



2/18th BATTALION (A.I.F.) ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER NO 153

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

March 2013

November 11, 2012. It was an honour to represent the 2/18th Battalion at the Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph in Sydney. A wreath was laid and many attended as usual. This year, I was accompanied by one of my sons, David, who had not participated in any of the Battalion's functions before. We had the honour of meeting our latest VC winner, Corporal David Keighran – a most impressive young man. The weather was kind and the usual dignitaries attended, including Her Excellency, Marie Bashir and Sir Nicholas Shehady, retired General Peter Cosgrove, Ron Ferguson, Secretary of 8th Division.

February 15, 2013; I represented the 2/18th Battalion to commemorate the Fall of Singapore at a Ceremony again at the Cenotaph in Sydney. A wreath was again laid.

We have had information from the Department of Veterans Affairs via Ron Ferguson of a Remembrance Mission to Thailand for four veterans in April / May this year. Unfortunately, it will not be possible for these Veterans to be accompanied by family members or carers although a doctor and nurse will be in the party. Merv Blyth has endeavoured to find members who would be well enough to accompany this Mission but, as it will be a very arduous trip during a hot and humid season, we may not be able to find any to attend. Time to respond is limited and I have advised Ron that we may not be able to participate. Should you feel you might like to attempt this trek, which includes Hellfire Pass, please contact me as soon as possible on 02 9634 7302

Anzac Day preparations are in full swing and the usual format will occur, Wheelchairs where required will be available if necessary and transport will be supplied as previously. Assembly will be again outside the NSW Leagues Club at about 10 am. Relatives are welcome to take part in the march.

The lunch and Annual General Meeting will again be at the NSW Bowling Club in York St following the March and it is important to advise Colleen and Larry Czarnik regarding the numbers of your party wishing to attend.

On Sunday, April 28th, a Church Service will be held at the usual venue at St John's Church, Gordon. Father Keith has extended his usual co-operation in assisting in the organisation along with Robbie Prince from Kuring-gai Council. Reverend Rob Sutherland will be assisting Father Keith on the day.

While on this subject, Father Keith has advised me of the recent passing of Reverend Roy Wooten. At 99 years of age. Roy was a past minister at St John's between 1951 and 1979 and took the Services for both the 1/18th and 2/18th for some time. I am sure Father Keith will have more information at our service on the 28th.

My sincere thanks to Joan for her great magazine publication and Diane for her Treasurer's duties, Larry and Colleen for their never failing support.

Thanks for articles contributed by Lynette Silver, Wendy Willcocks, Kevin Smith and Evan Richard among many others.

Looking forward to seeing you on Anzac Day. Keep well.

Noel Simmons
President.

Merv's Welfare Report.

Betty Gimbert:- Going quite well on her own.

Clarice McGrory:-Going well.

Jack & Marie Trimmingham:-Both keeping well, attended Rev Roy Wooten's service.

Cliff & Kath Olsen- Both going reasonably well, Cliff in constant pain & a bit forgetful.

Jack Barlow:-Doing reasonably well, was nicknamed "Oregon" because of his strength.

George Watts phones regularly, attended February 15th commemoration.

Michael Shanahan attended Cenotaph in February.

Evan Richard attended February 15th service as did **Larry Czarnik**.

Robyn Syme was unable to visit Sydney but Merv and family called into her property at Berry when returning from George Hall's funeral.

Shorty Bender is in a nursing home in Mttagong and is always happy to receive phone calls.

Jack Smith is as chirpy as ever.

"**Tich**" **Graham** is not well.

Bill Barnes is wheelchair bound. He lives with his daughter and is the only officer remaining

Merv & Heather Blyth have had quite a few health worries, with Heather admitted into hospital a few times.

Merv is the only remaining Sergeant in the Battalion and he has the most amazing memory. His son David and daughter Alison are most supportive. Heather mentioned that the ladies from the 2/18th donated the azalea plants for the garden in the courtyard at St Johns.

Joan Dorph is battling on, doesn't enjoy the cold weather.

Nancy Endacott is doing well.

Ray & Caroline Masling are both doing well.

