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

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Our NGVR 70th Anniversary Commemorative Dinner was held at the 'drop in centre' at the Greenbank RSL on Friday 1st June . Our Patron Major General John Pearn was in attendance as were about 45 other members and friends . Other guests included the PNG Consul -general to Queensland, Mr Paul Nerau MBE , the President of the Greenbank RSL and his wife, Mr and Mrs Eric Cavanagh OAM , the President and his wife of the Greenbank RSL Sub-branch , Mr and Mrs Tom McGee OAM and the President of the PNGAA, Ms Andrea Williams who travelled to Brisbane for the dinner. The keynote speaker was yours truly outlining the good works of the NGVR at Rabaul and in the Lae/Salamaua/Wau / Markham area during the early to mid part of 1942. The talk will be developed into an essay about 'the Keepers of the Gate' and later as a standing exhibit in our Museum at Wacol. There is an article with photographs about the Dinner near the rear of this issue.

About 20 members of the Association travelled to Canberra at the end of June to partake in the 70th Anniversary Commemorative luncheon on 30th June at Rydges Hotel and the Dedication Service and unveiling of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru National Memorial by the Governor General on 1st July, the 70th Anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru. Your will be aware that officially 36 members of NGVR were lost on the Montevideo Maru, unofficially possibly many more. It is for this reason why our active Association has been involved so closely with the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society. As President of both organisations, I am proud of the NGVR & PNGVR Association' s significant contribution towards having the men of so many Australian families recognised and honoured in this fitting way.

The dedication service on 1 July was a signal event, the culmination of many activities of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society which began just three and half years ago. It was an unqualified success with many complimentary emails received from members and friends. The key message is that those who attended left Canberra with a sense of peace and healing, confident that the sacrifices and memories of their men have been duly recognised and honoured by the nation.

While many unkind remarks were made about the weather before the dedication

service, only glowing reports have been received since. The sun came out just as the fly past of the three WW2 aircraft – the Hudson Bomber followed by a Wirraway and a black painted Catalina – droned overhead; the Memorial was blessed with a rainbow after the event and rain held off until the guests departed. Association members participated in the Service; Vice President Bob Collins laid a wreath on behalf of the Association and the Museum Curator John Holland read the Ode.

There were so many highlights, the fly-past, the speeches, the performance of the Ramale Anthem by Rebecca Raymond and the Salvation Army Band's music, the intensity of the crowd. Margaret Henderson, speaking on behalf of the families, said it was as if the dedication was a funeral service for the uninterred lost men and the Memorial a place mark for the men. Another mentioned that the number in attendance was similar to the number lost on the *Montevideo Maru* - imagine the instant loss of so many people and the repercussions it would bring to the community if it happened today.

The 70th Anniversary Commemorative luncheon on Saturday 30 June at Rydges Lakeside Hotel in Canberra saw 630 in attendance. Of these, 17 had a brother involved and 65 had a father. There was much chatter as people found they had amazing connections with many others around ...perhaps seeing someone they had gone to primary school in Rabaul with pre WWII!

The Chief of Army, Lt Gen David Morrison, gave a heartfelt speech about the fall of Rabaul, officially touching on issues never before discussed, to those who had gathered. The gathering was privileged to have several with Rabaul WW2 connections in the gathering: **Lorna Johnston** who had been a Prisoner of War in Japan, **Norm Furness** – President of the 2/22nd/Lark Force Battalion who had escaped Rabaul on the Lakatoi, **Len Wolfe** of Fortress Signallers who escaped Rabaul with the RAAF, **Lionel Veale** of the 1 Independent Coy, **Mr Hugh Ward** of Fortress Engineers who missed the ship taking the men to Rabaul due to illness – unfortunately **Lawrence Sawford**, ex Lark Force, of Tasmania had to cancel about a week before the event and **Matt Foley** was not able to make it from Queensland on the day. Other special guests included Dr Rowley Richards, ex

8 Div Malaya and Singapore, and Life President of the 2/15th Field Regiment Association, who spent time in Prisoner of War camps in Changi, Burma and Japan and 'Ossie' Osborne who was with the 2/6th Independent Commando Co. It was a privilege to have these people attending.

On 26 June, the Minister for Veteran Affairs, Warren Snowden, unveiled the recently received Montevideo Maru list. A Mr Harumi Sakaguchi, a Japanese national and private researcher has devoted many hours to, amongst other research, identifying and chronologically arranging Harold Williams' work of translating from the Katakana Roll in Tokyo in 1945 in which this particular list played an important part and work is continuing towards consolidating an early agreed list of those on board the Montevideo Maru. A DVD of the 30th June Luncheon and the 1st July Dedication will be available for sale by the end of July and you will be advised of ordering details.

Phil Ainsworth

July 2012



The Memorial 1 July 2012

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Stanley Lionel Burton NGVR

Story continued from last issue

As told to Bob Collins

Observation Post at Markham Point

In July 1942, Lofty Anderson and myself, together with two Airforce radio operators, were asked to establish another Radio Station at an Observation Post overlooking Lae, Markham Point. Markham Point is on the southern side of the mouth of the Markham River. We crossed the Markham at Kirklands Crossing and followed the River down to its mouth. This position gave us a good view of Lae Airstrip, Town and Harbour. It was important to keep Port Moresby informed of Jap Aircraft moving towards them, thus allowing adequate air and ground defence against these raids.

One of the 2/5 Ind Coy Sgts, W.A. Chaffey, cut a track into our position so that we could be resupplied without the Japs knowledge. It was called Chaffey's Secret Track. We were joined there by a native who belonged to the PIB (Papuan Infantry Battalion). He knew his aircraft so one day we had him on lookout for aircraft. He duly announced "Wanpela balus i-kam" then "Mi no savvy dispela balus" then "Igat tupela ars bilong em" - it was a Lockheed Lightning.

It was never difficult to find positions where we could view the Japanese positions, but the biggest difficulty was finding places where we could run the generators to charge the batteries without the Japs seeing the smoke from the air, as they knew we were watching them but didn't know just where we were.

We move to Madang

After two months at Markham Point we were recalled to the Wau area and sent to Kaindi. We were only there a short time when the C.O. announced he required two experienced operators to go to Madang and then added "Burton and Anderson - you are the volunteers". When I enquired as to what method of transport we would use the answer was "Walk!"

Madang was over 200 miles in a direct line, but about twice that distance by our walking track. When we arrived in Madang I relieved operator Ron Chugg (NGVR) whose health was not good. This station on Nobonob hill overlooked Madang town and harbour, and to sea as far as Kar Kar Island. Lofty Anderson went to assist some people who had escaped from New Britain, including a Wirraway pilot who had been shot down, and directed them through to Bena Bena, in the Central Highlands near Goroka.

I was in contact with Port Moresby and several other spotters and coast watchers daily - I used to conduct about 16 skeds daily. When Madang was evacuated the Mission Station at Nobonob removed all supplies and we were again without tinned food in case of movement inland. Consequently we obtained some old wash coppers and boiled sea water to obtain salt. Salt was very much sought after in the Highlands and this would ensure our existence in the event of a forced evacuation. An ex Police Officer arranged the transport of approximately 1 to 1½ tons of salt to an inland base where he remained in control.

We knew that we would be forced to evacuate our site when the Japanese decided to occupy Madang. The lack of food such as rice and tinned food supplies forced us to depend on kau kau, taro, corn and the odd piece of beef sent to us by a Lutheran Missionary. We found we could crush corn in a dolly pot normally used to crush gold ore and then, with the aid of a yeast made from coconut milk, produce a very



Stan on the steps of their house in Bulolo which was later totally destroyed together with all Stan & Daphne's belongings.

rough substitute for bread.

I was fortunate to have an Administration Officer, Capt. John Black, AN-GAU, share my site on Nobonob for his base.

The general area was serviced by two missionary groups:-

Lutheran—staffed by American missionaries

Roman Catholic—

staffed by German missionaries

Our station was situated close to a Lutheran mission station controlled by an American named Hans, known to us as Hans Anders. He was a very pleasant person and we appreciated his visits to our site. He advised us of the location of the other Lutheran Missionaries and their movements, if any, from their bases.

