



# ***TAIM BIPO:***

## **PEOPLE OF THE NOMAD DISTRICT WHEN THE WHITE MEN CAME**



*Nomad Station, 1963*



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## **PEOPLE OF THE NOMAD DISTRICT**

### **WHEN THE WHITE MEN CAME**

Written by Peter Dwyer & Monica Minnegal  
Cover photographs, and many others, by Bob Hoad

15 February 2020

This small book provides a brief history of the earliest visits to the Nomad River district by white men. The period covered starts in 1885 when white men reach the junction of the Murray and Strickland Rivers and finishes in 1967 when a government station has been established at Nomad but white Christian missionaries have not yet come to live. The book is written to mark the opening in 2020 of a High School at Mougulu. And it is written as a contribution to all the students and teachers who will attend that school. It tells part of the history of the Nomad District. It records early memories by white men who visited but did not stay. The parents and grandparents of students at the new school will share some of those memories but they will also have other memories. Those other memories will be different for people who speak different languages – Edolo, Bedamuni, Odoodde, Gobasi, Samo, Kubo, Febi and others. Perhaps this small book will encourage students to write the history that is remembered by their own parents and grandparents.



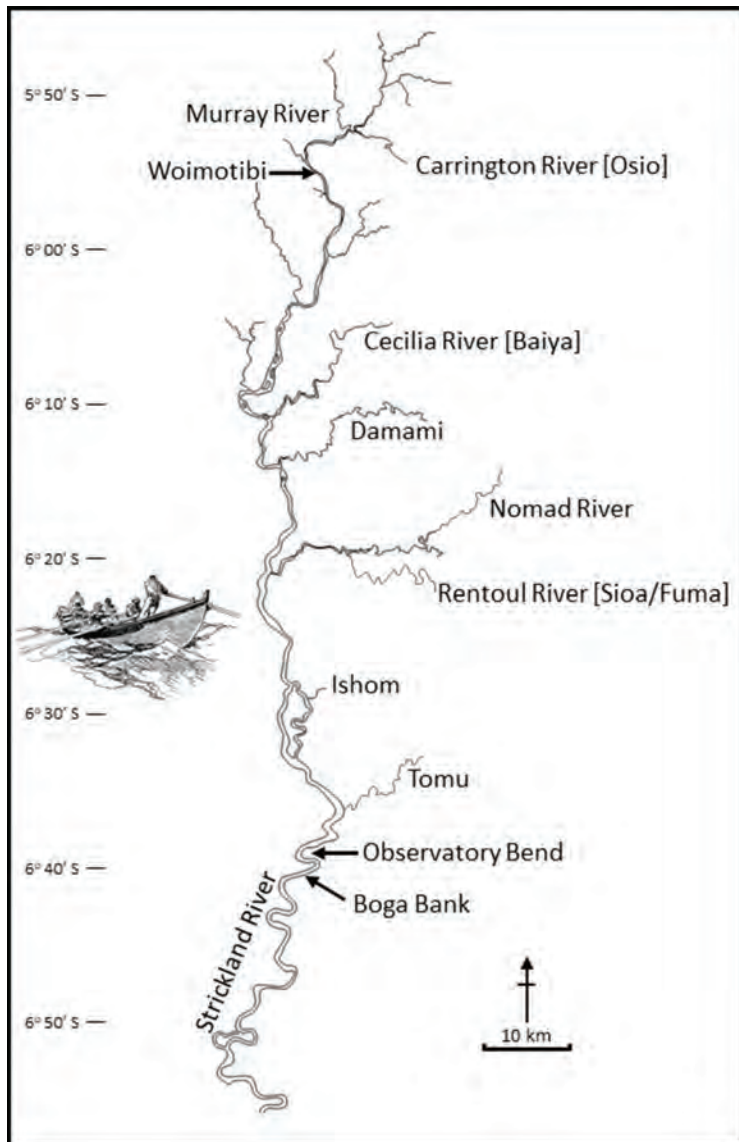
Jeffrey Willmer

## 1885: White men explore the Strickland River

In 1885, Captain Henry Everill led an expedition from Sydney, in Australia, to the Fly River and then up a large river that he called the Strickland. On his boat, the *Bonito*, there were 12 white men, 12 Indonesians, one man from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), three Kiwai men from near the mouth of the Fly who had been employed as interpreters, and five dogs. Near Lake Murray, the Kiwai men escaped, took a canoe and travelled down river back to their home village.



On 27 August 1885, the *Bonito* was stranded on a gravel bank. This was a time of drought. It was two months before good rains came, the river flooded, the *Bonito* floated free and the men could turn south and head for home. During those two months, with five of the white men and six Indonesians, Captain Everill took the small whale boat and – sailing, rowing and hauling – travelled north on the river to reach just beyond the place where the Murray River joins the Strickland. One day they rested where a large tributary joined the Strickland. They named this the Cecilia River. Its local name is Baiya.



*Bonito*, stranded near Bogo Bank, in Strickland River, 1885

The white men saw many signs of local people. There were dugout canoes and fish traps, there were small houses and fires that had recently been abandoned. They collected animals, plants and geological specimens and at several places they took string bags, stone axe heads, decorative bird feathers and human skulls. In return, they left red cloth and small mirrors and, once, what was probably the first steel axe to be seen by people of the upper Strickland River.



These were the first white men to discover and travel on the Strickland River. Near Lake Murray, local men on the river bank shot at them with arrows. They shot back with guns and may have injured or killed some of those who attacked them. But through all those months in the Strickland River area they did not speak to any local people. At one place, which Kubo people name Woimotibi, the visitors disturbed a man who was fishing. When he saw them coming, he fled. Local people will have watched from the shelter of the forest. Never before will they have seen people like this. People with strange clothing, strange skin, strange dogs and a huge boat.



The *Bonito*: arrow attack on Strickland River.  
Drawn by *Bonito* artist A. J. Vogan, 1885



Woimotibi, Strickland River, 1991

## 1927: Charles Karius on the Strickland River

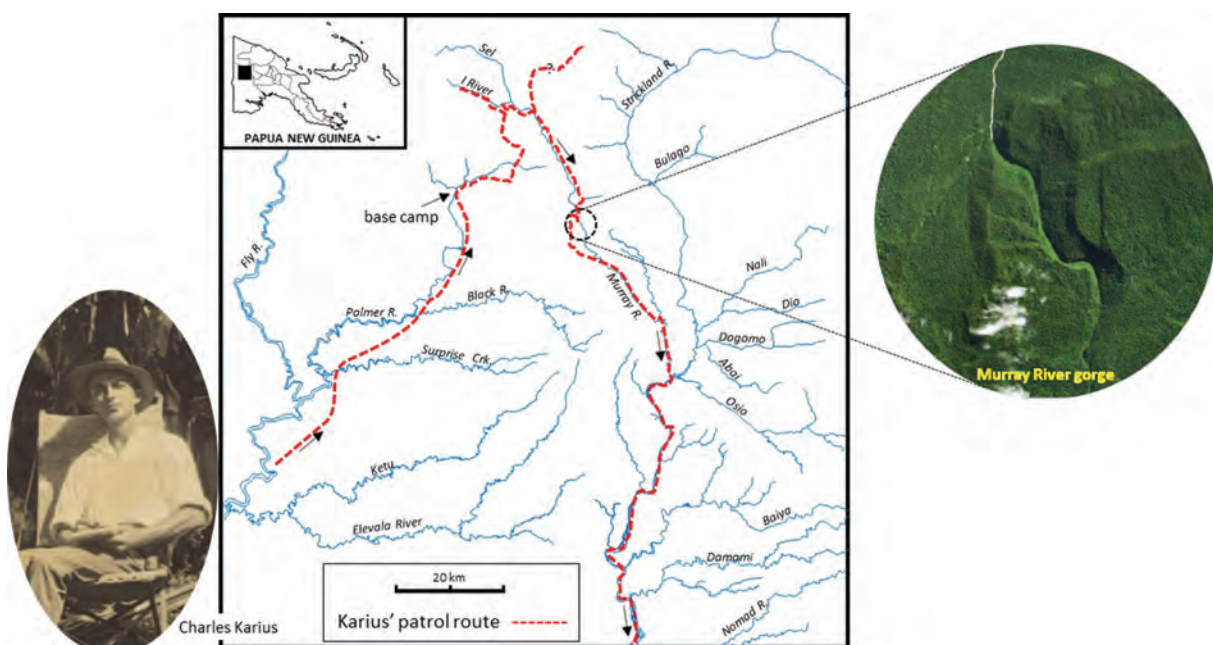
In December 1926, Charles Karius and Ivan Champion, with 12 police and 39 carriers, departed from Daru on their way north. They planned to cross the mountains between the watershed of the Fly River and the watershed of the Sepik River. They travelled by boat up the Fly River to a camp site north of the Elevala River. From here they walked, relaying supplies from camp site to camp site. In late April 1927, they established a base camp on the Palmer River. And in early May, Karius with six police and 21 carriers travelled north, hoping to follow a river that would take him to the Sepik.

But Karius did not find the Sepik River. Instead, he reached one of the tributaries of the Murray River, the I or the Sel. For two weeks, he came south, following the course of this river. Sometimes he moved away from the river to avoid steep cliffs or landslides. On 13<sup>th</sup> May he reached a deep gorge, turned back, repaired a vine bridge across the Murray River and camped on the other side under limestone cliffs. Two days later, after travelling through difficult limestone country his party returned again to the Murray River. They followed this downstream until they found a place where they could build rafts and travel on the water.

