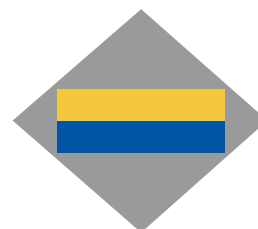


COMRADESHIP

www.2nd14battalion.org.au

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VOL XXXII No.1
March 2012

President's Report



Welcome to this, the first publication of Comradeship for 2012. I hope you all had a great Christmas. Ours was in Canberra, and so we missed all the hail and floods at our home town Eltham, on Christmas day.

This year is an important one for your Association. It is the 70th anniversary of the Kokoda battles of WW2, and we will be having a special ceremony of remembrance at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne for this; more information is enclosed. I thank newer member John Smith for taking control of this activity. The stage one upgrade of The Kokoda Memorial Walk at Fern Tree Gully National Park should also be completed, with an appropriate opening ceremony planned with State Government and Parks Victoria. I thank long-standing member Marg Briggs for so ably

representing the Association during the planning and organisation of the project.

Andrew James, the author of Kokoda Wallaby, will be taking a group of Gippsland Koori youth across the Kokoda track in May this year. They were in Melbourne recently and were shown around the Shrine. I was able to organise three Veterans to talk with these young future leaders about their experiences on the Kokoda Track in 1942. Thank you to Bob Iskov and Jim Coy from the 2/14, and Peter Holloway from the 39th Battalions for giving your time to this worthy cause.

During 2011 year 9 Australian History students from Footscray City College interviewed Kokoda veterans including Lionel Smith, Bob Iskov, and Bob Nichols. This material was then used to produce a book "Stories from the Kokoda Track" and recently Elaine and I, and a few others attended the launch, also at the Shrine in Melbourne. Look out for it, as it is a good read from this progressive school.

Please continue to support your Association as much as you can, the Melbourne reunion and ANZAC day march in April will soon be upon us. Participate in both. It is a great way to meet other members.

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

2012 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - \$25

2012 membership subscriptions will fall due on 30 April 2012 and we would be pleased to receive them by the due date. Please use the remittance form in this copy of Comradeship. If you wish to pay directly by internet or bank transfer please email chris.ingram@margni.com for banking details.

If you joined the Association between October and December 2011 your membership subscription will not be due until April 2013.

Remember timely payment saves your Association the additional costs caused by following up overdue membership subs.

Please note:

- Payment for veteran membership is optional.
- Widows of 2/14 veterans are not required to pay the membership fee.
- Do keep us informed about Changes of Address

DO YOU LIKE TO WRITE OR MAYBE YOU'RE A BIT OF AN ARTIST

THIS COMPETITION MAY BE FOR YOU

Ex-servicemen and women, spouses, widows, children and grandchildren (over the age of 18), living in Victoria, are eligible to enter the 50th Annual Victorian Veterans Story Writing and Art Competition.

The competition began in 1962 as a therapy exercise for returned veterans, but is now open to the wider veteran community.

Categories include story writing, poetry, art/painting, craftwork and photography. All skill levels are encouraged to enter.

Entries will be displayed at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in October. Prizes for the best entries in each category will be awarded at a presentation ceremony in late November.

Entry forms will be available from Monday 2nd April from Siobhan Hodgins (03) 9496 2290 (metropolitan) or 1800 134 865 (country residents).

Details of this competition originally appeared in Vet Affairs Summer 2011, a copy of which was sent to the Secretary by Les Cook (Canberra). Les reckons he would love to enter if he lived in Victoria.

Come on all you budding 2/14th writers and artists, now's your chance to express yourself.

**Entries close on Tuesday, 31st July
2012.**

MELBOURNE REUNION LUNCH

MONDAY, 23 APRIL AT
12.30 FOR 1.00 PM

THE CELTIC CLUB, 316/320 Queen Street, corner of Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

(03) 9670 6472

Cost : \$55 per head. Please see enclosed booking sheet for further information. Booking forms must be returned no later than **Monday 18th April**.

The Association will cover beer, wine and soft drinks. We ask that you please pay for spirits.

Lunch will be held in The Function Room, 1st floor (please take the lift).

Direct access to the lift is via the second door from Lonsdale Street. As there are a few steps at this entrance you may wish to enter via the first door and then proceed through the ground floor bar. A ramp can be provided via this route for wheelchairs or walking frames.

