

# **PNG** **Kinndu**

**MARCH 2024**



**Papua New Guinea Association  
of Australia Inc.**  
**[www.pngaa.org](http://www.pngaa.org)**



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

(Formally constituted in 1951—incorporated in 1996)

**Mail:** PNGAA, PO Box 250, Kilcoy QLD 4515 • **Website:** [www.pngaa.org](http://www.pngaa.org)

### 2023–2024 PNGAA Office Bearers

**PRESIDENT:** Position vacant (*please see page 8*)

**TREASURER:** Murrough Benson—(Mob) 0448 216 049; (Email) [treasurer@pngaa.net](mailto:treasurer@pngaa.net)

**SECRETARY:** Kylee Andersen—(Mob) 0405 334 501; (Email) [admin@pngaa.net](mailto:admin@pngaa.net)

**MEMBERSHIP OFFICER:** Roy Ranney—(Mob) 0412 556 593; (Email) [membership@pngaa.net](mailto:membership@pngaa.net)

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**EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR:** Position vacant (*please see page 8*)

**PNGAA COLLECTION:** Cheryl Marvell—(Mob) 0438 635 132; (Email) [collection@pngaa.net](mailto:collection@pngaa.net)

#### GENERAL COMMITTEE:

Phil Ainsworth, John Egerton AM, Steven Gagau, Christine Leonard, Chris Warrillow & Max Uechtritz

**PUBLIC OFFICER:** Jane Rybarz

**PNGAA Membership:** [www.membership@pngaa.net](http://www.membership@pngaa.net)—This is available to anyone with an interest in PNG. Members, who receive four issues of our journal per year, have access to all parts of the website and are encouraged to explore and become actively involved with all aspects of the PNGAA. Please refer to the *Treasurer's Corner Membership & Order Form*, at the back of this journal, for more details. Application forms are also available from the Membership Officer or our website. For members receiving a printed journal, the address label shows the current status of your membership. Digital members can check their status by logging on to the website and clicking on *Membership* then *My Subscription*. Username is your email address. A list of the names and addresses of PNGAA members is now available on our website

Please go to: <https://pngaa.org/membership-directories/>

**PNGAA Store:** [www.pngaa.org/store](http://www.pngaa.org/store)—If you are interested in the history, adventure and stories of Papua New Guinea, and those who helped build the nation, then please view the selection of books and DVDs available in our store. Details are on our website or on the *Treasurer's Corner Membership & Order Form*, which can also be used to renew your membership, introduce a friend or family member who wishes to join, book for a PNGAA function or make a donation.

**PNGAA Social Media:** FACEBOOK—<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PNGAA>

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LINKEDIN—<https://www.linkedin.com/company/papua-new-guinea-association-of-australia/>

### PNG KUNDU is the official journal of the PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

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Kundu is the *Tok Pisin* word for the hourglass-shaped drum that forms part of Papua New Guinea's Coat of Arms, and after which this journal is named (formerly called *Una Voce*). The Kundu has told fascinating stories for centuries, and through our PNGAA journal we will continue documenting history and the evolving special relationship between the two countries this association holds in its heart. Whilst *Tok Pisin* is one of the three official languages of PNG, please note that some authors still use the term *Pidgin* for *Tok Pisin*, and *PNG KUNDU* supports both terms.

#### ◀ Deadline for the June 2024 issue: 1 MAY 2024 ▶

(Estimated delivery 11 June 2024—please allow for unforeseen delays, etc.)

**NEW JOURNAL EDITOR:** Christine Leonard—(Mob) 0422 002 667

Please send all contributions to: [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net)

**March 2024 Editorial Team:** John Egerton AM, Christine Leonard, Jeannette Gilligan, Andrea Williams & Murrough Benson

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Guidelines for contributors are available on page 15 of this issue or on [www.pngaa.org](http://www.pngaa.org)

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## Features

|                                                |     |
|------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Finding an Invisible Killer in PNG             | 22  |
| Jay Maclean                                    |     |
| A PNG Music Mix in Queensland                  | 25  |
| MA Uechtritz                                   |     |
| Crossing the Saruwageds, Easter 1976—Part 1    | 27  |
| Ian Howie-Willis                               |     |
| Hidden Hazards                                 | 30  |
| Donald Grant                                   |     |
| The Life of a Young Geologist in the 1960s     | 33  |
| Malcolm Castle                                 |     |
| Japanese Memorials & Kokoda                    | 39  |
| Peter Ryan                                     |     |
| Matapui—Part 1                                 | 42  |
| Ekke Beinsse                                   |     |
| Fireworks at Wau                               | 46  |
| Ross Lockyer                                   |     |
| Destination PNG 1972                           | 48  |
| Deryck Thompson                                |     |
| A Manitoba Family in Gili Gili: 1925–29—Part 3 | 49  |
| Katherine Pettipas                             |     |
| The Skull                                      | 52  |
| Peter Uechtritz                                |     |
| CSIRO Surveys in Papua New Guinea              | 55  |
| Chris Warrillow                                |     |
| PNGAA Christmas Lunch, Sydney                  | IBC |
| Christine Leonard                              |     |
| Dinner with the King of Norway in the Snow     | BC  |
| Andrea Williams                                |     |

## Contents

### FRONT COVER—MARCH 2024

Papuan Hornbill 'Kokomo', *Rhyticeros plicatus*,  
Tufi, Oro Province © Reinhard Dirscherl  
(see Ross Lockyer's article on page 46)

### PNGAA REPORT

Notice of Annual General Meeting

### EVENTS DIARY & NEWS

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BOOKS & ART REVIEWS

### PNG IN THE NEWS

### VALES & TRIBUTES

### MEMORIAL NEWS

### TREASURER'S CORNER

Membership & Order Form



**Members of the Management Committee network on your behalf, organising and attending a wide range of events and activities, encouraging new members and possible partnerships to keep our association vital and viable. Featured here are reports from the committee, along with other news of interest and a welcome to new members.**

## Management Committee Update

2024 began at pace for the PNGAA Management Committee which had its inaugural meeting on 10 January with members hooked in from Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Western Australia!

The following week members received a letter urgently requesting volunteers for several gaps on the committee to be filled, to ensure the sustainability of the PNGAA operations.

### Editor's Resignation

In December, John Egerton advised that he needed to relinquish the role after the March 2024 issue. John joined the editorial team for the December 2020 issue of *PNG Kundu* and will have edited fourteen of the quarterly issues of PNGAA's magnificent journal, working with Production Manager, Jeannette Gilligan. We all know what an extraordinarily informative and entertaining read these pages are.

PNGAA is incredibly grateful to John's passion, skill and endless efforts resulting in a



John Egerton AM

highly-acclaimed international journal, regularly passed around and receiving praise. His insights on the committee are regularly sought and valuable and, together with wife, Robin, he is a good friend to us all.

We also acknowledge all the lovely comments that regularly come in about the journal. John has done an outstanding job for which we are truly grateful and we thank him.

### New Editor & Secretary

Happily, we are delighted to announce that Christine Leonard (née Wall) will take on the editor's role for the association. Christine was born in Rabaul and lived on Bougainville for many years. She has regularly attended the annual July lunch in Brisbane so put the date in your diary (28 July) and come along and meet her! (See more about Christine opposite.)

Christine will continue to be supported by Jeannette Gilligan, who does the wonderful production layout in each journal, and also Claire van Bakel, from Victoria, who has also been assisting, behind the scenes, on the PNGAA website.

Jane Rybarz kindly responded to our request for a replacement Public Officer. This is another one of those important 'behind the scenes' role for any association and we are grateful for Jane's professional background and keen interest to be involved.

It's very exciting to have these women on board assisting the PNGAA to continue running smoothly, and we thank them

enormously whilst looking forward to working together.

Kylee Andersen has stepped into the Secretary/Admin role with a bucketful of fresh ideas and an enthusiasm that is an absolute delight to share. (See page 4.)

Whilst there is a lot of expertise on the Management Committee, the PNGAA urgently needs to fill two important voluntary roles—President and Events Co-ordinator (Sydney Area Environs).

Our association is unique and its main goal is to strengthen the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea. The only way an amazing association like ours succeeds is through the passionate, proactive and generous efforts of its volunteers! It's a great team. Being flexible and a team player is vital. Please put your hand up! Contact Kylee [admin@pngaa.net](mailto:admin@pngaa.net) or Andrea [coordinator@pngaa.net](mailto:coordinator@pngaa.net).

### January 2024 Committee Meeting

At the recent committee meeting we were inspired to hear from Membership Officer, Roy Ranney, that our membership is increasing! Just as we like it! A big, warm welcome to all new members! One of the great attributes of our association is the broad background of each of PNGAA's members and the incredible knowledge base

connecting PNG and Australia. So, keep talking our association up to encourage new memberships, and keep sending in your anecdotes and stories. All are welcome!

Many topics were discussed at the meeting, including selecting a speaker for the AGM on 5 May in Sydney; proposed Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status; the past and future budget (yes, some things are necessary!), which was clearly and concisely presented by Murrough Benson, and various aspects of the rapidly growing PNGAA Collection so capably handled by Cheryl Marvell.

There has been work on the website photo galleries with thanks to Roy Ranney and Claire van Bakel and, in November, PNGAA doubled the capacity of the website (which also enhanced performance) in a three-year package taking the association through to August 2026. The recent increase in subscription rates should address the underlying shortfall in funding to meet general operating expenses.

### PNGAA Scholarship Fund

Potentially expanding the PNGAA Scholarship Fund has also been discussed. PNGAA supports continuing sponsorship of the current six students at Anguganak Junior High School for the 2024 school year on the same basis as in 2023; i.e., meeting the portion of their school fees not covered by the PNG Government as well as the cost of their books. We thank ►

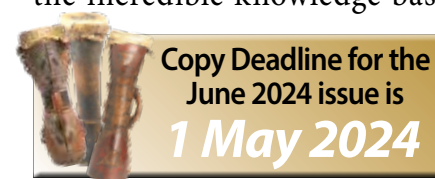


### CHRISTINE LEONARD: A New Editor for *PNG Kundu*

Christine was born in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, and apart from two years at Cutarp Plantation on New Britain in the early 1960s, she lived in Bougainville until 1981. Her first job after finishing Year 12 in Australia was working in the district local government office in Kieta, reporting to Danny Duggan. A large part of Christine's working life was in community development and international aid projects in the Asia Pacific Region with a special focus on PNG and the Pacific.

Christine has been a member of the PNGAA for the best part of a decade and attends functions in Brisbane when she can. She maintains close contact with people in Bougainville, returning there regularly until 2017.

A recent project saw Christine editing, and contributing additional stories to the memoir of the late Fr Franz Miltrup SM, a Marist priest who spent 50 years in Bougainville from 1938. She is drawn to social history and loves reading true stories set in PNG.





### KYLEE ANDERSEN: Our New Secretary

A woman of Australian nationality, Kylee has a diverse heritage stemming from her Irish, German, Papua New Guinean and Filipino ancestors.

Her maternal grandmother was born on Aua Island in the Western Islands, while her grandfather hailed from the Morobe Province. Her grandparents' journey began in 1922 when they were entrusted to the care of the Society of Divine Word Missionaries' (SVD) Alexishafen Mission. In 1937, they exchanged vows in the Alexishafen Cathedral, which unfortunately fell victim to bombing during World War II.

In 1944, Kylee's grandparents and their two eldest children were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese. They were transported on the *Yorishime Maru* (*Dorish Maru*) and miraculously survived an attack by American bombers.

After spending a decade at

the SVD's Queensland headquarters in Marburg, the family returned to Papua New Guinea (PNG) at the request of Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD. Kylee's grandfather was appointed as the production manager of the Marienberg Sawmill in the East Sepik Province.

In 1943, Kylee's maternal great-grandfather, who was of European ancestry, was executed by the Japanese on the destroyer, *Akikaze*.

Kylee's extraordinary upbringing took place in Marienberg and later Angoram, situated along the Sepik River, under the care of her grandparents, Pedro and Marie Babao. Eventually, her parents, Marie (*née* Babao) and Robert Magin, brought her back to Port Moresby for primary education at St Joseph's Primary School. In 1984, they made the decision to relocate to Australia.

Throughout her career, Kylee worked as a paralegal within law enforcement agencies, specialising in electronic document management and litigation support. She recently stepped down from her position at Living



Yorishime Maru victims' memorial at Alexishafen Cemetery



Japanese destroyer, *Akikaze*

Child Inc., a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing maternal health services and training to traditional birth attendants and community health workers in the East Sepik Province of PNG. This region holds a special place in Kylee's heart.

Aside from her professional pursuits, Kylee's interests revolve around her three grandsons, gardening and her passion for collecting Oceanic art.

For the past two decades, she has dedicated her time to researching her family history, particularly focusing on vintage Papua New Guinea and German New Guinea.

This led her to discover the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) and closely follow their activities and collections. When an administration position became available, Kylee felt a strong calling to contribute to preserving the bond between the two countries and guiding the next generation to the Association.

Kylee's plan is to assist the Committee, and members of the PNGAA in implementing modern governance and efficient business administration practices within the organisation.

◀ Glenda Giles, our representative in Wewak, and all donors to the scheme.

Coincidentally, on 10 January 2024 the PNG Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, announced that the PNG Government's allocation for school fee assistance in 2024 would see a significant boost to K856.686 million [A\$346.731m], marking an increase of K88.846 million [A\$36m] from the 2023 allocation of K767.84 million. It is not yet confirmed, however, when the schools will be receiving the assistance which might vary from school to school.

### PNGAA New Members

The committee welcomes the following new members: Anita Glenn, Pat Gray, Alex Harris, Ian Howie-Willis, Robyn Kemp, Gina Koczberski, Tempe MacGowan, Ann Mallard, Scott O'Reilly, Karen Paxton, Janet Pendrigh, Deborah Ritchie, Bob Schulz, John William Spillane Snr, Janet Watt (*née* McDonough) & Dianne Wellington.

### PNGAA Website

Roy Ranney updated the committee on the large job involved in updating the PNGAA website. Late in 2023 our Membership Management Program on the website started making changes to programs which adversely affected the functionality of the website. PNGAA then acquired a new system, called MemberPress, which was installed on the website in December.

Following that, the entire database had to be migrated across to the new system. At the same time the membership rates for all members needed changing, and this occurred over the Christmas break. There were some early bugs which proved tricky for installation, but almost everything has now been resolved. The new program is significantly more comprehensive with better support than the old system. And did you know that members can contact other members through the membership area of the website?

We thank those members who were caught up during the changeover for their patience. And the PNGAA thanks Roy Ranney for endless hours sorting this out.

### Dinners with a King and the Australian Prime Minister

2023 was a tremendous year for those connected with the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group. Following the expedition that found the ship after 81 years, Silentworld Foundation

sponsored two dinners in November 2023 held in Oslo and Canberra, to honour the lost men, to launch two short films by Max Uechtritz, to present specially designed medals from Silentworld Foundation and to present the final complete dossier of the search expedition to each country.

PNGAA congratulates Max Uechtritz on the production of the films, which were deeply emotional, highlighting the tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru* and the many descendant families touched by it across the nations, whilst also describing the search using some of the most sophisticated technology and machinery in the world.

Max Uechtritz and Andrea Williams were privileged to represent the PNGAA and attend these events as members of the Silentworld Foundation Expedition Team, which located the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru* in April 2023.

Andrea Williams spoke on behalf of the descendants at the dinner at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, follow-



John Mullen from Silentworld speaking at the Oslo function



## Notice of Annual General Meeting—5 May 2024

The 73rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Incorporated will be held in Sydney on Sunday, 5 May 2024 at the Hornsby RSL, 4 High Street, Hornsby, NSW, commencing at 11.30 am.

The PNGAA has invited a guest speaker from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and, whilst the invitation has been accepted, the name of the speaker will be advised closer to the date, so please watch the website <https://pngaa.org/> and social media for further information.

### AGENDA

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Members present and apologies                                                                                                                                                                        | Papua New Guinea as an Association individually or in conjunction with other agencies;                                                                                                                                   |
| 2. Confirmation of Minutes of the 72nd AGM—available on the PNGAA website at: <a href="https://pngaa.org/documents-relating-to-the-2023-agm/">https://pngaa.org/documents-relating-to-the-2023-agm/</a> | e) to publish journals, magazines, newsletters, websites, books and other media to inform and educate people about Papua New Guinea and to provide a means of communication among members of the Association and others; |
| 3. Business arising from the Minutes                                                                                                                                                                    | f) to encourage the preservation of documents, historical and cultural material related to Papua New Guinea; including the production and recording of oral and written histories; and                                   |
| 4. President's Report                                                                                                                                                                                   | g) to safeguard and foster the retirement conditions of superannuated members of the former services in Papua New Guinea.                                                                                                |
| 5. Treasurer's Report and receipt and adoption of the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 6. General discussion                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

#### The Objects for which the Association is primarily established are:

- to strengthen the civil relationship between the peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- to foster and encourage contact and friendship with Papua New Guineans and promote friendly association among members;
- to foster and maintain an interest in contemporary and historical events in Papua New Guinea;
- to provide appropriate financial, material or intellectual assistance to projects of benefit to

#### In pursuance of these Objects, the Association:

- will not be involved in, nor engage in, partisan politics; however, this does not prohibit the Association from engaging with members of parliament or public servants in pursuit of its objects; and
- may raise funds for its approved projects.

### AGM LUNCHEON DETAILS

A luncheon has been arranged and will commence at approximately 12.45 pm.

**Venue:** Hornsby RSL, 4 High Street, Hornsby, NSW

**Cost:** To be advised, but will not include liquor or soft drinks and these will be available from a cash-only bar.

**RSVP:** Including payment, needs to be by 24 April 2024 please.

The AGM should not take long and there will be plenty of time for mingling during the luncheon. Members, their families and friends are all welcome—but please let us know if you wish to come to the luncheon by contacting the Treasurer on [treasurer@pngaa.net](mailto:treasurer@pngaa.net); and paying by EITHER:

- Cheque—payable to PNGAA and posted to: PNGAA, PO Box 250, Kilcoy, Qld 4515; OR
- Credit/Debit Card—either post details to: PNGAA, PO Box 250, Kilcoy, Qld 4515 OR phone details to the Treasurer on 0448 216 049; OR
- Direct Credit to the bank account of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia: BSB: 062-009 / Account No. 0090 7724. Ensure you include your surname, member number (if known) and the code 'AGM' in the transaction description—and follow it up with a confirming email to [treasurer@pngaa.net](mailto:treasurer@pngaa.net) as the full transaction details do not always show up on our bank statement.

Cancellations advised by Wednesday, 24 April 2024 will secure a full refund. This is the date we need to inform the club of final numbers; after this date the Association must pay for those unable to attend.

There is free on-site parking available to those driving—entrance via Ashley Lane at the rear of the club.

The train station is nearby; public transport information Ph: 13 15 00.

Following speeches by the Prime Minister, the Chief of Army and John Mullen. See more on the Back Cover of this issue. Photos for these functions courtesy of Silentworld Foundation.

#### And now...

The turmoil in PNG during January has been very disappointing, and we are thinking about how these underlying issues could be improved. Good relations and understanding between Australia and PNG are crucial and this is where the PNGAA can play a part.

#### PNG Fiftieth Anniversary

With PNG's Independence milestone anniversary in 2025—yes, that's next year—we ask everyone to think about how PNGAA could acknowledge this milestone and celebrate achievements of the Australian era in PNG up to 1975, together with the ongoing relationship. And how members—you—might help. Please email [admin@pngaa.net](mailto:admin@pngaa.net) referring to '50th Anniversary'.

#### AGM Guest Speaker

Finally, PNGAA has invited a speaker from DFAT to the AGM in Sydney on 5 May to speak about our contemporary relationship with PNG, and to answer a few questions. It is more pertinent than ever with the current troubles in PNG and the 50th anniversary of independence in 2025 and we believe this will be of great interest.

Further information will be provided prior to the AGM.



#### Dear PNG Kundu Readers

This is my last note to you as the editor of our journal. The diversity of stories we have published has, I hope, properly reflected the range and richness of the PNG experience.

As I bid farewell to the editor's chair, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to this vibrant publication. Putting together each edition has been full of challenges but, I hope, it has resonated with you, our readers. Anything I have achieved over three years has been part of a humble attempt to give back to a country and its broader community something in return for its enrichment of my life and career.

In leaving, I acknowledge, with gratitude, our ever-patient production manager, Jeannette Gilligan, the meticulous proofreaders,



Murrough Benson and Andrea Williams, the support of the Management Committee and, of course, the contributors of all the stories.

Please treat the incoming editor with the same tolerance and understanding so that PNG Kundu can continue to beat out its messages.

**JOHN EGERTON AM**



#### Some Items Received Since the Last Report

- The last of George and Edna Oakes's books and artefacts were picked up by Ross and Pat Johnson from Dubbo and entered into the collection.
- Diaries and personal slides from Archibald and Joanne Dixson who arrived in TPNG in 1951 where he was a mechanic and she a midwife. These items tell the story of how they met and of their time in PNG.
- Photo album of the visit of Ester and William Harrison—members of the Burke Road Methodist Church, East Malvern, Victoria—to PNG 1922. Donated by Gwenda Smith née Hansen (granddaughter).
- Black and white photos taken by Lance William Hageman between 1950 and 1959 donated by his daughter Kerry Johnson.
- Assorted documents donated by John Goad—calendars and personal slides and Super 8 movies.

- Anne Peters from Rabaul has sent in a CD of music.
- John Egerton forwarded the books sent to the editor of *PNG Kuntu* for review.
- Four cartons of books from Mike Lean who passed them on from an old mate, Guy Potts, who has entered a care facility.
- Jan Smythe donated two reels of a large format 16mm movie, The Mendi—Parts 1 and 2. This is a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation production and part of the series, *The Nature of Things*. First broadcast in 1974, and directed by Nancy Archibald, the program recorded some of the ancient culture and lifestyle of the Mendi people.

