

"Vrai et Fort"

22nd Battalion Association

AUCKLAND BRANCH

Telephone 664-792

Secretary:

C. W. Randerson

22ND BATTALION NEWS

P.O. Box 13-058,

Onehunga,

Auckland, 6.

MARCH, 1991

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTION - SUNDAY, 7TH APRIL, 1991

As last year, this will be our one and only Branch get-together for the year. We normally hold it in March but with Easter falling at the end of that month and the Branch Secretary taking unauthorised leave of absence in the early part of March, it has been decided to hold this year's function on the first Sunday in April. A lot of us are rather partial to staying at home now that we are getting on in years but this is negative thinking for former members of a Battalion that prided itself on being 'true and strong'. Then there are others who are reluctant to give up their normal Sunday activities but, when it is only once a year, that is no excuse. It is worth making the small effort to get there, even if this involves some sacrifice. We and our ladies enjoy these gatherings and everyone who is reasonably fit and mobile should come. We also hope to see some of those who come from some distance away.

The function will be almost entirely social in nature. We will also hold our AGM but that doesn't take long. The caterer has held the cost of the luncheon at \$14 per head, which will also be the admission charge. You are asked to send pre-payments by mail, using the Reply Slip at the end of this Newsletter. This gives us the essential information we need for the Caterer and also saves the Treasurer a good deal of unnecessary work at the door. And, if you can't possibly be there, please send back the Reply Slip in any case, enclosing your sub. payment of \$5 and any arrears for the year ended 28/2/91.

VENUE:

Grey Lynn Returned Services Club
1 Francis Street, Grey Lynn

TIMES:

Assemble at:-	11 a.m.
Luncheon:-	1 p.m.
Close down:-	3 p.m.

VISITORS (your friends or relatives) are more than welcome

THE COST:- \$14 per head (And Subscription - \$5 per annum)

Drinks from the Bar will be available throughout and Wine for lunch will also be on sale.

NUMBERS FOR CATERER:- We MUST have catering numbers in advance, in fact the Caterer has asked for firm numbers two weeks ahead. PLEASE fill in the Reply Slip NOW and send it with your remittance in time to reach the Treasurer before Easter.

ROLL OF HONOUR

6392	J.D. CLARKE	Auckland	26/9/90
449325	J.A.C. HANHAM	Kaitaia	14/8/90
42788	J.T. HOLLAND	Hamilton	10/10/90
30659	B.C. HOULAHAN	Tauranga	24/8/90
460264	C.S. LAWSON	Tauranga	11/11/90
40200	T.J. MACKAY	Te Awamutu	31/10/90
636007	D.T. MITCHELL	Auckland	9/8/90
660438	D.R. NICHOLLS	Tauranga	22/7/90
30027	Y.L. SANDS	Auckland	October, 1990
263689	H.J. SHERMAN	Cambridge	16/8/90
632595	LEO. SIMMONDS	Te Puke	26/7/90
228659	LLOYD TREGOWETH	Auckland	16/10/90

The above list contains the names of all 22nd men in our Branch area who have died in recent months that we have knowledge of. It has been compiled from various sources but mainly from DENNY REIDY's 'Last Post' lists that he sends us from time to time. He does a magnificent job as Keeper of the National Roll. The list includes a number of men who had been members of Auckland Branch for many years and will be remembered with sadness now that they have come to the end of the line. BARRY HOULAHAN will be remembered for his indefatigable work for his 'Crete Box', in which he collected a quite substantial total of cash at National and Branch Reunions to help with our sponsorship of half a dozen school children on the island of Crete, over a period of about 13 years. He was elected a Life Member of the Branch for his services in this connection.

'SANDY' SANDS

YEO L. (SANDY) SANDS died in October of last year at the age of 76, after a life-time of prodigious work in the field of boat-designing and manufacture. We are grateful to LOU DUNHAM for sending us a cutting from 'Power Boat' magazine, from which the following extracts have been taken. Sandy was born in England but emigrated to New Zealand with his family when he was 5 years old. He started work with the Whangarei Harbour Board but the Depression forced him to seek other employment, such as working as a deck hand on the scow 'Seagull', taking the last of the kauri out of the Hokianga. When he was 21, he moved to Auckland and found work in bridge construction and as foreman for a ship-building company. When World War 2 broke out, he was classed as being in a reserved occupation but applied to have this status revoked so that he could serve in the Army overseas.