Public Transport: Nearest station is Flagstaff (underground)

For those people attending the Commemorative Tree Service at the Shrine of Remembrance: Tram -St Kilda Road/Swanston Street, change at La Trobe Street for tram to Queen Street.

Parking: Queen Victoria Carpark (as Mondays are not market days) is recommended. The cost - \$2/hr with a maximum of \$9 for all day. This carpark is about three blocks from The Celtic Club. Adjacent to the Club the limit is 2 hours free parking.

Also, within a couple of blocks:

- The Old Mint Building, cnr William & Latrobe –parking in William Street
- Flagstaff Gardens –parking in King Street

Master of Ceremonies: Rob Eden, will be hosting the event, as usual. Please contact him (03 9419 4393) if there's something you'd like to have included in the programme.

ANZAC Day Commemorative March Arrangements



MELBOURNE

Please note that this year the assembly point has changed and the assembly time and step off is earlier.

Assembly Point – St Kilda Road on the City side of Linlithgow Avenue, ie. outside the National Gallery.

Step Off - The 7th Division “step off” time is 9.30 am sharp so marchers should be in position by 9.15 am at the latest. Look for the Banner.

Vehicles will be provided for all veterans who would prefer to ride. The vehicles will be labelled with the unit and this year they will be positioned behind marching veterans. There will be no open trucks, just cars and jeeps. Meet at our form up point, at the 2/14 banner, and we will arrange a vehicle for you if required. Please let Chris Ingram (03 9561 5790) know if you prefer to ride in a car.

This year, we will not have access to the wheelchairs that were available last year. However, if you are one of those who feel a bit stiff early in the morning and need a bit of assistance but who would like to be with the Battalion, please contact secretary, Chris Ingram so arrangements can be made. Families may wish to borrow a wheelchair for the occasion.

We are looking for volunteers to carry the banner and flags so step up and take your place to commemorate your father's or grandfather's memory. Please contact Karen Brkic (03 9318 5394) if you would like to be involved in this way.

The March is a formal commemorative event and the organisers request that marchers be smartly dressed (no sporting jumpers, track suits, torn jeans or running shoes) and adopt a disciplined demeanour as they march, 6 abreast. Children who march should be of an age to understand the significance of their involvement in the event. Carrying photographs of veterans is discouraged and if you are a relative wearing medals for a veteran, they are to be worn on the right breast not the left. We will march up to the forecourt of the Shrine past the VIP dais and perform an “eyes right” at the Eternal Flame, the banner and flag bearers will dip the banner and flags at the same point before the entire party left wheels past the Flame and disperses beyond the main flag poles.

Once again our comrades from the 2/16 Battalion Association have kindly extended an invitation to join them for lunch and/or drinks and a chat at the Lord Palmerston Hotel after the March. The hotel is located at the corner of Palmerston Crescent & Kingsway in South Melbourne.

The RSL has advised that parking at Federation Square car park will be available for any car in which there is a veteran for \$7.00. All you will need to do is go to the office of the car park and a parking officer will organise a special permit at the reduced price. The RSL will also provide golf buggies at the car park to take veterans to the start of the March.

BRISBANE

Arrangements will be the same as last year. The official protocol asks that you wear appropriate clothes; no photos to be carried; and only one relative per vet.

Please gather by 9.30am in George St, near the park - look for the banner.

I will send further advice to those I have email addresses for and any others should contact me, Trevor Pryor, closer to the date on 07 34824768. If needed for the return trip to Federation Carpark, the buggies will be available near the Simpson and His Donkey statue.

Premier's Lunch - Have you been invited?

- Victorian Kokoda Veterans may receive an invitation to the Premier's lunch, which is to be held on Monday, 16th April. If you have been invited we'd like to know. Please give Chris Ingram a ring on 9561 5790 (or email: chris.ingram@margni.com)
- Again, Victorian Kokoda veterans may be contacted to do a press or media interview. This will be in relation to the 70th Anniversary of the Kokoda Campaign. Don't hide your light under a bushel; please ring Chris if you've been contacted.

70 Years Ago

BOB ISKOV'S JOURNEY HOME

I was an original member of the Mortar Platoon in 2/14 Battalion and sailed back to Australia in that epic voyage in early 1942.

