

FRONTLINE

A DEFENCE SERVICE JOURNAL

OFFICIAL JOURNAL

1ST/19TH BATTALION

THE ROYAL NEW

SOUTH WALES

REGIMENT

ASSOCIATION &

2ND/19TH BATTALION

A.I.F. ASSOCIATION.

MEMBERS OF THE

AUSTRALIAN

DEFENCE

FORCES

RESERVES

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precise PUBLISHING Pty. Ltd.

A.B.N. 63 108 030 968

PO BOX 513
MAROUBRA N.S.W. 2036
PH: (02) 9662 8343
FAX: (02) 9662 8312
EMAIL: ppsales@bigpond.net.au

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VALE GOOD FRIENDS



NX57909 LIEUTENANT William Gordon (Bill) MINTO Signals Platoon 2/19 Battalion AIF

Late of Yowie Bay NSW Bill sadly passed away on 16 November 2008. Bill was born at Sydney on 18 November 1918 and enlisted in 2/19 Battalion AIF on 17 July 1940 at Paddington NSW.

On 3 September 1941 he was one of 5 Sergeants from 2/19 Battalion AIF sent to OTU returning to the Battalion on 26 January 1942 and appointed Regimental Signals Officer on 27 January 1942 vice Lieutenant George Gill who had sadly been killed in action on 22 January 1942.

Following service in the Malayan and Singapore Campaign and as a prisoner of war in Changi he went with B Force to Sandakan Borneo. Bill was repatriated to Australia at war's end and discharged on 26 November 1945.

Bill is survived by his beloved wife Betty and was the much loved father and father-in-law of Iain and Gillian, Warren and Nong. Loved grandfather of Rona, Lindsey, Samantha and Joy. Eric Wilson represented the Association and Major Tony Said represented the Commanding Officer and All Ranks of 1st/19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment at Bill's farewell at Olsens Chapel Sutherland on 21 November 2008



NX35747 SERGEANT Sidney Albert WEEDEN, C Company 2/19 Battalion AIF

Late of Grafton NSW Sid was born at Young NSW on 21 November 1917 and sadly passed away at Grafton NSW on 22nd December 2008. Sid was an original member of 2/19 Battalion AIF enlisting at Wagga Wagga NSW on 20 June 1940. Following service in the Malayan Campaign he escaped after the Battle of Muar and following a perilous journey made it back to Australia where he continued to serve until discharge on 24 November 1945. Post war he worked for the Bank of New South Wales, retiring at age 60 as the Manager of the South Grafton NSW Branch.

Dearly loved husband of Mary (deceased), loving father and father-in-law of Allan and Ann, Jim and Rob, Mel and Bob, Lorraine and Ralph, Sharron and John (deceased), Ted and Sue, Narelle and Geoff (deceased), Tom, Mac, Kay and Ken. Loving pop to 22 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren.

Brad Collis represented the Association at Sid's Farewell at the Whitehouse Community Church, Grafton NSW on Saturday, 27 December 2008. The service was conducted by Reverend Chris Sparks and The Returned & Services League of Australia Tribute was delivered by Mr Kevin Hutchinson of the Grafton RSL Sub Branch.

Sid's eldest son Allan, delivered his eulogy on behalf the family:

Thank you for being here. As the eldest son I am speaking on behalf of Jim, Mel, Lorraine, Sharron, Ted, Narelle, Tom, Mac & Kay.

Dad was born at Young on the 21/11/17 as the 4th son of Edward John and Ada May Weeden. He did all his schooling in Young but had to do his leaving certificate at the Catholic High School because of a smoking problem at the State High School. His first job was as a cadet journalist with a local paper but found it boring and joined the Bank of New South Wales and started in the Wagga branch.

He volunteered for the Army at the outbreak of war. After basic training he married Mary Edna Taylor on the 20th December, 1940 before being posted overseas with the 2/19 Battalion. He saw war service in Singapore and Malaya but like many old diggers he kept his war stories for discussion with his mates on ANZAC Day and saved his family hearing the horrors of war. He merely described it as an unhappy time for everyone and unless you were there you wouldn't understand.

Mum was left at home in Cootamundra living with our grandparents and I was born in the local hospital on 1st October, 1941. Mum and I moved to Epping to live with an Auntie and Jim was born on 29th November, 1944. Dad resumed his banking career after returning from the war and was transferred to Coolamon where Mel was born on the 28th November, 1946.

Lorraine was born at Wagga on the 10 June, 1948 because they had closed Coolamon hospital. Sharron was born on the 25th January, 1950 at Junee. Ted was born at Junee on 9th October, 1951, Narelle on 21st March, 1953 at Coolamon in the local nursing home. Dad was transferred to Hay as accountant in 1953. Tom was born on the 20 July, 1954, Mac on 6th September, 1955 and Kay on the 4th December, 1956 all at Hay.

While in Hay Dad was involved with the Golf Club, Rifle Club and later put a lot of effort into the local bowling club. With a large family Dad found it necessary to do extra part time work to make ends meet and I can remember taking his dinner up to the wool shed where he was doing the books on a number of nights. He also put in a fair amount of time as secretary of the Hay Bowling Club. He was renowned for using the vacant block next door for creating a vegetable and flower garden and large chook yard.

I can remember him selling or bartering, vegetables, eggs and chooks. The family moved to Wagga in 1962 when Dad was transferred as the accountant at Wagga branch. The Garden was then set up over Willans Hill at a paddock of Jim Wallace's place. It was a fair walk over the hill or a long way around it especially carrying loads of flowers or vegetables. In 1964 he was transferred as Manager of The Rock branch and lack of space reduced his garden to the normal size for a back yard.

Mum passed away suddenly in May 1965 and left Dad with the grief and 9 children to care for. Dad used his Army training to allocate duties for each of the children and himself to ensure that all ran like clockwork. It was difficult to visit as you got told that anything you tried to do was allocated and the kitchen was his territory and didn't need any interference. Help only ruined his timetable.

Dad was moved to South Grafton Branch in 1969. There was still 7 children at home living above the Bank with virtually no back yard. While Dad was here, with children leaving home, he started the family bulletins so that he could type one letter with carbon copies to save having to write to children and friends separately. This is still a family monthly tradition. 1977 saw Dad retire from the Bank and move out to Mountain View where he had bought a 5 acre lot and used it to set up a big garden with large chook yards and mushroom sheds. He planted 10 jacaranda trees down the driveway. 1 for each child.

He used to proudly supply the 3 girls, and various others with large bunches of flowers over many years. The big occasion of the year with a growing family was Christmas when children, in-laws and grandchildren gathered in the backyard to get their presents from under the Christmas Trees. Circumstances changed which saw Dad moving with Narelle to Carr Street Grafton where once again he set up a large garden and chook yard (his hens were always known as "The Girls")

He remained in good health until about his 85th birthday and was still working in his garden until nearly his 90th birthday when his physical condition restricted his activities. His mind was still sharp right up to the end and he found his physical inability quite frustrating. We thank Tom and Narelle for allowing him his final wish to die at home. He was proud of his family and liked skiting about his 22 grandchildren and 31 Great Grandchildren. Dad you are a dearly loved Father and you will be sorely missed. Rest in God's Peace.

Lest We Forget



FROM THE PRESIDENT



We were saddened to read of the passing of LT Bill Minto, RSO 2/19 Battalion AIF on 16 November 2008. Eric Wilson represented the Association and Major Tony Said represented 1/19 RNSWR at Bill's farewell on 21 November 2008. As 2008 drew to a close the sad news of the death on 22 December of SGT Sidney Albert Weeden was received. Sid was an original member of 2/19 Battalion AIF and served in 15 Platoon, C Company at the Battle of Muar. He escaped back to Australia and continued to serve until his discharge on 24 November 1945. Sid's funeral service was held at Grafton on Saturday, 27 December and he was farewelled by his large family, his twenty two grandchildren and thirty one great grandchildren. A life well lived! The Association was represented at Sid's funeral by Brad Collis as both Bob Pink and I had previous engagements in Sydney.

December 22 also saw the passing of Mrs Patricia Sutton, the mother of Glenn Sutton. Glenn, a former assistant curator of the Carmanhurst Room in Carcoar had moved back to Bathurst to be with his mother. I am told it was Bert Donaldson's birthday on 13 January. There seems to be some disagreement as to his age (89 or 91). Bert – have you been telling “porkies” again? I never cease to be amazed at mindless vandalism. The magnificent 8th Australian Division memorial in Bathurst – The Broken Blade – was destroyed by vandals last year. The 8th Division Association with assistance from Bathurst City Council and Bathurst RSL Club have arranged for the memorial to be replaced. Unfortunately, those 8th Div survivors – including our own members – who have had the opportunity of visiting this memorial will find the replacement just that – a replacement, with the original, erected in comradeship and remembrance, lost and gone forever. The Memorial was to be rededicated on 22 February but there has been a delay in completion so the rededication has been postponed.

As a welcome change from the sad news that usually populates my report in each edition this month I have a complement of good news. Congratulations to Maree Winter (Derrick) on her promotion to Major on 1 January 2009. Maree is currently serving with 21 Construction Regiment and achieves a great balance of service to her country, in conjunction with her husband Tex, and motherhood. Well done Major Winter!

I also want to welcome Warrant Officer Class One Shane McPhee who has been posted as RSM of 1/19 RNSWR. It is a great shame that our RSMs (and our Commanding Officers) are there for such a short time – two years – and then we start all over again. Trevor Logan was farewelled at the AGM in Gosford and I look forward to catching up with Shane in the near future to discuss matters of mutual interest. Congratulations are also due to Association member Captain Lee Monzo who has returned to active service and been posted as OC B Coy 1/19 RNSWR at Bathurst.

On behalf of all Association members I extend our best wishes to Bodo Schwarz who, at the time this edition goes to print, will be recovering from triple bypass heart surgery. Bodo was an inaugural committee member and has been a stalwart supporter of the Association since its inception. Bob Pink can provide updates on Bodo's convalescence.

The Grim Glory the Official History of 2/19 Battalion AIF continues to attract interest. We have just received a further twenty copies from the printer and five of those have been sold already. The price of this printing will stay at \$130 per copy but I have been told by the printer that there will be a price rise for future print runs. If you want a copy get your order in early. Peter McGuinness, the editor of the 3rd edition of *The Grim Glory* is now working on another project for the Association. Details are contained elsewhere in this edition and I am very excited that a project that has been ten years in the planning is moving to realisation.

As this edition goes to press I have just returned from the Cenotaph service commemorating the Fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942. Unfortunately the weather was not very favourable and this, I am sure, deterred many from attending. That was a great shame because the Remembrance Address delivered by Brigadier W D Rolfe AO, (Retd) was a memorable and stirring one. Glen Scriven laid the wreath on behalf of the Association. Also in attendance, apart from Bob Pink and myself, were Maureen Mariner; Ettie Read, Jan Thomas, Margaret and Graeme Gill, Col Dengate and David Ring. Apologies were received from Jean Birch, Joe Coombs, Alf and Betty Mansfield and Jim and Margaret Forbes. Refreshments at the NSW League Club followed the ceremony.

David Ring tells me that he is recruiting the former Mortar Platoon members from 1/19 RNSWR into the Association. I think his intention is to outdo the Signals Platoon putsch. Should make for an interesting ANZAC Day this year! Well done David! I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on ANZAC Day. We have again booked the MV Jerry Bailey for the Harbour Cruise and details are in this edition. Get your bookings in early. So that there is NO confusion, all family members and descendants of 2/19 Battalion AIF men are welcome to march behind the Association banner on ANZAC Day.

