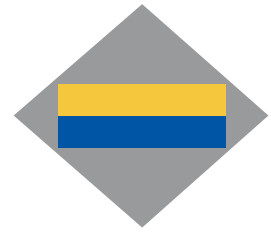


COMRADESHIP

www.2nd14battalion.org.au

Print Post Approved PP3394340023



VOL XXXVI No.3
September 2016

President's Report



It seems that in every edition of *Comradeship* I report that some more of our brave men have passed on. We accept this will happen eventually, but it always makes me contemplate that our time with our families is precious and we must make the most of it.

The 2/14 Battalion is now heavily involved in planning for the 75th anniversary of the Kokoda campaign in August – September next year. We have a date of Sunday 3 September approved for an event at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. We are now working with our friends from the 2/16 and 39 Battalion Associations to create a memorable and moving tribute to all those who fought on the Owen Stanley Ranges. We are also in talks with Yandina RSL regarding a service at the 2/14 memorial up there, followed by a lunch at the RSL. The Yandina RSL is heavily involved in seeking grants to restore the 2/14 memorial.

Author and filmmaker Patrick Lindsay is now making contact with veterans and families in an effort to record the memories and stories of those men that we have left. Any Kokoda information that you have can be passed through me to Patrick.

We are now in the process of purchasing a 2/14 flag for each of our partner schools of Kingsbury Primary, Reservoir High and Yandina Primary. The schools will fly the flags on appropriate days relevant to 2/14 history and events. Good quality flags are expensive and I gratefully acknowledge donations of \$600 each from Queensland company BMD Urban, in memory of Arthur Toombs, and Specialised Civil Pty, of Narrabri, NSW, in memory of another 2/14 family member.

These costs raise the issue that we do rely mainly on funding from our memberships, so if you feel you would like to financially support the work we do, or to specifically remember a loved one, please feel free to talk to a committee member about how you can help.

On a bright note, I have just returned from the Queensland reunion lunch which was a wonderful day. It was lovely to catch up with veterans and friends, so thanks to Trevor Pryor and crew for the organisation of the event.

Regards,
Craig Iskov
President

2016 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - FINAL REMINDER

(\$25 Single; \$40 Couple; \$50 Family)

These fell due on **30 April 2016** and whilst many have already been received, we wish to remind those who are still outstanding to please send them in. As we cannot include a remittance form with this issue, please contact Karen Brkic directly by phone (03 9318 5394) or email (karenbrkic54@gmail.com). If you wish to pay directly by internet or bank transfer Karen, will provide banking details.

If you joined the Association between October and December 2015 your membership subscription will not be due until April 2017.

The very latest we can receive the 2016 subscription is the end of October 2016. If your subscription is not received by this date you are in danger of falling off the Membership list, which means you will no longer receive *Comradeship*. And we know you don't want that to happen.

Please note:

- *Payment for veteran membership is optional.*
- *Widows of 2/14 veterans are not required to pay the membership fee.*
- *Please keep us updated with changes of address, phone numbers or email addresses.*

2/14 Battalion Association Inc

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the 2/14 Battalion Association Incorporated will be held on

**Sunday 25th September 2016
at 10.00 am**

at the Rats of Tobruk Hall,
44 Victoria Ave, Albert Park.

Business to be conducted:

1. To receive and adopt the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2015
2. To receive the President's and Secretary's Reports.
3. To receive and adopt the Annual Financial Report.
4. To elect Office Bearers for 2016/2017
5. To consider nominations for Life Membership.

Nominations are called for the following vacancies:

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Committee (25 positions)

Nominations are to be received by the Treasurer, 18 Khartoum St, West Footscray, 3012 no later than Friday 16th September 2016.

In the event that more nominations are received than there are vacancies, an election will be held.

An **Ordinary Committee Meeting** will immediately follow the Annual General Meeting. Members and visitors are welcome.

This is your chance to become actively involved in the management of one of Australia's largest Associations of World War Two veterans, families and friends. Please get involved.

Committee meetings are scheduled quarterly on the first Sunday of the month at East Malvern RSL.

QUEENSLAND REUNION

Forty nine turned out for the reunion in Brisbane on a winter's day in which the temperature failed get above 24 degrees at any time.

Friends from most parts of Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and NSW made the effort to attend. There were people linked with many units associated with the 2/14, local RSL representatives and many good friends of the Battalion.

It was most pleasing to see the families of passed veteran's not only honouring their relative's membership but taking an active role in the Association activities. My thanks to you all.

Due to the illness of two regular 39th members, we were limited to just two veterans, George Priestley and Jack Thompson. And how good it was to see them there.

