

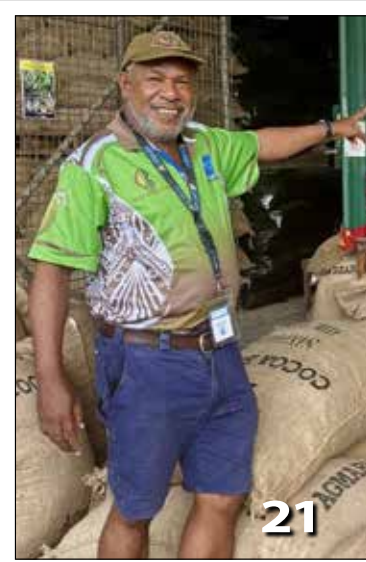
PNG **Kundu**

SEPTEMBER 2025



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





PNG Kundu

SEPTEMBER 2025

PNGAA REPORT 1

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ABOUT THE PNGAA IBC

One People, One Nation, One Country BC

Front Cover Feature:
Raising the new Papua New Guinea flag on
Independence Hill, Port Moresby at 10 am,
16 September 1975



**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.**

From the President

Honouring the voices that carry our history, our culture, our spirit, and inspire us to reach further, is a theme reflected in celebrations acknowledging Papua New Guinea's 50th Anniversary of Independence on 16 September 2025 and Australia's role in that.

The Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) is delighted that our association has been there for all those years and more, has recorded so many stories that would not exist over that period without this association, and that *PNG Kundu* is also celebrating PNG's 50th Anniversary of Independence.

Celebrating the Journey

This association celebrates the journey both before independence and following independence to today. We praise all the numerous volunteers over that time who have served on the PNGAA Management Committee, who have assisted the work and success of the association in various other ways, and our members for contributing stories, attending events, supporting fundraisers, creating the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Memorial at the AWM Canberra, and ensuring the success of this association during that time.

Congratulations to Them All

We reflect on all those courageous men and women who helped to build the independent nation of PNG and take it to a peaceful independence. We also thank all those who carried the country forward



PNG's new Prime Minister, Michael Somare, chats with his Australian counterpart Gough Whitlam while waiting for the formal ceremony to begin on 16 September 1975

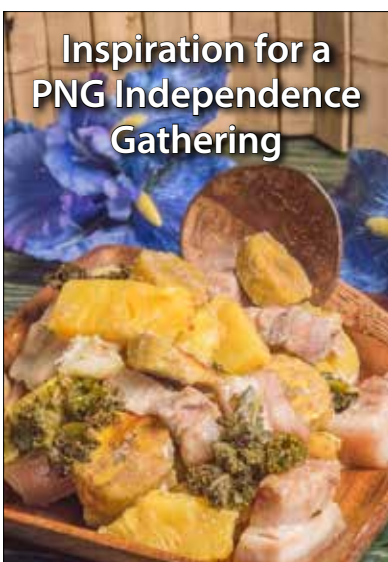
to today, and through whose thoughtful planning there will be more successes.

Those whose vision and hard work developed a country, ravaged by war just 30 years earlier, into a free, functioning democracy with active industries and a resilience to succeed in 1975 are to be applauded.

After World War II

Let's remember that the country had to be rebuilt after WWII; for example 82% of the male European population of Rabaul, which included those experienced in the administration of the then mandated Territory of New Guinea, perished following the occupation of Rabaul by the Japanese and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*, that the first graduates from the newly-formed University of Papua New Guinea were in 1970.

In 1975 Papua New Guinea's population was just under three million people with a GDP of US\$1.357 billion; in 2024-25 the population is estimated to be just



Inspiration for a PNG Independence Gathering

Roasted and salted Galip Nuts
Smoked fish or lobster
Bully Beef Stew (spring onions, tomatoes, dried peas, bully beef, cooked in a frying pan) and served with Basmati rice
Or a Bully Beef sandwich
Kaukau (sweet potato), pit pit (a cane) and aibika (like spinach), steamed/baked separately in coconut milk—or Kaukau chips
Fruit platter—pineapple, mango, laulaus, rambutans, bananas and the cru from a coconut
Muli (juice of lemon/orange) perhaps with a gin and tonic
... or a cold SP
New Guinea coffee
Decorate the table with laplaps and shredded palm fronds
With thanks to those who contributed on Facebook: Tony Bunting, Irene Gaskill-Vaughan, Jan Ross, Anne Peters, Sara Turner, Donald McKenzie

under 11 million people with a GDP of US\$32.54 billion.

The legacy which lives on in PNG, through public naming of landmarks, buildings and other places, acknowledging and honouring people who have made a significant difference, and maintaining places which protect

the history for future generations, add to our understanding; there are more, unnamed. Their stories fascinate—and need telling. They are the fabric of the foundation of a nation.

Since 1975

Successes and achievements since independence have come from people with passion to achieve dreams, those who inspire, and communities filled with energy, giving promise for the future and for making new memories. Yes, there are challenges, however we all delight in seeing Papua New Guineans continually shine in various areas.

The friendly people, breathtaking landscapes, varied culture, vibrant stories and traditions captivate everyone. The many Australians who have called Papua New Guinea 'home' have been privileged to share and enjoy so much ... and have been thankful for it. And it's the same for those Papua New Guineans living in Australia.

There are many 50th independence celebrations, as you'll see on page 13 of this issue—join in, or host one yourself. Ask to share your story, initiate a project or

share a PNG craft at your children or grandchildren's school. Share your stories with family and friends. Enjoy a meal and send us your photos!

The New Team

Within the Management Committee we are settling into a new team following the AGM in late April. Two key members have since had to step back—our editor, Christine Leonard, and PNGAA secretary/admin., Kylee Andersen. Both have continued to contribute to ensure the many aspects of running the PNGAA have continuity, and we can't thank them enough. Kylee recently told me she ensured our PNGAA website had a back-up. What a relief!

After a huge commitment over 10 years, Roy Ranney has stepped back (see June *PNG Kundu*) and we need someone urgently to handle his Membership Officer role, and others to build a team to help with website. If you have experience in Microsoft Access or relational databases would be an advantage, but anyone familiar with spreadsheets, would be able to adapt quickly—we thank Roy, who will assist in handover. Alternatively, there may be other options to



The nation's capital, Port Moresby, commenced its 50th Independence celebrations with the Grand Float Parade on 16 May 2025, featuring performances from the British Army's Pipe & Drum Majors, a Māori Kapa Haka group, and vibrant cultural dances



A fresh perspective on Expedition Cruising.

Pearl Expeditions is launching intimate Papua New Guinea adventures in late 2025. Onboard a boutique-sized motor yacht *Paspaley Pearl* carries just 30 guests, enabling access to remote destinations larger vessels cannot reach. Our expeditions emphasise authentic cultural participation—from traditional ceremonies to village exchanges—rather than conventional shore excursions, offering former PNG residents a fresh perspective on familiar territory.



Papua New Guinea's Hidden Secrets

12 NIGHTS - 9 October 2025

CAIRNS / Samarai Islands / Deboyne Lagoon / Trobriand Islands / Tufi / Morobe Harbour / Tami Islands / Tuam Island / **MADANG**



Papua New Guinea: Sepik Traditions and Island Mysteries

12 NIGHTS - 8 November 2025

MADANG / Kopar, Sepik River / Murik Lakes / Ali Island / Schouten Islands / Watam Village / Hansa Bay / Karkar Island / Nip Island / Tuam Island / **MADANG**



Papua New Guinea: A circumnavigation of New Britain

12 NIGHTS - 18 November 2025

MADANG / Nip Island / Witu Islands / Kimbe Bay / Ataliklikun Bay / Rabaul / Duke of York Islands / Jacquot Bay / Tami islands / **MADANG**

PACKAGE INCLUDES

Return economy class airfares*
2 nights' accommodation in Madang
All transfers in PNG
2 days of guided touring in Madang with an English-speaking guide
10 nights aboard Paspaley Pearl

ALL-INCLUSIVE PRICING

Ocean Double stateroom:	\$17,495 pp
Ocean Twin stateroom:	\$18,495 pp
Ocean Queen stateroom:	\$19,995 pp
Horizon Suite:	\$23,995 pp
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TERMS & CONDITIONS: Prices are in AUD\$ per person based on twin share. Single supplement pricing is available on application. *Sole occupancy of stateroom #107 attracts no single surcharge. Airfare Inclusions: Ocean Deck Staterooms: *Return flights from Cairns to Madang (up to \$1200 value) Horizon Suite & Pearl Suite: *Return flights from your closest Australian capital city to Madang (up to \$2500 value)



handle online membership of an association such as ours.

Thankfully, two of PNGAA's new committee members are taking on key roles—Frazer Harry is incoming secretary/administration, and John Reeves is our new editor. If you have not already done so, read about them in the June 2025 *PNG KUNDU*! Please get in touch with them and say hello. We appreciate their willingness to step in to these significant and voluntary roles and look forward to you getting to know them, too!

We welcome the popular Sara



Sara Turner

Turner back on the committee in the role of Events Co-ordinator. We are grateful Sara kindly put her hand up to help PNGAA with

events and to be the committee liaison.

PNGAA Functions

Our PNGAA 50th Anniversary of Independence events, in Brisbane on 9 August, with PNG Consul-General and his wife from Queensland, CG Reatau Rau and Susan Rau, and guest speaker Grim Jordan, together with the Canberra event on 30 August including PNG High Commissioner to Australia His Excellency John Kali and his wife, and guest speakers Dr Ian Howie-Willis and Mrs Willis were held during our publication cycle and we'll publish more next issue!

Andrew Cadden has offered to organise the Sydney Christmas lunch again this year on Wednesday, 26 November. Make sure you book early and come along!

Our PNGAA website, www.pngaa.org, continues to grow with wonderful stories, photos and research material and our thanks to Roy Ranney for overseeing that and to helpers, Claire van Bakel, Chris Leonard and Kylee Andersen.

And, after nearly seven years, our indefatigable Production Manager, Jeannette Gilligan, is still pulling out all stops. We're grateful for the magic Jeannette weaves with each issue—especially this one. Thanks from us all!

This year, after 11 years, and for this special anniversary year, the PNGAA Management Committee decided to invest in a new, updated website, which we hope will be up and running in September 2025. There have been many technology advances, and we hope you enjoy the new layout. Throughout this

year we have included a special 50th Anniversary tab—please take a look.

To our members, their families and friends, and on behalf of the PNGAA Management Committee—enjoy the 50th Anniversary of PNG Independence this September 2025.



Andrea Williams
PNGAA President

New Expedition Company Brings Intimate Access to Papua New Guinea

A new Australian expedition company is set to offer an alternative approach to exploring Papua New Guinea, with plans to launch five expeditions across three distinct routes beginning in late 2025. Pearl Expeditions operates the boutique motor yacht *Paspaley Pearl*, which carries just 30 guests—a scale that enables access to destinations larger vessels cannot reach.

