

"Vrai et Fort"

## *22nd Battalion Association*

### AUCKLAND BRANCH

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Secretary :

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#### 22ND BATTALION NEWS

P.O. Box 13-058,

Onehunga,

Auckland, 6.

(Registered at Post Office as a Magazine)

DECEMBER, 1986

#### CHRISTMAS EDITION

Our October issue (which did not go out till November) was converted to a National Circular because it dealt largely with the preliminary planning for the National Reunion to be staged in Auckland in February, 1988, with our T.F.S. Scheme and with the Agency arrangements to be made for accommodation bookings, which cannot be made until February, 1987 at the earliest. We are pretty confident that the 1988 National Reunion will take place during the last weekend of February, 1988 rather than early in March but we are not yet able to confirm the exact date. In the meantime, T.F.S. is in full operation and we strongly commend it to everyone likely to attend the 1988 Reunion. We remind you that the T.F.S. prize is a free double ticket to the Reunion and that it is necessary to contribute at least \$100 by 31/12/87 to participate in the draw. Send your first payment to P.O. Box 13-058, Auckland 6 and your T.F.S. book will be sent to you.

This issue of the Circular is our normal Christmas edition and will be sent only to those living in our Branch area, though copies will be sent to other Branches and Wanganui Branch has requested a bulk supply for distribution to its own members. Branch (& National) President GEORGE MATTHEWS joins with the Editor in wishing you and yours all the best for Christmas and the coming year.

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#### ROLL OF HONOUR

41631 R.M. (Bob) Reeve

Auckland 24/11/86

Bob Reeve, a former P.O.W., died suddenly last month. We extend our deep sympathy to his widow and family.

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#### BRANCH REUNION - MARCH, 1987

Our usual Branch Reunion (and A.G.M.) will be held in March, probably towards the end of that month, though the date has yet to be fixed. It will be a Sunday luncheon and we will keep to the same timing as last year:- 11 a.m. start and finishing about 3 p.m. The venue will again be the Grey Lynn Returned Services Club.

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~~We need a big turnout at the March 1987 function as the National Reunion will then be less than a year away and your Committee will be looking for your support in its preparations for 1988. Please bear this in mind and plan now to be there to show your support and encouragement and your willingness to~~

Branch Reunion (contd.)

volunteer to assist with the preparations for and the running of our big responsibility for 1988. Exact date and full details will be in our next issue.

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS

We do not send out subscription accounts to our Branch Members until well on in our financial year for a number of reasons:- (a) Many of our members send in their \$4 - NO GST - (and often a donation as well) before receiving an account. (b) Some of our people are on limited incomes and we do not make sub. payments a condition of membership. (c) It costs time and money to send out accounts. If you know that you have overlooked till now the sending in of your 1986/87 sub., or if you would like to pay for 1987/88 in advance, the Treasurer would appreciate whatever payment you care to send when you receive this Circular. We will, however, be sending out sub. accounts as soon as the Treasurer can get around to it. Our Circulars have to be paid for and we do need financial as well as moral support.

TOUR OF THE BATTLEFIELDS - 1985PART 2 - ON TO ITALY

The exit from Greece and our entry into Italy was occasioned by a delightful ferry ride, punctuated by a brief stop at the island of CORFU, very clean and picturesque. For the 20 tour members who were veterans of the Italian Campaign in 1943 - 1945, this part of the trip was anticipated with great relish. A fairly hectic arrival at BRINDISI, where the Italian Customs officials displayed both diligence and negligence, preceded our first meeting with our bus and driver, with whom we would be associated until we reached CALAIS three weeks hence. The lovely port of Brindisi had brief memories for some of us who had been shipped from here to the NZ Division in the north during the last months of the war. On our way to our next overnight stop in BARI, we visited the area of TRULLI, made famous for its strange roofing of hundreds of houses. This peculiar conical shape with overlapping tiles is only seen in this part of Europe and we noted that, as well as buildings hundreds of years old, many newer dwellings were being built in the same fashion. Those of us who were in the BARI-TARANTO area 40 years ago were very surprised to find that the caves at CASTELLANA were open but none of us had heard of them until our visit in the late afternoon. These caves are tremendous. We descended about 400 steps and then walked for about two kilometres along a path, admiring grottoes that were extremely well lighted, reminding us of Waitomo only on a much vaster scale. We were pleased to note that, at the end, the ride out was by lift. The thought of climbing those steps again was not appealing.

