

PNG **Kundu**

JUNE 2025



**Papua New Guinea Association of Australia
Celebrating Papua New Guinea's 50 Years
of Independence 1975-2025**



PNG Kundu

JUNE 2025

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Front Cover Feature:

Originally from South Africa, the Bird of Paradise flower (*Strelitzia reginae*) is named for the resemblance of its flowers to the Raggiana Bird of Paradise—the national bird of Papua New Guinea—with the bird's wings, representing the ability to soar and lead to newfound freedom and self-discovery.
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**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.**

PNGAA 74th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—27 April 2025

A Note from the President

ANDREA WILLIAMS

We are privileged to have this wonderful Association filled with energy 74 years after it was founded. The AGM on Sunday, 27 April 2025 highlighted the unique connections, the stories and experiences we share, and I am delighted to continue being part of the executive team and returning to this role this year.

This year we farewell some long serving and much valued voluntary committee members, and warmly welcome new ones—please see page 5. We thank them all, most sincerely.

PNGAA continues to have a wide network which nurtures our PNG-Australian community both here, in the Pacific, and internationally. Over the years many others have come to us for assistance, and we have willingly helped, and continue to do so ... however, we also need to recognise, focus on, strengthen and showcase our assets.

Our journal, *PNG Kundu*, and its predecessor *Una Voce*, keep us in touch with what's happening now but also hold 74 years of reflections, going back much further; both websites—PNGAA and Rabaul & Montevideo Maru hold extraordinary stories; PNGAA's books and videos contribute culturally and socially.

PNGAA's Collection of documents and artefacts needs a display centre and the PNGAA Scholarship holders need funding

to ensure talented students who need support can achieve dreams.

PNGAA volunteers have achieved much. However, volunteers to assist with admin, website, stories, events, PNGAA Collection and projects are always needed. Please email admin@pngaa.net.

Collaborating, and engaging assistance from others to ensure our historically strong connections, the work of past generations and our continuing place in the Pacific remains a respected and valued part of future generations, are important.

We need to build our membership and, as mentioned, our voluntary organisation needs people with all kinds of skills, so please find a way to contribute or offer to help. Remote work is not new now!

This year is special—the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea independence. Australia has many reasons to celebrate taking a country, PNG, to a peaceful



Andrea Williams



Raising the new PNG Flag at Port Moresby on Independence Day, 16 September 1975

independence. Despite work in developing the country and then having it devastated through war, Australia turned around and started building again.

The achievements in the time frame are often overlooked but should not be. Students in our education systems, in

both Australia and PNG, need our stories to understand their backyard, and to build on the achievements of those who have laid the path.

Whilst there is disappointment that a lack of knowledge together with an election year appears to take much government focus and funding away from what is a significant event for Australia, a golden anniversary, PNGAA events this year will celebrate it.

We encourage all members to host or engage in celebrations acknowledging PNG's 50th anniversary. The Bilas Exhibition planned by the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, commencing in September, will be well worth a visit. Keep an eye on our journal, on our website and social media for events.

An Australian Pacific Cultural and Community Centre located in Australia could highlight

Australia's role with PNG independence, honour both historic and contemporary Pacific lives, including PNGAA's rich stories, display the PNGAA Collection, and share and network the diverse cultures and heritage of Australia and the Pacific. This PNGAA project needs wide support from members to help achieve this. We all look forward to the year ahead.

2025 Annual General Meeting

PNGAA's 74th AGM was a successful and happy day enjoyed by 50 people in North Sydney. We were delighted to have the PNG High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE, as our guest of honour. Mr and Mrs Kali drove from Canberra, so their attendance was much appreciated. Also attending were



His Excellency and Emeritus Professor Ken McKinnon AO the PNG Consul General Ponabe Yuwa, Consul Keith Kawapuro and Linda Babao who mingled with attendees.

Attendees commented as to how much they enjoyed the speeches from Max Uechtritz and His Excellency, who later wrote: 'It was a real pleasure to address your wonderful group yesterday'. Mr Kali was also thrilled to meet up with Emeritus Professor Ken McKinnon AO, who had signed his school Leaving Certificate. The PNGAA wishes to thank Ken for another generous donation to the Association. Now 94 years young, he's renewed his membership, taking it to a further three years.

There were many aspects which added to the day's success—the travellers who came from far and wide in Australia ... this was greatly appreciated and, pleasingly, there was a delicious morning tea for everyone on arrival as they escaped the rain. Committee members—Kylee Andersen, Christine Leonard and Frazer Harry kindly flew in from Perth, Brisbane and

Albury respectively! It makes a huge difference when committees can meet face to face as well as with the wider membership.

Kylee stepped into the breach in the last couple of days due to a certain accident from yours truly—huge thanks Kylee for all the help! Sara Turner brought bunches of homegrown bay leaves in a generous basket to offer guests as a gift of welcome before acting as MC and keeping the day flowing. We also thank Sara for offering to be our Events Co-ordinator this year.

Kylie Adams-Collier delighted attendees with her beautiful acapella singing of the Australian and PNG National Anthems, and taking many of these photos.

Ross Johnson put together an interesting display of independence-related memorabilia and posters that told the story around independence. Ross was on the Select Committee for Constitutional Development and has long assisted the PNGAA committee particularly as a former treasurer and membership officer. Setting off the displays was a row of PNG Provincial flags, adding colour



Mrs Kali and Max Uechtritz, PNGAA Past President

and reference to PNG's independence story.

The High Commissioner provided an update on the progress of the Kiap Memorial, and members heard a couple of fascinating overviews from authors Alan Pierce and Jane Rybarz about their soon-to-be published books.

Thanks also go to Robin Mead for reminding us that this unique Association and its network stand on the shoulders of those who went before; great men and women who helped progress PNG to independence, and who continued to keep a shared spirit of hearts and minds. We remember them! Great seeing Robin in his Talair tie too!

Special appreciation goes to the tremendous PNGAA Management Committee, and extended helpers who pitched in to make the AGM such a successful day. There's always a lot of thought, collaboration and preparation from so many to ensure a smooth day—thank you Max Uechtritz, Kylee Andersen, Christine Leonard, Jane Rybarz, Steven Gagau, Sara Turner, Frazer Harry, Phil Ainsworth, Ross Johnson, Paul Munro and Beverley Melrose—and to those unable to attend but who have generously given significant and endless hours to this Association: Murrough Benson, Roy Ranney, Cheryl Marvell, Claire van Bakel, Chris Warrillow and Belinda Macartney.

ANDREA WILLIAMS
PNGAA President

Bilong Papua New Guinea Reflecting on 50 Years of Independence

To mark the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence, Bilong Papua New Guinea showcases the National Gallery of Australia's remarkable collection of art from PNG across various media, including sculptures, prints, bark cloths and *bilums*.

The exhibition celebrates Papua New Guinea's diverse artistic expressions, examining the impact of colonisation and the evolution of national identity through artists' perspectives post-independence.

Organised by Crispin Howarth (Curator, Pacific Art), this display delves into themes of cultural continuity and change. It explores the emergence of contemporary artistic practices that depart from traditional modes, as well as examining political contexts, the introduction of new technologies and the impact of Christianity on ancestral spiritual beliefs and *kastom*.



'Independence Celebration I, 1975'
by Mathias Kauage

Collection Display: September 2025–June 2026
Level 2, Gallery 21, National Gallery of Australia, Parkes Place East, Parkes, Canberra
Open 10 am–5 pm—Free admission

PNGAA looks forward to showcasing this exhibition in the September 2025 issue of *PNG KUNDU*!

See more details at <https://nga.gov.au/exhibitions/bilong-papua-new-guinea/>

Outgoing Committee Members

The PNGAA wishes to thank and acknowledge some long-standing members who stood down from the committee at the April AGM after volunteering tirelessly across multiple roles.

They are Murrough Benson, Secretary for three years and Treasurer for six years, Cheryl Marvell, PNGAA Archivist and Collections Officer for seven years and Roy Ranney, who has been the Membership Officer for 12 years and Website Administrator for at least a decade.

• MURROUGH BENSON

Murrough first went to PNG in February 1966 as a *didiman* with DASE, being posted to the Highlands before moving on to the Gulf District. His experience as a Rural Officer with the PNG Development Bank, a job that took Murrough all over PNG, stood him in good stead for his future volunteer roles with the PNGAA.

Having joined the PNGAA in March 2007, in January 2014 Murrough took up a general support role to the committee whilst not actually being a committee member. The tasks Murrough took on included collecting the mail and distributing it to committee members, fulfilling orders for books, DVDs and other items and maintaining spreadsheets of payments arriving

by post. Cheques accounted for almost two-thirds of payments initially. Murrough's spreadsheets were passed on to the Treasurer, but they also enabled an update of the membership database. So Murrough and Roy have worked closely together for more than a decade.

In May 2016 Murrough joined the PNGAA committee as Secretary and held this role for three years whilst still handling the general support tasks. In April 2019 he took on the role of Treasurer, still handling general support, but gradually he received more support with the book orders. Murrough reflected on how electronic funds transfers (EFT) and card payments have increased significantly since 2014 whilst cheques have similarly declined. In 2024 cheques accounted for 19 percent of incoming payments, and cards (mostly submitted by members through the website portal) accounted for 62 percent. EFT payments accounted for 19 percent.

Although Murrough stood down as Treasurer at the April AGM, he continues in the role as proofreader for the PNGAA journal and we can vouch for his skill and experience in this regard. Thank you, Murrough!



Murrough Benson

• CHERYL MARVELL

Cheryl took on the role of PNGAA Archivist/Collections Officer seven years ago. Fortunately for the Association, Cheryl brought professional expertise to her role, having worked in museums preserving archival material. The PNGAA collection holds a special value to the Association, apart from a comprehensive book collection, reflecting the memories, hopes and dreams of many members. A highlight for Cheryl were the conversations with member donors and learning about their lives in PNG and/or the lives of their family.

Cheryl took the view that the PNGAA Collection is a treasure trove worthy of respect and preservation. She felt the role taught her many things about PNG. In Cheryl's own words, she added,



Cheryl Marvell



2025 Annual General Meeting

'I was fortunate to have Robin Hodgson (Leahy) to help me with the artefacts—she had an amazing eye and knowledge; the irony of attending her memorial in late March 2025 was not lost on me. We leave the role together. I couldn't have imagined doing it without her special friendship and artefact guidance. A great loss for the PNGAA.'

Seven years is a great innings. Thank you, Cheryl, for your contribution.

• ROY RANNEY

Roy joined the PNGAA in 2012 and, in 2013, took on the role of Membership Officer from Nick Booth. Around this time, a team of volunteers met every quarter at Harry West's retirement complex in Chatswood to put labels on envelopes and insert printed journals into envelopes. Roy joined in on this activity. With the passing of Harry West, the venue changed to the Chatswood Bowling Club. Murrough and Roy managed these 'Label and Pack' working bees for several years in Chatswood until the printing, labelling and packing functions were contracted to



Roy Ranney

the Lismore City Printery in northern NSW. However, these Chatswood working bees were so successful as a social networking activity that they continue today even though there is no longer any work required.

Sometime around 2014 the PNGAA developed a new website that offered significant new opportunities for presenting information for the Association, including the publishing of a digital magazine. The PNGAA needed volunteers to maintain the website, and in the early days several volunteers took turns working on it. This entailed a lot of trial and error figuring out what worked best until Roy became more closely involved

in the website's development and management, an important asset to the Association that has grown substantially in volume and functionality.

Whilst Roy has no family connections to PNG, he worked there for seven years and was charmed by the people and culture of Pacific islanders. This was his primary motivation for involvement with the PNGAA. Roy has resigned from the committee and has indicated that he wants to stand down as Membership Officer and Website Administrator; but being the committed individual that he is, he has agreed to 'hold the fort' until others take a turn to offer their services.

So, members, please consider offering your time in one of these or any of the vacant roles that have been regularly highlighted:

• **Archivist and Collections Officer**

• **Membership Officer**

• **Website Administrator**

Without volunteers taking turns in such roles, your Association will struggle to continue.

Cairns Regional Gallery VIPs Association and the Australian American Association Inc. Cairns.

Jane also worked as Chief Financial Officer of Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation, who reunite members of the Stolen Generation, and is Financial Controller of the



Jane Rybarz

private members' Australian Club. Jane was an honorary consultant with the Arts Law Centre of Australia and in 1995 she won the inaugural Cairns Business Woman of the Year Encouragement Award and a North Queensland Radio Marketing award.

As the current Head of Finance at the Ettalong Diggers RSL Club, Jane enjoys being involved in the local NSW Central Coast community. She is also a board member of Australian Women in Music as its honorary treasurer.

In keeping with Jane's background and interest in PNG, she is a co-author with her mother, Beverley, of *The District Commissioner*, a biography of David Milbourne Marsh OBE. The book, expected to be published by August 2025, explores David's nation-building work in Papua New Guinea from 1940 to 1975.

• JOHN REEVES

John's journey with the PNG Association of Australia began with a profound connection to Papua New Guinea's history,

specifically during the 2014 Commemoration of the Battle of Bitia Paka in East New Britain. This was when John rediscovered his grandfather's role as a member of the ANMEF in 1914 stationed around Namanula.

Most of John's working life was spent either in civil construction or as a works manager for local governments in the Gulf country of Queensland or the Snowy Mountains region of NSW.

Whilst in the Gulf, John served with the Army Reserve as Patrol Commander with the 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment. From 2020, for four years, John ran his own consulting business.

John's academic journey culminated in a Master of Research at Macquarie University. His thesis was on the evacuation from Rabaul in 1941—a testament to his commitment to preserving the history of the New Guinea



John Reeves

Islands, a mission inspired by the late Gideon Kakabin.

Having travelled to Rabaul many times for Anzac Days and other commemorations, John became aware of the lack of understanding that many Australians have about PNG and New Britain in particular. This lack of knowledge, John believes, often leads to misconceptions and oversights about the rich history and culture of these regions.

John has been instrumental in organising annual Christmas lunches for PNGAA members and friends in Canberra, as well as annual commemorative luncheons for the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society.

• FRAZER HARRY

Frazer's relationship with Papua New Guinea harks back to his childhood and his parents' connections with the country. Bill Harry, Frazer's father, was a member of the 2/22 Battalion and was based in Rabaul when the Japanese landed in 1942.

Bill went on to live and work in PNG for a period. Ruth Harry, Frazer's mother, taught at Malabunga High School just out of Rabaul in the 1960s. While most of Frazer's childhood was spent living in Melbourne, the family regularly returned to PNG for holidays, Rabaul in particular.

In the 2000s Frazer became involved with the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society and consequently the PNGAA.

He also linked up with Kori Chan and Alan Manning

New PNGAA Committee Members

• JANE RYBARZ

PNGAA Treasurer

The PNGAA congratulates Jane Rybarz on her successful nomination as the Association's Treasurer following the April AGM.

Jane was born in Port Moresby and is the daughter of PNG road and bridge builder Stan Rybarz and author Beverley Rybarz.

After leaving private practice as a Chartered Accountant and CPA, Jane worked in senior finance roles in film, television and music. She has served on the Boards of Aurora Community Television Ltd, Women in Film and Television Association of NSW, Film & Television Association (FNQ),



Frazer with his PNG mama, Rabbonie Voi Voi, in Kokopo, 2024 (Rabbonie was at Malabunga with Frazer's mother, Ruth)

(two 'Rabaulites') of South Sea Horizons, setting up the Lark Force Trek which followed the general route taken by many men of the 2/22 Btn over the Baining Mountains on the Gazelle Peninsula and through to the South Coast of East New Britain.

Frazer accepted a position in PNG with Pacific Industries in 2014 as Regional Sales and Marketing Manager for the Islands Region. Based in Kokopo, Frazer found this to be a wonderful experience in terms of forming new friendships and lasting connections in the area.

On returning to Australia, Fazer and family (wife Leah and children Sarah and Ryan) settled in Albury/Wodonga on the Victorian NSW border.

They return to PNG and Rabaul on occasion, the most recent trip being April 2024 with other members of the 2/22 Battalion Association to unveil a 'storyboard' at Tol, alongside the Memorial Cairn for those who lost their lives there in 1942.

Welcome Jane, John and Frazer to the PNGAA team!

Address to the 2025 PNGAA AGM by the PNG High Commissioner to Australia, His Excellency John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE

Let me begin by acknowledging the Cammeraygal People, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered. My people and I pay our respect to your Elders, past and present.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea, I sincerely acknowledge the important role that the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc. continues to play in strengthening the people-to-people links between our two beautiful nations through acknowledging and respecting our joint history and in promoting social interaction between a broad network of organisations and people.

Thank you for the honour of being your guest today to commemorate and celebrate with you all another significant milestone, marking the 74th Annual General Meeting of this important association.

There is this old adage—You can choose your friends but you cannot choose your neighbours. That is so very true of PNG and Australia, for we are neighbours stuck together at the hips geographically and have no choice but to coexist peacefully!

Therefore, both countries place significant value on our bilateral relationship. For PNG, this is the single most important one because it has its roots in our shared colonial and

military history, apart from our geographical proximity that has enabled the relationship to remain resilient and robust over the last 49 years of PNG's political independence.

Australia was only a few years old as a Federation when it was entrusted with the responsibility of taking on PNG from Britain. From there, the relationship evolved from a master/servant relationship, overt aid dependence to an equal partnership with significant improvements in respective domestic and external operating environments.

The battles on Kokoda developed so many important bonds built through blood, sweat and tears, which led to changes in attitudes and policies towards PNG and its people, leading to the birth of a nation from the rubble of the Kokoda campaign.

Those hard-earned bonds have evolved to take a more focused stance on building an economic and strategic partnership through trade and investment links, security cooperation, and strengthening institutional and people-to-people links. This reflects the close relations between Australia and PNG based on mutual respect and understanding.

Both countries are committed to maintaining a peaceful region and are therefore focused on security cooperation that will

create strategic trust that underlies all aspects of socio-economic, trade and investment, while development assistance plays more of a catalyst role in certain strategic areas.

Security cooperation is not only about securing our borders, it's about protecting and securing our respective sovereignties and about protecting and securing our core values in democracy—freedom of speech, individual rights and liberties against the authoritarian regimes of the world who venture to subjugate our freedoms to their central control.

PNG will also continue to work closely with Australia on combating issues of human trafficking and other transnational crimes at both the regional and international fronts. Other areas on these fronts include addressing the issue of climate change through the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and other renowned regional and sub-regional blocs, as well as through participation at international forums like the Commonwealth of Nations; the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN and the United Nations, among others.

On 16 September this year, PNG will celebrate the attainment of its 50th Independence Anniversary. On that day 50 years ago, the Australian flag was peacefully lowered, NOT TORN DOWN AND BURNT as in other developing nations around that time, to mark the beginnings



His Excellency John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE and his wife, Mrs Vavinenama Vere Kali

of the birth of a nation. On that day we raised our own flag and took our place among the sovereign nations of the world. Today, we stand proudly as a nation that has persevered, evolved and defined our identity on the global stage.

It is a day to remember with gratitude the visionaries and patriots who led our country to independence, the early missionaries, *kiaps* and teachers who brought peace among the warring tribes and who brought development to our rural people. The journey they began was not easy, and the path since has been filled with challenges and triumphs with the undying and tireless efforts of our people.

I want to express my most sincere thanks to you, the PNGAA, for maintaining the connections and the beautiful memories of our forebears, some of whose descendants sit among us today. I believe many of you are descendants of these early Australian warriors, missionaries, teachers, *kiaps* and administrators, and some are still alive today.

From our humble beginnings as a young democracy filled with dreams, we have grown into a proud, diverse, and resilient country. We have embraced our immense cultural diversity and heritage, which makes Papua New Guinea one of the most unique and vibrant countries in the world.

Our diversity, with over 800 different languages and distinct cultures, remains our greatest strength in developing tolerance and resilience and forging our identity as a united nation in diversity.

As we approach our 50th anniversary, it is time to look to the future with hope and purpose. We are a young nation, and our potential is immense. In the coming years, we will focus on several key areas to strengthen our foundation and ensure that Papua New Guinea is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

I would like to once again thank the PNG Association of Australia Inc. for inviting me and my spouse to this auspicious occasion. I am confident and look forward to supporting the good work the Association is currently doing, especially by providing the link between Australia and Papua New Guinea.



Help with Grant Writing

Much has been achieved in the last 12 months, and our hardworking Secretary, Kylee Andersen, in collaboration with Andrea Williams, the PNGAA's President, has been and is still working on the Association receiving deductible gift recipients (DGR) status from the Australian Taxation Office. Such status will apply when members make donations to the Association. These applications and other similar initiatives take up a lot of time.

Meanwhile, there are opportunities for which the Association can apply such as the Volunteer Grant we submitted in December 2024 towards a couple

of laptops to assist committee members who live in different states so they have up-to-date equipment to function properly as a hybrid remote office.

Grant writing is not an ongoing task reflecting a lot of commitment but on top of other tasks the committee is already doing, it mounts up.

Would you be willing to lend some time towards grant writing? Some skills and tasks include the ability to review funders' guidelines relevant to the grants being advertised, writing a compelling argument that aligns with the Association's needs and the funder's goals and objectives, as well as good computer skills to put a proposal together.

If you fit the bill, please contact Kylee Andersen, who is waiting for your call!



PNGAA Scholarship Program Update

Euthanneshia Meibo is one of the student recipients of the program who moved into year 11 at Vanimo Secondary School. Euthanneshia was so excited about the opportunity that she wrote a letter with accompanying photos taken by her dad.

Following is an excerpt from Euthanneshia's letter, dated late February 2025:

My name is Euthanneshia Meibo, I'm 17 years old. I'm from Anguganak in Nuku in West Sepik Province. I last attended Anguganak Junior High School and was selected to do my grade 11 at Green River Secondary School, which is near Vanimo, but it takes me some hours to travel from Vanimo



Euthanneshia in her school uniform

to the school. [We believe there were difficulties travelling to Green River, resulting in Euthanneshia being subsequently accepted at Vanimo Secondary School.]

