THE PACIFIC WAR

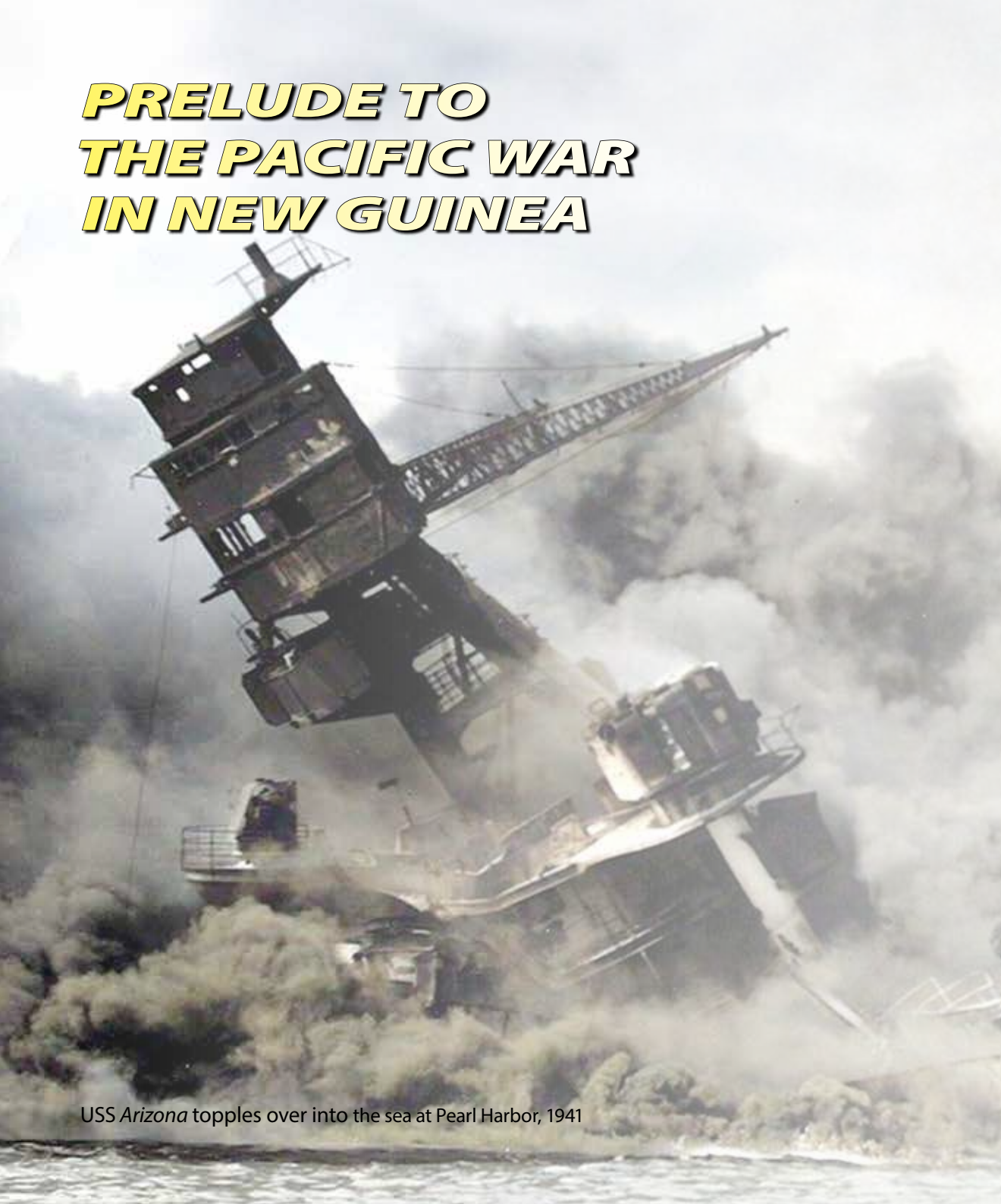
New Guinea 1942

80 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

The New Guinea Campaign of the Pacific War lasted from January 1942 until September 1945—and was arguably the most arduous fought by any Allied troops during WWII. It is now eighty years since the Japanese troops first landed on Australian soil in early 1942, and we pay tribute to all those involved in the war effort—and the many who did not survive ...

'Naval Landing Forces at the Battle of Rabaul, New Guinea', painting by Saburo Miyamoto, 1943

PRELUDE TO THE PACIFIC WAR IN NEW GUINEA



USS *Arizona* topples over into the sea at Pearl Harbor, 1941

The New Guinea Campaign of WWII lasted from early 1942 until the Japanese surrender at Wewak in September 1945. During the initial phase, eighty years ago, Japan invaded the Australian-administered Mandated Territory of New Guinea on 23 January 1942, the Australian Territory of Papua on 21 July, and overran western New Guinea at the end of March. Many important historical events led up to the first assault.

1920–30:
Japan's imperialism and industrial development increased.

18 September 1931:
Japan occupied Manchuria, in northeast China.

7 July 1937:
Japan invaded China, starting the Second Sino-Japanese War.

1 August 1940:
Japan announced the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a self-sufficient bloc of Asian nations, led by Japan.

27 September 1940:
Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany & Italy.

April 1941:
Australia sent 2/22nd Battalion Lark Force to Rabaul, and 1 Independent Company to Kavieng, New Guinea.

1. 2/10th Field Ambulance detachment in Rabaul, 1941;
2. RAN's HMAS *Sydney II*, 1941;
3. 2/9th Gurka Rifles in Malaya, 1941

April/May 1941:
Germans invaded island of Crete, 274 Australian soldiers from the 6th Division, AIF, killed, 507 wounded and 3,102 taken prisoner.

July 1941:
Japan extended its control over the whole of French Indochina.

26 July 1941:
US froze Japan's assets, established an embargo on oil and iron.

19 November 1941:
Loss of HMAS *Sydney II* and 645 lives in Australian waters—the worst naval disaster in the Royal Australian Navy's history.

7 December 1941:
Japanese military strike upon the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii—war was declared on Japan the next day by the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, The Netherlands & China.

8 December 1941:
Japan invaded Malaya, which was defended by the British Indian Army, the 8th Australian Division and the RAAF. There was also a Japanese reconnaissance flight over Rabaul on this date.

10 December 1941:
Japanese land and torpedo bombers sank Royal Navy ships, HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse*, in the South China Sea.

4 January 1942:
Rabaul came under bombing attack by large numbers of Japanese carrier-based aircraft.

23 January 1942:
The Battle of Rabaul, was fought on the island of New Britain, with the Japanese invasion force quickly overwhelming the small Australian garrison, the majority of whom were either killed or captured.

JOHN EGERTON AM

THE NEW GUINEA ISLANDS

The bleakest, most depressing days in Australia's history were surely the six months following Japan's entry into the Second World War … the invasion of Rabaul by Japanese troops on 23 January 1942 was the first occasion on which enemy forces had landed on Australian-controlled territory.

Lt-Gen. the Hon. Sir EF Herring

In January 1942 Rabaul was Australia's front line in the Pacific war. This war was fought on Australian soil against Australian people. It was a critical period in the history of both Australia, and what was then the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

Rabaul, on the northern tip of the Gazelle Peninsula, is surrounded with volcanoes and therefore complicated by the natural danger of volcanic activity. Its magnificent port was the export and import centre for the New Guinea islands with vessels loading copra, cocoa, timber and marine products. Whilst Rabaul had the major population, others were scattered on New Ireland and other islands in the Bismarck Archipelago.

When WWI broke out in 1914, Australia moved quickly to secure the former territory of German New Guinea, and Japan seized those German territories in the Pacific, north of the Equator—the Caroline Islands, the Mariana Islands and the Marshall Islands. At the conclusion of WWI the Council of the League of Nations granted mandates to both Australia and Japan in respect of these former German territories.

Whilst Australia had responsibility to protect the people of New Guinea, certain League of Nations restrictions were imposed prohibiting the establishment of fortifications, military or naval bases and of training local inhabitants other than for maintaining law and order. Australia abided by the conditions but Japan did not.

Previous Page: Detail of Geoffrey Mainwaring's painting, 'Japanese Landing Near Vulcan, Rabaul';
1. Main road of Rabaul prewar;
2. Evacuating residents from Rabaul, before the invasion

The European residents in New Guinea had considerable unease as they watched increasing visits by Japanese and German shipping to Australian Mandated New Guinea. After war with Germany broke out in 1939, a coastwatching network was set up by the Royal Australian Navy.

A militia unit—the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR), using obsolete WWI equipment—was formed in the Territory with its headquarters in Rabaul. This was made up of planters, administration officers, traders and other members of the community—men between sixteen and forty-five with intimate knowledge of New Guinea and its people.

In 1941 Australia sent Lark Force, 2/22nd Battalion, to Rabaul, and 1 Independent Company to Kavieng. No plan was made for the civilians. The defence of New Britain was to be the responsibility of 1,400 Australian troops, based around the 2/22nd Battalion. Among them was a Salvation Army band from Brunswick in Melbourne.

The 1 Independent Company, a commando unit, comprised around 250 officers and other ranks. About 150 men were based in Kavieng to protect the airfield, while others were deployed as observers to central New Ireland, Bougainville and Manus, as well as to Tulagi in the British Solomon Islands and Vila in the New Hebrides, now Vanuatu.

The military command could not possibly cover the miles of coastline with the token force they had. Yet the Chiefs of Staff in Australia had decided that the garrison would not be evacuated, would not be reinforced and would not be re-equipped. In August 1941 Rabaul was assessed to be at risk of a major invasion, but a proposal to evacuate civilians was rejected.

European Evacuation from Rabaul—22 December 1941

The first Japanese surveillance aircraft flew over Rabaul on 8 December 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor. On 11 December 1941 Canberra said there would be no evacuation, reversing this decision the following day. Males over sixteen years were to remain, although there were cases of younger boys staying.

The fate of Lark Force was set in a cable sent to Washington, on 12 December 1941, by the Prime Minister's Department, Canberra:

> *… it is considered better to maintain Rabaul only as an advanced air operational base, its present small garrison being regarded as hostages to fortune.*

Word had to hurriedly reach outlying plantations, and small vessels were delayed bringing women and children in to Rabaul because of the treacherous weather and rough

1. The wreck of the MV *Macdhui* in Port Moresby Harbour;
2. Japanese troops occupy Kavieng on 23 January 1942;

seas. The Burns Philp ships, MV *Macdhu*i (later sunk in Port Moresby Harbour on 18 July 1942 by Japanese bombers) and MV *Neptuna*, evacuated European women and children on 22 December 1941, although many from outlying plantations and New Ireland missed these ships. Upon reaching Australia the lives of the evacuees fragmented and many struggled. They had lost their men, their homes, their friends and their community.

The evacuation order did not apply to indigenous, mixed race or Chinese people. The failure to evacuate Chinese women and children in Rabaul and Kavieng caused understandable bitterness in a Chinese community that feared the Japanese. Later, those on the New Guinea mainland were approved evacuees. Despite the evacuation of women and children, many wives and families of missionaries and several nurses could not reach Rabaul in time, or elected to remain.

The First Bombs—4 January 1942

These were dropped on Rabaul on 4 January 1942, and the last civilians were taken out on 8 January 1942. 1,700 servicemen and at least 300 European civilians were not evacuated, despite several ships entering Rabaul before the bombing started.

In early January 1942 Lark Force was told that *'Every man would fight to the last'*. Still, no dumps of food, medicines, ammunition or maps were made in the mountainous jungle behind the Gazelle Peninsula.

Air attacks were made on Rabaul and Kavieng on 20 January. Rabaul saw eighty bombers and forty Zeros bomb shipping, wharves, airfields and buildings. One result was inevitable for the gallant five Wirraway crews of the RAAF No. 24 Squadron who took off to do battle in the face of overwhelming superiority, and they will always be remembered for their magnificent courage. Those who should also be remembered are the 5 civilians, survivors of a party of twenty-nine, who got clear of the Japanese at Kavieng and travelled nearly 1,000 miles over hostile land and sea and, *en route*, helped to rescue 37 American airmen, most of whom had been forced down during the Battle of the Coral Sea.

The Fall of Rabaul—23 January 1942

It was only a few hours after the Japanese invasion force of around 5,000 troops, mainly from the 144th Infantry Regiment, entered Simpson Harbour, quickly overwhelming the small Australian garrison on 23 January 1942, that word went out *'Every man for himself'*.

1. Australian soldiers retreating from Rabaul cross the Warangoi/Adler River in the Bainings Mountains, on the eastern side of Gazelle Peninsula in late January 1942;
2. Sr Berenice Twohill and the nuns being evacuated from the mission in Ramale Valley;

Those who escaped were considered the lucky ones and yet what many of them went through, walking hundreds of miles over rugged mountainous jungle in the wet nor'west season, crossing raging rivers often infested with crocodiles, suffering hunger and starvation and the dreaded malaria, can only be imagined. 214 escaped on MV *Lakatoi* and 156 were rescued on HMAS *Laurabada*. Others escaped New Britain and New Ireland on smaller vessels.

Japanese brutality towards prisoners of war, coastwatchers, interned civilians and missionaries in both New Britain and New Ireland was regular. For those captured or who gave themselves up, there was five months of imprisonment labouring for food.

The sixty officers who had been separated from the men, together with seventeen nurses and one civilian woman planter, were shipped to Japan on 6 July on MS *Naruto Maru* and spent the rest of the war years as prisoners of war. In addition, more than 150 civilians were eventually liberated from a valley camp at Ramale in the Kokopo area after WWII ended—nearly all were members of the Sacred Heart Mission, including many nuns.

Many of the soldiers and civilians who were rescued owed their lives to members of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), the New Guinea residents and some courageous New Guineans. These people took initiatives and accepted risks.

Rabaul became a key Japanese staging and supply centre, headquarters of the Japanese South East Fleet. In 1945, when Japan surrendered, there were nearly 100,000 Japanese troops and auxiliaries in this part of New Britain.

Difficult and costly battles were fought during the New Guinea Campaign from the invasion of Rabaul by Japanese troops on 23 January 1942—***the first occasion on which enemy forces had landed on Australian-controlled territory***. Many people mistakenly believed the first Japanese attack was the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942, which received comprehensive media coverage—whereas Rabaul, the horrific massacre at Tol Plantation and the tragic sinking of MS *Montevideo Maru* received little, if any, mention.

EIGHTY YEARS LATER many Australians are still unaware of this history. It is important to ensure that the sacrifice of these men is not forgotten, and that the Fall of Rabaul and surrounding islands and the sinking of* Montevideo Maru *remain an enduring part of the nation's history.

