton was with father Fred. It was good to have presence of octogenarian Nev Woodham and son Ian, from Cleveland, Q. We saw Ian Secombe (son of Cliff, HQ D Coys, and RAP 2/1).

Other regulars in the sons and others department were workers David Herron, Tim Lloyd, Ray Law, Geoff Finlay, George Granger, also Peter Gilchrist (son of John), Adam McInnes (son of Allan) and Gordon Collins (son of Pat). Another was Robert Stubbs, a nephew of Noel Schomberg. Noel (2/1) caught up with Pat Collins (2/2) – they both enlisted from Bega and were mates all through Tobruk. Pat Collins was showing WW1 medals passed on from his father-in-law Bert Galli – DCM, MM, 1914-18 STAR, SERVICE MEDAL, M.I.D.

There was talk of a youngster from Albury, named Michael, a great grand nephew of Normie (Nugget) Neal, who marched wearing Normie's medals from both wars. At Max Herron's table we noted his scouting mate Reg Ward from 2/4 Artillery. Moving down the room we observed Laurie Kelly keeping his table entertained, among them Gary Lewis, (son of Sam), Brian and Gary Hemmings and Allan

Moore (sons and son-in-law of the late Snowy).

Roy Jardine said he was disappointed that more 2/1 had not attended the Rats of Tobruk 60th Anniversary reunion (but being Vice-President of the Rats Association he would say that!).

In a romantic vein, we overheard Andy Beebar recounting how he met his wife Carrie while stationed at Trinity Beach. Carrie was working on a dairy at Daintree. Andy didn't tell us his opening gambit with Carrie – was it "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" – but whatever it was, it was successful. They married when he returned from Balikpapan.

Ivor (George) Balmain, swore that in a northern camp, he convinced the cook that a newly arrived can of egg powder was in fact, kalsomine. When the kitchen was painted, the colour was great, but after a few days of steamy tropical heat, the smell and the blowflies had the cook looking for George with a meat tenderiser.

THOSE GRAND OLD MEN

Padre Steele aged 91, marched strongly, but I did not see him at the Occidental. But Bill Robertson, now 95, was there as was Jack Pearce, 96, both looking good.

Nearly 80 members sat down at the Occidental and were spoiled with bright and friendly service. The meal was voted the best yet – rack of lamb and plenty of vegetables, all done well! Very different from the first year, when we got standard city style – rare cuts of beef, and vegs "al dente" (or almost raw). Now the chef has the message, and this meal could not be faulted.

By mid afternoon, the lady minders and drivers began to arrive, signalling the end of another successful reunion. Among them was a constant friend, Robyn Bell from Victoria, daughter of the late Leo Morris. Thanks are due to the committee and the many helpers.

– Reported by BILL LEWIS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2001

I am a very proud old Pioneer presenting the 55th Annual Report today. On 13th March 1946 the Inaugural meeting was held to form the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bns Association and at a subsequent meeting held on 15th March 1946 at the Hunter Street office of the 2/1-2/2 Comforts Fund with an attendance of eighteen members, the Executive was elected.

From this first meeting of eighteen members our Committee meetings have averaged twenty five members and they have always been productive with original thoughts and ideas being presented. Could anyone present at the initial meeting possibly have had the foresight to envisage that fifty five years later we would still have a very strong Association, carrying our banners into the year 2001.

I was at that first meeting and it is wonderful to see so many present after the initial attendance of eighteen members in 1946. The past century has been one of highs and lows and Federation stands out as the top high. Two World Wars were fought and won, but at great sacrifice of young Australian lives. The A.I.F. is just one hundred years old. The deeds of the A.I.F. received world acclaim for the bravery and gallantry from Gallipoli onward. This acclaim was truly deserved. (And so say all of us, came from Committee members).

Our Association has always been blessed with very talented executive officers and none

of us would realise the hours worked by our wonderful Secretary Max Herron who gives up that brilliant commodity on our behalf – ie his time. George Walker, who is our Assistant Secretary is willing and able to help. Don Crawford stepped in when we needed a Treasurer and is most capable in handling our finances and it is great to see Don and Max working so well together. Bill Tasker is a superb Welfare Officer and Roy Levy, as 7th Division delegate has carried out his job even though not well himself. Bill Lewis does our reporting in a most capable manner.

The Pioneer News is next on the agenda and this publication is the means of communicating with Pioneers scattered all over Australia and the many letters received show how important it is. Max Herron makes the Pioneer News one of his duties as he lays out and edits the paper for the printer, all this with the assistance of Peg who is not only officially appointed as correspondence editor of the large number of letters received but is also now our Minute Secretary. Many thanks Peg.

ANZAC Eve is one of the most important dates on our calendar and has been for many years, as on that day we form up and march to the Cenotaph for the Wreath Laying Service and as usual we are grateful to Aub Brasier (not a Pioneer) for his fine rendition on the bugle for Last Post and Reveille. Pioneers consider this to be what we value – Remembrance.

On ANZAC Day we were down in numbers at the march but those who are fit enough turn up; even though we are all getting older and not A1 the Pioneers will still be there. For the ANZAC Day Reunion the Occidental Hotel is perfect as the management and staff look after us, as being Pioneers so they should – we even receive waiter drinks service. The Association opens this day with the Ode as we do every meeting or function for our policy has always been remembrance. Mateships are seen at the reunion with members moving around the room sharing what they are doing now and tales, true and false, are relived. A feature of the reunion was the presence of a good roll up of country and interstate members. **ALLAN McINNES**

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

This service was held on 24th April at the Cenotaph in Martin Place with an attendance of thirty nine members including a good roll up of our ladies.

The members were formed up in the capable hands of Bill Tasker, with John Gilchrist and Jack Tooker as leaders. The banners were carried by Roy Jardine 2/1 and Jack McDonagh 2/2.

Wreaths were laid by President Allan McInnes for the Association and Katrina Fleming, grand-daughter of Noel & Jean Grant 2/1 of Altona, Vic.

The bugler was Aub Brasier who played a very fine rendition of Last Post & Reveille – thanks once again Aub.

ROCKY CREEK MEMORIAL

The unveiling of the 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion Plaque will take place on Sunday 12th August 2001 at 12.30 pm, in the Rocky Creek War Memorial Park. The park is situated on the Kennedy Highway between Mareeba and Atherton on the Atherton Tablelands where both units carried out their jungle training.

This will take the form of a memorial service to commemorate VP Day as well as the unveiling of unit plaques.

A cordial invitation is extended to all Pioneers to attend and to date, representing the two units are Les and Lesley Tunks (2/1) and Max and Peg Herron (2/1).

Anyone wishing further information may contact the Secretary on 02 9759 5491.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The first issue since ANZAC Day and, although the attendance was down a little on last year, those who were able to march and attend the reunion had a great day. The weather was much kinder than last year and thousands lined the route of the march. Quite a few regular attendees were unable to be present – age is fast catching up – but as can be seen from their letters to the Mail Bag they were there in spirit.

DORA ANDERSON, Merimbula, widow of Don 2/1, with a long letter and a welcome donation to funds. She enjoys reading the News even though none of the names are familiar to her, other than Bill Johnson of East Bentleigh, and sends her thanks to all those who keep our wonderful publication going.

Later in the year Dora hopes to be in Sydney and is looking forward to seeing the Rose Garden and the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord. Both she and Don were Victorians so has not had much chance to visit Sydney.

Dora has joined the Laurel Club, a branch of the South Coast Legacy, and says the war widows are really well looked after by the Legatees, wonderful men who can't do enough to help. They have a lot of bus outings and really enjoy themselves.

Good to hear you have had Don's medals mounted and framed, Dora, and am sure they are treasured by you and your family.

Many thanks for your donation and always pleased to hear from you.

ALF BALLARD 2/2, Monterey, with his sub. for the News, which he is always pleased to receive. His eyes are not the best, but is grateful to his daughter for reading the doings of his old mates. Alf sends his regards to all Pioneers and says to keep up the good work.

IVOR BALMAIN 2/2, Soldiers Point, with a few requests to Max and to say he will be "on parade" on ANZAC Day. Max has noted he has replied to your letter, Ivor, and given you the information you requested. The new 1945-1975 Aust. Service Medal may take some time to be processed, but I'm sure you will be pleased with it. Comes in a nice case with a miniature. Trust you had some luck with the other items you requested from the Victorian Assn. of the 2/2nds.

LEILA BARBER, Trarie, widow of Eric 2/1, with a donation to funds, for which many thanks. Good to hear from you after such a long time and have passed your best wishes on to Mary McInnes. Mary has her good and bad days, but still manages to get out occasionally when well. Our best wishes, Leila.

PHIL BARNETT 2/2, Alstonville, with a short note enclosing his sub. and his kindest regards to all. Many thanks.

ALBERT BARTON 2/1, Gulgong, sends greetings from the "bush" and although slowed down to low gear is still grateful to be in the land of the living. Does not get around much any more, but hopes to make a coach trip his local RSL is planning to the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord, stay overnight and on the way home visit the Lithgow Small Arms Museum. Hope you are able to make it.

Alby had been invited to speak at the local school on "Australia at War" and what role he played and said the kids enjoyed the talk and had to do a project on it. He said it was great to see the interest the younger generation showed in Aussie history. Now he's been invited to speak at a "Probuss" meeting in Mudgee on a similar subject. Your fame must be spreading, Alby, keep up the good work.

Pleased to hear both you and Gwen are well apart from related age problems and keeping busy. Many thanks for your kind words on the Mail Bag, will endeavour to keep up the good work, and for your donation to funds. All the best to you both.

ARTHUR BENNETT 2/1, Pendle Hill, has been placed on our mailing list to receive future issues of the News. This was arranged by his son-in-law Laurie Longmore of Barrington, who also kindly paid the subscription. Thank you, Laurie, and Max has already sent Arthur back

numbers of the paper. We hope you enjoy reading the News, Arthur, and maybe remember some of the names of old mates.

