

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

Telephone 523 1310

Secretary :

C. W. Randerson

BRANCH NEWSLETTER

PO Box 26 314

Epsom

Auckland 3

APRIL, 2002

BRANCH SOCIAL & AGM – SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2002

IS THE END IN SIGHT? Since our Branch held its most recent social gathering, on November 25, 2001, we in Auckland have been asking ourselves if the time is approaching when the Branch's affairs will have to be wound up, due to dwindling numbers and the effects of ageing on those of us who are still in the land of the living. Our luncheon at the Grey Lynn RSC in November was very enjoyable but we were very conscious of the decline in numbers and of the absence of a number of people whose attendance used to be as regular as clockwork. We are conscious, too, of the fact that while **AGE** may not yet have wearied us altogether, the years have certainly taken their toll and it has become increasingly difficult to make the effort necessary to keep the Branch afloat. The upshot of these deliberations is that it has been decided that, unless some keen replacements are available for Committee Membership, the end of our Branch as a viable entity may well be close at hand. It will, therefore be moved at the Branch AGM in April that the Branch Committee be instructed to consider winding up the affairs of the Branch at an early date and that, if and when a decision is made to do so, the Branch funds remaining after winding up be donated to the 22nd Battalion LW Andrew, VC Bursary Fund. If, of course, the motion is defeated, the Branch will continue in being until further notice. Your votes, whether at the AGM or by mail, will indicate which decision is the right one.

Regardless of the outcome of the proposed motion, we are now in a new financial year (see Treasurer's report – back page) and, as always, we need **advance replies and prepayments** of meal charges plus subs/donations. **Please use the reply slip** on Page 8 to send in your reply as promptly as possible.

VENUE:

Grey Lynn Returned Services Club

1 Francis Street

Grey Lynn

TIMES:

Assemble at:

11 am (promptly)

Luncheon:

To start between Noon & 1pm

Close down:

3 pm

VISITORS: Your friends and/or family members will, as always, be most welcome.

THE COST: \$15 per head (plus Subscription and/or Donation).

BAR: Drinks will be on sale throughout.

PLEASE FILL IN THE REPLY SLIP NOW and send it with your remittance
in time to reach the Treasurer by **Monday, 22/4/2002**

ROLL OF HONOUR

639149	GL ADAM	Palmerston North	6/12/01
396056	HG BOWYER	Wanganui	23/12/01
649645	CA BUNKER	Whangarei	1/10/01
459663	EA CAMERON	Christchurch	4/9/01
296753	MP CONDON	Wanganui	21/11/01
633965	WJ CORNWALL	Hawera	19/10/01
30086	CW DONOVAN	Hamilton	22/9/01
650713	TG EVANS	Palmerston North	15/4/01
446183	WO EVANS	Te Awamutu	11/10/01
41568	JA FERGUSON	Lower Hutt	15/7/01
46446	JRB GREENSTREET	Levin	22/4/01
5326	JF HINE	Stratford	10/8/01
444514	BC INNES	Hastings	30/10/01
652859	TB KINGSFORD	Lower Hutt	31/12/01
11357	(SIR) WM MANCHESTER	Auckland	25/12/01
45946	KE MARTIN	Matamata	12/2/02
40920	I MUNRO	Te Awamutu	2/2/02
44311	R MUNRO	New Plymouth	2/10/01
33760	JR OLIVER	Hastings	29/1/01
437060	BS PATTON	Kerikeri	23/8/01
654267	RA QUAY	Wellington	17/1/02
32786	NJ RETTER	Shannon	12/1/01
449996	J SARGISON	Shannon	7/4/01
44825	LC SUTHERLEY	Taupo	1/12/01
4113	RB SINCLAIR	Palmerston North	10/10/01
30048	LC STAINES	Wanganui	23/7/01
631205	RC TASKER	Wanganui	27/7/01
538722	JS WATT	Feilding	21/10/01
826281	KO WISHART	Auckland	16/1/01
31127	JS WITHERS	Wellington	7/12/01

As has been our practice for some years, the above list was compiled mainly from the "Last Post" advice sheets circulated to the Association's Branches by JOHN BOWKER, Keeper of the National Roll and we publish it subject to the usual proviso that some errors and omissions are inevitable. Of those included in this list, only 9 had been living in the Auckland Branch area (from North Cape to the King Country) and not all of the 9 were on our Branch Roll as dues-paying members. The President and Committee members of Auckland Branch extend their deep sympathy to the families of all former members of the Battalion who have passed away since the last issue of this Newsletter.