Keith Forsyth keeping reasonably well, but not very mobile, still enjoys gardening. Heather is well & their two daughters are doing very well, one in America.

"**Mac**" **Gibson** lives with his daughter Joan who looks after him very well. He was delighted to enjoy the Christmas luncheon with so many friends.

Linda Cottee is doing quite well with assistance from her granddaughter who lives in the upstairs flat. She hopes to attend the Anzac Day luncheon & hopes her son Angus will also attend. She enjoyed the Christmas luncheon with Sheila Braun.

Jean Auld is not well with throat cancer.

Judy Carey is doing quite well and sent a very generous donation to the Battalion. Many thanks Judy.

Received an e mail from **Jim McCorry**, from the other side of the world, namely Ireland, wishing the members of the 2/18th Battalion Association a very Happy & Peaceful Christmas and Prosperous 2013.

So this just shows how widely read is our newsletter !

The Christmas Luncheon

was again a great success with Mac Gibson with his daughter Joan & granddaughter Jemima from Queensland. He and Merv enjoyed a great reunion.

Also present Sheila Braun, Lynette Silver, Michael Shanahan, J Johnson, daughter of George Chapman, Evan & Liz Richard from Orange, Alison Job, Julie Whitehouse, Noni Stagg, Steve Ferris & wife Christine Larry & Colleen Czarnik, Diane Humphries, Merv Blyth (Heather was not well enough to attend) Joan Okey Noel Simmons.

Important Dates to Remember.

Monday April 1st, Easter Monday, lunch at Roseville RSL.

Thursday April 25th, Anzac Day, lunch at the Bowlers Club after the march at 11 am

Sunday April 28th, St John's Church of England, Gordon. Church service commencing at 11 am

Message from Larry Czarnik who maintains and updates our 2/18th Bn website.

Check our website www.218battalion.org.au

For information and changes contact secretary@218battalion.org.au

Under names and addresses and above newsletter number

From Treasurer Diane Humphries.

Many thanks to all those whose orders for Wendy Willcock's book, "Without Glamour". The response was overwhelming and copies were sold out within 2 months.

Apologies to those whose orders could not be filled.

Thank you also for all the generous donations received, especially from Judy Carey (Tamworth) and Jim Gregg, (Noosaville), son of Capt. Alston Gregg.

Part of the **Remembrance address** by Sir David Griffin at the Cenotaph
on Monday February 15th 1993.

This is really not a day for speech making. It is more a day for private thoughts. All of us standing on this special part of Australia here at the Cenotaph in Sydney – the symbol for all that is the noblest in the Australian character – must be thinking deeply at this moment; thinking each of your own particular Australian who over 50 years ago was prepared not only to offer his life, but to give it for a cause which he believed to be even more precious. That is the glory of it!

Last year, to commemorate this day, many of us went back to Singapore to re-live the moment which for the majority of us was the most shattering experience of our lives; the order to lay down our arms and surrender to the victorious Japanese army under its commander, General Tomouki Yamashita, "The Tiger of Malaya", as he was known. And as the sun came up at Kranji Cemetery, illuminating those rows of headstones, each bearing the number, name and serial number of an Australian Serviceman, those who stood there could scarcely believe that 50 years had passed. It was as yesterday. We of that company who do not need this ceremony to jog our memories. Yet it is fitting that we should assemble each year on this day not only to mark our respect for those of our friends whose lives were swept away, but to impress on the young Australians of today the significance of the sacrifices made and the hardships endured by the thousands of members of our Division who sailed away so full of hope and promise, yet who were destined never to see their country again.

All old Changi boys will know that Lt. Col. Galleghan, (as he was then), but "Black Jack" as to us he always will be, was insistent that the 8th Division should strive to be remembered not as prisoners of war, but as fighting soldiers. Not surprisingly this has not happened, making us the only Division which remembers its fallen on the day of its defeat. This is a pity, since the 8th Division was engaged in some of the fiercest sustained fighting by Australians in World War 2, with entire Battalions being almost eliminated in a single day, accompanied by displays of gallantry unsurpassed.

