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

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Welcome to the first 2013 edition of our newsletter - enjoy!

### Patron presents awards to executive of the NGVR & PNGVR Association

Major General John Pearn, the Patron of the NGVR & PNGVR Association, presented his specially minted Patron's medal to each of the executive members at the committee meeting of the Association on 19th January 2013 held in the Military Museum at Wacol, Brisbane. John said the award is a tribute to those who have rendered exceptional service to the Association, or promoted its aims in an exceptional way. It was instituted to honour the gallant service of the soldiers of NGVR on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their first operational service in WW2 – 1942 was the year of NGVR.

Those who received these medals were struck by the unexpected and unusual recognition of their many years of service to the Association and the generosity of their Patron. The medals were presented to John Holland, Colin Gould, Doug Ng, Bob Collins, Paul Brown, Bruce Crawford, Jesse Chee, Mal Zimmermann, Mike Griffin, Tom Dowling, Tony Boulter, Leigh Eastwood, Barry Wright and Phil Ainsworth.



Maj Gen John Pearn presenting Curator John Holland a framed copy of the citation with medals for display in the Museum.

The obverse of the medal portrays the Association's badge and motto which was the badge and motto of PNGVR, while the reverse depicts the national BIRD OF PARADISE symbol of PNG with the southern cross on each side surrounded by the objectives of the former units and a Latin phrase which freely translates as "the preservation and promotion of their heritage is our duty".

### NGVR & PNGVR Military Museum access ramp opening function - 19th January, 2013

The long awaited dedication of the disability ramp occurred at 11am Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2013 when over 60 distinguished guests, members and friends attended at the PNGVR Military Museum, Wacol.

This ramp would never have been built without the magnificent support of Hank and Berry

Cosgrove of the APNGA, Lige Donald of Bluescope/Smorgan Steel, who could not attend today, the Greenbank RSL and Chris and Christine Leonard. The design, fabrication and erection depended on many with the principal players being Paul Brown, Gus Macklin, John Holland and the other committee members of the Association. The all important coordination and facilitation was handled by the Museum Curator John Holland.

The installation of this ramp was but one of the many activities undertaken by the Association in 2012. This ramp in itself is a mundane material object but it serves an important purpose – a convenient entry for our ageing and increasingly frail members, friends and visitors to view the Museum in a comfortable and safe manner. After the ceremony everyone inspected the ramp, viewed inside the Museum and partook of the bar-b-que luncheon provided by the Association - a very successful and enjoyable day.



Mike Griffin's wife, Margaret test driving the ramp

### Integration of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society into the PNGAA

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society is integrating into the PNGAA, the organisation from which it grew. The Society had for practical purposes achieved its objectives and sought a higher resource based organisation and new ideas to grow into its next phase - the PNGAA being the one best suited and allied with its cause. The PNGAA executive committee approved the proposal submitted by the Society on the 3rd February 2013. The Annual General Meeting of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society held 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 in Canberra passed the necessary motions to enable the integration.

The integration has transferred about 180 new members to PNGAA, a 15% one off increase in the Association's membership. The Society's \$100,000 fund is to be expended according to its objectives. This group's development will be steered by a seconded sub-committee comprised mainly of ex-Society members, under the tutelage of the President of PNGAA.

The Society's website [www.memorial.org.au](http://www.memorial.org.au) continues with the same name and be linked and maintained by PNGAA. The Society's newsletter, *Memorial News*, would cease and, in its stead, four pages of the *Una Voce*, the quarterly journal of the Association, would promulgate the sub-committee's activities. The Society's funds will be accounted separately within PNGAA to ensure the fiduciary responsibilities of the Society and the Association are satisfactorily managed.

The work of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society has provided high level awareness in government, voluntary organisations and private enterprise and this exposure will be used by PNGAA to highlight its activities and profile.

### Melbourne Shrine Ceremony for the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/Lark Force

On the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the annual commemoration service for the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/Lark Force was held at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. About 80 NGVR men in Rabaul, many of whom died either during the invasion, on the Montevideo Maru or while escaping, formed part of Lark Force and faced the invading Japanese force as part of A Company, 2/22 Bn. There were around 60 in attendance at the Shrine. Dr Marian May from Canberra, whose father was a padre in the Battalion, was present and the presence of the Salvation Army Band added to the moving ceremony by playing Hymns and the National Anthem. After the Service everyone gathered downstairs where 2/22<sup>nd</sup> / Lark Force Association provided afternoon tea. Norm Furness, one of four surviving members, presided.

Phil Ainsworth

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## NGVR/AIF EXPERIENCES

### FRANCIS (FRANK) ROBERT WILSON

#### CONTINUED

#### I Take part in the Battle of El Alamein

By this time General Montgomery had taken command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in the Desert and the Germans were the closest to Cairo in Egypt that they had ever been.

Our Brigade moved up to El Alamein where we dug in. Our orders at this stage were to let the Germans go no further.

Unknown to us at the time of course, but General Montgomery's tactic was to build up his forces to such a strength that, when he launched his assault on the German line they would be overwhelmed by firepower and numbers – and, of course, that is exactly what happened.

One of Montgomery's quotes was "I'll always be proud to say that, under my command, fought the Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division".

We were very well dug in, and only aircraft bombing caused any problems. An occasional bomb landed as a direct hit on a trench and caused casualties, otherwise the bombing was really just a nuisance. Our food was pretty good, although you had to accept flies and drifting sand as just another part of life in the desert.

We carried on no training at this time as we were in a forward area. In the early stages we did not even have to send out patrols, as other units were forward of us, but, as we rotated into the forward positions we had to send reconnaissance patrols out. These patrols were about Section (10 men) strength, and usually lasted from 4 hours to 6 hours - 2/3 hours out and 2/3 hours back, although, if we came upon Germans the return was often a bit quicker. Even though I was a Platoon Commander I took out some patrols, not a lot, but those which were required to obtain special information

You often see in movies and newsreels of the Desert campaign Officers carrying only a revolver. It was my habit always to carry a rifle, and the only time I was ever armed with a revolver only while I was in the Middle East was when on guard duty or on special duty in a safe area, such as collecting those who had stayed too long in the hotels when on leave in Tel Aviv etc. It was a standing order that those on leave had to be back in the Camp by 2359 hrs. The Officer on guard duty would then take a vehicle and a small group and commence to search the most frequented hotels for the transgressors.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1942 Rommel commenced his last great offensive in an endeavour to break through the 8<sup>th</sup> Army lines and seize Cairo and the Suez Canal. Quite a fierce battle ensued for about 10 days, but the Germans did not have enough serviceable armour at this stage to break through and their attacks were thrown back. The 2/15<sup>th</sup> never took part in this battle as we were held in reserve.

Finally on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1944, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army offensive began. It commenced with an artillery barrage the likes of which had not been seen since WW1. At night the flashes of our artillery lit up the sky and, during the day, the exploding shells created a wall of flame as they exploded in the German positions – the concentration was so great and the shells were falling so close together. The 2/15<sup>th</sup> played a role in the attack on the Germans. We did not receive any German artillery fire, no doubt because of the concentration of our own artillery, and during the offensive we only saw 2 German bombers which dropped bombs on the Battalion before being driven off by ack-ack (anti aircraft) fire. Fortunately our Battalion did not suffer many casualties during this battle. We occupied the original defensive positions.



Lt Frank  
Wilson in the  
Middle East

Again, unknown to us at the time, Rommel was on leave in Germany, unaware of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army build-up which had taken place. He quickly returned to El Alamein and, true to his nature, commenced German counter attacks. However the 8<sup>th</sup> Army was superior in aircraft, artillery,

tanks and manpower and Montgomery was successful. By November the Germans had commenced their retreat and the battle for El Alamein had been won. El Alamein was the furthest East the Germans got in the Western Desert and this was the beginning of the end for the famous Afrika Corps.

Shortly after the main battle for El Alamein we were withdrawn and held in a staging area in Egypt

#### The 9<sup>th</sup> Division returns to Australia.

At the Casablanca Conference in January, 1943, attended by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met to decide Allied policy for 1943 and beyond. By this time the Australian Government had requested the return of its Divisions from the Middle East and the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division had returned and was resting from its efforts in the Papuan campaign (Kokoda Track). The 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Division had been put on notice to return to Australia, and we left the Middle East in January, 1942, and arrived in February, 1942. Unfortunately for me the ship we returned on was not of the quality of the 'Queen Elizabeth' - I do not remember the name of the ship.

We landed in Sydney, were sent by troop train to Brisbane, and then proceeded on 3 weeks leave. We then marched through Brisbane with bayonets fixed before reforming as a Division in the Kairi area of the Atherton Tableland near Ravenshoe. Again we travelled by troop train to the Atherton Tableland, and the trip took several days.

#### Training in the Atherton Tableland.

Training in the Atherton Tablelands was entirely different to what we had done in the Middle East. We were now training for jungle warfare and not open desert warfare, so a lot of new lessons had to be learned. Instead of Company, Battalion and Brigade training, most of our training was concentrated around Platoon training.