At 2.30 pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> May they reached the junction of the Murray and Strickland rivers. The Strickland was in flood: 'an immense stream of milky white water'. Their rafts were hurled at a terrific pace into a wall of rock, lifted from the water, dropped and flung toward the other side of the river. They were caught in a huge whirlpool. The fourth raft was turned upside down. The men on that raft were saved but some belongings were lost. It took an hour before they escaped.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May they made camp, and rested for two days to make sago. They were in the land of Kubo people. On 28<sup>th</sup> May they passed the junction of the Baiya. For food, they shot birds, cassowaries, pigs and a crocodile. They harvested coconuts, took bananas from gardens and on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, in the land of Zimikani people near Lake Murray, they obtained several canoes by trade. On 5<sup>th</sup> June they reached the Fly River, and five days later arrived at Daru. It was two weeks before Ivan Champion returned.

Captain Henry Everill and Charles Karius had travelled on the Strickland River north of Lake Murray but south of the mountains. They had hunted animals in these places. They had made sago and, sometimes, taken food from gardens. But they had not stopped long enough to meet, talk to and learn from the local people.





## 1935: Jack Hides crosses the Great Papuan Plateau

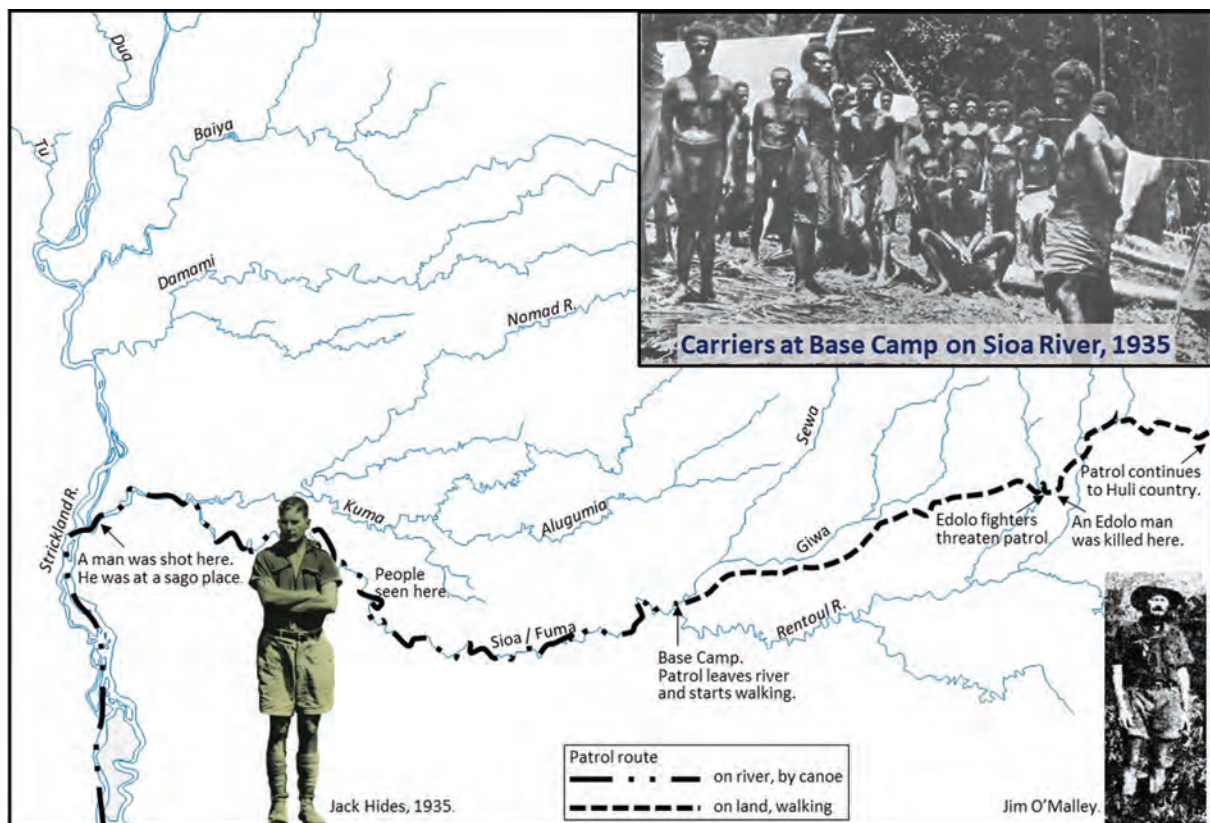
On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1935, Patrol Officer Jack Hides, with Jim O'Malley, police and carriers, departed from Daru, in the government boat *Vailala*. It was towing four canoes. Most of the carriers were men from Gulf Province. The boat turned into the Strickland River and on 10<sup>th</sup> May reached an island south of the Tomu River. The *Vailala* could not travel further upstream.

Hides' party now continued in canoes. Progress was slow. It was late January before they reached the Sioa and Hides decided to turn east along this river, which he called the Rentoul. At their first camp site they disturbed a group of women and men who were making sago. Hides tried to make friends but the people were frightened and a policeman, who had fallen in the mud, shot one of the local men who was going to shoot an arrow at him.

It took three weeks to reach the junction of Sewa and Sioa. They could travel only a short distance each day because it was not possible to transport all their supplies in a single trip upstream. At one camp site they were watched by a group of men, women and children who made fires at the river bank. These were probably Bedamuni people but they did not talk with the strangers.

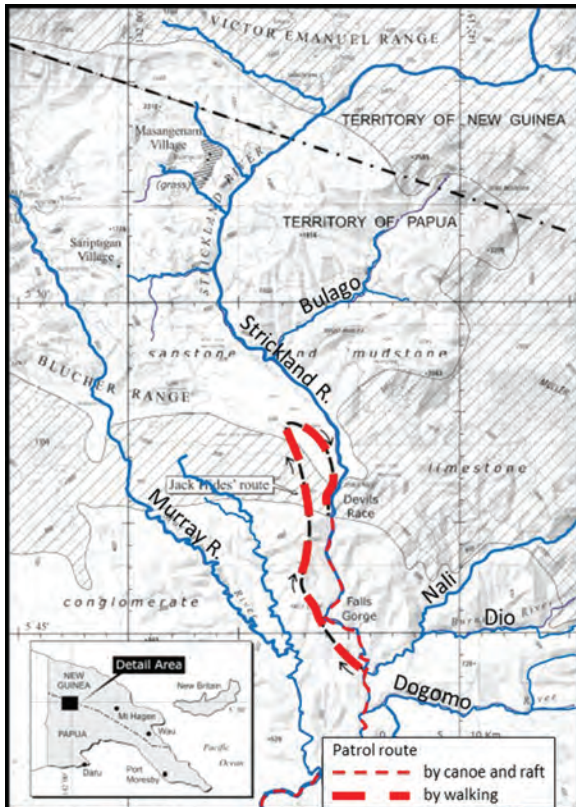
Hides' party now travelled by foot, moving east across the land of Edolo. On 20<sup>th</sup> March, they reached the watershed of Wamagula and in the evening, and long into the night, they listened to people singing. On the next two mornings they were challenged by about 50 armed men but when police fired overhead the men fled. Hides and O'Malley inspected an abandoned longhouse. They continued to the east, crossing the Wamagula, and in the late afternoon, as they reached a suitable campsite, an ambush by two Edolo men had the sad outcome that one of those men was shot.

Hides had no further encounters with people of the Great Papuan Plateau. His party crossed the mountains to the northeast, met Huli people, turned south and eventually, after many difficult weeks, reached the Kikori River and the coast.



## 1937: Jack Hides searches for gold

In 1937, Jack Hides returned to the Strickland River. He no longer worked for the Australian government. Instead, he was supported by an investment company that hoped to find gold in mountains at the headwaters of the Strickland. On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Jack Hides, David Lyall, and 43 men from Milne Bay and Kikori areas, left Daru in two boats: the larger *Ronald S* and the smaller *Peter Pan*. They established a base camp at Boga Bank on the Strickland where the larger boat returned to Daru. Now they made their way to the north, panning for gold all the way and travelling slowly. At the Rentoul River, the *Peter Pan* turned back for Daru and Hides' party continued by canoe.



