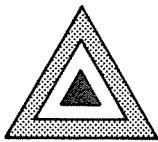


PIONEER NEWS



Phone 9759 5491

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

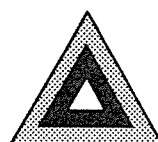
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Correspondence: MAX HERRON, Hon. Sec., 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn. Assoc., 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills 2209

Treasurer: DON CRAWFORD

Editors: MAX & PEG HERRON O.A.M's



Vol. 58 No. 1

APRIL 2012

ANZAC ACTIVITIES 2012

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

Tuesday, 24th April at 3.45pm

All members and their families are invited to the Wreath Laying Service at the Cenotaph on Tuesday, 24th April at 3.45pm. The Association Executive consider this event to be the most important event of the year and would like to see a good attendance.

Members and relatives to assemble on the corner of Pitt Street and Martin Place, on the GPO side, at about 3.15 pm ready to form up at 3.40 pm for the short walk to the Cenotaph. Medals are requested to be worn. Marshal will be John Hayden, son of the late Captain John Hayden 2/1.

ANZAC DAY MARCH

Wednesday, 25th April

Forming up for both 2/1st and 2/2nd will be in King Street right opposite the Phillip Street entrance. This will be on the south side footpath outside the old Law Court Building where the two banners will be displayed in the same position as last year. The head of the 6th Division will be in King Street head on to Castlereagh Street. In front of the Pioneers will be the 2/1, 2/2 and 2/3 Machine Gunners and behind the Pioneers will be the 6th Div. A.A.S.C.

LATE COMERS TRANSPORT

The RSL will have motorised Pedapods at the corner of Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets, corner of Park and College Streets, corner of Macquarie Street and St James Road and in George Street outside Wynyard Station. They are for veterans who are running late and these vehicles will take them to their starting position. The Pedapod is like a motorised rickshaw with a canopy. Also the RSL will have a special place fenced off with seats for veterans and their carers who cannot march. It will be near the George Street boom camera as you turn into George Street. The boom camera will aim at the veterans from time to time.

MARK NEASBEY - UNIT MARSHAL

Once again we are calling on Mark, son of Bert 2/2, to act as the Unit March Marshal and his duties are: 1. To watch for the movements of troops at the corner of Pitt and King Streets. 2. To then arrange the formation as follows - (a) Band (b) Land Rover (c) Banners/Flags (d) Troops (e) Head count of veterans and descendants to Secretary.

DON GRANT - LAND ROVER MARSHAL

In 2011 Don, son of Noel 2/1, carried out this task so well he has been asked to do it again this year. His duties are: 1. Contact the driver of the Land Rover which has been ordered by the Association. This will be in Castlereagh Street with 6th Div. HQ. 2. Organise the Land Rover in March position. 3. Arrange veterans into vehicle with aid of two carers. March Leader in front seat. 4. With two carers help veterans out of vehicle at Elizabeth Street.

Veterans to ring Secretary, Max Herron, 9759-5491, to book a seat in Land Rover.

DESCENDANTS MARCHING

In past years the Association has strictly carried out the ANZAC March protocol as laid down by the RSL regarding descendants as

follows:-

1. Must be over RSL age of 18 years.
2. Must be well dressed.
3. Must wear medals of deceased veteran on right breast.
4. No photographs of a veteran is to be worn or carried by a descendant.

The Chief Marshal of the RSL has stated one descendant to march with one veteran.

ANZAC DAY REUNION

Wednesday, 25th April

The Occidental Hotel is once again the venue for the ANZAC reunion which is situated on the corner of York and Erskine Streets, Sydney, opposite Wynyard Park.

In the hotel foyer you will be greeted by sons Geoff Finlay, David Herron and Ray Law who will collect the lunch fee of \$25 and issue name tags.

The Ladies Auxiliary will proceed upstairs and have their lunch fee of \$30 collected by Lynn Herron who will supply their name tags.

Members to be seated at 12.15 pm and lunch at 12.45 pm will consist of Roast of Sirloin with vegetables and buttered roll.

Ladies will have same menu as above, with dessert.

The reunion chairman will be Mark Neasbey, son of Bert 2/2.

Enjoy your day and the service organised by the Function Organiser and her team of helpers.

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

This issue of the Pioneer News celebrates three landmarks in the history of the Association. The first celebrates the formation, 66 years ago, on Wednesday 13th March 1946 at a meeting held at the Deaf and Dumb Society Rooms, Sydney.

In the minutes it notes a proposal from Mrs L. O'Malley Wood (President of the 2/1-2/2 Comfort Fund) that the "two units be amalgamated" and known as "2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalions Association". It was also proposed and accepted by the 118 members present, that the annual subscription be 10/- per member and the Association march together on ANZAC Day as one "body".

The second celebrates the 60th Anniversary of our Newsletter being printed in December 1952. It was conceived and edited by Max Law 2/1 and Frank Cheal 2/2 - and had its humble beginnings on a Gestetner duplicator and cost 2/6 per year.

Now the spirit of the Newsletter is about to take on a dramatic new life in its third and final celebration.

The Executive Committee are thrilled to announce the launch of our website

www.pioneerbattalion.com.au

Conceived and designed by John Tyler, son-in-law of the late Bill Jollie 2/1, the site contains copies of every newsletter printed, the history of the Association, honour rolls, nominal roll of 2/1, photos and more.

Lastly, the Executive Committee extend their thanks to you, the readers, who have contributed stories, made donations,

announced births and sadly deaths, and shared your lives with us. This newsletter is a testament to those friendships formed in foreign lands over 60 years ago.

Without you, there would be no reason to print - The Pioneer News.

Postscript - if you are computer literate and are interested in helping develop our website, please contact us at our email: info@pioneerbattalion.com.au - you can visit the website of the 2/2nds www.2nd2ndpioneerbattalion.com - for inspiration.

REMEMBRANCE DAY, 2011

A special Remembrance Day Service was held at the 113th A.G.H. Memorial Chapel at Concord on Friday, 11th November, 2011, and the Association was represented by our Treasurer Don Crawford and his wife Val.

The service was led by Paul Weaver, Anglican Chaplain of Concord Hospital and Father Artur Wojtowicz, Catholic Chaplain, and the Remembrance Day Reflection "Dear Veteran" was written by Jean Goujon, and much appreciated.

The Remembrance Day Address was given by Ben Stewart, School Captain of St Patrick's College for 2012, as follows:

"All wars," said Francois Fenelon, "are civil wars, because all men are brothers."

Engraved all around us are the names of the honoured dead. Our names contain for us, some sense of identity, some way to discern ourselves from the vast, faceless multitude. But let us think about our surnames, the surnames of the humble living and the noble dead. We all have 2 parents, and 4 grandparents, and 8 great-grandparents, and 16 great-great-grandparents and so on and so on back through history. What's important to note is that by the time we go back a few more generations, each of us has more ancestors than there has ever been human beings. It so follows that if you have European heritage, then you must be related to Charlemagne. And what's more important is that every single one of your past panoply of ancestors is equally responsible for your identity. Remove one, and you cease to exist. And yet only one of this immense multitude has your surname. Yet that is what we use to distinguish between us. The fact is, we are all related, we are all brothers and sisters, we share a human bond that makes the horrors of war even more poignant and tragic. The fallen soldiers around us share the same blood, the blood of Flanders Fields. When we weep for war, we weep not for defeat or victory, for battles, or for sides. Allied, German, black man, white, we weep for human life. "All wars are civil wars, because all men are brothers."

We meet here today, and I speak here today, to honour a pledge made many years ago, a pledge to never forget the fallen, the men and women whose lives of courage, and resilience, and grand nobility stand an indelible testament to a powerful lesson of history and humanity.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Former Prime Minister Paul Keating said it best: "out of the war came a powerful message which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly. It was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they are not ordinary."

Several months ago I travelled on a school immersion trip to Papua New Guinea, to the island of New Britain. We planned to visit Bitaparka War Cemetery, the gravesite of some of the first soldiers to be killed in World War II. Before we went, we were given soldiers to research and asked to write a memorial for that soldier, I read from the memorial I wrote that day at Bitaparka:

"My soldier's name is Douglas Arthur Gallahar. In many ways he is quite ordinary. He lived, fought and died before his 21st Birthday, and was soon lost among the paperwork of the Australian Defence Department and the countless graves of Bitaparka.

But for me, Douglas Gallahar is personally extraordinary. Too often we become apathetic, insulated and isolated against the tens of thousands of bodies washed up on the shores of the Pacific, Africa and Europe. Which is why Douglas Gallahar is so special for me. He represents a personal connection to the Second World War. From my research, I now know that he was born in 1921, not living to see his 21st year because of his refusal to surrender in the Tol Massacre of 1942. I know that he worked as a laundry assistant in Mornington, Victoria, travelling to Melbourne to enlist when he was 19. I know that those first 19 years of his life were spent unadventurously in his home town, single and Anglican. By all accounts, Douglas Gallahar was an ordinary man, an ordinary soldier, and ordinary corpse. But for me, he was Douglas Gallahar, my hero in the Second World War."

Months later, I still remember that day in Bitaparka, sitting on the grass before Gallahar's grave, holding my hand only metres from his coffin, from the hand that had signed those forms I'd read, who'd lived that life I spoke of. "It was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they are not ordinary."

Violence continues around the world, and this tragedy is made all the more poignant by the recent deaths of civilians and soldiers in Afghanistan. These tragedies are made all the more heart-wrenching by the close grave of Sgt. Brett Wood, who was killed by an Improvised Explosive Device in May of this year. But I give a message of hope. We live, right now, despite this violence, in the most peaceful era of human existence, and we owe that to the fallen that surround us, today of all days. "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," said Winston Churchill, and he is right for all the courageous human beings that rest peacefully both here, and around the world. On days like these however, it is right to add that never have so few, these brave men and women who have fallen for what is right, seemed so many.

"All wars are civil wars, because all men are brothers."

Lest We Forget.

The Wreath Laying Ceremony was followed by Last Post and Reveille and a prayer for the Commemoration of the Fallen.

Organisation of the very moving service was in the capable hands of Alice Kang, Hon. Secretary of the Kokoda Track Walkway Committee and the refreshments served at the conclusion of the service by the staff of Concord Hospital.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

• The first issue of the News for 2012 and we wish our readers lots of good health and happy days in the coming year. During last year we again lost many old friends due to ill health and age and they will be remembered. Time is marching on and sadly most Pioneers are well into their eighties and nineties. We thank all our friends who sent cards to Max and I for Christmas, and we were very happy to hear from you once again.

DORIS AMIES, Sandgate Qld, widow of Cyril 2/1, with a card for Christmas and a newsy letter of her "Doings" since she wrote last.

Pleased to hear your health has improved during the year, Doris, and she has been kept busy by daughter Wendy making bed covers and coat hangers for a charity group in their Ipswich area. This particular area was very badly affected by the Queensland floods.

Her daughter Wendy and her husband Stuart come down and do any odd jobs which arise and once a month Doris spends time with them. Nice to have family close and able to help out when needed.

Many thanks for your donation to the News and hope your health continues to improve. Take care and we both send our love.

GWEN BARTON, Gulgong, widow of Albert 2/1, with her love and best wishes for Christmas and her thanks for the latest issue of Pioneer News. Says that although she doesn't know most of the Pioneers still left, she does recognise the names.

Her son went down to the War Memorial to see the Tobruk display and one day would like to march in Sydney on ANZAC Day. He proudly wears his father's medals to the march in Gulgong, and would be most welcome in Sydney.

Good to hear from you, Gwen, and we both send you our love and hope the years ahead brings good health and happiness. Take care.

ROBYN BELL, Camberwell Vic, daughter of late Leo Morris 2/1, with greetings for Christmas and the news that she and husband Bruce are expecting to become first time grandparents early in the New Year. They are off to New York early March and returning to Sydney in time for a visit for ANZAC Day, all going to plan.

Latest news, at going to press, tells of the arrival of a baby boy safe and well – congratulations.

TOM BLAINEY 2/1, Noble Park Vic, with Season's Greetings to all for Christmas and lots of good health in the New Year. Both enjoy reading the News and keeping up with the "doings" of the old battalion. Take care and good health in the year ahead.

