

2/5TH INFANTRY BATTALION ASSOCIATION NSW



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JOHN CAIRNS PEART

This newsletter begins with a tribute to our late Secretary and good mate, John Peart who passed away on 21st July 2011 at the age of 87.

Born at Cessnock NSW on 9th November 1923 John Cairns Peart was the first child of John and Elizabeth Peart. John spent his boyhood and high school years at Cessnock.

After commencement of training to become a School Teacher, John was enlisted for war service at 18 years of age at Singleton NSW in April 1942. He subsequently transferred to the Australian Imperial Force and became a member of the 2/5th Infantry Battalion.



The Soldier and the Veteran.
(Photos courtesy Kathryn Reilly)

While John's war service is further detailed below, he held the rank of Sergeant at the time of his discharge in February 1946.

John married Pamela Gibson Goard in 1948 at Campbelltown NSW and they were blessed with four children; David, Kathryn, Annette and Gillian. The family moved from Cessnock to Adaminaby in the Snowy Mts in 1957 where John was the Public School Principal before being transferred to Newcastle in 1961.

A highly respected member of the teaching profession, John was the Principal of Caves Beach Public School at the time of his retirement in May 1983.

He was a founding member of the Jesmond-Wallsend Lions Club and enjoyed the years prior to retirement travelling in his Kombi Van with Pam to Cairns in Queensland each winter. Sadly, Pam passed away on 21st June 1984 at the relatively young age of 56. They had shared just one year of retirement together.

Several years later, John married Miriam, a joy that was short-lived when Miriam passed away in May 1989.

Caring for his family throughout his life, John's other abiding interests included bowls, travel, furniture restoration, music (including singing), catching up with friends, membership and lately for many years Honorary Secretary of the 2/5th Battalion Association.

John's life was celebrated on 28th July 2011 before a large congregation at the Lake Macquarie Memorial Park. During the Service, Fred Hoare was asked to speak and his tribute is reproduced below.

"On behalf of the members of the 2/5th Battalion Association I'd like to say how deeply saddened we are at the loss of our mate, John.

At the same time, it is my privilege to be able to pay tribute to one who has earned the love and respect, not only of those with whom he served, but also his family, the many children he taught and also the community in which he lived.

A good husband, a good father and a good friend, John was one of our most staunch supporters. He did a brilliant job with the Battalion newsletter. This indeed has been part of the "glue" keeping us together over these many years.

All those who knew him realise John was a man of many qualities – honour, integrity and loyalty to name a few.

He was a man of principle with high standards which he also expected others to follow.

John joined the 2/5th Battalion on 1st February 1944 along with a large group of reinforcements. He served with the Signals Platoon and was a member of the Platoon through the Battalion's final engagement; the Aitabe – Wewak campaign. Among others, his fellow "Sigs" included Bryan (Chuck) Ryan, Lou Brohman, Jim Christenson, John (Slim) Finneran, Gordon Glass and Owen Bailey.

Following the cessation of hostilities, John was released from the Army early to continue his training to become a School Teacher. He retired a School Principal in the early 80s.

They say old soldiers never die, they simply fade away, and so it is with John. Over the past year, he has just faded away leaving a lifetime of memories treasured by all who knew him.

John, sadly the time has come to say goodbye and on behalf of the Association I say,

If we couldn't do him honour
While he was here to hear the praise
At the ending of his days

Perhaps just a simple heading
In a paper that would say
Our country is in mourning
For a soldier died today

Rest well gallant mate.

We who are left in gratitude will always
remember you. May God bless you and keep
you forever more".

ERRATA

The 2011 ANZAC Day report in the last newsletter mentioned that special interstate guests at our Moore Park Golf Club gathering included **Donna McGreevy** and **Corporal Matt McGreevy**, the daughter and grandson, respectively of the late **Frank McGreevy MM**). Matt's military rank shown in the report should have read "**Lieutenant**".

