

"Vrai et Fort"

## ***22nd Battalion Association***

### **AUCKLAND BRANCH**

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#### **BATTLE OF CRETE - 1991 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR**

In the history of 22nd Battalion, the spirited defence of the island of Crete in 1941 against General KURT STUDENT's paratroops has a high ranking among the achievements of the Battalion and those of 2nd N.Z. Division as a whole and is so regarded by 22nd men who weren't there as well as by the surviving veterans of the battle. This makes the following information about the "Crete '91" tour next May, supplied by STAN JOHNSON, of general interest.

The Governments of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Greece are supporting the staging of what will be a memorable anniversary. From Britain, there will be two R.N. ships - details of Army & Veterans involvement not yet known; From Australia, the H.M.A.S. Perth, an Honour Guard, a Band and a very large group of veterans, their wives, partners and friends; From New Zealand, a frigate, an Honour Guard, a Band and the 70 veterans successful in the ballot for inclusion (travel costs paid) in the official N.Z. party. In addition, there will be two N.Z. tour parties, one led by JACK McLEOD and the other by JACK BAIN.

New Zealanders will also be welcome to join the 6th Australian Div. official Anniversary Tour. The tour operator is ALLSUN HOLIDAYS, an affiliate of Olympic Airways. This company has been most co-operative and competitive as regards the services provided and the costs involved, recently confirmed as under A.\$4,000. For details of this tour, N.Z. veterans of Crete and/or Greece should write to Allsun Holidays, 522 Marrickville Road, Dulwich Hill, N.S.W. 2203. The 6th Div. Tour Committee will be very pleased to have Kiwis in the party, making this tour a real Anzac one. Firm bookings for this tour are currently 200 plus.

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#### **THE MIDDLE EAST HAS NOT CHANGED**

The Crete Veterans Association has, at its headquarters, framed copies of the "CRETE NEWS", published on the island in May, 1941. This publication reported to its readers that "the situation in Iraq had deteriorated to such an extent that the RAF were flying into Baghdad to fly out English nationals to safety".

The C.V.A.'s Newsletter editor comments that, 50 years on, it seems to be a matter of SAME PLACE; SAME PROBLEM; DIFFERENT ACTORS. The editor complimented the RNZAF on its recent mercy missions in the same area. "Good to see they have the right equipment". I think that we will all echo that sentiment.

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ROLL OF HONOUR

31881	C.R. (RUSTY) CARSON	Palmerston North	10/4/90
41172	T. (TOM) SULLIVAN	Te Aroha	7/5/90
40934	W.S. (KAI) THOMSON	New Plymouth	31/5/90
655804	M.D. THORNTON	Te Kuiti	23/6/90
42313	J.L. (JACK) SULLIVAN	Wellington	9/7/90
76713	S.G. (SID) BUBB	Masterton	18/7/90
41167	S.I. SADLER	New Plymouth	5/8/90
	C.J.M. (BILL) HULTON	Auckland	11/8/90
6202	F.H. (FRANK) GREER	Hamilton	7/10/90
	P.E. )PHILLIP) McKEE	Whangarei	11/10/90

Once again, it is sad to have to report the passing of so many 22nd men since the last issue of this Newsletter, including such well-known Battalion personalities as "Rusty" Carson (at the age of 73), Tom & Jack Sullivan and "KAI" Thomson. Bill Hulton (81) was of the type who were excellent soldiers in action but inclined to tangle with authority when out of the line. Frank Greer (83) held the rank of Captain and was a staunch supporter of Auckland Branch until he was affected by failing health. Former All Black and Rugby administrator Jack Sullivan (75) was given a full write-up in the N.Z. Herald and, no doubt, in most N.Z. newspapers and his passing was also mourned by South African Rugby people, including that well-known and controversial personality, Dr. DANIE CRAVEN.

NATIONAL REUNION - WELLINGTON, MAY, 1990.

The 50th anniversary of the founding of the Battalion was well and truly celebrated from May 18th to 20th at what used to be Trentham Camp, in 1940 and for some years thereafter. The attendance was very good (over 500 I would say), including probably close on 300 former members of the Battalion. That muster was getting on for 50 per cent more than we had in Auckland for the 1988 National Reunion, when the tally was 356. The very satisfactory attendance was due, no doubt, to the Wellington location and the 50th anniversary aspect of the Reunion.