JACK BERTRAM 2/1, Hamilton, with a short note and apology for his non-attendance at the Annual Meeting. His regards are extended to all Pioneers – says there's no doubt they are a great mob. Jack passed on the news that Jack Griffiths is not in the best of health, but sends his best wishes to all.

ALF BENTLEY 2/1, Yokine, W.A. with a note from the West to say how much he and wife, Pat, enjoyed their stay in Sydney for ANZAC Day and once again able to take part in the march and the reunion dinner. Said his table at the luncheon was happy and noisy as usual, but despite only having a small number at the table made up for it in friendship and enjoyment. Alf says it was good to have Max visit their table this year and sent along a very nice photo as a memento. Many thanks. Also thanks for your kind remarks on my contribution to the Pioneer News and glad you look forward to receiving your copy. He also passed on his thanks to all the Pioneer ladies for cheering the unit during the march – that will make their day.

Thanks for the letter, Alf, and hope that both you and Pat are able to make the year next year.

MAVIS BLANCH, Beaudesert, widow of Joe 2/1, with her usual newsy letter enclosing her sub. Her daughter, Dell, and husband Peter, took Mavis to the service in Brisbane for the World Reunion of the Rats of Tobruk. She managed to find Laurie Kelly, Ron Cross, Roy Jardine, Ted and Mary Carter, all 2/1sts, also Jack Pearce with a carer looking after him. Jack (aged 94) had plenty of T.V. coverage.

After the service Mavis and her family went by bus to Mt. Coot-tha Gardens to see the Freedom Wall built for the Australia Remembers Year. There are thousands of plaques, brightly gold coated to preserve them, a really beautiful sight.

Good to hear from you again, Mavis, and love and best wishes from your friends "south of the border".

DICK BLAKENEY 2/1, Narrabeen, with a welcome donation to funds and congratulations on the continued good work of the Committee. Is still enjoying life at the RSL Retirement Village at Narrabeen and sends best wishes to all Pioneers, especially his old mates from A Coy 2/1. Thank you for the sub. Dick, and kindest regards.

LES BRITT 2/1, Edmonton, Qld., once more on the move, from Gordonvale, and your new address has been noted. At 82, says he's still young at heart, has a house and a dog and keeps reasonably good health. What more can you ask for Les, unless it's some good mates and a few beers.

In a letter from Ron Coyte, he is wondering if you are the same Les Britt he knew in Orange as a boy? Not a very common name – so maybe one and the same. Ron was also 2/1st, and close to your age.

GEORGE CATCHPOLE 2/2, Northgate, Qld., per pen of daughter Lynn Jones, and we thank you Lynn for taking the time and trouble to pass on the latest news of your Dad, also for the sub. enclosed with your letter.

Since Lynn wrote last, George has been given residency at Kedron Nursing Home and he seems happy in his new home. His wife, Amy, still lives in the family home at Northgate and they were fortunate to have him home on Christmas Day. It was a great family reunion, the only person missing was his grand-daughter, Tiffany, who was working on Hayman Island. George and Amy also celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary in February and we pass on our very best wishes to them both.

Late last year the Nundah/Northgate RSL presented George with a beautiful recognition award and he had a wonderful afternoon catching up with old friends and very thrilled with the award.

Do hope the problems with your legs have shown a lot of improvement, George, since Lynn wrote and we thank her for her best wishes to Association members for the coming year. Take care and your own kindest regards are passed on to your Pioneer mates.

VERA COOK, Randwick, widow of Clem 2/1, with a letter of thanks to the Association for the sympathy extended to her on Clem's passing and a welcome donation to funds. Thank you, Vera, also for returning the copy of "The Pioneers". We have a long waiting list of members hoping to procure a copy if any

become available. Our best wishes and the News will continue to be sent to you.

RON COYTE 2/1, Wentworthville, with a donation for the Association funds, for which many thanks. Ron apologises for his absence on ANZAC Day but was in Westmead Hospital recovering from a bowel problem – hope everything is O.K. again. Ron's son was hit by a car several months ago and is still in a Brain Injury Unit not very well, so he and his wife have had a very stressful time. We hope he has shown some improvement since you wrote in May. Ron also passed on the news that Sid Lane 2/2 passed early this year in hospital.

Ron has seen mention in the News of a Les Britt and wonders if he is the same Les whom Ron knew as a boy in Orange. We have a letter from Les in this issue also, so hope you may hear from him in this regard. Best wishes.

ARTHUR DAVIS 2/1, Granville, with a sub. for the News and to say how sorry he was to read of the passing of Bill Hodges of D Coy 2/1. They worked together a lot at Milne Bay and he still has a couple of photos which he would copy and send on to Bill's family. The address is Mrs Irene Hodges, 59 Juno Parade, Greenacre, 2190. Thank you, Arthur, and our good wishes.

ALBY DEAN 2/1, Shepparton, Vic., with two letters since ANZAC Day with details of the ANZAC ceremonies at their RSL Club and the recently finished update of their War Memorial, complete with photo. Certainly a very striking memorial and one of which the people of Shepparton can be very proud. Good to see both ceremonies were very well attended, Alby, and trust the extensions to your Club are finished by the end of the year. Thank you for photo and your donation to the News.

ANDY ELLISTON, Narooma, son of the late Phil 2/1, with the sad news that his mother, to whom the News had been sent for many years, passed away late last year aged 88. Phil passed away in 1968 and had served with the 2/1sts in Tobruk and New Guinea. Thank you for the subscription, Andy, and the News will be sent to you regularly at your Narooma address.

Our sympathy to you and the family on your sad loss.

DON GALVIN 2/1, Gloucester, with a change of address to Hillcrest Nursing Home, per letter from his nephew James Murray of Alexandra Headland in Queensland. James said Don continues to enjoy good physical health and looks forward to news of his old army mates. Thanks for the sub. to the News and Max has already replied to your letter and sent receipt. All the best to you, Don, from your fellow Pioneers.

AVELINE GAMBLE, Chermiside, Qld., widow of Bill 2/1, with two letters and a welcome donation to funds. Many thanks. Aveline still appreciates the News and even though she did not meet Bill until after the war, finds many of the names are familiar. Bill's sister Jean (who died four months before Bill) was with the AANS at Rocky Creek and kept a sisterly eye on her young brother and his friends. Jean nursed at Yaralla for some years after the war.

Max has written you re the Dutch Medal, Aveline, and noted your reply. Keep well and best wishes.

COLIN CAMERON 2/1, Campbelltown, with his sub. for the News and best wishes passed on by his daughter, Sandra Grainger. Col also sent his kindest regards to his old friend Ron Callaghan, whom he has not seen for several years, and hopes he's enjoying the sunshine in Queensland. Thank you, Sandra, for writing on your dad's behalf. All the best to you, Col, and thanks for the donation.

BOB DONALD 2/1, Glen Innes, with a letter to say he is still in the land of the living and apologies for lateness of his sub. Says time passes so quickly as years catch up but always enjoys reading the News when it arrives. Quite agree with you, Bob, about the problems with some of the young people today and it is sad to see so many on drugs and associated crimes. No amount of publicity on the dangers of drugs, fast speed in cars and drink driving seems to register. They have to learn the hard way.

Max has written you re the Dutch Medal and given you the information you required. I presume you already know and perhaps have received the Australian Service Medal 1945-75, with S.W. Pacific Clasp, for service in Borneo after 3/9/1945. This was issued by the Army Medals Section.

Many thanks for your contribution to funds and best wishes.

Dr. STAN GOULSTON 2/1, Chatswood, original RMO of the battalion, with a welcome donation to funds and to say how much he enjoyed reading the article on the Kyogle "boys" in the last issue. He is still conducting a Literary Option for medical students at the University of Sydney, so passing on his knowledge to the younger generation. Good to see you marching on ANZAC Day, Stan, and our best wishes for your continued good health.

GEORGE GRANGER, Kandos, son of the late Bill 2/1, with a very welcome letter and his thanks for back issues of the News posted on by Max. George was most appreciative of the warm welcome he received on ANZAC Day and to meet friends of his father that Bill used to talk so fondly of. It was a great honour to march with his dad's old battalion and to be so warmly welcomed at the reunion luncheon.

Although George intends to march again next year, he says that this year will always hold a special place in his heart and his only regret is that he did not come along with his father while he was alive.

Good to have you join us, George, and look forward to seeing you next year. Our kindest regards to your mother, Stella, and many thanks for your letter.

RUSS HARRISON 2/2, Stirling, S.A., with his very best wishes for ANZAC Day and a successful reunion. Good to hear from you, Russ and many thanks for your donation to the News. Kindest regards to Rona and yourself from your friends here in the East.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, with several letters since last Mail Bag per pen of good wife, Wyn, and apologies for his non-attendance on ANZAC Day. John had hoped to maybe get to Sydney this year for the march, but once again his duties as marshal of the Orange ceremonies caught up with him.

Max has already written you, John, re the roll you sent him with the names of the men of the 6th Reinforcement Coy, 2/1, you took to the Middle East. He found it very interesting and said quite a few of them finished up in D Coy where Max was at that time, before transferring to the Sigs. in H.Q. Coy.

John, I cannot believe that my casual reference in last Mail Bag to you wearing the 2/3rd Pioneer colour patch in your wedding photo brought to light the fact that your very good friend in that unit was my cousin, Clive Roper. Clive was killed, as you know, near Sattelberg and is buried in the Lae War Cemetery. Also the fact that Wyn was a good friend of Clive's wife, Bobbie, and corresponded with her until Bobbie passed away last year. What a small world!!

Hope this finds you both keeping well and that the medical report on your face, John, has been good. Fond wishes and many thanks for your letters and recent phone calls. Perhaps may see you in Sydney in the near future.

ANN HEALEY, Semaphore, S.A., daughter of the late Jim Hall 2/1 of Kyogle, with a very welcome letter and donation to funds. Ann and her husband, David, have moved from Sydney to a seaside suburb of Adelaide, a lovely home with a berth for their boat just up the road. Ann says they have settled in well, plenty to do in the garden, and she has enrolled at Flinders University.

