



HARIM TOK TOK VOLUME 48 SEPTEMBER 2006: VISIT TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In July 2006 three members of the Executive, Phillip Ainsworth, Co Gould and Bruce Crawford flew to PNG where they were joined by John Mudge.

The purpose of the visit was to:

1. Present 32 *Australian Service Medals 1945-1975 with PNG Clasp* to former PNG National members of PNGVR-17 in Mt Hagen; 5 in Port Moresby and 10 in other parts of the country including Madang, Wewak and Kavieng, by means to be established in Port Moresby.
2. Undertake discussions towards establishing ex Member Associations in PNG
3. Canvass whether there is sufficient ex-PIR support in PNG for our Association to assume Australian PIR responsibilities
4. Assess whether another viable war time tourism, similar to the existing Kokoda Track, may be established, eg the Black Cat or Bulldog tracks.
5. Commence preliminary planning for a proposed 2007 PNG tour for a larger contingent of Association members and friends/partners
6. To renew and strengthen business and social ties with various government and community leaders forged during previous visits.

Summary:

Saturday 15 July: Col & Bruce flew to Port Moresby and were met by John who kindly provided accommodation and transport in Port Moresby.

Sunday 16 July: Whilst John attended to personal business, Col and Bruce attended a Service at St Martins Anglican Church, Boroko. Bruce presented the Church with a gift box of Bibles from Australia for Bomana Jail and the Milne Bay Province. Col and Bruce also met well known local identity and leading Lawyer, Mrs Winifred Kamit, CBE (formally of the PNG Ombudsman Commission; Public Services Commissioner and wife of the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Mr Wilson Kamit, CBE.) Incidentally, Col was Secretary of the Ombudsman Commission and worked for many years with Mrs Kamit who was the Senior Investigation Officer for the Ombudsman Commission. The Church members were reminded of our Association's donation of an Organ to the Church in the recent past.

Monday 17 July: Col and Bruce visited the office of the Post Courier at Konedobu and spoke at length about our visit with Chief of Staff, Goreethy Kenneth and reporter, Estella Cheung. Photos of the ASM medals were taken, and, along with editorial, appeared in the Tuesday 18 July issue of the Post Courier.

Bruce later delivered a letter of thanks to the Post Courier for their support.

Tuesday 18 July: John, Col and Bruce paid a courtesy call on the Deputy High Commissioner, Ms Ann Harrap, at the Australian High Commission at Waigani. (His Excellency Michael Potts, the High Commissioner was overseas at the time) We were well received by Ms Harrap and briefed her on the purpose of our visit and the pending presentation of 32 Australian Service Medals in Port Moresby and Mt Hagen on the 23 July-PNG Remembrance Day.

During the day and evening we dined with a number of local businessmen and friends.

Wednesday 19 July: President Phillip Ainsworth flew to Port Moresby and met up with John, Col and Bruce. John provided accommodation for the group. This was followed by an interesting tour of Port Moresby and a planning meeting for the rest of our stay in PNG.

For the time B4 members, do you remember the old road that ran between Koki Market and Ela Beach-one road went up across the hill and down into Koki whilst the other road ran along the water front from Koki to Ela Beach, both being "one way only" Well the road along the waters edge between Koki Market and Ela Beach is now a two way, 4 lane divided sealed road. It is approx half way along this road that a new Memorial Park has been constructed to commemorate those who paid the supreme sacrifice during WW 2.



Thursday 20 July: Visits were made by our group of 4 to-Naval Captain Ur Tom, Deputy Commander of the PNG Defence Force (Commodore Peter Ilau, CBE was not available as he was meeting with the Prime Minister) Incidentally Captain Tom has a connection to Brisbane-he once served part of his Naval service on the HMAS Diamantina, which is laid up at the Maritime Museum in Brisbane. Then, Kingsbury Club to meet with Tom Ward Jr. Minister for Health, Sir Peter Barter, Kt. OBE. MP, who undertook to present 2 x ASM's to recipients in Madang, on Remembrance Day. We were well received by Sir Peter and we briefed him on the purpose of our visit. As we prepared to leave, Sir Peter presented Phil, John and Bruce with the 30th Anniversary Medal. (Col had earlier received this award from the PNG Consul General in Brisbane.)