Until then, take care of yourselves and each other!

Roger Perry



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Until then, take care of yourselves and each other!

Roger Perry

SICK REPORT

Get Well Soon

Aif MANSFIELD had a couple of days in hospital in mid February and is recovering at home.

Joe COOMBS is also back on the mend after a successful hernia operation.



CONGRATULATIONS



TO new Grandfather and Association Vice President Mick PASS on the safe arrival of Liam Michael PASS to son Phil and wife Kirsty on 7 December 2008.



TO David BIRCH son of Warwick and Heather and Grandson of Jean, on his award of the University Medal for his achievement of First Class Honours in his recent Arts component of his Arts/Law Degree at Sydney University.

The University Medal is usually awarded upon completion of Honours degrees based on academic merit. The criteria for bestowing the University Medal are stringent and the number of medals awarded is limited. The usual criterion is very high marks across all the subjects undertaken in the 4-year Honours degree. At the University of Sydney, the University Medal is treated as a distinct division or class of the Honours degree ("First class Honours and University Medal").



SEEN AROUND THE TRAPS



Ray Warden reports a sighting of CAPT Steve CAINES at NARELLAN SHOPPING CENTRE in mid February



Recently promoted Major General Craig WILLIAMS AM, Commander Second Division (and former Commander 5th Brigade) at the Fall of Singapore Commemoration at the Sydney Cenotaph on 15 FEB 09



MERRY CHRISTMAS
May 2009 be your best year ever!

Lots of Love Peter, Debi, Flint, Decklin, Hope & Daniel

Peter & Debi ROSS & Family

Bill Baird, 92, delivers mail, milk, groceries to Hay, Ivanhoe

Article from: **Daily Telegraph**

By Sam Williams, Regional Reporter
January 05, 2009



MOST 92-year-olds would be sitting down in front of the TV getting comfortable in their warm socks.

But an agile Bill Baird puts on his boots at 5.30am every day to deliver mail, groceries and milk to properties between **Hay** and **Ivanhoe** - a 420km round trip on the Cobb Highway. In his seventies, Mr Baird vowed he would retire from the job when he turned 80 - but that day came and passed and he still continues his run.

"I keep doing it because it gives me something to get up for in the morning," he said. While Mr Baird thinks his life's been unremarkable, locals say he's an icon and a great man who's led a colourful life . . . from his early milkman days when he gave away milk to those who couldn't afford it

because he believed kids should have milk, to being a POW of the Japanese.

Everyone has a story about him but those on the Cobb Highway said he was a lifeline to town. Mr Baird grew up on a dairy farm at Hay and worked for his father Tom, who had the milk run. I never went to school in the depression because you didn't have to go so I carried the milk on foot and would sell it for tuppence (twopence) a pint," he said.

"I struck a lot of poverty, people would say, 'Billy don't call in again . . . I don't have any money.'" In 1940, aged 24, Mr Baird married Doris, who worked at one of the town's cafes, just months before he joined the army. The following year, he was sent to Singapore where he became a prisoner of the Japanese. As a POW he suffered from malaria, dengue fever and scabies and was flogged for stealing cans of sardines to feed comrades. He said: "You'd get up every morning vowing they wouldn't break us."

He worked work on the Thai railway and the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, he was 6km away digging for coal. He remembered: "When we came up everything was black . . . raining black soot and there was nothing left. We all got cancer," he said. When he arrived home, he was ill and stick-thin - but determined to go back to his milk run. He has since driven through dust storms and floods so rural properties could get their mail and necessities. "I've seen kids grow up . . . towns come and go - but I wouldn't change a thing," he said.



A 2008 study found that the average Australian walks about 900 miles a year.

Another study found that the average Australian drinks 22 gallons of beer a year.

That means the average Australian gets about 41 miles per gallon.

Bloody good value that !

DONATIONS

It is a pleasure to once again acknowledge the generosity of the following members which is gratefully received. Our Thanks folks !



MR	Bruce	BATHGATE MPS PhC JP
MRS	Sylvia	BELL
LTCOL	Gary	BELTRAME RFD JP
MAJ	Robert	BINNS RFD
MRS	Diana	BLAND
MRS	Zita	BURROWS
MRS	Joan	BYE
MR	Bob	CANE
MR	Ian	CANNOCK
MAJ	Barry	CHAPMAN ED MB BS FRACP FCSANZ FICA FRSM
MR	Allen	CLARK
MR & MRS	Ray & Betty	CLENDENNING
MAJ	Harry	COLE JP
LCPL	Brad	COLLIS
LT	Tom	COOPER OAM JP
MRS	Rita	DEAN
MR	Warwick	DILLEY
MRS	Shirley	DRUM
CAPT	Bill	EDWARDS
MR	Charles	EDWARDS
MRS	Nancy	ELLIOTT
MRS	Marj	FLACK
CPL	Tom	FLETCHER
LTCOL	John	FOGARTY RFD JP AFAM
MR & MRS	Jim	FORBES
PTE	Paul	GRUMLEY
WO2	Martin	HANSON JP AIMM
MRS	Faye	HEDGES
SGT	Mick	HEYDON
MRS	Lynette	HISCOX
MRS	Christine	HORROCKS
SGT	Mark	HOSKINSON
SGT	Sandy	HOWARD
MRS	Norma	JAMIESON
CPL	Charles	JENSEN

SGT	Felicity	JESS JP
MRS	Margaret	JESS
LTCOL	Ken	KIRKBY ED
MR	Maurie	LAYTON
MAJ	Bob	LIDDEN RFD
MRS	Maureen	LONG
SGT	Gary	LOWREY
MR	David	MARINER
COL	Brian	MARTYN RFD
MRS	Pattie	McALEER
MR	Norm	McDONALD
MR	Gordon	McINNES
MAJ	Ken	McKAY RFD ED
MRS	Coralie	MOWBRAY
SGT	Ray	MULLER
MRS	June	MURDOCH
PTE	Graham	NEGUS
PTE	Tony	OHLBACH
MRS	Joan	PAGE
WO2	Roger	PERRY
WO2	Peter	PHILLIPS
MAJ	John	RALPH RFD
MRS	Reneth	RENNIE
MRS	Karen	RIGBY
MRS	Yvonne	RYAN
MRS	Dell	STAFFORD
PTE	Jonathan	STALLARD
MRS	Jean	TEERMAN
MR	Alan	THIELE
LTCOL	Trevor	THOMPSON RFD
MRS	Grace	TOBIN
LT	Bob	WEISE
MR	Wal	WILLIAMS
PTE	Anton	YUSWAK
CAPT	Dennis	ZALUNARDO OAM



NEW MEMBERS

A very warm and sincere welcome is extended to the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter:

SGT	Mick	HEYDON	GUNDAGAI NSW	2722
PTE	Mark	QUILL	BORONIA HEIGHTS QLD	4124
CPL	David	SMALL	BOOROWA NSW	2586

ANZAC DAY SYDNEY SAT 25 APRIL 2009



MV Jerry Bailey

\$60.00

**PER PERSON PAYABLE
PRIOR TO ATTENDING**
Includes cost of 4 hour
cruise and all food and
drinks (less spirits)

LUNCHEON MENU

To be preceded by light refreshments on boarding (coffee, biscuits & cake) at first pick up at Circular Quay **Lunch:** Freshly Cooked Prawns, Cheese, Cabanossi, Jatz, Chicken pieces, Chinese Mini Dim Sims, Cocktail Frankfurts & tomato sauce, Cocktail Sausage Rolls, Corn Chips with 4 mixed dips, Party Pies, Fish Cocktails, Marinated Chicken Kebabs, Mini Pizzas, Mixed Sandwiches, Potato chips / Peanuts, Bread Rolls & Butter, Tea & Coffee, Cake, Fruit Salad & Ice Cream.

ALL DRINKS (House Wines - beer - soft drinks – juices, tea/coffee) **ARE INCLUDED.**

(Spirits are not included - however, if you would like to bring your own sustaining bottle of Mr Walker or Mr Smirnoff etc., you are most welcome to. **Just a reminder folks that we have to confirm the numbers attending to the Cruise Company by no later than 11 APRIL 2008. Your prompt attention would be appreciated. Berths will be allocated on a 'first in best dressed basis'. Please do not just roll up on the day or ring up the night before advising of your attendance and expect a berth on the cruise - you may be disappointed. A sincere and warm invitation is extended to all family members and friends who are especially most welcome to attend. The weather forecast is for a fine sunny day!**

THE MARCH

ASSEMBLE from 9.30 a.m. Elizabeth Street (between King St & Martin Place) **SYDNEY** outside the NSW Leagues Club to march with the 2nd/19th Battalion A.I.F.

Following the march with the 2nd/19th Battalion A.I.F. - 1/19 RNSWR members will move back to the corner of Bent and Phillip Streets to march with 1/19 RNSWR Association in the 2nd Division contingent. A dash back to Circular Quay after the march to join the ferry will be required. **Limited transport (Land Rover) is yet to be confirmed however there should be room in one of the 8 Div HQ Land Rovers for those members of 2/19 Battalion A.I.F. who are unable / do not wish to march** and also a party to carry the 2/19 Battalion A.I.F. Association Banner.



THE REUNION – SYDNEY HARBOUR CRUISE

The MV 'Jerry Bailey' will pick up members & guests after the march at the Commissioner's Steps (opposite the old Maritime Services Board building - now the "Museum of Contemporary Art") at Circular Quay at **12:00 NOON and again at 1:30 p.m.** The cruise of Port Jackson and environs will continue all afternoon and return to Circular Quay at 4.00 p.m. It is suggested that family & friends view the march in George St Sydney adjacent to Town Hall Railway Station which has lifts installed on all platforms. They can then travel by train to Circular Quay Railway Station (which has escalators on each platform) to join the MV 'Jerry Bailey' at Commissioner's Steps.

PLEASE RETURN THE REPLY SLIP ENCLOSED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER TO THE HONORARY SECRETARY 1/19 RNSWR Association PO Box 224 INGLEBURN NSW 1890 WITH YOUR PAYMENT BY NOT LATER THAN FRIDAY 18 APRIL 2009. PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU PAY AND THEN FIND YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND, YOUR \$\$\$\$ WILL BE REFUNDED.

FRONTLINE

FALL OF SINGAPORE COMMEMORATION SUN 15 FEB 09



Our thanks to Association Members David Barrett & Ray Clendenning in alerting and forwarding this article to us

THE TIMES

December 19, 2008

PoWs used by Japanese Prime Minister's family business

Taro Aso's short tenure as Prime Minister has been marred by controversy and plunging public approval ratings

Leo Lewis in Tokyo



Bundles of documents stored in a basement and left to gather dust since the 1950s have forced Japan to acknowledge for the first time the use of slaves in wartime by Aso Mining — the family business of the Prime Minister.

Health Ministry records that were released yesterday after a long struggle between opposition MPs and the civil service appear to confirm that the company used hundreds of British and Australian prisoners of war as slave labourers to dig coal in its mines. Worse still, said Yukihiro Fujita, the MP chiefly responsible for tracking down the papers, the stash of other records still in the Health Ministry may implicate dozens of other Japanese companies in similar schemes. Japan has owned up previously to the use of Korean slave labour during the war but the documents forced the Government of Taro Aso to admit for the first time that European prisoners toiled in Japanese mines under similar conditions, Mr Fujita told *The Times*.