The other Mission staffed by Germans was situated about eight miles north of Madang, and only one contact was made with this group. We were disappointed with their attitude. We were visited one morning by a priest from this organisation. He advised us that the Bishop was aware that we had no food supply and that they had plenty of food and could help us, but the Bishop requested a favour. He would like us to supply them with some high powered rifles and ammunition, possibly three or four. We advised him we were unable to help him but would be prepared to pass on his request to headquarters. He rejected our suggestion and said if that was our reply he was afraid that they did not have any food to spare for us.

Other people in the area were Dr Braun, a Lutheran Missionary Doctor, stationed at Amele, Ted Radke, NGVR, stationed at Kranket Island in Madang Harbour, and Harry Dot, a Lutheran Missionary at Bodgadjim, on the South Coast of Madang. The Lutheran Missionaries had already made up their minds, unknown to me, that they would stay if the Japanese landed so they could assist their people.

I was able to follow the action of the various naval battles and, of course, this acted as a morale booster for me. I actually listened into the battle for the Bismark Sea. My radio contacts with other stations, including headquarters, could be as many as sixteen each day. We were able to monitor all Jap movements and also assist refugees from New Britain and other areas and help them with escape routes to link up with our troops further south in the Highlands. We knew other operators by their callsign - not necessarily by their name. One of the few names I knew was Lincoln Bell, NGVR, whose callsign was LJB. Lincoln was one of those who went to New Britain to assist in the evacuation of the Rabaul garrison. I was listening one day when he came on the air in clear "GIG - you tell those bloody Yanks to stop shooting up my boat. You tell them to stop straight away". Apparently

the Yanks came along while he was out in his boat and sent a few missiles his way.

We knew that the Japs would eventually take Madang, and, at 3pm on 20th December, 1942, I received a signal from HQ saying "Prepare to evacuate. Japanese invasion fleet anchored behind Kar Kar Island. Expect landing Madang this evening"

I was always prepared for a quick evacuation so the necessary routine was followed and other stations were quickly advised of the danger. We also advised the Lutheran Missionaries, and it was then that I found out that they had made up their minds to stay.

We Evacuate Nobonob, Madang

I am posted to New Guinea Air Warning Wireless

We waited until we heard the Japs blasting hell out of the Madang township and saw the pattern of the shelling, which was quite visible from our site, and we then moved off down the opposite side of the mountain from Madang and out of sight of the Japs. We used dull lights travelling along walking tracks through the thick vegetation, which also gave us good cover. After about six hours walking we slept until daylight and then continued walking westward towards the Ramu River where we considered we would be clear of any pursuit by the Japs.

My usual sked time with HQ was 3pm so I set up my radio and made contact, advising them of the Jap landing and of our position. I was advised of a change of HQ and was given a new HQ call sign. Unknown to me at the time, I had just been posted from NGVR to New Guinea Air Warning Wireless, and my number had been changed from NG 2116 to NGX 452. I am still not certain but it was about this time that I was promoted to Corporal.

New Guinea Air Warning Wireless was the Army group set up for spotting and had people posted in different places all over New Guinea. The procedures remained the same as when we were reporting to Port Moresby, the codes remained the same, and at the time I did not even know I had been transferred. One of the signals was a simple one - "Matchbox". If ever that was given the first thing you did was destroy all your codes and rely on the one you had been given to memorise - not to be written down.

I was also instructed to proceed to a location on the western side of the Ramu River to a position which we considered suitable for our operation.

Dallas, the Alsatian dog, was still with me and eating the same food as we had to eat, namely Kau Kau, Taro and Yams, and seemed to be quite happy with the diet, and possibly enjoyed it more than we did. Major Penglase, a District Officer with the NG Administration, had asked me to take care of the dog when he was called to Port Moresby. I was at first worried about the dog but it proved to be a perfect alarm for me when I was on my own, and would sleep about twelve feet from me, and would growl when anything approached to alert me to any possible danger. The dog would never bark unless on a command from me. During the first day Hans Anders, the Missionary, became worried because the natives were saying that he was deserting them, and this proved too much for Hans, and he requested he be allowed to return to his station. Unfortunately Capt. John Black granted him permission and the poor man was taken prisoner by the Japs and he died in their hands.

We walked on to the Ramu River where we considered we were reasonably safe from Japanese attack for the time. Jim Taylor, ANGAU, made contact with us at the River crossing and advised us he was carrying out a patrol to Sirinabu, behind Aitape. We spent the night in his company and next day proceeded towards Bundi.

The track to Bundi was narrow and very steep as it was on the slopes of Mount Herbert, which was the second highest mountain

in New Guinea, with a height of 14,000 ft. The going was slow and I felt sorry for the natives who were carrying my radio gear as I found it difficult carrying my pack and Tommy gun. The fast running streams were difficult to negotiate and progress generally was slow. We finally reached the Catholic Mission Station about 5pm. We were met by a German Priest and a Mission Brother who was also a German and we were invited to join them for a meal.

The meal provided by the missionaries was appreciated by us as we had been living on kau kau and taro for the past few days. The conversation during the meal was mainly restricted to the work of the station and obtaining information on the general topography and particularly access tracks from the coastal areas. However during the evening the priest asked if we considered that the Japanese would try to penetrate to this location and we replied that it was possible they may try to follow us because of the type of observation work we carried out. We were quite surprised when the old Brother replied "I hope so - I hope so", the priest quickly corrected by saying "You mean you are afraid so". The two gentlemen were German so we will never know the truth of the statements.

We advised the missionaries that they would have to accompany us on the next stage of our journey to the next mission station, which was also controlled by German Nationals at a place called Keglsugl. We particularly stressed that they should not send any message forward to advise of our movements. The track on this stage passed around the slopes of Mount Wilhelm and, at times, reached heights in excess of 10,000 ft - the height of this mountain is 15,400 ft - so you can imagine the going was tough when carrying a pack and Tommy Gun and ammunition. We had been joined by two more NGVR men, Bill Allen was one, and arrived at the next mission station about 5pm.



Wire suspension bridge typical of a number in the Lae, Salamaua, Wau, Madang area.

The instructions given regarding our movements had been ignored and we were confronted by about three hundred yelling natives carrying large spears and bows and arrows, with much yelling and chanting, but after our initial shock, I could see they were friendly and we were quickly surrounded and picked up bodily by these natives and carried into the village to a clean native hut where we were shown a heap of beautiful fresh vegetables, put there for us to use.

The two priests who controlled this station gave us an invitation to dine with them that evening and, of course, the



A Carrier Line moving through the Highlands during WW2

two missionaries who had accompanied us from Bundi were also present. We were given a glass of home brewed wine to drink and, naturally, we were careful not to accept more than one drink, much to the surprise of our hosts.

I had been advised by HQ that we were to arrange safe passage to Bena Bena for these four persons, and Capt Black and I had discussed the need for him to take the other NGVR men as escort for the missionaries, and I would proceed to a place called Mingendi to set up a permanent observation station. The four Germans were advised of the need for them to be transported to Port Moresby, and, after a full explanation of the reasons why it was necessary to take this action, they agreed to be ready to move off the following morning. The next day we received a message which stated that they would refuse to move. We immediately advised them they would be placed under open arrest if they refused the order to go. This action was taken and they were escorted to Bena Bena and flown to Port Moresby, and I parted company with them and proceeded to Mingende in the Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands, to set up my radio station.

My time at Mingende

I used a building near a fairly new Mission outstation as my radio station. The building was built of native materials which I thought may save it from air attacks. The Wahgi River Valley was very heavily populated with the population estimated to be in excess of one hundred thousand natives. They were very primitive with practically no contact with whites and practically every day a group of about 20 or 30 natives would come to check out the stranger who had just arrived in the district. They could not understand what was happening when I was making contact with other stations. They appeared to be dumfounded when I spoke to these strange boxes and was able to get them to talk back to me. I often think 'If only I had been able to capture so many of these very special incidents on film'.

I was now in a position where I was surrounded by primitive natives rather than hostile Japanese and my main concern was aircraft movements, and to be aware of and report any attempt by the Japanese to penetrate the Highland Area. The other concern was to keep the natives on side and it was not long before I was able to assist in solving a local problem. Some of the problems were medical and some were tribal. I will endeavour to describe a couple of these

problems so that you may understand the difficulty I had trying to keep the support of one hundred thousand primitive natives and so to my first story.

Four chiefs came to see me one morning. They were dressed in their find bird of paradise headdress and carrying large ceremonial spears and were escorted by several natives carrying bows and arrows. You may imagine I was quite worried until I could see they appeared to be in a happy mood and asked if I could help them with their problem. They sat on the ground and told me.