Colonel Rauka Eric Ani, CBE., Director of the National Disaster Centre. Colonel Ani kindly offered his support to any ex PNGVR members Association established in Port Moresby. At the Police Officers Club at Konedobu, we met with Tim Ward, Jr and Doug Kelson, CEO of St John Ambulance ,Service, PNG. Doug kindly shared his wealth of local knowledge by introducing us to Port Moresby's night life via St John HQ and St John Social Club near Gerehu and the Port Moresby Country Club (Old Chinese Club) in Waigani. The quality and decor of Moresby's new social clubs and up market eating establishments has to be seen to, be believed.

Friday 21 July: Phil and Bruce visited the Papua New Guinea Tourism Authority and spoke at length to Heni Dembis and Jim Yomapisi about alternate war time tourist walks. Heni, who was previously with the Morobe Province Tourism body, had already walked the Black Cat three times and kindly gave us a copy of his Black Cat Track report. They were very enthusiastic and sought our Association's assistance in promoting this walk.

John, Colin and Bruce also visited the National Broadcasting Commission HQ office at Boroko. Managing Director Mr Joseph N Ealedona made us welcome. Mr Ealedona is the son of former 12 Platoon D Coy Madang member, W02 Malea Ealedona, who now lives of Misima Island. We presented the ASM to Joseph who will, in turn, organise a family presentation to Malea on Misima Island on Independence Day, 16 September. Also present was Journalist Denyse Ray.

Later in the day we met up with Police Commissioner, Sam Inguba, CBE. QPM., who is an Honorary member of our Association, and Assistant Commissioner Papuan Region, Tony Wagambie, QPM, DPS. -(Tony is an ex Member of 12 PI D Coy Madang). We also met Laurence Newell, CBE of Warner Shand Lawyers. We dined at the Lamana Hotel in Waigani with Solicitor Goodwin Poole from O'Briens, Tim Ward Jr and Doug Kelson from St John's and completed the night at the Hotel's nightclub, the "Gold Club". As mentioned earlier, the high quality of dining and clubs is impressive.

Saturday 22 July: Col and Bruce departed for Mt Hagen whilst Phil was bough up to date on Port Moresby places and events.

Remembrance Day, Port Moresby, Sunday 23 July.
(Phillip Ainsworth & John Mudge)

Phil and John attended the Port Moresby Dawn Service at 5.00 am at 1 Royal Pacific Islands Regiment at Taurama Barracks and placed a wreath on the Memorial Cairn. After the ceremony they met with the Commander of the PNG Defence Force, Commodore Peter Ilau, CBE who introduced them to the gathering in the Officers Mess. Our President made a well received speech after which he)resented the ASM to Rfn Ken Rehder (Kainantu PI-who flew down from Manus Island); Cpl P Wenget (Sp Coy Pom) and Cpl Elias Sakbua (12 PI Madang) who flew down from Kavieng)

At 8.30 am Phil and John attended the official National Remembrance Day Service at the new Ela Beach Commemorative Monument (built 2005) as invited VIP guests. This impressive ceremony was attended His Excellency Sir Paulus Matane-Governor General, and the Deputy Prime Minister. Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was in Wewak.

As VIP's, we were given preference in the order for the ceremony over other visiting dignitaries including the Australian High Commission and other Diplomatic Corp members. About 8 other ex PNGVR members joined and march with us on parade. We met up afterwards and arranged for everyone to attend Monday's ceremony at Kanudi Bay outside of Port Moresby.

