

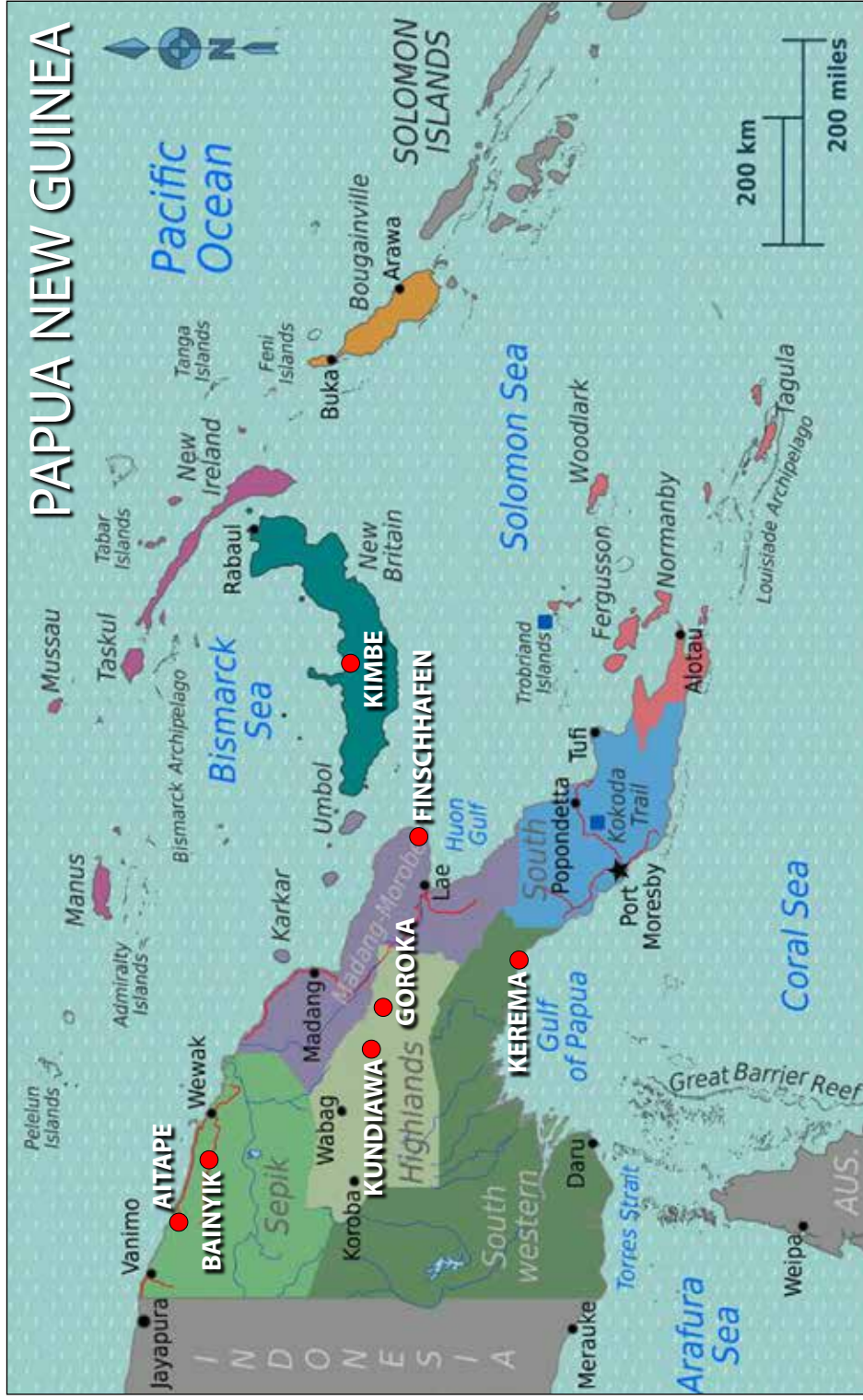
Didiman's Diary

A story of people, places and patrols in the life
of an Agricultural Extension Officer (*Didiman*)
in the Territory of Papua New Guinea
from 1956–65

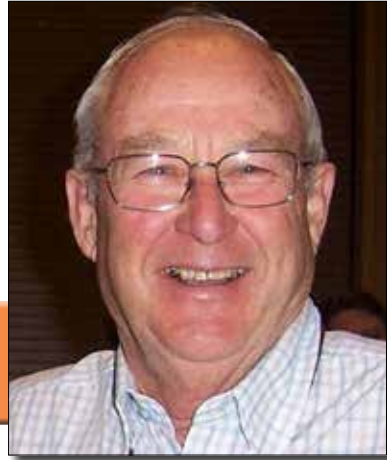
A color photograph of a man with light brown hair, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and light-colored shorts, crouching in a lush tropical forest. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. He is holding a large, dark, arrow-shaped plant (likely a Philodendfonium) in his right hand. The background shows dense green foliage and distant mountains under a blue sky.

**DAVID
MONTGOMERY**

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



David Ernest Montgomery, AM



AFTER GAINING HIS Diploma in Agriculture from Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1955, David was employed by the Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries (DASF) from 1956 to 1965. During this time David and Gillian Marks were married and had their first two children born at the Namanula Hospital in Rabaul. David was employed as an agricultural officer in Tropical Agriculture. His work was multifaceted and covered cocoa, coffee, coconuts, rice and peanuts in respect to establishment, development, production, processing, transport and marketing. His postings included Goroka and Kundiawa (Eastern Highlands), Finschhafen (Morobe District), Aitape and Bainyik Agricultural Station (Sepik District), Kerema (Central District, Papua) and Talasea/Kimbe (West New Britain).

In West New Britain, David had an inaugural role in the land selection for oil palm development, the basis for an economic resettlement project for PNG citizens. San Remo Plantation was purchased by the PNG Administration and became the focal point for the establishment of the town of Kimbe.

David's interpersonal skills, cultural awareness and empathy, reinforced by his example, contributed to the resettlement project, based on oil palm production, getting off to a good start.

Armed with this background knowledge and experience in the horticultural industry David and Gillian returned to Australia. They chose to settle at Crookwell in the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales, which was close to Gillian's ancestral home. They purchased a

farm at Grabben Gullen (near Crookwell) and with fond memories of PNG named it 'Kimbe'. This area had, and still has, a long history of success in the growing of potatoes and cool climate vegetables. David's innovation, skills, drive and, importantly, his credibility as a manager and leader, quickly made him a valued member of the local potato-growing community.

In the mid-1980s, the local potato industry was in trouble, faced with drought, a downturn in sales, problems of quality control and the inability of the industry to maintain continuity of supply. These issues were resolved by teamwork. David, other associates and industry representatives, formed the very successful Crookwell Potato Association.

David went on from this to develop new marketing concepts throughout Australia and overseas. He was a foundation director of the Australian Horticultural Research and Development Corporation and a founding director of Technico Pty Ltd, incorporated in Crookwell in 1994. This followed a number of years of scientific research into potato tuber development. Technico is now a global company and has revolutionised the global seed potato market.

Locally, David has been recognised by the Rotary Club of Crookwell on two occasions. In 1990 he received a Vocational Service Award, and in 1994 an Enterprise Award, in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the potato-growing industry.

Internationally, on 23 August 2006, David received a Citation from the World Potato Congress for his contribution to the potato industry.

David's honour as a Member of the Order of Australia is well deserved and we congratulate him on this recognition. David was invested by the Governor-General Ms Quentin Bryce, AC, on 12 September 2013.

A Didiman's Diary is a compilation of a series of articles he wrote for the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia's journal, *Una Voce*, published over the last couple of years.

Sadly, David passed away at Bingie, NSW on 17 November 2019, aged eighty-two years.



Arrival in Papua New Guinea

A GOOD WHILE AGO I realised there are always stories of kiaps in the PNGAA journal, *Una Voce*, but rarely news of didimen so, after conferring with the editor, I decided to remedy the situation.

I had completed a Diploma in Agriculture at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, Richmond NSW in 1955, a short stint as a labourer with the Mosman Municipal Council, then National Service Intake 2/56, Ingleburn NSW, followed. There were a couple of employment options after gaining my diploma—as a jackaroo in north-west Queensland or as an assistant agricultural officer in Papua New Guinea—and I chose the latter.

Completing National Service was a pre-requisite for an entry permit to the Territory of Papua New Guinea, and all new recruits were required to complete a short induction course at the School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) at Mosman in NSW.

19 August 1956: Wearing a long-sleeved white shirt, shorts and long white socks, I bid farewell to family at Mascot and left on board the Qantas DC4 Skymaster, 'Bird of Paradise' Route. I have the menu cards in the attractive folder from that flight. Qantas economy class passengers had never been treated better.

My mother, bless her, kept all my letters, and following is an extract from the first of them, others will be used throughout this book:

20 August 1956: Dear Mum and Dad, Here I am safe and sound after a wonderful trip. The flight was exceptionally smooth and

everyone in very high spirits. We arrived at Port Moresby at 7.30 am—cloudless and hot! with a fresh sea breeze.

Arrival at Jackson Field has been well described by new recruits—a scene less tropical would be hard to imagine, so unlike the tropical landscape expected. The approach, though, was fascinating with the coral reef and the very visible aircraft and wartime wrecks in the clear waters below. Only nineteen, with all but empty pockets, I don't remember any emotions. It was an extraordinary awakening, having never travelled overseas or experienced any other nations or their cultures.

21 August 1956: Truly, I don't know where to start. Everything has been so fascinating, strange and amazing; with everything happening at once, it seems as if weeks have passed. We were met at the airport by an administration representative who outlined our programs for the next four days: tours, slides, lectures, etc. We were driven to the hostel, about two and a half miles out of town, next to Government House and on a hillside with a beautiful view overlooking the harbour.

The hostel looked all right from the outside, freshly painted, big glass louvre windows covered with mosquito-proof netting. As we pulled up our luggage was taken out of the vehicle by some local boys, who started up to the building. I nervously entered the hostel to be met by ten happy chattering natives pointing the way to go. I followed them and ended up in Room B3. I could not believe my eyes. The room 'one man' and the whole place brand spanking new—fluorescent lighting, innerspring mattress, washbasin and the whole of the front of the room built-in cupboards, writing desk and drawers, chairs, two power points, shaving cabinet and mirror, etc. You would have to see it to believe it!

As I walked out, there in the passageway was a built-in refrigerator supplying ice cold water: honestly, it is fantastic!

With other recruits and after a few drinks and the purchase of cigarettes—two shillings for twenty on the plane and six shillings and sixpence at the store here for a tin of fifty—we shared a taxi out to the mess, which is about half a mile from the hostel. Walked in and again stood amazed. All cane furniture; no less than five

refrigerators and native boys in white lap-laps waiting by the tables. We sat down and ordered dinner. Two helpings of crumbed cutlets, beans, potato and cabbage; a plate of peaches, ice cream and all the trimmings—even better than National Service! The rest of the day was spent in general discussion.

23 August 1956: Today we had a trip to Sogeri; saw rubber, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, etc. A very interesting day which also turned out to be exciting as the road is just the width of two vehicles, cut out of the mountainside for 2000 ft and at one place has a sheer drop of 1000 ft.

As we approached a corner at about fifteen mph I said to the native driver: 'Hey no quick time go along slow,' (in my best Pidgin English!). He replied: 'No Tabauda, me go along slow more chance meetum more car.' (Heh, don't go quick, go slow ... No Master, if we go slow we will meet more cars.) We just held our breath on the way up and prayed on the way down!

By this time two of us had acquired a houseboy named Geer. When we got back that afternoon, there, laid out on the bed were perfectly ironed, folded starched shirts, socks turned in and rolled up, underclothes in the drawer, bed made, wash basin clean—it was fantastic—and our shoes cleaned. Certainly, does beat National Service. Cost one pound for a six-day week—phew! As far as we could make out Geer is from a mission; honest, clean living and efficient.

24 August 1956: This day was spent with various government officials and we met our 'chief', Mr Bill Conroy, and he told us where we would be stationed, answered all our questions and we had a very pleasant talk. Mr Conroy gave us our district postings.

Lin Green is going to Kalo, a mixed farming area and experiment station about fifty miles south east of Moresby as assistant manager. Mick Belfield is going to Popondetta. Both Lin and Mick are new recruits. I felt very fortunate in receiving my posting to Goroka in the Eastern Highlands District.

My first impressions in Port Moresby were the Koki markets, perhaps the best introduction to the lifestyle—the food, the colour, the relaxed laid-back day-to-day way of life. Throughout my years

in PNG there was one constant—the sensory, earthly smell of the villages, the native food and the people.

Another very favourable impression, are the members of the Papua New Guinea Constabulary. Always, immaculately turned out, they are courteous and helpful. During one of the first, dark, evenings I had an interesting ‘brush’ with the law. Noticing a telephone (the old Bakelite handset) sitting on a shelf in a compound and accessible, it occurred to me it might be possible to ring home! As I reached for the handset an ‘invisible’ form said: ‘*Yu laik mekim wanem masta?*’ (What do you want masta?) I was somewhat shocked. The ‘form’ took shape—a black, very black, Buka sergeant of police. It was pointless endeavouring to explain. Pidgin English was not part of my vocabulary and English was not his. We said ‘goodnight’ and I retreated back to where I should have been!

25 August 1956: The Mandated Airlines DC3 cargo charter to Goroka was due to leave at 7.30. (This was to be my first experience of ‘strip sitting’ and by no means the last in the ‘land of wait awhile’.) The aircraft turned up about two o’clock. Cargo was unloaded and the plane reloaded. Several other passengers boarded with me. I made myself comfortable on a crate of lettuce! The plane was to include Kainantu on its route. The pilot explained, being so late, we would fly straight to Goroka as it would be a bit hard to land on a grass plateau with no landing lights! The trip was quite comfortable despite the lettuce crate and I went straight to the hotel—the only one and really first class at four pounds per day including meals.


A stunning introduction to the Eastern Highlands as we flew low into the Bena Bena Valley. The timber-clad mountains around and above us, the green of the valley, the Bena Bena River glistening in the evening light, lazy smoke from the villages clinging to the mountain sides as we approached Goroka. Later, when on patrol in the Bismarck Range, I would watch fascinated from native villages as aircraft flew along the Bena Bena and Wahgi Valleys, 2000 ft below.

Had a good night’s sleep and after breakfast (we work on Saturday mornings) Jim Barrie, the District Agricultural Officer, picked me up, drove me to the office about a mile away, and he talked about what

I could be doing for the next twenty-one months. All very interesting and I'm sure I will enjoy it all.