Association President Craig Iskov gave a report, informing the assembly of the activities of the Association and impressing everyone with the great work being done. He was followed by Association 'travel agent', Ian Hopley, who discussed the next trip Borneo in 2017.

Following a wonderful meal, Aiden Grimes was introduced. Aiden had just returned from three consecutive treks in PNG marking his 104th, 105th and 106th crossing of the Kokoda Track. He spoke of his efforts to form a unified body of trek companies to ensure the best possible outcomes for trekkers and locals. He also showed his passion for the Owen Stanley Campaign and emphasised that it was "our" history and we must ensure its accurate continuation. He then, to his surprise, led us in *Danny Boy*, the theme song of the Brisbane reunion.

All too soon the day drew to a close and participants headed in all directions – but there was a wonderful feeling that they would all be there again next year.

Thanks again must go to all who attended and especially those who helped create the "Garden of Grog", the array of bottles hidden in the lovely plants. (Personally I was thrilled with my prize, Bertha's date and weet-bix cake!).

Thanks also to Elaine and Fran Ralston, and Kylie Grant for their assistance during the day.



Veterans George Priestly (2nd left) and Jack Thompson (3rd left) seated at a table that includes President Craig (centre rear) and Aiden Grimes (2 to his right).

WELFARE FUND

The Battalion Welfare Fund was set up with a bequest from the estate of veteran, Alan Blyth. Today, interest from the Fund provides the monies for the scholarship we award to a student at Reservoir High School, and the smaller bursaries that go to students from Kingsbury and Yandina Primary Schools.

Knowing how the veterans of the 2/14 Battalion valued education, we invite you to contribute to the Fund or set up a bequest to the Fund in their memory. This will ensure that the young people in these schools are supported to continue their education and that the sacrifice that was made on their behalf during World War II will be remembered.

Donations to the Welfare Fund are tax deductible.

2/16 BATTALION REUNION

2/14th Battalion Association members are cordially invited to attend the 2/16th Battalion Association Reunion Luncheon on

**Saturday 15th October 2016
at 11.30am**

Old Hepburn Springs Hotel, Hepburn – Newsted Road,
Hepburn Springs

RSVP Trevor Ingram 0419 333 347 or
Email: trevor.ingram@bigpond.com

YANDINA MEMORIAL



Plaque at the Yandina Memorial

Following the very successful Queensland reunion lunch recently, Craig Iskov and Michael Ralston journeyed up to Yandina. They met with Yandina RSL's Welfare officer, ex-RAAF nurse and Vietnam veteran, Helen Cook, who is managing a project to restore the 2/14 memorial in Tinarra Circuit Yandina. Helen has obtained quotes to replace the existing damaged rockwork with sandstone, replant the gardens and restore the signage. Yandina RSL are managing the costs of the restoration through various grants including DVA and the local council. Michael noted that it was very pleasing that there is a new sign on the Yandina - Coolool road denoting the location of the 2/14 memorial.

Craig and Michael then met with Ian Hicks, League Administration Manager, Maroochy RSL, who are also keen to assist with the 2/14 memorial project and any 2/14 events in the area. At this stage planning for the 75th anniversary of the Kokoda campaign will include a service at the Yandina memorial followed by lunch at the RSL hall, on a Sunday in mid-late August 2017. The service will include the RSL, Yandina Primary School, Yandina Council as well as the general public and our guests.

Craig and Michael also had the honour of meeting with Vietnam veteran Len Thompson OAM, who has worked with Ross Bastiaan on

providing plaques and memorial structures along the Kokoda Trail through the Kokoda Memorial Foundation. Len and some mates, along with Ross Bastiaan recently assisted the Australian Government to replace the stolen plaques at Gallipoli in time for the centenary commemorations.



Michael Ralston with Helen Cook



A view of the park

Michael commented that it was a very worthwhile day on behalf of the 2/14 battalion Association.

EVENT CALENDAR 2016

Gillison Memorial Service

Sunday 21 August
Cancelled

Bruce Kingsbury Memorial Service

Friday, 26 August
at 9 for 9.30am
Reservoir High School
855 Plenty Rd, Reservoir

Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital

(Austin Health)
Friday 26 August
at 11am
Enter via Gate 9
300 Waterdale Road, Heidelberg West

Annual General Meeting & Committee Meeting

Sunday, 25th September
at 10am - 12.00 noon
Rats of Tobruk Association House,
44 Victoria Ave, Albert Park.

