



ISSUE 2/98

“MICE OF MORESBY” – MEMBERS BULLETIN

### **FOREST LODGE DRILL HALL**

(report by Alex Bell)

On the 16th July '98 at the request of the "Save the DrillHall Campaign Committee" I forwarded a lengthy submission to TheHon Ian McLachlan, A.O., M.P., Minister for Defence to retain the present Forest Lodge Drill Hall as a facility for community purposes, i.e., indoor sports, (cricket etc.), community meetings and suchlike as an alternative to the existing plan to sell to a private developer when the present service group is moved to a depot at Dundas. The main thrust of my submission being the many known instances of Association member identification with both WWI and WWII with this location.

A REPLY dated 28th August with the full explanation given that the proceeds of a sale of Forest Lodge was necessary to offset the capital cost to establish the new Dundas facility was received. The final paragraph of the Minister's letter is quoted in full:

"Accordingly, your request to retain the hall for community use cannot be agreed. However, you will be pleased to hear that in recognition of the significance the site has

to the community and members of your Association, Defence will be requiring of any future owner that a small monument be erected on the property which commemorates the efforts of the 55 & 53 Infantry Battalions."

This commemorative plaque recognition, our church St John's, Glebe, with our memorabilia in safe custody at the Glebe Library added to solid local community support assures the ongoing "Service" identity of 55/53 in the Glebe/Leichhardt area of Sydney.

### **KOKODA COMMITTEE NSW INC.**

The annual commemorative service will be held at Martin Place Cenotaph at 11am on Wednesday, 4th November, in the presence of the Governor of N.S.W., His Excellency the Hon. Gordon Samuells A.C. . All able to attend will be most welcome and a single rose will be provided for all present in lieu of wreath laying.

### **KOKODA MEMORIAL WALKWAY - CONCORD**

With very short notice, at 1030 am Friday, 11th September '98, the premier of N. S.W., the Hon Bob Carr, M.P., officially unveiled and dedicated the Memorial Flagpole and Plaque to all Medical, Nursing and Support Staff of the Concord Hospital- past and present.

A reasonable number of members together with the committee were mustered to represent the Association's interest and support to this event. It was a most impressive service and the Army Re- enactment Group led by "Skeeter" Matthew received a warm acknowledgment from those in attendance.

A further warning notice has been given that at 2.30pm on Sunday 1st November, the Rose Garden itself will be dedicated.

Association members available are invited to attend to see our plaque located at this site. The usual dress requirements are jacket, ties and medals.

Stepping up action for the incomplete phase of the Walkway project, efforts are being

made at the Bray's Bay area (waterfront) to be completed. This area includes our commemorative "Sanananda" Station and it may occur in December this year. If so, a special sheet advice will accompany this issue of "Orderly Room Gossip" to obtain a representative gathering for this special occasion.

On a personal note, I attended the celebration day (20th September) at the Army Museum, Victoria Barracks, Paddington. The occasion marked the completion of the Museum restoration (in excess of one million dollars) and enabled those present to hear of the future plans for this magnificent centre.

### **MEMORIAL PARKS IN FRANCE** **FROMELLES & LE HAMEL**

The battle of FROMELLES (July 1916) resulted in 5533 Australian casualties. The battle of LE HAMEL (July 1918) planned and conducted by an Australian commander, General John MONASH was acknowledged a masterpiece of planning and execution.

Both battlefields were focal points for the commemorative memorial dedication in July 1988. Our Frenchman "MATE", YVES FOHLEN represented us on these occasions and placed a simple white rose at the memorial ceremony. During this time Yves also submitted an article (in French) for the local press under the title: -

### **TALES OF THE GREAT WAR**

*During the four years of the First World War more than 400,000 Australians volunteered to engage in this conflict (more than 10% of the Australian population at that time). More than 60,000 among them never returned. 45,000 of them died in Europe. These terrible figures can be explained by the fact that the Australian Infantry Units were most often used*

*as shock troops. This is how they were used, for example, at Fromelles near d'Armentieres in July 1916, (5,500 killed or wounded in 2 days), at Posieres (23,00 killed or wounded in 2 months), Bellicourt in April and May 1918 (10,000 killed or wounded), at Villiers-Bretonneux on 24 & 25 of April 1918 to retake the village and thus put a definite stop to the German offensive only 16k from Amiens.*

*Then on 8 August 1918, alongside the Canadians, the Australian "diggers" were the spearhead of the victorious Allied counter-attack until the Armistice, liberating Peronne on the way and participating in the breaching of the famous Hindenburg Line in l'Aisne around Bonney and Bellicourt.*

Major General Gordon Maitland, the leader of the official tour party to France met Yves and not only was he impressed with Yves' dedication etc., he was also greatly taken with Yves' very charming and very new bride.

