



HARIM TOK TOK

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

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Greetings,

Association activities since the issue of HTT 66 have been mainly centered on our Museum. There have been two working bees, a fundraising Greenbank Services Club sausage sizzle and a visit by a group of 21 from the Forest Lake Probus Club. Leigh Eastwood, our most recently appointed committee member, and Paul Brown with John Holland driving the project have replaced our Honour Board. The new Honour Board is an illuminated irregular shaped single piece of highly polished wood about 2 m long and 1.5m high affixed to the entrance stairway end wall. The names are in gold stuck onto sheets of perplex which are spaced from the board. The remembrance flame is suitably hung on the board – all up, a handsome and an appropriate remembrance board to our deceased members. The Honour Board was funded by a grant of \$1,500 received from the Department of Veteran Affairs. Thank you Leigh, Paul and John.



Leigh Eastwood and Paul Brown in front of our newly erected Honour Board, NGVR/PNGVR Military Museum, Wacol, February 2011

John Holland with assistance from Greenbank RSL and Brian Collin, have digitised PNGVR's Routine Orders (only to mid 1964) and these are now available in CD form for viewing at the Museum. This exercise cost a minimal \$150. John Winterbotham has found the last Routine Order which lists all PNGVR members by Company who were on strength when the Regiment was disbanded in 1973 in the Australian Archives. A request has been made for a digitized copy of this important document. This find has prompted a renewed search at the Archives for the complete set of our Routine Orders. I am hopeful John Winterbotham will have some good news in the next issue. Thank you John.

Bob Harvey-Hall needs to reference the Routine Orders constantly as he completes the writing of PNGVR's interesting history which will contain a nominal roll. Bob informs me he will complete the text later this year. Photographs, maps and the usual attachments will be incorporated and the Committee will decide on the manner of publishing the document. Preferably this should be in hardback book form, but if that is unattainable, we may have to settle for a CD format. An order form for the book will be contained in the next edition of HTT so we can assess the likely numbers which are needed. The project has been a huge task for a single person and we will owe Bob a large debt of gratitude when the task has been completed.

The Probus visit was a great success with 21 attending. Thank you John Holland for arranging this and thank you members Barry Wright, Mike Griffin, Bruce Crawford, Paul Brown and John Batz who assisted on the day. A very special thank you to Pamela Wright and Jenny Crawford for making the morning tea delights. Another unheralded activity is the regular issue of our quality newsletter Harim Tok Tok. Editor Bob Collins continues to produce these charming and historical stories of our NGVR men, a stack of jokes and other interesting articles. I am receiving great feedback from members and other readers. Please keep sending your comments and letters. Thank you Bob. Also a thank you to Jacqui Veiman from King & Co Property Consultants, our sponsor, for finalising these drafts after Bob is finished and printing them for distribution, and our Secretary Colin Gould for arranging the posting of the hard copies.

I look forward to seeing everyone on Anzac Day in Brisbane, the arrangements of which are: assembly at 9.30 am in George Street near Queens Park for a march off sometime after 10.00 am, depending on our order of March; dress for the day is our Anzac Day dress with full sized medals; after the March assemble in the Hall of Memories at the Brisbane Cenotaph for our usual NGVR Memorial Service; followed by our reunion lunch on the first floor of the Victory Hotel, Corner of Charlotte and Edward Streets, City. The cost of the luncheon will be \$20 pp, a price unchanged for fifteen years, for which you will have a choice of beer, wine or soft drink with hot and cold finger food. All members and friends including their spouses are invited. For those unable to March and get to the Memorial Service, the Reunion Lunch will commence around 11 am, soon after the completion of the March.

I have been much involved in the affairs of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society. Regrettably Keith Jackson resigned as President due to health difficulties and I was elected by the Committee as his replacement. We are expecting concept submissions soon from 4 well known Australian artists, which will be reviewed at a meeting on 24 March at the AWM, Canberra. The most important activity of the Society is to raise the \$400,000 for the National Memorial in the grounds of the AWM. The commissioning of the selected artist to construct the Memorial cannot be made until the money is in place. If anyone knows or is aware of someone who is a member of a corporation or foundation which may grant funds for this purpose or would like to assist in the fund raising, please contact me urgently on 0419 730 348 or email p.ainsworth@kingco.com.au.

You may be aware through the press of several important recent developments concerning Australian POWs captured by the Japanese. The Society is delighted about Japan's offer to return historical records of former Australian Prisoners of War held by Japan during World War Two. The Society also appreciates the initiatives of those who made the forthcoming transfer of these records to Australia possible. Additionally, it is understood that a nominal Mortuary Roll containing the names of approximately 48,000 Allied servicemen, including 7,630 Australians, who died in camps and elsewhere after being captured by the Japanese forces during the war, has been preserved at the Ryozen Kannon Memorial in

East Ward of Kyoto City. These records might help establish with certainty the names of servicemen who, as noted above, were on the Montevideo Maru when it was sunk on 1 July, 1942.

Since its inception the Society has been working towards the finding of the nominal roll of those who were on the Montevideo Maru. During the past year the Society has been working in cooperation with a Japanese history researcher, Mr Harumi Sakaguchi, who was instrumental in finding these documents. He also possibly assisted behind the scene to initiate the offers from the Japanese Government. Mr Harumi Sakaguchi, a former United Nations employee spent a number of years in PNG working for the United Nations. Some of you may have heard of him in his search for remains of and records of burials of Japanese soldiers killed in Papua New Guinea. The receipt and translation of these records will, hopefully, provide comfort and assist the relatives of the victims, many of whom, particularly in the case of the Montevideo Maru, have been waiting 69 years for confirmation in the manner of death and location of the remains of their loved ones.

The Society is arranging two Montevideo Maru memorial events in Canberra over the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd July 2011. A Commemoration Reunion Lunch will be held on the Saturday at the National Press Club with our Patron, Major General John Pearn, speaking. An Ecumenical Memorial Service in the chapel at Duntroon will be held on the Sunday morning. If anyone wishes to attend please contact Andrea Williams on 0409 031 889 or 02 9449 4129 or email andrea@bigpond.com. Over 300 attendees Australia wide are expected. The cost of the dinner and the post Sunday service morning tea is \$55. Please RSVP early and a list of Canberra hotels is available from Andrea. Payment for the events, not accommodation or travel, may be made by cheque to "The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society, Canberra Function, PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay, NSW, 2089." If you wish to pay by Visa or MasterCard you will need to contact Andrea as I have insufficient space to provide all the details.

