



Harim Tok Tok

PAPUA NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES EX-MEMBERS ASSOCIATION Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Welcome to your Christmas, and last issue for 2023 of Harim Tok Tok, which is filled with great stories, photographs and jokes with a bonus of two attachments. I hope you enjoy your read.

A successful AGM was held on Saturday 21 October at Wacol Museum when 29 members and friends attended. Your 2023 Patron, honorary Solicitor, honorary Chaplain, office bearers and committee members were re-appointed without change. I had the honour of presenting my eighteenth annual report, which may be read in the attachment to this newsletter. The AGM also passed a motion which gives the management committee the authority to engage with and negotiate the succession of the running and eventual take over of our Museum with an appropriate kindred organisation. On conclusion of the meeting the Museum remained open to noon when attendees walked over to Everyman's Hut to attend the 50th Anniversary of the disbandment of PNGVR remembrance luncheon. The reports, with photographs of the meeting and luncheon may be read from page 17 and attachments of this issue.



NSAAQ President Alex Garlin and Phil Ainsworth

The delightful luncheon held to remember the disbandment of PNGVR fifty years ago was attended by about 50 guests, members and friends in the nearby Everyman's Hut. Besides the usual welcoming address presentations of Patron's awards were made to NSAAQ members Steve and Robin Milner for their past and ongoing service to our Association, followed by several short interesting and humorous talks from members about their experiences in PNGVR. A two course meal with drinks was enjoyed by all.

The highlight of the year was the finding of the wreck of the MV Montevideo Maru in April by the Australian Silent World

Foundation syndicate. As a follow on high level dinners sponsored by Silent World Foundation are being held in several countries whose nationals were on board the Montevideo Maru. Hopefully these dinners will make the Montevideo Maru tragedy more widely known. A Norwegian dinner, attended by King Harald of Norway, was held on 2nd November in Oslo when about 90 attended including 58 relatives of the Norwegians lost on the Montevideo Maru (captured when the Herstein was sunk in Rabaul). Friend of our Association, Andrea Williams attended representing the Australian civilians and NGVR soldiers lost on the Montevideo Maru. Another dinner is to be held in the AWM late November when two representatives of our NGVR Soldiers lost will be present. These will be Sue Vail whose father was NGVR Sgt Charles Ian Maclean NG 4013 and myself.

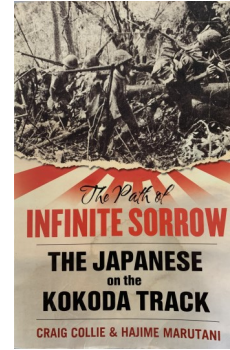


L to R - John Mullen, King Harold and Andrea Williams

9 RQR'S" Exercise Steel Tuff" to determine the best section in the Battalion will be held in November 2023. Unfortunately, this year, we are unable to attend the exercise and presentation resulting from structural and arrangement changes within the Regiment. The presentation of NGVR & PNGVR's "Medallions of Excellence" will be made by Regimental officers. We hope in the future more suitable arrangements may prevail. None the less we wish 9 RQR every success.

I am reading a book, which was published in 2009, "The Path of Infinite Sorrow, the Japanese on the Kokoda Track" by Craig Collie, an experienced television producer and Hajime Marutani, a translator -interpreter who was a researcher for the Australian War Memorial's Australian-Japan Research Project. They met when working on the production team of the award winning documentary "Beyond Kokoda".

Many stories have been told of the Australian experience of Kokoda. This book tells the story of the campaign from the



Japanese point of view. Based on personal accounts and the recollections of six Japanese soldiers, captured diaries and Australian unit diaries, this book brings a new perspective on this brutal conflict. I am finding the

book well worth the read.

Our next committee meeting will be held at 10am Saturday 9th December in the Museum when our Patron will present his Patron's award to Honorary Solicitor Craig Ray for his past and ongoing services to the Association.. All members and friends are welcome to attend. I suggest you bring your lunch and stay after the meeting and have a chat. The first committee meeting in 2024 will be held 10am Saturday 10th February in the Museum.

On behalf of your Patron and Management Committee, I extend best wishes to you and your family for Christmas and the New Year.

Phil Ainsworth, November 2023

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KESEKO**The experiences of a guide to US Marine landing and later as a coastwatcher in the British Solomon Islands**
by C Eric Spencer (Continued)

I have often heard it said that the Solomon Islander has no sense of humour but, believe me, it was the lively sense of humour of my native companions that made bearable those long months of isolation while coastwatching in enemy territory. Few members of the fighting forces experienced isolation in quite the same degree as did the coastwatchers dotted throughout the South West Pacific. Inwards mail was a rarity, possibly once in three months when fresh stores arrived, dropped by parachute from an aircraft; but outward mails, well there were none, except occasionally when either a submarine or a Catalina flying boat called on us as a special mission to pick up hot intelligence in the form of Japanese documents which we were sometimes able to acquire. During my whole six months on Vella I did not receive a single letter, yet this was one of the most interesting periods of the whole of my service.

A telephone connected the lookout to the house and, as we kept a continuous watch on duty at the lookout, the eyes of NRY never closed on this section we were watching. If anything was observed from the lookout it was immediately reported over the 'phone when appropriate action would be taken.

It was always necessary to have at least ten natives around the camp, for this was the minimum number of carriers to transport our wireless gear, should we have to make a hurried departure at short notice. Living in this state of tension necessitates our being constantly packed up. The wireless batteries were fitted with loops so that they could be carried on a pole; the battery charger had a box which fitted over it and screwed down with a couple of thumb screws.

Most of our kit was packed into tins - they were really biscuit tins slightly larger than a kerosene tin; these also acted as chairs when in camp. The beauty of the tins was that they were waterproof when exposed to the tropical downpours which were always a feature of every move.

A Forced move to Deneo

Tom had made a complete recovery from his fever and, in order to get him into some sort of trim for the track, I suggested that he should take one of the scouts with him and go for a morning's hike. When Ati informed me a runner had just arrived with information that a large party of 300 Japs had suddenly appeared as if from nowhere and were now only twenty minutes walk away. My first thought was for Tom, who had set out along the path by which the Japs were approaching. The native who brought the message had met Tom and had told the boy with him of the danger, and they had turned about and were returning as fast as they could travel.

I sent HQ a signal telling them we were moving in a hurry but would call later. There was no need to go into great detail; they knew the meaning of that terse message and all it implied. Since then I have witnessed the effect of similar messages from field parties on our Chief at HQ - you would have thought the Japs were on the old boy's tail, so uneasy would he be until an Okay message came from the party. He looked upon the Coastwatchers as his family.

I personally disposed of our spare wireless set. This we wrapped in canvas and buried in holes which had been prepared some time before. While we worked I sent Bulu, our cook boy, to gather plenty of dead leaves and ferns, etc from the other side of the track, and on his return we spread these over the top where the gear was buried.

I was last to leave Topolando and, after starting all the carriers on the road, I looked around the area to make sure no papers had been left visible. I crossed the little bridge to the

kitchen and here found Bulu labouring beneath such a conglomeration of tins of food, pots and pans etc, that he looked like a tinker's cart.

We arrived at Deneo, our new camp site, at just about the same time as the wireless, so without waiting to cool off, we put up the aerial and rigged the transmitter. soon I put a call through to HQ, giving them my new location and telling them that my party was safe. When night fell with no sign of the Japs, we hoped they had turned back, but we could not take any chances. Sentries were posted all the way back along the track as a precaution, then next morning a couple of trained scouts made a reconnaissance of Topolando, and we learned the Jap party had halted and spent the night at the foot of the final knoll upon which our Topolando camp was situated. These natives learned from the tracks that not one had gone up the hill - knowing how the Japs must have felt, I do not wonder, for it was some climb.

Bulu, complete with pots and pans, arrived at Deneo safely and was soon busy in his new kitchen putting the coffee pot to good use.

One day from Topolando lookout came the 'phone message; "Hello! Wardroom? Bridge talking! Me look in one fella ship close up along shore, him he no go quick time, him he stop. Me tink maybe him be fast long reef."

I sent a message to HQ, repeating it to our station at Munda, New Georgia, where there were American Marine Air Force Squadrons. We did not have long to wait for Marine Air Force aircraft who sank the ship. It was thrilling to us, and the boys began to discuss the possibility of going out to the wreck to see whether there might be something of value on board. The looting of bombed barges, etc actually kept my little bank in arms, ammunition and food .

After we had settled in at Deneo, I sent Esau and his mate to stay at Topolando and to report by walkie talkie any activity that might be going on up there. The walkie talkie was a very compact little radio telephone, not weighing more than six or seven pounds, which fitted into a small pack worn on the back. The aerial, a telescopic type, was rather like a car aerial, and this could be worn up, provided trees did not obstruct it.

Whenever three runners all brought in messages that Japs were approaching about the same time from three different directions, it was always a good indication that the Japs had been listening to us and were coming to look us up. If I considered it warranted such action, we would beat a retreat while the going was good and pay a visit to one of the other camp sites. The Japs in these islands did not trust the jungle and soon gave up a search if it led them too far inland.

Our fare on Vella Lavella was mostly confined to a tinned diet. The Japs had stripped all the old native gardens of fruit and vegetables, and their new gardens had not started to produce as yet. Tinned rations consisted of M & V (meat and vegetables) Vienna sausages occasionally, some Jap salmon, which was really excellent, when we were able to make a successful raid on a Jap food dump - another item, of course, which was always received on such escapades was Jap rice for feeding the natives I had attached to me. you may depend there would always be a good supply of rice, for rice was the natives' staple diet.

My food store was spread over several small dumps throughout the island, usually in most inaccessible spots from the enemy's point of view, yet, in such a location to enable me to have a supply of food should the Japs jump my camp site, causing me to leave hurriedly, leaving everything behind. Each food dump was housed in a small native hut which contained a drum of drinking water, and one of petrol for the battery charging engine without which my wireless would have been out of commission in two days.

Deneo seemed as though it was going to be my permanent headquarters, for Allied forces had landed on the southern tip of Vella and were pushing the Japs back into the northernmost

districts. This camp was well placed for the last phase of operations against the Japs.

Allied Invasion of Vella Lavella

The New Zealand Army troops had taken over Vella Lavella as a NZ Command and there was much activity along the coast as detachments were put in at all strategic points. Jap parties, too, were making their way as best they could to the northwest corner of the island. One of the NZ Army units took up quarters at Wataro Plantation near Kila Kila, the spot where I first landed on the morning of my arrival at Vella and, as this was only half a day's walk from Deno, our life of isolation was rapidly changing to one of much company. Why, the New Zealanders even had a picture show and while they were there a concert party touring the forward areas dropped in.

The NZ Forces on the coast, working on intelligence supplied by my scouts, were rapidly accounting for the remaining Japs, and before many days I was able to advise HQ that all Japs on Vella Lavella had been accounted for.

We remained at Deno for a fortnight longer, awaiting marching orders. However, we spent the time pleasantly, relaxing after the strain of the past few months.

A few days later Cdr A I Blenkin, RANVR arrived with 540 pounds, all in one shilling pieces. They were brand new coins and still in the wooden boxes as they had come from the Mint. This was to pay our native workers for their service during the occupation.

Besides paying the native scouts, I had decided to distribute all our surplus junk which could be of any use to them, and what was left over we would destroy together with a quantity of Jap grenades, ammunition, guns, rifles and such like, which it was not wise to leave intact for the natives to start private wars of their own.

First we paid outstanding accounts to the headmen for carriers supplied on various occasions during the past twelve months - a carrier earns a shilling a day. Accurate records had been kept by my predecessors, so really my job was relatively simple. Next the headmen of certain districts were given sums of varying amounts, to be distributed or spent to the advantage of the young men who had voluntarily done sentry work in the villages. This was a special grant made available by Allied Intelligence Bureau. After the pay parade, one of the boys came to me and asked if Red, Tom and I would attend a sing sing they were going to have as a finale to the memorable day.

Arriving at Kila Kila, Tom, Red and I camped in the same little native hut near the beach that I had slept in the night I arrived on Vella. It did not seem so long ago, gauging it by time, but by events it seemed an age. Yet people have said to me on hearing the nature of the work I was engaged on, "Weren't you bored and terribly lonely?"

Just before the barge landed us next morning at our destination I discovered the price the Americans were prepared to pay for a Jap rifle was 9 pounds 10 shillings. I could scarcely believe it, but they were sincere. Then I remembered the 40 Jap rifles I had burnt in the grave of NRY two days before.