Men of 'Juha'. (Photo: Jack Hides, 1937)

Late in May they passed the mouth of the Baiya River and on 30<sup>th</sup> June they reached the junction of the Murray River with the Strickland. Throughout this area they met and talked with local people. Near the mouth of the river named Dua, people gave bird of paradise feathers, red ochre, necklaces made from the teeth of dogs, and food. In return, Hides gave a mother-of-pearl shell and a new steel

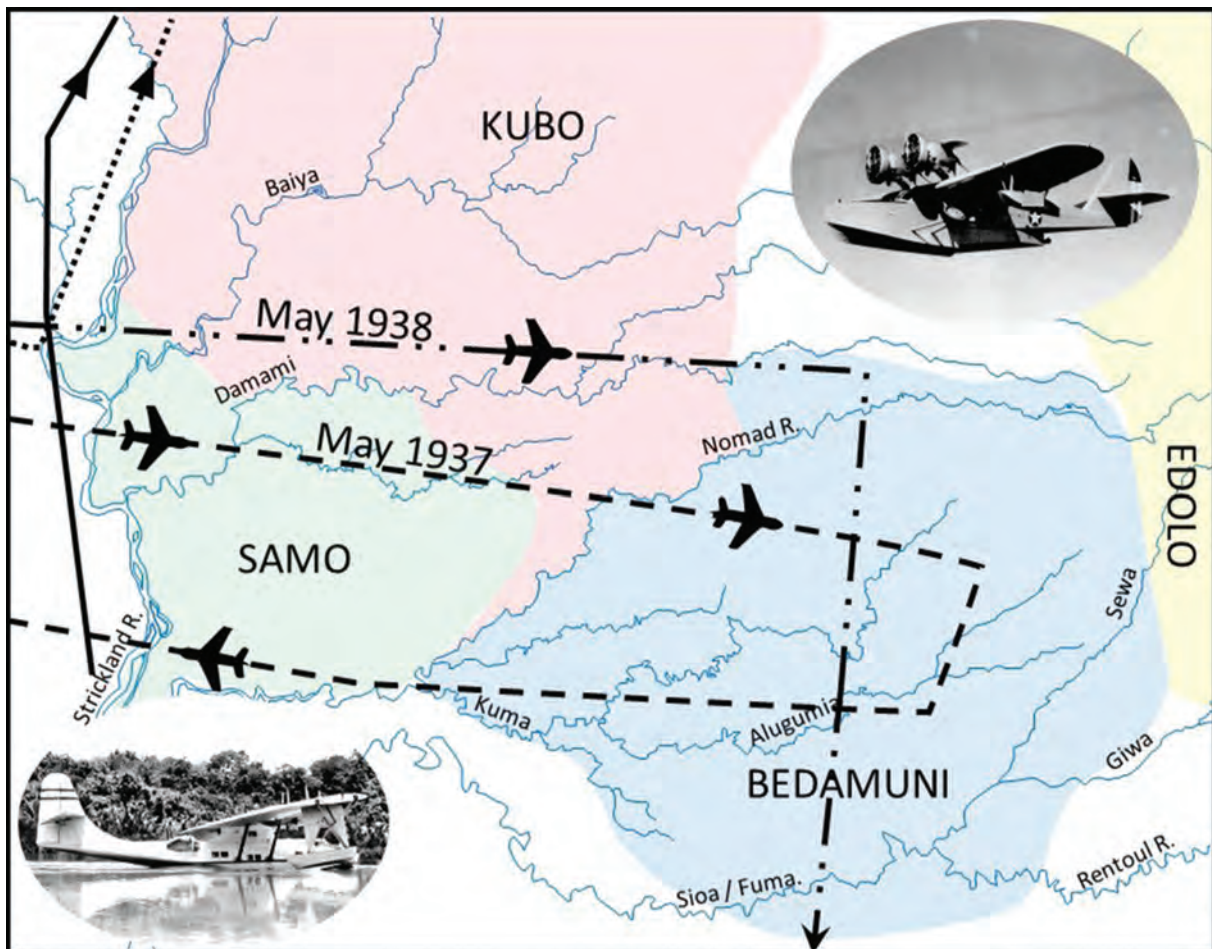
axe. Further north he met men who 'wore a belly armour of bark, and their long hair hung in ringlets'. They told him that the river was named 'Wua'. This is the Kubo name for the river. But Hides did not hear them well. He thought that the river was named 'Juha'. Many years later, geologists used this name for oil and gas fields found in the mountains where Febi people live. By 10<sup>th</sup> July, Hides' party had reached the junction of the Nali (Burnett River) with the Strickland. They could not take their canoes any further. They moved away from the river, and journeyed northwards across difficult limestone country. Their food supplies were not sufficient. Men became sick. Some died. They did not meet local people. High on the Blucher Mountains they waited for an airdrop of food and medicine. It did not come and their radio stopped working. David Lyall was now very sick and for two weeks he was carried from the mountain tops to the Strickland where they built rafts. Hides, with Lyall and the other sick men, moved off first. The remaining men built a third raft. The river was in flood and they had a wild ride south down the Strickland to the Murray River junction. Here, Hides stole a canoe and that night they camped near the Rentoul River. Two weeks later they reached Daru, where David Lyall died. Hides returned to Australia. He died a year later, long before the gold he had been seeking was found by other white men at Mount Kare and Porgera.



## 1937-1939: Searching for oil and gas

In the years 1937 to 1939, the Australasian Petroleum Company and Island Exploration Company carried out much geological exploration in Western District. They photographed the land from the air, looking for geological formations that might hold oil deposits. Some of these flights tracked the Strickland River north as far as the Burnett River (Nali). Two of them, in May 1937 and in May 1938, crossed the lands of Kubo, Samo and Bedamuni people. Between the river that white men call the Nomad, to the north, and the Rentoul River to the south the photographs revealed many villages and gardens. This was the land of Bedamuni people. It was the first time these people will have seen low flying aeroplanes.

In 1938, Island Exploration Company established a base camp at Boga Bank. In that year, and the next, geologist Geoffrey Barrow made three expeditions to the upper Strickland, mapping the river and geological formations as far north as its junction with the Burnett. On two of those expeditions his party travelled in canoes. They camped on the west bank of the Strickland near the junction of the Baiya and worked in this area for two to three weeks. They had Pare visitors from the southwest, Kubo visitors from the north, and Samo visitors from the east side of the river. At that time, the Australian government had declared the east side of the river to be 'uncontrolled territory' and the geologists were not allowed to visit. Barrow wrote that all the visitors were friendly though, if no one was watching, they would try to steal the white men's property.





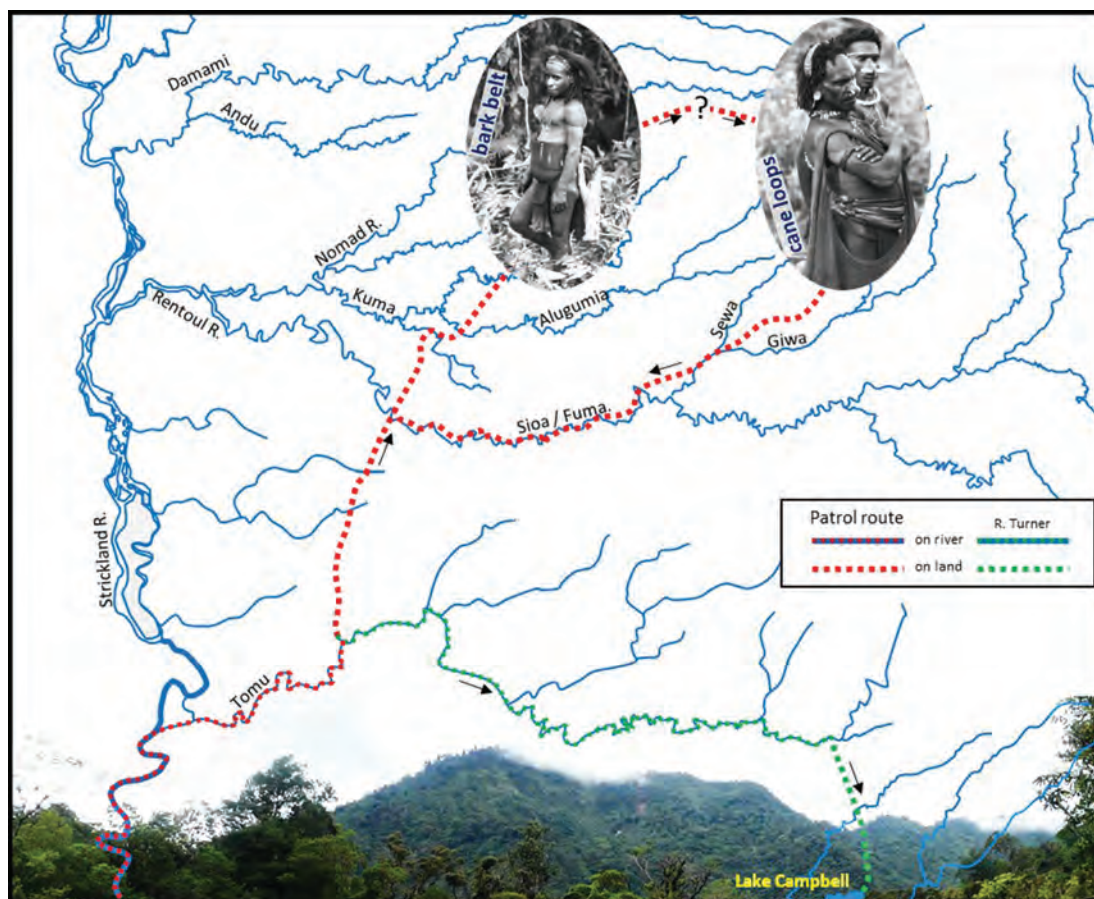
## 1940: White men visit the land of Bedamuni

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1940, patrol officers Claude Champion and R.C.M. Turner left Daru in a boat named the *Vailala*. They were accompanied by nine police, 30 carriers and one interpreter. North of Lake Murray, the *Vailala* turned back to Daru and the men continued their journey in canoes. They left the Strickland, turning east to follow the Tomu. The first night that they camped here, there was a big storm. A large tree fell on Turner's tent and, as he tried to escape, his foot was injured.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, they travelled north and reached Sioa five days later. The river was in flood. For the next two weeks they were in Bedamuni territory. They forded rivers, walked through gardens and saw many long houses and many people. At one village 50 men with bows and arrows blocked the path. Champion told his men to sit down, smoke and wait. The Bedamuni men became friendly. At other villages they traded for food, were told which roads to follow and were assisted by guides.