Annual Pilgrimage

Sunday 25 September
at 2.00pm
The Sanctuary, The Shrine of
Remembrance, Melbourne

2/16th Battalion Reunion Lunch

Saturday 15 October
at 11.30am
Old Hepburn Springs Hotel, Hepburn
- Newstead Road, Hepburn Springs
RSVP Trevor Ingram 0419 333 347
Email: trevor.ingram@bigpond.com

Committee Meeting

Sunday, 4th December
at 11.30am
East Malvern RSL

APOLOGY

In the article on ANZAC Day at Omeo in the last edition, Ian Hopley met up with Wayne Riordan, son of VX 15485 Athol Riordan, not Wayne Clark, as printed.

Ian Hopley apologises for his mistake and blames his error on too much gunfire breakfast

OBITUARIES

VX14065 Sergeant Peter Osborne FORSTER



Army records in Canberra indicate that when he enlisted on 2 March 1940, Peter stated he was born on 1 January 1918. He later amended this in 1944 to a more accurate 1921.

According to the 2/14 Battalion historian, Captain W B Russell, Peter was one of five brothers who served in the army and navy during World War II, several of whom were similarly creative with their dates of birth.

Peter marched into the 2/14th Battalion at Puckapunyal, as one of the first drafts, on 24 May 1940 and was assigned to 11 Platoon in B Company.

Following training at Puckapunyal, Peter embarked with the Battalion on HMT Aquitania in October, 1940 bound for the Middle East. Initially stationed in Palestine, the Battalion spent several weeks reinforcing defensive positions at Mersa Matruh in north-west Egypt during April 1941, where they first experienced enemy fire from attacking aircraft.

They returned to Palestine in May 1941 in order to prepare for the invasion of Syria, then under the control of the German-allied Vichy French. B Company crossed the border into Lebanon in the early hours of 8 June, 1941, with 11 Platoon given the task of capturing Labouna, a position of strategic importance due to its commanding view of the coast road south to Haifa in Palestine; one of the main transport routes into the country.

The Battalion pushed on to occupy Tyre and crossed the Litani River on 10 June. In reaching their next objective, Sidon, B Company took part in another major action at the Zahrani River on 11-12 June.

On 16 June, Peter was medically evacuated to 2/1 Australian General Hospital in Palestine, and upon his recovery, spent the remainder of the Syrian campaign with the 21 Infantry

Training Battalion which was then training reinforcements for the 21st Brigade including 2/14 Battalion.

Tragedy struck at this time, with the news that Peter's younger brother, David, serving with the 2/25 Battalion, had been killed during an attack on Hill 1054 between Rharife and Beit ed Dine, a few miles inland from where the 2/14 Battalion was deployed in the battle for Damour. Just four days later the Armistice was signed, and the Australian forces moved into garrison duties. However, David's death, following his own experience of the insanity of battle, had a profound effect on Peter, who became a deeply committed pacifist.

In October, 1941, Peter was transferred to the AIF 2nd Echelon in the Middle East, and taken on as a clerk, his pre-war occupation. He returned to Australia in March 1942 and married Gladys Aimee Miller a month later. Their son, David Peter, named for Peter's brother killed in Syria, was born the following year.

For the remaining years of the war, Peter worked in the Records Office, first in Melbourne, and then for the whole of 1944 in New Guinea at Port Moresby and Lae. During this time he was first promoted to Corporal and then Sergeant.

Like many who served in New Guinea, Peter suffered several bouts of Malaria and associated tropical illnesses that necessitated hospitalisation from time to time.

He returned to the Melbourne office in January 1945 and was discharged, following the Japanese surrender, on 11 September 1945 at Royal Park General Details Depot.

After the war, Peter renewed his association with his comrades in the 2/14 Battalion, regularly attending committee meetings, and taking part in Reunions and ANZAC Day Marches until only a few years ago.

299976 & VX16377 Private Cameron Gerald Thompson



Army records in Canberra show that Cam was born on 13 June 1918 and that he was living with his family in Glenhuntly when he initially enlisted in the 5th Militia Battalion, Victorian Scottish Regiment (VSR), on 7 February 1939. Australia was transfixed by events in Europe and a belief that war was imminent. Young men were being encouraged to join the Citizens Military Forces and train for the eventual war.

The Victorian Scottish Regiment was a kilted regiment who wore the Gordon Tartan and were aligned with the Gordon Highlanders in the British Army. Cam was a musician drummer and spent time in the regiment's pipe band so wore the kilt more often than not.

Training camps were held at Mt Martha and Point Nepean with the tensions in Europe indicating a likely war. With the outbreak of War on 3 September 1939, the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, announced that it was his melancholy duty to say that Australia was also at war to support its commitment to Great Britain.

