

gasped in wonderous amazement at the speedy replacement of the wet canteen by the end of breakfast time. An identical marquee stood erect alongside the position of the devastation of the previous day, looking more sturdy and secure than its predecessor.

Saturday was planned to be a relaxing day, with many tours arranged for the morning, for visitors to have the opportunity to visit the historic landing site of the Mataatua canoe, to learn of the courage of the young woman, Wairaka, who saved the canoe from being swept out to sea with the flow of the river, to visit the cave of Muriwai on the foreshore, and to see the growing town of Whakatane. During the afternoon, many of the participants at the Reunion braved the cold to go down to Rugby Park to watch the match of the weekend — Bay of Plenty versus Counties.

#### Reunion ball

Saturday evening was the Reunion Ball — a resplendent function which catered for one's every want. With all the old soldiers and their ladies in their finery, it was an elegant occasion. Waiters and waitresses attended to the needs of each person individually, and while some groups sat and chatted to friends, others danced the night away. Supper was a most enjoyable and relaxed occasion, with the most magnificent spread — a real credit to those who worked so hard behind the scenes all weekend to ensure appetites were well catered for.

Outside the elements were still pounding down upon us all, but again they did not detract from the feelings of happiness and togetherness. One part of the evening that will be especially remembered was the commemorative one minute's silence, with the lone bugler playing the Last Post in a darkened room with only the reflections from the rotating silver ball, hanging from the ceiling in the centre of the room, twinkling like stars against the shadows of the walls.



#### Proudly displayed

Sunday dawned a beautiful fine day. What more fitting a tribute to the men of the 28 Battalion — and being Easter Sunday as well. Soldiers assembled in front of the War Memorial — in Company formation with medals proudly displayed. With Colonel Sir James Henare in command and Company Sergeants with their men, the Parade through the streets began. Pockets of enthusiastic spectators applauded and encouraged the Battalion as they returned to the War Memorial. There waiting for the Parade to march past were the hundreds of families and friends gathered to take part in the Memorial Church service.

Our Lord Bishop, Hui Vercoe, arrived with his pastoral staff in hand, and the Karakia began in the warm sunshine and gentle breeze outside the War Memorial Hall. Such a great contrast to the fierce weather conditions of the previous two days. Wreaths were laid on the Memorial to commemorate those

lost in battle, hymns were sung, and the flag fluttered gently as it was lowered as the Last Post was trumpeted. Heads were bowed in silence but for the response "We shall remember them."

From the powhiri, speeches of welcome and blessing by Our Lord Bishop on Friday afternoon, to the time when visitors climbed aboard their buses and cars to return home on Monday morning, it was a truly memorable occasion. To the 'B' Company who hosted this 13th Reunion, we all owe a debt of true gratitude. To the ex-servicemen, the affiliated women's group, and the many workers who made the weekend run so smoothly — your explicit planning and long labouring was extremely rewarding. Those of us too young to remember learned a great deal about real friendship, and those 28 Battalion members who attended the Reunion went home with very happy memories of the gathering. As we sat in our home on Easter Tuesday and talked, laughed and remembered the happenings of the weekend, I am sure that so too did all of those who were there.

The depth of feeling at the hui had to be experienced to be understood. Reunions of this kind are not verbal re-enactments of the deeds of war; rather they are a bringing together of long-lost brothers to embrace each other. Their talk is of the 'hard case' times, and the laughter and smiles on their faces tells it all. Through my young eyes I learned a lot; and there is a great deal to learn. There will be fewer and fewer men of the 28 Battalion left as each Reunion comes along. The people may be no longer with us, the names may fade from memory, but the strength and pride will not be lost with them.

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