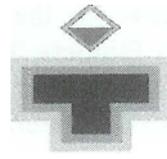


**The Furphy Flyer in Mufti.**



**I HOLD FAST**

Vo13, No. 25

May 2006

COMING EVENTS FOR 2006

**Battalion Birthday Lunch, Friday 30th June at Pascoe Vale RSL**

**Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 9th August at Pascoe Vale RSL**

2/24th,S Shrine Pilgrimage - Sunday 15th October, 2.00pm

(Assemble 1.30pm)

*(the August "Furphy" will provide further details)*

**9th Division's Shrine Service and Luncheon, Friday 20th October**

*(the August "Furphy" will provide further details)*

**Wangaratta Weekend Reunion, 10th, 11th & 12th November**

*(this Furphy and the August "Furphy" will provide further details)*

*My apologies/or giving incorrect dates in the February "Furphy"*

**VALE.**

Frederick C Lye VX35084 11 March 2006

Donald E Baker VX93609 25 March 2006

Jack M Catherall VX32634 08 May 2006

R J Crellin VX48078

Beverley Blanksby Lt. Col. AM RFD ED 16 May 2006

All members of the 2124th Battalion Association offer their deepest sympathy and understanding to those bereaved by the passing of members of the association

## **Anzac Day March**

You could not have asked for better weather for the 2006 ANZAC Day march. This year, members and relatives assembled in Flinders Street in readiness for the march down St Kilda Road to the Shrine of Remembrance. By having the assembly point in Flinders Street, instead of last years assembly in Collins Street, the 9th Division veterans were spared marching one city block. There was a good attendance with veterans, sons, daughters, grandchildren and relatives generating an enthusiastic and emotional atmosphere prior to the march.

Members caught up with old mates, made some new ones, lots of banter and then,... we f\_nned up for the march. A few of the boys were grateful to accept a ride in "jeeps" offered to us by volunteers. As the years pass there will possibly be more and more accepting this option.

The march, unfortunately, was quite slow this year with a few hold ups but, as usual, we can be proud of the way our unit marched. With our President leading, the unit looked impressive and professional.

Following the march our bus driver did a great job in "locating" us all and showed great care and consideration in delivering us safely to Pascoe Vale RSL. We especially wish to thank Peter Wright, son of the late Clarrie Wright, of the Morland Bus Company for their continued support over many years.

I have listed below some of the people who marched and I apologise to the many that I missed. With our Unit squashed between the 2/23rd and the 2/4Sth at the assembly point, it was difficult to make up a list.

Alan Macfarlane; Robin Mitchell; Bob Clark; Lyn Masters; Rod Wilson; Eric Edwards; Keith Clark; Charley Scales; Ken Dobson; Alan Nicholson; Max Oakley.

## **Lunch**

Following the march members and families returned to the Pascoe Vale RSL to enjoy a lovely meal. The seventy six people who attended the lunch enjoyed the food and the opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet some new ones. Our President, Alan Macfarlane, was our Master of Ceremonies and welcomed us all. Door prizes were kindly donated by the Pascoe Vale RSL.

A very special thank you to the great staff of the Pascoe Vale RSL for their hospitality. All in all a long day but a memorable one.

*Looking for articles in old "Furphys" I came across the following items. The first, a Toast to our Battalion, I feel sure was written by the original "Furphy Flyer" editor, Joe Moloney.*

Today is our first birthday and this year has seen us emerge from the chrysalis of the 10th Training Battalion, Wangaratta, to the fully fledged member of the AIF - proud members of a fine Battalion.

Looking back over the successive stages of our development - the Bonegilla march - the sea trip (with its occasional involuntary tributes to Neptune) - the training in Palestine - the 'Spowers Handicaps' (there was movement-at the c amp; for the word had got around that the Halt from BHQ had got away!) the Championship won by our band - the move up to Torca as self styled Libyan Tourists - the withdrawal and final stoppage at Tobruk as full members of the Libyan Harriers - our first visit to the Salient - our life under fire. All these afford a vista containing many highlights, ranging from grave to gay - but all playing their part in forging the bonds of friendship which have grown between us and which we will never forget while life lasts.

We salute the vanished year and our fallen mates - we look forward to the coming year, full of confidence in our Destiny, secure in the knowledge that we will share with our brothers in arms the fruits of final victory.

**GENTLEMEN, THE BATTALION!**

*This next item is from the July 1961 Furphy Flyer, a Special Twentieth Anniversary Edition, with a Foreword written by Lt Col Allan Spowers, D.S.O. MC, Commander 2/24 Australian Infantry Battalion.*

Birthdays should always be occasions that are worth remembering and the twentieth anniversary of the day on which the "Furphy Flyer" first saw light is one of those that we cannot allow to pass without some celebration or, at least, acknowledgement.

