

PIONEER NEWS

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

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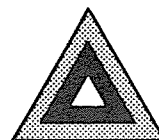
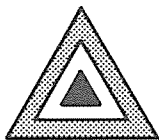
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GOVERNOR'S SPEECH AT KOKODA WALKWAY

Following upon the excellent article by Steve Clarke in the November 2003 issue of Pioneer News on the V P Commemoration Service at the Kokoda Track Walkway on 15th August 2003, we would like to publish the full speech by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC.

This was sent to us by Peter Cullen (son of Vince 2/1 Pioneer Battalion) who works for the office of the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir AC, and a member of the NSW Security Branch. Vince served with 2/1st Pioneer Battalion in the Middle East, including the Siege of Tobruk, along with Edmund Day 2/1 Pioneer from Maclean who was Eva Cullen's father. Edmund was killed in Tobruk. Vince later transferred to the 2/12th Infantry Battalion, 18th Brigade and served with that unit until the end of hostilities.

On the day when Her Excellency was researching and writing her speech for the V P Commemoration Service, Peter had the opportunity to relate to her some of the many experiences his Dad had at Milne Bay, Gona, Popondetta, Shaggy Ridge and Balikpapan. When the battle of the Beaches was on, Vince thought his number was up as the Japanese were well entrenched and snipers killed or wounded many of his mates.

Before leaving for the V P Service, Her Excellency gave Peter a copy of her speech to give to his father and at the end wrote the following:

"Dear Corporal Vincent Cullen, 18th Brigade 7th Division. Thank you for your priceless contribution which has enabled Australian people to go on to become the fine country it is – Best wishes always, Marie Bashir, Aug 15th 2003."

This very kind gesture on the part of Her Excellency really made Vince feel very proud of the five years he served with the 2nd AIF.

SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY

The following is the full speech by Her Excellency to the large gathering at the Kokoda Track Walkway on V P Day –

It is indeed a great privilege and a moving experience to stand with you all today in this most beautiful environment of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, to commemorate the Victory in the Pacific and the 60th Anniversary of the battle of the Beaches – and above all to remember with solemn gratitude the immeasurable contribution of our Australian Military.

There is no doubt that the announcement on August 15, 1945 of the ending of the War in the Pacific was greeted with jubilation by the Australian people. The War had taken a great toll on our young nation, with the loss of almost 40,000 Australians from a population of only seven million. Fears had escalated that our island home was at risk of attack and invasion by a cruel enemy. Air raid drill was underway and shelters had been built.

17,000 of our people had died in the Asia Pacific region. Eight thousand died in captivity as Prisoners of War, often in appalling conditions. 8,000 died in captivity from brutality, starvation and disease. Their suffering and that of the survivors, together with recorded memories and written accounts, have provided an unforgettable chapter in Australian history.

Today, Australia proudly acknowledges, that the epic of Kokoda, sixty-one years ago, was a critical turning point in those dark days

of a war which was advancing perilously close to Australian shores. Port Moresby was under regular bombardment, and the Japanese now planned an overland attack across the Owen Stanley Range to take Port Moresby. On the north west slopes, Kokoda – a small plateau with a small airstrip – was of major significance to both the Japanese and to the Australians.

In the most appalling terrain and debilitating environmental conditions, affected by malaria and dysentery, our valiant young Australians were outnumbered and at times outgunned, but tenaciously defending, retreating and then counter-attacking. So ultimately, they were able to fight the Japanese to a standstill first at Isurava, and a few days later at Brigade Butcher's Hill.

The Japanese were now forced to withdraw to Gona and Buna, to face in a greatly weakened state "The battle of the Beaches", where they were met with the vigour and resilience of members of the 7th Division. In retrospect, this marked the beginning of the end of Japan's intentions for New Guinea. At Milne Bay, Australian and American troops had defeated the Japanese landing, and a major engagement was taking place at Guadalcanal.

Our War Historians have reminded us that if the Japanese had been able to break through and "seize Port Moresby with its airstrip and supplies, the strategic situation would have undoubtedly been transformed" (*David Horner P.18 Issue 20, 2nd WW Wartime*) in regard to the vulnerability of Australia. "Battles of the Kokoda Campaign still remain the most important ever fought by Australians in relation to the direct security of Australia". (P19)

LIGHTS OF PORT MORESBY

Another account, by an Australian journalist, reminded us of the universal reality of the sorrows of War. He told also of the enemy, of a young Japanese soldier weeping as he looked down from the high ridge, at night, to see the twinkling lights of Port Moresby in the distance, far below. This emaciated, disease stricken and starving soldier, thinking of the promised food in Moresby, – food at last, – realised that it was never to be, and that death was inevitable. More than 12,500 Japanese soldiers died in Papua New Guinea.

But the most memorable words came from a former Australian Governor-General, Sir William Slim "It was the Australians" he said, "who broke the spell of Japanese invincibility on land and inflicted on their arrogant Army its first defeat. Let Australians never forget this. It is like Anzac, part of their noble tradition". When I contemplate those young men, refusing against all odds to give way on Kokoda, the passionate words of Mary Gilmore are evoked in my mind –

*We are the Sons of Australia
Of the men who fashioned the land,
We are the sons of the women
Who walked with them, hand in hand;
And we swear by the dead who bore us
By the heroes who blazed the trail.
No foe shall gather our harvest,
Or sit on our stockyard rail.*

The immortal images of this campaign have

been bequeathed to the nation in recollections, in inspired literary accounts and in deeply moving photographic images, particularly those including the courageous Papua New Guineans – the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels. We must applaud and support the sensitive and positive way these stories are brought before our children in today's multicultural Australia through the collaborative efforts of our schools and our veterans' associations.

Such knowledge of our history also serves to remind young Australians of our relationship with Papua New Guinea and our near Pacific neighbours, and the importance of continuing our efforts which build upon peace, respect and collaboration. It is so fitting that this beautiful walkway has been erected to honour those men of Kokoda and to remind us of our eternal debt.

My gratitude is extended to Mr Rusty Priest and to all responsible for this memorial.

Lest we Forget.

PIONEER ACTIVITIES 2004

WREATH LAYING – 24th April at 3.45pm

On Saturday 24th April the Association will conduct their Wreath Laying Service at the Cenotaph at 3.45pm. All members and their ladies are invited to assemble at 3.30pm on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, GPO side.

ANZAC DAY MARCH – Sunday, 25th April

The Anzac Day march will be held on Sunday 25th April and the forming up for both 2/1sts and 2/2nds will be the same as last year in Phillip Street head on to King Street, rear of 6th Division. Both Units 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 Bill Tasker, the Unit Marshal, who will ensure the relative is dressed in a tidy manner and if wearing the deceased member's medals is wearing the medals on the right breast.

ANZAC REUNION – Sunday, 25th April

The Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street Sydney is the venue for both units for the Reunion Dinner. Board the train at Museum Station after the March and travel to Wynyard Station – up the escalator, turn right into York Street and the hotel is on the corner.

GENERAL MEETINGS 2004

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

The dates are 26th March, 23rd July and 12th November. The General Meeting on 23rd July will be followed by the Annual Meeting. All Pioneers are invited to attend these meetings.

NSW NORTH COAST BRANCH

Members of the Lismore based branch had a get-together on 17th December at "The House of Steps" and, together with wives, there were twenty in attendance and a good time was had by all.

DON BARRACLOUGH of Burleigh Heads has had a heart turn and spent some time in hospital, but is now home doing well.

EXTREME DISABILITY ADJUSTMENT was granted recently to Charles Richardson and Dick Walker, and both are pleased with their successful applications.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

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

CYRIL AMIES 2/1, Forbes, with Christmas greetings from he and Doris in a long note on their doings over the last 12 months. Their lives in Forbes are very full with Probus, Bowling Club and Church friends and they are enjoying the peace and quiet of the countryside. Forbes has had very little rain, but they have bore water so are able to water their many trees and shrubs as they wish. Doris says her pride and joy (and says "don't laugh") is a brand new Cox ride-on mower, complete with tip truck, and they really need it to move about their property.

Cyril spent six weeks in Sydney early in the year to undergo radio therapy at the San Hospital and the treatment was very successful. They were able to catch up with a lot of their Sydney friends while they were here. Good to hear, Cyril, and hope you continue to improve and able to get around on your motorised scooter.

Keep well and always good to hear the news of your "doings" – a bonus too having Wendy and her husband close enough to be a great help when needed. Kindest regards from all here in Sydney and hope to catch up again one of these days.

ISABELL ANDERSON, Aspendale Vic., widow of "Snowy" 2/2, with a note of good wishes for Christmas from both Julie and herself. Do hope you are both keeping well and Julie still enjoying her music. Love and best wishes.

LEILA BARBER, Trangie, widow of Eric 2/1, with a note apologising for lateness in sending in her sub for the News. Many thanks. Says she still enjoys reading the paper, but not many names that she remembers. Does send her best wishes to Mary McInnes and trusts that she is keeping better health. Leila passes on kindest regards to all Pioneers and hopes that the coming year will be a more peaceful and better world for all to live in. All the best, Leila, good to hear from you again.

ROBYN BELL, Port Melbourne, daughter of the late Leo Morris 2/1, with Season's Greetings to all from Bruce and herself and the hope that she shall be able to make the trip to Sydney for ANZAC Day. Many thanks, Robyn, and hope your mum is still keeping well in the Yass RSL Hostel. Kindest regards from both of us.

ARTHUR BENNETT 2/1, Pendle Hill, enclosing a donation to funds in his letter and his thanks to the editors for the continuance of the News. Arthur will be 86 the day after ANZAC Day and says he has so many relatives, young and old, who are very good to him and he enjoys their company. Nice to hear in these troubled times with young ones, Arthur, so consider yourself very lucky. Our thanks for your kind words to both Max and myself and your donation enclosed. All the best.

PAT BENTLEY, Yokine W.A., widow of Alf 2/1, with her thanks to Max for sending her copies of the News with his tribute to Alf's passing in October. Pat was also very pleased to have Neville ("Bindi") Moane over from Sydney for the funeral, as he and Alf had been great friends since the war years. Pat is gradually settling down and says, hopefully, the bad days will get less as time marches on. Hopes to be able to get to Sydney for ANZAC Day and to meet up with the friends she and Alfie made on their visits over the years. Let me know closer to the day if you are able to make the trip. Our very best wishes and hope we may see you soon.

MAVIS BLANCH, Beaudesert Qld, widow of Joe 2/1, with her usual long newsy letter. Had hoped your family problems would have taken a turn for the better, Mavis, and our thoughts are with you in these troubled days. Must be a silver lining soon.

Your latest Probus trip sounded interesting and certainly different. Based at St George in Southern Queensland, the trippers went out each day to a town the old Cobb & Co. coaches travelled in the early days. At Possum Park at Miles, RAAF ammunition bunkers had been converted into modern self-contained units and had tea rooms situated in a bunker some 60 ft long, a wonderful tourist attraction. Next trip in April is to Yamba and surrounds and a boat trip on the Clarence River. Make the most of it, Mavis, and our love and best wishes from your friends down south.

JACK BERTRAM 2/1, Hamilton, with his thanks for the News and always interested in reading of old friends. Jack was particularly glad to read the news of Tom Wallace 2/1 and says although Tom is not keeping the best of health he still retains his great sense of humour.

In October, Jack attended a reunion of Junior Legatees, arranged by Sydney Legacy. As he was a junior back in 1930 there were not many of his friends there (it was over 70 years ago), but it was good to mingle with so many who owe more than they can ever repay to that grand organisation – the one great benefit of those horrific times at Gallipoli where our fathers conceived the great ideals of Legacy and carried them out after that great struggle.

Jack along with other members of the RATS has also been interviewed for a film illustrating defence values to be used as a training film and was to be launched by General Peter Cosgrove in Melbourne in December. Jack has seen the preview which is very good, having as a background scenes of Tobruk and illustrating the values of loyalty, training and discipline.

Thanks for all the news, Jack, and hope to see you on ANZAC Day.

VERA BRADLEY, Cairns, our ex-AAMWS friend, with New Year Greetings and apologies for lateness, due to family illness. Several years ago Vera published a book "I Didn't Know That" of life in Cairns and the Far North during the period 1939-1946. She wrote to say she had 500 copies reprinted and they are selling like hot cakes. Good to hear Vera and am sure the local Cairns Library will have plenty of borrowers. Our copy has been well read over the years.

Our love and best wishes and hope Ron's health continues to improve. Good to hear from you.

TED CARTER 2/1, Tamworth, with a very generous donation to the News and congratulations to the editorial staff on the November issue. Many thanks for your kind remarks, Ted, certainly not necessary but it is gratifying to know that our efforts are appreciated by the members.

Thank you for the news of Colonel Buckley 2/1 as we have not heard from him for ages, also of Bill ("Pee Wee") Russell 2/2. We have not heard from Bill for several years, so glad to hear he is still in the land of the living. At last report he was busy with RSL visiting etc and admits he hates writing letters.

Good to hear Mary and yourself are keeping well – see news of you in the 2/3 Pioneer Bulletin from time to time and that you have been to some of their functions. Their President lives here in Beverly Hills not far from us, but I think their newsletter is now only yearly. Like all associations the members are slowly dwindling.

Our best wishes to you and Mary and many thanks for the donation to funds.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, with Christmas greetings to Max and I and members of the Association. She also enclosed a donation to the News and is always pleased to see it in the mail. Lex was able to make a trip to the Kokoda Track Walkway this year for the first time and really enjoyed her day. Hopes to be able to come again with more time to read the inscriptions on the plaques.

The widows of the Central Coast Branch of R.O.T.A. have a get-together once a month at the Gosford Hotel and usually six to ten are able to attend. Glad Hamer, widow of Harry 2/1, has been coming along. Our best wishes to you, Glad, and hope you are keeping well.

Thanks for the donation, Lex, and always nice to hear from you.

BETTY CREASY, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with her greetings for Christmas to all Pioneers and a healthy and prosperous New Year. Passed on news of her grandson Jason (daughter Joy's youngest) just completing 1st year at Macquarie Uni and able to still live at home. How the years fly, Bet, last time I sighted him he was still in primary school. Hope to meet up with you one day – until then keep well and all the best. Many thanks for the sub.