Does any reader have any information about the making of this program?

*The list above is not exhaustive: other items have been received and not catalogued. Others are in the negotiation stage.*

**CHERYL MARVELL**  
0438 636 132 (MOB)  
collection@pngaa.net

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

**The PNGAA Management Committee has two vacancies which need urgent attention. These two positions must be filled to ensure that the PNGAA operations can be sustained—they are President & Events Co-Ordinator.**

It helps if you can be flexible, proactive, proficient in email and Word, and enjoy speaking with people.

The PNGAA also needs some 'working groups'—see further information below.

If you are able to volunteer, or to assist in any way, please contact one of the committee members listed at the end.

### The President's role includes:

- Chairing meetings of the Association and its management committee.
- Being passionate about the significance of the association and its unique role in the Australian-PNG relationship.
- Engaging with both members and external parties whilst showing leadership and belief in the Association.

### The President will be:

- Proactive and enjoy speaking with members, someone respected by the association and associated networks and able to work independently while also supporting the team.

### Events Co-Ordinator/General Committee:

- The Events Co-Ordinator enjoys getting together with others and initiates and manages social events for the PNGAA, including the AGM and Sydney Christmas Lunch, and represents other PNGAA state groups/organisations on the committee.
- Having computer skills, organisational and networking skills supported with positive phone and written communication will make this job a breeze.

### Working Groups:

The PNGAA has various activities and projects which require assistance.

- The PNGAA is currently working towards achieving Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. Anyone with experience in this area would be greatly appreciated to assist a small working group.
- Any and all members can host an event, small or larger, to help raise funds for our projects. (PNG Scholarship fund, digitising elements of the PNGAA Collection, various other projects from time to time). Advertise these in the journal, on social media and on the website.
- Website assistance—experience in Internet software programs is always helpful but not necessary, e.g. we need articles on the website categorised with tags added.
- Social media—We need help to submit items and initiate discussion on social media. The more the merrier!  
Let's get people talking about PNGAA!

### General comment:

The PNGAA will only remain vital when fresh ideas and activities support our much-loved journal and website. We cannot stress enough the need for volunteers to join the PNGAA Management Committee to share the jobs that need doing.

If you have any thoughts, please contact:  
Andrea (coordinator@pngaa.net / Mobile: 0409 031 889)  
or Kylee (admin@pngaa.net / Mobile: 0405 334 501)  
as soon as possible.



**Listings of upcoming meetings and events of interest for PNGAA members, and reports of functions, reunions and ceremonies held throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea. If you and your friends have an activity to advertise or promote, or have been 'out & about' recently, please send your details and reviews to the editor by 1 May 2024, the Copy Deadline for the next issue: [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net) Events are also listed on our website, under *Resources>Events*.**



## SYDNEY PNGAA Christmas Lunch

A small but joyful group of members attended the Sydney Christmas function on 2 December 2023 at the Waterview function centre at Bicentennial Park.

Being a very casual affair this year, Sara Turner was once again at the helm of leading the day. Thank you Sara—such safe hands.

The fundraising from the silent auction of a quilt (lovingly supplied by PNGAA member Jill Worsley from Perth—thank you!) went into our funds for the six high school students we are sponsoring in the West Sepik District. We have just had a report that they have done very well this year which is so pleasing.

The Muruk Quilt, beautifully handmade and donated by Jill Worsley, is a work of art. Look at the patterns also embroidered as part of the border! The colours toned magnificently.

With the assistance of Christine Leonard, our new editor, a collage of photographs from the luncheon is featured on the Inside Back Cover of this issue.

See the September 2023 issue of our journal, *PNG Kuntu*, for information about the students supported by PNGAA in 2023. Watch out for an update on scholarships in 2024 soon.

**ANDREA WILLIAMS**



Theresa Hogg, Inez Hargaden, Mai Maddox, Raglan Maddox, Erue Stephens, Jeremiah Renagi, Jane & Sara Turner



## CANBERRA PNGAA Christmas Event

The PNGAA's Christmas event in Canberra last December was well-supported, proving that for those living in and around our National Capital, and who love PNG, getting together is still important.

Rod Miller, author of *Lost Women of Rabaul*, was put on the spot when asked to provide an off-the-cuff summary of his research into the political shenanigans surrounding the Australian nurses who featured in the story.

We were also treated to a lively and humorous presentation by Dr Ian Howie-Willis, author of the recently published *Operation Postern: The Battle to Recapture Lae from the Japanese, 1943*. What better place was it for Ian's wife Margaret to run into a fellow teacher from their time teaching in Lae. These serendipitous moments are what make our PNGAA luncheons such great events.

Thank you, Sara Turner, for the photos.

**JOHN REEVES**



NGRV & PNGVR Ex-Members' Association members and guests at the luncheon

## BRISBANE



### 50th Anniversary Luncheon of the Disbandment of PNGVR

Following the PNGVR AGM on Saturday, 21 October 2023, 46 people attended a lunch at the Everyman's Hut in the Museum Precinct at Wacol, Brisbane, to remember the 50th Anniversary of the Disbandment of PNGVR in 1973. Association President, Phil Ainsworth, welcomed all and gave a short address on the formation and history of the PNGVR.

Then an excellent lunch was served and a number of members spoke on their experiences in PNGVR, including Peter Rogers DFC, Colin Gould MBE, Paul Brown, Mike Griffin, Bob Collins, Glen O'Brien and Phil Ainsworth.

Congratulations to the committee members for their organisation of the lunch and their efforts in making sure the terrific day ran smoothly, and thanks go to the National Servicemen's Association for the use of the Everyman's Hut on the day and for their assistance with food and drink.

## SUNSHINE COAST

### Kawana, November 2023

I attended the gathering at Kawana in November and thoroughly enjoyed it though, sadly, a few old faces were missing.

I caught up with a couple of old identities including Frank Haviland of whom I had heard for over forty years but never met.

John Hocknell and Mike Slough were wandering around taking photos (*below*). I do not have email addresses for Robyn and John Dagge, or Frank, or Tony Wright so if anyone has can they please pass on?

One very special aspect of this gathering was that Jan Sinclair came along with about 100 books from the collection of her late husband, Jim, and made them available to whoever wanted them. This was a lovely gesture.

I have spoken to several



Graham Tuck, Robyn & John Dagge, Bob Hoad, Nikki Turner

ex- PNG colleagues and we have all wondered what is going to happen to our own collections of PNG books because the number of people interested in Papua New Guinea is reducing day by day! We all think that even our kids will not be interested.

**DERYCK THOMPSON**



## PNGAA

### AGM Luncheon

Sunday, 5 May 2024

Details on page 6 of this issue.

### PNGAA WA Catch Up

Friday, 3 May 2024

Time: 12 noon.

Venue: RAAFA Club, Airforce Memorial Estate, Bull Creek WA.

RSVP: No later than Friday, 26 April 2024. Partners and friends will be very welcome. When booking, though, please let us know how many of you will be coming.

Please email your confirmation to Kylee at [admin@pngaa.net](mailto:admin@pngaa.net) or call her mobile 0405 334 501.

Parking is available at front of RAAFA Club. If you need to be picked up from train station, am happy to oblige.

Order from the menu and/or bar and pay the hotel direct for your own food and drinks on the day. No pre-payment is required.



Featuring commentaries about previously published articles and news items, along with opinions of interest and memories. Also included are enquiries from those who require assistance with their research or finding someone from the past.

Please send your contributions to the editor by 1 May 2024, the Copy Deadline for the June 2024 issue: [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net)

## PNG's Constitution

Belated congratulations on the article about the PNG Constitution by Judge Kerr in your September 2023 edition. From his tenure as Law Faculty Dean at UPNG up to his current ADF review, Justice Kerr has served the governments of PNG and Australia with distinction.

Also, as the author of published reports on the PNG Constitution, there can be few lawyers better qualified to provide this brief overview of the past and future PNG Constitution.

Kerr's residence and research in PNG has enabled him to offer, in his introduction, a credible view of the period before Independence—a view which is refreshingly different from the mainstream opinions, which persistently cast blame on the Whitlam government for 'rushing' Independence.

Kerr states that, after the Second World War, Australia's PNG administrators were complacent about decolonisation and were too slow to prepare the people for self-government.

Kerr's opinion may be a minority one, but it is evidence-based and resonates with a number of observers and residents of that pre-Independence era.

**GREG IVEY**

## The Merrie England

What an excellent edition the December PNG *Kundu* is. Maybe the best yet. I found the *Merrie England* article very fine and I'd



Sir William MacGregor

never seen that portrait of Sir William MacGregor.

Incidentally, the year after Sir William presented old Government House Brisbane to the University of Queensland my grandfather sat in the first class.

It was interesting to learn that the *Merrie England* went to the site of the *Quetta* wreck.

By the way, the full title of All Souls' Cathedral on Thursday Island is All Souls Quetta Memorial Cathedral.

**DAVID WETHERELL**

## Scholarship Update

The scholarship program has gone well this year. The six Grade 9 students have achieved well and were very grateful for the book packs we were able to give them.

In 2024, they will go into Grade 10 and will be preparing for a national exam at the end of the year to see if they can proceed to Grade 11 and 12. Their marks indicate that they are likely to continue to Grade 12.

I would like to arrange



Glenda Giles

another book pack for them with appropriate study guides for their Grade 10 subjects. This will cost approximately K350 each. We do not know what their school fee will be until the National Education Board sets the fee at the opening of the 2024 academic year.

If you would like to sponsor another batch who will be coming into grade 9, I can arrange that.

I went to this year's Grade ten graduation at Anguganak. The Anguganak airstrip is closed at present so this involved flying into Nuku in a single engine plane and then going by road for three hours to Anguganak.

Anguganak is a remote place but the people value education for their children. Thank you for making this possible with your sponsorship program. Long term it will result in teachers and health workers coming back into the village to help with development and services.

All the best to you and your colleagues.

**GLEND A GILES**

## Information About Evacuees Please

I would appreciate help from the association's members and other readers of *PNG Kuntu*.

I am undertaking research for my Master of Research thesis at Macquarie University. The subject of my thesis will be research into how the women and children involved were evacuated from Rabaul in December 1941. I will also highlight the experiences of these women and determine how they survived on their return to Australia.

I wish to contact any relative of these evacuees to discuss their experiences during their evacuation and the period from their arrival in Australia until the end of 1946.

If you can assist, please contact me at: [john-hugh.reeves@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:john-hugh.reeves@students.mq.edu.au) or 0448 483 932.

**JOHN REEVES**

## From a New Member

I am from PNG and I am based in Port Moresby. I am on a short visit to Canberra with my wife via Coochiemudlo Island, Qld.

Our host on the island was Keith Stebbins, a former resident in PNG for 38 years. He gave us a copy of the December 2023 issue of *PNG Kuntu* and it made a great impression on me. In 2009 I had received, unexpectedly, a black and white copy of the PNGAA magazine which contained an article I had written, but of which I had no knowledge of its being published.

Nevertheless, I was pleased with the person who was responsible for its publication.

The new look publication of the *PNG Kuntu* has taken a professional approach that takes the image of the PNGAA to another level of marketing excellence. I am so thankful for that.

*PNG Kuntu* has prompted me to register my membership with PNGAA.

Congratulations on the new outlook.

**ILAITA GIGIMAT**

**Editor's Note:** Ilaita's story in *Una Voce* in 2009 was forwarded to the journal by Dr Jon Ritchie.

## A Question of Land Ownership

The land litigation of the historical towns Wau and Bulolo started in the 1960s and is ongoing. Many tribes and clans have joined the Land Court case of the said township including the 6,000 hectares of state land.

In the Social Mapping and Socio-Economic Impact Study of the Hidden Valley Gold and Silver Project, John Burton has indicated that Biangai are the owners of these 6,000 hectares.

However there are arguments indicating that the land belongs to Nautia people based on accounts of events witnessed by Helmuth Baum, the prospector, in the 1920s. These accounts are supported by Beatrice Blackwood, an anthropologist who worked among the Kuka Kuka in 1936 and 1937.

I am in favour of the arguments that the 6,000 hectares are Nautia Land.

Hence, if any of your readers has a copy of any written record of Helmuth Baum and his first contact with the senior Nautia man at Ingelita, Upper Watut in the Bulolo District, I would much appreciate a copy of it and if they exist, photos of the senior Nautia man, Upper Watut area and copies of any sketch map of Nautia land.

Any materials or information provided corresponding to the subject will be appreciated.

Thank you.

**SIMBA ADAM**  
[simbaadam52@gmail.com](mailto:simbaadam52@gmail.com)

## Memories of Nadzab

**Editor's Note:** After seeing a news item about the new international airport at Nadzab, I sent it to an old colleague of mine for comment.

As a veterinary officer based in Lae in the late fifties and early sixties he went often to the Erap Livestock Station which adjoined the old Nadzab strip.

He replied as follows:

Thanks for the Nadzab item. When I first arrived in Lae I was issued with an old Land Rover. On a visit to Erap I took the Rover, with my 'boys' on board, for a spin down that extremely long airstrip. It took ages to get up to 60 mph and then, eventually, it reached 62 or 63, wildly celebrated with unanimous applause from my passengers.

Keith Smith had a peanut farm near the strip and had a few pigs. When castrating a litter, a feral sow came out of the bush and chased Samuel, one of

my offsidiers, who was holding one of the patients, around the old Land Rover. Keith's young daughter, who was watching proceedings, started screaming. Keith picked her up and followed Samuel, still holding the young pig, around and around the vehicle until all jumped up onto the bonnet.

This left me as the sow's sole target. Fortunately, there was a very large, heavy broom, used to clean his piggery, nearby. The sow and I faced up and, after a few blows landed on her snout, she returned to the bush and the near hysterical child was returned to her mother and we continued our work.

Col Tomkins was the manager of Erap. He was there for years and, as you might recall, I spent a great deal of time and energy at Erap eradicating TB and brucellosis from the property's very poor-quality cattle. I could go on but will spare you the sweaty details.

**TERRY ROTHWELL**



The old Nadzab Airfield in 1944—one of the busiest airstrips of WWII—it fell into disuse after the war but was reopened in 1977, redeveloped in 2019 and the official opening was in October 2023 (see page 18 of this issue for more information)

## Johnson Cargo Cult in New Hanover

I refer to the article in the December 2023 issue of *PNG Kuntu* about Johnson Cargo Cult.

My father was Jim White, a planter in New Hanover from the 1950s to 1987. We lived on Lungatan Plantation and we owned/leased other plantations around New Hanover—Lungatan, Benga (next to the Catholic Father's Mission on Lavongai), Metawoi, Wassanga, Metisong, Lamauling, Patiwai and Barwon. The latter three were on Three Islands Harbour.

In the 60s when the Johnson Cult occurred I was in my late teens, early twenties and I remember these happenings quite clearly.

Firstly, my father had good relations with both the Catholics on Lavongai and the Methodists on Ranmelek. I also remember the visit of the American Survey/Reconnaissance Team in 1962 and my father keeping the Americans up late into the night

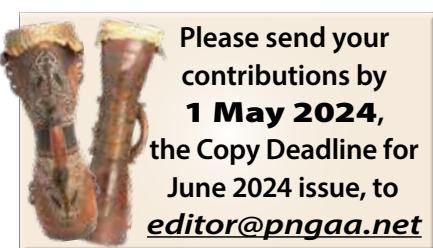
over a bottle of whiskey reliving the fact that Australians, not the Americans, were responsible for victory in the Pacific. They took this news with good humour.

I was an anthropology student at Sydney University and the anthropologist, Dorothy Billings, was my Lecturer/Tutor. I have recently re-read her book (*right*) on the Johnson Cult, *Cargo Cult as Theater*.

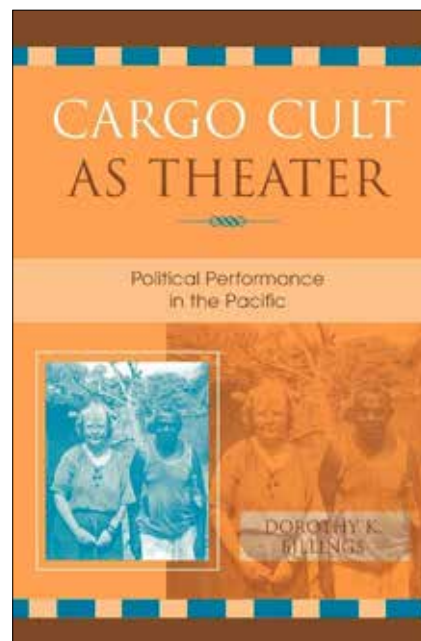
Rather than portraying the Lavongai people as naive primitives who believed that manna was about to fall from Heaven, my father (who knew the Lavongai people very well) believed they were intelligent, astute politicians who saw an opportunity and took it.

New Hanover/Lavongai is a very beautiful part of the world, an island about 30 nautical miles from Kavieng. However, as an island it never received the attention that the New Irelanders received, either in health or education services.

There had been a government outpost at Taskul but in the early 1960s the government decided, for budgetary purposes, to suspend the patrols that once visited villages around New Hanover. Government services and support started to dry up and while the Catholic and Methodist missionaries did provide services these were not sufficient.



Please send your contributions by **1 May 2024**, the Copy Deadline for June 2024 issue, to [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net)



New Hanover became a forgotten part of the world and the people sorely felt the results of this on a personal level.

My father tried to bring this to the attention of the authorities as early as 1962, to no avail, and the resentment of the locals grew. What could they do to draw attention to their situation?

On the one hand we had the American Survey Team and their numerous comments about President Johnson providing help. Coupled with this was the formation of an agricultural co-operative by Father Miller, in charge of the Catholic Mission at Lavongai, an American.

When the pre-elections of 1964 came up an opportunity was presented for the Lavongais to publicise their grievances and bring to the attention of the authorities what they perceived as neglect and lack of support. This was an opportunity which they took. If firstly the Germans, and then the Australians, were not going to help them, then why

not appeal to the Americans?

The Johnson Cult was never a primitive people believing in magic, or that cargo would arrive from America, but a very astute political movement. They simply started to refuse to pay their taxes, saying they would pay them to the Americans instead if they would listen and help provide agricultural, health and education services.

The Australian Government's reply was heavy handed and ineffective. Instead of listening to the people and the planters and missionaries, who were close to the people, and providing the services, support and patrols that were requested, they started to round up and jail the leaders of the cult. This had the exact opposite effect to what was intended. Instead, these actions made martyrs of the leaders and the movement spread.

It was still going during the 1964 elections and for years the people continued to refuse to pay their taxes and waited for help from the Americans and especially from President Johnson for whom they voted in the elections. They simply changed the name of the candidate on the blackboard which served as the voting tally.

So, the Johnson affair was not a cargo cult in the well-known sense of the term but a logical response from a people who believed they were being let down and not being heard. However, it makes for an interesting story.

**KAREN WILSON (WHITE)**

## Harold Oscar Norris and Marie Padgett

This is a call for information/assistance for any information on Harold Oscar Norris and sons, evacuees from PNG to Cairns in March 1942 on board the *Alagna*, which apparently departed from Daru. He was meant to have been on board the *Quest* owned by Janet Cowling but instead arrived on the *Alagna*.

He was 64-years-old on arrival, with two sons Steve and John Norris (2 and 1.5 respectively)—their mother died in PNG. Harold worked on copra plantations in PNG, throughout the Bismarck Archipelago, also worked for Burns Philp and may have lived on Thursday Island. Harold lived in Cairns after arrival where the boys were raised and attended school.

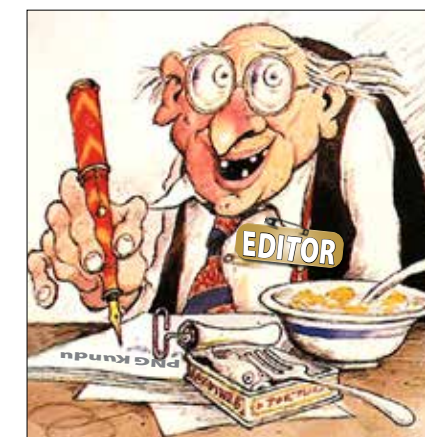
I am seeking any information about the mother of the boys—a Melanesian (PNG or other, we don't know) with the assumed Caucasian name Marie Padgett—apparently a worker at one of the plantations where Harold was.

My grandfather's (Steve Norris) dying wish was to find out where his mother (Marie) came from and something about her heritage. We have no information whatsoever. Any suggestions, information or assistance would be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

**STEVE FOLEY**  
[sjfoley83@gmail.com](mailto:sjfoley83@gmail.com)

## Thank you, John

It's been three great years working with you—there were a few teething editorial problems but, after constant bossing around by me (which, naturally, you totally



ignored), all was ironed out—and peace reigned. Trouble is, you seem to have taken the quote in the last issue to heart:

*It's not the life in your years,  
it's the years in your life!*

All right for you, riding off into the sunset, but I'll miss you—your knowledge, perspicacity, sense of humour, friendship and our little 'chats'—and wish you and Robin well for your justified 'retirement'.

**JEANNETTE GILLIGAN**



## Guidelines for Contributors to PNG Kundu

**We welcome factual and anecdotal stories of various lengths, information about members of PNGAA and their activities, letters and enquiries, reviews of art and books, photos, news and reunions—a diverse range of material is welcome—the common factor being that it is relevant to Papua New Guinea in some way.**

• **We welcome contributions from members and non-members—PNG citizens are welcome to contribute** •

**Contributions to be submitted as Word documents:** We prefer Arial or Times New Roman font / size 12, for all electronic submissions. Appropriate references are required if the article has been taken from a website or another primary source. Note: Unfortunately, PDFs and handwritten submissions cannot be accepted.