PAT BENTLEY, Yokine WA, widow of Alf 2/1, with a thank you for the Pioneer News, just received, and says she has a lovely photo of the Kokoda Track, complete with Fuzzy Wuzzies. Also Christmas greetings to all and hopes to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day as usual.

Looking forward to seeing you, Pat, and hope Loma is also able to make the trip. Best wishes from both of us.

MARY BURNHAM, Forster, daughter of the late Colonel Arnold Brown 2/1, with a welcome donation to funds and her greetings to all Pioneers for Christmas. Mary hopes to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day, all going well. How

time flies when we get older – seems no time since Christmas. Love from both of us.

KAY BURTON, Springwood, daughter of the late Bert Rayner 2/1 of Kyogle, with a welcome Christmas note and donation to funds – many thanks. The family are looking forward to ANZAC Day once again.

Her grandson, Darcy, doing well with trumpet and late last year went with Sydney West Band to China and also played in the School Spectacular at the Entertainment Centre. He's certainly doing very well, Kay, and still managing to keep up with his school studies.

Thank you for the newspaper cutting of some wartime photos of Vietnam and Kay was sure it was Ann Healey (nee Hall) in one of the photos. I sent it on, Kay, and it certainly was. She would like to hear from you sometime.

The State Masters Swim Championships have just concluded at Homebush Aquatic Centre and we are delighted to report that Kay swam two days winning four Gold and one Silver in her aged division. Well done, Kay.

TED CARTER 2/1, Tamworth, with a welcome letter just prior to Christmas and a phone call – says it's good to have a chat with old mates. Ted was a Lieutenant with 2/1, but after Tobruk transferred to the 2/3 Pioneers.

He apologised for his absence from the Christmas luncheon for the Rats of Tobruk, but from Tamworth means a lot of travelling and said he doesn't cope like he used to.

Hope your eyes have improved from the injections, Ted, and that both Mary and yourself are well and not been affected by the floods in the north. Best wishes to you both.

ERIC CAUSER 2/1, Hamilton Vic, with best wishes for Christmas from both Doff and himself and still looks forward to the Pioneer News. Apologises for not being able to come to Sydney for ANZAC Day, but hopes all have a good day.

Eric was in Melbourne recently for the Memorial Service for the late Bruce Ruxton and, while shopping, met Robyn Bell who was leaving the following day for the United States to see her first grandchild. Small world.

All the best Eric and hope Doff is keeping well.

LEXIE COATES, Umina, widow of Jack 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and their families. She keeps busy, still attends Legacy and goes on bus trips when she is able.

Take care, Lex, and many thanks for the donation to the News. Very best wishes from both of us and hope Doug's foot infection has cleared up by now.

VERA COOK, Randwick, widow of Clem 2/1, was not in the best of health with leg problems when we heard from her lately, but sent her best wishes to all Pioneers for ANZAC Day. Take care, Vera, and will keep in touch.

ARTHUR DAVIS 2/1, Berkeley Vale, with a welcome donation to funds, but no news from his part of the country. Hope you are keeping well, Arthur, always good to have a few lines as to your welfare. Take care and our best wishes.

ROSS DAWSON, Bayview, with Christmas greetings from Sue and himself to all and hopes to be on deck for ANZAC Day. Our kindest regards to both of you.

OLIVE FINLAY, Mt Pritchard, widow of Gordon 2/1, with greetings for Christmas and asks "Where did this year go?" I agree with you, Olive, never seems to be enough days in the week for me too. However, many thanks for your good wishes and hope 2012 will be kinder to you healthwise.

GRACE FOWKES, Wentworthville, widow of Dick ("Snowy") Fowkes 2/1, with Christmas greetings and thanks for the Pioneer News

which she always enjoys reading. Says it's good to hear about "Our Boys". Sadly, Grace, their numbers are slowly dwindling as time marches on – most now in the late eighties or early nineties.

Fond wishes to you and hope you are keeping well. Take care.

RONA HARRISON, Stirling SA, widow of Russ 2/2, with greetings for Christmas and a welcome donation to funds. Many thanks. It was good to hear from you, Rona, and that you have joined Legacy and making new friends since Russ passed away. I'm sure Cate has been most supportive, encouraging you to be out and about and make new friends.

Take care and our very best wishes to you and family, always happy to hear from you.

ANN HEALEY, Semaphore SA, daughter of late Jim Hall 2/1, Kyogle, was in touch just as we were going to press to say she would be in Sydney for ANZAC Day this year. Ann was a Vietnam wartime nursing sister and we were very pleased to invite her to our wreath laying on ANZAC Eve and the ANZAC luncheon at the Occidental.

Was happy to report that sister Margaret and her husband John, who have been teaching in China for several years, are on their way back to live in Brisbane, near their grandson Jagger. Will be lovely to have them close to home.

Looking forward to seeing you soon Ann, will be great to meet up once again.

MERCIA HEALY, Bonbeach Vic, widow of Leo 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all Pioneers and their families. Do hope you are keeping well and the past year has helped to heal the sadness of the passing of your son-in-law. They say time is a great healer, but it's easier said than done.

Both send you our fond wishes, Mercia, and hope the year ahead brings peace and happiness. Take care.

PAM HERRICK, Sutherland, daughter of late George Bates 2/1, with a long letter of her "doings" during the year and Christmas greetings from Edward and herself. They have been overseas visiting family in the UK, Ireland and Europe and this year off again for ten weeks.

Pam is still working at Sutherland Hospital and she and Edward (who has been retired for 26 years) have a busy life and belong to many associations.

Good to hear from you, Pam, and are hoping to catch up one day soon.

Best wishes to you both and keep well.

GLORIA HUTCHINSON, Caringbah, widow of Bill 2/1, with her love and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. How about a longer note next time, Gloria, with some family news.

FRED KILLEN 2/1, Warners Bay, per his son Roy, with a welcome donation and his thanks for the News which his father is always pleased to receive. Dad is now 94 and not in the best of health. However, he still gets great pleasure from telling stories of his days in the 2/1sts. Best wishes, Fred, and thank you Roy for your letter on your dad's behalf.

BETTY O'CONNOR, Ballina, widow of Neville 2/2, with Christmas greetings to all – says she has kept herself busy, but hasn't much to show for it. Had been making a cloth teddy bear for her great-granddaughter for Christmas and says it should look good when finished.

Her local Pioneer group had a luncheon early December – Betty and Ozie Carter, Clare and Terry McGuire, Dot Priest, Nancy Robbins and Betty. It's not easy for Alf and Lily Bettens to come from Lennox Head as Alf is in a wheelchair.

Good to hear from you, Betty, and many thanks for news of your local Pioneers.

ERICA PIELE, Caringbah, widow of Peter 2/1, with greetings for Christmas and a phone call recently with news of her rowing grandchildren. They are members of St George Rowing Club and performed well at week-long Australian Rowing Championships on Champion Lakes, Perth.

Jacky Piele, 24, finished fourth in the B final of the women's open lightweight single skull and in the women's open lightweight quad she finished to take silver.

Her brother Steven, 22, won a bronze in the men's under-23 quad skull. He also reached the semi-finals of the men's under-23 single and double skulls.

Good to hear from you, Erica, and our best wishes.

DOT PRIEST, Ballina, widow of Peter 2/1, with Christmas greetings to all and a few lines of what she has been doing since she wrote last. Ballina has been getting a by-pass and says it will be great to have the trucks out of the town.

She had over two months holidaying in WA, flew to Broome in early September and went down the coast with daughter Pam and her husband Ken in the caravan all the way to Perth, and flew home on the 3rd November. Pam came home by the Nullarbor to be in Queensland for Christmas. Hope the trip washed all the cobwebs away, Dot, no doubt WA has some spectacular scenery and wildflowers.

Good to hear from you Dot and hope this finds you well after your holiday.

MAY NEASBEY, Davistown, wife of Bert 2/2, with Christmas wishes to Max and myself and for your kind words on the work we both do for the Association. They were very much appreciated. Do hope your sixth great-grandchild arrived safely in December and doing well. Best wishes from Max and myself and hope Bert, Lynda and yourself are all well.

JOYCE LAW, Kareela, widow of Max 2/1, with best wishes for Christmas from Joyce and her family and lots of good health in the year ahead.

Hope we may see you at the ANZAC luncheon if you can make it Joyce, perhaps Karen may be able to come as well, or Craig. Fond wishes from both of us – take care.

FRANCES RHODES, Page ACT, daughter of Jim 2/1, with her usual yearly letter of the "doings" of daughter Meg and herself. What a year you two have had – two weeks during April up to the Gold Coast to see the Outback Spectacular (which was terrific), relaxing, sleeping in and resting. The ski season kicked off early and you both had a two week skiing holiday in August.

Frances works in government offices in Canberra and has been very busy all year and Meg has almost finished her vet nurse training and working hard to get it completed. She has applied to get into Uni this year to do Vet Science.

We were so happy to hear from you, Fran, and hope the coming year brings lots of good health and happiness to you both. Lots of love.

EULALIE SAUER, Elanora Qld, widow of George 2/1, with Christmas greetings and a cheque for the Treasurer, many thanks. She sends her thanks for the News and enjoys reading the Mail Bag.

Eulalie's letter was written early December and she was sorry to read about the death of Russ Harrison from Stirling in SA, also Allan Olson's passing as he and her late husband George were good friends. Her son Geoffrey attended Allan's funeral, as she could not get down to SA.

Her daughter Elizabeth has been overseas a lot during the last year for Bond University. She had to go to South Africa to give a series of lectures in Johannesburg and goes down to Canberra to advise the Dept. of Defence on matters of law, contracts and mediation. A busy person! Eulalie keeps an eye on the house (and dogs) while she is away.

Her son Geoffrey is going to France this year to Fromelle (hopefully for ANZAC Day) and to Eulalie's cousin's grave in St Omei, who was shot down while serving in the R.A.A.F.

Thanks for your newsy letter, Eulalie, and always good to hear from you.

NOELA SHEEN, Pearce ACT, widow of Gordon 2/2, with Christmas greetings to all 2/1-2/2 Pioneers and to Max and myself. She says not much news since she last wrote, but had a good report from the Dr and able to drive again – and back at golf. What more could you want!! Good to hear Noela, and we send you our very best wishes.

GWEN STRODE, Yagoona, sister of late Keith Jones 2/1, with a welcome donation to the News and her best wishes for Christmas to all Pioneers and their families. Hope you are keeping well, Gwen, always pleased to have a note from you. Take care.

BILL THIELE 2/1, Port Hughes SA, with a welcome card and donation to funds, per pen of good wife Betty, many thanks.

Unfortunately Bill has had a run of health problems over the last few months. Last June he was flown down to Adelaide by the Flying Doctor Service and had a large stent inserted in a main artery, and later had a bad fall and ended up in hospital at Wallaroo. He has a torn tendon in his left shoulder and lots of abrasions on elbows and knees.

Certainly in the wars, Bill, and we do hope by now you are well on the way to better health. They say "you can't keep an old soldier down".

Many thanks for writing on Bill's behalf, Betty, always good to have a line or two from South Aussie as Doug Waters and Bill are the only two now on our books since the passing of good friend, Allan Olson. Take care.

KATH TOOKER, West Pennant Hills, widow of Jack 2/1, with greetings for Christmas to all Pioneers, Max and myself, and hopes the New Year bring lots of good health to all. Take care and would love to hear from you when you have the time.

LES TUNKS 2/1, Mareeba and his wife Lesley were well when I spoke to them on the phone just before Christmas. Lesley's eye's not the best and writing a problem, so we shared a phone call instead. They have lots of home help and care and taken to doctor's appointments when needed. Both send their best wishes to all and nice to keep in touch. Take care.

HELEN WALKER, South Coogee, daughter of the late Jack and Mary Lloyd 2/1, with her thanks for the Pioneer News we mail her each issue, and happy Christmas greetings to all Pioneer families.

Helen and husband Andrew were sharing Christmas with all the Lloyd family this year and were excited about a niece expecting a baby on her late mother's Birthday in July.

Hope we may see you at the Wreath Laying on ANZAC Eve if you happen to be in the city. Fond love from both of us.

