

## **FRANK HOLLAND. MBE.**

Frank was born the 5<sup>th</sup> of 6 sons in England on 15 oct 1907.

He left school aged 14 and worked in his brother's grocery shop.

In 1924, aged 16, with his father's consent, emigrated to Australia under the empire settlement scheme. He obtained a job on a farm near Atherton where he had a broad education into farming, timber cutting and animal husbandry. he seemed to be a restless soul and at various times worked on farms, doing timber cutting. droving in the northern territory, shooting brumbies and driving bullock teams.

He married Mabel Clark-Kennedy at Malanda in 1938 and immediately sailed on the "*Montoro*" to Rabaul. New Guinea, where he took a position with pacific timbers at *Put Put*, on the south coast, in charge of a labour line.

Their son, John, was born in 1939 and daughter, Anne, in 1941. by this time Frank was at *Pondo* on the north coast of New Britain.

In December 1941 Mabel and the children were evacuated from new guinea. Frank stayed at *Pondo*.

### **Journey across New Britain**

In mid February 1942 the Japanese made a short visit to *Pondo* then left. shortly after Keith McCarthy, assistant district officer, called at *Pondo* and asked Frank to cross New Britain to the south coast and bring back any survivors he found from those retreating down the south coast from Rabaul. For this task Frank was given 6 armed police boys and a number of carriers.

The trip from north coast to south coast and back involved travelling through country inhabited by a fierce tribe of natives called the 'Mokolkol' who were in the habit of ambushing and killing anyone travelling through their territory. Frank's group were attacked on their journey and forced to kill two of the attackers.

Frank came back to the north coast with 23 men who had escaped from Rabaul, and were in poor condition. two of them were survivors of the *toll* massacre, A.L. Robinson and Bill Collins who had been bayoneted a number of times.

After arriving on the north coast the party then made their way in stages down the north coast, arriving eventually at the *Witu* islands from where 214 escapees left on the *Lakatoi* on 21<sup>st</sup> march, arriving Cairns 28<sup>th</sup> march 1942.

Frank had a short reunion with his family and then was drafted into a special unit.

### **Z Special Unit**

Frank was appointed a Lieutenant and given the number vx102689. he carried out training at Wilsons Promontory and Flinders Naval Base.

His first mission was to Timor on 17 Nov 1942 where he arrived on the northern coast with 100 rifles and some Bren Guns to arm the locals. His party's job was to observe the Japanese landings along a section of the north coast of Timor.

This was part of a larger operation called *lizard* which involved different parties carrying out various duties, one of which was getting vital rubber supplies out of Timor.

As part of their duties Frank's party also trained local Timorese with the weapons they had brought with them for guerilla strikes on the Japanese.

Frank's party were responsible for a number of air strikes on Japanese positions they had reported but, owing to Japanese continually seeking out their party they were forced to keep on the move. At times they were supplied by air drops, which included vital stores such as wireless sets, parts and batteries.

They also assisted in the evacuation of parties of Timorese and other nationality civilians by arranging the parties to be present at various places in time to board the evacuation ships.

On 18 Feb 1943 Frank's party of 28 was evacuated on the US submarine *Gudgeon* having been harassed by Japanese parties on their journey across Timor and at one stage surrounded by Japanese parties searching for them. They left their supplies and wireless with another party.

### **Back in Australia**

Frank arrived in Fremantle and travelled by train to Melbourne. He was given a short leave, used as a courier in Australia for a while, then sent to a small place called *Berri Springs* near Darwin to train Timorese in guerilla warfare. He was trained as a parachutist in June 1943 at Richmond air base, Sydney.

He then carried out further commando and espionage training at Fraser Island before returning to his training duties near Darwin.

### **Borneo**

Frank arrived in Borneo by ship on 22 Aug 1945 and flew to Labuan where he was part of an operation *Semut 1*.

Over the coming days he patrolled into the jungle of North Borneo accepting the surrender of a number of Japanese parties on the way and having them escorted back to the Australian army units.

This sounds a simple operation but the Japanese were armed and Frank had to make sure each party was willing to surrender peacefully. At one stage he was fired on by a party of Japanese found near a river.

Often they stayed for a night in a Dayak village and Frank had great admiration for the Dayaks who were fierce warriors and headhunters.

Their first patrol resulted in the surrender of 28 Japanese in four separate groups. Their second patrol was sent out to find a group of 340 Japanese who had refused to surrender but the group had moved out of the area of their patrol and later surrendered to another party.

Frank was taken out of the jungle from their second patrol on a stretcher. The past 3 years in tropical jungle had taken its toll and he had scrub typhus. He was evacuated from Borneo on the hospital ship *HMAS Wanganella*.

He spent Christmas 1945 on the hospital ship. Christmas 1944 had been spent in Timor and Christmas 1941 in the jungles of new guinea.

### **Award of the MBE.**

In June 1946 frank was awarded the MBE (civil division) "for brave conduct and meritorious and courageous service in assisting a party who had escaped from New Britain in march 1942."

### **Post War**

Frank was discharged on 17 march 1946. for a short time he worked on tin dredges outside Mt Garnet but returned to new guinea in august 1946 and went into business with Jack Chipper and Pat Roberts rebuilding Rabaul. Mabel and the children arrived back in Rabaul at the end of the year.

When the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR) was formed in 1951 Frank was asked to take over B company in Rabaul.

Frank was predominately employed in the harvesting of timber to cover construction caused by war damages and moved several times as stands of timber were cut out. Eventually he ended up at the Warangoi River. Other jobs included having an earth works.

In 1963 Frank and Mabel left new guinea to take over an orchard at Howard which had been run by their son John. He sold the orchard in 1973 and he and Mabel moved to Hervey Bay.

One memorable moment occurred in 1975 when Frank had a reunion with 4 of the nuns he had helped evacuate from Timor - after they had been evacuated from Timor for the second time.

He was very involved with various groups such as 9RQR, Z Special Unit, restoration of the *Krait* etc., and in 1985 was in one of the leading jeeps in Sydney for the ANZAC day parade when z special unit led the parade.

in 1994, due to franks ailing health they moved to Brisbane to be close to family.

Frank Holland MBE passed away on 17 March 1998, 3 months short of his 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. he was given an RSL funeral by 50 members of the PNGVR Association, as he had the honour of being the first member to have been granted life membership of the association.

Behind his humble background , restlessness and sense of adventure Frank proved his steadfastness, loyalty strength of character many times over through his deeds prior, during and after the war . His humbleness probably contributed to his lack of recognition

