

## The Association

After PNG's independence in 1975, most ex-NGVR and PNGVR veterans returned to Australia. In the late 1980s the Association was formed in Brisbane. It presently has over 200 members throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea. Many live in south-east Queensland which is the centre for the Association's activities. The objectives of the Association are to:

- bring together the returned and Ex-Servicemen members of the Association as a Returned and Ex-Servicemen's Group or Organisation;
- promote and encourage, through the Association, a close relationship with the people of Papua New Guinea;
- offer scholarships, awards, annual prizes and bursaries to members of the Australian Army and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force;
- preserve the memory, records and artefacts of those who served in the Second World War theatre of Papua New Guinea and to arrange exhibitions of the same from time to time in Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- provide plaques and memorials to honour members of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles who served and died in action or as prisoners of war; and
- affiliate with any other organisation which possesses similar aims and objectives upon such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreed upon.



Reserve Forces Day March

## Association activities

The stated objectives of the Association were influenced by its activities and functions, which include:

1. Harim Tok Tok, our 16 page newsletter, the main means of communicating with our membership, is published 6 times annually
2. Maintaining our face book page and website are important complementary means of communicating with members
3. Our outstanding Military Museum at Wacol is maintained as a community facility. It is also the Association's HQ.
4. ANZAC Day parade and reunion in Brisbane is an important get together
5. All members are welcome to attend the 6 committee meetings per annum are held in the Wacol Museum
6. Formal and informal events for members and friends are regularly arranged
7. Our AGM is held in October each year at the Wacol Museum to elect office bearers
8. Public Memorial services are held at Brisbane Cenotaph for NGVR on Anzac Day and for those lost on the Montevideo Maru on 1 July
9. Contact with members, particularly those sick and bereaved, is a vital service
10. Attendance and support at members funeral services
11. Maintain contact and support with and for kindred organisations
12. Provide annual awards of excellence to kindred military units
13. Encourage the writing and self publishing of books & documents of appropriate historical merit

## Association contact details

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## Become a friend of the Museum

The strength of any Museum is to provide and maintain interesting and relevant displays of artifacts, records and memorabilia. The Association's Museum has security vaults on its premises and maintains the necessary licenses including firearms to safe-guard its collection. The NSAAQ site is security fenced and protected by an on-site guard and is patrolled by dogs at night.

Acquisitioning, cataloging and establishing exhibits is continuing. Much additional work and support is required to enable the Museum to regularly open to the community. If you have an interest in assisting the Association's Museum, you are invited to become a friend of the Museum. All that is required is to contact either the Association's Secretary, or the Museum's Curator, whose details are elsewhere in this brochure.

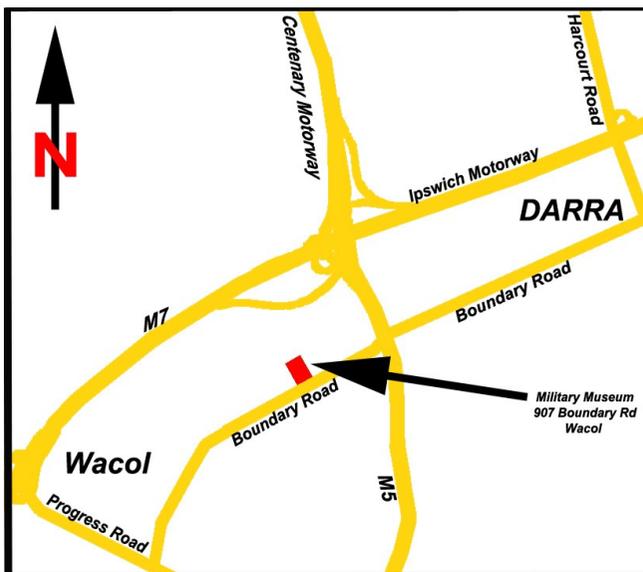


Curator John Holland in the new extension



Military Displays

### Directions to Military Museum



## Opening times

Monday to Friday—by appointment  
Weekends - Association meetings and NSAAQ function days— see contacts

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The work of the Museum compliments the objectives of the Association

## New Guinea Volunteer Rifles & Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles Ex-members Association Inc



# Military MUSEUM

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## History of the Museum

The Museum was established in 2005 in leased premises within the Wacol Military Heritage Precinct, Brisbane. Since then the Association has refurbished the original WW2 building, inside and out, added air-conditioning, a pedestrian safety ramp and more recently a substantial extension. During this period military displays and presentations about NGVR's wartime activities and other Australian Military campaigns in the PNG Archipelago have been installed and maintained, as well as a wide and large collection of military memorabilia and PNG artefacts have been acquired and exhibited.

