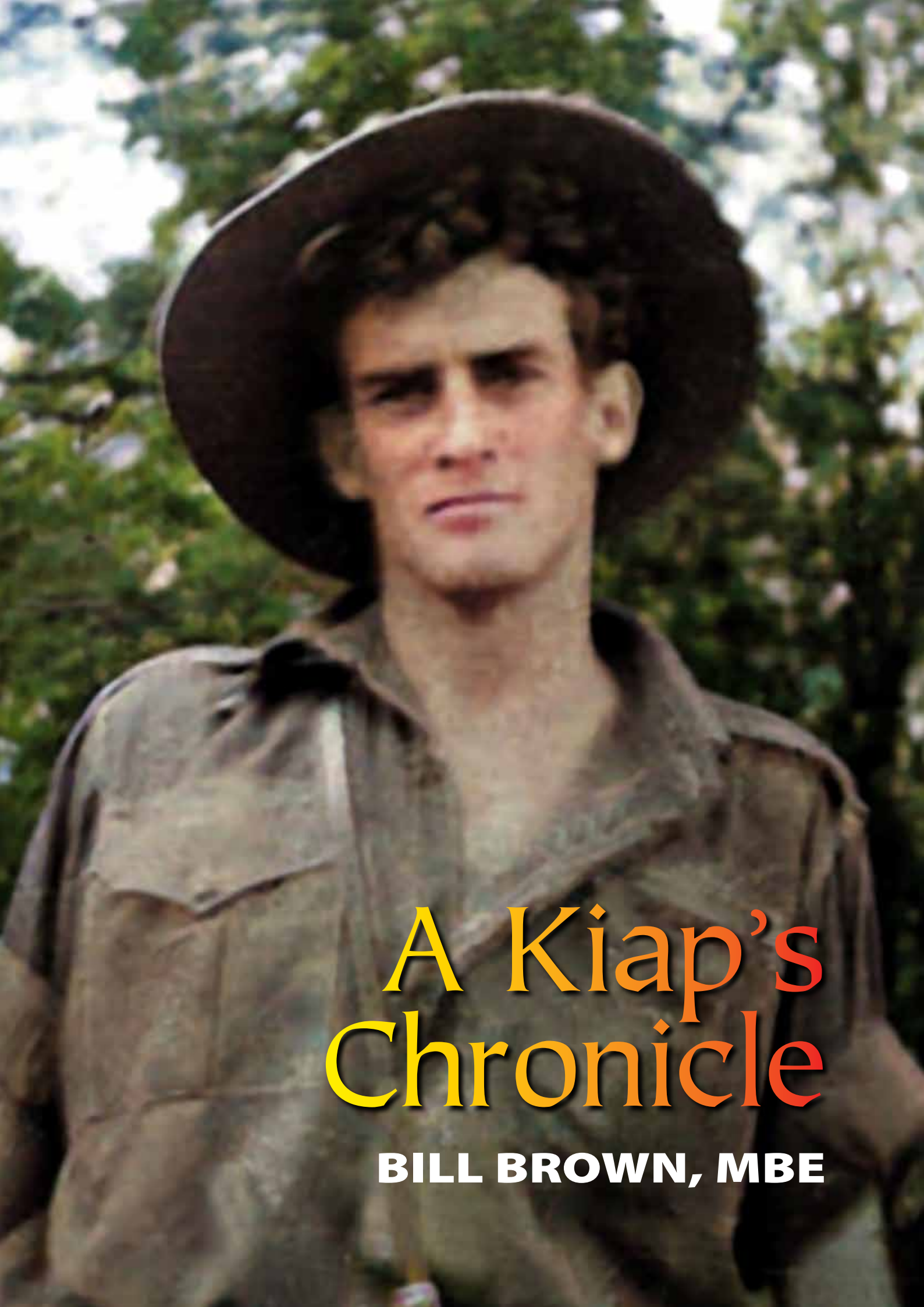

A Kiap's Chronicle

BILL BROWN, MBE

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

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Originally published as a series of articles in *PNG Attitude*

William Thomas Brown, MBE

BILL WAS BORN on 6 December 1929 and educated at Sydney Technical High School. He was selected to attend the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) before being transferred to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea as a Cadet Patrol Officer in December 1949. Between 1966 and 1973, he completed a Commerce degree by external study from the University of Queensland.

In 1950, he was posted to Kairuku on Yule Island in Papua as his initial assignment, and the following year became officer-in-charge of the one-man Urun Patrol Post in the Goilala area, three-days' walk from Tapini Government Station. Then followed a period in Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands, during which he led patrols into the remote and uncontrolled Lamari and Aziana River areas.

In 1955, Bill began an eleven-year stint in the Sepik District, where he was in charge of patrol posts at Vanimo and Dreikikir and then sub-districts at Aitape, Ambunti, Telefomin, Wewak and Maprik. In June 1966, he was transferred to Bougainville for field duties associated with CRA's problems in prospecting for gold and copper. His assiduous work was recognised in 1968 when he was made a Member of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List. The award was described as 'a rare honour never before granted to a DDA (Department of District Administration) officer of Brown's rank'.

In 1969, he was appointed District Commissioner for the CRA project area and was given responsibility for the entire Bougainville District in 1971. His PNG career finished in 1975, and he was variously Head of Administration of the Australian Film and Television School and, for six years, Director of Programmes and sometime Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission.

Bill is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders and lives with his wife, Pamela, at Bilgola Beach in Sydney.


New Guinea
INDONESIA
Admiralty Islands
Manus
Lorengau
Rambutyo
Mussau
Emira
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
NEW IRELAND
Kavieng
New Hanover
Djaul
Konos
Tabar Is.
Lihir Group
Tanga Is.
Feni Is.
Bismarck Archipelago
BISMARK SEA
New Ireland
Namatanai
NORTHERN SOLOMON
Green Is.
Kilinailau Is.
Buka
Bougainville
Arawa
Kieta
Buin
Shortland Islands
Rabaul
Kerawat
Kokopo
Witu Is.
Karkar
Bagabag
Long Island
Madang
Astrolabe Bay
MADANG
EASTERN SEPIK
SEPIK
ENGA
WESTERN HIGHLANDS
SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
CHIMBU
EASTERN HIGHLANDS
Vanimo
Sissano
Aitape
Wewak
Dagua
Maprik
Marienberg
Angoram
Ambunti
Telefomin
Wabag
Baiyer River
Lagaip
Mount Hagen
Tari
Mendi
Kiunga
Lake Murray
Garoka
Kainantu
Saidor
Umbai
Lae
Nadzab
Finschhafen
Mumeng
Huon Gulf
Salamaua
Bulolo
Wau
Morobe
Garaina
Kerema
Ihu
Kikori
Baimuru
GULF
MOROBE
WEST
Balimo
Merauke
Moreahead
Daru
Gulf of Papua
Iorna
Tapini
Kiwai I.
NORTH
Popondetta
Kokoda
Tufi
Woodlark
Kiriwina
Trobriand Islands
Fergusson I.
d'Entrecasteaux Is.
Normanby I.
Laughlan Is.
PORT MORESBY
Sogeri
Kwikila
Abau
Alotau
MILNE BAY
CENTRE
Conflict Group
Louisiade Archipelago
AUSTRALIA
Gulf of Carpentaria
Great Barrier Reef
CORAL SEA
WESTERN NEW BRITAIN
EASTERN NEW BRITAIN
New Britain
Kandrian
Wasum
Talasea
Hoskins
Kimbe
Pomio
Open Bay
Wide Bay
Crater Point
George Channel
SOLOMON SEA
SOLOMON ISLANDS

1: Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA)

Becoming a Kiap—I get to serve in Papua New Guinea

IN DECEMBER 1948, I was nineteen years of age, and I had just spent the year at the Royal Australian Air Force College.

It had been a useless year for me. I wanted to learn to fly, but the Air Force wanted me to study, and they taught me: mathematics, physics, chemistry and English literature, Air Force law, etiquette and the 'Customs of the Service'.

From the classroom, I watched the Flying Training School recruits fly overhead. After only six short weeks of basic training, they were in the air. I would have to wait for three years.

Each morning, with the other twenty-one cadets, I spent an hour on the parade ground, learning to march, and drill with a rifle. Lectures followed, and then, late in the afternoon, sport.

Personal likes or dislikes did not matter. We were taught athletics, boxing, cricket, golf, hockey, tennis, squash, sailing, and rugby—almost by numbers. On weekdays, the evening meal was followed by a two-hour study period.

We could do what we liked on the weekends, but we had to be back to attend Church Parade each Sunday morning. That meant we could catch Saturday morning train to Melbourne and spend the day there, but we had to catch the 10.40 pm train back home on Saturday night.

I was the Senior Cadet and President of the Mess Committee. I was expected to set an example, and I was not supposed to buck against the system. I certainly was not expected to be paraded before the Commandant, charged with failing to make my bed hospital-fashion, with having dirty fingernails on parade, with having a dirty rifle, etc. etc. A year was enough. I returned to Sydney in December 1948. I was relieved to escape—the RAAF was probably glad to see me go.

In Sydney, I had to find a job, but I had no idea what I wanted to do. I applied for several positions, and I could have had any of a number that were offered, but I did not want to work in an office. A job as a laboratory technician with a paint manufacturer, Jensen and Nicolson, looked different. I accepted it, but it quickly palled.

One of my tasks was to check each batch of paint as it was processed. I stretched deep into the ball mills to take the samples. I tested each for viscosity and cover. I made trial samples of the metallic paints. My face and hands became ingrained with paint, carbon black, aluminium dust, and bronze powder and I stunk of paint. Six months was enough.

I saw an advertisement for Cadet Patrol Officers for Papua and New Guinea in the newspaper. I thought that if I could get that job, I would see the country for six months, and then I would move on.

The Director of District Services, Bert Jones, and two Commonwealth Public Servants interviewed me. Two months passed, and I had just about given up, when a letter arrived from the Secretary for External Territories, Canberra. I had been selected. I would have to undertake a five-months' course. The commencing salary would be four hundred and eight pounds ($806) a year for adults but, because I was under twenty-one years of age, I would be paid three hundred pounds ($600).

On the appointed day, 18 July 1949, I made my way to Middle Head to the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA). That was a journey! From the family home at Coogee, I could catch a bus or tram to the city, and then change to another bus to cross the Harbour Bridge to Mosman. The final part of the journey was by a non-government bus to the Army establishment at the end of Middle Head.

I had another option—I could ride an auto-bike. My brother and I had each bought one, but, like most things, he had paid for both. The auto-bike was an underpowered cross between a pushbike and a motorbike. It simplified the journey, but it isolated me from the others on the course.

TOP & RIGHT: Site of the former ASOPA revisited in 2016, when there were hopes of turning it into a Pacific community centre

Then fate took a hand; I almost went under a moving tram at Taylors Square. The road was wet, and the bike skidded. It and I were under the conductor's footboard sliding towards the huge steel wheels. I saved myself from going right under by kicking against one of them with my foot, pushing myself, and the bike, backwards. I stopped travelling on the bike.

The school buildings were within the Army establishment. One single-storey brick building housed the administration offices, the library and the canteen. The two lecturer rooms were in a converted engineering workshop, where the overhead-crane gantries and huge roller doors were still in place. Those buildings belied the resources of the school and the quality of the staff.

The books in the specialist library had been selected and assembled by a Mitchell Librarian, and she had spared no expense. There were books on every aspect of Papua New Guinea: Anthropology, Law, Tropical Agriculture and Tropical Medicine. Some were new; some were collectors' items.

The lecturer in Anthropology, the Honourable Camilla Wedgwood, was a forbidding woman. She had been a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Directorate of Research from 1944 to 1945, and she had undertaken considerable field research in New Guinea. She was a daughter of a descendant of Josiah Wedgwood I, the founder of the 18th-century, fine china and porcelain company that bears his name, and her father's great-uncle was Charles Darwin.

Camilla dressed in heavy tweeds, thick stockings and brogues. Her grey hair, cut in a severe pageboy style, framed a rectangular, hairy, almost bearded face, which was surmounted by an immense square jaw. She sprayed her words from a mouth full of prominent large teeth, and delivered lectures on moieties, endogamy, and 'my Manam people' in stentorian tones.

Dr Black, later Professor of Tropical Medicine at Sydney University, told us about tropical diseases and infections. Colour slides and slide projectors had not arrived; he used an epidiascope to project ghastly images of suppurating venereal sores on male and female genitalia, of limbs covered with tropical ulcers and yaws—even one of an African with elephantiasis, trundling his massively swollen testicles before him in a barrow.

Another epidiascope exponent, Territory Agriculturist Bill Conroy, illustrated his lectures on tropical agriculture and food crops tropical crops, with sexless, black and white images of cassava, coconuts, cacao, taro, yams, etc.

David Fienberg punctuated his lectures with phrases like 'the white-arsed niggers of Bondi Beach'. It was his task to explain the practical side of our work. It was he who kept emphasising that it was our role to work ourselves out of a job—to train the local people to run their own country. I wonder whether he ever realised what that meant, or that Independence was only a few years away? Fienberg was on a loan to the school from New Guinea where he was an Assistant District Officer. Years later, as David Fenbury, he was to become Secretary of the Administrator's Department.

Some of his advice must have been good, but it was on his recommendation that I purchased a pith helmet and a metal cabin trunk, before leaving Sydney. People laughed at that 'tiger shooter' helmet. It was useless in rain, and when it collapsed I did not replace it.

The cabin trunk was not much better. It was too bulky to be moved overland by carriers, and it was too big to fit in a small aircraft.

When I left Kairuku, it was supposed to travel by ship to Port Moresby and then by aircraft to Tapini. Instead it disappeared. By the time it turned up at Kainantu, years later, I had forgotten what it contained. Fifty years later, it wastes valuable space in the garage at Bilgola. But Fienberg was well before his time, with his advice to use lots of sunburn cream, and to wear good-quality sunglasses that adjusted to the light.

The lecturer in Government, Jim McCauley, was already quite well-known as a poet and, later, became Professor of English at the University of Tasmania. At the school, he focussed on comparative political developments in Africa: Lord Lugard and the Kano, the Rhodesian Federation and the French colonies.

John Andrews, lecturer in Geography, later became Professor of Geography at Sydney University, and Hal Wooten, the lecturer in Law, became a QC and a member of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Their expertise was wasted on me. I did not know what my job was going to involve or what my future tasks would be. I could not see the relevance of Lord Lugard's Nigerian models, and I could not understand why I should be learning so much about the differences between the German administration of New Guinea and the Australian administration of Papua.

I attended lectures during the day, and I completed the obligatory assignments, but that was the limit of my involvement. At the end of August, the young tutor in Anthropology, Dorothy Munro—who later became the distinguished Professor Shineberg—awarded my monthly test a score of 'zero,' and told me that if I failed another, I would be expelled. From that day on, I did enough study to ensure that I got good marks for assignments, and that I knew enough to pass the final exams.

The five months passed quickly. We had a full lecture program, and the assignments kept me busy. The only respite was the occasional night out and, as the weather became warmer, I could escape down the cliff track to Cobblers Beach for a quick swim and lunch.

December was a busy month. I had my twentieth birthday, we sat the end-of-course examinations, and the Principal had a special function to announce the results: fifteen successful, one deferred and five failures. Our elation faded when we were told that we were 'urgently required' in the Territory and that we would be flying out of Sydney just two days before Christmas.

We were given a week's leave to say our 'goodbyes', and to do our last minute 'Fienberg' shopping. The war-surplus disposal stores were the cheapest. I bought ex-Navy white shirts, long white trousers, long white socks, 'Bombay bloomer' shorts, and, of course, the pith helmet and the cabin trunk.

Our aircraft left Sydney an hour before midnight on 23 December 1949.

2: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Port Moresby landing: my New Guinea adventure begins

WE WERE A mixed group on that flight to Port Moresby just before Christmas in 1949—education officers, agricultural officers and sixteen cadet patrol officers—and we were the only passengers on the aircraft, a Douglas DC4.

It was a charter, mainly loaded with cargo, and we obviously did not rate the best Qantas service.

The evening meal was basic, and as soon as the meal trays were cleared, there was no more service. The window shades were drawn, the cabin lights were turned off and the cabin crew vanished, not to reappear until just before dawn.

The next morning they moved down the aircraft, opening the window shades and shaking the passengers awake. It was time to eat the meagre breakfast and get ready for landing.

I could see waves were breaking onto a chain of coral reefs just below the surface of the clear blue-green sea. The sun was shining, and moments later, we were flying over the dry brown hills around Port Moresby.

My eyes were still glued to the window as we taxied along the steel Marston Matt airstrip—a legacy from the Pacific war that had ended only four years earlier. All I could see were low hills covered with dry brown grass. Where were the tropical jungles?

It was like an outback aerodrome. We disembarked by a set of wheeled stairs that were pushed to the front door of the aircraft. We were directed to a disused hangar that served as a terminal.

The inside was bare; there were no internal divisions or a ceiling, and there was no washroom or toilet. The Customs and Immigration checkpoint was a trestle table and two wooden chairs.

Two or three departmental officials were there to meet us, and they soon made it clear that they were not very enthusiastic about the task. Maybe, they had more important things to do on a Saturday morning that was Christmas Eve.

Our passage through Customs and Immigration was swift. There was only a perfunctory examination of our entry permits and our luggage was ignored. We were shown to our transport—an old army-style bus with hard bench seats and glassless window openings. Our luggage was loaded onto the back of a truck.

The narrow gravel road skirted around the low hills, lightly timbered with small eucalyptus and clothed in dry grass. There were wallabies and kookaburras. It could have been anywhere in Australia.

After a twelve-kilometre drive we reached the seashore and Koki village, and another dream was shattered. It had no tropical allure. It was a collection of thatched huts and corrugated iron shacks, the majority built along the shore with others perched on stilts over the sea.

A small armada of large, double-hulled sea-going canoes, some with claw-shaped matting sails flapping loosely in the breeze, was beached on the foreshore. The smell of the sea, of mud flats and of smoked fish pervaded the air.

We were driven straight past Ela Beach, through the township, and then around the harbour edge to a small settlement on the outskirts. We had arrived at Konedobu, the administrative centre—a ramshackle collection of single-storey wartime sheds and dormitories. It was where we would live and work for the next few months.

Our new home, a corrugated iron hut, was the only building on a dry, red-earth hillside. At each end, double doors opened to the bare interior; in one corner a stall contained rudimentary toilets and showers. The intense heat of the sun radiated from the unlined corrugated iron walls and roof. The push-out corrugated iron shutters were set too high in the walls to admit any cross-breeze.

Our furniture arrived on the truck with our luggage, and we soon had it unloaded and into the hut. We lined the camp-stretchers in two rows transverse to each side wall, draped them with army-style mosquito nets and arranged the folding chairs, suitcases and cabin trunks between them.

By the time we had finished the task it was lunchtime, and our guardians guided us on the short walk to the Konedobu Mess, introduced us and departed.

The next day, Sunday, was Christmas Day. Monday was Boxing Day and a public holiday. They said that they would call back for us on Tuesday.

We were on our own in a strange town with no money, and no friends, on Christmas Eve. What a way to start Christmas.

Konedobu Mess was a wartime anachronism. We sat down to meals on wooden forms, ten or twelve to a table, and quickly got accustomed to the waiters—fuzzy-haired Papuans—showing their superiority by ignoring us until they were well and truly ready to serve.

The food was terrible—everything came out of tins. There was egg powder in various forms for breakfast, and tinned soups, tinned stewed meats, tinned vegetables and tinned fruit at other meals. Stomach troubles were commonplace, but there was nowhere else to eat.

Tuesday morning came, and we walked across the valley to the Department's headquarters—two more corrugated-iron huts built on cement-slab floors with internal dividing walls of arc-mesh covered with tarred paper.

The acting Director, Allan Roberts, welcomed us. He did not say it, but it soon became obvious that there was no urgent need for our services and that our arrival was a nuisance. We were a threat to the festivities. 'Come back after New Year,' we were told. Nobody seemed to care when.

Our most urgent need was money. It was two weeks since we had been paid and most of us had spent our cash, what little we had, on last minute purchases in Sydney. We had been told we would be paid on arrival in Port Moresby. Now they maintained that we could not be paid until our personal files arrived from Australia.

After some heated argument, we were each given an advance of five pounds against our wages.

One of the group, David Stevens, had a solution to the problem—we should go to the bank and each use the five pounds to open a cheque account. We would then be able to write cheques for whatever we needed. We soon found that cheques could be cashed at stores, clubs and hotels, but we were still a lonely group.

Left to our own devices, we began to explore. We found the Public Library, the Red Cross Hall, and the Ex-Servicemen's Club on Ela Beach, all housed in ex-army buildings.

We swam in the tepid water at the beach reserved for 'whites'. We tried the clubs and town's two hotels—the Moresby Hotel, known as the 'Snake Pit' and, up the street, 'The Top Pub'—the slightly up-market Hotel Papua.

At night we went to the cinema next to the Hotel Papua, where the seats were deck chairs and the patrons smoked and drank liquor throughout the movie.

Four years after the war, Port Moresby was a still a small drab town of old army huts and a few prewar bungalows.

The Minister for Territories in Canberra had taken four years to decide that Port Moresby would be the capital. His department had to approve a town plan but would not do so. This prevented the private sector rebuilding homes or anything else, even on land to which they had title.

The Commonwealth Department of Works was responsible for all construction for the Administration, but it was answerable to Brisbane headquarters that reported to Melbourne. Nothing was being built.

Port Moresby was a male town. A few expatriates had managed to obtain married accommodation, but most of the men had been forced to leave their wives behind in Australia, officialdom having decreed that wives were not permitted to enter the Territory until they had 'officially approved' married accommodation.

Because houses were not being built, permits were not being issued for wives. The few

unattached females, senior officers and secretaries, vanished straight after work, probably to their barracks, the 'Stables' and the 'Virgins' Retreat'.

The absence of wives and the lack of female companionship set the social scene. At 4.03 pm when work stopped, most of the men moved to one of the half-dozen clubs to pass away the remaining hot hours of daylight.

The Papuan women were in stark contrast to the masculinity of the town. During the day, they visited the town from nearby villages, or from the seagoing canoes, to sell fruit, vegetables and betel nut. Clad only in brightly-dyed grass skirts, their swinging hips, jutting bare breasts and friendly smiles never failed to stir my attention.

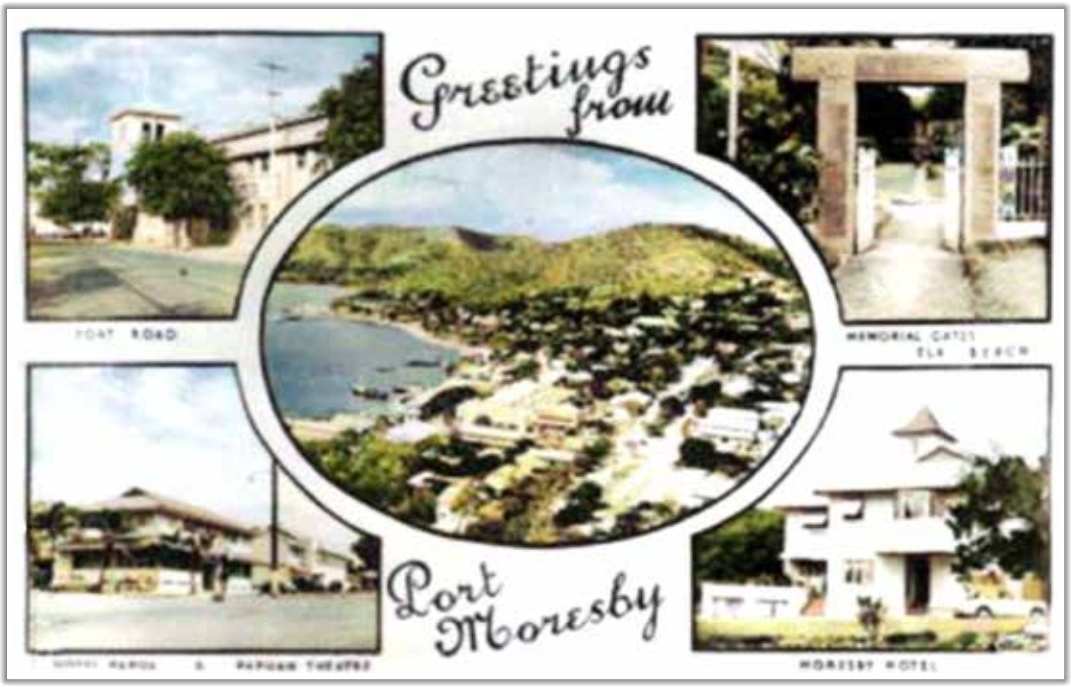
And it was a 'white' town. The hotels, picture show, beach and clubs were restricted to expatriates. The two stores, Burns Philp and Steamships, did not permit local people to enter the main store. Instead, each store had a counter in a side alley where domestic servants could present their employers' written orders for the desired purchases.

Locals, who had accommodation provided with their employment, were allowed to remain in the town after dark, but had to be off the streets at dusk. Those without accommodation had to leave town each evening.

We reported to Headquarters after the New Year, and started another training program. We were told this one was going to be practical—it was going to teach us all those things we needed to know before we were posted to an outstation.

Allan Roberts gave the first lecture and something seemed to be on his mind. He could not understand how we could believe that we could write cheques without adequate funds. The Commonwealth Bank and the Bank of New South Wales had both complained to him about us and about our lack of understanding of our obligations. He hoped we would desist.

That led Mr Roberts to his next subject: the high ethical and moral standards of the service, which involved relations with 'the native people' and in particular relations with 'native females'.



He told us that any form of liaison with 'native females' was forbidden. He said this unwritten rule would be enforced, and that any breach would result in at least a severe reprimand, but more likely in instant dismissal.

He continued his introduction, saying that our department was called District Services and Native Affairs because, on outstations, we acted for every department that did not have a representative there.

Because of this, each department—Agriculture, Civil Aviation, Customs, Education, Health, Lands, Labour, Posts and Telegraphs, Police, Prisons and Works—would provide a lecturer during the training program.

They did, and they all seemed to have the same objective: to convince us we should see the task of acting as an agent of their department as our highest priority.

Even the Commonwealth Bank joined the party. They presented us with a dazzling array of meaningless forms and an inadequate explanation of their use.

The Treasury Officer demonstrated some ten books of different accounting forms, each in quintuplicate and of a different colour.

The Commonwealth Bank introduced us to bank books, and to the forms to cover every circumstance. They even had a special withdrawal form for people who could not write.

The post office people taught us how to handle inward and outward registered mail, COD parcels, ordinary parcels and how to calculate *ad valorem* customs duty.

The Department of Civil Aviation Officer tried to teach us about wet and dry bulb thermometers, barometric pressure and coded weather reports.

The Telecommunications Officer explained how to operate a transmitter, receiver and battery charger. We tried to absorb it all and we tried to create a good impression, but all we really we wanted was to be posted away from headquarters to an outstation.

In 1950 Papua and New Guinea was divided into fourteen Districts, each controlled by a District Officer. Districts were split into three or four Sub-Districts, each the responsibility of an Assistant District Officer. Patrol Officers and Cadet Patrol Officers reported to an Assistant District Officer.

We were asked if we preferred a posting to a specific district. Chris Normoyle had spent his youth in Rabaul where his father had been a superintendent, before becoming Commissioner of Police.

Dennis Jones had been in Rabaul when his father was District Officer there. His father was now our Director. They both wanted to be posted to Rabaul; Normoyle went to Rabaul; Jones to Bougainville.

Everybody was raving about the Central Highlands, but I had no strong preference. When I learnt that I was posted to Port Moresby, the headquarters of the Central District, I was neither disappointed nor elated.

It meant that I would be the last to vacate the tin shed, and I was given the task of returning all the furniture. I failed that assignment—my confrérès took anything that was portable with them to their new postings—mosquito nets, stretchers and camp chairs.

The Port Moresby District Office, an H-shaped weatherboard building constructed in

1926, was located right in the middle of the town. District Officer Mick Healy occupied a large office in one of the front corners.

Across the open front verandah, on the other corner was the plain and unimpressive Court of Petty Sessions, where District Officers Bart Faithorn, Ted Sansom and Ernie Britten served as magistrates while waiting for retirement.

Mick Healy was impressive even though he was small framed and not very tall. He dressed in stiffly starched white trousers and a white shirt with long sleeves—and he always wore a tie.

He had sallow skin and cold, piercing, almost translucent, pale-blue eyes. Some time after I reported, he spoke to me briefly, assigned me to the Sub-District Office and from then on appeared to ignore my existence.

In Port Moresby, the Sub-District Office was located in the small room in one of the back corners of the District Office, and that back room was always crowded.

On a normal day, the ADO sat at his desk, with an interpreter standing alongside him. As many as half-a-dozen Papuan litigants might be standing on the other side of the desk, crowded into the room.

Others, perhaps less deeply involved, peered in through the door that opened to the back verandah. I became just one more body in an already overcrowded room.

A limestone hill had been excavated for the building site, and that excavation formed a three-sided courtyard, with sheer cliff walls, behind the office. The courtyard, shaded by the mango trees growing around its rim, served as the Sub-District Office waiting room, and also housed the outside pan toilets. A visit to the toilet was to be avoided—it was like parading the catwalk.

My job was to observe and learn, and that became less interesting each day, but the evenings were more interesting. I had moved from the corrugated-iron shed to a fully-furnished room in a barracks block.

Some temporary visitors occupied the neighbouring rooms and they would get together in one room, read Kipling's poetry and talk about their experiences.

Ted Hicks was having a break from Lake Kutubu. Des Clancy had just completed a long patrol, escorting Oil Search in their explorations. Herbert Clarke was sitting out a suspension while a sexual assault charge that had been preferred against him was being investigated.

Another neighbour, a cadet and slightly my senior, was in town to face the music for allegedly sleeping with a native female.

The Konedobu Mess food caught up with me and I spent three or four days in my room with a severe stomach upset.

The Port Moresby General Hospital was an old, bungalow-like, weatherboard building that had survived since 1905 and it did not inspire confidence. Dr White said my tests proved I had amoebic dysentery, a serious disease that would never be completely cured, and that would continually re-occur.

Ten days later, and much thinner, I was discharged. I have never had dysentery again. Maybe I never had it at all.

Back at the District Office someone must have recognised my frustration. I was told to get ready to move to the Kairuku Sub-District. Kairuku, located on Yule Island about 100 kilometres northwest of Port Moresby, had a fortnightly Catalina flying-boat service, and I was looking forward to my first flight in a seaplane, but that was not to be. Mick Healy did not see air travel as appropriate; he decided that I travel by a small coastal vessel.

I had no savings from my salary, but I needed provisions and some household utensils as I was going to be living on my own. I had opened credit accounts with Steamships Trading Company and Burns Philp, so before sailing I stocked up with supplies for three months.

I purchased tinned meats, tinned vegetables, tinned butter, tinned milk, a seventy-pound bag of sugar, a bag of flour, rations for a cook, a kerosene pressure lamp, a kerosene iron and a five-gallon drum of kerosene.

My final purchase, a STC radio receiver, was a portable. It had short wave and broadcast bands and was powered by dry batteries. I now owed so much money to Steamships and Burns Philp they virtually owned me.

I also employed my first cook. His wages were one pound (two dollars) a month and I had to supply rations worth more than twenty-five shillings ($2.50) a week. That was more than a third of my salary, but there was no alternative. I had to have a cook to prepare the meals while I was at work and when I was on patrol in the bush. He would also wash and iron my clothes.

The standard daytime wear was a white shirt with short sleeves, white shorts and long white socks. On more formal occasions a long-sleeved white shirt and long white trousers generally replaced the short-sleeved shirt and shorts, and they had to be lightly starched and ironed.

Sadi, the cook, was from the Buang area near Finschhafen, and he said he could cook, wash clothes and iron them. It was probably as much of a gamble for him as it was for me. He did not know anything about me or about Papua. He could not speak *Motu*, the Papuan lingua franca, but he spoke *Pidgin* English.

I borrowed the office utility to take my gear, the groceries and the cook to the wharf where they were loaded onto the MV *Kina*, a small coastal vessel loosely described as a 56-foot scow, and we sailed just before sunset on a Sunday afternoon.

I shared the passenger accommodation, a small cabin at the stern, with the only other passenger, John Gibson. He was going to Kairuku to take over as Assistant District Officer and he would be my boss. He slept peacefully all night, while I spent the night hanging over the stern. I was very seasick.

3: Kairuku, Central Province

Papua 1950—I settle into outstation life

MV *KINA* ENTERED Hall Sound just after dawn. Fifteen minutes later, the mainland was still on the right, but Kairuku—the government station on Yule Island and its long, dry-stone wharf—had appeared on the left.

That wharf would have been built by hand. A horrendous task in the sun and heat, with bare-footed labourers probably having to haul those large rocks for long distances, before they manoeuvred each one onto the reef, then manhandled and fitted each into an appropriate slot.

The wharf would have slowly emerged from the sea, gaining height and length, eventually extending to the extremity of the reef, but never quiet reaching very deep water.

After the boat trip from Port Moresby, my stomach was a void. The sea was calm, my sea sickness had gone and I was hungry and thirsty, but there was nothing to eat or drink. *Kina* was anchored in deep water a few hundred metres from the wharf and I could not get ashore.

About two hours later, a double canoe left the shore, poled through the water alongside the wharf by two prisoners, their red loincloths emblazoned with broad black arrows. A native police constable and two expatriates, the latter dressed in white shirts, white shorts and long white socks, stood on the light platform straddling the hulls.

As we approached the landing, beyond the beach I could see a parade ground, replete with flagstaff and Australian Blue Ensign, extending along the foreshore. To the left, manicured grass and long orderly rows of coconut palms stretched into the distance.

The gravel crunched beneath us as we walked along a path lined with white-painted stones to where a small crowd had gathered in the shade of a large mango tree. There were not many people and they stood in two groups—the expatriates and the rest.

As I was introduced, I thought about the fraternisation warning. None of those expatriates was single and all, except the children, were older than me. I realised I might be about to begin a very lonely period.

I spent the first night with the Tuohy family: Austin, the Patrol Officer, his wife Sylvia and their two young children.

Their home, with a roof thatched with nipa palm fronds and plaited cane walls, was perched on the hillside overlooking the parade ground and the beach.

It was a wonderful position but the window openings had sloping galvanised-iron eyebrows fixed to the outside walls and were covered with a fly-wire mesh. The fly-wire stopped any breeze, the eyebrows obscured the view and the interior of the house was hot and dark.

At dusk, I had my first experience of what was to become a daily ritual—the lighting of the kerosene pressure-lamps.

The model of the day, the 300-candlepower Tilley, burnt kerosene fuel and had a woven-asbestos mantle that had to be preheated from a spirit-soaked wick. I soon found out that the mantle was fragile and easily broken, that the kerosene tube was frequently blocked and that lamps only broke down at dusk.

I took my first wash under a bucket shower: a galvanised bucket with a shower rose screwed into the base. Filled with warm water, the bucket was hauled towards the ceiling by rope and pulley, the stopcock was released and the warm water flowed slowly as gravity allowed.

Two days later, the outgoing Assistant District Officer, Jock McLeod, and his wife left by the fortnightly Catalina flying boat, and I was able to move up the hill to join John Gibson in the ADO's house.

From the distance, it looked a dolls' house—two-storey and box-like with white fibro walls and a red corrugated iron roof. But it had occupied that lonely site on the knoll since the early 1930s, withstanding both weather and Japanese air raids.

Inside the house, a central stairwell divided the cement-slab ground floor. A dining room and a sitting room occupied each front corner. The kitchen in one of the back corners was replete with a wood-fired fuel stove, a kerosene refrigerator and a wooden table, but there was no kitchen sink or running water, just a hand basin and a bucket of water for washing up.

The bathroom was located downstairs, away from the bedrooms, because it was easier to get the hot water for the shower from the kitchen stove, but its location outside the kitchen door along with the pan toilet did little for privacy.

The bedrooms and the lounge room on the top floor were too hot to be used during the day, but a stand-alone room with a thatch roof and fly-wire walls in front of the house was cool. It was where we ate our lunch and relaxed after work.

The ADO's jeep was unserviceable, so we plodded up the hill from the office at noon and after work. It took ten minutes to negotiate the road, which was formed of stones and loose sand augmented with some gravel. The uphill climb was a struggle even in the afternoon, but at lunchtime, in the glare of the midday sun, it was torture.

John Gibson was posted to Kairuku as acting Assistant District Officer. He had attended the two-year course at ASOPA as an experiment to assess the value of the so-called Long Course to a young and inexperienced officer. His confrères at the school, all ex-servicemen and several years older, had nicknamed him 'Thrasher' because of his youthful enthusiasm.

Each morning we had an early breakfast and set off down the hill, our departure timed so we arrived at the parade ground just before 7.00 am when the police detachment, the prisoners and the labourers assembled for roll call.

The police carried the standard army issue .303 Lee Enfield service rifle, but their attire depended on the weather and on what they had available on the day.

Most wore a *sulu* (laplap) of either khaki drill or navy-blue serge topped by a red-bordered navy-blue tunic or a flannel singlet. Almost all wore a red cotton cummerbund under a belt of leather or canvas webbing replete with ammunition pouches. A brass chain hung from the front of the belt to the back.

TOP: Three long-term prisoners from the Goilala unloading heavy oil drums from the newly-built Mick Vesper barge —a police constable assists them

CENTRE: The Kairuku shoreline, the stone wharf barely visible with the stores on the left

RIGHT: Bill Brown on the hills above Kairuku, 1950 —the ADO's house knoll is to the left and the water is Galley Reach with the Papuan mainland in the background

The prisoners, mainly convicted murderers from the Goilala, the mountain region to the north, had arrived in earlier times having been sent overland to Kairuku for trial before there was an airstrip at Tapini.

They had been at Kairuku for so long, they virtually had freedom of the station. A police guard accompanied them while they were working, but it was not unusual to see a prisoner carrying the escort's rifle.

Those long-term prisoners chopped firewood, tended gardens, cut grass and unloaded cargo from ships. They were also the shepherds; they left the gaol compound at dawn to milk the goats and distribute milk to the four expatriate households. Another two prisoners were tasked to collect the toilet pans from the same houses and empty them into the sea.

The Sub-District Office was of a similar architectural style to the District Office in Port Moresby: a bungalow-like building with white weatherboard walls and a corrugated iron roof.

At the rear, invisible from the road, the most frequently used public entry gave access to the makeshift post office and bank.

At the western end of the building, a flight of wide wooden steps led to a verandah wrapped around three sides of the ADO's office—a room sparsely furnished with a desk, office chair, visitor's chair and a set of glass-doored bookshelves. The scrubbed, unpolished, bare wooden floor complemented its spartan appearance.

The adjoining hallway, lined with open wooden pigeonholes, was Bera Baupa's office. Bera was the clerk, interpreter and expert on local custom. He dressed in a white shirt, shorts and sandals and, as a chief's son, maintained an aloofness befitting his position. Very occasionally, he gave me condescending advice.

Philo Parau sat at a small table in the room that housed the post office and bank and did most of the work. She sorted mail, typed and maintained the filing system, and she teased me continuously.

A single mother with a four-year-old, mixed-race son, she was young and attractive and had a delightful sense of humour. Her high cheekbones, long black tresses, olive-brown skin and deep brown, gazelle-like eyes suggested she might not have been of pure Papuan stock.

Ivan Tuohy sat in the end room where two magneto-type telephones hung on the wall—one connected to the residences and the hospital; the other was the undersea link to the mainland, Delena and plantations to the east.

Both were party lines with no privacy. The number of turns of the magneto handle alerted the household being called, but anybody else who wanted to could listen in on the line.

The equipment in the office was basic. We had no calculators, biros or white-out. We shared an upright manual typewriter and used carbon paper to produce the required number of copies. The large safe was counter locked with a very large single key.

Straightforward letters had to be typed in quadruplicate—two copies to be sent, one to be filed in a subject file, and one filed sequentially on the running file. More complicated letters required more copies and were filed on a number of files, the bottom carbon copies almost unreadable. Requisitions for rations and for hardware were always in typed in quintuplicate.

Austin Tuohy was getting ready to go on patrol and John Gibson may have felt too superior for the menial work, so I became responsible for the cash office.

I paid the police, I issued cash advances to the hospital and to Public Works to pay their wages, I operated the Commonwealth Bank agency and I ran the post office. I should have written the cashbook up each day, but never managed it—there were more exciting things to do.

So at the end of the month, I was ready to panic. I had to prepare the tear-out originals of the cashbook, pay vouchers, receipts and schedules and send them to Treasury. Withdrawal slips, deposit slips and cash summaries had to be sent to the bank. The postal forms for COD parcels, registered mail and customs duty had to be sent to Posts and Telegraphs.

I had to balance the cashbook, the bank records and the stamps with the cash in the safe. If there was a shortage, I would have to make it good—but a surplus would be a bigger worry. This might mean I had recorded the details of the deposit in the customer's bank book but failed to record it in the bank transactions.

Bera and Philo both knew more about the cash office and the post office than either John Gibson or me, but it seemed they could not be given responsibility. They probably enjoyed watching me make mistakes, but they never let me get into real trouble, even though I must have driven them both mad with my youthful exuberance and inexperience.

The wireless room was a small box-like building set on high wooden stumps next to the office. It housed the transmitter, a crystal-locked AWA 3BZ, and the receiver, both powered by a 12-volt, wet cell battery.

The battery charger, a fractious Briggs and Stratton petrol motor, sat on the ground under the floor. The radio didn't work as well as I thought it should, so I tuned and re-tuned the transmitter. When that didn't help I made some new aerials, and had the prisoners climbing coconut palms for days as I tried the aerials in different configurations and alignments.

The twice-daily radiotelephone schedules were a big attraction. The 'sked' (schedule for sending and receiving radiograms) and radio conversations were involvement in the outside world.

The radiotelephone was not a duplex system—you could transmit or receive but you could not do both at the same time. All the stations and plantations west of Port Moresby transmitted on one frequency and received on another. While you were waiting your scheduled turn, you heard all the traffic being transmitted to the stations ahead of you and, by changing frequency, you could hear the responses and the outward traffic.

The wet and dry thermometers, barometer and rain gauge had to be read at 0900, noon and 1500. The data had to be encoded and transmitted to the Department of Civil Aviation in Port Moresby. It took time and it interfered with my freedom, especially on weekends. Fortunately, there was a small payment for the task, and Philo was happy to take the cash.

The two huge thatched barn-like stores buildings were another attraction. In the light and airy rations store, containers—drums, sacks, cartons and caddies—stood ready for daily use, providing rice, salt, sugar, wheat meal, dried peas, tins of bully beef, ships' biscuits, matches, stick tobacco and leaf tea.

Bunches of bananas hung from the roof while root vegetables—cassava, taro, sweet potato and yam—were stored on racks along the walls.

In the bulk store, bags of rice, wheat meal flour, sugar and salt, cases of tinned meat and margarine, caddies of twist tobacco, chests of tea and crates of ship's biscuits were lined in neat rows.

The twist tobacco leaf cured in molasses and braided into long, dark-brown almost black rectangular sticks had a fascinating appearance and odour.

And there was an array of tools and equipment—huge augurs, canoe adzes, Treewalla Jacks, camp ovens, mapping equipment, shotguns, revolvers, rifles and ammunition.

Harry Obi, the bulk store controller, had a skull like the Phantom insignia of comic book fame—a head, with very little flesh or hair, wide temples and a narrow jaw.

The mix of Thursday Island, Papuan and Madagascar blood that flowed in his veins entitled him to some privileges. A Special Arms Permit allowed him to own a shotgun and another permit enabled him to purchase and consume alcohol. Harry lived with his Papuan wife and their children in one of the five houses that formed the mixed-race enclave on the foreshore.

Two of his neighbours were Australians who had also married local women and had large households. They did not fit into either expatriate or local communities and seemed to be disdained by both.

Joe Bray was about sixty-five—rosy cheeked, pale, almost fragile. In the 1930s, a rich mining syndicate in the Wau Goldfields had recruited him to ride as a professional jockey but, when a hip injury ended his racing career, he had found a Papuan bride very much his junior and pursued other avenues.

The other neighbour, Tom Baker, born in Sweden more than eighty years earlier, had spent most of his life on sailing ships, until he too found a young Papuan wife from Kairuku. Her youth and alleged invasions of the marital couch were Tom's main concern.

Kairuku was the first port of call for the fortnightly Qantas Catalina flying boat, and it was always a beautiful sight as it soared gracefully over the passage and turned into the wind to land on the water a safe distance from the shore, the wing-tip floats rotating down as the aircraft descended.

As the Catalina taxied, a member of the crew took up station in the open nose-bubble to secure the aircraft to the mooring buoy. By the time the station canoe had been paddled alongside, the plexiglass bubble had been opened and the crew were ready to pass out the cargo: canvas bags of mail, pillowslip-like bags of frozen meat and the occasional passenger.

Writing in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* of December 1949, Qantas captain, Hugh M Birch, DFC, described a typical flight. He wrote that he left Port Moresby with seventeen passengers, three fowls, 200 chickens, a dog, two cats and 850 lbs (378 kg) of freezer goods. He did not mention the mailbags, but they must have been on board. There would have been at least one for each port of call.

Catalina Day was festive and people dressed for it. Even before the aircraft's 7.00 am

arrival, people congregated near the shore to see if there were any visitors, to collect bags of freezer and to wait while the mail was sorted.

Mick Vesper was the self-appointed meeter and greeter of the Catalina and of any ships that arrived. He had come to Papua with the Army during World War II, after which his wife, Barbara, and their two sons had joined him. Probably in his late forties, Mick was with Public Works and he was a jack-of-all-trades. He supervised road works, building maintenance and repairs. He oversaw the construction of the water supply, the powerhouse and a large timber barge to replace the double canoe used to unload cargo.

Mick was a 'fixer' and Kairuku was close enough to Port Moresby for senior Public Works' officials to take weekend breaks as his guests. It paid off.

My house to-be was a small item on Mick's list. I wanted it to be built at the end of a high, wooded point projecting into the sound, but that site would require new power lines and a water connection so it was not to be.

There was an old house site behind the office, just high enough up the hill to give a view over the tops of the coconut palms to the waters of Hall Sound, the mainland and the mountains beyond. It also caught the southeast breeze.

In addition, the old house piers, three metres tall at the front of the block and level at the rear, could be re-used.

Procuring materials to build the house gave me the excuse to accompany a gang of police and prisoners to the mainland.

We travelled on the *Nancye-Lee*, a forty-foot workboat, across to the mainland and, on the rising tide, up Mou Creek to the headwaters. While the tide ebbed and flowed, we chopped and stacked tall mangrove saplings for the frame, ceiling, and rafters of my new house.

Then we fed on mangrove oysters while awaited the return of the *Nancye-Lee*. The workers laughed at me when I suggested floating the saplings downstream to the boat, and laughed, even more when I insisted on trying my idea. The saplings sank to the bottom like stones.

Village people made my roof thatch, collecting green fronds from nipa palms growing in the creeks and folding them along the spine to give a double thickness. They also supplied, for cash, the floor boards—long convex lathes split from the skin of black palm trunks which, I was to find, shrank as they seasoned leaving gaps wide enough for cutlery and papers to fall through to the ground below. The floor was springy and the nails continually lifted to threaten bare feet.

The kitchen had a skillion roof of old corrugated iron which isolated the flue of the fuel stove from the thatch roof—a necessary precaution against fire. There was no sink, only a bucket positioned under a tap projecting knee-height from the wall. A wooden table served as the kitchen bench. My few cups, saucers and plates fitted comfortably into the narrow, fly-wired kitchen cabinet.

The dining space, open to the verandah and fresh air, held a wooden table, four chairs and an antiquated Hallstrom kerosene refrigerator. The refrigerator with a few shelves and a tiny freezer block with slots just enough for two ice trays was a challenge. If the wick was

not perfectly level and precisely at the required height, the flame would burn yellow not blue, the chimney would smoke and the refrigerator would get warm.

The two bedrooms and the narrow front verandah were totally enclosed in a fly-wire cage. The bedrooms were small and dark and offered little privacy as there were no doors on the openings to the front verandah and no shutters on the window openings.

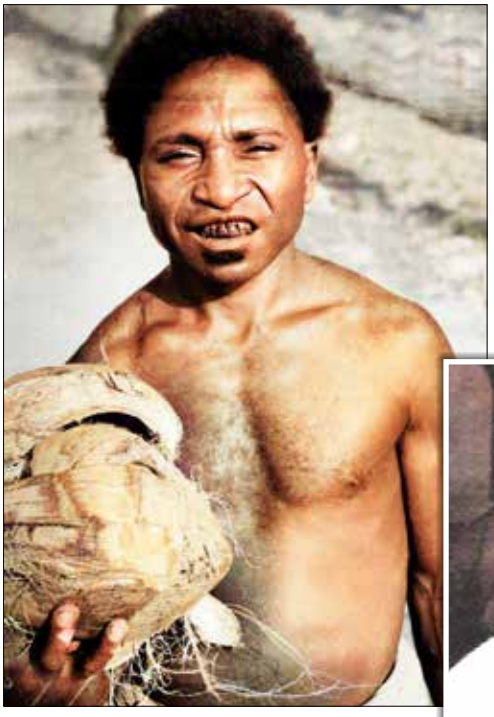
Each bedroom had an iron-framed single bed with a coir mattress. It was not a big house, but the spare bedroom soon became the boarding house for unimportant single visitors. Dignitaries and married couples went elsewhere.

My expenses were still a major problem. I was not paid the adult wage but had the same expenses as an adult. I just did not earn enough to live the way I wanted, and my overnight visitors seldom made any contribution.

I found that three credit accounts—one with Burns Philp, one with Steamships and one with the local trade store—allowed me to stretch my credit to the limit. I would run up debts with Burns Philp one month, Steamships the next month and the local store the third month. And I paid them off the same way.

I soon learnt to budget. I cancelled my expensive frozen meat order and I began to relish the occasional leg of young goat. I learnt to eat pumpkin tips for greens. I grew some vegetables and I accepted every invitation to dine out.

Life at Kairuku became quite acceptable.



LEFT: Karuama, a well-fed long-term Goilala prisoner

RIGHT: Catalina flying boat begins its take-off

BOTTOM: Bill in the Kairuku Sub-District Office, magneto phones on the wall

4: Malcolm Wright, DSC

My first patrol: under the command of a real hero

IN MAY OF 1950, acting Assistant District Officer John Gibson was on his way to Melbourne to get married.

It was to be a big wedding, and June was the society wedding month. Gibson was talking about getting a job with the United Nations; he said the UN paid tremendous salaries and offered wonderful travel opportunities.

I should have listened to him—another twenty-eight years would elapse before I joined an international organisation and began to see the world.

So Gibson departed Kairuku on the Papuan coast and Malcolm Wright arrived.

A lowly patrol officer prior to the war, Wright had finished it as a lieutenant commander in the Royal Australian Navy, his outstanding courage and bravery as a coastwatcher recognised by the award of Distinguished Service Cross.

Wright had enjoyed his first post-war posting, as ADO in charge of the Finschhafen Sub-District.

At the nearby naval shore station, HMAS *Tarangau* at Dregerhafen, his wartime exploits and naval rank were recognised and acknowledged, and there were invitations to functions at the Officers' Mess, dining-in nights, dinner dances, movies and tennis afternoons.

Nearby, the crystal-clear waters of the freshwater pool at Butaweng were the ideal place to recover from the heat and humidity.

Kairuku was a backwater by comparison. It was Wright's first Papuan posting and he was not enjoying it.

He railed against Mick Healy's parsimony and the frustrations of the Papuan system, but he maintained his cheery disposition. He smiled and his eyes twinkled as he puffed on his curved-stem Petersen pipe.

I watched his frustration increasing, and I began to understand the role the Assistant District Officer played in the community. He ran the Sub-District; he was the administrator and the co-ordinator.

He ran the bank, the post office and the telecommunications, and he was also the stipendiary magistrate, the coroner, the senior police officer and the gaoler. He could put people in gaol, look after them while they were incarcerated, discharge them when their term had expired, and then help them get back to their villages.

He could, and did, issue a myriad of licences, and he could perform marriages. The Sub-District Office was where it all happened; it was the hub of the community.

The clerk Bera Baupua must have spread word, that the new government *taubada* was

not only a notable worth talking to, he was also friendly and approachable. Village leaders arrived to check out Wright for themselves. They came from Hisiu on the coast in the east, from Waima and Kivori in the west, and, from the hinterland, the Roro and the Mekeo. Some arrived with a gift tucked under their arms, a live fowl seemingly subdued by the occasion.

The Catholic Bishop, André Sorin, made a gracious official call while knowing full well he could easily influence our careers—he was a member of the highest government council, and the Administrator sought his opinion.

The Bishop was a charmer. Born in 1903 in the Bay of Biscay town of Les Sables d'Olonne, he worried about a strong French accent that nobody else noticed. When he attended the occasional social at the Wrights' house, he was the life of the party, playing popular melodies on Grace's upright piano and singing unaccompanied his vast repertoire of Roro and Mekeo love songs.

Percy Chatterton was another visitor. He headed the London Missionary Society at mainland Delena, visible as a red-roofed complex on a low cliff three kilometres across the sound. I soon learnt to be wary of him. A bluff, hearty soul, he had come to Papua from England in 1924 when he was twenty-six. He lacked the Bishop's subtlety and finesse and he was somewhat overbearing. When he disapproved of something, he wrote a letter of complaint to the Administrator in Port Moresby. He even wrote one about me—he thought that, with my lack of experience, I should not be attempting to mediate disputes. Maybe he was right.

The Sacred Heart Mission, established on Yule Island since 1885, was only a five-minute drive away and it was like a small town. It dwarfed the Government Station and flaunted a massive church, the Bishop's residence, the Fathers' house, a Sacred Heart convent, a convent of Carmelite nuns, the De La Salle Brothers Boarding School, mechanical and carpentry workshops, bulk store, printery and a primary school.

A fleet of launches and a small coastal vessel, MV *Saint Francis*, lay at anchor at the mission wharf.

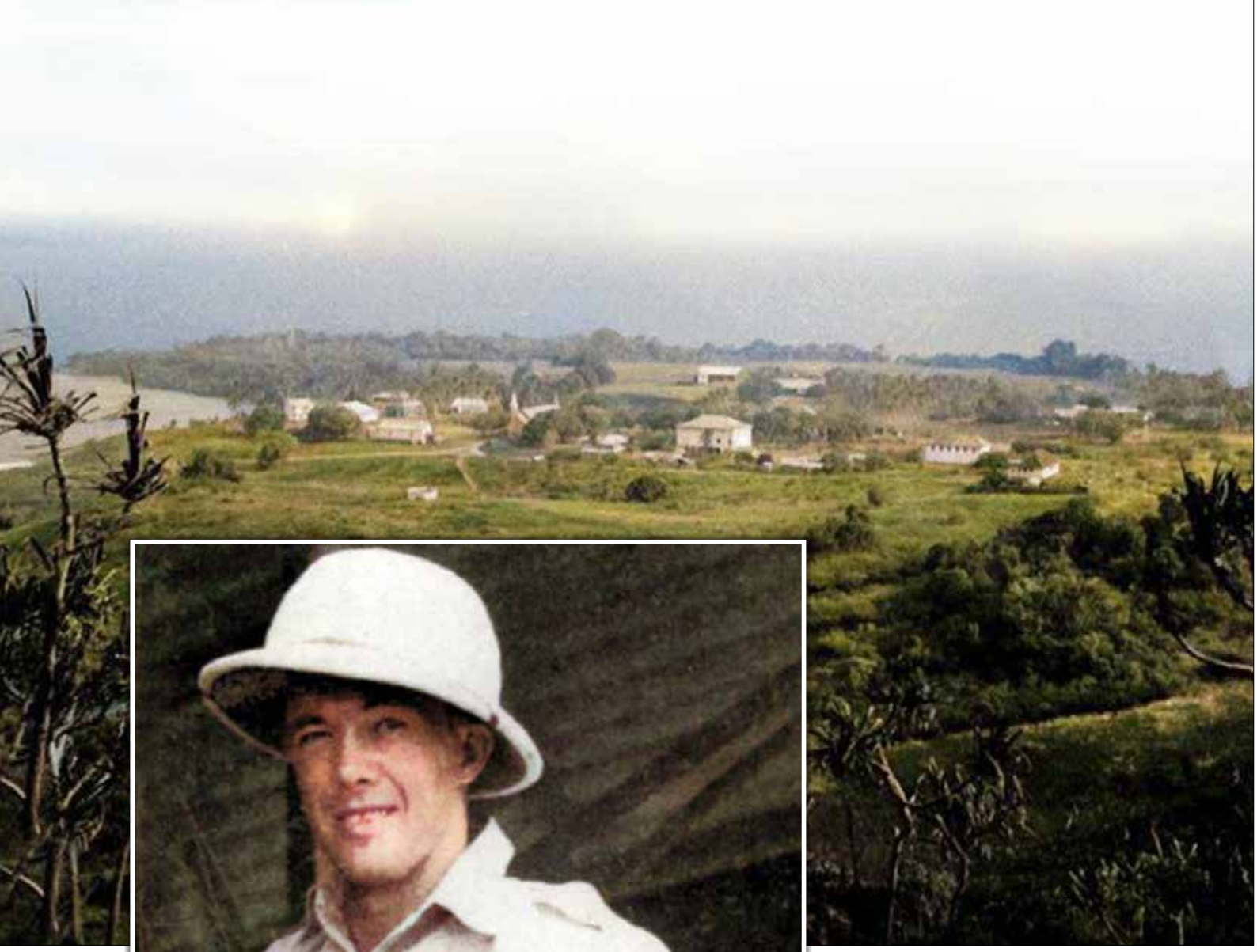
On the surface, the mission was a tranquil and happy community, but underneath it mirrored the tensions of war-torn Europe.

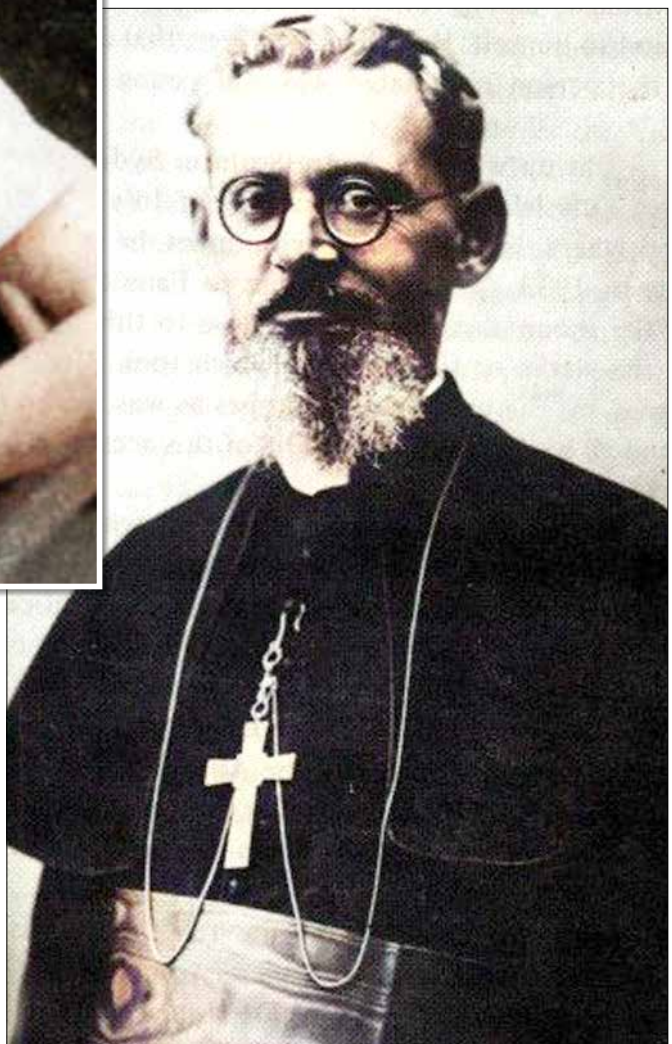
As in France, the loyalties of the missionaries had been divided during the World War II. When Germany invaded France, the former French Army hero, Marshal Pétain, as Premier, disarmed the French forces and surrendered sixty per cent of France to German control. As Chief of State in the Vichy Government, he nominally controlled the rest of France and advocated Franco-German collaboration.

In Lebanon and Syria, there was fierce fighting between the Vichy French and the Free French forces. By 1950 the wartime animosities and divisions had waned in France and Kairuku, but had not disappeared.

Another visitor, Bill Adamson, friendly but reclusive, came only to collect his mail. He was a tall and strong man with big bones, big frame and a strong jaw. His nose looked as though it had been broken more than once.

Two years earlier he had been District Officer in charge of the whole of the Central





TOP: Catholic Mission on Yule Island, 1950 *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Assistant District Officer Malcolm H Wright, DSC, 1951 —he was a renowned coastwatcher in World War II and later District Commissioner of Bougainville

RIGHT: Bishop Andre Sorin

District—Port Moresby, Abau, Rigo, Goilala and Kairuku. As a prewar Assistant Resident Magistrate, he had led exploratory patrols around Lake Kutubu and the area now known as the Southern Highlands.

Like Wright, he had resigned to join the Navy and served on armed merchant ships in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Now he ran his small plantation—at Ou-Ou Creek, on the mainland—but he always had time to chat and he gave me a lot of good advice.

Wright arrived and I was relieved of the cash office duties. He said I should be trained, not left to my own devices or to do jobs that no one else wanted to do.

I moved into my new house and could walk down to the 7.00 am roll call in a few minutes and return to the house for breakfast. At midday, I had an hour and a half for lunch to eat a simple meal: chilled meat out of a tin served with cold tinned vegetables and then fresh fruit—pineapple, custard apple, soursop or mango.

I soon found that despite what it said on the label, only three of the many varieties of tinned meats were palatable—the army-style bully beef in a rectangular can, the pressed ox tongue and the expensive ham.

While I ate, I read one of the newspapers that my parents had posted to me from Sydney. The newspapers came by sea mail and arrived about every six weeks—thirty *Sydney Morning Heralds* in each batch.

I read them in chronological order and I read almost every word—news items, editorial, and births, deaths and marriages.

Those papers had another value. Finely chopped, twisted tobacco was rolled in a piece of newspaper to craft a cigarette, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, with fewer photos and less thick, black printer's ink than other papers, was said to give the coolest smoke.

I was the only source, and I exchanged them for papayas, limes, custard apples and the custard apples' larger cousins, the bullock hearts.

After work, during the three hours left of daylight, I developed a vegetable garden. I had already organised two prisoners to build a goat-proof fence around the house and turn the hard, clayey soil into gardens beds.

All I had to do was collect the charcoal and ash from the fuel stove, and turn it into the soil before I planted seeds and doused them with water from the kitchen tap.

An Agriculture Department program provided seeds for distribution to village people, but they were not interested. The seeds were old and the people preferred paw-paws, bananas, citrus, yams, taro, cassava and dark leafed greens to insipid lettuce.

I planted all I could but only the tomatoes, silver beet, beans and pumpkin seeds germinated. The insects loved silver beet and turned it into lace, so I planted more for them to eat—each alternate row. They then left the other plants alone. I ate the tips of pumpkin leaves as a substitute for silver beet.

Most evenings, I ate at home alone. Meat from a tin, tinned vegetables, boiled pumpkin leaves and baked sweet potato or taro. The tins of meat were labelled with exotic names, but, no matter what they were called, they had little flavour and tasted like stew.

At night, I read one of the library books I had borrowed from the Port Moresby Public

Library. A small diesel-powered generator produced enough electricity for the expatriates' houses to each have a few lights from dusk until 10.30 pm, then it was time for bed and the radio.

While the generator was running, radio reception was restricted to the crowded short-wave band but, when it stopped, I could listen to the broadcast stations in Townsville and Cairns.

The weekend was the loneliest period. It was then I most resented the rule that only allowed me to mix with the expatriates, particularly when Philo's young female relatives stopped to gossip.

If I were working in the garden when they passed, they would lean against my garden fence, pert bare breasts just resting on the round topmost bamboo rail while they chatted, asking questions about the garden and my well-being.

I tried to focus on their eyes and not show any interest in the more interesting bits. They probably thought I was gay.

It was not long before there was another distraction. The Catholic Mission reported that the people from a village in the Goilala Sub-District were plundering one of our mountain villages. Malcolm Wright and Ron Galloway, the Goilala ADO, had a conversation on the radio and agreed to meet in the mountains; Wright would leave next day, and I would accompany him.

We organised the rations for the police: brown rice, sugar, tea, salt, ships' biscuits, tins of bully beef and sticks of tobacco. Our food went into a patrol box with the kitchen gear.

We each packed two other patrol boxes—one with our clothes and the other with bedding. The camp table, camp oven, folding chairs, lamps, kerosene, and buckets made separate loads.

There was barely a ripple on the sea as we crossed to the mainland on the *Nancye Lee*: Wright, Brown, six police, two cooks, one medical orderly and Bera Baupa, the clerk.

The skipper, Tom Baker—dressed in his habitual tattered shorts and shirt, and with his parchment-like skin and wisps of grey hair polished with diesel oil—perched barefooted, parrot-like, on the stern.

He called commands to the native helmsman in the wheelhouse below; flying into an eighty-year-old's equivalent of a tantrum when his commands to change course, as we approached the river mouth, were ignored.

The crew knew where we should be headed and they had younger eyes and could see the channel and sandbar at the river mouth. I wonder how some unimaginative soul could have discarded the river's original name, prosaically renaming it Ethel.

Just a few kilometres to the west, a larger river, the Angabunga, sounded so much better, as did the name of our destination, Aropokina, and the villages we would pass—Fofo Fofo and Deva Deva—as we trekked to our rendezvous at Oba-Oba.

We crossed the bar and pushed ahead. It was a sluggish river, no signs of habitation, a solid wall of trees, shrubs and vines growing to the water's edge.

Occasionally, as we passed a clearing, a crocodile would glide quietly into the stream or

charge down the bank erect on its hind legs, yellow-tinted underbelly exposed as it raced to splash noisily into the water.

From Aropokina, the riverside roadhead, we travelled courtesy of the Catholic Mission truck to Kubuna, a smooth twenty-kilometre journey along a grassed road.

The priest seemed a tad unfriendly when we called on him. Perhaps the roadhead location meant he received too many visitors, or maybe he was remembering that only eight years earlier Roden Cutler, an Australian, had won the Victoria Cross in the fighting against the Vichy French in Syria. That was the same year the British Navy had attacked the French Fleet, anchored at Mers el-Kébir on the Algerian coast.

In contrast the Little Sisters, members of an order of Papuan nuns, welcomed us with beaming smiles. Amazing to me, in that heat and humidity, only their brown faces, bare feet and forearms appeared from beneath the heavy grey habits.

I was surprised how their expatriate colleagues dwarfed them, and was more surprised that the French Mother Superior, Mother Geneviève de Massignac, towered over us all.

They sat in the refectory and talked to us about their work, but retired immediately after serving tea and cakes. The rules did not allow them to eat or drink with us.

By the time we returned to the rest house, the pressure lamp had been lit and a hot meal of tinned meat, tinned vegetables and mashed potatoes prepared. The table was laid: tablecloth, salt and pepper shakers, knife, fork, soupspoon, dessertspoon, side-plate, cup, saucer and teaspoon.

It was the first time I had slept on a 'bed-sail', a sleeve of canvas threaded over two horizontal poles, and stretched taut between them. The sleeve was too short, my feet pushed against the net and the mosquitoes bit the soles of my feet.

We moved on next morning, the villagers carrying our gear, two men to a load. Bamboo poles threaded through the U-shaped patrol box handles, chairs, tables and sacks of rations divided into loads and also lashed to bamboo poles.

Missionaries had designed the graded track for their mule trains and the people had built it, cutting the track through the jungle—carving out the mountain side with picks and shovels. Up spurs, down ravines, bridging mountain streams.

At that time, they had been enthusiastic. They had been told of the progress the track would bring, but now they were less than enthusiastic. The progress had not occurred, and they were expected to work on the track every Monday.

The rain poured down as we climbed. Over the years, the mule trains had formed chains of potholes. Now those were filled with water and soon our boots were filled with a mix of water, mud and horse manure.

Burr-like grass seeds invaded our socks and worked their way into the skin. As the day wore on, Wright cursed the plant seeds in his socks, which he declared were a form of 'prohibited, noxious weed' and in another outburst remarked, 'We could be working as tram guards in Sydney, be warm and dry, and get more pay.'

It took two days of steady climbing to reach Oba-Oba. We arrived late in the afternoon, cold, tired, and drenched by the afternoon deluge.

TOP: Beipa village, 1950 *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: The bush missionaries drop in for a drink, 1950: Father Somereaux, the tubby little Frenchman from Oba Oba in the Kuni; Father Verges, a Spaniard based at Beipa in the Mekeo; Bill Brown —photo taken on Bill's front verandah

RIGHT: Wright and his coastwatching squad in wartime: *(left-right)* Simogun Pita, BEM (later Sir Simogun Pita, BEM, MBE, KBE); Malcolm Wright, DSC; Les Williams, MC (later District Commissioner Madang); others unknown

BOTTOM: Oba Oba Mission Station—Fathers' house top left adjacent the church

Father Somereaux and Father Louis Vangecke were expecting us. The news of our progress had been shouted across the valleys. We were quickly ushered to our rooms and warm showers. We were welcomed, then dined and wined. We were not of their faith, we were two protestant government officers, and were received and treated like princes.

Oba-Oba, next morning in the sunlight, was almost a postcard scene. From the verandah of the Fathers' house, the small wooden chapel at the end of spur but a touch higher, was framed by a grove of pines. The mountains ranges in the distance provided a dramatic backdrop. A ring of dark, green-leafed citrus trees fringed both sides of the spur.

Father Louis from the Mekeo village of Beipa had been orphaned at an early age, reared by the Sisters of Mercy and had trained at a seminary in Madagascar. He dressed in beige cotton trousers and shirt, was tall, slim, almost Indonesian in appearance.

As a newly-ordained priest in 1937, he had unwittingly made one of the first challenges to the discriminatory, colonial legislation. As a Papuan he was not permitted to drink alcohol. How could he fit into the mission ritual or undertake his sacramental duties under that prohibition?

Father Somereaux, a jovial, tubby Frenchman, had brewed the sparkling, orange wine that we drank prior to the evening meal and the red wine—fermented from raisins and sugar—that was served with the evening meal of smoke-cured beef and home-grown vegetables. He also distilled the nightcap served after the meal, a green Chartreuse liqueur, by filtering medicinal alcohol many times through herbs imported from France.

Ron Galloway, the ADO from Tapini, walked into Oba-Oba the following day and he and Wright tried to sort out the Kuni people's side of the story of the Goilala plundering villages.

Bera did not speak the Kuni language and Galloway's interpreter from the Goilala was not doing any better. Eventually, a Kuni policeman, Lance Corporal Ai'a Kaio, on leave from Port Moresby, interpreted from *Kuni* to *Motu*, and Bera interpreted from *Motu* to English.

When it was time to leave Oba-Oba for the Kuni-Goilala boundary, there were not enough men to carry all the gear but Wright was not perturbed. He decided to leave me behind at the mission. Maybe, he was tired of my chatter.

I spent the next five days with the Fathers. Father Louis only appeared at meal times, but Father Somereaux spent much of the day with me. Despite the mandatory postwar requirement for returning missionaries to speak and read English, Somereaux did not. He had attended the order's live-in training program in Australia, but had fudged it, speaking only Latin. We stuck to simple conversation, Ai'a Kaio helping out on occasion, and we played a lot of chess.

One month later, I was again being shown the ropes, this time in the Mekeo. I am not sure what the official objective was apart from the census but the message I kept getting was, 'This is what you have to do, and this is how you do it!' It was unlike the Kuni. There were no mountains and there were no steep trails. We walked on level, grassed roads fringed, on either side, by a line of coconuts.

The whole Mekeo, an area of about 40,000 hectares, was an alluvial floodplain with only one hill which rose just sixty metres above the plain. The soil was rich and gardening was

simple; there was an abundance of vegetables. Even the most lucrative crop, betel nut palm, flourished with little maintenance.

The Mekeo Rice Project was rolling out and it was Bill Cottrell Dormer's favourite project. He was Director of Agriculture and that ensured funding but it did not stop the criticism.

Treasury Inspector Duncan complained that there was only enough fuel oil at the site to sustain the tractors for a few weeks but enough gear box oil for ten years, and that some of the expensive machinery—imported from Italy—was designed to produce rice paper for cigarette-manufacture. Duncan also queried why staff had been sent to the Murrumbidgee to study rice growing under irrigation when the Mekeo was a dry rice operation, the seed being planted into ploughed fields.

The Bishop was less critical. He said the people were being paid to watch the white man work. And the people were totally relaxed. They had watched the government's schemes come and go.

They knew that they could make more money with less effort by selling their betel nut in Port Moresby. If they got something out of another crazy government scheme, that would be a bonus

We spent from 29 August to 8 September 1950 visiting the twelve villages. The people kept their disputes and their problems to themselves and settled them themselves.

At Beipa, our first stopover, and the biggest village, with a population of 607, I learnt exactly how to write up a new census book to economise on space but make it all work, grouping the details of young women together so they could be deleted when they married and left the family, estimating when single men would marry and placing their names leaving sufficient space for their marriages and future children.

By the time we had finished that patrol, I think I knew a something about village hygiene and almost everything about conducting a village census. I had learnt a little humility, and I was about to learn a lot more.

5: Going Solo, Central Province

Some unexpected twists on my first independent patrol

AT KAIRUKU, I was trying to learn *Police Motu*, the lingua franca in Papua, but not making a lot of effort.