ALLAN CRUTE 2/1, Woolgoolga, enclosing a cheque with his Christmas greetings to "keep the pot boiling". Sorry Denny couldn't join you for Christmas, but glad you were able to spend it with your nieces and nephews. Allan is still ten-pin bowling and playing croquet, so gets out with company to relieve the loneliness. Also has his car licence back which makes it easy for him to get around and not dependent on public transport or other people.

Thank you for the donation, Allan, and for your kind remarks on the work Max and I do on the News – very much appreciated. It certainly keeps our country Pioneers up to date on the doings of the Association. Best wishes to you and Denny and family, always good to hear from you.

JOHN CUMMING 2/1, Sunshine Beach Qld, with a donation to funds – many thanks. In his letter to Max he was enquiring if any of the 2/1sts could throw any light on the paintings John had painted on the inner walls of the officers' mess just before the troops left for Borneo. Several years after the war he was told that these paintings had been cut off the walls and sent south. They are best described as black and white paintings on sisalcraft. If any of our Pioneers have any idea of what happened to them, we would be pleased to hear from them.

KATH FIELD, Greystanes, widow of Jim 2/2, with a very generous donation to funds sent in by her daughter Ruth Bosanko. Many thanks, Ruth, and for all the news contained in your letter. For several years Kath has been in a nursing home, totally wheelchair bound, after an accident with her leg. Ruth said her mum still likes to receive the News, as Ruth does too, and to read of names whom they both knew as friends of Jim when he was so active in the Association. They are saddened to read of so many passing on and remember the good days they shared in the past.

The News will be posted to you in future, Ruth, and it was nice to hear from you with all the news. Our love and best wishes to your Mum.

NITA FERRIS, Kyogle, widow of Leo 2/1, with a cheque for the News and a change of address. Nita has moved into Kyogle Court, an age care hostel, and says she gets well looked after and is quite happy. Often sees Bill Hoffman 2/1 and he looks well. As you are aware, Nita, our David's mother-in-law Emily Downes is also a resident there, and has been for several years.

Nita looks forward to the News as it keeps her in touch with the Kyogle "boys", but as you say not too many left now. Age has caught up. Always good to hear from you, Nita, and we send you our best wishes.

GRACE FOWKES, Wentworthville, widow of Dick "Snowy" Fowkes 2/1, with her best wishes for Christmas and a donation to funds. Her good wishes were passed on to all Pioneers for a peaceful New Year. Grace had recently paid a visit to the War Memorial in Canberra to see some of the newer exhibits and said it is always a humbling experience. Says we will never pay our debts to those who gave their youth and lives so that we can live in peace.

Many thanks for the sub Grace and all the very best for the coming year.

DR. STAN GOULSTON 2/1 R.M.O., Chatswood, with a welcome note enclosing a

donation for the News. He also sent his thanks to the editors for their efforts in keeping the Pioneer News going after so many years and we thank him for his kind words. He is hoping to meet and march with the Pioneers on ANZAC Day but says it may be for the last time. Like so many of the "old brigade", age is catching up.

However, he looks forward to meeting and marching with the men, those who are so blessed to still do it, and says it has become more and more important as they grow older.

Hope to see you on the 25th April and many thanks for the sub enclosed in your letter. All the best for the coming year.

VERA HAMILTON, 2/4 A.G.H., Inverell, with a change of address from Peakhurst. Vera has moved up north to be closer to family members and sister Marj Hamilton (who kindly phoned us with Vera's address) is also relocating late in the year, also to the same retirement village in Inverell.

As 2/1st Pioneer members will remember, Vera sailed with the Pioneers on the Johan-de-Witt in September 1940 along with three other nursing sisters and Dr Stan Goulston as the R.M.O. Vera served with the 2/4 A.G.H. in Tobruk and has kept in touch with the Pioneers over many years. Along with the late Sue Malcolm, 2/5 A.G.H. later to become Matron of Coffs Harbour Hospital, Vera attended many of our country reunions and she and Sue were always very welcome.

Many thanks Marj for your call and Vera's new address has been noted. Love and best wishes to both of you.

BEAU HANNAFORD 2/1, Umina, per pen of wife Jean, a short note enclosing Beau's dues and to say that, at the time of writing, Beau was in hospital. Do hope everything went well and he is now fully recovered. Many thanks for the sub and best wishes.

CLIVE HARRIS 2/1, Aberdeen, with his best wishes for Christmas and greetings to all Pioneers. He is taking life very steady these days and his health is not too bad. Does not venture too far from home unless he has to. Best wishes, Clive, keep well.

ELAINE HENDERSON, Epping, niece of the late Ron Clark 2/1, with greetings for the New Year to all Pioneers and enclosing a cheque to Association funds. Many Thanks, Elaine, and our best wishes.

PAM HERRICK, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with best wishes to the "Pioneer Family" for a blessed Christmas and lots of good health and happiness in the New Year. Her mother, Dorothy Bates, is now in palliative care and resting after some time in hospital. Hope all is well, Pam, and love and best wishes to both mum and yourself.

DICK HOBLEY 2/1, Bremer Bay W.A., with quite a long letter, the first in several years, and enclosing a cheque to the News. Many thanks, Dick.

He and Sheila are keeping reasonably fit and well for their years and still living on their 50 acre "hobby" farm 20ks north of Bremer in southern W.A. They have had a good season, compared to the previous year, grown their own fruit and vegies and run a few head of Merino sheep. Dick depends on a couple of his grandsons to get the wool off, and by my reckoning you certainly have plenty to choose from (23 in total), so no wonder Xmas for you is a time to go into hiding. Dick and Sheila are proud parents of seven adult children.

John Hayden is a regular correspondent to the News (his good wife Wyn does the writing) and will be pleased to hear he is still remembered after so many years. Dick would like to know if anyone else remembers John's directive before one "stunt" on the Atherton Tablelands – "There will be no talkin', or smokin' or pickin' wild fruit, etc."

Certain to be of interest to our readers relates to the Memorial Wall that has recently been completed in London. Dick says the granite slabs for the wall were quarried in W.A., quite close to where he lives. He also mentions that he still belongs to a Pistol Club and has to travel 400 ks (return trip) to attend shoots

which he does on a regular basis, although good scores are a bit rare.

Max has answered you re the Battalion history, Dick, and as regards your query re Fred Pitt of Lower Louis Ponds, ex Don Coy 2/1, we have no knowledge of his whereabouts and have never had his name on our rolls. Perhaps someone may have heard of him over the years.

We see Marie Jenson occasionally and hear from her, but do not have Joan Osbourne on our mailing list. As you say, so many B Coy no longer with us.

You have nearly given me writer's cramp replying to your letter, Dick, and it just goes to show you can find something of interest to your mates here in our part of the world. Don't leave it so long next time!! Our best wishes to Sheila and yourself for the coming year.

GLORIA HUTCHINSON, Caringbah, widow of Bill 2/1, with a cheque for the treasurer and Christmas greetings to all. Many thanks and hope to see you on ANZAC Day. All the best.

BERT HUTTLEY 2/2, Bloomsbury Qld, enclosing his sub for the News and Christmas greetings to all Pioneers for a healthy and happy New Year. He has had a mixed year with a couple of trips to hospital and then on the brighter side a party for his 80th birthday. Has now joined the O.B.E. Club – you've got a lot of mates there Bert, age fast catching up. Thoroughly enjoyed his big day with about 50 guests, including great-grandchildren who helped him blow out the candles, and three of his sisters and two brothers.

With ANZAC Day coming up shortly, he is looking forward to the celebrations. Bert mentions another 2/2nd Pioneer in Proserpine, also in H.Q. Coy, and from our records I think he is Vic Norman. We have had no news from him for many years, but he is on our mailing list.

Thank you for the sub, Bert, and keep well.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, Castle Hill, with greetings to all for the coming year. He is still having leg and back problems and unable to get about without assistance. Trust this year might be kinder to you, Bill, and we send you our very best wishes.

BRIAN KYBERT 2/1, Long Jetty, per Betty, enclosing a sub and apologies for lateness.

Sorry to hear Brian is now confined to a wheelchair and it's good that Danny Sprouster and Rita Trefoni keep in touch. We have so few Pioneers left up around your area now that could visit and all seem to have leg problems and can't get about.

Our best wishes to you both and many thanks for the sub to the News.

MARIE LAMERTON, Liverpool, widow of Jack 2/1, keeps in touch regularly by phone as her eyesight is not the best in the last 12 months. Some months back she saw a notice in the Vet. Affairs paper asking after the whereabouts of a Jack Lamerton 2/1 Pioneers by a Peggy Mooney (nee Pike) of Goulburn with a contact number. Marie, with the help of her family, made contact with the lady and found she and Jack used to go dancing together at Harbord in their teens before Jack joined the Army. A visit was arranged after Marie told Mrs Mooney Jack had passed away and her son brought her down from Goulburn recently. Marie had a butter knife Jack had made from a shell case in Balikpapan with Peggy's name on it, so she gave it to her for a keepsake. Just goes to show the power of the press – a small notice in the Vets. paper that had a happy ending.

All the best Marie and hope I managed to get all the facts right from your phone call.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, wishing all the very best for a peaceful and happy New Year. Have been meaning to ring you but time seems to go so quickly these days – and I'm getting slower. Will be in touch before ANZAC Day. Love and best wishes from both of us.

NANCY LINTON, Tuncurry, widow of Don 2/2, with a letter that arrived too late for inclusion in the last issue. Thanks for the sub enclosed, Nancy, and receipt was mailed with November issue. Glad you still enjoy the News and read of the "doings" of Don's Army mates.

We hear fairly regularly from Dick Wakeley and see Snowy Dodd on ANZAC Day, but the news from most these days is not always the best. So many now with bad legs and knees – but time is marching on and they are not getting any younger.

All the best, Nancy, and good to hear from you. Keep well.

ERNIE LUNN 2/2, Dubbo, per pen of good wife Norma, with the news that Ernie is now in a cottage adjacent to the Bracken House Nursing Home in Dubbo. Norma was finding it hard to manage as she has not been in the best of health herself over the past year. His phone number is 6882 1869 if anyone would care to ring him before 8 p.m. one night. Ernie has had to give up his bowls as his right knee quite often lets him down. Many thanks, Norma, for your note and your good wishes and I thought you would like the painting of the creek in Dubbo. Look after yourself and love from both of us.

DON MCCLELLAND 2/2, Bundaberg, with a change of address, which has been noted by Max, and a donation to funds. He says his health is pretty good so far, only getting older. Always good to get the News and his best wishes passed on to all for the New Year.

JOYCE MCGREGOR, Bradbury, widow of Bob 2/1, with lots of good wishes for Christmas and the news of another great-grandie. Do hope all are well. Joyce has met up with Joyce Westwood, widow of Jack 2/2, and Joyce Walker, widow of George 2/1, at War Widows meetings, which she said was great. Always good to hear from you Joyce with news of the family – our love to all and maybe see you ANZAC Eve.

JEAN MCINTYRE, Springwood, widow of John 2/2, with a welcome donation to funds and a change of address. You had already notified us of this, Jean, when you sold the house and moved to the unit in Springwood, but in July 2002 your News was "returned to sender, left address". (I feel it had something to do with the unit and street number.) However, Max has mailed you back numbers for 2003 and a receipt for your donation. Glad Fred and Jean Wheaton were able to give you our address, we have not had news of them for ages. All the best and good to hear from you again.

ELEANOR NEWCOMBE, Glen Iris Vic., daughter of the late Cal Mitchell 2/2, with a sub for the News, which she enjoys reading. In recent times Eleanor has become involved in the production of the 2/2nd Pioneer Assn. newsletter in Victoria and knows what a vital role these newsheets play, especially keeping in touch with those who are unable to meet in person.

Thank you for your letter, Eleanor, and for the subscription enclosed. Max will be in touch with you by mail shortly. Best wishes.

BETTY O'CONNOR, West Ballina, widow of Neville 2/2, with a note written a few days before Neville passed away to say he was in the Ex-Services nursing home. It was a great shock to hear a few days later that Nev had passed away. Sincere sympathy has been extended to you and his family, Bette, we have lost a good friend. Our love and take care.

PETER PEILE 2/1, Caringbah, as usual per pen of good wife Erika, enclosing Peter's sub for the year. (Officially, Erika, the financial year of the News is from April-March, in reply to your query). However, we are happy to receive it any time.

Thank you for the photos enclosed in your letter. Several of the 2/1sts and their wives were there for the "Back to Dubbo" weekend when the plaques were dedicated in November 1999. The stone cairn was originally erected at the camp entrance in 1944, but fell into disrepair, and the Dubbo Lions Club took on the task of rebuilding it in the position where you took the photo. It was a wet and miserable day, and very few photos were able to be taken.

In 1996 when you were there the cairn had been in the Dubbo museum for safe keeping until the Lions Club took on the task of restoring it.

Have not heard any news of Stan Selwood for several years, so good that you keep in touch.

Pleased to hear Peter is still battling on and able to get around doing little day trips. Our best wishes to you both for the coming year.

JOY PREEDY, Shenton Park W.A., widow of Len 2/2, with Christmas greetings to all and every good wish for the coming year. She was going to son Greg's home for Christmas and would be in touch later. Our best wishes Joy.

MONA REINERS, Corryong Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with a hurried note and card with greetings for Christmas as she was off to Shepparton to spend some days with son Brian and family. Good to hear all the young ones are doing so well with their studies and spreading their wings. Seems no time since your three were all at Corryong High – how the years fly when age catches up. Do hope Mandy's results were good, can imagine how worried you must have been. Will write soon, like you the end of year was busy for us and I'm afraid my letter writing was put on the "back burner". Fond love to you and the family.

GIL SHORT 2/2, Caringbah, with a "short" note enclosing his sub. Afraid cannot make anything from that Gil only to say thank you. Must be some news from your part of the world.

BRYAN SMALLHORN 2/1, Armidale, with a sub enclosed for the News and his congratulations on the continuance of the paper after so many years. Passes on his good wishes for a peaceful and happy 2004. Our thanks, Brian, and best wishes.

