

"Vrai et Fort"

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

Telephone 523-1310

Secretary :

C. W. Randerson

BRANCH NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 26-314

Epsom,

Auckland, 3.

OCTOBER 1993

THANK YOU WANGANUI

Not for the first time, the Wanganui Branch of our Association has been kind enough to say (in writing) how much its members have appreciated receiving the Newsletters issued by Auckland Branch (we send them, in bulk, the requested number of copies of each issue and, in return, Wanganui Branch sends us regular contributions towards the cost of producing the newsletters). At the 48th AGM of Wanganui Branch on 20/5/93, it was moved J. MEIKLE: "That this Branch congratulate the Auckland Branch for its continuing excellence in producing its Newsletters. Their wide distribution has resulted in maintaining a healthy interest in the 22nd Association Branches. Particular praise should be given to the March 1993 Newsletter. No other issue in recent times has been so informative and the stories therein were in the "classic" category". Seconded J. FITCHETT and CARRIED.

The above Wanganui resolution and the many letters received from individual members of the Association are most gratefully received and make the time and effort put into producing the Newsletters well worth while. Please remember, though, that we have been able to keep the standard of the stories at a reasonably high and sometimes "excellent" level and to keep the Newsletters coming only because so many members of 22 have sent in material at a steady rate. The supply of stories and articles has recently shown some signs of drying up but, usually, something else comes along in time to fill the gap. A succession of editors has produced the Auckland Branch Newsletters over a period of at least 25 years and, during that time, there has been enough good to excellent material to make a fair-sized book. We in Auckland hoped that some of it would be used in the Association's 50th Anniversary publication but, except for one short piece, our stuff was rejected.

SOUTH ISLAND BRANCH IN RECESS

South Island members of the Association have operated a Branch down there, based in Christchurch, for a good many years and ran a successful National Reunion there when their numbers were a bit thicker on the ground than they have been more recently. Much of the organising over the years has been the responsibility of fellows like JACK CUMMINS and CYRIL WHITTY. Last May, a meeting was called to discuss whether the Branch could be continued in being and it was decided that, in view of the advancing years and general health of the members, the Branch should go into recess. Apart from Jack and Cyril, there were two others at the meeting:- ALAN JARMEY & IAN FERGUSON. There were apologies from: FRANK MUSSO, BILL GEORGE, COLIN FERGUSON, JOE AINGE, CLIFF SMITH & TONY CLARK. Sad to see the Branch "shut up shop" but not difficult to understand the reasons for it. Immediate Past President JACK CUMMINS will continue to act as a contact point for Association affairs. Address:- 19 Fortune Street, Mairhau, Christchurch.

ROLL OF HONOUR

270682	M.R.G. HOWES	Papatoetoe	28/11/92
41399	H.M. (HARTLEY) KIRSCHBERG	Rotorua	29/5/93
37376	B. PARKER	Rotorua	13/6/93
41165	C. ROYDHOUSE	Taupo	(?)
40386	D. (DON) McLEOD	Ngatea	21/6/93
241339	A.G. (TONY) CLARK	Christchurch	3/7/93
30542	L.A. (LLOYD) WILLIAMS	Auckland	22/7/93
43713	R.M. (BOB) MUDGWAY	Tauranga	10/8/93
6720	B. (BERNARD) KENDRICK	Auckland	11/8/93

Apart from TONY CLARK of Christchurch, who was well known to several of us in Auckland, all the men on the above list resided in our Branch area. LLOYD WILLIAMS, one of the original members of A Company in Trentham in 1940, was on our Branch Committee for some years and seldom, if ever, missed a Branch Reunion or other social function. Several years after the war, he was transferred from Wellington to Auckland by his firm, 20th Century Fox Films and he took on the job of organising and screening films for our children at the family gatherings we used to hold in Newmarket on Anzac Day afternoons. Lloyd and his wife Joyce and their family lived in Riddell Road, Glendowie. Members of our Branch Committee extend their deep sympathy to the widows and families of all the 22nd men who have passed away this year.

Cedric Randerson

NATIONAL REUNION - HASTINGS, FEBRUARY 12/13, 1994

Those planning to attend the National Reunion in Hastings next February should, by now, have booked their accommodation and registered their attendance with National Secretary BRIAN BROOKER. If you have not yet attended to these matters, we suggest that you get busy without further delay. As you know, accommodation bookings are our own responsibility.

To register your attendance at the Reunion functions (Saturday and/or Sunday), write to Brian Brooker at 2/403 Avenue Road West, Hastings.