Members may have noted on page 8 of September/October issue of "Reveille" the notice for a book titled "He Came from Australia". This is a publication of Yves' and is about Lieut. Percy Ralph, M.M., M.I.D., 53rd Bn WWI, a paperback for \$20.00 (including postage and handling). The official launch of the book will be at Villiers Bretonneux, France on 14th October 1998.

### **BRISBANE FREEDOM WALL** **MOUNT COO-THA BOTANICAL GARDENS**

Replacement of the 15,600 brass plaques now cast and sealed at high temperature to protect them from weathering, similar to those used in memorials throughout Australia was completed in September this year. (55/53's "Lest We Forget" plaque to the 161 K.I.A. is included on the Freedom Wall).

### **OUR FLAG**

An article appeared in the U.K. Mail Newspaper 15 Feb. 1998 with the caption: "IS IT THE LAST WALTZ OF MATILDA"--- part of which reads "By a vote of 89-52 the constitution convention voted a preference for Australia as a Republic. The over 55's preferring to retain the monarchy and the young favouring a republic. When the time arrives "LOOK WELL TO YOUR BALLOT". I also like the quote on the back page of "Gun Blast", (14 Field Regt Newsletter) which features our present flag with the words - THIS IS YOUR FLAG - YOU FOUGHT FOR IT - PROTECT IT.

Our Glebe Library and Leichhardt Council Affiliation ties in with our plans to have a 55/53 BN SUPPORT GROUP in action by the year 2000. We are still looking for recruits, any preferably residing close to Sydney, in the age range 20-40 years. (Exceptions not excluded)

Give the committee a likely contact and we will do the rest. The group has aims etc. which DO NOT include "fund raising".

### **ANZAC DAY TALKS.**

DID YOU KNOW? That the Leichhardt area has 19 Primary and 4 High Schools! This suggests a challenge for our Association to meet members of this target area starting 1999, and to talk to them of subjects like "Pride in a Battalion", and how service experience has had considerable impact on our lives and points of view.

***TO HAVE THEM UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO PRESERVE VALUED TRADITIONS AND BE PREPARED SHOULD THE TIME ARISE AGAIN TO ACT ACCORDINGLY TO PROTECT AUSTRALIA.***

Plans have already started on such a project. (Volunteers please apply without delay).

## **RESERVE FORCES DAY PARADE**

This march through Sydney on Wednesday 1st July was to celebrate the raising of the Citizen Military Forces, Army Reserves and the Voluntary Services and it was a wonderful "follow on" from the Anzac Day March. An occasion to be an onlooker for this event and to enjoy the many wonderful bands taking part. (This will be an annual parade in the future.)

## **ORDERLY ROOM GOSSIP**

The "Masthead" of our Members Bulletin has deteriorated with a lot of black smudges showing around the soldier illustration. If any member can assist on a "no charge basis" with advice or a contact to clear up the problem it would be greatly appreciated.

## **THE GARDEN CREMATORIUM – ROOKWOOD CEMETERY**

In response to member enquiries, received from time to time, we have now obtained a quantity of brochures on this subject. Alternately contact with RAY KIRTON (Tel 02 97468945) can achieve the same result and a copy of Ray's booklet called a "Personal Information Guide" is an additional bonus offering.

## **REVEILLE Issue May /June 1998**

Most members will be aware that the 55/53 Anzac March made "front page". (I recall the old adage - ANY PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY). I was also interviewed by the ABC on the day and I trust that my comments on air met with the support of all who marched on that day. When checking the "Last Post" section of "Reveille" I always feel

sad to read references to the 53rd - 55th - 55/53 and my thoughts reach out with special concern for these deletions to our membership list, especially in those instances when we are unable to convey our commiserations personally to the grieving families.

### **VET AFFAIRS (June 1998 – front page)**

This issue covers in reasonable detail the news of the GOLD CARD issue for all of our WW2 veterans aged 70 years. This being a gesture of gratitude for courage in combat granted by the government. MEMBERS TO NOTE - NO application is required by a member who is in receipt of a service pension, otherwise you to the Department of Veteran Affairs on HOTLINE 1300-555-125, who will provide the alternate method of application.

### **OTHER ASSOCIATIONS.**

36 INF BN - President Keith Irwin was honoured for his services to the Association in the June '98 Honours List with an O.A.M. (Medal of the Order of Australia) and congratulations have been passed on to Keith. (In the same Honours List was Harry FOX of BEROWRA HEIGHTS, an Associate Member who received a similar award for services to the community.) Keith was given permission to publish in "Marching On", Capt O'DELL'S personal research of the 53rd early Kokoda involvement which 55/53 personally subsidised the cost. The 14th Field Regt was given similar permission to use the same copy in "Gun Blast".

