

MAILBAG—Continued

the Australian War Memorial found on the Honour Roll names from "D" Coy. 2/1 like Keith Jones, Ray Smithers and others.

Previous to his stay in Canberra Eric had a few days at Jenolan Caves, where he relaxed at the hotel. He said the meals were very good, the beer even better and, of course, the wine was the best of all. No wonder Eric was called "Bombo" in the Army days—looks as though he still lives up to it.

Daughter Alison could not go with them this time, as she starts her third year nursing at the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick and has just completed her three months' course at the Women's Royal Hospital, Paddington. We wish you every success, Alison.

Eric still works at McPhersons Ltd., and states he always has plenty to do.

Many thanks for your most interesting letter, Eric, and please give our regards to your wife and family.

MICK ROBERTS, of Leeton, was instructed by Phil Mahey to write and send a donation. Thanks, Mick and Phil, for the donation and your praise of our work at this end.

Mick sends regards to all his mates and in particular to Max Law, in South Australia.

Well, mates, that is the Mailbag for this issue. I am sorry that there is not more, but it's up to you blokes to make it better reading, as I've said in previous editions. I could name a score of chaps who could put a pen to paper and give some local news of their district. Still, we will see what happens in the next issue and see if we can get some marked improvements in the newspaper.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Ivor Garnon, Sitting Master of the Hunters Hill Lodge, extends an open invitation to any Masonic Brethren of the association to attend a Remembrance Service on the second Thursday in November, 9th November, 1967.

This Lodge is well known for the dignity and sincerity of this very impressive service and I do trust that the Pioneers will be well to the fore on this important occasion.

I will be grateful for your support if any Brother wishes to come along. Please write or ring me.

Ivor Garnon, NX19777,
Ex-2/1 Pnr. Bandsman.

116 High Street
Hunter's Hill. 89-4837.

VALE KEITH GARLAND

NX85076

It is with regret that we report the passing away of Keith Garland (2/1), of Balgowlah.

Keith died of a heart attack on the 4th September, and we extend our sincere sympathy to his wife, Norma, and children, Philip (24), Tony (21), Vicky (17), Kathy (16), Elizabeth (14) and John (11).

Philip is a Bombardier in an Artillery Unit at Holdsworthy, and is shortly to go to Vietnam. To you Philip, and your wife Rosemarie, we wish you the very best of health and happiness.

THE KOKODA TRAIL, 1942

This year the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fighting on the Kokoda Trail, a battle recognised as the most crucial in Australia's history, will take place. The following description was prepared by officers of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

The year 1942 saw the gravest threat to Australia's security in the history of this young nation. The victorious Japanese armies controlled the area within an arc which embraced the Western Pacific passed through the Solomons and New Guinea and south of the Indies to Burma. This arc pressed down almost upon Australia whose nearest friendly neighbours on either side, the United States and India, were now disadvantageously placed. Japanese triumph was at its height and it seemed that, at a time of their own choosing, they could take Papua—the sole remaining area held by our troops north of Australia. Port Moresby, the principal town and port of Papua appeared ripe for the picking.

The Owen Stanley Ranges campaign in the second half of 1942 was the third prong of a Japanese attack to gain possession of Port Moresby.

The enemy's first attempt a naval movement, had been frustrated in the Battle of the Coral Sea in May, 1942. An attack on Milne Bay in the following August also resulted in defeat—his first reverse of the war on land.

The third prong, a drive over the Owen Stanleys from Gona-Buna, came perilously close to success, reaching to within thirty air miles of Port Moresby.

On 21st July, 1942, Japanese troops began to land near Gona, a few miles from Buna on the northeast coast of Papua, and started to move inland at once. The role of this force was to test the possibilities of a track which began in this area, ran to the village of Kokoda and then across the Owen Stanley Range to Port Moresby. Kokoda itself was vital because of its position on the route and especially because it possessed the only airfield in the rugged mountain country. This track was little used and was considered by military authorities as impassable to any large-scale military movement and quite impassable in its main length to vehicles of any kind.

At the time of the Japanese landing at Gona the garrison at Port Moresby consisted mainly of two untried militia brigades of infantry. To oppose the Japanese advance over the beginning of the Kokoda Trail there was only the

Papuan Infantry Battalion (a native unit with a watching and reconnaissance task led by Australian officers and N.C.O.'s) and elements of the 39th C.M.F. Battalion. These few hundred men, known as Maroubra Force, were pitted again nearly 2,000 Japanese.