For former PNG residents, the company's approach may offer a fresh perspective on familiar territory. Rather than conventional shore excursions, their expeditions focus on participation in local customs—from traditional sago production in Tufi's fjords to authentic Kula exchange ceremonies in the Trobriand Islands—accessed via Zodiac expedition vessels. The small group

size appears designed to facilitate genuine cultural exchanges rather than staged performances.

The company's three routes showcase PNG's geographical and cultural diversity. Their Cairns to Madang expedition explores the cultural heartlands, taking in historic Samarai Island, the Trobriand 'Islands of Love', and Tufi's dramatic volcanic fjords.

A New Britain circumnavigation combines WWII history with living traditions, visiting sites from Rabaul's volcanic landscape to Kimbe Bay's renowned marine biodiversity within the Coral Triangle.

The North Coast expedition traces a path from the mighty Sepik River mouth to remote islands where traditional practices continue largely unchanged.

Pearl Expeditions offers stylishly elegant expedition travel, emphasising environmental mindfulness and authentic cultural encounters. Their expedition team works directly with local communities to arrange village visits and traditional ceremonies, aiming to create meaningful connections that respect PNG's cultural heritage.

The company's founder brings decades of expedition experience to Papua New Guinea's waters, building on established relationships with coastal communities.

For those who lived in PNG during earlier decades, these expeditions may provide an opportunity to reconnect with the country through a more intimate and respectful approach than traditional tourism typically allows.

Welcome to New Members

The management committee and members of PNGAA welcome the following new members to the Association: Gabrielle Alabaster, Nancy Buckney, Christine Carey, Margo Cavanagh, Greg Donald, Stella Freund, Geoff Laphorne, Charles Lee, Glenda Stirling, Barry Weir, Graham Werner & Joseph Yenmore.

PNGAA Education

PNGAA has sponsored book packs for each of the nine students in our PNGAA Education Program. Glenda Giles recently visited Sheppelle Hapika at Passam National School of Excellence and Macquaradah Anpan at Mercy Secondary School to give them their books. Glenda writes:

Both girls were delighted to get the text books, and the principals and teachers were also very grateful. Nowadays text books are in very short supply in all the schools. Please pass on their thanks to PNGAA for their help.



Glenda Giles with Sheppelle Hapika

Membership Subscription Rate Increases (Effective 1 January 2026)

Despite rising costs, we have been able to hold membership subscription rates steady for the past two years. For all but one of the past five years, however, membership subscriptions have not covered our operating costs. In expectation of continuing increases in operating costs, we regret that all rates will have to be increased effective from 1 January 2026. The new annual rates from that date will be:

- Printed journal posted within Australia: \$65.00
- Printed journal posted to Asia/Pacific (including New Zealand): \$87.00
- Printed journal posted to Rest of the World: \$98.00
- Digital Membership (no journal postage charge): \$46.00

Very modest operating surpluses in recent years have largely been achieved through a small number of extremely generous donations which supported our projects, along with interest earned on investments. However, interest rates are on the way down again now and we cannot reasonably expect to rely on a few large donations to prop up the financials of the Association. All donations will, of course, continue to be very much appreciated.

If you have an email address registered with us, you can find the status of your membership by logging onto the PNGAA website and clicking on 'Membership' then 'My Subscription'. Alternatively, if you receive a printed copy of the journal the expiry date of your membership is included on the mailing sheet that comes with your journal. Payment options are outlined in the Treasurer's Corner Membership & Order Form in the back of the journal.



Featured are items of interest, journal information, events calendar, letters and enquiries, book and exhibition reviews and news about modern-day Papua New Guinea. All contributions should be sent by 29 September 2025, the Copy Deadline for the next issue, to: editor@pngaa.net

ROUNDUP

Featuring reports and updates on PNGAA projects and other news of interest to members

The Kiap Memorial Update

At the time of writing, the final design for the Kiap Memorial has been agreed. The site in the Senate Gardens of Parliament House has been set aside, and the formalities between the different agencies are being finalised. Now for a contract to build the memorial.

There may be a groundbreaking ceremony in late August 2025, on the site. But there will be no activity there on 16 September. Celebrations for PNG's 50th Anniversary of Independence will happen in Port Moresby and elsewhere.

After several years of lobbying the Federal Government, with the help of Luke Gosling MP, Member for Solomon in the Northern Territory, there was major breakthrough in February 2023.

During a visit to PNG by our PM, the PNG Prime Minister said to him, '... *ah, that's something I want to talk to you about—acknowledging the work of the kiaps.*'

Twelve months later, in February 2024, Mr Marape visited Canberra, planted a tree (a 'Brittle gum') at Regatta Point, on Lake Burley Griffin, to acknowledge all *kiaps* who went to PNG. The PNG Prime Minister also visited National Archives, and addressed a joint sitting of Parliament.

In a joint statement post during that 2024 visit, the two governments agreed to work together to build a memorial. Since then DFAT has chaired a committee with representation from PNG, Prime Minister and Cabinet, National Capital Authority, Parliamentary Services, the architect, and the *kiap* community.

After consultation, including with the original architect of the parliamentary grounds, the final design was agreed at the beginning of July.

The featured mock-up photo



(*opposite*) shows a grove with a white concrete pillar, about two metres tall, with a bronze plaque and including a dedication to the *kiaps* who died in Papua and New Guinea, from 1922 on. That date coincides with the reintroduction of civil administration in Papua and civil administration in what had been German New Guinea.

The area of the memorial is to be paved, with an existing rock wall remaining. Ringing the space will be 22 rocks, one from each province in PNG. Each rock will be anchored and identified on an information post at the entrance to the grove.

That post will be bronze, etched with a brief history of the field administration of PNG, and topped with a the Raggiana bird-of-paradise—*Gerrus paradisaea*. There will be a QR code linked to a DFAT maintained website to give more information and provide more links.

There will be no names on the memorial, primarily because we do not know everyone who died in PNG. The records are incomplete and a search on the National Archives site admits that there are many gaps with PNG records.

We can identify 86 *kiaps* who died while working in PNG—the last one to die in PNG was post-Independence, in 1978. This is for them and for those who remain unnamed.

More died on returning to Australia, and there are those who carried scars and memories long into old age. And we do not forget the partners and wives who shared outstation life and raised

families while supporting their *kiap*.

About two years ago, at the beginning of the conversation about a memorial, there was concern that what was being proposed by way of a Kiap Memorial was self-aggrandisement.

Let there be no doubt that remembering those *kiaps* who died in PNG and who did not come home, is an act of deep respect and love from those who came home to tell the stories!

A dedication of the Kiap Memorial could be expected in the second half of 2026.

BILL SANDERS, July 2025

PNG KUNDU

Official Journal of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc.

Thanks to Christine

Christine Leonard has regrettably needed to resign from the editorial role she's been handling since early 2024.

Her ideas have been refreshing for the publication, and we have enjoyed her friendship and having her on the team. We wish her well with her other ongoing commitments for the future.

But now, we welcome our new editor—John Reeves!

The New Editor

After discovering that my grandfather served with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) in 1914 before going to France in WWI, I visited Rabaul for the 2014 Anzac

Centenary. A contingent of Aussies was there and I found out about the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA).

Since then I have developed an abiding passion for PNG. Although, I admit, until now I have had a bias towards East New Britain, I am looking forward to learning more about PNG and the 'land of the unexpected'.

In saying that, I believe strongly that the Association is a remarkable bridge to cross the gap that Australians have in acknowledging the history of our two countries.

I look forward to assisting in promoting PNG in our fields of endeavour and, in the broader sense, highlighting issues, where needed, for the betterment of the PNG people.

Over the years I have travelled to Rabaul many times for Anzac Day and other commemorations, and it is through these visits that I realised the lack of understanding that many Australians have about PNG.

This lack of knowledge often leads to misconceptions and oversights about the rich history and culture of these regions.

As a late-blooming historian,



John Reeves

I look forward to editing the journal so that it is both reflective and inspires the future ... so that it enshrines the memories of those Australians who have worked and lived in PNG, and it also highlights new achievements and successes in PNG.

I look forward to receiving a wide variety of articles and information to share with PNGAA members.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who have assisted me, while I am still finding my feet.

JOHN REEVES

New Journal Layout

We're always trying to make *PNG KUNDU* easier to read for members and, to this end, we've incorporated all the smaller regular categories into a new section, 'News & Views', which will, of course, contain all the normal features but in a slightly different format—hope you enjoy!

'Unity in Diversity'

In each issue this year, the journal has featured stories about PNG's independence and celebrations, and this issue contains so many that our usual articles have been held over until the December issue!

Don't worry, they'll all be there—and will give you something great to read over the holiday period!

Length of Submissions

Over the last few issues, many of the submissions have been well over the acceptable word limit.

Please note that articles should be between 500 and 1,200 words—longer submissions are welcome but may be split over two or more

sequential issues due to space restraints.

Other contributions (Events, Letters, Vales & Tributes, Roundup, Reviews, etc.) ideally should be no more than 300–500 words, and longer ones may be published on the website.

Front Cover

To celebrate 50 years of PNG Independence, this issue's cover features the raising of the new Papua New Guinea flag on Independence Hill, Port Moresby at 10 am, 16 September 1975.

REVIEWS

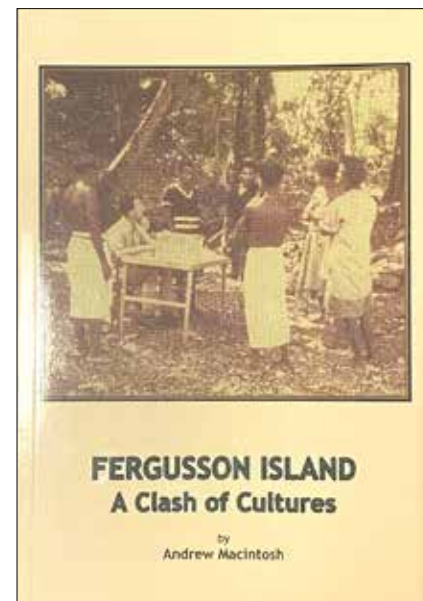
Featuring new books about PNG and reviews, art and craft exhibitions, interviews of interest to members and information for authors, artists and craftspeople

ANDREW MACINTOSH *Fergusson Island: A Clash of Cultures*

A story from Fergusson Island in the Territory of Papua, set in a period from the 1950s when the Territories were administered by the Australian Government, and a time when Christian missionaries had moved into remote areas to convert and educate the local people.

Traditional beliefs, laws and pursuit of Cargo Cult regularly clashed with the administration and Western laws imposed upon them, with potentially deadly results.

These are the overlapping stories of the Fergusson Islanders, the Australian patrol officers and



missionaries living and working on Fergusson Island.