Goroka is probably the most beautiful spot in Papua New Guinea. An amazing town; centred on a coffee industry and an airport, which virtually runs through the centre of the town. It has a population of 400 but, nevertheless, there are golf, tennis, football, cricket, badminton, table tennis clubs as well as a social and sports club. A swimming pool completes the sporting facilities. The airport handles about forty planes a day from Tiger Moths to DC3s.

The town itself is situated on a plateau 5,000 ft above sea level and surrounded by a horseshoe of mountains. Mt Wilhelm, the highest and over 17,000 ft, at times has snow on the summit. Despite the height above sea level, the climate at Goroka is first class. Day temperatures are about 75–78 degrees with little or no humidity. The nights are sometimes very cold and log fires are needed. The weather is very consistent and from November to May it rains about 3 pm every day and again during the night.



A view of Goroka

Now something of your own interest—the gardens. They are the most perfect example of gardens I have ever seen, the whole town being based on a garden pattern; beautiful couch lawns immaculately kept, low hedges, all kinds of garden shrubs and trees and not one dividing fence in the whole town.

There are all types of flowers, dahlias, gladioli, pansies, gerbera, etc. The plants are picture perfect, the soil being particularly fertile and plenty of water and native labour.

If you are wondering why I have dotted some ts and crossed the odd i, it's because the lighting plant here requires new brushes and periodically the lights flick and die for about thirty seconds and then burst back into light. The town is supplied by hydro power.

When the film 'Walk Into Paradise' comes on in Sydney please see it as it was filmed on the old airstrip at Goroka and it will give you a good idea of the landform, and the natives who are no different in dress and make up than in a normal sing-sing or native dance today. In the part when they rush down the airstrip to 'attack', I am told there were 26,000 natives all up in that scene. One can well imagine this with the population of the Eastern Highlands District is over a quarter of a million and in the Goroka District one hundred and fifteen thousand!

A requirement of the department was to keep a Field Officer's Journal (FOJ) on a daily basis, the original pages being forwarded to head office monthly. I have my journals covering nearly ten years. On completion of a patrol a detailed report was required, which gave comprehensive oversight of the work undertaken, the area visited, the people, their agriculture and their economic development.



Goroka, Eastern Highlands

MY NEARLY TEN YEARS in the Territory had an enormous number of highlights. Great friendships, lengthy patrols into areas of contrast—to those of little or no development or contact and to areas settled by Europeans more than 100 years previously.

By foot—on an old BSA 125cc motorbike (later graduating to 175cc—‘Beeza Bantam’); government workboats; chartered speedboats; various types of hollowed-out river and sea craft logs and one or two other makeshift forms of conveyance!

By aircraft—some very old, some very, very old and some not so old to fly into and out of patrol locations. A book could be written on my aircraft experiences; the airstrips and the pilots—bless them all.

Fieldwork, by patrolling, was the essence of our work. This commenced a few days after arrival. A very steep learning curve for a nineteen-year-old. Quoting from James Sinclair’s book, *The Money Tree Coffee in Papua New Guinea*:

I did my first patrol (early September 1956) under the direction of Noel Fowler, the PO in charge. He and his wife (Margaret) were lovely people, helped me a lot. I went up to the Upper Dunantina with a police sergeant with me and two trained fieldworkers. A magnificent experience. Major Casey had established a coffee plantation in the Dunantina and the village people wanted to follow suit. They were setting up small hand pulpers and fermenting vats and producing dried beans for sale. We established coffee seedling nurseries.

The patrol was not without incident. The Upper Dunantina people were smart and sharp. I purchased half-a-dozen fighting spears—my first native artefacts. These were carefully packaged into bamboo cylinders and bound for transport by the carriers. On arrival back at Henganofi Patrol Post I opened the package to find the spears had been substituted with *pit pit*—a tall cane-like grass. Noel Fowler dispatched a couple of policemen to recover the goods and apprehend the offenders.

One of the outstanding features of the government patrol posts and sub-district outstations was the park-like lawns and gardens. The kiaps, the police and the staff took immense pride in the presentation of their stations.

Of particular note on this patrol was the abundance, size and quality of European potatoes possibly grown from peelings obtained from Mick Casey's kitchen! Strangely, my career pathway on return to Australia was focused for forty-five years on potatoes.

Each of the villages had a 'village book', akin to a visitors' book. This was presented, proudly, by the village *luluai* to a visiting official on arrival. On the completion of a visit the book was endorsed with



A group of Kamano warriors at Henganofi Patrol Post
(Photo: Ross Johnson)

the work undertaken, arrangements made for follow up visits and signed. Some fifty years later I paid an earthmoving contractor, Steve Gibson, by cheque for work done on our NSW South Coast property. Steve looked at the signature and said that it had not changed in the fifty years since I signed the village books in New Guinea. Steve was a kiap and worked in the Eastern Highlands and a number of other districts.

My area of responsibility extended west to the Upper Asaro Valley and east to Henganofi. We were equipped with strong steel boxes and basic camping equipment. Trade goods of axes, knives, salt, twist tobacco (cured tobacco leaf mixed with a molasses and whatever else?). These items were exchanged for food or for carrier services as we moved from village to village. The only acceptable form of cash was the New Guinea shilling with a hole in the centre. One hundred of these were wrapped, as a cylinder, in paper and called a fuse!

Fieldwork was wide ranging, and area visits were often accompanied by native fieldworkers who had received basic agricultural education. A number of trainees would work with the village people during the patrols. Purpose-built village rest houses were reserved and maintained for use by officials and other visitors.

After my first patrol I made the personal decision not to request a police escort, not to carry a fireman and not to take alcohol. This remained so for all my time in PNG.

A lot of the development work in coffee, pine tree planning and establishing small dams for pond fish was in the Bena Bena. On my first visit riding the faithful 'Beeza Bantam' I negotiated the infamous Bena Bena Hill; the road was gravelled with a suicidal mix of all sizes of crushed stone.

At the bottom of the hill Ian Fraser was managing a coffee plantation on a kunai plateau at a location called Sogopego. Ian, like myself, had only been resident in the Territory for a few months and the new development was his first challenge in coffee growing. A 'house' needed to be built first, two rooms constructed with native materials and, as always, a detached *hauskuk*. I called in to introduce

myself—‘Ah, you’re the new *lik lik didiman*. Come in, take a seat,’ was Ian’s welcome. Ian was the first of the European settlers I had met. After inspecting his coffee project Ian asked me if I would like a feed? I thanked him for the offer whereupon he called out to his *hausboi*—a local lad ‘*suitim kai kai*’. Lunch was served—tinned spaghetti topped with icecream! Ian’s reaction best left unsaid. I complimented him on the lunch and his culinary delights. From then on we have been close friends.

The meeting with Ian was important as he introduced me to many of the people who pioneered the commercial development of the coffee industry in the Central Highlands of New Guinea. It did not take long to get to know most of them and respect their determination to succeed.

The inter-Territory town rugby league competition was a ‘ticket to travel’. The competition commenced in 1953. A match roster involved team aircraft charters between the main Territory towns, generally by DC3s and occasionally the Junkers. I joined the team for the 1957 season and played alongside a number of class footballers notably Brian Johnson and Neil Latime, both of whom played rugby union for Australia. The football team tours were an opportunity to meet and socialise with many people throughout PNG.

Dennis Buchanan Jnr, later Sir Dennis, was a friend in those early days and at the time he was the traffic clerk for Territory Airlines Ltd (TAL). Having discovered the ready availability of European potatoes in the Dunantina, I perceived a ready market for them in Port Moresby. Purchasing them at 2d per pound and retailing in Port Moresby at 2/- a pound. Dennis agreed on a backload rate Goroka to Port Moresby at 6d a pound! The margin looked pretty good with transport from the Dunantina compliments of the administration. Following the first successful shipment, guilt set in as I knew my side enterprise was contrary to Public Service Regulations.

Very soon after the first shipment, a smartly turned-out police constable arrived at our donga and handed me a note: ‘*Please come and see me at the Residency this afternoon,*’ signed Bill Seale, District Commissioner. I immediately concluded my days were numbered.

On presenting myself, Bill's wife, Heather, said: 'Come in David, Bill and I would like you to join us for dinner next Saturday evening.' A sense of relief and a mental note to do what I was supposed to be doing. The bonus of that evening was the presence of two lovely girls visiting from Australia.

In the first twelve months I flew out of Goroka many times, either on official duties, football or private charters. One particularly memorable trip was a TAL Cessna 170 charter to Mt Hagen with two didimen—Francis Xavier Ryan and Mick Belfield. John Downie was our pilot. What an experience, flying low up the Waghi Valley, seeing the start of the European coffee developments. The occasion was the wedding of Jim Kingston, the District Agricultural Officer, Western Highlands District to Mary Camp, daughter of Noel Camp, a pioneer coffee planter. I stayed at Dan Leahy Snr's home. Meeting Dan and his Papua New Guinean wife and listening to their stories of the early pioneer days was special.

Next day John flew the three of us to the mission airfield for the wedding service at the mission church. Two minutes in the air and back again to Mt Hagen for the wedding breakfast. A memorable event. No less memorable the return flight. Skimming the towering white cliffs of Mt Elimbari thousands of feet above us, over pretty Chuave Patrol Post, before descending into Goroka.

I flew a number of times with Peter Manser, Gibbes Sepik Airways (GSA) chief pilot. On one occasion he was flying me to Kundiawa in a Norseman. Kundiawa was to be my next posting. On take-off from Goroka I urgently drew Peter's attention to the fuel pressure warning light showing red. He gave a nonchalant wave, commenced a right bank and climbed up and on to a safe landing twenty minutes later at Kundiawa. When all was quiet (conversation in flight in a Norseman was impossible) he explained that the fuel warning light leads had been reversed when the aircraft had been serviced. Had the light gone out we would have been in trouble!

The chief of our Agricultural Extension Division, Bill Conroy, without consultation, had decided that, since I was unmarried, I would have 'roving' responsibilities!



PATROL OF UPPER CHIMBU CENSUS DIVISION EASTERN HIGHLANDS

D. E. MONTGOMERY,

In September-October, 1957, Mr. D. Montgomery made a long patrol of the Upper Chimbu Census Division, in the Chimbu Subdistrict of the Eastern Highlands. The patrol was designed to compile a village agricultural census, but a number of observations as to apparent pressure of population on the land in the area were also made. These observations should be read in conjunction with an earlier Journal article "A Special Report on the Pagaku sub-clan" (Vol. 11 : 4) by J. W. Barrie. Since both these surveys were made, a more intensive investigation of the Chimbu area has begun. Mr. D. Montgomery, an Assistant Agricultural Officer when this paper was written, is at present Agricultural Officer at Baiyik, in the Sepik District.

THE object of the patrol was to collect data to compile an Agricultural Village Census and, from this, together with general observations, to make a reconnaissance of the extent of land population pressure. This pressure was recognized as a future problem in the area shortly after the Chimbu Census Division came under Government control. Later, following Government and mission influence, and the introduction of health services and improved subsistence crops, the ratio of births over deaths began to rise.

On the patrol, the writer accompanied two Native Affairs officers, who were conducting an annual census. Other members of the patrol were two agricultural field workers, four native agricultural trainees, five members of the Royal Papuan and New Guinea Constabulary, one interpreter and one native medical orderly.

As the patrol took place during the annual census check, the villagers in the area gathered to await the patrol. Many treated it as an occasion for celebration.

The agricultural census was made using a question and answer technique, using an interpreter where necessary. Later, the writer, accompanied by agricultural fieldworkers, trainees and village members, inspected crop gardens and held discussions on economic crops and other matters pertaining to agriculture and land use.

GEOGRAPHY AND RELIEF

The Upper Chimbu Census Division has a land area of approximately 190 square miles and forms part of the Chimbu Subdistrict. The Subdistrict Headquarters are centrally located at Kundiawa. The census division comprises a series of high ridges and young river valleys,

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Edited extract from the *Papua and New Guinea Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, June 1960
and the de Havilland DH.84 Dragon



Kundiawa, Eastern Highlands

FOR 13 JULY 1957 my Field Officer's Journal notes: 'Departed Goroka for Chimbu per Territory Airlines (TAL) DH84 (Dragon) charter', and in my letter home 'a full charter, 1,050 lbs to shift myself, native house boy and stores'.

Climbing first up and through the Asolaka Gap and then at low level to touch down on the Kundiawa airstrip some twenty minutes or so later. To put the flight time in perspective, it took up to four hours by Land Rover from Goroka on a developmental road up and over Daulo Pass, which eventually became the Highlands Highway, connecting Lae with Mt Hagen.

The Kundiawa airstrip was literally carved out from the side of a mountain and had a grass surface. There was one way in, facing a mountain and one way out, with a precipitous drop of a couple of hundred feet at the southern end. The DH.84 was a marvellous little aircraft. Fabric covered with wooden superstructure; twin Fox Moth engines with wooden propellers. With a payload of a little over 1,000 lbs, an altitude of 5,000 to 6,000 ft above sea level was just about their limit.

Based at Kundiawa my area of responsibility was bounded by Chuave in the east, Kerowagi in the west, Gumine generally south and the Upper Chimbu valley to Keglsugl in the north. A fascinating area in which to work; the women industrious and intelligent food producers supported, to some degree, by their menfolk—when not fighting with neighbouring clans!

My 'Beeza Bantam' 175cc was an important ancillary to the extension work. Radiating from some of the administration centres 'bench' roads were constructed, more or less, on the contour. Over nearly sixty years these benches became roads. With some reservations, using the motorbike made life somewhat easier. Watercourses, of varying depths, were negotiated with the bike slung between two poles, carried by local villagers who appeared miraculously as soon as they heard the noise of the motorbike.

On one occasion I arranged for the faithful DH.84 to call and went down to meet the plane at the airstrip with houseboy, patrol box and motorbike. The pilot was not expecting a motorbike! Explaining it was essential to do what I had to do at the other end, we did a weight calculation and he agreed to take the load. Lifting into and stabilising a motorbike in a DH.84 is no mean feat. As an afterthought, the pilot asked if there was petrol in the bike's fuel tank. It was necessary to explain that where I was going there was little likelihood of petrol! We lumbered off the Kundiawa strip gaining height flying up the river below.

Many long motorbike day trips were made to Chuave Patrol Post with an occasional overnight stay. The native coffee industry was fast developing on the back of the European settlements either side of Goroka.

Orm Mathieson was the Assistant District Officer at the time of my posting to Kundiawa. On one occasion he and the station patrol officers, Liebfeldt and Alder, were away. As the only administration officer present I was responsible for making the early morning radio 'sked'—principally a weather report to assist aircraft entering or leaving the Whagi Valley. On the first morning I walked up to the sub-district office and there, at the foot of the steps, was a semi-clad female Chimbu woman with her head partly cleaved open and very deceased! I called for the police sergeant and asked him to arrange to remove the body and advise the woman's clan members that the matter would be dealt with on the return of Magistrate Mathieson.

