2/2nd PIONEER BATTALION ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER **DECEMBER 2012**

BATTLE HONOURS

Middle East
Syria
Java
New Guinea
Tarakan
Balikpapan

SECRETARY
Jenny Davidson

PRESIDENT
Col Hamley

TREASURER
Ken Fraser

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary

EDITOR Tom Prince

Coming events in 2013

Association AGM	Tuesday, April 9, Fairfield-Alphington RSL (1:30pm start — all members welcome)
Annual reunion	Saturday, April 20, Fairfield-Alphington RSL
ANZAC Day march	Thursday, April 25
Annual pilgrimage	Sunday, June 16 — venue to be confirmed

Annual General Meeting

At the 2012 AGM Col Hamley was re-elected President, while Harry Youens, Ken Fraser and Colin Vincent were elected Vice Presidents. Ken Fraser is once again the Treasurer, while Jenny Davidson is Secretary and Sue Tovey is Assistant Secretary. Committee members are Tom Gore, David Hocking, Wendy Apostolopoulos, Russell Jackman, Alan Rae and newsletter Editor Tom Prince.

Col's President's report for the year made special mention of the fact that 2010, 2011 and 2012 were all significant years in the Battalion's history, all marked by special services. He also thanked the members of the Committee for their ongoing contribution to the Association.

A special thank you goes out to George Dunn on behalf of the Association committee and all members. George has selflessly given many years of service as a member, on the committee, and as Vice President. We wish him good health.

ANZAC Day

This year's march was noticeably different to previous years, due to the starting point being moved to St Kilda Road, south of Princes Bridge, as a result of roadworks in Swanston Street. The non-stop rain certainly tested the enthusiasm but in true 2/2nd Pioneer spirit Col Hamley, Col Pitches and Harold Ramsey marched at the head of the Association, with Clarrie Christie travelling in a car. They were followed by the banner (carried by six Pioneer descendants) and 45 other Association members, some proudly wearing their Pioneer relatives' medals.

Col Pitches was also keen to share the story of the Order of Australia medal he was wearing, which had been awarded to his late sister.

After the march, several members headed to the Waterside Hotel for the traditional lunch. They were joined by Tom Gore and family, as well as Bonnie Dargaville, who came to see us while visiting from New Zealand.

Annual reunion

Col Hamley, Tom Gore, Harold Ramsey, Dub Smith and Clarrie Christie were joined by 55 family members at the Fairfield-Alphington RSL for an enjoyable lunch and afternoon of socialising at the 2012 annual reunion.

Apologies were received from Pioneers Snowy Youens, Don Crawford, Jack Hore-Lacy, George Dunn and Fred Tubb and family members Betty Farlow, Eleanor and Ross Newcombe, Helen Forrest, Dennis Wright, Jim Mitchell, Margaret Hayes (sister of Jim Brodribb), Alma Collie and Jean Phelps.

The day began with Col Hamley welcoming all present and leading into 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 then advised details of the recent AGM and the arrangements for ANZAC Day. Following the main course the usual raffle was held with a generous donation presented to Col for the Association.

The 2013 Annual Reunion will be on Saturday, April 20, at the Fairfield-Alphington RSL. Further details will be in the next newsletter.

Col Hamley: my reconciliation trip to Japan

In early October I was invited on a trip to Japan, along with Val, who accompanied me as my carer. The visit was paid for by the Japanese government and its intention was to try and bring me to understand that the Japanese people are no longer the brutal generation we encountered during the war years.

On arrival in Japan we were met by several ladies from a group known as 'The Japanese Society for Friendship with ex-POWs and Families'. They later hosted us at a meeting of their group where were each of us was invited to give a short talk on our experiences as POW. We met with nothing but goodwill and friendship from these people, who were anxious to hear our stories about the treatment we received during the war.