JOYCE WALKER, Gilead, widow of George 2/1, with a recent call to say she was going into a nursing home at the Kilbride Village in the area where she lives and would be in touch again when she is settled. Hope all goes well, Joyce, and would appreciate your new address in due course. Take care and we send our love.

DON WRIGHT 2/1, Camp Hill Qld, with a welcome donation to the News and his best wishes passed on to all members of the Association for the coming year.

• That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and many thanks to all those who sent greetings apart from those mentioned in the previous letters. All were very much appreciated and God's blessings for the year ahead – Aubrey and Nancy Brasier, Audrey and Jack Hearn, Marie Jensen and family, Alice Kang on behalf of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Marj Kerslake and family, Dawn Levy, Joan Lake, Joanna and Neil Whiteley.

CAN YOU HELP?

• If any member of the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion was friendly with Charles Thomas "Nobby" Smith, a stretcher bearer, who passed away in 1978, please contact Secretary Max Herron as "Nobby's" granddaughter would like to hear from them.

• We have received a letter from Katrina Kittel of 41 Sandy Point Road, Corlette NSW 2315, inquiring if any member of the 2/1 Pioneer Bn. know of three members of the unit who were captured in Tobruk – Harold Pack, Henry Perrott or Milton Rogers. Also if any members have any information to share with regard to POW's in Italy who were able to escape camp to be at large in Italy for any length of time.

Stories regarding any escaped POW men in Italy at all would be very welcome to give her a wider picture.

VALE – IAN WILLMORE

Ian Willmore 2/2 passed away on 28th November, 2011, aged 87 years, and the funeral service was held at St Michael's Church, Vaucluse, on 1st December.

The Eulogy below was supplied by his daughter Diana Ditchfield, who said her father was a very proud member of the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion.

Ian George Vernon Willmore was born on St Patrick's Day 1924, at home in Bondi, son of George and Annie, Ian was the fifth child of six – Olive, Marjorie, Donald, Dorothy, Ian and Lawrence.

In the early 30's they moved to Vaucluse and later Randwick where a young L. J. Hooker used to call in on a regular basis to collect the rent. Ian attended school in Sydney before being sent to board at Geelong Grammar School, Victoria.

He finished school in 1941, he was 17 and was determined to join the war effort. His father had survived Gallipoli and Ian also wanted to fight for his country. At the time they were only enlisting people 21 years and over but he found a contact at the Martin Place recruiting centre who put his age through as 21.

He was posted to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and completed initial training in NSW. In 1942 he embarked on the USS Seabarb and sailed to Port Moresby to defend Australia against the Japanese. There were about 1500 troops on the ship and they slept in bunks stacked 7 or 8 high.

In New Guinea they participated in several major campaigns. He was on the ground at Nadzab with the engineers, securing the airport for thousands of US Paratroopers who arrived in a mass drop. A spectacular sight that has been recorded in many well known photographs of WWII. His battalion was then sent to Lae, which was captured by the Allies on 19th September, 1943.

His final involvement in New Guinea was at Shaggy Ridge which was the last stronghold of

the Japanese in New Guinea. A narrow razor back with an altitude of 5,000 feet in thick rainforest. Australia suffered heavy casualties in this assault and endured horrendous conditions before securing the site in late 1943.

Later he was involved with beach landings in Borneo at Tarakan and Balikpapan (as part of the last big Australian amphibious operations in the Pacific War). The landing at Tarakan was particularly well organised. The Air Force took photos of the beach and dropped them in canisters which the destroyers picked up and delivered to our boats. At Balikpapan they had to contend with land mines and stores of oil from the local refinery set fire to by the Japanese and tipped down the hills.

Ian used to tell the story of when he was manning the radio on night duty in Borneo, he heard that the Atom Bomb had been dropped in Hiroshima. The terminology they used referred to a bomb the equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT. He rushed to tell his commanding officer who promptly told him it was time for a replacement on night duty as he didn't believe the young Sergeant Willmore's words.

On his return home he began studying engineering at Sydney University but this plan was derailed by his father, who persuaded Ian to join the family business, Willmore and Randell, the real estate company he had started in 1922. Although never an academic Ian not only had excellent business acumen but also an uncanny knack for real estate – the company prospered as a result of his input.

One of the things he did was head up a fund raising committee to replace the spire of St Michael's Church, Vaucluse. He arranged for the floodlit spire to be classified as a War Memorial so donors would be entitled to a tax deduction. Some say the St Michael's Church spire was a beacon in Sydney for pilots during the war! Later in life he also arranged and paid for one of the doors of the new chapel at Kapooka to become a memorial to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, as they were the first AIF battalion to occupy Kapooka Camp.

Ian had been in a nursing home for several years with ill-health, but had been a strong supporter of the Association and had regularly attended committee meetings and the ANZAC Day march and reunion.

He is survived by his wife Belinda and three daughters Diana, Wendy and Lucinda.

LAST POST

ANDREW BEEBAR 2/2, Catherine Fields, passed away on 15th December, 2011, in Campbelltown Hospital, after being admitted for another heart attack, aged 87 years. He had some complications while in hospital, having previously been admitted with a broken left hip and respiratory problems.

The funeral service was held in St. John's Anglican Church in Camden on Wednesday, 21st December, 2011, followed by a private cremation.

In a letter from his son Allen, he said his Dad was a very proud Pioneer and marched on Anzac Day, when he could, and looked forward to the reunion with his mates Ross Dawson and Clive Maddrell and their sons. We are sure he will be sadly missed.

Our sincere thanks to son Allen for sending the details of the passing of their loved father.

EDWARD (TED) HANSEN 2/2, Wantirna, Vic., passed away on 19th September, 2011, after some 35 years as President of the 2/2nd Pioneer Bn. Association in Victoria, until ill health forced him to relinquish office.

When the 7th Australian Division was recalled from the Middle East in January 1942, the 2/2nd Pioneers were shipped to Java and, after a short encounter with the Japanese,

members of the unit (including Ted) were taken prisoner.

He was held in Java as a P.O.W. for three and a half years.

After the war Ted joined the Committee of the 2/2nds, serving as a member of the Committee for many years before becoming President in 1973.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to members of his family and the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion Association.

JOE ROBERTSON 2/2, South Australia, passed away on 18th January, 2012, and the news was passed on to us by Bill Thiele 2/1 of Port Hughes S.A. to whom we extend our thanks.

THANKS TO DON CRAWFORD

The Secretary wishes to thank Don for the various tasks he has undertaken on behalf of the Association as follows:-

1. Visiting Mailroom Express to place the order for the printing and addressing of the 900 envelopes for posting the Pioneer News, then returning and picking up the boxes of envelopes when printed – as well as delivering them to the Secretary.
2. Visiting the Occidental Hotel to obtain details for the ANZAC Day reunion.
3. Attending two RSL ANZAC March Committee meetings to receive the rules and details of the march, which is published on page one.

Many thanks, Don, your assistance has been very much appreciated.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012

The Executive held their Annual Meeting on Monday, 27th February, 2012, at the home of the Secretary at 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills, at 10.30am. In attendance were Don Crawford (Treasurer), and Secretaries Max and Peg Herron.

Due to the passing of Roy Jardine in 2011 the Association no longer has a President, so Don Crawford called upon Max Herron to be the Chairman for the meeting.

An apology was received from Vice-President Jack Allison for non-attendance at the meeting and said he had declined the position of President due to ill health.

In a letter to the Association he gave a lot of advice for the Executive to carry on.

The Chairman opened the meeting by calling on the Assistant Secretary to read the correspondence both outgoing and incoming over the past year and then called on the Treasurer to present his Statement and Balance Sheet which will be published next issue. The Chairman complimented the Treasurer on the report and said all members would be very pleased to know the affairs of the Association are financially sound in Don's capable hands.

Don then gave a detailed account of his visit to the Manager of the Occidental Hotel and this information has been published on page one.

Secretary Max Herron then gave his report on the Wreath Laying Service and the ANZAC Day march and reunion.

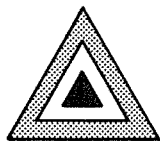
General Business: Don Crawford gave a report on his visit to Mailroom Express and was pleased to announce they have once again made a donation of the cost of supplying, printing and addressing the envelopes for the Pioneer News.

The Secretary also reported his daughter, Lynne Berry, had offered to organise the purchase of the wreath this year for the Wreath Laying Service, using purple and white flowers, at a cost of \$75.

Peg Herron presented her Petty Cash book showing the final figures – this was signed by the Chairman and Treasurer.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members for their attendance and for their reports.

PIONEER NEWS



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

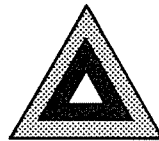
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Correspondence: MAX HERRON, Hon. Sec., 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn. Assoc., 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills 2209

Treasurer: DON CRAWFORD

Editors: MAX & PEG HERRON O.A.M's



Vol. 58 No. 2

AUGUST 2012

PIONEERS ATTEND ANZAC ACTIVITIES

YOUNGER GENERATION ASSISTS

As mentioned in the last issue, the Executive at their meeting in February decided to call on the Younger Generation to assist in running the ANZAC activities.

It was decided to call on three people (1) John Hayden, son of the late Capt. John Hayden 2/1 to be the Marshal for the Wreath Laying ceremony (2) Mark Neasbey, son of Bert Neasbey 2/2 to be Chairman of the ANZAC reunion and (3) Darcy Henderson (Kay Burton's grandson) and great-grandson of the late Bert Rayner 2/1, to assist our bugler Aub Brasier with Last Post and Reveille at the Wreath Laying ceremony.

The Executive extend a hearty thanks to the above for accepting the positions allotted to them and it was due to their efforts that the ANZAC activities were successfully carried out.

WREATH LAYING SERVICE

On Tuesday 24th April members and relatives assembled on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street for the service to pay tribute to all those Pioneers who lost their lives during the war and those who have passed away in later years.

John Hayden, Marshal, called on members and relatives at 3.35 pm to fall in to commence proceedings. Banner bearers were Don Grant (son of late Noel 2/1) and Mark Neasbey (son of Bert 2/2) and the wreath layer was our Treasurer, Don Crawford 2/2.

At 3.35 pm orders were given by the Marshal for members to fall in and march to the Cenotaph for the wreath to be laid. After laying the wreath Don Crawford recited the Ode to the Fallen and the Marshal called on the buglers Aub Brasier and Darcy Henderson to render Last Post and Reveille.

John Hayden then called on the assembled Pioneers and their families to lay their personal wreaths and then, before dismissing the parade, thanked the two buglers and went on to especially thank Aub Brasier for his 52 years of wonderful service as the bugler for the Association. This was carried by acclamation by all present.

Our thanks to the secretary's daughter, Lynne Berry, for supervising and arranging purchase of the Association wreath.

Among those who attended were only two members of the Association, Don Crawford 2/2 and Max Herron 2/1. A notable attendee was Anne Hall (daughter of late Jim Hall 2/1 of Kyogle, who was a nursing sister in Vietnam and was in Sydney for ANZAC Day). Sadly missed were Sam Lewis and Noel Grant, both 2/1sts, who always attended.

ANZAC DAY MARCH

March Marshal was Mark Neasbey, son of Bert 2/2, and at 9.50 am arranged for the Castle Hill Youth Band to form up. He then arranged for the two banner and flag bearers

into position. Banner bearers were Tim Lloyd 2/1 (his thirtieth year) and John Collins for the 2/2nds. The Australian flags were carried by Ray Law 2/1 and the 2/2 by Ryan Crawford. At the assembly point while waiting for the march to start, it was again quite a treat to receive a tot of rum served by Gordon Collins 2/2.

Don Grant, son of late Noel 2/1, was vehicle Marshal and helped Laurie Kelly into the vehicle and out again at the finish of the march.

Mark then called for the Pioneers and relatives to fall in and marched off behind the Castle Hill RSL Youth Band which has been the Pioneers' band for the past 19 years.

On reaching Martin Place an RSL Marshal called on our band to leave the marchers and, despite Tim Lloyd's intervention (to no avail), the Marshal insisted the band fall out. For the first time in twenty years we had to struggle around without our band.

