



JOHN GROENEWALD'S DIARY

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea Border : 28 January to 13 February 1963



JANUARY, 1963

MONDAY 28

28-337

At last we are under way and what a day it has been!! The Archimedes outboard wouldn't start and when it did gave trouble so all we could do was to walk from Kiunga.

Hes and I set out with 2 porters at 11.10 and were into the jungle right away - it is just unbelievable how awful it is to walk in the jungle. Walking through calf deep water and mud half the time and over tree roots the other half. At one spot we waded thigh deep for about 30 yds and frequently crossed log creeks over log-bridges. Fortunately it was fairly flat going all the way.

The bees were impossible - when I saw the first few I hunt them off at once, but after a while it was just impossible and I was too tired to even worry. I was also too tired to take much notice of anything around me - saw two cassowary and heard a lot of birds, one beautiful butterfly.

After six hours walking we got to a fair sized river and had a swim (our clothes were soaked with perspiration) from there it was only another 1/2 hr. to SIUKNAI and what a welcome night it was. We had no food but got some bananas and a cucumber which were very welcome.

Ross arrived one hour after us with the carriers and our gear that hadn't gone on the MAWA. The port carriers!

We are all feeling finished and if this is the way things are going to be I don't know how long I'll last.

[See January 1.]

28 JANUARY, 1963 (continued)

NEW YEAR'S DAY

~~TUESDAY~~
1-364

COMMONWEALTH OF
AUSTRALIA DAY

The first few villages we will stay at are patrolled about once a year so they have permanent rest houses for the Patrol Officers and police. These are like the village huts, on stilts and quite reasonable to live in.

Siuknai is a rather dirty village but Senomja is a bit better. These natives are meant to be reasonably civilized but to me they look rather wild making a terrific amount of noise most of the time. When carriers leave or enter a village they make a loud yodelling sound. Most of the natives seem to have the lobes of their ears stretched or split and hanging like earrings.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (28/01/63)

After considerable trouble, engine running smoothly only to find water cooling system U/S. 1100 hours when self, Surveyor and Sergeant Keme departed on foot for Siuknai village. Mr Henderson to follow with carriers and balance of patrol stores and equipment. Party slept at Siuknai.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



108-018 - Carriers arriving and starting off.
108-019 - The Carrier Line

JANUARY, 1963

TUESDAY 29

29-336

Today we continued walking - it had rained heavily during the early morning so it was a case of "water, water everywhere". The going was rougher than yesterday ankle-deep in mud or water most of the time and one 1/2 hour stretch over logs of which I slipped a few times going knee deep into mud. My feet were giving me hell as I had worn blisters on the top of every toe. We had put plenty of insect repellent on our legs and this helped to keep some of the leeches away but even so at the end of the walk there was blood all over my legs. (Nothing like yesterday though when I must have taken off at least 30 when we stopped).

Anyway after 2 hrs walking we got to the Ota Mek river only to find the Mewa hadn't arrived with our equipment. We crossed the river in canoes to the village of SEWAMORE and Ross set off down the river in a canoe in search of the Mewa.

Leo and I are waiting here and have no food but got 2 coconuts from the villagers and will get a chicken tonight. We can only hope Ross finds the Mewa because with all the bad luck we have already had not much more can go wrong.

My feet are rather sore and the rest here is most welcome. Nevertheless I must say that it is most interesting and so far I'm enjoying it.

(Continued from Tuesday, 29
January)

2-363

It is now 4 p.m. and Ross arrived about 1 hour ago with the Mewa which had lost its rudder. Anyway it looks as if our luck is changing because the very first patrol boat (out of about 15) I ordered had some biscuits for us to have with a cup of tea.

I'm getting tired and the blisters on my feet aren't making things any more pleasant either. Ross + Des are rigging an aerial so that we can call Kiunga on the radio. Will probably continue this once we've made contact.

We got hold of Kiunga - no messages.

"There is always something to annoy one here" Nigel.

This afternoon there were thousands of little bees buzzing around us (fortunately they don't sting) and the above was Des's remark. It looks as if there are either bees, mosquitoes or bees so far and we are wondering what there'll be up in the stars (as we call the mountains).

Now that I know Des + Ross a little better they both seem extra nice chaps and we should get on very well although being out in the bush for so long together we are sure to have arguments at times.