At 12 noon, Phil and John attended the VIP reception at the Ela Beach Hotel and met up with numerous dignitaries and Port Moresby identities, et al-Ms Ann Harrap, Deputy Australian High Commissioner; Commodore Peter Ilau, CBE; Mr Alan Oaisa, CMG of the PNG Events Council Secretariat ; Mr Peter Loko, City Manager of the National Capital District Commission ; Lawyer Camillus Narokobi ; Dr PJ Usurup of the Modlion Hospital, Madang;



Several members of Radio FM100 (through whom our President organized a radio interview for the following morning); Sir Brian Bell ; Ray Thurecht ; Lt Colonel Raymond Numa ; Ben Modie, CBE ;and many more.

As invited VIP's Phil and John attended the PNG Defence Force's evening flag lowering ceremony which ended the National Remembrance Day celebrations. We again met with Commodore Peter Ilau and other Defence Force Officers as well at the Australian and New Zealand Military Attaches. Phil and John completed the long day at the Royal Papua Yacht Club where they met Winnie Mac.

The following morning Phil was interviewed on Radio FM100 about our visit. We thank St John CEO, Doug Kelson, who greatly assisted us in Port Moresby.

Monday 24 July 2006, Kanudi Bay-Port Moresby, Remembrance Service.

This service was organized to remember those who lost their lives at sea during the Second World War, in particular the:

MV MacDhui - 18 June 1942 MV Namutu - 7 August 1942 MV Montevideo Maru 1 July 1942

During the ceremony President Phil laid a wreath on behalf of all NGVR and PNGVR members at the beachfront memorial cross. During these formalities Phil and John presented ASM's to Assistant Commissioner of Police, Tony Wagambie and the widow of the Late Sgt Nou. PNGVR was well represented with the following members marching and participating in the service"

Capt Phil Ainsworth (D, Sp and Admin Coys Port Moresby) ; Cpl John Mudge (Port Moresby); Sgt Col Gould (D Coy Madang) Rfn Bruce Crawford (Port Moresby); Cpl Tony Wagambie (D Coy Madang) ; Sgt Morea Gaigo (Port Moresby); Cpl Wenget (Sp Coy); Rfn Mike Bray; Rfn Kevau Raho; Rfn Bagu Gaigo; Rfn Cyril Nogah and Rfn P J Usuruo.

MT HAGEN VISIT

Saturday 22 July to Monday 24 July
(Col Gould & Bruce Crawford)

Col and Bruce traveled to Mt Hagen from Port Moresby on Saturday 22 July and were met by C Coy Secretary Patrick Amberye and three other members. When we arrived at the Highlander Hotel, we were surprised and impressed to be greeted by some 18 former members of the Hagen Platoon lined up "on parade " to welcome us. There-were also 4 ex PIR members to greet us as well.

With a comfortable 4 x 4 kindly provided and driven by Executive Committee member, Raphael Kona, we were quickly driven away down the Highlands Highway to Banz. The urgency of the Banz trip soon became apparent. Patrick, Raphael and members of C Coy wanted to take us on a visit to the house and coffee plantation of their former Company Commander, the Late Major Peter Harbeck, ED. We were driven right up to the front door and introduced to the current residents. Every one knew Peter Harbeck, and it is quite clear that some 32 years on, C Coy PNGVR ex Members still hold Peter in the highest regard.

On our return into Banz proper, we were driven to a local community venue where another surprise awaited Col and Bruce.. To the strong bellow of a former PNGVR Corporal " 8 PLATOON PNGVR ATTENTION! " we found 20 members of the Banz Platoon lined up on parade & who gave us a 'General Salute' . We were introduced to the members, local VIP's and family members of deceased members. This was followed by a substantial chicken and veggie lunch and some very cold "SP"

It was a very emotionally charged afternoon, and we all shared old PNGVR stories. I don't think there was a dry eye in the place, that afternoon in Banz. On our return to Banz Col was met by a small delegation of ex (Pre-Independence) PIR members who said that they have been trying for years to seek some redress in Australia and PNG for their service entitlements. Col was presented with a submission for safe hand delivery to Prime Minister Howard and His Excellency the Governor General in Canberra. The submission had been duly sent on to Canberra.