Changes in Movement Orders

I was due to take over a relay station, RJH, at Marovari but Just

when we were about to commence the buildings for the new camp, we received a signal from headquarters advising that Captain Robertson ("Dry Robbie" as he was known) was on his way to RJH from Kolombangara. Then the day after he arrived, we received another signal instructing me to hand over RJH to Robbie and to prepare myself to go to Choiseul Island, there to take over the station from Lieut. N Waddell, RANVR, who in peace time had been District Officer in the Civil Administration in this district. Nick had been on Choiseul Island without a break almost twelve months, having gone in about the same time as Henry Josselyn went in on Vella Lavella. Choiseul was still occupied by about 7,000 Japanese.



Next morning early the jeep and a truck loaded our gear and I left RJH accompanied by Gordoni, Aleko and Markuso. Markuso was a Choiseul boy, so he could act as interpreter if necessary. The other two boys were my personal cook and assistant. Aleko was quite well educated and he became an expert cipher hand.

The sun had set, and it was becoming dark just as we brought the last package aboard the submarine on which we were going. It was a day of experiences for my three native boys. They eyed the submarine very suspiciously, and when we were below they could not believe we were under the surface of the water. There was great Jap activity along the Choiseul coast maintaining their strip on Kolombangara, and the barges and patrol boats were everywhere, so we had to creep in to the rendezvous. We surfaced about two miles off shore - the night was pitch black with no breeze - so we closed to one mile which was the rendezvous station and from the conning tower we flashed a predetermined signal, dots and dash on the lamp. With not so much as a glimmer of light from the shore we waited patiently, and out of the blackness came two big Choiseul double-ended canoes. They approached cautiously and circled the sub twice before they came near enough for me to call out, whereup a voice from one of the canoes said, "Is that you, Spencer?" This was Carden Seton, Nick Waddell's mate, who lived on Choiseul before the War. at Bambatana we landed in the pitch dark.

We were on the trail before daylight, reaching Wasso at 4pm after nine and a half hours on the road.

On the third day Carden left on an important patrol about thirty miles south, and from then on I was on my own at Wasso, with Nick thirty miles north. Carden did not return to Wasso but established another post down in the region where he was working under the call sign of CAS.

I brought four of NRY wireless sets with me from Vella Lavella, and this enabled me to extend our sphere considerably on Choiseul, which is a large island over a hundred miles long. I spent a considerable amount of my time patrolling, checking up on our food dumps, and generally getting the lie of the land. On all these expeditions I took my own three scouts to enable them to get their bearings, too.

One morning the native on sentry duty half way up the cliff face signalled the approach of a Jap party from the sea shore. How they got there unobserved we did not know, nor did I ever satisfactorily clear it up. All I knew was we

should have to dismantle everything and hide in the bush, trusting they would not choose to stay. Desperately we buried all the wireless equipment, food and stores, covering it up to make the earth look as little like having been disturbed as possible. This is easy in the jungle where the ground is always wet and dead leaves are in abundance. It was indeed fortunate for us that this was so, for the Japs came up that track, not as though they were exhausted shipwrecked sailors; on the contrary, they were out on a definite mission, and I have reason to believe that we were their objective. Probably they had detected our transmitter working as they often did, and this, with other sources of Jap intelligence, I believe had guided them to the cliff track.

The next few minutes were probably the tensest I have ever experienced. We waited in ambush each side of the track just where it left the camp towards the hills. For Japs their approach was very quiet, something which still makes me think we were their objective.

The party approached the buildings cautiously, taking advantage of every bit of cover, then two entered the kitchen and looked around; calling something in Japanese, the remainder of the party came from cover more assuredly and looked around. They entered the wireless hut and we could hear them banging at an old native box, which we had carefully replaced, it being a bit more of our camouflage. Finally they got it open and there was much chatter and, although we could not see what was going on, I could picture them turning out the conglomeration of native junk that was in the box.

After a blow and a smoke, the Japs had a little pow wow and off they set along the path in the direction of Wasso. As soon as they had gone far enough away, we called up the native at Wasso on the Walkie Talkie and told him to post sentries along the path approaching the camp, as it was possible these Japs may keep on going in that direction. I detailed two boys to trail the Japs far beyond the junction of the path leading to Wasso. Next day they were reported from village sentries further up the coast.

After this experience I decided to move DEL back to Wasso, which in some respects resembled Topolando on Vella Lavella. There were many ways out if Japs suddenly appeared, and being inland it was less likely to have stray Jap parties paying calls. Japs mostly hugged the coast on Choiseul.

With the new stations all working through me, I found I was being kept so busy on my own coding, decoding and sending that I instructed Aleko and Markruso in the art of using the code. They were filled with pride and were very apt pupils; in no time they coded a message entirely on their own and which I did not check.

We were situated at this period of the War right in the midst of Jap sea activity. From the lookout tree at Wasso it was possible in clear weather to see the entrance to Buin Harbour, which is on the southern extremity of Bougainville Island. Buin was the centre of a great deal of Jap barge traffic. Barges had to come down the west coast of Choiseul on their way to Kolombangara for the purpose of taking supplies to the Jap garrison on that island. After the US Marines landed at Munda, which is north-west of Kolombangara, the Japs decided to evacuate the island, but by a stroke of good luck and the passing on of hot intelligence, DEL played a big part in a grand coup.

One day I received a signal instructing that a vigilant watch be kept for barge traffic during the next 48 hours and to report everything immediately. From the unusual nature of this request, I realised something was afoot. I heard the full story afterwards. It appears every available PT boat, destroyer and submarine in the area was sent to the straits between Kilombangara and Choiseul to be in wait for barges or whatever else attempted an evacuation of the Kolombangara

garrison which numbered three or four thousand.

DEL was on the air nearly all night on the 4th reporting an endless stream of barges, which started at dusk, all going south. On the night of the 4th, it looked as though our preparations were not in vain. The Commander of our task force withheld his fire and allowed forty odd barges to cross the water from Choiseul to Kolombangara. Then placing his force so that he could inflict the maximum damage, he silently awaited the return of the loaded barges. The Japs had apparently chosen a dark night purposely and in so doing they had played into our hands, for had they seen the fleet of small ships waiting for them, they must surely have changed their plans. The Air Force at Munda was kept informed of the situation and the planes were standing by to join in the action as soon as it started. A few hours before daylight the loaded barges began making for Choiseul. The signal was given and destroyers shot up a mass of star shell, turning the dark night into day, and under the canopy of light, chugging furiously, were the much overloaded barges, sitting shots for the speedy PT boats turned loose against them. In the chaos that reigned, some of the barges tried to make a break straight back to Buin, skirting the coast by a wide margin, but as soon as daylight came the Air Force made short work of these too. Of the mass of barges employed, the Allied Forces sank forty, all fully loaded with Jap troops, and it was estimated that a very small proportion of the total reached Choiseul with their troops.

On one other occasion the lookout boy rang through to my hut and informed me that he could see two warships leaving Buin. I immediately ran up to the lookout and took a sighting. Sure enough, there were two Jap destroyers just setting on to a course after leaving harbour. Waiting only long enough to get an approximate course and speed, I ran back to the wireless and made a signal, reporting them. Darkness closed in soon after and so far as we were concerned the destroyers held no further interest. Next morning, I received a signal from HQ referring to my signal reporting the destroyers. It read: "Ref your signal No 234 - both destroyers hit with bombs this am, one sunk, the other burning. Good work, DEL".

After the Kolombangara show the Japs made a definite effort to round up the Coastwatchers on Choiseul. Natives brought us reports that they were being offered all kinds of rich rewards for information of our whereabouts. They tortured many local natives but none gave our whereabouts away.

Another time we were requested to obtain a Jap prisoner. This we did and had him flown out by flying boat from No No Bay.

On another occasion my scouts removed ten bags of rice and there cases of salmon from a Japanese food dump without the sentry knowing a thing about it. This relieved the food situation considerably and the knowledge that there was plenty more available made everyone quite happy. Before we arranged for this dump to be bombed they removed another eight bags of rice and ten cases of fish besides many new blankets.

Just one week before Christmas 1944, I travelled by foot and canoe for three days to another station to deliver a replacement battery for their transmitter as theirs just was not working any more. The one I had spare was a Jap battery and it only managed to allow me to get a message to HQ before it too expired. Deciding the problem was probably the armature I gave Gordon a demonstration of how to replace the armature and assemble the remainder of the generator, in case I should have a spare armature at Wasso. The trip back was quite eventful as we ran into heavy seas and had problems with the canoes in the huge waves.

Shortly after my return to Wasso, I received a stack of messages all in together. One group seemed corrupt and they were trying it another way. Just then they substituted the new letters, and I read: "For Spencer. You have been awarded the American Legion of Merit for gallantry by the President of the United States. Congratulations."

It was months before I knew for which particular exploit I had

been decorated. It was not until after the presentation when passing through Guadalcanal on my way back to Australia. The decoration was for my part in the landing operation on Tauagi and Tanambogo and for subsequent patrol work with the Marines

At one stage I received a parachute drop. There were about thirty letters, some of them nearly twelve months old, but that did not worry me, and it was all news from people for whom I cared.

War Drawing to a close

The War was moving to an increased tempo. By now the Allied might had had time to assemble and every day found our front line further and further into what had been Jap occupied territory. We were now firmly established at Torokina on Bougainville, the large island immediately north-west of Choiseul, and this made Choiseul of secondary importance since the Jap lines of communication had been cut and the forces on Choiseul were more or less isolated. Barge traffic, which prior to the Jap evacuation of Kilombangara, had been very active along Choiseul coast, was now non-existent, and all the Japs on the island were heading towards the foreshores of Bougainville Straits with the forlorn hope that they might be ferried across to Buin or up to Kieta on the east coast of Bougainville. Our work evolved into locating their camps and, just as they were nicely settled, a bombing raid was invariably timed to catch them while in greatest concentration, such as while they were all eating.

The bombing crews would drop on the map pin-point and it needed seeing to believe the accuracy of these crews. Sometimes they were American Marines and sometimes New Zealand Air Force, but all did a rally excellent job. The estimate of 7,000 Japs on Choiseul when I first arrived had been decimated without landing any troops on the island. Three Coast-watchers and an army of native spies were all that was needed to direct the bombers with such accuracy that practically every mission was a winner.

Return to Australia

I was suddenly recalled to Brisbane. It came without even a whisper of what was afoot and at first, I thought I must have done something to cause the wrath of the powers that be, but it turned out that I was wanted at Guadalcanal for the presentation of my Legion of Merit and, as AIB activities in the British Solomons were on the verge of finishing up, I was recalled to Brisbane, where after a few days leave, I was given another assignment as Assistant District Supervising Intelligence Officer (DSIO), New Guinea.

On the way out another pleasant surprise awaited me at Munda. The Officer in Charge of AIB there handed me a signal on arrival, which read, "For Spencer. You have been promoted to Flight Lieutenant with effect 3 April 1943." This meant I had been a Flight Lieutenant for twelve months and had not known, still it represented a tidy sum of back pay.

Posted to New Guinea and then Biak

New Guinea was new ground to me, consequently I was used on the receiving end of the intelligence net, stationed at Finchhafen. We were the HQ for the New Guinea network, just as Guadalcanal had been HQ for the Solomon Islands network. It was very interesting doing the job from this end for a change. One gets a better conception of the whole of the AIB organisation and a better appreciation of the importance of the work of field parties. When Allied HQ moved to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, the US 5th Air Force moved from Nadzab to Owi Island, just off the shores of Biak, that bloody island for which the US Marines paid so dearly. I was then posted as AIB Liaison Officer to 5th Air Force. To reach Biak, I had travelled on the Royal Australian Navy ML. The initials stand for Motor Launch I am told, but it infuriates the crew for their speedy little craft to be termed a Motor Launch.

From Hollandia we went to Aitapi, Wakde and Owi and finally to Biak, where I was rowed ashore in a dinghy, complete with my gear and, with a wave to the remainder of the party, I set to, trying to locate my party who had flown up with the equipment from Nadzab. They were due to arrive about five days ahead of me, since I had been on the ML for a week.

At Biak it was a treat to be amongst my own countrymen who were all members of my own service. This was the first time I had slept in a tent with a crowd of RAAF lads during the whole of my War service. They were one of the squadrons moving up to Noemfoor Island, where the RAAF had gone in with the landing troops on D day.

