

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

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BRANCH NEWSLETTER

PO Box 26 314
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Auckland 3

NOVEMBER, 1996

THE BOYS OF THE OLD BRIGADE

"Where are the boys of the Old Brigade who fought with us side by side".

The question posed in that grand old British song is one that could well be asked now of the 22nd Battalion.

At our April meeting in Auckland it was remarked that our ranks were thinning quite rapidly and what an elderly group we now were.

"What would be the average age of those present?" someone asked. A quick survey disclosed that:

The eldest was 88 years 3 months.

The youngest was 72 years 3 months.

The average age was 77 years 8 months.

So yes! we are an aged group. And the mould in which we were cast is broken.

So Ladies! Please be gentle with us. We are irreplaceable.

Doug Froggatt

THE 22ND NZ BATTALION L.W. ANDREW VC BURSARY TRUST

As I'm sure you know, a Special 3-man Committee was appointed about two years ago to put into effect the decision of a meeting of Branch Delegates to establish the above Trust, the purpose being to perpetuate the awarding of Bursaries in the name of 22 Battalion and its first C.O. to students at Horowhenua College, Levin. During a period of 20 years up to 1994, these Bursaries were funded by means of regular contributions from the Battalion Association's Branches, a method of funding that obviously could not be continued indefinitely - hence the decision to establish a memorial Trust and to call upon those of us in a financial position to do so to donate to a Trust Fund. The goal is a Fund with a total Capital of \$8,000 to \$10,000, a target well within the capacity of an Association that still has more than 800 members.

We have all been concerned at the long delays that have occurred since the Special Committee was appointed in September 1994 but a variety of factors made delays inevitable. For example, it was necessary to have the Bursary Trust approved as a charitable trust for tax rebate purposes and this need caused problems in the drafting of the Trust Deed and in obtaining Inland Revenue approval, especially when the IR Department "lost" the file for some time. Other problems arose when one of the three Committee members was overseas for some months and when a second member suffered a heart attack last year. The good news is that all problems were eventually overcome and that, last May, our Association entered into a Trust Deed with the NZ Guardian

THE 22ND NZ BATTALION L.W. ANDREW VC BURSARY TRUST (CONT/D)

Trust Co Ltd and, further, that Inland Revenue has since approved the Bursary Trust as a Charitable Trust, entitling donors to a tax rebate on donations of \$5 and over.

The special meeting of Branch Delegates held in September 1994 ended a period of unseemly squabbling within our Association by confirming and endorsing the decision made at the biennial meeting of Branch delegates the previous February to establish the Bursary Trust. Support or non-support for this project is now a matter for individual decision and Doug Froggatt has drafted an Appeal for Donations circular letter that will be sent to everyone on the National Roll with the initial Notice of the National Reunion to be held in Rotorua in March 1998. I understand that Bursary donations totalling \$2,900 have already been received, not only from members but also from widows of members and including several \$50 donations and some of \$100 as well. I'm confident that there will be a great many comparatively small donations, ranging from \$10 upwards and perhaps averaging \$20 to \$25 each. Each of us has been given a chance to make a personal contribution, small or large, to a living memorial to 22 Battalion and everyone who served in it.

From here on, donations should be sent to National Treasurer J A (Aus) Riddell, 31 Montgomery Terrace, Palmerston North, who will issue the official receipts for tax purposes. Cheques should be made payable to 22nd Battalion Bursary Trust Fund.

Cedric Randerson

ROLL OF HONOUR

42491	T (TOM) BOLGER	Auckland	3/8/96
41589	W N CASSIDY	Whakatane	25/7/96
6779	G G FOXLEY	Whakatane	4/7/96
43939	R J ("CACTUS") GORE	Rotorua	27/3/96
263518	I W (IVAN) GREAVES	Tauranga	4/7/96
41282	N G HARRIS	Paihia	6/8/96
37084	R McK HAYDON	Rotorua	23/3/96
434310	R B S (ROY) LORIGAN	Cambridge	26/6/96
6917	K E (MAC) McLENNAN	Tauranga	6/9/96
5210	H D (DES) ORTON	Pukekohe	15/9/96
229770	F W (FRED) PINNY	Tauranga	30/6/96

The Auckland Branch Committee extends its deep sympathy to the widows and families of all former members of the 22nd who have died during the past few months; the very long list above makes sad reading and underlines the fact that the average age of our members is steadily rising. Of those whose names are on the present list, "Cactus" Gore had a most unusual nickname but nobody seems to know how he acquired it; perhaps he tended to become a little prickly when addressed by his given name of Raphaell. Probably the best-known of those on this list was Des Orton. He was originally in the 19th Battalion, was at OCTU at the time of Greece and Crete and joined the 22nd not long before Libya 1941. He was Platoon Commander of 8 Platoon, A Company, was later with B Company and then with the Carrier Platoon. Des and his wife Heather brought up a large family on their farm near Pukekohe and there are no fewer than 16 grandchildren.