HARRY SPREADBROUGH 2/1, Alexandra Hills Qld, and says he and Jean are doing fairly well for a couple of O.B.E.'s. That is getting to be a nasty word amongst those who have managed to make the distance. Plenty of them about, Harry, as it is a long time since the end of hostilities.

He was pleased to read of the success of the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord and would dearly love to see it, but says his legs and the long distance from Queensland make it impossible. The committee have really done a great job and are to be congratulated – always plenty of visitors walking the "track" and busloads of school children.

Harry and Jean send their best wishes to all Pioneers for the coming years and enclosed his sub to keep the News afloat. Many thanks.

DOROTHY STEAIN, Merewether, widow of Arthur 2/1, with a short note enclosing her sub for the News. Many thanks and best wishes.

GWEN STRODE, Yagoona, sister of the late Keith Jones 2/1 K.I.A., with her best wishes to all 2/1 Pioneers and a donation to the News. Max has replied to your query about your grandson marching on ANZAC Day, Gwen, and the wearing of Keith's medals. All the best and hope to meet one of these days. Thanks for the sub.

BILL THIELE 2/1, Port Hughes S.A., once again per pen of wife Betty. Says Bill is more gifted as a talker than a writer, but his regards are passed on to all Pioneers for a healthy New Year. They are both keeping reasonably well at the moment, but Bill may have to be "in the fashion" and have a knee reconstruction sometime in the future. He keeps in touch with Doug Waters 2/1 and Allan Olson 2/2 with the occasional phone call and perhaps may make Adelaide for ANZAC Day.

Their Yorke Peninsula has had some lovely rain after the long drought and the farmers are delighted with their lush crops. We could do with some here in Sydney too, our Warragamba Dam is down to only 52% and our hot weather is not making it any better. Still we are better off than some parts of the state.

Many thanks for the sub and your good wishes for the coming year.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba Nth Qld, with a couple of letters in the last month from he and Lesley. Our thanks for the sub enclosed and the book of stamps – always very acceptable.

Les mentions having cards from Jack and Shirley Hearn 2/2, Bert Huttley 2/2 and Peter and Dot Priest 2/1 for Christmas and a phone call from John Paul 2/1. We also heard from Bert Huttley, Les, see earlier in the Mail Bag.

Do hope your ankle operation was successful Les and by now home with plenty of

T.L.C. from Lesley. Take care and very best wishes to you both.

JOYCE WALKER, Rosemeadow, widow of George 2/1, with a welcome donation to the News and many thanks passed on to Max for his help since George's death last year. They were good friends, Joyce, and I'm sure he was only too happy to be of assistance. It was nice to see you and Judith recently and we will make the trip to Rookwood when time permits, Love and best wishes and will keep in touch.

DICK WAKELEY 2/2, Waratah, with some very kind words to the Editors (very much appreciated) and greetings to all Pioneers for Christmas. Many thanks, Dick, and for your donation to the News. Trust you are keeping well, take care.

DON CRAWFORD 2/2 of Concord, Association Treasurer, tripped over and fell, breaking his right wrist last November. After an operation at Concord Hospital, six weeks in plaster and much therapy he is back to normal.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue, but before closing, Max and I would like to thank all those Pioneers and their widows who so kindly sent greetings for Christmas and good wishes for the coming year. All were very much appreciated: Aub/Nancy Brasier; Eric/Doff Causer; Olive Finlay; Bob/Nell Ginnane; Bert/Connie Humphreys; Marie Jensen; Jack/Marj Kerslake; Joan Lake; Marie Lamerton; Dawn Levy; Mary Lloyd; Allan/Mary McInnes; Bert Neasbey; Allan Olson; Peter/Erika Peile; Doug/Roma Shearston; Doug/Maureen Waters; Ron Webster; Neville/Betty Woodham and John/Wyn Hayden.

LAST POST

NEVILLE O'CONNOR 2/2 of Ballina, passed away on 15th December 2003, at the age of 86 years, while residing at the Ballina Ex-Services Hostel. He had been in ill health for a few months and was only a few weeks in the home before passing away.

Neville had been a regular attendee of all our Country Reunions as well as coming down to Sydney each year with the Lismore crowd for the Anzac Day functions.

The funeral was held at the Wardell Catholic Church on 19th December and the church overflowed with relatives and friends – many standing outside for the service. Wardell is a small township, south of Ballina, and it was in that area that Neville lived most of his life.

Pioneers were well represented by Ken Wilson, Dick Walker, Ossie Carter, Ray and Nancy Robbins, Ray Harris and daughter Pam Lee, Albert and Lil Bettens, Peter and Dot Priest and Kevin Raward.

For sending the above details we thank Ken Wilson who extended our sincere sympathy to Neville's wife Betty, Brian, Michael, Sue, Tony and their families and Neville's two elderly sisters from Sydney.

MUFTI of Victoria, reported by Eric Causer 2/2nds – Max Cowden, P.O.W. of Frankston; Clifford Hunter of Moana; Albert Drew of Reservoir.

REVEILLE – Deceased; 2/1sts – A.C. Bentley; J.B. Dologhan; C.J. Hill; K.M. Leckie; T.H. Lee; C.Scholes; J.H. Wilson; 2/2nds – J.T. Jones; E.J. Sheumack; T.J. Stuart.

VALE JACK PEARCE

On 11th December, Jack Pearce 2/1 late of Collaroy Salvation Army Hostel, formerly of Manly, passed away at the Elizabeth Jenkins Hostel, at the age of 98 years.

Jack had not enjoyed good health for the past twelve months but was still bright and cheery when regularly visited by Jack and Marj Kerslake, as well as Joe Walker AASC, who represented the Rats of Tobruk Assoc.

The Remembrance Service was conducted at the Salvation Army Citadel in the grounds of their Hostel at Collaroy, on 15th December, by Salvation Army Officers who paid a very high tribute to Jack's stay at their hostel.

The reflections of Jack's life was given by Captain Ian Henry, followed by a scripture reading by Captain Robyn Collins and the

meditation and committal was carried out by Major Jan Fraser.

Ian Henry reflected on Jack's private life by saying he retired from work in 1971 and had been married to wife Valda for 75 years when she passed away in 2000 at the age of 94 years. Jack moved into the Hostel in 2000 and at that time gave up his driving licence at the age of 94 years.

The Remembrance Service was attended by eighty people which filled the Citadel, with family and friends. Pioneers and ladies in attendance were Roy Jardine, Laurie Kelly, Stan Jones, Max and Peg Herron, Jack and Marj Kerslake with daughter Margaret and grandchildren Jessie and Ellen, Joan Lake widow of Bob, and Joe Walker AASC of Rats of Tobruk Association.

Major Stan Morton OAM, Salvation Army and Padre of the Rats of Tobruk conducted the Poppy Service after which he recited the Ode to the Fallen and played the Last Post and Reveille.

The Eulogy of Jack's war service was carried out by Assoc. Vice President Roy Jardine as follows:-

"Jack enlisted in the AIF early 1940 and after being posted to the 2/1st Pioneer Bn sailed in September 1940 to the Middle East where he served in the Western Desert, Benghazi and Tobruk.

After returning to Australia in 1942 Jack went with the unit to New Guinea for the Kokoda Track battle at Imita Ridge. Upon return to Australia for jungle training he served with the unit in its last campaign at Balikpapan in Borneo.

When the Association was formed in 1948, Jack became involved as a Committee member and has been a staunch supporter of the Association until his passing. He also attended the ANZAC Day march and reunion at the Occidental Hotel each year. For 2003 he came to the Reunion on a walking frame with the support of daughter Joyce.

Jack was also a very keen supporter of the Rats of Tobruk Association and was a Life Member. He attended all their meetings and functions and made every endeavour to get up and dance whenever the occasion arose. Even in his later years he was an excellent dancer.

A regular correspondent to Pioneer News, it was only in the November issue that we published an article, written by a student for the "Manly Daily" titled "On the Buses with Jack Pearce", which went back to 1920 when Jack drove buses from Manly to Freshwater.

We thank God for the life of our departed friend and we extend our sincere sympathy to his daughter Joyce and her family. He will be sadly missed by both his fellow Pioneers and the members of the Rats of Tobruk Association."

VALE JACK McDONAGH

On 20th February, Jack McDonagh 2/2 of Kincumber, formerly of Condell Park, passed away at the age of 86 years. He had suffered an aneurism on 6th February and placed in intensive care at Gosford Hospital.

The funeral service was held at St. Lukes Church at Revesby on 26th February and Bankstown RSL carried out the Poppy Service. President Allan McInnes read the Eulogy on Jack's army service with the 2/2nd Pioneers. The funeral then left the church for the Woronora Cemetery for burial.

Pioneers in attendance at the service were Don and Val Crawford, Gavin Todd, Bill Lewis, Bert Neasbey and daughter Lynda, Dawn Levy (widow of Roy), Allan McInnes, Bill Tasker and Max and Peg Herron.

We thank Bert Neasbey for keeping us posted as to Jack's progress while in hospital and we have extended our sincere sympathy to Jack's family especially Simone and Paul who have kept in touch with Bert.

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With subscriptions send news of your family and happenings to MAX HERRON, 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills NSW 2209.

PIONEER NEWS

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2/1-2/2 PIONEER ANZAC ACTIVITIES

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

The most important service of this year was held on 24th April at the Martin Place Cenotaph with an attendance of twenty five Pioneers and twenty six of our ladies.

The assembly was marshalled by Bill Tasker with President Allan McInnes as Leader and the banner bearers were Noel Grant 2/1 and Don Crawford 2/2.

Wreaths were laid by Patron John Gilchrist for the Association, who also recited the Ode to the Fallen, and Janet O'Neill (daughter of the late Bill Robertson) for the ladies.

The bugler was Aub Brasier, who played a fine rendition of the Last Post and Reveille. We thank you Aub for your continued service to the Association over a period of forty-four years.

ANZAC DAY MARCH

Pioneers gathered around the 2/1 and 2/2 banners in Phillip Street on a fresh but fine autumn day. As they joined the march about 10.15 am, a rough count showed 51 marchers for 2/1 and 23 for 2/2, which included many minders and others proudly wearing medals on their right side. The two units followed the Castle Hill RSL Youth Band, which set a spanking pace. For a change, the march, after a long delay in King Street, proceeded without the usual stop/start interruptions - the downside being we missed out on our usual "rest" breaks.

For the 2/1, Ray Law was the flag bearer, with Tim Lloyd taking the banner. Dr Stan Goulston, OAM and John Gilchrist led the march. For the 2/2, Mark Neasbey was the flag bearer, Gordon Collins carried the banner, with Allan McInnes and John Allison leading.

OCCIDENTAL HOTEL REUNION

At the Occidental Hotel, the working sons - Ray Law, Geoff Finlay and David Herron accepted the meal monies and issued name tags, while upstairs Mark Neasbey, George Granger and Tim Lloyd assisted the Secretary. Also Don Crawford and Gavin Todd continued to issue receipts for Pioneer News contributions.

President Allan McInnes welcomed members, recited the Ode and proposed the toast to the Queen. Allan noted that this was the tenth year the Reunion had been held at the Occidental, and thanked the staff for the outstanding service over those years. He thanked also Mark Neasbey, George Granger, David and Craig Walker, and Harry Lamerton and family for their generous donations (of some hundreds of dollars to bar expenses). Also Craig Lynch (son-in-law of Noel Grant) who was unable to attend the reunion this year made a donation to the bar tab.

Allan expressed condolences for the families of those members who died since the last reunion. In particular, he mentioned Jack Pearce and Bill Robertson both aged 98 years. Their passing gave meaning to the old saying, "Old soldiers never die, they only fade away". Finally, he expressed appreciation on behalf of members to the workers, without whom the reunion could not continue.

Allan was followed by patron, John Gilchrist who commended the Committee whose untiring efforts had kept the Association together. In speaking of the

Occidental, he confided that his first drink at the hotel was in 1939, after a service at the Garrison Church (and after hours!). John spoke of changes which have taken place since that time, he regretted the decline in some values, in particular, respect for old people and invalids. On a lighter note, he told how in the desert at Cyrenaica where the unit was repairing a road pass, his prized Italian flying boots went missing. It seemed they had been exchanged by Laurie Kelly for some Egyptian eggs. On being reproached by John, Laurie said not to worry, he had saved a couple of eggs for him! (Read about Laurie's latest exploit further on in this report).

ROLL CALL

Jack Stewart again made the trip from Perth, WA. Noel Grant from Altona, Vic, was enthusiastic about his recent Tassie trip with wife and daughter where they enjoyed ten days in a motor home complete with mobile thunder box. Noel was impressed with the Bay of Fires and the great seafood, but not so keen on the narrow roads. Another from Victoria was Eric Causer from Hamilton who joined with his 1 platoon mates, Doug Shearston and Max Herron.

Phil Cramsie came down from Buderim, Qld and the usual suspects arrived from Forster - Doug Shearston and Snowy Dodd. There was Ron Cross from Ballina and Alec George and Ken Wilson from Lismore. Ken made sure everyone knew of the forthcoming reunion at Lismore in September. All good things come to an end, and this will be the last of the memorable events organised by Ken and his great group of helpers.

Frank (Bluey) Locane came after a three year absence, with son Andrew, and hopes to make it next year now that he and Jean are living at Prestons. Bob Ginnane missed out first time for a long time, not willing to leave Nell who is recovering from recent hospitalisation but was represented by son Kim. We overheard two old friends exchanging health notes. One said "Well put it this way - I'm not buying any more green tomatoes" Dick Chalmers regrets the ranks are thinning, and says "NO ONE CAN HEAR! I WONDER WHY?? "What did you say, Dick?".

One thing we did hear was the Parramatta Caledonian Youth Pipe Band, which paid a visit after lunch. There was drumming and skirling and piping, and the braw lads and winsome lassies were resplendent in their tartans.