ISBN: 978-0-646-70436-4 Self-Published 2024, *Cremorne1.com*
Self-publishing, A5 size; 104 pp; Cost: \$20 plus postage.
Purchasers can order by email to *andrewmacintosh59@gmail.com*

SUSAN COCHRANE *Living Art: Papua New Guinea*

Living Art in Papua New Guinea brings alive the multiple contemporary realities of the country and its people. This full-colour art book—lavishly illustrated with over 100 photos—presents artworks and cultural

SPECIAL OFFER FOR PNGAA MEMBERS —20% Discount

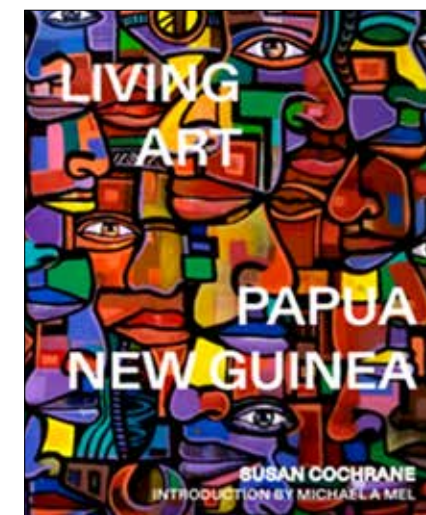
PNGAA thanks Melbourne Books who has kindly offered a discount especially for PNGAA members. To get the discount, enter the Coupon Code *PNGAA* at checkout.
Pre-Order Now for September 2025 Release
Print run is limited so secure your copy now!

performances that are astonishing for their dramatic visual effect and virtuosity. It is a highly visual experience of Papua New Guinea's spectacular cultures and aesthetic wealth in their own context.

Culture, politics, history, and identity are interlinking themes through which the book presents ideas about artists, creative processes and aesthetics, revealing Papua New Guinea's diversity of cultures and environments. It locates innovative artists in their villages, in downtown Port Moresby, and on to the international stage. Through this panorama, readers' ideas about what art is may be challenged.

Released in the month of Papua New Guinea's 50th Anniversary of Independence, this book explains and showcases the contemporary arts and culture of Papua New Guinea and its people, with a Preface by Honourable James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Dr Susan Cochrane is a researcher, curator and writer who works closely with communities and organisations in Papua New Guinea. Throughout her career,



Dr Cochrane has been a staunch advocate for Pacific artists and writers, and she regularly collaborates with artists and writers from Indigenous Australian, Pacific Islander, and Papua New Guinean communities.

ISBN: 978-1922779403

Published by Melbourne Books;
336 pp; Hardback.

RRP \$74.99

Please use this link:

<https://melbournebooks.com.au/products/living-art-papua-new-guinea-pgk>

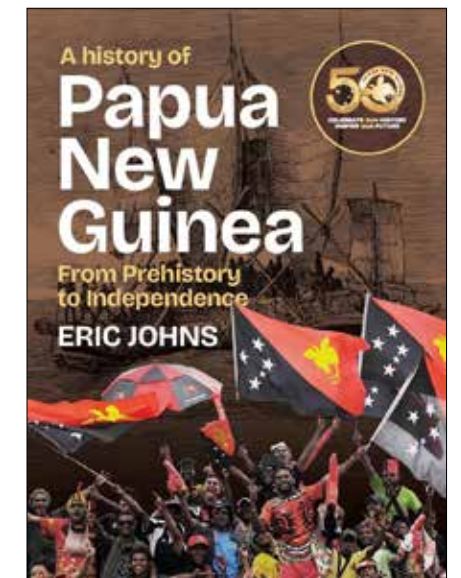
ERIC JOHNS *A History of Papua New Guinean from Prehistory to Independence*

Every once in a while, a truly memorable, superlative book about Papua New Guinea (PNG) is released. Often the author will be an Australian who lived in PNG and fell in love with the land and its diverse peoples.

Eric Johns' *A History of Papua New Guinea from Prehistory to Independence* is in the same class as the famous Professor Denoon's, *A Trial Separation*. It is, however, a very different kind of history.

Whereas that book is a polemic, Johns' book does not try to prove a point or win a constitutional debate. Instead, it patiently takes its readers on a long, instructive journey across the millennia from New Guinea's early prehistory, through the centuries of it becoming progressively known to the outside world.

Moving on through its decades of colonisation by, first, the Netherlands, then Germany, Britain, Australia and Indonesia, the author demonstrates how



the New Guineans became a commodity, units of labour in the Pacific plantation and mining industries.

Meanwhile, the colonial administrations sought to impose their systems of governance, while missionaries from various Christian denominations tried to save indigenous souls by spreading the Gospel, which necessitated the establishment of schools to impart literacy.

In the eastern half of New Guinea and the nearby archipelagos, which eventually coalesced into PNG, the village-based communities often resisted their assimilation into the colonial world. Many clashes occurred between them and the navigators, explorers, labour recruiters, gold prospectors, missionaries and district administrators. Countless lives were lost, always violently. Local conflicts continued into the 1970s, as at Kabaira on the Gazelle Peninsula, where aggrieved villagers murdered the District Commissioner, Jack Emanuel, in 1971. Eric Johns covers this highly controversial episode

fully, and with commendable even-handedness.

Meanwhile, two world wars had engulfed the then separate territories of Papua and New Guinea. The second, from 1939 to 1945, saw the Japanese invading both territories and fighting tenaciously to retain their conquests. It was this war that prompted the administrative union of the two territories, setting them on their course towards PNG nationhood.

Eric Johns' four chapters describing World War II provide an excellent summary of the war's ebb and flow across PNG.

Eric Johns' subsequent chapters, in which he charts PNG's post-war progress towards independent nationhood, are the best exposition of that era that I have seen. He guides the reader through the maze of administrative, political, economic and constitutional controversies that PNG endured to achieve its independence. This came on 16 September 1975 almost exactly 30 years after World War II formally ended in PNG.

A History of Papua New Guinea from Prehistory to Independence is a beautifully produced volume. It is a big, substantial book but remains highly readable throughout. The logical division of each chapter into clearly marked sections helps the reader. So, too, does the author's accessible prose style.

Unlike many 'academic' histories, this is one for the general reader. Thankfully, it does not try to align itself with any of the historiographical 'isms' beloved by those historians who

write mainly for others of their ilk. Readers will appreciate the author's effort to tell the PNG story simply and directly 'as it really was'.

The task of reading Eric Johns' 625 pages of complex history is greatly eased by the many maps and illustrations. The book averages almost one entrancing illustration per page, many of these rarely if ever published previously.

Inevitably, even the most detailed history will omit episodes that well-informed readers might wish to see discussed. One event I had hoped to read about was the 1953 murder of two patrol officers and two policemen near Telefomin in the Sepik highlands. I eventually found it, but it was consigned to a brief footnote in the chapter covering that period.

The absence of a discussion of the Telefomin killings, however, does not detract from Eric Johns's achievement. *A History of Papua New Guinea from Prehistory to Independence* is the most complete introduction to modern PNG that I have seen. Anyone curious about whether PNG's Independence in 1975 will eventually prove to have been 'a trial separation' from Australia will find much food for thought within its 25 carefully crafted chapters.

IAN HOWIE-WILLIS

Published by Chris Roering (Darnum, Victoria), 2025
ISBN: 978-0-646-72151-4, Hard copy, 631 pp; Note: This is a limited-edition production. Please contact eric@johns.com.au for further information.

PNG News

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

New Australian High Commissioner to PNG

A new Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Ewen McDonald, commenced his role on 7 May 2025. Mr McDonald also holds the position of Australia's Inaugural Special Envoy for the Pacific and Regional Affairs.

Mr McDonald replaces former Australian High Commissioner to PNG, John Feakes, who recently retired from his post, having served since September 2023.

The new Australian Deputy High Commissioner, HE Adrian Lochrin, was welcomed at the Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM) in Port Moresby on 15 July 2025.

Speaking with PNG's Secretary for the Department of National



PM Marape welcomes Ewen McDonald

Planning and Monitoring (DNPM), Koney Samuel, HE Lochrin said:

The theme for this year, 'Side by Side, Step by Step,' is the way we are commemorating and celebrating PNG's 50th Anniversary. Australia will still walk side by side, step by step with PNG. You talked about the new Development Cooperation Framework, we stand ready to engage on that constructively.

The visit highlighted Australia's ongoing support for Papua New Guinea's Development Agenda as the meeting also coincided with the signing ceremony for the four new Subsidiary Arrangements (SA):

1. The Strategic Health Infrastructure (Stage 2 of ANGAU Hospital support to the new Gware Administration Building and Daru General Hospital).
2. Law and Justice Program.
3. PNG Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Policy Support Program.
4. PNG Women Lead.

The Subsidiary Arrangements provide the legal framework for any new program to be implemented in PNG.

NRL Board Members Announced

On 24 June 2025 PM, Hon. James Marape announced members of the board of the NRL during a visit by Australia's Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, Hon. Pat Conroy MP to PNG (above), and together with NRL CEO, Andrew Abdo, and ARLC Chairman, Peter V'landys AM, who said:



Inaugural board of Papua New Guinea franchise announced

The importance of this franchise goes well beyond winning games of football, it is about nation building and bringing our two countries closer together. The new NRL Club will provide a pathway for young people in PNG to follow their dreams and it will help transform societal and economic outcomes.

This is an important moment for the NRL as PNG is set up to become a nursery of talent in the region for the entire competition, not to mention the millions of fans that will now follow a new team entering the competition.

PNG Hands Over Ownership of Panguna Mine to Bougainville

Papua New Guinea's government recently transferred its majority shareholding in Bougainville Copper Limited to the government of Bougainville.

The transfer includes ownership of Panguna Mine, the massive gold and copper mine that was at the centre of a decade-long civil war, and which shut down in 1989. Deposits are valued at \$60 billion.

Under the transfer, 53 million dollars' worth of shares go to

Bougainville to give the government a 73% holding, with the remaining 27% of shares in the hands of investors, some of whom are Bougainvilleans.

The former owner, Rio Tinto, let go of the shares nine years ago, with just over a third going to each government, and the remainder to the local landowners.

The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) now holds majority ownership in Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL), following the transfer of 36.4% shares held by the government of Papua New Guinea to the ABG.

This move delivers a strong assurance to the Panguna landowners and the people of Bougainville that the future of the Panguna Mine and BCL is now firmly in Bougainvillean hands.

ABG President His Excellency Ishmael Toroama described the transfer as a momentous occasion.

[https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/boughandovermine/105462240;](https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/boughandovermine/105462240)
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/565299/bougainville-finally-gets-all-rio-shares-in-bougainville-copper>

EVENTS

Reports of functions, reunions and ceremonies held throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea. If you have an activity to advertise or promote, please send your information by **29 September 2025, Copy Deadline for the next issue to: editor@pngaa.net** Events are also listed on our website: [Resources>Events](#)

PNGAA Events Co-ordinator

Hello to all our members and friends. Some of you may know me from my past time on the PNGAA Management Committee and I look forward to reconnecting, as well as gaining new friends, who have joined PNGAA more recently.

