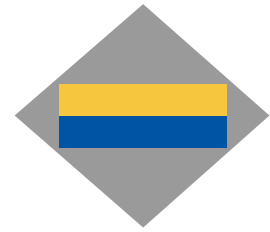


COMRADESHIP

www.2nd14battalion.org.au

Print Post Approved PP3394340023



VOL XXXI No.3
August 2011

President's Report



I am writing this report in sunny Brisbane, after yesterday attending another very successful Queensland reunion. There were about 70+ there, and it was great to catch up with many old friends, and fellow travellers from the 2/14 family. Ian Hopley came over from South Australia, and Gloria and Jim Bisset were also there. About 12 Veterans attended; Matt Power, George Priestly, Norm Stringer, Don Thomas, Jack Thompson, Arthur Toombs, Ken Watt, and Dudley Warhurst making up the 2/14th contingent. A group of NSW Police force members, who recently walked the Kokoda Track, presented me, on behalf of the Battalion, with a plaque in appreciation of the sacrifices made by the Battalion during the Kokoda campaign. I was also proud to have as my guest, my nephew Army Sapper Sean Mulqueen from 2CER, himself already an Afghan veteran.

I appeal to all of you to support us in our endeavours to keep this great Association viable and going. Support us not only by paying your subs as they fall due, and donations, but also by becoming involved in the activities. There is a terrific trip organised to Sydney on the 4th and 5th of November, come along and be part of the ceremonies as we dedicate a plaque at the Memorial Rose Garden, Kokoda Memorial Walkway, Concord. More on this trip is in this issue of Comradeship. The St Georges Church Service, and the Kingsbury Services at the Reservoir Secondary College, and Austin/Repat Hospital are notable events you can attend in late August. Then, why not make a day of it and come down to Geelong for the Kokoda Campaign Memorial Service at Osborne House on the 28th August?

The reprint of Bill Russell's book "The History of the 2/14 Battalion" should be available to us by the end of August. Help the Association by buying a book; the originals are on E-Bay at \$600, so at \$60 per copy we think it is excellent value. There are 2 other books coming on the market at much the same time, the biography of Stan Bissett by Bill James' son, Andrew, and "The Architect of Kokoda", the story of Soc Kienzle.

Our membership is strong at 505. Help us, the next generation, continue on with the tradition for as long as we are able.

**Till the next time,
Michael Ralston, President.**

The Second Fourteenth Battalion: A History of an Australian Infantry Battalion in the Second World War

By W.B. Russell

The Association is pleased to announce that Bill Russell's book is currently being reprinted and you can now place your order for delivery, which is due at the end of August. Please see separate order form which is enclosed with this issue of Comradeship.

The book is based on the 1986 reprint and includes amendments to text and photograph titles from the first edition. It does not have a dust cover, but the original design will form the basis of the hard cover design. There is also a new additional dedication page.

The reprinting of this edition would not have been possible without the generosity of the Quigley Family in memory of Private Denis Edward Quigley (VX125528) who served with the 2/14 Battalion AIF during World War Two. He later served the wider 2/14 Battalion family as a respected committee member of the 2/14 Battalion Association.

We would also like to acknowledge the generous donation from kinfolk member Jan Erskine towards the reprint.

The project has benefited greatly from the specific expertise and interest of kinfolk member Ross Wilkinson, who has seen the project through from the beginning.

KINGSBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - ISURAVA CENTRE FOR LEARNING

On Friday June 24, the new library and classrooms complex at Kingsbury Primary School was officially opened by the Federal Minister and also Member for Batman, the Hon Martin Ferguson. Very appropriately, the centre was named the "Isurava Centre for Learning" and a small group of 2/14 Association members were able to be present for this special occasion.

A large number of students, parents and Dept of Education personnel were also in attendance. The program was structured around the student leaders who told the audience the story of Pte Bruce Kingsbury and the Battle of Isurava. We could not help but be impressed with their understanding and skills in presenting this information to the group.

The Centre was decked out in the battalion colours and the blue and yellow school uniform worn by all the students looked most impressive. The flowers around the unveiled plaques were also blue and yellow – every effort had been made to ensure that Bruce Kingsbury and the 2/14 Battalion were on show!!