THE ROBIN SINCLAIR STORY

One reaction to the story in our last issue of ROBIN SINCLAIR's dramatic escape from Greece after being severely wounded and taken prisoner in Crete was that of BILL LAWRENCE of Waikanae. Bill found Robin's story most interesting as he, too, was in Kokinia Hospital in Greece, which was the 5th Australian General Hospital until it was captured by the Germans. Bill says that all badly wounded were flown from Crete by the Germans and most cases were taken to Kokinia Hospital and the care of "those wonderful Aussie Medics". On Sunday, May 25, 1941, Bill was taken with others to Maleme Drome to be loaded into Junkers 52s en route to Greece. One of the planes had Red Cross markings but Bill was put into an ordinary transport plane behind the Red Cross one. At that stage, R.A.F. Blenheims strafed and bombed the Drome and made at least three sorties. The plane Bill was in was put out of action and the Red Cross plane was shattered and went on fire. "I have been asked more than once what happened to Lt. GEORGE SLADE and a chap by the name of Coppett and can only assume that they were in the Red Cross JU52".

CONFRONTATION IN TRIESTE **(With acknowledgement to Rotorua Daily Post)**

With the current conflict in what was once Yugoslavia, many New Zealand ex-soldiers are reminded of those days at the end of the Second World War when after the heady days of dashing up the Adriatic in pursuit of fleeing Germans we were confronted with what appeared to be a new enemy.

Our main objective was the lovely untouched city of Trieste but shortly before reaching that target we met with elements of Tito's Yugoslav partisans who had driven Hitler's armies from their own country. We were most impressed with these grim faced men and women soldiers, dressed in Russian-style uniforms but with Western style small arms.

SITUATION

On the political side the situation was that, after Germany's defeat, the Istrian Peninsula, where the peasantry were mainly Slovenian, would be taken from Italy and given to Yugoslavia. However, Trieste, which had a 90 per cent Italian population, would remain Italian territory as a token of Italy's coming in on the Allies side after the downfall of Mussolini.

This was one of the agreements made at the Yalta Conference. Apparently Tito did not intend to honour this part of the agreement as the untouched port of Trieste was a glittering prize of war, and intended to keep possession even to the extent of fighting his former Allies. Thus the 2NZEF after six years of battling one enemy found themselves the meat in the sandwich of another political row. As a member of A Company 22nd Battalion I found myself in a most comfortable little hotel on the day that Germany finally surrendered their forces in Italy (May 2nd).

RELUCTANT

The Tedeschi were giving up in their hundreds to our side being very reluctant to be taken prisoner by Yugoslav Partisans, where their reputation for treating captives somewhat unkindly had preceded them. One could hardly blame them we supposed after the harsh regime imposed on their country during the preceding years. Yugoslav troops were everywhere in the city, far outnumbering us.

One significant incident illustrating the gap which had developed between us and our former Allies took place the next day. On the hills above Trieste is a village called Villa Opicina where apparently a large force of Germans were holding out against the partisans and a message came to Major Jock Wells (a former All Black) in command of A Company 22nd Battalion to take a force up to the village and negotiate the surrender of the beleaguered garrison.

"A" Company with two Sherman tanks of 20th Armoured Regiment set out up the hill. The partisans were holding a road block halfway up, but rather surprisingly they allowed us through.

We reached the town where the Germans greeted us like long lost brothers obviously expecting us to get them back to mainland Italy and a reasonably comfortable life as prisoners of a benevolent democracy. We realised that the Yugoslav forces had other ideas. Major Wells was escorted into what appeared to be a vast cave and I as his "I" man accompanied him.

The cave was a makeshift hospital where many wounded were being tended by two doctors and half a dozen German nurses. The Naval Commander in charge greeted us and was about to discuss surrender when a message came that a white flagged emissary of the partisans had arrived and wished to speak to the New Zealand Officer.

On going outside we met a young unsmiling officer who informed us that his general wished to speak to us. Our little group consisted of Major Jock, myself and our jeep driver Leo Bolger and off we went following along this bizarre way of ending a bloody war. We negotiated another two roadblocks and travelled about a dozen miles behind our stern escort in his jeep. We eventually came to a rather splendid villa where hordes of partisans were milling about and surprisingly a sprinkling of British officers were also present.

Major Jock and I were taken inside and met a bevy of Yugoslav high ranking officers. To save a little embarrassment I, a private, was temporarily made a "tenente". British officers were the interpreters in what

CONFRONTATION IN TRIESTE (CONT/D)

was an interminable debate but resulted in, after many telephone conversations with our superiors in Trieste city, our being instructed to leave Villa Opicina and allow the Yugoslav authorities control of the doomed garrison. Back we were escorted to the village and cave to let our new "friends" know the bad news.