Jan. 30th.

Their method of carrying is also rather strange - having a strap over the top of their head with the load attached hanging down their back.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (29/01/63)

Moved to Semnare where Miwa arrived at 1515 hrs with balance of supplies which Mr Henderson was unable to move. En route had lost rudder. Party slept at Semnare.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



109-014 The 'Mewa' arriving at Semnaria



110-015 Women and children of Semnaria Village

JANUARY, 1963

WEDNESDAY 30

30-335

It rained throughout the night and today has been completely overcast and quite pleasant as far as weather goes.

The police have been out looking for carriers and some of them have just got back, not having had much luck - it looks as if we're going to have a lot of trouble getting enough carriers to move all our things.

We have been sitting around reading and listening to the cricket all day. I was hoping to do an Astro-pic tonight but with cloud everywhere it is hopeless.

Thank goodness we didn't have to walk today and I hope these blisters will be ok tomorrow.

The pigs in these native villages are peculiar looking animals being very flat and narrow - like ~~the~~ wild pigs. I have been eating a lot of bananas and they are very nice indeed (bought off the villagers at about 6¢ a bunch of ± 30). This evening we got a few freshwater prawns about 8 inches long from some native women and the boss kindly said I could have them to try as there aren't enough to go round. [The prawns turned out to be delicious]

A few more carriers have just arrived. These carriers get paid 1/- a day. They really must be tough as I can hardly even move myself over this country let alone carrying 30 lbs or so. They start them young too - saw a girl of about 10 carrying a load of at least 25 lbs. (See 2nd letter 4.2.63)

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (30-31/01/63)

Seventeen carriers departed for Garan – balance of party awaiting arrival of further carriers to uplift supplies and stores. So far Awins have proved slow to respond but reports indicate that thirty men should arrive this afternoon or in the morning.



110-016 A family group (Semnaria Village)

JANUARY, 1963

THURSDAY 31

31-334

Today we had a fairly easy walk of just under 4 hours. We were going over ridges most of the time and are out of the swamp country so don't walk in water or mud much. Also with the insect repellent the bees stay away and I didn't even find one on myself which makes things a lot more pleasant.

We arrived in Marthomai fairly early after passing through two other villages. In Marthomai the natives built a shower and kitchen out of our rest-house in about 2 hours. I set up to try an astro-fix but by 6 p.m. a beautiful clear day became overcast so I had no luck.

For dinner we had the usual bully beef rissoles and some Taro - a tuber something like sweet-potato (which we have had quite often) and not bad at all.

These carriers certainly do a mighty job - we have about 50 at present but will have many more once we catch up with the things set in early in January. Three of the present carriers are girls of about 17, 14, 13 and they are rather small but carry up to 35 lb loads.

So far we have been very lucky as it has never rained while we were walking - suppose there'll be plenty to come through.

Both Hes + Ross speak Motu which is used in these parts but soon we'll be in a different area. The present people are Awans but tomorrow we get into
[JAN. 31]

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



111-017 'Additions' being made to the Village Rest-House



111-020 Crossing the Alice River

FEBRUARY, 1963

FRIDAY 1

32-333

Today has been a hell of a walk again starting at 8.40 from Matkomre we got to Birinkamba at 16.00. On the walk we passed two other villages and 20 minutes out of Birinkamba we had to cross the Alice River where the Okbirin joins it. The walking was again over ridges and nice and dry but the going was fairly hard because it is up and down all the time. With a long line of carriers it isn't possible to move very fast so I am finding it a lot easier than the first day when we went very fast and also I think I'm getting a bit fitter. The blisters on my feet are still rather painful but should be o.k. in a few more days time.

The crossing of the Alice was done in a big double canoe. The river was very low and on getting to it the canoe was on the wrong side so a few of our police swam through. The river was running fairly strongly and besides is crocodile infested so we were very pleased to see them reach the other side.

On the walk today we caught our first glimpse of the Star Mountains which are still a long way off. Birinkamba is at 560 ft elevation and one can see the mountains from here too. This is the first ^{Tungun} ~~Kiunga~~ village we have come to and tomorrow we join up with the things sent in earlier this month.
Sep. 14., 15 + 16. Crossing the Alice River.

