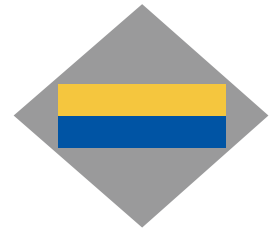


# COMRADESHIP

[www.2nd14battalion.org.au](http://www.2nd14battalion.org.au)

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## President's Report



Hello everybody, I'm very proud to be the new president of this great organisation. I know I have big shoes to fill after Michael Ralston's eight years at the helm. There are many of you in the 2/14 family I haven't yet met, but I do hope to be able to catch up with you over the next year. I refer to it as the 2/14th family as that is how my father, Bob, described it and it is how I feel. I have strong childhood memories of reunions in the park at Euroa with the Fergusons and Armstrongs, picnics at Puckapunyal and growing up with Dad talking about Teddy, Stan and Phil. I remember the Schwinds, Stringers and the Sheldons calling in at our farm at Tarrawingee; and the many more people I have met in the last 20 or so years are a part of my family life. I would like us all to feel that the 2/14th is a family connection that is worth maintaining and nurturing.

We have a great group of people on the committee who are passionate about honouring our great Battalion, respecting the memory of our lost heroes, caring for our veterans, widows and families, while building a future for the organisation based on our younger generations. We plan to maintain our strong connections with the Kingsbury Primary and the Reservoir High Schools and build a new friendship with a school in Balikpapan. We want to provide an interest for the grandchildren and great grandchildren to celebrate their famous family members and we want to be accessible to them in a social media world. We hope that the communications and events we provide will keep you all informed, interested and inspire you to contribute your skills and energy in supporting the Battalion Association. We do it for our fathers, grandfathers, uncles but we also do it for you, the families and friends of the 2/14 Battalion Association. There are always various tasks and events coming up and we would appreciate any assistance.

It will be a busy time coming up in 2015 with lots of activities and several significant events. As usual we will have the Battalion Reunion lunch and the Anzac Day march in April. It is the 75th anniversary of the creation of the 2/14 Battalion on the 26 April 2015. We will celebrate that with an event, possibly in mid May, details to be announced in the new year. And of course on July 1, it is the 70th anniversary of the landings at Balikpapan. Ian Hopley has done a magnificent job again in organising another trip to Borneo to celebrate that important date in the history of the 2/14.

Sadly, 2014 has seen us lose a number of our beloved veterans and others are not keeping in good health. If you know of a veteran or a widow who would like some contact from the committee please let us know.

I look forward to a great year for the 2/14 Battalion Association in 2015, and the opportunity to meet many of you in the next 12 months.



Kind regards,  
Craig Iskov

## A LASTING TRIBUTE TO PNG VETERANS

Veterans of the Papua - New Guinea battles can be remembered in a lasting tribute at the wonderful Kokoda Memorial at Cascade Gardens in Broadbeach, Qld.

Through a partnership with 39 Battalion Association and Gold Coast Council, you can honour a family member or friend with their name inscribed on a paver, laid under the Battalion insignia.

There are two types of pavers, the first is placed in the Honour Roll for men who made the ultimate sacrifice in the PNG campaigns. Their surnames are in capitals on the paver.

The other type is for veterans of the PNG campaigns. The lettering of their names is in lower case. The cost per paver is \$60 including laying.

Orders can be placed through the order form soon to be on the 2/14 website or for details contact Karen Brkic 03 9318 5394 or at [lydia.brkic@hotmail.com](mailto:lydia.brkic@hotmail.com)

If you wish to pay by direct deposit, the details are BSB: 063000, Acc No: 00900598, but include your initial and surname and "paver" in the remitter details.

**Orders for 2015 will close on  
30 June, 2015.**

General enquiries can be made to Craig Iskov 0428 737788 or [ckiskov@bigpond.com](mailto:ckiskov@bigpond.com)



Pavers in the 2/14 Battalion area of the Cascades Garden Memorial.



## MEMORIAL SERVICES IN AUGUST

### RESERVOIR HIGH

The work of the year 7 students at Reservoir High was again on display at the Kingsbury Memorial Service this year. Several of the students shared their poems, reflecting on the sacrifices made by Bruce Kingsbury, and others who served with the Battalion on the Kokoda Track.

After Barbara Hinsley, the Principal of Kingsbury Primary, spoke about the importance of ceremonies such as this one, in passing on important values to the next generation, her school captains, Chien Xin and Alaysia, expressed their appreciation of the ways in which the connection between their school and 2/14 Battalion was enriching their educational experience.

Current Kingsbury Scholarship holder, Hannah Nguyen, drew parallels between her experience as a scholarship winner, and that of Bruce Kingsbury, who was a scholarship winner at Windsor Primary. The scholarship is helping cover Hannah's expenses and winning it has reinforced her intention of attending university.

Michael Ralston spoke on separating the truth from the myths that have grown up around the actions on the Kokoda Track, pointing out that the truth of the deeds of these ordinary men, intent on supporting their mates and protecting their families at home, needs no embellishment.

Veteran, Max Caldwell was on hand to lay the wreath at the memorial tree at the front of the school.