It was here that I was reunited with my party once more after being on Biak nearly a week looking for them. In the scheme of things it appears Biak was destined to be a large base, and we had been allotted this place by the American Official whose duty it was to plan the base. My job was to build AIB's Comonotor wireless station at this spot, but a more unsuitable campsite I don't think it possible to find.

Not long after I arrived at Comonotor, the Dutch section arrived from Merauke on the south east of New Guinea. This party had its own wireless and was in direct contact with their field parties in islands to the north-west of New Guinea.

On Biak, we had a very high-powered wireless transmitter, hence the electric power plant which also supplied power to the whole camp. What a difference to Vella Lavella days, when our only light was a small 12 candlepower bulb run from the wireless show on the surface of the table and no more. This was fighting a war in comfort to be sure.

I came back to Hollandia to relieve the Naval Lieutenant in charge of AIB station there while he went further south to have some urgent dental treatment. I spent two weeks there acting as Liaison Officer to the US 6th Army, which was just preparing for the Philippines offensive. I witnessed the whole staging of that huge organisation being stowed on to ships and setting sail.

Final Return to Australia and Discharge

Once back in Brisbane I reported to AIB Supervising Intelligence Officer, who told me that the show was practically over as far as our organisation was concerned.

As soon as my carbuncles, which I had for some time, were cleared up, I was given a medical board, after which I was given my discharge on medical grounds. I accepted this with mixed feelings. I wanted to see the job through to the end of the War, but then the thought of being stuck in a base job in Australia after the intensely interesting service I had had, made me welcome my release.

I was discharged on 5 March 1945, three years and three days after my enlistment.

Three months after my return to Civvy Street, I was surprised one morning when reading the paper to discover that No 256323, Flight Lieutenant C E Spencer, RAAF, had been mentioned in despatches for service with Allied Intelligence Bureau in Solomon Islands and New Guinea. When the cessation of hostilities came so soon after my discharge, I was glad to be out, feeling satisfied I had at least done my share.





Yongai Airstrip, Goilala District, near Kokoda, Central Province.
6,500 ft. (1,890m above sea level)

Remembrance Day

Originally called Armistice Day, Remembrance Day commemorates the end of the hostilities of the Great War, the signing of the Armistice, which occurred on 11 November 1918. Armistice Day was observed by the Allies as a way of remembering those who died, especially soldiers with 'no known grave'.

In 1918, after suffering a number of defeats and heavy losses, the German forces agreed to an Armistice with the Allied troops and this signalled the end of the First World War. The treaty was signed at 5am on 11 November 1918 but did not officially come into effect until six hours later at 11am. The Armistice was met by celebrations around the world; people yelled, cheered and danced in the streets.

In Australia, Armistice Day was renamed in 1997. The name change broadened the meaning of the day, widening the focus from the First World War, to a day which commemorates all who served in any war or conflict.

On Remembrance Day we acknowledge the courage & sacrifice of those who served their country and acknowledge our responsibility to work for the peace they fought hard to achieve. We Remember Australians who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations.

Remembrance Day sees services held at 11am at War Memorials and cenotaphs across the country.

Australians have served in: -

The Maori Wars of 1863, Sudan in 1885,
The Boer War 1899, The Boxer Rebellion 1900,
World Wars One & Two,
Malaya
Korea
Borneo 1963,
Vietnam
First Gulf War
East Timor 1990's,
Iraq 2003
Afghanistan 2001 - 2021,
Peacekeeping Forces since 1947.

Gareth Mackay OAM, ANZAC Military Memories.

Lt A.E. Chowne VC. MM.

Albert Chowne, Victoria Cross recipient, was born in Sydney on 19 July 1920. He went to Chatswood Boys Intermediate High School and later Naremburn Junior Technical School. In 1935 he began work as a shirt-cutter at David Jones. Outside work, Chowne enjoyed sports, mainly tennis and rugby union, and was also a member of the scouts.

He spent a brief period in the 36th Militia Battalion before enlisting in the AIF in late May 1940. Chowne was assigned to the 2nd/13th Battalion as platoon and later company runner. The unit arrived in the Middle East in November 1940 and served at Tobruk for eight months the following year. During his time at Tobruk, Chowne transferred to the carrier platoon and was promoted to corporal. After Tobruk the 2nd/13th performed garrison duties in Syria where, in September, Chowne was promoted to sergeant. He was wounded in the leg and hand at El Alamein the following month and spent three weeks in hospital. He returned to Australia with the battalion in January 1943 before moving to Papua in July.



Chowne, now the mortar platoon sergeant, was awarded the Military Medal for twice crawling close to enemy positions to direct mortar fire. Regarded as exceptionally cool by his comrades, Chowne combined fearlessness with a self-effacing manner. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in January 1944 and he married Daphne Barton in March that year. Having completed the jungle warfare training course at Canungra, Chowne was posted to a new unit, the 2nd/2nd Battalion, in October 1944. The 2nd/2nd was sent to New Guinea two months later.

Chowne brought a reputation for bravery and leadership to his new unit. In March 1945 he carried out a one-man patrol in daylight, at one stage entering an empty hut and rifling through the belongings of Japanese soldiers, one of whom he shot when he was discovered. Some who knew him believed that Chowne was destined to either win the Victoria Cross or be killed in action. Sadly both happened. On 25 March 1945, Chowne, seeing the leading platoon in his company's attack on Japanese positions run into trouble, left cover and charged the enemy. He managed to knock out two machine guns before being killed. Chowne's actions enabled the attack to continue and, according to his citation, paved the way for the 6th Division's advance on Wewak.

Chowne was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously and was buried in the Lae War Cemetery in New Guinea. A street in Canberra was named after him as was a community hall in Willoughby, Sydney.

Chowne's VC was the first awarded to a soldier of the veteran 6th Division.

AWM Website





Aircraft previously at Northern end of Jacksons Airstrip, POM.
Above Japanese Zero
Below Consolidated PBV Catalina 1968
DCA Fire Services used the Catalina for practice but it is currently in Christchurch New Zealand being restored—photo 2020 bottom.



Japanese occupation of Rabaul 1942-1944

The Japanese captured Rabaul on 23 January 1942. They were preparing to convert the town into a large Naval and Air base for supplies and forces needed for the expansion of the Japanese Empire perimeter in the South West Pacific. This included the planned conquest of Port Moresby and subsequent occupation of New Caledonia, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Fiji, Samoa and other nearby islands.

The Japanese air raid on Rabaul started on the 4 January 1942 and continued daily, the air raids were relentless until the 5000-strong Japanese invasion force invaded Rabaul after 0000 hours on 23 January 1942.

Lt. Colonel Robert Maclaren retired from the British Army in 2001 after a long fulfilling career. On the day that he retired he received a letter from the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Defence setting out details of his pension and, in particular, the tax-free 'lump sum' award, (based upon completed years of service), that he would receive in addition to his monthly pension.

The letter read,

"Dear Lt. Colonel Maclaren,

We write to confirm that you retired from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on 1st March 2001 at the rank of Lt Colonel, having been commissioned into the British Army at Edinburgh Castle as a 2nd Lieutenant on 1st February 1366. Accordingly your lump sum payment, based on years served, has been calculated as £68,500. You will receive a cheque for this amount in due course.

Yours sincerely, Army Paymaster."

Col Maclaren replied;

"Dear Paymaster,

Thank you for your recent letter confirming that I served as an officer in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards between 1st February 1366 and 1st March 2001 – a total period of 635 years and 1 month. I note however that you have calculated my lump sum to be £68,500, which seems to be considerably less than it should be bearing in mind my length of service since I received my commission from King Edward III.

By my calculation, allowing for interest payments and currency fluctuations, my lump sum should actually be £6,427,586,619. 47p. I look forward to receiving a cheque for this amount in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Maclaren (Lt Col Retd)"

A month passed by and then in early April, a stout manila envelope from the Ministry of Defence in Edinburgh dropped through Col Maclaren's letter box, it read:

"Dear Lt Colonel Maclaren,

We have reviewed the circumstances of your case as outlined in your recent letter to us dated 8th March inst. We do indeed confirm that you were commissioned into the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards by King Edward III at Edinburgh Castle on 1st February 1366, and that you served continuously for the following 635 years and 1 month. We have re-calculated your pension and have pleasure in confirming that the lump sum payment due to you is indeed £6,427,586,619. 47p. However, we also note that according to our records you are the only surviving officer who had command responsibility during the following campaigns and battles;

The Wars of the Roses 1455 -1485 (Including the battles of Bosworth Field, Barnet and Towton)

The Civil War 1642 -1651 (Including the battles Edge Hill, Naseby and the conquest of Ireland)

The Napoleonic War 1803 – 1815 (including the battle of Waterloo and the Peninsular War)

The Crimean War (1853 – 1856) (including the battle of Sevastopol and the Charge of the Light Brigade)

The Boer War (1899 -1902).

We would therefore wish to know what happened to the following, which do not appear to have been returned to Stores by you on completion of operations: 9765 Cannon

26,785 Swords

12,889 Pikes

127,345 Rifles (with bayonets)

28,987 horses (fully kitted)

Plus three complete marching bands with instruments and banners.

We have calculated the total cost of these items and they amount to £6,427,518.119.47p. We have therefore subtracted this sum from your lump sum, leaving a residual amount of £68,500, for which you will receive a cheque in due course.

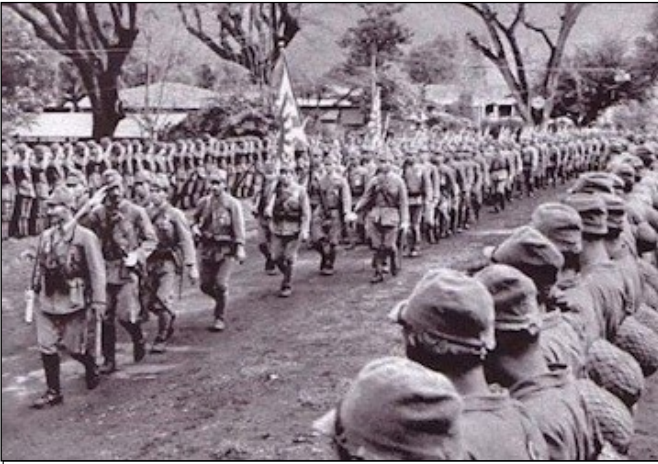
Yours sincerely"

Japanese ships entered the harbour and troops landed at Blanche Bay. The only resistance at the time was Lark Force and they had only a few anti-tank guns, mortars and Vickers machine-guns. The struggle was over in just a few hours and the Lark Force commander, Colonel Scanlon, ordered the men to disperse 'every man for himself'.

The Army had no such escape plans for its troops. Only the fittest, most determined and luckiest survived the long withdrawal across New Britain. The Japanese captured Rabaul with the loss of only 16 men.

After invading New Britain in January 1942, the Japanese developed a naval and logistic base at Rabaul. Small Japa-

nese forces had also landed at points along the north and south coasts of New Britain and New Ireland. Rabaul was the only major base developed on the islands, though a garrison of over 10,000 troops was built up at Kavieng, New Ireland, and a forward airbase was established at Gasmata, on the south coast of New Britain.



Japanese troops marching through Rabaul 1942

From early 1942, Rabaul was subjected to a prolonged bombing campaign by Allied bomber squadrons based in mainland New Guinea and later also on Bougainville. Japanese shipping was also attacked. The base was the most heavily defended target in the theatre, and losses were sometimes relatively heavy with three or four aircraft lost in a raid.

Targets were often identified by Australian coastwatchers - civilian men who had volunteered to stay behind and observe enemy activities and were commissioned into the Royal Australian Naval Reserve after the invasion. The Japanese knew of the coastwatchers through the 'native grapevine' and tracked and captured some, often with the assistance of villagers, but other coastwatchers survived with the help of New Guineans who provided warning of Japanese movements and helped them move about the island.

The Japanese maintained their own coastwatching stations along the south coast as far west as Awul, near Cape Dampier. Each post was manned by about 25 troops who gave warning of Allied air raids. They also mounted patrols to capture Allied airmen who had been forced down after their aircraft were damaged over Rabaul.

In 1943 Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) patrols, consisting of Australian and New Guinean troops, were sent to New Britain to gather intelligence, re-establish an Australian pres-



Japanese aircraft at Lakunai airstrip, Rabaul, 1942.

ence on the island and to rescue downed airmen. Villagers often suffered reprisals after assisting these patrols. For example, late in 1943 the Japanese sought to reassert their grip on the Nakanai area, where AIB patrols had been helped, by torturing and executing several village officials, and in other instances villagers were killed, beaten or raped. The Australians trained friendly villagers as guerrillas and during February-March 1944 guerrillas killed some 286 Japanese, with just two guerrillas killed.

