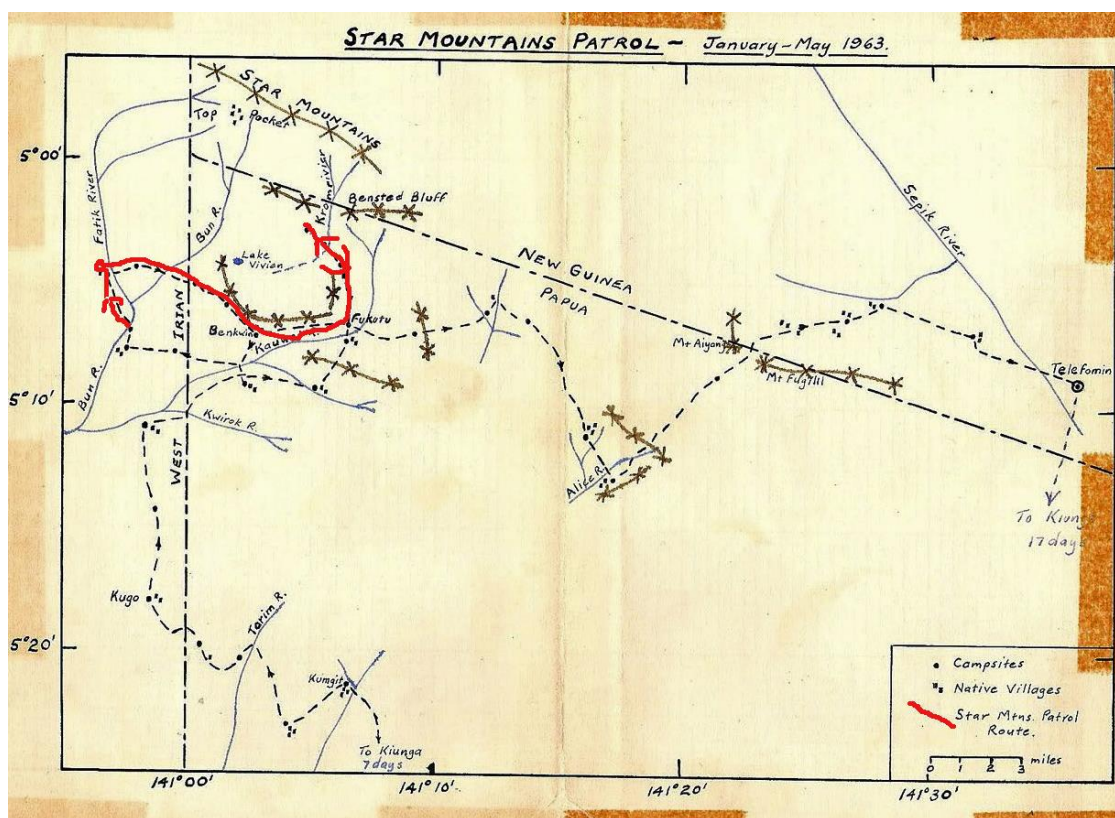




JOHN GROENEWALD'S DIARY

Part 4 – Bun River to Fukutu Drop Site 10 March to 13 April 1963



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MARCH, 1963

SUNDAY 10

2nd IN LENT

69-296

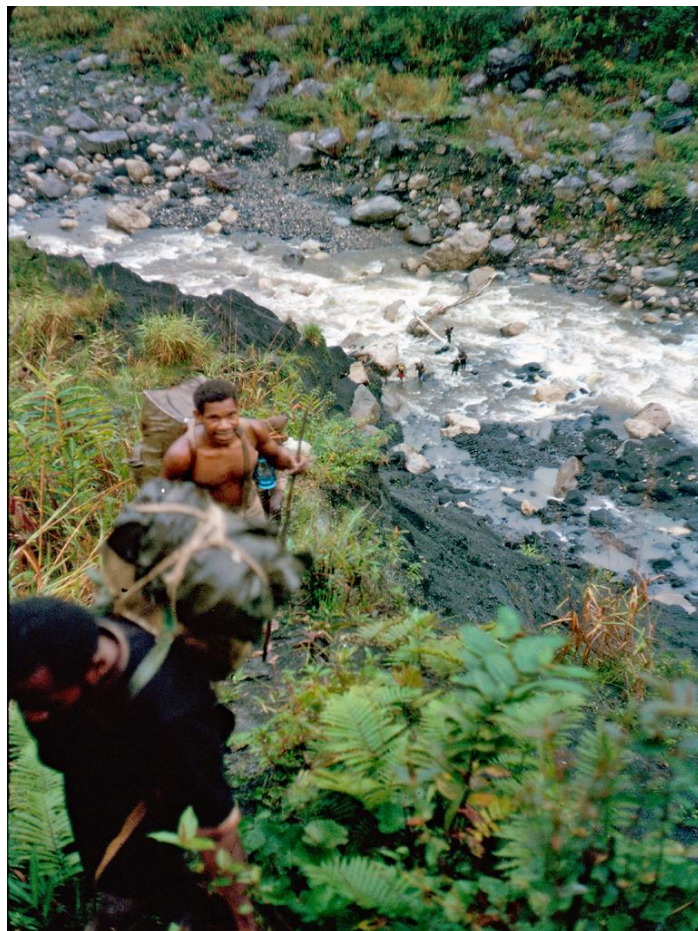
Since the medic was not feeling very well this morning Leo stayed behind with him and a few of his and will follow us as soon as possible. Ross and I did just over 4 hours of reasonably easy walking with a fairly steep climb towards the end so that we are again at 4500 ft.