Students from Reservoir High and Kingsbury Primary at the end of the service

### AUSTIN HEALTH

Once again, Rob Winther and his team hosted the annual service at what was formerly the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

Craig Iskov spoke about the difference in the speed of communication during the First World War, when for two years his grandfather's family had no news of what had happened to him. During the Second World War, despite the heavy censorship, families could at least watch

Cinesound newsreels and see where the troops were.

Kaylen and Yang, cadets from Ivanhoe Grammar read the names of the fallen from the Owen Stanley Campaign. Then the service concluded beside the Battalion memorials in the Memorial Garden, with Howard Cornish providing the traditional bugle calls.



The Kokoda Campaign memorials at Austin Health

### ST GEORGE'S: Healing the Wounds of War

A large crowd were in attendance for what was deemed to be the last Gillison Memorial Service, at St George's, East St Kilda, in August.

The flowers, in battalion colours, and provided by Elvala Ayton, in memory of her husband, Battalion original, Phillip Ayton, looked splendid.

John Bottomley, former minister of the church, spoke movingly of the "deep and personal silence that cloaks the suffering of war." In this context, the sacrifice of 14th Battalion chaplain, Andrew Gillison, killed while helping bring in the wounded at Gallipoli, created a sacred space in which to remember human love in war. Gillison's act of mercy in the midst of violence had a profound meaning for those he served, as well as for those of succeeding generations who have maintained the memory of his sacrifice.

We were glad to be assured that the memorial stones will continue to remain within the building, which will become part of the Performing Arts complex of St Michael's Grammar School across the road. It may be possible to hold a different form of ceremony there in the future.



Flowers in Battalion colours in front of the World War I Honour Roll at St George's

Jill Bear

### Osborne House, Geelong

Elaine and I decided at the last minute to attend this annual function. There was a good turnout in brilliant sunshine at Osborne House. Alpha Co 8/7RVR provided the Catafalque Party, Geelong Memorial Brass Band, the music, together with a Bagpiper. It is a pity that you don't put this in your diary to support the 2/14th, 39th, and 2/16th Battalions as they feature in this tribute to The Battles of Isurava & Kokoda. George Cops and Kanga Moore represented the 39th. The Guest Speaker this year was David Howell from the Shrine, a very good speaker. He had hoped to lead a group of 50 people up to Rabaul in late August, but the volcanic eruption may have put a stop to this. I also met a group of young teenagers at risk, who are walking Kokoda, accompanied by Geelong Police.

Neville Lewis from the National Servicemen's Association commenced this function some 8 years ago and I have been Guest Speaker there on one occasion. It is a well-run function, going for approx. 1 hour, then lunch at the Branscombe Room in Osborne House. Osborne House houses a very interesting Vietnam Veteran Museum.

Michael Ralston

### The Second Fourteenth Battalion: a history of an Australian Infantry Battalion in the Second World War

By W. B. Russell

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## SHRINE PILGRIMAGE 2014

The annual Shrine Pilgrimage was held on 28th September, following the Annual General Meeting of the Association. The current building works at the Shrine meant we had an early start for the meeting, at 8.30am. (Though, the editor turned up even earlier - by a week!)

In a few changes of leadership, Craig Iskov was elected unopposed as the new President, with David Webb taking on the role of Vice President. Upon election, Craig immediately paid tribute to the invaluable contribution made to the Association by Michael Ralston over the past eight years. The meeting unanimously endorsed the award of Life Membership to Michael, which will be conferred at the next Reunion.



Peg Armstrong, Max Caldwell and Margaret Briggs at the Shrine Pilgrimage

At the ceremony in the Sanctuary, following the AGM, the new President read the following poem, written during the war, by Sgt Frank Jacques Potter of 129 Australian General Hospital, stationed at Darwin.

### ARE THESE THE DEAD

Are these the dead? I came to mourn for them.  
To sit awhile, defy the solitude  
That holds a grim and silent requiem  
Over their heads, sleeping in quietude.  
But do they sleep? What if they know that Spring  
Has come again, and in the land they loved  
The wattle blooms, while arms that used to cling  
Now wait in vain? They cannot lie unmoved  
If all these things be known. Youth's lusty strength  
Would summon them to life and love again,  
And they must rise, glad to shake off at length  
Their loneliness for friendly world of men.

Long did I question thus until the golden sun  
Turned to its close, and in the western sky  
A few grey, wistful clouds flushed to deep crimson;  
And, as I watched, all heaven suddenly  
Filled with shining splendour of these who stay  
In new-found peace beneath an alien clay.

SX21027

This was followed by Gavon Armstrong reading of the Roll of Honour.

As always, The Last Post played within the confines of the Sanctuary, by Howard Cornish, gave the sense of a great choir of bugles, sounding a sad farewell to those we had gathered to remember. This is an experience that should not be missed.

We thank Shrine Life Governor, Lt Col Adrian Lombardo, for his attendance, and all the Shrine staff who assisted us on the day.

## NSW REPORT

With the passing of George Russell in October, the ranks of 2/14th veterans in southern New South Wales are diminishing. As far as we know, there are now only five veterans of the 2/14th left in our region.