My talk centred largely on the Burma Railway. It was not a happy story for them to hear, but they took it well and thanked me for sharing what they must have heard so many times from other POWs they had interviewed. We spent four full days in Tokyo, where we paid a social visit to the Australian Ambassador and then visited the Japanese Foreign Minister to receive a formal apology for our treatment as POWs. We then visited the beautifully kept Yokohama War Cemetery where I laid a poppy and our battalion colours on the plaque of Pioneer Harry Ashford.

I was later asked to give another talk to a group of students from Okayama University who were studying WWII history. We were again treated with nothing but respect and the students had an obvious desire to find out about what occurred during the war and what created such bad feeling against them in countries such as ours. In Japan, references to Japanese atrocities during WWII have obviously been stifled from the history books.

One highlight of our trip was our visit to Hiroshima. A Peace Park was established at the site where the first atomic bomb landed on Japan, killing nearly 100,000 civilians and committing hundreds of thousands more to a lingering death from the effects of radiation. In the Peace Park is a shrine that covers a chest that contains the names of all who died on that day, as well as those who died later because of the bomb. I was told the chest now contains well over 200,000 names.

Our last two days were spent in Kyoto, an earlier capital of Japan, and a beautiful city. Here we relaxed a bit and did a bit of shopping and sightseeing before we returned home.

What did I think of Japan? My overall impression is that the country has changed for the better. We found the people kind, friendly, generous and with a good sense of humour. They show respect for one another and their elders, they are honest, and the country is committed to peace. You don't see graffiti and the streets are free of litter. We could certainly learn a lot.

I also found that Harold Ramsey is a legend. Everywhere we went we found him remembered. I wonder why?

I came home with a completely different attitude to Japan, although I cannot forget or forgive what they did during the war.



Col and Val at Harry Ashford's plaque in Yokohama War Cemetery.

Association trip to Java

The Association received a tremendous response after an invitation was sent to members to join a pilgrimage to Java in July this year. The plan was to visit places significant to the 2/2nd Pioneers who, after serving in the Middle East, arrived in Java aboard *HMT Orcades* on February 17, 1942. There they became part of Blackforce, where they were captured by the Japanese on March 9, 1942.

The trip to Java was made by 23 family members of veterans of the 2/2nd Pioneer, 2/30th (who were attached to the Pioneers on arrival in Java), and 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalions. Unfortunately, no remaining ex-POWs were able to join us but with their guidance many places of significance were covered in the memorable trip.

Olwen Kitson, one of the group, kindly put together the following report.

Olwen Kitson: Java tour, July 23-30, 2012

Our group of 23 was joined by Dr Karl James, a senior historian from the AWM, while our escort around Java was an Indonesian tour guide called Thomas. During our visit we travelled over 700km while visiting places of significance to the 2/2nd Pioneers and doing a little sightseeing along the way. I was grateful to have the opportunity to travel with such a wonderful group and would like to share my thoughts on some of the locations we visited.

Tanjung Priok — Troops disembarked *HMT Orcades* here on Feb 18, 1942; months later, they embarked on Japanese 'hellships' for unknown destinations. Today, a huge container terminal is located behind the wharf area.

Tjililitan Airport — Troops were sent here to defend the aerodrome. They were subjected to bombing raids with the Zeros dropping "daisy cutter" bombs.

Jakarta War Cemetery — A short service was held here with the Australian and 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion flags draped on the base of the Cross of Sacrifice, while Glenda Atkins and Lyn Makeham (daughters of Fred Barnstable) proudly held the Pioneer banner. Tony Lamb (son of Hamilton Lamb) read *The Ode* and I was honoured to read a passage from the official Pioneer history book. Alan Rae (son of John Rae) and Malcolm Wiltshire (son of Ted Wiltshire from 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion) laid wreaths on behalf of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion. Jeff and Jenny Davidson (daughter and son in law of Ern Veal) placed a sprig of wattle, a gum leaf and a poppy tied with ribbons of the Battalion colours on the graves of the Pioneers, while Malcolm placed a poppy with the colours on the graves of the machine gunners. Jim Busine and Barry Howes (sons of Tommy Busine and Bill Howes of 2/30th Battalion), placed gum leaves on other Australian graves. Finally, the visitors' book was brought out for us to sign, ending a truly emotional visit for all.