ANZAC REUNION DINNER

As in past years the venue for the reunion was at the Occidental Hotel in York Street. In the foyer members were welcomed by three Pioneer sons – Geoff Finlay, Ray Law and David Herron, name tags issued and lunch fees collected. Members were then directed upstairs to the their seats and be ready for lunch.

Keeping to the programme at 12.15 pm the Secretary called on the members to be seated so that the proceedings could proceed. He extended thanks to Mark Neasbey for doing an excellent job as Marshal of the march and then handed over to Mark as the Chairman of the reunion.

Mark then recited the Ode to the Fallen with a special mention of the names of all Pioneers who had passed away since last ANZAC Day.

The Chairman then extended a welcome to all those present with a special mention of Mary Burnham, daughter of the late Colonel Arnold Brown, who was the Commanding Officer of the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion, and her daughter Dael Allison.

Mark also extended thanks to the working sons for a job well done – Geoff Finlay, Ray Law, David and Josh Herron, Tim Lloyd and Don Grant. He also thanked those who "shouted the bar" – this was very much appreciated – and the function manager Delfino and her staff for making the reunion a success.

In conclusion, Mark said the Secretary had received an apology from our Association Patron Brigadier John Gilchrist E.D., with a speech he desired to be read to reunion members in his absence.

"Once again I must apologise as your Patron for not attending the reunion and hope that it is a great success.

Some years ago – 72 to be exact I went to the AIF Recruiting Centre at Moore Park to

enlist in the AIF, where I was told by the recruiting officer that a new unit was being raised that day and would be a mixture of engineers and infantry and called the Pioneer Bn. I enlisted in the new unit and spent the first night in Ingleburn and the following day moved to Greta. We were a pretty rough mob and it took a lot of hard discipline and training to make us into an efficient unit.

This was achieved and our engineering and infantry skills were proved in the Western desert and Tobruk and later our engineering experience in New Guinea.

The Battalion was re-organised to full infantry establishment for the campaign in Borneo.

I transferred to engineers but still regard my time with the Pioneers as the most productive and enjoyable of my military service. The Battalion did everything that was expected of it and those who served in the unit and are here today can say with pride "I was a Pioneer".

The widows and relatives who are with us today have every reason to be proud of those who went before and members of our association, which has been kept going because of the dedication and hard work of Max and Peg Herron, have a lot to be thankful for; Peg's mailbag is a wonderful way to keep in touch and has largely enabled the association to continue when so many others have folded up.

Once again welcome to the reunion and our thanks to Max, Peg and Don Crawford for all they do for us. Enjoy yourselves and go away with many happy memories of the day and pride what the Bn achieved.

ANZAC REUNION ATTENDANCE

Pioneers in attendance were 2/1sts – Max Herron, Laurie Kelly, Noel Schomberg and Ern Walker. 2/2nds – Jack Allison, Don Crawford and Bert Neasbey. There were 49 relatives and 27 ladies – making a total of 76.

LUNCH WITH THE LADIES

The ladies enjoyed their lunch at the Occidental and, as usual, were joined by several visitors from interstate. From Victoria came Robyn Bell, Jean Grant with family members Margaret Fleming, Ann Grant, Katrina Fleming, Leanne Maher, Sharon Lynch (a lovely Grant gathering), Kay Burton from Springwood, Ann Healey from Semaphore in South Australia, Ainsley Cole from Toronto, Mary Burnham and her daughter Dael Allison from Forster.

Sydneysiders included Marj Kerslake and daughters Barbara Harrison and Margaret Stolp, Olive Finlay and daughter-in-law Lyn, Ruth Bosanko, Joy Taylor, Janet O'Neill, Joy Jorgenson, Barbara Allison, Marie Jensen, Natalie and Catherine Neasbey, Peg Herron and daughter-in-law Lynn who, as always, looked after the collection of the meal money. Many thanks, Lynn. We hope to see some of the new relatives join us next year.

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

• Another ANZAC Day has gone and although the weather could have been kinder, marchers and spectators braved the showery conditions. However, age and mobility is taking its toll on the veterans and World War II veterans were well down in numbers. However, their ranks were boosted by many sons and daughters who acted as carers.

PHIL BARNETT 2/2, Alstonville, with a welcome note enclosing cheque for the News (written courtesy of daughter Lyn) and appreciation of the work the Committee do for their members. Phil is now living in the hostel within the village where he has been for some time, says old age has caught up with him.

Many thanks for your donation, Phil, and always good to have news of your welfare.

KAY BURTON, Springwood, daughter of late Bert Rayner 2/1, with some great shots taken at the ANZAC reunion and these have been shared around with those who attended on the day. Many thanks, Kay.

It was great to see the three Kyogle "girls" together – Kay Burton (Rayner), Ann Healey (Hall) and Lynn Herron (Downes). Ann Hall lives in South Australia and was in Sydney for a month's holiday.

Kay said it was a great day, but she was exhausted by the time she finally arrived home at Springwood.

TED CARTER 2/1, Tamworth, with a welcome phone call recently with best wishes to his friends in Sydney. Says travelling by train on our main northern line is a problem these days and he doesn't get to Sydney as often as he used to.

His eyes still not the best – having injections every few months, but battling on.

His wife Mary was having her 90th birthday in July and we hope you had a great day, Mary, with family and friends, and lots of good health and happiness in the year ahead.

Thanks for your call, Ted, and best wishes from Max and myself. Take care.

ERIC CAUSER 2/1, Hamilton Vic, with a phone call re Noel Grant's passing and said he had been in Brisbane and Doff was on holiday at Port Fairy with a friend. Thanks for the call, Eric, and sorry you were not able to be in Sydney for ANZAC Day. Always good to have news of you, all the best.

RON CROSS 2/1, Ballina, has been making headlines in his local newspaper for baking biscuits to be sent to a Japan kindergarten in the name of "friendship".

Ron served with the 2/1sts in Tobruk and the Kokoda Track in New Guinea and has been sending home-made biscuits and cakes to a kindergarten on the island of Noko for several years. His son, Tim, is a university lecturer in Japan, and Ron and his late wife Joyce, have been visiting his son since the 1990's.

When Ron's health prevented him from making the trip to Japan, he started baking at home in Ballina and sending the "bickies" in the mail. He has been doing it every year since.

Well done, Ron, glad your health has improved and our thanks to Dot Priest of Ballina for sending in the article. Keep up the good work.

SUE DAWSON, Bayview, widow of Ross 2/2, with a welcome cheque for the News and written before Ross's passing in July. Ross was unable to attend ANZAC Day, but was so proud

to see his three sons marching in his place. It really made his day. Many thanks for your letter, Sue, and the paper will be sent to you when published. Best wishes from both Max and myself.

WIN DWYER, Bronte, widow of Mick 2/1, with a welcome cheque for the News and apology for lateness, many thanks. Do hope your health has improved since you wrote last Win – I'm sure the cold weather we have been having does not improve things – kindest regards from both of us.

MAUREEN FLEMING, Mittagong, widow of Bill 2/1, with a donation to the News, and misses Bill giving her a gentle reminder when fees were due. Many thanks, Maureen.

Since her last letter Maureen has had a wonderful trip overseas with a childhood friend who was also her bridesmaid. They had a great time. They went on a cruise, then a bus through the Balkan countries and finished up visiting relatives in England. The weather was kind to them too, which made for pleasant travelling.

Maureen was so pleased to see the photo and article in the November issue of the Fig Tree and R.A.P. in Tobruk.

Said Bill received treatment there on several occasions and thought the R.A.P. men did a great job.

Maureen says with ANZAC Day approaching (when she wrote) her thoughts would be with the veterans and sends her regards to those who keep the News going, it is always appreciated.

Good to hear from you Maureen, and glad you enjoyed your trip overseas – time marches on and these trips must be done while still able to travel and enjoy them. Fond wishes from both Max and myself.

MOLLIE JEAN HUNT, New Farm Qld, widow of John 2/1, with a welcome donation to funds and her thanks for the time and effort entailed in keeping the Pioneer Association healthy – says it cannot be easy as the numbers become fewer. (Mollie says at least we each have someone to growl to at the end of the day!!)

Max has a problem with eyesight and mobility, Mollie, and is gradually trying to hand over some duties to the Younger Generation who are more than willing to help on occasions. He is most grateful for their help and to our Treasurer, Don Crawford, for his valuable assistance.

Many thanks for your donation to funds, Mollie, and always good to hear from you. Hope you are keeping well – and busy.

SUE HALLENSTEIN, Wantirna South, Vic, daughter of late Dr Stan Goulston 2/1, with a welcome note apologising for the delay in answering Max's letter on the death of her father, and the copies of the Pioneer News where tribute was paid to her father on behalf of the 2/1st Pioneers.

Sue said her dad, often spoke about his time with the 2/1st Pioneers and especially about his time in Tobruk. Said he had lots of stories he enjoyed retelling, especially in his later years.

Thank you for your letter, Sue, and our kindest regards passed on to your sisters and yourself.

* **ANN HANSON**, Wallalong, daughter of late Sid Jopson 2/1, with a welcome letter after meeting her at a Rats of Tobruk luncheon at Five Dock just before Anzac Day. Her father was a well-known member of the 2/1st Pioneers and attended most of our country reunions until his passing.

Ann and her family were very good friends with late Jim and Lil Hall, 2/1sts of Kyogle and spent many a holiday on Jim's farm.

I was able to pass on the photos to Jim's daughter, Ann Healey, when she was in Sydney for a month over the ANZAC period, Ann, and no doubt you have heard from her in the meantime. It was lovely having her to our wreath-laying on ANZAC Eve and to our luncheon on ANZAC Day.

Hoping we may meet up again one day at a RATS meeting – Sid was a long time friend, as was your mother Myrtle, and we enjoyed meeting up now and again at our Pioneer reunions. Sadly so many have now passed away. Many thanks for your donation to funds.

JACK HORE-LACY 2/2, Moss Vale, was in touch by phone just before ANZAC Day and passed on his best wishes to all his old mates for a great day. He hoped to make it to the local service, perhaps by wheelchair, as his balance has not improved.

Take care, John, and hope your health has improved since we heard from you and our sympathy passed on to the family on the passing of your dear daughter some months ago.

LAURIE KELLY 2/1, Oxford Falls, made headline news in the "Manly Daily" on 26th April with a report on the Oxford Falls Peace Park dawn service for ANZAC Day. Northern beaches residents packed the park for the annual service and among them Laurie, a former Rat of Tobruk, who had not missed an Oxford Falls service in 59 years.

Well done, Laurie, and then to go on to the city to march and reunion. Hope your weary legs enjoyed the ride in the army Land Rover.

MARIE LAMERTON, Prestons, widow of Jack 2/1, who is a resident of the Blue Hills Retirement Village, sent along a very generous donation to the News. Many thanks, Marie, and pleased to hear you are still reasonably well and being well cared for. We have spoken to Harry on occasions and always good to have news of your welfare. Take care and best wishes.

DAWN LEVY, Revesby, widow of Roy 2/2, with a welcome newsy letter and her yearly sub to the News. Many thanks, Dawn, and good to read you have been busy with Legacy and War Widows – says she is still on Committee at both clubs and lead up to ANZAC Day is always hectic.

She has not had any holidays with Legacy for nearly a year – what with a third grandson starting high school in Year 7 and a Grandparents' Day in May coinciding with the Legacy holiday, there was no way Dawn was going to miss the biggest day on the school calendar.

Good to hear from you, Dawn. Often mean to ring you, but never seem to get around to it these days. Take care and very best wishes from both Max and myself.

NORMA LUNN, Dubbo, widow of Ern 2/2, with both a phone call and letter during the last week – and a photo. Norma was celebrating her 84th birthday at West Dubbo Bowling Club, and you certainly "brushed up well", Happy Birthday.

She has been able to go to a couple of weddings this year, with assistance in driving, one at Wagga and the other in the Hunter Valley. Good to hear, Norma, and will pass on your good wishes to Marj Kerslake next time I am speaking to her. Love from both Max and myself and always good to hear from you.