They were from four different villages but were having the same problem with a native who was wearing a gold number on his forehead and

claiming that he was presented with it by a white officer who told him he was not a Kiap and as such was a government representative with control over all natives in the area.

They told me that this native had recruited several natives to act as police and had built a jail to imprison any person in the area who did not respond to his orders. He would go into a village where he would select any young female he fancied and take her to his home as one of his wives and would not even offer to pay for her. He now had thirteen young wives, none of them bought by him in the usual tribal manner, and if anyone objected they would be threatened with severe punishment.

He also said that I was sent to spy on them and once I had gained their confidence I would bring many people like myself with guns and kill all the locals. The chiefs said they did not believe him as they knew that he would always try to make trouble for any person who he thought was stronger than he was. This was, of course, very serious, as I was the only white person in the area, and I considered I should act immediately and told the chiefs that I would help them. They went away very happy to have my support.

I immediately sent a native to tell this rebel that I wished to talk with him and he responded fairly quickly as I am sure he felt quite confident that I respected him as a man of substance. He arrived with a bodyguard of two big strong natives and, with a big smile on his face, asked how he could help me. I questioned him through my interpreter about the origin of the Gold Number he was wearing on his forehead. He was unable to name any government official who appointed him as a government representative so I suggested to him that I could not recognise his authority and would only deal with the hereditary chiefs. His attitude changed immediately and he walked away and after he had gone a few yards he turned and, with a look of disdain, he said something to me which I could not understand and walked quickly away.

I asked my interpreter what he said and the reply was "Masta - he talk no gut. U jus laik the hair on his legs". This, of course, meant that I had no standing in the community at all. You can imagine the need for me to act quickly to prevent any further trouble. As I was the only white man in the district occupied by in excess of 100,000 natives I needed to show some strength.

My first action was to contact a government Administration Officer who I knew personally and who I was able to contact by radio, and when I gave him the name of this rebel native, who he also knew had been a trouble maker he immediately arranged to have him taken into custody. He was situated about two days walk from where I was, and within two days a batch of P.I.B

(Papuan Infantry Battalion) boys came across and arrested him, and put him in his own jail overnight, then took him out of the area.

The chiefs who had complained about this rebel were delighted with the action taken and were prepared to do anything they could to assist me. The word spread throughout the whole district and I was continually visited by chiefs from all parts of the district with offers of gifts, mainly food.

Enemy activity was restricted to mainly reconnaissance aircraft which I saw on a daily basis, but little interest was shown in my location, and no enemy penetration was observed.

On the health side I considered that the most serious problem after malaria was tropical ulcers, and I found that the highland area was similar to the coastal regions in this regard. My most valuable medicine other than malaria tablets was a good supply of Sulfanilamide powder which enabled me to treat any tropical ulcers successfully during my long periods away from medical officers.

The natives in this area would sometimes approach me with severe tropical ulcers appealing for my assistance with their problem, and I would, where possible, and with considerable success, and this led me to be looked upon as a 'number one medicine man'. This activity created a real problem as, one day, a batch of natives from the mountain area carried a male native into my station on a roughly made stretcher and pleaded with me to help him. When I examined his leg, which was covered by a crude bandage of banana leaves, I was fortunate that I had not touched him, as I could see that the bones around the ankle area were completely exposed. I very quickly told them that I did not have medicine to help this native and that the only thing I could suggest was to take him to an Administration site which was two days walk away. I admit that I did not expect he would live long enough to complete the journey, but also I could not risk having him pass away at my station. The poor native passed away the day after he left the station and his carriers came to tell me about it and seemed to appreciate the fact that I told them where to go, but I think I may have been in trouble if I had made any attempt to help him at my station.

I felt that I now had the support of the majority of the natives in the valley and received frequent visits from the four chiefs who had previously appealed to me for assistance. Their attitude to me indicated how grateful they were for what I had done for them in bringing an end to their rebel native problem.

One day I received a signal from HQ asking if it were possible for me to find a suitable landing area for light aircraft, and on inspection of the area, I located a good level place, which, if cleared of heavy growth of grass and weeds, could serve as a rough landing strip, having a good approach from both ends and adequate length for the runway. I advised HQ of my findings and that I considered the native population would be prepared to provide the labour to prepare the site if required, as I had complete confidence of their support. The reply from HQ was to proceed with the clearing of the site if I thought it could be achieved fairly quickly.

I immediately called the four chiefs who had become quite friendly with me and explained to them what I had to achieve, and with their assistance marked out the area to be cleared and made level. I asked them if they could arrange for a large number of district natives to be organised to have work done quickly, and they advised me that they would have no trouble arranging the numbers needed as there were many people available to help. They would only require two days to organise the people to be there with the primitive tools required to do the job.

The chiefs were true to their word, and, on the appointed day, I was awakened at daybreak by much chanting and singing, and natives were coming down the mountains on both sides of the valley in large numbers. There appeared to be thousands on the move and they began assembling on the area we had marked out for clearing. As they arrived each headman was given instructions by my friendly chiefs who pointed me out as the person for whom they were working. They were all very friendly and seemed to be treating the project more as a celebration as they went to work singing and laughing, and in a very short time the whole area marked out for the strip was completely cleared and the surface made reasonably level. The only tools they had were sticks shaped for the purpose. I thanked them through my interpreter and they went back to their villages still in a very happy mood.

The newly constructed strip for the next week or so did not appear to attract much attention and I was not advised of any requirement for further work, and no inspection appeared to be made by our own air force. The only air movement was by Japanese reconnaissance aircraft.

To be continued...

A Queensland farmer drove to a neighbour's farmhouse in his Holden Ute, and knocked at the door.

A boy about 9 opened the door.

"Is your dad or your mum home?" asked the farmer.

"No! They went to town

"How about your brother Howard? Is he here?"

"No! He went with Mum and Dad".

The farmer stood there for a few minutes shifting from one foot to the other and mumbling to himself.

"I know where all the tools are if you want to borrow one, or I can give dad a message".

"Well!" said the farmer uncomfortably, "I really wanted to talk to your dad. It's about your brother Howard getting my daughter Susie pregnant".

The boy thought for a moment.

"You will have to talk to dad about that. I know he charges \$500 for the bull and \$50 for the pig, but I don't know how much he charges for Howard".

MEMORIES OF THE PNGVR

By Bernard Arnold

Looking back at my time with the PNGVR, I must say that the training received, particularly in communications (e.g., the SMEAC briefing sequence) and methods of instruction, have proved very useful to me in civilian life. My first promotion to temporary corporal was 'in the field' and followed a week-end bivouac in the Vanapa River area—jungle navigation was the theme and I was put in charge of a small section of Privates. My section came in first whilst another in charge of a visiting Lieutenant was 'bushed' and had to be 'rescued'.

For much of my time at Madang during my second posting there, the Platoon had no officer. Sergeant Stan Gould looked after the administrative matters and I was Sergeant in charge of training the platoon. By this time Papua New Guineans had

been admitted to the PNGVR and the slouch hat was replaced by dark blue berets. One of the problems faced was how to fit fuzzy-wuzzy hairdos into army headgear. One man in particular was inordinately proud of his flat-top style. He took some persuading to cut it short so as to look reasonably regimental in a beret. This recruit later became Minister of Defence in one of the PNG governments. I was also called upon by the police to remove the odd rusty hand-grenade and shells found in the town's front yards and backyards, which strictly speaking I was not qualified to do. I had a good understanding of mechanics which I coupled with the application of common sense and this gave me the confidence to safely do the job. Under a nervous police escort, I hurled them into the sea off Kalibobo point.

Stan Gould was the best organiser I ever met. With his drive the Madang Drill Hall and grounds received a prize for the neatest depot. I made a sign with a large PNGVR badge, fret-sawn from heavy waterproof ply and painted, at the entrance and mounted a 20 mm Japanese cannon on a concrete pad next to it. Stan organised all the materials. Later the unit retrieved a 75 mm gun from Alexishafen and set it up on the front boundary.