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TOUR OF THE BATTLEFIELDS - 1985  
PART 2 - ON TO ITALY (CONTD)

SORRENTO & CAPRI

The next day we headed for SORRENTO. Our impressions of Southern Italy made for many surprises. In the 1940's, the area was notable for the poverty of the peasants and the old and decrepit farmhouses. Today, the new prosperity was evident wherever we looked. A vast amount of industrialisation and well built comfortable homes dotted the countryside. The towns and villages we passed through seemed full of happy and prosperous people, a marked contrast to the bombed and war-damaged scenes we witnessed forty years ago. We skirted SALERNO, well remembered for the American landings in 1943 and then headed along what is known as the AMALFI Coast, 60 kilometres of twisting, turning highway along a cliff-face dotted by hundreds of seaside dwellings and hotels. Sheer drops of hundreds of feet were common place. Towns and villages clung to the hillsides and we looked down on tiny beaches where people enjoyed themselves while we crawled along kilometre by slow kilometre, the sheer beauty of the place taking our breath away. Our rather large bus had many occasions to back up and have two, sometimes three goes at rounding tortuous corners. Arrived at SORRENTO, we were soon esconced in one of the most comfortable hotels of the tour. Off the next morning to CAPRI. A very pleasant trip on a large launch brought us to the picturesque port where we boarded a smaller craft heading for the BLUE GROTTTO. We were rather fortunate, as frequently the state of the wind and sea make this adventure impossible. At the GROTTTO, we were shepherded aboard dinghies four at a time and slid through a tiny hole in a sheer rock face into a veritable wonderland. The only light comes from under the sea, which is an extremely pale blue. Truly a delightful sight. On the way back to Capri, we looked north across the bay to NAPLES and could make out the Isle of ISCHIA where many a tired old soldier was able to recuperate from the rigours of war during 1944. At CAPRI, we rode on the Funiculare up to the main town, a picturesque spot with many tiny shops, restaurants and bars. Many, many tourists and places charging astronomical prices. I paid 7000 lire (about \$8) for a sandwich and an orange drink.

ON TO CASSINO

A brief tour of this hilltop town featured a glimpse of Gracie Fields' home and spectacular views of the rugged southern coastline. Back on the launch to SORRENTO for some shopping. Some of the party took advantage of the many shops displaying most exquisite inlaid woodwork. The prices by Italian standards seemed reasonable and the merchants arranged for freighting back to New Zealand. Next morning we set out for POMPEII, well remembered by some of us during the early months of 1944. Among the many changes we saw in Italy, POMPEII was, as ever, unchanging.

We approached CASSINO with mixed emotions. Most of us who spent those horrific weeks there in 1944 had never returned since. Past MIGNANO, where 22 Battalion spent weeks acquiring the AMGOT label, round the bulk of MT. TROCCHIO and there was the town, the mountains and the Montecassino Monastery. Forty-one years on and what a contrast. Where we once saw death and destruction, ~~now there was beauty and tranquility. We were met at our hotel by the President~~ of the local equivalent of the RSA, a most obliging gentleman who conducted us to the Commonwealth War Cemetery. It was a most emotional experience as we discovered the last resting places of friends we knew so well all those years ago. We had a brief ceremony of Remembrance where the main theme was



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ON TO CASSINO (CONTD)

the thought that we, who had survived, asked ourselves had we proved worthy of those who hadn't. The next morning, our Italian friend took us up the Mountain to Montecassino. That might pile of rubble, the last time we saw it, was transformed into the most beautiful building most of us had ever seen. The much publicised animosity to FREYBERG and his New Zealanders was nowhere in evidence. Instead an atmosphere of peace, forgiveness and the resolve never to allow such events to re-occur permeated the whole place. CASSINO holds a unique place in New Zealand's history and the brief visit there made our whole long journey worth while.

ROME REVISITED

After the emotional experiences at CASSINO, the next section took us along the road to ROME. Most of our memories of this route were of a brief glimpse of the city as we journeyed to LAKE TRASIMENO in late June, 1944. Our hotel proved to be set in fairly rural surroundings, indicating that we were some distance from the centre of things Roman. However, after checking in, we were taken to the home of the New Zealand Ambassador where his staff entertained us right royally. In his unavoidable absence, we were given a real NZ afternoon tea and even a drop of NZ Beer and were able at last to find out the score of the All Blacks - England game played some days previously. The next day was looked forward to as being one of the highlights - the Sights of ROME. Our guide met the bus at ST. PETER'S SQUARE and proceeded to break all records for Roman sight-seeing. ST. PETER'S SQUARE, the BASILICA itself, the VATICAN MUSEUM, the SISTINE CHAPEL, the COLOSSEUM, the FORUM and a bank in the PIAZZA VENEZIA were all taken in and we were back at our hotel by 1.30 p.m. For those of us who had been in ROME before, it may have been sufficient as a second time round operation but, for the party members for whom this visit was a first, it was most disappointing. The distance of our hotel from the City Centre made it difficult and far too expensive to revisit later in the day. After GREECE, we found the prices of everyday wants, particularly food and drink, quite astronomical. A sandwich and a drink can cost up to \$5 or \$6. A small bottle of beer in the hotel bars can be anything above \$5. The food is different but adequate. This type of tour has breakfast and dinner provided and Continental breakfasts are fairly frugal. One roll, maybe two, with butter and jam and tea or coffee. The dinners are usually fairly good with up to 4 or 5 courses, with very little in the way of meat. By now we found the constant travelling fatiguing but we seemed to stand up to it well. The weather was beautifully warm, so clothing was not a problem. Rinse out a few items in the hotel bathroom and they are dry in the morning.