Hirofumi Nakasone, the Foreign Minister, said that he would consider a wider investigation into slave labour. The discovery of the papers — and their dramatic appearance in the hands of Mr Fujita at a parliamentary committee meeting yesterday afternoon — could provide yet more political ammunition for the many opponents of Mr Aso, whose short tenure as Prime Minister has been marred by controversy and plunging public approval ratings. Mr Aso, who has confronted popularity levels that have felled previous Japanese prime ministers, is now fighting not only for his own leadership survival but for the life of the Liberal Democratic Party, the political monolith that has governed Japan in a nearly unbroken 54-year run of power.

The corridors of parliament are thick with rumours of party rebellions, breakaway factions and of a fundamental realignment of Japanese politics: few believe that Mr Aso has the skills, strategy or support to navigate his party through the next few months intact.

While Mr Aso, a divisive nationalist, has scrambled ever closer to the pinnacle of Japanese power, he has played down or ignored awkward questions about the murky history of the company that his father, Takakichi, ran during the war. Although the allegations of slave labour have been a constant thorn in the side of Mr Aso in recent years, a supposed lack of hard evidence has allowed him to limit the damage to his reputation. Before taking over as leader in September, Mr Aso was challenged directly over the history of the family business. Once again he refused to confirm any details about the business, whose offshoot, Aso Cement, he ran in the 1970s. "I was only five years old when the war ended, and have no memory of that time," he said.

The refusal to acknowledge that side of the Aso company history has become more controversial as more evidence has emerged to confirm the allegations. Documents from the United States National Archive, submitted by the Aso Mining company to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces in 1946, include a letter from the head of the company's Yoshikuma Coal Mine in Fukuoka to General Gen Sugiyama, the Minister of War.

The letter, dated February 22, 1945, politely requests permission to use 300 prisoners in the mines to undertake 12-hour working days for a year. The typed document, produced on company paper, asserts that the prisoners of war were suitably fed and clothed and treated decently. Survivors of the ordeal have given very different versions of 15-hour days of forced labour in primitive conditions, with remorseless and exhausting work, starvation and beatings.

Arthur Titherington, of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association, told *The Times* that he was aware of the use of prisoners of war in the coalmine. "I was also forced to work in a mine as part of Japan's slave labour programme, although not the coalmine linked to the present Japanese Prime Minister. I had to work in a copper mine in Taiwan and I'm sure we were all treated in the same way, which was very badly," he said. The report was not accepted by the Japanese Government as absolute proof of the allegations, leading to a quest by opposition MPs for any shred of material archived in Japan that might authenticate the documents discovered in Washington.

That quest ended in a storeroom yards below the political heart of Tokyo with the discovery of a 43-page record. It detailed how Allied prisoners of war were deployed throughout a network of camps used to service the mines.

Next to the entry for Camp No 26 — the one believed to have provided men for the Aso mines — is written: "Brit: 101, Dutc 2, Aust 197, Total 300". Senior government members at the parliamentary committee meeting were forced to admit that the US documents now "seemed authentic" when they were presented with the papers.

Transcripts of Diet Questioning of Prime Minister Aso and Government Officials regarding POW and Korean Forced Labor at Aso Mining during World War II

With Related Documents Compiled by the Office of Yukihiisa Fujita, Member of the House of Councilors #205 House of Councilors Hall, 2-1-1 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8962

TEL: +81-(0)3-3508-8205, FAX: +81-(0)3-5512-2205, E-mail: yukihiisa_fujita01@sangiin.go.jp

11.13.2008 / House of Councilors Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense / Diet Member Y.Fujita vs. Foreign Minister H. Nakasone

DM FUJITA: Materials have been distributed and I would like to call your attention to the display panel, showing a document obtained from the US National Archives. This document is a detailed report submitted by Aso Mining Company to the Japanese government's Prisoner of War Information Bureau on January 24, 1946 (Showa 21), regarding Aso Mining's Yoshikuma coal mine. The panel shows pages 1 and 16 of this document of more than 10 pages. In addition, I have distributed other materials in English that the Japanese government submitted to the Allied Forces in Manila in 1945. This 2-page English document is also one part of a multiple-page document, and it also indicates there were prisoners of war at Aso Mining Company. Prime Minister Aso, how do you view the fact that POWs worked at Aso Mining during World War II?

PM ASO: I think you know that I was born in Showa 15 (1940) and was only 4 or 5 years old at that time. Because that age is a bit too young for recognition, honestly speaking, I had absolutely no knowledge at that time about those facts concerning the former Aso Mining Company. Moreover, I understand that at the present time the factual circumstances have not been confirmed.

DM FUJITA: You, the prime minister of a country, raise the issue of how old you were at the time. If you recognize only matters from the period of your personal knowledge, then what about past history? And regarding necessary political dealings involving people you have not personally met, it means you can have nothing to do with them. At the very least, a letter concerning these facts was sent from Australia when you were Minister of Foreign Affairs. There has also been quite a lot of discussion about these factual circumstances. So at least concerning the documents that exist in the US National Archives or the Japan National Diet Library, the failure to recognize them is surely irresponsible. That is, POW issues also are an extremely important matter for a nation's diplomatic policy. Therefore, I think your lack of recognition of this problem, despite even these concrete materials, shows you are not qualified for the responsibility of being the prime minister of a country. What do you think?

PM ASO: Honestly speaking, these documents have merely been requested. The fact is there has been no verification of them whatsoever. That's the first point. Secondly, you just asked something about an Australian former POW, but I never received the letter in question while I was foreign minister.

DM FUJITA: The two pages that have been distributed are from the US National Archives. They tell about the number of POWs and all kinds of other information. I would say these are facts which naturally must be confirmed by the Foreign Ministry. Also, when the New York Times published an article related to this issue, the Japanese Consulate in New York stated that the Japanese government had received no information about it. But back in 1945, the Japanese government submitted this document to the Allied nations. Isn't it strange that the Japanese government says it has not received such information?

FM NAKASONE: The New York Times article of November 15, 2006, that the Committee Member mentioned actually does not contain any description of Aso Mining. However, the International Herald Tribune of the same date does have an article concerning Aso Mining. Regarding these articles, the Japanese government did post a rebuttal on the website of the Japanese Consulate in New York. This rebuttal included the part about Aso Mining that you mentioned. Based on information that was available to us at the time, the home office of the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo performed the necessary confirmation. Then at the instruction of the home office, the Consulate in New York posted the rebuttal article on its website. At this point, considering the materials presented by the Committee Member, I would like to carry out a careful examination including the possibility of revising the rebuttal on the New York Consulate website.

DM FUJITA: Prime Minister Aso, back when you were foreign minister, on July 3 of the year before last, you visited a temple in East Osaka whose name I believe is pronounced "Juganji." Remains of foreign POWs who died in various parts of Japan are there, and I understand you attended a memorial service. Why did you visit Juganji temple? Also, after originally inviting the ambassadors to Japan of eight nations to attend the memorial service with you, why did you suddenly cancel the invitation at the last minute? I would like you to explain your intention and the chain of events concerning the invitation to the ambassadors that was withdrawn just before the service.

PM ASO: It is pronounced "Juganji." Continuously during the postwar period, Juganji temple has held memorial services for war victims. I really wanted to show my respect for this, and various friends of mine have long attended the ceremonies. So in order to express a spirit of mourning for the war victims by visiting the temple, and having heard that a memorial service for war victims of all nations is held annually, I made a promise beforehand to attend the event. Because coincidentally I was to be in the vicinity at the time, I was able to attend it. That is what happened. Regarding the attendance of the foreign ambassadors, since Japanese are not the only ones being memorialized, I thought it might be good for the ambassadors to attend such a solemn event. When I asked several ambassadors, some said they would like to go with me, some waited to wait, and some did not want to be involved. Various positions emerged, so I decided to forget the whole idea. I considered which of the various approaches would be most appropriate, and realized that if things got exaggerated and became like a tourist attraction, that would be the last thing those being remembered would want. That is, I thought about the quiet manner in which the service has always been held, and about my attendance as a government minister or in a private capacity. A big commotion would be the least desirable thing for those being remembered. That is how I came to withdraw the invitations I had extended.

DM FUJITA: Well, let's get back to the various documents. For example, this document is more than a dozen pages, and there are others. There are also quite a lot of materials in the National Diet Library as well as in the US National Archives. Would the prime minister himself promise to examine these documents and carefully investigate the actual situation of the POWs at Aso Mining at that time, and to give me a firm answer after you have done so?

PM ASO: If the materials are adequate, I will certainly respond to you.

DM FUJITA: The reason I have raised this topic is that I believe POW issues are a current matter of foreign affairs. How to respond to such issues is something that is extremely relevant to civilian control of the military and historical views.

FOLLOWING ON FROM THE ARTICLES AT PAGES 11 & 12 THE FOLLOWING NOTICE FROM "NEWS FOR SENIORS" SUMMER 2008 ISSUE 76 WILL BE OF INTEREST !!!!

NEWS

Have you ever worked in Japan?

A new social security agreement between Australia and Japan will start on 1 January 2009.

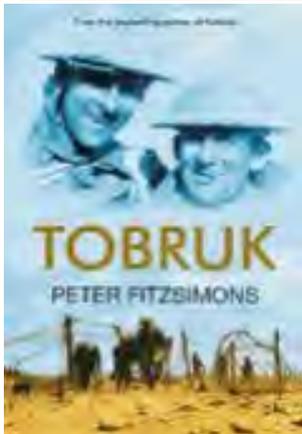
The Agreement will enable people to combine certain periods of residence in Australia with Japanese periods of coverage to qualify for an Australian Age Pension or a Japanese old age pension in either country.

Claims

Centrelink will send Japanese old age pension claim forms to customers whose records indicate they may have an entitlement. Those claim forms can be returned to Centrelink by posting them to Centrelink International Services in Hobart or to your local Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

More information

For more information about the Agreement visit www.centrelink.gov.au for the *Social Security Agreement between Australia and Japan* factsheet or call Centrelink International Services on **13 1673**.



PERYMAN TROPHIES - 2008

Our Congratulations to this year's winners of the Peryman Trophies.

Copies of 'TOBRUK' by Peter Fitzsimons were presented by the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Peter MORRISSEY at 1st/19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment's Christmas Ball held at the Bathurst Depot on Saturday 6 December 2008.

CAPT	Ian David	BRUCE	Adjutant	BHQ
WO2	Sean Dennis	RANSOME	Training Warrant Officer	B Coy
CPL	Matthew Paul	WATTS	Section Commander 1 Sect 4 PL (Lithgow)	B Coy



The trophy was instituted in April 1992, by the Peryman family, in memory of Captain Mario Lemmers Peryman, for competition within the 1st/19th Battalion, The Royal New South Wales Regiment, which had been a focal point of the family for many decades. The trophy is presented in an expression of thanks for the joys shared over these years. The benevolence of the bequest provides for three books, dedicated to the military arts and sciences to be awarded annually, and in perpetuity, one each to an Officer, a Senior Non Commissioned Officer and a Junior Non Commissioned Officer/Private soldier who exhibits outstanding qualities in the performance of their military duties and is symbolic of Captain Peryman's Commissioned and Non Commissioned service.