He was captured on Crete and made use of his years as a P.O.W. to study naval design. At the end of the war, he sought out UFFA FOX in the U.K. and, working for Fox, he received a good grounding in boat-building. Returning to New Zealand in 1947, he and Ivo Watson established Sea Craft Ltd. in Auckland, the company at first making oars but soon diversifying into building clinker dinghies, then inboard and outboard powered runabouts. By 1964, Sea Craft Ltd. had produced a total of 3,400 timber boats; despite his success in this field, Sandy recognised the merits of fibreglass construction and the switch was made in the mid sixties, using laminated expertise learnt in the U.S.A. The last timber boat left the factory in 1972. His son Lionel became a part owner in the business in 1976 and Sandy was more or less retired as from 1981 but he continued to play an active role in the company right up to the last. He was philosophical about his retirement

'SANDY' SANDS (Continued)

from active management and said when interviewed two years ago:- "You have to know when to hand over. There is no shame in working in the factory and I guess I'll eventually become the tea boy, which is where I began".

Sandy was a keen fisherman and hunter and was also a conservationist, establishing Sea Craft Forest, a 739 acre property originally bought to supply kauri to the boat building enterprise. The native bush on this property is now in family trust as a private conservation park. In his "retirement" years, Sandy often gave guided bush walks to school parties.

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN AMATEUR SOLDIER

I'm afraid I never felt I was a real soldier. I was only in it because, like everyone else, I was convinced that the destruction of Hitler and his regime was the only way the world could return to what we all considered was normal civilisation. So, the whole experience was temporary. Because we had to be soldiers for the time being, most of us tried very hard to be good soldiers so that we'd get the whole thing over as quickly as possible. I held, at one time or another, every rank from private to captain, including lance corporal and lance sergeant - all very temporary, of course.

However, I did know that the army had some very firm rules, one of which I understood still existed in WW2 - namely that a soldier guilty of sleeping at his post on active service would be shot. So, that is why I never told anyone, except my wife, what I am about to tell you now - that is to say, no-one except Cedric when he asked me to tell a little of what happened in Italy, and Ian Thomas, with whom I caught up recently after over forty years. Ian, in my opinion, was always the finest platoon commander I ever knew, just as Haddon Donald was the finest all round soldier I ever knew (both of them amateurs). So, now that I don't suppose they will be bothered trying to shoot me in my eightieth year, I can tell everyone.

It happened not long after I was commissioned - Haddon Donald woke me in the middle of the night after we came out of Cassino, thrust a couple of pips in my hand and said "Scotch, in the morning sew these on your shoulders. You're an officer now. It's a bloody racket, isn't it". I went straight to sleep again on the concrete floor and slept well into daylight. When I awoke, I found the pips in my pocket and wondered how the hell I had come by these things. Then I remembered, did as he had told me to do and went to see him to find out what happened next.

Things were relatively quiet for a few weeks - patrols in the Liri Valley and again in the mountains near Cassino - an 8th Army mines course at Caserta, then back to join D Company at Lake Trasimena. On arrival back, I was told that I had to leave 16 Platoon, who were a very tolerant bunch of blokes prepared to make the best of me, and take over 13 Platoon. 13 Platoon had a reputation. They were seasoned men. I was only me. In a state of partial shock, for the next few days I kept my mouth shut and never asked anyone to do anything unless I thought he would do it anyway. Then came what we had been waiting for - the advance to Florence.

We moved up into some hills south west of Florence where we took over from the Goons, French Moroccans. At midnight we set off on an approach along a long ridge which led to the village of La Romola, or rather the ravine which separated

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN AMATEUR SOLDIER(CONTINUED)

the ridge from the hill on which La Romola stood. 13 Platoon brought up D. Coy's rear as we marched in single file along a narrow metal country road in the bright moonlight. At the head of 13 Pl, all I had to do was to follow two yards behind the sergeant of the platoon in front of us. So in silence we marched for about two hours when the whole long file stopped. Up front they were probably investigating some possible trouble. After a few minutes we all sat down, backs against a low bank by the roadside. The air was pleasantly warm and fresh. It was 2 a.m. and we had come quite a way that day, by truck and then on foot.

Two or three hours later I woke with a start. The moonlight was still bright, the night was silent save for the snores of 13 Pl, all of whom were, as I had been, sound asleep. We were all alone. There was no sergeant or column in front of me; only my own platoon on this my first real, major operation:- all these blokes whose lives were my responsibility. Where must we go from here? Army training had taught me that one must never panic. "Decide what you are going to do, then do it positively", said the good book. My reason told me the company must have gone on up the road. As I remembered it, the road led to our first objective.