George was the last of the 'Middle East' veterans. The remaining five are 'youngsters', who joined the battalion after its return to Australia in March 1942.

Les Cooke, down in Canberra, is going fine, as is James Hudson up in the Blue Mountains. Both these men went on after the war to serve in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan.

Gordon Marquet, going fine up in East Maitland, has an easy-to-remember birthday, Anzac Day. He will be 95 next April 25. Gordon is still an active member of Maitland RSL.

Down on the South Coast is 96 year old Noel Pallier, still 'going OK' and Ken Asgill who still goes dancing each Saturday night.

I asked Ken if he was interested in the Return to Borneo 2015 trip being organised by DVA. He replied, 'I don't fly. Just can't take the confined spaces. The last time I flew was in a Douglas over the Markham valley in 1944'.

Ron Inglis

NSW representative 2/14th Battalion Association

## SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

In 1963, in a previous life as a Banker, I was sent to Robinvale on the Murray River in Victoria. This was my first move from home in Hopetoun, deep in the Mallee, to the multicultural Murray River area. I boarded, in a bungalow with a young fella named Bob Whittaker. We became great friends: the Banker and the Accountant. They were great days, and in our late teens, we had many adventures. Bob's mother and step father lived in Mildura, and great weekends were had there.

The friendship continued on in life, through marriages and careers. Bob was my Groomsman, at our own wedding. Bob's wife, Annette was well known to my wife Elaine, as both became teachers.

A few of us visited Matt Power in Queensland, over the last few weeks. He mentioned a Bob Whittaker with the 2/14 Battalion in the Middle East. With, the help of Jill Bear, I suddenly became aware that Bob's own father, Bob Whittaker, was a 2/14 Battalion Member, KIA in the Middle East. The elder Bob probably knew my own 2/14 father Gilbert. We had no idea of the connection, as it is now well known that "The Silent Seventh Division" remained silent for many years after World War Two.

Sadly I will not be able to tell my mate Bob of my find; he himself was killed in a plane crash at Swan Hill, some 30 odd years ago.

Michael Ralston



## OBITUARIES

### WX14639 Private John Francis BENSON

Army records indicate that John Francis Benson was born in Denmark, Western Australia on 6 June 1919. He was living there when he and his younger brother, WX14638 Corporal Peter Bernard Benson, both enlisted in the Army at the Western Command General Details Camp at Claremont on 25 June 1941.

They were both initially posted to 3 Recruit Training Battalion and then 1 Infantry Training Battalion before embarking for the Middle East as reinforcements for the Western Australian 2/16 Battalion. Arriving after the Syrian Campaign, they were initially posted to a reinforcements camp at 21 Brigade.

Shortly before its embarkation for Australia, both brothers marched in to the 2/14 Battalion on 19 January 1942 and were posted to 10 Platoon which had suffered over 50% casualties in the Syrian fighting.

After rest and further reinforcement in Australia, the Battalion was sent to Port Moresby as part of the 7th Division AIF contingent sent to counter the Japanese landing on the North Coast of New Guinea and its movement over what became known as the Kokoda Track.

After moving into the Isurava defensive position on 27 August 1942, B Company took up position in the area known as the Canefield. This was on the left flank protecting the battalion position from enemy infiltration from the high ground to the immediate west of Isurava. Over the next several days each platoon including No 10 were subjected to continuous heavy attacks that ultimately led to the severe wounding and subsequent death of Lieut Butch Bisset. Battalion History author, Major Bill Russell, recorded that 10 Platoon was subjected to 11 enemy attacks on 29 August alone resulting in at least 200 enemy casualties.

Jack was one of the members of the party that recovered Butch under fire and then carried him back for treatment. As they moved back, several times they had to pause, put Butch down and fight off the pressing enemy forces.

Jack is reported as having been wounded somewhere between Isurava and Brigade Hill. A search of various records does not disclose any details other than he suffered a slight gunshot wound to the right eye. Russell indicates that he was wounded at Isurava whereas Jim McAllester's record shows him being wounded on 5 September 1942. His Service Record at National Archives states gunshot wound on an unknown date and evacuation on 7 September 1942.

He was repatriated to Australia for medical treatment including an operation to remove the right eye. On return to Western Australia he was medically downgraded as unfit for active service and posted to the 5th Guard Battalion undertaking general guard duties on military and Naval bases in WA. After further hospital treatment Jack was further downgraded as unfit for any military service and discharged from the Army on 28 February 1944.

His brother, Peter, remained with the Battalion until the end of the War and was discharged on 4 January 1946. Our Geelong rep, Darren Benson is Jack's great nephew and Peter's grandson.

The Association was represented by Phil Kemp at Jack's funeral.

### 213605/VX8259 Sergeant Vernon Francis GARTH

Vernon Francis Garth was born in Wonthaggi on 16 February 1918, although his AIF records indicate that he was born in Windsor. He was living at Chelsea and working as a clerk at Collins Street Melbourne when he enlisted in the Militia with the Melbourne University Rifles on 20 January 1940.

On 16 May 1940, Vern transferred to the AIF and immediately marched into the 2/14 Battalion. As a musician, Euphonium player, he was immediately posted to the Band in Battalion Headquarters.