The first clash occurred near Awala, a few miles inland, on the 23rd July, when about 150 Australians, with some Papuan Infantry, found themselves engaged first against Japanese patrols, who rode bicycles, and later against about 600 well-armed and well-equipped infantry. After a brief fight the Australians fell back and, heavily outnumbered, began a fighting withdrawal across the Kumusi River at Wairope, through Gorari and Oivi to Kokoda. Here the enemy attacked in strength early on the 29th July and the Australians were forced out of the village. The enemy did not hold the position with all his strength and a counter-attack by the Australians drove him out. The triumph was brief, however, and by 10th August overwhelming pressure again forced the small garrison out of Kokoda.

Additional Japanese units were thrown into the fighting and on the 26th August, three enemy battalions attacked the worn-out Australians at Isurava and the withdrawal began again. Meanwhile the first A.I.F. brigades of the 6th and 7th Australian Divisions, which had returned from the Middle East earlier in the year, began to arrive in Papua. The first elements of the 21 Infantry Brigade A.I.F. arrived on the 13th August, 1942. These were the men of the 2/14th Battalion.

At this time the intentions of the Japanese were not exactly known. They had, as stated above, landed at Gona and pushed through the hills of Kokoda to determine the feasibility of the track for a large-scale movement to Port Moresby.

Favourable reports by the Japanese commander, Major-General Horii, based on the success of his advance at that stage, prompted General Hyakutake in Rabaul to issue orders for the overland attack on Port Moresby, the capture of which was planned by 21st September, 1942.

(Continued in next issue "News")

● CUT THIS OUT AND PUT IN YOUR POCKET AS A REMINDER

Place: BRITISH EX-SERVICES CLUB
Address: 5th FLOOR, 5 HAMILTON STREET, SYDNEY
Date: FRIDAY, 17th NOVEMBER, 1967
Admission: FREE — ONLY CHARGE IS FOR DRINKS
Membership: ALL 2/1 AND 2/2 PIONEERS AND FRIENDS
Reason: BI-ANNUAL REUNION
Time: 7.30 P.M.

THE KOKODA TRAIL, 1942

(Continued from November 1967, Pioneer News)

Brigadier A. W. Potts, the commander of the 21st Brigade, was ordered to recapture Kokoda with a view to facilitating further operations against Buna and Gona. On the 16th August, the 2/14th Battalion began the start across the track, where they soon ran into troubles. The precipitous nature of the track, the weight of the load that had to be carried and the ever-present mud exhausted the men. The greatest problem, however, was that of supply. Shortage of native carriers, the need to build up supplies and the unreliability of air droppings delayed the arrival in the actual battle area of his battalions.

On 26th August, the Japanese struck heavily at the Australians and they were steadily forced back—from Isurava to Alola, through Eora Creek, Templeton Crossing, Myola, Efogi, Menari, Nauro to Ioribaiwa Ridge, beyond which the Japanese could not be permitted to penetrate. The defence of Ioribaiwa Ridge therefore became the immediate problem and this difficult task was taken over from the exhausted remnants of the 21st Brigade on 14th September by fresh troops from Australia, the newly-arrived 25th Infantry Brigade under Brigadier K. W. Eather, augmented by the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and the 3rd Infantry Battalion C.M.F.

It was at Isurava that a member of the 2/14th Battalion, Private Bruce Steel Kingsbury, was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously—the first such decoration to be gained in territory administered by the Commonwealth. The citation covering the award stated that:

... the battalion to which Private Kingsbury belonged had been holding a position in the Isurava area for two days against continuous and fierce enemy attacks. On 29th August, 1942, the enemy attacked in such force that they succeeded in breaking through the Battalion's right flank, creating serious threats both to the rest of the Battalion and to its Headquarters. To avoid the situation becoming more desperate it was essential to regain immediately lost ground on the right flank. Private Kingsbury, who was one of the few survivors of a platoon which had been overrun and severely cut about by the enemy, immediately volunteered to join a different platoon which had been ordered to counter-attack. He rushed forward firing the Bren gun from his hip through terrific machine-gun fire and succeeded in clearing a path through the enemy. Continuing to sweep enemy positions with his fire and inflicting an extremely high number of casualties on them, Private Kingsbury was then seen to fall to the ground shot dead by the bullet from a sniper hiding in the wood. Private Kingsbury displayed a complete disregard for his own safety. His initiative and superb courage made possible the recapture of a

position which undoubtedly saved Battalion Headquarters, as well as causing heavy casualties amongst the enemy. His coolness, determination, and devotion to duty in the face of great odds was an inspiration to his comrades.