The crowning project of Stan's was the camp at Baiteta, near Rempi. It ended up with a Quonset hut with a concrete floor, a flushing toilet complete with vinyl floor covering and a septic tank. Finally, even showers were put in. I remember a couple of the 'working bees.' One was when we cleared a patch in the jungle and I was in the path of a falling tree. Fortunately only the small wood of the crown came down on my head. Another was when we shoveled loose cement from broken bags into 44-gallon drums in 'Steamies' store for use in the cement floors at the camp, and another when we graveled the road to the camp site and built a culvert over the creek. One working bee I had brought the family for a picnic and wanted to boil the billy. I found I had brought no matches to start a fire so I asked one of the passing villagers could he start the fire for me. I expected he would gather some tinder and use a rubbing-stick, instead he asked, "Master, you got benzene?" With his matches I managed quite well without the kerosene that he found obligatory. Much of the work at Baiteta Camp was done by the 'calaboose line' to which Stan also had good connections.

Service in the PNGVR occasionally put a strain on family relationships and sometimes with the employer too where the annual camp was concerned, which is why I missed several camps. Wives left at home felt abandoned whilst we 'enjoyed' ourselves, especially as we had extra-curricular exercises besides the prescribed parades and bivouacs and some members imbibed too freely in the Sergeants Mess after parade. The Madang unit was one that had a lot of social activity that the rest of the family was involved in. Picnics at Pig Island, Nagada, Rempi, and barbecues at the depot are some socials I remember. I was treasurer of the Madang Sergeants' Mess for some time and often did duty as barman. I was appalled at the frequency of four letter words used in normal conversation and decided to take corrective measures. One individual in particular used to exclaim "shit!" every time he was impressed by something he heard. One night I decided to serve up what the customer asked for. When I had my cue, I said, "coming up," and placed a serving tray with a neat little turd on it right in front of him on the counter. The shock was something to behold—he recoiled back from the bar in horror; but I'm afraid it was no cure, for he relapsed immediately! Incidentally, the turd was a clever plastic fake and it is interesting that the sense of smell had no impact in situations of surprise.

Some of the extra-curricular activities I participated in were—setting up a machine-gun post outside the picture-theatre at Madang when the film "The Longest Day" came to town. A 'recce' patrol in the hills behind Madang with Lieut. Chikka Hudson and another chap whose name escapes me. We ended up

bushed and eventually got a group of villagers to guide us down the Gum River to the bridge where long after dark we managed to catch a ride on the back of a truck back to town for an exorbitant fare. Another exercise was to walk from Utu to beyond Amaimon in the Gogol valley to visit a crash-landed American Boston fighter-bomber. We stayed the night at Amaimon and walked back to Utu next day. Two .50 caliber Browning machine guns were taken out of the aircraft and brought to Madang where one Platoon member, Ian Grattidge who worked for DCA, restored them to working order. Both guns had a round in the chamber and to 'extract' them he



*Bivouac in
Siar Planta-
tion, Madang.*

*Bernie leading
patrol with
Mick Brown
and Joe Berger
following*

fired a .22 rifle at the round from a safe distance. A route march from Rabaul along the 'escape route' to Major Green's house on the North Coast and the full circuit back

to town, and marches/climbs up the steep caldera overlooking the town—some of us believed in keeping fit!

Service in the early 1960s was less formal and some activities would not have been sanctioned by Company let alone Battalion command. In the absence of Aldershot grenades or Thunderflashes I purchased firecrackers at the Chinese trade store and bundled them into a 'handgrenade' and covered them in wax. With so much water from above and below, some had become damp during the bivouac and failed to ignite. These 'duds' remained in my basic pouches after I got home. One quiet sunny Madang lunchtime about a week later, my house-boy decided to clean my webbing and taking the contents to be rubbish, he threw them on a little fire he had going. Several loud bangs shattered the siesta—one has to appreciate the profound peace, accentuated by the chirping of cicadas, which reigned over the township at such a time to appreciate the ignominy of the act. My place was just across the lagoon from the police station so minutes later a police constable came to enquire into this gross disturbance of the peace. With embarrassment I explained the accident. After siesta I had to front up to police chief Thomas who was very understanding about the matter. On another bivouac a patrol was made more realistic when a slab of TNT was suspended in a shrub beside a footpath in the rainforest. It was intended to explode the slab to simulate an ambush hand-grenade-attack on the patrol when the first scout was a safe distance from it. The trouble was the first scout moved so stealthily and was so well camouflaged that he was not seen by the 'enemy'. When the slab exploded he had just passed the shrub and the blast

knocked him forward with his head tucked under his body. I was Bren-gunner towards the rear of the patrol but I still felt a hot blast of air. A small panic ensued when it looked as if the first scout had had his head blown off. Fortunately he was not injured beyond being completely stunned. He recovered enough to be married the following weekend!

Then there was a bit of fishing using hand-grenades as 'bait' and live firing with the Bren in a plantation. A bivouac at the Gum River was memorable because we were to be shown by an 'expert' how to use plastic explosives for demolition purposes. A ring of explosive was placed around the trunk of a dead tree. A length of fuse, instantaneous, was then run from the tree to a native hut where it terminated in a CB primer charge, a detonator was placed in the primer and a length of safety fuse to the edge of the garden where we all took positions behind trees. Our instructions were, immediately we heard the explosion to emerge from behind our trees to observe the effect of the charge which was to fell the tree. Imagine our amusement when after a loud explosion the dead tree stood firm with no observable damage to it while the native hut had a hole blown in the roof from the exploding primer cartridge. The sequel to this was a complaint by the owners to the kiap and a demand for compensation—not only for damage to the hut, but for the loss of several pigs as well!

There was also live firing at Goldie River. There was a sneaker course for the Owen machine carbine and we did live firing with the Bren, crawling and running and changing barrels. I received a nice blister on my belly from carrying the hot spare barrel. On a night exercise we had to dig in on a hill. In the middle of the night I was given filled magazines and then ordered to fire the tripod-mounted Bren with live rounds including tracer. This provided a surprise awakening to the sleepers and gave a very good demonstration of ricochet effect when the bullets hit the trees beyond our defended position. On a night patrol beside the Goldie River we were fired upon with two-inch mortar bombs. They were parachute illuminating rounds that failed to open and they came crashing through the treetops. I felt sure they were going to fall right on top of me.

I enjoyed the camp at Goldie River, especially as I did not become the target for any 'Thunderflashes'. Senior NCOs liked to toss the odd one under a hut as a wake-up call or to bury one as a booby trap in the earth floor of the mess hut. Crossing the river on a toggle-rope bridge and patrolling up a shallow river with bayonets fixed in fear of crocodiles, route march and sore feet, are some of the experiences we had, and I still have a slight scar on the tip of my nose where the thorns of a 'wait-a-while' vine left their mark. In one exercise we had to attack up a hill in the jungle. I was carrying the Bren and was perspiring so profusely that my glasses fogged up. I told the platoon commander that I couldn't see where I was going. He said, "In battle, that might be an advantage—carry on." One day we did jungle survival training which involved finding 'bush tucker.' We tasted fern tips, palm tips, fungi and drank fresh water from a water-vine. At the end of the exercise, the officer in charge announced that there would not be a midday meal in the mess that day and we would need to find our tucker in the bush. We had all worked up a good appetite by that stage so the announcement was met with great displeasure by the troops. Of course, he was only having a laugh at our expense and we afterwards marched off to the mess hut.

When I was first transferred to Madang I broke my journey at Goroka to see a little of the highlands. I was staying at the hotel and was just settling in to my room when I was spotted through the open window by Major Newman. "Ah! Arnold, how would you like to join the Goroka unit for a week-end bivouac?" What could I say? I surrendered the comfort of the paid-for hotel and attended the bivouac. At night we did a patrol which involved a crossing of the Asaro River. Being the guest, I was appointed

first scout to find a shallow crossing—the locals knew how cold the water could be. I spent an uncomfortable night in wet clothes but saw more of the highlands than had I stayed at the hotel. Later, when I was posted to Goroka for some months, I was wise enough not to get involved in the card games after parade—I don't think I ever saw Frank Hoeter, the OC, lose a game. While I was stationed at Goroka I decided to climb Mount Wilhelm. I chartered a TAL Cessna and needed to get another three persons to come along to share costs. None of the PNGVR members wanted to come along but I managed to find others, including our office typiste. We flew to Keglsugl and climbed from there. It was a great experience to reach the summit and to enjoy the scenery and unique vegetation on the slopes.