In July 1941 we were occupying the S.W. part of the Tobruk Perimeter (one of the quietest sections) gradually building up our rifle coys strength. After a discussion with my "I" Officer, Bob Searle, we decided that daily authentic news was badly needed to keep up morale at a time when boredom and monotony combined with the hottest period of summer were bearing down hard on all concerned, and the "I" Section was detailed to go into action and produce a daily news sheet.

Bob Serle turned to his ever reliable section and so Joe Moloney and Tony Fatouros set themselves to listening-in to the BBC short wave broadcasts with the aid of 9th Div Sigs, also collecting contributions from Battalion personnel.

The name "Furphy Flyer" was selected by Tony Fatouros, and from then on, no matter what the difficulties of typing, duplicating and distribution, one copy per section arrived at Coy HQ's with the rations for the remainder of the siege. During the Battalions subsequent sojourn in Palestine the original issues of the "Furphy Flyer" were printed as a Battalion souvenir.

Right through the months in Palestine, Syria and again when the Battalion went into action again at El Alamein the "Furphy Flyer" was produced.

In New Guinea it was produced for a short time at Milne Bay until such time as the Army itself published and distributed news sheets which reached forward units regularly.

Now, twenty years later, the Battalion is being served by the "Furphy Flyer in Mufti", and throughout that whole period under a succession of editors it has served us faithfully and well.

Personalities connected with the production of the two papers from the 28th July 1941 to 28th July 1961 include many well known Battalion identities - Joe Moloney, Tony Fatouros, Bob Serle, Ewen French, Alf Dore, Dave Griffin, Terry Jones, Alan Devereux, Bill Love, Jim Halloran, Bert Holm, Chas Wangemenn, Frank Gooderham, Mal Good, Ch as Weir, Gordon Annear, Arthur Freeman, Keith Schroder, John Shattock, Ken Dobson, Arthur Phillips and Lin and Mary Canty.

Our Battalion paper is a living memorial to the men who are no longer with us, their service to fellow comrades is an example to us all.

*A peep back in time.....from a 1941 Tobruk "Furphy Flyer".*

*From Screwballs Column, produced by Tony Fatouros.*

An Italian staff officer was reporting to Mussolini on the gravity of the situation in North Africa. When Mussolini began to question him, he said, "The Australians are in the fighting line".

"Australians" snapped the Duce, "Who are they?"

"They are savages from the Antipodes, Il Duce," was the reply, "and tremendous fighters. I believe that 11 of them defeated all England a few years ago!"

## **LETTERS**

### **Received by our President and Secretary**

*From Allan Rooke of Killarney Vale NSW... ..*

Enclosed subs and donation. Can't be at reunions, I cannot go too far these days. Thanks for the Furphy Flyer, really enjoy it and look forward to it coming. Happy New year to all. *Thanks for your note Allan, best wishes to you.*

*From Jack Collins and Family of McCrae VIC.....*

Dear Michael, enclosed are my 2006 subs and a donation towards work on the Memorial Wall. The Wangaratta Reunion again was a great success as usual, thanks to all the hard work done by Committee and local Volunteers. All the very best to you and your family. *Nice to hear from Jack.*

*From Bill Horrigan of Beaumaris VIC, relative of the late Bert Landrigan, VX94289.....*

Enclosed are my 2006 Subs and a donation for Battalion Funds. Kind regards to all members, their families and other associates. I keenly await and continue to enjoy the contents of the Furphy.

*Thanks for your support Bill, it is appreciated.*

*From Joan Monds of Croydon VIC ..... Enclosed is donation to help cover the cost of the "Furphy Flyer". I enjoy reading it and can relate to some of the names. Keep up the good work. Thank you Joan. Best wishes to you.*

*From Anne Bonner of Monterey NSW. .... Enclosed is a donation to the Association. I enjoy reading the "Furphy Flyer" and keeping up with what is happening, even from a distance! -Many thanks and best wishes to all. And our best wishes and thanks to you Anne.*

*From Ambrose Bourke of Mt Druitt NSW... ..*

Enclosed are my dues and a donation to the association. It's a bit hard to make it to ANZAC Day, I have now reached 87 and the RTA has reduced my travel to 100 kilometres. Thanks for the "Furphy Flyer", keep up the good works. *Good to hear from you Ambrose, all the best.*

*From Morrie Parry of Leongatha VIC ... ..*

Just a short note with my subs and donation. "We both, Val and I, enjoy reading the "Furphy Flyer", it keeps me in touch with all that is going on. Val's brother was killed in Syria, he was in the 2114th Battalion, she enjoys reading all the news too. We are both keeping reasonably well owing to our age, but doubt whether I will get down to the march this year. We went to the Dawn Service last year, with our daughters. All the best to you all for the coming year. *Thank you for your note Morrie, I hope 2006 is all you and Val hope it to be.*

