

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Welcome to your October Newsletter. Harim Tok Tok remains our main means of communicating with our members and friends. It is published and distributed digitally and hardcopy six times per year. Bob Collins is it's editor. The Association also uses Facebook (Kieran Nelson is it's administrator) and website www.pngvr.weebly.com (Trevor Connell, based in Canberra is its administrator). Please contact the Secretary, Colin Gould or Phil Ainsworth if you have changed your contact details. The contact details for Association office bearers are printed on the rear page of every issue of Harim Tok Tok.

Since October 2009, Bob Collins has edited 84 issues, each of 20 pages, numbers 58 to 142, of Harim Tok Tok, in the familiar format used here. King & Co Property Consultants (Managing Director Phil Ainsworth) has sponsored your newsletter since Bob became editor by providing final copy, printing, stapling and bulk delivery free of charge. Secretary Colin Gould prints labels and posts the printed copies while Phil Ainsworth digitally distributes it. The Association owes Bob, Colin and King & Co its gratitude for their 14 years service in delivering this service. In the Association's interest of economy, and you are able to receive your Harim Tok Tok by email but are presently receiving hardcopy, please advise Phil Ainsworth of your email address so you may receive your HTT on the same day of publication, at least 2 weeks before receiving a posted copy. The current issue, as well as all back issues of Harim Tok Tok, may be accessed through our website www.pngvr.weebly.com.

Since our last issue we have lost another



two members, Bill Bickerton and Bruce Johnson. Their stories may be read on pages 18 and 19. Bruce was an early 1957-1963 PNGVR soldier while Bill was more recent, 1963 to 1972; both were former National Service men and were commissioned in PNGVR. Both contributed significantly to the PNGVR and Association.

Phil Ainsworth attended and laid a wreath at the 81st Anniversary of the Battle for Australia commemorative service at the Chermside Historical Precinct, 61 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside on Wednesday 6 September 2023. Our Association is represented on the BFA committee by Phil. There was a vice-regal address by the Queensland Governor; the Anniversary address was given by Brigadier Michael Say DSC, Commander 7th Combat Brigade; and a student presentation by Lana Hung and Kyle Hassum from Aspley State School. The representation of students from 5 nearby High Schools and the Student Band and singers from the Craigslea State High School was impressive and reflected well on the BFA for getting young people involved. The service was followed by a delightful morning tea provided by ladies from a local church group. Photos show the Governor speak-

ing and the BFA monument.

Committee member Mike Griffin once again represented the Association at this year's Kokoda Day Commemorative Service at the Sherwood RSL. Surprisingly the usual annual Kokoda Day Commemorative Service at Broadbeach which was to be held early August was cancelled several days before the event without explanation.

The Association's AGM will be held at 10am Saturday 21 October at the Wacol Museum, Brisbane, prior to the Luncheon in Everyman's Hut. Besides the election of Association office bearers, the important issue of succession of the management of the Museum is to be considered, see attachment to this HTT for details. I look forward to seeing you at our AGM and our 50th Anniversary of the disbandment of PNGVR luncheon on Saturday 21 October; details are on the rear page.

The Museum's open day 2 September was very busy when our Patron brought a number of important guests from Queensland's Royal Historical Society, the Australian Water Transport Association, the Queensland Ambulance Heritage Museum, and the South African Military Veteran's Association to the Museum and morning tea, photo and details on page 18.

Phil Ainsworth, September 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

The author, a native of Sydney, was selected in 1929 for a Short Service Commission in the Royal Australian Air Force. A Short Service Commission was one year's training followed by three years' service training. The purpose of this was to have a nucleus of trained personnel on the reserve in Australia in case of national necessity.

After graduating as a pilot from the Flying Training School, Point Cook, Victoria, in 1930, he served for three years in the Royal Air Force in England. Returning to Australia and civil occupation at the end of this period, he worked as a draftsman in Sydney and as a hobby he took an active interest in the Boy Scouts Movement.

An appointment to the Colonial Civil Service in 1938 for service with the British Solomon Island Government was an outward sign of the adventurous spirit stirring within him once again. Always keen on out of door activity, he spent most of his leisure during his four years' residence exploring neighbouring islands and making long canoe trips which won him the respect and esteem of the natives.



After being in Tulagi, the capital of the Group, for two years the author started a Boy Scout Troop for natives - the first troop started in the Solomons. From a very small beginning 1st Tulagi Troop grew to twenty-five well trained native scouts whose ages ranged from seventeen to twenty years. These youths later played a most important part in the War which followed.

We had no defence. The War in the Pacific spread rapidly south with the Japanese occupying island after island in their thrust towards Australia. Tulagi, the tiny island capital of British Solomon Islands, was occupied in that thrust.

Before the Government was evacuated from Tulagi just prior to the Japanese occupation, all natives were returned to their home islands and likewise the author returned to Australia to rejoin the RAAF. Turned down on medical grounds at first attempt to enlist because he had suffered a black-out on one occasion when serving with the RAF, he was not daunted and later gained admission to the RAAF as an Aircraftman Draftsman by not disclosing his complete medical history and withholding the fact that he had previous experience in service. Then followed some weeks of employment in the Directorate of Technical Services at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, but soon specialised knowledge of the islands led to a Commission and ultimately his transfer to RAAF Intelligence and, within four months of joining up, the author was back in the Solomons on special duty.

The following pages are a documentary account of the author's experiences, first as a RAAF Liaison Intelligence Office with the United States Marine Corps during their first landing in the Solomons and later as an Allied Intelligence Bureau Coastwatcher in the Japanese occupied British Solomon Islands. Coastwatching was an Australian idea conceived by Commander Eric Feldt, RANVR. In the organisation were men from all services, experienced bushmen with a knowledge of the islands and their peoples.

These experienced personnel, it was considered, could establish themselves on an island under the very eyes of the Japs and be reasonably safe by virtue of their superior

knowledge of the locality and the friendliness of the native people. The jungle, too, under these circumstances could be a real friend, for it is easy to hide when the party is of only one or two. These tiny field parties were usually conveyed to their destination by American submarines or patrol torpedo boats, arriving in the dead of night to be transferred to a rubber boat or canoe and left to finish the last mile to the shore by paddle.

The role of the Coastwatcher was to observe and report land, sea and air activities of the enemy forces, twenty-four hours a day, without either being seen or heard. Each Coastwatcher in the field was equipped with a two-way Teleradio for keeping in contact with Allied Intelligence Bureau Headquarters (AIB) and for reporting. It was a Coastwatcher's job to organise the friendly natives into an espionage ring and to extract a maximum of valuable intelligence from his area. In effect, the Coastwatching organisation worked like a screen of radar stations spread around the islands forming the northern and north-eastern approaches to Australia.

Being an Intelligence organisation it was extremely hush-hush and received absolutely no publicity during the War and very little has been written about it since; yet this organisation can boast probably the highest percentage of decorated men of any single organisation in the War. As intelligence during wartime must be up to the minute, it is essential that AIB should have completely independent communications system from the usual services communications. Soon after the Americans landed on Guadalcanal, AIB set up a wireless station adjacent to Henderson Field, right at American Field Headquarters. AIB field parties spread out behind the Japanese lines communicated direct with AIB station on Guadalcanal which had the call sign of Ken.

All AIB messages were sent on the Teleradio in clear language using a code comprising of five letter groups. When a message was coded it took the form of ZAME, XTFNA, etc, which would be called over the radio telephone as "Zebra Apples Mary Easy Xray Thomas Fanny Nose Albert etc. Each individual Coastwatcher had his own pet way of calling the letters and this helped confuse the Japs. The code was a simple one which had elements of it changed frequently, thus helping security.

With the US Marines in Tulagi Tulagi, that tiny capital of the British Solomon Islands, was so remote from troubled Europe that in 1941 one could not imagine it ever being ravaged by war. Tulagi, only two and a half miles long and half a mile wide, possessed no roads; shady cobbled paths connected each of the residences which were mostly built on top of hills; but every step along those paths unfolded dazzling beauty.

There were small islands too, two of which, Gavutu and Tanambogo stood sentinel over the harbour entrance. These two made history later on, but no-one would have thought of such a thing before the War. Then came the blast of bombs, dropped right on the shores of Tulagi from Japanese flying boats. Being without any defence whatever, the British Solomon Island Government was evacuated to Sydney, Australia, just prior to the Japanese landing.

I rejoined the Royal Australian Air Force. The United States of America was preparing a task force in New Zealand which was to strike at the Japanese with sufficient force and with such overwhelming numbers that their advance was to be halted at all costs. The spot chosen for this strike was Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the British Solomon Islands, where simultaneous landings were to be made.

I was attached to General Rupertus' staff and consequently spent practically my entire war service in an American theatre of war.

D-day for the campaign was 7 August 1942. We were out of bed by 3am and were given a very early breakfast on Marine Transport "Elliot", which had conveyed us from Wellington, New Zealand, where the task force had stayed. The personnel in "Elliot" were by no means alone, for the force was a mighty one comprising over seventy surface ships and I know not how many

submarines. The three Australian cruisers, *HMAS's "Australia", "Canberra" and "Hobart"*, were part of the escort force all the way.

I had been allotted a special task by General Rupertus, who was commander of the Tulagi landing force and who was second in command of the Task Force. The landing beach on Guadalcanal, which was simultaneous with our landing, was vulnerable to enemy fire from a point of land on the nearby island of Nggela (this island is also known as Florida), and I was to guide a party of some sixty Marines to a small cove near this point, from where we were to move up to the point and deny the Japs any possible use of it, while the main landing force landed on Tulagi. Our landing therefore was timed for H-hour minus thirty minutes, so we were to land at 7.30am.

We assembled at our battle stations on the eventful D-day morning: all keyed up and, I might add, each man carrying 36 hours rations besides his battle kit. Personal gear was to be left on the ship and it was to be landed the following day. Nobody anticipated any sleep the first night so that arrangement was sound. Just as dawn broke the ships of the invasion force were steaming in line ahead when suddenly out of the darkness Savo Island appeared. This was the spot where the convoy split into two forces, one going each side of Savo, the first bound for Guadalcanal and the second for Tulagi.

I went over the side and climbed down the net to No 1 boat and took up my position beside the coxswain. As soon as all was ready, we were given the signal to move off to our landing point. To reach the cove some five miles off where my party was to land, we had to pass through a gap in the reef.



It is easy to recognise this gap looking at an aerial photograph, but it is impossible to indicate the exact location from about six feet above the waterline and at approximately five miles out. The shore line was just a thin line of palms surrounded by green jungle covered hills, featureless from such a distance.

The Navy had so completely surprised the Japs in the area on which we were to land that they had fled, leaving everything behind, consequently we experienced no opposition fire from the shore. We had been instructed to make quick time between the boats and the edge of the jungle. We certainly did! Our whole party had landed before a single shot was fired by the Japs. Having accomplished this much of my task, I was eager to get on with the next task. I was to take half the group and make our way to Heleta village, which was the nearest village to the scene of operations and to clean out any Japanese remnant that may still be there.

Heleta had received a pounding in the early hours of the morning and we did not receive any great opposition. My party had just thrown off their gear and were resting awhile when a message was received over our wireless that we were to be withdrawn and were to assemble immediately at the beach where we had landed.

I met Major Innes of General Rupertus' staff who instructed me that I was to guide the Higgins boats from Heleta Point of Nggela to Gavutu Island, which was one of a group of three small islands about three miles off the other end of Tulagi, and a distance of about nine or ten miles from where we were. Major Innes told me that the battalion of paratroopers had landed on Gavutu at about



11am and, by this time, the Japs had had time to prepare for the worst, consequently the paratroopers who had landed from the Higgins boats instead of from the air, but armed with only the light arms used in their regular mode of invasion, were rather badly knocked about, suffering some-

thing like 40% casualties on landing. We rounded Dead Island and were coming in slowly and silently in the darkness until the fire from our warships ceased. I immediately gave the signal and Coxswain Evans in my boat, taking the lead, sped forward followed by the others. We were making straight for a small sandy beach by the side of a jetty which we had built during the brief period that Tanambogo was a RAAF flying boat base. We found on reaching the shore that we were sandwiched between a Petrol dump fire and a recently constructed Jap jetty. It was impossible to get the Higgins boats into the shore because of the mass of wreckage on one side and the fire on the other, consequently we had to get out into the water and cling to the side of this low Jap jetty. The decking of the jetty was not more than ten or eleven inches above the water's surface. We had two heavy machine guns with us on the first boat and managed to get these rigged on the jetty behind some packing cases. As soon as the gunner opened fire, tracers (bullets which glow for the entire trajectory), gave away the position of our guns, and the Japs turned everything they had on to them, knocking them out very smartly.