Editor

COURAGEOUSLY FEARFUL

I can still recall, and quite vividly, those occasions during my years of service with the Battalion when I was scared half out of my wits and hugged Mother Earth with real ardour. Those were the times when enemy shells, bombs or what have you landed far too close for comfort. Thankfully, on such occasions the threat of danger to life and limb usually receded fairly quickly, enabling one to get on with the business of being a soldier, however limited one's abilities in that capacity might be.

I recall, too, that it was not the common practice for members of a Unit to discuss with each other things as deeply personal as fear and courage. For my part, I was conscious on these occasions of having let the side down a bit and was inclined to wonder (to myself only) if those nearest to me had been less petrified than me, more so, or about the same.

Like most of those who served in the 22nd and other NZ Battalions, I never had any ambition to be a soldier and became one only because I felt that it was my duty to enlist and for the duration and no longer. As I'm sure we all did, I thought a lot during the long months of waiting about what my reaction would be when I came under enemy fire for the first time and it was a big relief when the day came to find out that at least some of my apprehensive forebodings had been unwarranted - for example, it was surprising to discover just how much lead can be flying through the air without any of it hitting anyone.

The Brave & the Not So Brave:

The men who served in a front-line Unit in WW2 could be divided into three main categories:- the first group (a small one) would comprise the born soldiers, those who had made soldiering their career by joining the Regular Army and the winners of gallantry decorations, such as the VC, DSO, MC and MM. When double VC winner Charles Upham died two years ago at the age of 86, the "NZ Herald" quoted Jack Hinton VC as saying that Upham "had no fear; he was not afraid of the Germans". With due respect to Jack Hinton, I don't think any of us were afraid of the Germans. If you were going to be killed in action, the nationality of the enemy who pressed or squeezed the trigger would be of little consequence. What most of us were afraid of was death itself and it was this fear that placed us in a different category from those who were decorated for gallantry. Charles Upham was captured by the Germans in 1942 and, despite his strenuous efforts to escape, he spent the rest of the War as a P.O.W. As he had displayed extraordinary courage on at least two occasions not many months apart, it could be taken for granted that he would continue to display the same kind of heroism in subsequent actions, with little regard for his own safety. Would he, I wonder, have survived the War had he not become a P.O.W. ?

At the opposite end of the scale to the first group would be another smallish one of men who should never have been posted to a line Battalion. In this category were those who made a habit of going AWOL on the eve of battle and those who were liable to "do a runner" when the going got tough. This group would also include the very small number of soldiers who were afflicted by what used to be called Anxiety Neurosis, probably as a result of a previous encounter with heavy bombing or shelling, and were likely to go to pieces when the shooting started. These men included a few officers and NCOs as well as other ranks. After the first World War, we heard a lot about the men who were court-martialled for desertion and could be shot if found guilty but, in the more enlightened days of WW2, the penalties for desertion were considerably less drastic.

Solid Core:

In between these two extremes was the very large group to which most of us belonged, being the ~~civilians in uniform who overcame their natural fears and, in doing so, exhibited a special kind of~~ courage. They won no medals for conspicuous gallantry but formed the solid core of every front-line Unit. New Zealanders are rapid learners and adapt readily to unfamiliar tasks and

Solid Core (Cont/d)

experiences. Self-preservation was instinctive and we soon learned that the real name of the game was survival - for dead men don't win battles and the keeping of casualties as low as possible made sense from the Army commander's point of view as well as from ours. So, most of us remembered to keep our heads down when there was no reason to put them into the enemy's line of fire and we mastered the art of "fast-dropping" when we came under fire unexpectedly. Being able to drop from a vertical position to a horizontal one in a split second must have saved countless lives. Loyalty was another of the things that we did not talk about but, along the way, we learned the value of team-spirit (esprit de corps) and mutual support.