She enjoyed reading the article on the Kyogle boys in the last issue of the News, even though her dad was not mentioned. Very few of those mentioned, Ann, are still alive and of the other three transport platoon members who were with "Scotch" Aitken when he was killed, all have sadly passed on.

We have not been over to the Rose Garden at Concord recently, Ann, but will look for the plaque you dedicated to your dad on our next visit.

Many thanks for your donation and we wish you and David all the best in your new home. Do keep in touch and always nice to hear from you.

PAM HERRICK, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with her apologies for not making it to ANZAC Day this year as she was on holidays in the Philippines. Pam's daughter, Karen, lives there with her husband and family of three little girls and is a Lecturer in History and Languages at the Philippines University. Pam's son Damien was married last December and is now teaching in the States. Hope you had a great holiday, Pam.

Good to see your mum, Dorothy Bates, has finally been admitted to the nursing home at John Paul Village in Heathcote, where I am sure she will be very happy.

All the best to both mum and yourself and thanks for the card from overseas.

HARRY HEYWOOD 2/1, Fawkner, Vic., with a sub. for the News, which will be now sent to you regularly. Welcome to the Association and hope you found something of interest in the back numbers Max has sent you.

ALF HOLLOWAY 2/1, Grafton, with a letter of thanks for the Pioneer News and a welcome donation to keep the show on the road. Alf was another Pioneer who did not know the Association existed until the Lismore reunion was advertised in the Lismore paper.

Max has already written you about the medals, Alf, and given you the information you required. They may take some time, but worth the wait.

Many thanks for your kind remarks on the News and my thanks for your congrats. on my Life Membership.

I was interested to hear of your grandmother's shop in Beverly Hills (or in Dumbleton as it was known pre-war). Quite a few of the Pioneers seem to have either grown up or known this area from remarks in their letters. We bought land here in 1948 when there were very few houses, so notice a big difference these days.

Good to hear from you and perhaps you may be well enough to attend the next Lismore reunion.

SIDNEY HOLMES, Balgownie, son of the late Sid "Bluey" Holmes 2/1, with the sad news that his dad passed away in February at his home in Comboyne. To his wife, Joyce, and family we extend our sincere sympathy in their sad loss.

Thank you for your letter, Sid, and for your donation. The paper will be sent to your mum at your address in Balgownie. Kind regards.

JACK HORE-LACY 2/2, Moss Vale, with his sub. to help with the News expenses. Says it's good to get the paper and read of the doings of the old Pioneers. Has not been climbing any mountains lately, but instead walks his German Shepherd dog. Good to see you can still exercise, Jack, the old legs must still be in good shape.

His kindest regards are passed on to all his 2/2 mates. Thanks for the donation and best wishes.

JOHN HUNT 2/1, New Farm, Qld., with a brief note re ANZAC Day and another letter from wife Mollie-Jean with news of Nell Laughren, the widow of Pat 2/1. We have had no news of Nell for many years, so John and Mollie offered to try and contact her after ANZAC Day to ascertain if she was still living in Nambour. Contact was made with Nell's daughter, Mary, and she informed Mollie that her mother had moved from Nambour into hostel accommodation at Boronia Heights on Brisbane's south side. Nell has not been well and could no longer live at home. Thank you Mollie for the news and trust by now you have your new hip and all went well.

Best wishes to both you and John, always good to hear from you.

JOAN JENSON, Rydalmere, wife of Allen 2/1, with a message from Allen to his old mates for ANZAC Day and a donation to funds. Allen is still in the nursing home and although very thin has a strong handshake. Our best wishes to you, Allen, and thank you Joan for your letter. Hope you enjoyed the march on ANZAC Day and the luncheon with former AAMWS mates.

JACK KEMPNIH 2/1, Fingal Bay, per pen of good wife Maisie, with cheque for subs. and their very good wishes to all for a great ANZAC Day. For once the old battalion got very good T.V. coverage, as did the 2/2nds.

Guess by now you are back in the Bay after your holiday trip to South Aussie for a family visit. Rather spoilt I suppose by the robbery before you left, Mais, it certainly would have been a nasty shock. (Jack and Maisie were robbed of her purse containing money, pension cards etc. and house and car keys while sitting in their lounge room with a friend who was visiting). It's all the inconvenience of having to replace all the cards and keys, apart from the expense.

Hope by now you are feeling better after the trauma and that Jack has been able to keep his licence when due for his test in June. Many thanks for your best wishes to both Max and I and for your kind thoughts on our work on the News. From letters received it does seem to be appreciated and helps to keep the "Pioneer family" together. All the best to you both and keep well.

KIM LATHAM, Warriewood, daughter of the late Jack Howie 2/2, with a welcome letter sending her best wishes to all Pioneers for a great ANZAC Day. Many thanks, Kim, and for your generous donation to funds.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with a cheque for the Association and a thank you note for the lovely day she shared with the ladies at the Hilton on ANZAC Day. Joyce recently met up with Gloria Hutchinson (widow of Bill 2/1) and joined the Endeavour Legacy Club at Miranda RSL. Said it was a lovely day, the ladies all very friendly and she enjoyed the lunch that followed. Good to hear, Joyce, and hope you are able to attend future meetings with Gloria. Many thanks for the sub. and our love and best wishes. A big hello to Gloria too.

JOAN LEE, North Strathfield, widow of Bob 2/2, with her donation to the Association and her thanks for the News which she always finds a pleasure to read. Says it's good to still hear of the doings of some of Bob's old mates of days gone by.

Hope you are keeping well, Joan, and our thanks for your cheque.

NANCY LINTON, Tuncurry, widow of Don 2/2, with a letter of thanks for the sympathy expressed to her and the family on Don's passing in March. Nancy was very appreciative of the red poppy tribute paid by local RSL members and fellow Pioneers, "Snowy" Dodd, Tom Morgan and Dick Wakely, who had travelled from Newcastle to pay his respects.

Thank you for the donation enclosed Nancy, and the Pioneer News will continue to be sent to you. Glad to hear you enjoy reading it and that it keeps you in touch with former Pioneers. Nancy also sent best wishes to all and hoped the "boys" enjoyed ANZAC Day.

JACK MCGREGOR 2/2, Shortland, with a welcome cheque for funds and the news that he and Dot are still battling on, and giving a bit of cheek. Jack suffers a bit of arthritis in his right hand and makes that his excuse for not writing too many letters. Still looks forward to the News and found the ANZAC march interesting - says he watched it from his lounge chair and didn't raise a "sweat".

Both he and Dot send best wishes to all, especially to those who keep our Association alive. Keep well and kindest regards to you both.

BRUCE METCALF 2/2, Condell Park, with his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day owing to back problems and not being able to get about like he used to. He watched the march on T.V. and was able to recognise quite a few. For a change the coverage was good. Bruce sends regards to all, especially his army mates, and enclosed a welcome donation to funds. Many thanks.

KEVIN MORAHAN 2/1, Beverly Hills, with a donation to the Association to help with News expenses. Kevin called in for a chat and a "cuppa" and brought along some very good photos of camp life in Greta, Dubbo, the Middle East and Tobruk which brought back many memories with Max. He also produced a very nicely framed photo of himself taken with his twin brothers John and Cyril, who were both officers in the 2/1sts, with Kevin as a C.S.M. Good to see you again, Kevin, and thanks for the sub.

NEVILLE O'CONNOR 2/2, Ballina, per pen of good wife Betty, with some local news from the Lismore area. Ken Wilson and Kevin Rayward keep an eye on those Pioneers hospitalised in their area and let Neville know. Joyce Denny (widow of Dave 2/1) has been granted the War Widows pension and, although in the flood area during the recent heavy rain, was well taken care of by neighbours and Ken Wilson.

Neville also tells of Alec George's attempt to knock his house down. Alec's garage is under his house and he has parked his car hundreds of times without mishaps until recently. The house is supported by uprights and according to Alec one of these "jumped out" at him and he had no alternative than to wham it. (Better put more water with it, Alec). When he reported the mishap to the NRMA the girl looked aghast and asked him how the house was. Alec assured her it was still standing, the only damage was to his car and his pride and dignity.

Thanks for your letter, Nev, and to Betty for writing on your behalf. All the very best to you both.

LÉS PATTERSON 2/1, Porf Macquarie, with a donation to funds and a change of address from Pettit Street. This has been noted. He sends his best wishes to all for ANZAC Day and the reunion

at the Occidental. Les will be attending the service in Young with his two brothers, the town where they all joined up. Says it will be a great reunion as his five sisters and two other brothers will be there for a family gathering. Trust you enjoyed the big day and thanks for the sub.

CHARLES RICHARDSON 2/2, Manly West, Qld., with his best wishes to all Pioneers for ANZAC Day and hoped all had a great day. Charles had a quiet day, says all his friends have either passed on or given up going to the luncheon, so he did not attend.

Thanks for the cutting on the death notice of Tom McNamara 2/1, Boondall, and Max has noted his passing in Last Post. All the best.

MICK ROBERTS 2/1, Leeton, with two short letters and a cheque to help with funds. He appreciates the work the Committee and the editors do to keep the Association and the News going strongly.

Mick keeps in touch with Jack Purcell 2/1 who lives in Coffs Harbour and has had his share of troubles, plus a few operations, but keeps battling on. He also keeps in touch with Joyce Law as he and Max were good mates. Mentions that Jack Painter still lives in Narrandera, but Mick has not seen him for quite a few years. He was also glad to read Jack Hayden was still going strong – was Mick's company commander and a real gentleman, as was his brother Ernie.

In regard to your query re the Dutch Medal, Max has written you in this regard and given you the particulars you required.

Thanks for your donation and all the best.

BILL ("PEE WEE") RUSSELL 2/2, Tamworth, with a welcome letter, the first for some years, and admits he's hopeless at letter writing. However, better late than never and good to hear from you, and news of Nell. Bill had a hip replacement in February and says it has made a new man of him – reckons it's a pity a new brain wasn't implanted at the same time.