I look forward to meeting with you on Anzac Day.

Phil Ainsworth

April, 2011

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NGVR/ANGAU DAYS**Thomas Albert KEENAN****Continuation of his story as told to Bob Collins****NGVR Training**

WO 1 Umphelby used to conduct a little drill – but not a lot – he was more interested in getting us on the range for live firing. His comment one day was that he didn't have the time to waste on 'square bashing'.

We had to take the breech block out of a Vickers machine gun and put it back. When we became proficient at this we had to do it blindfold as his comment was "80% of the time you do this you will have to do it in the dark".

I had quite a bit of a problem with the .303 as I am left handed. WO Umphelby used to say to me "Don't take any notice of the experts Tom, they will only condemn you for your style and try to change it. I only take notice of the number of holes in the target at the end of the shoot."

In addition to the Vickers guns we had one Lewis Gun, complete with stand.

One of our exercises consisted of trying out some of the roads which led in from the coast to the gold-fields. Maj Bill Edwards, our C.O. suggested this, so it was arranged by Bill Bowden, who was in charge of all the Bulolo Gold Dredging native lines in Bulwa, for Bertie Heath, a pilot, to pick us up at Bulolo, after he had offloaded cargo, to take us back to Lae. There Bill had arranged for canoes to take us across the mouth of the Markham, past the Buang Ranges, and drop us off at the mouth of Buang Creek, close to Salamaua to explore a path up. The NGVR party consisted of Dud Baldie, Harold Osborne, Neville Bensley and myself.

By the time we had got to Lae, embarked on the canoes and travelled to the foot of the Buangs it was coming on dark. One of the few photos I have of that time was taken by Harold Osborne on the way across in the canoes, but, because of the angle and the light, it is a silhouette rather than a photo. (All my photos were lost during the war when the Japanese bombed Bulwa after the Salamaua Raid. They hit the single mens mess blowing both our barracks and our possessions to pieces) We had a fair bit of gear and were taken in two outrigger ca-

noes. Just as we were landed, we were advised by the natives who had dropped us, "Don't hang around here! The puk-puks (crocodiles) here are very fierce". So off we went as fast as we could through the swamps and up the range as crocodiles will not travel up hill. We had two carriers and were carrying a lot of our own gear. The country was pretty fierce. One of our carriers stated "Masta! Planti Sinak (snake) istap here, nau I laik kai-kai mi" (there are lots of snakes here who will eat us). We had only been going for about ten minutes and I looked down and saw great lines of leeches down both arms and all up both legs. We were clad only in our NGVR short-sleeved shirts and shorts. Out came a cigarette and we burnt them off but that spurred us on as well. At this stage we had crocodiles, snakes and leeches. By the time we had got out of the coastal jungle and up the hill a bit we had blood in our boots from the leeches which had got into our boots and had been squashed.

We camped that night and crack of dawn we got going. We were trying to get to Mapos, where the head of the Buang tribe is. We made good time and made Mapos late

that afternoon, after pretty tough going up and down the hills. The 'haus-kia' at Mapos was in pretty poor state of repair and the Tul-Tul suggested it was only a short walk down to 'Sun-sun' (I then realised he was talking about Sunshine, a mining claim just downstream from Bulwa).

So he advised

us that, if we kept to one side of the 'Senak' (Snake) River we would not have to cross any streams at all. He pointed out two small hills on a particularly flat stretch of country and said to head towards them. I asked him the name and he replied 'The su-su'. I later found that he was right and they were called the Su-su mountains, which were located close to an emergency landing strip. So off we headed and actually made Bulwa that afternoon. The trip had been done in two days of hard walking.

There were lots of rumours going around at the time

The fellows who had worked on the tin dredges in Malaya had come down to New Guinea when the war with Germany started told me at the time that they had seen a lot of Chinese maps in Malaya and Australia was listed on them as 'New China'.



The photo taken of Tom's canoe by Harold Osborne.

"Because of the angle and the light it is a silhouette rather than a photo"

In November and December 1942 all women and children were evacuated and this was followed by those men found to be unfit. Dad was evacuated despite his protests that he wanted to stay. He was quite incensed at the time about the internment of all the German and Italian males in the district who were not in NGVR. Many of them were all his workmates and he knew them well. I think he was more incensed that they were interned in the Hotel and he had to sleep in a house on the floor than simply that they were interned. One of his comments was that the women of Wau rallied around and helped the wives and children of the men interned. They really acted as a community.

The War comes to Wau

When the Japanese Zeroes attacked Wau on 21st January, 1942, Buster Mills was on the Lewis Gun and he commenced firing at them.

The day they attacked I was in the single men's mess, just having come off duty. Some of the fellows were talking about Lend Lease Finance, and the announcement was made that, as Australia and America had entered into a Lend Lease arrangement gold was no longer absolutely necessary for Australia's war effort. In fact it was mentioned that, at any day, we could be given the order to shut down the dredge and prepare for a 'scorched policy'.

We were just sitting there when we could hear the air-raid sirens from Bulolo. We rushed out into the bush and looked up to see the Zeroes only about 30 or so feet above our heads. They were throttling back at the time and the pilot of the first Zero looked down and was just watching us. I had my rifle but had no ammunition – it was only issued to us at the time when we went out on to the rifle range.

We then heard the Lewis Gun firing (Buster Mills had opened up). The Zeroes then commenced firing their machine guns and cannon and shortly after we could see smoke coming up.

When we eventually got to Bulolo there were the wrecks of two Junkers on the airstrip. One of them had a small consignment of beer on board but much of it was broken – I managed to get two bottles. The bottles hadn't cracked but the labels – blue Fosters labels – were pretty smoky and scorched. I took them back to Bulwa and that night we celebrated our last beer.

The next day we were mobilised – 22nd January, 1942.

I went to Bulolo from No 7 dredge – only about half a mile or so, and when I got there the Lieutenant in charge got us a ride down to Bulwa. At the time my gear consisted of shorts and shirts I had purchased myself, bright reddish brown boots (WW1 issue), leather bandoliers (Light Horse issue also from WW1) and a slouch hat and water-bottle. We got issued with ammunition and then our section walked down to Sunshine. From there we went up to a Mission station. The Missionaries had long since gone. This was to be our observation post.

