

# 26 Battalion Association Victorian Branch

## 26 AUST. INF. BN (AIF) "NEVER UNPREPARED"

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# NEWSLETTER

April 2011

ISSUE 18



Similar to **Capt John Gibson's** crossing in 1945, this heavy Army truck crosses the swiftly flowing Buso River near Lae, New Guinea in 1943. (Negative by H. Dick). Photo: AWM015736

## Welcome to Newsletter No. 18

**W**ELCOME to the latest issue of 26 Battalion Association, Victorian Branch newsletter.

A special thanks to **John Gibson** for his story in this Newsletter. Reminded by the recent floods in Australia, he recalls one time in 1945 he attempted to cross a flooded river in New Guinea.

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, **Mervyn (Laurie) Hill** wrote a story that won an award from the ADF Journal. I thank the ADFJ for its approval to reprint the article in this Newsletter.

You can search for the original article in the Journal at [www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au](http://www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au).  
Congratulations, Laurie

for the great story and winning the Veterans' competition.

There are **changes** to the ANZAC Day march that are detailed on **Page 2**.

If you have something interesting to tell, please drop me a line.

- Colin Block, Editor

Changes to Melbourne  
ANZAC March -- Page 2

## Changes to the 2011 ANZAC Day Parade

Following a review of the 2010 Parade, the ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee (ADCC) has given the following directions to pre-1945 Army veterans.

The ADCC has agreed that from 2011:

- Army will be grouped by Divisions, with each Division's banners massed in front, followed by Veterans in vehicles, then Veterans on foot. All descendants will march at the rear of the Division. Where Veterans have a carer, or any type of walking assistance, Marshals are to direct the Veteran to a vehicle and the carer to the rear of the Division.
- Though all WW2 Veterans will be strongly encouraged to ride in a vehicle, those who still wish to march will be allowed to do so. Marshals are to ensure that only ONE carer accompany a veteran as per the instructions on the Protocol Card.
- The carrying of photographs by the descendants of deceased Veterans is to be discouraged by Marshals.
- Marshals are asked to use discretion when approaching descendants of veterans who wish to participate in the Commemoration March to ensure that appropriate dress is worn for all people and to minimise the use of prams and pushers.
- Marshals are also to ensure that descendants wearing their deceased relative's medals wear them on the right-hand chest.

## INVITATION

### ANZAC Day 2011 -

### Reunion in Melbourne

Former 26th Battalion servicemen and their descendants are invited to attend the 2011 ANZAC Day Commemoration March to join others from our unit.

We especially welcome descendants and those who would like to represent a loved one who is no longer with us.

We will be meeting between 9.30 and 10.00 am opposite Flinders Street Station, on the corner of Degraives St and we start marching at 10.25 am.

All veterans are encouraged to travel in a car provided and we are pleased to advise that there will be adequate transport for for all veterans.

After the parade, we will return to Bell's Hotel, Cnr Moray Street & Coventry Street, South Melbourne (Melway ref: 57 H1). We invite you, along with your family and friends to join us for a meal and catch up.

Numbers are required for reservation of tables at Bell's Hotel so, please contact President, Jeff Collings or email

[webmaster26bn@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster26bn@gmail.com)

RSVP: 16 April 2011

## President's Report

I cannot believe how fast the 2011 ANZAC Day has approached. It only seemed like a few months ago we were lining up to march and having lunch at Bell's Hotel.

We have had some interesting correspondence this year regarding descendants interested in wanting to know more about the 26<sup>th</sup>.

The two featured stories are very intriguing accounts and very thought provoking.

Capt John Gibson's account of the river crossing reinforces the power of water which we have seen lately from around the world with its devastation on society. Laurie Hill's award winning dissertation is truly captivating.

On behalf of the Association members, I pass on our heartfelt condolences go to those affected by the floods in Australia and to those in New Zealand and Japan who have been recently impacted by the tragic natural disasters.

Once again, to the members whom we have lost, my sincere condolences to their families.

I hope to see you all at the 2011 ANZAC Day March and/or at Bell's Hotel for lunch and a chat. This year ANZAC Day falls on Easter Monday, so your support is even more important. [You will find the details in the Invitation.]

Kindest regards,

**Jeff Collings, President**

## That Sinking Feeling

**Captain John Gibson** was sent as a reinforcement officer in 1945 to join the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion just as they came back from leave, before reforming to go on to Bougainville.