L to R: Stephen Muir (Kingsbury PS), Chris Brown (Kingsbury PS), Hon. Martin Ferguson, Michael Ralston, Gavon Armstrong, Rob Eden at the opening of the Isurava Centre for Learning.

OBITUARY

VX21391/3400072 HEARN, PRIVATE EDWARD JAMES 'Ted'

According to Army records, Ted was born in Footscray on 29 January 1919 and enlisted in the Army on 7 May 1940. His records, show that he marched into the 2/14 Battalion on 6 June 1940. Having lied about his real age, he was given the nickname "Junior".

Ted was posted to 11 Platoon in B Company and took part in the Syrian and Kokoda campaigns where he was wounded on 28 August 1942 when B Company moved into the Isurava defences.

With the end of the Japanese Kokoda offensive and their gradual withdrawal back to the northern beachhead, a composite force was created called Chaforce, being under the command of Lt Col Hugh Challen, later 2/14 Battalion CO. Ted was one of a number of 2/14 men who formed A Company of the force where he was posted to Number 4 Section in 2 Platoon.

Chaforce's initial task was to outflank the retreating Japanese and destroy them, however, as the retreat became a rout, this role did not come about. Each of the Chaforce Companies were attached to the battalions of 25 Brigade for the assault on Gona where the bulk of its casualties occurred. A Company was attached to 2/31 Battalion for this battle.

After Gona, the men were returned to their parent units and Ted saw further service with 2/14 Battalion in the Markham-Ramu Campaign where he contracted scrub typhus and marched out of the battalion on 26 November 1943. Ted was discharged from the Army on 4 September 1945.

Ted re-enlisted in the Australian Army on 28 September 1950 with his correct date of birth, 29 January 1922, and was posted to 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, where he saw service at the Battle of Kapyong in the Korean War. It was here that the battalion held up the entire Chinese advance, most appropriately, on 25-26 April 1951 and was awarded the US Presidential Unit Citation.

On return to Australia Ted was discharged from the Army on 15 October 1951.

Ted was proud of his association with his former 2/14 Battalion comrades and attended many reunions and ANZAC Day marches in the City. Unfortunately his later years were spent with a deteriorating physical condition and he marched either in the comfort of a vehicle or in a wheelchair. In these instances, Ted surely appreciated the on-going support of Rob Eden, who saw to it on many occasions that Ted could continue to enjoy a beer and a chat with his old 2/14 mates.



Ted at the 2010 Hawthorn Kokoda game, with Rob Eden.

From South Australian Representative, Ian Hopley

Greetings from the land of the crow eaters.

Reporting on sick parade is Bob Thompson. Bob has been a little off colour of late and is spending time at the North Eastern Community Hospital and the Walkerville Residential Care Facility with daily visits from wife Joan. Bob has been as bright as a button when we visited and has been talking of being allowed home in the near future. Bob spoke of his recollections of the Isurava trip in 2006 and how pleasing it is that so many young people are visiting the Kokoda area these days which he sees as a sign of respect to all those who fought there.



Bob and Joan Thompson with Kim and Anna Hopley

The unstoppable **Keith Lambert** SX 24140 sends his regards to all members. Keith turned 90 recently and his family held a large gathering to celebrate his milestone.

In May, Keith and his brother Don (also a 2/14th veteran) were the guests of honour at the 125th celebrations of the Crystal Brook Football Club (SA) anniversary. Both Keith and Don played for Crystal Brook for many years. Keith is the oldest know ex-player and received a standing ovation when he was invited to toss the coin for the seniors match. Don's wife Mary has also been on the sick list lately and we wish her all the best for a speedy recovery.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting **Barbara Williams**, her sister, Rosslyn, and Rosslyn's husband, Simon in Blackwood, South Australia. Barbara and Rosslyn together with their sister, Bronwyn, are the daughters of the late Pte. **Arthur Turberville Williams (Toby)** WX9329. Arthur served the 2/14th Battalion with distinction between 19.1.42 and 28.11.43 and saw action in the Middle East, Papua (Kokoda and Gona campaigns) and New Guinea (Ramu Valley campaign). (See page 7 in this edition for a detailed profile on Arthur).

