

"Vrai et Fort"

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

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22ND BATTALION NEWS

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NATIONAL REUNION ISSUE

(Including Reports on the Association's National Reunion held in
Auckland - June 4/6, 1976)

"WE BELONG TO SERVE"

The Sunday luncheon has been one of the highlights of National Reunions for some time past and this year's luncheon was no exception. Over 400 of us sat down in the Grill Room at Alexandra Park to an excellent meal. When this had been disposed of, the assembled company listened, with obvious enjoyment, to some equally good speakers, beginning with a speech that was witty and serious by turns from the outgoing National President, GORDON COUCHMAN. Unfortunately, we do not have a transcript of the full speech but Gordon has been able to give us that part of it which dealt with the Welfare work of the Association and its Branches. Here it is:-

I must speak to you about our welfare work. We are leaving it to the Welfare Officer and the Secretary ——— very occasionally to one other member of the Committee. THIS IS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

50% of the patients admitted to psychiatric hospitals today are Returned Servicemen and 50% of these are there through LONELINESS. A peculiar anomaly exists today:- The faster we go, the less time we have. FIVE MINUTES - ONCE A WEEK - ONCE A MONTH MAY HAVE SAVED THEM FROM BECOMING PATIENTS.

I feel that an apt description of our Welfare Officers' work would be the answer given by Almoners when asked what they were trying to do. This has been handed down from the 6th Century:-

'I will pass this way but once; any good therefore that I can do to any human being, let me do it now; let me not defer nor neglect it; I will not pass this way again.'

I challenge you all to change the word 'I' to 'We'.

'We will pass this way but once; any good therefore that we can do, let us do it now; we will not pass this way again!

36 years ago, we served to belong. Surely, today, WE MUST BELONG TO SERVE.

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REUNION IN RETROSPECT

We have increased the distribution list for this issue of the Branch Circular to include all the Association members from other Branch areas who came to Auckland for Queen's Birthday weekend, 1976. We want to put the highlights on record and to tell you something of the planning and running of the Reunion. Although all members of the Reunion Committee had reached a state of exhaustion by the Sunday night, it was a pleasant state of exhaustion. We felt that the show had gone well; scores of people had taken the trouble to say so; there had been very few complaints and a great deal of praise and we were sure that the speakers were not just being polite. They really seemed to have enjoyed it and so had we.

The planning began away back in 1974, when our T.F.S. scheme was launched. We put special emphasis on T.F.S. because it had played such an important part in making the 1960 National Reunion at Auckland a success and we were very much aware of the distance between Auckland and the heartland of the Battalion. We pushed it again this time and the response was tremendous. There is no doubt at all that T.F.S. helped a lot of people to be there for sure and, to our way of thinking, a well-publicised T.F.S. scheme is a must for all future National Reunions, no matter where they are held.

A strong and enthusiastic Reunion Committee is the second requirement for running a 'National' and Auckland was in the fortunate position of having a very good Committee, every one of whom could be relied on to do whatever he was asked to do and do it well. We lost a few of them along the way:- MICK ANDERSON, who had done a fine job as Co-Ordinator of Planning, was transferred to Dunedin in 1975, BILL McLACHLAN departed for parts unknown and two others left us in March of this year:- SCOTCH PATERSON on an overseas trip and JIM WISHNOWSKY to the Nelson district. GEORGE MATTHEWS took over Mick's job and DOUG. FROGGATT and JOE NORRISH came onto the Committee as replacements and were of great help in the latter stages.

The third essential factor was the choice of a suitable venue. After looking at possible venues in the city, we made what proved to be an inspired choice by selecting the Alexandra Park Raceway in Greenlane Road. The grandstand we used had all the facilities we could have wished for. In particular, the large, carpeted lounge bar upstairs became (as we hoped it would) not just a report centre and general meeting place but the scene of the informal get-togethers which contributed so much to everyone's enjoyment of the weekend. Add to this that the Trotting Club's regular caterers (the MRKUSICH family) could not possibly have been more helpful and co-operative from start to finish.