As soldiers, the Band had a dual function depending on whether the Battalion was in battle or not.

On duty, the band provided the musical accompaniment for ceremonial activities and for off-duty entertainment. During actual battles, the bandsmen became stretcher-bearers and medical orderlies under the control of the Medical Officer.

When not practising musically for ceremonies and performances, the RMO had them practising bandaging and handling of casualties. Jim McAllister records that occasionally the Regimental Sergeant Major would attempt to "smarten" them up with rifle drill.

In their capacity as stretcher-bearers they enjoyed some protection as declared non-combatants under the Geneva Convention and wore Red Cross armbands. Whilst this was fine in the Middle East and respected by the French enemy, it became another matter in the Pacific War.

The Japanese were not signatories to the Convention and did not respect its conditions. With the nature of the fighting on the Kokoda Track, the Battalion suffered heavily and, as a consequence, was severely undermanned when required to go back into action at Gona. Every man was needed and with the enemy's lack of respect for the Red Cross, the bandsmen needed no urging.

Going forward they would carry ammunition and going back, the wounded. In between they would frequently slip into the weapons pits to assist the infantry. In McAllester's book, Vern describes carrying a wounded soldier through the Gona swamps in the darkness following a signal wire only to later man a Bren Gun alongside the infantry. There are two photographs of Vern in this book: one is the formal Band portrait at Puckapunyal and the other is of the Headquarters men at Gona with Vern holding a Thompson sub-machine gun.

Vern was no different to his comrades and suffered a range of tropical illnesses but served in all campaigns including the peace-time operations in the Celebes following the end of the War. He was promoted to Sergeant in March 1945, as the Bandmaster, although he had acted in that role on a number of occasions.

Vern marched out of the Battalion on 7 November 1945 and embarked for Australia where he was discharged from the Army on 4 December 1945.

About twelve years ago he was the feature of an article in the Melbourne Sun newspaper with the reunion of a Band colleague he had not seen since 1943. It appears that they had lived only a few miles apart in Gippsland all that time.

He was an active member of the Association attending many events until travel became too much of a burden.

The Association was represented at Vern's funeral by Gippsland representative, Gary McCulloch.

### 333283/VX22775 Lance Sergeant George Neville Russell



George Neville Russell was born in Sandringham on 17 March 1921 and was living in Warragul West when he enlisted in the Militia with 52 Battalion on 7 March 1939. On 6 June 1940, George transferred to the AIF and was posted to 2/14th Battalion, 11 Platoon, B Company with platoon commander Bill Russell (no relation), later author of the Battalion history.

The father of George Neville Russell, George Bruce Russell, was a veteran of the First World War. George Russell (snr) enlisted in the First AIF in October 1914 and he served both at Gallipoli and on the Western Front, returning to Australia in March 1919.

After training at Puckapunyal, the 2/14th Battalion was carried by troop train to Sydney where they embarked on the Aquitania. In the bright sunshine of 21 October 1940, the Aquitania and the Queen Mary sailed down Sydney Harbour and off, to what George and others thought at the time, to be a great adventure. The brigade arrived in the Middle East on 25 November 1940. The Battalion spent training time at several locations in North Africa including the fortress at Mersah Matruh where they first came under enemy fire. According to George, much worse were the blinding sandstorms that from time to time blew out of the Sahara. Whilst at Julis Camp, in Palestine, on 9 March 1941 George was promoted to Lance Corporal.

The 2/14th Battalion then took part in the Syrian campaign and George was severely wounded on 24 June 1941 with multiple gunshot wounds to the right arm and leg during the undermanned B Company support of the attack on Vichy French positions at Jezzine. George was captured by the French and spent his imprisonment as a prisoner of war in a French hospital.

His family had received notification that George was missing in action. They had great fears for him until they saw, in Life magazine, the photo below of George receiving treatment from French nuns.



*George Russell being tended by a French nun, Syria 1941*

With the surrender of the French in July, George was released and admitted to Australian and British hospitals to receive further treatment and admission to convalescent units. He returned to Australia and eventually rejoined the Battalion on 8 June 1942 at Yandina, in Queensland.

Probably fortunately for George, he was readmitted to hospital with complications arising from his wounds and he did not take part in the Papuan campaign battles along the Kokoda Track and at Gona where B Company suffered many casualties. It was at this time that amputation of George's right arm was considered. George was ever grateful to the doctor who believed that the arm could be saved and worked to that end.

In March 1943, with the Battalion back in Australia, George rejoined the 2/14th and was immediately promoted to Corporal and became a Section Leader. The Battalion embarked for Port Moresby and took part in actions to secure the Markham and Ramu Valleys culminating in the Battle at Shaggy Ridge. George was promoted to Sergeant in January 1944 prior to the Battalion's return to Australia.

He suffered a number of bouts of malaria and other fevers requiring several periods of hospitalisation including one whilst he was on leave in Gippsland, ending up in the local hospital.

The Battalion embarked for Morotai and the Borneo Campaign undertaking a seaborne landing at Balikpapan on 1 July 1945 and securing its objectives at Sepingang and Manggar airfields. B Company suffered some losses from small arms and artillery fire.

