

"Vrai et Fort"

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

Telephone 664-792
Secretary :
C. W. Randerson

BRANCH NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 13-058,
Onehunga,
Auckland, 6.
MARCH, 1989

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION (& AGM) - SUNDAY, 2ND APRIL, 1989.

As reported in our last issue, we did not hold our end-of-year get-together last year because it would have been too close to the date of the National Reunion at Alexandra Park and, in any case, those of us who were heavily involved in the organisation of the national gathering were very much in need of a spell. This year, we are back to normal, except that we are holding our Branch social on the first Sunday in April (April 2nd) because Easter falls in March and we could not organise it for any Sunday prior to Easter.

The AGM is not expected to last very long, so that the gathering will be almost entirely social in character. There will be a smorgasboard type of meal at a charge of \$11 per head, which will also be the admission charge. We do ask you to send pre-payments by mail, using the Reply Slip in this Newsletter, as the Treasurer much prefers not to have to handle any significant number of payments at the door. Your replies also give us the information we need for catering purposes. If you can't possibly be at the function, please send back the Reply slip any way, together with your subscription payments for the coming year, and any arrears (see Treasurer's report).

VENUE:

Grey Lynn Returned Services Club,
1 Francis Street, Grey LYnn.

TIMES:

Assemble at:-	11 a.m.
Luncheon at:-	1 p.m.
Close down:-	3 p.m.

VISITORS (your friends or relatives) will be most welcome.

THE COST:- \$11.00 per head (PLUS:- Subscription - \$5 per annum.)

Drinks from the Bar will be available throughout. Wine for lunch will also be on sale.

Numbers for catering:- We must have catering numbers in advance. PLEASE fill in the Reply Slip NOW and send it with your remittance to Box 13-058, Auckland, 6 by 29th March.

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION - 2ND APRIL - REPLIES PLEASE!

THE TREASURER REPORTS

Our financial statement for the year ended 29/2/89 is in course of preparation and will be presented on April 2nd. It seems likely to show that our income was only just sufficient to cover our only major expense:- the cost of typing, printing, folding, enveloping and posting our Newsletters. Subscriptions paid were well below our costs but the short-fall was covered by Bank interest and some generous donations from a number of our members. The low subscription income for the 1988/89 year was caused mainly by the fact that we did not send out subscription accounts during the year; the Treasurer was just too darned busy to get around to it and, of course, it costs money to send out accounts. As a result, less than half of our members are financial for the period ended 28/2/89. One thing needs to be made clear - we know that quite a few of our members are not particularly affluent, but those who can pay should do so. The continuation of these Newsletters depends on continuing financial support for the Branch. We are most grateful to all those members who don't wait for an account and to all those who send in donations.

ROLL OF HONOUR

41226	N. (NORMAN) AULD	Foxton	2/11/88
40733	E.J. BOLGER	Auckland	17/10/88
33849	C.W. (CAM) BUDD	Tauranga	27/2/89
270112	G.W. (GEORGE) CADE	Wellington	29/11/88
6304	M.J.T. (MURDOCH) FRASER	New Plymouth	13/11/88
6357	CLAUDE KELLY (JACK WEIR)	Taumarunui	31/12/88
599360	N.C. (NOEL) LEWIS	Wanganui	20/2/89
30323	I.E. LE MAY	Auckland	9/8/88
76602	ALBERT MCGREGOR	Auckland	3/11/88

It is sad to record the passing of these former members of the Battalion, including some very well-known personalities of the 22nd. Campbell Budd was a Crete Veteran; he had been ill for some time. George Cade had also been in poor health. Captain Murdoch Fraser was one of the originals but went on to 25 Battalion. Claude Kelly, better known in the Battalion as Jack Weir, was a real character, as the following eulogy, given at his funeral service, shows clearly. We made him a Life Member of Auckland Branch a good few years ago. There was a good muster of 22 at the funeral of Noel Lewis in Wanganui, including DOUG FROGGATT and MERV. ASHMAN, who went down from Tauranga. A number of us attended the funeral service of Albie McGregor, also a character in his own right.

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION - 2ND APRIL - REPLIES PLEASE!