I turn now to criticisms voiced abroad, of the part we played in the Malayan campaign. One's immediate reaction was to ignore such criticism as beneath contempt. But lest silence be mistaken for tacit admission, something should be said. On this subject, we, after all, have one immeasurable advantage over our critics: we know what happened because we were there, and being there know how monstrous the criticism is. Our one surviving General Staff Officer, John Wyett, who in addition to being on site – as

Gil knew precisely what happened on those fateful days, was so outraged that he broke a long silence to refer to the criticism as "disgraceful" and an insult "to all those brave Australians who fought and died in a hopeless cause". If you doubt his objectivity, which no one who knew him would, may I also quote extracts from a letter which has just come into my hands. It was published in the London Times on January 21st of this year. It was written by the celebrated Ronald Searle, then a private soldier in the British army in Malaya. A noted artist, even then, but later to become internationally famous, his superb drawings revealed to the world at large, the essence of what was the best and the worst of our captivity. A scandalised Searle writes as follows: "As a soldier and as a prisoner of war in Singapore - both before and after its fall, - up on the Kwai and back in Changi gaol, I encountered the Australian forces on a number of occasions, lived and worked with them. To brand these men as cowards, rapists, drunkards and deserters is to mock the name of all those Australian volunteers."- and let that never be forgotten - "who fought and died...to help save the skin on an inept Administration and a crumbling British Empire." Searle continues, "one learns a great deal about ones fellow men in action and as a prisoner of war in appalling conditions. To be a fellow prisoner of the Australians was a privilege. They were tough, generous, kind and morale boosting when such attributes were at a premium. I am able to write this letter today only because of the kindness, generosity and self sacrifice shown by those same Australians who saved the life of this "Pommie" in the Konyu and Kanchanaburi jungle camps, unable to move or take care of myself. They themselves were in little better condition, but they fed, nursed and protected me from being killed by the Japanese." On behalf of all of them, I am sure you would want me to say "THANK YOU", Ronald Searle. We ourselves could not say it, but we know how right you are.

Perhaps we can do no better than give the final word to one of the Changi poets, who with more than a touch of prophecy, from the depths of Changi gaol wrote:-

"Spare us your recriminations now that the fight is over and the battle done
Spare us your paeons of charity to the meek preservers of your Liberty."

Extracts from Newsletter No 67, April 1985

President:- Ken Mosher; **Hon. Treasurer:-** Reg Piper; **Hon. Secretary:-** Jack Shepherd.

News Items includes letter from Arthur Wright, now 79, with 3 sons & 3 daughters, all married. He decided to hand his property "Niithsdale", 16 miles out of Forbes on the Lachlan River over to his sons and now spends a lot of his time caravanning round Australia with his wife. He also does a bit of fossicking. On one occasion he fell into some very cold water, and the only change he could find was one of his wife's old petticoats, which had been used as a duster. He was forced to drive back to camp through town dressed in the petticoat.!

John Drummond, an ex Committeemen, has moved to War Veterans Home, Narrabeen. George Veitch had run into Bob Morgan, cheery as ever, also Tom Browning had retired in Adelaide as Emmeritis Professor.

Merv Mullins has sent some photographs of memorial gates leading into Honour Ave, Fairfield Park, and the dedicated area in the avenue in which are plaques for fourteen 8th Division men including Captain John Edgley.

Merv Gronow's monthly mini 2/18th Reunion T City Tatterslls Club (11am on 2nd Thursday of each month) is thriving, regulars being Tony Clive, Ian Doherty, Ted Colenso, Bill Ashe, Bluey Pidcock, Bill McCauley, Shorty Bender (who comes all the way from Mittagong where he is a good bowler and keen and successful Pennant player), and occasionally Gordon Williamson, Pat Levy & Bill Fraser.

Reg Piper had a short trip up North last month & visited Nancy Davidson, widow of Allen (Kelly - Porky) Davidson, in Guyra, then on to Glen Innes to visit Charlie & Joyce Goodwin. Off to Moree to visit Jack (Hank) Amos & wife Dawn. Hank has handed over the farm & is concentrating on his race horses.

Report of the Tamworth Reunion (from Newsletter No 70), October 10-11 October 1987.

