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NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES EX-MEMBERS ASSOCIATION INC

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

The activities since the last edition of HTT include the Federal Parliamentary resolution recognizing the civilian and military victims of the Montevideo Maru on 21 June, the 22 June meeting at the AWM to discuss the proposed MVM national memorial, an Association Committee meeting on 26 June, our Association's MVM memorial service on 1 July in the Brisbane Cenotaph, a working bee at our Museum on 10 July, several group visits to the Museum on 21 and 24 July, a 28 July visit to the Museum by the President and Committee members of the PNGAA and representation at the Gold Coast and Indooroopilly/Sherwood RSL's Kokoda Memorial Services.

The following two sections were lifted from the July edition of the MVM newsletter:

At last, recognition & resolution

MONDAY 21 JUNE proved an historic day with Australia's Parliament for the first time offering regrets for the Montevideo Maru tragedy.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence personnel, Hon Alan Griffin, expressed regret to 350 veterans, relatives and friends gathered in Parliament House on behalf of the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament. "I would like to express our sincere regret and sorrow for the tragedy that occurred with the sinking of the Montevideo Maru on 1 July 1942,"

Mr Griffin said. "I would especially like to acknowledge the great emotional suffering of the families and friends they left behind. These people endured many long and painful years waiting for news of their loved ones and they deserve to be remembered." Mr Griffin said the Australian Government will continue to work with the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society to ensure the Montevideo Maru remains a part of the of the nation's living history.

Shadow Minister, Louise Markus, said it was an "important day, tinged with sadness for survivors and families of the lost. Equally, it is a day for Australia to remember and commemorate those who gave their lives and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Sixty-eight years is a long time to wait for such a moment," she said.

Ahead: the permanent memorial

'We commit \$100,000 to the construction of a national memorial' – Hon Alan Griffin, MP. The Federal Government has given \$100,000 towards the construction of a memorial at the Australian War Memorial. This is the first significant step in providing enduring national recognition of the Montevideo Maru tragedy. The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial project is slated for completion by July 2012, the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru, and is expected to have a budget of \$400-500,000 dollars.

"The Society needs to begin serious fundraising," said President Keith Jackson. "We're working with the Australian War Memorial to ensure an appropriate monument is designed and constructed. "The AWM's job is to find a good site for the memorial in its grounds; it's up to us to find the money." Mr Jackson said that so far the Society has relied on donations from Friends and pro bono assistance to ensure it meets its running costs, "which have so far and will continue to be minimal." "The vast bulk of money we receive will go towards the memorial. The Society's operations are based on free labour, philanthropy and altruism. "We have now reached a point where we need to charge for membership, seek corporate sponsors and stage fundraising events to ensure the memorial can be built within a reasonable time," he said. "The government has provided a generous initial contribution, but it is not nearly enough to get a memorial nation's living history."

The 26 June Committee meeting was well attended and followed the usual format with working bee, lunch and meeting. All members are invited to attend these meetings.

A new computer has been purchased for the Secretary and after some difficulty most data has been recovered from the previous one which just crashed. Paul Brown is well advanced on fabricating the proposed museum ramp off site for installation in the coming few months for which assistance will be required.

After discussion and with permission from the NSAAQ, for which we are grateful, it was decided to hold the AGM on Saturday 16 October 2010 in the NSAAQ Chapel adjacent to our Military Museum at Wacol. The AGM will be preceded by an opening of the Museum and a Bar-b-q luncheon with the meeting scheduled for a 1315 hours start. Please advise this date and advise the Secretary of your attendance now so our catering staff will be run off their feet. More details and the necessary notice and proxy forms are inserted elsewhere in this HTT.

Our annual Montevideo Maru Memorial Service was held 1 July when over 35 members, friends and relatives of the victims attended. It was presided over by our Padre, the Rev. Allan McFarland and Paul Brown. Representatives of the POW Association, War Widows Guild of Queensland and the Salvation Army were present. PNG Consul General Paul Nerau gave his apologies as he was away from Brisbane. The ceremony was followed by the usual morning tea in the adjoining RSL rooms. It is pleasing to have our Padre back and officiating at our services.

Although the Association decided not to attend this years Reserve Forces Day March on 4 July, I understand 2 or 3 members attended and reported a low attendance. This was probably due to the usual lack of advertising

and the late notice of arrangements. This annual Brisbane event is not given the significance which is even to similar marches in the southern capitals. A reorganising of the event committee and its arrangements would assist to correct the non recognition.

A well attended Museum working bee on 10 July saw the place cleaned up and exhibits freshened. Additional furniture has been received from our sponsor King & Co and another mannequin dressed up in Bruce Inch's, previously I believe Joe Fisk's, mess dress installed. This is a piece of art – it turns and is lit with lights in its base. All the good work done by the working bee was appreciated by the Sunnybank RSL group visit of 10 on 21 July and the Macarthur Museum group of about 20 on 24 July.

Dennis Doyle, President and committee members Andrea Williams, who is also the editor of the Uno Voca, and Phil Ainsworth of the PNGAA (Papua New Guinea Association of Australia) which boast a membership of just under 2000 Australasian wide visited the museum with a view to providing future assistance to the museum. The PNGAA, a growing organisation and is potentially a succession candidate for the running of our Museum. Dennis and Andrea were impressed with the Museum and its exhibits and understand the significance of the collection. The PNGAA Committee is holding a meeting and a work shop in the form of a SWOT exercise in Sydney on 28 August to discuss its governance, which is Sydney-centric at present, and its activities to consider their relevance and new directions. I will be attending.

The Association was invited to and attended the Gold Coast RSL and the Indooroopilly / Sherwood RSL Kokoda Memorial Services Saturday 6 August. Gerry McGrade and Jesse Chee represented us on the Gold Coast while Paul Brown and Tom Dowling did the job at Corinda. PNG Consul General Paul Nerau also attended the Corinda service.

*Continued page 11 ...*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
ALAN DUNWOODIE	2
PNGVR HISTORY	6
MABEL HOLLAND'S OBIT.	7
FLASHBACK	8
GOROKA BIVOUAC 1966	9
PIR NEWS	10
NEWS	11

## WW11 EXPERIENCES Alan Kirby DUNWOODIE

NG 2336 / NGX 423

I was born in Bowral, N.S.W., on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1921. I was the youngest of three boys. My father was a builder who experienced difficult times during the Great Depression years. I have always used the expression 'we ate the house' during those years, as he mortgaged the house to the hilt so that the family could eat.

