

PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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

Per Annum: \$5

Typeset by Typesmith Pty Ltd, 12 Blakesley Road, Carlton NSW 2218 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Arncliffe NSW 2205

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Vol. 51 No. 1

APRIL 2005

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AN OUTSTANDING AUSTRALIAN

The above was the heading of an article by Ken Cunningham in a recent copy of the Combined Services RSL Club bulletin referring to the late Colonel John Williams, O.B.E., E.D., Commanding Officer of the original 2/2 Pioneer Battalion. Apparently, Ken had interviewed Colonel Williams before he passed away in 1998.

In that terrible turmoil created for them as a Prisoner of War of the Japanese, some Australians felt that they had been let down by their Officers, whom they considered did not support their interests adequately when dealing with the Japanese. So that when such men as "Weary" Dunlop and others like him did support them, they left an enduring, affectionate memory in post-war years. Such a man, who came out of those POW camps with high honour, was the Commanding Officer of the 2nd/2nd Pioneer Battalion, Lt. Colonel John Williams. He had earlier exhibited his soldierly qualities in Tobruk, as Second in Command of a famous Australian fighting unit - the 2/17th Infantry Battalion.

His transfer from the stony deserts of North Africa and the uplands of Syria, to the tropical humidity of the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia) came about from a Churchill proposal to dispatch 6th and 7th Australian Divisions from the Middle East to this Dutch territory and Burma. In addition, the Australian War Cabinet initially approved that they should move together with Corps Troops and Base organisations. And so a round figure of some 64,000 experienced Australian soldiers were afloat.

Fortunately, Australia was led at this critical time by one of its greatest Prime Ministers, John Curtin. In sailor's language he "jacked-up" to this Churchill/Roosevelt proposal, and refused to authorise this move of his Australian troops to any East Indies, Singapore or Burma territory. In the ensuing months these two Divisions, who probably would have joined 8th Australian Division in Japanese POW Camps had Churchill prevailed, were to go on and defeat the Japanese Army in the Battle of Papua as they etched the imperishable names of Kokoda, Buna, Gona, Milne Bay and Sanananda into their country's military history.

WAGGA REUNION 1982

Members will recall Colonel John Williams as our Guest speaker at the Wagga Reunion on 18th September, 1982, with an attendance of 260 members at which he gave a wonderful talk termed "Wouldn't It". He joined the 2/2 Pioneer Bn as their C.O. because B.H.Q. at Cairo said so. He had hoped to command the 2/17 Bn, as he had hand-picked the bulk of that unit at the Recruiting Depot at Moore Park, so was naturally disappointed to hear, whilst in Tobruk, that he was to leave the 2/17 Bn to command the 2/2 Pioneer Bn in Syria. However, the move turned out to be a transfer from one efficient unit to another equally efficient unit.

In early 1942 he received orders to assemble the unit and proceed to Hill 69 in Palestine where on 30th January, 1942, after a hearty meal supplied by 2/1 Pioneer Bn. they set off for Port Tewfik where they received orders to embark on the "Orcades" for a destination unknown.

At this stage he encountered problems - his transport and party were to follow on another ship (they landed in Fremantle). Baggage party containing kitbags and other baggage had not arrived (another loss). The Staff Captain of the "Orcades" would not allow them to take on board their first line equipment as they would

damage his ship. They had no transport, no baggage and now were to lose their guns, ammunition and A/T rifles. This was the last straw. This made John Williams see RED and he told the "Orcades" Staff Captain he would not embark without his war equipment - then sat down to wait. When the Ship's Captain came ashore he asked them to please embark as he wanted to sail with the tide. John doesn't know why, but the Pioneers were allotted the best accommodation on the ship.

On arriving in Batavia they were met with more inactivity. Eventually, they landed, approximately one Brigade in strength, but no service troops such as AASC. The 2/3 MG Bn had no guns or ammunition, they had left them on the wharf at Tewfik.

The first task on landing was to protect the airfields and installations. During the first air raid they fired all their ammunition and later had to send the 2/3 Motor Transport to the wharf to bring back food and ammo.

BRIGADE OUTNUMBERED 33 TO 1

Ten days after landing they had the Japanese attacking their front and Dutch troops blew up the Llewiliang Bridge two days before the Japanese landed and stopped deep patrols. Outnumbered 33 to 1, the Dutch who should have been the reserve force had disappeared, but the Brigade were able to hold up the advance of the Japs and inflict heavy casualties. Brigadier Blackburn could see they were in a hopeless position - short of food and ammo - so he ordered a withdrawal and reform outside the city of Bandoeng. In the meantime the Dutch GOC declared Bandoeng an open city and capitulated, leaving the troops high and dry. At least the Japanese Task Force was diverted away from landing in Australia.

Colonel Williams kept his Battalion, plus a large number of HMAS Perth officers under his command as they worked on the infamous Burma Railway, toiling from the Burma end. Then after the Japanese surrendered, he was to be the key Australian witness at the initial post-war enquiry into Japanese maladministration of the POW camps. He flew from Sydney to Tokyo and attended that enquiry for six months. It was from this initial investigation that the Japanese War Crimes Tribunal were initiated.

PIONEER ACTIVITIES - 2005

WREATH LAYING - 24th April at 3.45 pm.

The Association will conduct their wreath laying service on Sunday 24th April at 3.45 pm at the Cenotaph. All members and their relatives are invited to assemble at 3.30 pm on the corner of Martin Place at Pitt Street on the GPO side. Medals are requested to be worn.

ANZAC DAY MARCH - Monday, 25th April.

On Monday, 25th April the ANZAC Day March will be held 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 the 6th Division. Both units will form up outside the Leagues Club in Phillip Street.

Relatives taking part in the march must be eighteen years or older and they must report to

our unit marshal, Bill Tasker, who will ensure relatives are wearing deceased members medals on the right breast.

ANZAC REUNION - Monday, 25th April.

Venue for both units for the dinner is the Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street, Sydney. Board the train at Museum Station after march, to Wynyard, up the escalators, turn right into York Street and the hotel is on the corner.

2/1st PIONEER BRIDGE

We are grateful to Les Tunks 2/1 of Mareeba for sending in the following particulars, taken from an article in the local Atherton Tableland newspaper:

"Local former WWII soldiers relived some of their experiences when they visited their former training areas around Wondecla.

The soldiers, along with members of the Northern Branch National Servicemen's Association, of which John Hardy of Rocky Creek Committee is the Secretary, held a Nasho Get-Together at Wondecla on the weekend of 24th/25th July, 2004.

Activities included the inspection of the bridge erected by members of the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion, 2nd AIF during 1944. Other activities included static displays of military vehicles and equipment, light entertainment overnight, camping and an opportunity was provided to inspect the former 6th Division entertainment igloo on the property of Bob and Margaret Chester on Chester Road, Wondecla.

The above article in the "Tablelands" contained a photo of the actual suspension bridge erected by the 2/1sts in 1944 and the bridge mentioned is in our book "The Pioneers" on page 127 as follows:-

"Recapitulation of engineering training was carried out - suspension bridges using local materials, ARC mesh suspension as well as a very large timber bridge Class 30 was built surreptitiously in the jungle, which was completed 23rd August, 1944.

An air photo revealed a large bridge in the jungle, with no tracks leading to it or from it. As there were no records of the bridge, Divisional H.Q. concluded, as it was in the Pioneers area, that it was built by Buckley's Pioneers. Colonel Buckley was "ticked off" by the General, who somehow organised the payment of the necessary royalties to the property owner."

It is truly amazing that this bridge has stood the passage of time of the last 60 years and by the photo is still in good condition.

SICK PARADE

JACK KERSLAKE 2/1 of Collaroy has been hospitalised since December after a fall at home and at the moment is in respite care at Elizabeth Jenkins Hostel. He is hoping to transfer to the new nursing home at War Vets at Narrabeen as the News goes to press. He has been visited by Jack Bertram 2/1 and Gordon Hughes of R.O.T.A.

NOEL SCHOMBERG 2/1 of Parramatta was also hospitalised late February while holidaying at Fingal Bay and at time of going to press was recovering in Lake Macquarie Hospital after a lung operation. His progress is being monitored by friend Vi Flynn who is keeping us up to date on Noel's health. Noel was also visited by Jack Bertram.

VAL CRAWFORD, wife of our treasurer Don 2/2, has also been in and out of hospital since December with a duodenal ulcer which necessitated an operation. Home for several weeks, Val has once again been admitted to Concord Hospital for further tests and hoping to have some results in the next few days.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

First Mail Bag of the New Year - a year of mixed blessings and we are grateful for our active, at times hectic lifestyle. We particularly think of those who have suffered losses and sadness throughout the year and our thoughts are with you. We hope 2005 will be kind to all our "Pioneer Family" and we can look forward to a year of peace and good health.

CYRIL AMIES 2/1, Forbes, with Christmas greetings and a long note from Doris on their year's activities - including most importantly their 60th wedding anniversary. Heartiest congratulations and may you both share many more happy years together. Daughter Wendy excelled herself in the catering and planning and most important was the fact that Cyril was well enough on the day to enjoy the festivities. Since moving to Forbes several years ago, Cyril's health has had its ups and downs but at the time of writing was fairly steady. He enjoys his garden and especially all the new roses which Doris has been busy getting established. Apparently, Forbes is renowned for its roses - the local soil and drier weather promotes good growth. Cyril looks after the watering by riding around on his motorised scooter.

Thank you for your letter and cheque for funds, Doris, and hope Cyril's health continues to improve. Always good to hear from you both.

BILL ANDERSON 2/1, Beresfield, with a very generous donation to the News and his best wishes passed on to all who keep the Association afloat. Many thanks to both Molly and yourself for your kind words and for the cheque. All the best for the coming year.

ISABELL ANDERSON, Aspendale, Vic., widow of "Snowy" 2/2, with Christmas greetings to all from both Julie and herself and good to hear from you once again. Love and best wishes.

ANDY BEEBAR 2/2, Catherine Field, with a note of thanks for the expressions of sympathy passed on from the Association on the loss of his dear wife, Carrie. Max has included this in his Last Post section, Andy, with a few details of her life in the Queensland Land Army during the war.

He is hoping that he can make the March on ANZAC Day as he has missed the last couple of years. Time is marching on and the ranks thinning each year. Thanks for the cheque enclosed with the letter and kindest regards.

ROBYN BELL, Port Melbourne, daughter of the late Leo Morris 2/1, with Seasons Greetings to all from Bruce and herself to all Pioneers and all being well hopes to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day. Robyn was saddened to think that the Lismore reunion could have been the last, as it was wonderful to keep in touch with the many friends she had made over the years. However, age and ill health fast catching up and travelling long distances no longer possible for so many. Do hope you can make it to Sydney, Robyn, and look forward to seeing you again. Best wishes.

PAT BENTLEY, Yokine W.A., widow of Alf 2/1, with a short note and welcome cheque that arrived just too late for last issue. (The paper was already with the printer.) Many thanks.

Pat and a widowed friend (whose Dad was a "Rat of Tobruk") were off to Egypt at the time of writing and we hope you enjoyed your trip. Also hopes to be able to make another trip to Sydney for ANZAC Day. Will look forward to hearing from you.

She is now back swimming after her shoulder problems and very happy about that. Both Alf and Pat were in swim clubs in the west and Pat was the holder of three State swimming records (in her age group). Hope you are able to still swim competitively, Pat, certainly good exercise.

Kindest regards and hope to see you in April.

MAVIS BLANCH, Beaudesert, Qld., widow of Ray 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and wishing all lots of good health and happiness in the coming year. Mavis was so pleased to see all her old friends at the reunion at

Ballina but had a slow trip home after being caught up in a traffic accident on the return journey. Christmas breakups have kept her on the go - eight in two weeks - but likes her church and charity work and it beats sitting around like a lot do where she lives.

Do hope the new hearing aids have been satisfactory, Mavis, and your inner ear problem cleared up. Most people seem to have some kind of problems with them - either blocked up or "whistling" - Max is forever cleaning his.

Our best wishes and we hope to meet up again one of these days. Do keep well and love from your friends here in the south.

VERA BRADLEY, Cairns, our ex-AAMWS friend, with a card of greeting for Christmas and her many thanks for continuing to send her copies of the News. She enjoys reading same and beginning to know some of our members. Was pleased to read of the award of Life Membership to our treasurer, Don Crawford, and sends him her congratulations.

Do hope Ron's health is on the improve, Vera, and once more back in his workshop. Kindest regards from us both and hope the book sales are still coming in.

LES BRITT 2/1, Redlynch Qld., with a short note enclosing his subscription to the News and to say he was very pleased with his new unit. Hopes it will be his last move. Thanks for the sub and best wishes.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of John 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and a welcome donation to the News. She is still keeping herself busy - very involved with Legacy, War Widows and Brisbane Waters Seniors - and says it keeps her out of mischief. Holding office in both Legacy and War Widows wouldn't give you much spare time to get into mischief, Lex.

In regard to your query re a plaque for John in the Rose Garden at Kokoda Track Walkway, Max has written you re this matter, Lexie, and given you all the details. Trust you were able to do something about it. Fond regards from both of us and always good to hear from you.

VERA COOK, Randwick, widow of Clem 2/1, keeps in touch regularly and has just recently sent some interesting copies of old newspapers, reproductions of wartime editions with the news of the Japanese surrender in August 1945, which made good reading. Clem had them filed away and Vera decided they were too interesting to throw away.

Many thanks, Vera, and they will be filed away in the Association records. Always nice to hear from you, Vera, and we both send our best wishes.

BETTY CREASY, Portland, widow of George 2/1, with Seasons Greetings to all Pioneers and a cheque for worthy treasurer. Do hope the eye operation has gone well, Bet, and no problems. Thanks for the cheque and best wishes.

ALLAN CRUTE 2/1, Woolgoolga, with a card of greeting for Christmas and a cheque for the News. He had spent three weeks in hospital recently with an artery in his leg blocked and an operation to clear it, but is now home and feeling well. Says he's lucky at 87 to be in his own home and able to take care of himself. Is still able to drive and take himself to croquet a couple of days a week and plays ten pin bowls another day, so keeps busy socially. Good for you, Allan, and we hope you continue to enjoy life. Many thanks for the donation to funds - all the best.

GORDON CHRYSTALL 2/1, Larras Lee, a welcome note per pen of wife Eunice, with a cheque enclosed for the News. Many thanks. Gordon retired from the carrying business in May, but always busy helping out with mechanics for son Ralph, in road transport, or in the garden. His health has been fair with most of the aches and pains that come with age. They have a son's wedding coming up in March - the first Chrystall male to be married in 50 years, so are looking forward to the special event.