*From N H Mogridge "Moggy" of Sale VIC ...*

Enclosed are my 2006 subs. My wife and I had a very pleasant afternoon being amongst the large number of guests at Arthur Fitzpatrick's 90th birthday on the 18th March. As Arthur says, 17th March is St Patrick's day, 18th March is Fity Patrick's day. Arthur is hale and hearty although he has scaled down his busy community work that he carried out for so many years. *Thanks for telling us about Arthur's big day Moggy, all the best to you. (With regard to your question, the Aug 2005 Furphy carried that item)*

*From Fred White of Lindisfarne, TAS dated 21/2/06 .....*

Please inform members I will be in attendance on ANZAC Day in Melbourne this year. I will be accompanied by my brother Gordon (MID) who was a member of HMAS Sydney with the RAN. He was in the Mediterranean Sea in 1940 during which he encountered the Italian heavy Cruiser Bartolomio Collioni and the Destroyer Espro, both of which were sunk by the Sydney. - We are both EDA Veterans, fortunately we are still on our feet, we are well into our eighties so we won't be able to march any more unfortunately.

I look forward very much to the occasion as I was an original member of the 2/24th battalion at Wangaratta. I often reflect back to the occasion when we marched out of Wangaratta in 1940 on the day night exercise to Bonegilla, particularly the farewell by the Citizens of that popular country town. I can assure you it was an event especially nice to remember. Just to fill you in on my Army record, I embarked from Port Melbourne to the

Middle east with the Battalion on the Strathmore 17th November 1940. I later served with the 2/34 AGT in the Middle East and returned to Australia in 1942 with the 7th Division and served in New Guinea in 1943, and was a member of the task Force landing at Balikpapan South East Borneo in July 1945 with the Amphibious Dukws.

Kind regards and best wishes to all. *Thanks for your letter Fred. Good to hear that you and Gordon are "still on our feet". Our best wishes to you both.*

*From Mrs Rayda Noble of Bonbeach VIC ... .. Dear Frank, I worked for the Rats of Tobruk Association, Vic Branch, for over 20 years. Due to personal reasons I sadly resigned in 2004.*

*February of this year I notified over 80 descendants of deceased Rats of Tobruk that a Fig Tree had been planted in the gardens of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance and a service to dedicate the tree would be held on Sunday 19th February.*

*I telephoned Mrs Agnes McMahon, the widow of Basil McMahon (2/24th Btn POW) and her son Mark McMahon attended the service with his two sons Ben and Jacob. The two young boys were asked to hold the Banner of the Rats of Tobruk Association. Their grandmother, Agnes, was unable to attend as she was recovering from a stroke. Mark took plenty of photographs for Agnes to view. She was a very proud grandmother. Basil never talked to his family about his time in the AIF. I introduced Agnes to Alan Macfarlane about five years ago and she now receives your newsletter.*

*Charlie Scales kindly delivers his newsletter to my home. Congratulations Frank, I really enjoy reading the "Furphy Flyer in" Mufti". Kindest regards. Rayda, it's obvious that you have cared for, and still do care, for the "Rats of Tobruk" and their families. Thank you for letter and those kind words.*

*This next letter was sent to Alan and Faye in December last year. It's from Zoe Mair of Dungog in NSW. ... ..*

*It has been a good year with a few health set backs but that is to be expected and not worth mentioning. Lost a few good friends, made others and I continue to enjoy country life. I sometimes think that I will one day have to move from my small acreage to a house in town but I will put it off for as long as possible, don't know how I would cope without my daily dose of morning birdsong and wallabies hopping over the front lawn. Really as long as I can drive I have no need to leave here. I am very comfortable and have wonderful neighbours. I meant to make the trip to Wangaratta this year, with John's eldest son Peter, but I was shot into hospital with a breathing problem and had to give it a miss. Pete was very disappointed and so was I, but maybe in 2006.*

*I have just invested in a digital SLR camera which is giving me endless hours of fun. I think what excites me about computers and their off-shoots is the continual learning curve. I am completely self taught and find that I make new discoveries about what I can do daily. I really wish I had been born 30 years later so that could have been more involved in this exciting technology. I wish you a happy and healthy 2006. Best wishes to you Zoe, your words paint a wonderful picture of country life with morning birdsong and hopping wallabies.*

*From Clem Eastick of Nhill ..... Please find enclosed annual subs. Health wise not to bad; a bit of gout. It must be the tomatoes because I know it is not the whisky. The doctor gives me a few pills to keep me plodding along. I hope you are feeling better "Eddie Shilling". Regards to all. Thanks for your medical advice Clem, I will be pulling out my tomato plants tomorrow*

*We have also had contact and notes from Jack Devlin from Trafalgar VIC; Les Morris of Wyndhamvale VIC; Len McKenna of Wodonga; Joan Dare of Sandringham VIC; Maudie Stevens; Bob Robinson of Gatton QLD; Jessie Lewis of Dandenong VIC; Bob McGrath of Vermont South VIC; "Duke" Twentyman from A/tona; Joy Pigdon from Portarlinton; Beth Hodge of Mortlake and Hec Frankel to name but a few. They pass on their best wishes to all members.*



On the 20th April this year I had the pleasure of attending a talk about the Siege at Tobruk and how it impacted on one of our members. The talk, at the Shrine of Remembrance, was given by Dr Mark Johnston of Scotch College, an author of two books that feature the 2/24th; *Alamein: The Australian Story* and *The Magnificent 9th*. Mark talked about the 2/24th, its formation and why it was involved at Tobruk and then Alan Nicholson, our Vice President, took over and talked of his capture and life as a Prisoner of War.