Close to Nomad River, they turned east. In the distance, they saw the mountains that white men call the Karius range. 'Who lives there', they asked. 'Soge' they were told. 'It is a bush place. It is not a place of people.' Champion did not understand. He thought people had said it was cold in the mountains.

The visitors continued to the east, crossing Sewa river. They had moved from the land of Bedamuni to the land of Edolo, from a land where men wore wide bark belts to a land where most men wore loops of cane around their waist. Supplies were running low. They turned south, followed the Rentoul and on 4<sup>th</sup> April returned to their camp site on the Tomu. They had buried surplus food here. It was in perfect condition. From the Tomu campsite, Champion returned to Daru by way of the Strickland and Fly Rivers. Turner travelled by canoe to the headwaters of Tomu, walked south to Lake Campbell, crossed mountains to Wawoi and followed that river to the coast.



## 1947-1948: Geological mapping

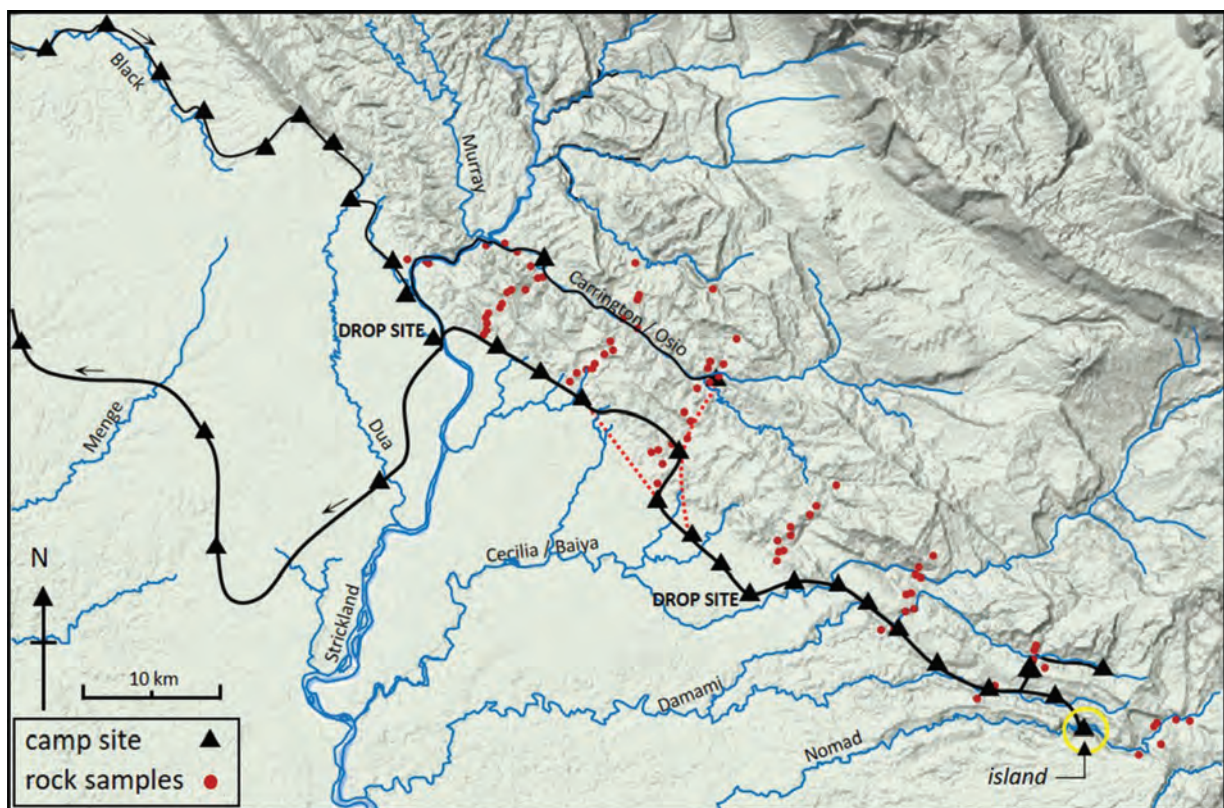
In early 1942, Japan invaded the island districts of New Guinea and coastal areas near Lae. From that time to the end of World War II in 1945, Australia, with the assistance of many Papua New Guinea people, was engaged in fighting the invaders. Most of the white civilian population left the country. Contact with remote populations and exploration for minerals and oil did not start again until the late 1940s.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1947, a team of Australasian Petroleum Company geologists travelled east from the Palmer River to the Black River and then, staying south of the mountains, found their way to the Strickland River. The team leader was geologist George A. V. Stanley. He was accompanied by five other Europeans, five Papuan police and 143 men from Kokoda, Goaribari, Kiwai, Lake Murray, Kiunga and other places. One of the Europeans was Patrol Officer Des Clancy, who was appointed by government to provide assistance to the geologists and ensure their safety.

The men reached the Strickland River in late December, made a very long canoe, established a base camp near a stream named No (also named Dege), cleared a drop site and on five days in January received supplies that were dropped from a Catalina aeroplane.

Clancy, with a team of workers, prepared camp sites and cut survey roads on behalf of the geologists. He did this first along the river named Osio (Carrington). His main task, however, was to use compass and chain to survey and cut a road across the land from the Strickland, southeast to the Nomad River. This work took more than two months. A second drop site was cleared north of Baiya River, near where the village of Suabi is now. Supplies, including frozen foods for the white men and *buai* for the workers, were relayed from here to the geologists who were now based near Osio.

At the Strickland River base camp, and at camp sites on Osio and near Baiya there were friendly meetings with local Febi and Kubo people. Clancy's party traded for garden food and, at the Baiya





drop site, felled sago palms. The men fed on birds, cassowary and wild pig for this land was a 'hunter's paradise'. In his report, Clancy wrote that

these people were excellent bird hunters and anything that flies falls to their deadly arrows. They build small houses in the tops of trees and from these they call to their unsuspecting prey until they venture too close. In most houses great numbers of bird skulls were seen .... Heads of large fish were also seen and are regarded as worthy of a proud position in the house and trophy line.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March, Clancy's men reached the Nomad River. They were now in the land of Bedamuni, close to the current village of Narius. There were many more people here and, for safety, Clancy put all his men on an island in the river. The next morning, a group of 30 men, women and children watched and called from the bank of the river. More men arrived through the day. Most carried bows and arrows. Clancy encouraged them to put their weapons down. He did the same with his gun. Gradually, the people established friendly relations and the next day men and women brought bananas to exchange for beads and axes. They would not accept the white men's food, or their salt and tobacco.

In early April, Clancy left the Nomad River, and returned to the base camp on the Strickland. At the end of April, guided by Pare men, he headed back towards Black River. His guides chose a road that avoided the large swamps west of Dua. Stanley's group stayed in the area for another few weeks, collecting rock samples in the hills near camps along the road that Clancy's men had made. They did not learn local names for rivers. Stanley was happy with the help that Clancy had provided so he gave the names Desmond Creek and Clancy River to the north and south branches of Damami. The last members of the geology survey team left the Strickland River area on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1948.

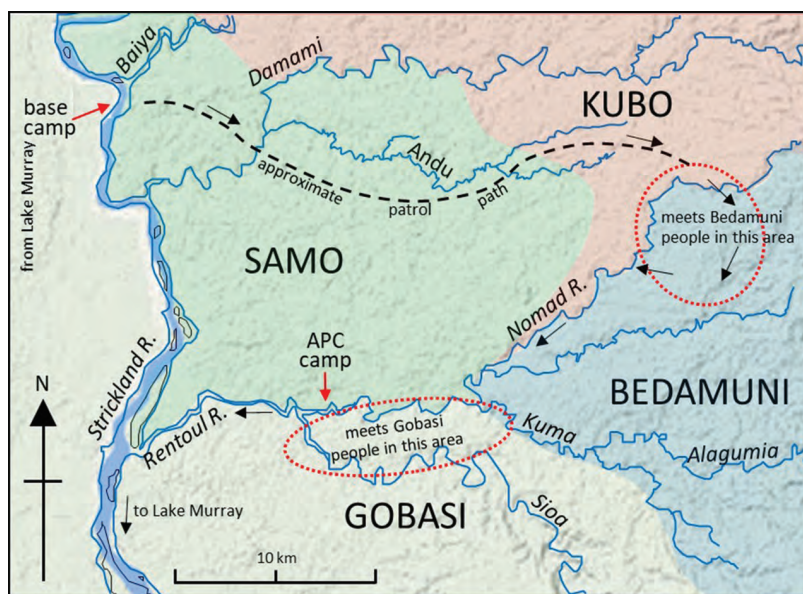


A satellite image showing the island where, in 1948, Des Clancy made a camp site so that his workers would be safe from Bedamuni men who were armed with bows and arrows.

## 1950-1954: Dave Calder, Des Clancy and the APC

In 1953, Dave Calder led a patrol north from Lake Murray to a camp site on the Strickland River, downstream from the mouth of Baiya. His party include six police, one medical orderly, two interpreters and 44 men who worked as carriers. They carried lots of trade goods: 48 axes, 78 tomahawks, 192 knives, 394 mirrors as well as beads, cloth, fishing line, fish hooks and soap. Calder hoped to meet and make friends with people living east of the Strickland.