ANDREA WILLIAMS
Edited extract from the Introduction,
***When the War Came: New Guinea Islands 1942*, PNGAA, 2017**

1. Memorial cairn at Tol Plantation, 1987;
2. Some of the men from the 2/22nd Battalion, all drowned on the *Montevideo Maru*;
3. MS *Montevideo Maru*

Tol Massacre—4 February 1942

Some of those who escaped from Rabaul and walked through the jungle eventually found a few small boats, in which they crept along the south-east coast of New Britain coming ashore in the vicinity of Tol Plantation at the eastern end of Wide Bay. Unfortunately, they were expected and were met by five barge loads of Japanese troops. The exhausted Australians had no choice but to surrender. Two men escaped and were re-captured at the neighbouring Waitavalo Plantation, where they were smeared in pig grease and burned alive in the house.

Another who escaped, eventually came into contact with some civilians on the bank of a creek about half a mile from the beach at Tol Plantation. They untied the cords which had been on his wrists all the time, and provided him with food.

After the war, 160 bodies were discovered in the vicinity of Tol and Waitavalo Plantations, including seven NGVR soldiers. A few survived by playing dead although they had terrible wounds and, against all the odds, managed to get back to Australia. They later described how most of them were rounded up and in the early morning of the next day, 4 February 1942, tied up in small groups, led into the jungle and bayoneted or shot by Japanese soldiers. The Japanese officer responsible for these war crimes was Colonel Masao Kusunose, who later committed suicide.

Some historians believe that the Tol Plantation massacre was among the most callous in the war. A school in the area has been named the 2/22 Lark Force School, and a small cairn was erected at the site in 1987 by survivors of the 2/22nd Battalion and members of the 3rd Brigade Australian Army.

Sinking of *Montevideo Maru*—1 July 1942

Early in the morning of 22 June 1942, members of the Australian 2/22nd Battalion, No. 1 Independent Company, and civilian prisoners, captured in New Britain during the Fall of Rabaul in January of that year, were ordered to board MS *Montevideo Maru*, a Japanese passenger vessel used by the Imperial Japanese Navy during WWII as an auxiliary vessel transporting troops and provisions throughout South East Asia—only the army officers, some nurses and a small number of civilians were left in the Malaguna Road camp.

MS *Montevideo Maru* sailed unescorted for Hainan Island, keeping to the east of the Philippines in an effort to avoid Allied submarines. On 1 July 1942, the ship was spotted

1. Sgt Gullidge conducting the 2/22nd Battalion Band, most of whom were lost on the ship; **2.** NGVR Vickers Platoon at Rabaul; **3.** NGVR B Company proudly display a Japanese flag captured at Mubo, 21 July 1942

by the American submarine, USS *Sturgeon*, which manoeuvred into position and fired its torpedoes. The ship sank by the stern in as little as eleven minutes from their impact.

Although the Japanese crew were ordered to abandon ship, it does not appear they made any attempt to assist the prisoners to do likewise. Of the eighty-eight Japanese guards and crew, only seventeen survived the sinking and subsequent march through the Philippines jungle.

While the exact number and identity of the more than 1,000 men aboard *Montevideo Maru* has never been confirmed, Japanese and Australian sources suggest an estimated 845 military personnel, including thirty-six NGVR soldiers, and up to 208 civilians perished in the tragedy—the greatest loss of Australian lives at sea in war or peace.

Considerable efforts were made by both the Inter-national Red Cross and the Australian Government to seek details of *Montevideo Maru*'s passengers from the Japanese authorities, however, the deaths in Australia's least-known maritime disaster were not revealed until after the end of the war, when Japanese records were accessed in Japan.

'Keepers of the Gate'

The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR), a militia unit, was established in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea in September 1939. With an establishment of twenty-three officers and 482 other ranks, sub-units were established in Rabaul, Kokopo, Wau, Bulolo, Lae, Salamaua and Madang.

When the Japanese invaded Rabaul in the early hours of 23 January 1942, there were eighty soldiers from the Rabaul company of the NGVR positioned on the extreme northern flank of the defence around the western shore of Simpson Harbour, but they withdrew when outflanked to the south, and most moved west along the north coast. Of these, twenty-two escaped, forty-six were captured and twelve perished in battle or succumbed to privations suffered during their escape.

Other NGVR units monitored the Japanese bases in the Huon Gulf region, establishing observation posts and camps overlooking the main approaches—they were the *'Keepers of the Gate'*. In a series of raids NGVR inflicted significant casualties on the Japanese. On 28 June 1942 NGVR and the newly-arrived 2/5th Independent Company carried out a highly successful attack on the Japanese garrison in Salamaua.

1. A group of Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) personnel;
2. Australian Coastwatchers and members of the US Army

Later, when the focus shifted to the Kokoda and Milne Bay battles, NGVR continued to man its posts overlooking the Japanese—*1942 was NGVR's year.* However, it was an exhausted unit by September. Although some troops remained in place, there were too few to be effective when NGVR was officially disbanded in April 1943. It was later reformed as the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR) in 1950.

Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU)

From their inauguration in April 1942, the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) played a vital role. The Australian Army called for young men to become patrol officers in ANGAU—the section of the Army which carried out the function of the two former civil administrations of the Territory of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

When a large part of New Guinea was occupied by the Japanese, some amazing feats of valour and endurance were performed by ANGAU Patrol Officers. Courage, ingenuity, bold shrewd enterprise, great patience and perception were required of them. They were deprived of the company of all other white men and without even the most ordinary comforts of life. Yet, enabled by their intimate knowledge of the indigenous people and the country, they lived amidst the enemy, causing incalculable losses by the intelligence sent to headquarters by wireless.

The ANGAU officers and their New Guinean carriers, labourers, scouts, guides and police were highly regarded by the American and Australian military. After the end of World War II, ANGAU was abolished and was replaced under the Papua New Guinea Provisional Administration Act (1945–46) by the combined government of Papua and Australian New Guinea.

The Coastwatchers

This force had its beginning in 1922 when the Royal Australian Navy received approval to recruit a network of unpaid, carefully selected civilians, including merchants, missionaries, planters and public servants who were living or working on or near the coast of the northern mainland of Australia and the islands to the north. The network was established for the purpose of reporting in wartime, any unusual or suspicious happenings along the coast.

1. Coastwatchers Memorial at Madang;
2. Subic Bay Memorial, The Philippines;
3. The Rabaul 1942–45 Memorial

When Japan began its move southward in January 1942, the network was enlarged. More people with local knowledge were recruited as well as personnel from the Australian armed forces. These men were landed at various vantage points, mostly at night, to observe and report by radio, movements of enemy shipping, planes and troops and any other information deemed important.

Most of them were helped by the local people, who risked their lives and that of their families, operating behind Japanese lines, fighting the enemy and gathering critical intelligence for the Allies—despite the threat of instant reprisal if they were discovered. Some of our men were accidentally betrayed and taken prisoner, which earned them instant execution. Theirs was a lonely death—alone against a brutal enemy.

The names of many of the coastwatchers who died are recorded on the memorial at Madang: *Watched and Warned and Died that We Might Live*'

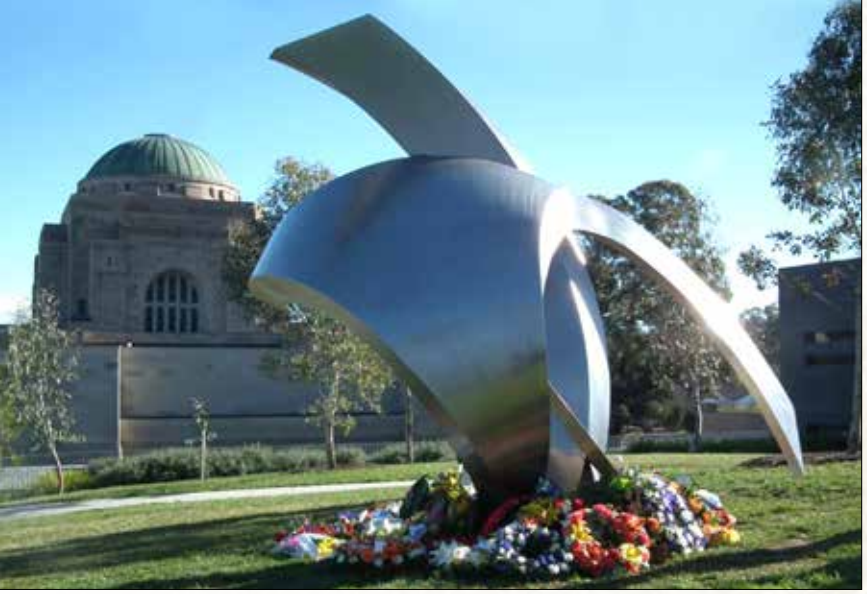
Official & Individual Memorials

In 1946, a memorial to those lost on the *Montevideo Maru* was erected on the shores of Rabaul Harbour, but was subsequently destroyed by volcanic eruption. It was replaced on 16 September 1993 by the Rabaul 1942–45 Memorial, erected close to where the men boarded *Montevideo Maru*. It commemorates more than 1,200 service personnel who lost their lives in New Britain and New Ireland and who have no known grave.

Memorials have also been erected in Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby, and Bita Paka Cemetery in Rabaul, to commemorate officers and men of the Australian Army (including Papuan and New Guinea local forces), the Australian Merchant Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force, who gave their lives during the New Guinea Operations, and who have no known grave.

A memorial plaque, privately funded by the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc. (PNGAA), the NGVR/PNGVR Ex-Members Association, Lark Force Association and the Greenbank RSL, was dedicated at the Hellships Memorial at Subic Bay, The Philippines, on 1 July 2009.

There are also many individual memorials, put in place as the result of private effort and subscription, throughout Australia, Papua New Guinea and, in 1957, Westminster Abbey in London introduced a red leather-bound volume in a series of WWII war dead, which contains the names of all civilians on *Montevideo Maru*.



1. Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial at the Australian War Memorial, ACT.
2. The Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC, CVO;
3. The artist, James Parrett, Phil Ainsworth, president of the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society and Andrea Williams, president of the PNGAA, at the Dedication Ceremony

On 6 November 1993, the NGVR & PNGVR Ex-Members' Association erected a memorial plaque in the Hall of Memories at Brisbane Cenotaph in honour of thirty-four NGVR men lost on *Montevideo Maru*. A memorial service is held each year on 1 July. In recent years this service has widened its scope to include all victims on the ship.

Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group

This was established in 2009 to represent the interests of the families of the soldiers and civilians captured in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion in January 1942, many of whom are believed to have perished on MS *Montevideo Maru*.

The major objective of the group was to have a memorial erected for those lost and, on 1 July 2012—the seventieth anniversary—a commemorative sculpture was unveiled by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, CVO, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, at a ceremony attended by 1,700 people—many in their eighties and nineties—at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Melbourne-based sculptor, James Parrett's design 'Passage' was approved for this memorial, and he sought to provide an abstract design for future generations that was timeless—both physically and aesthetically. The work was fabricated in stainless steel, and approximately 3.5 metres high. The design is based on the manipulation of circular forms, and refers to themes of physical and personal journeys, and the ocean. This symbolic design provides a peaceful way of reflecting upon the fall of Rabaul, the New Guinea Islands and the sinking of *Montevideo Maru*. An explanatory text panel is positioned adjacent to the memorial and provides a brief account of the events.

The Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group was wound up in 2013, with its assets and remaining objectives being transferred to the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, and in 2017 the PNGAA published *When the War Came: New Guinea Islands 1942*, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Fall of Rabaul and the sinking of MS *Montevideo Maru*.

The book tells the stories of the civilian and military men, women and children caught in the leadup and aftermath of the Japanese invasion and occupation of the New Guinea Islands in 1942. It brings into focus the actions and characters of young men who left home to willingly serve their country, and then literally vanished off the face of the earth; of nurses and missionaries who volunteered to stay to help both the war effort and the local people; and of civilians caught at home on WWII's Pacific front line.

1. Group of distinguished guests at the ceremony; **2.** Dr Brendan Nelson AO, Chairman of the AWM Council, laying a wreath; **3.** Wreaths laid at the memorial.

80th Anniversary of the Sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* and the Fall of the New Guinea Islands

COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY

On 1 July 2022 the 80th Anniversary Commemorative Ceremony was held at the Stone of Remembrance at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Although light rain fell this did not dampen the spirit of guests attending, many of whom had travelled from Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and NSW.

The catafalque party was provided by the Australian Federation Guard. Mr Brian Dawson AM, CSC, Assistant Director National Collection Australian War Memorial, welcomed 130 guests and provided background information about the sinking of *Montevideo Maru*, noting it remains Australia's greatest maritime tragedy.

The 80th Anniversary Commemorative Address was provided by Colonel James Kidd DSM, CSM, representing the Chief of Army. Colonel Kidd had recently returned from three years as Defence Attaché at the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby. Colonel Kidd also had family living in PNG in earlier years. His tribute to those affected by those early days of WWII in the Pacific and his understanding of the significance of this event to the families involved was most appropriate and very warmly received.

Wreaths were laid by: The Honourable Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Prime Minister, and Minister for Defence, representing the Prime Minister of Australia; His Excellency Mr John Ma'o Kali, High Commissioner for Papua New Guinea to Australia and Mrs Vavinenama Vere Kali; Mr Inge Wiktil, representing the Ambassador of Norway to Australia; Rear Admiral Brett Wolski AM, RAN, representing the Chief of the Defence Force.

Mr Chris Pearsall, President of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia with Ms Andrea Williams, Chair of the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group, Papua New Guinea Association of Australia; Brigadier Phil Winter AM, CSC, ADC (Retd), representing the National President of the Returned and Services League of Australia; Mr Michael White, representing the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles Ex-Members Association; Mr Frazer Harry, representing the 2/22nd Battalion Lark Force Association.

1. The Hon. Richard Marles with other distinguished guests; **2.** Kylie Adams-Collier and a special performance of her song 'Montevideo Maru'; **3.** Ross Campbell; **4.** Emeritus Professor David Horner AM, FASSA; **5.** His Excellency Mr John Ma-o Kali

Mr Patrick Bourke, representing 1 Independent Company; Dr Kathryn Spurling, representing the National President of the Australian War Widows Incorporated; Major Brett Gallagher, Chief Commissioner Salvation Army; The Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson AO, Chairman of the Council of the Australian War Memorial. Attending also were Captain Ryan Gaskin RAN, representing the Chief of the Navy and Group Captain Ian Goold CSC, representing Chief of Air Force.

Prayers were led by Chaplain Grant Ludlow of the Royal Australian Navy, and vocalist, Sergeant Jennifer Cooke, with the Band of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, led the hymn and national anthems. The bugler was musician Ryan Koroknai. Michael White, representing the NGVR/PNGVR Ex-Members Association, read the Ode.

