2/2nd PIONEER BATTALION ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER **DECEMBER 2011**

BATTLE HONOURS

Middle East
Syria
Java
New Guinea
Tarakan
Balikpapan

SECRETARY
Jenny Davidson

PRESIDENT
Col Hamley

TREASURER
Ken Fraser

EDITOR Tom Prince

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary

Coming events

Association AGM	Thursday, April 12, Fairfield-Alphington RSL (1:30pm start — all members welcome)
Annual reunion	Saturday, April 21, Fairfield-Alphington RSL
ANZAC Day march	Wednesday, April 25
Annual pilgrimage	Sunday, June 17, Shrine of Remembrance



Vale: Edward John (Ted) Hansen

Ted Hansen passed away on September 19, 2011. We remember him for his great contribution to the Association. The funeral was very well attended, with **President Col Hamley** conducting the RSL Service and **Sue Tovey** speaking about Ted's role in encouraging the Younger Generation to get involved with the Pioneers. Col's address (below) honoured the service Ted gave to Australia, his fellow men, and the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion Association.

We are assembled here today to pay our last tribute to Private E J Hansen, VX 58178, who served with us in war and has gone to join the great army of those who fell in battle in defence of their nation.

Ted came through the ordeal of war. How well he served will be known to his unit comrades, some of whom are gathered here today. How he served his fellow men on his return is known to members of his unit, his family and friends who mourn with me the passing of a loyal friend.

Ted enlisted in June 1941 and was posted as a reinforcement to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion in the Middle East. Soon after his arrival in the Middle East he was selected to drive to the Western Desert to pick up our new Colonel, Colonel Williams, and from then on Ted remained the Colonel's driver.

When the 7th Australian Division was recalled from the Middle East in January 1942 the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was shipped to Java to help stem the Japanese advance beyond Singapore.

After a short encounter with the Japanese, the unit (including Ted) were taken prisoner. With the Colonel's permission, Ted took the Colonel's car and drove into the hills to try and catch up with members of the Battalion who had been cut off from the remainder of the Battalion… and to destroy the car. He was later recaptured and badly beaten by the Japanese, and he did not rejoin the Battalion. He was held in Java as a prisoner for the following three and a half years, except for a short period when he was sent on a working party to Sumatra.

After the war, Ted joined the Committee of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion Association, serving as a committeeman and welfare trustee. He became President in 1973 and retained that position for some 35 years until ill health forced him to relinquish office.

In his term of office he did much to foster the interest of the younger generations to ensure the ongoing remembrance of the Battalion.

Ted served his country and his comrades well.

Col Hamley

Annual General Meeting

The following people were re-elected at the 2011 AGM: **Col Hamley** President, **Ken Fraser** Treasurer, **Jenny Davidson** Secretary and **Sue Tovey** Assistant Secretary. The Committee members are **Tom Gore**, **George Dunn**, **Harry Youens**, **David Hocking**, **Wendy Apostolopoulos**, **Colin Vincent** and newsletter Editor **Tom Prince**.

Since the AGM, the committee has been joined by **Alan Rae** and **Russell Jackman**.

Former Aussie POWs visit Japan

In March, 2011, my father Harold and I visited Japan as guests of the Japanese Government. Our visit was part of the Australia / Japan POW Friendship Program and we had travelled there with four other former POWs — **Rowley Richards**, **Fred Brett**, **Norman Anderton** and **Jack Simmonds** — along with their carers.

The hospitality and kindness shown to us was in stark contrast to the treatment Harold received almost 70 years ago. I was heartened to learn that, whilst Harold had been treated atrociously in the POW camps, some POWs of the Japanese had received kind and decent treatment.

It was a very moving scene when we visited the Japanese Foreign Minister. After all the photographers and reporters had left, we had a private meeting with Minister Maehara. There he officially apologised on behalf of the Japanese Government for the suffering that POWs had received at the hands of the Japanese. This was an important event that the POWs and their families had waited 66 years to hear — I'm thrilled that my father survived to hear the apology in person.

The Minister also handed to the former POWs a copy of their Japanese POW record, which has been sitting in a vault in Japan since WW2. The records of all POWs were to be handed to the Australian Government at a later date.