We are camped near a little village and the people have just brought some food in to us. They seem real "bushies" and are very shy - I don't think they will have seen white men before. We are amongst some mighty mountains here but there is a flat area which appears to be a suitable drop-site so we'll stay here waiting for Leo and take the drop on Thursday weather permitting.

There hasn't been a night with stars visible for over a week now so I'm quite idle. As I write it is pouring outside - it never seems to stop in this place!

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (10/03/63)

Mr P.O. Henderson with Mr Surveyor Groenewald and carriers moved off to select drop site. Hamlet some six to eight hours walk further on situated on the banks of the Fatik River. Self with N.M.O. and police party remained at camp.



Boulder crossing followed by a steep climb

MARCH, 1963

LABOUR DAY (VIC.)

MONDAY 11
70-295

We are stationary again and have been sitting around most of today. This morning I went with Ross to the village to have a chat with the locals. According to them the only way we can get further north is to head further west thro' Dutch patrolled areas so it looks as if we are really stopped this time. It will be a shame to turn round now that we've come so far but as before we might head of some other way.

The people agreed to sell part of an old garden site to us for a drop-site so we have started clearing it in preparation for Thursday.

This afternoon we received news that Hlo and his party are camped not far from here so they should be with us again to-morrow.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (11/03/63)

Broke camp and moved for 3 hours along track left by Mr Henderson's party and camped in bush.



One of the locals



Groups of local people on this and following pages





MARCH, 1963

TUESDAY 12
71-294

Not much doing today but Leo is with us again and the medic is much better although still in pain. I have been writing a few letters while Ross has been clearing the drop site.

Our campsite is not very pleasant here being in the jungle and as wet as anything. There are plenty of mosquitos and sandflies about and I'm itching all over.

Leo has decided that since we've come so far we'll have a go to get at these top people by bashing thro' the jungle thus avoiding the Dutch (or Indonesian) officials.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (12/03/63)

Moved on and rejoined Messrs Henderson and Groenewald with balance of patrol at the village of Daijurbit near the Fatik River. These people have not been contacted by the Dutch before but report that the route from here via the Fatik valley again passes through villages in which remain ex-Dutch Village Officials. Patrol again blocked so will request advice from Daru. Should as one can only anticipate, we have to abandon this route, the only other alternative lies up the Bun River through trackless, uninhabited and inhospitable country. Slept at Daijurbit 4,500 a.s.l.

MARCH, 1963

WEDNESDAY 13

72-293

It just looks as if we'll never win. Today on the radio Ross was told he'd have to return to Kinga by April 11th. Last night a native policeman was murdered near there and he is one of the witnesses and has to go and give evidence at the trial. With Ross going it will mean we will be left with too few carriers so I will just have to go back to the Alice Valley and sit around for about a month till Ross returns. It really makes everything a shambles and at this rate we'll never get anywhere.

If we have to sit around for a month it is going to be very miserable - it's bad enough while one is moving but at least then one sees different things each day.

Les is going to try and get Ross out of it tomorrow but they think there is very little hope. This is going to cost thousands and lengthen the patrol still more. It is really disheartening and we're all very fed-up.

Tomorrow we expect an airdrop and I'm looking forward to getting some mail again and decent food for a change.





MARCH, 1963

THURSDAY 14

73-292

Of course with the air-drop due today the weather has been bad and the plane couldn't get in so there'll be no steak for dinner tonight. With luck the drop should come in tomorrow.

We will now all return to the Alice Valley after the drop and Ross will continue on to Kiunga while Des + I wait for a cadet patrol officer Hans Klassen. Once Hans joins us we'll come all the way back here and try to find a way to the top pocket.

If we get thro' we'll contact the people up there and then return to the Alice and link up with Ross again. Anyway it is quite likely that there'll be a change in arrangements before then.