Among those there to support Mark and Alan were Battalion members Alan Macfarlane, Charlie Scales, Keith Clark, Rob Mitche11, Ken Dobson, Bob Clark, Eric Edwards, John Kelly plus the Nicholson family, Dawn Simmons and daughter Helen and Peter Kelly.

There were about 140 attendees which included secondary students from St Columbines College, Bendigo Catholic College and Wangaratta High School. It was great to see the students and teachers from Wangaratta and I know the Battalion members enjoyed taking to them and answering their questions after the talk. Charlie Scales also said he was thrilled to address the students at the Eternal Flame before the talk.

Mark, very kindly, sent me a copy of his notes for the "Furphy Flyer". Because there is insufficient space for me to include it all in this edition I will conclude the talk in the August edition and also include Alan's notes.

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### *A Surviving Rat*

Imagine you meet a stranger who tells you that in his youth he was an AFL or VFL footballer. The first question you'd probably ask would be: "What team were you in?" We identify players by their teams. With Australian soldiers, the teams they were in, called units in the army, were important to their identity too. One key to understanding any individual soldier's war is his unit, so I'm going to explain the background to Alan Nicholson's war by recounting the early events of his unit's career. Every soldier was simultaneously a member of several units, ranging from a section of fewer than 10 men up to an army of as many as 100,000 men. Two of the most important of these organisations in Alan's experience were the 2/24th Battalion and the 9th Division, which I'll explain in a minute.

First we need to think about the year 1940, the first full year of World War 2. Until May 1940 it seemed as if the war was not going to be as destructive as World War 1. Germany had invaded Poland, but then things had gone quiet.

However, in May 1940 everything changed. Germany attacked France. By mid-June France was defeated and Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium had also been conquered by the German blitzkrieg or lightning war tactics.

There was great anxiety in Britain, the only country in Europe still opposing Hitler. There was great anxiety in Australia too, where until then there had been a good deal of apathy about the war. A great recruiting drive began in Australia in May 1940. We had already raised one full division of volunteers, with another on the way - a division being about 13,000 to 18,000 men, but sufficient men quickly came forward to form another two. Alan was one of them.

The volunteers were all members of the Second Australian Imperial Force or AIF, a force like that raised in the First World War for overseas service. The four infantry divisions of this AIF were numbered the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th. You might wonder why they weren't called the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th. The reason is that as well as the AIF there were was another Australian army, called the militia, and consisting of other Australian soldiers who had not volunteered for overseas service but had volunteered or been conscripted for service in Australia itself. This militia was organised into 5 divisions, numbered 1st to 5th, so to avoid confusion, the first of the new AIF divisions raised was called the 6th. Of course the men of the 6th Division were proud of being the first to volunteer. They called themselves '39ers', for most joined in 1939 and when they came across men in the higher numbered divisions, they tended to tease them with comments like 'What took you so long?' or words not quite so polite. Most soldiers who joined the AIF in the first half of the war ended up in one of the four divisions. As I mentioned, in Alan Nicholson's case it was the 9th Division, but when he first joined up, in June 1940 he was allocated to a unit that was part of the 7th Division.

That unit was the 2/24th Battalion. It's an odd sounding name, and it's connected again to the fact that before the 2nd AIF was raised, the Australian army had the militia. When the heads of that army were

naming the new battalions of the AIF there was already a 1st battalion, 2nd battalion, etc all the way up to a 62nd Battalion in the militia. Rather than start the new battalions with numbers like cricket scores, they decided to put a 2 and a slash in front of their numbers, so there'd be a second first battalion, a Second second battalion, and in the case of Alan's new unit, a Second 24th Battalion.

The 2/24th Battalion was raised in Victoria in July 1940, when its first commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Allan Spowers was appointed to command it. He had already received the Distinguished Service Order and Military Cross as a member of the British Army in the First World War. Most of the battalion's recruits passed through a Reception Depot at Caulfield Racecourse. The 2/24th was allocated a camp being built in Bonegilla in north-eastern Victoria. In the meantime the battalion was sent to the Wangaratta Showgrounds camp. One of the first two other ranks posted to the 2/24th was Lance-Corporal Alan Macfarlane, who is with us here today.