The Williams sister remembered fondly their father occasionally sharing with them a number of stories of his experiences with the battalion but, like so many of our veterans, he was a "silent man" who generally kept his wartime experiences to himself. Hopefully we will have new kinfolk members from SA in the near future.

Hawthorn Kokoda Game

Once again the Hawthorn Football Club has made our veterans welcome over a weekend in which they honour the men who fought along the Kokoda Track and raise funds for the Kokoda Foundation. On Friday, 3 June, Jim Coy, MM and a group from the 39 Battalion, joined the team at their training venue, and were later given an opportunity to talk to the players about their experiences.

The Kokoda experience is well-honoured by the club. Granite blocks, with the words of the Isurava memorial, "Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice" are mounted overhead in the training room. Within two years of joining the team, all new members undertake the journey over the Track, with a view to showing the young men what their forebears endured. The experience helps the members understand the necessity of working together as a team, while giving your all as an individual.

The match itself was against Freemantle on Sun 5 June, and was attended by Jim, Col Blume, Lionel Smith and Bob Iskov. Unfortunately, Bob took ill at the ground and ended up in hospital.

The match ended in a 22 point win to Hawthorn, after trailing by 18 points at the last break.

After the game, coach Alastair Clarkson said it had been the club's chance to acknowledge all wartime veterans as the club was not part of the annual Anzac Day commemorations. Hawks Forward, Cyril Rioli went a step further and said it had played a motivating part in

getting his side back in the contest.

"This was the Kokoda game and the pillars that they had over there. Endurance, courage, mateship, sacrifice. We took that into the last half," he told Fox Sports.



Jim Coy, MM chats with Hawthorn ruckman, Max Bailey.

KOKODA - 70TH ANNIVERSARY 2012 - RSL ANZAC APPEAL

We have recently been approached by RSL Victoria's Appeals Department, who will be running a public education campaign around Kokoda in tandem with the ANZAC Appeal in April, and will be commemorating Kokoda with a \$30 70th anniversary badge. As you may know, money raised by the ANZAC Appeal is available to Associations such as ours for various projects which directly support veterans and widows. For the last three years we have been fortunate to receive grants from Appeal funds to assist with the cost of producing Comradeship.

They are inviting Kokoda veterans to assist with this education campaign via newspaper, radio and television interviews, such as occurred this year with the Rats of Tobruk. Kokoda veterans would also be honoured as part of the pre-ANZAC Day game procession at the MCG.

All Kokoda veterans who would like to be part of this campaign will be assisted with transport, briefings and chaperones and anything else required to participate in the media activity, which will commence in March next year.

Unfortunately as this is an initiative of the Victorian RSL, only Victorian veterans will be able to take part. Descendants of veterans are also invited to take part. Secretary, Chris Ingram will be contacting Kokoda veterans in Victoria to see if you wish to be involved within the next month or so, but you may wish to give her a ring on 9561 5790 to express your interest.

2/16 Battalion Association Events

Members of the 2/14 Battalion Association are cordially invited to attend the following:

- 2/16th Battalion Reunion lunch at the Old Hepburn Hotel, Main Road Hepburn Springs on Sunday, 16th October 2011 at 12.00 noon. Cost \$25.
- The Dedication of 2/16th plaque at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT on Tuesday, 18th October 2011, 10.00 am

Please advise Trevor Ingram at least one week before the date of either of these events if you wish to attend. Trevor can be contacted on Tingram@skm.com.au or telephone (mob) 0419333347

Tell the Children

In 2007, The Battle for Australia Commemorative Committee (Qld) published the book *Tell the Children*. It is a collection of stories described as "Memories from WW2 veterans and essays from school children."

Patrick O'Keeffe OAM, President of the Battle For Australia Committee, QLD, wrote,

Tell the Children is not intended to be a definitive history of the Defence of Australia from 1942 to 1945. Rather, it sets out to inform the younger generations of Australians about the experience of those whose sacrifice

and service to our nation, in its time of need, underpins the freedom we enjoy today."

Proceeds from the book are intended to be used by the committee for promotion and education about the campaigns that directly supported the defence of Australia.

The 299 page book is currently available for \$30 incl postage to anywhere in Australia.

Please contact Qld representative, Trevor Pryor, to secure your copy. (See contact page for details.)