As well as touring the locations where Harold had been a POW in Japan and attending official functions, we had some more "touristy excursions" to attend to. One highlight was a visit to Nara's Todaiji Temple to see Japan's largest Buddha. We also visited the Deer Park, home to hundreds of freely roaming deer. A word of warning to anyone planning the same visit — after I bought a pack of "Special Deer Cookies" to feed the animals, I was mobbed by a pack of eager, hungry deer. One of them was smart enough to repeatedly bite me on the rear-end in an effort to try and make me drop my cookies (my father laughed at my predicament — some things just don't change).

We had a wonderful 10 days in Japan and we met many lovely people and visited lots of interesting places. Our guides Maya and Yoko cried when we had to leave.

Sadly, the day after we left was the day the devastating earthquake and Tsunami struck. I know that the time we spent there meant my father now has very kindly thoughts towards the Japanese people. That was also worth waiting to see.

Stephen Ramsey

'Better than last time'

I am pleased that I went back to Japan because things were so changed since my last stay there as a Prisoner of War in World War 2. Most of the Japanese people did not know that Japan had been at war with Australia.
I spoke to the Japanese Parliamentarians and told them that the $500 per night room we were staying in was a big improvement on my previous stay!
I am very surprised that my feelings towards the Japanese people could be changed so much by this visit and it is very good that my feelings have changed for the better.
My son, Steve, was my carer on this trip - he made me shower every 4 days whether I needed it or not - some things just don't change.
It was a beaut trip!

Harold Ramsey

ANZAC Day

Members may recall that there was some uncertainty following the announcement prior to ANZAC Day that WWII veterans would travel in cars in their divisions, with all banners together in front of them, while family members would follow at the rear.

As usual though, the 2/2nd Pioneers excelled on the day. **Col Hamley**, **Col Pitches** and **Harold Ramsey** were determined to march, while **Owen Heron**, **Clarrie Christie** and **Snowy Youens** followed in cars. 54 family members also marched directly behind our Pioneer banner.

After the march, Col attended the traditional ANZAC Day Clash Essendon-Collingwood football match at the MCG as a guest of the AFL. The cheers were loud, particularly among those of us who were at the Waterside Hotel for lunch, as his name was announced as part of the motorcade doing a lap around the MCG.

'A band of brothers'

I always thought it was an honour to march on ANZAC Day with the Battalion. However, I was thrilled this year when I was asked to be part of the group that would hold the banner and lead the way. As a bonus, my cousin **Paulette Hutchinson** would also accompany me.

It was a wonderful and very emotional experience that meant so much to me. My uncles **Gordon (Boof)** and **Jimmy Johnstone** were in the Battalion and I always felt robbed that I never got to know these family members. However, I felt that a part of them was with me on this day.

The numbers may be dwindling but I would like the men to know that, thanks to the younger generation, there will always be a march behind their banner in their memory.

It's a privilege to have known such wonderful men and the sacrifices they made will never be forgotten. We can only imagine the horrors of their war and imprisonment.

To quote Shakespeare's Henry V in his St Crispin's Day speech at the Battle of Agincourt:

"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he today that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother"

That is how I'll always think of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.

Wendy Apostolopoulos

Words from the top

The Association Committee was honoured to receive the following letter from the Victorian RSL Branch, after this year's Melbourne ANZAC Day march.

Dear Mr Hamley,

ANZAC DAY 2011

Thank you for participating in the 2011 ANZAC Day Commemoration March. I am writing to you regarding this involvement, following a review of the participating unit associations.

I am pleased to be able to congratulate your association for being well turned out and meeting the ideals and spirit of the ANZAC Day Commemoration March.

Clearly, your members are proud of the tradition, and endeavoured to apply the protocols supported by the Unit Associations and the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council.

I will appreciate you passing on my congratulations to your members and I look forward to another excellent turnout in 2012.