I reported the murder by radio to Goroka and the weather report followed.

24 September 1957: As reported in my Field Officer's Journal the patrol in the company of Patrol Officers Liebfeldt and Alder departed 1 pm from Kundiawa (4,800 ft) arriving at the village of Kou (6,250 ft) at 3 pm. This was the pattern over several weeks as we moved through altitudes varying as much as 2,000 ft each day travelling up the valley and on the return down the valley.

8 October 1957: Arrived Waimambuno rest house (7,400 ft) at 11.30 am and that afternoon visited the Catholic Mission Station. From a letter home:

We left the mission at 9 am the next day to make our base camp at Lake Piunde (11,400 ft), the lower of two lakes at the base of Mt Wilhelm. These lakes, each about two miles in circumference, seemingly bottomless, with a magnificent waterfall, cascading from the top lake, Aunde, to the lower lake. By 3 pm the temperature had dropped to 42°F—ten above freezing! We tried to keep warm but did not light a fire for the fear of setting the four-foot grass hut alight.

At 5.30 am we woke to a beautiful cloudless day—the rising sun, the valley stretching out below and stark Mt Wilhelm registering the dawn above us. The scene was almost beyond description. We left camp at 6.30 for the summit. Sadly, at 8.30 cloud drifted in and we were surrounded by a murky whiteness with zero visibility. We pressed on. About 14,300 ft it started to rain which quickly turned to icy sleet—temperature two degrees above freezing. The native guides at this point briefly lost their way. Momentarily, the sky cleared and there, 200 ft above us, was the peak. I was in no condition to continue, learning something about oxygen starvation and altitude sickness. Alder made it to the peak to record the adventure!

At about 12,000 ft, on the descent we stopped for a short while to examine the wreckage of an American bomber that had hit the face of the mountain. A wooden cross, in memory of the sixteen airmen who died, has been erected above the top lake. We arrived back at our rest house at 6.30 pm, exhausted.

11 October 1957: I had to return briefly to Goroka. There were no aircraft movements from nearby Keglsugl airstrip, necessitating a walk across the range to Kwongi rest house, leaving at twelve midday arriving just before midnight! Next morning at 6.30 am I walked

to Miruma and was met by Judy Downs, wife of the former District Commissioner, Ian. The Downs' coffee plantation, *Korfena*, was some miles from Goroka.

14 October 1957: A Cessna 172 was chartered to fly to Kekl Sugl airstrip from Goroka. A memorable experience. The flight was a terrific one. Gaining the necessary height in the little Cessna took a couple of hours as well as losing our way and finding ourselves over the Ramu River. Backtracking west of Mt Wilhelm we located the strip, on a ridge, at the base of the mountain, 8,400 ft above sea level; just 800 yards long, not much wider than a road and an 8° slope. The sensation of approaching and landing was an exhilarating experience. It was reported, at the time, that Kekl Sugl was the highest operational airstrip in the world.

I rejoined the patrol at Gondamakane after a three-hour walk, which was completed on 26 October on returning to Kundiawa.

I was advised in early November of an immediate transfer to Finschhafen in the Morobe District, which was to be another interesting and exciting phase of my career.

There is another aircraft story from Kundiawa that I promised Bobby Gibbes' daughter I would relate. Bobby had arranged to pick me up in the Norseman en route to Goroka from Minj. We climbed into the cockpit, the aircraft hard up against the mountainous end of the airstrip. Power on, headphones on (as mentioned before conversation was impossible sitting behind and very close to a rebirthed Douglas DC3 radial engine at full revs), brakes off, we charged down the grassy strip for take-off. Around the halfway mark there was a loss of power and take off was aborted. We taxied back to the start and a second attempt with the same result. We climbed out of the cockpit and Bobby, armed with a sizeable screwdriver, opened the port engine cowling saying, 'Sometimes the carby float valve sticks.' He rapped the carburettor several times with the screwdriver handle, closed the cowling and said, 'Third time lucky!' Taxi back and after a minute or so of ear-shattering engine 'run up' we took off and arrived Goroka soon after.



Finschhafen, Morobe District

19 November 1957: Departed Kundiawa for Goroka by Land Rover reflecting on what would be the future of the Chimbu people and that of their neighbours. The Australian press had been reporting ‘Coffee is Gold’ on front-page stories and coffee-tree planting was the principal topic of conversation in the Highlands. Value of coffee, as a cash crop, was quickly grasped by the European settlers and the indigenous farmers.

And so to Lae, in the Morobe District, for a week of briefing on coastal cropping and agricultural developments in the Finschhafen sub-district.

Following is an extract from my letter home on 8 December:

Up at 5 am and made my way to the wharf to find the MV Kauri. Well, what a shock—no wharf; just an oily wartime smelly beach and a dirty little vessel. Departed 7 am and arrived at Finschhafen at 3 pm after sundry stops to let the passengers off. The trip along the coast was beautiful—truly tropical.

Little did I realise at that time the splendour of the area; the surrounding islands and the pleasure I would have working with the people in this sub-district.

There could have been no greater contrast to my previous posting. An area that was, up to WWII, under the influence of European missionaries for well over ninety years and then suddenly thrust into the forefront of the Pacific Campaign. It didn’t seem possible that the area I had just left had less than twenty years of civil administration.

A new challenge for me, moving from the perpetual spring of the Highlands and an undeveloped coffee industry, to the very tropical coastal lowlands growing cacao, rice, coconuts, peanuts and too, an established upland coffee industry. To add to the mix there was the developing Finschhafen Marketing and Development Society and the prospect of a commercial tuna fishing operation.

Finschhafen was a complete town—airstrip, roads, deep-water port at pretty Dregerhaven, tennis court and club house, lighted swimming pool and occasionally open-air movies. Nearby at Butaweng was a lovely, natural, freshwater pool. European staff numbered somewhere in the fifties—about thirty single men, married couples and single girls.

Station life and community activity between official duties was an important part of living in TPNG.

A feature event, apart from the Annual Golf Championships, was the Finschhafen Show, which naturally had a strong agricultural bias. Displays of coffee, rice, peanuts, kiln-dried copra, fruits and vegetables all professionally displayed. Dregahaven Primary School had a strong presence.

The Show Ball was held on the Saturday night—a grand affair with the Administrator, Dr John Gunther and Mr Horrie Niall (later Sir Horrance) as guests of honour and a special friend visiting from Lae for the weekend.

Reading this diary, and perhaps the previous editions, would suggest my life was one paid grand social tourist trip! In fact, extensive patrolling into the Hube, Dedua, Yabim and Kotte Census Divisions occupied a large amount of the time away from the station. On a six-week patrol into the Hube Census Division contact was made with fifty-eight villagers. Discussions on coffee production, processing and marketing were the principal objectives. A census and record of coffee plantings was undertaken by the fieldworkers under the supervision of the senior fieldworker, Salaen. Social issues, land ownership, general welfare and nutrition was noted and reported. There were many notable events and observations when patrolling.

On a dark night, sitting on the grass near the rest house, village

officials and villagers gathered around. We were talking about our respective lives when one of the men pointed to a light above the horizon and exclaimed: '*emi wanem masta—balus no gat, mipela no savvi?*' In silence we studied this object moving horizontally across the sky. It dawned on me it would be Sputnik 1, 2 or 3! How do you explain the space age to an unsophisticated incredulous audience? I tried.

On the arrival at each village the patrol was met by the village officials who, ceremoniously, presented a beautifully made *bilum*, a small parcel of raw, dried coffee beans wrapped in a banana leaf sachet and fresh fruit and vegetables for all the patrol personnel—often with a chook thrown in. The *bilums* were taken to Australia on my first leave, forty or so, and given to Sister Bromwell at the Margaret Reid Orthopaedic Hospital for sale at their annual fete.

The patrol commenced in September 1958 and finished at Yungzain, a new patrol post established by the resident patrol officer, Ken Laughlin. I said to Ken as I left, 'I have two cans of beer in the fridge to drink on my return.' With great anticipation, as I walked up to the patrol post after six weeks, I was welcomed back by Ken who said, 'I have some bad news for you.' 'What?' I replied, somewhat apprehensively. 'I drank your beer!'

Tropical scene in Finschhafen, 1888,
sketch by Otto Finsch, after whom the
town is named



The agricultural station at Finschhafen was well developed. Among other training and extension aids there were rice and peanut-hulling machines and equipment to process coffee to the dried bean stage. Thirty or so native agricultural trainees and three fieldworkers, who had had some formal and practical training in tropical agriculture, were on the staff. These people were invaluable in assisting the areas agricultural potential.

The patrolling was both land-based (walking!) and by water transport in various forms—trawlers, government and private, outboard motors and native canoes with a variable degree of risk travelling in the Vitiaz Straits.

A letter to my parents of 24 January describes a patrol to an offshore island group. Field Officer's Journal entry at the start of the patrol sets the scene.

10 January 1957: Organised equipment and materials on board the *MV Morobe* at Wasu for the Siassi Island patrol. Trainees for Aiyura, Rabaul and Wau to wait at Finschhafen. Boys for Siassi to join *MV Morobe* Tuesday. Departed per Cessna to Wasu Patrol Post. A location as pretty as a picture, an airstrip 800 yards long and a resident Patrol Officer.



1958 Finschhafen Show

Dear Mum, Dad and family,

Yesterday afternoon I arrived back from the Siassi patrol and what a glorious ten days it was too. After leaving Sio I returned by canoe to Wasu Patrol Post which will be marked on your map as Dorfer bay. On the Tuesday morning (the 15th) the MV Morobe arrived and about 9 am we departed for Sakar Island—no Tolakiwa Island the first of the Siassi group. The trip across was quite pleasant—had breakfast about 10 am and were anchored for lunch about 2 pm. Not sick. That afternoon I inspected some coconut plantings with Ron Green who was doing a census patrol. That night we slept on board and at 8 am Ron went ashore and we departed (Geoff Hall was the captain) for Bunsil.

We arrived here about 1 pm and with the help of the agricultural boys, threw over the side 200 bags of seed coconuts (4,000 nuts) and twenty-six empty 44-gallon drums. There was a strong inshore wind blowing and the coconuts floated to the shore (about 200 yards) with the drums, six of which sank. I had lunch then with essential personal cargo canoed ashore. The next three hours were spent in the surf with the boys collecting together the odd drums and bags that had floated down the coast. By the time I had climbed the 200 ft. up to the rest house I was completely exhausted. That night I had fresh fish for tea and then yarned to the local lads about the war days—most of them having seen active service.

The next morning I walked to Opai (three hours) had a terrific swim in a natural waterhole and then spent the afternoon discussing with the villagers the construction of copra dryers in the area and the extending of their coconut plantations. This village was the cleanest and happiest I have been in over fifteen months—wonderful people to work for and really keen to get on. They decided to buy about 200 coconuts and build a copra dryer (hot air) with the drums. The rest of the coconuts will be distributed throughout the islands as required; by canoes.

After tea I sat down with the schoolboys (they go to a government school at Bunsil and are from eight to twelve-years-old) and sang 'London Bridge', 'Three Blind Mice', 'Ten Green Bottles', 'Onward Christian Soldiers', etc., which the government native teachers had taught them. They (the schoolboys) were wide eyed to think that a 'white man' knew 'their' school songs! On the strength

of this the old headman decided to put on a sing-sing in my honour so I was up till midnight sipping hot milo and watching a terrific exhibition of native dancing.

The next morning I left Opai to walk to the other side of the island—the name of this island by the way is Umboi. I arrived at a place called Aupwell at 6 pm really ‘done in’ after eight hours walking through real jungle country. The leaches nearly drove me crazy and each half hour or so I would stop to pull off never less than five so you can imagine the mess my legs looked when I arrived. That night I chatted to the villagers for several hours and then collapsed into bed.

The next morning Sunday it poured raining for two hours which delayed my departure till 10 o’clock. At 12.30 I arrived at Lab-Lab harbour and joined the MV Morobe which had arrived about 10 am after picking up Ron Green from Tolakiwa. The rest of the day was spent sunbaking and sleeping with a delicious bottle of cold beer in the afternoon.

The patrol continued by trawler to take in the islands of Sakar, Tuam, Mandok and Aromot. Discussions with village officials revolved around the distribution of the seed coconuts and the construction of hot-air dryers for copra production.

The next day was a near-death experience. We departed Aromot Island at 8.30 am. Conditions deteriorated, the seas were mountainous; frightening; enormous huge walls of water about to swallow us and the trawler. Our skipper, Geoff, ‘drove’ the boat like a truck up the sandhills in a desert to find another towering sand hill over the crest! Arrived Finschhafen 4.30 pm pleased to step onto dry land.



Finschhafen, Morobe District

IN 1943 FINSCHHAFEN was at the forefront of the WWII Pacific campaign. In 1957 the remnants of that offensive were everywhere, rapidly being reclaimed by tropical growth or being recovered under licence, as scrap metal. I could not help recalling how Australia's prime minister in the early forties was called 'Pig-Iron Bob'.

The *Amazon Maru*, a Japanese vessel, was berthed in beautiful Dregarhafen Harbour. Being loaded by the ship's gantry were ten huge army blitz trucks, which had been driven onto the wharf and cut in half! One of the trucks, last loaded, was intact. On enquiring as to why the last vehicle had not got the same treatment I was told in reasonable English by one of the Japanese crew: 'Ahh!, for transport in Lae.'

Two Australian Army Ordnance disposal specialists were based at the station. On a number of occasions their services were needed. As part of the cocoa-planting program areas of regrowth coastal forest were being burnt off. Villages would report to me when they had uncovered a bomb or possibly live ammunition.


The first memorable incident was when a villager reported he had uncovered a bomb. I collected the disposal experts by Land Rover and drove them to the recently burnt-off area. The bomb was Japanese and about 100 pounds. The disposal guys considered it safe to remove the fuse. The bomb was then lifted into the Land Rover and I sat sitting on the opposite side holding it steady with my feet!

The bomb was offloaded onto the edge of the Dregerhafen wharf,

a slab of TNT taped to it with a seven-second fuse, the fuse lit and at the count of three rolled over the wharf side. The locals took a great delight in this procedure—fish for all.

Most of the station houses had been built in wartime and were then used by government staff. My house, at Gagidu, had a lovely view looking out over the Vitiaz Straits. It had been officers' quarters during the war. The house had been condemned some ten years earlier and was being slowly demolished by white ants. One could hear them munching away but could not see them. The timber frames were lined with bitumised paper and louvred windows. The roof was corrugated iron. Ghegoes, those friendly little chirping lizards and hundreds of them, enjoyed the freedom of the house, at all times defying gravity. Randomly in the ceiling lining there were neat round holes believed to be caused by the troops having pistol practice to the unlikely detriment of the lizards!