SYDNEY VISIT

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY, 4 & 5
NOVEMBER 2011**

All members, but especially those from NSW and Sydney, are cordially invited to a service to dedicate a 2/14 Infantry Battalion plaque at the Memorial Rose Garden, Kokoda Memorial Walkway, Concord. The service, during which you will be able to lay wreaths in memory of your loved ones, will commence at **10.00 am on Friday 4 November**, with a welcome by former ANZAC broadcaster, Sir John Moore.

This is just the first event in a 2-day program. Members can get further details of the program by referring to the June 2011 edition of Comradeship, **but please note that the plaque dedication ceremony has been brought forward to 10.00 am.**

You can also obtain further information about the program from the organiser, the Association's NSW representative, Ron Inglis, by telephoning him after hours on (02) 9642 3563 or email inglisrw@gmail.com.

Ron has done a terrific job in organising this special program of events, not least of which will be the dinner on **Friday 4 November, commencing at 6.30 for 7.00 pm at the Burwood RSL Club, Shaftesbury Road, Burwood.** Rusty Priest, former National President of the RSL, will be the speaker.

If you wish to come to the dinner, please let us know as soon as possible by **completing the booking form which is enclosed with this copy of Comradeship as it is necessary for catering purposes. Please also use the form to advise us of any special dietary restrictions.***

We urge all our members, wherever you live, to take this opportunity to meet up with friends and comrades in Sydney. We're looking forward to hearing from you. If you are not coming to the dinner, we still **need to know if you are coming to the plaque dedication ceremony** so we have some idea of seating required. Phone or email Chris Ingram on (03) 9561 5790 or chris.ingram@margni.com to let us know.

* You will notice that the form is sharing space with the 2/14 Battalion History order form. Due to the notice of the AGM, and having a limit of 2 enclosures in Comradeship, we've had to put the History order and Dinner booking on the same sheet.

Queensland Reunion

78 enthusiastic guests gathered for 30th Reunion in Brisbane. We were blessed with the company of 12 veterans from the 2/14th, 39th, PIR and PIB. It was sad to hear the news that Stan Boshammer had passed away during the previous 48 hours. Also disappointing was the inability of veteran Ken Watt (2/14) to attend and the late apology from Paul Nerau, Consul General for PNG who had to fly home at short notice.

However those who attended were remarkably fit and willing to engage anyone who approached them.



Standing:

Bill Bellairs, George Palmer (39th), Arthur Toombs, Jack Thompson (2/14), Alan Hooper (ANGAU, PIB), Jim Stillman (39th), Matt Power (2/14).

Seated:

Norm Stringer, Don Thomas, George Priestley, Dudley Warhurst (2/14), Frank Wust (PIR)

The formalities began with a moving tribute to our great mate, Stan Bisset. Paul Croll had put together a wonderful review of an extraordinary man, one which held the assembly absolutely silent and moved many of us to a tear or two

We quickly recovered as Andrew James "launched" his book, *Kokoda Wallaby*, Stan's biography. Andrew spoke of the emotive experience of working with Stan and Gloria in bringing this work to fruition. His generous donation of 5 books to the raffle caused a rush for extra tickets.

Gloria Bisset showed great strength in expressing her thanks to Andrew for his dedication to the task of producing a story with which Stan had been well pleased. (The book is in stores as of August 1st.)



Andrew James with Gloria Bisset

President Michael reported on the happenings of the Battalion Assn. in Melbourne. Shortly after, he was presented with a delightful plaque on behalf of a group of 6 officers from the NSW Police Force. The group had not long completed the "Track" under the guidance of great supporter, Aidan Grimes and had expressed a desire to attend the reunion.

Inspector Mark Carrick, representing the officers, spoke of feeling humble in the presence of the vets knowing what they had endured in 1942. He referred to the debt owed to them by all Australians and the role of police officers in daily protecting the way of life we enjoy through their actions.

The inscription on the plaque reads, *"In appreciation of the sacrifice made by members of the 2/14th Infantry Battalion during the Kokoda Campaign."* The group was a wonderful addition to the reunion.

All who attended had an enjoyable day of fellowship, mixing with the vets and building on the growing bond that has developed among their families and supporters. Many thanks to Ann Pryor, Elaine and Fran Ralston for their untiring assistance during the day.