Our first issue of jungle greens caused a bit of a laugh among the troops. They were really only our khaki uniforms which had been dyed, and after a hard days training we would strip off our clothes and the dye would have run and we would all be a lovely shade of green. Training was concentrated and, with the Japanese virtually on the doorstep of Australia, we did not receive much leave. I do not recall training with the Owen Gun

on the Tablelands, and can only assume we were issued with it when we arrived in New Guinea.

For sport I had always played rugby league. Being almost 6ft 2in I either played as prop or second row, and this had a funny consequence later in New Guinea.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1943, we commenced Amphibious training with the U.S. 532<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment at Deadmans Gully, near Trinity Beach, north of Cairns. Little did we know at the time where this was to lead. With the Japanese on the doorstep of Australia secrecy was vital.

### **Movement to New Guinea.**

Between 26<sup>th</sup> July and 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1943, the 9<sup>th</sup> Division moved forward to Milne Bay, New Guinea, with the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade being the first to arrive. I have mentioned secrecy before, and it was only after we had left Milne Bay on 31<sup>st</sup> August, that we were advised where we were headed.

For the capture of Lae it had been decided that the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division would land at Nadzab airstrip, in the Markham Valley north-west of Lae and advance on Lae. Incidentally Nadzab had to be captured first and turned into a strip capable of carrying the number of aircraft required to fly in a complete Division. The 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Division would land by landing barge east of Lae and advance on the town.

Our landing was set down for 4<sup>th</sup> September, and 2/15<sup>th</sup> Battalion was given the task of capturing the right hand half of the main landing beach, 'Red Beach'. The other landing beach was designated 'Yellow Beach'. The landing went well and there was no opposition at first. However, after we had landed, and the LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry) were bringing in the reserve Battalion, the 2/23<sup>rd</sup> which had been attached to the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade for this landing, they were attacked by 6 Japanese fighters and 3 bombers. One LSI was hit and disabled and the Battalion Commander, one Company Commander and 5 men were killed, and 28 wounded, including 5 Officers.

The other two Battalions then set out westward towards Lae while the 2/15<sup>th</sup> was tasked to guard the landing beach so that the landing and movement forward of stores was not interrupted. During the move on Lae the Division would have to cross 5 rivers and numerous streams. It was the wet season and the rivers and streams were swollen and running fast. There were no roads and only native paths were available.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade was relieved by the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade for the advance on Lae and we became Divisional reserve.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions met up in Lae. It was estimated that, of the 11,000 Japanese in the Lae area, there had been at least 2,200 casualties, but the 9<sup>th</sup> Division had suffered 547 casualties, 77 killed, 397 wounded and 73 missing.

At the time of the Lae landing I was seconded to an American Unit who trained people for 'Z' Special Force.

These groups were to land in Japanese occupied areas and check on the landing area and inform the native people as to what was about to happen. We normally would be landed by submarine.

Each group had one local person attached – the group I was with was to land at Madang and the local man was 'Sandshoe' Read – a planter from that area.

2<sup>nd</sup> man - qualified signaller

3<sup>rd</sup> man - myself who provided Army information

4<sup>th</sup> man - had medical knowledge

5<sup>th</sup> man - had knowledge of beach landing requirements

John Murphy, who was captured by the Japanese, was in one of

these groups. The other men in that group were killed by the Japanese.

As it happened we never landed in Madang. With the landing at Saidor by the US forces and the rapid pursuit of the Japanese by the 9<sup>th</sup> Division along the coast the Japanese abandoned Madang, making a landing unnecessary.

### **Our Next Operation, Finschhafen.**

After the capture of Lae, it was decided that a Brigade of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division would capture Finschhafen, after which the 9<sup>th</sup> Division would carry out further shore-to-shore operations to Bogadjim, south of Madang. The landing beach selected was north of Finschhafen and just south of the Song River.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade was selected for the landing, as it already had the experience of carrying out the initial landings east of Lae, and, after being Divisional reserve for the drive on Lae was relatively fresh. The beach this time was to be called 'Scarlet Beach', a change from the usual 'Red Beach' which at the time was the usual name for the main landing beach. The site was chosen for three reasons:-

i) It was the most suitable beach in the area

ii) Most Japanese troops were thought to be in the Lange-mak Bay area expecting a coastal advance from Lae

iii) A landing north of Finschhafen would cut the Japanese line of supply and withdrawal.

The initial plan called for the 2/17<sup>th</sup> and the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Battalions to land and secure the beach-head. When this was secure the 2/15<sup>th</sup> would land and advance south along the main road towards Finschhafen.

On the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> September, only 5 days after the meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions in Lae, we set off from Lae in LCIs. Landing was to be at dawn on the following day.

This time the landings did not go off as planned. The four Companies in the initial waves landed far to the left in Siki Cove instead of Scarlet Beach, and were hopelessly mixed up on landing. The second wave also veered to the left and many of the men were landed also in Siki Cove.

This meant that the third wave, consisting of the 2/15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters of supporting units, landed on the correct beach, Scarlet Beach, under Japanese fire. We were also disorganised, not expecting this, and, consequently it was not until much later in the morning (the landings had been at dawn) that the Brigade started to shake out into some sort of order.

**To be continued.**

**This is Frank's story as told to Bob Collins**

## **BADGES OF RANK (OFFICERS)**

Going back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the different styles of epaulettes worn by Officers were in themselves badges of rank. By 1803, Subalterns were wearing a single gold-bullion epaulette on their right shoulders; it was then decided to change what was then the Lieutenant's epaulette bullion tassels to a coarse gold fringe so as to differentiate between a Lieutenant and a Captain.

From 1822 to 1855 all General Officers wore the same badge of rank, that of crossed sword and baton, however the means of telling the different levels of Generals apart lay in their coat buttons.

In 1855 a Major-General wore a star, Lieutenant-General a crown and a General wore both crown and star. A major's



badge of rank was a single star. The Officers' Star (commonly known as a pip) is the Star of the Knight Grand Cross of the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, which bears the motto *Tria Juncta In Uno* (three joined unto one) meaning the Union of England, Scotland and Ireland.

This was then followed by some more changes – the badge of rank for a Colonel became a crown and a star, a Lieutenant-Colonel a crown, and in the case of the Artillery, both a Captain and a Lieutenant wore nothing but a silver gunner's grenade.

In 1864 the Colonel's rank changed yet again – this time to a half-inch (13mm) wide gold lace pattern around his collar, in addition to a silver embroidered crown and star. In that year the badge of a Brigadier-General was the same collar design as the Generals' but with no other embellishments.

From 1855 to 1880 the badges for Generals were a star for a Major-General, a crown for a Lieutenant-General and a General wore both a star and a crown. During the same period a Major wore one star.

Another change came along in 1857 with a Colonel, a Lieutenant-Colonel and a Major wearing respectively, a crown and star, crown, and star all on a collar surrounded with gold lace and cord. Captains wore a crown and a star and Lieutenants wore a crown, both on a collar with gold lace and cord on the top only.

1880 saw changes that have more-or-less remained constant over the last 100 years. A Field Marshall retained his crossed batons, wreath and crown, which came in to being in 1736. All Generals wore a crossed sword and baton with the addition of a crown and a star for generals, a crown for Lieutenant-Generals and a star for Major-Generals; however a Brigadier-General wore no additional embellishments.

Colonels wore a crown and two stars, Lieutenant-Colonels a crown and one star and Majors wore a crown. Captains wore two stars, Lieutenants wore one star and Second-Lieutenants wore no badge of rank at all.

In 1902 Captains and Lieutenants gained an additional star each and Second-Lieutenants wore one star. The rank of Brigadier-General was abolished in 1921 to be replaced by that of Brigadier and this badge of rank became a crown and three stars.

**Chris Jobson, formerly RSM Ceremonial, AHDQ**

## CONFESSIONS OF A COLLECTOR

**Bernard Arnold**

*Continued from last issue*

A number of week-end excursions, usually made with one or two friends, were made along the motor road which the Japanese were building to improve their lines of communication with Lae. The course of this road followed parts of the loworo and Mindjim river valleys. There were many river crossings. The villagers told us that during the period of the Ramu Campaign the American bombers came during the day and bombed the log bridges while the Japanese readied replacement logs to rebuild the bridges as soon as night came and for a few hours the traffic on the road could bring up supplies. Our trail bikes were the first vehicles to use a part of that road since the Japanese retreat and our arrival in Bauak village caused a lot of excitement. When our bikes could take us no further, because sections of the road had slipped into the river, we left them in the jungle and walked on to Yaula village, once a Japanese headquarters. We found shells, mortar bombs and Bangalore torpedoes.

At night when I sat for some time yarning with the village men

they told me the story where some years ago one of the village men had found some of the Bangalore torpedoes. He thought they would make a fine grate for his cooking fire so he brought them home and he put them to use. Soon after while he was

sitting beside his cooking fire, there was a loud explosion and the man was killed. When they described the scene they all burst out laughing, which made me reflect on the nature of humour.

Even while I was collecting, villagers were still being maimed and killed by wartime ammunition found. A man on one of the small islands in Madang harbour tried to use explosive from a shell for catching fish.