ASSISI & FABRIANO

The next stage took us into the hills north east of ROME, through well remembered FOLIGNO and ASSISI, and on to FABRIANO. A long stop at ASSISI took us back all those years to our previous visits to the hilltop city, famous as the home and shrine of St. Francis. The very fine churches and the old buildings seem to bring the Saint to life, with the numbers of genuine pilgrims for once outnumbering the gawking tourists. Our overnight stop at FABRIANO was looked forward to fairly eagerly as it was here that the NZ Division rested and reformed on two occasions during late 1944 and 1945. As Italian cities

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PART 2 - ASSISI & FABRIANO (CONTD)

go, it was fairly small and, thankfully for us, well off the tourist track. Our hotel was very comfortable and we were made most welcome. Our arrival was well known to the townsfolk and a goodly number were waiting for us. Many were most disappointed that their acquaintances of forty years ago were not with the party. However some of us were able to renew old friendships and the local equivalent of the RSA came to the hotel that evening for a very happy and cordial reception. We managed to exchange a few gifts and the banner of the Manurewa RSA is now displayed in the home of the local President. I was able to locate the family in whose home Keith McBrearty of Epsom and I were billeted during those weeks in February and March 1945, during the formation and retraining of 9th NZ Brigade. Olga and Oscar Ruiti remembered us well. She was 16 and her brother 9 when we were guests of their parents. I had a pleasant morning with them before our bus left for RIMINI. It is to the credit of the NZ Army that its conduct was such that the local people still feel affection for them. An army of occupation is seldom held in such high regard.

RIMINI & THE PO VALLEY

The area we were about to visit was as well known to the 2nd NZ Division as any part of ITALY. It was from RIMINI that our advance into the PO VALLEY began in late 1944 and the town of FAENZA some distance to the north west saw the launching of the last battles in the Spring of 1945. The road from FABRIANO to the coast was something of a revelation. The so well-remembered twisting and turning mountain route is now replaced by a magnificent highway, where tunnels pierce mountains and viaducts span valleys, and down below us at one point we spotted a Bailey Bridge which we imagined could have been there for forty years - impossible.

RIMINI itself, so well-remembered for its battered buildings, particularly the church bell tower, is now a charming place. It seems to be the centre of a long holiday coastline with multi-storied hotels rising up for miles north and south of the city centre. Each hotel seems to own its own stretch of beach and the facilities on the sand cater for all tastes. Food booths, bars, piped music and sports facilities are all there as well as places to just lie in the sun. Some of us spent a very happy evening walking along the shopping area, where we spotted an English Pub. type of bar. An Italian lady, who remembered the Kiwis quite well, played the pub piano nonstop with tunes that the predominantly English customers loved and we had a good old singalong. She even knew a Maori tune or two. Some Italians haven't changed. While enjoying a swim early next morning in the warm water of the Adriatic, I had my towel stolen.

NEXT STAGE FLORENCE

The next stage was to FLORENCE, but the day was spent first travelling up hills to the Republic of SAN MARINO, where we were able to do some shopping at reasonable prices. It's a very beautiful place and one feature which impressed us was the prominence given to Kiwi fruit liqueur in the many shops. It appears to be manufactured locally. Down to the PO VALLEY again and along the never to be forgotten Route 9 towards BOLOGNA. There are several Commonwealth War Cemeteries in the area and we were able to call at two of them - CESENA and



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FAENZA. The talk among us had been, to a great extent, about what formidable obstacles the rivers had been particularly the SENIO, before which we halted for three months in early 1945. That and the SILLARO and SANTERNO seem to be mere trickles now and the fact that we laboured so hard and at such cost brought gasps of disbelief to those who did not know them in those far off days.

The road from BOLOGNA to FLORENCE was a further example of superb Italian road building. In 100 kilometres we counted about 30 tunnels from 100m to 1100m in length. The traffic consists of tourist buses (hundreds of them), small European cars, huge trucks and hundreds of motor cycles. They drove without helmets but we didn't see even one minor accident. Our next stop was the last city that, during the War years, came to know the New Zealand soldier - FLORENCE.