The unit's history says that the 2/24th stuck to the principle 'as ye train so shall ye fight', in other words, if you train well you fight well. It's a bit of a myth about Australian soldiers that they were terribly behaved when not on a battlefield and then fantastic on it. The bit about being fantastic on it may be largely true, but modern armies can't function without training, and most veterans recall that the Australian army trained hard. Lieutenant-Colonel Spowers was a hard and sometimes fearsome taskmaster, but he did more than any other individual to make the 2/24th an efficient unit.

Neither officers nor men had much equipment to train with. There was clothing, rifles and bayonets, but vehicles and new weapons were sadly lacking. For example, the 2/24th received no submachine-guns, crucial weapons in World War II, until the siege of Tobruk, and in fact after the action in which Alan Nicholson was captured.

In Wangaratta, the local people were soon calling the newly arrived battalion 'Wangaratta's own', and they treated the soldiers with the kindness and generosity that name suggests. Wangaratta's hospitality has never been forgotten by the veterans of the 2/24th and the relationship between veterans and Wangaratta is still strong. Amongst all the good impressions, the troops did have at least one bad memory of 'Wang', in the form of the long route marches that were part of everyday training. Their first one was 30 kilometres on 7 September. When on 27 September, the battalion set out on a 90 kilometre march, to the new camp at Bonegilla, the whole of Wangaratta turned out to farewell them. The town also presented the battalion with a 4-metre pennant, which Sergeant Alan Macfarlane carried on the first stage of the march. The battalion history says that Alan found the going tough, largely because, unknown to him, one of his 'mates' had put two bricks in his pack before the march began.

When the unit reached Bonegilla the camp wasn't really ready. Some huts had no roofs, or proper toilets. Lieutenant-Colonel Spowers thought it best to give the men 6 days' leave. On their return they moved to more complex training, including firing on a rifle range for the first time.

16 November found the 2/24th at Port Melbourne, boarding the transport ship Strathmore, a former P & O liner that had often visited pre-war Australia. It had been a luxury liner, so men stayed in relative comfort in cabins with fitted wooden bunks or hammocks.

After a brief stopover in Ceylon, they sighted Egypt on 12 December. The unit historian says 'The Arabs at their prayers, the donkeys- and the camels, the mud huts, the tiny patches of cultivation - all were strange and new.' There were servicemen everywhere too. The Australians were warned to beware of the locals and especially of their fruit, which had reportedly been 'washed' in urine rather than water.

The 2/24th was sent to Palestine to join thousands of other Commonwealth troops training there. They'd been happy to replace their giggle suits with shorts and shirts or woollen service dress, but when they saw the superb turnout of British troops, especially the Scots, they felt a bit lacking in elegance. They were proud of something unique to their uniforms: their colour patch. It was a red and white diamond on a grey background. In late 1942, all 9th Division units would receive a T shaped patch and you can see some on ties of the 2/24th's vets here today.

In Palestine came more tough training: on Saturdays the 2/24th usually had a 35 kilometre route march. All the preparation received an extra purpose when in January the men heard that the 6th Division had entered Libya, an Italian colony from which the Italians had invaded Egypt in late 1940 before being pushed back. The 6th won crushing victories over the Italians, capturing their fortified towns of Bardia and Tobruk. The 2/24th, to whom the name Tobruk meant nothing at this point, worried that the way things were going they'd have nothing to do in this war.

On 26 February 1941 400 men of the unit received leave. Most visited Jerusalem, on what would be their last day of freedom for months, or even years. The battalion's 900 men were tremendously fit and eager, and were thrilled when on 10 March 1941 they were told that they were about to be sent to an area of operations. They were still short of training in many areas. For example, they had no experience working with artillery or tanks. They had few heavy weapons like mortars and medium machine-guns. Some 9th Division infantrymen had never thrown a grenade. Nevertheless, it was believed that they would have time for this. They were about to be sent to Libya, where the 6th Division and British army had captured Benghazi and all but eliminated the Italians. General Wavell had decided to withdraw the 6th Division from the desert so that it could be sent to Greece, where a German invasion seemed imminent. There were reports of small German forces landing in North Africa, at Tripoli, but Wavell considered it unlikely that they would be able to attack for a long time. The 9th Division would be able to hold this quiet front while learning more about war and slowly equipping. Unfortunately Wavell was unaware that in command of these German forces was one of the war's finest and most aggressive leaders, General Erwin Rommel.

Until February the 2124th had been part of the 7th Division, but that month it and the other two battalions of its brigade were transferred to the 9th Division. As I mentioned, the most prestigious divisions were those with the lowest numbers, so to be sent to the division with the highest number was at first annoying to the 2/24th. Not many members would have regretted it afterwards, as the 9th became the most famous of all the divisions. Then again, it suffered the highest casualties.