TED HEARN – A Personal Tribute

VETERAN OF KOKODA AND KOREA

29/1/1922 -11/6/2011



By Phillip Shehan. Dr Shehan interviewed Ted as part of an oral history project for the 2/14 Battalion and LaTrobe University. Part of this text appeared in *The Age*, 25 June, 2011.

Ted Hearn was born in Cavendish, in the Western district. He never knew his parents and grew up in a boys' home and foster homes.

Ted met his friend, Jim Rees, on the way home from school at the age of eight and so began a lifelong relationship with five generations of the Rees family. Ted had no blood relatives that he knew of but he regarded the Rees family as his own.

Ted was working at a tannery when the Second World War broke out and his official foster parents who were on a trip to England sent him a telegram telling him not to join the army until they returned. He complied and then presented himself to the recruiters in the old booking offices at Flinders street station.

'I went up to the bloke there and he says "How old are ya?" I said "Eighteen," and he says "Aahw, you're too young". So I went to the next window and the bloke says "How old are ya?" I said "Twenty one." "Oh yeah, right oh." and the next thing you know I'm marching up to the Town Hall. There's a lady grabs me and says "Son, you're too young. Don't go." I said "I'm goin' lady whether you like it or not. Hoo-rooh".'

Ted joined the 2/14 battalion AIF and first saw action in the hard fought but largely unrecognised Syrian campaign. This was the genesis of the 'Silent' Seventh Division, where the enemy were not Germans or Italian but the Vichy French - Foreign Legion and tough colonial troops - who the allies were hoping to win over to join De Gaulle's Free French forces. Ted had a complaint common to many veterans of that campaign - being strafed by Vichy French aircraft which they had mistaken for 'friendly' planes because of the similarity in shape and markings. After the French surrender, there were the usual soldiers' high jinks, including 'knocking off' supplies to sell to the locals for beer money. Ted and an engine driver mate carried it a bit far by borrowing a steam engine for a day trip to the border. Nobody missed it.

After the entry of Japan into the war, the 7th Division returned to Australia and then on to New Guinea, where Ted and the 2/14 were the first experienced AIF troops to reinforce the hard pressed Militia battalions holding back the Japanese at Isurava on the Kokoda track. Ted was wounded in the hip by a mortar round and although the bleeding would not stop, walked the 90 km back along the track. Ted

returned for the final battles of the Kokoda campaign at Gona and Buna - the Japanese landing grounds on the north coast.

In the later Ramu Valley campaign, Ted collapsed with scrub typhus, a disease responsible for many deaths among the troops. He was repatriated unconscious to Australia, waking up in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital wondering where he was and how he got there.

After recovery Ted went before a medical board and was classified 'B', never to serve outside Australia, and ended the war in a supply unit. Ted then took a 'gap' year before returning to employment with a tyre company because 'money was getting short'.

In spite of his medical classification, Ted volunteered and was accepted for service in the Korean War, joining the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. In Ted's own words:

'Korea had only two temperatures, boiling hot and freezing cold. I thought we should apologise to the Koreans and give the country back to them. The funny part was that when we first went ahead we went right up to the capital of North Korea. We got up there and we thought "This is good; the war's over in five minutes." Then the Chinese come in and they soon got rid of us. Pushed us right back to where we started from.'

Ted was present at the forgotten war's forgotten Battle of Kapyong, where the Australians held off wave after wave of attacking Chinese who were attempting to break through to Seoul. 'They were like ants; they kept coming at you, blowing bugles and trumpets, making funny noises.' The battle concluded on Anzac day 1951. Ted said it was worse than anything he had experienced in the Second World War. His unit received a US Presidential citation.

Returning to Australia, Ted's time in the army ended when he absented himself from white washing rocks in Victoria Barracks square to watch Footscray play Hawthorn. Hauled up before the Colonel, a fellow Kokoda veteran who recognized Ted's service ribbons, Ted explained that he knew he had done the wrong thing but if he had to start being a raw recruit, again, he gave up. Ted received an honourable discharge two days later.

Ted returned to employment with Dunlop until retirement.

Ted is survived by his god-daughter Sandy, other members of the Rees family, and the boys of the 2/14 Battalion AIF and 3 RAR.