Digging up shells near Yaula

He ended up losing an arm and a leg and he was blinded. One day in our welding shop there was an explosion. When the supervisor investigated, it transpired that a bricklayer wanted to make a plumb-bob out of a 37 mm armour-piercing shell as it had the right shape but was a bit too long. It looked and felt like a solid piece of steel. He took it to his mate in the plumbers' shop who put it in the hacksaw machine to trim it to the desired length. The shell being made of high-carbon steel, all the teeth were stripped off the blade and little impression was made on the proposed plumb-bob. The plumber then directed him to a mate in the welding shop who dutifully applied his oxy-cutting torch. The intense heat exploded the main charge which fortunately just blew out the fuse plug and sent the shell and plug rocketing off laterally into stacks of steel bridge girders without hitting anyone. The very surprised bricklayer and welder suffered no worse injury than the cutting invective of the Australian supervisor who naturally, souvenired the offending item and the brickie had to look elsewhere for a plumb-bob.

It was not only ammunition that was dangerous to the PNG population. Compressed gases were equally dangerous. I remember the case of a worker in the scrap yard in Rabaul who was killed when he drilled into a torpedo propellant tank. The pressure of 2,000 psi was usual for these and it tore the tank apart. Another man was killed ringing the church 'bell' for Sunday service. A favourite improvised bell was a gas cylinder suspended by a chain. Years of being struck with an iron bar had caused metal fatigue and the huge pressure of the gas finally burst it apart. Another danger was posed by drums of alcohol abandoned at an old airstrip. Death and blindness resulted from this 'booze.' But all these hazards pale into insignificance when one sees the carnage caused by motor transport in PNG.

My collecting excursions were beautiful experiences. The Rainforest, wild white-water rivers, and friendly, hospitable villagers combined with the physical exercise in manhandling the trail bikes over fallen logs and through the rivers. At one place Japanese trucks stood rusting in the jungle where they had been cut off from retreat by the destroyed bridges. I was struck by the realization that all motor trucks in the Public Works Department were now Japanese, whilst all the Japanese wrecked trucks from the war were of the Ford make and all tyres on trucks and 75 mm guns were of Firestone make.

Several of my excursions were particularly memorable. On one of them I rode my Yamaha 98cc some 200 km north to Hansa Bay. I had successfully forded all the rivers and was riding through a coconut plantation past Hatzfeldhafen. I had not encountered any traffic along the way when there, by the roadside, a group of young men stood waiting for one of the village trucks and with this group stood a lone dog which, contrary to the usual New Guinea dog, was of larger size and well-



Bernie at  
Amaimon  
Boston  
wreck

nour-  
ished.  
Just as I  
was  
passing  
the  
group,  
who  
were

waving to me, the dog rushed out right into my front wheel. I picked myself up off the roadside and was pleased that I had no broken limbs, just a few patches of severe gravel rash and bruising. The dog clearly came off the worst. The group of men was standing in stunned silence. I picked up my motor bike and tried to kick-start it but the carburetor had flooded, so I asked the men to give me a push, and away I went again, but not before apologizing for killing their dog—usually a big issue with them. They said it was nothing and I am sure it got a good ‘burial’—via people’s stomachs! I rode on to Bogia where I got myself patched up at the small hospital there and then rode on to Awar, my goal. In a flooded bomb crater I found some well-preserved fuses for Japanese artillery shells, making another successful collecting trip. The ride home was also memorable as I had to ride some 60 km in the dark because the lamp had suffered in the spill. With the help of a little moonlight and the light limestone surface of the road, pursued by the curses of frightened pedestrians who did not suspect that the culprit was a white man, I arrived home considerably overdue and ‘in the dog house.’

On another occasion I had left my VW Beetle at the Gilagil River to walk to a wrecked Boston fighter-bomber a couple of kilometers beyond the river. Along the way I met a family on the beach who had just had a feast of a turtle, the bloody half-cooked remains were still on display. The man gave me the customary handshake with a less customary greasy hand. The reek of the turtle was on my hand all day until I was able to give it a good scrub at home. When I returned to my car there was a



Amaimon  
Boston  
wreck

whole tribe  
assembled  
around it. I  
thought I  
was going to  
have some  
trouble but  
then noticed  
that two

men had suitcases. The tribe had come to farewell them and it was taken for granted that I would not refuse them a lift to Madang. It was as if the whole thing was planned and I had come

especially to pick them up. There were other memorable occasions but their telling might become repetitive.

With the coming of independence in PNG, my family returned to Adelaide. Whilst in PNG we had accumulated few private possessions beyond what was contained in a few suitcases. The Government in its repatriation package allowed a certain amount of free freight. This prompted me to bring some of the items I had collected back to Adelaide. I later wished I had brought more—such as rotting boots and empty sake bottles. I had of course to clear the items through Army and Police authorities and this took some months. I had intended originally to donate the collection to Darwin’s East Point Artillery Museum, but when I wrote to them I received no reply and I did not pursue the matter.

In 1989 I heard on the national radio news that a WWII ammunition dump had been discovered at Rabaul. It was in one of the tunnels at the back of the township and squatters had built their huts on top of it. Knowing that PNG had since established a war museum at Port Moresby, I rang the museum and urged that the find be made into a display. I said that I had experience in deactivating such ordnance and offered to do it for them if they wished. When I received no call I again rang and made my offer but again I received no response. Some time afterwards I looked up their newspaper at the State Library and was dismayed to find that the opportunity had been thrown away and the shells dumped at sea by personnel of the Defence Force. Angered, I wrote to the Editor in protest and was published. Of course the Defence Force was not impressed by my meddling and rightly pointed out that what I had done as a hobby was probably illegal. Sadly, bureaucracy could not deal with the unorthodox.

Over the years I have mounted a number of public displays of the collection using the theme “debris from the battlefield.” These displays always attracted much interest. My collection is also a testimony to the tolerance displayed by my wife, daughters and former neighbours in Madang, who, if they heard a ‘bang’ from our place, would just say, “It’s only Bernie doing his thing.”

Earlier this year (2005) I visited the Army Museum of SA at Keswick Barracks. I was impressed by the quality of its displays and decided to offer my collection to it. Its Curator has since inspected the collection and has accepted the offer. The transfer will be made as soon as I have labeled and described individual items.

**Thank you Bernard for another wonderful account of your experiences in PNG.**

**Should any member have his own story about either his experiences in PNGVR or otherwise in PNG please feel free to forward them, together with appropriate photos to bob.collins@bigpond.com for publication in HTT.**

**An Address given to the PNGAA on 4 Dec, 2011 by**

*Did you know?*

*The world’s first recorded chemist was a female perfume maker named Tapputi in 2000 BC.*

*The world’s most expensive perfume is Clive Christian No 1 at \$5,500 for 30 ml.*

*Worldwide, a bottle of the legendary Chanel No 5 is sold every 55 seconds.*





**FLASHBACK.** Anzac Day Goroka, 1960. Cenotaph party moving on—Michael Raasch, Juergen Raasch, Police constables and WO2 Jack Eggins. Note old style gaiters.

Photo courtesy Juergen Raasch



#### WHERE WHITE MAN WENT WRONG

*Indian Chief "Two Eagles" was asked by a white U.S. Government official, "You have observed the white man for 50 years. You've seen his wars and his technological advances. You've seen the damage he's done" The Chief nodded in agreement*

*The official continued, "Considering all these events, in your opinion where did the white man go wrong?"*

*The chief stared at the government official then replied "When white man find land, Indians running it, no taxes, no debt, plenty buffalo, plenty beaver, clean water. Women did all the work. Medicine man free. Indian man spend all day hunting and fishing: all night having sex". Then the chief leaned back and smiled, "Only white man dumb enough to think he could improve system like that".*

### Sigurd Lappegard

I'm here today to say a few words about a fateful journey of the Norwegian ship "Herstein" and its crew, which ended in the harbour of Rabaul in 1942.

First of all I want to tell you a little about where both I and these sailors are from Norway is located on the North West tip of Europe. Long winters, and short summers. My town Bodo is even above the Arctic Circle which means that at this time of the year, the sun never rises for a couple of weeks! Completely dark and about -10c. I don't mind being here in Australia at the moment.

When WW2 broke out in Norway, April 9, 1940, a Norwegian cargo ship names "Herstein" set away from Calcutta and a year



later arrived in Melbourne with 32 crew members. 25 Norwegians and 1 Australian among them.

In November, 1941, they became part of a search party of three ships that were sent looking for HMAS Sydney, a Royal Australian Navy cruiser that was sunk by Germans outside WA. There were no survivors.

A month later, "Herstein" was chartered out to the Australian Government, and on the 27th December, 1941, they set course for Port Moresby, Papua, along with British ships "Sarpedon" and "Aquitania". Four cruisers were escorting the three ships bringing 4250 troops and 10,000 tons of equipment to assist Papua and New Guinea. On the 2th January, 1942, the convoy docked safely in Port Moresby.

After unloading and reloading "Herstein" set course for Rabaul. By this point in the war, Rabaul had already been bombed several times. Upon arrival on the 14th January the crew started unloading about 1200 tons of cargo. On the 18th the ship was moved to load up the cargo holds with copra.