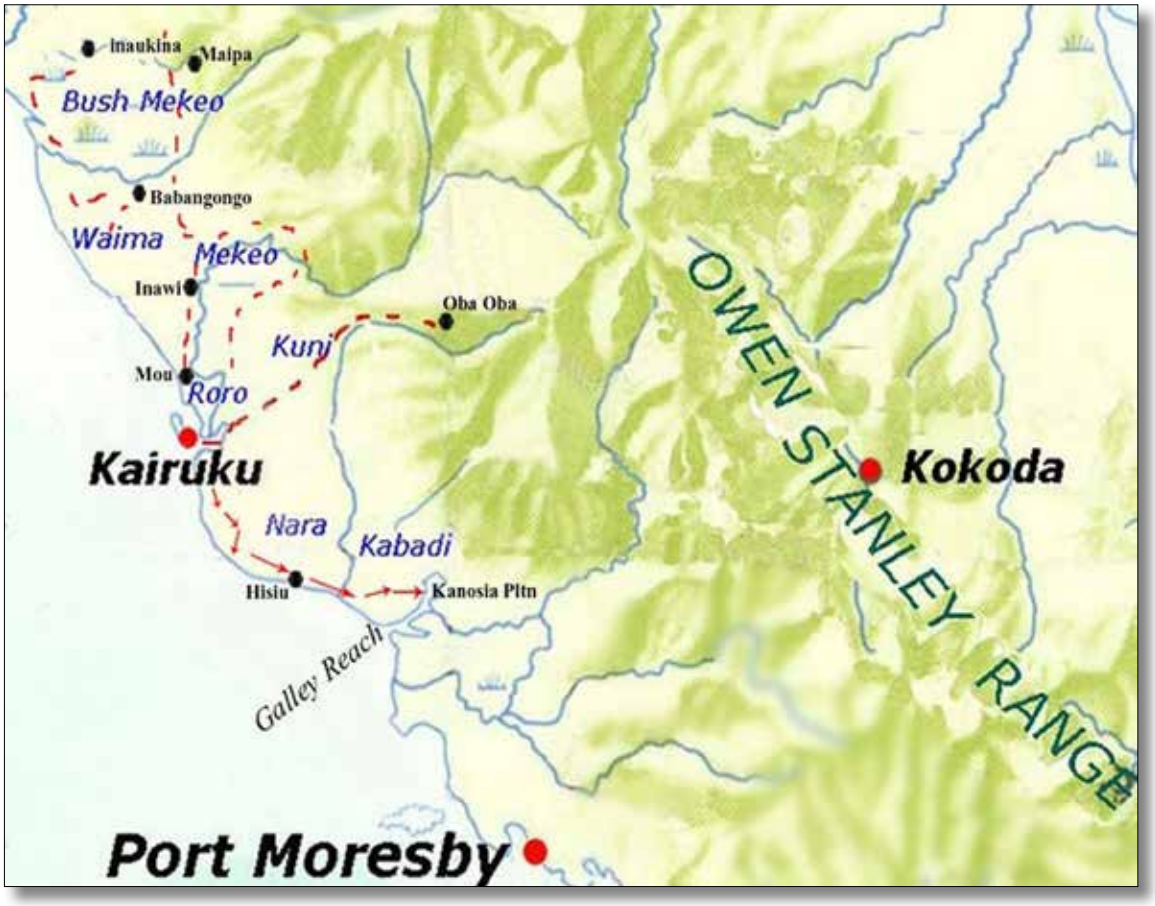
There was no real need, everyone in the office spoke English: Bera Baupua, Philo Parau, even the office boy, Leo Aitsi.

I was grinding through Percy Chatterton's *Primer of Police Motu*, a tiny, thirty-page booklet packed with grammar and lists of words. But it had been trimmed by his puritanical hand and was a tad uninteresting

My progress, or lack of it, was not good enough for war hero, Malcolm Wright.

In short order, I was back on the mainland with three Papuan police, walking the East Coast road to the Sub-District boundary.

I knew that the police had their instructions: they were to only to converse with me in *Police Motu*; they were not to speak English, *Pidgin* or baby talk. They were to restrain me from idiocy, and they were to keep me out of trouble. That was sixty-six years ago—I was twenty years old.



My tasks were to follow the East Coast road to the Sub-District boundary, rewriting the census books at villages on the way. At Kanosia Rubber Estate, on Galley Reach—our eastern boundary, I was to finalise an outstanding land application.

Assistant District Officer Wright thought it would take me two to three weeks to complete my tasks. When I had done so, at Kanosia, I would be only about twenty kilometres from Port Moresby. Wright suggested I go there by boat and have a brief break in the town before returning to Kairuku.

Once again, I crossed to the mainland, but this time I was headed for the anchorage at Ou-Ou Creek where Bill Adamson's truck and driver were waiting to transport my party the short distance down the road to Oroi village.

The old Army phone line ran waist-high alongside the road and I could see why the telephone no longer worked beyond Delena. There were many missing sections leaving large gaps in the line; the single-strand, heavy-gauge, copper wire was now in the rigging of many a village canoe.

The village census had become increasingly important after the war's end.

In New Guinea, records that had been lost were being replaced. In Papua, the *Village Book*, introduced in 1948, was a new concept, replacing the former small *Village Constables Register*. The new book listed the names of all the inhabitants of a village. Each village had a book; some of the larger villages had two.

It was an odd-shaped book—foolscap size (330 mm) in length and two-thirds that in width. It had a stiff cardboard cover and a spine bound with a cloth reinforcing. The left-hand pages were divided into four adjoining columns: two wide ones for people's names—males on the left, females on the right—and two narrow columns for their respective years of birth.

The right-hand page provided for notations and comments—why a name had been added or deleted, an added birth, a female migrating in by marriage, a death; absent at work, pregnancies and so on.

The entire village assembled for the fete-like occasion. The Village Constable called the name of the head of an extended family who came forward followed by the members; grouped in nuclear families. Names were carefully entered into the book in ink.

I used the Malcolm Wright system: leaving sufficient space between young men's names to provide for future children, grouped all of a family's female children immediately under the mother's name. When she married each female child's name would be deleted and moved to her husband's listing.

After I completed the task at Hisiu, Len Dexter, manager of a nearby coconut plantation, picked me up in his vehicle and showed me around the estate. His wife invited me to dinner and they delivered me back to the rest house.

I visited the Aroana sawmill and the desiccated coconut mill—a newish construction with magnificent stainless-steel silos and plant. The older traditionalists in the village complained to me about so many of their women folk working, away from home all day, neglecting the gardens, earning cash wages.

They need not have worried; the desiccated coconut factory was a doomed operation.

Within a few years, Papuan desiccated coconut was identified as the probable cause of a typhoid outbreak in Australia, and banned as an import.

McKenna handled the next part of our journey, driving us to the Kanosia; the last few kilometres in the gloom of the canopy of rubber trees that the sun itself was unable to penetrate.

McKenna's house, a twin of the Kairuku ADO's residence, was also surrounded by rubber trees and sunless. That evening, I learnt that he had been at Kanosia for many years, as assistant manager prewar and as manager postwar. During the war, he had served in the plantation arm of ANGAU and in the Production Control Board.

I also learnt that his employers, Clarke and Whitley, had made the land application in 1946, and that that there had already been two earlier attempts to finalise it. Patrol Officer FJ (Bill) Driver had spent a day on site in August 1948 and ADO JS (Jock) McLeod had done the same in November 1949.

The compass and chain survey was going to be the hard part. I had been schooled in the procedure at the ASOPA short course but that had been a brief training exercise on a small piece of flat land. The Kanosia task covered a huge, jungle-covered area.

I used a brass fifty-mm prismatic compass and a steel measuring tape wound around a canvas hand reel. Papua was still using the Imperial System of measurement and the tape was calibrated in chains (approximately twenty metres) and links (approximately twenty centimetres) and the area I surveyed was measured in acres.

McKenna had never walked around the boundaries, but one of his Papuan overseers, who was also one the landowners, had walked around the area which he thought McKenna had indicated.

The only things that were certain were the starting point and the finishing point, both on the boundary of the existing plantation, and the main road. As for the rest, it was featureless jungle.

The next day, with the overseer as the leader, I set off with the police and a handful of McKenna's labourers.

The Department of Lands required straight-line boundaries except where a natural feature, such as a river, was more appropriate. The overseer's proposed boundaries followed bush tracks that meandered through the jungle.

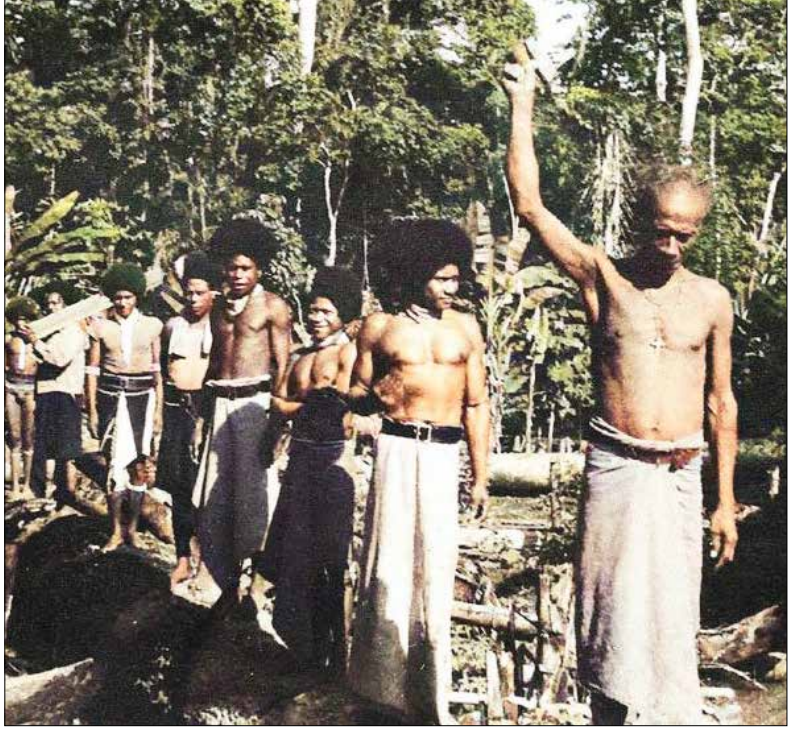
I kept the labourers on a compass bearing as they cut the traverse lie through the scrub, pulling the steel measuring chain until they reached its end.

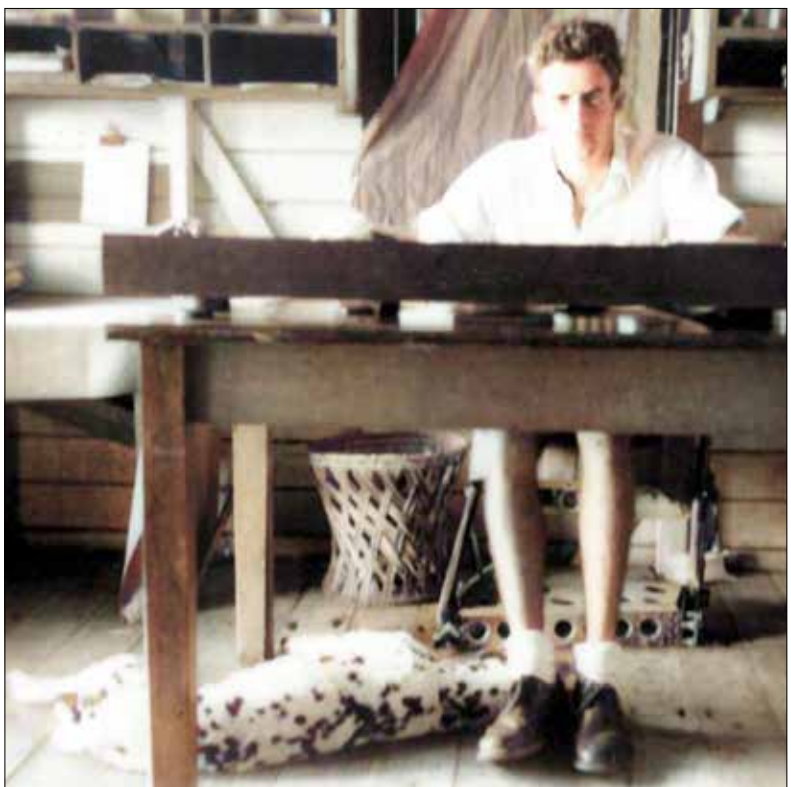
Then I set them off again on the same bearing. Sometimes we were near the overseer's track and sometimes we were a long way away from it.

Each afternoon we set up camp, building lean-tos from saplings and palm fronds. We ate reasonably well on boiled rice and game shot during the day.

Four days later, we were back at the road and we were at the designated finishing point. We only got there because the overseer knew his land so well. His sense of direction allowed him to indicate the position of that point from wherever we were. Finally, it was a simple task to chain back along the road to our starting point.

When I arrived back at Kanosia, *Kano*, a sister ship of *Kina*, was at the wharf loading rubber





TOP: In Babangongo village *(left to right)* police constable, Andrew Opu Aipu Maino sporting a full head of hair, Bill Brown and two Babangongo village officials. The rest house is in the rear on the right; the crawl-in kitchen in the rear on the left. The leaking roofs of both buildings have been temporarily repaired with coconut palm fronds

RIGHT: Travelling through the swampy section of forest on log trails in the Bush Mekeo—the trees have been felled to allow travel between villages and gardens

LEFT: Opu's female relatives and his son visit him at Kairuku, March 1951

SECOND RIGHT: Crossing the river at the Roro village of Rapa

BOTTOM: Bill Brown at the Sub-District Office, Kairuku, December 1950, sitting in the aircraft seat salvaged by Patrol Officer Gordon Steege—a section of the aircraft frame is visible at ankle height, with Boffin, the Dalmatian, in attendance

for Port Moresby. There was only one passenger, Tom Cole, a crocodile shooter, so, as Malcolm had suggested, I took passage to Port Moresby for my break.

I felt pretty cocky when we arrived in Port Moresby. I had been on patrol on my own and had accomplished all I had been told to do. I walked up the hill from the wharf to the District Office, but instead of the welcome I expected, Mick Healy fixed me with pale-blue eyes, even colder and steelier than normal.

He demanded to know what I was doing in town. Who had authorised my visit. He ignored my explanation, picked up the telephone and ascertained that *Kano* was loading for Kairuku and west coast ports and sailing at sunset.

He told me to return to the ship, stay on board and sail with it. At least he did not make me walk from Port Moresby to Kairuku.

Back at Kairuku, I took over Tuohy's room in the Sub-District Office. He and his family had departed to spend three-months' leave in Australia. For the first time, I had a table and chair, and that chair was something special.

It was made of aircraft quality aluminium and had a padded back and padded arms. A previous patrol officer, onetime Group Captain Gordon Steege, DSO, DFC, had salvaged it, hacking it and a portion of the floor section to which it was welded from a crashed US B24 Liberator bomber.

> I slogged for days at that desk preparing the Kanosia land investigation report, drafting the plan from the chain and compass survey, reproducing the plan at a smaller scale for the Transfer Document and finally drawing up the Land Transfer Document. Those documents were dispatched to Port Moresby, checked by the Department of Lands and accepted.

I spent as many days typing my first patrol report on the only typewriter—a manual Remington. I wasted a lot of paper because of typing mistakes. The five copies made with carbon paper meant that the last copy was almost illegible.

It did not matter, that patrol report disappeared somewhere in the system. Maybe it had something to do with District Officer Healy's reaction to my arrival in Port Moresby. Maybe he had words with ADO Wright.

Commenting on my next patrol (Kairuku No. 5 of 1950–51), ADO Wright wrote, 'This is Mr Brown's first patrol alone and he has given good attention to all details of a patrol.'

The Headquarters' comments, written over the Director's name, were less sanguine. They may have been influenced by the author's long service or he may have had his knickers in a knot. Acting District Commissioner, John Rollo Foldi, who had joined the Papuan administration in 1930, wrote:

> Probably the most important work that a Patrol Officer does in the field is the instruction of Village Councillors in their duties, and his attitude to them as leaders of their people. That Mr Brown has not the faintest idea of the work is illustrated by his suggestion that 'Kaia Towadade, a man of influence', be appointed a councillor, to assist the Village Constable. Please ask Mr Brown to write a composition headed 'Duties and Obligations of a Village Councillor' and forward it to this office.

With the Tuohy's on leave, their house had become vacant and was now occupied by a

young Hungarian couple. Gyula Harmos had served with the Hungarian forces during World War II, and was medically qualified but his medical qualifications were not recognised in Australia.

Like a number of other doctors, he had been seduced by John Gunther's simple recruitment scheme that was designed to attract doctors to the Territory: 'We will recognise your qualifications, we will pay you doctors' salaries, and we will provide you with married accommodation.'

Gunther's ultimatum to the outstations was simple: 'If you want a doctor you will have to provide the married accommodation!' Married ADOs, especially those with young children, quickly fell into line, and Malcolm Wright was no exception. He gladly made the Patrol Officer's house available.

There seemed to be new life in the weekends after the arrival of the couple. On Sunday mornings we swam at the beach in front of the parade ground—the Wrights, the Harmos and me. The water was clear; the sand was yellow and crystal. We had the beach, and sea, to ourselves, but we watched carefully for stonefish and kept an eye out for crocodiles.

Gyula Harmos—Julian he called himself—was years older than I. His wife, Maria Teresa, was almost my age; very attractive and even more so in the small two-piece, European bathing costume.

I frequently came back from the beach thinking she made me feel even lonelier. My timeframe of six months 'seeing the country' had passed, was it time to pack up and leave? Once a month, the cement slab behind the ration store became the venue for Brother Celsus, from the De La Salle High School, to screen a 16-millimetre, black-and-white movie.

The mission selected them carefully. We only saw movies that were classified as suitable for general viewing and even they were heavily censored: no violence, no love scenes and no alcohol.

As Malcolm Wright put it, after watching *Mutiny on the Bounty*, 'Every time Clark Gable got a glint in his eye, a book went over the projector lens, and the screen was blacked out.'

Judge Gore arrived on the government yacht, *Laurabada*, to hear a serious court case. A Mekeo couple had an argument, the husband struck the wife and she died of a ruptured spleen.

ADO Wright, as Coroner, committed the husband for trial. The ADO's office became the Supreme Court and the unfortunate husband received a gaol sentence, one year with hard labour. He served his time as my gardener.

He arrived each morning for work dressed in prison garb, a loin cloth emblazoned with broad black arrows, which he quickly set aside, preferring the more casual attire of a *sihi* (G-string) and leather belt.

At the end of October, a police constable returned from a routine task in the Mekeo and complained that some villagers at Inawi had attempted to steal his rifle. The allegation sounded serious, but it could not have been so as I was sent to investigate.

Baden Wales met me with a tractor on the mainland at Mou. I perched on the rear mudguard, the police and the patrol gear bounced around in the trailer and we rattled down the road to the rice project at Epo (Bereina).

I knew from Baden's overnight stays in my house that he drank a lot, but I was soon to

learn how much. That afternoon it was Rhum Negrita with lime-flavoured water. He did not eat dinner but around mealtime added honey to the mix and, later in the evening, condensed milk.

When I emerged next morning, he was drinking lukewarm tea and condensed milk laced with rum. He was using a towel, draped around his neck, to pull the glass to his mouth.

I spent two days at Inawi village trying to sort out the story about the rifle. It was a large village but the people were adamant that the accusation was not true. They had no use for a rifle.

I thought that, at Kairuku, more experienced minds than mine might solve the problem. Maybe the story would change in a different environment. The spokesman for the people, a young man who claimed to be a chief, Andrew Opu Aipu Maino, decided to accompany me back to Kairuku with the small group of accused.

At Kairuku nobody was interested. I spent another couple of days talking to the police constable and the Mekeo men. Finally, I told them all that I did not believe the constable's story and I told the Mekeos to go home.

The young chief, Andrew, asked if he could stay and work at the office. He said he wanted to learn about the government. I got approval for his employment, and he also became a friend.

In February and March, it was the time for me to revise the census of the Roro and Bush Mekeo Census Divisions. I avoided some typing by combing two patrols and submitting one report.

Andrew Opu Aipu Maino accompanied me for the whole of that patrol. He explained the Mekeo thinking and customs. We had discussions and arguments.

Chiria was the only village on Yule Island and I started with it. I walked across the island on Thursday, 1 February 1951. I knew most of the younger people and they made it a festive event, even walking with me back to Kairuku to keep me company.

All the other Roro villages were on the mainland and I could visit some of them in groups if I used a launch to drop me off. I then crisscrossed the floodplain using the government ferries—canoes—at Bioto and Rapa to cross the Angabunga and St Joseph's Rivers.

On one occasion, as we drifted downstream heading back towards Kairuku, a crocodile overtook our canoe swimming in the same direction. It was so large and so close that we let it pass even though we had a battery of rifles available.

Opu said that even the name, Bush Mekeo, was meaningless as the people were different from the Mekeo. They spoke a different language, had a different culture, were not artistic, were not as exuberant and were fewer. He clearly thought that they were inferior.

The Bush Mekeo adjoined the Mekeo on the northwest but its thick forests and massive swamps were very different to the alluvial plains.

It was several hours walk from Beipa to Engefa, the first of the Bush Mekeo villages. Most of the journey was through forest and most of the time we walked on tree trunks felled to form a trail above the swamp.

The track to Maipa and Inauakina on following days was much the same, but from there almost all our travel was by canoe on the network of waterways feeding the Akaifu River.

There was a current but the water was so smooth that I could sit on my camp chair and shoot at hornbills and flocks of fruit bats with the .22 rifle I had purloined from the

government store. Our final stop in the Bush Mekeo was at Babanongo on the Inawafunga River. It was a slow twenty kilometres upstream paddle from our previous overnight stop on the Biaru, and we arrived late in the afternoon on Thursday, 1 March.

It proved to be a sad stopover for me. The rest house was sited quite close to the river and during the night my Dalmatian dog slipped his collar and chain and was taken by a crocodile.

Boffin had only been in the country for four months. He had to wait in Sydney for a non-pressurised aircraft so had not travelled with me. After that incident, I resolved never to own another dog, a resolve I maintained for another ten years.

I wanted to get away from Babanongo but work was still to be done so I was stuck there for another day and night. Then we trekked across the 100-metre high Inapi Ridge to the coast at Kivori-Kui.

Another hour's walk along the beach brought us to Waima, where there were fast sailing canoes. We needed three.

Although we were only twenty-five kilometres from Kairuku in a straight line, we needed a long tack out to sea, almost out of the sight of land, across the prevailing wind. With all sails set, most of the crew stood on the outrigger to balance it just above the waves, never allowing the canoe to overturn.

Opu's family came to visit him at Kairuku—his wife, son, brother, niece and aunt. He had his hair cut, and he continued the instruction, explanations and debates about chieftainship and sorcery.

Opu said that all the Mekeo chiefs were hereditary. I had learnt at ASOPA that only in the Trobiand Islands were there hereditary chiefs and that elsewhere there were 'big men'.

The anthropologists had taught us that those 'big men' were leaders who attained their status by deeds and not by inheritance, but I could not convince Opu that he was wrong.

Years later, the anthropologists admitted they had it wrong and that the Mekeo, Roro, Fuyuge and many other groups had a firmly established hereditary chieftainship systems.

Opu also had a completely different view about sorcerers. I had been told they were aggressive and evil and that they killed people.

He said the sorcerer's main role was to protect the village from outside evils and that he was only secondary in status to the chief.

Bishop Louis Vangeke at his investiture in Sydney in December 1970 by Pope Paul was quoted as saying: 'I am the sorcerer of God', and during his subsequent installation as a Mekeo chief at Beipa the dignitaries of the church were guarded and protected by two sorcerers from Beipa and Aipiana.

Andrew Opu Aipu Maino's appointment as an officer in the Order of the British Empire was notified in the *London Gazette* of 31 December 1980, the citation reading: *'For public service as a magistrate and as Ombudsman.'* He hosted a luncheon for me at the Travelodge in Port Moresby in October 1984.

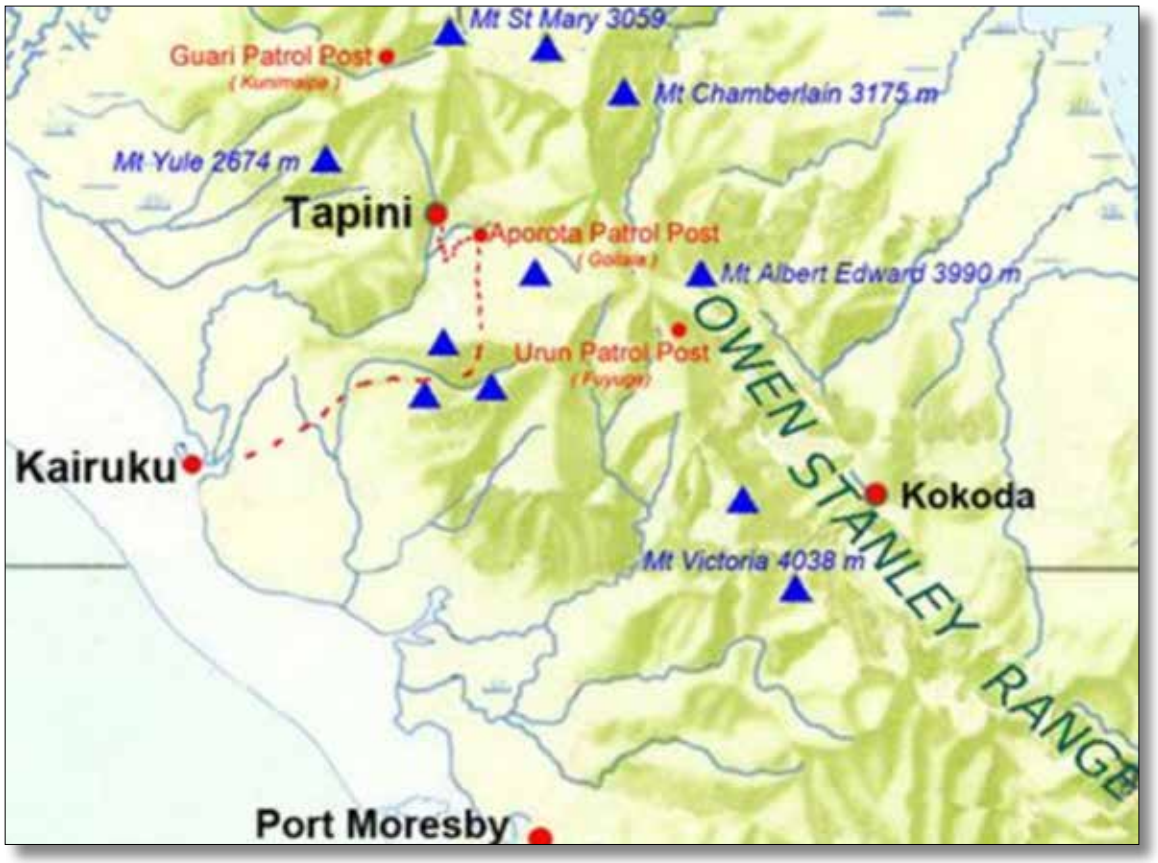
6: Goilala, Central Province

I begin to settle into my role in this wild, unpredictable place

MY SUPERIOR OFFICER, Malcolm Wright, was promoted in 1951 and transferred from Kairuku Sub-District to Bougainville as District Commissioner. Clarry (CT) Healy, Mick (MJ) Healy's elder brother, was coming to replace him. Clarry was forty-five and had the same small frame as Mick. They both had become Patrol Officers in the 1920s, but there the similarities ended. Mick dressed in stiff long whites; Clarry wore khaki. Mick was the epitome of respectability; Clarry was bit of a larrikin.

A few months earlier, as Gulf Division District Officer, Clarry had transgressed. He had given alcohol to a native, an illegal act, and had been demoted a rank to Assistant District Officer. As if that was not sufficient indignity, he was transferred from Kikori to the Central Division where he would report to his younger brother.

He was no longer the supremo in charge of a Papuan Division; he was no longer responsible for the co-ordination of Administration activity and he was no longer the Administrator's representative. Even though he was still a power in the land, he was now only going to be responsible for the Kairuku Sub-District.



A Cadet Patrol Officer had 'blown the whistle' and caused his fall from grace. I expected him to bear a grudge and give me a hard time, but it didn't turn out that way. Clarry was cynical and was taking it easy, but he was friendly. He expected me to do the cash office and everything else, but I could go where I wanted as long as I was there to close the books at the end of the month.

Clarry liked fishing and shooting and needed company. There was no one else available so I had no option. If I was on the station when he wanted to go somewhere, I went with him, and when he wanted to drink, he came to me.

After the powerhouse had shut down, and the lights had gone out, I would hear his jeep arrive. It was no use hiding, or pretending to be asleep; he would have already drunk enough to be persistent. He would lurch up the track, calling as he came, 'Bill! Bill! Bill! Are you there, Bill? Got a drink, Bill?'

Then it was time to light the kerosene chimney lamp and get him a drink while he settled himself into my favourite deck chair, the one with swing-out arms that he could put his legs on. Claiming he was frightened of losing his prosthetic eye, he would remove it from it socket and drop it into his drink.

His wife would usually arrive within the hour. She had to scramble down that hill in the dark, watchful for snakes and avoiding potholes and large stones, on a road that was hazardous even in daylight.

Then she had to find the unmarked track leading off the road to my house and negotiate her way through the coconut grove, dodging trunks and fallen fronds as she walked in the dark. Elaine never came inside but stood at the front gate and called, first to him and then to me, 'Bill, I know that bastard is in there, tell him to come out!'

Clarry would urge me to deny his presence and send her away, but the tell-tale jeep was outside and there was nowhere to hide. Eventually, they would leave together in the jeep.

On a couple of occasions, Clarry cajoled me into accompanying him on a late-night drive to the Catholic Mission. Perhaps he dreamed of emulating a previous ADO's escapade. Jock (JS) McLeod was said to have driven to the mission at night in his jeep circling the residence of the Carmelite nuns, his outstretched walking stick rattling along the corrugations of the iron perimeter wall.

McLeod may have got away with it; but there was no way that Clarry could do so. He and his wife were devout Catholics. If the Bishop did not hang him out to dry, his wife would have done so.

District Commissioner Mick Healey never visited Kairuku to carry out the mandatory inspections while Malcolm Wright and Clarry were there. Maybe he was avoiding a confrontation but, as soon as he departed on leave, Jim (LJ) O'Malley arrived to do so. I was not involved, but during his visit O'Malley took me aside and gave me a fatherly lecture.

He told me if I got good reports from Clarry it would be bad for my career and if I got bad reports I would equally be damned. He suggested I transfer to another station—to the Goilala—but I would have to defer my home leave for twelve months.

I assumed I would be told to travel to Port Moresby on the fortnightly Catalina flying boat and then on to Tapini by light aircraft, but it was not to be. The orders were clear. There would be an exchange of CPOs between the Goilala and Kairuku. Jack (DR) Sarjeant would come to the coast with a mule train and I would return with them to the Goilala.

I had been to Aropokina on the mainland many times, but this time I would not be returning to Kairuku. I was travelling with almost all of my possessions—and there weren't many.

But while my cabin trunk contained few items, it was too cumbersome to be carried on a mule. It was to go by sea to Government Stores in Port Moresby and then by air to Tapini. It never arrived.

Jack Sarjeant was waiting on the wharf at Aropokina, unhappy to have been transferred to the coast. He tersely volunteered the information that mules, muleteers, the police boy and a horse were waiting at the rest house near Kubuna, and went on his way.

The next morning I set out for the Goilala with all the mules laden. Some carried pack-saddles with a patrol box strapped to each side; others carried my gear crammed into saddlebags; the loose items—buckets, table, chairs and kerosene drums—were stacked on top of the saddles strapped between the side loads.

I had already walked to Oba-Oba on two occasions, but this was my first time on horseback. The chain of potholes along the track was still there, filled with soft mud and water, and they got worse as we climbed into the ranges.

The mules ploughed straight through the slosh, but my problem was the big brown stallion that I was supposed to be riding. He pussyfooted around the puddles, always taking the outside edge of the narrow track.

If I positioned myself at the rear of the line, he tried to push his way past the mules in front, even though there was no room to pass on the narrow track.

If he were in the lead, he would break into a gallop, or flick his heels and prance, regardless of my attempts to restrain him. A competent horseman would have been able to control the situation, but I could not.

Less than an hour after leaving Oba-Oba, I surrendered. I accepted that the stallion had won. I was saddle sore and tired of perching precariously on the horse, hanging out over the edge of the track with the river now many hundreds of feet below. I decided to walk the rest of the way.

The ridges became higher and higher and the valleys deeper and deeper as we climbed into the range. We sweated up the side of each mountain spur until we reached the spine and then descended into the next valley. There were six major spurs between Oba-Oba and the rest house in the headwaters of the Auga River.

We were now in the Goilala and, soon after we made our overnight stop, villagers arrived with produce from their gardens. I had seen locally-grown sweet potato, taro and corn many times before, but never the locally-grown cabbages and English potatoes that they brought.

The women carried their produce in net bags—*kiapas* in *Motu*, *bilums* in *Pidgin*—woven from a string that they had also made. The *bilums* hung down their backs, suspended from

TOP: Tapini and airstrip taken from the ridge behind the station on the way up the track to the Aibala/ Loloipa divide *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Looking down from the saddle to a river far below. One of the less frightening experience as the track was wider and the stallion not perched right on the edge *(Bill Brown)*

RIGHT: Buying food. Note the narrow waistbands, *bilums* and bare thighs *(Bill Brown)*

BOTTOM: Two women bringing food climb the track, both laden with *bilums*. The woman in the foreground is prepared for rain and wears a bark cloak. The woman behind carries sugar cane in the topmost *bilum* *(Bill Brown)*

their heads, by plaited string handles; some carried only one *bilum*; others had *bilums* hanging back and front; and others had their baby, carried carefully, suspended in its own dedicated *bilum*.

The men and women's attire was different from anything that I had ever seen: a narrow waistband with a G-string passing between the legs. KJ Williamson, in 1912, called it a perineum band, and wrote that:

> It often becomes so crumpled up and creased with wear that the portion passing between the legs dwindles down to about an inch or less in width … The girls and young women, and even sometimes married women who are nursing their babies, can really only be described as being practically naked.
>
> (*The Mafulu; Mountain People of British New Guinea*, MacMillan, London)

This fashion had changed little in forty years. The G-strings that had been made from stiff local vegetal material were now made from a cotton, trade-store fabric. It was softer and washable but really crumpled and creased—even disappeared from view—a tendency that caused an elderly police corporal to remark: '*Ol i kaikai i go*!' ['They are chewing it as they walk']

We crossed the Auga River by bridge, one of the many that had been built to the standard Goilala design—the concept of Père Dubuy of Ononge, who we shall meet in the next chapter.

It was a simple concept: a single span with two long parallel logs as bearers, straddled by a sawn-timber deck nailed down with deck spokes. A pandanus-thatch roof protected the softwood deck from the rain, and that was a problem.

The people, returning wet and cold from their gardens sheltered under the roof, lit fires on the deck and roasted sweet potatoes in the coals. This could burn holes in the bridge and sometimes destroy it completely.

Other people, while waiting for the rain to ease, might while away time extracting the deck spikes and forging them into knives and spearheads in a fire.

According to the map, the mountain peaks were just above us as we climbed out of the valley, but I could see only the muddy trail ahead and make out some trees on the mist-shrouded ridges. Finally, we breasted the crest of the divide at the pass, 2,300 metres above sea level.

Our next overnight stop, the rest house at Aromaite village in the Ivane River headwaters, lay almost 1,700 metres below, in the centre of a tight triangle of high mountains: Mt Follodeau (2,670 m), Mt Champion (3,218 m), and Mt De Boisemu (3,145 m).

With only two more days of our journey left, there was light-heartedness in the air as we began the day with a three-hour stiff climb to the crest of the divide between the Ivane valley and the Aibala.

At the pass, Speedie's Gap, the vista changed dramatically. The view ahead was a panorama of the Aibala valley, a deep grassy gorge backed by another massive mountain barrier. Mount Champion was somewhere in the clouds to my right. Now the grades were becoming easier and the climbing was almost over, a gently sloping track following the contours below the ridge line.

Aporota Patrol Post, the last overnight stop, occupied a small pocket-handkerchief of flat land perched 2,130 metres above sea level on the rim of the deep Aibala River gorge. The

concave slope hid the valley wall but the river was visible 750 metres below, almost under my feet as I peered over the edge.

The sole expat at Aporota, Bill (WM) Purdy was six months my junior and still a Cadet Patrol Officer. He provided me with a hot meal, a warm shower and a bed but I still felt cold even though a fire roared in the open fireplace.

Bill (CJ) Adamson describing Maini, as it was then called, said the 'cold is damnable. What a bastard of a place. I have not been properly warm since I have been here.' (James Sinclair, quoting Adamson's diaries in *Last Frontiers.)*

During the evening, Purdy explained that Aporota was an unofficial post. There were another two, Guari in the Kunimaipa and Urun in the Fuyuge. Everybody knew they were there but they did not exist officially.

Without any formal status, they had no authorised establishment of police, no funds and no supply of stores. Their resources were provided from the Tapini allocation and there were never enough police, rations, building materials or funds. Their small detachment of police and the 'gaols' were the symbols of law and order.

Like the officers at Guari and Urun, Purdy was not a magistrate but, by arrangement, he heard quasi-court cases and confined people to 'gaol'. The court documents were then forwarded to Tapini where the Assistant District Officer, a magistrate, signed them. The warrants theoretically confined the prisoner to Tapini gaol, even though he was confined at the other locations.

The next morning, after a few hours of easy walking, downhill all the way, I could see Tapini in the distance on the other side of the valley. But it would take several more hours fast walking to get there.

The muleteers and the police sang with joy as they started down the zigzag track towards the river. Tapini quickly disappeared from view as we descended. The gorge became narrower and the muleteers' choruses reverberated from the walls. A stream, cascading down the escarpment on the left, added to the din.

Finally, we reached the river. I wanted to ford it and press on up the other side but the muleteers had other ideas. They were going home to their wives and they wanted to be spruced for the occasion. They bathed in the river, sat on rocks to dry themselves in the sun and teased and fluffed their hair with long bamboo combs. This preening extended for over an hour, then we were off again to climb the 320 metres out of the gorge. There was a further short climb to the small mountain directly in the flight path of Tapini airstrip.

I set off up the airstrip. Even though it was only 1,000 metres long, the top was 200 metres higher than the bottom. Pilots increased power after landing to taxi up and parked transverse to the strip to stop the aircraft running backwards down the hill.

In the 1950s, the aircraft that served the outposts were low powered, low performance machines with fixed undercarriages and fabric covered airframes and wings: Austers, de Havilland Fox Moths, de Havilland Dragons and Noorydum Norseman.

There was only one way for pilots to approach and land at Tapini. They had to fly up the valley from the south, make a right-angle turn to the left, maintain enough height to clear

the hill at the end of the strip and then almost drop to touch down as near as possible to the end of the airstrip.

Further up the valley was a dead end and there was no room to go around. An Auster pilot, Allan Mossman, had tried to find a route up the valley in October 1950 but had crash landed in the stony river bed.

Tapini was the Sub-District headquarters but, in reality, it was an isolated inland outpost linked to the outside world by a battery-powered, shortwave radio-transceiver.

It did not have a regular air service; there was no electricity and no reticulated water. There were no motor bikes, no cars, no tractors and no trucks. Because there was no mechanical equipment, the hill that obstructed landings and take-offs could not be removed or reduced.

Assistant District Officer Ron (RT) Galloway's swimming hole, a pool in the station creek, was being enlarged by chunks. Every intending bather was expected to arrive carrying a towel, a detonator and a stick of gelignite and to explode the latter.

One building at the hospital had a corrugated iron roof but only the ADO's house was built of permanent materials. All of the components—roof, walls, doors, windows, flooring, plumbing and hardware—were flown in by expensive aircraft charters.

Most of Tapini's buildings were made from local materials, grass or pandanus thatched roofs, plaited cane walls, black palm or plaited cane floors; frame and floor tied together with bush rope or cane. Nails were always in short supply.

The Sub-District Office, roofed with pandanus thatch leaf and with walls and the floor were of woven cane, was being replaced, but work on the new edifice was spasmodic, delayed by the slow arrival of timber for the frame, floor and cladding.

The pitsaw team toiled in the forest behind the station. They had to select a tree, fell it, cut it into workable lengths, dig the pit and erect the platform, position the log and finally saw the planks.

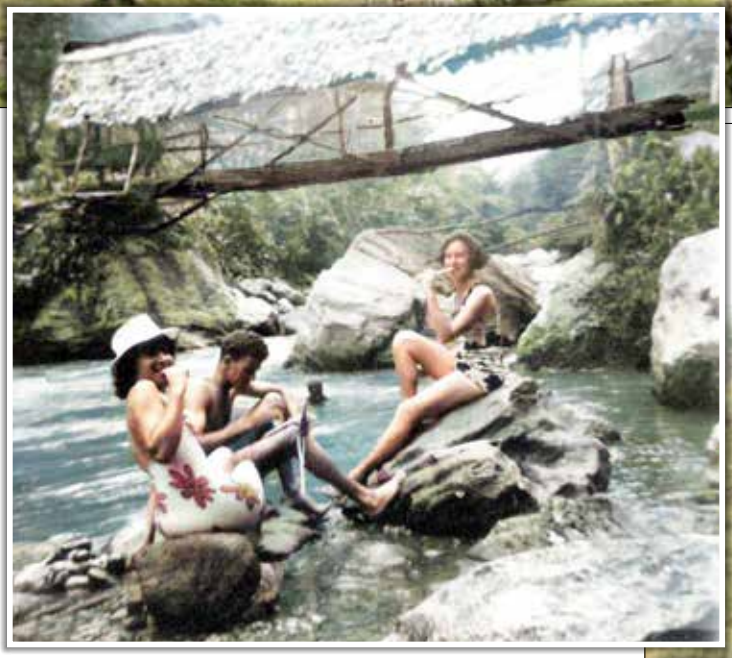
When the Galloways departed, the small expatriate community was reduced to five single men—acting ADO Gus (AM) Bottrill, CPOs Brian (BG) Wilson and Kitch (CJ) Banting, medico Dr Vin (VV) Zigas, and Medical Assistant Charlie Corbett.

Galloway was packing to go to Australia on leave and in the throes of a formal handover to Bottrill, so I did not see a lot of him. But when I did, I only heard his diatribes about Roy (ER) Edwards, a former Patrol Officer and his immediate predecessor in charge of the Sub-District.

Edwards was serving a gaol sentence in Port Moresby and was soon to be released. Galloway seemed obsessed by those past events and by the fear that Edwards would return to the Goilala after his discharge from gaol.

On 29 June 1950, Edwards was convicted in the Supreme Court on a charge of common assault and sentenced to six months imprisonment. Five other charges were dismissed. Eight police constables were imprisoned for terms ranging from two to six months, and sixty convictions were recorded against people associated with a patrol Edwards had led.

The Brisbane *Telegraph*, reporting court proceedings, said Edwards had made a native climb a pole and then had a fire lit under it so the man could not get down.



TOP: (1) The Sub-District Office and Government Store complex built of pandanus thatch and plaited cane. (2) Hospital and doctor's residence. (3) Patrol Officer's house built on stilts of all local material except for the sawn-timber floor *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Visitors from Port Moresby with Bill Brown, all intent on brushing their teeth in the Loloipa River two hours walk from Tapini. The bridge is a typical Dubuy design Goilala structure *(DHM)*

RIGHT: Looking across from the Aibala River gorge from the track leading down the Oro spur. The flat shelf of land mid-photo is Tapini airstrip. The ridge beyond is part of the Aibala/Loloipa divide. *(Bill Brown)*

Kou Geru told the court he was not burnt by the fire, but that Edwards had also slapped his face and made him lie in a dead girl's grave, covering him with leaves. The grave had been opened earlier and the girl's head removed. (Edwards said that Kou Geru had confessed to killing the girl, Kausisi.)

James Sinclair has written in *Kiap* that Edwards had set out on 25 October 1949 and was still on patrol when Galloway arrived in Tapini in January 1950. Galloway received allegations and reports of assault, rape and arson and advised Port Moresby. Bishop Andre Sorin MSC also wrote to the Administrator about the affair.

Syd (SS) Smith has added details to the story in an unpublished memoir. Smith was posted to the Goilala in 1947 when it was still under the jurisdiction of the District Officer at Kairuku, taking over as a/ADO Goilala in February 1948. Edwards became OIC after Smith departed on leave in November. Sometime after that, things started to go bad.

Edwards sent a signal to Port Moresby saying he was out of supplies, closing the station, sending the prisoners back to their villages and leaving on patrol with another officer, taking the police with them. All attempts to contact Tapini by radio failed, and the airstrip was closed by the Department of Civil Aviation.

When Smith returned from leave, he flew to Tapini in a Qantas Fox Moth piloted by Bill Hoskins. The formal explanation was that this was a specially arranged charter carrying 'urgently needed medical supplies.'

He was greeted at Tapini by PO Gus Bottrill who had just walked in from the coast to find the station deserted. Bottrill said that Edwards had gone in an easterly direction—he had no idea where—and said he had nothing to do with the sign over the office door.

This was written on a board in large letters: 'NIL DESPERANDUM NON CABORANDUM'. Pig Latin for, 'Don't let the bastards grind you down'.

There was another angle to the Edwards story, which was told to me by a priest the following year. The priest said Edwards had set out to solve some of the many outstanding murders and had used forceful methods to obtain confessions.

Edwards had also tried to prevent further murders being committed, the story went, but did not have enough regular police so acquired a small army of local irregulars—Tau'ade men led by Mou of Watagoipa—and with them a retinue of female camp followers.

It was said that this force was respected and was achieving result,s and many people at the mission were pleased with this and not particularly concerned about some violence. They were, however, disturbed by Edwards' entourage of female hangers-on.

I wondered whether Edwards' superiors at headquarters were at all culpable. Adamson's confidential warning: 'expressing misgivings about Edwards' suitability as a PO for the Kunimaipa, or indeed for the Goilala generally' apparently had been ignored.

Perhaps with assistance and adequate funds, Edwards could have mounted a successful defence or a subsequent appeal against his conviction. Perhaps there were factors that may have mitigated the sentence. Unlike the officers who had served with ANGAU, Edwards had no experience as a kiap, or indeed any administrative training, until he joined the Administration after his discharge from the Army in March 1946.

He had fought an infantry soldier's war in the 2/27 Battalion in the Middle East (Libya and Syria), New Guinea (Kokoda, Buna, Gona, Ramu and Shaggy Ridge), and in Borneo, where he was awarded the Military Medal for acts of bravery.

Personally, I wondered about some of the seemingly inconsistent standards—Healy demoted but not prosecuted for a criminal offence; Edwards prosecuted and gaoled for illegal behaviour; Galloway arranging for junior officers to exceed their authority and signing quasi court documents and fraudulent warrants of confinement.

Galloway need not have worried about Edwards returning to the Goilala. After he was discharged from Bomana Gaol, he started a new career as a crocodile shooter on the Papuan west coast, where he was joined by his former Tau'ade (Goilala) associates. Subsequently, he took over Adamson's Ou-Ou Creek Plantation, near Kairuku, where more Tau'ades joined him.

There was another strange Galloway episode that occurred during my first week at Tapini. Someone had arranged for a group of young people—six young men and seven young women—to fly in from Port Moresby for a camping weekend. (The extra female was a lass that Kunimaipa-based CPO Peter O'Sullivan had met in Port Moresby.)

Bottrill led the foray to organise a camp spot at the Loloipa River bridge in the next valley, a two-hour walk and climb away. O'Sullivan and I assisted to set up the camp site and used three overlapping lightweight tarpaulins, aligned as a longhouse.

On the last day when the group was due to return to Tapini, one of the girls was unwell and unable to walk. Bottrill asked me to go to Tapini and come back with a mule and saddle.

At Tapini, Galloway was not concerned with the girl's welfare but said, somewhat crudely, that the native people would think the girl could not walk because of too much sexual activity, and he refused me permission to take a mule.

I headed back to the Loloipa camp but arranged for a muleteer to follow with a mule and saddle. I crossed the Aibala-Loloipa divide three times that day—two hours each way.

That evening at the final fling at the Medical Assistant's house, Peter O'Sullivan had joined the sick list so I danced the night away with his lady friend.

Thirty years later, at a conference in French Polynesia, I was fronted by a couple from the Australian delegation, a parliamentarian and his wife. She asked if I remembered her and he seemed miffed when I said I did.

He was even more upset when I addressed her by her maiden name. A few weeks later, she sent me a collection of photos. One of them was the photo on the previous page taken at the bridge over the Loloipa River.

7: Urun, Central Province

Foregoing scheduled leave, I'm tasked to build a remote mountain airstrip

URUN PATROL POST, nestling in the Owen Stanley Range, was a long way from anywhere, and you could only get there by walking. Assistant District Officer Galloway said the walk would take me three days and that, once at Urun, I would be there on my own for twelve months, but I could return to Tapini for short breaks.

Nothing had prepared me for that long trek across the towering mountain ranges and the deep valleys that lay between. Not for the first time in being reposted, I left gear behind. I knew if I reduced my chattels to only those I needed, I could get away from the slow-moving mules and just use carriers.

Everybody had warned me about climbing the Oro Spur track when the morning sun was burning, but a farewell party the night before had taken its toll and the loads and carriers were not organised until just after 9.30 am. We had barely squelched down the track to the river and started the climb out of the gorge when the sun struck.

The men carrying single loads took the shortcut, straight up the face of the spur, cutting across the arms of the zigzag. I tried to follow but the slope was so steep I made little progress, even when I grasped the grass tussocks and pulled myself up on my knees.

So I decided to stay on the graded trail, where I still paused to rest more and more frequently. The carriers, who were sharing the double loads, were leaving me far behind.

It took me three hours to reach the forest line high up on the spur. An hour later, when Koruava Village came into view, the police and carriers were stretched out on the grass in front of the rest house, relaxing in the shade while they waited for me to catch up. I don't think anybody was surprised when I announced I was going no further that day. So much for the three-day walk to Urun; it was going to take me four. I had lost one day and it would take me another four-and-a-half hours to reach the first day's target, Aporota Patrol Post, on day two.

On the third day, I was still on the trail I had followed from the coast. There was a two-hour uphill slog to Speedie's Gap with the branch track to Kosipe and Urun being reached another two hours later. Then, for the rest of the day, we trekked under the canopy of the rainforest, broken occasionally by stands of immense mountain pandanus, their ghost-like trunks soaring ten to fifteen metres skywards before the first branch.

The map showed Kosipe Rest House to be on the edge of a large swamp. When I arrived after six and a half hours on the track, I could see no sign of the swamp. There were no people and the rest house was dilapidated and swarming with ferocious fleas. But that is where I had to spend the night.

The next day was cool and clear and came with that glorious 'last day' feeling. After a couple of hours, I reached the crest of the divide and could see the grassy patches in the Vetapu Valley against the dark green background of the Owen Stanley Range. From the far side of the valley, someone at Urun was flashing a mirror in response to our own signal.

I had been walking for over eight hours when I arrived at Urun late on a Sunday afternoon on the last day of September 1951. I was tired and I was not very interested in anything. Even if I had been, there was nothing to see. The clouds had rolled along the valley and enveloped the house and surrounds.

Gordon Conway probably thought I was insane. We had attended the ASOPA Short Course together, we had flown to the Territory together and we were both only days from the end of our first term.

He was about to leave Urun to start his three-months' vacation in Australia; I was about to take on an additional twelve months at Urun.

On 8 October, Gus Bottrill, now acting Assistant District Officer, walked in from Tapini with Cadet Patrol officer Brian Wilson, stayed for two days and then they all departed. Bottrill and Wilson set off for Tapini via Ononge and Fane and Conroy set off direct to Tapini and three-months' leave in Australia. Now I was on my own and I had the remainder of the day to take stock and tidy up a now empty house.

Patrol Officer Jim (JW) Kent had established Urun as a base camp, near the village of the same name, in mid-1950. The house was built with materials from the forest: saplings of various sizes for the ridge pole, rafters, and frame; pandanus frond roofing thatch; and walls of plaited cane. The beams were solid baulks and the floorboards were of pit sawn timber.

One half of the front verandah was enclosed with Sisalcraft, a bituminised paper product, and it was purpose built to be the office. But was bare except for a table and a canvas camp chair. There was no radio transceiver, no typewriter and only one file, a manila folder of patrol reports. The living room contained a wooden dining table, two camp chairs and two deck chairs; the two small bedroom cubicles were each furnished with a bed sleeve stretched between bamboo poles.

In the washroom, a galvanised basin sat on a bench made from a recycled packing case; a shower-bucket hung in one corner, waste water dripping through the designed cracks in the floor to the earth below. In the kitchen a section of curved arc mesh had been stretched over a clay and earth base to serve as the stove. The water in a bucket, carried each day from the creek in the valley below, was used for cooking and dishwashing.

Conway had warned me I needed a plan. The only way I could communicate with the outside world was by sending a runner, a police constable, to Tapini, and that it would take the runner three days to get there and another three days to return.

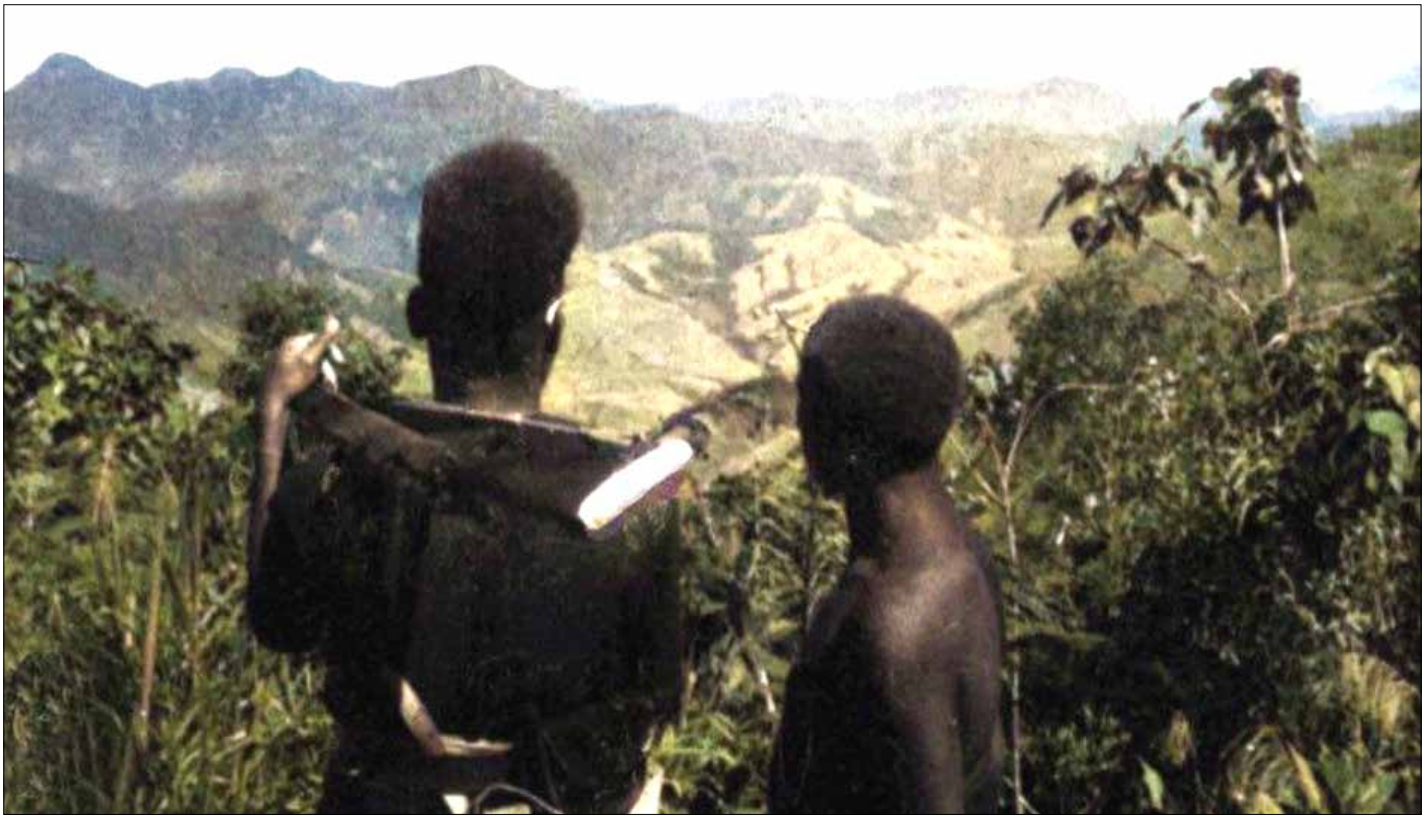
If I wanted stores from Tapini, I should send enough people to carry them back. Groceries and other supplies had to be ordered from one of the shops in Port Moresby and could take more than six weeks to arrive—if what I wanted was in stock. Even mail to and from Australia took two to three weeks, as there was only a thrice weekly DC3 service between Australia and Port Moresby and infrequent charter aircraft to Tapini.

My daily routine was dictated by an airstrip that needed to be built. I had to encourage the construction effort and to do that I needed to be at the site by 7.00 am.

Each morning I left the house, walked down to the three police houses and the lock-up on a flat area about forty metres below and continued further down to the spur that might, one day, become the airstrip.

I had my doubts that anybody would ever land an aircraft on that a slab of uneven clay. It was just 665 metres long, sixty metres wide narrowing to sixty metres. It also featured a slight bend in the middle. But the longitudinal slope, from 1,700 metres to 1,760 metres was a small advantage.

The real construction killer, with only ten labourers in the workforce, was a large bank, almost a metre high, on one side. Six of the labourers cut into the clay with picks, shovels and



TOP: Fuyuge Interpreter, Koga, Bill Brown and Fuyuge carriers ready to leave Tapini

RIGHT: A police constable flashes a mirror signal to Urun Patrol Post from the Kosipe/Woitape divide. Mount Albert Edward on the left. Urun Patrol Post on the far side of the valley just below the timberline

BOTTOM: Urun Patrol Post house. The office is in the enclosed section of the verandah on the left. The daily afternoon visitors are on the right, peering through the front window space

a crowbar, while four others loaded the spoil onto stretchers made from copra sacks threaded over poles and carried it away.

Bobby Gibbes, of Gibbes Sepik Airways and a World War II fighter pilot, was supposed to have a look at the strip from the air and, if he thought it safe, he might try a touch-and-go. He might even land. That could happen at any time and I had to be there if it did. Back at the house by 10.00 am I could use my own wireless to listen to the radio schedule between Port Moresby and Tapini and receive a personal message from the operator, which never seem to change. 'No aircraft today, Bill.'

Each afternoon, a group of people from Urun village dropped in on their way home from their gardens. It was almost a social call. They arrived with garden food—sweet potato, sugar cane, corn, and greens—to exchange for trade goods.

When trading was complete, some people would always move to my verandah, peer in the front window and listen to the radio. It was incomprehensible to them, but they stood and listened. The women with young children seem to prefer to rest on the front lawn between the house and the flag pole. When the sun disappeared and the clouds rolled in, the day was over and it was time to light the lamp.

I was alone in my house on the top of the spur, my nearest neighbours, the police, an interpreter and some wives, were somewhere in the darkness below. I learnt to go to bed early, turn out the pressure lamp and read by the dim light of a hurricane light.

At the end of the month, I visited Ononge Catholic Mission for the weekend. Père Dubuy had suggested I leave Urun on the Friday, after 'aircraft time'.

It took me just over three hours to walk there, up past Urun village, then along a high graded track crossing the Vetapu, below Ononge, by the 150-metre long suspension bridge, swinging high above the river—another Dubuy construction.

Friday was a day of abstinence from meat, but the omelettes the Sisters prepared and sent down for a supper were a feast.

On Saturday morning, Père Dubuy gave me the tour.

The church had a single spire of shiny steel, flaunting a large clock that tolled the hours, and a set of bells that tolled the Angelus three times a day.

His photographic laboratory had a darkroom equipped with sink, running water and red safety-glass windows that allowed him to process film during the day.

Then there were citrus, coffee and cinchona groves—Blue Mountain arabica coffee from Kenya and cinchona from seeds swinging high above the river that he had snuck out of the Dutch East Indies in defiance of the prohibition on their export.

In the evening we played bridge, a card game I had tried to learn at Kairuku with Malcolm and Grace Wright. I was hopeless then and at Ononge I was worse. The priests—Dubuy (from France), Rinn (from Alsace) and Grimaud (from Switzerland) were enthusiastic and fiercely competitive and they played in French.

I set off back to Urun on Monday morning mounted on a white mare, swaying and staggering as she walked. Father Rinn had fed her a meal of wine-soaked corn to enliven my journey.

TOP: My daily visitors pose in front of the office after exchanging their garden produce for trade goods

LEFT: Some of the visitors resting on the front lawn; flagpole at rear on the end of the spur

RIGHT: Looking from the office towards the police houses and, further down, the airstrip earthworks.

A schoolboy followed behind leading a cow and calf. The horse, saddle and bridle were a long-term loan. The cow, also a loan, would provide me with fresh milk if I could ever learn to milk her.

I was also carrying a loaf of newly-baked white bread, a slab of dried, smoked beef, a tin of freshly roasted coffee and a stack of old *Catholic Weeklies*—all gifts from the nuns.

I did not relish those *Catholic Weeklies,* but I was desperate for reading material and I read every article, even letters to the editor.

At the end of October, I was cleared to leave the station. Gibbes had said he could not do a fly-over until the New Year. Eleven days later, I was at Sigufe village, well down the Vetapu Valley, when I was instructed to return to Urun—an aircraft was coming.

In all, it took me three months to complete that forty-day patrol, including breaks at Tapini for Christmas and recalls for aircraft that never arrived.

Finally, I had to walk into Tapini to type my report; a six-day round trip made longer by having to share the only typewriter with other two-finger typists.

I did not think there was anything unusual in the report, but ADO Bottrill suggested I revise the section, which stated that I had the body of the Urun chief dug up. The chief, Aevi Gaveda, been missing for four or five years, having allegedly been murdered by the Kambisi people.

When I elicited that the Urun people had found his bones, buried them and continued to accuse the Kambisi, I had them dug up. The bones were clean and weathered and the soil was loose and friable. Aevi had probably been taken down from a niche in the spirit tree the previous day and interred to satisfy me.

I also reduced my comment on health matters to the bare facts that I had sent twenty-eight people with venereal disease to Urun for treatment, but only twenty-five had made the journey. I omitted the detail that at Urun the diagnosis was likely to have been problematic and the treatment even more so.

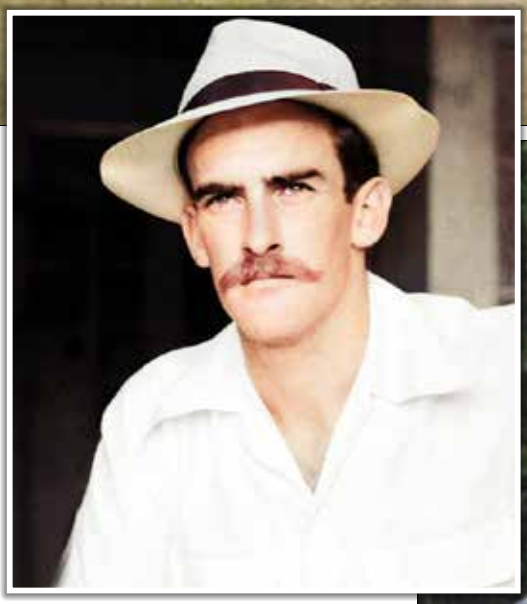
During my first days there, the medical orderly had asked me to visit the aid post. I think it was anticipated that I would inspect the patients, maybe comment on their treatment and maybe even give some advice.

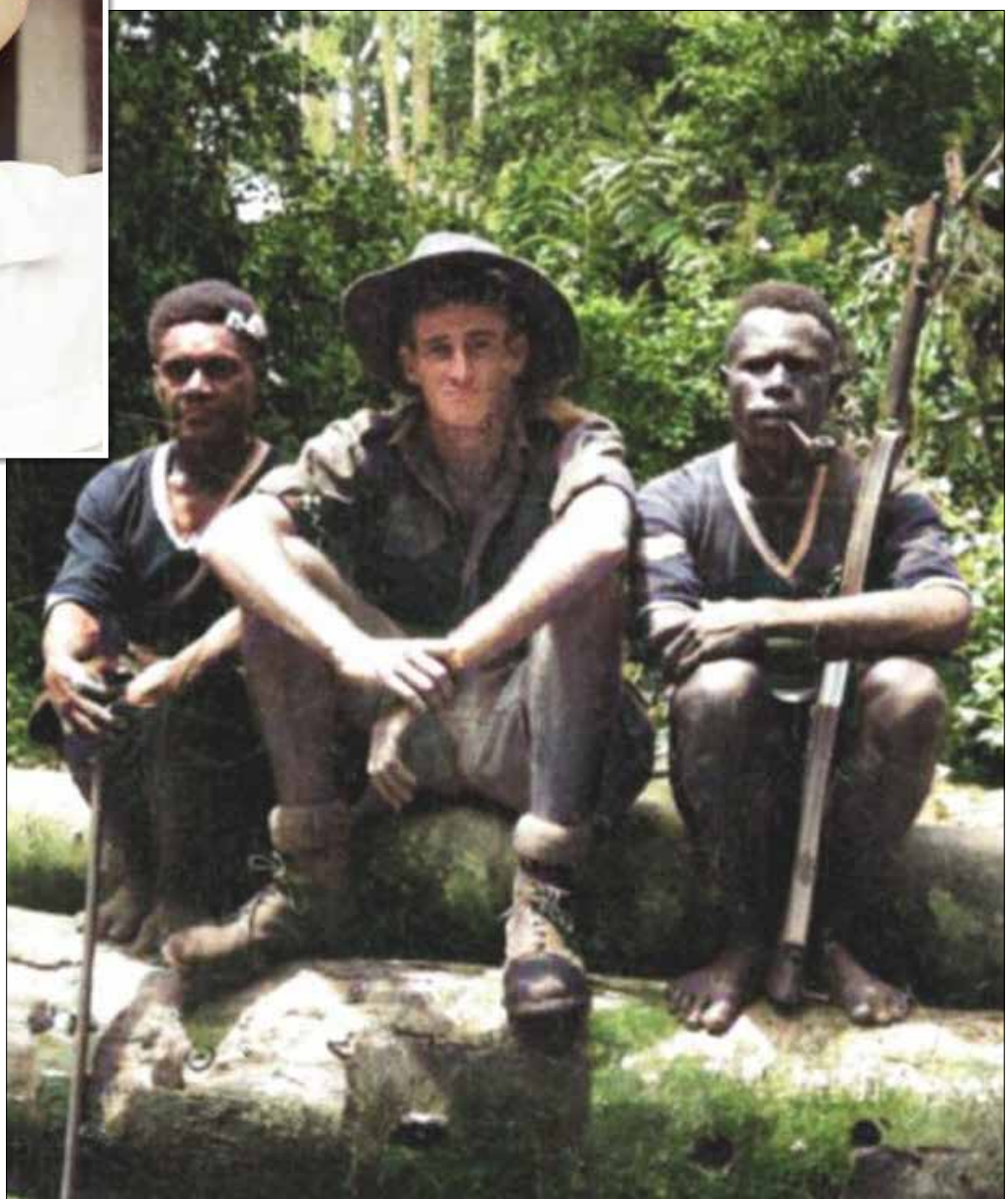
For my visit, a handful of women had been arranged on bench in the treatment room. The orderly said that they had 'VD'. If it was 'wet', it was 'VD', and the treatment was an intravenous injection of an arsenical compound. If he missed the vein, the patient developed a subcutaneous ulcer.

In March. I was told to visit the Chirima Valley in the Kokoda Sub-District. According to Father Bel at Iongai, the Fuyuges and the Chirimas were about to do battle.

A man had an arrow fired into his thigh and a woman had been threatened with murder. I was instructed to rendezvous with a cadet patrol officer from Kokoda and we were to prevent any fighting. I thought the decision to leave this problem to us two junior officers somewhat incongruous.

Travelling light, I set out from Urun with a party of three police, an interpreter, a cook and four carriers for the two patrol boxes. One box contained kitchen gear, tinned food,





TOP: Ononge. Church (clock visible in spire), MSC Sisters' house on right, Père Dubuy walking across the grass

LEFT: My Port Moresby shopping, a new shirt and the Panama hat

RIGHT: On Patrol, February 1952. Fuyuge Interpreter Koga, Bill Brown and Corporal Jojoga of the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC)

trade salt and face paint and rations for the police. Everything else went into the other box—stationery, medical kit, torch, my clothes, blankets and a hammock.

I replaced the heavy, canvas bed-sleeve with a net bag made for me by the Urun women; they had measured me and made a giant version of the ones in which they carried and cradled their babies.

It took the best part of the day to climb from Urun to Murray Pass, which was 3,660 metres above sea level and the crest of the Owen Stanley Range, and the watershed between the north and south coasts.

I spent the night in the hut at the pass and next day moved down to the Chirima village of Iongai. We watched the patrol from Kokoda ascending the track in single file. There were at least forty-five carriers and ten police in the party, which had climbed for three days, from Kokoda.

John (JW) Frawley and I spent five days at Iongai questioning and examining the men and one or two women who had been involved in the incidents. During that time, we ate at Frawley's patrol table and I enjoyed a hot shower using his shower bucket.

He slept on a bed-sleeve and I was most uncomfortable in my hammock. Never was it employed again. It was too short, the sides were too high and I did not have a baby's flexible bones and joints.

Maybe it was the Public Service Commissioner who instigated my next move. Certainly, somebody seemed to have decided that the attrition rate for cadets and junior patrol officers was too high.

Peter Evans had disappeared off the end of Port Moresby wharf in September 1950. Ken Bradford, Athol Earl and Ian James had been killed in the Mount Lamington eruption on 21 January 1951. Others, Conway amongst them, had resigned from the service during their first leave.

Whatever the reason, I was instructed to proceed to Port Moresby for a break. Perhaps I needed it. Apart from a few hours in October 1950, I had been on outstations for more than two years, and virtually on my own at Urun for the past nine months.

I took the customary three days to walk into Tapini and waited for an aircraft. It was the first time I had flown in a Norseman and it was the first time I had flown from Tapini. Sitting in the cockpit alongside the pilot, I wanted to close my eyes as the aircraft hurtled down the slope towards the small mountain at the end of the strip, Oro Spur looming in front of the aircraft.

In Port Moresby, I reported to the District Office during working hours. Broadcaster Percy Cochrane prevailed upon me to give a live talk in *Police Motu* on the local radio station and I visited the shops to buy a Panama hat and some badly needed clothes.

Back at Tapini, my final patrol, which was supposed to be a routine visit to the Auga Valley to revise the census, turned into another of those broken marathons, with diversions to the Dilava Valley and to Urun and to Ononge, adding an extra three weeks to the anticipated two-week circuit.

In the Mondo area, I was surprised to find that the priests from the Fane-les-Roses

and Bella Vista mission stations were out of favour with the people, because the priests had ignored custom in conducting marriages and had married women already wedded by custom to other men.

I thought that my comments, critical of the mission and of the legal supremacy of church marriages over native custom marriages, might upset my superiors.

But Marist-educated Bottrill surprised me, writing: 'Mr. Brown's comments on native custom marriages are pertinent and I entirely agree with his description of the position. The author opines that relations between the Fane Mission and the natives are not excellent. I concur.

'Last year Fane Mission twice reported to this station that an epidemic had caused over 200 deaths. A Medical Officer visited the area but found no unusual incidence of sickness. Vital statistics obtained by this patrol show that the report was exaggerated and irresponsible: '[Brown's] report is interesting, informative and provocative. The patrol officer shows a clear insight into the problems of the area.'

I visited Ononge Mission to bid farewell to Père Dubuy at the end of July then set off for Tapini. A few days after I arrived, the news came though that on 6 August, Father Dubuy had been killed by a rock fall. He had been excavating a wine cellar in the embankment behind the church at Ononge.

So passed a great man and a remarkable man, respected and admired by the famed and the mighty, by kiaps and commoners. He had been the parish priest at Ononge for almost forty years, from 1913 to 1952 and during that time he had visited his homeland, France, only once.

He created his own memorials—the Ononge Church; a network of outstations, each with a cabin and its own grove of citrus and coffee; a water-powered sawmill; a network of graded paths; and a five-metre-tall, metal cross firmly set in cement on the summit of Mount Albert Edward, which he had installed on 25 July 1938 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of Ononge.

On 10 September 1952 I left Port Moresby for Australia. I had been in Papua for just over two years and eight months and had seen some of the country.

I had been involved in an attempt to build an airstrip, I had intervened in a few disputes, and I had made many friends. I had not saved any money, I had not learnt very much, but I was determined to return to the Territory.

There was a sequel to Father Dubuy's death. While I was on leave in Australia, Port Moresby-based Assistant District officer Mike Tolhurst, tasked with conducting the inquest, was on the track heading towards Ononge on 19 December when shots were fired by his police who were ahead of him and out of sight.

According to the two police involved they had been attacked and a Goilala native had been killed as they defended themselves. ADO Wally (WB) Giles and ADO Arthur (AC) Ewing—neither with any Goilala experience—investigated then handed over to equally inexperienced uniformed police. Constable Suyae was convicted of unlawfully killing and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment by the Supreme Court.

8: Kainantu, Eastern Highlands Province

Things get pretty willing as I patrol restricted territory south of Kainantu

1953 WAS A couple of months old and my wallet and pockets were empty. I had been on leave in Australia for five months, and it was time to return to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

I needed a travel warrant, a permit to enter the Territory and a taxation clearance before I booked my flight. The first two were easy, involving a quick visit and a friendly chat, at the Sydney office of the Department of Territories.

But the taxation clearance was tedious. A long queue, another form, and an interview to convince the Taxation Department I had earned no income whilst on leave, and therefore owed no tax.

It was eventually sorted to their satisfaction and I returned to the Territory at the end of March 1953 on the regular Qantas service—a Douglas DC3. The propellers of the two Pratt and Whitney engines pulled the aircraft along at 270 kilometres an hour and, with a refuelling stop in Brisbane, it took eight hours to reach Townsville for the obligatory overnight stop.

At dawn the next morning, I was on the same aircraft flying from Townsville to Cooktown, where the fuel tanks were topped up and we flew on to Port Moresby, almost 700 kilometres away.

Obeying instructions, I reported to headquarters at Konedobu to be allocated my next posting. Three days later I was in Goroka being hectored by District Commissioner Ian Downs about his beloved Highlands. Downs talked with admiration about his predecessors, both now growing coffee on Goroka's outskirts.

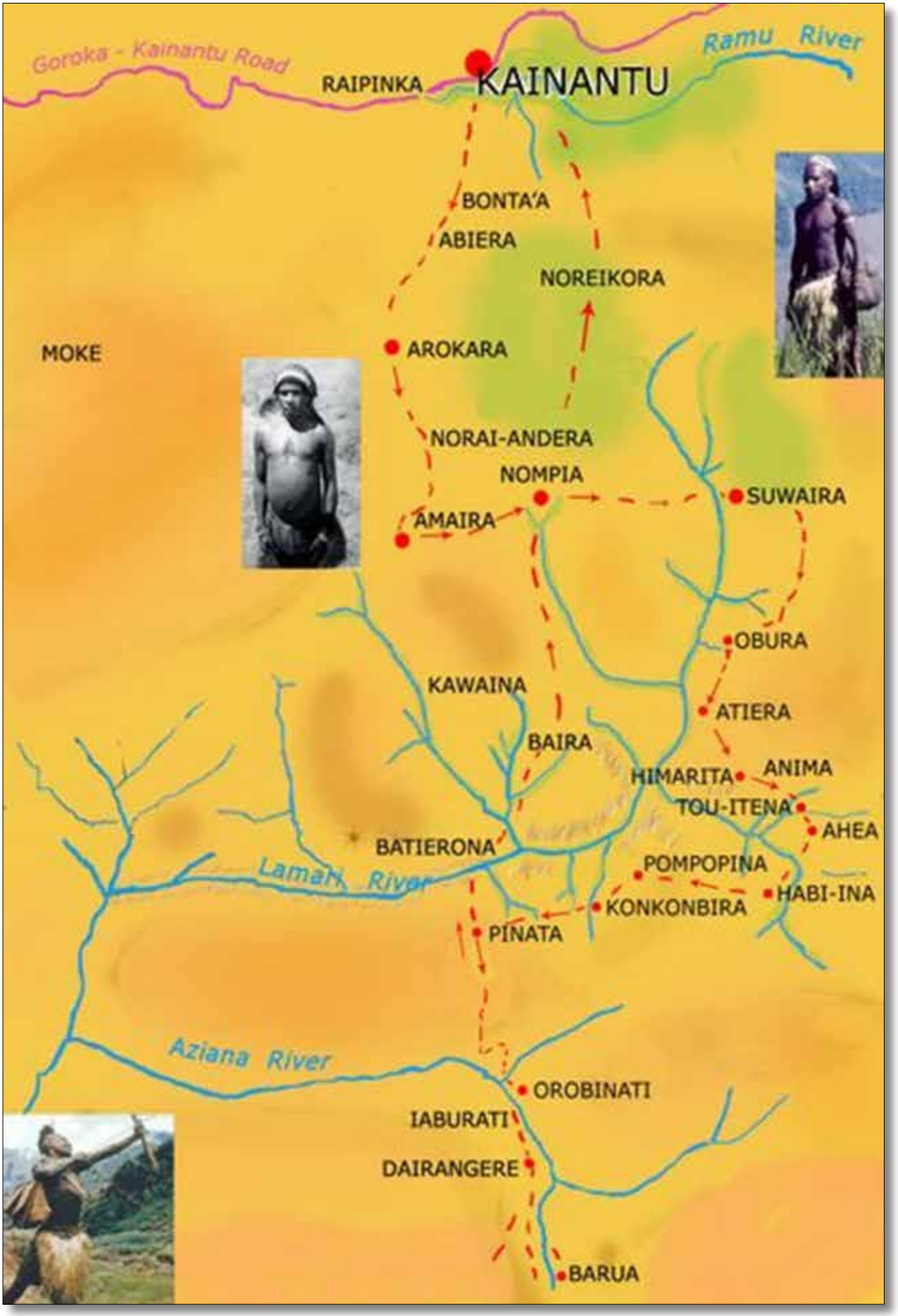
Jim (JL) Taylor had been the ANGAU District Officer at Bena-Bena before becoming District Officer of the postwar Central Highlands District, which had a greater population than the whole of Papua.