So the division began a long journey by train and truck. They passed through Tobruk, and through dust storms that reduced visibility to a few metres. They saw the characteristic desert vegetation, of small camel thorn bushes, surrounded by little mounds of sand. They saw that desert was often more rocky than sandy. For 8 days they paused at Gazala, about 50 kilometres west of Tobruk. With no tents, they had to construct their own accommodation. However, they were more fortunate than British and Australian troops further west, who on 24 March 1941 were attacked and forced back by a German assault. Two days later the 2/24th were ordered west to Tobra, a beautiful green place that the Italians had settled between the wars. The Australians weren't able to fully appreciate its beauty, for they realised they had no weapons that could adequately protect them from the German tanks that were motoring across Libya.

It soon became apparent that the Australian troops were in danger of being cut off. There followed a confusing, headlong retreat, later called 'The Benghazi Handicap'. In one day the 2/24th, which had no opportunity even to fire a shot, travelled 270 kilometres to Gazala. On 9 April they were sent to Tobruk, where the Italian-built defences might protect them from Rommel's seemingly unstoppable advance.

The following morning, the 2/24th Battalion and the rest of their brigade were ordered to cover the western perimeter of Tobruk, which the enemy were bound to reach first. The old Italian defence line ran in an arc some 45 kilometres long, with the average distance between the town and the perimeter 14 kilometres. The Italian defences comprised 128 concrete posts, from which men had good observation and fields of fire, a barbed-wire fence and either an anti-tank ditch or a minefield in front. However, they were so widely spaced that a determined enemy could infiltrate between them. Indeed the 6th Division had recently overcome these defences in just two days. During that assault, 25 to 50 Italians had manned each post. Now the Australians could afford only 10 or 15 men per post in this so-called 'Red Line'.

On reaching the western perimeter, the 2/24th came under machine-gun and artillery fire. Enemy vehicles drove up the main road running into Tobruk from the west that day, but some Australian infantrymen fired two Italian artillery pieces at them, and with great good luck, knocked out the leading armoured car. They destroyed 7 other vehicles that day, and the Axis forces stopped, realising that they could no longer simply advance without a fight. The next day 11 April, the axis forces completely surrounded Tobruk. The siege had begun. For 8 months everyone in Tobruk would depend on the sea, and more precisely the navy, for supplies and for getting in or out of the fortress.

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*I will conclude this talk, plus Alan Nicholson's notes, in the August edition of the " Furphy Flyer".*

## **Wine Lovers**

Women's Quote for the Day: "Men are like fine wine. They start out like grapes, and it is our job to stomp them and keep them in the dark until they mature into something we would like to have dinner with."

Men's Quote for the Day: Women are like fine wine. They all start out fresh, fruity and intoxicating to the mind, and then turn full-bodied with age until they go sour and vinegary and give you a headache."

*This next item was sent in by Keith Clark.*

### **A letter to Mum and Dad from a kid from Eromanga, a small town in far south west Queensland.**

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am well. Hope youse are too. Tell me big brothers Doug and Phil that the Anny is better than workin' on the farm - tell them to get in quick smart before the jobs are all gone!

I wuz a bit slow in settling down at first, because ya don't hafta get outta bed until 6 am. But I like sleeping in now, cuz all you gotta do before brekky is make ya bed and shine ya boots and clean ya uniform. No cows to milk, no calves to feed, no feed to stack - nothin'!! Blokes haz gotta shave though, but it's not so bad, coz there's lots of hot water and even a light to see what ya doing!

At brekky ya get cereal, fruit and eggs but there's no kangaroo steaks or possum stew like wot Mum makes. Ya don't get fed again until noon, and by that time all the city boys have had it because we've been on a 'route march' - geeze it's only just like walking to the windmill in the back paddock!!

This one will kill me brothers Doug and Phil with laughter. I keep getting medals for shootin - dunno why.

The bullseye is as big as a possum's bum and it don't move and it's not firing back at ya like the Johnsons did when our big scrubber bull got into their prize cows before the Ekka last year. All ya gotta do is make yourself comfortable and hit the target - it's a piece of cake!! You don't even load your own cartridges they comes in little boxes and ya don't have to steady yourself against the rollbar of the roo shooting truck when you reload!

Sometimes ya gotta wrestle with the city boys and I gotta be real careful coz they break easy - it's not like fighting with Doug and Phil and Jack and Boori and Steve and Muzza all at once like we do at home after muster.

Turns out I'm not a bad boxer either and it looks like I'm the best the platoon's got, and I've only been beaten by his one bloke from the Engineers - he's six foot five inches and fifteen stone and three pick handles across the shoulders and as ya know I'm only five foot seven inches and eight stone wringing wet, but I fought him till the other blokes carried me off to the boozer.

I can't complain about the Army - tell the boys to get in quick before the word gets around how good it is.

Your loving daughter... .Jill.