I was really the 'picinnini' of the family – dad was 6 feet tall, both my brothers were also 6 feet tall, my two sons are 6 feet tall and I am 5 ft 9ins tall. Consequently I quickly learned to say 'yes please' and 'no thanks'.

I attended Bowral primary and high school, and on leaving school joined the Bank of New South Wales. In those days a bond of 50 pounds (\$100) had to be produced prior to joining the Bank and several local businessmen in Bowral came to the family aid and guaranteed the bond.

### I leave home for the first time.

I commenced work in Bega much to my delight as this was the first time I had been away from home. Dad was not a teetotaler however our home was a very conservative one – there were certainly no wild parties at home. At Bega I lived in a guest house, 'Yoothapina', with 15 other fellows and 5 women. As a matter of interest after I retired my wife and I went caravanning around Australia and visited Bega exactly 40 years to the day after I first went there and the guest house was still there.

I was at Bega for two years after which I was placed on relief staff. The only relief I carried out was one of 6 weeks in Canberra.

One day the Manager called out 'Dunwoodie!' and I must confess I was a little worried when I went into his office as I thought I must be in trouble for something. However he opened the conversation with "Dunwoodie, I spent some time up in Darwin, which was very pleasant, and I am pleased to advise you that the Bank has seen fit to send you to Wau in New Guinea".

I then had a medical and embarked on my first big boat trip. Prior to that I had only ever been on a Manly ferry.

### Movement to Wau, New Guinea

I had a first class cabin on the 'Neptuna'. This was in August, 1941, and the war with Germany was already in progress. The trip was a very pleasant one at the time although it now has some unpleasant memories for me as, on the ship with me, was Keith Paul (NGVR - NG 4063) who was bound for Rabaul and was later killed in the Toll massacre (After the fall of Rabaul Australian soldiers and some civilians streamed down both the North and South coasts of New Britain. At Toll Plantation, on the South Coast, some 150 Australian soldiers surrendered to the Japanese and were brutally massacred either by bayoneting, shooting or being beheaded, and Keith was one of these). I was always amazed at Keith's attitude as he often said to me on the trip "You know we'll never get out of this" and, at times, he was terribly depressed.

We sailed directly from Sydney to Salamaua and the

scene as we steamed into Salamaua Harbour about 3pm when everything was dead still, except for a Junkers aircraft taking off from Salamaua airstrip, remains with me as one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever witnessed. I mention here that the Japs tricked everyone when they landed as they landed on the open side of the Salamaua Isthmus.

At this stage I might add that the 'Neptuna' was in Darwin harbour loaded with explosives when the Japanese air raid on Darwin occurred and she was hit by a bomb and blown apart and sunk. In a strange twist it was the Japanese who eventually raised her and took her back as scrap to Japan.

We were taken ashore in lighters and I was met by Alan Moore (NGVR – NG2122), the Accountant at the Bank in Salamaua, who introduced me to the other Bank staff and we went to the Hotel for a meal. I still remember my fright when, during this, my first meal in New Guinea, a black arm came over my shoulder.

The next morning I was taken to the airstrip for the flight to Wau and there, on the tarmac, was an old tri-motor Ford aircraft. I stuck my head in and there were 2 natives sitting on about 3 tons of bagged rice. I climbed in and sat with them, but when the pilot, who had gone into town, came back he said to me "Don't sit there. Come up into the co-pilot's seat". Frankly, if you had put your hand out the window the propeller would have chopped it off. We took off into cloud and we just kept going up and up, still in cloud. At one stage I looked down and saw the ocean and then realised that we were just gaining height. As I found out later the mountains go straight up behind Salamaua and between Salamaua and Wau there is one mountain 10,000 feet high where the Black Cat mine was. The gap is right beside this mountain and, after going through the gap the Bulolo Valley opens out. It was quite an experience for a young lad having his first flight to land at Wau. The airstrip at Wau is very steep, having a difference of some 300 feet in height between the two ends and, of course, you have to land up hill. I thought we were going to fly straight into the strip when the pilot heaved the controls back and we landed and ran up hill.

### Pre War life in Wau.

The staff at the Bank of New South Wales had been reduced from 9 to 7 as a result of the fewer number of residents in Wau.

Bobby (Bossy) Byrne was the perfect Manager. He had great control over the staff and was a well balanced man. He had one eye darker than the other and I recall that, when he looked at our beer book on the mess – The Bank Lounge room (we had a beer fridge and when you took out a beer you had to sign for it), the boys would say "Look out! Bossy's got his black eye on". All staff slept on the Bank premises and we had our meals at the Bottom Hotel.

Dudley Blyton (NGVR – NG 2328) was the Accountant, John 'Moosie' Brown (NGVR –NG2208), Horace 'Lachie' Harris (NGVR – NG2219). Jim Birrell (NGVR – NG2201), Gerry Monk (NGVR –NG2295) – Gerry had just arrived from Madang Branch, were the staff at the time.

The Bank was in a weatherboard building with a verandah and the Expatriate staff came in through the front door of the Branch while the local customers came around the side.

Bulolo / Wau was a big gold producing area and the Bank posted all gold direct to the Mint in Melbourne. The locals would come around the side and give me a parcel of gold. I would ask "Wanam Masta bilong yu?" (who is your master?). They would then dump the gold, the Manager and the Accountant would weigh it and give the local a 'ticket' (receipt). I would then post the gold bag.

This was what I called my gold claim. I would turn the empty bags inside out and carefully shake them onto blotting paper. I had a paint brush which I used to brush everything that came out into one pile and then gently blow away the dust and the lighter material. The gold would stay on the blotting paper and I would carefully pour my tiny pieces of gold into a jar. By doing this I eventually amassed an extremely small amount in the jar, but lost it later while moving about with NGVR.

Wau had a small 6 hole golf course and I would hit off the first tee with my servant acting as caddy. I had a bad slice and, in Wau, when you got off the fairway you were in big trouble, so I would sent Coonong, my caddy out to where I would invariably go with the instruction to 'lukim gut'. I always went off the fairway on the first and by the time I got up to where the ball had gone Coonong would say "Mi lukim masta" and pick the ball up between his toes and put it back on the fairway.

We used to go to the movies regularly and there were always a few parties at the Wau Club. There was a Haus Drink (Hotel) at the top end up the hill, one at the bottom end, and the Wau Club. There were always parties on at the mess also.