CLAUDE KELLY

Claude was born at Ohakune on the 27th February 1914. His parents, John Philip Kelly and Marion Bathgate Weir, were in Ohakune because John was associated with the building of the Main Trunk Line. Claude went to school in Hamilton, by which time his father owned a sawmill. At 14 and a half, Claude got his first job - driving the sawdust truck, delivering bagged sawdust to the local farmers around Gordontown. As a young man, Claude took up boxing as a sport. In 1934 he was the runner-up middleweight for New Zealand.

In 1939 with 4s. 6d. in his pocket and only his best suit, he arrived in the West Coast and got a job as foreman of a sawmill at Whatoroa. When the 2nd World War broke out Claude tried to join the Air Force. He was rejected because he had lost part of his finger and thumb on his right hand in a sawmilling accident. They put him in the Home Guard instead. Each area had to supply a quota of men for the Army. On hearing that Wellington's quota was low, Claude caught the overnight ferry from Christchurch. The recruiting Sergeant was sceptical about whether Claude could fire a rifle and did not believe he was left-handed so threw a rifle at Claude to see if he would instinctively catch the rifle with his left hand. Claude surprised everyone by catching it with his left hand, and was then accepted into the Army. Because he had been put in the Home Guard in Christchurch, Claude - not wanting to be held up or prevented from enlisting - changed his name to Jack Weir. Jack, after his father and Weir after his mother, and also gave his birthplace as Australia and date of birth as 12 February 1912.

As Jack Weir, he joined the 22nd Battalion, which left N.Z. on the "Empress of Britain" initially for Egypt. While in the Indian Ocean the ship was diverted to England to help defend England during the Battle of Britain. Later Jack was sent to Egypt with an Advance Guard. On the ship from England to Egypt, Jack was given the choice of fighting the British Army's Light Heavyweight Champion, who had called the New Zealanders and Australians "Mug Colonials", or all of the 22nd Battalion. The choice Jack made was obvious. It was to be grudge match. Unaware of what an army "grudge match" was, Jack realised the rules were different when the referee left the ring after starting the match. The first hit staggered Jack, who had not known the champion was a southpaw, and it took him some time to recover. In the 5th round Jack knocked out the British Army champion. The members of the French Foreign Legion who were on the ship gave Jack a share of the money (over 84 pounds) that they had won from the bets they had made on the match, as well as pinching the Captain's dinner for him.

The first job Jack and his company were given when they arrived in Egypt was to guard the Officers Mess booze. It took 30 men 5 days to drink it all. Jack served in Greece, Crete, Syria and North Africa. In Greece Jack and two others escaped in a small fishing boat, travelling by night and hiding by day they took 14 days to reach Crete. Jack was a Bren carrier driver and often ran the cutter for the Colonel and when the carrier's ammunition had run out in a battle he would pick up wounded and men who had no ammo left. In one battle he picked up 30 men and got them out under fire. Jack had an excellent sense of direction which on occasion ensured he and others with him did not get captured. In the Official History of the 22nd Battalion, Jack was described as "a born bush-mechanic". Jack returned by hospital ship to New Zealand, Christmas 1942.

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CLAUDE KELLY (CONTD)

After being demobbed he was once again known as Claude Kelly. Having two names did have its advantages. For a while he received two war pensions and at Christmas he got two beers at the Taumarunui R.S.A. Claude was made a Life Member of the Auckland Branch of the 22nd Battalion.

For a while Claude worked as a sawdoctor for the Hutt Timber Company and then as a foreman or manager in several sawmills around the National Park area. Later in his life he owned his own sawmill at Wellsford. On retirement he and his wife, Pat, spent five years travelling around New Zealand in a caravan. They decided that Taumarunui was the ideal place for them to spend their retirement years. Claude found a small job looking after the pool and snooker tables for the Taumarunui Cosmopolitan Club, where he worked until two months ago. Claude was married twice. He and his second wife Pat were married 46 years. Claude had six children, seven grandchildren and 1 great granddaughter.

ARTHUR FONG - REFEREE

Arthur Fong of Greymouth had an outstanding career as a Rugby referee and was last year honoured by the N.Z. Referees Association. JIM WISHNOWSKY sent us the enclosed report from a Nelson newspaper:- "West Coast rugby stalwart, Arthur Fong, has been presented with a 50-year service medal by the N.Z. Referees' Association. The Association president, Mr. John Cormack, presented Mr. Fong with his medal. Mr. Fong has, over the years, held most posts in the association, including that of president in 1954. He took up refereeing in 1938, after a playing career which earned him representative honours. He refereed his first international in Rome in 1945, a match between British and South African servicemen, and controlled his last first-class fixture in 1956.