Matt's response when he was contacted by the editor about the error was that Corporals are some of the hardest working members of the Army. He added that as his grandfather was a Sergeant and that his father is a currently serving WO2, he could certainly live with being a Corporal.

Matt is proud of his grandfather's service with the 2/5th and has expressed a strong desire that he and his family will always honour that service.

TAMBU DAY 2011

As they have done for many a year, the staff of the Moore Park Golf Club superbly hosted our annual gathering for Tambu Day held on Sunday 21st August 2011.

Piped and drummed in to the lunch venue by **Roy McCormack** on the pipes and his daughter **Kirsty Collingridge** on the drum, around sixty members and families observed

the traditional ceremony led by **Fred Hoare** to remember our departed soldiers before sitting down to a delightful three-course meal. Members, family and friends who attended were:

Susan and Bill Alexander, Ted Staines and Elizabeth Warren honouring the memory of the late Ernest Archibald Campbell Alexander;

Norma Beaver and Angela Rigoni honouring the memory of the late Ron Beaver;

Allen Birchall, Dara Birchall, John Quinlan and Margaret Quinlan honouring the memory of the late Jack Birchall;

Ian, Lisa and Peter Clarke, Anne McCormack, Roy McCormack and Kirsty Collingridge;

Annette, Daryl, Donna, Lynette and Mark Connolly honouring the memory of the late Verd Connolly;

Andrew, Cathy, Jake, May, Michael and Olivia Dovgan honouring the memory of the late Eugene Dovgan;

Tony Finneran honouring the memory of the late John ("Slim") Finneran;

Fred, Hoare, Val Hoare and Narelle Fisher;

Lew Jones;

John McCormick;

Laurel Harvey, Ken McKay and Ronda McKay honouring the memory of the late Jack McKay;

Irene, Graeme and Joan Neville honouring the memory of the late Ken ("Tiny") Neville;

Bill Houston (Australian Army History Unit);

Kentley Miles, Xanthe Miles, Dan Bailey, Debbie Bailey, Emily Bailey and Cam Lau honouring the memory of the late Cyril Miles;

Kath Reilly honouring the memory of the late John Peart;

Chuck, Cecily and Dennis Ryan;

John, Desleigh and Donald Shingles;

Lola Willard, Kay Huggett, Terry Huggett and Lorraine O'Rourke honouring the memory of the late Bill Willard; and

Allan Yates, Julie Sinha and Sat Sinha;

Apologies and donations were received from:

Eric Burgess, Bruce Campbell, Jack Carroll, Bill Cowie, Cynthia Davies, Una Drayton, Laura Felton, Gordon and Fran Glass, Heather Green, Les Hammond, Kevin Hickey, Jack Hilyard, Mavis Miles (represented by six of her family on the day), Vicki Langford, Betty McNally, Joy Milroy, Tom Muggleton, Lou and Laurel Nazzari (Lou has since passed away), John Quinn, Kath Reay, Alan Rossiter, Effie Sadler, N.L. Saunders, Paul Simons, Marie South, Owen Treadwell, Len Turner, Beryl Williams, Bev Yates and Cyril Zeller.

Thanks to all for your welfare fund raffle ticket purchases and donations which assist greatly in keeping us going. Thanks also once again to **Zoë Galloway, Kath Reay and Angela Rigoni** for your donations of the annual prizes. The winners were Les Hammond (a landscape painting by Angela), Chuck Ryan (a long stitch by Kath) and Peter Clarke (a cross stitch by Zoë).

Chuck Ryan delivered a most interesting and at times humorous account of his experience as a soldier in the 2/5th Battalion Signals Platoon in the Wau – Salamaua campaign in New Guinea, particularly when in the Goodview Junction between Mubo and Komiatum in July/August 1943.

Chuck's account of his battle experience was recorded will become part of the oral history collection held by the Australian Army History Unit, Canberra.

LAST POST

Our deepest condolences are extended to the families of the following departed friends and comrades.