We also heard Laurie (Three Course) Kelly complaining long and hard about his treatment at the Airport Train Station. Laurie had flown in for Anzac Day, and proceeded to the barrier where they asked for his ticket. Laurie explained he was a returned soldier, and travel was free for ANZAC Day. "Not here" they said, and asked for \$7 odd. Laurie enquired if they owned the trains which they denied, so he explained again with irrefutable logic that travel was free on NSW trains. When they still declined to open up and called for back-up, he pushed his suitcase through, scaled the barrier (try that some time in your eighties) and advanced to the platform. This was the turning point, and the minions admitted defeat - another Pioneer victory. As Laurie said, it was not the lousy \$7, it was the principle of the thing.

Finally, a thank you to the following sons, etc, for their support and attendance, some of

whom have been mentioned earlier - Don Grant (Noel), Frank and Wayne Fleming (son-in-law and grandson Noel Grant), Jeff Stone (Jack), Terry Jamison (Ernie), David and Craig Walker (late George), Jason Plevey (grandson Ronald Coyte), John Evans (late Ivor), Ken Finlayson (son-in-law Alec George), John Tasker / Canberra (Bill), Ben McPhee (grandson Eric Guthrie), Gordon Collins and Kevin Christopher (Pat Collins), Ian Secombe (late Cliff), Jim Fleming (Bill), Glen Dolaghan (late Jack), Adam Buchan / Allan Moore / Gary Hemmings (grandson, son-in-law, son - late Snowy), Gary and Chris Lewis (Sam), David Herron (Max), Ray Law (late Jim), George Granger (late Bill), Geoff Finlay (late Gordon), John Dawson (Ross), Philip and Tim Maddrell (Clive), Kim Ginnane (Bob), Andrew Locane (Frank), Paul Geronimi (nephew late Jack McDonagh), Mark and Greg / Sussex Inlet Neasbey (Bert). Tollis Smith grandson late George - marched with 2/2 but did not attend reunion.

This reunion seemed to go with a special swing but the veterans began to call it a day around mid-afternoon. The good ladies began to arrive, with the drivers and minders, and there were more hellos and goodbyes. The blithe Robyn Bell (daughter of the late Leo Morris) was up from Melbourne and called in to renew acquaintances.

And so, it was home James, and put the medals away, hopefully for another day. A final thank you to the Committee, and the willing workers who made the day go so smoothly and pleasantly.

Reported by **BILL LEWIS**

SICK PARADE

JACK BERTRAM 2/1 of Hamilton was in Mater Hospital in May for a stomach operation after which he went to stay with his daughter Susan Kenny. On our last phone call Jack said he was slowly recovering and getting back on his feet.

LAST POST

WAL de GRUCHY 2/2 of Kondinin WA passed away in hospital on 7th December 2003, aged 88 years. He served with the 2/2 Pioneers at Nadzab N.G. and Balikpapan, Borneo.

Wal was a very dedicated member of the local RSL and marched every Anzac Day with fellow members.

Wife Patricia and Wal had been married for 58 years and he is greatly missed by his family, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

We thank Patricia for sending us the sad news and we extend our sincere sympathy to her and the family members.

JOHN McKNIGHT 2/2, aged 88 years, passed away on 6th May after a short stay in palliative care at Greenwich.

He had formerly lived at Dundas, but moved in March this year to Wesley Gardens Nursing Home.

A private funeral was held at Pine Grove Crematorium, and the Poppy service was carried out by John's local RSL club.

John has been an ardent Association supporter with his regular contributions and letter writing. For the past few years he has been looked after by his niece Ann Caldwell and we thank her for phoning the details of John's passing.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

ANZAC Day was once more blessed with good weather and a huge crowd lined the Sydney streets waving our Australian Flag handed out by Australia Post employees. It was again great to see the 2/1 and 2/2 marching together, although down in numbers, but ranks boosted by sons and daughters of departed members of both units. However, we have received lots of letters for the Mail Bag from members who were not able to join their mates on this special day.

FRED ALWAY 2/1, Beaumaris Vic., with his thanks for the News and says he always looks forward to its arrival. Fred has not been in the best of health for quite a while, but not too bad at the time of writing. Fortunately, his son lives reasonably close and keeps an eye on him, but his two daughters live in Queensland so too far away to be of assistance.

Many thanks for the donation to funds, Fred, and your best wishes are passed on to all Pioneers. Hope your health continues to improve.

DORA ANDERSON, Merimbula, widow of Don 2/1, with a long note of her doings and enclosing a cheque for the News. She passed on her congratulations to the editors for keeping the Pioneer News going over so many years and always looks forward to its arrival, even though not many of the names are familiar. Don enlisted in Victoria (VX64297) and moved about different units before finally finishing up in the 2/1sts. Occasionally sees a name she remembers and was especially pleased to see Colonel Adrian Buckley's name in last newsletter, as she had heard Don speak of him in very high regard.

Dora keeps herself busy in the garden and is still involved in the RSL Auxiliary, Laurel Club, View Club and golf - how do you get time to garden Dora? They have a wonderful group of Legatees in Merimbula and nothing is ever a trouble to them. Just recently they took 76 ladies to a morning at the local cinema and then across the road to the Bowling Club for lunch. Dora says, just imagine 76 ladies, not all very mobile, and they are always so caring. Good to know you are all being looked after so well and able to join in with other widows in your area.

Dora sends her best wishes to all Pioneers and their families with good health for the year ahead and her prayers for a more peaceful future. Many thanks for your cheque, Dora, and our kind regards.

BOB BALDIE 2/1, Albert Park, Vic., with a generous donation to funds, for which many thanks. Bob's daughter, Christine, penned his note as his hand and eye are giving him trouble - good to have a back-up, Bob, and our thanks to Christine for her note. Apart from his eye problem, he keeps in good health and keeps his days busy with family. Says he has a grandson Mathew 6½ and a granddaughter Charlotte 2½ and they keep him young at heart and full of laughs.

Thank you for your very kind remarks on the Mail Bag, Bob, much appreciated, and will endeavour to keep up the good work. The "boys" had a great ANZAC Day, the weather was good, but sad to see so many old faces missing. All the best, always nice to hear from you.

PHIL BARNETT 2/2, Alstonville, enclosing his sub for the news and his congratulations to all those who keep the Association so active. Many thanks, Phil, and your kind regards passed on to all.

ALBERT BARTON 2/1, Gulgong, with greetings from both Gwen and himself and hope all his friends are enjoying good health and happiness in these troubled times. They are finding each day is getting more difficult to get motivated - and you've certainly not got that on your own. Time is fast catching up, but we are still here so have that to be thankful for.

Do hope Gwen has improved since her trip to hospital and taking it easy.

Alby says his part of the country was still in the grip of the drought and local farmers finding it difficult to manage. Perhaps they may have had some welcome rain since you wrote, but from quite a lot of letters received from all over the state, most farmers are suffering. Our Warragamba Dam is at an all-time low and any rain we get seems to miss the catchment area.

Many thanks for your donation to funds, Alby, and our very best wishes passed on to you both, keep well, and always good to hear from you.

DON BARRACLOUGH 2/1, Burleigh Heads Qld, with a letter of apology for non-attendance on ANZAC Day, but says he will be with all in spirit. Don had not been enjoying the best of health and finds that he can no longer drive down to Lismore for the Pioneer meetings and lunches associated with the North Coast Branch. The ranks of B Coy 2/1 are getting very thin these days, Bob, only a handful keeping reasonably well.

Many thanks for your sub and our best wishes to Mona and yourself - perhaps you may be able to make it to Lismore in September. Take care.

TOM BLAINEY 2/1, Noble Park Vic., per pen of wife Vi, with a welcome donation to funds and says how pleased they both are to receive the News. Helps to keep them in touch with news of fellow Pioneers and their families, especially living in another state and not having a lot of daily contact with former army mates.

Tom passed on the news that Ted Budge, a former sergeant in the 2/1st who served in Borneo, passed away earlier in the year. Ted enlisted in Victoria and in later years had a hotel in Beaconsfield, Vic. We had not heard any news of Ted in recent years, Tom, only from your letters. Eric Causer 2/1 of Hamilton usually rings Max with the names of any deceased Vic. Members whose names are listed in your RSL Newsletter MUFTI, but so far Ted's name has not been listed. Both Tom and Vi attended the funeral at Berwick, Vic. Our thanks for passing on the news.

Thanks for the donation to funds, Tom, and to you Vi, for the letter. Our fondest regards to you both, and always good to hear from you.

MAVIS BLANCH, Beaudesert, widow of Ray 2/1, with a short note and her sub for the News. Our thanks, Mavis, and hope you have recovered fully from the fall in the shower - must have had too much to drink at your "special" birthday the night before. Congratulations and best wishes from all your friends down south. Hope you have had no ongoing problems from the fall and it didn't effect your trip to Yamba in April (David & Lynn really enjoyed their trip a couple of months ago). Thanks for the news on Lola. It must be a very sad time for you and her family, but lovely that she was able to share your 80th with you.

Do hope you may be able to make Lismore for the reunion in September. At the moment we are fairly sure we are going to be able to make it, along with the Kerslakes, so hope to catch up once again. Love and best wishes.

EVELYN BOOTH, Wagga, partner of late Jack Morgan 2/2, with her sub for the News and her best wishes passed on to all Pioneers, both 2/1 and 2/2. Evelyn was a regular, along with Jack, to nearly all our reunions in the past and has kept in touch ever since Jack passed away. Good to hear from you, Ev, and thanks for your sub and your good wishes.

VERA BRADLEY, Cairns, our ex-AAMWS friend, with a letter of thanks for the mention of her book "I Didn't Know That" in my last Mail Bag. This resulted in a couple of sales - treasurer Don Crawford and a friend have sent along for copies. Hope you have had plenty of local sales, Vera, best of luck. All the best from Max and I.

LES BRITT 2/1, Westcourt Qld, with his sub for the News and a change of address, which Max has noted. Les apologises for not writing sooner but had a fall breaking a couple of ribs and was in hospital for nine weeks. Trust you are on the mend, Les, thanks for the sub and best wishes.

COLIN CAMERON 2/1, Campbelltown, per his daughter Sandra Grainger, a donation to the News. Thanks, Colin, and hope this finds you well as there was no news enclosed with your note. All the best.

BARBARA CHEAL, Glen Iris Vic., widow of Frank 2/2, with a change of address and a welcome donation to funds. She sends her thanks for the News and occasionally a name pops up that is familiar. Frank talked a lot about his mates and how he valued his years of their friendship; Says it is sad to see so many of their names listed in Last Post.

Barbara is well and content with life - has enough interests to keep the brain ticking over (somewhat slower she says) good family, and friends and her garden. What more could you want. Good to hear, Barbara, and nice to hear from you again. Keep well and best wishes.

VERA COOK, Randwick, widow of Clem 2/1, with a welcome donation for the News and that at long last she has received the War Widows Pension. Good to hear, Vera, and that you had also received word from the War Graves Commission that a plaque for Clem would be placed in the Commemoration Wall at Rookwood.

It is always good to hear from you, Vera, and I'll try to make sure Max has no more falls. Not too many (of his age) can claim to have fallen in a bucket of water. All the best.

RON COYTE 2/1, Wentworthville, with a note enclosing a cheque to assist with expenses for the News and to thank those responsible for a job well done. Ron was pleased to say his grandson was able to march for him on ANZAC Day and was very happy to do so, proudly wearing Ron's medals.

Do hope you have some luck with Veteran Affairs re your E.D.A. - if no luck keep trying. In some cases it can take a while.

In regard to Harry Corby, Ron, we no longer have him on our roll and he is not in the phone book under his old East Hills address. Perhaps someone in the unit may be able to help you with the information. Best wishes and thank you for your cheque.

ALBY DEAN 2/1, Shepparton Vic., sends best wishes to all fellow Pioneers and enclosed a cheque for the News. Their ANZAC services were well attended this year and although the ranks of the old Diggers were diminishing the public interest seemed to be increasing.

He and his wife are keeping well and very grateful that they can stay independent. Many thanks for the sub and best wishes.

JOYCE DENNY, Lismore, widow of Dave 2/1, also with a report of record crowds at their ANZAC services in Lismore, seeming to get bigger and better every year. The weather was great at both the Dawn Service and the later one and enjoyed by all.

Many thanks for your enclosed cheque, Joyce, and hope to see you in September, all going well. Quite a lot won't be able to make the trip because of age and ill-health. Time and age catching up.

WINN DWYER, Waverley, widow of Mick 2/1, with a short note enclosing a cheque towards the News and wishing all Pioneers the best of health in 2004. Many thanks, Winn, and hoping you are keeping well. All the best.

BILLIE DYNON, Booragul, widow of Frank 2/1, with a welcome cheque and a change of address from Toronto. Billie sends her thanks for continuing to receive the Pioneer News which she really enjoys reading. Hope you are keeping well, Billie, and we send you our best wishes.

MATT ELLIOTT 2/2, West Wollongong, enclosed a money order with his note and his thanks for keeping him up with the news. Sends best wishes to all Pioneers, especially those in D Coy, 2/2. How about a longer note next time, Matt, to let your mates know what goes on in your part of the country.

BILL FLEMING 2/1, Mittagong, per pen of wife Maureen, enclosing a donation to funds for which many thanks. Maureen writes that Bill has unfortunately lost most of his vision in the past few months, but is coping quite well. Judging distance and not being able to read is the worst

part, but they are discovering the world of "talking books". Quite a few of his fellow Pioneers are also having this problem, mostly through aged related macular degeneration.

Your regards are passed on to your mates in 2/1, Bill, and thank you to Maureen for writing on your behalf. Kindest regards to you both.

VI FLYNN, Belmont North, widow of Mick 2/1, passed on a donation to the News at the annual Tobruk Sunday service. Good to see you again, Vi, and maybe catch up once again in Lismore. Max will send receipt with this issue of News.

KEN FRANKS 2/1, Kirwan Qld, with a change of address from Waterford West. Max has made a note of this and copies of the News will be posted to your new address in future. From your letter, it amazed me to see how your christian name of Kynaston Spencer came to finish up Ken in the army. Maybe too hard for the "powers that be" to call the roll. Not too many of the band members still around, Ken, possibly only Ron Webster apart from yourself. Kind regards and keep well.

KEN FRASER, St. Helena Vic., with a note and cheque attached for subscription to the News. Max has written you, Ken, with a request for information for his records and looks forward to hearing from you in due course. Your name has been placed on the mailing list for future copies. Many thanks.