THE LAST POST SERVICE

Held at the AWM on the evening of 1 July 2022, this service acknowledged the service of Corporal George William Spensley of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and the sinking of *Montevideo Maru*. Wreaths were laid by his daughter, Gillian Nikakis, and his descendants.

Wreaths were also laid by Ross Johnson, representing the NGVR/PNGVR Ex-Members Association, Andrea Williams, representing the PNGAA and John Reeves, representing the Rabaul Historical Society.

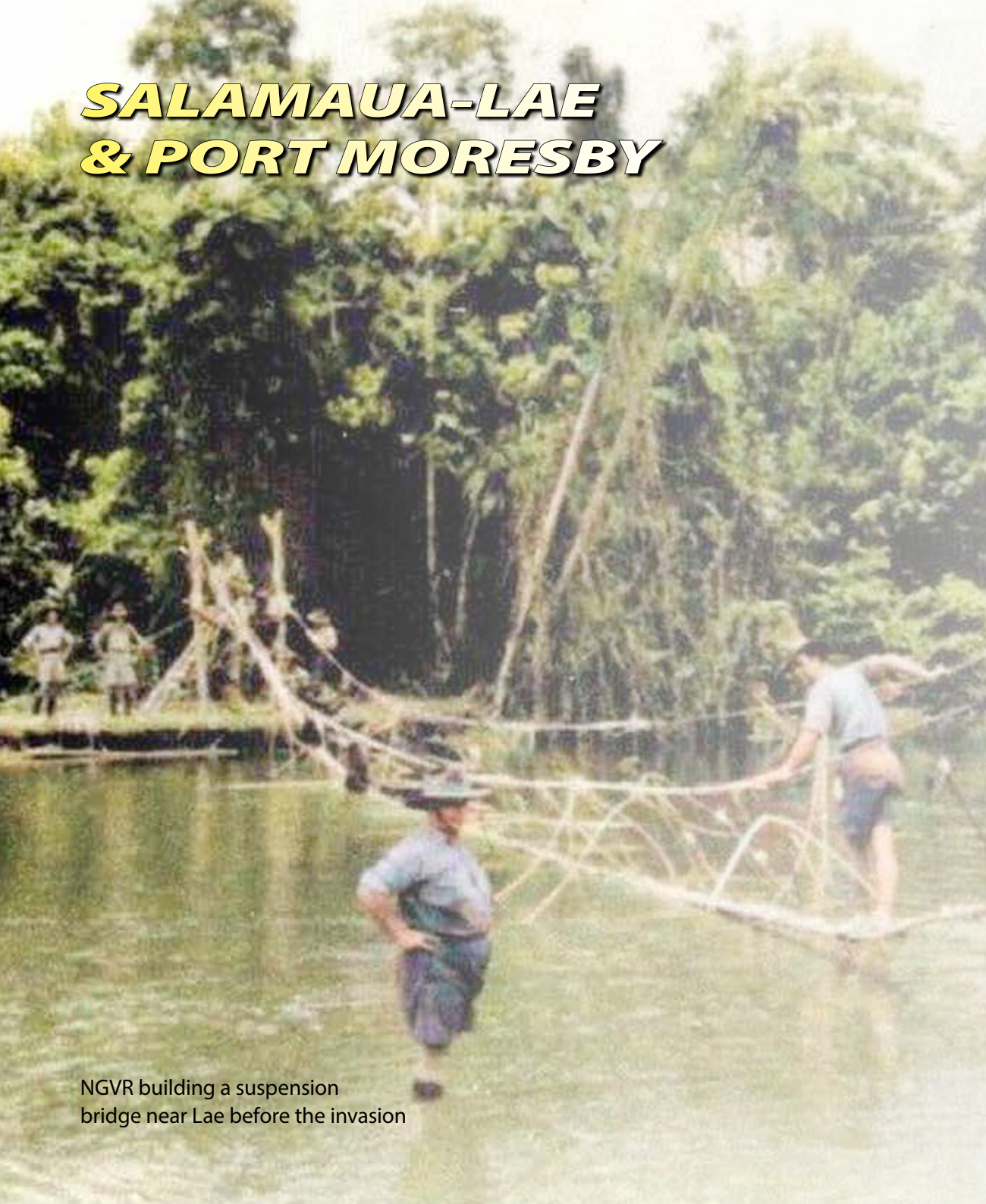
80th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The evening, held at Rydges Hotel, Canberra on 1 July 2022, featured special guests including the PNG High Commissioner to Australia, His Excellency John Ma'o Kali and his wife, Mrs Kali, as well as Emeritus Professor David Horner AM, Dip Mil Stud, MA (Hons), PhD, FASSA, who gave the keynote address with the topic: 'The Fall of Rabaul, the *Montevideo Maru* Tragedy, and the Defence of PNG and Australia'. Mr Horner is an emeritus professor in the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University, where he was Professor of Australian Defence History for fifteen years. Kylie Adams-Collier kindly led the two national anthems for Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Guests enjoyed hearing from His Excellency, Mr Kali, who spoke briefly at the start of the evening, and the Commemorative Address, by David Horner AM, covered the broader worldwide situation in the early years of WWII and how it affected the New Guinea islands and Australia.

ANDREA WILLIAMS

SALAMAUA-LAE & PORT MORESBY



NGVR building a suspension bridge near Lae before the invasion

Invasion of Salamaua-Lae—18 March 1942

This was an operation by Imperial Japanese forces to occupy the area in the Territory of New Guinea—'Operation SR'. The Japanese invaded and occupied the location in order to construct an airfield and establish a base to cover and support the advance of Japanese forces into the eastern New Guinea and Coral Sea areas. The small Australian garrison in the area withdrew as the Japanese landed and did not contest the invasion.

In response to the Japanese landings, a United States Navy aircraft carrier task force struck the invading Japanese naval forces with carrier aircraft on 10 March 1942.

Supporting the carrier aircraft were eight B-17 bombers of the 435th Bombardment Squadron of the 19th Bombardment Group from Garbutt Field, Townsville, Australia and eight Royal Australian Air Force Hudson bombers of No. 32 Squadron from Port Moresby, New Guinea.

The raid sank or damaged two thirds of the invasion transports employed. Higher casualties among the Japanese Army personnel were only prevented by the fact that most of the transports had been close to shore and could beach themselves. The psychological impact was greater, putting the Japanese on notice that the Americans were willing to place their carriers at risk to oppose their moves in the region. The fear of interdiction by US carrier forces against future operations contributed to the decision by the Japanese to include fleet carriers in their later plan to invade Port Moresby, resulting in the Battle of the Coral Sea.

Following the completion of the operation to capture Lae and Salamaua, the Japanese began operations to capture Tulagi, in the Solomon Islands, as the next stage in the establishment of a defensive perimeter in the South Pacific.

1. AIF Anti-aircraft gun crew at Port Moresby;
2. MV *Mamutu*, sunk by the Japanese in August 1942;
3. WWII propaganda poster

Meanwhile, beginning 18 March, they began to push inland from Salamaua, while around Lae they were confined mainly to the town for several weeks. While Japanese plans to secure Port Moresby were postponed after the Battle of the Coral Sea, they continued operations in the vicinity, and developed an airfield and large base facilities in the Salamaua–Lae area. These facilities later supported their ground operations during the Kokoda Track campaign.

Throughout 1942, the Australians largely withdrew from the area towards Wau, but continued guerilla style operations in the area with the establishment of Kanga Force which, along with the NGVR, conducted observation and small-scale raiding around Salamaua and Lae. The Allies later regained control of the area in September 1943 following the conclusion of the Salamaua–Lae campaign.

The AIF Memorial is situated at the entrance to the Lae War Cemetery. It contains the battle exploit plaques commemorating battles in the Salamaua, Nadzab and Lae areas.

Attempt on Port Moresby—May 1942

'Operation Mo' was the designation given by the Japanese to their initial plan to take possession of Port Moresby. Their operation plan decreed a five-pronged attack, one of which was to land troops near Port Moresby. In the resulting 4–8 May 1942 Battle of the Coral Sea, the Allies suffered higher losses in ships, but achieved a crucial strategic victory by turning the Japanese landing force back, thereby removing the threat to Port Moresby, at least for the time being.

After this failure, the Japanese decided on a longer term, two-pronged assault for their next attempt on Port Moresby. Forward positions would first be established at Milne Bay, located in the forked eastern end of the Papuan peninsula, and at Buna, a village on the northeast coast of Papua about halfway between Huon Gulf and Milne Bay. Simultaneous operations from these two locations, one amphibious and one overland, would converge on the target city.

In early August 1942, the evacuation of the remaining non-combatant European and mixed-race population of Port Moresby was ordered. The Burns Philp-owned coastal vessel, MV *Mamutu,* was assigned the task of transporting some of these evacuees. It left Port Moresby on 6 August 1942, and was sunk the next day by the Japanese submarine RO33—up to 122 passengers and crew of the *Mamutu* perished, including up to thirty mixed-race children and their parents.

1. Sqn Ldr Jackson, No. 75 Squadron, RAAF confers with others after a walk through the jungle, after he was shot down into the sea by three Japanese Mitsubishi Zeros;
2. John Francis Jackson DFC

John Francis Jackson DFC

John Jackson was the eldest of six children and purchased a sheep grazing properly at an early age at St George in Queensland. At 26, he purchased his first plane, an open cockpit monoplane, which he used for stock and property inspections. This involved landing the plane wherever he could put down, as there weren't many airfields in those days, and he soon earned the nickname 'Claypan'.

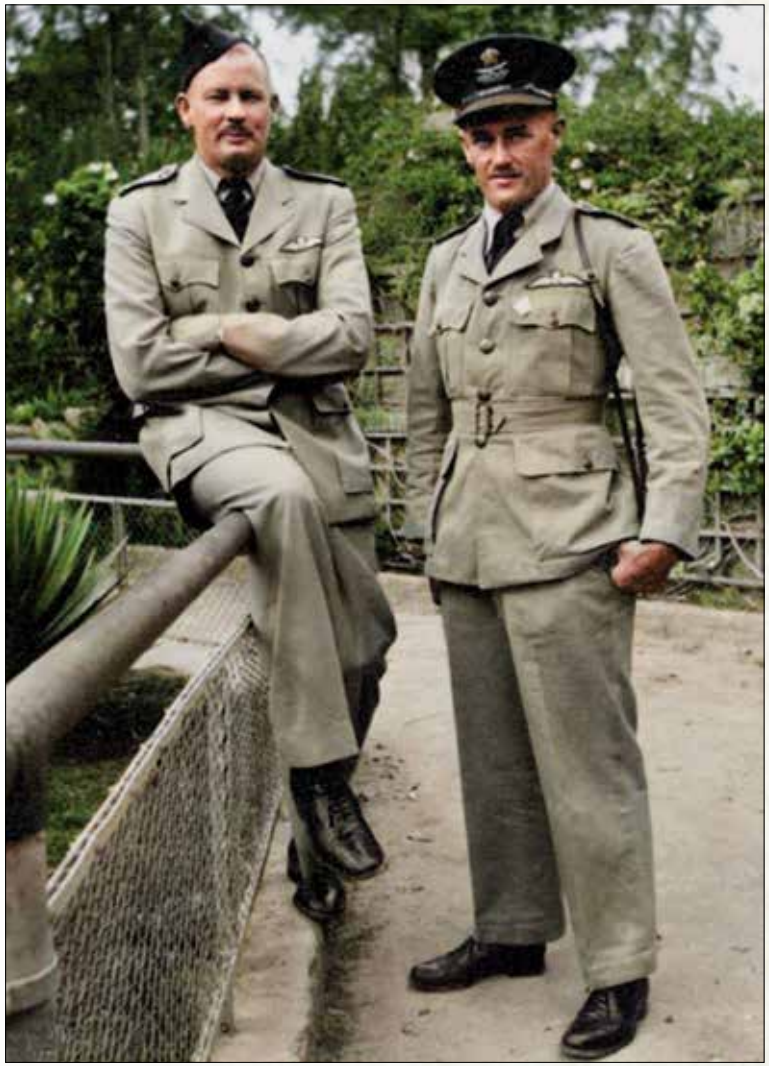
Within a month of the declaration of war in 1939, John joined the RAAF as a Pilot Officer and commenced a year of training, mostly in Wirraways at Archerfield. The RAAF, desperate for men with flying experience, was prepared to overlook some physical disabilities like John's poor eyesight.

He saw little of his family though he was able to keep a Beechcraft at Archerfield and fly to St George whenever possible. In October 1940 John was posted for a year to No. 3 Squadron in the Middle East; this is where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He was posted home in October 1941 and probably thought that the war was over for him. He was given three weeks' leave with his family, but during this time the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, so he was sent to Point Cook, Victoria, to train new pilots, something he hated after the excitement of being in an operational squadron—also because he was once again far from his family. John was moved to Canberra in January 1942 for more instructing.

Rabaul was taken, Singapore fell, Darwin was bombed and John and his mates were soon learning to fly newly-arrived American Kittyhawk fighters, which were to be the basis of Australia's air defence against a Japanese invasion. Three Kittyhawk squadrons were hastily formed in Townsville and John was given command of the first, No. 75, manned mostly by pilots with no combat experience and about ten years younger than John. He soon became known as 'Old John'. Another pilot in his early thirties was nicknamed 'Grandad'.

On 22 March 1942, 75 Squadron was in Port Moresby, which was being bombed almost daily by Japanese aircraft flying from Lae and Rabaul. A day after arriving, they launched a surprise low-level strafing attack on the Japanese-held airfield at Lae, destroying a number of aircraft on the ground. It was extremely low level; one Kittyhawk clipped the propeller of one of the Japanese planes, which were foolishly lined up in neat rows beside the airstrip. The attack caused such confusion on the ground that the Australians were able to do a second run before heading home.



1. Jackson International Airport, Port Moresby;
2. Sqn Ldr John Francis Jackson *(left)* and his brother

For six weeks, the action was intense, with air battles occurring regularly. The Australian pilots soon learned not to dogfight the Japanese Zeros, as they were superior in manoeuvrability, though not in speed or toughness, to the Kittyhawk. The Japanese pilots were also very experienced in combat. The Australian tactics were therefore to get above the Zeros, make diving attacks on them, and use their superior speed to get away.

On 10 April 1942, John flew over to Lae alone to do some reconnaissance but was jumped by two Zeros. With his aircraft on fire, he managed to land it in the sea and struggle free before it sank about a kilometre offshore. John shed his flying boots and swam towards a village (Busama) stopping at the mouth of a creek to rest near a floating log. When the log turned out to be a crocodile, he found new strength to get ashore. There, at great risk to their own lives by the Japanese, two New Britain boys offered to guide him to safety. So began a ten-day walk over mountains and through rugged jungle to Wau, from where John was flown to Port Moresby. His ordeal was not quite over, as the plane carrying him was attacked by a Zero just before landing, and a bullet took the tip off one of his fingers.