There has yet to be a National Reunion that did not have some shortcomings as well as many good points and this one was no exception. It was good to go back to Trentham, where the Battalion was formed and where we all did our preliminary training. The C.I.T. was an excellent venue in many ways, though not quite so good in others. The Reunion events were held in several buildings and the sign-posting (done by the Army) left something to be desired. I guess that we in Auckland were fortunate in that, for the last two Nationals held here (1976 and 1988), we had the facilities of Alexandra Park and were able to set up a central rallying area, where everyone could get together throughout the weekend for the informal chats and reminiscences that are such an enjoyable part of a National Reunion. It had fully adequate space, though it might have been a bit crowded if we had had 150 more people to cater for, and the Reception area, the Bar and other refreshment facilities were close at hand.

Having said that, we must give full credit to the Wellington Reunion Committee members, who had to cope with the large attendance, the inadequacies of the venue and the loss of key members of the Committee. Keith Elliott, who had played a central role on the organising and planning side, died about seven months before the Reunion and National Vice-President Jack Sullivan was put out of action by what proved to be a terminal illness. Add to this that National President MICK

**NATIONAL REUNION - WELLINGTON, MAY 1990**  
**(CONTINUED)**

KENNY had not been enjoying the best of health; in the circumstances, Mick did a splendid job, ably supported by National Secretary BOYD GERRARD and the other members of the Committee.

The least said about Wellington's weather, the better. The rain, especially on the Sunday, was unfortunate, but that is the luck of the draw.

Highlights:- The speaker at the Sunday memorial service, THADDY MCCARTHY, was excellent value, as he was at the Lower Hutt National Reunion of a few years ago and his address is printed in full in this issue. HADDON DONALD and NORM. CARTER both spoke very well at the Sunday luncheon and DAVID THORPE, the Battalion's only surviving Padre, did a fine job in the spot that KEITH ELLIOTT was to have occupied. There were at least 6 men present who came from overseas:- from Australia:- JACK GREEN, SNOW LEEKS, TONY WHITLOCK & BOB WOOD and, from the U.K.:- ROGER BARTON & TOM VALLIS. One of the problems that everyone had was to find, let alone have time to talk to, many of the people they particularly wanted to see. Quite a few people told me that it was not until the Reunion was nearly over that they sighted old friends who had been there throughout the weekend.

Meeting of Delegates:- The Branch delegates got together, in a rather remote hideaway, for the biennial meeting on the Saturday morning. We talked about the usual things:- future Reunions, the state of the Battalion funds and the L.W. Andrew, V.C. Bursary. The consensus was that National Reunions will continue to be held for as long as there is a demand for them and Branches willing and able to stage them. The 1992 National Reunion will be hosted by Manawatu Branch, in Palmerston North. The new National President is FREDDIE FIELD and the National Secretary is NITA MENHENNET. Good luck to them.

All in all, the 50th (Golden) Anniversary National Reunion was an enjoyable and memorable occasion and we congratulate Mick Kenny and the members of the Reunion Committee on a function that went off very well, despite the problems that they encountered.

**ADDRESS BY THE RT. HON. SIR THADDEUS MCCARTHY, K.B.E.**  
**AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION, MAY, 1990**

Over the fifty years which have run since the Battalion sailed on its odyssey of war in May 1940, you must have heard on times without number all that could reasonably have been said about World War II, our Battalion's part in it and the deficiencies of our Governments from time to time in keeping our defences sharp. It would be intolerable if I were now to inflict purely another regurgitation of that upon you.

Indeed, to me it seems that the only justification for my speaking today at all is that this is an opportunity - and perhaps for those of us for whom the bell tolls ominously, warning that our time is short - a last opportunity, to tell the world, those outside our own soldier groups, and especially the news media, why it is that we have come together in these reunions over the long years since 1945. And there is necessity for that still; far too often these gatherings have been misunderstood, even ridiculed as circuses of war-loving half-wits. Fortunately there has been of recent times a fresh understanding and appreciative



ADDRESS BY THE RT.HON. SIR THADDEUS MCCARTHY, K.B.E.  
AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION, MAY 1990 (CONTINUED)

covering of these assemblings and of our grand military history generally. You will be grateful I am sure for the interest revealed by the Wellington Newspapers in your Assembly and what it means to you.

Nevertheless there are still too many of our people who do not understand what this is all about. So this morning, disdaining oratory, I shall try to articulate simply those things which animate you and bring you here. And I shall be brief for long listening ill befits our years.