Occasionally we caught sight of a Jap moving through the smoke behind the blazing petrol dump, but let one of us show even the dome of his hat above the decking and a rain of .50 calibre bullets would descend upon it. Here we were, trapped, unable to move laterally between the fire and the jetty without exposing ourselves fully before an enemy which we could not even see. We were unable to retreat because the Higgins boats had returned to their ships. There we remained, submerged to our noses, waiting for the light from the flaming dump to subside.

For four hours we clung to the side of that jetty up to our noses in water and the brilliance of the glare from the fire diminished little. When another Higgins boat arrived only 7 of us made it back to Gavutu.

I Leave Gavutu for Tulagi

I left Gavutu in J13 for Tulagi later that morning. General Rupertus had instructed me to meet him there as soon as I had finished guiding the battalion in to Gavutu.

In a later check-up on Japs killed on Tanambogo it showed that there were over 500 on the island instead of 50 as we were led to believe when we made the initial attack. An inspection of the tunnels under the hill showed an amazing labyrinth of passages and cross passages, large enough to house hundreds together with stores and ammunition.

My first landing on Tulagi, after leaving there as a civilian just seven months earlier, was made solo. Leading Seaman Evans, the coxswain of J13, brought me from Gavutu in the afternoon of D-day plus one and landed me at the

old Police Lines. I felt particularly alone, as I hopped out of the Higgins boat on the edge of the reef and waded ashore, not knowing whom I should meet at this spot.

I was told that I would never realise what a service I had done the USA in modelling the relief map of Tulagi on board *USS Elliot* (I had made a large scale sand model of Tulagi Island for the purpose of pointing out the location of the caves bordering the path along the seashore to officers of landing troops). He said that in light of this knowledge they approached this area with extreme caution and discovered that hordes of Japs were hidden there inside the caves with machine-guns which fired through the entrances, thus covering the path with a dense cross-fire for hundreds of yards. He said if the Marines had moved along this path, no matter how cautiously, their casualties must have been terrific, because to the unsuspecting no caves existed, so well concealed were they by nature.

That night, out on the direction of Savo we could see the flashes in the inky darkness of the big artillery of warships at it in earnest. It is a thrilling spectacle, provided you are sitting on a beach twenty miles away and not in the target area. The darkness of the night, I think, added to the spectacle, for one could follow each individual shell. So rapid was the fire that it was possible to see five or six shells between the flash and the explosion of the first shell.

There was a series of flashes from somewhere near Savo Island accompanied by a thunderous roar as one of the battleships let loose a broadside, then came a terrific crash accompanied by an explosion out of all proportion to any previously heard as a belch of dense black smoke and flame was sent billowing spirally upwards for hundreds of feet. We all cheered, for that was one Jap cruiser less! Not until the next day did we learn that the good shooting which we had applauded so loudly was that of the enemy who had surprised our cruiser squadron on guard between Savo and Guadalcanal.

Our ships may have been caught off their guard but the Japs did not reach their objective, which was obviously the heavily laden troopships and transports spread out between Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Soon after the initial onslaught, the flashes became fainter and fainter and finally all we could see was the reflection of the gunfire on the clouds and we could hear the delayed rumble of the guns as they got further and further away out in the open sea beyond the northern end of Guadalcanal. This was the navel battle in which Australia's flagship, *HMAS Canberra* was lost.

I remained on Tulagi for some months. Three mornings running we were visited by two Jap destroyers. They usually announced their presence in the first light of dawn by firing star shells over Tulagi. These shells were frightening even if not damaging. Also twenty-two Jap bombers came over at about 20,000 feet and bombed with little damage. I had a great feeling of satisfaction sleeping in my own house again, so soon after the Japs had taken it. They had occupied it from May until August 1942. The walls were perforated by shrapnel from bombs which had burst close to the house.

The only ships which had arrived at Tulagi to date had brought only equipment, no food of any kind had arrived. As a result it became necessary to cut down on the food ration. Where each man had been getting three complete "C" ration per day, it was now reduced to two "C" rations. This did not affect the individual greatly where a large number were messing together, but for men doing patrols it was not so good.

Colonel Edson, of 1st Raider Battalion was going personally to supervise the first raid on a Jap outpost stationed on Ngela, and I was asked to guide him in to this village, which was to be reached by sea. We were to travel by Higgins boats to a point three miles off shore, level with the village, then in order to affect surprise the party was to take

to rubber boats and make a silent landing in the dark on the beach to one end of the village.

The raid was an absolute success, for we accounted for all the Jap occupants of the two central houses, where they had a wireless, together with maps and other gear. They had seemingly just moved in with the intention of watching Tulagi.

Return to Australia

Word came through after about twelve weeks campaigning with the Marines that I was to return to the RAAF in Australia.

On reporting in Melbourne, I was immediately posted to an Intelligence course which was just starting and was told that I could take some leave as soon as the course was completed, then was posted to RAAF HQ, Sydney, as an Intelligence Officer.

After 4 months I received a personal letter which made my blood tingle. It was from Commander Long, RAN, who was the Director of Naval Intelligence in Melbourne. He knew about my previous assignment as Liaison Officer to the US Marines and asked if I would consider joining Allied Intelligence Bureau? I could not give him an affirmative quickly enough.

I become a Coastwatcher

Upon arrival in Brisbane I reported to AIB, and next night was on my way back to Guadalcanal, twelve months to the day from my previous landing in the Solomons with the Marines.

As soon as we flew within view of Guadalcanal, I was astounded at the mass of equipment assembled there ready for the forward thrust which was to penetrate deeper into the parts of the Solomons still occupied by the enemy. It had taken twelve months to clear Guadalcanal of Japanese, and it had been a bloody business; but now a strong base had been built up with dumps of war materials and huge stores ranging as far as the eye could see.

I spent a few days at AIB Headquarters on Guadalcanal awaiting details of my new assignment - which was to be my first as a Coastwatcher. I was to relieve Lt Henry Josselyn, RANVR, my old friend who had with one companion and a wireless been put ashore on the West Coast of Vella Lavella Island about six months before from a US submarine.

These small groups of lone officers, mostly Australians drawn from all three services controlled by Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) and known as Coastwatchers, were put in on Japanese occupied islands throughout the Solomons and New Guinea to watch and report enemy activity, but the Yanks referred to them (and not disparagingly) as "poor man's radar".

It was still dark when we arrived alongside the Douglas aircraft which was to take me to the newly prepared strip at Munda. My personal gear and three months' provisions were all packed in small cases so that they might be loaded and unloaded into canoes, etc without difficulty, also that they would not be too heavy for the native carriers who would transport them inland up into the hills where Henry had his base camp.

Next afternoon I was taken with my gear to the Patrol Torpedo (PT) Boat base by a barge. At about half past five the officers of the PT boat patrol assembled and were briefed for their operation. It had been arranged that I was to be dropped off Jorio Point on the west coast of the island at midnight. Before leaving Munda, I had been in touch with Henry Josselyn by wireless, and he arranged to send a native canoe out to rendezvous with the PT boat at this point. Two large native war canoes, each paddled by about fifteen natives moving their craft with the silence and grace of a swan. As they came close one could see every eye focused on the personnel of the PT boat. I asked for the boss boy and one stood up in the middle of the canoe and handed me a note, which was from Henry Josselyn directing me how to proceed.

For an hour and a half the boys paddled unceasingly, and to make matters worse the threatening sky disgorged great quanti-

ties of its moisture, making it necessary for me to become the canoe's bailer.

By daylight we had left the coastal area and were well up in the hills. The going was exceedingly rough and steep, because in order to cover up our tracks we had to keep to the stream, walking in the running water.

The reputation of NRY, that being the call sign of the post, was very high at Allied HQ, and I felt it a great honour to be going there to take over command of the post to allow Henry to proceed on leave, of which he was most deserving.

Esau, one of the trusted locals, then led me to his camp which was well concealed and here, too, he had a lookout up in a big tree known as The Big Tree - it was a Banyan tree which went up easily 50 to 60 feet before the solid trunk started, then a further 30 feet before the branches, in which a platform was concealed. To reach the platform one climbed up a bush ladder - twisting about in the vine-like base, then vertically up the solid trunk. The platform was like the bridge of a ship, extending across the base of the leafy bowl. From here one could see the coast and the sea beyond for many miles. There was a constant watch on duty day and night, and any movement of Jap sea or air forces was radiophoned to NRY immediately.

When we reached Henry he had with him Cpl Henry (Red) Cunningham, US Army, and Tom Mungovern.

There were only two paths which led to Topolando and these were extremely steep, heart-breakingly so. Henry in his wisdom had established small dumps of food, and fuel for the battery charger, at a number of places throughout the island in case the Japs should discover us and it be necessary to beat a hasty retreat. Since the Japs were in occupation of the entire island, it became a necessity to remain hidden deep in the jungle. We had sixteen native scouts who had enlisted in the British Solomon Island Protectorate Defence Force, and whom ultimately we were able to arm as we captured or stole more Japanese equipment.

Henry and his original companion, John H Keenan, RANVR, had landed on Vella before the American advance was beyond Guadalcanal, and to them goes the honour of building up the organisation of NRY, which later I was able to exploit to the full. Intelligence from NRY ultimately was responsible for the complete overthrow of the Japanese on this island; an island which provided an advanced base and airfield for sea and air forces as they pushed the Japs back further and further towards Tokyo.

Every village on Vella and Ganongga Islands had a number of sentries who kept guard on all the approaches to their village. Whenever Japs were noted approaching a village, a native messenger would race ahead unobserved, and all the Meris and piccaninnies would be hurried to a place of safety before the Japs came near.

By having our own wireless set-up, Allied Intelligence Bureau was able to receive most valuable information while it was still "hot". The fighting services live on "hot intelligence" - it is of little use telling the Commander of a Naval task force that there was a heavily laden troopship in a certain position a week ago - a week ago!

To be Continued

"Kesoko" is the name of a legendary old warrior of the Solomons, and was used as the title for Spencer's story.

A blonde goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Christmas Cards. She says to the clerk "May I have 50 Christmas stamps please?"

The clerk says "What denomination?"

The blonde says "God help us. Has it come to this?. Give me 22 Catholic, 12 Anglican, 10 Lutheran and 6 Baptists. "

Remembrance Day

I saw a boy marching, with medals on his chest,
He marched alongside Soldiers, marching six abreast,
He knew it was Remembrance Day, he walked along with pride,
And did his best to keep in step with the soldiers by his side.
And when the march was over, the boy looked rather tired;
A soldier said, "Whose medals son?" to which the boy replied,
"They belong to my Dad, but he didn't come back.
He died out in Afghanistan, up on a Helmand track".
The boy looked rather sad, and a tear came to his eye;
But the soldier said, "Don't worry son, I'll tell you why,"
He said, "Your dad marched with us today, all the bloomin way,
All us soldiers knew he was here, it's like that on Remembrance Day."
The boy looked rather puzzled - he didn't understand
But the soldier went on talking, and started to wave his hand
"For this great land we live in, there's a price we have to pay,
To keep our Country free, and fly our flag today.
"Yes we all love fun and merriment in this country where we live,
But the price was that some soldier his precious life must give;
For you to go to school, my son, and worship God at will
Somebody had to pay the price, so our soldiers paid the bill.
"Your dad died for us my son, for all things good and true,
And I hope you can understand these words I've said to you".
The boy looked up at the soldier and after a little while,
His face changed expression, and he said with a beautiful smile,
"I know my dad marched here today, this our Remembrance Day,
I know he did, I know he did, all the bloomin way"

Steve Turner, Australian Military History



Sopu Airstrip, Goilala District in the Owen Stanleys, Central Province. 6,000 ft. (1,829m) Now opened again after 30 years.