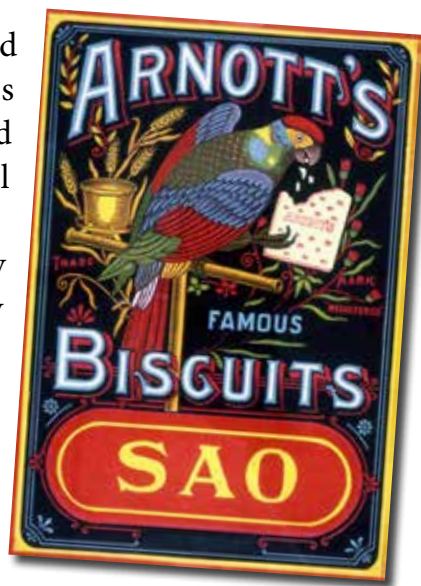
I have been often asked about my standard patrol rations. In the very early Highlands days it was *kau kau* chips and tinned kippers in tomato sauce with the labels treasured by the locals as decorations. On the coast, for snacks it was Sao biscuits and tinned cheese with canned lambs' tongues in gelatin and bully beef as a variation.



Allied forces landed at Scarlet Beach (pictured),
10 kilometres north of Finschhafen, in September 1943

Tropical fruits, vegetables and an odd chook always provided by the villages supplemented the diet. My regular and favourite drink during all my coastal postings was the *kulau*.

The Sao biscuits came in a sturdy cardboard carton and from memory there were twelve-dozen waxed wrapped packets per carton. The lambs' tongues were packed in a wooden crate. Of their origin I have no recall.



More about Saos—what a standby they were. Bulk buying proved uneconomical as demonstrated one day when I was packing my patrol box and asked the house cook to get several packets of Saos from the store room. He arrived looking crestfallen with a couple of very tattered packets of biscuits exclaiming: '*Masta dispella anis bilong diwai emi kai kai bisket nau sikin bilong em wantaim.*' The cardboard box was stored against a wall and the ants were working their way through the one hundred and forty-four packets!

A culinary note extracted from my Hube patrol report, under the heading, 'Living Standards' follows:

A visit to one of the villages was highlighted by an emphatic request made by an aged, toothless gentleman, for the writer to purchase, on his behalf, a small hand-mincing machine to facilitate eating. A quote was obtained from BPs for 1-17-6 (one pound seventeen shillings and sixpence) and the machine has been ordered. After all it is cheaper than false teeth!

In the previous chapter I mentioned the importance of our native agricultural fieldworkers and fieldworker trainees. These men were an integral part of effective agricultural extension work. My senior fieldworker was Salaen Sakaen. Together with his team a major impact was made in advancing cash cropping projects in the Huon Peninsula. Salaen was appointed a board member of the Papua New Guinea Coffee Marketing Board (1963)—one of two native

board members. He had little more than primary school (mission) education yet was a visionary for his people, a great organiser, coffee farmer and entrepreneur. I had the pleasure, as a result of an aircraft failure and a forced landing at Finschhafen in 1974, of an emotional meeting with Salaen—a wonderful reunion.

An important political and economic step forward, at this time, was the formation of the Finschhafen Marketing and Development Society (FMDS) closely aligned with the inaugural Gagidu Local Government Council.

Recreation leave was overdue and arrangements were made to travel south. This was put on hold as I was asked to fly to Wau to supervise the Agricultural Department's exhibition at the Wau Show. Another opportunity and an unforgettable experience of people and places.

And so to Sydney, 17 November 1958, for three months' leave.



Aitape, Sepik District

17 November 1958: I departed on recreation leave and returned on 3 April 1959, reporting for duty at Kinedobu Head Office, receiving what I considered disappointing news—instead of returning to Finschhafen, Aitape on the north-west coast of the Sepik District was to be my destination. The new posting took me first via Lae then Finschhafen to handover responsibilities to the incoming *didiman*. Back to Lae and on to Wewak via Madang. Air transport and travel were rarely straight forward and often involved the charter of aircraft of various ages and sizes.

The District Agricultural Officer at Wewak, Jack White and his wife, Norma, welcomed me. From that day to this they have remained close friends. After a briefing by Jack and the District Commissioner, Bob Cole, I departed for Aitape on 15 April in a small Catholic Mission Cessna 172. Flying over the eighty-five miles to Aitape, the aerial view confirmed my worst fears—nothing much more than sago swamps with a small strip of coastal sand. On arrival I contemplated a twenty-one month posting as a *liklik didiman*. The settlement was right on the coast; very hot and sticky twenty-four hours a day. The compensating factor was the beach and the surf. The administration staff numbered five, including myself. There was to be a cadet patrol officer, however, after two weeks at Aitape and four weeks all told in the Territory he resigned.

The Franciscan Mission had their headquarters at Aitape for

many years. Monsignor Ignatius Doggett was the priest in charge. There were some twenty or so brothers with various pastoral and administration duties. On occasions the station residents would be invited to share a meal with them which was always appreciated as they were self-sufficient in meat and milk! I used to wonder (with a degree of sympathy) how the nuns managed when they walked in from their mission outposts in their full habits—procedure or penance? It was suggested, windcheaters and shorts would have been more appropriate.

Because of the relative closeness to the border of the capital of Netherlands New Guinea (NNG), Hollandia, a social relationship developed with the residents through the Australian Ambassador for NNG, Pat Mollison. Exchange visits were arranged to play tennis; one visit as recorded in a letter home.

Social life should tone up for several days. I am flying to Vanimo (Gibbes Sepik Airways' Norseman) on Wednesday for a station inspection returning on Friday to welcome forty Dutch, Eurasian and others who are coming to Aitape for a day surfing and tennis travelling in the Dutch Governor's yacht, MV Oranje. I hope to sail with them 11 pm Friday night, after a barbecue dance, to Wewak. The Tennis Ball is on Saturday night and tennis all day Sunday.



The beach at Aitape

There were reciprocal visits and on one occasion a Gibbes Sepik Airways' Junkers was chartered from Wewak to continue the 'international' tennis challenge.

Perhaps those who commenced their career in a country far removed from their own culture and lifestyle found solace in writing to family and friends. My letters and personal diaries have been kept and are a great source of happy memories. They tell many stories of the pleasure and satisfaction of working in the land that time forgot or as some would have said: 'The land of wait a while'.

My first impressions of flying into Aitape were not justified. The geography of the sub-district; the range of developed and developing agricultural enterprises in the areas where I worked was not unlike the Finschhafen Sub-District—my previous posting. There were four geographic areas of responsibility—the coastal plain extending from Vanimo through Sissano, Aitape to Malol, the Nuku Sub-District, and the Lumi Patrol Post administration area.

The contrast in the above areas of agricultural development and crops was significant. The entire coastal population had been exposed for over one hundred years to coastal traders, itinerant travellers, explorers, foreign shipping and a German administration before 1914. Prior to 1945 there was little Australian administrative contact; the missions, in considerable numbers, were active amongst the coastal people and those of the hinterland. The whole of the coast was thrust into the confusion of the Japanese invasion. Australian government attention and support came to the coastal population following cessation of those hostilities.

Vanimo Patrol Post was one hundred miles south of the Netherlands New Guinea border and significantly the Pacific Islands Regiment maintained a detachment adjacent to the patrol post. Trade routes between the people of the Torrecilli Mountain Range and the coast were well established. Salt, seafood, sago, cowrie shell (*girigiri*) and mother of pearl (*kina*) were some of the important items. Extension work involved the management and marketing of a large range of crops. Peanuts, coffee, copra and cacao were produced

with rice trials an important introduction. Coffee robusta had been well established in German times although not as a plantation crop. The Hansenide (leprosy) Colony patients, close to Aitape produced marketable quantities of peanuts. I developed an excellent relationship with the growers.

A rural progress society (Waipo), was well established with directors nominated by the village shareholders along the Aitape sub-district coast. The Rural Progress Society owned and operated outboard motors—who can remember the ‘Archimedes A4’ or wants to remember them? During later postings they caused a degree of grief! The motors were attached to the rear of the hollowed-out log canoes. A canoe which I chartered for coastal travel was called Kranki; I don’t recall if the name was anglicised *pin* English or local dialect.

Moving from the coast to patrol in the Lumi and Nuku areas was an amazing transition from the ‘sophisticated’ and entrepreneurial coastal dwellers, to the primitive people of the Torrecilli Range—west and south-west.

13 June 1959: From my Field Officer’s Journal—Departed Wewak per Mission Cessna for Lumi, discussions ADO [Assistant District Officer] Tim Terrell.

And from a letter home:

I am sitting in a native material house one day’s walk from the nearest civilisation, five days’ walk from Wewak and three days’ from Aitape with Patrol Officer Harry Redmond. We have been out for nearly two weeks in a heavily-populated area north of a place called Lumi. The locals, by any measure, are fairly primitive. Over the past eleven days we have walked about eighty miles and climbed to 3,000 feet above sea level. The village we are at tonight is about 2,000 feet. The climate is cool with plenty of fresh vegetables; a welcome change from the coast.

At the conclusion of this patrol, I flew from Lumi to Angugunak to visit the Protestant Mission where they were building a large native hospital and a Douglas DC3 airstrip! They have a staff of four missionaries and a doctor. A nice break, with lovely people helping

them to plan a coffee plantation of thirty acres and to plant the remaining area to native subsistence foods.

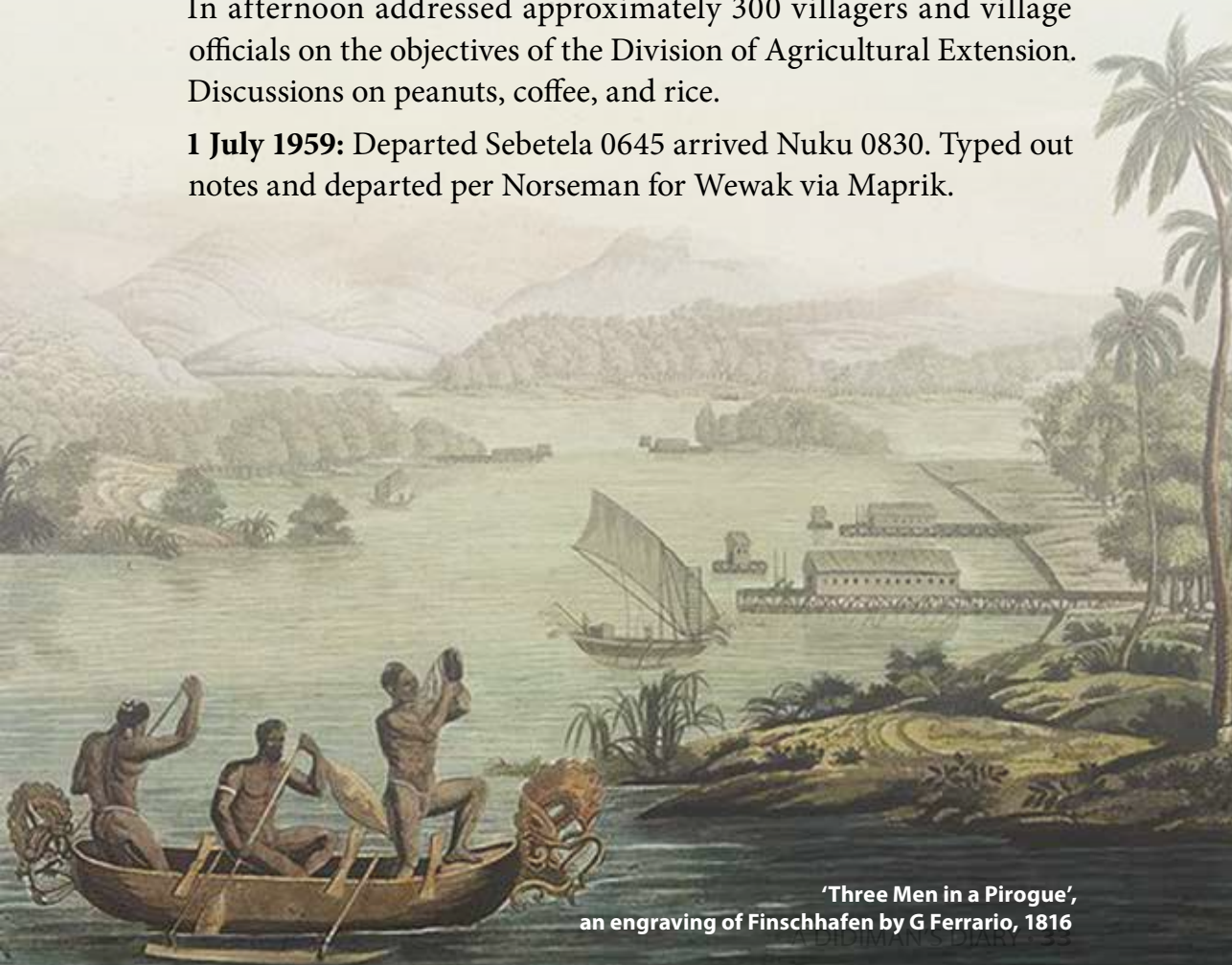
From there I fly to a place called Nuku which is a really 'bushy' area and the locals are a bit wild—a lot of the men still wear a large shell or a hollowed out marrow as their only form of dress.

27 June 1959: Packed stores and departed Aitape 1100 for Nuku arrived 1120. Discussions with Patrol Officer Faithfull on the area and in the afternoon addressed all village officials in the Nuku Administrative Area.

28 June 1959: Visited various sections of the station to determine a suitable location for coffee garden and nursery. Soil profiles examined.

29 June 1959: Departed Nuku 0900 for Sebetela. Arrived 1100. In afternoon addressed approximately 300 villagers and village officials on the objectives of the Division of Agricultural Extension. Discussions on peanuts, coffee, and rice.

1 July 1959: Departed Sebetela 0645 arrived Nuku 0830. Typed out notes and departed per Norseman for Wewak via Maprik.



**'Three Men in a Pirogue',
an engraving of Finschhafen by G Ferrario, 1816**

What a transition! Having the opportunity to move between areas of such developmental contrast was a rewarding experience. If one had an aversion to flying back in those days one would have remained 'grounded'. The excitement of flying in the Norsemans, de Havilland Dragons and any manner of other aircraft; landing on airstrips new and not so old has stayed with me ever since along with my love of flying. Several visits by aircraft were made to Nuku and Lumi in the ensuing months to follow up developmental work in coffee and rice in between supervising the coastal projects.