NX91662 MUNSIE, CPL R.C. (Reg)
(14th July 2011)

Born at Uralla, NSW on 14th January 1914 Reg Munsie originally enlisted in the AIF as NX80139 in December 1941 but was discharged only several weeks later. He re-enlisted in March 1942 and was with Lieutenant Brian Hodge, Lieutenant Kevin McCoy and 101 Other Ranks, mainly from NSW who were flown into Wau on 13th February 1943 as reinforcements for the Battalion.

By mid-afternoon the next day, a number of the reinforcements joined "B" Company then at Skindewai 22 km due east of Wau – much further when walking. There, Reg together with Jack McKay was ushered into 7 Section, 12 Platoon. At the time, the Platoon Commander was Lieutenant Danny Toland.

At the conclusion of the arduous Wau – Salamaua campaign, the Battalion returned to Australia for further training and reinforcement. Reg was with the Battalion in New Guinea for its final action, the Aitape – Wewak campaign.

Reg was discharged from the AIF in September 1946 and settled with his wife Heather at Brighton Le Sands.

A son, Norm became a very competent Jockey and Reg himself was a top class lawn bowls player. Sadly, both Heather and Norm predeceased Reg.

NX144500 PEART, SGT J.C. (John)
(21st July 2011)

Please see the tribute to John at the beginning of this newsletter.

WX14044 NAZZARI, L/CPL L (Lou)
(26th August 2011)

Louis Nazzari was born at Kalgorlie WA on 21st June 1916 and enlisted in the AIF in June 1941.

Lou as he was always known to us was one of 71 Western Australians, originally reinforcements for the 2/28th Battalion (9th Division) who were instead sent to the 2/5th then camped at Douma about 10 miles out of Damascus on 12th February 1942. Lou joined 15 Platoon, "C" Coy in which he served until the end of the war.

On 29th January 1943, in the early stages of the Wau – Salamaua campaign, Lou was reported missing in action but he re-joined the unit with several others on 3rd February after a hard slog through the jungle.

When Lieutenant Hank Gilbert was wounded and evacuated from the Goodview Junction area on 18th July 1943, 15 Platoon was left without a leader so Lou temporarily took over command. A great soldier, Lou again proved his worth during the Aitape – Wewak campaign. He was finally repatriated back home, leaving New Guinea on 1st December 1945 and was discharged from the AIF in January 1946.

Lou always kept touch with his mates from "the east", never failing to send a contribution to the Association each year as his shout.

NX131557 GALBRAITH PTE L. (Lloyd)
(16th September 2011)

Born at Dubbo NSW on 26th February 1923 Lloyd enlisted in the AMF in August 1942 and transferred to the AIF.

Lloyd joined the Battalion on 13th February 1943 at Wau and took part in the operation that became known as the Wau – Salamaua campaign. When the Battalion was pulled out of New Guinea, he returned with it to Cairns on 23rd September 1943 and went into camp at Wondecla on the Atherton Tablelands.

On 24th November 1944 the Battalion embarked at Cairns on the TSMV *Duntroon* and disembarked at Aitape New Guinea, just south of the Dutch New Guinea (now Irian Jaya) border. This was the Battalion's final foray, the Aitape – Wewak campaign. Lloyd was wounded in action on 15th July 1945 but remained on duty and was eventually discharged from the AIF in June 1946.

NX97326 GRIEVE PTE J. E. (James Ernest)
(Date of passing unknown)

Born at Binya NSW on 9th August 1921 James Ernest Grieve enlisted in the AIF in July 1942. He joined the Battalion as one of 17 infantry reinforcements or ten "X-list" men on 13th August 1943 during the Wau – Salamaua campaign and returned with the unit to Cairns on 23rd September 1943.

There is no further information known on Pte Grieve except that he was discharged from the AIF on 5th September 1946 and his passing was reported in the September/October 2011 issue of *Reveille*.

