

The Towner News

2/4 RAR Association Newsletter

II/IV



The 2nd/4th Battalion
The Royal Australian
Regiment Association

PO Box 240
Thuringowa Central Qld 4817

Email:
committee@24rarassociation.com

Website:
www.24rarassociation.com

Committee

Patron: BRIG Paul S. O'Sullivan AM
MDE (ret'd)

President: Merv Diction

Vice President: Ken Ellis

Secretary: Gary Jiear

Asst Secretary: Bill Marklew

Treasurer: Bob Bakkers

Merchandise: Martin Dunn

Web/IT/Media Member: Gary Jiear

Asst Web/IT/Media Mbr: John Mark

Personnel Member: Bob Weir

We have 272
members and our
numbers are
steadily growing.
Spread the word.

From the Editor

A lot has happened in the world since the first issue of 'The Towner News', with Covid 19, dare I say the 'China Virus', becoming a dominant factor in our lives.

Having to stay home from my Museum duties (3RAR say I'm a risk at my age), the gardens at home have never looked better and all those jobs around the house that I said would get done tomorrow are now on the road to completion. So, all is not that bad apart from having to line up outside Bunnings.

Keeping positive, all our lives will at some point get back to some form of normality and we will carry on from where we left off.

So, everyone stay safe, healthy and I hope you find this issue an interesting read. Our intention is to keep each issue different with article subjects resurfacing every now and then.

If you have something that you would like to contribute and that we can print without getting sued, feel free to forward it via the 2/4 Association email.

Cheers Bob
2/4 RAR Association Treasurer.
committee@24rarassociation.com

Patron's Message

Brigadier (Retired) Paul O' Sullivan AM MBE messages that:

As I write this message to you, I am very conscious that we are all confronted by very challenging circumstances in the world around us. Wherever you may be, I hope you, your family and friends are safe and well, and managing to stay that way. If you are experiencing problems, I encourage you to contact, not just those support agencies that are there to help, but do reach out to your fellow Association members who know you well and have always had your back.

I want to mention how proud and privileged I was to participate in the Association's Plaque dedication ceremony at Anzac Park in Townsville at the beginning of February, and extend my congratulations to the organising committee for arranging such a successful event.

As you know, we will not be able to march under our Battalion Association Banner on Anzac Day this year. However, I am confident we will stand wherever we may be to remember and honour all those who have contributed to the Anzac tradition, particularly those with whom we have served in the 2nd/4th Battalion.

We may not be able to gather as an Association for our AGM this year, but I want to acknowledge the great work of the Association's Executive, and indeed, the active participation of all members around the country who are keeping the spirit of the Battalion alive and well.

Again, take good care of yourselves and those near and dear to you. I look forward to sharing your company again at the next gathering that circumstances permit.

Duty First!
Paul O'Sullivan

President's Message

I extend the Association's Easter Greetings to all members and family of 2/4 RAR and 2/4 RAR Association and our commiserations for the unexpected upheaval and restrictions placed on all of us over this time

Thank you very much for your message Paul O'Sullivan. Truly appreciated.

We enjoyed a splendid Dedication of our 2/4 RAR Plaque in Townsville on 1 Feb 2020 on the 25th anniversary of de-linking. Well done to our Patron, Boof and all those who helped make the occasion a memorable one.

For those on the sick list or recovering, all the very best for your health and may your recovery be swift and complete.

Sadly we are currently mid-pandemic with a range of activities cancelled. On ANZAC Day we are unable to gather nationally and for us in our capital cities, regions and Longreach, restrictions prevent us getting together to remember our fallen, albeit each of us can all do so in our own way.

I would like you to virtually share with me and 2 RAR (Amphib) the live streaming of the Battalion's private service on ANZAC Day, providing that the pandemic restrictions allow this to go ahead. If possible the Association plans to lay a wreath or present a book on this solemn day. Lest We Forget.