Men of the 2/14 Battalion - Index Offer -

The structure of *Men of the 2/14 Battalion* means you can find references to people if you know the company or platoon they were part of, but it is difficult to find all the references when men were moved to different platoons.

As I have always found this rather frustrating, I spent some time last year putting together a Name index for this book. At this stage, the index is an electronic file, in Word, but if you have a copy of the book, and would like the index, please email me (jillebear@gmail.com). You can also contact me if you would like me to look up details for you. Editor

EVENT CALENDAR 2011

St Georges Church Service

Sunday, 21st August, 10.30 am
4 Chapel St, East St Kilda

Kingsbury Services

Friday, 26th August
9.30 am Reservoir District Secondary
College
11.00 am Austin/Repat Hospital

Kokoda Campaign Memorial Service

Sunday, 28th August, 11.00 am
Osborne House, Geelong

AGM & 1st Committee Meeting

Sunday, 18th September, 11.00 am,
Shrine of Remembrance

Annual Pilgrimage

Sunday, 18th September, 1.30 pm
Shrine of Remembrance

2nd Committee Meeting

Sunday, 4th December, 11.30 am
East Malvern RSL

August Commemorations

The last weeks of August see some significant events of commemoration taking place around Victoria. These ceremonies, all quite different in nature, provide a focus for reflecting on the battles of the Kokoda Track that occurred during August and September, 1942, and ensuring that all those who fought in the 2/14th Battalion are remembered. Let's not forget.

Andrew Gillison Memorial Service – Healing the Wounds of War

Sunday, 21 Aug 10.30 am, at St George's Uniting Church, 4 Chapel St, East St Kilda.

This important service has been held annually in remembrance of the 14 Battalion and the death at Gallipoli of their Chaplain, Rev. Andrew Gillison.

After World War II, members of the 2/14th Battalion and the 14/32nd Battalion also became involved in the annual memorial service and since 1994 Vietnam veterans have also attended with other veterans

This year the guest speaker will be Laurie Parks who served 1968 - 69 with 110 Sig Squadron SVN

A regular feature of the service is the opportunity to light a candle for personal remembrance of loved ones.

After the service LUNCH will be hosted by the 2/10 Field Regiment RAA and St. George's congregation

RSVP 9692 9426 by 5 Aug if staying for lunch (\$7) at the adjacent Drill Hall after the service.

Kingsbury Service I

Fri, 26th Aug, 9.30am, Reservoir District Secondary College, 855 Plenty Rd, Reservoir

The memorial service is held annually on the closest Friday to the death of Bruce Kingsbury on 29 August 1942.

A member of 2/14 Battalion Association will address the children with a short speech. The Last Post and Reveille will be played by Howard Cornish.

The service is attended by the year seven classes who will have their Bruce Kingsbury research projects on display in the library. Children from the Kingsbury Primary School years 5 & 6 will also be attending.

We urge Veterans if at all possible to come to this service as it is important for the children to have a perspective on the events surrounding Bruce Kingsbury's heroic actions.

Morning tea will be served after the service. If proceeding to the service at Heidelberg Repat, follow these directions: From Reservoir District SC turn L out of school, turn R into Kingsbury Drive, turn R into Waterdale Road, cross over Bell Street, turn L into Gate 9. Trip should take about 10 minutes.

Kingsbury Service II

Fri, 26th Aug, 11 am, Austin/ Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Waterdale Rd, Heidelberg

In the grounds of the Austin/Repat Hospital is a memorial garden that was begun with the placement of a plaque by 2/14th Battalion. The garden has grown considerably since then, and is the site of a wreath-laying ceremony, that follows a short service in the chapel, in which the Roll of Honour, the names of those who died on active service, of the 2/14th Battalion is read out.

Plan to stay on for a 'soup and sandwich' lunch, provided by the hospital. Disabled parking is available close to the chapel, use Gate 9 in Waterdale Rd.

Kokoda Campaign Memorial Service

Sun, 28th Aug, 11 am, Osborne House, Swinburne St, North Geelong

Geelong and surrounding district members in particular may wish to attend this service at the WW2 monument in the grounds of Osborne House. The service, organised by the National Servicemen's Association, Geelong and District Sub-Branch will commence at 11.00 am and at the conclusion of the service, all present will be invited to take part in a barbecue (no charge) and refreshments at Osborne House.