I recall early in the piece at the Bank Lounge room an amusing (to me at the time) incident. Remember I had just turned 20. The first Saturday afternoon I spent at the Club the ladies were sitting in the lounge having a quiet drink when a native boi walked in. One of the staff asked him "Masta bilong yu istap where?" to which the boi immediately replied in a loud voice "Em istap long shithouse Masta!"

One of the fellows I replaced at the Bank, George Whitbread, was engaged to a schoolteacher in Wau. Unfortunately she was murdered. This caused George to sit in his room all night with the light on and a loaded gun nearby so the Bank decided to get him out as fast as they could. I only knew him for a few weeks until he left.

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in December, 1941, things in New Guinea became serious, and the Administration decided to evacuate all women and children.

After the women and children got out anyone who was sick was evacuated and this went on until there were only fit males left in Wau

The signal for an air attack was to be the ringing of the church bell. On the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1942, it rang and Bossie Byrne came out of his office and announced "Martial law has been invoked, civilian law is finished and the Bank is closed". Obviously this was why the church

bell had been rung but it gave everyone the jitters, thinking that there was an air raid about to commence.

At the time there was a Chinese paying a deposit into the Bank. Horrie Harris, the teller, was about half way through taking the deposit but, on hearing the announcement, pushed the money back and said "The Bank is closed!" The Chinese pushed it back again with the comment "You take!" This "you take" went on for some time with the money going backwards and forwards, but Horrie won in the end and the Chinese had to take his money away.

Up to this time all the Branches in New Guinea, Rabaul, Madang and Lae had been sending their silver to Wau for safekeeping up in the mountains and the Bank was literally bulging with silver.

It was then decided that the silver would be smelted down into ingots as there was a lot of machinery for this purpose in Wau, a gold mining town. Bossie Byrne and a couple of people from the Administration went off to do this and Bossie said later "It was wonderful to see natives shovelling silver into the gold retort and practically crying. It was not surprising considering that an average native earned about 6 shillings and rations a month.

This smelting became such a slow process that it was halted after a short time, and it was fortunate that it did, as the silver was used by the Army at a later stage.

At the time there was a lot of talk about whether we would be called up or whether we would just go bush and sit out the war.

### **I join New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR)**

I arrived in Wau in August, 1941, and was called up for service with NGVR on 22nd January, 1942.

I was not given a medical but was required to fill out a form and was taken to the Club and sworn in.

Immediately after that we were taken in a truck as close as possible to Bulolo, but the road was closed and we had to walk the rest of the way. It was here that we were sworn into the Army.

It was while we were training in Bulolo that we heard aircraft and looked up to see a flight of Japanese flying boats go overhead and let a load of bombs go into Wau. Fortunately we had moved out as we would have been in trouble, as even though the quarters in Wau did not receive a direct hit the picture theatre was left on an angle. This was next door to the Bank and the quarters and all the windows had been blown out.

While we were in Bulolo training an unfortunate incident occurred. We used to receive aiming practice on the .303 rifle by having an instructor lie on the ground facing the muzzle of the rifle and he would advise whether you were sighting correctly using some tool he had made up. It appears that a live round was mixed up in the blank rounds and the instructor was shot at point blank range when the trigger was pulled.

I was put into the Vickers Gun Section. It is my opinion that mostly at the time the Vickers was useless as it needs a range of some 600-800 yards before the cone



### NGVR Vickers Gun Platoon

This photo was developed by a member of the Platoon who had no experience at developing photos and with whatever materials he could scrounge.

The spots are original.

Back 4th from L. Fred Still

2nd from R Erik Gaude

Front from L. Ted Blakey,

Walter Chapman. Lt Reg Plumb (PI Comd), Thomas Zoffman, **Alan Dunwoodie**

of fire spreads sufficiently for it to be fully effective as an area weapon. The type of country we operated in would not allow for a range of over 600 yards very often.

We used to drill by moving along and someone would call "Aircraft right" or 'Aircraft left' and we would jump around and aim our rifles in that direction. On the morning after the raid on Wau we all agreed that this was pretty stupid as it was obvious that in the event of an air raid we would all be down on the ground with our heads well down. Capt Umphelby called out 'Aircraft left' one morning, and all the chaps, about 30 of us, took off and lay on the ground. Capt Umphelby was a good scout and took this as a joke himself.

We soon found out that firing the Vickers gun with shorts on was a most uncomfortable experience. You had to sit down behind the gun to fire it and the spent casings, still red hot, would fall down and burn not only your bare legs, but would also fall down the legs of the shorts and burn other parts as well. We then started to wear long trousers when firing the Vickers. I must say you felt very powerful when firing the Vickers as, when firing across a gully, you would see your target, say a stump, just literally disintegrate.

### Move to Mubo

After a couple of weeks basic training we were moved down to Mubo.

Here we went out on a number of patrols just to get the feel of the country. The numbers in the patrols varied from a maximum of 8 to a minimum of 2. Even at this early stage blokes were going down with malaria, our food was not great and we often had to make do with 2, 3 or 4 in a patrol.

I recall one day while out on patrol we were having a break and I was sitting down on the track just around a corner from two of the older fellows and I overheard one of them say "I wonder just how long the young bloke will last?"

Our Vickers Section was living in the Church at Mubo. The church had pews made out of planks and I very quickly went out, cut some kunda (cane) and bound two of them together to make a bed.

One Sunday morning I looked out of the church and saw a native running up the track. I knew him to be one of our chap's servant and that the chap was down in the forward area near Salamaua, so thought "Oh! Oh! Here's trouble". Sure enough the Japanese had landed on the sea side of Salamaua the night previously.

We had a Section in Salamaua keeping an eye on things and the night before, Frank Keenan was on duty at 3am and decided to check the sea side before going off watch to make sure all was clear. Sure enough he saw something out there and the next thing he knew he was being chased by machine gun fire. The Section had an old Vauxhall or Morris car which was notoriously hard to start, and which I believe would not start at all the day before. Fortunately for them it started first time that night and they took off.

It was at Mubo that we were all ordered to shave. We thought it was a bit of a silly order so we then indented for razors, razor blades, shaving soap and mirrors etc. Naturally the supply system could not supply these so the order was just ignored.

Some months later we had a concert one night. It is marvellous the number of talented people you get in any group and a song had been composed about the Japanese landing. One of our people, Peter someone, had left his false teeth in a jug of water beside his bed in a house at Salamaua when the Japs landed and the song went

"When he heard those barking gnats (guns),

Peter pissed off without his tatts" (teeth)

The amazing sequel to this is that the next day he sent his native servant back into Salamaua and the native went into the hotel, retrieved the teeth and calmly walked out again.