With the war coming to a close and the need for Australian soldiers rapidly diminishing, George sought early release and flew back to Australia on 3 August 1945 and was discharged from the Army on 20 September 1945.

George was a popular member of the Association attending committee meetings, reunions, commemorations and services at St Georges, East St Kilda. He was a great mate of Jim Coy who was often heard to say, "I'll get Georgie to come," whenever anything was planned.

In 2009 George attended the unveiling of a 2/14th plaque outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and in 2011 he performed the honours, unveiling a plaque honouring the Battalion at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway in the Sydney suburb of Concord.

Some eight years ago George and his wife Sylvia moved to Sydney to be near their only child, Susan, a pediatrician in Sydney's eastern suburbs. Sylvia passed away in August this year, and George followed her just nine weeks later.



*George at the plaque unveiling at Concord in 2011*

### 317561/VX17954 Captain Robert Noel (Bob) THOMPSON

Army records in Canberra show that Bob was born on 7 April 1918 at Essendon. He was living in Alphington

when he enlisted on 12 January 1938 in the militia forces, serving with 57/60 Battalion that was known as the Merri/Heidelberg Regiment and was promoted to Sergeant on 4 March 1940.

However, like many at that time, knowing that the militia could not serve overseas, Bob transferred to the AIF on 28 May 1940 and marched in to the 2/14 Battalion on 12 July 1940. He was posted to the Signals Platoon in Headquarters Company and promoted to Corporal. On arrival at Julis Camp in Palestine he was further promoted to Sergeant.

The Signallers had to carry a lot of heavy equipment including radio sets, telephones and cables, morse keys, signalling flags, lamps and heliographs. During the Syrian Campaign this was added to with the use of abandoned enemy equipment. The ferrying of equipment and laying of lines to the forward companies was often under enemy fire.

With the ceasefire, the Platoon spent time at various camps in Syria including time in the snow in a Syrian Winter. It was also an opportune time to upgrade equipment and training using more captured enemy radios and telephone cable. Eventually, it was back to Palestine and then embarkation for Australia to meet the new threat from Japan.

Back in Australia the Battalion gathered at Yandina in Queensland after some local leave and rest. It was here that they trained for the new battles to come in the jungles of Papua and New Guinea. The Battalion then embarked for Port Moresby, arriving on 12 August 1942 and being transported, by motor transport, to the foothills of the Owen Stanley Mountains. It was here that they spent several days preparing for the epic struggle ahead along the Kokoda Track.

The Battalion, along with its sister Battalion, the 2/16 Battalion, was being sent to relieve the 39th Battalion, a militia unit alone in the jungle facing the Japanese invasion force at a village called Isurava. The battle had already started when elements of the 2/14 Battalion started arriving and being fed piecemeal into defensive positions whilst under heavy fire.

The Signals Platoon arrived on 29 August 1942 just as the Japanese broke through C Company on the right flank and were threatening Battalion Headquarters. Bob was immediately ordered to take his signallers and join a counter-attack being organised by Lieutenant Jack Clements of 13 Platoon. Several men from A Company attached themselves to the group including Private Bruce Kingsbury.

As the attack gathered momentum, Kingsbury, armed with a Bren Light Machinegun, charged forward at an enemy group, firing from the hip. He killed many and cleared a path for the remainder of the 2/14 group. As he paused to take stock of the situation and reload his weapon Private Kingsbury was killed by a sniper. Sergeant Thompson then led the signallers on to reclaim and hold the lost ground, killing many more enemy in the process.

Bob Thompson had the privilege of writing the recommendation that led to Private Bruce Kingsbury being awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously. This was the first such award in the South-West Pacific Theatre and the first ever on Australian Territory.

However, the position at Isurava became untenable and on 30 August the order was reluctantly given to withdraw. At this point Bob and his signallers became stretcher bearers to assist the rapid retirement from

the immediate threat. Some of the signallers attached to Battalion Headquarters became separated and trapped behind the advancing enemy along with the Battalion Commanding Officer. Whilst some of the signallers managed to regain Australian lines, the rest, including the CO were captured and executed.

With the defensive position established between Efoji and Menari the signallers established telephone lines between Brigade Headquarters and the various components of 2/14 and 2/16 Battalions and the newly arrived 2/27 Battalion. By this stage, Bob was acting Platoon Commander.

The Japanese managed to infiltrate and cut these lines thus exposing the position at Brigade Hill. Many fine officers and men were killed because these lines were cut before the order to cancel a relieving attack could be sent. This charge by two companies from 2/14 and 2/16 Battalions was made against concentrated Japanese machine gun fire.

After further withdrawal the remnants of the Battalion were relieved and returned to Port Moresby for rest and reinforcement. Before this could be effectively achieved, the Battalion was ordered back into battle at Gona on the Northern beachheads with only one-third of its normal strength. At Gona, conditions were terrible and it has often been described as the worst battlefield of any campaign of any theatre in World War Two.

Battle casualties and tropical illness took a terrible toll and normal roles were forgotten. Even the signallers had to act as infantry and undertake regular patrols through the swamps. By now Bob had received a battlefield commission to Lieutenant and was permanent commanding officer of the Signals Platoon. The combined effects of battle and tropical diseases reduced the platoon from 28 to just Bob and two others by the time the fighting was over.