Downs also spoke of the achievements of his immediate predecessor George Greathead. 'Farmer George' had become the first District Commissioner of the Eastern Highlands and had much to do with the planning and development of Goroka town.

When Downs told me about the Chimbu people—who already believed they were socially superior and were striving for political equality—I thought I might be headed there, but it was not to be.

I would be going to Kainantu, where my primary task would be extending control—law and order—into a restricted area: pushing down the Lamari River towards the Papuan border.

On Goroka airstrip the de Havilland DH84 Dragon looked as if it belonged in an aviation


Goroka - Kainantu Road
RAIPINKA
KAINANTU
Ramu River
BONTA'A
ABIERA
NOREIKORA
MOKE
AROKARA
NORAI-ANDERA
NOMPIA
SUWAIRA
AMAIRA
OBURA
KAWAINA
ATIERA
BAIRA
HIMARITA
ANIMA
TOU-ITENA
AHEA
BATIERONA
POMPOPINA
Lamari River
HABI-INA
KONKONBIRA
PINATA
Aziana River
OROBINATI
IABURATI
DAIRANGERE
BARUA

museum rather than in service with a commercial airline. The fabric biplane with two 130 hp Gypsy Major engines, wooden propellers and fixed wheels did not look fit to fly.

The pilot sat in the nose of the cabin. I perched on the bench seat on the left-hand side and Len Tudor, a planter returning to Kainantu from a District Advisory Council meeting, sat on the opposite bench. An enormous load of cargo was stacked between us strapped to the floor by a cargo net.

I could see through a plastic window on the opposite side of the cabin, but the view ahead was very restricted. It was a very brief flight, less than ten minutes, and we landed on the rough grass strip at Kainantu.

There was not going to be much time for me to become acquainted with my new surroundings—ten days in fact. That was the period Cadet Patrol Officer Frank (FN) Harris and I spent preparing for the Lamari patrol—selecting equipment, calculating single and two-man loads, weighing rations, airing and packing tarpaulins and selecting a tent.

Finally, we chose the men who would carry the cargo from a pool of volunteers and had them medically examined for fitness.

Frank and I packed on the assumption that we would be a party of fifty, including a medical orderly, seven police and thirty-five carriers. The logistics were fairly simple; most carriers would shoulder a load of eighteen kilograms (forty lbs) and bulky items that could not be carried by one man, like patrol boxes, canvas tarpaulins and the tent, would be assembled into loads of thirty-six kilograms and carried by two men.

Harris and I had been allotted an office in the top level of the government store, an establishment controlled by Beni, a short rotund gentleman from Finschhafen.

A devout Lutheran, Beni was committed to his job and to preserving his nubile young daughter, Katrina, from the wiles of evil young men. She was well endowed but Beni ensured these charms were thoroughly concealed by a 'Mother Hubbard' blouse that hung loosely well past her waist.

Each day he arrived at his office, an enclosed area between the pillars under the store, the beautiful Katrina was in tow and his eagle eye was on her throughout the day. I often wondered if she ever managed to escape to the toilet on her own.

I planned to be away for about four weeks. In the regularly patrolled area, we would be able to buy sweet potato and taro to replace rice, but in the restricted areas we would be dependant the rations we carried. For the first three days we would sleep in rest houses and after that our camp would consist of the tent, tarpaulins and lean-tos of grass, saplings and fronds.

CPO Harris would accompany me for the first week, and return to Kainantu before we reached hostile areas. I reckoned that one inexperienced person on the patrol, me, would be enough of a worry.

I had never been in a restricted area before and, with my lack of experience, I could have been heading into trouble. That's why I was going to rely on the three most experienced of the seven constables—Homoguei from Bena Bena; Pita also from Bena Bena; and Tokam from Chimbu. Each of them had been commended highly for their bushcraft and especially for their ability to work calmly with newly-contacted people.

TOP: Kainantu Airstrip 1953. An unusually busy day with a Qantas de Havilland Drover, Laurie Crowley's Avro Anson and a Mandated Airlines de Havilland Dove. At the end of the airstrip is the Ramu gap and on the right, in the background, the hills near Aiyura.

CENTRE: Amaira, 1953

BOTTOM: Census at Obura. The husband in borrowed clothing, the wife and an unmarried female relative in traditional garb but all with traditional hairstyles. Constable Pita on the right. Carriers in the background.

I studied and digested 'Circular Instruction, No 147 of 1952', fourteen closely-typed pages of sage advice, the dos and don'ts of patrolling in restricted areas. And I digested ADO Gordon (GT) Linsley's reports of his three earlier Lamari-probing patrols.

Then, the day before we were to leave, we had to change our plans. The people of Amaira village in the nearby Taiora area had started firing arrows at their neighbours, and that fracas needed to be stopped. There was little point taking law and order to the uncontrolled area while ignoring a skirmish nearer to home in a controlled area.

It was a two-day climb through the grasslands to hilltop Amaira and we had to be careful where we walked. The traditional burning of the grasslands had been banned for several years and the walking track was a basking spot for death adders. The superstition was that the second man in the file was always bitten.

With the arrow-firing miscreants apprehended and on their way to court proceeding in Kainantu, it was another two-day's walk from Amaira to the point at which we would start the Lamari patrol. After a tough climb to the crest of the dividing range, there was the descent to Suwaira where cargo, police and the main line of carriers were waiting.

Suwaira seemed to be the blending pot where the Taiora culture melded with the Lamari. As we began to move towards the next village, Obura, the differences in adornment, costume, hair style, language, even agriculture were even more noticeable. Unlike the Taiora, who were garbed in drab, tapa-like bark skirts otherwise unadorned, the upper Lamari men sported a flat, grass apron hanging to below the knee, a beaten-bark flap over the buttocks and wore shell adornments Married women sported a full-length grass skirt and single women a skirt split at the thigh. Both sexes favoured hair styled into long plaited lengths.

I knew that the further we travelled south, the more likely we were to be attacked so, as we departed Obura, I established a marching order that would be maintained for the duration of the patrol.

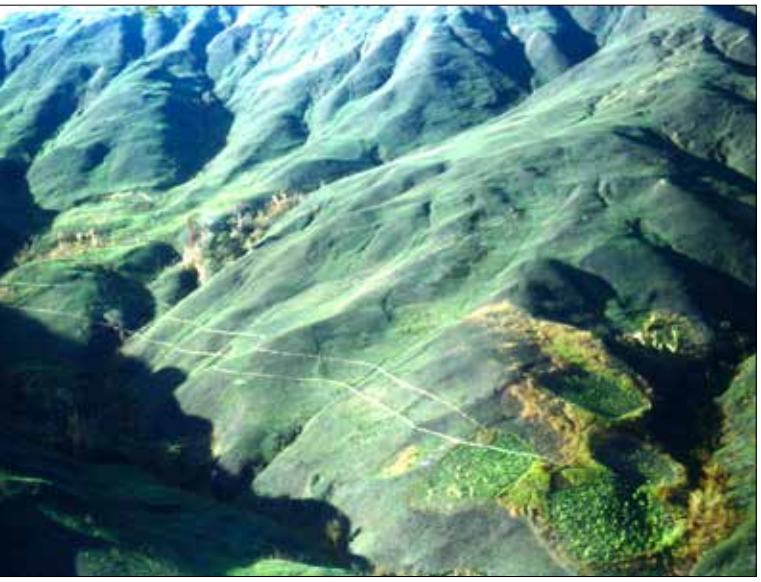
I would lead with one constable following immediately behind me; two constables would form the end of the line to watch and protect the rear and the remaining four constables would disperse themselves evenly through the line.

Each constable was issued with ten rounds of ammunition, checked to ensure they loaded the rounds into the magazine and not into the chamber of their rifle, and double-checked to determine that the safety catches were on.

I knew that the Obura people were warring with the next group downstream, the Atiera, so when a group of armed Obura warriors tried to tag along with our party, we convinced them to return to their village. But it was not long before we had other company.

As we followed a track around the left bank of a valley wall, a column of Atiera warriors, armed with bows, arrows and fighting shields, appeared on the crest of the ridge high above us. They kept up with us, following the ridge paralleling our course in clear view, and—as I soon calculated—close enough to lob arrows.

When we reached Atiera, we started our security routine. As soon as the campsite was selected, the carriers and the cargo were parked in the centre and a security zone set up around them.



TOP: A group of Kukukukus assembled outside the rope strung to delineate the perimeter of the security zone

RIGHT: Two parallel bamboo irrigation pipelines on the left bank of the Lamari River. In the left of the frame, the pipelines straddle a gully

BOTTOM: A long pipeline

Four posts were erected at the corners of the roughly rectangular area, additional posts placed in between and a light rope strung tightly between them to delineate the perimeter. A police constable stood guard at each corner. The other three police, assisted by the carriers, had the task of erecting the tarpaulins, tent and lean-tos while also maintaining some surveillance.

Our security zone was flimsy protection against a surprise attack but it would do and it also prevented petty thieving and the friction that could produce.

The rope boundary was also a convenient location for trading. Across it we exchanged trade items, mainly salt for small quantities of taro, and we purchased pigs so we could use them as targets to demonstrate our rifles' firepower.

The headquarters circular I had read stressed the value of demonstrating how a rifle could kill pigs, but I always doubted its value. The loud explosion may have created a shock and some fear, but the invisible bullet rarely left more than a small hole.

I wondered if the people could connect the hole made by the bullet with the firearm's noisy discharge. Had they gained any idea of how lethal the weapon was, or its range? I also wondered about what they thought of those occasions when the marksman failed to hit the pig.

We were now trekking in difficult country: a vee-shaped valley of dry, steep, almost grassless slopes broken by innumerable ridges and spurs, the occasional small stream and the incredible bamboo-pipe irrigation systems.

Assistant District Officer Ian (RI) Skinner had seen and described pipelines on the right bank in October 1947—lengths of bamboo joined together, telescope fashion, after they have been pierced and the interior nodules removed by fire-hardened, spear-like sticks. With each joint supported by a stake, the water was piped from small creeks to a main line linking to a taro garden three kilometres away, planted where there was an outcrop of good soil.

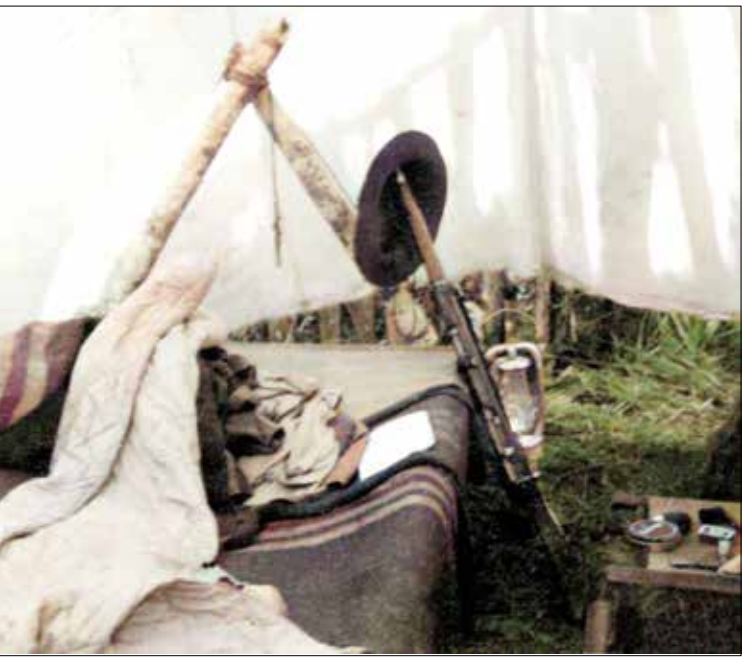
ADO Gordon Linsley had seen more extensive pipelines on his travels down the left bank and had also described them, but none of the reports had prepared me for the reality—the sheer ingenuity, design skill and imagination of that irrigation system. And nothing had prepared me for the joy of making camp next to a reticulated water line.

Linsley's report had warned that the people of Oneibira were warlike and likely to be a problem. He was almost right. We did not have trouble with the Oneibira, but we did with their neighbours, the Konkonbira.

It had been very peaceful until we reached their village at midday on the seventeenth day. My diary note for Thursday, 2 April reads: 'A number of truculent natives, dissuaded from snatching cargo from the carriers, accompanied us to the spur above the village, where camp was made.'

Soon after we made camp, two or three men brought a small quantity of taro to us and left. In the light of subsequent events, they were probably checking the layout of our position.

At about midnight that night, I was asleep in the tent. The normal night routine was being followed. Our kerosene supplies had to be husbanded, so all the lamps had been doused and an armed sentry was on watch. I had gone to bed dressed for next morning except for my boots.



TOP: A Konkonbira group

RIGHT: Inside the tent. My untidy bed sail after the disturbed night

BOTTOM: A Kukukuku warrior

I think that Constable Pita must have been very close to my head when he fired a warning shot. A Lee-Enfield Army rifle makes a very loud noise when it is fired during the day, but it is deafening when fired at close proximity in the stillness of the night.

I sprang out of bed. I heard the intruders careering through the camp as they fled. But we were all awake for the rest of the night.

At first light on 3 April, Good Friday, I could see that we were encircled by more than eighty armed warriors holding bows with arrows strung ready to fire. A ring of women, carrying reserve supplies of arrows, stood behind their menfolk, adding their cries to the general bedlam.

It was obvious who the fight leader was. He was doing all the shouting and prancing as he positioned his troops, moving them around the circle, encouraging them closer to us as if trying to tighten the noose. He appeared to want us to leave. But, even if we had wanted to, there was nowhere to go.

This continued for more than three hours. If it had come to a showdown, a volley over their heads may have ended the matter. We had six rifles, five constables' and mine, to use if required.

An emissary arrived, an old man quivering with fear. We could not understand what he said and he could not understand us, but our gestures may have done the trick.

He returned with younger men. A further, more serious, demonstration of firepower established our strength. Then a procession of women arrived carrying cooking bananas, corn and sugar cane as well as the ubiquitous taro. A truce had been declared.

Late the next morning we were off again and toiled around the spurs for four hours to Pinata. The Pinata people obviously knew all about the confrontation at Konkonbira, they were placid and not about to present the same problem.

The people of Oneibira, Konkonbira and Pinata appeared to be from a different cultural group to the northern Lamari. The men wore *giri-giri* shells (small cowrie) as forehead pieces, *kuma-kuma* shells (large cowrie) suspended around their necks as pendants and cane waist bands. They sported pig-tusk nose ornaments and spoke a different language.

Perhaps these people extended down the spur-like massif between the Lamari and Aziana Rivers? But we did not have a sufficient reserve of rations to investigate. On 6 April we left Pinata, crossed the divide between the Lamari and Aziana Rivers and entered Kukukuku territory.

If the Pinata people looked different, the Kukukuku people looked as though they came from another planet. They flaunted a wealth of shell adornments: bandoliers of *giri-giri*, necklaces of *kuma-kuma*, tiara-like headpieces of *giri-giri* and plumes. Maybe their salt trade was the source of the wealth.

ADO Linsley had in 1952 disproved a myth about the Lamari rock salt deposit. There was none. The salt traded up the Lamari was produced by the Aziana Kukukukus, the Imani and Barua groups.

Linsley commented that: 'the pit-pit gardens of the Imani somewhat resembled fields of young sugar cane' and made diary references to 'pit-pit fields, dotted here and there, with

huts containing ash'. But he had been there in the wet season. Perhaps seasonality was the reason nobody had really done justice to the complexity of that enterprise.

Fencing fields, clearing and planting a *pit-pit*-like grass, hand harvesting (slashing) the crop in the dry season, allowing to stubble to dry, collecting and burning it in bonfires, collecting and washing the ash, mounding the ash in sheds and trading the product. I could write a separate chapter about this time-honoured process.

There was another facet to the Kukukukus. They were game. They were a people reputed to appear from the shadows of the forest carrying a variety of weapons to kill and maim: long-handled tomahawks, stone clubs, bows and arrows, and a dagger made, perhaps, from the thigh-bone of a cassowary.

And, even though they knew about our rifles and their firepower, they seemed determined to taunt us.

They came close to attacking us at Iabunati on 8 April, when they streamed down a hill armed with bows and arrows and carrying war shields.

They changed their minds when we formed a circle on the high ground, prepared and ready for a fight. It was another two days before another group gained sufficient confidence to be irritating.

On 10 April, we had just made camp at Oribinata in the Barua group when we were again surrounded. This time our adversaries fired a volley of arrows into the air, not aimed directly at us, but obviously seeking a response.

We were almost at the end of the patrol and it was not the time for pleasantries. Maybe the news of that fracas preceded us down the valley and there were no further incidents. Thirteen days later we returned to Kainantu.

I laboriously typed my report, still to the same prescription—four copies for Headquarters, one for the District Commissioner, one for the Kainantu file and one for myself. But I had grown wiser. I kept the clearest copy, the second, for myself. I still have it.

District Commissioner Ian Downs seemed happy. In his covering letter to Headquarters he said:

> Some of the brief but illuminating diary records are worthy of a press release as an indication of efficient, level-headed, and proper conduct in the face of an aggressive, primitive group ... Mr Brown, whom I saw prior to his departure and again after his return from patrol, has carried out his instructions to my entire satisfaction.

He was also playing some sort of game, stating, 'The patrol was essential because Mr Linsley's patrol was far too rapid to have made a firm impression.'

He knew that Linsley had led the exploratory patrols down the Lamari, three of them, and he knew that my patrol had not made a firm impression. He anticipated further trouble and decided that I should be appointed a coroner even though I was only a junior patrol officer. I was duly appointed a coroner on 7 July 1953.

9: Settling into Kainantu

In Kainantu I become familiar with the highlands and road building

IN 1953, WITH MY first Lamari patrol out of the way, it was time to get to know something about Kainantu.

With its vistas of rolling grassed hills, small casuarina-lined valleys, bamboo groves and, always in the distance, forested mountain ranges, it was different to anything I had ever experienced.

There were roads, a small expatriate community and a grass airstrip, just 1,190 metres long and forty-six metres wide. The runway, on an east west axis, physically divided the community, a division that was engendered and emphasised by both law and policy.

The Native Women's Protection Ordinance made it an offence, punishable by a fine or six-months' imprisonment, for an expatriate to permit a female native to be on premises between the hours of six o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in morning.

A bloke called Sam Marshall quipped that the restricted hours didn't worry him because he only did matinees.

The edict, reissued by Director of the Department of Native Affairs, JK McCarthy, in August 1952, made it:

> ... quite clear that it [was] contrary to Administration policy for officers [kiaps] to have sexual relations with native women and that disciplinary action with a view to dismissal from the service will be taken against any officer so offending.

TOP: Queen Elizabeth's Coronation Day celebration, 2 June 1953, Kainantu. Looking across the parade ground, left to right: government store; small garage housing the Administration' s vehicles, a four-wheel drive Land Rover and a BSA motorbike; Sub-District Office with plaited cane walls and red corrugated iron roof

LEFT: Simbu workers removing the forest by hand between Kassam and the Markham, on the eastern escarpment

RIGHT: Parade ground, Assistant District Officer's residence at Kainantu, gardens, and pine trees imported from the countryside and planted to a geometric pattern

BOTTOM: The first permanent-material house in the Highlands, constructed for TG Aitchison in 1932. ADO Alan Timperley assisted the Young-Whitfords to celebrate Audrey's 21st birthday at a small function in the house in October 1948. *(Audrey Young-Whitford, 1948)*

So, the local people—police, prisoners, workers, hospital staff and patients—occupied the southern side of the airstrip. The flat plateau to its north provided an elevated setting for Sub-District Office, government store, parade ground, four expatriate houses and tennis court.

The wartime marriage of Assistant District Officer Gerry (GW) Toogood to socialite Monica Suzanne Angas, a daughter of the family after which Angaston in South Australia was named, may have influenced the construction of the clay-surfaced tennis court.

Replete with heavy roller, line-marking machine, elevated umpire's chair, covered seating for spectators and children's swings, the court was a social lubricant. Each Saturday afternoon it attracted expatriates from Kainantu, nearby Aiyura Agricultural Station and surrounds.

The after-tennis party that followed, in the ADO's residence could involve as many as thirty people dancing into the wee hours to music from a wind-up gramophone in a large lounge-dining room dimly lit by a kerosene lamp.

ADO Allen (AT) Timperley, Toogood's predecessor, had probably organised the construction of the residence—a solid building of pit-sawn timber—which occupied the prime position on the station—the rise overlooking the parade ground.

An adjacent dwelling had an intriguing history. Now occupied by Patrol Officer Bill (WJ) Kelly and family, in Timperley's day it had been home to PO Dudley (DAM) Young-Whitford and his bride.

Much earlier, in 1936, PO Tom (TG) Aitchison had built the house for his bride-to-be. He claimed he had paid for the materials and construction out of his own pocket; forced to do so by his superiors who would not allow his fiancée to enter the country, or even sanction his marriage, until the house was constructed.

So in March 1937, Sylvia had become the first expatriate woman to be married at Kainantu and the house the first permanent-material residence in the Highlands of New Guinea.

My life would have been simple at Kainantu if District Commissioner Ian Downs had not intervened, telling my ADO, Harry West, that he wanted me involved in the all-important road project—the four-wheel drive track being constructed from the Highlands to the Markham Valley.

I was a latecomer to the road project and was to be involved only on the periphery, to gain enough knowledge of the operation to be able to stand in if required.

ADO West had arrived at Kainantu in November 1952 tasked with revitalising the project, and had immediately recalled Cadet Patrol Officer Rupe (RR) Havilland from patrol to make the project his sole priority.

During the next fourteen days, West and Havilland examined the proposed route down the almost sheer 1,500-metre escarpment on the Markham fall and condemned it as unsafe.

Havilland's diary and report recorded the details:

> Upon arrival at the road on 22.11.52, it was found that … very little had been done and that work which had been done was largely misdirected. … the proposed route, owing to the nature of the terrain, wet weather and landslides was impractical. Food was scarce … no provision had been made for buying it and transporting it efficiently.
>
> The only thing to be done was start all over again. Owing to the shortage of tools during

> November the work was done mainly with ex-Army trenching tool and pointed stakes. … A new route had to be found up the Markham side of the range. … The whole road gang was moved to the top of Mount Kassam, overlooking the Markham … a new camp constructed … work began on the section down the Range to the Markham.

The official November 1965 publication from the Administration's information office unconscionably ignored Havilland's report and maintained the fiction that Toogood's original route proposal was followed, thus denigrating Havilland's vital input.

On 11 December 1952, Havilland moved the road camp from Arona to Kassam and the hard work of clearing and cutting the road down the escarpment began. The task was, to construct a four-wheel drive track down the eastern wall of the Highlands.

There were no bulldozers, no trucks and no mechanical equipment, not even wheelbarrows. A workforce of enthusiastic Highlanders mainly from the Simbu (Chimbu) area worked with hand tools: felling huge trees; cutting the bench; removing obstructions; creating the road surface.

They built bonfires around the huge boulders obstructing the route, fuelled the fires throughout the day and doused them at '*bello*' (knock-off). Slowly, the overnight cold and shrinkage fractured and splintered the boulders.

Then we got lucky. New Guinea Goldfields was showing an interest in Kainantu and, to sweeten the relationship, the company helped with some explosives—crates of weeping gelignite that was classed as unstable and unsafe for mining. Those crates came by air to Kainantu, travelled in our Land Rover to Kassam and individual sticks were frypan-dried for use.

Harry West visited Kassam at least weekly. I accompanied him from time to time and Downs appeared at monthly intervals to spur us on.

CPO Bob (RD) Cleland arrived in June to assist Havilland in the final stages then moved on to his own challenge—supervising the construction of the road over Daulo Pass on the route between Kundiawa and Goroka. At 2,478 metres, Daulo became the highest crossing along what would become the Highlands Highway.

In June, Dr John Gunther (then Director of Health, later Assistant Administrator and, later still, knighted) drove the first vehicle from Lae to Kainantu over Kassam Pass and then on to Goroka.

Downs and West drove down to the Markham Valley to assist Gunther and his passenger, Morobe District Commissioner Horrie (H L) Niall (also later knighted), through the wet crossing at Umi River and listened to him declaiming that the vehicle, a fully equipped ambulance, was only to be used for its designed purpose and 'not as a shag wagon'.

The last hurrah was the formal opening of the road and Kassam Pass on 2 July 1953 by Administrator Sir Donald Cleland driving in a fleet of Land Rovers from Gusap to Kainantu.

It was time for me to forget road works. Downs had seen how the Asaro people around Goroka were emulating the coffee plantation efforts of Jim Leahy, Jim Taylor and George Greathead, and he argued that, if some expatriate growers could be established around Kainantu, the local people would follow the lead and plant their own coffee.

My task was to make it happen by identifying available blocks of land that had a potential for road access, were surplus to native requirements and were suitable for growing coffee. Then I was to purchase them so they could be made available for tender.

I knew that I could judge whether a block of land had road access, I hoped I could assess whether it was surplus but I could only guess whether it would be suitable for coffee.

The advice of the guru, Aubrey Schindler, officer-in-charge of Aiyura Agricultural Station, did not help me:

> There are no places where the land is lying just ready for seed to be sown in order to become productive,' he said. 'The swamp demands attention to drainage on an extensive organised scale, the slopes require regeneration by re-afforestation and green manuring, and the grassy flats require considerable drainage and green manuring. Naturally well-drained and productive soils are occupied by native people's food gardens.

There were no enthusiastic sellers amongst the people. The idea of selling land was not in anybody's head and I wasted many weeks trying to locate land that was available, suitable and that had clear ownership. Eventually, I identified two blocks; one running from the roadside to the rim of Ramu Gorge and the other across the river opposite the airstrip at Aiyura Agricultural Station. Both were on hillsides, both were grassland, both were a trifle swampy and I had my doubts as to whether they had coffee-growing potential.

A new strategy was required. I borrowed a large ex-army table with folding legs from the office, packed a compass, chain, large office typewriter, drawing instruments and land transaction forms into patrol boxes, and set off. I left Kainantu on 3 August and when I returned on 1 October, I had revised the census of the thirty-three Taiora villages and acquired seven blocks of land totalling 586 hectares. I had also completed the compass and chain surveys, prepared the investigation and transfer documents and purchased the land.

It was time to get ready for the next Lamari patrols and I needed to know more about the past. Why had so many people been killed and wounded in the period 1920 to 1934?

I studied the old files and talked to people who had made some of that early history—Tom (TG) Aitchison, Anarai (the Paramount Luluai of Punano), the Reverend Johannes Flierl and his wife Hannah, Nomi (a young volunteer interpreter in the 1930s), Jim (JL) Taylor and Ted (EJ) Ubank.

Taylor had been District Officer of the huge Central Highlands District when he resigned from the Administration in June 1948 to grow coffee. He had been an Assistant District Officer in October 1932 when he was tasked with finding a new site for the Upper Ramu Patrol Post and building a new airstrip.

He had selected Kainantu, five kilometres to the east of the airstrip at Lapumpa, which Eric Feldt, District Officer of the Morobe District, had organised while on patrol, in July-August 1932.

Taylor was a taciturn soul but we had common items in our backgrounds that led to deeper conversation. He and I had been reared in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, had swum at the same beaches and had attended the same secondary school, albeit thirty years apart.

His brother and my father had both been Sergeants in the 55th Battalion of the Australian Infantry Forces in World War I and had fought together in the Battalion's first action in July

1916, the Battle of Fromelles, which Taylor's brother, Jason, did not survive. Jim himself had been wounded and gassed in 1918.

Tom Aitchison was transiting between his relieving role as District Commissioner Morobe and his new appointment as District Commissioner Kavieng when he stopped by in July 1963 to further his retirement dream—an agricultural lease near Aiamontina in the Agarabi Census Division.

Neither Aitchison nor the Aiamontina people seemed concerned that he had been involved in events following the death of ADO Ian Mack in 1933. Eleven men from Aiamontina and four from Unantu had been killed at that time but the people were happy to release their land to allow him to settle near them.

Aitchison was more forthcoming about the aftermath to the 1934 murder of McGrath at Finintegu. He spoke of the two-day battle in which District Officer Ted (E) Taylor and others were wounded and three local people killed, and he claimed that he had organised the initial response, led the police and miners, to arrest the culprits.

He also waxed lyrical about the peace ceremony that he and Lutheran missionary Johannes Flierl had organised to bring the warring tribes together, opt for peace and burn their weapons.

Ted Ubank was still mining on the Ornapinka near Barola when I was at Kainantu from 1953 to early 1955. With the exception of the Pacific War years, he had been there since 1930. A veteran of World War I, twice wounded at Gallipoli, Ted claimed he had entered the Highlands, mining in the Arona Valley, in 1928, a year before I was born.

Our conversations were not easy—he openly acknowledged that he did not like kiaps and he did not like the 'Government.' They had failed to protect the miners and as a result McGrath had died, although he reluctantly conceded that the 'sprog' Aitchison had handle the aftermath of that event with ability.

Paramount Lululai Anarai, from the Punano group of villages was proud of his role in the Mack affair. The Government had been strong and he had helped them punish the culprits—his enemies. His good had prevailed over their evil.

Nomi had been a youthful, unofficial interpreter with Mack in 1933 as well as Administration interpreter throughout the 1950s and he had his own definite views. He said those things had happened in the past and was almost castigating in his response to my question.

Nomi said the Lutheran missionaries had defended themselves against attack and would have been killed if they had not done so, and that, without the interventions of kiaps and police, the frequent tribal fighting, warfare and heavy loss of life would have continued unabated.

He said that times had changed and drew my attention to the present, pointing out that each morning of the working week, before the seven o'clock roll call, more than 100 people presented themselves in front of the Sub-District Office with produce to sell to the Administration: mostly root vegetables food and pit sawn planks. More than half of those people were women, and the majority of them were from his Agarabi group. Throughout the

working day, more Agarabi people would visit the office: to sell gold from alluvial mining and to sort out marital problems and other matters.

Finally, Nomi wondered whether I had noticed the small groups of Simbu women who passed by the office, wandering down the road on foot, on their way to visit their menfolk employed at the Kassam camp. No more than three or four at a time, some wearing their feathered finery they were unescorted and unmolested, protected by the government's law and order.

Of course, I had noticed. I was overawed. I do not know how long it took them, perhaps two weeks or more, walking all the way. There were no trucks or private cars. Vehicles were rare—scarcer than hen's teeth. Simbu wantoks on the government stations at Goroka and Henganofi provided stopovers, but those small groups of women were largely on their own, protected only by the sanctity of the government road inspired only by their love and respect for their menfolk.

My research had not provided me with answers but on 6 November 1953 Patrol Officer Gerald Szarka, Cadet Patrol Officer Geoffrey Harris, and Constables Buritori and Purari were killed in separate, but co-ordinated, attacks in the Eliptamin valley of the Sepik District.

I obviously needed to do more thinking before the impending patrol down the Lamari into the restricted (uncontrolled) area, especially as we had come under attack on our first exploration.

Director of District Services and Native Affairs J K McCarthy presents Administration Interpreter Nomi with the Loyal Service Medal, 1954. Left to right: Paramount Lululai Anarai LSM, District Commissioner Ian Downs (back to camera), Sergeant Major Bus LSM, J K McCarthy, Interpreter Nomi LSM

10: Incident at Obura, Eastern Highlands Province

Fights on patrol and fights with my headquarters both turn out OK

WE ALL MAKE mistakes, and Patrol Officer Bruce (BWP) Burge was no exception. -He was engaged on a routine task, revising the census in Baira village, when he heard about tribal fighting in which two people had been killed.

Accompanied by his small detachment of five police, he crossed to the left bank of the Lamari River to Atiera village, but by the time he got there the death toll had increased. Four Obura and two more Atiera warriors had been killed.

That evening, Burge tried to convince the Atiera men that they should accompany him to Obura village to make peace. The next morning, when they refused to do so, he arrested the *luluai* and another man. All hell broke loose; the Atiera warriors launched a fusillade of arrows at the patrol and the police returned fire.

Burge then made his second mistake. He decided to retreat through Obura taking the Atiera prisoners with him, virtually delivering them to their enemies.

At Obura, the patrol was surrounded by some 150 warriors carrying fighting shields and armed with bows and arrows

Burge grouped his carriers in front of the rest house, placed the two prisoners in their midst and deployed the police around the whole group.

The Oburas issued an ultimatum—unless Burge surrendered the prisoners to be killed, he and his patrol would be attacked.

When the Oburas saw the patrol was making preparations to leave, a warrior pranced forward and, Burge's report recorded, fired an arrow 'at about fifteen foot range into the centre of the huddle of carriers … he missed the carriers but struck the prisoner, the Atiera *luluai* in the back.'

Another twenty-five arrows were fired from a range of about twenty yards and the Atiera *luluai* was hit again and the other prisoner wounded by two arrows.

Lance Corporal Pakau and another policeman, Kaupa, led the breakout, leading the laden carriers and carrying the two prisoners, now wounded and unable to walk. Pakau fired several shots to clear a party opposing the retreat. Burge and the other three constables stayed until last; acting as a rearguard.

Assistant District Officer Harry West and I set out for Obura three days after Burge's return. We took a force of twenty police—even the station bugler—and thirty carriers. Burge was left with five police to look after Kainantu.

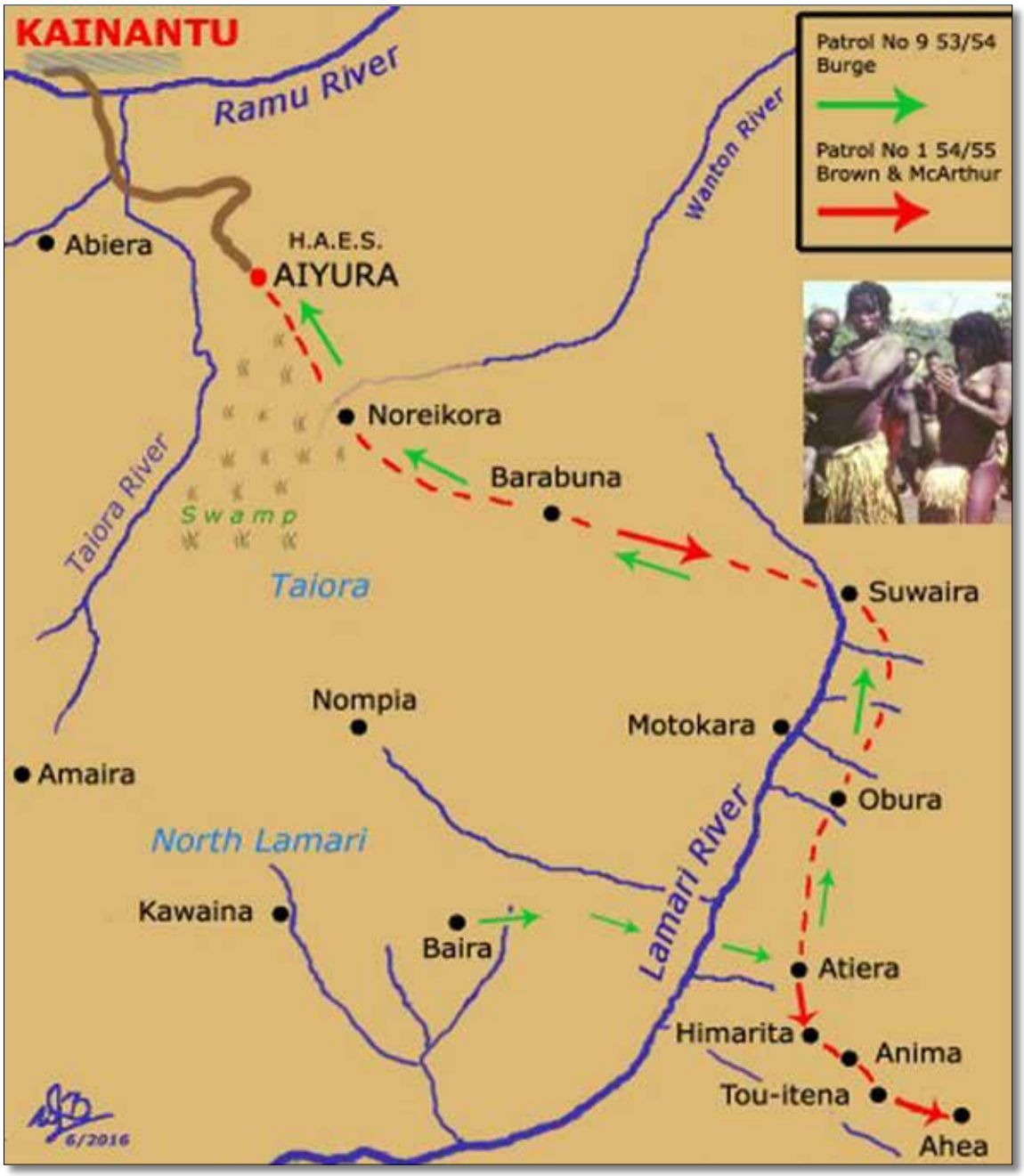
He had wanted to return to Obura but his family circumstance, a recently-arrived first-born— or the imminent arrival of one—dictated otherwise.

As we wound around the track, I could see from my position at the end of the single file that ADO West in the lead had stripped down to his favoured walking attire—shorts, a white sleeveless, cotton singlet, socks and boots.

He had covered his head and ginger hair with a well-worn green fedora but his pinkish neck, shoulders, and arms glowed in the sun.

At Obura, the women and children were being led out as we neared the village—evacuated to distant hiding places.

The men, as West's subsequent report told it: 'armed heavily with bows and arrows and shields, retired to the hills surrounding the rest house … They refused to come near [and] when approached, retreated to the next spur.'



TOP: ADO West having a breather, sitting on a patrol box in front of the village rest house, Obura 1954

LEFT: Aspiring sightseer from Obura area, groomed for his first visit to Kainantu and Goroka

RIGHT: Lance Corporal Pakau, Obura, June 1954

We arrested ten, then released five, sending them to join the recalcitrant with the message that I would be returning again in six weeks' time.

It was different at Atiera. Within a short time of our arrival, men women and children had assembled to greet us and bring food. They discussed the recent events, claimed the Oburas were the aggressors and suggested that two Atiera youths return with the patrol to Kainantu to learn Pidgin English.

The people were calmer when I returned to Obura five weeks later, but I was also constrained.

Only five of my twelve police were experienced, three others were recent graduates from the training depot and four were in their first year of service.

I also had some concerns about Lance Corporal Pakau, a Chimbu with twelve years' service, who may have been responsible for Burge's successful withdrawal, but who might also have had an over-zealous trigger finger. (Two years earlier, when he had shot and killed an escaping prisoner, the Coroner had exonerated him, accepting his story that the bullet had passed well above the escapee's head, struck a branch and ricocheted back striking the escapee in the forehead.)

Two men had been wounded by rifle fire in the attack on Burge's party. One had a bullet wound in the forearm, but the bullet had passed between the bones and there was no permanent damage. The other had his ear lobe clipped by a bullet that had passed so close that it caused temporary loss of hearing.

Almost everybody from the Obura group appeared when I called the roll from the census register. Perhaps the fifty-six who failed to do so had guilty consciences.

I stayed eight days in the area, visited Atiera and talked a lot but achieved little. I could see that no one village could withdraw from the conflict.

If any village group opted for peace and ceased defending itself, it would be annihilated. I suggested that a strong patrol visit the five villages—Obura, Atiera, Himarita, Ahea, Anima and Tou-intena—and enforce the cessation of tribal fighting.

It was not all patrolling and work. In mid-1954, the newly-formed Territory Rugby League commenced its season and District Commissioner Ian Downs drafted me into his Goroka team.

Each alternate Friday afternoon, some time after four, pilot Les Taylor would pick me up in a Territory Air Lines Dragon and fly me to Goroka to train before the Saturday game. It was almost an all-*kiap* backline with Cadet Patrol Officer Paul (PK) Healy playing scrum-half, Ian Downs at five-eighth, ADO Fred (FPC) Kaad at inside centre and me at outside centre. Notables in the forwards were 'Young Danny' Leahy (later knighted) and Merv and Les Gillies. I was not always available to play as I was sometimes on patrol and missed one home and two away games but played away in Madang and Lae, where the heat and humidity almost flattened me.

Goroka was the biggest town in the Highlands but still very small—not yet even a one-pub town.

Mrs Pitt (widow of kiap Mark Pitt) had a licensed guest house where Downs's young,

old-maidish secretary, Doreen McGee, moonlighted behind the bar and in the dining room, treating the guests with disdain.

I stayed there when on duty travel—with the government paying—but Fred and June Kaad looked after me on football jaunts, and one Sunday afternoon they took me to a barbeque at Bobby Gibbes' homestead on a hill outside town. June was pregnant at the time.

We arrived in a flurry of gravel—Kaad had his foot hard on the accelerator driving uphill—to be greeted by the rambunctious former RAAF Wing Commander Bobby (RH) Gibbes, DSO DFC and Bar.

'Your wife is going to have another daughter, Kaad,' Gibbes bellowed. 'The way you drive would shake the nuts off anything.'

In August, Harry West was about to go on seven-months' leave and Ian Downs was manoeuvring to ensure he returned to Kainantu afterwards. His strategy, opposed by some at Headquarters because of my lack of seniority, was that I would take over as acting Assistant District Officer while West was absent.

Downs got his way. The Administrator, Donald Cleland, authorised him to administer the oath of office to me and I took over on 7 August 1954 and Downs told headquarters:

> I am particularly anxious to consolidate in Obura area and I will accept full responsibility for anything that occurs.
>
> Patrol Officer McArthur has outstanding record in uncontrolled areas and Mr Brown is experienced and competent to lead such a patrol. It will be six months before West returns and this imposed restraint of normal activity will make the task much harder. If you will not let Brown and McArthur go, will you at least allow me to go personally?

Lance Corporal Pakau with youths from Obura area, June 1954

McArthur and I undertook the patrol. McArthur, accompanied by twenty police and forty-five carriers, left for Barabuna on 1 December. I followed a day later, delayed by a visit by Downs and newly-appointed Assistant Administrator, Rupert Wilson.

I was under instructions to be back at Kainantu to escort a New Guinea Goldfields' surveying team two weeks later on 16 December.

McArthur and I completed the task. There was no opposition; indeed we were welcomed with enthusiasm. The aircraft from Goroka—that flew overhead, circled and dropped a note—added to the awe.

When we encouraged each group to send some individuals with the patrol to see the sights of Kainantu, we were swamped with volunteers and limited the number to twelve from each group. Thirty of the sixty sightseers went on to Goroka and some of that group went further to see Port Moresby.

I was relieved to be home after sharing a tent with McArthur for fourteen days. I hosted the after-tennis party and dance on the Saturday, but this time there was a difference. I clicked with one of the ladies.

She was the last to leave and asked me to take her home; the beginning of six torrid weeks of late nights and early mornings. We spent each Sunday together and then there was a spate of Christmas activities.

It seared me—I think it seared us both—and then it was over. One night she announced we were both getting too involved, too committed and that the difference in our ages—almost fifteen years—was too great. 'It is wonderful now, but what will it be like later, when I am old and you will still be young?'

It did not matter how I argued but the next day she was gone. There was no good-bye, only a note to say that she was in tears but leaving, flying to Australia. And so she was gone but the pain and the void remained.

That brief romance was going to change my future.

11: Vanimo, West Sepik Province

I'm despatched to the Sepik—but is it an escape or a punishment?

IT WAS MAY 1955 and I'd been on leave in Australia for six weeks when a letter arrived signed by Director of Native Affairs, JK McCarthy.

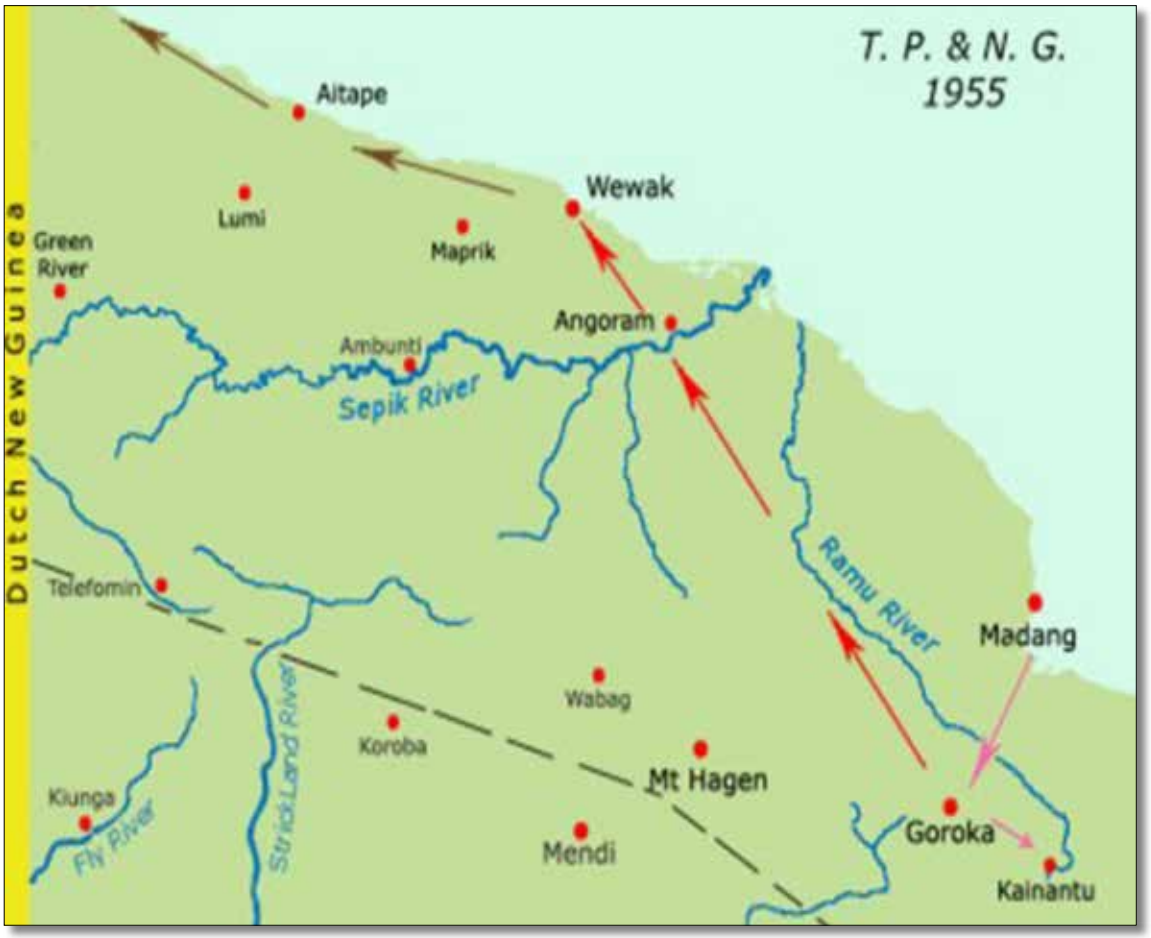
The letter read:

> Due to the exigencies of the service, it is now necessary that you take up duty in the Sepik District and not in the Central Highlands District. Your posting is to replace Mr TW Ellis who has been transferred to Madang for special duties. A warrant for Wewak has been authorised.

I had reservations about the veracity of that letter. The Central Highlands had ceased to exist as a district in 1951, and I doubted I was going to replace Tom Ellis.

I had no intention of proceeding direct to Wewak. If I was leaving the Highlands, I needed to travel to Kainantu; the ghosts were still there and I needed to pack my gear.

I did not realise it then but I was to be stationed in the Sepik District for eleven years.



The China Navigation Line's recently refurbished cargo ships were said to be a fine way to travel and I managed to secure one of the two single-berth staterooms, with an ensuite bathroom and a bed instead of a bunk, on the *Shansi* sailing from Sydney via Brisbane to Port Moresby, Samarai, Lae and Madang. From there, I would be able to hitch a ride to Goroka on one of the many government air charters carrying supplies to the Highlands.

Two hours after the ship berthed in Madang, I was in Goroka talking to District Commissioner Ian Downs. In the District Office, he could be demanding, forceful and aggressive, but that morning he was smiling and cheery and could not have been more helpful.

He organised two charters—a Territory Air Lines Dragon to fly me to Kainantu that afternoon, and a Gibbes-Sepik Norseman to pick me up the following morning, return to Goroka and then fly me to Wewak. And he went even further. He would arrange that my load was topped up with potatoes and any other vegetables that were available while the plane was being refuelled at Goroka.

It didn't take long to assemble my gear at Kainantu. Most of it was already packed into a cabin trunk and patrol boxes. But four cane chairs and table, a large seagrass mat and some odd and ends had to be wrapped in hessian and sewn into packages.

I was waiting at the airstrip at seven in the morning. The Norseman arrived soon after and we were on our way back to Goroka. While the plane was being refuelled, I visited the District Office, said my farewells and picked up letter from Downs that he wanted me to deliver to Elliott-Smith, the Sepik District Commissioner.

It was still early in the day. The cloud had not built up on the mountain ranges and we were soon through the Bena Gap, flying just above the forested 2,000-metre high ridges with peaks soaring skywards on either side of the aircraft.

From that altitude, I could see the braided Markham River winding its way east towards Lae and, on the left, the Ramu River, flowing north-west and delineating our route towards the Sepik.

Pilot Roy Shaw had trimmed the aircraft to gradually descend and we flew low over the Sepik River, passing over Angoram on the left bank 110 kilometres from the mouth. We were on a level trim and the nacelle of the large, nine-cylinder radial engine obscured much of the view ahead. It was incredibly hot in the cockpit, prompting Shaw to comment: 'These aircraft were designed for freezing Canada, but I bet that they were just as bloody hot and uncomfortable over there.'

Eventually, Wewak Point came into view. Surely the name was a misnomer? From the air, it looked more like an upturned pot or pan squashed a little out of shape, the handle, a long strip of narrow road running between the sea and a mangrove swamp.

Cadet Patrol Officer Max Duncan was waiting with a truck at Wirui airstrip, only a few minutes' drive from the small town. He said his instructions were to take me to the hotel to drop my bags and then to deliver the fresh vegetables—and me—to the District Office.

The narrow foreshore road, barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass, took us to Wewak, where a few houses stood on top of the hill. At the base of the hill was the Government

TOP: The wharf at Vanimo, 1955–56

LEFT: Bill Brown in front of Vanimo Patrol Post office, 1955

RIGHT: Vanimo Airstrip, 1955. Daulimge Bay and Narimuru Island in the background. The Pacific Islands Regiment buildings are at the top right-hand corner of the airstrip.

BOTTOM: Wewak from the air, 1955–56

Stores' warehouse. The swamp reclamation which would open up a larger town would not commence for another three years.

I was told that the native hospital and Tang Mow's trade store, which catered for the expatriate population, were on a loop road to the left; that the police barracks was to the right; and that the tiny foreshore cemetery was equidistant—left or right—from the intersection.

On top of the hill, a hotel occupied the cliff edge on the north-west corner of the headland. An unimpressive narrow entry led to a sitting room and small adjoining dining room. A small bar opened onto a grass lawn. On the cliff edge, a row of skillion-roofed buildings, each built on a raised cement slab, provided the bedroom accommodation.

I walked to the Sub-District Office next morning down to the road running round the top of the hill and past three or four houses on the cliff facing seawards towards Muschu Island. On the right was the expatriate hospital with its half-a-dozen beds.

My destination was tucked behind the main building, out of sight and seldom visited by anyone. David (DRM) Marsh, acting Assistant District Officer responsible for the Wewak Sub-District, assisted by Patrol Officer Barry (BT) Copely, was supposed to be the point of contact between the government and the local people.

But it would have been a hot walk for the local people, and taken hours for anyone to traverse the foreshore road and climb the hill to report serious crime. Perhaps a rape or a murder may have warranted the effort, maybe not. Certainly nothing less.

The District Office, a long rectangular single-storey squatting on a cement slab, had been part of the hospital built towards the end of World War II. Two senior District Officers, both with the surname White but unrelated, occupied separate offices at one end.

In the middle, three or four rooms that had been wards led off the concrete walkway, and now housed a sprinkling of clerks and female assistants.

At the far end of the building, on the corner, the Post Office lurked almost in obscurity; and—in even more obscurity, further around the corner—there was another White, *didiman* Jack, the District Agricultural Officer and District Education Officer Fred Barron.

David Marsh said I should call on the District Officers as opportunity occurred but should seek a formal appointment to see District Commissioner.

District Officer JP White, who liked to be addressed as Mr Preston White, declined to talk to me in the office but invited me to dinner.

It was a fascinating evening. He cooked a good curry and lubricated it well. He and his wife, Mary, talked about the high-profile Telefomin murder trials following the slaying of two patrol officers and two police in November 1953, and they knew their subject.

He had presided over the preliminary hearings and she sat through all the proceedings, drawing on her experience as a journalist with a Sydney daily newspaper, to compile the official report. When I left after a fascinating evening, I wondered how Preston White could possibly have gained the sobriquet 'Pissed-On White'.

My call on District Officer Joseph Richard White—known and addressed as Dick—was an eccentric experience. Dick had a rough and ready manner, and quickly told me that the District Commissioner and Preston White suspected him of drinking on the job.

To prove his point, he noisily opened a small bottle of lemonade and within minutes Preston White hurried into the room. When he'd left, Dick asked me to accompany him to his house 'to open some confidential documents', which turned out to be bottles of beer.

When the day of my appointment with the District Commissioner Elliott-Smith arrived, he kept me waiting in the anteroom as the secretary played gatekeeper and screened visitors. I was eventually guided into the inner sanctum where the walls were painted a shining buttercup yellow and the doors and window frames enamelled in white.

A gold-framed photo of Queen Elizabeth hung on one wall and opposite, strategically placed over the visitor's chair, was a mounted quotation from Plutarch extolling the virtues of conscience and morality. It would turn out to be false advertising.

Sydney Elliott-Smith exhibited all the aplomb of a former wartime commander of the Papua Infantry Battalion. He opened the letter from Downs, read it, found something very amusing and burst into rumbling belly-laughter.

He muttered something that sounded like 'pious rectitude' and passed the letter to me to read. Downs had given me a glowing report, listed my experience and spoke about my capabilities and said he regretted having to have me transferred.

He was sorry to let me go but I 'was socially heavy at moment [having] become involved with an older woman.' I had thought Downs was helping me. I did not realise he was giving me the push,

At the end of the interview, Elliott-Smith said I was posted to Vanimo to reopen the Patrol Post closed three months earlier when Patrol Officer Jock (JW) McGregor departed on leave.

Vanimo was just thirty-five kilometres from the border of Dutch New Guinea and it had been the poor relation of the Sepik District since Patrol Officer John (JW) Wakeford first re-opened the government station in February 1947.

In those days there was no airstrip and there was no teleradio; the only contact with the outside world was a four-day, police runner service to Aitape. Wakeford managed to open a small airstrip, suitable for Auster aircraft in March 1948, but never got his hands on a teleradio.

Patrol Officer Jack (JW) Sims replaced Wakeford, undertook five patrols—the first in April 1948, the last in May-June 1949—before committing suicide at Vanimo on 14 July 1949.

Assistant District Office Jim (JW) Hodgekiss, posted to Vanimo following that tragic event, commented that 'communications between Aitape and Vanimo [are] good, the weekly charter plane from Wewak via Aitape is the end of isolation as far as Vanimo is concerned.'

It may have taken a suicide to end the isolation but Hodgekiss's posting was only for a short period and marked the beginning of more short stays: ten officers in six years including long intervals when the station was unmanned because no one was available.

I flew to Vanimo on the regular weekly government charter, a Norseman, on Friday, 19 August 1955, three days after my interview with Elliott-Smith.

The flight path followed a string of narrow, grey beaches broken by headlands with the occasional large river spewing muddy water into the dull-blue sea.

On our left the Torricelli mountain range rose abruptly from the narrow coastal plain and paralleled our westward course. We passed over But, Boiken and Dagua airfields fringed and pockmarked by water-filled bomb craters. An hour later we landed at Tadji, once a bomber and fighter airstrip used by the Japanese then captured by the Allies, now desolate except for a corrugated iron lean-to.

Father Dennis Dobson, the Father Superior of the Order of Friars Minor, looking nothing like a Catholic priest and even less like a Father Superior, met the aircraft.

He was dressed in baggy shorts and a sweaty tee-shirt, a floppy cotton hat perched on his head, and wore grey plastic sandals, but not of a Franciscan pattern. Fr Dennis introduced himself and helped unloaded the Aitape cargo; some bags of mail, six or seven calico bags of freezer and a few cartons.

After another flight of almost an hour, we approached Vanimo over the sea. The airstrip, a narrow ribbon of grass, spanned the isthmus between the ocean shore and the harbour.

We passed over a thin beach and touched down immediately. The airstrip was barely long enough for the Norseman and it was either land short and brake hard or finish up in the sea.

An impressive collection of single-storey buildings—the huts and barracks of the Pacific Islands Regiment abutted the beach at the south-eastern corner of the airstrip. The Commanding Officer of B Company, Major Kayler-Thompson, MC, his Adjutant (a captain) and some Australian Warrant Officers met the aircraft.

They probably met every aircraft; it broke the monotony. Theirs was the prestige side of the strip with modern conveniences: 24-hour electric power, reticulated water, refrigeration, weekly movies, freezers and a canteen.

The Medical Assistant, Reg Collins, and Lance Corporal Korin of the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary with a detachment of five police constables, walked me across the strip to the Administration side, where there was no electricity and no running water.

Most of the staff lived in grass huts nestled among the coconut palms, and kerosene lamps provided illumination at night.

Collins' house was the exception. Adjoining the hospital and virtually on the waterfront, it was built from imported materials and painted white with royal-blue trim. I spent the first night there and subsequently enjoyed several meals. Collins had served with the British Occupation Force in the Japan and sukiyaki, cooked in a stainless-steel hospital tray, was his speciality.

The kiap's house, where I would live, was higher up the hill, sited there by Alex (AJ) Zweck in late 1949 to escape the heat and catch the ocean breeze. It was a long building in an almost Oriental style—high hipped-roof without a ceiling, sawn timber frame and walls of plaited cane. The front steps opened to a large lounge dining room with push-out shutters on three sides. A long corridor with the same style of shutters stretched the length of the house past the three bedrooms and bathroom.

The house was spotless and the timber floor, polished with coconut husks, gleamed as if burnished; Collins had organised that. Three Highlands police constables, Bary, Kimsavi and Kamgru, had unpacked my gear.

They opened the crates and boxes and stacked the contents on the floor for my *mankimasta* Gena (a Chimbu from the Kamanaku) to arrange in their final location.

The next morning I was up early to see the police, all six of them, at the morning parade in front of the office on the hillside just below the house. It commanded a clear view over the coconut palms to Daulimge Bay and Narimuru Island. Posts set upright into ground supported plaited sidewalls and sago-thatch roof. The front wall, two sheets of corrugated iron, divided the open porch from the one-room interior. Inside there was a table, chair and safe and nothing else. No office equipment, no typewriter and no stationery—not even a pencil.

The beachcomber floor, fine white beach sand, was raked smooth. An incongruous large metal sign proclaimed that it was a Commonwealth Bank.

The Army controlled the Administration radio and that morning they delivered my first message.

John (JC) Williams, Assistant District Officer at Aitape, had sent me a precise instruction. Because of the proximity of the Dutch New Guinea border and the international implications, I was not to leave the Patrol Post for any reason until he visited and briefed me.

I wondered what the Army had thought of that signal—I, the new officer-in-charge, was confined to base and not permitted to do my job.

And there was very little for me to do. There was no radio, no cash book—and no bank. I visited the wharf, and talked to group of people from Krissa, Vanimo and Warimo living there operating the station's small coconut plantation.

Their leader, retired Sergeant-Major Kiama, asked me if I liked fresh rock oysters and the next day, about midday, ten ladies arrived, each carrying two large beer bottles—long necks—full to the brim with fresh oysters and hanging on cords from the women's wrists.

I paid their two shillings (twenty cents) a bottle, kept two bottles and asked the Army to freeze the rest so that I could send them to Wewak on the next aircraft.

My suggestion that the number of ladies collecting oysters be restricted to one, two or even four was met with incredulity. One lady on her own would be raped. If two ladies went, they would both be raped. And if there were four, they would all be raped.

My conversations with Kiama and his group helped relieve the boredom and led to me joining in night-fishing activities. My pressure lamp replaced the *bombom* (a burning coconut frond) used to attract fish and I was allowed to sit down and hold it skywards.

I was never allowed to stand or to throw the multi-pointed spears. Back on the beach well into the night, we barbequed the catch, large garfish, and ate them whole, not cleaned or scaled.

During the daylight hours, I explored the station, the reef, the tracks around the crest of the Cape Concordia (a flat-topped hill behind the house) and tunnels left by the Japanese.

I organised for the undergrowth to be removed from around the kapok and fruit trees that some prewar kiap had planted (lemons, limes, custard apples and bullock hearts), and for the trees to be relieved of their heavy load of fruit.

At night, the trees were beacons flashing on and off, lit by fireflies. From the crest of the hill looking west, I could see the beams of car headlights in Hollandia, just across the border.

The Major from the Pacific Islands Regiment visited once or twice a week in the afternoons, driving his Land Rover—the only vehicle in Vanimo. The first visit seemed designed to inform me, with a malicious smile, that District Commissioner Elliott-Smith had flown in the Catholic Mission Cessna with a load of PIR stores twice that day, but had not been interested in visiting me.

Elliott-Smith had gained his pilot's licence, with some notoriety, in 1951. Now he was building up his hours. The return flight Wewak-Vanimo–Wewak took about three hours, and two flights absorbed most of the working day.

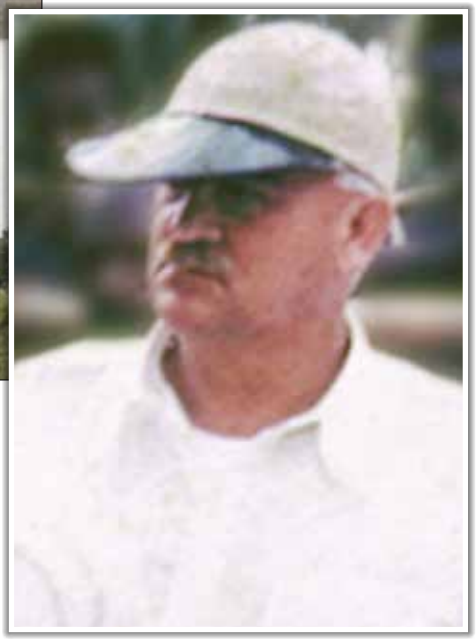
I changed my routine and began to loiter around the airstrip, eventually waylaying Elliott-Smith in September and told him what I thought of my confinement. I also presented him with a handwritten list of things I'd requested that had been ignored and, to be on the safe side, mailed him a carbon copy the next day.

It did the trick. The typewriter and some stationery were despatched from Wewak two weeks later and, at the end of September, I was advised of my transfer from Vanimo:

> Mr WT Brown, Patrol Officer, at present Officer in Charge, Vanimo Patrol Post, will relieve Mr Williams as Assistant District Officer, Aitape Sub-District. Mr BA Ryan, Patrol Officer, will be posted to Vanimo Patrol Post at the earliest date to take over from Mr Brown. This arrangement will give Mr Brown suitable opportunity to fully install Mr Ryan as OIC of the Vanimo Patrol Post before proceeding to Aitape.

I had done nothing for more than a month. There were no files and there had been very little contact with the outside world. What was I supposed to communicate to Barry Ryan while I used the 'suitable opportunity fully to install' him?

I never ever received the briefing from Williams. I left Vanimo and flew to Aitape to take over from him.



TOP: Looking across Vanimo Harbour (Dakriro Bay) from the Franciscan Mission towards Vanimo Patrol Post. Mid-frame are the slopes of Cape Concordia on the left and the airstrip on the low isthmus between the cape and the mainland on the right. Victor Cavill, 1955, *Softly, Wild Drums*).

RIGHT: District Commissioner Sydney Elliott-Smith in his pilot's garb

12: Aitape, West Sepik Province

Including a frustrating attempt to map the border with Dutch New Guinea

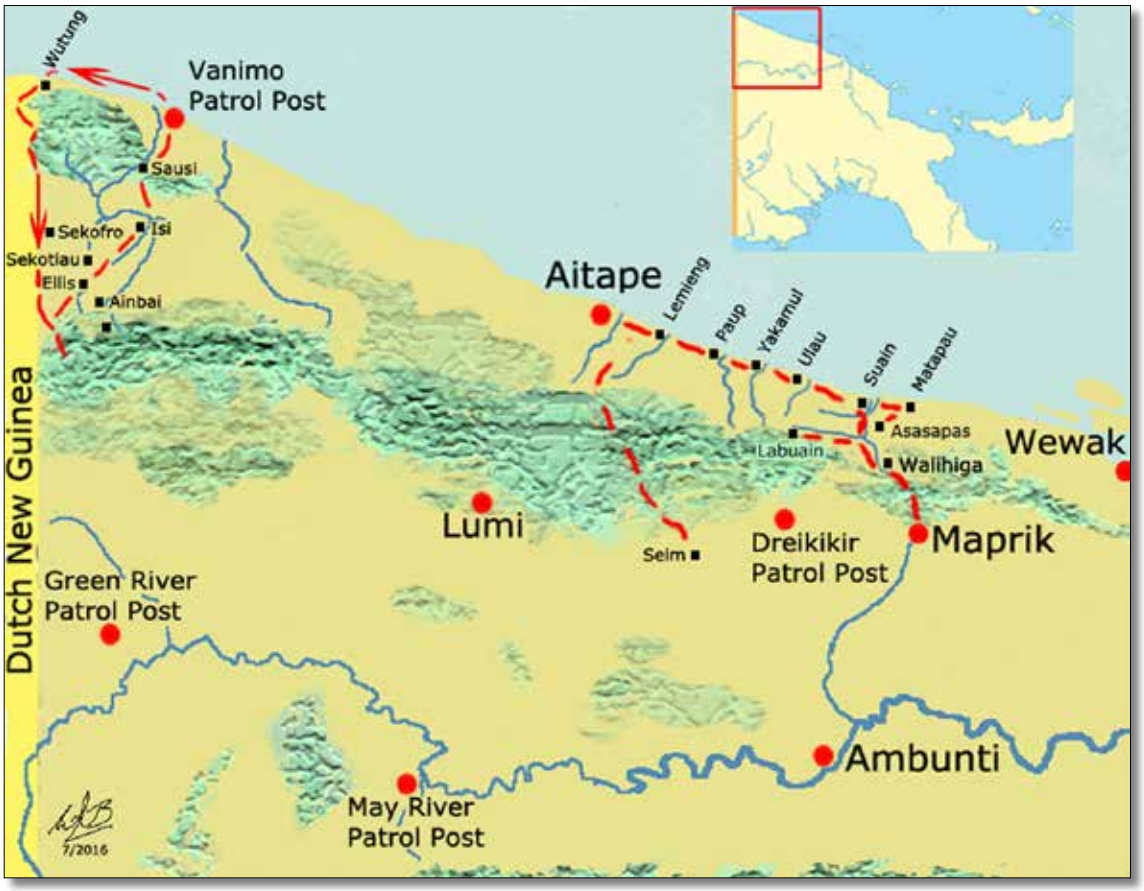
IT WAS 7 OCTOBER 1955—a Friday—and once again Gena, my Kamanaku *mankimasta*, and I were passengers on the weekly government charter.

But this time we were on our way to Aitape from Vanimo. Sitting in the cockpit next to the pilot, I had an embracing view of Aitape as we flew past on our way to Tadji airstrip.

I could see the waves breaking on the beach fronting No. 2 Passage and crashing on the rocks below a solitary house, which was perched on the cliff near Rohm Point.

Just around the point, a murky stream divided the shabby red roofs of the hospital from the government station and far into the distant east extended the black sand beach. Somewhere beyond the horizon was Wewak.

The 1,600-metre steel carpet of Marston Matting, which was Tadji airstrip, had been laid soon after United States forces landed to evict the Japanese on 22 April 1944. The lengths of steel linked together were now furred with grass but still radiated the sun's heat.



I had not anticipated that the short (fifteen kilometre) trip into Aitape would be so difficult. First by jeep to the Raihu River; then across the river in an outrigger canoe paddled by the resident ferryman; and, finally, another jeep to the Sub-District Office. The jeeps belonged to the Parers of Tadji Plantation and were wartime relics. They had been recently painted and daubed with silver frost—but had no windscreens, headlights or, because they were not registered, number plates. As the tail pipes rattled beneath my feet, I gained the clear impression that life was a little informal at Aitape.

In fact, I was cock-a-hoop about taking over from Williams—he of the 'don't leave Vanimo until I have briefed you on how to patrol near the international border' fame. Furthermore, I was regaining my status as Assistant District Officer in charge of a Sub-District, if only in an acting role. I had envisioned that the life at Aitape would be more vibrant than at Vanimo, but Williams dispelled that notion, telling me that, shortly after his departure, I would be the only expatriate left on the government station.

Medical Assistant Bert Carra would soon leave for Australia, to join his wife who had preceded him on leave and Patrol Officer Bill (WM) Purdy, who had resigned some months earlier, would also soon *go pinis* with his wife. Time had not been kind to Purdy since I had last seen him in the Goilala in 1951. A large right-angled scar, depressed deep into his forehead above his right eye, was testament to the severity of recent invasive surgery and now, after only six months back in the Territory, he and his young bride were about to leave forever.

When he was absent on patrol, she had found the isolation of the house on the cliff edge unbearable. Her only neighbour—on the other side of the hill—Rose Williams, rarely went outside her own house and disliked visitors.

The Williams were a strange couple. Rose had an almost translucent pallor, perhaps the result of her housebound existence and the humidity, while by contrast John's skin was pasty and splattered with light and dark freckles.

I shared the ADO's house with them for three days; hiding in my bedroom to avoid their constant disagreements and rants about how difficult life was at Aitape.

One Sunday afternoon, there was a fracas somewhere down below on the station. Williams jumped from the Land Rover when we reached the soccer field, grabbed a tomahawk from a bystander and attempted to chop up the ball. Each time he struck a blow, it bounced away and he pursued it around the field. 'Screaming Johnnie' was living up to his nickname.

The Williams departed soon enough and I had the house to myself. Jock Gilbert, the Wewak works supervisor, was responsible for its design. He should have stuck to carpentry.

Overlooking the station, it sat on two-metre high concrete piers, which did nothing to make it less of a weatherboard hotbox. The two rear bedrooms faced west and got steadily hotter as the day progressed. The lounge-dining room, on the seaward side at the front, had frosted glass louvre windows and fly wire, all of which totally obscured the view. To take in the vista to the government station or the ocean, I had to go outside to the kitchen stairs.

I drove up and down that hill twice a day. Two wheel tracks, gravelled in places, otherwise bare rock—part of the massif below. It was bordered by a manicured hibiscus hedge.

TOP: From near Tadji, an aerial view of St Anna plantation (foreground), and Aitape (Rohm) Point *(Bill Brown 1955–56)*

LEFT: Kittyhawks from 78 Wing Royal Australian Air Force lining the Marston Matting airstrip at Tadji, April 1944 *(Photo US Army Signal Corps, 1944)*

RIGHT: ADO John (JC) Williams standing outside the Aitape Sub-District Office; Bob (WH) Parer's daughters in an old jeep, on the right, 1954 *(Photo Rob Parer, CMG, MBE)*

BOTTOM: The road down the hill *(Photo Harry (JH) & Betty (ER) Roach, 1965–66)*

No matter how slowly I drove, the rickety Marston Matting bridge across the creek would rattle noisily and disconcert me with its shaking.

The silver-painted Sub-District Office had been a trade store in an earlier incarnation. Inside, the week's languor was disturbed only by the morning and afternoon radio schedule (sked) with Wewak, Friday's arrival and opening of the mailbag and the myriads of sand flies raising lumps that itched for days.

Bill Purdy and the clerical assistant, Jimmy Kalel, shared the main office housing the post office, the Commonwealth Bank agency, and the tele-radio. Jimmy had worked in the office since 1946 and knew all the shortcuts and where to find anything that was lost, missing or hidden. For many years, I thought Kalel came from Chinapelli village but Rob Parer, who spent most of a lifetime in the region, tells me he came from Yakamul. Fellow kiap, Harry West, nicknamed him Scrotum—a sly reference to wrinkled old retainers.

In the government store—a red-painted corrugated iron remnant of the wartime hospital—Bennie Kombe also led a tranquil existence, occasionally dipping his pen into an ink bottle to record on well-worn cards the movement of rations like bully beef and sticks of twist tobacco.

Over at the Franciscan Mission, Superior Denis Dobson was building the Father's house; labouring with a hammer, nailing hardwood noggins into the newly-erected wall frame and sweating profusely.

I lunched with him once and that was enough. It was the worst meal I ever ate at a mission, comprising cold soup made from green pawpaw followed by what Dobson called Bloody Baked Beans (out of a tin, heated and served with mashed sweet potato.)

There were eleven days before Purdy's departure, so I decided on a quick patrol. While I was away, Purdy would run the station and pay the wages at the end the month but there were other matters that demanded an early return to Aitape: a visit by the Assistant Administrator, the opening of Vanimo Hospital, the submission of an ASOPA assignment and the ASOPA course's finale in Wewak, known as the Local Examination.