Edward Kenna VC

Edward Kenna, VC (6 July 1919 – 8 July 2009) was the **last living Australian Second World War recipient of the Victoria Cross**, the highest decoration for gallantry "in the face of the enemy" that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth armed forces.

He was born at Hamilton, Victoria and completed his education in his home town before becoming a plumber.

Kenna served in the Citizens Military Force from August 1940 and was allotted service number V55955. In December 1941, the Citizens Military Force was called up for full-time service for the duration of the war. In June 1942, Kenna volunteered for the Second Australian Imperial Force and was allotted new service number VX102142. He served in the 23rd/21st Battalion in Victoria and later in the Darwin area. In June 1943, his



unit returned to Victoria before being sent to Queensland. At this point, the unit was disbanded and its members allotted as reinforcements to other units. Kenna was assigned to the 2/4th Battalion and embarked for New Guinea in October 1944.

On 15 May 1945, Kenna was involved in an action near Wewak, New Guinea, during which he exposed himself to heavy fire, killing a Japanese machine gun crew and making it possible for his company's attack to succeed. For this he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

His Citation reads:

"In the South West Pacific at Wewak on 15th May, 1945, during the attack on the Wirui Mission features, Private Kenna's company had the task of capturing certain enemy positions. The only position from which observation for supporting fire could be obtained was continuously swept by enemy heavy machine gun fire and it was not possible to bring Artillery or Mortars into action.

Private Kenna's platoon was ordered forward to deal with the enemy machine gun post, so that the company operation could proceed. His section moved as close as possible to the bunker in order to harass any enemy seen, so that the remainder of the platoon could attack from the flank. When the attacking sections came into view of the enemy they were immediately engaged at very close range by heavy automatic fire from a position not previously disclosed. Casualties were suffered and the attackers could not move further forward.

Private Kenna endeavoured to put his Bren gun into a position where he could engage the bunker, but was unable to do so because of the nature of the ground. On his own initiative and without orders Private Kenna immediately stood up in full view of the enemy less than fifty yards away and engaged the bunker, firing his Bren gun from the hip. The enemy machine gun immediately returned Private Kenna's fire and with such accuracy that bullets actually passed between his arms and his body. Undeterred, he remained completely exposed and continued to fire at the enemy until his magazine was exhausted. Still making a target of himself, Private Kenna discarded his Bren gun and called for a rifle. Despite the intense machine gun fire, he seized the rifle and, with amazing coolness, killed the gunner with his first round.



A second automatic opened fire on Private Kenna from a different position and another of the enemy immediately tried to move into position behind the first machine gun, but Private Kenna remained standing and killed him with his next round.

The result of Private Kenna's magnificent bravery in the face of concentrated fire, was that the bunker was captured without further loss, and the company attack proceeded to a successful conclusion, many

enemy being killed and numerous automatic weapons captured.

There is no doubt that the success of the company attack would have been seriously endangered and many casualties sustained but for Private Kenna's magnificent courage and complete disregard for his own safety. His action was an outstanding example of the highest degree of bravery."

Three weeks later he was shot in the mouth and spent more than a year in hospital before being discharged from the AIF in December 1946.

The following year he married Marjorie Rushberry, a nurse who had cared for him at Heidelberg Military Hospital.

Interviewed about his VC action for the Australians at War Film Archive in 2002, Kenna said:

"It's just one of those things that you do, I suppose. It's hard to say. I think anyone would have done the same thing in the same position because, well it's no good laying down there and doing nothing. You had to do something and I don't think the Nips would have brought tea or dinner for me so I had to get up and do something and I honestly think that any soldier would have done the same thing."

Wikipedia

Jewish mother-in-law arrives home from shopping to find her son-in-law, David, in a steaming rage and hurriedly packing his suitcase.

"What happened David ?" she asks anxiously.

"What happened!?!? I'll tell you what happened!!

said David. I sent an email to my wife ... your daughter..... telling her that I was coming home today from my fishing trip. I got home... and guess what I found?

Yes!!! Your daughter, my wife Sofia, naked with my best friend, Al Murphy! ... in our marital bed!!! This is unforgivable! This is the end of our marriage!! I'm done!!! I'm leaving forever!"

"Ah now, calm down, calm down David!" says his mother-in-law. "There is something very odd going on here. My daughter would never do such a thing! There must be a simple explanation. I'll go speak to her immediately and find out what happened. Calm down now.

Moments later, the mother-in-law comes back with a big smile. "David dear. I told you there was a simple explanation She never got your email!"



An old steam engine dug up at Ela Beach, Port Moresby, about 1985 during construction for a new building.



Dragging one of the 6 inch (152mm) guns on to temporary mounts - Paga Hill, Pt Moresby 1939. The photo shows one of the guns with Gemo Island in the background. The anti-submarine boom was to be later constructed across the harbour in the centre of this photo.

Battle of Binh Ba

The Battle of Binh Ba, fought 54 years ago on June 6 and 7, 1969 was a key moment in the history of Australian operations in Vietnam and is a prime example of combined arms and joint operations in general, and infantry and armour cooperation in particular.

In 1969, Australia had reached its peak commitment of around 7,000 troops to the conflict in South Vietnam. The 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) had responsibility for the province of Phuoc Tuy, south-east of Saigon, where it worked closely with South Vietnamese forces conducting security, cordon and search, and resettlement and rebuilding operations.

The primary base for 1ATF was at Nui Dat, a small hill in the middle of the province, away from urban centres but close to a few small villages and hamlets. On the morning of 6 June, 1969, a Centurion tank and an armoured recovery vehicle (ARV) were moving north along the main route to the nearby Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) Virginia to replace and recover two tanks that had maintenance difficulties and bring them back to the Task Force base. This took them past the small hamlet of Binh Ba a mere 5000 metres north of the base. It was here that a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) was fired at them and which would initiate one of the most significant battles of the war for the Task Force

Binh Ba was a rectangular settlement owned by French plantation managers and home to somewhere between 1,000 and 1,300 people. Although the Australians originally felt they were winning over the town's population, by 1969 it was firmly sympathetic to the communist forces. Furthermore, the events of the morning of 6 June established that the town was a significant threat to 1ATF.

After the contact, the armoured vehicles continued to the FSPB but sent a contact report to the base at Nui Dat. Helicopter surveillance by 161 Independent Recce Squadron reported that it was likely that two platoons of Viet Cong were stationed in the town. A Ready Reaction Force (RRF) – comprising four different force elements: the under-strength D company 5RAR; four Centurion tanks; a troop of M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs); and a battery of six M2A2 howitzers in direct support – prepared to respond. It was decided that a sweep of the town was necessary in order to clear the enemy.

The Centurion tanks were a critical part of the RRF, and of 1ATF as a whole. Prior to the arrival of the tanks, APCs had increasingly been utilised for a number of different roles, many of which were unsuitable and placed troops at risk. From 1967 1ATF was bolstered by the arrival of heavy armour from the 1st

Armoured Regiment.

At around 11:20 am, the RRF formed up at Nui Dat. The South Vietnamese district chief gave permission for the Australians to attack the village, and ordered civilians to evacuate. As the Australians advanced towards the village, they saw enemy soldiers moving to take up firing positions and soon came under RPG fire. The decision was made to conduct the sweep of the town from east to west. The town was laid out in a grid pattern, more or less on axis of east/west, so with the Centurions leading the formation, flanked by APCs with mounted infantry the sweep commenced from the main route to the east of the town, through the grid-pattern streets, towards the west. The four armoured callsigns were 21C, 22, 21 and 22B.

The formation was slow-moving, as it seemed the enemy was firing from just about every house. It soon became clear that there was more than just two platoons of Viet Cong. In reality, the village was being held by 1st Battalion, 33rd North Vietnamese Army Regiment, (1/33 NVA) which was well equipped with anti-armour weapons. The RPG-7 rounds, it was found, were capable of penetrating even Centurion armour. Troops were soon ordered out of the village amid concerns they might be 'stuck in the middle of the village' and surrounded by the enemy. B Company 5RAR was mobilised from Nui Dat to support troops as they regrouped for a second sweep of the village.

During the action, air support and artillery support proved invaluable. Reconnaissance from Army helicopters was able to identify enemy concentrations in the village and in the surrounding rubber plantations while a light fire team (two aircraft) of RAAF helicopter gunships – callsign Bushranger – were very effective in providing air support as infantry and armour re-organised for the second sweep. The RAAF crews did well to also cover the tanks which were immobilised by anti-armour fire and which were at risk of being overrun. The image shows a RAAF Iroquois approaching Binh Ba from the south a few months after the battle. The layout of the village can be seen quite clearly as well as the surrounding rubber plantation.

Artillery from 105 Field Battery conducted fire missions on enemy concentration areas and further air support by USAF Forward Air Controller-coordinated missions also added to the combined and joint effect.

With the re-org of infantry and armour conducted, the second sweep was to commence, this time from west to east, and this time with infantry dismounted. Further armoured callsigns joined the battle to replace the tanks that were disabled in the first sweep. The photo shows callsign 24A with dismounted infantry conducting the second sweep. It was soon clear that tank support was critical in clearing the houses and reduce the possibility of hand-to-hand combat.

The Centurions' long barrels proved effective in assisting with house clearances. A high explosive round would be fired that would blast a hole in the building after which a canister round would be fired and then the building raked with machine gun fire. After this, the infantry would clear the remnants of the building. Most of the buildings had a small bunker contained therein,



usually built by the occupants for protection against air attack. These bunkers now proved to be hiding places for enemy sol-

diers from which they could fire upon the Australians as they entered the houses. The infantry was required to clear the rooms as well as these bunkers.

This second sweep was successful in neutralising most of the enemy forces, however the Australians were still not satisfied that the village had been cleared and, exhausted, harboured nearby for the night. Some enemy troops that tried to escape



through the Australian lines under cover of darkness were neutralised.

Early the next day, fighting began in Duc Trung, a small hamlet a few hundred metres north of Binh Ba. B Company was deployed to support a South Vietnamese unit as it conducted its assault. But the worst of the fighting was over. A final sweep of Binh Ba was conducted at 8:00 am. The bodies of enemy dead were laid out in front of the schoolhouse upon the request of the Vietnamese district chief. 5RAR recorded 51 enemy killed and 11 captured. The Australians had lost one man – Private Wayne Teeling, who had been shot by the enemy during the second sweep – and sustained 11 other casualties. Despite the prior warning to evacuate, a small number of civilians had also been caught in the crossfire.

By 9:00 am the Australian Civil Affairs Unit began assisting in the resettlement and rebuilding of the village. It was a task that would take four and a half months. The battle would constitute one of the major engagements for Australians in Vietnam. It was also one of the few examples of Australians engaging in urban warfare in Vietnam.

The lessons learned from the offensive on the village, particularly in the collaboration between infantry and tanks, would prove invaluable. Although the North Vietnamese Army was learning that short-range attacks with RPGs could severely damage the Centurion, the presence of tanks had undoubtedly kept infantry casualties low, and had reasserted the need for training in infantry-tank cooperation. In 2007, then Chief of Army Lieutenant-General Peter Leahy would use examples of battles such as this one to argue that tanks remained an essential part of Army capability. The Hopkins' history of the armoured corps later called the action 'armour's greatest day' in Vietnam.

Erin McCullagh. Army Website

Association Committee Member Peter Rogers DFC. Flew an LOH (Light Observation Helicopter) over the battle Below are his memories

On the morning of the 6th June, 1969, I was in 161 (Independence) Recce Flight at Nui Dat, South Vietnam. I was waiting for a task, when an urgent call came through. The IO (Intelligence Officer) of 5RAR - CAPT Mike Battle needed to go on a surveillance job immediately. The Battle of Binh Ba, the first urban battle Australian troops had fought since World War II, had just begun a few kilometres up Route 2, which passed a few hundred metres west of our base. Apparently, an enemy soldier with more courage than common-sense had fired an RPG at a passing convoy, and the wrath of the nearby 1 Australian Task Force was brought rapidly to bear. Mike and I took off in a Bell 47 Sioux, got artillery info, and joined the 5RAR company's command net.