On 1 December I was advised (by telegram) of immediate transfer, after only eight months, to the Bainyik Agricultural Station, Maprik Sub-District, as the Officer-in-Charge.

Another change—another challenge!



Bainyik, Sepik District

5 January 1960: I flew into Maprik, from my previous posting at Aitape, and took up duty as the Officer-in-Charge of Bainyik Agricultural Station. The three-mile drive out to Bainyik was beautifully described by Jeanette Westley (née Mears) in her book, *My Walk into Paradise*:

The road leading into Bainyik was the most incredible sight I had witnessed to date. All along the edge on both sides of the road were the most amazing trees I had ever seen and their branches met in the middle to form an enveloping canopy. It was like driving through a tunnel, which was made by nature. We stopped at a river crossing so I could see Bainyik from a distance. These trees were planted by the Germans when they invaded New Guinea and were known as Rain Trees. Their botanical name is 'Samanea Saman'. They can spread over 125 feet and have a glorious umbrella-shaped canopy. Growing under the trees were the most beautiful tree orchids. When this road was travelled at night, the trees would light up with fireflies and it just looked like fairyland. This truly was a grand and romantic entry to Bainyik

So many of us were truly blessed to be able to see and experience New Guinea in these earlier days.

Like all of the challenges at each of my postings over the past four years, Bainyik was no exception. There was a native staff of seventy—agricultural fieldworkers, village trainees and labourers—supervised by a staff of four expatriates including a mechanic. The

mechanic's wife was employed as a clerical assistant and was paid seven shillings and sixpence per hour!

The station was a busy one. Rice, peanuts, lowland coffee, cacao and corn were the economic crops being encouraged at village level, and experimental crops like sisal and rubber with kapok trees being trialled for coffee shade were all in the mix. Rural progress societies, co-operative-like organisations of producers, were well-established within the sub-district and part of our monitoring responsibilities. These organisations funded and supported the ownership of light trucks and trailers, coffee-processing machinery, and other infrastructure.

Station staff were assembled at 0700 hrs when a bell was rung. Station duties, field extension visits to the villages, and patrol programs were detailed.

Substantial machinery was attached to the station—a John Deere thrasher, a Cecoco rice huller, a McCormick International AW6 tractor, Ferguson 135 and 165 tractors, a Caterpillar D4 bulldozer, and a coffee pulper together with necessary farming accessories like ploughs, harrows, etc. We were well-equipped to introduce the 'locals' to more sophisticated farming!



A village on the Sepik River

Interesting to note that a coffee rehabilitation program was launched late 2016 under the auspices of the PNG Coffee Industry Corporation, and directed towards some one thousand coffee producers.

Produce was shipped through Pagwi on the Sepik River and, depending on weather, this was a somewhat hazardous journey of a couple of hours or more. Now it is a forty-minute drive. The Department of Plant Industry had established an experimental station at Yambi between Bainyik and Pagwi to conduct rice trials. This project was handed over to the Division of Extension in 1960 and was managed from Bainyik.

Every day could be different with regular visits by senior administration officials and overseas specialists, not necessarily directly connected to the line of duty. On one occasion, I was asked to drive into Maprik to meet Dr Maurice Willis. Maurice was notable for the medical work he had done for the Red Cross in the Congo. I relate a paragraph from a letter I wrote home at that time:

One of the local headmen, a village official, asked in Pidgin whether I would take himself and a sick man to Maprik? I said: 'OK where is the sick man?' Around the back of the Land Rover appeared a native gentleman, on a stretcher, followed by one of his one talks (wantoks) carrying a broken spear. After a few questions and a look at the 'sick' man I wondered why he was still breathing. The spear had entered just below his breast missing his lung by a fraction, and appeared out of his back below the shoulder, sorry, it went the other way and then broke off. The spear his one talk was holding was the remaining section. It all started over a female!! As yet he hasn't died. It is the sort of everyday incident one could dramatise down south, but I will have forgotten it tomorrow.

Maurice and his offsider, Jim Warren, were both attached to the School of Tropical Medicine at Sydney University and were conducting a study of *leptospirosis*. This involved the catching of village rats for eventual kidney dissection and taking blood samples from village pigs. I had been asked to take Maurice, Jim, and Harry Standfast on patrol to carry out the various operations. Harry Standfast was the Malarial Control Officer stationed at Maprik.

28 January 1960: The patrol left Bainyik 1000 hrs for Bengaragum a village near Wingei, arriving 1400 hrs. We set up camp, called the village people together, and explained the reason for our visit. The rat traps were demonstrated and we asked those who were willing to bring their pigs next day so that blood samples could be taken.

Maurice had brought with him a CSIRO preparation of rat bait guaranteed to be unfailing. That evening the traps were set and with great anticipation we waited for the villagers to bring in a 'harvest' of rats. As the evening wore on no rats! The locals watched with amusement, exclaiming that the white man's bait was '*no gut tru*' and they substituted it with fresh coconut meat. Almost instantly we had rats a plenty, which were dispersed into a 44-gallon drum to go back to Maprik the next day with Harry Standfast.

I had some trepidation as to the blood-letting operation considering the importance of pigs in the cultural life of the people; however, all went smoothly, the pigs suffering no ill effects and the villagers and researchers were happy.

Later in the day we sat down with the villages to hear some of their stories. One of these stories involved a very large python, which had swallowed the storyteller's brother. Inside the snake his brother was very distressed and at wit's end as to how to escape. He remembered that his cassowary bone knife was in his armband. With a struggle, he was able to cut open the snake's stomach and slide out.

We listened with feigned awe and great respect and I said: '*No gat, sitori bilong you gammon tasol*' (No, your story is not true). He said he would go and get the snake as evidence. Shortly after he turned up with a twenty-two foot python and proudly pointed out a large scar on its underside! '*Yu savi masta*,' he said. Well, seeing is believing although he was unable to find his brother to support his story. I asked him if the snake was for sale—what a story—as I had a vision of it being a prize exhibit at the forthcoming Wewak Show at which I had been asked to prepare an agricultural display. The purchase was negotiated and dipping into my patrol allowance was happily concluded for five pounds. The python, willingly, was coiled into an empty patrol box. Jim enquired as to where it was to

be kept. Under the rest house where it is cool was my response. Jim was not happy at the prospect of sleeping above a twenty-two foot python even if it was safe in a steel box. The python (*below*) never made it to Wewak and was returned to its owner the next day due to an unprecedented event that night.

The patrol had been issued with a new radio transceiver and a few minutes before 11 pm I said to Maurice, 'I will try out the new radio.' I connected the battery and switched it on and moved the tuning dial to hear a voice announcing the 11 pm ABC News from Townsville: 'Lieutenant Hugh Montgomery was killed today in an army aircraft accident at Wingello in New South Wales.'

Oblivious to what was said next, I turned to Maurice and said: 'That is my brother; he has only been married six weeks.' Maurice asked me if I was sure. I had no doubts.

Maurice offered to drive me back to Bainyik. Next morning with the benefit of two-way radio, air traffic communication, and through the compassionate officers of the administration and Steamships Trading Company, I arrived late that night in Sydney to be with my family.

Life got back to near normal on my return from Sydney with patrols and day-visits to villages to inspect and advise on their cash crop developments. Agricultural trainees under the guidance of European staff or fieldworkers accompanied these activities. Rice threshing and milling, packing and shipping peanuts, machinery operation, and maintenance and administrative duties were all part of the mix. This was a great experience in multi-skilling by



all concerned. Disappointingly, the locally-produced rice that was sent into Maprik for prisoners' rations was rejected by them. They preferred Australian rice! In the last chapter reference was made to 'start-up' work at Lumi and Nuku. Follow-up visits continued, flying to both locations out of Maprik.

Bob Bunting was the Assistant District Officer (ADO). Bob and his son were both keen golfers. Bob had supervised the building of his European-type residence in Maprik replacing his former native-material house. The lounge room ended up a little out of level. It had been said that it was designed this way as a 'putting green'. The golf course, like so many in those early days, was the airstrip with the greens strategically placed over its length.

There has always been at least one aeroplane story to tell at each posting. I was returning to Maprik from Wewak in a Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) Cessna 172. Arriving in the vicinity of Maprik, the airstrip was clouded in. The pilot, an experienced 'older' gentleman, decided to circle above the cloud looking for a 'hole'. This appeared and we literally dropped through to the grass airstrip below which was wet, very wet. On the approach the pilot told me that as soon as we touched down, to open my door wide. Air brakes, no less!

We slid past the Maprik Hotel which was at the end of the airstrip pulling up with little grass to spare.

Up to this point in time I anticipated I would see out the rest of my twenty-one-month term on Bainyik Station. I had been encouraging my parents and a friend to visit over the Christmas period. A new 'M' type (married quarters) had been constructed and I had been looking forward to establishing lawns and garden in a lovely location shaded by kapok trees. Not to be, with a message from HQ, 'Prepare for immediate transfer to Kerema, Gulf District, Papua.'



Kerema, Central District

1 October 1960: I signed off at Bainyik Agricultural Station having made travel arrangements for a posting to the opposite side of the New Guinea mainland at Kerema in the Gulf District of Papua, as acting District Agricultural Officer.

Travel, as mentioned in earlier chapters, was never straight forward. I flew from Maprik by Gibbes Sepik Airways' Norseman, a tubular steel framed, fabric-covered, high wing monoplane, to Wewak, a Mandated Airlines DC3 to Port Moresby via Lae and a Piaggio (possibly TAA) to Baimuru and then a workboat, the MV *Magila* to Kerema.

Another change, another challenge and a posting only to last a little over four months.

The Gulf District was a fascinating area. A coastal 'jungle' of twisted tidal waterways, lowland river deltas and areas of fertile grasslands stretching and rising up to the Southern Highlands. Many of the waterways were navigable either by government workboats or the traditional canoes made from hollowed-out logs invariably powered by an outboard motor attached to the back of the canoe.

There were two major developing agricultural extension projects. A rubber factory at Cupola, South of Kerema, together with an extensive rubber nursery and mature rubber trees providing training to local farmers with a view to developing small holder areas for rubber production at Marua.

Marua Agricultural Training Station was being established

several miles upstream beside the Marua River north across Kerema Bay. Community housing for native trainees and a somewhat basic house for European staff and likewise for the agricultural fieldworkers who had graduated from Vudal Agricultural College near Rabaul.

Transport was, necessarily, by log canoe with an Archimedes outboard motor of questionable reliability or perhaps worse a Seagull—possibly one of the very original outboard prototypes. Depending on sea conditions in Kerema Bay, the tidal influence and rainfall effect on the Marua River, it could take up to three hours to reach the station.

On one occasion, having entered the river, the outboard motor noise suddenly stopped. I looked around from where I was sitting in a camp chair to see that our motor had disappeared. A slow paddle to the Murua Station wharf followed. Arrangements were made next day at low tide to locate and attempt to recover the motor with a congo-line of local villagers wading down the river. The search was called off when a healthy-sized crocodile was sighted on the river bank.

The latter part of October and most of November was spent away from Kerema, patrolling and reporting on village activities and supervising the Murua developments. All tropical cash crops were in the mix. Traditionally copra production as well as cocoa, peanuts, lowland coffee and rubber.

Sailing through the lowland flood plains and waterways between Kerema and Kikori was a fascinating experience; somewhat like being a paid tourist. The workboat facilities were basic however there were cold showers, toilets and bunks to sleep in! One of the culinary delights of these trips was the abundant supply of mudcrabs generally purchased with twist tobacco. The crabs were restrained with tropical twine and delivered alongside our workboat. Any oversupply was placed overnight in the shower recess to be kept wet and cool. One morning when I opened the shower door I was confronted by a dozen or so angry, clawing mudcrabs that had broken free of their constraints. There is a technique to restraining large crabs. I had to call for expert assistance.

John Fowke, at the time, was Officer-in-Charge at Beara, the Baimuru Sub-District headquarters. Following a day-visit to several of the villages on the Baroi River, the evening was spent with John at his 'residence'. We were about to settle down for the night after a couple of 'cold teas' (Negrita rum and water) when the house rats came out to play. John, irritated by their presence, got out his service pistol, loaded it with a several rounds declaring he would put paid to the scampering rats. One of the offenders ran under his bed sail. John lay prostrate on the limbom (sago palm) flooring and fired. Not one but several shots. There was a muffled, weak 'pop pop' from under the bed. Humidity had got the better of John's ammunition! We slept with the rats that night

Aircraft continued to be part of my New Guinea experience. No less in Papua. The infamous and unreliable Otter amphibian was operated by TAA. Port Moresby, Yule Island, Kerema Baimuru, Kikori route. The landing wheels were recessed into the floats and hydraulically operated. To ensure they were fully extended (and locked!) when landing, the passenger sitting next to, and on the right-hand side of the pilot, would be asked to manually crank the handle to ensure the wheels were down and locked.



David and his motorbike boarding the 'ferry' to cross Kerema Bay

To the embarrassment of one TAA pilot landing at Baimuru, on the moss-covered marsden matting airstrip, the wheels were not fully extended and locked and he skidded to a halt on the aircraft floats. No serious damage was done.

My friend from college days, Gillian Marks, arranged to visit TPNG in late December 'to check the place out'. Prior to coming to Kerema Gillian flew to Samarai, and travelled by workboat to Esa'Ala in the Normanby Group of islands for a week stay with another college friend, John Gosbell, then working for the Department of Agriculture. Having heard no word of Gillian's departure for Kerema, I radioed: *'Please advise the whereabouts of Gillian Marks?'* The telegraphic reply was almost instant: *'No Otter we've got her.'*

Five years of my descriptive writing to Gillian and her brief initiation to the country was the catalyst for her to say 'yes' when I proposed on New Year Eve, 1960. Gillian returned to Australia in mid-January with a wedding planned later in the year.



**Gillian meets her first crocodile
on the beach at Kerema!**

Her departure from Kerema was not without drama. Several aircraft bookings were made south from Port Moresby. Initially the Otter was unserviceable and with the second attempt it was en route Kerema when it made a forced landing at Morobe. Finally, our goodbyes and, too, to her parents' relief to know their daughter was on her way home.

Recreation leave was due and bookings made for early February. However, the Dutch Administrator had invited the Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries, Extension Division to prepare a display for the 1961 Netherlands Nieuw Guinea Show and Trade Fair and to attend the opening of the first Netherlands Nieuw Guinea Council—the New Guinea Raad—on 5 April. I was asked to defer my leave and design and prepare the exhibits.

An official visit to Netherlands New Guinea was a rewarding conclusion to the five and a half years in the Territory of Papua New Guinea (TPNG). Hollandia had been visited previously to play tennis when I had been posted to Aitape on the south-west coast of the New Guinea mainland.