Rain in their area near Molong is badly needed, as they have slipped back into drought - says they could do a rain dance but it hurts the joints too much.

Best wishes to you both and many thanks for the kind words on the production of the News.

ARTHUR DAVIS 2/1, Fletcher, an outer suburb of Newcastle, with a temporary change of address. He and his wife Alice have sold their home at Granville and are moving to a new home somewhere in the Warner's Bay area or thereabouts. Max has altered the address on our records, Arthur, and the paper will continue to be sent to Fletcher until you are settled in your new home. Glad you both still find it good reading.

Many thanks for the donation to funds and our best wishes.

NITA FERRIS, Kyogle, widow of Leo 2/1, with her best wishes to all for the coming year and she is still in the Kyogle Court Aged Care Home and being well looked after. Bill Hoffman 2/1 is also there and keeps reasonably well. Take care, Nita, and our best wishes.

GRACE FOWKES, Wentworthville, widow of "Snowy" 2/1, with a donation to funds and her best wishes to all Pioneers for a healthy and prosperous 2005. She sends her thanks for the News which she looks forward to receiving. Trust you are well, Grace, and thanks for your continued support of the News.

BOB GINNANE 2/2, Leumeah, with a cheque for the treasurer and his apologies for his absence from the social activities of the Association.

In July last year he and Nell lost their eldest son, Bob Jnr., to cancer and as this son was Bob's driver to the reunions, etc., transport became a major problem. Although said son lived in the city he used to drive out to Campbelltown to drive Bob to the city and have a beer or two with Bob's old army pals prior to the dinner.

It has been a stressful time and has taken both Bob and Nell some time adjusting - Nell has not been well and Bob has developed thrombosis which means long, white pressure stockings, but he denies the rumours that he will march in the Mardi Gras procession. Says their home is very congested as both he and Nell are on walking frames for mobility and he's thinking of installing traffic lights in their hallway to enable them to pass each other. Certainly haven't lost your sense of humour, Bob, and we do hope that time will help you both in your sad loss.

Their daughter, Dianne, has been a tower of strength in looking after them and having been a nurse and living close by they have been very fortunate.

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

NOEL GRANT 2/1, Seaholme Vic., with greetings to all Pioneers for the coming year and a cheque enclosed for Association funds. Noel and Jean and family have once again booked rooms at the NSW Rugby League Club to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day and will be attending the march and reunion. In regard to the ladies' lunch, will have to let you know later of arrangements, as I have been on the "sick list" since early December and have not been able to get into the city.

Good to hear your health has improved Noel with the removal of your gallstones, and looking for better times. All the best to both Jean and yourself and hoping to see you in April.

CLIVE HARRIS 2/1, Aberdeen, with a card of greeting and the news that he had only arrived home that morning after a rather lengthy stay in hospital. Hope by now you are feeling much better and taking each day as it comes. Take care and our best wishes.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, as usual per pen of good wife Wyn, with a long newsy letter and greetings to all Pioneers and their families for a peaceful and happy 2005. Many thanks Wyn for your very kind remarks on the Mail Bag contents and they were appreciated. In some small way it does keep our scattered Pioneer members in touch with one another - their ranks are thinning each year - and now with no country reunions some members rarely see one another. Age and time catching up.

Good to hear John is keeping well and that you were able to make it to Sydney for Christmas with your family. Your young families are increasing by leaps and bounds and must be giving you both a lot of pleasure. The older ones are doing well in their studies.

Do hope Skye had a successful interview in Newcastle for the Uni, there never seems to be enough vacancies for those who really want to study. Andrew seems settled in Canberra with his job and from your description sounds like a real "chip" off the old block. I'm sure you and John are very proud grandparents. It's so good these days to see the young ones finding their feet out in the real world. Another few years and they will all be out of High School. Hope it will be a more peaceful world than we are living in at the moment.

At last report Bill Jollie was home and reasonably well, considering, and Max endeavours to keep him up-to-date on Association matters.

Trust the eyes are holding up, Wyn, and the drops doing their job. Always good to hear from you and love and best wishes to you both.

ELAINE HENDERSON, Epping, niece of the late Ron Clark 2/1, with Christmas greetings to the men of the Pioneers and says "we never forget what our servicemen have done." Many thanks, Elaine, and for your cheque enclosed. Trust you are keeping well and always pleased to hear from you.

PAM HERRICK, Sutherland, daughter of the late George Bates 2/1, with her long, newsy Xmas letter of the year's "doings" and her Seasons Greetings to all Pioneers and their families.

During the year Pam holidayed in the Philippines with daughter Karen, husband Tom, and her little grand-daughters and had a wonderful time, even though it rained most of the time (monsoon season). They taught English at the Don Bosco School for Street Children and enjoyed every minute of their time there and felt very humble when they came back to Australia. Children are the same the world over - they need love and to be listened to and a guiding hand. Middle daughter Tracey and husband travelled overseas this year from their Brisbane home and son Damien and wife Cassandra, with a new 6-month old baby son, have settled in North Carolina, U.S.A. Pam hopes to be able to fly across to see them later in the year.

Some days after receiving Pam's letter, she rang to say her mum, Dorothy Bates, had passed away in John Paul Village at Heathcote, after a long illness, and Max has made mention of this in Last Post.

Many thanks for your letter, Pam, and hope to meet up at the ANZAC functions. Love and best wishes.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, Castle Hill, just home from hospital at Wahroonga, after a four week stay, when he wrote with his Christmas greetings. Recovery has been slow after his big operation. Trust by now you are on the mend, Bill, and best wishes are extended from your Pioneer friends. John and Wyn Hayden always ask to be remembered to you when they write.

MAISIE KEMPNIICH, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with a change of address at her nursing home and a wish to all Pioneers and their families for a happy festive season. Is sorry to see the passing of so many old friends in the newsletter, but at this late stage guesses it is part of life. Mais hopes to keep in touch, but says her eyesight is so much worse that it shortly will not be readable. She is hoping to be able to walk the "Kokoda Track Walkway" at Concord before her legs give out, so we hope family may be able to help out in this regard.

The newsletter will be sent to the nursing home, Mais, and we do hope to meet up again one day. Love and best wishes from your friends down south.

JOAN LEE, North Strathfield, widow of Bob 2/2, with Seasons Greetings to all Pioneers for a healthy New Year. Says the News always makes good reading and she enclosed a welcome sub towards funds. Many thanks, Joan, and kindest regards.

NANCY LINTON, Tuncurry, widow of Don 2/2, with a donation to the Association and every good wish for the coming year to all Pioneers and their families. Nancy is always pleased to read of Pioneer members and their comments and in the last issue was greatly interested to note a mention about Don from Hugh Vincent of

Wembley in W.A. Thank you, Hugh.

Her thanks are passed on also to the committee members who publish and distribute the News and looks forward to its arrival. Many thanks, Nancy, and for your donation to funds.

ERNIE LUNN 2/2, Dubbo, per pen of dear wife Norma, and they send greetings to all for the New Year. Ernie was home from the nursing home for Christmas and Boxing Day - Norma says it was peaceful and we ate all our favourite foods. (Trust Ern was able to have "something" to wash it down.) Their families called from their homes with greetings, even from Minnesota U.S.A. (where daughter Robyn lives) and the temperature there 27° below. (It was 39° in Dubbo.) Both Ernie and Norma are cricket fans so they spent a lot of time getting "square eyes". One way of having a rest!!

Fond greetings to both and many thanks Norma for keeping in touch.

GLORIA HUTCHINSON, Caringbah, widow of Bill 2/1, with her best wishes for the Festive Season and a cheque enclosed to keep the Pioneer News afloat. Many thanks, Gloria, and hopefully may see you ANZAC Day. Take care and love.

DON McCLELLAND 2/2, Bundaberg Qld., with his thanks for the Pioneer News - always good reading. However, he says at our age he sometimes wonders how long this service can last - don't worry, Don, we often have the same thought.

At the time of writing he was getting ready to leave for his annual trip south and wouldn't be back until the middle of June (some holiday). Intends being in Melbourne for the 2/2 Pioneer reunion on ANZAC Day, but takes things steady these days. (Not able to play up like they did 40 years ago.) While down south likes to go to a Carlton v Collingwood match, a Carlton fan, as a friend of his father was Captain of Carlton about 1906. Since meeting him in 1929, Don has been "one-eyed" with the Carlton team.

Thanks for the cheque enclosed in your letter and enjoy your stay down south.

JEAN McINTYRE, Springwood, widow of John 2/2, with a donation to the News included with her Christmas greetings. Says she is always happy to find it in her mail box and keep up with the Pioneer doings. Has had a good year herself and just celebrated her 85th birthday. How the years fly when you get older, but as long as your health is good, what does age matter. Best wishes, Jean, always nice to hear from you.

JEAN NICHOLS, Sutherland, widow of George 2/1, with a letter of thanks to Max for the help she received from him at the time of George's funeral - says it was much appreciated at a time when she was going through a very sad time. Also I had sent her a photo of the very last ANZAC march in which George had taken part and she said how she would treasure it. He was a very special person.

Our thanks, Jean, for your letter and trust you are feeling better and trying to get on with life. Take care and best wishes.

BETTY O'CONNOR, West Ballina, widow of Neville 2/2, with a note apologising for her absence at the Lismore reunion in September due to a bad bout of the flu. She had been away on a coach trip to Darwin and came home on the Ghan to Adelaide and flew back to Brisbane. Had a great trip, but came home the night before the reunion with a really bad infection and was sick for some weeks. We missed you, Betty, but as we did not stay in Ballina this trip, we did not get the opportunity to see you.

Do hope your daughters are doing well after their brush with cancer and responding to treatment. It's hard to see our younger ones having to cope with chemo and resultant treatment.

Your good wishes, are passed on to all Pioneers for the coming year and hope to meet up again in the future. Love and best wishes.

ALLAN OLSON 2/2, Netherby S.A., with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and lots of good health in the coming year. Mentions he had an operation on his left knee just before Christmas and it seems to be going well. Won't be long until ANZAC Day, Allan, so a good day for

a "work-out". Take care and best wishes from all.

PETER PEILE 2/1, Caringbah, per pen of good wife Erika, with news of Peter and a cheque for the News. Many thanks. They had not long returned from an eight day trip to Victoria along the Great Ocean Road by coach. They had a very interesting holiday and saw lots of places and most knowledgeable guides to point out landmarks along the way.

As an RSL group they held a small service and laid flowers on the new Prisoner of War Memorial at Ballarat - it was most impressive and there were lots of visitors.

Pete's health has had its ups and downs - his '95 bypass failed and he had to have five new stints implanted in the middle of last year and is still a little breathless and the pain from the attack of shingles still with him. However, still battling on with plenty of care from Erika. Hope the new year will be kinder to you, Pete, and many thanks Erika for your note.

JOY PREEDY, Shenton Park W.A., widow of Len 2/2, with greetings to all Pioneers and lots of good health to all in the coming year. Still enjoys getting the News and to reading it, keeps her up-to-date on the many friends Len made during his years in the army and his involvement in the W.A. Branch. Trust you are well, Joy, and still able to get out and about. Kindest regards from all here in the East.

JACK PURCELL 2/1, Coffs Harbour, with notification from his daughter Theresa Goodman of Paddington, Qld., that her dad had a heart attack late October and was in hospital in Coffs. He was busy having physio to get his strength back so he could wheel his wheelchair. (Jack lost his legs in 2003 due to bone cancer.)

His best wishes are passed on to all and he hoped to be home soon. Many thanks Theresa for your note and we hope that by now your dad has returned home. A pretty hardy breed these Pioneers. We wish him well.

MONA REINERS, Corryong Vic., widow of Bern 2/1, with a very welcome letter and news from her part of the country. Many thanks also for the donation to the News. It's always great to hear from you with news of the family, Mona, as you know Bern held a very special place in our lives and we often speak of him and the family in happier days. If only you could turn back the clock.

The young brood seem to be doing well in their chosen fields and now only Sally to finish this year. How the years have flown. Cannot believe Brian has nearly reached retiring age, but he was born several months after we moved to Beverly Hills - and that is over 55 years ago. Pleased to hear Mandy's health problem has had good results and her latest tests all clear.

Good to hear you are still bowling and playing bridge and, spare time, walking the dog. It's a wonder you get time to garden.

My brood are well, Lynn and family coming back to live in Aussie (here now some of them) so must get round to ringing you soon with the latest news. Fondest love to you all, keep well.

FRANCES RHODES, Page A.C.T., daughter of late Jim 2/1, with a long Christmas letter and lovely to hear from you and your "doings" since speaking to you last. Tracked around the country last year on holidays, "sussed" out Byron Bay and on to Nimbin, what an experience, and these holidays planning to take the new tent around Cowra, Dubbo and Jenolan and maybe across to the coast. Fran has now two high-schoolers on her hands so has plenty to keep her busy. You did not mention if you were still going on with your law degree. Best of luck and great to hear from you. Do keep in touch.

OLIVE RICHARDS, Bribie Island Qld., widow of Jack 2/1, written from her new address just before Christmas. They were still unpacking after the move from Lennox Head with son Chris and wife Annette and settling in. She had grandson Neil, Renee, and a three month old baby staying and says Neil has just been appointed to be the official photographer at the Edinburgh Tattoo in Sydney. They have had some good rain since arriving and a few typical sub-tropical storms.

Hope you have settled in by now and enjoying your new life-style. By the way, Olive, you will see

by Sick Parade, Jack Kerslake has been having a rather rough trot the last couple of months. He has spent a lot of time in Mona Vale Hospital, and now may be making a move to War Veterans' Home at Narrabeen - will keep you posted.

Our love and best wishes to you and the family and wish you all the best in your new life.

TOSS ROBERTSON, Randwick, widow of Bill 2/2, with Christmas greetings from both herself and daughter Janet to all Pioneers and their families for a healthy and happy 2005 and says Janet hopes to be at Five Dock for Tobruk Sunday in April. Every good wish, Toss, and hope the news of your son shows a big improvement.

LINDA SAUNDERS, Scone, widow of Ross 2/1, with a welcome cheque to the News and Max has written you in this regard. Many thanks. Do hope your health has improved and this year looking brighter. Glad to see you still look forward to the arrival of the News, helping to keep you in touch. Take care and best wishes.

JOHN SHARP 2/2, Goorambat Vic., with a long interesting letter enclosing a cheque for the News which he looks forward to receiving regularly. John says he's not much of a correspondent but losing his wife after 53 years in 2002 hasn't helped. His own health is reasonable and for 84 his luck has held out pretty well.