He was Second-in-Charge to Major G. Swinburne (OIC *HQ Coy*) in Brisbane who was unavailable to take the command on Bougainville, so Captain Gibson took on the responsibility and subsequently spent six weeks on the Numa Numa Trail.

He was given the job of OC 'C' Coy at the end of the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion's tour on Numa Numa and he led 'C' Coy in the Soraken Campaign described by Gavin Long in *The Final Campaigns* as "a brilliant campaign".

During that time whilst crossing a river near Lalum on the Numa Numa Trail, disaster struck. Now a 93 year old, John Gibson recalls the unfortunate event, "I really thought that at the time we were going to lose a few, if not all of us!"

Here is his account of that incident.

“ I was buying the beer and spirits using the *Battalion Funds*, as the regular ration of two bottles of beer per man was not always available – sometimes only one bottle. I tried to overcome this by fudging on the battalion strength figures by drawing grog rations for all our attached troops – these being artillery and engineers and ANGAU personnel, transport, etc. At the same time I phoned the HQ of each of these units and said that they should draw their grog ration. In the end I had a

problem, as after five weeks up in action, I had eight and a half bottles per man stored under guard.

How was I to get rid of **three hundred** odd bottles of beer?

Well one way or another we managed it. Captain Brooks (ex 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion), a baker by trade, was in charge of the bakery in Torokina, so we traded beer for cakes and goodies from the oven. A



*Cpl W. Smith and Pte S.E. Taylor members of the Australian Army Canteens Service in New Guinea, 1945.*

couple of 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays in the lines won an extra case of beer (20 bottles).

Of course it all had to be paid for!

There was a lot of accounting of money as I was running the *Battalion Funds* and the *Officers' Mess Funds*, so I guess I partly got my job as acting OC *HQ Coy*, which was largely an administrative role, because I was a bank officer.

Anyway, after three weeks the *Battalion Funds* went broke, so I telephoned Col.

Abbott and we decided to organise a pay-day. I would draw about £2,000 from Pay Corps and go up to the forward lines, paying part pay to anyone needing it and get each soldier to lend back £1 each to the *Battalion Funds* so that I could keep on drawing their beer rations, as there was **no chance** the Army Stores Dept would hold our grog otherwise!

So Alec and I went up and I had around £2,000 in a canvas bag, mostly in £1 notes, plus some £5 notes, and we carried out a pay day to all hands. They took over half the cash; canteen supplies were available to some, although difficult right up in the front company areas. By then I had about £500 to be put into the *Battalion Funds* with the District Finance Office, all in the canvas bag, by now tucked into my shirt.

On the return trip on the 4x4 truck, we were late, owing to our pay-day. Also they had run a Jeep onto the back tray and lashed it on with ropes. It was broken down and going back to the workshop for repairs. Also there were about 8 personnel going to NCO's school, etc. Fortunately Major Milson, now acting as Battalion 2IC, was coming back to base. So Major Dave Wilson sat in the front with the driver. I was on the back with the boys and the Jeep, with the £500 odd in my shirt.

As we were late, the usual rain started falling, but much heavier than usual – in fact, quite a storm was raging up in the mountains. As we were crossing and recrossing the river twenty six times, the rise in the water level became a

worry. We got all the way to the last crossing, where the river became with all its gullies and tributaries, a wide stony crossing of about 40 yards. The water was raging, carrying trees, branches, etc. and it was about 3 to 4 feet deep, but rising rapidly. Major Dave Milson decided that the high 4-wheel drive could make it and in we went. About half way through, the front wheels went down into a hole and hit a large rock – within minutes the water was pouring through the cabin and the motor was kaput! I asked all of the boys whether they could swim and a couple were very doubtful. I knew none of us could wade through – it was too swift and deep.

Then along came our saviour – a Provost Sergeant rode up on his motor bike “to have a look at the river in flood”. Our Numa Numa signal wires crossed the river here on short poles. We asked him to cut the signal wire and throw a length to us on a stone. I got the boys with us to untie the

ropes holding the Jeep onto the truck and the Sergeant drew the rope to the bank and tied it around a large rock, while we tied our end to the top of the cabin. By now the water was above the truck and tray and Major Milson and the driver were up on the truck too. I still had the £500 odd of Battalion Funds in my shirt, so it was going to be an expensive drowning! We urged all hands to dump all their gear and loosen their boots in case they got washed off the line.

I went first and with great difficulty being completely washed off my feet dragged along the rope to the bank. I handed the Sergeant the bag of cash.