RECOLLECTIONS BY LOU NAZZARI

In 1961 the ATN-7 television network ran a series of episodes titled *ANZAC*. One of the episodes was about the 1943 Wau – Salamaua campaign which began with a Japanese advance from Salamaua which was stopped by Australian Army units at Wau. After seeing a newspaper article about the TV episode, **Fred Hoare** made a copy of the article and sent it to **Lou Nazzari** in Western Australia.

Lou responded with his recollections which Fred recently copied and which, with Lou's permission not long before he passed away, are now reproduced below with contextual footnotes.

“Dear Fred

You have refreshed a few memories I have of the Wau show. I could almost write a book on what happened early in the piece.¹

The article certainly gave Moten a rap, but a false one. He decided that things were getting a bit hot so he handed over to the Brigade Major.²

I was with ‘C’ Coy at the time and our Captain decided to make sure that we got plenty of ammo sent up.³ A Lieutenant Samson⁴ took over the Company in the hope of getting Bill Sherlock⁵ out of trouble.

¹ The first major contact with units of the Japanese Army in the Battle of Wau occurred on 28th January 1943 at Wandumi Ridge overlooking the Wandumi village and only a few hours march east of Wau.

² Lou was referring Brigadier Murray John Moten, Commander 17th Infantry Brigade and Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Robert Alan Campbell Muir was the Brigade Major.

Major Muir had moved forward from Brigade Headquarters at Wau on 28th January 1943. His task was to report back on the developing situation near Wandumi.

³ The Captain referred to is not named in known published accounts of the battle for Wau.

⁴ Lieutenant Rex Stewart Samson, “C” Company 2/5th Infantry Battalion, killed in action 13th February 1943.

⁵ Captain Wilfrid Holden Sherlock, Officer Commanding “A” Company, 2/6th Infantry Battalion, killed in action 29th January 1943.

I was in charge of 7 Section, 15 Platoon so myself and Jack Brooker⁶, who was killed later in the struggle at Wewak, took off for Wandumi to help Sherlock of the Sixth⁷ [2/6th Infantry Battalion] but had the hell belted out of us. The weather turned nasty and Samson said we had better move out but the Bulolo River had flooded [and] the little swinging bridge we had was cut to stop the Japs from getting over.

Samson told Jack Brooker and me to get over the best way we could and contact the Major in charge. We got back to him but there was no hope. By this time the Japs had gone through us.

We eventually got mixed up with Bill Sherlock and our only way out was on a big tree across the river – and we managed to crawl across. We got over alright but it was costly exercise. I was alongside Bill Sherlock when he was killed and I was posted missing, believed killed, for a few days.

I finished up with Captain Dave Sherlock⁸ (no relation to Bill) from 17th Brigade Headquarters. There was Dave Sherlock and a Private (whose name I can't recall) wounded and another Private from the Sixth Battalion and a Sergeant from Brigade Headquarters and myself.

It was a real mix-up. Being new country to us, we were going around in circles. We got back six or seven days later.

Samson was killed a few days later and these are my recollections of the whole disastrous

⁶ VX5206 Corporal John Stanley Brooker, 2/5th Infantry Battalion, killed in action 13th June 1945.

⁷ Captain Wilfrid Holden Sherlock, Officer Commanding “A” Company 2/6th Infantry Battalion, killed in action 29th January 1943.

⁸ Captain Henry David Sherlock, Quartermaster, 2/5th Infantry Battalion.

show. I lost a few mates and consider myself lucky to have survived.

One particular mate said to me before we left Ascot Racecourse in Brisbane “I don’t want to go – I feel as though I’m going to be killed”. He was one of the first to go.”

SICK PARADE

Owen Treadwell has recently undergone back surgery but the good news is that he is on the mend and walking very well. Word is that he is being considered for The Marathon.

SOLDIER IDENTITY TAGS AND AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

It was during the Second Boer War 1899-1902 that each Australian soldier was first issued with a standard identity label. The label was in the form of strip of tape carried in a particular pocket of the soldier’s tunic.

A tin disc replaced the use of tape in 1906 as the Boer War showed that clothing searches often had to be made to identify those killed or seriously wounded in action. Suspended from a thin rope or cord worn around the neck, each disc was stamped with the soldier’s regimental number, surname and initials, religion and unit.