Before the Japanese landing at Salamaua we had raided the stores there and carried as much gear and food as we could back to Mubo. The sad thing is that the natives carried bags of flour up all that way only to have them get wet and then grow whiskers. Most of the flour had to be thrown into the creek.

Even with the food we had taken from Salamaua food at Mubo was not good. We had no milk, no butter and no sugar and I can tell you that life gets very uninteresting when you have to eat boi biscuits (great big square things) that you had to stand on the edge and slit in two with your bayonet to be able to even toast them. We then had huge tins of vegemite that we used to slap on these biscuits and that was our main diet. We did get some Spam and this was the first time I had seen Spam.

Capt Umphelby was in charge at Mubo and there were about 30 of us all up there at the time.

We used to patrol out from Mubo on a three day basis. The first patrol would be a patrol down to Komiatum which overlooked Salamaua and was important as we believed the Japs would have to come past here to get to Wau and Bulolo. We would leave Mubo at daylight and go to Komiatum, and that afternoon we would leave Komiatum with just on 2/3 hours of daylight left, which was just enough time for us to get back to Mubo at a fast walk. The second day's patrol was to Lababia Ridge which was also an observation post, but very steep and we would struggle just to get up. Coming down was even more hilarious as we would bounce from tree to tree. You picked a small tree and used it as an aiming point coming down, otherwise you would end up falling down. These were pretty hard patrols as the going was very tough and we did not waste time.

The third day was spent carrying out guard duty at Mubo. It was the night guard duty which was hard. At first there would be two of us on and often we would get a soft voice from Headquarters saying "We can hear you from here – don't talk".

Eventually the order was given that, as we would not stop talking at night only one at a time would be on guard duty. That was bad as you looked out and your imagination played games with you – fireflies looked like lamps coming up the track etc. We would be on shifts of two hours on and four off when on guard duty.

### **The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Independent Company arrives.**

Towards the end of 1941 the Australian Army began using the services of specialist British instructors to train special forces for the Australian Army. These men were trained in secret training areas away from centres of population and areas such as Wilsons Promontory in Victoria were selected.

The original plan was to send these Independent Companies to England and the Middle East, however, following Pearl Harbour and with the threat that Japan represented to Australia the Prime Minister, John Curtin, insisted these troops be used in the defence of Australia.

Consequently they were posted to various Islands to the North of Australia where it was necessary to establish isolated outposts which could warn of Japanese troop movements.

The 2/5 Independent Company, under the command of Major Paul Kneen arrived in Port Moresby on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1942, on their way to the Bulolo Valley where they were to co-operate with the NGVR. Their role was to keep close to the Japanese in the Salamaua and Markham

Valley areas and to raid and hinder the Japanese wherever possible.

The 2/5 Independent Company comprised approx 25 Officers and 300 Other ranks. Together with NGVR they constituted Kanga Force, under the command of Lt Col N.L. Fleay. Lt Col Fleay used to call me 'Meggsie' because of the colour of my hair – he would go past and say "G'day Meggsie, how's it going?" In fact on one occasion he was passing while I was getting my hair cut with a pair of nail clippers and just couldn't stop himself – he helped with the cutting.

Interestingly enough I attended a 2/5<sup>th</sup> reunion after the War and the men were very disappointed in Lt Col Fleay, as, after the War, he ignored them completely and never attended a reunion or contacted any of them.

Whilst the 2/5<sup>th</sup> had been well trained there were still a number of unfortunate accidents. Before they left Bulolo they lost two men killed by Tommy Guns and down at Mubo lost another when he pulled the pin on an instantaneous grenade thinking that it was a timed fuse.

The first section to reach us at Mubo arrived on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1942. They boasted to us about all the tough training they had undertaken at Wilsons Promontory, so we took them out on patrol up Lababia Ridge and I think we nearly killed a couple of them. They were unaccustomed to such steep climbs, but quickly gained their fitness.



*Rfn Alan Dunwoodie*

*To be continued ...*

**Alan's story as told to Bob Collins**

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## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA VOLUNTEER RIFLES**

**UNIT HISTORY 1950-Mar 1953.**

**By Lt Col N.P. Maddern M.B.E.**

**Cont. from last issue**

### **GOC's VISIT AND FIRST CEREMONIAL PARADE.**

At the request of His Honour the Administrator, CO PNGVR arranged to put on a combined ceremonial parade on the occasion of the King's Birthday 1951. The units parading were the PNGVR, PIR and the Royal Pap-

uan Constabulary.

The GOC N Comd, Maj Gen V C SECOMBE CBE notified his intention of visiting the Territory during the same period.

Units commenced training and arrangements were made for a rehearsal at SOGERI, in the mountains 27 miles from PORT MORESBY on the Sunday prior to the parade on the ELA Beach oval, PORT MORESBY. The GOC was to witness the rehearsal since he would not be in PORT MORESBY for the ELA Beach parade.

The setting at SOGERI was magnificent – a beautiful grassed parade ground on the banks of a river and surrounded by green kunai hills.

The parade did justice to the setting. The khaki clad PNGVR with white belts and gaiters, green clad native troops of the PIR, and Royal Papuan Constabulary with their black cloth smocks with scarlet edging made a more colourful display perhaps than has been seen in the Commonwealth.

General SECOMBE was most enthusiastic and stated that it was the best parade he had seen. The PNGVR troops had no equal outside of regular regiments in his opinion.

It would be difficult indeed for any unit to produce the standard in physique and intelligence represented by the 64 PNGVR men on parade that day.

After the parade, GOC N Comd departed for RABAUL, MANUS, LAE, WEWAK and WAU accompanied by CO PNGVR.

The GOC was again impressed by the PNGVR at RABAUL and LAE. The unit was riding the crest of a wave in recruiting, attendances and continuity in thorough basic training.

In RABAUL the block of land in MANGO Avenue on which it was intended to build a PNGVR training depot was refused on the grounds that it was too small and by arrangement with the Trustees of the recreation reserve and the District Commissioner, a section of the recreation reserve was made available.

In MANUS, 1 Aust War Crimes Unit had almost completed its task. Several days were spent disposing of their accumulation of stores. The Administration hospital at LORENGAU was outfitted with hospital beds and bedside lockers and a great deal of furniture was handed over for Administration married quarters.