However, the Australian Defence Act prevented Militia units from serving outside Australian territory and the wholly volunteer Australian Imperial Force was formed. A number of the Militia battalions attempted to "volunteer" to the AIF as complete existing units, including the Victorian Scottish Regiment, however this was not permitted.

Many soldiers in the militia subsequently resigned and transferred their enlistment to the AIF so they could serve overseas. About 50 from VSR eventually ended up in 2/14 Battalion including Cam and my father. Cam was discharged from VSR on 22 May 1940 and was enlisted into the AIF a day later at the Recruit Receiving Depot at the Caulfield Racecourse. After several days of processing and kitting out, he was transferred to 2/14 Battalion and marched in to the Battalion at Puckapunyal on 27 May 1940.

Being a drummer, he was posted to the Battalion Band. Whilst participating in the Battalion's ceremonial functions, the Band members were also ordinary soldiers and took part in a range of camp activities. One of these was to have the drummers parade at 6am every morning and march up and down the lines beating Reveille.

On one occasion, the RSM decided that the Band needed some smartening up and took them for a period of rifle drill. Upon completion, but before dismissing them, he told them that they needed to improve a lot. The following morning the drummers assembled outside the RSM's tent and at 6am on the dot, began to vigorously beat Reveille on the drums with much clashing of cymbals and loud protest from the RSM.

However, it was when the Battalion marched

onto the battlefield that the Band came into its own. Here the Band members would assume the role of stretcher-bearers, so when not practising their music, they were learning first aid and practising manoeuvring stretchers. This role was likely to take them into the dangers of the front line when recovering wounded and so they wore the Red Cross brassard on their arms that gave them protection as non-combatants under the Geneva Convention.

When the Battalion moved to the Middle East it came under enemy fire for the first time; bombing in Egypt and then face-to-face conflict against the famed French Foreign Legion in the Syrian Campaign. It was here, as stretcher-bearers, that the Band members went into the front line for the first time to recover the wounded, sometimes under fire.

On one occasion as the Battalion advanced over open ground, it came under intense, accurate artillery fire and was later to find out that the area was a practice artillery range that had been accurately plotted. It had been expected that the French would only offer token resistance but this was not to occur and they fought hard causing many casualties before surrendering.

After several months occupying Syria, the Pacific War broke out and the Australian troops were required back home to defend the homeland from this new threat. Cam had been transferred into the Anti-Aircraft Platoon which was to have a benefit for the sea voyage back to Australia. Armed with Bren Light Machine Guns, the Platoon had to provide 24 hour defence against enemy aircraft on the troopship for the voyage which meant that they did not have to spend time below decks in the hot tropical climate across the Indian Ocean.

After training in Queensland for the expected jungle fighting in Papua, the Battalion embarked for Port Moresby where Cam was back with the Band. The Battalion was the first of the AIF troops to climb the Kokoda Track to relieve the Militia troops who had first met the Japanese invasion. The fighting was tough and the Battalion suffered many losses at Isurava and then Brigade Hill as it was forced back.

Many were cut off behind the rapid Japanese advance and so Cam was transferred to Battalion Headquarters as a Runner. Communication was difficult in the jungle conditions with radios often ineffective and telephone lines broken frequently by enemy action, so physically sending messages about the battlefield by runner was most effective.

It was in the final stages of the Kokoda withdrawal at Iorabaiwa and subsequently in Port Moresby that much was to happen to Cam. He had just delivered a message to a command slit trench and was moving away

when a mortar bomb scored a direct hit on the trench killing all in the immediate area except Cam. Although suffering superficial wounds, his hearing was damaged and was to affect him for the rest of his life.

Evacuated to Port Moresby, Cam was afflicted by Scrub Typhus which had a high mortality rate. In a coma for nearly two weeks, he slowly recovered but missed the Battalion's next action at Gona where Band members, by circumstance, operated as riflemen and machine gunners despite their non-combatant status.

Following his recovery, Cam served the rest of the war as a bandsman/stretcher-bearer with the Battalion in the Markham-Ramu and Borneo Campaigns at Balikpapan. Often in the frontline, the bandsmen were again under fire recovering the wounded.

On account of his long service, Cam was eligible for early return to Australia and marched out of 2/14 Battalion on 23 August 1945, embarking for Australia from Borneo on 4 September 1945. He was discharged from the Army and returned to civilian life in Melbourne on 9 October 1945.

Of the approximately 3000 men who marched through the Battalion during the War, Cam was one of only about 115 who served the entire war in the Battalion.