During the First World War 1914-1918 the single tin disc was replaced with two fibreboard tags. One of the tags was octagonal, sometimes red, and remained with the casualty for later identification. The other tag, sometimes green, was a disc which was removed from the casualty and used for administrative purposes including notification of the soldier’s next-of-kin.

The fiberboard tags were not robust and after a period would rot which caused difficulties in identifying dead soldiers later exhumed from quickly made battlefield graves. To overcome this anticipated problem some soldiers had metal tags made privately.

Metal tags were issued to soldiers during the Second World War and were suspended from either a tied cotton tape, leather thong or a metal chain also worn around the neck. However, the soldier’s identity unit was not displayed for security reasons and the soldier’s blood type was stamped on the reverse side to enable a quick transfusion if necessary.

Roger Wainwright, President of the 5 RAR Association recently drew Fred Hoare’s attention to the finding this year among other military artefacts of two Australian identity tags from the Second World War by **Travis McCombe**.

Travis is the son of **Daryl McCombe** and Daryl was a member of 8 Platoon “B” Company 5 RAR commanded by the then Lieutenant Roger Wainwright in 1966/67 during the Vietnam War.

The find was at Lemieng village, 13 km east-south-east of Aitape on the Papua New Guinea north coast and which fell within the 2/5th Battalion area of operations from late 1944.

Travis told the following story to Roger on 18th October 2011.

“Whilst over at Lemieng, east of Aitape, organising an order of timber [this year], I noticed one of the young guys there was wearing what looked like a US dog tag. This turned out to be the case and I enquired as to where he got it and whether there were any more that had been found. The reply was that yes, there had been numerous found around the Aitape-Lemieng area.

I then asked whether they had any Australian or Japanese tags as well and was told that there were Australian tags found, but they did not believe that the Japanese used tags. This really increased my interest and I asked whether there were bodies found in the area

as well. The answer, again, was yes, with bones often found about the place.

Of further interest was that the locals later explained that the area of Lemieng was where the Australian forces were based during the Aitape conflict, with the Lemieng locals acting as guides in the region.

I organised for a couple of the locals to guide our group on a walk through the bush around the Lemieng area, to take a look at a number of Australian and US aircraft that had been left behind (some had crash-landed, some had been left in a state of disrepair). There is still a heap of WW2 weapons, wrecks, ammo etc. about the Aitape land and sea.

On our way back from the walk, we stopped off at a local village and the locals, knowing I had been interested in the war artifacts of the area, produced a number of articles. These included silver rings bearing insignia (US 32nd Infantry Division), US and Australian (slouch hat) army badges, ammo and three dog tags (1x US, 2 x Australian), including the two Aussie ones in question.

That is my account of what I experienced and it certainly fired up my interest. I have since tracked down as much info as I have been able to on the two Aussie guys and have had no luck as yet on the American, but will keep on trying. Hope this is of interest, although it probably won't answer any questions. It may throw up a few new ones.

I would be interested in finding out any further info if you come across it.

Regards,

Trav McCombe"

The two Australian ID tags as photographed by Travis also appear below with his kind permission.



The tag on the left is one that was issued to or intended for VX8413 **Private Charles John Thompson** who was a member of the 2/6th Infantry Battalion AIF and who was born at Stawell VIC. Although further research needs to be done, the Department of Veterans' Affairs Nominal Roll indicates that Private Thompson survived the war and was discharged on 18th October 1945.

Regarding the tag on the right, it was issued to or intended for QX55610 **Private John Richard (Jack) Shillington** of the 2/5th Infantry Battalion AIF who also survived the war. The Nominal Roll and the name search facility for personal files held by the National Archives Authority clearly indicate that the letter "C" in the initials "JC" on the tag is a mistake.

Born at Longreach QLD on 24th August 1924 Jack Shillington enlisted in the AIF at Gan Gan NSW in June 1943.