In the first place we meet to demonstrate our quiet pride that our generation of young men faced up to the great challenge of its years; and a special pride that we did so by serving in an infantry battalion whose record and standing was of the highest order among the vast collection of fighting units which the free world called together to meet what every right-thinking man saw as the forces of evil, hungry for world domination and determined on the destruction of our liberties and way of life, which let me remind you were not indigenous gifts from the soil of Aotearoa, but were part of our heritage from European civilization.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, we are here to pay our tribute to those who gave their lives in that brave stand, and whose bones now crumble in dry desert or moulder on Mediterranean rocky hillsides. We seek by this demonstration of continuing remembrance and pride in them, in what they stood for and in what they did, to help to keep alive in our countrymen, a recognition of their everlasting debt to those who fought and paid the price for their fifty years of plentitude and freedom.

Thirdly, we gather to maintain and refresh those friendships we formed in war. There is an indescribable quality about associations formed in an army unit or ship, formed out of shared dangers and need of mutual support and trust. Those who have not lived those experiences can never understand what it is that warms our hearts when we recall those days of endeavour, fear and friendships.

For me there is yet another reason why I parade today, and do so every Anzac day. I know that many others share the same motivation. It is this. In times of peace the debt owed to servicemen who have been on active service is readily forgotten or disregarded by most people, and all things military rejected as unnecessary and objectionable. Anzac Day becomes for most merely a feckless holiday. Doubtless forgetfulness has always been so. So we need not be surprised to find it happening here. But I do confess that I am angered, and I am sure you are too, by the scoffings and aspersions from time to time thrown on your reasons to do your bit, for our serving in those years. One can make excuses for and ignore such insults when thrown by semi-literates and the more irresponsible sections of our communities, but when they come, as they do not infrequently, from professional politicians or university people or writers whose enthusiasm to condemn outruns their understanding of what a battle is, in fact, like, most of whom have had their welfare supports and especially their expensive educations paid for or contributed to in substantial measure by the labours and enterprise of those who fought and returned to rebuild New Zealand, one's patience and control is sorely tested. There is no need for modesty here. Our generation, Gentlemen, did not do at all badly. It was the returned men who were the leaders in lifting this country's standard of living to the second highest in the world. I accept that New Zealand was then supplying a hungrier world than today and our produce found ready markets, but who can forget the energy and drive of our returned servicemen - yes we did well - compare the

ADDRESS BY THE RT.HON. SIR THADDEUS MCARTHY, K.B.E  
AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION, MAY 1990 (CONTINUED)

situation of New Zealand today when another generation is in control, our current unsolved turmoil in finance and economics, our race relations, our crime statistics, our appalling political chaos. You know how bad it is. Compare that with the fifties and sixties. Yet it is sometimes those very individuals who have enjoyed in greatest measure what our generation achieved who today imply that our young men mostly went to war in search of adventure, or to escape the restraints of marriage or life in a largely rural community. How quickly they have forgotten the ruthless invasions and threats to all free men from the heinous Nazi war machine, aided by the rapacious and cruel Japanese. I know it is not thought wise to remind people of those things today, but please do not expect us, our generation that suffered so horribly, to forget.

The great majority of the men I knew on active service did not leave the security of our homes and families, in many cases wives and children, to chase the false gods of thrills and glory. Even those who did were stimulated at the same time by a sense of duty to our country and our heritage from the western world, and pushed on by a determination to fight for our own freedoms. Would these critics have preferred that you had weakly submitted to the horrors of the Nazi gas chambers and the cruelties of fanatical Japanese - that we should have timidly laid ourselves down to servitude. Ask them that, next time they are clever about what you did.

Let me be not misunderstood. This is not to say that we pretend for a moment that war is glorious. Most of us loathe it bitterly, know it to be no substitute for reason, see it as the denial of civilisation. And we, too, search to put an end to armed struggle, and so we should for we have seen enough of it to know what it really is. But until we can be sure that man has changed his deep seated behavioural patterns and the inherent aggressive nature he has exhibited throughout his history, and that sufficient preventive mechanisms are at last in place, we have a duty to remind those who sit in high places and control our destinies that it is the strong man armed that keepeth his house.

So we continue to proclaim our pride today in the 22nd Battalion and, above all, we remember those we did not come back.