Then using more of the signal wire around my waist, I went downstream and anchored the other end to a rock as a standby in case someone got washed off the rope. We were lucky – everyone got ashore OK and just as the last bloke arrived, the truck, all our gear, plus the Jeep went rolling down

the river and out to sea, which wasn't far away. Major Dave Milson had to face up to the ensuing enquiry!

It was just a series of good luck – that Sergeant arriving – our having a disabled Jeep tied on top – our Boy Scout training, which enabled us to put a “sheep shank” on the rope to get it tight enough – and getting everyone off before the truck tumbled, which was unexpected and could have been very dangerous indeed.

”



*Capt John M. Gibson in Rabaul, December 1945*

## Bob Froome remembers the floods in New Guinea

In his interview with the *Australians At War Film Archive* (Archive No. 2186) Bob Froome remembers the conditions during the heavy downpours in New Guinea. Used with permission, this extract of his interview and photo can be found at [www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/224.aspx](http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/224.aspx)

“You try to cross a river with a tank or a truck and it will just wash it down the river. It travels far, far faster than the water travels down the rivers here. To go across a creek you've got to make a human chain - I hold your belt, you hold mine and you don't let go because if you fall over you just keep on going, that's the speed that the water comes out of the mountains in the monsoon period when it rains heavily. It rains there like you've probably never, ever seen it rain here. It just is like bucketfuls, just like you were standing there with a bucket which everything just goes rotten.

“You fire your rifle or your weapon now and in half an hour you look down the barrel and you wouldn't see down it because the rust looks like a cobweb and every time you fire your weapon, if you don't take out that rust, your barrel is doing that (demonstrates) so eventually your barrel doesn't shoot straight, so it's a case of trying to keep it clean all the time which is a job all the time. You've got to keep on putting the *pull-through* through it to keep it clean, or keep on firing it - it's just one of the little maintenance factors.”



## Objective Soraken Peninsula

By Mervyn (Laurie) Hill

*Department of Veterans' Affairs  
2008 Veteran Community Story  
Writing and Art Competition  
Winner of the 'True War  
Experience' Australian Defence  
Force Journal (ADFJ) prize. This is  
from the ADFJ No. 178/2009 and is  
used with permission.*

Bougainville; March 1945: it was early morning and enemy shells were landing and exploding just ahead of the platoon. The Platoon Commander called a stop and told me (the signaller attached to the platoon), to connect the phone to the cable I was laying. He then made a phone call to Tactical Headquarters (Tac HQ) advising them of the situation. They replied to suspend patrolling and dig in until the shelling stopped. Later that afternoon a patrol was sent out and came under intense fire from the enemy; two Japanese were killed and we suffered two men slightly wounded. The Japanese then mortar-bombed our position, we replied with our two inch mortars but during the battle one bomb hit a tree above our heads. The explosion killed two of our troops and the fellow beside me had a piece of shrapnel go through his boot and cut off the top of his big toe. I felt a whack and a stinging sensation in the small of my back. It was a piece of shrapnel the size of a peppercorn lodged under the skin, which had come through my webbing belt. I was able to dig it out with my fingernail.

Next day it was decided the platoon would advance along a well-used Japanese track that a patrol discovered the day before. Progress was very slow along this track as the enemy could attack from in front or behind. I pointed out to the OC [Officer Commanding] that the yellow Japanese signal wire running along the track hadn't been laid long as it was still a bright yellow colour. It was getting late in the afternoon so the OC decided to dig in and set up a perimeter beside the track. Fire lanes were set up and both entrances of the track covered by the Bren gunners and the usual booby traps put in place. There was no enemy activity in our position but Japanese artillery could be heard exploding in an area where

another company of our Battalion was operating. Just before dusk I decided to tap my phone into the yellow phone line to see if it was being used. A little while later the phone rang. I picked up the receiver and I could hear two Japanese having a conversation. I quickly replaced the handset so as not to alert the enemy that we were in the vicinity. Discussing the situation with the OC I suggested I could tap into this line and have it connected back to Tac HQ, and if they could get an interpreter, they may be able to get some vital information. The OC then rang Tac HQ to tell them of the plan, and after some time they rang back to say that they were able to locate an American/Japanese from Base HQ and all would be arranged for the next day. This was not to be an easy job as the system of using field phones requires only one cable to be laid, and a short wire from a phone attached to a steel stake driven into the ground to complete the circuit. This has its problems because of induction; which means if another of our companies or our artillery were using their phones, they could be heard faintly on the line which could alert the Japanese. When all of our lines were cleared and the interpreter was installed at Tac HQ I tapped my phone into the Japanese cable, and not long after it rang, indicating the line was being used. Later that night we were advised the interpreter learned some information of importance and that the Japanese were very worried about a large patrol that was missing. What they didn't know was our A Company had ambushed this patrol and killed all of them.