When I left for a patrol of the east coast on 25 October 1955, I took with me Sergeant Major Ubom and three other police. Ubom had been Jim Taylor's point man—the scout ahead of the column—throughout the 1938–39 Hagen Sepik Patrol and had a distinguished reputation.

Now, perhaps fifty years of age, he was almost too old for active patrolling, but I needed to get to know him, and he probably needed to get to know me. After week or two in the bush, we would know a lot about each other

Under a searing sun, we walked more than sixty kilometres along the beach visiting six villages and staying at least one night in four of them. We crossed eight major rivers and twenty-five smaller streams, one or two by canoe and fording the others.

I ran out of time before completing our intended itinerary and turned back from Ulau. The remaining villages on the coast (Suian and Matapau) and the inland villages could wait. I planned to visit them in the New Year.

Early in December, I had to sit that Local Examination. I was one of only twenty-three Patrol Officers who had not been permitted to attend the Long Course at ASOPA, and were directed to undertake its correspondence course and submit monthly assignments.

It was said that those who did not pass the examination would never be promoted. In fact, those who failed or did not sit the exam, spent the next twelve months at ASOPA in Sydney—if I'd have known that, I would have made sure I failed.

I flew to Wewak on the Friday charter and had to wait until the following Friday to return to Aitape. I managed to wriggle out of District Commissioner Elliott-Smith's offer to fly me to the Vanimo Hospital opening in the Catholic Mission Cessna.

The event was some weeks away, but I had no confidence in the DC's flying prowess. I had seen some of his landings, and I knew that he had crashed in an Auster at Fisherman's Island (off Port Moresby) when qualifying for his pilot's licence in 1951. He was hospitalised and DCA Regional Director John Arthur had two teeth knocked out, and suffered back injuries.

Vanimo airstrip had a recent history of aircraft accidents and I did not want to be added to the list. In March 1953, medico John McInerny, piloting his Auster aircraft, had crashed into the sea on take-off and did not survive. His two passengers, kiaps Ian Skinner and George Wearne, were hospitalised. A few months later Peter Manser had crashed on landing, overturning a Norseman.

Back in Aitape, I crossed the Raihu River again as I made my way to the station. I was sick and tired of crossing it and all the others that had slowed my passage in the past month: the Harech, the Nigia, the Driniumor and the Dainamor. They all had a long record of fatalities of people drowned in floods or taken by crocodiles, but the Raihu particularly annoyed me. It was the barrier between the airstrip at Tadji and the government headquarters at Aitape.

Returning from pre-Christmas drinks at the Parers' house was the decider. The Raihu was not in flood but still two-metres deep at the crossing. The ferryman was slow to appear with his canoe and I knew he would take two or three trips to transport us.

So, I decided to swim to the other side; handing my watch, sunglasses, cigarettes, matches and other items to a mission lay worker who would come by canoe. I dived in, not realising the lay worker, who was a little simple, would leap in after me with my gear. The sunglasses survived, but everything else was ruined. That was when I decided to build a bridge.

Sergeant Major Ubom came with me as I searched for a bridge site. We found one about a kilometre upstream from the ford, at the first bend where the river narrowed, forced between the hills on the left bank and a high stone outcrop on the right.

Ubom looked at me rather quizzically when I said that we were going to build a *kanda* (cane) suspension bridge. He became more enthusiastic when I told him the Chimbu police would build it under his direction and that I would borrow extra Chimbu police to assist.

We both knew that some of those police would not even have seen a *kanda* bridge let alone built one, but we also knew that Chimbus could always tell other people how to do the things they did not know how to do themselves.

There were only four working days before Christmas but there was time enough to re-open the old wartime track on the right bank, prepare the approaches on both banks and to send word to the nearby villages of Lemieng, Chinapelli, Pro, and Yako that we would like to buy as many lengths of long *kanda* as possible and even more lengths of bush rope.

I envisioned a bridge with a one-metre wide deck that would be well clear of floods—at

least seven metres at its lowest point above the normal river height, and sixty metres in length between the suspension points.

Construction would start immediately after Christmas by when, hopefully, the people would have delivered many lengths of *kanda*.

The Christmas season had benefits. In his youth, Monsignor Doggett, the Franciscan Prefect Apostolic, had been taught that whisky was the 'devil's drink', so when a kind soul sent him a case of whisky as Christmas gift, he passed it on to me.

It came with a gift card addressed to 'Bill Brown BHP'. The acronym BHP stood for Black Hearted Presbyterian, a payback for my occasional light-hearted remark that OTF (Order of Thieving Friars) might be more appropriate than OFM for the Order of Friars Minor.

Christmas was barely over, when the people started bringing in the *kanda* to sell; thicker, longer and stronger lengths than I had imagined. The first of my borrowed Highland police arrived—two Chimbu constables, Aina and Kimsave from Vanimo, accompanied by Bary, another Highlander, who was determined not to miss out on the fun.

On New Year's Eve, John Williams' prediction came to pass. I was the only expatriate on the government station. At midnight, I stepped outside the house, fired my shotgun skyward, and went to bed, wondering if somebody would come and check to see if I had committed suicide. No one did.

The bridge was completed towards the end of January. It was not one of the world's wonders, but the Aitape people had never seen anything like it. They had speculated about failure while it was being built. Now they came to test it and they marvelled. They had never before looked down on a river from such a great height.

February brought some staff changes. Fred (FPC) Kaad, due back from leave and two years at ASOPA, was posted to the Sepik and, as a senior Assistant District Officer, would take over Maprik.

Kaad had served under Bob (RR) Cole, MC in the 1944–45 Sepik campaign, under District Commissioner Ian Downs as ADO Goroka but, more importantly in this instance, under District Commissioner Elliott-Smith in the clean-up and rehabilitation following the eruption of Mount Lamington and the consequent disaster.

To make way for Kaad at Maprik, Arthur (AT) Carey, the ADO at Maprik, was moved to Aitape as Assistant District Officer and I reverted to my substantive position of Patrol Officer. It was Carey's second sojourn at Aitape; he had been a Wireless Operator Air Gunner in an RAAF Beaufort bomber squadron operating out of Tadji in 1944.

A number of other kiaps and kiaps-to-be had served in the Aitape campaign in World War II: Bob Bell, Bob Cole, MC, Max Denehy, Don Eisenhauer, DFC, Dave Fienberg, MC and Des Martin.

I vacated the ADO's house before Carey's arrival and moved over the hill to the Patrol Officer's house on the cliff. The vista extended 180 degrees from Lapar Point, the ocean view broken only by three royal palms clumped on the cliff edge.

In the foreground, the swell surged over the bombora at Lamak Rock, and beyond were the islands, Tumleo and, almost on the horizon, Ali, Seleo and tiny Angel.

TOP: The Bewani Mountains

LEFT: Arthur Calwell

RIGHT: The Sub-District Office at Aitape *(Photo Harry (JH) & Betty (ER) Roach 1965-66)*

BOTTOM: Vanimo airstrip, 1955 *(Bill Brown)*

On the long front verandah at night, the eerie silence was broken only by the sound of the waves thumping on the rocks below. And inside, as I was lying in bed, the only sound the ticking of termites as they chewed the Masonite lining of the bedroom walls. I could imagine why Bill Purdy's wife had been so lonely, maybe even terrified, when he was away for weeks on patrol.

With Carey now in charge, it was time for me to complete the outstanding east coast patrol. I spent five days at Yakamul trying to solve a land ownership problem with the Seleo Island people and then moved to Matapau, on the eastern boundary. As we trudged through the water up the Damap (Damnap) River, the people warned us to be careful, telling us of a flash flood that had swept down in 1945, drowning seven Australian soldiers.

When we saw villagers working alluvial gold above Wolihiga village in the headwaters of the Atob River, I was told that Maprik was *klostu*. Since it was said to be so near, I decided to walk there and spend the weekend with Patrol Officer Ron (RTD) and Coleen Neville. Ron was holding the fort, waiting for Fred Kaad to arrive.

Well, the crest of the range was *klostu* but it took ten hours, following the Screw (aka Amogu) River to reach Maprik. After the weekend we had to retrace our tracks.

Carey left Aitape and I was back as acting Assistant District Officer, but still in the cliff house, when I was asked to host a luncheon for Arthur Calwell, the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party and the Federal Parliament Opposition. He would be travelling alone; would I meet and greet, arrange a public meeting with the local people and host a private luncheon to which only Monsignor Doggett should be invited.

The response to my radiogram that Monsignor Doggett had declined my invitation was a peremptory 'Try Harder!' The Mons, as we called him, had been quite abrupt: 'Tell them that I will not have lunch with that "b" or even talk to him, under any circumstances.'

I visited the Mons a second time, told him I was under pressure, and that our friendship was on the line. I had not known, until then, that there had been a rift in the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party and that many Catholics had left to form the staunchly anti-Communist Democratic Labor Party.

Calwell, a devoted Catholic, had remained in the ALP, but it had cost him his friendship with Melbourne's Archbishop Mannix. He had even been denied communion in his local parish church.

Calwell arrived. I met him at Tadji airstrip and took him to Aitape where, garbed in a long-sleeved white shirt, suit trousers held up by braces and no coat and tie, he inspected the police guard of honour and addressed a small gathering of village officials.

He gave them a nonstop explanation of Australia's financial contributions to New Guinea, waited for me to interpret and interrupted to tell me that I had made an error with the first of his budget figures. It was at that point I lost the thread.

We moved on to lunch. I had boiled lobsters from Tumleo before breakfast and gone through the menu again with Gena before leaving early in the morning to meet Calwell at Tadji. For the first course we would eat chilled lobsters dressed with mayonnaise, accompanied by a cold salad of tinned vegetables and asparagus, and followed by a dessert of tinned peaches and cream.

Gena was not at his best with cold salads, his signature dish was roast chicken, and maybe he was having an off day. The previous day he had turned the barrel of my shotgun into a balloon when he tried to shoot a stingray with the muzzle of the gun underwater.

The lobsters were served covered with a mass of fiercely hot mustard. The dressing was almost too hot to eat, Gena having forgotten to add the condensed milk when preparing the mayonnaise. I decided to cancel the dessert when I saw it on the plates in the kitchen—slices of cold beetroot topped with tinned cream—and I departed leaving my guests on their own for coffee and a private conversation.

District Officer Tom (TG) Aitchison took up duty in the Sepik under District Commissioner Elliott-Smith on 17 May 1956. Maybe it was a loss of status that made him irascible (he had been an acting District Commissioner since 1949 with a term in Manus, relieving duties in Morobe and Madang, and more than a term in New Ireland) or maybe he was just being a new broom. Whatever the reason, it was not long before he announced a series of transfers.

Ron Neville would be transferred from Maprik to take over from Dave (ED) Wren as ADO at Telefomin, and Wren would transfer from Telefomin to Aitape and take over from me. I would revert to Patrol Officer and re-open the Dreikikir Patrol Post in Maprik Sub-District after I had undertaken a special patrol along the Dutch New Guinea border.

Monsignor Doggett was quick to protest, writing in a letter to Aitchison:

> True it is that over the past four or five years Aitape has been singularly blessed with excellent officers of your department but Mr Brown has been the 'Daddy' of them all. I would like to mention in a special manner the work he has done on the Raihu Bridge and which is only half complete. He has developed this work into a community effort and both the mission and business interests of Aitape have made manpower, material, equipment and money for the project. I feel that if Mr Brown is taken away suddenly this whole effort will lapse.

The second Raihu Bridge, like the first, was started from frustration. You could ride a motorbike over the narrow *kanda* bridge but I wanted something to drive across.

Peter Hughes and I began with one seven-metre by 457 mm rolled-steel joist. We stood it vertically in the river near the right bank adjacent to the *kanda* bridge, thinking it would sink into the sandy riverbed. It did not. We needed a pile driver.

Brere Awol from Malol, north of Aitape and nowhere near our site, found one and organised his people to carry it to the site. He also found the weight, the hammer and a winch to complete the package. The Aitape community was like that. Given a challenge, they all responded.

Before leaving Aitape to tackle the border patrol, Hughes and I and our work force of police and volunteers had driven three piles—a pair almost seven metres from the bank and the first of another pair almost another seven metres further out into the river. Those piles were constructed from two rolled-steel joists welded end-to-end and driven deep into the riverbed.

But the Monsignor's confidence was unfounded. There was a flaw in my design and the project was doomed to failure.

The river was going to demolish the piles, but Aitchison's decree ensured I would be in Dreikikir, not Aitape, when that happened.

Aitchison's instructions were precise. Before I left Aitape, I was to proceed to Vanimo, and

with Patrol Officer Barry (BA) Ryan, follow the unmarked border with Dutch New Guinea (the 141st degrees of longitude) and ascertain the location of the villages near the border.

Maybe it was Aitchison's own brainwave, maybe other interests were involved. The dispute between Indonesia and Holland over ownership of Dutch New Guinea had been fermenting since Indonesia gained its independence in December 1949 and there had been three military incursions before Indonesia finally gained United Nations support for its claim in April 1955.

Whatever the reason, we were told to set out from the Wutung on the coast and follow the border south until we met up Patrol Officer Robin (RA) Calcutt, who would be following the border north from Green River Patrol Post.

We were instructed to light a signal fire at 9:00 am each day so that the pilot of an aircraft, which would search for us every day at that time, could locate the smoke and indicate the location of the border.

I flew from Tadji to Vanimo by Norseman on Wednesday 15 August 1956 with three police from the Aitape detachment, my *mankimasta*, a tent fly and the rest of our gear. At Vanimo, Barry Ryan added three more police, rations for the trek—rice, tinned meat, sugar and tea. Two days later we set off in a fleet of 17 hired canoes.

The Vanimo canoes, with very little freeboard and only a small platform on the outrigger supports, were loaded to the gunnels but the sea was smooth, almost oily, and there was no wind.

We were paddled slowly westwards along the shelf that fringed the shore, never far from land. A few hours into the journey, however, one canoe was swamped by a slight wave and went under. Constable Aina, a non-swimmer, rescued himself and his rifle but the rest of the cargo went to the bottom.

We had lost axes, tomahawks and a lamp that would have been useful in the bush.

After a six-hour paddle, we reached Wutung and walked the 400 metres to the border. We then arranged for the surrounding vegetation to be cleared and organised some volunteers to flash mirrors from this position when the aircraft came searching.

The Wutung village officials (*luluai* Ni-Ala and *tultul* Uni) had volunteered to accompany us southwards. They were incredulous when we told them of our intention to climb the cliff behind the coastal marker. Nobody would climb that cliff, not surefooted villagers and certainly not laden carriers or clumsy kiaps.

The next morning, they led us from Wutung, through the limestone south-west into Dutch New Guinea. Five hours later we made camp at Kapalemou, a small village two or three kilometres inside the border.

From there it took a little more than two-and-a-half hours the next day, a Sunday, for them to lead us, directly, to a tree emblazoned with the letters X 111 1Y, L 11 0 and, 400 metres further on, to a cement block marked 141 00 13 005, 2 40 34 34. For some reason, the symbols for degrees, minutes and seconds were missing.

Two days later, after trekking through thick forest and limestone outcrops, we arrived at Kapou, a small village of eighteen houses about two kilometres inside Dutch territory and flying the Netherlands flag by way of welcome.

We were now trespassers and, knowing what was ahead, I wistfully wondered whether the Dutch authorities would arrest us—take us to the fleshpots of Hollandia (Jayapura) which was only twenty-five kilometres away.

I wanted to be certain of the position of Kapou vis-a-vis the border and was determined that the promised aircraft should find us. It took the rest of the day and into the early hours of Wednesday morning, to build a huge signal bonfire in the middle of the village square. We lit it early.

By 8.30 am a huge column of smoke was soaring skywards, thickening each time green branches were added to the blaze. But no aircraft appeared.

On Thursday, 23 August 1956, we crossed the Kohari Hills, climbing through limestone ridges, reefs and coral encrusted clam shells in a blinding thunderstorm. Barry Ryan was continually assaulted by wasps that stung him even behind his horn-rimmed glasses.

It took three more days to reach Sekofro, a small village of ten houses and perhaps seventy-five people. They had no flag but displayed a large framed colour photo of the Dutch royal family. We had climbed through limestone crags and sinkholes, crossed the flooded Puian (Tami) River and wandered through sago swamps and waterlogged rain forest.

My intuition told me that we were three or four kilometres on the eastern side of the border, inside Papua and New Guinea. The next village, Sekotchiau, perhaps ten kilometres inside Papua New Guinea contained only five houses.

We spent eight more days trying to penetrate the buttresses of the Bewani Mountains, with small parties probing up numerous watercourses to find a path. Others in the party scrounged and hunted for food along the many watercourses.

But we came to realise that, while seeing some incredible displays by birds-of-paradise and walking through an incredibly beautiful gorge, we had achieved nothing.

The police and carriers were all suffering from bruised and bleeding feet. We had lit the signal bonfire each morning but had only seen an aircraft on the first day. As far as I was concerned, it was time to go home.

We arrived back at Vanimo after spending twenty-three days in the bush; Robin Calcutt arrived with his Green River contingent the following day. He too had been unable to penetrate the Bewani Mountains at the border, reporting that because of the 'vertical stone cliffs, narrow valleys, and heaps of stone sent down by landslides, it developed into a question of getting the laden carriers out of this area, rather than holding to the original intention of keeping to an approximately northerly course along the border.'

Both patrols had wasted at least two hours of each day preparing the signal bonfire and waiting for an aircraft which failed to appear.

Aitchison commented later that 'it was unfortunate that air ground liaison failed after the first successful contact with the patrol from Vanimo [on the first day]. Unfortunately … I could not partake in the two latter flights.' I wonder if he realised how demoralising it was to the people on the ground that the aircraft had constantly failed to appear.

I returned to Aitape from Vanimo, handed over to Dave Wren who arrived at Aitape on 26 September 1956 and departed for Dreikikir.

13: Dreikikir, East Sepik Province

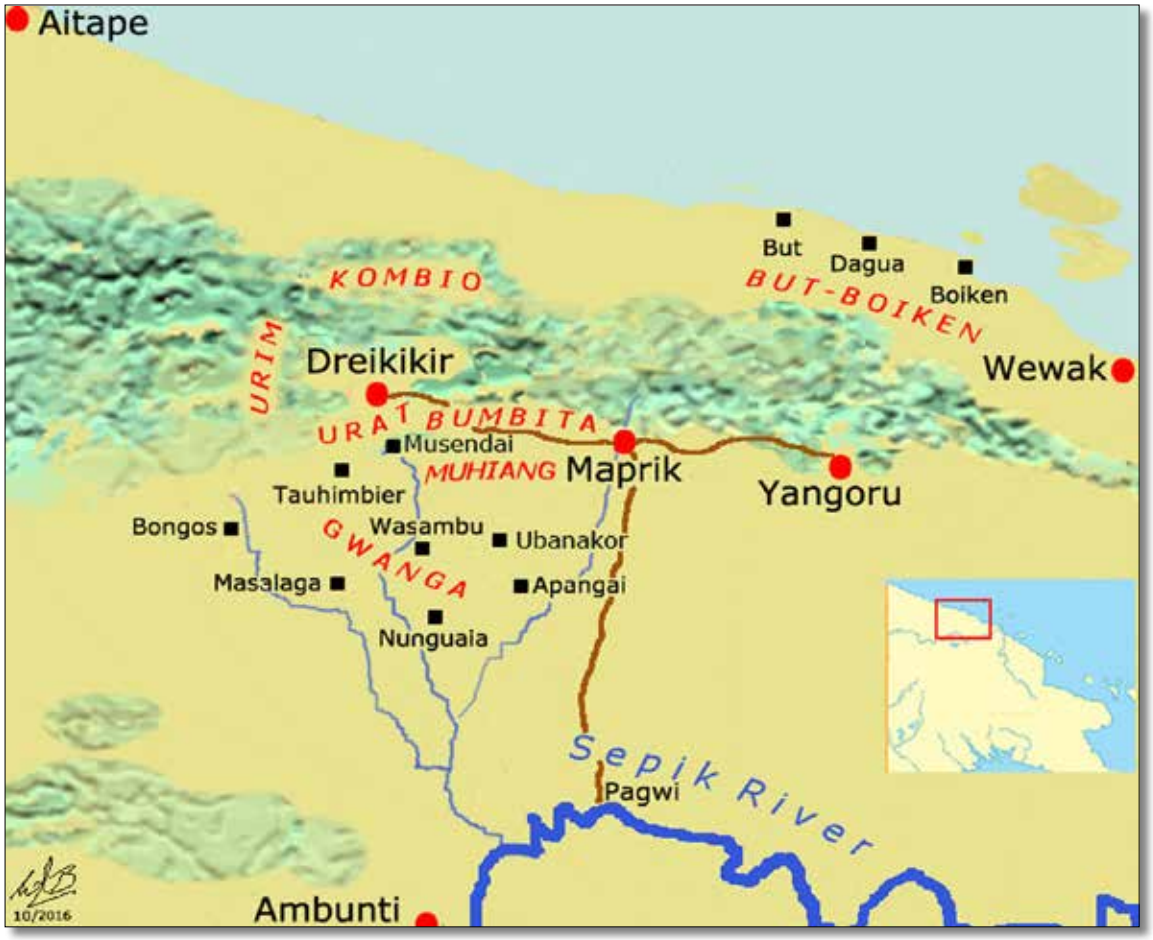
Now I really run into bureaucracy, till trying to work it out sixty years later

I HAD ONLY been six weeks at Vanimo Patrol Post when I was transferred to Aitape in October 1955 to take over the Sub-District.

In those days, the huge Sepik District had six sub-districts (Aitape, Angoram, Lumi, Maprik, Telefomin and Wewak), each under the control of an Assistant District Officer, who was a power in the land.

ADO's told people what to do and they did things themselves. They were the peacemakers and the peacekeepers, the law enforcers, the senior police officers, the District Court magistrates, the gaolers, the arbitrators, the counsellors and the mentors.

I was five months as acting ADO at Aitape before I reverted back to Patrol Officer, making way for ADO Arthur (AT) Carey, who had been moved to Aitape to make way for Fred (FPC) Kaad to take over at Maprik.



When Carey moved on, after only three months, and I took over again as ADO it was beginning to feel like a game of musical chairs. I did not like it, but it was going to get worse.

Three days later, District Officer Tom (TG) Aitchison arrived. Aitchison, a prewar kiap, had been a District Officer in ANGAU and after the war, and had served as District Commissioner since 1951—the year District Officers, in charge of Districts, had been given the new title of District Commissioner.

Aitchison had served in Manus, Morobe and New Island and was now posted to the Sepik District as District Officer responsible for the Department of Native Affairs.

In six districts, the senior government officer—the District Commissioner—had been transferred to the Department of the Administrator; in the Sepik, District Commissioner Elliott-Smith was one of them. Hence the bureaucratic entanglement. But readers should know that being a kiap involved more than breaking the bush and bring government to the people.

Maybe it was just Aitchison's new broom approach or maybe he was disgruntled because Elliott-Smith, an Assistant Resident Magistrate in prewar Papua who had also served in ANGAU, and who had commanded the Pacific Islands Battalion in 1945, had seemingly abandoned his Territory career but was now his superior.

(Elliott-Smith had continued in the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in Victoria until he joined the Western Australian Department of Native Affairs in June 1949. In March 1951, he was inexplicably appointed District Commissioner for the Higatura area following the Mount Lamington eruption.)

Whatever the reason, at the end of May Aitchison ordained that Patrol Officer Ron (RTD) Neville would move from Maprik to Telefomin to take over from Dave (ED) Wren as ADO. Wren would move from Telefomin and take over from me at Aitape, and I would move to Dreikikir, a Patrol Post about forty-five kilometres west of Maprik.

Everything was ready when Wren arrived from Telefomin via Wewak on 24 September 1956. The cash-book was closed off, the cash counted and the Government Store was in apple-pie-order.

Patrol Officer Paul (PCA) Conroy had done a thorough stocktake after I chewed his ear when I caught him rubbing the contents of a tin of bully beef on stock cards so cockroaches would destroy more recent entries.

We started the formal handover the day after Wren's arrival and had completed it by midday. Wren did not seem interested in the process, only glancing around the store and perfunctorily counting the cash and postage stamps.

Each evening we relaxed in well-lubricated discussion, and we had much to talk about. Wren was ten years my senior in age and three years my senior as a kiap.

He had joined the Administration in March 1946 just one month after his discharge from the Army, and his had been a long war. He had served as a 'weekend soldier' in the Citizen Military Forces while still a civilian and had enlisted in the AIF just six weeks after the outbreak of war in 1939.

He was given the New South Wales service number NX64, commissioned as a lieutenant

and was soon overseas fighting in the Middle East (Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi), in Greece and in Crete—in the 2/4th Infantry Battalion, AIF.

Perhaps it was the battles against superior German forces, the defeats, the desperate withdrawals, the evacuation from Greece and then the strafing and incessant dive bombing that preceded the airborne invasion of Crete by German paratroopers that took the greatest toll.

Wren did not dwell on the horror of those wartime experiences, but his enthusiasm and sense of purpose seemed to have been destroyed. Loud noises disturbed him and he had a pathological fear of heights. At Telefomin, he always arranged for his police to blindfold him and carry him, strapped to a pole, across the deep canyons that were bridged only by single tree trunks.

I only had two and a half days after the handover to show him around. I introduced him to Monsignor Doggett, Father Denis and the Parers and took him to see the bridge construction.

On the way back, we stopped off at the nearby 'Coffee Shop'—the one-bedroomed shack at St Anna Plantation where Bob (WH) Parer sometimes slept the night. It was always good for a cup of Nescafe, even when Bob was miles away.

We discussed the bridge construction and how much more needed to be done. Wren said he was not interested, that someone else would have to complete it at another time.

I was still thinking of that unfinished bridge and the people who had been involved in the work when Gena and I flew out of Aitape on Friday, 28 September 1956.

Nearly all my possessions were packed in three wooden trunks crafted by John Pitau from the nearby Ali Island. Those campaign-style trunks were carefully dimensioned to fit into small aircraft. They are still in my possession after sixty years, continuing to stir memories of the Aitape folk and our bridge-building ventures.

Pitau had toiled tirelessly in the flowing river—frequently under water—building the formwork for the concrete footings to the bridge piles.

Peter Hughes, who provided the timber for the trunks—he had selected flitches of aged Kwila hardwood and milled and thicknessed the planks—had worked with me daily on the second bridge. He supplied the electric welder and did all the welding, helped solve the continual problems and finished each day with our joint evaluation.

Another gent very much involved with the bridge, Brere Awol of Malol, arrived with a farewell gift just as I was about to depart. Even though it was a miniaturised version, the ornately carved and decorated *garamut* (slit drum) was far too big to fit in any container, and travelled unpacked.

Another memory that will not go away is of a sixty-seven-year old Bob Parer (baptised Wilfred Herbert) standing in front of me holding a can of beer in one hand and a lighted cigarette in the other. He handed me both and suddenly did a back-flip, landing poised on his feet and, with a smile, took back his beer and smoke.

District Commissioner Aitchison's instruction was clear. After the handover I would proceed to Wewak and 'assist with the setting up of the But-Boiken Council prior to moving to Maprik.' He did not say that PO Robin (RA) Calcutt would also assist or that our sole role would be to assist PO Geoffrey (CG) Littler with the initial elections.

TOP: The new house with the airy lounge-dining room, wide verandah and 180 degree views. Brere's garamut on the verandah above the steps *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: One of the three trunks crafted by Pitau of Tumleo in 1957 and the camp oven I first used in 1953. All still in service in 2017 *(Bill Brown)*

RIGHT: A photo of Dreikikir airstrip slightly readjusted to recreate the 1950s aura *(Bill Brown)*
The sloping airstrip separating (1) the Catholic Mission (Church and other buildings of native material) at the bottom left of the frame from (2) the native material hospital buildings at the top end of sloping airstrip. (3) The only permanent material building, a Bulolo-type bungalow, originally the OIC's house, and (4) the rough location of the new house.

BOTTOM: An Aitape *garamut* (slit drum) on its stand, perhaps twice the size of that presented by Brere Awol of Malol *(Victor Cavill, 1955, Softly, Wild Drums)*

Littler had done all the preliminaries in May and June, but it was Dave (DFM) Fenbury MC who had ensued the smoothness of the elections.

Earlier in the year, in March, he had flown from Port Moresby to Dagua to visit Simogun Pita BEM and gain his support. The two had wartime affinities: Fenbury had operated behind Japanese lines in the Sepik; Simogun had spent a year in coastwatcher and guerrilla operations on New Britain with Malcolm Wright and had been awarded the British Empire Medal—unparalleled recognition in those racist times.

When Simogun Pita (later Sir Simogun Pita) told the people that the council was a good thing and that all the people should vote, sixty-four per cent of eligible voters did so. We conducted the ballot for each language group, and twenty-four councillors were elected. The council covered the But and Boiken groups, 5,500 people living in thirty-four villages.

We spent the last two nights and a rest day at Yuo, a tiny isle just off the mainland about thirty kilometres from Wewak, enjoying the white sand, colourful coral, clear water and freshly caught crayfish.

The gossip had it that Yuo was the DC's trysting spot and the rest house, with its timber floor and fine furniture, gave credence to the story. Furniture, especially refrigerators and double beds, was in short supply on outstations, but at Yuo the rest house contained one of each and they were sparkling.

Back at Wewak, Elliott-Smith and Aitchison gave me a long, almost disquieting, briefing before I departed for Maprik. According to Elliott-Smith, the area was still only 'semi-controlled and much more work needed to be done.'

Dreikikir had been established as a base by ANGAU towards the end of the Pacific War. Following the resumption of civil administration in the Sepik in February 1946, a police constable acted as caretaker until Patrol Officer Dudley Young Whitforde opened the patrol post in April 1947.

When Young Whitforde was withdrawn unwell and hospitalised after two months, a succession of patrol officers followed but there were long intervals when the station was unmanned. I would be the seventh incumbent in ten years; my predecessor, PO Jock (JW) McGregor, had been transferred away three years earlier.

A medical assistant was living in the PO's house—the only permanent material building on the station—and I would have to survive in a ramshackle, local material building until a new house was built for me 'soon'. I was instructed not to build anything else in the interim.

I flew into Maprik on 21 October 1956 and set out for Dreikikir two days later, travelling in a refurbished, ex-army jeep that Kaad had hired from somewhere. Durami, a little guy from Yangoru, was at the wheel; Gena and a police constable shared the back with as much gear as would fit, and the box trailer hooked on behind was crammed high.

When, some ten kilometres along the track, the engine died, villagers helped us unload, took the heavier items into storage and we set out on foot.

At the end of the road some forty kilometres further on, Dreikikir stretched along a high narrow ridge, but I did not see much of it that night. I slept in the house that Elliott-Smith had described as 'ramshackle' and got my bearings the next morning.

The dilapidated house had an earth floor, small shuttered windows and a low thatched roof. The interior was hot, dank and dark. It was not for me. I wandered around the station for a couple of days, dined with medical assistant John Waters and his wife in the Bulolo-style bungalow on a couple of evenings, and decided that I would ignore the 'do not build' instruction.

To my mind, the obvious site for a new house was on the bluff at the northern end of the ridge, past the married police houses. It was isolated and there was an uninterrupted view over the lowlands.

I sketched a plan, then with my builders—the police detachment—I marked the footprint out on the ground. The house was going to catch the breezes; the lounge-dining room would have large, uncluttered window openings that would be protected from the elements by eaves spanning the verandah, which would surround the house on four sides and be almost two metres wide—wide enough for me to sprawl out in a deck chair. The police criticised the design: it was flawed, they said, the roof would be too flat and it would leak. They were right, it did.

I was lucky. Fred Kaad had moved from Maprik to replace Aitchison as District Officer in Wewak a few days earlier, and Arthur Carey was once again ADO at Maprik. Kaad came good with the required cash and Carey sent me nails, hammers, saws and a bush carpenter.

The word went out to the villages. The builders needed hardwood posts—Kwila—in various dimensions: thick logs for the foundation stumps, thinner logs for the bearers, and mature saplings for the uprights. We also needed black palm flooring, softwood for the rafters, bush rope for binding, and sheets and sheets of sago thatching for the roof.

My day was getting busy. There were two obligatory radio schedules with Wewak, and village officials—Luluais, Tultuls, and even a Paramount or two—roamed in from near and far, some with problems, some just to pass the time. Villagers came with interminable complaints—some of which led to court proceedings—about assaults, theft, and infidelities.

Whenever I could, I got out of the tiny office: a one-roomed cube with thatched roof, plaited walls, limbon floor, and small front verandah. My new house was moving along too slowly for me but I had to address a host of tasks in the field.

There were rumours of a cargo cult at Ilihita and allegations of *sanguma* (sorcery) reported by the South Seas Evangelical Mission, the annual census revision was due, and some impetus was needed to upgrade the road network.

Ilihita village was in the Bumbita-Muhiang census division, one of three forming the inner arc around the station. I decided to divide my visits into four segments, returning to Dreikikir between each segment to check on the progress of the building. That exercise took thirty-four days.

John (JG) O'Brien, Maprik's newest Cadet Patrol Officer had joined me at Ilihita to gain experience. It was the first time he had been on a patrol and the first time he been involved in a cargo cult investigation.

We visited the South Seas Evangelical Mission and made the acquaintance of the woman in charge. Elizabeth Schrader was an unmarried German who had experienced the Marching Rule cult in the British Solomon Islands and was fearful of a similar outbreak at Ilihita.

Her assistant Helen Held, also an unmarried German but much younger and very comely,

was not concerned. O'Brien and I enjoyed several home-cooked German meals during our prolonged investigation. Maybe we defused the movement.

O'Brien also accompanied on my next patrol, eighteen days in the Gawanga, a huge sparsely populated area of forested hills and sago swamps stretching southwards almost to the Sepik River.

David Fenbury, as a Captain in ANGAU, had opened up the area in 1944–45, but the first postwar patrol had entered only in June 1948. That was after Patrol Officer Blue (G) Morris, the second civilian incumbent at Dreikikir, was told that twenty-five males and two females had been killed in tribal fighting and that villagers, some armed with grenades, were being trained to resist the government.

Morris and his wife had been just deposited at Dreikikir from Aitape by Bobby Gibbes's flimsy Auster aircraft but, when he heard the news, Morris arranged for his wife to be flown to Wewak. He set out for the Gawanga with four native police on 11 June and two days later returned to Dreikikir with twenty-six natives, including the original murderer and witnesses.

Patrol Officer Alex (AJ) Zweck walked in from Maprik with two police and accompanied Morris back to the Gawanga. ADO George Greathead flew in from Wewak with six more police on 26 June and, together with Morris and Zweck, arrested sixty men and recovered two hand grenades. During the whole operation only one shot was fired, a warning over the Gwanga's heads.

Greathead, Zweck and Morris had restored law and order. Subsequent patrols—by Laurie (LJ) Doolan in 1949 and 1950, by Des (DM) Martin in 1951 and by Jock (JW) McGregor in July 1953—received an apathetic but not unfriendly reception and recorded the area as the most backward in Dreikikir.

Very little had changed by the time we visited in February 1957. We spent eighteen days meandering around the network of narrow bush tracks that linked the villages and were briefly delayed while we built a raft to cross the flooded Bongos River. We wandered through a forest abundant with game, our guides signalling our progress by messages drummed on the buttresses of giant trees. People who had returned from their homes that were as much as a day's walk away in the sago swamps met us in the villages. In stark contrast to the verdant forest, the village houses, unlived in for most of the years, were dilapidated, dirty and unkempt.

Two days after the Gawanga patrol, the acting District Officer contacted me by radio and asked whether I would postpone my leave by six months and take over from ADO Brightwell at Ambunti.

I left Dreikikir, where I had been based for less than five months, on 9 March 1957. Tony (AL) Redwood, recovering from hepatitis contracted at May River, replaced me and within a month had himself been replaced by Tony (CA) Trollope,

Nine different officers had taken charge of Dreikikir in ten years, and for four of those years the station had been unmanned. Was it any wonder that the people were confused and unenthusiastic. From my perspective the saving grace was that my former District Officer Aitchison was relocated to headquarters in Port Moresby. I did not know at the time that he would return to haunt me in 1966.

14: Ambunti, East Sepik Province

Reposted where I want to be, the Sepik: full of big characters and big adventures

WHEN DISTRICT OFFICER Fred (FPC) Kaad transferred me from Dreikikir Patrol Post to Ambunti in 1957, it served both our ends.

It solved Fred's staffing problem and meant I would be in charge of a Sub-District once again, a prospect I was looking forward to.

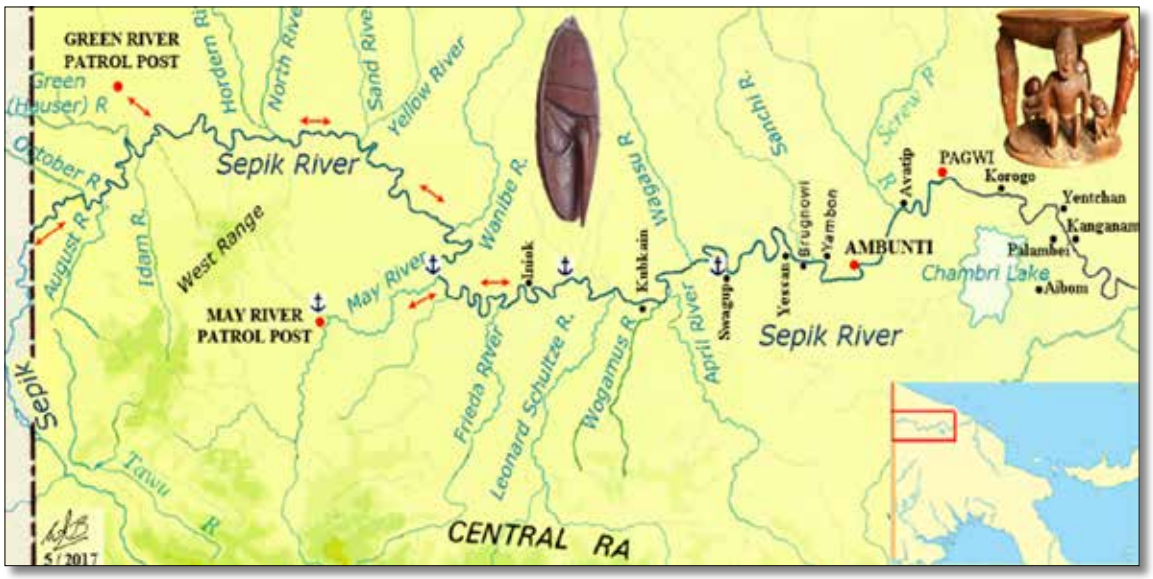
Taking over from Mert (MW) Brightwell as acting Assistant District Officer, I would be paid a little more but, on the downside, I'd have to defer my leave for at least seven months.

I could have travelled to Ambunti overland—down the road from Maprik to Pagwi and then upriver by boat—but the road sector was a slow drive of fifty-five kilometres in the middle of the wet season. The rains and the swollen Sepik River would have flooded the roadhead and we would have to truck my gear through the quagmire to the workboat.

The final leg, pushing upstream against the Sepik River current for sixty kilometres, would take another three hours. Perhaps six hours in all, just to get from Maprik to Ambunti.

I decided to take the quicker option and arranged a charter flight. One of Bobby Gibbes' Norseman aircraft flew a load of government stores to Maprik then uplifted me and all my gear to Ambunti. Even with some added sightseeing, it was only a thirty-minute flight.

I had flown over the Sepik River once before, but I was not prepared for the vista emerging from the early morning mist. A seemingly endless river twisted and turned through swamps and grasslands, its meandering course punctuated by numerous ox-bow lakes and a few straight reaches.



From my seat in the cockpit, I could see the Chambri Lakes on the left shimmering in the morning sunlight, while ahead the mountain at Ambunti and the Waskuk Hills rose abruptly from the plain. In the distance, New Guinea's central ranges jag-toothed across the skyline.

We flew a beeline for ten minutes, almost directly above the road to Pagwi, before turning to follow the river upstream: a thirteen-kilometre straight stretch to Avatip then another change of course for an even straighter leg from Malu to Ambunti. Pilot David Wills gave me a flypast of Ambunti station before making a wide 270-degree turn to land.

By New Guinea standards, Ambunti was a simple one-way airstrip with a long clear approach. With the throttle cut back after touchdown and a little application of the brakes, the 300-metre grassed surface brought the aircraft to a standstill well before the mountain at the end of the strip. The river bank was the only hazard. If the pilot landed too short, the wheels could clip the top of the bank and flip the aircraft on its back.

Mert Brightwell was waiting at the airstrip to meet me. He explained the handover would take about four weeks, beginning with a thorough familiarisation with the station and environs after which we would take the workboat upriver: first to May River Patrol Post (333 kilometres) and then a further 444 kilometres to the border with Dutch New Guinea.

Back at Ambunti, the process would be completed with the formal check of the cash and assets. Then we would each sign the handover certificates and Brightwell would be on his way.

Saturday was Station Inspection Day at Ambunti and Brightwell had postponed the early morning ritual until my arrival. We began with the inspection of the police detachment, formed outside the barracks in their parade ground best. Then we moved on to the *kalabus* (gaol), a long, thatch-roofed shed with substantial walls of logs driven vertically in the ground.

The detainees were lined up inside the surrounding barbed-wire fence and, as Brightwell called names from the gaol register, I checked each individual prisoner against the warrants of imprisonment.

We moved to the airstrip and walked its 300 metres end to the end and back again. Brightwell was known to be fastidious, some would say pernickety, and we checked the surface for sogginess and ruts. I was mildly surprised that we did not check each blade of grass.

A footpath, shaded by shrubbery and some small trees, led from the airstrip up a gentle rise to the office where the serious exertion began.

First, some fifteen-odd steps cut ladder-like into the cliff at the back, then a stiff climb up the spine of the hill in the broiling sun.

Three zigzags led to the Medical Assistant's house, then a few more zigs and zags further up the hill to the Assistant District Officer's house. Finally, we followed a narrow path through the bush to a clearing a little higher up the mountain—this was Kiap McDonald's last resting place.

Edward McDonald had been killed by a disaffected policeman—shot at dawn with a service rifle while sleeping in his bed.

His grief-stricken family (his father was mayor of Geelong in Victoria) were further distressed when the two-metre long, pink granite tombstone, shipped in a crate from Australia,

was found to be cracked and fractured when unpacked at the graveside. A replacement slab now covered the grave, with the fractured slab alongside. Both carried the same simple epitaph engraved in gold:

In Remembrance of Assistant District Officer Edward Colin McDonald
Who was Killed on Service 28th February 1935—Aged 29 years.

Brightwell and I talked that evening about McDonald's murder and other events—the 1952 'Creighton Affair' and the May River massacre of August 1956.

The Creighton Affair of May 1952 had thrown Ambunti Patrol Post into chaos when the expatriate population of three single officers was arrested and charged with rape and other crimes.

The two Patrol Officers, acquitted of rape, were subsequently convicted on lesser charges and deported. The Medical Assistant, convicted, and gaoled for four and a half years, was acquitted after a High Court Appeal.

Those arrests and the ensuing, lengthy court proceedings left an administrative vacuum at Ambunti that Sepik Robbie, the Sub-District Office clerk at Angoram, was sent to fill.

Semi-retired, Eric Douglas Robinson knew the Sepik well. He had been a Patrol Officer on the river in 1928 and District Officer in charge of the river district at Ambunti in 1932.

Born with a speech impediment, Robinson introduced himself as 'Wobbinson' and would joke: 'The diffewence between Mawilyn Monwoe and me is that I have a bit of twoble wolling my r's.'

JK McCarthy in his memoir, *Patrol Into Yesterday*, relates how, after Robinson nearly died from leech bite, he stated he would raise the question of officers patrolling leech-infested grass country being issued with issued with a certain type of 'wubber goods'.

The leech that snuck up Robbie's penis and latched on inside had gorged and gorged. Robbie reached hospital, his sense of humour intact, imploring the medicos to 'wapidly wemove the wascal, but please wetain the size'.

Patrol Officer Peter (PB) Wenke, just returned from leave after completing his first term, took over Ambunti from Robbie and by mid-1953, he was patrolling with gusto and venturing recklessly far afield—travelling up the Sepik by workboat to enter and explore a right bank tributary, the notorious Leonard Schultze, and travelling overland from Ambunti through the swamps to the Yellow River with an escort of only three police.

At Angoram, 170 kilometres downstream, the Sub-District headquarters was in caretaker mode with Patrol Officer Jock (JW) MacGregor, barely out of his cadetship, in charge. Some 750 kilometres upstream at Green River Patrol Post, Allan (AT) Cottle, another young kiap of MacGregor's vintage, was custodian.

It seemed incredible that three very junior officers could be responsible for the law, order and welfare of the people living along 1,000 kilometres of the Sepik River—from the sea to the international border with what was then Dutch New Guinea.

Further south, at Telefomin, in the headwaters of the Sepik River high in the mountains, two other inexperienced officers were in control. This was where the practice of deploying relatively inexperienced young men came to grief.

Cadet Patrol Officer Geoffrey (GB) Harris had been stationed at Telefomin for eight of his fifteen months' total service. His superior, Patrol Officer Gerald (GL) Szarka was nearing the completion of his second term—but had been at Telefomin for only three months. (Szarka and Harris were murdered in two separate incidents on 6 November 1953.)

The Telefomin tragedy brought an influx of kiaps to the Sepik—Brightwell was almost the last of them. Just back from the two-year diploma course at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) in March 1954, he was ensconced as acting ADO at Abau in the Central District when he was drafted to play a role in the lower court hearings at Wewak.

He was moved to Ambunti when the Supreme Court hearings ended in August and spent six months as Patrol Officer before Ambunti was regraded to sub-district status in April 1956 and he was elevated to acting ADO.

Life should have been easy from then on, but in August the May River people invited their neighbours from a little further upstream at the Yellow River junction to a feast where they murdered and cooked twenty-five of their invitees.

The boofheads in Port Moresby seemingly had not learnt anything from the Telefomin massacre, even ignoring their own edict—in force in 1956 and for many years thereafter—that Telefomin patrols must comprise at least two officers, one 'an experienced Patrol Officer, Assistant District Officer, or District Officer'.

Patrol Officer Tony (AL) Redwood, five months back from his first leave and based in Port Moresby 1,200 kilometres from May River, was certainly not 'an experienced Patrol Officer' when he 'was called to headquarters at Konedobu, and told [he] had been selected to lead the May River patrol' which would traverse through the lower end of the Telefomin Sub-District.

Except for the occasional visitor, Redwood and his police detachment were on their own during the eighty-two days (29 0ctober 1956—18 January 1957) of the May River patrol. They rounded up the culprits and saw them through the court proceedings that culminated in forty men being convicted in the Supreme Court and sentenced on 11 February 1957. Redwood had contracted hepatitis and was at Dreikikir recuperating when I left there for Ambunti on 27 February 1957.

Preparations for our departure upriver to May River Patrol Post and then to the Dutch New Guinea border were made in typical Brightwell style. It took a whole day to assemble and load the rations to resupply the Patrol Post. March was the wettest month of the normally wet year. Rations were loaded into *Mala's* small cabin and laid out carefully on the floor: unopened bags of rice, wheatmeal and dried peas, each weighing 51 kilograms; smaller 32-kilogram bags of slightly damp sugar, and smaller 25-kilogram bags of even damper salt.

When the crates, cartons and caddies of ships biscuits, tea, matches and tobacco had been squeezed into corners and crannies, there was no room to move around. The only free space, a passage around the diesel motor, allowed the crew limited access to ensure it was greased and oiled and powering the boat along.

We slept on board on the night before our departure, crawling from the bulwarks onto canvas bed sleeves stretched above the cargo. We wriggled under mosquito nets before dusk and emerged only after dawn when some of the clouds of mosquitos had dispersed.

TOP: Gibbes Sepik Airway's Norseman parked alongside the footpath leading from the airstrip to the Ambunti Sub-District Office (Internet)

RIGHT: Ambunti from the air (Department of Information modified):
1. Assistant District Officer's house (Mert Brightwell then Bill Brown), domestic servant's house at rear; 2. European Medical Assistant's house (Allen Kelly), domestic servant's house at rear; 3. Patrol Officer's house (John Tierney); 4. Sub-District Office; 5. Haus Sik (hospital); 6. Floating wharf (left-right) Wewak-based MV *Thetis*, Ambunti workboats MV *Mala* and MV *Onyx*; 7. Airstrip

BOTTOM: Ambunti Hill from the river. The office is on the right and the zigzag track leads up the spine of the hill to the Medical Assistant's house. On the top of the hill is the ADO's house and the forest behind. *(Bill Brown)*

The boat's crew—Manji, Kontrak, Nyaga, and Aipak, all from the middle river—came on board just before first light. Woken by the rumble of the diesel as the crew fired it up, Brightwell and I crawled out from under our mosquito nets.

Brightwell's cook, Auriman from Avatip, was next aboard and, after much shouting, latecomers made their way around the deck and stepped into a long canoe strapped to the starboard side. There were three exchange police for May River, some accompanying wives, a medical orderly and two other police who were part of our team.

At 6.10 am, twenty minutes before sunrise, we were underway and heading upriver in the dawn light. Brightwell and I moved the two canvas chairs to the reinforced roof above the wheelhouse and here we spent the daylight hours. When it rained, we descended to the cabin and perched on bags of rice.

Auriman cooked breakfast in the foc'sle on a single burner Primus stove—fried eggs, bacon and coffee—and served it while *Mala* was passing through the Yambon Gate, where the river, at its fastest and deepest, raced and swirled through the narrow cutting it had gouged through a high ridge.

With breakfast out of the way, it was time for the daily *waswas*, a ritual involving standing naked in the sunlight on the stern of the boat. The shower, a galvanized bucket tied to a rope, was thrown overboard from the stern and hauled back filled with gritty, colloidal Sepik River.

There were accompanying cautions shouted by the crew in Tok Pisin: 'Don't loop the rope around your wrist—the bucket will pull you under and you might never come back up!'

The toilet was another stern rope, knotted at regular intervals and secured to a cleat. The rope was to be firmly gripped by the crouching user who would hang bare-bottomed over the stern in full view of the river banks.

There was another admonishment for the toilet: 'Don't get chopped up by the propeller, kick away if you fall in.'

Aboard *Mala* we had a modicum of privacy and comfort, partially shielded from prying eyes by a canvas flap hanging from the cabin roof. It was not so secluded for those travelling in the canoe strapped alongside.

The canoe's freeboard was one-third that of *Mala* and her passengers were completely exposed to view. It was too dangerous to move between the two vessels when we were underway, and even when we tied up after the day's travel as there was seldom enough dry land to move around.

Brightwell had commissioned men from Kubkain village to fell the tallest canoe tree that they could find. Their finest craftsman had tirelessly adzed and honed the log, transforming it into a canoe that projected more than a metre fore and aft of *Mala's* twelve-metre length.

With two 44-gallon (200 litre) drums of diesel fuel standing vertically amidships, the passengers could move gingerly from end to end, perch on one side of the canoe or squat on the floor or on their hand luggage.

A young lady gave every one a blast when, while perched on the edge of the canoe, she suffered a wardrobe malfunction and lost control of the laplap at a crucial time. She complained bitterly about the rudeness and callousness of men. When men stood up and

turned their backs to pee she said that she averted her eyes but they never did the same.

It was tough being a policeman on the Sepik if you didn't come from there, and tougher still being a policeman's wife. Life was hard at Ambunti but much worse travelling on the river, in the swamps and at that hellhole at May River.

Mosquitos attacked throughout the day. They were different at every stop—a wasp-like sting at one place, painless at another; while elsewhere they seemed to have chewing teeth.

I used a pressure pack of insecticide to liberally spray any mosquitos that joined me under the net and later I spent ten days in hospital recovering from a reaction to the spray, the skin on my arms and legs erupting into fluid-filled blisters.

Arriving back at Ambunti on Wednesday, 3 April 1957, we had a week before Brightwell needed to depart on leave—time to finalise the slowest handover in history—before we both headed to town, me for medical treatment.

The station was left for the time being in the care of newly-appointed Cadet Patrol Officer John (JF) Tierney and his mentors—Medical Assistant Allan Kelly, Clerk Lasi from the Papuan Gulf, and, most experienced of all, Sergeant Lingut of the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary.

Tierney stepped off the aircraft that I caught to Wewak. There, Hungarian-born District Medical Officer Lajos Roth said he did not know how to treat my problem, but would admit me and try an 'old wives' remedy.

The expat hospital, just along the road from the Wewak Point Hotel, was a small remnant of a much larger wartime edifice. It normally catered for maternity events but there were no births in the offing and I was the only patient. Each morning for a fortnight, after completing his rounds at the main hospital on the road around the point from Chinatown, Roth appeared with a huge syringe and extracted blood from a vein in my arm and promptly re-injected it into my rump. I was never sure what triggered the cure—Roth's blood transfer treatment, the elapse of time, Matron Bodellia Mulcahy's nightly libations or the ministrations and the banter of her young cohorts, Sisters Patricia Bondason and Gloria Dag.

Cured anyway, I flew back to Ambunti to find the station running smoothly, but there was much to do. John Tierney had accomplished more than I expected. He had learnt the office procedures—how to handle the radio transceiver and worked on many chores.

But there were some things beyond his purview, like the string of people—men and women—seeking a court hearing, and there was official correspondence demanding a reply.

As part of what to Tierney may have been a boring learning curve, he sat alongside me in the office as I worked through the complaints and disputes: some frivolous, others settled by mediation, others like adulteries addressed through more formal court processes. (At the time, adultery was a crime applying only to the indigenous people.)

Among the letters, there was a formal invitation, addressed to Bill Brown BHP, to an ordination of the first Franciscan Bishop. It was almost a command. An attached handwritten, unsigned note explained it was Monsignor Doggett's personal request that I attend his ordination. It was arranged that an SVD Cessna would pick me up at Ambunti early in the morning of 3 June and return me from Aitape to Ambunti the following day.

The note concluded with the comment that my contention that I was not a Black Hearted Presbyterian was accepted, but the BHP post-nominal was correct for a Black Hearted Protestant.

There was always something happening on the river.

Famed American TV raconteur Lowell Thomas together with Australian filmmaker Lee Robinson and his associate Joy Cavill arrived with a flotilla of small ships laden with movie equipment to record the first episode of *High Adventure*, a colour series for the CBS Television Network.

They and our bosses in Port Moresby expected us to ensure there was plenty of local co-operation and colour. Later, in return, the Ambunti community from near and far was invited to a night-time premiere of the full-length colour movie, *Walk Into Paradise,* filmed on the Sepik and around Goroka in 1955. (For American release it was later retitled *Walk Into Hell*.)

Downstream at Pagwi, Education Officer Tasman (TR) Hammersley had been in trouble for some time, accused of romancing District Commissioner Elliott-Smith's daughter, and was barred from visiting town. The brash young lady, nose in air and not perturbed, proclaimed to anyone who would listen, 'If Daddy does it, so can I!'

The townsfolk had been speculating about Daddy Elliott-Smith for some time. The speculation ended when the storeman's young wife collided with the District Commissioner and the love bug bit them both, ending his marriage of twenty-six years. Thirty years his junior, and married just two years, his lover fled to Australia, perhaps to establish a nest. Elliott-Smith followed soon after, abandoning forever his prestigious DC's position, never to return.

Elliott-Smith's sudden departure was followed by another unexpected twist. On 30 April 1957, acting District Officer Fred Kaad was slotted in as acting District Commissioner ahead of the irreverent and unruly District Officer Dick White—a prewar officer, ten years Kaad's senior.

Neither event made ripples at Ambunti where we were playing catch-up. May River Patrol Post had been without an expatriate officer since Redwood's departure on 11 January. Police Sergeant Sauweni and a small detachment were left to hold the fort.

Sauweni had probably saved the Telefomin station from completion annihilation in November 1953, but I did not think that leaving him in charge of the May River was reward or recognition for that extraordinary achievement. I needed to have somebody posted to administer May River and Patrol Officer Peter O'Sullivan drew the short straw.

In 1956, O'Sullivan had been acting Assistant District Officer at idyllic Misima in Milne Bay and after leave was posted to the Sepik District, first to Wewak, then to Lumi and finally to May River.

In Wewak, O'Sullivan had formed an attachment with a sinuous, long-legged young lady—described inelegantly by Dave Wills as 'all muscle and no tits.' Maybe he was correct as she later became famous on Australian television as a fitness guru and, later still, host of a successful BBC television show. O'Sullivan's romance survived his transfer to Lumi but not to May River. He had not been there very long when I was asked to get an urgent 'Dear John' letter delivered to him.

TOP: MV *Mala* moored alongside the floating wharf, Ambunti, 1957 *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: The canvas chairs on the roof above *Mala's* wheelhouse where we spent our days on the river (Bill Brown)

RIGHT: Police Sergeant Lingut, Bill Brown and John Tierney at Ambunti,1957, standing in front of the Sub-District Office; Medical Assistant's house at rear (Lee Robinson)

BOTTOM: No dry ground at the first night's stop; the river breaks its banks near Swagup (Bill Brown)

May River lapsed into relative unimportance when the Anderson Affair, as it became known, hit the headlines.

The Administrator had forwarded the report of an inquiry into the affair to Canberra on 16 July 1957 and three days later Territories Minister, Paul Hasluck, launched his blistering response:

> After reading the report it seems to me that you may not be viewing this matter as gravely and with the same sense of anxiety that the Government is bound to view it … The report reveals a state of affairs, as well as a most grievous abuse of authority, and its conclusions are damaging not merely to the reputations of the officers concerned but to the reputation of the whole Administration, and must deeply effect the confidence of the Government and (should the occasion unfortunately arise) of the Commonwealth Parliament in your own ability to control the matters entrusted to you.

At the same time Hasluck wrote to the PNG Public Service Commissioner, N Thomson, directing him to hold an immediate inquiry under Section 10 of the Public Service Ordinance into aspects of the Departments of Law and of Public Health, and a full-blown, nine-pronged investigation of the Department of Native Affairs.

The cause of all this had transpired at Tapini, headquarters of the Goilala Sub-District, and 125 kilometres north of Port Moresby in the Owen Stanley Ranges. It was a long way from the Sepik District but the events there in late 1956 triggered reviews, adjustments and changes to our department that would continue for years.

We knew nothing of this in the Sepik, but guessed something was afoot when all the outstation ADOs—real and acting—Geoff (GR) Burfoot at Aitape, Bunny (SH) Yeoman at Angoram, Frank (FD) Jones at Lumi, Arthur (AT) Carey at Maprik, Ron (RTD) Neville at Telefomin and me at Ambunti were peremptorily ordered into town, with instructions to proceed direct to accommodation at the Wewak Point Hotel and remain there until we were contacted. Wewak-based acting District Officer Dick White and acting Assistant District Officer Tom Ellis would join us there.

We were a motley group—married, single and separated, one Lothario; young and old; mostly ex-servicemen but for two of us—Ron Neville and me, schoolboys during the war.

We learnt a little more that afternoon when acting District Commissioner Fred Kaad appeared. The Public Service Commissioner and a three-man team were flying to all centres in the Territory to conduct an enquiry, and the Wewak segment would kick off the next day.

We would be individually grilled, under oath and in camera, as to our own behaviour and as to what we knew about the behaviour of others.

Assistant Secretary for Territories, Dudley McCarthy—a prewar, New Guinea kiap—would assist the Public Service Commissioner with the inquisition while two other members of the team, John Legge from Canberra and Gerry (GJ) McLaughlin, a former Goroka District Clerk turned Public Service Inspector, would make flying visits to our stations while we were absent to see what they could unearth.

The inquisitors were not interested in an earlier altercation that I had with the police

sergeant at Aitape. That was already on the record, but I was thoroughly grilled about my time in the Goilala and at Ambunti about the number and frequency of ADO and DC inspections and what I knew and felt about the Edwards and Creighton affairs.

I knew a lot about the Edwards affair. Patrol Officer Edwards MM had been convicted and gaoled in 1950 a year prior to my time in the Goilala. I knew all the details and also knew that Edwards had been awarded the Military Medal for acts of bravery during the landing at Balikpapan on 1 July 1945.

I said I thought Edwards had been left alone and unsupported for too long. The Creighton affair, initially disbelieved, had caused revulsion among us all as the facts were revealed.

As to visits and inspections, I explained that acting ADO Gus Bottrill had twice made the trek from Tapini to Urun—three-days there and three days back—while I was based there but that I could not imagine how a Port Moresby-based District Commissioner would handle the physical exertion, or be able to afford the time it would take.

I was more worried by what Legge and McLaughlin might unearth during their visit to Ambunti than I was about the inquisition by Thomson and McCarthy.

McLaughlin and I had known and disliked each other for three years in the Eastern Highlands, and a recent subterfuge at Ambunti had left me exposed.

I had been instructed to arrange a public meeting so an Australian cabinet minister, visiting the Territory from Canberra during the parliamentary winter recess, could meet with the village leaders.

I had seen it all before. The politician puffed and preened and spoke of his political wisdom and achievements. The *luluais, tultuls* and other notables, who had trekked from near and far, listened in disbelief, then returned home disillusioned and disheartened by the complete and needless waste of their effort and time.

On that recent occasion, I had organised a 'rent-a-crowd' to listen to the minister. The station work force—labourers and their wives; visitors and hospital outpatients; even the calaboose, re-garbed in lap laps borrowed from the government store—were assembled for the occasion, schooled and groomed to be enthusiastic and to applaud.

They performed well and the minister departed, happy and content. It would be curtains for me if my ruse became public or if the investigators discovered it. Fortunately, Tierney and the others at Ambunti held their whist.

At the beginning of August another event was in train. Dick White decided I was going troppo and insisted I apply for leave. Approval was delayed because of the inquiry but on 3 October I departed on 122 days recreation leave plus four months long service leave.

I hoped that I would be reposted back to the Sepik, after an absence of almost eight months, when my leave expired at the end of May 1958.

15: Around the Sepik

Troubled and colourful personalities, promotion and marriage come my way

THE FIRST THREE days of October 1957 were momentous for me but much more so for Patrol Officer John (JW) MacGregor, two years my junior and who had been deeply involved in the Anderson Affair.

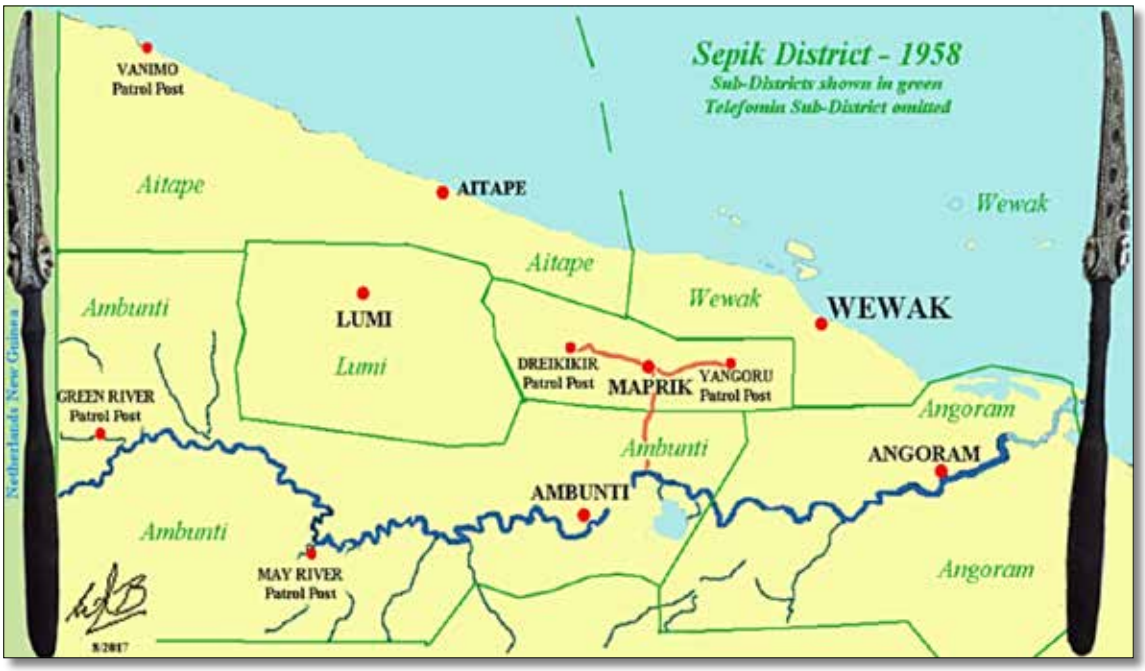
While I was flying out of Wewak to go on leave, MacGregor was in Port Moresby trying to salvage what he could of his career.

In August, magistrate Fred (FJ) Winkle RM had dismissed two charges of assault brought in the lower court against MacGregor, concluding that they were trivial, but MacGregor had also pleaded guilty in the Supreme Court to two other charges, one of 'deprivation of liberty' and one of 'setting fire to a native house'.

On the first charge, deprivation of liberty, MacGregor was convicted—and then discharged.

In his summing up, the Chief Justice remarked:

> The Patrol Officer was in charge of, and solely responsible, for a major development project at Woitape [in the Goilala] involving the construction of a new airstrip. The task was urgent and required an amazing amount of native labour from the District which is well known for its difficulties, geographical and administrative. The difficult task was completed and I have no doubt the accused deserves great credit for the undertaking …



> The accused was dealing with a serious source of trouble by what amounted to be a technical offence. It is possible that the accused might have justified his action by going into substantial evidence, but in the circumstances, I think it proper to discharge the accused.

On the second charge, 'setting fire to a native house', MacGregor was convicted and discharged on his own recognisance of £50, the Chief Justice commenting:

> There are many things to be commended about Mr MacGregor. He has commendable self-control under difficult circumstances and genuine regard for native welfare… I don't think he will feel any difficulty in carrying out his duties loyally in the future. His service was motivated by the right principles and I would be sorry to be compelled to inflict any punishment which would make it impossible for the Crown to continue to employ him.

At 9.30 on the morning of 1 October 1957, MacGregor called on the Director of Native Affairs Allan (AA) Roberts to notify him of his intention to resign. Maybe he thought his past achievements would help his cause and rule out a conviction. He had been officer-in-charge of Dreikikir Patrol Post in 1953, Angoram Sub-District in October 1953 and Vanimo Patrol Post in 1954-55. He had also located and built the airstrip and Patrol Post at Woitape in 1956.

But Director Roberts was not interested in those youthful achievements. He told MacGregor of his failings—the recent charges, unfavourable reports submitted by District Commissioner Elliott-Smith during 1954, earlier reports of instability and failure to qualify after his first term at ASOPA.

Roberts said MacGregor's resignation would not be accepted and recommended he be dismissed, even though this would result in the forfeiture of his entitlements including overdue long-service leave.

Did the Director have an uncompromising streak or was he just protecting his rear?

This was the same Allan Roberts who had told my 1949 ASOPA intake that any form of liaison with 'native females' was forbidden and warned that any breach of this unwritten rule would most likely result in instant dismissal.

Yes, he was an uncompromising man with a clear view of what he expected of his field officers.

It was all over by the afternoon, with one major change. The Public Service Commissioner rejected Roberts' recommendation and allowed MacGregor to resign.

As for Anderson, his role in the controversy that bore his name was still being discussed when I flew from Lae en route to Sydney on leave. Speculation had heightened about Anderson's forthcoming appeal to the High Court of Australia.

Anderson was stationed at Tapini in 1955. In July 1956, while he was on patrol, there was a shooting at the station. A man named Avila, in company with Koupa, shot Koupa's wife. The men, who had no right to possess a firearm or ammunition, claimed they had mistaken her for a cassowary.

Anderson returned from patrol to find Avila in gaol and Koupa at the hospital where his wife was being treated for a gunshot wound. Anderson interviewed the two men separately and when they persisted with the story of mistaking Koupa's wife for a cassowary he struck them both, and handcuffed them to a flagpole for the remainder of the afternoon.

On 23 July, Chief Justice Alan Mann sentenced Anderson to six months with hard labour on each of two charges of assault, and to eighteen months with hard labour on each of two charges of deprivation of liberty.

In new proceedings the following day, Anderson, having given up hope, changed his plea from 'not guilty' to 'guilty' on the charge of unlawfully keeping Avila in gaol, and Mann sentenced him to a further twenty-one months with hard labour.

In determining the appeal, the five judges of the High Court said that Anderson must have known he was acting illegally when he assaulted the men and had them handcuffed to the flagpole. But they said neither man had suffered pain nor harm, and Anderson had been severely punished by the conviction and loss of career.

The judges noted that Avila, and perhaps Koupa, might well have been committed for trial and held under arrest pending committal. Anderson's actions had been unusual, but everything that he had done he could have done legally, if he had followed the correct procedure and completed the paperwork.

Avila had not been detained in gaol but had been held under a form of open arrest, worked around the hospital and accompanied patrols.

The judges said the imprisonment of eight weeks that Anderson had already suffered was as great as any of the five offences could justify. Many people would think it was too great. The periods of imprisonment were reduced so as expire on the day Anderson was granted bail.

The judges were critical that Justice Mann had released Avila and Koupa without charge. They may well have commented that Mann had no experience in the criminal law. One wonders why it was that Territories Minister Paul Hasluck had appointed him to the role of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

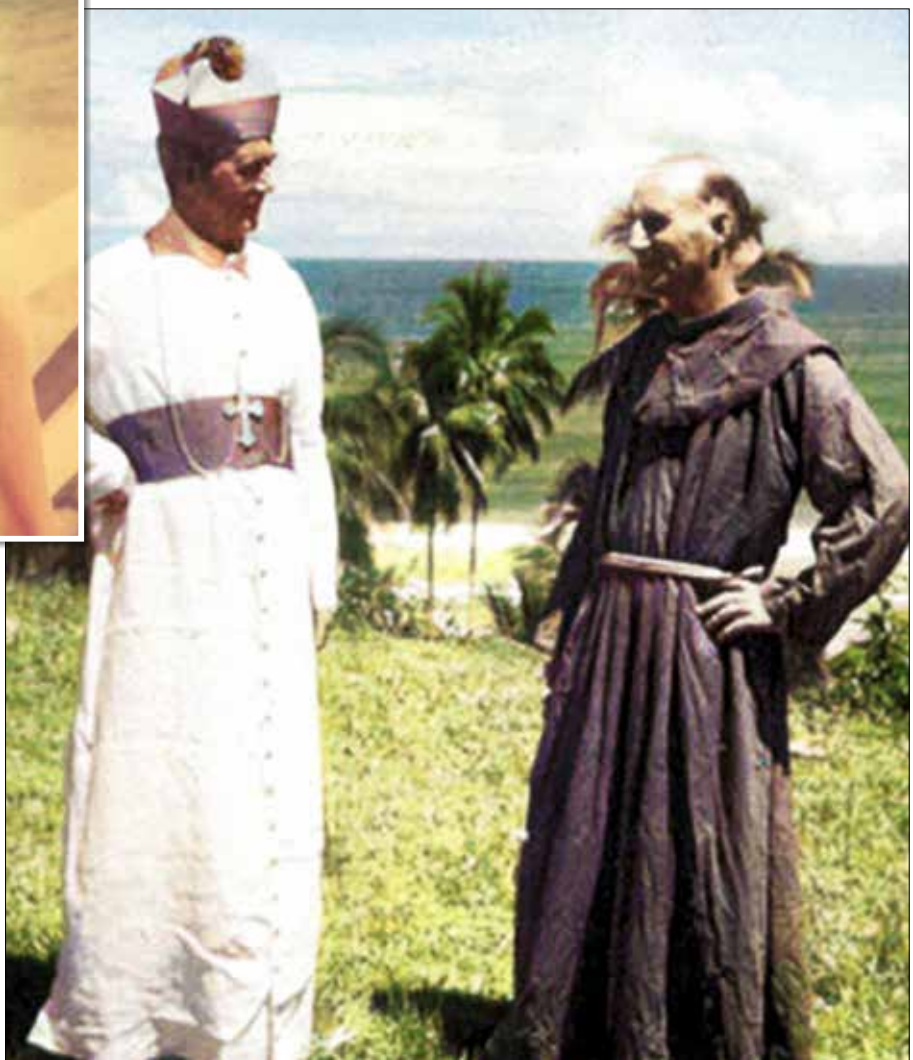
I was six months overdue for leave when I left Ambunti to head south, but there was not a lot of money in my bank account. Almost a quarter of my leave cheque had gone to Tang Mow and Burns Philp to pay outstanding accounts.

Now I had to survive—live and play—for eight months at Sydney prices and, to add to my woes, the used car I bought had a cracked cylinder head needing immediate repair. Fortunately, though, I had found the lady who was to become my wife and she applied some financial acumen to my situation.

Pamela and I had flown in the same Sandringham flying boat from Sydney's Rose Bay to Lord Howe Island. We did not know each other nor meet during the noisy, three-hour flight. We were to meet for the first time a day later, at the weekly dance in the local community hall, then at the beach the following day, and then every day thereafter for the next two weeks.

In the beginning it was not hard to find Pam, especially if you were downwind. Like other young ladies of that era, she was bent on obtaining a suntan and had sought a pharmacist's advice.

That misguided soul had suggested she rub mutton bird lotion into her skin before exposing it to the sun. The oil may have had dietary benefits if swallowed, but it did not produce a tan. Furthermore, it had a foetid, fishy smell guaranteed to repel potential suitors and other beasts.



TOP: Sandringham flying boat prior to landing on lagoon, Lord Howe Island. Mount Lidgbird and Mount Gower in the background

LEFT: Pamela at Lord Howe Island, 1957 *(Bill Brown)*

RIGHT: Bishop Ignatius Doggett OFM and Father Dom OFM *(Rob Parer)*

The weeks and months passed and in May it was time to think about returning to the Territory.

I wanted to determine where my next posting would be but also needed to stay below the radar. I didn't want to give Headquarters any ideas about transferring me to another District. So I mailed a short note to the District Officer in Wewak advising of my impending return and saying I would be returning to Sydney to be married twelve months into the term.

The reply arrived in Sydney as a telegram: 'Proceed Wewak. Final posting indefinite probably Ambunti then Maprik. Regards Tom Ellis'

By the time I arrived in Wewak, ten days later, the plans had changed. I would be relieving as acting Assistant District Officer at Aitape for three months, then Maprik, then Ambunti and finally Wewak, from where I could fly south to be married if my plans had not changed.

Ellis's parting remark, before I left for Aitape, was rather typical: 'Get in there for three months, clean the place up and get out before they kill you!' He knew full well, that nobody could make enduring changes if the previous incumbent was returning to pick up the reins after three months away on leave.

Not much had changed at Aitape in the eighteen months since I had last been stationed there, but the territorial jousting between Father Superior Denis Dobson and the former Prefect Apostolic, now Bishop Ignatius Doggett, as to who controlled and directed the friars, seemed to have ceased.

Perhaps I had seen the last of it at the Bishop's ordination that Father Ivo Reuter had flown me from Ambunti to attend. My mind kept returning to that event. It was the luncheon that stuck in my mind. Halfway through the meal the newly-ordained Bishop had left the table and returned with a skull cap embroidered with green mountain firs and red deer and with the Austrian resort of Innsbruk's name spelt out in black

Calling for silence, he placed the zucchetto-like cap upon my head, announcing, amongst much laughter, that he was appointing me a cadet cardinal and henceforth my Black Hearted Presbyterian post nominal, BHP, would be discontinued.