**Length of contributions:** Stories should be between 500 and 1,500 words—longer submissions are welcome but may be split over two or more sequential issues due to space issues. Vales are normally about 300–500 words—longer vales may be separated into a shorter vale and the longer version added to the website. News items and reviews should not normally exceed 500 words. The number of words should be added to each contribution.

**Photographs:** Should be submitted as JPGs (approx. 300 dpi/10 cm wide), with appropriate acknowledgement and captions.

**All contributions are subject to editorial consideration:** The editorial team reserves the right to reject, reduce and/or postpone publication. While every attempt is made to reply or publish in a reasonable time, there may be times when your patience is appreciated. However, members may add their stories and photos directly to our website.

**All contributions should be submitted to the editor, Christine Leonard, at [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net) by the Copy Deadline stated on the masthead page of each issue.**

**However, if not received in time, they cannot be guaranteed inclusion in the forthcoming issue.**



Featuring  
book reviews about  
Papua New Guinea,  
listings of art and craft  
exhibitions, interviews,  
and items of interest to  
PNGAA members.  
Please send your  
articles, information  
and photos  
to the editor by  
1 May 2024,  
the Copy Deadline for  
the June 2024 issue:  
[editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net)

**R WALLY JOHNSON &  
NEVILLE A THRELFALL**  
*Return to Volcano  
Town—Reassessing the  
1937–1943 Eruptions at  
Rabaul*

This is an expanded, more detailed version of the book published by the same authors in 1985—*Volcano Town: The 1937–43 Eruptions*. That book they considered to be a public awareness document for local consumption, given the apprehension then felt about a recurrence of the earlier disasters.

This new book includes description of the eruptions and earthquake activity from 1994 to 2014, but also records the prolific disaster management and geoscientific investigations that have continued in the Blanche Bay area since the re-establishment of the Rabaul Vulcanological Observatory in 1950.

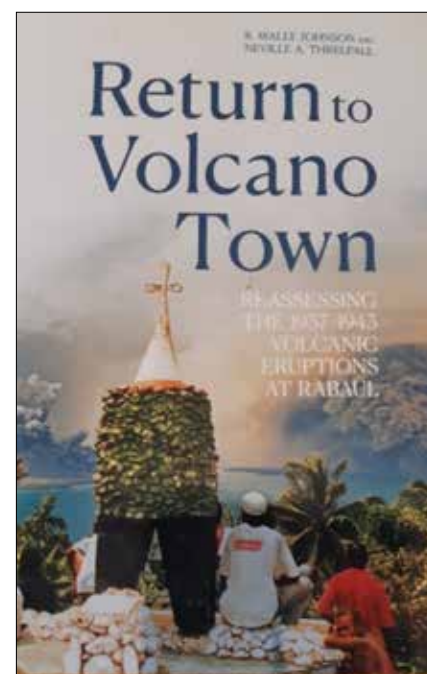
Another motivation for the new book was to deal in greater detail with the eruptions of the twin volcanoes, Vulcan and Tavurvur, in 1878 and to compare those events with the eruptions of 1937–43.

The book begins with a discussion of the establishment of Rabaul as the new colonial German capital after its earlier siting at Herbertshöhe (Kokopo). The Tolai people, plantation operators and missionaries knew about the volcanic nature of the area but the safety of Simpson Harbour as a port was a compelling reason for re-location to Rabaul.

There was continuing earthquake activity in and around Rabaul after the administration of the former German Territory became Australia's responsibility in 1914. Although recommendations for a geophysical laboratory and a volcano observatory were made in a report by Evan Stanley, the Government Geologist of the Territory of Papua in a report in 1923, no official seismological studies were done until after the 1937 eruptions.

About one quarter of the book's content deals with the 1937 eruption and the response of the community—800 Caucasians, 1,000 Asians and about 8,000 New Guineans—the Tolai people and indentured labourers.

Although *gurias* had been a regular feature of life in Rabaul since European settlement began, the devastation caused by the eruption, which began on 29 May, a Saturday afternoon, was unexpected and no plans for dealing with such an emergency existed.



Later chapters describe the scientific investigations which followed immediately after the eruptions ceased and continue to this day. Medical and vulcanological experts prepared reports for the Administration who determined that refugees who had fled to Kokopo should return to Rabaul and that the town should continue as capital of the Territory.

The vulcanologist's report recommended the establishment of a vulcanology laboratory and this was effected in 1939.

By mid-June 1941 Tavurvur erupted again, providing some relief from the boredom of garrison duties for the young soldiers of Lark Force. These eruptions continued until 7 October. Tavurvur was active again in late 1943 by which time Japan had developed Rabaul as a major base and had established its own seismic testing facility. The book's authors concluded that these eruptions were the last in the 1937–43 series.

After the war Rabaul was rebuilt despite doubts about its continuing exposure to the likelihood of volcanic eruption. Part of that rebuilding was the re-establishment of the Vulcanological Laboratory and the collection of data. Collectively, this data indicated the likelihood of further serious eruptions from Vulcan and Tavurvur.

This came to pass in 1994 when, once again, Rabaul was severely damaged by twin eruptions of its two volcanoes and

the fall-out of ash and, finally, abandoned.

The authors' analysis of information about recorded eruptions from 1878 to 2014 and the frequency of near simultaneous eruption of volcanoes on either side of Rabaul Harbour suggest the existence of a common pool of magma under the harbour. Perhaps even more serious eruptions will occur in the future.

Unlike the earlier version of this book, this edition includes references to the publications cited and a list of the authors' research collections now in the National Library of Australia and accessible to the public. Future editions would be improved by the addition of an index.

The authors, both of whom spent many years in Rabaul, have written a masterful account of its volcanoes and their impact on the land and its people.

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ACT 2600 (2023)  
407 pages, pictures, maps  
Available from ANU Press, \$A69.95

**Step Inside Australia's  
Latest Haven for Pacific  
Culture**

The new *Wansolmoana: One Salt Ocean* permanent Pasifika Gallery at the Australian Museum opened in October 2023.



Melissa Malu, who led the curation of the exhibition in the new Pasifika Gallery

*Wansolmoana* was curated by the Australian Museum's Pasifika team and cultural knowledge holders in Australia and the Pacific. This exhibition celebrates the complex, varied and dynamic cultures and languages of today's Pasifika peoples.

Breathtaking objects from the world-renowned Pacific cultural collections of the Australian Museum are accompanied by contemporary artworks and newly acquired pieces.

Delve into the ties Pasifika peoples have with the past, each other and the environment; a space dedicated to our young Pacific people, a reminder of who you are, where you come from and what you are made of.

*Wansolmoana*—meaning One Salt Ocean—reflects the cultural significance of the immense body of water that connects the islands and people across the Pacific region.

It blends the wisdom of ancestors with the voices of the present to ensure a vibrant legacy for future generations through stories and objects from across the region.



**Featuring  
news and articles about  
contemporary  
Papua New Guinea  
—also included are  
the nation's sporting  
achievements and  
events and stories  
about people doing  
interesting things.  
We encourage  
young people to  
become involved in  
the PNGAA to ensure  
the strong ties formed  
between  
Papua New Guinea  
and Australia continue  
into the future.**

## Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport

Papua New Guinea's second international airport was opened on 2 October 2023 by Prime Minister James Marape. The redevelopment of Nadzab began in November 2019 with the assistance of a loan of 25.9 billion kina from Japan and includes not only the widening and strengthening of the runway, but also a new passenger terminal and administration buildings. It is expected that passenger numbers will increase to 600,000 *per annum* and freight will rise to an expected 5,000 tons annually. Economic activity in Morobe Province is expected to increase accordingly.

The project was managed by the Japan International Co-operation Agency.

The opening ceremony was attended by Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister, Japan's ambass-

ador to PNG and other dignitaries. The Governor of Morobe Province, Hon. Luther Wenge, who first promoted the idea of an international airport at Nadzab, was also present at the opening.

The word *Tomodachi* in the airport's name is a Japanese word indicating friends and friendship. In opening the airport Prime Minister Marape said: 'The Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport reflects the bond of shared history, the present friendship between Japan and Papua New Guinea, as well as the collective future that lies ahead of us.'

<https://www.postcourier.com.pg/more-passengers-expected-at-nadzab-tomodachi/>  
<https://news.pngfacts.com/2023/10/png-pm-marape-opens-nadzab-tomodachi.html>

**Editor's Note:** Nadzab, 41 km from Lae the Provincial capital, was the site of a major Allied



Prime Minister Marape with Japan's Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. Iwao Horri, Ambassador to Papua New Guinea HE Nobuyuki Watanabe, and JICA Representative to PNG (PM's Office Media)

airbase after its recapture from the Japanese in 1943. The base included four all-weather airstrips, some of bitumen and others of Marsden matting. Nearby Erap was the site of one of the cattle breeding stations operated by the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries during Australia's post-war administration of PNG.

## Historic Military Appointment

Lieutenant Colonel Boniface Aruma from Papua New Guinea will become the second-in-command of one of Australia's combat brigades in a historic move designed to shore up military ties between the two nations.

Lt-Col Aruma will take up the position of second-in-command of Townsville's 3rd Brigade. This is the first time in the history of the Australian Army a military officer from another country has been appointed to such a senior role. He has served in PNG's army for 27 years. He has previously studied in Australia, earning two Master's degrees in international relations and defence studies from Deakin and Australian National Universities.

The appointment is intended to send a strong message of solidarity to our Pacific neighbours. The 3rd Brigade has a long history of training exchanges with PNG and Lt-Col Golder expressed optimism that this will foster a 'tangible, person-to-person' relationship with the Australian ADF.

Lt-Col Aruma said, 'You now have someone from the Pacific region who sits here, who has a



Lt-Col Aruma

little bit more understanding of how the dynamics work back home. We share the same values and the same idea about what we want our region to be like—safe, secure and stable'.

Lieutenant Colonel Aruma recently completed ADF training in Canberra to induct him into the local armed forces.

**Editor's Note:** Abstracted from *Army Nius*, November 2023. Originally referenced from an article by Rachael Merritt, ABC North Qld, 30 October 2023.

## Prime Minister Marape Addresses Parliament of Australia

History was made in Canberra on Thursday 8 February when Prime Minister James Marape of Papua New Guinea addressed the national parliament. He became the first leader of the island nations of the Pacific to do so.

Speaking for more than half an hour he referred again and again to the close association between Australia and his country and to the close bonds forged over the last 125 years. He paid a special tribute to the decision of the Whitlam Government that resulted in independence for his country in 1975.

Prime Minister Marape acknowledged the work done by Australia and Australians in preparing the road to Independence making special mention of the role of kiaps in this process. Three former kiaps, members of PNGAA, Graham Watts and Bill Sanders, and John Hocknell and Morag Hocknell were in the public gallery during the speech.

He went on to praise others—e.g. teachers, health workers, other administration people, missionaries and business-people—who, before and after independence, contributed to PNG's emergence as a sovereign nation. Among the continuing and strong legacies of Australia's occupation of PNG were the English language and a constitution which ensured a strong democracy.

Marape said he knew that much more needed to be done to change PNG's economy from its dependency on grants to one which was driven by its own resources and industry. He expressed an ambition for PNG to be a safe, secure and free country able to contribute to the security of our Pacific region.



Prime Minister Marape

‘Thank you for all you have done,’ he said. ‘Do not give up on us.’

<https://www.skynews.com.au/world-news/global-affairs/png-prime-minister-james-marape-makes-historic-first-address-to-australian-parliament/video/9e5291ddc7221949ab63cb72ef37bd6d>

## State of Emergency Declared After Riots in Port Moresby and Lae

A 14-day state of emergency was imposed in Port Moresby on Thursday 11 January 2023 as authorities tried to restore law and order, as well as essential services, following deadly riots. Prime Minister James Marape declared that 1,000 defence personnel would be on stand-by to quell any further unrest as part of the state of emergency.

The national death toll from the riots in Papua New Guinea (PNG), which began on Wednesday, 10 January 2023, reached 22 after six bodies were found in buildings that had been looted and burnt. Fifteen of these deaths were in Port Moresby and seven in Lae.

The unrest began after hundreds of police officers, soldiers, prison staff and other public servants walked off their jobs over what the government described as a payroll error. This error meant 300 Kina (\$120)—about half the pay of junior public service staff—was docked from the fortnightly pay packets of public servants across the country.

PNG’s taxation body blamed a payroll ‘glitch’ for the error and that the pay would be restored. However, many of those who gathered at Parliament House for a demonstration on 10 January believed a new tax had been enacted, a claim strenuously denied by PNG’s Internal Revenue Commission (IRC).

At a press conference, Mr Marape said the riots had an element of ‘*organised arsonists*’ and were assisted by ‘*some rogue elements of our police force*’. He said that a full investigation of what happened would be completed in 14 days and it would be the basis for administrative as well as criminal action.

Meanwhile, Mr Marape confirmed that he had suspended his chief of police and top bureaucrats in the finance and treasury departments.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-12/png-government-attempts-to-restore-essential-services/103312786>

## Papua New Guinea-Australia Sign Security Agreement

Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) signed a security agreement on 7 December 2023 that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and PNG’s Prime Minister, James Marape, said showed the closeness of the two nations.

The agreement is designed to bolster PNG’s internal security through more assistance in policing, defence and the judiciary.

Australian Pacific Minister Pat Conroy told the ABC the agreement had treaty-like powers, and Australia would spend A\$200 million on police training and infrastructure to help PNG double its police force to 10,000 officers.

Prime Minister Marape told a press conference with his counterpart in Canberra that the agreement with Australia showed they were ‘brother and sister nations’, but added PNG would not pick sides and had a foreign policy of ‘friends to all’.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-signs-security-agreement-with-papua-new-guinea-2023-12-07/>

## China to Assist with Security in Papua New Guinea?

The ABC has reported that Papua New Guinea is in talks with China on a potential security and policing deal, Foreign Minister, Justin Tkatchenko, has announced, weeks after the riots in Port Moresby.

PNG has previously said Australia and the United States are its security partners, while China is its most important economic partner, Mr Tkatchenko told the Reuters news agency on 29 January 2024.

China approached PNG in September with an offer to assist its police force with training, equipment and surveillance technology.

‘We deal with China at this stage only at [the] economic and trade level. They are one

of our biggest trading partners, but they have offered to assist our policing and security on the internal security side,’ Mr Tkatchenko said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-29/china-png-pacific-security-policing-cooperation-justin-tkatchenko/103402660>

## Port Moresby Gallery Opening

A new exhibition space at the National Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG), the Kokoda Gallery and World War II Exhibition, opened on 3 November 2023, in a building at Waigani specially modified to provide both storage and an exhibition space. The new gallery is a joint project of NMAG and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) of the government of Australia. It is an initiative of the latter’s Military Heritage Action Plan and designed to commemorate the bonds forged between Australia and PNG during the Second World War, particularly around the Kokoda Track.

The major themes of the exhibition are:

- The shared experience of Papua New Guineans and Australians during the war, and the enduring bonds forged between them, throughout the conflict and especially during the Kokoda Campaign.
- The prominent role played by Papua New Guineans in the eventual Allied victory, with stories by and about Papua New Guineans foregrounding their experiences.
- Legacies of the war that

remain on the landscape and with the people of PNG today.

Speaking at the opening, the Prime Minister, James Marape, referred to the comradeship developed during the war between Australians and the people of Papua New Guinea. He suggested also that the battles fought in PNG were the beginning of the road to nationhood.

The Australian Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Hon. Mark Thistlethwaite, also spoke at the opening. He noted the contribution made by the people of PNG to the success of the campaigns in Kokoda and elsewhere and referred to the new gallery as a monument to their sacrifice.

Among the photographs displayed in the exhibition are several from PNGAA’s collection—photographs of the lowering and raising of the flags of Australia and PNG, respectively. These were donated to the Association by the family of the late David Marsh.

**Editor’s Note:** The new Kokoda Gallery and exhibition in Port Moresby is in addition to the Herbert Kienzle Memorial Museum in Kokoda, often called the Kokoda Museum.



PNG middle school students visiting the new gallery

## Adventure Kokoda Wins Court Decision

We welcome the decision of the PNG National Court to restore our Adventure Kokoda tour operator’s licence. The judge found the cancellation of our licence by the Minister for Environment, Conservation and Climate Change was illegal and awarded costs to Adventure Kokoda.

The outcome of the hearing has lifted the scab off the insidious influence of Australian environment officials in the DFAT Kokoda Initiative who use aid to influence rogue PNG officials as their ‘useful idiots’ in hijacking the term ‘Kokoda’ in support of their socio-environmental agenda at the expense of our shared military heritage.

The court decision should now act as the catalyst for PNG to reclaim ownership of their Kokoda Trail as it will never realise its potential as a world-class pilgrimage tourism destination for the economic benefit of traditional landowner communities until they change the current management system.

**CHARLIE LYNN OAM, OL**

<https://blog.kokdatreks.com/2023/12/28/adventure-kokoda-license-restored-by-png-national->

# Finding an Invisible Killer in PNG

JAY MACLEAN

**The strange deaths of three young children in a small coastal village in the Territory of Papua New Guinea in 1972 did not rate a mention in the Territory's annual report to the Australian government. Yet, it was to become an event of international proportions.**

**As a marine biologist seconded to the Territory government, I investigated the phenomenon during 1972–73 and continued my investigations for many years afterward, including co-organising an international conference on the subject. The cause was a microscopic marine algal species, never recorded in the western Pacific, and known elsewhere only as a harmless species. Here, I describe the initial discovery and confirmation of the alga as the cause of the children's deaths.**

In early 1972, hospitals in the vicinity of Port Moresby began filling up with people suffering from symptoms not seen before in the area: tingling sensation in the lips, hyperactivity, ataxia, and mild convulsion and paralysis of the respiratory mechanism. In all, there were seven distinct episodes covering several adjacent villages during March to July 1972. It was an epidemic. In April, three young children died from the disease.

After the deaths, village residents began looking for 'payback', that is, revenge. When investigating doctors arrived in the affected village, the villagers were preparing for battle against residents of nearby villages, whom they suspected of having poisoned the water in their well. Residents of the other villages were blaming the government for contaminating their wells with DDT, which was being sprayed in an effort to kill mosquitoes to reduce the widespread incidence of malaria in the area.

No one could provide an answer that would placate the villagers; the illnesses had no precedent. Fortunately, they were persuaded to wait for government agencies to find the cause before they slaughtered one another indiscriminately. The prospect of bloodshed remained a threat however, and an answer would have to be found fast. The well water was quickly determined to be clean and devoid of pesticide.

The patients' symptoms were not of simple food poisoning. Shellfish were the main component of the victims' last meal and Health Department doctors determined that all who died or became ill ate shellfish. But then again, shellfish were always a prominent part of their diet. Some had eaten oysters and others had eaten various kinds of clams. Some ate them fresh; others boiled them first.

There were few possible causes of the deaths, if indeed they were from eating shellfish: shellfish poisoning is either from eating some that have 'gone off,' or an individual allergic response, or paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), caused by the shellfish feeding on a kind of alga in the sea that is harmless to the shellfish but potentially fatal to humans.

A call for help in solving the mystery arrived at the government marine research station in Kanudi, in Port Moresby Harbour. As the shellfish 'expert' at the time, I joined a team of chemists—Mal Price and Greg Worth—and a neurosurgeon, Frank Rhodes.

One of the joys of working in the Territory was the speed at which decisions could be made and action taken. The

bureaucratic red tape one normally associates with any government-led undertaking was simply absent. Our team was not appointed, let alone given terms of reference or a chain of command. The four of us had a preliminary meeting, at which we concluded that the most probable cause of illness was PSP and discussed how we could verify or discount that conclusion.

We felt like, indeed we were, detectives. The clues to the mystery might seem obvious now, but in the still-remote tropics in the early 1970s, they were as obscure as any faced by Sherlock Holmes.

Immediately after the meeting, Frank called for all the patients' case histories, the chemists sent for mice, and I called for a helicopter.

Frank wrote a clinical description of the cases for the *Papua New Guinea Medical Journal*. The symptoms were those of PSP. Patients who survive 12 hours usually recover, as did all the adult patients in the present epidemic.

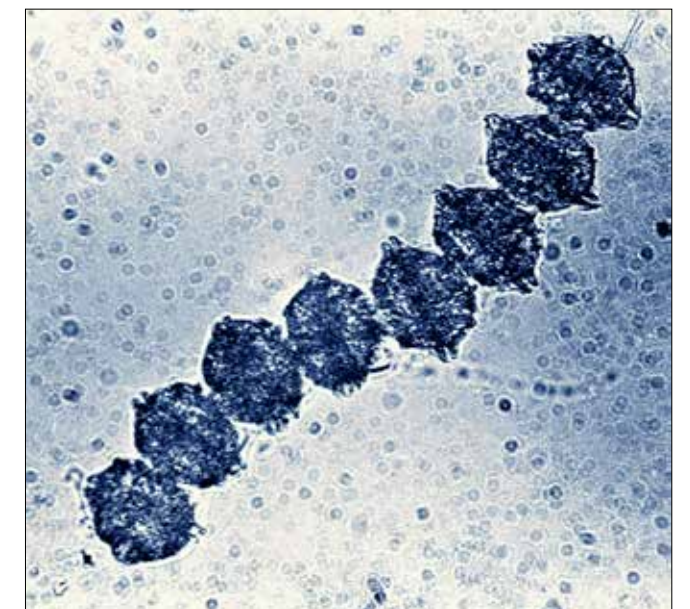
The standard method of measuring PSP at the time was to inject finely ground solutions of tissues from the shellfish (and later we extended this to the plankton) into live mice, a practice that has long since given way to chemical analyses. The chemists were lucky enough to find some mice being bred for other purposes in the Health Department. However, there was no standard toxin available to use as a reference to quantify the strength of any toxin.