The purpose of the Museum is to provide a lasting tribute to NGVR and a memorial to the men who were lost in the Pacific War. Importantly the Museum is to provide a growing community facility for the benefit of future generations. The Museum is promoted widely and many community adult and children groups regularly visit. It is due to the dedication of only a few Association members that this outstanding military and PNG exposition is available to the community.

The Museum has links to the Victoria Barracks and MacArthur Museums in the city. Inter-loans are regularly arranged.

Work is continuing to collect, catalogue and exhibit the many records, artefacts and memorabilia held. Although rent is minimal, the cost of utilities and general maintenance is borne by the Association. Entry to the Museum is \$3.00 per person to assist with maintenance.



You are invited to donate or loan appropriate items to the Museum, with the knowledge they will be properly and securely looked after. Also please do not forget to make a bequest to the NGVR/PNGVR Museum in your will.

## New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR)

NGVR had the distinction of being the only Australian army militia unit raised, mobilised, fought and disbanded overseas in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea between 1939 and 1943. On 4th September 1939, Australian Army Headquarters ordered the raising of NGVR. A cosmopolitan group of men from Europe, the British Isles, New Zealand, Australia and Asia, whose homes and livelihoods were in New Guinea, hastened to join.

The initial strength of the battalion was limited to 20 officers and 400 other ranks, but this was increased in June 1940 to 23 officers and 482 other ranks. The enthusiasm in the early days stemmed mainly from returned soldiers of the 1914-18 War, but by mid-1941 the unit had lost many of its younger members having joined the AIF and other services. While the remoteness of many areas was a disadvantage, a growing realisation of the danger of war in the Pacific led to a revival of interest late 1941.

The headquarters of the NGVR was originally at Rabaul and sub-units were located at Wau, Salamaua, Lae and Madang. Fit men between the ages of 18 and 50 were accepted. Enlistment was for a two-year period and there was no pay except for an allowance of 1 pound per year. The uniform consisted of khaki shirts and trousers, made from material sent from Australia. The Army supplied felt hats, bandoliers, leather belts, boots and puttees. Brass NGVR shoulder badges were worn. Arms consisted of rifles and some Vickers and Lewis machine guns.



NGVR on parade, Rabaul 1940

In August 1941, after the arrival of 'Lark Force' in Rabaul, NGVR, under the command of Major WM Edwards, moved its headquarters to Bulolo on the mainland. After Japan attacked, the Battalion was placed on full-time duty and mobilized on the 21 January, 1942.

When the Japanese invaded Rabaul in the early hours of the 23 January, NGVR was under the command of the CO of 2/22nd Battalion. NGVR was positioned on the northern flank of the Lark Forces defence line around the harbour and manned medium machine guns and mortars. NGVR fought until resistance was of no avail, either sharing the fate of other prisoners-of-war or withdrawing south across New Britain to the Open Bay and Wide Bay areas for eventual evacuation south.

Over 80 NGVR personnel of the 1300 plus Australian POWs from Rabaul died when the Japanese naval prison ship Montevideo Maru was sunk in the South China Sea on 1 July by an American submarine; the worst single Australian marine tragedy in WW2. Together, with about 150 other Australian soldiers, a number of NGVR soldiers were massacred at Toll Plantation on Wide Bay by the Japanese.

On the mainland, NGVR formed independent detachments at Wau, Salamaua, Bulolo and Lae. On 21 January, when 60 Japanese aircraft struck simultaneously at Lae, Salamaua and Bulolo, the second-in-command of NGVR, Major EW Jenyns, went to the Administrator in Lae, who then declared a state of emergency and handed over to Jenyns.

Assuming a Japanese landing at Lae was imminent and with NGVR on full time duty, all civilians departed on 24 January. This left six RAAF signalers and six NGVR soldiers in Lae. Meanwhile, other NGVR groups defended strategic points in the area, with their headquarters at Mubo. NGVR was at about company strength in the Lae area by this time.

When the Japanese invaded Lae on 8 March 1942, NGVR moved westward towards Nadzab. After the Japanese landed at Salamaua on the same day, NGVR withdrew across the Francisco River and destroyed the bridge. Positioning a section at the River, the others moved south to Mubo. Although the Japanese appeared to be in no hurry to move inland, a party of 60 went to Komiatum, half way to Mubo, on 18 March and destroyed the NGVR stores dump.

While the Japanese kept to the Lae town area, NGVR faced new problems. As the only administrative representative of law and order, it assumed responsibility for several thousand indentured labourers recruited from many outlying districts, but now without support and unable to return to their homes. The NGVR established depots and fed them, and they became the first of the army of carriers and labourers who proved so vital in their support to the Allies during the fighting that followed.

