

# PIONEER NEWS

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

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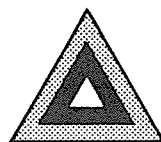
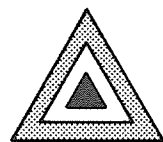
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## GALLIPOLI - TOBRUK - ALAMEIN TOUR

Association Vice-President, Jack Bertram was in a group of twenty one Rats of Tobruk Association members who did a tour in October 2002 and took part in the commemoration services on the battlefields of Gallipoli, Tobruk and Alamein. The following is Jack's account of this epic journey.

Leaving Sydney on 6th October, we stopped over in Singapore for a day and a half, visiting, amongst other places, Changi Museum and a reconstruction of the chapel in which so many of our 2/2 Pioneers must have worshipped. A place of sad memories.

On departing Singapore we flew to Istanbul and I was fortunate to be joined here by my granddaughter who accompanied us to Tobruk and Alamein. She acquired twenty one instant Grandads.

We spent three days then at the Gallipoli Peninsular which is about 20kms long by 8kms wide. A wonderful but sad place and a credit to the Turkish Government who have made a huge park with its numerous cemeteries, Allied and Turkish. A portion of Sari-Burnu, where the ANZACS landed has a huge cemetery on the beach front and courtesy of the Turks named officially ANZAC. An incredible terrain and I don't know how they lasted from April to December. Most depressing as about 90% of the graves being of boys in their late teens and early twenties, with many bearing the inscription "Known only to God".

A particular monument bearing an inscription in both English and Arabic, written by Kemal Ataturk, and which was repeated several times at other memorial sites, read – "Those heroes that shed their blood, and lost their lives, you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country – therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmeds to us, where they be side by side, here in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away places, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom after having lost their lives on this land. They have become our sons as well" – Ataturk 1934.

I did not see a dry eye amongst us when we again saw this epitaph next day at Lone Pine. Here we had a commemoration service and then were able to explore the reconstructed trench system.

Following several days of sight-seeing in this area we boarded a flight at Istanbul to Cairo where we spent a most interesting day sightseeing, visiting the Museum, the Sphinx and the Pyramids.

Leaving Cairo we travelled north west along a good road, and after four hours arrived at Mersa-Matruh which caters for a tourist population and consists of many high rise compartments. We stayed here the night in a very comfortable hotel.

Next day, off to Tobruk, past Sidi Barani, which we only saw in the distance, then Sollum, much bigger now, up the Halfaya Pass, still as steep as it was in 1941, but with an excellent graded road and on to the Egyptian border. This time we did not pass hundreds of Italian soldiers, as in 1941, heading for Sollum.

### TOBRUK'S BEAUTIFUL HARBOUR

As we approached Tobruk, heavy showers of rain greeted us and the road into Tobruk cut under a cross over road and we continued along the eastern side of the harbour to our modern Masira Hotel.

Next day across the beautiful harbour the sun was shining on the large modern city of 100,000 people, several high rise buildings. Oil was discovered South of Tobruk thirty years ago and plus excellent planning was responsible for Libya's growth.

Next day we visited the well maintained Tobruk Cemetery where we had a

commemoration service, and, the saddest part of the trip, went looking for our mates we had left behind. This was an easy task because of the excellent register at the entrance. Many of Tobruk's dead were also buried at Knightsbridge Cemetery about 12 kms on the Derna Road.

After paying our respects to the forty seven mates we left behind, all very youthful, we departed for the French Cemetery then on to the German Memorial, containing the names, but no bodies as they were taken back to their homeland. We then set out for the perimeter, arriving firstly in the Fig Tree area. It was still the deserted place we knew, and the well built posts the Italians had built for us were filled in with rocks and sand. Our slit trenches had long vanished, although there were some rusty pieces of barbed wire around, and some pieces of shrapnel and spent bullets were found. The wadi we used for sleeping is still there, as are the caves we used when stationed in this area. The big surprise was to find the Fig Tree basement full of rain water. The tank traps are still traceable although they too are filled with stones and sand.

We then followed the western side of the Salient to Hill 209, still the same, except this time we could wander freely over and around it. The old stone buildings to the south east of the Hill are still standing but these were the only things we could positively identify in this area, although we did locate the concrete tops of a couple of the posts. Not having shovels, nor the inclination, we did not excavate any of them.

We then proceeded out to Knightsbridge Cemetery about 15 kms along the Derna Road, where lie men from the battlefields scattered around the desert. Many 6th, 9th Division and Corps Troops are buried here including ten 2/1 Pioneers. I particularly wished to pay my respects to Harry Edwards as I was with him when he was killed and buried him just behind R8 later in the night – a great mate.

We then visited areas around Bardia Road sector, and then along the El Adam Road. All told this was a most satisfying visit to places of many memories, but I would have loved to trace our route past Derna, Wadi-El-Cuff, Bardia and Benghazi, but of course this was not the object of the tour.

### ALAMEIN – EIGHTH ARMY

Next day we headed for Alamein, east of Mersa Matruh, and found Alamein a most memorable spot and rightly commemorated for the wonderful victory there by the Eighth Army. 1942 started badly for the Aussies with Japan entering the war in December 1941, and appearing unstoppable. We were bewildered and were soon heading back home. Unfortunately the 2/2 Pioneers were taken prisoner in Java and as the year wore on, the AXIS after terrific battles at the Knightsbridge Box and Bir Hachiem, seized Tobruk and then surged on to Alamein. Here was waged that great Battle, which the Allies won, with the assistance of the 9th Division, which became a fitting encore to the Japanese first defeat at Milne Bay and Irobaiwa Ridge by the Aussies. The tide had turned in those two episodes and we were to go on in the next few years to the final defeat of Nazism – may it never return.

There are many memorials at Alamein, and graveyards; the Commonwealth Cemetery having 7,368 burials, a number of which unidentified. The memorial bears the names of 12,000 soldiers and airmen who have no known

grave, covering all theatres of war around the Mediterranean area. Near the cemetery are the memorials for the 1st South African Division for the battle of Cyrenaica, and the 9th Australian Division memorial.

We had a ceremony at the 9th Division memorial, which raised many memories. This was followed by a most impressive ceremony, our Commonwealth represented by the Governor-General Dr Peter Hollingworth, New Zealand by their Prime Minister, Helen Clark M.P. It was most impressive with the trooping of all Commonwealth flags.

A big day and we were glad to get back to our hotel. May all men, whatever their colour or creed, place of birth, strive for that great ideal "The brotherhood of man, under the fatherhood of God" – it can be done.

### LONDON – WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Next morning back to Cairo for our trip to England. Sad for me, because my granddaughter was leaving me for Milan. Arriving London we stayed at the Victory Club and next morning we were entertained at a reception at Australia House by the Australian Commissioner. Then next day, the culmination of the memorial services – a service at Westminster Abbey, which is a beautiful building and when such a show is put on by the Army, it is hard to believe you are participating.

The nave was lined with the standards of the Eighth Army Veterans Association and the Band of the Royal Artillery played incidental music. The choir of Westminster gave several items. The whole service was well planned and a great pleasure to be in attendance. The official party was led by the Duke of Edinburgh, consisting of several of the Royalty, Lord Mayors, Generals and Admirals, and we were all seated in a prominent position. A wonderful service being particularly noteworthy in that Viscount Montgomery (Monty's son) read the first lesson and the second lesson was read by Manfred Rommel (Rommel's son).

After the service we adjourned to a large conference room for eats and drinks, each table having a prominent member of the Eighth Army to look after us. A great show and even more so with the many Army uniforms. I was intrigued with the spurs worn by the Tank Corps and I tapped a person on the shoulder and enquired, did they use the spurs to drive the tanks. He looked surprised and said "I am not sure, it must come with the uniform, I was navy – it would be strange though" My table companion laughed and said to me "That was Prince Philip" – no wonder he was at a loss. I thought he looked familiar. This was our last official function of the tour, but we had a great night at the Victory Club, as some were leaving us and the rest of us were proceeding to Scotland. We were joined at the Victory Club by members of the German Afrika Corps, so it was a night of memories.

### PERTH, SCOTLAND

We then proceeded to Perth, where the 51st Highland Regiment invited us to a dedication of a memorial to them in a park in several day's time. On arrival we were well received and had a great time.

After a very nice service we, with the veterans of the 51st Regiment marched through Perth, with twelve pipe bands, and lots of army units to a park where the memorial to the 51st Highland Division was dedicated. Like us, the march of time has caught up with them, as they are in the process of disbandment. This did not spoil a great night in a huge marquee, where over 400 of us sat down to an excellent three course dinner and entertainment.

This concluded my official tour but I spent several weeks with my son-in-law and my granddaughter which was akin to the icing on the cake.

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The first issue of Mail Bag for 2003 and our sincere thanks to all who sent cards and letters to the Association and to Max and I personally for the Christmas season. We hope all our readers enjoyed time with family and friends and can look forward to a new year of good health and happiness – and peace in the world.

**CYRIL AMIES 2/1**, Forbes, with a newsletter and card from Doris and himself for Christmas and lots of news of their "doings" over the last twelve months. Cyril has had his share of problems over recent months with a spell in hospital with a broken leg, but was hoping to be fully recovered early in the new year. They are enjoying their new life in Forbes, but like most of our state are badly in need of rain. Doris said it was sad to see the dry grass cracking under foot, but when they realise their livelihood is not dependent on their produce they take heart. Trees and shrubs can always be replaced.

For ANZAC Day, Cyril and "Rat" mate Gil Ratcliffe (Engineers) did the march in style driven in a Vintage Ford T. Time has caught up with Cyril and his legs not much good for walking. However, they enjoy lots of outings with a Probus group and their church offers plenty of companionship and warmth.

Good to hear from you both and many thanks for the donation enclosed in your letter. Kindest regards from your friends in the "big smoke".

**ISABELL ANDERSON**, Aspendale Vic., widow of "Snowy" 2/2, with her best wishes to all Pioneers for Christmas and some kind words to Max and myself for our efforts in helping to keep the Association alive. Our sincere thanks, Isabell, and our fond love to Julie. Hope this finds you both in the best of health.

**REG ARMSTRONG 2/2**, Baradine, per pen of wife Coralie, just a short note to say Reg is very frail and his eyesight failing. Sorry to read of his problems, Coralie, and wish you both all the best. Age is fast catching up with all old veterans.

**ROBYN BELL**, Port Melbourne Vic., daughter of the late Leo Morris 2/1, with a card of greeting for Xmas and said how pleased she was to have been able to make the trip to the Lismore reunion. Also looks forward to catching up again on ANZAC Day, all being well. All the best, Robyn, and hope to see you at the wreath laying at the Cenotaph on the 24th.

**DAWN BARRY**, Floreat W.A., widow of Peter 2/2, with the sad news that Peter had passed away in September. Max has included your letter in his Last Post, Dawn, and extended his sympathy to you and your family. The Pioneer News will continue to be sent to you and we look forward to hearing from you sometime in the future. Best wishes

**ALF BENTLEY 2/1**, Yokine W.A., with best wishes from Pat and himself for Christmas and the news that he intends to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day. He was really upset that a trip to hospital stopped him from making the journey last year. Hope your legs have improved, Alf, better get into condition for the March. Our best wishes to Pat and looking forward to seeing you in April.

**JUNE BIRRELL**, Mudgee, widow of Bob 2/1, enclosing a donation to funds with her Xmas card. Many thanks, June, and our best wishes to you for the coming year.

**MAVIS BLANCH**, Beaudesert Qld., with lots of family news with her greeting card and that daughter Lola is still battling with her cancer problem. Must be a big strain, Mavis, and our thoughts are with you. Trust the 90th party for Cecil Blanch 2/1 was a success – he looked a picture of health at the Lismore reunion. I think there is only Jack Shearman, Bill Hoffman and Cecil left now of the big influx into the 2/1sts from Kyogle (actually still living in the town).

Hope you had good news from the eye specialist in January, you have enough worries to cope with at the moment. All the best from your friends down south – keep well and love.

**MARJ BOYLE**, Moama, widow of Keith 2/1, with a welcome sub. for the News and her greetings to all Pioneers for a healthy and happy new year. Marj is battling, healthwise, with arterial

problems and kidney trouble, but is still doing Meals on Wheels. Back in July she bought a new car and had it modified so that she can drive her electric scooter into the back of the vehicle. To gain access she raises the top door like a hatch back and the bottom part rolls out as a ramp. It has given her a new lease of life – completely independent and that to her is most important. One of the "wags" from her church nick-named it the "Popemobile" and that name has been taken up by one and all. Full credit to you, Marj, just shows what can be done if you are determined enough. We wish you all the luck in the world.

Many thanks for your cheque, Marj, and our best wishes for a healthier coming year. Always good to hear from you.

**LES BRITT 2/1**, Earlville, Nth Qld., with greetings to all Pioneers and a donation to funds. Many thanks. Trust life in your new village is all that you can wish for Les, and best of health for 2003.

**MARY BURNHAM**, Forster, daughter of the late Colonel Arnold Brown 2/1, with special Christmas greetings to all 2/1 Pioneers and every good wish for the year ahead.

Mary was thrilled, that after marching for the first time last ANZAC Day, she had received a copy of the 2/1st history "The Pioneers" from Vern Humphreys and then a couple of months ago Bert Woodhouse 2/1 from Western Australia contacted her and sent her a copy of the history of the 28th Bn, World War 1, in which her Dad served, and was mentioned numerous times. Mary was very grateful for the books and felt very humble. She sends a big thank you to 2/1st Pioneers.

Thank you for your letter, Mary, and we hope to see you in Sydney again in the near future. You are always assured of a warm welcome.

**DOROTHY CAMPBELL**, Inverell, widow of Claude 2/1, with a few lines enclosing a donation for the News, for which many thanks. Dot enjoys the paper, but says she is not one for putting pen to paper. However, sends her best wishes to all 2/1 Pioneers for the coming year.

**ERIC CAUSER 2/1**, Hamilton Vic., with greetings to all for the New Year and a thank you for the congratulations passed on to he and Doff on their 50th Wedding anniversary on 10th January. They were very spoilt by their family who gave a wonderful luncheon for family and friends. Doff says it has taken a while to get the feet firmly back on the ground.

Eric is still working with Legacy and helping with pensions – he is amazed at the number of vets. who aren't aware of their entitlements. Keep up the good work and our best wishes to you both.

**LEXIE COATES**, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, enclosing a cheque for worthy treasurer. Many thanks Lex, and for your good wishes to all members of the Association.

It was good to hear you had been able to spend time with Glad Hamer (widow of Harry 2/1), while both were attending the Central Coast Rats of Tobruk luncheon. Max has written to Glad and sent her back numbers of the News and reinstated her name on the mailing list. (The gremlins must have been at work).

Hope your little great-granddaughter is doing well Lex – guess she gets lots of love and attention. Our best wishes to you and keep well.