Probably the most distinguished of all the New Zealanders who served with the 2NZEF in World War 2 was Sir William M Manchester, MB, CHB, FRCS, FACS, KBE. He was the Battalion's first MO and those of us who joined the 22nd after he had been promoted elsewhere were given to understand that he acquired the nickname of "BUTCH" as an Army-style tribute to his outstanding skill as a plastic surgeon. A eulogy published in the New Zealand Herald described him as a "father figure of plastic surgery and a world authority on reconstructive surgery

ROLL OF HONOUR (Continued)

for conditions of the palate and cleft lip". After the war, during which he reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he converted his 30-bed military unit at Burwood into a 60-bed civilian hospital.

In 1960, Sir William was appointed first plastic surgeon to the Auckland Hospital Board and set up the plastic surgical unit at Middlemore Hospital, where he worked until his retirement. In 1977, he was appointed first Professor of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Auckland University and, in 1987, he was knighted for his services to medicine. A surgeon colleague of Sir William has said of him that he "had made a profound contribution to surgery in New Zealand and that his skill and judgement in the operating theatre was legendary".

A HEALING OF OLD WOUNDS

Several months ago, DOUG FROGGATT sent me a copy of an article that had appeared in THE INDEPENDENT, a Business Weekly published by Pauanui Publishing Ltd of Auckland. The article was one written by MIKE HUTCHESON, whose father, the late Major KEITH HUTCHESON, was wounded at Rimini in September 1944, was invalided home and died in 1956. Mike Hutcheson is managing director of Saatchi & Saatchi, the well-known advertising agents. We feel that we are justified in giving you a few excerpts from Mike's article, as it quotes extensively from Jim Henderson's Official History of 22 Battalion.

In 1999, Mike Hutcheson read (on the Internet) an article by an Italian historian on the battle of the Gothic Line and the liberation of Rimini in 1944, including a reference to the fact that, on the night of 21 September 1944, Major Hutcheson of 22 Battalion (he was OC2 Company at the time) had camped with his men on the banks of the Turchetta Stream!! This was more, commented Mike, than I had ever learned about my father Keith's war experience. He died when I was very young and, like most citizen-soldiers who saw real action, had been taciturn about it. The newspaper reference was enough to spur Keith's son to visit the places where Keith had spent his last days as a well man. Three days after crossing the Turchetta, Keith was severely wounded by a German mortar shell, near the banks of another stream, Rio Fontah Accia. Mike Hutcheson and his wife duly visited the Rimini area and thanks to the contact Mike had made with the Italian historian, Amedeo Montemaggi, they were able to meet the Mayor, among others. "Despite the fact that our troops helped flatten the place during the war, we were made very welcome. They genuinely want more contact with Kiwis".

GOTHIC LINE OFFENSIVE: This offensive has been historically overshadowed by the D-Day invasion of Normandy in June that year, but was one of the biggest battles fought during the entire North African or Italian campaigns. More munitions were used and more artillery rounds fired than at either Monte Cassino or El Alamein.

The Germans has retired to this defensive line after the fall of Rome on 4 June 1944. It comprised a heavily fortified belt of minefields and gun emplacements some 16 km deep, extending from Italy's west coast to the Adriatic Sea near Rimini on the east.

It was one of the crucial battles of the entire war, launched with the aim of destroying the German Army in Italy and bringing the Allies into the Balkans before the Red Army arrived.

Unfortunately for the future of Yugoslavia, a combination of fierce German resistance and ~~less-than-ideal co-operation in the Allied leadership enabled the Wehrmacht to slow the Allied~~ advance during the winter of 1944/45, allowing the Russians to make it to the Balkans first.

It wasn't quite the right time of year, it being June 26 when Mike Hutcheson's small expedition arrived in Rimini. Next day, armed with photocopied pages of Jim Henderson's "Official

A HEALING OF OLD WOUNDS (Continued)

History", they set out to retrace the advance of 2 Company during the last 3 days of Major Keith Hutcheson's war, in September 1944.