Nevertheless, the results were quite conclusive. Mouse toxicity was rated on an arbitrary three-point scale. An average death time of mice of less than seven minutes was regarded as toxic; death times between seven and 20 minutes were regarded as representing mild toxicity; while mice surviving longer than 20 minutes did not subsequently die, indicating no toxicity. Shellfish taken from meal leftovers in the affected villages, either raw or boiled, proved to be toxic or mildly toxic in all cases. In most, the mice died in less than one minute—it was a powerful poison! The toxin was found to be confined to bivalve shellfish, like clams and oysters.

Meanwhile, I was aloft in a yellow Dragonfly helicopter. Being new to helicopters of any size, I was absolutely thrilled and heedless of the danger as we clattered low over stretches of beach and up over headlands between them; children and adults waving as we passed. If PSP was the answer to the poisonings, it was caused by a red tide, in which areas of the sea turn a rusty red due to high concentrations of the causative organism at the surface. Sure enough, I began to spot reddish streaks right outside Port Moresby Harbour and along the 80-kilometre stretch of coast where the affected villages lay.

We had our red tide but still it could have been a harmless type. The red tide that gave the Red Sea its name, for example, is due to a harmless algal species, red tides of which are common in the tropical Pacific.

The next step, then, was to take water samples. Rushing straight from the helicopter, I managed to rent a speedboat and driver, grabbed some collecting gear and headed for the site. The trip was awful to say the least. The daily monsoonal wind had come up and generated a sickening swell. When we arrived in the area, red tide was nowhere to be found. The view from the sea surface was of the next few crests and the swell was probably dispersing any colouration.



A chain of eight cells of the killer alga, highly magnified



Hatched area from Port Moresby to Wood Point shows distribution of red tide in 1972–73

Nevertheless, I took some seawater samples and when I examined them under a microscope back at Kanudi, I found one single-cell algal species dominating the samples.

This was promising but I had to get samples from a visible red tide to make sure it was composed of the same tiny cells. However, finding red tides from surface vessels was going to be a needle in a haystack business. Aerial support would be necessary, so why not take samples using the helicopter and avoid the surface vessels altogether?

Early next day, I was in the Dragonfly hovering over a dense red tide outside Port Moresby Harbour. For sampling, I had a Nansen bottle, the standard tool for seawater sampling. It was a heavy tube of brass and was lowered down a wire while open at both ends. When it reached the desired depth, a heavy messenger weight was sent down the wire that tripped a spring that closed both ends and secured exactly one litre of seawater. In the laboratory, one filtered off all the seawater and identified and counted the organisms left behind.

Both the pilot and I were rather nervous about balancing the helicopter a few metres above the sea in one spot while the sampling was done. I thought the bubble-like machine might float

and asked the pilot. ‘Yeah, like a streamlined manhole cover,’ he shouted. He was sweating at the controls and calling to me over the noise of the whirring blades to hurry. I had to lean out into space with one foot hooked behind the seat, dangling the heavy equipment over the red tide. In this awkward position I managed to take a few samples before the pilot became overwrought, and suddenly took us almost violently upward, shouting ‘That’s enough’.

Back in my Kanudi laboratory, I placed a drop of these precious samples on a slide under a high-power microscope. I was amazed to see huge numbers of orange-brown coloured algae actively swimming around the field of view. It was a planktonic red tide all right, the same beast I captured from the speedboat.

But what were they? Photos of known red tide organisms in the available books and reports did not quite resemble it, although it was clearly closely related to known producers of paralytic shellfish toxin.

I rushed some of this live material over to the chemistry laboratory in Konedobu to see how the mice would react to a direct injection of this organism. We watched as the hapless mice were injected and replaced in their cages. The seconds passed and then a minute and then five minutes. Nothing happened. The mice recovered and were quietly sniffing around their new quarters.

This was a major setback. If these algae were not the killers, we were back to square one in the puzzle. Yet, there was nowhere left to look unless all the other clues were wrong as well.

Small as they were, about 5–6 hundredths of a millimetre in diameter, these red tide algae had a rugged-looking shell. From my undergraduate biology lectures, I remembered that shellfish, most of which eat whatever small planktonic algae come within reach, suck them in through their gills and pass them to the stomach *via* a kind of mortar and pestle, which breaks up the plankton for digestion. We needed to simulate this action to see if we could find and release any poison in the red tide organism.

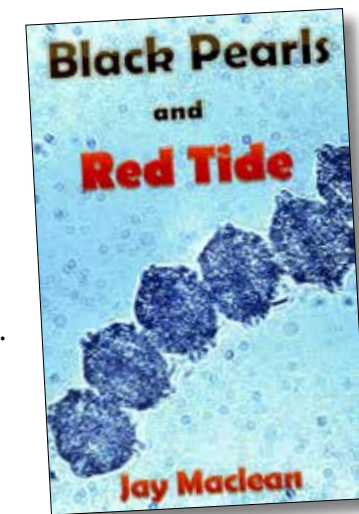
The chemistry lab had a sonic disintegrator, a metal cylinder that produced sound waves to break up tough matter, like the cell walls on these algae. I was amazed that the Territory was in possession of such modern equipment and drove at high speed to the laboratory with some of the sample material. There was no time to lose, as the cells could not live long in their concentrated state.

I hid my emotions as I tipped some of the helicopter’s sample into the cylinder. The result was an orange liquid and, the microscope revealed a mass of tiny broken pieces of shell. The liquid was injected into the hapless mice and they died—very, very rapidly. We had our culprit.

Subsamples of the red tide were preserved in small vials, sealed, and sent to plankton experts overseas. Our killer turned out to be a single-celled alga called *Pyrodinium bahamense*, first

described in Jamaica, where it produced harmless red tides that glowed at night.

The event in PNG was found to be associated with the first major El Niño phenomenon in 50 years. In subsequent El Niño periods, outbreaks spread northward to Brunei, Darussalam, Sabah and, by 1983, the Philippines. •



**Editor’s Note:** This article is from the book, *Black Pearls and Red Tides*, 2018, available on Amazon and other major eBook retailers. The book describes Jay Maclean’s research into red tides as well as oyster and pearl oyster culture in PNG and his subsequent investigations into the nature and spreading of the red tide. [https://pngaa.org/special\\_documents/](https://pngaa.org/special_documents/)

## A PNG Music Mix in Queensland MA UECHTRITZ

**What are the odds of two Papua New Guinea-born creatives meeting by chance in the Highlands of Eudlo in Queensland’s Sunshine Coast hinterland?**  
**When Chris Cobb stepped inside the door of Bradley Campbell’s shed in late 2023, he found himself staring back at a photo of a young Bradley wearing the ceremonial costume of the wigmen of Tari.**

Chris is a PNG national, newly moved to Eudlo. Bradley is a long-time local, born in PNG to an expatriate mother deeply versed in the botanical flora of the tropics and a father who flew DC3s and Fokker Friendships, eventually becoming operations manager of Ansett and Air Niugini. It wasn’t long before the two were exchanging shared interests in creative pursuits, trading laughs and generating the roots of goodwill.

Bradley is a sound engineer with a background in theatre and the film industry and Chris is a singer/songwriter who runs a talent agency in Port Moresby that supports local musicians. He is currently tracking the evolution of music in PNG, from the earliest drum beats through to reggae,



Chris Cobb



Bradley Campbell and Tuki wigman

rock and modern pop, from which he plans to build a show to tour. Chris talks about his earliest influence coming from his Uncle Oliver who was the leader of a well-known local string band called 'Gara Texas'. Two of the guitars in the band only had two strings and sounded like a bluegrass upright T-Box bass, and the other two guitars sounded like banjos.

He became a roadie and, at eighteen, was introduced to the 'big rock band' world through the legendary Barike Band. For a kid growing up in faraway settlements, the radio also provided a gateway to international sounds. Who would have thought that in August 2023 he would unexpectedly find himself singing back-up to 'Life is a Rollercoaster' with Ronan Keating on stage in Singapore.

He arrives in Eudlo with fresh energy to focus on songwriting as well as to establish himself as a Sunshine Coast talent. He has already performed in various venues around the Coast and Hinterland, including nabbing a spot in Buskers by the Lake in 2022 and a number of gigs at Maleny Lane, where he joined forces with the popular Andrea Kirwin on 24 November.

Speaking to human rights issues in West Papua, Cobb crafted the moving single 'Freedom' and says that 'writing songs that have meaning, and that can give a voice to the voiceless is what I'm really hoping to do more of in the future'. As a father of three, he is keen to produce an album of traditional PNG lullabies for children as well as an album of songs that fuses cultural chants with a contemporary twist—created in

the unique style that has become a signature of his music. Chris is currently penning a more light-hearted album with the working title 'Songs about Nating'; there'll be something for everyone!

Bradley started out as an actor with the Qld Theatre Company then went backstage and became props master. When he segued into the film industry, he became a sets dresser in the arts department and a props buyer, then took on what's known as 'standby props', which involves producing 'effects'. In the 70s and 80s, he did a lot of work in theatre education with Aboriginal kids out west, in Cape York and up at Groote Eylandt.

His focus at the moment, however, is on creating a 'Gong Bath'—the placement and recording of various types of gongs such as Tibetan bowls, traditional Chinese Chao gongs, and wind gongs. Originally he wanted to produce a series of healing music that didn't have the vibration of electronics in it, incorporating string sounds such as the magical harp and certain percussion instruments but, Bradley says, the gongs 'just came along and started to own me'.

Gongs are particularly hard to record due to their frequencies, and even more so if you want to record a lot of gongs at once (composing). He envisions lining up about ten gongs on stands to play all at once using flumies—special mallets made from high-density rubber that come in different sizes and produce different tones and pitches. He wants to source sounds that resonate at lower frequencies in the cosmos and is confident the arrangement will prove to be an intuitive thing.

Researching gong-recording techniques and listening to hours and hours of gongs to see what works has led Bradley to the point of now creating the space necessary to start putting it all together. The path has been a fairly long one, and has also become a very personal one. Analysis has demonstrated the powerful effect that sound can have on our nervous system and physiology. Bradley's longer term aim is to open the Gong Bath to others to access. •

## Crossing the Saruwageds, Easter 1976

### Part 1

IAN

HOWIE-WILLIS

**I left Papua New Guinea (PNG) in August 1973 after three years at Brandi High School near Wewak, and then almost six years at the University of Technology (Unitech) in Lae.**

**Following some time in England, I moved to Canberra in early 1975 to undertake a PhD degree in PNG History at the Australian National University (ANU). I went back to PNG for a fortnight for the Independence Celebrations in September 1975.**

In February 1976 I returned to PNG for seven months' archival research and interviews at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby and at Unitech. This was because my PhD topic was a history of the planning, development and politics of the PNG university system.

During those months, I lived through, and survived, the most exciting and most hazardous of my many adventures in PNG. This one happened during Easter 1976 while I was living back on the Unitech campus.

My next-door neighbour and bushwalking companion, Hector Clark, invited me to join him and two of his campus colleagues on a crossing of the Saruwaged Range. I accepted enthusiastically. Crossing the range had been an ambition of mine ever since I had moved to Lae in early 1968. Although I had taken part in various expeditions into the Saruwageds, I had never walked from one side to the other.

Our companions on this trip would be Robin King, a lecturer in Electrical Engineering and Matthew (Matt) Linton, who taught Mathematics. I knew neither Robin nor Matt, but we soon chummed up and enjoyed each other's company.

The plan for the trip was to fly by light plane from Lae to Baiduong, a village with an airstrip high on the southern or Lae side of the range. We would then engage village people there and in other villages along the way to help carry our backpacks up the steep tracks through the rainforest to the edge of the alpine grassland at about the 10,000-foot level (3048 m). We would camp there the first night then clamber up to the broad plateau forming the top of the ridgeline. If we had enough time and energy, we would climb Mount Saruwaged then cross the plateau and follow the trail down the northern side of the range. After that, we would pass through various villages on the northern side, making our way to the airstrip at Kabwum, a large village which was the headquarters of one of the Morobe Province's administrative sub-districts.



The Saruwaged Range from the Unitech front entrance, 1972

(Source: Hector Clark)

The expedition went according to plan during the first day and a half. We arrived at Bainduong aboard the plane Hector had chartered. We had no difficulty recruiting carriers to help us carry our gear to the next villages, which might have been Tukwambet, Awen and Kisituen, then up the increasingly precipitous and indistinct paths through the rainforest to the open grassland. After paying off our carriers, we pitched our tents then spent a reasonably comfortable night in a sheltered clearing.

The next morning, we trekked up through the tussocky grass. By early afternoon the clouds began rolling up from below but when we were high enough, we caught a glimpse of Lae and the Markham mouth and of the coast down to Salamaua and beyond. The view was magnificent. The Huon Gulf coast lay before us as if on a huge map. Higher again, we could see to the north-east. In the distance on the far side of Vitiaz Strait was the south coast of New Britain stretching away to the horizon.

But then, as Scots might say, the excursion began to *gang apley*.

As more and more dense banks of cloud enveloped us, visibility was reduced to a few metres. We could not see any of the peaks or pinnacles to take compass bearings; and the faint track soon vanished amid the thick grass.

By the time we were *antap tru* (at the very



The Huon Peninsula showing the Saruwaged Range, Mount Saruwaged, Lake Gwam, Bainduong and Kabwum in relation to Lae

(Source: the 'Anzac Portal' website <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/>.)



The track from Bainduong up through the rainforest to the Saruwaged plateau, 1972 (Hector Clark)

top), on the broad generally level plateau of the ridgetop, we were uncertain where we were on our map. We were trudging across tundra, a soggy, dismal grey-brown wasteland of bog moss interspersed with stretches of flat lichen-carpeted stone littered with frost-exfoliated rock shards. On either side were numerous ponds of shallow water, several about 50 metres and more across.

We had little idea where we really were. Our map, not very detailed but the best then available, was little help. It neither showed the contours at that height nor displayed the features of the landscape we were crossing. We were, we reluctantly conceded, lost! We wandered back and forth for an hour or so, trying to find a track and peering through the mist to try to locate features from which we might take bearings.

My guess, after consulting more recent maps and Google Maps satellite images, is that we were somewhere between Mount Saruwaged to the west and Lake Gwam to the east. They are only three kilometres apart, so if that was where we were, they were nearby.

At 4,121 m (13,520 feet), Mount Saruwaged is the highest point along the range. It is a rocky conical pinnacle that rises above the main ridge line. Lake Gwam is a tarn of glacial origin. In

a hollow fed by numerous small streams, it is roughly stadium-shaped (i.e. rectangular with rounded corners), but with several bays and promontories along the sides. It is about 630 metres long and 455 metres wide and lies at 3517 m (11,539 feet) above sea level.

Both the mountain and the lake must be among the most inaccessible places in all PNG. Few people ever go there. Those who do are generally from the highest villages below the plateau. They go there seasonally during the drier ('less wet') months, roughly May to September, to hunt the wallabies inhabiting the alpine grasslands. Some villagers maintain bush-material huts there for these excursions.

All routes across the Saruwageds are difficult, dangerous and demanding. The perils include precipitous slopes, landslides, steep, slippery, narrow tracks, slimy logs bridging rushing torrents, paths that peter out, the dense, tangled rainforests, few campsites or shelters and the exposure and bleakness of the swampy ground along the broad ridgelines. Severe weather conditions are the norm. Dense fogs reduce visibility to several metres as the clouds roll up from the valleys below each afternoon. The almost daily, hours-long deluges of rain drench the mountains. Fierce winds sweep across the exposed plateau above the treeline; while periodic frost, and gale-driven hail, sleet and occasionally snow are additional hazards for travellers in the high Saruwageds.

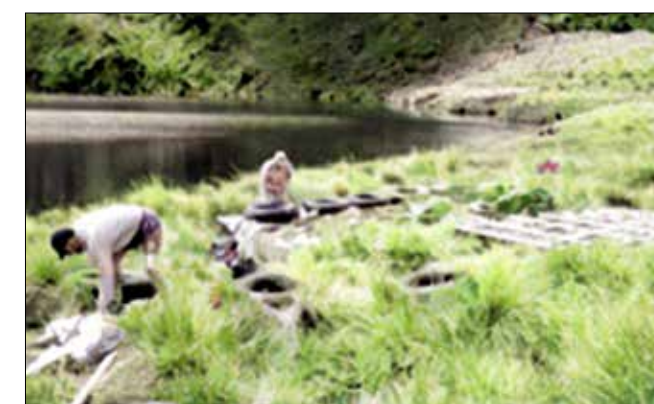
One couple who braved the Saruwageds about 23 years ago were the geologists Wibjörn Karlen (1937–2021) of the University of Stockholm and Michael L. Prentice from the University of Indiana. They were there to examine the lake. Amazingly, after setting up camp there, they built a raft so they could take core samples from the lake floor. A safe bet would be that that was the first time the lake had ever been sailed on! Equally surprising is that now a bamboo helipad is laid out beside the lake. This is for the helicopters bringing in engineers to service a nearby telecommunications relay station.

And as if that is not enough, a Melbourne

adventure tour company now offers an eight-day expedition from Port Moresby to Mount Saruwaged for €2915 (Aus\$4894). On the first day out from Port Moresby the tour party reaches Kiroro village, the highest in the Kwama River headwaters on the north side of the range, where the company maintains a guest house. Day 2 involves an ascent to a place called Mono further up the range in the forest at the 2450-metre (8039-foot) level. From Mono on Day 3, the party climbs to 'Grassland Camp', a campsite above the treeline at the 3680-m (12,074 feet) level. Day 4 sees them arrive at the next camp, near Lake Gwam. On Day 5 they trek across the tundra to their base camp at the 3940-m (12,927 feet) level on the south-eastern flank of Mount Saruwaged. From the base camp, over the next two days, they climb the mountain and several other nearby 4000 metre pinnacles. Day 8 they are helicoptered to Lae for their flight back to Moresby. For an extra \$750 the company provides a local carrier, hiring whom it recommends strongly.

The Melbourne company's clients obviously see much if their trip runs according to schedule. We, however, saw neither the mountain nor the lake as we wended our uncertain way across the plateau. That does not mean they were not nearby, just that the all-enveloping fog was so dense we could not see them. That makes me wonder what contingency plans the company might have for parties that become fog bound. •

**Part 2 will be published in the next issue of PNG KUNDU**



Wibjörn Karlen and Michael Prentice constructing the raft at their campsite beside the lake  
(Source: <http://remotesensing.utoledo.edu/>; 26 October 2023)



## Hidden Hazards

**DONALD GRANT**

**My introduction to life as a lay-missionary teacher at Wirui Mission station, Wewak, on the North Coast of PNG, could not have been more unique. Dutifully, on the morning of 28 January 1959, I fronted up before the desk of Fr Peter O'Reilly, the Director of Catholic Education for the Diocese. Fr Pete didn't muck around. 'There are no classes this week, Don. But I'd like you to go down to the workshop area and supervise some workers digging out an unexploded bomb.'**

*My God, I thought, what have I gotten myself into? Well, I guess that's part of the life around here, so I suppose I have to go.* No one in the office had batted an eyelid at Fr Pete's request; so off I went to the workshop area.

Sure enough, there it was, a 500-pound bomb, wrapped in rope, being hoisted out of a large hole by five or six men who carefully laid it by the side of the road to await collection by the mission truck. On completion of that task, I breathed a sigh of relief then gratefully retired from the scene. I had been told some bombs had a detonator located at the rear section so, when I observed one of the rear tailfins 'swaying in the breeze', I wasn't at all happy.

Later that week I wrote home and gave Mum and Dad an account of my introduction to life in PNG. Dad, a WWI veteran, hastily wrote back: *Don't go near unexploded bombs. Rope off the area*

*and call in the army's bomb disposal unit.* If poor Dad had seen the mission truck duly arrive to load the bomb on board to take it to be dumped into the ocean, he would have had a heart attack.

Wewak was subjected to heavy land and sea warfare during the Second World War. In fact, the final surrender of Japanese troops engaged in PNG conflict took place at Moem beach, only eight kilometres from the town centre. The rusting remains of Jap trucks, ammo boxes and other items were still to be found scattered throughout the lush vegetation.

My mission station of Dagua, on the west coast of Wewak, still sported the remains of both Japanese and American planes in the form of broken sections of fuselages, wings and cockpits (pictured above). The station was actually built on a former Japanese airstrip, which explained why it was so difficult to grow garden vegetables

successfully. The sandy soil had been saturated with oil to give it some strength and cohesion, making it safer, of course, for the coming and going of aircraft.

While I was at Dagua the army bomb-disposal team arrived unannounced to 'remove' several unexploded bombs, which they did by blowing two of them up. The explosions were literally house shaking, a couple of the teachers' houses suffering broken windows. I suffered from shock myself, in as much as I had no idea that bombs could make such a deafening noise. I could only feel much sympathy for the poor people of European cities who had been subjected to the cruelty of saturation bombing, such as took place in London and Dresden.

Unfortunately, many locals lost their fear of unexploded bombs, etc. Along the coastal villages, it was not uncommon for enterprising fishermen to set to with hacksaws to retrieve the TNT, so as to fashion hand-bombs of some kind with which to blow up shoals of fish. As a consequence, I've met a couple of one-handed fishermen—the result of this practice.

It was also not that uncommon to come across old army ordinance on the mission station grounds; cleaning areas for gardening was hazardous. I remember one Saturday afternoon the Sisters setting fire to an area they wished to use as a garden. They got a marvellous fireworks display as unexploded bullets and smaller ordinance provided us all with an exciting afternoon's entertainment.

One experience still comes vividly to mind. I was at Sunday dinner in our communal dining room when, from somewhere to the east of our station, came a huge explosion; almost immediately most of the mission personnel sprang to their feet and took off, scrambling into the various mission vehicles parked nearby. Only two of us remained sitting opposite each other at the long table adorned with the remnants of half-eaten meals. I, for one, had no desire to see the remains of blown-up bodies. Neither did the other guy.