**BETTY CREASY**, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with a cheque for the News and to say how sad she is to read all the names in Last Post each issue. The passing years fast catching up. They had big celebrations in Portland recently for 100 years of continuous Methodist services and lots of former families came back to celebrate. Dave Dixon 2/1 who grew up in Portland, was one of the former locals who made the trip back with his son.

Trust you enjoyed Christmas with Joy and family, Bet, and hope we may meet up sometime – somewhere. All the best.

**ALLAN CRUTE 2/1**, Woolgoolga, with a card of greeting for Christmas and a cheque for the News.

Allan has had trouble with his hands and finds writing a problem, but says for an 85 year old he keeps fairly well. However, he can still play croquet and ten pin bowls, which he enjoys, and also the company of other people. It is a lonely life without Beulah, but son Denny has been home from Parkes during the year, also Denny's wife Chris and his grandsons.

Many thanks for the cheque, Allan, and keep up your activities for as long as you can.

**DAPHNE FALLON**, Barraba, widow of Bill 2/2, with a very generous donation to funds, for which many thanks. She enjoys reading the News and says the cheque will help with mounting expenses. Your good wishes are passed on to all Pioneer members. Hope you have had some rain in your part of the country in recent weeks.

**NORMA FITCH**, Calwell A.C.T., widow of Harold 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and a donation to funds. Many thanks, Norma, and I hope you were not one of the Canberra suburbs in the disastrous fires which swept through the National Capitol. Keep well and our kindest regards.

**GRACE FOWKES**, Wentworthville, widow of Dick ("Snowy") 2/1, with a card of greeting and a cheque towards costs of the Pioneer News.

Many thanks and your good wishes passed on to all Pioneers for the coming year. All the best to you, Grace, hope you are keeping well.

**BETTY GAYDEN**, Shoalhaven Heads, widow of Lance 2/1, with her best wishes to all and a cheque enclosed for the News. She says it is hard to realise Lance has been gone nearly 12 months and she misses him very much. Time marches on Bet and we realise just how many Pioneers have passed on by our records. Sadly our roll contains nearly as many widows as members. Our best wishes to you and thanks for the sub.

**NOEL GRANT 2/1**, Seaholme Vic., with a request to Max for permission to permit his family members to march on ANZAC Day. Max has been in touch with you in this regard, Noel, and I have also written in regard to the ladies luncheon. Many thanks for your good wishes and all the best to Jean.

**DR DES GREEN 2/1**, Wattle Grove, with a very generous donation to funds and wishing all Pioneers the very best for the coming year. Max and I extend our thanks to you Mick for your kind words and will endeavour to keep up the good work. All the best and many thanks for your cheque.

**JOHN HAYDEN 2/1**, Orange, per pen of good wife Wyn, despite problems again with the dreadful skin rash on her face, arms and legs. Hope the Dr from Sydney is able to do something for you, Wyn, you must feel like a prisoner in your own home.

Both you and John must have a problem keeping up with your grand-children and all their school activities. All seem to be doing very well and with weddings and excitement of a new baby due in July to son John's daughter, you need to get yourself well in a hurry. John seems to have made up his mind re ANZAC Day, so hope all goes well in the meantime.

Our very best to you both for the coming year. **CLIVE HARRIS 2/1**, Aberdeen, with best wishes to all for the new year and the news that he has not had the best of health lately. He had a couple of trips to hospital, plus an operation, but getting about very slowly at the moment. All the best, Clive, and hope this year will bring you better health.

**MERCIA HEALY**, Keysborough Vic, widow of Leo 2/1, with best wishes for Christmas and a cheque for the News. Many thanks. She was sorry to hear of the death of Beulah Crute, as Leo had spent a couple of holidays with Allan and Beulah before he and Mercia were married. She was happy to welcome a new grand-child (Jack) born in September and had spent a couple of months early in the year in the Hornsby-Gosford area. Best wishes to you Mercia, and keep well.

**PAM HERRICK**, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with a Christmas letter of greeting to Pioneer friends near and far. Both Pam and her mum, Dorothy, are thankful they have kept well this year and have been able to enjoy several holidays with family and friends.

Pam's family are scattered – daughter Karen and family live in the Philippines, son Damian and his wife in North Carolina, USA and daughter Tracey and husband Sam in Brisbane. All are able to make a trip home now and again and Pam able to enjoy time with them and her grand-children.

She is still working a Sutherland Hospital and doing voluntary work at Calvary Hospital so is kept busy.

Nice to hear from you, Pam, and probably see you on ANZAC Day as usual. All the best to mum.

**ELAINE HENDERSON**, Epping, niece of the late Ron Clark 2/1, with greetings and a welcome sub for the News. Elaine was delighted to see the

Pioneers interviewed on ANZAC Day and wishes them all good health and happiness in 2003.

She sends her thanks for the News, loves to read it and takes it to her husband, who is in a nursing home, for the interest he shows. Still believes he is in the army and wants a leave pass for the week-end. So sad, but Elaine says he remembers everything from the war years clearly.

Thanks for the card, Elaine, and for the donation to funds.

**GLORIA HUTCHINSON**, Caringbah, widow of Bill 2/1, with greetings for the Festive Season and wishes all Pioneers and their families the very best for 2003. Many thanks for the sub enclosed with your letter, Gloria, hope to see you ANZAC Day.

**MAISE KEMPNIH**, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with a welcome donation to funds and the news that she has settled in her new surroundings at Harbourside Haven Village with plenty of nice "oldies", reasonably good food and great caring staff. Has not been able to get anywhere with D.V.A. regards a war widow's pension, but don't give up Mais. We know of lots of cases where it has taken some years to finally get results.

Max has altered your address on our mailing list, Mais, and the paper will be sent to you as usual. Take care and keep in touch. Many thanks for the sub.

**MARIE LAMERTON**, Liverpool, widow of Jack 2/1, with her greetings to all Pioneers for the coming year. Still attends Legacy and had a holiday at Eden with them, including a trip on a trawler, complete with life jackets – and a bucket. Guess that got plenty of use if the seas were rough.

Marie keeps in touch with Joan McGowan, widow of Len 2/1, who lives at Berala. Also mentioned that son Harry was mentioned in the new book "The Spirit of Kokoda", but she finds it hard with macular degeneration to read the small print. Keep well, Marie, and our best wishes.

**JOYCE LAW**, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with special greetings for Christmas to all Pioneers and hopes the new year will bring lots of good health and peace for all. Joyce has been busy caring for her two sisters, who have not been well, and I hope by now they are a lot better.

She was saddened to read of Gordon Finlay's passing and that Brian Kybert had been admitted to a nursing home. Guess you would have heard from his wife Betty by now.

All the best to you, Joyce, and will be in touch with you before ANZAC Day.

**BOB LEHMANN**, 2/1, Miami Qld., with a long letter in reply to my query in the July issue last year about ANZAC Day 1943. It was most interesting, Bob, and I have written to you personally in this regard.

Sorry to hear Mavis is now in a nursing home, but I guess there comes a time when you can't manage any more, especially when your legs have given out. Trust the electric scooter you were expecting enables you a lot more freedom. As you say, age is fast catching up with all of us. Very best wishes from Max and thanks for your letter.

**DAWN LEVY**, Revesby, widow of Roy 2/2, with greetings for Christmas and best wishes to all Pioneers. Thanks for your good wishes and I, too, hope 2003 will be much better. Age catching up I'm afraid. All the best Dawn from both of us.

**ERNIE LUNN** 2/2, Dubbo, with a welcome donation to funds, for which many thanks. Ernie started the letter and then gave it to Norma to finish as he wasn't too well. Unfortunately, Ern had a stroke at the end of October and after a month in hospital is back home. He lost the use of his left hand and foot, could not walk, but speech and memory not affected. After intense rehabilitation he can walk O.K., but always has a walking stick nearby. Do hope by now you are well on the road to recovery, Ern, and I'm sure Norma would have given you lots of loving care.

Their district is very badly drought affected and the high temperatures a real drain. Do hope you have had some relief since you wrote in December.

Warm wishes to you both and hope to see you again one of these days.

**JOYCE MCGREGOR**, Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, with Christmas greetings and lots of family news. We miss the old times Joy when you lived at Kingsgrove – so much water has gone under the bridge since those days. You must try and make ANZAC Eve again with the girls would

be great to see them after so many years.

Did your friend from Legacy tell you that it was a case of mistaken identity? I phoned her as you suggested and although I know where she lived, she had the wrong lady. We had a long chat as her girls went to Beverly Hills High, but were some years behind Lynne. There may be other Herrons in the area that she knew of.

Take care and perhaps may see you in April. Love and best wishes. (Enjoyed your "Fish Tales").

**ALLAN MCINNES** 2/2, North Sydney, with greetings for Christmas and the news that Mary is making some progress since being in the nursing home and is at last reading a little. She celebrated her 80th birthday recently at the home of son, Adam, and had a wonderful day with family and friends, although very tiring. The outing would do her good, and hope she was able to make it to Peter's for Xmas.

Our love and best wishes to her, Mac, and all the best for the coming year.

**DON MURRAY** 2/2, Tinonee, with a generous donation to funds and his apologies for his bad writing owing to eye problems. Could read most of what you wrote, Don, and we thank you for the effort involved, also many thanks for your kind words on the work Max and I do for the News – they were nice thoughts and very much appreciated. Best wishes and keep well.

**NEVILLE O'CONNOR** 2/2, Ballina, per pen of good wife Betty, with greetings to all for the coming year. So pleased your trip to Sydney for the operation was a success and that you are feeling a lot better. Hope Neville is still able to have his daily walk – our very best wishes to him.

We heard recently on the news that Ballina had received some very heavy rain, so hope it fell where it did a lot of good. The country is sure in a mess, and it's not only N.S.W. I spoke to Joy Preedy from Western Australia this morning (widow of Len Preedy 2/2) and she said W.A. is having the same problems – no rain and lots of bushfires, and HOT.

Thanks for the note, Bette, keep well.

**ALLAN OLSON** 2/2, South Australia, with sincere greetings to all Pioneers from The S.A. Branch and every good wish for 2003. Many thanks. Have you had any news lately of George Sauer. Allan, we have not heard for quite a long time and had enquiries as to his well being. Hope he is well.

**PETER PEILE** 2/1, Caringbah, as usual per pen of good wife Erika, with greetings for the new year and a donation to the News, for which many thanks. Peter has had another trip to hospital and Erika says last year was mostly spent in doctor's waiting rooms. Hope he is on the mend and that this year brings better health. Happy to say you are still on the mailing list and likely to be – the paper only published three times a year – so it seems a long time between issues. All the best.

**JOY PREEDY**, Shenton Park, widow of Len 2/2, sends best wishes to all Pioneers and hopes for them a happy and healthy 2003. Joy was in Sydney recently visiting her son, who now works here, and we had quite a long chat. She is managing quite well on her new prosthesis, but does find getting around a little difficult. Does not hear from too many of Len's former Pioneer members in W.A., but one or two keep in touch. Conditions in W.A. very much the same as in N.S.W. – drought conditions, heat and bushfires.

Good to talk to you, Joy, and all the very best for the coming year.

**MONA REINERS**, Corryong Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with a long newsy letter of doings of the family and it certainly makes me feel old when I see how they are all growing up – their families are older now than when we were all on holidays so many years ago. If only we could turn back the clock.

Hope you enjoyed your Christmas with Brian and Barb and I guess the girls were busy working at the Australian Open. They get so many wonderful opportunities these days.

Good to see you are still bowling, even if not really enthusiastic. It gets you out of the house and the company is good for you. It's hard here as regards members too, so many of the clubs have closed from lack of players.

David and Lynn had no problems with fires where they are in Kurrajong, but always vigilant as there is a lot of bush around their area. Our Lynne was home from India for three months, mostly spent in Port Macquarie where John was teaching at the High School, but she went back in

November. I think they are due to return again in early April.

Lovely to hear from you and will try and write you more often. Marj and Jack Kerslake send their kindest regards, both are reasonably well. Love from Max and I and many thanks for the subs.

**JOE SACKER** 2/1, Chiswick, with best wishes from he and wife Mary to all Pioneers. Many thanks for your donation to funds and good to hear you are O.K. healthwise. All the best.

**CLANCY SCHOLES** 2/1, South West Rocks, with a change of address from Casino. He and Wendy moved in September to get closer to Clancy's other daughter. We were wondering how you were as we have had no news for several years, and often are asked if we had heard from you. All the best to you Clancy and our love to Wendy. Max has made a note of your new address.

**BRYAN SMALLHORN** 2/1, Armidale, with subs enclosed for the News and seasons greetings to all. He had a short trip to St. Vincent's Hospital during last year and hopes for better health in 2003. Amazing how age is catching up with all old soldiers (and old ladies), just as well a lot of our ageing parts can be replaced.

Thank you for the news of the passing of Bill Gibbons 2/1 – Max has included the details in Last Post. We often do not hear of the passing of some country members unless notified by family or friends.

Your donation to funds gratefully acknowledged.

**BILL THIELE** 2/1, Port Hughes, S.A., with greetings for Christmas and a donation to the News, per pen of wife Betty. Bill is still playing golf and has just started playing night bowls again. The golf course is very dry, like in most places at the moment, although the crops on the Yorke Peninsula recently received some late rain. Whether it will do any good remains to be seen.

They send their best wishes to all Pioneers for a safe and happy new year.

**GWEN STRODE**, Yagoona, sister of Keith Jones 2/1 (K.I.A.), with seasons greetings to all Pioneers. Gwen also sends a message to Joyce McGregor, formerly of Glamis Street, Kingsgrove, mentioning the street parties that they enjoyed each year and lovingly remembered. Gwen's other brother Davey Jones lived a few doors from Joyce. All the best to you, Gwen, keep well.

**HARRY SPREADBOROUGH** 2/1, Alexandra Hills Qld., with some cash for the treasurer and his best wishes to all for the festive season. Says he will write later when something happens worth talking about. Surely there must be some news from your part of the world, Harry. Our best wishes to both Jean and yourself.

**LES TUNKS** 2/1, Mareeba, with a note to say he and Lesley are both well and to say how pleased they were to receive cards from Bert Huttley 2/2 and his wife, also from Jack Hearn 2/2 and wife Audrey from Howlong and from Peter Priest 2/1 and Dot from Ballina. Max will forward receipt for your donation in due course Les. Many thanks.

Also many thanks Les for the newsheet from the "Cairns Post" with the article on the Australian Ambulance Trains on the Tablelands. It was very interesting reading. Your remarks on "Olga from Tolga" raised a smile with Max and I as we had known the saying from when our book was published. One of our officers tells how when Lady B. was off duty and in the officers' mess she was rather partial to a drink (or two) and often danced on the tables and even hung from the rafters, before being quietly shepherd outside. (Naturally we did not publish it in the book). Very best wishes, to you both.

**DON UPSON** 2/2, Maidstone Vic., with apology for lateness of his subs., but says he is no letter writer. Still, better late than never Don.