Yours sincerely,

LTCOL David Blackwell

Chief Marshal

ANZAC Day Commemoration Council

Important: 2012 ANZAC Day changes

Please note there will be major changes to the 2012 ANZAC Day march in Melbourne. Road works planned on Swanston Street mean all units will assemble in St Kilda Road, in front of the Arts Centre. Look out for full details in our March newsletter. The Waterside Hotel has again been booked for families to join the Pioneers at a post-march lunch.

Annual reunion

For the 2011 annual reunion, **Col Hamley**, **Snowy Youens**, **Tom Gore**, **Harold Ramsey** and **Clarrie Christie** were joined by 55 friends and family at the Fairfield-Alphington RSL for an enjoyable lunch and afternoon of socialising.

The event began with Col welcoming all present and leading a service in memory of fallen comrades. Secretary **Jenny Davidson** thanked the Pioneers for allowing the family members to share the day with them, and on behalf of all Association members expressed thanks to Col for the great job he is doing as President. She also thanked Col's wife, **Val**, for her unwavering support. Jenny then advised details of the recent AGM and the arrangements for ANZAC Day. Apologies were received from **Lorna English**, **Dorothy Willis**, **Paulette Hutchinson**, **Marita Lock**, **Eleanor and Ross Newcombe**, **Tom Prince**, **Linda Dart**, **Doris Fraser** and **Yvonne Sweeney**.

After the main course, Jenny introduced **Harold Ramsey**, who spoke briefly about his trip to Japan (see Harold's full report earlier in this newsletter) in March 2011 as part of a group of former POWs. The group had been invited by the Japanese Government to visit Japan and receive an apology from the then-Foreign Minister for the treatment they received as POWs.

His talk was followed by the Ladies' Auxiliary raffle, after which a generous cheque was presented to Col for the Association.

The 2012 Annual Reunion will be on Saturday, April 21, 2012, at the Fairfield Alphington RSL. Since the event will mark 70 years since many Pioneers became POWs of the Japanese and the Battalion was reformed, a talk will be given on these topics.

Look out for further details in the March 2012 newsletter. Remember, if you plan to attend, please reply as requested so that the organisers can get an accurate number for the catering. If we don't know how many people will be attending, the Association could either end up having to pay for excessive meals or, even worse, we could be short on meals. So do let the Association know!

The Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary raffle held at the annual reunion luncheon raised $310.60. This is down from previous years along with the number of attendees. A $200 donation was also made to the Battalion Association / Younger Generation.

A big thank you goes out to all the helpers on the day and for everyone who donated prizes.

Beatrice Fraser (**Trissie**) now resides at Benetas Colton Close (1/19 York Street, Glenroy, Vic) and would be delighted to have visitors. Trissie was the Ladies' Auxiliary Treasurer for many years and has been a great friend of all the Ladies.

Wendy Apostolopoulos

Annual pilgrimage

The Association's annual pilgrimage enjoyed an excellent turnout at the Shrine of Remembrance, on June 19, 2011. The pilgrimage began with a service at the crypt, led by **Col Hamley**, who read the names of Pioneers that had passed away since the 2010 pilgrimage. Col then continued the service, while being ably assisted by **Jenny Davidson**, **Alan Rae** and **Ann Holland**. Wreaths were laid by **Harold Ramsey** on behalf of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and **Wendy Apostolopoulos** on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary.

We adjourned to the Shrine Café where the service continued and Col spoke about the Battalion's Syrian Campaign. He talked about the battle 70 years earlier on June 17, 1941 at Fort Merdjayoun, and was accompanied by a slideshow of maps and photos. Younger Generation member **Sue Tovey** then read a letter sent by **Lt Col Wellington** written during the Syrian Campaign to the father of Pioneer **Wally Mitchell**. The letter had been passed on to Sue by Wally's sister, **Mrs Marion Brown**. This was followed by a great afternoon tea supplied by the Ladies Auxiliary, presented by Wendy and her helpers.

Please note in your calendar that next year's service will be on Sunday, June 17, 2012. The pilgrimage will mark the 71st anniversary of the date the Battalion went into action at Fort Merdjayoun.

Shrine of Remembrance exhibition

The Western Visitor Centre in the Shrine is hosting an exhibition called 'Greece, Crete and Syria — The AIF in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1941'.