During his walk to safety, he had managed to keep a diary using a pencil and scraps of paper and this diary has been published in many magazines and books over the years.

The squadron's elation at having their leader back was to be short-lived. Over the previous months they had lost seven pilots killed in action, and all but five of their Kittyhawks. Illness from malaria and dysentery had also taken its toll.

On 28 April 1942, John led the five aircraft against a superior force of eight bombers escorted by 11 Zeros. Unable to gain sufficient height, they attacked the bombers from below, but the Zeros came down on them and after a furious dogfight, John and another pilot were shot down and killed. A few days later, only one serviceable aircraft was left and the squadron withdrew to Australia. Later that year the Seven Mile Aerodrome, from which they had operated, was renamed Jackson Field in honour of John, and is now known as Jackson International Airport, Port Moresby. John was buried in Bomana War Cemetery.

The squadron regrouped at Kingaroy and, under John's brother, Les Jackson's command, did a terrific job supporting the Australian ground forces at the Battle of Milne Bay, then went on to pursue the Japanese up through the islands until the end of the war.

GYNNIE KERO

Edited extract from PNGVR's *Harim Tok Tok*, February 2022

1. MV *Macdhui*;
2. A group of survivors from the *Macdhui*, sunk in Port Moresby on 18 June 1942;
3. Detail from painting by Richard Ashton, showing Japanese bombs exploding around the MV *Macdhui*, in the first bombing attack on the vessel at Port Moresby

The Sinking of the MV *Macdhui*

It was on 18 June 1942 that Japanese planes completed their previous day's attack in Port Moresby Harbour on the MV *Macdhui*, Burns Philp's prewar flagship.

On 17 June, all passengers from Australia having disembarked, cargo was still being, unloaded when 18 Japanese bombers and nine fighters appeared. The master, Captain James Campbell, at once weighed anchor and began manoeuvring around the harbour; but one of an estimated 56 bombs that were dropped scored a direct hit on the after part of the bridge, and passed through three decks to the first-aid station in the dining-saloon where it exploded, killing the surgeon, Dr C Tunstall, two crew and a soldier.

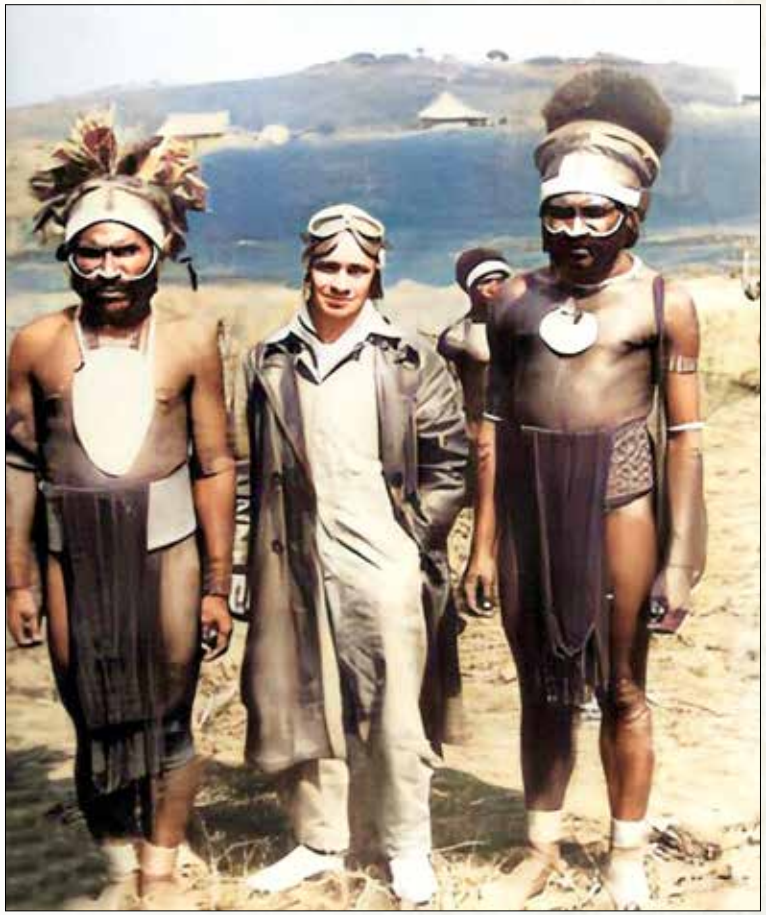
When the attack ended, the ship returned to the wharf to complete unloading, but the following day the bombers returned. Again, Captain Campbell tried evasive action, but four out of 68 bombs scored hits, whilst Campbell himself received serious burns and shrapnel wounds. We managed to take the ship into shallow water for the easier evacuation of the people aboard; but there it ran aground, and has lain ever since, often prompting the question: 'What is that rusty old hulk?!'

In 1961, *Macdhui's* mast was removed and set up in front of the Port Moresby Yacht Club as a kind of mascot. It was dedicated by Archbishop Virgil Copes and myself. In attendance was Captain Campbell. In 1970, large quantities of oil leaked from *Macdhui's* bunkers, but the Harbours Board dispersed the slick with hundreds of litres of detergent.

Macdhui had been launched on the River Clyde in Scotland in 1930 by Miss Margaret Burns, daughter of Burns Philp's then Chairman, Jellies Burns. She carried 3,200 tons of cargo and 138 passengers in two, three and four-berth cabins. She arrived in Port Moresby for the first time in 1931, and the passengers were loud in their praises of the comforts provided. The fare from or to Australia was sixteen pounds ten shillings. Regular passenger flights between PNG and Australia started in 1938, but did not take over from ships until the fifties or sixties.

Another point of interest is that, when St John's-on-the-Hill (now the Cathedral of the Anglican diocese of Port Moresby) was being refurbished after World War II, the then general manager of Burns Philp (PNG) kindly donated the *Macdhui's* bell. It still hangs in the cathedral's tower, daily calling to prayer—morning, noon and evening—and on Sunday, to Worship. Lest we forget.

BISHOP DAVID HAND



1. Salamaua Isthmus, 1941;
2. Kevin Parer after a flight into the Western Highlands

Ordeal of New Guinea Evacuees

First eye-witness accounts of the Japanese air raids on the goldfields ports of New Guinea, Salamaua and Lae were given by a party of civilian evacuees, who arrived on the south coast after an epic journey in a canoe. They had to make their way along native tracks for more than 180 miles of wild coast.

All the members of the party were sick or wounded. They were in the charge of Mr Robert Melrose, Director of District Services. They all highly praise the heroism and uncomplaining devotion to duty of the administration nurse, Miss Esther Stock, the sole woman in the party of 32, many of whom were suffering from wounds, malaria, or ulcers. Nurse Stock bore a man's part in the desperate adventure. She cheered on the others and tended their wounds. Seven of the evacuees were carried by natives on crude stretchers.

The arrivals on the south coast included Ernest Clarke, who was wounded three times by machine-gun bullets in a heroic attempt to drag Kevin Parer, the first Australian to be killed by the Japanese Imperial Force on the New Guinea Mainland, from a burning plane.

Photographer Damien Parer's cousin, Kevin Parer, with his three-plane fleet of Parer's Air Transport, based at Wewak, and other pilots, had been involved in air-lifting women and children to Port Moresby, as part of the evacuation to Australia of some 800 people.

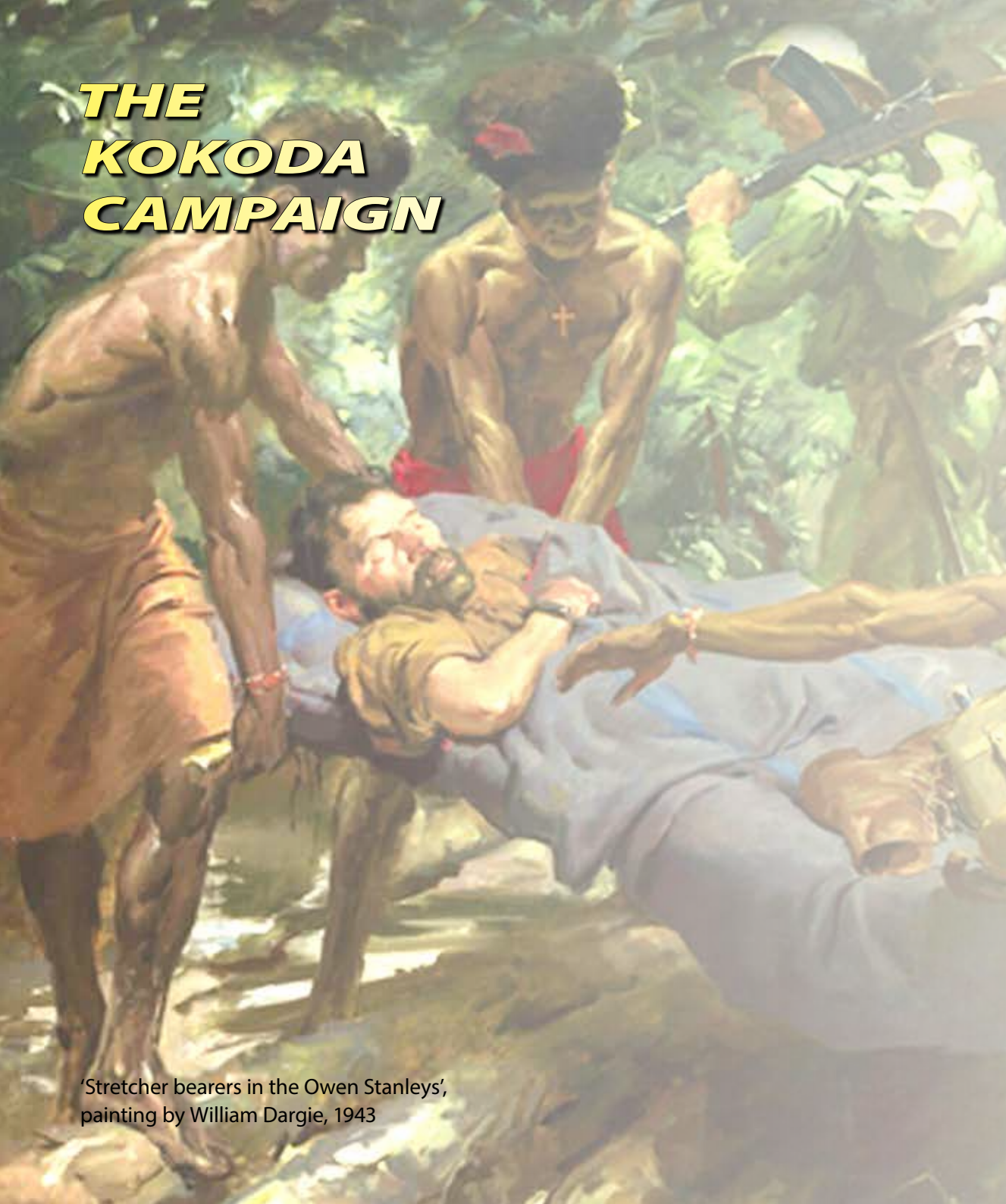
On 21 January 1942, he was about to take off when the Japanese attacked the airport, during which he was killed on the runway by a Zero fighter as part of a force of 30 'Betty' bombers and 60 Zero fighters that took off from a Japanese carrier fleet, and attacked Kavieng on New Ireland and Lae, Salamaua, Bulolo and Madang.

Kevin was hit by a cannon shell and died almost immediately, but his wife wasn't notified of his death until 30 January. This showed how disorganised and caught napping Australia was in this theatre of war.

Ernie Clarke was awarded the George Medal in 1943 for his outstanding valour in evacuating civilians from New Guinea in early 1942 while flying with Parer Aircraft Company, but was killed in an aircraft accident at Higgins Field, QLD, on 5 May 1945, when he was a member of the RAAF Reserve, Civil Aircrew.

Official reports of the attack on Lae reveal the amazing ordeal of the Administrator of the Mandated Territory (Sir Walter McNicol), who was carried out by natives.

THE KOKODA CAMPAIGN



'Stretcher bearers in the Owen Stanleys', painting by William Dargie, 1943

They carried stretchers over seemingly impassable barriers, with the patient reasonably comfortable. The care they give to the patient is magnificent. If night finds the stretcher still on the trail, they will find a level spot and build a shelter over the patient. They will make him as comfortable as possible, fetch him water and feed him if food is available, regardless of their own needs. They sleep four each side of the stretcher and if the patient moves or requires any attention during the night, this is given instantly. These were the deeds of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels'!

The Japanese invasion fleet left Rabaul and landed on 8 March 1942 at Lae, without opposition, and Salamaua where a small detachment of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR) and some men from the 2/22nd Infantry Battalion set about the demolition of key infrastructure. After a small skirmish that resulted in one Japanese casualty, they destroyed the bridge over the Francisco River and then withdrew into the hills towards Mubo.

Following the completion of the operation to capture the area, the Japanese began to push inland from Salamaua from 18 March. But when their plans to secure Port Moresby by a seaborne landing in July were disrupted, the Japanese saw the Kokoda Trail as a means by which to advance on it overland.

The Kokoda Trail

The Kokoda Trail was a path that linked Owers Corner, north-east of Port Moresby, and the small village of Wairopi, on the northern side of the Owen Stanley mountain range. It was connected to the settlements of Buna, Gona and Sanananda on the north coast.

1. A patrol of Australian Infantry battalions crossing Brown River, during the Kokoda Campaign;
2. Australian soldiers moving along the Kokoda Trail in 1942;
3. Brigadier Arnold Potts, DSO, MC, commanding 21st Infantry Brigade *(left)*, with other army officers on the Kokoda Trail

Japanese troops of the South Seas Detachment began landing at Gona on 21 July 1942, where a full-scale offensive soon developed. The first fighting occurred with elements of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) and the 39th Australian Infantry Battalion, commanded by Brigadier Arnold Potts, at Awala on 23 July 1942. Although steadily reinforced by the battalions of 30th and 21st Brigades, the Australian force was unable to hold back the Japanese arm.

The conditions for the Australians, mostly untrained in the jungle environment, were deplorable, as one soldier reported in a letter home:

… The first night out we slept in a shelter of bushes many thousands of feet up, but none of us could manage sleep. Next day we were caught in a fierce storm, and staggered and slipped through it for two long hours. When we rested, we lay out in puddles in the pouring rain, panting and steaming and wet through in the fullest sense of the words.

But you had to keep going. Everything was wet and heavier now, and although not yet halfway we had to finish that dreadful 2,000 ft climb. At nightfall we staggered into a ramshackle native grass hut. It had no sides, and the rain was driving in on us all night. One of the men sat up all night.