It will be a pity losing Ross because the 3 of us get on well together and by now know each other well. All I can say is I'm pleased it is Des and not I that is in charge of this patrol.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (13 - 14/03/63)

Work on drop site. District Officer orders no further movement North West and consequently advised of our intention to attempt to force a route along Bun River. D.O. further orders that Mr Henderson, Constable Awoki and Interpreter Onvang are to return to Kiunga for Supreme Court sittings.

MARCH, 1963

FRIDAY 15
74-291

These airdrops are great morale-boosters - we had a drop today and everyone is much happier. A second drop will be coming in tomorrow. Today I received a few letters but there was no big mail bag and it will probably come tomorrow. One of the aérogrammes was from Tom and says "continued on next letter" - what that is I don't know. We also got some steak and have had a good lunch and dinner. (Actually it was as tough as hell but boy that doesn't matter!)

The pilot dropping to us today was very good. We had very little room in which to manoeuvre as we have great cliffs to the east and north of us. He came in terribly low and all the bags dropped well in the centre of the clearing.

I also received a lot of aerial photos of the area we are expecting to go into within the next 2 months and it looks pretty awful and very rough. Whether we'll get that remains to be seen - I'm quite looking forward to it.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (15/03/63)

Third drop successfully carried out with 100% recovery and conversation held with D.O. Daru. Three possible routes [for] Mr Henderson's return suggested. One via Telefomin, second via the Alice Valley, and the third by moving down our back track to Kungit. D.O. vetoes Telefomin and selects Kungit. Slept at Daijurbit.



Our Interpreter querying local people regarding possible tracks to the 'Top Pocket'

MARCH, 1963

SATURDAY 16
75-290

Today's drop went off well again and the mail bag was on it. I got a handfull of letters including Lou's continuation. These letters were actually written earlier than the ones I got yesterday. Receiving this mail makes the whole of this job worthwhile and I'm pleased to hear everyone at home is fit and well. At this time of the year I always miss home a lot and in Lou's letter he tells of the apple-yacking - wish I could be there to help. Its good to hear the peach crop was good and by the sounds of things the apples are going to be excellent.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (16/03/63)

Fourth drop in and again 100% recovery obtained. A further conversation with D.O. in which I in turn veto the Kungit track. This track has no local population worthy of mention and no food. It is of equal if not greater length than the route out via the Alice and Arip valleys where at least one has a local population and with even normal luck will be able to purchase local foods. D.O. agrees and Mr Henderson, court witnesses and carriers will therefore move to Kiunga via the above route.

MARCH, 1963

3rd IN LENT

SUNDAY 17
76-289

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Last night there was a bit of tension in our camp. The people from the village near us had all disappeared during the afternoon and for no apparent reason. With these people one never knows what they are up to and one of the possibilities was that they were going to attack us. The police and carriers were quite nervous but of course nothing happened and this morning the people were back. It turned out that they had gone off because there had been two deaths in a nearby village.

So we started walking again today and it's good to be on the move. We did not get very far however so we have a terrific amount of food to shift after these airdrops. Also it started raining at 12 and we had to pull up before the rice got wet.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (17/03/63)

Reception with Daru Kiunga U/S – no contact established. Patrol departed for Benkwin over previously non-existent track but which locals are now only too happy to show us. Patrol crossed Fatik River and camped in bush at 3,100 a.s.l. Track time 3½ hours, going very very slow, track exceptionally poor and carriers moving under very heavy loads.

MARCH, 1963

MONDAY 18

77-288

An ordinary day's walking done today, a bit tougher than usual because we did nearly 6 hours which included crossing the Bun river. This crossing was much higher upstream than the previous one and the bridge we had to build was only a small one.

Further because of the amount of food we now have and the lack of carriers Leo, Ross and I each take a load. My load is not much - probably 20-25 lbs but it certainly slows one down somewhat.

We are camped on the side of one of the most beautiful little streams I have ever seen. It is crystal clear and flows over a series of limestone steps and has some lovely pools in it. Needless to say we had a glorious bath in one of them this afternoon.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (18/03/63)

Departed camp site and after crossing the Bun River where, once again, bridging was needed. Camped in bush at 4,100 a.s.l. Track time 5 hours.

MARCH, 1963

TUESDAY 19
78-287

We are a day further on our way back and did not get very far because it was raining this morning and we only made a late start. Going was pretty tough and especially so carrying a load. We are camped at 5100 ft in an old garden site and it is fairly cold and raining again. From the track today we could see the gorge of the Ok Ben up which we hope to get to the top about when we come back. The country looks rougher than anything we have been in to date and it is doubtful whether we'll get through.