We were seated at a table at one end of the long front verandah, which stretched the entire width of the very wide house. The Bishop at one end, the Superior at the other, with fifteen or more priests, brothers, lay workers and invitees seated on either side.

At the conclusion, the Bishop thanked everyone for attending and said: 'We will have coffee up the other end.'

'My Lord, I would prefer to drink it,' riposted the Superior Denis Dobson, at which there was a sudden muted silence.

Geoffrey Burfoot, the ADO I was relieving, was already on leave. It was not only the Superior who referred to him as 'the Boy Bastard'. There were many complaints that he had destroyed the community's spirit of co-operation amidst reflections on how they had all been involved in my attempts to bridge the Raihu River, and how, when a ship arrived, Administration, Mission and the Parers had all participated in its unloading no matter what the difficulties.

They were fond reminiscences but, upon Burfoot's return from leave, there would be

worse to come. He closed all the ramshackle bridges without warning during his next term at vast inconvenience to the area. True, those bridges were rickety and dangerous, but vital to move copra from Tepier Plantation to Aitape beach and to the Franciscans' supply line to Malol and Sissano in the north.

I don't remember exactly when it happened, or who was with me at the time, but there was another unrelated incident while I was back at Aitape.

We received a message through the mission that an aircraft had made a forced landing on the beach at Malol. I took the station Land Rover and drove over Aitape Hill as fast as the track would allow, speeding past Tepier Plantation and to the end of the road at the Yalingi River.

Gibbes Sepik Airways pilot Roy Shaw and his Norseman were on the beach a few miles further on.

'The cause of the Norseman coming down at Malol was that Roy Shaw had noticed that the indicator on the oil pressure gauge had plummeted,' Rob Parer said later. 'Most pilots would have tried to get back to Aitape, but not super cautious Roy.'

Parer remembered Shaw saying: 'There are old pilots and there are bold pilots but there are not many old, bold pilots. I don't want to be the best pilot, only the oldest.'

Forty-three-year-old Shaw had every reason to be cautious in his golden years. He had joined the RAAF at twenty-seven, had flown two hazardous tours of operations in Lockheed Hudson and Martin Baltimore bombers with 459 Squadron against enemy shipping targets in the Mediterranean and against land-based targets in Greece and Crete.

He had been promoted to Squadron Leader and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in January 1944.

Good fortune had continued in his postwar years. As a pilot with Gibbes Sepik Airways, he had walked away from a crash on his first flight to Telefomin. He was being checked out by Robin Grey when the Norseman hit a soft spot on touchdown and turned over.

The date was inauspicious—Friday, 13 November 1953, and three days after the massacre in which kiaps, Szarka and Harris, and Constables Buritori and Purari were butchered.

On 23 June 1954, Shaw's ticket in the Queensland Golden Casket Lottery won the first prize of six thousand pounds (more than a quarter of a million dollars today).

The landing at Malol was another piece of good luck. While the beach was too soft and steeply sloped to the sea and unsuitable for an aircraft to take-off, there was a piece of solid ground across the small lagoon behind the beach.

Shaw examined it and specified the clearing that was required and local leader Brere Awol and his people were organised to manhandle the aircraft from the beach to the edge of the lagoon, where they loaded it by placing the wheels on small canoes.

Pushing those canoes carefully across the shoulder-deep lagoon was simple until we encountered Shaw on the other side. He was furious. He had not been consulted. We had risked dunking his aircraft, engine first, into the saltwater lagoon. He was still fuming when he flew off into the sky and did not talk to me for a long time after the event.

Around this time I sent Cadet Patrol Officer Michael O'Connor, who had transferred

to Aitape after an initial three months at Lumi, on his first solo patrol. If he observed my instructions to make a leisurely census patrol of the East Coast and Inland Census Divisions, it would still test him, and he would not return until after I had departed for Maprik.

I did not see his patrol report but the hierarchy was eloquent in their praise. ADO Geoff Burfoot wrote O'Connor was 'to be commended on first solo patrol—an informative well-written report.' DO Wewak Tom Ellis congratulated him 'on the way he carried out the patrol and on his report', and Tom Aitchison at Headquarters noted the 'remarkable maturity in his appreciation of the attitudes of people.'

Burfoot returned from leave on 11 August and the quick handover I wanted occurred allowing me to take over at Maprik at the end of the month.

There was nothing to clean up, my predecessors Kaad and Carey being dedicated, hard-working officers. Even so, Maprik was no sinecure. It had one established Local Government Council and two more on the horizon; two Patrol Posts; two Agricultural Stations; and four missionary groups, Roman Catholic Society of the Divine Word, Seventh Day Adventist, South Seas Evangelical Mission and Assemblies of God.

It also had the densest population (over 78,000 people) in the lowlands of mainland New Guinea, and was beset by constant tribal battles with armed warriors fighting over land.

Kaad, transferred to Maprik in early 1956, had moved into the seriously dilapidated house that had been constructed for Bob (RR) Cole by the Army in 1945. Kaad organised the design, approval and construction of a new residence but, as he was transferred to Wewak before its completion, he never got to live in it.

Arthur and Jean Carey were the first occupants of that beautiful house, sitting high on the hill above the Screw (Amagu) River, with a view straight down Maprik airstrip. They moved in just a few months before I arrived to relieve them, in August 1958.

The house was far too big for me. I used one of the three bedrooms, spent some of my time in the lounge/dining room, and virtually lived in the huge breezeway that had been added to the standard M-type design, to separate it from the added guest wing

The house originally built by the Army for Bob Cole in 1945 had deteriorated, the green, freshly-cut, unseasoned timber had twisted and turned. But it was still habitable and was occupied by the new Sub-District clerk, Bob Laybutt, and his wife, Marise.

Having spent their first term at Daru in the Western District, they were delighted to be at Maprik, but were overawed by the house with its wide sweeping verandahs and the cement obelisk at the front steps with its copper plate dedication:

In appreciation of the gallant services
Rendered by the natives of New Guinea to
17th Aus. Inf. Bde. In operations against
the Japs in 1945.

Another innovation turned out to be a disaster. Fred Kaad's pride and joy, large fish ponds, built with high earthen walls near the river, had been swept away by floods. The tilapia fingerlings, foisted on him by some technocrat, had flushed into the river system and washed into the Sepik where they multiplied dramatically and changed the environment forever.

One of Dr John (JT) Gunther's final initiatives before leaving his role as Director of Health to become Assistant Administrator had been to recruit a highly qualified medico to create the Malaria Control Division in Port Moresby.

Dr Wally Peters—an English-born physician and biologist who had been working with the World Health Organisation in Nepal—decided Maprik was a more suitable base for his operation than Port Moresby and had laboratory and houses built in a flash.

A swimming pool alongside a house was an unusual feature in the 1950s, and Peters paid for that himself. Nobody but an Englishman would have built a pool without drainage, it was filled by rainwater from the roof, but Peters was determined that his wife Ruth was going to enjoy the third year of their marriage with more comforts than during the first two years in Nepal.

I was not the only one to enjoy the Peters' hospitality, but the memory of Ruth's Swiss charm and her cooking—poolside meals of rosti and ravioli in the Zurich style—lingers with me to this day.

We had a galaxy of young Cadet Patrol Officers in the Sepik, all destined to be stars. At Maprik, Rod Donovan (vintage February 1957), having learnt the ropes under Arthur Carey, was operating on his own between June and September 1958, leading a forty-day patrol from Dreikikir to the Bumbita/Muhiang.

Peter Wright, of similar vintage, had already completed one patrol to the Wosera under the guidance of Patrol Officer Stan Pegg when I arrived at Maprik to take over in August. While I was approving Pegg and Wright's second patrol to the Wosera on 25 August, I decided it was time for me to give our newest arrival, CPO Harry Redmond (vintage February 1958) some patrol experience.

Although this would only be of short duration and in intermittent bursts to the villages in the Tamaui Census Division, which occupied the quadrant immediately to the south-east, it was good experience and exposure to the Abelam culture and to census and council tax collection.

We started on Thursday, 28 August with a day visit to the villages of Yeningo and Narango, then I was tied up in paperwork and courts. After two more one-day exercises, we eventually got away for an eight-day stretch on 9 September. Redmond, who compiled the report, noted 'the reception to the patrol was good … in some cases there was a holiday atmosphere prevalent suggesting we were welcomed as a diversion to the regularity of their lives.'

I compensated a little for the shortness of that patrol by instructing CPO Peter Wright to proceed on patrol to the Maprik Census Division. 'Take all possible steps to find out how and what the people are thinking,' I wrote on 30 October, 'visit each and every hamlet, visit subsistence and economic gardens and record details, and submit a detailed report and map.'

By the time Peter Wright completed that patrol on 14 January 1959, I had left Maprik and had been at Ambunti for more than a month. Its lethargic climate and atmosphere had not changed. Morning mists on the river, and the river itself, contributed to the humidity, but the ADO's house on the top of the spur was still a special place even though it was exposed to the sun all day and searing hot inside.

Even on Sundays, the chorus of the birds in the gulley below the bedroom—seemingly there were millions of them—woke me at dawn. It was time to enjoy the house, and an early-morning cup of coffee enhanced the view of the river; infrequently heightened by the appearance of a floating island drifting downstream or a pig or a cassowary swimming across to the other side.

Normally, later in the day on Sundays, I escaped from the house down the spur to the airstrip and the river and joined the anglers—men and women—on the bank. It was the place to catch up on station gossip, learn some bawdy jokes but, for me, not the place to catch fish.

I was using live bait, worms and grasshoppers. The police anglers moulded globules of Sunlight soap onto their hooks and caught fish. I did not!

Early in January 1959, Roger (RM) Claridge, Vince (EV) Smith, Chris (CJT) Normoyle, Dave (AD) Steven and I were on the list of twenty-five Patrol Officers promoted to Assistant District Officer Grade 1. We had nudged our way ahead of seven others of our ASOPA intake and leapfrogged a handful more from earlier intakes.

Now confirmed as permanent ADOs, never again would we revert to a PO's salary when we were transferred or proceeded on leave.

Kiaps living on remote outstations that were fortunate enough to have an airstrip had a special relationship with aircraft pilots. They would deliver the essentials of life: mail, meat and veg, lighting kerosene and booze. And they occasionally took pregnant wives to the main centres for medical checkups and to give birth.

On the flip side, kiaps provided pilots with the weather and airstrip reports, the occasional overnight bed and, less frequently, we recovered them from mishap.

Owner-operators like Bobby Gibbes of Gibbes Sepik Airways and Dave Robinson of Madang Air Services were held in special regard. So when Robinson overturned his Cessna and destroyed a complete wing while landing on the newly constructed Yellow River strip, it was axiomatic that we would be involved.

The new wing was delivered from Madang to Ambunti by a coastal vessel, packaged in an immensely-heavy wooden box. Our job was to convey the box up the Sepik River to the Yellow River junction by boat then have the wing carried overland through the jungle river to the strip. The overriding instruction was precise: the box must not be opened. If it was the insurance on the contents would be void.

I gave another of the stars, CPO Ross (RR) Allan (vintage June 1958), the task of delivering the wing to its destination. I watched the box and its contents loaded on to the roof of *Onyx*, the station workboat. It was a difficult process because of its bulk and weight. Then I waved goodbye as the team set off on the three-day, 250-kilometre run upstream.

Seven days later, Allan called me on the radio to report that they had carried the box along the narrow winding track, clearing obstructions and cutting down trees as they went. But now the box was stuck in the jungle.

Even with all the local people helping his crew of three police constables, boats crew and labourers from Ambunti, the box could not be moved in any direction. The only solution was to take the wing out of the box, but he would not do this without my approval.

TOP: Unloading a ship at Aitape through a light surf on one of Parer's canoes *(Rob Parer)*

LEFT: Bill Brown, Ambunti, 1959 *(Arthur Marks)*

RIGHT: The ADO's house at Maprik, organised by Fred Kaad, 1958 *(Bill Brown)*

SECOND RIGHT: Looking from new ADO's house at Maprik towards the airstrip, 1957

BOTTOM LEFT: Squadron Leader Roy Shaw *(Australian War Memorial)*

BOTTOM RIGHT: Flying Officer Tom Ellis *(Australian War Memorial)*

It took me a few minutes to decide to ignore the instructions about insurance and the lightweight wing was on its way to its final destination, which it reached unscathed.

On 12 May 1958, four days after I had moved into Wewak from Ambunti, I was hanging around the District Office on top of Wewak Hill, waiting to see DO Tom Ellis, as was my kiap colleague, Robin Calcutt.

Eventually deciding we were wasting our time, we headed downtown to the Sub-District Office. As ADO in charge of the Wewak Sub-District, I had taken possession of the Sub-District Office Land Rover and was driving it.

I don't know why we decided to drop into the Sepik Club before going down the hill. Maybe it was for a cup of coffee, maybe it was for a hair of the dog or maybe it was just to look out over Burns Philp's MV *Malekula*, loading and unloading by lighter to the beach.

Irrespective of our reason, the club was empty except for the manager behind the bar and the captain of MV *Busama,* Mike Greggor, standing on the verandah looking out over the bay below.

We had barely joined Greggor outside when there was a flash of light—a starburst—on his vessel followed by a massive cloud of smoke and human bodies soaring vertically into the air, one visibly white, the others not so clear. As the bodies fell into the sea, the sound wave, an almighty boom, reached us.

I wasted a few moments unsuccessfully trying to call in an emergency by telephone, then drove down the hill to the foreshore. The surface of the sea was alight with patches of burning oil, even wavelets breaking on the shore were aflame.

Blue Hannon, who ran the Administration transport pool, stripped to his briefs, was in the water swimming freestyle between flames looking for survivors while, further out, Cadet Edwards from *Malekula* had abandoned his other tasks and was crisscrossing the waves in the ship's pinnace pulling bodies aboard.

Tom Ellis and District Agricultural Officer Jack (MJB) White were next to arrive, chugging around in an Administration workboat, but the initial drama was over. There were no more bodies floating on the surface, a crowd of spectators spreading along the narrow, coastal strip while the *Busama* was a flaming, smoking inferno wracked by spasmodic explosions.

The vessel had arrived at about 9.00 am and anchored close to shore to allow her cargo—170 drums of dieseline, 200 drums of avgas and 450 drums of petrol in drums to be swum ashore as Wewak did not have a wharf.

The drums, chained together in groups of three, were being lifted from the ship's hold by crane. Some were uncoupled on the deck and rolled overboard to be swum ashore and others were uncoupled by swimmers in the sea. Unloading had just begun when the explosion, a lethal cocktail of almost 164,000 litres of inflammable fuel, occurred.

Next morning the assessment and evaluation began. At least fourteen people had been killed by the explosion: thirteen bodies had been recovered from the sea and Chief Engineer George Riik's body was found floating in the shallows near the shore. A further eleven individuals, including the local stevedore Jon Stuart, were in hospital with serious injuries—some unlikely to survive.

How many people were missing was unknown: no one knew how many of the crew had gone ashore and no one knew how many local people had been employed as casual stevedores and swimmers.

I was appointed ex-officio undertaker. Wewak did not have a morgue or any storage facilities and so I arranged for the bodies that were recovered to be buried. I predicted there would be more in a few days' time when those that were submerged began to float to the surface.

Discussion turned to the next moves. District Commissioner Bob (RR) Cole thought the *Busama* should be left to burn out where she lay at anchor but acting District Officer Tom Ellis demurred.

He had a phobia about wrecks obstructing harbours and wanted the *Busama* moved from where she lay, before she sank. As a Beaufighter pilot in the Pacific War, he had deliberately sunk enemy ships in harbour and knew what mayhem it caused.

Some idea of Ellis's fearlessness and determination is indicated by the citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross he was awarded in March 1945:

> He had relieved another aircraft which was covering survivors in a dinghy, and under intense enemy fire remained as cover while rescue was effected by Catalina. During this time his starboard engine completely failed …
>
> He made two strafing runs on active enemy anti-aircraft positions and deliberately drew shore fire which was harassing the rescue operation. He remained until the Catalina and the survivors had departed then set course for base, covering the entire 400 miles (640 kilometres) on his port motor.

Early on Thursday morning, Ellis and I went out to the *Busama* to have a look around. We had dressed in old clobber and were wearing heavy boots and planned to climb aboard if we could do so, and if it seemed safe.

The vessel was lying into the breeze held by a single bow anchor. The deck above the forecastle looked cool and unscathed but it was too high for us to reach. We managed to clamber up over the bulwarks, near where the main deck met the forecastle but we did not stay there for long; the metal deck was searing the soles of our boots.

It wasn't as hot on the bow. The anchor winch was undamaged and, if we were going to move the vessel, we had to haul up the anchor and its heavy chain. But the only way of doing that was to use a winch that had to be turned by hand. It did not take long for the two of us to realise that the task was beyond us.

So we moved to the next option and let the anchor chain run free, hoping it was not coupled to the vessel and would disappear into the sea. That was wishful thinking, the anchor chain was firmly affixed to something somewhere in the vessel's red hot bowels.

We were back to winding the winch by hand, attempting to recover all that chain, until Goya Henry on the *Thetis*—our transport and our escape route—asked we were doing.

Ellis's reply was terse:

> Use your [expletive] eyes. We are travelling across Wewak Harbour powered by [expletive] winch and chain. Do something useful; throw across an [expletive] hacksaw!

Maybe it took thirty minutes to cut through the anchor chain and then we were drifting in the breeze. Goya Henry decided to assist and push the *Busama* along with a thrust from the *Thetis*. His one and only attempt flattened Ellis and me to the deck and we urged him to desist.

We now a new set of problems as the ship turned in the breeze. We no longer had a cool refuge; the fire and smoke began to move towards the bow. Newly-exposed material started to burn and gas bottles exploded, opening flat like sheets of paper, as we raced across the red-hot deck towards the stern.

Our new refuge, the bridge, was higher, but not as cool as the bow. Fortunately, we had only a little more than 1,500 metres to drift before we could abandon ship and watch the *Busama* go firmly aground almost at full tide.

We left a function at the District Commissioner's that evening and returned to the *Busama*. The tide had receded, the ship had listed and was lying almost on its side. For some unbeknown reason Ellis wanted to pump the vessel out and had commandeered the town's portable fire pump despite the protests of its custodian, Sub-Inspector John Purcell.

The suction hose was long enough to reach the liquid slopping around in the hold, and the pump's petrol motor kicked over at first pull. But despite all our efforts, even with the petrol motor running at full bore, the pump would not suck and we abandoned the attempt.

We had just returned to the DC's function and were outside on the lawn when there was another almighty explosion and the sky glowed. The *Busama* had exploded for the last time. The fluid that we had being to trying to pump out was more lethal than we had known.

In those days, there was nothing projecting into the sea along that long narrow stretch of beach, but I understand that in more recent times the Wewak wharf was built there. The *Busama* skeleton still rests there, where Ellis and I beached her unaided more than half a century ago.

Ralph (RG) Ormsby, District Officer-Magistrate flew from Madang to commence the coronial inquiry. At 205 kilograms, he was a man of gargantuan proportions except for head, hands and feet.

To my concern, he seemed determined to have some fun at my expense by threatening to impede my departure to get married. It did not come to that and the inquiry was still continuing when on the 29 May 1959, I flew out of Wewak bound for Sydney and my wedding.

16: Telefomin, West Sepik Province

The murders of kiaps and police pose problems in the field and for Pax Australiana

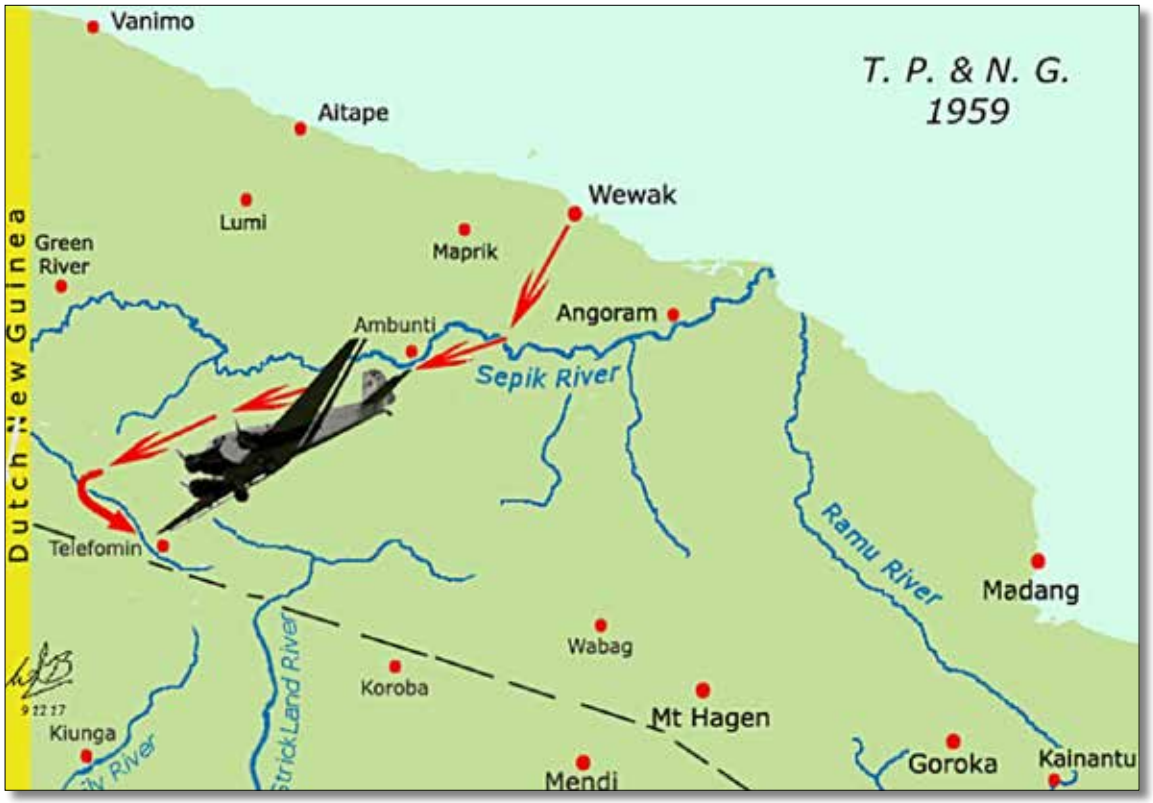
THE CHRONICLE CONTINUES—Pamela and I had been married for a little over a month and were still in honeymoon mode when we returned to the Territory in July 1959.

The luxury of the newish, Qantas super constellation service (Sydney-Port Moresby–Lae) added to the bliss, but reality soon re-asserted itself with our overnight stay at the Qantas transit lodge in Lae.

The next day we flew on to Wewak, again with Qantas but this time on the fortnightly Lae-Hollandia (now Jayapura) service, falsely glorified as an 'international flight'.

Unlike the normal Dakota, the wartime version of the Douglas DC3, which had a bench of canvas bucket-seats running the full length of each side of the cabin with the fuselage providing the backrest, our aircraft had real seats with armrests and they faced forwards, with two seats on either side of a central aisle. We even had a female cabin attendant—albeit of mature years.

Our final destination, Telefomin, was one of the most remote government outposts in the Territory, located almost in the centre of continental New Guinea and just sixty-six kilometres from where the border between Papua and New Guinea met the border of Dutch New Guinea.



I was in two minds about the whole affair and about the district administration service. Like many other kiaps, I was disenchanted by the way Anderson and MacGregor at Tapini and Nolen at Telefomin had been hounded out of the Administration. And it still rankled that I had been required to pay my fares to and from Australia when I took leave to get married, even though I had previously deferred leave on three occasions at the Administration's behest. As a result, I'd been on leave only three times in those first eight years and had missed out completely on one return fare.

I knew we would be staying a few nights with District Commissioner Bob Cole and his wife, Kay, in Wewak before flying on to Telefomin, but I had not anticipated Kay would be at the airport to greet us.

Kay had experienced a near marital meltdown when travelling to the Territory as a bride in 1947, having spent six lonely weeks in Rabaul while waiting for a ship to transport her to join Bob in Bougainville—and she was determined that no one else would face such an introduction. She took each new bride and bride-to-be under her wing as they arrived and cared for them like a mother hen.

I had no role in that initiation process. I was called upon only when it was time to visit Wewak's two general stores—Burns Philp and Tang Mow—after I was given the job of ordering six weeks' supply of groceries and items we would using around our new home in Telefomin.

Pamela knew what food should look like on the plate and how the table should be laid, but it was her mother who had done the food shopping and the cooking and run the family kitchen.

Fortunately, Tang Mow's daughter-in-law—Mil's wife, Dorothy—knew all there was to know about shopping and she was happy to assist me overspend—suggesting items I'd forgotten and goodies I'd not thought of. The Dorothy arranged for all our purchases to be delivered to the Gibbes' hanger at Boram just before our flight.

We flew out of Wewak on Monday, 27 July in a Junkers 52. It was an ugly-looking monster with corrugated metal sides, three radial engines each with a three-bladed propeller. One engine projected from the nose, the others mounted on each wing.

With their origins in the 1930s, the same type of aircraft had been used as civil airliners and in a wartime role as bombers and as launching pads for paratroopers. Gibbes had bought three secondhand in Sweden in 1955 and had them flown to New Guinea, piloting one himself. Twenty-five years earlier, Adolf Hitler had trundled around Germany in the same type of plane, but it was unlikely his aircraft had passengers sitting behind a huge stack of sawn timber that occupied most of the cabin floor—and his aircraft probably was equipped with a toilet.

The long box-like cabin was not pressurised so we would not be flying very high. Pamela and I took the only two seats in the cabin, bolted to the floor against the rear bulkhead. In the cockpit Dave Wills piloted and Archie Murdock was in the right-hand seat.

After take-off, we flew across the coastal range heading for the Sepik River, passing over Pagwi, then Ambunti, climbing slowly all the while towards the Central Ranges blurred by the distant haze.

Surprisingly, it was an almost cloudless day. We had been flying for almost two hours, the

north coast and Wewak now 275 kilometres behind us, when Mount Stolle (2,670 metres), the point where we had to report our position to air traffic control, came into view on the port side. Eighty kilometres to the west, inside Dutch New Guinea, the snow-covered peak of Mount Juliana thrust 4,750 metres into the sky.

It was time for pilot Wills to start the descent; first down to the gorge known as the Sepik Gap, and then in a descending curve to port, following up the tiny stream that transformed itself as it flowed downstream, morphing to become the mighty Sepik River.

A few minutes later, Telefomin airstrip came into view. A long grass swathe partially encircled by a heavily-timbered mountain range. The half dozen corrugated iron roofs contrasting sharply with thirty or so native material buildings.

It had not always been that way. It had taken five years and a massacre—the slaughter of Patrol Officer Gerry (GL) Szarka, Cadet Patrol Officer Geoff (GB) Harris, Constable Buritori and Constable Purari in November 1953—before those permanent buildings were constructed and the Telefomin region given sub-district status and administered by an Assistant District Officer.

Over just four years, four Wewak-based District Commissioners had been responsible for the Sepik—Horrie (RL, later Sir Horace) Niall, 'Reckless' Reg (JR) Rigby, John (JJ) Murphy and Allan (AT) Timperley. Prior to May 1951, District Commissioners were known as District Officers.

In the same four-year period, acting Assistant District Officer Des (DC) Clifton-Bassett, Patrol Officer Geoffrey (GB) Gilbert, Patrol Officer Harry (HW) West, Patrol Officer Laurie (LJ) Doolan, Patrol Officer Laurie (LT) Nolen and Patrol Officer Gerry (GL) Szarka were successively posted to Telefomin as officers-in-charge.

Those officers-in-charge generally had assistants but for periods served alone. Patrol Officer Buck (JW) Rogers served with Clifton-Bassett; Cadet Patrol Officer Harry (H) Thomas served with Gilbert, and briefly with West; Cadet Patrol Officer Chris (CG) Day served with both West and Doolan; Cadet Patrol Officers John (JA) Gauci, Ken (KJ) Graham and Dick (RB) Lulofs served for brief periods with Nolen; and Harris served with both Nolen and Szarka.

It had all begun on 27 April 1948, when World War II fighter ace, Bobby Gibbes, and a civil aviation airport inspector named Glindeman made a reconnaissance flight over Telefomin to ascertain the condition of an emergency landing strip constructed in 1944. Water was flowing across the centre of the strip in a shallow stream so Gibbes did not attempt to land.

Gibbes was flying one of his seven Auster aircraft, and the tiny machine with one propeller, a fabric covered fuselage, a cruising speed of 160 kph and a ceiling of 11,000 feet (3,400 metres) was struggling with the altitude. It was an aircraft barely adequate for the task and the deficiencies of its equipment made the flight even more hazardous.

The Austers were not equipped with radio or any radio aids; there were no inflight weather reports, no radio compass and no way to make a Mayday call if the engine stopped mid-flight.

Two months later, at the end of June 1948, Gibbes returned to Telefomin, again flying an Auster and with Glindeman and Assistant Director Ivan Champion as passengers. On that occasion, Champion was standing in for ADO George Greathead who had been tasked to escort Glindeman but had been diverted to the Gawanga when a fracas had erupted there. Glindeman's

task was to make a detailed ground investigation of the airstrip, prior to the establishment of the new patrol post.

Champion sat next to the pilot with Glindeman crouched in the rear seat hemmed in by stores, tools and a tent. That tent, erected soon after Gibbes's hurriedly departed back to Wewak to escape closing weather, was their accommodation for the next two days.

As a result of that brief stay, and having walked through the Telefomin valley twenty-four years earlier on the Fly–Sepik patrol with Assistant Resident Magistrate Charles Karius, Champion considered himself to be the only expert on the Telefomin area and took a proprietary view, writing to the Administrator in April 1950:

> As I am the only officer who has a detailed knowledge of the region, not much importance should be attached to the opinions of District Officers who play flying visits to Telefomin. Some District Officers in New Guinea do not seem to be in favour of extending Government influence before full consolidation is effected in areas nearer to Headquarters, and thus we have many areas still labelled uncontrolled. I am not agreement with this view.

Four years later, Sydney Elliott-Smith, another prewar Papuan Officer, would express a contrary view: 'Instructions to the Assistant District Officer, Telefomin, are clear and without dual meaning—Telefomin, Eliptamin and Feramin are to be completely consolidated before moving further afield.' (In this case, though, the circumstances were somewhat different as Elliott-Smith had replaced Timperley as District Commissioner a few months after the 1953 massacre.)

On Thursday, 21 October 1948, Gibbes made another flight to Telefomin, this time with acting Assistant District Officer Des Clifton-Basset sitting next to him and Corporal Tokoruru of the New Guinea Police Force crouched on the back seat amongst personal effects, stores and another tent. Clifton-Bassett and Tokoruru had come to stay. They did not know for how long.

Five days and half-a-dozen flights later—when Patrol Officer Buck (JW) Rodgers, a dozen more police and the rest of the stores had been flown in—Clifton-Bassett commented: 'the movement was smooth and efficient and a very good job done by the pilots concerned.'

The next few weeks were difficult for the newcomers cramped together in hot canvas tents. They needed to buy bush materials to build more substantial housing and they needed to buy food. The problem was that they could only communicate with the local people by using signs and gestures. Only one or two of the Telefomin men had picked up a few words of Tok Pisin from the Hagen–Sepik Patrol in 1936 and from Mick Leahy and his team in 1944.

The problem was solved when Suni arrived, flown in direct from Goroka on 10 December. He was assigned to be the interpreter for six months. He was to stay for twenty-five years. Originally from Olsobip to the south of Telefomin, Suni had been adopted by an Eliptamin valley family as a child and left Telefomin as a youthful camp follower, attaching himself to John Black and accompanying him to Wabag at the conclusion of the Hagen–Sepik patrol.

Suni had returned to Telefomin in 1944, dropped in by glider, to 'turn the talk' for Mick Leahy's team and had left with them when they departed in 1945.

Suni's arrival marked a new era. Communication was established. The people brought taro and other native foods to the camp to barter and they gathered building materials from the

bush and brought them to trade as well. Construction of the station buildings began in earnest and 29 houses were built in the next eight months.

Officers-in-charge did not spend a long time at Telefomin. Clifton-Bassett was there for just more than a year when he contracted scrub typhus, being relieved by Rogers when he was hospitalised for ten weeks.

Gilbert followed Clifton-Bassett, filling in for three months until Harry West arrived. West served a year, did some heavy patrolling and was relieved by Laurie Doolan. Doolan arrived with wife and child and remained for five months. Robin Doolan was the first expatriate woman to live at Telefomin, but she was not new to outposts, having previously lived at Bogia and Dreikikir.

The pattern changed with the arrival of Nolen in December 1951. He had served at Telefomin for twenty-two months—almost twice as long as any of his predecessors—when he was transferred, relieved by Szarka in September 1953. Nolen was already more than a month overdue for leave when, in July, he was advised by the District Commissioner that, 'according to Headquarters the staff position is rather grim, and applications for leave will not be approved until early next year.'

Unlike Clifton-Bassett and West, who had years of experience, both having served in ANGAU before becoming Patrol Officers or Doolan, who had joined the Administration in 1946 and served as officer-in-charge at Bogia and Dreikikir, Nolen was a new boy and a novice. He had joined the Administration in March 1949 and had only completed his cadetship in sophisticated Rabaul and Kokopo. When he returned from his first leave, he was posted to the Sepik District and to Telefomin.

Despite his lack of experience, Nolen led patrols far and wide from Telefomin. He followed the route of West's earlier expeditions to the Mianmin and the Oksapmin but set his own direction when he ventured across the Hindenberg Range into Papua, visiting the previously uncontacted Wokeimin and Fegolmin groups.

Nolen took two more junior officers with him on the first patrol. Cadet Patrol Officer Lulofs accompanied him on the Feramin–Rapmin segment and Cadet Patrol Officer Gauci went with him to the Eliptamin. With Nolen's lack of bush experience, it must have been a case of the blind leading the blind. Those two CPOs had only been in the Territory for eight months and he was showing them the ropes.

Timperley had just commenced his first assignment as District Commissioner when he chided Nolen for regurgitating a suggestion contained in one of West's 1950 patrol reports. Nolen, like West, reported that 'the natives in the area around Telefomin have reached a standard where the law can and should be enforced.'

Timperley's sarcastic comment read by all and sundry said: 'Nolen has been instructed to exercise patience in dealing with the people. Telefomin has been gazetted a prison district, but that is no reason for the gaol to be full.'

It was picked up and endorsed at Headquarters by Assistant Director Ian (IFG) Downs. Downs' comment was a put-down that would be read by all and sundry at headquarters, by the staff at Wewak and by the cadets serving under Nolen at Telefomin.

Known more for irascibility than gentleness in the field, Downs wrote in Director JK McCarthy's name:

> Four years is definitely not enough, particularly when the quality and experience of the staff concerned does not compare with that used to open up others areas. It should take at least ten years to reach the standard that Nolen has in mind … Mr Nolen was appointed a Cadet Patrol Officer in 1949 and has served in Rabaul and Kokopo only, then gone on leave, before being posted to Wewak. It would appear that he has as much to learn about his work as the natives of Telefomin have to learn about the Administration.

Both Downs and Timperley had completely ignored the vital section of Nolen's report that said:

> ... it was impossible to find out the reason for the planning of an attack on the station by the Eliptamin and the Telefomin natives. The Eliptamin natives claim that it was planned by the natives of Telefomin while the latter say they know nothing of such plan.

Timperley went on to ignore two further subsequent reports of threats of attack. He pooh-poohed Colin Simpson's verbal report of a threat and of a disturbed night with barricaded doors when he picked the author up from Wewak airport after an eight-day visit to Telefomin in August 1952. And he ignored Nolen's reiteration of that event in the August monthly report:

> Heard rumours of that some of the villages near the station intended attacking the station. Headman and other were questioned but all dismissed the suggestion as absurd. Some suggested the stories originated from the bragging of the young men who are now denied the pleasure and glory of tribal fighting.

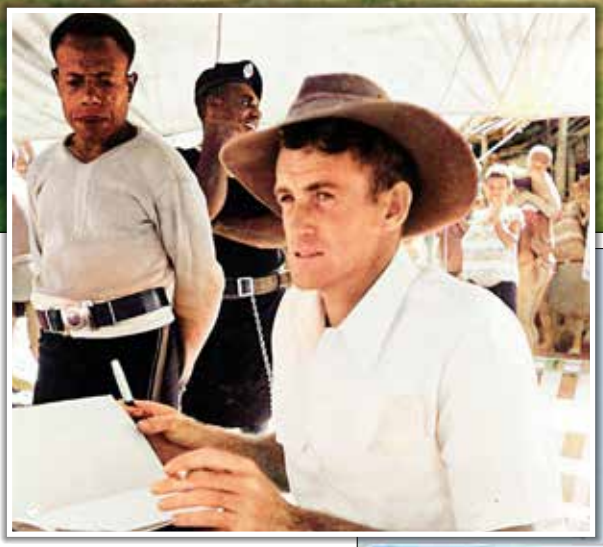
Nolen typed his report on 4 September 1954. Fourteen months later, on 6 November 1953, Patrol Officer Gerry (GL) Szarka, Cadet Patrol Officer Geoffrey (GB) Harris, Constable Buritori and Constable Purari were viciously slaughtered. Those orchestrated events took place in three different locations in the Eliptamin valley, each less than a day's walk from Telefomin government station.

In accordance with Szarka's instruction, Harris had set out on a routine census patrol of the eastern end of the Eliptamin on Friday 26 October. He completed the task and was about to return to Telefomin from Terapdavip village on 6 November when he was killed.

Even though Szarka was warned on Sunday, 28 October that patrols would be attacked, he apparently did not communicate that information to Harris and he set out himself for the north-western end of the Eliptamin valley on 3 November. He too was engaged on a routine census patrol and accompanied by three police constables. Szarka and Constable Buritori were killed at Uguntemtigin village (Misinmin No 1) and Constable Purari was killed at the adjacent village of Komdavip.

Purely by chance, a section of the long-held plan to eradicate all outsiders activated the previous day at a meeting at Ankavip village was derailed by two unrelated events. Baptist missionary, Norm Draper, waking bright and early on the day of the murder, had walked from the mission and crossed the airstrip to the government station to use the teleradio. An aircraft, a Norseman, had landed on the airstrip a little while later.

In accordance with the plan endorsed at Ankavip, the people living in the villages near



TOP: District Commissioner's residence, Wewak, 1950s *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Routine census, Ankavip, Telefomin, 1959. *(l-r)* Interpreter Suni, Constable Yaref (Wabag) and Bill Brown, wearing a DCA groundsman's hat *(Andrew Hoffman)*

RIGHT: Auster J5, VH-KLS, stablemate of the Gibbes fleet *(Australian Aircraft History Archives)*

BOTTOM: Gibbes Sepik Airway's Junker 52 at Telefomin *(Jim Fenton)*

Telefomin had visited the station earlier that morning, carrying bilums of root vegetables (taro) to allay any fears but after the two events they feared the plan had been uncovered so did not follow through on their other allocated tasks.

They did not kill the government station personnel. They did not kill Draper. And they did not place logs across the airstrip to prevent aircraft from landing in the future.

Missionary Draper was the only expatriate left at Telefomin, and was the only person remaining who knew how to operate the station's radio transmitter. The two messages he transmitted on the civil aviation network alerted the District Commissioner in Wewak. Those messages probably saved Telefomin station from annihilation, but they caused deep disquiet when they eventually reached Australia.

The first message, transmitted at around about 11.00 am on 6 November reported rumours that CPO Harris' patrol had been attacked and that he had been severely injured with tomahawk wounds to face and back. The second message said Harris had been killed.

Events moved quickly. ADO George (GRG) Wearne, Medical Assistant Rhys (LR) Healy, and nine police flew to Telefomin at DC Timperley's instruction. Village people carried CPO Harris' body into Telefomin that afternoon.

Timperely flew to Telefomin the next day and set out for Misinmin in the Eliptamin accompanied by thirty-two police, eighty carriers, ADO Wearne, Medical Assistant Healy, and PO Brian (BR) Corrigan who had been called in from Minj in the Western Highlands at Timperley's request.

The news of Harris' death had been reported in the Australian press and on radio by late on 7 November. Szarka's fate was unknown and his anguished parents in Sydney were demanding answers. In Canberra, senators and members of the opposition were hounding the minister, and the press were in full cry.

In the Territory, officials provided their version of the facts to Canberra, but made no mention of Nolen's earlier reports of rumoured attacks. These reports appear to have blurred, even deliberately distorted, some of the background facts.

The Administrator's Press Release of November 12, 1953 concluded with a regurgitation of an earlier explanation:

> The greatest care is taken in selecting and building up patrols which are to penetrate an uncontrolled area and establish a new post. Only experienced officers are used in this work. New and inexperienced officers are not posted to a new area until my responsible officers are satisfied that it is under control, and only then in company with experienced officers.

I happened to be one of the junior kiaps who knew from personal experience in the field that the statement was untrue. It was probably untrue when it was first mouthed by the minister in the Australian parliament in 1950 and it was certainly untrue when made in 1953. The subsequent briefing material provided by the Administration to Canberra contained some other dubious information:

> Szarka had three years' experience with the Administration previously at Manus and Madang and since March at Green River and Telefomin, Harris had one year's experience in Sepik … at Telefomin since March. … Harris' experience was sufficient to warrant his posting under Szarka. Geoffrey Harris was in a course of training which would ultimately enable him to

conduct solo patrols. At the time of his death, he had not reached this stage of his training … Telefomin is in the 'Restricted Area'.

In fact, Szarka had arrived at Telefomin on 8 September, 1953. He was killed two months later while conducting his first Telefomin patrol. His first term, as a cadet at Manus and Madang was neither an adequate grounding for either his role as OIC of a bush station like Telefomin nor for his supposed role of training Harris.

Harris, although inexperienced, knew a great deal more about the bush and bush patrolling, than Szarka. He had been stationed at Telefomin since 12 March 1953, had accompanied Nolen on a thirty-nine-day patrol to the uncontrolled and feared Mianmin in April-May 1953 and had led a brief solo patrol to the Feramin in July 'to [gain] experience in arranging and conducting a patrol'.

Harris was not the first Cadet Patrol Officer to lead a solo patrol at Telefomin. CPO John (JA) Gauci had been less than a year in the Territory when he led a six-day patrol to the Feramin in May 1952 and CPO Ken (KJ) Graham, who had come to the Territory with Gauci, led a patrol to Timakmin and Sepkialikin in February 1953. (Sepkialikin was near Misinmin, where Szarka was killed.)

Timperley located Patrol Officer Szarka's mutilated remains and Constable Buritori's body at Misinmin on 13 November. His radiogram advice, transmitted to Canberra on 14 November 1953, was stark, bleak, and horrifying:

> Located Szarka's remains in two latrine pits at site of Misinmin Rest House at eight o'clock Friday morning thirteenth. Body shockingly mutilated and apparently chopped into pieces with tomahawks. From first latrine pit recovered lower trunk right leg amputated at knee left leg at thigh also right leg and few bones.
>
> From second latrine recovered left foot and three pieces of flesh. Thorough search of scrub over wide area revealed no trace of body arms or head. Constable Buritori's body recovered at base of ridge near rest house identified by tattoo marks on left arm which had been amputated at wrist.
>
> Body on finding was being ravaged by dog and pig. Only portion of body remaining was chest which contained deep wound possibly by tomahawk. All other flesh removed from body possibly by dogs and pigs. Have carried both remains to Telefomin.

Australian prime minister, RG Menzies, made a rare broadcast to the nation on 18 November. Constable Purari's body was carried into Telefomin from Komdavip on 20 November.

The hunt was now on for the killers and it would continue for months. District Officer Ian (RI) Skinner came from Lae to stand in at Wewak while Timperley was absent at Telefomin. By mid-January fourteen other officers had undertaken duty in and around the area where the killings had occurred.

ADO Wearne, PO Nolen and CPO Barry (BA) Ryan were from other Sepik stations. Others came from further afield: ADO Corrigan from Minj and ADO Wally (WB) Giles from Madang. Patrol Officer Neil (RN) Desailly was on his way to ASOPA and Allan (AJ) Zweck, Bill (WW) Crellin and Frank (FD) Jones had just returned from the two-year Diploma Course at ASOPA.

On 29 January, Crellin, Zweck, Nolen and thirty-two police crossed the Mittag Range and

established a base camp at Terapdavip where Harris had been killed. Jones, with seventeen police, remained in charge at Telefomin.

A press release dated 9 April reported that ADOs Crellin, Jones, Wearne and Zweck and Patrol Officer Nolen had been commended for their role in the location and apprehension of 135 suspects. The statement would not have been of much comfort to Nolen. He knew he was under a cloud.

He had already been charged and reprimanded in February for 'disobeying an official instruction in that he had intimate relationships with a native female native, Binatang, during the time he was stationed at Telefomin' and he was also being blamed for two incidents that allegedly contributed to the attacks, even though they were not within his control.

The instruction that he had breached had been restated by Director McCarthy in February 1952:

> It is contrary to administration policy for officers to have sexual relations with native women, and that disciplinary action, with a view to dismissal from the service, will be taken against any officer so offending. ... I regret that the actions of a few have made the issue of this general warning necessary. … An officer who is guilty of either of these actions is unfit to remain in the Service.

The Administrator was less than phlegmatic about the reprimand, writing to the Minister:

> I am deeply concerned to think that the offence should have been treated as a minor one … It should have been dealt with … as a serious offence no matter what extenuating circumstances may have existed … I cannot accept 'lack of amenity and company' on an isolated station as a factor of mitigation. … I [have] issued instructions … that in all cases of this nature and under any circumstances the offence will be treated as a serious offence.

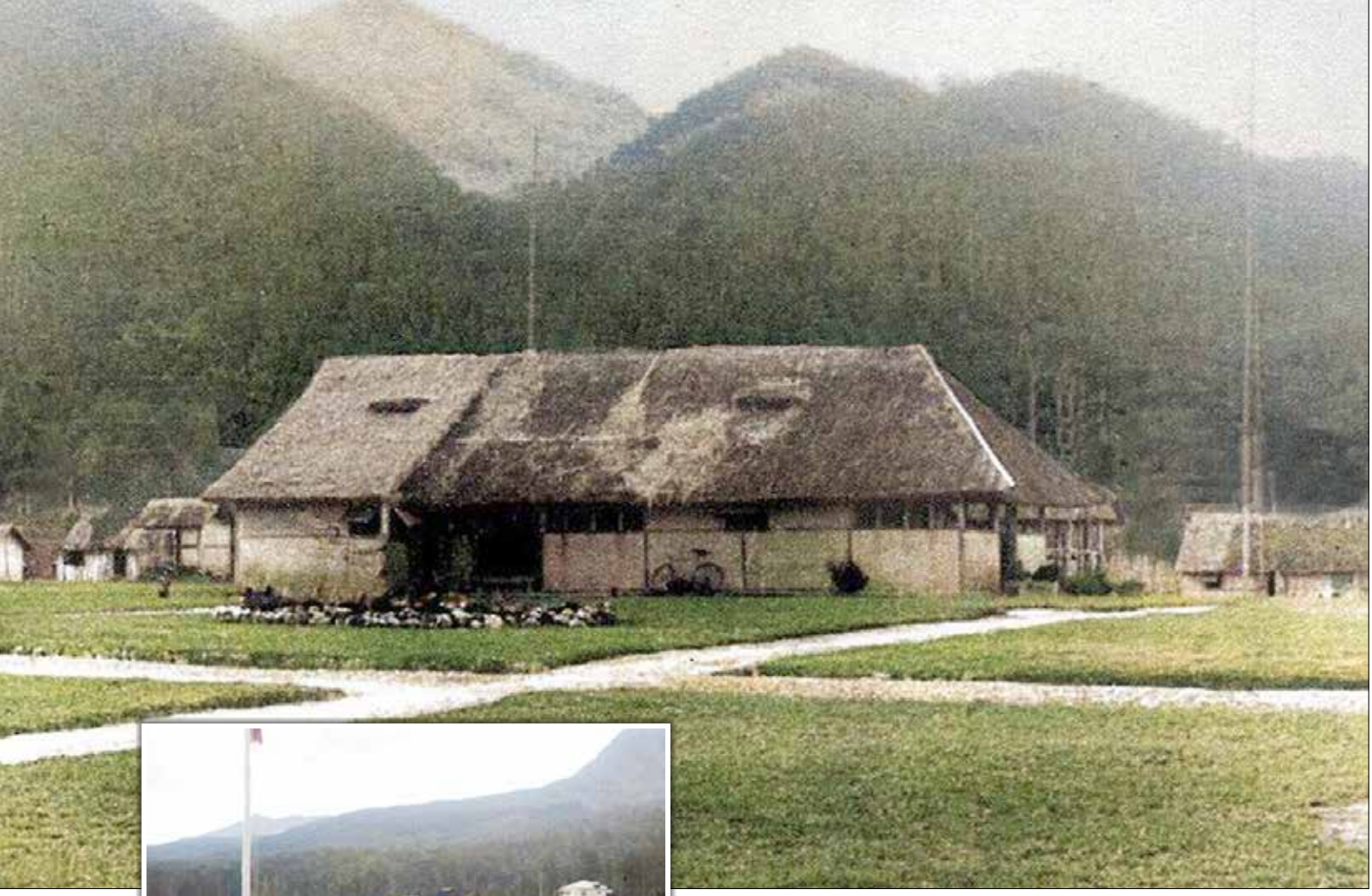
Nolen's career was almost over, blighted by his association with a Telefomin lady friend. After all the allegations against him had been explored, he was finally permitted to resign at the end of August and he and Binatang moved to the Western Highlands to set up home in Minj. It would not be much of a life, but at least they would be together and away from the self-serving viciousness of the top brass.

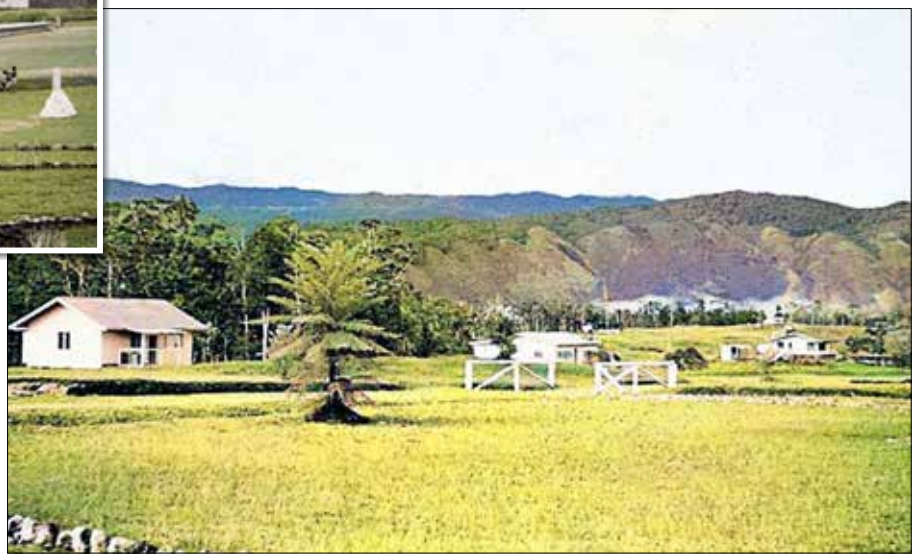
Sergeant Tokoruru's career was also trashed. He was dismissed from the force for striking a native with a stick a short time before the massacre. The incident occurred while Szarka was officer in charge but no action was taken at the time. DC Elliott-Smith recommended Tokoruru's dismissal after he had been charged and imprisoned for the offence when it was disclosed by the investigation into the attacks.

Tokoruru had served at Telefomin since he had flown in with Clifton Bassett on the very first day. He had been the senior non-commissioned officer responsible for the Telefomin police detachment for five years and had married locally. He had served the Administration for more than twenty years in war and peace. So much for loyalty and devoted service.

In June 1954, after Telefomin had been given sub-district status with Jones as ADO, DC Elliott-Smith reported that construction of the permanent material buildings had begun: 'residences, office, store and prison with roofing now going forward.'

The roofing material, corrugated galvanised iron, was used on the three new residences,





TOP: Buildings constructed from bush materials, Telefomin Government Station, 1952–53 (CPO Geoff Harris, killed at Telefomin, November 1953)

LEFT: Junkers 52 taxiing towards the office at Telefomin. The memorial plaque for the victims of the 1953 massacre in the foreground. In the background, on the other side of the airstrip, the Medical Assistant's house *(Bill Brown)*

RIGHT: The three houses on Main Street, Telefomin, 1959. The ADO's house with a red roof is furthest from camera *(John Tierney/Bill Brown)*

BOTTOM: On the left, the *kalabus* (gaol) within the barbed-wire enclosure, on the right, the barracks for the single police—all with thatched roofs *(Jim Fenton)*

the office and the store, but it was not used on the prison. That building, the *kalabus*, may have been re-fenced and enlarged but it had a thatched roof and plaited walls throughout my time in Telefomin.

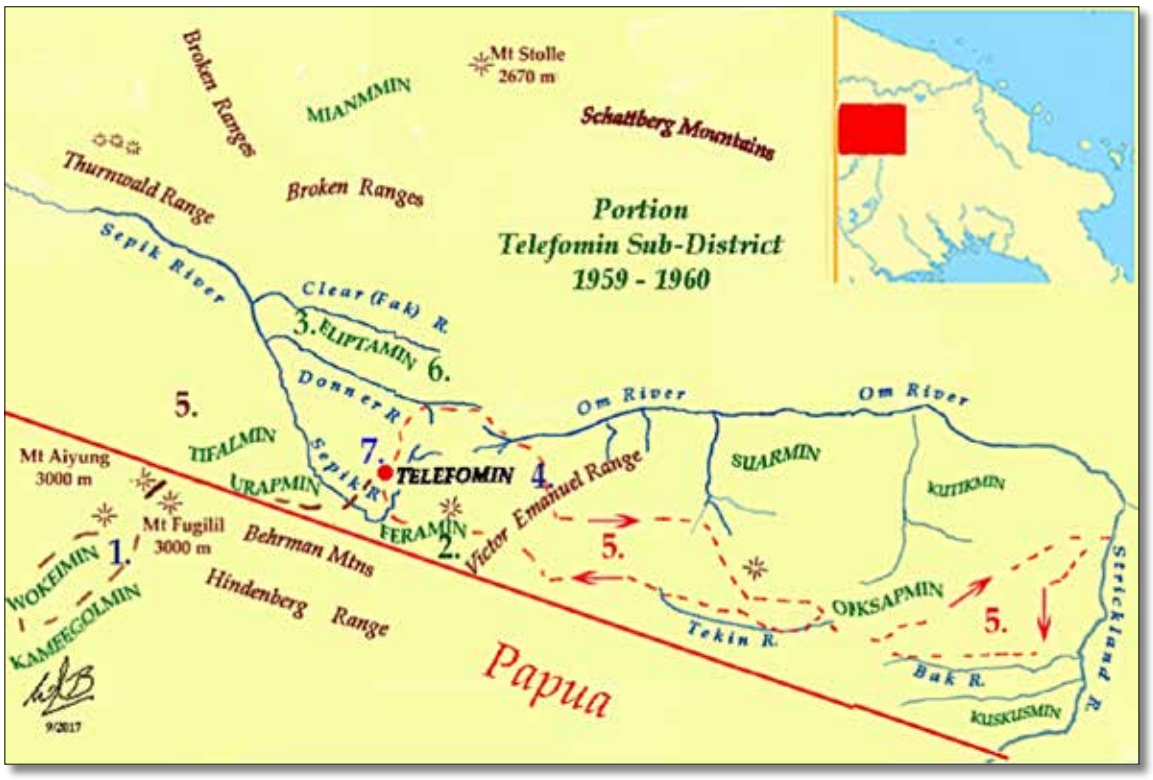
Dave (ED) Wren replaced Jones as ADO in April 1955, then came the Nevilles, (Ron (RTD) and Colleen), transferred from Maprik to Telefomin in September 1956. Patrol Officer Len Aisbett, accompanied by wife Margaret, transferred from Vanimo, was some months at Telefomin before taking over from Neville in December 1957. Aisbett served eighteen months as ADO at Telefomin, and then came the Browns.

I was in a hurry to get out of that Junkers, to climb down the half dozen steps to the ground. My bladder was bursting. I urgently needed a toilet. But, horror of horrors, a welcoming committee was standing in front of the Sub-District Office waiting to meet and greet.

There were the two Baptist missionary couples together with their young children and the government expatriate staff—all young and single: Cadet Patrol Officers Jim (PJ) Fenton, Bob (RL) O'Connell and Medical Assistant Ian Lightfoot. Only chalkie Don Gaffney was missing, unable to escape from his teaching chores at the government boarding school.

Living at Telefomin was going to be a dramatic change for my twenty-two-year-old bride, fresh from a small close-knit family and a workplace full of young female companions. Now Pamela would be the only expatriate female on the small government station, with two of the three expatiate bachelors to talk to when I was absent on patrol—the other one would be accompanying me.

The Baptist missionary wives, Elaine Doull and Rosemary Vaughan, lived a two-kilometre walk away on the other side of the airstrip and were fully engaged rearing young children and discharging their church obligations.



Patrol routes, 1959–60 *(Bill Brown)*

The formalities completed, we were escorted from the office past two bungalows to our new home, 500 metres along a level road. With drainage ditches on each side, the road was just wide enough for the station's only four-wheeled vehicle, the Administration's Ferguson tractor.

Ours was the last and biggest house in Main Street, Telefomin. It was nothing flash, a standard Administration M-type design, but bigger than the others.

The bungalow had been tricked out for our arrival. There were flowers in the lounge. The double bed in the main bedroom had been made with fresh sheets, courtesy of Fenton. The wick on the kerosene refrigerator had been trimmed and was burning brightly; the refrigerator itself was cold and ready to receive our recently purchased frozen meat.

My single man's gear, flown to Telefomin before our arrival in Wewak, was sitting on the floor in the middle of the main room: a large crate holding the carved kwila table from Korogo; three wooden trunks built by Pitau at Aitape; a scattering of patrol boxes; and items wrapped in hessian packs—four cane chairs and a matching table, a set of bookshelves and two large sea-grass mats.

It was what we'd be relying on for a month or two until Pamela' possessions, our wedding presents and household effects we had purchased in Australia made their way from Sydney to Wewak by ship and then by aircraft to Telefomin.

My own gear was an unimpressive collection and did not take long to unpack. My once white, bed linen had been washed too often in the murky Sepik River and was now stained a pale brown and my towels were tattered and worn. My pots and pans were blackened and bent and the crockery dinner set had seen better days. The fifty-three-piece canteen of Margaret Rose cutlery was perhaps the only saving grace.

For Pamela, there would be other challenges apart from loneliness. The only electricity supply, a single supply line from Fenton's personal 110-volt generator, powered a globe in our kitchen for several hours a night. The rest of the house was illuminated by the kerosene pressure lamps, two of them, which we carried from room to room until bedtime when battery-powered torches came into play.

The fuel stove in the kitchen was like none other I had seen—and I'd seen plenty. The Rayburn Slow Combustion had a cream baked-enamel finish that extended from the hot plates to the floor. Its clean lines were only broken by the two oven doors while two more doors related to the fire box. There was a clock-faced thermometer and a bewildering set of knobs and baffles. Manufactured in England, it was designed to be fuelled by coke or coal and to provide reticulated hot water as well as cooking food, but it did not perform well when burning New Guinea wood.

The small water tank mounted above the roof was another complication. If it ran dry so did taps in kitchen and bathroom, the shower, the toilet and the boiler in that infernal stove. The overhead tank had to replenished from rainwater tanks located on the ground, pumped by hand from outside the house, an unpleasant chore after dark when it generally ran dry.

Ferapnok, a local Telefomin man who had helped in the Aisbett's kitchen, came looking for work and was immediately employed. He knew how to operate that monster of a stove and how to light pressure lamps and how to use a benzene iron.

His first job after fuelling and lighting the stove would be to collect fresh flowers from the bush at the back of the house: bunches of orange and gold magnolia, orchid blooms and long vermillion racemes from the umbrella trees—the Telefol called them *uguk*.

The Telefomin men wandering around the station were virtually naked—a few strips of cane encircled their waists, penises sheathed in gourds of various lengths and curvature, testicles hanging in the breeze, completely bare backsides.

The young women and girls were more modest in appearance, if they were standing upright and not on a rise. Their fronts were covered by tiny aprons sewn from flattened reeds, layered untidily—one of top of another—and suspended from the waist. The only other covering, two fringes also sewn from smaller reeds, were attached to a waist band above the buttocks, with a tassel hanging down.

The two headmen from Kialikman, Fensep and Nifinim, began to drop by when I was in the front garden, sometimes early in the morning, sometimes after work. No matter what the time of day, they always extended their stock greeting of *'Gutnaits'* (Goodnight).

Perhaps they assumed that by greeting me so effusively, the guards would think they had gained my tacit approval to visit enfeebled prisoners from Ankavip who had been sent back from confinement at Boram on the coast to serve out their time nearer to home. (The Ankavip prisoners had not physically participated in the massacre, but according to the trial judge, they had.)

The garden became our free time activity and relaxation, but it rained most afternoons and sometimes all day. The records showed that the rainfall was heavy, somewhere between 295 and 760 millimetres between the driest and the wettest month. It never rained on less than twenty-five days in any month and in some months it rained every day.

My predecessors and their wives must have spent a lot of effort on that garden and fernery but we also needed to do something about the area between the front of the house and the garden. Theoretically it was the front lawn, but in reality it was an unsightly mess of white clayey pug sprouting a few sad threads of grass.

My helpers caught on quickly to the idea of covering the surface with moss. We started with small pieces that they scrounged from the forest near the house. Then they brought large slabs which we trimmed and laid like carpet squares. The result: a large, green velveteen lawn that could absorb lots of rain.

We had been at Telefomin for a month, had walked around the station many times and had even ventured a little way up the Mittag Range behind the hospital to a bat cave, and, in the other direction, down to the edge of the Sepik escarpment. Pamela had settled in and I had taught her how to point a revolver and pull the trigger.

It was time for me to learn something about the Sub-District; to be out among the people, get more acquainted with members of the police detachment and have them get to know me. It was time to leave on patrol.

That was not so simple at Telefomin. In July 1955, ADO Wren had got into strife for allowing CPO Grant to patrol alone to the Tifalmin, and in 1959 Aisbett had been similarly chastised for sending CPOs Fenton and O'Connell to the Eliptamin in March and to the Kamfegolmin

in April. (Headquarters was in error. Fenton had completed his cadetship in and was entitled to lead patrols, although they could quibble about his experience.)

The policy on patrolling at Telefomin was rigid and clear. Cadet Patrol Officers could only accompany an experienced Patrol Officer or more senior officer on patrol, and no officer was permitted to patrol alone.

I set out for the Wokeimin with CPO Bob (RL) O'Connell on Thursday, 27 August. Our destination was the Tifalmin and Urapmin groups, a day's walk away, and then the Wokeimin on the southern side of the Hindenberg Range across the border in Papua.

I had no reason for selecting that particular destination other than I wanted a good work out with some stiff climbing and I did not want to be away too long. I was very conscious of the admonition from the Coles: 'Be careful of your marriage. Protect it, and make sure that it works!' An absence of eleven days seemed long enough for the first foray.

From Tifalmin, the last Telefomin group, it took two hard days climbing through the moss forest—scrambling around moss-coated, limestone crags, skirting seemingly bottomless sinkholes—to reach first Wokeimin hamlet, where we were welcomed by three men, two women and several dogs.

We had crossed the range at 2,650 metres south of Mount Aiyung and had crossed the border into Papua somewhere along the track.

Two days later we headed home—back across the border—by a different route. It took two days to cross the range, with a 550-metre cliff face to be scaled two hours into the first day. Our overnight campsite was in marshland at 2,300 metres beneath Mount Fugilil. Next morning, after two hours on the track, we reached the crest at Alukfal at 2,590 metres where the winds were bitterly cold. We hurriedly descended down the northern side to re-join our outward path.

We had spent a total of six days visiting the Wokeimin to record the names of 69 people, including absentees. It would have taken thirty days to visit all the groups living in the foothills of the Hindenburg Range, an estimated 1,500. Headquarters did not agree with my contention that our time would be better spent in the Telefomin Sub-District, decreeing that until a patrol post was established north of Kiunga, we should continue to patrol that piece of Papua.

After a week on the track, as you start to get fit, you have time to think and dream and I arrived back at Telefomin full of enthusiasm and with lots of plans for gingering up the building program. I had ideas for building a new barracks for the single police using permanent materials, and also constructing at least half a dozen married quarters.

I wanted to extend the length of the airstrip by thirty metres to meet the demands of the Department of Civil Aviation. Not an easy task when the surface had to be raised by a metre and the fill—gravel, stones, and rocks—had to be placed by hand.

There were no funds available for airstrips, a small amount for buildings and almost unlimited money for roads and bridges, so the problem was easily resolved. I had learnt creative accounting from DC Downs in the Highlands. The airstrip was my highway to the outside world, building timber could be order for bridges and the building funds used for hardware—hinges, nails and corrugated iron roofing.

After two weeks back on the station, I headed off again, this time with Medical Assistant Ian Lightfoot for eleven days in the Feramin group returning on 6 October.

On Tuesday, 20 October, Lightfoot and I headed off again this time to the Eliptamin for a ten-day census patrol. I had left patrolling Eliptamin to later in my program to get a feel for Telefomin and to give the Eliptamins a chance to hear about me.

By the end of the patrol, I had formed the impression that the older men's attitude indicated no respect for law and order and that they would resist lawful intervention if not backed by adequate force. The Eliptamins had proved our vulnerability in November 1953, I was not convinced they had changed their attitude.

In November it was Fenton's turn. Some months earlier, a group of Mianmins raided the small settlement called Suwana in the Abaru group near May River Patrol Post. It had taken the Mianmins the best part of five days—trekking, drifting downriver on rafts and then trekking again—to reach their objective, where they killed three men and one woman.

They set off for home with seven female captives and the butchered remains of those they had killed. One of the abducted women had difficulty keeping up so she was killed as well, and 'parts of her body taken to be eaten ...' Another of the abducted women subsequently escaped, reported the whole incident to May River Patrol Post, and we became involved.

We sent a small team consisting of Fenton, Interpreter Suni and Constable Kusinok from Telefomin to join Patrol Officer Jack Mater and his team from May River Patrol Post in the investigation and pursuit.

It took them fourteen days to reach the Mianmin settlement, surround it at dawn and apprehend the fifteen men involved in the massacre, including the men who actually did the killings. It was an operation that went without incident. Hopefully it also gave the Mianmins a lesson about the government's intent and reach.

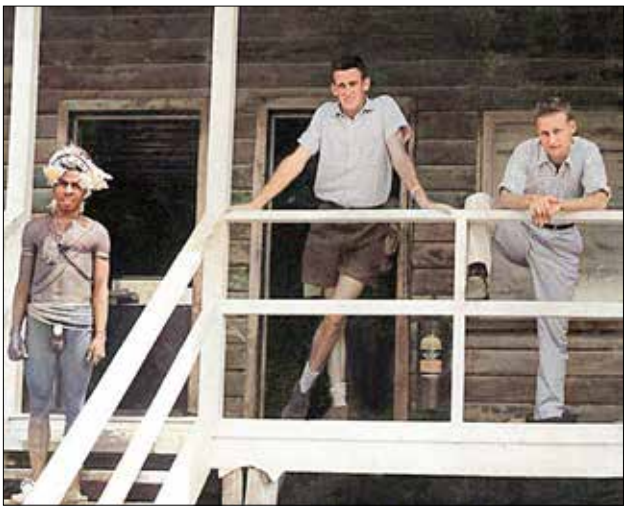
1959 may have been the honeymoon year but 1960 was full on and it wasn't long before one of my ideas came completely unstuck.

At the beginning of February, I decided to take a patrol to the Oksapmin despite a lot of advice that it was the wrong time of the year and that all the rivers would be in flood. My plan was to avoid the normal route—via the Donner and Om River headwaters—and cross the Victor Emanuel Range above Feramin, using a technique I had picked up from Gus (AM) Bottrill in the Goilala. My group would be lightly laden, we would carry the bare minimum of food and we would cross the range into the Oksapmin in just a few days.

We set out on Wednesday, 3 February; my reluctant companion Medical Assistant Ian Lightfoot, twelve police and me. The venture was doomed to fail. In the Goilala the distances to travel had been shorter and we took just one or two police and did not carry tents.

After four fruitless days casting around in the high country behind Feramin, I was forced to admit defeat. We had even spent one night bundled together wrapped in the unerected tents. The next morning, still fully dressed in the previous day's wet and mud-covered clothes, I had dried out a little but smelt like a sewer drain.

The locals said it would take them five days to get to the first Oksapmin habitation from where we were. It would take us longer than that and we did not have enough food to make that



TOP: Medical Assistant Andrew Hoffman, Constable Pigi (a local Telefomin) and Tifalmin village people, April 1960 *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Mianmin visitor in normal attire, Bill Brown, John Tierney, Sub-District Office, Telefomin, 1960 *(Jacques Villeminot)*

RIGHT: Bernie Mulcahy, Tony Trollope and Lieutenant J Farry, PIR, Telefomin, 1960 *(Arthur Marks)*

BOTTOM: Unmarried young women and girls wearing their normal attire of brief, apron-like skirts *(Geoff Harris)*

sort of trek. But I was not prepared to admit defeat. Instead of returning to base, we changed direction and revisited the Eliptamin villagers, the scenes of the 1953 murders, and slowly made our way home.

John Tierney and Arthur Marks were posted to Telefomin towards the end of March, filling the gaps left by the departure of Fenton and O'Connell. I knew both of them from their time with me at Ambunti, but Tierney was especially welcome. He had married a few weeks earlier and arrived with Margaret, his very young bride.

Pamela had endured the lack of female company for eight months, but with Margaret Tierney's arrival the drought had broken. She was never, ever, going to miss the chance to chat again in the future, wherever and whenever it occurred.

A few days later, the arrangements were in place. Every weekday morning, Margaret took the shortcut between our houses and came to our place for morning tea. And every weekday afternoon, Pamela took the same shortcut to join Margaret for tea.

A week or so later, just before the weekly aircraft arrived, Tierney and I were amazed to see a procession of sorts form outside our houses and start making its way up the road towards the office. Side by side, in the vanguard, two *mankimastas* carrying laden trays were followed by the two ladies in their finery, teetering on high heels as they progressed up the roughly surfaced road.

We did not know it at the time, but that welcome for the pilot, and whoever else that was on board, was to become a regular weekly feature. Each week, the trays were laden with the best crockery: cups and saucers, plates of hot scones and strawberry jam, and teapots filled with steaming tea.

I managed to make two patrols, both of short duration, in April. The first, to introduce recently arrived Medical Assistant Andrew Hoffman to the Telefomin patrol regime in a visit to the Tifalmin– rapmin group.

The second and much more important patrol was with Tierney to the Eliptamin for eight days. It was his first experience of patrolling in high mountain country and it was his introduction to the peculiarities of Telefomin patrolling.

In a little under a month, he would be leading the patrol showing CPO Arthur Marks the ropes and be responsible for the safety of all personnel. It was not beyond the realms of possibility that things might again suddenly turn nasty.

I knew that he had read the confidential file about the murders. Now he was going to visit the scenes of the crime and he would meet relatives and associates of the perpetrators. I wanted to be certain he looked behind the façade of smiling faces and was fully aware of the gruesome details, particularly related to the killing of Szarka.

The official report, described by Elliott-Smith as 'a factual report of the Telefomin affair … compiled by Mrs M White ... depositions clerk and associate during the Preliminary Hearings and the subsequent Supreme Court Trials. … Only facts … anything else being carefully avoided' contained horrific details, like:

> At a prearranged signal, Kaiobengal of Uguntemtigin, who was standing behind the officer, seized him, pinioning his arm to his sides. At the same time Novonengim seized Buritori.

Kaiobengal and Szarka, in their struggles, rolled over one side of the ridge, while Novonengim went over the opposite side. The natives Olsikim of Inantigan, Irinsomnok of Inantigan, Tigimnok and Warimsep both of Iwartigan, ran down to where Kaiobengal was struggling with Szarka a short distance down the ridge. Szarka was held down and an axe was called for. This was brought by the native Timengin of Uguntemtigin, and Tigimnok ran up the slope and took it from him.

Unlike Harris, Szarka therefore had time to realise what his probable fate was to be, even if he did not understand what the natives were saying. His feelings during those moments of delay are hideous to contemplate.

While the others held him down on his back Tigimnok raised the axe and struck Szarka in the throat, completely decapitating the head in a very few blows. Then Tigimnok cut Szarka's body through at the waist into two parts. Olsikim took the axe from Tigimnok and cut off both of Szarka's legs.

While Szarka was being slaughtered, women and children ... were pillaging the belongings and patrol gear from the Rest House and the Police Barracks ... the murderers returned up the slope, dancing the killing dance ... Tigimnok was holding the bloodstained axe in two hands above his head.

Towards the end of May, we were involved in the planning and logistics for a patrol from May River to Telefomin. The patrol would be led by the acting Assistant District Officer at Ambunti Tony (CA) Trollope and his task would be to trek from May River Patrol Post through the mountainous Mianmin country with a detachment of the Pacific Islands Regiment.

The aim was to give the Army experience in operating in the uncontrolled area and to give the Mianmin people a little more exposure to the outside world.

Trollope set out from May River on 1 June with a cavalcade of over 100 men. He was accompanied by Patrol Officer Bernie (BH) Mulcahy, OIC of May River, Lieutenant J Farry and five troops from the PIR, a Medical Orderly, two interpreters, twelve police and eighty-five carriers.

We contributed an NCO of police and two quasi-interpreters. Lance Corporal Kusinok, a local Telefomin with almost ten-years' service in the police, had trekked from Telefomin to May River Post and back with Aisbett and Fenton at the end of 1958.

Atikbiren, from the Eliptamin and Beliap from the Mianmin had also accompanied Aisbett and Fenton and were very familiar with their sections of the route. They would turn the talk from their own language to Tok Pisin.

I had reservations about the ability of Trollope's lowland carriers to handle the Telefomin hills, so sent Constable Wasinok—an Eliptamin by birth—to organise relief carriers for the more difficult sections as well as firewood and food supplies along the route.

Trollope's patrol walked into Telefomin on 20 June after thirteen hard days on the track and the station was teeming with people. Then the next day District Officer Des Clancy flew in from Wewak and another bed had to be found. Both the spare bedrooms were occupied.

It was a long well-oiled evening with Clancy leading the discussion. His main gripe was about the memorandum of patrol, a one-page form introduced in 1958 which replaced the Patrol Report. According to Clancy, reports submitted in the new format told him nothing and

created a 'secret service'. We didn't really care, the form could not be used in restricted areas, so could not be used in Telefomin.

There was a totally unexpected event next day. Two single-engined Cessna aircraft circled the station and landed about 11 am, disgorging a high level team: kiap boss Director JK McCarthy; Tom Ellis, who had recently been appointed District Commissioner of the Western Highlands; Brian McBride, ADO of the Laiagam Sub-District; and Neville (NC) Robinson, referred to as a Field Assistant, Native Mining.

