

PIONEER NEWS

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Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 78 6658

THE 2/2nd AUST. PIONEER BATTALION

A series in three parts covering the Battalion from its re-formation in June 1942 to the 50th anniversary in 1992.

Part 1 — The move to Kapooka Camp

Part 2 — Training and other activities up to departure from Kapooka in September 1942.

Part 3 — Operations and activities of the Battalion after leaving Kapooka to war's end and activities of Battalion Associations up to the 50th anniversary of re-formation in June 1992.

Part 1 appears in this edition of *Pioneer News*. Parts 2 and 3 will appear in the two remaining issues to be published this year.

Part 1 — The MOVE TO KAPOOKA CAMP

The tragic end to the Allied campaign in Java in March 1942 saw the passing of members of the 2/2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion into captivity after heroic service and resistance to Japanese onslaughts.

The baggage and stores party arrived back in Australia after having travelled from the Middle East in slow moving ships, one of which had been at sea for 11 weeks. These ships contained transport, ammunition and other stores which would have been invaluable to the troops in Java. These ships had not been able to proceed to Java due to their slow speeds and the great speed of the advance of the Japanese forces.

Australian Army authorities decided that the Battalion would be disbanded and the troops transferred to other units in the Adelaide area.

Rumours began circulating of the Battalion being re-formed and late in May 1942, orders were issued for that to take place at Kapooka Camp, a few miles from Wagga Wagga, a city in southern New South Wales.

JUNE 1942, FIRST DRAFT

The first draft, from Victoria, consisting of five officers and 400 other ranks, which included a number of those who had returned after service in the Middle East, arrived at Wagga Wagga in late June, 1942.

The second draft followed in mid July and consisted of four officers and 308 other ranks from No. 1 Pioneer Training Battalion in Bathurst in New South Wales.

The Victorian contingent spent about two weeks at the Wagga Wagga Showground. Within days an Australian Rules football team was formed and in their first match easily accounted for a team of RAAF personnel from the Forest Hills base.

The first Church Parade was conducted by Arch-deacon West on June 28.

There was a need for experienced NCOs and while these were being trained and training programmes organised, the troops were sent on route marches and engaged in physical exercises during that period.

Those in the Bathurst contingent remember well that cold frosty morning in July 1942 when they arrived in Wagga Wagga. The troop train drew into the siding and orders were given to de-train. Thoughts as to what the future held were soon dispelled as the troops formed up and marched to the Showground, where a hot breakfast was served. After the meal, many congregated around the sawyers in the kitchen area trying to warm frozen feet and hands. Wagga Wagga seemed to be even colder than Bathurst.

With the arrival of the Bathurst contingent, the Battalion was close to full strength and concentration of the troops in Kapooka Camp began. The hills and gullies soon rang to the shouting of orders and sounds associated with building an army camp and settling in.

FIRST IN KAPOOKA CAMP

The 2/2nd Pioneers became the first Battalion to occupy Kapooka Camp. The re-formed Battalion contained a sprinkling of original 2/2nd officers and men who had seen action in Syria as well as officers and men of the 2/1st Pioneers who had served in the Western Desert and who were veterans of Tobruk. Also joining the Battalion were officers who had served with Pioneer Rifle Companies in the Northern Territory.

The troops were allotted to their respective companies, namely HQ, A, B, C and D, and then formed into platoons, then sections and finally tent occupants. Friendships formed during that period have lasted to the present day. Nicknames began to appear — Lofty, Shorty, Curley, Bluey, Softy, Granny, Rocky Ned, Stumblebum, Deserthead, Blockhead, Rags, Spag, Tanglefoot, Paddles, Hobbly, Darky, Snowy and so on — names that still can be heard today when old mates meet.

It did not take long for the men to appreciate being members of a famous battalion with a proud history of achievement in often the most difficult of situations. The 2/2nd Pioneers had served with distinction in the Syrian Campaign and in the short Java campaign. What the Java campaign contributed to the final Allied victory is incalculable. The enemy admitted to 500 casualties and was never convinced that such a small force could hold up his numerically superior army. The caution and delay imposed on the Japanese, who up to that time had enjoyed rapid and comparatively easy victories, may well have saved Australia from the horrors of invasion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion History (E. F. Aitken) — *Pioneer News* March 1982 — September 1982 — April 1990 — Bob Ginnane — Ray Harris — Russ Harrison — Allan McInnes — Bill Robertson.

CALL FOR STORIES

It would be appreciated if former members of the 2/2nd Pioneers would be prepared to supply anecdotes, stories, recollections, memories, poems and any items suitable for inclusion in Parts 2 and 3 of the series which commences in this issue of *Pioneer News*. Please forward all material to Russ Harrison, 39 Norfolk Road, Epping NSW 2121 (phone [02] 876 5880).

GOSFORD REUNION

Applications received to date number 130 and the Galaxy and Rambler Motels were fully booked out in January. However, additional bookings have been arranged at the Gosford Motor Inn, just up the highway from the RSL.

Deposit of \$30 is required for each room booking but it is necessary for catering purposes that ALL persons attending fill out and send in the application form below. Form also applies to persons arranging own accommodation. Cheques for bookings to be made out to P. HERRON, not Association, and posted with application form to Mrs. P. HERRON, 3 ENOGGERA RD., BEVERLY HILLS 2209. Phone (02) 759 5491.

GOSFORD REUNION — SEPT. 26 and 27, 1992

SURNAME CHRISTIAN NAME

LADIES NAME PHONE UNIT

ADDRESS

TICK — NIGHTS: FRI SAT SUN MON CAR TRAIN

TICK — REUNION DINNER PICNIC FAREWELL LUNCH DINNER

KAPOOKA CHAPEL APPEAL

Kapooka Army Camp at Wagga Wagga is the point of entry into the Australian Army for all male and female general enlistees.

Sadly, as Kapooka has grown, the state of the Chapels from which the padres work and in which many thousands, including 2/2nd Pioneer Bn in 1942, have worshipped has deteriorated to the extent that they are approaching the end of their useful life. They are, in fact, the last of the World War II buildings still in use in Kapooka.

A group of service personnel and Wagga business people have formed a committee to promote the construction of a new Chapel, dedicated to Australian soldiers who have died in the service of their country. Constructed at Kapooka, the home of the Australian soldier, the Chapel will provide a focus for the spiritual needs of all soldiers.

The Gallipoli spirit will be engendered when the Chapel dream is realised. A block of stone from the scene of the famous World War I battlefield will take a prominent place in the Chapel to signify the sacrifice that is part of soldiering and to preserve the Anzac legend. The rock was brought to Australia on HMAS "Tobruk" after the 75th Anniversary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli in April, 1990.

The foundation was completed in January, 1992, and work has commenced on the building. The Army will ensure that, wherever appropriate, the special skills of soldiers will be brought to the project. To complete the task, the Chapel Committee need \$1.2 million and at this stage have raised \$780,000 from various sources. Donations have come from the Army, 1st Recruit Training Bn., citizens of Wagga, RSLs, churches, corporate bodies, ROTA Branches and other Associations.

If any members of our Association are willing to make a personal donation to this worthy cause, please send direct and include your Unit with your name and address to:

Australian Soldiers' Chapel Appeal
Kapooka NSW 2661

2/1-2/2 PIONEERS W.A.

By President LEN PREEDY

The meeting on November 15 was well attended and a happy affair. Apologies were received from Fred Newton, Bill and Hazel Sutton, Norm LeCornu and Bob Bally. Fred and Norm were in Hollywood hospital and Bill was due to go in.

Those attending were Barry and Millie Hunt, Jack and Joan Monger, Ethel and John McDougall, Jack Murray, Syd Abercrombie, Neil Macpherson, Owen Herron, Beth Lee, Freda Due, Joy Butcher, Jack Stewart and Lorna and Mac English from Melbourne. Mac is V/P of the 2/2 over there. It was very nice to have their company. Received a phone call from Dick Holey from Esperance with apologies.

Joan Monger passed on the information about the recent death of an ex-2/1 man by the name of Pryor. He was buried in the Guildford cemetery on November 7. Donations to our expenses were gratefully received from Hazel and Bill Sutton who live in Wongan Hills, J. Murray, D. Holey, J. Butcher, B. Lee, F. Due.

The ladies received a nice little gift from Barry, one of his ornaments made from natural woods, they are really first class Barry, thank you. I rang Hollywood to enquire about Bill Sutton since our meeting, only to find I had missed him by a day, sorry Bill. Received a letter from Ted Hansen, president of the 2/2 advising that the "Back to Java" trip had been dropped owing to lack of support.

I have just rung the Fitzgeralds and spoke to Gwen, she reminded me that Harry is 83 now and not as active as he was, Gwen has some leg problems, this all makes the journey in from Gosnells rather difficult. They send best wishes to all. It was nice to catch up with Nev O'Connor on his recent trip over, it has been a long, long time.

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AUGUST, 1992

Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 718 6658

THE 2/2nd AUST. PIONEER BATTALION

Part Two of the three part series covering the Battalion from its re-formation in June 1942 to the 50th Anniversary in 1992.

Part 2 — TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES

Lt-Colonel Joe Lang arrived from Darwin on 20th June 1942 to command the unit in formation and he was in time to see the arrival of the reinforcement body from Victoria of five officers and 400 other ranks in the charge of Major Aitken at the newly constructed Kapooka Camp, four miles from Wagga Wagga.

Four officers and 308 other ranks were a new complement from the No. 1 Pioneer Training Battalion of Bathurst in the charge of Captain W. Robertson in the middle of July.

Key appointments were: Battalion second-in-command, Maj. Aitken; Company commanders — Capt. Mitchell, A Company; Maj. Kidd, B Company; Capt. Richardson, C Company; Capt. Robertson, D Company; Maj. Tope, HQ Company; Capt. Garrard, Adjutant. Company second-in-commands — Capt. Bellmaine, Copp, James, Page. Quartermaster, Capt. McInnes.

It became clear very quickly that of its dual Pioneer role — part infantry and part engineers — it was going to be chiefly as infantry that the re-formed Battalion was going to win its spurs.

A newly-constructed 30-yard rifle range (the work of Lt. White and party) rang to the command of Sgt George Paricos, i/c weapon training. Basic training was to occupy the first eight weeks for all personnel. Music to the ears of the other ranks, was to hear the company sergeant-majors parading daily under Capt. Garrard and the Regimental Sergeant-Major, W. O. Waite!

Next leg of the training program for rifle companies was "training in sections"; for HQ Company, specialised training. How the peace of the Kapooka hills was shattered by the medley of orders accounting for weapon instruction, bayonet drill, grenade throwing, etc. And to the welcome revving of transport vehicles, motor-cycles, Bren Gun carriers filling out the long-awaited complement!