This afternoon Ross cooked a "dampet" which turned out to be pretty heavy and doughy but nevertheless it went down well and didn't last long.

**Bun
River
Gorge**



Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (19/03/63)

Camp site to camp site, track time 3 hours. Camped at 5,100 a.s.l.

MARCH, 1963

WEDNESDAY 20

79-286

Today we had 1½ hours walking to Benkwin so have completed another huge circle. We have now decided on the following plan. Res will go back the way we have just come with a small party to have a look at the Ok Bun gorge to see if we can get through it. Ross and I will go on to our first airdrop site where he'll leave me and push on to Kiunga while I stay and receive a few airdrops. Then I'll wait there till Res gets back and Ran joins us. I hope this will all work out well.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (20/03/63)

Departed camp site and arrived at Benkwin hamlet where contact was established with Kiunga and D.O. Slept at Benkwin.

MARCH, 1963

THURSDAY 21

80-285

Last night 2 more carriers deserted and as we are down to a bare minimum we have decided to change arrangements again and Res and I will go together to our first drop site and wait there for Ran.

Today has been a miserable day – just a typical Cape Town winters day with a fine drizzle most of the time and fairly cold. We have been sitting here to arrange things and move again tomorrow.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (21/03/63)

Awaiting cargo, resting carriers at Benkwin. Last night two more Kativa carriers ran off and future Officers would do well to ignore them as a source of carriers. So far, the Awins and Ningiaruma remain staunch.

MARCH, 1963

FRIDAY 22
81-284

Another miserable day with no sunshine and a bit of drizzle. Ross left this morning with about 12 carriers and when we'll see him again is hard to say. Des and I have repacked some things this afternoon but other than that there has been nothing worth noting.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (22/03/63)

Patrol departs for Fukutu where Mr Groenewald and self will remain pending another drop and Mr Henderson will continue on en-route for Kiunga. The patrol has only managed to average five miles per day to date and this average will fall to an estimated mile a day on the climb up the Bun River to the top pocket. The terrain though so far not particularly high, is rugged and hard on both police and carriers, all of whom are suffering now from sore feet, minor cuts and abrasions. General health and morale remain remarkably good when one considers the conditions and the paucity of food so far encountered. Bulk of the patrol camped at 6,000 feet on the lower ridges of the bluffs overlooking Fukutu whilst Mr Henderson pushed on to the old drop site.

To summarise to date, we have so far contacted the following groups :-

1. Tauwanams. These people are situated in the lower Kauwol Valley and the Haro Valley and estimates at some 50 persons.
2. Bundits. These people live in the upper Kauwol Valley and are estimated at between 90 and 100 people.
3. Benkwins. These are to be found in the middle and lower Kauwol stretching though to the Bun with a total estimated population of some 100 to 120.
4. Fatikmin These people live in the Fatik River Valley of Netherlands N.G. and are estimated at some 350 plus.

Of these, the group immediately around our second drop site would number 100 and the patrol actually sighted 60 to 70 of them. Contact had not been initial in all cases as far as the Tauwanams as we were forestalled here by an earlier Dutch patrol. However the Bundit, Benkwin and Fatikmin people had not enjoyed a previous visit by Europeans. Mr C.P.O. Classen has been instructed by radio to move up via the Alice, Arip track bringing in replacement carriers and police and to rendezvous with myself at Fukutu. In the interim, the patrol will be stood down to enable all to obtain a well-earned rest pending his arrival.

NB: There are no diary entries in the Patrol Report covering period 23 – 24 March 1963.

MARCH, 1963

SATURDAY 23
82-283

This walk from Benkwim to our first dropsite is one we have done before and at that time I described it as about the worst to date and today it was no better. The track is awful and as muddy and boggy as any we have encountered. There being no hurry we now camped halfway back to the dropsite so did only 3 hours walking.

MARCH, 1963

4th IN LENT
SUNDAY 24
83-282

Today we covered the rest of the distance to the dropite in just over 2 hours. Again a bloody awful walk, ankle-deep in mud most of the time.

Just as we approached the old campsite the lessona appeared through some rather thick cloud. We were only expecting it tomorrow, but nevertheless it was a welcome sight and dropped 6 bags of meat and rice to us. It was really disappointing not getting any mail or personal things.

The flowers are coming out in the jungle now and today I saw several very pretty orchids and other small flowers.

MARCH, 1963

ANNUNCIATION LADY DAY

MONDAY 25
84-281

back at our old camp we are very comfortably set up and it has been a lovely day. As we expect to be here about 2 weeks and I have only a few maps to draw and field diaries to complete it is going to be a bit of a holiday. Most of today Des and I spent on the "sundech" outside our tent reading and doing a bit of planning for the future.