Madang Platoon headed for Bivouac via DC3

A small incident on a week-end bivouac at Kokopo with the Rabaul Unit in 1962, tickled my fancy—We were on the rifle range and our detail of five had just taken up the prone position on the mound. I was on gun number one of five.

We had sighted our Bren-guns on the cardboard targets held up by the butt party and were ready for the command to fire, when the regular army Warrant Officer doing our training gave an almighty yell of "**STOP!**" and bellowed out "IT IS A PHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITY TO FIRE THE BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUN FROM THE LEFT SHOULDER!"

I knew immediately that I was the cause of this outburst, because I have been blind in my right eye from a childhood accident. I told him that I could not fire from the right shoulder given the off-set sights, so he ordered me to leave the mound.



Camouflage lesson, Siar Plantation, Madang, 1961.

This was immediately countermanded by the firm voice of Major Harry Green who had been hovering about in the background. "Sergeant Major, that man goes on firing!" With only one arm himself, he did not believe in letting a small physical handicap get in the way of martial pursuits. (He could sometimes be seen shooting on the range with a light carbine one-handed.)

Fuming, the SM gave us our permission to fire. Insult was added to the SM's injury when the scores came back from the butts—I got the best score!

Afterwards I took my turn at butts duty and then discovered that Cpl Holland, slightly the worse for last night's hospitality at the Kokopo Club, had the numbers reversed and consequently I had been given the score of gun number five. We decided not to spoil matters by revealing the truth to the SM. I had a reasonably good score anyway.



Anzac Day, Lae, 1961 Photo courtesy Bernie.

In the early sixties the PNGVR song was heard from time to time along with the now politically incorrect songs 'The Burden,' and 'Bye, Bye, Black Girl.' The PNGVR song was to the tune of the Gendarmes' Song in Offenbach's 'Genevieve de Brabant,' and went something like this:—

We're only innocent young civilians—
They drag us in from off the street!
They fit us out in jungle greens and boots;
And how the damn things hurt our feet!
They put us through our basic training;
They yell and shout to push us on.

[Refrain]

They bring us on, they bring us on,
They bring us on, they bring us on,
We're from the P N G V R!

There were two other verses of which I can't remember the words. I think they started with—

And once a month we have a bivouac...
And once a year we have out training camp...
We bring them on, etc.

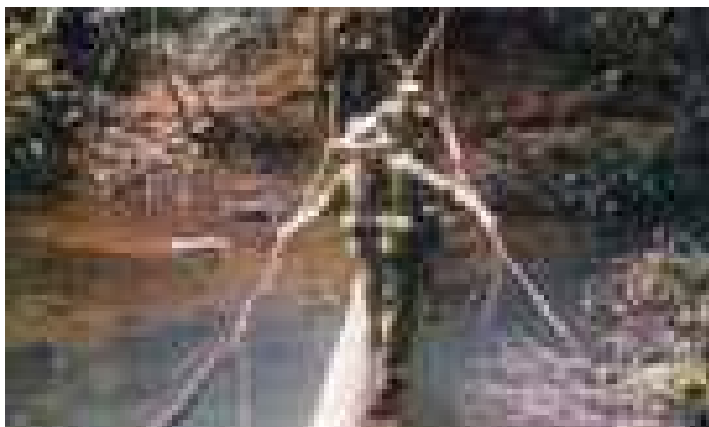
Annual Camp at Taurama Barracks in 1962 was a camp with a difference. Patrolling in the open Savannah of the hills nearby with little shade and no breeze in the high grass, I saw a chap fall down with heat exhaustion, his body twitching with spasms. It looked worse than it was but it gave me a healthy respect for the climate. Sometimes when I felt near exhaustion, with my water bottle empty, I thought to myself "I must be crazy to do this when I could be at home in com-

fort and within reach of the fridge." Eventually you got back to where the Padre had a big kettle of sweet white smoke-flavoured tea waiting and the discomfort faded from memory. Talking about water bottles—after filling them we put in a white chlorine sterilizing tablet and half an hour later a blue 'de-taster' tablet. It was a moot point whether the de-taster made the water taste better or worse. Taste aside, one became so thirsty that it was sometimes hard to wait the half hour sterilizing period.

When Colonel Eldridge became OC (he always reminded me of IKE), we heard much of the Pentropic Division. I couldn't quite see how that affected our small dispersed band of warriors and it was no surprise when, after a short time, that concept was dropped as suddenly as it had arisen.

A bizarre aspect of the Taurama Camp was that we were shown a couple of training films on riot control. The area had been screened off with hessian to prevent PIR soldiers from seeing these films. If anything, the hessian must have aroused curiosity rather than achieve its objective. The reason for the secrecy was that the films dealt with techniques, British fashion—read the riot act, mark a line on the ground, and shoot to kill! One of the films as I recall was called 'Keeping the Peace' and was set in the Mediterranean area. It suggested a role for the PNGVR that we had not reckoned with and saw no need for.

Another camp I attended was based at the Lae drill hall. The second week was entirely in the field, patrolling the Atzera Range. It is well known that rubber is perished by chlorine. I suspect that chlorine is produced by perspiration, salts, and bacteria on the body. I was walking along in a single file patrol when the elastic in my underpants failed. In the roomy army issue trousers the pants, heavy with water, became a great hindrance to pro-



Bernard on a bivouac near Owers Corner

gress. I could not very well ask the patrol to stop so that I could take them off, so I used my bayonet to cut them free via the fly. In keeping with good patrol discipline I buried them to deny the enemy vital intelligence.

The last camp I attended was at Mount Ambra in the Western Highlands. It was notable only that the latrines had to be placed out of bounds during range firing by recruits after some bullets had gone through them although they were nearly at right angles to the mound. I was occupied with a number of men in degreasing handgrenades when we kept hearing buzzing sounds overhead. At first thinking they were large insects we soon deduced they were too consistently in one direction and almost simultaneously realised they were bullets coming over the hill separating us and the butts. We did not linger longer. On several mornings a few of us climbed the big hill overlooking the camp—Mount Ambre. Someone had brought bagpipes and everyone had to take turns to blow into the bag as it was too exhausting for the player to climb and blow for any length of time. I provided some amusement to a squad of men I was to instruct. They were lined

up in a rank and I needed to step back to make myself seen and heard to the men on the wings. I stepped back and disappeared down a hole that had been dug there. The food provided at the camp was generally quite good but always a little light for big appetites. For that reason bread and jam on the table was an important 'filler' item to the men. One day the jam had run out and this caused a big ado with mutinous overtones. Next day there was adequate jam on the table.

I always took our training seriously, after all, its purpose was to train for war and war, I knew from my German childhood, was a serious business. Not everyone in the Unit thought like that and when I had to share a weapon pit with an unreliable person who was not only not going to stay awake for his watch but was also going to give our position away by snoring loudly, I decided I must stay awake all night. An incident that was particularly riling was when it was discovered after a bivouac in the Siar Plantation area that a rifle was missing. We all had to go back to the bivouac site and search. A large bottle of beer was offered as an incentive to the finder and by that stage of the week-end the thought of enjoying a cold bottle of beer was very attractive indeed. We were not happy when the person whom we all suspected of being the sloppy soldier found the missing musket where his tent had been and he received the reward.

I also remember Siar bivouacs for other reasons. Night patrols in pitch black conditions with only a phosphorescent piece of decaying vegetable matter attached to the back of the man in front, the flashes of fireflies, unpleasant contact with a nettle bush, and I have never again experienced demarcation of rainfall as on one occasion when an afternoon tropical downpour came through the plantation. The demarcation was so sudden that I was able to hold my arm out and get a thoroughly wet hand while my body stayed dry. Mentioning rainfall also brings to mind an occasion in a defensive position near Wewak in rainforest almost at sea level. Everything was silent because we were at evening 'stand to' positions when a roaring sound came from the direction of the sea. The thought occurred to me that it might be a tidal wave rushing through the forest. I was thinking of finding a suitable tree to climb when the sound proved to be a tropical downpour. I would never have believed rain could produce so much noise.

Another bivouac at Wewak was memorable because of a small incident. We were in forest near sundown and had to make a defensive position rather hurriedly before 'stand to.' After 'stand down' one man in my section kept shuffling about all night and I made a mental note to tell him off in the morning. After morning 'stand down' I went to his tent to see what all the undue noise during the night was about. The answer was that he could not get comfortable all night. Not only were there roots and vines under his ground sheet, but also human skeletal remains. Closer examination of the site revealed a rusty Japanese helmet.