Essential services had rapidly to be provided, company latrines appearing courtesy of plumbers Spot Sullivan, Charlie Armstrong, Ron Dunning and Bob Lee. Military initiative, if not military protocol provided materials lacking. The neighbouring Civil Construction Corps could well afford their "contribution".

Around Battalion HQ clustered the "odds and sods" — the Orderly Room, the RAP, the stretcher-bearers-cum-Band, the Intelligence (called Ignorance) Section. The early strangled sounds of cornets at practice were soon refined by Bandleader George Dobson, who composed the Kapooka March for the Battalion parade through Wagga Wagga. Escaping the daily grind of infantry training, the "I" Section marched off into the hills, honing their map-reading skills.

Section training began in earnest and it was decided that the Murrumbidgee River needed reconnoitring! A task for all sections — from Tumbalong (where they were dispatched at hourly intervals) along the 64 miles of river, to Camp. Iron rations were stood down on the menu in favour of wild duck. Welcome supplements in fresh farm eggs, milk-from-the-cow, etc. The honours in the reconnoitre to Corporal J. Lee's Section of A Company.

Route marches with increasing distance built up to 30 miles in "battle order". The chances of the 30-miler becoming a 40-miler were averted when one company march-leader was persuaded from the collective wisdom of some of the "led" to reassess the direction of Camp at a late stage of the march! Back to Camp and sweet relief to the march step provided by the Battalion band; arrival time 2100 hrs.

The Uranquinty Hotel proved to be a half-way house to the RAAF Station as opportunity offered and seemingly, never the pub-with-no-beer or without clients. A likely RV for a BBQ following an evening route march. One night culminated in rain, beer, mud, bloody beef and wet bread! It was rumoured that a mysterious phone call requiring all RAAF personnel to return to base, effectively cleared some refreshment space ("drinking room") for thirsty army foot-sloggers.

Faithfully following the "I" Section on the cross-country homeward leg, a few "minor" obstructions were encountered — sewage earthworks, trenches, deep concrete pits. To the pitch-black confusion, the "I" Section countered: "Clear proof that maps do not show everything!"

Wagga Wagga was proud of its hospitality to soldiers — a first for this city. Pioneers were warmly received into the township activities; while honorary membership of the Riverina Club was extended to officers of the Battalion. So, voices raised to the old theme — "The Pioneers are marching on their way" left a strong sentimental note as, no doubt, many of the locals echoed "They'll be sometimes missed by the girls they've kissed".

The war had moved closer to Aussie shores as 1942 progressed. Back on 15th February, 1942, Singapore had surrendered to the Japanese. So followed New Britain, New Ireland, the Admiralty and Solomon Islands. The fightback was firmly on the way when our forces notched up the Milne Bay victory. By August some of the Seventh Division had landed at Port Moresby and were part of the bloody push to secure the Kokoda trail. Where to, then, for this frisky young, re-formed unit now, by September, stamping at the bit?

On Saturday afternoon of 30th September, 1942, Lt-Col. Joe Lang was proudly marching his Battalion in battle order, Bren Carriers and vehicles in the rear, down the streets of Wagga Wagga. The salute was taken by Brig. W. C. D. Veale, M.C., D.S.M., E.D., Commander of the Engineer Training Centre. Present at the ceremony, too, was Mrs L. O'Malley Wood, a tireless welfare worker for "her" battalion boys. The march was accompanied by the regimental band.

At the showground an athletic carnival followed, the Pioneers winning the aggregate points and still to come, on the Sunday, was the presentation of amassed booty — nine handsome silver cups, to remain in the keeping of Ald. H. E. Gissing, Mayor of Wagga, until the end of the war. Other trophies presented by Brig. Veale included the Shillito Cup won by B Company for the most efficient company; a cup won by Headquarters Company, commanded by Maj. Tope, for the sports championship; and a cup won by 17 Platoon, commanded by Lt Harris, for first place in the platoon drill competition.

Visions of a quick translation to the Middle East where the parent battalions had made their mark faded, as the unit entrained for Melbourne. . . and instead, a long journey to Western Australia to train and shore up defences on the western coastline.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2/2nd Pioneer Battalion History (E. F. Aitken), Jack Allison, Bob Ginnane, Ray Harris, Russ Harrison, Bill Lewis, Bob Lee, Allan McInnes, Bill Robertson, Pioneer News; March and September 1982 and April 1990.

GOSFORD REUNION

WREATH LAYING SERVICE—Sat., Sept. 26, 5 pm.
REUNION DINNER — Saturday 26th — Gosford RSL Club — 6 pm Refreshments; 7 pm Dinner — Per person \$19.

PICNIC LUNCH — Sunday 27th — Mt Penang.
FAREWELL DINNER — Sunday 27th 7 pm — Gosford RSL — Per person \$18.50.

S.A. PIONEER BATTALION

By President ALLAN OLSON

Anzac Day 1992 saw one of the smallest contingent of Pioneers to march. Father time and illness has caught up with several of our Pioneers with the result that only 13 members faced the march from Victoria Square to the Cross of Sacrifice at Pennington Gardens.

Those who couldn't march, lined the route and gave the marchers a good cheerio and then attended the Annual Meeting and Reunion luncheon. This was thoroughly enjoyed by 27 Pioneers and friends held at the Duke of York Hotel in Currie Street.

Members unable to march were — Les Bence, Reg Cranwell, George Sauer and Stan (J. E.) Clarke who is having another rough time having spent two weeks in hospital.

The members marching were: 2/1st — Bill Thiele and Doug Waters. 2/2nds: Cyril Denton, Geoff Lloyd, Len Norman, Joe Robertson, Bruce Scott, Roger Monks and Allan Olson. This was Roger Monks' first march for many years and has assured everyone he hopes to make it an annual event.

Len Norman and Allan Olson attended the Dawn Service and placed a wreath in memory of all fallen Pioneers and those who have departed us since the war.

That is all for this year's Anzac Day in Adelaide and look forward to seeing all the Pioneers at the Gosford Reunion.

RETURN TO ADELAIDE

By RUSS HARRISON, 2/2

Recently Rona and I had a trip to Adelaide after receiving a request to "mind" the home of a friend in St Peters, which is a suburb about two miles north east of the city centre. As a matter of topical interest our friend was attending the World Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro, as a representative of the SA Government and of the Environment Association of Australia of which she is President. We await reports from her of the "inside" story of what happened behind the scenes.

We left Epping on 28th May and travelled via the Mid Western and Stuart Highways with one overnight stay in Balranald. We did the usual tourist bits with trips to Port Pirie (looks a lot different from the way it looked in 1942), Cape Jervis, Victor Harbor, Port Elliott, Goolwa and the Adelaide Hills. We also had a day in Hahndorf and feasted on German beer, German sausage, sauerkraut and fried potatoes.

Travelling on the Adelaide metropolitan transport system was a great experience as we travelled by bus, tram and train for a whole day at a cost of \$1.60 each. Rona has relatives in Adelaide and we enjoyed their hospitality on a number of occasions.

A highlight of our visit was being able to meet up with old army mates, thanks to good organising by Ronnie and Geoff Lloyd, whom we had lunch with on June 2. Then on the following Tuesday we were back at their home for an afternoon with Helen and Ron Pasfield, Len Norman, Bruce Scott and Allan Olson. Joe Robertson had the flu and so could not attend. The old photographs and newspaper clippings were produced and reminiscences exchanged. It was a very pleasant afternoon.

We caught up with Joe Robertson a few days later when we paid a visit to Allan Olson's manufacturing premises in Forestville. This was a most interesting afternoon as we were shown over the works and watched the various operations.

At last we had to depart, and left Adelaide on June 19, arriving home on the 21st after travelling via Murray Bridge, Bordertown, Horsham, Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton, Albury and the Hume Highway.

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Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 718 6658

THE 2/2nd AUST. PIONEER BATTALION

Part Three of the series covering the Battalion from its re-formation in June 1942 to the 50th Anniversary in 1992.

Part 3 — MOVE TO STRAWBERRY, WA

Late in September, 1942, a small advance party, under the command of Major E. F. Aitken, left Wagga Wagga for Western Australia. In early October, "HQ" and "A" Companies followed and by 8th October, the whole battalion was on the way, eventually being concentrated at Strawberry some 60 miles south west of Geraldton.

The purpose of the move to Strawberry soon became evident when the battalion took part in the ambitious "Robber" exercise directed by Lt. General Gordon Bennett and involving 4th Division, elements of an armoured regiment and other units. Soon townships such as Mingenew, Moora and Dongara became familiar to the troops. A route march to Dongara where surfing beaches were available was a highlight of the battalion's stay in the Strawberry area. A vast bushfire moving through the area was, over a period of a few days, brought under control with much loss of sweat and sleep. Only six weeks after arriving at Strawberry, the battalion was on the move again and by mid-November had occupied a camp-site at Bellevue, a Perth suburb about 15 miles east of the city centre. Six weeks of primitive conditions in the Strawberry area had wrought havoc with uniforms and battalion equipment, and re-issue of various items, particularly hats, was organised. The troops soon availed themselves of the amenities on offer in Perth and liberal leave conditions applied. Here the battalion received reinforcements from the Infantry Training Battalion at Northam. The 2/2 Pioneers' third Christmas was celebrated at Bellevue in more or less a traditional manner. Beer at 10 shillings and 6 pence a dozen and red or white wine at 4 shillings and 6 pence per 4 gallon can seems attractive these days.

In January 1943 a 4th Division sports meeting was held at Gloucester Park in the presence of Sir James Mitchell, Governor of Western Australia. Capt W. Mitchell commanded the guard of honour which received favourable comment. The battalion band under Sgt G. Dobson won the music competition, Jack Tolley the 880 yards event and Jim McFadden the hop, step and jump. Lectures on living off the land, the crossing of creek-beds by various uses of ropes helped to amplify training. Bellevue was regarded as a home away from home and the contentedness it engendered in the troops soon came to the Army's attention, so that it was not long before the battalion was on the move again. It will be noted by students of military history that no attempt was made by Japanese forces to invade north western Australia and many authorities believe that this was due in large measure to the presence of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.

In early February 1942, Maj H. Tope and a small advance party had arrived in Mangalore a few miles north of Victoria's military town of Seymour. Capts A. J. McInnes, H. Huggard and Lieut. D. A. Williamson joined the battalion which was concentrated in the new camp by mid-February.

Soon it was on again — another move that is. Maj Kidd and an advance party, followed by the main body had proceeded to Woodford in Southern Queensland by the end of March, 1943. This was obviously a staging camp and just two days after the battalion's arrival, orders were received for another move, this time to Ravenshoe on the Atherton Tablelands to rejoin 7th Division, where the battalion was concentrated by late April. The divisional commander Maj Gen G. Vasey allotted the battalion to 21st Brigade for training purposes.