CAPTAIN Mario Lemmers PERYMAN

1st October, 1897 - 9th March 1991
19th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force
13th Garrison Battalion, Australian Military Forces



Premier announces new Minister for Veterans

January 23 2009

Premier Nathan Rees today announced that he would create a new portfolio in the Cabinet dedicated to assisting him on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr Rees said Minister for Juvenile Justice and Volunteering Graham West would take on the additional responsibility of Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs.

"This new position is not only recognition of the sacrifices made by our former servicemen and women to our nation, but also of the unique set of issues they face," Mr Rees said.



"I want to ensure their dealings with my Government are as easy as possible so Minister West will be their single point of contact.

"He will also be responsible for working with me to promote the education and awareness of Veterans' issues throughout NSW and for monuments erected in their honour."

Mr Rees said Mr West had a long-standing interest in Veterans' Affairs and excellent relationships with both the veteran community at large and the peak

bodies representing them including the Returned Services League.

"He has been working with the veteran community behind projects to recognise the roles of our former servicemen and women – most notably the proposed Korean War Memorial at Moore Park," Mr Rees said. "I look forward to working closely with the Minister in his new role."

Minister West was joined by his family to be officially sworn in at Government House this morning at 9.30am.

MORE QUOTABLE QUOTES

My wife has a slight impediment in her speech. Every now and then she stops to breathe.
- Jimmy Durante

Money can't buy you happiness .. But it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery.
- Spike Milligan

I never drink water because of the disgusting things that fish do in it.
- W. C. Fields

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you.
- Winston Churchill

I have never hated a man enough to give his diamonds back.
- Zsa Zsa Gabor

Maybe it's true that life begins at fifty. But everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out.
- Phyllis Diller

Last week, I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen. I have since been visited by her sister, and now wish to withdraw that statement.
- Mark Twain

By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.
- Billy Crystal

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.
- George Burns

HISTORY OF 19th BATTALION AIF

A JOURNAL OF 19 AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION, AIF

During the course of the "Our Other Anzac Day Tour" last year in April after discussions with other members of the Association, also on the tour, I determined that I would commit to writing a history of the 19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF. Since my return in May last year I have done considerable research and writing and a DRAFT version is well on the way to completion. The book will take the format of a day-to-day journal from the day 19 Battalion was raised in March 1915 until it was "absorbed" into 17, 18 and 20 Battalions in October 1918 and will include an extensive and detailed Nominal Roll.

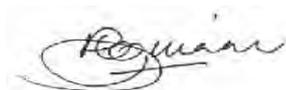
However, I am at a point where it is now appropriate to canvass other Association members for COPIES of any material they believe may be worthy of consideration for inclusion in this journal.

Pictures of members of 19 Battalion are of particular interest to me but they must have accurate detail for the captions to be placed along with the pictures. All material that is considered appropriate and included will have an appropriate accreditation recognising the donor. It is important that the donor must acknowledge their copyright ownership of the material and that they freely give their approval for it to be included should it be considered appropriate.

To that extent may I ask that you publish this letter in the next Association newsletter to make the Association members aware of the work that I am undertaking and that I am seeking their help by being given the opportunity to review what material they have and to consider its suitability for inclusion. I make no promise that any material will be included but it will be seriously considered. It is my intention that at a future date I will "gift" the completed work in a "draft format" to 1/19 RNSWR Association giving the Association full intellectual property and copyright ownership.

I further intend to provide a Draft Copy to 1/19 Battalion, RNSWR, and another to the Australian War Memorial as works in progress but only the Association will have copyright ownership. I have provided my contact details below for those that have any material. They may contact me, preferably during business hours, regarding method of delivery and return of any material.

Yours sincerely,



Peter McGuinness, MBE, RFD, ED
Lieutenant Colonel (Rtd)

PETER MCGUINNESS
5 SARRON PLACE
LOWER SNUG
TASMANIA 7054

HOME: 03 6267 9984
MOBILE: 0409 990 287
EMAIL: peter.mcguinness1@bigpond.com



FROM THE PRESIDENT:

History of 19 Battalion AIF:

With the completion of the project to finalise the editing and reprinting of *The Grim Glory the Official History of 2/19 Battalion AIF*, Peter McGuinness, who did such a great job with the editing of the 3rd edition, agreed to undertake a new project for me. This project was to compile the "History of 19 Battalion AIF".

This project has been high on my list of priorities since my time serving in 19 RNSWR so many years ago. As a "task" it has had a stop/start timeline for more than thirty years. Peter has spent a great deal of time in the last two years researching the history of 19 Battalion AIF, from its inception in March 1915 until it was "absorbed" into the other battalions of 5 Brigade – 17, 18 and 20 Battalions – of 2 Division in October 1918.

Bob Pink and I had occasion recently, at Peter's request, to visit St Luke's Anglican Church at Clovelly. Many of you will recall that this is the location of the 19th Battalion AIF Pozieres Cross. It is many years since I visited St Luke's and I had no real recollection of my visits there as a very young soldier in the late sixties and early seventies. I was stunned to see the inestimable collection of 19 Battalion "history" that is enshrined in this church. As a first step to ensuring that this history is not forgotten again I have made arrangements for it to be photographed and I will be discussing with the Association Chancellor what steps we need to take to ensure its preservation.

When he agreed to undertake the "project", Peter did so on the strict condition that, in the early stages, his involvement was to remain confidential as he had other tasks that he needed to complete without undue distraction. He is now at the stage of his work on the 19 Battalion history where he is "pulling it all together". He expects to deliver the manuscript to me early next year. To that end he has sent a letter opposite to The Editor requesting any material that members may have that will enhance this history. Any member who has any material can be assured that it will be dealt with in a careful and proper fashion. Peter is nothing if not punctilious.

The completion of this history – Peter is producing it in the form of a "Journal" – that draws on the War Diaries of 19 Battalion and 5 Brigade, will complete a missing "chapter" in the memoirs of 19 Battalion.

I personally, the Association and 1/19 RNSWR, am indebted to Peter McGuinness for the dedication that has seen the 2/19 Battalion AIF history edited and reprinted and now has brought the History of 19 Battalion AIF to the final stages of compilation.

If any member has any material that might be of interest to Peter I urge you to get it to him as soon as possible.

Roger Perry

FRONTLINE

NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S COMMEMORATION 8 FEB 09



POET'S CORNER

Contributed by Mrs Jean BIRCH

WHY ?

Why are they selling poppies, Mummy ?
Selling poppies in town today
The poppies child, are flowers of love
For the men who marched away.

But why have they chosen a poppy Mummy ?
Why not a beautiful rose ?
Because my child, men fought and died
In the fields where poppies grow.

But why are the poppies so red Mummy ?
Why are the poppies so red ?
Red is the colour of blood, my child
The blood that the soldiers shed

The heart oif the poppy is black Mummy
Why does it have to be black ?
Black my child, is the symbol of grief
For men who never came back

But why Mummy are you crying so ?
Your tears are giving you pain
My tears are for you my child
For the world is forgetting again.

(From 'Barrage' Nov 2008)

UNDERSTANDING

It isn't easy to be young
It isn't easy to be wise
Life is a strange and complex thing
And it takes young hearts by surprise

Today some things come all at once
And each one seems so close at hand
Older folks should remember this –
That life takes a lifetime to understand

Thus wisdom can seem completely dull
And youth is doubtful of its powers
For youth believes entirely in itself
And thinks wisdom is a fruit that sours

How then can age help youth to find
All that the years alone portray
Age draws experience by looking back
But youth is going the other way

PASSING TIME

The flower will fade- its message still remains
Some joys will stay, to rest against life's pain
The rose has died, but memories linger on –
The love which brought it to you has not gone
The years go by and slip into the past
Yet as they fly some happiness will last
The song is dead, but its melody lives on
- to sweeten years that are to be.

(By 'Southern Cross')

WHAT IS SUCCESS ?

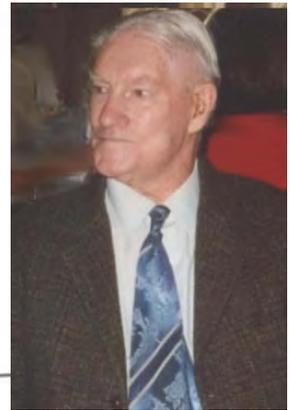
Success is the way you walk the paths of life each day
It's in the little things you do and in the things you say
Success is not getting rich or rising high to fame
It's not alone in winning goals which all hope to claim
Success is being big of heart and clean and broad of mind
It's being faithful to your friends and to the stranger kind
It's in the children who you love and all they learn from you
Success depends on character in everything you do.

(From 'WIRY')

*Walking with a friend in the dark is
better than walking alone in the
light - Helen Keller*

*The most wasted day of all is one
in which you have not laughed*

Australian Military Service



Name: Rodney Thomas Parker

Rank: Lance Corporal (Don'ar)

Regimental Number: A441867 (A.M.F) - NX58293 (2nd A.I.F)

Enlistment Date: 8th May 1940 (A.M.F) - 19th July 1940 (A.I.F) - **Age:** 21

Branch of Service- Corps: Army - A.M.F (Australian Military Forces) and 2nd - A.I. F (Australian Imperial Forces)

Division - Brigade: 2nd Division and 8th Division - Australian Army Service Corps
Corps

Battalion/Company: 2nd Cavalry Division AASC (Militia) - H.Q 8th Division Army Service Corps - 1 Company Australian Army Service Corps and X Battalion (Infantry)

Depots and Camps: Walgrove - Rosebery - Ingleburn - Sydney Show Ground - Bathurst

Service Schools: Recruit Training - Driving and Servicing Training

Promotions: Lance-Corporal - 21st May 1941

Active Service: Malaya - Singapore Island - Departed: - Finger Wharf - Sydney on the H.M.T "Johann Van Olden-Barneveldt" 29th July 1941 Disembarked: Singapore 15th August 1941- Returned Sydney " H.M.S Formidable" 13th October 1945

Operations: Defence of Malaya and Singapore Island

Operation Areas: Johore Bahru - Mersing - Jemaluang - Kota Tinggi - Kluang - Hill 30 Jurong Road - Bukit Timah - Singapore - Tangalin Barracks

Action Report: Rodney Parker was stationed at Johore Bahru in Malaya, when the Japanese bombed the camp on 8th December 1941. After the bombing, as he was a don'ar, he was one of the few soldiers along with his O.C., retained in the camp. The remainder of the personnel were moved to a rubber plantation on the Kota Tinggi Road. In the battle for Malaya, some of his duties, were to carry messages through the Japanese lines between Johore Bahru, Mersing and Kluang. This trip would take him on his motor bike, just over two hours to complete. He was the only don'ar of six not wounded or hurt in Japanese ambushes or road blocks. During the defence of Singapore Island, he volunteered to join X Infantry Battalion. This battalion was sent to an area adjacent to the Jurong Road. The Japanese already occupied the village of Bukit Timah and much of the area around the Jurong Road. At 0300 hours on 11th February 1942, the Japanese attacked X Battalion lines, killing the commanding officer Lieutenant- Colonel Boyes, and all of his headquarters staff and most of his men, including 48 members of the 250 Army Service Corps, volunteers in X Battalion. Rodney Parker, with other survivors of the battalion, fought their way back to Tangalin Barracks. He remained at the barracks until the surrender of Singapore on 15th February 1942.

