***31st Infantry Battalion Association (Brisbane Branch)***

***President’s – Annual Report for 2020***

***It is my honour and privilege to offer this report on the activities of the Brisbane Branch of the 31st Infantry Battalion Association for the past year.***

***The year was fragmented by the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic causing many of our usual Ceremonies and Parades postponed or cancelled entirely. However our Membership was maintained at 41 members including Honorary and Associate members. Three new members joined at the later part of the year.***

***Our first activity for the year held on the 6th February, was the Boer War Commemoration of the Battle of the Onverwacht Hills South Africa in 1902. It was held at the Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch. Several of our Members attended and a Wreath was laid on our behalf by Doug Angus.***

***The Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers was scheduled to be held on the 5th March, but Covid-19 intervened, and it was rescheduled to the 27th March, however further restrictions on spacing were imposed, and the meeting was cancelled altogether.***

***The Anzac Day March and Parade through the streets of Brisbane was also cancelled due to further restrictions imposed by the spread of the Virus. Most members however, partook in the new “Personal Dawn Service Observance” by “Standing Fast” at their driveway entrances for the “Last Post”.***

***By 19th July we were able to plan and control the relaxed distance regulations at the Ipswich General Cemetery, to commemorate the 104th Anniversary, of the “Battle of Fromelles”. At his Grave Site, we recognized the Service of Lt. Robert James Carew DCM, a member of the 31st Bn, who fought in the battle. Due to the restrictions in place a small number of our Members attended, but support was given by members of the 49th Bn Association, Battle for Australia Committee, and the members of both the Rosewood, and Ipswich RSL Sub Branches. We were honoured by the Presence of the Commanding Officer LTCOL Damien Green and RSM, WO1 John Stafford of our Regiment, 31st/42nd Bn Royal Queensland Regiment, who travelled down from Townsville. The Address was given by COL Mark Plath, descendant of COL Fred Toll DSO/ Bar MBE VD, Commanding Officer of the 31st Bn at the time of the Battle, and during WW1. A Tribute to COL Fred Toll, designed and produced by our Life Member Pierre Seillier of Fromelles was presented to COL Mark Plath.***

***The Annual Reserve Forces Day, Cocktail Party, and Recognition Ceremony, normally held in Brisbane City unfortunately had to be cancelled. However the Lord Mayor’s Morning Tea Reception was postponed to 14th October, when restrictions had been further relaxed, and I accepted the Invitation and attended the reception, which was well attended by approximately 70 other Battalion Associations and Service Personnel. Tony Wadeson was also present, as a member of the Reserve Forces Day Committee. The Lord Mayor expressed his sincere appreciation to the Reserve Force Personnel, who provided tremendous service in helping to control the Covid-19 pandemic during the previous 8 months.***

***The Anniversary of the “Battle of Kokoda” was held on the 9th August at the Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL Sub Branch. Several of our Members attended, supported by daughters and sons of 2/31st Bn past Veterans. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the 2/31st Bn by Veteran’s Daughters, - Elizabeth Timms, Patricia Date, & Cherrie Cameron, and son Tim Lewis. I lay a wreath on behalf of the 31st Bn Association. We had the 2/31st Bn Banner on display, which was provided by WW2 – 2/31st Bn Veteran Keith Hearne, past President of the 2/31st & 2/25th Bn Association of Victoria.***

***With Covid-19 restrictions somewhat relaxed, we were able to hold a “Limited AGM” at the Sherwood Services Club on 20th August 2020. Twelve members attended. Election of the committee was held, but as no other Nominations were received the current Officers were re-elected.***

***The Commemoration of the Battle for Australia was held on 5th September, at 7th Brigade Historical Park Chermside. Several of our members attended. A Wreath was laid on behalf of the association by Member Bill Mills. Our Members, Mick James and Merv Hazell hold Office on the Battle for Australia Committee, Mick as Vice President and Merv as Secretary. At the completion of the Service we all adjourned to the Kedron Wavell Services Club for Lunch.***

***The year ended on a very sad note, with the passing of WW2, - 2/31st Bn Veteran, - 103 Year old Alf Cumberland. Alf was remarkable for his age, with an excellent memory and supporter of the Association. Alf’s funeral was held on the 20th October, with a very large gathering of Relatives of the 2/31st Bn Veterans, who Alf considered as his Family. Our Members formed a Guard with the 2/31st Bn Banner, to lead the procession to farewell Alf at the end of the Service.***

***The Annual Remembrance Day Ceremony was held on the 11th Nov. at the Graceville Memorial Park, organised by the Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL Sub Branch. Five of our Members attended with our Banner prominently displayed. A wreath was laid in Honour.***

***Although the year’s events were curtailed by the Covid-19 restrictions applied, we managed to conduct some of the Ceremonies successfully. This was possible due to the work and support of the Committee members, Col Jackson, Eugene Farrell, Mick James, and George Stanger, but especially the work and dedication of our secretary Tony Wadeson to who we owe the success of the activities. I also acknowledge the dedicated work carried out by Martin O’Sullivan in managing the 31st Bn – Whispering Boomerang, Website, and the enormous amount of time consuming work done by Tim Lewis in contacting Family members of Past Presidents and Committee members of the 2/31st Bn Associations all over Australia.***

***Finally I thank you, the Members of the Brisbane Branch for supporting the Association by always offering a helping hand and attending the many Ceremonies, Services and lunch meetings that are planned by our Committee.***

 ***Raymond Fogg***

 ***President (Brisbane Branch)***