At an altitude of 4,000 ft I lay on the bare ground all night in wet clothes. It was bitterly cold. As soon as we settled down the native rats started. One of them ran across my face and scratched my nostril with his sharp claws. They kept running over my body, and when I dozed off they started nibbling at my hair. The chap next to me had a patch nibbled completely out of his hair by morning.

You might ask why I or anyone else kept going. You

1. 14th Field Regiment's 25-pounder gun being pulled into position near Uberi;
2. A patrol of the 2/31st Battalion negotiating a path through the swampy river flats bordering the Brown River

keep going because you have to, and because if you stop you stop nowhere, but if you keep going you might get somewhere. Everybody vows that never, never will he do it again. But there are days of this ahead of us ... and Kokoda is somewhere over those ridges.

A number of desperate delaying actions were fought as the Australians withdrew along the Trail. They finally stopped on 17 September 1942 at Imita Ridge, the last natural obstacle along the Trail, a mere 8 km from the junction with the road to Port Moresby. The Japanese held the opposite ridge, 6 km distant at Ioribaiwa.

The tactical situation, however, had now swung in favour of the Australians. Their artillery at Owers Corner was now in range and their supplies could be trucked most of the way forward, whereas Japanese supplies had to be carried all the way from the north coast. Australian troops of the 25th Brigade began to edge forward from Imita Ridge on 23 September, and the Japanese withdrew from Ioribaiwa the next day, but fought delaying actions every bit as determined as those of the Australians.

Several difficult and costly battles were fought before the 16th and 25th Brigades crossed the Kumusi at Wairopi in mid-November 1942 heading for even more bitter fighting around the Japanese beachheads at Gona, Buna and Sanananda.

The Kokoda Trail fighting was some of the most desperate and vicious encountered by Australian troops in the Second World War. Approximately 625 Australians were killed along the Kokoda Trail and over 1,600 were wounded. Casualties due to sickness exceeded 4,000. Those Australians who died on the Trail are buried at the Bomana War Cemetery outside Port Moresby.

Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels

Papuans living in the villages along the Kokoda Trail prior to WWII lived a wholly traditional existence. Their only previous contact with the modern world had come with the occasional visits of Australian Government patrol officers. They knew nothing of the war or the nature of modern warfare, until it came crashing into their villages in July 1942.

Both Australian and Japanese soldiers trampled crops, destroyed huts and stole food. Terrified villagers fled into the jungle to escape the destructive battles and air raids which followed on the heels of the troops. Villages were destroyed and many villagers were killed, injured or mistreated.

1. Papuan carriers transporting an Australian wounded soldier;
2. Boatmen transport Allied supplies by water;
3. 'Fuzzy Wuzzy' carriers transporting Allied wounded through the jungle at Kokoda

The Papuans were recruited to work as labourers, carriers and scouts for both sides and executed their tasks in conditions of extreme heat and wet. Teams of carriers brought Australian supplies to the front lines and carried seriously wounded and sick soldiers back over the trail to Owers Corner. Many worked until they dropped, and it is said that no living soldier was ever abandoned by the carriers, not even during heavy combat.

Their compassion for the wounded and sick earned them the eternal gratitude of the Australian soldiers, who called them 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels'.

Many a mother in Australia, when the busy day is done,
Sends a prayer to the Almighty for the keeping of her son;
Asking that an Angel guide him, help, and bring him safely back,
Now we see her prayers are answered on the Owen Stanley track.

Tho' they haven't any halos, only holes slashed in their ear,
With their faces marked by tattoos and with scratch pins in their hair,
They bring back the badly wounded and the going can't be worse,
Using leaves to keep the rain off, kind and gentle as a nurse.

Slow and careful in bad places on the awful mountain track,
And the look upon their faces makes us think that Christ was black.
Not a move to hurt the wounded, as they treat him like a saint;
It's a picture worth recording that an artist's yet to paint.

Many a lad will see his mother, and husbands, too, will see their wives,
Just because the Fuzzy Wuzzys carried them, to save their lives
May the people of Australia, when they offer up a prayer,
Mention these impromptu angels, with their fuzzy-wuzzy hair.

Unknown Australian Soldier

Papuan Carriers Memorials

While there are many memorials along the Kokoda Trail commemorating Australian soldiers, other than those organised by Bert Kienzle, there is very little that acknowledges the significant contribution of the Papuan carriers and soldiers. However, in 2018 a plaque was designed and installed by the Kokoda Memorial Foundation (KMF) in the Naduri village, halfway along the Kokoda Trail.

1. Villagers with the plaque in the Naduri village;
2. Templetons Crossing, named in honour of Captain Sam Templeton;
3. Captain HT 'Bert' Kienzle

This magnificent plaque is the largest and best along the Kokoda Trail, and a great credit to the KMF for their highly professional work—all done by volunteers.

Also, in 1990 a plaque was fixed to the Sogeri Memorial at the road junction of the Kokoda Trail and Sogeri Road, in recognition of the support given by the local Ianari community.

> *When this war is over we should raise a memorial ... so that we may remember how many Australians owe their lives to the natives who bore the wounded in their stretchers across the tortuous trail to safety.* Chester Wilmot, Australian war correspondent

'Architect of the Kokoda Trail'

Captain Herbert Thomson 'Bert' Kienzle was born in Fiji in 1905 of Samoan, English, German descent. In 1927, Bert moved to Papua and by 1942 he had establishing his own rubber plantation in the Yodda Valley, near Kokoda. Bert was already fluent in *Motu*, the lingua franca of Papua at the time, and was well-liked and respected by the local people, so he was the obvious man to put in charge of the carrier and labour lines being assembled at Sogeri for preparations being made along the Kokoda Trail.

Over the period of the ensuing battles, Bert earned accolades including 'The Architect of the Kokoda Trail' and 'The King of the Angels' and historians would say of him that without his presence the outcome of the whole operation may have been very different.

It was Bert Kienzle who located and named the Myola Lakes, the use of which as a drop zone for supplies proved a logistical turning point in the campaign. He also named Templetons Crossing after Captain Sam Templeton, from B Company, 39th Australian Infantry Battalion, whom he had led across the Trail in July. Bert's local knowledge and ability to communicate with the Papuans was put to constant use by his superiors in planning military and logistical strategies, and it was he who helped reduce the number of the desertions of Papuan carriers.

Following the war, he was instrumental in having a monument commemorating the contribution of the native carriers erected at Kokoda in 1957, and also to have a monument erected to honour those Papuan and New Guinea servicemen, police and carriers who served during the campaign in Papua New Guinea. It was unveiled at Three-Mile Hill, Port Moresby, on 3 November 1967, as part of the 25th Kokoda Anniversary commemorations.

1. Isurava Memorial;
2. Members of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB);
3. Soldiers of the Australian 39th Battalion, September 1942

Courage, Endurance, Mateship & Sacrifice

One of the most desperate battles in Australian history was fought in August 1942 at Isurava in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. To commemorate the event, the Australian Government commissioned the design and production of a memorial to coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of the event in 2002.

Visitors approach the site from an upper pathway and their first view is of the commemorative circle, a simple geometric form in a wild landscape that boldly states: Battle of Isurava Kokoda Track 1942.

The inner segments of grey granite surround a central stone of polished granite with hand-chiselled lettering.

Four black Australian granite sentinel stones, each weighing 3.5 tons, were airlifted by helicopter for installation. Each stone is inscribed with a single word representing the values and qualities of those soldiers who fought along the Kokoda Trail. Also, an interpretive platform looking out over the valley is concealed from the top memorial tier. This lower platform contains ten interpretive panels describing the time frame and significance of the event, while paying tribute to the local people.

Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB)

This was a unit of the Australian Army raised in the Territory of Papua for service during WWII. Formed in April 1940 in Port Moresby to help defend the territory in the event of a Japanese invasion, its soldiers consisted of 550 Papuan soldiers led by 77 Australian officers and non-commissioned officers.

Following the outbreak of the Pacific War, the PIB served in many of the Allied campaigns in New Guinea; however, due to the nature of its role its sub-units mainly operated separately, attached to larger Australian and US Army units and formations.

Slow in forming, the first members of the PIB were not officially posted in until March 1941.

By 1942 it consisted of only three companies, all of which were under-strength and poorly equipped. It was subsequently employed on scouting, reconnaissance and surveillance patrols against the Japanese, where the natural bushcraft of its native soldiers could be used to their advantage.

1. D Company, 39th Battalion, returning to their camp; **2.** Official portrait of Damien Parer

The PIB soldiers were often sent on dangerous missions behind enemy lines. By blending in with the local people, they were able to gather valuable information, and in June 1942 they were sent forward to patrol the northern coast of Papua over a wide area. These small parties were the first to make contact with the Imperial Japanese forces upon their landing in Papua, before participating in the Kokoda Trail campaign.

As part of Maroubra Force, the PIB fought alongside the Australian 39th Battalion at Kokoda, Deniki, and Isurava as the Japanese forced them back along the Kokoda Trail, but was withdrawn before the campaign finally turned in favour of the Australians.

The Papuan Infantry Battalion, never more than 300 strong in 1942, was credited with killing at least that many Japanese. The battalion was in action for the entire seven months of the Papuan campaign and lost 15 men killed and 35 wounded.

They were amalgamated with the New Guinea Infantry Battalion in November 1944.

Damien Parer, Master Photographer (1912–44)

Nearly 80 years after his death, Damien Peter Parer remains one of Australia's most well-known combat cameramen.

He was born on 1 August 1912 at Malvern in Melbourne but was educated largely in Bathurst, New South Wales, at St Stanislaus College. Upon leaving school, after completing his photographic apprenticeship, he moved to Sydney to work with the director, Charles Chauvel, and filmed the Australian classic Forty Thousand Horsemen.

When the Second World War began, Parer was appointed as official movie photographer to the AIF. He filmed the action in the Middle East, Greece, Syria and Tobruk, before covering the fighting in the Western desert. By mid-1942 Parer was in New Guinea ready to cover the fighting against the Japanese.

During this phase of the war, he filmed some of his most famous sequences, some at Salamaua and, most notably, those used in Kokoda Front Line, an award-winning documentary made by Parer and film-maker, Ken G Hall. It was filmed on location in New Guinea in 1942, and shows Australian troops along the Kokoda Trail, the fighting conditions in the jungle, and the help of indigenous carriers to remove wounded soldiers from the front line. This film was shown at cinemas throughout Australia.

Other important newsreels and documentaries contained Parer's footage—these

1. Parer's photo of an Australian soldier assisting a wounded mate across a creek;
2. Damien Parer *(centre)* photographed with two diggers

included *Men of Timor* (1942), *Moresby Under the Blitz* (1942), *The Road to Kokoda* (1942), *Assault on Salamaua* (1943) and *The Bismarck Convoy Smashed* (1943). Most Australians became familiar with his work and through it learnt of their countrymen's ordeals and exploits.

In late 1942 Parer travelled to Timor to film Australians of the 2/2nd Independent Company, who were fighting a guerrilla campaign on the island. He then returned to New Guinea where he flew on a series of hair-raising Beaufighter operations against Japanese shipping in the Bismarck Sea. After that he moved to the Salamaua area where he filmed, among other actions, the well-known assault on Timbered Knoll.

In August 1943, he began work for Paramount News, and his early assignments involved filming further air raids over New Guinea. On 23 March 1944, during a period of leave, he married Elizabeth Marie Cotter in Sydney, after which he returned to action, leaving the war in New Guinea behind to accompany the United States Marines.

He filmed them first on Guam and then, on 17 September 1944, during the battle on the island of Peleliu, fought between the United States and the Japanese—keen to get shots of the faces of advancing soldiers—Parer was walking backwards behind a tank, filming a group of marines advancing under fire. He was shot in the back and killed by a burst of Japanese machine gun fire. He was only 32 years old.

Damien Parer was initially buried in a shallow grave on Peleliu but later exhumed, and finally moved to Ambon War Cemetery, Indonesia in 1961.

His son, also named Damien, was born in 1945, six months after his father had died and, in 2004, the Parer Gallery was established in his father's honour at St Stanislaus College, in Bathurst NSW.

Australia Remembers Kokoda

Public Memorial Sites: These include material in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra and the Army Museum of South Australia, the Kokoda Memorial Walk at One Tree Hill in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria, the Kokoda Track at Mt Coot-tha, Brisbane and the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk in Perth. Townsville has a Kokoda Memorial Swimming Pool.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway: This is a community project in Concord, Sydney, involving Concord Council, the Department of Employment, Education and Training,

1. Section of the gardens at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Sydney;
2. Kokoda Memorial at One Tree Hill, Dandenong Ranges, VIC

Concord Rotary, RSL NSW, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and Concord Hospital—and a strong synergy exists between the Walkway and the PNGAA.

City Thoroughfares and Parks: Newly-made streets and roads were called Kokoda as Australian cities expanded after the war. Sydney and Melbourne have eight and seven of these, respectively—Kokoda Avenue in Turramurra, Sydney has its own Kokoda Monument. There are three roads named after Kokoda in the Greater Brisbane area. Sydney has a Kokoda Memorial Park at Kensington and a Kokoda Reserve at Mt Druitt, while in Victoria there is a Kokoda Memorial playground at Ararat.

Charitable and Other Foundations: Returned servicemen and their families and others, out of a sense of concern and gratitude for the contribution made by Papua New Guineans to the Kokoda Campaign, have established foundations that fund charitable work in Papua New Guinea. These include the Kokoda Track Foundation, that has been working in PNG since 2003 in education, health and community affairs. Network Kokoda provides support in similar areas to people along the Kokoda Trail. The Kokoda Youth Foundation provides experiential programs that engage and inspire young people in Australia to reach their full potential. Their program includes the promotion of annual challenges which invoke the hardship and rigour of the campaign as an inspiration for young people.

Business Names: Most businesses which include the name Kokoda are companies in Australia and PNG which, before COVID-19, organised treks to and from Kokoda along the Kokoda Trail. Walking the Trail had become a challenge for individuals and groups. Before COVID-19 about 6,000 people were making the trek annually, providing a unique experience for participants, and a welcome source of employment and income for villagers along the trail.

Public Art: The montage prepared by Rob Barclay for the RSL Club at Blackburn, Victoria encapsulates some key elements of the campaign and is a tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who fought, suffered and died in that conflict. Images from the montage were sent to PNG Kundu by the artist, Rob Barclay, who was a kiap in PNG from 1958–79.

JOHN EGERTON AM

BATTLE OF MILNE BAY

William Dargie's painting, 'RAAF Kittyhawk Squadron at Milne Bay, August–September 1942', with *'Peter's Revenge'* inscribed on one of the planes

Milne Bay was bloody awful. Never stopped raining. The mountains came straight up from the strip. The strip was just mud with steel planking on it. It was carved out of a coconut plantation, so if you went off the runway, which you did, you ran into a coconut tree, which didn't do the aircraft much good.