He still lives on his property "Hopefield" in Goorambat (I did look up a map to find out just where Goorambat was) where he has spent all his life with the exception of his time with the Pioneers. John was a member of B Coy. In the original 2/2 Pioneers and sailed with them to the Middle East. He was in A Coy in the reformed unit and had quite a number of NSW mates at that time. Ted Rainey was in his platoon, the rest all Vics. He met the late Don Linton 2/2 on swim parades in Cairns, some of them thought they could swim until they saw Don in action. John has kept in touch with "Snowy" Dodd 2/2 whom he didn't know until he started going to Forster-Tuncurry for a yearly break in the 80's.

The property runs crossbred sheep, fat lambs and cereal crops, cows and vealers and is situated 10 miles out of Benalla towards Yarrowonga. They have an irrigation water-right although not large, it is most valued. He has a daughter living with him and his only son and family living on and managing their mixed farm.

Good letter, John, and for your saying not a good correspondent, you did yourself proud. All the best of health in the future and many thanks for the cheque.

GEORGE SAUER 2/1, Lower Mitcham S.A., per his wife Eulali, with the news that George is far from well and at the time of writing was in hospital with a broken hip. He has been in Aged Care since last August after a series of nasty falls and the latest was in early December. His health has deteriorated in the last few months, with some slight strokes.

Thank you for writing, Eulali, as we have had quite a few enquiries regarding George and we have passed on your news to them. I know Steve Clarke has been in touch with you by phone. Pass on greetings to George from his friends over here. Many thanks.

WAL SMITH 2/1, Sans Souci, with a brief note enclosing his subs for the year and best wishes to all his Pioneer mates. Many thanks.

EDITH STONE, Raymond Terrace, widow of Allen 2/2, enclosing a cheque for the News and advising Max of Allen's death in September. This is noted in Last Post, Edith, and the Pioneer News will be sent on to you as requested. Take care and best wishes.

BILL THIELE 2/1, Port Hughes S.A., as usual per Betty his good wife, with greetings for Christmas and a cheque to funds. They still enjoy receiving the News, though saddened to see so many names in Last Post. Of those names Bill remembers of 2/1sts who were in his tent in Qld., only Doug Waters is still alive. Bryan Smallhorn, Lieut. of 15 Pln. is still with us and lives at 138 Jessie Street, Armidale, NSW 2350. We hear from him fairly regularly and he keeps fairly well.

Bill is still playing golf occasionally and "night owl" bowls in the summer. He's on the "hit list" for a knee reconstruction, result of an old war injury, but Betty says he still looks pretty good for an 80

year old. That's saying something, Bill.

Last ANZAC Day they travelled to Adelaide and Bill was able to catch up with Doug Waters 2/1 and Allan Olson 2/2.

Kind regards to you both and many thanks for the donation to Association funds.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba Qld., with Christmas greetings and the news that he had been in hospital late in the year with fluid on the lungs and has had another pacemaker which seems to be working OK. Les has had a talk to John Paul 2/1 of Camira Qld. (just had his 80th birthday) who was going to family in Sydney on holiday. Trust you and Lesley are well at the moment and we send you our best wishes.

NEVILLE WOODHAM 2/1, Cleveland Qld., with greetings to all from he and Betty for a healthy and rewarding 2005 and a big thank you for the Pioneer News which they are always happy to find in the mail. Trust you both are well and every good wish for the New Year. Maybe see you ANZAC Day.

BERT WOODHOUSE 2/1, Karridale W.A., with greetings while in Sydney to attend the Edinburgh Tattoo early in February. Thoroughly enjoyed the show and while in Sydney phoned Mary Burnham (Colonel Brown's daughter) who was also coming to Sydney for the show. Good to hear from you, Bert, and our best wishes.

FRED ALWAY 2/1, Beaumaris Vic., with a short note enclosing his donation to funds and his warm wishes passed on to all Pioneers. Fred has not been in the best of health lately, but says he is happy and still able to go fishing on Port Phillip Bay fairly regularly and have a few home brew beers. What more could you ask of life, Fred, and hope your health improves.

■ That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and many thanks to all those Pioneers and friends who sent cards to us for Christmas, apart from those mentioned in the Mail Bag. All were very much appreciated - best wishes from Max and myself for the coming year.

Aub/Nancy Brasier, Eric/Doff Causer, Olive Finlay, Mercia Healey, Verdie/Connie Humphreys, Marie Jensen, Joyce Law, Dawn Levy, Bert/May/Lynda Neasbey, Toss Robertson and daughter Janet, Helen Walker, (daughter of late Mary Lloyd) and Doug/Maureen Waters.

LAST POST

CARRIE BEEBAR, wife of Andy 2/2, Catherine Field, passed away in October 2004 whilst in hospital and a sympathy card was sent from the Association.

Carrie joined the Qld Land Army at 18 years of age and rose to rank of sergeant. She worked on farms out of Daintree and Rockhampton and numerous farms around Brisbane. When not on duty at the farm she helped at the Greenslopes Military Hospital where she helped to heal the wounded soldiers from New Guinea and later on those returning from the Burma Railway. She had lots of stories to tell - some sad but lots of funny ones.

Andy finished his letter by saying life will never be the same without Carrie to whom he had been married 59 years, but he is fortunate in having lots of help from his sons, their wives and his many grandchildren.

ALLAN STONE 2/2 of Raymond Terrace passed away on 18th September 2004, at the age of 86 years, just two days after his 65th wedding anniversary.

Allen had battled with a heart valve problem and in the end he died very peacefully.

To his widow Edith, we express our sincere sympathy in her sad loss.

FRED WHEATON 2/1 of Sawtell passed away in November 2004 and sincere sympathy was expressed to Jean and her family.

All 2/1st Pioneers will remember Fred as the burly front row forward in their famous Rugby League football team who won many matches against other units while training at Atherton.

GEORGE NICHOLS 2/1 of Thomas Holt Village, Sutherland passed away on 5th December 2004 after a heart operation, and the funeral was held at Olson Funeral Parlours, Sutherland.

The Poppy Service, Last Post, Reveille and Ode to the Fallen was carried out by Cronulla RSL.

Pioneers in attendance were Joyce Law and son Craig, Peg and Max Herron and Bill Tasker who gave the Eulogy on George's army career with the 2/1st Pioneer Bn as follows:

George enlisted in 1940 and was posted to the 2/1st Pioneer Bn. and served in the campaigns of Middle East, New Guinea, including the Kokoda Track and then Balikpapan in Borneo.

It was at the landing at Balikpapan on 1st July, 1945, that George saved the life of a fellow Pioneer who had fallen into the sea between two ships when scrambling down a net. For his brave action George was Mentioned in Despatches.

After the war George attended every ANZAC Day march and reunion and greatly assisted the Association by attending funerals and carrying out many hospital visitations.

Bill then extended deepest sympathy on behalf of the Association to dear wife Jean, and said George will be sadly missed by all his fellow Pioneers who held him in high esteem.

DOROTHY BATES, widow of George 2/1, passed away on 16th December, aged 84. Dorothy had lived at John Paul Village Nursing Home at Heathcote for four years prior to her death and daughter Pam Herrick had nothing but praise for the care and attention her mother had received from the nursing staff. Dorothy was in a water chair during the day, but was still coherent and interested in all activities going on around her. She had many visits to Sutherland Hospital (where Pam works) and was looked after with gentle care. It was easy for Pam to run up and down stairs during the day to see her.

Dorothy's Requiem Mass, to celebrate her life, was held on 21st December at Mary Help of Christian's Catholic Church, Heathcote, and was buried with George (who passed away in 1997) in the General Lawn Cemetery at Woronora Cemetery. After the burial, friends and family were invited back to JPV for an Irish wake. Pam wanted to thank the staff at John Paul Village and Sutherland Hospital for the care they had shown her mum over the years. It was good to have so many of them attend, as well as the church service.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to Pam and her family, Dorothy's sister Rosalind (82) and her niece, Gloria Holloway, on their sad loss. Our thanks to Pam for passing on the news.

PETER PRIEST 2/1 of Ballina passed away on 1st March and at time of going to press no further details to hand, but we do thank Ken Wilson for contacting us.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual and General Meeting will be held on Friday 22nd July at 1 pm at the Redfern RSL Club in the Snooker Room. All Pioneers are invited to attend and will be most welcome.

NEWS ITEMS

ANZAC DAY MARCH provides a good opportunity to meet up with your mates of the war years so how about making an effort and coming along to swell the marching ranks. You can also bring along a carer.

SINCERE SYMPATHY has been extended to Allan McInnes 2/2 in the sad passing of his grandson in Adelaide, as a result of a motor bike accident.

JACK TOOKER 2/1 has been having treatment for some months on a leg problem necessitating weekly visits to a doctor and bi-weekly home nursing calls for dressings. Hope you will soon be on the mend, Jack, and best wishes.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, was in Mt. Wilga Rehabilitation Centre for treatment for a leg problem at the time of going to press. He had been hospitalised since early February. Hurry up and get well, Bill, and thanks to daughter Sharon for letting us know of your whereabouts.

STEVE CLARKE 2/1 has also been on the sick list in the San Hospital, Wahoonga, and Lady Davidson at Turrumurra with leg problems for several weeks, but home at the moment having to take things easy. All the best, Steve, take care.

PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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

Per Annum: \$5

Typeset by Typesmith Pty Ltd, 12 Blakesley Road, Carlton NSW 2218 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Arncliffe NSW 2205

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Vol. 51 No. 2

JULY 2005

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2/1-2/2 PIONEER ANZAC ACTIVITIES

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

This service was held on Sunday 24th April at the Cenotaph in Martin Place with an attendance of only ten Pioneers, twelve ladies and six relatives.

Bill Tasker marshalled the assembly, with President Allan McInnes as leader and the Banner bearers were Noel Grant 2/1 and Bert Neasbey 2/2.

The wreaths were laid by Neville Woodham for the Association, who also recited the Ode, and Val Crawford for the Ladies Auxiliary.

The bugler was Aub Brasier who played a fine rendition of the Last Post and Reveille. Once again we thank Aub for his great service to the Association over a period of forty-five years.

ANZAC DAY MARCH

Once again, the weather was fine, a typical autumn day. From memory, over many recent years, there has been only one Anzac Day when the weather was less than perfect, and even then it was an infrequent drizzle which did not interfere with the march. The 2/1 lined up with the 2/2 close behind at the south end of Phillip, in the cool shade of the city buildings. The 2/1 numbered about 50, of whom about half were relatives of Pioneers. The 2/2 had only seven old Pioneers with 14 relatives. We moved off at 9.30 am, but waited in King Street for half an hour before resuming the march with the Castle Hill RSL Youth Band again preceding the 2/1. The march then proceeded with minimal interruption. The sun turned up the heat in the concrete canyon of George Street, lined with an enthusiastic and vocal crowd. In a little over the half hour, the march ended, and most entrained at Museum, arriving at the Occidental about 11.30 am.

John Gilchrist led the march for the 2/1, with Ray Law carrying the flag and Tim Lloyd the banner. For the 2/2 Allan McInnes was leader, while Mark Neasbey took the flag and Ryan Crawford the banner.

OCCIDENTAL HOTEL REUNION

At the Occidental, working sons, Geoff Finlay, Ray Law and David Herron collected the luncheon money and issued name tags while upstairs, Mark Neasbey and Joshua Herron assisted the Secretary in organising the programme. Also Don Crawford and Gavin Todd continued to issue receipts for Pioneer News contributions. Then on to the domain of Mary, the function room co-ordinator, who combines charm with competence (and looks good as well), Allan McInnes recited the Ode and spoke of the 90th anniversary of Gallipoli and its significance. In his view, Australia Day should be moved to Anzac Day, citing the big crowds, the number of children waving flags, supporting the theme of love of country and mateship. Allan mentioned the visits overseas sponsored by the Government through the DVA for a small group of veterans, and announced that Ken Oliver, as veteran and Joyce Law as war widow of Max, had been put forward by the Committee for possible selection.

He mentioned also, that if the gathering was agreeable, Peg Herron and her Ladies Auxiliary would be invited to join members at the luncheon next year.

Allan specially mentioned the generosity of some younger guests for donations to the bar, (which kept the beer flowing all afternoon). In the best traditions of investigative reporting, we can reveal that the contributions made

anonymously were from - Frank Fleming, George Granger, Don Grant, Craig Lynch, Paul Maddrell, Mark Neasbey, David Walker, Ian Secombe and friend. (Frank Fleming and Craig Lynch who were unable to attend are relatives of Noel Grant.) Allan also paid tribute to the small army of helpers who ensured the day went smoothly for the enjoyment of all. He also thanked Mary and her staff of the Occidental for their warm, and high quality service which expressed the feelings of all Pioneers and guests.

Patron John Gilchrist then spoke of the tradition of Anzac. He had quite recently seen a film about Gallipoli, which showed the campaign warts and all, concluding with the only thing done right - the evacuation. He spoke of the tradition of volunteer service for overseas. John specially thanked Max and Peg Herron, and also praised the good work of Treasurer Don Crawford. In conclusion, John appealed for more members to attend the wreath-laying service. Acknowledging that some were not fit enough to take part in the Anzac Day march, he felt they would be well able to attend the wreath-laying service.

The luncheon which followed was of the usual high standard, served by pleasant and attentive young wenches. The contemplative post-prandial interval was abruptly terminated at about 2 pm by the Parramatta RSL Pipe Band, a reminder that proceedings were winding down. As ever, the pipers were colourful and pleasantly overpowering in that confined space.

TABLE TALK

Sam Lewis was proud to have three generations there. He would like an open vehicle arranged to cater for the increasing number not fit enough to march. Noel Grant made a similar suggestion and conveys an apology from Jack Stewart of Perth who is ill and unable to travel. Jack Kerslake sent his regards to all Pioneers via Laurie Kelly who said Jack could not attend because of his health but did make the march in a taxi from War Vets home at Narrabeen. Laurie also reported that Noel Schomberg is on the mend and that Vi Flynn is a great help. Ken Oliver brought along his "meat tags" discovered in the back of a drawer. It was interesting that his name, etc were stamped on to the disk. Others remembered theirs had been etched on with acid.

Tim Lloyd recalls that Jack (D Coy, 2/1) would have been 95 this year. There are now six grandchildren. The one great grandson, Oliver attended the Anzac ceremony. Grandson Anthony is about to go to the University of Barcelona to study Spanish having already qualified as a barrister. Tim who has carried the 2/1 banner on Anzac Day for 26 years, is going next year to trek to the top of Mt Kilimanjaro in Africa. If he makes it, Tim says he will be remembering Jack and the Pioneers. At another table, Max told George Granger he was the best looking bloke at the table, so gave him the job of filling out the report sheet. This led George to ask would Max therefore tell Mary the restaurant manager of his good looks.