That 5 RAR company as a ready reaction force mounted in APCs with a troop of Centurion tanks under command of Lt

Brian Sullivan (later to become an Army Aviator - of course!) had reached the village of Binh Ba and was shaking out on a start line just west of Route 2. Artillery was firing from 105 Battery at Nui Dat to the north and west of the village to block off entry and exit to the village. I took up an orbit on the southern edge of the village at 1500 feet, clear of the artillery GT lines and in a perfect position to see all that eventuated while (hopefully) too high for accurate small arms fire. The buildings were neat brick cottages with tiled roofs, laid out in tidy blocks with lanes and streets separating them — very pretty and orderly.

Our attack began. It was spectacular, with the tanks/APCs and infantry in classic close co-operation. The amount of tracer (red and green) going both ways was horrendous, with great clouds of dust and smoke rapidly filling the village from numerous explosions. Tracer was going straight through the houses - most of which seemed to be full of enemy from the flashes of gunfire from the windows. I could see the baddies racing from house to house almost as soon as they were engaged.

Shortly afterwards I saw about 15-20 enemy running south west into the paddy fields towards a thick line of trees; I reported them, and still have my voice on tape, recorded by 105 Battery which was monitoring the infantry net. Sadly, little could be done at that stage, and they got away.

Meanwhile the tanks, two in the north part of the village, and two in the south almost directly below me, moved ahead of the assault and started taking out houses which showed resistance. **That** was awesome! A Centurion would trundle up to a house, with ricochets bouncing off it, put the muzzle of its 20 pounder under the roof eaves, and fire a canister round. All four walls would explode outwards, and the roof would crash to the ground in front of the tank.

I saw from a distance the famous RPG fired at Brian Sullivan's tank on the north side. He was leaning forward in his turret and the RPG fins actually cut his back. He was awarded a Military Cross for his subsequent actions in dismounting from his tank in the middle of the firefight to help one of his other tank's wounded crew member. He was a true hero that day.

I noticed that close to one of the tanks below me was an enemy soldier with an RPG, manoeuvring around to get behind it. I yelled to Mike to look up the tank's command frequency from my code book. It was a frantic, helpless time; even if I wanted to be a hero and descend into that massive firefight below, it would take at least one or two minutes - even in autorotation. The chances of my shooting him with my M-16 before we got shot down ourselves were very slim. I was trying to get into the cacophony of radio chatter on the infantry frequency without interfering with the battle when Mike came up with the tank frequency. I cranked it in to the FM radio without even asking to leave the infantry net, pressed the transmit and yelled a warning to the tank. I didn't know his callsign, just referred to his position. A second or so later the NVA/VC fired a round into the back of the Centurion, and immobilised it.

At least I was on the tank net now, and could give them some assistance, so I started pointing out targets.. There was so much smoke and dust in front of the tanks that although I could see what was in front of them, they obviously could not. Directly in front of the disabled tank, which was still using its main gun to good effect, were two houses, from one of which about a dozen enemy would fire, then race across in front of the tank (still obscured) to the other house, then reverse the process... They did this two or three times, and each time I implored the commander to just shoot. To his credit, he did not - because he could not see the target. His turret was moving back and forth, though, just in case...

Back the bunch came, again, running back to the same house. I was still imploring, but they managed to get there. Then, Bingo! One straggler was running about fifteen metres behind, just as a puff of wind cleared the smoke and dust. There he was, right in front of the tank. The canister round fired, and he merely disappeared: vaporised. Mike and I cheered, and the rest of the ene-

my decided their tactic wasn't going to work anymore, and they all fled out of the village to the west.

Incredibly, all this took over two hours, so we had to return to Nui Dat to refuel; another Possum took over and did what was needed.

Other than directing fire or casevac, an unarmed helicopter's usefulness decreases enormously as the scale of battle increases, and of course the luxury we had of only a small-arms threat would not work today. To their credit, the RAAF Bush-rangers later made a very low pass to the south side of the village, firing their machine guns laterally... I could not see how they could identify targets from low level and outside the village, but that all occurred after I left, so I won't comment.

All in all, it was a truly remarkable experience...

Thank you Peter.

An elderly man in Queensland owned a large property for several years. He had a dam in one of the lower paddocks where he had planted mango and avocado trees.

The dam had been fixed up for swimming when it was built and he also had some picnic tables placed there in the shade of the fruit trees.

One evening the old farmer decided to go down to the dam to look it over, as he hadn't been there for a while.

He grabbed a 10 litre bucket to bring back some fruit. As he neared the dam, he heard voices shouting and laughing.

As he came closer he saw it was 4 young women skinny-dipping in his dam. He made the women aware of his presence and they all went to the deep end.

One of the women shouted to him, 'We're not coming out until you leave.'

The old man frowned, 'I didn't come down here to watch you ladies swim naked or make you get out of the dam naked.'

Holding the bucket up he said, 'I'm here to feed the crocodile.'

Moral : Old men may walk slowly, but they can still think fast.

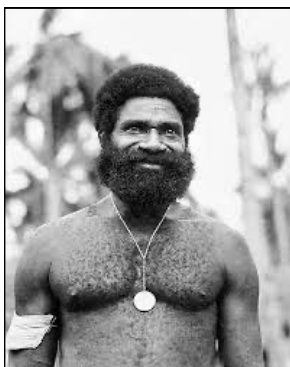
WO1 Paul Yauwiga R416: WW2

Police Sergeant Paul Yauwiga was from Kusaun village in the Kubiala region of East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. During the Second World War he was a member of the Coastwatchers, part of the Allied Intelligence Bureau that reported on enemy positions and movements across Solomon Islands and Island New Guinea.

He spent 1943 leading native guerrilla bands on jungle reconnaissance missions and local psyops in Northern Bougainville.

He worked with Coastwatcher Jack Read on Bougainville and was mentioned on many occasions by Read for his devotion to duty and his ingenious methods of detecting Japanese and hostile native approaches to their Coastwatcher lookouts.

He had been advised in Bougainville not to engage with superior Japanese forces due to the value of the intel he provided, and his mission had always been "observe and report." Yauwiga wasn't a big fan of this and remarked, "Why do we run away the same as women do?"



Recognizing his potential, he was re-deployed to Australia by submarine in 1944 to train troops in Jungle Warfare. This quickly ended, as Allied forces needed Yauwiga to flush out the stubborn Japanese resistance still fighting in Bougainville in 1945. His first major contract was with a mixed band of 80 Japanese troops and tribal collaborations. He annihilated 25 of the enemy with two other

guerrillas after only 15 minutes.

He made sure to add some salt to the injury he caused to Japanese forces. Yauwiga killed a known tribal collaborator and spread false rumours that the now dead man had been an Allied agent. The Japanese responded with heavy-handed paranoia, executing 10 of their best spies. He followed this bit of genius psyops by arresting 30 other tribal collaborators and destroying the Japanese spy network in the process.

By June 1945, his small team had accounted for 57 confirmed kills over only 17 months in the jungle. Barefoot, bare-chested, and armed with a mixture of Allied provided rifles, they punched well above their weight. Unfortunately, a white phosphorous grenade accidentally exploded in Yauwiga's face in a freak accident as he attempted to signal Allied aircraft.

He was evacuated to Australia, where his left arm was amputated and his left eye removed. A corneal transplant saved his right eye from the young blue-eyed Australian donor killed in a motor bike accident, one of the earliest surgeries of its type.

Yauwiga was awarded a Loyal Service Medal in 1943 and a Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1947. He finished the War with the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1.

After the war, Yauwiga established a school at Boram, near Wewak in East Sepik Province. In 1982 Yauwiga was interviewed for the documentary "Angels of War", about the Second World War in Papua new Guinea.

He remained a well-respected community leader until he died in 1982.

Australian War Memorial

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

Hidden trunk revealed Japanese codes and helped win war in PNG

It was one of the luckiest discoveries of World War II and helped forge Australia's lasting intelligence* alliance* with the United States.

In the jungles of Papua New Guinea (PNG), an Australian sapper was sweeping for mines after the retreat of Japanese troops in January 1944 when his metal detector found an object buried in a stream bed.

It was a steel trunk, hidden and left behind by retreating Japanese troops near Sio, on the Huon Peninsula, because it was too heavy to take with them.

The sapper forced the trunk open to see an astonishing sight – it contained the secret codes for the Japanese 20th Army division, codes the Allies had never properly cracked.

What happened next gave Australian and US cryptanalysts an edge that accelerated their victory over the Japanese in PNG, according to a new book "The Secret History Of The Five Eyes."

Released this week, the book by Australian documentary maker and author Richard Kerbaj shines a spotlight on this largely forgotten incident, which helped build a partnership between Australian and US spy agencies that continues today as part of the 'Five Eyes' pact.

At the time of the discovery, the US had made solid progress in breaking Japan's naval codes, helping to deliver crucial victories in the battle of the Coral Sea and at Midway.

In March 1943, Allied code breakers in PNG had also uncovered Tokyo's plans to reinforce Lae – intelligence that allowed the Allies to ambush the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, tilting the war in PNG in the Allies favour.

The Japanese air force was also thwarted in PNG by an attack

on Japanese airfields at Wewak in August 1943 – an operation that came out of the work of Australian-based code breakers.

But the codes of the Japanese army were far harder to crack – until the discovery of the steel trunk.

Documentary maker and writer Richard Kerbaj, author of the new book *The Secret History Of The Five Eyes*.

“In the main, we didn’t have a great deal of success against the tactical (coded army) material,” said US code breaker Major Abraham Sinkov, who was working alongside Australian and other Allied code-breakers at the Central Bureau – the Allied code-breaking centre in Brisbane.

When the steel trunk arrived at the Central Bureau, its contents were so saturated the code breakers were unable to read them.

“Cryptanalysts used any method they could think of to dry out the pages, including hanging some on clothes lines and placing others in front of electric fans,” the book says.

“The books were water-soaked and practically stuck together,” Mr Sinkov said. “We had to separate the pages one by one and ... worked out an interesting procedure for swabbing* the page with something like alcohol, I guess it was, which would cause the written material on the page to show up briefly but long enough to give us a chance to take a photograph of it and we were able to reconstruct practically all of this material.”

The ability to read the codes suddenly gave the Australians and Americans clear insight into the shortages of food, ammunition, ships and other equipment weakening the Japanese forces, which were already in retreat across PNG.

Mr Sinkov and his team of Australians and Americans in Brisbane photographed each page of the material found in the trunk and sent them to Arlington Hall, the US signals intelligence headquarters in Virginia.

With this information, the Allies went from decrypting 1846 Japanese messages in January 1944 to 36,000 messages in March.

Any hope that Japan had of reversing its losses in PNG were over and the foundations for a lasting intelligence partnership between Australia and the US were fast being laid.

Camreron Stewart—Kidsnews Oct 2022.



Sgt J F Stone leads a section from A Company, 1PIB, at the start of a patrol, 4 Mar, 1944, in the Sio area on the Huon Peninsula, near where the trunk was found. Picture: AWM

How the ARA was born

The Australian Regular Army was formed 75 years ago. The Australian Army History Unit reports.

On September 13, 1947, the Minister for Army, Cyril Chambers, approved the use of the term ‘Regular Army’ when referring to what had previously been known as the Australian Permanent Military Force (PMF).

In November 1947, the Military Board directed it be referred to as the Australian Regular Army (ARA), giving birth to today’s modern, professional Army.

The formation of the ARA gave Australia the capacity to respond quickly and decisively to emerging security risks, and other crises, domestically, regionally and internationally.

Before World War 2, the PMF was a small cadre, averaging about 2000 soldiers, whose role was to provide administration and instruction to the Citizens Military Force (CMF), which was the main military force intended for the defence of Australia.

Because of restrictions placed on the PMF contained within the Defence Act 1903, the only corps the PMF could form in peace time were the staff, instructional, aviation, survey, service, medical, veterinarian, ordnance, artillery and engineer corps.

The Act also did not allow any soldier, either PMF or CMF, to serve outside of Australia or its territories unless they volunteered to do so.

This restriction was what led to the formation of the Australian Imperial Forces so that Australia could provide troops to serve overseas during First and Second World Wars.