Bicycle Camp — There is a large, modern multi-storey building here where the Dutch barracks were situated. As the number of POWs in the camp grew, it spread down over the area where the playing fields and park are today. An imposing 32m high monument, featuring a man with broken chains on his wrists and ankles (which represents Indonesian freedom from the Japanese) was built here. We also walked around the perimeter of the block to the entrance of what is now a Marine Corps base, and noted that the entrance is very similar to the photo in the Pioneer history book.

The Australian Embassy, Jakarta — Jenny arranged for our group to visit the Embassy where we met the Ambassador, Defence Attache and several Defence staff from the three services. We were treated to afternoon tea and presented with an Australian Defence Staff Indonesia Medallion.

We travelled in an easterly direction en route to the Garot area, passing tea plantations, rice paddies, clove trees and tapioca groves. The countryside is beautiful and very lush, with little villages dotted along steep winding roads to a backdrop of rugged mountains.

Leles — This is the village where POWs camped after the Battle of Leuwiliang. Leuwigoong Station was where they entrained to travel to Batavia and move into Bicycle Camp. We had a special moment here when the people of a small community near the station greeted us with warm smiles, much hand-clasping and cheek-kissing. The eldest lady in this group may have been a young child when the Pioneers were here, as she had called out "hello" and saluted some of our men when we passed by to walk up to an old cemetery and view the river far below. The folk eagerly joined in our group photo on the station platform. As we departed the lady waved the Australian flag that Cary had given her and in the other hand proudly held up the Pioneer sign that had been on the bus window. Our guide, Thomas, told us that we were probably the first Europeans most of these people had seen.

Leuwiliang Bridge — This is the only place where the Japanese encountered serious resistance during the Java campaign. It's likely the bridge spanning the river today was built in 1981, as a plaque on the bridge said "October 1981" (the rest was in Indonesian, so we're not entirely sure). Karl pointed out where the various companies including the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion were positioned and where "A" Company came in on the left flank. We then travelled on the road along which the main body of the battalion retreated.

The next section of our tour was significant to me and several other members of the group, whose relatives were in "A" Company. These men never made it to Leles or Bicycle Camp, as some ended up in Soekabumi and Bandung after the Battle at Leuwiliang while others, sadly, didn't make it that far.

No.1 Allied General Hospital, Bandung — Before the war this was the Christelijk Lyceum, an abandoned Christian girls school. On February 27, 1942, Weary Dunlop and his staff turned it into a hospital which treated 1351 patients until it was forced to cease functioning on April 18, 1942. Karl and Malcolm located the site for us. My relative was a patient here, so this was particularly significant for me. Today it is once again a Christian school. We also passed the **Grand Preanger Hotel** where (after great debate) the surrender documents were signed on March 12, 1942.

Stasiun Bandung — Those of "A" Company at Bandung, became part of Dunlop Force, and entrained here to Meester Cornelis, then were encamped at Kampong Makassar. Our guide obtained special security passes so that we could go through on to the station (which was very clean and had pretty gardens). By using topiary on low bushes the name "Bandung" had been spelt across the other side of the tracks at the station.

Stadion Siliwangi — The former POW barracks known as No.12 PW Camp, Bandung, is now a multi-use sports stadium. This was the second camp in Bandung where the POWs were held. The first was Landsopvoedingsgesticht, usually abbreviated to Landsop or LOG.

Ereveld, Ancol, Dutch War Cemetery, Jakarta — As you cast your eyes across the sea of white crosses you couldn't help but feel great sadness, as most of graves are for unknown soldiers. Here we sprinkled gum leaves and placed poppies at the base of the cross of the Australian graves.