A 2 RAR Reunions Committee planned anniversary of Malaya and Malaysia (two 2 RAR tours and 12 2/4 RAR tours of RCB reunion) has also been cancelled. CO 2 RAR (Amphib) had agreed that our plaque which is yet to be dedicated at the home of The Battalion, Samichon Lines, would occur during this activity so we are now in the process of rethinking when that will occur. Hopefully the 75th anniversary of the formation of The Battalions will go ahead later in the year.

Once again I would thank Bob and Kim for editing and providing The Towner News and hope you enjoy reading.

Please follow the Government's restrictions and stay safe everyone until we beat this pandemic.

Regards from Merv Diction

Lavarack Barracks

Why is Australia's largest Army Base in Townsville?

Personally, I thought it was for the defence of the North. Well, apparently after attending a lecture at JCU early last year, this was not the case. Lavarack Barracks was originally intended to be built and located in Melbourne's south-western suburbs or if that proved to be unviable another location in Perth was being considered.

However, the Prime Minister at the time, Robert Menzies decided against the advice of his senior defence staff who were looking at these two areas, and decreed that the base be built in Townsville, a basically unknown North Queensland town.

His reasoning was that he needed votes in the north which had a serious unemployment problem and the new Barracks would solve this... which it did. He won the next election.

Lavarack Barracks was completed in 1966, with Townsville nearly losing the Barracks contract to Cairns over a 'who should pay for the sewerage line issue' between Defence and the Townsville City Council at the time, with the T.C.C eventually footing the bill.

2RAR were brought up by train from Sydney (prior to the Battalion's embarkation for Vietnam), for the opening of the Barracks by the Prime Minister. However were the first Battalion of the Regiment to call Lavarack Barracks home.

Bob Bakkers
2/4 RAR D Coy 80-86
Currently
3RAR Museum Curator.
&
Townsville History Walking Tours.

What are you up to now? *Rick Canhan*

This is a follow on from Bob Bakkers (ex-Delta coy) story from the December 2019 edition of the Towner Rick Canhan, Robert Holmes and John Thompson Three ex-2/4 RAR members, and all ex-Delta Coy from the 1980's era are keeping the military memory alive by participating in the 'Back to the Track 2020' event in Jul/Aug 2020.

The outline is to drive Rick's (self-restored) 1943 Willys Jeep and a support vehicle from Alice Springs to Darwin. The Mission Statement: To commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the end of WW2 through a nation procession of historic military vehicles from every state to Darwin. The event is called 'Back to the Track 2020' or 'BTTT2020' it is just part of the many events that will commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the end of WW2 although this will no doubt be a most unique and memorable way.

Approximately 180 WW2 vintage vehicles from all around Australia will unite in Alice Springs to re-enact the military supply convoys that ran north along the track to Darwin to deliver much needed supplies during the war.

The 2/4 RAR Association has recognised the special military significance of this historic event . A report, plus photos of the boys and the vehicles on the trip will hopefully be posted in a future addition of the 'Towner'. If you would like to take part in any of the activities planned along the route an itinerary can be viewed at www.backtothetrack2020.com come and show your support too.

Duty First

Note: Rick's team is endeavouring to continue fundraising for Mate4Mates along the route, with over \$1,300 raised already.



Cockatoo Rise War Veterans Retreat

Help needed for Cockatoo Rise War Veterans Retreat

The Retreat is undergoing some critical improvements to the bathrooms where the vets and their partners stay.

We are needing \$5000.00 to complete these works, **your help would be greatly appreciated.**

The Retreat has become very popular and is used on a near daily basis, by those who have and are serving.

The PTSD Unit of Austin Hospital in Melbourne is now drawing on the retreats facilities, recommending patients who need accommodation.



Greg Carter ex Vietnam veteran 6 RAR, welcomes ex and serving defence personnel and their partners to his Retreat situated between Port Fairy & Hamilton in Victoria's Western District.