MARGARET MUNRIGHT, Tea Gardens, daughter of late Jack Claypole 2/1, with a welcome donation to the News and the amount you sent was sufficient for several years – many thanks. Says she enjoys reading the News and has also checked out the website.

Margaret and her husband Terry are planning to be in Rocky Creek in North Queensland for the memorial service on the 12th August. She had read Ray Law's interesting article in the November issue of the News on last year's service and would like to join him if he was making the trip this year. I have been in touch with him Margaret, and he was hoping to make the trip, work permitting.

Her husband, Terry, is President of the local RSL Sub-Branch and always very pleased with the attendance at the Dawn Service and the march. Their grandson, Brock, aged nine, accompanies Terry in the march wearing his great-grandfather's medals with pride.

Best wishes to you both and hope you enjoy your visit up north – Max and I often wish we could go back again, a wonderful trip.

JACK PAUL 2/1, Camira Qld, with a short note enclosing his donation to the News. Apologises for lateness, but has had a few trips to hospital and still needs further treatment for a few more weeks. Hope all is going well, Jack, and many thanks for your sub. Take care and best wishes.

ERIKA PEILE, Caringbah, widow of Peter 2/1, with a note of thanks for the extra copies of the News containing reference to the rowing achievements of her grandchildren.

In regard to the misspelling of your name in the last issue, it was my fault (first time ever) and unfortunately cannot be rectified on the website. I shall take more care in future. My apologies.

Hope you were OK after your fall on the day I spoke to you – take care and our best wishes.

DOT PRIEST, Ballina, widow of Peter 2/1, with a cutting from the local Ballina paper on Ron Cross 2/1 Pioneers. Many thanks, Dot, and as you can see, we have printed some of the article in the Mail Bag. He certainly looks well – and so do his biscuits.

Good to hear from you as we have not had much news from your part of the world for some time. Hope you have enjoyed your visit from Pam and Kevin and are keeping well. Love from both of us.

GEOFF SMITH, Bateau Bay, son of late "Mick" Smith 2/2, with a note to say his mother is now in a nursing home and would we remove her name from our mailing list. He will use our website as a means of keeping in touch in future. Many thanks for your note, Geoff, and hope your mum continues to keep well.

ROBERT STUBBS, Dongara WA, with a welcome donation to the News and apologies for not being able to be in Sydney to share ANZAC Day with his uncle Noel Schomberg 2/1. Now being an Anglican minister being based in WA he is asked to take part in the Dawn Service and other services in Dongara.

Robert hopes they had a great day and said he had enjoyed spending time with Noel. Many thanks for your donation to funds.

KAY SCHULZ, Georges Hall, daughter of the late Bill Tasker 2/1, left on 1st July for a trip to the States with her husband Bernard and expects to be away to the middle of August. Hope you had a great trip, Kay, and away from business worries for a well-earned holiday. Best wishes from Max and myself and hope to hear from you when you return home.

DOUG WATERS 2/1, West Croydon, SA, with a letter from Maureen, on Doug's behalf with photos of the Pioneers marching in Adelaide on ANZAC Day. Doug was the only Pioneer veteran in the march as he and Bill Thiele 2/1 of Port Hughes are the only two Pioneers (whom we know about) left in South Australia.

Their son David pushed Doug in a wheelchair as Doug is no longer mobile. The Pioneers were accompanied by three next of kin, believe they were representing the Olson and Everett families. The Olson family carried the banner, representing all four Pioneer Battalions.

Thank you for your letter Maureen – Doug looks well from his photo and enjoying his day. Best wishes from Max and myself – take care.

RON WEBSTER 2/1, with a welcome letter and a donation to the News. Our thanks, Ron, and good to hear you are coping with your hearing loss. Max's is not the best either, making phone calls difficult, and his eyesight is bad but can get about the yard. Can no longer go out on his own, but nothing wrong with the memory.

I take him to the RATS meeting at Five Dock most months, their numbers sadly depleted. Ernie Walker and Max are the only Pioneers able to attend the meetings now that Roy Jardine has passed away.

BELINDA WILLMORE, Bellevue Hill, widow of Ian Willmore 2/2, with a thank you letter to the Association and a generous donation to the News. Many thanks.

Belinda has recently read the letters Ian had written to his mother during the war years – they had been in storage for many years – and says she was full of admiration for what those young men did for their country in those war years. Ian was only 17 years and 10 months when he joined up and it was April 1946 before he was discharged.

We shall keep your name on our mailing list, Belinda, until such time as you no longer wish to receive it in the mail. Our best wishes are passed on to you from the Association.

- That's all the Mail Bag for this issue and our thanks to all those members who keep in touch and to those who send donations to keep the Association afloat. All very much appreciated.

52 YEARS OF SERVICE

Aub Brasier has been the Association bugler for the past 52 years, playing at the Wreath Laying ceremony since 24th April, 1960. He has only missed one service since that time while working down on the Snowy.

The Association held the first Wreath Laying service on 24th April, 1958 and if successful the committee of Fred Callaway, Jack Westwood, Bob McGregor, Vic Whiteley, Jim Field, Harry Mostyn, Charlie Vickers, Harry Montague and Max Herron (the only surviving member) planned to make it a yearly event. In earlier years it was always held on ANZAC Eve, until age made the earlier time more suitable. Aub has always given a wonderful rendition of Last Post and Reveille each year and will be sadly missed.

In planning his retirement he personally visited Darcy Henderson in Springwood to practice the calls with him and show him the procedure for the service. Darcy is the grandson of Kay Burton and a Year 9 student of Winmalee High School where he plays in their band and has played trumpet with Sydney West Concert Band, Pulse Orchestra and has been to China with the School Spectacular.

Also has marched with the Millenium Band as a trumpeter on ANZAC Day.

Consequently, Aub and Darcy combined to play the calls at this year's service and were very well received.

The Executive would like to express their thanks to Aub for his many years of wonderful service to the Association and his handing over the Wreath Laying service to Darcy. It was a very fine gesture and very much appreciated.

VALE – BRIGADIER JOHN GILCHRIST, E.D.

John Gilchrist, Patron of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalion Association passed away at the War Veteran's Village at Narrabeen on 25th April, 2012, aged 96 years.

A Memorial Service was held in the Chapel of the Village on Friday, 11th May, with an attendance of 150 people. The service was conducted by Rev. Bob Durbin with John's sons John and James and son-in-law Darcy Pethers giving an excellent tribute of their part in John's life, followed by a reading from the Bible by his daughter Jane Pethers.

The Reverend spoke of his association with John over many years at the Village and then called on David Herron, son of Max Herron Secretary of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalions Association to read the Eulogy, as follows:

John enlisted in the 2nd AIF in June 1940 and was posted to the newly formed 2/1st Pioneer Battalion at Ingleburn. Further training was carried out at Greta and Dubbo military camps and while at Dubbo John was selected to attend an Officers Training School at Narellan. Upon the successful completion of the course he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

After final leave, John travelled with the unit to Sydney and boarded the Dutch ship Johan-de-Witt on 30th September 1940 for the Middle East.

From Palestine the unit moved to Egypt and the Western Desert in Libya and fought in the campaigns up to Benghazi. It was at this stage that the German Field Marshal Rommel with his Africa Corps and Panzer Division forced the Australians back to the fortress of Tobruk and the Siege which lasted seven months from April 1941.

After being relieved in late September 1941 from the Tobruk garrison, the unit moved back to Palestine until orders were received for the Battalion to be returned to Australia on the U.S.S. "Westpoint". John had been placed in charge of the transport and heavy baggage and returned on another ship which took two months to reach Australia.

Upon returning from leave the unit moved to Queensland and carried out engineering tasks around Woodford and Kilcoy areas before once again boarding ship for New Guinea and service on the Kokoda Track and the battle for Imita Ridge.

While on the Track, John was placed in charge of 5 Platoon whose task it was to haul a large and heavy 25 pounder artillery gun up the mountain to Imita Ridge. When the gun was assembled they fired on the Japanese dispositions along the Track – this came as a surprise to the Japanese as they retreated along the Track.

It was at this time that John was promoted to the rank of Captain in November 1942.

September 1943 saw the Pioneers back in Australia into camp on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland before embarking on their final campaign in Borneo.

On returning to Australia from New Guinea John was transferred to the Royal Australian Engineers and, at a later stage, was promoted to the rank of Brigadier and awarded the E.D. (Efficiency Decoration) for his dedicated service as an Officer.

After the war, the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Battalion Association was formed and in 1961 John became a member of the Committee and was the leader of the Anzac Day march, as well as attending the Anzac Day dinner. In 1988 he was elected as Patron, a position he still held until his passing on Anzac Day 2012.

At the reunion he would always be called upon to deliver an address and spoke of the importance of keeping the Anzac spirit alive. This year he sent along an address for the Chairman to read to the gathering.

We thank God for the life of John – a true friend, a fine officer and a perfect gentleman and we extend our sincere sympathy to his family in their sad loss.

He will be sadly missed by his fellow Pioneers.

INVITATION TO REFRESHMENTS

Upon completion of the service, the Reverend invited all to proceed to the Pompey Elliot Lounge for refreshments. This was followed by a movie of John Gilchrist and his team hauling a 25 pounder gun up the mountain to Imita Ridge. Although it was a silent film it was expertly narrated by a granddaughter who could lip read the soldiers in the film.

Laurie Kelly 2/1 who was present at the showing was able to recognise many of the Pioneers working on the Gun as he was a member of John Gilchrist's team.

The following Pioneers were present at the service – Laurie Kelly and Max Herron and family members Peg, David and Lynn Herron and Marj Kerslake, widow of Jack 2/1.

LAST POST

JOYCE WALKER, Gilead, widow of George 2/1, passed away on 9th July, 2012, in a nursing home at Kilbride Village, aged 88 years. She had been in the nursing home for several months before her passing.

Her funeral service was held at the Forest Lawn Crematorium at Leppington on Thursday, 14th July 2012, and was attended by many relatives and friends. Pioneer friends attending were Olive Finlay and family – Geoff and Lyn Finlay, and Jan and Keith Bannon.

Not long before her death Joyce had a visit from England of her grand-daughter Danielle, who had been living and working overseas for many years. A lovely surprise.

Over many years, Joyce and her late husband George had been active members of the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn Association and attended their country reunions and various activities associated with the 2/1 Pioneers.

Secretary Max Herron had met Joyce during a spell in a private hospital in Hurstville in 1969 and, when George came to visit Joyce, found that they both had served in the 2/1st Pioneers during the war. George later became a member of the Committee until his passing in July 2003.

The sympathy of the Association has been passed on to the family – Susan, Judith, David and Brian in their sad loss.

We have lost a good friend of over 40 years and she will be lovingly remembered.

NOEL GRANT 2/1, of Seaholme, Vic, passed away peacefully on 28th March, 2012, aged 86, with Jean his loving wife of 67 years by his side.

Noel served with the 2/1 Pioneers in New Guinea and Balikpapan and for the last twelve years had come from Victoria to carry the 2/1 banner at the Wreath Laying ceremony on ANZAC Eve and, on ANZAC Day, had assisted Don Crawford in collecting fees for the Association before the start of the march.

Noel was a loving father to Margaret and Don, father-in-law of Frank Fleming and Ann Grant, and beloved grandfather of nine and adored great-grandfather of ten – all of whom have over the years been to Sydney for ANZAC Day to celebrate "Pop's" life.

Margaret, Don and their families would like to

express thanks to the 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneers for many years of friendship and stories of the past and a special thank you to Max and Peg Herron for their never ending support and dedication.

Our thoughts and prayers have been with you – Noel will be sadly missed by his Pioneer friends.

SAM LEWIS 2/1, Forster, passed away in hospital on 11th April, 2012, aged 90 years. Sam was a long time member of the Association, serving in the Middle East, New Guinea and Balikpapan in Borneo with the unit.

His funeral was held at the Uniting Church Chapel in Tuncurry on 16th April, 2012, conducted by Pastor Wendy Ballard. There were over 80 people in attendance including Sam's wife Margaret and her sister Kay, son Gary and his wife Robyn and children Kate and Christopher, Kate's husband Charlie and Sam's two surviving sisters Valma 92 and Betty 87.