En route to WEWAK, the aircraft landed at AITAPE to permit the GOC and CO PNGVR to visit AITAPE. A check was made there on reports of so-called 'Indonesian Infiltration' across the Dutch New Guinea border. The patrol officer at AITAPE and the local inhabitants were amused at the reports and confirmed that fears on this score were groundless.

At WEWAK, an investigation was made into the possibility of establishing a Pacific Islands Regiment Company at VANIMO, 13 miles from the Dutch New Guinea border. This possibility had been discussed with District Commissioners in each centre, and all were in favour of the project.

In LAE, for which CO PNGVR had developed an aversion, a meeting of the RSSAILA sub-branch was addressed by the GOC, Group Captain T CARR, AOC NE Area who had accompanied the GOC, and CO PNGVR. It was a disorderly meeting characterized by rude questions and a dictatorial attitude on the part of RSL members. Once previously and during a later visit by the Minister of the Army, CO PNGVR was to witness similar unfortunate proceedings which did nothing to enhance the prestige of the RSSAILA.

WAU was a very pleasant interlude. The RSSAILA was hospitable – not that the organisation can be criticized anywhere for its excellent hospitality – and most constructive in its comments on the proposed PNGVR platoon. However, while the ex-servicemen were enthusiastic, apparently none intended to enlist but all were anxious to lend their moral support.

CO PNGVR had already visited WAU and had a fairly accurate knowledge of those who intended to enlist. Two only of the potential recruits (including one officer) were at the RSL meeting on the occasion of the GOC's visit.

This indeed indicated the unsound basis on which Major HOBBS had concluded that a CMF unit could be formed. He mistook enthusiasm at public meetings for intention to enlist, without a clear assessment of recruiting potential.

The GOC concluded his visit quite pleased with the Army in the Territory, both PNGVR and the infant PIR. He had been most annoyed to learn that Commissioner J S GRIMSHAW MC (Lt Col R of O) of the Royal Papuan Constabulary had commanded the combined ceremonial parade on the King's Birthday and was not mollified by the explanation that he had been asked to command on account of his co-operation with the Army in its early efforts to re-establish itself in the Territory.

#### RECRUITING AT WAU

Pm 9 Jun 51, CO & QM PNGVR proceeded to LAE to prepare for recruiting in WAU.

The two officers left for WAU by jeep and trailer on 11 Jun 51. Pte B A FOSTER – who had arrived in the Territory on 15 Apr 51 and been sent to LAE as a storeman the following week – followed on a NGG Coy diesel truck with 3 PI stores.

The 90 mile drive from the coast to the highlands was a very pleasant experience with a hint of adventure in fording swift flowing streams.

On arrival WAU was found to be torn by internecine strife. Mr Cyril ELDRED, in producing Lt G CORLIS as the only possible PI Comd, had deliberately ignored the presence in WAU of Lt J F DAVIS, an ex infantry officer. Mr ELDRED and DAVIS were enemies.

Since Mr ELDRED had widely publicized the appointment of Lt CORLIS, the general public in this small and isolated centre had split on the issue and had ranged themselves solidly behind the man of their choice, either DAVIS or CORLIS.

Men previously assessed as potential recruits declared

stoutly for or against one or the other, with refusal to enlist as the penalty for flouting their wishes. Advice on the capabilities of the two officers concerned was offered by many.

Since DAVIS appeared to be very capable and had the background of infantry experience, CO PNGVR decided to appoint him as PI Comd, with Lt CORLIS on the Regimental Reserve as deputy PI Comd. This appeared to satisfy everyone.

The use of the Memorial Hall, WAU, was obtained as a training depot at a nominal rental.

The recruiting campaign was pursued by personal contact and CO PNGVR visited the mine, businesses, and stopped young men on the roads.

Mr ELDRED, who had been so confident of an excellent response during April and May, decided that very few recruits would be obtained, and seemed to welcome the suggestion that the centre would not be opened if less than ten men enlisted on 16 Jun.

17 men enlisted, two of whom were whisked from their homes by Mr ELDRED when they did not appear voluntarily. Four recruits were miners from NGC mine at GOLDEN RIDGES. It was a disappointment when three excellent men (former PW's 8 Div) from KORANGS Gold Sluicing did not enlist, since they had had their fill of service during the war.

Training commenced at 0900 hrs 17 Jun 51.

After making arrangements for the transport of troops from the mines to parades, the recruiting team departed WAU on 18 Jun 51.

Lt CORLIS never played an active part and was returned to the R of O Sep 51.

#### THE SECOND SETBACK – FALLING OFF IN ATTENDANCES AND RECRUITS.

After the four centres were opened, unit strength increased rapidly to its peak at 201 all ranks. For a time attendances were good and the men keen.

A slump was anticipated when the initial enthusiasm wore off. Fewer recruits and a falling off in attendances were expected.

These things happened and they could not be countered immediately. Many men began to apply for discharge:

Some of the many reasons are as follows.

i) In each centre the unit was working with primitive accommodation and inadequate ARA staff. In the Territory, permanent residents have 3 months leave on the mainland after 21 months and a proportion of the men had gone south. A large proportion of the labour force is in the Territory on one or two year contracts and such men either will not enlist for that reason or will fail to attend parades for some time prior to their contracts expiring. For this reason also, men had applied for discharge – some have come to the Territory, enlisted and departed in one month.

ii) Shiftworkers such as police officers had arranged for others to take over shifts in the initial stages, but this ar-

rangement could not continue permanently.

iii) Some had decided that military training under tropical conditions was tiring and uncomfortable – cool clubs with cold beer were a more attractive alternative.

iv) Men were being transferred in their civil jobs to centres in the Territory in which the PNGVR had not opened – the unit's first recruit was transferred to MANUS one month after he enlisted.

v) Short staffs and high overtime pay.

vi) The PNGVR will labour always under many of these difficulties. Recruiting and maintaining attendances will be the major problems and at times they will seem insurmountable.

*To be continued .....*

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### MABEL THELMA HOLLAND

**18.11.1919—7.2.2010**

Mabel was born in Atherton, Qld, on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1919 to Mabel and Lex Clarke-Kennedy. She had two sisters, Zuill and Alice and one brother, Ewart. She grew up on several small crop and dairy farms, life was not easy on the farms as there were no mod conveniences and living conditions were very basic. As a treat on a frosty night, her mother would place milk in patty tins and leave them out so next morning they had formed ice blocks. Cakes were a real treat, but only for birthdays – entertainment was non-existent so her mother would play a tune on a hand saw – rather like Rolf Harris with his wobble board.