I'm not sure why the ship was not used for evacuation, because on the 20th Jan, 1942, the Japanese struck the harbour of Rabaul with full force. About 100 dive bomber aeroplanes caused mayhem in the harbour, and three bombs hit "Herstein" midships. The anti-aircraft guns mounted on the deck did their best, until a second bomb hit the bridge and put them out of action. The third bomb exploded in the engine room, and Captain Gottfred M Gundersen watched in awe as all but one of his crew jumped overboard the burning ship, and swam to safety. Three of the crew were sent to hospital and taken good care of. The next morning "Herstein" had drifted across to the other side of the harbour, still burning—a total loss. That afternoon information reached them that the Japanese were preparing to land in Rabaul. Each of the Norwegian crew members were given 60 pounds to survive on the other side of their world with no means of return to home. The majority of the crew decided to stay in Rabaul, in the hope that the Japanese would send them home, because Norway was not at war with Japan at that time. This had happened before. That turned out to be a fateful decision.

Capt Gundersen was split from his crew and joined a group of Australians that wandered 300 miles overland and along the coast for 78 days. Half of the group died of hunger and illness, and others were killed by the Japanese. Those who survived were picked up by and expedited from New Guinea and Captain Gundersen eventually made it back to Norway, as the only one.

Meanwhile the crew of "Herstein" had been captured and imprisoned by the Japanese invaders, and then moved aboard a Japanese cargo ship named "Montevideo Mauru". The ship was used as a prison ship with terrible conditions and held 1050 POWs captured by the Japanese. "Montevideo Mauru" set course for Hainan Island, but on 1 July, 1942, the American submarine "Sturgeon" hit it with a torpedo 65 miles West of Cape Bojeador, Luzon. The American submarine had instructions to stop the Japanese supply line, unaware that the "Montevideo Mauru" was carrying POWs. The ship sunk and all the prisoners on board died. I cannot help but to send a thought to those Norwegian sailors that had been long away from their home country long before the war even

started, but somehow still ended up as victims of it on the other side of the globe.

### EXERCISE LONG HOP – FEBRUARY 1963



John Muller, from Norway, whose father was on the Montevideo Mauru at the Museum. John then

travelled to Canberra for the dedication of the memorial to those on the Montevideo Mauru on 1st July 2012.

"Long Hop" was a combined exercise arranged by PNG Command involving most Services but more particularly PIR and SAS. The scenario was that an invading force (PIR with a detached platoon of SAS) had landed in the Buna Area and had advanced to Popondetta with its southern flank anchored on the foothills of Mt Lamington. The invaders were likely to advance towards Kokoda. The main defending force (SAS with a detached platoon of PIR) were positioned west of the Kumusi River with probing patrols (some SAS with the PIR integrated with the villagers) east of the River. The exercise was designed in 3 phases, phase 1 being the advance to the Kumusi followed by a non-tactical crossing of this unbridged and unpredictable river (this is where the Japanese Major General Tomitaro Horii drowned), phase 2 being the advance to Kododa, finishing with an assault on Kokoda, while phase 3 was the 5 day walk home to Port Moresby - there were insufficient funds to fly - all up, about 21 days in the bush.

My involvement was as an Umpire bedded in the detached SAS platoon to the invading force positioned somewhere on the southern flank. Cpl Peter Rogers, now Major Peter Rogers DFC (Rtd), accompanied me in a similar role. Peter and I were flown into Popondetta arriving about 8am, driven westwards for some distance along the Popondetta /Kokoda Road, dropped off and then started looking for the SAS unit we were to umpire. We moved south along a well used track until the habitation thinned, then travelled easterly asking the villagers as we went if the SAS were around. Eventually someone said they had been sighted. We walked further east until we entered the devastated uninhabited area created by a 1951 volcanic eruption. We cut south to the Amboga River and proceeded downstream. We were about to look for a camp site, as evening was approaching, when we spotted a standing patrol on the riverbank. We were not seen as we were approaching from the rear. At this point the Amboga River had 10m high escarpment banks of volcanic material and the SAS platoon was camped above the bank. Higaturu was about 1km north of our position.

The 1,680 m Mount Lamington erupted late January 1951 when a large part of the northern side of the mountain was blown away and pyroclastic flows poured from the gap killing over 3,000 people, including 30 Europeans. Higaturu, the government sub-district station was destroyed. The pyroclastic flows and eruptions of dust and ash filled streams and tanks. In March 1951 another major eruption occurred which threw large pieces of the volcanic dome as far as 3km and caused a flow of pumice and rocks for a distance of 14 km. The flow was so hot

it set fire to everything in its path. In 1963, 12 years later, the vegetation had regenerated and was about 6 m high. No one lived in the blasted area for fear of the mountain, which continued to smoke and gurias (land tremors) were ever present.

Mt Lamington and surrounds are in a high rainfall area and the water running off the mountain cut creeks and rivers through the soft deposited volcanic material down to their original levels. Most tracks in the area ran north south along the plateau ridges and were easy to walk. The occasional east west tracks running across the grain of the country were not. They crossed 20 to 30m deep mini ravines created by the creeks. It was a tiring and time consuming task traversing down and up these many ravines to cover distances one could throw a stone.

As early as 1963, the exploits of the SAS were held in awe, so I was surprised by the non-tactical nature of their Amboga River camp as well as their relatively poor camp craft. Obviously these troops were new to the rainforest environment. When the SAS arrived in PNG a week or so before the start of the exercise to acclimatise, they were fascinated by the Chinese made jungle boots being sold cheaply in the Port Moresby trade stores. Practically every SAS soldier discarded their Boots AB for these canvas sided, rubber sole boots. They were light and worked well in the dry, the weather they experienced in Port Moresby, but the jungle boots were untried in wet muddy conditions which was experienced at Popondetta. The grooves in the boot filled with mud, which was difficult to dislodge, and made walking most difficult even on level ground if wet. Further no allowance was made for swelling of the feet and the shrinking of the canvas boot. The feet of the SAS were so poor that after a week an air drop for Boots AB was made to alleviate the problem. Admittedly I had also succumbed to the delights of jungle boots, but having been cautioned beforehand, I also carried my faithful Boots AB. I had the luxury of discarding my jungle boots within the first day or two and reverting to Boots AB. I felt very smug. On the other hand the SAS troops were very fit. We carried a similar weight of living gear in similar Bergen packs but the SAS also carried their section weapons and the various paraphernalia necessary for a functional self-contained fighting SAS unit. The weight carried per soldier was mind boggling, from memory 80 pounds or 36 kg.

A humorous incident occurred on the first night. As the camp was non-tactical I began erecting my hutchie in the usual way - two crossed sticks lashed together at each end of my bed sail with the net and poncho suitably affixed above to protect me from the elements. This method was new to the SAS but they soon realised the advantages and set their own up accordingly. One soldier was a little lazy and hooked his up to mine. After retiring for the night and just before sleep my bed began shaking. I was mystified and my initial reaction was to have bad thoughts about what my neighbour was doing in the attached hutchie. However, I soon realised we were experiencing a guria - I felt I owed my neighbour an apology.

The first couple of days were occupied by setting ambushes on nearby tracks and patrolling forward for signs of the defending force. This was a frustrating period as no contacts were made nor did any Papuans venture near the camp. It is possible PIR, under the guise of locals did come near seeking intelligence, but the SAS seemed unaware of such a possibility. As umpires we accompanied the troops during their activities and their field movement and ambush procedures were by the book. Orders came through to advance and the role of the SAS platoon was to secure the left southern flank. It was not until near the end of the second day our first contact was made. We had just passed through a village and were waiting for the stragglers to catch up before descending a steep incline to a creek when our forward scout reported the opposition moving slowly up the incline. A quick ambush was set and successfully triggered. Because the soldiers coming up the steep incline were well spread, the ambush was not as successful as was



wished. None the less the action got the adrenalin going .

Following the first contact a series of similar short contacts followed, a contact would be made followed by the withdrawal of the defensive force . If the terrain allowed, the response was to mount a quick flanking attack rather than go to ground and formally plan the attack. As we neared the Kumusi we were obliged to head north to the agreed river crossing. However, the night before we reached the Kumusi River we bivouacked on a small creek adjacent to a rubber plantation. Next morning moving along the creek we came across old trenches and found rusted out .303 rifles, brass cartridge cases and British pattern helmets. One of the SAS soldiers was reading a recently published book about the Kokoda campaign and the description in the section about the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion's initial contact with the Japanese at Awala Plantation fitted perfectly with the scene before us. I think everyone felt the significance of this discovery and it is one I shall never forget. Our interest in the book the SAS soldier was reading grew immeasurably after this encounter. We were indeed passing over hallowed ground.

The crossing of the Kumusi was very mundane, the sun was shining and the river was but a braided stream. We crossed in a rubber duckie wearing life jackets. Everyone marched from the river in non tactical mode westward for a kilometer or so up the Kokoda Road to a clean water stream where we camped for the night. The exercise recommenced the next day and again the SAS platoon I was with was given the role to protect the southern flank. The main force was to advance west using the road to Kokoda as the axis of advance. The attacking force re-fought most of the WW2 battles, but unfortunately, we were well south and missed these. We continued westwards with minor contacts but never getting to grips with the defending force - I would say they carried out their task well, delaying our advance and preventing us from cutting off the Kokoda to Port Moresby track. I believe the speed of our advance was restricted by the exercise controllers so our interdiction of the Kokoda Track did not upset the flow of planned main events for the exercise. Eventually we reached the main Kododa Track a km or so south of Kokoda. All troops camped near the Kokoda airstrip for a days rest and then began the 5 days walk to Port Moresby. I had only 2 weeks leave from work and had to return to Port Moresby. Unfortunately the weather closed in and I had to wait another two days before I flew out – I could have walked back like everyone else.