We travelled by train running alongside the Suez Canal to embark at Suez, an uneventful trip, but on arrival, it was discovered that Pte Jack Mann was missing. We rested on the sand overnight, to board the Ile de France early next morning, lamenting the loss of our mate 'Brower'. Just before the ship sailed, an army truck pulled up and a group of Indian troops handed Mann out of the truck. He'd fallen off the train somewhere, and was lucky it only travelled at about 15 miles an hour. We had no idea of our destination, but expected it would be Singapore, or that area.



SS Ile de France

After an uneventful voyage, we disembarked at Bombay and moved into Colaba Barracks for a few days. Leave was available into Bombay, a city of contrasts – dire poverty in some areas and immense wealth in others.

A funny thing happened at the barracks one warm afternoon. George Routledge, myself and a couple of mates had sampled a bottle of warm beer at the NAAFI canteen. We were wending our way back to our quarters when we encountered the Camp Commandant and his inspection retinue. We tried to change direction but were halted by this high ranking English officer. So I bunged him my best salute, a la Les Tipton, (our Regimental Sergeant Major) and the Colonel said, "Australians, what? Any complaints, men?"

I said, "Yes, Sir, bed bugs. They're eating us alive." Well, the Colonel drew himself up another two inches, his moustache quivered and his face grew redder. He replied,

"Bai, Jove. Those wallahs were ordered to disinfect the camp." Then turned to the junior officer behind him and gave an order which passed down the line. We left a day or two later, so never learned the fate of the bugs, or the staff responsible.



SS City of Paris

We then embarked on a much smaller ship, the City of Paris, about mid-February. Singapore fell at this time and events over the next few days probably changed the course of history. In a convoy we headed east towards Java for a few days, then turned suddenly round and headed back to Colombo. We were lucky to avoid the fate of the 2/2 Pioneers and 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion, and Weary Dunlop's medical unit. They were unloaded in Java, captured and spent the rest of the war as POWs of the Japanese. (These 7th Division units had left Bombay after the City of Paris, but overtook the convoy and reached Batavia just before it fell.)

After a few days in Colombo harbour, with no shore leave, we sailed again in convoy, destination unknown. Life on board was boring, with lectures, physical training, boxing matches and, of course, gambling, housie-housie (bingo), etc. The food wasn't too crash hot, either. I was lucky, as a group of the Mortar Platoon was allocated to assist the British gunners manning the anti-aircraft gun mounted at the stern of the ship. This meant we were able to sleep on deck, near our post, away from the hot, smelly holds where the troops had to sleep. The only problem was the Indian seamen (Lascars) who washed the deck at about 4.30 each morning. You had to wake up quickly, grab your few possessions and life jacket, before a high powered jet of sea water engulfed you.

We soon realised our destination was Australia, with great joy when we saw the Southern Cross again. We stopped at Fremantle in mid-March, with one days shore leave before sailing on to Adelaide. Here we camped in the suburbs for three weeks, did a bit of training and enjoyed the hospitality of the Adelaide people. I'm sure they felt a lot safer with a battalion of battle hardened troops around.

Of course, we would sooner have been home in Victoria, but we finally got there for seven days leave, before heading north to Yandina, to get ready for the next stage of the war.

QUEENSLAND DATES

The QUEENSLAND branch of the Association will hold its Annual Reunion on Thursday, 26th July, from 10am, at Riverside Receptions at New Farm. This year we are combining with the PIB/PIR Assn as a 70th anniversary commemoration.

Some other dates for Kokoda Commemorative activities in Southern Queensland, this year are:

SUNDAY 22 APRIL:

Rotary Kokoda Memorial Walk. This year there will be only one stage, the 10.9km Family and Community Walk. Start time is 9am, at Metricon Stadium, Carrara, and finishes at Cascade Gardens, Broadbeach (mid morning). A bus will return participants to Carrara around lunch time – home early afternoon! No cost, but donations gratefully received on the day. Information on the event can be found at www.gcrotary.com or contact Rotary on 0417 620 516 or email: cmyers@smh.net.au

WEDNESDAY 8 AUGUST:

Kokoda Day Service at Memorial Wall, Cascade Gardens, conducted by Surfers Paradise RSL. Details to be announced.

Also, please note the FIRST Friday of every month, there is "Lunch with Bill", a regular Yum Cha gathering in Broadbeach (Gold Coast) to honour the Patron of the Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall, WWII Kokoda Veteran and 39th Bn Life Member, Bill Bellairs.

Anyone in the region on that first Friday of the month, please contact George Friend on 0418 418 282 to book a seat.