PLEADED

The Commander pleaded with us to take the nurses back as they were most concerned at the treatment likely to be met with at the hands of the partisans.

He also gave Major Jock his pearl handled Luger, the key to his Mercedes parked in a garage in the city and also the telephone number of his lady friend who resided in the city as well. Incidentally she turned out to be a rather charming Contessa. But that's another story.

This Kiwi contingent had then to leave the place. While our party was on its task, mortars were dropped on the village resulting in the death of Lance Corporal John Russell, 22nd Battalion's last casualty of the war.

We stayed in the city for several weeks while the powers that controlled our destinies talked and talked. There were times when, if the balloon finally did go up, we would have little chance of getting out as our former allies had each of our positions neatly boxed in with sundry armed elements.

However most of our memories of Trieste are very happy ones as the Italians, particularly the young ladies, took these rude foreign soldiers to their hearts realising that we were the ones who had driven out the hated Germans and were quite prepared to defend to the death their desire to remain Italian.

Eventually Trieste became a free city for some time in the forties and fifties but now it is 100 per cent Italian. New Zealanders are still highly regarded by the older Triestini as I discovered during a nostalgic visit in 1985.

JACK ("SCOTTY") McMILLAN

A CHAIN LETTER TO END ALL CHAIN LETTERS

"Dear Friend,

This letter was started by a woman like yourself in the hope of bringing relief to tired and discontented women. Unlike some chain letters, this one does not cost anything. Just send a copy to five of your friends, who are equally tired and discontented. Then bundle up your husband/boyfriend and send him to the woman whose name is at the top of the list and add your name at the bottom. When your name comes to the top you will receive 16,874 men and some of them are bound to be a hell of a lot better than the one you already have. Do not break the chain. One woman did so and got her husband back.

At this date, a friend of mine had already received 184 men. They buried her yesterday but it took 3 undertakers 36 hours to get the smile off her face.

We are counting on you.

Yours etc.

A LIBERATED WOMAN

LOOKING BACK - THE CRETE KIDS

A couple of years ago, one of our Branch members rang me to say that a Journalist friend of his had expressed considerable interest in our "CRETE KIDS" project of 20 to 30 years ago and was going to telephone me to obtain further details for inclusion in a newspaper article he was writing. I never received that phone call but I did dig back into our Branch records to refresh my own memory and to be in a position to answer questions. Back in 1962, a newspaper write-up about Crete and the poverty of most Cretans inspired us to look into the possibility of doing something to help, on however modest a scale. We felt that, by giving some kind of help, we could reinforce in a practical way the strong ties that already existed between the island of Crete and the islands of New Zealand.

After a good deal of research and careful thought, we (the Branch Committee) decided that the best way to go about things was to do some fund-raising among our members with a view to sponsoring one or more children from among the poorer families of the Maleme/Chania area of Crete through the world-wide Save The Children Fund. We would stipulate that the money was to be used to help pay for the secondary education of children whose parents could not afford that cost without financial help.

These proposals were given publicity in our Branch Newsletter and, from memory, they also received notice in the R.S.A. Review and in at least one daily newspaper. The response was dramatic; the donations flowed in and not only from members of 22nd Battalion Association but from members of other Unit Associations and members of the general public as well. There was never any fantastically large sum of money involved but we were usually able to sponsor two children at a time, from the age of 11, 12 or 13 until they left school. Starting in 1963, the project continued for about 12 years. The total sum paid out through the S.C.F. in that period was somewhere between \$1,500 and \$2,000. We received many, many donations through the mail and these were supplemented by that indefatigable collector, the late BARRY HOULAHAN of Tauranga, who rattled his "Crete Box" to good effect at every National Reunion during that period.

What of the response from Crete itself? The children were required by S.C.F. to send regular letters of thanks to their sponsors. These letters would have been written in Greek and then translated into English by someone with a reasonable command of our language. They were "duty" letters from teenagers but heart-warming none the less. Then, in 1971, IAN BURNETT of Wanganui (who was going to Crete with a tour party) offered to contact some of our Crete Kids, if he could find them, and bring back a report. Of the six children, Ian could find only the boy then being sponsored - IOANNIS KALIOTSAKIS. Ian visited Ioannis and his family and was given a tremendous reception. During the previous year, we had received a final letter of thanks from a girl named EVANGELIA, who had left school, married and moved to another village. The last paragraph of her letter read:- "God Bless you and give you back much more and keep you all in Good Health and happiness. My family and I will never forget what we owe you. May Good Lord largely reward you for your gentle feelings".