AVELINE GAMBLE, Chermerside Qld, widow of Bill 2/1, with a short note enclosing a donation to funds and says how she still appreciates receiving and reading the News. Good to hear from you and we send our kindest regards.

RUSS HARRISON 2/2, Stirling S.A., enclosing a welcome donation and greetings from the South Aussie Pioneers. With ANZAC Day approaching, Russ was looking forward to meeting old friends, especially as he and Rona will have daughter Kate with them and a granddaughter, Jessica Harrison, from North Wilberforce NSW, who will be spending a couple of weeks with them. Real family gathering and I'm sure you all had a great day.

Best wishes to both Rona and yourself Russ from your old friends in the East.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, with a long note penned by wife Wyn, and apologies for John's non-attendance on ANZAC Day. Wyn has had several trips to Sydney over recent months for surgery on her right eye and they have been staying with son John. At the moment not sure if it means more surgery or radio therapy, but the doctors have given Wyn some months to make up her mind.

John is keeping very well and has just celebrated his 89th birthday - belated greetings and our best wishes. Seems to be plenty of celebrations with all your young ones - how time flies. Hope all goes well, Wyn, love and take care.

IAN HODGE 2/1, Evans Head, with a welcome donation to funds and congratulations to the editors on the standard of the News. Even though not many of the names are familiar, due to the fact that Ian only joined the 2/1sts in April, 1945 and turned 20 after the war had finished, he still looks forward to the News arriving.

Was interested to read the article on the front page of last issue with mention of Peter Cullen who works for the office of the Governor of NSW as Ian believes that the author of the article was a brother of Sandra Cooper who lives a 3-iron shot (must be a golfer Ian) from him up the street. Small world.

Thanks for the donation, Ian, and glad to hear you are keeping well.

JOHN HUNT 2/1, New Farm Qld, with news of the trip he and Mollie Jean made to Canada late last year. They had a great time and Mollie saw just about all her family and friends while there. They both came to Sydney for ANZAC Day and while John joined the reunion lunch at the Occidental, Mollie Jean was able to lunch with the ladies. Good to see you both and hope you had a safe trip home.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, Castle Hill, with a very generous donation to funds and his apologies for his non-attendance on ANZAC Day. He passed on his regards to all Pioneers and

hoped they had a great day. (Max passed on your apologies at the reunion.)

Bill is still troubled with his legs and unable to get about very well. His daughter was going to drive him to his old bowling club on ANZAC Day, so we hope you enjoyed your outing. Do keep well and kind regards from all your Pioneer friends.

GORDON KILLION, RAAF, Ballina, with a short note with his cheque for funds and mentions that he met Phil Barnett 2/2 recently at Ballina RSL and says he was fit and well. Gordon says he disturbed Phil's reading by reminiscing about old Lismore days and friends still in the land of the living and others who have sadly passed on. There are certainly getting plenty of those, Gordon, as time marches on. All the best and many thanks for your donation to the News.

KIM LATHAM, Warriewood, daughter of the late Jack Howie 2/2, with a welcome donation and with ANZAC Day here again special thoughts to all her dad's friends, especially "Toddy" (Gavin Todd, and "Mac" (Allan McInnes).

Kim says Jack now has five most beautiful great-grandchildren - Jordan, Alex, Tessa, Hugh and Harry and is sure he would have been very proud of them. Many thanks for your letter, Kim, and your cheque and I'm sure your dad's mates will be happy to know that they are still remembered by you and your family.

DAWN LEVY, Revesby, widow of Roy 2/2, with a very welcome letter and a cheque enclosed for the News. Dawn keeps busy, but misses Roy very much. Max and I do too, Dawn, he was always on the phone with his "hello 5491". (Strange how small things stick in your mind.)

She has joined Legacy and War Widows' Guild and attends regularly. Was a little doubtful at first but has now made some nice friends and really looks forward to the days out.

The three grandsons are a blessing to her - the eldest two (both nine) are now into sport and Dawn attends their matches when she can. Ryan and Bryce both play soccer (For different teams) and Bryce has been accepted into the Australian Youth Choir and will be performing at the Sydney Town Hall. Wouldn't Roy have been thrilled about that, Dawn, as he really had a fine voice himself.

Good to hear from you, Dawn, and will be in touch with you one day soon. Take care.

NANCY LINTON, Tuncurry, widow of Don 2/2, with her thanks for the News and a cheque to worthy treasurer.

Nancy had a call from Dick Wakeley 2/2 on ANZAC morning, remembering Don, and it was much appreciated. Dick was not in the best of health and was unable to attend an ANZAC service.

Nancy had also been speaking by phone to Ray Burroughs (2/2) and Meryl in the ACT and says they were celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary in April. We send our congratulations to you also Ray and Meryl and may you have many more happy years together.

Nice to hear from you Nancy and we send our best wishes. Many thanks for the cheque.

ERNIE LUNN 2/2, Dubbo, with a short note enclosing a cheque for subs. Dubbo has had a plague of grasshoppers and certainly did nothing to help the local farmers as they were already in the grip of drought. Hope the weather has improved since you wrote, Ern, and that you may have had some rain.

Our best to Norma and hope she is feeling better since the cooler weather. Good to hear from you. Keep well and kindest regards.

NEVILLE ("BINDER") MOANE 2/1, North Curl Curl, with a donation to the News and his apologies for not being able to attend the ANZAC reunion. However, was able to have a chat to Max before the march and hopes to be a "starter" next year. Trust you were able to have a few words with Pat Bentley while she was over from the west - says it may be her last trip. Thanks for the sub and best wishes.

MARION MCGREGOR, Rothbury, widow of Roy 2/2, with a small change of address, which

Max has noted, and cheque for funds. Good to hear you still enjoy the News and, as you say, always something of interest to someone.

Pleased to hear you have enrolled in Hunter Legacy and in company with lots of other widows. Most of our Legacy ladies enjoy the company and outings and have made lots of new friends. I'm sure your trip to Adelaide to your daughter was great, as I guess with the distance you don't see her very often. May as well do as much as you can, Marion, while you are able to travel and enjoy it.

In regard to the photos of D Coy 2/2 that Roy took on his travels, we are sure that someone may be interested and could contact you if they would like them. Some were taken in Australia, Morotai and Balikpapan. Marion's address is 124 Wilderness Road, Rothbury NSW 2320. Many thanks and good to hear from you again.

GEORGE NICHOLS 2/1, Sutherland, with his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day owing to a slight stroke which has left him a "bit wobbly" on his feet and unable to march. I'm quite sure Jean did the right thing when she wouldn't give you a leave pass. Max extended your apologies to Stan Jones for your absence, but unfortunately Jack Tooker was also an absentee on the day. The "boys" enjoyed their big day, as usual, but it is sad to see age and sickness fast catching up.

Glad to see you and Jean are happy in your move to the Village and that you made the move when you did. Best wishes to you both and I hope your health continues to improve.

JOHN PAUL 2/1, Camira Qld, with an apology for lateness of last sub, but had a new knee late last year and although the replacement went fine he has had problems with blood circulation. He had the operation done in Greenslopes.

John plays bowls every Saturday and still enjoys the day - wins some, loses some. Also spends a few hours in the garden every day to keep himself active.

Says he has a good yarn now and again to Les and Lesley Tunks in Mareeba and they seem to be going OK at the moment. The operations on Les' ankle seems to have been a success.

Max enjoyed your Viagra jokes, but will save them for an appropriate occasion. Best wishes and hope your leg improves.

ROBERT PHILPOTTS 2/2, Woodend Vic., with just a very short note with his sub to help with the good work of the Association.

Many thanks. Bob is still keeping good health and sends kindest regards to all, especially his friends in 2/2 Pioneers.

JOHN PITMAN 2/1, Moree, with a welcome donation to the News which he really looks forward to receiving. Mentions that there are not many old 2/1 fellows left around the Moree area - there are not a lot of old 2/1sts left anywhere any more. The ranks are thinning, and only a handful of old Sigs. Max is always pleased to hear from you.

Good to hear that your part of the country is enjoying a good season and the cattle market good and very kind to you. Looks as if we shall have to grin and bear it with our steak prices.

You will have returned from your trip on the Ghan to Darwin by the time the News reaches you and hope you really enjoyed the trip. Max and I have often thought of making the trip but think we may have left our run a bit late.

Many thanks for the sub and very best wishes from Max.

DOT PRIEST, Ballina, wife of Peter 2/1, with the news that Pete had been seven weeks in John Flynn Hospital for ray treatment and by now trust you have had some successful results. We had not heard, Dot, as we don't have too many regular correspondents from your part of the world anymore. Ken Wilson had told us Don Barraclough had been in hospital and from your letter he must have contacted shingles later on. Pleased to see he and Mona had been to see Pete while in hospital. We had a note this Mail Bag from Don with apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day, but only mentioned he was not driving long distances.

Pete's best wishes are passed on to the 2/1 "boys" and sorry he could not join them - but hope for better luck next year.

With a bit of luck, and good health, we hope to see you in Lismore. Thanks for the sub, Dot, and our love and best wishes to you both.

CHARLES RICHARDSON 2/2, Manly West Qld, with a cheque and his best wishes for a successful ANZAC Day. The numbers are thinning but they still managed a good day with old friends.

Says it is good to read the News with items of interest on old mates and certainly can bring back memories. He mentions that when Ted Carter arrived in Tobruk he was posted to Charles Platoon for a while and that Jack Bertram was a stalwart of his 7PI, A Coy. Dick Wakeley was also his Platoon Commander C Coy 2/2. Charles was sorry to read of the death of Neville O'Connor in last issue. On the "Trek Back" to the Tablelands in 1993 he met up with Betty and Neville. He had known Nev previously, after the war, on the North Coast.

Do hope your health problems have sorted themselves out, Charles, and were able to watch the march on TV. Keep well.

TOSS ROBERTSON, Randwick, widow of Bill 2/2, had her 94th Birthday on 3rd June and belated greetings Toss from all your Pioneer friends and a happy and healthier year ahead. We were pleased to have daughter Janet join us on Tobruk Sunday and she gave Max a donation to the News on your behalf. Love and best wishes to you both.

GEOFF ROBINSON 2/1, Quaama, with a welcome cheque for subs and "something extra" to keep the Association functioning. He and Enid have not had a good year, Enid so crippled with multiple sclerosis that Geoff was unable to look after her at home, even with Home Care, so she is now in a nursing home. Says it was a blow to him after being together 58 years. Geoff had some time in hospital with pneumonia, but now on the mend.

Obviously, you did not make it to Sydney for ANZAC Day, Geoff, so hope all is well. Best wishes to Enid and hope this year is kinder to you both.

BILL "PEE WEE" RUSSELL 2/2, Tamworth, with his once in a "blue moon" letter, but better late than never. (Says himself he was the worst letter writer in the unit.) Passes on news of Ted Carter 2/1 - still as cheeky as ever - Cec Sloggett 2/2 of Gunnedah still going fairly well for an old fella and Bill himself busy with the local RSL visiting hospitals and attending funerals - all too frequent these days. He and wife Nell also attend the local schools sharing the ANZAC story and are amazed at the interest shown by these young people.

Nell still has her health problems but copes well - Bills says she is still his worry - and he is still her problem.

They have lived in Tamworth since 1948 and says it's a great town (must be Bill, I was born there) and during January at Country Western Time he does a little yodelling and says he's not too bad. Would love to hear from any of the Pioneers passing through Tamworth at anytime (phone 6765 8565) and ask for "Pee Wee".

Best wishes to you both and many thanks for the cheque enclosed in your letter.

BOB SEFTON 2/2, Safety Bay WA, with a short note enclosing his sub and says he feels somewhat akin to the bloke in the poem of earlier years who said "there have been no shipwrecks or drownings and nothing to laugh at". So it has been with him, nothing of interest to report except that life marches on. However, that condition doesn't make good copy.

Never mind, Bob, glad to hear you are well and still in the land of the living and thanks for your sub and your kind remarks on the Mail Bag. Your best wishes passed on to fellow Pioneers.

RAY SMITH 2/1, Glen Iris Vic., with sub enclosed and apologies for lateness. Has just returned from his summer "retreat" at McCrae. Many thanks - maybe a longer letter next time. All the best.

HARRY SPREADBOROUGH 2/1, Alexandra Hills Qld, with a "masterpiece" per the computer,

says his typewriter gave up the ghost. Very good effort for an "oldie" with arthritis, Harry, so will expect to hear more from you in future.

Both he and Jean have had a rough bout of sickness, Jean with a bad virus and Harry in hospital with a heart attack. He's back on deck again and not able to do too much, but Jean says he can still "barber the spuds", so still some use about the house.

Good to hear of you both and look forward to more of your "masterpieces" to keep you in practice. Keep well and your very best wishes passed on to all Pioneers.

DANNY SPROUSTER 2/1, Dundas with a brief note enclosing his sub and apologies for ANZAC Day. Age and sickness catching up. Best wishes and thank you for sub and your kind remarks to both of us.

RAY STIDIFORD 2/2, Berri SA, per pen of good wife Marcia, with a sub from Ray and the news that his health is improving but very frail. He sends his regards to all his old mates and looks forward to the News. Many thanks for the sub.

GEORGE TOLMIE 2/1, Canley Heights, with a very brief note enclosing his sub and best wishes passed on to Max and fellow Pioneers. Thanks George and kindest regards.

JOYCE WESTWOOD, Bradbury, widow of Jack 2/2, enclosing a cheque for the News and apologies for lateness. She looks forward to receiving same and sends her best wishes.

FRED WHEATON 2/1, Sawtell, with a welcome letter after so long and good to hear you are still battling on. Fred and Jean also had a 60th wedding anniversary last year (as Max and I did too), so that rather gives our ages away, not young "chicks" any more. We often, like you, think of the old reunions, Fred, and of the lots of great friends who have passed on. They really were good old days. Good to see Judy lives close and can keep an eye on you, makes life a little easier.

Sorry you couldn't make it on ANZAC Day, but not too many of the old faces able to front up nowadays. Time has certainly caught up and age has wearied them.