He and Nell closed their business down 12 months ago, says at 76 he felt it was time to relax a little. Nell is still in a wheel chair, but has a wonderful spirit and happily married for 55 years. (As Lahey used to say "you don't get that long for murder").

Bill is fairly active in the local RSL and visits all the OLD fellows in nursing homes and hospitals and has recently joined Legacy. He seems to think at 76 he is the baby of the battalion, hence the name "Pee Wee", but I wouldn't be sure of this.

Bill mentions a Ray Ellis in his letter as enlisting the same day and with whom he still keeps in touch. Was he a fellow 2/2nd, Bill, if so we do not have him on our mailing list?

Pioneers are scarce in his part of the state – Ted Carter 2/1 is about the only one he knows of. Adrian Buckley, the last C.O. of the 2/1st, lives in Tamworth, and I'm sure he would be a member of the local RSL.

Many thanks for your generous donation, Bill, and your kind remarks to Max and myself on our work for the Association over so many years. All the best to Nell and yourself and hopefully you may both be able to make the next Lismore reunion – whenever.

BRYAN SMALLHORN 2/1, Armidale, with a short note re the passing of Claude Campbell 2/1 of Inverell on 19th March. Bryan attended the funeral in St. Augustine's Anglican Church, Inverell, which was well attended and the RSL tribute performed by about 20 members. Claude was an original of the 2/1. Bryan passed on the sympathy of the Association to Dot and her family.

Many thanks and for your donation to funds.

DANNY SPROUSTER 2/1, Dundas, with his apology for non-attendance on ANZAC Day owing to health problems. He says the last 12 months has not been the best for him after losing his darling wife of 60 years and it has left a big hole in his life.

Danny asked to be remembered to all his mates and says he keeps in touch with Frank Gillian, Brian Kybert and Dick Blakeney who have been on the sick list, also Ron Callaghan.

Thanks for the donation Danny and hope this year will be brighter and healthier for you.

JACK STEWART 2/1, Woodlands, W.A., with a letter since ANZAC Day with news of Joy Preedy, widow of Len 2/2. We had not heard from Joy for some time and asked Jack while in Sydney if he would make some enquiries as to Joy's welfare. On returning to the West, Jack contacted Joy and has kindly written with the latest news.

Apparently six months after losing Len she had a heart attack requiring open heart surgery and then had a leg amputated. Joy has been able to stay in the family home at Shenton Park as her son and his family have moved in and built a granny flat attached to the family home so Joy could keep her independence. She has mobility via a motorised wheel chair and Jack said she sounded quite bright when he spoke to her.

Many thanks for your letter, Jack, and we will be in touch with Joy. Hope to see you in Sydney again next year and best wishes to Yvonne and yourself.

JOHN TREVETHICK 2/1, Lane Cove, with a note enclosing his sub. and his thanks for the Pioneer News which he had just received. Have noted your address, John, and it has been rectified, my apologies, was an error on my part when I typed the stencil.

John is keeping good health and often in touch with Kevin Morahan who keeps him up to date on any army news. Good to hear, John, and thanks for your donation to funds.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba, Nth Qld., enclosing photos to Max of some of the memorials at Rocky Creek, taken by his wife Lesley. They were very good and he showed them around at our last Committee meeting. Also thanks Les, for the stamps enclosed in your letter.

Trust your pacemaker is still going well and looking forward to meeting up with you both in August. Kindest regards.

NEV WOODHAM 2/1, Cleveland, Qld., with a welcome letter from the Sunshine State and to say he would be in Sydney for ANZAC Day with wife Betty. He reports that the Rats of Tobruk World Reunion held in Brisbane prior to Easter was successful, but he and Bett only went to the Memorial Service at the Shrine. There was a good representation of Pioneers. Nev spotted Roy Jardine, Jack Pearce, Ted Carter and Laurie Kelly, all sheltering from the rain.

Neville mentions that one of his members from the local RSL, Bill O'Connor, whilst holidaying in Victoria, met up with Albert Dean 2/1 of Shepparton who showed Bill a copy of the Pioneer News with a letter from Neville in the Mail Bag. Certainly a small world!!

Good to see you and Bett down for both the wreath laying and the march, Nev, and both looking well. Our good wishes to you both.

HARRY YOUNG 2/2 Essendon, Vic., with a very short note enclosing his sub. for the News, for which many thanks. He sends best wishes to all and says he is keeping well. How about a longer note next time, Harry, you must have some news from your part of the state.

NITA FERRIS, Kyogle, widow of Leo 2/1, with a letter just received as I was finishing off the Mail Bag, and a donation to funds. Nita sends her thanks for the Pioneer News and says it is good to keep in touch and read of the news of former members of the unit. She had a copy of the news cutting about the Kyogle boys in last issue and enjoyed reading it again.

Was sorry to hear that Beulah Crute, wife of Allan 2/1, had not been well and hopes by now she is much better. Nita keeps in touch with them at Christmas time with a card. Passes on her best wishes to you, Beulah, and to Allan.

Good to have a note from you Nita, and thanks for the sub. Hear a little news from the Kyogle area now and then from my daughter-in-law, Lynn, who as you know was Lynn Downes. Not very many of the "boys" left in Kyogle nowadays apart from Jack Shearman, Cecil Blanch and Bill Hoffman.

Our best wishes to you, Nita, keep well.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue with plenty of letters and lots of news from around the states. Trust the winter months will be kind to all those with aches and pains and look forward to lots more letters for next issue.

NEWS ITEMS

GEORGE WALKER celebrated his 80th birthday on Saturday 2nd June at his Culburra home with many relations, friends and army mates. He wore the over-bloody-eighty medal on a ribbon, quite proudly around his neck.

Present were Tom Wood 2/2, Frank Locane 2/2 and Max Herron 2/1 as well as a neighbour Alf who was in the Royal Navy. Naturally most of the talk at that table was on Pioneering days but it was most interesting to hear of Alf's exploits in the navy, as he was on LST's and did the Normandy landing.

Max and Peg thank Tom and René Wood for acting as their driver from Bomaderry Station to Culburra and return.

FRED ALWAY 2/1 of Beaumaris Vic., has marched with the 2/2 Pioneers in Melbourne on ANZAC Day for many years, but was unable to do so this year on account of being in hospital with pneumonia. However, he did not miss out on the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal where he has been a cashier on this day for 42 years. He was sighted and recognised by many during the course of the T.V. coverage.

LAST POST

SIDNEY LANE 2/2 of Wentworthville passed away on 3rd January aged 76 and sympathy is extended to wife and family.

CLEM COOK 2/1 of Randwick passed away on 13th March aged 79 years, while in St Vincents Hospital. The funeral service was conducted at St Marys Anglican Church, Waverley, which was filled with friends and neighbours. Representing the Association was Bill Tasker and George Nichols who extended to Clem's wife Vera the sincere sympathy of all Pioneers.

Clem was a regular attendee at the ANZAC reunion each year and sat in a group with Sam Lewis and George Nichols. We are grateful to Vera in presenting us with Clem's copy of the 2/1st book "The Pioneers".

CLAUDE CAMPBELL 2/1 of Inverell passed away on 16th March aged 87 years and a sympathy card was sent to his wife Dorothy who has passed on her thanks to the Association for their condolences.

DON LINTON 2/2 of Tuncurry passed away in hospital on 23rd March aged 78 years, after a long illness. The funeral included the RSL Service conducted by Tuncurry Sub-Branch. Among the mourners were Pioneers, "Snow" Dodd, Tom Morgan and Dick Wakely, who came up from Waratah. Their attendance was appreciated by the family and a comfort to Don's wife Nancy.

ARTHUR STEAIN 2/1 of Forster passed away on 3rd April at the age of 83 years and sympathy was extended to wife Dorothy by Doug Shearston whom we thank for sending us the details.

ARTHUR "BILL" HANSON 2/2 of Timboon, Vic., passed away on 3rd May and sympathy was extended to his wife Dorothy by Jack Hore-Lacy who was a close friend of Bill. They were both together at Balikpapan and Tarakan where Bill was awarded the M.M. Thanks go to Jack for supplying these details.

LEO HEALEY 2/1 of Mentone, Vic., passed away on 23rd May and the funeral service was attended by many of Leo's friends including Jim Taylor of the 2/16 Inf. Bn. Eric Causer represented the Association and extended sympathy to wife Mercia and her family of four.

Leo was in the Signals Platoon with Eric and Max as well as Jack Comerford of Elwood, Vic., who extended his apology for non-attendance to Eric. Thanks to Eric for supplying all the details.

TOM McNAMARA 2/1 of Boondall, Qld., passed away on 23rd May and the RSL Service was conducted by the Sandgate Sub-Branch. Thanks to Charles Richardson for supplying the details.

JOHN DOWD 2/2 of Wagga passed away in May, and we are grateful to Bob Ginnane for the details.

DICK KENNEWELL 2/2 of Brighton-le-Sands passed away on 30th May after a long illness during which time he was cared for at home by his wife Sylvia. The funeral service was at St Marks Anglican Church at Brighton and the RSL Service was carried out by Brighton RSL.

The Association was represented by Gavin Todd, Bill Lewis, Tom Wood (from Nowra), Alf Ballard (93 yrs) and Judith, daughter of George Walker, who was a close friend of the family.

2/2 Pioneers will remember Dick and Sylvia, assisted by Jack Howie, Don Lawson and "Cappy" Christian, as the driving force behind the ANZAC Reunions for the 2/2nds at St Peters before joining the 2/1sts at Redfern Town Hall.

Many thanks to Temple Wood and Bill Lewis for supplying the details and expressing sympathy to the family on behalf of the Association.

MUFTI of Victoria reported by Eric Causer – Deceased: 2/2 Vance Foley and Leslie Golz.

REVEILLE – Deceased: A Dargan 2/1, M. Dickens 2/2, W. Fallon 2/2, R. Jones 2/2.