Because of the impact of these restrictions on Australia’s ability to mobilise for WW2, in 1944 the government directed Army to consider what the strength, organisation and capability of a post-war force should be. This led to the implementation of the Post-War Army Planning Committee and the Vasey Report.

In 1946, a recommendation was made to government for a permanent Army of 30,000 soldiers, including a brigade of 4000, and a CMF of about 40,000.

However, financial limitations meant the final numbers approved were an ARA of 19,000 with a CMF of 50,000. The Minister for Defence approved its creation on June 4, 1947.

To ensure Army could meet its commitments in the period covering the demobilisation of the AIF and the formation of the ARA, particularly to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, Australia formed the Interim Army. The Interim Army served between May 1946 and August 1952.

On the same day Mr Chambers approved the naming of the PMF as the Regular Army, two Australian soldiers arrived in Jakarta on Australia’s first peacekeeping mission, and since then Army has posted soldiers on peacekeeping operations somewhere in the world every day for the past 75 years.



Prime Minister Robert Menzies inspects Australian troops of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) on parade at Anzac Park, Kure, Japan. Standing behind him is Commander in Chief of the BCOF Lt-Gen H C H Robertson

The ARA has served honourably and with distinction in combat operations in Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, and supported regional partners in building their capacity and supporting them in times of need with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

It has served the people of Australia directly with support and assistance during domestic disaster events, and most recently with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ARA has 75 years of proud and distinguished service to all Australians.

Army Newspaper 1525 Nov. 20

A seventy-four-year-old man is sitting on a park bench, sobbing, when a young man walks by and asks him what's wrong. Through his tears, the old man answers, "I'm in love with a twenty-two-year-old woman"
 "What's wrong with that?" asks the young man.
 Between his sobs he answers, "You don't understand, every morning before she goes to work, we make love.
 At lunchtime, she comes home and we make love again, and then she makes my favourite meal. In the afternoon when she gets a break, she rushes home and gives me oral sex, the best an old man could want. And then at suppertime, and all night long, we make love"
 He breaks down, no longer able to speak.
 The young man puts his arm around him. "I don't understand. It sounds like you have the perfect relationship. Why are you sitting here on this park bench crying.
 The old man answers, again through his tears,
 "I forgot where I live."

Cornelius 'Con' Page—Coastwatcher

Cornelius (Con) Page was one of many Coastwatchers who risked his life transmitting reports of Japanese movements. Page was born in Sydney but went to New Guinea at the age of 19. He bought a plantation in Rabaul and began coastwatching duties at the age of 30, when Japan entered the war. Page is remembered as being 'a trader, planter and free spirit, who violated the expatriates' code by taking a Tabar girl, as his consort.' He is also remembered as being liked and trusted by the natives. Page is credited with making **the first enemy sighting by a Coastwatcher in the Bismarck Archipelago** when he spotted Japanese plans en route to reconnoitre Rabaul on 9 December 1941. As they passed overhead he reported their numbers to Naval Intelligence. His plantation was raided after the fall of Rabaul and Intelligence Headquarters in Townsville signalled him to bury his radio and leave the island for somewhere safer. Page refused to leave: his wife Ansin Bulu was a Tabar islander and he regarded the islanders as his people. He was then ordered to cease transmissions to avoid attracting enemy attention.

Con Page was a civilian Coastwatcher and was not paid for his services. Belatedly, he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant RANVR (Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve) but nothing could save him. As the Japanese moved in the islanders turned against him. The RAAF continued to drop supplies and radio parts but attempts to evacuate him failed. He refused to leave or to silence his radio.

According to Feldt, 'by the end of March, Page was a dot in a Japanese-held ocean'. [Feldt, p. 75]

On June 12, 1942, Page signalled for assistance:

SOS Japanese landed Monday. Am hunted by dogs, natives, machine guns. Japanese left last night Thursday. They will return with more troops. Only chance flying boat land on west side where there is small island and sandpit.

At dusk on 16 June a flying boat was despatched to rescue Page. The pilot searched the beach thoroughly but saw no sign of the Coastwatcher and turned back to Cairns. It is assumed



Sub Lt C.L. Page headstone in Bita Paka War Cemetery, New Britain.

that this captured document, the diary of a Japanese soldier who was a member of Kure No 3 Special Landing Party April to August 1942 refers to the capture of Page and a fellow planter, Talmage in June 1942. According to this document the Japanese searched for the Coastwatchers between 13 and 20 June so they were probably not actually captured until after the

RAAF's unsuccessful search.

There is some discrepancy about the date on which Page was executed but it is believed he was executed in the company of two other Coastwatchers who had been captured in New Ireland. Some accounts suggest it was as late as September but the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour lists his date of death as 21 July 1942.

Two years after Page's death, Sub-Lieutenant Stanley Bell RANVR visited the Tabar group which was then on the outskirts of Japanese-held territory under siege from the Allies. Page's wife/companion, Ansin Bulu, just released by the Japanese came to Bell with a crumpled and dirty scrap of paper she had managed to carry during her years of imprisonment. In, by then, barely legible, pencilled scrawl Page had written:

*To CO Allied Forces
 For Lieut-Commander E. A. Feldt, R.A.N.
 From Sub-Lieutenant C.L. Page R.A.N.V.R.
 9th July. [sic]
 Re the female Ansin Bulu,
 Nakapur Village,
 Simberi Island.
 This female has been in my service 7 years. Has been of great value to me since Jan. Japs looted all she owned value A£50, put her in prison and God knows what else. Her crime was she stuck.
 Sir, please do your best for her.
 Sub-Lieutenant C.L. Page.*

Cornelius Page was Mentioned in Dispatches 'for special services in the South West Pacific'. His name is included under HMAS Brisbane on Panel 1 of the World War II Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial.

Dept Veterans Affairs. ANZAC Portal

Black Bra (as told by a woman)
 I had lunch with 2 of my unmarried friends.
 One is engaged, one is a mistress, and I have been married for 20+ years.
 We were chatting about our relationships and decided to amaze our men by greeting them at the door wearing a black bra, stiletto heels and a mask over our eyes. We agreed to meet in a few days to exchange notes.
 Here's how it all went.....
 My engaged friend:
 The other night when my boyfriend came over he found me with a black leather bodice, tall stilettos and a mask. He saw me and said, 'You are the woman of my dreams...I love you.'
 Then we made passionate love all night long.
 The mistress:
 Me too! The other night I met my lover at his office wearing a raincoat. Under it only the black bra, heels and mask over my eyes. When I opened the raincoat he didn't say a word. He started to tremble and we had wild sex all night.
 Then I had to share my story:
 When my husband came home I was wearing the black bra, black stockings, stilettos and a mask over my eyes. When he came in the door and saw me he said.....
 "What's for dinner, Zorro?"

Early Days of the NGVR/PNGVR Association

Norm Mundy

It all really commenced after the Finschhafen Camp in 1973 when we knew that PNGVR was going to be disbanded.

A group of us used to gather for a cup of coffee after parades in Port Moresby—John Murray, Michael Moir-Bussy, Denis Samin, Henry Sims and myself, and we used to speak about continuing to get together after the disbandment.

When the PNGVR actually disbanded I managed to obtain a position with the DCA drafting office in Brisbane. Joan and I purchased a house in Daisy Hill Road, Daisy Hill. It was not long before I found out that Joe and Val Fisk lived only 400+ metres in the same road and later we discovered that Colonel Harry Green also lived in Daisy Hill Road. We got together from time to time to discuss the formation of an Association.

Then on New Year's Day 1975 I heard a familiar voice coming from my neighbour's house (he used to have a New Year's Day Party each year), and this turned out to be Bill Kelly. There was also another ex PNGVR chap there Kev Farrelly.

I had transferred with the CMF to 9 RQR and then to 1 Training Group with which Joe Fisk also paraded as a specialist Recruit Trainer. Jim Cattermole and Mike Larkin were also at 1 Training Group at some stage.

In 1976 a combined 9RQR and 49RQR recruit training camp was held and Joe Fisk and I were sitting in the Sgts Mess one evening when we heard a raucous laugh coming from the kitchen. We looked at one another and said "There's only one person with a laugh like that" and sure enough, it was Mike Konecny.

So, with these contacts, I thought I had better commence putting names to paper. Bill Kelly gave me Graeme Blanch's address – he gave me Barry Wright's etc. At that stage I had a mining claim at Lightning Ridge and heard that Karl Aschhoff was at Coronas Hotel in Charleville, so called in to see him on the way back. By this time names were coming in from those who had been contacted.

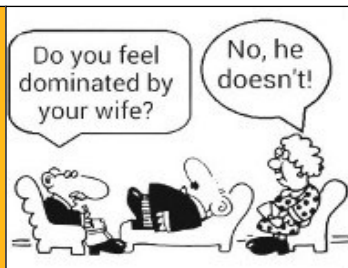
I used to go to my drafting office early in the morning and kept a list of names and addresses. However every time a new name came in I had to rewrite the list and this became tiresome so I thought "Better get a computer". There were only two computers on the market at the time – Commodore and Apple 2C, so I purchased the Apple for about \$2000, which, as I recall, had a memory capacity of 597 kb. This enabled me to have names in order and insert new names as they came up.

The list grew rapidly and soon we had between 150 and 200 names. We had a couple of small get-togethers but from then on it really exploded. On Sat 26 March 1983 15 of us got together at the Army Aviation Sgts Mess at Oakey, Qld., thanks to Peter Rogers DFC and Terry Egan DCM who were stationed there, for a dinner.

A second dinner was held at 8/9 RAR Sgts Mess at Enoggera, Qld., on Sat 28th May and 34 ex PNGVR members attended this. 14 apologies were received from those whose location made it difficult to attend. Things just grew from those early meetings to what we have today.

Thanks Norm. Some of those early handwritten lists are at the museum.

Wife crashed the car again today. She told the police the man she collided with was on his mobile phone and drinking a can of beer! Police said he can do what he likes in his own living room!



Albert Lambton Robinson, DCM. NG240 NGX263

Statement of A.L. Robinson of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles to F Holland esq a member of the New Guinea Administrative Unit – at Wide Bay, South Coast, New Britain. 27th Feb 1942.

Japs landed at TOL Plantation about 8.00a.m. on approx.: 31st January 1942 (10 days after landing at Rabaul). Two Lieuts: Grant and Erwin in charge of party in absence of Major Mollard passed word around they could see nothing to be gained by continuing further and that they had decided to surrender.

This done with the exception of about 18 men who had gone on and to whom word could not be got. All men were lined on the beach by the Japanese and the names numbers and ranks taken in three separate lists. Men then allowed to sit in the shade and given Kulaus to drink. About 2 p.m. one 6lb tin of meat opened.

More and more prisoners kept arriving during the day, all N.C.O's being separated from privates immediately upon arrival. About dusk men herded into a native hut – very crowded. Small amount of rice cooked by the Japs and given to the prisoners. Quantity insufficient and permission obtained for men to cook rice some had with them. Fires lit around hut and kept going all night. Next day 9 a.m. all prisoners marched to TOL PLTN. House where 22 men who were on the beach with white flags when the Japanese boats arrived were separated from the rest of the men. Identification disks that were taken previous day were then returned to us. On completion of this the 22 men referred to were marched off. As soon as they had gone the identification discs just issued and everything else the remaining men possessed were taken from them. The men were then divided into groups of approx. 10 men, hands tied behind each mans back with white fishing cord every Jap carried as part of his equipment. Men were then ordered to sit in shade and each given a few sips of water and a couple of puffs at a cigarette. Men then roped together in lines of 9 or 10 with the exception of 1 or 2 for whom insufficient rope was available, and marched off through the plantation.

All Japanese with fixed bayonets and some carrying spades. I decided that this was a shooting party and that if one were to be shot one might as well be shot trying to escape as to be done in 'Cold Blood'. I was fortunate in that the line I was in happened to be not roped together and that I was No. 2 in the line. Three Japanese soldiers headed the line then came 9-10 of our men then 3 more Japanese and so on. In the beginning the procession made its own track through the cover crop and secondary growth (which was springing up) but after a time emerged for a short distance upon the track proper through the plantation.