Many natives are blind, have a skin disease or something else wrong - it's really pathetic.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (1/02/65)

Carriers arrived late yesterday afternoon. Departed Semnare passing through Dande and Ipoknai to Matkomre village. Track time 4 hours. Slept at Matkomre.

FEBRUARY, 1963

SATURDAY 2

PURIFICATION

33-332

Today has been a rather easy day as we only walked from Birimbamba to Garandimok, a matter of $1\frac{1}{4}$ hrs. Going was however hard and fast being up and down a lot. I'm still rather foot-sore and have a few chafe marks on my legs caused by the gaiters.

We have caught up with all the things sent in earlier this month and now wait carriers from the north to move us further – we will probably start again tomorrow. A lot of our carriers were paid off today but 17 volunteers for the Stars remain with us.

Tried a bit of sago cooked native style today – it is tasteless and rather gooey but if I have to I'll eat it.

The two police who brought in the things earlier thought we weren't coming anymore so returned to Kiunga by a different route. This afternoon we got news that they had turned round to join us and one of them had collapsed about 3 hours from here. Des sent some carriers and the medical orderly out to go and look after him and we are hoping he'll arrive tomorrow.

Last night was overcast with a little rain and this evening it is also overcast so there is little hope of getting an astro-fix.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (2/02/63)

Departed for Birim Kamba passing through Mimingiri, Tekenai, and Mendna, thence across the Alice at the Birim Junction to Birim Kamba. Track time 5 hours – slept at Birim Kamba – 560 feet a.s.l.

FEBRUARY, 1963

4th AFTER EPIPHANY

SUNDAY 3

34-331

~~It rained heavily most of last night and this morning~~
we set off at about 9.30 crossing the Birim River just out of Garandimok by canoe. All our Ningirum carriers had arrived by this time so we now have over 100 carriers. Walking was a little wet at times but fairly easy being up and down quite a lot. We passed thro' 2 other villages and slowly the people are getting less civilized judging by their dress. The women still all wear the grass skirts as has been the case since Kiunga but there are quite a lot of men + boys without trousers and wearing almost nothing.

Today there were several lovely butterflies to be seen but one was especially beautiful – a big swallow-tail ~~being~~ bright blue ⁱⁿ colour.

This evening I did the first astro-pid in good weather and all went very well. Was able to identify one star so should get a result – it is a good feeling to have done some constructive work.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (3/02/63)

Dearted for Garan Dimok arriving only to find that Constables Kere and Karara had left for Kunga – runners sent to recall them and also runners sent to Police waiting in the Ningirrum to bring all carriers to Garan Dimok. Track time 1 ½ hrs – slept at Garan/Dimok, 440 feet a.s.l.

FEBRUARY, 1963

MONDAY 4

35-330

This has been a rather hot day and although we only did 2½ hours walking it was enough for me.

We built a cairn and cross over last night's fire and the villagers seemed very keen to do it – they probably feel proud to have a mark in their village. Last night there were crowds watching while I was staving.

Heo moved off early with the carrier line and I remained behind with Ross who had to hear a few "cases". No. 1 was an old chap who had threatened to kill the village constable and incidentally he is a born trouble-maker. He tried to run off but was caught and put in hand-cuffs and will be sent to Kiunga as soon as possible to appeal before the court there.

The next case was a fellow who had stolen another's wife – the first husband no longer wanted her but the second had to pay for the damage. Payment was settled at a medium sized pig, an axe, a bush knife and a head-dress made of sea-shells (they did not know where this originally came from). All concerned were happy at the transaction but to my mind (having seen the woman) the payment made was rather high.

Upon getting to Basakim (tonight's village) I tried some scales without much success.

We are seeing more of the Star Mttns each day and should be at the base of them in two days time.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (4/02/63)

Carriers arrived. Self with 40 carriers departed across Birrim for Tengkim, passing through Digam and Wambon en-route. Mp P.O. Henderson with 70 carriers and balance of stores arriving at 1600. Track time 4 hours. Slept at Tengkim 660 a.s.l. Surveyor takes first astrofix.