The visitors only stayed for half an hour or so and then flew back to the Western Highlands. Clancy returned to Wewak on 23 June and Trollope and his party set off back to May River on 24 June with a replenished supply of rations, and thirty-five Eliptamin carriers to help with the load.

From the Brown household perspective, the timing could not have been much worse: 23 June was Pamela's birthday but we were not in birthday mode, what with a crowded house and Pamela preparing to fly in to Wewak for the birth of our first child: Michael was born on 22 July.

Tierney and I started planning our visit to Oksapmin a month or so before the date of our intended departure, sending messages for the headman and carriers to come to Telefomin to assist the patrol. They arrived full of enthusiasm but were too old, too young or too inept to be of any real assistance.

We set out on Saturday, 20 August, three expatriates (me, John Tierney and a Baptist missionary, Don Doull), twelve police (Senior Constable Ampula, Constable 1st Class Kusinok and ten constables), Interpreter Suni and a line of more than sixty carriers—volunteers from the Feramin, around Telefomin, the headman of Duamin, and four Oksapmin carriers who doubled up as messengers.

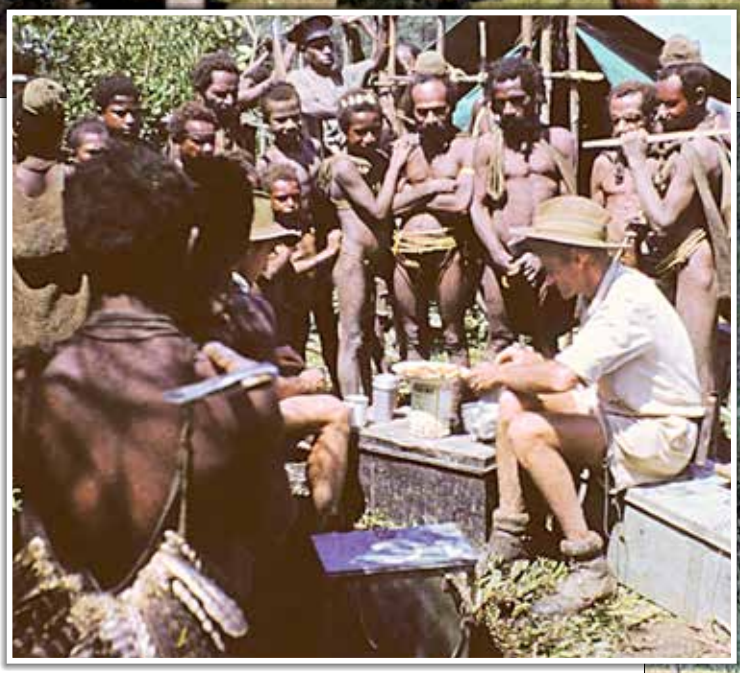
The inclusion of Don Doull was unusual. The Baptist archives record that 'unexpectedly ADO Bill Brown invited Don Doull to go on that patrol' but I do not remember why. Maybe it was to ensure an airdrop by the Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

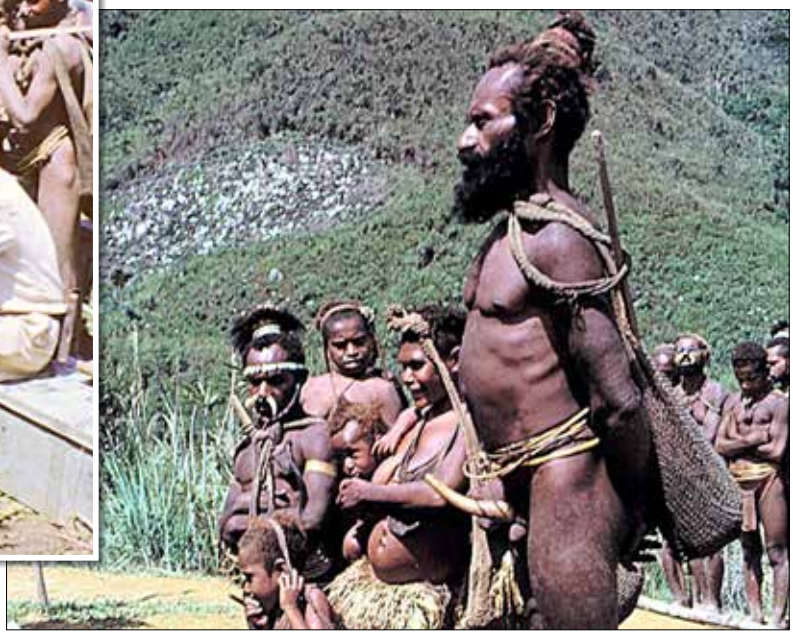
I certainly had no Baptist leanings. In fact, quite the reverse. My mother said they bred like rabbits, and the fire and brimstone ravings of Pastor Leghorn in the Burton Street Tabernacle, which I had visited with some young ladies in my youth, had cured me for life.

I was at the head of the long, single-file column as we set off from the office to walk up the airstrip to where the 840-metre climb to the crest of the Mittag Range began. I had crossed the range at that spot on previous occasions but it was the first time I had ever been flashed.

We had been clambering and scrambling up the greasy, almost vertical track for over an hour when the young woman zoomed up behind us and slithered past. Clad in the traditional fore-and-aft grass skirt, she paused briefly, poised with her feet astride just above my head—flashed—and took off for her home. She had been a prisoner, discharged more than an hour after our departure, and was giving me the metaphorical finger for putting her in gaol.

From our first overnight stop at the Eliptamin village of Terapdavip, where we were lashed by strong winds, rain, and large, shredding hail, it took eight days of hard walking and climbing—five of those days through uninhabited country—to reach the first Oksapmin habitation.





TOP: Standing (L -R) Des Clancy, Bill Brown, J K McCarthy and Brian McBride. Crouched (with backs to camera) Neville Robinson and Tom Ellis (wearing hat) *(Arthur Marks)*

LEFT: Don Doull (partially obscured) and Bill Brown, Tekmin group, Oksapmin, 1960 *(John Tierney)*

RIGHT: Family group having names recorded in Village Book, Oksapmin, 1960 *(Bill Brown)*

BOTTOM: Two local men roofing the camp kitchen as other people bring in thatch, Oksapmin, 1960 *(John Tierney/Bill Brown)*

We were expected. Some sixteen kilometres before the Tekmin group's settlement, we broke into the path they had cleared in anticipation of our arrival. It had been carved through heavy forest and numerous almost impenetrable thickets of cane grass, and at the end we found that a camp site had been prepared and lean-to shelters erected in readiness.

We had been on the track for five hours, our boots and socks were sodden and coated with heavy mud and we were tired and hungry. While the tents were being erected, the cook was set to boiling water for coffee and frying up a mess of bully beef, onions and sweet potatoes. One patrol box served as a table, others served as stools, but there was no privacy. We surrounded by hordes of curious onlookers as we ate the hastily prepared meal.

Our onward route followed a small river known as the Tekin, somewhat wider than its namesake at Telefomin. The path, well defined from frequent use, was frequently bordered by fenced gardens containing sweet potato, green-leafed plants and vines and occasionally embellished by a triangular funeral platform. The corpse was uncovered except for a small branch of a special tree twisted into a ring which was said to prevent any odours of decay.

There were no true villages. The houses, scrappy by even Telefomin standards, were scattered over the land occupied by the group. Central points where we made camp, more or less at the people's direction, were about one to two hour's walk apart, and were where we spent two nights gathering information, cementing relations, compiling the initial census and village registers.

The people were cooperative and friendly, doing all they could to assist. New shelters, that invariably leaked, were built prior to our arrival and when this was not done building materials were assembled ready for our use and they assisted in establishing the camp.

Men and women cheerfully cleared a drop site when an airdrop of supplies was arranged, and men of all ages volunteered as carriers and were available whenever required, even having to be discouraged on occasions. When one of the police fell sick, they organised a stretcher service on their own initiative, and maintained a continuous change of carriers until he recovered. Unlike other mountain peoples, there appeared to be no enmity between the groups. We saw very few weapons, and people seemed to move about freely without fear.

The wife of our guide, Sinonok of Duanmin, accompanied only by her infant son, one other woman and some young lads, walked from her home to our camp at Teranmin, a distance of some twenty kilometres each way through ten other groups to investigate rumours that he was unwell.

The people said that we were way off beam when we referred to them all, as the Oksapmin. They said that the Oksapmin were only the people who lived in the upper section of the Tekin—before the river disappeared underground for the first time. The group who lived in the valley from where the Tekin re-emerged, to where it disappeared underground again, were the Teranmin, and the Kuskusmin occupied the final stretch of the Tekin, from where it re-emerged the second time, to where it disappeared underground for the third and final time.

We visited the all the Tekin groups, and we visited the Kutikmin, in the Kutik River system; the Bakmin in the Bak River valley, and the Gaugutianmin in the Gaweng River valley. All appeared similar but were markedly different in temperament to the Eliptamin and the people

around Telefomin. The Oksapmin groups seemed more even tempered, placid, less volatile, and perhaps less acute. The only real point of commonalty appeared to be the male garb; the Oksapmin women, both unmarried and married, wearing fuller skirts than their Telefomin counterparts.

We had worked our way back to our first camp in the Tekin by Day 24. The way ahead, over the crest of the Victor Emanuel Ranges, would take less time than our inward route and after the initial climbing would be more downhill.

On Day 25, we made camp at 2,560 metres after walking for five and a half hours. The steep climb began next day. We reached the first crest (2,960 metres) after an hour and the second crest (3,200 metres) after another hour and a half. From there it was almost all downhill to the Sepik headwaters, and a camp at 2,100 metres.

Telefomin was now two days walk away but Tierney and I decided to do it in one day while the rest, moving slowly because of the load, would take two days and overnight at Feramin.

The three of us set out at dawn, Tierney, me and Constable Kusinok. We were each carrying some roasted sweet potato in a ruck sack and Tierney and I had a small tin of peaches. Kusinok had his rifle and Tierney and I had handguns.

We walked into Telefomin after eleven hours on the track, having actually walked for nine and a half hours. I sat on a mound at the end of the airstrip, penned a note and gave it to a worker to deliver to the office. 'We are at the end of the airstrip ... I am not going to walk another inch. Please send the tractor to pick us up!' I may not have written 'Please'.

In October, the news came through that I was being transferred and should start to pack. I would be taking over as Assistant District Officer in charge of the Wewak Sub-District from Royce (RR) Webb. Webb would be relieving District Officer Clancy who was proceeding on recreation leave. I would have been worried about the transfer, except the advice was accompanied by a laudatory confidential personal report assessing my performance at Telefomin.

The wheels turned slowly. Patrol Officer Robin Calcutt arrived to take over at Telefomin as acting ADO on 7 December. The Browns loaded all their gear into a Douglas Dakota, chartered from MAL (Mandated Airlines) and flew to Wewak on Monday, 12 December 1955.

17: Bougainville Landfall

I'm transferred to Bougainville where, controversially, mining is on the agenda and people are agitated

IT WAS 1966, the family and I had just returned from six-months' leave in Australia and I had resumed duty at Maprik in the Sepik District. It was then that incidents in Bougainville and a government report changed the course of my career.

The incidents related to opposition to the mining exploration activities of Conzinc Riotinto Australia. The report, on the same issue, related to the January 1966 visit to the site of a possible mine at Panguna by the Director of Lands, Surveys and Mines.

The Director, DS Grove,[1] himself a former kiap, wrote that critical problems were not being addressed and that the Assistant District Commissioner at Kieta, Max (MJ) Denehy, [2] was over-committed and had no experienced field staff to assist him.

He said that Denehy was due for leave at the end of the year, but after four terms at Kieta 'it would not be in [Denehy's] own interests or the interests of the Administration that he return for a fifth [term].' The Director of District Administration, JK McCarthy, should post an experienced officer to Kieta to understudy Denehy, tackle the land issues and take over from Denehy when he departed on leave.

Four months later on 25 May 1966, McCarthy wrote to the District Commissioner Sepik District:

> You are no doubt aware of the possibility of large-scale mineral development in the Kieta area of Bougainville District and of the importance which the Commonwealth Government and the Administration attach to this project. There are various local factors and problems involved in this possible development which require that an additional experienced and capable officer of this Department be posted to the District, and I am under direction to arrange an early posting of such an officer. After close consideration, therefore, I have decided to transfer Mr WT Brown, District Officer, from your District to [the] Bougainville District for duty in the Kieta Sub-District.

I had been stationed in the Sepik for eleven years. I knew nothing of CRA or its activities and little of Bougainville, but early in the morning on 2 June 1966, District Commissioner Ted Hicks came on the radio to tell me that I had been transferred to Kieta. I was required urgently. When we were packed, a Caribou aircraft would fly us there.

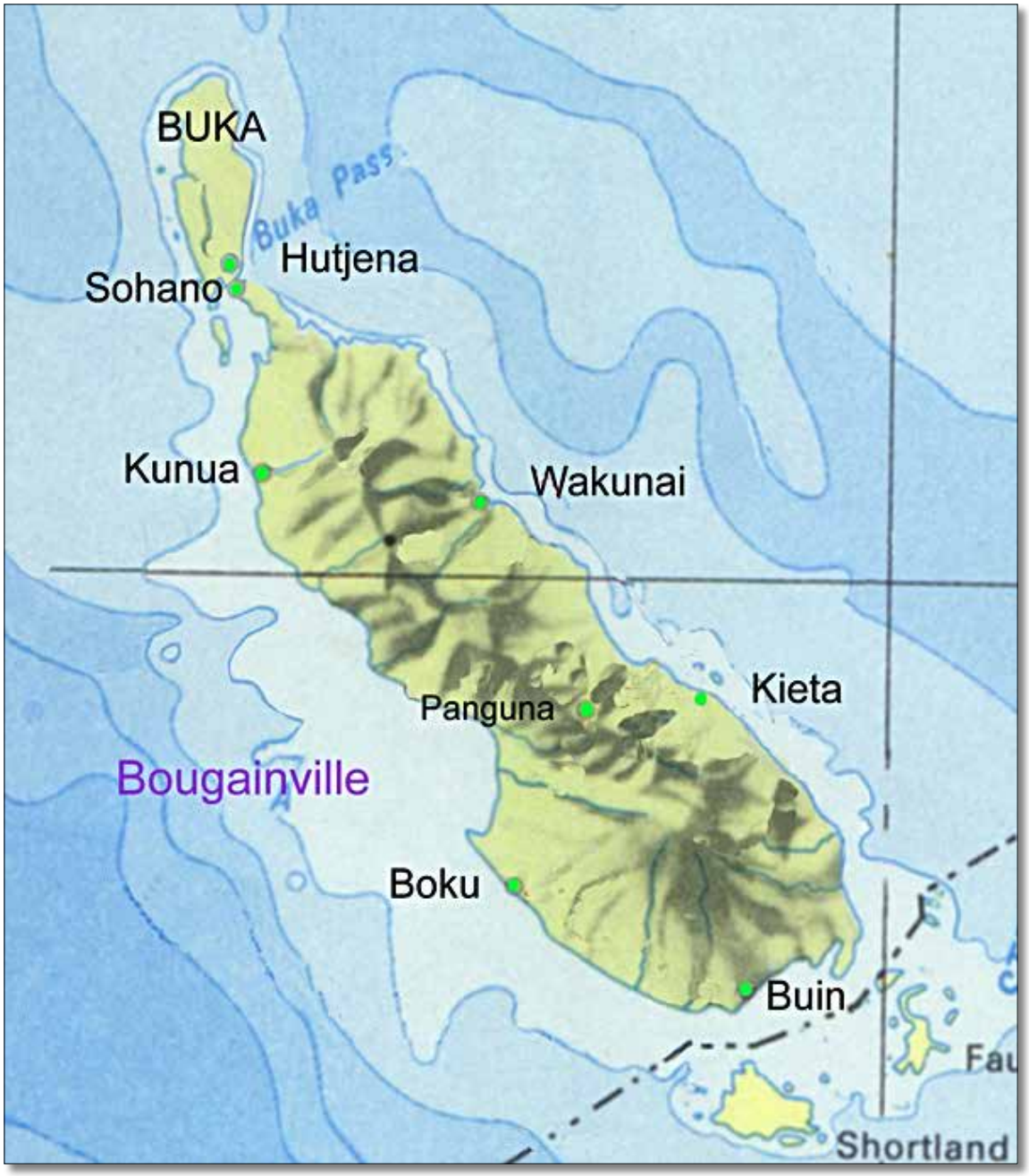
It had all begun in 1963 when CRA geologist, Ken Phillips, drew the company's attention to the government geologists' reports (Fisher in 1936 and Thompson in 1962) about the copper and gold deposits in the mountains behind Kieta: at Kupei, Pumkuna and Moroni—the prewar mining sites. The search was on. The company needed to find an ore body that was

large enough to warrant commercial development. Phillips visited Bougainville in February 1964 and met with ADC Denehy. That discussion was Denehy's introduction to CRA and their prospecting arm Conzinc Riotinto Exploration (CRAE).

Denehy would become more involved with them during the next three years and perhaps a little besotted by the economic opportunity they appeared to offer to the Bougainville people.

Even though he had reverted from acting Assistant District Officer to Patrol Officer, Denehy must have thought that he was escaping to paradise when he was posted to Kieta in 1958. He had spent the previous three terms in the Papuan Gulf: at Ihu Patrol Post, Kerema and Kikori.

Bougainville was a green and verdant island with pristine beaches, an aqua-blue sea, and fringing coral reefs. It had a fortnightly air service from Rabaul. A Catalina flying boat



carrying freezer meat, mail and the occasional passenger landed in the roadstead between Pok Pok (Tautsina) Island and the peninsula.

Burns Philp's MV *Tulagi*, calling at six-weekly intervals to load copra, provided the opportunity to indent vegetables and frozen meats from the Australian mainland at Australian prices.

Denehy, his wife and child were absent on the New Guinea mainland when Phillips returned to commence the search in April 1964. Andrew Melville, a junior Patrol Officer still in his first term, was in charge.

He met with Phillips, and for some inexplicable reason provided an escort, a police constable, to accompany the CRAE team into the mountains. That gesture would have indicated to the local people that the party had official status, even though it was not intended to do so.

Latvian-born geochemist, Edgar Muceniakas, and the two young field assistants were fresh from Australia; they had no New Guinea experience and did not understand *Tok Pisin*. Phillips had been 'a few weeks in the bush just out of Moresby and about two months at Porgera in the Western Highlands in 1963 … whose population was primitive and non-Pidgin speaking.'

Neville (NC) Robinson, on loan from his government employment as Senior Field Assistant (Native Mining), accompanied the newcomers to help them communicate, obtain food and move from place to place.

After four weeks with Phillips and his team, Robinson resumed his government role and set out for Atamo village to help the local people engaged in alluvial mining for gold.

He didn't get very far. Just outside CRA's area of operations, at Boira—an Eivo village in the foothills on the left bank of the Pinei—the people assumed he was on CRA business and refused to allow him to proceed. It was the first of many instances of the Bougainville people striving to confine CRA activities to the Panguna area.

In the discussion that followed, CRA's Clem Knight (from Melbourne) and Phillips 'outlined the difficulties encountered with the native people and expressed their concern … they considered that complete native co-operation was a basic necessity for the mining development on the scale envisaged by CRA.'

Robinson said that 'a patrol officer should be attached to CRA'. Deputy District Commissioner Des (DJ) Clancy[3] did not agree, stating: 'word would be sent to the native leaders from all the villages concerned to assemble in Kieta and the whole situation explained and clarified.…

'Officers of the Department of Native Affairs would assume all responsibility for the [future] trouble-free movement of the CRA party thus relieving the Division of Mines of this responsibility.'

Maybe Clancy had his tongue in his cheek. Only two years earlier in February 1962 when Hahalis villagers had defied a party of three Patrol Officers and ten police attempting to make arrests, he had led a party comprising an expatriate police officer and seventy other ranks in a second attempt. They too were chased out of the village.

Those same villagers then confronted a force of more than 500 police. If that was their reaction against a $2 head tax, how much more opposition could be expected to the invasion of their land by prospectors?

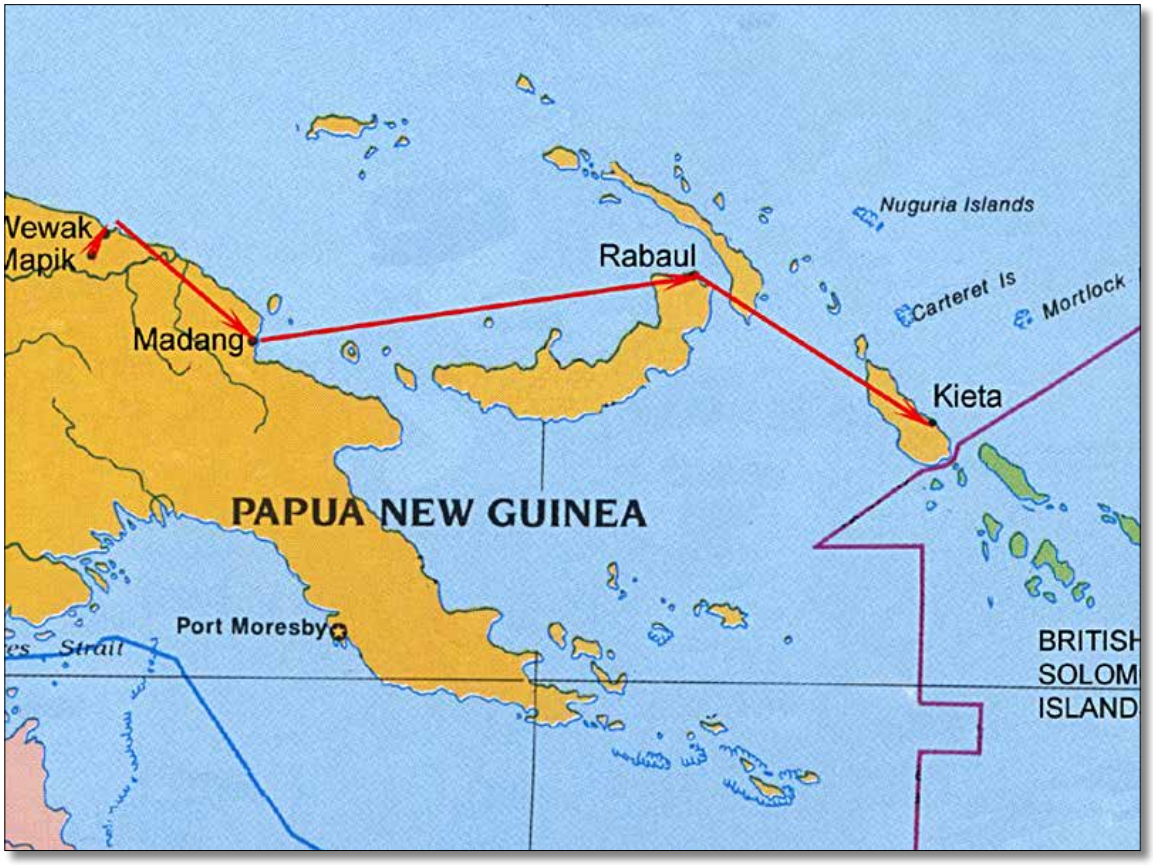
Denehy was keeping close tabs on the events, sending Cadet Patrol Officer Bob (RG) Godden [4] to the area to ascertain if there was any change in the attitude of the people towards CRA activities. After nineteen days in the area in January 1965 and twenty-three days in February-March Godden reported that there was no evidence of friction or animosity.

CRAE's Director of Operations, Haddon King, and maybe Denehy, was not so sanguine. On 31 March, Haddon King wrote to Sir Donald Cleland:

> ... one of the Administration's problems is to satisfy the leaders of the indigenous people that it is in their interest to grant these extensive prospecting rights, and perhaps later mining rights ... In the course of this discussion, the suggestion has arisen that this company might sponsor a visit by up to six Bougainville people to selected mining areas in Australia … accompanied by someone who has the confidence of the Bougainville people … someone like Mr Denehy.

Four months later, in July 1965, the flare-ups began. Angry villagers from the Mainoki area, eight-hours' walk to the south-west of Panguna, were determined to prevent any CRA intrusion on their land, and forced a stream-sampling team to beat a hasty retreat.

Within days, and nearer home, a particular incident was of more concern. A cement survey post that marked a corner common to all four CRA's leases was removed from its location.



Bill and family's journey from the Sepik to Bougainville *(Bill Brown)*

CRA's four lease applications, crafted on a map in far-away Melbourne, had a common corner that turned out to be located in the middle of Musinau village. Corners had to be marked by labelled posts and trenches dug to indicate the direction of the boundaries.

The people watched the invaders enter their village carrying a heavy cement post and they watched as the surveyor established the post's position with his sextant.

That night, the people mulled over all that had transpired and decided the company was attempting to steal their land. The next day they unearthed the post and returned it to Panguna.

Perhaps it was that last event that overcame Canberra's reluctance to approve the proposed company-sponsored tour to Australia. Denehy left with five Bougainville men in September 1965. Only two, Miringtoro Taroa of Musinau and Severinus Ampaoi of Dapera, president of Kieta Council, were from the prospecting area. The other three tourists were councillors from afar: Kenananai from Nagovis, president of the Bana Council, Moiku from Buin Council and Ionai from Kieta Council.

During the course of the visit to Australia, the Bougainvilleans made three requests of Department of Territories' officials in Canberra: a share of mineral and timber royalties to be paid to landowners; companies to contribute twenty-five per cent of profits to a Bougainville development fund; and a greater proportion of Administration expenditure to be made in Bougainville. Nobody said no and they returned home satisfied.

The Minister for Territories, Cedric ('Ceb') Barnes arrived in Kieta on 11 February 1966 and in just two days at public meetings at Kieta and Panguna he dashed the hopes of all the people who were anticipating gaining personal, family and district wealth from Panguna.

Patrol Officer Andrew Melville remembered the meeting at Kieta when the Minister told the people that, while the mine would not benefit them directly, it was going to do wonders for all the people of Papua New Guinea.

He was asked, 'The mine may not be of benefit to us old guys, but what about our children and our children's children? What is it going to do for them?'

Barnes replied: 'It is not going to do anything for you, for your children or for your grandchildren, but it is going to do wonders for the people of Papua and New Guinea as a whole.'

Haddon King, quoting from a memo he wrote on 15 March 1966, claimed:

> The effects [of the Minister's statements] on CRA's activities were dramatic: Three days later trees were felled across a helicopter pad; two days after this, surveyors met opposition in cutting lines west of the area being drilled … The geologist in charge was told by the landowners that they wished to see mining activity confined to the area of present activities (about one-mile square) until they had the opportunity to see the effects of mining on the land, and also what they would get out of it. A few days later our present area of activities was surrounded by tambu (keep out) signs.

King's view that the Minister's statement triggered the disruption may have been simplistic. Two days prior to Barnes' arrival, Cadet Patrol Officer Peter Steele[5] at Dapena-Larenai in the Guava area was told that people wanted no interference by the company;

they owned the land and therefore the copper and they did not want the company to take it away and leave their children with nothing. They refused to accept that the minerals did not belong to the people.

The Musinau villagers made headlines again at the end of May 1966 when a hunting party from the village stumbled across a CRA fly camp in their forest and pulled it down. The CRA employees, confronted by five angry villagers said to be armed with bows and arrows, radioed for a helicopter help and were evacuated.

When Denehy put the villagers in gaol for a month Paul Lapun, the Member for Southern Bougainville, speaking in parliament, said that the five had not been armed and he asked did they not have the right to protect their land?

Reporting the incident to Canberra by telephone on Sunday 30 May 1966, Administrator Cleland said, 'A good Native Affairs man, Mr Max [sic] Brown, has been sent over to Bougainville to assist Mr Denihy [sic], the Native Affairs man in the area.' Some confused soul had given me Denehy's first name and misspelt his surname.

We were supposed to fly out of Maprik airstrip in a Caribou—a STOL (short takeoff and landing) aircraft—to fly direct to Bougainville. The Caribou never came.

We had been living out of suitcases for eight days when on 14 June, two Norseman aircraft—single-engined and sluggish—began shuttling our thirty-three crates, and burlap-wrapped bundles to the main Wewak airport at Boram where they were manhandled into the waiting Douglas Dakota—the cargo version of the DC3.

Our *mankimasta* Suni, his wife Clara and their two children, my wife Pamela, our sons (Michael, almost six, and David, three) and I followed with last-minute items: half a dozen fowls and Ulupu the cat (a present from Divine Word missionary, Father Knorr) semi-secured in plaited coconut frond baskets; our soiled clothes; and the previous night's bed linen.

After an unscheduled landing at Madang to have a leaking propeller oil seal repaired, the pilots diverted to Rabaul claiming they were 'out of hours'. They were determined to avoid an overnight stay in Kieta.

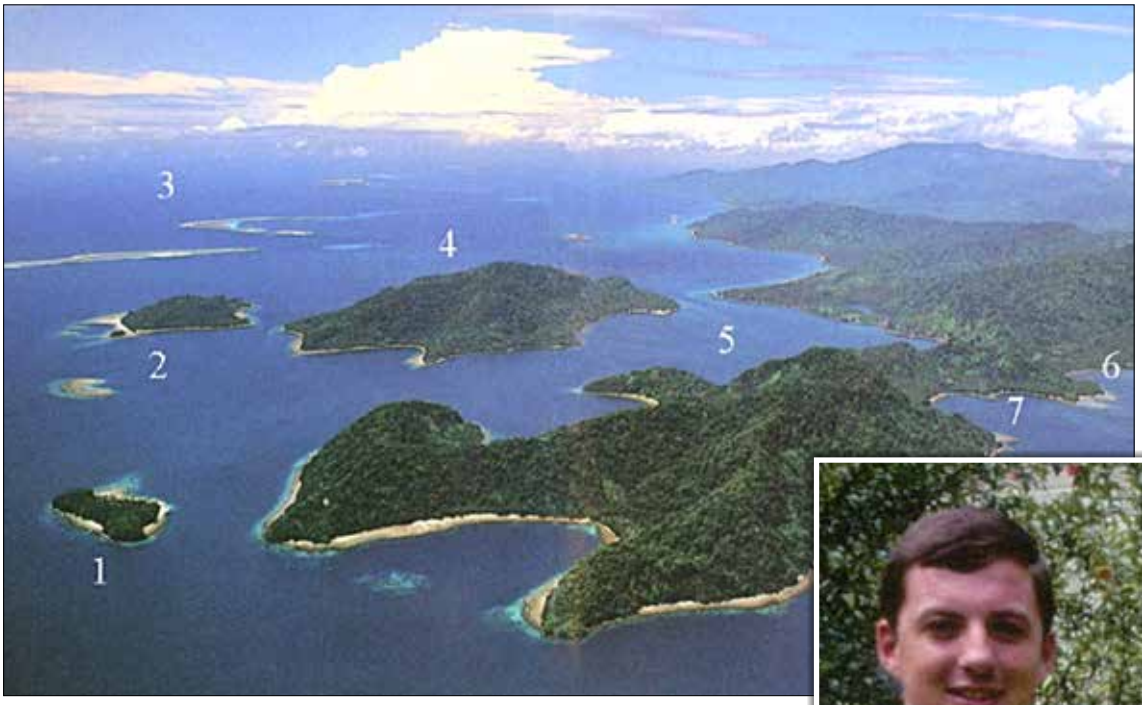
So what had been touted as a direct six-hour flight took two days before we landed on the grass airstrip at Aropa, twenty-two kilometres from Kieta town. We stood under an aircraft's wing sheltering from the burning sun until Greg Wall arrived and took us to Aropa plantation.

More than an hour later, Denehy drove up in a LandRover along with the Bougainville District Commissioner, Pat Mollison.[6] Mollison exchanged pleasantries before boarding the aircraft we had arrived in to fly back to his headquarters at Sohano. He did not visit Kieta again but maintained a peripheral involvement with CRA affairs until his departure on leave.

ENDNOTES

1. Donald Stuart Grove, son of an eminent Methodist clergyman, probably mirrored some of his father's traits. He was friendly but reserved, did not drink or smoke, was almost prim and proper (something of a paradox as a kiap) but was liked and respected. During World War II he had served with the AIF in the Middle East and as a lieutenant in ANGAU. He became Patrol Officer in October 1946 and was posted to Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands. He completed the first two-year Diploma Course at ASOPA and served in Northern District as ADO Tufi and in Milne Bay as ADO Esa'ala before being posted to headquarters.

2. Maxwell Joseph Denehy had served with 2/7th AIF Battalion in the Aitape campaign during the Pacific War and was wounded, shot in the right shoulder. He became a Cadet Patrol Officer in November 1946 and served in the Sepik and Madang Districts before attending the two-year Diploma Course at the ASOPA in 1952-53. He then spent three terms in the Papuan Gulf at Ihu Patrol Post, Kerema and Kikori before being posted to Kieta in 1958. Although taciturn and sardonic, Denehy was highly respected by his confreres and staff.
3. Desmond James (Des) Clancy served in the Royal Australian Air Force from September 1943 until discharged as a Sergeant pilot in May 1945. He became a Patrol Officer in May 1946 and, after a period in the Western District, was involved in the re-opening of the pre-war station at Lake Kutubu. Clancy played a major role in the early post-war exploration of the Southern Highlands and led what kiap and author James Sinclair described as 'one of the greatest patrols ever made in PNG'. He served as District Officer in the Sepik District prior to being posted to Bougainville as District Commissioner early in 1961. He was a big, suave man with a ready smile, a twinkling eye and more than a touch of Irish blarney. Phillips described him as a conciliator; others described him as a two-fisted man.
4. Robert George Godden was in his twentieth year and had been a Cadet Patrol Officer for almost 18 months when he was tasked with ascertaining the reaction of the people in the prospecting area. Godden completed one term as a kiap then returned to Australia. As a Detective Inspector in the New South Wales Police, he was involved in a number of notable cases including the backpacker murders.
5. Peter Donald Steele was 19-years old and had been a Cadet Patrol Officer for just over a year when he undertook his first solo patrol to the Guava area in February 1966. After one term as a kiap, he returned to Australia to pursue a teaching career.
6. Patrick John Mollison became a Patrol Officer in 1936 and served as a Coastwatcher and a liaison officer with the US patrol boats in World War II. In the post-war years, he served in New Britain, New Ireland and Manus and was appointed a District Commissioner in 1957. At Bougainville, his last outstation posting, he created no waves and was said to avoid the trouble spots. He was affable and avuncular and enjoyed his daily visit to the small Sohano club, but was said to have short arms and deep pockets.



TOP: Beautiful Kieta from the air (1) Arovo Island (2) Bakawari Island (3) Outer reef (4) Tautsina or Pok Pok Island (5) Kieta Harbour (6) Bobuan, CRA's initial coastal base (7) Pidia village *(Tiny Wendt, CRA)*

RIGHT: Peter Steele, Cadet Patrol Officer, Kieta 1966

18: Coming to Grips with Bougainville

I get out amongst the Bougainville people to better understand their grievances about mining

IN EARLY 1966, it took the Assistant District Commissioner at Kieta, Max (MJ) Denehy, more than an hour to drive from Aropa to Kieta town, and we were tossed and shaken about as we followed the water-filled wheel ruts winding through the plantation's coconut groves.

Ten kilometres further on, the flat coastal section of the road seemed to have been hewn from cliffs of volcanic rock that had flowed into the sea aeons ago. We picked up speed on the graded stretch that passed the Toboroi Plantation homestead where Mrs Francis Kroening and her married son Bruno resided.

The Marist Sisters House soon appeared on the right followed by the Marist Brothers High School at Rigu and then St Michael's Church at Tubiana.

Finally, we crossed a small bridge and drove into Kieta town's commercial hub—half a dozen corrugated sheds, trade stores owned by Wong You, Yee Sui Kin, Joe Tak Long (whose real name was Joseph Fook Wing Yee) and Joseph Seeto (aka Black Joe).

Denehy talked a little as he drove but pointedly ignored my questions about CRA's prospecting problems. I found it strange that the people on the roadside looked the other way as we passed. Where we had come from, even complete strangers always waved, smiled and called out greetings.

The family and I spent several nights in one of the nine bedrooms in Bruno Kroening's hotel. The single-storey structure was built on a concrete slab and had fibro walls and a corrugated-iron roof. It seemed to be more renowned for the liquor bar than for the quality of accommodation or the cuisine.

Early in the morning on the day after our arrival, I strolled along the foreshore to the Sub-District Office where I was welcomed by the beaming smile of the blue-black Mark Nabuai from Buin. As other staff drifted in, I realised the office set-up was rather strange.

At one end of the building, the petulant clerk, Fred Mortimer, controlled the post office and the bank. Patrol Officer Andrew Melville and the two Cadets, Roger (REH) Dargie and Bob (RW) Gregory, sat at tables in the central room.

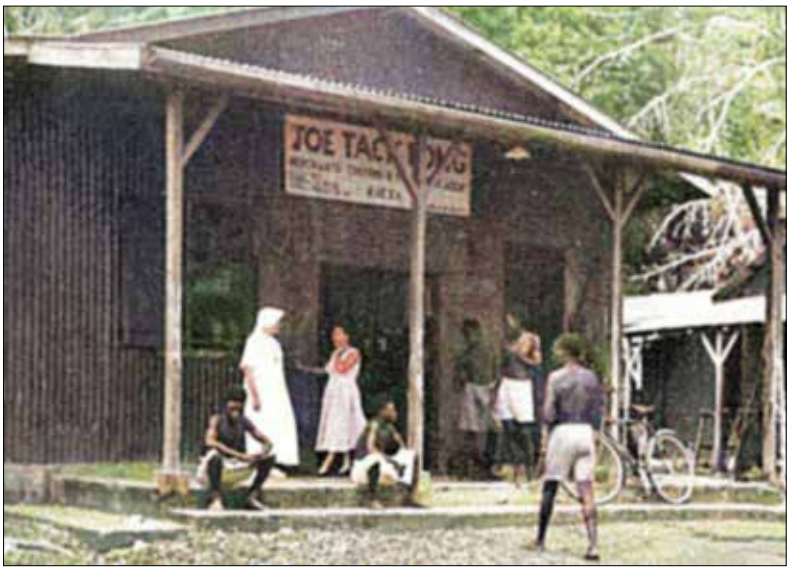
Agricultural Officer Bob Tevlin and his assistant Clement Ona shared the area at the rear, and the quasi-police station—with its own separate entry—occupied the right-hand back corner. There was little or no privacy.

I wondered how many people were listening in to the conversation as Melville told me about CRA's operation in the Crown Prince Range, and how opposition from local villagers had brought prospecting to a virtual standstill.

Later in the day, when Denehy said my first task would be to update the Common Roll, I rebelled and told him that he should advise Headquarters that I refused to obey his instructions. Maybe I was bloody-minded but I did not think I had been flown 1,500 kilometres by special charter to undertake a mundane task relating to the 1968 elections—an event two years away. (In the Maprik Sub-District, where the population was roughly three times that of Kieta, it was a job I had given to cadets to finish in their slack time.)

I don't know how the Administrator, Brigadier Sir Donald Cleland, became involved but his intervention ended the impasse between Denehy and me. Cleland telegraphed his instruction to the Bougainville District Commissioner on Wednesday, 27 June 1966. He telegraphed a copy of the instruction to Denehy and to me:

> During Mr Denehy's visit to Headquarters, an official application on the Panguna land dispute was lodged with the Chief Lands Commissioner. Mr Kimmorley is proceeding to Bougainville to conduct the Hearing.
>
> Any other land disputes within the prospecting authority held by CRA should be brought to the surface as quickly as possible so that payments flowing from the amended mining legislation can be made. To assist in achieving this, Mr Brown should spend as much time as possible in the field. This will give him the opportunity of contacts with the people and help in disseminating information on Administration policy on mining matters.
>
> Mr McKenzie, Mining Warden, is proceeding to South Bougainville and will be available for consultation with European staff and the Bougainville people generally.
>
> The CRA problem is to be given priority over all other work in your District. Mr Denehy should maintain his good relations with the Kieta Council, and handle the CRA problem generally. Mr Brown was posted to your District to strengthen field contacts in the CRA area, and his energies are not to be dissipated on Census and routine matters.
>
> It is important that CRA is able to proceed with their exploratory work in a normal way, and every effort must be made to ensure this is made possible.



TOP: Kieta Sub-District Office, 1966 *(Peter Steele)*

LEFT: Patrol Officer Andrew Melville, Kieta, 1966 *(Bill Brown)*

RIGHT: Joe Tak Long's store, Kieta, 1960s, Joe's wife, Mrs Pauline Yee is chatting with a Marist Sister *(Kevin Wong)*

BOTTOM: Wong You's store, Kieta, 1966 *(Peter Steele)*

Not to be left out, District Commissioner Mollison added largely fatuous comments to the Administrator's instruction and mailed the composite document to us.

Mollison knew that the people objected to CRA's intrusions and he knew they feared the destruction of their most valued commodity—their land. But he seemed oblivious to the enormity of the problem and out of touch with reality:

> This directive from His Honour which is clear and precise should be carried out precisely. Neither of you are involved in the Census collection and Mr Brown, with advice and any assistance necessary from yourself, owing to his recent arrival in the Sub-District, should commence his field work without delay, and make every effort to achieve results as desired above.
>
> The Company is still in the exploratory stage and may be for a considerable time and the people should understand this, and also the fact that, even so, owing to the amended mining legislation, as soon as the land disputes are settled, monetary benefits can flow to the rightful landowners at once.
>
> It is important, therefore, that harmony be restored and that CRA be able to carry out its exploratory work in all of the three or four areas it desires
>
> One disadvantage their field teams might have is their Australian employees have come direct to the Guava and would have no understanding of the people or even be able to converse with them. If so, perhaps interpreters could travel with such teams to interpret between the party leader and anyone whom they should meet.
>
> A lot can be gained by a friendly approach and good comradely relations in such outback parts. Care should be taken too, not to disturb any native property of value or significance to them ...
>
> So, in my view, it is best to keep the immediate task in perspective and to work for the success of the exploratory stage, achieving harmony in relations, and through the settlement of existing land disputes, enable the people to obtain the monetary benefits from the amended legislation.

Denehy became a different person after he received the Administrator's directive. He knew he was in charge and shook off all his previous reticence. He discussed what he termed 'the localised opposition' to CRA, and talked about the different attitudes in Bougainville, in Port Moresby and in Canberra.

He pulled the confidential files out of the safe and gave them to me to read and warned me that CRA had the Territories' Minister's support and the ear of the Australian Prime Minister.

Denehy and I agreed that, after I had unpacked and settled my family into the allocated house, I would move to Guava village near the prospecting activity. But then there was another delay.

Months earlier a regular police officer, Sub-Inspector Allan Craig (an Englishman with police experience in the United Kingdom, Kenya and Rhodesia before his arrival in PNG in 1962) had assumed control of the newly-created Kieta Police District.

That re-organisation relieved Denehy of the responsibility for law and order in a minuscule portion of the Sub-District—an area of foreshore perhaps two kilometres long

stretching from Chinatown to the native hospital—but it gave Craig control of the Sub-District's fifteen native police.

He said that he was not interested in the Administrator's instructions or priorities and he could spare no constables to accompany me to Guava. Within a few days, someone, possibly the Police Commissioner, had changed Craig's mind.

It would have taken ten minutes to fly in one of CRA's helicopters to Guava village, near the CRA activity, but I did not want the people to assume that I was a CRA employee.

With two police constables (not the four Denehy and I thought were necessary) and a dozen or so volunteers borrowed from the station labour line to carry the gear, I travelled in the Administration's five-ton truck to Arawa Plantation, then ten kilometres up the Bovo valley to the end of the road. That was where the foot slog began.

We climbed steadily up the bush track to Kupei village before the tortuous scramble began. The police constables took one look at the way ahead—muddy steps cut into an almost 900-metre vertical escarpment—and removed their boots and socks, knowing they could climb better with bare feet.

We trudged and scrambled upwards through a forest of moss-covered, dripping trees, crossed the 1,300-metre crest of the Crown Prince Range and slithered down the western slope to Guava village. We arrived just before nightfall. I hadn't climbed real mountains for 15 years and it had been a long hard day.

Guava village nestled in a hollow, protected from the wind. The village rest house, which would be my abode for months to come, perched in isolation on a 900-metre high shelf. The wind whistled through every crack and crevice in the bush material building. The house inside was bare and very cold.

The sun had been up for few hours and the morning chill had eased by the time the people from the village walked up the hill. They gathered in front of the rest house, on a narrow shelf of hard clay ending at a cliff edge.

Aerial view of the eastern fall and Mount Negro Head, Crown Prince Range near Guava
(Tiny Wendt, CRA)

In the valley far below, the forested Nagovisi plain extended west into the far distance—ending at the blue waters of Empress Augusta Bay.

I told the people about the changes to the mining law and how it now provided for landowners to be paid occupation fees and compensated for damage. I also explained that the CRA geologists had the right to prospect and that the landowners did not have the right to deny them access.

Their response was vitriolic. The people were not interested in financial compensation. They were dismissive of the changes to the law. They repudiated the right of the House of Assembly to make laws about mining or ownership of minerals on their land. And they totally rejected the notion that CRA prospectors, or anybody else, had the right to enter their land.

The discussion became more heated the following day when people from three nearby villages—Musinau, Irang and Kokorei—joined the group.

The Musinau villagers were bitter about punishment handed out to the five men who had chased CRA intruders off Musinau land. Denehy had sentenced the Musinau men to a month in gaol.

Martin Mirintoro said that when he had been shown the huge open-cut mine at Mount Morgan during a CRA-sponsored visit to Australia, he had asked how it would compare with Bougainville and had been told that the Panguna hole would be much larger.

When asked about Minister Barnes' February visit to Kieta and Panguna, they said that they had no interest in what he had to say to Kieta Council, or to anybody else. They owned their land and they wanted the company to leave it immediately.

I quickly learnt that when a man's eyeballs suffused with blood, his anger was rising to boiling point. Some of the men emphasised their arguments with machetes—gesticulating, waving, thrusting them in my face.

(I was chided by a constable for turning my back and walking away from one such incident. He said that if he had not interposed himself between the ranter and my retreating back, my blood would have flowed—and that would have been the end of us all.)

Those morning discussions were worthwhile, and I was prepared to repeat them as many times as the people wanted. The afternoons were less fruitful. That was when most of the people went to their gardens, but Luluai Oni, Mathew Kove or another relative always appeared to talk with me.

Oni and Kove wanted prospecting to go ahead and were happy to spend time with me discussing land ownership and clan structures. They also improved my somewhat limited knowledge of the matrilineal system.

After more than a week of making the same arguments and listening to the same disagreements, it was time to visit the prospecting area. The track led down the spur towards Guava, branched off before the village, and followed another track, a five-minute climb, to the ridge overlooking the forested Kawerong valley.

There was another twenty-minute trek down the other side of the ridge to Pan Flat where geologist Ken Phillips was ensconced in a clearing between Pumkuna Creek and the

Pankiranku outcrop—his residence a large dwelling with roof and walls of local materials and a sawn timber floor.

(Geologist JE Thompson stated that he used the name 'Pumkuna' throughout his 1962 report 'because of the precedence established by Dr Fisher in1936. He said that 'Pung'gana' was the way the locals pronounced it and this was not far from CRA's 'Panguna'.' This was how Panguna got its name.)

Anthony Ampei, Damien and others were on my heels wherever I moved, and I had my first encounter with Gregory Korpa, spokesman for the large Moroni-Pakia group.

Gregory was adamant that CRA must leave Panguna. He said he had opposed the geologists' intrusion from the outset and had told them that they were trespassers. He may have forgotten that Phillips and party had lived in a house in Moroni village for weeks as welcome guests. He may also have forgotten his August 1965 conversation with Arthur Marks—but more about that later.

I walked around the prospect for days, climbing back to the rest house at Guava each evening, invariably in pouring rain. CRA's rain measuring instrument had a maximum scale of four inches (100 millimetres) an hour, but it often went right off the scale for brief periods.

CRA's Ken Phillips, mining engineer Frank Paholski and drilling foremen Bob Reade and Peter Gaydon told me something about the company's thinking—if you could call it that.

They said that if CRA was satisfied and went ahead, they might construct a large open cut mine or they might use the glory hole technique, where the ore was mined from underneath and dragged out through a tunnel.

They talked about a port, maybe on the west coast or maybe on the east coast. And if the mine was ever built, the access might be through an underground tunnel from Kupei or a road from Torokina on the west coast or a road from the east coast following the Pinei River. Everything was unresolved. No wonder the people were confused.

According to Phillips, in June 1966 when Anthony Ampei claimed 'he was the owner of the land which comprised the central third of the ore body and on which three of [the] drills were operating and [CRA] were to stay off it forthwith,' Phillips 'withdrew [the] drillers, suspended all work, advised Max Denehy and Melbourne office and suggested they come and sort it out.'

Phillip's account differed from a report Administrator Sir Donald Cleland wrote to the Secretary for Territories in Canberra on 26 August 1966:

> I understand that the situation as far as the CRA work at Bougainville is concerned they have eight drills working without let or hindrance and that they cannot extend their drilling until they can fly more drills in, and this will not be until December because they have lost their big helicopter and it will not be replaced until then.

The Administrator may have been misinformed. Three of the eight drills were idle when I visited Pan Flat at the end of July 1966; CRA had not operated them after Ampei demanded that they leave his land.

After two weeks operating from the rest house above Guava village, I needed a break. I wanted to see my family and needed to report to Denehy. I was now in better physical

condition so the climb to the crest of the Crown Prince Range was less gruelling, but the long descent down the escarpment to the Bovo headwaters was a knee-jerker, and painful.

I typed my report on the Sub-District Office's one and only typewriter and addressed it to Denehy. The people were not interested in any promises of financial rewards and their opposition to prospecting was intense. If it could be considered as good news, the people were still talking to me and they expected me to return after the weekend.

The Administrator quoted three sentences of my assessment in a report he forwarded to Canberra:

> I regard the threats of suicide to be quite serious. I would like it appreciated at a Headquarters level that I feel suicides are probable. I also feel that we may have to use physical persuasion to remove people from drill rigs.

Responding to my report from headquarters in Port Moresby, Assistant Director TG Aitchison [1] asked did I need someone to assist me? I could have anyone at all. I only had to ask. And what else did I need?

I thought about his offer for a couple of days and decided I needed three things. Maybe I should have asked for more.

I needed company, someone to talk to and argue with—a sounding board—someone who could help. I also needed a radio transceiver (a combined transmitter and receiver) so that I could communicate with Kieta. And I needed a publicist.

In normal circumstances, I would have organised a police constable, or someone from the village, to deliver my messages to Kieta, but I did want to ask favours from the villagers and I could not spare either of the two constables.

Some A510 transceivers like those we carried in the bush at Telefomin would be ideal. I asked for three—one for my use, one for Kieta and one as a spare—and I asked for them to be set up with a frequency that would allow me to converse without the rest of Bougainville listening in.

I asked for Senior Constable Yimbin [2] to be plucked out of Maprik, ostensibly to take charge of my two police but to be my publicist. I did not want to wait months for the people to trust me or for the police to understand what I expected of them—or what they could expect of me.

In the 1960s, many village people could not read or write; news travelled by word of mouth and people gossiped.

Yimbin, a Sepik from the middle-river village of Korogo, was not garrulous, but at the evening meal around the campfire—at his storytelling best—he would talk about the Sepik, about himself and about me. He would not have to be told to do so, it would be spontaneous. We had known each other for ten years in the Sepik, and he knew the other stories: of the Goilala and of patrolling at Telefomin and in the wild country south of Kainantu.

I knew that a young Patrol Officer at Maprik, John (VJ) Dagge, would meet my need for company. I could discuss ideas, explore and argue options with him. I knew he was single, and I thought that he was unattached, but I was wrong.

Dagge had become seriously involved with the young lady—soon to be his wife—who

was the East Sepik District Commissioner's secretary. Perhaps that was why it took him over two months, until November, to get to Bougainville.

I think I surprised Denehy when I announced that on my return to the Guava, I was going to visit each village in the area and update the census. He was probably more amazed when I offered to take one of the Cadets along with me.

What we called a census was more a roll call. After all the people at each village assembled in family groups to have their names checked against the village book and I had talked to them, I would be confident that everybody knew something about the insufferable mining legislation.

Cadet Patrol Officer Bob Gregory[3] brought four more police constables with him when he walked in to join me on the census patrol. That increased my detachment's strength to seven.

We set off on 28 July 1966, the local men carrying our gear as we moved from one village to the next. At each village, the women brought food (root vegetables) for us to buy. Nobody was unfriendly. They just did not believe anything I had to say about CRA or the mining legislation.

After two months of discussion, I was satisfied the people had heard and digested my explanations about their rights and the company's rights, and, even though they did not accept the mining laws, they knew the fundamental aspects of the legislation.

At the beginning of September 1966, the men from Guava helped us shift our base from the village down to the prospecting area. It was time to move forward. CRA was applying pressure. They wanted the freedom to operate according with the law and their government-granted prospecting licences. I told the people that the drilling operations that had been closed on 2 June 1966 in response to Anthony Ampei's demand were going to be reactivated.

The drill thought to be in the centre of the ore body would be the first as the test results from it might determine the future of the operation. It was located on Biuro, a piece of land recognised as being owned by the Kurava and controlled by Anthony Ampei.

To avoid creating the impression that the police had to occupy the site before CRA could operate, the drill team (two expatriates and three or four Bougainvilleans) took the kilometre-long level walk through the forest without an escort.

I followed them after a five-minute interval and six constables followed me, in groups of two, at similar intervals. The police carried unloaded .303 Lee Enfield rifles and had no ammunition.

Even though the operation on the 21 September 1966 was carried out without incident and provoked no opposition, I decided that I had had enough. Five days later, I wrote a tirade to Assistant Director Aitchison.

I told him I wanted out. I did not like the task that I had been given, and I did not like being separated from my family. (They had been living on their own in Kieta for three months and I had only seen them for a weekend at the end of each fortnight. Making things worse, during that time my four-year-old son had been evacuated to Rabaul as a medical emergency.)

In a further complaint, I pointed out that, when I was transferred, I had reverted from my Assistant District Commissioner position to District Officer, a move that had reduced my salary and probably prejudiced my chance of future promotion.

Finally, I queried why I had been transported 1,500 kilometres from the Sepik to Bougainville when two senior kiaps, Phil Hardy[4] and Bob (RW) Blaikie,[5] who knew the people well, were based at either end of Bougainville—and only thirty minutes' flight from the problem.

With nothing to lose, I told Aitchison I was determined to leave and that either Blaikie or Hardy could replace me.

But, in reality, it was a hollow threat. I had just returned from leave. If I resigned, I would have to pay the family's fares back to Australia. I had nothing in the bank and could not just walk away from Dagge and Yimbin after I had dragged them into the mess. Yimbin was already with me and Dagge was on his way.

Author's Note

Two very important subjects, the Pankiranku land dispute and the Catholic Mission's involvement, have been omitted from this chapter. I will write about these important matters as stand-alone chapters later.

Knowledgeable readers may also notice that details in my account differ significantly from those in Ken Phillip's 'Notes on early contact with Bougainvilleans in the early exploration phase, 1966—1964' published as an appendix in Bedford and Mamak's *Compensating for development: the Bougainville case* (Department of Geography, University of Canterbury, Christchurch New Zealand, 1977).

Bedford and Mamak undertook their fieldwork in Bougainville in 1973 and 1974. They published their book in 1977. Phillips' notes were written as 'comment on an earlier draft' in 1976, 10 years after the events they purported to describe. Errors suggest that Phillips may not have had access to records.

I note some examples of the more glaring errors here with my comments below:

CRA Geologist Ken Phillips, Bougainville, 1965
(Patrol Officer Arthur Marks)

'Mollison, the DC (District Commissioner) was virtually waiting for retirement and hoping we would go away and probably stopped a lot of Denehy's reports ever reaching Moresby (Not for publication!)'

In 1965, Denehy reported to the District Officer Bougainville, Des Clancy. Clancy commented on those reports and sent them to the Director in Port Moresby. In 1966, Denehy was addressing CRA-related correspondence to the Assistant Administrator and the Director of Administration in Port Moresby and to the District Commissioner, Sohano.

'A new Bougainvillean arrived on the scene … Anthony Ampei. A young man who claimed to have been at Sohano with Bishop for the past two or three years … [he] turned out to be something of a religious/cargo cult fanatic who had been in the asylum in Port Moresby for the previous three years … and subsequently returned there where he still is.'

I do not whether Anthony Ampei came back to Guava from the Bishop's establishment at Tsiroge (not Sohano), or if he had ever been away. The records establish that Ampei was in and around Panguna from 1966 to 1973 at least.

'W Brown was posted to Panguna by (Tom) Ellis as a hard-line kiap with explicit directions to get us back on the job with force if necessary but without bloodshed (my interpretation).'

The letter quoted earlier in this chapter establishes that I was transferred from the Sepik to Kieta (not to Panguna) by Director JK McCarthy (not by Tom Ellis). In 1966, Tom (TW) Ellis, District Commissioner, Western Highlands, based in Mount Hagen was not involved in Bougainville and had nothing to do with staff postings.

'Denehy was slapped over the knuckles ... Denehy was removed from having anything to do with Panguna and confined to Kieta and then transferred to oblivion in Samarai at the end of 1966.'

Denehy was promoted from District Officer to Deputy District Commissioner in June 1966. Most people would consider that a reward not a slap over the knuckles. He was not removed from having anything to do with Panguna, I reported to him. His posting as Deputy District Commissioner, Milne Bay, would have been envied, not viewed as a banishment to oblivion. Samarai was a highly regarded station.

FOOTNOTES

1. Assistant Director TG Aitchison, a pre-war patrol officer and District Officer in ANGAU, had been District Commissioner before taking up his role in Headquarters. He played an active role in CRA's Bougainville affairs from 1966 until he retired in 1968.
2. Sergeant-Major Henry Yimbin-Tamai was awarded the British Empire Medal in the 1977 Queen's Silver Jubilee and Birthday Honours.
3. RW Gregory, a Western Australian, was less than 20 years of age when he became a Cadet Patrol Officer in December 1965. He had only been at Kieta six months when he joined me at Guava for his first and only exposure to the CRA problem. Gregory completed his second term at Hutjena and Kunua in Bougainville and may have then resigned.
4. GP Hardy was born in Port Moresby in 1923. He was a Captain in ANGAU during World War II and became a Patrol Officer in January 1946. Except for a period when he acting as District Officer Sohano, responsible for the Bougainville District, Hardy had been Assistant District Commissioner at Buin for six years in July 1966.
5. RW Blaikie born in 1927 became a kiap in November 1948 and served in Bougainville from November 1964 to October 1968 with four stints as acting DDC between 1966 and 1968.

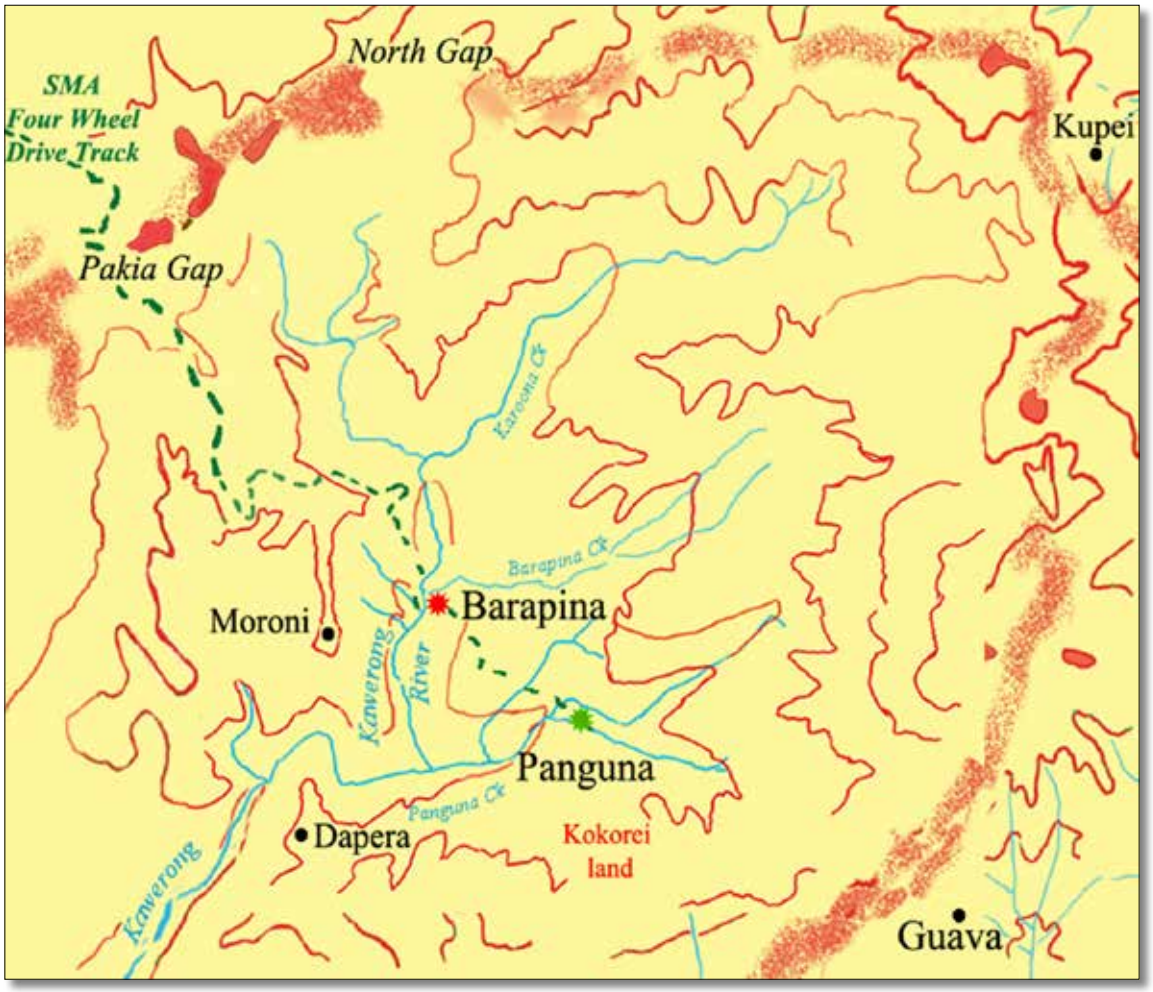
19: Trapped Between Landowners and Bureaucrats

I seek to mediate with angry landowners but find the mining company and my own bosses in Canberra and Port Moresby unhelpful

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 1966, CRA's geologist Ken Phillips left for his New Zealand homeland, supposedly for a short holiday.

The gossip was that he was unwell and close to a stress-related breakdown. That may not have been true but if it was, I wasn't very far behind.

Tom Aitchison, the assistant director of my department, had not replied to my letter in which I had told him in the strongest terms that I did not like the task I had been given and wanted out. I expected another officer to fly in unannounced to take over my job at any time.



Two senior kiaps, Phil Hardy and Bob Blaikie, who knew the people well, were based at either end of Bougainville just a thirty-minute flight away.

There were frequent incidents involving the local people almost every day and I was experiencing the pressures that my predecessor Max Denehy had spoken about: CRA wanted to expand their operations at Panguna and beyond.

Three months earlier, Canberra-based Gerry Gutman, First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Territories, had advised CRA that 'District Officers would make close contact with the native people particularly in the Mainoki, Karato and Daratui areas to give them a clearer understanding of the value to them of the project to facilitate the early entry of CRA to the area.'

If anybody had asked me what I thought of his idea, I would have said that he must be raving mad.

We had not gained even tacit acceptance from the people of CRA's drilling operation at Panguna, and I was resisting CRA's planned intrusions into their other areas of interest.

I was certainly not going to become involved in negotiations at Mainoki, an eight-hour walk away, or Karato, which was even further south across the ranges.

The Mining Warden, Hec (HJ) McKenzie, walked into Barapina at dusk on 28 September to stay for a couple of nights. McKenzie was based at Wau but visited Bougainville when required.

On this occasion, he had come to adjudicate CRA's request for permission to build a temporary access road (a four-wheel drive track from the coast) through Gregory Korpa's pig enclosure on the hillside near Moroni.

We spent the evening talking and arguing about CRA's problems as well as the mining law. Next morning, we climbed up to Moroni village where he opened his Warden's Court proceedings.

The village was perched on the brow of a very high bluff. It looked down into Barapina and it had a bird's-eye view over the Kaweong River valley and Panguna. The pig enclosure turned out to be huge—almost a paddock, palisaded and stocked with numerous pigs—and not owned by just Gregory Korpa.

It was a communal venture owned by families from Pakia and Moroni, and all wanted to be involved. Husbands, wives and offspring followed us back down to Barapina for the conclusion of the proceedings.

They seemed satisfied and happy when McKenzie decreed that the company build a 457-metre pig-wire fence where the proposed road would run alongside the enclosure. They were even happier when he awarded them cash payments for the nuisance.

Perhaps it was not surprising that Gregory Korpa declined to accept the occupation fee. He said if he did, the company would prevent him from driving on the road when he obtained a car. Maybe he rationalised that if he accepted he would be acknowledging that CRA had the right to prospect on his land.

I don't know whether it was because of my submissions to that Warden's Court or because the Barapina house was close to the main track between the villages in the Kawerong and

Pinei River valleys, but from that day on, I had a constant stream of people dropping in every day to talk.

Gregory Korpa came down from Moroni almost every morning to discuss and argue about his problems. Anthony Ampei from Guava and Damien Damen from Irang made an occasional appearance, but only to rant and rave.

I told the company that I wanted a two-week interval before the second drilling rig on Biuro (No. 39) was reactivated. Ampei's hand-printed 'tambu' (keep out) signs surrounded that drilling rig just as they had drilling rig No. 38 which had been brought back into operation on 21 September 1966.

I wanted the time to have leisurely discussions with the people about the company's plans and what the law allowed. By the end of the second week, I was satisfied that the drillers and their Bougainvillean assistants would not need to be protected when they made the long walk through the forest to ready the rig on Monday, 3 November.

I would not be involved, nor would any of the police. Nor would we be involved on the following day when drilling recommenced.

I was pleasantly surprised when, two days later, Pena (the Tultul of Musinau) and three other men from Musinau village recommenced their employment on drilling rig No. 39. They had been willing workers on that rig until Anthony Ampei's threat had closed it down and public opinion had forced them to withdraw from CRA. Now they were back, working one of the two shifts each day and returning home to the village to sleep.

Any good relations that I had managed to establish were destroyed on Tuesday, 11 October, when dogs attacked and savaged the Moroni villagers' pigs. The dogs belonged to members of a CRA geological team that was operating in another pig enclosure on the right bank of the Kawerong.

A thirty-year-old geologist, Phil (PM) Macnamara from Naremburn in Sydney, probably received most of my wrath. Colin (CP) Bishop, who had replaced geologist Ken Phillips as Area Manager of the Bougainville operation, was also in the firing line. He and everybody within earshot of my tirade would have realised that I was very annoyed and not on CRA's side.

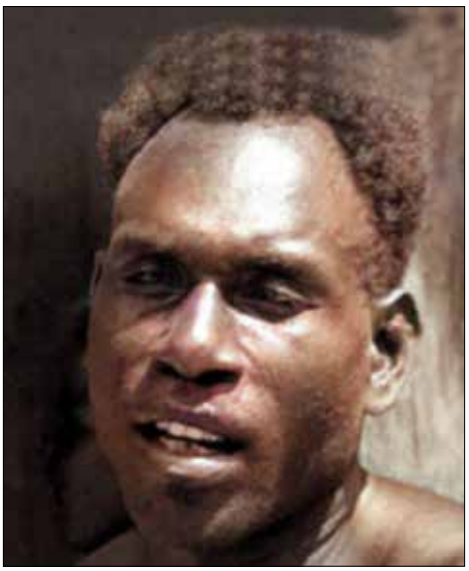
During that tumultuous week, I received a reply from Assistant Director Aitchison dated 3 October 1966. The letter was addressed to 'W T Brown, District Office, Kieta' followed by the salutation 'Dear Bill' handwritten in ink.

That was the first time he had addressed me by my first name. On earlier occasions in the Sepik he had always referred to me as 'Brown' or, even more disdainfully, as 'Mr Brown'.

He wrote that Dagge (the Patrol Officer whom I had requested be transferred from the Sepik to join me) had not yet left but would soon be on the way. He 'hoped that I could get down and see the family soon and that the drilling activities continued to go smoothly'.

Although the foolscap page of typing contained other platitudes and concluded 'With kind regards to all at Kieta and of course your own good self and family, I remain … Yours sincerely ... T. G. Aitchison.' his signature failed to match the informal 'Dear Bill' salutation.

The attachment, a copy of a letter addressed to the Assistant Administrator (Services),



TOP: A Bell 47G helicopter, described as a balus bun nating [lit. skeletal bird] in Tok Pisin, on the ground at Torokina, Bougainville, 1960s *(Darryl Robbins)*

CENTRE: Gregory Korpa at Moroni *(J Martin-Jones, AFTVS);* Colin Bishop, CRA's Area Manager *(J Martin-Jones, AFTVS;)* Paul Lapun, Member for Bougainville in the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly, 1966 *(J Martin-Jones, AFTVS)*

BOTTOM: John Dagge, Patrol Officer, outside Mushroom Castle at Barapina—the romantic era *(provided)*

signed by Director JK McCarthy, was even more remarkable and liberally sprinkled with bunkum:

> Mr Brown was selected by this Department as the officer best able to meet the situation which has arisen … because of CRA's prospecting activities. He is occupying the position of Assistant District Commissioner, Kieta at present … engaged in a most delicate task for which I have no other officer so well equipped. It is most likely that he will miss opportunities to act in the position of Deputy District Commissioner whilst engaged in those duties.

The letter went on to recommend that I be paid a higher duties allowance to bring my salary to Deputy District Commissioner level.

I was not 'occupying the position of Assistant District Commissioner, Kieta.' I was living in a shack at Barapina. I had a portable transceiver to report to DDC Denehy at Kieta, but I had nothing whatsoever to do with Sub-District affairs. Nevertheless, from that time on I was given the ADC title and paid the ADC allowance.

According to the Staff Postings circular three months later in January 1967, I was still an Assistant District Commissioner but the Secretary for Territories in Canberra and the new Administrator, David Hay, were referring to me in correspondence as Deputy District Commissioner.

Patrol Officer John Dagge was delivered to Barapina by helicopter at the end of October 1966. Around this time, the Snowy Mountains Authority's lead bulldozer made its appearance at Pakia Gap on the top of the Crown Prince Range.

The SMA was building a 'jeep track' for CRA from the coast to Panguna using two heavy bulldozers. They had taken almost a year—from November 1965—to claw and clamber up the coastal side of the range, forming the rough track as they progressed.

Almost simultaneously the heavy rains began. Over the next five months, from November to March inclusive, we copped 2,769 millimetres. Even by Territory standards that was a lot of rain. It seemed to pour down every afternoon and continue throughout the night.

Often in the late afternoon, Dagge and I watched the bulldozer struggling up and down the ridges. Far away in the distance, the dozer seemed to be alive as it pushed huge trees and boulders out of its path. We were sheltering undercover; the bulldozer operator and his surrounds were being drenched by teeming rain.

It took the whole of November and 19 days of December for the dozer to cut the track down from the Pakia Gap to Barapina. Dagge was on his own the day it arrived—I was in Kieta—but he described the event to me:

> The bulldozer clomped over the last ridgeline and came face to face with 'micaceous schist', which is unstable and turns to a soupy bog if disturbed. The operator buried the blade and then the complete machine much to the amusement of the hostile villagers who were watching his attempts to extricate himself from the soup.
>
> I watched the performance until the 'dozer disappeared. A little later, I was confronted by the operator coated in the mud-like contents of the bog. He was furious and shouted that 'he was snatching it and I could stick his job up where the sun did not shine. Anyone thinking they could build roads in this country was insane!'
>
> When I informed him that I was with the government and that he would need to tender

his resignation to the company, a further stroll up the valley, he defamed my parents, cursed my indolence and departed spraying another torrent of abuse as he disappeared up the track towards Panguna.

November had to be a quiet month, so I had been told. No incidents were to occur while the Member for Bougainville's third attempt to amend the mining legislation was being debated in the House of Assembly. Paul Lapun had assured the House that the landowners at Panguna would be satisfied and that their opposition to prospecting would cease if they were given five percent of mineral royalties.

CRA had agreed to the Administration's request to defer expanding their operations onto Kokorei land while the amendment was being debated, but when it was passed on 25 November 1966, they wanted to surge ahead without any more delays.

I described the situation rather bluntly in my very last report to Denehy on 3 December:

> There is a hardening of opposition as the destruction of the forest and the magnitude of damage to the countryside becomes more obvious; a closer alignment between the opposing groups of Kokorei, Guava and Moroni as each becomes more and more affected by the company activity, and there is an increased resentment of the Company and the Administration.
>
> The Company currently desires to locate the drill on Kokorei, to clear the road between Barapina and Panguna, to commence preparing a new camp area and gravel pit operations, to move drills from site to site within the area and to go about their business in the area at the current accelerated pace.
>
> Each of these activities will probably provoke an incident and could require police intervention … I strongly recommend that the Member be given the opportunity to explain his amendment to the people before further company activity, and Administration support of this activity can be used as an excuse.

Denehy did not express an opinion but passed my report to Headquarters with a brief one-line comment: 'Forwarded, please. I bow to Mr Brown's reasoning.' He had other things to do: he was packing up his household to go on leave. I was taking over his role, but I would have to split my time between Kieta and Barapina where twenty-five-year-old Dagge, a kiap with only five years' experience, would be saddled with an unreasonable responsibility.

On Monday, 19 December, CRA started to move a drill onto Kokorei land and the villagers stopped them from doing so. The villagers then called a meeting of the neighbouring villages. CRA's management and I were summoned to attend.

Bob Read, CRA's mining foreman, and drilling foreman, Peter Gayden, appeared in place of Area Manager Bishop who had left 10 days earlier to spend Christmas in Australia. Patrol Officer John Dagge accompanied me. There were no arguments or discussion: the villagers had already decided the outcome. The sixty people from the six villages at the meeting announced 'There would be no more drilling! CRA must leave.'

In an endeavour to defuse the standoff, the CRA team arranged for Paul Lapun to be collected from his village by helicopter and deposited at Guava to reason with CRA opponents. He talked about the amended legislation; he explained that the activities were exploratory;

he spoke about the benefits they would receive if mining went ahead. He reasoned, cajoled and pleaded for five hours without success.

I told Headquarters the situation could develop into a major incident. In a separate communication, CRA Melbourne told Canberra that:

> ... after talking to the Guava people Paul Lapun had visited Panguna … There was no change in the landowners' attitudes … Mr Brown had agreed to CRA proceeding with their drilling [at Panguna] and work on the East Coast road which had previously been held up through opposition from Kokorei people.

Some weeks later, Melbourne-based Don (DC) Vernon seemed to get sardonic pleasure in informing me how that message had been passed to Canberra. Vernon, the local Area Manager Bishop's immediate superior, said an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Territories named Ahrens telephoned him frequently to check whether my reports were accurate. He implied that the Department was anxious to help CRA.

CRA closed down for Christmas on 23 December and Dagge and I went down to Kieta. He to meet Robyn Griffin, his wife-to-be, visiting from Wewak; I to catch up with my family and any outstanding matters left by Denehy.