T'was here that an (S) bend in the path with secondary growth overgrown with a cover crop presented an opportunity for me to escape and I availed my-self of it. Turning the 1st bend of the (S) I nipped out of the line and ducked down behind a bush on the other bend of the (S). The chap next to me called "Lower sport" and I accordingly crouched further into the shrub. Fortunately the line went by with nothing untoward happening and I made off thru the plantation. Heard some shooting whilst on my way. After a trying experience of three days wandering in the bush living only on water I came across a party of civilians camped on the bank of a creek, who released me and looked after me for a couple of days. The civilians were Vic Pennefather, Tex Roberts, Jack Allan, Harry Bridges, W Seale and Ken Ryall. I then made off for the mission to get disinfected and bandages for my sores.

Met Col. Scanlan en route and related to him the whole story. Col. Scanlan a couple of days later decided to return to Kokopo with his party and surrender. As I was all in at this stage and unable to continue with the troops I made my way to Kasalea Police Post approx. 6 miles from the beach at Wide

Bay. I was subsequently informed by the natives that the Japanese had paid a visit to the post when they made the landing at TOL.

I stayed at the post for almost 3 weeks then heard that Mr Ball, Supt: of Police, Rabaul and party of soldiers were on the beach. When down and related events to him after which I returned to the Police Post. During my stay and up to the arrival of Mr F Holland I lived on native foods. On Mr Holland's arrival at dusk I informed him that Mr Ball and Lt.Col. Carr had left that morning for Kiep Plantation. Mr Holland did not stop with me but informed me that he would come back later. Two days later I received a note per Police Boy asking me to follow the runner with all my possessions to Mr Holland's camp.

While at Mr Pennefather's camp the YOL natives informed us that the Japanese had killed (Plenty Soldiers) that the mounds were in the plantation down near the Point where they were buried.

One of Major Palmer's patients – a soldier who had been in the TOL (now Shooting Party) informed me while I was at the mission that a Japanese Officer cut each prisoner loose with his sword and that the prisoner was then bayoneted. If he moved after this he was shot. Failing movement he was assumed dead. This man lay 'Doggo' and later got away. I regret that I do not know his name.

While it is difficult to find any justification for the Japanese action it is possible that their interpretation of 'Surrender' embodies only those under a white flag, all other being classed as resisters. However barbarians is the best one can evidently call some if not all of them.

It might be as well to mention that the Japanese had with them two half caste lads who had been staying with NAGAHAMNA in Rabaul (one a son of YAMASHITA's – minus and the other the son of IKESAKI's - minus) who were used as clerks to record particulars of the men taken and possibly otherwise.

The night I arrived at the mission Lt. Davidson and others rigged a sail on the mission pinnace and left 5 days (approx.) after the Japanese landing at TOL to seek assistance. Carburetors and magnetos previously taken from the pinnace by the Japanese. (remaining final four lines are indecipherable as page is badly torn and scuffed up.)

Alfred Lambton Robinson returned to Port Moresby and was transferred from full-time CMF (NGVR) to the AIF (ANGAU) and given the new service number NX263. He received the Distin-



Lt. AL. Robinson, AIF, with Major Keith McCarthy as Manus Island after the landing of the 2/5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division

guished Conduct Medal (DCM) for his actions on Momote and was commissioned as a Lieutenant on 10th July 1944.

Thank you Michael White.



Carrier Line Manyamya patrol 1950. Photo Sue Hurrell Spargo

RAAF flies Vietnamese peacekeepers to South Sudan

A Royal Australian Air Force C-17A Globemaster has transported more than 60 Vietnamese military personnel deploying to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

RAAF provided the strategic airlift for Vietnamese soldiers and equipment from Ho Chi Minh City to Juba, South Sudan, enabling Vietnam to rotate their staff at the role 2 field hospital.

Vietnam's President Võ Văn Thường attended a farewell ceremony held in honour of the peacekeepers departure from Ho Chi Minh City.

Australia's Chief of Joint Operations Lieutenant General Greg Bilton said Australia and Vietnam's deepening defence relationship enabled both nations to make an active contribution as regional partners to the maintenance of the global rules-based order.

"Vietnam is an important partner for Australia," Lieutenant General Bilton said. "We share a strategic interest in maintaining a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific .

"Our militaries work collectively and learn from each other – not only through this close peacekeeping partnership [ahem – taxi ride – Ed], but also through professional military education and skills-exchange programs.

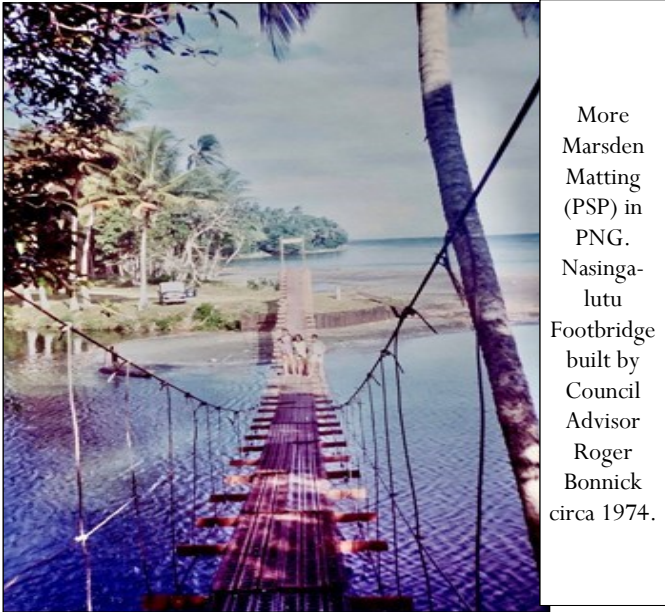
"This is the fifth year Australia has been able to provide the strategic airlift to assist Vietnam rotate their military personnel through UNMISS.

"I am proud of the work we are doing together to strengthen our enduring partnership to support the important work of the United Nations". *Contact Newsletter 199*



Australian World War II soldiers' partial remains recovered off Kokoda Track, grave sites untouched for 80 years'

By ABC PNG correspondent Tim Swanston 25/7/23.



More Marsden Matting (PSP) in PNG. Nasingalutu Footbridge built by Council Advisor Roger Bonnick circa 1974.

The partial remains of 15 Australian World War 11 soldiers may never have been found if not for a Papua New Guinean landowner upgrading his property.

Templeton's Crossing is deep into PNG's Kokoda Track — accessible either by several days' walk or a helicopter flight from Port Moresby. The area marks the site of a series of battles fought in October 1942, during Japan's withdrawal along the Kokoda Track.

During the fighting, 65 Australian soldiers were buried in temporary graves at Templeton's Crossing, among more than 600 soldiers killed in the Kokoda campaign.

As the war drew to an end, the graves were systematically cleared, said Andrew Bernie, from the Australian Army's Unrecovered War Casualties Team. "However the task was an extremely challenging one, with small teams under time pressure, without logistic support, without air support — it was a terrible job and a difficult job," he told the ABC.

The soldiers' remains were transferred to the Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby. But more than eight decades on, a chance discovery revealed the task was not quite complete.

Star pickets used to mark original graves hadn't moved since

In 2018, a local landowner was carrying out terracing of the hilly terrain on his property when he came across what appeared to be human remains. He alerted local trekking companies to his discovery, and eventually the Unrecovered War Casualties Team was brought in.

After years of COVID-related delays, the team finally made it to the site last month.



Archaeologist Marc Oxenham said when they arrived, landowners told the team they believed that star pickets that stood near where the discovery had been made were simply commemorative.

At the time, his team agreed. "Because who would have expected star pickets to last for about 80-odd years in tropical conditions?" Professor Oxenham said. "But when we investigated the site, we discovered they were actually original ... they haven't been moved since they were placed to mark the graves."

"With that discovery, it sort of started to make sense — this is why we have people here, because no-one actually thought this was the actual cemetery."

Professor Oxenham's team began the painstaking work to identify and exhume all 65 graves at Templeton's Crossing.

It's no simple dig — the operation involved people trained in human skeletal anatomy, archaeological excavation as well as an officer specialising in crime scenes, who photographed all of the remains.

Working against inclement weather, the team flew into the remote site and camped out nearby for nine-day stretches over several months. The team retrieved partial remains of 15 soldiers, which have now been sent back to Port Moresby for forensic processing.

Remarkably, the graves are in full view of the well-trodden Kokoda Trail. "We've had trekkers going through the region for years, there was no reason to dig on that particular river terrace and there was no real reason to believe we would have found anything there anyway," Professor Oxenham said.

Genealogists and World War II historians help piece together final clues

Along with the partial remains, the team recovered pocket-knives, part of a bayonet and other personal items in the graves, with the help of an expert in World War II artefacts. "Even a signet ring that one of the soldiers had... well over half of the graves had something in them," Professor Oxenham said.

With the remains now recovered, the operation moves into the identification phase. "We know we have a good start as to who was in each grave and then where they should end up," said Mr Bernie, from the Army's Unrecovered War Casualties Team. "With the remains that are possible to be further tested, they will be anthropologically analysed to confirm that their stature, age and similar features are consistent with who we should have expected to be coming across.

"Where possible, we'll also use DNA technology to try and confirm that we will get the right soldiers from their temporary cemetery location and marry them up with their substantive remains in their substantive grave."

The team will now engage genealogists to track down the families of these soldiers, so that they can see their ancestors finally



laid to rest. "Now they're going to be with the rest of their bodies and the rest of their mates in the cemetery," Professor Oxenham said. "It's extremely satisfying work and well worth the effort that's gone into it."

A Chinese man decides to move to Australia after 50 years of living in Shanghai . He buys a small piece of land near Mt Isa. A few days after moving in, the friendly Aussie neighbour decides to go across and welcome the new guy to the region . He goes next door but on his way up the drive-way he sees the Chinese man running around his front yard chasing about 10 hens . Not wanting to interrupt these 'Chinese customs', he decides to put the welcome on hold for the day. The next day, he decides to try again, but just as he is about to knock on the front door, he looks through the window and sees the Chinese man urinate into a glass and then drink it. Not wanting to interrupt another 'Chinese custom', he decides to put the welcome on hold for yet another day. A day later he decides to give it one last go, but on his way next door, he sees the Chinese man leading a bull down the drive-way, pause, and then put his head next to the bull's bum. The Aussie bloke can't handle this, so he goes up to the Chinese man and says , "Jeez Mate, what the hell is it with your Chinese customs? I come over to welcome you to the neighbourhood, and see you running around the yard after hens. The next day you are pissing in a glass and drinking it, and then today you have your head so close to that bull's bum, it could just about shit on you." The Chinese man is very taken back and says, "Sorry sir, you no understand, these no Chinese customs I doing, these Australian Customs." "What do you mean mate," says the Aussie. "Those aren't Australian customs." "Yes they are, man at travel agent tell me," replied the Chinese man. "He say to become true Australian, I learn chase chicks, drink piss, and listen to bull-shit."



Wilson's Bird of Paradise (Diphylloides respublica)

A very close thing indeed
Ashley Ekins

The battle of Long Tan was Australia's most costly battle in Vietnam.

Australian soldiers fought in scores of fierce actions during the war in Vietnam. Few were as intense or dramatic as the action in the Long Tan rubber plantation on 18 August 1966. An isolated infantry company of 108 men, cut off and outnumbered by at least ten to one, withstood massed Viet Cong attacks for three hours. They suffered the heaviest Australian casualties in a single engagement in Vietnam, but prevailed against the odds. Their valiant stand became a defining action of the war.



Maj. Harry Smith

In the early hours of 17 August, the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat was shaken without warning by enemy mortar and recoilless rifle fire. The bombardment lasted just 22 minutes but it left 24 soldiers wounded and raised fears that it could be a prelude to a full-scale enemy attack on the base, established in the heart of Phuoc Tuy province just two months earlier.

No attack followed. At dawn, rifle companies of 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) were sent out to search for the enemy. Soldiers of B Company located the mortar base plate positions and followed

several enemy tracks, but they encountered no Viet Cong. The search continued, although the threat now seemed to have passed. Companies harboured overnight in their search areas and the next day B Company sent 48 men, who were due for leave, back to the base where a visiting Australian concert party with Col Joye and Little Pattie was due to perform.