Hearty congratulations to "Ginty" Pearson & his lovely wife Eileen, for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the 2/18th Bn. members & partners. Eileen was responsible for selling nearly half of the raffle tickets which raised \$590 helping to offset the cost of the reunion.

Many units of the 8th Division were represented at this reunion, 64 from 2/18th Bn. It was great to see old mates one had not seen since our return in 1945, & to renew friendships with others one had seen from time to time over the years. The ever irrepressible Bert Pikett was, as ever, in good form, as is usual with Bert, sartorially elegant, looking more like 57 than the 87 he claims. Still has a great head of hair (most of us are jealous, Bert). He was keeping Arthur Hence & Tom Johnstone on their toes, all seemed to be enjoying themselves. One of the most popular was old mate Charlie Livermore. Charlie has been travelling around Queensland & NSW these last few years, but is now settled in Tamworth.

Arthur Wright is still seeing the country from the drivers seat with caravan in tow. While in Tamworth for the reunion, he decided to have some work done on his car, took it to the garage, saw a new car he liked, now he is driving the new car. I understand it was the easiest car sale ever made in Tamworth. You can't keep a good man down.

Mac Cottee & his wife Linda were continuing on after the reunion, travelling north.

Paul Gemmell stopped off at Wallabadah seeing his son & daughter in law & Grandson. On Sunday Paul went on to Armidale with Keith Forsyth to visit another son, spent 3 days on a ladder hanging wallpaper. Never mind, Paul, we all probably spoil our children – whatever their age.

The Mini Reunion, which takes place at the Lane Cove National Park or Centennial Park, several times each year had Jack Trimmingham, George Veitch, Brian James, Eddie Coleman, Arch Davey, Cliff Olsen, Paul Gemmell, Reg Shannahan, Mac McGrory, Jack Shepherd, Reg Piper, Nemo Dorph, Anyone interested in attending these mini reunions, please let me know, BYO sandwiches & lemonade. Always a great day.

Reg & Joan Piper just recently back from New Zealand.

Paul Gemmell handling hospital visiting in his inimitable style. He says that if you ever have to go to Concord, you can be assured that you will receive the best possible care in NSW.

Extract from Kevin's News, March 2013,

"I was very pleased to meet Linda Cottee to enjoy a chat and a cup of coffee in Sydney recently. It was interesting to learn that Linda had been school captain at Glen Innes High, back in the days when all of us were young. Her late Husband Mac Cottee served in the 2/18th Bn. I've been privileged to read his comprehensive memoir, Growing up in Australia, covering the early years of his long life, from the end of WW1 to the end of WW2. He mentions primary school days at Nimbin, his time at Lismore High, his employment in banks at Casino and Wialda, and then the AIF where his training days were far from trouble free in relationships with his company commanders. After a brief account of his unit's action in the Mersing area, his description of the defence of Singapore Island is particularly detailed, as are his stories of POW experiences on the Island. Mac Cottee is mentioned in the Singapore segment of my Stories from Sandakan."

Some Humorous Items.

Two friends were playing their weekly round of golf. One said to the other, "Isn't that a new putter?"

"Yep," he said

"What happened to your old one?"

His golf partner replied, "It couldn't swim."

A helicopter loses power over a remote Scottish island and makes an emergency landing. Luckily there's a cottage nearby, so the pilot knocks on the door. "Is there a mechanic in the area?" he asks the woman who answers.

She thinks for a minute. "No but we do have a McArdle and a McKay."

The anti ageing ad I'd like to see is a baby covered in cream saying, "Oh, I've used too much!"

While we were working at a men's clothing store, a customer asked my colleague to help her pick out a tie that would make her husband's blue eye stand out. "Ma'am", he explained, "any tie will make blue eyes stand out if you tie it tight enough."

Bedtime Stories.

Ever wonder what medical personnel scribble on those clipboards attached to the foot of the bed? Here are some comments taken from hospital charts:

"The patient has refused autopsy."

"The patient has no previous history of suicides."

She has had no rigours or shaking chills, but her husband states she was very hot in bed last night."