Today on the radio we were told that funds are low and we won't be able to receive airdrops as often as we hoped. This means goodbye to mail and any form of decent food - we'll just have to eat the rice and tinned meat the police and carriers get. It even looks as if part of the patrol might be left off and we could find ourselves home much sooner than expected. By Wednesday we should have more details.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (25/03/63)

Two parties despatched to investigate possible passes to the South West and North West of Fukutu over Benkwin and Bensted Bluffs respectively.

NB: There are no Patrol diary entries covering the period 26 – 31 March 1963.

MARCH, 1963

TUESDAY 26

85-280

Now it is just a matter of sitting around and there is very little of interest going on. Today was a nice day and again we baked in the sun. I spent most of the afternoon sewing a few handkerchiefs into bags to keep the beads we use as trade, in. It was a very slow business and I'm simply no good at sewing.

MARCH, 1963

WEDNESDAY 27

86-279

Another fairly pleasant day with very little happening although this waiting around with nothing to do is getting boring. Fortunately we have a pile of paperbacks and I'm getting thro' them at about one a day and also spent quite a bit of today getting my diary up to date.

MARCH, 1963

THURSDAY 28

87-278

This has been one of the most miserable days we've had. We woke up to find ourselves completely clouded in with visibility about 50 yds. or less. The temperature stayed at 60°F all day and the cloud never lifted.

To make things worse our food situation is shocking at present. We have no bully left and had the last of our porridge this morning so wouldn't know what we'll be eating to-morrow.



Pitcher plant

MARCH, 1963

FRIDAY 29

88-277

Hike yesterday today has been foggy all day and even worse than yesterday since it has been windy and raining at times. This is really boring and miserable and have spent most of these two days in my sleeping bag as it has been too cold to go outside the tent.

This morning our corporal, 2 pliers and 9 carriers set off to try and find a route to the top pocket. From the aerial photographs I found what looked like a possible way thro' and he will be investigating that.

Today's meals consisted of a tin of fruit for breakfast; a few "fried flour patties" (we're out of baking powder) with butter at lunch; a tin of "boymeat" (curried) with a packet of Rebo Statoes and some pumpkin for supper. (The pumpkin we got from the locals). The "boymeat" is the meat we give the pliers and carriers and is pretty awful stuff. It looks as if we'll be living on "boy's meat" and rice for the rest of the patrol and it is definitely not a cheerful prospect.

MARCH, 1963

SATURDAY 30

89-276

Another pretty miserable day but a bit better than the last two and at least we could get out of the tent for a few hours. Staying in one place like this there is not much to write down. Today we did without breakfast and again had "jairy cakes" for lunch but the locals brought in a fair amount of taro so that should fill us tonight. They also brought one cooked taro and I have had a slice of it - it is not too bad to eat as long as one doesn't think about where it was cooked or who has handled it. Our own cooks are forever handing us spoons, forks etc by holding them at the wrong end and before giving us our taro usually blow them after they're seared, so there is very little that would put me off. As Leo said if I hadn't died from some disease by now I should last out the patrol.

After today's radio sched. Leo has decided that we'll try to move north by ferrying i.e. carry as much as possible ^{each day} and then return for what we left behind the next day and so on. Whether H.Q. will approve and whether the carriers will last I don't know. Quite honestly this patrol is so disorganised by now ~~and~~ that I'm getting rather cheered off and unless things improve I'd gladly go back to Australia.

MARCH, 1963

PASSION SUNDAY

SUNDAY 31
90-275

The weather today was a great improvement on these last few days and we spent several hours tanning on the "deck." It was really pleasant to have some sun and warm again for a change. These past few days the temperature stayed round the 60° mark and the minimum was about 56°F and I never realised that at such temps. it would be so cold in the tropics.

Today a few of our carriers walked to Benhwin to pick up the things we had left behind there.



Remote campsite

APRIL, 1963

MONDAY 1

91-274

A pleasant day here and it was possible to spend several hours in the sun.

Four of the corporals' party returned this afternoon (one of them had cut his foot badly with an axe). It looks as if he is finding a way through so far ^{which} we will probably be able to follow later.

We expect a drop round about Thursday and have now decided to move north then so it will just be Des, myself, and Splice and about 25 carriers. It seems quite a good arrangement and is certainly better than waiting another 2 weeks for Han to join us here. In the meantime Han will move into the Alice valley and start looking for an airstrip site there, until such time as we join him in about 5 weeks time (we hope).

This is ^{very} unhealthy country as far as ants and scratches go as they usually become infected and take weeks to heal. I have a few sores on my legs but this rest has enabled them to heal. One of our interpreters has the biggest boil I have ever seen (about the size of a clenched fist) and must be having hell. Des is sending him over to the Alice valley so that he won't have to walk all the way up north with us.

