



THE MIGHTY 12TH

NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH NATIONAL SERVICE Training Battalion

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It seems a long time since I sat here to prepare a newsletter but on checking it's been only about 3 months.

As usual for a busy man everyone wants your time or you think up some new crazy idea to distract you from one or more of your regular tasks.

I am sure I will hear a big AWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW when you read this next bit of the newsletter but there is a lesson in it for all you computer users.

About 6 weeks ago, as I was preparing to get this edition onto my computer ready for sending I went to my data base to separate my email clients from my snail mail clients. AND I managed to delete all my non email members. In a data base, delete means go, gone, departed.

For the last 5 weeks I have been trying to retrieve as many names as possible from old printed records, even going back to the forms that most of you sent in when we got started.

Sensible computer operators ALWAYS BACK UP their work. I was not sensible!

The email group was easy as it was the one I kept but I am afraid that I have lost some of our ordinary mail members and their information.

If you don't get this edition of the newsletter you are one of the ones I lost. (Think about this!)

If you do get it and are talking to other chaps you know from the Mighty 12th and find that they didn't receive this edition you might like to get them to contact me.

I had over 300 names on the list but have lost approx 20-30 (mainly the most recent non email ones.

Enough of my self inflicted punishment.

Thought you might like to know of a couple of things that we organised here in Wagga Wagga.

Wednesday 2nd September was the commemoration of "The Battle for Australia". I know it was celebrated in Sydney but not sure if any other areas acknowledged the sacrifices that kept our Oriental Neighbours from invading our shores.

The feature of the day was a fly over by a WWII Kittyhawk from Albury. Boy, did that make the hair stand on end! He flew over the cenotaph and back then finished off with a climb into the sun and a barrel roll and a "wing wave". They will be talking about it here for a long time to come.

In my spare time I have edited another book which was researched by one of our WWII vets from the Sub Branch. It's not about Nashos as such but covers the Battle for Australia. It's not very long- 55 pages- but the standards of research, editing and typing (of course) the pictures from the Aust. War Memorial and the colour maps make this an outstanding publication by any standards.

The Sub Branch made 5 copies available to the local High School Libraries (12 of them) and the students were there to accept them on 2nd September. Our own Sub Branch members have received a copy of their own- most have seen it appropriate to make a donation to the cost of publication.

If any of you guys would be interested in getting hold of a copy (I sent one to every NSW Sub Branch of the NSAA) you may like to order one through them or directly from me for \$6.65 posted (or \$7.00 with a small donation to the Sub Branch. You would not be disappointed with the purchase I assure you.

(Send a cheque or Money order made out to **Wagga Wagga & District Sub Branch** at my address above and I will do the rest.

I have 5 Twelve Battalion Badges left from my last order- I will not be ordering more- The cost is \$13.00 with orders being made out to ME! The only way to do this so that there is not an over order is to make you order **by phone** (02) 69263123 so that once the 5 have gone I can notify prospective purchasers and not have to return cheques etc.

Here is the story read by the Naval representative at our Battle for Australia Day Service:

HMAS Armidale, was sunk by enemy action. She went down on 1 December, 1942, off Timor, while taking supplies and reinforcements to the commandos fighting ashore. The ship had been hit by two torpedoes and a near-miss bomb had helped by blowing a hole in her side. The Captain, Lieutenant-



Commander David Richards, gave the order to abandon ship but one man refused - Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean. He struggled back to the after Oerlikon gun, strapped himself in and fired at the planes strafing his shipmates in the water. The ship was sinking so rapidly that when he fastened those straps he must have known he would go down with the ship. He poured a stream of 20mm shells at the planes and sent one cartwheeling into the sea. A Zero flashed in, its guns blazing, and slashed Sheean's chest and back wide open. With blood pouring from his wounds he kept fighting. The ship was now sinking

faster and with water lapping his feet he kept shooting. The men in the water gasped in amazement as they saw the blood-stained, desperate youngster wheel his gun from target to target, his powerless legs dragging on the deck.

Then came the most incredible sight of all - the ship plunged down and the sea rose up past Sheean's waist to his shattered chest, but still he kept firing. Even when there was nothing left of the ship above water, tracer bullets from Sheean's gun kept shooting up from under the water in forlorn, bizarre arcs.

Armidale and Sheean had kept fighting to the end. It was valour above and beyond the call of duty.

Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean was 18 years of age.

Computer members might like to look at <http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/sheean.asp>

**One of my Bowls friends did his Nashos in South Africa in The Kenya Regiment.
I thought his story was worth repeating for your information.**

The Kenya Regiment was formed on the 1st of June 1937.

Although the Regiment had a very short life span due to Kenya becoming independent in 1963, its contributions to WW1 and later the Mau Mau emergency gave it a reputation of a truly famous colonial regiment. In its very short time as a regiment it was notable that a VC was won by Sergeant Nigel Gray Leakey.

He was awarded the VC for gallantry at Colito in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) when allied forces had made a bridgehead against the strong Italian opposition. The enemy made a sudden counter attack with both light and medium tanks. In the face of withering fire Sergeant Leakey leaped on top of one of the

tanks, wrenched open the turret and shot all the crew except the driver whom he forced to drive the tank to cover. Along with three others they tried to repeat this courageous act with another tank, but he was killed just as opened the turret.