He sends his regards to all 2/2nds, especially any from the Sig. Platoon. Says they are getting scarce but sees four at their reunion and march – Col Pitches, Ken Duncan, Jack Farley and George Howlet.

Don sends his thanks for those who produce the News and wishes all a healthy year ahead.

**REUBEN WADE**, Surfers Paradise Qld., son of the late Reuben Wade 2/1, with a note to Max thanking him for his prompt reply to his phone call and for sending him back copies of the Pioneer News. His dad passed away in 1984 (they share



the same name). Reuben Jnr. spoke with Alec George in Lismore and he remembered his father as they were both footballers.

As you have your dad's service records and casualty forms, that is all the records available from the army and Max cannot help you further in this regard.

Thank you for your donation to funds and sub. for the News and future copies will be posted as published.

**JOYCE WESTWOOD**, Bradbury, widow of Jack 2/2, with the news that her husband passed away in October. Max has mentioned this, Joyce, in Last Post and has written you extending the Association's sympathy.

Copies of future issues, will be sent to you when published and the subscription of \$5 is usually due after the April issue. With best wishes.

**NEVILLE WOODHAM** 2/1, Cleveland Qld., with Christmas greetings to all and the news that he and Betty hope to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day. Looking forward to seeing you – all the best.

**FRED KILLEN** 2/1, Warners Bay, with a cheque enclosed just as News was going to press. Many thanks and our sympathy extended to you on the loss of your wife after a long illness. Fred still lives on his own, after being married for sixty four years, but doesn't go much on cooking for himself. Hands are a problem, but can still get around on his own and plays bowls twice a week. Sends his best wishes to all Pioneers for a healthy year ahead.

That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and I must especially thank the twenty three widows who have put pen to paper and written in with good wishes and news. Well done ladies. Hope to see a good roll up to the wreath laying on ANZAC Eve and the March and reunion on ANZAC Day.

## PIONEER ACTIVITIES 2003

### WREATH LAYING – 24th April at 3.45pm

On Thursday 24th April the Association will conduct their Wreath Laying Service at the Cenotaph at 3.45pm. Please note the change in time as in previous years it has been at 4.10pm. All members are to assemble on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, GPO side at 3.30pm.

### ANZAC DAY MARCH – Friday, 25th April

The Anzac Day march will be held on Friday 25th April and the forming up for 2/1sts and 2/2nds will be same as last year in Phillip Street head on to King Street, rear of 6th Division. Please note the 2/2nds will march immediately behind the 2/1sts as last year, and will form up outside the Leagues Club in Phillip Street.

Any relative of a member, taking part in the Anzac Day March must be of RSL age, that is eighteen years or older. Furthermore that person must report to the unit marshal, who will ensure the relative, if wearing the deceased member's medals, must wear them on the right breast.

### ANZAC REUNION – Friday, 25th April

The Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street Sydney is the venue once again for the Reunion Dinner. Just board the train at Museum Station after the march and travel to Wynyard – up the escalator, turn right into York Street and the hotel is on the corner.

## GENERAL MEETINGS 2003

The Executive have decided on the dates of three General Meetings this year and each one will be held on a Friday at Redfern RSL Club, Board Room, Redfern Street at 1pm.

The dates are 28th March, 25th July and 14th November. The General Meeting on the 25th July will be followed by the Annual Meeting, which in the past has been held in May. The Executive have decided on this change to fall into line with the standard financial year, by closing the accounts on 30th June instead of the usual 30th March.

This change will relieve the burden on the Secretary and Treasurer who find the March/April period a busy one in organising the production of Pioneer News, Wreath Laying Service, Anzac Day March and Reunion.

The Executive would like to see a good roll up at these meetings and extend a hearty welcome to all Pioneers to attend. Please make a note of the dates.

## LAST POST

**PETER TERRY BARRY**, 2/2 of Floreat W.A., aged 76 years passed away on 15th September 2002 only three weeks after he had been diagnosed with lung cancer.

With wife Dawn, he had just returned from two weeks holiday at Coral Bay, 1200 km north of Perth and according to Dawn, he had thoroughly enjoyed the stay with swimming, snorkelling and socialising.

Up to the day of his passing, he was his usual tanned and healthy looking self at 99 kg.

We extend heartfelt sympathy to Dawn and her four children and eleven grandchildren and we also thank Dawn for sending the details.

**BILL GIBBONS** 2/1 of Armidale passed away and the funeral was held at Piddingtons Funeral Chapel on the 6th November 2002. The poppy service was carried out by the Armidale RSL. Bill had been ill for a long time.

We are grateful to Bryan Smallhorn of Armidale for supplying the details in which he said he would have attended the funeral only that he was in hospital at the time.

**ROY MCGREGOR** 2/2 of Maitland passed away on 24th October 2002, after many months of illness, but had a peaceful passing.

Our sympathy is extended to wife Marion and we do thank her for sending the details.

**TEMPLE JACK WOOD** 2/2, formerly of Kingsgrove, passed away on 30th December 2002, aged 86 years and the funeral was held at Palmdale Crematorium on 3rd January.

Temple was a regular correspondent to the Pioneer News and always kept us abreast of his doings. When his wife passed away in 1994 he moved in with his daughter Susan at Terrigal. He had a liver problem for three years and had recently been operated on for a melanoma. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

Our sympathy is extended to Susan and all the family and we do thank her for passing on the details of Temple's passing.

**GWEN PEGG**, widow of Rod 2/1 was killed in January while crossing Military Road, Neutral Bay, and it is understood the traffic lights were green.

Gwen was in her 89th year and was a very active lady and a very good bridge player. She certainly did not look her age. We are grateful to Allan McInnes for supplying those details.

**MUFTI** of Victoria reported by Eric Causer Deceased: 2/2nds – Robert Allen, Percy Johnson, Ronald Wilson, Len May, Ken Milne and Rodney Thompson.

**REVELLE** – DECEASED: 2/1sts – J.C. Hill, R.L. Murray, T.S. McGuinness, K.G. Relf, E.J. Reynolds. 2/2nds – A. Brown, J.B. Causley, H.A. Greenwood and N.J. Went.

## ROCKY CREEK MEMORIAL

On Sunday 11th August 2002 a further fourteen memorial plaques were unveiled at the Rocky Creek War Memorial Park, on the Atherton Tablelands.

At this service Les Tunks 2/1 of Mareeba represented the Association. Two weeks later he welcomed Peter and Dot Priest 2/1 to the Park and they were very impressed with the area and the 2/1 - 2/2 plaque.

At the Association November meeting the Committee proposed and approved the donation of \$100 to the Rocky Creek Memorial Park Committee towards the cost of the upkeep of the Park and the 2/1 - 2/2 plaque.

In his reply, John Hardy, Secretary, thanked the Association for the donation and stated it would be used for maintaining the Association memorial plaque. He said he has fond memories of the role that Pioneers played in the military as he served as a Pioneer sergeant for several years while in the Army reserve.

John Hardy said the interest for new memorial plaques is still rolling in and at this stage there are fourteen plaques being considered for dedication on VP Day 2003.

In the Chairman's report it was stated the past twelve months has been an exciting period for his Committee as so much has been achieved. Toilet block completed, fourteen new plaques dedicated, new garden beds, excellent irrigation system, planting of one hundred trees, extensive cleaning of park grounds and large signage on highway and entrance.

## CHRISTMAS AS A CHILD

Our good friend in Cairns, Vera Bradley, AAMWS, was asked by the Cairns Post to write what she remembered about Christmas as a child and Vera used her article as her Christmas letter to us. We thought we would share it with you – and bring back memories.

*Christmas is coming the geese are getting fat, please put a penny in the old mans hat, if you haven't got a penny, a halfpenny will do, if you haven't got a halfpenny, well God Bless You.* is what we used to sing after school broke up for the seven weeks school's Christmas holidays. Not only was it a joy, no more school but also, Christmas was coming and the long awaited presents and all that went with it, plus the lovely Christmas dinner.

My first memory of Christmas goes back to 1929 when I recall being scared of Santa after he lifted me up at Boland's Christmas street stall. A canvas-covered treasure trove that went from the footpath out onto Spence Street road and displayed the most wonderful toys, at another stall jutting out from the shop onto the footpath was beautifully gift-wrapped presents for sale also.

Christmas Eve and the night before Good Friday were the only nights of the year the shops stayed open until 9pm. It was magical to go into town and see the lighted shop windows plus all the wonderful things our parents could not afford. We accepted this; it was being in the crowded streets where everyone was so happy that gave us the excited feeling of Christmas. Many happy evenings ended with a thunderstorm and then walking home in the heavy rain, but that did not matter, it was Christmas.

On opening our eyes in the morning we could see a red Xmas stocking full of nuts, sweets, whistles, comic pages and games poking out of our pillowcase. Presents were mostly a celluloid doll or tea set for the girls and the boys aeroplanes, trains or cars massed produced in Japan by stamping out sheets of tin, leaving a small strip folded into a small slot to hold the toy together. A lot of tears were shed on Christmas Day when one of the flaps broke off or the key wound spring mechanism broke, making the toy useless.

The best was yet to come, CHRISTMAS DINNER, in the downstairs dining room where crepe paper streamers, fine paper Christmas balls, bells and lanterns had been hung.

The smell of the cooked ham that Pop had won at the Ambulance Christmas Carnival, plus the plum duff (pudding) cooking on the wood fired stove made us hungry, but the best of all was the tantalising smell of the roosters being roasted. For weeks we had fattened them especially for this occasion. Pop had cut off their heads and we kids watched the poor thing's last fight for life. It was our job to keep the water boiling in Mum's washing boiler to scald the chooks, we then had to pluck and gut them. We smelt of wet chook feathers for the rest of the day.

The older girls helped Mum peel the vegetables, make red and green jelly to set in the ice chest. We ate the jelly with the plum pudding, tinned peaches and custard. As there was no room in the ice chest for the soft drink and watermelon, to keep them cool they were stored in water overnight in Mum's concrete washtubs and covered with wet heavy hessian potato sacks that were kept moist during the day.

At last 12.30 came, Mum and Pop, we six kids and our guests sat down to the long awaited feast. Even though we were as full as ticks, as we used to say, we still nibbled on plums, cherries, figs, lollies and nuts set in little bowls on the table. Of course, we also had to finish off the plum pudding just in case there was still the chance of finding more of the threepences and sixpences that Mum would have tossed into the mixture before cooking. After the dishes were washed and our parents rested, it was the custom for those who could to play rounders. Then it was watermelon time.

As Christmas Day drew to a close, we knew that in a week's time we would do it all again to celebrate the beginning of a new year.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE APRIL

Send with news to M. Herron  
3 Enggera Road Beverly Hills 2209

# PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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

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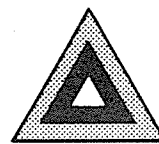
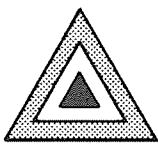
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## 2/1-2/2 PIONEER ANZAC ACTIVITIES

### WREATH LAYING SERVICE

This service was held on 24th April at the new time of 3.45pm at the Cenotaph in Martin Place with an attendance of thirty Pioneers and fifteen ladies. The members were marshalled by Bill Tasker with Allan McInnes as leader and banner bearers were Noel Grant 2/1 and Jack McDonagh 2/2.

Wreaths were laid by Bert Neasbey for the Association and Marj Kerslake for the ladies. The bugle call was expertly carried out by Aub Brasier who has performed this role for the last forty years. Thank you Aub for a job well done.

### ANZAC DAY MARCH

Once again the two units assembled in Phillip Street and from there the 2/2nds followed the 2/1st who were behind the Castle Hill RSL Youth Band. We were then directed down King Street and stood here and waited in formation for a long time, before proceeding to Martin Place and the Cenotaph. Meanwhile the clouds gathered, but only a few spots of rain fell, which was most considerate of "Hughie" and appreciated by both marchers and the large crowd, estimated by the media at 200,000.

Treasurer Don Crawford and Gavin Todd collected subs from 2/1 and 2/2 respectively, at the assembly point and later at the reunion. Dr Stan Goulston, OAM, led the march for the 2/1, with Ray Law bearing the flag, and Tim Lloyd the banner. An estimated 53 marched which included some relatives. For the 2/2, the march was led by Allan McInnes with Padre Steele, and Adam McInnes carried the banner. Including relatives, about 25 turned out for the 2/2.

The overcast skies ensured the temperature was cool and even, and conditions for the march were therefore pleasant. Even so, one of the marchers - I think it was Tom Crossman, wanted to know - "Is George Street getting longer?" Tom might be on to something, they do seem to stretch it a bit each year.

### OCCIDENTAL HOTEL REUNION

At the Occidental, the efficient working group of Ray Law, David Herron and Geoff Finlay collected the meal money and issued name tags with a minimum of delay. Then it was up to the first floor where we found that Mark Neasbey and George Granger had each placed \$200 on the bar. Their generosity is very much appreciated.

In welcoming those present to another reunion, Allan McInnes went on to say he was sorry to announce that Bill Robertson had been admitted to hospital suffering from a stroke and pneumonia.

Robbie was not conscious and his condition could only be regarded as grave. After reciting the Ode, Allan spoke briefly about the continuing importance of Anzac Day. He apologised for the absence of John Gilchrist with one leg in plaster, and Bill Jollie who was confined to barracks.

Country and interstate visitors were again there in force. Alf Bentley (WA) made it this year, recovered from the operation which kept him from attending in 2002. Another from the West was Jack Stewart. Neville Woodham, John Hunt and Phil Cramsie (Qld) and Noel Grant (Vic) completed the interstate visitors, while from the far North Coast, NSW we saw Kevin Raward, Ken Wilson and Jack Crouch. From the mid-North Coast, Sam Lewis, Doug Shearston and Snowy Dodd, all from Forster. John Hayden came again from Orange, having relinquished his duties as Marshal of that city's march. Following the President's address, we put aside our thoughts of Bill, Toss and the family, as Robbie would have wanted us to do

All then settled down to reduce the large credit Mark and George had arranged with the bar. Someone was heard to say that the pretty waitresses would not have been allowed to move around so freely 40 years ago. Which overlooks the fact they weren't born then - and if they had, they would have thought we were even then a bunch of old blokes. The meal, served piping hot by the aforesaid lissom lassies, was up to the usual high standard. An excellent cup of coffee was available at the bar. Then it was time for yarning. After all these years, the Pioneers still find plenty to talk about. We had a brief visit from a pipe band, which lifted the spirits of some - and blew out a few hearing aids in the process. Then it was time to call it a day (unlike 40 years ago when we would have just been getting started). Some better halves, and other assorted minders joined the group as the reunion finished. So ended another memorable occasion, for which thanks are due to the Committee, the many helpers, and of course the staff of the Occidental for providing a pleasant and enjoyable environment.

### REUNION TABLE TALK

• Harry and Bernard Lamerton, sons of the late Jack, came along to attend their first march and Reunion and voted it a very enlightening experience and enjoyed the company at their table with Ken Oliver, George Walker and son David and grandson Craig. Harry spoke of his trek along the Kokoda Track in 1992 and then for a second time with son Peter in 1994. Harry also had a talk with Stephen Darmody, whose grandfather served in the 1st Pioneer Battalion 1st AIF and Stephen had walked around New Guinea last year.