Love and best wishes to both Jean and yourself. Keep as well as possible and many thanks for sub.

"SNOWY" YOUENS 2/2, Essendon Vic., with a brief note enclosing his sub and looking forward to their reunion in Melbourne for ANZAC DAY. Hope you had a good day. Says he is still enjoying good health, still gets three meals a day, and half the bed, so what more can you ask. Your kindest regards passed on to all Pioneers and thanks for the sub.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue, such a lot of letters and I'm sure over my allotted space Max allows me - he can always give me the "sack". Before closing, I would like to thank all the Pioneer ladies who joined in our luncheon ANZAC Day, although we had to make do this year with a coffee bar. Interstate visitors were Jean Grant, Ann Grant, Margaret Fleming, Kim Fleming (Jean's family), Robyn Bell (All from Victoria), Pat Bentley from WA, Mollie Jean Hunt from Brisbane, Roma Shearston came from Forster and Sydneysiders included Marj Kerslake, Gloria Hutchinson, Joyce Law, Lynn and Peg Herron. Most joined the menfolk later in the afternoon at the Occidental.

KOKODA ANZAC SERVICE

The ANZAC Commemoration Service was held on 23rd April at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway and for the unveiling of the Flight Lieutenant William Newton VC Plaque by Air Vice Marshall Geoff Shepherd AM. Being a sunny day attracted a huge crowd and was a credit to organisers, Alice Kang, Secretary and Rusty Priest, Chairman.

Pioneers in attendance were Don and Val Crawford, Roy Jardine and Max and Peg Herron. With this group was President Joe Madeley and Rae Kean, Rats of Tobruk Assoc.

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC - Sunday 15th August at 2.30pm Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Killoola St, Concord. Notification of attendance to Max Herron. Ph: 9759 5491.

VALE - MARY LLOYD

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Mary Lloyd, widow of the late Jack Lloyd, 2/1, on 29th June. Mary had not been in the best of health for some time and was being lovingly cared for at the home of her daughter Helen Walker.

The funeral service on 6th July was held at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Randwick, and Mary was laid to rest in Waverley Cemetery. Among the many mourners at the church were members of the Association - Jack and Marj Kerslake, Joan Lake, Olive and Lyn Finlay, Max and Peg Herron and Lynn Herron.

Mary had been a great supporter of the Association and attended most of our country reunions, annual wreath laying and ANZAC Day marches and was proud to see son Tim carrying the 2/1st banner.

We have lost a wonderful friend and our very sincere sympathy is extended to Tim, Anthony, Helen and their families on their sad loss.

2/1-2/2 LISMORE REUNION

Sat. 11th Sept., -Sun. 12th Sept., 2004

The NSW North Coast Branch invite all Pioneers, wives, friends and adult families to attend their Reunion at Lismore and Ballina. The organisers would like to see a good attendance as it may be the last country reunion.

WREATH LAYING - Sat. 11th, September.

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

REUNION DINNER - Sat. 11th September.

7pm. Smorgasbord Dinner at the Lismore RSL Club, Market Street. Cost \$25 per head. Drinks at own expense.

BARBECUE LUNCH - Sun. 12th September.

12 noon for lunch at the Ballina Ex-Servicemen's Home Complex, 71-73 Norton Street, Ballina. Cost is \$10 per head. Drinks at \$1.50 per can or stubby of beer.

ACCOMMODATION: LISMORE - Olympic Motel Ph 02 6621 9900: Single \$66; Double \$77; 2 persons 2 beds \$81; 3 persons 2 beds \$88; 3 persons 3 beds \$92; 4 persons \$104. Karinga Motel 02 6621 2787: Single \$62; Double \$72; 2 persons, 2 beds \$75; 3 in 2 beds \$85; 3 in 3 beds \$90; 4 persons \$100. Centrepoint Motel 02 6621 8877 - no rates available. These three motels are in Molesworth Street and within walking distance of RSL Club and Central Lismore. Ballina Motel - no rates available - check NRMA guide. All accommodation is to be booked by member.

TRANSPORT: Planes from Sydney to Lismore and Ballina daily. Country Link trains from Sydney to Lismore (1) Departs Sydney 7am arrives Lismore 7pm same day. (2) Departs Sydney 4pm, arrives Lismore 4am next morning. Train travellers will be met at station and taken to motel. Plane travellers to Lismore will be met, if notified to Ken Wilson. Ballina travellers to arrange own transport.

DEPOSIT OF \$10 per head is required with application form below to reach Ken Wilson before 28th August for catering purposes. Deposit is non-refundable.

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

CUT OUT - Fill in particulars

Full Name:
Ladies Name:

Phone: Unit:

Address:

No. ATTENDING ☐

TICK: CAR ☐ TRAIN ☐ PLANE ☐

PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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

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Welfare: BILL TASKER, Phone 9718 6658

VICTORY IN PACIFIC SERVICE

The commemoration service of V.P. Day in Sydney was held at two places – the first was the usual official service in the morning at the Cenotaph, Martin Place, and the second one in the afternoon at the Kokoda Track Memorial Park at Concord, on Sunday 15th August.

The yearly service at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Concord at 2.30 pm commenced under the auspices of the RSL. This event is open to all people and particularly to ex-servicemen, their families and friends. The attendance was excellent and all comfortably seated under the cover of huge marquees.

The 233rd Regional Cadet Unit, St George, provided the Catafalque Party and upon it being mounted, the service began. The programme was under the smooth control of the Master of Ceremonies, Ms Suzanne Latimer, well known announcer from Sky Channel.

WELCOME BY RUSTY PRIEST

Mr Rusty Priest AM, Chairman of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, welcomed everybody at this service and in particular introduced the Guest of Honour, Major General Ken Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM, Land Commander Australia. Rusty went on to say the Walkway is a constant reminder of the actual Kokoda operation and praised the deeds of those courageous soldiers who were involved. He mentioned also the foolish people who seek to vandalise parts of the Walkway which means a constant watch and repair.

The prayers for "serving members of the forces", "The Queen and Nation", and the "Lord's Prayer" were in the capable hands of the Rev. David Hayes, OAM, and Rev. Paul Weaver, who is Chaplain of Concord Hospital. This was followed by reciting the "Prayer for the Fallen" by Major Tex Morton, OAM, of the Salvation Army who then went on to say he would like to give a vote of thanks to Rusty Priest for the great work that he has put into the overall project of this Walkway. All present responded with hearty acclamation.

ADDRESS BY GUEST OF HONOUR

Major General Gillespie, in delivering the V.P. Day address, covered the various battles leading up to the point where our troops were subject to direct attack on the Kokoda Track and the Japanese were pressing on strongly towards Australia. He gave praise to our forces in meeting the enemy and mentioned the assistance received, such as the Battle of Midway. He stated these particular episodes strengthened his view that having won these battles, Australia had matured as a nation. The present defence forces are in a position to cope with present and any further troubles.

While the Wreath Laying Ceremony was taking place, the Sydney Town Chorus, made up of about twenty five ladies from Concord district, rendered various popular tunes, such as "I love my beloved country" and "I am, you are, we are Australians".

The "Ode to the Fallen" was recited by Paul Bartels, Vice-President 2 Aust Corps Signals Assoc. The Bugler from the NSW Corrective Services Band rendered the Last Post and Reveille. The band provided music for the two hymns and National Anthem. They also played occasional tunes when appropriate.

POEM BY HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAIN

Charlie Lynn, MLC, Member of NSW Parliament, who is a recent appointment to the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Kokoda Track Foundation, introduced Mohammad Kabaaaito, Captain of Punchbowl

High School. He had joined Charlie Lynn and his group in March this year on one of Charlie's numerous trips over the Track.

Mohammad then read the poem "The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels of the Owen Stanley Track" by Sapper Bert Beros.

At the conclusion of the programme, John Murray, a Director of the Kokoda Track Walkway, extended a word of thanks to all organisations and individuals, especially Alice Kang (Hon. Secretary), who had helped with making the day such a success. All present were invited to partake of refreshments provided by the staff of Concord Hospital.

Throughout the past year the maintenance and caring of the Track by various groups, including school children, has been actively pursued. Following is an extract from the Kokoda Track newsletter 2004 edition:- "The Memorial Walkway and Dept. of Corrective Services has enjoyed a strong and important partnership dating back to 1997. This partnership has ensured the provision of Periodic Detention detainees to assist with the maintenance of vegetation and weed control at the Walkway.

Donation of 300 native trees, shrubs and grasses were planted and assistance was forthcoming from Canada Bay Council, Enviroquest Landscape Services, Strathfield Community Nursery and Greening Australia."

Rusty Priest took the opportunity, while he had this captive audience, to advise of future intentions and projects, such as enhancement of security, upgrade of central processing unit which will enable the distribution of pre-recorded speech and music to individual stations, additional planting and landscaping around stations in Brays Bay and upgrading of BBQ Shed. Of course, these improvements will cost a fair amount of money. Accordingly, he is hoping that organisations such as RSL clubs, trade firms, Councils and individuals will assist in this regard.

The Kokoda Walkway website is www.kokodawalkway.com.au and the website has proved to be popular with visitors from all around the world. For example the site has seen an average of fifty one visitors per day since August 2003.

Pioneers attending the VP service were: Roy Jardine, Bill Tasker and daughter Kay, Max/Peg Herron, Dawn Levy, Don/Val Crawford, Jack Bertram and daughter Janet, Jack/Marj Kerslake and daughter Margaret and granddaughter Jessica, Rita Trefoni and friend Betty Ray and Steve Clarke. With the Pioneer group was Joe Madeley, President of Rats Tobruk Assoc. and Rae Kean, Rats Ladies Auxiliary President.

Reported by STEVE CLARKE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2004

It gives me great pleasure to present my report covering yet another successful year. My thanks go to a wonderful executive – Max Herron who gives 101% to his secretarial duties and the production and posting of "Pioneer News", Peg Herron our assistant secretary and Mail Bag editor, Don Crawford our Treasurer who looks after our finances and helps with wrapping and posting of the "News", Bill Tasker as welfare officer, a position he has held for many years – many thanks Bill, and Bill Lewis as our ANZAC Day reporter.

Many thanks to the sons of the Pioneers who, for many years, have manned the tables at the Occidental Hotel entrance to collect fees and write out name tags, which gives the Executive

time to enjoy their reunion. To our Patron, John Gilchrist, our sincere thanks for his very informative talks at the luncheon. Always good to have you with us, John.

To Paulette West and her staff at the Occidental Hotel for the past ten years for making our day such a success. When we look back to our days at the Redfern Town Hall where Pat Murphy arranged for us to have the hall, on a no charge basis, and Bob Lake (our Lakey) man handled the beer kegs up about thirty stairs with the aid of family members, we realise our good fortune having the services of the Occidental.

Sadly this year we lost our two oldest members – Jack Pearce 98 years and Bill Robertson 97 years. They were both ardent committee members and very rarely missed a meeting. I feel that the saying "Old soldiers never die, they simply fade away" surely applied to these two old soldiers – they simply faded away. Vale Jack and Bill.

Thank you Pioneers for electing me as your President for another year and may the coming 12 months be a happy and healthy one for all.

– ALLAN McINNES

DON CRAWFORD – LIFE MEMBER

At the Annual Meeting on 23rd July, a presentation was made to Treasurer Don Crawford of the Association's Life Member Certificate.

In presenting Don with his Life Member Certificate, President Allan McInnes stated it was indeed a pleasure for him to speak on Don's outstanding service to the Association.

Patron, John Gilchrist, then presented Don with his Life Member Badge and then read the citation as follows:-

"To Don Crawford for his many years of honorary service of an outstanding nature to the Association, thereby qualifying for Life Membership.

Over the years Don has been an ardent member of the Committee and has assisted the Secretary in many ways. In 1996 he took on the role of Custodian of the 2/2nd Banner as well as the purchasing of the two wreaths for our annual wreath laying service. He has also represented the 2/2nds at the service at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway as well as all the country reunions at Lismore.

Don accepted the position of Treasurer in November 1998 and has been instrumental in presenting a healthy bank balance and report to all meetings.

In 2002 Don was the force behind the organising of the transition over to the new system of barcoding the addresses on to envelopes for the posting of Pioneer News, which has resulted in many time saving hours as well as reducing the postage cost.

This certificate is presented in recognition of Don's many years of valuable service voluntarily given to this Association."

This was carried with acclamation after which Don spoke and thanked the Executive for their fine gesture for nominating him.

SICK PARADE

JACK STONE 2/1 of Earlwood had a stay in Concord Hospital in August and was visited by Roy Jardine, but is now home and doing well.

FRANK LOCANE 2/2 of Prestons was in Liverpool Hospital in September and we thank Joyce Walker for ringing and giving a progress report on Frank. He is at the moment waiting on a bed in rehabilitation.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The last Mail Bag for the year – and how it has flown. Seems the older one gets, the faster the time flies. Letters for the News were well down in numbers for this issue, perhaps due to the winter months or members not well enough to write, but still very glad to hear from those who were able to put pen to paper.

MARY BURNHAM, Forster, daughter of the late Lieut-Col Arnold Brown 2/1, enclosing her subscription to the News and her apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day. However, is hopeful she will be "on parade" next year.

In her letter, Mary mentions that she had received a DVD from Bert Woodhouse 2/1 of WA on the 28th Bn (WWI) in which her father served and the 2/28th Bn, of which her brother was a member, before being killed in action at El Alamein. Mary said it was a wonderful disc and she was most grateful to Bert for sending it to her.

Earlier in the year she and a friend had a delightful cruise of the Caribbean and can thoroughly recommend it. Certainly not letting the grass grow under your feet, Mary, and good that you are still well enough to travel.

Your kind regards are passed on to the "old boys" and hope to see you for the march next year. Many thanks for the donation to funds.

LES BRITT 2/1, Redlynch Qld, with a change of address to another retirement village, a new complex with better facilities. Hard keeping up with you these days, Les, you have more moves than Grace Bros. Your kind regards passed on to all.

PETER COOKE, R.A.N., Carlingford, with a welcome donation to funds, for which many thanks. Peter is a bowling mate of Don Crawford, our worthy Treasurer, and Don has been passing on copies of the News for Peter to read. Max has placed your name on our mailing list and copies of the News will be posted to you regularly. Best wishes and good bowling.