Tribal warfare also erupted as the guerrillas sought retribution on villagers closer to Rabaul who had assisted the Japanese. In early to mid 1944 the American 1st Marine Division made amphibious landings at Cape Gloucester on the western tip of New Britain, at Arawe on the south-west coast, and at Talasea midway along the north coast towards Rabaul. The new bases were, in effect, American enclaves developed as forward airbases.

The Japanese did not attempt to repel them, and the Americans were content to maintain a defensive perimeter around each base. The AIB strength on New Britain now totalled five Australian officers and ten NCOs along with about 140 New Guinean troops. Their patrols stepped up activities along both coasts.

A few hundred Japanese died of hunger and disease when withdrawing from the Nakanai area, near Talasea, and on the south coast the AIB overran three coastwatching stations and pushed the Japanese back to Wide Bay. The Japanese maintained a forward base there with about 800 troops. On the north coast,

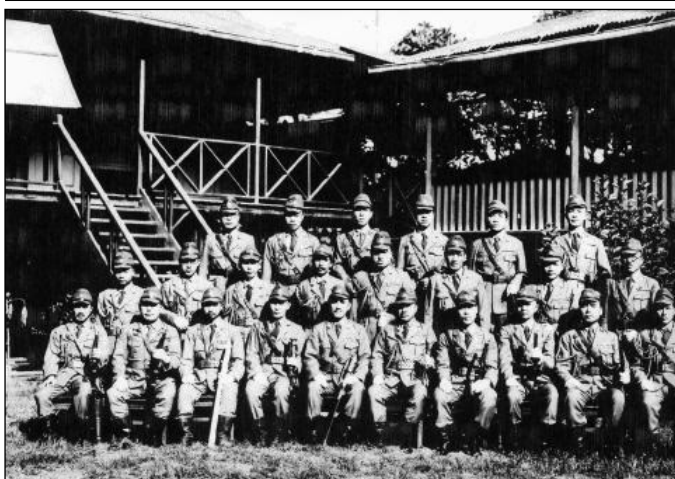


Low flying attack on a Japanese freighter

AIB patrols infiltrated Gazelle Peninsula, on which Rabaul was located, but were pushed back by the Japanese. About 400 villagers who had assisted the Australians came out with the AIB patrols.

Tribal conflicts erupted in the Wide Bay area, as villagers had taken sides during the Japanese occupation. Those closest to Rabaul were more likely to be aligned to the Japanese. In May 1944, a force of 80 Australian-trained guerrillas killed 14 Japanese and 14 of their New Guinean allies - guerrilla warfare continued for several months. The Japanese stepped up patrols in the Wide Bay hinterland and punished villagers suspected of assisting the Allies. Fearing more reprisals, the AIB persuaded many villagers to move to more remote locations, an action which also denied the Japanese potential workers.

In October 1944, the Australian 5th Division, led by Major General Alan Ramsay, took over the American bases and a new offensive against Rabaul began. In November, the 6th Brigade (less one battalion) landed at Jacquinot Bay on the south coast and began advancing along the south coast in conjunction with another advance on the north coast. Opposition was relatively light and by February 1945, after several small amphibious landings along the coasts, the Japanese had been pushed onto the



Fleet headquarters staff at Rabaul. Admiral Yamamoto sitting fifth from the left, on of the very rare occasions Yamamoto is not wearing his white Navel uniform

Gazelle Peninsula. About 93,000 Japanese were contained within the Gazelle Peninsula.

The defensive force consisted of the 17th and 38th Divisions, the 65th Infantry Brigade, and detachments from other divisions. In addition, about 22,000 base and line of communication troops and 2,500 naval personnel occupied the base. No ships remained afloat in the harbour and less than thirty aircraft remained, but Allied air raids continued against base facilities and caves used to accommodate Japanese troops.

Chinese, Indian and British prisoners of war had been transported to Rabaul to work as labourers. Most of the 500 British prisoners had been moved to the Solomon Islands, where they perished, but many Chinese and Indians remained. Dozens were killed in air raids or died as a result of mistreatment and poor diet. American and Australian airmen who had been shot down were also held captive, but most of these prisoners were either executed or died and at war's end only six remained alive.

Over 100 European civilian internees - mostly missionaries and nuns - and over 300 local Chinese civilians were interned outside Rabaul. In previous campaigns, the Australians had enjoyed ready access to close air support - but not so on New Britain.

In December 1944 a wing of Mitchell bombers (including two Dutch squadrons) was ordered to Jacquinot Bay but it was redeployed after the Dutch requested that the wing be used in the Netherlands East Indies. This left the Australians without dedicated air support apart from a flight of Boomerang tactical reconnaissance aircraft based at Cape Hoskins, some Auster light liaison aircraft and occasional bombing strikes by Beauforts based on mainland New Guinea.

General Hitoshi IMAMURA was content merely to defend the Rabaul perimeter established on the Gazelle Peninsula, knowing that his garrison was too large for the Australian division to overcome. Both sides patrolled the jungle areas in a largely static campaign and battle casualties were relatively low. In fact, the majority of the Japanese army and navy personnel were engaged on food production, with large gardens established in and around Rabaul. The garrison held out until the war's end when over 97,000 Japanese personnel surrendered at Rabaul along with another 12,000 on nearby New Ireland.

Contributed by Dr John Moremon Australian War Memorial

Operation Cartwheel

At the end of April 1943, the Allies developed their plan for encircling Rabaul, codenamed "Operation Cartwheel." It

called for MacArthur to approach Rabaul from the southwest, through New Guinea and the southern Bismarcks, while Halsey would advance through the Solomons, forming two pincers that would close in on the Japanese base. Meanwhile, the Japanese were busy reinforcing and reorganizing their forces in the South Pacific in anticipation of an Allied offensive. General Hitoshi Imamura, headquartered at Rabaul, commanded Japan's 17th Army in the Solomons; they were reinforced by the 18th Army, tasked with defending northern New Guinea.

In late June, the two-pronged Allied drive toward Rabaul began, both in New Guinea and the Solomons. Lae, on the northern New Guinea coast, fell in mid-September; U.S. forces then seized Saidor, opposite Cape Gloucester, on the westernmost tip of New Britain. By October 1943, Halsey's forces were ready to attack Bougainville, the largest and westernmost island in the Solomon chain, located just 200 miles from Rabaul at the narrowest sea crossing. Reinforcements (some 37,500 men) from the Japanese 17th Army were sent to Bougainville, concentrated at Buin, near the island's southern end, and on small islets off the shore of the main island. This left Empress Augusta Bay, to the north, open to a landing by U.S. Marines on November 1, 1943, four days after New Zealand forces captured the tiny Treasury Islands, south of Bougainville. In the ensuing battle, American ships engaged thinly dispersed Japanese defenders, sinking Japanese cruisers and a destroyer while the 5th Army Air Force bombed Japanese airstrips and supported the Marine landing.

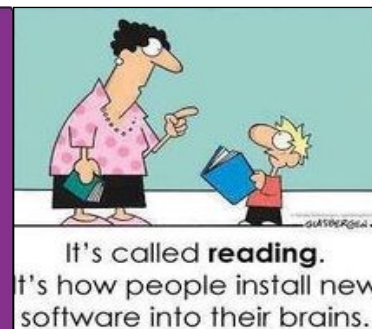
Closing in on Rabaul

In conjunction with MacArthur's advance in New Guinea, Halsey's forces were closing in on the Japanese at Rabaul. By November 21, U.S. troops from the 3rd Marine and 37th Army Divisions had firmly established themselves on Bougainville. In addition, Halsey ordered an attack against the powerful Japanese fleet just as it set forth from Rabaul—a risky gamble, as it put a two-carrier American task force in range of Japan's huge air power. Through skillful deployment of land-based aircraft, the Allied force kept Japan's planes at bay, leaving the U.S. carriers unscathed and allowing them to launch waves of torpedo- and dive-bombers against the fleet, which was forced to withdraw to distant Truk Island. Meanwhile, the Marines at Bougainville launched a series of intensive air raids against Rabaul.

On December 15, Allied troops landed at Arawe, on the southwestern coast of New Britain, diverting Japanese focus from Cape Gloucester, on the northwestern coast, in time for a major Allied landing there on December 26. After repulsing a Japanese counterattack, the Allies captured Cape Gloucester and its major airstrip by January 16, 1944, and set up a solid defensive line. New Zealand took the Green Islands, southeast of New Guinea, in mid-February, while U.S. forces invaded the Admiralty Islands later that month and captured the Emirau Islands by March 20. On each island they captured, the Allies constructed air bases, allowing them to block any westward movement by the Japanese. In this way, the Allies tightened their stranglehold on Rabaul, effectively neutralizing the 100,000 Japanese troops stationed there by the end of March 1944.

(History.com)

IN WINE
THERE IS WISDOM,
IN BEER
THERE IS FREEDOM,
IN WATER
THERE IS BACTERIA.



The Garage Girls

At the rear of Nyrambla (21 Henry Street, Ascot Qld, 2007) Central Bureau's headquarters, there was a garage from which personnel from the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) operated. Nicknamed the 'Garage Girls' for the location of their operations, these women used TypeX machines, British cipher machines that were adapted from the German Enigma machines, to send and receive encrypted communications between Allied forces.

The work was top secret and the women were sworn to absolute secrecy, not even permitted to tell their families of their work. The Garage Girls processed huge daily volumes of coded communications spelt out in ciphers; these ciphers would change daily to make it harder for enemies to decipher. The messages would be padded with irrelevant messaging to make it more difficult for enemies listening in to understand. The messages would come in five-letter groups, which would be delivered onto a paper ribbon, and at the end of every shift they would carefully burn anything incriminating in an incinerator. Accuracy was key in the role of a typist, as mistyped letters or symbols could result in wide-scale disaster.

The highly secretive nature of the work meant that the Garage Girls formed incredibly close bonds with one another, and some remained life-long friends. One former operator, Madeline Chidgey, described her fellow Garage Girls as 'a close-knit, mutually-supportive group', remembering that 'anyone who was homesick, lovesick, or just plain sick of waiting for the war to end was never down for long'.

Indeed, some Garage Girls even found love within the secretive walls of Nyrambla; Coral Osborne met her future husband, Sandy Hinds, on her first day as a Garage Girl. The two kept in touch while he was deployed to South-East Asia by padding out the messages sent between field offices with their own communications, including a marriage proposal.

Australian Signals Directorate

Australia Day honours for women WWII codebreakers who operated in Brisbane garage

Eighty years after secretly cracking codes in a Brisbane garage, three women have been recognised for their World War II service.

Coral Hinds, Joyce Grace and Ailsa Hale were among a group of women who played a critical but largely unrecognised role in the Allied victories in the Pacific, including the battle of Midway in June 1942.

From the garage of the Brisbane suburban mansion that served as a top-secret signals base, the women worked around the clock on 12 British Typex cipher machines, decoding encrypted messages from German and Japanese forces.

Among their most consequential contributions, cracked communications played a key role in the intelligence that led to the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto.

Yamamoto was commander-in-chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy Combined Fleet during the attack on Pearl Harbour and the Battle of Midway.

Their impact carried into the post-war successor of the Central Bureau when, knowing the exceptional service of the women, the new director ignored a Defence directive to limit how many women were employed.

Now aged 98, Coral Hinds fondly recalls her days as a so-called "Garage Girl" and said she was proud something had come of it.

"It's quite unexpected," she said of being awarded the Australian Intelligence Medal.

"All the time I worked with Central Bureau, I've met some wonderful girls. It's those girls that I'm still friends with and, knowing that they have the same thoughts about privacy and work and all those things we held so dear in our work, that's the thing I remember most."

'Hush-hush'

The work of Allied signals intelligence is credited to have ended the war two years earlier than expected.

"There were some very important messages, but we didn't always know how important they were," Hinds said.

The messages came in five-letter groups, which the girls would then deliver onto a paper ribbon in a process Hinds described as "very hush-hush".

The awards come five weeks before Grace celebrates her 100th birthday.

'Enduring legacy'

Rachel Noble, who leads the successor to the Central Bureau, said the women and their colleagues achieved the extraordinary without being able to share the enormity of their achievements for so long.

"The Australian Intelligence Medal rightly recognises the significance of their service and sacrifice, to signals intelligence and Australia's war effort" the Australian Signals Directorate director-general said.