"Patient has two teenage children but no other abnormalities."

"Discharge status: alive but without my permission."

"She is numb from her toes down."

A woman is brought into court after stealing from a supermarket.

"Mrs Krupnick," says the judge, "what did you take?"

"Just a small can of peaches," she answers. "There were only six peaches in the can."

"Six peaches... hmmm I sentence you to six nights in jail, one night for each peach."

The woman is about to collapse to the floor when her husband leaps to his feet, "Your Honour," he shouts, "she also stole a can of peas.!"

Bread Upon the Waters

An old lady saw a poorly dressed man standing outside a vacant store just below her window. She noticed that several passers-by stopped to give the man money. So the kind hearted woman placed \$5.00 in an envelope on which she wrote "Godspeed", and tossed it down to him.

A few days later she saw the man again. This time he was walking to and fro in front of her house and looking very puzzled. After some time he saw her standing at the window and called out to her, "Oh I say Lady, I've been looking for you. Here's your \$130.00. Godspeed won at twenty six to one."

From the Archives—

A letter to Major Okey from Brigadier Varley 10 July 1944

River Valley Road Camp
10 July 44

Major Okey

Dear Okey,

Well I have arrived back here in Singapore after spending 20 months in Burma, 4 months in Thailand and 2 months in Indo-China (Saigon). On arrival in Burma I was informed that I would be returned to Singapore to go to Formosa with the senior officers but I managed to make a case for my retention in Burma where I was put in charge of 10,000 P.O.W. Australians, Dutch, British and Americans. In Nov last a further 2,000 were added to our Branch which was known as No 3 Branch (or Group) Thai P.O.W. Camps.

We had working camps all along the route of the new railway line from THANBYUZAYAT Burma to KANCHANBURI (Thailand), the two starting points, though No E Branch only operated on 133 k of this line to the Thai border. We had 1844 deaths out of 11824 i.e. 15.6%. The A.I.F. losses among the 3000 I took from Singapore was 392 or 13.1%. These figures are up to end Jan '44 and others have died since.

These figures tell then our story and I do not want to again pass through a period of such mental and physical strain.

You no doubt have heard I lost Ray Griffen who was SC with me. During one of the bombing raids on our camp at Thanbyuzayat 15 June '43. We were getting men under cover when a bomb fell almost on top of us. We were 3 ft from the edge of the crater. It was a great loss to me as he was a sterling chap. Toose took over the SC job.

I have left Lt Col Anderson i/c of 3rd Br P.O.W. I left with 2500 Aus, Brit and Dutch and American POWs for Japan via Saigon. They could not get us away via this port. We transferred the Dutch British and 60 Aust to No 1 Branch and left them there where they are working and the balance 1056 were brought here plus a further 250 (998 Dutch, 33 American & 119 Aus) came later from 3 Br Thailand. I do not think we will get away from here. They tell me my destination is still Formosa and the men to to Japan. Major O'Brien is at Nakompatong (T) as adjt 3 Br Hos personnel it being a Hos' Camp for 10,000. Sgt Alan McIntyre is there as his clerk. Farmer is a patient (dysentery and malaria), Sgt F Adams is working there and a few 2/18 men at TAMARKAN (T) HQ No 3 Br Lt Col Anderson with Toose and some Dutch staff are installed with Lt Col Ramsay Camp Commander. Hence is Camp Adjt. Other 2/18 officers are Carey, McDonald, Staples. Hence has done a very good job. My son Jack is also there.

I saw Arnold Nicholls two days ago. He is in a camp adjoining us and one of a party with Lt Richardson 2/18. Lt Bacyetz is 2ic and Cpl Harrington 2/18 who were torpedoed on way from Sumatra to Singapore towards the end of last month. He looks well. Richardson I did not see as he has gone to Changi Hos for attention to a head injury but I understand he is OK. It was great to see Nicholls again.

Carey contacted Hugh Simmons many months ago near Thai Burma border on rail way line and passed much news to me. I understand Simmons is back here having returned with the remnants of F Force (Lt Col Kappe).