Phil Ainsworth

7 March 2011

A blonde decides one day that she is sick and tired of all the blonde jokes and how all blondes are perceived as stupid. So she decides to show her husband that blondes really are smart. While her husband is off at work, she decided that she is going to paint a couple of rooms in the house. The next day, right after her husband leaves for work, she gets down to the task at hand.

Her husband arrives home at 5.30 and smells the distinctive smell of paint. He walks into the living room and finds his wife lying on the floor in a pool of sweat. He notices that she is wearing a heavy parka and a leather jacket at the same time. He goes over and asks her if she is OK. She replies "Yes!". He then asks what she is doing and she replies that she wanted to prove to him that not all blonde women are dumb, and she wanted to do it by painting the house. He then asks her why she has a parka over her leather jacket. She replies that she was reading the directions on the paint can and it said.....

**FOR BEST RESULTS PUT ON TWO COATS.**

**This article is self explanatory. Part 1 of the story was covered in John Stokie's story in HTT Vol 75**

## **RESCUED FROM THE JUNGLE FINAL STAGES IN STIRRING ISLAND ADVENTURE.**

From Geoffrey Hutton, "Argus" War 'Correspondent

This is part 2 (and conclusion) of the story, part 1 of which was published yesterday, of the dramatic rescue of 3 young American airmen-Second-Lieut Eugene D. Wallace, Second-Lieut Marvin C. Hughes, and Pte First-class Dale E. Bordner-and Pte Leslie John Stokie, a New Guinea planter, formerly of Colac, Victoria. They had been living for 10 months in the mountain jungles of New Britain, suffering miseries and hardships, in order to avoid capture by the Japanese, after a forced landing in that enemy-occupied island.

**SOMEWHERE IN NEW GUINEA, Mon:** As soon as they had a chance the 3 Americans went down to the coast with a guide to look for Stokie. They slipped through a Japanese camp, groping their way down a track on a wet, moonless night. A boy hid them in a hut and then prepared them their first good meal for months. It was served on a table covered with his white laplap (shirt), and the food was good Japanese stores which the natives had salvaged from a freighter. The ship had been bombed and sunk by a Flying Fortress.

"Next day we had a real thrill," Bordner said. "We saw a Fortress come down and strafe hell out of that Japanese camp. It kept turning and making its run really low. It did our hearts good. I shouted to the boys, " I guess we're still in the war." Next day they had another thrill. They pushed on and met the first white man they had seen for over 6 months. "I'm mighty glad to see you boys," he said. Hughes answered, "You're not as glad to see us as we are to see you."

Stokie had plenty of food at his camp, but the party had another shock that afternoon when 20 Japanese appeared in a village a quarter of a mile away. They hung around the village overnight and then moved on in the morning. They seemed to be workmen, because they had only one rifle. Next day a dozen Japanese soldiers arrived and made the natives give them food and kill them a pig. They breakfasted 200 yards from the camp where the fugitives were eating Japanese tinned salmon and smoking Japanese cigarettes. Then they went away.

## **DISCOVERED BY PLANE**

One canoe was ready to put to sea when the monsoons ended, and the men went to work making another. Then one day early in March they saw a Liberator flying low over the beach. They ran down, waving lap laps and flashing a mirror. Wildly excited, Wallace and Bordner scrambled into a canoe and paddled out to sea. Next day the plane was back again. It was a Sunday, and the villagers were at church. The men took all the laplaps they could collect, and even used the elder's ceremonial white shirt to form their insignia on the beach.

The plane dropped a yellow streamer with food and instructions for identifying themselves. They had been found. In the next fortnight they received several visits. They saw themselves being photo-graphed and were dropped flash-lights to signal their position. From then on they kept a 24-hour watch. They used Stokie's last razor blade and morsel of soap, and spent the days in an anguish of excitement until the rescue actually came.



## BACK TO CIVILISATION

The men stepped into a new world at Port Moresby—a very different one from the Port Moresby they left last May. They met old friends who had been lieutenants and captains and are now majors and colonels. Over a breakfast of eggs, bacon, grape-fruit juice, and real white bread Tiny talked fast and answered hundreds of questions. Everybody was surprised to find them well shaved and washed, dressed in clean though ragged shorts, and apparently fit. Their worst experience they agreed was marching barefoot for days on end. After they had had an interview with war correspondents Brig-Gen E. C. Whitehead, Commander "Allied Air Force in New Guinea, decorated them with the Purple Heart and congratulated them on their amazing luck.

The rescue was an example of remarkably efficient reconnaissance and organisation. First intimation that white men might be at large in New Britain was a report from a Liberator, piloted by Capt Everett Wood, of Colorado, whose navigator noticed a native waving on the shore. "We thought he was just being friendly at first, and made jokes about it," he said, "but we reported it when we got back. The intelligence officer was interested and told us to take another look. Next time we got a picture which showed that there were white men there."

## STOKIE'S STORY

Fourteen months of hand-to-mouth living, with the Japanese continually on his trail, have left little mark on lean, weather-beaten Leslie John Stokie, who has lived in New Guinea and the Solomons for the past 16 years. Stokie, who is 40, comes from Colac, V. He believed that his mother had died, but he was not sure. Stokie told the story of his desperate game of hide and seek and his extraordinary escape in an unexcited drawl between puffs at his pipe. "

Like other plantation managers, he had enlisted, as a private in the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles at £1 a year pay when the Japanese first threatened Rabaul in January, 1942. He arrived at Rabaul for duty in time to see about 100 Japanese planes battering the town and harbour into clouds of smoke and dust. Next day he went down with malaria, and while the Japanese were landing he was lying in a regimental aid post with a high fever. He summoned enough strength to clamber into a truck during the withdrawal, but the truck bogged down along the rough track, and the troops were ordered to make their way to the Baining Mountains as best they could.

"There was no panic during the withdrawal, and some of our units were still putting up a show a few miles inland 2 nights later," he said. "I was in a pretty low state, and after I had marched a few yards I went out to it. When I came to everybody had gone, and I was left with nothing but 2 Mills bombs. There were no Japs around, so I went back to re-equip at one of the bogged trucks which were near Bunakanau airfield. I found 3 together and wrecked the engines. Then I salvaged a primus stove full of kerosene.

## PAST JAP PATROLS

"I had just fired the first truck when a party of Japanese came round the next corner on bicycles. I let them have one bomb and made for the kunai grass at top speed. A lot of Japs concentrated in the area, and I was right inside their lines. So I spent the night and all the next day lying where I had fallen. I

couldn't get any food or water, and I was frightened to cough because they were passing 10 yards away. On the second night I tried to get out and nearly walked into a sentry. I saw his bayonet glint just in time to avoid bumping into him.

On the fourth night I finally got clear of their lines and had a good feed of coconuts. I still had one grenade, and I set out to get some equipment with it. Along the track I found another truck which had been abandoned, so I was able to equip myself without using it. After that I hung around the island for several months. I was searching through the Bainings for our troops, and sent my boys around the villages to look for stragglers. There are 287 varieties of edible foods growing in New Britain, if you know where to look for them, and I knew the natives pretty well. I was very sick when I got away, but I found a kanaka who was friendly, and he gave me boiled eggs and fruit and kept me at his house for 4 days while I was down with fever. I nearly died there, but as soon as I could walk I had to push on, because the Japanese were patrolling the whole area, and the natives were scared. They gave me soma quinine from their Government issue, and one of my hosts recited a charm over me which was supposed to make me bullet proof and invisible. He made me promise first not to inform against him to the missionaries.

## MET 3 SOLDIERS

"After a week I found 3 soldiers pushing south. They were sick and miserable, and one of them was being helped along by the other 2. I convinced them that they wouldn't die, and took them to an abandoned village, where I kept them for 6 weeks, feeding them up on native foods until they were fit again. Then I left them in charge of the luluwai (chief) at a near by village, and did a little reconnaissance. Some of the boys agreed to come with me, and we celebrated with a half-day feast. The Japs seemed to be suspicious, because when we went down to the canoes we found a guard on them.

"We had to lie low for a week before we got away. I went along the coast to look up a man I knew. He was still there, and he looked as if he had seen a ghost when I walked in. We had a grand dinner of roast duck and good bread and butter. We sat up yarning half the night, and he told me about the Coral Sea battle. We arranged to keep in touch with each other, and I slipped out a few hours before dawn. I began to expect our troops to be back in Rabaul in a month or 2. I pushed back to the home plantation and found it clear of Japs, so I put boys back to work and settled down to wait. I sent down for the 3 boys I had left behind 4 months before, but they were content to stay put. Later I heard that they had set out for the mountains, but I could never trace them again. I am afraid they were captured by the Japs.