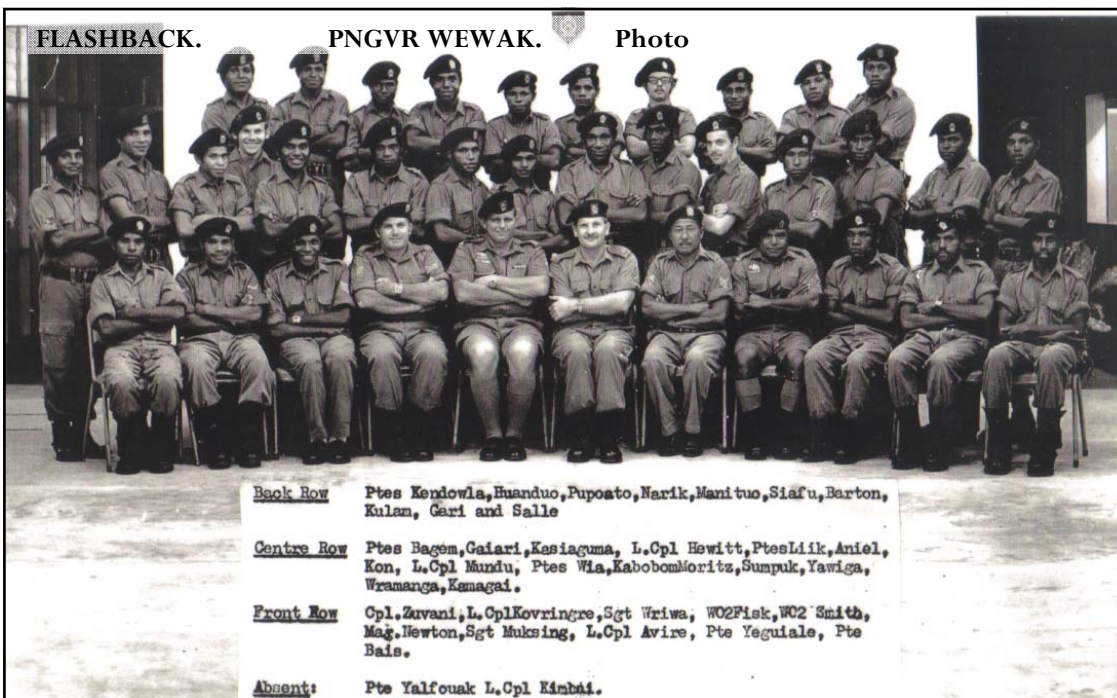
Most days the children walked the four miles (6.4km) to school. Sometimes as a treat the four children were able to ride the farm horse – making sure it had water and food for the day. On one occasion the cream cheque for the month was five pounds (\$10).

In 1932 things became very tough and the family had to move off the farm and moved to Crendon, which was owned by Verge and Jessie Johnson and took the dairy herd with them. The Johnsons were struggling also so everyone had to work on the farm. Mabel's job was to rise at 4.30am, catch and saddle the horse, and bring in the cows. The early morning work was to hand milk the herd of 80 cows and, after milking, separate the cream and all the milking and cream separators had to be washed in boiling water from an open fire. Then the pigs were fed from the skim milk.

Nothing on the farm was ever wasted. Kerosene for the lamps came in 4 gallon tins – two to a wooden case.

*A man and his wife, now in their 60's were celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. On their special day a good fairy came to them and said that, because they had been so good that each one of them could have one wish. The wife wished for a trip around the world with her husband. Whoosh! —Immediately she had airline / cruise tickets in her hand. The man wished for a female companion 30 years younger. Whoosh! ----- immediately he turned ninety.*

*Gotta love that fairy!*



From these cases wardrobes were made and hessian was used for curtains. The tins were used for water buckets. Large sacks were sewn together to use as blankets and blinds, and sacks were also attached to timber frames for use as spare beds.

In 1935 Mabel left school and was employed as a cook on Wyandot cattle station cooking for 16 ringers and drovers. This is where Frank Holland proposed and they were engaged in 1937. They married on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1938, in Malanda. The reception was held at Crendon homestead. For the first time Mable had new shoes, a new dress and gloves. The limo was a horse drawn cream sled, which had also to deliver the cream to the main shed first. It was decorated for the occasion.

They went to Cairns. Mabel had never seen the ocean before and they went on a passenger liner the SS "Montoro" for a cruise to New Guinea.

They fell in love with Rabaul, Frank obtained work and they moved down the South coast to Wide Bay. Their house was built from native materials, split bamboo for the floors, plaited sac sac walls and a grass thatched roof. 44 gallon drums were the water storage and they had a deep pit toilet.

John was born in Australia in 1939 but because of trouble with the Mokolkol tribe Mabel could not return to New Guinea for 12 months. Her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was spent huddled under a bed with John as the Molkolkol conducted a raid. The two bull terriers kept them at bay until Frank returned. Ann was born in 1941 at Rabaul Hospital.

In August, 1941, they moved to the north coast of New Britain to Pondo plantation. It was a large plantation with its own timber mill, workshops and electric generators and a freezer. Ice was delivered every day to the houses and Mabel recalled this was heaven as for the first time in her married life she had a wooden house and could purchase meat, fruit and veggies.

In Dec, 1941, all women and children were evacuated from NG. The first part of the journey was by boat and then by aircraft from Rabaul to Port Moresby and Cairns.

Mabel did not know what had happened to Frank until three months later when her sister in the Mt Garnett Post office received a phone call saying he was well and had returned to Australia.

On Christmas Day, 1946, Mabel and the children returned to Toboi, on the shores of Simpson Harbour, Rabaul. There was still war devastation everywhere – trucks, jeeps, tanks and piles of Japanese rifles – and the wharf and harbour were a

mess with sunken ships all round. There were still about 10,000 Japanese prisoners still in Rabaul and they were used to help clean up the mess. The house at Toboi had a tin roof and tar paper walls and shutters but had a cement floor and electric lighting, and fruit and veggies were available at the Bung (Market). Burns Philp were selling frozen meat from the shell of the store that had been destroyed by bombing.