SOME INNOVATIONS

The Auckland Reunion Committee chalked up some 'firsts' at this Reunion, mainly dictated by the venue and its location but also decided upon in the belief that they would make the weekend more enjoyable. All functions and activities were at the one venue, including the Sunday morning Parade and Service. There were no licensed Hotels near the venue and only two licensed Motels. This made it necessary to accommodate many people at unlicensed Motels and there were some very good Motels close to Alexandra Park. The lack of suitable Hotels also encouraged us to use the big lounge bar to provide continuous Bar service and light meals throughout the weekend - a bit of a gamble this as we had no way of knowing in advance to what extent the facilities we provided would be used. In the event, they proved highly popular and the Lounge Bar was the focal point of the Reunion, as we had hoped.

Some Innovations (contd.)

Another innovation was that we asked everyone to pay their Reunion registration fees in advance, which is standard practice in most organisations for Conventions and the like but, strangely enough, had not been the previous practice in 22nd Battalion Association. The simple fact is that you can't cater for a big function by guesswork, so we tried to eliminate the guesswork as far as possible. We very much appreciated the way in which most people co-operated in this. The great majority paid in advance and, two weeks before the Reunion, we were in a position to give the caterers minimum numbers for the Saturday night do and for the Sunday luncheon. We expected that late registrations would counter-balance last minute withdrawals and knew that the caterers were able to cope with a reasonable excess in the numbers. That's the way it worked out and we were very pleased to be able to make full refunds of registration fees and accommodation deposits, even in the case of last minute cancellations.

STATISTICS

We kept a reasonably accurate tally of the numbers attending the Reunion and the numbers from each Branch area are quite interesting:-

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>
Auckland Urban Area	55	44	99
Auckland Province	46	33	79
<u>Auckland Branch (total)</u>	<u>101</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>178</u>
Wellington Branch	36	26	62
Taranaki Branch	32	19	51
Hawkes Bay Branch	30	18	48
Manawatu Branch	23	19	42
Wairarapa Branch	15	9	24
Wanganui Branch	12	8	20
South Island	10	10	20
Gisborne	3	3	6
Southern Hawkes Bay	2	2	4
	<u>264</u>	<u>191</u>	<u>455</u>

Quite a drop from the figures recorded at Wellington two years earlier but this was expected. Escalating costs, the economic situation, the distance to be travelled and the march of the years were bound to have their effect. The National Roll is shrinking fast and not only because of deaths. Many of the names on the Roll are marked:- "Gone; no address!" All things considered, it was a very good muster, the number of men who checked in being something like 17% of the total number on the National Roll, as compared with a little over 20% at Wellington in 1974. A surprising thing was that 72% of the men were accompanied by their wives, which shows how much things have changed since 1958 when a handful of wives were brave enough to make the first assault on the tradition of 'men only' at Army Reunions.

If you are still interested in figures, we handled a pretty large sum of money between 1974 and 1976. Over \$20,000 passed through the Reunion bank account and nearly \$13,000 of this came in before June 4th - about \$6,700 in T.F.S.

Statistics (contd.)

contributions, over \$1,000 in accommodation deposits and over \$5,000, in advance registration fees.

ROLL CALL

Who was there? Far too many to name them all but here are some of the names known to almost everyone beginning with two of the commanding officers of the Battalion, Brig. TOM CAMPBELL and Lt. Col. HADDON DONALD. The other well-known names included FRANK TWIGG, PHIL RETSON and RAY MOLLIER from Hawkes Bay, JACK FORD, HARRY BIDLAKE and GEORGE McCORMACK from Wairarapa and FRANK WHEELER, TOM SULLIVAN, GEORGE MURFITT and TOM STEELE from Taranaki.

The Wanganui contingent included IAN BURNETT, LES CLARK and JACK WILSON and among those from Manawatu were TOM GRACE, BILL JUDE and DENNY REIDY. The Wellington Branch President GRAHAM DAWSON arrived in Auckland without the slightest idea that he would soon be National President as well. The others from Wellington included HAMILTON MITCHELL, MICK KENNY, PHIL MONK and DON VAUSE.

There was a very good muster of South Islanders, who had further to come than anyone else, and a specially good effort by TED HEENAN, who came all the way from Wyndham in Southland - not quite as far as STAN CHONG, who came over from Papua - New Guinea.