We heard that a great number of 2/18 were kept here reinforcing your working party and I have often thanked God for this as I presume your casualties would be very much lighter. I read in a Tokyo paper remarks by Capts Chisholm and Barnet re the death of Lt Col Robertson (2/20th) in Japan and therefore know they had both arrived there. From time to time we have heard reports and rumours of other drafts but I am not sure of the whereabouts of other members of the Bn. It will be a happy day when we can get them all together again. It won't be long now.

2/18 men still in Sumatra (vide Nicholls report) are ALDERTON, J.D., BALDRY F, BARRETT H.D, DAVIES W.L., DASEY A.J., FREWIN S.B., HOLMES, H.R., RUSH A.E, RUSH I.J., SAWYER F.K., SIMON R, SHIELDS R.F.A, WARD J.A. Missing after torpedoing is CLANCY J.

2/18 deaths from those who left with me who died in Burma are Sgt NICHOLLS (Pay Sgt) Cpl McCORMICK (HQ Coy), GREEN C.R. (HQ Coy), Pte MEREDITH (HQ Coy), AYLING L (HQ Coy), JOHNSON (Maj Davis's batman), SHERWODD (HQ Coy) Cpl SHEPHERD W (HQ Coy) Pte BRETT H (HQ Coy), Pte HARRISON (B Coy), Pte BERRY B (C Coy), Pte SMITH R (1 Sec died Thailand), Cpt REED R (Reinf) Pte PITT W (rein). Also of course Cpt Griffen. As we left with 100 this is 15%.

We had a couple of hundred who had leg amputations as result of tropical ulcers. Many died (having other complaints in addition). Pte J MOORE (D Coy) is one now at KAKOMPATANG T. Hos'.

The Js went through my gear in great detail when I left Thairland for Saigon and took all records which I had with me. They were anxious I should not take figures with me. We had about 20 odd men shot for escaping and who were recaptured.

Looking forward to seeing you again. Please give my best wishes to all members of the Bn. Keep your chins up and don't forget the old team spirit.

Yours
ALV

I trust Swaddling and Barnes have recovered satisfactorily. Very sorry to hear Sgt Sam Browne died. Am anxious to hear about Vernon. He was very sick when I left.



A boy went to war in 1914 and left his bike chained to a small tree. He never made it home, and his family left the bike by the tree in his memory. This is that tree today.

SHARE

this if it's one of the best monuments to our fallen soldiers that you have ever seen.



.....lest we forget

NEWS FROM BORNEO JANUARY 2013

15(B) ADA AVE, WAHROONGA 2076 02 9489 3949
websites: www.lynettesilver.com www.sandakan-deathmarch.com
newsletter email: lynettesilver@gmail.com

Dear 2/18th and Sandakan Friends

Neil and I finished off 2012 with two final treks in Sabah. One group was from Lindisfarne Grammar School in northern NSW (making their second trip), and the other was the usual November trek, timed to commemorate Remembrance Day at the beautiful Kundasang War Memorial, on the slopes of Mt Kinabalu.

Memorial News:

I am reliably informed that the construction of the visitors' centre and amenities block at the entrance to the Sandakan Memorial Park is on track and should be open for

Housing construction continues on the old E Force site and part of the British Camp, and the Park will shortly be almost entirely surrounded by homes. Fortunately the shrubs and trees planted over the years by our excellent caretaker Doris Wong are thriving, creating a lush and green refuge within this expanding area of Sandakan.

Workers at **Labuan War Cemetery**, which is always pristine no matter what time of year we visit, have been busily refurbishing the headstones – stripping back and reapplying white paint to the concrete plinths and completely restoring the bronze markers. I visited most of the 'marked' Australian graves, including that of the 2/18th's Ellis (Roy) 'Smiler' Watts, who was being especially remembered by one of our trekkers. As usual, an official service was held at Labuan on Remembrance Sunday, which we could not attend as we were at Kundasang, holding our own special service.

Scholarship Scheme: We have had an unexpected boost to the general fund recently, with a \$2000 donation from the students of Pimlico State High School in Queensland. This school has been to Borneo on prior occasions, visiting St Michael's and calling on the Scholarship students as part of their program. Pimlico School has now made an undertaking to support the Scheme to the tune of at least \$1000 per annum – an amount sufficient to educate, house, feed and look after one student for an entire year.