"GUN BLAST" - 14th FIELD REGIMENT. At a recent Annual General Meeting where Lt/Col. Ken Thompson (Military Historian, Victoria Barracks), was guest speaker he related the information that the 53rd Battery of the School of Artillery which would be moving from NORTH HEAD to PUCKAPUNYAL had a close affinity with the 14th Field Regiment. The Association was also outlining the method for members to acquire the Government Certificate of Appreciation and the 1945-75 Medal for those entitled to same.

49th INFANTRY BATTALION. Fred Cranston mentions that a newsletter "The Bushman's Telegraph" is under way and we are on the mailing list. On a personal note, we wish Fred a speedy return to regular good health following his recent exposure to Radium poisoning for a prostate cancer condition.

UNITING SERVICE - GULF CRISIS. As a result of Association's direct approach to Rusty Priest, The RSL Executive Committee passed on to the Chief of Army a message of support to the servicemen and servicewomen committed to the Gulf Crisis Operation. The letter of acknowledgment included a message of kind regards from "Rusty" to all members of the Association.

Our Association was also a contributor to the RSL Aid Fund in connection with the P.N.G. drought relief.

7DIV CAVALRY REGT. Ray Birks, the NSW President, kindly invited me to use the SISTER VIVIEN BULLWINKLE address to members of the Corps of Staff Cadets at Duntroon, certainly an inspirational presentation. For those interested a return, stamped addressed envelope with a donation to cover costs is all that is necessary to obtain a copy.

"GUNNERS' GOSSIP" - 7th AUST. MACHINE GUN BN AIF newsletter included a report on the funeral of Rev. Terrance O'Brien. The service was held at St Paul's Burwood on 15th May and I represented the Association for a final farewell to a highly respected padre. President Les Rudd obliged our Association with the English translation of the article in French which YVES FOHLEN prepared for local release



at the time when he attended the dedication of the Fromelles commemoration memorial in July 1998 (for further comment look elsewhere in this newsletter - page 2/3). Thank you, Les.

### **55/ 53 ASSOCIATION JOTTINGS.**

I visited VIV HALL PORT MACUARIE at the Retreat Retirement Village when calling on my eldest brother in the same town. Vi is the sister of our past member John Prescott, (see ORG issue 1/97).

LEN BROWN NELSON BAY forwarded an article which appeared in the Newcastle Herald 4th July '98 under the heading "Service to Honour Great War Sacrifice". The article reported some 65 Hunter Valley men of which 60 died in the Battle of Fromelles campaign in 1916. The service was held at Wallsend Park and reported 5533 Australian casualties from 30,31,32,53, 54 55<sup>th</sup> Battalions.

VIC HUNT- PARKDALE-VICTORIA recently sent in a series of his reminiscences under the headings, "International Trade", "The Advance to the Rear Party Syndrome", "How I Nearly Lost My Teeth", "A Bed Time Story", "It Was Only a Game". The last is included verbatim this issue.

### **“IT WAS ONLY A GAME” by VIC HUNT**

Pearl Ridge Bougainville, will have many memories for members of the Battalion but one I have is a strange one for a person while in action.

As you will remember the Companies and Battalion were sitting along the narrow ridge. I had charge of a "bits and pieces" company composed of all the odds and sods in the intelligence, transport, cooks and other HQ sections.

I had the misfortune (or perhaps on reflection good fortune) of being asked some time back at Torokina to join the CO and others in games of draw poker.

It so happened that draw poker was my favorite game and had been since the age of 10. During my teen years and early in the war I used almost to earn a living from the noble game.

It was little wonder that the CO and others became regular contributors to my income.

Well, we're sitting minding our own business, sometimes getting called on to go on patrols and going through our on and off guard duties, when one day I got a message from the CO to see him for a conference at about 1900 hours that night and that the sentries would be alerted to my arrival. Hell, I thought, what's on. Was it my turn for another patrol?

Anyway, at 1800 hours I crept out into the dark, told our sentry to tell his successor I'd be back (I hoped). I edged my way along the 500 yards of narrow track with my pistol in front like Wyatt Earp. I wouldn't be exaggerating to say I could have pooped myself all the way. Well when I arrived, gave the password and saw the Co, the task I had to perform was to play poker. The school was obviously determined to get their money back.

Getting back to my lodgings at about 0200 hours was just as traumatic. I did it on another occasion as well while on the Ridge. I think I enjoyed it really, particularly the contribution to my paybook.

CHARLIE COVER - EURUDGERE via MUDGE. Recently I read a book titled "Outback Pubs" published by Childs & Associates, Brookvale NSW and found that Mudgee and Singleton were featured towns. Sending the appropriate copies to Nev White, Singleton proved a slip with the envelope returned "Left Address", and no doubt Trevor will get an up to date address. NOTE: Nev White's new address is - Mountain View, Unit 17 Jacaranda Ave., INGRAM PLACE, MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484 (Trevor advises). Charlie's contact by letter resulted in oodles of pub references in fact more than 15 in all. (Editor: A book worth browsing through if it is available through your local library.) Charlie is always on the ball and has items of our unit memorabilia in the display cabinet

of the local RSL Club Mudgee - WELL DONE CHARLIE!