The following story appeared in a slightly abbreviated form (and without names) in a 1977 edition of this Newsletter. It is worth repeating here because it illustrates some of the things I have said in the above article:-

Sangro River Front, December 1943:

Having crossed the Sangro, 4th Brigade was endeavouring to outflank Orsogna by a left hook, the idea being to move past Guardiagrele to San Martino. The 22nd was still a Motor Battalion at that stage. 1 (or A) Company, supported by Div Cav and tanks, moved out in broad daylight past San Eusanio towards Guardiagrele, which dominated the surrounding countryside from the high ground to our left front. The road climbed a ridge and then turned to run straight and level for nearly half a mile before reaching the comparative shelter of a low ridge on the enemy's side of the road. The catch was that the level stretch of road was in full view of the German gunners, who, like those at Cassino, knew the range to a centimetre and shelled any vehicle of ours that came into view. I was a section sergeant with responsibility for two Vickers guns and their crews. I travelled in the cab of the first of 6 Platoon's trucks and my driver was Len Astwood, the brother-in-law of Lincoln (Lin) Thomas, who was then No 6 Platoon Sergeant. Len Astwood was a delightful young fellow who had joined the Battalion fairly recently. It would have been impossible not to like him. Before we set out that morning, I told him what to expect and gave him firm instructions that, as soon as we reached that exposed piece of road, he was to put his foot hard down on the accelerator and keep it there until we were out of sight of the enemy's gunners. "What happens if we get hit?" asked Len. "You just keep on going" I replied. We duly reached the straight stretch of road but seemed to be travelling along it at a fairly moderate speed. The German guns opened up as soon as we appeared. The shells were passing overhead or landing behind us but far closer than I thought was desirable. Our truck was moving far too slowly but I was sure Len was doing his best to get past the danger zone - perhaps the flaming thing just wouldn't go any faster! In any case, it was up to me to set a good example by keeping calm, so I didn't utter a word. As we reached the shelter of the low ridge and I was heaving a prodigious sigh of relief, Len asked me this question in all seriousness:- "Tell me, Sarge", he said:- "when do we get to this dangerous stretch of road?" It was so comical that I almost collapsed with laughter.

Later in the Italian campaign, Len Astwood was promoted to L/Cpl, but sadly, he was killed in action in September, 1944.

Cedric Randerson

NATIONAL REUNION - ROTORUA, MARCH 1998:-

1998 is still some way off but it's not too soon for you to think about visiting Rotorua in 16 months from now. One of our vice-presidents - Jack (Scotty) McMillan, Rotorua - set up the nucleus of the 1998 National Reunion Committee earlier this year and this embryo Committee has already fixed, among other things, the dates in 1998:- from Monday, 16/3/98 to Wednesday, 18/3/98. The other Committee members so far recruited are:- Jack Anderson - President, Rotorua RSA and ex 22 Battalion in Japan; Keith Redmayne - Italy & Japan; Roly Rolston - ex Army & Secretary, Rotorua RSA; Doug Froggatt, Tauranga - our Branch Patron.

JOTTINGS ABOUT MEMBERS

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:-

Since the last issue of this Newsletter, the names of no fewer than three former members of 22 Battalion have been added to our Branch Roll for the first time. They are:-

J C (JACK) ANDERSON, 38 Russell Crescent, Rotorua
 A N (NEVILLE) WARWICK, 78 Aberdeen Road, Castor Bay (Phone 410 6047)
 M H C (BILL) LEES, 58 Pulham Road, Warkworth (Phone (09) 425 9983)

Jack Anderson is the President of the Rotorua RSA and is also a key member of our Association's 1998 National Reunion Committee, convened by J G (Scotty) McMillan.

Neville Warwick was in B Company of the Battalion. His name and address were passed on to us by John Senior, Torbay and Neville in his turn has put us in touch with Bill Lees.

TRANSFER TO AUCKLAND:-

A W (ROBBY) ROBERTS (1 Company) has spent most of the post-War years in Kerikeri but has just recently moved to Auckland, where his address is:- 50A Arundel Street, Hillsborough.

EDWARD KENNY, QSM:-

There was genuine puzzlement among sporting experts when it was announced in the Queen's Birthday honours last June that Edward Henry William Kenny had been awarded the QSM and added that he was "one of the first Maori players to represent New Zealand against South Africa at rugby and cricket". Rapid enquiries and phone calls by Sports journalists soon revealed that E H W Kenny was none other than MICK KENNY, formerly of 22 Battalion, whose life came close to being ended in December 1944, when a burst of fire from a German machine gun almost ripped him apart. As many of us remember, this happened only hours after he had played a vital part in the 22 Battalion team's victory in the inter-unit competition for the Freyberg Cup and it seemed to be highly unlikely that he would ever play rugby again. It speaks volumes for Mick's courage and determination that he fought his way back to fitness and made such a remarkable recovery that, after the War, he represented Wellington and was a member of the NZ Maori team of 1948/49, playing against Fiji in New Zealand and on tour in Australia. For 20 years after his playing career ended, he coached and selected Maori rugby sides in Wellington, one writer describing him as a father-figure for Maori rugby.