MEMORIES OF FLORENCE

The two nights and a day spent in FLORENCE brought back many happy and sad memories to those of us who were veterans of the Italian Campaign. It was in the hills to the south that the NZ Division broke the back of the German resistance during July and August 1944. Consideration was given to some of us visiting the SAN CASCIANO area and LA ROMOLA and SAN MICHELE, villages where a great many New Zealand lives were lost. Cost and time prevented this, so we spent the day being guided once again round the beauties of this lovely city. Our hotel was once again well out of the city centre in a less than agreeable industrial district but our bus dropped us the next day right outside the BAGLIONI HOTEL, the finest in FLORENCE and, during 1944-45, the NZ Forces leave centre. Our guide walked us to the PIAZZA VECCHIO and outside the famous PALAZZO we saw for the first time the statuary that we missed 40 years ago, as it was out of sight for safety purposes. The Square and the Cathedral were of course thronged with tourists but our guide did exceedingly well keeping us intact as a group, through the UFFIZI GALLERY and the MUSEO where the MICHELANGELO'S "DAVID" was viewed. That piece of work is, to say the least, breathtaking. It appears that our appreciation of Art and Artists in our younger days was a little sketchy as our visit to the SANTA CROCE CHURCH revealed the burial places of DANTE, MICHELANGELO and GALILEO, a fact that I personally did not take note of in 1944. The PONTE VECCHIO across the ARNO was still the same as were all the shops featuring very fine jewellery at very steep prices. Comments are often made that we in New Zealand shut up shop at the weekends to the detriment of our tourist trade. The same can also be said of most of Europe where we discovered, in FLORENCE anyway, that all but bars and food shops closed up tight at the stroke of 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. Most disappointing. Part of the morning was spent in a leather goods factory and shop, where the most exquisite work was on display. Some small items were within the price range of what we could afford but \$300 for a monogrammed handbag was a little beyond most of us. On the morning of our departure we were taken a short distance up a hillside south of the city where the view of the Cathedral, palaces and city squares was magnificent.

JACK McMILLAN

VENICE & TRIESTE:- This section of Scotty's report will be in our next issue.

DEFENCE POLICY HIJACKED

In March, 1985, the Editor of these newsletters was game enough, or misguided enough, to express considerable concern that the N.Z. Government had effectively scuttled the ANZUS PACT, for long the keystone of our country's security. I had reason to believe that the views expressed were those of the vast majority of World War 2 returned servicemen and that they were also the views of a substantial majority of the New Zealanders who were not involved in W.W.2. I have been made aware of only two dissenting opinions from readers of the newsletters and at least 10 times that number of the Association's members have gone out of their way to express wholehearted agreement. Nothing that has happened in the past year or so has caused me to change in any way the conclusion that I reached at that time - namely that, while New Zealand can justifiably criticise the defence policies of the United States and other countries, we must also remember who our friends are (or were) in this very unfriendly world and avoid overt acts that will injure and embarrass them, while doing nothing to further the cause of World peace.

Strong support for this point of view, from men whose opinions are entitled to respect, has been reported in the newspapers this month. The first comments reported were those of Defence and foreign policy expert FRANK CORNER, former Secretary of Foreign Affairs and N.Z. Ambassador to Washington, who chaired the Defence Committee of Inquiry recently set up by our Government:- "N.Z. will be left without allies if the Government proceeds with its anti-nuclear policy" - specifically the banning of nuclear-powered warships from N.Z. ports. Corner expressed astonishment that N.Z. had allowed itself to get into its present Defence situation without public debate - "its Defence policy has effectively been hijacked by a small group within the anti-nuclear movement, motivated largely by anti-Americanism". Because the preference of most New Zealanders for a continued Anzus relationship with the U.S. was precluded by the Government's anti-nuclear policy, the Defence Committee had studied the option of an enhanced Defence relationship with Australia - the "Hobson's choice". Some Government Ministers had said that this could easily be arranged at the official level but the Defence Committee had found that the difficulties were real and that all N.Z. was left with was its own efforts which, even with a great deal of money and energy, would probably be inadequate.

New Zealand was now in a position where it was offside with many countries - "if large numbers of Governments dislike you, is it going to spill over into trade, or isn't it? Especially when the going gets tough - and all for a gesture".

(continued on back page)

22nd Battalion Assn.,  
Box 13-058, Auckland 6.

December, 1986.

I enclose the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, being:- Sub.(s) to 28/2/87:- \$ \_\_\_\_\_;  
Advance Subs:- \$ \_\_\_\_\_; Donation (Welfare/General):- \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name (block letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Address:- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Branch Reunion (contd.)

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