



Issue 2-2006

"THE MICE OF MORESBY" MEMBERS BULLETIN

PRESIDENTS REPORT

by PETER WRIGHT

As we approach the end of another year, some of us can thank heaven for good health. Unfortunately, some of us have not been so lucky, and it is sad to see our numbers dropping. Recently our secretary, Trevor Harper, was asked by one of our former officers, "who is this guy, Peter Wright, who is now president?" So, I hope you will allow me to indulge in some nostalgia. Like many other eighteen year old's, in January 1942 I ended up at Greta Camp and next morning we were rudely awakened by the PT instructor, **SIDDIE YUM**, and a tirade of the foulest language I had ever experienced. In due course we were up on Molly Morgan's hill digging slit trenches army style – "strike, break, rake" shortly after; but with our first inoculations, TAB & TT1, what a shock, and who can forget the march from Greta to Bob's Farm, manning the local beaches with our first issue of live ammo. "Bluey" **MCKNIGHT** was our first casualty, shot in the groin and hospitalised. Obviously we all have our own memories, both good and bad, and I hope many of you have made the effort to write your life story.

Without going into much detail let me look back --- our first reinforcements – AIF guys, (what a blow – sent to a "Chocko" unit.). Final leave and MP's waiting at Central Station to send us back. Boarding the "Taroona" first stop Port Moresby.

As a member of "C" company along with "A" Company and half of "E" Company, it was down to Milne Bay, the Gili Gili plantation with the patrols in the surrounding hills and around the airstrip, being built by the American Engineers, and not forgetting the malaria carrying mosquito that took a heavy toll on the troops.

Back at Moresby at Simpsons Gap where the boys from the 53rd joined us and we became the 55/53rd Australian Infantry Battalion. Our fateful experience at Sanananda I prefer to not write about, I get to emotional when I think about it and when I visited the Bomana War Cemetery a couple of years ago, even though the place is so well looked after. I was pleased to see that the remains of all our mates were there.

Our short respite back in Australia at Alligator Creek where once again we received more reinforcements. Later another trip to Bougainville landing in Empress Augusta Bay, at Torokina and soon making our way along the Numa Numa Trail to harass the Japanese forces. Patrolling behind enemy lines where we once again lost more of more mates.

The wonderful news of 14 August 1945 that the war was over was very welcome and most of us thought that we would very soon be home. But this was not to be. Off to Rabaul to mobilize the Jap forces and get them back home.

As you will recall our troops were sent home on a points system, and eventually, having accumulated 126 points I came back to Australia in May 1946 and was discharged a week later, so ending my army service as a member of 14 Platoon "C" Company the whole time except for a few hospitalisations and a very pleasant few months at Burleigh Heads Convalescent Depot. Service time 19/1/1942 to 29/5/1946.

I am sure that many of the "C" Company boys that I had the pleasure of knowing will recall the good times we had, and like me have blocked out in their minds the unpleasant incidents.

Back to present happenings, let me assure you that the members of your committee are dedicated and do their best to arrange all out functions, especially the Kokoda Walkway at various times of the year and not forgetting that our A G M in November we will be looking for members attendance.

At this juncture I would like to wish all our members and their families the very Best Wishes for the coming Festive Season and may the New Year bring good health and Happiness.

KENNETH GEORGE LAYCOCK, M.Litt., Litt B.BA(AS)(Hon)BA,Comm

Ken was born 18 August 1921 and died 12th January 2006, joined the CMF 1938, sailed to New Guinea in May 1942 and was wounded at Templeton's Crossing whilst serving with the 3rd Battalion. At the outbreak of war, he was posted to a vulnerable point, an oil complex near Rhodes near Sydney. He was serving with members of the 53rd Battalion at this post and some years ago sent us a copy of a flag signed by members of that posting and this is now among our memorabilia in the Glebe Library. He was the author of several books of family and personal history. VALE, Ken.

??? Questions?

Why do you call in a building when it is already built?
Why do they sterilise needles for a lethal injection?
Why can you make amends but not one amend?
Why is it called after dark when it is after light?

Hec LOWE "D" Company writes: - *"I would like to relay a personal experience I had with General VASEY.*

At the time I was wounded, medicated and was walking down with three others up the track towards a dressing station when down the track came General Vasey in a jeep with his driver. He stopped and asked questions and took out his gold cigarette case and we each enjoyed a smoke in his company. He had all his pips and braid displayed. Vasey feared no one. I wonder where the other three who were with me that day are today? I have never forgotten Sanananda and have always remembered the occasion of meeting and talking to General Vasey".

Were you one of the three? If so, I am sure Hec would be glad to know.

The following paragraphs tell the story of 53 hours in the history of the Battalion and may not be known to some of our members. This is an extract from the official report of the action.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required)

UNIT 55/53 Aust Inf Bn Date & Time 6th Dec

SOPUTA 6th Dec 1942

1115 hours ... and general arrangements C.O. and I.O. made recce of fwd area in preparation for relief of 16 Aust Inf Bde. Coy comds arrived 30 minutes later and commenced to recce of area as allotted

1330 hours "B" Coy left bivouac area to relieve 2/3 Bn in area 1190230 Map Ref local grid

1615 hours Remainder of Bn moved forward guided by O.I.. Major A S Hillen remained at Soputa as C.O. Bn Rear Details. Bn arrived in forward area and took up positions. Troops instructed NOT to light fires. The kitchen area established 400 x south along SOPUTA/SANANANDA TRACK

1830 hours Coy Comds conference re general situation.