At the Strickland camp a large canoe was made. On 30<sup>th</sup> July Calder, with some of his carriers, crossed the river to enter Samo land. The patrol crossed Damami river, then followed Andu creek through Kubo territory and eventually, at Nomad River, reached the land of Bedamuni. Here they met large groups of men who were armed with bows and arrows. After visiting several Bedamuni villages they returned to the Nomad River, made canoes and travelled downstream. On 22<sup>nd</sup> August they passed the mouth of Kuma, met ten Gobasi men and, before reaching Sioa River, passed an old camp site of the Australasian Petroleum Company (APC). They then followed the Strickland River south to Lake Murray.



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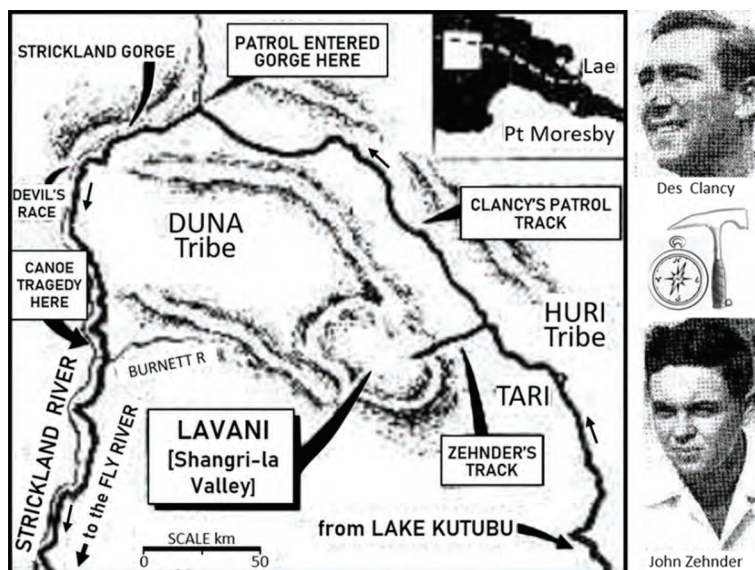
Calder reported that Samo and Kubo people were unsure why this large patrol had come. Those people gave some garden food and sago palms in exchange for trade goods, but kept women and children away from the patrol and did not reveal the location of villages. Calder's interpreters came from Lake Murray. They had some knowledge of Samo, Kubo and Gobasi languages but were unable to communicate with Bedamuni. While some Bedamuni people made friends and traded, others closed paths with broken bushes in an attempt to lead the patrol out of their area. At one longhouse, people barricaded themselves inside and could not be encouraged to come out. The Gobasi men were not afraid. They traded sago to the patrol and showed them where they could fell a palm.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1954, patrol officer Des Clancy accompanied an APC expedition from Lake Kutubu, north to Tari and Kopiago, and then south following the Strickland River to its junction with the Fly River. The APC geologists were Keith Llewellyn and John Zehnder and there were 160 carriers, including many Huli. Between Tari and Kopiago a group led by John Zehnder visited the valley of Lavani, which local people described as 'the home of earthquakes'.

In late May and early June the men travelled south, following the course of the Strickland. At a place, north of the Burnett River (Nali) they received an air drop of supplies and made 20 canoes. They set off down the river on 15<sup>th</sup> June. But some of the men had no experience with canoes. One canoe was trapped in a huge whirlpool, four metres across and two metres deep, and 12 men were flung into the water. Nine drowned. Only one body was found; the other eight rest were swept away and lost. Travel



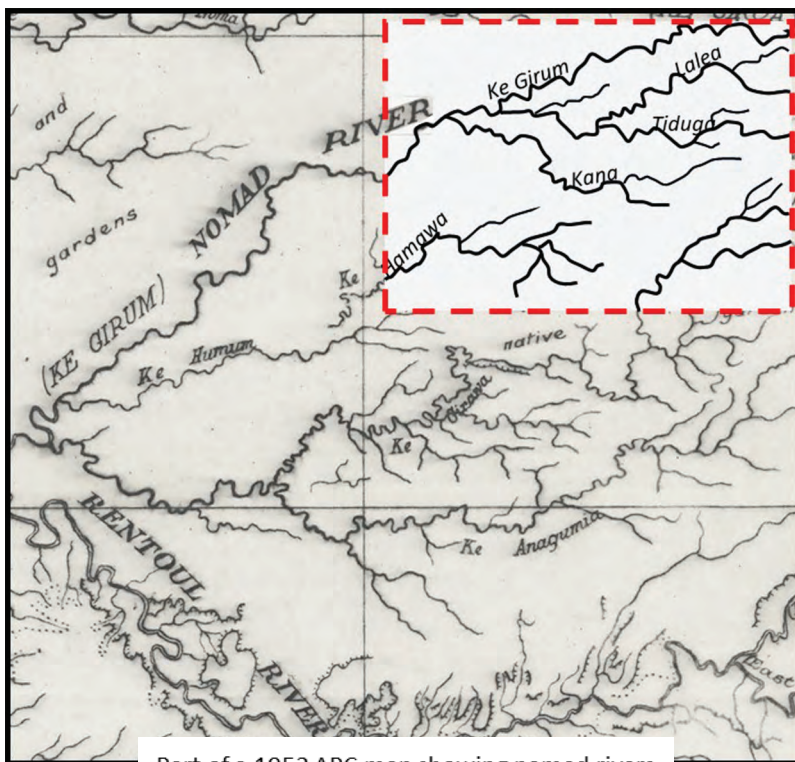


by canoe was abandoned. The men walked as far as the Murray River. One other man drowned when he tried to swim across that river. More canoes were made and the men moved south again, passing an old APC camp near Lake Murray and reaching the Fly River on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

Eight of the men who drowned were Huli. This was '*taim bipo waitman moni*' and a big meeting was held in Tari, where the government paid compensation with lots of shells, axes, bush-knives, face paint, salt and pigs.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the early 1950s the Australasian Petroleum Company (APC) had base camps at Lake Kutubu, Lake Murray and beside the Strickland River. The geologists led many exploratory patrols from these camps. An APC map published in 1952 gives local names for some rivers and creeks in Bedamuni territory. Alagumia and Hamami are named and there are names for creeks near Adumari (Lalea, Tiduga, Kana). On the map, however, the word for river is given as 'ke' or 'gwe'. This word is from a Lake Murray language. The map shows us that by the end of 1952, geologists had travelled through the heart of Bedamuni land. They were accompanied by interpreters and carriers from the Lake Murray area. They met Bedamuni people and learned local names for creeks and rivers. But their expedition was not known to the government, though in 1953 patrol officer Dave Calder saw one of their camp sites on the Nomad River. Later in the same year, APC geologists Keith Llewellyn and W. Russell travelled northwest from Lake Kutubu. Before reaching the Rentoul River they separated. Llewellyn turned southwest and followed the Tomu to the Strickland. Russell travelled northwest towards Bedamuni land and reached the Strickland by rafting down either the Rentoul (Sioa) or Cecilia (Baiya). We do not know where he travelled or who he met.



Part of a 1952 APC map showing named rivers and creeks between the Nomad and Rentoul rivers in the land of Bedamuni people.

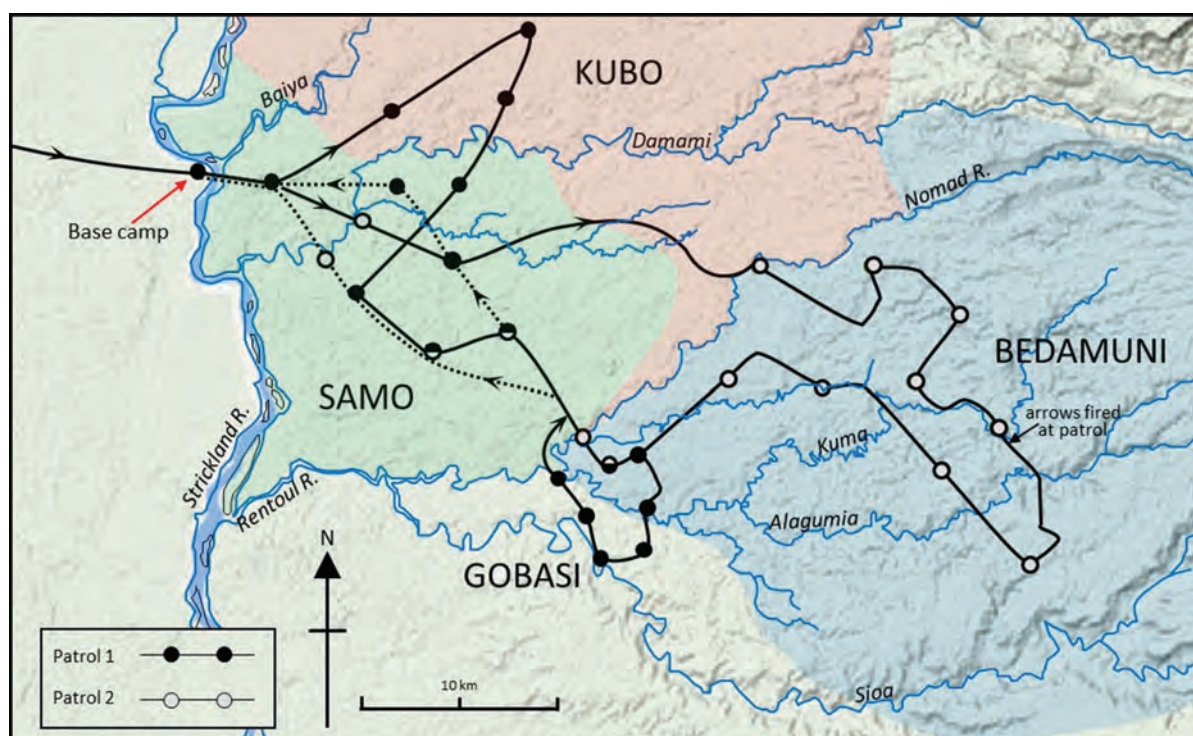
## 1959: Brian McBride meets Strickland River people

In late 1959, Brian McBride with two Europeans, ten police and more than 50 carriers, led a patrol from Kiunga to a base camp west of the Strickland River and a little south of the junction with the Baiya. This camp was visited by both Pare and Samo people. In November, after making a large canoe, McBride led a patrol through the land of Kubo people north toward Baiya, southeast through Samo territory and, finally, after visiting Gobasi longhouse communities, he returned to base camp.