• Noel Grant of Seaholme, Vic was at the same table as Alf Bentley, Yokine WA, and Jack Stewart, Woodlands, WA who are our longest distance runners but Neville "Bindi" Moane who was in this group said he too was a long distance runner "from overseas" - he lives across the harbour at Curl Curl.

Noel had booked five rooms at the Leagues Club for his family of ten and at his table was son Don, grandson Wayne, son-in-law Frank and grandson-in-law Craig. This would have to be a record family attendance. Their ladies had lunch at the Grace Hotel with Peg Herron.

• Allan McInnes and son Adam were at the President's table with John Hayden, son John, Jack Tooker with son-in-law Robert Cole. Stan Jones was at this table with Steve Clarke who stated he watched the march before coming to the Reunion and said the camera showed up the Leaders Stan Goulston and Allan McInnes well, but was too low on the troops and made it appear as though they were bunched up.

• Bob Ginnane, with son Kim and grandson Adam was at a table with Kevin Raward and Ken Wilson both from Lismore. Also Bert Neasbey with sons Mark, Greg and Rodney and amongst this group was heard there may be another Reunion at Lismore next September.

• Jack Pearce at the young age of 98 years was being looked after by Bill Tasker, son John and grandson Billy. Although Jack was on a walker frame he still moved around to talk with his mates such as Roy Jardine, Perce Penrose and Jack Kerslake - all bowlers, he joined when playing with the Rats of Tobruk Association.

• Gavin Todd was assisted by Bill Lewis in collecting subs for the 2/2nds and stated it was a great day and made all the better by the presence of the young people. He also said it was a great meal served by such obliging girls. This was a great improvement to the days when

the troops had to line up to be served a stew at the Redfern Town Hall.

• Noel Schomberg had his nephew Robert Stubbs at his table and passed on the news that Vi Flynn, widow of Mick, had an operation on her leg and was in plaster at the moment.

• Doug Shearston sat at the workers' table and was in earnest conversation with Tim Lloyd, son of late Jack, about his time in New Guinea with the machine gun battalion before he transferred to the Pioneers. Also at the table were Ray Law, son of late Jim, Geoff Finlay, son of late Gordon, George Granger son of late Bill, David and Chris Herron, son and grandson of Max.

We are grateful to these working sons for their help with flags and banners in the march and in the organisation of the Reunion, not to mention their support of individual members.

• Apart from all the aforementioned relatives we would like to acknowledge the following with their relative in brackets: Gordon Collins (Pat), Phillip Dawson (Ross), John Evans (late Ivor), Jim Fleming (Bill), Nick Fraser, friend of Chris Lewis (Sam), Paul Geronimo, nephew Jack McDonagh, Alan Hemmings (late Snowy), Gary Lewis (Sam), Phillip Maddrell (Clive), Ian Secombe (late Cliff), Luke Zahra (late Joe Hanlon), John Crouch (Jack). Some of these visitors came from the country, including Greg Neasbey from Sussex Inlet and John and Billy Tasker from Canberra.

- Reported by BILL LEWIS

## LAST POST

**BRIAN GUHL** 2/1, of Floreat Park, WA passed away in April and Jack Stewart attended the funeral and signed a sympathy card on behalf of the Pioneers. He also paid a visit to Brian's wife and gave her a sympathy card from the Pioneers. Jack also enclosed a newspaper cutting on the life of Brian which showed he was a very caring family man.

**JACK HOCKING** 2/2, of Chadstone, Vic, passed away on 26th May at the age of 87 years and at the funeral the Eulogy was read by Secretary Col Hamley and the RSL Service was conducted by President Ted Hansen. Jack had been Editor and Treasurer of the Victorian Association for many years. He saw service in Syria and Java where he was captured by the Japanese with the rest of the unit. He was sent to Burma to work on the Burma Railway until he was shipped to Japan in 1944. The Japanese ship was torpedoed by an American submarine and a total of 55 2/2nd Pioneers lost their lives. Jack was one of only eight survivors. He was returned to Australia in September, 1944.

On behalf of the Association, President Ted Hansen extended sincere sympathy to Mrs Hocking and family and we thank Ted for passing on the news.

**ARTHUR WATSON** of Cronulla, who has been our Association Auditor for the past forty years passed away in March. Sympathy has been extended to wife Marie and her family and Arthur will be sadly missed as he was always on hand to offer advice on matters appertaining to Association finances.

**KEVIN MORAHAN** 2/1, of Beverly Hills passed away on 15th June aged 88 years and the funeral on 19th June at Woronora Crematorium was attended by Roy Jardine, Peg & Max Herron and Bill Tasker who conducted the RSL Service. Padre Stan Morton was also in attendance as a representative of the Rats of Tobruk Association of which Kevin had been a regular attender of their meetings.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE APRIL

Send with news to M. Herron  
3 Enoggera Road Beverly Hills 2209

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

There are lots of letters for this issue of Mail Bag with plenty of news from around the country. ANZAC Day activities motivates both Pioneers and their ladies to put pen to paper, for which we are very grateful and certainly makes my job a lot easier. Many thanks also to all those who enclosed subs and donations to keep the News afloat – all very gratefully received.

**FRED ALWAYS** 2/1, Beaumaris Vic., with his apologies for being late with his sub, but has not been in the best of health for some time. At the moment of writing was booked into hospital for prostate surgery and was very confident that all would be well. We certainly hope so, Fred, and that you are now well on the road to recovery. He sends his thanks for the News and still finds it of great interest despite the passing of the years. Many thanks for your sub and our best wishes.

**CYRIL AMIES** 2/1, Forbes, has had a spell in the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital at Wahroonga and his good wife Doris reports that the operation went well and he had now returned home. Trust your doctor's reports are good Cyril and that the coming months are kinder to you healthwise. All the best to you both and a thank you to Doris for the news.

**DORA ANDERSON**, Merimbula, widow of Don 2/1, with a generous donation to funds and her subs. A long, newsy letter off her "doings" over the last few months, beginning in December with a trip to Sydney for the war widows' Christmas party at the Wentworth Hotel, a lovely occasion and a superb luncheon. Dora and several other widows also stayed at Manly for a week and really enjoyed their stay. Plenty of ferry trips and excursions to places of interest around Sydney, especially The Rocks area, but glad to get home.

Healthwise you've certainly not had a good year Dora, two cataract operations, three skin grafts for melanomas and your trip to Melbourne for an operation, quite enough for one year. Hope you are lots better and able to get back to golf and your other activities.

**PHIL BARNETT** 2/2, Alstonville, with a short note enclosing his sub and a donation to funds. Both he and his wife look forward to receiving the News which is always interesting reading. He sends his best wishes to all and our thanks for your sub.

**ALBERT BARTON** 2/1, Gulgong, with a welcome note enclosing his sub and a donation, for which many thanks. While sitting writing his letter, Alby was watching TV and the attack on Iraq and said it brought back many memories of past experiences – but what a different style of warfare. Jack Bertram's graphic report in last issue brought back vivid memories of the days in the desert in North Africa and made him think of so many incidents in which the 2/1sts were involved.

Alby is still working one morning per week in the local museum and tells of a project he was involved in for a Gulgong lass who won a trip to Gallipoli for ANZAC Day. She wanted something to present to the museum over there, so he photocopied and laminated a photo of three brothers from Gulgong who joined the Light Horse, fought on Gallipoli and were all killed there – what a sacrifice from one family. The original photo of the three "Watt" brothers hangs in the museum in Gulgong.

He and Gwen are gradually taking things easy – potter and do their chores in the mornings then rest in the afternoon. His legs are not the best and has to take things easy on doctor's orders.

All the best to you both and your kind wishes passed on to the "boys". Good to hear from you.

**MAVIS BLANCH**, Beaudesert Qld., widow of Joe 2/1, with news of another trip away, this time to lovely Norfolk Island with her Probus Club members. (Certainly get around Mavis, have to re-name you the "Merry Widow"). As you say, a beautiful spot and so peaceful – we had ten days there several years ago and really enjoyed our stay. Hope your April trip on the old Cobb and Coach tour to Surat was all that you hoped it would be.

Joe's brother Cecil, 2/1 from Kyogle.

celebrated his 90th birthday in January and a surprise party was held for "rellies" and friends. All had a great day and Mavis says he still walks a mile or more every day and never looks any older.

Do hope your eye problems have cleared up Mavis and the eye specialist is happy with latest results. Keep well and every good wish from your friends down south.

**EVELYN BOOTH**, Wagga Wagga, long-time friend of the late Jack Morgan 2/2, with a welcome sub and her best wishes passed on to all Pioneers. Says her promised trip to the Top End was a great event and something she had wanted to do for ages. Was hoping this year to do a trip to the Gulf country and Cairns. Good to see you can still get around. Ev. and nice to hear from you again. All the best.

**AUB BRASIER**, Dee Why, our long-time bugler for ANZAC Eve, with a letter of thanks for the latest News and to say how he enjoyed reading the article of the trip to the Middle East and Gallipoli by Jack Bertram in last issue. Aub's father was in the Light Horse in Mesopotamia in World War I, so was very interested. Good to see you again Aub and best wishes to Nancy and yourself.

**RAY BURROUGHS** 2/2, Cook, ACT, with his best wishes to all Pioneers and a cheque for worthy treasurer. He passes on his thanks to all who keep the News afloat and looks forward to hearing the news of former army mates. Thanks for the sub Ray and your good wishes.

**RON COYTE** 2/1, Wentworthville, enclosing a cheque for the News and his thanks to all who put time and effort into its production.

Sorry to hear of the passing of your son, David, early this year, Ron, and our sympathy in your sad loss. Ron's daughter was killed by a truck running a red light in 1985, so he has had his full share of problems over the years. However, on the brighter side, his grand-daughter is being married in Port Douglas in September and Ron and his wife are off there for a couple of weeks. Hope you have a wonderful holiday and we wish you all the best.

**ALBY DEAN** 2/1, Shepparton, Vic., with his thanks for the News and a welcome donation to funds. Had a boost to his ego lately when one of the local papers asked him to appear in their ANZAC Day feature. Took a photo of him and a young bugler in front of their local memorial, with a short ceremony of Alby's war history. All the best and many thanks for the sub.

**WINN DWYER**, Waverley, widow of Mick 2/1, with a short note enclosing a cheque for the News.

Winn mentions she still sees Frank and Beryl Gillian and talks on the phone occasionally to Rita Trefoni. She has not seen anything of Joyce Law or Bill and Win Tasker, but sends them all her warm wishes. The men were all good mates in the 2/1sts. Winn wished all Pioneers a great ANZAC Day march and reunion. Thanks for the sub Winn.

**TOM DUNSTAN** 2/2, Eudunda S.A., with a very short note saying he enjoyed the News and enclosed his subscription. Sorry I can't make any news out of that Tom, but many thanks for your cheque. Maybe a longer note next time.

**BILLIE DYNON**, Toronto, widow of Frank 2/1, apologising for the writing. She still looks forward to the News and says that age prevents her from joining in some of the Pioneer activities. Many thanks for your cheque. Billie, and for your good wishes. Do keep well and our thanks for your kind words of praise for those who keep the News alive.

**PAT EGAN** 2/2, Queanbeyan, enclosing his dues and apologies for his non-attendance on ANZAC Day due to a recent spell in hospital. All going well, he hopes to be on deck next year. Sends his best wishes to all. Thanks for the sub. Pat, and hope you are fully recovered.

**NORMA FITCH**, Calwell A.C.T., widow of Harold 2/1, with her thanks for the Pioneer News and our best wishes re the disastrous fires in Canberra.

Norma says it was a night of horror, one she will never forget. Her daughter stayed with her and her son-in-law looked after their own home. Luckily both escaped any damage. Good news. Norma, and many thanks for your good wishes for the "boys" for ANZAC Day. Keep well and all the best.

**BILL FLEMING** 2/1, Mittagong, per pen of good wife Maureen, with subs enclosed for Bill.

Many thanks. Maureen says Bill has been in and out of hospital this year with a knee reconstruction that also picked up an infection, then another trip with pneumonia, so has not been a good start to 2003.

Bill missed the local Dawn Service for the first time, however managed to catch a glimpse of son Jim on TV marching with 2/1sts in the Sydney parade.

Since the closure of the South Coast Branch of the RATS, Bill and Maureen have kept in touch with quite a lot of the ex-members and meet occasionally for lunch. One of the ladies, Dulcie Webb, brought along an album of photos from the recent tour of the battlefields of Gallipoli, Tobruk and Alamein which was most interesting. They also both enjoyed the wonderful description of the trip written by Jack Bertram in the April issue of the News.

Thank you for your kind remarks on the publication of the News and we hope that the rest of the year will be kinder to Bill, healthwise. Best wishes to you both.

**VERA COOK**, Randwick, widow of Clem 2/1, with a note of thanks for the News and a donation to funds. Vera enjoys reading same and still sees a name now and again that she remembers Clem speaking of – not too many now as time marches on. (Clem would have been 81 this year). She has very happy memories of their 52 wonderful years together.

Hope your broken hand has fully recovered, Vera, and that your holiday down south has recharged the batteries. Always good to hear from you and best wishes from both of us.

**AVELINE GAMBLE**, Chermiside, Qld., widow of Bill 2/1, with a welcome letter and sub for the News. Many thanks. She mentions she was very appreciative of Jack Bertram's article on his tour of the Battlefields of Gallipoli and North Africa, especially as both she and Bill had many relations involved in both wars. Also said it was not everyone who gets to tap the Duke of Edinburgh on the shoulder – and lives. How true.

Since Bill's passing, Aveline had made enquiries at the Army Medals Section and found that Bill had become eligible for the 39/45 Star and according to army records was also eligible for the Australian Service Medal 1945/1975 with S.W. Pacific Clasp – both of which she has received. These have been worn with pride by two grand-daughters at school services, one in Coffs Harbour and one on the Sunshine Coast.

Always nice to hear from you, Aveline, and we send you our best wishes and thanks for your letter.

**FRANK GILLIAN** 2/1, Maroubra, with apologies for his absence on ANZAC Day and enclosing a cheque for the treasurer. He had a few days in hospital and wasn't feeling the best. (Did not hear you when I arrived later in the afternoon).

Frank keeps in touch with Danny Sprouster 2/1 quite a lot and Beryl hears from Winn Dwyer every week to catch up on her news.

He sends best wishes to all 2/1sts and we hope by now you are feeling a lot better and over your health problems. Kindest regards to both you and Beryl and many thanks for the sub. Hope to see you on deck next year.

**CLIVE HARRIS** 2/1, Aberdeen, with a note of thanks for the News and a cheque to defray expenses incurred. Many thanks. Last year wasn't the best that he has had, but at the present time battling on. Clive has not seen any of the old crowd of late, but then does not venture too far from home these days.

