



"The Messenger"



(Of The Gods.)

Official Newsletter of the Royal Australian Signals Association (SA) Inc.

December 2007.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles in the "Messenger" are those of the writers/contributors and not necessarily those of the "Committee" or "General Membership" of the Royal Australian Signal Association (SA) Inc.

PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR 2007.

Dear Members,

I hope you are all well and looking forward to the Christmas & New Year break.

For those who did not attend the recent Corps Dinner, you missed a fantastic evening. The committee worked very hard to provide a good night for all and I would like to thank them very much. Next year we have the RASigs Reunion 2008 and the Corps Dinner will form part of that function.

This year has gone very fast, it was mainly filled with preparation for the future. It included forming a committee that we can count on, methods to increase membership, continue to foster our relationship with 144 Signal Squadron and continue our efforts to build a museum at 144 Signal Squadron in the area allocated to us by the unit. Our success this year was in the formation of a good committee and the allocation by 144 Signal Squadron of room for the association and its memorabilia. I would like to thank the 144 Signal Squadron staff who have helped us this year, these include the SSM WO2 Chris Anthony and WO1 Doc O'Connell. I would also like to thank the outgoing OC of 144 Signal Squadron, Maj Steve Halliday for his support, and on behalf of the Association we wish him all the best in his future plans.

The Reunion next year is looking like the biggest event this state has ever had. It starts on Friday the 7th of November with Registration at Keswick Barracks. Saturday is a Family BBQ at Bonython Park, Sunday is a Formal Parade conduct at Keswick by 144 Signal Squadron trooping the Princess Anne Banner. Monday night is the Formal Dinner being held at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre. The Reunion will then finish Tuesday the 11th November with a Remembrance Day Service at the Signals Memorial at Keswick Barracks. Could you all please consider the event and either register on the website www.rasigs.com or call 08 8342 3012 and we will post out the registration form.

(Continued overleaf)

Everyone is reminded of the upcoming AGM and I would ask that you make the effort to attend and enjoy a few drinks and a bit to eat with your fellow Sig's. The AGM will be at 4.30pm on Sunday the 3rd of February 2008 at 144 Signal Squadron Keswick Barracks. More information is available in the AGM documents.

Once again the year edges towards a close and we get ready for the Christmas/New Year break. The committee and I would like to wish all our members and family a very Safe, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in the new Year.

Regards: Bruce Long President RA Sigs. Assn (SA)

Signals Reunion November 2008.

As reported in previous editions of the "Messenger" the organization of this **national event** is still progressing well, it is now confirmed that the reunion dinner is booked and will take place at the Entertainment Centre. The dates are now ironclad being centred around Corps Day and Remembrance Day.

- Friday November 7th** Registration day at Keswick Barracks. (Between 1000 and 1400 Hrs)
At the 144 Sig Sqn lines, other activities are being planned on this day.
- Saturday: 8th:** Family day and barbeque at Bonython Park.
- Sunday 9th:** Corps Day Parade at Keswick Barracks. The Princess Anne Banner will be Present and a meal will be provided afterwards.
- Monday 10th :** Reunion Dinner at the Entertainment Centre.
- Tuesday 11th:** Remembrance Day at our memorial in Keswick Barracks.

Go to the Association's website: **www.rasigs.com** for further information and to register and or pay, or ring 08 8342 3012 to request a registration form.

The Kokoda Track. (continued from the last issue)

5/10

“**H**ump Day” – 45 and half Kms to Ower's Corner (not that anyone is counting!!!). Well how would one describe today's hike – technically not difficult but having said that it was (in agreement with Bob Col and Adam), by far the hardest day that we had experienced since starting our sojourn along the “track”. We left camp at approximately 06.30 and headed up the hill – (the “hill” being Mt. Bellamy – 2190m) – one gets to the Kokoda lookout at approximately 2000m and then traverses along the track for approximately an hour to reach Mt. Bellamy (which was somewhat disappointing – as whilst it is the highest point on the track one cannot see a great deal due to the dense foliage. From there