Going back to the reference to Mick having represented New Zealand against South Africa, this was of course in North Africa when the 8th Army included a South African Division as well as our own 2nd NZ Division. Despite the demands of the desert campaign, it was somehow arranged that a team of close to All Black calibre would play the "Springboks" at rugby and, though scarcely any of us were allowed to see that game, there was great rejoicing when we heard that our team had won 8-Nil. Later, Mick was also selected in a New Zealand Army cricket side that defeated a South African side at Gezira, Mick taking 6 wickets for 24.

Mick Kenny has been described as one of the unlucky players whose best rugby years coincided with their years of war service. Mick was named in 1937 as one of the five promising rugby players of the year. In Italy, with the end of the war close at hand, the inter-unit rugby contest had sorted out the players who seemed most likely to be members of the planned tour of Britain by the 2 NZEF side that became the fabled Kiwis. Mick was the ranking fullback and was regarded as a certainty for the tour. It was a sad day when that machine gun burst ended his tour prospects and almost ended his life.

Editor

"ESCAPE! ESCAPE! SHE CRIED

(Concluding Pat Kennedy's story of his escape from an Italian P O W Camp in September, 1943 and his success in evading recapture during the rest of the war in Italy)

THEY HAD ME COVERED WITH THEIR TOMMY GUNS - -

"Come down here with your hands up", said one. I went down to the one who gave the order and realised that he was a partisan leader with his red scarf and two stars on his ski cap. After I told him I was English he asked for my identity. Now it was hard to convince some of these people that I was not Italian and Les a German, Les being blonde and me dark. So we decided that we would always wear our battle dresses except when scrounging for food. I opened my battle dress tunic and showed him my identity disc. Immediately they both relaxed. To his companion one of them said, "What a fine specimen of a man! Young, handsome and most likely has not had a woman for years".

"BRAVO, BRAVO":

His companion laughed and I smiled. "You understand me?" he asked and I nodded. Then came the inevitable question. "Why do you not join the partisans?" For reply I called Les to come down. "Oh, you are the two English who are supposed to have been captured by the Germans". He thought this was a great joke. Meanwhile Les had arrived by my side. One look at him and the partisan leader knew why I could not leave him and join the partisans. Les must be over seventy years old now.

"Bravo, Bravo", he said. "Watch out always and may good luck guide you". With that they were off again. The partisan raids were getting more numerous now and so were the rastralementos. We had many further scares that the Germans were combing the mountains. Meanwhile we had found a more comfortable cave beside the creek. This was a natural cave and one could stand in it and it held about five persons. One morning we heard heavy tommy gun fire over the next range and we made for cover but not actually going into the cave. It was then that I saw Butchet the farmer further along making some queer movements, stamping his feet and rubbing his nose with his open hand.

A GERMAN PATROL

Suddenly I realised that he was warning me that the Germans were alongside him. "Quick, hide", I whispered to Les, and not before time. A patrol of about 30 soldiers came down the ridge of the stream and passed by our hut but did not enter it. They had questioned Butchet if he had seen any partisans in the neighbourhood. Luck was again on our side. Two months later Batista called and informed us that partisans had taken over Biella. The Germans were moving out.

The Americans had entered Milano and were now proceeding to Torino. We went down to Sant Eurosia and celebrated for three days with the people who had helped us. The other four had gone down to Andorno and celebrated with the people who had helped them and then met us at Sant Eurosia. Les and I then went to Batista's house at Pralunga. Lucia was there and so was her sister Maria. This was the first time that Les and I had met Maria. She was a real beauty and sexy too and kept making passes at me. This was embarrassing for both Lucia and me.

LUCIA WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN

After an hour or so of chatting Batista said it was time to go. Our final parting had come. When I looked for Lucia she was nowhere to be seen and Batista would not say anything about where she had gone but I surmised that she was somewhere crying. Maybe it was for the best, this way of parting. The carnival is over. We arrived at Biella at dusk and were taken to a hotel to stay.