They have had some good rain lately after some very dry conditions, so have a lot to be thankful for.

Sends his very best wishes to all and his thanks for the News which he looks forward to reading.

**RUSS HARRISON** 2/2, Stirling, S.A., with his best wishes to all for ANZAC Day and how they were looking forward to their big day in Adelaide. Hope all went well Russ. Good to see you and Rona again at Bill Robertson's funeral, along with Allan Olson, despite the circumstances and the atrocious weather. We heard you had a long delay at Mascot before your trip home. Best wishes to you both and thanks for the sub to the News.

**ANN HEALEY**, Semaphore, S.A., daughter of the late Jim Hall 2/1 of Kyogle, with a welcome donation towards expenses for the News. Ann and husband David have settled in well in S.A.

and going to Canada in June for two months. Tells that sister Margaret is in East Timor using her Indonesian language skills to gather information for the trials against humanity. We hope she and her family are all well, as we have had no word from Kyogle regarding them over the last year.

Hope you both have a good trip and it was nice to hear from you again. Love and best wishes.

**JOHN HAYDEN** 2/1, Orange, once again per pen of good wife Wyn. (What would you do without her, John, I think she deserves an increase in pay). Sorry I was unable to contact you while in Sydney, but I believe both John and John Jnr. had a great day on ANZAC Day, both at the march and reunion catching up on old friends. Time is marching on though and so many old mates are finding it hard to make the reunion – let alone the March – even if the spirit is willing.

Do hope your problems with the shingles and the result of your bad fall are over and your cataract operation quite successful. You've certainly had a bad trot the last 12 months and now the cold weather in your part of the country to contend with.

Always good to hear from you and trust both you and John are well at the moment and enjoying the latest addition to your family – a great-granddaughter. Love and best wishes to all.

**ALF HOLLOWAY** 2/1, Grafton, with a short note enclosing a sub for the News and some kind words to Max and myself for the work we do on behalf of the Association. Your kind thoughts are very much appreciated. Has no news from his part of the country other than that healthwise he's still battling on, which is good to hear. All the best and many thanks for the sub.

**HAZEL JOHNS**, Villawood, widow of George 2/1, with a donation for the News and that she appreciates receiving it and catching up on the names she remembers. She doesn't get out much these days due to leg problems, but is lucky to have six delightful great-grandchildren who come to visit. I am sure they are a source of great pleasure to you.

Thank you for the donation Hazel and our best wishes to you.

**MOLLIE-JEAN HUNT**, New Farm, Qld., wife of John 2/1, with a call to say she had visited Nell Laughren in her villa at Boronia Heights (Nell is the widow of Pat Laughren 2/1) and found her quite well. We have had no word of Nell for such a long time and when Mollie and John were down for ANZAC Day they offered to pay Nell a visit when they returned home. Many thanks to you both and good to hear the renovations to your unit have gone well. All the best.

**BILL JOLLIE** 2/1, Castle Hill, with a very generous donation to funds and his best wishes to all for ANZAC Day and his apologies for his non-attendance due to bad legs and back problems. Quite a few on the sick list this year. Bill, age is fast catching up, even though the spirit is still willing. All the best and many thanks for the subs.

**MAISIE KEMPNIH**, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with donation to the News per courtesy of daughter Lenore Robson from Bolton Point. Many thanks, Mais, and hope you have settled in well in your new surroundings. Miss your friendly letters and hope to meet up again in the not too distant future. Love from all your friends down south.

**GORDON KILLION**, R.A.A.F., Ballina, with a cheque to cover his subs to the News, for which many thanks. He had recently met up with Ken Wilson 2/2 and wife Ida at Ballina RSL Club and they were both well. All the best.

**DAWN LEVY**, Revesby, widow of Roy 2/2, with a note and her subs for the News. Good to hear you are well and I'm sure that you still miss Roy very much – especially after all the problems you had to cope with before he passed away. We too both miss his friendly phone calls and visits – a good friend. Keep well and will be in touch.

**ERNIE LUNN** 2/2, Dubbo, with a couple of letters since last Mail Bag and an enclosure of a sub for the News. Since his stroke in October last year, Ernie is progressing slowly and is back at bowls so says he can't complain. However, he has had to give up his driver's licence and not very happy about that.

You mentioned a J. Barry of C Coy 2/2 who passed away in October last year. Ern. would that be Peter Barry 2/2 of Floreat Park in W.A. who died in September last of lung cancer. We had

him on our mailing list and have kept his wife Dawn on our list for future issues. He was the only Barry 2/2 we had, and his passing was listed under Last Post in our April issue.

Sorry to hear Norma is not well and our kindest regards are passed on to her. I, personally, owe her a letter, but have had quite a few health problems the last months and my letter writing has been badly neglected. All the best to you both and hope you continue to improve.

**PAT MACFARLANE**, Blacktown, widow of Ron 2/1, with a brief note enclosing her subs. Thanks, Pat and hope you are keeping well. All the best.

**JOYCE MCGREGOR**, Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, with a donation to funds and her very best wishes to all Pioneers for a great ANZAC Day. She was sorry she could not make it, but daughters Jill and Linda both marched in memory of their Dad. (Caught sight of them in the march, but went by so quickly). My love to both and hope to meet up one day.

Joyce was so pleased to read Jack Bertram's trip to Gallipoli and Tobruk in last issue – says it was a great article and very well written. (Congratulations Jack on a job well done).

Do keep well, Joyce, and keep in touch.

**MARION MCGREGOR**, Rothbury, widow of Roy 2/2, with a letter of thanks to Max for literature he sent her on the 2/2nds, for which she was very grateful. I'm sure your family would enjoy reading it, Marion, as a lot of our men did not talk to their families about their wartime experiences. Thank you for your donation to funds and Max has kept you on the mailing list for future copies of the News. All the best and keep well.

**BILL MURPHY** Blakehurst, son of late Pat 2/1, with a donation on behalf of his mother Colleen, for which many thanks. Hope all are well. Bill, and our very best wishes.

**JACK PAINTER** 2/1, Narrandera, with a very generous donation to funds for which many thanks. Jack says now he is on his own he is no letter writer, so do not give up on him just yet. No chance of that. Jack, it will be a good many years until your donation runs out.

He had his son and daughter home for a few days over Christmas and was so pleased to see them. His son is headmaster at Corowa School and his daughter has her own business on the Central Coast.

They have had some good rains locally, but like lots of other places are hoping for more. The country around was very dry.

In regard to the Borneo medal you spoke of, it is known as the Dutch Cross and can be obtained from Christies, 248 Pitt Street, Sydney – (02) 9264 6751 and the latest price we had was \$23.60 (but could be dearer). It is not an official medal. Jack, so is up to the individual if they wish to wear one.

**MARIE PARSONS**, North Haven, wife of Wal 2/1, with the news that Wal suffered a stroke last year and is still in Port Macquarie Private Hospital at time of writing (no date on your letter Marie) awaiting a bed in Lakeside Nursing Home in Laurieton.

He is being very well cared for as he can no longer do anything for himself. Marie takes in his mail, including his Pioneer News, and puts a smile on his face by reading to him.

Some time back Wal joined the North Coast RATS and they have spent some very enjoyable reunions at Nambucca Heads with the group, but unfortunately that is now all past history, but lots of happy memories. Wal and Marie were also able to join the Pioneers at their Gosford and Lismore reunions in past years.

Thank you for passing on the News, Marie, and Max personally sends his very best wishes from one old sig to another. Hope by now you have been able to get a bed for Wal nearer to home. Our very best wishes to you both and keep in touch.

**JOHN PAUL** 2/1, Camira, Qld., with a donation to funds and a book of stamps, for which many thanks. Has no news to report, but keeps in touch with Les and Lesley Tunks in Mareeba once a month to talk over their problems. John's right knee is giving him problems and looks like it might need surgery soon. Says it's wearing out, like him!!

Sends his best wishes to all and hopes all Pioneers had a successful ANZAC Day and reunion. All the best, John, try and keep well.

**BOB PHILPOTTS** 2/2, Woodena, Vic., with a cheque to help with the good work of the Association, for which many thanks. Bob recently (letter dated March) attended the funeral service for Colin Sprague 2/2, in Bendigo and Fred Barnstable 2/2 also attended, per favour of his son Terry. The Bendigo RSL officiated and made Bob's day when he likened the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion to what the SAS is today.

Bob sends his best regards to all.

**DOT PRIEST**, Ballina, wife of Peter 2/1, with a donation to funds – and two letters. Yes, you had mailed two copies of your letter. Dot, one in May and another in June, with the postal note enclosed in the May letter. However, all is well – just put it down to age. Sorry neither of you could make the planned trip to Sydney, but maybe better luck next year. Hope Peter is now feeling OK. Take care and very best wishes to both.

**JACK PURCELL** 2/1, Coffs Harbour, had been in hospital in Brisbane for an amputation of his left leg due to cancer and we received news of this fact from his daughter Theresa Goodman. Jack was to be moved to Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital in Brisbane and we rang John and Mollie-Jean Hunt to see if they could make contact. Believe they spoke to Theresa only to find Jack had returned home to Coffs Harbour. We have no further news in this regard. (Jack was formerly of Leeton and Inverell). Trust all is going well and our best wishes for a return to good health. Thank you to Theresa for sending us the news of her dad.

**LINDA SAUNDERS**, Scone, widow of Ross 2/1, with a short note and enclosure of cheque for the News. Linda says she still enjoys reading news of former mates of Ross and sends her thanks for keeping her in touch. Trust you are keeping well and many thanks for your donation to funds.

**BOB SEFTON** 2/2, Safety Bay, W.A., with, in his own words, more news than he has written since 1991. (Good effort, Bob, don't leave it so long next time).

Over the past few years he has managed to keep in touch with two ex-2/2nds – Jack Hore-Lacy of Moss Vale and Lionel Fullarton of Orbst. Many years ago called to see Lionel, a visit enjoyed by Bob and his wife, but did not manage the trip into NSW to see Jack. We hear from both from time to time as you will have seen from previous issues of the News.

In his letter, Bob advises of the passing in January this year of ex-2/2 Sydney Robert Mathews. He was an ex-WXer whom he believes joined the reformed unit at Bellevue in W.A. in 1942. A member of the mortar platoon, he served with Punchy Hanson on Tarakan. (Bob said he was also his mentor at the swy game when Bob first joined the unit).

Thanks for the donation, Bob, and best wishes.

**DOUG SHEARSTON** 2/1, Forster, and his wife Roma have recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary and made the news in their local newspaper. Long-time residents of Beverly Hills before their move to Forster, they have been personal friends of Max and I since the end of the war. Doug was also treasurer of the Association for many years and both were sadly missed when they moved up North. All Pioneers and friends wish you both every happiness and many more wonderful years together.

**GIL SHORT** 2/2, Caringbah, per wife Ivy, with the news that Gil had been in Hospital but was at present at home and going to a heart and lung programme at the hospital. Do hope the treatment has been successful. Ivy, and best wishes are passed on from former mates of 2/2. Many thanks for the donation to funds.

**RAY SMITH** 2/1, Glen Iris, Vic., with a short note apologising for lateness of sub, but he and his wife had been on an extended holiday at their beach house enjoying the beach and swimming (Sure beats sitting writing letters, Ray). Thank you for the cheque and your kind words to all those who keep the Association afloat.

**HARRY SPREDBOROUGH** 2/1, Alexandra Hills, Qld., with news from north of the border of doings around ANZAC Day. Harry has been involved for several years visiting local schools in his area talking to the children on wartime experiences and what ANZAC Day means to the youth of today. He tells that they have managed to interest some of the Vietnam Veterans in joining them, as many of the older men are getting too old for the job. Says the Viet "lads"



were quite happy to go with them and the students were pleased to hear two different stories.

Their ANZAC Day at Redlands was a bit damp, they had a heavy shower just before the parade moved off, but all went well in the end. He doesn't march any more as his legs no longer keep pace, but, he takes advantage of a seat in a jeep if one is available.

Harry sends his thanks for the News as it's always good to hear what is happening down south. Says it's a long time since those days in the desert of North Africa and he still likes to wear his Association badge when he gets the chance.

Good to hear from you, Harry, and we send our best wishes to both Jean and yourself for continued good health.

**DANNY SPROUSTER** 2/1. Dundas, with his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day due to ill-health, but enclosed a donation to the News with his brief note. Hope things have improved for you now, Danny, and thanks for the sub.

**JOHN TREVETHICK** 2/1. Lane Cove, with a cheque for dues and an article for Max on the Association banners of both 2/1 and 2/2. (This has been dealt with by Max in a separate article). Many thanks for your donation and for the kind words on our efforts on behalf of the Association. They were very much appreciated.

**LES TUNKS** 2/1. Mareeba, with a couple of letters since last issue and newspaper cuttings from their local newspapers in reference to Rocky Creek Memorial Park and the refurbishment of the memorial markers on the Tablelands. Over the years some of the markers have deteriorated and a grant was obtained from Veteran Affairs to refurbish the signs as a community project. Quite a lot of work has been done on the Rocky Creek site and Les says it has become quite a show place.

Many thanks for the cuttings. Les, the donation to funds and the stamps, and I hope both Lesley and yourself are keeping as well as can be expected. It's always good to hear from you. Trust you enjoyed your local ANZAC Day, even if you weren't up to the march.

**DICK WAKELY** 2/2. Waratah, with a very short note enclosing his sub and the news that he was recuperating from a bout of pneumonia – and doesn't recommend it. Trust you have fully recovered, Dick, and your best wishes passed on to all Pioneers. Many thanks for the donation to funds.

**DOUG WATERS** 2/1. West Croydon, S.A., per pen of wife Maureen, enclosing sub. for which many thanks. Glad you are both well and that Doug still enjoys reading the News and sends his best wishes to all. He keeps busy in his garage making toys – always good to have a hobby. Trust you enjoyed your ANZAC Day in Adelaide. Doug, with the combined Pioneer Association. Our kindest regards to you both.

**RON WEBSTER** 2/1. Bass Hill, with a very welcome Easter card to both Max and I and we thank you Ron for your kind thought. Trust you and family are well and send you all our best wishes.

**JOYCE WESTWOOD**, Bradbury, widow of Jack 2/2, with a sub to the News which she enjoys reading. Many thanks. Joyce has now joined War Widows and Legacy and finds them both very enjoyable and has made a number of new friends with similar interests. Good to hear, Joyce, and hope you will continue to keep in touch. All the best.

**NEIL WHITELEY**, Terara, son of the late Vic Whiteley 2/1, with a generous donation to funds and apologies for having missed the last two ANZAC Days because of work commitments, but hoped to be on deck this year. However, prior to ANZAC Day rang to say he was unable to make it. (Neil is an engineer on a ship and can be at sea when these special days are on the calendar). Sorry you couldn't make it. Neil, perhaps better luck next year. Many thanks for the sub and our best wishes.

