

Thumbs Up 2018

The Annual Newsletter of the
2/20th Battalion Association.

Check us out on the web:
www.secondtwentieth.org.au

Vale:

NX10935, Private Max Ernest DENNING

His grandmother and aunties in the Woolgoolga area raised Max. He left school at a young age and worked on banana plantations. He showed skills in surf lifesaving, cricket and football. Later he moved to Sydney where he worked in a battery factory.

He gave his date of birth as 04 November 1920 on enlisting but was actually 3 years younger, just aged 17, when he signed up in 1940. He trained as a sniper and arrived in Singapore in October 1941.

He remembered his time working the night shift in Hell Fire Pass as very difficult. The noise from blasting made sleeping tough during the day. He was very positive about his prison camp commander who really stood up for his men. He recalled a time when in a prison camp he befriended a wounded Japanese soldier and cared and shared his meagre rations with him.

When Max returned to Australia he worked as a bricklayer and then became a builder. He married Mary and they had two daughters before separating with each parent taking one child. Max and his daughter Roslyn lived at Clemtton Park until she was married and eventually Max retired and moved to the Central Coast. Max became a much loved grandfather to Roslyn's children.

Max was our last marching veteran at Anzac Day 2017. His effort in marching the distance he did were an inspiration to all marchers there with him and a great thrill for the crowd as he passed by.

Max passed away on the 24th of August 2017.

NX72734, Private Frank Clem SMITH

Frank was born in Narromine and was the 5th of 9 children. His Mum died giving birth to the 9th baby. Frank's father was away working and so the children became virtual orphans. Frank and his brother were relocated to a home in Glebe from where they were fostered by a family from Bulli. When Frank came of age (16) he returned to Narromine where he worked on farms and with turkeys. It was while he was working there that he met and fed Dickie Bye who was "on the wallaby". They were to meet up again on the Burma railway. Four of the brothers enlisted during WW2 and three returned home.

While on night duty as a guard in Malaya, Frank issued the "who goes there?" and was given a reply to which he asked "where are you from?" The reply was "Narromine". His reply was, "I'm your brother, Les!" Frank was a Bren gun carrier and was amongst the very last to cross the causeway back onto Singapore Island during the Japanese advance. After his capture he moved to Changi where he made a flag with insignia from old uniforms. This flag and a Japanese flag came home with Frank and are on display at the Narromine Air Museum. On the march to the railway, Frank picked up a cooking pot that couldn't be carried any further by its carrier. This led to him working in the cookhouse. At the end of proceedings, Frank and his mate Dickie Bye witnessed the signing of the Japanese surrender from their positions in a tree overlooking the event.

On his return to Australia he went back to Narromine where he met Pam working in a local café. Frank had a time rabbiting and fencing and this helped him to

readjust his life. He and Pam married in 1950 and set up home in Narromine. This involved sawing his own timber as this was scarce after the war. They raised three girls there and Frank and his uncle bought a drilling rig which was used to find water. This was very successful and Frank owned 3 rigs eventually.

Frank's last Anzac Day march was at Narromine in 2017 and he was a regular attendee at the get togethers at Roseville RSL.

Frank and Pam did a lot of travelling around Australia and enjoyed great times with their grandchildren. With encouragement, Frank wrote a book called "Experiences of Frank Clem Smith". It has had three reprint runs. When Pam passed away Frank continued to live in the same house in Narromine with some assistance. Later on he moved to Sydney to live with his daughter's family.

Frank passed away on the 5th of July 2017.

NX50646, Private Leslie WEST

Les arrived in Australia from the Bradford area of the UK with his parents and siblings when he was 3 or 4 years of age. The family settled in Castle Hill where his dad was an orchardist and Les grew up and lived his early life there.

Les' war experience saw him in Changi, working on the railway and then in medical services. He met an Englishman called Ted who was medically trained and helped to get Les into this line of work. These two exchanged cards every year after the war and caught up in both Australia and the UK. Their descendants remain very firm friends.

When Les returned from the war he worked various jobs and enjoyed dancing. He met Martia and soon this dancing team developed into a life team when they were married in 1947. They spent some years in WA where Les worked as a greenkeeper at Subiaco before returning to Sydney's Parramatta area. Here Les got into trucking and the family of two girls and one boy settled into a home in Blacktown. This was to be Les' base for 50 years.

Les and Martia continued to enjoy an active life both on the dance floor and with their family and grandchildren. We all have wonderful memories of Les on Anzac Day as he danced his way up George and Park Streets to the delight of children attending the march. He certainly had a special way of lightening things up as he worked the crowd.

Les passed away on the 6th of April 2017.

Lest We Forget



Picture 1: Frank Smith (L), Les West (M) & Max Denning (R) at ANZAC Day 2013

Presidents Report:

Since my last report we have sadly lost our two remaining original members. Frank Smith NX72734 who passed away on the 5/7/2017 and Max Denning NX10935 our Patron who passed away on the 24/8/2017. Their passing marks the end of an era. We the descendants of the men who served their country during the lead up to the Fall of Singapore and as prisoners thereafter in many places will forever honour their contribution to our country's defence and their unfailing loyalty and support of each other.