As usual it has been raining every night and there hasn't been a clear night since we arrived here - not that it matters 'cause I got an astrofix the first time we were here.

Today the locals suddenly decided on face paint as trade and we got quite a heap of tars. Before it has always been beads but just like sheep and when one decides on something all the others follow them.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (1/04/63)

Benkwin Bluff party returned to camp to report no passes discovered. Party under Corporal Beroro will remain out in its attempt to establish crossing over lower part of Bensted Bluff.

NB: There are no Patrol diary entries covering the period 2 – 7 April 1963.

APRIL, 1963

TUESDAY 2

92-273

This has been a glorious day and just perfect for sunbathing. The maximum temp. was 86°F and I could hate to think how hot it would get if there should be a perfectly clear day as today there were light clouds over the sun most of the time. It is an awfully lazy existence this and I feel quite guilty being paid for doing nothing but anyway that is beyond my control.

It rained fairly heavily all last night and is now clouding over so the rain is probably not far off.

I did a small amount of work today taking angles to some of the highest mountains around here which we have named as there are very few of them named at present. We have Bensted Bluff (±11,600 ft), Mount Hazluck (8,800 ft); mt. Cleland (7,900 ft) and Mount Jan (7,500 ft).

APRIL, 1963

WEDNESDAY 3

93-272

Another nice morning although it was overcast by afternoon. Not much happened today. Ross has reached Han and on the radio told us that he has had a fairly rough walk and all the carriers with him are on their last legs. We also heard that the Supreme court sitting will now only be on April 25th which means that we could have gone to the top yocket before Ross left us and have been there by now. Its all most infuriating.

We expect a drop tomorrow and I hope there'll be some mail. This evening its not raining which could quite easily mean tomorrow will be worse but if all goes well we should be moving northwards on Friday.

APRIL, 1963

THURSDAY 4

94-271

Needless to say today was completely overcast all day and there was no chance of a drop. One just cant in in this country.

APRIL, 1963

FRIDAY 5
95-270

Everything is going wrong again. Today was a perfect day so far as weather goes with hardly a cloud in the sky but the pilot couldn't find us. We heard a plane in the distance but never saw a thing, so his navigation couldn't have been much good. This means goodbye to any frozen steak that might have been on board 'cause they will probably have had to eat it before it went off. Anyway there'll be another attempt to-morrow.

The corporal and party returned today much the worse for wear. They seem to have found a way thro' for us so once the drop comes in we'll be able to move for the top pocket. Evidently they ran into some beastly cold weather - cold enough to make their hands + feet numb, so it looks as if we're in for quite a hard time.



Remote Village

APRIL, 1963

SATURDAY 6

96-269

Well now we've had everything! Today the plane came in early in the morning and again we only heard them in the far distance and they turned back because of bad weather. Round about noon we heard them again but they disappeared almost immediately even though the weather was quite good. This afternoon on the radio we heard that they had to turn back because their fuel ran out and evidently only had 2 galls. left when they got back to Kinga! This pilot must be a real clot as his navigation seems very good and running out of fuel is about the end. Hope I won't ever have to fly with him.

That means we still have no food - all Des + I have left is a few packets of soup, 1 tin asparagus, 1 tin peaches, 1 very small tin baked beans, 1 very small tin sausages. We have divided it to last till Monday night but if the drop hasn't come by then we are lost.

APRIL, 1963

PALM SUNDAY

SUNDAY 7

97-268

Things are at an all time low as far as I'm concerned. Yesterday I wasn't feeling very good and today hasn't been much better - don't know if it is the lack of food or just the monotony that is getting me down. I have gone off food and can't face rice, lass or tea and feel rather weak. Lets hope things will be right once this drop comes and we are moving again. Hea is also getting cheered off and all we seem to be able to talk about is food.

There was no attempt made to get a drop in today but they'll probably try again tomorrow and if they don't succeed then we'll probably all be out of our minds by the time they do drop us anything. It is really an awful position to be in and I am sick and tired of Papua, but there is probably another 3 months to go so that won't help.

Today a fairly big twin engined plane flew over us twice. Don't know what it was - possibly an Indonesian recce plane or a commercial line.

A further 4 carriers deserted last night so we are now down to 19 carriers.

APRIL, 1963

MONDAY 8

98-267

With the drop coming in today the complexion of things has changed completely in our camp. This pilot is either mad or a dare-devil as he was dropping from about 2001 30 feet - I have never seen a plane fly so low - it was quite frightening.

We got in quite a bit of food but have to eat most of it by tomorrow as we don't have carriers to shift anything other than bare essentials so within a few days we'll be back on bogy meat and rice. Anyway we've been eating like horses all day and in fact I have had too much and am feeling uncomfortable - it's certainly wonderful to have a full belly again.