After resting for a week, a large group with McBride as leader crossed the Strickland River and followed the Andu east, passing through Kubo land to reach Bedamuni territory. There were seven police, 50 Yonggom, Awin and Pare carriers, 15 Samo carriers and one Kubo interpreter to help communication with Bedamuni people. They crossed Nomad River on 26<sup>th</sup> November and were met by 50 armed men. These men took them to their longhouse and provided guides to lead them to the next community. This was the pattern for several days. They were met by large groups of armed men, saw no women and children, were shown the road to the next community and, after camping for a night, sometimes discovered that axes and bush knives had been stolen.

At one community, however, four arrows were fired at them. No one was hit but the carriers were frightened. McBride gathered all his men together and demanded compensation. Some Bedamuni men shouted that the patrol should leave or they would all be killed. Two old men calmed things down and, the next day, a pig was given as compensation. When the patrol left this place, they were watched by 70 men. All were carrying bows and arrows. They wanted to be sure that McBride's group was leaving their area.

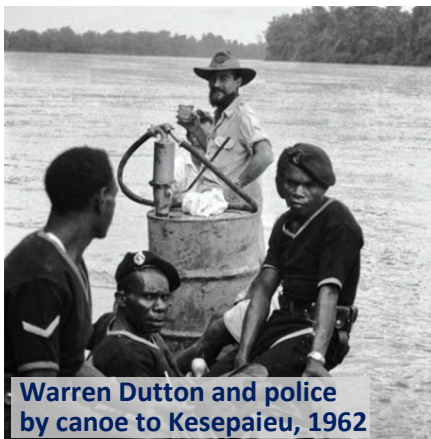
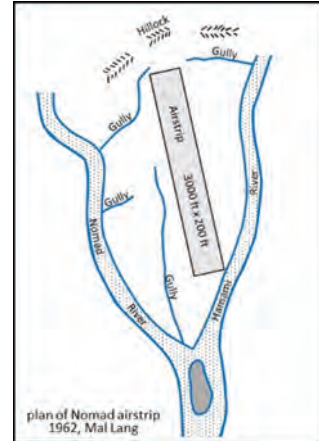
At this time, all the people living east of the Strickland River were 'hungry' for steel and a pig could be bought for just one small axe. Small knives, razor blades, mirrors and matches were highly valued and were used to trade for food. Beads and cloth were accepted by some people but no one was very interested in white men's salt. At this time too, McBride reported that while coconuts were producing many nuts in the land of Kubo, Samo and Gobasi people, none were seen anywhere in Bedamuni territory.





## 1961-1964: Nomad Station

After the attack on Brian McBride's patrol, the Australian government decided to establish a patrol post near the junction of the Nomad and Hamami rivers. The government wanted to extend its influence among these people, reduce fighting between people of different language groups and stop cannibalism. The first task was to establish a base camp on the west side of the Strickland River, near the junction with Baiya. More than 100 carriers travelled from Kiunga. Under the leadership of Rob Stott, they transported more than 10,000 kilograms of supplies to the Strickland base camp. From here, in April 1961, Stott led a patrol to Nomad. He was assisted by Samo men who helped cut the road and worked as guides and carriers. At Nomad, Stott was joined by Mal Lang who was in charge of the project. Houses were built, supplies were ferried by canoe from the base camp down the Strickland, into Rentoul (Sioa), and then to the station at Nomad. A drop site was made, and by the end of 1962 the men living at Nomad were supplied from the air. There were more than 200 Yonggom, Awin and Pare workers.



**Warren Dutton and police by canoe to Kesepaieu, 1962**

By this time Mal Lang had left Nomad and was replaced by Bob Hoad. Patrol Officer Warren Dutton took Hoad and several police from Kiunga to Kesepaieu on the Elevala River. From here, they walked to Nomad. The airstrip was completed to DC3 standard in June 1963. In July, 160 men who had worked on the airstrip returned to Kiunga. Hoad recruited new carriers, many of whom would spend the next year living at Nomad. With the station now well set up,



**One axe for one month's work**

the government planned to conduct many patrols in the district. They needed carriers from outside because, at this time, few local people wanted to work for government. Those who did, received an axe for one month's work.



**Bob Hoad at Nomad**

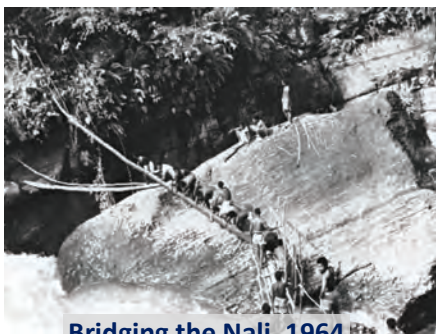
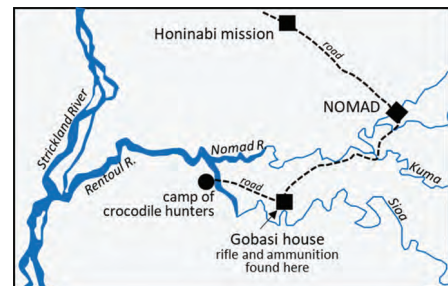
Patrols were conducted west across the Strickland River, to the land of Pare people, south to nearby Gobasi communities and, further south still, to contact Tomu river people. Shorter patrols were made to census Samo communities and, in 1963, to mark out a Special Lease at Honinabi where missionaries from Debepare were building an airstrip. Kubo people were contacted at communities as far north as Baiya river. These were all quite small groups of people. To the east, however, there were a few thousand Bedamuni people living at more than 50 communities. These people continued to raid their neighbours and sometimes threatened government patrols. Most men still used stone axes but wanted to obtain steel ones, in exchange for food or even by stealing. They used fish hooks to decorate their hair, and were startled when they first saw matches being used. They were fascinated by the 'houses' – the tents – carried by the patrol, by the Australian flag flown at camp sites, by lamps, by food

that came in tins, and by the white men's habit of combing their hair. When they saw these things, Bedamuni men flicked their wide bark belts with their fingers, and gave cries of amazement. Mirrors were puzzling and pictures in books were exciting.



On patrol: calling Daru

In August 1963, two white men camped near the Rentoul River (Sioa). They had come to hunt crocodiles. One day, when they were on the river, their campsite was raided and many things were stolen. Patrol Officer Ian Douglas and police searched for the things that had been stolen. They found a high-powered rifle and 72 rounds of ammunition in a Gobasi house. They waited for two weeks but no one returned to the house. The thieves were hiding. The crocodile hunters, Mr Baxter and Mr Henwood, were frightened and left the area. They did not have government permission to be there, and had not told people at Nomad Station where they were camped.



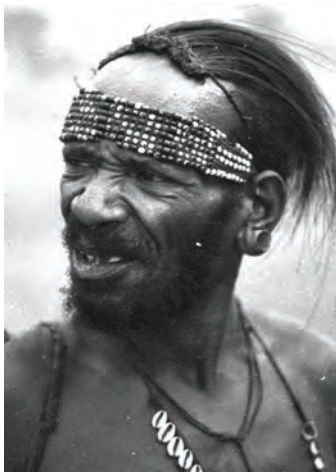
Bridging the Nali, 1964

In the second week of November 1963, Bob Hoad left Nomad with nine police, two interpreters and 55 carriers. He travelled east, crossing Bedamuni and Edolo lands, to reach Huli land at Komo. He continued north and west, through Koroba and the Lavani Valley, on his way to the headwaters of Burnett River (Nali). His carriers built a bridge across the Nali, came down from the mountains towards the Strickland River, and passed through the lands of Febi, Kubo and Samo people to arrive back at Nomad Station on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1964. This was the first time a white man had walked through the mountainous landscape of Febi people. It was also Bob Hoad's last big patrol from Nomad. Soon afterwards, he moved to Olsobip where, with Warren Dutton, he made another airstrip.

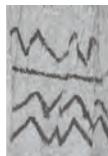


## People of the Nomad district

Bob Hoad took many photographs during his time as a patrol officer in Papua New Guinea. Some of the photographs that he took at Nomad Station and when patrolling through the land of Bedamuni people are shown on this page and the next.









## Some tools and weapons from the Nomad district



Bedamuni men showing use of stone axe and bows and arrows.



Stone clubs and arrows were used for hunting and fighting.



Stone (*tibi*) was used to make tools for preparing sago (Komagato, 1987).