In February 1943 Cam acted as Bill Wilkinson's Best Man at his wedding to Joy Wilding and the wedding photograph shows the men in 2/14 uniforms. Many years later, Joy recalled that she thought Cam was drunk during the service because when the minister asked him for the wedding ring, she said he kept pulling beer bottle tops from his pocket!

She probably didn't understand or appreciate the classic Best Man joke of pretending to lose the ring!

Cam was a 2/14 Battalion Association stalwart. Quarterly Committee meetings were like mini-reunions as, apart from the office bearers, there were 25 ordinary committee members. And, of course, Cam had the front row at every meeting as he sat there leaning slightly forward cupping his ear to hear properly. Occasionally Cam's voice could be heard asking "What did he say?"

Cam was a great Association member who could be relied upon when we needed someone with medals on their chest to represent the Battalion and lay a wreath. He rarely missed the Annual Reunion or ANZAC Day March. In 2010 he was honoured with Life Membership of the Association.

He gave his all and it's now time to go home to the Barracks and rest.

Farewell Soldier

V386833/VX127008 Private George Edward WHITECHURCH

Army records indicate George Whitechurch was born in Nagambie on 3 July 1923 and was living at Mangalore when he enlisted in the Militia at Coburg on 19 January 1942. He was called up for full time military service on 13 July 1942, whilst serving at the Artillery Proof Range, Fort Gellibrand, Williamstown, in the Australian Army Ordnance Corps.

Over the next three years he served with the Artillery Proof and Experimental Section at the Stockton Proof Range and at the Maribyrnong Magazine. Proofing is the testing of military equipment to ensure it meets the standards required by the Army. At the Stockton Range, 25 pounder artillery and mortar high explosive shells were tested for standards and effectiveness.

On reaching his 20th birthday, George transferred his enlistment to the AIF, meaning he could serve overseas if required. An interesting aspect of his service during this time was that, being the son of a farming family, he was given seasonal leave without pay to assist with harvesting work, a vital wartime requirement.

With the War nearing its end, he marched in to 2/14 Battalion in Queensland and joined his brother, Sergeant John H 'Bluey' Whitechurch MM in 9 Platoon, on 2 May 1945. He took part in the Balikpapan Landing and subsequent Borneo Campaign. 'A' Company led the advance to take Manggar Airfield with 9 Platoon suffering the most casualties in the advance and subsequent defensive patrolling about the airfield.

With the end of the War came a peace-keeping role on Morotai and then the Celebes in the Dutch East Indies. Progressively the longer serving soldiers went back to Australia for discharge and George's brother, 'Bluey' marched out of the Battalion in early November 1945 and was discharged.

With the imminent return of the whole Battalion to Australia, George marched out to 2/10 Battalion on 22 November 1945. He returned to Australia and was discharged from the Army on 15 March 1946.

George died in August, 2015.

Lest we Forget

Q & A with CLARRIE CUNNINGHAM - PART 2

The continuation of the Question and Answer session with veteran, Clarrie Cunningham, during the trip to Balikpapan, Borneo in July 2015. **Part 1** appeared in the December 2015 edition of *Comradeship*.

Can you remember how the 2/14 Marching song went?

*I can't remember that one so well but another one in the Light Horse that we'd sing was ...
We're marching on! Marching on,
From the land in the Southern Sea.
There'll be no more 'Heiling Hitler'
No more 'Berlin on the spree'.
For the AIF is marching
With its cry of "Liberty!"
So keep your chin up Mother England,
We're on the road to Victory!!*

How long after the war did you get married, Clarrie? And how did you meet your wife?

We got married about 18 months after the war. I went to school with her. I knew her when she was only 11 or 12. We went to the same school. We were born in the same hospital in Condobolin. We're still together. It's been 67 years so we haven't done too bad!

Here's a poem for you...

*As I was coming down Conroys Gap
I heard a maiden cry
"There goes Bill The Bullocky -
He's bound for Gundagai."*

*A better poor old blighter
Never cracked an honest crust,
Nor a tougher man than Bill
Ever dragged the wood through dust.*

*But Bill's team got bogged in the five mile creek,
And he cursed and swore and cried
"If Nobby don't me get out of this bog
I'll tattoo his blinkin' hide."*

*But Nobby strained and he broke the yoke
And he strained his blinkin' eye,
And the dog sits on the tucker box,
Five miles from Gundagai.*

Here's another!...