"I Salute you and I send you my tenderly kisses."

Evangelia.

By way of postscript, last year we reprinted an article that Scotty McMillan had written for the Rotorua Daily Post. It was an account of an incident that occurred when Scotty visited Crete with an ex-servicemen's tour in 1985 and a member of the party collapsed and eventually died from a heart attack. Scotty's story told how a young local doctor arrived on the scene and how the two of them did everything possible to revive the sick man with cardiac massage until it became clear that he was beyond help. When he was being thanked by Scotty, the young doctor told him that he owed his education to people from our part of the world. It was an intriguing thought that the young doctor could have been one of our Crete Kids

LOOKING BACK - THE CRETE KIDS (CONT/D)

but, unfortunately, Scotty was unable to find him again to pursue the matter further.
Cedric Randerson

THE SCUD & HITLER'S V-2

All veterans of World War 2 must have followed with interest the reports of the Gulf War against the forces of SADDAM HUSSEIN, especially those of us who served in the deserts of Egypt and Libya. The Gulf War was dominated by the use of missiles by both sides. The allied forces made extensive use of the American computer-guided Tomahawk cruise missile, as well as the Patriot Anti-missile, which largely neutralised the Scud missiles launched by the Iraqis against targets in Saudi Arabia and Israel. Versions of the Scud ballistic missile had been used in the Iraq-Iran war before Hussein endeavoured to cause trouble with it during the Gulf War.

An article in the N.Z. Herald at the time traced the origins of the Scud back to Hitler's "terror weapons" of World War 2. The Soviet-designed SS-1 Scud-B was developed with the aid of German scientists captured in 1945 and obviously owed its parentage to the V-2 rocket and its pre-decessor, the V-1 buzz-bomb. The article gave some interesting statistics of the use of the V-1 and the V-2 against London and Southern England. In the period of 9 months up to March 1945, 7840 V-1s were sent across the Channel. A/A guns and fighter planes shot down 4260 but the ones that got through killed 6,200 people and wounded nearly 18,000. Over the six months from September 1944, 1250 of the more-powerful V-2s were launched against England and killed 2754 people. Both the V-1 and the V-2 did a lot of damage and caused many civilian casualties but failed to produce the amount of terror expected of them by Hitler.

"A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TANK TROOP"

Fortunes or otherwise of No.10 Troop "C" Squadron 19th Armoured Regiment July 27th 1944, during the Division's advance on Florence, Central Italy. Notes from a gunner's diary, (embellishments accepted). Late afternoon 26th July found us laagered near the village of Montagnana. German gunners with evil intent endeavoured to ruin our evening meal - they succeeded.

27th July, Time 0230. Troop moved off towards the Pesa River, a few unpredictable miles ahead. First light, greeted with a spattering of bullets on the hull and turret accompanied by the familiar Brurp-Brurp of a Spandau. Returned the compliment with sweeping bursts of Browning, firing in the general direction.

Carried on down the winding metal road, no further hindrance, relatively easy going. Approaching Pesa River, still some 500 - 600 yards away, came upon a small stream spanned by a rather fragile in appearance Roman arch bridge. Lieutenant Ike Gibbs, troop commander called a halt, consulted driver Colin Farquharson, their considered opinion was, with luck and full throttle the tank would make a safe crossing - we didn't. Time: 0700.

Half way across a sudden and ominous lurch, the centre section collapsed; with motors roaring, the tank slithered along the bank for some 5 yards, finally coming to a sudden unscheduled stop, rolled onto its side, firmly wedged between the banks of the stream, the near side (driver's side) tracks and hull level with the top of the bank.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TANK TROOP (CONT/D)

The sliding, lurching, rolling action dislodged extra 75mm shells stacked under the gun and in company with several boxes of M G ammo literally flew in all directions with no particular preference who or what was in the way. Yours truly sitting or trying, to hang on to anything stable in the vicinity of the gunner's seat, wore a fair share of these projectiles and in the process lost some great patches of genuine Kiwi hide, collected a thump on the head in collision with the top of the turret, luckily well padded. It came as a surprise how unsecured items lying about in the turret of a Sherman tank can become objects of a definitely lethal nature in the confined space.

What to do!! Ike Gibbs made several appropriate but unprintable comments that cast doubt on the parenthood of Italian engineers in general and was particularly verbal in reference to builders of the bridge responsible for our predicament. Time: 0730. Out went a call to H.Q.