It was interesting that, when other Australian Army Units commenced arriving in Wau, one of the first things that they did was to peruse our roll books. We had on strength a number of Germans and Italian nationals and, had it not been for our Commanding Officer, Major Bill Edwards,

some of these men may have also been interned. Maj Edwards stood up for his men and made the statement "NGVR has every nationality in the world on its books – except Eskimos". The statement of his that ended the matter was "All these men have taken the oath of allegiance. They are in the King's Army, and if you touch them, you are touching the King." That seemed to end the matter. Major Jennings backed up Bill Edwards in this matter. He was a WW1 soldier and had a number of friends in Administrative positions in Australia who closed the books on the matter.

The first Australian troops to arrive in Wau were personnel from the 2 / 2nd Independent Coy. They had just finished training in Australia and were supposed to go to East Timor, but were diverted to New Guinea, because of a breakdown in security communications between Darwin and East Timor which would have compromised those troops of the 2/2nd already in East Timor. Their commander was Maj Paul Kneen who was shortly afterwards killed in the raid on Heath's Plantation near Lae.

Move into the Markham.

We moved from our position at the Mission Station which was down the Lower Watut River from Bulwa, through Sunshine (an alluvial gold claim) down the hill and across Zenag airstrip to a hillock about an hour's walk from the airstrip. Zenag had been designated an emergency airstrip, but to my knowledge had never been used. A pilot told me that it had big gutters running across it, caused by the heavy rain and lack of maintenance, but the pilots considered, although it was dangerous, it would be better than crashing into the jungle or the kunai.

We then went further downhill to a place called Timney Waters, which was a small stream running into the Markham, and camped. The local natives called Timney Waters 'place nat nat' (place of insects) – and they were right. Some of the Sepik natives who were with us stated that it was as bad as the Sepik, which has a fearsome reputation for insects. Timney Waters was across the Markham from what was later called 'Bobs Camp' and had a very small airstrip there also - about half an hour's walk from the Markham itself. I would not liked to have landed on it but a good pilot in a small plane would be able to do so. 'Bobs Camp' was named after Bob Duncan (NGVR) who got Blackwater Fever there. Dr McKenna treated him without the aid of any drugs, which were not available at the time. He boiled pearl barley, which had been taken out of Lae, added something I was not aware of to the barley water and treated Bob with that. Bob was allowed to drink mouley (lemon) water as well, allowed to sit up or lie down, but not allowed to walk around. Remarkably enough he recovered and Haydn Davies, another medico, stayed at the camp with him until he was well enough to walk, even though it was thought at the time that the Japanese would cross the Markham and occupy the area.

The next day Dusty Scott and myself went about 2/3 of the way to 'Bobs Camp' and set up a mini camp where there was a branch track that went to a crossing on the Wampit River to another emergency airstrip. Dusty stayed there and I went on to Nadzab with Ron Hicks, the policeman from Wau. As I recall it was about an hours walk from Timney to Bobs and about half an hour from Bobs to the Markham River crossing at Kirklands which was about 100 yards from the mouth of the Erap River.

At Timney Waters Ivan Hoggard, a former Police Inspector, was challenged by the local 'Luluai' (village headman). Ivan did not hesitate or wait for his Police boys to catch up. He quickly sorted the problem out with the implied threat of physical violence and thereafter we had no problems with the local natives. Our role there was to accept all the food and equipment coming out from Lae and to ferry it across the Markham and establish food and ammunition dumps on the side that we did not think the Japanese would occupy.

There was a large kunai house right in the middle of the airstrip and it was this hut that we were decided to use for our store where the loads would be split up.

When we arrived at Nadzab the two people currently in charge of the camp there were Spess Warton and 'Hoppy' Hargreaves. Spess was over 70 and Hoppy had a wooden leg – however both were capable of doing a job and, in fact did it well. There were the two Poland brothers – one of them called 'Kunai' Poland as his mother did not make the hospital in time at Wau when he was being born and he arrived in the kunai. Baden and Hector Wales were also there, Jack Leslie, Alf Lane, Jack McGrath, Ed Rowlands, Jack Toogood, Mark Schultz, Stan Burton and Joe Lorraine (known as 'wheelbarrow', because, when the gold rush was on at Edie Creek, Joe took off from Lae pushing a wheelbarrow. It bogged half way up the Nadzab road and the natives convinced him to stay there and start a farm, and run a trade store. He grew mandarins and limes for Schweppes and made quite a good living).

Ernie Britten was also there. He was the Legal Representative for all the natives in the Mandated Territory. He was nicknamed 'Darby' because the first Legal Representative the natives had was a Mister Darby.

Jim Goodwin was our Regimental Sgt Major. He had a training aide he used to help soldiers to more accurately aim their rifles. It was a tube he used to peer down in front of their rifle and be able to tell if the sighting was correct. Unfortunately one day he was carrying out training with this and one of the soldiers was aiming his rifle, but had not taken the rounds out. At about 6 feet range he shot Jim through the eye.

Most of these fellows were NGVR and had come up from Lae, which was in the process of being evacuated and all attractive items moved inland where supply dumps were being established.

Stan Burton drove a truck up from Lae to Nadzab two or three times a day. We had to build bridges for the truck

across a series of creeks.

This was done by putting two big logs across the creek – everybody helped in this, both NGVR and native labour. Then poles about 6 inches in diameter were adzed and laid across between the two logs, laced with kunda (cane). Stan would then casually drive across.

As I said we used the kunai house in the middle of the strip to split up the loads. My job was to have the loads, after they had been split up, carried up past the Erap River and put in onto canoes for transport across to Bobs Camp.

Our labour line consisted of hundreds of natives who had been recruited from areas such as Madang, Aitape the Sepik etc, who were halted at Nadzab while trying to walk back to their home areas. Ivan Hoggard felt that we couldn't waste such an opportunity so the labourers were held at Nadzab and put to work. Most of these indentured labourers were carrying things which had been looted from various houses in Lae and on the way out to Nadzab. Ivan felt that most of these natives would be murdered on their way home by other villagers who would steal the items they had looted so we kept them until they could be repatriated in an orderly fashion.