## WORRIED BY JAPS

"Gradually my optimism faded, and the Japs began to bother me again. They sent parties to look for me, but I always cleared out in time and lay low until they had gone. They made 2 very determined efforts to catch me. The first time they sent boys after me and told them they would be killed if they came back without me. They explained their difficulty to me, so I told them not to go back to the Japs at all. That seemed to satisfy everybody. The second time they came after me themselves, and parties of them began beating the bush around the plantation. They didn't want to look ridiculous in the eyes of the boys, so they told them they were looking for gold. They didn't find any. Another time I ran into a party of them on the road, but we saw them coming first.

"When I gave up hope of seeing Rabaul fall soon I decided to come to Port Moresby by canoe; that was in July. I set off along the coast with some boys, but one of them became very ill and nearly died. This laid us up over September and October. The Japanese got active again and I had to lie low for a while. One native luluwai who had gone pro-Japanese made an enterprising attempt to capture me. He came and told me that he had been ordered by our Government to collect any stray soldiers he could find and take them to his village until the war was over. I was warned against him, and I learned that there were Japanese in the village. So I told him that all the Japanese were too frightened to come and get one white man. I said that very soon we would drive out the Japanese and he would be punished. This terrified him and he begged forgiveness.

## NEWS OF AMERICANS

"I had learned that 3 American fliers were up in the mountains. While I was waiting for the Americans I decided to get a few home comforts together for them. I got hold of some of the Japanese stores which the natives had salvaged from a sunken freighter off the coast. I would trade for tinned goods and cigarettes. That way I always had plenty of Japanese cigarettes, excellent tinned meat, and vegetable extract. The Japanese got to hear that a lot of cargo had been salvaged from their supply ship, so they came down to find it. To prevent them finding my dump I opened half the cases, made a neat hole in each tin, and soaked them thoroughly in sea water. When the American boys turned up they were certainly surprised to find tinned meat, rice, and quinine waiting for them.

"All 3 of them looked terribly sick, but there was no need to hurry because we had to build a second canoe and wait for the monsoons to end. So I fed them up for a few weeks and they soon began to put on weight again. I had boys out hunting, too, and we used to dine off pork, beef, pigeons, and fish."

Stokie followed the course of the war by piecing together scraps of news or propaganda from the Japanese and by watching the skies. For months he saw little but Japanese aircraft, and he never let one pass without taking a shot at it with his army rifle. He never brought one down, but it helped to keep him in the war. Later he began to see more American aircraft, and he saw a curious change take place. "You would see Zeros patrolling around the sky for an hour, and suddenly they would turn north and hightail straight home," he said. "Some of the boys with phenomenal hearing would come yelling, 'Four engine, he come.' Sure enough a Fortress or a Liberator would come roaring along with the sky to itself. The Japanese admitted to the boys that the big bombers were too hard to handle, and they ran like rabbits when they had an air raid alert."

Stokie ended his story with a quiet chuckle. "I had a bet of a year's pay with one of the Americans on when we would be rescued," he said. "I lost, and he was feeling pretty good until I told him he had won just over 3 dollars."



**This story was published in the "Argus" on 6th April, 1943.**

John Stokie with his distinctive slouch hat on his rescue from New Britain.

*A man is stopped by the police at midnight and asked where he's going.*

*"I'm on the way to listen to a lecture about the effects of alcohol and drug abuse on the human body."*

*The policeman asks, "Really? And who's going to give a lecture at this time of night?"*

*"My wife", comes the reply*

## THE PUGGAREE

The puggaree takes its name from the Hindu 'pagre', meaning a turban or thin scarf of muslin. It has, in its time, been worn on the Slouch Hat in many forms but during the First World War a plain khaki cloth band was worn and this style continued until 1929.

In 1930 new puggarees were introduced with different folds denoting Arms of Services. During the Second World War a flat puggaree was issued to the Second AIF.

The troops serving in the middle east introduced a folded puggaree as a distinguishing mark of active serviced and in time this style has become the puggaree of today

## Ted Kenna, VC.

'First visit' to the battlefields by family;  
Wewak, ESP, Papua New Guinea  
April 2012

Rob and Alan Kenna, sons of the late Ted Kenna, VC and their brother-in-law Ian Day visited Wewak, Dagua and the Sepik River during 28 March-8 April 2012 with Reg Yates of "Kokoda Historical" as guide. The group flew to Port Moresby and Wewak and stayed at Alois Mateos' SurfSite Lodge just across from Boram airport with fine views of Wewak harbour.

The first part of the visit examined the battlefields. We identified the ridgeline or spur along which Pte Ted Kenna's A Company, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Division AIF advanced to seize the former Wirui Mission, (usually called 'Boystown' nowadays) on 15 May 1945. We walked onto the top of nearby Mt Kawakubo (named after the Japanese commander; above Koigin village) where Ted Kenna was severely wounded in the face and back on 5 June 1945, some 3 weeks after being awarded the Victoria Cross. Later we visited Dagua near Tokoku Pass where Lt Bert Chowne, MM of 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Division AIF was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross on 25 March 1945.







The second part of the visit was a simple adventure, with some physical effort! We were driven for 4 hours to Pagwi on the Sepik River, for a 2 hour motorised dugout ride up-river to Ambunti Lodge, also owned by Alois Mateos. The following day we travelled further up-river to Yambon village, hired two 30' dugout canoes and paddles and set off paddling (with a River Guide steering each dugout from the stern) for half a day to the far side of Wasu Lagoon and stayed at Wagu Guesthouse. That evening, by motor canoe, we went looking for baby crocodiles. A spotter with a powerful torch stood in the bow, backed by a hunter with a multi-pronged spear; when the spotter saw red eyes amongst the reeds the helmsman closed on them and the hunter speared the baby croc through the meaty part of its tail (which does no lasting harm and heals readily). One small croc was returned to the river; the other, about 40cm long was bagged and handed over to the local croc farmer. Next morning we paddled 15 minutes to see Raggiana Birds of Paradise chorusing and preening in the forest canopy atop a nearby knoll. Then another half day paddling via a short-cut back to Ambunti Lodge; beers all round; we bought traditional Sepik carvings and souvenirs from local women.

During the third part of the visit we paid our respects to Ted Kenna and Bert Chowne as Victoria Cross recipients in the 6<sup>th</sup> Division AIF Aitape-Wewak Campaign, 1944-45 with a simple ceremony involving Lt Col Steven Dom, Commanding Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Royal Pacific Island Regiment, PNGDF and his staff from Moem Barracks, representing Warrant Officer Yauwiga and Sergeant Major Simogun and all the local people who were guides and carriers or fought alongside the Australians during the war. A wreath was laid at the Memorial on Mission Hill and tribute paid, 'Lest we forget'. Pork roast lunch and beers followed.

The visit closed with an invitation to a round of 'Mongrel Golf' from expat' Chris Rose whom Reg Yates had met some 20 years previously at Tari, which led to a helicopter ride next morning, courtesy of Tod Petherick of Niugini Helicopters, over Wirui Mission, Cape Wom (site of General Adachi's surrender) and Wewak Hill, including Kenna Avenue. The actions of Ted Kenna, Bert Chowne and 6<sup>th</sup> Division AIF are well remembered in Wewak. We thanked our generous hosts and flew to Moresby and home. A description of the two Victoria Cross actions follows:

Adapted from "The Proud Sixth" by Mark Johnston; Cambridge University Press:

"19<sup>th</sup> Brigade troops were embroiled in hard fighting at Wirui Mission, a steep hill nearly 100 metres high, covered in thick kunai grass and overlooking (Boram) airfield. With tank support the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion captured its eastern slopes and summit (destroying 6 Japanese artillery pieces with obvious fragment damage, still on site today) on 14 May but the Japanese kept firing from bunkers on the north-western slopes. The next day, as 2/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion's A Company sought to eliminate these bunkers, several men were hit and its leading section became pinned down. Private Ted Kenna, who was with the supporting section just 50 metres from the bunkers, stood up in the kunai grass, in full view of the enemy machine gunners and fired his (Bren) light machine gun at them. (Bullets passed through his clothing but missed him. He said to his No 2 gunner, "They've got a bead on me. Give me your rifle!") with which he was a crack shot. With 4 bullets he silenced the enemy (machine gun) post. Then, taking the Bren again he silenced a second (machine gun) post. A photo in the above book shows one of the Japanese machine gun posts. Two dead Japanese were also found there, one of whom had been shot between the eyes. Seizure of Wirui Mission allowed the Australians to dominate Boram airfield and) secure the Wewak coastal plain."

Also, 2 months earlier:

"The 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had the important task of clearing these Japanese (in well-prepared positions south of But, pronounced as in 'put') who threatened the flank of the advance on Wewak. Some of the campaign's toughest fighting ensued, especially around Tokuku Pass. On 25 March the leading platoon advancing on one narrow ridge near Dagua was pinned down. Lt Bert Chowne, MM (well regarded as a fearless leader) was commanding the reserve platoon and now took action. Running up the steep track, he threw grenades that knocked out two machine guns. Then, firing his sub-machine gun from the hip, he led his platoon in a charge that took the feature and, after he had killed two more Japanese, cost him his life. Chowne was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the first for the 6<sup>th</sup> Division. That the award came so late reflected not the lack of valour in the Division's men, but excessive parsimony in their senior officers."



A Japanese artillery piece still in the Wewak area.