The Australian students each researched a POW, which added a great depth of meaning to their visit, which was chronicled in an excellent commemorative book, produced by the school. Well done, Pimlico State High!

We have also received some substantial donations from individuals and organisations, along with smaller annual donations from people committed to help regularly, long term. Thank you everyone!

Thank you also to the Sandakan Family members who are providing special 'end-of-year' prizes to Scholarship Students. We were fortunate to be able to personally hand over one of these annual monetary awards on behalf of the donor, and the excitement of receiving hard cash, purely for the use of the recipient, was wonderful to see. A member of our November group, which was able to meet most of the students before they returned home to their remote villages for the holidays, also presented a substantial sum to the Scheme – the result of an unexpected windfall that she wished to share. Gladdens your heart, doesn't it?

Friends of Miruru Village: For those new to our Sandakan Family, please look at www.lynettesilver.com under 'Community projects' (on the top menu bar), for background to this story.

The drums! You might recall that the village had asked the Friends about the possibility of replacing Miruru's aging and pretty much defunct drum set. This was bought second-hand 20 years ago and is now very much the worse for wear, with rusting cymbals and substantial holes in most of the skins. The Friends had actually donated sufficient funds (about AUD1000) to purchase a new five-piece set but, on learning of this need, the Sandakan Family had stepped in to help. The

with a substantial gift of rice, powdered milk etc.

As an added bonus, the proprietor of the music shop, with subtle encouragement from Neil, donated tambourines, maracas, a descant recorder and a guitar as additional 'presents', to the value of RM500.

The village headman and two other senior village men travelled down to Kota Kinabalu in the village van for the exciting hand-over. The villagers left Miruru the night before - to make sure they got there! To top off what was already a very emotionally charged event, Neil and I also presented a much-needed printer/scanner (mentioned in the last newsletter) on behalf of the Friends.

This relatively inexpensive gift (along with extra ink and reams of paper) has made a huge difference to village life. Prior to this, anyone requiring a copy of, say, an identity card or birth certificate, had to wait until someone drove into the nearest big town - up the rough village road and then across the mountain range. Now they can have a copy in seconds. Photos of the drums etc are on the Miruru page on my website. By the way, unlike Australia, nothing goes to waste in Miruru village. The old battered drums are now being used to teach the village children how to play!

With Lindisfarne School taking care of the new drums, and with \$1000 still in the kitty, Neil and I visited the village in November with a member of the trekking group (who was doing a half-day walk only, and was therefore free), to ascertain what else could be done to help this small community.

After presenting villagers with a pile of staple foodstuffs from the trekking party, along with special treats for Christmas, Neil asked if there were any further community projects with which the Friends could assist. The headman rather hesitantly confided that a new building was needed for the village - a very simple affair, about 30 feet square, to be used as a Sunday School by 17 surrounding villages on Sundays, and on week days as a much-needed Kindergarten. The Miruru villagers, who all pitch in to do the construction, are able obtain roofing material from the forest, but they lacked the funds to purchase the 1000 concrete blocks, and cement, to build a half-wall (the upper half is open).

On discovering, for an outlay of just \$AUD800 for the construction materials, that this vitally needed building could become reality, we provided the necessary money from the Friends' Fund. A plaque will be attached to the wall stating that the building was erected with funds provided by the Friends of Miruru Village, in Australia. Thank you so much, Friends, for your generosity.

You may recall that in 1945 a teenaged villager, Domoit, saved the life of an Australian POW he found hiding in the jungle near the death march track at Kuporon River. His mate had been shot dead by the Japanese. The entire village assisted Domoit in hiding the fugitive and supplying him with food, which was extremely scarce, until he was strong enough to be handed over to another village headman, who had harboured other POWs.

Domoit's wife, who is crippled, is confined to their small shack, and Domoit, now well

access his elevated home. His son has been trying to save the necessary money to build a ground-floor room onto his own house, and had accumulated RM1000 (\$350) – or half of what was needed.