John and Ann were sent to boarding school in 1948 and only came home once a year and this was very tough on Mabel. Some of the incidents could never happen today – just visualise yourself at the airport and the children had just boarded the plane. One engine starts OK but the other will not. So the ground staff attach a rope to the propeller with a slip knot and the other end to a jeep. After several attempts the engine starts and the plane takes off. Mabel went home thinking all was well, but the engine caught fire over the Bismark Sea. The Qantas Empire Airways pilot had been in a similar situation during the war and knew that Finschhafen airstrip was covered with marsden matting and two feet of water – this would put out the engine fire when he landed. The children were then put up in the old war time hospital for four days waiting for a replacement aircraft to take them to Australia.

About this time Mabel learned to drive in an old Willeys Jeep salvaged from the war. She was living on the Warangoi River at this time and often had to run into Rabaul for shopping and could then socialise with friends.

Frank was invested with the M.B.E. at Government House on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1948.

Small gurias (earth tremors) were common and Christmas Day 1948 was no exception. Mabel expected 20 guests for Christmas lunch and made a special cake and iced it. To keep it safe from little fingers she placed it on the kerosene fridge – and then a large guria shook the house causing the fridge and cake to land on the floor. All the water pipes split and the water tank was down. Mabel looked at the mess and said "It could



have been worse – the house could have fallen down”.

Mabel was presented to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1956. In 1958 the family travelled to Europe on the “Fair Sea” and spent 12 months visiting Franks’ relatives. He had not seen his mother for over 50 years. Mabel and Frank organised her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday party and she died 3 months later.

The family purchased a citrus orchard at Howard, Qld, and John came down from PNG in 1961 to manage it – Ann followed soon after. Frank and Mabel celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 1963 and the function was hosted by Bishop Scharmack at the Vunapope Mission at Kokopo. The Bishop had written a book “This crowd beats us all” about the German Missionaries and Nuns who were interned by the Japanese during the war. Frank was honoured by being requested to give his opinion on the manuscript before it was printed. Mabel was presented with a copy signed by the Bishop and the nuns and missionaries who had been interned.

The decision to return to Australia was hastened by the killing of three natives by Police in the front yard of their home. Not long after returning to manage the farm, they received a letter from the Vatican thanking them for all their assistance given to the Vunapope Mission.

They moved from Hervey Bay to Oxley, a Brisbane suburb, in 1984 and their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary was celebrated in Oxley in 1988, and in 1989 Mabel celebrated her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Frank died in 1998 and Mabel continued to live a quiet life in Oxley enjoying her children, 6 Grandchildren and 5 Great Grandchildren. She had one great ambition – to live to 90 years, the same age as Frank, and this duly occurred, although it was celebrated in a nursing home.

Mabel died on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2010, after a truly remarkable life.



*Mabel Holland*

*Mother of our Museum  
Curator John Holland*

## AN OLFACTORY ASSAULT AT CAMP CASEY

**Rick Giddings**

We were making our way up the Zokozoi creek from near its confluence with the Asaro River, when it came time to go into harbour (camp) for the night. We had arrived in an area named Camp Casey, after a former

commander of C Coy, Capt. Mick Casey. Seven Platoon had bivouacked in the same area on previous occasions but that happened before I joined the Unit.

The actual site where we would spend the night was selected by our Platoon Commander, 2Lt Bob Collins. We settled into the landscape in a roughly circular configuration which was subdivided into three wedges, each being an area of responsibility for the Platoon’s Sections. Platoon HQ, comprising Mr Collins and Sgt Bob Sears, was sited in the centre of the harbour.

We did as we were ordered. We dug weapon pits next to the shelters we erected in which to spend the night. We prepared and ate our evening meals and readied ourselves for stand-to, that period embracing the last half hour of daylight and the first half-hour of darkness which military wisdom said was the most likely time an enemy would choose to attack.

Mr Collins gave us our instructions for the coming night. Stand-to would be communicated to the section Commanders who would receive their orders from the Platoon Sgt, Sgt Sears. During that period we were to get into our weapon pits and prepare to repel any assault which might be launched against us. Most importantly, Mr Collins insisted, we were not to move about above ground under any circumstances. Had we been in a real war situation rather than an exercise, we may be mistaken for an enemy and shot.

One of the diggers asked what we were to do if taken short and needed to relieve ourselves in the “dunny pit” – the toilet pit which had been dug just outside the Platoon lines. “You will have to crap on your shovel”, he said, “and get rid of it later, but under no circumstances are you to leave your weapon pit during stand to”.

Our harbour was on the Northern bank of the Zokizoi within a copse of casuarina trees. It was a still night and, as darkness blanketed us, a mist rolled up from the creek. It hung throughout the bivouac, its progress being checked by the dense foliage which overshadowed and enveloped our positions. The darkness, the density of the mist and the quietness which prevailed – other than for the incessant shrilling of crickets and the croaking of frogs – provided us with a sense of security which seemed inviolate.

Then it came: first an unpleasant odour, a pong which developed into a really foul smell. Nobody commented and no one moved. The foul smell grew into a full-bodied stink before maturing into a dreadful stench which deepened in intensity to the point where it took the form of an assault of the vilest nature upon our olfactory glands. It suspended itself in the mist and hung within the foliage. It was not going away – at least not in the short term – and its intensity increased to a point just short of an all-out gas attack. It was as though we were being subjected to the sort of ‘shock and awe’ treatment which would have made the 2003 bombing of Baghdad look like a side-show. But we hung on, no movement, no comment.

I think others were as bemused as I was about what had happened but we remained in our weapon pits, quiet and unmoving. It became too much for Mr Collins though



7 PI C Coy PNGVR, GOROKA, 1966

Front Rank from L. S/Sgt Barry Wright, Cpl Rick Giddings. Sgt Bob Sears on R. Lt (Prob) Bob Collins commanding parade.

“What the hell’s going on”, he bellowed as he clambered to his feet before striding off in the direction from which the stink was coming. I followed him because it originated in the Section I had been given to command that week-end.

We found two soldiers sharing a weapon pit, one of whom had been taken short and, confirming to the instructions so explicitly given, had crapped on his shovel. He defended his actions, as well he might, given the circumstances in which he found himself and the order he had obeyed.

He was told to empty his shovel into the toilet pit and to resume his position for the remainder of the stand-to, which was about half way through at this point. Gradually the smell diffused and drifted away and by the time we stood down it had completely disappeared leaving us to spend a cold and uncomfortable night on the hard earth, but at least the air was fresh.

**Reminiscences: Service with the PNGVR**

**7 PI C Coy, Goroka.**

**Date. Early months, 1966.**

**As a Lt Rick later was PI Comd 7 PI C Coy, Goroka.**

**PIR NEWS**

**PIB ANNIVERSARY**

Email sent by Greg Ivey to PIR members on 1st June.