### **A reminder that Association subscriptions are now due.**

Members and Associate Members \$10.00 p.a.

Widows of Battalion members are not required to pay annual subscriptions.

Unfortunately, if a member is unfinancial for two consecutive years, we cannot continue to supply copies the Furphy Flyer in Mufti.

*I received a nice note from Kev Baker, Sec/Treasurer of the 2/24th Battalion, Brisbane Branch. He has sent the following details of their Annual Luncheon, thanks Kev.*

### **Annual Luncheon, held on the 12th March at the Geebung Zillmere RSL.**

Those attending were Norm King, Mick Benson, Tom Ross, Stan McKay, Tom McLucas, Barry Evans, Walter PickeTing, Roy Theoharris, Ed O'Brien, Johnnie Gorrie and Kev Baker. They were joined by their family members who took the number present to thirty four.

An apology was sent by Johnnie Reardon who is not enjoying the best of health at present.. We send him our best wishes and any others who are not well.

Tom McLucas was MC and as usual had some interesting things to tell us, as did Johnnie Gorrie. A meeting was held before the lunch was served and the members decided they would like to try for one more reunion then meet socially from time to time.

We all enjoyed a very well presented meal and a beer or two, and for those who don't drink beer they were catered for also. There were quite a few raffles and a lucky door prize. Everyone got a \$1.00 Scratchy but I don't think anyone got the jackpot prize. If they did they didn't tell anyone.

The day ended with everyone pleased with the time we had spent together. It was a really enjoyable day.

Over the last few months we have received Annual Subscriptions and Donations from the following members. Thank you for your support and your kind donations.

#### **Subscriptions:**

Alan Macfarlane; Steven Greentree; Heath Keighley; Fred White; Jack Collins; F J Seymour; Danny Maher; Jack Devlin; Bill Horrigan; Len McKenna; The late Don Baker; Edith Cockfield; Les Adams; Nola Adams; Owen Lewis; Bob McGrath; W PickeTing; Norm King; Stan McKay; Roy Theoharris; A Bourke; R L Robinson; Morry Parry; Moggy Mogridge; The late Fred Lye; Roma Taylor; P Kelly; Clem Eastick; Joy Pigdon; Terry Parsons; Merv Twentyman

#### **Donations:**

Alan Macfarlane; Bill Horrigan; Maudie Stevens; Joan Monds; Anne Bonner; Edith Cockfield; Bob McGrath; Morry Parry; Johnnie Gorrie; Clem Eastick; Terry Parsons; Merv Twentyman; Hec Frankel; Stan McKay; A Bourke

### **Facelift for 9th Division Memorial**

The 9th Division (2nd AIF) memorial at El Alamein has recently been renovated in a joint undertaking by the Dept of Veteran Affairs and 9th Div. Association. The renovation, which included the building of a chain and bollard fence around the memorial was organised through the Australian Embassy in Cairo by DVA's Office of War Graves. The memorial was dedicated in 1989 by the then Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General LG O'Donne11 AG, and recognises the decisive role played by the 9th Division at the 1942 Battle of El Alamein.

### **Welcome to New Member**

**Roma Taylor**, niece of the late Fred Lye.

It's with much pleasure that we welcome Roma as a new Associate Member to the 2/24th Aust. Infantry Battalion Association.

## News Items

Thank you to Jean Aitken, widow of Stan Aitken, for the donation of a Rats of Tobruk blazer pocket to the Association. Your generosity is appreciated.

### Wall Plaques

Our President has requested that anyone who has a 2/24th Wall Plaque and, is not using it anymore or has a surplus of wall plaques, could they please return it to the Association. Alan can be contacted on 9884 9378, hope you can assist.

### Birthday Boy

Great to hear that Arthur Fitzpatrick celebrated his 90th birthday in March. Well done Arthur, we wish you all the best.

### Lawn Bowls

Congratulations to Keith Clark on his being awarded a Service Award by the Northwest RSL Lawn Bowls Association. The Award, for his outstanding work with the Association over many years, was well deserved. Well done Keith.

Last month Eric Edwards was invited by History teacher, Jane Brown, to speak of his War time experiences at the Flinders Christian Community College in Carrum Downs. Eric, a Prisoner of War, enjoyed talking to the students and I'm sure the students were enthralled with his story. Well done Eric.

It was sad to hear of the death of C.C. "Mick" Bailey OAM. Mick was Secretary of the 2/8th Australian Field Regiment and this year's ANZAC day marked his 48th year as Secretary of that Association, surely a record for the Secretary of any Army Unit Association. Our thoughts are with the family and members of the 2/8th Aust Field Regiment Association.

### 60

On the 4th May this year Val and Dick Wilson celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. The couple received many warm wishes from relatives and friends, plus, a letter and photograph from Queen Elizabeth, -a letter from the Prime Minister and a letter from the Governor General.