**KEITH PROSSER** 2/1. Cranbrook, W.A., with his sub enclosed and a card to be re-addressed to Ernie Lunn 2/2 in Dubbo. This was duly sent on, Keith, and latest reports from Ernie shows he is much improved. (See letter this Mail Bag). Thanks for your donation and kindest regards.

• That's the end of the Mail Bag for this issue and I thank all those who made time and effort to keep us up to date on your doings over the last months. Several ladies of the Association

enjoyed a lovely luncheon at the Grace Hotel after the march on ANZAC Day and it was good to see so many of them able to come along and enjoy the day. We were joined by ladies from Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. Hopefully we may make it again next year. My love and best wishes to all.

## THE PIONEER BANNERS

BY JOHN TREVETHICK, Secretary 1946

In the early post-war years, the units did not have banners, as on ANZAC Day they carried a cardboard sign on a pole with the units' title supplied by the RSL.

In the late 1940's, however, approval was granted for banners to be designed and paid for by the individual units.

At the Committee meeting held on 26th January, 1950, presided over by ex C.O. Geoff Graham the following motion was approved:

"Arrangements be made for the manufacture of two banners for the use of 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneers. Each unit to have campaign honours as applicable to the unit, attached to the banner.

Each banner at a cost of approximately £14. Moved by D. Walker and seconded by E. Face, that this matter be left in the hands of John Trevethick."

After several trips to the Public Library in Macquarie Street, it was decided the shape of the banners to be the Heraldic Shield type, most favoured by British units, both for its historical significance and it could be carried by one person.

The banners to be purple, the official army colour for engineers, to signify that element in our dual role as Infantry and Engineers. An enlargement of the unit badge plus unit number and title, with campaign honours were superimposed in white on the shield. In the early years they were termed campaign honours, as the term "Battle Honours" was not formulated until about 1960.

Over the years the original banners became worn and damaged which necessitated removing all the lettering, renewing the purple cloth and then sewing back the white lettering. This was carried out in 1962 by Laura Westwood, wife of Joe who was the then Social Secretary, and Peg Herron, wife of Secretary.

The original banners were made by the late Connie Lester of Double Bay, at no charge. She was a friend of John and Cyril Morahan who were both on the Committee of the Association.

The 2/2 Pioneers in Victoria, in early years, had formed their own 2/2 Pioneer Bn Assoc. under Clayton Davis and had their own separate banner, whereas in NSW the two units came together to form the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn Assoc. in 1946, which made for easier administration and lower costs. Both branches, over the years have had their own newsletters, but have kept in touch with one another through the two Secretaries.

Because of high numbers, in NSW the two units had separate venues for the Anzac Day Reunions until 1976 when they came together and held a combined Reunion at the Redfern Town Hall of 170 members.

Then in 1994 they moved to the Occidental Hotel in York Street, with an attendance of 104 but now down to fifty two members combined plus twenty two relations. At these combined Reunions both banners have been proudly and prominently displayed alongside one another.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Many thanks for your most interesting article John – we feel sure it will bring back memories to our members who, like me, would not know the work and research that went into producing the two famous banners.*

## SICK PARADE

**GEORGE WALKER** 2/1 was in Liverpool Hospital on 26th April with a heart problem. He went home for a while but was back in hospital for a pacemaker implant in May at Liverpool Hospital where he was visited by Peg & Max Herron.

**WALLY COE** 2/2 of Summer Hill was in Wyoming Nursing Home at Summer Hill, recuperating after having a leg amputated when in Concord Hospital. He had been visited by Don Crawford and Bill Tasker.

## VALE BILL ROBERTSON OAM

On 8th May, Bill Robertson OAM, 2/2 of Randwick passed away in St Vincents Hospital at the age of 97 years. He had been in hospital for three weeks and most of the time he was not conscious.

The funeral on 13th May at the Eastern Suburbs Crematorium was packed with people from all walks of life who had been associated with Bill over many years.

Pioneers in attendance at the funeral were Allan Olson and Russ and Rona Harrison who had flown over from Adelaide for the day, Snowy Dodd with daughter from Forster, Don/Val Crawford, Gavin Todd, Roy Jardine, Jack/Barbara Allison, Allan McInnes, Bob/Neil Ginnane and son and Max/Peg Herron.

The minister called upon Bill's granddaughter to speak on Bill's family life and then called on President Allan McInnes to deliver the Eulogy on Bill's military service which he carried out as follows:

"Bill enlisted in May, 1940 and was posted to the 2/1 Pioneer Battalion and after training at Greta and Dubbo camps sailed with the unit to the Middle East and served in the seven month Siege of Tobruk.

On return to Australia in 1942 he was seconded to the newly formed 2/2 Pioneer Battalion, whose original members had been captured in the fall of Java. During the 1943 New Guinea campaign as a Captain he was O.C. of "D" Coy and took part in the Lae campaign including Nadzab, Tsili Tsili and Shaggy Ridge.

In 1945 he was appointed Major-Beach Commander for the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion when they landed at Tarakan and in the final campaign at Balikpapan, Borneo.

Since the war, Bill has been a staunch Committee member since 1948 and served in an Executive position as Vice-President for many years and in recent times as Co-Patron. In 1943 Bill was made a Life Member for his outstanding service to the Association. He has not missed an Anzac Day March and Reunion Dinner and has attended many Country Reunions conducted by the Association.

In April, 1998, Bill was awarded the Order of Australia Medal after being nominated by the Clovelly RSL Sub-Branch (which he joined in 1951) because of his dedication to the Branch where he served in numerous roles as President, Pensions and Welfare Officer and delegate to the NSW State Congress.

Bill was a keen member of the Rats of Tobruk Association and each year attended the Tobruk Sunday Service at the Five Dock Bowling Club.

President Allan concluded the Eulogy by saying we thank God for the life of our friend and our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife Toss and her family. He will be sadly missed by all.

## PIONEER NEWS POSTING

Members will have noticed that the Pioneer News April issue was contained in an envelope for the first time ever, as previously it had been in a wrapper.

This came about because the Secretary reported the addressograph stencils used to produce the addresses on to wrappers had worn out after 50 years of use and the system needed updating. At the November meeting Don Crawford proposed that quotes be obtained for the printing of the Associations' details on to envelopes and for the addressing of 500 envelopes. After numerous quotes he chose one from Mailroom Express of Regents Park.

The envelopes were printed, addressed, post coded and bar coded and cost wise the new system came out in front, but the big factor was the time saved – old system took thirty hours to prepare and five hours to wrap – new system one hour to prepare and one hour to insert the news into the envelopes. Also posting time faster than ever.

At the March meeting the Secretary thanked Don Crawford for his effort and also thanked Peg Herron for the typing of roll from the card system and extended thanks to Don's daughter, Sandra Bowmer for her typing of the roll on to the computer for dispatch by the internet to Mailroom Express.



# PIONEER NEWS

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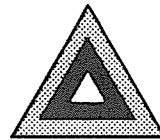
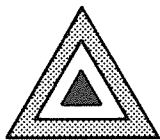
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Welfare: BILL TASKER, Phone 9718 6658



## V.P. COMMEMORATION SERVICE

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway at Concord NSW was again the venue on 15th August for holding the memorial service to commemorate Victory in the Pacific and the conclusion of World War II. The Walkway is now looked upon as a memorial to all ex-servicemen, so it was pleasing to see representatives from both 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneer Battalions in attendance.

Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir A.C., Governor of N.S.W., was the guest speaker and the Master of Ceremonies, John Gatfield, handled the programme of events with precision. Present was an excellent attendance of veterans, wearing their medals, accompanied by families and friends who were all comfortably seated in the marquee shelters.

This year the 60th anniversary of the "Battle of the Beaches" was especially honoured. The north Papuan coast was to see some of the fiercest fighting, which resulted in the eventual defeat of the Japanese in the Papuan campaign and their expulsion from the areas centred on Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

The welcome address was delivered by Rusty Priest A.M. Chairman of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Committee. In his usual exuberant way, he particularly mentioned the wonderful young Australians who, under the outstanding leaderships of Lt.-Col. Honor 39th Infantry Battalion, were the first troops to come in contact with the Japanese forces.

### ADDRESS BY GOVERNOR

Her Excellency gave the official address and mentioned the amazing contribution by such a large enlistment of Australians to the war and the sad loss of lives in many conflicts. She gave special thought to the valiant young Australians forcing the Japanese to retreat to the beaches, which marked the end of Japanese intentions to seek with his Kokoda campaign, a direct action to Australia. She quoted General Sir William Slim, Governor General of Australia in the mid 1950's when he said "The forces from Australia were the first to stop the Japanese attackers". She hoped these stories are brought to the attention of our young people.

In concluding her address, Her Excellency said it was a great privilege to participate at this beautiful Walkway, which is an amazing contribution in remembrance to our outstanding young forces and particularly in memory of those who were lost.

### GUARD OF HONOUR

Members of the 233rd Regional Cadet Unit, St George, supplied the Guard of Honour to welcome the official party and provide the Catafalque Party. The occasion was ably supported by the NSW Corrective Services Band and Pipes and Drums Royal NSW Regiment who not only supplied music for the two hymns and the National Anthem but rendered a most enjoyable programme of ceremonial music, including a well received rendition of "Highland Cathedral". Six clergymen were in attendance and recited special prayers selected for the occasion. A new innovation this year occurred when the scripture reading was delivered by Eleana Talamara, a scholar from Concord High School, which was a great idea to call on the young folk to participate.

A Kokoda veteran, Lloyd Birdsall of 14th Aust Field Regiment was called on to recite the Ode of Remembrance. I met him later and

when I told him my unit being 2/1 Pioneers he said "It was your mob that man-handled our 25 pounder guns up the track". Refer page 102 of our book "The Pioneers", especially the letter from the C.O. of the artillery regiment to our Colonel Arnold Brown.

Director of Kokoda Track Committee, Ian McManus concluded proceedings with a word of thanks to all personnel and groups for their participation in making this service such a great success. He especially mentioned Alice Kang, who has been Hon. Secretary of the Walkway, right from the start of this venture, which was conceived by Alan Kincade who at that time was General Manager of Concord Repatriation Hospital. That was in 1995 and he asked one of his nursing sisters Alice Kang to take on the secretary's job, which she has carried out ever since.

Everyone was then invited to the excellent afternoon tea which had been prepared and presented by staff from Concord Hospital. The following Pioneers were present for this service:- Jack and Marj Kerslake, Max and Peg Herron, Don and Val Crawford, Ern and Beth Walker and daughter, Joyce Law, Rita Trefoni, Bill Tasker, Jack Allison, Roy Jardine, Perc Penrose, Steve Clarke, Rae Kean and Jean Stafford.

### WALKWAY NEWS REPORT

The walkway is developing very well and shows that the initial planning was sound. Different groups help keep the Memorial in a beautiful condition. One key support group is from the Corrective Services and the detainees apparently enjoy having a meaningful role whilst doing community work. Over the last year a surge in the dedication of plaques in the Rose Garden has taken place resulting in all available spaces in the garden wall now being filled. Alternative areas will become available.

There has been a lot of work done in the last two years on the Kokoda Website and has established valuable links to other relative sites such as the Australian War Memorial, Dept of Veteran Affairs and National Archives. School children are catered for and grand children of members who have these facilities would find all the information fascinating and helpful educationally. Website address is:- [www.kokodawalkway.com.au](http://www.kokodawalkway.com.au)

Reported by STEVE CLARKE

## SOUTH AUST. PIONEERS

Although our marching numbers decrease each year, our Reunion on Anzac Day, held at the Duke of York Hotel, was well attended by nearly sixty members consisting of wives, sons, daughters and next of kin. We had a most enjoyable lunch, plenty of the amber liquid and a good old ear bash.

Those in attendance were Russ & Rona Harrison and daughter Kate, Frank Maher, Joe Robertson, Bruce Scott, Doug Waters, George Sauer and Allan Olson representing the 2/1sts and 2/2nds. Kindest regards to all Pioneers from 2/1 - 2/2 Pioneers in S.A.

Reported by ALLAN OLSON, President

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2003

*The following is the report by the President Allan McInnes to the General/Annual Meeting on Friday 25th July at Redfern RSL Club.*

I am privileged to be presenting my report at the end of a very satisfactory twelve months. I consider our Association to be number one, even though there are many other good Associations, we have stood tall for over fifty years.

Our success has been based on comradeship, enterprise, tolerance and understanding and the Association's aim is and has always been to inspire the living and honour the dead - "Lest We Forget".

I have worked with a committee and Executive whose one aim is that we are there for the good of all our members. Our association meetings never rubber stamp motions and, after discussion, the right decision is always made. How lucky we are that our Executive of Peg and Max Herron, Don Crawford and Bill Tasker all give of their time on our behalf. Time is, and always will be, a very valuable commodity.

The "Pioneer News" is distributed to members far and wide, and the only way this happens is because Peg and Max put in many hours. Peg is doing a sterling job as she handles all the letters received and no doubt she feels she knows the writers from their letters. Apart from his secretarial duties Max does the layout for the "News", takes it to the printer collects the proofs and after checking same it is returned and then the paper is printed. It is then placed in envelopes for posting by the team consisting of Marj and Jack Kerslake, Val and Don Crawford and Peg and Max.

Don Crawford stepped in when we urgently needed a treasurer and apart from this valuable position, Don works very closely with Max and is always ready to assist. These Executives are V.I.P. which includes Bill Tasker whose portfolio of welfare has been very important and his visits to the sick at home or in hospital are appreciated. Funeral attendance is very important and Bill always steps in if the RSL is unavailable and conducts the Poppy service.

Anzac Day and Anzac Eve were most successful this year. The wreath laying service at the Cenotaph on April 24th was very well attended by Pioneers, wives and widows. Anzac Day march was down in numbers by both units which is natural as so many of us have disabilities which don't improve at our age but I know as many as possible will continue to march. A very important change was to have the 2/2nds march directly behind the 2/1sts for the second year. All members at the reunion agreed it was a valuable move.

Our Reunion at the Occidental Hotel was most successful which was made possible by Don and Max contacting function manager Paulette West and organising the food, beer and getting the best prices. The Occidental Hotel is as close to perfect as one could wish for and we thank Bill Jollie, past President, for finding this venue.

We are sorry you could not make it this year Bill and we do appreciate all the work you have put into the Association.

We have lost two very valuable committee members this year namely Bill Robertson, Patron and George Walker, Assistant Secretary, "Lest We Forget".

Thank you Pioneers for having elected me and may 2003 - 4 be as good as last year

— ALLAN McINNES

# MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The last Mail Bag for the year and rather a shortage of letters over the last few months. However, still quite a lot of news from around the country and we are grateful to all those Pioneers and their widows who have sent donations and "doings" from far and wide. With age fast catching up, the news is not always good, but most still manage to write a few lines to keep in touch.

**SID BOOTH** 2/2, Minyama Qld., with the news that both he and Jean are still battling on and send their regards and thanks to all those they met at the last Lismore reunion. They look forward to the News and Sid enclosed a donation towards its cost. Many thanks.