D Company was next ordered out to search and left the base at 11 am on 18 August. Company commander Major Harry Smith recalled that he and his men were "not real happy at missing the concert" as they pushed through tall grass to the sound of the music from the base (as reported in *Wartime Issue 35*). The enemy, estimated to be a heavy weapons platoon of the local D445 Battalion, numbering some 30 to 40 men, was by now "thought long gone". D Company relieved B Company at about 1pm at the edge of the Long Tan rubber plantation, 2,500 metres east of Nui Dat. After inspecting the area and a quick meal of combat rations, D Company entered the rubber plantation at about 3 pm to search eastwards. "We did not expect action," Smith recalled, "but nevertheless, we set off in two-up formation, widely dispersed, alert, watching for the enemy."

What Smith and his soldiers did not know was that the task force headquarters signals intelligence unit, 547 Signal Troop, had been monitoring the transmissions of a radio set belonging to the Viet Cong 275 Regiment. This highly classified signals intelligence was restricted to operations and intelligence officers and the task force commander. For the past two weeks, tracking by radio direction-finding had indicated that the radio—and with it presumably the enemy main force formation—was approaching Nui Dat from the east, advancing a kilometre every day. The transmissions had apparently ceased on 14 August, when the radio was near the Nui Dat 2 hill feature, 5,000 metres east of the task force base. Earlier patrols sent out to investigate had found no signs of the enemy in the region. Now D Company was patrolling towards the same area.

At around 3.40 pm rifle platoons had their first fleeting contacts with scattered groups of enemy. The enemy uniforms, equipment and weapons, including AK47 assault rifles, should have warned the Australians they were enemy main force soldiers, not local guerrillas, but at first "the penny didn't drop", Smith said.

Contacts increased rapidly and it was soon obvious that the Australians were facing a large enemy main force regiment. The Australians were used to short, sharp enemy actions in which local guerrillas quickly struck, then slipped away. But the enemy were standing and fighting, not avoiding contact, and they were massing for attack with large volumes of fire.

11 Platoon was almost surrounded and pinned down by heavy RPG and automatic weapons fire from an estimated company strength force of Viet Cong. At about this time, the monsoon broke and the battle continued through a torrential downpour. Within 20 minutes, the platoon commander and one-third of his platoon of 28 men were killed or wounded. The survivors were forced to pull back and rejoin the other platoons who were also fighting off heavy enemy attacks and manoeuvring to counter enemy flanking movements.

As the enemy continued to press their attacks, the dispersed platoons called in artillery fire support but communications were impeded as their radios were hit and damaged by enemy fire. One soldier ran forward to 10 Platoon under heavy enemy fire carrying a spare radio.

Major Smith managed to draw his platoons together and organise his force into a defensive perimeter around the company headquarters. Soldiers went to ground there and withstood repeated enemy attacks, including massed human-wave assaults. They held firm and controlled their fire, taking a steady toll of the assaulting enemy. Any movement by the Australians drew a furious hail of automatic weapons fire from enemy assault rifles and machine-guns and enemy sniper fire from the



Pte 'Yank' Arkell, the Signaller who delivered the spare radio to 10 Platoon.

trees. The thunderstorm added to the deafening din of the battle, making all communication difficult.

Under intense enemy fire, the soldiers of D Company fought off successive assaults, assisted by accurate artillery fire from the base at Nui Dat five kilometres away. Labouring in acrid cordite smoke and driving rain, the gunners knew their artillery support was crucial to the infantry company's survival. They worked hard to maintain their rhythm of preparing, loading and firing while checking and adjusting the fall of their shells in response to the calls from the forward observer in the field. Soldiers from around the base were called in to assist in unpacking the artillery rounds and feeding them to the gunners. At times, the fire of all 18 guns totalled over 100 rounds per minute. Fighter-bombers attempted to provide air support but this was found to be impossible owing to the low cloud cover and the thunderstorm.

Meanwhile the soldiers of the besieged D Company fell back on their training and teamwork. Men know what they had to do and were sure from their training of what their mates alongside them were doing, and so worked together as a unit. As each wave of Viet Cong came forward they fired as a team, providing covering fire for each other. One soldier recalled:

A solid line of them—it looked like hundreds—would suddenly rush us. The artillery would burst right in the middle of them and there would be bodies all over the place. The survivors would dive for cover beside these bodies, wait for the next attacking line, get up and leap over the dead to resume the rush. They were inching forward all the time over their

piles of dead.

Radio messages from D Company, recorded in the 6RAR log at Nui Dat, conveyed the company's increasingly desperate situation:

4.26 pm "Being mortared . . . Want all artillery possible."

4.31 pm "Enemy [on] left flank. Could be serious."

5.01 pm "Enemy . . . penetrating both flanks and to north and south."

5.02 pm "Running short of ammo. Require drop through trees."

With soldiers almost out of ammunition, the artillery briefly halted fire while RAAF helicopter crews flew a daring resupply mission. At 6 pm two RAAF helicopters succeeded in dropping boxes of ammunition to the company while hovering at tree-top level, despite the heavy downpour and the risks from enemy ground fire.

Company sergeant major Warrant Officer "Big Jack" Kirby handled the distribution of the rounds to soldiers lying in the mud under constant enemy fire. Kirby was the mainstay of the defence and an inspiration to soldiers, his burly figure moving among the men as he distributed ammunition, organised the collection of the wounded, encouraged soldiers and even joked with them on occasion. At one stage, when the enemy attempted to set up a heavy machine-gun post only 50 metres from the company perimeter, Kirby moved out and personally silenced the weapon by killing the crew.



WO2 Jack Kirby

The enemy continued to press their attack and soldiers began to wonder if the promised relief force would arrive in time. For over two hours they had been fighting a ferocious battle against overwhelming odds and they were now virtually surrounded by a determined and well-equipped combined Viet Cong

and North Vietnamese Army force estimated at over 2,000 men. At 6.20 pm, as daylight was fading, D Company radioed to the base: "Enemy could be reorganising to attack. Two platoons are about 75 per cent effective. One platoon has been almost completely destroyed. [We] are reorganising for all-round defence."

Annihilation seemed imminent. Then, just before 7 pm, as the enemy were apparently forming up for a final assault, the relief company of infantry, mounted in armoured personnel carriers, broke through the enemy lines and drove them off.

The battle ended and the monsoonal storm abated, as suddenly as both began. "All firing ceased as though the tap was turned off," Major Smith recalled. Under cover of darkness, the Australian units withdrew and regrouped while the dead and wounded were evacuated by helicopters. Soldiers spent a restless night as artillery and air strikes continued to pound the battle site and likely enemy withdrawal routes.

The next morning, a combined force of infantry and armoured personnel carriers went back into the battlefield to conduct a thorough clearance. For the men of D Company this was a harrowing experience. The rubber plantation was a scene of utter devastation and carnage. The bodies of the soldiers of 11 Platoon were found lying in their firing positions, still facing towards the enemy and eerily washed clean by overnight rain. Amid the sombre scene, soldiers were elated to find two of their mates earlier reported missing in action. The two men had been wounded but survived on the battlefield overnight. Soldiers also found three enemy wounded who were treated and evacuated.

The grisly task of counting the enemy bodies was eventually halted at a total of 245. The dead were buried where they lay in shallow graves. There were signs that many more had been

removed by the enemy as they withdrew during the night.

The bravery, tenacity and sacrifice of Australian and New Zealand soldiers at Long Tan was duly celebrated. They had won a legendary victory against odds of at least ten to one. D Company 6RAR was awarded a US Presidential Unit Citation and fifteen Commonwealth decorations were awarded to individual soldiers for their actions during the battle.

The Australians had inflicted heavy losses on Viet Cong forces but the cost was high: seventeen Australian soldiers were killed in action and 25 were wounded, one of whom died nine days later. The battle left one third of the Australian company dead or wounded, making Long Tan the army's most costly single engagement in Vietnam. Eleven of the dead were National Servicemen and seven were Regular Army soldiers: their average age was 21 years. Brigadier O.D. Jackson, commander of the 1st Australian Task Force, was impressed by the battle performance of D Company but he judged the outcome "a very close thing indeed". The effectiveness of the artillery support had proved crucial to the survival of the company and the relief force had arrived just in time.

Many questions remained about the enemy involved, their intentions and plans, and the outcome. It appeared that the battle of Long Tan had established the Australian task force's dominance in Phuoc Tuy province, but that dominance did not rest unchallenged. Over the following five years, aggressive Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces periodically threatened the peace and stability within the province and forced the task force to retaliate.

Long Tan remains a defining event in Australia's longest war. But it was not a pivotal battle as some have claimed. It was neither a turning point in the Vietnam War, nor was it a decisive victory. The Viet Cong units involved were damaged but not destroyed. They regrouped and continued their revolutionary struggle for nine more years until the armies of North Vietnam defeated the south in 1975.

Today, the veterans of D Company 6RAR guard the memory of their unit's bravery and sacrifice on 18 August 1966. This is understandable. The survivors among the original Anzacs who landed on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 did the same. Just as Anzac Day has grown in significance to become Australia's de facto national day, so too has Long Tan day become more inclusive. On Vietnam Veterans' Day, the recalling of a single battle on one afternoon in August 1966 now commemorates all Australians who took part in that long and divisive conflict.

AWM Website



On the morning after the battle, troops in a clearing in the rubber plantation of Long Tan examine some of the Viet Cong weapons captured by D Company, 6RAR, including rocket launchers, heavy machine-guns, recoilless rifles and scores of rifles and carbines.



Maj Harry Smith, SG. MC. aged 90 died at his home at Buderim Qld. on 20 Aug 2023. Maj Smith was OC D Coy 6RAR at the above Battle of Long Tan. He spent much of his life after Long Tan fighting for the medals he had recommended for his soldiers after the battle, but which were not awarded at the time.

RIP Harry
LEST WE FORGET.



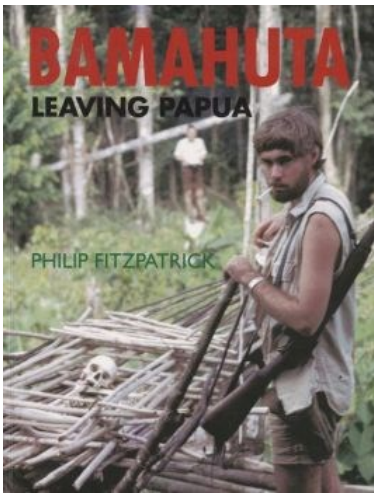
Long houses near Tambul, border Western Highlands, Enga and Southern Highlands Provinces. The long houses were for pig killings, each villager had a room where he'd accommodate his distant relatives for the duration of the feast; usually a 3 to 5 days event.

Chiefs usually would get the corner/last room. This practice stopped in the late 80s. Photo Colin Pain.

Bamahuta

One of the many stories kiap Phillip Fitzpatrick tells in his book, 'Bamahuta' is about the court case of seven young cannibals he takes to trial in Daru.

The men ate an enemy who had died, but because they didn't kill the man they can't be charged with murder so are charged with 'unlawfully and indecently interfering with a corpse'.



The Judge examines the law, case precedents, the legal meaning of indecency and concludes that the conduct of the men in eating the body was neither improper or indecent behaviour, being normal and reasonable behaviour for them living in an area of limited pacification. The judge finds the men have not broken the law by eating the corpse because there was no law to break. They are acquitted of all charges.

Later, after flying the seven ex-cannibals home, now all wearing shorts, t-shirts and loaded with baggage after a shopping spree in BPs, the kiap's boss, an annoyed ADC, says "How the hell am I supposed to run a Sub-District full of cannibals if we can't bring them to trial?"

'Bamahuta' (meaning goodbye in Motu) is a little disjointed to follow, but an often funny account of a kiap's life in the final years leading up to independence. The book got good reviews on an ex-kiap forum.

Alan Brooke



Photograph taken on the occasion of visiting Curators and Executives of the Royal Historical Association, the Australian Water Transport Association; the South African Military Veterans Association of Australia; and Queensland Ambulance Heritage and History to the Museum, Wacol on 2nd September 2023.