SOPUTA/SANANANDA 7th Dec 1942

AM 49 Aust Inf Bn attacked on RIGHT flank. Under cover of ARTY and MORTAR fire. Zero hour 0945. 49 Bn used two coys fwd and later two remaining companies were committed to clear area of enemy. On left flank "B" Coy 55/53 Aust Inf Bn provided diversion for main attack on right flank. "B" Coy gained approx. 50X and Coy Cmd was thus able to straiten his line, then dig in, some casualties were suffered. Leading Coys of 49 Bn uncouneted little opposition and moved well forward. Following two Coys met heavy enemy fire and were forced to withdraw, suffering very heavy casualties.

1310 hours C.O. was at conference at 30 Bde H.Q.

1340 hours C.O. conducted recce with Bn 1/1c, Coy Comds, I.O. preparatory to an attack by "A" & "C" coy on enemy posns on RIGHT flank. C.O. issued verbal order on the ground for the attack. Zero 1515 hours

1516 hours Attack commenced, after a short advance in heavy jungle undergrowth both coys encountered heavy M.G. fire from cleverly concealed posns. "C" Coy lost direction and were far too right. One Sec of "C" Coy did cross main track and was held up on the left of the track. Had "C" Coy maintained direction and crossed to left of track as instructed it is felt that "A" Coy would not have been held up by enfilade fire from that direction as the enemy would have been forced to conclude their fire on "C" Coy tps. Casualties were heavy and the unit stretcher bearers performed excellently.

1720 hours From infn brought in by I.O. and Lieut Dellacca, 2 1/c "A" Coy. C.O. decided to commit "B" Coy to an attack on enemy posns via "big white tree" from their Coy area left of track. "B" Coy attacked across the road and took up a position rear "Big white tree." US forces under Haan had relieved "B" Coy at 1615 hours. As a result of the attack the Bn FDLs were pushed fwd approximately distance 100X on the line occupied by 49 Bn in the morning. "A" & "C" Coys were regrouped and sent in to hold the line under Cmd Capt. GILLELAND, "B" Coy Comd. A.A. Pln was also sent to

strengthen the line. Lt Dellacca was left in charge of these troops as his previous good work during the attack enabled him to form a clear picture of the type of country. Despite heavy casualties our troops showed splendid determination to close with the enemy. Thick undergrowth however caused bunching and Jap posns were difficult to sight, sniper activity also took its toll and it appeared the enemy used snipers to pin our tps in areas covered by their automatic weapons. Unit casualties were heavy particularly in junior officers and NCO's Bn H.Q. returned fwd to original HQ for night.

Trps received hot meal prior to attack and generally food to date was good.

SOPUTA/ SANANANDA

8 Dec

AM

Mortar OP's were established in "B" Coy area and MORTAR OFFR assumed command 49 Bn mortars. "D" Coy comd and Pl comds carried out recce of "A" & "C" Coy posns.

1245 hours

Relief of "D" Coy fwd trps commenced. "A" "B" & "C" Coys were regrouped in Bn HQ Area and then received a hot meal and rested.

1500 hours

Bn HQ was established at Map Ref 196223 BUNA REVISITED 2nd Revision and Coys took up posn as per map

TOKYO ROSE Reported from America that one of the women, a voice for Tokyo Rose has died.

With thanks. Reproduced from Article by Laurie Barker Port Macquarie Express

WOMEN WHO DID US PROUD

The Port Macquarie Ex-Servicewomen's Association held a luncheon at PM Golf Club to celebrate 81 years since the end of WWII. Fifty brave women, some guests from as far away as Hastings and Mackay had a memorable day, like ourselves recalling many forgotten moments of their service. Vi Hall, sister of our late comrade John Preston, sent me a cutting from the local paper. Association president Joy Hutchinson said "*All the women had some good tales to tell. We had a wonderful time*". ... Congratulations, ladies and thank you. What would we have done without the support of our women's services, WAAF, AWAS, RNS, AAMWAS, WRANS, nor forgetting those who kept the home front, ... driving buses, munition workers and so on, the land Army and many other occupations?

THE KOKODA WALKWAY is a memorial to all WW2 Veterans, men and women and celebrated its 10th birthday on 3rd October.

Official guests attended the dedication included the Hon Bruce Scott MP – Minister for Veteran Affairs, Mr Paul Zammitt MP Mt Bruce McCarthy – State Member for Strathfield; Councillor Peter Woods – Mayor of Concord, Mr Kila Karo – Consul General of Papua New Guinea.

Other distinguished guests most assuredly included those "Ragged bloody heroes" who took part in the Kokoda battles and the Papua New Guinea campaigns who were there that day, the representatives of the Battalion Associations who come from far and wide to honour their mates no longer with us 2/1, 2/2, 2/3, 2/14, 2/15, 2/33, 55/53 and 3rd Battalions. The opening words of the address given by Rusty Priest, State President NSW RSL on this date, October 1996. Paid tribute to the Manager of RGH Concord, Mr Robert Kinkaid whose concept of a memorial to all who served in WW2 would be unique to Australia and a lasting memorial to their service.

Members of our association are closely associated with the Walkway and act as guides for visitors, especially school children and they are to be congratulated for their dedication. There is a very informative booklet available titled "Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway" at a cost of \$5.00; contact Alice Kang, Hon Secretary of the Walkway, phone 02 9767 8488 and the web site detail www.kokodawalkway.com.au. Well worth a visit.

VALE Sadly again this year we have said goodbye to some of our mates who have made their last "parade" and on some occasions have been able to have some of our comrades attend their last farewell. Also, sadly, we have sometimes found out too late to pay our last respects. Members are urged to ask their families to include their unit identification in obituary notices to allow us the opportunity to be "on parade" with them at this time and to meet family members.

Another year comes to a close, a difficult period in world affairs, but if one looks at world history, it has been always ever so. In this great country we are blessed and may you all have the blessings of a Holy Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2007.

The Editor (Trevor Harper)