I was also Officer Commanding, Accommodation, and we used the Lutheran 'haus lotu' (church). Ivan Hoggard's attitude was that we represented not only the Army, but the civilian administration as well and he impressed on me the need to retain these labourers in an orderly fashion and make sure there were no problems here at Nadzab, and it was imperative that they should not panic and bolt as their safety could not be guaranteed if they left Nadzab.

There was an element of urgency to get the supplies across the Markham. At any time the Japanese could land and interrupt the smooth supply of stores from Lae and then proceed up the Markham. Once across the Markham we were confident that we could hide the dumps in the bush and the Japanese would not find them.

One of the few things that were not coming through was alcohol. In Lae a zealous Officer had ordered the tops knocked off all spirit bottles. However, even though I did not get to Lae I was fortunate enough to obtain four bottles of Johnny Walker Black Label, thanks to a friendly native.

Ivan Hoggard used to disappear for days at a time and none of us knew just what he was doing. However he was patrolling the areas towards Madang, and eventually arranged for the repatriation of a lot of our labour line back to their villages, accompanied at times by Police Boys to ensure their safety. However this was not carried out until all our cargo had been delivered across the Markham. Stan Burton was bringing up from Lae about 20 tons a day.

One of the major items Stan used to bring up was salt. Salt was essential for us for future use as trade goods and to pay native labour and was as useful to us as cash for this purpose. I did not want the native boys to know that we had large quantities of salt in case a riot broke

out resulting in many of them disappearing in the direction of their villages with much of our salt. I preferred to use 'meris' (females) for carrying the salt however it was brought up from Lae in big bags, which were too heavy for the meris to carry on their heads, and they were not good at carrying the big bags on poles so the big bags had to be broken down and transferred to other containers for movement forward to the dumps.

I also paid many of the meris in salt. They were quite agreeable to this but I made them keep the fact a secret as, their society being what it was, if the men found out about it they were likely to take it from them.

They used to receive their 'salt' pay in fresh banana leaves, carefully put the salt in and close up the leaf carefully, binding it up with a type of tree twine.

Carrying in those days was paid at the rate of one shilling a day, or one tablespoon of salt a day. Spess Warton was the paymaster and seemed to have an endless supply of shillings, the old New Guinea ones with the hole in them. I think that the Bank of New South Wales in Lae had given its total supply of coin to the NGVR as the Bank had closed its doors by then. At one stage I approached him to use the meris to also carry, on the basis that we were in a hurry and they were just as good as the men anyway. His reply was "Good idea Tom! You are now in charge of those carry lines".

I had attached to me at the time by Spess Warton a native called Kwila whose job was to teach me the local customs and taboos. Kwila is a noted New Guinea hardwood and Kwila lived up to the name. He was over six feet tall and very impressive and used to accompany me on all patrols outside of Nadzab. He had a big bush knife lashed on to the end of a long pole and used this to cut branches out of my way while he was walking behind me. It was a bit disconcerting to be walking along and suddenly a 'whish' and this long pole would go over my shoulder to cut away a branch or vine from in front of me. Kwila was pretty much a power broker so I approached him about using the meris to carry. He was in favour and arranged it so that there would be no friction with the men.

After this my nickname among all, both expatriate and native became 'meri masta'.

This caused a bit of confusion later on when the AIF Divisions had taken Lae and I was being greeted by the local meris in town who would then claim to be 'Masta Toms meri'. I think some of the AIF men thought I had a harem, but such was certainly not the case. It was probably the first time the meris had been treated as equals and no doubt they very much appreciated what I had done for them.

Doc McKenna often used me to get the meris to come to him for treatment for any medical problems they may have, as it was not their custom at the time to go to a doctor for treatment. The women in particular suffered from a variety of yaws diseases and the meris had confidence enough in me to go and see the Doctor if I was present.

At one stage the Luluai of the Waramble tribe, a local

tribe, came up to me and said "Masta, you friend bilong mipela, mi friend bilong yu, mipela alsame," and he put both his hands out, turned one over and locked his fingers, "look look – he alsame mipela he alsame" and he pulled his hands away, but of course they were locked. I told Spess Warton about this and asked what it was all about. His reply was to the effect that I was now a member of the Waramble tribe. The Luluai was telling you that you are now one of the tribe.

It was at Nadzab that I was almost killed. Myself and two other fellows had gone over from the airstrip close to the Mission house when a 4 engined Jap bomber came over. I looked up and saw the bomb bays open, and yelled "Hit the ground". I looked up and saw the bombs leave the bomb bay. True to my training I put my hand over my ears and opened my mouth. I had my eyes closed but then saw a terrible red colour – I felt like I had been squashed between two big boards and was thrown up in the air and the noise was terrible. When I could gather my breath I sat up and looked at the other two. One was sitting with his legs over the side of a huge crater which had not been there before and he had tears running down his face – not crying – but tears everywhere. I would say his eyes were smarting. The other fellow was just sitting there with a rather blank look on his face. I called out to him "Are you alright?" and when he opened his mouth to reply nothing came out – he couldn't talk. Then I was hit by a roaring in my ears

Fortunately for us, it had rained non-stop for the past fortnight and the ground was soft mud. I was told later that the ground had absorbed most of the blast, but we were lucky in that we were in what they call the 'donut' of the explosion. This meant that the blast actually went over us. I ended up only about three feet from the edge of the crater, but had I been closer I would have been blown up – had I been too much further away I would have copped the concussion of the blast and been killed. The comment made to me by an explosives expert (and there were plenty of them in NGVR) was that, even if we thought we were unlucky, we were, in fact, some of the few people ever to survive so close to a bomb blast.

Doc McKenna looked in my eyes and said that I had blood in my tear ducts. While he was examining me I could hardly hear him. When he asked me how I felt generally I told him I had a very sore anus – like something was burning. He then told me that I had been 'compressed' and that my lower intestine was hanging out. However he told me that he could fix it on the spot and did so, albeit painfully at the time. However he told me that never in my life would I be able to undertake an operation for haemorrhoids without severe consequences.

One of the later effects of the blast was that by the age of about 40 I was profoundly deaf, and remain so to this day.