All Battalion members send their heartiest congratulations.

### A prayer for ANZAC Day

God of love and liberty, we bring our thanks this day for the peace and security we enjoy, which was won for us through the courage and devotion of those who gave their lives in time of war. We pray that their labour and sacrifice may not be in vain, but that their spirit may live on in us and in generations to come. That the liberty, truth and justice which they sought to preserve may be seen and known in all the nations upon earth. This we pray in the name of the one who gave his life for the sake of the world, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*This next item was kindly forwarded to me, via Keith Clark, from Jean Aitken, widow of Stan Aitken.*

### **The Passing Parade**

We met and we were married a long time ago  
 We worked for long hours when the wages were low  
 No TV, no Wireless, no bath, times were hard  
 Just a cold water tap, and a walk in the yard  
 No holidays abroad, no carpet on the floor  
 We had no coal on the fires and we didn't lock the doors.

Our children arrived, no pill in those days  
 And we brought them up without state aid  
 They were safe going out to play in the street  
 The old folks could go for a walk in the dark  
 No Valium, no drugs, no LSD  
 We cured most of our ills with a good cup of tea.

No vandals, no muggins, there was nothing to rob  
 We felt rich with a couple of "bob"  
 People were happy in those far off days  
 Kinder and caring in so many ways  
 Milkman and paper-boy would whistle and sing  
 A night at the pictures was our one mad fling.

We all had our share of trouble and strife  
 We just had to face it and that's the pattern of life  
 Now I'm alone and look back through the years  
 I don't think of the bad times, trouble and tears  
 I remember the blessings, our home and our love  
 And that we shared them together, I thank God above.

### **The Ceremony of Silence**

At every RSL function, no matter how small, members stand in silence for a brief interval to remember departed comrades. At Leagues Clubs around Australia the Remembrance Silence has become part of the nightly ritual when every light, other than the Memorial Flame, is dimmed - members stand in silence and the Ode is read.

The concept of Remembrance Silence appears to have originated with an Australian journalist, Edward George Honey, born in St Kilda in 1885 and died in London in 1922. Honey published a letter in the London Evening News on 5 May, 1919, in which he appealed for a five minutes silence amid all the joy-making planned to celebrate the first anniversary of the end of the War. No official action was taken until 27 October, 1919, when the matter was presented to the King's private secretary. King George was very moved with the idea and adopted it immediately.

A rehearsal with the Grenadier Guards for a five minutes silence was held at Buckingham Palace - it proved too long and two minutes was felt to be adequate. On the 7 November, 1919, the King issued a proclamation asking that the hour when the Armistice came into force, the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, there may be, for the brief space of two minutes, a complete suspension of normal activities, so that in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
 Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn,  
 At the going down of the Sun and in the morning  
 We will remember them.

*It is interesting to note that there is a memorial to Edward Honey, in Birdwood Avenue, near the Shrine.*

**THE BATTALION BIRTHDAY LUNCH --- FRIDAY 30 JUNE 2006**  
**12 FOR 12.30 AT P ASCOE VALE R.S.L**

Coming up in June we have the Annual Birthday Lunch. The cost is approximately \$13.00 for a two course meal with tea and coffee provided. (Please pay on the day)

If it is your intention to attend could you please phone one of the following Members and advise the number that will be attending the lunch :

Michael Oakley	9772 3302
Janice Young	0414782557
Alan Macfarlane	9884 9378
Robin Mitchell	9304 2516

If you are unlucky enough to get a recorded message, just leave your name and the number attending. Thank you.

Also coming up is our Wangaratta Weekend on the 10th, 11th and 12th of November.

The events at Wangaratta - the Memorial Wall Service at the Cemetery; the Reception and Dinner at the Town Hall; the Service at Cenotaph; and the BBQ lunch - all make for a memorable and enjoyable weekend, a weekend that is an important part of the 2/24th Battalion Association.

To enable the Committee to plan for this Weekend could you please advise us of your intention to come and the possible number of guests who will accompany you.

This request is only to gauge possible numbers. A form giving more details about the weekend and asking for more information will be sent out in the next "Furphy".

Please phone one of the following Members advising us of the number that you think will be attending:

Michael Oakley	9772 3302
Janice Young	0414782557
Alan Macfarlane	98849378
Robin Mitchell	9304 2516

### **Important**

As with last year we are asking you to book your own accommodation for our Wangaratta Reunion. The following is a list of toll free / phone numbers for you to ring.

Merriwa, now Park View Motor In-n .....1800032475

Warby Lodge..... 1800 806 720

Wangaratta Motor Inn.....035721 5488

Heritage Motor Inn .....1800066679

El Portego, now Ryley Motor Inn..... 0357216388

Please indicate that you are part of the 2/24th Reunion and please specify room number or upstairs or downstairs room requirements. The staff are waiting for your call and I know they will assist you. Thank you.