Back in Australia for rest, recovery and reinforcement, Bob was seconded to the 2/24 Battalion that had just returned to Australia, to teach them about jungle fighting.

In August 1943 with Bob back in charge of signals, 2/14 Battalion returned to New Guinea for the Markham Ramu Campaign. After a US parachute landing at Nadzab, the battalion was flown in with the rest of 21 Brigade to clear the Markham Valley and prevent the Japanese from escaping over the Finisterre Mountains to the north coast.

The Battalion then took part in rapid advances up the Markham River Valley and into the Ramu River Valley. Much of this was over wide kunai grass covered plains that were hot and disease-ridden. It presented many challenges to the signallers to maintain effective communications in the rapid advance and changing conditions. Concluding with the battle at Shaggy Ridge, the signallers were frequently under fire but maintained good communications as conditions allowed.

At this point, Bob was transferred from Signals to become the Battalion's Assistant Adjutant. This was not for long, however, as on the Battalion's return to Australia and movement to Strathpine in Queensland, Bob was promoted to Captain and appointed as Second-in Command of D Company.

The Battalion spent 12 months in Queensland while Australian High Command determined what would be the next offensive action for the 7th Division. Initially,

>>>



## OBITUARIES CONTINUED

>>> General MacArthur indicated he would need the 7th Division to assist US forces in the invasion of the Philippines and amphibious training was undertaken around Townsville. At the last minute this involvement was cancelled and the Australians were left twiddling their thumbs.

General Blamey was determined that Australians would remain visibly active in the Asian Theatre to have an entitlement to a seat at the Peace Table and so the invasion of Borneo in the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) was planned. The 7th Division would land at the oil centre at Balikpapan and so the amphibious training was not lost.

The landing occurred on 1 July 1945 with D Company in the van. The Company rapidly advanced up the coast to seize Manggar airstrip and take the surrounding high ground from the Japanese where they had a large artillery position. It was during this action that Bob was wounded.

Shortly after this landing, while 2/14 was securing the area, the US dropped atomic bombs on Japan and the War ended. Immediately after the War the Battalion was given a peace-keeping role on the Celebes Islands (now Sulawesi) and on 4 November 1945, Bob marched out of the Battalion and returned to Australia where he was discharged from the Army on 21 January 1946.

Bob's wartime service was exemplary and distinguished, having served in every active campaign that the Battalion was involved with during the War and was twice mentioned in despatches for actions in the Markham-Ramu Campaign in 1943 and in Borneo in 1945.

Bob was President of the 2/14 Battalion Association in 1949-50 in the days when presidents served one term. After his move to South Australia, he continued to regularly attend the Melbourne Reunions and march the next day in the Melbourne ANZAC Day March. He provided valuable assistance to the Association with the compilation of historical records and was always ready to assist anybody with queries about Battalion actions.

South Australian Representative, Ian Hopley, delivered this eulogy at Bob's funeral.



Lest We Forget.

## 2/14 BATTALION AND 2/4 FIELD REGIMENT

Following is an edited version of an address prepared by Ross Wilkinson and Jill Bear, and recently delivered by Michael Ralston at the Tree Service of the 2/4th Field Regiment.

It is a privilege and a pleasure today to give this short address, to the 2/4th Field Regiment. This Ceremony is part of tradition, the remembrance process. It is an important part of what we do today. Keeping up the traditions is a priority in the 2/14 Battalion Association. Our Association is now being run by Sons and Daughters of 2/14 Veterans. I am the son of a 2/14t Vet, one of the silent 7th Division, who went away to save Australia and the World in WW2, they then came home and got on with their lives, speaking little of what they achieved. Your Tree in the grounds of the Shrine of Remembrance is close to our Tree, and how fitting this is, having regard to the close association that our two parent organisations formed over the duration of the Second World War.

On the 3rd of September 1939, the then Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Honourable Robert Menzies, broadcast to the Australian people that it was his melancholy duty to announce that, as a result of events in Europe and Britain's declaration of war on Germany, Australia was also at war.

Australia's ability to support this action was extremely limited due to the size of its peacetime army and the terms of its Defence Act that controlled how its armed forces would be used. The Depression and its budgetary constraints meant that Australia only had a very small permanent army made up of staff officers and some garrison artillery. It relied on a part-time militia force scattered throughout Australia as regional-based infantry units to defend Australia in the event of an attack. These forces could only be used in Australia and its territories, and not overseas.

So, as in the First World War, Australia's commitment to Great Britain was required to be met by the raising of a separate volunteer force, the AIF. This consisted of the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Divisions. Each Division was a self-contained fighting force with 9 Infantry Battalions split into 3 Brigades with supporting arms such as engineers, medical services and artillery.

The 7th Division was raised in April 1940 and the 2/14 Battalion came into existence as part of 21 Brigade along with its sister battalions: 2/16 and 2/27. Many of the men who enlisted at this time transferred from the numerous Victorian regional militia units including 14 Battalion and the Victorian Scottish Regiment, because they thought they would miss out on fighting overseas.