Ian Clarke has noted that Jack was taken onto Battalion strength at Wondecla QLD in March 1944 and was drafted into 10 Platoon "B" Coy with which he served during the Aitape – Wewak campaign Nov 1944 – Aug 1945. During that period, he held the appointment of Lance Corporal and in an action against a Japanese patrol at in June 1945 was wounded along with Bob Cunningham (NX170832 Private Robert Charles Cunningham). Bob's injuries were severe enough to see him evacuated but Jack was able to remain on duty.

The 2/5th Battalion War Diary shows that the action was reported at 1500 hrs on 27th June 1945 and occurred at a place named Uaninge. The action and casualties are also recorded on page 296 of *All the King's Enemies – A History of the 2/5th Australian Infantry Battalion* by S. Trigellis-Smith, published in 1988.

Jack Shillington was discharged from the AIF in October 1945. He later met **Margaret Hurrell Blank** at Longreach and they married in Rockhampton QLD. Late of Yeppoon QLD, Jack passed away on 24th February 1994 is survived by Margaret and their four children, Bruce, Greg, Gail and Neil.

Margaret also served during the Second World War, in her case as an Aircraftwoman in the WAAAF into which she enlisted in August 1944 and was posted to the Discharge Section in Melbourne VIC. She was discharged in March 1947, well after war's end.

Why the tags were lost or discarded remains a mystery which would be a good one to solve. Any theories or known facts will be published in our next newsletter.

We are grateful to Travis McCombe for his story and for bringing to attention a mystery that began nearly 70 years ago.

OUT AND ABOUT

On 29th October 2011 the 5th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment Association unveiled a plaque at the Land Warfare Centre (the old Jungle Training Centre), Canungra in Queensland. The plaque is in recognition of the training that 5 RAR members received at Canungra before deployment on operations during the Vietnam War.

Ian Clarke was there for the unveiling, after which he enjoyed lunch with 5 RAR Association members at the Canungra RSL Club. Over the following days, Ian had the

pleasure of meeting up with **John Shingles** at Buddina, **Lance** and **Marie Copland** at Buderim and **Owen Treadwell** and Owen's daughter, **Janine** at Coolum.



Ian Clarke at the Canungra Vietnam Memorial, Land Warfare Centre, Canungra, Oct 2011.

(Photo courtesy Ian Clarke)

Fred and Val Hoare met up with **Gordon Glass** on 10th November 2011 at Woy Woy.

The next day, members of the 2/5th Battalion Association and families participated in the Gosford RSL Sub Branch Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph in Gosford Memorial Park.

Members and families at the Service included **Ian** and **Lisa Clarke**; **Zoë Galloway**; **Fred and Val Hoare**; **Roy McCormack**, his wife **Ann** and daughter **Kirsty**; **John McCormick** and his daughters **Karen**, **Robyn** and **Lyn**; **Joy Milroy** and her daughter **Lesley**; **Kath Reilly** (John Peart's daughter); **Chuck** and **Cecily Ryan**; and **Laurie Toland**.

Val reports that it was a lovely day in the Memorial Park, made especially so with the 2/5th members and families gathered and with Roy and Kirsty playing their music.

Back at Gosford RSL Club, all had the pleasure of Joy Milroy singing and dancing to Roy on his pipes accompanied by Kirsty on the drum.

The whole club was delighted!



Tambu Day 2011
Rear L-R: Allan Yates, Ian Clarke and John Shingles.
Front: Chuck Ryan, John McCormick, Fred Hoare and Lew Jones
(Photo courtesy Lisa Clarke)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



Endnote

Our July 2011 newsletter included the first instalment of a story by Molly Myers (now deceased) about her father who was the first Commanding Officer of 2/5th Battalion, Colonel T.P. Cook.

Due to space constraint, the final instalment of the story will now appear in our March 2012 newsletter. However, if anyone would like a copy of the full story in the meantime Ken McKay will send it as an email attachment from kennthmckay4@bigpond.com