Several days after my departure from Kerema were spent in designing and acquiring material for the exhibition and arranging its dispatch to Hollandia. Our presentation was located at the Hollandia Fairgrounds and was to be ready by 4 April. We didn't realise that no work was done between 2 pm and 5 pm. We adjusted to this and our display was completed on time.

An unbelievable number of activities had been programmed to celebrate the inauguration of the council and entertain some 135 official delegates and the many thousands of West Papuan people who had made their way to Hollandia.

Accommodation had been arranged on the vessel MV *Kasimbar*. A number of relaxed meals were shared with the ship's master, T van der Molan, a welcome change after bachelor and patrol camp cooking. During one of the luncheons a petty officer walked up to the table, saluted, and passed the master a piece of paper. T van der Molan studied the paper, thanked the message bearer and said to those at the lunch: 'The Indonesian Air Force was planning a

bombing raid 1200 hrs today. It is now 1300 hrs they are always running late.’ With that we all enjoyed our lunch. Up to 1961 and into 1962 the Indonesians had been intimidating but there was no aggression.

The speech by Nicholas Jouwe, Vice-President of the Netherlands New Guinea Council at the council opening was passionate and decisive, expressing a wish to see the country evolve into an independent democratic nation. On that day His Excellency the State Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr TH Bot’s opening remarks said:

For the people of Netherlands New Guinea this day is an important landmark on the road to self-determination ... the Netherlands will continue to assist in the process of your speedy independence, the fighting of poverty and ignorance—the bringing of peace, quiet and order where these did not exist before.

As I listened to the speeches I felt confident that Papua would move forward. A ten-year plan was agreed!

History has recorded the events of 1962—just one year later and the people of West Papua have had to live with the transition of its country; its people; its independence; to no longer own their culture and their way of life.

Forward to the *Weekend Australian*, 3–4 June 2017, and an extract from Hugh Grant’s book, *Subtle Moments*, on the occasion he met Dean Acheson the (then) US Secretary of State. Acheson tells him he had asked the Dutch if they really wanted to hang on to West Irian. They did not. ‘Well, if I could get the Australians to take it was that alright?’ Acheson wondered. It sure was and the sooner the better the Dutch replied. After consulting President John F Kennedy, Acheson rang ‘that fat fraud Bob Menzies’. He declined saying they had enough trouble with their own half of New Guinea. So West Irian only went to Indonesia after you wouldn’t have it.’

If what Grant has written is factually correct, it is a terrible indictment of process and the United Nation’s role. Bruce Grant was a former High Commissioner, an advisor to Gough Whitlam and a consultant to Gareth Evans, a former foreign minister.



Kimbe, West New Britain

July 1960—and another posting, another piece of paradise! Prior to going on three months' leave in March I advised head office of plans to be married and would like a permanent location after six years of roving responsibilities. This was agreed to and I was appointed District Agricultural Officer in Kimbe, Talasea District, West New Britain.

The administrative area covered the sub-districts of Talasea, Cape Hoskins, Kandrian and the delightful Witu Island group. The whole of the east coast of West New Britain was actively volcanic. Pure sulphur lay in the beds of crystal clear watercourses. The coastline was constantly 'breathing' sulphurous fumes. Close to Volupai Plantation at the southern end of the Willaumez Peninsular, a lava vent, several feet below the land surface, was a mass of red-hot bubbling lava. A fascinating and frightening phenomenon. Earthquakes were frequent, never of a magnitude to cause structural damage or too much alarm.

During 1958 a three-bedroom married quarters had been constructed in Kimbe on a rise west of the administration area. A picture-perfect location looking northwest to the Willaumez Peninsular framing Kimbe Bay, with Garua Island a couple of miles offshore from the town, and Cape Hoskins on the eastern coastline. There was very little road development. An airstrip with DC3 capability was under construction close to Volupai Plantation. It wasn't though to be Talasea's first airstrip! Another had been

operational prewar, above and west of the town. I have my uncle's (Jos Crisp, a Carpenters Airline pilot) log books who recorded visits to Talasea in a de Havilland Dragon (VH-URW). The flying time from Rabaul was one hour thirty-five minutes!

The development of the (new) Talasea airstrip was an interesting experience. Chris Normoyle Jnr was the Assistant District Officer at the time and supervised the airstrip's construction. He had arranged for nearby villagers to collect and deliver daily bilums of a couch-like grass. I had the task of supervising the planting. Lines four-hundred feet across the prepared surface were marked out at three-foot intervals and the grass runners were hand planted along the lines! The airstrip and its subsequent demise has been well documented.

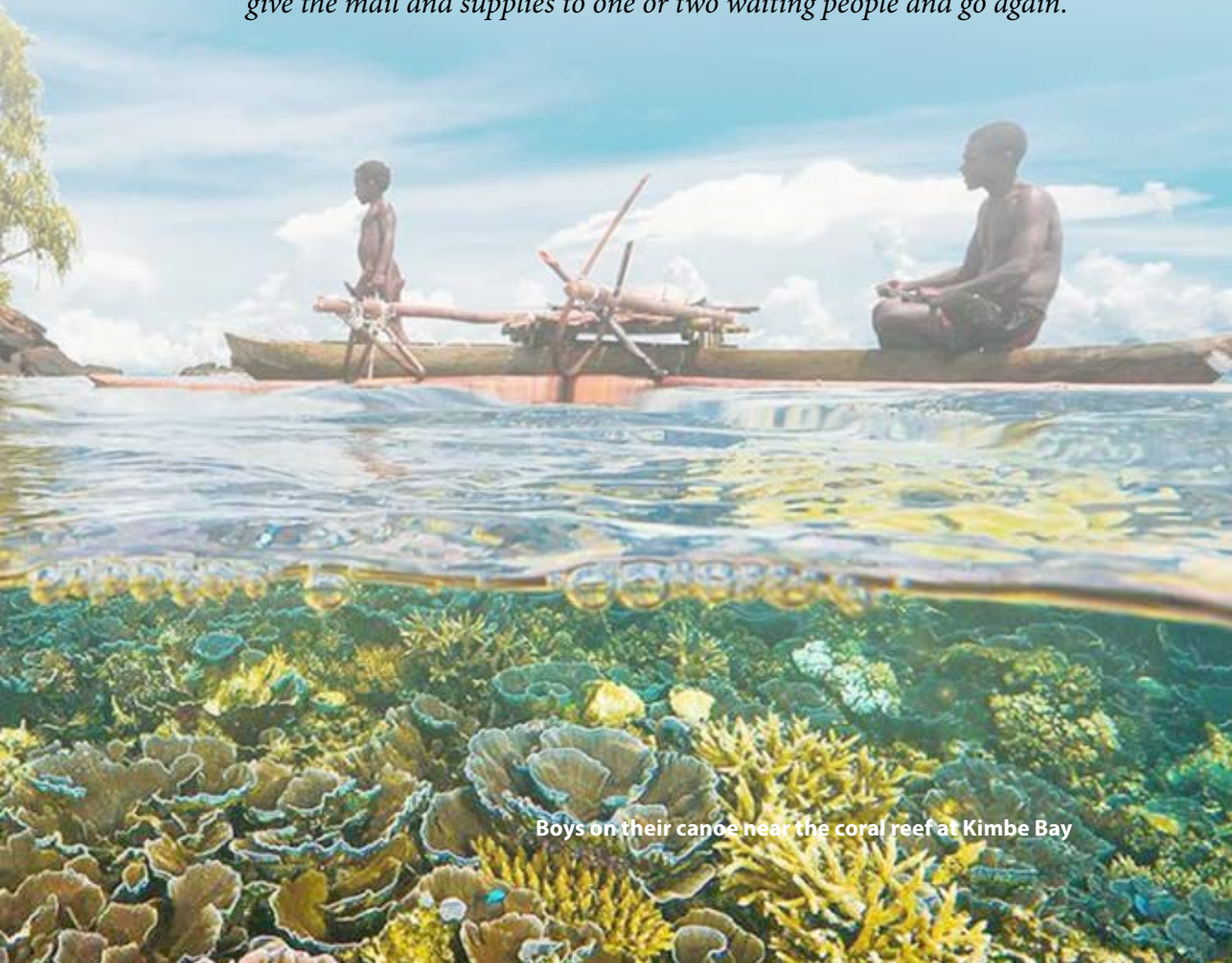
Agricultural extension work was centred on the development and management of already significant and expanding village cocoa projects; increased plantings of coconuts on resettlement blocks and improving copra quality, building hot air dyers, utilising discarded wartime 44-gallon drums, steel mesh and corrugated iron. Coconut shells were used for fuel. Coffee, in a limited way, had also been introduced into a few of the elevated inland areas below the Whiteman Range. Associated with the foregoing was the introduction of the Rural Progress Societies (RPS) to co-operatively and more profitably market local produce. These organisations were invariably linked, by membership, to the recently formed Native Local Government Councils by the grouping of village census divisions. These paved the way for more structured political and economic change. Native resettlement was in the formative stage, the forerunner to extensive coconut planting and palm oil development.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, regular patrolling was the principle of effective agricultural extension work. In contrast to some of my previous postings water transport was essential to access the extensive coastline and the Witu islands. A government trawler, MV *Aimara*, and a workboat, MV *Garnet*, were available for this work crewed by competent local lads. The *Aimara* was skippered by Maus, an extremely knowledgeable seaman. Maus's ability to navigate the coral reefs was uncanny—day or night.

The four years spent at Talasea had many happy highlights. The work was interesting and particularly satisfying being at the cusp of major agricultural developments. Some of the highlights were family, some social and some hilariously official. These will be recorded in some sort of chronological order.

Special leave was granted and Gillian (Marks) and I were married in Sydney in September 1961, and after a honeymoon in Tasmania we returned to Talasea. Gillian wrote detailed and interesting letters to her family in which she best describes her introduction to Territory life. Edited extracts of her letters follow after our arrival in Rabaul and Talasea:

7 October 1961: We left Rabaul about a quarter to ten on Saturday morning for Talasea and had only one stop at Jacquinot Bay. We only stopped there for ten or fifteen minutes. I didn't even get out of the plane. You just set down on a strip in the middle of nowhere, give the mail and supplies to one or two waiting people and go again.



Boys on their canoe near the coral reef at Kimbe Bay

There were quite a few to meet the plane at Cape Hoskins. We had about three-quarters of an hour unloading the plane onto a trailer pulled by a tractor, taking that to the beach and transporting it all out to the 38 ft workboat, Garnet, by a native double canoe. We had a terrific amount of stuff and there were also station supplies, mail and other people's orders.

We were, eventually, all aboard at 1 pm and set off across the bay to Talasea. The local priest was on board. He had gone to meet a nun off our plane and saved our lives by producing tea and sandwiches. The plane was a couple of hours late leaving Rabaul and they don't supply lunch. You normally hang out till you reach Talasea about 2 pm, but we didn't get here until nearly five. We met a few people, loaded up the Land Rover, collected the mail from the office, got the house keys and came home. What a relief to get here. Gosh, it's a nice house. One of the first pieces of news that we heard was that the power plant was broken down so Monty went searching for Tilley lamps. We had an early tea and fell into bed exhausted.

Prior to departing on leave I had planned an extensive patrol to the Central Nakanai as a lot needed to be done at and near the villages of Uasilau and Silaanga involving the mapping, harvesting, processing and marketing of the cocoa projects. So, after a very brief orientation of the station for Gillian, this is her story:

12 October 1961: We left at 10.30 this morning on a beaut little boat called Aimara for Uasilau. We were later than we expected to be leaving and will now only be away for about a fortnight. I am armed with writing paper and books and we seem to have enough food to last an army a month. We will have to sleep on the boat tonight and will go to Uasilau in the morning. We will then have about a two-hour walk inland to the village and the boat will be calling to collect us again on 28th. We are just crossing Kimbe Bay to Cape Hoskins and there is quite a pleasant swell.

At Cape Hoskins we collected Monty's only English-speaking field worker called Moses! I suppose there would have been nine or ten of us on board. Monty and Moses and me and the captain and five or six other crew members, all native of course. We got some terrific hauls of fish on the way. Had four trawling lines on the back of the boat and every now and then there would be cries to slow the

boat or, once, to stop the boat all together while tuna, mackerel or something else, I have forgotten what—huge big fish—hailed on board.

The captain decided we couldn't get all the way so at 6 pm we anchored off a coastal village called Tarobi. No sooner had we stopped than a native canoe and a very sober-looking gentleman came slowly paddling out to us. He drew alongside, gravely shook Monty by the hand and stated he was the village luluai (head man). Monty said who he was and asked if we could come to his village for a wash. We were invited to sleep the night, too, but decided it would be too much trouble to get beds and mattresses unloaded and ashore so said we would sleep on the boat.

We collected our soap (one of two cakes), and our only tin of Johnson's Baby Powder, clean clothes and our shower bucket and we were paddled ashore. They had quite a decent little rest house so we dumped our things and while willing hands went off to get buckets of water and heat them we walked around the village and along a little one-man track a bit further inland to another village.

I have no idea how many hands we shook or how many little black heads we patted, but the time we got back to the rest house it was quite dark and we followed behind the leader, who carried a lantern, I was tripping up and down and over things and trying to keep up with Monty and various of our new pals in Pisin English.

Unbeknown to us, while we had showers the local teacher was gathering together all his children outside our hut and when we were nearly ready to go he said could they sing. Monty said we would love them to and I sat myself down on the step to listen and there in the dark were all these little black children lined up with big white-looking eyes in the lantern light and very serious faces. Their singing was absolutely beautiful. The teacher had been trained at the Catholic mission school in Rabaul and he had those children practically perfect.

Their harmonising was like nothing I had heard before. We expected there to be three or four songs but they sang on and on while we sat on the steps of the rest house in raptures and wishing we owned a tape recorder. At last Monty said we would have to go and did they know a farewell song. They sang 'Wish Me Luck as You Wave Me Goodbye' and 'Now is the Hour'. Honestly, I've never

heard anything like it. It was one of the most moving things I've ever experienced. When you think the Vienna Boys Choir is paid thousands to tour the world and here were these little children—as good or better, considering their training, singing to us for pure pleasure in the middle of nowhere.

They followed us back to the beach and just as the canoe left, they sang 'Goodbye' from 'White Horse Inn'. It lasted until we were to the boat and they called out 'Good night Master' and 'Good night Missus, God bless You'. We didn't get back on board until after eight (minus the soap and powder, which we had left in the rest house) and we lit the primus, heated a mug of mince for tea, put two mattresses on the floor of the cabin and went to sleep.

They started the engine right under our heads at 5.15 the next morning and nearly frightened ten year's good growth out of me. An hour later we were at Walo, our destination in Bangula Bay. We had breakfast while the bois got all our patrol boxes, our beds, our mattresses, a stove for the rest house and other odds and ends rowed ashore. Monty sent a man to Uasilau to tell Soa Ubia, the village luluai, we had arrived and we would need carriers to collect our things.