PIONEER NEWS

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Treasurer: DON CRAWFORD

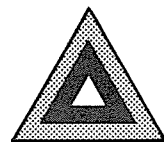
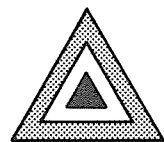
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ROCKY CREEK WAR MEMORIAL PARK

On Sunday 12th August, at the Rocky Creek Memorial Service for the 56th Anniversary of VP Day, the unveiling of eight unit plaques took place, which included the combined plaque of the 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneer Battalions.

The Rocky Creek Memorial Park is situated on the war time site of the 2/2 and 2/6 Aust General Hospitals on the Kennedy Highway, between Mareeba and Atherton, of which the Custodian is the Atherton Shire Council. They have developed the park and provided the granite boulders and the labour to affix the plaques in conjunction with the Rocky Creek War Memorial Park Committee.

To date forty nine plaques have been unveiled so it was quite an honour and privilege for Max Herron 2/1 and Les Tunks 2/1 to unveil the 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneer plaque. Also present was Jack Hearn 2/2 of Howlong NSW.

The following is a summary of the history of the two units as delivered by Secretary Max Herron at the gathering of 600 spectators.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

"As Secretary of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalions Assn. based in Sydney, I am honoured to be here today for the unveiling of the plaque dedicated to both units.

The 2/1st Pioneer Battalion was formed in Sydney in May, 1940, and sailed for the Middle East in September of that year. They served as infantry and engineers in Palestine, Egypt, Libya, the Siege of Tobruk, New Guinea and their final campaign in Balikpapan in Borneo. The surrender of the Japanese forces in the Balikpapan area was taken in their lines on 10th September, 1945.

For their jungle training on the Atherton Tableland the 2/1st Pioneers were staged in camps at Wongabel, Wondecla and then Kairi, attached at various times to both 6th and 7th Divisions.

The 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was formed in Victoria in May, 1940, and sailed for the Middle East in April, 1941. After several

weeks in Palestine they were on the move to Syria and were involved in heavy fighting until the French sought an armistice in July, 1941. The Battalion then embarked for Java, where several weeks after landing and fighting, they were taken prisoners by the Japanese. The Battalion was then reformed at Wagga in N.S.W. in 1942 and served in New Guinea at Lae, Nadzab and Shaggy Ridge before their final campaigns at Tarakan and Balikpapan.

Whilst on the Tableland, the 2/2nd Pioneers were camped at Ravenshoe, Wongabel and operated as a Beach Group at Trinity Beach.

Both units are now part of history, as are many others, and we thank those members who gave their youth and sadly, in some cases, their lives to make the battalions what they were, units which gave their best at all times either as infantry or engineers. In particular we remember those 400 members from the two units who gave their lives in the service of their country.

We who are left are very proud to have been a member of either unit and our post-war Pioneer Association and before calling on Les Tunks, 2/1 Pioneer of Mareeba to unveil this memorial plaque, I would like to thank the following local people who have been of assistance to me in the preparation of the plaque - Mick Henderson, Les and Lesley Tunks, John Hardy and the Atherton Shire Council. We are also grateful to the Department of Veterans Affairs for sponsorship of our Plaque."

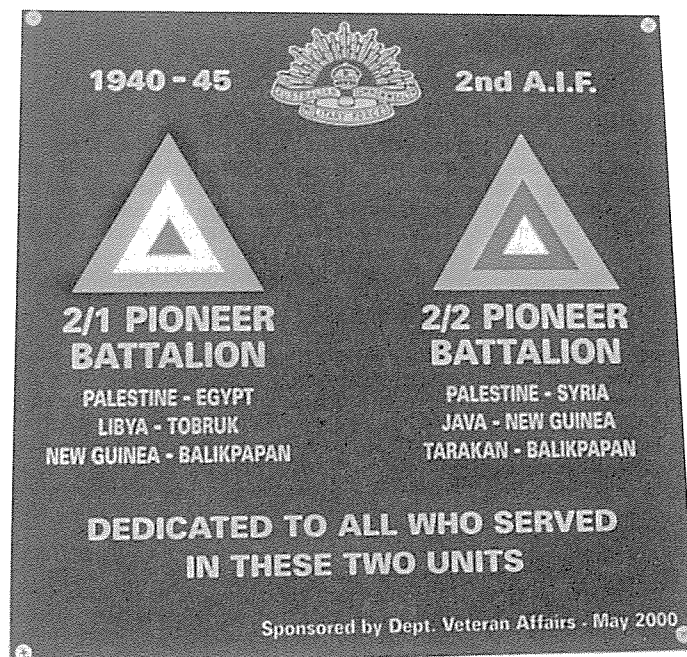
Les Tunks 2/1 then unveiled the plaque by taking away the cloth cover which displayed the two colour patches painted onto calico. This was carried with acclamation by the spectators. Of the eight plaques unveiled it was the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer plaque that was

chosen by the local newspaper

"The Tablelander" to feature a photo showing the Council workers affixing the plaque to a granite rock, in a feature article the week prior to the 12th August.

The plaque, at left is made of heavy bronze metal and is 600mm x 600mm (2ft x 2ft). The three sections of each triangle are in colours of grey, white and purple and are outlined with a gold border which make it very impressive.

The overall cost of the plaque was \$618 of which \$559 was kindly donated by the Dept. of Veteran Affairs Canberra.



CAIRNS-ATHERTON TOUR

By PEG HERRON

When it was first suggested two years ago that an Association plaque be placed in the Rocky Creek Memorial Park, Max and I decided to be there for the unveiling if at all possible - much depending on our health. He had spent such a lot of time and effort in paper work connected with the plaque lay-out and design, that I'm sure he would have been very disappointed if he couldn't make the trip. As I have an ear condition that can be a problem flying, we were faced with the trip having to be made by train - rather a daunting three day journey.

We left Sydney on the Brisbane train on the 7th August and even here could not avoid the Census. The forms were distributed and picked up by special staff all along the route. We boarded the "Sunlander" next morning at Brisbane for the long trip to Cairns. Having a comfortable sleeper compartment, the journey though tiring was quite enjoyable with lovely scenery. Arriving at Cairns late next day, we were met by our ex-A.A.M.W.S. friend Vera Bradley and husband, Ron, who drove us to our hotel on the Esplanade. Many thanks to you both.

Saturday morning, a little weary after the long trip, we picked up our hire car and were soon on our way up the Range to Mareeba. Here we were met by our only Pioneer in the area, Les Tunks 2/1, who took us to his home for a lovely afternoon tea and to meet his wife Lesley. A very enjoyable couple of hours with them and we were off to Atherton on our motel.

Next morning we left for Rocky Creek Park, the "big day" finally with us. We were joined by Les Tunks (unfortunately Lesley was not able to make it). The programme of events commenced at 12.15pm and included military drill, war dog handling, a pipe band and all the old wartime songs. They also had a fly-over of "War Birds" showering the plaque area with hundreds of red poppies. A lovely sight. After lunch, kindly provided by Lesley Tunks, the unveiling ceremony of the eight unit plaques commenced, including the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer plaque by two very proud Pioneers, Max and Les Tunks. Also in attendance were Jack Hearn 2/2 and his wife from Howlong, N.S.W., who happened to be in Cairns on holidays. A wonderful occasion.

On the Monday morning we set out on a day's tour of the old campsites, calling into Atherton War Cemetery on the way. I had collected a bunch of red poppies from the "War Birds" drop on the Sunday and we placed these at the grave of W.O.2 Charlie Gilbert 2/1, who was accidentally killed on 28th December, 1944, at Kairi Camp while preparing a gun cotton explosive demonstration. The War Cemetery is kept in wonderful condition by the War Graves Commission.

From here we proceeded to Herberton and Wondecla where we located the 2/1 campsite marker (complete with colour patch), also the large Igloo hut used during the war for concerts and picture shows - drill too when the weather was bad. This has been fenced and in the process of renovation by a young couple - but I'm sure Max could still hear the ghosts of the past. On from here to Ravenshoe where we found, with difficulty, the 2/2 marker out on the Mt. Garnet Rd.

Tuesday morning drove to Tolga and Kairi and located the campsite markers of the 7th and 9th Divisions, and the 2/1 Pioneers.

We left Atherton on Wednesday and, before heading back to Cairns, we drove out to Trinity Beach where the 2/2 Pioneers were camped and operated as a Beach Group with the Navy. Their role was to train all units in ship to shore landings, including the 2/1 Pioneers.

Boarded the "Sunlander" next morning for the long journey home. A really great trip.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The last Mail Bag for the year and not quite so many letters as last issue. The winter months seem to slow everyone down with colds and aching joints and most letters have mention of illness and trips to hospital. Age is fast catching up. However, our thanks to all those who kept me "on the job".

FRED ALWAYS 2/1, Beaumaris, Vic., with a cheque enclosed for the News, which he looks forward to with great interest. After a bout of ill-health he is now much better and, although with little to write about, sends his best wishes to all Pioneers lots of good health and happiness. Thanks for the donation, Fred.

BOB BALDIE 2/1, Albert Park, Vic., with a short note to say "Hello" and with some kind words to the editors for the job they are doing on the News. Thanks Bob and for your generous donation to funds. Bob writes that his mate Vincent Mahoney 2/1, passed away early this year and he and his wife attended the funeral service, with about 400 mourners present. Thank you, Bob, for passing on the news. Kindest regards.

BOB BALLY 2/1, Balga, W.A., with a phone call to send his best wishes to all, especially to his mates in A Coy, 2/1. He is reasonably well and enjoys getting the News. All the best, Bob, and thank you for the call.

ARTHUR BENNETT 2/1, Pendle Hill, with a first letter to the News. Arthur's son-in-law, Laurie Longmore, contacted Max and sent along a sub on Arthur's behalf. Good to hear from you after so many years, Arthur, and the Pioneer News will be sent to you regularly when published. At 83 he keeps fairly well and had two new knee caps inserted about 18 months ago.

Arthur was in B Coy and was wounded in the mouth after the landing at Balikpapan, which resulted in the removal of all his teeth.