I just attended class in week two on Wednesday. When entering the school gate, I was a bit shy because I was new to that school ... as time passed, every student in the same class knew me already. The way that they greeted me and talked to me just made me feel comfortable...

I am very pleased to be part of Vanimo Secondary School and it's a pleasure to have new subject teachers. And I would like to take a science course but it depends on my marks for term one. I am so thankful for the sponsorship that you have invested in me and the others. I have registered using the school fee receipt of K1960. It is an opportunity for me to be part of the sponsorship. I will do my best academically to maintain it.

Thank you to God for providing this opportunity.

Glenda Giles, our scholarship facilitator, explained that most school principals use *WhatsApp*. Glenda also communicates with scholarship recipients, albeit through their parents, by email or on *WhatsApp*.

In late March or early April,

If anyone is travelling to PNG (no specific timeline), especially Wewak and or Vanimo, it would be wonderful if they could take some copies of the PNG Kundu to leave with the schools participating in the Scholarships Program.

It is best to liaise on this with Kylee Andersen, PNGAA Secretary.

Glenda was running teacher training for elementary teachers in Sandaun at Vanimo, after which she was to travel to Nuku, then Oksapmin and Aitape. Enclosed are transcript excerpts of letters from Wulai Augustine and Raily Aliawani—two students attending Green River Secondary School. It's interesting to note all three students are doing science subjects.

Augustine's letter follows:

*Hello Ms Glenda
I am Wulai Augustine currently doing Gr. 11 at Green River Christian Secondary School West Sepik PNG. I really appreciate ... this opportunity*



Euthanneshia setting off to Vanimo Secondary School—both photos taken by her father

and your acceptance [sic] sponsor which is really helping me by paying my school fees since last year. Here is my short story.

I am in a boarding school that is mentioned above. I usually follow a normal school routine. At 6.00 to 6.30 am we have morning charge (grass cutting). Then we go for a bath and have breakfast by 7.00 am. Assembly starts at 8.00 am outdoors (Mon. Wed. & Fri). Normal lessons begin at 8.30 am to 1.00 pm. We have a one-hour break (lunch) and continue periods 7 and 8 in the afternoon from 2.00 pm to 3.20 pm. After that we have afternoon charges, either playing or cutting grass... Study starts at 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm and by 10.00 pm it is sleeping time.

My interest or what I am thinking to be in the future...is to be a doctor ...This is what is in my mind that makes me try my best ...to do well in my assignments in order to meet my future goals.

My favourite sport in school is soccer...May the Good Lord bless you and your family.

Raily Aliawani's letter:

*Hello Miss Glenda,
I am Raily Aliawani who wants to thank you for taking me as a sponsored student. I am very pleased to have such an opportunity ... I am happy that I attend Green River Secondary School for my next two grades—11 and 12. I happily attend every school activities [sic], both indoor and outdoor.*

I am interested to be a doctor in the future so I decided to take science subjects.

PNGAA New Members

The committee welcomes the following new members: Robyn Arrowsmith, Keith Clarke, Rosita Henry, Sir John Kaputin CMG, Jeffrey Kite, Anna McCall, Melody Ann Pollard, Gillian Righi, Ronald Sandell, Bronwyn Scott and Edward Wolfers.



Editorial

Christine Leonard
editor@pngaa.net

The year is racing on at a pace and the committee has kept busy, not least with the Annual General Meeting in April, held in Sydney. Being a Queenslander, it was my first time to attend. The presentation by invited guest, His Excellency Mr John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE, High Commissioner for PNG, was deeply moving and equally eloquent, to quote Robin Mead.

Another enjoyable aspect of being at an AGM is meeting members, some of whom I have previously communicated with, such as David Campbell-Williams, a recent proofreader for the journal. David and I share a connection with Bougainville which gives us a regular talking point.

Two days before the AGM, the Association's incoming president, Andrea Williams, had the misfortune of breaking her wrist, but in her indomitable style, she was there, along with other committee members, ensuring the proceedings flowed.

With this being the 50th anniversary year for PNG, many organisations and community groups associated with PNG in Australia are planning events to celebrate.

On 26 March, I attended the Australia PNG Association's AGM in Brisbane, where PNGAA member, Major General

Lest We Forget

On Anzac Day, 25 April 2025, Papua New Guinea commemorated 110 years of ANZAC courage—a legacy that helped lay the foundation for the free and independent nation we celebrate this year—50 years strong. Dawn Services were held in Port Moresby, Rabaul, Madang and Lae, to reflect and remember the sacrifices that shaped our shared history.





Major General Emeritus Professor John Pearn AO, GCStJ, RFD

Emeritus Professor John Pearn AO, GCStJ, RFD, was the guest speaker. At the time of John's retirement from active service in 2000, he held the rank of Major General and Surgeon General to the Australian Defence Force. One of John's topics that stayed with me was about the Aitape Tsunami in 1998. The aerial footage really brought home the scale of devastation.

It was also lovely to see Professor Robin Cooke AM, OAM, OBE—a life member of the APNGA as well as a member of the PNGAA. The newly elected APNGA Vice President, Clare Akauma, represented Papua New Guinea in the 2020 National Women's Rugby XV's squad, the Cassowaries. Clare also played in PNG's National Women's Rugby 7s squad, the Palais, in 2019. When Clare isn't playing rugby she wears

her agronomist hat, working to create more opportunities for PNG agricultural ambassadors.

The March 2025 issue of *PNG KUNDU* contained a tribute to Emeritus Professor Michael Alpers on the back cover. Unfortunately, some of the information was inaccurate but has been addressed by the corrigendum by Deborah Lehmann AO, MBBS, MSc, which is published on our website.

The issue also contained a vale for Neville Howcroft OBE, who passed away in November 2024. Readers may be interested to know that Neville has been honoured posthumously with a newly described orchid species named after him: *Dendrobium howcroftii*, of section *calyptrichilus*, found growing in the Eastern Highlands Province in PNG.



Dendrobium howcroftii

Paul Ormerod and Kurt Metzger published an article in the German Orchid Society's newsletter on the discovery, and have a post about it and Neville on *Facebook*. Search for 'Orchids of Kurt' on *Facebook* for links to the full story.

Following Deryck Thompson's article in the *Una Voce* of June 2018, Deryck and Greg Knight collaborated, researched and produced a comprehensive database of all expatriates known to have been buried in Wau Cemetery in colonial and pre-independence times. The cemetery also includes several hundred post-independence graves of Wau locals.

The names of those identified will be uploaded to the PNGAA website in the near future, if not already done by the time this issue goes to print. These documents can be sourced under the Discovery Centre tab. Go to the PNGAA Library and the member-only e-documents.

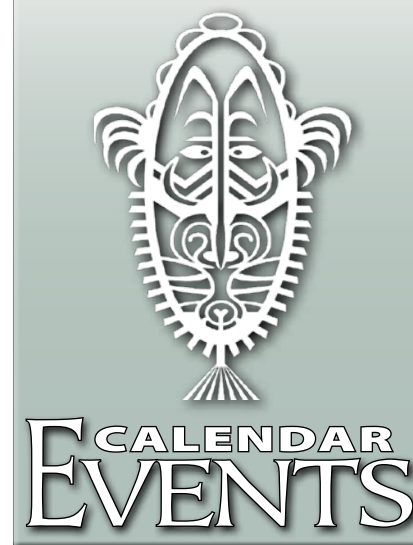
There are two more issues to come in this 50th anniversary year. If you find yourself reflecting on this important milestone for Papua New Guinea or a particular event and are of a mind to submit an article for the journal, I welcome your contribution.

Tenk yu tru olgeta



PNGAA 50th Anniversary Celebrations

If your group is organising a special event to celebrate the anniversary, please send the details in time for promotion in the September issue, by the Copy Deadline of **18 July 2025**, to ensure they are included.



Reports of functions, reunions and ceremonies held throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea, and listings of upcoming meetings and events of interest for PNGAA members. 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 18 July 2025, the Copy Deadline for the next issue: editor@pngaa.net

Celebrating PNG's 50th Anniversary of Independence

BRISBANE PNGAA Annual Lunch Saturday, 9 August 2025

Golden Jubilee celebrations of 50 years of Papua New Guinea's independence will be held in the Function Room of the Ship Inn, South Bank.

The event program will include artist, Grim Jordan (*below*), who was commissioned to design an artwork logo on the K50 note marking the 50th Anniversary of the Bank of Papua New Guinea.

Apart from the usual camaraderie, you will certainly want to hear how his name came about! This occasion promises opportunities to mingle with friends old and new. You won't want to miss it.

Time: Registration starts at 11.30 am. Lunch 12 midday–3 pm

Venue: Level One, Ship Inn, South Bank.

Payment: \$57 per person for a two-course sit-down lunch required at the time of booking. Drinks on consumption.



RSVP: Monday, 21 July ESSENTIAL. Please note any dietary requirements when booking.

Please book your attendance via the PNGAA website Events page by completing the online form with your details, including prepayment. For enquiries, phone Belinda Macartney on 0411 037 377.

SYDNEY Nicholas Hoare: Reporting PNG's Independence

**State Library of NSW
Online Event—11 am to 12 pm
Tuesday, 2 September 2025
Free—Registrations required**

Ahead of Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of nationhood, Dr Nicholas Hoare looks back at the country's independence through the NSW State Library's Stuart Inder collection.

Stuart Inder had a legendary reputation in the Pacific as editor and publisher of *Pacific Islands Monthly*. He was a well-known PNGAA member, regularly attending events and assisting with *Una Voce* (former name of PNGAA's quarterly journal) over many years to 2013. Stuart was the editor of *Tales of Papua New Guinea*, the book published by the ROAPNG prior to the association's name change to Papua New Guinea Association of Australia.

Dr Nicholas Hoare takes us



Stuart Inder MBE

back to 16 September 1975, the day Papua New Guinea gained its independence from Australia. In this talk, Nicholas captures the feeling of the day and its significance 50 years on through the eyes of Stuart Inder, who was reporting from Port Moresby that day, and his papers, now held in the Library, offer a unique window on Australia's Pacific history.

Dr Nicholas Hoare is a lecturer and Pacific History Research Fellow at the Australian National University. In addition to working on a history of the

Pacific Islands Monthly magazine, he is collaborating with colleagues in revitalising the *Papua New Guinea Dictionary of Biography*. He was the Library's David Scott Mitchell Memorial Fellow in 2024.

Register your attendance at:
<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/events/nicholas-hoare-reporting-papua-new-guineas-independence>

CAIRNS AHC Exhibition Cairns Regional Council's Mulgrave Gallery, September 2025

The Australian High Commission Papua New Guinea is celebrating with several cultural activities, and is collaborating with Cairns Regional Council's Mulgrave Gallery to bring together PNG and Australian artists for a special exhibition, *The Invisible Line: Stories, Legends and Connections*,

celebrating the deep ties between our people, which will open in Cairns in September 2025.

Four PNG-based artists and four Australia-based artists will meet in Port Moresby for a series of workshops and art camps in preparation for the exhibition, which will highlight the ancestral and continued connections between PNG and Australia through art and stories.

For more information:
Mulgrave Gallery, 51 Esplanade,
Telephone: 07 4032 6660
E: mulgravegallery@cairns.qld.gov.au



Participants in the Australian High Commission's exhibition



Papua New Guinea will celebrate its independence from Australia on 16 September 2025 and there will be special events throughout Australia commemorating the 50th Anniversary

The South Pacific Memories Group

The South Pacific Memories Group was formed in Brisbane in early 2007 by Jim and Joan Burton. Jim thought it would be a great idea for expatriates to come together, to share memories of time spent in the Pacific Islands.

The first meeting was held at Mt Ommaney Library with 12 attendees. In January 2009 monthly meetings chaired by Jim were moved to the Toowong Library before ill

health intervened and Ian Lockley took the helm. Over the years attendees have enjoyed guest speakers sharing their memories and experiences of times in PNG, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu.

The group, which is all about friendships, fun and keeping in contact, now meets every second month on the first Friday of that month at Toowong Library. We normally have up to 24 attendees. The next meeting is

scheduled for Friday, 1 August 2025.

If you are interested in joining our group please contact Mrs Keitha Brown:
E: keithab105@bigpond.com



April 2024 meeting (Keitha Brown)



Featuring letters to the editor along with opinions of interest, memories and enquiries from those who require assistance with their research or finding someone from the past.

Also included are book and exhibition reviews about Papua New Guinea, and items of interest to members.

Please send your contributions to the editor by 18 July 2025, the Copy Deadline for the next issue:
editor@pngaa.net

Help Wanted

Does anyone have knowledge of or the contact details for Mr Denholm, who was headmaster at Goroka Primary in the mid-seventies?

If so, please contact Dave Lornie at email postbuka@gmail.com and/or Andrea Williams on mobile: 0409 031 889 / Email: coordinator@pngaa.net

Much appreciated.

**DAVE LORNIE/
ANDREA WILLIAMS**

Call Out from *The Guardian*

Melbourne-based journalist Prianka Srinivasan, attached to *The Guardian*, is working on a special feature to mark the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence, reflecting on the legacy of that moment and the people who witnessed it firsthand.

Prianka is reaching out to PNGAA members who were in Papua New Guinea around the time of independence in 1975.

She is particularly interested in speaking with Australians who lived or worked in PNG at the time and can offer personal insight into that historic transition.

If you would like to share your recollections with Prianka, please contact her via email at prianka@prianka.site or by mobile at 0410 012 457.

A Memory of Sir Julius Chan

The article on the Late Sir Julius Chan in the recent *PNG KUNDU*



reminded me of when I first went to PNG in 1961 as a Cadet Patrol Officer. We were housed in the old Qantas Mess at Konedobu. I took a photo (above) of some of the other CPOs which included a young Julius Chan at right, which might be of interest to PNGAA members.

PETER WORSLEY

Research Help

I am researching my grandmother, Amy Lumley (Melville, Hicks) who lived on Woodlark Island, Samarai and Teava Village or Tillage, from 1899 to 1950. I believe that a Chief Touawala presented her with his hereditary armband in gratitude for something she did for him. Grandma donated it to the Port Moresby Museum.

I would like to get a photo of the armband, if possible, and any information on Grandma that is available.

I am also looking for information on the murder of a Mr James Penny, which happened sometime between 1900 and 1910. I have searched Trove but can't find anything.

I would appreciate any help that is available. Thanking you.

**MELODY POLLARD
(E) melannpoll@gmail.com**



**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.**

National Identity Cards

In January 2025, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape directed that all PNG citizens be registered with a PNG National Identity (NID) by 16 September 2025 to coincide with the country's 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations. The PNG government initiated this project in November 2014 with the aim of registering and issuing national identification cards to all citizens of the country. Refer Dev Policy blog PNG and the Pacific email 14 Feb 2025.

Joint Australian and PNG Ministers of Defence Meeting

On 20 February, Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles hosted PNG Minister for Defence, Dr Billy Joseph PhD, MP, for the 2025 Australia-Papua New Guinea Defence Ministers' Meeting in Brisbane.

Reflecting on Papua New Guinea's (PNG) 50th year of independence, Ministers recalled the creation by PNG's leaders of the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) in 1975 from the Pacific Islands Regiment and the Australian Army. The Ministers announced their shared commitment to



Hon. Richard Marles MP and
Dr Billy Joseph PhD, MP

negotiate a bilateral defence treaty that would build on the historic Australia-PNG Bilateral Security Agreement signed by Prime Ministers Marape and Albanese in 2023.

A longer article on this topic can be found at <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/statements/2025-02-20/joint-statement-australia-papua-new-guinea-defence-ministers-meeting>

Talisman Sabre

Australia's largest military exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 (TS25) involving 19 nations will be hosted in cooperation with Papua New Guinea in July this year amid moves to bind the nations' military forces more closely. Most of the exercises, which include live fire and field training, will take place primarily in Queensland, but some elements will occur in PNG.

Facebook Test Ban

PNG Facebook users were hit with an unexpected shock as the PNG government carried out tests under the country's new anti-terrorism act by shutting Facebook down for 24 hours from 25 March.

Peter Tsiamilili Jnr, Minister of Internal Security, who was also appointed as Minister for Police on 1 January 2024, cited an increase in misinformation and pornography as being behind the call.

PNG's population, which is under 11 million, has an estimated 1.5 million Facebook users. Across all age groups, male users far outweigh female users. Port

Moresby bore the brunt of the shutdown's impact.

Vote of No-Confidence

Following a week of political uncertainty in Port Moresby, the PNG PM James Marape survived a vote of no-confidence (VoNC) on 15 April with 89 supporting votes to 16 against and three abstaining.

To avoid further instability, the government amended its constitution during the 13 March 2025 parliamentary sitting to prevent a VoNC for 18 months if the incumbent has successfully defeated one previously.

In March the PNG Parliament voted 81 to 4, in favour of the bill, which, as a constitutional amendment, requires a two-thirds absolute majority of over 79 members to pass. Called a 'grace period' Marape can now continue his term until 2027.

Canonisation of PNG's First Saint

Pope Francis, who sadly died on 21 April 2025 (*please see the back cover*), on 1 April 2025, authorised the publication of a decree, paving the way for the canonisation of the late Peter To Rot, a second-generation Catholic, in East New Britain. Peter To Rot will be PNG's first saint and also the first Melanesian to be canonised, which brings added excitement to Catholics in PNG and the Pacific.

Peter To Rot, a lay catechist born in 1912, was executed in 1945 by Japanese soldiers during World War II. He opposed the custom of polygamy and continued his



PNG Catholics celebrating the announcement of a papal decree authorising canonisation of the late Peter To Rot (ABC News)

pastoral activities despite the risks to his life. An interview by Radio Australia through the Pacific Beat can be heard on <https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/png-saint/105120730>

Peace Building at the Grass Roots

Voice for Change, a provincial women's organisation based in Jiwaka Province, has been addressing the significant challenges faced by women since 1996. Recently VFC hosted a workshop for 60 frontline peace mediators.

Between January 2024 and February 2025, Peace Officials mediated 277 cases across the province, including 54 murders, 30 incidents of sexual violence (rapes), and 24 cases of sorcery-accusation-related violence. They cited a need for a national strategy to integrate local knowledge and foster community resilience.

You can read the article in full via the DevPolicy blog posts on PNG and the Pacific, 'Building peace from the group up: a call for a peace strategy in PNG'.

China-PNG News

Chinese Ambassador to PNG, Yang Xiaoguang, attended a

ribbon-cutting ceremony on 11 April, announcing K16 million to fund a digital library at the Western Pacific University in Ialibu in the Southern Highlands. Ambassador Yang said that PNG is the first Pacific Island nation to sign a bilateral document on the Belt and Road Cooperation with China.

Bougainville News

A Joint Consultation Moderator Meeting between the Government of PNG and the Autonomous Bougainville Government was held in Port Moresby in the first half of April. This second meeting was part of a consultation process moderated by Lieutenant General The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, GNZM, QSO, KtStJ. These consultations provide a forum for the PNG Prime Minister Marape and ABG President Ishmael Toroama to present their respective visions for Bougainville's political future. Key issues centre around four thematic pillars: Political, Institutional, Economic, and Parliamentary matters.

Yumi Stap Wantaim—Standing Together Side by Side, Walking Step by Step

This program was launched by the Australian High Commission in early March, as part of Australia's contribution to celebrating PNG's 50th anniversary of independence. The program will deliver a series of high-profile events throughout the year showcasing our cultural bonds, including in film, music, dance, art and food.



Papua New Guinea will celebrate 50 years of independence from Australia on 16 September 2025 with a public holiday, but during the year there will be special events commemorating the 50th Anniversary, including diverse cultural festivals. Throughout Australia there will also be many celebrations to observe the anniversary. These are featured in our Events Calendar.

Celebrate Our History: Inspire Our Future

Papua New Guinea is planning a variety of celebrations, including not only cultural events and festivals listed below, but also the awarding of the 50th Independence Anniversary King's Medal.

Among the highlights are the launch of PNG's NRL team in February, a youth-focused initiative, celebrating 50 years since the introduction of PNG's own currency, and a series of events leading up to the main celebrations, where up to 30 world leaders, including all Pacific leaders, are expected to attend.

In August, churches will host a national revival and reconciliation program; a ceremony will be held in Bougainville for those affected by the Bougainville crisis, involving police and defence forces.

The PNG Games are slated for Southern Highlands, and the Education Department will also align the school calendar with the year's events.

JUNE: *Madang Festival—Madang, Madang Province*

JULY: *National Mask Festival—Kokopo, East New Britain*

AUGUST: *Sepik River Crocodile Festival—Ambunti, East Sepik*

Mt Hagen Show—Mt Hagen, Western Highlands

Enga Cultural Show—Wabag, Enga Province

SEPTEMBER: *Goroka Show—Goroka, Eastern Highlands*

Official Anniversary Celebrations—Port Moresby, NCD

Frangipani Festival—Rabaul, East New Britain

Bougainville Chocolate Festival—Buka, Bougainville

Kutubu Kundu & Digaso Festival—Southern Highlands

OCTOBER: *Morobe Show—Lae, Morobe Province*

NOVEMBER: *Kenu & Kundu Festival—Alotau, Milne Bay*



Dancers at the Goroka Show and one of the Baining Fire Dancers, who perform at many of the country's festivals

Lawyers, Milestones or Millstones for the Rule of Law in the Independent State of Papua New Guinea: a memoir

**PART TWO
PAUL MUNRO AM**



The Hon. Justice Paul Munro AM

Moving from Part One of this memoir to focus on the topic of Rule of Law, in 1960, as in 2025, no more important icon of sociolegal discipline exists than the concept of the rule of law. No more concrete symbols of legal presence exist than the court buildings: emblems of nationhood, housing legal proceedings and staff. Yet, as in the 1960s, both topics lend more easily to ridicule and distortion than to earnest discussion and respect.