One of our original Pioneers, **Tom Gore**, is featured in the display, in the form of a recently completed oil painting of Tom, accompanied by an explanation of his service in Syria with the 2/2nd Pioneers. Several Association members joined Tom for the exhibition opening in September, which by all reports was a memorable experience.

The exhibition will run until February 2012.

Obituaries

We've been advised that the following 2/2nd Pioneers have passed away since our last newsletter.

Burroughs, R.	March 2011
Dargaville, J.A.	April 2011
Hansen, E.J.	September 2011
Henry, C.	October 2005
Heron, O.L.	June 2011
Juckes, W.G.	May 2011
McLeod, N.	October 2011
Quoyle, J.A.	May 2011
Walker, R.	Unknown (NSW news)

Lest we forget

Important note:
Please let Col Hamley or Jenny Davidson know if anyone, either Pioneer or spouse, has passed away.

President's message

I would like to take this opportunity to extend to all Pioneers, widows, families and friends my best wishes for good health, happiness and prosperity over the Christmas and New Year period and for 2012.

Col Hamley

2/2nd Pioneers website

If you get a chance you're encouraged to visit the Battalion's website at www.2nd2ndpioneerbattalion.com. It contains many topics relating to the Pioneers including history, photos, soldier's profiles, soldier's stories, a notice board, coming events, and much more. Member, **Cary Sandell (grandson of late Charles Douglas)**, has put a lot of effort into setting up and managing the site. All members are encouraged to visit and contribute.

The newsletter is now available by email

If you would like the newsletter emailed to you then please forward your email address to Jenny at the following address: jada1952@bigpond.net.au

Personal Pars

Bob Sefton wrote in reference to the request in a previous newsletter that he remembers "Cpl Bill Prince in the Mortar Platoon as a fairly quiet, decent sort of bloke who was very approachable and helpful to young private soldiers such as I was". Thanks Bob.

Neil MacPherson extends an invitation to anyone interested in joining him for the 2012 Quiet Lion Tour to Thailand, taking in ANZAC Day. Neil can be contacted via email at macpherson.bros@bigpond.com

Wendy Apostolopoulos and her family wish to thank the Association for their kindness and sympathy following the passing of Wendy's mother, **Shirley Johnstone**.

Brendan Quoyle wrote to advise the Association of the unexpected passing of his father, **John Anthony Quoyle**, on May 29, 2011. Brendan says his father very much looked forward to each new instalment of the newsletter, and would read it many times. "He would very rarely discuss the war," says Brendan. "Like many, he was proud to serve, but sought not to boast or brag," he says.

Phil Barnett from Alstonville, NSW, wrote to say that he sends his best wishes "to those who keep the Association functioning."

Bonnie Dargaville writes to tell us of the passing of her father, **Jack Dargaville** in Tasmania**.** She says the funeral was just as Jack would have liked it, with about 150 people attending the service. Her son, **Chris**, came over to speak about "his wonderful papa" and Bonnie then gave a 15 minute eulogy. A friend of Jack's then played The Last Post.
Bonnie says Jack's wife, **June**, was unable to attend. June has dementia and doctors advised against bringing her along. However, Bonnie says that she and Chris did take June to Jack's grave the next day.
"I hope to catch up with **Tom Gore** next time I'm in Melbourne — hopefully, it won't be too long," says Bonnie.
Anyone who would like a copy of Jack's funeral service sheet should contact the Association Secretary.

Colleen Hains (nee Naylor) wishes to thank Bob and Rose Milliken for their good wishes. Colleen says it's nice to know they had good memories of her father, **Melbourne (Mel) George Naylor**. She says she was sad to read in the Herald Sun of the passing of one of her dad's good friends, **Wally Juckes**.
Colleen had enclosed some photos from old reunions and says she would love to know who was featured (these photos are on the attached photo page). She identified **Mick Green** as one of them and says he was a great friend of her dad's, adding that he used to call and see her dad when he passed through Beaufort going to the Stawell Gift.
"Was that our President, Col Hamley, being driven around the MCG on ANZAC Day?" asks Colleen (it certainly was!). She sends her regards to all and adds that she loves receiving the newsletter.