"The enduring legacy of the 'Garage Girls' continues today. They are our modern-day heroines and an inspiration to our people.

"As ASD celebrates its 75th anniversary year, we still stand on their shoulders.

"The work they did in harsh conditions shortened the war and no doubt saved many lives. It is humbling for us all to finally see their incredible achievements recognised."

7News.com.au 27 Jan 2023.



Nyrambla (State Library of Queensland, Neg 67869)

Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When little Johnny received his plate, he started eating straight away.

"Jonny, wait until we've said our prayer/" his mother reminded him.

"I don't have to." - the little boy replied.

"Of course you do." - his mother insisted. "We say a prayer before eating at our house."

"That's at our house," Johnny explained, "but this is Grandma's house and she knows how to cook."

Tighnabruaich

Japanese Prisoners of War Imprisoned and Interrogated in the heart of Indooroopilly .

'Tighnabruaich', named after a district in Scotland, is located at 203 Clarence Road, Indooroopilly, Brisbane, just to the left of the Indooroopilly Bridge as you approach from the Taringa/Toowong side. The house was built for H. C. Stanley the then Chief Engineer of Queensland Railways.

The property and surrounding lands were requested by the Military in 1942 and renamed Witton Barracks. A joint US-Australian intelligence unit named the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section interrogated captured Japanese soldiers who were held in cells within the grounds. The Australian Military Police were also based at Tighnabruaich' within what had become Witton Barracks.

The army privatised 'Tighnabruaich' in the early 2000's and the house was sold to a local family for use as a private residence. When the property was being prepared for sale Japanese graffiti was said to be found in some of the upstairs rooms reported as being used for the interrogation of prisoners. The graffiti was subsequently painted over.

While it cannot be substantiated as to the actual site of the incident, be it within the house, the cells or within the grounds, there are a number of reports of a Japanese Prisoner who committed suicide within the barracks.

Brisbane residents were never told of the top secret prison cells or of the interrogation unit which worked from 'Tighnabruaich'.

The Brisbane City Council acquired the site, excluding 'Tighnabruaich' in 2015. Other historical buildings, including the cells, have undergone a program of restoration which is soon to be completed. The remaining land which made up Witton Barracks has been or will be transformed into public parkland.

The cells are said to be the last of their kind in Australia.

Ross Palm. Australian Military History.



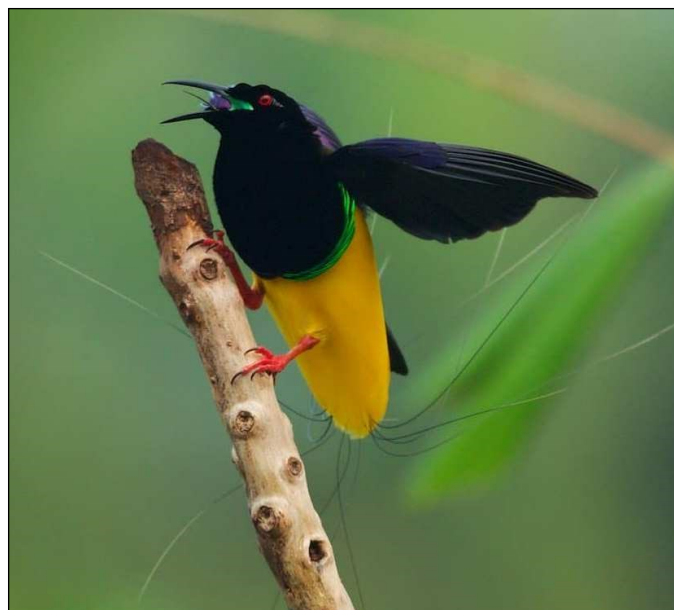
Tighnabruaich. pic credit: BCC archives

Three men were waiting at the Pearly Gates for admission on Christmas Eve where St Peter was interviewing prospective entrants. He asked the first man, an Englishman, what he could contribute to the festive occasion. The Englishman removed a cigarette lighter from his pocket and lit it, "Candles" he replied and he was allowed to enter.

Next it was the Irishman who was asked the same question and he removed a set of keys from his pocket and said "Jingle Bells" and he was also allowed to enter.

Finally, the Australian was questioned about what he could give so that he could enter with the others.

He was wearing shorts and from his left pocket he removed a pair of lacy knickers and from his right hand pocket he produced a sexy bra causing St Peter to demand what he was doing. Aha, said the Aussie, these are Carols!



Twelve Wire Bird of Paradise

ADF replacing Steyr 5.56 with Sig 7.62

The Australian government has signed a multi-million dollar agreement with a Queensland company to start acquiring and supplying the next generation of small arms for the Australian Defence Force.

The contract is part of a \$500-million-plus commitment to provide Australia's soldiers, sailors and aviators with enhanced-lethality weapon systems. Head Land Systems Major General Andrew Bottrell said the Lethality System Project (LAND 159) Tranche 1 contract had been awarded to Queensland-based company NIOA.

Between now and the mid-2020s, NIOA will use a range of sub-contractors to supply new sniper rifles, pistols, shotguns, personal defence weapons, fighting knives and an assault-breaching system to the ADF, with many of the new weapons to be on display at the Land Forces expo in Brisbane from 4 to 6 October 2022.

Major General Bottrell said the contract would include munitions and ancillary equipment including optical and laser systems, torches and suppressors for the new generation of small arms. "Under the contract, NIOA will be the prime contractor, working with local and international suppliers and weapon manufacturers on the acquisition, integration, delivery and ongoing support of the new weapon systems from 2023," he said. "This is a bold step into modern weaponry to quickly improve Australia's defence preparedness. Early engagement with industry has proven very successful.

"NIOA has demonstrated a long-term commitment, private investment, and a focus on growing sovereign industrial capability to support Australia's war fighters. The collaboration between Defence and industry means we will acquire the best available weapon systems for our troops."

NIOA weapons and munitions specialists worked alongside the Commonwealth project team to evaluate 649 products across weapons, ancillaries, and munitions for 11 mission systems before making its final recommendations to Defence in a 600-page report.

The company said their transparent, collaborative and rigorous process included 800 weapons and ammunition test serials with more than 31,000 rounds fired during evaluations off site and at its Brisbane indoor range where it invested more than \$1m in new testing equipment specifically for the LAND 159 project.

CEO Robert Nioa said the company's best-of-breed approach maximised industry participation to ensure Australia's servicemen and women had the best combinations of the best equipment to complete their missions safely. The battlefield capability increase that these next-generation weapons provide is a game-changer for our warfighters," Mr Nioa said. "NIOA is proud of its role in this project. Protecting our national security means teamwork at every level – government, Defence and industry. As an Australian-owned company we feel strongly about assisting the Commonwealth government to meet the sovereign capability priorities of today and tomorrow."

Defence said it would seek to maximise Australian-industry involvement throughout the life of the Lethality System Project, and ensure continuous engagement with industry partners.

Contact Newsletter. 10/2022



SIG Sauer's MCX in .300 Blackout calibre [7.62×35mm] [a sub-sonic round]

A Scotsman and his wife walked past a swanky new restaurant.

"Did you smell that food?" she asked. "It's smells absolutely incredible!"

Being a 'kind-hearted Scotsman', he thought, "What the hell... I'll treat her!"

So, they walked past it again!

Beware of a new Amazon scam. My husband ordered me some expensive jewelry, but motorcycle parts came instead. Thankfully they fit his bike...

Robert Kerr (Jock) McLaren MC and Bar MID (1902–1956)
by Alan Powell

Robert Kerr McLaren (1902-1956), army officer and veterinarian, was born on 27 April 1902 at Pathhead, Fifeshire, Scotland, son of James Bryce McLaren, chemist, and his wife Annie Maxwell, née Kerr. Emigrating to Australia (probably in the 1920s), Bob practised as a veterinary surgeon around Bundaberg, Queensland. Although he belonged to the Church of Scotland, he married 40-year-old Catherine Ahearn with Catholic rites on 18 June 1938 at the Sacred Heart Church, Childers.

On 12 March 1941 McLaren joined the Citizen Military Forces; on 23 April he transferred to the Australian Imperial Force. He was then 5 ft 11 ins (180 cm) tall, lean and sharp-featured, with fair hair and blue eyes. In January 1942 he sailed for Singapore with the 2nd/10th Ordnance Field Workshops. When the Japanese took the island in the following month, he became a prisoner of war at Changi. Within days he escaped with two other Australians and headed to the north-west. Betrayed by some Malaysians, they were captured by the Japanese. The three men were made to face a firing squad on six successive mornings at Seremban before being taken to Pudu Gaol, Kuala Lumpur. By September they were back in Changi.

As part of 'E' Force, McLaren was among five hundred British and five hundred Australian prisoners transferred to Borneo in

March 1943. The Australians were taken to a camp on Berhala Island, at the entrance to Sandakan harbour in British North Borneo. McLaren and Lieutenant Rex Blow made contact with Filipino guerrillas who helped them and five others to escape in June. Another Australian, already at large, joined the group which then sailed to the island of Tawitawi in the Philippines. Attaching themselves to an American-led guerrilla force, the men sailed for Mindanao in October. McLaren had been promoted sergeant in July. He was to serve with distinction in the Philippines, receiving a field commission (January 1944) and the rank of temporary captain (April 1945).

From September 1944 McLaren skippered an armed whale-boat off Mindanao. He attacked Japanese small craft and coastal installations with dash and aggression, qualities he also displayed when commanding combat patrols on land. On 2 April 1945 he and Blow headed elements of the guerrilla force's 108th Division in an assault on the last Japanese stronghold in Lanao province. Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Hedges, the American divisional commander, recorded that the fighting ended with the capture of the garrison and the destruction of about 450 enemy troops. For his efforts at sea and on land, McLaren won the Military Cross and was mentioned in dispatches. His M.C. citation read: 'throughout the whole of his service with the Guerilla Forces, Captain McLaren displayed outstanding leadership in battle and had no regard for his personal safety. His cheerful imperturbability was an inspiration to all with whom he came into contact'. The Americans awarded him the Philippines Liberation ribbon.

Ordered home in April 1945, McLaren joined the Services Reconnaissance Department, a section of the Allied Intelligence Bureau which was largely Australian-manned. On 30 June he led four S.R.D. operatives in a pre-invasion parachute operation near Balikpapan, Borneo. One man was injured on landing, another was taken in an ambush, and the Japanese captured their supplies and radios. McLaren, however, carried on with his task and slipped through enemy lines on 6 July to report to 7th Division headquarters. His deeds earned him a Bar to his M.C. His last wartime mission, code-



named Agas 5, saw him (as a substantive captain) lead an eight-man team to Talasai, British North Borneo, on 27 July. After World War II had ended, the party remained to administer to civilian needs until 10 September. McLaren returned to Australia on 5 November and transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 15 January 1946.

A natural leader and a man of driving energy, McLaren found no satisfactory occupation in Australia and accepted a post as a government veterinary officer in the Territory of Papua-New Guinea. In early 1956 he left the public service and took over a coffee plantation near Wau. On 3 March that year he accidentally backed his Jeep into a pergola and was killed when struck by falling

McLaren removed his own appendix in the middle of the Philippine jungle. He conducted the 4.5 hour procedure with no anaesthetic and only a mirror and a knife. He used jungle fibres to stitch himself up. He was assisted by a Philippine medical student. As a vet he had sufficient knowledge to carry this out.

timber. Survived by his wife, he was buried in the European cemetery at Wau.

This article was published in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 15, (MUP), 2000

Little boy tells his nursery teacher he found a dead cat.
 "How did you know it was dead?" asks the teacher.
 "Because I pissed in its ear & it didn't move" says the boy.
 "You did what!?" shrieks the teacher.
 "You know" explains the boy, "I leant over & went Psst & it didn't move!"



Above and below. Cape Wom Memorial Park, Wewak. Fourteen kilometres west of Wewak, this is the site of a wartime airstrip and the war memorial marks the spot where Japanese Lieutenant General Adachi signed the surrender documents and handed his sword to Australian Major General Robertson on 13 September 1945.

A triangular concrete cairn painted white was built at the surrender site with a brass plaque commemorating the surrender. The marker is flanked by five flag poles and a series of brass plaques on concrete bases. Two Japanese guns Type 88 75mm anti-aircraft gun and Type 88 75mm anti-aircraft gun recovered from the ridge behind Boram Airfield are displayed nearby with several field guns.