Prisoner of War: After the surrender, he was conscripted by the Japanese to an Australian working party, where he drove a 30 Hwt truck, cleaning up the bomb damage around the Singapore wharfs. He was eventually sent to the Changi Barracks, with dermatitis and double vision. At Changi he was posted to 'B' Force, which went to Borneo and Sandakan, but was removed from the draft and sent to AASC H.Q. He was then drafted to 'H' Force, which went to Thailand and Hell Fire Pass. On this occasion he was removed from the draft at the request of his C.O. On the 15th/16th May 1943, he was placed in 'J' Force (300 men), and shipped on the 'Weills Maru' to Japan. In Japan he spent most of his time working on the Kobe wharves, loading Japanese cargo ships. However, on occasions he would be seconded to work in the Deniki Carbon Works, or the Mitsubishi Soap Factory. He was expected to work 7 days a week, and up to 16 hours a day and for the majority of the time, would only be fed, with a small rationed portion of rice. During his imprisonment in Japan, he was barracked at Kobe House, until it was bombed by the American Air Force, in June 1945. He was then moved to the Kanasaki camp and eventually finished in a camp at Wakinohama. When the war finished on the 15th August 1945, the Japanese guards disappeared from the camp. Two days later a Lieutenant Goddard, who had been with him, in X Battalion, informed the men in the camp that the war was over. He was repatriated from Notagowa, where, because he was so ill, he could only be fed with eggs and beer (egg-flips). From Notagowa he was sent by train to Yokohama, where he was shipped via the 'SS Goodhue' to Manila. He was hospitalised for 10 days in Manila, until he embarked on the 'H.M.S Formidable', on the 4th October 1945, for Sydney.

Commanding Officer: Lieut - Colonel J. H. Stephson OBE - Lieut - Colonel L.J.A. Byrne - Captain Bill Harper MM
 Captain G.J. Boreman MBE and Lieut - Colonel Boyes KIA (X Battalion)

Service Medals Awarded: 1939 - 45 Star - Pacific Star - 1939-45 War Medal - Australian Service Medal and
 Active Service Badge No 139306

Discharged: Sydney 1st February 1946

Service: 2024 days **Active Service:** 1649 days

Letter by Rodney Parker whilst in Japan to his Mother

800 Parker R.T.
 Australian
 Private
 Osaka
 27 Oct., 1943

Mrs E. M. Parker
 25A Greenbank Street
 Marrickville
 N.S.W.
 Australia
 Dear Mother,

At last I have an opportunity to write you a letter. I am safe and well enjoying the best of health.

As you may already know by the letter card I sent a little while ago I am enjoying the best of treatment in Nippon. The food here is quite good and is appreciated after our daily work.

I received your very welcome letter some time ago and was pleased to know all at home were well.

There is no necessity to worry about me as our treatment is excellent.

Merry Christmas best of health everyone.

Rodney

JFW'97



Hero ... Victoria Cross recipient Trooper Mark Donaldson with his wife Emma and daughter Kaylee (photo AAP)

Australian SASR soldier Trooper Mark Donaldson awarded the Victoria Cross

MARK Donaldson has become the first Australian soldier awarded the Victoria Cross in 40 years, for his exceptional bravery in service in Afghanistan. Trooper Donaldson has been awarded the nation's highest military honour in a ceremony in Canberra this morning by Governor-General Quentin Bryce. Trooper Donaldson was



serving with the SAS in Oruzgan province in Afghanistan on September 2 last year when his unit was hit by an ambush, wounding nine Australians. He deliberately drew enemy fire to allow wounded soldiers to escape and be taken to safety. Then, with complete disregard for his own safety Trooper Donaldson ran back 80m across exposed ground to rescue a wounded coalition force interpreter and take him back to a vehicle. His citation said he displayed exceptional courage in circumstances of great peril and saved the life of the interpreter.

Major General Tim McOwan said a joint US, Australian and Afghan Humvee convoy was ambushed when returning to base after inflicting 13 Taliban kills a day earlier. In order to regain the initiative several SAS soldiers reacted to the ambush without regard to their own safety, Major General McOwan said. One soldier, whom I shall refer to as Trooper F, moved between positions of cover to engage the enemy, using anti-armour weapons as well as his personal weapon. The soldier deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire on several occasions in order to draw fire away from those soldiers who were already wounded in the initial heavy fire. During an attempt to move the convoy away from the heavy enemy fire, a severely wounded Afghan interpreter fell from a truck. Trooper F saw he had fallen and was lying to the rear in the open ground being raked by machine gun fire, Major General McOwan said. Without prompting and without regard to his own safety, Trooper F went back to recover the wounded Afghan. He ran across about 80m of fire-swept and exposed ground, drawing intense and accurate machinegun fire from the entrenched enemy positions. Trooper F lifted the wounded man on to his shoulders and carried him back to the vehicles before applying first aid and then returning to the firefight. The Taliban ambush resulted in nine Australian soldiers being wounded, the most in a single action since the Vietnam War.

Ninety six Australians have been awarded the Imperial Victoria Cross. Trooper Donaldson becomes the first recipient of the Victoria Cross for Australia, which replaced the imperial honour in 1991. The first Australian to be awarded a Victoria Cross was Captain Sir Neville Howse VC KCMG CB KStJ in 1900 during the Boer War. He also served in World War I and later as commonwealth minister for health, defence and repatriation. The most recent Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross was Warrant Officer Keith Payne VC OAM in 1969 for gallantry during the Vietnam War. Under heavy enemy fire Warrant Officer Payne instigated a daring rescue of more than 40 men, many of them wounded, and led the party back to the battalion base. Along with Mr Payne, the only other surviving Australian VC recipient is Victorian Edward Kenna, who won his award for service in New Guinea in 1945.

Personal biography of Trooper Mark Gregor Strang Donaldson, VC

Mark Donaldson was born in Waratah, Newcastle, NSW on 2 April 1979. He spent his formative years in northern NSW where he graduated from high school in 1996. Trooper Donaldson enlisted into the Australian Army on 18 June 2002 and entered recruit training at the Army Recruit Training Centre, Kapooka, NSW. He demonstrated an early aptitude for soldiering and was awarded the prizes for best shot and best at physical training in his platoon. Subsequently he was allocated to the Royal Australian infantry corps and posted to the school of infantry at Singleton, NSW, where he excelled in his initial employment training. At the completion of this training he was again awarded best shot and best at physical training, as well as the award for the most outstanding soldier in his platoon. He was posted to 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Townsville, QLD in November 2002. It was during this time that Trooper Donaldson decided to pursue his ambition to join the Special Air Service Regiment. In February 2004, he successfully completed the Special Air Service Regiment selection course and was posted to the regiment in May 2004. He was then posted to I Troop, 3 Special Air Service Squadron. Since that time he has been deployed on operations to East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. On 12 August 2008, Trooper Donaldson was wounded in action whilst conducting night operations in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan. He recovered from his minor wounds and continued on the deployment. Trooper Donaldson was involved in an incident on 2 September 2008 in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan that resulted in him being awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia. He was invested by Her Excellency the Governor-General of Australia at Government House, Canberra on 16 January 2009. Trooper Donaldson remains posted to the Special Air Service Regiment in Perth, WA. Trooper Donaldson is married to Emma and has a daughter Kaylee. His parents are deceased.

RESERVE FORCES DAY NATIONAL LAUNCH 1 DEC 08



Thirty-Niners... (from left) Ken Sutherland, Ray Williams, Alf Carpenter and Sir John Carrick (Photo Jacky Ghossein)

Honouring the '39ers: men who had plenty in reserve

Malcolm Brown – Sydney Morning Herald Mon 1 December 2008

SIR JOHN CARRICK, 90, a former Liberal Government minister, was only too aware at the weekend of a world in turmoil, similar in some ways to the circumstances 70 years ago which caused him and like-minded individuals to sign up in the citizens' armed forces.

He was one of the "ThirtyNiners", those who were in the Militia or its air force or naval equivalents, who then enlisted when war broke out.

They were specially honoured at a Reserve Forces parade at Shore School, North Sydney, and were looking forward to commemorating the 70th anniversary next year of that momentous event.

The headmaster of Shore, Dr Tim Wright, said the first Australian officer killed in World War 1, Captain Brian Pockley, was a Shore Old Boy, as was one of the recent Australian casualties in Afghanistan.

Australia's defences were in a parlous state in the mid-1930s but developments in Europe could hardly be ignored.

"At that time, 70 years ago, Hitler had done his Mein Kampf and Stephen Roberts had just published *The House That Hitler Built*," Sir John said. When the announcement came that Australia was at war, Sir John, who had been a member of the Sydney University Regiment, was selected for Sparrow Force, a 1400-man strong unit assigned to resist the Japanese advance on Timor.

The Japanese landed thousands of troops on parachutes and the Australian force was overwhelmed. Sir John was sent to Changi prison in Singapore and survived about a year on the Burma-Thailand railway.

For the commemoration, at which regimental association standards were dedicated, he joined the likes of Alf Carpenter, 91, who 70 years ago was in the 56th Battalion of the Militia; Ken Sutherland, 91, who joined the Naval Reserve in 1936, and Ray Williams, 87, who was serving with the 61st Cameron Highlanders Regiment in Brisbane.

WHAT CAUSES ARTHRITIS ?



A drunk who smelled like beer sat down on a bus next to a priest. The man's tie was stained, his face was plastered with red lipstick, and a half-empty bottle of gin was sticking out of his torn coat pocket. He opened his newspaper and began reading. After a few minutes the man turned to the priest and asked, "Say Father, what causes arthritis?"

The priest replied, "My Son, it's caused by loose living, being with cheap, wicked women, too much alcohol, contempt for your fellow man, sleeping around with prostitutes and lack of a bath." The drunk muttered in response, "Well, I'll be damned," Then returned to his paper.

The priest, thinking about what he had said, nudged the man and apologised. "I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to come on so strong. How long have you had arthritis?" The drunk answered, "I don't have it, Father. I was just reading here that the Pope does."