We very much wanted to help but, as this room for Domoit is to be built onto a private house, it did not meet the guidelines to qualify for a donation by the Friends – who supply funds for community projects to benefit the entire village. The problem was solved when two trekkers from WA, who work with handicapped people, handed Neil RM500 (about \$175). With an equal amount supplied by Neil and myself, Domoit will have his new room.

Vale: Those of you who have met **Mr Umpil** at his small house at Tampias (he was the smiling, elderly Dusun man with all the gold teeth) will be sorry to learn that he died in September. Umpil, as a teenager, was forced to carry goods along the death march track and, in June 1945, he also showed POWs on the 2nd march where to cross the river near Tampias. His intimate knowledge of the POW route was vital in pin-pointing the path taken by the POWs, as they moved from the Taviu River valley, across the mountain range to Paginatan. Fortunately, Neil video-recorded the interviews, so we have all this for posterity!

Although he was not in Borneo, I am sad to report that **Dr Lloyd Cahill**, one of the many wonderful POW doctors on the Burma-Thai railway, died in November at the age of 98. I knew him, so I attended his funeral in Sydney, at which I also represented the 2/18th Association.

Anzac Day in Sandakan: The travel agent who organises the Anzac Day tour for us reports that, as it is already fully booked, the tour has been 'closed off'. Some people are also staying on to do a trek, an option that was offered for the first time this year. I also understand that a good number of Australians travelling with other groups will also attend the Anzac Day service, so the number of attendees may be up on last year's, which was smaller than normal. The service, as usual, will be conducted by the Office of Australian War Graves, which cares for the Memorial Park.

Bring the Spirits Home: This new initiative has resulted in a number of 'spirits' returning home. (For background on this, see the last newsletter or go to my website, under the side bar menu 'prisoners of war'). Be assured that the trekkers who perform this special task for those who cannot travel to Borneo are very conscious of the great honour entrusted to them.

If you would like your POW spirit to symbolically return home, please contact me,

Well folks, that just about wraps it up for this news bulletin. Neil joins me in wishing you all a happy 2013.

Lynette



Dear Members, Family & Friends,

Anzac Day is the most important date on our 2/18 Battalion calendar. To better facilitate this years Anzac Day Luncheon at the Bowlers Club, you **MUST** book by cutting out and completing the form below and returning it with your cheque or money order to the Secretary, 2/18th Battalion **no later than Tuesday 9th April 2013.**

If you are booking for a party of 10 with cheque or money order enclosed, you will automatically be assigned a table. Any booking less than 10 will be assigned to an existing table with other attendees thus making up tables of 10.

You are reminded that the 2/18th Battalion's Annual General Meeting and election of Office Bearers for 2013 will be conducted prior to lunch on Anzac Day 25th April 2013. If you are interested in becoming part of the Executive Committee of the 2/18th Battalion Association, you are encouraged to contact us.

This important day begins with the March and then onto the Bowlers Club for a delicious 2 course sit-down luncheon.

Summary of Details:

Date: Thursday, 25th April 2013

Time: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Venue: The Bowlers Club - 95-99 York Street - Sydney NSW 2000 - Phone: (02) 9290 1155

Member's entrance also available via Clarence Street - Website: www.99onyork.com.au/

Cost: \$40.00 per head, includes Main and Dessert, plus continuous Tea and Coffee

There will be a CASH BAR for drinks

Please include your cheque or money order with your booking slip as **we will not be able to handle late acceptances at the door this.**



BOOKING SLIP (cut on line above)

Please make your cheque or money order in favour of: **"2/18th Battalion (A.I.F) Association"**

Please return: (1) Completed Booking Slip plus (2) Cheque or Money Order - **COST: \$40.00 per person, no Later than Tuesday, 9th April 2013.** We will not be able to handle late acceptances at the door due to catering restrictions.

Send your completed booking slip and your cheque or money order to:

Secretary, 2/18th Battalion (A.I.F) Association - P.O. Box 108, Pennant Hills NSW 2120

Cheque/Money Order	\$
Number of people attending	
Name	
Suburb /Postcode	
Print your email address here →	