Diggers,

Today is the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the PIB on 1 June, 1940, at Port Moresby.

I’m sure you will mark the Anniversary in your own way.

You will know that our Association marked the 70th year during our Anzac Day reunion in Brisbane with a Short History from President Frank.

Maurie Pears added “You are probably aware that the date was chosen as the basic formation date of the Pacific Islands Regiment which grew from the RPNGC, the PIB and the NGVR and ANGAU.”

**CONGRATULATIONS EX PIR MEMBERS.**

**PIR MUSEUM**

Hori Howard has informed Peter Porteous that a PIR display will be added to the Infantry Museum at Singleton from late 2011. Four cabinets will be allocated. Further detail can be obtained from Hori on [h2howard@bigpond.com](mailto:h2howard@bigpond.com)

**CHARITY FUNDRAISING**

Wayne Bensley (ex 2PIR) left Perth just after Anzac Day to travel across Australia raising money and awareness for the Sir Roden and Lady Cutler Foundation. If you do see him and the wheelchair roll, say hello and dig deep to support such a worthwhile charity.

*Military Humour*

*In the USA at some airports the Air Force is on one side of the field and civilian aircraft use the other side of the field, with the control tower in the middle. One day the tower received a call from an aircraft asking “What time is it?”*

*The tower responded “Who is calling?”*

*The aircraft replied “What difference does it make?”*

*The tower replied “It makes a lot of difference...if it is a commercial flight, it is 3 o’clock. If it is an Air Force plane, it is 1500 hrs. If it is a Navy aircraft, it is 6 bells. If it is an Army aircraft, the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the 3. If it is a Marine Corps aircraft, it’s Wednesday afternoon and 120 minutes to “Happy Hour”.*

## CHANDELIER PNG STYLE

It could only happen in PNG. This is a chandelier in the foyer of the Holiday Inn in Port Moresby

The chandelier is made from penis gourds.

The photo was sent in by Leigh Eastwood who travels to PNG on a regular basis mainly visiting the mining camps.



*The Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society Committee June 21 at Parliament House Canberra*

*[from left]: Keith Jackson; Hooky Street; Andrea Williams; Don Hook; Bob Lawrence; Liz Thurston; Kurt Diercke; Phil Ainsworth*

Norm Parry was a powerful guest speaker who spoke wonderfully, without notes, told stories of the Diggers and recommended we read the paperback "Mud and Blood".

The event was very well organised and the participants were invited to retreat to the Surfers Paradise RSL for light refreshments. As we had family commitments, Jesse and I were unable to attend, unfortunately. The battle for Kokoda was a major event in the history of our country and the memorial situated at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast is a worthy monument, depicting as it does the attributes of the Australian Digger. Because of the existence of this Memorial Wall, Jessie and I were given the opportunity to salute the memory of these men and we thank all those involved in its creation and construction."

Paul Brown's report of the Sherwood Kokoda Service follows: "Tom Dowling and I represented the association at the service. We were welcomed by Mr Matt Conway, President of the Sherwood Services Club. The key note speech was given by Lt Col Daryl Campbell of the Canungra Land Warfare Centre about the sterling work of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the early days of the campaign. Together with the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion Association representative PIR Frank Wust and Paul Nerau, we were invited to lay our wreaths while a fly past by Warbirds Aviation took place. It was a well organised and presented service and we were able to meet many of those present at the luncheon arranged in the adjoining RSL premises. We are pleased to be able to represent our members on this commemoration of the 39<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion and the Papua Infantry Battalion, the only Australian units with Kokoda as a battle honour."

We have been notified by Paul Nerau of the following Consulate functions celebrating 35 years of the Independence of PNG.

**Wednesday 15 September**.....Cocktail reception, by invitation only

**Saturday 18 September**.....Cultural day celebrations, open to the public

**Saturday 30 October**.....PNG Cultural & Community Centre Corporate Fundraising Ball

Further information will be forwarded when available.

I understand editor Bob will be incapacitated for a week or so while he trades in the odd knee or so- best wishes Bob.

This does not mean he is behind in the next edition, it is already to go, only limited by the capacity of president Phil to keep up and time for events to happen to be reported.

I do apologise for the lateness of this edition but the fault is entirely my own.

**Phil Ainsworth**



*Doug & Fran Ng with their 3 daughters on 30th May, 2010, to mark their 40th Wedding anniversary and Doug's 68th Birthday. A photo of their wedding in Rabaul appeared in HTT Vol 59.*

*Doug is the Association Treasurer.*

*Finding a woman sobbing that she had locked her keys in her car, a passing soldier assured her that he can help. She looked on amazed as he removed his trousers, rolled them into a tight ball and rubbed them against the car door. Magically it opened. "That's so clever," the woman gasps. "How did you do it?" "Easy!" replied the soldier "These are my khakis".*

*Continued from page 1*

This is Gerry and Jesse's report from the Gold Coast "Alan Whelan, Surfers Paradise RSL Sub Branch, welcomed us warmly. He also provided us with a wreath and arranged our seating, immediately behind the Mayor and his party.

Jesse and I spoke with Michael Ralston of the 2/14th and Dudley Warhurst of the 39th Battalion. The conversation hinted at closer ties between their groups and the NGVR/PNGVR Ex Members' Association.

We met Mat Powers, former Principal of Malabunga High School and had a conversation with Ross Eastgate OAM, ex Papua New Guinea and now Media Adviser in the office of the

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## WANTED

Photos and articles from your PNGVR days for publication in HTT.

Group photos should have the names of those in the photo and date and place where it was taken.

**PIR photos and articles also urgently required as I do not have anything for publication from our PIR members.**

Email to [bob-collins@bigpond.com](mailto:bob-collins@bigpond.com)  
or post to 45 Capricornia,  
121 Surf Parade,  
BROADBEACH, QLD. 4218.

## **FUNCTION DATES**

Sat 4th Sep, 12.30 Committee Mtg

Assn Museum Wacol. Come along  
- view the new exhibits

- See your Committee in action

**Sat 16th Oct. 1.15pm AGM**

**Assn Museum, Wacol**

Be there by 12 Noon and enjoy a  
BBQ and viewing of the Museum  
prior to the AGM

Sat 9th Oct, 6.00 pm Field Dining  
Night—Jimboomba.

Be there by 3pm and enjoy the com-  
pany of former comrades.

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**Bob Collins—Editor**