Members of Auckland Branch came from all over the province and some of these were in the long time no see category, notably LLOYD CROSS, who is farming at Atiamuri, and RON GARMONSWAY, now in Tauranga. ARTHUR REVELL came up from Taupo and JIM SHERRATT (the 'big horse') from Te Awamutu way. It was good to see BOB KNOX looking fitter than he has for a good many years. Other stalwarts from Tauranga included MERV. ASHMAN, TOM DE LISLE and BARRY HOULAHAN, rattling the Crete Box with his usual enthusiasm and success - \$84 worth.

Last, but not least, no 22nd Reunion would be quite the same without HICKO BROUGHTON. He's not as fit as he used to be but Hicko came along on the Sunday and was given a big hand.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY

If Auckland's experience is any guide, the recipe for a successful National Reunion is to get things moving early and keep them going as long as possible. The facilities at Alexandra Park were a big help in achieving this. The Reunion really started at Noon on Friday and was still going strong at 10.30 p.m. on Sunday. The crowd on Friday night was astonishingly large and, although people came and went over the next two days, there were very few quiet periods. A lot of people went off to the Ellerslie Races on Saturday (we had a supply of free tickets) a busload went on a sightseeing trip and others went visiting or relaxed at their Motels but a good crowd stayed on at the venue and watched the Rugby Test on T.V.

The big do on Saturday night went with a swing and the evening seemed to go by in a flash. This was where we did get a few complaints. We did everything we

Friday to Sunday (contd.)

could think of to keep the orchestra's volume down to a bearable level and at times we succeeded but, let's face it, musicians today are lost without their electronic amplifiers.

Sunday morning, the weather let us down a bit - almost the only rain of the weekend fell just as the Parade was getting ready to move off. The rain was not heavy and did not last long but it was enough to bring Plan B into operation. The Padres were to conduct the service from the dais at the front of the grandstand, looking out over the Trotting course, and the Parade was to march there and form up in a hollow square in the open area in front of the stand. In view of the rain, everyone moved onto the grandstand itself for the duration of the service. The service was a moving one and we were grateful to our two Padres, PAUL SERGEL and FATHER SHEELY, for the way they conducted it and to ERL PLEASANTS for his inspiring address. With the sun shining again, the Parade reformed and moved off in good order to the pipes and drums of the Innes Tartan Pipe Band to march past the saluting base. The Parade arrangements were in the very efficient hands of GEORGE MATTHEWS and RON JONES.

SUNDAY LUNCHEON

For many of us, the luncheon was by no means the end of the Reunion but it was the last of the formal events and a fitting climax to all that preceded it. It was formal, yet informal - a very relaxed occasion and very much a high point of the weekend. All the speakers were good and were highly praised afterwards but this was not so much because of any flights of oratory as because each speaker managed to strike just the right note, did not talk for too long and presented a good mixture of humorous and serious comment. GORDON COUCHMAN set the right tone in his opening remarks. We have already quoted part of his speech; the rest was just as good, but in lighter vein. TOM CAMPBELL is always worth hearing; he replied to the toast of 'The Battalion' in his own inimitable style. HADDON DONALD was equally on the ball in replying to the toast of 'Absent Friends'. The toasts were proposed by DOUG. FROGGATT (The Battalion), CEDRIC RANDERSON (Absent Friends) and MASSEY WOOD (The Ladies). We will quote some of their comments if space permits. The last official speaker was GRAHAM DAWSON, the new National President, who was probably rehearsing what he would say to the Wellington Branch Committee when he got home, having stuck his neck out (his words) by accepting the 1978 Reunion on Wellington's behalf.

THE LADIES - GOD BLESS THEM

We drank your health at the Reunion Luncheon on 6th June and we drank it with enthusiasm. MASSEY WOOD said it for us in proposing the toast but it needs to be placed on record. You were very much part of the show and we would not have it otherwise. Some of the men still believe that Army Reunions are for men only or that, at least, there should be some part of a Reunion when the ladies are banished and their menfolk left to reminisce in peace but those who think so are very much in the minority these days. One thing is certain - if the ladies were not made welcome and brought fully into the proceedings, the attendances at National Reunions would quickly dwindle to vanishing point. Thanks for coming along and being with us and bearing with us. See you all in Wellington in '78.

