**Legacy Luncheon Address by Frank Doolan**

**24th Battalion (Gallipoli)**

The 24th landed on Gallipoli on 5th September – 1000 strong. The most of the time on the Peninsula was in defence of the Lone Pine trenches, which had been won at great cost by the 1st Division troops.

On December 18th the whole Lone Pine front was taken over by the 24th Battalion. Their job was to keep up the pretence that the Front Line was fully manned, whilst the main body of troops was evacuated.

The timetable for final withdrawal of the five parties on the night of December 19th/20th extended from 9.30pm till 3am, and the last C.3 Party to leave consisted on 3 lieutenants and 34 other ranks.

Two of the three Lieutenants were original foundation member of Melbourne Legacy, viz. Lieut. Stan Savige and Lieut. H C Brinsmead, and one of the earlier sections was in charge of 3 Lieutenants which included John Anderson, our fellow member, who is with us today, the sole surviving Foundation Member.

It was found possible to withdraw the rearguard at 2.40pm, 20 minutes before the planned time.

Army Staff had estimated a minimum of 10 per cent casualties over the whole AIF Force during the evacuation. The actual casualties were one man wounded by a shell splinter, and a Lighthorseman shot through the arm on the boat by the accidental discharge of a rifle.

They returned to Egypt and were engaged on mounting defence patrols on the Suez Canal, and before leaving for Europe were reviewed by the Prince of Wales and General Birdwood.

Time does not permit for me to tell you of all the exploits of the Battalion in France and Belgium.

Suffice to say that wherever the AIF was engaged in heavy fighting the 24th Battalion seemed to be in it. They started at Fleurbaix on the Armentieres sector, were in the ‘Big Push’ of 1916 at Pozieres, Moquet Farm, Bapaume, Bullecourt, Ypres and Broodseinde.

In 1917, Capt. Savige, who was Adjutant of the Battalion was transferred to Headquarters, and Capt. Selleck took over as Adjutant (The Kid Adjutant). He was the first secretary of Melbourne Legacy, and Lord Mayor of Melbourne for two terms and was knighted for his public service.

Stan Savige was selected from volunteers from the Colonial Forces to go with Lord Dunsterville (Kipling’s original Stalky) on a secret military mission to Persia.

The exploits of this special force, a very small percentage of whom returned are recounted in his book – “Stalky’s Forlorn Hope” (Birdwood’s quote from preface).

Back to Australia and after settling into civilian life, some of the old 24th decided to ‘soldier on’ in the CMF.

Savige was promoted to Major and was appointed OC of 24th Battalion based at Surrey Hills, and which became entitled to wear the RED AND WHITE DIAMOND COLOUR PATCH.

Savige went abroad, and saw the Trooping of the Colour at Buckingham Palace. On his return he announced his intention to Troop the Colours with his 24th Battalion, and was laughed at by the Top Brass.

Nevertheless he did this at Wattle Park in the presence of 20,000 spectators, and a seedling from the Lone Pine on Gallipoli was planted there to commemorate the occasion which was a brilliant success.

War clouds loomed again, and when war was declared Savige was promoted to the rank of Brigadier to command the 16th Brigade which went into Camp at Puckapunyal.

The 2/24th was recruited in 1939 and it is interesting to note that some officers and NCOs transferred from the Surrey Hills Battalion to form the nucleus of the new command.

The OC of the new battalion was the late Colonel Allan Spowers, a scholar, a soldier and a gentleman whose military training came from the grass roots of the Surrey Hills unit.

This gives me the opportunity to divert a little and tell a personal story:-

There are a few here today who were in the small committee of Melbourne Legacy, which decided in the late 20’s to put up a fight to restore the Shrine of Remembrance as the National War Memorial.

One night, a cobber and I, were walking down Collins Street. This cover is here today; but I wouldn’t dare tell you his name because you know how angry these VC types can get when annoyed.

Anyhow we were accosted by a well known reporter of one of the best known Melbourne evening papers who attacked us and also Legacy on its attitude to the Shrine. He told us that we were ‘flogging a dead horse’, and that the Shrine of Remembrance was as dead as the late Julius Ceasar. After we had brushed him off, we decided to have a few drinks. This could be done in those days when hotels were open till 11pm, and beer was only 4d a pint.

After this little session, my pal – and he is still a pal – announced with an air of finality that we would go to the Argus Office and beard the Editor in his den.

We did this very thing, and using his influence, we eventually were ushered into the presence of the Editor in the person of the late Allan Spowers. My unnamed companion turned on a fiery oration in favour of the Shrine, which impressed the Editor so much that he came out a couple of days later with a leading article, and a large illustration of the Shrine, and declared his paper’s backing.

The ‘Age’ followed suit, and we were really in business for the first time.

But let’s get back to the 2/24th.

This battalion trained at Wangaratta and Bonegilla, and when it went abroad, it ‘copped the lot’ – just as the original 24th had done on Gallipoli and in France in the First War.

They were in the Benghazi Derby, when Rommel returned to Africa, and drove the Allied Army across the desert.

They dug in at Tobruk and withstood the siege – not withstanding heavy losses.

The battalion was then engaged at Alamein and at this stage when absorbed into the 9th Division was forced to haul down the Red and White Diamond, and adopt the new T shaped colour patch, which was selected by General Morshead because of the Australian part in the defence of Tobruk.

Back to Australia when the Japs were menacing New Guinea, and over the water again to fight desperately at Lae, Finschaven, and along the coast back to Queensland and finally to be in a the death at Tarakan in Borneo.

Everyone of you should get hold of a copy of the **2/24th Battalion History** written by Bob Serle who is here today. It is a beauty.

And while the 2/24th were being belted about in Africa, there was another Battalion being trained in warfare and wearing the Red and White Diamond.

This unit consisted of younger men who had served with the CNF between the wars and included several sons of Legatees and several Junior Legatees. Our President Don, was attached for a short time.

This battalion known official as the 24th Battalion (AIF) 1939-1945 was posted to North Australia at the time of the Brisbane Line theory, and after training on the Tableland eventually embarked from Townsville for New Guinea where it was distinguished for fierce and bitter fighting in the jungle and on the steep mountainside at high altitudes.

At the close of the war the battalion was located in Bougainville where it served under the old Chief from Surrey Hills – then Lieutenant General and Divisional Commander.

But I am reminded by the clock that I have reached the stage of the penguin in the Antarctic – and my tale is told also.

The purpose of my somewhat disjointed talk has been to link the battalions which wore the red and white diamond with Legacy.

Just as the ‘Espirit de Corps’ and comradeships which was bred and fostered at Surrey Hills was passed on from one battalion to the other, likewise I like to think that this comradeship also ‘rubbed off’ on to Legacy through the years.

It is my opinion that comradeship is the backbone of the Legacy movement and that it always be the framework around which our work must be built.

And now I have a surprise to spring, because I have been able to enlist the help of two very good friends to assist me in completing the story of the Red and White Diamond.

I refer to Squadron Leader Hicks, Conductor of the world famous Royal Australian Air Force Band and Mr John Anderson of AWA who will entertain you for 10 minutes or so, and will conclude this lunchtime session.