But curiosity, not valour, won out. I had use of an old wartime Jeep, so Rod and I set off. By some unfortunate timing I happened to be the first to pull up at the mouth of the bush track leading to the site of the blast. With foreboding the two of us began walking into the unknown, my imagination running riot with images of mutilated bodies.

Then staggering towards us came an obviously dazed fellow, one hand holding his bloodied forehead. A quick examination revealed a gash to the bone; serious, but by no means life-threatening. 'Anybody else in there?' I demanded. 'Yes,' he replied.

Rod and I took off. A three-minute walk brought us to a clearing where two other



An Australian soldier inspecting a Japanese gun, left behind at the Wirui Mission during WWII

bewildered men were sitting on the ground completely shocked and dazed but, thank God, physically uninjured. They had been extremely lucky. Unwittingly, they had set their fire on top of a hidden anti-personnel mine. Fortunately, they had been squatting around the fire when the mine exploded so the main force of the blast went up over their heads. That they were lucky was testified to by a nearby tree about the diameter of a man's leg being snapped like a twig; anyone standing would have been decapitated.

A somewhat humorous sideline to this saga occurred after I had bundled the injured fellow into my Jeep to take him to hospital. Two old-time missionary priests appeared each with Holy Oils poised for use to administer the Last Rites. However, one was a canon lawyer, so the two debated with each other as to whether this poor suffering victim was seriously injured enough to receive Extreme Unction. Finally, the decision was reached, the Sacrament was administered and I was able to get the guy to the doctor. The Church has moved on since those days.

My fear of unexploded bombs was not

alleviated when I boarded a government trawler that happened to be travelling to Kairiru Island, a journey which should have taken one and a half hours. To give sufficient space for carrying cargo, the passenger seating ran the length of the boat on each side leaving the centre free. I settled down on one side, but it was not long before I spotted an unexploded bomb under the passenger seat on the opposite side; it was being taken out to sea to be heaved overboard. To add to my concern, the vessel's engine broke down when we were half an hour out of port, so we began drifting with the current, getting nowhere. Thank goodness the crew decided it was time to dispense with the bomb. Three of them duly lifted it up and allowed it to drop into the ocean, obviously counting that the damned thing would not blow us all up when it hit the water.

Kairiru Island, off the coast of Wewak, boasted a minor seminary. The boss, Fr Kalisz, saw the need for a sports field for the active young men who resided and studied at that establishment. Having obtained a small bulldozer he set about levelling an area of ground that bordered the seashore. As he drove back and forth on the job one afternoon, he suddenly found himself bouncing up and down as he proceeded to level a strip of ground about thirty metres in length. Much to his horror, on investigation, he began uncovering a row of drums packed with some type of explosive material, remnants of the Japanese effort to blow up any invading troops as they stormed the island.

The bomb-disposal squad missed one bomb when they came to Dagua Station. Having wandered down to the seashore at very low tide on a balmy afternoon, there before me, a bomb, the water gently lapping around it as it lay peacefully ten metres offshore; another reminder of hidden hazards.

I suppose many such hazards still lie hidden in remote locations in PNG. What with warfare taking place at present between various countries in our wounded world, it seems that hidden hazards will be with us for some time to come. •



Catholic Church on Kairiru Island

# The Life of a Young Geologist in the 1960s

**MALCOLM CASTLE**

**The mining industry was going through a boom cycle worldwide with companies like US-based Kennecott Corporation investing in exploration in Australia and New Guinea in a big way, and the idea of the adventure of a career in geology in New Guinea was fascinating to me—tramping about in strange jungles where normal men rarely ventured, tales of head hunters and cannibals behind every tree and reliving the lifestyle of the early explorers.**

## Exploration in Yandera

In the 1960s the focus was on the hard-rock potential at Porgera in the Western Highlands Province (after independence in 1975 now in Enga Province), 600 kilometres north-west of Port Moresby. With the help of the Administration, companies such as Bulolo Gold Dredging and later Mount Isa Mines (MIM) took an interest and began to drill test the Waruwari hardrock resources.

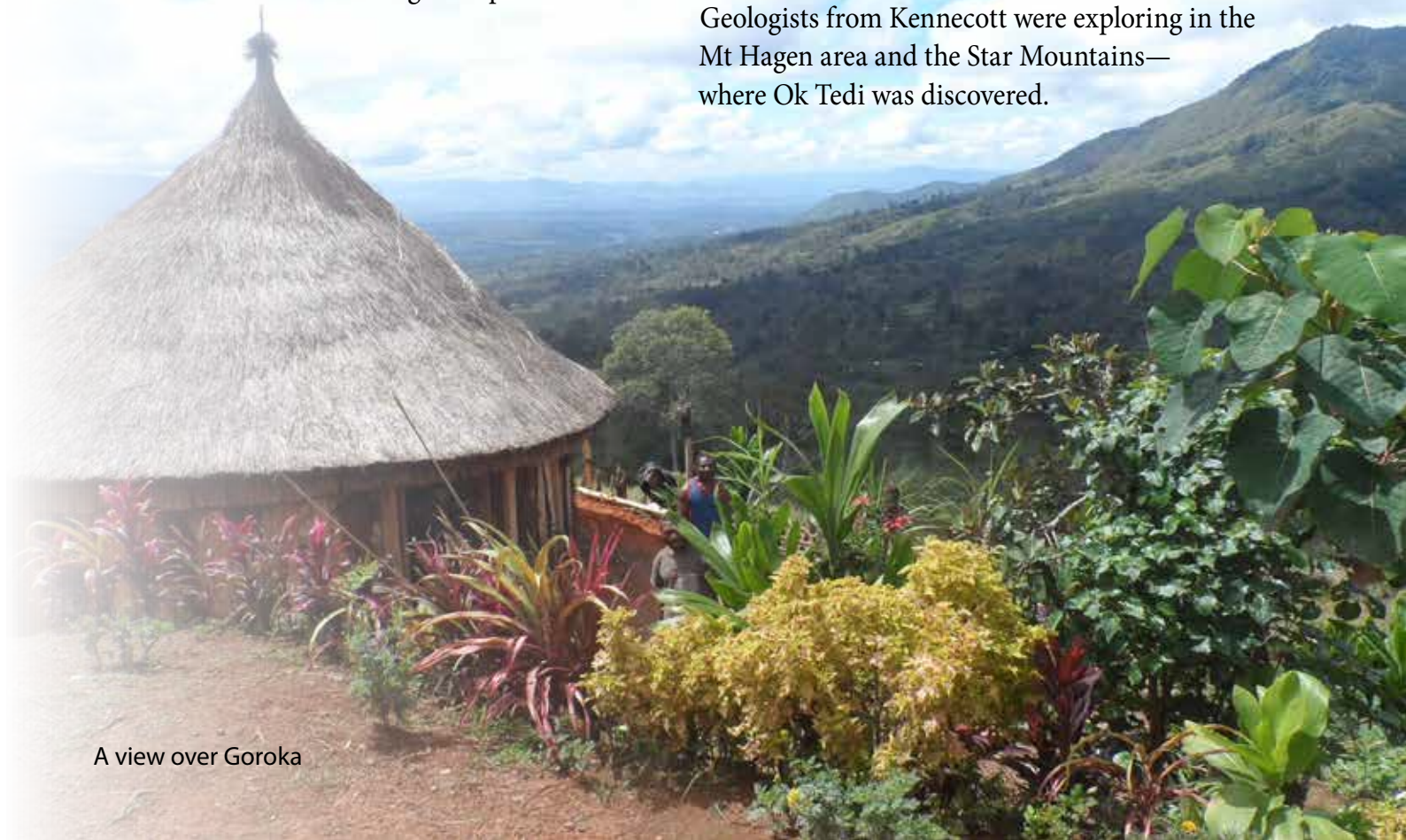
But in 1965 Kennecott began exploring the known copper mineralisation in the Yandera-Bundi area (examined and rejected by other geologists in July 1964), in Madang Province, before establishing an exploration

centre—helipad, accommodation and geochemical laboratory—just outside Goroka in mid-1966. This was overseen by American Joe Swinderman.

The exploration work was commenced by Mark Foy based in Sydney, and I joined him in that halfway through 1966—also out of Sydney.

The work was centred on the Yandera porphyry copper project and lasted for a few years. The field trips to the area, where we lived in a bush camp for about six weeks, were followed by a couple of weeks back in Sydney to charge the batteries. The office was on site at the Yandera field camp.

The Goroka camp was set up after that when several other projects were being worked on. Geologists from Kennecott were exploring in the Mt Hagen area and the Star Mountains—where Ok Tedi was discovered.



A view over Goroka



1. TAA DC3 in operation in the late 1960s; 2. Cowley Airways' Cessna 206 loading up for the trip to a bush airstrip; 3. Trekking to the Yandera Project with patrol boxes; 4. Children dressed for the Goroka Show.

Getting to the Yandera camp was a bit of an ordeal! First leg was a plane ride from Sydney to Port Moresby by Lockheed Electra turboprop airliner (Qantas) and then making a connection, first to a local DC3 left over from the Second World War, and later to a Fokker Friendship aircraft for a flight across the Owen Stanley Ranges to Madang. That usually meant an overnight at a seaside hotel (not resort quality) and an early morning flight in a light aircraft, Cessna 206, to Bundi airstrip.

Bundi was a local administrative centre manned by a couple of patrol officers (*kiaps*). The *kiap* was district administrator, commissioned policeman, magistrate, gaoler. If he was in a remote area he may well also have been engineer, surveyor, medical officer, dentist, lawyer, and agricultural adviser. The *kiap* system grew out of necessity and the demands made by poor communications in impossible country—the man on the spot had to have power to make the decision.

Just as important as the Patrol Post at Bundi for us was the Catholic Mission Station. They had a pretty laid-back attitude to life and focused mainly on educating the local children. Kids came from far and wide and were put up at the mission school. They were well fed and it was a good start to their lives. The Brothers were very hospitable and offered us a bed and meals before our trek further into the mountains.

Yandera was a good many hours walk from Bundi (depending on level of fitness). The tracks were well maintained so walking was easy enough. We had a string of porters to bring in our baggage and all the food and equipment required. Kennecott had built a small camp out of local timber and bamboo.

The Yandera Project area was the subject of intensive, drill-based exploration programs by several companies, including Kennecott Copper and BHP, during the late 1960s and 1970s.

The historic exploration work, which included 102 diamond drill holes totalling over 33,000 metres, culminated in the preparation of a

mining study by BHP, identifying the Yandera system as containing one of the largest undeveloped porphyry copper systems (with ancillary molybdenum and gold) in the southwest Pacific.

Recognising that their field staff had little better than a rudimentary knowledge of the porphyry copper targets they were seeking, Kennecott arranged in early 1968 for five junior geologists—John Clema, John Eckersley, Doug Fishburn, Mark Foy and me, to attend a company-sponsored two-to three-month Porphyry Copper Workshop, which included visits to mines and prospects in the Southwest USA so as to familiarise participants with characteristics of the deposits.

Canadian geologist, Gerry Rayner, took charge of the Goroka operation in 1968. In May, geologists Doug Fishburn and John Felderhof, European field assistants, Tom Harvey and Chris Larkham, together with Papua New Guinea Nationals, Mangu, Peter and Fuse from Bundi, proceeded to Oksapmin, the nearest airstrip to the eastern boundary of Kennecott's project area, to begin exploration of the section of the mainland spine westwards to the (then) West Irian border (the Star Mountains).

The initial assessment of the resources available at Yandera were not seen to be that attractive to a large American copper giant, and it was time to move on to more widespread exploration.

Kennecott formed a Joint Venture with BHP to continue the work at Yandera. My assignments in New Guinea included work at the Owen Stanleys and throughout the Highlands.

From the mid-1960s to the early seventies, vast areas of Papua New Guinea were subjected to first pass prospecting for porphyry copper-style mineralisation. This work was carried out at a time of relatively low gold prices. Thus, the exploration programs gave little or no consideration to gold as a possible exploration target.

## Living in Goroka

In 1968 Kennecott had increased its exploration staff and moved some married couples to Goroka. We had a compound on the outskirts of town for the office work and with accommodation for single staff and people passing through. Joe Swinderman was the first regional manager and lived there with his wife, Florence. Bob Jones was later in charge of the operation, and he lived in a large house beside the Goroka Airstrip with his wife, Tina and three sons. There were two other couples living there with the company—it was a close-knit company 'mafia' that often develops in isolated postings.

During field trips and exploration jobs for a few weeks at a time in the jungle, my new wife, Sue, was left to amuse herself as best she could. Internet and email was a thing of the future and



Map showing the Yandera and Pongera exploration sites—and the young enthusiastic geologist—*Photographs and illustrations used in this article are from the author's collection and various sources under fair-use guidelines.*



air letters written on very thin paper were the only means of communication. Phone calls were out of the question because of the exorbitant cost and availability of a connection.

It must have been fairly lonely, as she relates: *After we were married in September 1967, Malcolm and I lived in Goroka until 1970 in a flat above the IOOF Hall—a local drinking hole, which Malcolm felt obliged to check out from time to time. To get his attention to come home for dinner I used to bang on the floor with the broom handle, but it made little difference. For the first year there were some single staff in town, including John Clema from Malcolm's first days with Kennecott.*

*The highlight of my day during this period was a daily trip to the supermarket to buy some stuff. The maxim was never to buy too much so there was an excuse to go back the following day and buy something else. The attraction, of course, was to have a bit of human contact and a chat with the checkout lady.*

*I was happier with some female company and gave up ideas of 'going home to Mum'. Instead, we decided to have a baby as there was no TV in Goroka and little else to do at night. I thought we were well prepared for the momentous event. Malcolm had bought a copy of Dr Spock's famous book on raising children—so what could go wrong?*



Goroka main street, late 1960s

*I was not convinced and went home to Mum for a bit of moral support. Our son was born at Auburn Hospital in March 1968 just a bit overdue. He was duly admired by all the family, being the first born of his generation.*

*Malcolm flew down for the event and spent some time getting used to being a proud father. He wasn't there for the actual birth—this sort of thing wasn't allowed in the 1960s. When he returned to the hospital, he brought a bunch of flowers. To save embarrassment he hid the flowers up the front of his jumper in the lift and hallway. He was oblivious to the sniggers of the various nurses he passed by—ever the romantic!*

### The Helicopter Crash at Ok Tedi, 1968

My main job was in the Eastern Highlands but on one occasion I went to Ok Tedi to fill in for a few weeks while one of the geologists went on a field break.

Weather at Ok Tedi was particularly treacherous with clouds rolling in on most afternoons and severe downdrafts developing. One afternoon in November 1968 the clouds came in early, and we had some people stuck on a helipad waiting to be picked up—they included Doug Fishburn and Robbie Robinson, the logistics chief for the project and several New Guinean field assistants.

Dave Binnie was a very experienced helicopter pilot with a lot of airtime in New Guinea and he probably had some misgivings about flying conditions. Nevertheless, we had people stuck in the bush who needed a cold beer at the end of a hard day.

At that time, we were using Bell 47 G3B1 helicopters made famous in the Vietnam War and the TV show *MASH*. They had served us well but were pushed to their limit in the Mt Fubilan area. Dave took off from the base camp at about 4 o'clock, before the clouds descended completely and with plenty of time for the pick-up. He landed on the creek-side pad and loaded his first two passengers, Doug and Robbie, and their gear. He was going to make a quick trip down to the base camp where I was waiting and go back for the rest of the crew.

As the helicopter lifted off from the pad it was hit by a strong downdraft and the pilot fought for control.

Unfortunately, the helicopter was underpowered in those conditions and the machine became unstable, rolled on its side and crashed into a small creek just beside the pad. It was only a fall of a few metres, and we believe the pilot sacrificed his own safety by rolling to the right so that his passengers might fare better.

Both the pilot and Robbie were killed on impact. Doug survived with a broken jaw. He crawled up to the pad and took shelter in a small bush lean-to.

The native field assistants, who were to be on the next helicopter load, stayed with Doug and sent one of their number down the hill by foot to the main camp where I was waiting for any news as the flight was some hours overdue.

A rescue party was organised to take whatever aid we could back to Doug while we waited for evacuation. The pilot had managed to send a mayday signal out on the radio as the helicopter plunged down. Other aircraft had picked this up and another helicopter was on the way.

Despite repeated and frantic efforts, radio communication was very poor in the area and I couldn't transmit or receive from the base radio,



1. The Ok Tedi Mine and Mt Fubilan area;
2. The Bell 47 G3B1 heading into cloudy weather

and so it wasn't possible to let my wife, Sue, know I was safe and well at Base Camp and trying all methods to get help and provide comfort for Doug. It was a sleepless night for all of us—as Sue relates:

*The commercial radio stations had picked up on the mayday call and a short item was broadcast on the local radio saying that a helicopter had crashed in the Star Mountains, but it was not known if there were any survivors.*

*I was at home in our flat in Goroka listening to the radio when I heard this news item, and I was convinced it was the Kennecott helicopter. I knew Malcolm was working in that area and thought he might be on it! Others in the company also picked it up and quickly went round to our flat to be with me until the situation was known. This was a very gruelling experience and extremely upsetting.*

*I was five months pregnant with our first child and all the worst scenarios raced through my mind. What was I to do so far from home if Malcolm was injured or perhaps dead? I didn't sleep a wink all night and it wasn't until the following morning when the weather cleared, and the rescue helicopter arrived that the true picture was known. Malcolm was safe and Doug*

had survived with a broken jaw. The pilot and Robbie Robinson had been killed instantly in the crash.

*This was a terrible blow as we had become close friends with Robbie. He had been with Kennecott since the beginning at Yandera and had been in New Guinea for many years. He was an open friendly man and loved to go off to Thailand or the Philippines for his holidays, and then recount lurid tales of his adventures. His passing left a big hole in our lives and was a serious blow to the company and his many friends.*

The following morning the rescue helicopter arrived and airlifted Doug out, and he was flown to Port Moresby Hospital, where he spent a few weeks with his jaw wired up and a pair of wire cutters handy. He made a full recovery and returned to work with the Ok Tedi operation for some years.

### Farewell to Papua New Guinea

After the helicopter crash Kennecott upgraded its safety regime and insisted on more powerful helicopters, and all passengers had to wear crash helmets. Doug returned to the project and drove it to a major development operation. Kennecott entered into a joint venture with BHP to develop the giant mine.



Overlooking Goroka in 1970

My period in New Guinea—peripheral to Ok Tedi and focused on Yandera and the Owen Stanleys— was among the most exciting and memorable of my career. Not many people get the opportunity to go to such remote places and meet people living in the stone age; to stumble across remnants of downed aircraft from the Second World War; to fly by helicopter into completely uncharted forests; to be involved in the discovery of one of the world's greatest copper-gold mines; to survive a dose of malaria and to raise a young family. That is a fantastic experience!

Kennecott was a marvellous employer. I joined them in January 1966 straight from university and left four years later in 1970, to return to Sydney. As a geologist I had come of age. I was well trained by one of the best copper companies of the time and visited some of the most iconic copper deposits known in the USA at Bingham Canyon, Santa Rita, Morenci and the new Pacific Rim orebodies at Bougainville, Ok Tedi and Yandera. •

*I was ready to take on the world!*

## Japanese Memorials & Kokoda

**PETER RYAN**

**Unexpectedly there are two Japanese memorials on the Kokoda Track.**

The first is that erected in 1979 by the Japanese PNG Goodwill Society with the permission of local authorities after it was agreed that the monument would honour all war dead.

The monument displays the barrel of a Japanese mountain gun used along the Kokoda corridor. This gun was buried during the Japanese retreat and was retrieved in 1966 from the Gorari battle site and obtained by Bert Kienzle's son 'Soc'. Initially the gun stood on the lawn at the Kienzle family home in Yodda.

In 1968 a party of Japanese war veterans, widows and other relatives had come to the area to try to retrieve the remains of Japanese soldiers who had died in the campaign. Included in the party was a veteran named Nakahashi. He recognised the gun as that used by First Lieutenant Takaki. His story:

*Major-General Horii decided to commence a general withdrawal from the Oivi area on 10 November 1942. On arrival at Gorari at dawn, we found that due to continuous rain, the Kumusi river was in flood and that crossing the river by the soldiers who were exhausted was very difficult. While preparing to withdraw from Gorari, First Lieutenant Takaki Yoshijo received orders to bury his gun and carry out the wounded from Force HQ. Takaki was a young, commissioned officer of the 53rd intake of the Military Academy and an artillery officer into the bargain – an artilleryman and his gun are one.*

*He had a firm belief in the artilleryman's manual and would be unable to bury his gun no matter what. He had entreated the Force Commander that he be permitted to take both the gun and the casualties,*



The Kokoda Memorial

*but this was refused, so he had no alternative but to return to his company. He called the men together and explained the situation and obtaining their consent, the gun was destroyed and buried. He made his final farewells to all members of the company and then he gave orders to take the wounded to the rear. He then returned to the spot where we had buried the gun and, sitting down, he calmly pulled out his pistol and shot himself in the head.*

*At that time First Lieutenant Takaki was 24 years old, fiercely patriotic and a fine, upstanding figure of a young officer. His character was such that he was not only popular in his own company but throughout the entire unit. His actions were in accordance with his own beliefs as an officer in the artillery, however, it was regrettable that all this should be wasted in the battlefield. At that time I was the company clerk. I was older but I had lost a friend. During the battles, each time we met, he asked after the dead. I saw him last at Kokoda.*

*When I saw the barrel of the gun that had been abandoned under such distressing circumstances, I was filled with deep emotion. Remembrances of those times brought about a flood of tears. I, who had had a lifetime of friendship with the officers and men of that unit, had been strangely destined to discover this gun barrel. I must have been guided by the spirit of the First Lieutenant Takaki. Even now I can still see his face and I pray for his happiness in the next world.*



The Efogi Memorial

### Wording on the Monument (translated) (Erected December 1979)

*This monument has been erected in memory of all the war dead, Japanese, Papua New Guineans, and Australians, in appreciation of their greatest courage during the campaigns in Kokoda, Buna and Giruwa and also to commemorate the landing on July 21, 1942 of the Japanese Nankai Detachment at Gona and its withdrawal from Kumusi on February 7, 1943.*

The second monument is at Efogi 2. It is a stone cairn with an engraved top stone, and was built (unsanctioned) by Kokichi Nishimura, (the Bone Man of Kokoda) who spent 26 years in PNG repatriating the bones of his fellow soldiers. The stone cairn still stands; however, the top engraved stone is now held by the local land-owner. He will only bring it out upon request (and a small payment).