It was while we were here that a group of survivors from the Toll Massacre on New Britain came through. It was at Toll Plantation that the Japanese bayoneted, beheaded or shot some 150 Australian survivors of the battle for Rabaul who had just surrendered and should have

been treated as prisoners-of-war. They had been taken by boat from New Britain to Finschafen and then to Lae, and were being taken to Wau to be flown out. One of the fellows showed me the 11 bayonet wounds that the Japanese had inflicted on him before they left him for dead. They were in the company of a chap called Sitauski, which caused a lot of humour the way the natives pronounced his name.

Major Jennings came down through Nadzab at that stage. He was a hands on Commander and wanted to see the operation first hand. He then took Stan Burton with him and they went across over the foothills of the Buang Ranges, then up into the mountains, and he left Stan to set up a lookout over Salamaua. The Observation Post was not far from what was called Nialls Post – where District Officer Horrie Niall from Lae had also set up his camp. Stan had a few bottles of comfort souvenired from Lae for company and was pretty well set up.

About this time I came down with another attack of malaria. Dr McKenna advised me that I was no longer an asset to the group but a liability and he didn't want me at Nadzab any longer.

To be continued



Not quite PNGVR—however this Goroka local took a keen interest in the Mortar at the PNGVR display at the 1968 Goroka Show.

Photo supplied by Mal King (PNGVR, Goroka)

ORIGIN OF "THE LAST POST"

The Last Post originated in Medieval times, about the year 1622 and was known as the "Retreat". It was usually played at 10.00 pm to call "the soldiers to retire for the night" at the end of the day. It then became custom over the year to play the Last Post at Military Funerals and Commemorative functions where the closing sounds of the music sounds out the sad farewell to "Lights Out, Lights Out",

WORDS TO THE LAST POST

Come home! Come home! The last post is sounding for you to hear. All good soldiers know very well there is nothing to fear while they do what is right, and forget all the worries they have met in their duties through the year. A soldier cannot always be great, but he can be a gentleman and he can be a right good pal to his comrades in

his squad. So all you soldiers listen to this – Deal fair by all

Be brave! Be just! Be honest and true men!

TWO MINUTES SILENCE

At almost every ceremony of remembrance people stand in silence for a brief period to remember departed comrades. The concept of remembrance silence appears to have originated with an Australian journalist, Edward George Honey, who served briefly in World War One with an English Regiment. Honey was born in St Kilda, Melbourne, in 1885 and died of consumption in England in 1922. His idea of five minutes silence was brought to the attention of King George V in 1919, however five minutes silence proved too long and was reduced to two minutes and was first observed at 11.00 am, 11th November, 1919. It is also acceptable to observe one minutes silence only.

An Australian Story

A Northern Territory station hand radios back to the Station Manager "Boss! I gotta helluva problem here—I hit a pig with the ute. The pig's OK, but he's stuck in the bull-bars at the front of the ute, and is wriggling and squealing so much I can't get him out."

The Manager says "OK. There's a .303 rifle behind the seat. Shoot the pig in the head and you'll be able to remove him".

Five minutes later the farm hand calls back. "I did what you said Boss! Took the .303, shot the pig in the head and removed him from the bull-bars. No problem there but I still can't go on".

"Now what's the problem?" raged the Manager.

"Well boss, it's his motorbike. Its stuck under the front wheel arch and the flashing blue light is still on".

"You still there boss?" "Hey Boss?"

CHRISTMAS PARTY!

6 1/4 Tough Days on the Kokoda Trail.

When a party from Port Moresby, comprising 10 members of the PNGVR, and 5 civilians, walked from Sogeri, over the Owen Stanley Ranges and down into Kokoda, in 6 1/4 days, during the holidays, without carriers and each with a 50 lb pack, they confounded the critics, who declared that it could not be done by untrained people.

NGVR / KANGA FORCE / ANGAU**GEORGE EDWARD COCKRAM
NG 2246****NGX 426**

This was the Kokoda Trail – the incredibly broken, mountainous and bleak trek which both the Japanese and the Australian forces twice (coming and going) climbed over in 1942. The tracks then made have largely disappeared, and the Moresby Christmas Party found the going exceedingly rough and exhausting. They lived mostly on the biscuit and bully beef they carried and their overnight camps were most primitive.

But they got through, carrying all gear and food, and all but two marched the last three miles into Kokoda in smart military style, and at a route-march pace. The other two came in later, and were not too exhausted to tackle a highly welcome meal put on by Mr and Mrs Yeoman, of the Government station.

The only one who did not carry a pack was Miss Vellicott-Jones, of the ABC. She took along two native carriers.

Practically all collected feet blisters and a few stiff muscles. Lt Col N.P. Maddern, CO of the PNGVR who led the party, came home with no blister, and loudly praising the magnificent qualities of an Australian Army boot. Those who made the trek were:-

PNGVR Lt Col N.P. Maddern, Sgt B. Parker (Army) and CMF members Tom Crotty, W. Wyatt, J. Grose, R. Cowell, Max Little, J. Fisher, A. North. G. Straughen.

Guide Pte Kora, of Kokoda.

Civilians. Messrs Frank Vincent, Kenneth Wood, Ray Harris. J.W. Bax, and Miss K. Vellicott-Jones

This is an extract from the Pacific Islands Monthly, January, 1952, provided by your Assn Museum.



Lt Col Maddern at his house in Port Moresby prior to his departure for Kokoda in December, 1951.

Photo from your Museum

I was born in Box Hill, Victoria, on 17th September, 1915. My father, also George Cockram, was a carpenter and had built a large number of houses in the Box Hill, Hawthorn, Surrey Hills area of Melbourne. My grandfather had emigrated to Australia and my father worked with one of his brothers, Uncle Arthur who was a pattern maker by trade and later worked for one of the large electrical companies, making patterns for light switches etc.

My mother, originally Helen Mary Ford, died when I was about 5/6 years old. My father was not much for talking and to this day I believe she died of pneumonia, but am not certain. Dad later remarried and there were two boys from the second marriage

I had two brothers, Thomas William, who lived until he was 96, and Harold, who was later accidentally killed together with my step-mother, originally Ivy Edgar, in a motor vehicle accident in Station Street, Box Hill. A couple of young kids were doing a bit of a burn-up and were spotted by the Police who chased them. The car being chased veered onto the wrong side of the road to dodge some road works and hit the car Harold was driving head on. My step-mother was killed instantly and Harold died several days later.