With the 50th Anniversary Celebrations for PNG's Independence we are encouraging more local and personal get-togethers, and look forward to hearing about them and having your photos sent in to remember this special celebration.

SARA TURNER
events@pngaa.net

CHATSWOOD Networking Meeting 17 November 2025

Venue: Chatswood Bowling Club, 655 Pacific Highway, Chatswood—9.30–11.30 am.

RSVP: membership@pngaa.net
You bring your food and drink, and help clean up afterwards.

At the May meeting, Ross & Pat Johnson presented the original 'PNG Flag', made by Pat (below—and also see the article in 'Unity in Diversity' on page 45).

SYDNEY PNGAA Christmas Lunch

Wed., 26 November 2025

This special luncheon will round out PNG's golden jubilee 50th anniversary of independence year. Gather together and share the stories and the highlights of this year, whilst connecting with others who have enjoyed the amazing culture and experiences of our PNG/Australia relationship. Opportunities to mingle with friends old and new will be an occasion not to miss!

Date: Wednesday, 26 November 2025, 11.30 am.

Venue: Norths Club, Ken Irvine Room, 12 Abbott Street, Cammeray NSW 2062

Cost: \$88.00 per person.

RSVP: By 12 November 2025 to events@pngaa.net

Payment: Bookings by direct

payment to PNGAA's account (see Treasurer's Corner on page 63 and please email events@pngaa.net); Or via www.pngaa.org, then go to the Events menu and select the Sydney lunch.

Transport: Parking available at the Norths Club. Public bus No. 194 leaves Wynyard Station half hourly and stops in Miller Street, opposite Abbot Street, Cammeray. There is very short walk to the club.

SUNSHINE COAST South East Queensland Ex-Kiap Reunion 9–10 November 2025

Venue: Kawana Waters Hotel, 136 Point Cartright Drive, Buddina QLD—07 5444 6699

Time: 11 am–4 pm.

RSVP: 15 October 2025, via email kiap@optusnet.com.au

This invitation is extended to all *kiaps*, their families, their friends and other acquaintances from a previous lifetime such as chalkies, didimen, etc.

The reunion is at the Kawana Waters Hotel, with dining and seating facilities available for our use.



Upcoming Papua New Guinea Anniversary Celebrations

PNGAA has listed a number of events related to PNG 50th Anniversary of Independence celebrations for your information. They are both PNGAA and other group events in various locations.

BRISBANE: 9 August 2025

PNGAA Brisbane Annual Lunch was held at the Ship Inn, South Bank, and featured artist, Grim Jordan, who was commissioned to design an artwork logo on the K50 note marking the 50th Anniversary of the Bank of Papua New Guinea.

PERTH: 29 August 2025

PNGAA WA Luncheon, RAAFA Club, Bull Creek; 11.30 am–4.30 pm; Pay as you go. Contact Kylee 0405 334 501.

CANBERRA: 30 August 2025

PNGAA 50th Anniversary Dinner, Canberra; Organised by the new *PNG Kundu* Editor, John Reeves, and held at The Pavilion at Dickson.

We were delighted that His Excellency John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE, PNG High Commissioner to Australia was able to attend with his wife, Mrs Kali, and speak, together with guest speakers, Dr Ian Howie-Willis OAM and Mrs Margaret Howie-Willis, who shared their unique experiences as teachers in New Guinea, and as independent professional historians.

In 1968, following three years at Brandi High School near Wewak, Dr Howie-Willis was appointed to lecture English at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology. Whilst at 'Unitech', he completed a MA degree in Papua New Guinean History at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1972–73, and a PhD in Papua New Guinea history followed at the Australian National University in 1977. He is the author of 23 books, with a couple more in the pipeline.

SYDNEY: 2 September 2025

Dr Nicholas Hoare, from the Australian National University, presented an online event, 'Reporting PNG's Independence', looking 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.

BRISBANE: 6 September 2025

East New Britain Guria Gala Ball; Eagle Farm Racecourse, Brisbane, QLD.

RSVP Iava Parapa-Falvey:
iparapafalvey@yahoo.com

SYDNEY: 7 September 2025

PNG 50th Independence Lotu, Turramurra Uniting Church, 10 Turramurra Avenue, Turramurra, (02) 9144 1853

GOLD COAST: 9 September 2025

Gold Coast PNG Club Cultural Cocktail Party; HOTA, Gold Coast, QLD.

RSVP Iava Parapa-Falvey:
iparapafalvey@yahoo.com

CANBERRA: 12 September–June 2026

Bilong Papua New Guinea: 50 years of Independence, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT. (See page 28 for more details.)



His Excellency John Ma'o Kali CMG, OBE, and his wife, Mrs Vavinenama Vere Kali, who were at the Canberra Dinner



SYDNEY: 13 September 2025

PNG Cultural Family Day, Sydney;
Email: sydwantok@gmail.com

BEENLEIGH: 13 September 2025

PNG Federation Qld Inc Cultural Day, Bill
Norris Oval, 39 Boundary Street, Beenleigh;
8.30 am–3 pm.

Tickets available: www.pngfqi.org/events

CAIRNS: 13 September 2025

PNG Wantoks Association, Cairns;
PNG 50th Anniversary Ball; Pullman Reef
Hotel Casino, 35 Wharf Street, Cairns, 6 pm.
Information: 0419 977 898

PERTH: 13 September 2025

PNG Association of WA Inc.; 50th Independence
Anniversary Celebrations. Details TBA.

GOLD COAST: 14 September 2025

Gold Coast PNG Club 50th Independence
Luncheon, Southport Golf Club, QLD.

RSVP Iava Parapa-Falvey;
iparapafalvey@yahoo.com

FELIXSTOW: 20 September 2025

PNG Independence Day Gala; 6 pm, Fogolar
Furlan, 69 Briar Rd, Felixstow, SA;
PNG Association of South Australia; event
sponsored by South Australian Government.

RICHMOND: 20 September 2025

Richmond Church Hall, 304-314 Church Street,
Richmond VIC; 12.30 pm. Bring your family, a
pot of kaukau, banana, taro, tapiok to share, and
byo drinks. Sit roast of pork, lamb and chicken
will be provided. RSVP Julius Jacobs 0450 560
357, Teresa Cox 0435 716 693.

BRISBANE: 20 September 2025

Consul General (Brisbane) Kumul 50th
Independence Ball; Brisbane Ent. Centre.

SYDNEY: 27 September 2025

Sydney Wantok 50th Independence Ball;
Showroom, Hornsby RSL, 6.30 pm–11.30 pm,
Dress: Formal; Cost: Early bird \$150 (before 27
August), \$180 after 27 August 2025; 3-course
meal with drinks and canapes on arrival.
BSB: 062 000/Account No: 17021082. Please
add payment description: Last Name_PNG50
and then email: sydwantok@gmail.com for
confirmation and ticket collection.

CAIRNS: September 2025

‘The Invisible Line: Stories, Legends and
Connections’—Cairns Regional Council,
Mulgrave Gallery. This exhibition will highlight
the ancestral and continued connections
between PNG and Australia through art and
stories. These stories celebrate Australian
First Nation and PNG cultures as well as
contemporary interpretations and PNG diaspora
voices in Australia.

BRISBANE: 1 November 2025

PNG Gulf Association of QLD Inc—
2025 Annual Gala Dinner, Hillstone,
St Lucia. Tickets: www.trybooking.com/DDCMH
or FaceBook: [https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/events/1141503524663266)
[events/1141503524663266](https://www.facebook.com/events/1141503524663266)

CANBERRA: 14–15 November 2025

OAS Canberra Forum, National Gallery of
Australia, Canberra. Further information:
(email) info@oceanicartsociety.org.au

CANBERRA: 14 November 2025

Oceanic Art Society XIII Forum Dinner,
Canberra, details to be advised.

SYDNEY: 26 November 2025

PNGAA's Sydney Christmas Lunch; This special
luncheon will round out PNG's golden jubilee
independence year and will be held at Norths
Club, Cammeray, from 11.30 am. *See page 12 for
more details.*

PERTH: 5 December 2025

PNGAA WA Christmas Lunch; RAAFA Club,
Bull Creek, 11.30 am–4.30 pm; Pay as you go.
Contact Kylee 0405 334 501.



Unity in Diversity 1975–2025



**Celebrating
Papua New Guinea's
50 Years of
Independence**

Together, Let Us Move Forward

HON. MICHAEL SOMARE MP, 1975

First Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

Michael Somare was Chief Minister from 1972, and led the country to self-government up to the point Independence was proclaimed. He became the Prime Minister of a brand new nation, which was to be known as the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, and addressed the nation in a radio broadcast shortly before midnight.

My people of Papua New Guinea, the big day we have looked forward to for so long—our Independence Day—has arrived. Today is the 16th of September 1975—the day of Independence for Papua New Guinea. We have talked about this day, we have planned for it, worked for it and looked forward to it.

Today, our young nation takes possession of the prize which marks our people's determination and hard work. This country and its people now enter Independence and sovereignty, and as from now, we will be counted among the family of nations. I think we are more fortunate than many other countries.

We have been lucky because we have reached full nationhood without the fighting and bloodshed that has been experienced by many former colonies.



PNG's first Prime Minister, Michael Somare, and first Governor-General, Sir John Guise, at the Independence Day Ceremony in Port Moresby

But even so, our achievement of Independence still represents years of planning, overcoming opposition, debates, and hard work on the part of everyone who has contributed to the birth of our new nation.

I know that every man, woman and child of our nation shares this moment of pride and happiness with one heart, to join in celebrating our Independence.

At this point, I wish to remind all of us too that this is just the beginning. Now we must stand on our own two feet and work harder than ever before. Our land and our history has plenty to offer our people in this effort. Our rich cultures have always provided us with our sense of values, and will continue to do so.

As a united people we will achieve our goals with the stability of our background to support us, and the richness of the earth to provide for us. Many who have helped to build this nation are no longer with us. Their efforts and services must be remembered at this time.