Because all was silent there was no battle yet. So, I strode "positively" along my blokes, shaking them awake and on their feet, then back to the front of the line and off we went. The radio operator walked alongside me. He asked where we were going. I simply said we were off to join up with the company further up the road.

We walked along for about an hour, when to my dismay, the road forked off to the left and also slightly to the right. My companion said, "Which way now, Scotch?" "This way", I said firmly following where ever my feet took me, which turned out to be the right. About an hour later the road started to drop in front and the first streaks of dawn were lightening the Eastern sky. As we marched firmly down to the slope, figures could be seen moving about on the road. Then one came towards us and "Garry George's" voice called out - "Ah, Scotch - I was just coming up to get you - I've got a job for you". That was the start of the battle for La Romola, probably the worst I ever experienced.

One of my most treasured possessions from those days is a letter enclosed in my personal gear which the remnants of 13 Pl sent to me at 2GH Casserta. The chief scribe was Frank Baker who started the letter off - "Dear Scotch, I am writing this because the rest of the poor bastards are most illiterate". (Frank in civilian life was a school teacher). The letter carried on with a few lines from each of those "poor illiterate bastards". They thanked me for the whisky which wouldn't have travelled well in such a fragile bottle and asked me to thank my wife, Pat, and congratulate her on her first class cooking. The fruit cake would have been sure to have been cliftied by those lousy ASC wallahs en route to 2GH. They were the salt of the earth - The Max Rogerses, Doug Batys, Harry MacIvors, Richy Richardsons et alia, whose mere presence made you feel good. As infanteers, I'd back them against any anywhere else in the world. Indeed, my experience with the 22 Bn convinced me that that description applied to the whole Battalion - a remarkable group of people, trained by Les Andrew so effectively that I heard Sgt. Bill Windsor address a recalcitrant new recruit thus "By Christ, if Les Andrew were here you'd never get away with that and you're not going to get away with it now!" Those earlier blokes were the skeleton on which we later arrivals tried to put some flesh.

Scotch Paterson

1992 NATIONAL REUNION

Manawatu Branch, and NITA MENHENNET in particular, are carrying on with the good work in preparation for next year's National Reunion in Palmerston North - to be held on February 29th and March 1st, 1992, less than a year from the time you receive this Newsletter. The Reunion Committee is making special efforts to keep the cost of the Reunion as low as possible. Manawatu Branch has been raising funds towards this objective and their Committee has asked other Branches of the Association for the names of any of their members who may need financial help in order to attend the Reunion. Their decision to restrict the number of future Reunion circulars to those who have paid either the registration fee (\$20) or the Administration fee (\$5) is also a cost-cutting move. We in Auckland Branch who dealt with the budgeting for the 1976 and 1988 National Reunions are well aware of just how costly it is to send Reunion circulars to every person on the National Roll.

By December, 1990, Manawatu had already received over 200 registrations and a further 100 plus had sent in \$5 to pay for administration and Newsletter costs. Since then, the registrations have continued to come in slowly. When we last heard from Nita, a total of 16 members of our Branch had contacted her about 1992 and 10 of these had paid the registration fee. The sixteen names are:- E. BARKER-BENFIELD; J.P. COLLINS; A.A. CLEGHORN; D. ELLIS; C. FRASER; G. HUDSON; B.D. JURGENS; R. JONES; E.N. LEE; G. MATTHEWS; W.D. McLACHLAN; H.B. McRAE; R.M. REEVES; A.W. ROBERTS; M. WOOD; B.J. WHEATLEY. There must be many more in our Branch area who are sure to be going (D.V) to Palmerston North and the Reunion Committee would very much like to hear from you. How about doing this little thing smartly.

T.F.S. Scheme:- This is in full operation and those who wish to be There For Sure are asked to send in their initial payments just as soon as possible. Those who pay in \$100 or more by 31/12/91 will be in the lucky draw for the \$100 prize and will have the big advantage of being in credit when the Reunion is held.

ANZAC DAY & POPPY DAY - 1991

You should not need reminding that Anzac Day falls on April 25th (a Thursday this year). Don't forget that Auckland Branch will parade as usual, with Banner, at the 11 a.m. Anzac Day Service in the Auckland Domain. The numbers taking part in our short march to the Cenotaph have dwindled a bit each year but we hope that a few more of you will join us for this year's march (from just inside the main Domain gates) or at the Cenotaph.