Jungle training was commenced in earnest and it was not long before the troops were experienc-

ing the difficulties in operating in such terrain. The fiasco of the exercise at Tully Falls caused by heavy rain comes to mind. The perils of encounters with the wait-a-while vine and the Gympie bush were ever present and were even experienced by Joe Lang, the CO. Ernie Jones of "D" Coy spent one very painful period of about 12 hours as a result of contact with the Gympie bush. There were also the mosquitoes and all sorts of creepy-crawlies to contend with.

Training was interspersed with sporting events and race meetings. In June 1943 at the 21st Brigade Sports the Pioneers had success in individual and team events. L/Cpl Carroll won the 100 yards sprint, Tom Bye the 220 yards, Tom Clarke the 440 yards, Jack Tolley the mile and Jim McFadden the hop, step and jump. A team led by Joe White won the tank attack gun competition and the battalion team won the tug-of-war. In other activities, a visit to the 2/3rd Pioneer Battalion at Kairi resulted in wins by the 2/2nd teams at hockey and rugby league.

On 22nd June, 1943, the battalion celebrated the first anniversary of its being re-formed at Kapooka.

As well as the sporting events, entertainment for the troops was provided by the 5th, 6th and 7th Division Concert Parties.

RODEO AT MOUNT GARNET

The last exercise involving the battalion was exercise "Rodeo" in the Mount Garnet area. "C" company was given the job of making the Mount Garnet racecourse ready for a rodeo and race meeting. The purpose of exercise "Rodeo" was to gain experience of operating with the presence of American paratroopers, of 503rd Parachute Regiment, a precursor to the battalions involvement in the capture of Nadzab in New Guinea. As the main body of the battalion watched the rodeo, Capt A. McInnes and Lieut Stevenson and 150 troops filed on board the troopship "Canberra" at Townsville and sailed for Port Moresby on 11th July, 1943. The remainder of the battalion boarded the "Duntroon" at Townsville on 25th July and sailed for Port Moresby the next morning.

The move to Port Moresby was the seventh since being re-formed, and the "Duntroon" arrived there on 28th July. As she moved to her berth most of the Pioneers on board experienced the real war. The ship "Macdhui" lay in shallow waters having some months earlier been sunk during a Japanese raid. This was followed by the crash of a Kittyhawk fighter which showed signs of severe damage to its wings.

Movement of the troops to Seven Mile Gully took place without incident. The advance party had prepared the camp-site and by late afternoon the companies had settled in their areas.

During the morning of the second day, an air-raid warning was sounded. Bren guns were quickly mounted and air sentries posted. No enemy aircraft appeared. The camp site was within a couple of miles of Jacksons and Wards airfields and there was an almost continuous coming and going of aircraft involved in operations against the Japanese.

Training resumed without delay, with a deal of practice in the use of the Owen sub-machine gun, leaving little time for recreation. American "movies" and the inevitable gambling schools functioned in abundance but heavy tropical showers often spoiled these activities. Training included the role of small sub-units and river crossings of the Laloki River. Prior to the move to Tisli Tisli for the battalion's participation in the assault on Nadzab, Maj Kidd, Lieut D. O. Smith and Pte P. Robinson were flown there to carry out patrolling the Watut River, tracks to Kirklands Dump and crossings of the Markham River. On 23rd August, 1943, the battalion was flown to Tisli Tisli. The left-out-of-battle group under Maj E. Aitken and the support group under WO(II) Wellington remained in Port Moresby. Tisli Tisli was a for-

ward fighter base occupied by the United States Air Force. Contact was maintained with the Papuan Infantry Battalion which was manning observation posts at the junction of the Watut and Markham Rivers and on Mount Ngaraneno.

The move to Kirklands Dump involved a march of about 50 miles. As well as the Pioneers, the force included Engineers, small parties from 2/4th Field Regiment and 7th Division Signals and a Field Security Section. For the portage of reserve rations, ammunition and other stores, 800 New Guinean people were employed. For the transport of heavy equipment, 60 Pioneers and a part of Engineers using 12 large folding boats sailed the Watut River to the Markham to arrive opposite Kirklands Dump on the night preceding the attack on Nadzab Airfield. The movement by river was most difficult due to fast flowing sections and shoals and unfortunately one man and three boats were lost. The remaining nine boats arrived just after midnight on 5th September. The force moving overland, comprising 780 troops and 800 carriers, moved out on 1st September, each man carrying between 60 to 80 pounds of arms and equipment. Extremely arduous conditions were encountered all the way. On the first day only seven miles were covered. Third day was long and very tiring, commencing with a steep climb of 1200 feet. Then followed a stretch of swampy country followed by more stiff climbing. Camp for the night was at Kunai Patch. The fourth day offered no relief and to traverse one ridge the column of men climbed 1800 feet. Native bees were a constant source of annoyance. They did not sting but appeared to be seeking salt from the men's perspiration and were most persistent. The laying up area at Kirklands Dump was eventually reached later than scheduled and night had fallen when the stragglers, assisted by their mates, arrived exhausted. No fires were permitted and only cold rations were available. There were not many who had the stomach for food in such conditions as the weary men settled down for the night mostly sleeping fitfully if at all.

ADVANCE ACROSS MARKHAM RIVER

Through the night individual boats arrived and by 3.15 am on 5th September seven had been unloaded and concealed. By about 8 am the drone of aircraft could be heard. These soon appeared flying 12 abreast and began discharging the paratroopers of the 503rd US Army Paratroop Regiment, "umbrella men" to the New Guinea carriers. This was the signal for the Pioneers and their support groups to begin the advance across the Markham River. "A" company was the first to move. Using the folding boats a crossing was made and a bridgehead established to protect the crossing by the remainder of the land force. One platoon of "B" company also crossed and moved out to the Erap River to establish a post to give any warning of any enemy approach from that flank. The Engineers constructed a bridge and ropeway over the last four channels. While these activities proceeded the other companies dug in on the sandbanks or waited in the jungle cover on the river banks. By 2.15 pm the whole group had crossed the Markham River and was in enemy territory. To put it in Eddie Aitken's words as he wrote in the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion History — perhaps there were more gruelling marches in the Pacific War, but there was never one so well-timed over such rugged country. Major H. Duchatel and Lieut E. Snook from New Guinea Force Headquarters proved invaluable as guides and the loss of Maj Duchatel some weeks after the capture of Nadzab came as a great shock to all. The first of the Pioneers reached the southern edge of the airfield by late afternoon. Capt Putland and his RAP staff attended to the casualties which were mainly paratroopers' broken legs and arms. Many landed in trees and could only be released with great difficulty. The sight of the paratroops dropping

from their aircraft was one of the great events of the battalion's operations in New Guinea. Some 1500 men were dropped and fortunately casualties were very light. Those who witnessed the operations carry vivid memories of it. Volunteers from the 2/4th Australian Field Regiment dropped with them and they were the first Australian troops to make an operational descent. Two short 25 pounders were also dropped. They were in pieces and one was assembled only after a jeep track had been cut through the jungle to assemble its parts. They were quickly brought to the task of providing artillery support.

Thus Nadzab Airfield was secured and the troops spent an uneasy night awaiting the arrival of another dawn and what the new day would bring forth.

(Part Four continues next issue)

2/2 PIONEER BN INSERT

The insert enclosed with this issue of *Pioneer News* has been printed as a follow up to the 2/2 Pioneer Bn history. The printing has been organised and kindly donated by Ian Willmore 2/2.

PIONEER NEWS REDUCED

In order to cut costs the Committee have agreed to reduce the number of issues of *Pioneer News* from three to two per year as from 1993.

This decision was taken because of the increased cost of printing as well as postage and the reduction of donations as the following figures indicate:

	Printing/Postage	Subs by Letter
1989	\$2541	\$1680
1991	\$3039	\$1508

There is no fee to belong to the Association and unlike some other organisations we do not conduct raffles each year, so our only source of income is donations to the *Pioneer News*, for printing at \$648 and postage at \$365 (45 cents per copy) for each issue.

It is now also necessary for an appeal to be made to over 400 members of the total 813 posted out, who according to our records show they have not made a donation over the past six years, to come forward and assist in keeping the *Pioneer News* alive. Perhaps some of these people are not interested in receiving the *Pioneer News*, in which case they can return the wrapper marked "Not Required", place in an envelope and return to M. Herron, 3 Enoggera Road, Beverly Hills 2209.

An appeal was made in the August issue of *Pioneer News* to those who have not contributed to our "news" in years but as the response was less than gratifying we are appealing again hoping for more encouraging results.

This appeal is not directed at all those 400 hundred members who have made donations regularly and we do thank them for their support and we know they realise no *Pioneer News* means no Association. Also the Committee do not expect donations from the widows of our members, so they too can ignore this appeal.

At the October Committee meeting one member summed up our lengthy discussion on this subject by saying —

**IF YOU WANT THE NEWS —
PAY YOUR DUES**

THE DUTCH MEDAL

The official title of this award is the Netherlands War Commemorative Cross 1940/45 and is officially recognised with a foreign award classification.

Those eligible to have the cross are those who served in Dutch New Guinea, Java, Tarakan, Borneo and other Dutch territories in East Asia and South Pacific areas.

The cross may be worn on the left breast following all other decorations and campaign awards. It is only available from recognised medal dealers.

INFORMATION REQUIRED

The secretary recently had a call from Richard McIntyre, who is the son of the late William Thomas McIntyre, requesting information about his father, a member of the 2/1st Pioneer Bn., NX90563.

If any member of the unit can supply any particulars please contact Richard McIntyre, 4 Tornado Avenue, Hallett Cove, SA 5158.

Also Jeff Richards seeks information on his grandfather, John William James Richards NX23575 2/1, so please contact him at 55 Cantrell Street, Yagoona 2199.

MAIL BAG

Editor: BOB LAKE

A short comment on the Gosford Reunion. A really good show well attended by 168 people and I think everyone enjoyed themselves. Speaking from a personal point of view to be with old mates, to enjoy their company and to see those that one only sees periodically, is well worth any effort that one puts into attending.

WES BENNETT 2/2, Albury, with a letter enclosing a cut out from the local paper regarding an avenue of trees at Albury-Wodonga to commemorate the 2/2 Pioneer Bn. Max has passed on the addresses of the NSW and Vic. Associations and as Wes remarks would be nice if a few of the old members could be present at the official opening.