My early schooling was at Box Hill State School, No. 2838. All schools in Victoria in those days had a number. I did not go to High School as I left school as quickly as I could and at age 14 had a job lined up in a Nursery. However they kept me waiting too long and so I took a job at MacPherson's factory in Burnley/ Richmond. I was taken on as a general hand and later became a crane driver. On my record of service my occupation is listed as Electric Crane Driver.

It was while I was sitting in the cab of the crane that I started thinking about the fact that I had a girl-friend who wanted to get married, and I couldn't afford to get married, and had heard from another chap at MacPhersons, Bill Lugg, whose sister's boyfriend was working in New Guinea for the grand sum of 6 pounds (\$12) per week. His name was Lionel Webb.

I had wanted to join the Army as soon as WW1 broke out and used to practice drill at home with my girlfriend's hockey stick. My father had served in the 14th Battalion (Albert Jacka won a Victoria Cross with the 14th Battalion) in WW1 and his advice to me was "Don't rush into it! Just sit for a while and see how things go".

My move to New Guinea.

Bill Lugg and I both took off for New Guinea with the idea of earning big money. As it happened Bill did not stay up there very long. I was about 24 at the time. Bill had a job

lined up in New Guinea but I went up on spec. We caught the m.v. "Neptuna" in Melbourne in February,

1940. The fare from Melbourne to Salamaua was 28 pounds 12 shillings (\$57.20). We lived on the ship for a week in Sydney and, as it happened, Tom Lega joined the ship in Sydney, also headed for Salamaua. The "Neptuna" was due to sail in 1939 but was delayed because of the outbreak of WW11.

This, of course, was my first time on board a ship and I thoroughly enjoyed it – in fact we used to eat at the Captain's table. The "Neptuna" travelled Melbourne, Sydney, Salamaua. Where it went from there I do not know but I feel that it must have eventually gone to Hong Kong. On board the "Neptuna" was a couple, Mr and Mrs Birkenshaw, and he was an executive for an electrical firm in Shanghai, China. Mrs Birkenshaw used to say to me "Why do you want to go to a malarial-disease ridden place like New Guinea? Why don't you come with us to China? My husband will give you a job". Obviously I didn't take up the offer. Also on board was Mrs Godden, the wife of the BGD Manager in New Guinea. I distinctly recall her leaning over the rail of the ship and losing her handbag. In it was her passport and apparently all her jewellery.

We landed in Salamaua late in the afternoon and had a big party on board, which resulted in our being threatened with either quietening the party down or being put off the ship immediately – needless to say we quietened down. The next morning we disembarked on lighters and flew up to Bulolo, via Wau, on a Ford aeroplane.

When I arrived in Bulolo there was a public holiday of some sort and the offices of Bulolo Gold Dredging were closed so I stayed in the BGD mess for a couple of days, but when I turned up at the office was immediately taken on. In those days the small dredge No 6 was in Wau, the biggest ones, Nos 1, 5 and 7 were in Bulolo and Nos 4, 8 and 3 at Bulwa.

I started on No 4 Dredge at Bulwa as a deckhand oiler. The dredges used to have jig oilers, stern oilers, bow oilers, etc. The normal progression on a dredge was to go through some of those oiler jobs and end up as a winchman.

I Join the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR)

I enlisted in the NGVR on 14th October, 1940. As I said previously I was keen to join the Army and when I found out there was a Militia Unit in Bulwa I joined up. When you are young and there is a war on you just have to be a part of it.

Our training was not very detailed. We had a Vickers Machine Gun, a Lewis Machine Gun and our rifles. There was a rifle range at Bulwa and we had a number of range practices and used to spend a bit of time running around stabbing bags of straw with our bayonets.

We were mostly shift workers at Bulwa and our training used to be conducted around our shift work, but I do not remember much of it except the range practices. After Pearl Harbour, 7th December, 1940, we were issued with 100 rounds of ammunition for our .303 rifles and used to

take the rifle and ammunition to work on the dredge with us. There seemed to be a fear of a parachute landing by the Japanese at the time so we were armed at work in case this eventuated.

There was a master power switch up at the Baiune Power Station, and, if there was a Jap reconnaissance plane flying over, they would flick the master switch. While that was good as a warning, it caused a lot of bother on the dredges as the pumps would then stop and everything would sand up and it took time to get everything going again. Fortunately this only occurred on a couple of occasions forcing us to shut down.

The day Wau was strafed I was on afternoon shift and had been to Bulolo that morning. When I arrived back at Bulwa there wasn't a soul to be seen. Everyone was in their slit trenches and I was told "There's some Nip planes around". Well I looked up and saw what I thought were Kite Hawks – there used to be a lot of them around. Anyway they were the Jap planes about to strafe Wau, and when they broke formation it didn't take me long to find a spot in a trench.

Pilot Bertie Heath had just landed on the Bulolo strip minutes before the raid started and just managed to get clear of the airfield himself. Had he been a few minutes later he would have no doubt been shot out of the air. The plane was a Junkers and had a load of beer for the Bulolo golf club, most of which I think was salvaged. There was a Ford Monoplane parked on the strip, which was damaged also. The Ford would have been the one I flew in from Salamaua to Wau and Bulolo on my arrival into New Guinea. I can't recall what damage was done at Wau but I am of the opinion that Bulolo got hit the worst of the two places.

Mobilisation.

When the Japs strafed Lae and Wau, and a landing at Rabaul was imminent we were mobilised. My record of Service states that I was taken on strength on 22nd January, 1942.

The first thing we did at Bulwa was dig shelves about 10 feet (3metres) deep for the dredges so that when they sank, which they would do quickly without power for the pumps, they would sit on the shelves and not sink too deeply into the water where they were working.

We then had to put 44 gallon drums each side of the airstrip at Bulwa and string steel cables between them so that any Jap planes trying to land would crash. We then did this for a private strip on a hill near Bulwa where Ted Nichterlein had a sluicing plant. Bulwa airstrip was an emergency strip and only small aircraft like tiger moths used the strip regularly. People like Ray Parer had a small aircraft and used to do charter work into Bulwa. As an aside very few of us used to charter Ray's plane as he was notoriously unreliable. He would take you out and then completely forget about picking you up again, leaving you in all sorts of trouble trying to get back to Bulwa.