115-021 Getting ready to 'sort out' a marital dispute



115-022 Part of the 'Judgement' – a medium size pig

FEBRUARY, 1963

TUESDAY 5

36-329

Today has been one of the worst as far as I'm concerned - we did about 4½ hours walking over very hilly country going up and down some rather steep slopes. I certainly did not enjoy the walk as my feet were pretty sore and I felt like packing up but once we got to Bwakim everything was okay and we could laugh at what had passed.

On the way we got some beautiful views of the Star Atlas and we are fairly close to them now.

Last night we had soup made from the pig I mentioned used as payment for the native woman and then had roast pork which was a rather welcome change from the bully beef viasoles we've had ever since leaving Kiunga.

In spite of all the trials and tribulations we are having a lot of laughs. Has and Ross are both very interesting chaps to talk to being very intelligent and having a good sense of humour.

This afternoon I finally found the mistake made in calculations yesterday and the Tenghin fish should be o.k. It rained a lot this afternoon so that is little hope of any observing tonight.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (5/02/63)

Departed for Bwakim passing through Bikim Minipon and Hukim. Track time 2 hours. Slept at Bwakim 940 a.s.l.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



116-027 Our destination, the Star Mountains



116-027A Our destination looking NW to West New Guinea

FEBRUARY, 1963

WEDNESDAY 6

ACCESSION OF
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

37-328

These last few days our luck has certainly improved and especially as far as the weather goes. Today we did 5 hours walking much the same as yesterday, up and down. As soon as had we arrived at Kungit than it started pouring. We managed to get everything under cover before the rain fell so still have been lucky enough not to have done any walking in rain - touch wood!

My first impressions of Kungit are that it is the best village visited to date - it is situated on a river with a terrific swimming-hole which is rather pleasant. When we got here this afternoon Res, Ross and I just fell into the river clothes and all - it was glorious. A further stroke of luck was that the river came down a few hours after we'd crossed it.

Kungit is at the foot of the Star Mtns but one can't see the mtns from here as there are a few hills in the way. This is the last village regularly patrolled so from here on we are going into unknown country. We plan to use Kungit as a base for going into the first Star Mtn. pocket where we saw villages on the recent flight. We'll probably leave in 2 or 3 days time, be out approx. a month before returning to Kungit and then pushing on.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (6/02/63)

Departed for Bankim passing through Butipkawok. Track time 3 hours. Slept at Bankim 1200 a.s.l.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



117-023 Kungit Village



117-024 The Carrier Line arriving at Kungit

FEBRUARY, 1963

THURSDAY 7

38-327

Last night I managed some observations but as there were many clouds around could not identify any stars. Today I spent trying to sort out the obs. but did not have much luck but still should get a result out of it eventually. There might be a chance to do some more this evening.

It has been a rather pleasant day here and we had a few swims in the river which were rather refreshing. Ross has a boil under his arm so is not feeling very well but it is improving and we hope he'll be fit by to-morrow. This rest has been very welcome and I'm hoping my feet will have recovered by the time we start walking again.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (7/02/63)

Departed for Kumgit passing through Dorongo (1600 a.s.l.). Track time 4 ½ hours. Slept at Kumgit. Surveyor takes astrofix.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



118-024 At Kumgit – raising the ‘flag’



118-025 At Kumgit – a refreshing swim

FEBRUARY, 1963

FRIDAY 8
39-326

Today has been another day of sitting around. Most of the time I spent calculating but am still having trouble identifying the stars observed on Wednesday nights.

This afternoon there were two FAIWOMIN natives here in Kungit. They are rather wild looking characters with virtually no clothing and feathers and sticks through their noses. They told Ross (through interpreters) that there are tracks into the mountains where we're going.

There was a terrific thunderstorm here this afternoon and several times the lightning struck within a mile of us. Not much rain fell and by now it has stopped.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (8-10/02/63)

Remained at Kungit drying out rice and other supplies soaked in yesterday's driving rain. Three carrier loads lost crossing river to Kungit but party intact and well. Selected 43 carriers and paid off balance of line. Load sorted for move into the Taub Valley area. Routes from here will be via Netherlands New Guinea. The track leads East into the Arip and Alice Valleys but as we know of no route from there to the Taub, the patrol will swing West along reported trade tracks moving through the grid numeral squares.

FEBRUARY, 1963

SATURDAY 9

40-325

Another day waiting in Kunjait for the policeman to take the prisoners back to Kiunga. Still doing calculations. The weather has been bad each night and there has been no chance of doing any further work.