Flight Lt Arthur 'Nat' Gould, 75 Squadron

The Battle of Milne Bay is one of the Australian Army's most overshadowed battles. The public's attention is mostly drawn to the Kokoda Campaign, which was fought at the same time. Kokoda rightly deserves its accolades, but so too does its sister battle at Milne Bay for the bitter fighting over this isolated harbour played an equally important role in contributing to the shifting Allied fortunes in the Pacific War.

Offering a sheltered harbour, Milne Bay cuts into the eastern tip of the island of New Guinea. Its remoteness, swampish landscape and the prevalence of tropical disease deterred any significant development prior to WWII. Despite these disadvantages, Milne Bay is situated between a number of locations that were at the forefront of the war in the South-West Pacific in mid-1942, namely Port Moresby, Rabaul, Guadalcanal and Buna-Gona.

The strategic value offered by Milne Bay's location prompted General Douglas MacArthur to order the secret construction of an Allied base with airfields to protect the maritime approach to Port Moresby. From this base, Allied aircraft could attack the large Japanese base at Rabaul without flying the dangerous journey over the Owen Stanley mountain range.

The base at Milne Bay was quickly established and expanded. Australian and American troops assisted by Papuan

1. Thomas Fisher's photograph of an Australian patrol from the 61st AIF Battalion crossing a river while searching for Japanese in the Milne Bay area;
2. Australian troops plough through the mud at Milne Bay, shortly after the unsuccessful Japanese invasion attempt

labourers worked tirelessly to construct facilities to support a garrison of nearly 10,000 men. Crucially, the Allies sought to conceal the base's development and size for as long as possible.

Their endeavour was successful; for once the Japanese discovered it and despatched a task force to seize the base, they did so based on a faulty estimate that the garrison's strength was less than one-tenth of its actual size.

Japanese Landing—25 August 1942

The battle began on the night of 25/26 August 1942, when the Imperial Japanese Navy landed approximately 1,200 men at Wahahuba Bay on Milne Bay's north shore.

From the beginning, the Japanese were at a disadvantage. The marines were landed eleven kilometres east of their intended landing area, and their intelligence had significantly underestimated the Allied garrison. Whereas the Japanese believed there were no more than a few hundred troops defending the airstrip, there were actually almost 9,000 Allied troops including two Australian infantry brigades—the 7th and the 18th.

The Allies had the additional advantage of having air support close at hand because the 75 and 76 Squadrons from the RAAF, both equipped with P-40 fighter bombers, were also based at Milne Bay.

Initially, however, the Japanese met with their accustomed success. Supported by two light tanks, they advanced steadily westward. The 61st Battalion was first into action and slowed the Japanese, although unable to hold them back.

The 2/10th Battalion was moved up on the night of 27 August, but faulty dispositions and other command failings, meant it was brushed aside by a renewed Japanese thrust, and disintegrated in a confused withdrawal.

Reaching the edge of the easternmost airstrip on 28 August the intensity of Japanese operations fell away as they made preparations for their attack, which included landing 800 reinforcements. In the early hours of 31 August, they charged the defences manned by the 25th and 61st Australian Battalions and the United States 43rd Engineer Regiment and 709th Anti-Aircraft Battery.

The Japanese suffered grievously, largely due to machine gun and artillery fire, and withdrew by dawn. Throughout their operations the Japanese were constantly harassed during daylight hours by the P-40s.

1. A ground crew member of 76 Squadron RAAF sits on the wing tip to guide the pilot of the P-40 Kittyhawk, who couldn't see over the nose while taxiing on the Marston planking on the runway at Milne Bay;
2. One of the Japanese barges after the battle

On the night of 30/31 August, buoyed by the arrival of 800 reinforcements, the Japanese launched an all-out assault on the Allies' base. The attack was an utter disaster. Scores of Japanese were killed by the lethal array of firepower the Allies had placed along their base perimeter. Not a single Japanese marine breached the Allies' defensive line.

The following week saw Australian infantry push the Japanese back along the north shore of Milne Bay beyond their original landing point. The remnants of the Japanese task force were evacuated on the nights of 4 and 5 September. The invasion was thwarted and Milne Bay was secure.

Of the 2,800 Japanese landed, only 1,318 re-embarked. It was estimated that up to 750 lay dead around Milne Bay and the majority of the remainder were killed trying to escape overland to the Japanese base at Buna.

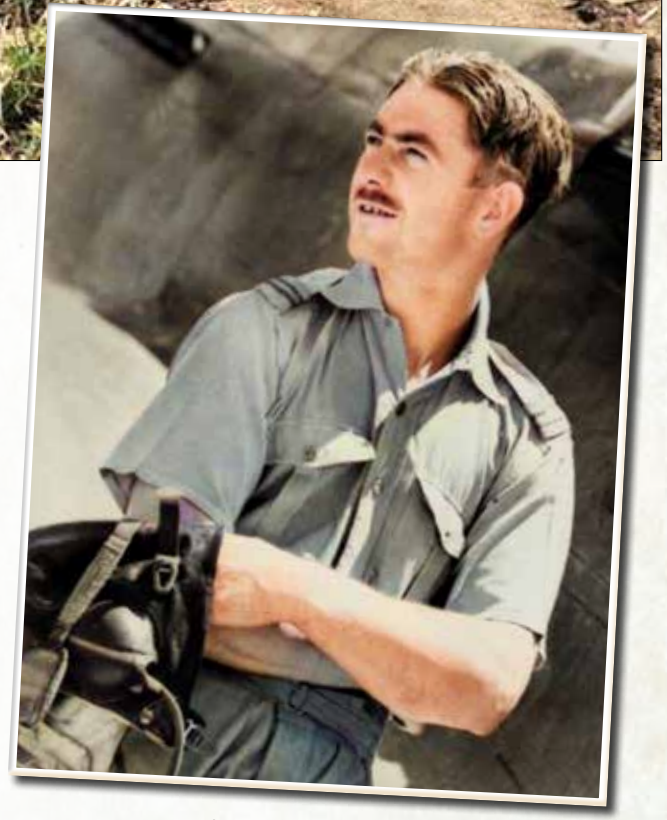
Allied deaths included 167 Australians and fourteen Americans. Milne Bay is remembered as the first defeat of the Japanese on land during the Pacific War. Despite an oppressive combination of extreme humidity, voracious insects, and the tropical disease both combined to create, Milne Bay remained an important Allied staging area until victories in New Guinea made other more suitable areas available from September 1943 onwards.

The Allied victory at Milne Bay—one of the first on land in the Pacific War—was a confidence injection to Allied armies across the world. By securing Milne Bay, the Allies kept an important base that serviced the Allied war effort for the duration of the war. In addition, the Allies' continued occupation of Milne Bay made life more difficult for the Japanese fighting on the Kokoda Trail, because they now knew they could not expect supply from the sea even if they made it all the way to Port Moresby.

Major reasons for the Allied victory included the advantages they enjoyed in troop numbers and weaponry and the close air support provided by the two RAAF fighter Squadrons.

For their part, the Japanese were not used to defeat and struggled to make sense out of the disaster that had befallen them. The Japanese commanders blamed their own troops and denigrated their fighting prowess, willpower and age.

However, the larger failings were of their own making: deficiencies in battle planning, a woeful inadequacy of detailed intelligence and the lack of air support provided to the invasion force.



1. An Australian Infantry patrol passing a Japanese tank, knocked out during the fighting;
2. Damien Parer's photo of Peter Turnbull in June 1941

These failings can be attributed to the underlying problem the Japanese faced in the South Pacific. By committing to simultaneous military operations at Milne Bay, the Kokoda Trail and Guadalcanal, the Japanese grossly overextended themselves, and lacked the manpower and resources to carry any of those three operations to a successful conclusion.

Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull DFC

He was called 'The Flying Cowboy' and was known for his 'magnificent fighting spirit and great skill' during the Second World War but, to his family, Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull was the much-loved son and brother who gave his all for his country during the fighting at Milne Bay 80 years ago.

The commander of No. 76 Squadron, RAAF, Turnbull was just 25 years old when his Kittyhawk crashed in the jungle while on a mission to spot and attack enemy tanks that had been causing heavy casualties on the ground. He was killed instantly, but his remarkable courage and skill were never forgotten.

Peter St George Bruce Turnbull was born in Armidale, in the New England region of New South Wales, on 9 February 1917 and was raised on the family property near Glen Innes. The Turnbulls were well-known graziers in the region, and life on the land suited Peter.

Peter was working as an electrician in Glen Innes and serving as a trooper in the 12/24 Light Horse Regiment of the Militia when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in January 1939. He was undergoing pilot training at Point Cook in Victoria when the Second World War broke out in September. He was soon posted to No. 3 Squadron, a fighter squadron that specialised in co-operation with ground units.

In July 1940, the squadron marched out from Richmond to the tune of 'Roll out the Barrel' before embarking for the Middle East and North Africa. It was in Egypt that the squadron was equipped with Gloster Gladiator aircraft and Peter first made a name for himself as a top fighter pilot.

He served with great distinction through the Syrian Campaign of June and July 1941, and in October 1941 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions. The citation read:

This Officer has carried out 116 Operational sorties involving 200 hours of flying.
One day in April of 1941 his formation engaged 16 enemy aircraft which were attacking our troops.

1. Damien Parer's photograph of Squadron Leader Peter Jeffrey of No. 3 Squadron goes over the points of the new American Tomahawk with Flying Officer Peter Turnbull in Palestine in June 1941;
2. Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull DFC in Townsville, Australia, in June 1942 with Pilot Officer Tainton, Flight Lieutenant Clive Wawn DFC and Squadron Leader Keith Truscott DFC and bar

[Flying Officer] Turnbull personally destroyed three Messerschmitts in the combat. He has destroyed eight enemy aircraft in the air and inflicted considerable damage to aircraft on the ground, as well as [to] mechanical transports and troops. Throughout [he] has shown magnificent fighting spirit and great skill.

When Peter returned to Australia in December that year, he was greeted with much fanfare by the Mayor of Glen Innes and about 150 townsfolk who wanted to wish him well and welcome him home.

He told a civic reception at the local town hall:

I'm not much good at making speeches. I'm better at drilling men I guess ... The Squadron I have been with is entirely manned by Australian personnel, it has made a name for itself, and the credit is due not only to the pilots but the ground crew as well … Just because I got the DFC it does not mean I won it myself. The whole squadron helped … We must have every man available, and the more the better and the quicker it will be over. The lads over there are a grand bunch of boys and are doing a grand job. I have been away 18 months. It has been a great experience, and I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I am sure all the returned men here know how I feel—what it's like to get home after a real go, a real ding-dong fight.

In March 1942, Peter joined 75 Squadron in New Guinea under Squadron Leader 'Old John' Jackson, another veteran and ace from 3 Squadron in the Middle East. Equipped with P-40 Kittyhawks, 75 Squadron quickly became engaged in the defence of Port Moresby, one of the crucial early battles in the New Guinea Campaign. Shortly after, Turnbull was appointed commanding officer of 76 Squadron and promoted to squadron leader.

Equipped with P-40 Kittyhawks, the squadron was sent to Papua at the end of July to help defend Milne Bay. Following the landing by Japanese marines at Milne Bay on 25 August 1942, the RAAF Kittyhawks of 75 and 76 Squadrons played a crucial role, destroying Japanese landing barges and stores; flying at treetop level they strafed enemy positions and suppressed enemy movement.

Two days later, Peter was on a mission with Flight Lieutenant Ron Kerville to spot and attack two Japanese tanks that had been causing heavy casualties on the ground at Milne Bay. It was then that disaster struck. Kerville later wrote in a letter to Peter's mother:

It was just about dusk when we took off together to attack a Japanese tank located on the roadway right on the shore of Milne Bay. Peter was in good spirits as we talked over the method of attack

1. Members of 76 Squadron outside a tent at Milne Bay —Peter Turnbull is pictured fifth from right;
2. Peter Turnbull playing chess with Squadron Leader John Francis Jackson DFC—a distinguished fighter pilot *(centre)*, he was killed in action in April 1942 during a flying battle over Papua New Guinea and is buried in Bomana War Cemetery —Jackson International Airport, Port Moresby, is named after him

and as we flew out to locate the target he told me exactly what to do if my engine failed—'hop out old boy and swim for it.'

He was really happy to be flying again after a few days on the ground. He told me to keep top cover—watch his attack and then follow him in. As I did so, I saw his aircraft dive from about 600 feet and from about 500 yards out to sea.

His guns opened fire in a long burst—tracer could be seen flying in all directions from the tank and I could not tell whether it was return fire or Peter's own fire. He carried the dive very low and his aircraft, during the recovery, turned over—hit the trees and disappeared into the dense undergrowth.

I called up on the radio in the hope that perhaps he was not badly hurt—but, fortunately, he was killed instantly, for which we were all thankful as the target was 400 yards inside enemy territory. The thought of him being in Japanese hands at that stage of the struggle was not a pleasant one. Although he has passed on, I assure you Peter's spirit still lives in the squadron of which he was so proud—we will never forget him.

Eight days later a patrol from the 2/12th Battalion found the plane near Kabi Mission and recovered his body from the wreckage. He was buried in a temporary cemetery at Milne Bay, marked by a wooden cross, and was later re-interred at the larger Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby.

Such was the regard in which he was held among pilots and troops on the ground, the official historian later wrote:

Soldiers much admired and appreciated the work of the two RAAF squadrons and, for them, the gallant Turnbull had epitomised the courage and skill of all the airmen.

Australia's defeat of the Japanese at Milne Bay owed much to the RAAF and men like Peter; their Kittyhawks sank enemy landing craft and shipping, destroyed stockpiles of supplies, and suppressed enemy troop movements. Such was the importance of 75 and 76 Squadron that Major General Cyril Clowes specifically praised the RAAF's untiring and courageous work which earned the admiration of all. The Commander of New Guinea Force, Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell, noted that the actions of the two RAAF fighter squadrons were the battle's 'decisive factor'.

After Peter's death, Milne Bay's No. 3 strip was renamed Turnbull Field in his honour. It marked the furthest westward advance of the Japanese in the area, and was a lasting reminder of his remarkable courage and bravery.

1. Turnbull War Memorial Park on the main road leading to Alotau;
2. The Milne Bay and WWII Memorial Wall at Nundah;
3. Peter Turnbull's temporary grave at Milne Bay

Kerville later wrote in his diary at Milne Bay:

> *During all operations in this area, [Peter's] leadership judgement and organising ability have been an inspiration. Never still, he provided a wonderful example to all.*

Official war artist, William Dargie, inscribed *'Peter's Revenge'* on one of the planes in his 1969 painting, 'RAAF Kittyhawk Squadron at Milne Bay, August–September 1942', as his own personal tribute to the much-loved squadron leader.