ALF BENTLEY 2/1, WA, with a letter and a donation for the treasurer. He has sent some photos to Max that included Sid Jopson at Kairi and Moratai and comments that he was sorry to hear of the death of Sid's wife, Myrtle. Also met Len Preedy in hospital a couple of months ago and has since heard from him with date of their next meeting. He and his wife hope to be in Sydney for next Anzac Day and hope to contact some of the old Tank Attack Platoon. The photos you sent to Max taken at Kairi in 1945 were of Tom Chrystall, Frank Pawley, Max Cutler, Fred Baldock, Alf Bentley, Sid Jopson, and Phil Ruby and this photo with be placed in the Pioneer's album. Many thanks for your letter, Alf, and looking forward to seeing you in 1993.

JACK BERTRAM 2/1, Hamilton, with a letter to say he had visited Larry Robson and reports that Larry was a little better. He still has his infection and swollen legs, but was able to walk round his bed, and is very cheerful. His Life Membership Badge and Certificate gives him a terrific sense of satisfaction. Larry passed on his thanks to Mary Lloyd for her card of good wishes and sends his regards to all as he is unable to write. He receives lots of visitors and Jack says he has bumped into Jack and Esme Griffiths twice at the hospital.

Thanks for your letter and caring visits to Larry, Jack. I'm sure they are appreciated.

JACK COATES 2/1, Umina, with a long newsy letter and a big thank you to all for the efforts of the Gosford Reunion. Mentions that Canon Heuston's service at the Memorial was splendid and Jack pleased to see so many of his old B Coy represented — John Gilchrist, Bluey Miller, Noel Trefoni and Harry Mowbray — took Jack back to old Greta days. Says he will be passing through Greta on his way to Narrabri later in the month on the XPT and will give the ghosts a silent salute at Silver City.

Thank you, Jack, for your good wishes and for your many visits to Jack Collis while in Brisbane Waters Hospital and your phone calls to us on his progress — all very much appreciated.

Have passed on your donation to worthy treasurer and a big thank you from Peg for your gift of the First Day cover. Sends regards to all hands — and for Lakey, "Tigers to roar in 93 and 94".

KEITH BOYLE 2/1, Moama, was unable to attend Gosford because of a stroke suffered earlier in the year, but was home on "weekend leave" on the evening of the reunion. His good wife, Marj, rang Peg Herron during the evening with their good wishes for a great weekend and Keith was able to speak with Peg for a few minutes. It was good to hear from you both and your kind wishes were passed on to all during the evening.

Glad you are making progress, Keith, and sincerely hope you will be "home for Christmas".

REBECCA CLOGG, widow of Bill 2/1, with a cheque for the treasurer and a change of address. Enjoys reading the *News* and meeting mates of Bills that she had met through the "Rats of Tobruk". Had a visit from Ivor Garnon but after just completing her move to new home was too tired to go the meeting with him. Hope you are now settled in Rebecca and all the best in your new surroundings.

PAT COLLINS 2/1-2/2 Glenfield, with an apology for not being present at Gosford. He and Edna were attending a reunion of a different kind on the same date — namely their 50th Wedding Anniversary. They were married in Canberra on 30th Septem-

ber, 1942, the same day the 2/2nds made their march through Wagga. Edna was able to manage seven days leave, so they were able to have a couple of days together before Pat had to board the train for WA.

Your apologies accepted Pat and, as you say, 50 years is very short when you are having fun. All the best to you both, and thanks for photos.

RON CROSS 2/1, Ballina, with a short note to Max and a sub for the treasurer. Ron says that Alex Cameron has now been admitted to the Ex-Servicemen's Complex at Ballina after a fall. His Dr at Maclean would not let him out of hospital, as he could not look after himself. Ron has visited him and while he is not the best has settled into the home well. Thanks for the information, Ron, and it is good that you can visit him occasionally.

JIM GRAY 2/1, Warrawong, with a letter and few quips for the *News*, a walk down Memory Lane —

Bromide never did serve the purpose for which it was drunk, due to its shocking taste. A Pallase was never a spring mattress. A Kit-bag was never a dream pillow. Burgoon was just a cartoon character. In all those years I never heard the cook called a B_____ to his face — dehydrated eggs and potatoes were probably the fast foods of that era. A Rose Bowl was never meant to put flowers in and a "back up" had nothing to do with patrols.

But one thing we did have was mateship — when someone received parcels from home it was shared around, excerpts from letters were also shared when they had not been chopped to pieces by the Censor — it all went to knocking that boredom on the head.

Wishes all Pioneers and their ladies good health and happiness.

JACK GRIFFITH 2/2, Frankston, sends a short note with kind regards to all, especially his old mates of 2/2, and a donation to the *News*. Says he is not much of a letter writer, but a short note is better than none at all, Jack.

CLIFF HILL 2/1, Murwillumbah, with an apology for not keeping in touch more often. He has not been in the best of health over the years, with a list that makes the eyes pop — bad nerves, stomach ulcers, hiatus hernia and a cancer removed from his leg and the skin graft did not take. Do hope you can improve on that list, Cliff, and enjoy a few good years.

He often sees Lyle Butcher and Len O'Connor and has a chat with them. Enjoys reading the *News* and enclosed a welcome donation for the treasurer.

IAN HODGE 2/1, Evans Head, with a cheque enclosed for the treasurer and a change of address from number 11 to 14 due to some council stupidity. Had no other news of other Pioneers, as he hasn't seen anyone for years. Seems strange, Ian, as there are plenty of blokes up around that area. It is seven years since Ian retired and he still enjoys good health with plenty of golf, gardening, mud crabbing and fishing. When do you get time to rest. He spent a week in Sydney lately and shivered all the time and was quite glad to get back to God's own country.

JACK HUMPHREY 2/1, Casino, with a letter telling how his *Pioneer News* was not arriving. He was walking his dog down the street and passed a lady looking in her letter box. Taking the *Pioneer News* out she asked him if by any chance did it belong to him, as she had also received earlier copies. Somehow the "gremlins" had got into the secretary's addressing system and instead of going to number 39, they were being delivered to 29. Anyway, all has been sorted out and Jack is now looking forward to further issues of the *News*.

Jack was sorry to hear of the death of John Douglas and pleased to see that Max Law was able to attend the Anzac Day reunion — how lucky to have a wonderful wife and son to look after him. Closes with best wishes to all.

PHILL JACKSON 2/2, Dongara, WA, with a thank you for *Pioneer News* and a welcome sub for the treasurer. Phill derives great pleasure in hearing of his old mates and sends regards to Stan Rixon, Jack Hocking and Charlie Vickery (known as Father). Also his best wishes to Colonel Williams, whose help and advice never forgotten.

He spends quite a lot of time in his garden these days and, although war blinded, with his wife's help can still potter about. Apart from a few twinges of gout, life is treating him pretty well for a 70-year-old. They live in a coastal town, Dongara, with a flourishing fishing fleet (crayfish) with good sheep and

PIONEER NEWS

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Editors: R. LAKE and M. HERRON

President: BILL JOLLIE

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APRIL, 1993

Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 718 6658

THE 2/2nd AUST PIONEER BATTALION

Part Four of the series covering the Battalion from the formation in June 1940 to the 50th anniversary in 1992.

PART 4 —

THE CAPTURE OF LAE

On the morning of the 6th September, the Pioneers began clearing the airstrip of kunai grass, using flame throwers and incendiary bombs provided by the Americans. Before long those engaged were filthy dirty with soot. After four hours the airstrip was ready to receive the first aircraft, which soon arrived and began disgorging the advance elements of the 7th Division infantry and their support groups.

C and D companies worked on improving the landing strip and unloading the aircraft and the remainder of the battalion moved to Narrakapor to relieve the paratroopers. It was estimated that there were three companies of the enemy in the area. On the afternoon of the third day a patrol from the 2/25th Battalion clashed with an enemy patrol and from then on the advance towards Lae was to be contested with vigour by the enemy forces.

The American paratroopers were withdrawn at that time and returned to Moresby. They always referred to the 2/2nd Pioneers as the Two-bar-two Combat Engineers.

The first contact along the Lae road took place when Tom Hulse's platoon was fired on. The patrol pressed home its attack, routing a numerically superior force. The Support Group arrived at Nadzab on the seventh day and the Pioneers were close to full strength.

Platoon cooking was carried out for a time and many innovations to make life easier were noted. Jack Henderson and Len Hope, D Coy, made bush ovens from flour containers and were soon producing good quality dampers. These were much appreciated by the troops seeing as the Field Bakery providing bread rolls was hit by a bomb from an enemy aircraft on a night raid.

After probing patrols had established the location of a number of enemy positions, Brig. K. Eather decided to launch an attack on Heath's plantation which began on 13th September. A and B companies were placed under brigade control and given the role of flank protection. These troops were soon actively engaged in the area where the 2/33rd Battalion was now engaged. For his outstanding leadership Tom Hulse was awarded the Military Cross and Pat Egan was awarded the Military Medal for courage and audacity under fire. During these actions, Pte. Hatchard of A company was wounded.

The battalion was engaged in much patrolling and A company was placed under the command of 2/33rd Battalion, B company being under 2/25th Battalion command. Heath's plantation fell in the afternoon of 12th September. Within 15 minutes of its fall, A company was ambushed and in a fierce fight eight enemy were killed. Ptes. W. Green, N. Prior, R. Tout and C. Irwin were wounded. Attacks against C and D company positions were repulsed.

On 15th September the decisive battle for Lae began. A company was engaged in the Edwards plantation area. Tom Hulse's platoon attacked when the forward company of the 2/33rd Battalion came under heavy fire. Unfortunately, Mick Eddy — Battalion welter weight champion boxer — was killed. Pte. T. Byrne was wounded and later died. Corporal Stan "Bluey" Hucker was awarded the Military Medal. The 7th Division's advance continued and on 16th September, Lae fell. It was during this time Joe Lang sent his now famous signal — "2/2nd Pioneer Battalion less 4 rifle companies will advance on Lae".

The Japanese forces in Lae were caught in the movement of the 9th Division along the coast and

the 7th Division's drive from Nadzab and the enemy suffered very heavy casualties. Lae having been secured, the 7th Division turned to the advance up the Markham and Ramu Valleys in which the Pioneers were to be actively involved.

By 23rd September the detached companies had rejoined the battalion which moved to Camp Diddy about 10 miles from Nadzab to give protection against any threat by the direction of Boana. Constant patrolling was carried out, Lieut. R. B. White and 12 men from C company along the track leading to Boana, Sgt. French's patrol of six men and two New Guineans went to the Busu River near Gumbuk, and a patrol under Lieut. R. Harris covered the higher ground.

THE RAMU RIVER VALLEY CAMPAIGN

Operations by the 7th Division along the Ramu Valley were now to commence. In late September, 1943, the 2/6th Independent Company had moved up the Markham Valley, crossed the Ramu Valley and captured Kaiapit. Aircraft carrying elements of the 21st Brigade arrived the following day. Lieut. C. L. Fraser and a small party of Pioneers left Nadzab for Kaiapit on 29th September. The Pioneers were concentrated there two days later taking responsibility for the area.