There are stacks of alternative criteria for defining what is meant by the rule of law.¹ It is enough here to identify the concept of equality of everyone, including governments under duly made laws, consistently applied and enforced, overseen by independent, impartial judiciaries. For me, there is a well framed criterion against which to test the resilience of the rule of law in national systems. It asks— whether the people with authority to make, administer and apply the rules are accountable and actually administer the law consistently and in accordance with its tenor.² Let me tag that as the Finnis test.

The Constitution of the Independent State of PNG and the laws received on Independence are a monument to the general capabilities marshalled across Crown Law and the drafting networks engaged. To quote Justice Logan, *'The PNG Constitution enshrines, rather than leaves unstated but assumed, certain elements of [our] understanding of the rule of law.'*

All great monuments are built by the work of many hands and minds. For this article, recognition of the Crown lawyers generally, whether at Konedobu, ASOPA or Department of External Territories (DOET), must be confined to a few endnote references.

Instead, my focus is upon four instances, milestones, of conduct that I believe shaped how rule of law principles took sometime precarious root in the growth of PNG to and through nationhood.

The first two instances were responses by Public Solicitor officeholders. I was indirectly involved in the first. I had worked closely with the key figure in the second. John Greville-Smith and Peter Lalor were men of markedly different character and background, but they had some things in common. Both held the office of Pubsol for a time, both became Presidents of the PSA; each had strong commitments to ethical principles of legal representation for those in need of it. Courage and integrity in responding to pressures challenging those values are demonstrated in the conduct I recount.

My first milestone is less widely known than others. It arose

out of an attack upon an administration patrol in late May to early June 1961. A police investigation resulted in charges for indictable offences being laid against the patrol officer involved and one of his accompanying Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) members, Sergeant Gonene. Sgt Gonene was committed for trial for wilful murder in Goroka on 25 January 1962. As junior counsel to Greville-Smith, I was part of the defence team for Gonene. Alerted by an observation arising from the committal proceedings, Smith sought authorisation to secure evidential support from a Brisbane-based ballistic expert. The Secretary for Law, I believe, refused Smith's requisition for the expense involved. Smith defied the constraint and authorised travel, etc. out of his PubSol budget. In a public service environment conditioned to discourage dissent, Greville-Smith manifested courage, integrity and perseverance in representational duty.

Contrary to suggestions by some commentators, the resultant evidence for the defence that evidence did not cause the Crown case to be 'inconclusive'. It demolished that case, shredding its premises. Greville-Smith was firmly of the view that Gonene was entitled to immediate acquittal. Instead, to save face (not for the only time in this memoir), the Crown withdrew the indictment. There was no revival of the charges. Gonene was reinstated, resumed his uniform and duties, and was promoted in due course to a higher rank.³

My second instance is much better documented, extraordinarily by an official publication: DFAT Docs Aust/PNG 1966–69. An extended comment about negotiations with Conzinc Riotinto of Australia's (CRA) mining venture on Bougainville narrates the pressures applied to Peter Lalor as Public Solicitor in 1968. A slice of extracts indicates the nature of what became six months of pressuring:

In October 1968 DOET, received news [a telex from Administrator David Hay], that the PNG Public Solicitor, acting on behalf of indigenes, was considering a legal challenge to the validity of the Territory's Mining Ordinance. Having decided to face litigation, Canberra took a tough line. Here, Peter Lalor, the Public Solicitor, became a target.

He was told that the department was aware of a speech he had given ... and threatened that if he were to publicly oppose our legislation he could expect us to use his own address against him. Early consideration was given to abolishing his position ... [indeed the incumbent Konedobu Secretary for Law canvassed that option, reflecting upon Lalor's allegedly being: 'irresponsible administratively, an indifferent lawyer but a good advocate'] ... but the final conclusion was that the Minister should reserve the right to discontinue his funding.⁴

Lalor persevered and took his challenge to the High Court which ruled against it, but he had fulfilled his duty to his clients.

Those instances are among many others that almost certainly could be documented by those who followed in Public Solicitor roles. Together, they may serve to explain why the PNG Constitution established the Public Solicitor as a Constitutional Office-Holder appointed by the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, with constitutionally defined functions and protections, including resource allocation.⁵ Constitutional enshrinement of rights to legal representation, let alone a public defender agency, is exceptional. That enablement has been and continues to be a substantial plank in PNG's platform for sustaining the rule of law.

The third and fourth milestones both mark stages in establishing community respect for the judicial agencies. In my experience of both criminal and civil proceedings from 1961–66, virtually all my Papuan or New Guinean clients saw any court as just another arm of government: 'samting bilong gavman, bilong yupela tasol'. I thought most accepted I was on their side, but with bemusement because I had said I was, and most 'laik winim kot'.

Paul Quinlivan's early experience brought him within reach of mentoring by Justice Sir Beaumont Phillips. It exposed him to Phillips' intense and persevering efforts to have villagers better understand his Supreme Court sittings as part and parcel of their lives. Paul's consolidated 'Snapshots', published on the PNGAA website, elaborate on that rationale and practice. Quinlivan, as Senior Stipendiary Magistrate in Rabaul, adopted a

similar approach. He was at all times committed to performing judicial functions in a manner that would build respect for courts. He went to lengths to have courts seen by all as fair, well informed and communicative agencies for determining matters in contest.

His perseverance with that commitment provoked a hostile reaction in the Rabaul Multi-Racial Council trespass and damage to property case in 1969. A fuller story can be found elsewhere.⁶ Some Tolai leaders shut down the council buildings, were arrested and locked away. Fierce public and behind-the-scenes interplay followed, involving Quinlivan, the Secretary for Law, and Canberra bureaucrats. As a magistrate, he was soon presented with the task of dealing with some rather lightweight charges against three accused. His judgment, at length, dismissed the charges drawing upon legal precedent and the surrounding circumstances, including facts attested in cogent supportive evidence as part of the Crown case from then District Commissioner Harry West.

Unequivocally, Quinlivan's decision was founded upon his commitment to maintaining respect for the integrity of his court and upholding the rule of law. Canberra and the incoming Konedobu Secretary for Law, Lindsay Curtis, did not see it that way. Almost immediately, they acted to have Quinlivan removed from his position in Rabaul. When that eventuated, for Paul and his family, the disruptive relocations involved were traumatic.

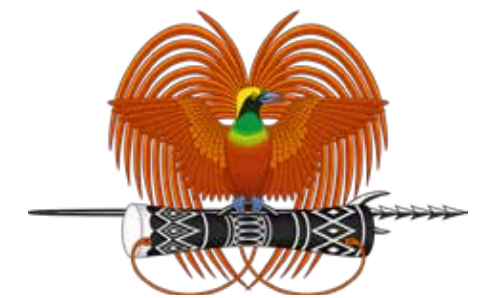
Conversely, his approach to the administration of justice resonates to this day. Upon Paul's death in 2017, Sir John Kaputin published widely an extensive tribute including:

To our Tolai people in Rabaul, he will remain in memorial in our hearts for giving us the recognition, dignity and respectability and in so doing, he was prepared to stand up to Canberra and uphold the rule of law as the legal guiding principle in his judgement in which he cited the nationalist Scottish people as the rightful owners of the Crown Jewels as a precedent.

My fourth milestone marks a pivotal, post-independence point for the judicial structure and values.

Again, much of the story is public knowledge. In mid-1979 the Minister for Justice, Nahau Rooney, persisted with recriminations against an interim injunction of the National Court restraining a decision by the Minister to revoke a non-national UPNG lecturer's entry permit. The Supreme Court later convicted Rooney of contempt and sentenced her to eight months imprisonment with light labour. Chief Minister Somare set her free after one day pending an appeal to a non-judicial Mercy Committee. As a direct result, five judges, including the Chief Justice and Deputy CJ, resigned from late 1979 to early 1980.⁷ The resignations led to the first indigenous lawyer to be appointed to the National and Supreme Courts, Mari Kapi, on 1 December 1979. It was not until August 1980 that a replacement for the Chief Justice was filled by the appointment of Buri Kidu, who served from 1980 to 1993.

Academic Don Denoon was correct when he wrote that: 'The spur to localising judicial offices was the bench of [Australian] judges, not the Government'. However, I believe Denoon was mistaken, attributing to Hal Wooten 'a willingness to take over as Chief Justice, but the Government



Unity in Diversity

This is the National Motto, which is applicable given the hundreds of different tribes and languages that make up the population.

The National Emblem consists of a bird of paradise over a traditional spear and a kundu drum. It was designed by Hal Holman OL, OAM, an Australian artist working for the PNG Government, who was also involved in the design of the spectacular National Flag, which was developed to its final design by Papua New Guinea schoolgirl, Susan Karike, and adopted in 1971.

began a program of localisation'. A year or so before Hal's death in 2021, I had a recorded conversation with Wooten about the 1966-67 Local Officers Case. We also had some exchanges tangential to that topic. I clearly understood that Somare had invited Wooten to be CJ, but Wooten persuaded Somare that the appointment of Kidu was the better option; he supported that contention by withdrawing in favour of Buri Kidu.

I include that event and outcome as a milestone for two reasons. Hal Wooten is widely acknowledged for his diverse and career-long contributions to the development of PNG's legal and other structures toward nationhood. He should be honoured also for his insight, devoid of self-interest.

One measure of the magnitude of that contribution is the almost universal acclaim of Sir Buri Kidu's performance as PNG Chief Justice. Almost universal, because despite his 13 years' service, he was denied renewal of appointment, leaving him two years short of entitlement to pension. From my sources over the years, I heard only high praise for Buri Kidu's leadership and lawyering. Justice Logan is experienced in appellate court levels in both Australia and PNG.

In 2022, he wrote:

An immediate legacy of the judicial resignations which were a sequel to the Rooney affair was a need in short order to appoint a new Chief Justice and other superior court judges. In this regard, it is impossible to overstate the value of the service rendered to the nation by the Honourable Sir Buri Kidu, in the respectful memory of whom this lecture series is named, in assuming the office of Chief Justice in the wake of these resignations. Under his leadership, the doing of justice according to law in Papua New Guinea, as contemplated by the PNG Constitution, was maintained. Papua New Guinea was blessed by his service, as it has been by that of his successors in office.⁸

In the celebration of 50 years of PNG's independence, the chance must also be taken to review, perhaps audit, progress against promise. The promise was embodied not only in legislation, in

hopes and aspirations, but in people. At their best, they strove toward and modelled what might be needed for optimally establishing a viably independent nation. Most readers of *PNG Kundu* will be familiar with shortfalls and disappointments in PNG governance, societal welfare, law and order. The milestones recalled are intended to show the linkages between past events, figures, models and present structures and conduct. My review for this memoir took me to a bundle of sources. Most point out the scope for improvements or reforms, but none of them do other than endorse a view that the legal structural element of the rule of law is in reasonably good health for the Independent State of PNG on its 50th birthday. The same may not so readily be said in the application of the Finnis test to other agencies and principles of PNG.

But to condemn failure to satisfy that criterion, which anglophone-developed nation is in a position to cast the first stone? •

FOOTNOTES

1. Justice JA Logan RFD: *The Rule of Law, Economic Development, and Peace and Welfare and Good Government*. Sir Buri Kidu Lecture UPNG 2022; Judges Speeches/fedcourt.gov.au
2. J Finnis: *Natural Law and Natural Rights* 1980 cited Butterworths Australian Legal Dictionary @1041
3. For a detailed discussion see PJ Self: *Kiap Otto Alder and Sgt. Gonene Dorni*. (2011) and Paul Munro Reply to Philip Selth's post (24 Feb 2024). Ex-Kiap Forum: exkiap.net
4. Op.cit: DFAT Documents Aust-PNG 1966-1969 at 994-997.
5. *Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea*; Division 5 Subdivision G @ Ss 176, 177, 178, 180 and S156
6. PJ Quinlivan: Snapshots: 57. *The Mataungan case-A preliminary comment*. 58. *The Mataungan case-The case itself*. Law and Order/pngaa.org; DFATDocs1966-1969: *Gazelle Peninsula: Government responses to the Connolly Commission, the Mataungan Court case and the land issue*; at 954, especially at 956-957 and 1005 footnote (4); Kaputin, Op.cit
7. Justice JA Logan: *Law and Justice in Papua New Guinea*. Australian Institute of International Affairs 2015 @17-2: <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Justice-Logan-Presentation>; Donald Denoon: *A Trial Separation. Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea 2005* Pandanus Books @152-153
8. Justice JA Logan RFD: *The Rule of Law*. Op.cit @ p4/12

Personal Recollections of PNG's 50th Anniversary

IAN HOWIE-WILLIS

I have reason to remember Tuesday, 16 September 1975, Papua New Guinea's Independence Day. It was one of the most convivial days of my life, mainly spent rejoicing with old friends in Lae.

Independence Day came eight months after I moved to Canberra to begin my PhD research project at the Australian National University (ANU), on the history of the development of the PNG university system. With my wife Margaret's agreement, I made a spur-of-the-moment decision to return to Lae for the celebrations and to undertake interviews for my thesis in both Lae and Port Moresby. I spent a fortnight between the two cities. In Lae I stayed with my friends Jack and Mary Woodward on the University of Technology (Unitech) campus; and in Port Moresby I stayed with John Haugie, a former student from my time at Brandi High School near Wewak, with whom I had kept in touch.

On the Unitech campus I found that many of the staff from my time, 1968-1973, were still present. Those still at Unitech included former neighbours Hector and Bori Clark, Neville and Peg Quarry, David and Mary Dale, John and Anne Sandover and Adrian Boddy. Among the Papua New Guineans were Kabi Mande from Finschhafen and Ben from Labu village on the far side of the Markham River mouth. Both Kabi and Ben were Unitech drivers I knew and respected. I had not seen any of these people for two years. I was heartened that all warmly welcomed me back.

Independence Day itself was rather a fizzer for me. It was a public holiday throughout PNG, but to my surprise, no acknowledgement of the occasion was made on the Unitech campus.

A Morobe Province Independence Day ceremony took place on the Lae showground on the Tuesday morning, which I attended with Mary and Jack Woodward. I remember that many

thousands of Papua New Guineans had come to town and were milling around in a festive mood. Among them were some of my one-time *Pangu Pati* comrades who greeted me cheerfully, asking if I had returned for good. I told them in my best *Tok Pisin*, 'Unfortunately not. I've returned but can't remain in Lae; but I did want to be with you for your great Independence Day celebration.'

The main National Independence Day event took place at the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in Port Moresby, where the then Prince Charles represented the Queen. (The British press was vastly amused that in *Tok Pisin* he was referred to as *Pikinini Man Bilong Misis Kwin*—'HM the Queen's son.')

As well as speeches, the climax came when the Australian flag was lowered for the last time with the PNG flag raised in its place. The dignitaries present included the Australian Governor General, Sir John Kerr, and Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam (who had not yet fallen out with each other); the new PNG Governor General, Sir John Guise; and the PNG Chief Minister, Michael Somare, who then became the inaugural Prime Minister.

John Guise gave the best speech. He said that independence had come peacefully to PNG and that Australia and PNG would remain close friends. Significantly, he said, the Australian flag had been lowered, not torn down.

On the Tuesday afternoon, Adrian Boddy, Hector Clark, Mary Dale and I conducted our own celebration. Adrian and I had run into one another on the campus and I suggested that we go to the staff club for a celebratory drink. Adrian explained that the club was closed. The government had banned alcohol sales for the six days of official

The King's Medal

The 50th Independence Anniversary King's Medal is to be awarded, as its name indicates, to mark Papua New Guinea's significant milestone.

The medal program was announced by the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea, Sir Bob Dadae, at Government House on 2 December 2024, who said that Charles III, King of Papua New Guinea, had approved the medal to honour and recognise Papua New Guineans who have made significant contributions to the country over the past 50 years.

The King's medal will be awarded to 3,000 individuals across Papua New Guinea.

The Honours and Awards Committee is chaired by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Justin Tkatchenko, who, under the PM's department, will oversee the awards, in which all Papua New Guineans were invited to participate.

Beginning in June 2025, the Governor-General, as the King's representative, will undertake medal presentation ceremonies in all the four regions of the country: Lae (Momase), Mount Hagen (Highlands), Kokopo (New Guinea Islands), and the National Capital District (Southern).



Sir Bob Dadae launching the King's Medal nominations

celebrations, 14–19 September lest the rejoicing lead to civil unrest. We happened to be outside Hector's home on Ramu Drive, so we called in to see if he might have some beer in his fridge. He didn't but suggested David Dale would have some, despite the official drought.

The three of us trooped across to the Dale *estancia*, 70 metres away on the far side of Warangoi Avenue. David was playing golf that afternoon but Mary was home. She said that all they had was an open bottle of Mateus Rosé in the fridge which they intended finishing that evening over dinner.

'That'll do!' we said. 'Will you share it with us now?' Mary invited us in, fetched four glasses and the bottle and sat us around the dining table. A most congenial afternoon commenced, as we reminisced, joked and laughed over the 'good old days of yore', pre-self government and pre-independence.

After we were seated in the Dale dining room, the bottle seemed to empty miraculously. 'Are you sure that's all you have, Mary?' we asked. Mary said that the carton the bottle had come from was in the broom cupboard. There might be other bottles but they would be warm. We went to investigate. Five of the original six bottles were still in the carton.

'David won't mind if we borrow one of them!' we assured her. The second bottle also emptied miraculously, despite its being at room temperature—about 30° C in Lae. About an hour later we were finishing the third bottle when David arrived home. After four glasses each of Mateus,¹ we were merry and expansive. 'Come and join us, Dave!' we called out. Dave seemed perturbed by the home invasion, but after a couple of glasses, he was as happy as we were. I don't know if we ever replaced his case of Mateus, but by the time the party broke up, the sixth bottle was empty, and we were sure we had celebrated Independence Day in the best way possible, affirming special friendships in PNG. •

1. Mateus is a pinkish, medium-sweet Portuguese frizzante wine, best drunk when chilled to about 6° C. In the early to mid-1970s, it was very popular among Unitech partygoers. We drank gallons of it. Nowadays, Clan Willis only drinks it for old time's sake, if an ex-Unitech friend is visiting.

Approaching 50 Years: the challenge of building a national identity in PNG

THERESA MEKI



The first writers' workshop held at the Dream Inn, Port Moresby, 26–27 June 2024

Papua New Guinea will celebrate its 50th anniversary as an independent nation in September 2025. This momentous milestone will undoubtedly be marked by jubilant celebrations. However, it also prompts reflection on the country's path to independence and the prominent people who built the nation and continue to shape its future.

The *Revitalising the PNG Dictionary of Biography* (PNGDB) Project is an attempt to celebrate Papua New Guineans from various sectors of society who have contributed to progressing the nation's development. This project, funded by the Department of Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University (ANU) and convened by Nicholas Hoare (an ANU Pacific historian), Keimelo Gima (a University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) PNG historian) and me, commenced in 2023. It is an attempt to revitalise the original dictionary project, known as the *PNG Dictionary of Contemporary Biography* (PNGDCB), that started in the 1980s.

In 1984, the government of PNG formed the Centennial Committee with the purpose of organising a series of cultural heritage projects of national significance to mark 100 years of colonial administration and modern government in the territories of both Papua and New Guinea. The PNGDCB, hosted by UPNG, was designed to be a

scholarly work of reference. The project was chaired by PNG historian John Waiko and managed by Australian historian Jim Griffin. It was an ambitious project that had the support of UPNG Vice Chancellor Elton Brash as well as that of Deputy Prime Minister Paias Wintgi as patron.

The project's initial deadline of 1986 was postponed to 1988 and archival records indicate that by 1990 the project had come to a halt. The project experienced practical challenges such as limited funding and a shortage of editors and researchers. In 2000, UPNG librarian Sam Kaima tried, unsuccessfully, to revive it.

Both Jim Griffin and Sam Kaima passed away in 2010. More recently, John Waiko also passed away.

Having a national dictionary of biography is a significant marker of nationhood. In the case of the PNGDCB, it included the likes of Michael Somare, Josephine Abaijah, Paul Lapun (the first PNG citizen to be knighted), Anna Solomon (first national editor of *Wantok Niuspepa*), Albert Maori

Kiki, John Guise (first Governor-General), Florence Griffin (first woman librarian) and many others who helped to build the nation in various capacities. The impacts of their contributions to the country are enjoyed by many today. There are over 2,000 draft entries about these remarkable people available in a database at the UPNG library. They are currently just sitting there, collecting dust.

The original architects of the project were motivated to document and celebrate the pioneers who were instrumental during the transition to independence. Being a 'first' was certainly celebrated in the early days. However, since then, countless Papua New Guineans in various fields and occupations have contributed tremendously to maintaining the country and pushing it forward. They too need to be documented. That is the aim of the revitalised project—to produce 50 biographical entries to mark the 50 years of independence in an edited volume. Additionally, we hope to encourage young Papua New Guinean writers to write their own stories and, by extension, their own history.

Applications for the new PNGDCB opened in April 2024, with almost 100 writers expressing



TOP:
Keimelo Gima
speaking (right)
with Vicky
Puipui and
Karen Kaso

RIGHT:
Dr Theresa Meki



interest. Only 25 were selected due to budget constraints. In June, the first workshop was held in Port Moresby and included training in ethical data collection, archival research and consent. At the end of the workshop, the writers had outlined their criteria for a 'nation maker' and were tasked to research and write a short biographical entry (at least 1,500 words) about the nation maker of their choice, whom they affectionately dubbed 'nameless champions'.

Eight weeks later, at a second workshop in August, the writers met again in Port Moresby and presented their subjects to the group. Many captivating and heartwarming stories about hard-working Papua New Guineans were shared and appreciated. I learned of amazing Papua New Guineans such as the late Jacob Luke, a philanthropist and entrepreneur, whose company, Maipai Transport, is synonymous with the Okuk Highlands Highway. Luke, from his own pocket, put hundreds of children through school and brought services to his district. Or the late Beverly Kaleva, a lifelong educationist who opened her home to struggling day students, many of whom were unrelated to her, so that they could have a place to eat, rest and comfortably continue their tertiary studies.