Back home, Peter's parents were devastated by his death, but were somewhat comforted by the letters they received from his friends and colleagues. In a letter to Peter's mother, Leading Aircraftsman Doug Cox said Peter's deeds

> *... stirred everyone … he just ceased being an officer and became our hero and real friend.*

He enclosed a poem that included these lines:

> *But pilots say when the dusk is grey, and the sunset fires grow dim*
> *That Turnbull flies in those cloudy skies and angels smile on him.*

His friend and fellow pilot, Alan Rawlinson, wrote simply:

> *He was one of the most outstanding pilots and personalities of the original 3 Squadron and was well known throughout the Middle East. His name was legend on the Northern fronts. It was with deep regret and bitterness that we learnt of Pete's death in action. His manner and sense of duty were an inspiration to all. Australia has lost one of its finest men.*

Milne Bay Memorials

In additional to the airstrip renamed Turnbull Field Memorial, after Squadron Leader Turnbull, there is also the Turnbull War Memorial Park on the main road leading to Alotau, and consists of three monuments and a relief map with an overview of the battlefield. One of the monuments is in memory of the 61st Battalion, and the two memorials at the back are standing on the grave of 85 unknown Japanese marines who were killed on 31 August 1942.

The Milne Bay and WWII Memorial Wall at Nundah in Queensland commemorates those who served, died in service or were killed in action during the Battle of Milne Bay and WWII, and the Milne Bay Memorial Library and Research Centre at Chermside, Brisbane is a 9th Battalions Association Inc. facility, in the Sandgate Army Drill Hall, which was built in 1915. There is also a memorial plaque on side of the Toowoomba 25th Battalion Monument.

1. Some of the fighter pilots from No. 76 Squadron, RAAF;
2. The Milne Bay Memorial at Alotau

The Milne Bay Memorial, located on the foreshore of Hiwehiwe Beach at Alotau, features an imposing three-metre high granite column, with the centrepiece inscribed with the three service crests, and the words:

In remembrance of those Australians, Papua New Guineans,
and their Allies who fought and those who died in the Battle of Milne Bay 1942.

The memorial site also features an interpretative area with eight information panels. The memorial was dedicated on 1 November 2002 by the Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Hon. Danna Vale.

Turning Point in WWII

The Battle for Milne Bay—Japan's first defeat on land in the Second World War—was a defining moment in the evolution of the indomitable Australian fighting spirit. For the men of the AIF, the militia and the RAAF, it was the turning point in the Pacific, and their finest—though now largely forgotten—hour. Forgotten, until now.

In August 1942, Japan's forces were unstoppable. Having conquered vast swathes of south-east Asia—Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies—and now invading New Guinea, many feared the Empire of the Rising Sun stood poised to knock down Australia's northern door.

But first they needed Port Moresby. In the still of an August night, Japanese marines sailed quietly into Milne Bay, a long, malaria-ridden dead end at the far eastern tip of Papua, to unleash an audacious pincer movement. Unbeknown to them, however, a secret airstrip had been carved out of a coconut plantation by US Engineers, and a garrison of Australian troops had been established, supported by two locally based squadrons of RAAF Kittyhawks, including the men of the famed 75 Squadron. The scene was set for one of the most decisive and vicious battles of the war.

For ten days and nights Australia's soldiers and airmen fought the elite of Japan's forces along a sodden jungle track, and forced them back step by muddy, bloody step.

Bestselling author, Michael Veitch, brings to life the incredible exploits and tragic sacrifices of these Australian heroes, in *Turning Point: The Battle for Milne Bay 1942—Japan's First Land Defeat in World War II.*

His account of the battle for Milne Bay of 1942 shines a light on a little-known World

1. A Kittyhawk comes in to land at No. 1 Airstrip, guarded by an anti-aircraft gun of the 2/9th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, during the Battle of Milne Bay;
2. Thomas Fisher's photograph of the happy crew of Lockheed Hudson A16-246 of 6 Squadron RAAF, after their return from attacking Japanese destroyers

War II story—In 1993, Prime Minister Paul Keating visited the Australian War Memorial to unveil a newly refurbished Kittyhawk aircraft that had come into the Memorial's collections some months earlier.

Also present in Aircraft Hall for this significant event was the original pilot of this particular aircraft, Bruce 'Buster' Brown and his wife Polly. As soon as the silk parachute covering the aircraft was withdrawn by the Prime Minister visitors gasped and applauded as the resplendent machine was revealed, bearing the name 'Polly', which Buster had inscribed on his plane in honour of his, then, fiancée.

The Prime Minister said he was amazed that this was the only surviving Kittyhawk in a public collection in Australia. As a kid, he said, he had played at Bankstown Aerodrome, roaming on and around the dozen or so Kittyhawks parked on the edge of the field. They must all have been sold for scrap, he suggested, regretfully.

The main point in narrating this crucial battle is the close and essential co-operation between the Australians in the sky and the Australians on the ground in repelling the Japanese.

The soldiers called the aircraft 'airborne artillery' and each morning of the battle, from 25 August to 7 September 1942, the Kittyhawks of 75 and 76 Squadrons would be in the air pouring thousands of rounds of ammunition into the enemy, who suffered from the lack of any protection from its own aircraft.

Sheltering in the jungle by day, the enemy emerged at night to press the attack for the landing strip which was the aim of the operation. Worn down by Australian soldiers and airmen, the Japanese eventually evacuated, throwing up the white flag for the first time anywhere in the Pacific War. The Japanese were stunned and humiliated by their loss.

Australian soldiers and airmen alike shared the horrible conditions of this battle, where the rain was continuous and the sun rarely seen. Readers well understand the appalling conditions of fighting on the Western Front during the First World War and it was astonishing to read that at Milne Bay it was much worse. One soldier, remembered beginning the night in a slit trench with water around his knees: 'by the time he was relieved in the morning it was up around his chest'.

Milne Bay was the first airfield in the war to be constructed with Marston matting—perforated steel planking (PSP)—which was a rugged heavy and reliable system that made it

1. Pilots of 76 Squadron RAAF, lend a hand to push one of the planes over the Marston matting into the Milne Bay dispersal bay;
2. Pilots of No. 75 Squadron going out on a strafing raid

possible to turn beaches, muddy plains and the most unlikely places into serviceable airstrips for military aircraft—it helped win the war.

PSP was invented by GG Gruelich, a steel expert with no experience of aviation. It consisted of sheets of corrosion resistant steel 2 m long and .38 m wide. One of the long edges had a series of hooks and the other a series of slots into which these hooks fitted. A feature of the sheets were the eighty-seven holes punched out of them to reduce weight. Each sheet had three rows of twenty-nine holes and weighed 30 kg.

The name Marston matting comes from the town in North Carolina in which they were first produced. This name was often mispronounced Marsden. Developed through the 1930s PSP were proven effective by the US Air Force by 1942 and later became a feature of the many airstrips built in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in the Pacific region during the Second World War.

The trouble at Milne Bay was the ground on which the matting was laid. The place was a quagmire and every landing or departing aircraft threw up vast quantities of mud which coated everything. This was a great danger to the pilots and so ground crew worked overtime to try to return mud-encrusted machines to something like flying conditions.

Eventually, the aircraft from these two Australian squadrons had to be sent to Port Moresby for a thorough cleaning with pressure hoses. They then re-entered the final phases of the fight.

Before Milne Bay the Japanese had swept away everything before them, but this battle showed that they were not invincible. Far from it—and the fact that the Imperial Japanese Navy sent their men to Milne Bay without proper intelligence ... speaks to their military folly. When the troops landed they had no idea where their objective, the Australian airstrip, even was.

The focus, however, remains on the Australians. Mistakes were made, of course, and men killed because of lack of equipment, or misdiagnosis of the situation. But there are heroes aplenty. 'Silent Cyril' Clowes, the Australian commander, was unflappable, methodical and clever. Never appreciated by his superiors and uncelebrated in his lifetime, except by those who were there, despite his magnificent victory, Clowes saw out the war in a backwater. Peter Turnbull, commanding officer of 76 Squadron, died in combat, exhausted beyond his capacity to fly in any way safely. Milne Bay was an action of which Australians deserve to know.

Edited extract from *The Canberra Times* and industry reviews

BATTLE OF BUNA-GONA

I'm putting you in command at Buna. Relieve Harding ...
I want you to remove all officers who won't fight.
Relieve regimental and battalion commanders; if necessary, put sergeants in charge of battalions and corporals in charge of companies—anyone who will fight.
Time is of the essence ... Bob, I want you to take Buna, or not come back alive ... And that goes for your chief of staff, too.

General Douglas MacArthur
to Major General RL Eichelberger, 29 November 1942

The Battle of Buna-Gona followed the conclusion of the Kokoda Trail Campaign, and was fought by Australian and United States forces against the Japanese beachheads at Buna, Sanananda and Gona.

Both forces were riddled by disease and lacking the most basic supplies, including medicine and food. The Japanese were under pressure to hold Guadalcanal, which had forced them to withdraw their forces when they were within sight of Port Moresby. Since arriving on the north coast in June, the Japanese had built hundreds of well-camouflaged, reinforced bunkers in mutually supporting positions blocking all available approaches.

Combined with the forces who had returned from the Kokoda Trail, the Japanese initially had nearly 5,500 troops on the northern coast. This rose to about 6,500 later in the battle.

Because of poor intelligence, Supreme Commander MacArthur and his staff vastly underestimated the number of defenders and the superior quality of the Japanese defensive system—referred to as 'hasty field entrenchments'.

When the Allies attacked on three fronts beginning on 16 November, they were immediately stymied by the excellent

1. Japanese ammunition captured when the Australians attacked the eastern portion of Gona village;
2. George Silk's famous photo for *Life Magazine* of a Papuan orderly leading wounded Australian soldier, Pte Whittington, to the base hospital in Buna

Japanese defensive position. The Allies suffered heavy casualties and gained virtually no ground. They had only a few artillery pieces and their mortar ammunition was so limited it was rationed. Although requested, the Allies lacked tank and naval support. They received only partially effective air support.

MacArthur repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction with the US 32nd Infantry Division's inability to defeat the Japanese. On 29 November, after thirteen days of poor results and high casualties, he ordered Lieutenant General Eichelberger—commander of the US I Corps in the South West Pacific Area—to relieve Major General Edwin F Harding along with most of his regimental and battalion commanders.

Harding was replaced in turn by, first, his former artillery commander Albert W Waldron, then Eichelberger's Chief of Staff Brig. Gen. Clovis E Byers, and finally by Eichelberger himself. Only then did Eichelberger fully appreciate the difficulty faced by the Allies in overcoming the Japanese forces. He learned that the majority of his troops were sick with a variety of illnesses including malaria, dengue fever, bush typhus, and tropical dysentery.

Supplies, including food, were a major problem for both the Allied and Japanese forces. The Japanese were at first resupplied by destroyers who slipped through from Rabaul, and later by submarines that arrived by night, until the Allies' increasingly effective air and naval forces cut off further supply. After the battle ended, the Allies found evidence of cannibalism among the Japanese.

The Allies were at first supplied only by air drop and by sea until they could build rough airstrips at Wanigela and then Pongani. Even then, they remained short on ammunition, medicine, and food. Some US troops were reduced to a small portion of a C ration each day.

The Allied forces only made significant progress when they were finally given the tanks and artillery they had long sought. On 2 January 1943, they captured Buna, and on 22 January, after prolonged intense fighting in extraordinarily difficult conditions, the Allied forces killed or captured almost the entire defending Japanese forces. Only a few hundred escaped to the north. Casualties on both sides were extremely high. General Eichelberger later compared the casualty rate to the American Civil War. As a percentage of casualties, killed or wounded in action at Buna exceeded the better-known Battle of Guadalcanal by a margin of three to one.

1. A Stuart tank that was destroyed at Sanananda—the dense vegetation confined the tanks to the track;
2. Popondetta Memorial;
3. Memorial plaque at Townsville QLD

Recognition and Memorials

For eligible Australian units, the US Government bestowed the battle honour for Buna–Gona. Subsidiary honours were also bestowed for Gona, Sanananda Road, Amboga River, Cape Endaiadere–Sinemi Creek and Sanananda–Cape Killerton.

A brass memorial plaque was placed between Soputa and Sanananda, and the Japanese also erected a monument commemorating their soldiers' struggle there. The Australians placed a plaque in memory of their fallen comrades:

To the memory of the 161 members of the 53rd and 55th Australian Infantry Battalions (AIF) who gave their lives in Papua New Guinea 1942–1945.

The memorial at Popondetta, capital of Oro (Northern) Province, commemorates the service and sacrifice by Australians, Papua New Guineans and their Allies in the Battle for Buna, Gona and Sanananda in 1942–43. The upgrade, completed in October 2002, involved a significant refurbishment of the existing memorial and the construction of a new pavilion at the entrance to the park.

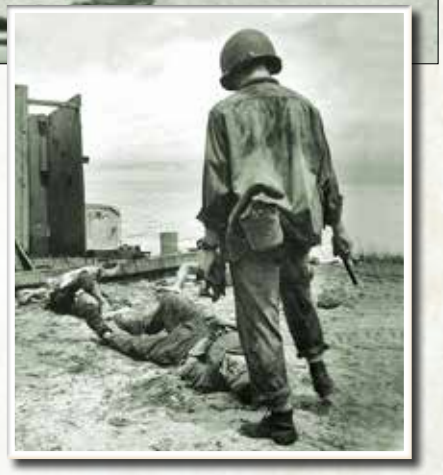
The original structure built in 1962 featured seven battle notices, which were relocated to the site from Buna, Buna Old Strip, Cape Endaiadere, Giropa Point, Gona, Sanananda Point and Wye Point, so that they could be preserved at a central place of commemoration.

Plaques were erected at Kingscliff NSW, and Townsville QLD, detailing Australia's involvement and commemorating the contribution of South Sea Islanders to the defence of Australia.

'A Magnificent Tragedy'

The Battle of Buna during the defence of Australia in New Guinea saw both sides battle stubborn resistance, harsh jungle, and treacherous mountains. The casualties on both sides were staggering, with the Allies suffering 6,419 killed, wounded, or missing at Buna. Comparatively, on Guadalcanal the Americans suffered 5,845 total casualties. The Japanese at Buna/Gona lost 8,546, nearly all of them killed. Senior commanders in the Japanese Army later referred to the New Guinea campaign as 'a magnificent tragedy'.

Both the Americans and the Australians were exhausted from their victory. There would be no new offensive operations on New Guinea for six months. When fighting began again, pockets of Japanese along the north shore would be bypassed altogether and left to starve in



1. George Strock's famous photo 'Dead Americans at Buna Beach';
2. Another of Strock's photos from the same collection

the jungle. The Allied strategy of 'Island Hopping' grew in part out of fear of another Buna.