Mr. Fong, now in his 80th year, controlled junior games on the West Coast till 1986. In 1946, he refereed the All Blacks - Australia test at Carisbrook, in 1950 a British Isles v. All Blacks test and, over the years, a number of Ranfurly Shield fixtures. In accepting his service medal, Mr. Fong, a recipient of the MBE for his services to rugby and athletics, said it was a proud moment. 'I would like to say just how much I've enjoyed it and I hope you all get just as much pleasure. I have never regretted taking up the whistle'."

' MYSTERY' HERO - L/CPL. DAVID RUSSELL

(With acknowledgements to Terry McLean & the N.Z. Herald)

The strange silence which has clothed the feat of a soldier of the 2nd New Zealand Division in winning the George Cross was broken at the weekend reunion in Auckland of the 22nd Infantry Battalion.

Neither the battalion's history, nor official histories of the Division, carry a mention of the 1946 award, which in order of precedence ranks with the Victoria Cross. It was won by David Russell, a Scotsman in his 20s who had reached New Zealand via Australia a little time before the outbreak of the war. The award was a unique distinction in the Second NZEF.

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'MYSTERY' HERO - L/CPL DAVID RUSSELL
(CONTD)

In the minds of two of his great friends in the battalion, Alf Harbottle and Toby Pearce, is retained a memory of Russell's last dramatic few minutes. Having been taken prisoner-of-war at Alamein in July of 1942, Russell, an original member of the 22nd, used his time while on the run from Germans and Italians in Northern Italy to organise the return to Allied lines of Kiwi prisoners-of-war who rendezvoused on beaches whence they were transported to submarines which bore them to safety. He was picked up by the Fascists. For four days, they beat and tortured him while demanding the name of the Italian or Italians who had assisted him. Told that he was to be shot, Russell asked a favour. He calmly rolled a cigarette and was about at the end of it when the Fascists shot him. "What Dave and a great friend of his, Arch Scott (a retired lecturer from Ardmore Teachers College) did in organising the escapes was tremendously brave and tremendously risky," said Harbottle. "He had been in a bayonet charge in Crete. Afterwards, he used to say that if he could survive that, he must last out the war. "Sadly, an informer let him down. The odd thing was that when the War Crimes Tribunal held sessions on Italian atrocities, it was the evidence of a German sergeant-major which drew attention to Dave Russell's feat. "Afterwards, things hummed along at high official level until the decision was made to award him a posthumous George Cross. "Like so many good soldiers in the line, Dave out of it, was a hard case. The two of us went AWOL in Cape Town for five days on the way to England in 1940 and for seven days in the same city on the way back. "But, once in action he was a great fighter, cool and tough and brave." Oddly enough, despite the neglect of Russell by both his battalion and the New Zealand Division, he is warmly and proudly remembered in Napier, where he was working at the outbreak of war.

A NEW BOOK ON CRETE & LIBYAN CAMPAIGNS

Tony Whitlock writes from Melbourne:

Really old digs will be interested in a new book on the 1941 Greek and Libyan campaigns by a well known div IO, Geoffrey Cox, whom some will remember as editor of "Crete News", the only English-language paper ever published on Crete. He sailed from England in January 1941 with the Bn on the "Duchess of Bedford". Geoff Cox, who was a Rhodes Scholar from Otago and a war correspondent for Beaverbrook's Daily Express in Spain, Berlin, Finland and France before joining the division in England in 1940, was knighted in 1966 for his services to journalism, particularly his pioneering work in building up Independent Television News in Britain from 1956 to 1968. His other war books cover the Spanish and the Russo-Finnish wars and the advance on Trieste, re-issued several years ago as "The Race for Trieste", a great story of the Div's last battles. In his retirement he was chairman of an international TV news company and the all-news London radio station. At 78 he is still a director of the London Sunday Observer. He lives in Gloucestershire.

His latest book, "A Tale of Two Battles: A Personal Memoir of Crete and the Western Desert 1941", has appeared in Australia but friends say that it was not properly launched by the publishers, William Kimber, in New Zealand its natural market. Cox says in a letter that Kimber has since been taken over and the book is to be relaunched in New Zealand.