Jenny summed it up beautifully when she said: "All found the pilgrimage to be an emotional experience which certainly met their expectations and helped to fill gaps in the understanding of that very significant part of their family member's life."

Olwen R. Kitson is a great niece of William John (Billy) Waite VX56152. He was killed by Allied bombing on the wharf in Bangkok on March 27, 1945.

Heidelberg Repatriation Remembrance Garden

Earlier this year Col Hamley requested recognition be given at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital to POWs (including nine Pioneers) who died as a result of the Sandakan death marches in Borneo.

Col's letter asked for them to be recognised, noting Captain Lionel Matthews, who was awarded the George Cross for his outstanding devotion to his fellow POWs.

Permission was given for a plaque to be placed in the Remembrance Garden, on the same rock as the plaques for the 2/2nd Pioneer and 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalions. The cost of the plaque was shared by the Association and the North Balwyn RSL, where Col is a member. The Committees

of both associations attended the unveiling at the Remembrance Day Service on November 9.
This plaque recognises events of important historical significance and the Association plans to arrange a day where all members will be invited to visit the garden. Look out for details in our next newsletter.

The Ladies Auxiliary

$320 was raised from the raffle at the annual reunion luncheon, of which $150 was given to the Association. Wendy Apostolopoulos from the Ladies Auxiliary thanks all who helped and for the donations added to the table — it is all much appreciated. "A big thank you to Sue Tovey for her knitting of scarves to add to my supply," said Wendy. "Many thanks to all who helped make afternoon tea a success at the pilgrimage at the Shrine, in June. Wishing our President Col Hamley and wife Val a safe and enjoyable trip to Japan and on their return — our congratulations to them for celebrating 60 years of marriage," she said.

Book launch: *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*

Author Pattie Wright's latest book, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*, was recently launched aboard *HMAS Warramunga* at Station Pier. The book is a biography of Ray Parkin, a petty officer aboard the *HMAS Perth* who became a POW after the ship was sunk off the coast of Java. Ray spent much of his time as a POW in the same camps as some of the Pioneers.
Pattie is an Association member and is well known to many of us and is a great friend of the Pioneers. The Association congratulates Pattie on her excellent new book.
The launch was attended by three ex-POW Pioneers: Dub Smith, Col Hamley and Harold Ramsey, along with other Association members.

Replacement service medals

Need to replace the medals of a deceased member? A list of their entitlements can be obtained by applying to the Directorate of Honours and Awards (call 1800 111 321 for details on how to apply). This will allow you to purchase replica awards from commercial military memorabilia outlets, which are listed in the Yellow Pages telephone book in the 'Medal and Medal Mounting' section or online.

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 2013. ***Col Hamley***

Personal pars

Dorothy Hanson says she met **William O'Hehir's** daughter (who now lives at Camperdown, Vic) at the Australia Day celebrations at Cobden, Vic. **W. O. Hehir** served in Tarakan, Balikpapan, with Dorothy's late husband, **Arthur S. Hanson**, known as '**Bill**'.
Dorothy says it was wonderful to watch the march and see folk marching behind the 2/2nd Pioneers Battalion banner. She adds that she always enjoys catching up with the news from the newsletter.

Jack and Audrey Hearn have identified some Pioneers from an old reunion photo in our December 2011 newsletter. **Reggie Benton** and **Frankie Cahill** (both deceased) are two of the five gentlemen in the photo below. But who are the other three? Jack and Audrey also send their best wishes to all Pioneers and their families.



From a previous re-union (L to R): Reggie Benton and Frankie Cahill. Can you identify the remaining three?

Doreen Barnett writes to say that her husband (of 68 years!) **Phil Barnett** is now a resident of the hostel that is part of the retirement village in Alstonville, NSW. Phil says age has finally caught up with him now that he's over 95 years old. Doreen sends their best wishes and thanks everyone who keeps the Association going.