## Making an airstrip at Nomad

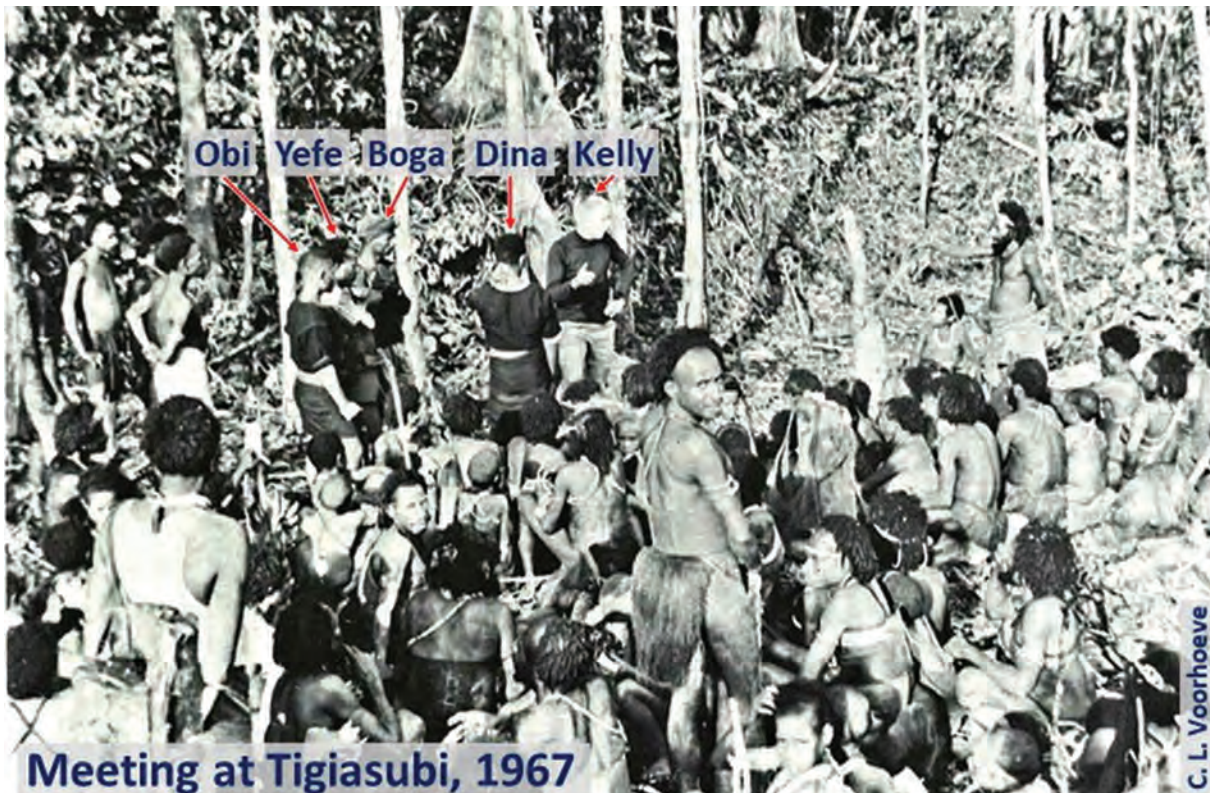




## 1965-1967: Spreading the influence of government

In the years 1965 to 1967, other patrol officers were based at Nomad. Mike Briar, Graham Dent, John Kelly, Garry Luhrs, Turiai Maravila, Mark Sage, Rob Stott and Chris Viner-Smith continued patrolling the district, spreading the influence of the Australian government. Through these years raiding continued, longhouses were burned and some young girls were kidnapped. In late 1964, matches, soap, mirrors, knives, 24 axes and three Australian flags were stolen from the Nomad equipment store. Twenty-six men were arrested for this theft, and sent to jail. Now other people were afraid they would be punished. They were now unwilling to come and assist with work at the government station.

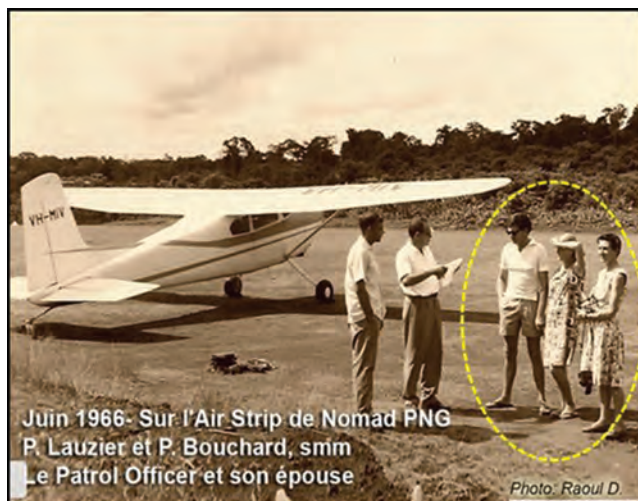
In these years, too, stories about people of the Nomad District reached the outside world. These were stories about raiding, cannibalism and above-ground burial practices. Other people wanted to visit, to see and learn about these things themselves. Roy Mackay came to make collections for the Museum. Neville Moderate came to photograph local people. Malcolm Dunjey came to survey health needs and Bert Voorhoeve came to study the different languages that were spoken in the area. Voorhoeve went on patrol with John Kelly and recorded the speeches at meetings. At Tigiasubi, Kelly told people about the new government ways. He spoke in Pidgin. Constable Boga, from Milne Bay, turned the talk to Motu. Obi translated from Motu to Samo and Yefe, a Kubo man, translated from Samo to Bedamuni. This was hard work. It took a long time. And sometimes the words changed as they followed the path of turning talk. For example, in his Pidgin speech, Kelly said that if people did not do what government ordered then "the Government will give you trouble". But in the Bedamuni language Yefe told people that if they did not obey, the government "will teach you his way of killing and capturing you". That is not what John Kelly wanted to do!



## Christianity comes to the Nomad District

On 30 January 1963, the Nomad airstrip was opened to light aircraft. That afternoon, Keith Dennis and Steve Cochrane arrived by plane from the Unevangelized Field Mission at Debepare.<sup>1</sup> They were joined by carriers who had walked from Debepare and, for three weeks, patrolled in Samo land. In May they came again, walking from Debepare, crossing the Strickland River, and camping at Honinabi. Here they built a house of bush materials and started clearing ground for a private mission airstrip. The work was done by about 35 Pare men, 70 Samo men and 20 Samo women. The white missionaries did not remain at Honinabi. For some years, the station was looked after by Gogodala men who provided local people with some health care and an introduction to Christian beliefs.

In June 1966, two Catholic missionaries visited Nomad. Father Lauzier and Father Bouchard came from the Montford Mission at Kiunga. At the Nomad airstrip they were met by patrol officer Garry James, his wife Toni and one other white woman (name not known). During the visit to Nomad, Father Bouchard preached in Motu at the first Christian service held at Nomad.



Garry James  
Toni James  
unknown



A Christian service at Nomad, 1966

<sup>1</sup> The Unevangelized Fields Mission became the Asia Pacific Christian Mission that later, in Papua New Guinea, established the independent Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea (ECPNG).



## First contact

The first white visitors to the Nomad district were all men. The first government officers to live at Nomad were also all men. It was 1966 before Toni James came to Nomad as wife to patrol officer Garry. Later in that same year John Kelly arrived with his wife Val. Their daughter Leanne, born in 1967, was the first white child to live at Nomad. Up to this time, white men had been making their first contacts with people of different language groups who lived in the Nomad area. Now, at last, those people could be introduced to white women and white children and see for themselves that like everyone else white people lived as families. That experience was a special kind of first contact.



A young man, dressed for initiation, meets the first white child to live in the Nomad district.  
The baby girl is Leanne Kelly, her mother is Val Kelly.

Through the next 50 years, many more changes occur. Missionaries come, bringing their families, and stay for many years. Community Health Centres and schools are opened. More airstrips are made. Companies come in search of oil and gas. Anthropologists, journalists, photographers and film makers come to live with, learn from, write about and film people of the Nomad district. Papua New Guinea becomes an independent Nation and the Australian patrol officers leave. People try growing chillies, rice and vanilla as cash crops. Some travel throughout Papua New Guinea and overseas. Times of drought, huge earthquakes and cyclonic winds damage gardens, destroy houses and cause deaths. All these things and more are part of another history of the Nomad district that is waiting to be written.

## Notes and memories







## **TAIM BIPO: PEOPLE OF THE NOMAD DISTRICT, WHEN THE WHITE MEN CAME**



Written by Peter Dwyer & Monica Minnegal. Most photographs by Bob Hoad.

### **PRIMARY SOURCES**

#### **Title page**

Photograph by Jeffrey Willmer, Komagato, 1987.

#### **1885: White men explore the Strickland River**

Dwyer, P. D., M. Minnegal and C. Warrillow (2015) The Forgotten Expedition – 1885: The Strickland River, New Guinea. *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 101: 7-24.

The photograph of the stranded *Bonito* and the drawing by A. J. Vogan are from Mackay, Roy D. (2012) *The Bonito Expedition: The New Guinea Exploring Expedition of 1885*. Crawford House Publishing: Belair, SA. (ISBN 9781863333368).

The image of Capt. Everill is from Plate 50 in *Picturesque New Guinea* by J. W. Lindt (1887).

The photograph captioned 'Woimotibi, Strickland River, 1991' was taken by Peter Dwyer.