70 Years Ago - Continued

THE JOURNEY HOME

Jill Bear

A few months ago, I was trying to work out where the battalion was on a particular day at sea in March 1942, when several of 9 platoon, including Lindsay 'Teddy' Bear, were put on a charge of "Conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline". When I checked the battalion diary, I was struck by the changes in direction that the ship they were on, the City of Paris, underwent after it left Bombay: first, south-east for four days, then north for two days and finally, west to Colombo. I was intrigued, and as often with historical research, diverted from my original task, into finding the story behind this round-about route.

By the time the City of Paris left Bombay on 13 Feb, 1942 the political map of south-east Asia had changed dramatically. Prior to Dec 1941, the Japanese had established themselves in northern China, Taiwan, and Indo-China (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam). Following the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 Dec 1941, the Japanese moved swiftly to take control of the area from their south-west to their south-east, so that, by the 13 Feb, 1942 they had control of the Malay Peninsula, Thailand, Borneo, the Celebes, New Britain (Rabaul), New Ireland, Ambon (between the Celebes and New Guinea) and were attacking Singapore, the Philippines, Burma, and Timor. The speed and efficiency of the Japanese advance was alarming. The island barrier, that Australia had long been confident would protect it, was being compromised.



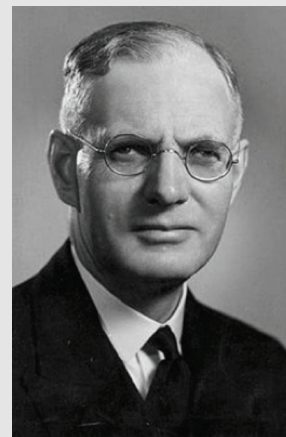
Area of Japanese influence by March 1942

The convoy, with the City of Paris, left Bombay at 1300 hrs on 13 Feb, heading on a course SE and SSE, for the Dutch East Indies, specifically Batavia, (Jakarta) on Java. On 15 Feb, 1942, Singapore fell, leading to the capture of that portion of the 8th Division, sent there as reinforcements. Two days later, as Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, cabled British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, requesting the immediate return to Australia of the 6th and 7th Divisions (which included 2/14th Battalion). He noted that the British commander in the Far East, General Wavell, believed that Java could not be held, and so asked that the convoy currently en route to Java be diverted to Australia. On that same night, the City of Paris crossed the Equator in fine weather, and the Southern Cross could be seen in the night sky to starboard.

On the 19th Feb, the Japanese launched their first bombing raid on Darwin. Later in the day, Churchill asked that the leading division be diverted to Burma, as, following the fall of Singapore, Burma and Australia were regarded as the only positions in which British imperial forces could be concentrated sufficiently to launch counter-attacks on the Japanese. Curtin's immediate reply to Churchill was that he and his government rejected the request for the convoy to be diverted and that the 7th Division should return immediately to Australia. Sir

Earle Page, Australian minister on the London Pacific War Council, after secret consultations with Churchill, sent cables back to Australia, asking for the response to be reviewed in the light of a promise that a US Division would be sent to Australia immediately, to allow the 7th Division, since they were the closest force available for reinforcement, to proceed to Burma.

At 0800 hrs on the 20 Feb, 1942, the City of Paris and its convoy, under orders from Churchill, turned back on its course, heading N and NE. It proceeded on this new course for the next two days, re-crossing the Equator on 21 Feb, en route for Burma. Those on board who could read the stars knew the ship had turned. Obviously, Java was no longer the destination, the alternatives appeared to be India or Burma. On 21 Feb, Curtin received an assurance from Roosevelt that the US would protect Australia on the right flank, and Roosevelt, too, requested that the 7th Division continue to Burma in order to secure the left flank, which the Americans would have difficulty reaching.



Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin

On 22 Feb, 1942, Curtin discovered that Churchill had directed the convoy to be diverted towards Burma, contrary to his request. His response was immediate. The convoy changed course, again, this time heading W and SW for Ceylon, and landing at Colombo on 25 Feb, 1942 for re-fueling. On 23 Feb, Japanese forces took the Sittang River in Burma, after continually outflanking the 17th Indian Division, and General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief of Australian, British, Dutch and American (ABDA) forces in the Far East, began to prepare for the evacuation of Rangoon, which was effected on 7 Mar, 1942. Timor had

finally fallen on 23 Feb and the Japanese began to invade Java on 25 Feb, completing the task by 11 Mar, 1942. Japanese landings on the north coast of New Guinea at Lae and Salamaua began on 8 Mar, 1942. With the exception of Papua on the southern coast of the island of New Guinea, the encirclement of northern Australia was complete.