About 2 pm Soa and a mob of bois arrived. Soa was all dressed up in a nice embroidered lap-lap and was all smiles. This was the bloke Monty had promised would be the first to have his new wife stay in his village. Then the men and the bois began picking up the boxes, the beds, the mattresses, the chairs and the buckets and I picked up my hat and myself and off we all went.

We left at 3.30 and walked and walked and walked till six when we arrived here. Actually, we did have one stop by a swiftly flowing river with cool water and had a drink there. The whole journey was only about five miles but, heck, it felt like fifty by the time we got here. I thought my knees were going to buckle under me. I bet it is the first time in my life I have ever just got up and walked five miles. If you thought about the scenery instead of your knees and your thirst it was a lovely walk really. Huge trees and vines I had never seen before and, in spots, formed an arch over our head.

I appreciated it and asked intelligent questions for the first mile! The village was so tidy, the houses are all separated and the people keep the grass between them cut and looking very nice. Our rest house, at the top of the village square, is quite a palatial joint.



Kimbe, West New Britain

I FINISHED OFF in the last chapter saying there was a need to explain patrol necessities—mattresses, a wood stove, refrigerator, etc. A base camp in the village of Uasilau in the Central Nakanai was set up as this was one of the focal points for development of a cacao industry and in later years, extensive plantings of palm oil throughout the area. In the interest of a little comfort for long-term stays and staff visits, a few extras were added to the patrol equipment inventory. These ‘home’ extras were a far cry from my earlier patrolling experiences.

Social life at Talasea revolved around the Talasea Club and a tennis court—a meeting place for the administration staff, their families and nearby plantation owners—Humphrey (Volupai); Huygen (Garua Island); Marsland (Lagenda); Searle (Walindi); Desborough (Numundo) and Allshorn (San Remo) the closest and regular visitors. Interesting to note that Walindi today is widely recognised as a first-class, environmentally managed diving centre. Each Christmas Santa Claus arrived at the club to the delight of the children and especially ours. Our first son, Scott, was born 19 January 1963 and Mark 15 April 1964, both at Namanula Hospital in Rabaul.

A United Nations Food and Agricultural Survey was required to be carried out in each of the West New Britain Sub-Districts—Talasea, Cape Gloucester, Kandrian and Pomio. Identification, mapping and recording of representative samples of village gardens was to be undertaken. This required extensive patrolling into villages rarely visited.

My field journal of 19 May 1962 records a patrol commencing at Denga Island of the mouth of the Aria River—between Talasea and Cape Gloucester: 0620 departed for Aria River per MV *Langu* arrived 0750. By canoe to the village of Bagai arriving 1830. 20 May 0930 departed on foot to Aikon village arrived 1715 with only short stops. The patrol covered twenty-one days and important to note that my bride of eight months looked after herself at our new home at Talasea. Our handyman Tito slept under the house with our dog, Tiffany. Peaceful and untroubled times.

Back in October 1961 on Gillian's first patrol we went to Uasilau base camp. Bed made, we climbed in, tucked in the mosquito net ready for a good sleep. Gillian aroused me and said she had observed something moving under the sheet—with that a large rat appeared and commenced circumnavigating the bed to find a way out of the mosquito net. I lifted the net, the rat departed and I said to Gillian, '*taim bilong slip*'. Next morning, I asked several of the villagers to remove the mattress out onto the lawn and give it a good shake. Mother rat and six offspring departed their overnight accommodation much to the hilarity of the locals. There were no more start-up dramas as Gillian settled into the New Guinea way of life.

Special mention needs to be made of Soa Ubia, who was the *lululai* (headman) at Uasilau. A gentleman, a leader and a powerful pro-government influence in the Central Nakanai. I met with him many times and very much respected his intelligence, advice and desire to move his people forward. Some years later, on a private visit with the family, I had an emotional meeting with Soa. Another outstanding leader from the village of Silanga was Maneke, who nominated for and won the seat of West New Britain in the first parliament. I still have a letter he wrote to me at that time thanking me for the direction I gave to him and his people.

In my previous ramblings there has always been an aircraft story, having travelled to and fro over much of TPNG without serious incident in planes old, very old and some not so new. Helicopters were not part of the scene until early 1963 when a Bell 47 helicopter was chartered for an aerial survey of possible resettlement sites.

Accompanied by Bill Conroy, Chief of Division, Agricultural Extension we flew the East Coast of West New Britain.

Several memories of that time—the pilot, named Hirst, wore only a pair of shorts and carried a pair of rubber thongs, should the control pedals get hot, and a toothbrush in his back pocket. The wide-eyed fascination of the children as they gathered around to see us, seemingly, drop from the sky on any cleared area near their villages. The departures from the Talasea school oval were no less frightening for us—under the power lines then out and around Kimbe Bay.

Coastal travel was either by canoes, work boats, speedboats or commercial vessels all variously used, without incident, except for one. With increasing administration staffing, allocation of transport to fit in with patrol schedules was sometimes difficult. I decided (without seeking local expertise) to construct a double canoe. Two hollowed out logs were purchased—funded from patrol allowance—joined catamaran-style with sawn hardwood and notched bearers with a *limbom* (sago) bark deck sufficient to hold patrol equipment and a couple of camp chairs. One outboard motor was fitted to each of the canoes.

A patrol to Ewase and intermediate villages on the north coast was planned with this vessel to prove its usefulness. Rex McKenzie, a recently appointed agricultural officer, accompanied me. Some days later leaving Sulu on our return journey, there was a light north-westerly wind and choppy seas. Fortunately, the decision was made to move inside the reef to smoother shallower waters. Without warning the cross members broke and the canoes rolled over. Villagers south of Sulu did a great job in rescue and recovery of waterlogged patrol boxes, outboard motors and numerous other effects.

Unknown to me Rex had written a graphic story of the event to his father in Melbourne, who wrote to the Public Service Commissioner. Some weeks later, the Commissioner wrote to me requesting an explanation. There was no official reprimand.

Continuing the marine theme, Agriculture owned a new ‘tinny’ and outboard motor. It had been pulled up on the beach at Cape Hoskins to meet the DC3 service from Rabaul. In the interim, whilst

unloading the aircraft, the tinny and motor went missing. The TAA pilot agreed to an aerial search en route Talasea (Volupai Airport), flying time normally ten minutes, at the rate of one pound per minute. After ten minutes the search was called off. The boat and motor were never seen again. Another report to the Public Service Commissioner!

Major changes were in the planning stages for coastal resettlement of people undergoing land/population pressures from the Gazelle Peninsular, the Bainings and the Highlands. The DAGI River Resettlement Scheme was the forerunner to these changes. Small at the time of implementation, it set the scene for what was to become major rural development along the east coast and hinterland of West New Britain.

An inter-departmental conference in Port Moresby in December 1962 developed the strategies to move the project forward. There was excellent co-ordination and co-operation at all levels of government; field staff increases were planned and policy on native title and land acquisition finalised.

Recreation leave was due and taken in June 1963. As seemed to happen with my career, extra-curricular activities had been planned by Headquarters, the Public Service Commissioner and the Department of Territories (in Sydney). It was a very happy and productive couple of weeks with Gumia Gitti and Stanley Wuai. To add to the Expo mix we made visits to Nestles, Taronga Zoo and Hawkesbury Agricultural College and, if I recall correctly, met with the Chief Quarantine Officer (Plants) in Sydney. Interesting to note that Gumi ended up a senior quarantine officer at Port Moresby. Stanley, I lost track of.

Not originally scheduled but a Cessna 172 was chartered (not sure if that was financed out of patrol funds!) and Gumia, Stanley and myself flew to Coffs Harbour to visit sugar-cane farms and a sugar refinery. I think the Big Banana was also on the itinerary. Great experience for two of our staff.

Return from leave was planned for October 1963 and there is more to the Talasea story.



Kimbe & Going Home

ONE OF THE DELIGHTS of tropical living, and the indigenous people's skill as gardeners, was the abundance of fresh tropical fruits and vegetables—beans, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, taro, yams, tapioca and leafy greens. Fresh European potatoes were highly valued, as those available from the Chin Cheu's trade store at Talasea were always well sprouted and of suspect quality. Our garden handyman, Tito, would request the peelings (with sprouts). On one occasion, some three months later, I asked him if he had dug the potatoes, 'Yes' he said and then confessed he had given them to the local Irish priest.

Apart from an occasional visit by a coastal trader there was little marine activity other than the government workboats. Ted Foad was the most regular visitor. You could hear him coming before he arrived over the horizon! This was beneficial in that there was time for the locals to get their produce to the wharf or beachside.

With the development of timber exports and the palm oil industry, a marine survey was to be undertaken of Stetten Bay extending to the proposed township of Kimbe.

28 April 1964—a telegram was received at the sub-district office: *Warship HMAS Paluma (3rd) due 1030 hrs.* The Assistant District Officer, Chris Normoyle, sent a note to Gillian, as our house looked across Stetten Bay and Garua Island, asking her to report the arrival of the 'warship'. In due course Gillian responded: *Warship Paluma has arrived and appears to be bogged* (Gillian's not very

nautical terminology) *on a reef off Garua Island*. This was not the case, however, it became a joke with the crew at our social evenings at the Talasea Club. Not so with the captain, Lt-Cmdr Varley, who had previously scraped off some of the survey gear attached to the ship on the Barrier Reef. HMAS *Paluma* carried an armament of two .303 service rifles and the captain's pistol! Interestingly, the Queensland town of Paluma has a war service memorial monument to an earlier vessel of the same name, *Paluma* (1st). The vessel stayed in the survey area for six months.

17 May 1964: There was much excitement with the arrival of the HMAS *Anzac*—a magnificent sight anchored off the north side of Garua Island. I was invited on board on several occasions by the Captain, Lt-Cmdr (Nobby) Clarke and his 'offsider', Lt-Cmdr (R) Wilson. Dr Wilson was a Perth medical specialist and was spending three weeks on the ship.

The forthcoming visit, and lunch, with the Governor-General Viscount Lord Sidney de Lisle and his daughter, the Honourable Catherine Sidney, was discussed. The captain said, 'Anything you need we have it.' I successfully negotiated a chief steward, a table steward, a bar steward, a complete silver service setting for eight,

six bottles of wine, five dozen glasses, linen serviettes and a linen tablecloth for the official table at the Talasea Club on 22 May. To stock the club bar, unrestricted quantities of Victorian beer was required.

During the week, visits to the ship by local village elders and council dignitaries were arranged and they, too, were guests of the Talasea Club for the luncheon.

What a memorable week, which also included a couple of picture shows for all at the club courtesy of the *Anzac*.

Three DC3s with press, public relations, etc. arrived a few minutes before the dignitaries landed at Talasea (Volupai Airstrip), and so to the official welcome and lunch. All and sundry lined up, the local planters, government staff and the village officials. Brian McBride, the Assistant District Officer, introduced the Governor-General and my task, as president of the Talasea Club, was to introduce his daughter, Catherine. I was hopeful she would pause, ask a question, comment on the area, her surroundings. No—there was just the formal handshake and repeatedly ‘How do you do’!

After the first twenty or so introductions, in my head, I was saying ‘Cockle doodle do’. The protocol officer on the ship had earlier stressed, ‘If you forget a name just make one up, your guest will in all probability be unawares.’ That was okay until it happened with one of my own staff members. He was unimpressed with his substituted name.

Following the lunch there was a tour of the station. The official party departed the next day by air for Port Moresby.

A great upside of the *Anzac* visit, apart from the socialising, was that anything needed to be fixed—was fixed—wirelesses, lights, motorbikes, jeeps, generators, etc. It was great to have a skilled temporary workshop!

Land settlement had become the focus—initially, in the immediate vicinity of the town of Kimbe and extensive areas had been purchased by the administration. This extended to village areas from Cape Hoskins to Bangalu Bay and, eventually, extending further north to Ewase. Going forward fifty years, the scale of development of palm oil on the whole of the West New Britain coast is staggering.

I would love to see this development now and the changes it has brought.

As an insight into a 'normal' day's work involving land settlement, the following diary note is recorded:

9/2/64. 0900 by speed boat to San Remo Plantation (which was subsequently purchased by the Administration and is now part of the town of Kimbe). Walked to Ruango Village and then by tractor to the DAGI land settlement arriving 1115. Peter Croke (Project Manager) arrived 1300 after leaving Cape Hoskins 0600—getting bogged and raft turning over in the DAGI River. Departed the land settlement area by Landrover 1630. Brief stops San Remo (Wing-Comdr William (Bill) Faulkner-Allshorn as he preferred to be known) and Walindi Plantation (Margaret and Lou Searle). The trip took 4.5 hours—36 miles, arriving Talasea 2100!

In each of the previous ten chapters there has been an aviation highlight. In the 1950s–60s when relying on unscheduled services, private or government charters, the catch phrase was 'the land of wait a while'. Strip sitting became the norm and often without any creature comforts. My diary frequently noted occasions like: *0900 to airstrip, awaiting Aztec. 0930—amended to 1030, 1145, 1215! Departed 1230 for Rabaul*. In earlier stories I spoke of there being no anxious moments flying in TPNG, however, there was one which, on reflection, could have been disastrous.

Having completed a patrol into Sibul, Esau, and Berberg River areas on the east coast to inspect cacao and coconut establishment, I returned to Cutarp Plantation (Mr Butcher) and then to Pomio Patrol Post. This area subsequently became part of East New Britain. The following morning a mission workboat was chartered to Jacquinot Bay and Unung Plantation (Mr Bode). Contact was made with TAA Lae to ask for a diversion of the Aztec Rabaul-Kandrian-Lae service into Jacquinot Bay and Talasea.

The aircraft arrived Jacquinot Bay and at 1030 departed for Talasea with Agricultural Officer Jones and myself. Also on board was a passenger for Kandrian, the manager of Arawe Plantation. As we crossed the Whiteman Range (approx. 4,500 feet ASL) the pilot

was advised that Talasea (Volupai) airstrip was closed so we headed west for Kandrian. Flying through cloud and severe turbulence we suddenly flew into clear still air which, in fact, was a 360 degree 'funnel' surrounded by dense cumulus cloud.

Our pilot was disinclined to fly into and perhaps through the cloud wall, and continued circling upwards in the hope of getting above the cloud and flying out. We were getting close to the Aztec's ceiling with severe icing occurring to the aircraft.

The pilot was looking for guidance. Fortunately, a DC3 flying along the south coast made contact and gave compass directions for clearer air. After an hour and a very bumpy ride we arrived over the Pacific Ocean and turned right to land at Kandrian.