On mobilisation we were all allocated our different tasks. I was designated as a runner and had to move regularly between Bulwa and the NGVR outposts in the

Markham Valley. I used to carry dispatches, orders, and messages between the varying outposts on the way. I also had to guide troops arriving as reinforcements or replacements to these Markham outposts.

One dispatch I probably carried to the Markham NGVR was an order to capture a Jap prisoner. I am not aware of the complete details of the operation but I do know the plan went very wrong. The NGVR knew that a Jap truck was moving up the Lae / Markham road and set up an ambush with the idea of capturing a prisoner. They had positioned themselves for an attack when the truck became bogged right alongside their position with the result that the Japs all jumped off the truck. Dick Vernon was aiming his revolver when he received a burst of fire in the chest. That is the story I was led to believe but the NGVR book by Ian Downs has a slightly different version of the story.

On these trips I would start out at Bulolo or Bulwa, go straight down to Sunshine, which only took one or two hours, depending on what was being carried, from Bulwa (longer from Bulolo or Wau), then up, follow the Snake River until past Zenag aerodrome and then down again through Wampit and Bob's Camp until you came to Timney Waters, where I used to overnight most times. The next day I went down close to the Markham River to New Mari, then to Old Mari and cross the Markham River to go past Nadzab airstrip, then along the road towards Lae for a while and then cut north off the road up into the Wain Mountain Range to Camp Diddy.

The Markham natives were real 'water bois' - I used to reckon they could walk on top of the water, and they used to help us cross the Markham. We did not go across in canoes but used to wade across with a native helping us on the way. At times even the meris (native women) used to cross with us sometimes with food and even their babies in a bilim (basket) on their heads.

An average trip was two days down, stay and rest at Camp Diddy for a day and then two days back. As I recall I did this something like 11 times to the Markham but not that many trips forward to Camp Diddy. My armament consisted of a rifle and ammunition - I did not carry any grenades.

Incident on the Markham

The last trip I did down to Camp Diddy I had to guide down Mick Rowse (J.W.Rouse NGVR) and two signallers from the 2/5 Independent Company, Cpl McBarron and Sgt Main, to Camp Diddy where the 2/5th fellows were to be allocated to other duties in the Markham Area. We had crossed the Markham and, at the Nadzab Mission a truck was leaving to go down the Markham / Lae Road with rations for the various NGVR and 2/5 Independent Coy Camps in the area, so we put our heavy gear on it, kept our haversacks and rifles and walked for about an hour. We came to a stream and stopped for a drink and a spell, and I said to Sgt Main "Would you like to make the pace?" so he started off and we followed in single file. We had no sooner started off when I actually walked into his back - he had stopped. I asked "What's the matter?" and he replied "Nips!" Sure enough I looked and there they were - right in the middle of the road in

front of us. They started to fire and we all dived into the kunai grass. I was lying behind a stump and my mother's words on the bottom of her last letter kept ringing in my ears "God bless you and keep you safe". Apparently he did. Anyway a single shot rang out. I didn't know who fired it at the time, but it was Mick Rowse, and he then started to run. Well you can imagine trying to run in the thick kunai grass and Mick stumbled and fell - I thought he had been shot and I asked "Mick! Are you all right?" He replied "Yes!" and got up and ran again - so I followed so fast that I soon caught and passed him. I didn't even have a bullet in the spout of my rifle at that stage and. we eventually got into some very thick jungle - lawyer vines so thick you could hardly move and stopped.

Mick hadn't been in that country before and didn't know where he was so I explained that we were between the road and the Markham River and said "Look! If we head in that direction we will hit the Markham and follow it up to the Nadzab Mission". So off we went and sure enough came to the Markham where there was a great long island just off the edge of the bank and we crossed - I don't think Mick could swim but we got across by treading water and moving slowly. We kept moving up the Markham on this island, then back to the shore in the same manner, and not long later we were back on the road. At this stage we both made sure we had a bullet up the spout of the rifle as we didn't know whether the Japs had come up the road and started off towards the Mission. It was getting pretty dark when we came to the Mission and we were creeping along very carefully towards the Mission when the silhouette of a native came into view. As it happened Lt John Clark, NGVR, was in charge of the Mission and his native servant had a hunched back. This silhouette was that of a native with a hunch-back so I knew we were safe. At this stage I whispered to Mick "We're O.K. This is John Clark's boi" and called out "Are you there John?" By this time he had heard about the incident as apparently the Japs had a large patrol out and they had split up into two parties - one got the truck and the other got us.

The two 2/5 Independent soldiers were never seen again but according to natives were captured and taken to Lae.

When we arrived at the Mission we found John Clark already prepared to move out as he had heard of the Jap patrol in the area. We did not stay around very long but headed up the Erap River, heading for Camp Diddy. The Erap River runs into the Markham at the Mission and if you go up the Erap, into the Wain Mountains you can get around into Camp Diddy with a two day hard walk.

The Wain was lovely country with lots of native fruit to eat but it was very hard going.

After arriving at Camp Diddy two days later a Jap plane was circling overhead and I guess that was what prompted the O.I.C of the Camp to move out as we were certain that the camp had been spotted.

I slept the night on a bag of rice to keep out of the water, it was raining so hard. It was decided that most of us would go back to Bulwa or Bulolo so we were split up into two parties again and I was given the job of guiding

one party back through the Wain Mountains and down the Erap River – the party I wanted to go with took the short route down the road to the Nadzab / Lae Road and along it to the Mission – this took hours instead of two days. We started out in the very early morning and it was so dark that, to stop losing touch with each other, we all carried a piece of rotting timber with phosphorus pieces on it. I took the group along until we reached the Erap and then said “Look! All you have to do is follow this down to the Mission” and off I went ahead. When I came to the Markham I decided not to get wet, so, instead of fording the River, signalled to a group of natives on the far shore to come and get me in a canoe, which they did, and of I went to Bulwa.

This was the end of the permanent garrison at Camp Diddy – the post was moved to Camp Watut on the Watut River which runs past Bulolo and Bulwa . I don't know the exact spot where the camp was established as I went to Bulolo and never returned to that area. There were still other camps operating in the Markham, Kirklands and Bobs Camp are just a couple.