Route of 7th Division convoy from 13 -25 Feb, 1942

At 0730 on 1 Mar, 1942 the convoy left Colombo, proceeding without further change of direction to arrive in Fremantle on 15 Mar. Thanks to the insistence of Prime Minister Curtin, the battalion was saved from hasty and ill-advised deployment against the Japanese in

Burma, and was home, at last. However, its greatest challenge, the very reason for its return to Australia, lay ahead of it in the months to come.

(And I still don't know what those boys got up to aboard ship, that lead to that disciplinary charge.)

70 Years Ago - Continued

LES COOK in ADELAIDE, April 1942

In March, 1942, the arrival in Australia of more than forty thousand men created a real problem for the authorities. The military camps across Australia were already fully occupied, and there was nowhere for us to go. Many of the troops coming back from the Middle East landed at Adelaide.



Scene on the wharf the day the 7th Division arrived in Adelaide, March 1942

As an interim measure, arrangements were made to billet us in private homes for the first few weeks after we arrived at Adelaide. This was a tremendous achievement: the mind boggles at the administrative hassle it must have been. To the best of my knowledge, however, the arrangements worked well, and, as far as I am aware, there were no unpleasant incidents. It is to the great credit of the people of Adelaide that they opened their homes to us.

Participation in providing billets was voluntary, and I assume that householders could stipulate how many soldiers they were prepared to take, but, generally there were four to each house. We had one completely unfurnished room for the four of us, where we slept on the floor, using our own blankets. We ate breakfast and the evening meal with the family.

I was billeted with three others at the home of a couple in their early thirties who had two young children. The husband worked at an engineering factory engaged on war-production work, and was working night shifts all the time we were there. Apart from when we first arrived at the house, I can't remember seeing him.

After breakfast each day we would meet in the street with the others billeted in the same area. Marching from there to the nearest park, we would carry on with our normal training, returning to the house in the evening. I don't know if it was part of the official arrangement with the householder or if it just evolved that way, but one of the four was detailed to stay behind each day, taking it in turns to assist with the housework.

Three of us were under twenty years of age. We had been at war since we were seventeen or eighteen and had had little experience with women, other than those in our own families. Our corporal was several years older, and was married, but N.C.Os did not normally assist with the housework.

The lady of the house was overly friendly in a way that we found disconcerting, and it wasn't long before we became reluctant to be alone in the house with her. We were arguing in the street one morning as to whose turn it was to stay behind when the corporal demanded to know what the fuss was about. He laughed when we explained what had been happening, calling us a bunch of dingoes to be afraid of the woman. He said that he would stay behind that day himself to find out what was going on. I don't think that he came on parade with us again all the time we were at the house. Certainly, none of us young ones ever helped with the housework again. If my memory serves me correctly, he continued to visit the house to help even after we left.



Kit inspection at the temporary camp, Adelaide, 1942

After about two weeks at the house, we moved into a temporary camp that had been established at a nearby park.

I wonder what the people living near the park thought about its transformation into an army camp. A working party would have arrived one day to erect the tents, followed the next day by columns of marching men carrying all their gear. There would have been an equally sudden change back to a park, when in one night we left abruptly for the eastern states. One day a bustling army camp with guards posted, bugle calls, groups of men marching, drilling, and lining up for meals during the day, and the rows of tents lit by hurricane lamps at night. The next day, nothing but the rows of empty, silent tents that would have been removed soon after we left, and the park restored to its original condition. Within a very short time of our leaving, there would have been no sign that we had ever been there.

Hotels were out-of-bounds to the troops in the daytime while we were in Adelaide, and picquets were posted at each hotel to ensure that this rule was observed. There was a milk-bar opposite the hotel where three of us were on picquet duty one day. Three girls worked at the milk-bar, and the boldest among us went over to ask if one of them would go out with him. The girl was reluctant to go out alone with a stranger, but said she would go if the six of us went as a group. This was agreed, and we took them to dinner and a picture show.