a one hour “downhill skelter”. “Eddy the Eagle” (the “famed” English downhill jump skier) had nothing on us. Reminded me of Banjo Paterson’s poem of “Mulga Bill”. The conditions were “murderous” – the rain that had fallen “in buckets” throughout the night had turned the so-called placid track into a real “slip-siding” event, and made negotiating the downward slopes “nigh impossible”. Mud conditions ankle deep in parts and the angle of descent meant that one slip and you “went”. Tree roots, vines and general jungle debris also assisted in making it an interesting exercise. Must confess that I had a number of “close calls” – slip sliding – downhill racer. The conditions – mud that is – would have made any pig deliriously happy!!!. Finally reached the bottom – thankfully in one piece. Then another hour climb – relentless – “up hill down dale” – “no rest for the wicked” – but no doubt as you are thinking – “you have only yourself to blame”. One interesting snippet – whilst nearing the top of Mt. Bellamy we were startled by an eerie “rat a tat tat, rat a tat tat” not unlike the sound of a bren gun being fired. Apparently lyre birds that inhabit this area of the jungle have mimicked the sound of gun fire dating back to the 1940’s – “stranger than friction!!!”.

“Wandering” along this particular sector of the track could be “poetically” likened to that of a nave in a cathedral, with shaft of light cascading through the foliage – dappled shades of green - (been in the jungle too long!!). However, it was quite impressive. (An aside – if per chance you are having difficulty reading it (the diary) – then I too am experiencing difficulty writing it – ensconced in bed – yes, 1900 hours. Had tea and “headed in”.

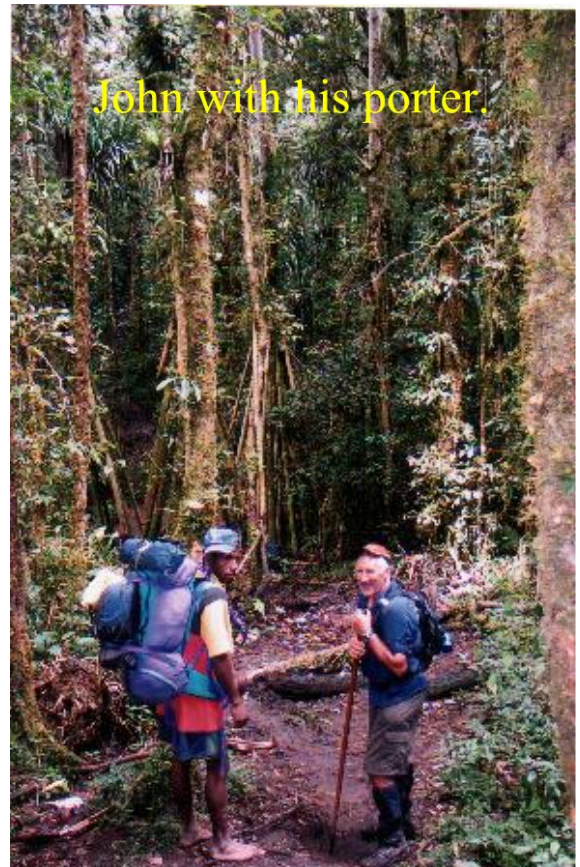
We are staying in a 4 star guest house at Efogi - with separate rooms and two mattresses provided!! May yet get a good night’s sleep. I certainly could do with one after last night’s sleep was regularly spoiled by some noisy insects, crickets etc which seemed to be just outside the hut where we were attempting to sleep – what with dogs, (sheep), kids, roosters, rivers, rain, etc it will be interesting to see what tonight holds. Whilst I have not finished today’s notes will relate the afternoon happenings – (no nothing happened!!!) tomorrow. Till then.....

PS Barb, - yes the mud is thick, “clayey” and sticks like the “proverbial” and your current pair of hiking boots would have been swallowed up in the mire.

6/10

Currently doing a “Tom Sawyer”, dangling my feet in the stream – so relaxing after yet another 8 and half hour trek. From Efogi we climbed (as appears to be the norm) – (camp near the water and therefore the daily climb first thing after breakfast) – “doesn’t half kill you”. Breakfast for me (6/10) consisted of muesli (Swiss), bacon and eggs (only joking), small container of two fruits, and a cup of coffee. I will be pleasantly surprised if I have not lost weight – what with all the “exercise” and the “balanced meals”) – to a lookout some 200 metres above the village. From there we trugged, no in fact it was reasonable going for some 2 hours, though in parts, the track deteriorated somewhat and a slip would have had you sliding down some 300/400 metre drop!!! (not for the faint hearted or those who suffer vertigo).