FEBRUARY, 1963

SUNDAY 10

SEPTUAGESIMA

41-324

More calculations so that at last I have identified 2 more stars but still a lot to do.

This sitting waiting is getting rather boring.

We got a message this afternoon that the policeman from Kiunga had reached up on the track with a sore foot so tomorrow will send the prisoners off with one of our police. At present Ross is holding a court at which the prisoner is appearing.

Tomorrow we will now definitely start moving on and I'm looking forward to start off again.

FEBRUARY, 1963

MONDAY 11

42-323

We're on the move again and today walked 3 hours from Kumgit to Kaiumgin the track was not the best and steep slopes all the time. At one spot we waded knee deep up a river for about 150 yards.

I wore new boots and expected blisters but have only one on my heel. Also I'm finding the walking a bit easier than the first week or so.

Kaiumgin is over 2200 feet and on top of a hill. The view from here all round is beautiful and one can see well into West Irian (we're only about 4 miles from the border). Unfortunately the mountains are covered completely by cloud but I hope it will be possible to take some photos tomorrow morning.

It started raining at about 14.00 and is quite cold now which is rather unusual. We're all wearing sweaters and expect to sleep in sleeping-bags tonight.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (11/02/63)

Departed from Kumgit and moved to Kaiumgin whence our route is reported North-West in the general direction of the Stars. Track time 2 hours, slept at Kaiumgin 2250 a.s.l.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



← 122-026 *Pwata, the Cook-boy*

122-028 *A jungle track*





122-029 Sometimes it's easier to follow a jungle stream



122-029 or following the course of a river

FEBRUARY, 1963

TUESDAY 12

43-322

Now the adventure has started and we have completed our first step into the unknown. From Kaiungin the track was no longer a "four lane highway" as Leo had called it thus far. It was narrow, uneven and very wet after rain all night. This morning we had quite a good view of the mountains but it was overcast and not very good for photos.

At one spot we waded knee deep for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down a beautiful limestone gorge. It was a lovely little creek with crystal clear water.

The most interesting event was the crossing of the Ok Tarim which was well up after all the rain. The current was very strong but one of the police managed to wade through (at times chest deep). They got a rope across but it was clear that even with its help the carriers would never get their loads over. We decided to build a raft but in the meantime the carriers got a tree across and in about an hour built a bridge which proved satisfactory and we all got across safely.

We did another hour walking after this and are now camped in the bush. We were very lucky as no sooner were the tents up than it started to rain and came down really hard. - Its rather dismal sitting here in the tent with rain pouring down outside.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (12/02/63)

Departed from Kaiungin and camped in bush after crossing numerous small creeks and bridging the Tarim River. Track time 5 hours. Camped at 2100 a.s.l.

Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



123-027 and 123-028

The Police 'wading' across the Ok-Tarim river at times chest deep



Part 2 – Kiunga to West New Guinea border – (28 January - 13 February)



123-029/123-030 The Ok-Tarim crossing – a bridge had to be made for the carriers



FEBRUARY, 1963

WEDNESDAY 13

44-321

Last night we had a very good sleep with the beautiful sound of heavy rain on canvas.

Today we walked about 3 hours but going was very slow as a track had to be cut most of the time. We are still on a track but it is seldom used and very much overgrown. We passed through one hamlet consisting of one hut and there was no point in staying there, so we are camping again tonight. The natives are very quick at setting up a camp and within an hour of stopping had cut a clearing and put up the 4 tents, and bed-sleeves the lot.

On the track today there were several thorny plants and I got caught a few times. Also picked up a few leeches as we've been careless lately and no longer put on repellent. Besides we are being annoyed by thousands of little bees that drive one mad crawling all over you (they're worse than flies) and then several march flies which give a rather painful bite.

The chances of doing a fix here are nil because one can hardly see any of the sky the jungle is so dense around us. I reckon we crossed the border into West Irian today and it would be interesting to have a fix here.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (13/02/63)

Departed campsite and again camped in bush after passing through the hamlet of Tundenghaitkwi. One rough bush shelter with an estimated 20 people. Track time 3 1/2 hours. Camped at 2200 a.s.l.

This concludes Part 2 of John Groenewald's description of his Star Mountains Patrol.