Bob Ginnane (2/2) was pleased to meet up again with old mates, having missed out last year. Bob also had three generations at the reunion. (The other three generation members were Lewis, Stone, Herron and Woodham.) Bob sends best wishes for the future to all Pioneers. Frank Locane was not able to attend, and best wishes go to him also, and to Jean and family. Ken Forrest (2/2) was another unable to attend. As

large as life, from the far north coast was Ken Wilson, who organised last year's successful Lismore reunion. Mark Neasbey recalled he was called upon by father Bert, to chauffeur him and Gavin Todd to that reunion. Their transport was a far cry from long trips in the back of three-tonners. Mark rolled up in his SAAB convertible, keen to take it on a long drive. And that's travelling in style. Mark found the reunion a moving experience which helped him focus on the important things in life, and which he hopes can be repeated.

Bill Tasker sends best wishes from city members to our country cousins.

Mary Burnham, daughter of the late Colonel Arnold Brown 2/1st, arrived with the girls and immediately "shouted the mob" in memory of her father. One member appreciated her fine gesture by saying "Here's to good old Brownie".

ROLL CALL AT REUNION

2/1sts (17) - Jack Bertram (Hamilton), Steve Clarke, Phil Cramsie (Buderim, Q), Ron Cross (Ballina), Tom Crossman, John Gilchrist, Noel Grant (Seaholme, Vic), Max Herron, Roy Jardine, Laurie Kelly, Sam Lewis (Forster), Ken Oliver, Perc Penrose, Jack Robinson (Woy Woy), Jack Stone, Bill Tasker and Neville Woodham (Cleveland, Q).

2/2nds (12) - Jack Allison, Andy Beebar, Don Crawford, Ross Dawson, Snowy Dodd (Forster), Bob Ginnane, Bill Lewis, Clive Maddrell, Allan McInnes, Bert Neasbey (Davistown), Gavin Todd and Ken Wilson (Lismore).

SONS AND OTHERS

2/1sts - (Pioneer in brackets): Stephen Darmody (Bill), Glen Dolaghan (Jack), Geoff Finlay (Gordon), Frank Fleming (Noel Grant), Jim Fleming (Bill), Julia Gilchrist (John), George and Bill Granger (Bill), Don Grant (Noel), David and Joshua Herron (Max), Ray Law (Jim), Gary and Chris Lewis (Sam), Tim Lloyd (Jack), Dean Oliver (Ken), Olive Robinson (Jack), Ian Secombe (Cliff), Scott Simpson (Sam Lewis), Nathan Stone (Jack), John Tasker (Bill), Craig and David Walker (George), Ian and Mathew Woodham (Neville).

2/2nds - (Pioneer in brackets): David Allison (Jack), Ryan Crawford (Don), Phil and John Dawson (Ross), Paul Geronimi (Jack McDonagh), Kim and Adam Ginnane (Bob), Phil and Tim Maddrell (Clive), Adam McInnes (Allan), Mark and Greg Neasbey (Bert).

Finally a thank you to all who scribbled down a few notes to make this article possible

- Reported by BILL LEWIS (2/2).

KOKODA ANZAC SERVICE

The service to commemorate ANZAC DAY and the 90th Anniversary of Gallipoli was held at the Kokoda Track Walkway at Concord on 22nd April and the address was given by Major General Ken Gillespie AO, DSC, CSM.

The service was led by Father Malone and Rev. Weaver and Pioneers in attendance were Don and Val Crawford, Bill Tasker and Joyce Law who said it was a most impressive ceremony.

"OUR BAND"

Congratulations to members of the Castle Hill RSL Band in winning the Band competition on ANZAC Day. They also won the National Band competition, recently held in Adelaide.

Musical Director, Michael Butcher has resigned as director but will carry on as President. All Pioneers say thank you Michael for the past eleven years you have led the band for us on Anzac Day. We will miss you.

PILGRIMAGE TO BORNEO

By KEN OLIVER

At the Committee meeting in March when I was nominated by the Association to take part in the mission to Borneo to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the landings, I did not expect to be selected. Many others would be more deserving, especially those with awards and decorations, so it was an honour to be able to represent the 2/1 Pioneers on the mission, the only Army veteran from NSW.

The mission was headed by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, De-Anne Kelly, representatives from the Veterans' Affairs and eleven veterans. The group flew from Brisbane to Singapore on Sunday, 5th June and the following morning I had an early visit to the Singapore War Cemetery to pay respects to my brother, Bob, who was listed as M.I.A. while serving with the 2/19 Bn in Malaya in January 1942. I'm very grateful to the DVA for making this possible. Then to Changi for a Commemorative Service at the chapel and a viewing of the Changi Museum.

Later that afternoon the party flew to Balikpapan where a reception was held at Manggar Airport, then by bus down the Vasey Highway to Balikpapan. Driving through our old camping area and then past the landing areas was quite an experience. I was expecting a small modern city, with up-to-date development, but the old traditional native-style housing mixes with modern architecture. Balikpapan is a busy port these days, servicing the oil and coal mining industries.

Further inland and up to the "Tank Plateau" where all signs of the wartime destruction have been rebuilt. These areas were obviously settled by those in the oil industry, which is still a big presence in Balikpapan. Moving out beyond the refinery area we attended a ceremony at the Cenotaph where my duty was to read a dedication, which was very inspiring.

Next day was a 6 am start for a visit by boat to Penadum which D Coy occupied after our time at Tempadong. Here we were able to inspect the remains of the Jap ack-ack guns which are still in place, with barrels pointing straight up.

The trip by boat back to Balikpapan enabled us to anchor off the invasion beaches. We were some way out and in a small boat, so the view was a little distant, but I could still make out the low hills behind the beaches. I had some old photos of the invasion with me and was able to pass them around so we could compare the views. At that moment our party leader said, "OK, Ken, what stands out in your mind from this day 60 years ago?". Out came my story of crouching behind a large steel cylinder on the beach which was hit by a mortar shell - my poor old ears were ringing for hours after. The bloke laying beside me let fly with a torrent of expletives and when I looked at him I was surprised to see he was a Salvation Army officer.

Later, I was able to seek out a few of the older locals. I asked one who spoke a little English if anyone knew anything about the Tempadong area but with no success. Further enquiries seemed to indicate that Tempadong may now not exist.

Our next stop was on the bumpy airstrip at Tarakan where we had a super reception from the locals and a ceremony at the landing area.

We then flew to Labuan where the day started early at 5.30 am with a visit to the Labuan War Cemetery to locate the grave site of Keith Jones 2/1. Labuan was the location of the main commemorative ceremony. The Malaysian Army staged a re-enactment of the landing with soldiers coming ashore from small boats, marching through purple smoke, carrying the flags of the nations who took part. It was quite a sight! Photos and interviews with the ABC radio followed, then it was back to the Labuan Cemetery for a sunset commemoration service. That evening was a gala dinner at the Sheraton Hotel.

The following day the group went by boat for the one hour trip from Labuan to Brunei where we were welcomed by the Australian High Commissioner and a plaque was unveiled commemorating the visit and with all participants' names included. The final day was spent at the palatial Brunei Country Club.

We were warmly welcomed at every stop on the mission and it was a great privilege for me.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

ANZAC Day has once again been and gone and Sydney was blessed with good weather and huge crowds lining our city streets. Both units marched together under their own banners, but noticeably down in numbers, behind the Castle Hill Band. What a great asset they have been over the past eleven years, firstly to the 2/1sts and now both 2/1 and 2/2 are sharing their wonderful music. There was a good roll up of "carers" looking after their fathers and others who marched for deceased members. Time is marching on.

DORA ANDERSON, Merimbula, widow of Don 2/1, with a long newsy letter enclosing her sub for the News. She had been in Melbourne receiving treatment for melanomas, eight in all, and first class care at a cancer clinic. In earlier years had spent time fishing with Don and with very fair skin thinks that was the cause of the trouble. Hope everything is going well, Dora, and our thanks for the sub.

Dora had been on a coach holiday to Darwin since she wrote last and had a fabulous trip. Flew straight from Sydney to Darwin and stayed at a great hotel right on the waterfront. Had always wanted to see Darwin, as her father was in the Navy and had been sent there after the first raid on the city by the Japanese. He returned home safe and well. After four days in Darwin, the coach headed south down the Centre to Kakadu, Katherine, Mataranka and Daly River. The "Pub" at Daly River brought back memories to Max and I, as we also did your trip, a camping safari, nearly 30 years ago and covered mostly the same ground. Also spent days at Alice Springs, Uluru and Coober Pedy. In those days Woomera was a really busy place, not the ghost town you mentioned. Dora said Don worked there building houses for Public Service personnel in the years when the Rocket Range was all fired up, now the population would only be in the vicinity of 300 or 400 people.

Keep well (and out of the sun) and thanks for your kind words on the News. Will endeavour to keep up the good work, all the best.

PHIL BARNETT 2/2, Alstonville, with a brief note enclosing his cheque for the News and his congratulations to the Editor and committee members on a job well done. His personal good wishes are also passed on to Allan McInnes. Many thanks, Phil, and your subs handed on to our Treasurer.

ALBERT BARTON 2/1, Gulgong, with a welcome donation to funds (many thanks) and having reached the ripe old age of 90 has to do a driving test, etc., but keeping fairly well apart from bad knees which necessitate him using a cane. They get Meals on Wheels five days a week but Gwen manages the cooking at the weekends. Says their travelling days are almost over, just living quiet country lives.

Your greetings are passed on to all the "boys" Alby, and good luck with the driving test. Very best wishes to you both and always good to hear from you.

ROBYN BELL, Port Melbourne, daughter of the late Leo Morris, 2/1, with a note to say how she was once again delighted to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day and to be in the March was a great honour. She is hopeful of making the Kokoda Track V.P. Service in August, all being well and sends her best wishes to all.

JACK (DICK) CHALMERS 2/1, Wentworthville, with a note from his daughter Judy Murray, saying her dad was not able to attend ANZAC Day this year as he had been hospitalised for several weeks. He sent his apologies and hopes all had a great day, wishes he had been able to join in the reunion. Do hope you are at home now, Dick, and on the mend and many thanks for the very generous donation to funds. Our thanks to Judy for the note and receipt has been posted. Take care and best wishes.

JACK CLAYPOLE 2/1, Matraville, with a note

of apology for non-attendance on ANZAC Day due to foot problems, but was able to watch the march on TV. He was surprised to see so few marching, but time and age has caught up with so many of them. From previous par you will have read Jack Chalmers was also unable to attend as he was having a spell in hospital. Perhaps better luck next year. Many thanks for your cheque for the News and hope the foot problems are on the mend.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, with a welcome note to say that the plaque she organised for Jack in the Rose Garden at the Kokoda Track Walkway has been mounted on the wall and the service she received from Alice Kang, Track Hon. Secretary, was excellent. Lexie will not be down until October, as she does not come to Sydney very often. The widows from the Central Coast walk the "Track" each year and this year will be hiring a bus for the trip. Will make sure we pay a visit to the Rose Garden when next over at Concord, Lex, and many thanks for your letter. Good to hear all is well with you and yours. Take care.

RON COYTE 2/1, Wentworthville, enclosing his subs for the News and apologies for not being able to attend on ANZAC Day, but was chair bound with a busted artery in his leg. However, his grandson Jason Plevey was going to attend on his behalf. Jason went along last year and enjoyed his day, so was more than happy to go again this year. Ron passes on his thanks for the unselfish work the editors are doing and the rest of the team who keep the Association afloat. Many thanks.

He also mentioned that Stan Gavan 2/2 passed away late in March. He played bowls with Wenty Leagues and he and Ron used to have a good yarn together.

Hope the leg has shown lots of improvement and thank you for the cheque enclosed in your letter.

PHIL CRAMSIE 2/1, Buderim Qld, with a cheque for the News and his many thanks for the papers he has received over the years. He had already booked his air ticket to Sydney for the march and was looking forward to seeing all his old mates on ANZAC Day. Glad to see you made it, Phil, even though the ranks are getting very thin, especially at the march.

PETER CULLEN, Picnic Point, son of Vince 2/1, wrote advising that his dad had been placed in Eddystone Nursing Home in Eddystone Road, Bexley, with cancer. He also had a fall at the nursing home and broke his hip in April but is still alert and would welcome a visit from any Pioneers or members of Rats of Tobruk Assn. who may live in the area. Vince served with the 2/1st Pioneers in Libya and transferred to the 18th Brigade while in Tobruk.

Son, Peter is a member of the NSW Police Force attached to the Office of the Governor of NSW, and Her Excellency has been kind enough to send get well greetings to his dad which have cheered him up. She advises to stay cheerful and cheeky as optimism really helps to heal tissue.

Max and I visited him late in June, representing both RATS and Pioneers, and hope to see him again soon. Take care, Vince, and best wishes.

JOYCE DENNY, Lismore, widow of Dave 2/1, with a welcome letter and a donation to the News. Many thanks. Joyce says it was great to see so many old faces at the last Lismore reunion as the Lismore RSL finished trading after 55 years. However, the local Workers Club stepped in and did a wonderful job on ANZAC Day serving a hot breakfast to 500 people - and no charge.

Dave worked at the RSL for seven years and during that time there were at least two floods a year and the staff had to lift all the furniture upstairs, plus the poker machines, and bring it back down when the floods receded.

Joyce sends her best wishes to all Pioneers and their families and always looks forward to receiving the News.

WINN DWYER, Waverley, widow of Mick 2/1, sending best wishes to all, along with a donation to the News. She still sees or hears from Beryl and Frank Gillian, also Rita Trefoni, and sends her kindest regards to Joyce Law and Winn Tasker. Many thanks, Winn, all the best.

BILLIE DYNON, Booragul, widow of Frank

2/1, with a short note of thanks for the News and enclosing a cheque for the Treasurer. Many thanks. She watched the march on ANZAC Day and was delighted when she saw the 2/1st banner. Naturally, it brought back many happy memories. Billie apologises for her writing, but says at 89 she finds letter writing not an easy task. Still quite legible Billie and always good to hear from you. Take care and our best wishes.

PAT EGAN 2/2, Turner A.C.T., with a change of address included with his donation to the News. This has been noted on our records, Pat, and the paper will be mailed to you in due course. Best wishes from your 2/2 mates.

MATT ELLIOTT 2/2, Wollongong, with a money order enclosed with his letter and his thanks for keeping him up-to-date with the doings of his former mates, especially of D Coy 2/2. Our thanks, Matt, for the sub to the News and best wishes.

BILL FLEMING 2/1, Mittagong, once again per pen of good wife Maureen, and our thanks for the generous donation enclosed. Trust Bill's health has improved since last letter when he was having knee problems and pneumonia. Maureen reports that Bill manages to keep mobile, with a little assistance, and recently enjoyed an outing to the "Lion King" at the Capitol Theatre - the staff were very helpful and definitely contributed to the enjoyment of the day. Nice to hear in these troubled times.