Other reminders of the Pacific War were encountered from time to time. I was being examined for first appointment to officer rank in field tactics. The enemy position I was to take with my imaginary platoon was no less than that Japanese machinegun position where Pte R. Kelliher won his VC in Whittaker's Plantation outside Lae. I failed this part of the exam but I maintain Kelliher only had enemy bullets and hand grenades to contend with—I'd had a tropical downpour and lots of fresh cowpads! These experiences brought one in close touch with history and they have left me with the greatest admiration for our troops who fought in New Guinea.

The Madang unit being numerically small, was always a platoon of a company located either at Wewak or later, Lae. The advantage was that we got to travel more than other units when we undertook joint bivouacs. A Caribou transport air-

craft was assigned to fly us over. It would come to Madang to collect us where we were ready to load together with our platoon's Landrover and trailer. On one flight to Wewak the rear ramp was kept down and the pilot did several swoops on a plantations where he had friends. We had been told to make sure our seatbelts were fastened because the pilot did not want to lose any of us!

The Madang unit was accustomed to visits by senior officers on parade night. Some wags had it that it was when it was winter 'down south.' I was not surprised therefore when one parade night I spotted an officer standing in the shadow on the edge of the parade ground. Not wanting to be caught out, I gave a smart "officer on parade—dismiss!" marched up to the officer and saluted. He smiled and said to me, "you don't have to salute me, I'm a bloody Hun." I replied, "that's alright, I'm a bloody Hun too!" It transpired that he was radio officer on a German cargo ship visiting Madang and with no other nightlife in the town he had been attracted by our activity.

In 1963 after the Indonesian invasion of Dutch New Guinea there was a certain amount of tension in Papua New Guinea. The possibility of the Indonesians taking over the whole the island was thought possible. We of the PNGVR were asked to sign a paper (in typical fashion for a young male, I don't recall reading the text of the paper before signing it) to the effect that we would volunteer to join the regular army for scouting and intelligence gathering roles. Fortunately no such invasion eventuated, but I recall an SAS unit arriving in PNG and doing some exercises with some of those men.

It was always an honour to be involved in Anzac Day celebrations. Port Moresby had a large parade where we actually got to use the 'size' drill, whilst at Lae we stood guard on the steps of the War Cemetery. I was quartered at the Hotel Cecil and had no alarm clock. I woke up dismayed that I was late for dawn guard duty. It was still pitch black when I sneaked into my position on the steps and I doubt anyone noticed my lateness. At Rabaul I was one of two PNGVR and two Navy men in the catafalque party. At Madang I was guard commander at the Coastwatcher's Memorial.



Bernard and Edel at home in South Australia, 2010

When I was transferred to Madang, the '303' rifle was being replaced by the 7.62 SLR. I was asked to carry one SLR to Madang and to demonstrate its stripping down and reassembly to the Madang unit.

In 1967 I was transferred back to Port Moresby where they already had all the sergeants they needed. When I attended parade I was assigned menial tasks such as supervising recruits in the issue, disassembling, cleaning, reassembling, and return of rifles. There was no challenge in that for me after I had been training men in the full range of infantry skills. I had also sat for first appointment on two occasions. I passed the written papers and drill but was failed on the subjective tactical field-work. I believed in surviving to fight another day and was told by a sarcastic observer that I would never win a VC. It appears I should have had my platoon charge a hill across a bridge against defilade machine gun fire! It was rumoured, however, that there were no vacancies for officer rank so you were failed to keep you interested. In the light of the reduced attraction it was not worth straining familial relationships and so I left the PNGVR. I maintained my interest in bushwalking and trail biking and did a bit of hunting for deer and wild pigs in the Moresby area. I also developed an interest in visiting scenes of WW11 fighting and collecting memorabilia—but that is another story.

Thank you Bernard for your story.

HTT is always looking for articles and stories so please do not hesitate to forward yours in.

More of Bernard's story Confessions of a Collector will be told in future editions.



FLASHBACK



A face familiar to many in PNGVR.

Maj Peter Harbeck on exercise in the Lae area.

HISTORY OF THE DAWN SERVICE

Recall the article on the History of the Dawn Service in HTT Vol 69? Its conclusion was the moving of the priest concerned to Herberton, North Qld. Where he died shortly after becoming Chaplain of an Anglican convent in his retirement. He was buried modestly and anonymously as "A Priest".

Thanks to John Holland who recently holidayed in the area, we now have photos of the priest's grave and memorial.

OL BOI HARIM TOK

Mi, Tseneral Sir TOMAS BLEIMI, nambawan long ol soldia INGILIS, salim dispela tok I ham long yupela boi bilong NUKINI TRU, NUBRIKEN, NUAILAN, MANUS, BIK BUKA, BUKA, MUSAU, LAWANGAI nau ol lik lik ailan Japan I kam pait sitil long em.

Long nambaru dei long dispela mun, long ples tru bilong Japan, King, Nau Guvman na kiap bilong Japan ol I tokim sampela nambawan bilong ol I wokim wanpela pas nau gipim long ol nambawan bilong AMERIKA, KONG KONG, INGILIS, nau RASA I stop weitim. Guvman bilong INGILIS I makim mi long ko kisim dispela pas, nau I holim.

Dispela pas I tok olsem: YU MAS TOKIM OLGETA MAN BILONG YU INOKEN PAIT MOR. Oil mas troimwei musket nau samtig bilong pait nau stap gut long ol ples. OI I mas weitim tok bilong nambawan bilong mipela, HARIM GUT, NAU INOKEN SAKIM. Pas I tok olsem.

Nau yupela bilong olgeta ples pastaim Japan I sitilim, nau tu long ol man I bin kalabus long Japan. Long dispela taim ol soldia bilong yumi I rausim pinis ol Japan long ples bilong yu. Mi ting tumas long yu. MI HAMAMAS TUMAS LONG YU.

Yu mas harim tok bilong ol nambawan nau kiap bilong yu, nau yu noken ran nabaut nabaut – stap gut long ples bilong yu.

NAU WEITIM TOK MOR I KAMAP.

Nambatu Dei

Long namba nain mun, 1945. Signed THOMAS BLEIMI

NAMBAWAN LONG OL SOLDIA INGILIS
TOK BILONG GUVMAN

THE AMAZING STORY OF PRIVATE STOKIE'S WAR IN THE JUNGLE

By Don Hook

One of the more extraordinary stories to come out of WW2 involves John Stokie, a New Guinea planter and one-time private in the NGVR, who ended the war as a decorated coast-watcher and guerilla leader. Stokie has been described as a 'roughneck' with no military training or knowledge, and as a first class bushman who knew how to work with the local people. **Don Hook** has been tracing, albeit with some difficulty, the background and adventures of this amazing soldier.

Leslie John Stokie was born at Colac, a dairying town in western Victoria. His date of birth is shown on most Army records as 12 September 1902. On others it is 12 December 1901 which is probably correct.

Stokie worked for five years as an agent for the Victorian Producers' Cooperative. He joined the New Guinea Police Force but left after 12 months to go to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP) as a representative for Lever Bros.

Several years later, he returned to Australia and bought a dairy farm at Pakenham south east of Melbourne. That didn't last long and he was back to New Guinea in the late 1930s managing plantations.

In July 1940 Stokie enlisted in the 2nd AIF, giving his date of birth as 12 December 1901. He was posted to a machine gun training company but was discharged after five months under the then Manpower Act. As a plantation manager, he was deemed to be in a reserved occupation.

Stokie joined the NGVR in Rabaul in April 1941 and was placed on the reserve list. He was told he'd be required only if there were an invasion in which case his knowledge of the Bainingis would be invaluable.

In September 1941 Stokie married Helen Mason, a sister of Bougainville planter and Coastwatcher Paul Mason. It was Stokie's second marriage. His first wife had died about seven years previously, leaving him with two sons.

The boys - John (14) and Peter (7) - were with Stokie's widowed mother Henrietta at Upper Ferntree Gulley, near Melbourne.

Stokie was mobilised on January 20. The next day he stood guard at the Rabaul wharf before being transferred to A Company 2/22nd Battalion. Later in the day he was admitted to the regimental aid post suffering from malaria.