The Last Post Ceremony held at the Australian War Memorial on the anniversary of the Fall of Singapore honoured NX33630 Private William Maxwell Ferguson, Ron's Father. The Ceremony was very well attended by members of various units of the 8th Division as well as two large school groups and many who were visiting the AWM. Members of the 2/20th Battalion Association who attended were Ron Ferguson and his wife Dawn, Graham Tweedie and his wife Margie, Stewart Thompson and his wife Jayne and daughter Clare, Scott Trapman and Wendy and myself. Ron Ferguson laid the first wreath under a photograph of his father followed by a representative of the

Singapore High Commission. I then laid a wreath on behalf of our Battalion Association.

Following the Ceremony Ron and his wife, Graham and his wife, Wendy and I attended a dinner organised by the 2/19th Battalion Association. It provided an opportunity to meet other members of the 8th Division family. Following the dinner a presentation was given by a staff member of the Australian War Memorial on a number of topics including aboriginal soldiers who served in the 8th Division.

Dennis Baker

Fall of Singapore Service:

As mentioned above in the Presidents Report, the Fall of Singapore Service is no longer occurring, however there is a service held at the AWM in Canberra. Given the success of the first service in Canberra, let us make an effort to continue this attendance next year in 2019.

ANZAC Day March 2018:

Form up at 11:00am in King Street at the intersection of Pitt Street. The estimated march off time is 11:40am. Look for the 2/20th Banner. The light rail building works on George Street, has changed some aspects of this year's march, please keep that in mind.

ANZAC Day Lunch & AGM:

We are at Tattersals Club again this year. The lunch will commence at 12:45pm sharp.

Lunch will cost \$85, which will include a two course meal, beverages and Association Membership.

The address of Tattersals Club is 181 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, opposite Hyde Park.

Don Tweedie Fighting Bandsman's Last Stand

Terry Tweedie's book shares his father's wartime story 'Don Tweedie Fighting Bandsman's Last Stand' follows story of courage, determination, heroism, faith, love, mateship.

After sharing with an Australian Vietnam War veteran his father's story as a prisoner of war on the Burma Railway in 1942, he encouraged Terry Tweedie to write a book. It prompted him in writing the story of his father in "Don Tweedie Fighting Bandsman's Last Stand"

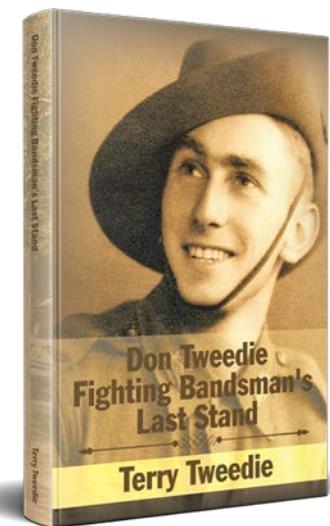
This is a story of Don Tweedie who was raised during the Great Depression and then enlisted to go off to

war only to find himself involved in the greatest defeat of the British Empire in Singapore in 1942. He was severely wounded and was taken prisoner to Changi, Burma Railway, Thailand, Saigon, Singapore and Japan as a prisoner of war for the remainder of the war. Don witnessed numerous atrocities and watched on as many of his mates slowly died of starvation and disease.

He returned home and continued living in a changed society. He moved on with his life as a farmer, bandsman and had a family. It was not easy for him as he suffered from war related issues such as collapsed nerves, and the traumas haunting him from the prison camps. He found solace in brass band music and cattle farming and it became his passion throughout his life.

"There are a lot of soldiers now coming home from war who need help and in most cases are getting it. However in

1946, Don
Tweedie was
checked over
by doctors
after World
War II and sent
home," Terry
says. "There
was no serious
ongoing help
and he had to
fight every inch
of the way to
obtain
psychological
help."



"Don Tweedie Fighting Bandsman's Last Stand" hopes to make readers understand what war can do to people's lives, how it can change their lives and how the war changes families' lives. Don Tweedie went off to war thinking it was going to be a great adventure and at the same time getting paid for this great adventure. He had no idea what he was about to be engaged in at Malaya and Singapore. However, he always maintained that he was proud to have fought under the Australian flag.

"Don Tweedie Fighting Bandsman's Last Stand"

By Terry Tweedie

ANZAC DAY 2018

Lunch, Reunion and AGM
Tattersals Club
181 Elizabeth Street, Sydney
12.45pm

Member's Name:			
Member's Address			
Member's Email Address:			
Member's Phone Number:			
Invited Family Guests:			
Dietary Requirements:			
ANZAC Day Lunch			
Members Lunch	\$85.00	<i>Per head (includes 2018 membership)</i>	\$ _____
2018 Membership	\$10.00	<i>If not attending the lunch</i>	\$ _____
Donations Thankfully Received			\$ _____
Singapore & Beyond	\$27.50	<i>Battalion History Book</i>	\$ _____
Battalion Tie	\$20.00		\$ _____
Battalion Badge	\$10.00		\$ _____
Total			\$ _____

RSVP NO LATER THAN THE 17th APRIL 2018

Payment can be made to the Treasurer by either cheque or electronic bank transfer.

The Treasurer 2/20th Battalion

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