Continued over the page >>

EVENT CALENDAR 2012

Yarra Valley Legacy ANZAC Service for Local Schools

Wednesday, 18th April, 11.00 am
Ferntree Gully National Park

Wreath-laying Service

Monday, 23rd April, 11.00 am
2/14 Battalion tree, north-west corner
of The Shrine of Remembrance

Reunion – Melbourne

Monday, 23rd April, 12.30 pm
The Celtic Club
316-320 Queen Street, Melbourne

ANZAC Day March

Wednesday, 25th April, 9.15am

4th Committee Meeting

Sunday, 3rd June, 11.30 am
East Malvern RSL

Reunion – Queensland

Thursday, 26th July, 10.00 am
Riverside Receptions, New Farm

St Georges Church Service

Sunday, 19th August, 10.30 am
4 Chapel St, East St Kilda

Kingsbury Services

Friday, 24th August
9.30 am Reservoir High School
11.00 am Austin/Repat Hospital

Kokoda Campaign Memorial Service

Sunday, 26th August, 11.00 am
Osborne House, Geelong

70th Anniversary, Kokoda Campaign Special 2/14 Battalion Association Service

Sunday, 9th September, 2.00 pm
2/14 Battalion tree, north-west corner
Afternoon tea to follow
The Shrine of Remembrance

AGM & 1st Committee Meeting

Sunday, 23rd September, 11.00 am
The Shrine of Remembrance

Annual Pilgrimage

Sunday, 23rd September, 1.30 pm
The Sanctuary, Shrine of
Remembrance

2nd Committee Meeting

Sunday, 2nd December, 11.30 am
East Malvern RSL

70 Years Ago - Continued

LES COOK in ADELAIDE, April 1942 - Continued



King William St, Adelaide, March 1942

My partner's name was Peggy Cameron. I can't remember how it was decided who would partner whom, but perhaps it happened this way because she and I were the youngest in the two groups. I had just turned nineteen, she was eighteen.

Peggy had recently come to Adelaide from Mount Gambier, and was living with her married sister. When we first met I didn't know she was engaged to a young man in the R.A.A.F. who was in Canada training under the Empire Air Training Scheme, but a special affinity developed between us. But for her loyalty to her commitment, it is probable that we would have become more than just friends as we were together as often as possible.

We walked in the Adelaide hills from a tram terminus with the appropriate name of Paradise, and along the beach at Glenelg. I remember that there was a small shop at Paradise that sold Devonshire teas with real clotted cream, something I have not seen elsewhere since before the war. I had left Australia when I was seventeen, and had not even been out with a girl before I met Peggy. She will always hold a special place in my memory.

It is of interest to note here the very strong desire in most men going to war to have established a permanent relationship with a girl before leaving for overseas. There was a need to have someone at home to think of and to communicate with, and to feel sure that whoever it was would be waiting when one returned home. It appeared that the girls, too, were similarly affected, in that most of them wanted a relationship with someone in the armed forces: preferably someone who was overseas, or was likely to be sent overseas, directly engaged in the war. I'm sure that a psychologist would have a simple explanation for these feelings. Some of these relationships survived the war, but a great many did not.

We were in Adelaide for about a month before going to Melbourne for a few days home-leave, then on to Queensland, and finally to New Guinea. In the manner of the times, we left at night without warning, and there would not have been any opportunity for me to let Peggy know that I was going. Certainly I have no recollection of saying goodbye to her, and I'm sure that I would have remembered if I had done so. The war had brought us together fleetingly, and just as suddenly, had parted us.

In December of that year, I had a very distressful letter from her. Her fiancée had been killed in a bombing raid over Germany, and her mother had died suddenly and unexpectedly soon after. As can be imagined, she felt that her entire world had collapsed. What can anyone say at such a time?

We were fighting in the most awful conditions in the swamps at Gona on the north coast of New Guinea when I received her letter. Everything that came to us had been dropped by aircraft and carried forward by hand. We had no paper or pen to write our replies. The only thing we could do was write in pencil on the back of the letter, and readdress the used envelope, which, of course, could not be sealed. I don't know how the outgoing letters were taken back, but, in those conditions, it would have been a hazardous business at best. Much of our mail could have gone astray, or been inadvertently damaged on its way from the forward area.

I didn't hear from Peggy Cameron again. It occurs to me now that perhaps she didn't receive my letter. She would not have known where I was, of course, but it was public knowledge that the A.I.F., back from the Middle East, was fighting in New Guinea. If she didn't get my letter, perhaps she thought that I was not interested enough to write, or else, in view of the recent happenings in her life, that I also was dead.