If you are attending or you would like further information please contact Neville Lewis on 0352779352 or Mobile 0419 383 386 or email: neville.lewis6@gmail.com

Do you need a lift to any of these Memorial Services?

If so, please telephone Chris Ingram on 9561 5790 at least 1 week before the service and she will endeavour to arrange a lift.

70 Years Ago - The Syrian Campaign

In June and July of 1941, the 2/14 Battalion was part of a force that invaded Syria and Lebanon, to wrest control from the Vichy French. The Battalion was involved in bitter fighting round Jezzine and Damour.

Looking over the photos from my recent trip to Lebanon, while referring to the maps in Russell's *History of the 2/14th Battalion*, I was struck again by the problems of terrain that aren't apparent until you see the landscape. Without contours, the maps seem flat, the territory straightforward. The realization that every stream marked is at the bottom of a deep ravine changes the scene dramatically.



Mt Kharatt – the peak at top right, across the valley from Jezzine

On Mt Kharatt, near Jezzine, the French had taken up strategic positions, at various points on the mountain, commanding views in all directions, about 1000m above the valley floor. On 25 June, the Battalion, in a costly action, attempted to dislodge the French from these positions.



The western slopes of Mt Kharatt, scene of action 25 June, 1941



Terrain on the slopes around Mt Kharatt where the battalion fought and slept

The area around Damour, which was the scene of action on the days following 3 July, 1941, though not as high, is similarly rugged. From the narrow coastal strip, only a kilometre wide, the land rises steeply into the mountains, cut east-west at regular intervals by rivers running through deep gorges; an area the French deemed impassable. Following zig-zag goat tracks, where even

mules could not be used, the battalion, to gain the high ground around Damour, had to negotiate this series of precipitous rivers and ridges. A French colonel is alleged to have said, "I thought the Foreign Legion were the best soldiers in the world, until I saw the Australians coming over the hills at Damour."



The precipitous slopes above Damour



Damour River gorge

Let us never forget the hardships endured and sacrifices made by the men of the 2/14 Battalion.

Jill Bear

Arthur Turberville Williams (Toby) WX 9329

Arthur Williams was born in Wales in 1904. As a 23 year old, he migrated to Australia and sought work as a farm hand and later share farmer in Western Australia. He enlisted in the AIF in October 1940 in Claremont WA and was posted to the 2/14th Battalion in January 1942 in the Middle East. Arthur was nicknamed 'Toby' whilst in the 2/14th.

Arthur sailed to the Middle East where he joined the 2/14th as a reinforcement. Matt Power recalls a large number of Western Australians coming into the battalion as replacements towards the end of the campaign; the first 'outsiders' to join the battalion. Arthur then saw service with the battalion during the Syrian occupation. His daughter, Barbara, recalls him discussing how cold it was in Syria during winter and it later came to light that it had been one of the coldest winters there on record.

Returning from the Middle East, Arthur was with the battalion in Queensland for training around Yandina, then sailed to Port Moresby and saw action on the Kokoda Track and at the Gona beaches. On the rare occasions he spoke with his family regarding his experiences, he talked of being amazed to see the Salvation Army tea posts on the Kokoda Track and being given a hot cup of Bovril in the middle of nowhere.

He also spoke of the constant rain and mud and told of one experience where a Japanese bullet went straight through the rim of his hat. He also spoke of being up a tree in pouring rain and eyeballing a Japanese soldier also up a tree nearby. Arthur told his daughters, 'we saw each other, climbed down our respective trees, and walked our separate ways'. According to Barbara, 'our dad constantly praised the work of the fuzzy wuzzy angels on the track. He held them in awe'.

Arthur later saw action in the Ramu Valley and spoke of digging fox holes in constant mud and rain in the area. He had been appointed a medic and despite having very little medical training, he told of treating serious injuries and even giving injections. Whilst in the Ramu Valley, Arthur contracted acute malaria and scrub typhus and was returned to Australia. Obviously due to his illness, a long period of convalescence followed and he remained on the strength of the battalion until 28.11.1943.