*One evening in November,
As I very well remember,
I was walking down the street in drunken pride;
But my knees began to flutter
So I landed in the gutter
And a pig came up and lay down by me side.*

*As I lay there in the gutter,
Thinking thoughts I shouldn't utter
A maiden passing by was heard to say
"You can pick the man who boozes
By the company he chooses."
And the pig got up and slowly walked away!*

Clarrie, since the war you've lead a wonderful and long life and done a lot of things. Would you like to tell us about some of the things you did after the war and later.

Well, I got married to start with and a son came along 12 or 15 months or so afterwards. By that time I had a job on the Ambulances. I'd done a lot of work on Ambulance repair in my spare time in Borneo. I'd helped out too with patching up some of the natives. You've got no idea what the Japs did. They left them in an awful condition. Shocking! Anyway, when I was discharged I ended up as an Ambulance officer. I was there for four and a half years and I didn't regret it at all. I had a bit of bad luck though. I applied for a job as a Station Officer

over in Tottenham not far from where I live now. Things didn't go so well. I'd had the books audited before I took over. When I took them to the Bank Manager, he said "Listen Mate. I think you'd be best to look for a job somewhere else. There's a lot of money missing here. There's been some bad blokes involved here."

So I tossed it in and went back to saw mill work. It was what I was used to. After a long period at the saw mills and earth moving and tank sinking out there in the west, I left there and applied for a job in The Snowy Mountains Scheme and got a job as foreman because I'd done a lot of work as a timber man before. I did timber work for the Scheme for the next six years.

From there they wanted me to go to Thailand and take my wife and kids to do timber work over there. I said: "No. I've been in the Islands for long enough. You can't drink the water or eat the vegetables." I reneged! So I stayed on in that job there for a while until it was time to walk away from it. I had a lot of mates there.

I've done some pretty hard yakka. Always enjoyed axe work. I went back and worked at the Shire of Condobolin doing clearing and eventually ended up as an overseer, just out of Lithgow in NSW. I retired from there and have done what I wanted here, there and everywhere since



Clarrie serenading the Melbourne Reunion, with George Collins in the background

What about your dog?

I've had several dogs. I've put a lot of time in with two of my dogs. ...a 'half stag' and another 'half-Labrador fella',

going after foxes. They were pretty good. If I'd miss them with the gun they'd go after them. I seldom missed them though.

I had one dog who could find foxes anywhere: in rabbit burrows; even the particular burrow it was in. He'd go right to where the fox was; in a little log or a tree. Anywhere! He was a beauty!

I used to only go for half a dozen foxes in a day. Then I'd take them back and skin them. That way your dog didn't get too knocked up. They were ready to go again the next day. After about a week I'd give them a rest for a day or two and then we'd go out fresh.

Oh boy! They used to work well!

I've always been a bit of a 'dog man'. Wherever I've been I'd have the dogs with me.

Fox skins were up over thirty dollars a skin at that

time! The lowest they went was about twelve or fourteen dollars. My dogs didn't tear the skins. They could kill them without that. I really enjoyed it. I used to walk anything up to twenty kilometres a day just poking along steady with the dogs picking up a fox here and there. It was a great life!!

We hear you weren't a bad shot with a gun, Clarrie. Did you get any awards?

Yes. I was a good shot with the gun and won a lot of events: Clay targets with a shot gun.

I went to Wagga Wagga with The Veterans with a big event on: The Australian Championships for all age groups. I was in the Veterans Class. I won the Australian Championship at 72 years of age. I won it very easily, really.

The last event was a point score event and that meant if you shot the clay with the first barrel you got three points; with the second barrel you got two points and if you missed you got nothing. It was a fifty clay event and the last event of the day I was in front for the day and there was an old lady who could shoot very well shoving me along a bit. She said, "No. This isn't my cup of tea."

Well I had a go anyway and lost one point out of fifty targets. I shot all except one with the first barrel! They said it was pretty good going!! There's not many old coves have done it!

I don't shoot anymore much. I fell out of a tree and busted my shoulder and I've lost all the meat off my arms now. The gun kicks too much. I gave it to my Grandson. It was a very good gun!!

While I've got this microphone in my hand I'd like to thank everyone who's been so kind to me. I've been so lucky. My son and I can't believe what wonderful people we've been mixed up with here. Thank-you very much!

Much applause.



Clarrie at FTG National Park earlier this year.

THE KOKODA EFFECT - PART 1

Trevor Pryor

The text of Trevor's speech delivered at Sherwood RSL on Kokoda Day, 2015.

After the list of inspirational speakers what would I speak about? I could tell the Kokoda Campaign story – they wouldn't have heard that!!

I could further extol the virtues of those who took part in the campaign and all other actions while serving the country.