A point of particular interest to 22 Bn is the lower picture across the front cover, illustrating a little-known incident in the battalion's long history.

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION - 2ND APRIL - REPLIES PLEASE!

A NEW BOOK ON CRETE & LIBYAN CAMPAIGNS
 (CONT/D)

The picture is of a German tank crew surrendering to a 22 Bn patrol from, probably A Coy. The surprising thing is that the tank, though draped with a swastika flag and painted with the German black cross, is obviously a British Matilda. Here's the story of the picture: During the great flap at Corps around November 25, just a week after the 1941 Libyan campaign started, odd traffic headed east at high speed on the open desert south of 22 Bn, which was on the escarpment at Menastir, several miles west of Bardia. A few trucks stopped; most didn't. Colonel Andrew called out for me (I was sigs officer and with my old platoon) and said "You were a journalist. Got a fellow here in Australian uniform with a camera and a British truck who says he's a New Zealander. Looks pretty fishy to me. Might shoot him. Anyway, take a look".

I walked over, held out my hand, and said "Hullo George". It was George Silk, an Auckland friend of my skiing days. I had last seen him on September 1, 1939, when we were both covering the NZ Ski championships at Ruapehu (the winner, a Dr Frank, from Austria, was promptly interned when war broke out a couple of days later). George had then gone to Australia to join the Aust Dept of Information as a photographer. He had been covering the latest desert campaign because there was still a battalion of Aussies in Tobruk but before the breakthrough there, all hell had broken loose, corps was on the run back for the frontier and he'd been caught in the rout. Could he stay with us? George Silk became one of the war's great photographers and enjoyed being at the sharp end. As soon as the colonel had been persuaded to let him stay, he shot off with his cameras to one of the forward companies below the escarpment. Next day he told me how a captured Matilda with a Nazi flag had tried to tackle them. An A/tk 2pdr had fired 40 shots, hit it 30 times and with the last shot had jammed the turret. George had gone out with a 22 patrol which snuck up on immobile tank and found the crew sheltering behind it, looking the wrong way. George took several very good pictures, which fortunately found their way to the Imperial War Museum. Another picture in the Bn history, "Bringing in German wounded, November 1941," was probably taken at the same time. Some of his other pics in the campaign appear in "The Relief of Tobruk".

So, though it looks phony the picture of the 22 Bn's first captured enemy tank was genuine. The tank had probably been first captured during the disastrous Battleaxe attack in June. Later some Australian politician complained about the Government recruiting a New Zealand photographer when there were perfectly good Australians available, so George, fed up with such pettiness, joined Life and became one of their truly great photographers. I next saw him at the Dai Iti Hotel in Tokyo at the time of the Japanese surrender, in early September, 1945. I was working for the Sydney Morning Herald as a war correspondent by that stage, and had been flying over Japan in dive bomber raids with Royal Navy Avengers. George Silk had been flying with the American SuperForts and had persuaded them to replace the perspex in the nose of one with optical glass. He then flew all over Japan at a few hundred feet in the uneasy lull between the cease fire and the surrender. As a result Life was able to appear in the surrender week with a magnificent series of low level pictures of Japan as it was. Perhaps someone who was with A company in the November 1941 campaign can tell more of the story of one of the many little battles the battalion won in that campaign. Our first tank attack - and we won! Meantime, if you want to recapture the feel of those days when we were young and war was still an exciting adventure, then look out for Geoffrey Cox' book, "A Tale of Two Battles".

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Editor's footnote:

I remember the incident with the Matilda tank very well, as I was with A Company beside the main road at Menastir in the 1941 campaign. Our orders were to stop German traffic from using the main road linking Tobruk and Bardia and we did this most effectively with the help of the A/Tank and Vickers M.G. detachments between us and the escarpment. I can assure you that no enemy vehicle got past our positions. I would not have thought that an A. Coy. patrol took the tank crew prisoner but it could have been a patrol from 7 Platoon, which was about 100 yards closer to the Matilda tank and some additional German A.V.s behind it than we (9 Platoon) were. I recall that we buried a German officer whose staff car tried to get past us from the direction of Bardia and that other German vehicles and small convoys coming from the same direction also tried to get past but failed to do so.