Patrolling was carried out but the battalion had become far removed from the scene of operations. Evacuation of casualties became a problem and men having to live on edge of the air strip awaiting arrival of the few aircraft now arriving. Lieut. J. Drummond carried out the only long distance patrol, the purpose being to establish an Air Wireless Warning Post at Wantoot. The patrol consisted of Cpl. Mathews, 12 other ranks, two police boys and 100 New Guinean carriers with 6 months supply of rations for the post. This patrol took 14 days and arrived back at Kaiapit to find that the battalion had been airlifted to the Dumpu area. Major Tope was waiting at the Kaiapit Airfield with one aircraft standing by. After a night's rest they rejoined the battalion the following day.

Kaipit village was voted by the troops as one of the most comfortable areas occupied during the New Guinea operations. It was flat and clean and there was plenty of water.

The battalion again resumed engineering tasks, D company in the Dumpu area with the 2/6th Field Company, C company working on a road between the Faria and Mosia River and B company constructing a bridge across the Mosia River and A company making a cutting adjacent to the Uria River.

On 28th October the battalion was placed under command of 21st Brigade and moved to Kumburum. The following day the battalion set out for Levett's Post. In one of those military mishaps, the wrong course was followed, which took the troops through the 2/16th Battalion's lines, and Levett's Post was reached late in the afternoon with the men exhausted. The 2/16 did not appreciate the enemy shelling which followed these troop movements.

Some patrolling was carried out and the names of the various posts in the area — Moto's, Levett's, Sam's, Tom's are still talked about. On 5th November, Lieut. R. Harris and a patrol composed of members of 17 Platoon covered the Gurumbu-Berringe-Mungu track and at Berringe village a clash with the enemy occurred. This was a close contact encounter with the opposing groups being as close as 6 feet from each other for a short time. The enemy left two dead and probably carried away others. At an elevation of 8000 feet a grand stand view was occasionally afforded of fighter and bombing missions, chiefly US aircraft, to destroy Japanese lines of communications from Madang.

The battalion moved on 8th November to a spur above Moto's Post. It was from here that Lieut. R.

White's patrol clashed with an enemy group. He fell wounded and attempts to recover him proved unsuccessful and he was posted missing presumed dead.

Towards the end of November, C company at Tom's Post was attacked in the area occupied by Lieut. J. Drummond's platoon. The attack was repulsed, the enemy withdrawing in haste leaving an officer's sword as a trophy.

The battalion then moved back to Kumburum. It was officially regarded as a rest area, the major activity for the troops being road construction.

THE ATTACK ON SHAGGY RIDGE

On 11th December the battalion moved to the Lakes area and eventually occupied the high ridge overlooking the Mene River and a tall feature which was to become famous as Shaggy Ridge. Patrolling continued, Lieut. Sam Coles and his platoon along the Uria River, Lieut. D. O. Smith's rations party to Levett's Post. It was on the basis of Lt. Col. Joe Lang's proposals that the attack on Shaggy Ridge was planned.

It was obvious that the enemy's forces were being concentrated in the Shaggy Ridge area. Left flank protection became the responsibility of the Pioneers, with Bert's Post, the Pines, Brian's Hill and Herald Hill being occupied. Patrolling continued with Lieut. P. Scholtz's party reaching a wired area at the northern end of Shaggy Ridge, and withdrawing undetected.

Christmas Day 1943, the battalion's fourth, saw the dinner consisting of turkey and potatoes being served and packs of tobacco and cigarettes dropped by parachute being the Christmas presents.

On 27th December the 2/16 Battalion attacked the Pimple supported by guns of the 2/4th Field Regiment and air attacks by allied aircraft. The Pioneers had a good view of these activities from their positions.

As part of the preparation for the attack on Shaggy Ridge, intensive patrolling was carried out, Capt. A. McInnes and his party carrying stocks of rations to a cache at Canning's Saddle. Because of the terrain, the going on these patrols was hard work. Lieut. H. Conley with 8 men from C company patrolled the Mene River. Other patrols under Lieut. D. Williamson, Lieut. Coles and Capt. McInnes were carried out.

It was at this time that a major event causing great sadness occurred when the C.O., Lt. Col. Joe Lang was transferred to Buna Base Area. A giant of a man in all ways was he. Command passed to Maj. E. F. Aitken.

As plans for the attack on Shaggy Ridge proceeded, intensive patrolling continued including observation of the enemy's activities, carrying rations and laying cable.

(Part Five continues next issue)

SICK PARADE

JACK COLLIS, Welfare Officer, reports as follows: **John Gibson** of Dungog in hospital in December. **Larry Robson** on the improve in Westcott Nursing Home, Stockton. **Noel Trefoni** in Concord Hospital in February. **Ivor Garnon** in North Gosford Hospital for his second knee replacement in February. **Bill Jollie** for an operation on his hand in March. **Jack Collis** in Royal North Shore for vascular treatment in February. **Jim McDonald** in Newcastle Hospital for treatment. **Jack Kempnich** in hospital for appendicitis. **Maisie Kempnich** in hospital for an operation on her ear. **Cliff Secombe** having treatment for eye problem.

ATHERTON TREK BACK

OCTOBER 16-24, 1993

Cost \$1080 per person twin share
For programme and details contact RSL Travel

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Welfare: **BILL TASKER**, phone 718 6658

THE 2/2nd AUST PIONEER BATTALION

Part Five of the series covering the Battalion from the formation in June 1940 to the 50th anniversary in 1992.

PART 5 — ATTACK ON SHAGGY RIDGE

The plan for the attack on Shaggy Ridge called for a three pronged attack. On the right flank, the 2/10th Battalion to attack Cam's Saddle, 2/9th along the crest of Shaggy Ridge, 2/12th with B and D companies 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion to carry out a wide encircling movement on the left flank. D company 2/2nd Pioneers, under Capt. G. Bellmaine, on the 19th January, 1944, led the way from Lang's Junction. At Canning's Saddle this company took up a position to prevent enemy interference with troops which were to carry out the attack. No. 17 platoon was sited in a position 200 yards from the forward Japanese position and spent the night there. Next morning, B company under Capt. T. James moved down the track with 2/12th Battalion and established a perimeter defence. There they spent the night. At dawn the approach to the objective began, B company being fourth company in the order of march. The going was difficult, with D company rendering assistance to the troops clambering up the final slope. First contact with the enemy occurred about 200 yards below the crest. Resistance was brushed aside and just below the crest the leading troops had come under heavy machine gun and rifle fire. Nearby a 75mm gun which was shelling the 2/9th Battalion on the ridge was swung around and began firing point blank at nearby tree tops and trunks. It was not until late afternoon that B company silenced the gun which was captured intact after an encounter involving hand to hand fighting. The 2/12th had 10 killed and 47 wounded, their C.O., Lt. Col. Bourne being seriously wounded. Evacuation of the casualties was a major problem. Most were stretcher cases and had to be carried down slippery tracks to the aid post. D Coy 2/2nd Pioneers were involved in these duties. Also involved were locally recruited New Guinean porters — the Fuzzy Wuzzies. Night fell and the troops spent a sleepless night due to enemy infiltration which had to be repulsed. When daylight came there was no sign of the enemy and the advance was resumed, B company 2/2nd Pioneers with the 2/12th and D company recovering and carrying to the forward areas the supplies dropped by parachute. Lieut. Drummond's and Lieut. H. Liston's platoons (C company) were also carrying rations and evacuating casualties.

MORESBY AND RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

On 23rd January, 1944 with the capture of Mt. Prothero and Kankiryo Saddle, the Pioneers' participation in the Shaggy Ridge campaign was concluded and D company was ordered to withdraw and move to Dumpu. B company remained in defensive positions and during patrolling, had more clashes with the Japanese. Eventually they made their way to Dumpu. By 31st January most of the battalion had been flown out to Port Moresby via Nadzab where a complete re-outfitting from hats to boots was carried out. A and C companies with elements of Battalion H.Q. returned to Port Moresby on 3rd February.

The battalion, with tiredness very evident, and wracked with tropical diseases, embarked on H.M.A.S. Kanimbla on 8th February, 1944. The troops lined the deck to farewell Port Moresby. They were homeward bound for Townsville. Medical examinations prior to departing revealed more than 60 percent were suffering from skin conditions and malaria was prevalent.

First unit to be committed to action, the Pioneers had served with each of the 3 infantry brigades of the 7th Division. The battalion enjoyed the confidence of senior commanders and the troops had constructed roads, cleared airstrips, traversed

jungle trails, endured the mud and the insects and fought the Japanese. The troops had great cause for satisfaction and leave.

ATHERTON TABLELAND AND CAIRNS

The battalion arrived in Townsville on 10th February, 1944 and the Army moved quickly to ensure a minimum of delay in making arrangements for the troops to proceed on leave. Over the next few days all personnel were on their way home. The pleasures of life at home were enjoyed but soon return to army life was necessary and the battalion began concentrating at Wongabel in North Queensland in the area allocated to 2nd Australian Beach Group, commander being Colonel C.R. Hodgson.

Command of the battalion was given to Lt. Col. Clayton E. Davis D.S.O. M.C. who had been commander of 1st Australian Engineer Centre at Kapooka and therefore was no stranger to the 2/2nd Pioneers. He had a distinguished record including service in World War I.

(Part Six continued next issue)

NEWS ITEMS

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL Canberra advise that they will be undertaking the entombment of an Unknown Australian Soldier on Remembrance Day 11th November 1993. The Unknown Soldier will be returned to Australia from a battlefield cemetery in France or Belgium.

ATHERTON TREK BACK October 16-24, 1993 and for programme and details contact RSL Travel.

SICK PARADE

BILL TASKER, Welfare Officer, reports on the following hospital visitations: **GORDON FINLAY** who took a turn on Anzac Day and was in R.P.A. but is now home. **ALLAN McINNES** in hospital at Hornsby — now under treatment. **RAY HARRIS** in Lismore Hospital for an operation. **BOB LAKE** in Manly Hospital for an operation on his neck. **CHARLIE HENRY** in Concord Hospital for hernia operation. **JACK DOLOGHAN** in Concord Hospital, now at home under treatment. **JACK TOOKER** in Concord Hospital and now doing well. **WAL SMITH** was in hospital in April with back problems.

JACK COATES Welfare Officer Central Coast reports that **EDNA MILLER** has been in hospital for a kidney operation, now at home being looked after by Bluey. **HARRY HAMER** and **IVOR GARNON** looking well after being in hospital.