Trust you were able to make contact with Allan Stone for Neville O'Connor, Sid. Our latest records show he was still battling on a couple of years ago and had just then celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary. Unfortunately Neville has not been keeping the best of health according to latest reports. Your kind regards are passed on to Jack Allison and Allan McInnes - all D Coy. 2/2 wonderful fellows and at time of writing both well.

Thank you for your kind message to Max and myself, they were very much appreciated. All the best to Jean and yourself. Hope to meet up again one of these days.

**KAY BURTON**, Springwood, daughter of the late Bert Rayner 2/1 of Kyogle, with a welcome donation to funds and news that her mother Margaret is still reasonably well and still living in Kyogle.

While on a recent visit to her home town, Kay read an article in a local paper "Talking Turkey" on brother and sister Ben and Jessica Ferris, who are the grandchildren of the late Leo Ferris, a Lieut. in the 2/1 Pioneers. Both Ben and Jessica are in the Army, Jessica at the Australian Defence Force Academy and Ben serving as a peace keeper in the Solomon Islands. (I'm sure Leo would have been a very proud grandfather).

Kay sends her best wishes to all Pioneers and says only a few left in Kyogle now. Their ranks are certain thinning, Kay, and since you wrote "Clancy" Scholes has also passed on.

Our best wishes to you and to mum and thanks for your letter.

**MARY BURNHAM**, Forster, daughter of late Lieut-Col. Arnold Brown 2/1, enclosing a generous donation for the News, which she is always pleased to receive. Mary also mentions having an interesting talk with Doug Shearston 2/1, who also lives in Forster, our long-time friend and a very worthy treasurer over so many years.

She apologised for her non-attendance on Anzac Day, but she was about to go on a bus trip to Birdsville and all places in between - a wonderful trip (apart from the flies). Trust you enjoyed your later trip to Innamincka and hopefully may see you in Sydney next April for the march. With best wishes and your kind regards passed on to the 2/1 "boys".

**BETTY CREASY**, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with her thanks for the continued receipt of the News which she looks forward to. Keeps her in touch with all that goes on with our "Pioneer Family".

There's not much news from her part of the country - the young generation have taken over the selling of the badges for Legacy and not too many World War II left around the area. Bet has been invited to Day Care, which she enjoyed, as it does get you out to meet people.

Always good to hear from you, Bet, and many thanks for the donation.

**GEORGE CATCHPOLE** 2/2, Northgate Qld., per pen of his daughter Lynn Jones, with news of her dad and a donation to funds. Lynn says George is still living in the Kedron Nursing Home, where he has been for the past three years, and his wife Amy is still in the family home and is coping well. George has made a wonderful recovery from the amputation of both his legs and his general health is good.

Lynn says her dad enjoys reading the News

and catching up on the doings of old mates. He mentioned the sad loss of his old "boss" Bill Robertson, also Jack Hocking, and asked that his condolences be passed on to the widows and families of his old friends.

The arrival of two great-grandchildren over the past 18 months would have been a blessing to him and we hope both are well and happy.

Many thanks for your letter, Lynn, and our very best wishes to your dad from his Pioneer mates.

**GORDON CHRYSTALL** 2/1, Larras Lee, per good wife Eunice, with a welcome cheque for the treasurer and apologies for late payment. Many thanks, Eunice, and hope by now Gordon's trip to hospital was not serious and he's once more out on the road.

She mentions a recent trip to the theatre where they met up with John Hayden 2/1 of Orange. Both had grandchildren performing in a school event and was a very pleasurable evening. Says they certainly have some talent out in the country.

Many thanks for your letter and your kind remarks on the News - much appreciated - and all the best to both Gordon and yourself.

**JOYCE DENNY**, Lismore, widow of Dave 2/1, enclosing a donation to funds and says she looks forward to the News as it's always good reading. Nice to hear, Joyce, and it is only through our readers' letters that we know what is happening to our Pioneer friends.

Joyce reports a wonderful ANZAC Day in Lismore, seemingly getting bigger every year. They had a big crowd at the Dawn Service despite the rain and even more at the later service. The younger generations are taking much more interest than they did some years ago which is a good thing.

They have had lots of rain in the Lismore area after a ten months' drought and their dams are full - very pleasing for the people on the land. Sydney could certainly do with some at the present time.

Best wishes to you, Joyce, and many thanks for your donation to the News.

**MATT ELLIOTT** 2/2, West Wollongong, with his sub. enclosed in his letter. Says he looks forward to the newsletter with news of his old mates, especially Don Coy., and sends best wishes to all Pioneers for continued good health.

**ANDY ELLISTON**, Narooma, son of the late Phil 2/1, with his thanks for the News and enclosing a welcome donation to funds. Best wishes, Andy, and thank you for your continued support.

**JACK HEARN** 2/2, Howlong, with a short note enclosing his sub. and his best wishes passed on to all Pioneers. Hears quite regularly from Les and Lesley Tunks (2/1 of Mareeba Qld) with latest up-date on the Rocky Creek Memorial Park. Jack was fortunate to be in the area when the 2/1-2/2 plaque was dedicated and Les has kept him up to date on the latest developments.

Our best wishes to both yourself and Audrey, and thanks for the sub.

**NELL LAUGHREN**, Boronia Heights Qld., widow of Pat 2/1, and letter courtesy her daughter Mary. Thank you, Mary, and for the donation enclosed. Nell has moved into hostel accommodation at St. Paul de Chartres Retirement Village in Boronia Hts. to be closer to Mary and her brother, who both live in Brisbane. At 88, Nell is in fairly good health and enjoys still reading the Pioneer News and keeping up with doings of members. In bygone days Nell and Pat were very good correspondents and it is good to hear that Nell is still interested.

Thank you for your kind words on the paper, Mary, and our very best wishes to Nell from all south of the border. So good to hear she is still in reasonably good health - God Bless.

**JOYCE LAW**, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with a card of thanks for the invitation to be present at the VP Day Service at the Kokoda Track Walkway in August. It was good to see you, Joyce, and very pleased that your back operation was such a success. Must be great to be free of pain after so long. Many thanks for your kind words re the News and your kind donation to funds, both very much appreciated. Love and best wishes - will keep in touch.

**JOAN LEE**, Strathfield, widow of Bob 2/2 with a short note enclosing a donation for the

News and some kind words to those who keep the Association afloat. She likes to read news of Bob's mates during the war years, and sends her best wishes to all. Thank you, Joan, and kind regards.

**JOAN LAKE**, Brookvale, widow of Bob 2/1, celebrated her 80th birthday in September and a luncheon was held by her family in the function room of the Brookvale Hotel. Several of her Pioneer friends were in attendance - Marj and Jack Kerslake, Olive Finlay and daughter-in-law Lynn, and Peg and Max Herron - who joined in wishing Joan all the best and continued good health. Our thanks to Gail, Eileen and Bill and their families for being able to share this special day with them.

**DON MURRAY** 2/2, Tinonee, with a generous donation to funds and his best wishes to all 2/2nds and those who produce the News. Don would also like his sincere sympathy passed on to Toss Robertson (widow of Bill) and Mrs Jack Hocking (as their addresses were not known to him) on their sad loss. Many thanks, Don, and hope you are keeping well.

**NEVILLE O'CONNOR** 2/2, Ballina, with a long letter from Betty on his behalf and enclosing a welcome donation to funds. Neville has not been in the best of health - had a dreadful bout of flu, despite the needle, and lots of fluid which has taken many months to get rid of despite medication. Do hope the warmer weather may show some improvement, Bette, and we all wish him the very best. I'm sure he is getting plenty of loving care.

Good to see you are still able to play golf after your bad year and that your daughter Cheryl has been able to start on her radiotherapy. Do hope all goes well.

We had a note from Sid Booth recently and he mentioned he had been talking to Neville. They were both well.

Do take care and our very best to Neville from all his mates here in the south. Thank you for your note and our love and best wishes.

**WALLY PARSONS** 2/1, North Haven, per pen of Marie, with the news that Wal is now a resident of Lakeside Nursing Home at Laurieton, suffering from dementia. They have no family close by, but Marie's son rings regularly three times a week and comes up from Sydney as often as he can.

Roma and Doug Shearston are still in Forster, Marie, and we speak on the phone quite regularly. I shall pass on your message to Roma when I'm speaking to her next. She had told me years ago that she went to school with you. We were very good friends here at Beverly Hills and Roma and I were very involved with school activities and played golf together. Doug has just had a trip to hospital with pneumonia, but was home last week and celebrating his 89th birthday.

Many thanks for letting us know about Wal and Max sends special wishes to his old Sig. mate. Not too many of them left now.

**REV. PETER PLAYSTED**, R.A.A.F., Castle Hill, formerly of Lismore, has taken up duties at St. Columba's Church, Castle Hill, and will serve as chaplain at the Richmond R.A.A.F. Base. For several years Peter has conducted the memorial services for the wreath laying at the Lismore reunion of the 2/1-2/2 and was a welcome guest at the reunion dinner. We wish him well in his new Parish and hope to meet up with him again in the near future.

Your new address has been noted, Peter, and copies of the News will be posted on to you in due course. Very best wishes to you and your wife in your new ministry.

**FRANK RAY** 2/2, Mont Albert Vic., with a letter enclosing his subs. to the News, for which many thanks.

Whilst many names in the Mail Bag are unknown to Frank, his mate in NSW (Mick Smith 2/2) keeps him in touch with one or two, particularly Allan McInnes and sadly the late Bill Robertson, both of whom Frank knew well.

Frank tells that he attended the funeral service of the late Jack Hocking and it was a tribute to him that some 300 attended the service. In his opinion a very worthy and fitting tribute to a very dedicated worker for the 2/2 Association. He regrets that so many of the original unit that he trained with did not survive the overseas service, or as P.O.W.'s, and served with Frank in New Guinea and Borneo. Quite a few of those that did return have since passed on.

Your good wishes are passed on to Allan McInnes, Frank, and many thanks for your letter.

**OLIVE RICHARDS**, Lennox Head, widow of Jack 2/1, with her donation to funds and a book of stamps, also gratefully received. Olive has obviously had her birthday as she regularly sends her subs when her birthday comes round – says birthday means time for the Pioneers' money. One way of remembering Olive!! So keep on having birthdays.

Olive has had surgery on her nose for a benign carcinoma, plus a skin graft, and her cancer check up. So far, so good. Says her general health is fine – has a new brace for her bad back and special shoes for her wonky feet – so what more could she want? Nothing like a good make-over, Olive, soon be able to take up line dancing.

Have passed on your good wishes to the Kerslakes, who are always kept busy, family-wise. Jack has had a few falls, plus stitches, but seems to bounce back. Has not been able to play bowls for a while due to leg problems, but is hopeful all will be well soon.

Every good wish to yourself and family, hope to see you one day soon.

**TOSS ROBERTSON**, Randwick, widow of Bill 2/2, with a cheque for the News and a card of appreciation to Committee for their kind messages of sympathy during her sad loss earlier in the year. Always good to hear from you, Toss, and our love and best wishes.

**TED ROWE** 2/2, Willetton W.A., with a very brief note enclosing his sub, for which many thanks. Certainly you won't get writer's cramp, Ted, and there must be some news from your part of the country. Maybe next time.

**DUDLEY STANFORTH** 2/2, West Wyalong, with the news of the passing of Doug Scott 2/2 of "Bologamy" Station, West Wyalong, after a long illness. (Max has made mention of this in Last Post). Hope you are keeping well, Dudley, and many thanks for your donation to funds.

**RAY STIDIFORD** 2/2, Berri S.A., per pen of his wife Marcia, enclosing a cheque for the News and says Ray always looks forward to receiving it. Ray hasn't been in the best of health, but has shown some improvement since his last letter. He sends his sincere condolences on the passing of Jack Hocking in Victoria, a great loss to the Association. Our thanks, Marcia, for writing on Ray's behalf and best wishes to you both.

**MICK TASSELL** 2/1, Hay, a short note enclosing his donation to keep the paper coming and wishing all the "boys" the best of health. Good to hear from you, Mick, how about some news next time. Thanks for the sub.

**RITA TREFONI**, Pendle Hill, widow of Noel 2/1, with a welcome donation handed to treasurer Don at the V.P. Day service at the Kokoda Track Walkway. Many thanks, Rita, and good to see you again after such a long time. It's always great to meet up with old friends. Hope you enjoyed the service and perhaps may be able to make it a date for next year.

**LES TUNKS** 2/1, Mareeba, with two very welcome letters and lots of cuttings and photos of the latest V.P. Day at the Rocky Creek Memorial Park on the Atherton Tablelands. The park was established 10 years ago and now features 64 plaques in memory of serving units as well as allied and community plaques. Fourteen were unveiled this year and there are another eighteen in the pipeline for next unveiling in 2004.

Many thanks Les for the copy of "Remember Rocky Creek" and we shall pass it around amongst our Pioneer friends for them to read. Jack Kerslake has it at the moment and we are sure he will find it interesting reading.

Pleased to hear both Lesley and yourself are keeping well and thanks for the book of stamps enclosed in your letter. Take care and lots of good wishes from both Max and myself.

**TOM WALLACE** 2/1, Rankin Park, enclosed a cheque for the News with his letter and keeps reasonably well for an 85 year old – or as he says 40% mobile and 20% fit. He and his wife have their 60th wedding anniversary coming up shortly – Tom says married people don't live longer, only seems longer. Must have something good going for you to have made 60 years, Tom, so heartiest congratulations to you both and have many more happy years together.

**KEN WILSON** 2/2, Lismore, with quite a long letter with news of the passing of "Clancy" Scholes 2/1 and funeral details which Max has included in Last Post. The Eulogy was too lengthy for inclusion in the paper, Ken, as space is always a problem, but I am sure some of our Sydney 2/1sts will be interested to read it.

Many thanks also for the local news of the Pioneers in your area, most of whom seem to have not been in the best of health at time of writing. Ted Vaughan and Bruce McNaughton (2/1sts) had been on the sick list and Ken thinks that Bruce was in hospital on the day of the funeral. The 2/2nds in the area were also having their problems – Ray Robbins had been in hospital for an operation and had a slight stroke when he came home. Neville O'Connor with a heart problem and Ray Harris having trouble with his breathing. Let's hope the warmer weather will work wonders with all their health problems – and, of course, age is fast catching up with them all.

Good to hear Ida and yourself are keeping well and our best wishes to you both.

**JOYCE WALKER**, Rosemeadow, widow of George 2/1, with the news that the War Graves Commission had approved of a plaque for George to be placed in the War Graves Cemetery at Rookwood and she would be notified when completed. Joyce has joined the Campbelltown branch of Legacy and mentions that Joyce McGregor, widow of the late Bob 2/1, is also a member. I'm sure you will enjoy the companionship of the Legacy ladies in your area. Our best wishes, Joyce, keep well.