The Forster-Tuncurry RSL conducted the RSL service, including Sam's war record and the Last Post.

Son Gary kindly sent on the notes of the service sheet and he said Sam was still playing competition snooker. His snooker mates from Forster Memorial Club were present and were going to name a snooker trophy after his father.

Many thanks Gary for your notes on your Dad's passing and our sincere sympathy has been conveyed to your mother from the Association – he will be sadly missed by his 2/1st mates.

NEVILLE WOODHAM 2/1, of Labrador, Qld., passed away on 23rd June, 2012, aged 92 years. Nev was an original member of the 2/1sts and served with the unit in Tobruk, New Guinea, Morotai and Balikpapan.

For many years before moving to Queensland he was a member of the 2/1 Pioneer Battalion Association Committee and attended most of their meetings and an occasional Pioneer paper wrapping when he and his taxi were in our Beverly Hills area.

He received an Australia Day Achievement Award in 2006, sponsored by the National Australia Day Committee and awarded through the RSL. He was a tireless and willing worker for the Redlands Sub-Branch over many years, serving as Sub-Branch secretary, a founding member of the Rats of Tobruk Assn. in Queensland and secretary for 15 years from 1991-2006. He was also a Legatee, the

secretary of Joint Venture, a member of Cleveland Bowls Club for 25 years and secretary for several years. A life devoted to the service of his fellow men.

A memorial service was held at Cleveland RSL Club on 12th July and well attended by family and members of the various organisations with whom he had been involved over the years.

Our very sincere sympathy has been extended to Betty and her family in their sad loss and we thank John Hayden for passing on the news of Nev's passing.

ROSS DAWSON 2/2 of Bayview passed away on 9th July, 2012, after several months of the year in and out of hospital with a cancer related problem, aged 88 years.

He was a member of the 2/2 Pioneer Bn. and was stationed at Trinity Beach in North Queensland as a swimming instructor before the unit sailed for Morotai, a vast American air base. From here the 2/2nds moved to Tarakan and it was here that Ross celebrated his 21st birthday – with a cake sent by his mother, no plates, no champagne, no one sang, no knives – but with their bayonets the 10 mates devoured the cake and had a party.

From Tarakan the 2/2nds moved to Balikpapan and it was from here that Ross obtained a compassionate discharge because his mother, living on her own, was having troubles. He flew home in the BLISTER of the plane in dirty shorts and shirt, half a towel and boots without sox – the plane was leaving and he had to leave as he was.

Ross had wished for a private funeral. Everything had to be HAPPY. Twelve immediate family members met at Anne Wilson Parlours at Mona Vale and a get together of family and old friends was held at a coffee cafe in Bayview where Ross and Sue had a coffee each day. It was a lovely sunny day and about 30 or 40 friends, including Clive Maddrell's two sons, joined the group.

Ross's youngest son Phillip and two of his sons (a musical family) played quite a few of Ross's favourite songs as a last farewell to finish off Ross's "Happy Day". A great loss to the family, but they realise he is no longer in pain.

Many thanks for your notes, Sue, and the Association's sympathy is extended to Sue, John, Phillip and Greig on your sad loss.

2/1-2/2 PIONEER BATTALIONS ASSOCIATION GENERAL WELFARE ACCOUNT 80-105-103

Statement of Income and Expenditure for Year Ended 17/2/12

EXPENDITURE

Pioneer News	– Printing	1,905.00
	– Postage	480.78
		<u>2,385.78</u>
M. Herron – Petty Cash		300.00
M. Herron – Telephone Rental		78.08
Aub Brasier – Bugler ANZAC Day		50.00
Association Paid towards ANZAC Day Lunch		100.00
Association Paid Taxi Fare for 7 Veterans		58.00
from End of March to Occidental Hotel		
Donation to Kokoda Track Walkway		100.00
Donation to Rocky Creek Memorial Walkway		100.00
		<u>\$3,171.86</u>

INCOME

Donations	3,002.00
Bank Interest	40.75

CASH BANK BALANCE

Cash at Bank 4-2-11	\$8,725.17
Add Donations	3,042.75
	<u>\$11,767.92</u>
Less Expenditure	3,171.86
	<u>\$8,596.06</u>
	\$129.11

EXCESS EXPENDITURE over Donations

D. Crawford
Hon. Treasurer

PIONEER NEWS

Phone 9759 5491

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

Per Annum: \$5

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

Treasurer: DON CRAWFORD

Editors: MAX & PEG HERRON O.A.M's

Vol. 58 No. 3

NOVEMBER 2012

VP DAY – KOKODA TRACK WALKWAY

The 67th Anniversary of VP Day at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway at Concord was held on 15th August and a huge crowd gathered to pay their respects to all those servicemen and women who volunteered to serve their country in our armed forces and the many who paid the Supreme Sacrifice in all theatres of war. The service was conducted by Father Graeme Malone SSS, Hon. Chaplain of Concord Hospital and Reverend Paul Weaver Anglican Chaplain of Concord Hospital. Mr John Gatfield was Master of Ceremonies.

After the arrival of the Official Party and the mounting of the Catafalque Party, the Prologue was given by Angelo Tsirekas, Mayor of Canada Bay.

The welcome to guests was given by Mr John Haines AM, who then called on Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales, to address the gathering.

ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR

The Governor began her address by recounting that on 15th August 1945, when, at last, peace was restored to a war weary nation, a sense of relief quickly spread throughout Australia, to its cities and remote towns. However, the celebrations were also accompanied by a sense of great sadness.

The war had been a time of exceptional sadness and cruelty, and in the suffering and memory of the survivors a unique chapter in Australia's history had been enshrined. Foremost among people's thoughts were the POW's who had been subjected to years of brutality, starvation and disease.

Turning to the dark days of 1942, when Australia faced the prospect of invasion, the Governor noted that a number of beheadings of Australian and New Guinea civilians, including missionaries, were conducted by Japanese forces recently landed

on Buna and Gona beaches on the Northern New Guinea coast.

The Governor paid special tribute to the young men of the militia battalions, many just out of school, who fought a monumental rearguard action along the Kokoda Track until reinforcements arrived. Together with their AIF comrades they fought in a nightmare world of heat, disease, slime and mountains. Their exposure to severe tropical diseases, including malaria, was considerable, but in the end they pushed the Japanese invasion force back to where it first landed.

The Governor concluded her address with a quote by noted Australian war historian A. K. McDougall, "All that is best in the Australian character surfaces in commissions of extreme adversity."

Following the Governor's speech, the Reflection was excellent footage from National Film and Sound Archive – War in Pacific, and brought back vivid memories of wartime news at theatres around the country – very well received by the older members of the attending visitors.

This was followed by the Wreath Laying Ceremony conducted by John Gatfield and, with the screen, the attending public were able to view the Kokoda Track Walkway Centrepiece and the wreaths being laid.

The Ode to the Fallen was given by Mr Don Rowe, President of the NSW Branch of the RSL, followed by Last Post and Reveille.

At the conclusion of the ceremony white doves of peace were released by veterans. Our thanks to Alice Kang, Honorary Secretary and the Walkway Committee for the organisation of the service and the afternoon tea that followed.

PIONEERS IN ATTENDANCE

Pioneers who attended were Don and Val Crawford, Marj Kerslake and daughter Margaret Stolp and Max and Peg Herron.

were shuttled through the interesting city of Port Moresby to the airport where we boarded small charter planes that took us to the Kokoda airstrip and commencement of our trek. We had everything crossed in hope of good flying weather and our wishes were answered as our short flight navigated over what was to be our path back to Port Moresby, by foot. The nerves increased in line with our altitude in the plane. Our descent into Kokoda was sudden as the clouds opened and our pilot took this advantage to dip our plane through the gap and we landed, not too softly, on the grass airstrip.

Once we were safely on the ground at Kokoda we were introduced to our porters and other local members of the team who would ensure that we were safe throughout our trek and made it to our final destination. These men were direct descendants of the famous fuzzy wuzzys and from their conduct throughout the trek, their caring nature helping across precarious creek crossings, down slippery muddy slopes and putting our own wellbeing in front of theirs, it was easy to see how much we owe their ancestors for helping ours. Such a wonderful bunch of people.

Our first day of trekking was relatively easy, obviously to help us acclimatise to the heat, humidity and help settle the butterflies in my stomach. We walked to the Kokoda plateau and conducted our own ceremony to honour those who had been there exactly 70 years before us and then made our way to our first campsite in the Hoi village.

We would spend the next eight days making our way through the many famous villages and sites including Deniki, Isurava, Abuari, through Templeton's Crossing and Eora Creek, onto Lake Myola, Kagi, Efogi, Mission Ridge, Brigade Hill, Menari, Nauro, Ioribaiwa, over Imita Ridge and finally push through the Goldie River and up to Owers Corner. It was very difficult to imagine the conditions endured by the diggers as we walked through the lush jungles, climbed to the top of mountain peaks and had a view for many miles across the Owen Stanley range in what appeared to be a very peaceful environment. Charlie and our porters conducted a very moving dawn service for our group at the Isurava memorial site. There was not a dry eye among us. And the stark reality of war hit home as we passed through the memorial at Brigade Hill where the graves of unknown soldiers were marked simply with a stick in the ground and poppy on top. We all had our moments on the track but team spirit prevailed and every trekker made it safely to the end of our journey. On top of our own individual motivations to complete the trek, the pertinent words inscribed at the Isurava memorial provided further encouragement – courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice. For me the biggest highlight was to make it to Imita Ridge and take in the surroundings where the 2/1 Pioneers were stationed. Reaching this point was also a celebrated achievement of the group but we knew that we were on the homeward stretch from that point.

Continued foot col. 1 page 2

DESCENDANT WALKS N.G. KOKODA TRACK

By Karen McWilliam, grand-daughter of the late Steve Clarke, 2/1

Early in June this year my partner, Nick Miller, and I signed ourselves up for a trek of the Kokoda Track commencing on 29th July, the 70th anniversary of the battle at Kokoda village. Our motivations were to challenge ourselves physically and mentally, learn more about Australia's war history in this region and pay our respects to the Diggers who fought for our freedom 70 years ago. Personally, this trip was a huge significance as my grandfather, Stephen Clarke, was a member of the 2/1 Pioneers who fought in PNG.

We really didn't know what to expect or what we would experience when we first made the decision to retrace the Diggers' footsteps over mountain ridges, along jungle paths and goat tracks but we did know that we would be a lot better equipped than those that first made this journey and it was our decision to do it. Our training regime commenced immediately and

along with getting regular exercise our training took us to some amazing walking trails around Sydney, the Hunter Valley, and Cairns. It was an unexpected surprise and pleasure as we would never have seen these areas if it wasn't for the upcoming Kokoda adventure. In the four weeks before our departure to PNG, I was trying to walk an average of 10 kilometres a day.

We hoped we were in good hands by trekking the track with the Adventure Kokoda tour company. Our trek leader, also the founder of the company, was Mr Charlie Lynn, parliamentary secretary for Veterans Affairs in NSW. This was his 64th trek of the Kokoda track. He was a wealth of knowledge about everything to do with the track and the PNG campaign from 70 years ago. Due to his extensive interest in the area we also went "off track" to some very important battle sites.

Early on Sunday 29th July, our group of 33 trekkers gathered before dawn for our final cooked breakfast for the next eight days. We

MAIL BAG

By PEG HERRON

• Once again, the last Mail Bag for the year and, as usual, not so many letters. The winter months seem to slow down our writers – perhaps too cold to be sitting down writing letters. However, our thanks to all those who put pen to paper and sent along news and donations to the News.

PHIL BARNETT 2/2, Alstonville, with a welcome phone call from his wife Doreen to say Phil was doing well in the care department where he lives at Alstonville and she was coping at home, but fairly crippled with rheumatics. Do hope the warmer weather has improved your aches and pains, Doreen, and our best wishes to you both for the coming year.

GORDON CHRYSTALL 2/1, Larras Lee, per pen of good wife Eunice, a welcome letter enclosing a cheque for the News, many thanks, and lots of news from their part of the country.

They have had a pretty rough year healthwise, mostly with Gordon in and out of hospital and then health problems also with Eunice.