CONSTITUTION ALTERED

It was moved as a notice of motion at the Annual Meeting April 24, that a Special Meeting be convened on Friday 13th August 1993 at Redfern RSL Club at 1pm for the purpose of altering the Associations Constitution:

Clause 8. MEETINGS — Delete:

Sub Clause (d). A quorum for an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting shall be at least thirty (30) members.

Insert: A quorum for an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting shall be at least fifteen (15) members.

Clause 10. ACCOUNTS — Delete:

Sub Clause (c). The funds from all functions to be paid into a General Fund Account — the name of this account to be 2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bns Assoc. General Fund.

(d) That a separate account be known as Pioneer News Account.

(e) That a separate account be known as Welfare Fund account.

Insert: (c) The funds be paid into an account known as 2/1-2/2 Bns Assoc. General and Welfare Account.

LARRY ROBSON REPORT

Being confined to restricted outings I prepared myself on Anzac Day to watch the Sydney Parade of our Pioneers on television. I saw them alright but if I had blinked I would have missed seeing them altogether. It is the worst commentary I have heard of the Anzac March. Who wants to hear music and all the talk about bands. One can see them any-time, but it is only once a year people like me in the country areas, particularly those unable to get about, can see our mates of yesteryear.

When our Secretary goes to so much effort in sending a letter with all the particulars to the television channel for the announcer to read out, I think Channel Two should be taken to task.

Since my last report I have had visits from John and Mollie Hunt, Jack and Jean Bertam, Jack (Glido) Griffiths, Max (Slim) Wilson who calls in every Wednesday for an hour and a surprise visit from Bob and Joan Lake. Bob was on his way home from Nelson Bay and as I was in the process of having a shower we had a good talk in the "Furphy Room". Sorry I missed seeing you Joan.

I am slowly picking up and expecting my electric wheel chair shortly, which Veteran Affairs will supply, so this will enable me to get about and be more independent.

The sad passing of Jack Collis was very upsetting as he had only visited me three days before he died. Also very sorry to hear of the passing of Noel Trefoni. I hope Gordon Finlay is improving and I wish him all the best. Congratulations to Bill Tasker on being presented with his Life Membership, well done Bill. It was great to read in the Pioneer News about Jack Monger and he would remember the late Bluey Eather calling out "Unger-Unger, Mr Munger".

Will end this scribble now and maybe by my next report I will have a typewriter so that the Editor will find it easier to read.

Best wishes to all Pioneers, **LARRY ROBSON**.

THANK YOU

GORDON FINLAY wishes to say thank you, on behalf of Olive and himself, for all those people who phoned, sent get well cards, and visited him while in R.P.A. hospital.

Each day Olive brought several names, written down of people who had phoned and although Olive did not know the people, Gordon certainly did, and says thank you from them both.

S.A. PIONEER BATTALIONS

Together with Russ Harrison and Ken Wilson, Bluey Locane attended the Anzac weekend in Adelaide and their host President Allan Olson with his family gave them a wonderful time.

Bluey reports that the following, who attended wished to be remembered to all Pioneers: "D" Coy. 2/2nds — **Cyril Denton** sends regards to Snowy Dodd and Allan McInnes. **Joe Robertson** sends regards to Bob Ginnane, Roy McGregor, Bill Fallon and Bruce Scott. **Geoff Lloyd** with regards to Bill Robertson, Ray Harris, Jack Henderson, Bill Lewis and Bob Ginnane. **Len Norman's** regards to Ross Dawson, Bill Fallon and Ray Harris.

"C" Coy. 2/2nds — **Roger Monks** sends regards to Gordon Walker, George Smith and Don Linton, also invites anyone visiting S.A. to call on him by phone (086) 35 2213.

2/1sts, **Bill Thiele** and **Noel Grant** send regards to Brian Smallhorn, Bill Wright, Laurie Kelly, "Hoot" Gibson and "Doc" McKibbin.

Bluey Locane had the pleasure of meeting Bill McIntyre, son of the late Richard McIntyre, and Bill sends regards to George Nichols and Gordon Finlay. Bluey also met up with George Sauer 2/2 who left the unit at Cairns to go to O.T.S. and finished up with a Captaincy in 2/1sts.

PIONEER NEWS

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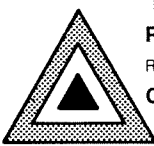
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President: BILL JOLLIE

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NOVEMBER, 1993

Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 718 6658



THE 2/2nd AUST PIONEER BATTALION

Part Six of the series covering the Battalion from the formation in June 1940 to the 50th anniversary in 1992.

PART 6 — BEACH GROUP, TRINITY

The NSW troops were the first to arrive at Wondabel. However, on 10th April a move to Trinity Beach, 15 miles north of Cairns was made. By 26th April the whole battalion had moved there, the campsite being in an area known as Deadman's Gully. The Beach Group was concentrated at Trinity Beach for amphibious training. The battalion received reinforcements from the Canungra Jungle Training Centre and was about at full strength.

The Beach Group was established to provide the personnel to man a beach maintenance area in the initial stages of amphibious landings on enemy held shores. The 2nd Beach Group consisted of some 15 individual units including 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, Signals, RAAF and Naval liaison personnel, engineers and others. The role of the Pioneers was handling stores landed in the area and defence to prevent enemy interference in these activities. The work of unloading in the landing area required much practice and despite assurances from senior officers, was regarded by the troops as boring and lowering of morale.

To maintain enthusiasm, leave to Cairns was reasonably generous and sporting activities were organised against other units. The Australian Rules team took part in the Cairns Services Competition. The Rugby League team participated in the 1st Australian Corps competition and the Beach Group Competition, and the hockey team had many successes. Cricket and basketball were also popular. Swimming instruction at Trinity Beach and Cairns Baths, had for its main object the qualifying of all ranks in swimming 50 yards in shirt, trousers and boots.

The construction of a battle course five miles south of the Pioneers camp, with the stress on realism, proved of benefit although there were accidents. Capt. T. James, Clemm McDonald and Matt Elliott suffered wounds — Clemm's more to his pride than anything and Matt's serious enough to necessitate a long period in hospital.

Training continued, enthusiasm being revived at various times using assault landing craft and in October with the arrival of a tank landing ship and in mid November, two infantry landing ships, HMS Empire Spearhead and HMS Glenearn, Royal Navy vessels, which had been used in the Normandy landings.

In December, Exercise Mowbray was carried out. The battalion traversed the Macalister Range, then proceeded 50 miles through Black Mount area to Mowbray Pass and down to the sea. This exercise and Exercise Schnapper carried out by the Beach Group saw the arrival of Christmas 1944, the battalion's fifth.

On 19th January, 1945, 9th Australian Division staged a sports carnival in which a composite platoon under Sgt. G. Colcott won the drill competition. The tank attack gun competition was won by a team under Sgt. White and Pte. Morgan obtained first place in the grenade competition. The mortar, machine gun and stretcher bearer teams were all placed.

In inter-company competitions held in January, Pte. R. Molyneux (D Company), Cpl. Egan (HQ Company) and Pte. R. Kenny (A Company) were adjudged the best marksmen and D Company the best company.

Soon orders were received for the battalion to move to Wondelca on the Atherton Tableland. In early February, the Duke of Gloucester visited the Beach Group area and carried out an inspection of the troops. Rumours abounded and on 23rd February Lt. Col. Davis attended a conference on

deficiencies in personnel and equipment. This was followed a few days later with an inspection by Colonel Hodgson, Beach Group commander. This activity preceded another move and on 9th March, 1945, advance parties moved to the Staging Camp at Redlynch. By 11th March the entire battalion was aboard the United States troopship *Sea Barb*, berthed in Cairns. The ship moved to the north of Fitzroy Island and hove to for two days due to bad weather. As a result she sailed for Morotai with a strong contingent of sea-sick Pioneers.

MOROTAI — ABOARD THE SEA BARB

The voyage to Morotai took 13 days and calls were made to Hollandia, Noemfoor and Biak. The *Sea Barb* arrived at Morotai on 28th March. Morotai in the Halmaheras group was a vast United States air base. Conditions for the Pioneers were very poor. Initially the water was tainted by petrol and tasted vile, but the troops soon improvised rainwater catching devices. There were no washing facilities, these being provided about 4 pm each afternoon by nature with downpours of rain. The battalion provided working parties engaged at stores dumps, wharf labouring, cleaning campsites and guarding various installations. The worst job was unloading and stacking timber done by shifts working at night. These activities prevented any improvements at the Pioneers campsite. Morale was at a low point and apart from all the other problems, the food was poor, not in any way due to the cooks, but more to what was provided.

AMPHIBIOUS LANDINGS AT TARAKAN ISLAND

The involvement of the 2nd Beach Group in the landing at Tarakan Island off the north east coast of Borneo was now imminent. Embarkation of the battalion and its stores began on 21st April. The convoy put to sea on 27th April. The invasion force consisted of 26th Brigade 9th Division (2/23rd, 2/24th and 2/48th Battalions), 2/3 Pioneer Battalion, 2nd Australian Beach Group (which included 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion); 2/12th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, 57th Battery, 2/7th Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery and 2/4th Independent Company. The 2/2nd Pioneers embarked 200 men below strength from Cairns due to leave parties being unable to reach Cairns due to flooding in the Burdekin River causing several spans of the railway bridge being carried away. On 1st May the convoy was standing 4000 yards from the shore off Tarakan Island. The landing beaches were pounded by salvos from cruisers and destroyers standing further out to sea and by bombing sorties by allied aircraft. The bombardment lifted to targets inland and landings of troops began at 8 am. First ashore were the Beach Company commanders, Majors W. A. Robertson and K. B. Kidd. Their assistants, Capt. W. Copp and Lieuts. R. Harris, A. J. Olson, L. Murphy, T. Emes, M. Armstrong and F. Bolitho landed later than was planned due to a last minute decision to change the sequence of landing. Then the rest of the battalion waded ashore. Sporadic small arms fire had little or no effect on the setting up of the Beach Maintenance Area. After being allotted bivouac areas the rifle companies were detailed to the work areas. BHQ and HQ Company were located near the village of Sibengkok.

Work proceeded all day and the tired troops moved to Roach feature but enemy reaction, including mortar fire, forced them to adopt a defensive position for the night. During action to clear the enemy, Pte. K. Moore was wounded and later died. Lieut. W. Hood, Sgt. A. R. Woods, Ptes. H. T. Brown, G. Walker, J. J. Newton and J. N. Lyons were wounded. Working parties were called for during the night and all the next day.

Late on 2nd May 2/2nd Pioneers and 2/3rd

Pioneers relieved 2/23rd and 2/48th Battalions of responsibility for protecting the coastal road, the features Finch and Lingkas being allotted to the 2/2nd.