Although the Japanese had suffered severe battle casualties and sickness they were still a formidable and outnumbering force of about 5,000 fighting men. They began a vigorous probe of the Australian front and flanks and Brigadier Eather felt that if he continued to hold the Ioribaiwa position he would soon have his force fully committed to defensive tasks and would thus lose any freedom of movement to adopt the offensive. Consequently, he made a brave but wise decision on 16th September to draw back his line to Imita Ridge, the last readily defensible high ground in the foothills above Port Moresby.

For a period there was a comparative lull in the fighting as both sides consolidated their positions. The Australians, however, had a surprise in store for the enemy. Two 25-pounder guns of the 14th Field Regiment, dismantled and manhandled up the track from Port Moresby to Owers Corner, poured nearly seven hundred rounds into the Japanese barricades and weakened their defences. On the 25th September fighting patrols from the 2/25th Battalion penetrated enemy lines in the neighbourhood of the main track and on the 28th September our troops commenced their offensive.

The enemy had now inherited all the difficulties of an extended supply line that had previously been ours. Soon these factors were to assist in his downfall. Ordered to retreat to the coast the Japanese abandoned stores and equipment—even unburied dead—as they withdrew. There was ample evidence that they were starving, dropping with dysentery and dying from malnutrition. Our troops pressed on, regaining Nauro, Menari, Efogi, Myola and Kagi.

The 25th Brigade caught their rear-guards on the approaches to Templeton's

Crossing and, after hard fighting, handed over to Brigadier J. E. Lloyd's newly-arrived 16th Brigade (6th Australian Division) on 20th October. As the Japanese neared their base their food difficulties eased while our supply lines again lengthened. The nearer the Australians got to Kokoda the more stubborn became enemy resistance and it was now evident that the Japanese had brought fresh troops up from the coast.

The 16th Brigade skirted Kokoda along the east bank of Eora Creek until they were halted in front of strong enemy positions at Oivi on 5th November. Meanwhile, the 25th Brigade, back in the fighting, reoccupied Kokoda on 2nd November. On the next day supplies were dropping there and the work began of putting the airfield in order for aircraft landings so that, for the first time in the mountain campaign, the Australians would have an airfield as a supply point and for the evacuation of their wounded.

The enemy was providing stiff resistance at Oivi-Gorari and losses on both sides were heavy. On the 11th November the 16th and 25th Brigades closed their pincers and in one of the swiftest and fiercest actions fought in the New Guinea campaigns the Japanese broke and fled losing about 600 of their troops killed.

On the 12th November the 25th Brigade advanced towards Wairopi, where a wire-rope suspension bridge had previously crossed the swiftly-flowing Kumusi River; but Allied aircraft had recently destroyed this bridge completely. Many fleeing Japanese, including General Horii, were drowned there and when the first Australians arrived (on 13th November) they also faced a difficult crossing, so that it was not until the 16th that the main advance was resumed.

That day, with our troops advancing on Gona, marked the beginning of a new phase and the end of the Kokoda Trail fighting. The crossing of the mountains had been a remarkable feat of arms by both Japanese and Australians. At first the former were

25-pounder guns of the 14th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, being pulled through dense jungle in the vicinity of Uberi on the Kokoda Trail. Members of the regiment are being assisted by the 2/1st Australian Pioneer Battalion, September, 1942. (Photo: Australian War Museum.)



KOKODA TRAIL, 1942

superior in jungle warfare but ultimately the Australians learned to out-match the Japanese in bushcraft and so adapted their supply machinery to the use of aeroplanes and native carriers that they were able to meet these problems far more effectively than their enemy.

From the beginning to the end of the Battle of the Kokoda Trail the Japanese committed at least 6,000 men. Against them, though never more than one brigade at a time until the final clash at Oivi-Gorari, the Australians committed three experienced A.I.F. brigades, three militia battalions—the 39th, the 53rd and the 3rd—The Papuan Infantry Battalion and the 2/1 Pioneer Battalion. The Australian units were, however, never at strength, and at one stage the two brigades could not muster between them a complete battalion of effectives. The Australians lost 625 killed and approximately 1,055 wounded, but for every one of these casualties two to three were treated for illness, especially malaria in its various forms. "Tropical diseases, such as scrub typhus and malaria, were even more deadly than the Japanese", said General Sir Thomas Blamey, the Commander-in-Chief of the A.M.F. "Men fighting by day could not protect themselves from such insidious enemies. Often no fires could be lit to cook meals. Emergency rations, which were very light, had sometimes to be eaten dry. Australia owes a great deal to her sons who endured much and, through self-sacrifice, conquered."