MEETING OF BRANCH DELEGATES

'During the two years of my presidency it has become increasingly obvious to me that, with the passage of time, our numbers are becoming depleted, our mobility decreased and our lack of awareness of the needs of our less fortunate comrades becoming an accepted thing. Escalating costs in the staging of Reunions are an increasing burden to those involved with the staging of these functions and, as I write this, no Branch has applied to stage the next one. The "faithful few" continue to carry the load at national and local levels. Whether the solution is to centralise our future activities in the lower half of the North Island and/or hold national functions with less frequency are matters requiring your consideration.'

So said National President Gordon in his report to the 24 men who represented their Branches at the Saturday morning meeting at Alexandra Park. The idea of less frequent Reunions did not get much support, the consensus being that there are still quite enough of us around to keep the show going and much to be done on the Welfare front at Branch level. A Wellington remit proposing a National Lottery to subsidise Reunion costs was lost but the merits of Branch Raffles to help Branch members to get to Reunions found some favour. A grant of \$500 from the National Reunion Account towards the cost of running the 1978 Reunion was passed. When the venue for 1978 was discussed, it seemed to be a case of 'after you' and a lengthy discussion proceeded until GRAHAM DAWSON was brave enough to lay Wellington's neck on the block, this, after Manawatu had undertaken to be host in 1980 and Hawkes Bay in 1982 - sighs of relief all round. So Graham is the National President, ERL PLEASANTS and DENNY REIDY are the National Vice-Presidents and AUS RIDDELL (elected in absentia) is the National Secretary. DENNY REIDY was re-elected National Treasurer.

HOW IT CAME OUT

We have left until last the information that everyone will want to know - how we made out financially. The Branches have received copies of the Reunion financial statement and we give you here the essential details - that we finished up with a surplus of \$651 to distribute. We did not plan it this way but we did try to avoid making a loss, which is so easy to do. When our budget was prepared, we were certain of getting a minimum attendance of 300, while hoping for at least 350 and possibly 400 or more. The registration fees were fixed at a level that would, if the numbers reached 350, cover cost escalation and unbudgeted expenses and leave a small surplus but, as the final tally was 455 people, our overheads were well and truly covered. Being wise after the event, we now know that we could safely have trimmed the registration fees a bit, though it would have been by only a small amount on a per head basis. To dispose of the surplus, the Reunion Committee decided to donate \$100 to the Freyberg Memorial Fund, \$350 to the National Reunion Fund and the balance to the Ranfurly Home Locker fund.

For the benefit of those who were not at the National Reunion, we heard early this year that the Ranfurly War Veterans Home in Mt. Roskill needed lockers of a new type for the use of the exservicemen living there, who now include three men of the 22nd. The lockers cost nearly \$100 each and Auckland Branch decided to donate one or more lockers by asking for donations at the National Reunion, subsidising the amount collected by a grant from the Branch Welfare Fund. There was a very generous response at the Reunion and, including the Branch grant, we had nearly enough for two lockers. To this, the Reunion Committee added \$201 from the Reunion surplus, with the result that 4 lockers were presented at a small function held at Ranfurly Home last month.

AUCKLAND BRANCH NEWS

It's a long time now since the Branch Reunion in March but this is the first opportunity we have had to give a brief account of it. The Annual Meeting was held during the evening and the main business was a motion that the annual subscription be increased to cover rising costs, for postages and printing in particular. The sub. had stayed at \$1 since 1958, back in the days before inflation had been heard of. The meeting raised it to \$2 per annum, a sum which won't buy you much at 1976 prices. There was also a motion that the Branch Secretary be elected a life member of the Branch and this was carried with acclamation. The Secretary thanked the meeting for the honour accorded to him. The Reunion was a most enjoyable one though the attendance was smaller than usual, partly because it was held on a Friday evening to save the expense of a Saturday night venue. The next Branch Reunion will be held at a new venue, where catering costs are a bit cheaper.