He sends his thanks to all those who keep the ex-Pioneers together and will look forward to future issues of the News.

ALF BENTLEY 2/1, Yokine, W.A., with a welcome note from the West and news from their part of the globe. Both he and wife, Pat, are in swim clubs and Alf tells us that Pat now holds three State swimming records (in her age group) and he won a trophy in an "Iron Oldies" competition swim. Congratulations, Pat, you have every reason to be proud and to you Alf, keep up the good work.

They had a nice surprise recently with a phone call from Noel and Jean Grant of Altona, Vic., who were in the West on holidays, which resulted in a few get-togethers and lunch at the Anzac Club in Perth. They were joined at the luncheon by Jack and Yvonne Stewart of Woodlands, W.A.

Noel and Jean were to fly home while their daughter drove their car back to Melbourne, but the collapse of Ansett took care of that, so they had to make the long trip home by car.

Alf reports that he was able to loan his copy of the 2/1st history, "The Pioneers", to another former 2/1st, Keith Prosser, now living in the West, who was very pleased to be able to read of the war years of his old unit.

All the best to you and Pat, Alf, and hope to see you both in Sydney for ANZAC Day next year.

JUNE BIRRELL, Mudgee, widow of Bob 2/1, with a letter to Max re the Rats of Tobruk Siege Medal and enclosing a cheque to Association funds. Max has written you in regard to this matter, June, and given you the details you required. I believe you have heard from Gordon Hughes, secretary of the RATS in this regard.

Although June does not know any of the names mentioned in the News, she still enjoys reading same – she has been a widow for 24 years. Bob enlisted as a "day boy" from Hurstville in the 2/2nd Pioneers, but went away with the 2/1sts. A great nephew wears his medals on ANZAC Day as June and Bob had no children of their own.

Thank you for your donation, June, and our best wishes.

ERIC CAUSER 2/1, Hamilton, Vic., contacted Max to say he had been in touch with fellow 2/1 Sig. Jack Comerford who was in

good health and enjoying his job as treasurer of his Elwood RSL Sub-Branch. Jack passed on the news that another former Signal Platoon member, Bob Gash, had passed away. Both Jack and Eric send their regards to all Pioneers.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, with a welcome letter, as always, and the sad news that Edna Miller (wife of late Jim "Bluey" Miller 2/1) had passed away and was privately cremated after a service at the Umina Uniting Church. Edna had not been well for some time. Lex had been able to attend the service along with members of the local RATS Branch.

Good to hear you are still keeping well and the Drs. keeping a watchful eye on your progress, Lex. The bus trips twice a month get you out and about and bring a lot of pleasure to people like yourself who are on their own and no car. Enjoy them while you can.

Many thanks for the book of stamps enclosed – much appreciated – and glad you still enjoy reading the News. Our best wishes to you and keep well.

JOYCE DENNY, Lismore, widow of Dave 2/1, with a donation to funds and a request for the News still to be sent to her, as she likes to know what is going on in the Pioneer "world". This has been noted, Joyce and we thank you for your cheque.

Joyce has joined the War Widows Guild in Lismore, who have just celebrated their 50th Anniversary. They have 80 members in the Club and Joyce is their newest widow, so now she has plenty of mates.

Nice to hear from you, Joyce, and do keep in touch.

BILLIE DYNON, Toronto, widow of Frank 2/1, with a cheque for the News, which she still enjoys reading. She saw the Pioneer banner in the ANZAC Day march, but says you have to be quick to catch sight of anyone.

Billie is quite happy in her new unit in Toronto mainly because son Tony and family live close by. Approaching her 86th birthday, she apologises for the writing (still very readable) and sends her best wishes to all Pioneers. Thank you for the donation, Billie, and keep well.

MATTHEW ELLISTON, Everton Hills, Qld., grandson of the late Lt. Phil Elliston 2/1, with a request to Max for information on his grandfather's military service. Matthew has recently taken an interest in his grandfather's army life through service documents supplied by CARO and the Pioneer unit history and wishes to build further knowledge by any members of 2/1 members who may remember serving with him. Max has given you the name of Capt. Bill Jollie of Castle Hill, who was in B Coy. With Phil and trust he may have been of help to you. If any other members of the unit could help Matthew in this regard, his address is 44 Merbella Street, Everton Hills, Qld. 4053. He would be very pleased to hear from you.

Thank you for your letter, Matthew, and I hope some of our Pioneer "family" can be of help to you. Best wishes.

PERCY FISK 2/1, Pendle Hill, with a donation to funds for which many thanks. Do hope your health has improved and we send you our best wishes.

NORMA FITCH, Calwell, ACT., widow of Harold 2/1, with a letter of thanks for the News and a welcome donation. She still misses Sydney very much, but says Canberra is a beautiful place and the War Memorial makes one very proud. Certainly does that, Norma, and Max and I are looking forward to seeing the new extensions in the near future.

Trust you are keeping well and always good to hear from you.

JOHN FLOOD 2/1, Claremont Meadows, per pen of his daughter Wendy Pritchard, with a change of address for her dad and the news that John had been very ill for the first part of this year. However, he is now recovering and on the way to becoming his old self. Do hope this finds you a lot better, John, and our thanks to your daughter for writing on your behalf. Take care and best wishes.

DON GALVIN 2/1, Mt. Coolum Shores, Qld., also a new address from Gloucester NSW. Don now resides with his nephew and wife, James and Katherine Murray and Don's twin sister, Mavis Murray, at their home in Queensland. He continues to enjoy good health, although his memory is not the best.

Thank you for your letter, James and for the donation. The News will be sent to Don in future at your address.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, once again per pen of good wife Wyn, with lots of news from their part of the country. They are always sad to read in the News of the passing of so many old Pioneer friends of the war years and their thoughts are with the families in their sad loss. Age is fast catching up, I think Max has only about 240 of the 2/1sts left on his roll. Not many of the 2,500 who passed through the battalion during their five and a half years of war.

John and Wyn had been in touch with Bill Jollie for his 82nd birthday in August and Wyn said he seemed happy and contented with life at his new address. Also were pleased to read in the News of Stan Goulston and John Gilchrist and send their best wishes to both.

As a long-time resident of Orange, Wyn passed on the news that the 2/1sts Ron Coyte and Les Britt, were both from Orange in their younger days. (She had noticed the letter from Ron Coyte in last News). Wyn knew of these families quite well – and they may remember her family too – Sherlock. Said most of the older people in Orange seemed to be related to one another, as happens in lots of country towns. As mentioned previously, Wyn, both my mum and dad came from Walcha in northern N.S.W., both big families, so you can imagine how many "rellies" I have – at one count many years ago, 67 cousins.

A big thank you for sending on the scroll on my cousin Clive Roper, Wyn, it has gone in our family album. Your kind thought was very much appreciated.

Very best wishes to you both and hope the warmer months bring new life to the aching joints. Always good to hear from you. Take care.

CLIFF HILL 2/1, Murwillumbah, with a short note from his wife, Christina, with a donation to funds. Many thanks and best wishes.

FRANK LOCANE 2/2, Callala Bay, and wife Jean celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in August and spent some days in Sydney as a gift from their family to celebrate the big occasion. Our very best wishes to you both – may you have many more happy years together.

ELIZABETH MAHY-BAILEY, Leeton, daughter of the late Phil Mahy, 2/1, with a donation to funds and her thanks for the Pioneer News which she continues to receive. Kindest regards and thanks for the cheque.

BILL MURPHY, Blakehurst, son of the late Pat Murphy 2/1, with a short note of thanks for the News and a donation to funds. Good to hear from you, Bill, and our best wishes to you and the family.

DON MURRAY 2/2, Tinonee, with a welcome donation to funds, for which many thanks, and the news that he has had a fairly rough time, healthwise, the last few years. Still says there are plenty of old soldiers worse off than he is. Hope the warmer weather may be kinder to you, Don.

In regard to the news cutting you sent, Don, of the 1958 reunion, of the ten Pioneers in the photo there are only two left – Max and Jack Bertram of Newcastle. A lot of years down the track. All the best.

DON MCCLELLAND 2/2, Bundaberg, enclosing a sub. for the News and apologies for lateness – says he does not like writing letters. Don was able to go to Melbourne for the reunion and ANZAC Day, was away for nine weeks. He drove from Bundaberg to Woodend and a brother-in-law drove him to Melbourne and back to Woodend where Don started his return journey. He enjoyed himself and hopes to do the same next year. Says he enjoys getting the News and sends best wishes to all.

PAT MacFARLANE, Blacktown, widow of Ron 2/1, with apologies for late sending of sub., but has not been in the best of health this year. Hope things improve for you, Pat, and our best wishes.

JOHN PAUL 2/1, Camira, Qld., advertised in the Queensland RSL paper for information on the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and the article was seen by Les Tunks 2/1 of Mareeba. This was handed on to Max and copies of back numbers of Pioneer News were forwarded to John, along with newsheets on the formation of both 2/1 and 2/2 units and information on the Association. So far no reply has been received, but Max has added your name to our mailing list. Best wishes.

BOB PHILPOTTS 2/2, Woodend, Vic., with his thanks for the latest copy of the News and enclosing a donation to funds. Says it gives him a lot of pleasure to read and brings back a lot of memories.

He sends best wishes to Allan McInnes and Bill Lewis, with special regards to Bill Robertson, a Pioneer marvel. (Couldn't agree with you more in that regard, Bob). He also passes on his kindest regards to all fellow Pioneers and lots of good health.

JOHN PITMAN 2/1, Moree, with a cheque enclosed for the News – many thanks. He says things around Moree are much brighter since the big lift in cattle prices, also some prospects for wool and cotton. Although there has been a fall in prices, it is still very promising in their part of the country. Good to hear, John, and hope the news continues. A special "hello" from Max – not too many old sibs left now in the battalion.