The first obstacle confronting the 22nd Battalion was the Marrechia River. Jim Henderson described the crossing: "Spandaus (heavy machine-guns) had stopped any of Hutcheson's daylight patrols from testing the river and because of this 2 Company would have a miserable crossing... unfortunately another bomb had blasted a crater in the riverbed ... "As the company forded the river in the pitch dark of a cloudy evening every man must have had the experience of plunging into a hole four feet deep", Hutcheson recalls. "With great difficulty I raised both arms and managed to keep dry my map board and walky-talky wireless"... but in 1 Company's case all went very well indeed .. a detour which, under cover of the northern stopbank, took it back into position alongside Hutcheson's sopping men, who somehow managed to flounder through their unexplored part of the river... Then, side by side, the two companies would advance, attacking over a mile to a watercourse called the Fossa Turchetta. This is where Amedeo's article, written more than 50 years later, placed my father on the night of 21 September.

RIMINI THEN & NOW: Rimini rather reminded us of Mount Maunganui, or Surfers Paradise without the glitzy apartment towers. Hotels and apartments line both sides of the road along kilometre after kilometre of beach.

But in wartime, Rimini was a sinister and threatening maze. The *Official History* continues: "Houses thickly dotted the land ahead and gave good cover to the enemy machine-gunners and riflemen waiting to meet the advance ... To the right, nearer the coast, Hutcheson's force would clash with well-equipped troops from 303 Regiment and 162 Turcoman Infantry Division, who would make the best use of fortified villas, minefields, and fortifications which had been intended to smash any invasion from the sea".

"Hutcheson saw six enemy running along the beach, set after them with a couple of comrades, landed up by a big gun emplacement and bagged fifteen Turcomen cowering in a nearby trench. The Russians obligingly pointed to a camouflaged dugout, where a solitary German under-officer was added to the bag".

"Suddenly a terrible enemy "stonk" (mortar) came right down on our HQ.." Keith Hutcheson says "We all dropped below the window level and I was a bit slower than the rest.." At the RAP Hutcheson, almost unconscious, lips numb, vision only a pinpoint, was given a transfusion of plasma, "I felt the vitality returning to my lips, and I could talk again. Soon I was feeling fine". But for days he lay near death".

There was a poignant irony in the shallowness of Rio Fontanaccia. You see, although his wounds never healed, almost to the end, it wasn't so much damage to his body that killed my father. It was damage to his mind. He took his own life, leaving no note nor explanation. He was found drowned, lying face down in a shallow ditch. Somehow a circle was closed.

He had no epitaph and was buried in unconsecrated ground, but if there were words to go on his grave I would like them to be these. They are from the last paragraph of *All Quiet On The Western Front* written in 1929 by Erich-Maria Remarque:

"He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come."

AUCKLAND BRANCH – LOOKING BACK

The Auckland Branch of our Association was formed in 1955, which means that, this year, it has been in existence for just 3 years short of half a century. Our Branch came into being a bit later in the piece than the other branches, possibly because 22 Battalion was originally Wellington-based and it was not at first considered likely that many ex-members of the Battalion would settle in Auckland after the war. In the past forty-seven years, well over 50 former members of the Battalion have served on our Branch Committee, indicating that many have served for a decade or two and quite a few for a good deal longer. In these notes, an asterisk before someone's name means that he is still around; if no asterisk, he is known or believed to be deceased.

We got away to a good start in that our first Branch President was ET (ERL) PLEASANTS, whose legal knowledge and experience had been put to good use in the Battalion and were equally valuable to our Branch. Eri stood down after 6 years as President and, for the next 12 years, it became the custom for the President to serve a two-year term. The Presidents in this period were CG (CECIL) SMITH; *EB (SCOTCH) PATERSON; *KS (KEITH) McBREARTY; *RG (RON) JONES; BA (BARK) COX; HE (HAL) GREIG. After that, *GORDON COUCHMAN served a 4-year term and *GEORGE MATTHEWS has been our top man since 1977. The job of Branch Secretary was held for the first 5 years by TP (TOM) GRACE and by the present incumbent since 1960.

Our Branch can lay claim to some worthwhile achievements. For example, Auckland was the first of the Association's branches to bring the womenfolk into full participation at both National and Branch Reunions. A further claim to fame is that contributors to Auckland Branch Newsletters have come very close to writing an unofficial history of the Battalion. National Reunions were staged in Auckland in 1960, 1976 and 1988 and we were also host Branch for the 1998 National Reunion, held in Rotorua.