"MORAL: Make sure you understand the question before offering the answer"



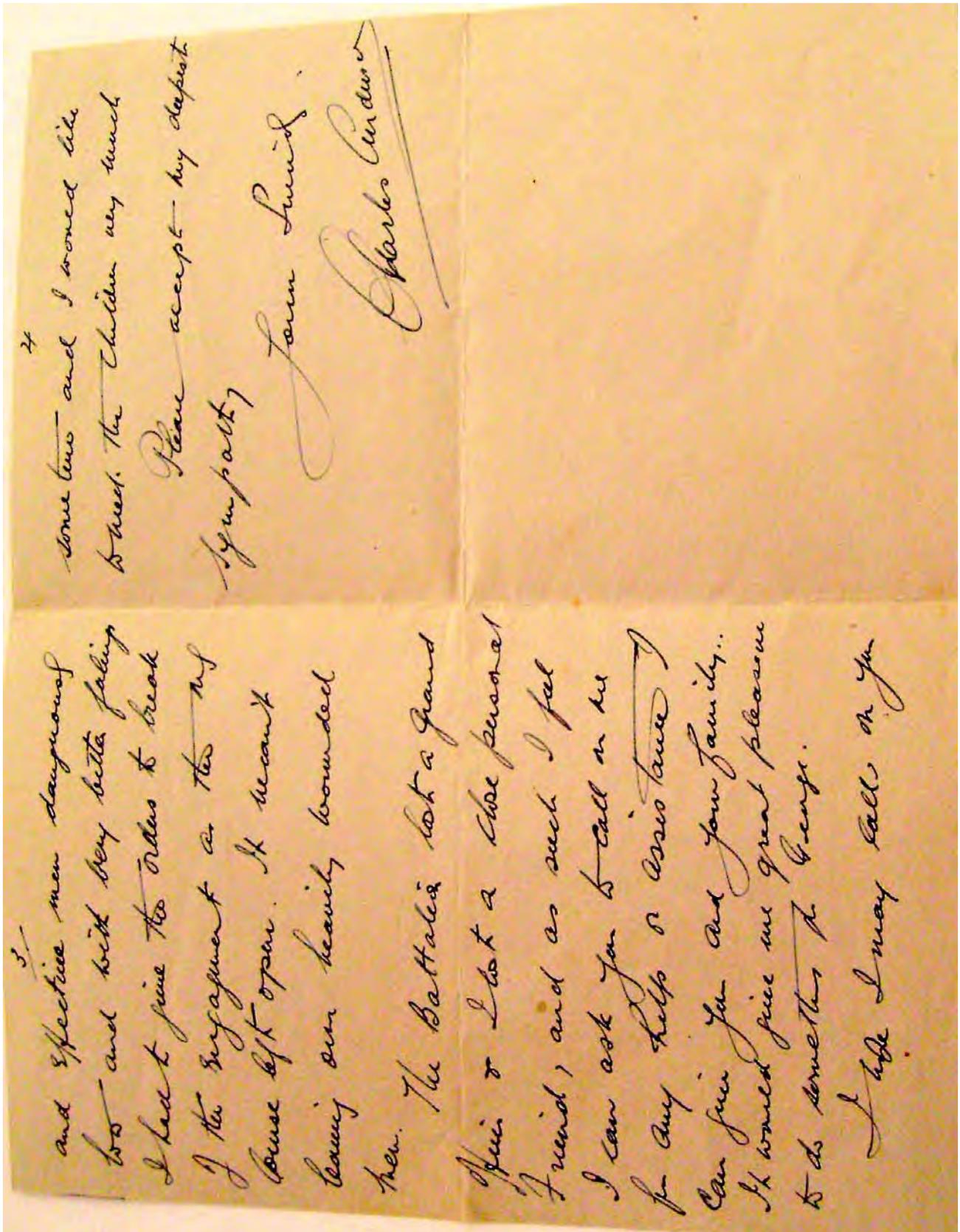
FRONTLINE

A LETTER FROM LTCOL Charles ANDERSON VC MC

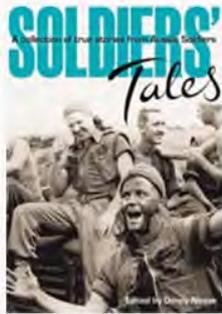
The following letter is reproduced with the kind permission of Association committee member Graeme Gill. The letter which only recently came into his possession is from the Commanding Officer 2/19 Battalion AIF Lieutenant Colonel Charles Anderson VC MC to Mrs Gill – widow of Lieutenant George Gill – Regimental Signals Officer 2/19 Battalion who was Killed in Action in Malaya on 22 January 1942.

Dear Mrs Gill,
I cannot recall if I wrote to you about your husband from Johore Bahru or whether I waited to get further news before writing. The last I had was confiscated by the Japanese and destroyed.
George was badly wounded in the last afternoon, he complained of no pain as I think the shock was mercifully very great, later I was told he lost consciousness and did not recover.
I was with him when he was hit and deeply pained. I was extremely fond of George, I had some insight into his grand & loyal nature, and held him not only in highest regard but also with great affection, and I am deeply sorry for you and your children.
George was a splendid officer, popular with his fellow officers & held in high esteem by his Signal Section. He did a sterling job in action, as I know he would. To hard the end our casualties became very heavy.

Lambhill.
Crowther
Nov. 15. 41



BOOK REVIEWS



SOLDIERS' TALES

Edited by Denny Neave
Big Sky Publishing, 2008, 182pp

Denny Neave has collated an interesting collection of tales.

They include darkly humorous stories (Ron Cashman's story of his Polish officer in Korea, challenging 200 Chinese soldiers to 'come up and fight' his 16 men, David Sabben's painful encounter between a scorpion and a delicate part of his anatomy in Vietnam, and Gordon Traill's description of the Baghdad Golfer). One can only imagine the probable reaction of 'Red Robbie' (assuming that he was the GOC BCOF involved) at his elderly Japanese lady 'door opener' bowing and saying solemnly 'Oh, my bloody back' to his visitors, as related by Alec Weaver!

There is interesting factual information (Ken Wright's account of the Dead Man's Penny, related against the background of Private Robert Bruce, 46th Battalion, who died of war related injuries on 21 November 1918, and whose grave in Will Will Rook cemetery has been lost), and poignant items, such as the two poems by Bede Tongs, MM, and Lance Campbell's story of his uncle, Driver Malcolm Campbell, 8th Division, a prisoner at Sandakan, who died of illness on 3 June 1945, and has no known grave. There is also Col Stringer's inspirational story of chaplain William (Fighting Mac) McKenzie of the First AIF, now hardly remembered, but to whom some recognition may be restored by this tale.

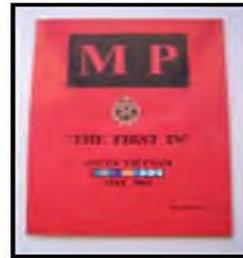
The book is well illustrated, generally with photos and artwork that are not 'well known', adding to its interest.



REVIEWED BY JOHN DONOVAN

John Donovan worked in the Department of Defence for over 32 years, principally in the fields of intelligence, force development and resource management.

He also served for several years in the Australian Army Reserve (Infantry).



MP THE FIRST IN: South Vietnam May 1965.

Ray Bate
Privately published, 2007, 38pp, rrp \$19.95.

Ray Bate has written an interesting account of the experiences of the first detachment of Australian military police to serve in South Vietnam. Starting with the hasty raising of the MP section as part of the 1st Australian Logistic Support Company in May 1965, he follows them through training and deployment by air and sea only four weeks later.

After arrival, the section was split between Bien Hoa and Saigon, with the Saigon group becoming part of HQ AAFV, and the Bien Hoa group joining USAF Air Police to provide police services at the airbase, where 1 RAR and the 1st ALSC were located. After four months, with many Australian soldiers on leave in Saigon, the section concentrated there.

The MP's duties included joint military and civilian police patrols in Saigon and at Bien Hoa, and assisting after terrorist explosions in Saigon. They provided assistance and escort support to 'Dust Off' medical evacuation operations. Both of these duties exposed them to the full horrors of war. Their experiences included returning curfew-breaking soldiers discreetly to their units, the son of a French diplomat, also breaking curfew, to his parents, and assisting soldiers who had been robbed. They attended incidents of murder, attempted bomb planting, and violence in the streets of Saigon.

Ray Bate is proud of the service the section provided, and the support it gave to the troops during that first year.

A SEA SAGA



Nelson: "Order the signal, Hardy."

Hardy: "Aye, aye sir."

Nelson: "Hold on,

that's not what I dictated to Flags.

What's the meaning of this?"

Hardy: "Sorry sir?"

Nelson (reading aloud): "' England expects every person to do his or her duty, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion or disability.' - What gobbledegook is this?"

Hardy: "Admiralty policy, I'm afraid, sir. We're an equal opportunities employer now. We had the devil's own job getting ' England ' past the censors, lest it be considered racist."

Nelson: "Gadzooks, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco."

Hardy: "Sorry sir. All naval vessels have now been designated smoke-free working environments."

Nelson: "In that case, break open the rum ration. Let us splice the mainbrace to steel the men before battle."

Hardy: "The rum ration has been abolished, Admiral. Its part of the Government's policy on binge drinking."

Nelson: "Good heavens, Hardy. I suppose we'd better get on with it full speed ahead."

Hardy: "I think you'll find that there's a 4 knot speed limit in this stretch of water."

Nelson: "Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in history. We must advance with all dispatch. Report from the crow's nest please."

Hardy: "That won't be possible, sir."

Nelson: "What?"

Hardy: "Health and Safety have closed the crow's nest, sir. No harness; and they said that rope ladders don't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until a proper scaffolding can be erected."

Nelson: "Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay, Hardy."

Hardy: "He's busy knocking up a wheelchair access to the foredeck Admiral."

Nelson: "Wheelchair access? I've never heard anything so absurd."

Hardy: "Health and safety again, sir. We have to provide a barrier-free environment for the differently abled."

Nelson: "Differently abled? I've only one arm and one eye and I refuse even to hear mention of the word. I didn't rise to the rank of admiral by playing the disability card."

Hardy: "Actually, sir, you did. The Royal Navy is under represented in the areas of visual impairment and limb deficiency."

Nelson: "Whatever next? Give me full sail. The salt spray beckons."

Hardy: "A couple of problems there too, sir. Health and safety won't let the crew up the rigging without hard hats. And they don't want anyone breathing in too much salt - haven't you seen the adverts?"

Nelson: "I've never heard such infamy. Break out the cannon and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy."

Hardy: "The men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral."

Nelson: "What? This is mutiny!"

Hardy: "It's not that, sir. It's just that they're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill anyone. There's a couple of legal-aid lawyers on board, watching everyone like hawks."

Nelson: "Then how are we to sink the Frenchies and the Spanish?"

Hardy: "Actually, sir, we're not."

Nelson: "We're not?"

Hardy: "No, sir. The French and the Spanish are our European partners now. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, we shouldn't even be in this stretch of water. We could get hit with a claim for compensation."

Nelson: "But you must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil."

Hardy: "I wouldn't let the ship's diversity coordinator hear you saying that sir. You'll be up on disciplinary report."

Nelson: "You must consider every man an enemy, who speaks ill of your King."

Hardy: "Not any more, sir. We must be inclusive in this multicultural age. Now put on your Kevlar vest; it's the rules. It could save your life"

Nelson: "Don't tell me - health and safety. Whatever happened to rum, sodomy and the lash?"

Hardy: "As I explained, sir, rum is off the menu! And there's a ban on corporal punishment."

Nelson: "What about sodomy?"

Hardy: "I believe that is now legal, sir."

Nelson: "In that case..... kiss me, Hardy!"

THE TONNICH I TALES

Reminiscences of a Halifax Bomber Pilot.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT Sydney Alberto TONNICH I, D.F.C.

Royal Australian Air Force who served with his Australian crew in 51 SQUADRON RAF

Contributed by his nephew – Association member Troy THOMAS



A Gathering Of Eagles

I have just come back from a 466/462 Squadron reunion at which I met a lot of old mates who had shared the same dangers and experiences as myself, and Max McVicar, a very good friend to whom I related these stories, suggested that I go home and dictate them to a recorder. But as I don't have a recorder, Max, I put them- in print.

Red Robbie

We were posted to 51 Squadron in 4 Group of Bomber Command then operating from Snaith in Yorkshire. When I first heard the name Snaith it conjured up in my mind the image of a snake with all its sinister connotations. So it was in that frame of mind that I set out to join the squadron on the 25th September 1944.

Arriving fairly early in the morning we reported to the Group Captain commanding the station. He was a nice older type of man, rather fatherly in his attitude. He welcomed us, nothing too effusive, but I guess there was no point in getting too close to newcomers whose length of stay was uncertain, then he sent us off to the Wing Commander in charge of the Squadron.