Needless to say we paid special attention as to where we putting our feet. After some 3 hours we met several tour groups travelling in the opposite direction (Ower’s Corner to Kokoda). The “grapevine”

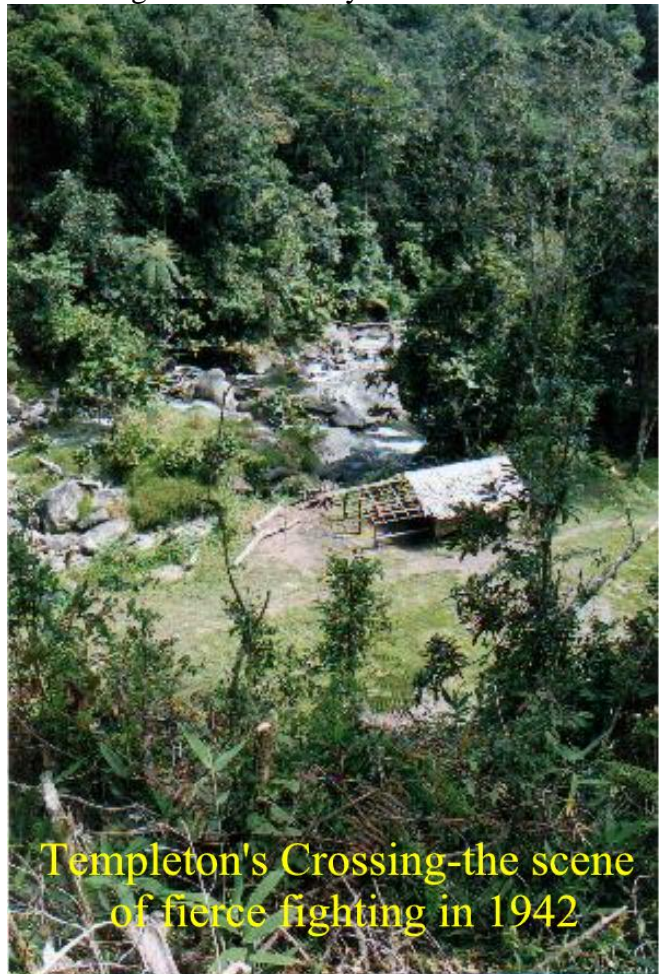


works in these parts too – most had heard about a “mad” Australian who had the misfortune of injuring himself on the first day and wanted all the “macabre” details. Finally, reached Brigade Hill – (one of the major battle sites during the fighting – strategically a good spot – high ground but unfortunately the Japs encircled the position and the “good guys” had to “high tail it”). From there it was presumably a “doddle” down to the creek, up the other side, and then camp for the night – wrong – as we were doing good time it was suggested that we “push on” from Monara and head several hours closer to our objective (Ower’s Corner) – now two days and a number of hours!!! We were shown the “Gap” to which we had to climb and am not sure whether this was the 800 metre climb that the Swans footballers (AFL) took 45 minutes to “do” – needless to say my time was “better” (just over an hour). Real slog and went through at least a litre of Gatorade in the process. Very conscious that one needs to keep the mineral/salts up and drink “copious” quantities of water. Have been drinking more than I normally do!!>

As an aside, Barb – today’s little exercise was not unlike going up and down “Tricolor” in the French Alps for about six hours – upon reaching the top “knackered” – there is the down hill walk – surprise and whilst this is possibly easier than an uphill climb, it is more taxing on your knees and one must be alert at all times!! It should be added that even the guides occasionally slip but given that they do not wear shoes – bare feet – they do a marvellous job. The weather today was in the high 20’s with high humidity – just to make things interesting. Down to the bottom – another hour and then late lunch. Another 20 minute walk to a small village near the course of a creek!!! One thing that I have as yet not mentioned is how clean the track is – contrary to comments made by the ABC several “moons ago”, the track appears “neat” with very little evidence of Coke cans etc that were highlighted by the ABC. The tour group which we are “travelling” with, Kokoda Trekking, ensure that all cans (food that is) papers etc are “bashed, burnt and buried”. The villages that we have been through are neat (native fashion) and the populace friendly. Not much to add to today’s episode other than I believe I have mastered the art of “calm walking”.