"ESCAPE! ESCAPE! SHE CRIED (CONT/D)

LOOKING IMPORTANT

The British major was there looking important with all his hangers on. Like us, his main aim was to keep away from danger until the war ended. It was good having our first hot shower for years, and strange sleeping between sheets in a bed again. The six of us cadged a ride in an American truck and made for the American Headquarters in Torino. From there we went to Naples via the Leaning Tower of Pisa, then to England for three months and finally back to New Zealand. On returning to New Zealand I was purchasing my civilian clothes in Wellington when I took a felt hat to try on for size. Branded inside was "Made in Andorno, Italy". Most likely by Ernesto's father in the felt factory where he worked. This is certainly a small world in the vast Universe of Space and we are only insignificant blots in it.

NO INDISPENSABLE MAN

I would like to end this story with a poem taken from the journal of the Tasmanian P.S.A. and reproduced in the NZ Public Service Journal.

Some time when you're feeling important,
Some time, when your ego's in bloom.
Some time, when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room,
Some time, when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just try this simple instruction
And see how it humbles the soul.
Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to the wrist,
Pull it out and the hole that is remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.
You may splash all you please when you enter,
You can stir up the water galore,
But stop, and you'll find in a minute
That it looks quite the same as before.
The moral of this quaint example
Is to do just the best that you can,
Be proud of yourself, but remember -
There is no Indispensible Man!

Editor's Footnote:- Pat Kennedy's story of his experiences on the run after escaping from a North Italian P.O.W. camp was first printed in POW-WOW Magazine in 1961. About 2 years ago, Pat gave us permission to reprint his story in our Newsletter, which we have done by instalments, the above being the final one. Pat made his escape from the camp near the village of Gruppiano when Italy capitulated in September, 1943. During the following 18 months, he played a dangerous cat and mouse game with German and Fascist troops during their numerous "RASTRALEMENTOS" for partisans and escapees. His adventures took him right into the heart of the peasant countryside of Northern Italy and his story has recalled many heart-warming incidents of his life in that period.

POSTSCRIPT:- I had a letter from Pat Kennedy last month - to let me know that, he was back in New Zealand after his annual six months' sojourn in the tropics, on Vavau Island (Tonga). Over there, Pat occupies a 2 bedroom bungalow, with electricity, gas, water, frig, etc that is available for rent when he's not using it (from November to April). Anyone interested can contact Pat at 172A Ruahine Street, Palmerston North - Phone (06) 358 4417. Editor

INCIDENT AT EL ADEM

R T (RAY) SALTER of Brind Road, Russell, whose Army number was 6818, sent me the following piece about the period in February 1942 when 22 Battalion went back into Libya some weeks after the 1941 campaign had ended.

"I remember an incident at El Adem in February 1942 that may amuse some of the fellows who were there, and perhaps those that weren't for that matter. 3rd & 4th Brigades had gone back to Maadi and we were sent to El Adem to guard a supply dump and gain a bit more desert time to make up for the time we spent in the UK. We had just got out of the trucks and could see the "drome in the distance piled with wrecked aircraft, with a wadi behind us where we set up shop later. I could see something gleaming in the stones nearby and found a pair of Jerry flare cartridges. They were different from ours in that in addition to releasing a star they also released a big streamer of smoke the same colour as the star, and this was forced out through a small aperture giving a loud whistle falling in pitch which sounded like an incoming shell. I set one off by thumping it on a sharp stone and was rewarded with a purple star, a lot of purple smoke and the afore-mentioned whistle. Hugely pleased I looked around and there wasn't a soul to be seen so I resisted the temptation to laugh and removed myself from the scene! I often wondered about the dialogue that must have taken place after they regained their composure.

One other gem; we were strafed at dawn by a couple of fighters and looking out of my dugout to see what all the excitement was about. I was rewarded with the sight of Pat Harford making great speed along the bottom of the wadi clad in only a singlet. Later on he came hobbling back and told me he hadn't felt a single stone on his way out but they were only too apparent on the way back!"

A WORD FROM THE TREASURER

For the information of ex-members of 22 Battalion who have only recently moved into our Branch district, it is necessary to explain why we ask for money each time we send out one of these Newsletters. To keep costs down and because some of our members are more affluent than others, we stopped sending out sub accounts several years ago. We have also kept our official annual sub down to \$5, even though it needs to be at least twice that much. This highly inefficient way of obtaining subs and/or donations from our Branch members and other recipients of these Newsletters works surprisingly well 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 mailing these Newsletters. The response to our March issue was excellent, as always but we still need to hear from quite a few people this year. If you know that a payment is due from you, please use the reply slip below.

Cedric Randerson

22nd Battalion Association
Box 26-314
AUCKLAND 3

November 1996

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

Name & Address (Block Letters):- _____

Army No: _____