We will not attempt to name every Branch Officer worthy of praise but here are some of them. The list of Vice-Presidents who did not get as far as the President's chair includes:- AF (MICK) ANDERSON; WD (DUDLEY) SHIRLEY-THOMSON; MH (MAL) LINKLATER. Some of the other long-serving Committee members were:- JS (JACK) PENDER; DA (DOUG) KINVIG; BJ (BRIAN) GALVIN; LA (LLOYD) WILLIAMS; EB (MASSEY) WOOD. It's now getting a little difficult to remember that, in the days before our womenfolk became honorary members of Auckland Branch, the Battalion Association was a strictly men only organisation. So it was that, when Auckland Branch was first formed, it held official gatherings that only those who had served with 22 Battalion overseas were entitled to attend. Do you remember those all-male gatherings that were held for several years in the Royal Commonwealth Society's premises in central Auckland? The records show that there were 96 men at the AGM of 1958 and 98 men at the 1959 AGM. After that peak period, the numbers attending began to drop, bit by bit, and were below the 50 mark by 1971. But, since the late seventies, we have enjoyed the presence of ladies and have also welcomed family and other visitors. Our present problem is, of course, that the overall numbers have continued to dwindle – to such an extent that we are getting very thin on the ground.

Branch Secretary

GERMAN USE OF PANTHER-TURRETS

In our issue of last November, we gave details of an interesting enquiry sent to the Secretary of Auckland Branch by an American researcher named WM A BORCHARDT. William's approach to us was made in the hope that our Association could supply data for his research topic, which was the World War 2 German use of detached Panther-turrets and dug-in Panther Tanks as static fortifications. He was especially keen on amplifying information he had obtained (source not stated) to the effect that, during the night of 21-22 September 1944, 22 Battalion attacked and captured a Panther-turret emplacement in the Celle hamlet, north of Rimini, and that separate attacks had been made single-handedly by JOE COPPELL and MAURICE NORMAN REEVE, the latter being awarded a medal for his heroic action.

In reply, we sent William a photo-copy of Page 353 of the Official History of 22 Battalion, which we thought made it clear that Joe's "furious one-man charge" on the strongpoint had almost but not quite succeeded in capturing it, whereas Maurice Reeve and his Section from 7 Platoon had made a successful attack that won him an immediate MM. William's enquiry had also expressed considerable interest by him in making personal contacts with both Joe Coppel and Maurice Reeve but our reply told him that our preliminary enquiries had caused us to doubt whether either Joe or Maurice was still alive. However, we also told him that we hoped that we would, by publishing his enquiry in the Branch Newsletter, obtain further information that would assist his research project.

Well, the extracts from this correspondence published in last November's issue of the Branch Newsletter, did bring some responses and we have sent these on to Bill Borchardt. We have, for example, been able to tell him that it seems quite definite that neither Joe Coppel nor Maurice Reeve is still alive, though we can find no record of either the dates or causes of their deaths. But we have obtained and sent on copies of three war-time snapshots, two of these being photos of groups that included Joe Coppel, while the third is a photo of Maurice Reeve and one other man.

The most helpful response that we have received is a Copy of the Official Citation for the award of the Military Medal to Maurice Reeve. We have sent a copy of the Citation to Bill Borchardt and we are also including it in this report. It makes it apparent that Maurice Reeve and his Section from 7 Platoon attacked the Panther-turret strongpoint no less than three times before its final capture.

AWARD OF THE MILITARY MEDAL

to

LANCE SERGT MAURICE REEVE

1945

Copy of the Official Citation

On the night of the 21st/22nd September 1944, during the attack across and beyond the River Marecchio Corporal Reeve was in command of a section disposed on the left flank of the Company and astride Route 16. The night was dark and in the close country enemy positions were difficult to locate. At a stage of the advance Corporal Reeve's section came under heavy fire from enemy machine guns. Corporal Reeve immediately placed his men in positions from which the maximum fire could be brought to bear. With complete disregard for his personal safety he ~~charged the position across open ground with such determination that the enemy was compelled~~ to hurriedly withdraw. To an enemy fusillade of hand grenades Corporal Reeve made reply with grenades and these were undoubtedly a most important factor in driving out the enemy. The enemy position attacked was a concrete emplacement surmounted by a Panther type turret manned and heavily defended by infantry. Corporal Reeve led the section in mopping up in the