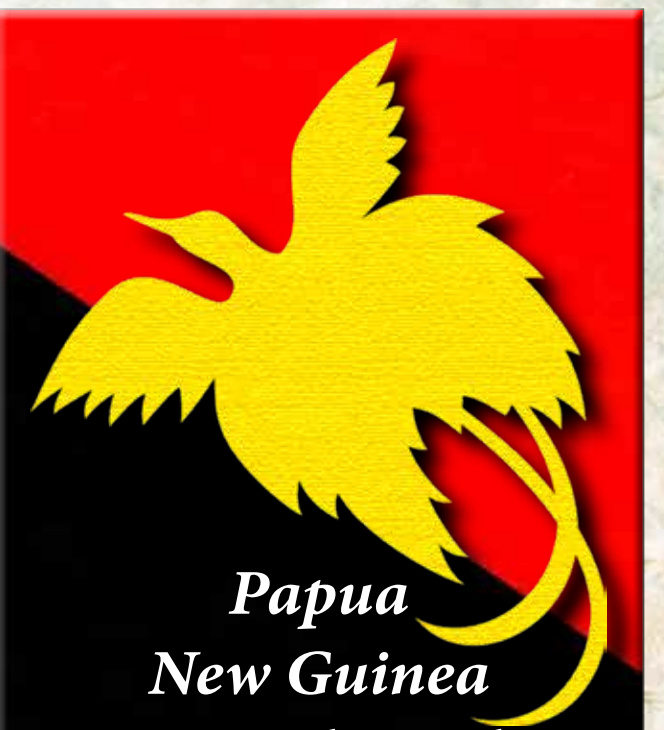
Our leaders hold the responsibility for the future of our country and its governments. The people's welfare, freedom and peace will be the primary concern of our politicians.

In conclusion, I would like to say again that the achievement of Independence is our national pride. We do not owe this Independence to the Government of Papua New Guinea, nor to the Government of Australia, nor even to the United Nations that has watched over our progress during the past years.

We owe our Independence to the men and women in the villages who helped build roads to link our diverse people together. We owe it to others who have counselled wisely on village, district and government committees, and to our fathers and mothers who have had the vision to work in some small way towards our freedom.

We are indebted to wise elders of our own clans, and those from other lands who saw unity and peace as the long-term aim of their work.

We should work together after Independence in the same spirit as those men and women toiled to achieve our Independence.



is now independent.

***The Constitution
of the Independent State of
Papua New Guinea,
under which all power rests
with the people,
is now in effect.***

***We have at this point in time
broken with our colonial past
and we now stand as an
independent nation
in our own right.
Let us unite, with the Almighty
God's guidance and help,
in working together
for a future as a strong
and free country.***

***The Proclamation of Independence,
issued by the Governor-General,
Sir John Guise,
at one minute past midnight,
16 September 1975***



Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, Prime Minister James Marape and former Prime Ministers leaving Parliament after paying their respects at the funeral of Sir Mekere Morauta

HON. JAMES MARAPE MP, 2025

Ninth Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

James Marape has served as the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea since May 2019, and has been a member of the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea since July 2007, and won the 2022 elections under the banner of the Pangu Party.

My Fellow Papua New Guineans, we gather at a pivotal moment in our nation's history. As we stand on the threshold of our 50th Independence Anniversary, we are reminded of the remarkable journey that has brought us to where we are today.

We celebrate our independence, won on 16 September 1975, after years of struggle and determination. We honour the sacrifices of our founding fathers and mothers, who fought tirelessly for our nation's sovereignty.

As we reflect on our past, we acknowledge the wisdom of our ancestors, the resilience of our communities, and the determination of each generation to build a better future. Our Constitution, crafted by the Constitutional Planning Committee, has been our guiding light, upholding the principles of democracy, human rights, and self-determination. However, as we celebrate, we are also met with sadness.

It has been my most unpleasant tasks, that, during the tenure of my position as the Prime Minister, I have had to preside over the passing of Sir Michael Somare, Sir Mekere Morauta, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, and now Sir Julius—our first lot of prime ministers. It is clear that our nation is transitioning into another phase of our journey as an independent country. This also means the responsibility upon the shoulders of present leadership both in Government and Public Service will now be greater felt by all.

As we move forward, let this 50th anniversary remind us that our nation's strength has always come from its people—from the wisdom of our ancestors, the resilience of our communities, and the determination of each generation to build a better future.

Let us celebrate our rich cultural heritage—not as separate tribes, but as a united nation proud of its traditions, its democracy, and its vision for the future. Let us embrace reconciliation, not just in words but in action, ensuring that no Papua New Guinean is left behind. And let us be inspired—not just for today, but for the next 50 years—to build a nation of peace, prosperity, and unity.

Together, let us move forward.

Together, let us celebrate our history and inspire our future.

Nearest of Neighbours & Closest of Friends

Australia's national day was on 26 January. It's a day where we take the opportunity to understand where we've been so that we can shape where we want to go. On Australia Day, we take stock of who we are as a nation, recognising our achievements, embracing our national identity and welcoming new Australians while honouring those who have contributed to building Australia, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As Australia's High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, I am both humbled and privileged to reflect on the meaning of Australia Day and its relevance in the context of the enduring bond between our two nations. In 2025, this reflection carries resonance as Papua New Guinea approaches an historic milestone: the 50th anniversary of its independence on 16 September 2025.

In 2025, we celebrate together as neighbours, friends and partners in our region. No relationship is as close and important to Australia as our relationship is with PNG. And in this year, celebrating PNG's 50th anniversary of independence, we are reminded further of our shared history and shared future.

Australia and PNG are the nearest of neighbours and closest of friends. Since before independence and over many generations, we have remained steadfast in our shared values of democracy, sovereignty and the rule of law and our shared vision for a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and unified region.

In 1906, Australia and Papua were under one Australian administration. Together, we went through WWI, the Great Depression and WWII where the Kokoda spirit was born. After WWII, our people-to-people links remained strong with Australian teachers, missionaries, health care workers and public servants working across the country. Then, on 16 September 1975, through the

efforts of the Somare and Whitlam governments and in the presence of the then Prince and now His Majesty King Charles III, the Australian flag was lowered and the PNG flag raised over Port Moresby. PNG gained its independence, and Australia gained a friend.

Australia is as enthusiastic about PNG's Golden Jubilee as we were about independence in 1975. Now, like then, we look to the future and the significance of the next 50 years.

As Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of the Papua New Guinean people and their commitment to their nation. The celebrations are an opportunity to reflect on the journey so far, one in which Australia has accompanied its neighbour side by side, step by step and we will continue to do so as we envision a future of even greater progress and collaboration between our nations.

Our strong friendship and our forward-looking trajectory make our relationship unique. Among our shared cultural bonds is our unrivalled love of sport. In December the Australian and PNG governments announced their support of a PNG NRL team, Australians will sit up and take notice as PNG enters the international stage. I can't wait to come back to attend their first match in 2028.



PNG Prime Minister James Marape and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese walking side by side on the Kokoda Track in April 2024



National Anthem

*O arise all you sons of this land,
Let us sing of our joy to be free,
Praising God and rejoicing to be
Papua New Guinea.*

*Shout our name from the
mountains to seas
Papua New Guinea;
Let us raise our voices and proclaim
Papua New Guinea.*

*Now give thanks to the good Lord above
For His kindness, His wisdom and love
For this land of our fathers so free,
Papua New Guinea.*

*Shout again for the whole world to hear
Papua New Guinea;
We're independent and we're free
Papua New Guinea.*

Composed and written by
Chief Inspector Thomas Shacklady
MBE (1917–2006) in 1975.

He was bandmaster of the Royal
Papua New Guinea Constabulary Band,
having been appointed in 1964.
Under his direction, the band toured
Australia, New Zealand, United States
of America and SE Asia,
performing at the Edinburgh Military
Tattoo in 1970.

Our cooperation across defence, policing, health, education, economic growth and business development, sports and environment continue to grow from strength to strength. This year, we will continue a strong focus on supporting the delivery of quality infrastructure in PNG. Recent examples include the Metoreia Urban Health Centre in Hanuabada in Port Moresby, and the upgrading of the Kimbe Port in West New Britain (part of a comprehensive plan to help upgrade ports across PNG using local contractors and in consultation with communities).

While our governments' work is important, it's the connections between individual Australians and Papua New Guineans that make our partnership so special and, in recognition of this, Australia is launching its Yumi Stap Wantaim campaign, which highlights our cultural, defence, security, development and economic ties—and goes beyond simple recognition of PNG's independence.

Yumi Stap Wantaim is not merely a celebration; it is a tribute to the success of the Papua New Guinea which has emerged in the last 50 years. It is a celebration of its vitality and its resilience and of the deep friendship and partnership between our two nations and our two people. While our contemporary relationship is anchored in our shared history, it is enlivened and given meaning by our shared values and faith.

Throughout 2025, Yumi Stap Wantaim will deliver a series of high-profile events, showcasing our close partnership through activities that focus on education, sport, film, music, dance, art, and food.

As part of the festivities, Australia and PNG talk about new avenues for co-operation and partnership. Events, forums, and exhibitions will be held across both countries to celebrate our shared achievements and aspirations. Australians and Papua New Guineans alike are invited to take part in these events, reaffirming our commitment to a bright and inclusive future.

It will be a year to remember. We look forward to reflecting on our history, celebrating with the people of PNG, and continuing to build a future based on friendship, respect, and collaboration.

JOHN FEAKES

**Former Australian High Commissioner to
Papua New Guinea**

PNG at 50: We Are the Children of the 1960s —a Bridge Between Worlds



1. The twin
volcanic eruption at Rabaul in 1994

2. Malum Nalu with bags of cocoa and the current
cocoa dry bean price buoying the PNG industry

We were born in the late 1960s—into a world still under the shadow of colonialism, but stirring with the promise of freedom. The Queen was on our coins. English had just arrived in our classrooms. Roads were few, yet our imaginations ran wild. Papua New Guinea was not yet a nation, but we were already its sons and daughters.

We grew up in the 1970s, as the flag of black, red, and gold was raised to the skies. We were children during independence—wide-eyed, barefoot, and full of wonder. We remember the kundu drums beating, the school choirs singing, the joy in our parents' voices as the nation found its name.

We drank Fanta from glass bottles, bought Twisties at trade stores, and danced to music played on vinyl records, cassette tapes, and later, CDs. Life was raw, real, and full of hope.

We studied in the 1970s and '80s, when education meant chalkboards, school uniforms and strict teachers. We memorised multiplication tables and sang hymns during assembly.

We passed notes in class, walked miles to school, and came home to gardens, laughter, and storytelling around the fire.

We came of age in the 1980s and '90s, a time of nation-building. We fell in love, got married (or didn't), raised families, and found jobs in a growing PNG. We saved for box cameras, took photos which were developed at the pharmacy, and sent letters through Post PNG. We queued at public phones, dropped in 20 toea coins, and remembered numbers by heart.

Some of us became teachers, nurses, carpenters, soldiers, police officers, journalists, or small business owners. We helped carry the weight of a new nation on our shoulders—with pride. We entered the 2000s a little older, a little wiser. We watched our children embrace mobile phones, computers, Facebook, and the world beyond. We didn't always understand it, but we adapted. We endured. We continued to give—from our wisdom, our work, our hearts.

By the 2010s, we had become 'elders'. Our children began asking: 'Did you really grow up



1. Aftermath of the Aitape tsunami, 1994
2. The winning Kumuls in 1977
3. Bougainvilleans await the results of the Independence Referendum, 2019
4. Celebrating at the Pacific Games, 2015

without TV?’ ‘Did you walk to school every day?’ ‘Did you use those big black phones on the wall?’