Subsequent battles of World War II would take higher death tolls on both sides, but never again would Allied armies go into battle as unprepared as they were at Buna.

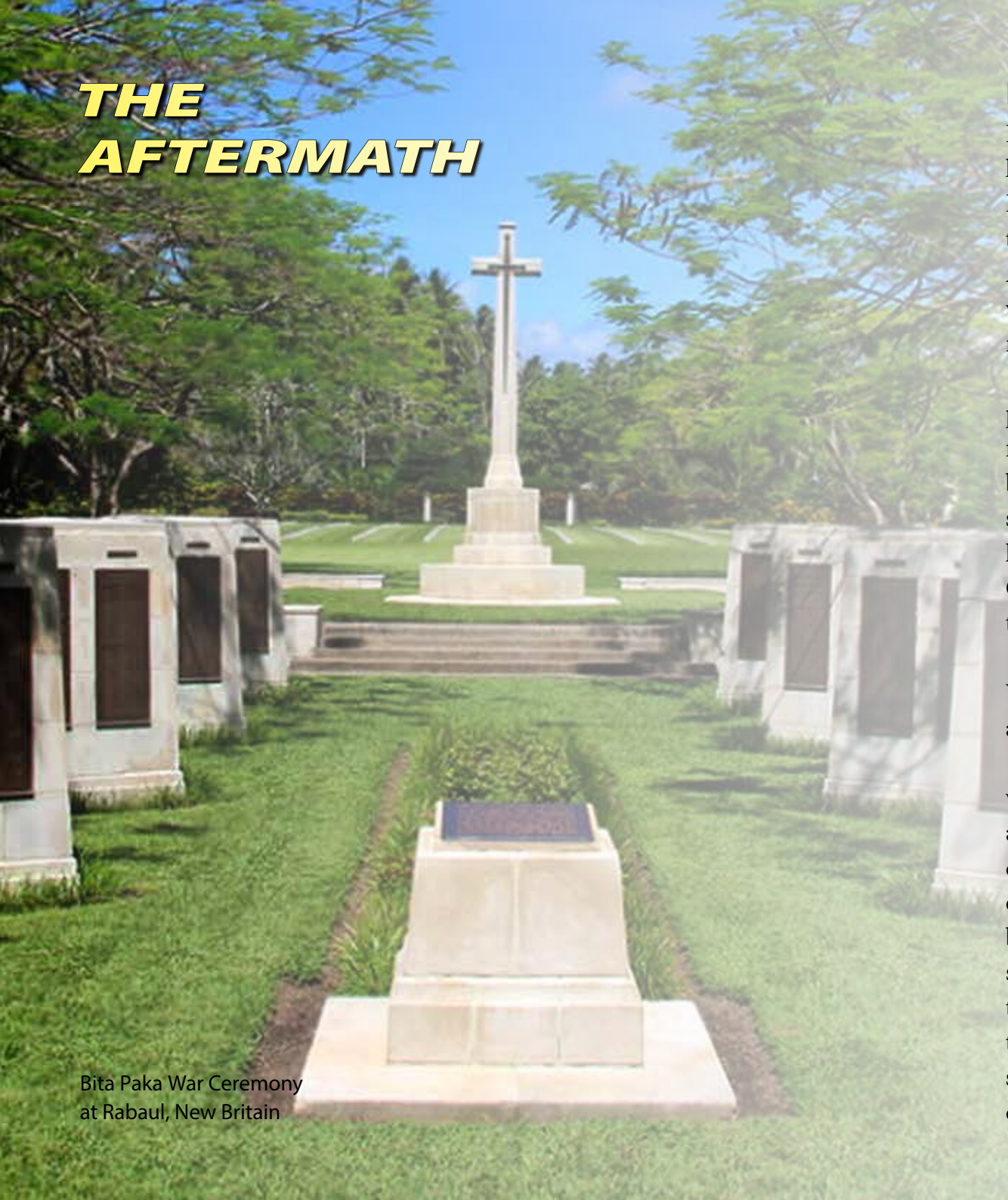
For months after American photojournalist, George Strock, made his now-iconic picture, 'Dead Americans at Buna Beach', *Life Magazine's* editors pushed the American government's military censors to allow the magazine to publish that one photograph. The concern, among some at *Life Magazine* and certainly many in the government, was that Americans were growing complacent about a war that was far from over and in which an Allied victory was far from certain. A 25-year-old magazine correspondent in Washington named Cal Whipple refused to take no for an answer from the censors and he *'went from Army captain to major to colonel to general, until I wound up in the office of an assistant secretary of the Air Corps, who decided that it had to go to the White House.'*

In the 20 September 1943 issue of *Life Magazine*, in which the famous photo first appeared (and in which it was given a full page to itself), the editors made the case to the magazine readers for publishing the picture—even if it took the better part of a year to bring the censors and President Franklin Roosevelt himself around to their way of thinking—and, in part, the editorial read:

> *Here lie three Americans. What shall we say of them? Shall we say that this is a noble sight? Shall we say that this is a fine thing, that they should give their lives for their country? Or shall we say that this is too horrible to look at?*
>
> *Why print this picture, anyway, of three American boys dead upon an alien shore? Is it to hurt people? To be morbid? Those are not the reasons. The reason is that words are never enough. The eye sees. The mind knows. The heart feels. But the words do not exist to make us see, or know, or feel what it is like, what actually happens. The words are never right ...*
>
> *The reason we print it now is that, last week, President Roosevelt and [Director of the Office of War Information] Elmer Davis and the War Department decided that the American people ought to be able to see their own boys as they fall in battle; to come directly and without words into the presence of their own dead. And so here it is.*
>
> *This is the reality that lies behind the names that come to rest at last on monuments in the leafy squares of busy American towns.*

LIFE MAGAZINE & GLENN BARNETT

THE AFTERMATH



Bita Paka War Ceremony
at Rabaul, New Britain

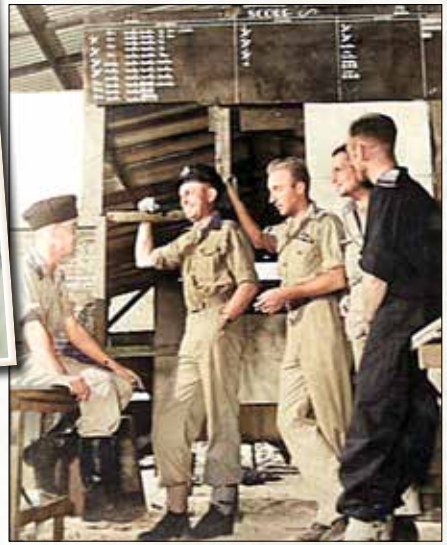
Dramatic Rescues in the South Pacific

Preparing to bail out as his damaged Kittyhawk fighter laboured across the South Pacific, Squadron Leader Ian Loudon of Port Moresby and of an RAAF fighter unit in the New Guinea area, was intercepted and trailed by an Australian Beaufighter until he abandoned the aircraft and was safely aboard an American torpedo patrol boat, which raced to the rescue.

The Beaufighter, which circled the Kittyhawk until the patrol torpedo boat picked the pilot up, was actually looking for another Kittyhawk pilot who had bailed out 24 hours before on his way back from covering a Beaufort daylight strike. Half an hour later the other Kittyhawk pilot was located 50 miles away. The Beaufighter then intercepted a Catalina flying boat manned by Americans and guided it to the dinghy.

The second pilot to be rescued within an hour was Warrant Officer (WO) JEC Arthur, of Burnie, who had been adrift in a rubber dinghy for 28 hours.

The aircraft piloted by Squadron Leader Loudon, who was a sergeant 15 months ago, was hit in three places by fight anti-aircraft fire while strafing Cape Hoskins. One bullet, damaged the lubricating system and oil thrown out burnt on the exhaust stacks. With a tremendous expanse of sea between him and home, Loudon set course as a film of oil started to cover the windscreen. The oil was leaking so freely that he prepared to abandon the Kittyhawk as he crossed the south coast of New Britain. At this stage his Kittyhawk section sighted two torpedo boats and directed him to change course.



1. Squadron Leader Ian Loudon *(right)*, checks with Flight Lieutenant Jim Harrison, in the cockpit; **2.** Ian Loudon; **3.** Ian Loudon (left) with pilots *(l to r)* Flight Lieutenant Bowes, Flying Officer Bill Cashmore, Flying Officer James Hannigan and Flight Lieutenant Byrne *(foreground)*

Just then the motor, which had begun to vibrate intensely, lost power, and shuddered violently. Loudon jettisoned the hood, which struck him above the right ear as the slipstream tore it off. He rolled the aircraft over and fell out.

The parachute opened immediately. He released the harness at 20 feet and dazed himself by landing hard on his face and stomach. He swallowed several mouthfuls of water before he could get into his dinghy. Nine minutes later he was aboard a torpedo boat.

THE SECOND RESCUE

Flight Sergeant Boehm's Beaufighter, which had intercepted the Kittyhawk's calls, and another, piloted by Flying Officer R Albrecht, of Bundaberg, circled the dinghy and torpedo boat until Squadron Leader Loudon had been picked up. On the Beaufighter were Warrant Officer Don West, of Merryweather, NSW and Sergeant Jack Leary, of Mildura, as look-outs. It was the diversion to the Kittyhawk the Beaufighter's crew partly attributes the location half an hour later of Warrant Officer Arthur after he had been afloat for 28 hours. This event took them sufficiently off their original course to see him 300 to 400 yards from their aircraft, another 50 miles due north.

They could easily have missed him, as several aircraft had already done, had they continued the exact course they had been following. While adrift WO Arthur saw searching aircraft turn within 200 yards without sighting him. He watched a Catalina for two hours on the first afternoon and, in the twilight, saw it pass practically right over him on its way home.

He kept on paddling after dark, getting his direction from the Southern Cross. FO Albrecht's Beaufighter, which was navigated by F/Sgt J Carroll, of Ballarat, dropped a dinghy as an extra marker and a water bottle within 20 yards of the dinghy. Altogether, a large number of aircraft, including Bostons, Beauforts, Beaufighters, Kittyhawks and Catalina flying boats and two torpedo boats, as well as an RAAF rescue boat, took part in the search. A total area of 5,300 square miles of the South Pacific was scoured.

Ian Loudon was a Spitfire pilot in England in 1940, a Wing Commander at age 23, and after his New Guinea service joined the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. He was awarded the DFC and was Mentioned in Dispatches. He survived the war and returned to Eilogo Plantation at Sogeri where, postwar, he established a herd of Angus cattle. He died in a car accident at the bridge over the Laloki River on 2 November 1957.

JOHN EGERTON AM

1. Australian infantrymen resting before attacking Japanese positions near Matapau in January 1945;
2. A wounded Australian soldier being helped to a jeep-ambulance on a forward track in the Aitape Sector

Future Operations

After the Battle of Milne Bay and the recapture of Gona and Buna in late 1942, the campaign continued, and from 1943 to 1945 Australian and American forces launched major offensives against the Japanese occupying New Guinea.

These resulted in a crushing defeat and heavy losses for the Empire of Japan. As in most Pacific War campaigns, disease and starvation claimed more Japanese lives than enemy action. Most Japanese troops never even came into contact with Allied forces, and were instead simply cut off and subjected to an effective blockade by Allied naval forces. Garrisons were effectively besieged and denied shipments of food and medical supplies, and as a result, some claim that 97% of Japanese deaths in this campaign were from non-combat causes.

The End of the War

The final Japanese surrender in New Guinea came one month after VP Day (on 15 August 1945). It marked the end of the war against Japan in the Pacific and the end of World War II. However, as celebrations reverberated around the world, isolated groups of Japanese continued fighting in PNG.

The Aitape–Wewak offensive was one of the final campaigns of the Pacific War. Between November 1944 and the end of the war in August 1945, the Australian 6th Division, with air and naval support, fought the Imperial Japanese 18th Army in northern New Guinea. Considered a 'mopping up' operation by the Australians and, although ultimately successful for them, with the Japanese forces cleared from the coastal areas and driven inland, amidst difficult jungle conditions, casualties from combat and disease were high. With Japan on the verge of defeat, such casualties later led to the strategic necessity of the campaign being called into question.

However, Japan's General Adachi had vowed to fight to the end, and it was not until 13 September 1945, almost a month after VP Day that he surrendered to Major General HCH Robertson, of the Australian 6th Division, at a ceremony at Cape Wom, near Wewak.

By then General Adachi's once proud army of 100,000 men had been reduced to about 13,000. His men died on the battlefield, from disease and from starvation. Earlier the Japanese had defended Wewak with utmost heroism.

1. Lieutenant General Adachi hands over his katana sword as a symbol of surrender of the Japanese 18th Army to Major-General Robertson of the Australian 6th Division;
2. On the way to the surrender, Lieutenant General Adachi, was carried in a litter by his troops;
3. Japanese War Trials gallows at Rabaul, 1946

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At the end, fighting from caves in the cliffs, many Japanese refused to surrender and were sealed beneath by explosive charges set off at the entrances.

Several hundred 6th Division troops were present at the surrender ceremony, when General Adachi was ordered to hand over his sword. He appeared very taken aback before taking two paces to the rear, stopping for a few moments, then handing his sword to General Robertson. General Adachi was escorted to the surrender table by two Australian Army military policemen.

After the war, General Adachi was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to life imprisonment. He committed suicide in 1947 after writing a letter which was described as 'a moving document of soldierly loyalty and an eloquent condemnation of the futility of war'.

Japanese War Crimes Trials took place in Rabaul over three periods from December 1945 to August 1947. Of the 188 trials, 390 Japanese accused war criminals were tried, and 266 were convicted. Of those, eighty-four were hanged and three were shot. The location of the graves of the criminals was never revealed even after overtures from the Japanese Government in the 1970s.

The Aitape-Wewak campaign, along with the campaigns on Bougainville and New Britain, came in for considerable criticism from both Australian and Japanese officers, who found it difficult to understand why such aggressive actions should be fought as the war was ending.

HH Hammer, referred to the 'military futility' of the campaigns. Japanese staff officers on Bougainville believed the campaigns were 'absolutely pointless', and that world prestige gained by Australia would not compensate for the loss of life and equipment. On the other hand, it was argued that the campaigns were justified as there was an obligation to liberate the people of PNG as quickly as possible from Japanese rule. In many areas, Japanese occupation was creating terrible privation.

It is likely that these campaigns were fought because General Blamey wanted to continue in command of a large army in the field, and because John Curtin, the then Prime Minister, and certain members of his Cabinet believed that a continued active fighting role would strengthen their position in the coming treaty negotiations.

DON HOOK

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