Now, my conscience bothers me that I didn't make any subsequent attempt to contact her. I could use the excuse of the awful conditions at Gona when her letter arrived. I could use the excuse that I was in and out of hospital several times after returning to Australia at the end of January 1943, and that I was back in New Guinea for the Lae/Ramu valley campaign six months later. I could use any number of excuses, but the fact of the matter is that I didn't even try. Whatever the reason, I feel somehow that perhaps I failed her in her hour of need, and for this I am sorry.

Les's article was originally published in VetAffairs. His story continues in the next issue.

25-27 February 2012 - WHAT A BUSY WEEKEND!

Chris Ingram

You well might ask what GEYAJ stands for. You could ask Bob Iskov or Jim Coy, as they first met up with the Gippsland East Young Aboriginals Journey on Saturday 25th February at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Peter Holloway from the 39th joined with Bob and Jim to talk to these young people who hail from, guess where? You're right, East Gippsland.

This was a chance for Veterans of Kokoda to share their wartime experiences with a particular group, who will soon be walking the Track under the leadership of Andrew James, the author of the memorable biography, Kokoda Wallaby, the story of Stan Bisset. By all accounts these young men and women were enthralled by the stories told by the Veterans, as they had very little idea of what Australian soldiers encountered on the Track.

This group of young Aboriginals has been especially chosen as future leaders in their community and were in Melbourne over the weekend to meet Kokoda Veterans and to train on the Kokoda Memorial Track at the Ferntree Gully National Park. The GEYAJ Project has a local governance committee supporting these young people in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and has received sponsorship through the James family.



Bob Iskov with two of the GEYAJ participants

On Sunday 26th February, at the Ferntree Gully National Park, the 39th Battalion Association held their annual picnic and Cam Thompson, accompanied by daughter Chris Ingram and son-in-law Geoff went along. Cam really enjoyed himself talking to other veterans and meeting Andrew James and some of the GEYAJ team.

Michael and Elaine Ralston joined in the fun as well. After lunch a brief formal ceremony was held to mark the beginning of 70th Anniversary commemorations. Posies

were laid at each of the commemorative plaques at the start of the Kokoda Memorial Track. Following this the GEYAJ group did their training walk up the Track.



Cam Thompson enjoying the 39th Battalion Association picnic at Ferntree Gully

The weekend didn't end on Sunday, because on Monday, 27th February we gathered, again, at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne for the launch of Stories from the Kokoda Track by year 9 Humanities students from Footscray City College 2011. Bob Nichols, who was unable to attend, Bob Iskov and Lionel Smith were all interviewed by the students for the book.

Colonel George Mackenzie OBE RFD opened the proceedings, warmly welcoming the Veterans attending. Bob Iskov and Lionel Smith enjoyed catching up with the students who had originally interviewed them and as this had occurred over the phone, it was good for all concerned to meet face to face.



Dora Tsoukas, Humanities co-ordinator at Footscray City College, with two of her students

There was a further surprise in store for Bob, when one of the Shrine volunteers, Maureen Bugden, approached him. It turns out Maureen and her cousins used to attend the same dances as Bob when they were all a lot younger.

2/14th BATTALION at BALIKPAPAN

20.05.12 to 26.05.12

South Australian Battalion representative, Ian Hopley, is planning to take a small band of intrepid explorers back to Balikpapan in May in order to properly identify a number of 2/14th action sites. This is an "informal" trip and the plan is to meet in Balikpapan, hire a mini-van and with the help of a few of the local expatriates, seek to identify a number of sites where the 2/14th Battalion saw action. Ian is hopeful this will include Waite's Knoll, as well as other locations in the Manggar area.

Participants are at liberty to arrange their own flights/stopovers, etc, so long as we meet in Balikpapan on 20 May. The only other cost will be a share of the mini-van costs and personal expenses. We are hopeful of having a veteran or two with us. There are currently cheap flight offers via Singapore or Kuala Lumpur available.