DAWN WAS THEIRS  
 AND SUNSET, AND THE COLOURS OF THE EARTH.  
 THEY HAD SEEN MOVEMENT, AND HEARD MUSIC; KNOWN  
 SLUMBER AND WAKING; LOVED, GONE PROUDLY FRIENDED.  
 FELT THE QUICK STIR OF WONDER: SAT ALONE: TOUCHED FLOWERS AND  
 FURS AND CHEEKS. (FOR THEM)  
 ALL THIS WAS ENDED.

And to these lovely words of the poet Rupert Brooke, the friend whom General Freyberg helped to bury on the Aegean island of Sycros short of the Dardanelles in 1915, let us declare our belief that our men did not die in vain and our hope and prayer that they now rest in peace.

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### JACK SULLIVAN

Before World War 2 broke out, Jack Sullivan's name was already a famous one in Rugby circles. He played for the Tukapa Club and represented Taranaki before coming into real prominence in the All Black team that did battle with the visiting Springbok team in 1937. He scored two brilliant tries in the second test at Christchurch and was one of the few New Zealand backs to emerge from the Eden Park 3rd test defeat with his reputation as a player unscathed. He usually played at centre or wing but preferred the position of 2nd five-eighths and my recollection is that he played in that position, outside CHARLIE SAXTON at half-back and TREVOR BERGHAN at 1st 5/8th, in the victorious 1938 All Black team that did much to erase the memory of that Eden Park debacle against the Springboks when it toured Australia the following season.

In the Middle East, Jack was an automatic choice for Army Rugby teams up to Divisional level and scored the only try of the match when 2nd N.Z. Div. defeated the South African Div. side just before the Libya, 1941 show. After that campaign, he played for the N.Z. Army team in a series of games in Cairo, Alexandria and Maadi. Jack was wounded in the leg at MINQAR QAIM in June, 1942, and, a few months later, injured his other leg in a game against the South Africans. These injuries unfortunately brought his playing career at top level to a close. The Battalion History records how much his team-mates in Battalion, Brigade & Divisional teams "missed the brilliance of Jack's play and the joy of seeing his defence-splitting runs".

After the war, Jack was an All Black selector (1956), went to South Africa as coach of the 1960 All Blacks and was chairman of the N.Z. Rugby Football Union from 1969 to 1977, a most unenviable position to hold during that period of mounting pressure and protest against sporting contacts with South Africa. It was at that time that the news media dubbed him the master of "no comment" but he was acting on the instructions of the N.Z.R.F.U.'s Council and there was really nothing else he could say when peppered with searching questions by reporters. The effects on him and on his wife and family of anonymous phone calls in that period can easily be imagined.

Jack Sullivan was dedicated to rugby as player and administrator and was equally dedicated to his family and to his work, starting with Caltex Oil as a tanker-driver and finishing as the company's top N.Z. executive. He will long be remembered for his superlative skills as a rugby player, for his major contributions to the sport as selector, coach and administrator and for his rise from a humble position to a top job in the business world.

### 1992 NATIONAL REUNION

Following the (grateful) acceptance last May by the biennial meeting of Delegates of Manawatu's bid to stage the 1992 National Reunion in Palmerston North, the Branch lost no time in getting itself organised and the first Reunion notice was sent out four months ago. I feel that this prompt action was due, in no small measure, to the fact that new National Secretary NITA MENHENNET is always very much on the ball. One of the first decisions made was to bring the 1992 Reunion forward to earlier in the year. It will be held on February 29/March 1st, when the weather should certainly be warmer than it is likely to be closer to Easter, 1992. We have also been assured that the venue will be large enough to seat everyone comfortably and food will be served at the tables, eliminating the need for queues.



### 1992 NATIONAL REUNION (CONTINUED)

T.F.S. books are ready and will be issued on request to Nita at 5 Plymouth Street, Palmerston North. A deposit of \$20.00 is required when you register but if you prefer not to register just yet, a payment of \$5.00 now will ensure that you get copies of the Branch Newsletters from here on.

Manawatu Branch President C.F.J. (Freddie) Field was elected as National President for the next two years at the Wellington Reunion. In June, the Levin RSA held a social gathering at which DON McKINNON of Palmerston North presented Mr. & Mrs. Field with a wall clock on behalf of the committee and members to mark Freddie's appointment as our National President. We wish Freddie, Nita and the other members of Manawatu's 1992 National Reunion Committee the very best. We know that they will do a fine job and we will look forward to a most successful and enjoyable Reunion a year from next February.