And now, in the 2020s, we stand as the living memory of a young nation turning 50. We have lived through seven decades, two centuries, and two millennia. From slates to smartphones, typewriters to AI—we have witnessed it all. We’ve gone from letter-writing to WhatsApp, shortwave radios to YouTube livestreams, PMVs and Land Rovers to sealed highways and Air Niugini jets.

We’ve travelled by canoe, dinghy, PMV, Land Cruiser—and sometimes, just on foot; from vinyl and cassettes to streaming music; from marbles and slingshots to mobile games. We remember when rugby league lived on the radio.

We cheered for John Wagambie in 1977 as he led the PNG Kumuls to a 37–6 victory over France. We cried when John Aba fought valiantly but lost to Eusebio Pedroza in the 1979 World Featherweight Boxing Title. We roared as Marcus Bai hoisted the NRL Premiership trophy with the Melbourne Storm in 1999, and again in 2004, as he lifted the English Super League title with Leeds Rhinos. We waved flags and sang together during the Pacific Games—in 1969, 1991 and 2015, right here on home soil.

And we sang ‘Islands and Mountains’—not just with our voices, but with our hearts.

We’ve lived through: the Bougainville Crisis, the Rabaul volcanic eruption of 1994, the global panic of Y2K in 1999, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, fuel shortages, the pain and silence of COVID-19 lockdowns. And yet—we are still here.

Still standing. Still believing. Still proud to call this land—this blessed land of a thousand tribes—home.

We are the generation born in the 1960s—We are the bridge between the old world and the new. We are the last of the handwritten letters and the first to hold a mobile phone. We are the keepers of PNG’s stories—the eyewitnesses to its birth, its struggles, its triumphs.

**We are rare. We are resilient.
We are Papua New Guinea.**

MALUM NALU



Kina & Toea: 50 Years

The denomination names of Papua New Guinea’s currency, kina and toea, originated from traditional shell money, which was historically used for trade, in ceremonies, and as a symbol of wealth amongst Papua New Guineans and their communities. These linkages continue to unite coastal and highlands peoples to the enduring significance of Papua New Guinea’s cultural heritage.

On 21 April 1975, the six first coin denominations from one toea to one kina of the new nation of Papua New Guinea were issued. Official First Day Cachets combining proof coin sets and commemorative stamps honouring Papua New Guinea’s independence and its first coinage were also issued. The newly minted kina circulated with the Australian dollar in Papua New Guinea until 31 December 1975.

These coins portray Papua New Guinea’s extraordinary wildlife, together with the symbols of the nation’s sovereignty. The coinage employs a decimal system with 100 toea equal to one kina. The kina is named after one of the region’s earliest forms of currency—the pearl shell. Toea is the name of another shell used in island barter.

The one-kina coin portrays two crocodiles. They look the same on the coin but one is the smaller, *Crocodylus novaeguineae*, found only on the island of New Guinea (<https://en.numista.com/>); the larger species is the wide ranging Saltwater or Indo-Pacific Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*). The hole in the centre is a tribute to when coins were worn on strings or carried on sticks. The reverse of this coin carries a stylised emblem of the Bank of Papua New Guinea, while the national crest of Papua New Guinea appears on the reverse of all the other coins.

Bennett’s cassowary (*Casuarius bennetti*), a flightless bird indigenous only to Papua New Guinea, features on the 20-toea coin. The spotted cuscus (*Spiloglossus maculatus*), a member of the marsupial family, is shown on the 10-toea coin.

The five-toea coin portrays the rare plateless turtle. The ornate butterfly cod, one of the many fascinating fish inhabiting coral reefs around the nation, was shown on the two-toea coin. The one-toea coin depicted a paradise birdwing (*Ornithoptera paradisea*) butterfly, a giant species

found only in Papua New Guinea. The one and two-toea coins were withdrawn from circulation in 2006 when they became redundant.

The two largest denomination proof coins, the sterling silver ten kina and the five kina, minted in .500 silver, were contained in the commemorative First Day Cachets.

The Raggiana Bird of Paradise—the national bird of Papua New Guinea—is portrayed on the largest denomination coin, the ten kina. The five stars of the Southern Cross constellation appear with the bird just as they do on the national flag. This coin was combined in a cachet with the 30-toea independence stamp, which depicts the national crest along with a map of Papua New Guinea and the surrounding islands.

The five-kina coin depicts the Papuan Harpy Eagle (*Harpyopsis novaeguineae*) or *Tarangau* in Tok Pisin, and was combined in a cachet with the seven-toea stamp, which depicts the national flag and a map showing the location of Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinean visual artist Grim Jordan was commissioned by the Bank of Papua New Guinea in 2023 to design a piece of art now featured on the 50-kina bank note for the Bank’s 50th Anniversary.

ANDREA WILLIAMS

with reference to First Day Cachets issued 21 April 1975



Discovering PNG's Cultural Diversity Along the Way to School

I was born a kanaka at Kondo village in Kandep, Enga Province, sometime in the mid-1950s. As a small boy, when I played with other children, there was no road in my village. We followed bush tracks to play on the village square or *kamapu*. I only heard about the 'koneakali' or red skinned men who had come to other parts of Kandep.

Based on information my parents provided, I assumed I was between three to five years old when the first census was conducted by the Australian colonial government *kiaps* or patrol officers at Kalimanga village in 1958.

My people—the Korotep and Aimbarep tribesmen, assembled there to record their names. I was told much later that it took about three days to record all our tribesmen who live from the base of Kondo Kana all the way up to Last Wert on the foothills of the Mt Sugarloaf Ranges.

We number more than 14 council wards in the Mariant Local Government Council area. When I began going to school, I discovered that there were many other tribes in Kandep. And the people were divided into three distinct cultural groups—Mariant, Lai and Wage census divisions.

Although we speak the same Enga language, the pronunciation of words, the way of traditional dressing and other aspects of our culture were different. We, the Mariantal people, had cultural ties with people in the Western Highlands and Mendi in the Southern Highlands. The Wage people spoke the *Huli*



We speak the same language but these Huli men dressed differently at a recent Enga Cultural Show language and dressed like Huli wigman of Hela province. While people in the Lai census division were more or less like people from Laiagam, with their mushroom-shaped human hair wig and all.

When I attended St Paul's Lutheran High School at Pausa in 1972, I discovered that students from Wapenamanda, Wabag and Kompam spoke the *Enga* language as everybody else did, but our pronunciations of particular words differed, much like Americans and British speaking English. Students from Porgera could speak and act the same way as did people from Wage in Kandep.

I also saw much more cultural diversity at the world-famous Mt Hagen Cultural Show that same year. I kept close to where people from Kandep had camped in case I got lost in the crowds. It was in Mt Hagen that I saw, and touched, the thick hide of my first elephant whose name was Jumbo. I was amazed at its enormous strength when it pulled huge logs in the main arena.

After two years at Pausa, I transferred to Lae Technical College in 1974. There I saw students from virtually every corner of PNG. Jet black students from Bougainville, light skinned students from Central, blonde-haired students from Rabaul, very tall students from Kerema or Daru and stocky highlanders and many other groups of students. The Morobe Agricultural Show presented more cultural diversity. It was

here that I saw local cowboys on horseback for the first time.

The following year, in 1975, we students who took electrical as a trade subject were transferred to Port Moresby Technical College. We had no technical instructors. I was soon exposed to more of my country's cultural diversity—at the college, on the streets of Port Moresby and the Cultural Show at Moitaka near the police training college at Bomana. The delicately clad Mekeo dancers and Milne Bay Tapioka dancers were my favourite groups to watch.

What I couldn't see in Mt Hagen, Lae or in Port Moresby was the diversity of PNG's cultural beliefs and practices—rituals, ways of preparing food, courting sessions, marriage ceremonies or youth initiation ceremonies. But I began to read about our cultural practices in books. I read about one such ritual, a painful youth initiation ritual from the Sepik in our 1975 School Yearbook.

I still have my copy of the yearbook from 50 years ago. I hope that the Form 4 student who wrote it, Thomas Kapai, or his children could read about the ritual which I reproduce here.

'The Initiation' is the title of Thomas Kapai's article. I didn't know him, but we had graduated together in 1975. He was from somewhere in the Sepik. I reproduce this article with another one of my own classmates in mind as well, late Martin Trei who died from heart disease. The evening before, he had been running around the playing field and had vomited blood. Martin was taken to hospital but died some days later. He was from the East Sepik Province.

I remember five of us from our class going up to Port Moresby General Hospital to wrap his body in some sheets we took along and placed our friend's body in the morgue before it was evacuated home for burial.

Anyway, here is the article, which includes sensitive cultural information, by Thomas Kapai:

Papua New Guinea is composed of hundreds of villages. Almost every village has its own customs. A number of villages speak the same language and

these villages have the same customs in common, as in my area's case, which I would like to discuss.

In my area, there are about forty villages that speak the same language, and most of our customs are very similar. We have a custom which is entirely different from all the villages in PNG.

It is an initiation ceremony, unlike all initiation ceremonies conducted in this country. In this ceremony, it is the duty of the boys' uncles to look after the well-being of the boys. Before the boys can be taken into the haus tambaran or spirit home, permission must be obtained from their fathers because this ceremony involves lots of hard work and these days, lots of money.

After permission is given, the boys can be taken into the haus tambaran. Inside, the boys are then laid on their stomachs on the bottom of canoes. Then two poles are put on each boy, one across his neck and one across his legs and four men sit on each end of the poles. This is to prevent them from jumping up and down while the initiation is carried on.

When the boys are firmly held, the initiation starts by shaving the boys' hair off. Then the real thing begins with three to four men per boy with brand new razor blades. These men must have at least two packets of razor blades because they have to change the blades every now and then. In the olden days, they used sharp pieces of bamboo. The maximum depth of the cuts is about one and a half centimetres, and the length one centimetre. The men who do the job usually put their blades three times in the same place so that when the sore dries up, the mark will be very firm, like a breast of a very young girl.



A pig is led to be sacrificed at a show

While the cutting is going on, everyone inside the haus tambaran make tremendous noises to drown the cries of the boys. If anybody dies during the ceremony, it will be a very big secret until the day they are released. On that day of release, the first boy in the line will carry the unfortunate one's head on a tray.

By the time the dreadful business is over, the boys are almost dead. They lie there like logs covered with sticky blood. The cutting normally goes on for thirty to forty minutes.

Then the boys are lifted onto their uncles' shoulders and carried to a creek or a river. When the boys are being carried to the water, women and the uninitiated are forbidden to see them. If anyone is caught spying, he or she will be in serious trouble.

When the boys hit the water, they come to life again. The blood is then thoroughly washed away and they are taken back to the haus tambaran where they stay awake all night.