On the previous Friday, 19th April, we will once again man Stall No.3 (Karangahape Road) for the POPPY DAY collection and we trust that those who took part in this exercise last year will make themselves available again on 19th April. If that is not possible, please give the Branch Secretary a ring.

NEWS IN BRIEF

JIM ALLEN, who moved to Rotorua a year or so ago, has since moved again - this time to Hawkes Bay. Present address:- 17 FRICKLETON STREET, TARADALE. We expect to see Jim at our function at the Grey Lynn R.S.C. on 7th April.

NEWS IN BRIEF (CONTINUED)

NOT SO WELL LIST:- This list tends to get a bit bigger each year and includes the names of such well-known members of our Branch as MAL LINKLATER and BRIAN GALVIN. We hear too that GERRY FOWLER of Taranaki has recently been in hospital.

DOUG FROGGATT of Tauranga, Patron of Auckland Branch, is still as active as ever and keeps us in touch with news of our members in the Bay of Plenty. He has recently been away on an overseas trip and reported on his return that he had spent a number of weeks in Europe, England and Hong Kong. In Italy, he visited several of 22's battle areas, including the SANGRO, CASSINO, LA ROMOLA and FLORENCE. He visited the war cemeteries at Cassino and Florence, and saw and photographed the graves of several of our chaps. "The cemeteries are well maintained but made one think on the madness of it all". Doug also visited the Polish and German cemeteries at Cassino and noted that the German one contained 20,051 dead, buried in the main 6 to each grave, with many inscribed:- "A GERMAN SOLDIER".

CRETE 50TH ANNIVERSARY:- "RSA REVIEW" has published the names of the 70 strong group of Crete veterans who will form part of the official N.Z. delegation going to Greece and Crete in May. The list included at least 3 22nd men:- SYD DEVLIN (Taumarunui); FRANK TWIGG (Hastings) and J.H. WEAVER (Napier).

PATROLLING IN ITALY

Patrolling in Italy would present something of a contrast to the old desert dig and his equivalent in the desert. For one thing, there were times when there was no need to save, in a mug, the water you emptied out of your boots for a shave later. To me, a recce patrol in Italy presented something of a dilemma. First, I considered you were better on your own. If you ran into trouble you didn't have to turn around quickly and possibly shoot one of your own blokes. One could scatter more quickly than two, and so on. Again, ground cover was usually pretty good for both sides. If you went out to find out where and how many of "them" and walked silently taking advantage of all possible, the chances were that you would walk right through a defended area without either you seeing "them" or they seeing you. On the other hand if you whistled a tune and skipped along there was quite a chance you might not get back with whatever information had suddenly made itself known to you or your companions.

A recce patrol I remember just after Christmas, 1943 took place near Salarola, a village a little north of Orsogna. There was a mile long ridge, gently sloping down to some ground which we understood was heavily defended. This ridge was probably about two hundred yards wide, while the sides sloped away on either side to low cliffs dropping down into a valley on either side. At three or four hundred yard intervals were groups of farm buildings, five or six in all. Snow was a couple of feet deep over the whole countryside and weather clear, crisp and cold. As a corporal with a section in Ian Thomas's 15 pl, I was told to take three of my blokes - Bruce Gibson of Havelock North, "Fats" McGurr of Wellington and Dick Shepherd of Stratford - and find out whether or not the farms were occupied by Germans. Ian Thomas was, I think, more concerned about our welfare than we were, making sure we had everything we needed, including some very creditable white hooded parkas and pants from sheets we found in the houses we were occupying at the time. These made excellent camouflage suits in the snow. He spent some time with me studying a large scale map which showed all the buildings we were to examine. I also memorised alternative routes home if such were needed.

At 9 pm we set out on a very interesting walkabout. We planned to keep on the slopes below the level of the ridge's flat part on which were the buildings, coming

PATROLLING IN ITALY (CONTINUED)

up to where we could expect to find each of the farms. At the first approach to the first building we split, "Fats" and Dick lying down as getaway men to watch as Bruce and I crept over the snow on our bellies - the frozen surface of the snow crackled as we moved. A few yards from a big one storey stone house, we decided there was no sign of anyone around so we stood up and walked, first to the front entrance, with several steps leading up to it. There we found fresh footprints in the snow, not yet frozen after the crust had been broken. They came from the other side. Looking more closely, fine black trip wires were seen lying across the steps, connected to lumps of explosive. The steps up to the back door had the same trip wires and explosives. Obviously our friends had only just finished checking their booby traps. I sent Bruce down to join the others while I checked a small out-house - probably a pig or sheep shelter. It had a side doorway. Approaching it on the blind side I reached around with my left hand to tear away a curtain hanging over the doorway so that I could thrust my tommy gun forward with my right. I was just about to rip the curtain off when my mind said "Why the curtain?" So, I felt the wire on which the curtain hung from one end to the other. At the far end was a small brass pull switch rigged to a detonator and several sticks of explosive tied together. Rejoining the others, we repeated the performance at each of the next three farm buildings. All were booby trapped and unoccupied.