I also learned new fun facts about Papua New Guineans who have represented us internationally. For example, in 1971 Dame Meg Taylor represented the territory as an athlete in the South Pacific Games in Tahiti. She won a bronze medal in the 4 x 100-metre race and a silver medal in the pentathlon. Another interesting fact relates to the late Ambassador Peter Donigi, who at the tender age of just 23 represented the country at the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1974. He was instrumental in the development of the body of international sea law that derived from that conference.

But, while it was exciting for the group to reflect on and reminisce about the lives that they planned to document, the writers also reflected on the constraints of doing such historical and archival research in PNG. The most glaring of these was

the closure of the PNG National Archives from October 2023 to September 2024. Most historical material had to be researched and gathered from online archival sites such as *Trove* and the *Pacific Manuscripts Bureau* (PAMBU). Many of the writers had their own challenges, ranging from setting interview appointments to finding time to write, as this was a side project on top of all their other work and life responsibilities. The project is now at its editorial stage. We plan to have an official launch towards the end of this year.

The prerequisite for building a national identity is to have and share some level of collective national memory. Sadly, the country's institutions that house national and cultural memory, such as archives, museums and libraries, and the technicians that work within them, are struggling because they do not receive the same level of attention or funding from the government or donor agencies as other arms of government. For a country as ethnically diverse and socioeconomically fragmented as PNG, there needs to be a concerted effort to forge a united national identity, particularly as we turn 50. It is important to invest in these institutions because they help to facilitate our sense of national identity by recording, maintaining and showcasing stories of the past.

If we do not seriously reflect on what Papua New Guineans have built and strived for over the past 50 years, we will continue to stagger and stumble forward instead of charting our own positive and constructive path into the future. •

Disclosures:

Funding for the Revitalising the PNG Dictionary of Biography project is provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the Pacific Research Program.

Link: <https://devpolicy.org/approaching-50-years-the-challenge-of-building-a-national-identity-in-png-20250317/>

This article is reproduced with the permission of Dr Theresa Meki, who published it on the blog site of the Australian National University (ANU) Development Policy Centre. Theresa Meki is a Pacific Research Fellow in the Department of Pacific Affairs, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University. Her research focuses on women's presence and vote share in Papua New Guinea's election history.



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Papua New Guinea (AAPNG) are designed to promote knowledge and leadership, and enduring ties between Australia and PNG. The scholarships aim to build a qualified workforce, fill critical human resource gaps, and support good leadership.

Every year, both the Governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea agree on priority sectors that will target key development areas. Applicants are assessed on their professional and personal qualities, academic competence and, most importantly, their potential to impact on development challenges in PNG.

All recipients of the 2025 Australia Awards PNG scholarships have been given the honorary title of 'Australia Awards Somare-Whitlam Scholars', in honour of Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of independence.

The name recognises the contributions made by the former Prime Minister Great Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, in creating the foundation for the PNG and Australia that we know today, and our contemporary relationship.

The co-badged scholarships were initially announced by Prime Minister Marape and Prime Minister Albanese in their joint Leaders Declaration in February 2024, during Prime Minister Marape's visit to Australia. The announcement came alongside a reaffirmed commitment to working together for climate resilience, infrastructure development and regional peace, reflecting the important contribution made by Australia Awards to PNG's future and the relationship with Australia.

A Project to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Independence

TIM GRIFFITHS

For some years Tim has been involved in a PNG heritage project. His goal is to celebrate the anniversary of independence with an installation in regional centres of interpretive panels displaying historic photographs depicting village life 100 years ago. A successful prototype panel was installed at Lake Murray, Western Province, in 2017. To tell the story behind that installation we must go back 103 years ...



Jenny and Tim Griffiths onboard the *Kiwai Chief* heading up the Fly River to Lake Murray, 2017

Following Frank Hurley's 1922 Expedition to Lake Murray

When world famous photographer Frank Hurley and Australian Museum scientist Alan McCulloch sailed their ketch *Eureka* into Port Moresby's Fairfax Harbour in December 1922, they had every reason to feel pleased with themselves. They had penetrated the interior of Papua by journeying up the Fly and Strickland Rivers into Lake Murray. They succeeded in achieving 'first contact' with headhunting tribes in the upper reaches of Lake Murray.

The expedition had assembled an extensive collection of artefacts, including intricately decorated and stuffed human heads, and Hurley had obtained hundreds of glass plate negatives. His photographs captured the diversity of the peoples in the Gulf and Western Province. Hurley photographed *ravis* (men's houses), some over 400 feet long and 70 feet high, which no longer exist except in his photographs. Hurley even made the first aircraft journey in the country when he flew from Port Moresby to join up with the *Eureka* at Daru. His flying boat, *Seagull*, was typical of aircraft at the time, constructed of timber, canvas and wire, with an open-air cockpit, travelling at an average speed of about 95 kilometres an hour.

Imagine Hurley's surprise when the Government welcoming party at the main wharf came on board and seized the entire artefact collection, despite Hurley and McCulloch holding collection permits. The administration announced an official inquiry into allegations of improper collecting methods, intimidation and use of force. Witness statements were obtained. Hurley denied the allegations and denounced the Lieutenant Governor Sir Hubert Murray in the Sun Newspaper in Australia for preventing the collection being seen by the public.

Whilst the artefacts were intended for the Australian Museum in Sydney, Hurley was first and foremost a commercial man. Some of the artefacts were wanted as props for the release of his film, *Pearls and Savages*.

Ultimately, most of the artefacts were released to the Australian Museum where they became a key part of its Pacific culture display. Sir Hubert Murray was unforgiving and refused Hurley permission to re-enter Papua to make two feature films. Hurley went instead to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea.

NINETY-FIVE YEARS LATER, in November 2017, anthropologist, Dr Jim Specht, Tim and Jenny Griffiths, film maker Alex George and ABC journalist Catherine Graue set out from Port Moresby to retrace the route taken by Hurley and McCulloch.

They took with them an interpretive panel made of stainless steel and aluminium on which several of Hurley's Lake Murray photographs were enlarged and printed in high resolution. Most people in Lake Murray had never seen Frank Hurley's photographs of their ancestors. The panel also contained a short story written in English and *Tok Ples*, telling of the historic meeting in 1922 between Hurley and the people of the lake. Once assembled, the panel stood three metres high and three metres wide.

Even today, Lake Murray, in the remote Western Province of Papua New Guinea, remains isolated. There are no connecting roads or regular airline passenger services. Consort Shipping runs cargo vessels up the Fly River to service Ok Tedi Mine and generously offered the group passage on its vessel *Kiwai Chief*.

Setting out from Port Moresby at the end of October 2017, the *Kiwai Chief* enjoyed a calm crossing of the Gulf of Papua and spectacular red sky sunsets. Approaching the Fly River delta, they found the water had turned brown with sediment. Uprooted sago and nipa palm trees (*Nypa fruticans*) drifted out into the current, an issue that would have created navigation hazards for the *Eureka*, but not the *Kiwai Chief*. The delta itself is 100 kilometres wide, braided with channels and islands. The Fly River starts over 1,000 kilometres to the north in the central highlands and powerfully snakes its way across flat savannah and floodplain. Whole islands of grass and trees come floating down the river.

On the fourth day, the *Kiwai Chief* reached Everill Junction where the Fly and Strickland Rivers converge. From there, Ok Tedi Development Foundation provided the expedition with a fast-moving 'banana boat' to travel up the Strickland and into the very pretty Herbert River. The

Herbert, fed by Lake Murray, disappears into tall reeds and giant lotus lilies masking the entrance to Lake Murray. The lake is a huge body of water studded with low-lying islands. After the wet season, it grows to about 2,000 square kilometres, a paradise for birdwatchers and fishermen.

Hurley's 1922 diary describes how the inhabitants fled their villages as soon as they saw *Eureka* steaming across the lake.

After two frustrating weeks, Hurley 'collected' artefacts but was unable to make contact with the 'headhunters' he desperately wanted to film. About to give up, Hurley and his crew pursued a distant boat that was spied disappearing into a dense thicket of tall reeds. Nearby, they were attracted to an abandoned log canoe full of artefacts and booty.

In his diary, Hurley congratulated himself on his good fortune. He called out the only *Tok Ples* word he knows, '*sambio!!*'. The word meant peace. The canoe they had pursued was paddled out from the reeds. The tribesmen on board replied, '*sambio*', but Hurley had fallen into a dangerous trap. The canoe was a ruse. Suddenly, hundreds of warriors emerged from the tall reeds, their canoes quickly surrounding the *Eureka*. It was a moment of high drama; both sides were armed. McCulloch skilfully defused the situation, and soon an exchange and trading of goods was underway with the people of the lake. Hurley got his photographs of the warriors, and he kept his head.



Expedition crew: Jenny Griffiths third from the right, Tim Griffiths on Jenny's left. Dr Jim Specht in foreground



TOP: Interpretive Panel at Lake Murray with descendants of Musje

BELOW: David, an Usakof man with Tim Griffiths, holds Frank Hurley's 1922 photograph of his ancestor, Musje. Hurley incorrectly named this man Homoiji—photo taken in 2016

Hurley's diary records meeting the chief of these tribesmen, a man called Homoiji from a village called Dukoif. No such village exists.

On a previous trip to Lake Murray, Tim had visited the island of Usakof which he surmised was the location of Hurley's encounter.

The villagers of Usakof were familiar with the story of Hurley. One of the villagers produced a stained photograph of his great-grandfather, Musje. The subject of this photograph looks proud and self assured. The front half of his head is shaved while the back has long 'Rastafarian' style locks with straw extensions. It was in fact Hurley's photograph taken of the chief whom Hurley misdescribed as 'Homoiji'.

After three days of talks with villagers at

Usakof and nearby Boboa, the interpretive panel was assembled, erected and formally unveiled at Lake Murray Station on 6 November 2017. Several hundred villagers attended these meetings.

The 2017 expedition team should not have been surprised by the first two questions from the elders. 'Does the Australian Museum still have the artefacts taken by Hurley?' and 'Can we get them back?'

The repatriation of artefacts is a complex issue. It usually involves a return to a well-resourced Museum. It was the next question from the Lake Murray elders, however, which was completely unexpected. 'Musje was a great chief but he disappeared after Hurley came. Did Frank Hurley kill Musje or take him away on his boat?'

There was no satisfactory answer to the question. Musje was photographed on board the *Eureka* but there is no suggestion in the diaries that he remained on board. It is a puzzling gap in the oral history. However, oral history varies depending on who is doing the telling, and each Lake Murray clan has a different version of events. More than one clan claims ancestral connection to Musje.

THE INTERPRETIVE PANEL was welcomed by the people of Lake Murray as educational for the younger generation. It also provides a lasting opportunity for cultural tourism. The Australian Museum holds photographs which Hurley took throughout Papua, including in the Gulf, Oro, Milne Bay and Central Provinces as well as Hanuabada. With support from the Museum and the PNG National Cultural Commission Tim has applied for Commonwealth funding to do similar installations in each of these areas. If you would like to be a project sponsor or assist with the installations, please contact Tim directly. Email tgriffiths217@gmail.com •

Editor's Note: Photos courtesy of Tim Griffiths, a Sydney lawyer and author, who lived and worked in PNG for several years. He is the author of *Endurance*, a novel based on the life of Frank Hurley, published by Allen & Unwin in 2015. He will shortly hear if his project to celebrate the 50th anniversary is to receive Commonwealth Grant funding.

Sel Kambang and Andapen

PART TWO • BAKA BINA

This story picks up from Part One in the March issue where Baka wrote about when he was in Grade 4 and the school children were being taught a song about Papua New Guinea's new flag.

He also described how the concepts of self government and PNG's pending independence became lost in translation when discussed by people in his village.

The story continues:

Dad was talking about the *sel kambang* from where we grew up. The *Sununo* pods we grew were calabash gourds used mainly as water or seed containers. Someone in my dad's group said they were required to wear this *sel kambang* gourd around their lower parts.

He forgot to inform them that in some places smaller sized pods of the *sununo* gourds were used as lime pot containers, but in the Sepik and in Telefomin, the slimmer long fruits were used as penis gourds. Perhaps that was what Somare intended for them.

He didn't need to describe penis gourds and *sel kambangs*. Our people had seen a group wearing them at the Goroka Show earlier. It was just that we did not have that variety of *sununo* plant in our place. They were to substitute the Telefomin gourds with their own round calabash *sununo*, and that is where everyone's imaginations ran wild considering

how to wear one let alone walk around with one attached to their legs.

'Eh, the police are going to stop everyone and check if they are wearing *sel kambang* as we go into town.' Chuckles were heard around the fireplace.

Who the heck was going to travel into town anyhow? We had to wait nearly all morning to jump onto one of the very few Public Moving Vehicles (PMVs) that trundled past our village and down the road to Asaro Station where we could pick up a 50-toea fare. It cost 20 toea to go into town from our stop, and by the time PMVs had room for us, the Traffic Police would have set up their regular weekend roadblocks, making it hard for those jittery old PMVs to make it into town.

'It is not that we won't be wearing any *sel kambangs*; it is the indignation of being humiliated by little boys—these policemen who, because they wear a uniform, are going to ask us to remove our trousers or to lift up our skirts. Think about it!



FLAG SONG

This is our flag
Flag of our land
Proudly it flutters
And proudly we stand
Flag of our island
Home in the sun
Papua New Guinea
We are one
Papua New Guinea
We are one

Paradise bird
Flying on high
Lifting our vision
Right up to the sky
Shine cross of
Five bright stars
Never cease
Leading our land
To strength and peace
Leading our land
to strength and peace.



How they will treat and ridicule us elderly people.’

‘Gosh, they ask us to put on a calabash *sununo* so we walk around like ducks! What indignation is this *Somare gavman* trying to put us through? How do I hide this duck walk into town?’

‘Eh, don’t worry. Everyone will be walking with legs akimbo so no one will bother laughing about every other person walking like them.’

‘Heh heh heh.’ Soon everyone was rolling silly with laughter.

‘We’ll tell the children tomorrow—when they go to school they can tell those teachers, Masta Opokins and Masta Milati, that if we are to be forced to wear *sel kambangs* we expect them to show us how.’

‘I want to see Masta Opokins wear the Telefomin *sel kambang* and see his white balls pop out from the end of his *sel kambang andapens*.’

‘Hey, you kids, get to bed now. If you hear the grownups starting to swear, you may never grow up.’

As we children stood to leave, Maunten Mahn, the strongest man in the village, who could use his thumb as a screwdriver to undo rusted nuts, pressed his thumb onto the thigh of a woman sitting near him.

The woman whimpered with pain and shouted,

‘You think you’re being funny! But I am not wearing any *Somare andapens* that you might hope to see!’ And with that and a few hot-eared expletives, hobbled out of his reach.

When Maunten Mahn touched us, and I mean everyone, young and old, we always came away with whelping bruises and plenty of tears. Not only that but the indignation of being laughed at by everyone around us. Nobody wanted to be his victim. The crowd dispersed, returning to their houses with the thought of *sel kambangs* and *andapens* ringing in the night, only to be serenaded in the morning by the flag song.

When I went to bed, *sel kambangs* and *andapens* floated around in my head. I could not sleep so I lulled myself to sleep by humming the flag song in my head for a long while. •

Author’s Note:

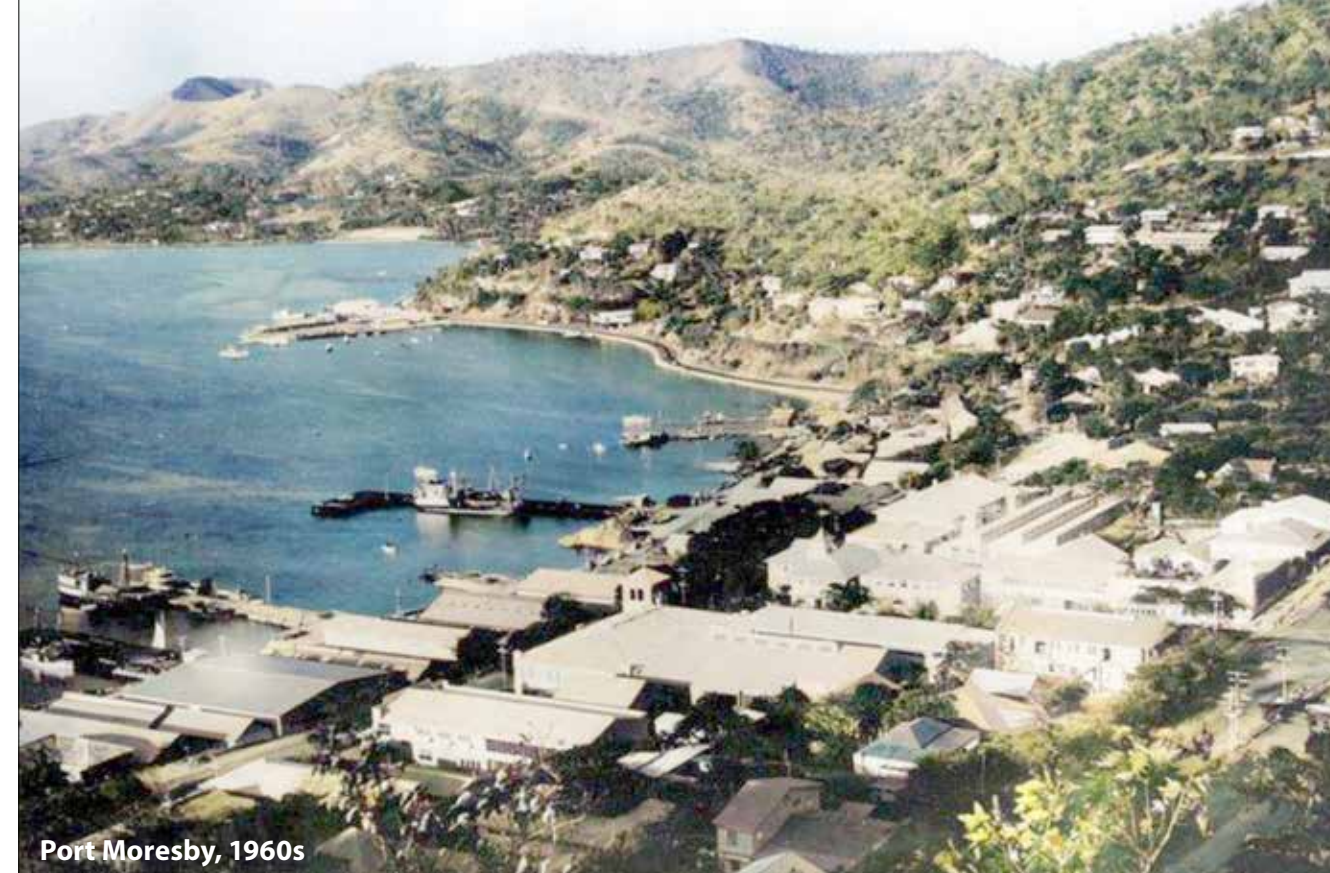
Kambang is the *Tok Pisin* term for lime powder made from dried and crushed shells or coral that betel nut chewers dip into with a ‘mustard stick’. People grow betel nut palms and the pepper plant that produces the mustard stick, but *kambang* is harvested by people who live near the sea and reefs. They may do the processing themselves or sell it to middlemen who process it, selling the finished product, a white powder not unlike cornflour. The receptacle for holding the powder was the hewn-out pod of the *sununo* plant; *Lagenaria* bottle gourds. Over time and as they were traded inland, these receptacles then became known as *sel kambang*. How the penis gourds acquired the pun name as *sel kambang* is anybody’s guess.

Pitpit is a generic name for all canes, and most plants having marked stems where the leaves fall off are called by the generic name *pitpit*. There are various types, some strong, some soft with hollow inner parts like bamboo, some in between, including two edible ones where one is also known as New Guinea Asparagus. The one mentioned in this story is the strong variety that most Highland houses would have used in constructing beds.

Featured overleaf is the Flag Song. I could not locate the name of the person who wrote the lyrics. It could be Thomas Shacklady, who wrote the lyrics and music for the PNG National Anthem. •

UNITY IN DIVERSITY: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PNG INDEPENDENCE

This special section will be featured in the following issues of *PNG KUNDU* throughout this anniversary year, and all your stories are welcome on the topic of independence—be that of a specific year or a broader reflection of your own lived experience.



Where on Earth is Kundiawa?

JOY BENSON • PART ONE

It’s 5 September 1967 and I’m winging my way to Port Moresby. Having not long completed a year of Midwifery training at the Royal Women’s Hospital in Melbourne following my General Nursing training at Charters Towers in North Queensland, I’ve been accepted into a position with the Public Health Department (PHD) in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG). I know little of what awaits me, let alone that the 21-month term for which I signed up would become 10 years. Ten years of incredibly rewarding personal and professional experiences, with more than a few interesting challenges along the way.

I smile at the middle-aged man seated beside me on the aircraft, and we chat for a while. He asks why I am travelling to Port Moresby. When I tell him, he fixes me with a look of total disbelief and dismay. Didn’t I know about the dangerous people, the deadly diseases, the dreadful weather and numerous life-threatening situations I would face there? At first, I think he’s joking, but I quickly realise he is deadly serious. I can only stare back in utter confusion.

My relief at being on my way to TPNG has switched to despair, mostly over my naivety as well as annoyance at the stranger who, without invitation, has violated my private world.

Soon after take-off from Townsville, my fellow

passenger, who boarded the aircraft in Sydney, falls asleep, leaving me to consider his words. As the Australian coastline disappears and the outline of the Great Barrier Reef gradually fades beneath the green sea, his warning words run riot in my mind. I’m no longer sure if the place and the job will live up to my expectations or whether it is I who will not live up to the expectations of the job and the place.

We are on approach into Port Moresby’s Jacksons airport when my neighbour wakes. He is good-natured but he can’t resist remonstrating with me again, telling me with a smile that if I had any sense I would catch the next plane home. His final and earnest words are, ‘*There are two types*

of people in this Godforsaken place: missionaries and mercenaries. If you want to succeed, you need to decide where you fit.' Retrieving his briefcase from the overhead luggage rack, he nods solemnly and walks quickly down the aisle to be first off the aircraft. I don't see him again.