Milk was also very welcome again but I feel quite ashamed to admit it came second to the frozen steak.

Tomorrow we are on our way again and it will be wonderful to do something constructive for a change. It was a nice break here but it was getting awfully boring after the first few days.

A news item on the ABC Papua-N.G. news about us described the country in which we are as "a geographic hell". Ross who is back in Hearn must have been responsible for this and he certainly isn't that wrong there.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (8/04/63)

Air drop in after failures on Friday and Saturday and closure due to weather on Thursday. Corporal Beroro returned with his party on the 5th to report having succeeded in crossing Bensted Bluff. Party lost considerable weight, all extremely footsore, two carriers suffering from axe and bush knife cuts, one to left foot, the second to the right hand. The patrol will move off tomorrow with the assistance of local Bundit people and in the absence of four more Ningirums who absconded on Saturday night, bringing our total of absconding carriers to 16. Our present line strength consists of 19 rather tired men. Mr Henderson reported on Kiunga on Sunday, whilst Mr Classen is still moving to the Upper Alice area. Mr Classen instructed by radio to commence phase 3 of the patrol, namely to investigate possible station and strip sites in that area. Morale has considerably improved with food, blankets and the promise of getting underway once more after three weeks of hanging around in indecision.

APRIL, 1963

TUESDAY 9
99-266

Its good to be moving again but its been one of the toughest days we've had and I am dead-dog tired. With only 24 carriers left Bes and I had to shoulder packs and for the first time I carried a full pack (about 30 lbs). We did about 3 hours walking by which time the carriers, Bes and especially myself were just at the end of our tether and could get no further. We climbed 1,500 feet and are now camped at exactly 7,000 feet and it is rather cold.

Since we have eaten some of the rice being carried the carriers will take over our packs and the going should be a lot easier. The track we are on at present is quite a good one (as far as these tracks around here go) and we are hoping it will last and possibly go all the way to the top pocket. The locals round Fukutu denied all knowledge of any tracks leading in this direction - they just can't be trusted and seem to tell lies for no apparent reason.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (9/04/63)

Departed from Fukutu with four locals assisting as carriers, the remaining 12 who were all too eager and anxious yesterday, went home last night. Camped in bush at 7,000 a.s.l. Track time 5 1/2 hours.

APRIL, 1963

WEDNESDAY 10

100-265

Cold and miserable with an aching and chafed back and
 so tired they couldn't carry me any further. Mats
 and I feel at the moment - it is 13.30, we are at
 8,100ft. and the temperature is 56°F. Today we walked
 12 hours and going was a lot rougher than yesterday - the
 "back" deteriorated rapidly and most of the time we were
 lumbering over a tangle of fallen branches and trees. We
 are no longer in the dense jungle but in moss forest
 - all the trees are covered by mass of grass and look
 dead alive.

While I was writing the above Des was on the radio and
 has just come back furious. The District Officer in Koro
 has told him that there is no guarantee of an airdrop once
 we get to the top pocket and with that left Des with
 the decision whether we should carry on or not. With the
 amount of food we can carry this has forced Des to withdraw
 and is in my opinion extremely low of the D.O. At present Des
 is still fuming but will try to discuss things with the D.O. in
 the morning so that we can go on. After these last 2 days
 we are getting so close to the top pocket that it would
 be most disappointing to turn back. If we do go on the
 whole job up here is a waste of time as far as I'm
 concerned and the most interesting part of the patrol
 will have gone by the board.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (10/04/63)

Move on an upwards towards Beroro Pass and again camped in the bush. As the patrol had been in low cloud and moss forest all day, efforts to raise Daru failed but contact established by relaying through Kiunga. D.O worried in relation to carrier reliability and the fact that airline pilots are not anxious to drop supplies into the top pocket. After discussions with him I decided to abandon phase 2 of the patrol, that is contact with that group of people living in the vicinity of Mt Capella. D.O. informed that prior to turning back, the patrol will cross Beroro Pass in an endeavour to establish, or otherwise the feasibility of our proposed route into these people. Camp broken and moved to new campsite 8,100 a.s.l. Track time 5 hours

APRIL, 1963

THURSDAY 11

MAUNDY THURSDAY

101-264

After much discussion Des and I decided to push on another day and after seeing how we ^{proceeded} ~~did~~ to decide whether it was worthwhile going on or not. Well unfortunately today was a hell of a day and the going was incredibly bad - it is just impossible to describe the walking we were doing. Several of us went for falls and Des had one particularly nasty fall off a log.