Battle of the Bismarck Sea

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea, took place on Australia's doorstep from 2 to 4 March 1943. It was a defining battle that thwarted Japan's attempt to secure a permanent foothold in Australia's nearest neighbour, which was then the Australian territory of Papua and territory protectorate of New Guinea. While action in the battle occurred at sea, it was Allied air power that was the deciding factor. The success of air power was only made possible through a series of carefully planned and orchestrated opera-

tions, which today would be collectively termed a joint operation.

Alerted by signals intelligence in February 1943 that the Japanese were preparing to ship reinforcements to the north coast of New Guinea, the Allies began planning to prevent the enemy troops from reaching their destination. Air attacks were launched. However bad weather had hampered the effort and reconnaissance on 28 February revealed that only one ship of the sixteen ship convoy had been sunk.

On 3 March 1943, the convoy was located in the Huon Gulf, heading towards Lae in bright sunlight. RAAF Beaufighters of No 30 Squadron led an attack, followed by a mix of US bombers and other strike aircraft, including A-20 Bostons of the RAAF's No 22 Squadron. The remaining transports were sunk, along with half the convoy escort.

The event became known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea and was identified as one of the most awesome displays of air power in the Pacific during WWII.



While action in the battle occurred at sea, it was Allied air power that was the deciding factor. The success of air power was only made possible through a series of carefully planned and orchestrated operations, which today would be collectively termed a joint operation.

Japan was providing vital logistics support from Rabaul to their New Guinea base in Lae. The Allies missed an opportunity to intercept a Japanese convoy in January 1943 but they knew well that further convoys were needed to support the Japanese advance over the Owen Stanley Range to their final prize of securing Port Moresby, the capital of Papua. Intelligence reports were filtering into the Allies from a number of sources that included Australian Coastwatchers who had oversight of all shipping that left Rabaul harbour, the monitoring of Japanese communications, air reconnaissance and the use of radar surveillance.

On 1 March 1943, a patrolling US Liberator aircraft sighted an enemy convoy outward bound from Rabaul. The convoy consisted of eight troop transports escorted by eight destroyers with air cover being provided by Zero aircraft operating out of both Rabaul and Lae. This was a much bigger convoy than the one that landed Japanese troops at Lae on 7 January.

At first, bad weather hid this second fleet from Allied reconnaissance aircraft, and the convoy was not sighted again until the following day. In a seemingly unconnected operation, on 2 March, six Boston aircraft from the RAAF's No 22 Squadron made a dawn raid on Lae airfield. While easily

seen as just another raid, the attack was in fact mounted to prevent Japanese aircraft intended as the fighter escort for the convoy from operating from the airstrips, thereby ceding air control over the convoy to the Allies.

Searching United States Army Air Force (USAAF) Liberator aircraft relocated the convoy mid-morning. Eight Flying Fortresses were launched, followed shortly afterwards by 20 more. The Flying Fortresses attacked the convoy from 6500 feet using 100 lb demolition bombs, and one transport was sunk. Later in the day, a further attack was conducted by 11 Flying Fortresses, but this attack yielded no results.

After dusk, RAAF Catalinas from No 11 Squadron shadowed the convoy throughout the night, with the purpose of providing detailed information on the movements of the convoy to the various Allied headquarters located throughout the South West Pacific. Throughout the night, the extremely poor weather conditions favoured the Japanese convoy. A lone Beaufort from No 100 Squadron made an unsuccessful torpedo attack while the Japanese transited Vitiaz Strait.



As a bomber banks away its bomb can be seen falling towards the Japanese ship.

On the morning of 3 March, eight Beauforts from No 100 Squadron made an unsuccessful dawn torpedo attack. This was a precursor to a more coordinated attack to be made later, which involved RAAF Bostons, Beauforts and Beaufighters working in unison with USAAF Flying Fortress, Mitchell and Boston aircraft. By 0930 hrs, more than 90 Allied aircraft rallied at the rendezvous point over Cape Ward Hunt (200 km South East of Lae) to synchronise their strike on the convoy. Their attacks were made in three waves and from different levels with split second timing.

Firstly, 13 USAAF Flying Fortresses bombed from medium altitude. In addition to the obvious objective of sinking ships, these attacks were intended to disperse the convoy by forcing vessels to break their tight convoy grouping to avoid being hit. Secondly, 13 RAAF Beaufighters from No 30 Squadron hit the enemy from very low altitude, lining up on their targets as the bombs from the Flying Fortresses were exploding. The Australians' job was twofold: to suppress anti-aircraft fire, and to target the ships' executives located on the bridge of the ships. The Beaufighters initially approached at 150 m (around 400 feet) in line-astern formation. The pilots then dove to mast-level height, set full power on their engines, changed into the abreast formation, and approached their targets at 420 km/h (around 225 knots).

It seems that some of the Japanese captains thought the Beaufighters were going to make a torpedo attack because they altered course to meet the Australians head-on, to present a smaller profile. Instead, this exposed the bridge of the



vessels and made them better targets for strafing as the Beaufighters altered their heading in response and raked the ships from bow to stern, subjecting the enemy to a storm of cannon and machine gun fire.

With the convoy now dispersed and in disarray, the third wave of attackers was able to concentrate on sinking ships. Thirteen USAAF Mitchells made a medium-level bombing strike and made low-level 'skip bombing' attacks while, simultaneously, a mast-level attack was made by 12 other specially modified USAAF Mitchells, commonly referred to as 'commerce destroyers' because of their heavy armament. The commerce destroyers were devastating, claiming 17 direct hits. Close behind the 3 Mitchells, USAAF Bostons added more firepower.

Following the coordinated onslaught, Beaufighters, Mitchells and Bostons intermingled as they swept back and forth over the convoy, strafing and bombing selected targets at will. The Japanese ships were now listing and sinking, their superstructures smashed and blazing, producing great clouds of smoke. Above the surface battle, 28 USAAF Lightning fighters provided air defence for the strike force. In their combat with the Zeros, which were attempting to protect the convoy, three of the Lightnings were shot down, but in turn the American pilots claimed 20 kills. The only other USAAF aircraft lost was a single Flying Fortress, shot down by a Zero.

By midday on 3 March, the Allied aircraft then returned to Port Moresby for refuelling and rearming.

The attacks on the convoy continued throughout the afternoon. Again, USAAF Flying Fortresses struck from medium level, this time in cooperation with USAAF Mitchells and five RAAF Bostons from No 22 Squadron, flying at very low level. At least 20 direct hits were claimed against the by-now devastated convoy. On 4 March, Allied aircraft attacked Malahang airfield near Lae and destroyed many enemy aircraft and ground installations.

This was the last to be seen of the invading Japanese convoy. In the days following the attacks, RAAF and USAAF aircraft patrolled the Huon Gulf area between Lae and Rabaul in what was described by official historian Douglas Gillison as 'the terrible yet essential finale', destroying barges and rafts crowded with Japanese survivors.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea provides a classic example of the effective integration of a wide range of air power roles. For the loss of a handful of aircraft, the Allied air forces had sunk 12 ships – all eight of the troop transports and four of the eight destroyers – and killed nearly 3000 enemy soldiers. The brilliantly conceived and executed operation had smashed Japanese hopes of regaining the initiative in their New Guinea campaign and eliminated any possibility that Australia might be invaded. It also allowed the Australian Army to prepare for the Salamaua and Lae campaigns later in 1943.

General MacArthur described the battle as 'the decisive aerial

engagement' of the war in the South-West Pacific Area'.

Key Points

- Allied Air Forces involved in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea included elements of the United States Army Air Force, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Air Force, the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Netherlands East Indies Air Force.
- The Japanese convoy was decimated by a three-wave attack made over three levels, with the majority of ships lost at the expense of only a few Allied aircraft.
- The success gained in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea paved the way ahead for other Australian and Allied operations in New Guinea.

Rosalind Turner. Air Force.gov.au



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

079862

In March 1945, the Waitavolo and Tol plantations in New Britain were captured by the Australian troops.

In 1942, the Tol plantation was the scene of the massacre of some 150 Australians as they attempted to flee Rabaul. The capture of the plantations in 1945 enabled the Australian 5th Division to establish a line across the Gazelle Peninsula from which they were able to conduct patrols against Japanese positions in the North of New Britain. Image: Waitavolo Area, Wide Bay, New Britain.

16.3.1945 A Jeep ambulance assisting to evacuate wounded personnel of the 14/32nd Infantry Battalion from the dressing station of the 6th Field Ambulance, Army Medical Corps. AWM 079862

WWII Escape Maps

During World War II, the United States and Great Britain produced in excess of 3.5 million silk maps and cloth maps for Allied military personnel to use as escape maps. In 1940, the British military intelligence unit, known as MI 9, started issuing silk maps for use by British aircrews shot down over enemy occupied territory in Europe. The silk maps were intended to assist airman in evading capture. MI 9 also smuggled silk and tissue paper escape maps into POW camps in Germany along with other escape aids to encourage POWs to attempt escape.

After the US's entry into WWII, US military intelligence officers learned of the activities of MI 9 and established a similar intelligence unit referred to as MIS-X, which began mass producing cloth maps and tissue paper escape maps for US military personnel. The first US cloth maps were printed on balloon cloth, but soon thereafter a more suitable material, acetate rayon, was found and used for all subsequent cloth maps.

What are Silk Escape Maps?

When a serviceman was captured or shot down behind enemy lines, he could use a silk map to find his way to safety, or better

still, evade capture in the first place. They were also sent to Prisoners of War to help them if they managed to escape.

Why Silk?

Silk was the perfect fabric for these maps because it is so lightweight, it can be folded up really small and it doesn't rustle when you crumple it. You wouldn't want your map to be noisy when you were unfolding it secretly. It also doesn't fall apart when it gets wet. An escape map would be of little use if you couldn't use it in the rain.

Where did they hide the maps?

The maps were hidden in many creative ways before being sent to prisoners of war. Some ways that we know about are,

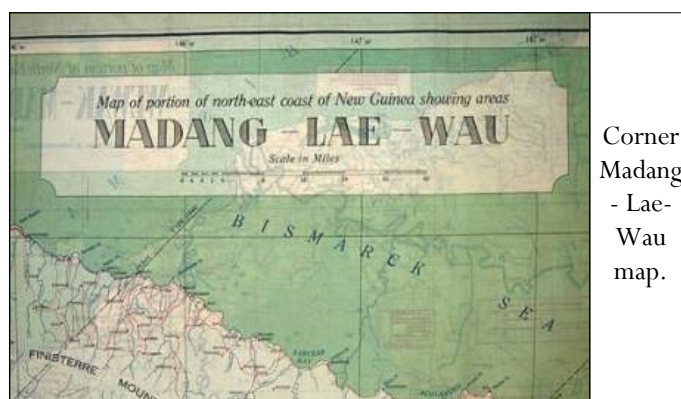
- Hidden in Monopoly Boards—a dot on the car parking square told you that a map was hidden in the set. (HTT Vol 74 had an article on this.)
- In playing cards,
- In pencils,
- In gramophone records.

Southwest Pacific Area Series

The first cloth map series produced covered New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies, and is known as the Southwest Pacific Area Series.

Southwest Pacific Area Series

Side 1	Side 2
No. 16 Owen Stanley	No. 17 New Britain
No. 18 Papua No.	No. 19 Nassau
No. 20 Amboina	No. 21 Halmahera
No. 22/26 Southwestern Java	No. 25 Timor
No. 23 North Celebes	No. 24 South Celebes
No. 27 Madang-Lae-Wau	No. 28 Wewak-Madang-Mt. Hagen



Corner Madang - Lae - Wau map.

This map was printed on balloon cloth while most of the other AAF cloth maps were printed on acetate rayon. Interesting features on the map include the location of emergency landing airstrips and notes regarding the size of boats that can navigate some of the rivers .

The cloth maps include the usual typographic features along with offshore information about shoals, reefs and rocks. The maps contain some elevation data but do not include contour lines. The maps were compiled in the Mercator projection, and compilation and drafting of each map cost approximately \$1,500 and reproduction cost approximately 60 cents per map.

SWPA records indicate that the following silk maps were obtained from the RAAF.

RAAF Silk Escape Maps Produced for MIS-X

Banda Sea, East Borneo, South Borneo, Celebes, Halmahera, Luzon, Manila, Mindanao, Central New Guinea, Eastern New Guinea, Western New Guinea, Solomon Islands.

Escape-maps.com.