The regiment was very active during the Mau May emergency in between 1950 to 1953. Many raids were carried out on suspected terrorists in villages and in the mountainous regions where Mau Mau hide outs were located. The regiment soldiers, who all spoke Swahili,(the native language) were also used extensively as guides and interpreters for the British forces who were sent to Kenya to fight the terrorists.

Members of the regiment were actually recruited from high schools as soon as you turned sixteen. In the year you became sixteen the British High Commission visited every school and issued every student acquiring that age an identity card. This card served to place you on record with finger prints and was used to call up all Europeans as soon as they turned eighteen for compulsory national service. The only choice open to those who were called up was which intake you preferred January or July.

The Compulsory National service was for 6 months in basic training, held at the Sergeant Leakey VC Barracks at Lanet, followed by four years of Territorials.

Each intake was of 2 platoons broken up into four squads.

All officers and instructors were seconded from the British army and served for various periods.

Drill sergeants were all seconded from the Brigade of Guards, i.e.

Grenadiers, Scots, Irish, and Welsh Guards.

Other instructors in weapon training, PE, field craft and signals were from other County regiments in England.

Basic training was very demanding and the instructors had a way of bringing some out of their shell, whilst bringing others down to earth so we all ended up equals which formed great esprit de Corp and camaraderie.

One of my strong memories was the bed inspection every morning which demanded your bed to be made without any wrinkles and all your gear had to be folded and presented for inspection as per the



following photo.

At the conclusion of our six months basic training the servicemen were split into three categories infantry, recce and signals.

Our four year term as territorialists was based on a twelve day annual camp and a minimum of 100 hours of weekend training Friday to Monday. Most of the servicemen were paid for their territorial activities as that was the requirement of all employers.

The Kenya regiment had many things in common with the Australian forces, the most noticeable was the slouch hat, which was worn with much pride and varied from the Aussie hat with the addition of a hackle and badge.

The regiment also acquired a reputation of being a little undisciplined and reluctant to accept the authority of the British instructors, which is somewhat similar to the reputation of the diggers in the WW11 arena.

I served in the Regiment for a very short period of time due to political changes.

My basic training was in January 1962 and it was the first course that was a multiracial intake. Predominately it was still a European intake but six Africans and six Indians were also included. The non Europeans settled in very well considering the segregation that had been part of our everyday life.

On the completion of my basic training, I was transferred to signals, where we learnt basic wireless procedures on 19 sets usually through sky wave aerials, which we had to erect as high up as possible in the tallest tree available. (We usually bribed one of the African boys to shin up the tree for us)

Kenya became an Independent Country in December 1963 and soon after the Regiment was disbanded in June 1964.

I was part of the final parade of the regiment, when the Freedom of the City of Nairobi was granted, and the regiment marched from the City Hall to the Cathedral with fixed bayonets and the Regimental colours were laid to rest in the cathedral.

And finally a few extracts from the book, The Battle for Australia by Dennis O'Leary. This from a diary of Roy Frederick Pfeffer, 61st Aust Infantry Bn.

Tuesday, August 25 - 42 "This tragic day dawned slowly! A dense curtain of fog hung over the hills and the sky wore a blanket of cloud. I was still quite sick and the boys went off to work in the drizzling rain. We didn't quite believe the news at midday which told of a Jap convoy 60 miles away. Hasty preparations were made and we settled down to our allotted positions. At sundown the order went out for the troops to stand to. I was still crook but prepared to do my share, and I put the night in with my section. Early the next morning we heard that the Japs had made a landing from steel barges, about six miles up the coast. So, we were playing at war no longer. The switch-over came as easily as that. B had engaged them successfully and D was now coming in to give them a hand. The enemy had landed tanks but B coy claimed to have put them out of action. D met with a tragedy on the boat which tried to evacuate them, a number of the boys losing their lives. The sound of battle reached our unaccustomed ears. How disconcerting it was to think that the RAT-a-TAT-TAT was taking toll of human lives.

Wednesday, January 6 - 43 "Today was the last day of our sea voyage and we ran into Gladstone harbour. A sister from the Red Cross was on the wharf and was the first white woman we had seen for over six months. We boarded the hospital train, and the Red Cross ladies sent telegrams for us. The public gave us a rousing welcome at the train station. We were showered with all sorts of luxuries, including ice cream!

Until next time- without too many mishaps-

An elderly gent was invited to an old friend's home for dinner one evening. He was impressed by the way his buddy preceded every request to his wife with endearing terms such as: Honey, My Love, Darling, Sweetheart, Pumpkin, etc. The couple had been married almost 70 years and, clearly, they were still very much in love. While the wife was in the kitchen, the man leaned over to his host, 'I think it's wonderful that, after all these years, you still call your wife those loving pet names'. The old man hung his head. 'I have to tell you the truth,' he said, 'Her name slipped my mind about 10 years ago ,and I'm scared to death to ask the cranky old bitch what her name is.'

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Australian National Servicemen's Ass'n

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