The Wingco was a different kettle of fish - a large man who made a lot of noise wherever he was. He bade us welcome too in his boisterous way. His name was Ling, alias Ming The Merciless, after a cartoon character of the time, and he was well-known for his briefing addresses which he usually finished with the cry of "rivers of blood!". Not all that stirring when you realized that some of the blood could be yours. Moustaches were fairly common in the air force but they were said not to be, moustaches unless they could be seen from behind. However, knowing this had not prepared

me for what greeted me when I presented myself to Officer Commanding, A Flight, Squadron Leader Robinson. He was sitting behind his desk with a face like granite, wearing the biggest, reddest moustache I had or have ever seen. It could certainly be seen from behind, he could have tied his cap on with it! For a brand-new untried pilot officer to be in the presence of a veteran squadron leader with something like 26 or 27 operations under his belt it was a terrifying experience. Happily his personality was not nearly as fearsome as his looks and he soon put me at ease, well... as easy or comfortable as one could expect to be arriving at a front-line squadron that was operating day and night across the most heavily-defended areas of Europe.

In a very short time he had organized for one of the pilots of A Flight to take me for a familiarization flight, that is a flight around the surrounding area to point out significant landmarks and their relation to the aerodrome, and also to show me the intricacies of the Halifax - Mark III which was very different from the old Halifax Mark 1 that we had been flying at Heavy Conversion Unit

The Halifax Mark III was powered by four Bristol Hercules radial engines each pushing 1675 horse power, and when you opened the throttles on these motors things started to happen. The unfortunate pilot selected for this was a Flying Officer Bamsey. This name always reminds me of the deer in the Walt Disney cartoons, and so did F/O Bamsey. A nice friendly fellow, not a bit like you would expect a hardened bomber pilot to be. "The crew can come if they want to," he said, and they did want to, which pleased me. The whole flight including my taking my first solo flight with our crew in the Mark III took only 40 minutes, which I guess made us the newest operational crew of 51 Squadron, Bomber Command

Through this whole experience and particularly while reporting to the fearsome-looking Squadron Leader, known respectfully as Red Robbie, it never entered my head that in the not-too-distant future I would be sitting behind that same desk doing the same thing's for some new pilot posted to the squadron. That did happen, but I'm sure my moustache did not have the same effect.

Arrival

It did not take us long to settle into squadron life, everyone seemed to make that process as easy as possible. By and large I think Australians were fairly popular in England. Joining a squadron is something like becoming a member of a family. The unit of course is the crew, and we had by this time become a rather closely-knit unit. We had a certain uniqueness about us, we were an Australian crew on a English squadron and furthermore we were an all-Australian crew.

There were other Australian crews on the, squadron and there were mixed crews, mixed in regard to nationality and mixed in regard to rank, We too were mixed in regard to rank. At this time I was a brand-new Pilot Officer, Frank, our navigator, Bert, our Bomb Aimer and Tug, our Wireless Operator, were Flying Officers, Jack and Pete, our two Air Gunners, and Blue, our Engineer, were all Flight Sergeants. The difference in rank made absolutely no difference in the air and in our case made no difference on the ground except that on the station we did not eat together as NCOs had a separate Mess.

Most of our leaves we spent together, not always in one group because in some areas our preferences differed, but essentially we were a quite compatible group, and where you found one of us you would usually find two or three more. When we first got the news that we were going to 51 Squadron it was not received with great rejoicing. Naturally we had hoped to be posted to one of the Australian squadrons of which there were two in 4 Group. However that was not to be and I consoled myself with the thought that I would know someone on 51 as Jimmy Preston, one of the boys I had trained with, had been posted there from the course ahead of us. Jimmy was quite a good musician, part of a group that were very popular in Sydney at that time, but sadly, by the time we got to the squadron Jimmy had been posted *Missing*. He had cone on an operation as a second pilot for experience. which was the usual routine, and had not returned.

When we arrived on the squadron there were two or three other Australian crews there. One of them had just finished their tour, I think. they had only one or two trips to do. They finished their tour all right. I did not get to know them very well. I do recall that their pilot was a Flight Sergeant, from Queensland. The other two crews were those of Keith McKnight and Jack Paradise who had party Australian crews. Keith McKnight's crew finished their tour and some of his crew, namely John Tidex their navigator, and Harry Rees and Frank Toohey the gunners I see today at the various reunions. Jack Paradise was not so lucky. His aircraft was hit by a bomb from one of our own

squadron aircraft which was flying above him. That aircraft was being flown by the squadron's most experienced pilot. The pilot was on his second tour, but unfortunately the bomb aimer was relatively new. Jack's aircraft went down, the crew got out, but what happened to them on the ground was terrible- They were murdered, I refer to that incident elsewhere in these stories.

How Wide Open Can Your Eyes Be Opened?

September 1944 - we'd been on 51 Squadron, Bomber Command, about ten days or thereabouts and had been introduced to the Halifax Mark III, a heavy bomber powered by four Bristol Hercules motors, and a welcome improvement on the clapped out Mark H we had been flying at Heavy Conversion Unit at Marston Moor. We'd had our familiarization flight to let us see and learn to recognize the surrounding countryside, done a lot of bombing at the bombing range at Roos, near the Yorkshire coast, done quite a bit of fighter affiliation in which a friendly fighter would make realistic attacks to sharpen up the gunners and give the pilot some experience of what to do and what to expect when he got that horrible command of "Corkscrew go!"

Things were pretty busy and we knew we must be close to being ready for our first operation. The usual procedure was that a pilot was taken on a *second dicky*, on which the pilot without his own crew went with an experienced combat pilot and crew as second pilot. So far this hadn't happened to me so it came as a bit of a surprise when I was told by the flight commander (Red Robbie aka Squadron Leader Robinson) that we were on the battle order for that day. Very mixed feelings and quite apprehensive but, well, this was it.

Before an operation there was a general briefing which the whole crew attended, and a separate briefing for pilots, navigators and bomb aimers. This being our first operational briefing it was all quite new and strange to us.

I recall walking into the briefing room; seated on a dais at one end of the hall were the Station Commander, Squadron Commander and Flight Commander in front of a large map of Europe. On the map were large red splotches and through the splotches ran a red tape. I asked the chap beside me what the red tape indicated. He told me it was our route to the target. I asked what the red splotches were, and got the bad news: "They are the heavily defended areas", he informed me. Nice, the red tape seemed to run through the biggest red splotch of all, and in fact it did.

To be continued.....

Bill LOWCOCK'S WAR STORY

**NX10682 PTE William Mackenzie LOWCOCK
2/19 Battalion A.I.F.**

Bill's story continues
from the December 08 Newsletter:

This would have been about the 150 k mark from Ban Pong which was the base of the line. At south Tonchan, we were camped on the edge of a beautiful crystal clear stream that ran down from the hills behind us. The whole of these sites were surrounded by mountains and hills. The roughest looking country you ever saw in your life.

This was a beautiful crystal clear stream, and of course we weren't allowed to drink it unboiled, but we did wash in it every day. The Japs had the camp on the other side of the stream and they kept out of our road and we kept out of theirs. Not long after getting there, I kicked and broke my toe on a tent peg and this caused me a bit of trouble for a few weeks until it healed up.

Then a major catastrophe happened. The Japs brought probably a couple of hundred Chinese coolie workers and they camped up on the other side of the creek about 150 yards away. These poor beggars had no organisation. They had no idea of hygiene, how to look after themselves, nothing that we had and in no time at all disease was evident there, not only dysentery, but with the wet season, cholera.

Cholera was a water borne disease and in a matter of a month, every one of those poor devils had died. Then one or two of our fellows caught cholera and within two weeks, we had lost 20 men. Cholera was very sudden. It could take you out in about 2 – 3 days. Our Camp Commandant was a Japanese Sergeant Major named Hiromatsu. He became known as the tiger of the line. He was a big heavy tough guy and a strict disciplinarian and life was pretty miserable under him.

At this camp we were making cuttings through rock outcrops up on the line and of course, no proper drills. We did it with what was called the hammer and tap. A long drill about 2 ft long with a sharpened end, one man held the drill and the other bloke belted it with a sledge hammer. It was slow work. We had to do one man, one metre of drill hole per day.

We were working in an area about, I suppose 30 or 40 yards square and when the holes were dug, the Jap engineers would come along and put down a plug of gelnignite with a detonator and a

fuse attached. The fuse stuck out of the ground and when all these were set in place, probably half a dozen or 10 of us were given a piece of proper match rope which was glowing on one end (it was on fire) and each man had to light five fuses.



I was one of them and the rest of the mob sheltered about 50 or 60 yards away behind a great outcrop of rock. The thing was when everybody started, I had a bit of trouble getting my fuses lit and all of a sudden, I got the last one going and looked up and I'm the last one left. Everyone else was gone and I'm surrounded by about 150 sticks of gelnignite with fuses burning down them. I reckon I covered that 50 yards to the rock column and I dived over the top. I must have done that in Olympic time, went over the top, just as the whole bang lot went up. Of course, all the boys thought it was very funny, but at the time I wasn't very amused. In hindsight, it was a rather amusing incident. It was here that I had my first attack of malaria. The previous year when Johnny Bell had visited me in the isolation ward at Roberts Hospital at Selarang, he gave me a diary. A large book about A4 size, properly bound and I kept that diary until it was stolen from me by the Japs about 18 months later.

I seem to remember I recorded about 60 or 70 attacks of malaria up to that time. It came around quite regularly BT type, every 13 days and lasted about 2-3 days and then repeated itself. This happened right through to the end of the war and back into civilian life when I had a couple of attacks. South Tonchan was, I am sure, the worst camp I was in. It was away from the river and all supplies had to come by road, (if you could call it a road) through the jungle. Japanese trucks tried to carry them up.

The mud was anything from ankle to knee deep. It rained all the time and we spent a lot of our night time when we were supposed to be sleeping, going back down the muddy road and carrying the supplies on our shoulders, because the trucks got bogged. With the cholera on, we couldn't use the stream for bathing any more and our cooks did a marvellous job of boiling water and when we came back from the day's work, each man was given a billy can full of boiled water in which he had to wash. The result was that we were never clean. We were always muddy. We had the pleasure here of seeing the Japanese

front line troops march through to Burma. They marched along the railway line. The railway hadn't actually arrived where we were, we were still getting the track ready. But they followed the path of it, carrying all their goods on their backs and in small trolley carts and they were even driving the odd bullock with them. They were doing it the hard way too. After a couple of months – it was now about June/July 1943 – we moved to Central Tonchan, about 20 k on. The camp here was built on a small plateau about 400 yards from the river and supplies could now come through by barge. Reg had organised our money supplies to buy goods from Boon Pong and we found that the standard of food that we were getting, thanks to Reg, was improving while it still wasn't good tucker. There were a large number of British in this camp and the officers were absolute no-hopers. The British Army Officers and the Enlisted Men didn't mix at all and the result was that the poor enlisted men were not getting sufficient care and attention from their officers as our men did.