OLIVE RICHARDS, Lennox Head, widow of Jack 2/1, with a nice card enclosing her donation to funds and a book of stamps. Many thanks for both – says she's just had a birthday so knows it is time to send along her sub. (Certainly one way of remembering Olive). Her health has been good, but like most people of her age says she could do with a few new bones. Doesn't seem to stop your walking, Olive, as the following letter from Chris and Annette tells of your daily walks around Lennox Head to keep fit.

Olive tells of the further extensions to the Ballina Ex-Services Homes, where our reunion luncheon is held, a big block of 16 self-care units and all very nice. What a lovely spot to spend your later years, no wonder they always have a waiting list. The Homes have also acquired some land at Evans Head (another lovely spot) to build a nursing home.

Good to see your garden is doing well, Olive, it was a picture the last time the Kerslakes and Max and I paid a visit. I have passed on your message to them and they send you their fond wishes. We also saw Noel Schomberg recently at Jack Griffith's funeral and he looked very well.

Best wishes from all, Olive, and keep well.

CHRIS RICHARDS, East Ballina, son of Olive and the late Jack Richards 2/1, with a nice newsy letter – almost in the same mail as the one from his mother. Chris says he has heard a lot of stories of the Pioneers from his late father and he recognises a lot of names from the Pioneer News which Olive passes on to him to read. Having seen the closeness of the friendship that his dad had with his army mates, in particular Noel Schomberg (Schommie), it is ironic that such mateship was created by conflict. No doubt those who participated in these "inevitable" wars would have much preferred their friendships to germinate in times of peace.

Chris and wife Annette have their son Neil in his sixth year in the Navy, currently serving as second in the engine room of the heavy landing craft, Tarakan. With several tours of duty as part of the peace keeping force in Bougainville and a long stint in East Timor, he is shortly to return to East Timor on the UNTAET Force. (Readers of ROTA will recall that Neil was selected as one of the "youngsters" to open the ROTA time capsule later this century, something he is very proud of). Latest news is that their daughter, Cerena, has also joined the Navy and is currently attached to HMAS Cerberus in Victoria. No wonder your mum is a proud grandmother.

Chris closes his letter with "keep up the good work, as I'm sure that Pioneers everywhere love to see the news that appears beneath those two triangular patches at the head of the Pioneer News."

Many thanks for your best wishes and to hear from you. Kind regards to Annette.

TED ROWE 2/2, Willetton, W.A., with a very brief note enclosing his sub. and thanks for the Pioneer News. Certainly you won't get writer's cramp, Ted, but perhaps next time may be able to send some news from your part of the country.

GEORGE SAUER 2/2, Lower Mitcham, S.A., with a short note requesting the address of Ann Healey (daughter of the late Jim Hall 2/1) who has recently moved to Semaphore in South Aussie. This has been sent onto you George, and I hope you have been able to make contact. Kindest regards from both of us.

RAY SMITH 2/1, Glen Iris, Vic., with a cheque enclosed for the News and his best

wishes to all. They spent the summer, as usual, at their beach house at McCrae (not sure where that is) and had a very relaxed holiday. Celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in May and then in July were off to New Zealand to visit their daughter in Auckland. Certainly not letting the grass grow under your feet, Ray. Many thanks for the donation to funds and best wishes.

REBECCA SOYA, Yokine, W.A., daughter of Keith Prosser 2/1, with a request for information on her father's army service during the war.

Originally from South Australia, where he enlisted, Keith now lives in Western Australia and would like to contact anyone from his old battalion.

Max has been in touch with you, Rebecca, and sent you information on the Association and the Pioneer News, also addresses of some 2/1sts in W.A. We have heard from Alf Bentley 2/1 of Yokine that he loaned your father a copy of the unit history of the 2/1sts to read. If you send us your father's address his name will be put on the mailing list. In the meantime have recorded your name and address and you may pass on the News to your father. Hoping to hear from you again.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba, per pen of good wife Lesley, enclosing a donation to funds, a book of stamps and photos she took recently at Rocky Creek Memorial Park. Thank you for all the enclosures, the photos were extremely good and will be passed around amongst Pioneer members at their next meeting.

As Max has written you, he wrote to John Paul at Camira, Qld., sent him details of the Association and history sheet of the unit, as well as back numbers of the Pioneer News. At date of writing, we have received no reply. Perhaps you may have heard from him.

Max and I would like to thank you both for the kindness shown while we were on the Tablelands, both for the lovely afternoon tea the day we arrived at Mareeba and supplying our lunch at Rocky Creek on the day of the unveiling of our plaque. Being so far from home, it was really appreciated. We were sorry, Lesley, that you could not join us for the day.

Again many thanks and it will be our pleasure to keep in touch. Warm wishes to you both.

HARRY WEST 2/2, Lane Cove, with a donation to funds, for which many thanks. Harry was with D and H.Q. Coys. of 2/2 from Dubbo in 1942 to Trinity Beach in 1944 – then transferred to A.N.G.A.U. and remained in New Guinea for the rest of his working life. He is now retired in Sydney. As he is committed to the A.N.G.A.U./P.N.G.V.R. on ANZAC Day, he misses the Pioneers. Fortunately his health is good and he will be celebrating his 79th birthday on a European holiday in August/ September.

Harry sends his greetings to his surviving best Pioneer mates – Allan Stone, Cec Sloggett and Norm Le Cornu – all who were well when we last heard from them. Hope you had a great trip and our best wishes.

TOM WILLIAMS 2/1, Rangeway, W.A., with a first letter to the Association and a very generous donation, for which many thanks. Tom and his twin brother, Mac, joined the Pioneers in Palestine and went to New Guinea with them – Mac with D Coy. to Milne Bay and Tom to A Coy. on the Kokoda Track. His brother passed away with cancer in 1994.

Tom does not know of any Pioneers around where he lives, the only ones he joined up with have all passed away. He himself has not been in the best of health the last couple of years, but for 82 not doing too badly.

Closes with best wishes to all Pioneers, especially his old mates from A Coy. Kindest regards and hope your health continues to improve.

BERT WOODHOUSE 2/1, Karridale, W.A., with a long letter apologising for not writing earlier, but has been busy on his farm. A cheque was also enclosed for donation to funds, many thanks.

Max has reported the deaths of Fred Craig 2/2 and Ron (Dasher) Dean 2/1 in his Last Post, Bert, and thank you for passing on this information. Our sincere sympathy to you too in the loss of your dear wife of 51½ years. I'm sure she will be sadly missed.

Since writing last, Bert has spent a lot of time travelling – across to Victoria and Tasmania, up to Yass and Canberra where he visited the Australian War Memorial. He found this vastly improved from when he was there in

1986. They have just opened another big hall, so perhaps time for another visit, Bert. He also flew to Cairns late last year for three weeks and visited the Tablelands including Tolga and Wondecia. He was a little disappointed at the lack of unit signs where the old campsites used to be, but perhaps these have been updated by the Rocky Creek Park convenor since he was there. Max and I have just returned from there, Bert, as you will have read in the News, and found quite a lot in our travels. The 2/1 Pioneer marker has also a large colour patch attached to it – much to our surprise, and pleasure. We visited the Nissan hut at Wondecia and were, like you, pleased to see the property had been fenced and tidied up and was in the final stages of being restored. A lot of difference to our last visit in 1989. You will also have read of our visit to Rocky Creek for the unveiling of our own plaque to both 2/1 and 2/2 – a wonderful occasion – perhaps as Max says maybe I'm "one-eyed". (Guess he could be right too).

Bert has recently seen Fred Pratt 2/1 (A Coy.) who has just turned 80. Fred was placed in an orphanage at a very young age and tells Bert that he has just received news that he has four half-brothers and over 200 relatives. In typical humour Fred said "I won't be buying all that mob Xmas presents". (A true Aussie).

While at Wondecia in January, 1944, twenty of the WX Pioneers, who joined the unit in Palestine, transferred to the 2/11 Bn. (including Bert) and in his letter he says the 2/11 has recently produced their war history. Included in the book were location of war cemeteries and of interest to 2/1 Pioneers was the name of WX10492, Pte J.R. Aitken, who was accidentally drowned in the Hawkesbury River while returning from leave in W.A. on 4/6/1944 – he is buried in Goulburn N.S.W.

Thank you for the poem by the late Steve Alliss, very true says Max, but not for publication. Will pass it around at first opportunity.

Good letter, Bert, and your kindest regards are passed on to all Pioneers and we hope to see you over this part of the world in the near future. Keep well and enjoy your travels.

TEMPLE WOOD 2/2, Terrigal, with a cheque for the treasurer. He looks forward to receiving the News and still feels a part of his old unit. His best wishes are passed on to his old mates.

Temple recently visited a daughter who lives at Dayboro in Queensland and whilst there she took him to Woodford, about 40 kms away. He remembered the battalion marching from Woodford to Caloundra as a toughening up exercise before going to New Guinea. He had a drink in the old pub built in 1913 – still pretty much the same.

Although not in the best of health due to emphysema and losing mobility, Temple says he's not too bad and perhaps better than some. Trust the warmer weather may improve your health problems and many thanks for your donation to funds.

BERT HUTTLEY 2/2, Bloomsbury, Qld., with his donation to funds and his thanks to those who keep the Pioneer News afloat. He tells of his visit to the local school (about 40 pupils) for a service prior to ANZAC Day where the guest speaker was a Major from Townsville Army Barracks, a Vietnam veteran. In conversation, Bert told him he had been in Tarakan when "Diver" Derrick, V.C., was killed and the Major said he had been to see his grave. On ANZAC Day, Bert marched in Proserpine, but said there were not many servicemen from WWII. There were about five in the march and a few in cars. Thank you for your donation, Bert, and best wishes from your mates in 2/2.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this time, the last of our Federation year, and on behalf of President Allan, Treasurer Don, Max and myself we wish all our members and their families the very best of health and happiness in the coming year. Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

SICK PARADE

KEN (MICK) ROBERTS 2/1 of Leeton was in St Vincents Private Hospital in June for a by-pass operation. While there he was visited by Max/Peg Herron, Joyce Law and Bill Tasker and was pleased to talk of his army days after joining the 2/1 Pioneers on the Atherton Tableland and serving in the Balikpapan campaign. He said he was fortunate in having a good sergeant in Max

Law and officers like John Douglas, Gordon Kitching and John Hayden.