Marie Foley wrote to say thank you for the newsletter. Her husband **Jack [J.W. Foley, VX 70699]**, passed away in 2006 after many years of ill health. Marie says he always enjoyed the newsletter and regretted being unwell and not close enough to Melbourne to be able to attend the reunions.

Dawn Mackay writes to say thank you for being included as a new member of the Association. Dawn says her father died as a result of his imprisonment by the Japanese, on the Burma Railway. She was an only-child and quite young, but she says her memories of him are quite vivid. Her mother lived until she was 94 and she spent a good part of her life with her and the family. Dawn adds that she is looking forward to more Association news.

Emily McDiarmid emailed the Association after discovering the website. She would be thrilled to hear from anyone who knew her grandfather, **Geoffrey Thorn**. Emily can be emailed on emily_mc_diarmid@hotmail.com or called on 0431 098080.

Please keep those letters coming! We love receiving your letters and hearing your news. Others also look forward to catching up with those they cannot see or speak to, via the newsletter.

Donations

Your donations are always gratefully received and we thank everyone for their generosity.

Please keep up the good work.

$200	Ladies Auxiliary, Karen Duncan (for Ken Duncan)
$150	John and Patricia Carroll (for George Carroll)
$100	Iris Taylor (sister of Pte Doug Wrathall and mother to Doug Andrews)
$60	Clarrie and Shane Christie
$50	John Milliken
$40	Pat Leviston (Hains)
$38	Marie O'Connor (daughter of R.S. Hunt)
$30	Jack Hearn
$25	Joy Preedy, Ross Brittle, Bob Sefton
$20	Milada Matek (Barry Young), Joy Hocking and Sue Bramberry (nee Hocking), Phil Barnett
$15	Snowy Youens
$10	Betty Farlow, Frances McKay, Harold Ramsey
$5	Jean Williams, Les Clarke

And now for some humour…

An Irishman wants to apply for a job, but the foreman decides he must first pass a demeaning math test.
"Here is your first question," the foreman says. "Without using numbers, represent the number 9 on this piece of paper."
"Without numbers?" says the Irishman. "Dat is easy." And he proceeds to draw three trees.
"What's this?" the boss asks. "Have you ain't got no brain? Tree and tree plus tree makes 9," says the Irishman.
"I see…" says the boss, rather unimpressed. "Here's your second question then. Use the same rules, but this time represent the number is 99."
The Irishman stares into space for a while, then picks up the picture that he has just drawn and makes a smudge on each tree... "Ere you go," says the Irishman.
The boss scratches his head and says, "How on earth do you get that to represent 99?"
"Each of da trees is dirty now. So, it's dirty tree, and dirty tree, plus dirty tree. Dat makes 99," says the Irishman.
The boss, who is now visibly annoyed, decides to teach this Irishman a lesson. "All right, last question," says the boss with an evil smirk. "Same rules again, but this time let's see you represent the number 100."
The Irishman stares into space some more, then picks up the picture again and makes a little mark at the base of each tree and says, "Ere you go. One hundred." The boss looks at the attempt.
"You must be nuts if you think that represents a hundred!" he shouts.
The Irishman leans forward and points to the marks at the base of each tree and whispers: "A little dog come along and poop by each tree. So now you got dirty tree and a turd, dirty tree and a turd, and dirty tree and a turd, which makes ONE HUNDRED!"

The following story, titled '<u>Diary sheds light on war</u>', was published in the Tweed News, (NSW) on April 25, 2011.

Many thanks to Ron Goodman for providing permission to reprint it.

Many people have family members who served the nation as soldiers, sailors or airmen. Editor RON GOODMAN shares his thoughts on keeping the memories of those soldiers alive.