We received a message from Tac HQ that the enemy was in strength on the knoll ahead of our platoon, and for us to stay dug in and take cover while our artillery pounded the area with their 25 pounders and also, the heavy mortars would give them a bit of curry before we would be sent in to clear the enemy from their well-protected pillboxes.

Shell after shell from our artillery whistled over our heads and exploded on the knoll scarring the trees with shrapnel. We hoped they would do the job on the knoll for us and not fall short on our position. The mortars were also very effective in clearing the foliage from the trees and exposing the Japanese bunkers, which would help our assault on their position.

A short while after the shelling

finished my phone rang. I handed it to the Platoon Commander who received a message from Tac HQ to prepare for the attack on the knoll. We were told that if we dislodged the enemy from this position the Battalion would have control of all the high ground leading to the Soraken Peninsula.

After the bombardment finished two of our platoons attacked from different directions, but because of the strength of the opposition and a forward scout killed and two men wounded, we were told to withdraw. The Japanese then attacked our perimeter with small arms and grenades but after intense fire from both sides they were beaten off. The heavy mortars were then called on to give the knoll another pounding. The next day our patrol reported a dead Japanese soldier just outside our perimeter and there appeared to be less enemy activity on the knoll. A decision was then made to attack later that afternoon.

As we started to ascend the steep slopes, a burst of machine gun fire came from higher up, so everybody took cover behind logs and trees. The OC then sent a Bren gunner and one rifleman to approach from each flank. When the rest of the platoon were in position they were told to keep the enemy engaged while the Bren gunners crawled to a position where they could get a 'bead' on the enemy. The Japanese in their pillboxes and trench system had command of all approaches and were able to roll grenades down on the approaching platoons. After a lot of rifle fire and grenade throwing between the platoon and the enemy, their machine gun ceased firing and only small arms fire was coming from them. This gave the rest of the platoon the opportunity to attack. One soldier crawled up close to their position firing his Owen gun until he got close enough to toss grenades into a bunker; he killed three Japanese. This soldier was awarded a Military Medal for his bravery.

After overtaking the Japanese position we found the enemy machine gunner dead (he had been taken out by one of the Bren gunners) and seven rifleman dead in their foxholes. Our casualties were two killed and three badly wounded men, who had to be carried back to base. As well as capturing the knoll there was a Juki machine gun, many rifles, a field phone and we recovered two Australian rifles. I was very interested

in the Japanese field phone, it being half the size of mine and much lighter.

There was a lot of equipment and military documents left in foxholes indicating a hasty retreat by probably about 30 enemy. After he was satisfied we were clear of the enemy, the OC selected a position further along the ridge and told us to form a perimeter and dig in.

When a mate and I were digging in we cut through the roots of a large Lawyer vine that was growing up into a tree near our weapon pit. We noticed there was clear liquid dripping from the severed root. One fellow (a Queenslander) told us if we became desperate for water we could drink it.

We put our pannikins under to catch the drips and collected nearly a pint. We were reluctant to drink the liquid and used it to clean our eating utensils; by doing so it saved a trip down to the creek for water. For the three days we were on the hill, the Japanese shelled us in the morning and then again late at night without doing any damage. We could hear the shells whistling overhead and then exploding harmlessly behind us.

After each shelling we dug our trenches a little deeper and fortunately were not dislodged from this position. News came to us that two islands (Saposa and Taioff) off the coast of the peninsula had been cleared of all enemy. The Japanese artillery that was captured had been shelling our troops who were advancing along the coast.

Patrols from our perimeter reported very little activity in the area, which meant the enemy had withdrawn a considerable distance; probably to reorganise. I was glad not to be part of these patrols; carrying a field phone, Owen machine gun and running out phone cable was hard work on flat territory let alone having to negotiate steep descents. Troops on patrols liked to have a Sig [Signalman] with them as they would be in contact with the Platoon

Commander for directions or call for help if needed. Sigs were always concerned that the cable could be cut behind by the Japanese and an ambush set up at the cut. This had happened to me previously—one of the times the forward scout came under fire and was wounded. The patrol then had to fight its way out of the ambush; fortunately no one was killed but we did suffer two wounded. Next day a stronger patrol went back to where the cut was and found that the enemy had fled and I was able to join the cable and restore communications.