After a few weeks at St. Vincents he had another week at Lady Davidson and said he was very well looked after by Veterans Affairs.

JOYCE WALKER, wife of George 2/1 of Culburra, has spent three months in hospital for a by-pass on her leg. She was in Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney for a couple of months and was visited while there by Frank and Jean Locane and Max and Peg Herron. She was then transferred to the local Nowra Hospital for several more weeks and at the time of the News going to press was hoping to be home in a few days. Get well soon, Joyce.

VALE JACK GRIFFITHS

On 8th September, Jack Griffiths OAM, 2/1st of Mayfield passed away in hospital at the age of 84 years. The funeral on 12th September at Pettigrew Funeral Parlour in Wallsend was packed with people who had been associated with Jack. Pioneers in attendance were Roy Jardine, Noel Schomberg, Jack Bertram, Jack/Marj Kerslake, Vi Flynn, Max/Peg Herron and Jack/Maisie Kemprich.

The service was conducted by Padre Ron Elliott ex-RAAF and Jack Bertram OAM, President of Rats of Tobruk Association Newcastle, carried out the RSL service with ODe to the Fallen, Last Post and Reveille.

The Eulogy delivered by the Padre and Jack Bertram stated that Jack served with the 2/1 Pioneer Battalion from 1940 to 1945 in all its campaigns. For the past fourteen years he has been Vice President of the Association and in 1990 was awarded Life membership in recognition for his outstanding service by the Association.

In 1996 Jack was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his dedication to the Rats of Tobruk Association and for his service to the Gallipoli Legion Club, having served as President since 1981.

Jack played a key role in organising the World War II 50th Anniversary celebrations as Chairman of the Newcastle Australia Remembers Committee in 1995.

In 1990 Jack was chosen by the Gallipoli Legion Club to represent the Club on a visit to Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, and the French Battlefields of 1914-18.

Jack had been a long time member of the Rats of Tobruk Association, Newcastle Branch, and of recent years as President of the Branch. He was also a Life Member of the Rats of Tobruk Association.

We thank God for the life of our friend and we extend our sincere sympathy to Jack's wife Esme, daughters Anne and Jill and family. He will be missed by all.

VETERANS HONOURED

By ALLAN McINNES

A presentation to local veterans of North Sydney Electorate by local member, The Hon. Joe Hickey, M.P., on 31st August, 2001, was very well received by about 100 veterans and their partners. The presentation was made up of all services, Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as ladies representing all three services. Medals were worn.

The theme was "Their Service - Our Heritage" honouring our veterans and celebrating 100 years of Australian Army, 90 years of R.A.N. and 80 years of R.A.A.F.

Guest speaker was Mr. G.E. Priest, A.M. I know Rusty Priest's great ability in this field is well-known to us all and he received a well-deserved standing ovation.

Presentations of framed certificates were made to all eligible veterans and each one received one of the new uncirculated \$1 coins with the rising sun on the front and encased in a most suitable cover and lapel badge for "Their Service - Our Heritage".

The ceremony was held at HMAS Waterhen at Waverton and the Navy band played leading up to presentation time and again during refreshments with renditions of war songs and classics.

I appreciated the thoughtful gesture by a very busy M.P. and Mary and I took home happy memories of this memorable day.

Many thanks.

LAST POST

RON (DASHER) DEAN 2/1 of Mandurah W.A. passed away on 29th March at the age of 81 and at his funeral two of the pall bearers were his two 2/1 mates, Harry Cable and Bert Woodhouse. According to a local newspaper cutting sent by Bert he was a terrific friend and the life of the party with a wonderful voice. Ron originally lived at Albany then retired to Mandurah where he joined the "Shades of Harmony" men's singing group.

Sincere sympathy was extended to Ron's wife and family by Bert Woodhouse on behalf of the Association.

FRED CRAIG 2/2 of Kalgoorlie passed away on 16th March and we thank Bert Woodhouse for the details.

BOB ADOLPHSON 2/2 of Mornington passed away on 30th June after several months of illness. To his wife Joyce and family we extend our sincere sympathy.

RUBY HARRIS wife of Ray 2/2 passed away in Ballina Hospital on 15th August and the funeral was conducted at the Ballina Rainbow Chapel. Pioneers in attendance were: Ray Robbins, Kevin Rayward, Ron Cross, Ken/Ida

Wilson, Alf/Lil Bettins, Neville/Betty O'Connor, Ossie/Betty Carter and Peter/Dot Priest.

Sympathy on behalf of the Association was extended to Ray, daughter Pam and family by Ken Wilson.

EDWARD GEORGE NEILSON 2/1 of Hornsby passed away on 6th September at the age of 79 years and the funeral was held at the Wamberal Catholic Church. Sympathy was extended to the family by Bill Tasker.

PETER PETERSON 2/2 of Broulee passed away on 29th August aged 79 years after a long illness.

JIM PURSE 2/1 of Bankstown passed away in June.

HARRY SHIELS 2/1 of Dee Why passed away on 6th October at the age of 90 years. The funeral on 11th October was attended by Jack/Marj Kerslake, Max/Peg Herron, Laurie Kelly and Roy Jardine. Sympathy was extended to wife Beryl and her four daughters.

MUFTI of Victoria reported by Eric Causer - Deceased: Fred Bacon 2/1, Mildura; Allan Benson 2/1 Warrnambool; Fred Lay 2/2 Orboost; Thomas O'Brien 2/2 Geelong; Vincent Mahoney 2/1 Geelong.

VP DAY SERVICE AT KOKODA TRACK WALKWAY

The main service in Sydney to commemorate VP Day was held at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway on 15th August at 2.30pm. The glorious weather set the tone for an excellent ceremony, under the leadership of the RSL President and Chairman of the Walkway Committee, Rusty Priest, AM, who in his usual efficient manner welcomed the special guests for the day, and especially thanked the large attendance of mainly ex-servicemen, wives and widows.

Rusty went on to thank the Premier of NSW and the Parliament for providing assistance in upgrading security of this beautiful Track.

The prologue was given by Cr. Michael Wroblewski, Mayor, City of Canada Bay, who mentioned that the Track was a reminder to future Australians of this joyous day in the Nation's history and a remembrance of the loved ones who did not return.

In his address, the Deputy Premier of NSW, the Hon. Dr. Andrew Refshauge MP gave a short historical review of the main strategic battles and the horrors of war. He also made comment that this peaceful Walkway was such a majestic memorial of anywhere in Australia. As well as the Catafalque Party, the 233 Regimental Cadet Unit, St George, provided a very well trained Guard of Honour.

The prayers were in the capable hands of Major "Tex" Morton, Salvation Army and hospital Chaplains Father Graham Malone, Mr John McKillop and Rev. Paul Watkins. Wreaths were laid by personnel from the special guests. Pipers from Royal NSW Regiment played the Lament. The NSW Corrective Services Band provided music in their usual proficient manner before and after the service, as well as for the three hymns and the National Anthem. The

assembly were led in the hymns by an excellent vocalist, Majella Bendeich.

In her words of thanks, Dr Margaret Sanger (Director Walkway Committee) stated that the Walkway is now fully secured 24 hours per day, and 7 days per week through the assistance from the NSW Govt. and the work carried out by the Canada Bay City Council. Also the construction company, Paynter Dixon received special mention due to the various tasks in maintenance. Dr Sanger also thanked the Corrective Services Dept. for their regular assistance in keeping the area beautiful. There is increasing interest in this Memorial as a tourist attraction, as each day two to three tourist buses arrive.

At the conclusion of proceedings an invitation to attend afternoon tea was extended to the assembly which was provided by Concord Repatriation Hospital. The Pioneer Assoc. was represented by Bill Jollie, Don and Val Crawford, Steve Clarke and Roy Jardine.

May I suggest to members of our Association that if you can make it, the Walkway is something you will thoroughly enjoy. It is amazing how well the plantings of trees, shrubs and other horticultural species are maturing. Tell your friends about it, and people from the country or interstate. If in Sydney try and make time in your itinerary to go out to Concord.

Reported by STEVE CLARKE

EDITORS NOTE: The layout below of the Imita Ridge plaque is an abridged version as the original is too large to produce clearly to be read. The original has the same wording as below but in addition contains a photo of Imita Ridge in left corner and a sketch map of Kokoda Track in right hand corner.

IMITA RIDGE

Imita Ridge was reached by the "golden stairs" which consisted of some 2,000 timber steps cut into the mountain side by the engineers. It was an exhausting climb. After leaving Uberi the track rose 1,200 feet in the first three miles, dropped some 1,600 feet and then rose about 2,000 feet in the last four miles.

During 17 September 1942 Brigadier Ken Eather's 25th Brigade at Ioribaiwa withdrew to Imita Ridge and its 3rd, 2/25th, 2/31st, 2/33rd and 2/1st Pioneer Battalions were deployed to meet the final Japanese attack. It was this withdrawal which caused intense consternation at the Allied headquarters in Brisbane. Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell in Port Moresby told the 7th Division commander, Major General Arthur (Tubby) Allen, that any further withdrawal was out of the question. "Eather must fight it out at all costs".

The Australians did not know that on 18th September the Japanese had been ordered to withdraw. Nevertheless, when the Australians began patrolling forward from Imita they struck Japanese defences which were still in force on 25 September. On 28 September the Australians at Imita launched a major attack on the Japanese at Ioribaiwa, but found that the Japanese had abandoned the position. At last the Australians could begin their counter-offensive.



GOLD SPONSOR
2/1st PIONEER BATTALION



The "golden stairs" climbing to Imita Ridge were cut into the track after the 39th Bn first crossed the mountain. Battered at the edge by a rough log, sometimes broken and therefore treacherous, the "stairs" cradled mud and water from the afternoon rains.