7/10

Woke –well cannot say I had a particularly good sleep given the village dog and sundry “chooks” antics throughout the night endeavouring to rummage through our day packs etc. One enterprising “chook” did in fact peck its way through the inner tent and was ceremoniously given “the boot” however morning revealed that it had attacked the milk powder packet as well as chewing through the plastic bag in which the food was contained. Relentless and monotonous – are they words with a similar meaning? Today’s hike of some 6 hours was both. Initially we were only going to do a 2 hour hike and have a “quiet day” but



Templeton's Crossing-the scene of fierce fighting in 1942

is was agreed that it would be a wasted exercise and that we all (the three hikers that is) would prefer to “put in” six hours today 7 hours tomorrow and then a “walk in the park” on Monday (2 hours).

The general consensus prevailed and so the hike. Weather overcast approximately 28 degrees and high humidity we decided to “do” the 9 hills – more like ninety nine!!!! Up, up, up – reached the village

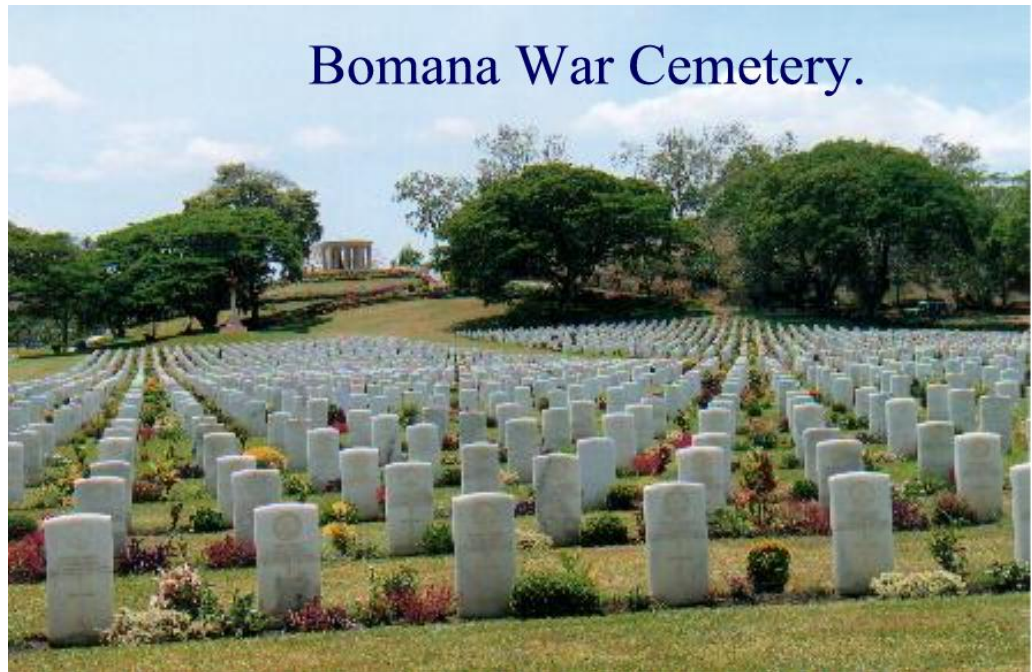
where we had originally planned to stop for the day within one and a half hours walk – only Hill 4!!! Up, up, up and “still they kept coming” Finally some hours later we reached the top 1300m and yes you guessed it – descended down – well – a little down – then a traverse and then down, down, down to Ofi Creek. Arrived here at approximately 1300 hours so not bad time. Lunch consisted of GreenSeas Tuna, Arnotts crackers, several biscuits and a mug of coffee. After erecting the tent I decided to go for a “swim” as best I could under the circumstances prevailing. Not permitted to get either head or finger wound wet!!. Most invigorating and “just what the doctor ordered”.

Being entertained by the local kids at the watering hole – “kids are kids” anywhere in the world and these were no different. Col handed out balloons and that kept them duly amused. Nothing much else to report. Weather overcast with prospect of rain but we have been exceedingly lucky throughout the hike, so it would be nice to finish the walk dry.