In the same way the 2/4th Field Regiment was formed at this time with the basis of its establishment coming from the 4th Field Regiment which was based in Victoria before

the war commenced. It was attached to the 7th Division as the required artillery component.

Throughout 1940, convoys left Australia with the various components of the 7th and 9th Divisions, to support Great Britain in the Mediterranean Theatre in North Africa and the Middle-East in order to halt the advance of Hitler and his allies.

The 7th Division was chosen to support the British Campaign in what is now Syria and Lebanon, and it was here that the close ties between troops of the 2/4th Field Regiment and 2/14 Battalion were formed. Both units suffered from enemy air attacks and bombing and from shelling from both enemy artillery and ships. It was with great satisfaction that on several occasions the Regiment was able to return fire on the enemy ships causing them to retire. These events were heartily cheered on by all troops watching.

2/14 Battalion historian, Major Bill Russell, draws a vivid picture of the Regiment's work against a French destroyer attacking Battalion Headquarters set up in Sidon:

"The gunners of 2/4th Field Regiment, who had won the admiration of all as they toiled and sweated over their guns night and day, their eyes heavy and bloodshot, engaged the destroyer and quickly drove her out of range."

I believe some of the 2/4th gunners calculated that this was the first time in WWII that Australian artillery had engaged a warship.

Russell also describes the 2/4th in the night attack on Adloun, south of Sidon on 10th-11th June:

"Suddenly, on the stroke of midnight, the 2/4th Field Regiment, a crack Victorian regiment, second to none in this war, opened fire with all its guns. Their sheet lightning flickered and winked and flared across the rearward sky. The fierce crack of discharge and the pounding of shells sounded simultaneously."

It was during this campaign that your Regiment was also able to provide support to the advancing infantry with pre-attack bombardments and to consolidate positions won in an anti-tank role. The Regiment fired in excess of 40,000 rounds during the Syrian Campaign. A mighty effort!



2/4th Field Regiment in action in Syria, June 1941

After both units spent time in garrison roles after the truce in Syria, the Pacific threat materialised

and the 7th Division was the first of the Australian troops to return to Australia to prepare to meet this new threat to Australia's northern borders.

Both units fought in significant battles in 1942: 2/14 Battalion along the Kokoda Track and at Gona; and 2/4 Field Regiment at Milne Bay, where elements of the 2/4th Field Regiment were sent to provide artillery support, and where the Japanese were first defeated anywhere in the Pacific War.

During 1943, attention was turned to removing the Japanese from the northern half of New Guinea and the islands. With the planned Campaign to capture the towns of Lae, Madang and Finschhafen, our units joined up again. However, something unique in Australian military history was about to occur.

Whilst the 9th Division prepared to attack Lae and Finschhafen from the sea, the 7th Division was to attack from the land which required the capture and construction of an airfield from which to support this attack. In the Markham Valley outside Lae, there was a flat area at a place called Nadzab which was considered suitable for this to occur. But it had to be captured and consolidated quickly and a parachute landing was considered to be the best means to do this.

An American parachute regiment was to be the infantry component of the force but the artillery support was provided by your Regiment, the 2/4th. With 2 cut down guns, a successful jump was achieved and Nadzab successfully seized. This was the first and only time that an Australian artillery regiment has been parachuted into an active combat area.



One of the "short" 25 pounders that was parachuted into the Ramu Valley

The action was successful and the Japanese driven from Lae and the Markham Valley. Then the advance started up the Valley and into the Ramu Valley and the Finesterre Mountains culminating in the various actions now generally described as Shaggy Ridge.

In the training period prior to this Ramu-Markham Campaign, Russell notes that:

"The (21st) Brigade was united with the 2/4 Field Regiment... Some officers and NCOs from the Battalion and the Regiment were interchanged for a period with a special eye to co-ordination of mortars and artillery."

This co-ordination was to be of crucial importance in the attack by 9 Platoon on Palliers Hill, which

saved the 2/27 Battalion from annihilation.

Russell again notes: *"From the point of view of supporting fire, it was an ideal text-book attack."*

*Vickers guns were set up on the Three Pimples, a hill perpendicular to the attack, with the 2/4th's short 25 pounder, down in the valley between, firing up onto the ridge, over open sights. The fall of shot was called back via the observer on top of the Three Pimples.*

Lieut Noel Pallier, the leader of the attack, will still tell you how he counted the shells, one per minute, for the nineteen minutes he had to get his platoon into position, over the open ground ahead of where the Japanese were dug in. He imagined the Japanese defenders hunkered down in their foxholes, just getting ready to have another look when the next shell would arrive. Noel and the rest of his platoon were in no doubt as to the significance of the 2/4th's contribution to the success of the attack.

The two units were again together in the Australian Army's final campaign in Borneo and the landing at the Balikpapan oilfields. Here the infantry were up against a determined and entrenched enemy in the drive up the coast and the capture of Manggar airfield. Accurate fire from the 10,000 rounds fired by your Regiment ensured an early success and minimal loss of Australian lives as the war ended.