With great views, a relaxed atmosphere, close proximity to the Grampian ranges and Mt Eccles, beaches, great fishing and wonderful touring, Cockatoo Rise is a great place to spend some time.

The retreat's 156 year old hotel, the 3rd oldest in Victoria, provides a unique atmosphere, to enjoy a beer in the retreats private bar (not open to the public) and a camp fire outside.

Due to the unique nature of Cockatoo Rise, bookings are essential. We regret that we are unable to cater for children and pets.

Contact Greg:- **M: 0409418332**

E: cockatoorise@wideband.net.au

P O BOX 395 , WARRNAMBOOL 3280

Life after 2/4 RAR *Gary Jiear*

318499 / 8223112 Gary Jiear

Everyone says that your first battalion should be your favourite but I just must be different. 2/4 RAR was not my first battalion with which I served but it certainly holds the best memories for me.

After enlisting in Dec 75 and completing Kapooka and Singleton my first posting was to 10IRC at Canungra 76 - 77 and then on to 8/9 RAR from Jun 77 to Dec 85. It was during this time that I switched over from regimental stream to a grunt.

After 8/9 RAR I was off to 51 FNQR in Cairns 86 / 87 and then posted to 2/4 RAR from Dec 1987 – Dec 91. Great times during those four years where I served mainly as CQMS Bravo; a job to this day that rates as my favourite posting.

I loved the day to day contact with the soldiers and even more so when we were out in the field. If I didn't do my job then the boys would starve, run out of water or ammo. I had some great storemen working with me during my time there and this helped me to rate my time in 2/4 RAR as the best of my career. Only one other job came close to this.

I was posted over to WA 92 – 94 and made it back again to 2/4 RAR; sadly, only for two weeks prior to the delinking to form 2 RAR and 4 RAR. It was a sad time for all on 1 Feb 95.

I remained in 2 RAR Feb 95 – Dec 98 until being commissioned from WO1 to CAPT QM and posted to 31 RQR. But that was short lived and I was posted back to 2 RAR in Dec 99 just in time to join the battalion as part of INTERFET in East Timor. I remained in 2 RAR until Dec 2002 and saw a second deployment to East Timor.

2003 /04 I posted back to Regimental stream to Combat Training Centre (CTC) and enjoyed my time there planning and running the MRE's for the deploying units to the Middle East. During this posting I was lucky to get a short trip to the middle east for about 12 days to enable us to come back to plan for future rotations.

Life after 2/4 RAR *continued*

318499 / 8223112 Gary Jiear

Dare I say; posted to 1 RAR 2005/06 on promotion to Major. The role I had in 1 RAR was as OC Admin Coy; a posting no regimental Majors wanted but I relished it. This position is my second-best posting as it closed the loop for me as I served in every rank (less LT) in various Admin Companies and battalions. In 2006 I moved up as Battalion 2IC.

2007 / 09 saw me posted back to CTC and looking after rotations as well as XO CTC-Live. I was again lucky enough to get another short hop to the middle east for another 12 days...another experience in my career.

2010 / 12 my final posting in the ARA. I was posted to HQ 3 BDE as OC HQ which was pretty much the ADJT role you would say. But the role also saw me and my offsider CSM be OC /CSM Brigade Maintenance Area (BMA) for the BDE. OMG what a job that was circling the wagons of the Brigade Logistic elements....HUGE. On one exercise I was looking after more people in the BMA than CO's had in their units.

In Sep 2011 I filled in as Acting Deputy Commander 3 BDE until finally, during the Reduced Tempo Period (RTP) on 13 Jan 2012 at about lunch I turned off the computer, switched off the lights and closed the door on both my office and my ARA career.

After that I took a short break, drove a concrete truck for about six months and then got tempted back with some Reserve service. Easy money..... Between July 2012 and May 2014, I worked as a Reservist in Townsville until we moved to Brisbane. I continued in the reserves until that light at the end of the tunnel was reached and I resigned on 12 Dec 2019. Exactly 44 years and two days after enlisting.