I note, that the afternoon session Day 4 was not completed – similar to all days – get in about 1400 hours, lunch and then pitch the tent, normally in a communal hut above ground, away from the “marauding hordes” at the site and contemplate!!!. Yes, a difficult scene – not quite your “sea change” or for that matter a “tree change” but it has its merits. The natives seem happy though and their children healthy and loved.

8/10

The penultimate day – 8/10 – weather 30 degrees, high humidity and cloudy (a break from the norm!!). Thankfully, had a reasonable sleep given that we were camping out under the stars – not that I saw too many if any, having gone to bed at approximately 18.30 hours. Spent some time listening to classical jazz before retiring.



Woke before the birds but again endeavoured

to get some “shut eye” without much success. Therefore, up at approximately 05.15 - ablutions, pack the tent and breakfast (muesli, two fruits, and a mug of coffee). Left the camp at 0630 and you guessed it – first hour hiking up a “near vertical hill” some 500-600m climb – why they persist in giving us breakfast and then making us do “somersaults”? Needless to say, “wacked” by the time we reached the top. From there to Imita Ridge with some 14 creek crossings to negotiate!!!. Have decided to retitle the presentation, novelle, what you will, - “Rock Hopping – Kokoda style”. Catchy title and sure to entice “rock hoppers” to spend their money!!! After traversing the creek/rivers on 14 occasions and not falling in, came upon a pretty shady area near the creek for lunch. We had throughout the morning passed several tour groups on their second day out – swapped yarns re conditions of the track etc. After lunch – yes again – another climb – one hour duration and another bunch of hikers – not quite sure as from which

galaxy but Hard yards, but must be doing me some good. Top of Imata Ridge and down the hill along the “Golden Stairs” – more like “Golden Syrup” - muddy, wet, sticky and a pleasure to get to the bottom – one and half hour duration – somewhat treacherous and I was making sure that no other catastrophe was to befall me. The “Golden Stairs” were originally dug into the hillside, some 3000 odd steps to make the “going easier”!!! Some 60 years later little remains bar the track, that snakes its way down hill.

Pitched the tent, went for a cooling “swim” and now have my feet dangling in the water as I relate the day’s happenings. I covered some 17400 steps today – probably one of the lowest number per day – averaging around the 25000 mark – tomorrow’s will be somewhat less given that we have only a 2 hour hike to the “finish line” (Ower’s Corner) and civilisation.

Failed to mention, that several days ago spotted a 4/5 foot snake slithering across the path – not sure who was more surprised – the snake or yours truly. The bird calls continue to accompany us along the track – not that we get the opportunity of sighting these lovely warblers – one bird, no doubt, a lyre bird was mimicking the sound of a mobile phone call!!! – well that is what it sounded like but then I may have been in the tropics too long.

It is envisaged that we will “break camp” at 0630 and reach Ower’s Corner at approximately 0830 and that Gail Thomas (Tour Operator) or someone from the Company will pick us up at 0900 and drive us the 30 odd Kms back to Port Moresby – hot bath, clean clothes and yes Barb, a shave!!! One look at me at the present stage and I believe that you may have grounds for divorce. “Ruggedly handsome” comes to mind.

The following day 10/10 – flight out to Brisbane at 06.40 and ‘freedom’. We have been abundantly blessed with exceptionally good weather – no doubt due to my or our combined power of positive prayer. Yes, I admit that not one day went by without saying a small prayer for the safe deliverance and good weather. God too, must have had the Monday off as well!! I Believe that I have covered most of the happenings today – it was hard, strenuous, but the walk along the creek was magical.