I knew that Robyn was the Sepik District Commissioner's secretary and I had envisaged a formidable dragon or a buxom Irish lady with green eyes, red hair and freckles. Robyn was neither. This lithe, dark-haired beauty with sparkling hazel eyes was about to turn twenty-three and very much smitten. I felt sorry for the Sepik District Commissioner. I thought he might need to find another secretary.

Dagge and Robyn had flitted off to the hills and I was enjoying the Christmas holiday break when an unexpected radiogram arrived from Headquarters. Assistant Director Aitchison was on his way from Port Moresby, flying in a chartered aircraft to Aropa airstrip.

He needed to visit Marist Bishop Leo LeMay and Marist Fathers Mahoney, Moore and Wiley; he also wanted to visit Panguna to talk with the village people. He was in a hurry. He wanted to travel by helicopter. Please meet and arrange!

Aitchison arrived in Kieta but told us very little. He said he had come to assess the Kokorei situation and he wanted to ascertain other facts. What was the attitude of the people? Could there be violence? Had the Marist priests played any role? He had to report before 3 January but he did not say to whom.

Although he was more amenable than he had been 10 years earlier when he was my boss as District Officer in the Sepik, he still concluded every discussion with his 'see how clever I am' smirk. I sometimes wished he would emulate the Cheshire cat in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and gradually disappear, leaving just the smile.

Aitchison talked to a few people in Kieta then departed in the helicopter—a tiny Bell 47—to visit Father Wiley at Tunuru (on the east coast north of Kieta), Father Moore at Moratona (on the west coast) and Father Mahoney (at Deomori in the mountains west of Panguna).

He drafted his preliminary report when he returned that afternoon, and he wanted it sent immediately as two encrypted radiograms to the Assistant Administrator in Port Moresby. Despite Aitchison's haste, the first message did not clear Kieta until 10.40 am on 28 December.

The shorter, second message left twenty minutes later.

Two days of Aitchison were enough. We were glad to see him fly off to Buka Passage to visit Bishop Lemay at Tsiroge and the District Commissioner at Sohano.

I had taken Aitchison to Barapina for one-on-one meetings that Dagge had set up with Anthony Ampei (Guava), Damien Damen (Irang) and Gregory Korpa (Moroni). Aitchison had also spoken individually to the thirteen members of the police detachment and to the CRA Area Manager. He told us nothing about those conversations.

We knew the Area Manager kept information from us, although he was supposed to tell us what was planned so we could inform the people. We expected better, however, from our Assistant Director. Dagge and I decided it was time to change the name of our Barapina house to Mushroom Castle. We were being kept in the dark and fed on bullshit.

The company resumed work 3 January 1966 and began moving the first drill onto the Kokorei site and preparing the site for the second drill. Dagge and I wandered around, providing a presence, until both drills were installed and operating: the first on 10 January, the second on 13 January.

There was no opposition to the moves. Drills and drilling were not new to the Kokorei people. Drilling had taken place on their land in early 1966, and 30 CRA employees still lived in the village. Nevertheless, I tasked some police constables to roam around in pairs at regular intervals as a precaution. As was the custom, they each carried a rifle, but they had no ammunition.

On 7 January, three days after the first drill was positioned, a radiogram arrived from Port Moresby:

> Aitchison's directions 28th December to Brown and Wakeford now modified. Agreed CRA proceed drilling programme in Panguna grid area and Kokorei locality and road location and construction in consultation with Brown. Any police protection to be available to Company parties to allow them to proceed [with their] lawful occasions. Mining operations should not be commenced in new areas where opposition is likely pending further review.

We wondered what had happened, what could have changed? The revised instruction permitted drilling on Kokorei land, but Aitchison knew that drilling had already commenced.

The company was now entitled to 'any police protection … to allow them [to] proceed' Maybe the revision was intended to make us more responsive to CRA.

They could proceed with their program 'in consultation with Brown.' Maybe CRA could now claim they were not at fault, provided I had been consulted?

Many years later we learnt the reason for the confusing message. The Minister's bureaucrats did not understand the statement contained in a summary of Aitchison's final report—eleven long pages of telex—sent from Port Moresby on 3 January 1967: 'Drill grid or plan indicates two year's [of] work on present rate [of] progress to complete and could continue within the grid area without interference.'

They wanted to know 'the meaning of drill grid or plan, whether it referred to the Kokorei area only, and if the two years' work related to Kokorei only.' They also wanted to know how many police could be moved into the area if difficulties arose suddenly, and 'if

additional police could be moved readily to area from other parts of the Territory if a show of force becomes necessary.'

The telexed reply on 4 January 1967 said that the drill grid was the drilling pattern overlaid on CRA's map of the Panguna area, that the 'grid area did not include the Kokorei land [but] only embraced the area immediately surrounding CRA's Panguna operations; [that the] two-year estimate [was] ADO [sic] Brown's based on the present rate [of] progress.'

He was referring to my contention that CRA should not provoke opposition by entering the Kokorei land while two years' further drilling work was still outstanding around Panguna. He did not mention my even stronger objection to the mooted move on to Moroni land.

He also said that there were thirteen police at Barapina under Patrol Officer Dagge, twelve at Kieta and ninety-two throughout Bougainville but argued that it would be 'easier to re-enforce [Barapina] from Rabaul where well-trained riot squads are available. Forty fully equipped police can be carried in each aircraft and landed in Kieta in two hours.'

The telex concluded with a virtual recommendation:

> The general situation has not changed in the last six months. Ample time has now elapsed for implications on mining amendments to be understood by people but people unreceptive. CRA has co-operated fully in the last six months to avoid incidents, but we believe necessary now to ensure the company can exercise legal rights in Prospecting Authorities.
>
> Always a risk of incident but the risk of clash now no greater than when previously drills were moved into areas against the wish of some landowners. Believe delay in implementing drilling in Kokorei area will compound difficulties.

That recommendation differed from all that had been said and recommended in Kieta on 28 December, as did the follow-up telex sent in the Administrator's name on 5 January 1967:

> Aitchison issued explicit instructions to Brown and Wakeford incoming District Commissioner on 28th December that use of force cannot be allowed in regard to mining operations without explicit authorisation of Minister. Told that CRA should be so advised. Brown instructed to withdraw if physical opposition offered.

I wondered how he defined the offer of physical opposition and I wondered, if there was opposition, whether our opponents would allow us to withdraw.

The remainder of January would have been relaxed, were it not for the series of Warden's Court hearings to renew the prospecting authorities. Villagers, landowners, and anybody else who was interested were invited to attend and express their views. The hearings, intended to keep the people informed about what was going to happen, only made them more irate and annoyed.

I reported that it would take very little to cause an outbreak of violence in the Guava area. Warden McKenzie reported verbally to his headquarters that rumours were circulating that he and I were going to be attacked when we attended a meeting at Guava. The summons to attend the meeting, handwritten in Bougainville-style Tok Pisin and dated 23 January 67, was delivered to John Dagge at Barapina on 16 January:

Benedicamus Domino, Koava Village, 23-1-67
Dear Mr Bill Brown and McKenzie
You mas kam long pode tokim mipela sam ting yu bin selim tok long mipela. Dispela graun no Australia Kantri belong yu, nau ino graun bilong CRA tu. Yu biket man tru na man bling tok nabaut. Yu gat rang pinis. Gavaman bilong yu em I stil gavaman tru, mipela ologeta saave pinis long yupela. CRA I mas go nau. Olreit em dasol dispel toke mi belong all pipal.
(sgd) Anthony Ampe

You must come on Thursday and tell us what kind of messages you have been sending to us. This land is not your country, Australia, neither is it CRA's land. You guys are bigheads and talk nonsense. You are guilty of wrong, your Government is a very thieving government, and each and every one of us knows you guys. C.RA must leave immediately. Okay, that's all—this is the unanimous message of all the people. *[Translation by Chris Warrillow]*

Ampe's note probably referred to the following Thursday, but on that day McKenzie would be presiding at the Warden's Court hearing at Daratui. I was also required to attend. Although I suggested he nominate another day, I never received a reply.

ENDNOTES

1. Hector James McKenzie, born in 1923 in Wycheproof, a tiny town in the dry and dusty Mallee in Victoria's north west. Following service in the Royal Australian Navy, he joined the TPNG Administration as clerk in August 1946 and was employed in the Mining Warden's office until Warden Percy (OP) Blanden's untimely demise in 1954. Blanden must have taught McKenzie well. As Warden, he handled the complex Bougainville mining issues until 1975.
2. Vincent John Dagge, born in Melbourne in December 1941, was also a boy from the Victoria's dry and dusty Mallee. He had moved with his parents from Melbourne to Ultima, his father's birthplace, as an eight-year old. According to Dagge, Ultima (80 kilometres north of Wycheproof) had a 'population of about 120 all up, people plus dogs.' Like McKenzie, Dagge had joined the Territory administration as a clerk. He worked in the Department of Agriculture for 12 months before becoming a Cadet Patrol Officer in 1962, He was seven months into his third term and had been stationed at five Sepik outstations—Amanab, Imonda, Maprik, Yangoru and Ambunti—when transferred to Bougainville.
3. Paul Lapun was born in Mabis village, Banoni, Bougainville in 1923. In 1966, he was a community leader and a politician, having easily won the seat of Bougainville in the first House of Assembly elections. He became the first parliamentary leader of the Pangu Party in 1967, patron of the pro-independence Napidakoe Navitu in Bougainville in 1969. He was Minister for Mines in the first Somare government from 1972 and was knighted in 1974.
4. Bishop Leo LeMay was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA, in 1909 and ordained into the Society of Mary in August 1933. On 14 June 1960, he was appointed bishop of the Northern Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea. On 15 November 1966, he was appointed first bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bougainville. He resigned on 1 July 1974 and died in 1983 aged 73

20: Anti-Mining Tensions Escalate at Barapina

Patrol Officer John Dagge and I deploy every bit of our knowledge, judgement and luck to defuse a potentially nasty conflict near the copper mine site

MY SENIOR OFFICER, Assistant Director Tom Aitchison, was back in Port Moresby from Bougainville and Patrol Officer John Dagge and I had negotiated with landowners for CRA to install two new drills at Kokorei.

I was catching up on Sub-District affairs, working from the office in Kieta, as well as spending at least two or three days each week at Barapina with Dagge and his small detachment of police.

I had secured the posting of Inspector of Police Clem Henney[1] in Kieta by making my house available and moving up to Max Denehy's house on the point.

A uniformed officer was required to manage the increasing numbers of police deployed to the Kieta Hotel on weekends. Many of the 500-strong CRA workforce flocked to the bar around midday each Saturday and there they stayed: black Bougainvilleans, redskins (other Papua New Guineans, mainly Highlanders) and whites and brindles from all corners of the globe.

All were single men and on their time off they had nowhere else to go and nothing else to do except get drunk and brawl, mostly across their racial groups.

Each weekend the skirmishes seemed the same. The Bougainvilleans—heavily outnumbered—were generally the first to withdraw but fighting continued between the redskins until the coastal elements pulled out. Late in the evening the Highlanders were still at it, the battles now between Chimbus and Hagens and all the other lines.

The New Year of 1967 had brought other changes. John (JE) Wakeford was transferred from the Sepik to take over as District Commissioner, Bougainville, while in Port Moresby, former diplomat David Hay was replacing Brigadier Sir Donald Cleland as Administrator of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.[2]

CRA had been revamped the previous year when the Bougainville prospect was made a stand-alone operation under Melbourne-based Frank (FF) Espie.[3] He was supported in Melbourne by Project Manager Don (DC) Vernon and accountant and financial planner Paul Quodling. Meanwhile, Colin Bishop remained in Bougainville as Area Manager.

Tensions, and our wariness, were taken to a higher level by a series of Warden's Court hearings in January. I avoided the two hearings on the west coast—at Boku and Torokina—that related to limestone and construction materials and were unlikely to create contention. But I needed to be present for the hearings at Kieta, Daratui, Pakia and Barapina that concerned the mining of copper.

At the Barapina hearing on 15 January 1967, the people from Moroni village told Mining Warden Hec McKenzie that they implacably opposed CRA's plans to build an accommodation complex on their land to the north of Barapina Creek.

They were even more opposed to drilling anywhere on the right bank of the Kawerong River. Two old men, Dua Bouwaru and Dotanum Bakamori, said they would have to be killed before CRA could work on their land.

The people listened quietly as McKenzie provided his opening explanation. He would write down each person's evidence in the words they used and send them to Port Moresby where the Administrator of Papua and New Guinea would determine the outcome.

To Dagge and I, it seemed part of a logical process. We knew the Mining Advisory Board would consider the evidence given before McKenzie in the Warden's Court, and the Board would make recommendations to the Administrator. We did not know, however, that David Hay, the new Administrator, would consult with Warwick Smith, Secretary for Territories in Canberra, before making his decision. He did so by telex on 1 February 1967:

> Mining Advisory Board has recommended extension of Prospecting Authority N07 covering 110 square miles [285 square kilometres] for term of two years. Minutes of meeting and text of Warden's Court hearings forwarded by memorandum … My intention is to determine the matter by accepting the recommendations of the Mining Advisory Board. Subject to your views, I would informally advise the Administrator's Council to this effect on 4 February and would refrain from signing the determination until the Council had been so advised ...

One particular paragraph of the Secretary's response, telexed to the Administrator the following day, revealed Canberra's attempt at spin:

> Suggest that if not already doing so and if legally possible you might consider adding to the conditions recommended by the Mining Board which would be helpful for presentational purposes such as obliging the Company to respect customs and traditional practices of the landowners and the people of the area to the fullest extent practicable consistent with carrying out programme of prospecting operations and requiring prior notice to, and agreement of, Administration to operations involving disturbance of people or land.

Amidst the increasing tension, Assistant Director Aitchison made another brief visit to Kieta at the end of January but on this occasion he was not interested in visiting the Marists. He wanted to speak to Dagge and me, and also CRA.

I went with him to Barapina to meet up with Dagge and Aitchison told us of a new instruction from Canberra that we should observe immediately and meticulously. He said the documentation would arrive in due course:

> Each move to a new area is to be preceded by patient and persevering attempts by Administration officials over several weeks if necessary, to explain what is involved [and] the benefits.
>
> The actual commencement of operations in a new area will be preceded if necessary, by a formal attempt to explain the forgoing in writing, by loud speaker, and by word of mouth. If after these steps have been taken there is reason to think that new mining operations are likely to result in violence, … a final effort [should be made] by a top-level group (e.g. the Director of Lands, the Secretary for Law, and one or both the Assistant Administrators) to go through the procedures of explanation, advice and consultation again. The possibility is not ruled out of the Administrator himself visiting the area with such a group ...

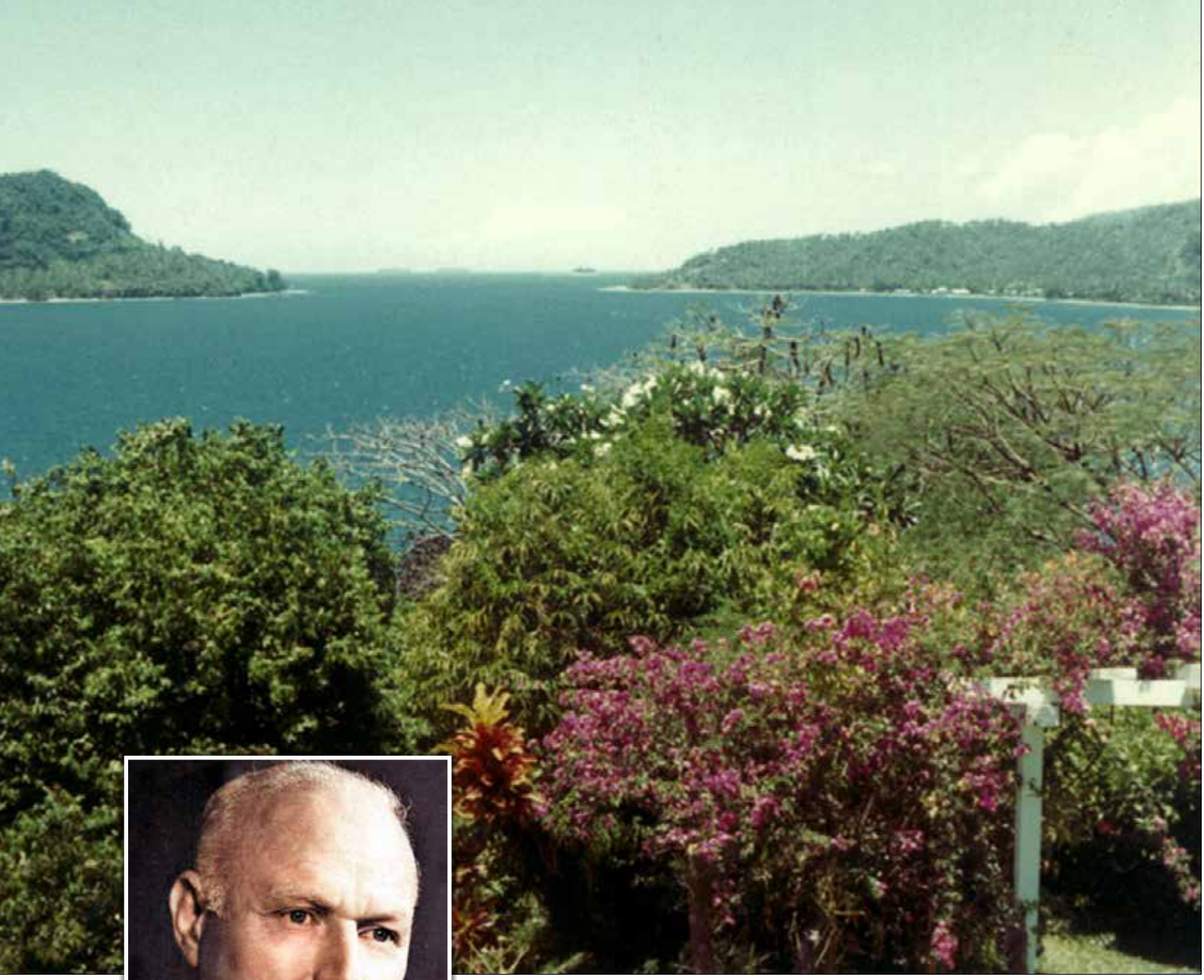
We wondered what we had been doing for the past eight months and whether time would stand still while we called for, and awaited the arrival of, the 'top level group'?

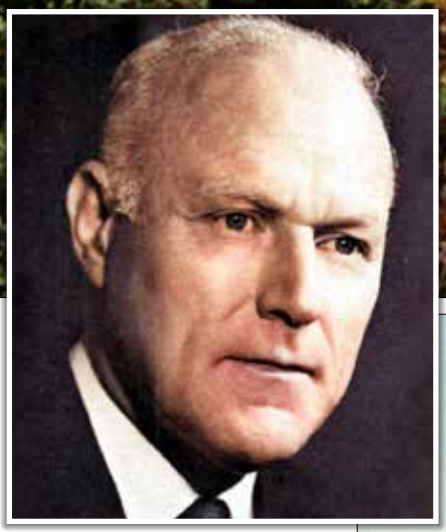
Much later, we found out that the instruction had been formulated in our Department's headquarters in Port Moresby (probably at Aitchison's behest) then forwarded to Canberra. Warwick Smith, the Secretary for Territories, had made minor modifications, given it a tick and presto, the instruction had become Ministerial command.

On 15 February 1967, Canberra's rehash of Aitchison's handiwork was rebirthed as Circular Instruction [4] No. 2 of J.1-58 with the title, 'Instructions and Advice to Officers involved in duties relating to prospecting, mining, and associated matters in Central Bougainville', and circulated to all District Commissioners over Director JK McCarthy's signature.

Dagge and I were gobsmacked. We had a Circular Instruction that seemed to apply only to us, a novel circumstance. We were not as surprised, though, by some of the gobbledegook that served as more spin and window dressing:

> The intention of the Administration is that the lawful operations under the Mining Ordinances should proceed without obstruction … In the rare cases where this purpose is not secured our objective is to ensure that the Territory Law is upheld and that lawful operations proceed ...
>
> In order to avoid unnecessary delays in the lawful operations of the Company, Administration officers shall use their initiative in seeking agreement on the spot. Much





TOP: Looking south-west from the Assistant District Commissioner's house across Kieta Harbour and the passage between Tautsina (Pok Pok) on the left and the mainland (St Michael's Marists Mission, Tubiana) on the right *(Bill Brown)*

LEFT: Frank (FF) Espie

RIGHT: The Crown Prince Range and Kawerong Valley *(Bill Brown)*

depends on their assessment as to the likelihood of group violence. Where it is the officer's assessment that such resistance is not likely and where consequently he authorises a move by company personnel to a new area he should, in the event of unexpected opposition, give such police support as is necessary to ensure that the operation proceeds.

I was soon being chastised for failing to obey the requirement that I radio 'a weekly situation report to reach DDA headquarters by Thursday evening each week'. I soon learnt that 'nothing to report' or 'no change since last report' was unacceptable. My bosses in Port Moresby had to have news to pass on to Canberra.

A couple of sentences in Aitchison's report to Canberra about his brief, end-of-January visit to Kieta were also of concern:

> From discussions with DDC Brown and PO Dagge it appears that the situation is being held and there is no more than usual activity in the mining area.
>
> CRA'S Vernon and Bishop were advised of the [new] instructions given to Administration officers involved in mining prospecting development and associated activities … Information given to press by government officers will be of a factual nature [and] only in relation to the work they are actually performing and personal opinions not to be expressed.
>
> Prior to these discussion CRA had been providing facilities to a pressman but Brown informed me that these facilities had been withdrawn by Bishop on Vernon's instruction.

I knew that an article by the journalist in question was about to be published in the Territory's daily newspaper, *South Pacific Post*, and I suspected it might contain some of those forbidden personal comments. A three-page spread appeared on 15 February 1967 did indeed include a rendition of my words, preceded by the introductory, 'This how Mr Brown sums up today's situation on Bougainville':

> The people of Bougainville are proud and independent. They don't see eventual self-government as the creation of Papua New Guinea, but a creation of an independent Bougainville. Some of them would like to have an alliance with the British Solomon Islands where there are already some ethnic ties. The Bougainville Islanders differ in skin colour to all other Papuans and New Guineans—who they call redskins.
>
> Their isolation complex and their deep but understandable preoccupation with their land has created a situation where they refuse to believe anything, we tell them, or in fact anything which another Papuan or New Guinean tells them.
>
> All we can do as government officers is to talk with them, listen to them, and keep them informed.

Those brief remarks would not win me any accolades. The bureaucrats in Canberra and the new Administrator in Port Moresby would be upset by the mention of an independent Bougainville. But this was to be the least of my worries.

More than one month had elapsed since the Warden had kicked off the first of the renewal hearings in Kieta on 14 January 1967. Each adjournment, the first to Barapina on 15 January then to a series of different villages, although well-intentioned had only increased the people's ire. They did not like be told, again and again, how CRA intended to prospect (or, in their eyes, invade) their land.

The animosity to CRA's expansion and increasing demands was at boiling point on 17 February 1967, the final hearing day for the renewal of Prospecting Authorities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6—another 332 square kilometres.

McKenzie wanted the proceedings to be held on the flat land in front of 'Mushroom Castle', the house at Barapina, so the people could gather and hear what was going on.

Dagge and I had other ideas. We located his table and chair about 60 metres from the house where we would be close enough to keep an eye on the proceedings but far enough away not to be swamped by the crowd if there was any trouble. After all, we were responsible for the Warden's safety and well-being.

For the first and only time in Bougainville, I issued live ammunition. But I gave one clip of five rounds to one person only, Senior Constable Yimbin, together with precise instructions: to load all the bullets into the magazine of his rifle.

If trouble flared up, and if I gave the command, he was to fire one shot well over the heads of the crowd and into the escarpment on the opposite bank of the Kawerong. If one shot did not stop the fracas, I would run forward with Dagge accompanied by the remaining twelve constables who carried unloaded rifles. He, Yimbin, was to fire over our heads as we ran. It was a precarious plan without any fallback.

The CRA team (Area Manager Colin Bishop and mining engineer Frank Paholski) stood in front of the table and gave their evidence. Port Moresby solicitor Cyril (CP) McCubbery assisted them as did Don Barrett, a Member of the House of Assembly, who CRA had employed to act as their interpreter.

Bishop and Paholski droned on for about ninety minutes reciting the company's good intentions and achievements. At the same time, the people crowded round shouting their opposition to CRA's intrusion.

They yelled their repudiation of the mining law, and they disparaged and rejected the authority of the House of Assembly and of the Australian Government. On several occasions Warden McKenzie suspended proceedings and threatened to abandon them.

Speaking later about the event, Chris Rangatin, an ABC radio reporter based in Port Moresby but originally from Lemankot Village, New Ireland, said:

> Things became a bit heated. Some of the young men began moving towards Barrett … asking him who he was … what right he had [to be] at the court. Had he come to help the Government tell more lies and take their land? One man walked close to Barrett and shook his fist in his face. I edged back out of the crowd. I was worried. Some of the men had bush knives.

Journalist David White's description of the event in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was more explicit:

> As McKenzie walked up to the Barapina patrol post he saw about 200 Nasioi people [from Guava, Irang, Kokorei, Moroni, Musinau and Pakia villages] gathered for the hearings. He also noticed an ominous sign: There were no children and very few women present. He knew that this generally meant that the villagers were expecting trouble or thinking of making some. It would not be an easy hearing …

> The Nasioi crowded in under a canvas lean-to … and clustered around the table at which McKenzie sat … The formalities necessary at the opening of the hearing were barely over when the Nasioi displayed their first flash of anger. Two young men stepped forward and denounced the hearing. 'We are the owners of this land' one of them, Anthony Ampe from Guava village said in pidgin. 'You do not belong here. CRA must go.' …
>
> McKenzie quickly called for order, 'There will be no interruptions of this Court. I will hear the applicant first then [I will] hear you,' he said firmly. This was one of several tense moments at the hearing … Three CRA officials gave evidence for the first 90 minutes. … But the crowd appeared unmoved by their recital of past and future accomplishments.…
>
> Then a young man, Damian Damen of Irang stepped forward and he clearly was to be main spokesman for the opposition … His impatience to state his case was shown when he was asked to swear on the Bible that he would tell the truth. Not understanding initially, he put his hand on the Bible and made an oath that CRA must leave the area immediately.
>
> Then reading from an obviously carefully prepared list, Damien gave seven reasons why the Company should leave … For an hour after Damien finished evidence, seven other Nasioi people spoke and all except one were resolutely opposed to the presence of CRA. Gregory Korpa particularly spoke with great heat and even called on the mining warden to hold a vote at the hearing to decide whether CRA- should go or stay. He was told it was for the Administration (sic), not the mining warden, and certainly not those at the hearing, to decide the fate of the CRA application.

The Mining Advisory Board considered the evidence presented to the Warden and made recommendations to the Administrator. The Administrator renewed CRA's Prospecting Authorities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for a further two years. Once again the people had been asked to give their views; once again they had been ignored.

Barrett commented on the hearing when he called on Administrator David Hay in Port Moresby on 24 February 1967:

> The people in the area objected to seeing strange faces, for example Mr McCubbery's presence was not welcome. There were some signs that the people of Panguna are prepared to see the minerals mined. The fact that they agreed to give evidence was important. The Company had not known of the use of local women by Company officers. The complaint had been made to the DDC. The Company should have been notified immediately.

I thought his comments fatuous. I was not the custodian of public morals and I did not report to the company. And I was surprised that he did not seem to realise how close we had come to violence.

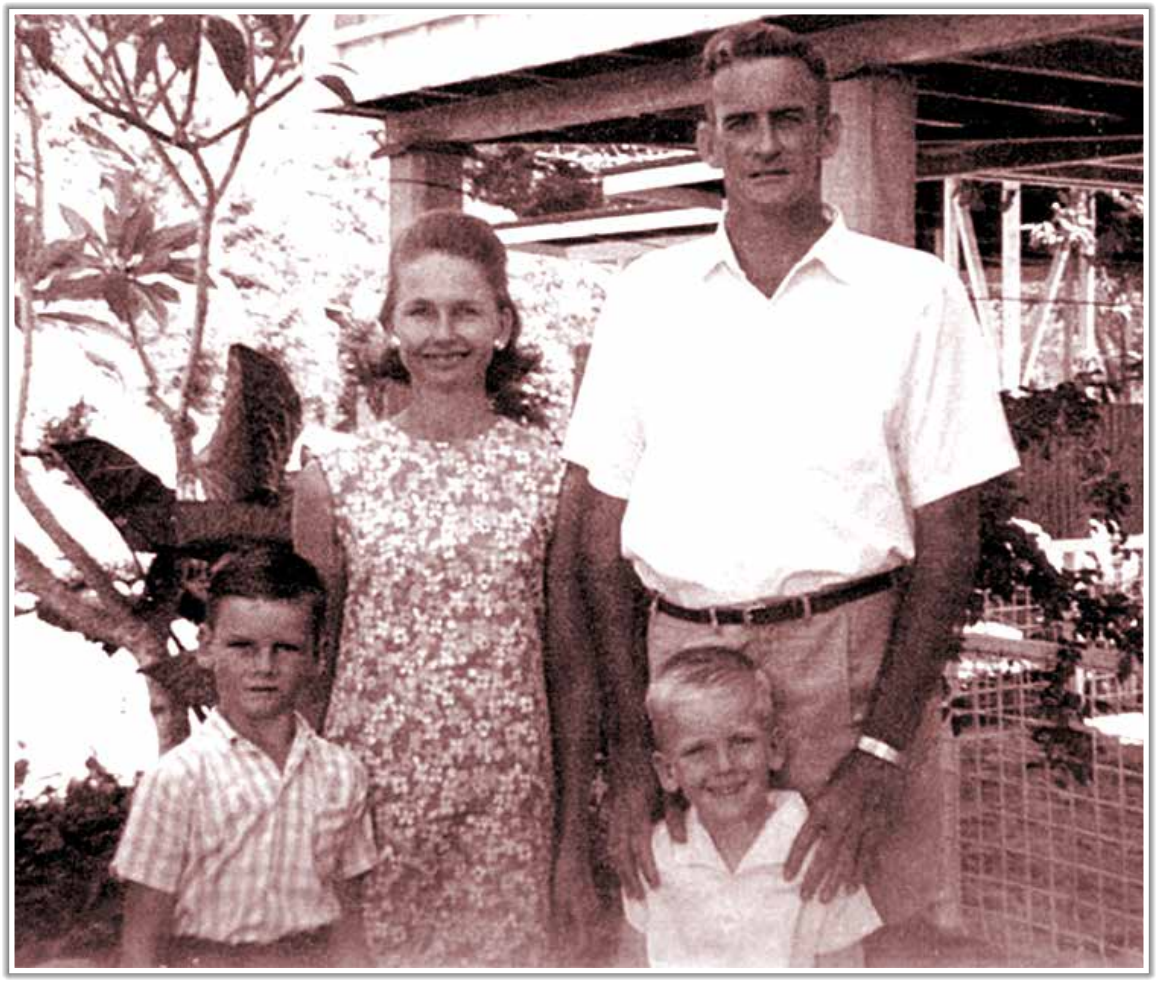
Only McKenzie, Dagge and I seemed to realise how knife-edged that hearing had been. Senior Constable Yimbin was more phlegmatic, asking how could we expect otherwise. We were essentially battling two adversaries: not only the landowners but also CRA.

ENDNOTES

1. I assume that 34-year old Inspector Clem (CI) Henney was specially selected to fill the spot left vacant by Sub-Inspector Alan Craig's removal five months earlier. Henney was noted not only for his acumen and ability, but he was also understanding but firm. Clem's wife, Myee Elliott-Smith in her single days, had worked in the District Office in Wewak in 1955 when her father was District Commissioner
2. The Territory of Papua and New Guinea was renamed as the Territory of Papua New Guinea on 1 July 1971 with an emblem and a new flag to match the new name
3. I first met Frank (FF) Espie in July 1966. He was roaming on his own on Guava ridge above Panguna. I met him many times, but even on that first occasion he was ideas were different: he was interested in 'what was right' not 'who was right.'

   In September 1966, Espie told Canberra that Administration's proposal to muzzle debate in the House of Assembly on Lapun's amendments to mining legislation was the wrong way to go. It would be better to discuss them fully and openly. 'We seeking to set up a democratic government and it's wrong to emphasise Australian views too strong on questions like this when the people have other ideas of their own.'

   Espie was born in 1917 in Burma, when it was still part of the Indian Empire, and enlisted while a student at Adelaide University. He served as a Captain in the Middle East and New Guinea in World War II. Espie was appointed Director of BCL in 1969 and Chairman of BCL in 1979. He was awarded an OBE in 1971 and appointed Knight Bachelor in 1979
4. Circular Instructions were the Departments policy directives and formed a section of its corporate memory. Circular Instruction No 1 dated 7 January 1946 laid out the Department's filing system, Circular Instruction No 2 dated 16 February 1946 decreed that Resident Magistrates in Papua were renamed District Officers and Divisions would be known as Districts. The first bound volume of Instructions ended with No 192, published 9 December 1953

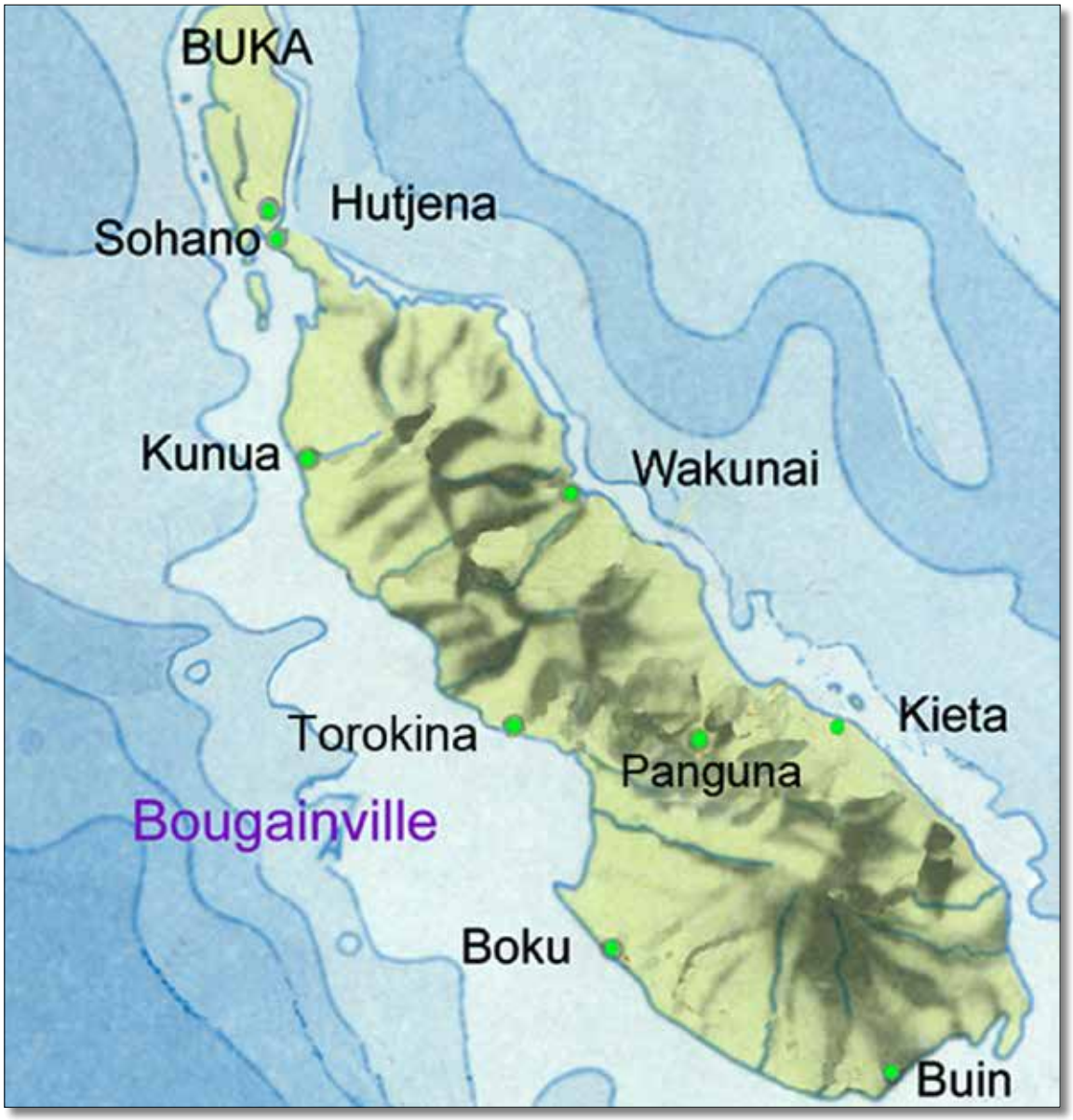


The Brown family in 1966—Michael, Pamela, David and Bill

21: An Unwelcome Call to Canberra

We fail in our efforts to persuade our superiors in Port Moresby and Australia about the need to take account of the people's attitude to land - and I am instructed to fly to Canberra

IT WAS EARLY 1967 and John Dagge and I knew something must be in the wind when District Commissioner Wakeford advised he was sending Ken Hanrahan, the Assistant District Commissioner of Buka Sub-District, on 'a familiarisation visit to Panguna before the Karato exercise.'



Karato, Mainoki and Daratui were the three areas of mineralisation that Conzinc Rio Australia (CRA) said it needed to test before deciding whether Panguna was the best site to mine.

Mainoki was eight hours' hard walking from Panguna and Karato was even further into the hills. The people of both villages refused to allow the CRA teams onto their land.

Ken (KJP) Hanrahan,[1] based at Hutjena on Buka Passage, was responsible for the northern end of Bougainville and had nothing to do with Karato, which was in the Buin Sub-District.

John (JE) Wakeford had been in Bougainville for only five months, after being transferred from the Sepik in November 1966 to take over from District Commissioner Mollison who was considered too old. (Wakeford was actually the older of the two but he had shaved eight years off his age before joining the Territory Administration in 1946.)[2]

Immediately after Hanrahan visited Panguna, he and Phil (GP) Hardy—Assistant District Commissioner, Buin Sub-District—set out on a joint patrol of the west coast to assess the people's attitudes to CRA.

Their expedition would have been made at the Administrator's behest and, on 30 March, Administrator David Hay advised Canberra that Hanrahan and Hardy had reported widespread opposition to prospecting in the whole area between Torokina and Boku.

In a private communication, Hanrahan said:

> ... the north Bougainville people did not oppose the Panguna mine; they welcomed the employment opportunities it offered. In the south of the island, the people's attitude to the Panguna mine was very negative. Our talks and explanations were invariably greeted with a sullen response.

Some of that negative reaction may have been deliberately provoked. On 9 March 1967, Don Grove, the Administration's Secretary of Lands, Survey and Mines, made a long statement to the House of Assembly that was designed to gain the support of the elected members—and of the outside world.

Grove attacked the landowners opposing CRA's prospecting activities at Panguna, suggesting that those who opposed the company would deprive Papua and New Guinea of massive financial and flow-on benefits:

> The people in local villages are challenging the right of this House to make laws to enable prospecting and mining of the mineral resources of this Territory to proceed if they do not wish …. [CRA] will need to enter the three other anomaly areas [the areas of copper mineralisation] of Mainoki, Karato and Abaru, where access to date has been made very difficult by the attitude of the local people.

We did not—we could not—realise the ignorance (or was it untruth?) in his statement until many years had passed. One paragraph, in particular, stands out even now:

> There would undoubtedly be some damage to the land if mining does take place because a mining operation would almost certainly involve an open cut operation and some areas will be rendered useless for a time by the dumping of overburden and tailings. The Administration is insisting that everything practicable is done to render the overburden and tailings dumping areas as suitable as possible for regeneration.

> Owners of any land affected by mining operations, which of course will remain their property, will not only be compensated by way of an occupation fee and compensation for damages. They will benefit from the considerable employment opportunities …. the increase in general land values and the community development which will surely flow from mining development.

Maybe he did not foresee that the sloping hillsides covered by ancient forest, sacred trees and stones, and mountain streams and pools, would be destroyed. The people's precious land and the heritage it held would be replaced by barren rock at the bottom of a 2,000-foot-deep hole. He certainly did not mention the miserliness of the $2 per acre ($4.94 per hectare) per annum prescribed occupation fee.

Dagge and I were forced to push our concerns aside when CRA project manager Don Vernon [3] arrived at Panguna on 14 March from Melbourne. On this his second week-long visit in 1967, he renewed the Company's campaign to prospect the hillsides where the Moroni people grew most of their food—on the right bank of the Kawerong River.

On 29 March, I advised headquarters by radiogram that the Pakia-Moroni people were saying the Administration was ignoring their welfare and looking after only the company's interests. They wanted the Administrator to send a government lawyer—paid by the Administration—to talk to them about their land and to tell the company not to cross the Kawerong River. All the people living in Pakia would return to Moroni—their ancestral home—and would be waiting on the bank of Kawerong River to prevent the company from entering their land.

The Administrator bounced that message to Canberra with the comment:

> Our present assessment is that the possibility of group violence in opposition to Company move to Moroni area cannot be excluded, any further delay in movement of CRA parties in group area will only aggravate the situation …. As a precaution, it has been decided to increase police strength in the Moroni area from 13 to 30. Police being moved from Rabaul to Kieta by trawler—ETA 31 March.

Canberra's telexed response on 1 April was concise:

> Minister's view at this stage is that Administration must ensure CRA investigations can proceed.

In faraway Port Moresby, Administrator Hay seemed to think it was only a matter of timing. He said the Administrator's Executive Council (AEC) would have to be briefed before the move across the river could be allowed, and Mining Warden McKenzie would need to be available to assess any damage.

The AEC's next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 5 April. McKenzie could complete the Warden's Court hearing at Torokina on the same day and be available at Barapina twenty-four hours later. With those measures in place, Messrs Brown and Dagge would be directed to escort the CRA party across the Kawerong on Thursday, 6 April.

The powers that be were ignoring evidence the Moronis had already given at the Mining Warden's Court in January 1967. Here they had told the Warden that the community would not permit CRA to cross to the right bank of the Kawerong River.

Aitchison said we had four weeks to prepare the people for the new activity, and he reminded me that his Circular Instruction required us to keep the people informed and to seek the co-operation of local government councillors and missionaries. As if we could ever forget it.

Even though the Moronis were tired of being told what was planned, Dagge and I told them again and again, at every opportunity. Our other tasks we prioritised.

Dagge would continue talks with Gregory Korpa and the Moroni people, and he would visit Deomori Catholic Mission to talk with Father Woeste.

Meanwhile, I would concentrate my efforts on the only three Guava villages on the coastal side of the Crown Prince Range—who also happened to be members of the Kieta Local Government Council.

A few days later, a consignment of unsolicited supplies arrived at Barapina: a loud hailer, a tape recorder and a container of half a dozen brand-new pump-action shotguns.

We tested one of the shiny short-barrelled Remingtons before repacking all six into the container and returning it to the coast. When loaded with the ammunition supplied—No. 4 birdshot—the 12-gauge weapon couldn't hit a bird at the top of a tree but at close range could punch a massive hole through a human. I did not think they were suitable or in any way appropriate for our situation.

The additional police, Sub-Inspector Daniel Gire[4] and sixteen other ranks, arrived in Kieta by government trawler from Rabaul on 31 March and moved overland next day to Barapina where the barracks already verged on overflow.

We moved Gire into the unallocated bedroom in Mushroom Castle. Dagge was in permanent occupation; Mining Warden McKenzie and I occupied the other two bedrooms—sometimes in person, sometimes with the gear we left behind.

We had to revise the daily schedule after Gire arrived. Dagge and I were accustomed to attending the 0700 police parade dressed in patrol gear then returning to the house for a leisurely breakfast.

Gire rose at dawn and at 0630 was showered and resplendent in blue shorts, shirt, long socks and highly polished boots, ready to eat. We barely had time for a hurried breakfast before he donned his Sam Browne belt for the morning parade, after which he changed into working gear for the daily routine.

For two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon, Gire directed a phalanx of helmeted police in close-order exercises as they beat their long-handled batons against riot shields in a noisy rhythm, stomped their feet in unison, and charged up and down the Moroni hill.

I felt sympathy for Senior Constable Yimbin and our thirteen general-duties police who endeavoured to keep up but soon ran out of steam. And I also felt for the village people who watched on in apparent awe.

Neither Dagge nor I was present when the government lawyer requested by the Moroni villagers met with them at Barapina on Tuesday, 4 April 1967.

Norris (NH) Pratt was not the ideal person for the task. As a Deputy Crown Solicitor, his job was to protect and promote the government's interests and not provide the public with legal advice. Moreover, he could barely speak or understand *Tok Pisin* and knew little about life in the New Guinea community.

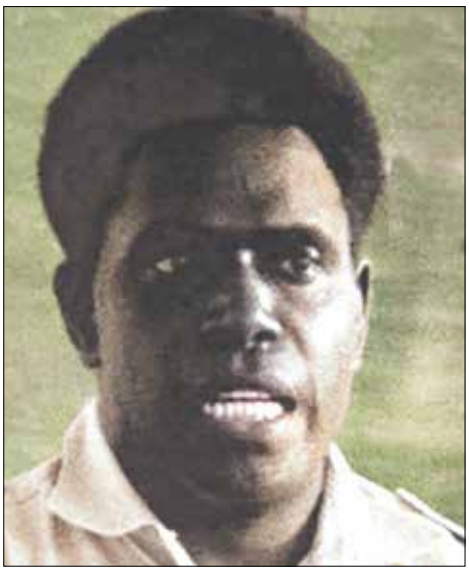
He implied his visit was a waste of time. The people wanted 'to exhort the government to take action against CRA rather than ask legal questions' and 'the question of mineral ownership has now become inextricably mixed up with self-government and a somewhat veiled threat of separation or at least a new state movement.'

Pratt may not have realised that Damien Damen, who dominated the meeting, came from Irang—outside the mining area—and not from Moroni. Another speaker, Henry Moses, came from Sieronji in the Pinei Valley—again outside the mining area—and was an advocate for those who opposed CRA.

(Later in the year Moses took up a management role with the company, became an industrial relations officer, and subsequently President of the Bougainville Mining Workers Association.)

And it is conceivable that Severinus Ampaoi who 'interpreted from English to the local dialect' had dual loyalties, even a covert role. He came from Dapera village in the prospecting area and logically should have been opposed to CRA. He was, however, a trusted employee.

First employed by Ken Phillips in 1964, Ampaoi was now highly regarded as CRA's quasi-manager of community relations. He was also vice-president of the Kieta Local Council, which had become lukewarm in its support of the Panguna development after Minister 'Ceb' Barnes' 1966 visit.



TOP: Coastal scene near Wakunai *(Darryl Robbins)*

CENTRE: Henry Moses—Bougainville 1968 *(John Martin-Jones, AFTVS)*; Severinus Ampaoi—Bougainville 1968 *(John Martin-Jones, AFTVS);* George Warwick Smith, Secretary, Australian Department of Territories *(National Archives)*

RIGHT: Ron Staples at Wakunai—1967 *(supplied)*

We missed the Administrator's target date of 6 April 1967 to escort the CRA team across the Kawerong. We kept the people informed and told them what was planned for our new date of 8 April.

Dagge and I would walk through the river behind the CRA team and would be accompanied by Senior Constable Yimbin and a couple of our police detachment. Sub-Inspector Gire and the riot squad from Rabaul would be on hand, but would take no active role unless required to do so.

We forded the river early in the morning. The Kawerong was often a raging torrent, but little or no rain had fallen overnight and the river remained somewhere between knee- and waist-deep.

The people were gathered on the slopes beside the stream. Most of the shouting was in Nasioi, some in *Tok Pisin*, the shrill voices of the women cutting through the outcry and abuse from the men.

I reported to Port Moresby with a brief radiogram: 'CRA party crossed Kawerong River Saturday 8. Strong vocal opposition but no incidents. Work proceeding. Brown returning to Kieta Tuesday 11.' One minor incident did occur, but was not worth reporting. Someone, possibly me, stumbled midstream and dunked the tape recorder in the Kawerong.

Until the Moroni exercise, I had never heard of the Executive Committee Handling the Bougainville Situation (ECHBS). It was a pretentious title—was it just another BS (bullshit) group?

Frank (FP) Henderson, the chairman, was the Assistant Administrator (Economic Affairs) and ranked just under the Administrator in clout and status.

Don (DS) Grove (Secretary for Lands, Surveys and Mines) and Wally (WW) Watkins (Secretary for Law) were departmental heads, while Tom Aitchison (Assistant Director of Native Affairs, and my boss), was low man on the totem pole.

According to the minutes of its meeting of 14 April 1967, the members were 'called together to discuss DDC Brown's preliminary report on Moroni, and the report of the Deputy Crown Solicitor, Mr Pratt.'

They thought that, although Pratt's report revealed nothing new, it 'was valuable as an independent outside assessment of the thinking of the Moroni people.'

But, like Pratt, the committee members were not aware that the Moroni people contributed very little to the meeting—the principal speakers at the meeting did not come from Moroni.

Their recommendation that 'the Rabaul police be withdrawn and replaced by another group of police from Rabaul for the move to the Korroni [sic] Creek and Mautango area', suggested another nasty operation waited in the wings for Dagge and me.

But it was one item out of the blue that caused uproar. The other members of the committee almost went into meltdown when Grove told them that CRA Melbourne proposed entering into a commercial arrangement with an employee who had brought in some mineral samples.

The employee, Thomas Mortai,[5] came from a village in the hills behind Numa-Numa

Plantation near Wakunai, sixty-five kilometres north of Kieta, and the company proposed he take out a prospecting authority.

If he did so, CRA would take a six months' option over the prospect and pay him $2,000, and $1,000 a year during the testing period. If mining went ahead, they proposed to pay him a $500 finder's reward plus $20,000 for ten years, or $200,000 worth of shares in the venture.

The committee panicked that CRA's newest proposal would conflict with the financial dictates imposed on the landowners at Panguna. They had tried to obtain a share of the mining and been fobbed off, initially with the $2 an acre occupation fee, augmented in 1966 by a further small amount—five percent of the ten percent royalty payable to the government.

And I was concerned that, although the proposed operation was a long way from Panguna, Wakunai and its surrounds were still part of the Kieta Sub-District and I would have to be involved.

CRA Melbourne was told the Wakunai scheme should be put on hold. Nevertheless, the joint application by CRA and Thomas Mortai for a prospecting authority initially set down for hearing at Kieta on 24 May 1967 was transferred to Wakunai for hearing on 26 May.

Patrol Officer Ron Staples[6] got the job of explaining what was happening to the people. Twenty-three-year-old blond-haired Staples had been married for less than three months when he was transferred to Wakunai from Boku on 15 February 1967.

District Commissioner Wakeford thought he was too young and too compassionate to be in charge of Boku Patrol Post, but Wakeford had not anticipated the weightier situation that would arise at Wakunai with the unexpected appearance of CRA. And he had misjudged Staples, who handled it all with exuberance and aplomb.

On 3 May, Staples visited Okowopaia village to tell the people about the mining legislation and Thomas Mortai's application for a prospecting authority.

It took Staples one and a half hours to pedal his bike from Wakunai along the bush track to Okowopaia, and the same amount of time to pedal home.

The people could not understand why Mortai had to apply for a permit to take something that was already his—the copper in his land.

Forewarned by Staples that Wakunai Local Government councillors were going to discuss the application on the morning of 9 May, I flew there the day before and spent the night with Sandy and Joan Sandford at Numa Numa plantation.

Staples picked me up next morning in the Administration LandRover and then drove to the airstrip to collect CRA Area Manager Colin (CP) Bishop and Geologist Dick (RN) Spratt. We proceeded together to the meeting.

Bishop told the councillors about CRA's prospecting operations around Panguna and attempted to explain the application for the prospecting authority in the Wakunai area.

The councillors objected to Mortai's financial arrangement with CRA and were more interested in their Council taking a pecuniary role in CRA's Wakunai venture.

When Staples pedalled to Okowopaia village on 25 May to notify the people of the Warden's Court hearing the following day, the whole village decided to attend.

The hearing turned out to be a rude initiation to Bougainville for Port Moresby-based

Warden Arthur (Bluey) Stephens. (Mining Warden McKenzie had taken twelve-months' leave and the Administrator had appointed Stephens to the New Guinea jurisdiction to officiate.) At Wakunai, the Council and a noisy crowd opposed CRA's application.

CRA's application was granted in the usual way. The Warden sent all the paperwork to the Mining Advisory Board. The Board members may have pondered a little before they pushed everything on to the Administrator for his rubber stamp.

CRA's Wakunai operation was underway but, perhaps fortuitously, bumbling and slow. Patrol Officer Ron Staples had the task of keeping the people informed.

During the brouhaha, I was spending a couple of days at Barapina when a runner arrived early one morning with a message from CRA Panguna: I was required to travel to Canberra.

One of their helicopters would transport me to Kieta, wait while I packed a suitcase, then fly me to Aropa where the regular DC3 flight to Rabaul would be delayed until I arrived.

I had never heard of anyone of my rank being dragged out of the bush and summoned to Canberra for stiffening up.

I had plenty of time to ponder the implications. It took an hour to fly from Kieta to Rabaul, an overnight stay, an early morning flight from Rabaul via Lae to Port Moresby by Fokker Friendship, then a flight by TAA jet from Port Moresby to Sydney. Finally, the last short leg to Canberra. I did not think I had much to contribute. Neither Dagge nor I was enjoying our role in Bougainville. Like all kiaps, we had been taught that native land was sacrosanct and that landowners could transfer land only by native custom.

Accordingly, we had always told the people that nobody could take their land from them. Now we were being told that those rules applied only to the surface of the land and not what lay beneath. The land laws that we had administered and upheld did not apply to mining. We did not—we could not—like the mining legislation.

At that time, the Department of Territories was located in Derwent House in Hobart Place, close to the commercial heart of Canberra, and only a short walk from the Town House Motel on Northbourne Avenue where I spent the night.

The meeting had already started when I was shown into the conference room. There were no introductions. I took a seat at the end of a long rectangular table—left vacant just inside the door. Within a few minutes, I was quickly made to realise that public servants from the Territory were regarded as inferior by Commonwealth public servants.

The participants were discussing CRA's Bougainville operation, and eventually I identified the Department's top echelon by their interchanges. The Secretary for Territories, George Warwick Smith, sat at the head of the table; Gerry (GO) Gutman (Assistant Secretary, Political and Legal Affairs Branch) and John (JO) Ballard (Assistant Secretary, Government Branch and Political Affairs Branch) sat on his left and his right.

The lesser mortals—Ahrens, Evatt, Grigor and nameless others—who sat nearer to me spoke only when asked about some minor detail. The Deputy Secretary, Robert S Swift, did not appear.

Only Gutman had ever visited Bougainville, and only for a couple of nights when he was accompanying Minister Cedric Barnes on his brief but disastrous visit in February 1966.

The group was not interested in my opinion or anything I had to say about Bougainville. They did not seem to understand or care that twenty-one different languages were spoken on Bougainville, and that the people from the north of Bougainville differed in thought and custom from those of the centre and the south.

Nor did the group seem to understand or care that those different languages and different beliefs affected Bougainvillean attitudes to the Administration, to Australia and to CRA. Astoundingly, they did not even seem interested in murmurs of secession.

They reminded me of my responsibilities: that as a public servant I had to do what the government said, and that as an officer of the Royal Papuan and New Guinea Constabulary I had a responsibility to see the laws were observed.

One of the top brass, presumably drawing on his Malaysian Insurgency experience, suggested that when I returned to Bougainville, I should, in the appropriate circumstances, establish crowd control—roll a plastic streamer out along the ground and tell people it would be curtains if they stepped over it.

When I rejected that advice, Secretary Warwick Smith got up and left the room. I thought I might have just lost my job.

ENDNOTES

1. Kenneth Joseph Patrick Hanrahan had been stationed in Bougainville since the middle of 1963 and by 1967 he had more field experience of Bougainville than any kiap in the District. He had served as officer-in-charge of Kunua Patrol Post (five months), acting Assistant District Commissioner of Buin Sub-District (three months), and Assistant District Commissioner of Buka Passage (three terms of 21 months). Hanrahan was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1979, following full time university study in Brisbane.
2. John Eric Wakeford was born in Wimbledon, England, on 25 March 1908 and migrated to Australia with his parents while a child. He was 34 years of age when he enlisted in the Australian Military Forces on 7 August 1942, being mentioned in dispatches for exceptional service in the Milne Bay campaign. He was a Lieutenant in ANGAU and not quite 38 years of age when discharged from the Army on 9 March 1946. He was purportedly eight years younger, with an assumed birthdate of 25 March 1916, when he joined the Administration as a Patrol Officer on 8 October 1946. He maintained that fiction for the rest of his career.
3. Donald Clayton Vernon (who I will mention frequently in the remainder of this chronicle) was born in Sydney in 1924. A chemical engineer by training, he was first employed by CRA as a production manager at the Rum Jungle uranium mine in 1953. He was appointed as the Melbourne-based Project Manager of CRA's Bougainville project and he was Area Manager Bishop's immediate superior and reported to CRA's boss, Frank Espie. Vernon moved to Bougainville around 1974 and became General Manager of Bougainville Copper Ltd in 1975.
4. Sub-Inspector Daniel Gire, a 24-year-old Tolai from New Britain, was a renowned Territory rugby league footballer and a fitness fanatic. He was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1970 following Prime Minister John Gorton's visit to Rabaul.
5. The CRA worker was referred to as Thomas Batoi by Staples in entries in his Field Officer's Journal but as Thomas Mortai in official correspondence. I have used the latter surname throughout.
6. Ronald John Staples was born in Brisbane in November 1943—his mother coming from Switzerland and his father from New Zealand. He had been a kiap for five years since August 1962 serving only in Bougainville—at Kieta, Boku, Kunua, Kauna (Base Camp), Boku and Wakunai—with two sojourns at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, ASOPA. He completed a Bachelor of Economics degree by external studies with the University of Queensland in 1974 and a Master of Arts Development Economics at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) in 1978.

22: The Administration versus the People

The colonial administration and CRA mining company become impatient about landowner resistance on Bougainville and we find ourselves with a greatly increased police presence

I THOUGHT ADMINISTRATOR David Hay's decision to send a 'welfare group'—a team of outsiders—to visit Panguna for a week or two in May 1967 was extraordinary. He told the Canberra bureaucrats that their task was to seek 'further information about the people's views and attitudes and the possibility of improving the Administration's image.'

What made his statement bizarre was that only six weeks earlier he had directed Patrol Officer John Dagge and me to ignore the people's protests and escort personnel from mining company CRA across the Kawerong River. He must have realised that operation would have besmirched the Administration's image beyond repair.

During the following weeks the villagers vented their displeasure. On a single night the wooden pegs that had been precisely positioned by surveyors around the Moroni hillside in a week-long operation were removed and dumped at Barapina on what we termed the parade ground. Up the road at Panguna, a stack of cement posts was smashed to pieces in an overnight raid and dumped on CRA's doorstep.

To the south of Panguna, at Deomori, Marist Father Woeste was accused of helping CRA and told that, as his mission station was on native land, he should follow the people's wishes or get out.

The people around Panguna were still seething in the last week of May, when Terry Daw,[1] Judy (JK) Peters[2] and Lukas Waka[3] arrived in Kieta to carry out the Administrator's task of 'improving the Administration's image'.

Daw and Peters were Welfare Officers even though Daw had the title of District Officer. Waka was from the Department of Information and Extension Services.

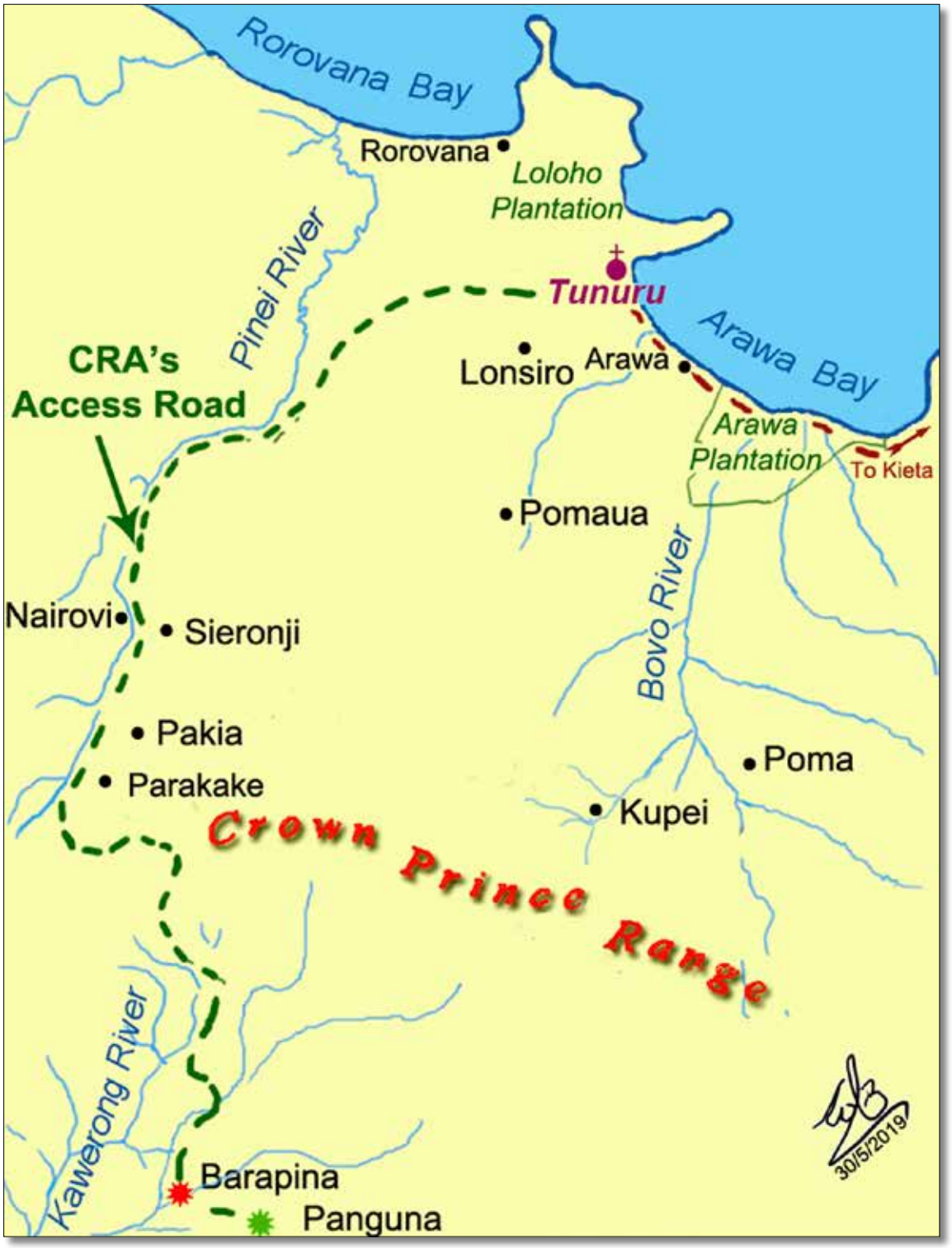
As Panguna was a maelstrom of prospecting-related activity, I redirected our visitors to the rest house at Pakia on the coastal side of the range, where I knew they would be accosted by individuals and factions opposed to CRA's activities. They would get the full story.

Miss Peters' report of the visit—a female perspective—did not make it to the archives, but Daw's twelve closely-typed foolscap pages provided an overall view. Furthermore, he recorded the group's objectives somewhat differently from how the Administrator had framed them:

> To advise the people that change was inevitable, to invite their opinion as to how these changes might affect them, to discuss what steps might be taken to lessen the impact of change, and to assess means of improving the relationship between the people, the Administration and the Company.

Daw said his group's ignorance of the area had been an advantage in discussions, as had been their zero contact with the Administration and the mining company. The community had accepted the trio as outsiders who were not involved with CRA.

Henry Moses and Gregory Korpa had met them—the latter being very rude, according to Daw—and the team had regularly visited the nearby villages of Parakake, new Pakia,



The access road to the proposed Panguna minesite was the locus of most of the resistance action by landowners in 1969. At the copper company's insistence the colonial Administration began to harden its stance on forcing the people to comply

Borumai and Korpei. They had also contacted individuals and groups from Mainoki and Moroni.

Daw said the whole community wanted CRA to go away—to leave.

The villagers were aware how much the company had helped with schooling, scholarships, employment, communications and health, but nothing—none of those things—could compensate the people for the loss of their land.

Daw was hard-nosed in his assessment. He said the villagers were aware of the benefits of a large company moving into the area, but they could not be dissuaded from their agricultural pursuits. While they were in their present state of mind, it was impossible to explain to them that they must accept progress—mining—for the benefit of the country.

He felt CRA's future plans should be explained to the people. At the same time, they should be told that legislation existed and, if necessary, force would be used to ensure the mining operation proceeded unhindered.

On Friday, 9 June, just three days after Daw's group left Pakia, a CRA survey team escorted by Dagge and six police was forced to cease mapping the centre line of the proposed new road between Tunuru and Pakia in the Pinei river valley.

The incident occurred near Nairovi village about thirteen kilometres from the coast. A group of forty to fifty people crowded the surveyors, repeatedly disturbed the theodolite and prevented the survey pegs from being driven into the ground.

When women in the front line surged forward and thrust their babes in arms at him, Dagge felt that was enough. He took the 'mass violence likely' option and, as instructed, closed the operation down and told the survey team to go home.

The following day, my Administration driver William Poto drove District Commissioner John Wakeford [4] and me up CRA's four-wheel drive track to Pakia. When Wakeford queried why we were not taking a police constable or two as escorts, I told him that we were going to Pakia to talk, not to fight. He rolled his eyes and did not comment further.

It was not entirely a wasted day. I argued with the group—mainly men—for an hour or so. The older women occasionally interjected in the Nasioi language. I was advised their remarks were directed at me and too crude and personal for translation.

At the end of it all, I told the principal spokesman, Councillor Teori Tau, that he and I had to find a resolution that was in the community's best interest. I could help them only if they worked with me. They could think and talk about it overnight and I would return the next day, Sunday, 11 June, to hear what they had decided.

When Poto drove us back to Pakia on Sunday we found they had not changed their minds. They were adamant that they would not permit the road survey to recommence.

I ended the discussion by reiterating my earlier proposition that Teori and I had to steer a passage through the impasse so the community did not suffer. Neither they nor I could stop the company's progress, but they still had sufficient time to come round to my point of view, as I had been summoned to Port Moresby to attend a meeting and would be absent for a week.

In the vehicle, on the way back to Kieta, I did not reply when Wakeford said, 'I am worried for you Brownie. What are you going to do if someone calls your bluff?'

Meanwhile in Canberra, on 13 June, Robert (RS) Swift, Deputy Secretary of Territories, noted the content of a phone conversation:

> The Administrator, Papua and New Guinea referred to the latest Bougainville reports which did not look good. He said that it may be necessary for the Administration to take firm action in the next few days such as sending a few police in. Aitchison is going across tomorrow to have a look.

A few days after the Pakia discussions, I flew to Port Moresby to attend what would be the first of many meetings over the next three years in which CRA demanded and the Administration acceded.

On 23 June 1967, the Administrator reported a new development to the Secretary for Territories:

> Discussions between CRA's Espie and Bishop and Administration officers including Brown from Kieta and law officers held Port Moresby on 19 and 20 June resulted in an improved understanding and arrangement CRA programs. Additional fifty police being sent Kieta in groups of about ten over next seven to eight weeks view providing effective support extension CRA lawful activities. My assessment is that situation in Pakia is unresolved but propose ensure CRA can operate safely.

That meeting, held in the Administrator's conference room at Konedobu, was chaired by Frank Henderson, Assistant Administrator (Economic Affairs), who also led the Administration team of Don (DS) Grove (Secretary for Lands, Surveys and Mines), Wally (WW) Watkins (Secretary for Law) and Tom (TG) Aitchison (First Assistant Director, Department of District Administration).

Frank (FF) Espie (Director, Bougainville Copper Pty Ltd) and Colin (CP) Bishop (Area Manager) represented CRA.

'W Brown DDC Kieta' was tacked on to the minutes as the last of the attendees.

I do not know if the meeting improved anyone's understanding of CRA's activities. Perhaps Henderson and Watkins, who had not been involved on the ground in Bougainville, may have learnt something about the situation. The main topic of discussion was the incident at Nairovi—the Dagge event—and CRA's priorities.

According to Espie, the mapping of the road between Tunuru, Pakia and beyond, and the triangulation around Panguna was essential. It could be delayed, but he implied not for long.

The area requiring survey in the future was home to some 2,000 people who would no doubt be annoyed by the activity. Some intrusions could be avoided by the use of a tellurometer,[5] but marker beacons would have to be established and Espie wondered if they could be protected. I agreed with the CRA team that the first priority was to re-establish their surveying activity along the road at Pakia and Nairovi, and I agreed to do so once I had fifteen police I could call on without weakening the holding force at Panguna.

Watkins could not, or would not, give a response to my query as to what action I was legally entitled to take to re-establish CRA's right to move on the road—or to intrude on other fiercely held land. When he quoted the relevant law to the Assistant Administrator in written advice next day, it must have caused surprise, even consternation and dismay:

> Landowners in possession of their land are entitled to use reasonable force to defend their possession even against a person entitled to enter. Any person, who in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace … enters on land which is in the actual and peaceable possession of another is guilty of a misdemeanour … It is immaterial whether he is entitled to enter on the land or not.

The Administrator took swift action and advised the Secretary of Territories:

> I have directed the Department of District Administration to include in its instruction to field officers a clause to the effect that whenever possible in relation to a piece of ground on which resistance is expected the police should endeavour to secure occupation in the first place. This could be done by helicopter or encircling movement.

The meeting concluded with the decision that similar meetings would be held in Port Moresby at two-monthly intervals, and I was also directed to attend the weekly Panguna meetings between field staff and company, which I had been avoiding by sending someone in my place.

Sub-Inspector Orm (JRO) Power[6] and the first of an additional fifty police arrived by air at Kieta around 24 June and almost immediately commenced drilling the riot squads up and down Kieta's main—and only—street.

The frightening display sent shock waves through the town and, it seemed, beyond. The Administration's weekly telex to Territories in Canberra—the mandatory situation report—dated 30 June included this information:

> Immediate effects of police training programme Kieta appear to be lapse of opposition to surveying existing road Pakia. Brown meeting Pakia group Saturday [1 July 1967] prior to survey re-commencing Monday [3 July]. He will advise me whether this will be peaceful or not.

The surveying operation went smoothly. No one intervened and the route between Tunuru and Pakia was completed on 14 July.

Public service jaws may have dropped at the Department of Territories in Canberra, when they read the Administrator's situation report dated 28 July. It recorded that I did I not take any police with me when I accompanied the CRA team tasked to install the tellurometer equipment and the VHF wireless mast at Pakia.

The report also noted that Patrol Officer Cedric Tabua[7] had found the people at Dapera (the village just south of Panguna) had softened their attitude to CRA and the Administration.

The archives tell us that the members of the Bougainville Public Relations Committee[8] aired differing views at their 22 August meeting.

Wright, a psychologist from the Public Service Commission, suggested that, as the people were willing to talk, the Administration should make concessions and withdraw some police. He also urged care in the selection of expatriate police. He had heard rumours that 'ex-colonial African police, with attitudes contrary to those of the Administration, had been engaged in the area'.

Aitchison said one officer with African experience (he was referring to Orm Power) had been in Kieta to teach riot drill but had since been withdrawn. 'The Commissioner of Police

had been careful in his selection of European officers and police in the area were under control and supervision of a DDA Officer, W Brown.' (I wondered whether the Commissioner or his 'uniforms' would have agreed with the latter part of that statement.)

David Fenbury,[9] the bush-wise head of the Department of Administrator, opposed any suggestion that police numbers be reduced, saying, 'so far the police had only contributed a presence, but this show of strength had enabled the situation to be kept under control'.

While the strategists were poncing about in Port Moresby, back on Bougainville the opposition to CRA was spreading and gaining pace.

Earlier in the year, in January, I had predicted there would not be opposition to CRA's application to prospect around Torokina (on the west coast), as it was for limestone, phosphate and bauxite, and not copper. However, I got that one quite wrong.

When McKenzie held his Warden's Court at Torokina in April 1967 he recorded protests—lots of them—but, as in previous hearings, they were ignored. The Mining Advisory Board made their recommendations. The Administrator approved a Prospecting Authority that covered twenty-six square miles.

According to Patrol Officer John Gordon-Kirkby, who took a patrol to the area in July, 'the people as a whole were resentful of the decision—summed up in the words of an objector, Councillor Piriri of Piva: *"Mipela no laik, olsem strong bilong gaviman, i winem mipela."* [We do not like it, but the strength of the government has beaten us.].'

Gordon-Kirkby said he rejected the people's demands that CRA should confine its activity to Panguna 'with long explanations of the overall needs of the Company to exploit the resources of the area to the full and in the most economical way'. He said he did not understand the part of limestone, phosphate and bauxite in the refining process, but presumed it was a vital necessity. He said he explained this to the people by a simple analogy: 'they could not cook kaukau [sweet potato] without water and CRA could not make good copper without limestone'.

District Commissioner Wakeford was at his fussy best when he commented on Gordon-Kirkby's endeavour:

> He has devoted a lot of time to this patrol and I fear has got himself in rather deeply. I have written to him saying that we must not associate ourselves too closely with the Company. Our job is to explain to the people that the Company was given the legal right to prospect through laws passed by the House of Assembly and that is as far as we should go.

Three extra officers were coming on stream to assist us, and an outsider might have viewed our situation as improving.

District Officer John (JA) Wiltshire was transferred from Milne Bay to Bougainville to become Assistant District Commissioner, Kieta, and would be directly involved in CRA affairs. Assistant District Officer Chris (C) Warrillow, on his way to Kieta from Mendi (Southern Highlands), would look after the proposed CRA activity at Mainoki, and would be involved in other operations. Patrol Officer John Gordon-Kirkby, from Boku—back from visiting the Torokina area—would come under our direction and be involved with Karato.

And the stalwart, John Dagge, would still be saddled with the problems of continuing opposition to CRA around Panguna.

When I took into account the extra staff and an apparent lull in the people's opposition, I thought we could make progress, maybe even gain acceptance.

But all that fell apart when CRA applied for Prospecting Authorities covering the areas of Bougainville to the north and south of their present Prospecting Authorities—in effect the whole of the island.

And then to top it off, the House of Assembly passed the Bougainville Mining Agreement. The future looked horrendous.