As I wondered about a topic, I realised all the angles I thought about were effects of the campaign. So I decided to go with that. We will all have a number of these episodes but I now have the opportunity to share some of mine. The effects of the Kokoda campaign permeate a huge variety of places.

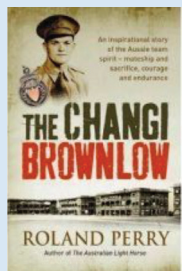
Historical Effects

Effect 1: Saved Aust.

The Japanese had been stopped on land, for the first time in their relentless push.

Some historians of late want to say that the Japanese were never coming to Aust. I would defer to the recently deceased Bob Iskov of the 2/14th who told the story of taking papers from the body of an enemy officer. These documents showed maps of Darwin including defences. Bob concluded, "They weren't coming to play golf!"

Effect 2: Morale



No doubt word of success in the campaign provided enormous joy for the country but I want to share a passage from a book I have recently read called "Changi Brownlow". The book tells the story of life in the prisoner of war camp and the role sport played in maintaining their spirits.

"As the year dragged on in Changi, the men and officers were inventive in their attempts to keep up morale.

They were helped by titbits of news from radios hidden around Changi...

On 13 November, (1942) a radio broadcast picked up at Changi said that the Australians had recaptured Kokoda. It was 11 days after the event, but the report rippled like a small earthquake through the 8th Division camp as the word was passed around.

Every Australian was lifted. A sense of hope pervaded the barracks."

On the cover the book is described as: "An inspirational story of the Aussie team spirit – mateship and sacrifice, courage and endurance." Have you heard those words before? They're engraved on the four granite blocks at Isurava.



Trekkers at the Isurava Memorial

Effect 3: Choco Myth

Evidently, militia battalions had been gifted with this less than glamorous name by AIF forces. Chocolate soldiers were expected to melt in the heat of battle. They were also referred to as koalas – couldn't be shot at and couldn't leave Aust. The Track certainly blew that to pieces following the exploits of those battalions during the campaign.

I have seen for myself the extreme respect between veterans of the 2/14 and the 39 and members of both units have related stories of the actions that have created this respect.

Effect 4. The Irishman Effect

Aidan Grimes 90th crossing was with an Indigenous Youth Leadership group which was highly complimentary about his education program on the Kokoda campaign. (Aiden made his 100th crossing Nov 2015.)



Some of the participants in Aidan Grimes's 90th Kokoda trek

Effect 5 Afghanistan Effect

It is significant that some Afghanistan vets, and their families are walking the Track as a most important part of their rehabilitation from both physical and mental injuries. It is special to think that they are using the history of those who fought along the Track to help in repairing their damage.



Veterans of conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somali, Rwanda, East Timor and Vietnam ready to walk the Kokoda Track

As a child I grew up with terms such as 2/14 Battalion, 21 Brigade, 7th Division, as a regular part of the conversation in our house. I was aware that Dad had been a member of the 2/14 and had fought in the war. Not much else!

We went to functions and picnics with these groups. We visited the homes of many of Dad's army friends. Dad marched on ANZAC Day. Once a year he took me to Victoria Barracks in Sydney to prepare the room for the annual brigade ball. One of my jobs was to throw the pops onto the floor. (Ask your grandparents.)

Like most families, the soldiers spoke little of their experiences so I knew very little. Dad did point out a humorous incident in the Battalion History (p 265) while they were based in the Atherton tableland prior to departure to Borneo for the Battalion's final theatre of the war. He and another sergeant (H A Phefley) were woken by groans outside their tent around 11.30 pm on Christmas day 1944. It was another soldier quite the worse for wear. They grabbed a jungle cart and wheeled him back to his tent while they were dressed only in singlets. He let out another loud moan outside Battalion HQ and after the soldier was safely deposited in his tent, the two sergeants had their seat prints taken before being allowed to return to D Coy lines.

He omitted to show me, a few pages earlier, the report from 1943 when he and Colonel Honner were wounded by a burst of machine gun fire in the Ramu Valley.

I may not have known much as a 6-10 year old, but I did know something. There was something special between these men. I wasn't old enough to know what it was but there was a feeling, a special bond between them.

And I knew one other thing. I was never treated as Tom's young bloke, or a kid. They spoke with me, knew things about me, asked me about what I was doing and referred to me by name. I remember feeling very special when among them.