Things on the farm are getting worrying as they have had no decent rain for a long time and they fear they are heading into another drought.

Son Ralph has been doing a wonderful job keeping an eye on them and they are very grateful. He has become a dad since Eunice wrote last and they are expecting again next month.

Ralph has been building an airstrip on a property close by, started about 12 years ago, and nearly finished. He has a particular interest in DC3 aircraft and has about six parked at the airstrip. When finished, will be fully operational and will be mainly used by fire brigades, SES, power and other services.

Our best wishes to Gordon and yourself and hope you have both improved healthwise since you wrote. Take care and fond wishes.

BOB COLE, Toronto, son-in-law of late Jack Tooker 2/1, with a welcome letter from he and his wife Ainsley, enclosing a welcome cheque for the News – many thanks.

Track Walk from page 1

Rather than just do this walk for ourselves we also decided to align our endeavour with fundraising efforts for cancer research. It was a moving trip where we remembered and paid our respect to our forefathers who fought for our freedom and all that we have today. At the same time though, we reflected on the battles of modern day life with the silent killer of cancer and how far reaching its effects are. Our friends and family showed great support for our cause and helped us to raise over \$4,100 towards the Brain Cancer Action Group.

It was an absolutely incredible experience which I will cherish for the rest of my life. I just wish that my grandfather were still around today so that I could talk to him about it. I encourage those who took part in any war campaign for Australia, or were told about it, to talk to your children, grandchildren or great grandchildren about the experience as it is so important for the current and future generations to learn about what happened and carry on the history.

• On Kokoda Day, 3rd November at Kokoda Track Walkway, our Pioneer members Max and Peg Herron, Don and Val Crawford, Marj Kerslake and daughter Margaret Stolp were very happy to meet Karen and Nick for a chat.

Jack's widow, Kathleen at 95 is now quite frail and her mobility is very restricted due to hip problems which cannot be operated on due to age. Our love and best wishes to you, Kath, and take care.

Many thanks for your kind words on the News, Bob, and Max is glad of any assistance. His eyes are deteriorating and is grateful for any help on ANZAC Day by the younger sons. The RSL, of course, have the final say on march procedure, but our Treasurer Don Crawford attends the meetings for Max and keeps a close eye on their rulings.

Kindest regards to you both and hope you have a healthy and happy Festive Season.

RON COYTE 2/1, Wentworthville, with a welcome note and cheque for the News – many thanks. Sorry to hear you have been in hospital with a stroke, Ron, and do hope you have had some improvement since you wrote in September. Trust your good wife too is still able to walk a little and able to move about the house.

Ron says his daughters are a great help to him and his wife in jobs around the house and with Wesley Mission's help they are managing. Ron has just turned 91 and can still do a little gardening and some handy jobs around the home.

We both send you our best wishes and hope the New Year brings better health to you and your good wife. Take care.

KEN FRASER 2/2, Treasurer of the 2/2 Pioneer Btn Assn. in Victoria, with a welcome letter with his thanks for our newsletter and some kind words of praise for our efforts in its production. Thanks, Ken, it is good to hear our efforts are appreciated.

Our best wishes passed on to you and all those who, like ourselves, are endeavouring to keep our associations alive and many thanks for your donation to funds.

OLIVE FINLAY, Mt Pritchard, widow of Gordon 2/1, has just returned home after nine weeks in Bankstown and Fairfield Hospitals with renal failure and slowly recovering. She had a lot of family help on returning home, but spends weekly visits to doctors for injections.

Take care, Olive, and hope by the time the News reaches you that you are feeling much better. Love from both of us.

JIM GELCH, Moama, son of late Alf 2/1, with a welcome note and a donation to the News, many thanks. Your kind words on the work Max and I do for the Association were very much appreciated and we hope, in time, we may be able to find others to keep the "flag flying".

Jim and his brother Mathew have decided to make the journey to Sydney for ANZAC Day 2013 – their first – and he looks forward to meeting up once again with Max and fellow Pioneers. Sadly, Jim, not too many these days.

Kindest regards and hope you can make the trip to Sydney next year.

ANN HEALEY, Semaphore SA, daughter of late Jim Hall 2/1, Kyogle, with a welcome letter on her return to her home after a visit to Sydney for ANZAC Day. She has been on the go since then and had only just returned to SA when she wrote in early September.

Many thanks also Ann for your welcome donation to funds and so glad you were able to join us here in Sydney for the Wreath Laying and lunch on ANZAC Day and catching up with some Kyogle "girls" at the reunion.

We both send you our love and hope we may meet up again in the not too distant future. Take care, and our best wishes for the New Year.

JACK HEARN 2/2, Howlong, per good wife Audrey, with a welcome note and donation to

the News – many thanks. Jack and Audrey were at Rocky Creek on the Tablelands in Queensland when the 2/1-2/1 Pioneer plaque was dedicated in 2002 and says he was pleased to meet up with Max and Les Tunks 2/1, otherwise would not have had a chance to meet.

We both send our best wishes to you and Audrey for the coming Festive Season and lots of good health in the coming year.

WENDY LINCOLN, Lennox Head, daughter of Albert Bettens 2/1, with the sad news of the passing of her mother Lillian on the 31st July, 2012, and that her father Albert is now residing at St Andrews Nursing Home in Ballina. Since Lil's passing her father's health has not been the best and Wendy visits him every day, including the rest of her family, and she will continue to care and respect this old soldier in the nursing home.

Albert and Lilly were regular visitors to our North Coast reunion and were often visited by Pioneers who happened to be passing through Lennox Head. Sadly, so many of our Pioneers in the area have now passed on – age just catching up.

Thank you, Wendy, for your letter and we have included your late mother's funeral details in Last Post.

RAY LAW, Yanderra, son of late Jim Law 2/1, with a short note with his article on Rocky Creek, to mention grandchild No. 3 arrived in February – a beautiful girl named Georgia Emily, the first girl to be born in the Law side of the family in 61 years. Congratulations to both Ray and Sue – there's no chance she will be spoilt, is there?

JULIE McWILLIAM, Griffith, daughter of the late Steve Clark 2/1, with a very welcome letter and a generous donation to the News. Many thanks, Julie, and glad to hear you are always pleased to receive it in the mail.

We are not committed to a specific amount to the Kokoda Walkway, but we do donate each year as there are always problems that need to be fixed as the years roll by.

We finally met up with Karen and Nick at the Track on Kokoda Day and she gave us a story of their "walk", very well written, and published in this issue. It was lovely to meet with them both and to have a chat. She gave me her address and I shall send them copies of the News when published.

Good to hear from you again and hope you and Doug are in good health and the weather in your area is "kind" to the grapes. Our love and best wishes.

MARGARET MUNRIGHT, Tea Gardens, daughter of the late Jack Claypole 2/1, with a welcome letter with news of the trip she and husband Terry made to the Atherton Tablelands for VP Day, inspired by Ray Law's account each year of his visit to Rocky Creek for the special service. They had a fabulous holiday covering near on 6,000km in six weeks, weather perfect, cool nights and no rain to mention.

They both enjoyed Ray's company, who made the trip again this year, and Margaret thanked the News for publishing Ray's wonderful reports on Rocky Creek in previous years. It inspired Terry and herself to venture north and pay their respects to the brave Pioneers.

It was truly a special day and Ray's presence made it just perfect.

They left Atherton on the 13th August passing through Herberton on the way to their next stop at Charters Towers. (Brought back memories for me, Margaret, as Max and I spent some time on the same trip when we went in 2001. My army brother was in camp there

before sailing off to Aitapei in New Guinea.)

Many thanks for the write-up of your trip, Margaret, and Max has made a special article of the Memorial Service at Rocky Creek on VP Day which you attended with Terry. Our best wishes to you both.

PETA PARRAVICINI, Condell Park, daughter of late Warwick Sands 2/1, with the news that her dad had passed away in September and she was over from WA for the funeral. Her father was 89 years of age and served with the 2/1 Pioneers in Australia and Borneo.

Peta spoke to both Max and myself by phone and was surprised to hear how the Association had been operating for so many years after the war. She sent a copy of her father's funeral service which Max has included in Last Post.

Her home address is in Menora in WA and she has asked us to contact her if family members are ever in her State.

Many thanks, Peta, and it was very nice to have a chat to you while in Sydney. Very best wishes from both of us.

BETTY O'CONNOR, West Ballina, widow of Neville 2/2, with the news that Ron Cross 2/1 passed away on the 9th September and the funeral was to be held on 20th October when his son Tim brings his family to Ballina for the service. Betty extended the Association's sympathy to his son when she met him at church.

Betty also was saddened by a death in her family a few months ago – her granddaughter Heather lost her partner Kane, aged 25, after being taken off life support after a cardiac arrest. Very hard to come to terms with such a loss.

Six golfers from Ballina including Betty, went on a nine-day coach trip to the Birdsville Races – camping in a tent. They were called the "Golden Oldies", some of them in their eighties, had a great time and many laughs – and cured Betty of tenting.

Betty closed her letter wishing all Pioneers a healthy Christmas and the very best of health in the New Year. Closes with a prayer for rain – the country is very dry.

DOT PRIEST, Ballina, widow of Peter 2/1, also wrote a short note to say she and Betty O'Connor attended the RSL Service for Ron Cross on Saturday 20th October in Ballina. It was good to see the Pioneers were able to attend the service and pay their respects. Many thanks.

Dot has had daughter Pam and husband Kevin there for a week when she wrote and Pam sends her thanks for the Pioneer News. Hope Bob Brown (son of 2/1 Pioneer late B. J. Brown) has improved in health since you wrote, and glad he finds the News of interest.

Thanks for your Christmas greetings, Dot, both to ourselves and our "Pioneer Family", and all the best for the New Year.

Take care and love from Max and myself.

FRANCES RHODES, Page ACT, daughter of late Jim Rhodes 2/1, with her usual long newsy letter and her family "doings" for the past year, also a welcome donation to funds. Many thanks, Fran.

Always good to hear from you and catching up with what you and Meg have been doing during the year. Certainly neither of you let the grass grow under your feet.

Thanks also for the family news of the Rhodes family – sorry to hear they are not in the best of health. Over the years Max and I met quite a few at your parent's house.

Glad to hear Meg has settled as a nurse for a horse vet and loving it. It makes such a difference if you like your job.

Fran had been on a cruise to Fiji, Vanuatu

and New Caledonia and loved it, much to her surprise. Also changed jobs in April. Says she's looking for a permanent move – away from the office bullies.

Will be in touch with you personally Fran before Christmas, but wish you and Meg all the best from the Pioneers also always pleased to hear from you. Take care and love to you both.

JACK ROBINSON 2/1, Slacks Creek Qld, with a welcome donation to the News – many thanks. At the time of receipt, Jack was in Greenslopes Hospital in Brisbane, and we have had no further news from the family. Do hope all is well and you are fully recovered from your illness.

Take care and best wishes.

NOEL SCHOMBERG 2/1, Parramatta, with a note to advise of both Vi Flynn's and his own health issues and to let us know Vi's new address.

Vi had a bone scan in July and she was found to have a hip fracture, and arthritis in her hip. She was operated on in August and now in rehabilitation at Shortland. She is recovering slowly. Noel had a fall at home in August and is healing well. Good to hear Noel and many thanks for news of Vi and her new address.

Take care and best wishes from both Max and myself.

BRYAN SHEPLEY of Leeton has kindly sent a donation to the News for the copies of the Pioneer News that have been sent over many, many years to his father, the late Ted Shepley.

Apparently, Ted's name comes on our roll through being Secretary of the Leeton RSL from 1954 until he passed away in 1986 and, at that time, we had several Pioneers on their roll. Also the fact that Ted, although not a Pioneer, came back with the 2/2 Pioneers from the Middle East and was caught up with them in Java.

Many thanks for your letter and donation, Bryan, and hope your mother is happy in the nursing home and continues with reasonably good health.

• That's the Mail Bag for this issue and on behalf of our Treasurer Don Crawford, Max and myself we wish all our Pioneer friends and loved ones lots of good health and happiness in the year ahead. To those who have lost loved ones during the year we send special thoughts. Very best wishes for Christmas and may the New Year bring Peace and Goodwill.