Humidity rolls in through the open aircraft doors, engulfing the cabin in a fog, and continues to weigh heavily on me as I cross the steaming tarmac. It's hot, very hot! Overhead, enormous fans rotate lazily in a vain attempt to cool the huge space inside the terminal. Someone is supposed to meet me but I have no idea how I will recognise them in this crush of humanity. The chap on the plane might have a point, not only about life and work here but especially the bit about getting out of the country, fast!

I've never travelled overseas before and am surprised to pass through Customs quickly; there's no need for an Australian passport, only an Entry Permit, because this is 1967, and TPNG is a Territory of Australia. I, being an employee of the Commonwealth Government probably makes things easier. Dragging (no trolley bags then!) my case along, I notice a local man holding up a handwritten sign with the letters 'PHD'. After some moments it dawns on me—Public Health Department! A smiling Papua New Guinean grabs my bag and, in a flash, I am seated in a small four-wheel drive vehicle about to get my second impression of Papua New Guinea.

As I can't see any buildings, I'm guessing we are nowhere near the city. In the distance a glowing chain of bushfires crown the Owen Stanley Ranges casting a pall of smoke over everything. As far as the eye can see, the environment is dry



Nurses' Home, Moresby General Hospital. 1967

and dusty. Where is the green tropical island I envisaged?

As there's little traffic, we drive quickly through silent streets. Is this all there is? A few people are walking along the road edges and my driver seems to know all of them. People wave to one another while my driver leans out the window shouting cheerful greetings, especially to the young girls! I feel totally overdressed in my pink linen suit and high heels!

In a cloud of dust we pull up in front of a low building partly obscured by greenery. A tangle of banana trees, bougainvillea, and frangipani crowd the entrance, almost hiding a long, low timber building. With the green painted concrete floor inside there's an expansive and pleasant tropical feel about the place. Soon, I'm settling into a simple first-floor room with an overhead fan whirring dutifully above. I feel very alone.

The nurses' home is situated in the grounds of Port Moresby General Hospital. Looking out through glass louvres, it's hard to see anything resembling a hospital, but there are lovely views of hibiscus, frangipani and huge mango trees. Recalling my interview in Townsville, I know I will stay here for a few days while undergoing an orientation. Later, I will be posted to one of the many hospitals in PNG. There's a slight chance I will remain at Port Moresby Hospital, but it's unlikely as most double-certificated nurses are sent to the more remote centres.

After a pleasant evening meal with some friendly local nurses, followed by a restless night, I start work in a medical ward. The hospital is unlike any that I have experienced before. It consists of numerous low wooden single-storey buildings neatly arranged in rows that are connected by covered concrete walkways. At 7.00 am, inside the ward, I see a row of beds and curiously, in each, there are at least two people. Beside each bed, more people are sleeping on the floor with some even under the beds! I have one expatriate registered nurse and two local student nurses with me. I expect to wash and feed the

patients to prepare them for the day. Very quickly it becomes obvious that I have a lot to learn.

This is the moment I first encounter the concept of 'Territory time.' I soon realise that I need to rid myself of the obsession of attempting to wash everyone and everything. Everything is done in Territory time. The first thing that our little group does is to make coffee when a couple of expatriate doctors turn up, joining the jovial coffee party. I also learn to drink very hot coffee laced with tinned evaporated milk in the tropical heat.

By 7.00 am, it's hot and very humid. The uniform is clinging to my back and I still haven't done any work. I feel guilty standing there when there are so many sick patients waiting, but I tell myself I need to learn to relax and go with the flow. Everyone else is relaxed and happy—doctors, nurses, patients and their *wantoks*, who I come to understand are the many relatives of each patient. All are now slowly waking and moving around outside, laden with bamboo mats, blankets and cooking pots and looking for places to sit in the grounds. Everyone is relaxed. It's up to me to divest myself of the urge to leap on patients and do things to them.

Generally, hospital patients receive wonderful care, but everything happens when and how they want it to—in Territory time. Unaware, my socialisation is well under way. I'm a fish out of water and yet everyone is welcoming and friendly especially the young student nurses who are a cheerful, giggling group. Their joy of life is infectious.

The Port Moresby Hospital spreads unfenced over a huge expanse of dry, dusty land. Along with the neatly lined-up rows of wards connected as they are by grey concrete pathways, other single-storey wooden buildings are scattered around as far as I can see. During the day the grounds are dotted with many groups of relatives and friends of the patients. Some stretch out on bamboo mats dozing under the trees, while others gather around large pots of food containing mainly rice, with what looks like fish stirred through it. Some people wash articles of clothing, then drape them over trees and rocks to dry, creating an overall sense of



Nurses in Port Moresby General Hospital, 1967

untidiness, but everyone seems happy enough as they chat, sipping tea from huge enamel mugs. No one seems to have jobs or chores to attend to—a vastly different scene from the manicured gardens of an Australian hospital.

I follow staff around most of the morning, trying to adjust my attitude and values to this land and its culture. Around midday, I return to the nurses' home for lunch where I'm heartened to see a group of Australian women with piles of luggage being dropped off by the same dusty Land Rover that brought me the day before. I'm no longer the new girl! I feel a long way ahead of them, having been there about 18 hours, of which five hours were spent working. The new arrivals ply me with questions, most of which I can't answer, but on returning to the ward I allow myself to feel like an old hand. Goodness knows why, because as I walk back I become lost.

With the new arrivals, there are now seven recruits. The other registered nurses (RNs) are from Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane. Lyn, from Brisbane, is upset because Qantas has lost her baggage, leaving her with nothing but hand luggage. Ruth, a girl from Adelaide, had two packs of playing cards confiscated as they are illegal in TPNG. Everyone is feeling a bit shellshocked especially given the overwhelming heat and humidity. We have arrived during the early buildup to the wet season, hence the dry, dusty environment. The next day we are sent to work in one of the many wards—our socialisation has begun in earnest.

Part Two of Joy's story will continue in the next issue.



Producing Copra on New Ireland

IAN SMITH

This story follows an earlier article of Ian's, published in 2022, about Patlangat Plantation in New Ireland.

Working with Papua New Guinea Highlanders on a remote coastal copra plantation in the early 1960s could be a real challenge, especially for a young trainee manager like me.

WR Carpenter (PNG), the company I worked for, owned 30 large copra and cocoa plantations and as a new cadet trainee manager in the 1960s I had to quickly learn all aspects of what the company required of me.

This entailed keeping business records, signed employee labour contracts, ordering and storing tons of food supplies that had to be accounted for, and tractor and machinery maintenance. Ordering supplies took particular skill and experience to competently anticipate the plantation's requirements, given the long lead times, particularly from Australia, and the uncertainties of the weather. All freight to and from the plantation was by sea.

In keeping with government regulations, we also had to pass a six-week Medical Assistants Course that was held at Nonga Base Hospital in Rabaul.

A copra plantation producing 30 to 40 tons per month of dried copra would normally require 180 to 200 workers, and producing this tonnage of dried copra requires approximately 60,000 palm trees. Generally, plantations had many trees that were planted in the German times, covering 1884 until 1914. The older trees would be extremely tall, making them more susceptible to lightning strikes and insect pests. Plantations needed to keep up a constant replanting program, requiring seedling nurseries to be established.

Coconut palms were evenly spaced in lines and planted in a square configuration for ease of management. Plantations near Rabaul and Madang and some on Bougainville grew cocoa between the

palm trees. Cocoa, however, demands significant processing facilities and a lot more labour to cultivate, maintain, harvest and process. This made it impractical on isolated plantations such as the one I was on, on the East coast of New Ireland.

The plantation was usually worked by focusing on one particular area of the plantation at a time, usually determined by the length of the kunai grass and the number of fallen nuts apparent in the area. Large numbers of plantation workers were employed to work in teams to cut the kunai with a hand-held steel '*sarif*', made from approximately 1.5 m lengths of re-purposed steel strapping that had held the bales of empty hessian sacks and sharpened by hammering the edge on an anvil. The grass cutters were usually the largest team and, for that reason, usually known as the *big lain*. Usually following the grass cutters were copra cutters, who gathered up the fallen coconuts into piles. Working around these piles, the cutting crew cut the nuts in half with an axe, removing the white kernel with a sharp knife before packing the wet copra into hessian bags.

Towards the end of the day, tractors pulling large trailers, each with six to eight men on board,

collected the bags of cut copra and transported them to the drying shed. Later, the remaining coconut husks, which still contained the hard shell from which the copra had been cut, were taken to the drying shed to be used to fire brick furnaces for the hot air drying process. It was at the drying shed where every bag was weighed to determine whether the copra cutters had met their daily quota.

Inside the shed, wire mesh racks were set up for the wet copra. Drying copra was a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week process, requiring teams of firemen rostered in shifts. Once dried, the copra was taken to a storage shed, and rammed with a wooden pole into the bags. The storage shed on coastal plantations was usually near the beach for easier loading on ships.

Coastal ships might turn up every month, if not a few weeks later, bringing with them food supplies—tons of bagged rice and boxes of tinned fish and meat, machinery parts, household goods, whatever was ordered previously by radio. And, of course, many 44-gallon drums of fuel and lubricating oil.

With few plantations having a deepwater wharf, most coastal ships had to anchor off the reef, and



A load of wet copra on its way to the drying shed

unload and load cargo using a diesel engined pinnace, towing one or more lighters to and from the shore.

Incoming cargo was offloaded before the copra was loaded. Loading and unloading cargo were critical times as coral reefs and tropical storms were a constant source of risk for the plantation and the ship.

The 44-gallon drums were sometimes simply dropped over the side of the ship and floated ashore. Once the ship unloaded its cargo for that plantation, the heavy bags of dried copra, weighing as much as 60 kg, were taken on board. The bags were usually carried from the shed perched on the labourer's shoulder to the waiting lighter at the water's edge.

There was no such thing as a handbook on native labour or details about cultural or ethnic background, and yet these men were the backbone of the plantation's workforce. As many plantation managers experienced, including myself, inter-tribal and inter-clan paybacks and disputes often occurred between groups. It was difficult at times to understand how and why personal grievances continued after the feuding factions or individuals had left their remote home villages. It always surprised me how quickly the men learned to speak *Tok Pisin*. We often ended up having very funny conversations, which included hand actions and facial expressions to bridge language gaps.

The Highland workers on plantations I was involved with represented four or five different tribes; Chimbu, Wabag, Minj, etc. As one group completed its two-year indentured contract, another group arrived on the next ship.

Some groups earned a reputation for being aggressive to other workers, so it was a balancing act for the manager to maintain peace and tolerance. In some situations, it was best to have *wantoks* work together. It encouraged a sense of competition between tribal groups and was good for copra production.

Each tribe appointed their own cooks who were supplied food from the plantation storerooms. Large cauldrons of rice were prepared to which was added fish or meat. Rations included cooked

oaten fried cakes along with billy tea and so forth. Everyone had three square meals per day. It was a responsible job.

There were never any idle workers, and that included the plantation manager. Everyone pulled together to produce the expected monthly copra tonnage. This was not always easy to achieve, especially in times of constant rain, machinery breakdowns, and various other incidents that inevitably affected copra production. Lead times for major spare parts or repairs could run for more than a month.

Training a new tractor driver required patience, as in those days few Highlanders had any experience with vehicles or machinery, let alone maintaining them. Breakdowns related to tractor clutches and gearboxes were a major problem that the manager had to fix, usually under a lean-to shed with a dirt floor. These complicated repairs would normally be done in a fully equipped workshop by a trained mechanic but on an isolated plantation it was a case of consulting the tractor workshop and spare parts manuals. For readers unfamiliar with tractor clutches and gearboxes, it requires splitting the tractor into two halves. These types of breakdowns were annoying as it meant doubling up on tractors and crew to do the extra work.

Most plantations had a set work roster until something out of the ordinary happened—sometimes very funny, sometimes alarming. I recall an incident when three plantation workers arrived at my single room *haus-sik* (hospital). One of them had a length of eight-gauge fencing wire wrapped around his head and just above his eyes; a short stick was inserted into the wire near his ear and twisted very tightly. I asked what was wrong with the man. Although we could communicate well in *Tok Pisin*, a sick person would often revert to *tok ples*, leaving it to his mates to relay the circumstances back to me. The man's mates told me that he had a splitting headache. I suggested we first remove the wire and we'd work through the problem with modern remedies—all ended well.

I wonder what my local doctor GP would say if confronted with this situation. •

Omie: The Other Oro Tapa

JOAN WINTER, International Partner Omie Tapa Art PNG

The moment I stepped off the plane at Jacksons Airport in 1972 I fell in love with Papua New Guinea. I collected my first Oro tapa in 1979 from a *haus win* on the shores of a Maisin village. Fate would play its hand as I still have that first tapa. I will be buried with it.

When expatriates and nationals alike think of Oro tapa (painted beaten bark cloth), they think of the coastal Maisin of Collingwood Bay, its black, brown and white tapa that has been around since the 1930s and often used in national PNG design elements. This limited palette in a curvilinear style based on facial tattoos and clan designs is easily recognisable. Omie tapa is very different. It speaks to the incredible artistic wealth of hundreds of visual arts and cultural traditions practised in PNG today.

In 2017, I was visiting my goddaughter, Rahab, who lived in a village near Sirope on the track leading into Omie territory. I thought I was nearing retirement. No such luck. That's when I happened to meet Omie people for the first time and after hearing their concerns with how their tapa was sold internationally, I was drawn in.

The Omie are a very remote group numbering about 2,000 people. They live on the southern slopes of Mt Lamington, *Humaervo*, their sacred mountain, in the vast tropical rainforest mountains of Oro, not so far from Kokoda. Within this small community today, there are well over 110 individuals, mostly women, practising tapa *nioge* making. They see their *nioge* as the only way out of extreme isolation and poverty, with sales enabling them to pay school and hospital fees, transport to Popondetta, etc.

The development and exposure of Omie *nioge* tapa is remarkable. In 2019 when I spoke to members of the annual Tapa and Tattooing Festival committee, they had never heard of the Omie. The Omie are surrounded by the Orokaiva, a much larger group who, at times, can be hostile, making it difficult for Omie to walk through their territory. The Omie were isolated but things were changing.



LEFT: Tapa artist Doris Naumo
RIGHT: Tapas by Gilchris Sosa, Pennyrose Sosa & Elizabeth L'eami
BELOW: 'Hia'e Hia'e Visone' by Faith Jina'emmi
(photos Joan Winter)

In the 1960s Omie patriarchal and patrilineal elders deliberated on the causes of two major events that rocked their world. The first traumatic event was the impact of WWII. Many Omie men were recruited as carriers. The second traumatic event was the 1951 eruption of Mt Lamington, *Humaervo*.

The Omie took this as a sign that their ancestors were unhappy. What should they do? The men had held their people's cultural visual language by inscribing, etching bamboo pipes and tattooing young men for male initiation. Now, they thought the ancestors might be appeased by a highly unusual and dramatic transfer of major cultural knowledge to women. They would transfer their cultural knowledge onto *nioge*/tapa, thus making women the main interpreters of Omie visual culture today.

When David Baker, a prolific collector, came across Omie tapa around 2002, he was astounded. In 2006 Baker organised the first Omie tapa exhibition at Annandale Galleries in Sydney. It was a hit. The Omie decided to go straight to the international, indigenous, fine arts market, bypassing their own country. This, however, exposed the Omie to challenges and exploitation they could not understand.

On our first meeting, when I was invited to their nearest villages, Asafa and Godibehi, I offered to help.

At that stage only women created *nioge*, but as I created more opportunities to exhibit, women welcomed a few men into their *nioge* cohort. These men are usually the sons, husbands and family members of the significant original female cohort who exhibited in 2006.

In 2019 I curated their first exhibition in Brisbane. In 2021, their first and only travelling exhibition, titled *Sihot'e Nioge—When Skirts Become Artworks*, opened at Lismore Regional Gallery NSW before it toured to seven mainly regional galleries in Queensland. The last venue proposed is the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait—closer to home.

Omie tapa is remarkable for many reasons. At the beginning of time, the first man who arrived on earth asked the first woman to make tapa so they could become man and wife—a sacred act, making

them the progenitors of Omie society. The first tapa was soaked in mud.

Two styles developed: grey mud-soaked appliquéd tapa, the other painted on the base cloth. The breadth of their iconography and imagery is vast; their compositional design elements are equally diverse, surpassing all traditional tapa from across the Pacific. Their infinite colour range made from natural plant materials is bountiful. Plants in all their glory, while being the substance of coloured paints, reveal themselves as edible plants, fruit, bark designs, tree branches, flowers and more. Omie imagery is infinite. Omie tapa artists look at the minutiae of the natural world as far as the stars and moon.

Centipedes and caterpillars form lines; grub, spider and dwarf cassowary eggs are represented by black dots; bird feathers open; fish gills and human ears, dragonflies and spider webs, pig tusks, bird beaks and jaw bones all multiply on the surfaces of beaten bark. Much of it is sacred. Bamboo is represented in cross sections and cut pieces. It was there on the first day the Omie arrived on earth as part of the original coupling. Unfurling ferns are often represented as the bellybutton tattoos boys were given to become men.

The mountains they live in are ever-present; the grid patterns represent pathways both literal and esoteric, with repetition providing a contemporary feel. Lizard and eel backbones form grid patterns, while mountains, represented by black triangles, form border designs. Totem imagery is common. Descendants utilise them in various ways, creating a staggering wealth of artistic talents.

There are protocols for making and keeping *nioge*/tapa safe, but how these have entered the wider world beyond their comprehension is a continuing concern for them. Unfortunately, as I must retire, the Omie tapa makers are looking for a replacement. Can you help in any way?

I am retiring, and prices for the tapa have been lowered this year. You can enjoy Omie tapa by visiting their *nioge* at Baboa Gallery at The Gap in Brisbane by appointment only. Please contact me on 0401 309 694 or email: joangwinter@gmail.com. •



A Dragon Nightmare

CHRIS WARRILLOW

IT WAS ON AN AIR NIUGINI flight in 1981 when I recalled events of more than 20 years before. I was reading the inflight magazine *Paradise* (No. 30, July 1981), and an article by Roy D Mackay (then Superintendent of the Baiyer River Wildlife Sanctuary) was titled 'Dragons'. It described lizards found in PNG. One such creature was Salvadori's Monitor (*Varanus Salvadori*), or Papuan monitor, also known as the 'tree-climbing crocodile'.

In late 1959 soon after I had arrived in Kairuku, on Yule Island, I heard tales of tree-climbing crocodiles that lived in the rainforests on the mainland. It was said that, such was their size, they sometimes captured and ate domestic pigs.

Such 'native myths' were, at the time, taken with a grain of salt. There was no easy way to research such rumours. Those were the days before Internet and we certainly did not have any reference library! Communications were unreliable and expensive.

Like all outstations, Kairuku's only speedy communication with the outside world was by way of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs' Crammond two-way radio. Outstations were allotted two 10–15-minute schedules (skeds) a day in which to send and receive radiograms at sixpence a word or have a pre-booked 'conversation' at five shillings a minute.

After leaving Kairuku I soon forgot about those myths and the related stories until I read Mackay's 1981 article. It, and further research (including the 1972 *Encyclopaedia of Papua and New Guinea*), revealed that Salvadori's Monitor was probably the longest lizard in the world. A 'reliable report' cites a length of 4.75 metres, but the average length of an adult is just over 2.5 metres. However, two thirds of its body length consists of its tail. It does climb trees and sometimes lies in wait, on a branch, to catch a bird or drop onto prey moving along the ground below.

I had asked my Assistant District Officer, Ken Brown, about these 'monsters'. He laughed and said, 'Of course I've heard! Maybe the locals are trying to intimidate you, young fella.' He then went on to relate the following story.

During the first half of 1958 *Mekeo* speaking people visiting Kairuku from the mainland spread rumours of a child having been taken by a tree-climbing crocodile. It was said that the mother and child were in a garden next to the forest and the mother was cutting down a bunch of bananas. Hearing a scream she turned and 'saw a dragon run off, into the jungle, with her child in its jaws'.

In May 1958, Cadet Patrol Officer Ian Gibbins conducted a routine census patrol of the Bush Mekeo Census Division. In addition to issuing written Patrol Instructions, Ken Brown verbally instructed Ian to investigate the rumours and in any case find out as much as possible about these strange creatures.

Ian left Kairuku on 14 May and returned on 3 June. He questioned people closely at every village and became convinced that some sort of large dragon did exist. However, in regard to the missing child he was always told that it had occurred 'in the next village'. He was unable to obtain any reliable evidence in regard to the matter.

During his stays in villages and whilst walking from one to another, Ian asked to be shown where these creatures had been seen. A number of sites were inspected and on a couple of nights he was taken to places in the jungle where one might be found—but without success.

One night, during the last week of his patrol, Ian went to bed on his canvas bed-sleeve (*bed seil*). It was very early morning when, tucked between two sheets, he felt the dragon which had got under the mosquito net and was clawing at his neck. Despite the darkness he could see its mouth and sharp teeth inches from his face.

Issuing a shriek and suddenly fully awake, Ian grasped at his throat and grabbed a tiny mouse exploring the hairs of his lower neck. •

Author's Note: Unfortunately, the activities of Malaysian loggers in the forests of southern PNG are causing loss of habitat. This, along with smuggling of captured creatures for the overseas pet-trade market, is leading to the Monitor's demise.

Surviving the Tari Gap, Papua New Guinea

Part One of the story of one pilot's
miraculous escape from a crash
in an infamous jungle

RICHARD BROOMHEAD

Between 1965 and 1996, there were 685 accidents (as opposed to incidents) involving aircraft in Papua New Guinea, that led to 467 fatalities. Most of these accidents were the result of controlled flight into terrain in single-engine aircraft.

Hundreds of aircraft lost during World War II are still unaccounted for. One problem was inaccurate maps. Still, there are currently no World Aeronautical Charts available for PNG either from Civil Aviation Safety Australia or the PNG equivalent. Local operators produce their own.