Note the bullet and shrapnel holes in the mounting.



### A SALUTE TO AUSTRALIA DAY

Australians are a funny lot, you'll often hear one curse,  
 How things have started badly, and they'll probably get worse,  
 The weathers dry, the sun's so hot it's stolen all the water,  
 The Government has never done the things we think they oughta'.  
 But if we hear a tourist say his home is much more grand,  
 They had better be prepared to make a very solid stand.  
 For although we Aussies may complain at what's become our lot,  
 When someone knocks this country, we defend with all we've got.  
 We may criticize some teenage brat, may even wish them failure,  
 But we stand behind them cheering when they're playing for Australia.  
 Because, if this is home to you, the country of your birth,  
 Then you back the native player to beat anyone on Earth.  
 When the cricket bats are swinging or when someone scores a try,  
 When a home grown horse has won the cup and made the owner cry,  
 When some paralympic athlete hits the front and sets the pace,  
 You'll hear "Aussie Aussie Aussie" as the crowd goes off their face.  
 And although we like to take a break in overseas locations,  
 If you take the time to question this nomadic population,  
 They will tell you without blinking that wherever they may roam,  
 The best part of the journey was the last bit, ....coming home.  
 For the sun was never brighter on the beach at Waikiki,  
 Than it is on all the sandy shores Australia has to see,  
 The water never purer nor the air as fresh and clear,  
 The people never friendlier than those that we have here.  
 If you venture to the outback where grass is scarce as snow,

As you swelter you may wonder what it was that made you go,  
 But just look at the locals who have lived there since their birth,  
 And I know you will not find a better class of folk on earth.  
 All across this wide brown country from the Cape to Hobart town,  
 There are people who will help you when you find the chips are down,  
 And if someone should abuse you, and does it just because,  
 Then that person's not Australian, and that person never was.  
 So when you feel disgruntled just remember this rendition,  
 And never blame the country for the acts of politicians,  
 Look up and count your blessings when you see our flag unfurled,  
 And be grateful that you live in the best country in the world.

### THE PAPER WITH THE RATIONS.

It was in many ways the most extraordinary launching of a daily newspaper in Australian publishing history.

The setting was the steamy jungles of New Guinea at the height of the bitter fighting with the Japanese in WW11.

The Year – 1942 – and the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian forces, General Blamey, called Australian war correspondent Reg Leonard to his tent in Port Moresby.

So was born the Australian Army newspaper "Guinea Gold".

Former printer with "Guinea Gold", Paul Wallace, recalled the conversation the other day in Sydney, and he has set down the record of the paper in a small book. Wallace reveals that before "Guinea Gold" started, the only source of news to the troops came from a news sheet called "Mans" (Moresby Army News Sheet) – a single sheet printed on two sides letterpress and produced by the Army Education Unit.

The official news doing the rounds, was known in the sland of the time as the "G.G." - "Good Guts".

The Commander-in-Chief was not so isolated from his troops that he did not know. He played with the letters "G.G" and produced the title for the paper - "Guinea Gold".

And General Blamey also decided its transport priority – after ammunition, but equal with rations.

As Paul Wallace puts it in his record, the idea for a paper came from a conversation between Leonard, then a correspondent for the Melbourne Herald, and Lt Col George Fenton of the Australian Army and officer-in-charge of war correspondents in the New Guinea area.

Wallace, now a slight, mild mannered man of 61 and retired from the printing industry sat at a cluttered desk. The memories spanning his years with "Guinea Gold" tumbled out faster than the dog-eared issues, scrap books and faded photographs.

The first issue was published at Port Moresby on Nov 19, 1942.

Present was its first editor Reg Leonard, now Chairman of Directors of Queensland Press Ltd.

For Paul Wallace, his most vivid memory is the atmosphere of professional competence of the entire staff, who worked under the most trying conditions. He remembers the insatiable demand for spot news from news hungry men of the Australian troops – and the American forces who were later to benefit from this small paper.

General Blamey was firm on one point – the newspaper was to present only factual news without comment. In his view an



Army newspaper should contain no editorial comment.

"Guinea Gold" started publication in a former government printing office at Port Moresby with a linotype and antiquated flatbed presses. Later another linotype was scrounged. According to the history unfolded by Paul Wallace, the equipment was old and by no means reliable. Wallace describes the 45-year-old press as a "plumbing giant" which "flat-out" could only produce 1,500 copies an hour. It took from midnight until dawn to meet the original circulation of 9,000 copies.

Reg Leonard, in the book, recalls the "Guinea Gold" had been one of the few revolutionary experiments in daily journalism to have survived a multitude of crises.

On moonlit nights in those early days the four page tabloid paper was often interrupted by air raids, but despite this, deadlines were still met. And blow-lamps were sometimes used to melt lino metal as power failed. And in the initial stages, the hand-set type for headings was so badly worn it was necessary to pack the under side with layers of gummed paper to raise it to type height.

Circulation was an intrepid affair. Copies were distributed by jeep and mail where possible and dropped by plane to troops in forward areas and isolated outposts.

Production continued in Port Moresby until some of the plant was transferred to Dobodure, where a second plant was established, publishing Australian and American news in Nov, 1943.

General Blamey provided a new press and by late 1943 circulation had jumped to 30,000 a day. A special edition was produced for the American troops in the area. This was done by replacing page two, which had always carried snippets of Australian home news. This page was replaced with US baseball scores and news items of American interest.

According to Reg Wallace in his book, the circulation figures during the war could never be revealed, as it had been announced from the beginning that one copy would be printed for every eight men. That meant that the 64,000 copies were distributed to 512,000 men – but the total serving personnel was more than that.

And "Guinea Gold" made more journalistic history, publishing in Lae one day and Rabaul the next. A skeleton staff was flown into Rabaul a week before the transfer with a part of Lae's plant. Machines were assembled and readied for printing. As Paul Wallace writes "It was probably the first time a paper had been published in different lands on successive days".

The Army newspaper had its "scoops" when General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters were at Port Moresby, his daily communiqué was being read in "Guinea Gold" before it was released for publication elsewhere.

A Paul Watson recounts in his book, for a long time "Guinea Gold" had a world "scoop" a day and the news of many major military operations in the South-West Pacific area was published on the front page. "The biggest news was the Japanese surrender and seven editions rolled off the press within 36 hours.

In its infancy "Guinea Gold" was produced from a building of undressed timber, sisalcraft roofing and walls with an earth floor, but by 1943 it moved into new, modern premises.

On its last issue of June 30, 1946, it carried on its front page a report which in part read "Distributed by air, over an area stretching from Morotai across to the Solomons, it was read by Australians, Americans and New Zealanders, by white men, red men, black men, brown men and yellow men. To all of them it brought each day their daily news.

And perhaps that is "Guinea Gold's" true significance. When today's air speeds become the cruising speeds of long-distance

airliners, Melbourne will be within 20 hours flying time of London and no one will live more than a day from anyone else. Then maybe, there will be a world daily, for all men, everywhere.

And, perhaps it will recall that it was predicted in a newspaper named "Guinea Gold", which also did something to shape 'the shape of things to come', back in the yesterdays of WW11".

**By Oliver Harvey in Sydney.**

**Printed in the "Courier Mail". Sat., Nov 20, 1982.**

A follow on from the article which appeared in HTT Vol 77



Above. Aircraft dump at Wards Strip, 1951. The aircraft were being melted down for aluminium.

Photo Alf Scales

Below. PIR Trooping the Colour at Taurama Barracks, Port Moresby, 1959.

Photo Bruce Crawford



## Indian Burials at Rabaul (Bita Paka) Cemetery

The Office for Australian War Graves (OAWG), on behalf of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), assisted in the burial of five unknown Indian soldiers from the Second World War at the Rabaul (Bita Paka) War Cemetery on 23 February 2012. The burial service was coordinated by the Indian High Commission with support from the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Defence Force.

The remains of the five soldiers were discovered in 2009 and were verified by the Australian Army Unrecovered War Casualties Unit. While more than 5600 Indian prisoners were freed on New Britain during the Second World War, many perished under the harsh conditions faced while in Japanese captivity. There are 619 casualties of the Old Indian Army buried at Bita Paka.

OAWG maintains 72 war cemeteries and plots around Australia and three in PNG on behalf of the CWGC. The PNG war cemeteries are located at Bomana near Port Moresby, Rabaul and Lae. The Rabaul (Bita Paka) War Cemetery contains 1147 burials, including 500 of which are marked 'Known unto God'. There are 32 First World War casualties buried or commemorated in the cemetery.

An avenue of bronze-paneled stone pylons forms the Rabaul Memorial to the Missing, on which the names of those who died in New Britain and New Ireland and who have no known graves are inscribed. Included are the names of 1216 Australian casualties.

The Rabaul (Bita Paka) War Cemetery is near the site of the German wireless station captured by the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force on 11 September 1914, during the first Australian action of the First World War. Five naval personnel who died in the operation at Rabaul are buried there.



The burial of the unknown Indian Soldiers from WW2 at Bita Paka Cemetery.

## COLOURS

As colours have no practical value, it may be thought that there is a case for their abolition. However, colours are a symbol of the spirit of the regiment, for on them are borne the battle honours and badges granted to the regiment in commemoration of some of the gallant deeds performed by its members from the time it was raised.