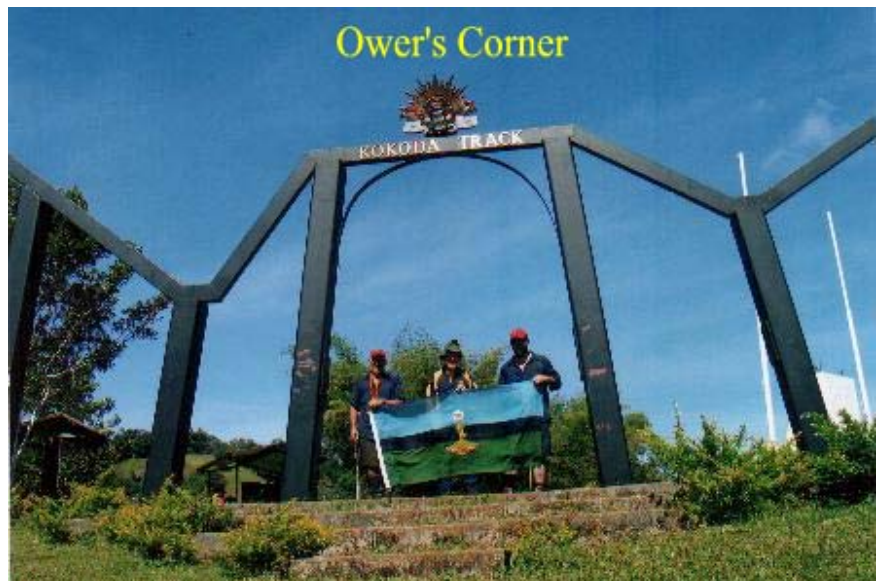
In passing, - a quote from a fellow trekker (Irishman) who we met along the track, who when asked about trekkers doing Kokoda succinctly stated that there are only two types of trekkers:

- - brutally honest
- - liars

The final day – 9/10

Woke early well 0.500 in anticipation of the final walk. Breakfast and on the “road” by 0.6.30 for the climb – (what’s new)

and the descent to the Goldie River and yes, you’ve guessed it, the final climb to Ower’s Corner.



The push to Goldie River took approximately an hour and upon reaching the river which incidentally was the largest and widest that we had to negotiate throughout the entire hike (other than the one in which I had the misfortune of falling into!!!), had an early morning cuppa and Col and Adam went for a swim in the river whilst I performed my “Bay Watch” duties!!! Tradition has it, that upon reaching this point, the

“hitch hiker” carries the porter’s back packs for the last section, to Ower’s Corner. Thankfully, I was able to honour this tradition, though I admit that I was glad that Grayford (my porter) had carried his back pack for the preceding days. Again the weather was favourable, low 20’s at this time of the morning and therefore conducive to walking. Another tradition carried out on the last day – each hiker is presented with a fern garland – its significance presumably in acknowledgement of “conquering” the “bloody track”. The final push to the top took approximately 45 minutes (ascent 465 metres) and my first word upon sighting the memorial at Owen’s Corner was “Eureka!!!”

The celebratory “slap on the back, well done etc” echoed down the valley upon our arrival. Ower’s Corner overlooks the valley below, Goldie River and in the distance Imita Ridge. We then waited for approximately an hour before Rusty and crew arrived to take us back to Port Moresby, Col and Adam to the hotel and yours truly to the medical clinic to have the stiches removed from both head and finger.

My reaction upon completing such a gruelling trek was one of thanks that we had been so fortunate with the weather, that we had all finished the trek with few ails (no blisters, leech bites etc) and due respect and admiration that all Australians should have for the men who fought and died in this particular theatre of war. It was due to their efforts and their courage that we may pursue our dreams.

Whilst I have as yet not penned my final comments in relation to the trek, I do recall thinking of the lyrics of Paul McCartney’s song “Yesterday” as I inched my way to the top on the last day.

“Yesterday, All my troubles seemed so far away,
Now I need a place to hide away,
Oh – I believe in yesterday”!!!

Strange – no doubt some “shrink” would have a field day.

I have only admiration for those who fought in such tortious, wet, miserable conditions.

LEST WE FORGET

Itinerary:

Day 1. Port Moresby – Kokoda

Day 2. Kokoda – Isurava

Day 3. Isurava – Eora Creek

Day 4. Eora Creek – Templeton’s Crossing

Day 5. Templeton’s Crossing – Efogi

Day 6. Efogi – Menari

Day 7. Menari – Ofi Creek

Day 8. Ofi Creek – Uberi

Day 9. Uberi – Ower’s Corner

As AGM documentation has been included with this issue of the “Messenger” the next part of the “Rumsby Report” will appear in the first issue for 2008.

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