Problems in the Beach Maintenance Area began to appear. These included haphazard loading of stores prior to leaving Morotai and heavy vehicles becoming bogged in the muddy conditions. Mesh pathways were proving useless. Added to this, enemy activity caused problems necessitating continual battalion action. Hospital Ridge was cleared on 3rd May, removing danger from the Beach area from sniper fire, infiltration and shell-fire. Bombs disposal duties resulted in two victims, L.Cpl. C. Lucas and Pte. R. Bracken.

Two 3 inch mortar detachments under Sgt. A. S. Hanson and three PITA teams (Projectile Infantry Tank Attack), Ptes. F. W. Thomas, J. Williams, R. Fairbairn, J. P. Barry, J. T. Tuckwell and J. L. Bobbin were attached to 2/4 Independent Company. For his part in the operations that followed Sgt. Hanson was awarded the Military Medal.

Patrolling continued under Capt. C. Richardson, Sgt. Baird, Sgt. Bardsley, Pte. Stewart, Sgt. Elphick, Lt. E. B. Reid and L/Cpl. McCourt during which several clashes with the Japanese occurred. During one, Pte. H. A. Adams was wounded. By 16th May, Australian troops had reached the east coast and Netherlands East Indies troops had captured both the main oilfields. News of the cessation of military operations in Europe was received, which brought hopes in the troops that before long, operations against the Japanese forces would be all over.

It was decided that 2nd Beach Group would return to Morotai and 19th May the battalion embarked at Tarakan. They reached their destination a few days later, and moved to a new staging area prepared by Lieut. Canning and the LOB group. A week later the battalion moved to an area near the Sabata River and the demand for working parties resumed. It was at this area that the Pioneers came to appreciate the Beach Group Salvation Army representative Cappy Redford and his writing materials and tea and biscuits.

Swimming was possible, despite the presence of coral snakes, bluebottles and other marine menaces.

AMPHIBIOUS LANDINGS AT BALIKPAPAN

The battalions' next operation became known about this time — the invasion of Balikpapan by the 7th Division. The L.O.B. group moved from the battalion area to the area vacated by D Company. On 20th June, 1945, the battalion embarked, its men and equipment loaded on 19 different vessels. A change of command occurred at this time when Major Aitken took over from Lt. Col. C. Davis who was evacuated sick.

A full rehearsal for the coming operation occurred and the invasion force set forth. The largest convoy of Australian forces ever assembled consisting of more than 200 vessels of war to take part in the amphibious landings, protected by a force of allied naval vessels including aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers. The air forces had undisputed control of the skies.

The landings commenced on 1st July, 1945, from the infantry landing ships *Manoora*, *Kanimbla* and *Westralia*. The first 2/2nd Pioneers ashore were the Beach Commanders' parties. By mid-morning the battalion was ashore, A B and D companies to Red Green and Yellow Beaches respectively, C company and HQ Company moved to Romilly feature to protect the area between the advancing troops and the beaches. The mortar platoon registered targets forward and to the left and right of Romilly. Cpl. Cotter and his section were sited on the right flank to cover a footbridge carrying an oil pipeline across the river Klandasan Besar. By the end of the first day, the Beach Maintenance Area was virtually free of the enemy.

By the end of the second day the whole of 7th Division was ashore involving 35,000 personnel and 4250 vehicles.

On 11th July the battalion moved to the old Dutch hospital which had been practically demolished. Conditions were much better than the beach areas. The battalion's LOB group arrived together with 30 tons of unit stores.

By 25th July, the troops were working longer hours than at any time during the campaign. To provide more men, the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion was called on for working parties. The situation was aggravated by the raids by enemy aircraft in the port area. Morale was being seriously affected. August brought increasing demands for labour and the quality of the rations deteriorated.

(Part Seven (final) continued next issue.)

SOLDIERS CHAPEL KAPOOKA

More than 1500 people, on Saturday 30th October, were present to celebrate the official opening of the \$1.4 million chapel, the fruition of years of fund raising and hard work since the national Soldiers Chapel Appeal launched in May 1989, from the Army camp at Kapooka, Wagga Wagga.

The impressive chapel, designed as a dove in flight as a symbol of peace, was officially opened by the chapel patron and Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General J. C. Grey, A.O.

The imposing building was constructed by Sappers of the RAE with minor input from outside contractors.

Multiple glass doors span the entrance, each bearing its particular emblem, such as Artillery, Nursing and Armoured Corps but of special interest is the striking 2/2 Pioneer door, proudly bearing the Battalion colour patch, above the words, "The first AIF battalion to occupy Kapooka camp 1942". On another door was the emblem of the Rats of Tobruk Association.

Other features of interest are the three magnificent stained glass windows, and the golden translucent Rising Sun badge in a glass panel over the main entrance.

After the ceremony, afternoon tea was served in the Recruits Mess, a formidable exercise in logistics. An officer was overheard instructing two very young recruits at the door. Pointing to the hat rack, he indicated caps belonging to two Generals and one Admiral. "There they are, and there they will stay until they leave. You will see to it. Do I make myself clear?"

On or off duty, recruits do not walk around Kapooka, they MARCH! Small objects are carried in the left hand, which is held firmly against the side. This is the Army, 1993 style.

Hundreds of people returned to the new chapel on the following morning, Sunday 31st October, to attend the Inaugural Worship service beginning with an Ecumenical Service followed by individual services held in each wing of the Chapel for Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations — a fitting end to a weekend of symbolic ceremonies for Kapooka.

Visitors to Wagga Wagga would find it worthwhile to phone Kapooka camp and seek permission to inspect the Chapel with special regard to the Pioneer door.

Pioneers in attendance were: 2/2nds — Victoria: George Murphy, Tom Brabin, Don Hose, Snowy Anderson. South Australia: Allan Olson. NSW: Kevin Raward, "Stumpy" Rae, Ken/Ida Wilson, Jack/Barbara Allison, Jack Morgan/Evelyn Booth, Allan McInnes, Ian Willmore, Bill Robertson, Bill Lewis, Vance Foley. 2/1sts: Vic/Peg Whiteley, Jack/Marj Kerslake, Roy Jardine, Maurie McEvoy, and Max/Peg Herron.

— Reported by BILL LEWIS

SICK PARADE

ALBERT BARTON 2/1 of Gulgong for a brief stay at Concord Hospital then on to Strathfield Private for a double by-pass in October. Visited by Peg/Max Herron and now doing well.

RAY HARRIS 2/2 of Ballina at Concord for check ups then on to Lady Davidson for treatment. Visited by Bill Robertson and Russ Harrison.

JACK TOOKER 2/1 of Chatswood in Concord Hospital for a short stay to have a cataract operation which was successful.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

On Thursday, 11th November, about 20,000 people witnessed the funeral parade of the Unknown Australian Soldier and veterans from all this century's conflicts were among the crowd as the soldier's remains were interred at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

The unknown digger's long journey from the battlefields of France ended when he was buried with full honours in the War Memorial Hall of Memory at 11 am on the 75th anniversary of the end of the Great War.

The last leg of the Unknown Australian Soldier's final journey had begun that morning, at 9.25 am, at old Parliament House. Fourteen World War I veterans from four states and the ACT formed a guard of honour for the coffin as it was moved from Kings Hall where the soldier had lain in state for four days.

The Unknown Soldier was farewelled inside the Hall of Memory — after prayers read by chaplains of the three services — by the funeral party and his World War I comrades, all of whom might have known him in life.

The Governor General placed a sprig of wattle on the coffin before 93-year-old veteran Bob Comb, of Canberra, threw a handful of French battlefield soil on the lid as the coffin was lowered. To the thousands outside, that final moment was signalled by three volleys of rifle fire.

The national president of the RSL Major General "Digger" James then read the Ode which was followed by the playing of "The Last Post" and two minutes silence.

More than 600 unit banners and thousands of spectators lined Anzac Parade. The 2/1st Pioneer banner was carried by Bill Tasker and in the banner party were Bill Jollie, John Gilchrist, Stan Jones, Jack Kerslake, and Max Herron. Also in attendance were Tom Wood, George Walker, and Ron Murray.

The 2/2nd Pioneer banner was in the hands of Ted Hanson, John Williams and George "Bluey" Kelly.

NOTICE

With this issue of *Pioneer News*, we enclose a card commemorating the opening of the Soldiers' Chapel at Kapooka, incorporating among others, the 2/2 Pioneer door.

The door was a gift, made possible by the generosity of a member of the 2/2nd Pioneer Bn., who wishes to remain anonymous.

Initially, the 2/2 Pioneer Chapel Committee wished the message on the door to be the same as that on the card. The Trustees of the Chapel, in their wisdom, decreed otherwise, and the battle honours, etc., were excluded.

Although disappointing at the time, the restrained and balanced treatment of the Chapel as a whole confirms the correctness of the Trustees' judgement.

We are grateful to Ian Willmore for producing this excellent card for everyone to keep as a memento of such a memorable occasion. If anyone wishes further copies for relatives or friends contact our Secretary.

LAST POST

JOE KYFFIN 2/1 of Reservoir, Victoria, passed away on 22nd July at the age of 81. Sympathy was extended to his wife Maïda.

NEVILLE GRIFFITHS 2/1 of Towong, Victoria, passed away in July. Bernie Reiners who gave us the details said Neville worked for the Forest Commission until he retired, manning one of the fire towers in the hills.

BARLOW, S.A. of Numurkah, Vic., and **ALLINGHAM, A. A.** of Rosebud, Vic., passed away in August and we thank Eric Causer for these details.

SECRETARY'S REQUEST

Please address mail to Secretary as follows:
M. HERRON, Hon. Secretary
2/1-2/2 Pioneer Bn Assoc
3 Enoggera Road
Beverly Hills NSW 2209

ANZAC 1994 CHANGES

At the Committee Meeting held on 13th August it was resolved that, in order to ease the work load of the Executive, the following changes be made over the Anzac period.

1. **ANZAC REUNION DINNER** to be held at the Occidental Hotel, 43 York Street, Sydney (corner York and Erskine Streets), just a few minutes walk from Wynyard Station.

2. **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** date be changed from Anzac Eve to a date in May to be decided by the Executive.

3. **WREATH LAYING CEREMONY** to remain at 7.30 pm on Anzac Eve as in previous years. Organised by Jack Tooker.

Full details will be published in April issue of *Pioneer News*.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

24th APRIL 1993

During the past 12 months two Committee meetings were held at Redfern RSL and a reunion at Gosford in addition to Anzac Day.

The committee meetings on both occasions were well attended and conducted in an harmonious manner. We were indeed very sorry to lose the efficient services of Vice President Ray Harris during the year when he and his wife moved to Ballina. Ray was our representative on the 7th Division Association. This position has now been filled by Vice President Allan McInnes.