The top stone was engraved by the monks at Zenshoan Temple in Tokyo—the wording reads ‘To the Loyal War Dead’. •

## Memorial Service in Japan

**Recently I was invited as a special guest to a moving ceremony in Kochi —on the island of Shikoku, Japan. This ceremony was the Japan/New Guinea War Veterans Memorial Service, conducted by the Japan New Guinea Association and held at the Gokoku Shrine in Kochi.**

The ceremony is held in October each year, and attended by the Governor of Kochi Prefecture, government officials, members of the Bereaved Families Association, Japan New Guinea Association members and relatives of the soldiers who fought and died in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Kochi city and surrounding areas were the primary source of soldiers who formed the South Seas Detachment (Nankai Shitai) in World War II. In the main they were farmers and factory workers—and these soldiers fought in Rabaul, Kokoda and the beachheads Buna, Gona and Sanananda and at Lae.

My involvement began when, on one of my conducted tours of Kokoda, a Japanese trekker requested more information, from the Japanese perspective, regarding the battles fought,

and particularly from the ordinary soldier’s perspective.

Whilst I could give some information, I felt I could provide more. With the help of the Japanese trekker and Jun McLatchie we tracked down the Nankai Shitai in Kochi, and from there the Japan New Guinea Association. Mr Fukuda, a journalist in Kochi, provided great information and contacts for us—he has published a book (in Japanese only) on Kokichi Nishimura—known as *The Bone Man of Kokoda* (also the title of a book published in 2009 by Charles Happell, an Australian author). Nishimura spent 20 years based in Popondetta and Efogi finding and repatriating the remains of Japanese soldiers and was interviewed extensively by Fukuda for his book.

There is a declining audience for the ceremony in Kochi as relatives get older, and the younger

generation is not actively involved, as this aspect of war history is not normally part of any school curriculum. Any interest shown is welcomed, and when those in Kochi received enquiries from Australia, they were most helpful in providing information. I was then formally invited to the ceremony and, as a member of the 2/14th Association (my father’s battalion), I was also encouraged to wear my father’s medals at the ceremony itself.

The questions before and after the ceremony went both ways, as I was asked about my father’s service, and in turn I was provided with stories about their relatives’ war stories. A few of the attendees had travelled to PNG in the past to view the battle sites where their relatives had fought and died.

There was a great interest for future co-operation, and future involvement from Australians was encouraged. Involvement of Australians would help lift the profile of the ceremony itself and perhaps increase attendance.

After returning to Australia, I was contacted again and there is now a proposal to organise a group of secondary school students from Kochi, and a similar group from Australia, to walk Kokoda together in 2025 (the anniversary of the end of World War II). There is a great deal of feeling in Japan about reconciliation and co-operation, and the concept of students from both countries walking together would go a long way with not only realising this aim, but also perhaps, keep the interest going.

The official ceremony itself was exceptional, and quite different from what we normally undertake in Australia. Whilst overseen by the Japan PNG Association, it is conducted in the main by priests, and involves traditional prayers, blessing and offerings and dancing (by a Shinto nun). There is a ‘cleansing’ ceremony where the priests ‘cleans the crime’—as the wording in the ceremony says—‘cleansing crimes committed in daily activities which you know you should not be doing but cannot help saying or doing’.

As part of the Shinto tradition, special guests



The flag says the Kochi New Guinea Association—the smaller monument on the right of the flag is the actual Kochi Prefecture Gokoku Shrine, and the tall one is the Japanese Navy shrine for WWII (top); Memorial stone for those who fought in New Guinea in WWII (below)

were invited to lay a branch of the Sakaki tree on the altar.

The speeches provided some information on the travails endured, and part of the speech included ‘we will continue to tell the horror of war and the preciousness of peace so that the war will not create orphans again’. If there is any involvement from Australia in future ceremonies, there will be an opportunity to include in the service a speech from an Australian representative.

If anyone would like more information, please feel free to contact me at: [enquiries@wildtrek-tours.com.au](mailto:enquiries@wildtrek-tours.com.au) •

# Matapui

## Part 1

**EKKE BEINSEN**

**It is late July 1929.  
A leaden heat, saturated  
with moisture, broods  
over Salamaua, the  
harbour town of the  
goldfields of New Guinea.  
I am waiting on the  
verandah of the only  
guesthouse.  
Like all the houses and  
storage sheds of the  
little white settlement,  
it stands on a coral reef  
perhaps a hundred  
metres in width, which  
connects the mainland to  
a steep island.  
I am waiting for my two  
future comrades.**

Lump, my large, but not quite pure Irish Wolfhound, is lying at my feet with his tongue hanging out, pumping air. He is squinting obliquely at me with the whites of his eyes showing, as though he holds me responsible for the heat.

‘It was more pleasant up in the mountains, wasn’t it Lump?’ His squint turns into a broad grin, and he wags his stumpy tail, though his good manners don’t go as far as pulling his tongue in.

‘Cheer up, Lump, in a few days we will be going into the interior again. There you can hunt wild pigs, cassowaries, and kangaroos, guard the camp and take a bath in a cold mountain creek.’ In response he blinks his eyes and once again wags his stumpy tail as though he were saying: ‘I don’t quite understand what you are saying but I can see that you are happy, so I’ll consider it my duty to show a bit of pleasure too.’

‘Yes, this time I won’t have to depend solely on your company and that of a few natives,’ I say, and I get out the telegram and read it once again: *Arriving with geologist by schooner Namanula. Will employ you and your twenty-five boys for a gold prospecting expedition on behalf of a German Rabaul-based syndicate. Regards Soltwedel.*

Their boat is due today, and while I wait, I reminisce about my last two years in New Guinea. First, there were months of sailing various routes along the coast in a small trading schooner, carting copra from plantations to the depot in Rabaul. White breakers foaming over the coral reefs and playing along the shores of the islands; dark, green jungle, often reaching right down to the ocean; the fight for life and boat in the storms of the south-east and north-west monsoons; then again, nights floating along on a calm sea in chaste moon-lit silence.

Times when one developed an intimacy with the ocean; times of forgetting everything and dreaming without a care in the world.

We earn money, buy land, recruit workers, and start our own plantation. I work on the land with a few local men. They call me Master. I am their master, must fill this role and force myself to rule. They are like children, full of pranks, with a natural playfulness and usually also a good deal of naivety that wins me over. I spend months alone with them in the ocean-lapped jungle, while my Australian partner works the schooner, trading and carrying cargo. All our income goes into setting up this new plantation.

Then one dark night our sailing boat runs aground on a reef and breaks up.

Other disappointments follow in short succession. We have to abandon our plantation, and our partnership ends. But there are new challenges ahead. I take on work loading copra onto ocean-going ships in Rabaul. It’s not what I would choose to do but there is no choice.

Other casual jobs follow, often exhausting; work that whites are not accustomed to in the steamy tropical heat. Kanakas dripping with sweat; monotonous chants; French, Australian, British, and American sailors and engineers; hard-drinking captains with their rowdy humour; gold diggers, planters, traders and recruiters; wild nights of drinking. All the frenzy of the South Seas.

But this state of unthinking surrender to the moment could only be temporary. To reach my goals I must stay alert. Thus, it happens that one day I met Helmuth Baum, known by white and black alike simply as Boom. He is the embodiment of a New Guinea bushman—like a cassowary here one day and there the next, always walking barefoot and with little baggage, often for weeks on end, eating only sweet potatoes and bananas, but always with his toothbrush, soap, and razor in his haversack for use twice a day.

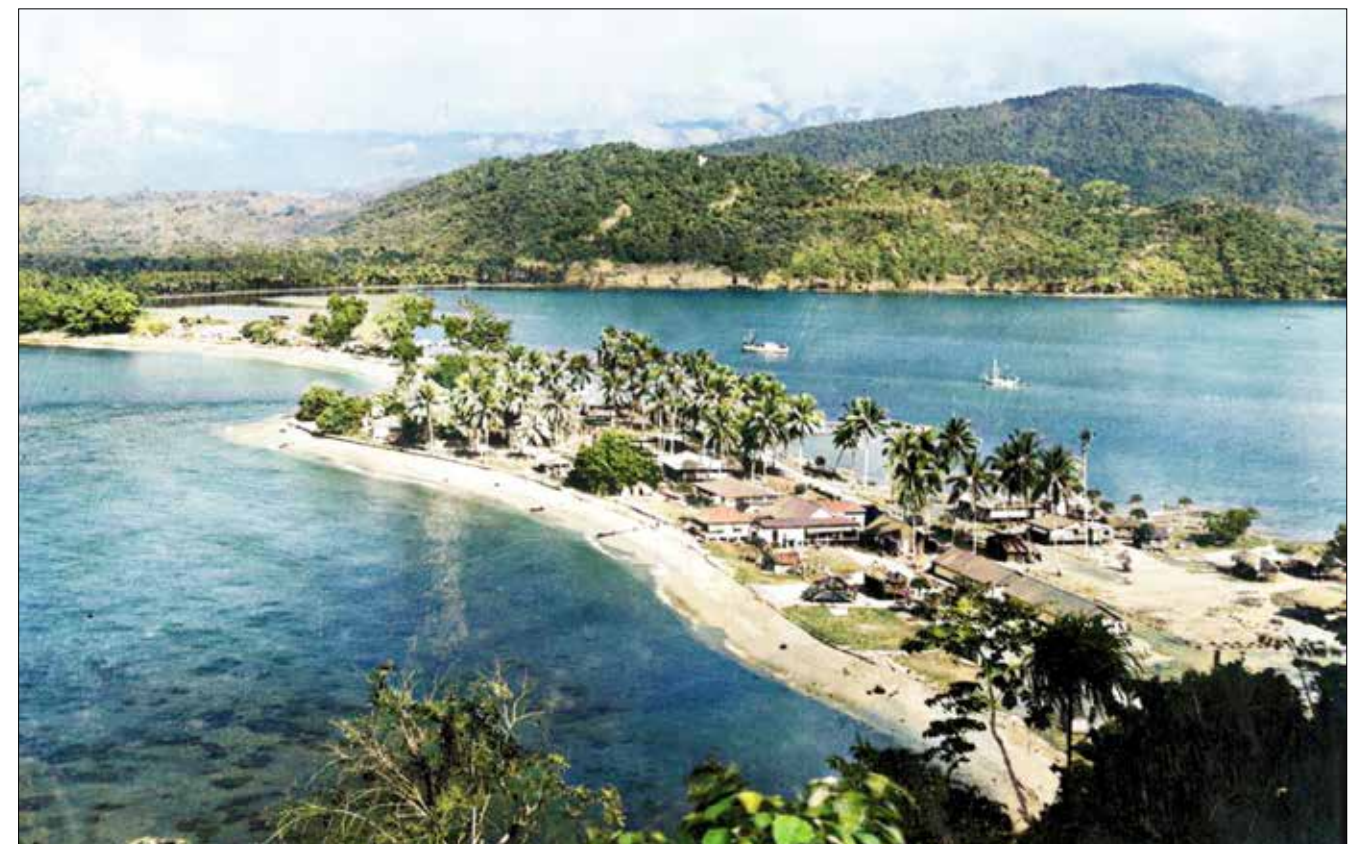
Boom had just returned from one of his long expeditions into the interior of the main island of New Guinea. His experiences fascinated me and his reports of discovering gold prompted me to

make new plans. As he talked, night after night about the possibilities and probabilities of finding treasures just waiting to be discovered, the prospect of freedom and independence drives me into the grip of gold fever, a malady against which Boom himself has remained immune.

I can now understand the old Australian prospector who had fossicked for the better part of his life and had still found nothing much. In response to my question why he had, at his age, not given up when he had experienced so little success, he answered: ‘To tell all those who would boss me around to go to hell!’

Boom simply smiles; he knows and fears no master. And so, my fever also cools and in its place comes the old desire to wander into strange unexplored regions and experience adventures that test both courage and strength; to give in to that eternal primal curiosity about what might lie beyond the mountains. Nevertheless, the thought lingers in the back of my mind: ‘Just think what I could do with all that wealth!’

It was then that Boom, in his unassuming way, offered to take me into the Herzog Mountains for



Salamaua in the 1930s

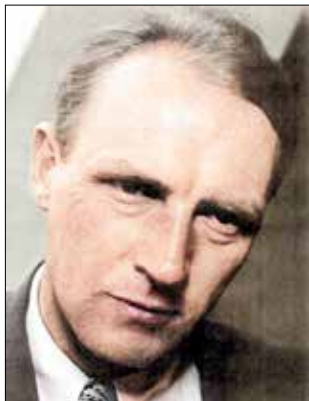
### Editor's Note:

This story, written in the 1920s, uses contemporary language. Some words, no longer acceptable, have been retained to maintain the authenticity of the author's account.

three months, to learn the trade of prospecting and panning for gold.

These three months would render me penniless but give me experiences that were worth ten times more than what it would cost. Three months of glimpsing the majesty of the untouched mountain world with its endless vistas and of listening to the sounds and the silence of the jungle. A

## About the Author, Ekke Beinssen



Peter Beinssen, a member of PNGAA and son of the author, provided us with a copy of *Matapui* for publication in *PNG KUNDU*. It tells the story in some detail of an expedition that searched for gold in the area inland from Salamaua in 1929-1930. It describes the physical and mental challenges they faced and adds another perspective to the history of European involvement in Papua New Guinea.

A later version of *Matapui* was published in Germany in 1933. However, this unpublished version is the earliest and most historically accurate. It was translated into English by the author's daughter, Dr Silke Beinssen-Hesse.

The author of *Matapui*, Ekkehard (Ekke) Beinssen, was born in Sydney in 1899. His father was a German wool broker who lived in Hunters Hill, Sydney at that time. Ekke began his education in Australia but when he was 11 his father decided to move the family to Germany so the children could learn the language and finish their schooling there. The family was in Germany when the First World War began. Born in Australia, the three children were Australian citizens under Australian law but in Germany they were German citizens. Thus, when Ekke turned 18 he was conscripted into the German Army (pictured right). He served on the Western Front where his unit opposed allied forces, including Australians, in the Battle of Passchendaele.

magnificent landscape with a small white speck moving through it, where that speck is a human being with an internal emotional world of a similar scale.

New Guinea now holds me completely in its thrall. I have become obsessed with the idea of coming closer to the heart of this land, of penetrating into it and understanding it, no matter

Ekke survived the war and in 1922 he completed a degree in macro-economics in Germany. In 1927 he returned to Australia and towards the end of that year he went to New Guinea where he had various jobs leading up to managing the expedition described in his book. At its conclusion he returned to Australia for life-saving surgery. In 1931 he returned to Germany.

After Hitler came to power in January 1933 Ekke became involved with a movement that opposed the regime. Many members of the group were incarcerated by the Nazis, but thanks to his Australian nationality Ekke was able to escape to America. His fiancée followed him, and they were married and lived in California for some time. In 1935 Ekke returned to Australia where he took over the management of his father's wool business.

Like many other German families in Australia Ekke, his wife Irmhild and three children (Silke, Wally and Peter) were interned during World War II. Their fourth child, Konrad, was born during their internment. In September 1944, the family was released and moved to an orchard property near Orange in NSW. They remained there until the end of the war after which



Ekke returned to the wool-broking business.

Ekkehard Beinssen died in Sydney in 1980, and his daughter, Silke Beinssen-Hesse, has written a detailed, currently unpublished, biography of her father.

### Editor's Note:

We are indebted to Peter Beinssen and Silke Beinssen-Hesse for information about the life story of their father.

whether this would make me rich or send me home a pauper, or perhaps even destroy me.

But to turn this idea into reality I must first acquire the means to accomplish it. Fate is on my side. I am soon able to recruit twenty-five local workers and take up a contract offered by a gold company in Salamaua to build a road to transport goods through the swamps to a new airport, which is to become a link to the goldfields at Edie Creek.

Fever swamps—but what did it matter? Behind them on the slopes of the high mountains there are the forests, and the unknown. Many weeks of hard, unhealthy work go by. Then eight days ago, Soltwedel's telegram reaches me, and I grasp his offer with both hands. Here at last is the opportunity to fulfil my dreams.

Biek, my boss-boy, is just coming along the veranda. 'Master, sail he come now.' He points out to sea where a small two-masted schooner can be seen entering the bay. It is the *Namanula*, and I walk over to the jetty to meet my new companions.

The first to approach me is my countryman, Soltwedel, a tall man dressed in khaki. He has a typically German face with a high forehead, brown eyes, and a strong straight nose. We greet each other cordially, for we had known each

other in Rabaul. He introduces me to the geologist of our expedition, Mr Zakharov. A Russian by birth and extraction, Zakharov, with his thickset, sturdy figure, broad face, deep-set eyes, high cheekbones, and strong jawbone, is the epitome of the Slavic type. He shakes my hand firmly and, with his square forehead in broad furrows, says: 'We are destined to share a great many experiences. I hope we will become good friends out there.'

'I am sure we will,' I reply with sincere conviction, returning his handshake. 'Have you seen anything of New Guinea yet?' I ask.

'I only arrived from Australia a month ago, but Mr Soltwedel has told me a great deal about it on the trip over.'

'That surprises me,' I joke, 'because, in spite of the twenty years he has spent here, I always have to squeeze him like a lemon to get him to talk about his experiences. People who have been in the bush for a while become taciturn.'

Soltwedel laughs and says: 'Eating and drinking are sometimes more important than talking. Let's go before hunger and thirst get the better of us.' And he is right, because in this hot climate thirst always seems unquenchable. •

*Another episode of this story will be published in a future issue of PNG KUNDU.*



View of the untouched mountains, taken from Lae



## Fireworks at Wau

ROSS LOCKYER

Jim Riley and I wandered about the New Guinea countryside and into the jungle at any opportunity, visiting villages, mission stations, gold sluicing operations, the old gold dredges and anything else that looked interesting.

We would often drive up the Bulolo Valley to Wau.

It was only 30 kilometres, but it took us an hour to get there as the road was gravelled, pot-holed, windy, and narrow.

The world-renowned Bernice P Bishop Natural History Museum headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii, had a collection and research station based in Wau.

Our mate, Ross Wylie, often accompanied us on these trips—before he was married that is.

ABOVE: The python at the Bishop Museum compound at Wau—(l-r) Peter Shanahan, Museum scientist, Ross Lockyer, Phil Colman, Ross Wylie, 1968

Jim, Ross, and I became mates with two of the resident scientists and we often threw a few cold SPs into the Land Rover and went up to spend a Sunday with them; Phil Colman and Peter Shanahan were both Aussies, and they were good blokes. Phil was a malacologist (snails and shells specialist) from Sydney and Peter was a small animal expert. They had a team of local New Guineans working for them on the collection side, and other scientists from Honolulu would visit on short-term projects. Their work was remarkably interesting, and Jim and I enjoyed catching up on their latest finds, observations and discoveries when we went up to Wau.

Phil and Peter had a collection of live animals and birds that they were studying. This changed or was added to on a regular basis. They had this huge pet python, which we used to carry about and wrap around ourselves. It was sixteen feet long, weighed 60 pounds, and was as thick as a man's leg. They also had a pygmy possum, sugar gliders, a *cuscus* (which looks like a large golden possum), and a big Papuan horn-bill known locally as a 'woosh-woosh bird' or *kokomo*. The woosh-woosh bird's name denotes the sound made by its wings as it flies through the jungle among the treetops. The one at Phil and Peter's house was a pet they had raised from a chick. It was about 130 centimetres long, with a 150-centimetre wingspan, and it had an enormous, hooked beak. It was the most comical looking bird I had ever seen.

We would often sit on the steps of the old house in the museum compound where they lived, drinking SP, and catching up on the local gossip. The *kokomo* would hear us from somewhere in the depths of the house and come hopping out in its most peculiar way, which was a bit like a wallaby leaping along. It would park itself on the top step and stare at us with one beady red eye and its head cocked to one side and wait. Peter usually had a big jar of ripe red coffee beans at hand, and he would throw one up to the bird, which would catch it neatly with the tip of its long beak, flick it back, and swallow it. Then we would start the count-down, and before we could count to a

hundred—plop—the coffee bean, minus its outer red coating, would drop out of the bird's rear-end onto the floor.

This trick would be repeated *ad nauseam* until either the bird got bored and hopped off somewhere else or we ran out of beer or coffee beans. This, of course, was all done in the cause of science. We concluded that the *kokomo* had a straight pipe with no baffles.

Wau was an interesting place. It had an airfield that was built on a hillside on a steep slope with a bend near the top. This was an important airfield during the Second World War, and there were many battles between the Japs and the Aussies trying to keep, or wrest, control of it. It was located roughly midway between Port Moresby on the south coast and Salamaua on the north coast, so it was a critical supply point for the defending troops. The old, corrugated iron shed on the western side of the airstrip was the original terminal building, and it was still full of bullet and shrapnel holes when I was there.