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### SALUTE TO THE FEW

There can be no question that the 1940 Battle of Britain saved the British Isles from invasion by German forces and saved the allied war effort from almost complete collapse. The "few" who fought that battle, including many New Zealand airmen, were therefore remembered with pride and thankfulness at the 50th Anniversary Parade in London on Saturday, September 15th and at the Service of Remembrance held in Westminster Abbey the following day. Twenty N.Z. veterans of the famous battle went to England to take part in the ceremonies, accompanied by about 40 serving RNZAF aircrew and ground crew. The veterans gathered at Buckingham Palace on September 15 for the parade and flypast and to be inspected by the Queen and also attended the Westminster Abbey Service on the Sunday. The RNZAF contingent represented their country with distinction and did honour to the 1940 veterans by parading as an armed flight and an escort for the RNZAF Queen's Colour, marching down the Mall to a position in front of the Palace for the flypast, inspection and march past.

Betty and I had an extra interest in the London ceremonies because one of our sons was there as a leader of the RNZAF contingent. He brought back video-tapes of the B.B.C.'s telecasts of the parade on the Saturday and of the Abbey Service on the Sunday. London turned on perfect weather for the big parade and the area around Buckingham Palace and the route followed by the marchers were lined by thongs of spectators. The British always do this kind of thing very well and the whole parade was impressive. The marching and drill were very good too, even though the Army was not involved, except for the presence of an Artillery Band. One of the highlights was the flypast by every type of military aircraft available (from 1940 up to the present day), with pride of place going to the Spitfires and Hurricanes that are still airworthy.

The telecast of the Westminster Abbey Thanksgiving Service was equally impressive. It was attended by probably the most distinguished assembly of notable personages that London has seen for quite some years. The address was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Runcie, who had this to say in his tribute to "The Few":- "We must not allow the stories which shaped the values and hopes of their generation to become threadbare or lose their potency. We shall always need such stories. Without them there is a drift into a moral vacuum easily filled by some ranter or by the cynical self-interest and opting for comfort which could push our country down a slope into a carping and unattractive meanness".

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ROMMEL V. AUCHINLECK

The men who took part in the 8th Army's Libya - 1941 campaign have always been puzzled as to the reasons for ERWIN ROMMEL's seemingly inexplicable decision to abandon the SIDI RESEGH battlefield to 8th Army's forward Infantry and Armour in order to lead his Afrika Korps in a dash towards the Egyptian frontier and the positions held by 5th N.Z. Brigade. In his controversial book "The Desert Generals", author CORRELLI BARNETT suggested an answer to this conundrum:-

The 8th Army commander, General Cunningham (who was suffering badly from overstrain) had been so upset by the hammering his armoured formations had received that he was ready to call off the battle and retreat into Egypt. Rommel intuitively sensed that 8th Army command was in disorder. Also, his Panzer Divisions were in poor shape and down to 100 tanks. Presumably, he decided that a dramatic Panzer attack on the 8th Army formations in the SIDI AZIS/frontier area would bring the whole battle to a prompt ending.

Unfortunately for this plan, General Auchinleck (C. in C., M.E.) had temporarily taken over command of 8th Army from Cunningham. The new commander sensed that Rommel's situation was as desperate as 8th Army's, due to battle losses and shortage of supplies. Auchinleck therefore gave orders for an all-out attack in the SIDI RESEGH/TOBRUK area, while Rommel's sortie was achieving nothing, except for the over-running of 5th Brigade H.Q., and B Coy., 22nd Battalion, at SIDI AZIZ. It would appear from all this that the outcome of military campaigns often depends on the intuition of the army commanders, rather than on the relative strengths of their forces.

FROM THE TREASURER

There was a very encouraging response to the appeal in our last issue for Branch members to send in their subscriptions and/or donations and we are most grateful to all those who responded, very generously in some cases. Ours is a voluntary organisation and payment of dues is therefore optional but we do expect/hope that everyone financially able to contribute will do so. The annual subscription is \$5.00 and many of our members make donations for general and welfare purposes. We prefer not to send out subscription accounts, a costly exercise in itself, but the continuation of these Newsletters depends on your financial support for the Branch. If you are one of the considerable number who have not recently sent in a payment or if you feel that you may be in arrears, please use the reply slip below.

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November, 1990

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I enclose the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, being subscriptions (1990/91, Arrears or Advance):-  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ and/or donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name & Address (Block letters):- \_\_\_\_\_