The brass plate on the above Escape Map of Halmahera reads "Printed for the RAAF 18th Squadron, NEI, WW11." The framed map is on the wall of the neighbour of a friend whose father served in the RAAF in what was then the Dutch East Indies during World War 11.

An email from Wewak

Carol Kovinge had made an enquiry through our website about her father T/Sgt Henry Kovinge who served in D Coy PNGVR Wewak and the PNGVR University Platoon. In answer to receiving some information she replied.

"Thank you for the information. I have received it and read through it is great. My father passed away I am the eldest daughter still holding his PNGVR Badge and photos of him at Jungle Training Centre at Canungra in uniform with a officer. He used to tell stories of PNGVR. I am living today in my beautiful home Wewak where the PNGVR hall is still standing today, now the East Sepik Provincial Government Headquarters in Wewak District.

I read that, by law, you have to turn on your headlights when it's raining in Sweden. How the hell am I supposed to know if it's raining in Sweden? ❤️

YOU KNOW YOU'RE OLD WHEN YOUR KNEES GIVE YOU A MORE ACCURATE WEATHER FORECAST THAN THE GUY ON THE TV.

Contract to replace some Bushmasters sent to Ukraine

Thales Australia has welcomed the announcement today by Minister for Defence Industry Pat Conroy of a \$160m contract to build new Bushmaster Protected Vehicles for the Australian Army.

Thales Australia CEO Jeff Connolly said the manufacture of new Bushmasters would directly support jobs at the Bendigo facility.

"This is a strategic industrial capability that is vital for the Australian Defence Force," Mr Connolly said. "Today's con-

tract signing is an important expression of support from the government, not just for the Bushmaster vehicle, but also for the manufacturing capability and Australian supply chain that produces and sustains the vehicles.

"Work will begin immediately on the new vehicles, with a mix of troop-carrying vehicles and command vehicles to be manufactured over the next 18 months.

"More than 1200 Bushmasters have already been manufactured at our Bendigo facility and, as well as proving to be a life-saving vehicle for the Australian Army in operations in the Middle East, they have been exported to eight nations including the Netherlands, UK, Fiji, Jamaica, New Zealand, Japan and Indonesia.

"Bushmasters gifted to Ukraine by the Australian government are currently in service in Ukraine and providing a vital capability to the Ukrainian Armed Forces as they fight the Russian invasion.

"In addition to our direct employment on site in Bendigo, the manufacture of protected vehicles supports around 360 jobs in our Australian supply chain with many suppliers across regional areas of Victoria and New South Wales."

Contact Newsletter 195.



The Governor of New South Wales Lord Wakehurst inspecting B Company, 2 New Guinea Infantry Battalion, near Nadzab, New Guinea on 26 March 1945. He is accompanied by the unit's commanding officer, Captain A I Gay.



Simbu lass at 26th University of Goroka graduation ceremony. The University of Goroka is the third largest of the six Universities in PNG and has over 4,000 students.

Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport

"It is not how you start the race that determines success, but how you finish it."



Prime Minister James Marape made this opening statement when delivering his speech at the grand opening of the Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport in Lae, Morobe Province, yesterday afternoon.

Nadzab, in the Wampar LLG of Huon Gulf district, in Morobe Province, was bustling as early as 6am, with sponsors, singing groups, contractors and volunteers getting ready for the grand opening of the K692 million Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport.

The Nadzab Airport Redevelopment Project is jointly funded by the Japanese Overseas Development concessional loan and the Government of Papua New Guinea through budgetary allocation.

Marape said the concept of a redeveloped Nadzab was put together in 2005, then he was elected into Parliament in 2007, where he held the portfolio of vice-minister for transport and civil aviation.

"Mr Joe Kintau was there as the managing director for the National Airports Corporation, Mr Roy Mumu was there as secretary for transport - these were all those moments in which the first concept of Nadzab was put in place many, many years later. In fact, over 15 years later, we are sitting at the cusp of opening a brand new, world-class facility.

"This is an airport befitting the 70 percent of this country's economy carried out of Lae, carried through the Highlands Highway infrastructure, carried through the Momase infrastructures and the ocean of the New Guinea Islands that fits into Lae; you carry this country's economy not by 20, 30, 40 percent but close to 70 percent.

"You deserve this and even better, I just want to thank the taxpayers, the business community here in Morobe, the business community in Madang, Ramu Valley, Markham Valley and right up into the highlands. This your facility."

PM Marape said Nadzab will be PNG's second international gateway, with the construction of a new passenger terminal building, fire station, the widening and strengthening of existing runway, taxiways, apron and road to accept larger aircraft, such as Boeing's wide-body B777-200.



The Nadzab Airport Redevelopment Project (NARP) was initiated in 2015 through the Japan International Cooperation Agency's Official Development Assistance Loan for K692 million. With today's exchange rate,

the amount would be K750 million.

Marape gave the assurance that his government is not reckless, adding, 'you have to borrow to grow the economy.

"It has a 10-year grace period, meaning you don't repay when you secure the loan," he explained. "This loan was secured in 2015. You don't repay until after 10 years. It has a .01 percent interest payment, and you'll repay it for 40 years.

"I want to announce that our government put in counterpart funding to this project close to the tune of - we already paid K29 million - we have K84 million yet to go."

The Prime Minister then unveiled a plaque signalling friendship and cooperation between Japan and PNG, then a Japanese 'sake barrel ceremony, or 'kagami-biraki', was conducted, representing an opening to harmony and good fortune.

Loop Author. 3 Oct 2023.

2023 Association AGM

29 members and friends attended the AGM at the Museum on Sat 22nd October. As always there were a number of unavoidable absences including our Patron Maj Gen Professor John Pearn who was unable to make it—the first AGM Gen Pearn has missed in many years.

Reports were tabled by President Phil Ainsworth, Treasurer Kieran Nelson, Museum Curator and Welfare Officer Paul Brown. The President's and Treasurer's reports are attached.

It was no great surprise when the current Committee members, Patron, Welfare Officer, Chaplain, Solicitor and Auditors were all re-elected and appointed unopposed. It would be nice to see a few more hands raised at the next AGM for positions on the Committee.

Three people were awarded the Patron's Medal:-

- Craig Ray (Honorary Solicitor) - for his work in obtaining a new lease of the Museum for the Association and his willingness to assist the Association at any time.
- Robin and Steve Milner for their excellent maintenance of the precinct and the fact that they pay close attention to the presentation and surrounds of our Museum.

One resolution was passed at the AGM which will eventually have a major effect on the Association :-

"Recognising the present precarious nature of the ongoing management of our Military Museum and the need to ensure its continuity for the benefit of our members and the community, the management committee is authorised to seek and engage an appropriate kindred organisation to assume the ongoing management of the Museum and, when appropriate, to transfer the leased premises and contents to it. This includes the preparation of suitable documents to ensure the transition of the contents and premises are made to secure the benefits and rights to all parties, including those who have loaned items to the Museum. This authorises the committee to complete these arrangements in a timely and appropriate manner without further recourse to the members."

The Association Committee takes on this responsibility with the determination that any partnership entered into will preserve the integrity of the Museum with its NGVR/PNGVR history and theme.

After the meeting concluded the Museum was open until 12 noon when a luncheon to remember the 50 year disbandment of the PNGVR was held in the Everyman's Hut.

The President's Report and Treasurer's Report are included in the attachments to HTT.



At the AGM. Above—L-R. Kieran Nelson, Bob Collins, Phil Ainsworth, Ron MacDonald, Colin Gould MBE.

Below. L-R. Elaine Glover, Alex Garlin(NSAAQ) Andrea Williams (standing) Kerry Glover, Jessica Harrington, Doug Ng, Gerry McGrade, Peter Rogers DFC, Leigh Eastwood, Mal Zimmerman.

50th Anniversary Luncheon of the disbandment of PNGVR

Following the Association AGM and an hour to view the museum exhibits, 46 people attended a lunch at the Everyman's Hut in the Museum Precinct at Wacol. to remember the 50th Anniversary of the disbandment of PNGVR in 1973.

Association President Phil Ainsworth welcomed all and gave a short address on the formation and history of the PNGVR.

Then, on behalf of the Patron, Phil presented Robin and Steve Milner With the Patron's medal for their excellent maintenance of the Museum precinct and their assistance to and co-operation with our Association whenever we are in the precinct. They ensure our Museum building is well looked after and well presented.

Lunch was served and between the main course and sweets a number of ex PNGVR members gave a short address to the assembled on their experiences in PNGVR.

- Peter Rogers DFC—Integration
- Colin Gould MBE—Father and Son in the PNGVR.
- Paul Brown—How he came to join the PNGVR
- Mike Griffin—The University Platoon
- Bob Collins—Co-operation between PNGVR and the civilian population, Police, Cadets and Calaboose.
- Glen O'Brien—a number of amusing incidents in his time with PNGVR.
- Phil Ainsworth—Serious incidents during training.

Then it was on to coffee and camaraderie until, slowly everyone drifted off, having had a great get together once again.

Once again the caterers provided an excellent meal.

Our thanks go to the National Servicemen's Association for the use of the Everyman's hut on the day and for their assistance with food and drink.



After the AGM. Chaplain Ron MacDonald, Mal Zimmerman and Peter Rogers (the younger)



Helen Nixon, Elaine & Kerry Glover, Leigh Eastwood.



Congratulations to Paul Brown, Colin Gould MBE, Kieran Nelson and other Committee members for their organisation of the lunch and their efforts in making sure the day ran smoothly.



Andrea Williams (PNGAA), Steve Ford (President Forest Lake RSL Sub Branch), Phil Ainsworth, Sharon Ford, Alex Garlin (NSAAQ).



Robin and Steve Milner with Phil Ainsworth after the presentation of the Patron's Medal.



Jessica Harrington, Chaplain Ron MacDonald and Peter Rogers (the younger)

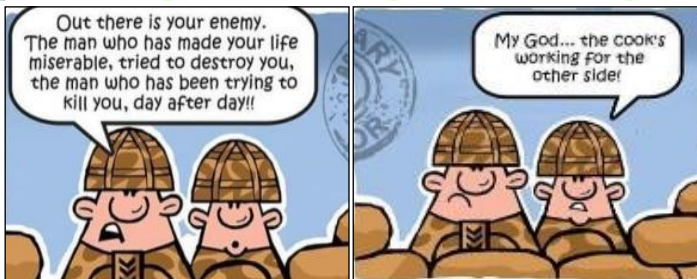


L. Paul Brown giving address on "How I came to join the PNGVR"

R. Fran and Doug Ng.

Below and top R. The Group at the Luncheon.





NATIONAL MEDALS
Pty Ltd



REPLICA MEDALS OR MOUNTING OF MEDALS

A reliable source for medal work is National Medals, natmedals@bigpond.com, Ph 07 3871 0600 Ask for Greg Faux, mobile 0419 196 172. Located at 13/200 Moggill Road, Taringa, Brisbane, 4066

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY AND HEALTHY YEAR IN 2024
FROM PATRON MAJ GEN JOHN PEARN AO RFD
PRESIDENT PHIL AINSWORTH
AND YOUR ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE**

**New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and Papua New Guinea
Volunteer Rifles Ex Members Association Inc,**

Includes former members of the PIR, PIB and NGIB.

For correspondence contact Secretary, Colin Gould, email pngvr@optusnet.com.au, phone 0424 562 030 (The Secretary, P O Box 885, Park Ridge, Qld, 4125)

For Military Museum enquires contact Paul Brown email paulbrown475@gmail.com. Phone 0402 644 181 or Colin Gould email pngvr@optusnet.com.au, phone 0424 562 030

(NGVR/PNGVR Military Museum, 1007 Boundary Road, Wacol, Qld, 4076)

Membership fee payments to Treasurer, Kieran Nelson email kierannelson@bigpond.com Phone 0412 236 013

(NGVR & PNGVR Ex-members Association : BSB: 064006 - A/C: 10001126)

Website Master: Trevor Connell email trevor.connell@internode.on.net, phone 0409 690 590

www.pngvr.weebly.com (all back copies of HTT may be obtained from our website)

Facebook Master: Kieran Nelson, email kierannelson@bigpond.com, phone 0412 236 013

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ngvrandonpngvrilitarymuseum/>

Harim Tok Tok Editor: Bob Collins, email bob-collins@bigpond.com, phone 0413 831 397

President: Email p.ainsworth@kingco.com.au to get on members electronic distribution including Harim Tok Tok (you will receive it in colour, earlier and can adjust the print size to suit)

Chaplain. Rev Ron MacDonald. Phone 0407 008 624 email Cheryl.ron@gmail.com

NGVR/PNGVR service recollections are copyright.