The day we left the knoll it was raining heavily and I think we slipped



*Laurie Hill (left) and "Lud" Holloway (right) guard a young Japanese Working Party that was reporting for work near Rabaul in 1945.*

most of the way down. At the bottom was a very open swampy area, the water sometimes waist deep. As there was no cover in the swamp the OC decided it would be a good time to cross as the rain made visibility difficult and also covered any noise we made. The crossing was made without incident and on reaching slightly higher ground we headed in the direction of the Soraken Peninsula. Again we passed through more soggy areas and on reaching higher ground the forward scouts sent a message back to take cover while they checked out several thatched huts. They reported that the huts were deserted and, judging by office equipment and medical supplies, it

must have been a headquarters that the Japanese evacuated in a hurry.

We then followed a well-used track and late in the afternoon we left the track and did what we called a 'scrub bash' through intense jungle undergrowth until we came to a suitable area where we were told to dig trenches to spend the night. There were quite a lot of banana trees in this area so I selected a spot between a couple of the trees and dug a trench about a foot deep sloping down to where my feet would be. At the feet end I dug a sump so the water would drain into it and help keep my body dry.

It was still raining so I got a bright idea and speared several banana tree leaves over the trench to help ward off the rain; this was reasonably successful as I was able to get some sleep even though my boots were wet and soggy.

About midnight the rain stopped and I could see patches of clear sky. Next morning when we were on the move again, the sun filtered through the canopy over our heads and there was a mist rising

through the jungle, creating an eerie feeling. The humidity was extremely high and after travelling for about a half hour we came to a little creek. The water was lovely and cool so we rinsed our stinking shirts, took boots and socks off and bathed our feet. Several of us found the skin had gone white and chunks of skin peeled off.

We did not drink from the creek as a sign a little way back stated 'eleven Japs buried here'. The Battalion we relieved would have killed and buried them. The smell of death and rotting vegetation was very bad in this area and made me feel nauseous. The creek was flowing in the right direction and to cover any noise we made, we walked in the water, but after a mile or so the creek turned away from where we were headed. Progress was very slow now as the forward scouts reported that they could see signs of recent enemy

activity. The Japanese wore 'two toed' boots that left telltale footprints in the sandy soil. The platoon leader was checking his maps to ensure we were heading in the right direction to the coast when all of a sudden a forward scout came scampering back telling us to take cover as there was a party of Japanese heading our way.

There were not a lot of trees in this area so we quickly had to scrape trenches in the sand. It was soft sand and I was able to get down about a foot to cover over my upper body but where my backside was, six inches down I struck coral. I thought if I got hit in the buttocks, that wouldn't be too bad.

I had just placed my phone in front of me for more protection when a burst of enemy machine gun cracked over our heads. We then heard Japanese voices, and some singing out in English 'Aussie come out and fight'. This suited our Bren gunners as they aimed at the direction of the voices. The enemy rushed our position in suicidal attack after attack but we were able to hold our ground. After this battle, we buried five Japanese and saw a blood trail but did not find any wounded. Our casualties were one killed and three wounded.

On finding a suitable position the platoon dug in astride a track and from here extensive patrolling and probing was carried out without contact with the enemy, and on the second day contact was made with another of our platoons. They reported they had killed a Japanese officer who had information about the defence of the Soraken Peninsula. It was also reported that another of the Battalion's companies had cleared the enemy from the peninsula and all organised resistance had ceased.

Our next move was in the direction of the coast. After a short while we came to a river and followed it for quite a distance. At one deep hole, one of the fellows noticed some good sized fish and said they would make a good meal; a grenade was tossed in, it failed to detonate then two more with the same results. One

of the grenades was mine and I was glad I didn't have to use it in a tight situation; maybe the wet and humid conditions of the jungle caused them to be duds.

Tac HQ told us to proceed to the coast beachhead at Soraken where the Battalion would be rested. It was very good news as this campaign had lasted for about 45 days, the Battalion was well down on strength due to casualties and sickness (Malaria, Dysentery etc.) and the troops were in need of new clothing and equipment.

I was returned to HQ Company and was reunited with my Signal Platoon mates who had spent the Soraken campaign attached to various companies. The area where we set up camp was in a coconut plantation right at the edge of the beach and with breezes coming off the ocean, much cooler than the jungle we had left. We were told to dig trenches in case of shelling and patrols would be shared by each of the companies to allow as many troops as possible to rest.