**ERIC CAUSER** 2/1, Hamilton Vic., with his welcome regular call to Max re the notices in "Mufti" (the Victorian R.S.L. paper) of the passing of any Pioneers in his state. Eric is very involved with Legacy in his area and has been of great help to many widows with regard to pensions and other problems. We appreciate your help, Eric, as we do not always hear of the passing of former members in other states, especially those with no next-of-kin.

Good to hear you and Doff are well and keeping busy, and again many thanks for the call.

**DON CRAWFORD** 2/2, Concord, our worthy treasurer, has had another successful bowling year. Don and his two fellow bowlers recently won the Club Triples at Concord Golf Bowling Club and Don has qualified to play in the Singles Final at the end of November.

Hearty congratulations, Don, and we wish you good luck in the coming match.

**PERRY WELLS**, Lennox Head, son of the late Bill Wells 2/2, with a welcome note and sub sent in by his wife Carol. Although Perry did not know any of his father's mates, he appreciates the news of the battalion. His dad passed away 11 years ago, but his 86 year old mother, Peg, is still alive. Peg was a welcome visitor to the last reunion in Lismore.

Thank you for the donation to funds, Perry, and to you Carol for the letter.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and on behalf of President Allan, Treasurer Don, Max and myself we wish our members and their families lots of good health and happiness in the year ahead. To those who have lost loved ones we send our special thoughts. Have a Happy and Holy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

## MAD HARRY

I would like to share with you extracts from "Mad Harry" (he wasn't mad, but ultra brave) which is the biography of Australian Henry William "Harry" Murray, the British Empire's most decorated infantryman of World War I and I recommend the book to you all. The title "Mad Harry" is by George Franki and Clyde Slatyer. Harry's decorations included the V.C., C.M.G., D.S.O. and Bar, D.C.M., C de G (Croix de Guerre).

In the book Harry Murray was an original ANZAC and after being evacuated wounded he returned and from there went to France, where he had a very meritorious record. He never did a school or attended lectures or classes, but rose from the ranks to Lt-Colonel and was recognised as a top leader, as shown by his decorations.

During World War II he was given command of the 26 Bn. A.M.F. in Central Queensland. He

argued strongly to join the A.I.F. but General Blamey would not allow it, even though there were many soldiers of his rank over 55 years, and had him put on the supernumerary list relieving him of his command. It wasn't who you knew, but possibly a jealous General.

Also from "Mad Harry" there is an article which reminds me of an incident at Cairns when a very depleted 2/2nd Pioneer Bn. got some hundreds of recruits to build up strength after New Guinea. When we went home on leave and the time came to return to camp, the Victorians were unable to catch trains because of a large backlog of troops and had to take extra leave (bad luck). Recruits not very well trained and some only fresh into camp were put on guard. Our new C.O., Lt.-Col. Clayton Davis, a fitness fanatic, on his morning run at 5.30 a.m. (as was his custom dressed in shorts, singlet and sandshoes) passed the sentry who was leaning on his rifle almost asleep. Not realising that the runner was the new C.O. and in reply to the Colonel's "Good morning sentry" (in his best "pucka" voice) the sentry answered "some of you bastards get it easy".

From "Mad Harry", a nursing sister stationed in Charters Towers area hitched a ride to town on a garbage truck. A little further along the road a soldier hailed the truck and was also picked up. The talk was very amiable and on leaving the elderly private (she thought) snapped a classy salute and their ways parted. The sister was told some days later that the new admission was Australia's most decorated soldier and on doing rounds she recognised the patient who had shared a lift was Lt.-Col. Murray. She wondered why he didn't use a staff car – a little classier than a garbage truck.

A poem in the book was a reminder of an old song the 2/1st Pioneers used to sing during the war years and at our 2/1-2/2 reunions, especially by our good Pioneer friend Mary Lloyd. It went as follows:

"The Pioneers are happy,  
The Pioneers are free,  
The Pioneers are happy  
When they are on the spree.  
They never, never quarrel  
They never disagree  
But they all dropped dead  
When Brownie said  
Come and have a drink with me."

("Brownie" as most 2/1sts would remember was Colonel Arnold Brown, the C.O. of the Battalion from 1941-1943).

Reported by ALLAN MCINNES

## LAST POST

**COLIN (CLANCY) SCHOLLES** 2/1 of Casino passed away on 14th August aged 83 yrs. The funeral service, on 18th August was conducted at St Mark's Anglican Church Casino which was followed by the interment at the Casino Lawn Cemetery.

The Eulogy on Clancy's life, including his army career, was read by grandson Brian Scholes and was in the form of a poem with thirty six verses. The last verse gives an indication of the high standard of the Eulogy and reads as follows:-

"His time with us saw the good and the sad,  
But nevertheless he was a great Dad.  
He leaves us now to start a new life,  
Where he will be united with his  
devoted and darling wife."

Clancy was a very popular figure in the 2/1 Pioneers and in the final stages was the Company Sergeant Major of H.Q. Coy. Pioneers in attendance at the funeral were Ted Vaughan, Terry McGuire, Alex and Jean George, Jack and Flo Shearman and Ken Wilson to whom we thank for sending us all the above details.

**RODGER MONKS**, "C" Coy. 2/2 passed away on 28th May after an illness of five months and died as a result of a stroke. The funeral service took place at Pt Broughton. Wendy Short, his next of kin, will continue to be sent the Pioneer News as requested. We thank Alan Olson S.A. for supplying the above details.

**REG ARMSTRONG** 2/2 of Baradine passed away on 23rd July at the age of 97 years, while in Narrabri Hospital. He was also in hospital a

few months earlier when he had a couple of falls and broke his hip.

The township of Baradine gave Reg a full military funeral, complete with a guard of honour, and in memory of a great community worker all shops closed and the service was packed with his friends.

Prior to moving to Baradine Reg lived at Merrylands, close to his close friend, the late Bob Dixon 2/2 and was a staunch Association member having served on the Committee as well as the Social and Pioneer News wrapping committees.

Reg wrote some excellent articles on the exploits of the 2/2nds and was the official reporter for the Anzac Day Reunions the 2/2nds held at St Peters.

Sincere sympathy has been extended to wife Coralie and like her we will sadly miss our mate.

**DOUG SCOTT** 2/2 of West Wyalong passed away on 16th August after a long illness. Early in the year he had moved to Waratah Village.

His wife and family will continue to live on their station, "Bolagamy" which is twenty kms out of West Wyalong. We thank Dudley Staniforth for sending us the above details.

**JACK DOLAGHAN** 2/1 of Manly Vale passed away 23rd August, aged 84 years and the Balgowlah RSL conducted the Poppy service at St Kierans Church.

Pioneers who attended the funeral service were Roy Jardine, Marj and Jack Kerslake and Rae Kean representing Rats of Tobruk Association, as Jack had been a keen bowler for R.O.T.A.

**ALF BENTLEY** 2/1 of Yokine W.A. passed away on 2nd October aged 78 years at the Hollywood Hospital, Perth following an aneurysm of the aorta.

The funeral was held on 10th October in Perth and the local RSL carried out the full Poppy service. The chapel was packed with friends and relatives as Alf and wife Pat were very popular in the community having competed in many veteran swimming events. The Eulogy was spoken by a very close friend of Alf and touched on his army service as well as his private career.

Pioneers in attendance were Neville "Bindi" Moane of Sydney and Jack Stewart of W.A. who both acted as guard of honour. "Bindi" Moane flew from Sydney to Perth especially for the funeral which was a mighty effort and showed true Pioneer spirit and great mateship. They had been close friends in the Pioneers and have continued that friendship ever since. Alf and Pat have travelled to Sydney every year for the past ten years to attend the Anzac Day march and reunion and always have sat at table ten at the hotel with "Bindi". Jack Stewart and Noel Grant from Victoria.

Sincere sympathy has been extended to Pat and also to Alf's two sisters and brother.

• **MUFTI** of Victoria as reported by Eric Causser: Deceased - 2/2nds: Alfred Burkitt, Jack Hocking and Alexander McKenzie. 2/1: Arthur Edwards.

## VALE GEORGE WALKER

On 8th July George Walker 2/1 late of Kilbride Village, Rosemeadow, formerly Culburra, passed away in Campbelltown hospital, aged 82 years.

George had been in and out of Campbelltown and Liverpool Hospitals with heart and lung problems since Anzac Day, and even after a pace maker had been fitted he had not enjoyed good health.

The funeral service for George was held on 11th July at the Forest Lawn Crematorium, Leppington and the Chapel was packed with people from all walks of life who had been associated with George over many years.

Pioneers in attendance at the funeral were: Frank and Jean Locane, Tom and René Woods, Olive, Lyn and Geoff Finlay, Jack and Marj Kerslake, Bill Tasker, Don and Val Crawford, Max, Peg and David Herron.

The Minister called upon George's daughter Susan, to speak on his family life and then called on Welfare Officer Bill Tasker to deliver the RSL Poppy Service, also to give the Eulogy on George's military service which he carried out as follows:- "George enlisted in the 2nd

A.I.F. in 1942 and was posted to the 2/4th Field Company Engineers. He served with that unit at Milne Bay in New Guinea, where the company carried out a massive road building project through the jungle. He later transferred to the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion, and was posted to "D" Coy.

In September 1943, "D" Coy was moved to Port Moresby to rejoin the remainder of the unit before returning to Australia in November of that year. They then carried out extensive Jungle training on the Atherton Tablelands as well as ship to shore training at Trinity Beach near Cairns.

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In April 1945 the unit sailed for Balikpapan in Borneo where they again fought the Japanese until cessation of hostilities on 15th August 1945. After the war George served in the Regular Army and was discharged in 1969 after 12 years of service.

George joined the Association Committee in 1972 and in 1975 was appointed Assistant Secretary and served in this position until his passing. In 1986 he was awarded Life Membership of the 2/1 - 2/2 Pioneer Bns Association in recognition of his outstanding service to the Association. As Assistant Secretary he was on the Social Committee and served on that Committee, assisting in the organisation of the twenty Country Reunions, the Anzac Day marches and Reunion Dinner as well as being Custodian of the 2/1st Banner.

In addition to all this, George assisted the Secretary at every Committee Meeting and as a member, with Joyce, as a member of the Pioneer News wrapping committee for 30 years.

We thank God for the life of our friend George and we extend our sincere sympathy to his wife Joyce and her family. He will be sadly missed by his fellow Pioneers.

After the service Bill Tasker personally extended the Association's sympathy to Joyce and her family of Brian, David, Susan and Judith.

## AUSTRALIANS AT WAR

The Federal Government had two episodes made and presented on TV by Channel Two. The Honourable Danna Vale MP has followed on by handling a massive project named "Australians at War Film Archive" which will have two thousand veterans interviewed and photographed for storage in the archives.

The process is that Mullion Creek Productions P/L has been appointed to interview the veterans and the first approach is a telephone two hour interview by the agency, then the next phase is a two by four hour interview and photographs which is carried out in the veteran's home.

This valuable documentation will be stored for posterity and in years to come, schoolchildren, teachers, academics, film makers and historians will be able to carry out research from these interviews. The internet site for the Archive will be launched in August 2003 and as transcriptions are completed each interview will be posted on the site.

At present only four hundred veterans have had the full two interviews and an all out effort is being made to complete the project. These interviews will not be edited or cut but will be posted in the archives, warts and all. Our two battalion stories will be given by John Gilchrist and Max Herron who both have had the phone interview as representing the 2/1sts. Jack Allison 2/2nd and Allan McInnes, representing both the 2/2nd and the Extreme Disabled Association, have both completed their full phone and two four hour interviews at home.

Having completed their endurance test of the eight hour interviews, Jack and Allan have received a letter from the Project Director thanking them for the generous gift of their time and memories, for without them this valuable national resource could not exist.

## 2/1 - 2/2 PIONEER COYS.

Many of our members have enquired about the banner they see on the ANZAC Day march which is displayed as 2/1-2/2 SPECIAL PIONEER COMPANIES, so upon request Bob Gray, Secretary of their Association has kindly supplied the following details - Editor

In December 1941 an avalanche of enlistments followed Japan's entry into the war and drafts were assigned from Sydney to the 9th Pioneer Training Battalion at Dubbo. Then followed six weeks of Infantry and Pioneer training and then pre-embarkation leave. During 3rd to 11th February 1942 saw two companies formed and designated, 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneer Training Rifle Companies.

Colour patches allocated were, 2/1 triangular purple inside white and inside a grey background 2/2 was triangular white inside purple and a grey background. The officers in command were 2/1 Captain Stuart MC and 2/2 Captain Burnett.

The contingent was transported by rail to Narellan training camp for further infantry training instruction and it was then split into two separate detachments - the 2/1 to Ingleburn and the 2/2 to Rosehill Race course. Then on 1st April they were brought together for an eleven day trip to Katherine NT, arriving on 11 April 1942.

Duties here were road improvements, Railway siding construction, building meat chilling stores, enlarging Aust. General Hospital at Katherine, and timber getting for buildings. These duties were additional to the continuance of infantry training which was carried out on some evenings and on weekends.

The companies were briefed that Darwin Command anticipated an invasion from the north by the Japanese using small craft on the Adelaide and Katherine Rivers, and it was the Pioneers role to counter such incursions. Contingents were sent to Pine Creek, Adelaide River and Mataranka to construct railway sidings on the Larrimah to Darwin rail line.

In September 1942 the companies were amalgamated to be termed, 2/11 Army Troops Company RAE and adopting a purple triangle colour patch on a grey background. Major Hugh Bond O/C and Captain Bill Fraser 2ic were sent from 2/4 Pioneer Battalion with other officers.

Some of our officers were sent to Kapooka to participate in reforming the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion and these were, Capt. Allan McInnes, Capt Harry Huggard, Lieuts. White, West, Welch and Harris.

In 1942 a driver died in an accident in a truck at the Katherine River crossing. Only other problems encountered were, tropical ulcers; dysentery; dengue; dermatitis and malaria.

In July 1943 the company was despatched to Kapooka Engineer training depot and as they were not expected they stayed in the Red Cross hut. After concluding the course, reinforcements were taken in and the unit then went to Wongabel in the Atherton Tableland, and then down to Trinity Beach where a detachment constructed a beach landing feature. (Which no doubt was used by both the 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneer Bns for their amphibious training for Borneo).

In March 1944 the 2/11th embarked on the "Sea Barb" for Morotai, and its operations there were, Island water supply, road construction and installations, until cessation of hostilities in August 1945, when it was represented at the surrender.

After restructure in 1942 large numbers transferred to more forward units and those successful went to RAAF aircrew, 2/3 Inf Bn. and to the following engineer field companies -

2/1, 2/3, 2/4, 2/5, 2/8, 2/15 and 2/25. These people served in Liberators, and beach landings at Wewak, Aitape, Labuan, Tarakan and Balikpapan.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE APRIL 2003

With subscription send news of your family and happenings. Letter to contain name and address. Battalion (2/1 or 2/2) and Company.

All correspondence to MAX HERRON Hon. Sec., 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills, NSW 2209