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT - Craig Iskov
Mob 0428 737 788
ckiskov@bigpond.com

SECRETARY AND VICE PRESIDENT - David Webb
5 Radnor Crt, Mt Dandenong, 3767
Mob 0417 442 299

ASST. SECRETARY - Margaret Briggs
Tel (03) 9561 2247

ASST. SECRETARY - Sue Davies
Tel 0417387250
2/14 Battalion Association Inc.
PO Box 6428, Highton, Vic, 3216
Email: 2.14battalion@gmail.com

TREASURER - Karen Brkic
18 Khartoum Street, West Footscray, 3012
Tel 9318 5394

EDITOR - Jill Bear
26 Merton St, Camberwell, 3124
Tel 9889 3466
jillebear@gmail.com

WELFARE TRUSTEES - Robert Eden, Ian Hopley, Michael Ralston

MEMORABILIA OFFICER - Darryl Thomson
22-24 Jarrah Drive, Braeside, 3195
Tel 9588 1444

WEB MASTER - Jonnie Iskov
webmaster@2nd14battalion.org.au

AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Bill Vandenberg - Mallee
Tel 5026 4535

Gavon Armstrong - CNE & Riverina
gavnheln@bigpond.com

Gary McCulloch - Gippsland
Tel 5144 4435

Darren Benson - Geelong
Mobile 0424 179 017

John Vandenberg - Tasmania, South
Tel (03) 6265 8071
jandpvandenberg@bigpond.com

Ian Hopley - South Australia
Mobile 0433 019 441

Trevor Pryor - Queensland
Tel (07) 3482 4768
teepee_au@yahoo.com

Jan Erskine - Mildura
berka@ncable.com.au

Ron Inglis - NSW
Tel (02) 9642 3563
inglisrw@gmail.com

REMEMBERING WAR MATES

Royals' visit to diggers' graves sparks memories of the Fallen

Bob Iskov

The text of this article by Bob Iskov appeared in the Wangaratta Chronicle on 26 Sept, 2012



Bob Iskov in 1940 (displaying the original 2/14 Battalion colour patch) and on the Kokoda Track in 2012

On their recent visit to Singapore, Prince William and Princess Kate stopped briefly before the graves of 10 British and Australian servicemen.

These brave men, part of Z Special Force, had been captured when they attempted to carry out a raid on Japanese shipping.

Using a captured Malayan fishing junk named "Mustika" the operation was code-named Rimau.

One of these men was Lieutenant Albert Sargent (Blondie) of Wangaratta, who initially escaped capture and with two companions paddled some 2000 kilometres in commandeered boats and canoes.

Eventually left alone and in poor physical condition, Sargent was handed over to the Japanese by local natives near Timor and taken back to join his mates in a Singapore jail.

Some months later the 10 prisoners were tried by a Japanese court-martial and sentenced to death by beheading, which was carried out with due ceremony on 7 July, 1945 - just one month before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the war came to an end.

I had served with Albert Sargent, first in the local CMF Militia, doing part-time training, then a group of us volunteered for overseas service in May 1940.

We became part of the 2/14 Battalion, 7 Division, in the mortar platoon, where Sargent's leadership qualities were seen and he was promoted to sergeant.

We went to the Middle East in October 1940 and served in Palestine, Egypt and then fought the Vichy French in Syria.

When our platoon commander was wounded by a bullet from an enemy plane, Lieutenant Jack Schwind, one of our local group, just commissioned,

took command and Bert Sargent took over as his platoon sergeant.

The three of us were together in action on the Kokoda Track in August-September 1942, where Bert's courage and leadership again stood out.

We lost another local man, Norman Wilkinson, when he dropped dead alongside us with a bullet through the heart at Efogi.

Forced to withdraw by the encircling Japanese we became separated and I spent two weeks in the jungle mostly without food.

Linking up with a few mates we eventually reached the safety of our own unit and savoured a bully beef stew.

A few weeks later the 2/14 was back in action at Gona Beach, and Sargent, controlling our mortar fire from a forward position, had the bombs falling dangerously close to himself.

Lieutenant Schwind was promoted to captain and Sargent - given his commission in the 'field' - took over as mortar platoon commander, and I took over as his sergeant.

A year or so later, Bert volunteered for "Z Special" and after months of intensive training was selected for that fateful Rimau raid.

I hope the people of Wangaratta will find time to pause and reflect on the sacrifices of these and other local men who gave their lives in defence of our country.

Bob provided this list of the members of the group who were with him when they were separated from the main body of the Battalion between Efogi and Iorabaiwa on the Kokoda Track: Lt Jock Greenwood, Cpl R F Iskov, Ptes R Mitchell, L A Green, W Scott, A Rumpf, A Oliver, A Gemmel and C Martin