Son, Jim, represented Bill on ANZAC Day and nephew Glen Dolaghan marched in memory of Jack Dolaghan (who was Maureen's brother and also a 2/1st Pioneer). The younger generation was represented by grandson, Daniel Fleming, who marched with his own Commando Regiment. I'm sure Jim and Glen enjoyed their day with their father's mates.

Many thanks for your kind wishes re the News and glad you look forward to its arrival. Kindest regards to you both and thanks Maureen for writing on Bill's behalf. Take care.

AVELINE GAMBLE, Chermislee, Qld, widow of Bill 2/1, with her contribution to Association funds and her thanks for the receipt of same. She has no Pioneer contacts in her area, but the News often mentions names that Bill used to talk about.

Reading of Rev. Rutherford's reminiscences of Greta in the November 2004 News, Aveline thought about her own Greta memories. As a schoolgirl at Maitland in the early '40s they lived near the railway line and always knew when the troops were on the move. Train after train of troops would steam towards Sydney. On occasions families were permitted to visit Greta for pre-embarkation farewells, so one evening they drove to say goodbye to her brother (2/2 Inf. Bn.). To this day she remembers the dozens of campfires in the darkness, the voices singing the "Maori's Farewell" or "Keep The Home Fires Burning". Several years later her brother and Bill played football against each other on the Tablelands, and refreshed themselves later, but never met officially until 1948.

Always good to hear from you, Aveline, and many thanks for your donation to the News.

RUSS HARRISON 2/2, Stirling S.A., with ANZAC greetings from the Adelaide Pioneers to their mates in Sydney and his cheque enclosed for Association funds. The ranks in S.A. are very thin, but they get lots of support from family and friends for their ANZAC Day reunion at the Duke of York Hotel. Hope all had a great day, Russ, and best wishes passed on to Rona and yourself from your Sydney mates. Many thanks for the sub.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, a very nice card penned, as usual, by good wife Wyn with Easter greetings, and the news that John wasn't in the best of health with a blood problem and would not make it to Sydney for ANZAC Day. He was to see a specialist in Orange shortly after Wyn wrote, so hope the problem has been cleared up. Says age is catching up with them both (tell me about it). John was to have his 90th birthday in May and I'm sure you would have had a family celebration with your loved ones. Still does his Meals on Wheels and other jobs, but one of the younger ones cuts the grass when needed. Trust the new baby arrived safely in May, another to love and spoil.

We spoke to Bill Jollie recently at home and he was reasonably well, but has a lot of trouble with his legs. He's not able to participate in any of the Pioneer activities these days, but likes to keep in touch with their doings. I'm sure he is always pleased to hear news from John. Take care and love and best wishes to you both.

ELAINE HENDERSON, Epping, niece of Ron Clark 2/1, with some photos enclosed for Max for identification which she had found when cleaning out an old album. If his memory serves him right, Elaine, the photo with the huts was at Greta (Silver City Camp) and the other with the soldiers in the corn field (with the E.P.I. tents in the background) was probably in Palestine at Hill 69. Many thanks for sending them on and as we have the Battalion albums, they will be well cared for.

Your best wishes are passed on to the 2/1 Pioneer veterans and although down in numbers, they had a great day on ANZAC Day. Kindest regards from both of us.

ALF HOLLOWAY 2/1, Grafton, with a cheque for the News and his thanks for still receiving his copy. Says he has no news from his part of the country, life continues at a much slower pace, but is still better than the alternative. Certainly is, Alf, at our age all you can ask is reasonably good health and old friends to remember the passing years. Thanks for the sub and keep well.

JOHN HUNT 2/1, New Farm, Qld, with his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day, along with Mollie-Jean, as he is no longer able to march and the trip down too much of a hassle. Says time has finally caught up with him. Sorry to hear John, but glad both you and Mollie have been able to make the trip so many times in the past. Many thanks for the donation to funds and hoping that you keep reasonably well. Kindest regards from both of us.

BILL JOLLIE 2/1, Castle Hill, with his apologies for non-attendance on ANZAC Day due to his leg problems and enclosing a very generous donation to funds and a donation to the Castle Hill Band. As Max has written you, Bill, the Band won the "Best Band" award on ANZAC Day, as well as winning the Adelaide Nationals. Max also sent you a copy of their magazine "Music Matters" with a photo of Tim Lloyd (son of the late Jack 2/1) carrying the 2/1st banner, which he has done for so many years.

Keep well and glad you are now at home from hospital and respite care. Our best wishes.

MAISIE KEMPENICH, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with a cheque to keep the "Association afloat" and her very best wishes passed on to all her old friends near and far. Mais is in Room 5B of the Shoal Bay Nursing Home and hopes that perhaps someone may have time to drop her a note sometime. She misses hearing of the doings of the Association, but with age and distance, their activities are somewhat curtailed and reunions, etc. a thing of the past. We certainly made the most of our good years, Mais, and made a lot of wonderful friends in the post-war era. Sadly, so many are no longer with us, but left a lot of happy memories.

She gets involved in the activities in the nursing home and able to get about, if somewhat slower, and at time of writing was off to Melbourne by car with daughter Lenore, as driver's adviser. With all the new roads since she last went south, hopes there'll be no problem. Trust you had a good trip, Mais, and I'll get round to dropping you a note shortly. Love and best wishes.

KIM LATHAM, Warriewood, daughter of the late Jack Howie 2/2, with her usual ANZAC Day greetings to her dad's old friends in 2/2nds, especially Allan McInnes (Mac) and Gavin Todd (Toddy). She recalls all the preparation of the cheese and crackers for "after the march" and says she presumes the "afters" are a little different now.

Thanks for the donation to funds, Kim, and your special thoughts passed on to all 2/2nds.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with a thank you card and some kind words to both Max and I for our efforts on behalf of the Association. It is nice to know that they are appreciated, Joyce, and as you know from your Max's duties while editor of the News years ago, it does involve a lot of time and effort.

Hope to see you at the Kokoda Track for V.P. Day in August, will be in touch before then. Love and best wishes, and many thanks for your cheque.

NANCY LINTON, Tuncurry, widow of Don 2/2, enclosing a cheque for the News - many thanks. She is always pleased to receive the paper and it brings back memories of names often mentioned by Don.

In last issue, Nancy appreciated John Sharp's comment on Don's swimming ability at swim parades in Cairns and sends her thanks to him. Even in his late forties Don continued to compete in swimming and diving competitions.

Nancy sent her best wishes to all for ANZAC Day and hopes all Pioneers had a great reunion afterwards. Can assure you they did, Nancy, although down in numbers. All the best and take care.

DON MURRAY 2/2, Tinonee, with a short note enclosing his sub to the News and a little extra for "kitty". Enjoys receiving the paper and sends best wishes to all Pioneer mates. Our thanks Don and good to hear you are keeping reasonably well.

JANET O'NEILL, Randwick, daughter of our late friend Bill Robertson 2/2, reports that she organises the Remembrance Day service in November for Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School at Kensington, where she teaches.

In 2004, she organised a Powerpoint Presentation to go with a new song called "We Will Remember". (A Powerpoint presentation is like a slide show.) This presentation consisted of men from the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion marching on ANZAC Day 2004. The children ranging from 5 to 12 years old were very moved by the scenes of these men marching along to the song. They went home and told their parents about this moving service.

So congratulations 2/2 Pioneers, you are still touching the lives of many, especially the young ones.

Janet's mother, Toss Robertson (Bill's widow) was unable to make the service for Tobruk Sunday at Five Dock, but Janet attended and passed on a donation from Toss towards the Pioneer News. Many thanks, Toss, and we enjoyed sharing lunch with Janet and hearing all the family news. Take care and our best wishes to you both.

BOB PHILPOTS 2/2, Woodend, Vic., with a very short note enclosing his sub for the News and his thanks to those who produce it. His kindest regards are passed on to all Pioneers, especially Bill Lewis. Short and sweet, Bob, many thanks.

DOT PRIEST, Ballina, widow of Peter 2/1, with her thanks for the sympathy extended on Peter's passing in March. She also enclosed a tape of the funeral service for Pete's Sydney friends who were unable to make the trip north. Our thanks, Dot, and it was really a nice thought on your behalf.

The family celebrated at night with a dinner at Ballina RSL in remembrance and it so happened it was the 100th Anniversary of Rotary. There was a barge on the river outside the club with a beautiful fireworks display, so Dot said Pete went out with a bang - he would have loved that!! I'm sure, with his great sense of humour, he would have Dot.

Good to hear from you and hope you will keep in touch until we meet again sometime - somewhere. Love and best wishes.

KEVIN RAWARD 2/2, Ballina, with a change of address from Lismore, courtesy of a letter from his daughter Elizabeth Campbell. This has been noted Kevin and the News will be sent to your new address. Hope your health is improving and best wishes are passed on from your 2/2 friends down south.

DOUG SHEARSTON 2/1, Forster, with his cheque for the News and apologies that he and Roma would not be in Sydney for ANZAC Day, and how they would miss seeing their old friends.

We missed you both too and hope it won't be too long before you can make a trip down south.

Doug had rung Ron Webster 2/1 to have a chat and thought Ron did not seem his usual cheery self. Doug also sent his kindest regards to

George Granger, son of late Bill 2/1, and said he would miss having a chat with him. George was there, Doug, down from Rockhampton and accompanied by brother Bill.

Love and best wishes to you both, take care and will be in touch.

HUGH SORLEY 2/2, Canning, W.A., with quite a lengthy letter and items of interest from the West. Always good to hear from our W.A. Pioneers as we do not have too many correspondents in that area. (Strangely enough three this issue.)

Hugh enclosed in his letter a couple of prints of the originals taken some twenty years ago by a friend at the National Museum in Canberra. The shield was in connection with a drill competition which, after a series of eliminations, the 2/2 Pioneer Bn. defeated the 2/48th Bn. in the final. Hugh was proud to say he was the N.C.O. marker of the squad and the C.O. of the time. Lieut-Col. Lang had promised a keg of beer if they won. The "booze" did not eventuate, but each member of the squad received an engraved spoon which still remains one of Hugh's prized possessions.

Hugh keeps in touch with Joy Preedy (widow of the late Len 2/2), a lovely and courageous lady. Len and Hugh grew up together in the Perth suburb of Subiaco and to add to his honours with the W.A. Branch of the Pioneers, Len was a Life Member of the Subiaco RSL Sub-Branch and they both followed its football team.

Several years ago, Hugh stood down, after some thirty years, fifteen of them as weekly hospital visitor, of the 2/28th Bn. Assn. He is a Past President and Hon. Life Member. (Hope I have got that right, Hugh.) Does not state that in a boastful way, but knew that Max and I would appreciate the time and effort this would entail. Congratulations.

Another name Hugh sees regularly is Allan Olson, a good loyal member. Allan became his Platoon Commander sometime after the 2/2nds lost Lieut. Russell White in New Guinea as a result of an ambush. Hugh was 2IC to Mr White on that patrol, he was a popular officer and a good soldier.

The letter you sent for Nancy Linton was sent on in April, Hugh, so you may have heard from her in the meantime. Best wishes and good to hear from you.

JACK STEWART 2/1, Woodlands, W.A., with his apologies for ANZAC Day due to a spell in hospital, which left it too late to make arrangements. However, hopes to make it next year. Sends his cheque for the News and all the best for the "big" day. Many thanks.

MICK TASSELL 2/1, Hay, sent by his daughter, Veronica Patrone, on behalf of her dad. Mick has had a three week stay in hospital with heart/lung problems, followed by another three weeks in respite care when he underwent successful cataract surgery. He is home now enjoying the weather, although the drought in their area of N.S.W. is really bad. Do hope you have received some of the rain the country so badly needs the last few weeks.

Mick sends his regards to all his fellow Pioneers and his thanks for the News. Must have taken my remarks seriously last time he wrote when I asked "surely there must be some news from his part of the country". Good work, Veronica, looks as if you might be put on the payroll. Best wishes and many thanks for the cheque.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba, with a welcome donation to funds and stamps. Many thanks for both. Les had spoken lately with John Paul 2/1 who had recently had a knee operation, so marching was out on ANZAC Day. Les was also not marching this year.

Thanks for the cutting on the new warbird for the town museum which had been transported from Victoria, quite a big job.

All the best to both Lesley and yourself and always good to hear from you.

JOYCE WESTWOOD, Bradbury, widow of Jack 2/2, with her thanks for the News and a cheque to keep up the good work. Many thanks, Joyce, and good to see you are enjoying your meetings and outings with Campbelltown War Widows and Legacy and that everyone is so friendly. Nice to hear and as you say "all in the same boat".

NEV WOODHAM 2/1, Cleveland, with two letters over the last couple of months and both he and Betty were able to come to Sydney for ANZAC Day. Our thanks Nev for the details on Harry Spreadborough's passing - Max has covered this in Last Post.

Many thanks for the photo you sent of Max and yourself - as you say two handsome fellas (for two 85 year old Pioneers, quite a good snap). Congratulations - now you'll have to do a driving test - or isn't that law in Queensland.

Neville is still attending monthly meetings of R.O.T.A., but like all other Sub-Branches are dwindling rapidly. State President Kev Baker has joined their Branch, so at some meetings only seven RATS attending. The ladies have the same problem and are now down to four. Betty is President/Treasurer.

Nev celebrated his 85th birthday recently and had a great evening at the local RSL Club where he is a Sub-Branch Life Member. Mostly Vietnam Vets and their wives and one presented him with a bunch of flowers (a bit embarrassing) but in the middle of the flowers was a four-pound coral trout which Betty baked for dinner. Hope you have many more happy birthdays.

Love and best wishes to you both and hope that spur in your heel soon clears up. Take care.

BERT WOODHOUSE 2/1, Karridale, W.A., with quite a lengthy letter and selections of pages on Col. Arnold Brown's record of service with 28 Bn. In World War I. Many thanks also for the cheque to the News and as to the payment for the D.V.D. by Mary Burnham (Col. Brown's daughter) this has also been paid in to Association funds. Mary had lunch with some of our ladies on ANZAC Day, a delightful lady, and we enjoyed her company. Also went back to the Occidental Hotel after lunch to meet up with the "boys".

Your letter of former West Aussies was very interesting, Bert, but as my "boss" says he's running out of space for my notes I shall have to hold over most of it until next issue, when I can do it justice.

Hope you have fully recovered after your farm accident. A large bale of hay came off a front-end loader and crashed on his head, breaking a vertebrae. Bert was flown to Perth and found they could not operate because of closeness to the brain, so ended up in traction with head frame and weights for 86 days. Must have been a very traumatic experience.