The New Guinea bush does not give up its dead easily. Tall trees, growing to well over 100 feet high, form a canopy, under which grows a second layer of trees, reaching to perhaps 60 feet. Below that, rotting tree trunks and vegetation produce a deep pile. Once an aircraft falls into this tangle it becomes almost impossible to spot from the air. Search parties on the ground usually rely on the smell of aviation fuel to find the wreckage.

Over the same period, 101 deaths involving 28 aircraft were the result of trying to fly through the high-altitude gaps or passes in the ranges, which rise to nearly 15,000 feet. Although the average sector length in PNG flying is less than 30 minutes, it frequently involves negotiating one or more of these gaps. The pilot flies through them on the way out to destinations and through them again on the way back to base.



In the Southern Highlands, the Tari Gap, between Mendi and Tari (a distance of 60 miles) accounted for seven of those crashed aircraft. At over 9,200 feet, and between mountains of nearly 12,000 feet, it was a difficult gap to negotiate in a normally-aspirated aircraft with a full load.

In the wet season it was a ghastly, haunted place in the afternoon. Often, the pilot had to climb up one side of the gap in swirling mist and rain with only 100 feet between the cloud base and the trees and then dive down into the valley on the other side in the same conditions.

The advice given to new pilots on flying gaps usually mentioned approaching at a 45-degree angle, ensuring that the valley on the other side is in full view, clearing the gap with a few hundred feet to spare to counter any downdrafts, etc. The fact is that if these rules were followed in the wet then no flying would have been done. There were few good roads through the Highlands until well into the 1980s. The outstations relied on air transport for all supplies. Everything had to be flown in, including fuel, boxes of nails, roofing iron, food, clothing and the mail.

Consequently, there was always subtle pressure on the pilots to 'get the mail through'. One of the hardest things to drill into new pilots was that there was no stigma attached to aborting a flight and coming back to base with the load. Flying was generally called off for the day after the second abort.

In 1966 I was the first pilot to be based in Mendi, in the Southern Highlands, with a C185 belonging to Territory Airlines Ltd. On a number of occasions I scared the living daylights out of myself in the Tari gap. Now-retired pilot John Absolon is the only pilot to survive a crash there. I was on leave of absence from Qantas at the time and was involved in the search.

John joined Talair in September of 1975 and was posted straight to Mendi. By the time of the accident, 8 January 1976, he had been thoroughly checked out with the usual five checks over the route and three strip checks, fortunately before the onset of the wet, which could make the same route appear completely different. At the time of his accident, John had about 200 hours ex-Mendi, with a total of 1800 hours.

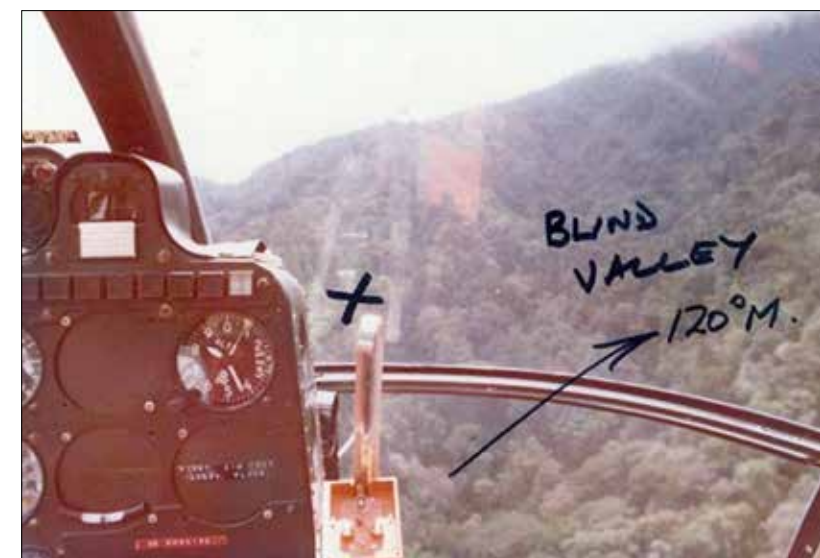
John recalls:

That day was typical of the wet season, with the murk closing in around midday. The five Mendi-based pilots were sitting around the mess waiting for flying to be called off for the day, when the Port Manager came in with a request for an urgent flight to Koroba with two drums of diesel to supply the station generator. No one wanted to go west of the Tari Gap at that time of day but being the new boy and eager to please, I put my hand up.

On doing the pre-flight, I drained five small fire buckets full of water from the wing tanks. Obviously the seals were faulty.

I took off and then quickly offloaded the drums at Koroba (ten minutes flying time from the gap) and returned via the same route. I had to climb up to the Tari Gap from the west under almost full power, as the cloud base was just about in the trees and it had started to rain. When I got to the gap itself there was just a black wall of rain and mist on the other side. I pulled the aircraft into a steep turn to the right to attempt to go around via the south of Mount Kerewa.

Just then the engine faltered and I lost about 50 percent of my power, probably the result of water in the fuel. I instinctively rolled the wings level and in doing so the engine ran smoothly again but I finished up off the usual escape route



TOP: Aft fuselage

BELOW: The crash site (marked with an 'X')

to the south-west. I was dodging in and out of rain squalls and mist with the cloud almost in the treetops. Descending rapidly down the slopes of Mount Ne I found my forward way blocked and I turned left, entering what I thought was an escape route but what turned out to be a blind valley.

Suddenly, a large treetop loomed out of the murk and I had nowhere to go. I threw the aircraft into a steep turn to the right but the right wing caught the top of the tree.

All I remember from the prang is the aircraft going round and round like a spinning top, huge g-forces and foliage flying everywhere; incredible noise. Then no movement, only silence. •

This article was first published by Qantas Airways in its inflight magazine in 2009. It has been reproduced with the permission of the author, then-Captain Richard Broomhead, and the photos are courtesy of his brother, Ken Broomhead. Part Two will be published in the next issue of PNG KUNDU.



Paul Oates at Pindiu in 1970

A New Guinea Christmas

PAUL OATES

During a police investigation in 1974, in the Sialum Patrol Post station office, I asked the village 'komiti' for his Village Book. This is the grey-blue book presented to each village on first contact, and into which an entry was supposed to be made whenever some government activity occurred.

The Village Book was a running commentary of each government visit containing notes by government officers on any important points to be noted or followed up by subsequent patrols. By the end of World War II, most villages in 'Controlled Territories' had been issued with one of these books.

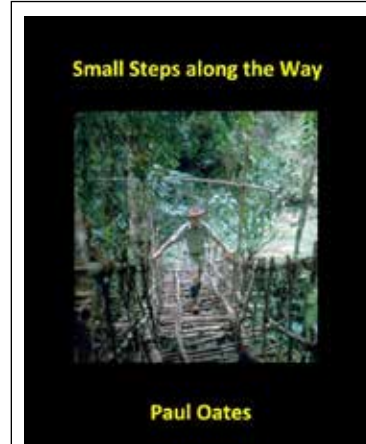
The Village Book for Gitua (a coastal village north of Sialum) contained comments going back to 1944 when the Japanese had been withdrawing towards Madang. An Assistant District Officer (ADO) had written about his conduct of the first village census after the Japanese had been forced out and had signed his entry, 'Captain/Assistant District Officer'. *Kiaps* in those days had a military rank equivalent (either army or, in the case of some coastwatchers, naval), and it was thought this might help if they were captured, that they might be treated as a prisoner of war rather than shot as a spy for operating behind enemy lines.

The Captain/ADO's report noted an increase in the population and recorded various misdemeanours that he had investigated. The entry also reported that the village was actively preparing for a special feast, celebrating the collecting of its share of the annual appearance of sea worms. Noting the date of the ADO's entry was near the current date (November), I asked the old village 'komiti' if the feast was still celebrated and he assured me it was. Later that day, I buttonholed the village 'komiti' from Kwamkwam, just to the south of Sialum. Would I be able to witness this feast when it was due in roughly a week's

time? After some discussion, it was decided it was possible for me to attend, given that, as a white man, any taboos associated with the celebration would not apply.

The villagers all along the coast were keeping a close watch on the rising of the moon, the timing of which apparently triggered the appearance of the worms. When the moon rose late over the sea, not until about half past seven, the worms would be caught from the time the sun went down to the time the moon appeared. Just prior to this time, everyone was warned to stay away from the nearby rivers that ran down from the mountains and emptied into the sea. Traditionally, going near the rivers at this time would cause death. The village people said that it was rumoured that the worms came down the rivers and travelled into the sea. Maybe the 'worms' were small eels or elvers (baby eels), I wondered.

Not long after I enquired about attending the ceremony, people sent word that that night was probably 'the night'. Towards late afternoon, my wife and I walked along the beach from our house to where villagers waited with canoes. Each dugout was fitted with an outrigger and, in the centre of the canoe, was an empty half 200-litre drum tied to the poles joining the canoe to the outrigger. Inside was a stack of coconut frond torches and a hand net made from mosquito netting. With each canoe team was a young girl holding a lighted torch (*bum bum*), a young man to operate the net (*numbum*), and a small boy whose duties included paddling the canoe and emptying the net into the drum.



This story is taken from an excerpt of Paul Oates' book, *Small Steps along the Way*, available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com.au/Small-Steps-Along-Paul-Oates/dp/1707077932>

In the tropics, the time between the sun going down and mosquitoes coming out is possibly the most peaceful period of the day. The waves from Vitiaz Strait rolled in, expending most of their energy on the reef before gently surging towards shore. At regular intervals, inside this reef, islets rose above the high-water mark: the worms were supposed to arrive through the gaps between them.

Towards sunset, canoes were launched as the young boys paddled towards these gaps in the reef. Hoping to observe the complete performance closely, I asked if I could accompany a canoe and, after a short discussion, it was agreed that I could. I was welcomed aboard a canoe and the young occupants paddled me to the reef where the rest of the flotilla awaited. Standing on a sharp coral island, I was surprised to see only teenagers and unmarried young people in the canoes. I was informed that the married or elderly could not participate in this part of the ceremony as their genitals would swell, causing death. Seeing the look on my face, all those around hastily assured me this did not apply to white men.

These thoughts were terminated abruptly when a young man suddenly yelled out, '*Em nau, em pesman bilong ol.*' (Aha, there's the first of them now!)

My young friends called me to where they stood in about two feet of water on the reef's sandy top. At first, all I saw was a brown thread corkscrewing through the water. Then the water came alive. As the tide flowed in and the water reached my waist, hundreds and then thousands of worms arrived, clouding the water. Some worms were as long as 30 centimetres, while some were just five to 10 centimetres. The worms were about two to three millimetres in width, some rusty brown, some azure blue. It was not a pleasant feeling as worms slid around my body. I joined a team in a nearby canoe.

The technique for catching the worms was well known. Girls would light a torch and hold the glowing end just above the water. The flickering light seemed to attract the worms as they formed a seething mass under torchlight. Young men would scoop them up, handing a full net to the young boy

Contributors' Guidelines

We welcome factual and anecdotal stories of various lengths pertaining to Papua New Guinea, information about members, events, letters and enquiries, PNG book reviews, vales and reunions—a diverse range of material is accepted from members, non-members and PNG citizens.

• **Contributions to be submitted via email as MS Word documents:** They must be checked, and typed in a plain typeface, with the author's name included. Appropriate references are required if the article has been taken from a website or another primary source. PDF text files and handwritten or printed submissions cannot be accepted.

• **Length of contributions:** Articles 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 restraints. Vales are normally about 300–500 words, and longer ones may be reduced and the full version added to the website. Usually, news items, letters and book reviews should not exceed 500 words.

• **Photographs & Images:** Scans should be emailed as JPGs (approx. 300 dpi / 12 cm wide), with appropriate acknowledgement and captions. They should be provided as separate files and not embedded in the document. Unfortunately, slides or original photos cannot be accepted.

• **Front Covers:** We are always interested in receiving appropriate, copyright-free images that suit the format for this position. Specifications required are JPG / 300 dpi / 220 x 310 mm (min.) portrait size. Caption and photographer information must also be included.

• **Events Roundup & Diary:** If you have an activity to advertise, promote or report, please send the information as soon as possible for inclusion. Events are also listed on our website at *Resources>Events*.

• **All submissions are subject to editorial consideration:** However, we reserve the right to reject, reduce and/or postpone contributions to following issues subject to time and space, and there may be times when your patience is appreciated—however, members may add their stories and photos directly to our website. We try to represent all submissions respectfully, and the journal supports the use of both *Pidgin* and *Tok Pisin*.



**Please send your contributions to
editor@pngaa.net
by the Copy Deadline
on the masthead page of each issue**

in the canoe, who would then tip the squirming mass into an empty drum before quickly handing back the net. If the torch flared, worms would corkscrew away, so a steady light was essential to catching them.

By now, it was pitch black, and all along the coast, as far as I could see, lights flickered as each village proceeded to glean their share of the harvest. Gentle waves rocking the canoe helped create a surreal picture. Torchlights reflected off the surface in flashes of yellow, red, blue and purple as minute water creatures emitted their own blue-green phosphorescence. Combined with the phosphorescent slime from the worms, it was a memorable sight. As nets full of worms were tipped into the drums, phosphorescent slime drooled down the outside of the containers and clung to the bottom of the nets.

The netting went on for about two hours before the moon rose. As each drum filled, the canoe was paddled to the nearby beach, where waiting adults tipped the worms into saucepans.

At about eight o'clock, the moon rose and the worms disappeared. Everyone assembled on the beach to stuff the worms into lengths of hollow bamboo. These would be heated slowly on an open fire for about a day until the contents became a solidified, translucent mass to be eaten. The smell of cooking worms was very pungent. I politely thanked everyone and walked home. Before we left, I scooped up a few worms of each colour into a small bottle of seawater to study in daylight.

The next morning, much to my dismay, the worms in the bottle had all died. However, at the bottom of the bottle was a layer of blue eggs. I assumed that the blue worms might be female and the rusty brown ones male. I also assumed that the worms were coming to lay their eggs in the sand on the beach and then die, having completed their life cycle.

Before we left the beach that night, the villagers explained that this was their Christmas—*Em Krismas bilong mipela*. For a week after this feast, they would do no work in the village gardens or at the government station. •

Planting Memories: A Settler's Life on the Sogeri Plateau

ANTHEA MATLEY

**Returning to Port Moresby in 2018
PART TWO**

During dinner that evening in Port Moresby, the hotel manager, an Australian, approached us. Average height, with grey curly hair and wearing a grey uniform of a short-sleeved shirt and skirt, she wanted to know if we enjoyed our meal and whether the wait staff had been helpful. Her smile was strained as if it was something she wasn't used to. The staff kept well clear, I noticed. We assured her we were very satisfied with our wait staff, which seemed to relax her as her shoulders dropped a little and she became almost chatty.

'What brings you to Port Moresby?'

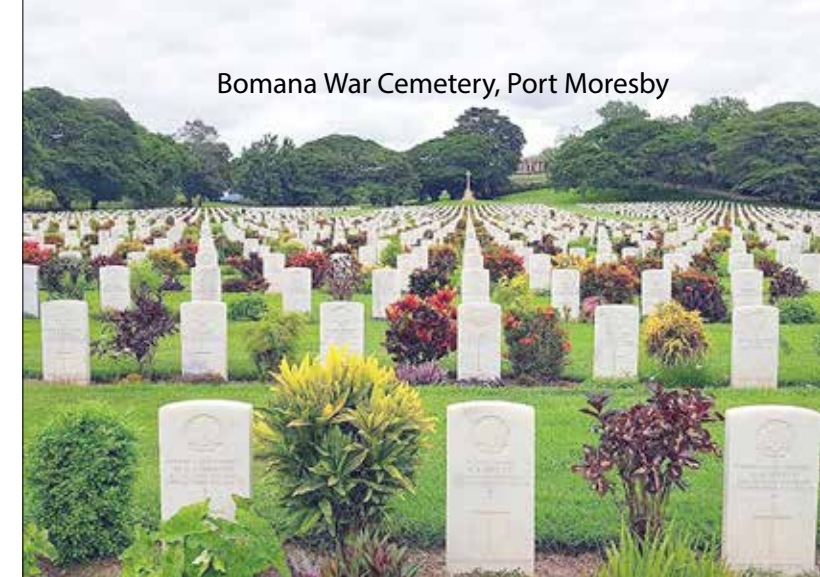
'A holiday,' we replied.

She gave a humourless laugh, more a snort really and looked incredulous. 'No one comes here for a holiday. There's nothing to do.' She laughed. 'My contract finishes at the end of the year, and I'm looking forward to going back to Australia.'

She was right about there being nothing for visitors to do. There were no boats to hire for a day trip to any of the shimmeringly, inviting nearby islands, the museum was closed for an upgrade, and it seemed there were no public parks nearby.

Unbeknownst to us, one of the hotel desk staff arranged for a car and driver to take us for a tour of the city the next day. Ben was short, looked about 40 with thick wiry hair and he was full of energy and enthusiasm. He had stuck the Mt Hagen flag prominently on the bonnet of his dilapidated Toyota to show how proud he was of his region. Ben showed us the local markets, downtown city, and suburban shopping centres, all of which were doing a brisk trade. He pointed out all the high-security fences surrounding almost every building in the downtown area. They were mainly hotels,

Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby



banks, businesses and offices. He then drove us to the suburb of Waigani to visit Parliament House, adjacent to the Supreme Court Buildings. It's a stunningly beautiful building with its modern architecture blended with ancient tribal designs.

A four-lane, one-kilometre long bitumen road for use by government officials only led to the entrance. Ben laughed as we shook our heads: 'This Government is pretending we're a first-world country when really, we are a third-world country.'

We felt safe and comfortable in Moresby, just as I had done when growing up, but we didn't risk going out after dark. We sat on the hotel's balcony each evening, overlooking the harbour and the street below. We watched the sun setting behind the hills and mountains, lighting the edges of rain-promising clouds. The lights from the surrounding buildings and streetlights splashed their reflections on the calm harbour.

On the fourth day, our driver and vehicle arrived at the hotel with a flash four-wheel-drive, the type used in Australian cities by parents ferrying their children to school. Not quite the robust vehicle I knew we would need to tackle those expected and often washed-out roads, but it would have to do. We were running out of time.

'I'm Graham,' announced the 183-centimetre, broad-shouldered, bald man, holding out his hand and smiling widely. His dark skin gleamed against his black suit, white shirt, and company tie. Despite the heat, I didn't doubt the heavy jacket also concealed a small handgun. We shook hands with Graham, introduced ourselves, and he invited me to sit in the front of the air-conditioned vehicle to get the best view. Graham was interested in why we

had come to Port Moresby and keen to see a part of his country he hadn't yet visited. We drove through an ever-expanding city. The suburbs were now overtaking what was once the countryside.

The Sogeri road begins at the 9 Mile settlement, northeast of Moresby along the Hubert Murray Highway, and is accessed by taking a right-hand exit at the big roundabout. So much had changed. Major settlements bordered the road and the streets teemed with people. This is the road that in the Second World War, soldiers from engineering, ordnance, signals, survey, transport, medical and convalescent units, travelled on and camped beside. Around three kilometres from here, we could see in the distance the Hombrom and Wariarata bluffs of the Owen Stanley Range.

The Bomana War Cemetery was close by, and we took a short break to wander through this beautiful and immaculately kept cemetery. Many of those who died fighting in Papua and Bougainville were brought here to be buried. Local staff maintain it and the garden, which is financed by the Office of Australian War Graves in Canberra. We took a contemplative walk through simple wrought-iron gates onto a grass forecourt and climbed a short flight of steps to the Stone of Remembrance, an altar of pink stone. Just beyond, on gentle slopes were the graves, marked by rows and rows of white marble headstones that stand stark against the bright green of the lawns. In the centre, the focus of the whole cemetery, stood the Cross of Sacrifice, made from the same stone as the altar. We were the only ones visiting that morning. The tropical plants and magnificent rainforest trees added to the peaceful setting.

We continued our drive on a well-made bitumen road passing through a mixture of scrubby-looking trees: cycads, eucalypts and tall, blade-like grasses. Though now sealed, it was still the narrow road I remembered. A red dirt road back then, it was regularly washed out during torrential and seasonal monsoon rains.

The road from Bomana to Rouna Falls was dubbed the 'Snake Road' by Second World War soldiers as it has a few steep S bends. We travelled

along the Laloki Valley, which rises and narrows at its peak, ending at the base of the Rouna Falls where two familiar massive bluffs dominate—Hombrom and Wariarata. One is a spur, and the other is the point where the 30-kilometre-long Astrolabe Range terminates. As we climbed the valley the trees increased in size and pockets of rainforest trees appeared dominated by high green grass. The familiar large, black volcanic boulders appeared, scattered throughout the landscape as we approached the Devil's Elbow, the first of the S-bends. The road twisted around the mountainside until we reached the falls.

Graham parked the car, and we took a two-minute walk down to the lookout to view the falls cascading to a rock pool below. From here we could see tropical rainforest descending from the escarpments on both sides of the valley into the deep shadowed gullies. Other pockets of rainforest were surrounded by small trees and grassland, almost as if they had been deliberately landscaped. The thunderous noise from the falls blocked out all other sounds. The sky was overcast with low, rain-filled clouds, and though it was cooler up here, it was still hot and muggy.

Travelling a little further on to the Kokoda Trail Monument, we passed the turnoff to the Varirata National Park, but we didn't have time to visit it. Soon we reached the Laloki River and the third bridge that spans it. Early in the war, engineers built a low-level steel and concrete structure that remains today. This was the site of Ian Loudon's accident. On crossing this bridge, we stopped to view the Kokoda Trail Monument, a simple stone cairn, then bumped and wound our way through undulating hills, lightly wooded with small trees and banksias, to Owers' Corner. Most of the once thickly forested hills I remembered had been cleared over the years for communal gardens. People grow a wide range of tropical fruits and vegetables for themselves and to sell at village markets.