He left the aid post on the morning of January 23 - invasion day - scouted the immediate area and then boarded a truck that promptly became bogged in the sand. The officer in charge made the call: *Every man for himself.*

Stokie still had malaria and it wasn't long before he lost consciousness. When recovered, he set out on foot for the Bainingis but was confronted by a group of Japanese on bicycles. He reacted by throwing a Mills bomb at them, and quickly ran into the kunai.

In an official Army report by NG239 Pte John Stokie on his movements during the period January 1942 - March 1943, he wrote of further serious bouts of Malaria leaving him "nearly dead for four days".

He gave details of his journey by foot and canoe to reach the Bainingis; providing food and care for troops trying to escape; compiling details of every Japanese position in the Rabaul area; and defying Japanese calls for his surrender.

On one occasion the Japanese sent a native force of 200 to take him prisoner. According to Stokie, he told them to go

home while their luck lasted. They did.

Stokie heard snippets of war news from time to time. They were not always accurate like claims that Port Moresby had fallen and Japanese troops had landed in Australia. But he reacted positively by having work done on his plantation when he was told, incorrectly, that the Allies had retaken Salamaua, Lae and Kavieng.

Eventually at the end of July, he came to the conclusion that the war would continue for a long time. He had a canoe built and set out for the New Guinea mainland. He had to return, however, when a native crew member became very ill. This delayed future plans until at least October.

Stokie learned that shot-down American airmen had been hiding in hills at the back of Ulimono for some months. The Japanese were very active in the area and it took several weeks to get a message to them. Stokie told them he was sailing to the New Guinea mainland as soon as the north-west monsoon ended, and invited them to join him.

At first the Americans thought it might be a trap. But that was discounted when they read Stokie's note a second time. It ended with the words "Cheerio all. The best of luck". According to the Americans that sounded like the words of a "dinkum Aussie".



John Stokie centre in his unique bush hat. The photo presumably was taken at the Catalina Base in Port Moresby Harbour on his rescue in March 1943. This photo courtesy Burnie Gough.

The three young airmen were in poor health when they arrived at Stokie's camp. Two had to be carried but they soon recovered after medical attention and good food.



Sketch of John Stokie held in the AWM. This sketch & the one on P12 are by Dennis Adams, 1943.

In early March 1943 Stokie and the Americans waved lap laps and flashed a mirror at a low flying American Liberator aircraft. When the aircraft returned the next day, it dropped food and instructions for identifying themselves. They received further visits during the next two weeks and were dropped flashlights to signal their position to a Catalina flying boat sent to pick them up.

On arrival in Port Moresby, a U.S. general decorated the airmen



"Stokie was wearing his distinctive NGVR hat when he arrived in Port Moresby with the American air-men. The hat fur felt was even more distinctive than usual. After 10 months the brim had separated from the crown. Stokie used the cuff from old drill trousers as a hat band and then sewed it altogether using twine from the webbing of his rifle sling"

with the Purple Heart and congratulated them on their amazing luck. Along with Stokie they were debriefed and then presented to a group of war correspondents. The story attracted headlines in several countries with Life magazine devoting nine pages to their rescue.

All John Stokie wanted to do was establish whether he was a soldier or a civilian. "If I'm a soldier, can I have some leave?" he asked senior officers. He got his leave.

Interviewed in Melbourne, his mother Henrietta told journalists: "It seems that John has done his duty."

She said he was very carefree and never worried. "As long as his wife, mother and children are well he does not appear to have a care in the world."

After a family holiday, Stokie returned to duty as NGX450 Lt. John Stokie of 'M' Special Unit – and he was soon in action as a coastwatcher and leader of a small guerilla group in New Britain.

On 28 September 1943 the American submarine *Grouper* put ashore 16 Australian and 27 native troops near Cape Orford south of Wide Bay.

A group led by Middle East veteran and former patrol officer, Captain Ian Skinner, included Lt Stokie as 2IC and Sgt Matt Foley as signaller. They moved quickly to the Open Bay region on the North Coast near a mountain known as *The Father*.

Later, Skinner moved south to form Lion Force guerillas while Stokie stayed in the north with Sgt Foley. Officially, Stokie was supposed to be gathering intelligence, not fighting. His native troops had deliberately not been issued with modern automatic weapons.

The Japanese were in retreat from West New Britain giving Stokie plenty of opportunity to use his newly formed force. However, he was refused permission to mount an attack on a post manned by 15 Japanese naval men at a village near Ulamona.

Soon afterwards, HQ New Guinea received the following signal from Stokie:

"For security reasons it became necessary to liquidate Jap garrison at Ulamona. Now have their books 2LMG (light machine guns) in short their entire belongings, maps charts, etc. no survivors."

Thereafter Stokie was allowed to use his native followers armed with spears, knives and captured weapons to seek out the enemy in their country. By the time Stokie was withdrawn from New Britain in June 1944, his men had killed 63 Japanese.

Their method of attack was described as simple, devious and of little risk. The natives would approach a camp and single out a Japanese, engage in conversation, and offer *brus* (leaf tobacco) and native food. On a given signal, the natives would seize the nearest Jap whilst others quickly emerged with sharp axes and promptly executed the entire party. It was bloody but effective and silent.



Not surprisingly, there were differences between Skinner and Stokie.

Skinner is quoted as saying: "As regards Stokie ... well, any military unit of any size would be well off without Stokie."

A high ranking officer said: "Skinner is a good soldier. Stokie is a roughneck, a first class bushman and can handle boys. Has no military training or knowledge."

On the other hand, Sgt Matt Foley described Stokie as a "good bloke – a gallant gentleman."

"He was much older than the rest of us. He was not fast but



John Stokie, April, 1963.

he could walk all day. He was an incredible walker. He'd say you go ahead and I'll catch up later and he would," Sgt Foley said.

When the war ended John Stokie was an acting captain and had been awarded the Military Cross for outstanding gallantry during the period September 1943 to May 1944. The citation said his personal courage and vast knowledge of natives contributed to the success of coast watching and guerilla operations on New Britain.

Stokie is thought to have returned briefly to New Britain after the war but he and his wife Helen settled on farming properties at Nana

Glen and Upper Orara on the NSW North Coast.

Helen's nephew, Jim Mason from Sydney, remembers staying at Nana Glen with his aunt and "Uncle John" in the 1960s.

"He liked horses and we went to race meetings at Coffs Harbour and Grafton. He enjoyed riding, especially an old racehorse named *Helen's Beau*, and obviously was a good rider," according to Jim.

John Stokie is believed to have been President of the Coffs Harbour Race Club in the 1960s. Unfortunately, all club records for that period were lost in a flood.

Jim Mason said his uncle's dress on the farm was always a singlet, trousers, and gum boots. He liked a drop of whisky and smoked cigars.

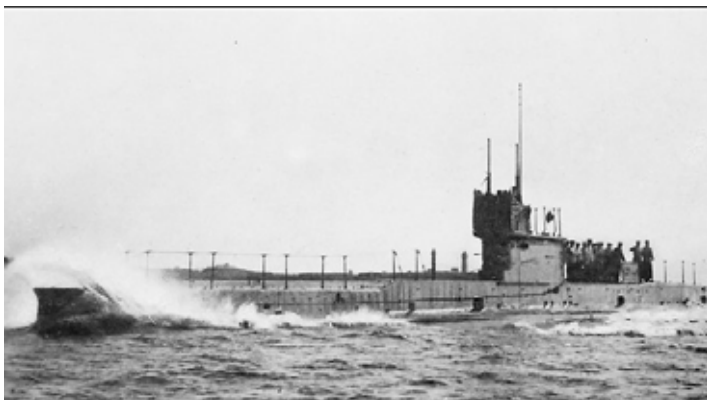
"He was quite a character. He was a member of the then Country Party and claimed a former Governor General Sir Paul Hasluck as a friend."

John Stokie died in 1973 not long after being involved in a road accident. He is buried at Coffs Harbour. Helen moved to Sydney after his death and remained there for the rest of her life.

Nothing is known of Stokie's two sons from his first marriage. Jim Mason said he'd met Peter in Sydney years ago but had never met the elder son John who, at that time, lived in Melbourne. Today, if alive, they would be 75 and 82.

Stokie's young brother, Pte James Albert Stokie, died in a Japanese POW camp six months before the war ended. Aged 40, he'd been captured on Ambon in early 1942.