The Kokoda Trail fighting was the most crucial land battle in Australia's history. It was, in every sense, a battle for Australia and during its painful process the people of Australia became aware as never before of their peril. Against a background of almost total mobilisation every citizen followed the fluctuations of the campaign with great

concentration, with apprehensiveness and with special admiration of the heroic efforts being made on their behalf by the forward troops. But as the invaders finally turned their backs on Port Moresby, Australia knew that its fighting men had again demonstrated their remarkable adaptability, tenacity and endurance against an enemy that had earlier seemed invincible. The victory proved to be the beginning of the end for the Japanese and never in the theatre were the Allies again forced to play the unpalatable role of defender. For the soldiers themselves, leaders and privates alike, the operations resulted in many well-learned lessons—especially those which revealed weaknesses in existing doctrines and tactics for conducting operations in such an environment. These same weaknesses were ultimately changed to strengths and led to the Australian becoming recognised as an expert in this difficult and ruthless art. Valuable knowledge, also, came in the battle of Man versus Nature, in the constant fight against disease, in the conservation of manpower and material and in the whole complicated area of logistical support for jungle fighting. But aside from these long-term effects the harsh events of the Owen Stanleys, and the victory there, provided a boost to morale that contributed immeasurable impetus to the relentless offensives yet to come.

WELFARE REPORT

Since our last Pioneer News, members visited in hospital have been Jack Westwood, Fred Loveliss, George Levy and Hugh Green. If there were others in hospital and I did not get to see them, then I apologise, for twice since our last news I have been laid up myself. But now that I am about again, I'll get to see you all as soon as possible.

JACK COLLIS, Welfare Officer.

OFFICE JARGON AND DEFINITIONS

It's In Process.

Absolutely beyond any power of human understanding, but the office boy might come up with something.

We Will Look Into Your Request.

By the time it has gone the full rounds of the establishment, we hope you will have completely forgotten about it, too.

Under Most Active Consideration.

The entire staff are looking everywhere for files on this particular subject. *Let's Get Together On This Subject.*

Come down to my office as I am sure you're as confused as I am.

Channels.

A complete blocked mess left by inter-office correspondence.

A Clarification.

To fill in the background with so many items that the foreground goes underground.

We Are Making A Survey.

Much more time is needed to think of an answer.

Give Us Your Views On This Important Thinking.

We have already decided the issue, but a hearing will be given you as long as it does not interfere with what our verdict is.

Will Advise You Later.

If we can work out what we are doing we will let you know.

To Note and Initial.

Let us spread the responsibility amongst the entire office staff.

The Subject Will Be Expedited.

To add further confusion to the already confounded commotion.

Return For Modifications.

This will be forwarded to you, in kit form, put it together if at all possible. Glue optional.

Unimpeachable Source.

The fellow who started the rumours in the first place.

To Negotiate.

To seek a meeting of masterminds without knocking together of heads.

HOSPITAL NOTIFICATION

We request next of kin of a member to notify Jack Collis, our Welfare Officer immediately a Pioneer enters hospital, or even before, if possible.

Contact by letter or phone Jack Collis, 22 Fisher Street, Auburn, N.S.W. Telephone 648-1509.

1968 ANZAC SMOKO

CASTLEREAGH HOTEL

Quarter Deck Lounge

Castlereagh Street, Sydney

THURSDAY, 25th APRIL, 1968

• FREE LUNCH

Commencing at 11.20 a.m.

1968 PIONEER PROGRAMME

APRIL 24: WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

APRIL 24: ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 25: ANZAC MARCH, AFTERWARDS RE-UNION 2/1-2/2 AT CASTLEREAGH HOTEL, 2/2 AT RANDWICK

MAY 24: COMMITTEE MEETING

JULY 26: PIONEER NEWS WRAPPING. COPY TO PRINTER JUNE 24

AUGUST 23: COMMITTEE MEETING

OCTOBER 25: COMMITTEE MEETING

NOVEMBER 4: PIONEER NEWS WRAPPING. COPY TO PRINTER OCTOBER 1

NOVEMBER 22: BI-ANNUAL SMOKO

"Pioneer News" is published in the months of April, July and November