The first week was very enjoyable. We rigged up portable showers using fresh water from little wells that we dug, and were issued with new clothing and boots. Without any activity from the enemy the days were filled with swimming, reading, writing letters and catching up on sleep. One fellow borrowed some of my phone cable to make a fishing line and caught a shark about four feet long. I never found out whether he ate any of it.

The cooks set up a field kitchen about 400 yards back along the beach from our camp, and we were able to go down and have hot meals three times a day.

One of my best days while on Bougainville was when a mate and I conned our way on a barge trip to the island of Taioff. The island had recently been cleared of all enemy and the barge party were taking food and supplies over to the islanders. It was a beautiful tropical island, and on landing the islanders greeted us by placing lovely-smelling leis around our necks; we in return were able to give them tobacco and cigarettes.

After the barge had been unloaded the islanders provided us with a luscious tropical fruit lunch but, as all good things come to an end, we reluctantly sailed back to the mainland. The troops were making the best of the rest period until one day a senior officer (senior in age as well) of our company who did not like the idea of the troops being idle all day, gave an order to clean up around the camp, and to pick up all of the fallen fronds from the coconut trees and put them into a pile. When this was completed he got the bright idea for the pile of fronds to be set on fire. That night the Japanese from one of the islands further up the coast, possibly ranging on the smoke, shelled us.

Next day we were all up early and dug bunkers which would each accommodate three persons. We cut down coconut trees, cutting the trunks into lengths to cover the bunkers. That evening we were shelled again just as several of us had reached the cookhouse for a meal. There was a mad bolt back to the shelter of our bunkers. I looked back a couple of times; the shells were exploding in the water and it seemed as though they were following us along the beach.

The shelling continued from then on, always at evening mess time. The cooks got sick of this and cooked the meal during the day and put it out for anyone who was game enough to go for a meal. Three of us were very glad we covered our bunker with coconut tree logs as a direct hit by a shell from a mountain gun did no damage. After a few days, a routine order from HQ Torokina stated no more coconut trees were to be cut down as this plantation belonged to the Burns Philp company and it would be required by them after the war. This didn't go down too well with the troops—possible lives for a few miserable coconut trees.

The Soraken campaign cost the Battalion 19 killed in action, four died of wounds and 61 wounded.

Honours and awards included one DSO, one MBE, two MCs, one GM, two MMs and five MID. The Japanese losses were 167 killed



*Photo of the blue coloured and watermarked 'One Shilling' banknote that is Japanese Invasion Money, intended for use as a replacement for the local currency.*



*Left: Laurie Hill wins an inscribed plaque from the Australian Defence Force Journal for the above article.*

## Photos from the Years



*Above: Adorned with the Australian flag, Jeff Collings arrives at Bell's Hotel on his Harley-Davidson in 2003. Riding pillion is his brother, Len, who carries the 26 Battalion banner. In the background, Bob Gaudion walks past.*

### Via e-mail:

My father, William, known as **Bill McNeilly** NX103371 (N6116) served in the 26th Battalion, A Company.

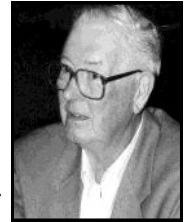
He first joined the 21st Light Horse in 1938

transferring to the 26th Battalion then serving until 26th March 1946.



Bill passed away in July 2005 at 85 years and as I said in his Eulogy, he carried out the battalion motto "Never Unprepared" throughout his life.

Never more so, than fighting he his last enemy - cancer .



As family historian, I have his copy of "Never Unprepared"

*Corporal William (Bill) McNeilly*

but I am sending a new copy to my son (his grandson) who is serving in the Australian Army now.

Regards, Frances Robinson

### Sadly, two key supporters pass away

Sadly, we wish to report the passing of **Margery Miles**, wife of Keith Miles, who was the foundation President of the 26 Battalion Association in 1991. Marge had been ill for some time before passing away in Bundaberg. Her support of the Association particularly as Secretary and all her efforts in keeping the membership together are still highly valued.

Another staunch supporter, was **Pat Maxwell**, wife of Captain Kemp Maxwell. After the Kemp's death Pat left Toowoomba and moved to Yeppoon to be near her family. Pat passed away in September 2010. Pat spent a lot of time in support of the Association over many years this is greatly appreciated.



*Left: Marge Miles at the 26 Battalion Association reunion in 1991.*

### VALE

Bill McNeilly  
Nelson Allen

### Printed versions of this Newsletter

If you wish to receive a printed and posted copy of this Newsletter please send \$5.00 per year with your name and address to:

**Colin Block, WebMaster26Bn@gmail.com**

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