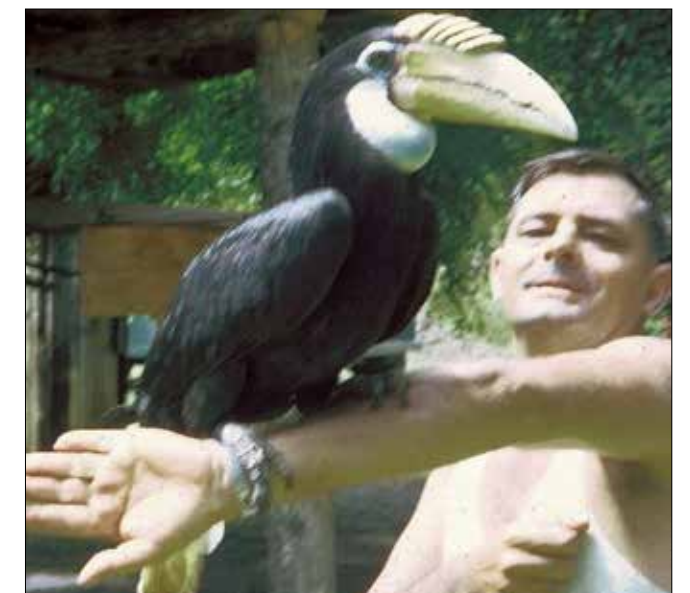
The surrounding area, particularly on the eastern side of the airstrip, was all scrub and low bush, and the Department of Forests decided, in its wisdom, to clear it and plant it with hoop pine. It consisted of a few hundred acres of rough land, and they brought up a gang of Chimbus from Bulolo to hand-cut the taller scrub and create a source of dry fuel to carry a fire through the entire area to prepare it for tree planting.

The day came when the cut scrub had dried sufficiently, and conditions were considered exactly right for a good burn-off. The Forestry guys positioned about fifty Chimbus around the perimeter of the cut area. At the signal, they struck their matches and lit their fires. The breeze was good and soon more than a hundred fires took hold then joined up. The burn started to move toward the centre. Then ... bang, bang, BOOM! It sounded like a war had started up. There were bullets and shrapnel flying everywhere! The Chimbus and the Forestry guys hit the turf, trying to find something behind which to hide and dived for cover, but the battle just kept raging.

The Forestry Department had not done its homework—that area was vacant, scrub-covered, and with no native gardens for a good reason. The locals all knew that it was covered in abandoned ammunition when the war ended! Much of it had been buried under only a few centimetres of soil and some of it was practically on the surface, covered by years of scrub and weeds. A lot of it was scattered individual rounds, but there were also cases of cartridges, as well as hand grenades, a few anti-aircraft shells and various other explosives. The fire was out of control by this time and there were more explosions and metal and lead flying everywhere each time the fire front found more ammo.

The terrified Chimbus crawled away on their bellies into the surrounding jungle, and it was days before some of them were found and taken back to their compound at Bulolo. It was two days before many of the residents of Wau and the villages located near the airstrip ventured back to their homes. Miraculously, no one was killed, although bullets and shrapnel were found buried in walls around Wau for quite a while. •

**Editor's Note:** The preceding yarn is a chapter abstracted from the author's book, *Cannibals, Crocodiles and Cassowaries—A New Zealand Forest Ranger in the Jungles of Papua New Guinea*. The book is about his years as a forester in pre-independence PNG (1967–73). Website: [rosslockyer.co.nz](http://rosslockyer.co.nz)



Bulolo Department of Forests' lik-lik doctor, Peter Woolcott, and his pet *kokomo*, Bulolo, 1968

# Destination PNG 1972

**DERYCK THOMPSON**

In late 1971 there was a notice in the Australian press advertising positions available as Assistant Patrol Officers in Papua New Guinea. I applied, and in my interview in Melbourne, I was told that successful applicants would be offered a two-by-two year contract and that due to political changes taking place in Papua New Guinea most likely there would be no extensions after four years expired. As it turned out those political changes did happen, but I stayed on in government service in various capacities until 1988.

Sixty-two *liklik kiaps* were recruited and I was one of them and, as it turned out, we were the very last intake of patrol officers recruited from Australia. On Tuesday, 21 February 1972, 24 of us flew into Port Moresby to commence an eight-weeks training course at Four Mile, Boroko. The other 38 recruits were all sent to the Australian School of Pacific Administration for a four-month training course. On our arrival at Jackson's airstrip, we were met by Training Officer Dave Reid who told us that he had only been advised the week before that we were arriving and that he was still preparing course materials. Yes, it was the Land of the Unexpected, even then!! Dave provided us with a driver and one of those old blue government truck-like buses with no windows and for the rest of the week we explored Port Moresby and surrounds.

We covered many topics in our training course—ranging from the customs and culture of Papua New Guinea to land surveying and bomb recognition—as there was still a lot of unexploded WWII ordinance around. One day was spent at Bomana Police College learning about Police matters—like tear gas—how to throw it and then walk through it! I remember that the general feeling was that we had come to PNG to work with the locals—not to throw tear gas at them! We were also taught *tok pisin* but my first posting was on the south coast so, on arrival in the field, I had to learn *Police Motu*. Apart from all that, we spent a lot of time familiarising ourselves with, and debating the merits of, SP green and SP brown.

My first posting was Morehead in the then Western District and, on arrival there on 26 April 1972, I was met on the airstrip by ADC, Mike Eggleton. During my 18 months at Morehead I spent 200 nights on patrol carrying out various tasks like census, attending to village disputes, and maintenance of roads, bridges, aid posts



and school buildings. One of the big tasks was 'political education' as PNG was approaching self-government. I carried with me Papua New Guinea and Australian flags and flew them at every opportunity. I had a large map of PNG, which also showed the islands of the Torres Straits, and I would display it when trying to explain self-government. I would often use the analogy that PNG was like a canoe being towed along by Australia and that soon the rope would be cut and PNG would paddle away to seek its own destiny. Many people of the Morehead area, particularly on the south coast, had heard about, or had visited Saibai or Boigu, and they knew that Australia was further down south. However, most people were focussed on subsistence living and did not seem too concerned by the imminent political changes.

I spent most of my time in the trans-Fly area to the east of Morehead, but 1972 was one of those periodic dry years—the previous one had been in 1965 when the Catalinas stopped flying to Lake Murray. Wildfires ravaged the Morehead savannah, and yam houses in some garden hamlets were burned to the ground as owners



At Gigwa—both flags flying—Suki Lagoon in the background would normally be covered by several metres of water

were away seeking water. In October of that year, I was able to travel along very rough tracks, initially by tractor and trailer, then on foot, then by canoe to Gigwa on Suki Lagoon. In a normal year access would have been mostly by water transport. It was a tough year for village people but they faced it with their usual resilience, just as they have been resilient with managing life in the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

## A Manitoba Family in Gili Gili: 1925–29

**KATHERINE PETTIPAS—PART 3**

From 1925 to 1929, William McGregor, a Canadian farmer/rancher worked on the Gili Gili Plantation in the Milne Bay District as the Head Stockman for Lever Brothers. Accompanying him on this venture were his wife, Kate, and their teenaged daughter, Rubina. While Kate used photography and correspondence to document her experiences, Rubina acquired indigenous artefacts and natural history specimens.

Part 3 of their story describes highlights from the artefact collection.

My interview in 1984 with Rubina (Ruby) Miles of Brandon, Manitoba, was one of the highlights of my curatorship at the Manitoba Museum. Ruby (1909–2003) was born in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan to Kate (née Rowe) and William Thom McGregor. A farming family, the McGregors immigrated to Australia in 1921 where Ruby completed her high school education in Sydney. In 1925, the family moved to the Gili Gili plantation.

A forthcoming and gentle woman, Ruby fondly reminisced about her time as a teenager at Gili Gili and enjoyed sharing her experiences with me. Despite having to save her father from an attacker as well as witnessing an instance of domestic violence, Ruby was surprisingly non-judgmental of the Papuans. In fact, she insisted that she viewed Papuans as 'just another type of people who lived differently from her'. Somewhat of an



An example of decorated bark cloth from Ruby's collection, H4-0-325A, MM, and Kate McGregor photographed a plantation worker wearing bark cloth painted with designs, EP1290, MM



armchair anthropologist in her later years, Ruby was an observant student of cultural practices and was able to discuss the subject matter of her mother's photographs in some detail. For example, she described the specific types of clothing that were assigned to various workers and was able to attribute hairstyles to particular villages.

While at Gili Gili, Ruby remained close to her family unit and lacked white peers of her age. She loved her pets, exploring her environs, experimenting with growing plants, and horseback riding. However, life at Gili Gili was hardly a care-free or idyllic tropical experience for the teenager who was required to assist her father with caring for the stock, even helping with the laborious task of cattle dipping. Likely as a result of her involvement with tending to the herds, Ruby did develop a friendship with 'Teddy', her father's Papuan hired hand, whose main job was the care of new calves. On one occasion, Teddy gifted Ruby a pig and in return, she left him a writing desk when the family returned to Canada.

Local conditions and lack of transportation restricted the family's movements. According to Ruby, white personnel were discouraged from wandering off the plantation compound for fear that their lives would be endangered. However, there were short trips to a few friends in the immediate area and likely to Samarai. On one occasion, Ruby had a tour of a rubber plantation facility.

Ruby attended several local ceremonial events with her parents. She fondly recalled spending many evenings sitting on the verandah with her mother listening to the singing and drumming emanating from the villages located around the edges of the plantation. The night sky would be lit up from all of the burning camp fires. On at least on one occasion, she witnessed a ceremony to honour a deceased man's remains. Her recounting of the event prompted Ruby to contrast Western and Papuan attitudes related to death and dying, Papuans being more accepting of death as a part of living.

Keenly interested in the local culture, the teenager traded sticks of tobacco for a number of small portable objects from labourers and their family members. Some 60 artefacts and natural history specimens, including butterflies, were transported back to Canada in 1929. The largest items were examples of indigenous clothing.

In addition to three pieces of bark cloth, there are four women's plant-dyed fibre skirts. One of these skirts was presented to Ruby's mother as a Christmas gift by local women. This gesture may have been an indigenous example of reciprocal exchange given that Kate did sew clothing for the children and some of the women. Fondly known as the little 'white woman', Ruby herself was gifted a traditional outfit including Birds of Paradise headdresses.

In addition to the skirts, Ruby donated a number of other indigenous personal items to the Manitoba Museum including two fly whisks made from cassowary feathers fastened to a wooden shaft; two fishbone sewing needles; wooden and bamboo hair combs; plaited plant fibre arm bands; fibre belts, shell armlets, and two decorative nose bones.

Ruby also collected four wooden dishes, three fibre baskets, a woven fibre band used to carry large baskets and three wooden napkin rings. A decorated wooden mortar was used for processing areca (betel) nuts. Five wooden lime sticks and three gourd lime pots are associated with the consumption of areca nuts.

Ruby's acquisition of two shell armlets is particular noteworthy since further research has revealed that these objects are similar to those, or may have, in fact, been traded through the Kula ritual exchange system. Known as *mwali*, these polished conus shell armlets are very similar to those collected by anthropologist Dr. Bronislaw Malinowski in the early 20th C. They are one of two main types of objects (the other being red shell neckpieces) involved in the Kula Ring or ritual exchange system. This ceremonial exchange tradition is well-documented and is linked to personal prestige and status. Item H4-0-312a likely had beads and other objects strung through the holes with a plant fibre twine. For a comparable reference see Plate XVI in Malinowski's publication titled *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1922.

A decorated hour-glass-shaped kundu featuring a lizard skin head was also donated, but the circumstances of acquisition were not recorded. The letters 'ABUAI' have been painted onto one side of the drum. This lettering likely indicates the surname of the maker. Three wooden napkin rings and a small carved wooden seated figure are inlaid with limestone chalk. Acquired as Indigenous-produced art objects, further research indicates that the figurines are near-identical to traditional protective figures that were produced in the Massim area.

The few natural history specimens that were donated to the Manitoba Museum include a cassowary egg, a Bird of Paradise skin, a tanned spotted *cuscus* skin, a python skin and the scutes from a Hawksbill sea turtle. Ruby collected hundreds of specimens of butterflies while she lived at Gili Gili and a few were on display in frames in her Brandon home.

Ruby's collection is a modest one when compared to the thousands of artefacts that were amassed by the various colonial agencies of the day and transported back to Western nations. In my opinion, as with children's art, artefacts that were collected by youth – in this case, an expatriate teenager, are not generally represented in museums or art galleries. For this reason, Ruby's collection of personal mementos from her time at Gili Gili offer an interesting dimension to the McGregor Family story and museum collections.\*

*I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Manitoba Museum staff who provided photographs for these articles and to Christy Henry, University Archivist, SJ McKee Archives, Brandon University for forwarding me copies of photographs and correspondence from the Rubina Miles Fonds. A note of appreciation is also owing to the hard-working staff associated with the publication of PNG KUNDU. Thank you for allowing me to share the Miles story with your readership.*



Ruby wearing gifts of a fibre skirt and Birds of Paradise feathers; she also wears woven fibre and shell armlets from her collection, EP 1289, MM

# The Skull

**PETER UECHTRITZ**

Our plantation, 'Sum Sum', is situated on a lonely stretch of the south-east coast of New Britain. Our nearest neighbours live twenty miles in one direction and thirty miles in the other. Native tracks come from their inland villages to the coast, and these with the coastal tracks are our only local means of communication.

The only means of reaching 'Sum Sum' from Rabaul is by sea. Each month an island schooner appears and brings us any visitors and the necessary provisions; picks up the plantation products and the copra and anyone going to Rabaul, etc.

From time to time some other ships arrive to wait in the bay for better weather, or to drop anchor for only a night or so, but that happens very seldom.

On one nice sunny morning in 1931 my wife Joanna (Dolly, née Parkinson) was working in our garden, while I went, as usual, to our plantation to direct the plantation labourers with their work. Some little time later, our native house servant came running in my direction, out of breath. I had already seen him when he was some distance away. At once, I became worried; had something really bad happened to our children?

'What's the reason?' I asked him when he arrived.

'Your wife told me, that you should come home very quickly, because a ship has arrived.'

I felt much relieved that nothing serious had happened. In such a place as this, one always feels and has a great responsibility for children and that burdens me all the time, 'What about the ship?' I asked my native servant.



'I don't know, I never have seen it before'. As this native servant had been living for six years on our plantation and all the usual ships are known to him, it must indeed be a new one.

'Have you seen the master?'

'Yes, he is already at the house, but I don't know him.' I gave my native servant necessary instructions and returned home. When I arrived, I was very surprised to see a senior doctor sitting in my chair for the first time. I immediately thought that his reason for coming was to check and inspect my native labourers and the native hospital. But that seemed to me to be rather unusual as such inspections are usually done by other persons of lower rank. I therefore assumed that he visited us for another reason.

Tea was served and now the doctor, who was

very well known to us as an extraordinarily kind person, explained that he was visiting the south coast to collect skulls from different tribes. He was very pleased that he had been very successful and was now on the way back to Rabaul. As well, he told me that he had stopped at 'Sum Sum' to ask if I could organise a skull from our district, because he did not have one in his collection from this tribal area.

The 'Baining', which is the name of the tribe, are very shy natives, normally living a primitive existence in the mountains and quite remote from civilisation. It is not easy to contact them. The doctor told me that, if it would be possible for me to get the Bainings to sell him a skull, he would pay any price they wanted. 'It would be a great pleasure for me to assist you,' I replied.



Peter's wife, Dolly, at Kuradui, her parents' plantation, before her marriage in 1918 (above); and 'Sum Sum' Plantation, New Britain (main)

Very pleased with this answer the doctor stood up and told me that he was now continuing his voyage to Rabaul, and that I should send him the skull as soon as possible. I suggested to him that if he could remain until the next morning, I believe I would be able to arrange this and he could take a skull with him. This was quite acceptable to him and he agreed to stay a night and be our guest.

I called for a Baining from amongst some of



my plantation labourers. His name was Amatum. I chose him because he appeared to me to be brighter than his fellow tribesmen. Amatum quickly appeared. 'Amatum,' I said, 'this master is a famous medical doctor and he wishes to collect a skull from your native tribe. With such a skull he will be able to discover the reason why you Bainings people die so often.'

I gave Amatum a short while to think about this task and asked him if he could organise one. He did not reply immediately and I waited for his answer. 'Yes, I can do that,' he finally answered.

'That's very good, but this master can't stay long, he has to return early the next morning. If you can organise the skull by then, you will receive several rolls of tobacco.' This is a much-desired possession for the natives. He appeared to be very satisfied with the prospect of receiving the tobacco and left us smiling.

With the doctor I then had a detailed discussion about the different corpse disposal methods of the natives of this area. The 'Sulkas' bury their dead in the ground under their huts. The 'Mengen' tribe wrap up parts of the corpse and hang them under the roof of their huts. Others have a special place in the middle of their village to bury them. In the northern part of New Ireland the corpse will be

painted before burning. Later their relatives wear little baskets with some fragments of the bones with them, believing this will protect them by magic.

None of these rituals is practised by the Bainings. They carry a dead person into the jungle, as we call the primeval forest here, and they finally lay the corpse down, in a sitting position, at the foot of a great tree. This corpse will then be surrounded by a small stone wall and the ceremony is over. There is no special place for a corpse to be placed. Finally, wild pigs and other animals do the rest. The doctor listened to my tales and was astonished as he had previously never heard of these corpse disposal methods.

I had thought that Amatum knew where a corpse might be located, as he had agreed relatively quickly to return with a skull. Next morning after breakfast we were sitting together on the verandah waiting hopefully for Amatum to return. Will he be able to uphold his word? I was sure that he will do so. As we waited, a short time later we saw Amatum in the distance holding something under his arm.

The doctor jumped up excitedly when Amatum arrived. He had brought a nice large skull and handed it over to him. I immediately gave Amatum the tobacco I had promised him, asking him, 'Do you know whose skull that is?'

He rose and with his finger pointing to the skull said with a wide grin, 'That is my father!' With this he left our place satisfied with his tobacco. •

The author, Peter Karl Gustav Uechtritz (1889–1947), was the son of Carl August Wilhelm and Anna Catharina Uechtritz, and the husband of Joanna (Dolly) Parkinson, daughter of Phebe Clothilde Parkinson.

Phebe was the daughter of the American Consul at Apia, Samoa and granddaughter of a Samoan chief—and the German scientist, Richard Parkinson, who she married at age sixteen.

Peter and Dolly's son was Alfred Uechtritz, and PNGAA's Max Uechtritz is the great-grandson of Phebe and Richard Parkinson.

This article was translated by K Baumann and Max Hayes and originally published in *Una Voce*, September 2005.

# CSIRO Surveys in Papua New Guinea

**CHRIS WARRILLOW**

**Ken Granger, in his three-part account of the above, described some of the trials and tribulations of providing logistic- and transport-support for a group of scientists and other professionals who spent time in remote and difficult country in a different era.**

That 1961 survey resulted in the CSIRO's *Land Research Series (LRS) No. 14* publication. It was titled 'Lands of the Wabag-Tari Area, Territory of Papua New Guinea'.

Shortly after World War II the CSIRO agreed to approaches by the Commonwealth, Western Australian and Queensland governments in regard to carrying out extensive land studies in areas of northern Australia.

Commencing in 1948 the earliest studies were undertaken in the NT, Qld and WA.

The administration of then TPNG later sought the same assistance and the Commonwealth agreed. The first land surveys were undertaken in the Buna-Kokoda area of the Northern District (now Oro Province). They lasted from 1 July to 4 October, 1953. However, the completed report, *LRS No. 10*, was not published until 1964.

It was not until the late 1960s that the RAAF had completed its comprehensive aerial photography coverage of the whole of TPNG. This then enabled the Royal Australian Survey Corp to produce the excellent 1:10000 topographical maps series.

After flying into an area, the CSIRO teams may have had some limited 4-wheel drive assistance, but most of the work was on foot and small river-craft. Today, helicopters, satellite-imagery and mobile telephone communications make such surveys easier.

The last of 39 reports by the CSIRO was published in 1977. Twelve of these reports covered much of mainland PNG and a thirteenth covered Bougainville. The last PNG LRS report was No. 37 – 'Ramu-Madang'. However, most of the initial on-the-ground work for that area was completed between 1956–58. Of the 39 reports, three were explanatory notes on maps covering the whole of PNG.

The reports varied in length from 107 to 276 pages of narrative, photographs and tables. Included separately with each report were several excellent well-referenced, multi-coloured maps.

These valuable records, references and over 50-year old baselines, are now available in electronic form on the CSIRO website and available for free download.



Family group near Tugure, 1961



**The recent history of Papua New Guinea is intimately bound up with the people who made PNG their home and, in many cases, their life's work—it is therefore fitting, but also with deep regret, that we record the death of members and friends.**

**Please send any obituaries and tributes for the next issue to the editor by 1 May 2024, the Copy Deadline for the June 2024 issue: [editor@pngaa.net](mailto:editor@pngaa.net)**

## NELSON, Kieran

**d. 7 February 2024**

More information next issue.  
<https://pngaa.org/kieran-nelson-01-november-1950-7-february-2024/>

## REGAN, John Michael

**d. 1 November 2023**

John Regan was born on 18 August 1931 at Bellingen on the Mid North Coast of NSW.

He was born into a dairying family who had a sizeable herd at Raleigh, between Bellingen and Urunga. John left any education aspirations behind on completion of primary school and joined his dad on the family farm.

It was not long before he was bitten by the aviation bug and he commenced pilot training at Coffs Harbour Airport. He trained under instructors of the Royal Newcastle Aero Club who had many training bases scattered over northern NSW at that time. After completing his private and commercial pilot licence training John moved to Queensland and became an instructor under the Chief Flying Instructor, Morrie McMullen, at Rockhampton Aero Club during 1958 and 1959.



Captain John Regan

In 1960 John moved to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG) to fly for Mandated Airlines (MAL) being based in Lae. John was assigned to the DC-3/C-47 and remained in Lae for five years. He then became Check and Training Captain at MAL's Madang base. In 1961 Ansett Australia purchased MAL and the airline was renamed Ansett MAL.