A lot of the time we were crawling on hands and knees to get up slopes and at one stage did about 200 yds wading up an icy cold stream and again had to crawl several times to get under fallen logs. We climbed 1,000 feet in 1 1/2 hours crossing Beroro Pass (our name) at 9,100 then we came down a creek at a hill of an angle to 8,700 where we are now camped on the banks of the Krom River (our name).

Now that we have got here it is obvious that through this awful country we can't reach the top pocket and get back without an airdrop. This means we have to turn back so tomorrow we start the long road back.

At least Des and I won't have to carry our own yacks now that a fair amount of rice has been eaten so the return should be somewhat easier. Another reason for turning back is that our carriers are ^{knocked} ~~knocked~~ ^{knocked} ~~knocked~~.

Last night was pretty cold and even with one blanket and my sleeping bag it was cool. Minimum temperature was 48° F.

Going over the pass the vegetation was quite unusual with stunted trees (very sparse) and covered by moss and grass.

Saw several beautiful flowers today but unfortunately they were in awkward spots so have no photos of them.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (11/04/63)

All efforts to contact Daru or Kiunga futile. Camp broken and Patrol crossed Beroro Pass at 9,200 a.s.l. and again camped in bush on the banks of the Krom River at 8,700 a.s.l. Track time 5 1/2 hours. Carriers exhausted suffering from cold and height.



Up and Up



Rough going



Tired out



The 'Turn Around' point

APRIL, 1963

GOOD FRIDAY

FRIDAY 12
102-263

Last night being the highest we have yet camped was also the coldest and the temperature got down to 44°F. It did not rain during the night and this morning the thrombolite which had quite a lot of water in it yesterday was absolutely dry. This thrombolite couldn't be more unlike the one at home - besides being in the most godforsaken country I have ever seen (there aren't any natives living there), it goes underground at several places and being in limestone country.

The trek back started today and even without a pack it was hell and in all honesty I must say that in this climate (the temp. hasn't been over 66°F for 4 days now) and under these walking conditions, I am pleased in a way that we are going back. Our carriers are all hopeless and complaining all the time and even I and I have been knocked around by these last few days.

We will probably move eastwards now and go to Teleponia and from there down to Kuinga through the Murray and Palmel valleys where we should see some interesting people. This all depends on what the D.O. has to say once we make radio contact after Easter. [What a place this is to spend Easter!]

O-H. Back to Fukutu.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (12/04/63)

With light party and Mr Surveyor Groenewald, moved up Krom river and along a small tributary to its headwaters, thence West along the base of Ross Bluff to the watershed. Obtained view through glasses of a lake to our South West and westwards to the edge of what we took to be the Eastern ridge of the Bun River. No altimeters were carried but as we have climbed steadily all day and are now camped about 3 hours from the rest of our party and 2 hours back from the watershed, we estimate our height at between 9,000 and 9,500 a.s.l. Track time 7 1/2 hours.



Moss Forest (1 & 2)



APRIL, 1963

SATURDAY 13

EASTER EVEN

103-262

Here we are back at Fukutu after 4½ hours solid walking during which time we came down 2,600 ft. Fortunately Leo and I weren't carrying packs but even so it was pretty rough going. It is beautiful to be back in warm surroundings again after these last few days. To-morrow we start going east to the Alice valley and thence to Telefomin which we should reach about a fortnight from now. We'll probably spend a few days there and then go back to Kiunga taking about 4 weeks.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (13/04/63)

Returned to camp where I decided that the physical and mental condition of the patrol carriers made it extremely unwise, if not foolhardy, for our party to proceed any further westwards. At 6:30 this morning, the temperature was 42 o F. Accordingly, camp was broken and the patrol moved back over Beroro Pass en route for the Alice valley.

To summarise:-

1. There is no population in the North west corner of Papua and the land is incapable of supporting any form of such.
2. The nearest population lies some five air miles from last night's camp and will probably be 8 to 10 miles by foot taking some 8 to 10 days and well into the Sepik District.
3. With the colder weather approaching and the fact that from last night's camp, one would spend at least 3 to 4 days at heights above 9,000 feet prior to reaching the Bun [River headwaters] our party is not equipped to meet [such] climatic exigencies. The total time involved in reaching these people and returning to our present camp site would be about 3 to 4 weeks. I do not feel that my patrol personnel in general and in particular, the carriers, would survive this period of time.
4. Should, at a later date it be deemed necessary that another patrol follows this route, careful planning and proper equipping will be essential particularly if lowland carriers are used which course of action I do not recommend should we wish to avoid carrier fatalities.



*Bensted Bluff
from
the
Moss Forest*

*Main Range
From
The
Moss Forest*



**This concludes Part 4 of John Groenewald's description
of his Star Mountains Patrol.**