As a matter of interest a small version of the above appears in the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles book. It is a pity that I was not consulted about this as the article is not correct.

On a couple of occasions I accompanied the Independent Company patrols, acting as a native overseer, and have still a Japanese Invasion note signed by all the members of one of the patrols.

To be continued.

George's story as told To Bob Collins

Do you know why Army compasses have a mirror on the back?

So you can see who is lost.



FLASHBACK. A Coy patrol , Lae, 1957.

Members, L-R Kel Chew (could be Rod Harvey-Hall), Alan Jenkins, Trevor Isles, Frank Cleal, Doug Laws, Joe Fisk.

Photo supplied by Frank Cleal.

Photo HTT Vol 65

Officer inspecting PIR

Responses have been received as to the identity of the Officer Inspecting PIR in the photo in HTT Vol 65.

Maurie Pears thinks Adj Gen. Harrison

Hori Howard and Phil Ainsworth think Gen Sir Arthur McDonald

Jack Press thinks Lt Gen Tom Daly who paid the PIR a 6 day visit after Brig Hunter became Comd PNGDF. (definitely not Daly as I met him a few times—Ed)

Jim Devitt (PIR 59-62 and 67/69) thinks it may be Gen Pollard. He is certain that the Officer behind is Col Bruce Hearn.M.C.

John Holland, Museum Curator, thought it was Maj Gen Secombe.

Any more comments?.

Email from Hori Howard.

I am pleased to advise that the first volume of the PIR History has now been updated on to the Australian Army History Unit's website and the second will be there soon.

Would you please pass this information on to your PIR friends.

Painim Rot,

Hori.



Reserve Forces Day, Sydney, 2010.

L-R Back. Michael White, Noel Seraphim, Trevor Connell, Jes Hansford. **Front** Gordon Wilks, Ray Dalton, Owen? (Welfare officer Ryde RSL and carer for Ray Dalton). Also present from the Assn but not for this photo were John McGrath, Richard Hart, Bob Collins.

THE AUSTRALIAN CRICKET TEAM.

What do you get if you cross the Australian cricket team with an OXO cube? - A laughing stock.

The Australian bob sleigh team have asked the Aussie cricket team for a meeting – They want to ask their advice about going downhill so fast.

What's the difference between Ricky Ponting and a funeral director? - A funeral director doesn't keep losing the ashes.

Of everyone in the Aussie team, who spends the most time at the crease? - The woman who irons their cricket whites.

What's the height of optimism? - An Aussie batsman putting on sunscreen.

Why did the Aussie break his leg throwing the ball? - He forgot it was chained to his foot.

What is the main function of the Australian coach? - To transport the team from the hotel to the ground.

On his way out into the middle to bat, Ricky Ponting gets a call from his wife and a teammate tells her he's heading out to bat – His wife replies "I'll hold – he won't be long!"

What's the difference between an Aussie batsman and a Formula 1 car? - Nothing! If you blink you'll miss them both.

Who has the easiest job in the Australian squad? - The guy who removes the red ball marks from the bats.

What do Aussie batsmen and drug addicts have in common? - Both spend most of their time wondering where their next score will come from.

What did the spectator miss when he went to the toilet? - The entire Aussie innings.

What's the Aussie version of LBW? - Lost, beaten, Walloped.

Why is Ricky Ponting clever than Houdini? - Because he can get out without even trying.

What does Ricky Ponting put in his hands to make sure the next ball is almost certainly going to be a wicket? - A bat.

What does an Aussie batsman who is playing in the Ashes have in common with Michael Jackson? - They both wear gloves for no apparent reason.

What's the difference between Ricky Ponting and a phoenix? - At the end of the ashes the phoenix still has a future.

Email received from Bill Bickerton.

Subject. HTT Vol 66

Thanks Phil.

This edition is great. Thanks for all that you do—I often wish I was back in Qld and could offer some assistance. My wife Sawai and I are currently living in Manjimup, WA.

I have just completed a project management job in Kyrgyzstan building 350 new concrete and brick houses after huge civil unrest there and the subsequent destruction of hundreds of homes and businesses.

Cheers and pas on my regards to the Committee at your meeting this weekend.

Best Regards.

Gift to Qld Flood Victims from St John Ambulance, PNG.

In the aftermath of the devastating Qld floods, the Patron, Major General John Pearn, travelled to Port Moresby to thank colleagues in St John Ambulance Papua New Guinea for a most generous fundraising bequest, given to St John Ambulance in Qld for their ongoing disaster relief work. He was the guest of Commodore Peter Ilau, the Immediate Past Commander in Chief of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, and the Hon. Justice Mark Sevua, Chair of the Council of St John, Papua New Guinea.



Members of the Council of St John Ambulance PNG at the fundraising dinner held at the Crown Plaza, Port Moresby. L-R. The Hon Mark Sevua CBE, Chairman of the St John Ambulance PNG, Commodore Peter Ilau, Chairman of the St John Fundraising Ctee, Maj Gen John Pearn (Patron of our Assn), Lady Elizabeth Thurecht, OBE, Sir Ramon Thureche OBE (Member of Council)



Maj Gen John Pearn receiving a cheque from the Hon. Mark Sevua, CBE, for the work of St John Ambulance Queensland disaster relief.

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FUNCTION DATES

Sun 24th April

Museum Open 10am—1pm.

Mon 25th April.

Anzac Day March 9.30am

Left side George St March commences
10am

After the March—NGVR Memorial Service at the Hall of Memories Cenotaph, followed by Anzac Day Reunion 1st Floor Victory Hotel cnr Edward & Charlotte Sts, Brisbane.

Sat 11th June

Committee Meeting 12 noon at
Museum

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

Includes former members of the Pacific Islands Regiment, Papuan Infantry Battalion and New Guinea Infantry Battalion

All correspondence to:-

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Bob Collins—Editor

PIR Anzac Day Sydney, 2011

From Peter Porteous

Former members of the PIR Association will meet at Cnr Bligh & Hunter Sts, Sydney on Anzac Day at 8.30am.

There will be a reunion at the NSW Leagues Club at 12.30.

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

or post to 45 Capricornia,

121 Surf Parade,

BROADBEACH, QLD. 4218.

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