Jesus is the reason for the season

Luke 2:1-20 tells us the story of God's love personified; how even though He was born in a lowly stable, and had an animal feeding trough for His bed, He was visited by royalty from other countries who acknowledged Jesus as the promised Messiah. What an amazing love story beginning at Christmas and sealing it 33 years later at what we celebrate as Easter.

My prayer for you is that you and your family will be safe this Christmas season and find time to rest and refresh yourselves from a very busy 2023.

I pray that God will reveal Himself to you in a special way this Christmas, and that He will show you something new about the Christmas story.

I choose this blessing for you, found in Numbers 6:24-26:

**"May the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."**

Rev Ron MacDonald, Chaplain.

The Association would like to thank KING & Co Property Consultants for its continuing support, including the printing of this edition, together with the past 84 issues of Harim Tok Tok. Its contribution is much appreciated.

FUNCTION DATES

Sat 2 Dec. Sat 3 Feb.

Museum open. 10am—1pm.

As usual the Museum will not be open in January as it has shown over past years that visitors do not come during the school holidays.

Thanks to the enthusiastic group of Museum volunteers there are always new exhibits on display.

Sat 9 Dec. Sat 10 Feb.

10am. Executive Committee meeting. Members always welcome. BYO lunch.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR NGVR & PNGVR EX-MEMBERS ASSOCIATION'S 2023 AGM, 21 OCTOBER 2023

Members, friends and guests, I have the honour and pleasure of presenting my eighteenth annual report to the NGVR & PNGVR Ex-members Association Inc.

There were several highlights for the past year:

The finding of the Montevideo Maru in April 2023 in the Philippines' Sea at 4200m. NGVR lost at least 36 of its members when the ship was sunk by friendly fire on 1 July 1942, 81 years ago. This was a project the Association has been closely involved since 2008 and the successful find has brought much comfort to the relatives and friends of those lost.

The grant of a lease by NSAAQ over the museum premises to the association.

Today's 50th Anniversary of PNGVR's disbandment luncheon.

These will be discussed further in the report.

The Association remains well managed and I believe members and friends were well served during the past year, because of our long serving, able office bearers and committee members. Our aging memberships remains reasonably stable, losing a few to death or debilitating illness and occasionally adding a new ex-PNGVR soldier as member.

Since our 2022 AGM, to my knowledge, seven members and friends have died. Those are Joan Mundy (Sept 22), Bernice Cosgrove (Oct 22), Donald James Hook (Dec 22), Michael Raasch (Feb 23), Bill Bickerton and Bruce Johnson (Aug 23) and Pamela Wright (Sept 23). On a brighter note, 2 members have received awards for their community service: Don Lowie OAM and Stan Carswell MBE, both living in north Queensland. Stan was nominated 'Volunteer of the Year' by Cairns RSL.

Our activities during the past year include:

- 1 Anzac Day March and Reunion
- 2 1st July Montevideo Maru 81st Anniversary Memorial Service
- 3 publication and distribution of 6 issues of Harim Tok Tok
- 4 maintenance of our web site www.pngvr.weebly.com and face book
- 5 maintaining and operating our Museum with openings to the public on the first Saturday of each month and with group tours
- 6 holding 6 management committee meetings
- 7 attendance at numerous kindred organisations' events and commemorative services, and
- 8 maintaining contact with our older and frailer members and friends.

Most if not all activities were reported in Harim Tok Tok, our face book and web site - please keep yourself informed by regularly viewing these media.

Our newsletter Harim Tok Tok is our main means of communicating with our wide-flung membership, and it continues to grow in its popularity. I would like to acknowledge Editor Bob Collins contribution by producing 84 issues over the past 14 years, thank you Bob for your passion and dedication.

I also acknowledge and thank our treasurer, Kieran Nelson, who also administers our face book with timely postings of information and notifications, and Canberra based member Trevor Connell who efficiently maintains our web site www.pngvr.weebly.com.

Our Museum curator's Paul Brown, Colin Gould and Kieran Nelson with assistance from Jessica Harrington and Sylvia McNeilly continue to maintain the Museum to a high standard. We are indebted to these few for their ongoing devoted work to the Museum, which has become a focus for many of our activities. The Association's legacy to the community will be our military museum which will ensure the history of our two unique units and the enduring relationship between Australia and PNG are not forgotten.

And I thank Colin Gould and Paul Brown for arranging today's AGM and luncheon.

I thank Alex Garlin and his NSAAQ team for their ongoing assistance to our Association. The maintenance of the Military Precinct is a credit to them.

Our Association has been granted a lease by NSAAQ. The most pressing issue for the Museum is to seek an appropriate organisation which is willing and capable of assuming the responsibility for and the running of it.

Today the Committee will be asking the Association members to pass a motion which will allow the committee to negotiate succession for the Museum on reasonable terms to all parties. I particularly thank our Honorary Solicitor Craig Ray for his assistance in negotiating the lease and his continuing assistance in helping us to negotiate a successful succession for the Museum.

Despite our limited funding opportunities, our present financial position is sound with thanks to Treasurer and Grants Officer Kieran Nelson. Presently we are awaiting the results of the recent round of Gaming Grants for a grant to fund solar panels for the Museum. Our financial position will come under increasing pressure due to the loss of Bunnings Sausage Sizzle revenue following the 2022 floods (nearly 2 years ago now), and increased costs associated with the running of the Museum.



Your 2023-24 management committee will need to continue addressing this issue, and support from members with donations and bequests is appreciated.

A late news item is that two representatives of our NGVR soldiers lost on the Montevideo Maru will be present at a late November 2023 special dinner, in Canberra, to mark the finding of the wreck of the Montevideo Maru. These are Sue Vail whose father was NGVR Sgt Charles Ian Maclean NG 4013 and myself, President of NGVR & PNGVR Association.. Another similar type of dinner will be held on 2 November in Oslo, Norway with the King of Norway and relatives of 24 Norwegian merchant sailors from the Herstein who were lost on the Montevideo Maru present. Hopefully these functions will make the Montevideo Maru tragedy more widely known.

On behalf of our Members, I thank the outgoing committee members. We are always appreciative of our Honorary Chaplain Ron McDonald and Honorary Solicitor Craig Ray who are always available when needed. Our Patron Major General John Pearn graciously continues to provide engaged support and encouragement to us, thank you Sir.

As an Association, we continue to meet and exceed our stated objectives in our constitution and the expectations of our community.

I wish our incoming office bearers and committee members every success in 2023-24, and I thank members and friends of the association for their continuing support.

Phillip Ainsworth

WELCOMING ADDRESS 50TH ANNIVERSARY DISBANDMENT OF PNGVR.

I welcome you to our luncheon to acknowledge the 50th Anniversary of the disbandment of PNGVR.

A special welcome to our esteemed guests:

- Alex Garlin, President of NSAAQ
- Steve Ford, President of West Lakes RSL Sub-branch, and
- Andrea Williams, Acting President of PNGAA

It is appreciated that many of you have travelled some way to be here, thank you.

- PNGVR was the successor to the WW2 NGVR militia battalion.
- PNGVR was the only Australian post WW2 militia (C M F) battalion which was:

Formed, served and disbanded overseas

Never served in Australia

Always on Australia's Order of Battle

Always commanded by a Regular Army Officer

Always a widely dispersed unit with Companies in Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul and Goroka and platoons in Bulolo/Wau, Samarai, Madang, Wewak, Banz and the University of PNG.

From 1964 began enlisting Papua New Guineans (non- Australian)

From 1964 was a fully-integrated unit comprising Australian and non- Australians in all ranks.

Just as NGVR provided the initial defence of Australia, PNGVR role's was similar.

- It assisted to re-establish the Pacific Island Regiment and provide initial aid to Popenetta after the
- Mt Lamington eruption In 1951 when over 3000 people were killed including 31 Europeans..

As PNG's development process increased, the battalion's role was expanded

and Papuan New Guineans were welcomed enlistments into the PNGVR military community.

The battalion played an important role during the anxious time the governing of West Papua was transferred to Indonesia from the Dutch in the late 1960's.

Another anxious time was in the Gazelle Peninsula when the District Commissioner was killed over land issues.

As the country rapidly moved towards its own independence, there was no need for an Australian CMF unit in PNG and the unit was disbanded.

Many of the expatriate Australians remained in PNG after Independence in 1975 and further assisted the country in its development.

The bonding created by the unique shared experiences within PNGVR remains strong today, 50 years after it's disbandment,



and is exemplified whenever a group of former PNGVR solders meet.

We can be proud of the legacy created in PNGVR which continues in our Association today.

Please enjoy your lunch.

Phillip Ainsworth

TREASURER'S REPORT 30 JUNE 2023

Our association entered this financial year on 1 July 2022 as we seemed to be emerging from the Covid Pandemic with most of the restrictions now lifted and the prospects of life returning to normal.

We are still dealing the impacts of the severe flooding last year with Bunnings Oxley, which had become a major source of our funding, being closed indefinitely due to flood damage and no viable alternative becoming available. Despite this setback we ended the year in a strong position due to a generous donation of \$5,000 from a deceased estate which was very much appreciated.

Our main source of income remains our Annual Membership Fees which need to be paid when due on 1 July each year to cover the cost of our insurance public liability and museum contents policies amounting to \$1,481.28 and post, printing and stationary amounting to \$2,735.15 which includes the mailing of our Harim Tok Tok journal which is a very important communication tool for our association. A new lease from NSAAQ was negotiated and signed in December 2022 which increased our rental to \$1200 per year and we have an ongoing responsibility to have our financial records audited at the cost of \$450 this year. All of which place a significant burden on our finances. We appreciate the support of King and Co Property Consultants for printing in this regard.

NGVR PNGVR EX MEMBERS ASSOCIATION INC		
Profit & Loss		
July 2022 through June 2023		
	<u>Jul 22 - Jun 23</u>	<u>Jul 21 - Jun 22</u>
Income		
Annual Fees	3,075.00	1,990.00
Book Sales	390.00	150.00
Donations		
General	5,998.21	11,430.03
Total Donations	5,998.21	11,430.03
Functions Profit	0.00	4,926.80
Grants	0.00	3,799.00
Museum Income	1,678.00	649.70
Q Store Sales	153.50	130.00
Sales	5.00	20.00
Total Income	11,299.71	23,095.53
Expense		
Audit Fee	450.00	400.00
Bank Charges	12.38	16.83
Book Purchases	0.00	37.74
Depreciation	0.00	4,496.99
Events	701.55	3,213.90
Fees	128.60	123.60
Goods Donated	852.09	0.00
Insurance	1,481.28	1,481.28
Internet	211.00	312.57
Light and Power	1,089.26	797.43
Museum Leasing	600.00	0.00
PO Box Rental	224.00	211.00
Post, Printing and Stationery	2,075.57	2,735.15
Q Store Purchases	0.00	50.00
Repairs and Maintenance	535.40	119.56
Security	483.36	787.86
Water & Sewerage	330.39	0.00
Total Expense	9,174.88	14,783.91
Net Income	2,124.83	8,311.62



Unfortunately, our financial membership has been in decline for several years now due to deceased and lapsed members resulting in the subsequent loss of membership income, so any assistance members can provide by receiving all communications by email to cut down on postage would be appreciated.

To offset the electricity expenses charged to us by NSAAQ, we have applied for a grant from Gambling Community Benefit Fund which closed on 30 June 2023 to install solar panels on our roof but to date we have not had a decision handed down to us.

Kieran Nelson

Ed. Note. *If it had not been for one off donations of \$10,000 in 2021/22 and \$5,000 in 2022/23 the Association would have been in negative cash flow of \$4,689 for 2021/22 and \$2,876 for 2022/23. The budget for 2023/24 projects a net loss of \$4,958. In a few words "We will soon be running on empty".*

Photos from the Anniversary Luncheon



Mal Zimmerman saying Grace In Pidgin

Peter Rogers DFC Integration in PNGVR

Bob Collins Co-operation with civilian population

Mike Griffin The University Platoon PNGVR.



L. Sara Weight, Ainslie Ng, Wendi Ng. These ladies were a great assistance in handing around nibbles and clearing tables etc.



Above. Mal & Marie Zimmerman, Joyce McGrade.

Below. Gerry McGrade, Lucy Junker. Lucy is a strong supporter of our Association.



R. Paul Brown, Frank Kummer, Alex Kummer, background Mike Griffin Peter Rogers (the younger)