LAST POST

RON CROSS 2/1, Ballina, passed away on 9th September 2012, aged 91 years, and his funeral was held in the Ballina Presbyterian Church on Saturday, 20th October. Ron's son Tim teaches in Japan and he arranged the later funeral to enable him to bring his family to Ballina for the service.

Ron was an original member of the 2/1sts and served with them from Tobruk to the end of hostilities in Borneo.

In 2006, due to the untimely death of Ken Wilson, President of the North Coast Branch, a meeting was held and Ron was elected Chairman / Secretary / Treasurer with Betty O'Connor as assistant. They continued until 2009 when the committee was disbanded due to lack of members, and funds in hand transferred to the 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn Association.

We wish to thank Betty O'Connor and Dot Priest, both of Ballina, for sending notes on Ron's passing and both attended the service on 20th October and passed on the Association's sympathy to the family.

ERNEST (ERNIE) LEE 2/2, Glen Innes, passed away peacefully on 23rd May, 2012, aged 90 years. The funeral service was held in Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Glen Innes on

29th May, 2012, followed by interment in the Glen Innes Lawn Cemetery.

Ernie served with the 2/2 Pioneers in Borneo and was wounded by a grenade blast at Tarakan.

He was a loved husband (for almost 71 years) of Queenie, and a much loved father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother and brother-in-law.

We send our thanks to his eldest son, John, for passing on the sad news, and copies of the News will be posted in due course.

The sincere sympathy of the Association is extended to the family.

DOROTHY (DOT) CAMPBELL of McLean Village, Inverell, passed away on 25th July, 2012, after several years in a nursing home. Dot was the widow of the late Claude Campbell 2/1, who passed away several years ago.

We are indebted to son Greg for passing on the news of his mother's death and will delete her name, as requested, from our mailing list.

LILLIAN BETTENS, Lennox Head, loving wife of Alf Bettens 2/1 for 57 years passed away on 31st July, 2012. Her funeral service was conducted at Parkview Funeral Home in Ballina on 3rd August and was attended by 150 relatives and friends.

Lilly is survived by Albert, who is in St Andrews Nursing Home in Ballina, four daughters, thirteen grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren.

She and Alf were always visitors to our country reunions and have kept in touch with the Association over many, many years.

Our sincere thanks to her daughter Wendy Lincoln of Lennox Head for passing on the sad news. She will be sadly missed.

CLIVE MADDELL 2/2 of Allambie Heights passed away on 4th August, 2012, aged 87. He had been ill for a number of years, the last two years in Kokoda at Narrabeen War Vets, where he endured this time with courage and dignity.

A Memorial Service was held on Friday, 10th August, 2012, at St John the Evangelist, Dee Why, and was attended by more than 200 people who stayed to spend time with the family.

Clive attended Chatswood Primary School, Crows Nest Technical and Knox Grammar and after finishing school joined the army as soon as he was 18, in October 1943. He became a member of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, 7th Division, and after training with his Battalion sailed in March 1945. He saw service overseas at Tarakan, Balikpapan, Celebes and Rabaul and returned to Sydney in 1946 for discharge.

Clive married his wife Pamela in 1951 and made their home in Kogarah, where children Julia and Phillip were born, before moving to Allambie Heights where Tim was born in 1963.

As well as a full working life and his church commitments, Clive joined Legacy, serving 28 years as a Legatee. Loved his golf and fishing and attended the ANZAC march and the ANZAC luncheon with sons Phillip and Tim, until he became ill.

Our sincere sympathy has been passed on to Pam and the family in their sad loss.

WARWICK SANDS 2/1, Condell Park, passed away on 5th September, 2012, aged 89 years, and we are indebted to his daughter Peta Parravicini of Menora, WA, for passing on the sad news.

Warwick joined the AIF in January 1942 at 19 years of age and served until January 1946. He served with an Anti-Aircraft Battery and the 2/1st Pioneer Bn in Australia and Borneo. In Borneo, Warwick was conductor of the 2/10 Infantry Battalion Band.

On return to Australia he married Dorothy Aley in August 1947 at Revesby – Peta was

born in 1952 and her sister Kathy in 1955. A few years in Perth followed before they returned to Sydney and many happy days of family life took over.

Warwick's life long love was brass bands and teaching children music which gave him great pleasure. He founded and conducted Yagoona Boys Band in 1961 and devoted many years to their competitions. His final chapter in life was with Chester Hill Public School Brass Band from 1987 to 2007, retiring at 84 years of age.

To Peta and her family we extend our sincere sympathy and thanks for passing on the sad news.

JEAN GRANT of Seaholme Vic, widow of Noel 2/1, passed away suddenly on 16th November 2012 just as the News was going to press. Our deepest sympathy is extended to her family. Details next issue.

• Reported in "Mufti", Vic, by Eric Causer – NX137453 **W.G. JOHNSON**

PIONEER WEBSITE NEWS

From the Website Secretary

Our new website, www.pioneerbattalion.com.au, has been up and running since April this year and we have been receiving feedback via email.

One request was of a very unusual nature. It came from Stefan Eberhard in Germany, whose father was taken prisoner in Tobruk in WWII.

Stefan was searching the internet for the whereabouts of Alan Alway, who became friends with his father whilst in hospital at Heidelberg, Victoria. His father, Fritz, and Alan were both repatriated to Australia with jaw wounds after an attack on a bunker on May 1st, 1941. (See full story on our website, in back issue, Vol. 48. No 1 April 2002).

Stefan had read the article by Bill Rudd "2/1sts as POWs in Switzerland", who in passing mentioned the story of Fritz and Alan. He emailed us asking if we could put him in contact with Alan or his family.

We researched on the internet and found that, sadly, Alan had passed away in February. As the cemetery was listed, we contacted them and asked they convey Stefan's request to the family.

This week we received a phone call from Chris, Alan's daughter, who is very excited at the opportunity to contact Stefan in Germany and discuss their fathers' exploits. Oddly as it turned out, Alan wasn't even a Pioneer!

In September, we had an email from Amanda Hart, seeking information on Padre Pitt-Owen. Her husband, Michael, was a student at the Blue Mountains Grammar School, where the Reverend was headmaster. On the occasion of her husband's 60th birthday, she planned to present him with information regarding the Reverend as he was a "guiding light" in her husband's life.

We contacted the Reverend's son and gave him Amanda's request.

This week we received an email from Tom Osborn, son of one of our late Patrons and author of "The Pioneers", Gordon Osborn. He is doing research on his father and came across our website. He also wrote he was "delighted to see that Max is still editing the Pioneer News (with Peg) and to pass onto Max his sincere thanks for everything he (and others) did when his father died, especially for seeing the book through to publication".

2/1 HISTORY WANTED

The daughter of the late Athol Roberts 2/1 of Mudgee would like a copy of the 2/1 history and would be willing to pay a reasonable price, if one is available. Contact the Secretary.

COUNCILLOR RAY LAW

In a moment of temporary insanity Ray agreed to requests from a number of people to nominate for a position on Wollondilly Shire Council at the last Local Government elections in September. He didn't rate his chances highly as he was up against a couple of teams consisting of members of one of the political parties with seemingly unlimited resources.

However, to everyone's amazement, Ray's included, he was elected and Ray is now wondering about his own sanity. It is bound to be an intense four years and he hopes he can do justice to the people who placed their trust in him. Says it will be steep learning for someone who always said they would never get involved in any sort of politics.

By a strange coincidence, Ray found that his election rival, Noel Lowry (who stood against him as East Ward candidate) was also the son of Reg Lowry a 2/1st Pioneer who served with Ray's father Jim during World War II, also a 2/1 Pioneer. Both fathers enlisted at the same time in 1940, served side by side as sergeants and finished their campaigns from Tobruk to Borneo. They would have known each other quite well.

Ray discovered the link when he noticed a picture of Noel's father in uniform on his campaign brochure, with the Pioneer colour patch, and phoned Noel when he discovered the link.

Our congratulations to you, Ray, on being elected. Well done.

VP DAY 2012 – ROCKY CREEK

By Ray Law, son of the late Jim Law 2/1

Every year as the time for VP Day approaches I promise myself to spend a few days to properly visit the Atherton Tablelands and explore some of it's great WWII historical sites. Every year I break that promise and finish up with a rush trip. This year was no exception.

Peg Herron had rung me some time earlier to ask if I intended to go again this year because Maureen Munright, the daughter of the late Jack Claypole 2/1 and her husband Terry had indicated that they would be making the trip and she thought I might like to catch up with them. Despite this forewarning that the time was approaching to make arrangements I still found myself having to be rescued at the last minute by Sue (nothing new there) in getting everything organised.

I arrived in Cairns much later than I would have liked on Saturday, the day before the Rocky Creek service so was late to drive up for the "meet and greet" with the ever hospitable locals which is always a feature of the trip. I'd also hoped to meet with Maureen and Terry to visit the Tunks but it just wasn't happening.

Sunday morning arrived clear and warm and after collecting the pre-ordered wreath from the motel staff, I headed off for Rocky Creek. Just out of Cairns, I stopped at a small shop and as I emerged from the car feeling the warmth of the bright sunshine took off my jacket and placed it on the back seat. I was therefore somewhat bemused by the shopkeeper who proceeded to tell me how cold it was and that the temperature had actually dropped to an unbelievable 10 degrees overnight! I feigned amazement as I didn't think he'd believe me if I told him that where I live (Southern Highlands of NSW) we'd had snow to within 20km of home just two days earlier.

I arrived at Rocky Creek mid-morning and rang Maureen and Terry who were staying in

Atherton. We arranged to meet at the Wall of Remembrance where they had organised a plaque for her dad to be installed. As I waited for them to arrive I spent some time visiting Bill Gamble's plaque and placed a poppy on behalf of the Pioneers.

Meeting Maureen and Terry for the first time was a unique experience because it was as if we were long lost friends. There was obviously a bond there between us which I can only put down to the link our fathers had in the Pioneers. I have always marvelled at the way in which my own dad had picked up his friendship with his old comrades who he had not seen for over forty years when he finally attended his first reunion after a serious accident in 1948. The immediate kinship between us as "Pioneer Children" was just as obvious to me and continues to be something special. I think I enjoyed this trip even more than the previous ones because I could share it with some new but very special friends.

As usual the service commenced with the sounding of an air raid siren followed by a low level fly over by two WWII fighters from nearby Mareeba Airfield. This is always spectacular and really sets the scene for the service. After the usual welcome and formalities Senator Jan McLucas brought the commemorative address. She reminded us of how vulnerable we as a nation were in those dark days of 1942. With the Japanese rapidly moving south and now having landed in New Guinea, Australia's main fighting force, the AIF, were largely stationed overseas. With Darwin and Northern Queensland now being bombed seemingly at will by the enemy, Australia had become increasingly isolated. It was up to a few inexperienced, poorly trained and ill-equipped members of the militia to stem the flow of the ever advancing Japanese. That they were able to hinder their advance to the extent that they did is a feat of arms that is amazing in itself. Their valiant efforts brought enough time to bring home the AIF and the slow costly process of pushing the Japanese back over the Owen Stanley was begun.

She went on to say the Rocky Creek Memorial Park performs a vital function as time moves on because we do not all have first-hand knowledge of those turbulent years and the park gives us the opportunity to think about and be reminded of the debt that we owe to you all.

At the conclusion of her address she acknowledged the Defence Force Personnel who are today still carrying on that tradition established by their forefathers in Afghanistan and other troublespots worldwide.

It was then time for the wreath laying and as always I was humbled by the opportunity to lay a wreath on your behalf but incredibly proud to be there as a son of a Pioneer.

As the service drew to a close it was time to reluctantly say goodbye to Maureen and Terry whose company I had enjoyed so much. I am very grateful that Peg put me in touch with them because it made the day that much more special.

With the crowd fast dissipating I lingered for a while at the granite plinth dedicated to the 2/1 and 2/2 Pioneers for a time of quiet reflection. There is such a presence at this place and I feel a real sense of my dad here that I do not get anywhere else. I always find it hard to leave but time, as we know, waits for no one and as I had an early flight back home the next morning, it was time to go.

Who knows, maybe next year, I will get that few extra days I've been talking about.