Karen Duncan sent a quick note along with her donation in memory of her late father, **Ken Duncan**. "He had a strong bond and enduring friendship with his army mates until his death in 2006," says Karen.

Milada Matek says she read **Col Hamley's** POW address (featured in the previous newsletter) with great interest. Milada says her husband was there as a POW and she passed the address on to her children to remind them about the events. Milada has previously been to the River Kwai and walked the rail track, where she attended a dawn service and laid a wreath.
Helen Forrest wrote to say that she regrets being unable to attend the annual reunion on April 21 but nonetheless hopes everyone has a wonderful day. Helen is the daughter of **Stan Rixon,** known to many as **'The Mad Barber'** on the Burma Railroad.
Many thanks also for the lovely poem that Helen sent us.

Rob Sefton has informed us that his father **Bob Sefton** died during surgery on January 17 this year. "Old soldiers never die, they only fade away," was one of his father's favourite sayings, says Rob.

Eleanor Newcombe says how sorry she was to hear that the mothers of **Jenny Davidson**, **Ken Fraser** and **Wendy Apostolopoulos** had all passed away recently. Eleanor says that she and husband **Ross Newcombe** will regrettably be unable to attend the annual reunion or the ANZAC Day

march. She says she copped a bad knee injury on a recent London trip, but she hopes that it will be right soon.

Don Crawford says he is very sorry to hear about the death of **Ted Hansen**. "He gave many years of his time to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and he will be missed at your reunions," says Don. Don is keeping in good health and hopes all Pioneers are keeping well. He adds that he will march this year with the 2/2nd Pioneers in Sydney.

Malcolm Brodie says he recently found his father's tutor book for the bugle (Malcolm's father was in the 2/2nd Pioneers band). "At the back are the many tunes he must have learnt for Battalion concerts and the like – hymns, Celtic folk tunes and European works mostly," says Malcolm.
Malcolm was very interested in knowing what tunes were favourites among 'the boys', especially during the 75-mile training march mentioned by **Lt. Col. Wellington**. Malcolm asked Col Hamley, who couldn't quite recall which songs were favourites, but he says they were more than likely songs dating back to WWI. Malcolm adds that he is putting together a medley of likely tunes played by the unit. He regrets that he was unable to attend the 2012 annual pilgrimage at the Shrine due to an injured foot.

Peter Hargreaves sent us information and photos about his grandfather, **Benjamin Barnes** (VX 22220).
Peter adds: "If any surviving members remember Ben I would love to hear from them. He was 40 when he signed up and he served in Syria and Palestine. He was on the later ship home and thus wasn't taken prisoner in Java. I believe he served the remainder of the war in Queensland."
NOTE: Please get in touch with us if you have any photos. We would love to scan copies and upload them to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion website (see previous page).

Sharon Lee says she and her dad, **Ernest Alfred Lee**, were looking at photos on the 2/2nd Pioneers website when they spotted a photo showing Ernest fishing at Morotai in April 1945. Sharon says several other Pioneers are named in the same image: **Len Manski**, as well as Pioneers named **Paterson**, **Crankshaw**, **Smith**, **Bolitho**, **Carpenter** and **Lofthouse** (she says Ernest also remembers a soldier called **Leo Davis**). Sharon says: "Do you have information regarding any of these 2/2nd pioneers? My dad would dearly love to have news of any of them." Her dad adds: "I bet they all remember **Cappie Radford**."
Note: an apology is in order here. Sharon's letter was received last year but was accidentally omitted until now. Sharon can be reached on salee878@usathome.com.au.

Lesley Quaini writes to say: "I would like to let you know about the passing of my father, **Joseph Robertson**, (SX028738), on January 18. My father was a proud Pioneer and enjoyed reading the interesting information found in your regular newsletters."
We're saddened to hear about your father Lesley but thank you nonetheless for getting in touch, and we're glad you still enjoy the newsletter.