ENDNOTES

1. Terence Edward Daw was born in Simla, India, in April 1926, joined the Indian Army in in 1943, being commissioned into the Gurkha Rifles in 1944. He served on the North-West Frontier, in Burma, Malaya, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore—and was Mentioned in Dispatches. Subsequently, he joined the Malaya Police Force and spent years as commander of a Jungle Company and of a Police District before migrating to Australia. He became a Welfare Officer two months after joining the Territory Administration in September 1958. He and a fellow Welfare Officer, David Henry Case, were promoted to District Officer in September 1968, but with no kiap duties or authority.
2. Twenty-three-year old Judith (JK) Peters, from Whyalla in South Australia, had already been a teacher in Papua New Guinea for nearly five years—at Wau, Lae, Dregerhafen and Mendi—when in October 1966 she changed her role to become a Welfare Officer. She was based at Hutjena, Bougainville, in 1967 when assigned by DDA headquarters to join Daw and Waka in the Panguna exercise. She was later transferred from Sohano to Rabaul, then in 1972 back to Kieta, where by then the district headquarters had been relocated, and was appointed to the position of District Community Development Officer. As Mrs Judy Duggan she returned to Australia from Bougainville in December 1975.
3. Sir Lucas (LJ) Waka, born in Bola village in West New Britain, had a distinguished career of public service. First employed as an Interpreter, he became an Assistant Patrol Officer in training in March 1964. Promoted to Assistant Extension Officer in the Department of Information and Extension Services in September 1966, he became an Assistant Industrial Relations Officer January 1968. He was elected to the House of Assembly in 1977, was Governor of West New Britain Province from 1995 to 1997. He was awarded a Knight Bachelor for services to politics in January 2005.
4. Unlike the previous District Commissioner Mollison, who had kept away from the CRA problem during the last six months of his term, Wakeford visited Kieta for four or five days each month, occupied our third bedroom and accompanied me to CRA. He was primarily concerned about CRA's negative impact on the community.
5. The tellurometer was the first successful microwave electronic distance measurement device.
6. John Richard Ormonde Power, born Limerick, Ireland in 1937, served in the North Rhodesian police prior to migrating to Australia in January 1964. He was an officer in the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary from October 1964 to 1971 and was deployed to Bougainville on several occasions—the last in 1969.
7. Cedric Tabua, a member of a well-known family from Daru in the Western Province, joined the Administration as a clerk in February 1964 and later became a Patrol Officer.
8. I was invited to attend the Administration's Public Relations Advisory Committee—Bougainville (PRAC) in Port Moresby on 21 June 1967. The members wanted to discuss the Daw report, the Dagge event and the current CRA situation in Bougainville. Les (LW) Johnson, Assistant Administrator (Services), was chairman.
9. Dave (DM) Fenbury (Fienberg) was one of the legendary bush kiaps. A Patrol Officer in 1936, he joined the AIF in 1941, and from 1942–1945 served with ANGAU. He was with the American forces in 1944 when they landed to retake Aitape, led Australian and Papua New Guinea troops on guerrilla operations in Japanese-held territory around Dreikikir and the middle Sepik and was awarded the Military Cross and mentioned in dispatches. In the post-war years he was seconded to the British Colonial Service, lectured at the Australian School of Pacific Administration and was involved in Area Authorities but took time off to lead a patrol to the remote and feared Mokolkols in New Britain. He was appointed head of the Department of the Administrator in 1962.

23: The Plot Against Bougainville

With my fellow kiaps, I trek to remote villages to speak with the people and reassure them about mining. But the copper company and the colonial Administration secretly decide on a more robust approach.

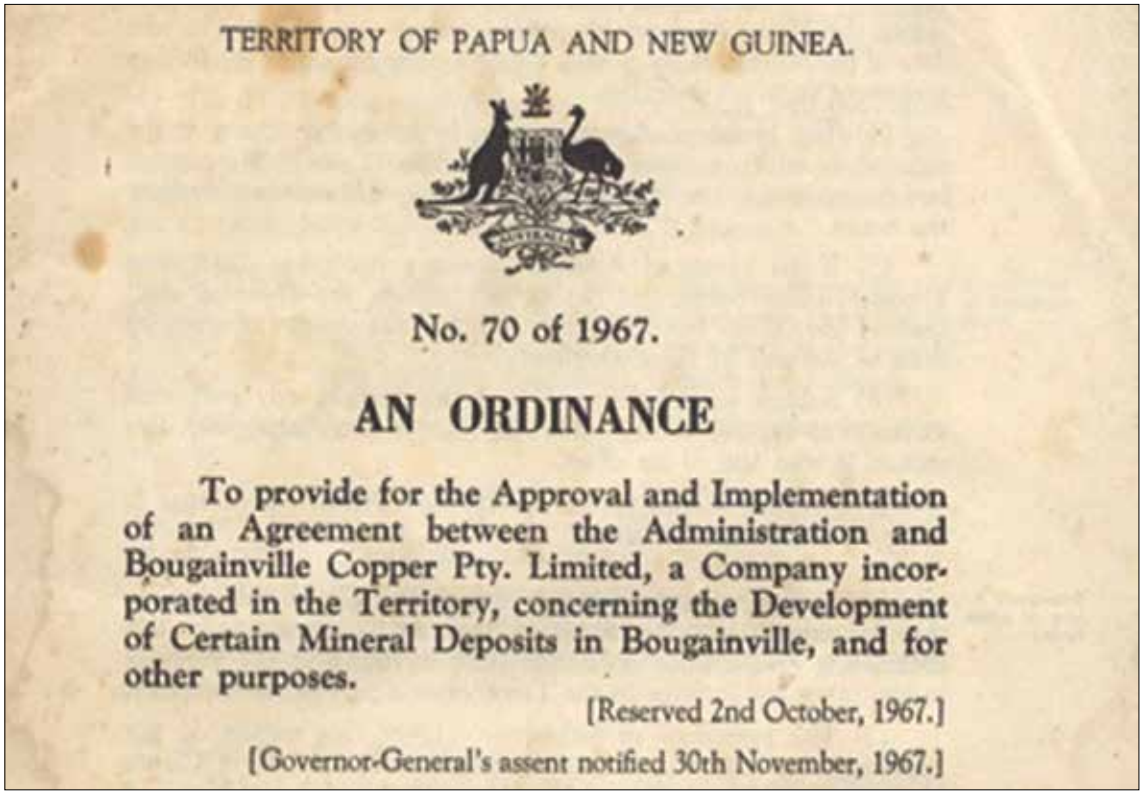
AS FAR AS my kiap colleague John Dagge and I were concerned, everything was going well around Barapina and Panguna.

We were not gaining acceptance, but the people were at least listening to our explanations about CRA's prospecting activity.

Then, on 29 August 1967, the House of Assembly—Papua New Guinea's parliament—passed into law a mining agreement bill between the company and the Administration.

It was only then that we discovered the document we had been given to brief the people had omitted some vital details.

This document's worn and faded pages—rubber-stamped 'CONFIDENTIAL' in purple ink—still glare at me from my files:



TERRITORY OF PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA.

No. 70 of 1967.

AN ORDINANCE

To provide for the Approval and Implementation of an Agreement between the Administration and Bougainville Copper Pty. Limited, a Company incorporated in the Territory, concerning the Development of Certain Mineral Deposits in Bougainville, and for other purposes.

[Reserved 2nd October, 1967.]

[Governor-General's assent notified 30th November, 1967.]

The mining agreement between the copper company and the colonial Administration passed into law without the field officers in Bougainville being forewarned, let alone fully briefed

> Before the Company decides to go ahead, both the Company and the Administration wish to have an agreement setting out the conditions under which the Company may operate. The terms have been under discussion this year. The Agreement is for the Administration to prepare. In order to assure the people and the Company that the Agreement is fully supported the Administration is going to ask the House of Assembly to ratify it by passing a special Bill.'

The facts were different. It was the CRA directors who wanted the agreement. Director Frank Espie introduced the idea to Secretary for Territories George Warwick Smith when he met with him in Canberra on 12 December 1965.

Following that encounter, Warwick Smith allowed Espie to raise the proposal with the Administration in Port Moresby in February 1966. But Canberra retained control.

Warwick Smith decreed that 'discussions in the Territory on major issues will be entirely without commitment and subject to further discussions in Canberra.' Once again, Dagge and I had been misled.

On several occasions over the next 18 months, a small official delegation from the Territory flew south to Canberra to participate in meetings between CRA and the Territories Department.

Administrator Frank Henderson, Lands Secretary Don Grove and Division of Mines chief Ivo Wood flew to Canberra four times in 1966 (in March, June, August and October), and for three more meetings in 1967. Secretary for Law, Wally (WW) Watkins and Collector of Taxation Ray (RF) White were drafted to attend one meeting each in 1967.

They had little input, and they may have been outgunned. Hard-nosed Espie led the five-person CRA team, while assistant-secretary Gerry Gutman, the Territories Department's front man in the wheeling and dealing was able to call on the considerable expertise in other Australian government departments to help bolster his arguments.

We in PNG were not aware that the Australian Cabinet was involved, as its role was not disclosed. On 18 April 1967, the cabinet considered and approved Minister Charles (Ceb) Barnes' submission on the agreement.

It was not until the House of Assembly debated the Mining (Bougainville Copper Agreement) Ordinance in August 1967 that the public learnt the nasty details.

The printed bill stated that, at any time up to the end of 1971, the CRA could apply for a special mining lease within its prospecting authorities. A lease could be in one or more parts and up to 100 square miles in area.

At any time the company could apply for other leases: for mining, treatment plants, town sites, ports, wharves, power stations, dams, roads, railways, tunnels, pipelines, transmission lines and for the disposal of overburden and tailings.

The sting lay in Clause 12 of the Ordinance: 'The purposes of this Agreement are a public purpose within the meaning of any [Territory] law.' This meant the government could resume—compulsorily acquire—any land the company required for its mining operation.

Bougainville was outraged.

As if that were not enough, someone in either Canberra or Port Moresby ignored all the reservations I had expressed about exploratory activities at Mainoki.

They decided CRA could resume prospecting there and, adding to the affront, they added Karato, which lay further west in the Crown Prince Range.

Two years earlier, in July 1965, the Mainoki villagers had chased a party of CRA geologists off their land.

They were not violent, nor did they have to be. They had only to shout a few threats and maybe wave a bow and arrow or two for the intruders to flee back to Panguna.

On the advice of the Administration, the company stopped prospecting at Mainoki, Karato and Daratui. But Frank Espie was determined and on half a dozen occasions after the incident put pressure on Canberra for the company to be allowed to return to the area:

> The work at Panguna is well advanced. The lack of work in these other areas could cause the Company acute embarrassment if one of those areas proved to be more attractive. For this reason, the Company is keen to push ahead with geochemical sampling and perhaps drilling in these areas before further expanding the work at Panguna.

At an earlier meeting in Canberra on 25 March 1966, when Espie enquired whether there was any way the geological team could get quickly into Mainoki, Karato and Daratui, he said the company was opposed to the use of force, by which he meant it did not want police protection.

But he must have changed his mind over succeeding months. When the CRA geologists returned to Mainoki, they were escorted by the most potent force of police that central Bougainville had seen.

John Wakeford, acting District Commissioner at Sohano, announced the strategy before he departed for Australia on recreation leave.

Assistant District Officer Chris (C) Warrillow[1] was being transferred from Mendi in the

The Mainoki and Karato operations

Southern Highlands to lead the operation. He and a detachment of twenty riot police, under Sub-Inspector Geoff (G) Brazier,[2] would escort the geologists to Mainoki.

Only when that operation was successfully underway would Patrol Officer John (JW) Gordon-Kirkby[3] shepherd the geologists into Karato. Gordon-Kirkby was based at Boku in the Buin sub-district.

Ken (KA) Brown,[4] who was acting district commissioner for three months while Wakeford was away, accepted Gordon-Kirkby's assertion that he and two constables could handle the Karato exercise.

I was apprehensive. I knew Gordon-Kirkby had served his first term in Manus and had just commenced his second term in Bougainville. His career and his self-confidence reminded me of an earlier tragedy—the Telefomin massacre in 1953 when patrol officer Gerry Szarka, cadet patrol officer Geoffrey Harris and police constables Buritori and Purari were killed.

Coincidentally, Szarka had served his cadetship at Manus, and was in his second term when the Telefomin people went on their killing spree.

Warrillow arrived in Kieta on Thursday, 31 August 1967, and, reflecting on that time, has commented:

> I spent a week in Kieta in discussions with you [Brown] and others. I studied the patrol reports, circular instructions, and confidential files. And, as all my previous time had been in Papua, I boned up on the New Guinea law. I visited Barapina and Panguna by road—met with Dagge and Brazier—and I flew over the area in a helicopter.
>
> At the end of it all, I asked you were the Guava [people] like the Mekeo, or more like the Goilala. And I wondered how they compared with the Highlanders. My thoughts about your response, and explanatory description of the Guava, was: 'Oh, what the hell would he know anyhow?' At the time, I did not know that you had been stationed in Kairuku and Goilala. And, oh again, what was your response to my query? 'Like none of them'.

Warrillow drove up over the range to Barapina on 8 September 1967 and three days later set out with his team on the long trek towards Mainoki. He took and maintained the lead as the patrol followed the left bank of the Kawerong, crossed the river to Onovi and headed further west, deeper into the Crown Prince Range.

Because of his long aggressive stride the police dubbed Warrillow the Muruk (cassowary). Like that powerful and flightless bird, he was also hard-headed and determined.

The volunteers carrying the cargo were either too old or too young to obtain employment elsewhere, and soon fell behind the main group. After seven hours on the track, Warrillow was on his own when he walked into Kokomate village late in the afternoon.

Despite the approaching dusk and pouring rain, three village men volunteered to go to the nearby bush to find two long thin saplings for radio masts and to gather tent poles. Sub-Inspector Brazier staggered into camp just before dusk. The last carriers arrived in the dark at 7.15 and the camp was established an hour later.

Everyone was wet, cold and bedraggled. That was to be the pattern of life in those high mountains every afternoon over the coming months.

Early the next morning, a group of twenty-six village men confronted Warrillow and

warned him they would not allow CRA to prospect on their land. They said they knew nothing about the mining laws and did not want to know.

He was dumbfounded when they told him they had said the same thing to patrol officer Cedric Tabua earlier in the year when he had visited to explain the new laws. They asked him why Tabua hadn't reported this to the officers in Kieta—but he had.

As Warrillow continued to try to reason with the men, people from nearby villages came to join the protest, the numbers swelling to around 110, seventy men and forty women.

The arguments and discussions extended over three days. Lamoli of Mainoki, luluai Luau of Kokomate, Pagweri of Kokomate and Aitei of Paura had a lot to say, but it was local government councillor Luparabai who spearheaded the opposition.

He had walked a long distance from his village on the eastern side of the range to be here. When he spoke, he was at times almost incoherent but his main argument was clear. He told Warrillow:

> Our talk is not being sent to Port Moresby. We have complained to all the kiaps, mining warden McKenzie, the welfare officer and his missus [Judith Peters], but no one has ever answered. The big men in Port Moresby, especially the House of Assembly, do not hear our talk because you have kept your reports in Kieta.

The arguments were still going four days later, on Tuesday, 12 September. On that morning, the people told Warrillow they would place more credence on his statements if they heard about the mining law and the agreement on their radios.

They did not have long to wait. Early next evening, the Administrator was on the air, speaking to the people of Bougainville from Radio Rabaul. Reporting to Canberra on 14 September, the Administrator telexed:

> ' made a statement which was broadcast over Radio Rabaul last night laying down the rights and obligations of all involved in the Mainoki exercise. Police protection would be given to the exploratory parties if necessary. Patrol and CRA plans are to proceed at Mainoki as dictated by local events.

That radio broadcast gave Warrillow another problem. Sub-Inspector Brazier and his 20 riot police were eager for action and ready to intervene. Some wanted to teach the protestors to respect the law, and were itching to throw some tear gas and maybe crack a few heads. They did not get the chance. Warrillow was in control.

Three days later, on Friday, 15 September, Michael (MT) Lorenz, a twenty-one-year-old CRA field assistant, arrived by helicopter from Panguna. The flight took less than fifteen minutes. It had taken Warrillow and his team a full day to walk from nearby Barapina.

Over the weekend, Warrillow moved the group overland, passing through Sirowai and Mainoki villages to reach the high valleys further to the north. The mood in the area had subtly changed for the better.

The lululai of Sirowai offered his services as a guide and, as the group passed, handed out coconuts to drink. The carriers and police made three trips to shift all the gear—it was a two-hour trek each way—twelve hours in all. A few days later, after geologist Joe (MJ) Mooney flew in to Sirowai, the team was complete.

When a group of men representing the four villages (Mainoki, Kokomate, Paura and Sirowai) inquired about the company's plans, CRA area manager Bishop and I attended a meeting that Warrillow organised for Thursday, 21 September.

Although I had visited Warrillow two days earlier at the camp north of Mainoki, the meeting at the Kokomate rest house was to be a community affair. I was to explain the law and the government's point of view while Bishop would tell the people what the company proposed.

It did not work out that way. When Councillor Luparabai attacked the government and its mining law, I responded. But he held the floor and delivered his last rant before departing back home. I had my say, but the CRA area manager did not get the opportunity to speak.

The stream sampling operations were barely underway on 5 October 1967 when Warrillow was beset by a galaxy of CRA visitors to the camp: Frank Espie from Melbourne, area manager Colin Bishop and geologists Hughes, Spratt and McNamara.

By this time, the strident opposition had declined. But even though village people were visiting and selling vegetables, it was still too soon to activate the Karato move. CRA and Canberra would have to wait until later in the year.

In the meantime, Gordon-Kirkby would travel to Barapina on Thursday, 2 November, for a briefing on Karato. Warrillow would also attend.

CRA closed the Mainoki operation on 4 December. It was not as rich in minerals as the geologists had hoped, but could prove useful in the future.

Warrillow spent eighty-four days in the field—from 11 September to 4 December—on the Mainoki exercise. During that time, in addition to his main role of talking with the village people, he held regular planning meetings with geologists Hughes, Spratt, McNamara and Mooney).

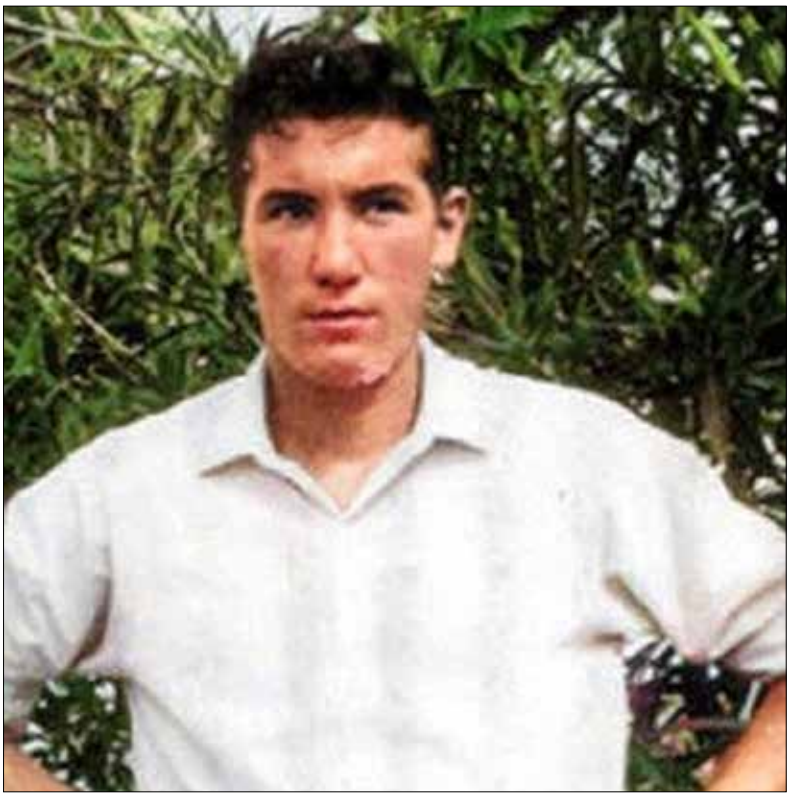
He accompanied Mooney and Lorenz on their stream sampling endeavours, he supervised the clearing of more than half a dozen helicopter pads, and he organised the construction of a handful of base camps. District Commissioner Wakeford would have been horrified.[5]

Patrol Officer Gordon-Kirkby travelled by vehicle from Boku, then on foot, and finally by canoe to reach Karairo village on the west coast near Torokina. The journey took all of Tuesday, 22 November 1967. The next day, he trekked for six hours to Karato, arriving at 2.30 pm, a day behind schedule.

Assistant District Officer Warrillow was already in the village, having flown by helicopter earlier in the day. He had already set up radio aerials and, using the portable transmitter, established radio contact with Barapina and Kieta. He had also already had an argument with the village spokesman, Siwapain.

Like John Dagge at Panguna and Warrillow at Mainoki, Gordon-Kirkby reported to me twice daily by radio. Those conversations—at 8.00 am and 4.00 pm, seven days a week—kept everybody in the loop, provided grist for my weekly situation report to Port Moresby and sometimes served as a way for us to let off steam.

At the end of the operation, Gordon-Kirkby compiled a longer than usual report that, at times, appeared a tad confused. It seemed incongruous that he reported his patrol as being



TOP: Bell 47G helicopter approaching one of Warrillow's campsites *(Chris Warrillow)*

LEFT: John Gordon-Kirkby and friends, Baluan, Manus, 1965

RIGHT: Chris Warrillow, Kairuku, Central District, 1956

BOTTOM: Administrator David O Hay and Mrs Hay, 1967

well received when, after a one-hour talk with the villagers, he was threatened with eviction if CRA moved out into the field.

His description of the next morning's events illustrated the people's mood. Warrillow had just departed for the Mainoki camp when another helicopter arrived—the third for the day:

> As the machine landed, it was rushed by half a dozen men trying to reload the machine. There was hysterical screaming by women and menacing looks in the eyes of the men. 'The battle of the cargo continued for some 10 minutes.' The noise of the helicopter aggravated the confusion. I persuaded the leaders to act more rationally, to allow the helicopter to leave—but empty.

Gordon-Kirkby said he tried to convince the people to allow the geologists to carry out their work but 'the slight hope of success was smashed' by the arrival of a Kieta local government councillor, Kia of Karikobi, who 'spoke with emotion and pent up hatred'.

Monday, 27 November was the deadline for Gordon-Kirkby to gain the people's acceptance. When he did not achieve that goal, I had no option but to initiate the action for his group to be withdrawn.

We held a planning meeting at Mainoki camp on Tuesday, 28 November. Warrillow and Brazier were already there. Kieta ADC Wiltshire, John Dagge from Barapina, CRA area manager Bishop, geologists Hughes (from Melbourne) and Mooney flew in by the Bell 204B helicopter.[6]

Early in the morning of Thursday, 30 November, CRA deployed a series of helicopter flights to evacuate all equipment and personnel. Gordon-Kirkby and his group (including the CRA field assistant, Lorenz) walked out overland. Two police constables[7] and two men from Paura village, sent by Warrillow, acted as guides. The trek took almost six hours.

Gordon-Kirkby recorded that their departure from Karato was 'marked by cordiality and a general round of handshaking' but he also wrote, 'I was not given the opportunity to put these people to the test, to see if they would really resist us to the point of using force ... Our retreat from Karato was probably taken as a triumph by the people of Karato.'

If the Karato people saw it that way, they would not have done so for very long. On the following day, Friday, 1 December, Gordon-Kirkby, Lorenz and ten CRA labourers, accompanied by Sub-Inspector Brazier and eighteen members of his riot squad returned to a temporary camp three miles from Karato village.

Four consecutive flights by the Bell 204B helicopter deposited a group whose strength would have overawed Karato village, population 93.

A two-day exercise saw the construction of a permanent camp while geologist Mooney and field assistant Lorenz went about their stream sampling operation without interference. The helicopter delivered supplies and visitors.[8]

On 7 December, Gordon-Kirkby, Brazier and fourteen police visited Karato village. In Gordon-Kirkby's words: 'to let the Karato people know that I was not fooling when I told them that I would call for [extra] police' and 'to show the flag.' Only six men were in the village at the time.

Even before the camp had settled down, senior geologists Don Carruthers[9] and F Hughes

flew up from Melbourne and were among the first visitors to the site, arriving on 6 December.

From then on, one joyrider or another would fill the vacant seat on almost every supply run from Panguna but would rarely descend the 200 steps from the helicopter pad to the camp.

Other visitors stayed longer. Acting District Commissioner Ken Brown visited for an hour or so on 9 December. Bob (RA) Hoad,[10] District Officer in charge at Boku, walked in from the west coast on 10 December, stayed overnight and roamed around the area for several days.

Sub-Inspector Brazier and nine police were withdrawn to Barapina on 12 December, and CRA withdrew their staff to Panguna for the Christmas–New Year shutdown on 23 December.

Surprisingly, the most vocal objector to CRA's intrusion, Siwapain, the Karato village spokesman, accepted their invitation to visit the Panguna operation over the Christmas break. He flew there by helicopter, stayed for a week and then flew back home.

Gordon-Kirkby and nine police remained on duty at Karato until 23 January 1968 for a lonely festive season. Then, on Christmas morning, Kieta ADC John Wiltshire arrived by helicopter with Christmas cheer and Gordon-Kirkby shared a celebratory Christmas luncheon with the police. The same group helped him while away the hours on New Year's Eve by playing Monopoly.

Three weeks after the New Year, CRA closed down the Karato operation. Like Mainoki, the area did not promise the mineral riches of Panguna. On 23 January 1968 all personnel were evacuated by helicopter.

Like 1966, 1967 had been an 'IF' year in Kieta and around Panguna—a year of Ignorance and Fear. The ignorance resided in Canberra, where the officials advising the Territories Minister were still peering through White Australia spectacles and, with one exception, had never visited or been near the island of Bougainville.

The fear came from the Nasioi-speaking people who lived around Panguna and on the east coast of central Bougainville. They were frightened that CRA would destroy their most treasured possession—their land.

Only one of the three senior Administration officials who visited Kieta to look at CRA activities in 1966 had any impact on the Canberra bureaucrats, and that influence was minimal at best.

Tom Aitchison, the Assistant Director of District Administration, had made a hurried visit to Bougainville on 27 December 1966, travelled to Panguna and other parts, and flown back to Port Moresby. He descended on us again in February and March 1967 and twice more in June. On each occasion he issued orders and directives.

All that changed when Aitchison visited Kieta on 23 September 1967. He said he would not be visiting Bougainville again. He was sick of being Canberra's minion. He was retiring to breed racehorses in Australia and intended to enjoy the rest of his life. He would be sailing home on MV *Bulolo* at the end of the year.

Administrator David (DO) Hay would miss Aitchison's daily briefings on Bougainville

and the situation reports he telexed to Canberra. Seeking to orientate himself to the island, Hay made his first visit to Bougainville on 18 October 1967, his wife accompanying him.

I met them at Aropa airstrip and William Poto drove us to Kieta in the battered Administration LandRover. We stopped outside town to allow Hay to don his World War II awards and campaign medals and his civil CBE.[11] He wanted to wear them for his inspection of the ceremonial honour guard.

Later in the morning, we took Hay on what I called my 'two-day highlights tour.' The first day went as planned when we drove over the Crown Prince range to inspect CRA activities at Panguna.

However, the Administrator changed the second-day itinerary, insisting on a visit to Arawa Plantation before visiting St Joseph's High School at Rigu and the Catholic Mission at Tubiana.

The Executive Committee handling the Bougainville situation[12] had suggested that Aropa or Arawa Plantations might be used to resettle people from the mine area, and Hay wanted to see Arawa for himself.

Two days was enough. Mrs Hay seemed to think our house too hot and our second bedroom too small—maybe she wasn't one for single beds—and I don't think she liked sharing the bathroom and our only toilet.

The area covered by CRA's application for a prospecting authority over northern Bougainville in 1967, and Tom Ellis, Director of District Administration *(right)*

On Friday, 20 October the Hays flew to Tinputz where he talked to a meeting of Local Government Councillors about CRA's latest application for a prospecting authority, 'which embraced the whole of Wakunai/Tinputz/Kunua Administrative areas of 1138 square miles. [295,000]' [13] This area of about 2,950 square kilometres was almost a third of Bougainville. No wonder the people were anxious.

The Administrator knew I had accepted an invitation from Tinputz Council to discuss the issue with them at the beginning of the following week, and I was surprised at his decision to become involved at the grassroots level. I thought it demeaned his office.

When we discussed the visit, I told him I thought the councillors would not respond to his explanation that a large copper mine would help the nation develop—they would be too polite to tell him what they thought.

Dagge and I were by now accustomed to First Assistant Director of District Administration Tom Aitchison flitting in and out of Bougainville, cock-a-hoop and ostensibly in charge of Administration activity.

That came to an end when he failed to succeed to be appointed Director to take over from J K McCarthy. Minister for Territories Barnes appointed Tom (TW) Ellis, District Commissioner of the Western Highlands, to the role on 13 September.

The newly-appointed Ellis said he was pressed for time when he descended on us in Bougainville in November. He wanted to see Panguna and surrounds. And he wanted to know all about the incidents that had recently occurred at Kokorei and Moroni.

John Dagge recalled the visit thus:

> On the day in question, with typical showers and mist, the helicopter arrived, and I proceeded to the pad. Ellis, of course, was first out followed by Bill Brown. Ellis stalked towards me and acknowledged my outstretched hand. 'Ah yes, Dagge. Who f**ked this up?'
>
> Completely taken aback and with visions of the Number One Kiap inscribing my personal file 'Never to be Promoted' I managed to stammer out, 'Well, Mr Brown was here before me, sir'. The betrayal was unworthy but met with Ellis saying, 'Huh—get inside somewhere. I want to talk!

Ellis and I left Dagge at Barapina and travelled back to Kieta. We talked until late in the evening. Ellis made things very clear. As far as our department was concerned, he was not waiting until Aitchison retired. He personally would forthwith assume control of CRA affairs.

John Wakeford, who was on leave, would not return to Bougainville. Des (DN) Ashton, now in Lae, would replace Wakeford as District Commissioner. A District Officer would be transferred from the Western Highlands to assist at Panguna, and ADC John Wiltshire would take over my role when I took leave in mid-December.

And, despite my protests, I would return to Kieta and the CRA role.

On 10 December 1967, I left Bougainville for a meeting in Port Moresby followed by three-months' leave.

ENDNOTES

1. Christopher Warrillow was born at Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, England in April 1941. He would joke that he was given only one first name because in wartorn Britain his mother did not have sufficient ration coupons for a second. The Warrillow family arrived in Melbourne on the migrant ship SS *New Australia* on 21 August 1955 when he was fourteen. He became a cadet patrol officer on 14 August 1959. He was promoted to Assistant District Officer in December 1964
2. Geoffrey (G) Brazier was born in England in May 1939, and arrived in Melbourne on the SS *New Australia* in February 1953. He left the Victorian Police Force to join the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary with the rank of Sub-Inspector in October 1965. He handled the Mainoki—Karato exercise with composure even though it was probably his first experience of such a situation.
3. John William Gordon-Kirkby was born on 26 August 1936. His parents lived in Spain but went to Gibraltar so he would be born on British soil. Due to the political situation in Spain, the family moved to Tangier in Morocco in 1939. After schooling in England and national service in the Royal Marines, he worked in the tourist industry in Morocco until he migrated to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on 26 November 1961 on the P&O liner, *Orsova*. He joined the Papua and New Guinea Administration as a cadet patrol officer on 1 June 1964.
4. Ken Arthur Brown was born in Dubbo, NSW on 23 June 1927 and joined the Royal Australian Air Force just before the end of World War II, aged eighteen. Discharged from the RAAF on 9 April 1946, he became a cadet patrol officer in June 1947 and served in the Gulf, Western, Manus, Sepik and Central Districts before being transferred to Bougainville as Deputy District Commissioner in March 1967. As Acting District Commissioner, he was involved with CRA activities from the beginning of September 1967 until the end of that year.
5. Following Gordon-Kirkby's patrol to Torokina in July 1967, Wakeford wrote to him saying 'we must not associate ourselves too closely with the Company. Our job is to explain to the people that the Company was given the legal right to prospect through laws passed by the House of Assembly and that is as far as we should go.'
6. The Bell 204B (civil version of the 'Huey' Iroquois helicopter famed for its role in the Vietnam war) carried ten to eleven passengers.
7. Constable Narokai, born around the late 1930s at Taroba village, Nagovis, South Bougainville, joined the Royal Papuan and New Guinea Constabulary in the 1950s. He spent his early years as a young constable at Mendi in the Southern Highlands and was transferred to Bougainville in 1967. He became Warrillow's right-hand man and later worked with other kiaps in the lower tailings area.
8. Warrillow expressed the view that the young geologists and field assistants 'deserved praise for their fortitude and trust in us. They were either very naive or very brave to come pretty fresh from the south and be thrown into some testing situations'. From my perspective, geologists seemed to think they had a god-given right to trample the earth and dig up anything valuable that they found. Only two of them, Ken (KM) Phillips and Frank (FE) Hughes, were considerate and caring. Phillips was a newcomer and feeling his way. Hughes had been awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar for his exploits flying Lancaster bombers over Europe in World War II.
9. Don (DS) Carruthers was chairman of Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) from July 1986 to November 1992.
10. Robert Alexander Hoad was born in Newcastle, NSW, in December 1937, and studied engineering for a year at university before becoming a cadet patrol officer in February 1957. In 1965 while stationed at Taskul, New Ireland, he was promoted to district officer and was transferred to Bougainville in September 1967.
11. David Hay was awarded a DSO and MBE in World War II and a CBE in January 1963 when he was Australia's High Commissioner in Canada.
12. Assistant Director Aitchison, Assistant Administrator Johnson, Secretary for Law Watkins and Director of Lands, Surveys and Mines Grove.
13. Assistant District Officer Arthur Marks' field officers' journal.

24: The United Nations Visiting Mission

Straddling the gulf between Bougainvilleans and the collusion of copper company and colonial Administration, the kiaps are fighting a losing battle - and then the UN visiting mission arrives. Is this a turning point?

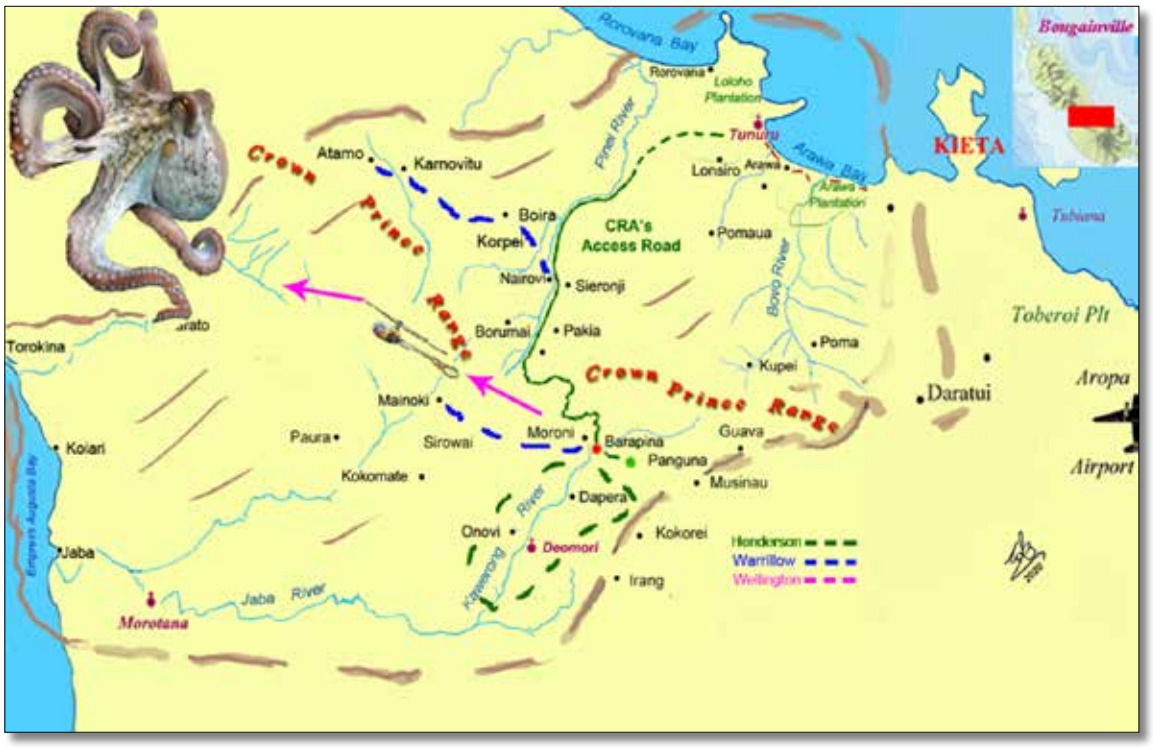
IT WAS NOT a massive upheaval, but the last quarter of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968 saw two of the kiaps enmeshed in Conzinc Rio Tinto's (CRA) operation leave Bougainville and four newcomers arrive.

District Commissioner John Wakeford moved to another hotspot, the recently created West Sepik District. His headquarters were situated at Vanimo, just forty-five kilometres from the border with West Irian.[1]

Another newly appointed District Commissioner, Des (DN) Ashton, came from Lae to replace him. I would come to miss Wakeford's 'tread lightly' counsel.

Wakeford was probably moved at CRA's behest, although he also trod on some toes.

CRA did not agree with his oft-repeated concern about the impact they were having on the people's land, and his comment that Gordon-Kirkby had become too close to CRA annoyed Aitchison and some of the other Administration brass. We kiaps were expected to facilitate, not criticise.



I would also sorely miss Assistant District Officer John Dagge. He handled the CRA-created problems around Panguna and Barapina for more than eighteen months before his departure to get married in Australia.

He needed a break and, if I had any say, would not be returning to Barapina or even to Kieta. Dagge and also Chris Warrillow were showing signs of strain. At the time I had not heard of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In an unexpected acknowledgement of Dagge's efforts, on 9 January 1968 Gregory Korpa (one of the more vocal CRA antagonists) made a special visit down the steep foot track from Moroni village to say farewell to him.[2]

On 11 December, when I departed for Australia on three months' leave, John (JA) Wiltshire,[3] the Assistant District Commissioner at Kieta, was lumbered with it all. He attended the weekly meetings at Panguna and the bi-monthly meetings in Port Moresby.

He told the other kiaps when and where to accompany the CRA teams, kept in radio contact with them each day, and visited them in the field. All that was in addition to his regular sub-district duties.

And if that was not enough, he had to organise the opening ceremony for the Kieta overseas wharf in January, the House of Assembly elections in February, and preparations for the UN visiting mission in March.

District Officer Ross (RW) Henderson [4] was based at Laiagam in the Western Highlands when the Director of District Administration, Tom Ellis, called him into Mount Hagen for an interview on 16 December 1967.

Five days later, Henderson arrived in Bougainville and took up residence at Barapina. During the following week, he unpacked his gear, visited CRA operations and helicoptered down the Jaba River to Morotana on the west coast.

He also roamed around the ridge that overlooked Panguna to meet the people who lived on the other side, in Guava and Musinau villages.

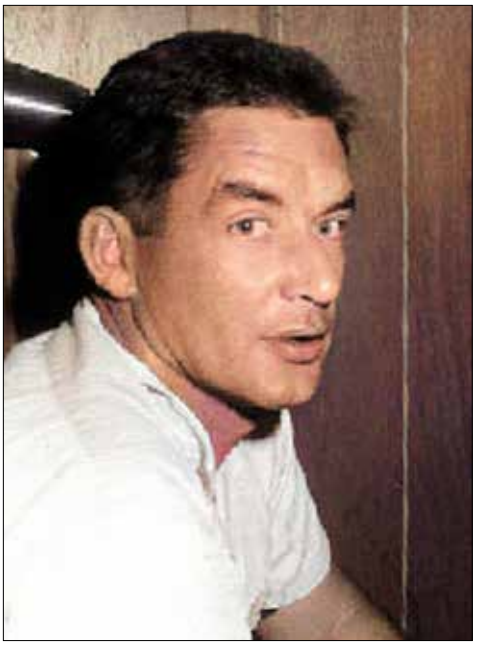
Henderson had a mixed reception at Panguna. Some expatriates, confused by his habitual khaki shorts and shirt, heavy boots and bluff exterior, thought him to be inflexible—a Western Highlands hard head.

But, with a few exceptions, the mountain people around Panguna were much more perceptive. They saw him as another kiap who would listen and with whom they could argue.

In a display of confidence, the Panguna-area landowners—except those from Guava village—were soon showing him their boundaries, something they had steadfastly refused to do before.

Two much younger kiaps became involved in the CRA mayhem in early 1968: 20-year-old Cadet Patrol Officer John (JR) Gyngell,[5] with only six months' experience and Patrol Officer Jim (JL) Wellington,[6] after just one term in New Ireland.

On Tuesday, 23 January, Assistant Administrator Frank (FC) Henderson [7] came to Bougainville to officially open the overseas wharf. Early next morning, he and his wife flew to Panguna by helicopter with District Commissioner Ashton in tow. Ashton came from Sohano in north Bougainville for the occasion.

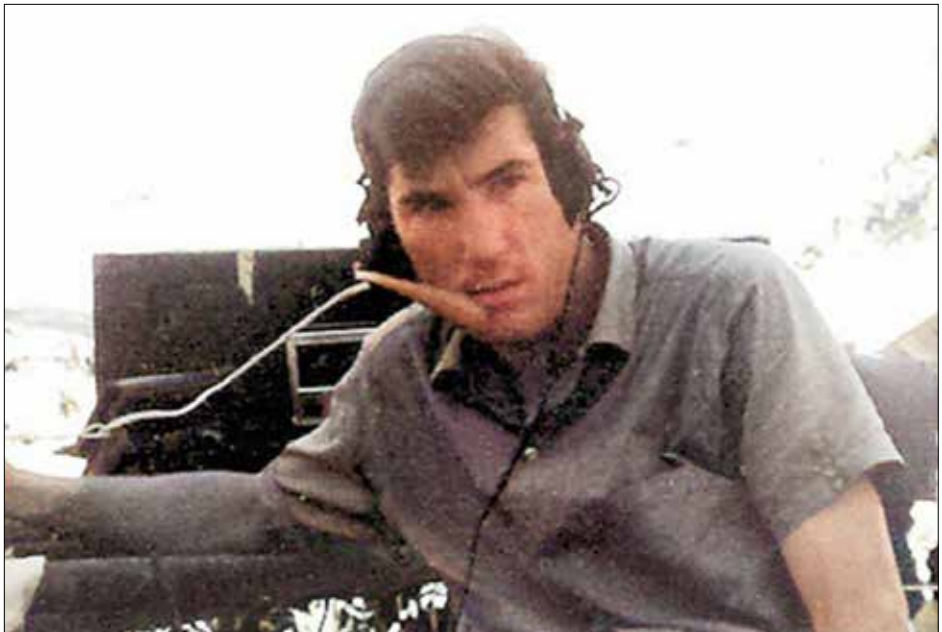


TOP: Moroni village

LEFT: District Officer Ross Henderson, *c.*1967

RIGHT: Assistant District Commissioner John Wiltshire

BOTTOM: Assistant District Officer Chris Warrillow, 1967



District Officer Ross Henderson (not related) met them at the Panguna helipad, delivered them to CRA for the tour and departed in haste. Fifty Musinau and Guava men were clamouring to be shown their transport to Kieta, having put themselves forward to attend the opening. After the ceremony, however, they were not in the same hurry to go home. The village men wanted to see town, and Henderson spent hours tracking them down.

Henderson revisited Guava and Musinau on 30 January intending to talk about the 1968 House of Assembly elections. His explanation degenerated into a shouting and screaming match: 'Anthony Ampei, in particular, abusing Paul Lapun, all members of the House of Assembly, Councillors, the Administration, CRA, and whiteskins in general,' he recorded in his Field Officer's Journal.

He said that Miringtoro Taroa, from Musinau, was one of the most influential men he had seen so far. 'He is quiet, will argue and reasons. When he loses an argument, he does not admit a loss but changes tack. He is anti-Administration, but he is human—not like the raving lunatic Ampei.'

(Assistant District Commissioner Denehy who had led the CRA-sponsored educational tour to Australia in 1965 had a different view. He thought Miringtoro learnt nothing from the trip and had no potential.)

Anthony Ampei's brother, Dumeno, spent almost all of February 1968 roaming around the district telling everybody there would be a catastrophic earthquake on 8 March. The dead would rise from their graves and the world would end.

He warned that people had little time to prepare. They should all attend the singsing (ceremonial feast) at Guava village commencing on 2 March and enjoy the last six days before the end.

Oni, the Luluai of Guava, who had supported CRA and who had been forced to leave Guava village when its people objected to prospecting, was living in a hideaway on the coast near Aropa, south of Kieta.

Disturbed by Dumeno's raving, Oni visited Henderson at Barapina and suggested they attend the singsing where the pair found many of the confused and uncertain participants had come just in case. On 9 March, the day after the expected cataclysm, Gregory Korpa visited Henderson to advise him 'the end of the world didn't come'.

While Henderson was occupied around the Guava, Warrillow, accompanied by Gyngell, was visiting four of the villages in the Eivo census division: Atamo (population 327), Boira (145), Karnovitu (196) and Korpei (293).

The people were opposed to any CRA intrusion. Warrillow had to tell them he would be escorting onto their land the CRA geologists who had been at Mainoki.

The Administrator, David Hay, kept Canberra up to date. On 5 January he telexed the Secretary that a DDA officer [Warrillow], a police officer [Brazier] and twenty police, together with CRA personnel would be entering the Atamo area to establish a helicopter pad and camp in preparation for a CRA survey commencing on 22 January. The helicopter pad and tents would be one mile upstream from the village.

The operation did not go as planned. Warrillow and Brazier left Kieta at 6.15 am on 15

January and arrived at the rendezvous—Korpei village—at 07:00. They found no one there.

They continued to Nairovi road camp where they met up with twenty riot police from Barapina, two CRA field assistants, and five men prepared to carry the supplies.

The field assistants said they had sent a truck to Daratui to pick up the additional thirty porters needed to move the party to Atamo, and 'they could be expected when they arrived'. Maybe they did not know that it would take the truck driver at least six hours to drive to Daratui and return.

Warrillow and Sub-Inspector Brazier waited for three hours then returned to Kieta, after rescheduling the departure for the same time on the morrow. CRA repeated the fiasco next day. Nobody turned up at the Korpei rendezvous.

Eventually, he and Brazier shepherded the CRA party and their gear to Karnovitu on Wednesday, 17 January—two days later than planned. Warrillow spent the night as a guest in Councillor Naimeko's house while the others slept under canvas.

Next morning the group walked for ten minutes to Atamo, passed through the village, and continued upstream to the site that had been selected from the air.

A day later, the first helicopter flew into the newly created pad. The only passenger, Sub-Inspector Campbell [8] was also new. The second helicopter delivered CRA Area Manager Bishop and the senior geologist from Panguna, Dick (RN) Spratt.[9] Sub-Inspector Brazier departed on the outward flight.

Bishop and Spratt wanted to plan the future activity with Warrillow. But when he complained about the chaotic organisation at Nairovi, Bishop said, 'It couldn't be helped!' and Spratt added 'You are not doing us any favours by escorting us in, you know.' Warrillow's retort was unrepeatable.

Before departing back to Panguna, Bishop said they would employ the Atamo people before any others. And they would buy all the vegetables they brought to camp. A few days later, when camp staff were rejecting workers and refusing to buy vegetables, Atamo Councillor Tonepa resumed his tirades of abuse against CRA and the Administration.

Sub-Inspector Campbell stayed only a week at Atamo. On 25 January, he and 10 other ranks were withdrawn to Barapina, leaving Warrillow and 10 police at Atamo. Fortunately, Constable Narokai, a Nagovisi from Buin, who had become Warrillow's right-hand man, was among the stayers.

A day elapsed before some Atamo men plucked up the courage to protest. At 11:30 on 26 January, geologist Mooney returned to the camp. Six Atamo men told him he was trespassing in their creek and to get back where he belonged.

Early next morning, fifty men presented themselves in front of Warrillow's tent, the spokesman saying, 'We have come to carry your cargo back to Panguna where you belong.'

Then men and women commenced the usual shouting and ranting: against CRA, the House of Assembly, the laws and the kiaps.

Warrillow said he tried to reason and explain but gave up and ignored them. He remained at Atamo, babysitting CRA field assistant Fernon [10] and geologist Mooney until 3 March 1968, when the camp was closed.

He moved back to Mainoki for the next exercise and was warmly welcomed. Around the same time, in an uneventful operation, Patrol Officer Wellington escorted geologist Mooney back to Karato.

I returned to Kieta from my vacation in Australia on 15 March 1968, five days before the United Nations Visiting Mission arrived in Kieta. According to the files,[11] one week earlier the Administrator advised Canberra that he expected village spokesmen to demand immediate independence for Bougainville and CRA's removal.

He also advised that, because of the people's opposition, CRA had decided to defer a proposal to relocate the main road through Pakia land until after the UN visit.

I knew that Damien Damen [Irang] and Anthony Ampei [Guava] had told their followers they would give the UN team a lot of money to get them to visit Guava, and that after they heard the talk, the UN would order CRA to leave Panguna.

The Mission's visit to Bougainville was short and sharp. On 20 March, they flew to Buka, spent the morning there, and flew to Kieta that afternoon. Next day they drove to Panguna, inspected CRA's operations, then drove back to Kieta.

After the public meeting held in the Kieta Local Government Chambers in the early afternoon, they drove to Aropa airport and departed Bougainville. They only wanted to see Panguna, and they declined to visit Guava or any other villages.

I think the tenor of the meeting surprised everyone. Raphael Niniku, the Kieta Council President, demanded that the mining royalties be paid into a development fund for Bougainville and that CRA establish a processing plant on Bougainville so the people could

Moroni and Barapina villages from the air

see how to make copper. Councillor Tonepa, from Atamo, said the people were very upset about CRA's activities because they did not know what the company was doing.

In a surprising rebuttal, Gregory Korpa from Moroni said he owned land where CRA was working, and Tonepa's statements made him angry. (During the six years I was in Bougainville that was the only time Korpa was not screaming 'CRA cease operating and quit Panguna'.)

Theodore Dewe, a CRA employee, asked what would happen when the company finished the ore. He also wanted to know if Bougainville could become an independent nation.

The leader of the Mission said that some countries were lucky and had mineral deposits. He added, 'In Bougainville, you may have copper in workable quantities. There are many countries where the law says the minerals belong to the nation. I ask the Liberian member to tell you if all minerals belong to the state in his country'

The crowd was dumbfounded when Augustus Caine, the thirty-six-year-old Liberian member of the UN team, spoke. He said his country, on the west coast of Africa, between Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, had been an independent republic since 1847. Several large iron ore deposits had been discovered in recent years.

Now, with four mines operating Liberia was one of the world's leading exporters. The government owned the ore. The people and landowners received no financial reward, but they and the rest of the nation benefited in every way from the development.

We kiaps were also dumbfounded. We had expected the UN to be anti-CRA and pro-Independence.

Maybe the UN visit gave the company greater confidence. At the weekly onsite conference on 7 May, Area Manager Bishop announced a massive expansion of their activity: 'The rerouting of the main road through the Pakia land will be investigated this week against the people's wishes.'

In the coming weeks, the company would operate in a broad swathe of the country stretching from east coast to west coast. They were looking for town sites, port sites, access roads, power transmission lines, areas for industrial sites, and tailings disposal.

They were also seeking construction materials: limestone, gravel and rock. They would need to explore, survey, drill and sample.

Until now, the people around Panguna had been the principal opponents to CRA. Soon, CRA's surveyors and engineers would be tramping through the villages on the east coast - in the Pinei valley and the North Nasioi—and down the Jaba River valley to Empress Augusta Bay.

Henderson and I were horrified.

ENDNOTES

1. Vanimo, his new headquarters, was forty-five kilometres from the West Irian border. Jayapura, the capital, was only another sixty kilometres further on. The 'act of free choice' was only twelve months away. Irian Jaya refugees—Melanesians—were already seeking sanctuary in PNG, and were sometimes pursued across the border.
2. Four months later, when Dagge married Robyn Griffin, his dark-haired beauty, in Bendigo, Australia, the wedding guests may have been confused by a telegram read out at the reception. In *Tok Pisin*, and purportedly sent by Senior Constable Yimbin, it read: '*Baraun I tok yu laik marit tudei (stop) Mi no klia gut. Oloseim wotam bipo.*' [Brown says you are getting married today. I am confused. What was going on before?]

3. John Albert Wiltshire born at Scone, NSW, in May 1936 became a kiap in April 1955 and was transferred to Kieta around about June 1967. I do not recall how or why that occurred. Wiltshire was ADC at Cameron (renamed Alotau) in Milne Bay at the time, and I knew him very well. He had been one of the Patrol Officers at Maprik in the Sepik District when I was posted there in 1962. We worked together until April 1965 when the Yangoru area was split from Maprik and became a Sub-District with Wiltshire the first ADC.
4. Ross William Henderson, a fourth-generation Tasmanian, was born in Devonport where his father was a bank manager. Ross attended Devonport High School and was involved in the scouting movement. A talk by a former pupil, kiap Terry (TW) White, inspired him to follow that career.
5. John Raymond Gyngell, generally as known as 'Jingle-bells' was popular with his peers. Born in Melbourne in March 1947, he became a Cadet Patrol Officer on 13 March 1967 and served two twenty-one terms in Bougainville. After accompanying Warrillow to Atamo in January 1968, he was posted to Barapina and to assist in defining the clans' land boundaries.
6. James Leslie Wellington was born in Australia in December 1945 but grew up in New Guinea where his father worked as a clerk in the various District Offices. He was home schooled at Namatanai and Kavieng, New Ireland, and Sohano, Bougainville, and was fluent in *Tok Pisin*. After attending boarding school for five years in Australia, he became a Cadet Patrol Officer and was posted to New Ireland without any specific training. A few months into his second term, he was transferred to Bougainville where he was involved with CRA.
7. Frank Cotter Henderson born 1911 in Broken Hill, NSW, joined the Territory of New Guinea Administration as Agricultural Office in 1936. He was based in New Britain—at Kerevat and Talasea, before enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1942. Returning to Papua New Guinea postwar, Henderson was appointed head of the Division of Plant Industry in 1951, Director of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries in 1958, and Assistant Administrator (Economic Affairs) in 1966. He was appointed as one of the Official Members in the House of Assembly in 1964 and Leader of the Government Members in 1966. I found him to be friendly and approachable but focused on economic development and almost uninterested in the grassroots' problems.
8. Ivan Leslie Campbell was twenty-two years old and a virtually a newcomer to Papua New Guinea when he was posted to Bougainville in 1968. He joined the Territory force as a Sub- Inspector from South Australia Police in 1967. When he returned to Australia in October 1968, he said he was returning to live permanently in Australia. He must have changed his mind; he had a distinguished career in Papua New Guinea.
9. Richard Nicholas Spratt, born in March 1924 took over the role of Senior Geologist at Panguna in 1966. He had the geologist's typical myopia.
10. Bruce Anthony Fernon, a twenty-two-year-old CRA field assistant from Ashbury, NSW, had been in Bougainville for almost a year when he was involved in the Atamo exercise. He returned to Australia.
11. From 1967 to 1969, weekly situation reports were sent by telegram from Kieta to the Administrator in Port Moresby. He telexed them - sometimes with comment, sometimes with amendment—to Canberra. In August 1969, Prime Minister Gorton demanded daily reports. Those situation reports, records of meetings, and documents are preserved in a number of files in the Australian National Archives. My own files together with the Field Officers Journals that I have borrowed from half a dozen kiaps, and the digitised Patrol Reports and PNG Land Titles Commission records augment the reservoir.

25: In Defence of the People's Land

As PNG approaches independence, the copper and gold deposit in Bougainville looks like a windfall. As forces gather to get on with the project, the kiaps struggle to protect the landowners' rights.

TUESDAY, 7 MAY 1968. District Officer Ross Henderson and I were dumbstruck at the tone of the on-site meeting at Panguna that morning.

Conzinc Rio Tinto Area Manager Colin Bishop was unusually forceful with his demands.

He wanted more assistance in the coming months when the CRA teams - geologists, engineers, planners and surveyors—would start tramping through the villages and gardens of central Bougainville.

All the way along the Pinei Valley, through the North Nasioi and down the Jaba River Valley to Empress Augusta Bay on the west coast.

At a crisis meeting the previous day, he had sweet-talked us with missionary fervour [1] about the company's desire to examine a possible light aircraft landing strip near Rorovana, at the bottom of the Pinei Valley.

Would I please ask the people to allow his team access to their land?

It was not even a minor crisis, but Bishop saw it that way.

Maybe he needed to satisfy the Project Manager who was visiting from Melbourne: Don Vernon verged on the dictatorial and would not have accepted that a CRA team could be denied access to anywhere or anything.

I was surprised by the request. Only twelve months earlier I had blocked the company's attempt to locate an airstrip for Fokker Friendship aircraft at the other end of the same valley.

I did not think it reasonable to move an entire village—Pakia—and destroy all the gardens merely to lessen the commute for company officials from Melbourne and the newly recruited overseas workers. An airstrip at Pakia would have saved their backsides only a ninety-minute drive from Aropa to Kieta to Tunuru and up the valley to Pakia.

I stayed overnight in the kiap-police compound at Barapina in the house that John Dagge and I had occupied in 1966. It was a bush hut I had taken over when the drilling team moved out. We had called it Mushroom Castle. Now Ross Henderson was head of household, Cadet Patrol Officer John Gyngell occupied the second bedroom, and I was the guest.

That overnight stay on the preceding day, 6 May 1968, worked out well. It gave us time to discuss Bishop's request. Had we not done so, I might have missed what Henderson was able to spot—that the area was outside the prospecting authority.

CRA had no right to enter the land without the people's permission.

The day after the on-site meeting and Bishop's more bullish demands, my Administration driver, William Poto, drove us to Rorovana. Assistant District Officer Chris Warrillow accompanied me to witness proceedings because I anticipated CRA would be critical of my discussions with the village leaders.[2] CRA thought I was biased.

After discussing the pro and cons, the Rorovana people agreed to allow CRA to proceed on two conditions: that I reported to Port Moresby the people's total opposition to any CRA intrusion, and that I accompanied the proposed survey team.

The Administrator telexed the addendum to my message to Canberra: 'CRA should be made aware of the overall reaction and the hostility to their demands for an unessential facility. The site is the only garden land available on the swampy coastal strip.'

I expected the two-monthly meeting between the Administration and CRA at Port Moresby would be the usual drag.

Sometime after midday on Friday, I caught the 'milk run' DC3 from Aropa via Wakunai and Buka to Rabaul, and at first light next morning a Fokker turboprop took me to Port Moresby.

Six days later, I would retrace my steps with another overnight in Rabaul before flying back on the Friday DC3 'milk run' via Buka and Wakunai to Aropa.

I was not looking forward to the Moresby sojourn. In the beginning, our headquarters put me in a travelling officer's bungalow at the back of Konedobu, without transport and miles from anywhere.

Later, they put me in the Moresby Hotel that in the 1950s had been a boozer and the haunt of the heavy drinkers. By 1968 it was a flophouse where the brawlers and the noise moved from bar to footpath at closing time, which made sleep impossible until the early hours.

My other gripe was with transport—or the lack of it—from the airport into town. I could never ascertain whether headquarters had neglected to book it and I did not enjoy hitching rides.

But on this occasion I got a big surprise. As I entered the terminal, Director Tom Ellis's driver met me and walked with me to the baggage claim.

Half an hour later, we arrived at Ellis's donga high on the hill above Ela Beach where Ellis was living as a single man.[3] His *mankimasta* (Bun, as I recall) assured me I was expected and would be occupying the second bedroom. Bun asked whether I wanted him to unpack my suitcase, and said Ellis was at the office but that he was now sending the driver to collect him.

Ellis and I talked throughout that afternoon.

He asked for an update on Panguna and wanted us to work out a strategy for two meetings: Monday's preliminary meeting that would be attended by Administration officials only, and the joint session on Tuesday when we might have to argue with the company's managers.

Ellis said I should understand, 'Get it into your noggin!', that Canberra, the Administration, Papua New Guinea, the Kieta Local Government Council and indeed most of Bougainville wanted the mine at Panguna to go ahead. A successful mine would finance Papua New Guinea's independence. (Mind you, not all the groups he listed would have agreed with the independence proposition.)

Ellis stressed that we also had to remember the Agreement[4] which allowed the company to apply for leases for town sites, roads, ports and other infrastructure—and the Administration had to provide the land. Our job was to protect the people's interests and help them get a fair deal.

Ellis continued. At Monday's Administration meeting, I could fight for what I wanted, and I could confront the two Assistant Administrators, Frank Henderson and Les Johnson, with my arguments.

If I wanted Ellis's assistance, I should tap the table and he would throw all his weight behind me.

At the joint session on Tuesday, the two Assistant Administrators would put the Administration's arguments to the company.

My job was to report on the current situation and, if need be, comment on the assertions made by company officials.

Once again, if I wanted his support, I should tap the table. He concluded with the comment, 'You won't get anywhere by being Mr Nice Guy. Don't pull your punches. Tell it as it is.'

On Sunday morning, Police Commissioner Bob (RR) Cole MC[5] dropped in to say hello. A social call only: police matters were not to be discussed.

Cole had a personal interest in Bougainville. He wanted to hear about Buin where he had worked and lived, first as Patrol Officer and then in charge of the sub-district for four or five years after World War II.

I could not help him. I knew nothing about Buin or the Buin Sub-District apart from Karato, Torokina and the Jaba, but we did discuss a mutual friend, Frank Miltrup, who had been Cole's neighbour at Turiboiru near Buin. Now parish priest at Tubiana, and sixty years old, I visited him most Friday afternoons to pick up the gossip and share my Scotch.

Cole also wanted to know how Father Wally Fingleton was faring. As a newly-ordained priest he had taken over Buin's Tabago mission before Cole departed in 1948.

I knew Fingleton had visited District Commissioner Cole at Wewak in 1964 but at that stage I had not met up with him.

Tuesday's joint session went more or less as planned.

CRA Frank Espie, who was to become the first Managing Director of Bougainville Copper, stressed the urgency of the impending surveys.

In response, I said CRA's intrusions into new areas, particularly those far from Panguna, would end the period of acceptance. More and more people would oppose and distrust the company, and we should expect increasing hostility.

If we were to get anywhere at all, and that was very doubtful, we kiaps needed more time to try to explain what was going on.

At the end of the argy-bargy, Espie accepted an eight-week delay to allow the people to be informed, and I received commitments for more field staff—kiaps— to help meet that deadline.

Unasked, somebody provided a Land Titles Commissioner, and Don Grove even promised that Mining Warden McKenzie would be full-time on Bougainville. The Administration also committed to a new police station at Nairovi. The people and the councillors said they wanted a uniformed officer and a detachment of other ranks to control excessive speeding by semi-trailers travelling to and from Panguna.

I think they were more concerned with the lecherous expats who were venturing near the villages on weekends desperately seeking female favours.

Espie's demand for increased airport capacity, the ostensible purpose of the Rorovana investigation, caused a flare-up. As a compromise, the discussion was 'deferred pending [an on the ground] inspection by Mr Espie and Mr Brown.'

TOP: Kiaps' house at Barapina *(John Dagge's Covid-19 shoebox)*

LEFT: Patrol Officer Max Heggen on patrol, Menyamya 1965 *(Max Heggen)*

RIGHT: David Christopher Brown (aged five) atop 1907 German marker trig point, Kieta 1968 *(Bill Brown)*

I flew back into Kieta on Friday, 17 May hoping District Commissioner Des Ashton was enjoying the weekend in Sohano and not making one of his frequent visits to Kieta. I was looking forward to some quiet time with my family.

Ashton did not disturb me, but on Saturday morning Ross Henderson drove to my house in a flap He had given CRA's staff photographer [6] a lift over the range from Panguna and, as they had driven past Pakia, the photographer had revealed that CRA had decided to build the company town there.

We did not know it at the time, but the company must have been planning for some big front lawns: they wanted 1,300 acres for 110 houses. If that went through, the Pakia people would lose 10,000 coconut palms and more than 30,000 cocoa trees as well as their entire village.

At the Kieta Council meeting on 27 June, when Teori-Tau from Pakia and his counterpart from Pomaua moved that the company could not build their town on Pakia land, council president Raphael Niniku said it was only one of many alternative sites. He added there was no need to worry: the Deputy District Commissioner, me, was helping the people.

Had I been present, I would have told him the battle had only just begun—and not to put his faith in princes, or kiaps, or me. Even so, I was determined to prevent the company and its minions from violating Pakia.

One week later, on Friday, 5 July 1968, Poto and I picked up Director Tom Ellis, Assistant Director Management Services (Screaming Johnnie) Williams [7] and District Commissioner Ashton from the airport at Aropa. Poto drove us into Kieta, then to Pakia, and finally to Panguna.

At Pakia, Councillor Teori-Tau did most of the talking but Councillor Naika (Borumai-Sieronji) added his support. Ellis listened to what they had to say, and Williams recorded it all. The councillors said they would never allow anyone to build a town on their land and, if necessary, the people would fight.

The big surprise came at Panguna when Area Manager Colin Bishop told Ellis that the consultant surveyors who had recently arrived from Australia were under instructions to survey only one town site—Pakia.

Although he was seething, Ellis did not respond to Bishop's comment. He was saving his wrath for bigger fry elsewhere.

CRA continued to fight for Pakia as their town site until the end of February 1969 and they ignored our efforts to steer them elsewhere. They liked Pakia's elevation, its cool evenings and its significant area of flat land. And it was close to Panguna—only half an hour's drive.

The town site argument was only one of many simultaneous problems. On 21 May 1968, just four days after I returned from Port Moresby to Kieta, some of the people decided to get rid of two of the three trig stations [8] around Panguna—one on the hill above Guava, one on the ridge above Kokorei. They didn't interfere with the one near Moroni.

Some individuals cut a stay wire on the Guava trig station while others dug a trench under the cement block on Kokorei ridge.

CRA had considered the two-ton edifice on Kokorei immovable. It was no problem for the Kokorei villagers. They undermined it and sent it rolling down the mountainside.

Henderson had spent weeks getting the people's approval for those structures and I had negotiated approval for the one near Pakia. Now they were all under threat.

When Henderson flew in alone by helicopter to assess the damage, and 'seven Kokorei men [9] of truculent mien met him', he sent the aircraft back to Barapina to collect two constables to maintain the peace.

I joined in the discussions with the Kokorei villagers that afternoon, and Mining Warden McKenzie added his weight to the argument. District Commissioner Ashton flew down from Sohano to join us the next day.

It took a lot of talking and a visit to the German trig station (known as the German marker) on my front lawn in Kieta for the Kokorei men to understand that trig stations did not mark land or define land ownership.

When they understood the German government had erected the Kieta station in 1907, and that neither the Australians nor the Japanese had interfered with it, they accepted that the Kokorei station was not an attempt by CRA to grab their land.

They offered to help rebuild Kokorei and did so on 26 May. But three days later the Guava station was sabotaged again.

Warrillow and I had returned to Rorovana on 25 May. I needed to report: to tell the people what had happened in Port Moresby.

CRA Geologist Dick Spratt, Assistant Administrator Les Johnson, his wife Dulcie Johnson and Bill Brown at Panguna for the official opening of Radio Bougainville, April 1968
(Department of Information and Extension Services)

I explained that the Administration had opposed the airstrip, but had agreed to an inspection by Espie and me. And that, since then, a helicopter pilot had reported the area was not suitable.

I further explained that Espie had said the company would be able to locate the port-loading facilities and the oil tank farm within Loloho plantation. There would be no intrusion into Rorovana.[10]

The people relaxed a little. But a short time later District Commissioner Ashton hit the airwaves, telling Radio Bougainville listeners about mining company CRA's planned activities.[11] His message offered no compromise, and it emphasised the impending Pakia survey. That talk, repeated over several days, may have been the trigger for our accords to unravel once again.

The Guavas cut more stay wires. The Kokorei and Dapera landowners, who had already indicated most of the land boundaries south of Panguna, refused further co-operation.

Amid the continuing turmoil, our personnel began to grow. The additional kiaps drafted by Tom Ellis arrived on a three-month assignment to help with the eight-week deadline set by Espie.

The Administrator advised Canberra, 'three additional DDA staff, an ADO, a senior Patrol Officer, and a junior Patrol Officer, all experienced bushmen,[12] have been posted to the area and thirty extra police have been moved quietly in to the Kieta area, bringing the total police strength to sixty'.

Patrol Officer Max Heggen [13] from Morobe District arrived on 28 May. Assistant District Officer Richard Glover [14] and Patrol Officer Noel Mathison [15] took a few days longer to make their way from the Western Highlands.

Quiet and unassuming, Land Titles Commissioner Bob (RI) MacIlwain [16] flew into Kieta in early June. A prewar officer, MacIlwain had been an Assistant District Officer in charge of various Sub-Districts since 1946.

MacIlwain was no newcomer to Bougainville. He had been stationed at Kieta for a term from 1952 to 1953, except for a brief stint filling in as District Commissioner at Sohano between DCs MH Wright's departure and CH MacLean's arrival, when Wright resigned in 1952.

District Officer Bob (RA) Hoad roamed in overland from Boku to Panguna on 24 June. He had previously been involved with CRA at Karato in January, when he had walked in to overnight and to check on Patrol Officer Gordon-Kirkby during that investigation.

Now he would be keeping his eye on CRA's forays down the Jaba River valley and beyond, and he needed to familiarise himself with CRA's new program.

It might have been the grand finale—or was it a new beginning when, between 22 July and 30 July, District Commissioner Ashton transferred the District Headquarters from Sohano to Kieta?

The staff and their families flew in by air, all except Ashton's Deputy District Commissioner Ken (KA) Brown and his family who were possibly to be transferred back to Papua.

The Administration trawler transported office and household furniture, stationery, files, equipment, and the contents of the government store from Buka to Kieta. The Nivani took several trips to move it all—then she, too, took up station in Kieta.

Heggen and I assisted in moving the furniture, and the office setup. Ashton told me to pack whatever gear I needed from the Sub-District Office and move it forthwith to the new District Office.[17]

Henceforth I would be Deputy District Commissioner for the entire Bougainville District.

Life was about to change again ...

ENDNOTES

1. Like Sir Val Duncan (chairman and chief executive officer of CRA's parent company, the England-based Rio-Tinto Zinc Corporation), thirty-seven-year-old Bishop and his wife were adherents of the smallish religion Church of Christ, Scientist. Bishop and his wife, from Queensland's Sunshine Coast, loved the sun and the sea. She involved herself in Panguna matters but failed in her primary challenge to prevent expatriate males from visiting the occupants of the single women's quarters. Perhaps she did not realise it was serious courting and it was where CRA staff, a couple of police officers and two notable kiaps would find their brides.
2. Councillor Wau was elected to represent Rorovana Village No. 1 when it became a founding member of Kieta Local Government Council in 1964. The people of Rorovana No. 2 declined to join the council and Tultul Bubua continued to be their spokesman.
3. Ellis and his wife Freda married in 1935 but lived apart from the mid-1950s until Ellis retired.
4. The Mining (Bougainville Copper Agreement) Ordinance became law in August 1967.
5. Bob Cole and Tom Ellis had been my friends, as well as superiors, in the Sepik District from September 1957. District Officer Ellis was promoted to District Commissioner and transferred to Mount Hagen in May 1960. District Commissioner Cole became Chief of Police in December 1964. I was stationed in the Sepik District from August 1955 to June 1966.
6. Tiny (BA) Wendt, a thirty-one-year-old professional photographer from Victoria, had worked at Panguna for more than a year.

Kieta from the air (Tiny Wendt, CRA)

7. John Cyril Williams was twenty-five years of age when he became a Patrol Officer in 1946—two years after his discharge from the Royal Australia Air Force. Williams served as Patrol Officer in New Britain and the Sepik, completed the ASOPA two-year diploma course and served as ADO/ADC at Aitape and Kokoda before being appointed Assistant Director Management Services in 1966.
8. In the days before satellites and the global positioning systems, trig stations—or trigonometrical stations—were important and fundamental to large scale engineering surveys and design. Generally concrete pillars on hilltops and visible from afar, they marked points with precise geographic coordinates obtained by fixes from the sun and stars and triangulation. The network of trig stations set up around Panguna enabled the proposed structures and facilities to be conceptualised and planned.
9. Luluai Basiona-Amenu, Noanu-Una, Karavue-Ilo, Omanu-Basiona, Ovio-Pana, Kampa-Nike, and Kakinu-Oliko.
10. Sadly, that statement turned out to be flawed. In 1969, when CRA required the government to compulsorily acquire a large area of Rorovana land all hell broke loose.
11. Radio Bougainville commenced trial transmissions in March 1968 and was officially opened by Assistant Administrator Les Johnson on 20 April 1968. Encouraged by the Administration, Ashton went on air to tell all Bougainville about CRA's activities and plans—and he used less than dulcet tones.
12. I thought 'experienced bushmen' was an overkill. We kiaps largely depended on our patrol police and the local people for our bushcraft.
13. Max Wilfred Heggen, an orchardist from Kerang, Victoria, was twenty-four years of age when he was transferred to Bougainville. He was OIC Aseki Patrol Post in his second term and had already served at Kabwum and Menyamya. Heggen remained in Bougainville until 1975.
14. Assistant District Officer Richard Glover from Kogarah, Sydney, had been a kiap for a little over five years when he arrived in Bougainville. After a term in New Britain and a year in Sydney at ASOPA, he was posted to the Western Highlands. He was keen to leave Bougainville as soon as possible.
15. Twenty-three-year-old Noel Francis Mathison, a former police constable from Moe, Victoria, was three months into his second term. He had been a kiap for almost two and a half years. He came with Glover from the Western Highlands and, influenced by him, was also keen to leave Bougainville as soon as possible.
16. Robert Ivor MacIlwain was a twenty-six-year-old clerk in the Territory's New Guinea Administration and stationed in Rabaul when he enlisted in the AIF (NGX146) on 16 July 1940. MacIlwain did not have an easy war, first serving with the 2/25th Battalion AIF and then, as Sergeant, involved in guerrilla-like operations in Morobe (Salamaua) and Madang with the 1st Papuan Infantry Battalion. He was commissioned, served with ANGAU and ended the war with the British Borneo Civil Administration Unit.
17. Ashton took over Delta Construction's vacant waterfront complex at Kieta as his offices. It had been empty since earlier in the year when Delta finished building the overseas wharf. It was not a substantial building but the two storeys, replete with kitchen and toilets, accommodated all the staff. Ashton occupied the double room across one end of the building, and I grabbed the corner room at the other end of the building adjacent to the stairway. It had a water view and I could escape when I wanted.

Afterword

BILL BROWN began an eleven-year stint as a kiap in the Sepik District in 1955, where he was in charge of patrol posts at Vanimo and Dreikikir and then sub-districts at Aitape, Ambunti, Telefomin, Wewak and Maprik.

In June 1966, he was transferred to Bougainville for field duties associated with CRA's problems in prospecting for gold and copper. His assiduous work was recognised in 1968 when he was made a Member of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List. The award was described as 'a rare honour never before granted to a DDA (Department of District Administration) officer of Brown's rank'.

He was appointed District Commissioner for the CRA project area in 1969, and was given responsibility for the entire Bougainville District in 1971. His PNG career finished in 1975, and he was variously Head of Administration of the Australian Film and Television School and, for six years, Director of Programmes and sometime Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission.

Bill Brown, MBE with Fred Kaad, OBE
A recent photo of two of colonial Papua New Guinea's distinguished district commissioners