TOP: Fresh water supply in bamboo 'bucket' for Government Rest House, 1963

LEFT: Cacao fermentary building under construction, 1964, in Uasilau Nakanai West New Britain District

From the outset, our Rabaul passenger was upset by the diversion and became volubly traumatised by the experience—and our fuel had been close to exhausted. The pilot was not prepared to take off again for Lae and requested avgas from Rabaul. A DC3 was dispatched with a 44-gallon drum of fuel! As the best option, Jones and I flew back to Rabaul on the DC3, and two days later flew back to Talasea via Cape Hoskins.

An interesting diversion in the Central Nakanai in 1959–60, centred on Uasilau, was the arrival of a CRA team of geologists. I had earlier provided some soil samples from the confluence of the Ala River and an adjoining river. Unannounced, and during my routine patrol inspecting native cacao plantations and processing facilities, a helicopter arrived carrying a couple of geologists who worked in the area for some weeks. The anticipation of economic copper deposits was not fulfilled.

Early in 1964 the move to individual land ownership was gathering pace, the forerunner to the now extensive palm oil and cacao plantings. Over a period of several days the project manager, Peter Croke, and myself registered over 380 applications. Public service conditions did not apply in those days. On 18 March after commencing the day at 0715 at the Uasilau base camp and inspecting settlement blocks, the flooded Ala River was negotiated, and after an hour arrived at the Santa Maria Mission (Fr Wagner) at Silanga. At 2000 we started signing off applications and payment of lease fees. 225 applications, with queries, took us through to 0100 (1 am!). At 0630 we began a two-hour walk to Lasebu to board the government workboat MV *Langu* to return to Talasea.

Moving away from the intensity of the work involved in the land settlement program, special reference is made to Peter Croke who made a significant contribution to the success of the West New Britain land settlement projects. Peter continued working in TPNG, eventually assuming senior positions with the Papua New Guinea Development Bank.

Over the period of my TPNG career I had been nominated for a health education fellowship in the Philippines, but this was not

approved by Canberra. I had also applied to continue my studies at the School of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad. Insufficient professional qualification was the reason given for declining my application.

My decision to return to Australia was a relatively easy one. I had reached the top of my salary scale at age twenty-nine and I decided, with two small children, that the offer of a transfer to Port Moresby was an unattractive one.

Recreation and long service leave was due. Some twelve months previously I had notified our Chief of Division, Jack Lamrock, of my intention to resign. In August 1965 Gillian, our two sons and myself departed Rabaul on the SS *Francis Drake*. Gillian cried as we departed. Talasea was the happiest of times.

*This story has barely covered those exciting years—
very special experience with very special people*



Scott, David, Mark and Gillian Montgomery
at Wau airstrip, August 1965

Aerial photograph of Kimbe in 2016,
courtesy of Peter Humphreys



Kimbe to Kimbe

Ten years had passed since Gillian, myself and the two boys, Scott and Mark, had left Papua New Guinea. A new life and a new career had begun in 1967 on a property at Grabben Gullen, near Crookwell in the Southern Tablelands of NSW.

We called it Kimbe, named after our view over Stettin and Kimbe Bays at Talasea. Our daughter Jenni was born in November 1968 at Crookwell.

In 1976 we planned a return trip to West New Britain, Wau and Lae. The boys had no memory of their early days at their home at Talasea nor of their birthplace at the Namanula Hospital, Rabaul. As a family we were keen to revisit, meet with friends, former staff members and to see a few of the places we knew ten years previously.

We arrived in Port Moresby, August, 1976, a year after Independence and it was little changed. We were hosted by Peter and Coral Croke, a former didiman and Assistant Manager—Operations, PNG Development Bank, responsible for the bank's branches.

Harry Humphreys, MP, the Member for West New Britain and the owner of Volupai Plantation near Talasea had arranged for a visit to Parliament House, sitting in the Speakers Gallery. He and his wife, Thelma, had also opened a supermarket at Kimbe. We still have amongst our memorabilia some of the supermarket plastic bags. A couple of enjoyable days, with visits to the university, the orchid



gardens, the PNG Museum, the Anglican and Catholic churches and also the 100-year-old Anglican church.

We then flew to Wau to stay with my old mate Ian Fraser (Goroka 1956), his wife Janet and children Brian,

Sarah and Angus. Ian had established a successful coffee and cattle operation. An interesting time to see the extent of development. Ian's children took ours to meet some of the locals in the nearby villages, a wonderful experience for them. A highlight remembered was a visit to Lloyd Hurrell and his wife, Margaret's orchid collection. Lloyd was highly respected and honoured for his involvement in the PNG coffee industry.

From Wau, Ian drove us via Aiyura, an early posting for another friend John Gosbell. John and I graduated from Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1955 and met up again in Goroka in 1956. We travelled to John's property, Singaua, which he owned and managed. The Land Rover journey—and anyone who had been driven by Ian would understand—put any overland car trial in Australia in the shade. Singaua Plantation is north east of Lae. We met with John, his daughters, Julie and Sandie and sons, Peter and Philip. John's wife Noelene had died at Singaua where she is buried. Julie became his cook and homemaker.

A relaxed and happy few days. The boys were rapt in the docility of John's Zebu cattle, thinking they would be able to re-enact Hogan's scene in *Crocodile Dundee*.

Negotiating four creek crossings we arrived in Lae with plans to go onto Cape Hoskins. I still have an Air Niugini ticket dated 2 September 1976, departing 9.15 am. We boarded the aircraft to discover no seat belts had been fitted. This was declared minor and



TOP: Coastal war wrecks (*l-r*) Scott, Mark, Salaen and David

BELOW: Leaving Kimbe for Sulu, 1976





TOP: Daughter Jenni on board the workboat, *Kerowagi*
BELOW: Molten lava vent, Willaumez Peninsula



we would soon be on our way. We bought magazines and comics and sat down to wait, which we did.

About 10.30 the Panga Airlines manager arrived to say the delay would be somewhat longer and drove us up to the town. There were locals all along one street with baskets, shells, bags, belts, beads and carvings. The children were quite delighted with this unexpected turn of events. At midday 'our' Panga man collected us again and took us to the new Palm Lodge Motel for lunch—all airconditioned, plush chairs and carpet. People were waiting all the time to pull out chairs, open doors and generally fuss over the guests. The children were practically speechless having been hardly anywhere more exotic than Nick's Niagara café in Crookwell in their whole lives.

We had a beautiful lunch as guests of Panga, which made it especially nice. Our man returned with all our luggage, apologised again and took us to the Air Niugini Lodge. We then spent an enjoyable afternoon visiting the Lae War Cemetery and the Botanic Gardens!

Up at 6 am next morning with the pilot and bundled ourselves into the Piper Aztec without any apprehension. I had asked the pilot if we could do a low run over Singaua Plantation, which he did. We commenced climbing and headed north-east. At about 3,000 feet our son Mark, who was seated next to the pilot, turned to me and said: 'Dad, what is that green stuff flowing over the wing?' Aviation fuel no less.

The pilot attempted to make an emergency call to Lae. The wireless was unserviceable! At that point, and having sufficient altitude, the pilot decided Finschhafen would be the best option, immediately ahead, rather than returning to Lae. On landing we speedily tumbled out of that airplane.

Stranger than strange to have an unplanned visit. I had spent two years working at Finschhafen, 1958–59, a delightful part of the Huon Peninsula. I decided to ring one of my senior staff members of that time, Salaen Sakaen, who answered the phone and said he would drive to the airstrip. When he arrived, he came up to me, looked, blinked, held his head and shook it and decided he wasn't seeing things after

all. He flung his arms around me and was just so excited. He had never met Gillian or the children and had a good look at the five of us, still holding and shaking his head and just couldn't believe it was true after eighteen years.

Salaen was a pleasure to work with and his capabilities were reflected in his appointment to the PNG Coffee Marketing Board in 1963. He was awarded an OBE in 1967 and later represented PNG at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. His descriptions of all these things caused us to laugh—he was so unassuming. He only spoke *Tok Pisin* and it was a great pity that the children couldn't understand the language. He wanted to take us wherever we wanted to go and hoped we would stay at his house that night at the very least!

We climbed into his car and it made the children's day. Half-padded spring seats, very little floor and no muffler. He handed me the key and said first we needed petrol and I obliged. A tour of old sites—beautiful Dregerhaven Harbour, the delightful swimming hole at Butaweng and coastal WWII relics. Our replacement aircraft arrived, and we had a very emotional farewell with Salaen.

Unfortunately, we had to overfly Volupai Airport now abandoned and planted to oil palm. We stepped out of the aircraft at Cape Hoskins to an unarranged meeting with former staff member, Tokabene. Another emotional greeting. He told us to wait and departed on his motorbike in the direction of the Dagi River, returning not much later in a Land Rover and took us to the Palm Lodge Motel at Kimbe. The motel was a two-storey brick building. Our room had a little fridge, electric jug and writing desk just like any motel in Australia. Our room and the children's rooms had their own bathrooms and ours had a little balcony looking across the palm trees to the beach.

No sooner had we arrived on the previous day when Towaila, another ex-Talasea staff member, turned up almost in tears over our return. He was one of the original Dagi River block holders, and had developed his palm oil holding and purchased and developed several others. He arranged to pick us up in his truck and have a tour of his enterprises. Kessie, his wife, and children joined us. Kessie was an ex-

preschool-trained teacher from Rabaul and used to sometimes babysit our sons, Scott and Mark.

They took a great interest in the boys who they had not seen for ten years. It was a lovely reunion, they asked us to stay and gave us all sorts of presents—mostly food. I still have a list of some of the staff members who settled at the Dagi River.

Harry Humpreys had done a great deal to facilitate our visit. With his son, Peter, we spent a day driving up the coast from Talasea reliving our time in the area. Numundo Plantation, owned by Coconut Products Ltd, to be eventually planted to oil palm then on to Walindi a plantation formerly owned by Lou and Margaret Searle. It was subsequently developed as a plantation and dive resort.

Talasea had been abandoned as an administrative centre and was rapidly going into decline. The prewar airstrip had been cleaned up and the crashed and abandoned WWII aircraft very visible and free of tropical undergrowth. It is well described on Google and is a tourist attraction. We continued driving to the active volcanic Willaumez Peninsula via Volupai Plantation. A fascinating and awe-inspiring experience for the children to view bubbling lava not far below ground level.

Harry had arranged the *Kerowagi*, a government workboat to be put at our disposal at Kimbe. We travelled west up the coast to Tarobi, the coastal port for Silanga, Bangalu Bay and Walo, the shipping port for Uasilau and the developing settlements along the Ala River. It did not take long for word to spread that visitors had arrived at Hoskins, and were making their way up the coast. Ten years or so not a long gap. Meeting again with so many with whom we were involved was special. We anchored off Sulu village and were made welcome and stayed at the government rest house.

We received word that Luluai Soa Ubia, of Uasilau, could not meet us at Walo, but would be walking to Sulu to meet with us. Soa was a high profile, pro-government leader in Central Nakanai and facilitated many of the early developments amongst his people. A special moment and much *tok tok* through to the early hours—of times past, times present and the future of the West Nakanai.

Back in the late 1960s, marketing groups, rural progress societies, co-operative-like organisations had been formed to facilitate the orderly purchase, processing and marketing of cocoa, coffee and copra. Soa wanted to know how his people could share in the commercial activities by way of shareholders or part ownership. Perhaps this has happened?

We returned by workboat to Cape Hoskins, thence to Rabaul for our flight back to Sydney. Just one more aircraft story for those who have been following them throughout this story. Just after we left Rabaul in a DC3, the First Officer came and asked Mark if he would like to 'come up front'. Mark then occupied the right-hand seat in the cockpit. Not long after that the aircraft went through several manoeuvres. Sitting in front of us an American tourist exclaimed, 'Man, I think your son is flying this goddammed aircraft!!'

A memorable visit, perhaps never to be repeated.

Special and heartfelt thanks to all those associated with the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc. for the opportunity to relive those memorable days in Papua New Guinea.



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Front Cover Photograph: David Montgomery at the Yungzain Patrol Post, 1958

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DAVID ERNEST MONTGOMERY, AM, was an unsung hero to many who worked alongside him in agriculture. Hailed as an entrepreneur, he dedicated much of his life to innovation, significantly in the potato industry.

Formerly of Kimbe, Grabben Gullen, David passed away at his home, Bingie Banis, at Bingie on the south coast on 17 November 2019, aged eighty-two.

At a Grabben Gullen Hall memorial service on 26 November, his son Scott said he would 'never be forgotten and that his legacy is well recognised by peers and friends and by the horticultural industry in which he played a significant role to drive change.'

He said his father had been an inspiration and a family man, and shared stories of early business ventures from his years at The Scots College, Sydney (1947–52) to his education at the Hawkesbury Agriculture College (1953–55).

It was during this time he met his future wife, Gillian Marks. They celebrated their fifty-eighth wedding anniversary in September. Mr Montgomery wrote to her from Papua New Guinea during his employment by the Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries (Department of Agriculture). His experiences were recorded in the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia journals, *Una Voce*, titled *A Didiman's Diary*. The Montgomerys moved to Grabben Gullen in 1966 with sons Scott and Mark; daughter Jenni was born in 1967.

David began Southern Tablelands Potatoes, producing summer vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, leeks) and certified seed potatoes for supermarkets and fast food outlets. They also grew crops, traded in fat lambs, and bred cattle.

It was about this time that methods to speed up potato seed propagation developed and Technico, with Peter Waterhouse, began. Technico's chief executive, Sachid Madan, said Mr Montgomery had seen something in Technituber technology that others had not. The company is now a leading seed potato company with global operations, providing food safety and better farm incomes, he said.

The technology had been adopted by the International Centre for Potato and given rise to new technologies. 'The seed David planted in Crookwell nearly twenty-five years ago has spread across the world, benefiting millions of consumers, and rural communities,' he said.

As a founding member of the Horticultural Research and Development Cooperation, Mr Montgomery served for six years on its board. In 2000, he was recognised for his contributions to the development of PNG.

He was the Crookwell Potato Association executive director 1988–2009, and its public officer until his passing. In the 1990s, he received a Vocational Service and Enterprise award from the Rotary Club of Crookwell. In 2006, he was the first Australian honoured by the World Potato Congress in Boise, Idaho, USA.

In 2013, Governor-General Quentin Bryce, AC, awarded his AM for significant service to the potato industry and agriculture.

In 2004, he began work on the Australian Rural Innovative Centre, and in 2014 this concept became the Australian Agricultural Centre, which is planned for Crookwell.

He is survived by his wife Gillian, children Scott and Jenni (Mark passed in 1983), seven grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

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