This association of colours with heroic deeds has caused them to be regarded with veneration. In a sense they are the epitome of the history of the regiment. The full history of a regiment is contained in written records but as these are not portable in a convenient form.

The colours, emblazoned with distinctions for long and honourable service, are something in the nature of a silken history, the sight of which creates a feeling of pride in soldiers and ex-soldiers.

To trace the origin of the custom of carrying colours, one must go back to the days of early man when he fixed his family badge to a pole and held it aloft in battle for the dual purpose of indicating his position in the action and as a rallying point should the

need arise.

Caesar's troops marched behind the Roman eagle vexilloid and medieval chivalry followed the same idea when they placed their armorial bearings on their banners so that they would float on high, well above the melee.

When armies were beginning to adopt a system of regimentation at the start of the 17th century, each company was allotted a colour, a custom that persisted for 100 years.

In 1661, during the reign of Charles II, when the British Army as we know it today first began to take shape, the number of colours carried by a unit was reduced to three to correspond with the technical arrangements of a battalion for battle.

A royal warrant dated February 13 of that year accordingly authorised the newly raised footguards to have 12 stands of colours.

An attempt to lay down a practice of producing colours peculiar to a particular regiment was made in 1689. However, it was not until September 1743 that a royal warrant decreed the practice of each battalion having only two colours, a practice that exists to this present day.

Another royal warrant of the time made it clear that a regiment, though still in some respects the colonel's own possession, was part of the king's army.

King's colour as it was soon called, was to be the Greater Union (the Union Jack); the second, or regimental colour, was to be of the same colours as that particular regiment's facing with the union in the upper canton (except in the case of those regiments whose facings were either red or white, then the colour was to be white with a red cross of St George over its entire surface, having a small union in the upper canton).

Those regiments that had the privilege of bearing royal devices were to have the number of the regiment placed towards the upper corner. The colours at this time, and for 100 years after, were very large, fully 5 feet (1.5m) on the pike and 6 feet (1.8m) on the fly, as opposed to modern colours which are 3 feet (.9m) on the pike and 3 feet 9 inches (1.1m) on the fly.

As the purpose of colours was to advertise the presence of the commanders, those regiments whose duty it was to skirmish ahead of the main body, where speed and concealment were essential, did not carry colours.

These were rifle regiments, which is the reason why they, today, in the British army, do not carry colours (although Australian rifle regiments do).

In the cavalry, the counterparts of rifle units are the lancers and the hussars, and they do not carry standards or guidons for the same reason.

The foot guards observe a custom that dates to the new model of the Commonwealth. In those 17th-century days the field officers of a regiment were the colonel, the lieutenant colonel and the sergeant-major (today's major) and each of those officers had a company.

The colonel's colour was plain, that is it had no devices on it to denote the rank; the lieutenant colonel's colour was basically the same as the colonel's except it had a small St George's cross in the upper canton nearest the pike head; and the sergeant-major's was similar to that of the lieutenant colonel's but had a 'pile wavy' in gold issuing from the lower inner corner of the St George's cross.

These distinctions are still observed in the Queen's colours of 1, 2 and 3 Bns respectively of the Foot Guards.

When carried into battle the colour was positioned in the cen-



tre of the front rank where they could be easily seen and recognised, and to act as a guide and a rallying point.

There is no doubt that their presence in battle had a high morale effect. The colours were carried in companies and they were borne by the youngest officers, whose rank was ensign (the company officers in those days were a captain, a lieutenant and a number of ensigns, and when the two colours of a regiment Were carried the duty of bearing them was divided among the ensigns).

As the importance of a victory was generally gauged by the number of guns and stands of colours that were captured, the colour party became an obvious target. Hence the scenes of the most bitter hand-to-hand fighting. This resulted in a very high rate of mortality among the ensigns because as one fell, another ensign would pick up the colour and carry on.

With the view of giving the ensigns some local protection the rank of colour sergeant was introduced in 1813.

The escort to the colour was formed by five colour sergeants. They were chosen from the senior and the bravest sergeants as they had to stand, armed only with halbpikes, in the most exposed places in the fields of battle.

The practice of carrying colours in battle gradually came to an end after 1879, when two subalterns of the South Wales Borders received posthumous VCs for their endeavours to save the regiment's colours at the battle of Isandhlwana.

Some historians, however, state that they, were last carried by the 58th Regt of Foot (later 2 Bn, the Northamptonshire Regt) in action on January 26, 1881, at Laings Nek during the first Boer War; while it is also quoted that the 38th Regt of Foot carried them at the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882.

The colour party was, in the past, expected to fight to the death to defend the colours. For the same symbolic reason the colours are paraded in the centre of the regiment or battalion when on the march, and not at its head.

A different custom exists, however, in the cavalry. As their battles were fought around a fixed spot, marked by the colours, their standard was carried by an NCO, the sergeant-major, and was unprotected.

**WOI C.J. Jobson, Former RSM Ceremonial ADHQ**



**PNGVR. Queen and Regimental Colours.**



*I'm getting so old all my friends in Heaven will think I didn't make it.*

**I have been unable to obtain photos of the PIR Colours. Should any member be able to supply me with a copy they will be published in future editions of HTT.**

**Email to bob-collins@bigpond.com or mail to Bob Collins, 45 Capricornia, 121 Surf Parade, Broadbeach, Qld, 4218. Ed.**

### **SLOUCH HATS**

The ADF has decreed that the Rising Sun badge must be removed from a slouch hat worn with the brim down all round. This is to prevent 'disrespect to the badge'

Quite a change from our day

### **EXERCISE STEEL TUFF 2013**

Each year our Assn awards a medallion and certificate to each member of the best Section in 9 RQR. This year, unlike most years in the past, there was not a special weekend in which the various sections competed, but a section from D Coy, Maryborough was chosen for the award.

A number of our members traveled to Maryborough for the presentation (photo below), and the following email was received from the RSM of 9 RQR.

*Phil, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you and your Association for the support you have provided to 9 RQR, and in particular your patronage of the Unit Military Skills Competition. "Exercise Steel Tuff", with the provision of soldiers medallions for the winning section.*

*I know these soldiers appreciate this recognition. Long may it continue.*

*Of note, I am no longer RSM 9 RQR, and request that you please remove me from the mailing list. The new incumbent as RSM 9 RQR Matthew Bold, he will contact you in the new year.*

President Phil responded and congratulated David Trill on being promoted to RSM 8/9 RAR.

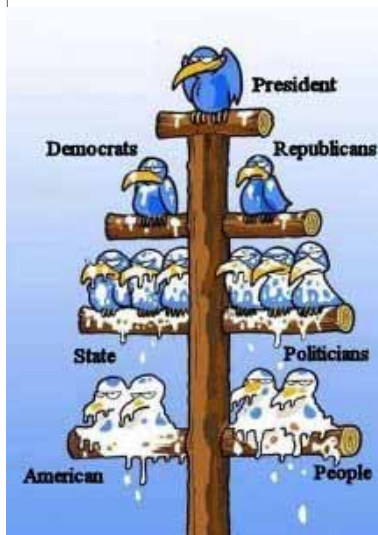


Assn members with the successful 9 RQR section. L-R Anne & Stewart Lewis, Phil Ainsworth, John Holland, Jessica Harrington.

### **DETACHMENTS AND CREWS**

Tanks, APS's, antiarmour weapons, mortars, etc. are **MANNED** or **CREWED** by **CREWS**. However, guns with the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery are **SERVED BY DETACHMENTS**

## FINALLY SOMEONE EXPLAINED AMERICAN POLITICS TO ME.



Right or left doesn't matter - it is really up or down in Politics. When top level people look down they see only shit-heads.

When the bottom level people look up they see only assholes.

You will never see another flow chart that describes American politics so clearly.

*Could well apply in Australia also.*

## BLACK BERET

Members of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps proudly wear a black beret, as opposed to the standard Army issue blue beret. The origin of the "black hat" goes back to the latter days of WW1. During a British Army Tank Corps dinner, held at Bernicourt in 1917, a discussion was held by some officers with regard to what type of uniform the new corps would wear with the eventual coming of peace.

It was decided to adopt the 'beret Basque' which was, at the time, being worn by the Chars d'Assaut (the French tank regiment). The opinion was that the beret which was black, hid oil stains and was considerably more practical for use with tanks than the khaki peaked cap or the leather helmet.

After some debate, a suggestion was put forward to, and approved by HM King George V in March 1924. However, the black beret is only worn in the British Army by the Royal Tank Regiment. The Royal Australian Armoured Corps was granted approval to wear the beret in August 1944.

The Australian Army and a number of corps within the Army have since adopted other colours than the blue beret for their headdress (ieSASR, the commandos, the military police etc) but it was the armoured corps which made the initial change to the beret headdress.

## FUNCTION DATES

**Sat 9th March**

Mixed Dining Night  
Jimboomba

Contact Bob Collins 5526 8396 or  
Barry Wright 5546 9865 if attending.

**25 Apr** ANZAC Day march and reunion - Assemble in George St at top of the mall by 0930. Afterwards reunion at the Victory Hotel in Edward St.

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**Bob Collins—Editor**



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