I had multiple postings and a handful of deployments during my service; of which I enjoyed every one of them. I worked with, for and alongside many great people.

As mentioned earlier 8/9 RAR was my first Battalion but, 2/4 RAR was my favourite and then followed by 2 RAR. The two units just had that feel about them that wasn't emulated in my other postings.

And now....as a retiree and pensioner I get to relax a little bit filling my time with family and house renovations.....and dodging COVID-19.

"Duty First"

1983

The Commanding Officer was LTCOL. M. J. Keating and the RSM was WO1 T. R. Curtis.

We lost 2 members of the Battalion that year, Private Peter 'Judge' Jury, who died in a car accident at Rockhampton and Corporal Harry Dore, one of the Battalion medics who died of an illness.

The Battalion participated in: Exercise Northern Run at Coen
Kangaroo 83 at Shoalwater Bay

Charlie Coy deployed to Butterworth in January for 3 months. We worked alongside the Kiwis and the PNG PIR. Conducted individual Company Gas (NBC) training.

Each Coy partook in various Coy Exercises that took us all around the North. In the Battalion's Ceremonial side, we laid the old Colours to rest and trooped in the new Colours.

The Battalion had an open day which proved very popular with a large number of the Townsville population turning up for the morning. There was a Soldiers Dining-in Night, where the Officers and Senior NCO's had the privilege of being wait staff.

The 2/4 Ladies Association had quite a few activities throughout the year. In Battalion inter Coy Sport, D Coy took out the inter Coy Rugby Trophy and the Tug-o-war on Battalion Sports Day. B Coy won the Inter Coy Shooting, C Coy won the Soccer, and D Coy won the Aussie Rules.

Catering platoon supported the Battalion on all fronts as did the RAP. The Quartermaster platoon achieved a 100% CES stock take... successfully. And that was the year 1983...

I do need more year books to continue this article please forward any that you don't want, to the postal address of the

2/4 Association,
PO Box 240,
Thuringowa Central, Qld 4817

Vincent

The 'Marriedies' suburb

Did you know that the suburb of Vincent is named after Major William Slade Vincent, the first Commanding Officer of the Kennedy Regiment in North Queensland in 1886.

He obtained a special leave of absence in 1888 to join Her Majesty's forces in the war in Sudan, though by the time he got there it had already finished.

Completed and formerly gazetted as a Townsville suburb on the 1st of January 1967, Vincent was constructed with the purpose of housing the many married soldiers posted to the new Lavarack Barracks with their families.

Houses were fully furnished, with married soldiers from all units based at the Barracks, living alongside each other.

Houses were kept in very good order, with most of the soldiers' kids attending the Vincent State School which opened on the 30th January 1968.

It wasn't the only suburb to house the 'Marriedies', with there being other groups of housing at Heatley, Aitkenvale and Wulguru.

Today sees a decline in the appearance of the suburb with the selling off of the defence housing due to the Army policy of intermingling its personnel within the Townsville community rather than having it in concentrated areas.



Up and coming events

I plan on doing a 3km walk every second day.

No, seriously there aren't any, but there will be when this is all over.

Hang-on I think the Norfolk Island ANZAC Day for 2021 is still a goer. Keep your eye out for that one.

Bob.

Wanted

Information from past members of the 2/4 Pipes and Drums for an up and coming article which will be about its formation in 1981, all of its trials and tribulations leading to their future success and high reputation.

John Dyson and others, what do you remember?

Also, individual stories or any 2/4 related stories would be nice from the many past members out there with the ability to write. It seems at the moment that D Coy members are the only literate ones so far, oh and Merv.

So, with all this down time, I'm sure there are some other budding contributors out there who can come up with something, no matter how big or small (500 words or less is good) to help make this newsletter a worthwhile read.

Bob