#### **1927: Charles Karius on the Strickland River**

Dwyer, P. D. and M. Minnegal (2018) Charles Karius and Crystal Creek: Some addenda to 'Captain Everill's error'. Unpublished manuscript available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326059422>

Dwyer, P. D. and M. Minnegal (2019) Not the Strickland River – Charles Karius' 'short report'. Unpublished manuscript available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337636287>

Image of Charles Karius extracted from photograph held by National Library of Australia [PIC P535 LOC Album 815; <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-140492430/view>]

#### **1935: Jack Hides crosses the Great Papuan Plateau**

Hides, J. G. (1936) *Papuan Wonderland*. London, Blackie and Son.

Schieffelin, E. L. and R. Crittenden (eds) (1991) *Like people you see in a dream: First contact in six Papuan societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. [Chapters 2 and 3, Maps 4 and 5.]

Image of 'carriers at base camp' is from *Papuan Wonderland*.

Image of Jack Hides extracted from cover photograph published by *The Illustrated London News* [Saturday 24 August 1935].

Image of Jim O'Malley extracted from photograph published by *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* [Friday 14 February 1975, p. 15].



### **1937: Jack Hides searches for gold**

Hides, J. G. (1939) *Beyond the Kubea*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

The map is adapted from

McGee, W. A. (2007) Tragedy on the Strickland: Jack Hides and the Investors Ltd Expedition of 1937. *Journal of Australasian Mining History* 5: 150–70.

Jack Hides used the name 'Kubea' to refer to that portion of the Blucher Range that runs west to east between the Murray and Strickland Rivers. He attributes this name to Sitimu, a man from the Lake Murray area, who accompanied him on the Strickland for periods during both 1935 and 1937. Sitimu talked of 'head hunting' raids to the north and pointed in that direction when saying 'Kubea'. Hides was told of 'head hunting' raids as far north as the Rentoul River. In 1987 we were told of raids as far north as Dege (No) stream within the territory of Kubo people (Minnegal, M. and P. D. Dwyer (2017) *Navigating the Future: An Ethnography of Change in Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: ANU Press, p. 189). It was said that near Dege members of one named clan were killed and that their bodies were taken. We think that the Blucher Range is an unlikely candidate as the referent of 'Kubea' in Sitimu's conversation with Hides. An alternative possibility is that Sitimu was referring to Kubo people.

### **1937-1939: Searching for oil and gas**

Barrow, G. (1939) Geological Reconnaissance of the Strickland River Area, Permit 4, Papua. Island Exploration Company Pty. Ltd Report April 1939 (unpublished, Papuan Oil Search Limited library, Sydney). Plate 1 shows routes flown in the course of aerial surveys.

### **1940: White men visit the land of Bedamuni**

Champion, C. (1940) Strickland – Tiomu patrol. Patrol Reports, Daru, vol. 37, 1939-40. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb89099046>

The map is missing from this archived report. An interpretation of the route followed by Champion is provided on the map accompanying a later report by R. A. Hoad.

Hoad, R. A. (1963) Nomad Patrol no. 4, 1962-63. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 1, 1962-63. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb2903029c>

### **1947-1948: Geological mapping**

Clancy, D. J. (1948) Daru patrol no. 2, 1947-48. Patrol Reports, Daru, vol. 45, 1947-48. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb2254555w>

Stanley, G.A.V. (1948) Report on the Fly-Strickland Survey, Permits 4 & 11, Papua. Sydney: Oil Search Library (Reference RPo5474).

### **1950-1954: Dave Calder, Des Clancy and the APC**

Calder, D. G. (1953) Lake Murray patrol no. 1, 1953-54. Patrol Reports, Lake Murray, vol. 4, 1953-56. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0309147j>

Clancy, D. J. (1954) Mendi patrol no. 13, 1953-54. Patrol Reports, Mendi, vol. 3, 1953–54. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb43704582>

The map showing the route followed by Clancy and the APC geologists is from

'River whirlpool sucked nine to their death'. *Daily Telegraph* Friday 1 October 1954, p. 10. Available at

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article248944904> (includes the photograph of Clancy used here).

The photograph of John Zehnder is from “Shangri-La ‘all quakes’” (The Daily Telegraph 24 July 1954, p. 3). Available at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/248936241?searchTerm=Shangri-La%20all%20quakes&searchLimits=>

The 1952 Australasian Petroleum Company (APC) map of Fly River Province [Sheet JY-1, 1952, 1:250 000] is available at <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/115443>

Information on the 1952 and 1953 APC survey expeditions that reached Biami [Bedamuni] is limited. In 2009, in association with a Household Income Expenditure Survey, the PNG National Statistical Office produced a Notable Events Book. One ‘Notable Event’ listed for NOMAD LLG (LOWER RENTOUL AREA) is ‘1952 APC Oil Party moving through area (see BIAMI)’. This is consistent with Calder’s 1953 observation of an APC camp on the lower Nomad River and appears to confirm our interpretation that an APC survey was conducted within Bedamuni territory in 1952. Wren (1952) provides an account of the early phase of the 1953 venture from Lake Kutubu by Russell and Llewellyn. [ERRATUM: p.12, Wren, Russell and Llewellyn travelled a little ‘south of west’ not ‘northwest’ from Lake Kutubu.]

Wren, E. D. (1952) Kutubu patrol no. 4, 1952-53. Patrol Reports, Lake Kutubu, vol. 4, p. 70, 1952-53. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb2390916g>

Hoad (1963) suggests that Russell reached the Rentoul River from the southeast and followed this to the Strickland. A coroner’s report that accompanies Clancy’s (1954) report of his APC Strickland patrol states that Russell reached the Strickland via Fairfish River. ‘Fairfish’ was a name used by geologists for the Cecilia (Baiya) River.

Hoad, R. A. (1963) Nomad Patrol no. 4, 1962-63. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 1, 1962-63. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb2903029c>

Clancy, D. J. (1954) Mendi patrol no. 13, 1953-54. Patrol Reports, Mendi, vol. 3, 1953–54. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb43704582>

### **1959: Brian McBride meets Strickland River people**

McBride, B. (1960) Kiunga patrol no. 2, 1959-60. Patrol Reports, Kiunga, vol. 8, 1959-60. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb4984957w>

### **1961-1964: Nomad Station**

Key sources that provide details about establishing the Nomad patrol station are available as reports and special reports by R. R. Stott and M. Lang in Patrol Reports, Kiunga, vol. 10, 1961-62; available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb3653885z>. These reports are not mentioned in the introductory listings for the collection but may be found at the end of the volume.

See also

Douglas, I. M. (1963) Nomad patrol no. 2 of 1963-64. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 2, 1963-64. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9660770f>

Hoad, R. A. (1964) Nomad patrol no. 1 of 1963-64. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 2, 1963-64. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9660770f>

Hoad, R. A. (1964) Nomad patrol no. 4 of 1963-64. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 2, 1963-64. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9660770f>

Photographs by Bob Hoad.



## **People of the Nomad district**

Photographs by Bob Hoad.

## **Some tools and weapons from the Nomad district**

Photographs:

Top row by Bob Hoad.

Middle row: Nomad man with club, Plate 44, p. 185, from Office of Information [photographer Neville Moderate] in

Swadling, P. (1983) *How long have people been in the Ok Tedi Impact Region?* Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery.

Bottom row by authors.

## **Making an airstrip at Nomad**

Photographs by Bob Hoad.

## **1965-1967: Spreading the influence of government**

Reference to visits by Roy Mackay and Neville Moderate is from a comment by Graham Dent on an article in *PNG Attitude* by Philip Fitzpatrick [<https://www.pngattitude.com/2011/01/broken-arrows-and-smelly-cassowary-claws.html>; 31 January 2011]

Reference to visits by Malcolm Dunjey and Bert Voorhoeve is from

Kelly, J. P. (1967) Nomad patrol no. 1 of 1967-68. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 5, 1967-68. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb7647100w>

Photograph beneath 'Killers no more' is by Neville Moderate, PNG Office of Information. It is available in *Pacific Islands Monthly* Vol. 42, No. 5, 1 May 1971.

Voorhoeve, C. L. (1979) Turning the talk: a case of chain-interpreting in Papua New Guinea. In S. A. Wurm (ed.) *New Guinea and Neighboring Areas: A Sociolinguistic Laboratory*. New York: Mouton Publishers. Pp. 177 – 206. [Includes photograph of meeting held at Tigasubi in 1967.]

## **Christianity comes to the Nomad District**

Douglas, I. M. (1963) Nomad patrol no. 2 of 1963-64. Patrol Reports, Nomad, vol. 2, 1963-64. Available at <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9660770f>

The first names of the Debepare missionaries [Dennis and Cochrane] are courtesy of Chris Warrillow [Amo Wapula – an old Pa speaker and former pastor; field notes].

In a May 1963 article published in *Pacific Island Monthly*, J. K. McCarthy comments on the initial January opening, and subsequent upgrading, of the Nomad airstrip.

McCarthy, J. K. (1963) Patrol officers move in to "last frontier" area of Papua. *Pacific Island Monthly* 33(10): 77-78. Available at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-324701331>.

The photographs were retrieved in July 2016 from a web site hosted by Daughters of Wisdom, Kiunga. That web site is no longer extant [[http://www.fldsagesse.org/cms/web\\_albums/nomad-png-2013/](http://www.fldsagesse.org/cms/web_albums/nomad-png-2013/)] but may be accessible via the 'Wayback Machine' [<https://web.archive.org>].

## **First contact**

Photograph and details courtesy of John Kelly.