While based at Ansett MAL in Madang, John flew the DC-3/C-47, the DHC-6 Twin Otter and the DHC-4 Caribou on which he did the full evaluation for its suitability to operate in TPNG. John also flew the Fokker FK-27 Friendship whilst with Ansett MAL, which became Ansett Airlines of PNG in 1968 and later, in 1970, absorbed Papuan Airlines.

John relocated to Port Moresby in 1970 to become a Senior Captain with Ansett Airlines of PNG where he remained until November 1973 as Papua New Guinea (PNG) approached self-government.

John, along with Capt. Dick Glassey and Capt. Bill Johns of Ansett Airlines of PNG, and Capt. Larry Blackman and Capt. Garry Honour of TAA PNG, was one of the pilots in TPNG who took the option of joining Air Niugini when that airline formed. John remained with Air Niugini for ten years, flying the Boeing 707 on international routes including inaugural flights to several Asian countries.

His flying experience post-

PNG (from 1983 to 1998) included flying Airbus aircraft in Australia and overseas. In Australia, he was a captain with East West Airlines, Ansett Australia and Compass Mark1. Overseas, he flew an Airbus A300 cargo freighter from a base in Hong Kong before moving to Oman in 1991 to set up Oman Air Flight Operations.

In 1998 John returned to PNG to join its Civil Aviation Agency as a Senior Executive.

The last two years of his flying career began in 2006 when he joined Airlines of PNG, flying DHC-8 aircraft. By the time he stopped flying he was 77 years old and was possibly the oldest pilot, ever, to fly commercially in PNG. Altogether, Captain Regan spent 33 years in PNG and amassed 23,946 flying hours.

John is survived by his loyal wife, Laurel, who continues to call Newry Island, near Urunga, their family home. He had two brothers Bernie and Gerald and a sister Maureen. Another sister, Gai, predeceased John. Son Tim and two grandsons, Alex and Chris, survive him.

Capt. John Michael Regan will be remembered as a true PNG aviation legend. We *lapun* who

remain, will never forget John and his amazing contribution to airline safety in Papua New Guinea.

Rest in eternal peace, Capt. John. We all miss you tremendously.

**Garry Honour**

## WEBER, Raymond Edwin

**MBE, ML, MCS**

**d. 30 September 2023**

Born in the Barossa Valley, South Australia on 28 February 1942, Ray spent his early years on the family dairy farm at Eden Valley. After the death of his father the farm was sold and the family moved to Angaston from where Ray attended the Nuriootpa High School, graduating Dux Year 12.

Ray began in PNG as a cadet patrol officer in February 1961 and initially was posted to the Madang District. He spent much time on patrol, including on Kar Kar Island.

Following the 1963 patrol officers' long course, at ASOPA in Sydney, Ray spent 1964–65 in the Gulf District. He served at Kukipi then Kaintiba where he continued the establishment of the new government station including construction of the airstrip.



Raymond Weber

Ray related the story of applying for special leave to attend the Goroka (or Hagen) show. There being no response he walked from Kaintiba to Aseki and flew to Lae and the highlands. Returning to Kaintiba he received a radiogram informing him: 'leave application denied'.

Ray was posted to Central District in 1966. He spent most of the next four years in the Goilala Sub-District at postings including Tapini, Guari and Woitape. He often spoke of the Kunimaipa area and the priests who worked at the missions there.

In 1971 he was posted to New Ireland District. He served at Taskul and was Assistant District Commissioner, Namatanai in 1974. One of Ray's officers, Rod Owens, wrote: 'The profound impact that Ray Weber had on my life narrative is immeasurable.'



## The PNGAA Collection

This consists of archival material on PNG—photographs, documents, maps, patrol reports, books—reflecting the lives and work of those who have lived in PNG.

The PNGAA wishes to ensure these are readily available worldwide to our members, researchers or those simply interested in the rich history of Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea.

If you have items you would care to donate, or you would like to contribute towards the digitisation of items already in the collection, please contact Cheryl Marvell at [collection@pngaa.net](mailto:collection@pngaa.net) or 0438 636 132.

Ray married Martina (deceased) the love of his life in 1975. In 1976 he was posted to Kavieng as District Officer Lands. Frank Howard (the last Australian DC of New Ireland) wrote that 'Ray's patience, his listening ability and acceptance of the reasoning of parties in discussions or disputes, was reassuring to the Papua New Guineans that they were being heard.' He was a gifted negotiator and a lot of outstanding land matters were finalised during his time in Kavieng.

In 1980 the family moved to Brisbane to begin a new life. Ray was a crack shot and was often the winner in competitions in the local Clay Pigeon Club. He prepared all his own ammunition. Ray was a keen golfer and encouraged many people to play the game. His only drawback was he stood on the wrong side of the ball.

But, in 1988 he was back in PNG, recruited to work on land and community affairs for the Lihir gold project.

Ray later worked for the Ramu nickel project, 1997–2003. Next, until 2008, he was among the Huli people, working at the Porgera Gold Mine. Tim Omundsen, former Community Relations Manager, Porgera wrote: 'We have lost a great man.'

Finally, until health and then Covid 19 restrictions on travel intervened, Ray spent his final years in PNG consulting for Total on dealing with landowners in the nation's next LNG project which may start construction next year.

He became a keen lawn bowler and croquet player in recent years and was adamant that he would play in the seniors' competition in 2024.

Ray was awarded an MBE for his services and was also a Member of Logohu and Meritorious Community Services Medal recipient.

Chris Makin relates that, when he was working at Mt Kare, 'We would communicate regularly. Ray liked to catch up when we were both home, on break, in Cairns to have a quiet one.' Chris wrote, 'One could say that Ray was a great bloke but he was not a blokey person. One-of-a-kind, a gentleman and scholar, highly intelligent, a man of integrity, but modest ... A nice guy with Christian values and goodwill. Never heard him utter a swear word or speak ill of anyone. All this without being a church goer.'

Ray often expressed frustration at the attitude of international companies' lack of knowledge and respect towards the local people and their cultures. He held a strong belief that throwing money to the local people caused a lot of harm whereas honest negotiations usually resulted in general agreement. There can be no doubt that Ray's calming attitudes and knowledge saved and resolved many tension-filled situations.

Martina was also awarded PNG's Logohu Medal for exemplary services to health and community. Children Yvette and Robert were born in Kavieng and

Ursula in Brisbane. Ray worked in Brisbane before his expertise was sought in PNG and he returned. The Webers spent some time back in Port Moresby before they settled in Cairns. Ray always enjoyed and appreciated a glass of red and he has gone on his last patrol to the *haus kiap* in his beloved Barossa. R.I.P.

**Paul Simpson**

### **YOUNG, Warren d. 19 December 2023**

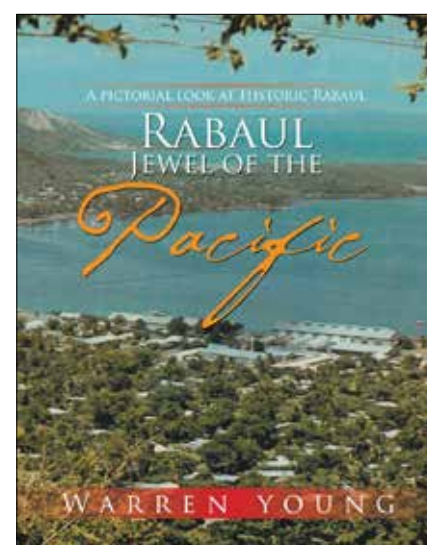
Warren Young spent his childhood in Rabaul where his father was a police officer and his mother worked at the telephone exchange.

Readers may have known Warren through his love of Rabaul and the publication of *Rabaul: Jewel of the Pacific—A Pictorial look at Historic Rabaul*.

Warren wrote several other books: about policing in PNG, Port Moresby and the German occupation of the country. He was a regular poster on Facebook about the history of Rabaul.

Warren is survived by his wife Chiharu.

**Stephen Hull**



### **Silentworld Foundation Commemorative Dinner with the Australian Prime Minister**

A commemorative dinner was held on Monday 27 November 2023 in the Aircraft Hall at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra to honour all those who died when the *Montevideo Maru* was sunk on 1 July 1942. The dinner also acknowledged the Silentworld Expedition of April 2023 which successfully located the final resting place of the men of the *Montevideo Maru*, after nearly 81 years, providing great comfort to generations of relatives.

This special evening was hosted by John and Jacqui Mullen and the Silentworld Foundation.

Special guest-of-honour was the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, acknowledging the significance of the occasion. He was greeted by John and Jacqui Mullen as well as Director of the Australian War Memorial, Matt Anderson, before spending some time mingling with guests.

Guests included dignitaries from government, the military, representatives of other countries and Australian industry, together with a representative group of descendant families. Ray Martin was the Master of Ceremonies and ensured the evening flowed beautifully.

John Mullen welcomed everyone with a thoughtful speech that highlighted his enormous compassion for all those touched by this Australian and international disaster.

In the magnificent aviation hall of the AWM, guests were privileged to watch the powerful



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (centre) with members of the Silentworld Team at the dinner

premiere of the outstanding short film by our amazing Max Uechtritz, 'Finding the *Montevideo Maru*'. Hugely poignant and emotional, and reaching into the hearts of everyone present in honouring the courage and sacrifice of the men. It also showcased the expedition which found the *Montevideo Maru* in April 2023. At over 4,100 m down, the *Montevideo Maru* is deeper than the Titanic and visiting those depths is pushing the limits of even modern technology. As well, there were endless hours of calculations and planning.

The support by Australia's Department of Defence and the Army's Unrecovered War Casualties Unit, together with Fugro, the Dutch company which uses geo-data to unlock the secrets of the earth, and an international team of voluntary researchers, whose work and vast knowledge were critical to the success, was acknowledged.

Speeches were made by the Prime Minister, Chief of Army Lt Gen Simon Stuart, John Mullen and Andrea Williams.

Later in the evening, a presentation of a dossier containing all the data and images from the expedition was handed to Matt Anderson of the Australian War Memorial and to Daryl Karp of the Australian National Maritime Museum to be preserved as a permanent record in Australian history.

Finally, medallions were presented in recognition of the event to descendants and special guests as a permanent memory. It was a tradition in the 1700s and early 1800s that on the great voyages of discovery by the major seafaring nations in Europe, a medallion would be struck to commemorate the expedition and the brave men who sailed across the oceans.

Silentworld thought that it would be nice to replicate that tradition, and so they thoughtfully considered so many of the aspects that came together in this story, and made some medallions in the same style to record and remember the *Montevideo Maru* and all those who lost their lives.

I was privileged to sit between the Prime

Minister and Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Mark Hammond, and it was especially enjoyable to join other members of the Silentworld *Montevideo Maru* Expedition team—John Mullen, Max Uechtritz, Neale Maude, Captain Roger Turner (RN Rtd) and Commodore Tim Brown (RAN retd), as well as many who had worked 'behind the scenes'.

That the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, various defence chiefs and departmental heads, and seven ambassadors wanted to be present, says to the descendants that Australia does now care.

It was an important and much-appreciated evening and a salute to the victims and their families...a wonderful evening of commemoration and celebration.

#### ANDREA WILLIAMS

**Note:** Both Max Uechtritz and Andrea Williams were privileged to be part of the five-year expedition planning and the search itself on the state-of-the-art vessel *Fugro Equator*.



Barney Cain

#### Barney Cain VX3069

**FINAL SALUTE:**  
*103-year-old digger Barney Cain, last survivor from the Fall of Rabaul, dies after honouring his fallen mates in PM dinner video. It was almost as if Barney held on to give one last final, sombre salute to lost mates.*

And what a stylish cameo send-off it was: there on a huge screen in front of the Prime Minister, Chief of Army, Chief of Navy and multiple international ambassadors at a commemorative dinner at the Australian War Memorial.

It was to be his final bow. A few hours later Barney Cain VX3069 slipped away. He was the last survivor of the first WWII attack on Australian territory—the Japanese invasion of Rabaul on 23 January 1942.

He was the last person to see alive the nearly 1,000 Australians who perished aboard the prison ship MV *Montevideo Maru* in our greatest maritime disaster.

So, who better to feature in a documentary I'd made for a special dinner for descendant families of those poor souls. An event hosted by John Mullen, the Silentworld Foundation chairman who'd led our expedition to finally locate the wreck and war grave of the ship at a depth deeper than the *Titanic* in April this year.

#### Meeting Barney Cain was a privilege

It was a privilege for cinematographer, Neale Maude, and me to meet and interview Barney in May when he still, defiantly, lived independently in his own home on the Mornington Peninsula.

And fun! A renowned wise-cracker, Barney had us in stitches at times.

'Deaf as a beetle!' ... he roared and laughed at himself repeatedly as his son, Dennis and daughter-in-law, Yvonne, relayed questions via instant text transcripts on the iPhone.

Then, we'd struggle with our emotions along with Barney when he talked about the mates who never managed to escape from Rabaul like he did when the order went out 'every man for himself'.

There were more than a few moist eyes among the 140 dinner guests as they watched Barney falter ever so slightly then sink into silence, his eyes and face momentarily a haunting kaleidoscope of grief, memories and what he saw as the sheer folly of war.

Neale and I listened in awe as Barney described his 78-day escape ordeal through jungle, over mountains and across croc-infested rivers dodging Japanese hunting them from land, sea and air. Before finally being plucked from a plantation beach by a rescue boat, Barney had suffered intense malaria, dysentery and malnutrition. His clothes and boots rotted off and giant leeches sucked his blood. His soul was shattered when he saw others die or give up, surrendering to the Japanese in the hope of food, rest and the Geneva Convention.

'We didn't have a bloody chance,' Barney said about his under-equipped, out-gunned Lark Force of 1,400 when a massive Japanese fleet (fresh from Pearl Harbour) sailed into Rabaul Harbour disgorging thousands of troops and hundreds of warplanes from aircraft carriers.



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese watches the documentary featuring Barney Cain (top); Barney Cain with Max Uechtritz (below)

As his ailments worsened during what was one of the greatest escape treks in Australian history, Barney felt he had about two weeks of life left in him.

His health was nearly a moot point when he rounded a corner near a plantation called Tol. He and his mates saw some barges, as he'd recounted previously.

Barney remembers the moment the Japanese arrived as if it was yesterday.

'There were a lot of troops there, all in these small parties, and a Major Bill Owen was organising to get everyone over to the other side of the river,' he said.

'The natives were going to ferry us across in canoes, and around the corner came these barges.

'Someone said, "They've come to rescue us," but I had a pair of binoculars, and I won't tell you what I said first, then said, "No, they're Japanese," and they let us know then. Boom, boom, boom. They started firing—I think they were mortars—and it scattered the natives, so they abandoned us, and took off in the canoes.'

Amid a hail of fire, Barney’s bunch took off into the hills. About 160 other Australian soldiers and civilians were captured that dreadful day at Tol and were brutally killed in what’s known as the Massacre of Tol and Waitavolo.

One man who’d been bayoneted 11 times and left for dead—Private Billy Cook—crawled out of the jungle to join Barney’s group in what was the most incredible of survival stories.  
Excerpt from: [https://maxmoments.blog/2023/11/29/final-salute-103-year-old-digger-barney-cain-last-survivor-from-the-fall-of-rabaul-dies-after-honouring-his-fallen-mates-in-pm-dinner-video/?fbclid=IwAR1Nq\\_1yj8RqlzNtGaSs5KeJ4Q\\_BWTZrrFnfZ8z7I8UuVMxBXZ1P1OpzoM](https://maxmoments.blog/2023/11/29/final-salute-103-year-old-digger-barney-cain-last-survivor-from-the-fall-of-rabaul-dies-after-honouring-his-fallen-mates-in-pm-dinner-video/?fbclid=IwAR1Nq_1yj8RqlzNtGaSs5KeJ4Q_BWTZrrFnfZ8z7I8UuVMxBXZ1P1OpzoM)

MAX UECHTRITZ

Special Article

Congratulations to Gayle Thwaites who has had a special article printed as the lead story in Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance Magazine, *Remembrance*, in November 2023. It was titled ‘Remembering Jock: Find Closure in the Wreckage of the MV *Montevideo Maru*’. We hope to be able to bring it to you next issue.

Anzac Day and the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Education Program

There is an excellent education program on the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru website, designed by history teachers, which can be taught in one or more lessons—in the lead up to Anzac Day, and one year after the *Montevideo Maru* was found. Please share to your local schools and encourage any support by telling your story, and please let us know which schools you are speaking with! Queries to [education@montevideo-maru.org](mailto:education@montevideo-maru.org) OR <https://montevideo-maru.org/education/>  
Patrick Bourke has advised that RSL Australia has now included the *Montevideo Maru* in its Key Commemorative Dates: <https://www.rslaustralia.org/key-commemorative-dates>



Anzac Day, Rabaul 2024

A number of people have expressed an interest in travelling to Rabaul for Anzac Day 2024.  
The visit will be a combination of Lark Force members and any others who would like to visit Rabaul/Kokopo. Are you keen to join? Let us know!  
There will be several formal events including a dusk service at the Montevideo Maru Monument on Rabaul’s Simpson Harbour in the late afternoon of Wednesday, 24 April, and traditional Anzac Day Service and Gunfire Breakfast on Thursday, 25 April.  
It is also hoped that there will be a service later that day at Bitapaka but that is to be confirmed.  
Descendants of Lark Force will be travelling to Tol Plantation to instal and unveil a story board commemorating the WWII history at Tol. The plan is to do this during a school day (likely Tuesday, 23 April) so that the students from the 2/22nd Lark Force Tol High School can also participate.  
Those already booked are travelling to Rabaul the weekend before, or on Monday 22 April and returning the following Friday and Saturday or Sunday, although a few will be staying a bit longer. There will be opportunities to see the many sites around the Gazelle Peninsula.  
Whilst it may be best for everyone to book their own airfares and accommodation, there may be an opportunity for group travel.  
Anyone interested, please keep in touch with Marg Curtis at Lark Force Association, [margcurtis@outlook.com](mailto:margcurtis@outlook.com), John Reeves at [neradaq@gmail.com](mailto:neradaq@gmail.com) or Andrea Williams at PNGAA—Rabaul & Montevideo Maru group, [admin@montevideo-maru.org](mailto:admin@montevideo-maru.org)

Memorial News welcomes your stories, photos, research, maps and memorabilia

General email: [admin@montevideo-maru.org](mailto:admin@montevideo-maru.org) (Andrea Williams)

Send stories to: [stories@montevideo-maru.org](mailto:stories@montevideo-maru.org) (Andrea Williams)

For education information email: [education@montevideo-maru.org](mailto:education@montevideo-maru.org) (Patrick Bourke)



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## PNGAA Sydney Christmas Luncheon

2 December 2023



• Kylie Adams-Collier



• Sally & Joan Stobo



• John Wilkinson, Patricia Bestic & Michael Cadden



• Steven Marvell



• Rob Coote, Rod Miller & Phil Ainsworth



• Karo Haltmeier



• Paul Griffiths



• Muruk Quilt donated by Jill Worsley



• Jeremy Dykgraaff, Carol & Doff Shultz



• John Wilkinson, Andrew Cadden, Michael & Patricia Bestic



• Jessica, Janet & Jeremy Dykgraaff



# Dinner with the King of Norway ... in the Snow

Under a domed night sky reminding us of early celestial navigators ...

Flying from a warm Australian spring to Oslo, Norway, just below the Arctic Circle, in late October 2023 meant that the Silentworld Expedition members travelling, including PNGAA members Andrea Williams and Max Uechtritz, landed in a country cloaked in snow. It was beautiful.

His Majesty King Harald V of Norway attended a special dinner on 2 November to mark the finding of the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru* and to commemorate a WWII tragedy that has indelibly linked Australia and Norway for more than eight decades.

Twenty-four Norwegian sailors from the MS *Herstein*—a ship serving the Australian Government in the lead-up to the Japanese invasion of New Guinea in 1942—were captured, and later perished, along with nearly 1,000 Australians when *Montevideo Maru* was sunk off the Philippines. A genealogist had worked for months to trace descendant families, 20 of whom were present.

Australia's Silentworld Foundation organised the event at the Oslo Sjomannsforening (Oslo Seamen's Association) in collaboration with Norway's Centre for the History of Seafarers at War at ARKIVET Peace and Human Rights Centre in Kristiansand. With its stunning, blue-domed ceiling showcasing a sky designed for celestial navigation, it was the perfect location.

The gathering included the Norwegian Minister of Defence, Bjørn Arild Gram and Australia's Ambassador to Norway, Ms Kerin Ayyalaraju.

During the dinner, there were speeches by Silentworld founder and expedition leader, John Mullen, Bjørn Arild Gram and Bjørn Tore Rosendahl, leader of Norway's Centre for the History of Seafarers at War. John Møller spoke on behalf of the families of the Norwegians who perished.

Absolute silence reigned as everyone watched, mesmerised, the premiere of a short film by acclaimed documentary producer, Max Uechtritz, titled 'Bond of History: Australia & Norway and the Tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru*'. It was a moving tribute to these brave Norwegian war sailors who had travelled so far from their homes, and to the sophisticated technology which enabled the finding of *Montevideo Maru*. Families had been isolated for the intervening 81 years and the shared evening began a heartening bond.

It was an extraordinary evening with the film, the heartfelt tributes, a special gift of a thoughtfully designed Commemorative Medal—to be treasured always—and, significantly, a gift to the Norwegian government of the final report detailing the search expedition in April 2023.

An unforgettable occasion.

**ANDREA WILLIAMS**

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1. The Royal Palace, Oslo;
  2. King Harald V of Norway (centre) & Andrea Williams (right);
  3. John Mullen, Kerin Ayyalaraju, Bjørn Arild Gram & Lauri Bambus;
  4. Max Uechtritz, Andrea Williams, Roger Turner & Michael Gooding;
  5. Silentworld *Montevideo Maru* Commemorative Medal
- Photos courtesy of Silentworld Foundation