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.

Obituaries

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

Beebar, A.	Dec 2011
Cashion, T.R.	Oct 2011
Maddrell, C.	Oct 2012
Robertson, J.T	Jan 2012
Rowe, E.A.	Oct 2012
Sefton, R.J. (Bob)	Jan 2012
Tubb, F.H.	Jul 2012
Willmore, I.G.V.	Nov 2011

Lest we forget

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

The Association is pleased to re-introduce the Battalion tie, available for purchase to all Pioneers and Association members. Jenny Davidson reckons it'd be wonderful to see all the men who march on ANZAC Day wearing a 2/2nd Pioneers tie! Look for more information in the next newsletter.

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

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. Younger Generation member, Cary Sandell (grandson of the late Charles Douglas), has put a lot of effort into the site.

Donations

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

$200	Karen Duncan (daughter of Ken Duncan)
$150	Ladies Auxiliary
$100	Don Crawford, Terry Hippisley
$50	Betty Hayes, Tom Gore, Ann Holland, Dorothy Hanson (wife of Sgt A.S. Hanson MM), Tony Lamb
$40	Jim Mitchell, Kerry Shorney, Milada Matek
$30	Jack Hore-Lacy, Olwen Kitson, Jack Hearn, Ross Brittle
$25	Ross & Eleanor Newcombe, Phil and Doreen Barnett
$20	Frances McKay and Marita Lock
$20	Dub Smith, Edna Rowe
$10	Colin Bruggy
$5	Rev Bill Pugh, Jean Williams
$2	Wendy Apostolopoulos



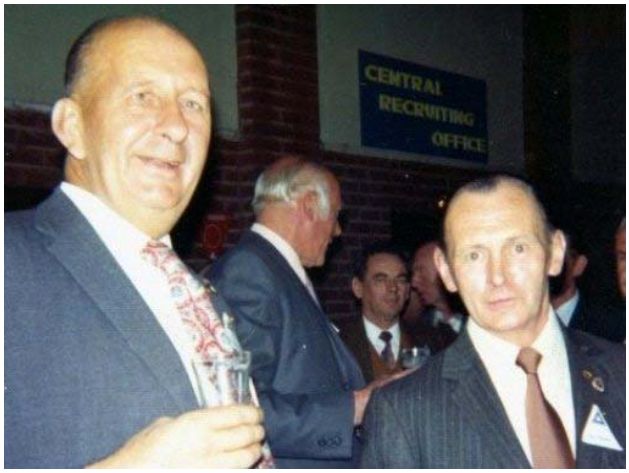
Four of our Pioneers at the 2012 Reunion: Col, Tom, Harold and Dub. Clarrie had to leave early.



Do you recognise these faces from a previous reunion? Daniel Craven is on left. Can you identify the other two Pioneers?



Col and Harold ready waiting for the ANZAC Day March to start. Rain did not dampen anyone's enthusiasm.



Another reunion shot. Daniel Craven is on right again. Do you recognize the other Pioneer? The sign at the back says "Central Recruiting Office".



Committee Members and Pioneers at the Heidelberg Hospital Remembrance Day Service.



The two Cols (Col Hamley and Col Pitches) at the Shrine of Remembrance at conclusion of the ANZAC Day march.



The Association group at Leuwiiang during the Java trip. The new and old bridges are visible in the background.

And now for some humour…

What is the Karate expert's favourite's beverage? Kara-tea.

What's the difference between bird flu and swine flu? If you have bird flu, you need tweetment. If you have swine flu, you need oink-ment.

Did you hear about the two kids that were arrested by the police? One was drinking battery acid while the other was eating fireworks. The police charged one – and let the other one off.

The neighbour asked the newly wedded woman why she decided to get married at a TV station. "Well," she responded. "I have to admit, the ceremony wasn't very good. But the reception was great!"