ROLL OF HONOUR

HAROLD BERNECKER, Auckland	August, 1976
JOHN SCOBIE, Rukuhia	June, 1976
A.L. (POD) SWINNERTON, Rotorua	August, 1976
A.J. WILSON, Auckland	March, 1976

From other Branch areas:-

D.M. GORDON, Wellington	March, 1976
W. (BILL) IMLACH, Wellington	March, 1976
I. PENHALL, Woodville	May, 1976
J.B. RICE, Waipukurau	April, 1976
E.F. (TED) LAWS, Wanganui	June, 1976
JIM McKEOWN, Wellington	April, 1976
DUNCAN MCGREGOR, Paremata	March, 1976

A TOAST TO THE BATTALION

(Proposed by DOUG. FROGGATT)

Today is a very significant day to the world as a whole. 32 years ago this morning, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normanby and "D" day had dawned. And this was really the "beginning of the end" of it all.

But for many gathered here today, the beginning of it all was several years before then. It was in fact January and it was 1940 - 36½ years ago. For in that month of that year 22nd Battalion was born. Born of ordinary men from cities, towns, villages and farms; they came together at Trentham and, in the words of Erl Pleasants, "a pretty rough looking lot we were". But they were to become the 22nd Battalion of 2 N.Z.E.F. and soon - and forever - etched into the minds of those men and of the many who were to follow, were new phrases:- Phrases such as - Vrai et Fort; Phrases such as - 2nd to none; Phrases such as - 28 days!! And during the years that followed, the 22nd was to be found in England, Greece, Crete, the Western Desert, Italy and Japan. Several thousand men passed through its ranks; 327 remain forever in areas where the Battalion served; 511 were made prisoners of war; 39 were decorated for bravery; many were mentioned in despatches.

All of these things - the phrases, the places, the people; fused to make the spirit that is the 22nd. A spirit that has lived on, and that today - 36½ years later - gathers us together here in Auckland for this very wonderful weekend. From all parts of New Zealand we have come and from even further afield. Stan Chong for instance has flown in from New Guinea especially for this gathering. A gathering now - of Grandfathers; of greying heads; short in wind but long in memory. But still members of 22. So I ask you now to be upstanding and as in memory we: go back to distant places; go back to times of joy and times of sorrow; to days of great comradeship with wonderful men. With pride, I give you this toast; A toast, 2nd to none; I give you:- (THE 22ND BATTALION).

TOAST TO ABSENT FRIENDS
(Proposed by Cedric Randerson)

Our Absent Friends include three distinct groups:- those who did not come back from the War, those who have died since and those who are still very much alive but unable to be with us today. Of those who did not come back, you may be thinking of the men we all knew, like JOHN RUSSELL or FREDDIE OLDHAM, but you will also be thinking of some of the blokes who were with you in Greece or Crete, in Libya, at Ruweisat or Alamein, across the Sangro, at La Romola or further north along the road to Trieste. These are the men we will always remember.

I have often wondered how many returned men have died prematurely as the result of War wounds or other effects of War service. There must have been many in this category, though most of us came back in good shape. A young bloke in my platoon in Italy who had missed the desert campaigns told me one day, with apparent relish, that anyone who had been in the desert fighting was not likely to live very long because of the sand in his lungs. I told him he was talking a load of rubbish but it made me think a bit about my chances of survival after the War. There did not seem to be any major cause for concern and the effects of a year or two in the desert appeared to be superficial. Your skin had begun to adopt the texture of old leather; you squinted through eyes kept half-closed against sun and sand; your teeth were as sharp as razors from the constant diet of Army biscuits. You were periodically dehydrated and your stomach shrank to the size of a tennis ball. You suffered from dysentery, hepatitis, quinzey and a dozen other ailments. Otherwise, you kept fit and well. It is comforting to see how many of us are still hale and hearty in spite of all the sand we absorbed 35 years ago.

Of those who have died since the War, the name that comes most quickly to mind is that of LESLIE WILTON ANDREW, who derived so much enjoyment from these National Reunions. On the notice-board is a long list of the 22nd men who have died recently. Each of you will remember some of the men listed there with pride and affection.

Finally, there are those who were booked in here but have had to cancel and the many who sent apologies and good wishes - notably BERT O'REILLY, who had a very pressing engagement at the jubilee of his old school in Dunedin. Regrettably, too, some people are simply not well enough to attend and others find the high cost of attending Reunions beyond them. I ask you to drink this toast to the memory of those who have died and to the good health of all other ABSENT FRIENDS.

In next Circular:- Erl Pleasants' address at the Commemoration Service