Thanks for your kind words to those who keep the paper and Association going and we send you our best wishes.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue, as I've used all the space I've been allotted by the "Boss". Before closing I must apologise to my ladies for the luncheon on ANZAC Day, the long delay with their meals and service at the Grace Hotel, all beyond my control. Better luck next year. Kindest regards to all until next paper.

LAST POST

PETER PRIEST 2/1 of Ballina passed away on 1st March at the age of 83 years with a lung condition. He had been in hospital only three days when he passed away peacefully in his sleep.

Pete and wife Dot, had quite a colourful life. After the war, having served with the 2/1 Pioneer Bn. in New Guinea and Borneo, Pete settled down in Kyogle, where he worked on the Shire.

After a few years, they moved to Alice Springs and from here they travelled around Australia extensively before retiring in Ballina.

The funeral service, conducted at Ballina saw an attendance of eighty friends and relations, including ten Pioneers from around the district.

Sincere sympathy from the Association has been extended to Dot and her family in their recent sad loss.

HARRY SPREADBOROUGH 2/1 of Alexandra Hills, Qld, passed away on 8th March at the age of 89 years. He had been in and out of hospital at Greenslopes for the past eighteen months for the treatment of a heart condition and leukaemia and on numerous occasions, Neville and Betty Woodham had visited him.

The funeral service was conducted at the Great Southern Gardens at Carbrook and in attendance were members of the Redlands RSL

of which Harry had been a Life Member and members of the Rats of Tobruk Assoc. including Neville and Betty Woodham and the State President. All these members formed a Guard of Honour at the entrance to the Chapel, for the eighty five friends and relatives who attended.

Harry was a sergeant with the 2/1 Pioneer Bn. while in Tobruk and then he transferred to the Engineers where he became a Warrant Officer.

Sincere sympathy has been extended from the Association to wife Jean and her family.

ALFRED BALLARD 2/2, (D Coy) of Monterey passed away on 20th April at the age of 96 years and the funeral was conducted at the Woronora Crematorium on 27th April.

His wife Kathleen is deceased, so to his family, we extend our sincere sympathy.

JOHN WILLIAMS 2/2 (C Coy) of Blackburn, Victoria, passed away at the age of 85 years on 14th May.

Being an original 2/2 Pioneer he was amongst those of the unit who were captured in Java and spent the remainder of the war as a P.O.W.

The last three years John has been in care but looked forward to each issue of the Pioneer News as he was very proud of his unit.

In her letter wife Jean stated she was pleased with the story in April Pioneer News on Colonel Williams as an outstanding Australian, as she states he was a wonderful man and is sadly missed by all Pioneers.

Sincere sympathy is extended from the Association to Jean and her family.,

JACK TOOKER 2/1 of Galston, formerly Chatswood, passed away on 22nd June aged 88 years while he was in hospital with a prostrate problem.

Jack has been a Committee man for the Association for the past twenty years and has attended every Wreath Laying Service and Anzac Day Reunion and March in that time.

Jack enlisted in May 1940 and was posted to the 2/1 Pioneer Bn. at Greta and in June was sent to the Eastern Command Officers Training School at Narellan and returned to the unit as a Lieut. He then sailed with the unit in September 1940 and saw action in the Siege of Tobruk. Upon return to Australia for more training before going to New Guinea, Jack took part in the last campaign in Borneo where he was promoted to Major.

The funeral was conducted at the Chatswood South Uniting Church on 28th June by the Reverend Jane Fry. The Eulogy on Jack's life was read by daughter Ainsley Cole, highlighting the fact Jack had been a wonderful father and a staunch supporter of the Church. He had sung in the Church choir for past fifty years. Ainsley mentioned in the Eulogy that Jack and Kathleen had travelled extensively and in 1992 had been on a commemorative trip back to the battlefields of Tobruk and El Alamein.

The Church was packed with fellow parishioners, relatives and friends, including Pioneers Don and Val Crawford, John Gilchrist and Max and Peg Herron.

Sincere sympathy was extended to wife Kathleen and her family members - Ainsley and Robert Cole.

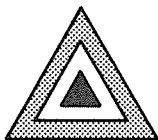
VERA HAMILTON, a nursing sister of the 2/2 C.C.S., passed away in Inverell on 22nd May, aged 95 years, after nearly a lifetime of nursing. Her funeral service was held at the Presbyterian Church in Inverell and the Poppy Service was conducted by the local R.S.L.

Vera had been a member of our Association for many years as she, together with three nursing sisters of the 2/5 A.G.H., sailed with the 2/1 Pioneers on the "Johan de Witt" in September 1940 to the Middle East, with Dr Stan Goulston as their medical officer. Each ANZAC Day after the war she would join the 2/1 Pioneers at their dismissal area in Elizabeth Street for a "chat" and attended many of our country reunions along with the late Sue Malcolm (2/5th A.G.H.).

Since moving to Inverell in 2003, Vera had not been in the best of health, but had been lovingly cared for by sister Marj and her nieces and nephew who live locally. Our very sincere sympathy is extended to all by her "Pioneer" family.

MUFTI per Eric Causer: Deceased - Royston McCarthy 2/1, Desmond Halliday 2/2.

PIONEER NEWS



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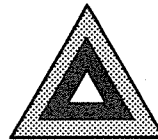
Typeset by Typesmith Pty Ltd, 12 Blakesley Road, Carlton NSW 2218 Printed by ABF Printers, 3 Argyle Street, Arncliffe NSW 2205

Correspondence: MAX HERRON, Hon. Sec., 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn. Assoc., 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills 2209

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Vol. 51 No. 3

NOVEMBER 2005

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60TH ANNIVERSARY OF V.P. DAY

On Sunday, 14th August, it was time for remembrance and gratitude at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway at Concord when dignitaries, veterans and the public, totalling over 1,000 gathered to commemorate Victory in the Pacific Day and the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II.

The Kokoda Track served as a fitting venue for the occasion and the Master of Ceremonies, John Gatfield, who is a reporter for RSL Reveille, handled the whole programme in an excellent manner.

WELCOME ADDRESS

In his address "Rusty" Priest, Chairman of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Committee, welcomed the Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jeffrey, AC, CVO, MC (Rtd) and Mrs Jeffrey, The Hon. Morris Iemma, newly elected Premier of N.S.W., distinguished guests, veterans and members of the public. "Rusty" then went on to say if Gallipoli was the defining Australian battle of World War I, Kokoda was surely that of the Second. He then called on the Premier to deliver the Prologue.

PREMIER MORRIS IEMMA

Throughout this year, we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of history's most terrible war. And as Australians, we commemorate - with a sense of special significance - the victory of Allied forces in the Pacific . . . The end of the only war in history to directly threaten this continent. We honour the one million Australians who served in uniform. And with particular reverence, we honour the 40,000 who made the supreme sacrifice, including the 8,000 who died in barbaric captivity.

It is entirely appropriate that we gather at this Kokoda memorial - a peaceful garden walkway near a place of healing, the great Concord Hospital, so well known to the veterans of Australia's wars. It is equally appropriate that our most esteemed guests today are the men and women of World War II - "The Greatest Generation" - who lived through the Depression and War and who, along with the migrants of my parents' generation, built the modern Australia we enjoy today.

And it is, finally, most appropriate that today's main address should be given by a man who is not only the First Representative of our nation, but also a distinguished soldier who knows better than we who have been spared the burdens of war what it is like to fight for our country in a conflict far from home.

Let us today remember that at the time of maximum peril, our nation and its people were tried in the balance and not found wanting - but with bravery and honour and sacrifice won a victory that will live forever in history, memory and song.

PRAYERS FOR THE FALLEN

The Prayers for "The Fallen", for "Serving Members of the Forces" and the "Queen and the Nation" were in the capable hands of Rev. Paul Weaver and Father Graeme Malone SSS, Chaplains at Concord Hospital, and the scripture reading was given by Cr. Angelo Tsirekas, Mayor of the City of Canada Bay.

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jeffrey was greeted with warm applause and commenced his address by commending the

Catafalque banner party which included cadets from the 233 Regional Cadet Unit - St. George. He went on to give a comprehensive overview of the Australian commitment in World War II, starting with the outbreak of war and dispatch of Australian troops to the Middle East. Followed the return of the troops to Australia, the fall of Singapore and the ensuing dark days of the POW camps at Changi and Burma.

He mentioned great Australians like Weary Dunlop and spoke of the fightback by independent companies in Malaya. The Coral Sea Battle stalled the Japanese naval advance, which meant that Japanese forces had to attack Australia via New Guinea where they met their final defeat of the war at Milne Bay and then Kokoda.

The Governor-General emphasised the military significance of these Japanese defeats and how close Australia had come to direct invasion. General Jeffrey then spoke of the training and preparation being undertaken in Australia for the eventual Borneo landings by Australians at Tarakan, Labuan and Balikpapan in preparation for a possible Allied assault on Japan. The end of the war and Victory in the Pacific heralded a new start for Australia and ushered in a great period of prosperity and rebuilding.

General Jeffrey reminded us that almost one million Australians served during World War II and nearly 40 thousand died. He said "the war took an enormous toll on the physical and emotional health of our veterans and many never fully recovered and that people could show their gratitude by seizing the marvellous opportunities we have been given through them for peace and prosperity".

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

At the conclusion of the Commemorative Address the Governor-General led the wreath laying ceremony at the Memorial Centrepiece, accompanied by "Rusty" Priest, the N.S.W. Premier Morris Iemma and the Mayor of Canada Bay Cr. Angelo Tsirekas. While the wreaths were being laid, Andrea Corish of McDonald College sang a beautiful rendition of Ave Maria.

Following the wreath laying, Don Rowe, President of the N.S.W. Branch of the RSL, recited the ODE which was followed by Last Post and Reveille and a poem by Sean Clifford.

RELEASE OF DOVES

Master of Ceremonies John Gatfield then called on two veterans - Norm Pope (a month short of his 101st birthday) and Ethel "Stalky" Lane AM, MBE, former nursing sister, to release a flock of doves as a symbol of gratitude and peace. This was followed by a standing ovation from those present.

At the conclusion of the programme, John Gatfield called upon John Haines OAM, Director of Kokoda Track Walkway and RSL Vice-President, to say a few words of thanks to all those who had contributed to the day's programme. Firstly, John Haines spoke of the wonderful day it had been and this was due in no small measure to John Gatfield as Master of Ceremonies and those who had worked on the programme for the day. To "Rusty" Priest, Chairman, and Secretary Alice Kang, he made particular mention and then went on to thank the chaplains, N.S.W. Corrective Services Band, Pipes and Drums of Royal N.S.W. Regt., 233 Regional Cadet Unit (St. George), 302 Squadron Rockdale, Naval Cadets and Piper W. M. Campbell.

The gathering were then invited to an excellent morning tea prepared by the staff of Concord Hospital.

Pioneers in attendance were Don and Val Crawford, Joyce Law, Allan McInnes, Jack Bertram, Ken Oliver and son Dean, Max and Peg Herron and daughter-in-law Lynn Herron, who capably assisted Don and Max with the two unit banners. The many unit banners lined both sides of the pathway forming a guard of honour for the dignitaries.

We thank Dean Oliver for responding on the spot (at short notice) to take notes on the Governor-General's address and we thank the Office of the Premier who supplied the copy of the Premier's prologue.

NX 70326 - VERA HAMILTON

Vera Hamilton who passed away recently was a member of our Association for many years after nearly a lifetime of nursing. When war was declared, Vera had been nursing at Scott Memorial Hospital at Scone for just on seven years. Twelve months later she was NX70326 Sister Vera Hamilton, a member of the A.I. F., and on five day's notice to be ready to sail. These days were taken up with passport photos, X-rays, injections and home to Quirindi to pack.

Monday, 30th September, 1940 was one of the wettest days Sydney had ever had, when Vera presented herself at the No 1 wharf from which they were to embark. Her ship the Dutch transport S.S. "Johan-de-Witt", looking no larger than a Manly ferry, was to hold over 1,000 men of 2/1 Pioneer Bn, plus Dr Stan Goulston 2/1, and four nursing sisters - Vera and three members of 2/5 A.G.H. including Sue Malcolm, Mabel Skerman and Gwen Tidd. The "Johan-de-Witt" was one of 12 ships to leave Amsterdam when the Germans invaded Holland, only five made it to England. At Melbourne they were joined by the S.S. "New Zealand", a sister ship of the Dutch line, carrying D Coy of 2/1 Pioneers and Ordnance Stores and Signals Units.

They had four wonderful days leave in Colombo before arriving at El Kantara and had to say farewell to the Pioneers before the journey to Gaza.

Before leaving for overseas, Vera was detailed for transport duty between the Middle East and Australia, but on arrival at Gaza Ridge was told she would be attached to 2/6 A.G.H., but the day they arrived she left to join the 2/2 Casualty Clearing Station (2/2 C.C.S.). February 1941 saw Vera saying farewell to her new friends and on the way to join her new unit. The seven hour journey from Gaza to Kantara was a nightmare - Vera the only Australian and female. From here on to Alexandria and at last joining up with her new unit, the 2/2 C.C.S. The men folk from her unit were in the desert with the front line troops and were receiving patients direct from the combat area. Vera worked mainly in "burns" ward, some patients travelling three days from the C.C.S. in the desert to the hospital. Burns of such a degree she had yet to encounter in civilian life.

PORT SAID TO TOBRUK

Three weeks later the 2/2 C.C.S. sisters are at Port Said boarding the hospital ship "Dorsetshire" en route to Tobruk. On arrival they started work at the hospital - a 3/4 mile walk away. Tobruk even then was a relic of its former self with hardly a building that had not been demolished or partially so. Vera was the

news of your trip, Bert, and best wishes from your friends in the East.

EVELYN BOOTH, Wagga Wagga, partner of late Jack Morgan 2/2, with her apologies for lateness in sending her sub. She had been absent in Western Australia, where her eldest son had passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. Our sincere sympathy, Ev, from your Pioneer family. Says the News is always important to her and sends her best wishes to all.

MAISIE KEMPNIICH, Shoal Bay, widow of Jack 2/1, with a nice letter of thanks for the News which she still looks forward to receiving. Lenore did send the cheque, Mais, many thanks, and covers you also for 2006.

She was sorry to see so many names of old friends in Last Post – and even more this issue. Age and time catching up. Her very best wishes are passed on to all Association members for a great festive season and lots of good health in the coming year. Take care and love.