Canberra-based Don Hook was a PNGVR member in the 1960s. He can be contacted at hookdon@bigpond.net.au



The Australian submarine AE1. Picture Aust. War Memorial..

Chance wreck find may solve WW1 mystery From The Courier Mail. Oct 28, 2011

Australia's most enduring maritime mystery, the disappearance of WW1 submarine AE1. May have been solved with the discovery of a shipwreck near Rabaul, PNG.

The Royal Australian Navy's first submarine sank with all 35 hands on Sep; 15, 1914 off the Duke of York Islands. It was Australia's first naval loss of the Great War.

On Wednesday afternoon, as two Australian and two Kiwi vessels scanned the sea bottom looking for unexploded munitions, the outline of a wreck appeared on the screen of the New Zealand hydrographic survey vessel HMNZ Resolution. The find was in the Simpson Harbour of East New Britain not far from where the 600 tonne AE1 was last sighted near the entrance of Mioko Harbour, east of New Britain.

A Navy enquiry found the submarine sank during a dive or hit a reef. Several searches have been mounted for the submarine over the years with the most recent involving two Navy vessels in 2007.

During that search a "Wreck" of the size of the sub was identified but was later found to be a rock.

The submarine, under the command of Royal Navy Lieutenant Thomas Besant, was sent north to assist with the capture of German New Guinea. The AE1's crew consisted of 20 Britains, 14 Australians and a New Zealander.

The annual Operation Render Safe—the operation which made the finding—is an annual exercise to find and destroy wartime munitions.

The RAN vessels HMAS Gascoyne and Diamantine were joined by Kiwi ships HMNZS Resolution and Wellington for the exercise.

Following this article an email was received from Burnie Gough

Greetings

By now you would have heard or read on The Australian



Above—Taruuvur Below— Bita Paka War Cemetery



web site about the discovery by a RAN and RNZN vessels of an undiscovered submarine in Simpson Harbor. Initially it was suggested it may be the A.E.1. Both search vessels were active last week when I was visiting Rabaul. I can't wait to find out more about the discovery.

I visited Bita Paka for the second time and took more photos. We were amazed to discover that a Henry Joseph Gough was a Stoker on the A.E.1. He was English, we are Irish.

Another surprise was to find a VC winner in Bita Paka. He was 4469, Corporal, Sefanaia Sukanavalu. VC. KIA in June 1944. **Lest We Forget.**

Apologies for the glare off the plaques.

Thankfully Tavurvur Volcano on Matupi Harbour was quiet that day.

Regards Burnie



In HTT Vol 73 Shui Hong Wong's story told of one of his older brothers being lost on the ship 'Desikoko' during WW1. Below is the story of the 'Desikoko'

"DESIKOKO"

Owned & operated by W.R Carpenter & Co. Ltd.

The wooden motor vessel was designed for the copra merchants and millers transporting goods around New Guinea and the Islands. Copra is dried coconut flesh from which coconut oil is extracted. The ship's name is an abbreviation of "Dessicated Coconut" - Desikoko.

The 'Desikoko' had an overall length of 33.5m, beam 7.5m and depth 3.2m. Launched on May 28, 1934, by Vera Settree she was towed to Sydney Where her diesel engine was installed. With a cargo of timber aboard, she set off for New Guinea.

'Desikoko' sailed from Rabaul every two or three weeks to various ports around the islands and New Britain to collect cargoes of copra.

In May, 1936, her keel was damaged and superstructure burned by hot ashes when the volcano Vulcan in Rabaul erupted, causing tidal waves. 'Desikoko' was able to flee the harbour through the volcanic ash and pumice to safe anchorage. She returned to Sydney for repairs under her own steam.

In 1942, a call was sent out for assistance by ship owners as Japanese forces threatened an invasion. The 'Desikoko' was attached to the US Army Small Ships Section to take part in operations around New Guinea. Small ships were used to supply the area with men and materiel. The crew of this fleet were usually men ineligible for standard military service because of age or disability. Native New Guineans and Islanders were also used as crew.

The 'Desikoko' spent the war supplying the troops with ammunition and rations, and avoiding enemy soldiers and aircraft.

In 1946 the USASSS returned the ship to her owners, W.R. Carpenter. Unfortunately the Carpenter's coconut interests around New Britain had been destroyed and they had no use for the 'Desikoko'. She was sold to a Chinese firm trading between Sydney and China, and renamed 'Yua Hwa'.

Under the command of Captain Baldwin on Jan 4, 1947, while en route from Sydney to China with a cargo of flour, she struck heavy weather. Leaking badly, the pilot boat 'Birubi' took the 'Yua Hwa' in tow. However she began to list and then sank off Newcastle. The crew jumped overboard and were rescued.

Source. "The Forgotten Fleet 2" by Bill & Ruth Lunney, LDHC Archives.



Tour de France, 1940.

With all the publicity given to the Tour de France recently, it is appropriate to look at past events.



Anzac Day, Brisbane, 2012 Above—The Marchers.

Below - After the march—John McGrath Graeme Blanch, Ken Connolly, Ted McAllan, Joe Hall





PIR members, Anzac Day, Brisbane. WO Peter Jesser, Maj Don Graham, Sgt Richard Boddington, Sgt Ian Ogston, Sgt Greg Ivey, Kneeling Sgt Kev Horton.



Allen Bell and Barry Wright in a Jeep.



The Association Banner Carriers over the past few years. Grant Harbeck (L) and Neil Clayton (Lucy Harbeck's son)

Their assistance is greatly appreciated in view of the ageing of our marchers who find it difficult to carry such a large banner.

I'M JOBLESS

I just got sacked from my job with Lifeline. The other day a guy phoned in and said 'I'm desperate! I'm lying on the railway tracks waiting for a train to come along.' I replied 'Just remain calm & stay on the line.'

VALE WO2 MALEA EALEDONA

I write this to sadly inform you of the passing of our late father and a member of The NGVR and PNGVR Ex-Members Association, Mr Malea EALEDONA on Sunday, 1st April, 2012, at the Alotau Provincial Hospital, Milne Bay Province.

He died after a long battle with respiratory and heart problems/complications. He was 78 years old. He is survived by his wife Mrs Baselisa Ealedona and 9 out of 10 children, a number of grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. I just thought I should let you know, as You may need updates on all Association members, which you may wish to have on your next issue of "Harim Tok Tok".

Refer scanned copy of a very old photo you sent me some-time back (you're also in the photo - same seat as my father, far to the right. My father pointed you out..). If you can re-send a copy so I can have a better copy, and any other photos you may have of him. Thanks and kind regards,

Oswald Ealedona

Son - 9th born

This was forwarded by Association Secretary, Colin Gould, MBE, who wrote "I served with Malea in 12 PI D Coy, Madang, and knew him and his family very well. Malea was one of the National members of PNGVR that I was able to get the ASM 1945-75 Clasp PNG, presented to on Misima Island where he was born and retired to in recent years. He was an excellent member of the Platoon and much respected by other Expat and National members."

LEST WE FORGET



The late Ken MacGowan at his work station at Airlie Beach. Photo courtesy Burnie Gough.

NGVR ANNIVERSARY DINNER

45 Members and Guests attended the Formal Dinner at Greenbank RSL "Drop In Centre" to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the NGVR going into action during WW2.

The "Drop In Centre" is a great venue and the Presidents of the Greenbank RSL Sub Branch and the Greenbank RSL Memorial Club gave the Association their full support and also attended the function. Other guests included Mr Paul Nerau, PNG Consul General in Brisbane, Andrea Williams, President of the PNGAA and also editor of "Una Voce", and several members of the Greenbank RSL Sub Branch. One of these, George Royes, kindly manned the bar prior to the dinner. Anthony McGrath, RAAF and pilot of the new Super Hornet



Bill McGrath and Karl Aschhoff



John McGrath and son Anthony, who has served in Afghanistan



Association Treasurer Douglas Ng and wife Fran



Patron, John Pearn AO RFD
President Phil Ainsworth
Vice President, Bob Collins



was also present. Member Karl Aschhoff traveled from Charleville to be present, and Andrea Williams from Sydney. Our Patron, Maj Gen John Pearn, AO, RFD, also attended.

The usual toasts were proposed and Association President, Phil Ainsworth, gave an address on the formation and activities of the NGVR.

All in all a wonderful evening and a fitting tribute to the actions of our predecessors, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.

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

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Bob Collins—Editor



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