BETTY CREASY, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with a short note enclosing donation to the News – many thanks. ANZAC Day this year found her recovering from an eye operation – doctor put in a splint and tied the retina – and so far everything is going well. Her daughter Joy came to keep an eye on her and to help out and Bet was grateful for the care. Son-in-law Dominic stayed at home to look after things and came up to take Joy home.

Bet passes on best wishes to all Pioneers and lots of good health to those who aren't feeling the best.

TOM CROSSMAN 2/1, St. Ives, with his apologies for his non-attendance on ANZAC Day, due to a family commitment, and enclosed a cheque for the News. He still keeps reasonably well, playing golf and bowls, but fears his golfing days are just about over. They say all good things come to an end, Tom, and you have done well to still being able to chase that little white ball round the course. Thanks for the sub and our best wishes.

ANDY ELLISTON, Narooma, son of the late Phil 2/1, with just a few lines thanking the Association for still sending him the News and enclosing a cheque to keep the show on the road. Many thanks, Andy and best wishes.

FRANK GILLIAN 2/1, Maroubra, with his congratulations to the Editors and committee for the good work they continue to do for their members over so many years and he always looks forward to the News to catch up on doings of his old mates. Frank keeps in touch by phone with Danny Sprouster and has a talk about old times.

Thanks for your sub, Frank, and for your kind words to those who keep the Association alive.

JACK HEARN 2/1, Howlong, a short note with his sub – many thanks. Still enjoys receiving the News, but says there's not much to report from his part of the world. He and

Audrey are both keeping well and send their best wishes to all Pioneers – with a special hello to Les and Lesley Tunks at Mareeba. Kindest regards to you both.

PAM HERRICK, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with a greeting card from the Philippines where she was staying on holiday with her daughter Karen and family in Alabang (could not decipher the other word Pam, but managed to find Alabang on the map). The weather was hot – 38° to 42° every day, plenty of swimming and the beaches are white, silky powdery sand. Sounds like a grand place for a holiday, Pam. Has done a lot of visiting some of the history sites including Corregidor Island, Subic Bay and at the time of writing was off to the smallest volcano, via horse back. Also spent a couple of hours a day at Don Bascoe School for street children teaching English.

I guess by the time you receive the News, Pam, you will be back in Aussie. Missed you at the Lismore reunion, but glad to hear you had a happy and interesting time with your family. Love and best wishes both to yourself and Dorothy.

SID HOLMES, Balgownie, son of late Sid "Bluey" Holmes 2/1, with a welcome sub and the news that his mother, Joyce, has moved to a unit in the Woonona Retirement Village at Woonona and would like the News sent to her at her new address. Joyce is not in the best of health but sends her regards to all Pioneers.

Thank you for your letter, Sid, and Max has made the necessary change on his mailing list. Many thanks for the sub to the News.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, with a card of greetings and thanks for the News, as usual penned by good wife Wyn. Pleased to hear your eye surgery has gone well and that the cataract operations have also been done. Do hope that they continue to improve. Trust John has also recovered from his throat virus, there have been a lot of those throat "wogs" going about with the dry weather. Max had an attack while at the Lismore reunion – no voice and then a bad dose of conjunctivitis which took some clearing up. Certainly didn't need that with his eye problems.

Good to hear news of the young family, Wyn, seems no time since they were in high school and now celebrating 21st birthdays. It's great to hear of them making their way in the world – and please God no wars to take them away fighting in foreign lands. I'm sure both John and yourself are very proud "grandies" and derive a lot of pleasure from their visits.

Spoke to Bill Jollie recently on the phone and, although fairly handicapped with his legs, does manage to get out on the village bus occasionally for lunch as an outing. Is not able to join in any of the Pioneer activities, but likes to keep in touch. I'm sure he is always pleased to hear from John.

Do keep well and our love and best wishes to you both.

BILL JOHNSON 2/1 East Bentleigh, Vic, with quite a long note and a very generous donation to funds, for which many thanks. Apologises for delay in writing, but had cut his finger on a power saw, so letter writing had to be put on the "back burner" for some time.

He has also had a couple of hip replacements and Mavis, his wife, suffers from very bad osteoporosis, with a number of fractures at times – apart from that they have reasonable mobility and still driving (local areas only) so can go out shopping and seeing friends for a yarn or two.

On the brighter side, they are looking forward to a trip in January to New Zealand with their daughter and son-in-law (who are very good to them) and will hire a car to get about while they are there. From first hand experience, I'm sure you will enjoy every day of your trip.

Bill mentions they have five grand-children from 19 to 27 years of age and all have done very well at their studies. The eldest two gained honours in engineering and teaching and two still at university. Especially pleased to hear Robyn's two girls are doing so well after the loss of their mother (Robyn passed away a couple of years ago with a brain tumour). I'm

sure you are both very proud of them and give them a lot of loving care.

Now the kitchen has had its makeover, Bill, how about that promised trip to Sydney for ANZAC Day – time is marching on and Pioneers getting fewer each year. You would be ensured of a good day and I'm sure Mavis would give you a leave pass. In the meantime, your good wishes are passed on to all Pioneers and hope both Mavis and yourself keep well and have a lovely trip to New Zealand.

MAISIE KEMPNIICH, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with a long letter, at last, and so good to hear from you. Have missed your long, newsy letters, Mais, and a double bonus to see you were able to make the trip to Lismore, along with Lenore and your grandson, Scott. So many of our old group of friends are now gone that it is lovely just to keep in touch. Don't worry about the writing, just keep writing.

Many thanks for your kind words on the News to Max and myself and will endeavour to keep up the good work – health permitting of course. We realise from the letters that come in how the News does keep the Pioneer "family" together.

Concluding, Mais passed on her fond wishes to all for a happy festive season and a new year that we can all enjoy.

Hope to hear from you again one day soon and love and best wishes and keep well.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with details of Brian Kybert's funeral which she attended with Rita Trefoni (widow of Noel 2/1). Max has mentioned this in Last Post, Joyce, and a big thank you to Rita and yourself for making the trip to Palmdale.

Joyce was saddened to read of Mary Lloyd's passing in July, says she was a lovely lady in so many ways.

Thank you for your kind remarks to Max and I re the News, Joyce, and it's always good to know that our efforts are appreciated. So many of the letters to the Mail Bag say how the News keeps them in touch with the Pioneers they never see but always glad to hear of them and their doings. Love and keep well.

ERNIE LUNN 2/2, Dubbo, with a welcome note, per Norma, and with a book of stamps enclosed.

Many thanks to you both and so good to hear from you again.

Pleased to hear your health has taken a turn for the better, Norma, and are back playing bowls. Also that Ernie continues to make the best of things even though he has been diagnosed with Paget's disease. He uses a walking stick, but sometimes too painful to stand up.

We were sorry you were unable to make the reunion at Lismore recently, but realise that it would have been quite a long trip with Ern's health problem, even though the spirit is willing. Most of those who attended were on walking sticks and the spring gone out of their step. Time certainly is marching on.

Your good wishes have been passed on to the Kerslakes, Norma, and thank you for your kind words to the editors. Do take care and perhaps may meet up again one of these days.

ELIZABETH MAHY-BAILEY, Leeton, daughter of the late Phil Mahy 2/1, enclosing a cheque for the News and, although not aware of the members who shared army life with her father, enjoys receiving and reading her copy.

On a recent trip to Cairns this year with her husband Chris, they drove to Atherton and surrounds to see what was left of the training camps. Do hope you were able to see the park at Rocky Creek with the memorial plaques to various units, including the 2/1-2/2 Pioneers. It has become quite an attraction for visitors to the Tablelands.

Many thanks for your cheque and best wishes.

TERRY McGUIRE 2/1, Lismore, was at the Lismore reunion and passed on a welcome sub to the News. Our thanks, Terry, and best wishes to yourself and Claire.

DON MURRAY 2/2, Tinonee, with a letter that arrived too late for the last issue, enclosing his subscription to the News – many thanks. Don is still battling on, turned 82 in August, still driving to Taree each day for lunch and to do

his shopping. Good to hear, Don, and our best wishes.

OLIVE RICHARDS, Lennox Head, widow of Jack 2/1, with a donation to funds and a book of stamps, always acceptable, for which many thanks. Olive did not make the Lismore reunion in September owing to back problems, so a couple of days after Marj and Jack Kerslake, Noel Schomberg, Vi Flynn, Max and I went for lunch and spent some hours with Olive, son Chris and his wife Annette, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Olive has her house on the market and, with Chris and Annette, are heading up to Bribie Island off the Queensland coast where they will share a house and the "young ones" will carry on their business. Hope all goes well with the sale, Olive, and our thanks to you for a very pleasant visit.

JOE SACKER 2/1, Chiswick, with a short note enclosing a cheque for worthy treasurer – many thanks. (Added a postscript "don't forget my Pioneer News", so obviously looks forward to its arrival.) He has been in Concord Hospital but says he is on the mend and sends very best wishes to all 2/1sts. Take care, always good to hear from you.

BRYAN SMALLHORN 2/1, Armidale, with his thanks for the newsy unit paper and a cheque to keep the show on the road. Says he doesn't know too many of the names mentioned (being a late-comer to the unit) but was sorry to hear of the incapacity of George Nichols and Jack Tooker (both C Coy) and sends best wishes to both. Bryan says it doesn't seem something like 55 years since he last saw George doing his bit at the wool table at Deepwater Station – how time flies.

He keeps fairly well himself – at 86– and lives on his own. Has four children living in Sydney and Brisbane and 12 grandchildren, so has plenty of opportunity to count his blessings. (Bryan lost a son suddenly on Christmas Day last and sympathy is extended to him from his fellow 2/1 Pioneers).

All the best, Bryan, and many thanks for the cheque.

DUDLEY STANFORTH 2/2, West Wyalong, with just a short note of greetings with his sub and his best wishes passed on to fellow Pioneers. Many thanks and good to know you are keeping fairly well – take care and best wishes.

MICK TASSELL 2/1, Hay, with a cheque enclosed in an envelope. Many thanks, Mick, but surely there must be some news from your part of the country. However, the cheque tells us you are still with us, so keep well and maybe a line or two next time.

JACK TOOKER 2/1, Galston, rang recently to thank me for a photo I had sent him taken at the wreath laying ceremony a couple of years ago. He apologised for non-attendance on ANZAC Day as he and Kathleen were in the process of moving from his home in Chatswood to the RSL village at Galston. They have settled in and happy in their new surroundings, and have already made some new friends. Sends his regards to John Gilchrist, Steve Clarke and Bill Jollie. Our kindest regards to you both and keep well.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba, with some funds for the News – many thanks – and sorry your letter came too late for last issue. He was not long out of hospital when he wrote, so hope by now that you are well on the road to recovery. I'm sure Leslie is keeping a close watch over you.

Les had been asked by John Hardy, Secretary of the National Servicemen's Assn of Queensland to participate in a Military History and Social Weekend at Wondecla, but declined because of health reasons. Thank you for the newspaper cutting on this, Les, and on the Pioneer bridge at Wondecla. The article was very interesting and Max will publish the story in the next issue. Best wishes to you both, keep well.

HUGH VINCENT 2/2, Wembley WA, and good to hear from you after so long. Many thanks for your donation to funds and for your kind words to all those who keep the Association and the News afloat. Says one has only to study the Mail Bag section to see the

interest shown by the readers in each issue.

Hugh was saddened to read some time ago of the passing of Don Linton, a good man, who was a fellow platoon member. Also mentions reading regularly of Ken Wilson of Lismore, one of the organisers of the country Lismore reunions, and says it comes as no surprise as Hugh well remembers Ken as the very capable orderly room N.C.O. of C Coy.

Although Hugh transferred to a WA Battalion after Tarakan, two and a half years with the 2/2nd Pioneers has left him with a keen interest in present activities and he looks forward to the regular newsletters. Your kind wishes passed on to all 2/2nds.

NEV WOODHAM 2/1, Cleveland Qld, with greetings from sunny Queensland and to say how he and Betty enjoyed their short visit to Lismore and Ballina for the reunion and happy to catch up with the "old" faces again. Passes on the news that Harry Spreadborough 2/1 has had a trip to hospital for a serious face operation, and wife Jean (at time of writing) was also in hospital with emphysema. Hope by now both are home and well. Neville has also had two ops on his face and radiation treatment and says one good thing about it all he doesn't have to shave the right side of his face.

Their Rats of Tobruk sub-branch, of which Neville is foundation secretary, is still operating with members fast dwindling, but they intend to keep operating as long as possible. They have six state schools in their area which they attend on their Memorial and ANZAC Days and present plaques to students who are selected for their scholastic and sporting achievements.

Good to hear from you both and many thanks for the cheque enclosed and the photo and the print of the fig tree in Tobruk. Our best wishes and keep well.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue. On behalf of President Allan, Treasurer Don, Max and myself we wish all Pioneers and their families good health and happiness in the coming year. So many old friends have passed on during the last 12 months and to their families we send our warm wishes and special thoughts. Have a Happy and Holy Christmas and may the New Year be blessed with Peace and Goodwill in our troubled world.

LAST POST

DORRIE LONG widow of Bob 2/1, passed away on 26th February and we are grateful to her son Peter for giving us the details. Peter stated he appreciated the help and support to his parents over their living years by the Association.

ALBERT BROWN 2/1, passed away on 15th July, aged 88 years, while residing at the War Veterans Home at Narrabeen. The funeral was held on 21st July at Pinegrove Memorial Park, Minchinbury and representing the Association was Bill Tasker who passed on sincere sympathy to daughter Janet Burgess and the family.

JOHN FLOOD 2/1 of Penrith passed away on 1st August aged 84 years, and the funeral on 6th August was conducted at Pinegrove Memorial Park. John had been residing at the Jamison Gardens Aged Care Centre in Penrith for the past four years. We thank daughter Wendy Pritchard for sending in the details.