GERMAN USE OF PANTHER TURRETS (Continued)

surrounding area, but because of the wide front covered by the company it was not possible to leave a detail in protection of so obvious a strongpoint. With the further advance of the Company the left flank became exposed and enemy infiltrated back into the pill box. As soon as reports of this were received a small patrol led by a Sergeant was dispatched to clean out the area. This patrol was heavily engaged by the enemy and forced to withdraw after suffering casualties. A further patrol of the area was then made by Corporal Reeve and his men but the enemy had withdrawn from the position and Corporal Reeve returned to his platoon to assist in the advance to the night's objective. By first light the Company's left flank had become exposed and a party of enemy estimated to be twenty strong filtered into the area of the pill box. For the third time Corporal Reeve returned to the scene and by the clever deployment of his men and by bold and courageous leadership he put the enemy to flight inflicting casualties and taking six prisoners. In the remaining advances of the Company upon Igiea Marina Corporal Reeve continued to perform with distinguished judgement and personal bravery. His qualities of leadership continued to inspire his men with the greatest confidence, and he materially contributed to the unit's fighting efficiency.

FROM THE TREASURER

At the time of writing this report, the Hon Treasurer is unable to supply very much information except to say that our Branch is still solvent and, thanks to a backlog of reserve funds from previous years, able to pay its way – that is to meet the expected cost of processing, printing and mailing this issue of the Newsletter. The Association is, of course, a non-profit organisation that is exempted from taxation, provided that its members do not derive any personal financial benefit from Membership.

The Annual Accounts of Auckland Branch for the year ended 28/2/2002 will be prepared in time for presentation at the AGM on April 28, making it easier for the AGM to decide where we go from here. As you know, we stopped sending out sub-accounts back in the Nineteen-eighties, leaving it to Branch members and others on our mailing list to contribute according to their means. The system has worked out quite well in practice. Once again, we extend our warm thanks to all those who send in donations in excess of the "official" and nominal sub of \$5.00 p.a.

Cedric Randerson, Hon Treasurer

SHOULD WE CONTINUE?

The members of our Branch Committee were given a preview of the front page of this issue and invited to comment. This reply came back from RON JONES of Papatoetoe.

"We need to get together, as the past is now more important than the future. We can talk about ourselves as no one else is interested. We still have thoughts and memories. Our comradeship is real. Age has wearied us but we can get around. Myself is a case. I can still drive but I don't trust myself over time and distance. I look forward to going to a far away place and meeting old comrades.

I hope this explains my thoughts on our future. If going to Tauranga means more people will attend our reunion then let us go there or where ever."

22ND BATTALION ASSOCIATION AUCKLAND BRANCH**BRANCH COMMITTEE – YEAR ENDING 28/2/2002**

838 9556

<u>PATRON:</u>	DR FROGGATT	28 Freyberg Street, Tauranga
<u>PRESIDENT:</u>	HG MATTHEWS	2 Cron Avenue, Te Atatu South, Auckland 8
<u>VICE-PRESIDENT:</u>	J ALLEN	1 Mayville Avenue, New Lynn
	JG McMILLAN	8C Seddon Street, Rotorua
<u>SECRETARY</u>	CW RANDERSON	PO Box 26-314, Epsom, Auckland
<u>TREASURER:</u>		<u>RES:</u> 13 Alexis Avenue, Mt Albert, Auckland
<u>WELFARE OFFICER:</u>	RG JONES	3/10 Mahon Place, Papatoetoe
<u>COMMITTEE:</u>	G HUDSON	3/89 Centreway Road, Orewa
	MI KNIGHT	24 Carisbrook Street, Katikati West
	HB McRAE	34 Gifford Road, Papatoetoe
	SR (STU) SOUTHALL	29 Francis Drive, Katikati
	CHARLES FRASER	9 Lipscombe Avenue, Papatoetoe

April, 2002

22nd Battalion Association
Box 26-314
AUCKLAND 1003

Branch Social Function - Sunday, April 28, 2002

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

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| (1) | Entrance fee for _____ people at \$15.00 per head | \$ _____ |
| | <u>AND/OR:</u> | |
| (2) | My Subscription/Donation | \$ _____ |
| | <u>Total</u> | \$ _____ |

Name & Address (Block Letters):-

Army No: _____

PROMPT REPLIES PLEASE