We drove on through Sogeri, a formerly thriving town that used to host agricultural shows, sports events, and gymkhanas. Now, apart from the primary school, we could only see a couple of

roadside stalls selling tropical fruits and vegetables. There were other buildings, but our limited time prevented further exploration. Graham was only familiar with the road to Sogeri but with the help of a detailed map, we guided him onto a narrow, dirt track with deep potholes and washouts. I thought it was more like a creek bed than a road. Graham was gripping the steering wheel and saying at frequent intervals: 'We'll have to turn back; the road is too bad.'

The four-wheel drive was barely managing the huge potholes. If it had been raining, the unsealed road without a four-wheel drive would have been impassable. During the plantation days, the managers kept this road graded and in good condition. Repairs were constant due to the regular heavy rains washing it out.

'It's not far,' we encouraged him. 'Let's go a little further.'

Around gentle, twisting bends of the open grassland, we drove the route I used to travel every day to primary school.

'Do you remember this?' Graham kept asking and looking at me to see my reaction. I did, and I didn't. It felt and looked familiar, yet strange at times. There were more houses now, and the landscape looked open and less covered than the landscape of my memories.

We passed the old Mororo plantation on the left, and I could just see a house on a hill in the distance. Perhaps it was the same one my father had built, but I couldn't be sure. A few kilometres on, we approached Eilogo. It had taken us about an hour to get here. We could see the tops of the rubber trees through the thick jungle plants that had reclaimed the land. Apart from a fruit seller at Sogeri, we hadn't seen any other people or vehicles.

On reaching Eilogo homestead, Graham parked the car and a young couple appeared with half a dozen children. Graham spoke to them in Motu, explaining why we were there, and asked if it was all right for us to look around and take photos. The couple were extremely welcoming and happy to show me around. The children looked unsure and hung back but still seemed keen to find out

what was happening. The terraced gardens my mother had planted and tended were long gone and replaced with long grass. I had expected this from social media posts of other expats who had gone back to their childhood homes and reported what they'd seen.

But everything about the house felt familiar. The dining room had been portioned off with tin sheeting to create an extra room. I couldn't see into the bedrooms as they had been rented out and had locks on them. The concrete floor surrounding a central courtyard where we used to ride our bikes, still looked freshly polished. The teak pillars holding the roof seemed sturdy enough to last a hundred years.

The courtyard, still open to the sky, used to have a garden full of ferns and orchids. During heavy storms and torrential rain, those concrete floors would become small rivers as the rain pelted down in centimetres. The kitchen, now a shell, still had the remnants of the wood stove my mother cooked on. The tub and toilet in the bathroom were still in place, but no longer in use as the room was being used for storage.

Memories flooded back. I remembered one evening when my sister locked the door, and she, my brother and I (who all shared the bath) slid across the concrete floor on our bare bums, getting up and running back to the tub to push off and repeat it. It was fun until my mother insisted the door be unlocked. I also remembered coming off my bike and hitting my head on the corner of a concrete plinth. The gash needed stitches but because we were so far from a hospital, my mother spent the night holding the two pieces of skin together until they knitted.

This is where I was born and raised and though the sense of familiarity was strong, the house no longer had any sense of home. I left feeling contented and grateful for the opportunity to revisit the centre of so many of my childhood memories. •

Editor's Note:

This article is included in the back of Anthea Matley's book, *Planting Memories A Settler's Life on the Sogeri Plateau*, and continues from Part One, published in the December 2024 issue of *PNG KUNDU*.



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 your obituaries and tributes for the next issue to the editor by 18 July 2025, if not before, the Copy Deadline for the next issue: editor@pngaa.net

COLLIS, Norma d. 23 January 2025

Norma married Ted Collis in 1954 in Forbes, NSW, while Ted was enjoying six months' leave from the Territory of PNG (TPNG). After Ted's leave, Norma travelled to PNG with Ted as a new bride to the Territory. She lived at the Yalu Department of Forests sawmill until 1960 when Ted moved to Lae to work in the government sawmill. Their daughter Cheryl and son Greg were born in Lae in 1955 and 1956.

When the Lae sawmill closed in 1962 and became the Lae market, Ted and Norma, with their family, moved to Bulolo where Ted became the manager of the TPNG Forests Nursery.

In 1964 Norma began working at the Bulolo Forestry College under principal, Joe Havel. Norma was Joe's first clerical assistant, working at the college for nine years. The college's students with a grade 10 education came from Laos, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and PNG.

The establishment of the Bulolo Forestry College in 1962 saw the commencement of formal technical training for Papua New Guineans. Initially,



Norma at Bulolo Forestry College
(Collis Family archives)

training entailed a two-year certificate course. A three-year diploma course was introduced in 1967, with the first graduates commencing their fieldwork in 1970. Albert Kairo was the college's first Papua New Guinean lecturer appointed under Joe Havel. Bulolo Forestry College's first principal was Joe Havel, followed by Bill Finlayson, then Leon Clifford, Robin Angus, and later, John Godlee.

In 1974 Norma moved to the forest station where she was employed as a pay officer under District Forester, Dick McCarthy. Norma gave so much for the PNG Forestry students in Bulolo from 1964 to 1975 when in December of 1975, she and Ted retired to Bribie Island in Queensland.

News of Norma's passing came from her daughter, Cheryl Collis.

Richard McCarthy

KAUAGE, Elisabet d. 5 February 2025

Papua New Guinea lost a national treasure with the passing of renowned artist Elisabet Kauage, following a short illness. Elisabet was born in Kambu, Kerowagi District, Chimbu Province in 1958. She moved to Port Moresby in 1983 and commenced painting in 1986. Elisabet was self-taught, learning by observing her late husband, Mathius Kauage, draw and paint. Mathius was a pioneer of Papua New Guinea's contemporary art movement.

During the 1990s Elisabet regularly attended weekend craft markets held in the grounds of Ela



Elisabet Kauage
(photo courtesy Don Wotton)

Murray International School at Port Moresby's Ela Beach, where she sold her paintings alongside her late husband and fellow self-taught artists, such as the late John Siune and Oscar Towa. This she did while keeping a close eye on her growing children.

Elisabet's detailed observations of everyday life and interactions among her fellow citizens and PNG's expatriate community provided rich and endless subject matter for her artworks. Her exuberant paintings in the naive style, which typically featured political narratives, Bible stories and characters grasping new technologies, form a wonderful socioeconomic record of everyday life in Papua New Guinea.

Various exhibitions of Elisabet's artwork in Australia, England, Germany, Italy and elsewhere overseas during the past 30 years throw a spotlight on contemporary art in PNG. She inspired many talented women lacking formal education in PNG and the wider Pacific region to pursue visual arts as a career.

In her later years, Elisabet

could be found selling her paintings outside the Holiday Inn in Hohola, or at various other craft markets around the city of Port Moresby, dispensing wisdom and leaving a calming influence in her wake. Despite her shy façade, an aura of warmth and hospitality defined Elisabet's personality as the unofficial matriarch of PNG's contemporary art movement.

Elisabet's sons, Chris, Andrew, John, Willey and Michael, have also forged careers as artists, but not her three daughters. Elisabet was the only female in her family to take up the brush.

Her enduring legacy lies in her artworks which can be found hanging in private homes and prestigious galleries around the world, including Queensland's State Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Her work brings joy, colour and vibrancy to the lives of everyone privileged to view her paintings.

Hers was a long and productive life. Vale Elisabet.

**Mi paint—em tasol
Don Wotton**

VICKERS, Dr Wesley d. 6 May 2022

Wes Vickers was exceptional even at a young age. Born in Brisbane 27 August 1937, Wes spent his young life in various locations across QLD and NSW to which his parents', Harold and Gladys Vickers, Salvation Army ministry placements, took them. Wes was also an accomplished musician,

playing the piano, the organ, the flute, guitar and recorder, gaining high qualifications in performance and theory. He was an avid reader, this leading him towards a future as a doctor in overseas countries through reading the teachings and reverence for life of Dr Albert Schweitzer.

After two years as a boarder at Scots College in Warwick, Wes began medical studies at the University of Queensland. In his third year, a cadetship with the Department of Territories offered by the then Director of the Department of Health in Papua New Guinea, Dr Roy Scragg, enabled him to plan his life and begin his journey to PNG.

As part of the cadetship, Wes accumulated a knowledge of Papua New Guinea's medical needs by spending his 1960 and 1961 Christmas university vacations in Port Moresby, Mt Hagen and the Eastern Highlands. Recognising a future lack of laboratory support in remote locations, Wes took an additional year during medical school to complete a Bachelor of Science and buy his own microscope and many medical instruments in the areas of ophthalmology, paediatrics and obstetrics.

His letters home, descriptive and full of excitement, described Mt Hagen Hospital as constructed from bush materials, just three wards and an administration area. Patients were often moved outside for ward rounds where the air was fresh. Dr Vladas Ivinskis, a Lithuanian, was the sole medical

officer for a population of 320,000. In one letter Wes described an experience of a retrieval team to the crash site of a Norseman and collecting body parts in butter boxes.

Wes and his wife were married in Sydney in early 1963 in his father's church at Neutral Bay, flying to Hobart the next day so Wes could complete a year of Medical Residency at The Royal Hobart Hospital. Their next move was the big one to PNG, arriving with a ten-week-old baby son, David, and three suitcases.

Wes's first posting was as a medical officer at Bogia in Madang District, an outstation 13 kilometres from Manam Island, with its two active summit craters and frequent mild to moderate eruptions. Wes was in his element! He patrolled in remote areas sometimes with District Officer Peter Sheekey and a police escort along with medical and personal supplies packed in tin trunks slung under wooden poles carried by villagers. They slept in kunai *haus kiaps*, and at times they used dugout canoes with outboard motors to move along crocodile-infested waterways, usually accompanied by Casey, the Irish Terrier Wes inherited from a dying copra plantation manager, Claude Rouse.

Other duties included visits to mission stations to foster good relationships and to check on their needs for the administration. Wes immunised children, overnights at remote aid posts, missions and plantations, conducted



Dr Wes Vickers

clinics, checked on spleen sizes for malaria, and looked after any inpatients at Bogia. When on patrol, messages would be relayed via the outstation two-way radio or by a villager bringing back a letter.

Manam Island was the site for Wes's first exhumation and autopsy, carried out under the coconut palms and watched by hushed and curious onlookers, all with handkerchiefs tied tightly around their noses. This day was one of so many memorable and unusual days in the life of an outstation doctor.

At Bogia the hospital mainly provided outpatient services with the occasional emergency surgery. Sister Gwen Sheekey ran the Infant Welfare clinics and delivered more babies there in 1964 than Madang Hospital did. Gwen, the widow of Peter Sheekey, now lives in Sydney.

Wes was asked to move into Madang shortly after being summoned there to give evidence at a Supreme Court murder trial. This was a change from

outstation life. His duties were now in wards and the operating theatre, delivering babies, plus hospital governance in his role of Superintendent of Madang Hospital. Wes also started sailing on Madang Harbour as regularly as he could.

In 1966, after the Department of Health accepted Wes's request to further his postgraduate studies in Public Health at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, he fell ill with malaria. This made him a curiosity for the local General Practitioner and University hospital staff. No one could remember when they had seen a patient with malaria, let alone a doctor who had forgotten to take his antimalarial drugs.

A new PNG posting followed, to Mendi, a settlement in the Southern Highlands of PNG laid out around the airstrip. From here Wes administered 12 much smaller outstations with aid posts, and small hospitals in Tari and Ialibu, accessed mostly by air with some Land Rover travel.

Their daughter Sue was born in Goroka in March 1967. They lived close to Mendi Hospital, rather than as part of the hospital compounds in Bogia and Madang.

During the Mendi posting, in addition to ward rounds, some surgery and clinics, Wes went to district and regional meetings, with the big push for the road south to Kikori being one of the projects he worked on with other Heads of Department. Wes prepared papers for the World Health Organisation and the

World Bank, and I recall his mind literally buzzed with ideas and planning on how to take PNG and the Southern Highlands ahead. Medicine was only ever one part of his life and thinking. There was always a big picture.

In 1969, after two years in Mendi, Wes undertook further postgraduate study, this time in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, and was back in Mendi mid-December. On arrival, Wes was met by a senior army officer and flown to various locations to assess major crises. The Southern Highlands was in the grip of a famine, and a deadly influenza outbreak had already claimed over 2,000 lives. Wes moved quickly from one mode to the next with his medical duties always given top priority.

In April 1972 Wes made a difficult personal and family decision to resign from the department and return to Australia. The news came as a shock to the Director of Public Health in Port Moresby, Dr William (Bill) Symes, who wrote.

As a health administrator, Dr Vickers excelled in planning, organisation, personnel management, appraisal and evaluation. He accepted responsibility and made decisions. His professional judgement was excellent and characterised by objectivity and a careful appraisal of the situation as a whole. No one could question his motivation and dedication to his professional tasks ... or his ability to work with people.

Dr Vickers' resignation, despite offers of promotion, was a blow to

the Department of Public Health. Few doctors of the calibre and personal and professional maturity of Dr Vickers come to work as health administrators in this country.

The years of service in PNG laid strong foundations for what followed. Wes distinguished himself in senior leadership positions with the Health Commission and Department of Health in the NSW Government, working in major health regions—the Hunter, the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands, and Southern Region. Then, when most doctors might have been thinking of retirement, Wes reevaluated his priorities, retrained and worked in Accident and Emergency, then as a GP part time and a career medical officer in a private hospital. He found the move back to face-to-face medicine rewarding.

Medicine and music weren't Wes's only passions. He very much enjoyed quality family time, sailing on Lake Macquarie, obtaining a PADI diving certification, completing a welding course, honing his photographic skills, and breeding and showing Irish Terriers (all related to Casey in PNG). Wes was also a Deputy Rural Fire Captain. He enjoyed a wonderful 16 years on the farm near Robertson in the NSW Southern Highlands where he bred Angus cattle—being a country boy at heart. During those years, Wes also provided mentoring and stability for two young men, Peter and Trent who joined their family.

Cognitive decline led to Wes's moving into residential care for five years, a Memory Support Unit at Frederickton, just outside Kempsey. Wes adapted to the move, mostly believing he worked there. The staff kept a 'special folder of work' clearly marked 'Urgent Attention Dr Vickers'. Wes also played the flute and a recorder with the music team during those years.

Wes died seven weeks after being diagnosed with an aggressive head and neck cancer. Mercifully, he did not know about his medical situation, maintaining a positive and mostly happy disposition in difficult circumstances, usually with an engaging smile.

Many stories were shared by family and friends who travelled from far and wide to Wes's Farewell Celebration in Port Macquarie. Son David, who has lived in Hawaii for 38 years, spoke at the celebration and recalled several PNG anecdotes. Sadly, their daughter Sue died in 2016. Her death was a deep loss for Wes, as it was for the whole family.

Wes's casket was woven from banana and pandanus leaves with a stunning wreath of orchids, Bird of Paradise blooms and ferns. He would have approved as this completed the circle back to PNG. Wes would have also agreed with the words of the Nobel Laureate Tagore that ended the Celebration.

'Farewell my friends, it was beautiful as long as it lasted—the journey of my life.'

Bron Vickers

Isobel Mary Marchment

A Remarkable Life

17 February 1921–16 January 2025

PART ONE

Isobel Marchment wrote a memoir for her 100th birthday. For this tribute I referred to her notes to add to my own anecdotes and memories.

PETER COMERFORD

The remarkable life of Isobel Marchment began on 17 February 1921 in Wiltshire, England at Charlton Park on the estate of the 19th Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, where her mother, Mary Crowther, worked in the dairy and her father, David Marchant, a returned soldier, was a gardener. The couple married in 1915 and had two children, David and Isobel.

It has been said Isobel inherited her determination from her mother and that she was quite adventurous from an early age, prone to wandering and exploring. Village people often were sent the message that if they saw that little Marchment girl they were to take her home. When she was older, the family moved to another large estate, Winterfold, where her father was head gardener. At 5 pm each evening, Mary would blow a whistle, signalling Isobel to stop her wanderings and games and scurry home.



Isobel Marchment at her desk at Madina Girls High School in New Ireland, 1972 (photo by Gordon Doyle)

Isobel contracted glandular tuberculosis in her neck when she was ten years old, an illness that later led to hospitalisation and hampered her chances of winning a scholarship for secondary school. A combination of her mother's determination and the help of David, her older brother, who coached Isobel every night, Isobel passed the entrance examination and began high school in September 1932, later becoming school captain and matriculating.

By 1939 many men were about to enlist just as WWII broke out. This created a shortage of teachers, so Isobel set her eyes on teaching. In 1939 she was accepted into teacher training at Bishop Otter Memorial College in Chichester, Sussex.

As Hitler's armies pushed through Europe, conquering countries in their path and the invasion of Britain was imminent, Isobel, along with other college students, slept in air raid

shelters at night. She recalls the college being strategically in a bad position with an RAF base on one side at Thorney Island and on the other the Tangmere Spitfire base where the war hero, Douglas (Tin Legs Bader) Bader, was in charge.

Isobel's parents in the meantime had moved to the Isle of Wight as Winterfold House was appropriated as a Special Operations Training School for undercover agents heading for German occupied France. One of the agents was Violette Szabo who was awarded the George Cross and was the hero of the book and film 'Carve Her Name with Pride'. When Isobel was headmistress at Madina Girls High School in New Ireland, she often showed the film to the students. It obviously affected her to the extent that she used it as a teaching tool for character-building for female students.

Memories of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and The Blitz,

and the soldiers going away to war remained with Isobel, memories she often shared with students and staff. In 1971 while she was headmistress at Madina, a loud explosion rocked the staff-room. Sitting in her office and visibly shaken, she announced, 'That was a bomb! I will never forget the sound of them.'

Investigations revealed that village women working in their gardens behind the school had found a bomb while digging in their garden to plant sweet potatoes. They handled the discovery in a basic village way by piling wood onto the bomb and lighting a bonfire. The women then retreated to sit under a tree and smoke their brus tobacco and chew betel nut while waiting for the bomb to explode, which it eventually did. Earth and rocks were blasted everywhere leaving a huge smoking crater in the ground. Miraculously no one was killed or injured.

During WWII Isobel's parents lived in a house that faced Portsmouth and Southampton. German planes in their hundreds would fly right over them to bomb those locations and continue on

to bomb London. While staying with her parents, Isobel recalled the battles overhead and running out of the house when a plane with the German swastika flew so low over her head before crashing and bursting into flame in their orchard, so low she clearly saw the pilot's face.

Isobel moved to Devonshire when it was swarming with American troops training to join the British soldiers in the invasion of France, in 1943. She fell in love with an American medic but sadly, after the D-Day Landings, she never heard from him again.

After the war ended, Isobel left England to take up a teaching position at St Margaret's College in Christchurch, New Zealand. It was there she met her lifelong friend and travelling companion, Frances Morris. Isobel followed Frances to Australia and spent some time travelling and working in part-time jobs around Queensland before finding a teaching position at Ascham, an elite independent girls' school in Sydney.

After leaving Ascham, Isobel sailed back to England with Frances, spending time with



Isobel with Madina staff, 1971 (photo by Thomas Deane)

her parents in the Lake District before taking up teaching jobs in London.

The desire to travel was strong, so in 1952, both Isobel and Frances applied for teaching positions in Newfoundland. Following a year in Newfoundland, the two women travelled to the USA and Canada, buying push bikes to continue their adventures. They heeded the warnings in the Rocky Mountains about bears and moose and survived several encounters along the way. There were many highlights, and cycling through the Grand Canyon was one of them.

Shortly after returning to England, Isobel's father died, prompting a move back into the family home to nurse her mother until her passing in 1955. Meanwhile, Frances Morris returned to Australia following her mother's death.

To be continued in the next PNG KUNDU issue

Please see our website for an update to the Vale for Emeritus Professor Michael Alpers AO, CSM, FRS, FAA, which was published in the March issue.



Isobel holding Assembly at Madina Girls High School in New Ireland, 1971 (photo by Thomas Deane)



A TRIBUTE BY
ANDREA WILLIAMS

Sir Charles Watson Lepani KBE, CBE, OBE

28 October 1947
–10 January 2025

PART TWO



(Featured above) Sir Charles Lepani KBE, CBE, OBE at a PNGAA function, Sydney, 2006

In its earlier tribute to one of its greatest supporters, Sir Charles Lepani, following his passing on 10 January 2025, the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) highlighted some of Sir Charles's important contributions to the Association. This second section focuses on his young life, his outstanding career and the remarkable achievements that followed.

Sir Charles's homeland in PNG is the Trobriand Islands, where his grandfather was the chief of Vakuta Village. His mother was Sarah. His father, Lepani Watson, was one of only two village lads allowed a mission education. He believed greatly in hard work, a philosophy he instilled in his son, Charles. Lepani Watson eventually moved to Port Moresby, becoming a clerk in the Department of Treasury, and with his family he lived next to Sir John Guise's family in Kaugere. Later, he was elected as the representative for the Trobriand Islands in PNG's Legislative Council.

Lepani Watson was significant in both the administration and in his Hohola neighbourhood. His grassroots campaign to win the election was dissected in an influential study by distinguished anthropologist Peter Lawrence, whose book about that campaign was later used by Sir Ebia Olewale as a primer, a how-to-do-it, for his own campaign to win a seat in the House of Assembly for the PANGU Pati. Sir Charles's father was a widely loved, humble man, as was his son.

Growing up among early Methodist (now United Church) missionaries and living under Australia's administration of PNG had an enormous impact, both positive and negative, on Charles Lepani. It gave him great respect for authority and the law and also how one can adapt through culture as well as what life can bring.

As a young lad, Sir Charles was one of the top 20 primary school students in the country when he was awarded an Australian government scholarship that led to furthering his education in 1961 in Charters Towers, Queensland. At the time, Lepani Watson said to his son, 'This is the opportunity. Don't let it slip. Be the first in line, be the first, be the first to have worked. Be the first to line up for this.'