Itinerary

Sun, 20 May

Meet at Novotel Hotel, Balikpapan (currently around \$70-90 per room per night)

Mon, 21 May

Balikpapan war memorials and Yellow Beach landing site

Tue, 22 May:

Manggar Airport site and Manggar Beach. Site of 2/14th camp and where Australian tanks were destroyed. Search for Waites Knoll site

Wed, 23 May:

Possible Manggar River cruise

Thu, 24 May:

Leisure/shopping/other sites

Fri, 25 May:

PM flight to Singapore and overnight flight to Australia

Sat, 26 May:

Arrive at departure port

Enquiries to Ian Hopley On 0433 019441 or Michael Ralston 0417550861

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Around The Traps

Our talented webmaster, **Ben Edwards**, grandson of **Alf Rumpff (VX16378)**, is holding a small photographic exhibition at the Bullie Café & Bar, 274 Park Street, South Melbourne, running until the end of April. Feel free to drop in and have a look around... it's open for breakfast and lunch Monday to Saturday and the bar is open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

Our regular contributor, 'Lights Out' tells me **Jim Coy, MM (VX17982)** and his Wife Leonora celebrate their 70th Wedding Anniversary in April this year. May it be a beautiful celebration and one that they and their family will remember with great joy. We congratulate them and wish them all the best for their future years. We imagine that they must have got married on Jim's return from the Middle East. I wonder if there is any other veteran out there who has been married as long or longer? Let's know.

'Indigenous Australians at war from the Boer War to the present' is a travelling exhibition of photographs put together by the Shrine. It also includes a video with segments by people talking about a family member who served. In the video, there is a segment about 2/14 Battalion member **Harry Saunders (VX18629)**. The family talk about the father who served in WW1, and his sons, Reg and Harry in WW2. Reg, the first aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian Army also served in Korea as a captain in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and fought at Kapyong, while Harry was killed in the fighting at Gona in November, 1942. The video will apparently be available for download from the Shrine website. Bob and Craig Iskov went to see the exhibition when it was in Beechworth, and Bob was very impressed. It will be on display at the **Echuca Uniting Church Hall** from 30 March to 29 April.

Over the very hot New Year weekend, while travelling through southern NSW, I visited **Bob Turnley (VX64855)** at Tocumwal and **Bill Parfrey (VX61294)** at Urana. Both are keeping in reasonable health, given they are now in their 90's. Bill and his wife have been involved in the recent evacuation of Urana, due to flood waters isolating the town and inundating the general store. We trust they are safe with their family.

Trustees, Michael Ralston and Rob Eden attended the awards ceremonies at Kingsbury Primary and Reservoir High Schools in December, 2100. They presented our Kingsbury Scholarship winners, **Kyam North** (Reservoir High), and **Rayanne Margi** and **Andrew Devine** (Kingsbury Primary) with their awards.

At the recent 2/14 committee meeting, **Margaret Briggs**, who represents 2/14 on the organising committee for the Upgrade of the Memorial Walkway at **Ferntree**

Gully National Park, which includes the 1000 steps, advised that all planning had been completed and Parks Victoria were now negotiating contracts. The opening is scheduled for **August 26 2012**, the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Isurava. The design for the second component of the project, the Memorial Wall with Honour Roll as designed by David Yardley, has been accepted, and will be completed by November 11 2012.

Another date for your diary is the **18 August, 2012**, when Melbourne Racing Club is holding a race day at Caulfield Racecourse, in aid of Legacy. The theme, this year, is the 70th anniversary of the Kokoda Campaign, and the Battalion will be contributing some of its memorabilia to a display.

With regret, we announce the passing of **Amy Iskov**, Bob's wife of 65 years. Amy and Bob started writing to each other in 1940 after Amy attached her name to one of the army groundsheets she was making at Bramac's Rain Wear in Footscray. The details on that groundsheet found their way to Bob and the pair maintained a correspondence, meeting for the first time when Bob returned to Australia in 1942. They were married in 1946, and lived most of their life together in the Wangaratta area. Our condolences are extended to Bob, and all the family.



Amy and Bob Iskov last year

Condolences, too, to the family of **Allan Noel Varty VX125549**, died in Perth on 26 Feb 2012. A full obituary will be included in the next issue of Comradeship.

2/16th REUNION LUNCH – SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2012

Our friends in the 2/16th Battalion Association have kindly invited 2/14 Battalion Association members to join them for lunch at Hepburn Springs. The cost is \$30 for a three-course lunch, including tea, coffee and soft drinks. There is no charge for veterans.

Time and Venue: 12.00 noon, Old Hepburn Hotel, 236 Main Road, Hepburn Springs.

Please let Trevor Ingram know at your very earliest convenience if you wish to join them:
Email: TIngram@globalskm.com OR Mobile: 0419 333 347