MY memories of my grandfather Charlie Sedgwick, who died when I was only eight, are few.
Conversations with family members and the mementos of war that have been kept tell a story of service to the nation when it was most needed.
As a child I was fascinated by the story of the Second World War, at least in part I suppose because my grandfathers had fought in it.
Since my teenage years I have been the custodian of Charlie's kit bag, some of his uniform badges, his two-up dice and unit badge from the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion.
I also have many of the manuals that were issued to him to help him be a better soldier, covering everything from instructions for using grenades and machine guns to what to do if taken prisoner of war.
My personal favourite is a small cardboard pamphlet, called First aid for fighting men, with brilliant advice such as this for chest and head wounds: Cover the wound. Stop the bleeding as best you can. They look worse than they are.
This provides an insight into what was important on the battlefield. It was about maintaining morale in the face of death.
Charlie fought in the Middle East. His tiny Dewars pocket diary tells of sand, snow and air raids, of hopes for his yet-unborn daughter at home and of the hamper received at Christmas. At times the sparse notes give a glimpse of battle, such as when shells were falling close to him and he described himself as "windy", meaning anxious, but not frightened.
At other times he gives a glimpse of the mundane. Moved here. Given leave. Leave cancelled. Posted a letter home.
The diary is hardly an insight into the man, but it is an insight into what was important to him at the time.
Charlie survived the Middle East. He came back to Australia then was to sail with his 2/2 Pioneers to Borneo. At the last minute he was one of only four transferred to a supply ship. All the others became prisoners of war and the supply ship was diverted. The fate of his mates affected Charlie.
He came home to his family in 1945, to his war-baby daughter (my mother). He was eventually a proud father of three.
Every now and then I like to take out the kit bag and think about where it has been. Then I think about the hundreds of thousands of Australians who served the way Charlie did, everywhere from Europe and the Pacific through to Afghanistan.
Today I will remember what I can of Charlie and remember what I have learned of his service and sacrifice. Thousands of families across the country will do the same. My hat's off to them.



Diary notes from Priv Charles Sedgwick, Middle East, 1941:

7/4 Joined ship in Sydney
4/5 Port – went up canal
5/5 Fought air raid
6/5 Destination – sand everywhere
1/7 Posted letter number 8 to home
5/7 Went up to front line. Shells falling very close. Windy but not frightened.
8/7 Still under barrage
14/7 Moved up to Tripoli in occupation
5/8 Impatiently waiting news of our child. Expecting word any time now.
14/8 Received wire announcing birth of daughter. Very proud Daddy.
17/8 Left dump, moved to aerodrome 20km from Tripoli
18/8 Arrived back feeling ill
6/9 Transferred to B Company
7/9 Stand to for air raid in bright moonlight.
10/9 Air raid possible. Free French took over most of oil refinery.
25/9 Camped in grove
28/9 Anniversary of wedding day – sent letter to Nell
2/10 Mail never came. Planes flying most of the night.
7/10 Some boat mail and papers. No air mail yet.
9/10 Mail arrived
14/10 Letters from Nell, Maisie, Mum and Dad. Wrote a long letter to Nell.
17/10 Snow still on the hills. Beautiful day. Feeling homesick. Missing Nell very much.
4/12 Three days leave to Beirut. Snow and ice on the mountains. Held up two hours.
14/12 Football match. We lost, 10 goals.
21/12 Football match with A Company. We lost. 2 goals. Padre umpired.
24/12 Got ACF Christmas hamper. Raining and snowing.
25/12 Snow, rain, thunder, good dinner.



Clarrie Christie, Harold Ramsey, Col Hamley, Tom Gore, Snowy Youens at 2011 Reunion



Harold Ramsey speaking at the Reunion



Pioneers and family members enjoying the Reunion



Col Hamley, Col Pitches, Harold Ramsey followed by family Members marching in St Kilda Road



Neil MacPherson chatting with Governor General at ANZAC Day Dawn Service Hellfire Pass



Col Hamley on Lap of Honour at MCG



Clarrie Christie, Snowy Youens, Owen Heron in cars nearing the Shrine



Painting of Tom Gore on display at the Exhibition on at The Shrine of Remembrance



Tom Gore and Col Hamley reading up on Pioneer History in 'old' issues of the Newsletter at Tom's 90th birthday celebration



Who are these Pioneers and what year Reunion are they at? Can you help?



The new 2/2nd Pioneer Tree at The Shrine



Trinity Beach Qld October 1944
J Ryan, E Lee, C Slogget
O Ostram, N Laconice



Another old Reunion photo - Mick Green in centre