Then we started a routine inspection. Bruce and I cautiously crawled up the slope to a small tree whose leafless branches threw heavy dark shadows on the snow from the bright moon. We watched the house, twenty yards away, and listened for several minutes. We were able to distinguish, at the front door, a sentry dressed in white and another sentry at a side door, also in white. They must have heard the snow crackling as we crawled up and were peering intently in our direction. Then Bruce whispered "They've some sort of an engine going - perhaps a generator. Do you hear it, Scotch?" I listened for a while, hearing nothing. Then Bruce said again in a whisper "Christ, it's my heart beating". After what seemed a long time, the sentries decided that we were something. One went inside and returned with another fellow. The three again stared over our way then they were joined by another five or six, all of whom started firing at us. Fortunately for us the bullets were well over our heads as we slithered on our bellies backwards down the slope to the other two. "Fats" was all for giving them the works and I had to explain firmly and briefly, that a recce patrol's first job was to get home with the news. So - no fighting.

We set off for home keeping well down on our side of the slopes. The Germans, on the other hand, kept up on the top and followed us along, taking pot shots as we travelled. The snow was soft and deep on the slopes and the going very hard. About half a mile later we came to a place where it looked as though we could drop over a rocky cliff down to the valley below. We dropped onto ledges covered with snow till we reached flat ground. The Germans had given up and gone home. We did likewise. To avoid accidental death from our own people as we approached their known positions, we whistled well known N.Z. tunes of the day. We were welcomed inside and were soon reporting to Ian Thomas. He was pleased to see us and sent the others off to their blankets and sleep. It was 5 am. Then he asked me to give him all the details of our trip. When he had heard it all he said our company commander, Haddon Donald, wanted to hear my story. He listened as I repeated it all again, then told me that Bn HQ wanted me to tell the story again. By this time I was beginning to feel that my credibility was deemed to be of doubtful quality. This feeling was intensified when Ken Joblin, as "I" officer, very politely asked me to go over all the details with the map in front of us - tracing our route on it in pencil. Then he produced aerial photographs of the same area. Once again I went through the whole business.

PATROLLING IN ITALY (CONTINUED)

By this time, after 8 am, I was ready to tell him to stick his maps and forget I'd said anything. After that, seeing the sun was shining brightly, Ken took me up the hill to a knoll from which, to my relief, we could see the whole ridge from one end to the other. Through binoculars, we could see our own tracks and those of the Germans exactly as I had described. I was then allowed to go back to my blanket and sleep.

Scotch Paterson

THE TREASURER REPORTS

A year or two ago, we stopped sending subscription accounts to our Branch members in order to save the far from negligible cost of sending them out. We decided to rely on you people to send in remittances when a general request was made in these Newsletters. The response has really been very good. Not everyone who can and should contribute towards our costs has done so but the shortfall has usually been made up by the donations sent in by the others and some of the donations have been most generous ones. Our only major expense is the costs that we incur for the typing, printing, folding, enveloping and mailing of these Newsletters and we remind you that we can only continue to produce and mail them if we receive sufficient funds each year in subs. and donations. Your Committee is grateful to all those who respond so regularly and well but would be even more grateful if some of the others on our mailing list who are financially able to contribute would come to the party. Our financial statement for the year ended 28/2/90 is likely to show a deficit. This could suggest that \$5 a year is not enough to cover the increases in cost due to inflation since the sub. rate last went up - from \$4 to \$5 in 1987/88.

22 Battalion Assn.,
Box 13-058,
AUCKLAND 6

MARCH, 1991

Branch Social Function - 7th April, 1991

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

(1) Entrance for _____ people at the Branch function at \$14 per head.

AND/OR (2) My 1991/92 subscription (& Arrears/donation)

TOTAL

\$ _____
\$ _____
\$ _____

NAME (block letters):- _____

ADDRESS:- _____

(Please return by 28th March)