For a couple of days, the boys do not eat very much but after a week they are expected to eat as much as they like.

The miraculous thing is that the sore usually dries up in about two weeks. Some of you might think that some sort of medicine is being used to cure the sore but nothing is used except red clay and a black liquid that comes out of a certain tree.

They do not release the boys as soon as their sores are dry. They usually keep them for another three weeks or so. In the olden days, they usually kept them up to two years.

From the time the boys enter the haus tambaran



Previous anniversary celebrations at the Rainbow Elementary School

until about three months after, they are not allowed to sleep on their backs. Every morning they are inspected to see that no boys have slept on their backs.

During the initiation period, the boys wear nothing, they walk naked, sleep naked. From the day they enter the haus tambaran, they are in the custody of their uncles until the day they are released.

When the boys are released, they can get married at any time they wish. Now they are regarded as men and not boys anymore.

In conclusion, I would like to say that readers might say that this is more than an initiation but, to us, it's just the same as any other initiations. It is also another way of finding out who is brave and who is a coward and, also, the only way we can prove that we are men and not boys.

Thomas Kapai,
4F, Port Moresby Technical College, 1975

I would like to add that Papua New Guinea was initiated on 1 December 1973, for self-government and declared a man (nation) on 16 September 1975. How the country has conducted itself is reflected on the living conditions of our people. If we have suffered, let it be like the scars on the bodies of young men who underwent the bloody, painful and dangerous initiation ritual.

If tribal warfare, alleged deep-rooted corruption in government, sorcery-related killings and other such menaces have been like the sharp razor blades that cut deep into the skins of the young initiates, let us all, our political leaders included, change our mindsets, make amends, be thankful to the fertile soil on which we stand on, breath in the fresh air and make decisions for ourselves, our women and children, and for our country to prosper in peace and unity in the next fifty years and beyond.

NOTE: If you've enjoyed this special independence story, watch out for more articles from the past recorded in four books, copies of which I still have—the POMTECH 1975 Yearbook, *Faces and Voices of Papua New Guinea*, *Shaping the Future* and UPNG Enga Students Association Yearbooks.

DANIEL KUMBON

Somare-Whitlam Australia Awards

The 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—and this year this prestigious program marks 50 years of PNG's Independence and honours the legacy of former Prime Ministers Sir Michael Somare and Gough Whitlam.

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. This scholarship isn't just about study—it's about history, leadership, and the deep friendship between Australia and PNG.

There are 90 scholars at universities in Australia, with 12 at the Australian National University in Canberra and 11 of those to the Crawford School of Public Policy, where a welcome event for the awardees, was attended by Senator the Hon. Penny Wong and PNG Prime Minister, the Hon. James Marape, along with ANU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Genevieve Bell, who shared inspiring words with the scholars.

A special moment was the signing of the ANU Red Book—a historic guest book that holds

the signatures of distinguished visitors to the university. Remarkably, only two people have signed it twice: Gough Whitlam and PM Marape!

There are 30 PNG teachers at Curtin University in Perth, and there was a ceremony held there, organised by DFAT and the University, to officially congratulate them as they further their education and skills under the STEM program. As the Hon. Anne Aly MP said at the ceremony:

In my first official engagement as Minister for International Development, I met and congratulated these teachers, who will bring important STEM knowledge and skills to classrooms across Australia Awards studies from their 12-week Australia Awards short course.

This year's Australia Awards PNG recipients have been recognised as Somare-Whitlam scholars and awardees—honouring Prime Ministers Sir Michael Somare and Gough Whitlam, and their role leading up to PNG's independence 50 years ago.



2025 Australia Awards Somare-Whitlam scholars at ANU University in Canberra with Senator the Hon. Penny Wong and PNG Prime Minister, the Hon. James Marape at the ANU event

Bilong Papua New Guinea at the National Gallery of Australia

Bilong Papua New Guinea: 50 years of Independence is an exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, opening 12 September 2025. The exhibition brings together a selection of the Gallery's remarkable collection of Papua New Guinean art to mark the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence and the birth of the new nation on 16 September 1975.

Over eighty works from the Pacific Arts collection present stories, historical moments, and elements of custom and modernity in the leadup to the formation of the nation of Papua New Guinea and its development over the last 50 years. Together, the works display multiple facets of the art of Papua New Guinea, although as any members of the PNGAA will understand, in a country of over 800 distinct communities and more than 20 provinces, it is impossible to be fully representative in one exhibition. In the words of the first Prime Minister, Michael Somare:

One of the most important and difficult tasks facing any new country is the creation of a national identity. In order to weld together the multiplicity of cultures and languages that make up Papua New Guinea, we must first of all know what our complex cultural heritage is.

As a starting point for the exhibition, the great antiquity of Papuan cultures is represented by the Ambum Stone, a small sculpture known to many by its inclusion on Papua New Guinea's 1970 5-cent stamp.

The Ambum stone is at least 3,500 years old and possibly around 10,000 years old. It was created by



The Ambum Stone 3,500 years Before Present
Enga Province, Papua New Guinea
Purchased 1977-77.637

an unknown culture active in the Ambum Valley, Enga Province, whose identity is now unknown.

The form of the Ambum stone suggests a puggle, a baby echidna. During a visit to the National Gallery in March this year Prime Minister James Marape viewed the Ambum stone and noted how this highly refined sculpture created by his Papuan ancestors rivalled the arts of the contemporary era of Mesopotamia, considered the 'cradle of civilisation'.

Two important artists in the exhibition, Timothy Akis and Mathias Kauage, are connected within the story of Papua New Guinea's modern art history. Akis began his artistic career drawing for anthropologists researching in the Highlands. In the late 1960s Akis visited Port Moresby and encountered Georgina and Ulli Beier, an English-German couple working for the University of Papua New Guinea. The Beiers were a catalyst for contemporary arts in Papua New Guinea, encouraging, supporting and championing New Guinean artists as the country moved towards independence.

Akis, a Maring man, enjoyed drawing insects, lizards, cassowaries, birds, spirit beings and people, all informed by his life in the Simbai Valley. He was the first New Guinean artist to hold a solo exhibition. This exhibition is recognised as a milestone in contemporary Papua New Guinean creative practice and Akis' contribution to the

arts was considerable. In 2024 the annual Akis Art Prize was inaugurated in Port Moresby by the Arts Society of Papua New Guinea to recognise and celebrate artists active today. A group of prints and drawings by Akis are a feature of the exhibition.

That first exhibition by Akis proved pivotal in many ways. Mathias Kauage, then working as a cleaner at the University, attended the opening and the exhibition introduced him to art. From this fortuitous encounter Kauage, from Simbu Province, became the most internationally recognised artist from Papua New Guinea and worked in printmaking, drawing, painting, textile appliqué, and copper-beating over a long career beginning in the 1970s. He found inspiration in the urban changes occurring around Port Moresby at that time, the growing number of cars, motorbikes, and helicopters, and changes in social attitudes.

One of Kauage's works in the exhibition is 'Independence Plane, 1977', his depiction of the royal aircraft which brought His Majesty King Charles III (then the 27-year-old Prince of Wales) to Papua New Guinea for the Independence Day celebrations. His Royal Highness delivered a speech in *tok pisin* as part of the raising of the new national flag ceremonies at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in September 1975. Within the body of the aircraft shown in Independence Plane is a warmly humorous portrait of the young prince in his summer clothes, wearing a highlander headdress. In 1996 Kauage attended the opening of the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Scotland, and met Queen

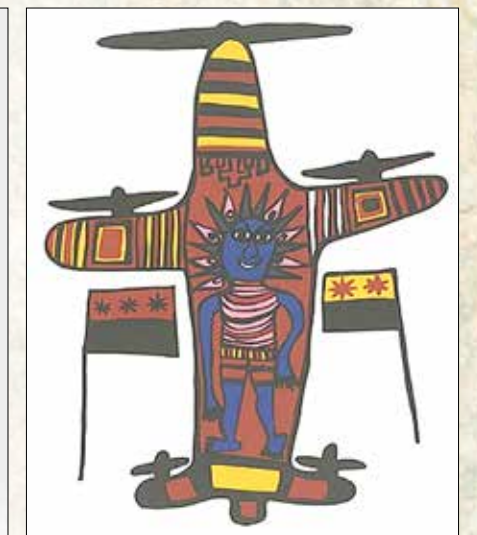
Elizabeth II. After the meeting Kauage created a painting for the Queen, and in 1998 received an OBE for his services to the arts.

The 1970s and the 1980s were marked by a surge in artistic creativity with artists imaging a new national identity through their work. The country presented an intriguing fusion of urban modernity and rural tribalism. Port Moresby developed with the construction of office blocks, shopping malls and skyscraper hotels, which co-existed with traditional social practices.

Beyond the regional centres it was, and remains, a nation of smaller communities with customary laws and local agriculture where people can live on smaller incomes than in the cities. Neither environment is mutually exclusive, with urban New Guineans often keeping ties to their ancestral villages and continuing the oral histories and stories of their communities.

In John Danger's work 'Untitled [man and woman] 2000', this theme of connection is shown through two people split down the middle wearing the fashions, clothes and styles of both the village and the town. Danger has captured the unique nature of the evolving social landscape for many New Guineans.

The renowned traditional cultural arts of Papua New Guinea are also represented in the exhibition with carved sculptures, intricately woven *bilum* bags, decorated bark cloth, pottery vessels, shields and other works from the Sepik River, Oro Province, New Britain and New Ireland. A standout



1. Timothy Akis: 'Tupela man [Two men] 1977'; 2. Marangis people: 'Brag Mask c.1975'
3. Mathias Kauage: 'Independence Plane 1977'

among these is the Brag Mask, c.1975, from the coastal Sepik region that still retains most of its decorations of fibre, cassowary feathers, dogs' teeth and boar tusks. Brag spirits can be ancestral in nature or beings from the sea or the bush, and each is an individual with a name, personality, and community history. Brag masks when worn are brightly decorated and their appearance and performance at important community occasions are dramatic spectacles. The National Gallery's Brag Mask has a historic connection as it appeared in performances during Independence Day festivities at a village along the coast of Broken Water Bay on 16 September 1975.

With art spanning prehistory to the Independence era, and more recent works, Bilong Papua New Guinea is a timely opportunity to see

Level 2, Gallery 21, National Gallery of Australia, Parkes Place East, Parkes, Canberra
12 September 2025–April 2026—Open 10 am–5 pm—Free admission
www.nga.gov.au



Stronger Together, Growing the Future

Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Anniversary in 2025 will be celebrated with the theme 'Stronger Together, Growing the Future'. This theme reflects the nation's focus on economic diversification, infrastructure development, and partnerships with regional and global stakeholders.

The celebrations, which include a golden jubilee event on September 16th, are expected to attract global investors and business leaders. The theme also reflects Papua New Guinea's commitment to building a prosperous future, inviting investors and development partners to be a part of this journey.