Anzac Day, although reduced in numbers, was still a great success and our thanks go out to the sons and friends of some of our members who assisted on the day. The 2/1st march was once again led by the Bankstown Police Youth Band. Many thanks to that organisation. We will have to accept as a fact of life on this and future Anzac Days, numbers will diminish as the years roll on.

The 50th anniversary of the reformation of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was well and truly celebrated at the Gosford Reunion held during September last year. The organisation was superb and greatly appreciated by all concerned. Once again our many thanks to Max and Peg Herron for a job well done and also to Ray Harris and Roy Levy who organised the Wreath Laying and the Sunday picnic.

Life Membership during the year was awarded to Ray Harris and Larry Robson in recognition of their services to the Association.

Our Treasurer, Vic Whiteley, has once again carried out his duties in a most satisfactory manner and an appeal for funds assisted to boost our dwindling finances. Please take note of our appeal "If you want the News — pay your dues". The cost of printing and postage of the News is becoming prohibitive.

To our welfare officers Bill Tasker and the late Jack Collis we owe a debt of gratitude for their visitation to the sick and attendances at funerals. The loss of Jack Collis was a sad blow to the Association.

Many of our members have died since our last Annual Meeting and to their loved ones we extend our deepest sympathy. They will be remembered throughout the coming years.

The *Pioneer News* continues to be the life line of the Association and for the three editions published during the past 12 months we sincerely thank the Editors, Bob Lake and Max Herron. We would not receive the News without the efforts of the Wrapping Committee. This is a tedious and time consuming job. Thank you for a job well done.

Once again I would like to convey our thanks to Len Preedy of Western Australia and Allan Olson of South Australia and their respective committees for keeping the flag flying in their States.

I would like to extend on your behalf our appreciation to the President and Board of Directors of Redfern RSL Club for the use of their facilities free of charge, and to the Mayor and Aldermen of South Sydney Council for the use of Redfern Town Hall on Anzac Day also free of charge.

Finally and on behalf of you all we say a big thank you to both Max and Peg Herron who have served us well throughout the years far beyond the call of duty.

— BILL JOLLIE

PIONEER NEWS

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Editors: R. LAKE and M. HERRON

President: BILL JOLLIE

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APRIL, 1994

Welfare: BILL TASKER, phone 718 6658

1994 ANZAC ACTIVITIES

Although the Wreath Laying Ceremony and the Anzac March are the same details as in previous years, it is important that members note carefully there is a change of venue for the Anzac Day Reunion Dinner and for the date of the Annual General Meeting.

WREATH LAYING — Sunday, 24th April

The Wreath Laying Service will be held at 7.30 p.m., on Sunday, 24th April and the assembly point will be on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, G.P.O. side, at 7.25 p.m.

This has been an important event organised by your Committee and it is here we pay homage to all our mates who gave of their lives. Let us pledge to be at this ceremony, if at all possible, and ladies are also welcome.

ANZAC DAY MARCH — Monday, 25th April

The forming up of the march will be the same as in previous years for both units — 2/1st in Phillip Street, head on King Street and rear of 6th Division. 2/2nds in Phillip Street, near Martin Place and rear of 7th Division. Both unit banners will be displayed at their respective assembly points. Please check city newspapers for any change in the assembly points.

ANZAC REUNION — Monday, 25th April

The Anzac Day Reunion Dinner will be held at: THE OCCIDENTAL HOTEL 43 YORK STREET, SYDNEY.

The Committee made the decision to move from the Redfern Town Hall because the small band of workers had found it impossible to carry on with the arduous task of carrying out the work at this hall. At the Occidental Hotel everything will be done by the staff.

DIRECTIONS: After the march board train at Museum and travel to Wynyard. Proceed up esca-

lators to York Street exit — turn right into York Street towards Central — travel to the first street (Erskine Street) and the hotel is on the south side corner. Enter from York Street to hotel foyer.

PROCEDURE on entering foyer:

1. NAME TAGS issued at first table by Bob Lake/Geoff Finlay.
2. MEAL COST of \$10 paid to David Herron/Ray Law.
3. ENTER LIFT and proceed to the 1st Floor and be seated at table. (Three tables will be reserved for 2/2nds who march with the 7th Division and arrive late.)
4. REFRESHMENTS from bar: beer, midgy \$1.50, schooner \$2.
5. LUNCH SERVED at 12.45 p.m. Roast beef or chicken, vegetables, buttered roll. Waitress will serve to table of 10. One member from each table to collect meal tickets.

ANNUAL MEETING — Friday, 27th May

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday, 27th May at the Redfern R.S.L. Club, corner of Redfern and Gibbons Street, Redfern, at 1 p.m.

The reason for the date change is because after last year's Anzac functions the Secretary and Treasurer pointed out to the Committee that their task in preparing for all the Anzac functions, e.g. Annual Meeting, Wreath Laying, Anzac March and Anzac Reunion Dinner over two consecutive days had become too arduous for them. Upon this request the Committee agreed to the change of date to 27th May.

KEEP OUR FLAG FLYING

The Australian flag was born with the creation of Federation at the dawn of the century. A contest resulted in 32,822 entries — seven judges, representing the Army, Navy, Mercantile Marine, Pilot Services and Parliament, unanimously choosing five equal winning designs. Thus was produced "the flag of stars".

The Exhibition Building, Melbourne, was used to display the numerous flag entries, the exhibition being opened on 3rd September, 1901, by Lady Hopetoun, wife of Australia's first Governor-General and Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton. On the building's dome a huge flag of the winning design flew gloriously in a strong breeze.

The Union Jack reflected the new Federation's historical background, the Southern Cross its place in space, and the large star the six States of the Federation. Here was a flag containing history, heraldry, distinctiveness and beauty.

Why pull it down, when it has flown over 90 years of Australia's history as a nation?

The flag is a symbol — it speaks for the nation's history and soul. The pattern which emerges when the flag is unfurled tells of the birth, the growth, the trials, the glories and the hopes of the people who fly it.

Critics of the Australian flag are all united against the presence of the Union Jack. This is the number one target. The following is the type of statement made by the critics: "We are now a nation which has come of age. We must stand on our own feet and show the rest of the world that we are truly independent. It is, therefore, essential that we free ourselves from our colonial past. How can we expect other people to respect us while we use the flag of a foreign nation? Let us show the world a distinctive Australian image."

This type of criticism is not a manifestation of maturity, but that of immaturity and shallowness. It also lacks that logic which its authors often stress.

Tradition is not something which can be dismissed as a "blind clinging to a past which no longer matters". Tradition is the accumulated wisdom of the past, learned in the long years of a people's history. Those who will not learn from the mistakes of history are doomed to keep on repeating those mistakes.

The Union Jack not only symbolises the truth that the overwhelming majority of the people who explored, pioneered and developed Australia were English, Irish, Scots and Welsh background, but that every aspect of social, cultural, constitutional, legal and religious life had its roots in the United Kingdom.

The Anzacs who stormed the beaches at Gallipoli did not feel subordinate to anyone, nor did they feel they were searching for a "new identity". They fought under the Australian flag. El Alamein was one of the turning points of the Second World War, where Australians took place with troops from all parts of the Crown Commonwealth. All fought under flags in which were incorporated the Union Jack. HMAS Sydney flew our flag as she defeated the German ship Emden in the First World War. The first allied flag raised in Singapore after the Japanese surrender in 1945 was an Australian flag made in secret.

In two World Wars, in Malaya, in Korea and Vietnam, Australians have fought against totalitarianism under the symbol of the Australian flag. It is this flag which symbolises Australia's real heritage, which has been so closely associated with everything worthwhile in Australian history.

A nation tearing down the symbols of its heritage is a nation engaged in destroying itself through vandalism. Those who wish to preserve the nation's heritage for their children's future must at all times proudly display the symbols of that heritage.

— Keep our Australian flag flying!

THE 2/2nd AUST PIONEER BATTALION

Final article of the series covering the Battalion from the formation in June, 1940, to the 50th Anniversary in 1992.

PART 7 — THE JAPANESE SURRENDER

On 9th August, the day a second atom bomb was dropped, this one on Hiroshima. On 15th August the official news was received and excited troops celebrated with rifle fire and singing and shouting. The Japanese Government had accepted the surrender terms.

On 8th September, 1945, Admiral Kamada signed the surrender of all Japanese forces in Borneo. The process of demobilisation had already begun, those with 5 years service and a minimum of 2 years overseas service being the first to be on the way home. Two small parties of the 2/2nd Pioneers who had been prisoners of war for 3½ years were aboard ships which called in at Balikpapan. They were warmly greeted by the members of the battalion who were allowed on board.

On 8th October the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was declared redundant and the men were drafted to units of their choice. Many went to the 2/33rd Battalion. Others went to 2/10th Battalion and various other units. There were some who volunteered for 65th Battalion, established for garrison duties in Japan. Those with the required number of demobilisation points were transferred to 2/1st Machine Gun Battalion and 2/6th Independent Company. A proportion of regimental funds accompanied each draft. Eventually Maj. W. A. Robertson assumed command of 2/33rd Battalion until it too was disbanded.

TROPHIES TO WAR MEMORIAL

A committee consisting of Maj. W. A. Robertson, Lieut. J. Drummond, Sgt. J. White, Cpl. E. Loveridge and Pte. N. A. Robinson recommended

that battalion trophies be given into the custody of the Australian War Museum. The proviso was made that, should an authorised association be formed by men of the 2/2 Pioneers, the trophies might be given to that association.

So ended the official existence of the 2/2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion, and eventually those who had survived the more than 5 years of its operations, returned to their homes and loved ones. Official associations were formed and Pioneers still gather to meet their old army mates. Those who died in battle and as prisoners of war, and those who have passed away over the years are remembered when Pioneers meet. — LEST WE FORGET.

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It has been a pleasure for me to publish the seven part series of the story of the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion. My thanks to the following: Jack Allison, Ray "Butch" Buchart, Bill Cunneen, Bob Ginnane, Ray Harris, Russ and Rona Harrison, Bob Lee, Allan McInnes, Len Preedy, Charles Richardson, Bill Robertson and George "Squizzy" Taylor. The Committee also acknowledge using the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion History by E. F. Aitken and Pioneer News copies of 1982 and 1990.

The seven part series has filled the need for the battalion history because of the scarcity of the history book — not many were printed and it is now nigh on impossible to obtain a copy. I only hope our readers have kept all the copies so that they can keep it to show their families — many times I have been asked by sons and daughters for a history of the unit their father served in. I can now refer them to the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion's seven part series, which in due course I intend pasting up and photocopying as a complete booklet.

— MAX HERRON, Editor