In one of those vagaries of the military honours system, an artillery regiment does not have "colours" and does not receive Battle Honours. Its colours are represented by its guns which take precedence on ceremonial occasions. It has one Battle Honour represented by the word **"Ubique"** on its badge. This word is Latin and means **"Everywhere"** and describes the expectations placed on the artillery in time of war: at the front to destroy the enemy defences to aid the Army's advances; and on its nation's borders to repel enemy attacks. The deeds of the 2/4th Field Regiment epitomise that notion.

I am honoured to recognise the close relationship between our two associations and their parent units. Whilst our ranks are now thin, I am sure that every one of the approximately 3000 men who marched into the 2/14 Battalion was thankful for the efficiency, accuracy and dedication of their comrades who served in the 2/4th Field Regiment.



Michael Ralston speaking at the 2/4 Field Regiment Memorial Tree Service

## EVENT CALENDAR 2014/2015

### Committee Meeting

Sunday, 1st December 2014  
at 11.30 am  
East Malvern RSL

### Launch of Kokoda Memorial Cairns

One Tree Hill, Dandenong Ranges  
National Park, Ferntree Gully  
Sunday, 14th December 2014  
at 10.30 am  
(for details contact Asst. Sec.  
Marg Briggs on 9561 2247)

### Kingsbury Primary School Graduating Class of 2014

Monday, 15th December 2014  
at 6.15 pm

### Non-Trekking Tour of Kokoda visiting Battle Sites, Memorials and Historic Sites

Departing Brisbane  
from 19th February 2015  
to 25th February 2015  
(For details contact Secretary John Smith)

### Committee Meeting

Sunday, 1st March 2015  
at 11.30 am  
East Malvern RSL

### 2015 Reunion

April 2015  
(Details to be advised – we are negotiating with Victoria Barracks)

### 2015 Anzac Day March

25th April 2015

### Traditional 2/14th Picnic (Training commenced at Puckapunyal on the 11th May 1940)

May 2015  
(Details to be advised)

### Committee Meeting

Sunday, 7th June 2015  
at 11.30 am  
East Malvern RSL

### Balikpapan 70th Anniversary Trip

From 29th June 2015  
to 5th July 2015





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## AROUND THE TRAPS

A former Kingsbury Scholarship winner, now Able Seaman, Laura Nicholls, had a starring role in the Centenary of ANZAC - Sunset Ceremony at Albany, WA, on Friday, 31st October. Laura is a vocalist with the Melbourne detachment of the Royal Australian Navy Band, and performed Waltzing Matilda and the New Zealand and Australian National Anthems.



*Kingsbury Scholarship winner, Laura Nicholls addressed the Battalion Reunion in 2011*

Two of our veteran life members are not well at the moment. Matt Power is close to the end of his life as pancreatic cancer progresses. He was visited recently by Michael Ralston, Ian Hopley, Darryl Thomson, Craig Iskov and John Smith.



*Matt Power and Craig Iskov, with the "Thank You" Matt received from students in Balikpapan.*

Cam Thompson has moved into a care facility at Prahran, but currently is also unwell.

We thank these men for their service to this country in its time of need; for their service to the Battalion over the course of their long lives; we wish their time in the weeks to come be comfortable and pain-free.



*Peter Dorman helping Dudley Warhurst celebrate his 95th birthday*

Dudley Warhurst recently celebrated his 95th birthday, with author of *The Silent Men*, Philip Dornan. On a recent visit, Michael Ralston slipped a much appreciated bottle of single malt whiskey into the basket of Dudley's walker. We hope it keeps him going for another year, at least.

In September, Greg Ivey informed us that QX 52785 Sergeant Francis (Frank) George Wust, president of the Papuan Infantry Battalion Association died. Frank was well known to those who attend the Queensland Reunion. He had served with the 9th Battalion at Milne Bay, prior to joining the PIB.

Sadly, Joan Watson, widow of Roy Watson, also passed away recently.

On the eve of Remembrance Day, Craig Iskov and the editor, Jill Bear, were among a group who spoke at a function at Footscray RSL organised by artist/historian Geoff Fox. The theme of the evening was: What does the experience of war mean to you?

Geoff spends some time each year on Morotai Island, where he has established a number of artworks/memorials, including posters of 2/14's Bob Iskov near General MacArthur's bathhouse. He has also planted an avenue of trees that he hopes young Australians will visit and dedicate to a family member.

## UPDATING OUR RECORDS

We are keen to update our records so we would appreciate it if you could complete and return the attached **Important Notice** to Secretary John Smith as soon as possible. Thank you.

## BATTLEFIELD TOURS

Ian Hopley is organising the trip to Balikpapan in June-July, 2015 to mark the 70th anniversary of the landings there. Full details were in the September issue of *Comradeship*, but the Expression of Interest form was not included with that mailout. If you are interested in the trip, and haven't been in contact with Ian, please use the form included with this issue.

As well as the trip to Balikpapan in next year, members may be interested in a trip to Papua New Guinea being organised by George Friend from 19 February 2015. This will be a week-long, fully escorted, non-trekking trip, which will take in sites and memorials around Port Moresby, Popondetta, Kokoda village, Buna, Gona and Sanananda. For further details contact John Smith (0307828132 or jlsmith1946@gmail.com).