That night we dined with PNGVR Lt and former Patrol Officer, Ian Thompson, who works in the Highlands. Ian has kindly offered to assist the C Coy members, if required. Thanks Ian.



On Sunday 23 July, Remembrance Day, we joined some 100 former members of PNGVR, PIR, EX Servicemen and a small detachment of PNGDF Engineers to march through Mt Hagen to Provincial HQ.

We had the pleasure of meeting Provincial Governor and three times former Prime Minister, Paias Wingti, CMG., Col and Bruce escorted the Governor on the Parade.

When the parade reached Provincial HQ, Patrick, Raphael, Col and Bruce were presented with flower leis and welcomed by a group of traditionally dressed SING SING dancers.

Following a formal welcome and speeches, Governor Wingti presented 17 Australian Service Medals to PNGVR recipients from Mt Hagen and Banz. Col and Bruce personally pinned each medal on the recipients jackets.

In his formal address, the Governor stated that he was most pleased and impressed by the work put into organizing the Mt Hagen Remembrance Day function and medal presentation by PNGVR. The Governor went on to thank our Association for organizing the ASM for his citizens, and was looking forward to a growing relationship between the Western Highland Province and Papua New Guinea and our Association in Australia. Governor Wingti announced that his Government will fund the purchase of two air tickets so that two former PNGVR members in Mt Hagen can join us in Brisbane on ANZAC Day 2007. The Governor also announce that Remembrance Day 2007 is firmly on his Provincial Calendar, and, with the help of PNGVR in the Province and other community groups, Remembrance Day 2007 in Mt Hagen will be bigger and better than ever. Guests were invited to a pig and chicken lunch hosted by C Coy PNGVR. Colin and Bruce would like to thank Patrick Amberye, Raphael Kona, Committee Executives and members of C Coy for all their hard work and efforts in making our visit such a success.

CONCLUSION

The visit's achievements exceeded all expectations. 17 ASM medals were presented in Mt Hagen and 5 in Port Moresby. Of the remaining 10 medals, 8 were posted by Registered Mail to other PNG locations, and 2 were presented to Sir Peter Barter for presentation in Madang on Remembrance Day.

Initial contact with the PNG Tourism Authority showed an enthusiasm for another war time tourism walk and agreed that the BLACK CAT TRACK between Salamaua and Wau is probably most suitable. The track is part of our NGVR history. It is not only a wartime walk, but allows for a round trip by bus from Wau through Bulolo and the Watut and Markham Valleys to Lae. It would seem that the next step is to have the track mapped, arrange the war time write up and post war history, obtain villagers assistance in developing the track and appropriate rest houses for walkers etc and arrange for tour operators such as Fred Cook of Hilo Holdings in Lae to promote and start the tours. Naturally the National and Provincial Governments will need to be fully involved in this exercise. Whilst not part of NGVR history, another possible war time tour could be Shaggy Ridge on the Markham / Ramu divide.

The visit confirmed that any proposed group tour by our members to PNG should be organized around Remembrance Day 23 July 2007. This would allow our Australian members the opportunity to meet former comrades in the various centers around the country. It has been announced that the main Remembrance Day ceremony in 2007 will be held in Wewak. Whilst we look at costs etc for such a 12 1 14 day tour to visit PNGVR centers such as Port Moresby, Lae, Mt Hagen, Madang, Wewak and Rabaul etc your Committee would like to hear from any member who may be interested in such a PNG tour in July 2007. All comments and ideas welcome. We were extremely well received by all whom we met during our short sojourn, and strengthen the ties that were made over the past few years. We record our thanks to all those we met and who helped us.

We are indebted to our VP John Mudge for his valuable help, transportation, accommodation, advice and local introductions, and for ensuring our safe stay and return to Brisbane. Our thanks also to Patrick Amberye (above right) Raphael Kona (right) and the ex Members of C Coy PNGVR. Well done.

P Ainsworth C Gould B Crawford Footnote; All travel & accommodatic expenses for the PNG visit was mi wholly by each member concerned.