It was here that boots began to give me some trouble as well as a lot of others. The new boots that we wore when we left Selarang were now history and a lot of us, including me, were going around without boots. The Japanese then issued us with their own type of boot which is now called a track boot, made of rubbers sole, canvas top. The only trouble was that the largest Japanese soldier was about an 8 and I took a 10. We overcame the problem by cutting the top out of the canvas part of the boot around the toe allowing my foot to hang over the sole by an inch or two and to stop the sole flapping around, I tied it with a piece of wire back to my toe onto the canvas upper. This way for the rest of our prisoner of war period, I managed to keep myself in some sort of footwear.

The railway had passed through Tonchan by now and our job was maintenance, ballasting, repairing bridges and collecting wood for the engines. The real speedo work had slowed down a lot and we were not working as hard as we used to. We quite often got a Sunday off and we spent the time down in the river washing ourselves and our clothes. To take up some of our spare time, if there was much, the Japs decided that we would learn their drill. We were told how to march in Japanese, how to turn in Japanese and how to number in Japanese. All of our troops had, for quite a long time now, been compelled to salute every Japanese you saw, regardless of his rank. If you failed to do so, you got a bashing. We built our own attap huts at Tonchan, a fair way from the British. We got on well with the British troops, but we had no time for their officers. I remember one Yasme day (that's a day off), we were all down in

the river, the Kwai Noi. It flows very quickly there and there was a bay probably 100 yards or so long and the water flowed back into this bay quite slowly, a good place to swim. We were there one day and the Japs decided they would get some fish. So they went up the river about 300 or 400 yards and they tossed in quite a lot of sticks of gelly. A lot of big bangs and the Japs were rushing around down the river trying to find the fish which should be stunned and float to the surface. When we were swimming and standing in the fairly shallow water in this bay, we found that hundreds and hundreds of fish were washing in, not on the surface, but on the bottom. So we continued to wash ourselves and most of us had 3 or 4 fish stuck in the crutch of our shorts or standing on them or in bags on the bottom of the river with our feet on top of the bags. The Japanese got some fish, but we sure got a lot in our meal that night too.

We were out on the job one day on the jungle track and we were having lunch. Snow White was sitting next to me and I looked down the road and saw a tiger walk out of the jungle on the track about 150 yards away. It appeared to be a young tiger, not terribly large, but big enough. The Jap guard there was only a blooming kid and he had a Japanese rifle which is a small calibre, high velocity thing. We called him over and in great excitement pointed down – tiger, tiger, tiger! "Oh" he said and he walks down and tries to bag this tiger with his rifle. We were only hoping that he would walk into mother tiger or father tiger because his rifle against a tiger would be quite useless. However the tiger disappeared and no harm was done either way.

Another time we were out in a similar area and out of the bush staggered one of these bullocks that the Japanese had been taking up to Burma with them for food. Poor devil of a thing, it was only skin a bone and could barely walk. It wandered out onto the clearing and the Jap guard there had a .303 rifle and he put about 3 bullets into the poor beast and it was still standing on its feet. So I walked over and he was only a youngster too. Most of these guards were only kids. And I, by sign language, persuaded him to give me the rifle which he did and I put one through the bullocks head right between the eyes.

We all had a little bit of meat that night too, the Japs as well. Our butchers used to do all the butchering if there was going to be any meat in camp and they were always very careful to see that we got the best cuts. It was now possibly October 43 and we moved farther up the line about 10 or 12 km to Tampii.

To be continued.....

NOR ALL THY TEARS

NX45804 Driver Herbert James McNAMARA, Carrier PI, HQ Coy, 2/20 Battalion A.I.F.

Continued from December 2008 Newsletter

None but a professional historian is fitted to the task of sifting the truth out of the infinity of stories that gathered round him, stories, that if all true, would have made him the oldest man who ever lived. They were passed from man to man as being things he had done, or would have done if he had the time, or could have done, without any attempt having been made to separate them. It is said that he once had a man mentally examined for saying that he had never heard of him, and I can think of no more obvious a case of certifiable lunacy under the circumstances. For, whether they hated him or worshipped him, there are no ex-prisoners who do not resent the deplorable habit of indiscriminately bestowing the name "Black Jack" on less famous beings.

Better verified is the story of the Nip Officer who brought in his guards for an inspection of the Camp. Black Jack assented but claimed the right to inspect the Nip guard first. From man to man he went, soundly reprimanding every Nip who had a strap out of place or a hair that missed the razor. The Nip officer followed behind, adding his own tirade to Black Jack's. And from then on all guards visiting the camp were got up in a manner better fitted to pass two gruelling inspections. He made a fitting entry onto the Malayan scene when at Gemas he won the first, and only, marked victory of the sorry campaign. Costly losses among troops untrained in the new kind of war had been almost futile and had led to a change in strategy that would take into account things that had been learnt since the little green books had been written.

Most marked of these was the fact that they kept to the roads when opposition was light, deploying only when fired upon. Large scale troop movements were not possible through the dense jungle with any speed, and their virtual command of the air enabled them to take maximum advantage of the good, but narrow roads. Forward troops on bicycles were given the opportunity of earning posthumous decorations for finding out if there were any troops in the area. Another characteristic was that all their strategy was characterised. However wide their diversity might be in the handling of P.O.W.'s, in action they kept repeating any successful strategy while ever it was successful. A disastrous battle on the Slim River led to a decision to draw Allied lines back to Gemas and there to form an ambush. It was to be an ambush in the true tradition of fiction save that

it was to be on a scale rarely met in truth or fiction, and its success was in proportion. This was to be the first Japanese contact with Australians as a unit, and Black Jack's Second Thirtieth Battalion was given the nerve-taxing task of laying the ambush in the perfect jungle setting. Fifth column activity and pre-war exploration of the country under the guise of big-game hunting, made secrets almost impossible, but this secret was kept.



The debacle on the Slim River made a panic retreat seem plausible, and the background was fashioned accordingly, even to leaving the bridges intact. The last bridge left intact was across the river near Gemas and there the Second-Thirtieth waited: the cyclists crossed unhindered.

When the bridge divided the column into two halves a tremendous explosion tore it to pieces annihilating the whole mass of men still crossing, and at the same instant every gun opened up on the compact mass of troops that had crossed. The success of the operation is best measured in casualties. One officer and sixteen O.R.'s missing amongst Australians, against an estimated thousand deaths among the Japanese.

Prisoners of War under the command of their own officers was breaking new ground, and Black Jack saw that the ground was broken thoroughly. His organisation was as formal and tight as at Victoria Barracks and some of his ceremonial parades lacked only the bear-skin caps and red uniforms. These, it need hardly be said, brought some friction with our hosts, but no more than that. We had won the battle of the Barrack Square, and they were not much disposed to stir up anything not directly related to the New Order. However they did froth in the mouth a bit about the ostentatious flaunting of an Australian flag on one of these ceremonies and ordered it to be destroyed. It came back to Australia nonetheless.

But in the main they were not strongly opposed to military drill, for they were as satisfied that we would be there for the duration as we were of the contrary. Most opposition, and that chiefly vocal, came from within, where disgruntled prisoners considered ceremonial parades to be waste of

good rice. The camp buzzed with rumours that "that Black Bastard" was planning to "re-take the island with pickhandles," and the military strategy involved was discussed with much detail, until most old-timers had accepted it as no longer a matter of dispute save in terms of wisdom. Though this was violently criticised, I dare say that not many would have declined to grab a pickhandle if he said so. In actual fact, if he had had any such ambitious notions, he would have had more than pick-handles to reply upon. There were several caches of arms in the compound, and though they were not much use by the time they came to get us out, they were probably quite good at this time. In fact, it was stated in a rumour of about the fourth degree of probability (the "re-take the island with pick-handles") was assessed at the twenty-third degree of probability that a machine-gun was taken into the square at the time of the "Incident" and certainly cameras were taken in, for there are many photos available. One man actually took a movie, though I have not heard of it being brought out.

On a less ambitious scale, however, the military set-up served a purpose immediately useful. A purely defensive purpose. It was impossible for them to get to our nerve-centres unheralded as for us to get to theirs. The innumerable sentries, unarmed and not very well clad, did a much more useful job than many of the armed variety. For we had many reasons to resent intrusion. Chief among them was the very elaborate and efficient News Service.

Then there were the lectures on the campaign history and the compiling of the official history. A radio transmitter was also made in the camp and some messages were sent out, but it was not considered expedient to make much use of this, though seasoned Changi rumour-mongers probably believed that Black Jack had a long conversation with Churchill every night. The official news service cramped the style of rumour-mongers quite a lot. The only amendment they felt to be justified was to the effect that the officers were suppressing the news about the Burma fighting so that we would not be tempted to get ourselves shot for trying to escape. With that limitation, it was necessary to concentrate on rumours about Black Jack and these were most ornate. There was an air of conspiracy about the place and always there was something to confirm the previous rumour, even if it were only another rumour.

Food was villainously light, but cooks were working wonders with what there was, and the herbs of the field were gathered to help us. Certain prejudices had been overcome when we were at Changi before. In the first few weeks a notice authorised by the doctors informed us that

the weevils in the rice, so far from being harmful, contained protein which our diet lacked. Much had been done to make life tolerable. There was little material, but much talent, and (I think I may say) genius. From the books assembled, an imposing library had been built, and the much-read books patched again and again to eke out their valuable lives. A news-bulletin was issued daily, lectures were arranged every night, and a concert party, including professional talent. It was organised on an impressive scale.

Here we were initiated into the hygiene discipline that was saving many lives then and would save thousands later. In spite of the great crowding, the camp was kept almost free of flies by the destruction of all refuse. Borehole latrines, covered with earth every ten days to kill the larvae, were almost as effective as sewerage, and by example and precept, everything was done to keep back the risk of dysentery and the like fly-borne diseases ~ deadly killers in a place where adequate treatment was impossible. All the doctors gave lectures on the diseases we were subject to, and the means of preventing them, and every effort was made to enforce their recommendations. Much of the propaganda was drastic, but it was necessary and effective. Notices were chalked up on every wall, exhorting and warning. "Flies have a habit of vomiting their last meal (borehole) onto their next meal - your food "Spilt food means flies, flies mean dysentery and dysentery means Death". "Remember the five F's Filth, Flies, Faeces, Fingers and Food". Not elegant but it got results.

We prepared for our first Christmas inside and there was as much of the Christmas feeling as I have seen anywhere. The concert party had arranged a pantomime for the children of the internees in the Changi Jail, but the I.J.A. would not give them permission to go over, though they agreed to take some toys that had been made by prisoners. So "Citronella" and her ugly sisters were de-censored and de-glamorised and made into a very popular show for us.

No amount of genius can construct an artificial turkey, but you had a poor imagination if the rice dumplings cooked in cloths did not taste like the real Christmas duff. They let their head go themselves, too, and gave us a bottle of plonk to so many men. (Quite a large number, but the kind thought must have been there mixed up with some villainy). They told us that if we behaved we would get another bottle next year. The stock joke that added much brightness to the day was to ask what we would get the Christmas after that. We cracked the same joke the next Christmas, but had no heart for it the third time.

To be continued.....

FRONTLINE

DOWN MEMORY LANE



INT SECTION INGLEBURN

At back standing L to R: PTE Tony BRAY - LCPL Peter BURNS - CAPT Brett COOPER - SGT Dianne WILSON
At front: Unknown - Unknown - CPL THOMPSON



RUTHERFORD NSW - SEPTEMBER 1938 - 30th BATTALION

L to R: STIMSON - MURCHISON (Later MAJGEN) LT Reg NEWTON - Bill MINTO - EMMERSON
(Photo courtesy of Graeme GILL)