Reminiscing on travelling to Australia, Sir Charles told Jonathan Ritchie in July 2011:

When we landed, I was astounded to see white people doing manual jobs ... And I was frightened ... who was

going to take my luggage off my plane and put the stairs down so I could walk off? ... Everybody walked off and this air hostess kind of came and said to me, "This is where the flight ends. That's where you get off."

I said, 'But who's...? How am I going to get off and step on these stairs when white people have put the stairs down, and my luggage? Am I going to...?'

She said, "No, no, no, no. They'll bring your luggage. You go. You get out." ... That was the first eyeopener, seeing white people doing manual jobs. Never seen them in PNG. I was stunned... I got off, waiting for the police to come and arrest me because... I'm a black person getting on the stairs... my luggage was being collected by white people. So that... sticks out in my mind [and was] the decolonisation of my mind in a sense.

And the high school in Charters Towers was another... it's a milestone for me. It made me who I am.

As Sir Charles said, in Charters Towers he made many lifelong friends at school and came to understand how being good at both schoolwork and sports earned him respect. He was welcomed into the homes of local families, on farms and on cattle and sheep stations which was when he learned to ride a horse.

It was timely that the University of PNG (UPNG) took in its first cohort in 1966 as Sir Charles's schooling in Charters Towers came to an end the following year. This saw him return to PNG and enrol in UPNG. After two years, he earned a scholarship awarded by the ACTU and the Papua New Guinea Public Service Association (PSA) to attend the University of New South Wales. According to distinguished PNGAA colleague Paul Munro AM, 'the eminent industrial relations academic, the always colourful Professor Bill Ford shared fond memories of Charles as his energetic and engaging young student on the Kensington campus and surrounds.' With PNG's transition to self-government from 1971 to 1973, the PSA suggested Sir Charles should complete his university studies in PNG.

Sir Charles became one of the country's highest ranked civil servants during PNG's decentralisation process from self-government in 1973 through to independence in 1975, being appointed Director of the PNG National Planning Office from 1975 to 1980. This saw him having tight control and management of fiscal policy at 27 years of age. Sir Charles, along with Rabbie Namaliu as Chairman of the Public Service Commission, who was decentralising the public service; Mekere Morauta in Finance, who was dealing with fund decentralisation; and Anthony (Tony) Siaguru, who headed Foreign Affairs, together they earned notoriety as the 'Gang of Four.' Nothing went through Cabinet without them.

Sir Charles considered his role in nation building and the period from PNG self-government to independence in 1975 as a highlight in his life. The feeling of enthusiasm and sense of excitement were unique, perhaps coming close to, 'when you talk to some expatriate kiaps; those who go out in the jungles, take patrols—that sense of nation building. For us—it's independence.' Thus, when Sir Charles met Australian kiaps through the PNGAA and whilst living in Canberra as PNG High Commissioner to Australia, he encouraged them to write their stories. 'What you did is part of our history; it's important that you put it in writing for future generations, both Papua New Guineans and Australians, to learn how PNG came to be what it is today.'

Sir Charles was always keen on ongoing discussions about PNG. He believed it was the right of



Sir Charles Lepani, at a Policy Forum at Deakin University, 2013

Australians to do this, 'because today's PNG is your creation also.'

Sir Charles's role as head of the PNG National Planning Office saw him being involved in the formulation of PNG's post-independence macro-economic policy and public sector planning system, including aid coordination. He said, '... the team was amazing. And the air of what it is together to build a young nation: white and young Papua New Guineans coming out with first degrees and no experience. But having to run an organisation with the support of young expatriates.'

After five or six years in the Planning Office, Sir Charles went to the United States to study for a Master of Public Administration (MPA) at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. After returning to PNG, he ran his own consultancy business for eight years whilst also starting a family. Sir Charles was one of the first two Papua New Guinean freelance consultants working in the private sector, gaining valuable experience in surviving in challenging circumstances. He was eventually contracted by the Australian and PNG governments including PNG's provincial governments.

In 1986 Sir Charles was invited to lead the Pacific Islands Research Program (PIRP), which he did for five years. He noted that this experience was a great opportunity to get to know



Sir Charles as Director-General of the APEC Authority in 2018

the Pacific Islands. Having served as PNG's Ambassador to the European Union from 1991 to 1994, Sir Charles was one of PNG's most experienced diplomats,

On his return to PNG, Sir Charles ran the Minerals Resources Development Company, established in 1975, initially to acquire state-owned and landowner equity interests in mining and petroleum projects and to manage the equity funds for landowner companies from the major resource development areas of PNG. He 'was stunned to see [that PNG was] living in debt, getting money from joint venture partners to finance our equity.'

From his time in National Planning, Sir Charles understood the importance of fiscal self-reliance for an independent country. He firmly believed that PNG could and should benefit from its assets, a vision that drove the next five years of his work with the aim of reducing Australian aid. These groundbreaking negotiations were challenged by the breaking news of the 'Sandline Affair'. Sir Charles needed to convince international investors of the stability of the country, that PNG was a constitutional democracy and that a commission would get to the bottom of 'Sandline'.

Sir Charles's final roles were as Director-General of the 2018 APEC Authority in Port Moresby and more recently, Chair of the Eminent Persons Group that worked on the Foreign Policy White Paper.

Sir Charles had a lifelong passion and dedication to his country and its people, as well as a strong belief in the Australian-PNG relationship. He represented PNG internationally and domestically with great distinction. The development of a common national identity for PNG will be his enduring legacy.

With grateful thanks to an interview of Charles Lepani conducted by Jonathon Ritchie on 13 July 2011 for the *Oral History and Folklore Collection* conducted by the National Library of Australia. Available online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220254691/listen>



MEMORIAL NEWS

RABAUL & MONTEVIDEO MARU GROUP

Established in 2009 to represent the interests of the families of the soldiers and civilians captured in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion in January 1942, and the sinking of MS Montevideo Maru on 1 July 1942, the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group was integrated into the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia after the erection of the commemorative sculpture at the Australian War Memorial, ACT, in 2012.

Members receive PNG Kundu, the quarterly journal of the PNGAA, which includes the 'Memorial News', dedicated to those who lost their lives at the start of the Pacific War in New Guinea.

For more information, please contact Andrea Williams on admin@montevideo-maru.org



Australian War Memorial, Canberra—1 July 2025

The Last Post Ceremony at the AWM will commemorate George Christopher Harrington NX191465 and the 83rd anniversary of the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*.

All are welcome to share this service of reflection. The service commences at 4.30 pm. Tickets are free but are required to attend. You are encouraged to register in advance although tickets may be available at Memorial entry providing there is capacity available. If you would like to attend please let admin@montevideo-maru.org know.

On 23 March 2025 Milton Alfred Warner of 2/22nd was also honoured at the Last Post Ceremony at the AWM.

Montevideo Maru Service, Brisbane—1 July 2025

The annual Montevideo Maru Memorial Service, held by NGVR/PNGVR Ex-members Association, for those 1,053 lost Australians, military and civilian internees, on the MS *Montevideo Maru* in 1942 will be held in the Memorial Galleries located under the Brisbane Cenotaph at 10 am, 1 July 2025. Anzac Day dress with medals as appropriate. Everyone welcome, please arrive by 9.45 am. Morning tea will follow the service. Enquiries to admin@montevideo-maru.org.

ANZAC Day

Thank you to Kylie Adams-Collier for representing the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru group at Pittwater RSL's Dawn Service and laying a wreath on our behalf.

Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Website—Education Program

The Education program on the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru website has been recently upgraded. The link is <https://montevideo-maru.org/education/>

Included are lesson plans, background notes, worksheets, links, resources, templates and easy access to an electronic 15-minute version of the video *Some Came Home*, all to be used in conjunction or separately to support the delivery of this unit of work.

Also included is a link to the notes, classroom worksheets and writing ideas for Finding Darcy by Sue Lawson, one of the books recommended in the Premier's Reading Challenge booklists for both South Australia and Western Australia.

A section of Poems and Songs has also been added. Please share these links with family and friends, and help this association by contacting and suggesting your lower-secondary schools consider using it. If they are interested, please also let us know at education@montevideo-maru.org

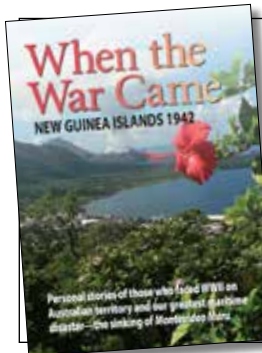
NSW History Curriculum update

The new NSW History Curriculum, to be implemented in 2027, will mean that a new topic, titled *Australians At War*, combining WWI history and WWII history, will be compulsory in year 9. Combining these histories together makes sense as they have connections. At the moment this history has been taught in two different years. War history in PNG flows from WWI to WWII, though it would surprise many students and some teachers that Australians were fighting in New Guinea during WWI!

Letters from Rabaul 1942

On 28 April 1942 Japanese bombers dropped mail bags with about 100 letters in each over Port Moresby, and 395 letters from Australian prisoners-of-war in Rabaul are recorded as having been dropped out of the sky. Why did the Japanese deliver these letters? Nothing had been heard of the prisoners since the invasion and occupation on 23 January 1942 and these were the only letter some families received. Other families received nothing.

A month after the letter drop an article in the *Melbourne Argus* is titled 'Meagre News in Letters from Rabaul'. Excerpts include:



Published in 2017 by PNGAA to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Rabaul and the sinking of MS Montevideo Maru, this book tells the stories of the civilian and military men, women and children caught in the leadup and aftermath of the Japanese invasion and occupation of the New Guinea Islands in 1942. Order your copy from the Treasurer's Corner at the back of this issue.

*'the Japanese are going to great trouble to see that we have the privilege of writing this note'.
'Please do not worry about me as I am alright. Let us hope and pray that it will only be a short time before we are all together again.'*

*'I've said more prayers than ever in my life. Tell Marie these beads she brought me are nearly worn out.'
'No need to worry. We are being well looked after.'*

The letters were optimistic—they were censored first by the Japanese and then by the Australians. In late October 1945 families were sent telegrams saying that the men *'became missing on 1 July 1942 and were, for official purposes, presumed dead'*.

Shot for Spying

Although there is the evidence of fair treatment to the prisoners in Rabaul there was one shocking event which would appear to go against this theory. Those of you who have read Ian Townsend's book, *Line of Fire*, will know that in April 1942 the Japanese Army brought in a number of civilian prisoners to Rabaul including a child, who were all later executed. In his memoirs, Lark Force officer David Hutchinson Smith wrote:

Early in April we were shocked to see Mr and Mrs AA Harvey, their small son, aged about eight, Mrs Harvey's brother, JS Mason, and a friend, W Parker, all of [...] Plantation, Lassul Bay, brought into camp. We knew that they had been in hiding in the bush and were endeavouring to contact Moresby by teleradio for evacuation. The Japanese herded them in a small room opposite the guard house and only allowed them out only to have ulcers dressed or to visit the benjo, and then only under close guard. They were not supposed to speak to anyone, but the lad was allowed out now and then and played ball with guards, with whom he was apparently a favourite.

After about a week, the men were charged with espionage and were not permitted any legal representation. They were found 'guilty' and all five left camp with no belongings one afternoon and were never seen subsequently. The following day O'hara, a so-called 'Christian' submarine sailor, told us that they had all been shot, including the boy.

Note: A handwritten memoir of James MacKnight Hamilton who was escaping Rabaul, says he was advised of a teleradio



Brian Adams, grandson of Harry Adams who was aboard the *Montevideo Maru*, laying a wreath for Anzac Day at Memorial Park, Mornington—hosted by the Mornington RSL, Victoria

and abundant food at Lassul, so he went to investigate. He wrote:

We met at Lassul homestead the most excitable, eccentric, drug addicted owner, Mr. Harvey, who was on the veranda, where most people in the tropics live, having breakfast about 1000 hours. He rushed down almost hysterical talking the whole time brought us onto the veranda and offered us breakfast ... Harvey told us he had plenty of food to feed 200 for six months mostly hidden in dumps through the bush; his teleradio was packed up ready to move into the jungle and another man was down working on a boat. Every few minutes he would take a pill of some drug and every hour or so his wife (?), who could not get a word in edgewise, gave him a shot of some drug. ... When he first got his teleradio he had an emergency frequency and code, but the first thing he did was code a long message to Port Moresby ordering more beer for Christmas from Burns Philp and Co, so they took away his codes and emergency frequency crystal.

On the 18th May 1942, the whole family, including Ted Harvey and his wife Marjorie Manson, her brother, Jimmy Manson and friend Bill Parker, were loaded on the back of a truck and driven a short journey from the prison camp to an isolated location in Rabaul, Young Richard, 'Dickie', stood between his mother and Ted Harvey, at the foot of a volcano, blindfolded to disguise the open pit. Dickie was 11 years and 3 months old.

ROD MILLER

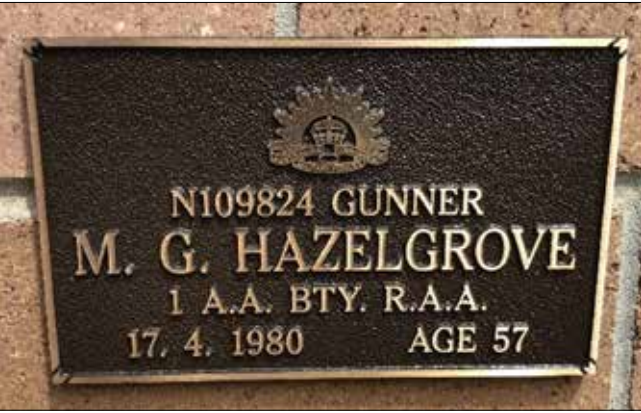
Max 'Smacker' Hazelgrove

George 'Smacker' Maxwell Hazelgrove, the son of George Hazelgrove and Amalia, née Whiffen, was born on 24 October 1923 in Bega, NSW. Max enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as Maxwell Hazelgrove N109824 in Sydney on 2 May 1941, claiming his age as 18 years and six months, making his date of birth as 27 October 1922. Max was a carpenter before becoming a gunner with the 1st Anti-Aircraft Brigade and a member of the Rabaul Anti-Aircraft Battery, a part of Lark Force. He arrived in Rabaul on 16 August 1941.

Max spent some time in hospital with malaria but was able to take part in the anti-aircraft defence of Rabaul. The *Bega District News* of Thursday, 8 January 1942 reported that 'five Bega boys are in the anti-aircraft garrison at Rabaul, New Guinea, which was twice bombed by the Japanese on Sunday last. The boys are Pat Salway, Arthur Cooper, Bob Alexander, 'Smacker' Hazelgrove, son of Mr and Mrs G Hazelgrove, and Tom Alcock, who at one time worked in the Bega Co-operative store.'

We know from official army records and Japanese Prisoner of War (POW) records that these young Bega men, except for Max 'Smacker' Hazelgrove, died when the MS *Montevideo Maru*, a Japanese POW transport ship, was sunk by an American submarine on 1 July 1942. What happened to Smacker Hazelgrove?

An examination of Max 'Smacker' Hazelgrove's army service records reveals that he arrived in Sydney on 27 April 1942 for hospital treatment with a gunshot wound to his right shoulder. Max



Maxwell George Hazelgrove’s commemorative plaque in the NSW Garden of Remembrance, a memorial site adjacent to the Sydney War Cemetery, within the Rookwood Necropolis (Photo courtesy of The Office of Australian War Graves)

was discharged as medically unfit on 20 October 1942. There is no record in his army service records that he was a POW.

Max ‘Smacker’ Hazelgrove died in Sydney on 17 April 1980 aged 57. His full army service file is now freely available online through the National Archives of Australia using a Name Search. In his army service file, there is evidence that towards the end of 1970 he had contacted the Commonwealth Department of Repatriation (now the Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs) in Sydney, applying for Repatriation benefits. On 1 December 1970 the Department wrote to the Central Army Records Office in Melbourne stating they had information that he was a POW and asked the army to confirm whether this was correct. In a letter to the Commonwealth Department of Repatriation dated 9 December 1970, the Army Records Office stated that they had no record of Maxwell Hazelgrove being a POW. When the Department of Veterans’ Affairs compiled their WWII Nominal Roll, they used his army service records. Of course, Maxwell Hazelgrove was not noted as a POW.

A letter in Max’s file written during 1991 by his brother, Raymond, asks about the service of his

late brother. Ray Hazelgrove, also a WWII veteran (NX204969), had gone to Rabaul after the war’s end to work in the War Graves Maintenance Unit for the Australian Army. Ray Hazelgrove had included a copy of the Official History of WWII (Wigmore), The Japanese Thrust, Ordeal of New Britain, p.667, with his letter. On this page Max Hazelgrove’s capture and his attempted execution by the Japanese armed forces at Tol Plantation was described. This was solid evidence that Max ‘Smacker’ Hazelgrove was an ex-POW.

With this information, I contacted the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs and asked them to update their records for Maxwell Hazelgrove on the WWII Nominal Roll. This has been done and Max ‘Smacker’ Hazelgrove is now listed as a POW on the WWII Nominal Roll.

I also contacted The Office of the Australian War Graves, as all Australian ex-POWs are entitled to a commemoration from the Australian Government upon their death. A commemorative plaque for Maxwell Hazelgrove has now been erected by the Office of Australian War Graves in the NSW Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Sources:
Australian War Memorial, *The Loss of Lark Force*, Extracted from AWM website that fits with this report that Hazelgrove arrived in Australia with a gunshot wound on April 27, 1942. Available online at <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/the-loss-of-lark-force>
Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs websites for the WW2 Nominal Roll & Commemorations.
National Archives of Australia websites for *Montevideo Maru* and the Service Records Files for Maxwell Hazelgrove and Raymond Hazelgrove;
National Library of Australia’s TROVE website for *The Bega District News* newspaper; and
NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

PATRICK BOURKE

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

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

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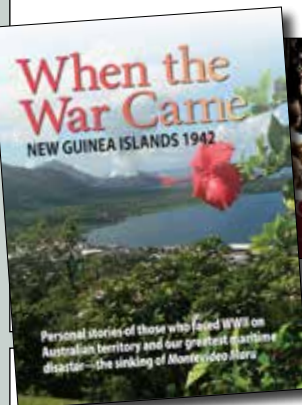
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Papua New Guinea Association of Australia

The Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc. (PNGAA)—formally constituted in 1951 and incorporated in 1996—was originally known as the Retired Officers' Association of Papua New Guinea (ROAPNG) and owed its genesis to the concerns related to superannuation entitlements and retirement benefits of officers who had served in the Public Service. The role of the PNGAA has progressively expanded and it now comprises a global network of members representing the diverse interests of people with affection for or an interest in Papua New Guinea.

Membership of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc (PNGAA) provides you with access to a contemporary organisation dedicated to strengthening the people-to-people links between Australia and Papua New Guinea, respecting our joint history, and promoting social interaction between a broad network of people.

Papua New Guinea & Australia are two nations sharing an ongoing story. This is a central focus of the PNGAA—fostering healthy conversations, activities, and the importance of our shared futures in a rapidly shifting international landscape.

The PNGAA welcomes anyone with an interest in the Papua New Guinea & Australian connection. With modern technologies and social media, we are now closer than ever to our geographic neighbours with increasing opportunities to improve that relationship—and we encourage you to explore and become actively involved with the PNGAA, so that we can all tell this story together.

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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. 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.

◀ **Copy Deadline for the September 2025 issue: 18 July 2025**

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Please send all contributions to: editor@pngaa.net

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Contributors' guidelines are available on page 46 and under 'Contributions Welcome' on our website: www.pngaa.org

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Vale **POPE FRANCIS** *The Bishop of Rome*

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 17 December 1936, Pope Francis was the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State from 2013.

Inspired to join the Jesuit Order in 1958 after recovering from a severe illness, he was ordained a Catholic priest in 1969. From 1973 to 1979, he was the Jesuit Provincial Superior in Argentina, becoming the Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998 and was created a cardinal in 2001 by Pope John Paul II.

Following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, a papal conclave elected Bergoglio, as his successor, the first Latin-American, in March 2013, and he chose his papal name in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi. Throughout the pontiff's public life, Francis was noted for his humility, emphasis on God's mercy, international visibility as pope, concern for the poor, and commitment to interreligious dialogue. His significant achievements include the papal encyclical in 2015, which addresses the climate crisis and champions environmental stewardship; his efforts to promote unity among Catholics, non-Catholics, and non-Christians; his historic apologies to survivors of clergy sexual abuse and, in 2013 he appointed a council of cardinals to advise him on church policy.

Pope Francis made more than 45 international trips during his papacy, including the first by any pope to Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Myanmar, North Macedonia, Bahrain and Mongolia—but never Argentina, his homeland.

In September 2024, as part of a four-nation journey, he visited Papua New Guinea, where he met with the Governor-General, Sir Bob Dadae, and other government and civil leaders, and celebrated Mass in the capital, Port Moresby, which was attended by at least 35,000 people. He also visited Vanimo, the remote capital of Sandaun Province, where a group of Argentinean nuns and priests are working to improve the lives of those who are abused and disadvantaged. He was welcomed by an estimated 20,000 people who gathered in front of the Holy Cross Cathedral accompanied by singing and dancing. One of his last actions was passing a decree enabling the late Peter To Rot to be PNG's first saint.

At the beginning of 2025 His Holiness received the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction from US President, Joe Biden but, sadly, he died at the age of 88 in the early morning of 21 April 2025, after suffering a stroke. In the weeks before his death, he had been making fewer public appearances so that he could be treated for chronic lung disease, including a respiratory crisis and pneumonia. The pontiff made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday, and his funeral in St Peter's Square—attended by world leaders, royals and faithful worshippers—was on 26 April 2025. In early May, Cardinal Robert Prevost, from America, was elected as the new pope and will take the name Leo XIV.

1. Pope Francis releasing the dove of peace in Iraq, 2021
2. Papal visit to Vanimo, Sandaun Province, PNG, 2024
3. The Pope was presented with an image of Blessed Peter To Rot in Port Moresby, 2024
4. Pope Francis, Bishop of Rome, 2022
5. Some of the 200,000 people who attended the Pope's funeral

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