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

ANOTHER KELLY STORY

The following is a further tale of the war years as related by 2/1 colourful character Laurie Kelly. "Sitting in my lounge room recently looking at the flood water passing my door after a real heavy deluge of rain, reminded me of our camp in Palestine after we came out of Tobruk. It never stopped raining for six weeks over the Xmas period. The slit trenches outside our large tents even filled up with rainwater and many of our chaps, on returning from the canteen with a sack full of bottled beer, stumbled into the trench.

As a cook in the kitchen at 6 am we had trouble starting the fires for breakfast with half green citrus tree wood, that the locals sold to the army. It would take two gallons of kerosene to start the fires in the rain. The kerosene was in short supply as the cooks had sold it to the wogs the week before the big wet set in.

The night piquets were coming off duty and were waiting for their usual cuppa at 6.30 am, after a night of patrolling the campsite in the rain, but the firewood would just not burn. About a hundred yards away was the Sergeant's toilet which was built of pine wood around the sides. As I saw the means of getting the fires going and the water boiled for the cuppa, I said to the guard, go over and pull off a couple of the boards from the toilet, which was very promptly carried out, and within a few minutes we had a good fire going.

When the sergeants came out to use the toilets you could see their feet when they sat down. The trouble was, it rained so long that in the end all the cooks wanted to know how I started such a good fire each morning, so I pointed to the pine boards of the Sergeant's toilet and from then on, more boards were removed and finally you could see their bare bottoms. That immediately stopped any more wood being taken from the toilet.

Fortunately for me, a month later we left that Palestine campsite and sailed for Australia.

SICK PARADE

DOUG SHEARSTON 2/1 of Forster has had a few health problems of late and spent a few days in a private hospital near Taree in July for a bladder problem. At the time of writing was due back for a check-up. Trust all goes well, Doug, and you'll be back to your daily swim again.

STEVE CLARKE 2/1 of Killara has also spent some time in the Sydney Adventist Hospital during August for a hernia operation on the groin and spent several weeks in Lady Davidson. He is home now and progressing slowly. Take care, Steve, and best wishes.

JACK KERSLAKE 2/1, Collaroy, is still in the War Vets Nursing Home and the staff are taking several patients to Nelson Bay on a three day holiday early November - hope you

get a good-looking carer, Jack. Don Crawford and Max Herron, together with Val and Peg, are hoping to have lunch with Jack in the near future.

Laurie Kelly, Jack Bertram and Gordon Hughes, R.O.T.A. Secretary, have been fairly regular visitors to Jack at the nursing home.

ROY JARDINE 2/1 of Gladesville is still having trouble with his knees and we have missed seeing him at the Rats of Tobruk meetings. Also hope Phyllis has recovered fully from her heart problems.

VALE - BILL JOLLIE

Bill Jollie 2/1, late of Castle Hill, passed way on 15th August, aged 85 years, in Sydney Adventist Hospital, Wahroonga.

The funeral service on 18th August was held at Castlebrook Crematorium and filled with relatives, friends and members of his bowling club. Pioneers in attendance were Bill Tasker, Max Herron and Joyce Law who kindly acted as driver.

The service was conducted by Canon Colin Aitken and the first reading was carried out by Stewart Roberts (grandson), after which John Tyler (son-in-law) spoke in an excellent manner of the great events in the family life of Bill.

The Parramatta RSL carried out the Poppy Service, reciting the Ode and sounding of the Last Post, followed by members placing poppies on the casket. Bill Tasker, Welfare Officer, then read the Eulogy of Bill's army career with the 2/1sts and with the Association, which is abridged as follows:

"Bill Jollie enlisted in the 2nd AIF early in 1940 and after doing an officer training school was posted to the 2/1st Pioneer Bn. as a Lieutenant. In 1941 he sailed to the Middle East where he served with the unit until they returned to Australia in March 1942. After training, the unit sailed for New Guinea in August 1942 and Bill took part in the battle of Imita Ridge on the Kokoda Track. The unit returned to Australia in October 1943.

The final campaign for the unit was Balikpapan in Borneo where Bill was promoted to Captain and made adjutant of the Battalion.

After the war Bill took an active part in the Association and held the position of Vice-President from 1968 to 1988 when he was elected President. In 1988 he was made a life member of the Association for outstanding service. During this period he was a member of the editorial team that produced the 2/1 Unit history book "The Pioneers".

In 1996 it was Bill who proposed the 2/1sts to place a plaque on the plinth at the Imita Ridge station at the Kokoda Track Walkway and when unveiled on 19th April 1998 Bill was selected to address the gathering of thirty Pioneers.

In conclusion we extend sympathy to daughters Sharon and Tana and their families.

LAST POST

PERC PENROSE 2/1 of Darlington passed away on 17th June, aged 86 years, while in Prince Alfred Hospital.

Perc had been a very keen Committee man for many years and also a regular attendee at all the Association meetings as well as being a regular at each year's Wreath Laying Service and the ANZAC Day March and Reunion.

He was also a member of the Rats of Tobruk Association and attended all their meetings in addition to being a regular visitor to their Tobruk Sunday Service and their Christmas luncheon.

The funeral service on 8th July was conducted at Simplicity Funeral Parlour Chapel in Newtown and the Poppy Service and bugle calls were carried out by members of the Newtown RSL.

Representing the Association were Roy Jardine and Bill Tasker who extended sympathy to family members and in particular to nephew Neil Woodward who rang the Association with all the details.

VINCE CULLEN 2/1 of Peakhurst passed away on 10th July, aged 85 years, while in Eddystone Nursing Home at Bexley.

The funeral was held at Woronora Crematorium on 14th July and representing the Association were Bill Tasker and Ken Oliver who kindly acted as driver.

Sincere sympathy was extended by Bill Tasker from the Association to son Peter and the family.

FRANK LOCANE 2/2 of Prestons, formerly of Nowra, passed away on 27th July, aged 82 years while in hospital for cancer treatment.

Frank had been a keen Committeeman of the Association, and was always in attendance at the Anzac Day March and Reunion.

The funeral service on 1st August was held at the Rookwood Independent Cemetery with the Bankstown RSL members conducting the Poppy Service and the bugle calls.

Representing the Association were Joyce Walker (widow of George 2/1) and daughter Judith, as well as Peg and Max Herron who extended sincere sympathy from the Association to wife Jean and her family.

WAL PARSONS 2/1, of Laurieton, formerly of Greenacre, passed away peacefully on 5th August. He had a bad stroke three years ago and has been a sick man ever since, but has been well looked after at the Lakeside Nursing Home at Laurieton.

Wal was a very popular sergeant of the No.1 Signals Platoon and served in Tobruk, New Guinea and Balikpapan with the 2/1sts.

We thank wife Marie for supplying the details and extend our sincere sympathy in her loss.

GEORGE TOLMIE 2/1 of Canley Heights passed away on 23rd August aged 82 years after a long illness from kidney problems.

The service at Perrans Funeral Parlour, Liverpool on 26th August was attended by Marie Lamerton, widow of Jack 2/1, who had been a very close friend of George. The funeral was then conducted at the Liverpool Catholic Cemetery.

Marie in representing the Association extended sincere sympathy to wife Cathie and her family, Carol, Stephen and Geoffrey.

LIONEL FULLARTON 2/2 of Orbost Vic., passed away on 26th September and the service at St Andrew's Uniting Church, Orbost, was followed by the funeral at Orbost Lawn Cemetery.

Members of the 2/2nd Pioneer Assoc., Victoria were in attendance and extended to the family their tribute of respect.

Lionel was a very popular member of the Phillip Island RSL Sub-Branch, of which he was a past member of the Executive Committee. He was also a tireless worker for the East Gippsland Group of Melbourne Legacy.

We thank Jack Hore-Lacy of Moss Vale for supplying us with all these details, which had been sent to him by George West 2/2 of Bairnsdale Vic., who was a close mate of Jack, when they served in No. 3 Mortar Platoon 2/2.

Jack was also a good mate of Lionel and over the years had kept in touch with one another and quite often Lionel and wife Jean (decd.) would visit them when holidaying in NSW.

Jack extended our sincere sympathy to Lionel's son when he rang to impart the sad news of Lionel's passing.

WALTER WILLIAM SMITH 2/1 of Sans Souci, passed way on 13th August and we thank his son Leon for contacting the Association.

JOHN PATRICK (JACK) PURCELL passed away on 26th October 2005 at the age of 87 years. He served in Balikpapan, Borneo with the 2/1 Pioneers as a Lance Corporal. The funeral took place at Coffs Harbour Catholic Church on 31st October 2005 with Father Paul McDonald officiating and the interment took place at the local Crematorium. It was attended by a large gathering of friends including members of the Coffs Harbour RSL and family from Leeton, Sydney and Canberra. Jack's wife, Irene sadly passed away 17th February 2003.

A wonderful eulogy detailing Jack's life, times and anecdotes since 1918 was read by his daughter Theresa Goodman. His nephew Frank Ross wrote a poem which captured Jack's life and spirit. His daughter Irene Hartsuyker read a moving poem. Irene and Luke's eldest son, Ben aged 11 years proudly wore Jack's medals on his right breast. Jack is survived by his daughters Theresa and Irene, grandsons Ben and Paul.

To daughter Theresa Goodman who sent the above details we say thank you and extend our sincere sympathy.

REVEILLE July and October - Deceased, 2/1st: A. R. Thomas, L. W. Blackburn, R. J. Allan, K. L. Roberts. 2/2nds: S. Gavan, L. D. Murphy, R. S. Nicholls, R. P. Molyneux and J. J. White.

in last issue. Well done, Ken.

Marion, mentions that, like a lot of the men, Roy did not say much about his time in the services, not until the last few years, but had quite a few stories taped for everyone to hear later.

Also says that she had received the 60th Anniversary Medallion and was a credit to everyone concerned - greeted with lots of "oohs and aahs".

Marion keeps well, with lots of help from her doctor (all our age group seem to be in the same boat), and sends a cheque to worthy treasurer to keep the News afloat. Many thanks and our best wishes.

BETTY O'CONNOR, West Ballina, widow of Neville 2/2, with a letter that arrived just too late for last paper. Not much news from her part of the country as she had not seen any of the Pioneer folk lately and did not get to their last luncheon.

Had been on a visit to her sister in Lake Cargelligo for a couple of weeks and saw the drought at its worst. However, it is green once again, had lots of rain, and now having problems getting crops in because it is too wet.

Betty keeps well and sends her best regards to all 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneers and passes on her best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and lots of good health and happiness in the coming year.

Many thanks for your cheque for the News, Betty, take care and all the best from both Max and I.

MARIE PARSONS, Laurieton, widow of Wal 2/1, with the news that Wal had passed away in August after a long illness. (Max has made mention of this in Last Post.)

Many thanks for letting us know, Marie, and our thoughts are with you in your sad loss. Unless Max hears from you to the contrary, he will continue to keep you on the mailing list.

The V.P. March here in Sydney was not quite the celebration expected - very early in the morning and the crowds not as large as for ANZAC Day. However, those who were able to march (without a carer) made the most of their "special" day.

Our best wishes to you and perhaps may meet up again in the future.

PETER PEILE 2/1, Caringbah, with a short note from good wife Erika enclosing a sub for the News. This year has not been the best for Peter - they seem to be spending any "free" time in doctors surgeries, nothing life threatening but distressing just the same. Most of our readers seem to be in the same boat, Erika, that nasty word "age" seems to be catching up with us all.

Their best wishes are passed on to all Pioneers and many thanks for the cheque enclosed in your note.

OLIVE RICHARDS, Bribie Island, widow of Jack 2/1, with a welcome note enclosing a cheque for the News and a book of stamps. It was birthday time for Olive, once again, as she regularly remembers to send her dues on her big day. Many thanks, glad you enjoyed your day and hope you have many more in your new surroundings.

She has settled into her new life on Bribie Island with son Chris and his wife Annette and enjoying the climate.

Chris's son, Neil, went up to Iraq on the "Tobruk" some months ago as the official photographer on board, calling in at Dubai and a few days in India on the way home. When the ship arrived back in Cairns they took 60 of the crew's family on board and brought them down to Sydney. Chris went and said it was a great experience.

At the September meeting of the Rats of Tobruk the Commanding Officer of the HMAS Tobruk, Commander Michael Rothwell, and eight of his crew gave a wonderful report on the trip, accompanied by videos - a most entertaining and educational hour. Max was seated next to a lady member of the crew - a radio officer - and mentioned that Neil had gone with them to Iraq. She remembered him and was glad he enjoyed the trip. The ship is in Sydney undergoing a refit.

While grandson Neil was away, Olive had his wife and nine month old son staying with her for

a few weeks and had forgotten how much room a baby takes up in a house. All are back now at Nowra where they will be for a least another two years. Her grand-daughter is still at "Cerberus".

Your good wishes have been passed on to both Noel Schomberg and Vi Flynn, and to the Kerslakes. Jack remains about the same and Marj keeps a daily eye on him. All send you their best wishes.

Always good to hear from you, Olive, keep well and best wishes from both Max and I.

FRANCES RHODES, Page A.C.T., daughter of the late Jim Rhodes 2/1, with a welcome card and a cheque enclosed for the News. Many thanks, Frances, and it was good to hear from you and your family news. The young ones were certainly in the "wars" and great to hear they are now both fully recovered. How time flies, last time we saw them they were only pre-schoolers.

Glad your new job in the Public Service is going well and we both send you and the family our very best wishes.

In regard to the photos of your dad, we have quite a few of him in our albums, also of your mum, and as we are not sure what will become of them when Max and I retire from the "job", perhaps may be better if you keep them for family. We have many fond memories of days we spent together in happier times. Your dad was a very popular member of the 2/1sts.

BOB SEFTON 2/2, Safety Bay W.A. with a welcome letter and his sub for the News. Although he still enjoys receiving same, he says his contribution of news over the years has been very limited. However, the Newsletter has been instrumental in keeping him in touch with a couple of particular mates and kept him informed of others of his acquaintance, for which he is grateful. He was saddened recently to hear of the passing of good mate Lionel Fullarton.

Bob said he was interested to read last issue of the epistle from Hugh Sorley of W.A., but I must apologise for this - the gremlins were at work on this par. The letter was from Hugh Vincent 2/2 of Wembley W.A. and with no home address at the head and signed Hugh, we credited the letter to the wrong writer. Our apologies. As far as we know Hugh Sorley is still at Canning Vale, or was when he wrote to us last. Bob mentions he spent some time with him in Hollywood Hospital some years ago.

Thanks for the sub, Bob, and always good to hear some news from the West.

DOROTHY STEAIN, Merewether, widow of Arthur 2/1, with a very short note enclosing her subs to the News and her thanks for ongoing postage. Trust you are keeping well.