OLLIE HARDY - GOLDEN BEACH Q'LAND is planning a return trip to PNG sometime in the near future and I responded to his request for names and addresses, location of plaques and memorials and he is now well equipped for his tour and we wish him every success.

COLIN DARBY KADINA SOUTH AUSTRALIA Arrival of a letter from Clem Tretheway of the same town (population 3,500) mentioned his attendance at Colin's funeral back in January 1998. Colin was in "A" Coy 8 Pln and had 30 years with the S.A. Railways. With a passion for breeding pigeons, his collection of birds is now located at WAULAROO Fauna Park. We extend our sincere condolences to Colin's family on this sad loss of a good man!

CLARRIE MEREDITH - MERMAID WATERS Q'LAND sent along photos, of the "Aquitania Newsletter" which is now safe in our Glebe Library Memorabilia Cabinet. (Thanks, Clarrie.)

TOM MARSHALL KENDALL NSW runs cattle on his property "GORWENELLEN" and uses a 4 wheel motorbike to move around his property. He relates that he was on his way back to the house when he cleared his mail box - becoming absorbed in reading "Orderly Room Gossip", his motor bike for the first time ever, "back fired" and this sound caused him to experience a trip down memory lane, reminding him of his time in the services.

LUCY KELTY BATHURST widow of Merv Kelty, (ex Sigs) writes to me on what looks like brown paper and explains it as canteen stock she unearthed when she was cleaning out a tin trunk of Merv's. She also proudly relates that two of her granddaughters competed in the State Championships (TRACK & FIELD

EVENTS) at Homebush this year - The girls scored well and just missed a placing. (In my book, they must get a 10 for participating). Owing to a good relationship with DICK HOLT, RSL Sub-Branch Secretary at Bathurst we were able to provide the necessary help for Lucy to have suitable engraving on Merv's memorial plaque.

DICK WRIGHT - Funeral service was attended by Harry Matthew and Mick Riotto on 2nd April and a sympathy card forwarded to Mavis Kemp, daughter of ALEX CCOMOLLATTI of Duaringa by Trevor Harper.

CLARRIE JAMES - DUBBO has completed the manuscript of his book "ONE MAN'S LAW" for the publisher. This is Clarrie's autobiography from Pearl Harbour to Victory in the Pacific and I am sure we will obtain a copy for our memorabilia.

HAROLD JACOBS - LILLI PILLI has forwarded some interesting extracts from the book "Jungle Warfare". These include "The Definition of an Infanteer" and "To The Memory of Fallen Comrades", which material comes from the Australian War Memorial. Thanks Harold for the results of your research.

BRUCE MITCHELL - CAMBERWELL VICTORIA is recovering from bypass No2 and we thank George Nolan of New Gisborne Vic. for keeping in touch with his mate and passing on the information. George, Bruce, Peter Grotto and Neil Halliwell meet a couple of times a year and keep in touch with Paddy O'Connell.

MILTON EVANS - GREENACRE recently received a Council Community Award as a further acknowledgment of his outstanding service to Scouting and in particular to the BADEN POWELL GUILD of NSW. Congratulations Milton.

NORM KING - PICNIC POINT in company with 6 or more "B" Coy boys attended

the funeral service of Johnny Robertson ex 53rd who moved over to 36 Bn at the linking of 55/53 in October 1942. Condolences were passed to John's widow Beryl.

On my request Norm recently made a handsome travelling display case to carry some memorabilia charts. A first-class job and we thank him particularly for it.

ROGER and FRANCES SMITH, it is with deep regret that we record the passing of both Roger and Frances. On the day of Roger's funeral (Monday 19th July) Frances was greatly affected on the day and taken to hospital for attention and sadly passed on later that evening. Roger during his service on committee was involved in selecting the venue for our annual gatherings and his input was always greatly appreciated.

PAUL REES - ST CLAIR His funeral on 31st August was well attended by his good mates. Paul was Ray Gentles' Brother(s)-in- Law, who was indeed deeply affected on this occasion. Paul was 76 years of age.

We also note with deep regret the deletion of other names from our membership list, such as Herb Barlow (Ingleburn), Mick O'Loughlin (Mannering Park) and two "Lost Sheep", Stan Bain and Les Rennie.

## LATENEWS

### "PASSING OF THE DEPOTS"

### CHRISTMAS GREETIN(G)S.

Whilst much earlier than usual but with no, less sincerity on behalf of myself and the committee, I wish you all the very best for the forthcoming festive season.

Editor - Alex