Short time later - a bulldozer appeared on the scene immediately started constructing a crossing some 30 feet downstream by pushing top soil and rubble into the stream. This operation and implications were not lost on lap gunner cum spare driver Ted Morgan who watched with alarm as the water level rose perilously close to his hatch opening, he was heard to observe with words to effect that if he was going to play submarines he should have joined the ruddy navy.

Disappeared down his hatchway obviously intent on gathering up treasures that tank drivers seem to accumulate and store in their compartment, preparing no doubt to abandon ship. Fortunately this emergency did not eventuate; before the water reached such a disastrous level, the two remaining mobile 10 troop tanks negotiated the temporary crossing compacting the fill sufficiently to release the dammed up stream.

Ike Gibbs had taken over the Corporal's tank and followed by Sergeant Doug (Poco) Robertson moved forward to support the infantry who seemed to be well pinned down some distance ahead. One tin helmeted Kiwi infantryman in passing peered down at what in his eyes must have been a most unusual sight and situation for a tank that was

supposed to be supporting him and his mates, "What-cha doing down there", he inquired, from the bowels of the tank came a laconic "Fishin". Further pleasantries were abruptly terminated by a sudden high pitched "Whee-oosh", a sound that sends a chill down the spine of tank crews friend or foe and signalled the arrival of high velocity A.P.

At this stage German gunners who appeared to have maintained the role of interested spectators took a hand in proceedings, a ranging shell burst a short distance to our rear, the next one fell some 100 yards in advance of our position, this bracket gave warning that something very unpleasant was in store.

The bulldozer driver, having accomplished the task of efficiently blocking the stream, parked the tractor with the motor still ticking over, 20 yards beyond the crossing then climbed down to survey the result of his handiwork, the sudden arrival of a brace of shells or heavy mortars gave wings to his feet as he took off, as fate would have it, in the direction of our partially submerged tank; the open turret hatch presented an inviting port in a storm and without hesitation he slithered in, the whole six Kiwi feet of him, tin hat and all, lay motionless on a heap of shells and ammo boxes for an immeasurable thirty seconds, looked at each one of us in turn, perched in various strange and exceedingly uncomfortable positions in the turret, gave a sheepish grin and promptly went to sleep. We learned later that this intrepid bully driver had been up all night right in the middle of things filling in holes in the road created by demolition charges or as a result of our tanks churning their way.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TANK TROOP (CONT/D)

As the morning progressed the level of shelling and mortar firing increased in intensity; Sgt Robertson's tank was hit on numerous occasions, including an A.P. that glanced off, the glow of the tracer clearly visible as it disappeared in the distance, perhaps to frighten seven bells out of some "B" Echelon.

A mortar exploded close by and Sgt Robertson with his head protruding out of turret received a nasty gash to the back of his neck, another direct hit, all periscopes shattered, driver either concussed or unsighted, attempted to move tank away from line of enemy fire, reversed tank, in doing so backed on to our tank in the stream. The screeching and grinding of steel tracks on the top side of our tank will never be forgotten by those cooped up inside. Sgt Robertson's driver regained a degree of control and drove forward up a roadside bank where the tank flipped on its side almost in the middle of the road. Sergeant Robertson evacuated - Time: 1030. Two of 10 Troop tanks out of action.

Lieutenant Gibbs pushed on towards the Pesa River. The concentration of fire put down by the German gunners, mortar and anti-tank crews was unbelievable, neither tanks nor infantry could make any substantial progress in the face of such devastating fire power. (It was possibly some of the heaviest opposition encountered during the entire Italian campaign).

Ike Gibbs and his crew took a tremendous pounding and managed to reach the Pesa River, but it was all to no avail, the tank ran over a mine and disabled. Time: early afternoon. All No. 10 troop now out of action.

TREASURER'S CORNER

I'm sure we don't need to apologise for asking for money each time we send out one of these Newsletters but a word of explanation will help any recent arrivals in our Branch district. We stopped sending out sub. accounts several years ago to keep costs down and because some of our members are more affluent than others. This disorganised way of obtaining subs. and/or donations from our Branch members and other recipients of the Newsletters seems to work and we are most grateful to everyone concerned for their continued and generous support, which makes it possible for us to go on producing, printing and sending out the Newsletters. During the past six months and a bit, we received remittances from a good number of people, many of them paying subs. for more than one year or sending a substantial donation. If you think a payment is due from you, please use the reply slip below. Cedric Randerson

22nd Battalion Association
Box 26-314
AUCKLAND 3

October, 1993

I enclose the sum of \$ _____, being my current sub. (\$5) and/or Donation.

Name & Address (Block Letters):- _____