Arthur met his wife to be, Iris, in Adelaide whilst he was with the battalion. After the war, Arthur returned to Wales for a while before returning to Australia, marrying Iris and settling in the Adelaide Hills where they had 3 daughters and later 2 grandchildren. He worked as a gardener and a warehouse manager before retiring at the age of 70. Arthur never missed a dawn service or ANZAC Day march in Adelaide and remained a proud and loyal association member right up until his passing in 1990.

Ian Hopley

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Around The Traps



NSW Rep, Ron Inglis, son of **W 'Jock' Inglis** (VX48007) asks if anyone knows the name of the third digger in the famous Damien Parer photo of Albert Moore and Val Gardner; the one on the left drinking out of a mug? Contact Ron on 0296423563 or inglissrw@gmail.com

Queensland rep, Trevor Pryor recently visited **Ken Watt** (QX47956). They sat and chatted for a while and Ken was chuffed that Trevor had found him. Ken hasn't seen anyone in the Battalion for 10-12 years mainly because he doesn't drive any more. He is pretty good and is looking forward to attending the Queensland reunion. Ken was in HQ for his time (NG & B). He remembers Arthur Toombs best, although Dudley Warhurst and Matt Power were names familiar to him.

Max Caldwell (VX92324) represented the Battalion at a recent Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC) luncheon in Melbourne. Among the speakers, Alan 'Kanga' Moore (39 Battalion) got by far the best ovation when he told the assembly how he 'felt a bit tired' at Gona, fell asleep and woke up in Port Moresby to be told he had scrub typhus, malaria, hook worm and hepatitis!

John Rennie, our current Rep in PNG, maintains a website on Bomana War Cemetery in PNG (www.bomanaguidebook.com). John became involved with the battalion initially with the establishment of the Isurava Monuments, as a friend of the Bissets, and some others within the 2/14 family. He is the son of Jack Rennie, trainer of the recently deceased boxer Lionel Rose, and he was pictured in a recent edition of The Age, taking his father to Lionel's funeral.

On the subject of Bomana Cemetery, the committee extends its thanks to **Aidan Grimes**, trek operator, who, at his own expense, again laid a wreath in memory of the 2/14 Battalion at Bomana on ANZAC Day.

When **Matt Power** (V16374) came to Melbourne for the reunion earlier this year, he visited his former 15 Platoon comrades, **Alex 'Sandy' Thomson** (VX15794) and **Alf Rumpff** (VX16378).

He found both in good health, though Sandy's short term memory isn't what it was.

Shane Chisholm is seeking any information about **Alfred Charles Neuman** (VX110094). Alf passed away 3 years ago and is Shane's wife's grandfather. He was one of the reinforcements who joined the battalion in October, 1944, and was initially posted to the mortar platoon. He was later attached to 21st Brigade Headquarters, as a driver, before returning to the battalion for the Balikpapan invasion. Alf would attend the Eaglehawk Cenotaph each year without fail and very much enjoyed a beer with his mates until the end. If you remember him or have any information whatsoever about his involvement in the campaign, please contact Shane by email Shane.Chisholm@bendigobank.com.au or Ph 0354856558

Following his collapse at the Kokoda Game, **Bob Iskov** (VX15237) has had a number of tests and appears to have developed bi-rhythmic heart beats, leaving him a bit short on breath and energy. However, he is still on the go, and celebrated his 91st birthday a few weeks ago. The family is now preparing for his and his wife's 65th wedding anniversary on 17th August. It will be a quiet family afternoon tea, but Bob is very excited at the prospect.

On a sadder note, we record the passing of **Stan Boshammer** (QX29600) and **Alan Treloar** (VX14095). Their obituaries will appear in the next issue.

We note with regret, too, that **Val McAllester**, widow of Jim McAllester (VX14147), passed away in mid June.



Ken Phelan (L), with **Stan Bisset**, **Col Blume**, **Con Vapp**, **Matt Power**, **Roy Watson**, **Doug McLean** (39th).

Ken Phelan who served as a signaller with the 39 Battalion passed away on 23 July. Ken (front left in photo below) was a member of the 2000 Isurava Survey Team. He fought at Isurava and the younger members of the survey team found it an honour to listen to him relive the battles during the time they camped at Isurava. The outcome of the Survey Team's effort was the building of the current Isurava Memorial.