BRANCH NEWS

JIM ALLEN has decided to wipe the dust of Auckland from his feet in favour of the delights (and sulphurous smells) of Rotorua, following the example of SCOTTY McMILLAN, who moved to Rotorua last year. We will miss Jim, who has been a most valuable member of our Branch Committee for some years. He and Scotty will now be able to organise a Rotorua sub-Branch.

GERRY FOWLER, New Plymouth is reported by Doug. Froggatt to be in good health, apart from a few aches and pains, which are mainly because "he still plays around with horses at 79". Gerry's cousin, TIM FOWLER (Gordon Couchman reports) has sold up and moved to Caloundra in Queensland. Tim's wife died of cancer about 6 years ago.

BARRY HOULAHAN, Tauranga and KEITH ELLIOTT, Wellington are reported to have been on the not so well list just lately.

KEEP THE NEWSLETTERS COMING

Thank you for the newsletter; the Roll of Honour was very poignant, though, so many familiar names this time. I saw in the paper that Pete Butler was in Whangarei hospital and sent him a "Get Well" card. This was not acknowledged and it now appears that he was in a very bad way. Brodie, Garmonsway, Sainsbury, Tom Hood and Gray Tennent were well known to me also, and to see their names on that page shows the passing years are taking their toll. I've had my troubles too, a Coronary, three Haemorrhages and a Cholestomy over the past 14 years have been my lot, with the "Old man's" op. looming up ahead! Still, I'm not too badly off, apart from a bit of Arthritis in the hands. I shook up the RSA pensions bloke when our means-tested incomes became taxable, and he replied "Not to worry, our donations would be tax free"! When I asked him how much he thought I could donate on a gross income of \$10,000 a year, the Assistant Secretary replied that there were so few of us that we weren't worth bothering about! Not quite what we expected when we were demobbed. The RSA let me down very badly in Rehab. days too, but that's another story. Keep the newsletters coming as long as you can Cedric, they are most appreciated and give us an idea how the other chaps are doing. Will close now with grateful thanks and best wishes.

RAY SLATER, RUSSELL

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION - 2ND APRIL - REPLIES PLEASE!

1990 NATIONAL REUNION - WELLINGTON

We remind you again that the next National Reunion, at which we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Battalion, will be held in Wellington from May 18 to 20, 1990, at Heretaunga, very close to where the 22nd was formed in 1940. Everyone on the national roll should have received Wellington Branch's first National Reunion circular last September. If you did not get a copy or have lost it, write to 22 Battalion Association, Box 14-386, Kilbirnie, Wellington. We were asked to send in T.F.S. contributions and/or the registration fee of \$10 per head. We were also asked to say whether we wished to book the accommodation available at the venue itself (Central Institute of Technology) at \$65 per person per day (including meals). Those wishing to book elsewhere were given a list of Motels near the venue and advised to make their bookings direct to a Motel, NOT through the Association.

At last report, Wellington Branch already had 115 registrations. BOYD GERRARD has taken over as National Secretary from CLARRIE CRAWSHAW, whose health is not the best following a stroke,

ON WITH THE DANCE

It was the night of Monday, May 7, and B Coy 22 NZ Inf Bn, were holding a dance in the beautiful ballroom of the Hotel Danieli, in Venice, partly as a celebration of the peace that day announced and partly as a farewell to Venice. They were due to leave the next day and rejoin the rest of the battalion at Trieste. The revelry was at its height when a lieutenant was astounded to see a party of six armed Germans, officers and OR's, march through the door. Immediately he pounced on them, and through one who spoke English, he learned that these six, plus a further 28 in a boat outside, had come from an island 48 miles away. For some days on the island they had been without news or instructions, and finally made the decision that they would proceed to Venice and see what was happening. Purely by coincidence they made for the Danieli, moored their boat in the canal, and walked straight into the hotel. How they passed the picquet is still a mystery. The party were duly handed over to the CMP, and the club had a welcome addition to its fleet of two pleasure cruise launches in the shape of one large Diesel motored scow.

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

March, 1989

Branch Social Function - 2nd April, 1989

I enclose the sum of \$ _____, being:-

(1) Entrance for _____ people at the Branch function at \$11 per head.

AND/OR (2) My current year's subscription (& Arrears/donation)

\$ _____
\$ _____
TOTAL \$ _____

NAME (Block letters):- _____

ADDRESS:- _____

(Please return by 29th March)