Colonel Edwards sent six NGVR soldiers to find out what the Japanese were doing in Salamaua. The Japanese knew they were there but failed to find them. As the local people were in trouble with the Japanese for assisting the Australians, NGVR withdrew to avoid further trouble for them. Similar NGVR posts were established along the Markham Valley and Heath's Plantation closer to Lae to watch the Japanese. NGVR filled a large gap to late May 1942 by keeping in touch with and containing the enemy.

The 2/5th Independent Company AIF, with supporting attachments, flew into Wau from Port Moresby on 23 May to reinforce NGVR. These units formed Kanga Force, whose role was to start a limited offensive to harass and destroy enemy personnel and equipment in the area. The OC Kanga Force considered there were 2,000 Japanese in Lae and 250 in Salamaua. Kanga Force had 700 men, of whom only 450 were fit for operations - a small number to meet the many possible Japanese threats. To forestall these, the OC ordered raids on Salamaua and Heath's Plantation west of Lae. The Salamaua raid was planned quickly as a result of previous scouting work. Early in the morning of 29 June, 71 members of NGVR and 2/5th Independent Company killed at least 100 Japanese at a cost of three men slightly wounded. This very successful raid made the Japanese draw on their garrison at Lae to reinforce their perimeter at Salamaua. Although the 58 man strong raid on Heath's Plantation was successful, it lacked surprise and the leader was killed and two other men wounded.

Although NGVR remained in good spirits, the deprivations of continuous operations in hostile terrain without adequate supply and medication took their toll, with many falling sick with fever and other tropical diseases. The number of fit men steadily dwindled. As food was not getting through, the soldiers became increasingly dependent on the local food supply. Japanese air raids, their intimidation tactics over the local people, and the sheer physical difficulty of getting rations forward to feed carriers had a cumulative effect and threatened to stop Kanga Force activity.

Later, when the focus shifted to the Milne Bay and Kokoda Track battles, NGVR continued to man its posts overlooking the Japanese. 1942 was NGVR's year. By early 1943 too few were left to be effective. Because of their knowledge of the country and its problems, the remaining NGVR soldiers were attached to the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), and NGVR lost its identity.



NGVR with captured flag, Wau 1942

The NGVR soldiers came from many walks of life. While some were too old to join the AIF, medically unfit or employed in restricted occupations, they fought well. They also initiated the organising Papua New Guinean labour which was to become a vital contributory feature to the success of the Allied campaign in the New Guinea archipelago.

As at September 2010, there are 6 ex-NGVR men alive. Excerpted from Coady's article in the "Australian Territories Magazine", published 1995-96.

## Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR)

Although the formation of the unit was mooted earlier, PNGVR was not activated until 17 March 1951, when the first recruits were enlisted. These were mostly Australians, who had served in WW2.

The role of PNGVR was to maintain sub-units capable of providing information and advice on topography, native customs and personalities; guides and interpreters and assistance in the organisation and training of indigenous and irregular forces, if required.

The first CO was Lt. Col. E. F. Maddern and by the end of 1951 there were detachments at Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul. The Honorary Colonel of the Regiment then was the Administrator, Col. J. K. Murray. Eventually other detachments were raised in Wau, Samarai, Madang, Wewak, Goroka, Mt Hagen, Banz, Kainantu and Kavieng. A platoon was raised in April 1970 at the University of Papua New Guinea.

By January 1963, PNGVR was a 550 strong all Australian force mainly of European background. It was not until 1964 that PNGVR became a multi-racial unit with the enlistment of Papua New Guineans and others. When PNGVR was disbanded on 1 December 1973, 80% of its members were Papua New Guineans.

As part of the training program, a two week annual camp was held, initially at Goldie River, then after integration in 1964, at Mt Ambra near Mt Hagen, and in later years near Lae. In 1962, PNGVR was presented with NGVR's WW2 battle honours, Rabaul, Wau and South West Pacific. On 17 May 1969, the Administrator D O Hay presented the Queen's and Regimental Colours to PNGVR at Igam Barracks, Lae. Sec. Lt. Pascal Idok of the UPNG platoon became the first Papua New Guinean to be commissioned in PNGVR in July 1971.

PNGVR's last annual camp was held in August 1973 at Finschaaven when 350 soldiers from Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul, Goroka, Banz, Mt Hagen, Madang and Wewak attended. On 1 December 1973, PNGVR was disbanded. Its colours were laid up at the Australian War Memorial on Anzac Day, 1974.

PNGVR was an Australian CMF unit always commanded by a regular army officer. There were 12 commanding officers from 1950 to 1973. PNGVR and NGVR were the only Australian volunteer army reserve units which were formed, served and disbanded overseas. They were at all times in the Australian Army Order of Battle, that is, they were front line units and were on continuous overseas service.



Regimental Colour



Queen's Colour