Caption: left to right: Maj General John Pearn; Dr Ruth Kerr; Gordon Meikle; Don Hacker; Paul Brown; Phillip Ainsworth; Dr Denver Beanland; Stephen Sheaffe; and Matthew Rowe.

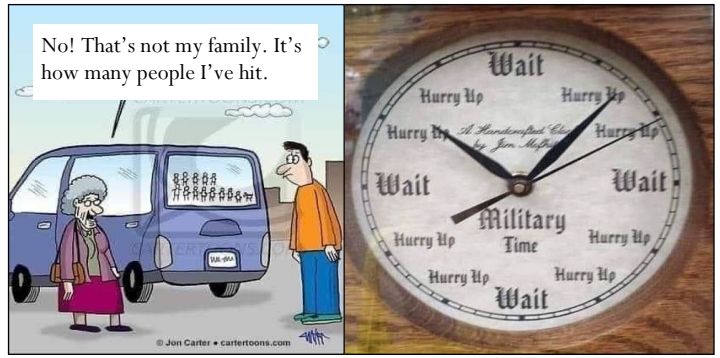
Eleven people were hanging on a rope, under a helicopter. 10 men and 1 woman.

The rope was not strong enough to carry them all, so they decided that one had to leave, because otherwise they were all going to fall.

They weren't able to choose that person, until the woman gave a very touching speech.

She said that she would voluntarily let go of the rope, because, as a woman, she was used to giving up everything for her husband and kids or for men in general, and was used to always making sacrifices with little in return.

As soon as she finished her speech, all the men started clapping



VALE Lt William (Bill) L Bickerton

NS7278 / 860284 22.9.1938— 29/8/2023

Bill was born in East Victoria Park, WA. He attended school locally and was involved in the Scouting movement, later in life becoming a Scout Leader. He did an apprenticeship as a boiler-maker/welder.

In 1956 he did National Service in the RAN—6 months full time then 5 years in the Reserves. He was a boiler attendant/stoker on HMAS Fremantle and visited a number of overseas countries, including Papua and New Guinea.

He worked in Kalgoolie goldfields, BHP shipyards Whyalla, and when he married Syliva Smith in 1962 moved to Port Moresby with Dept Works. Caron was born in 1964.

In 1963 he joined the PNGVR in Port Moresby as part of his National Service obligation. He served in D Coy and Support Coy and when commissioned in 1966 as PI Comd of the Assault Pioneer PI. During his time with the Assault Pioneers they carried out a number of civil aid projects, including Kido Village in the Papuan Gulf where they prevented seawater coming into the lagoon behind the village, and a bridge across Brown River.

In PNG Bill worked on projects such as Rouna Hydro Electric, Madang Powerhouse, Ramu Hydro, Bulolo Valley Hydro and Goroka Hydro.

In 1972 Bill and Syliva returned to Perth where he worked on the new Naval base at Garden Island and Darwin after Cyclone Tracey, then in the aboriginal settlement of Cundeleele.

He had stayed in PNGVR until 1972 and then transferred to 13 Field Sqn, RAE, until his discharge in 1973.

1981-86 they moved to Sydney where Bill had a number of jobs and then to the Gold Coast.

While on the Gold Coast Bill was on the Association Committee and was the Welfare Officer.

He was awarded Citizen of the year, Gold Coast, 2001.

After the death of his wife Sylvia in 2001 Bill worked in many countries as a Humanitarian aid Engineer with several international agencies including Care Australia, Save the Children (US), Catholic Relief Services (US) and the International Office of Migration (I.O.M. - UN).



Bill and Sylvia at PNGVR Dining Night, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, 1999.

His work has included construction of roads and bridges, thousands of permanent concrete and brick houses, medical clinics,



schools, clean drinking water systems, open channel farm water systems, market buildings, children's playgrounds and a three story hospital in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

The countries that he worked in include East Timor, Afghanistan-2 ½ years (Kandahar city, Herat and Mazar-esharif), Pakistan, Indonesia/Sumatra/Aceh after the 2004 tsunami – 5 years, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman and more.

For a portion of this work Bill was awarded -The Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal (East Timor clasp)

Bill lived in Thailand for some years then spent the latter years of his life at Manjimup, W.A.

LEST WE FORGET



Bill with the PNGVR soldier display he set up at the RSL Museum in Manjimup, W,A, where he spent his latter years.

VALE Maj Bruce William JOHNSON
1713996 / 859851 Dec 1935- 20/8/2023

Bruce was born in Brisbane and had two brothers Keith and Robin. He enjoyed an active youth and spent a lot of time surfing at the Gold Coast.

Bruce was working as a shipping agent in Brisbane when called up for National Service in 11 Training Bn, Wacol, Brisbane in 1955. After initial training he was posted to 51 Inf Bn and, when he joined Steamships, Port Moresby in 1957, trans-

ferred as Temp. Sgt to HQ Coy, PNGVR.

He married Greta in 1959 in Longford, Tasmania. They had two daughters, Susan, born in Port Moresby and Lyn, born in Tasmania.

He was commissioned in PNGVR in 1960 and in July 1961 was appointed as a PI Comd in the newly formed D. Coy.

He was involved in several incidents whilst in PNGVR—see “Laloki River Incident” and “Plantation Papuan Black Incident” in the book “PNGVR—a History. 1951-1973”.

In 1963 Bruce transferred from PNGVR to CSTU, Tasmania, on leaving PNG. He later served with 40th Bn., Royal Tasmanian Regiment and retired in 1983 with rank of Major. During the Derwent River Bridge disaster in 1975 he was involved in the organisation of Military craft to assist civilians being able to cross the Derwent until sufficient civilian craft became available.

After moving to SE Qld in the 1980's Bruce became aware of our Association, joined and attended as many functions as possible.

After his move to Brisbane Bruce started a business called Hansa Chippers which proved to be a successful venture.



Bruce as a National Serviceman 1954

enabling Lyn and husband Eugene to buy into the business and grow the business even more.

He also purchased a property at Cooroy/Eumundi and enjoyed many years developing the grounds, planting trees and improving the cottage.

Bruce developed Parkinsons and eventually he had to go into care in St Lukes's Green, Woolloongabba, Qld.

He was adventurous on his motorised scooter and one day took it from St. Luke's in Woolloongabba to the Bronco's Club in Red Hill. He did go a bit of the way by train, but late in the afternoon Sue & Lyn got a call from him to say his scooter had run out of battery but he wasn't sure where he actually was... Sue & Lyn eventually found him and the scooter and had to transport them both back to Woolloongabba!



Bruce at a Field Dining Night, Jimboomba, 2003.

He was a positive thinker - always looking to the next adventure or opportunity. Even in his last couple of months he told Lyn that he thought he'd like to go to Bali!

Phil Ainsworth and Bob Collins attended his fu-

neral as Association representatives and Phil gave an interesting and sometimes humorous account of Bruce's Military Service.

Bruce had a keen sense of humour, was a dedicated family man, soldier and Association Member.

LEST WE FORGET



Kieran Nelson, Phil Ainsworth, Bruce Johnson, Bob Collins. Kokoda Memorial Day, Cascade Gardens, Gold Coast, 2016. Although being restricted to a motorised scooter at the time Bruce had travelled from his home at Main Beach the day prior to polish all the brass plaques for the ceremony.

Police were summoned to a day care centre where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.



A sign used in Australia to advise that slow drivers are about to temporarily increase their speed



The Official flag of 2020

**Don't Forget
Saturday 21 October, 2023.**

Lunch to mark the 50th Anniversary of the disbandment of the Papua New Guinea Rifles (PNGVR)

PNGVR was formed 1n 1951 and during it's time in PNG had depots at Port Moresby, Rabaul, Lae, Goroka, Madang, Wewak, Mt Hagen, Banz, Kainantu, Samarai and Wau.

It was disbanded on 31 Dec 1973, prior to Independence.

To mark the 50th anniversary of its disbandment, a mixed lunch at the Everymans Hut in the Museum precinct will be held on Saturday 21 October, 2023, following the Association's Annual General Meeting.

Acceptance to Treasurer Kieran Nelson by 7th October. Cost will be \$40 p.p. with monies paid into Association Account BSB 064006—A/c number 10001126

The Association would like to thank KING & Co Property Consultants for its continuing support, including the printing of this edition, together with the past 83 issues of Harim Tok Tok. Its contribution is much appreciated.



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

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/ngvrandpngvrilitarymuseum/>

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.

FUNCTION DATES

Sat 7 October Sat 4 November

Museum Open 10am—1pm. Come along and see the new exhibits. Exhibits are constantly being altered.

Sat 14 October Sat 9 December

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

Sat 21 October

10am. Annual General Meeting at the Museum to be followed by lunch in Everymans Hut to mark the 50th anniversary of the disbandment of PNGVR on 31 Dec 1973.

See notice on previous column and attached flyer.

An Invitation to the 50th Anniversary of PNGVR's Disbandment

You and your wife/partner are invited to join us at the 50th Anniversary luncheon to mark the disbandment of the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR) on 31st December 1973.

This luncheon will be held in Everyman's Hut, Wacol Military Precinct, 97 Boundary Road, Wacol, Brisbane, 4076 on Saturday 21st October 2023.



The luncheon will be preceded by the Association's Annual General Meeting commencing 10am sharp which will be held in the NGVR Memorial Museum. The AGM will last no longer than one hour and you are welcome to attend.

If you do not wish to attend the AGM, come along about 11 am for a pre-luncheon drink and a chat. The two course, sit down, buffet luncheon will be held in the adjacent Everyman's Hut and will commence at 12:30 pm.

A brief informative discussion about PNGVR will accompany the luncheon. There will be plenty of time to chat with your friends before, during and after and still be home before dark. There is easy parking on site for the Museum and Everyman's Hut. Both facilities and in between are wheelchair accessible.

There is a charge of \$40 per person for the luncheon: drinks will be available at a cash bar.



Everyman's Hut

Please contact either:

Paul Brown at 0402 644181 or paulbrown475@gmail.com or
Colin Gould at 0424 562 030 or pngvr@optus.com.au
by 10 October 2023 if you are interested in attending,

Payment is by electronic transfer directly to NGVR & PNGVR Association

BSB: 064 006

Account number: 10001126

ensuring an adequate reference is used so the transaction may be traced

Please also send a confirmatory email to kierannelson@bigpond.com.

Dress for the occasion is Anzac Day Dress with full medals for members and smart casual for partners and friends.



NGVR Memorial Museum

PNGVR was a militia (Citizens Military Force) battalion formed in 1951 and disbanded in December 1973, prior to PNG Independence. PNGVR's parent unit was the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR), the militia battalion which faced the Japanese at Rabaul and did valuable front line work on the New Guinea mainland during the first six months of the Pacific War.

NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES
EX MEMBERS ASSOCIATION INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—Saturday 21 October 2023 at the Wacol Museum
2023/2024 NOMINATION FORM

MEMBER NOMINATED:.....

COMMITTEE POSITION NOMINATED FOR:.....

(Positions:- PRESIDENT; VICE-PRESIDENT ; SECRETARY; TREASURER;
& up to 8 COMMITTEE MEMBERS (Total Executive Committee of 12).

NOMINATED BY: (Print).....SIGNATURE/DATE.....

SECONDED BY: (Print).....SIGNATURE/DATE.....

NB: Nominations, in writing, to be forwarded to the Secretary by 11th October 2023

Only former members of NGVR and/or PNGVR who are financial members may nominat-
ed & seconded for election to the Executive Committee.

Post to: The Secretary NGVR/PNGVR Assoc. PO Box 885 PARK RIDGE Q 4125

Email: pngvr@optusnet.com.au

NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA
VOLUNTEER RIFLES EX MEMBERS ASSOCIATION INC.

2023
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
PROXY FORM

I, of
(Financial Member's name) (Address)

being a financial Member of the above named Association, hereby appoint

..... of
(Member's name) (Address)

as my PROXY to vote for me on my behalf at the 2023 Annual General Meeting to be held on
Saturday the 21st October 2023 at the NGVR/PNGVR Museum at Wacol.

Signed:..... Date:.....
(NB Proxy's close 10.00 am on the day of the A.G.M.)

Post to: The Secretary, PO Box 885, PARK RIDGE, Queensland. 4125

Email: pngvr@optusnet.com.au