BRIAN KYBERT 2/1 of Long Jetty passed away on 18th August and the funeral service was held at Palmdale Crematorium on 23rd August, with fifty people in attendance. The Catholic Priest who conducted the service called on two of Brian's close friends to speak on the life of Brian. A work mate stated Brian started work at the age of fifteen at a Trustee firm, where he remained until he retired as Manager. A neighbour highlighted Brian's war service with the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and his gentleness and said he was mentally alert right to the end.

The local RSL carried out the Poppy service and recited the Ode to the Fallen as well as sounding Last Post and Reveille.

Brian is survived by wife Betty, two sons and three grandsons. Representing the Association were Rita Trefoni and Joyce Law who, on our

behalf, extended sincere sympathy to Betty and her family.

We are grateful to Danny Sprouster 2/1 who also contacted us with the sad news and to Joyce Law for passing on the above information.

REV. WILLIAM "JOCK" STEELE 2/2 Pendle Hill, passed away on 24th August aged 94 years and the funeral at Pinegrove Memorial Park on 30th August was conducted by Rev. Young and Rev. Dae Lee. The Poppy Service was carried out by three members from the Parramatta RSL Club and the main speaker gave a run down on the time Jock spent in the army. He joined the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion in 1943 in New Guinea, having taken over from Padre Stan Cloughton.

Pioneers in attendance were Don and Val Crawford and Max and Peg Herron. Sincere sympathy from the Association was extended to Wife Kathleen and her family.

KATHLEEN FIELD, widow of Jim 2/2, of Greystanes passed away on the 24th August in Westmead Hospital after several years in a nursing home. Her funeral on 30th August was attended by Olive Finlay and daughter-in-law Lynn Finlay, Marj and Jack Kerslake and Max and Peg Herron. She was 85 years old.

Kath had been a staunch supporter of the Association for many years by assisting Jim in his role of custodian of the 2/2 banner and with wreaths, as well as being a member of the Pioneer News wrapping committee for many years.

We are grateful to Kathleen's daughter Ruth Bosanko for keeping in touch over the years. Kath was in the nursing home and our very sincere sympathy was extended to Ruth and husband Kevin and family.

STAN JONES 2/1 of Dee Why passed away on 23rd September in hospital, aged 86 years. The funeral service was conducted at Northern Suburbs Crematorium on 30th September. The RSL Poppy Service was carried out in an excellent manner by the Welfare Officer from Dee Why RSL, followed by Last Post and Reveille and the reciting of the Ode to the Fallen.

The Eulogy was read by son-in-law Sam Ierace who spoke of Stan's private life as well as his service as an officer with the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion.

Pioneers in attendance were Roy Jardine, Bill Tasker and Steve Clarke, who extended sincere sympathy on behalf of the Association to daughter Carola and family. Steve also made an apology for John Trevethick (who is unable to drive now) as John had mentioned on the phone that he had enlisted on the same day as Stan and Bill Hood 2/2 and had been best man at Stan's wedding.

We thank Steve Clarke for providing the above details and to Bill Tasker for extending our sincere sympathy to wife Peg

MUFTI per Eric Causer: Joseph Meade, 2/1 deceased.

VALE RAY HARRIS

On 23rd September Ray Harris 2/2 of Ballina, formerly of Greenacre in Sydney, passed away at the age of 84 years. He had not been in the best of health for several years. It came as a shock to those who attended the Lismore reunion on 11th September as Ray confidently conducted the Wreath Laying Service and attended the dinner that night, also the luncheon at Ballina the following day.

Before moving to Ballina several years ago, Ray was a very keen member of the Association Committee and attended every meeting. He was a great supporter of ANZAC Day, acting as Marshal for the 2/2nds. He was appointed Vice-President of the Association in 1980 and held the position of Country Vice-President until his passing.

The funeral service was held at the Rainbow Chapel at Ballina on 27th September and Ballina RSL carried out the Poppy Service. The Eulogy spoken by Colin Wheat, who spoke highly of Ray as a family man of being a father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather, and who came from a family of nine sisters and brothers. He also spoke of

Ray's dedication in assisting to organise the six reunions conducted by the Pioneer Branch. Colin concluded by saying "He will always be remembered and loved by us all and will always remain our hero".

The service was attended by 50 people of which twenty two were Pioneers and relatives as follows: Albert/Lil Bettens, Ossie/Betty Carter, son David, Don Crawford, Ron Cross, Jack Crouch, Alec/Jean George, Terry/Claire McQuire, Betty O'Connor, Peter/Dot Priest, Ray/Nancy Robbins, Dick Walker and Ken/Ida Wilson.

Sincere sympathy was extended to daughter Pam Lee and the family by Don Crawford to whom we thank for his mighty effort in flying up to Ballina especially for the funeral on behalf of the Association and for supplying us with the details.

2/1-2/2 LISMORE REUNION

The North Coast Branch organised the Reunion at Lismore on 11th/12th September and first event on the programme was the Wreath Laying Service at the Soldiers Memorial on 11th September. Ray Harris was Marshal and called on the Bugler to play Last Post and Reveille. The Branch Banner was displayed by Bert Neasbey and son Mark, while the National Flag was attended by Ron Cross. Wreaths were laid by Joy Denny for the ladies, Max Herron for the Association and local member Ian Causley for North Coast Branch.

The service was conducted by Rev. Bob Rutherford who gave an outstanding address as follows:

ADDRESS BY REV. RUTHERFORD

Both the 2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneer Battalions have a remarkable array of stories attached to them and I personally have enjoyed the privilege of reading some of these accounts. Today as we gather together for this reunion, we do so, not only to remember past stories but to acknowledge the peace that was won by men and women during war and give thanks to those of you who were part of that process.

When you gather later for dinner, you will undoubtedly have many memories to reflect upon but most of all you have each other here to greet and to pay your respect to your fallen brothers in arms, and those, who have since last you met, been laid to rest.

As a retired Army Chaplain I consider it always to be an honour to meet with soldiers who have been prepared to serve their country honourably and who have seen others who have paid the supreme sacrifice. As one who was born in 1941 I give thanks often for people such as you, who made my life secure and gave to me the opportunity to grow up in relative peace. Having served as Chaplain to three infantry Battalions each of which had Pioneers included in them I have a great respect for the skill, ingenuity and toughness of these unique fighting soldiers.

VIVID MEMORIES OF GRETA

Being a Novacastrian I grew up with vivid memories of Greta and indeed my late father did his basic training in this camp. He often spoke fondly of the "boys" he trained with and the pride each had in their unit; a pride that would take them to the shores of foreign lands to fight hard for peace and freedom.

As I read the stories of these two unique Battalions I was moved by the recalling of Tobruk, the camaraderie of the Kyogle boys and the ruggedness, mud and rain of the Kokoda Track. I felt the emotion of the men who lamented their losses at Balikpapan and their longing to return to their homes and loved ones. I have been both saddened yet proud to read the scattering of the 2/2nd across seven different countries and their remarkable stories of the Burma-Thailand railway. I say proud for it is in stories such as these I capture my heritage and pride as an Australian. It is here that I see what it means to have a mate and to be a mate. Here I have come face to face with the very spirit that has made Australia the best nation in the world today.

This is not to glorify war, for to do so would, I believe, dishonour those who gave their all

and you who are here today. No, this is to remember with pride and to say a deep and heartfelt thanks for you have given to me and many of my age and others since a heritage of fair dinkum mateship a spirit that is truly Aussie born and bred.

2/1st and 2/2nd Pioneers I salute you and your fallen comrades buried on foreign shores and I say thank you, You've done us proud and as I recall the words of Scripture "Greater love has no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends". May God continue to bless you and help us to always remember. Lest we Forget!

THE REUNION DINNER

Guests were introduced by Master of Ceremonies, Don Crawford, who then called on Rev. Rutherford to say Grace, which was followed by the Loyal Toast in the hands of Ray Harris. The MC then called on Ken Wilson to propose a Toast to the Guests and in response Ian Causley spoke on how proud the community was of the ex-servicemen.

The Toast to Departed and Absent Comrades was carried out by Jack Allison while the final item was appreciation by Ken Wilson, as well as reading out the long list of apologies.

The meal was a smorgasbord, including sweets, which was an excellent one and enjoyed by all present. Then, of course, the members settled down to having drinks and the usual chat about old times.

BARBECUE AT BALLINA

The Ballina Ex-Servicemens Home Complex was the venue next morning, and refreshments were served among very pleasant surroundings and excellent company.

The members were then called upon to move up to the large dining room, which presented a very happy atmosphere, with everyone enjoying a wonderful prepared barbecue by the staff.

At the completion of the meal Ken Wilson thanked the staff for the barbecue then went on to announce this would be the last Lismore Reunion he would organise. He then called on Jack Allison to give an appreciation of the weekend, and in response Jack thanked Ken Wilson and his Committee for having staged the six Country Reunions at Lismore since 1996.

Jack went on to say the Assoc Executive have been grateful for these reunions, which followed the twenty Country Reunions they conducted from 1960 at Port Macquarie to the 1996 one at Wagga. They were also grateful to John and Mollie Jean Hunt for their organising of the Brisbane Reunions. Jack then said it has been wonderful to have had the support of the ladies over the years and he would like to pay special tribute to the many widows who have continued with their support in many ways.

On behalf of all present Jack congratulated Assoc Treasurer Don Crawford on his fine performance at the dinner last night as Master of Ceremonies. He also congratulated Don on being bestowed Assoc Honorary Life Membership at the Annual Meeting.

Finally, Jack congratulated Ken and his Committee once again for their most successful Reunion. In reply Ken thanked Jack for his words of appreciation and brought the weekend to a conclusion by wishing all members a safe trip home.

ATTENDANCE FOR WEEKEND

There were twenty seven Pioneers, plus their ladies in attendance, consisting of thirteen 2/1sts and fourteen 2/2nds as follows:-

2/1sts: Albert/Lil Bettens, Ron Cross, Alec/Jean George, Max/Peg Herron, John/Mollie-Jean Hunt, Laurie Kelly, Jack/Marj Kerslake, Terry/Claire McQuire, Peter/Dot Priest, Noel Schomburg, Jack/Flo Shearman, Ern/Bev Walker and Nev/Betty Woodham.

2/2nds: Jack/Barbara Allison, Sid/Jean Booth, Ossie/Betty Carter, Don/Val Crawford, Jack Crouch, Snow Dodd, Ray Harris, Bob McGregor, Bert Neasbey, Kev Raward, Ray/Nancy Robbins, Gavin Todd, Dick/Alison Walker and Ken/Ida Wilson.

Widows: Mavis Blanch, Joyce Denny, Vi Flynn and Maisie Kempnich.

It was also pleasing to have in attendance the following relations and friends: Robyn Bell, Chris Beaton, Phillip Bradley, Ian/June Causley, Jack/Cheryl Carter, Heather Crichton, Steve

Darmody, Diane Edwards, Pam Lee, Roy Medhurst, Sue McGregor, David McInnes, Mark Neasbey, Lenore Robson, Scott Robson, Rev Bob Rutherford, Ashley/Gail Spendelove, Norma Taylor, Anneke Withers and Ray/Narelle Walker.

LAURIE NASH - A LEGEND

The 2/2 Pioneers have boasted many colourful characters in their time, but none more colourful than Laurie Nash, ace full forward for South Melbourne, rated by many including himself as the best AFL footballer of all time.

On top of all this, he played cricket for Tasmania, scoring a century against Victoria, and went on to play test cricket for Australia. Against South Africa in 1932 he took four wickets for 18 runs, and played another test five years later. His test figures were 10 wickets at 12 runs apiece. Playing for the 2/2nd Pioneers and bowling at half pace, he took most of the opponents' wickets and also scored many runs for his side.

Allan McInnes was reminded of Laurie Nash when he borrowed a library book, "Game in Time of War" by Martin Flanagan to whom acknowledgement is made for some of the following information. Allan recalls that Laurie came to the 2/2nd Pioneers with reinforcements, and joined the battalion team which was already strong with many League and Association players. A crack 6th Divvie team came to Cairns to play the 2/2 Pioneers, boasting of their unbeaten record. Soundly thrashed, they went home with their tails between their legs. Allan recalls seeing Laurie taking impossible marks, and kicking impossible goals.

For all his sporting brilliance, Laurie was a reluctant soldier. There came the day when after movement orders, the battalion prepared to proceed - the objective Nadzab and Lae. Nash had an unfortunate accident when cleaning his bayonet. The injury was serious enough for him to be sent back to Melbourne and discharge - in those days it was called a sportsman's discharge. Martin Flanagan wrote in his book that Laurie was reticent and modest about his war experiences.

South Melbourne had Nash back for the 1945 season. The Grand Final against Carlton, won by Carlton, was described as a "blood bath" with Nash criticised for an "ordinary" game. There were rumours that a member, or members of Souths team had been got at, and Nash's performance came in for withering scrutiny. He kicked over 50 goals for that season, and often asked opponents to choose whether he should kick for goal with left, or his right foot. Asked who was the best player he had seen, he replied "I look at him every morning when I shave".

South Melbourne went on to become Sydney Swans in the AFL carve up, and became a very competitive outfit. In Jan 2004, S. M. Herald printed a "Swans Team of the Century", and ex-Pioneer Laurie Nash features as Centre half-forward of the century. Laurie died in 1986 at the age of 76.

- From details supplied by ALLAN MCINNES

S.A. BRANCH NEWS

Once again, ANZAC Day for 2004 has come and passed. The Adelaide Reunion and General Meeting were held at the Duke of York Hotel, Adelaide, with seventy persons in attendance, which composed of Association members, family members and friends. Sadly the number of Pioneers is very depleted. Apologies were received from 2/2 members, Les Bence and Harry Lock.

Those who marched were, 2/1sts: Bill Thiele, Doug Waters, 2/2nds: Frank Maher, Allan Olson and Bruce Scott. They also attended the Reunion with 2/2nds: George Sauer, Joe Robertson and Russ Harrison who did not march.

All office bearers were re-elected with the exception of George Sauer, who declined nomination due to ill health. President Allan Olson praised George Sauer for his role as Branch Secretary over the years, which was carried with hearty acclamation for George. Russ Harrison was elected as the new Branch Secretary. Best wishes are extended from Adelaide to all Pioneers.

Reported by President ALLAN OLSON