DAN SPROUSTER 2/1, Dundas, with a short note enclosing his sub for the News, but apologises for lateness. Says sometimes he finds it hard to remember. Know what you mean, Dan, happens here in this house quite often. However, says he still remembers the good times they enjoyed with their mates of the war years and hopes to make a reunion dinner if health permits.

Take care and best wishes.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba, per pen of wife Lesley, as at the time of writing Les had had a fall in the kitchen and fractured his pelvis in a couple of places and still in a lot of pain. They both have walkers, so Lesley said they needed a couple of horns or learn to give right of way. However, jokes aside, they are managing OK and are waiting for a ramp between sun room and lounge to make things easier for both.

When well, Les has to go Brisbane for an eye operation, on which there is a time limit, so hope by now things have improved considerably since you wrote.

Max sends his thanks for the copy of the "Tableland" and says it was great to read all the articles, especially the one by Sister Fay Clarke and the one by Ann Porters - Mayor of Herberton.

Many thanks for your note, Lesley, and our very best to you both. Get well soon, Les.

HUGH VINCENT 2/2, Wembley W.A., our WX member who got caught up in the mix-up in last issue when his article was credited to Hugh Sorley, also from W.A., by our mistake. Max finally sorted things out and has spoken to you Hugh and apologised. (I'm sure Hugh Sorley

would have read the article and wondered what was going on.) Hugh was also a little concerned about the keg of beer that was promised by the C.O. of that time (now presumed to be Lt. Col. C Davis) which did not eventuate. Says Lt. Col Lang was a very capable leader and well thought of by his men - a promise by him would have been observed. Trust this clears up the matter, Hugh, and once again our apologies. Put it down to old age.

Hugh is always interested in the names mentioned in the Mail Bag and would like to send special regards to Allan McInnes and Gavin Todd. Up until the time he moved about three years ago, he lived a few doors from Jack Stewart 2/1, and they used to chat about their experiences in the army.

Many thanks for your letter and our very best wishes to you. Keep well.

JEAN WHEATON, Sawtell, widow of Fred 2/1, with a letter of thanks to the Association for their sympathy extended to her and her family on Fred's passing. It was a long illness and they had celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary the week before Fred died. A good friend, Jean, and a very popular member of the 2/1sts. Often still hear his name mentioned when the subject of football in the unit crops up.

Sadly both Sue Malcolm and Vera Hamilton are both gone and yes we did know Sue (2/5 A.G.H.) was Matron of Coffs Harbour Hospital for many years. They attended quite a few of our country reunions together and we became quite good friends.

Thanks for the sub, Jean, and hope this finds you in better health yourself. Our love and best wishes and always nice to hear from you.

NEV WOODHAM 2/1, Cleveland Qld., with a couple of letters re doings in Queensland in connection with Rats of Tobruk functions in their State, early April next year. Many thanks, Nev, and we are giving it some thought - a lot depends on whether we are up to making the trip.

We found the newspaper report on your years with the 2/1sts most interesting along with the photos - not bad for a spritely 85 year old proud Rat of Tobruk. From the cuttings you sent, V.P. Day was given plenty of publicity in your local papers and well written.

Do hope Bett's problem has improved and that the physio is doing some good. I know just how painful those back problems are and despite all the cortisone and needles mine is not showing much improvement. Still, here's hoping. Age doesn't help.

Fond wishes to you both and will let you know later on what we decide on the trip.

BERT WOODHOUSE 2/1, Karridale W.A., with quite a lot of his last letter held over as we had run out of space in the July issue. Since then, Bert was chosen by Veterans' Affairs as a member of another unit (I think 2/11 Inf. Bn.) to go on the New Guinea pilgrimage, but so far have had no report from him. The trip to New Guinea was part of the 60th anniversary celebrations.

In his letter, Bert mentions quite a few of the WX members of 2/1sts who transferred to other units while at Wondecla - several to 2/3 Field Regiment in January 1944 - amongst them the Criddle brothers who passed away some years ago - Jim of natural causes and Don (who was wounded in New Guinea) was lost at sea during a fishing trip out from Northampton several years ago. Tom Williams (WX14974) died some two years ago and two others Ron ("Tuppence") Henley and Wally ("Bullock") Thompson both passed away last year. "Tuppence" transferred to 2/11 Bn. and was badly wounded at Wewak. He became a postman for a number of years before he became T.P.I. "Bullock" lived at Toodyay about 70 miles north of Perth and worked on the Railway maintenance line gang until his retirement. Harry Cable and Bert attended both funerals. Harry had not been in the best of health after some time in Hollywood Hospital with a stroke, but has had a pacemaker fitted and going along quite well. Is looked after by a carer but sadly had to give up his bowls.

In closing, Bert sends his thanks to all those who keep the Association going and says he is always interested in reading the News. Let's hear

only N.S.W. sister to serve in Tobruk.

Two weeks later they were ordered to evacuate and sailed on the hospital ship "Vita" loaded with casualties, disembarking at Haifa and then on to 2/1 A.G.H. Again very busy with casualties coming from Tobruk and Greece.

The end of January 1942 found the C.C.S. packing again and ready to sail once more. Boarding the "Orcades" at Port Suez they are on their way again, destination unknown, and met up with their medical staff, plus 2/2 Pioneer Bn. Arrived in Sumatra on 15th February where troops disembarked and the C.C.S. go on to Batavia for a train to Bandung. They were only at Bandung a couple of days when they were visited by their C.O. and Dr. "Weary" Dunlop and told to pack and leave if the going became "sticky". Of the 23 ships to leave Batavia they heard later they were the only one to get through - along with the "Hobart" as escort. They arrived back in Colombo and then set sail for Australia.

After a few weeks home leave, Vera joined a re-formed 2/2 C.C.S. at Tenterfield (most of the unit were left behind in Batavia) for several months and then on to New Guinea again joining up with the men of their unit at Koitaki at the foot of the Owen Stanleys. Here they received the walking wounded and some stretcher cases carried by the "Fuzzy Wuzzy" angels down the track. They found a different kind of nursing - as mixed with the surgical cases they had all the tropical diseases, scrub typhus, berri-berri and lots of skin problems. In the desert - sand, dust and flies and New Guinea - malaria and the scrub typhus bug.

After 13 months they return to Australia for leave and reposting - Vera to Townsville at 2/14 A.G.H. and it was here that she was stationed when peace was declared. Her stay in Townsville was for 12 months, then on to Melbourne with 2/14 A.G.H. where she boarded a ship to Singapore. As the Armistice was now signed, they set up a hospital in what had been a school in Singapore. The idea was to nurse those P.O.W.'s who were too ill to travel, amongst them the sisters taken P.O.W.'s at the fall of Singapore.

Vera was there for three months and at the closure of the hospital back to Australia and the 101 A.G.H. at Herne Bay (now Riverwood) for five months. From Herne Bay she was transferred to 113 A.G.H. at Concord, mostly on night duty in surgical wards.

When the T.B. patient's were transferred to Concord, Vera was asked to volunteer to work in the T.B. wards. With 300 to 400 T.B. patients arriving at Concord she was fortunate to be allotted the Chest Investigation Ward, which included chest surgery. This nursing she found most interesting, so much so that when Concord became a repatriation hospital Vera accepted the challenge which meant she had to resign from Scott Memorial at Scone.

Whilst in the Middle East, penicillin was first introduced and made up by the theatre staff - gowned and gloved. Whilst at Concord, Vera had the privilege of being one of the team to administer the first course of streptomycin, which really helped to eradicate T.B.

The following years at Concord were to see so many fascinating changes in medicine generally, and nursing. Together with Dr Harry Windsor (first heart transplant at St. Vincent's Hospital) and Dr Dave Perry, the Intensive Care Unit was formed. Vera remained as Charge Sister of that Unit until her retirement.

We are sure our readers will find Vera's notes of great interest. They were given to us by her sister Marj Hamilton, now of Inverell, and we were only able to print a very abridged version of her army life as space permitted. Strangely enough both trips with our 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneer Battalions.

On 11th November, Remembrance Day, Marj is presenting Vera's war medals to the Ethel ("Storky") Lane Museum at Concord Hospital after the service in the Hospital Chapel. A fitting resting place for them in memory of a nursing sister who gave so many years of her life in the service to others.

"We Will Remember"

Reported by PEG HERRON

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

The last Mail Bag for 2005 and how the year has flown. Letters for the News were well down in numbers, perhaps because of the winter months or our ageing writers, but are always pleased to hear from our members - even if only a few lines. However, lots of news from far and wide from members of both units and our thanks to those who were able to put pen to paper.

GRAEME AUSTIN, Florey A.C.T. son of late Norman Austin, D. Coy, 2/1, with a selection of photos, relevant to the unit, which Graeme had downloaded from the internet and sent on to Max. The photo of the "Anshun" at Milne Bay was of special interest to Max as he was on board that particular transport on the trip from Brisbane to Gili Gili in Milne Bay and had disembarked before she was shelled by a Japanese cruiser and sunk at the wharf.

Many thanks for the photos, Graeme, and for the cheque enclosed for the News. Have placed your name on our mailing list for future copies and Max was pleased he was able to talk to you about your dad's time with the unit. Best wishes.

ARTHUR BENNETT 2/1, Pendle Hill, enclosing a cheque for Association funds and his thanks for continued efforts in keeping the News going. Says we are all getting older but never forget the past and mates with whom we shared so much. Arthur is 87 and admits to slowing up, but says he is lovingly cared for by his wife. Good to hear in these troubled times, Arthur, and our thanks to you both for your kind words to both of us. Many thanks for your subs.

PAT BENTLEY, Yokine W.A., widow of Alf 2/1, with a card and letter since her return to the West (with niece Loma) after their trip to Sydney. Good to hear from you, Pat, and pleased that all the drama at the Grace Hotel over our luncheon did not affect your day with the ladies. As Pat says "the food was delicious and the company much fun - Has never seen a "cookie" on his knees before, really enjoyed that, not to mention the free drinks that came with his abject apology."

Hope your weather has improved since you wrote - only wish our part of the country could share some of your rain. Parts of the state are now lush and green, but with those drawing water from Warragamba Dam we are still on restrictions.

Many thanks for the cheque for funds, Pat, and keep up your computer skills. Have noted your change of plans for ANZAC Day if you decide to come next year. Both send you our very best wishes and always pleased to hear from you.

BERT BEATON 2/2, Casterton Vic., with the sad news that his wife of nearly sixty years had passed away in August after a long illness. Our sympathy is extended to you and your family, Bert, from your fellow Pioneers.

Our thanks for your generous donation to funds and your change of R.M.B. number has been noted on our records. Keep well and best wishes.

AUB BRASIER Dee Why, our adopted bugler of some 45 years, visits Elizabeth Jenkins Salvation Army Home at Collaroy to visit his wife Nancy and meets up with our Ron Webster 2/1 of Bass Hill. Ron's wife is also in residence there and he travels from his home two or three times a week to visit her. A long journey. As Ron and Aub were both bandsmen (Aub formerly with Corrective Services Band) they have a lot in common and find time when they meet for a chat. Thanks for the news, Aub, and say hello to Nancy.

OLIVE FINLAY, Mt. Pritchard, widow of Gordon 2/1, with a short note enclosing a printout from her Rheumatologist which I found most interesting. I have been suffering most of this year with Polymyalgia Rheumatica (PMR) and on heavy doses of Cortisone. Doctors say it's a virus and there's no short term cure. Many thanks, Olive, and hope to catch up with you soon.

CAROLYN GOULD, Kellyville, Co-Ordinator of the Castle Hill Youth Band with husband Graeme, with a letter of thanks for the July issue

of the News. Great supporters of both the 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneers on ANZAC Day, Carolyn took the opportunity to tell the Band members about our mention of them in the News and said a smaller group than usual marched in the V.P. March in August. It was disappointing that crowds were low, but an important memory to commemorate.

Carolyn's own parents met in Darwin on V.P. Day, 60 years ago, so celebrate that day as their "anniversary". Her dad was with the Army at SDR and actually announced the Victory over the air. Her mother was in the Womens' Army and was also stationed in Darwin.

She was sad to read of the passing of Jack Tooker 2/1, who for many years supported the Pioneer donation to the Youth Band, and looks forward to ANZAC Day next year.

JOHN HAYDEN 2/1, Orange, with two long letters from dear wife Wyn (mostly under great difficulty with her bad eyes and hands) and always full of news from their part of the world. John celebrated his 90th birthday in May and really had a great day with family and friends. The photos were very good and the write-up in your local paper certainly well written. Over the years John has played an active note in local Masonic organisations, the Uniting Church, Legacy and the RSL and led the Orange ANZAC Day march this year. Not too bad for a 90 year old - and we wish you many more happy birthdays John.

He and Wyn were saddened to hear of the passing of dear friend Bill Jollie and have been in touch with his daughter, Sharon.

Do hope your weather has improved since you wrote last, I know how you hate the cold and the bitter winds. Age doesn't help the creaky bones, but nothing we can do about that.

Many thanks to you both for your kind words re the paper, Wyn, and for your generous gift to funds (you are well in front with your dues). Our love and best wishes, keep well and look after your eyes. All the very best to John.

BETTY KYBERT, Long Jetty, widow of Brian 2/1, with a short note enclosing her sub for the News and apologising for the delay in sending it on. Says Brian had the most retentive brain, but says she's afraid she's let the side down. No worries, Betty, always good to hear from you and know you still like to receive the News. Keep well, and thanks for the cheque.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with a note of thanks to the Association for their nomination of her representing the Pioneers for the Commemorative Mission marking the 60th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific. More than 280 nominations were received from veterans around Australia, including war widows.

All applications were carefully considered by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs and 17 veterans and one war widow made up the party to Hawaii. Joyce said the thought of nomination alone was most heartening for such an occasion.

Do hope you are keeping well and many thanks for your warm wishes to the committee.

DON MURRAY 2/2, Cundletown (late of Tinonee), with his change of address to St Paul's Hostel on a permanent basis. Your new address has been noted on Max's records, Don, and the paper will be sent there when published.

For someone who went to the dentist and ended up nearly three months in various hospitals in your area, you've certainly given the system a shake-up and hope by now you are on the mend. With your eyesight so bad, you are so much better in a Hostel where you can receive proper care.

Don mentions that when he arrived in Kapooka in September 1942 and found Allen Stone 2/2, who was also from the Tinonee area, they became good friends. Hearing of Allen's passing late last year he has asked that his sympathy be passed on to Edith, Allen's widow, and sends her his regards.

Enjoy your new surrounds, Don, and all the best from your 2/2 mates.

MARION MCGREGOR, Rothbury, widow of Roy 2/2, with a letter of thanks for the last Pioneer News and says it is always welcome to her and her family. They were very interested in the article by Ken Oliver 2/1 on his trip to Borneo and passes on her thanks for the story