Here's a more detailed look at the theme and its significance:

Stronger Together: This part of the theme emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnerships for Papua New Guinea's development. It highlights the nation's efforts to build strong relationships with regional and global partners, including Australia, New Zealand, and other development agencies. The theme also reflects the importance of unity and co-operation within Papua New Guinea, with a focus on bringing together various communities and groups to achieve common goals.

Growing the Future: This part of the theme underscores Papua New Guinea's aspirations for long-term economic and social growth. It reflects the nation's commitment to investing in its people, infrastructure, and industries to create a more prosperous future for all. The theme also highlights Papua New Guinea's focus on sustainable development and ensuring a more equitable and inclusive future for its citizens.

In essence, the theme 'Stronger Together, Growing the Future' encapsulates Papua New Guinea's vision for the next 50 years, emphasising the importance of collaboration, partnership, and a commitment to building a prosperous and sustainable future for all its citizens.

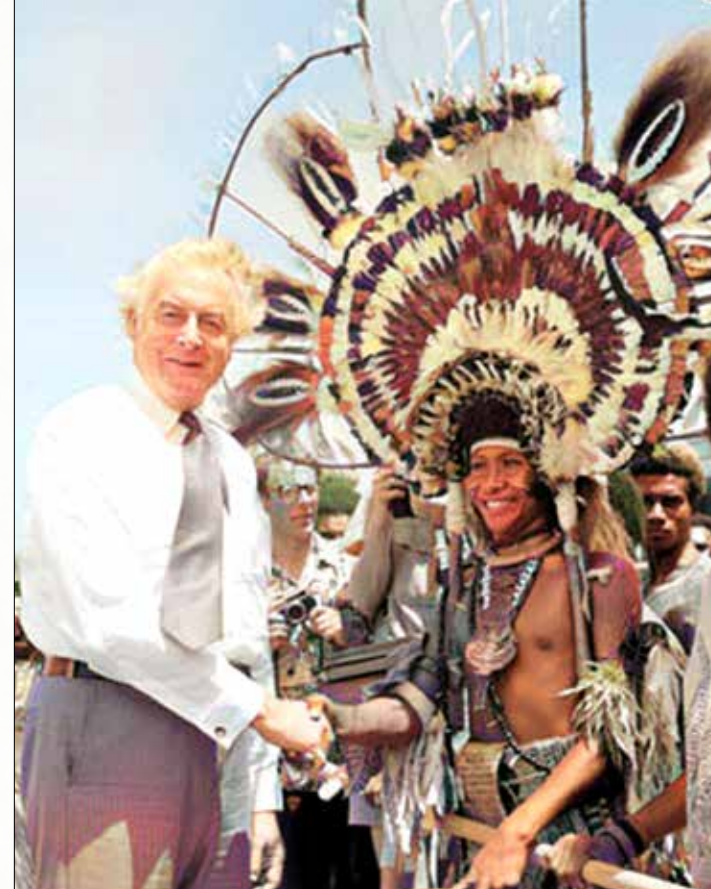
an impressive selection from over 2,700+ works of Papua New Guinean art in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. The curators, Crispin Howarth and Dan Toua hope visitors will encounter, enjoy, and learn about Papuan New Guinea's rich history and culture through the works on display.

An associated event, the Oceanic Art Society's XII Forum, will be held at the National Gallery of Australia on 14–15 November 2025. This is a free series of talks and tours related to the art, culture, and history of Papua New Guinea.

All PNGAA members are welcome. Please see the OAS website for details:

www.oceanicartsociety.org.au

CRISPIN HOWARTH
 Curator, Pacific Arts
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Memories of PNG's Independence Journey

Australia and Papua New Guinea share a deep historical and contemporary relationship, highlighted by the warm respect between peoples from both countries who have shared the journey to independence and beyond.

The PNGAA embraces initiatives to highlight and develop cultural understanding and education between the two countries, along with robust civil links. Over the last 50 years, there have been many stories featured in the PNGAA journals celebrating independence, some of which are republished here to showcase our connection and strengthen our future. We also feature new stories, which will bring back many memories.

1. Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam at the Independence Day celebrations, 1975
2. HRH Prince Charles, representing Queen Elizabeth II, at the Independence Day celebrations, Port Moresby (Ross Wilkinson)
3. The Committee of the PNG Independence Celebration Organisation saying goodbye to the royal visitor at the end of his 5-day visit
4. A sing-sing at the primary school at Erap Agricultural Station in the Markham Valley on Independence Day, 1975 (Ann Mallard)



A Papua New Guinean casting his vote at the New Guinea Elections in 1964
(Photo Frederick Carter, National Library of Australia)

The Road to Independence

The first general election in PNG was held between 15 March 1964 and 15 April 1964. This election, in which more than a million registered voters participated, was an important first step on the road to independence in 1975. The election was preceded by the passing of the necessary enabling legislation by the Australian Parliament and then many months of painstaking work by officers of the Department of Native Affairs (DNA—the *kiaps*) in establishing electoral rolls throughout the Territory of Papua New Guinea. All adults aged 18 and older were identified and included on the roll. The only people not included were those in Restricted areas which were determined to be too hazardous for entry.

In 1964, I was officer in charge of the Central Veterinary Laboratory at Kila Kila. We lived in Huala Place, Boroko. The latter is relevant to this story because Quentin Anthony, who was Assistant District Officer (ADO), Central District, and responsible for managing the voting for the Moresby Open and Central Special electorates, also lived in Huala Place. There were polling places distributed throughout these electorates

which included people in the Tapini, Goilala and Koiari areas, as well as those in Port Moresby and the coastal villages of the Motu people.

There were not enough people in DNA to staff all the polling booths. Volunteers were needed and Quentin suggested to me that I might like to be the Returning Officer for one of his polling places. Initially I was reluctant, concerned that I might have to trek into some remote part of the Goilala, but when he told me that he wanted someone to man the booth on Gemo Island on a nominated Saturday I was happy to accept.

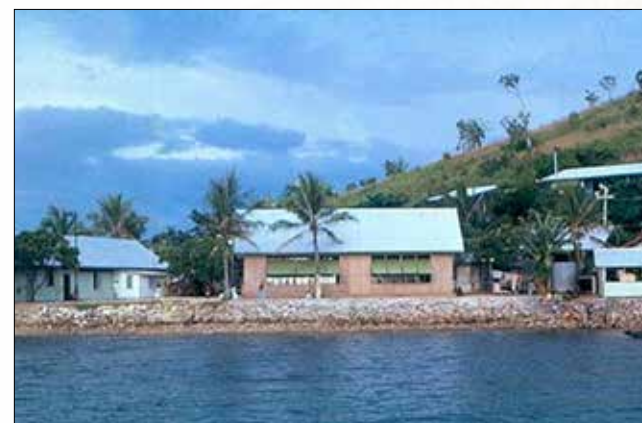
Gemo Island is in the northwestern corner of Port Moresby's harbour and, after its purchase from the people of Hanuabada in 1937, had been an isolation hospital for people with either tuberculosis or Hansen's disease (leprosy). Founded by Constance Fairhall of the London Missionary Society (LMS) the hospital was operated jointly by LMS and the Papuan administration. The army took control of Gemo during the Second World War, but it reverted to its original role in 1946. From then to 1960, Rachel Leighton was the senior LMS nurse at the hospital.

Postwar, European Medical Assistants and doctors helped in patient management at Gemo which now housed patients from throughout the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and their numbers increased through the work of Department of Public Health specialists in tuberculosis and Hansen's Disease, Stan Wigley and Doug Russell, respectively. When the hospital closed in 1974 Myra Macey was the last of the Gemo sisters. (See *PNG Kundu*, June 2021).

So it came to pass that, on a Saturday morning in March 1964, I took the government launch for a 30 minute ride to Gemo, armed with instructions for collection of the votes of the 389 people on a previously established roll. This number included staff and other people resident on the island as well as patients. In this first, universal suffrage election, voters had to choose their preferred candidate in two electorates – Open and Special. The day proceeded slowly, many voters obviously puzzled by what was, for them, a unique experience. Some Hansen Disease patients needed help to get their names or marks onto the ballot paper.

My role as a volunteer Returning Officer ended when I delivered the Gemo Island ballot box to Quentin later that Saturday. My voters were responsible, in a small way, for electing Eriko Rarupu, a Tapini man, as member for Moresby Open and Percy Chatterton of LMS as member for Central Special. And I had the privilege of helping those voters take a small step on the road to the independence of Papua and New Guinea.

JOHN EGERTON AM



Gemo Island Hospital, 1960s



The famous photo of Harry West, as a patrol officer, wearing his trademark sleeveless singlet, meeting with residents in the outlying regions in the leadup to independence

Harry West's Journey

Loved and highly respected, long-time President of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, Harry West OAM, died in 2015, but he had steered the PNGAA for 26 years until stepping back in 2008 from his role as President, which he had held for 16 years, when he was unanimously voted an honorary life member of the PNGAA and in 2009 he was awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division 'For Service to the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia'.

As a *kiap*, Harry had a meritorious career and was held in high regard by both fellow *kiaps* and all those who knew him as a friend, or through business, during his 30 years in PNG, and after he returned to Australia.

It was during his time as District Commissioner in Rabaul that the town attracted a number of political and state visitors—Gough Whitlam came in 1970 and Harry's clash with him led to hours of debate in the House of Representatives with senior politicians either praising or denouncing Harry, along party lines.

Prime Minister Gorton visited Rabaul not long after Gough Whitlam. Next, PNG Administrator David Hay arrived to tour the Gazelle Peninsula. Soon there was a top-level conference in Moresby, and cabinet ministers came from Canberra.

Towards the end of his PNG career, he was promoted to First Assistant Secretary in the Department of the Chief Minister, before leaving PNG in 1973, but he remained closely connected through the many friends he made there.

However, a letter from the Chief Minister, Michael Somare, later Sir Michael, written in April 1974, epitomised Harry's enormous contribution to Papua New Guinea:

Dear Harry

It is with sincere regret that I learn of your impending retirement because of ill health. I am very conscious of the outstanding role you have played in the progress of our country over the

last 28 years, and I realise that a man of your wide experience and understanding would be invaluable to us as this country moves through the independence period.

Independence will bring us problems, but the public services and the people will be able to cope with those problems, due to you, and to others like you, who have given a lifetime of service with this object in view.

I would particularly like to acknowledge your personal role during the difficult times of the Gazelle Peninsula. I know that your knowledge, tact, and understanding helped in no small way to bring about a peaceful settlement to that extremely tense situation.

I thank you for your sound counsel, always so readily available, and always so necessary to the important decisions in the political field.

I wish and hope that you can be with me on Independence Day on 1975.

ANDREA WILLIAMS

Papua New Guinea's Transition to Independence

I made my first visit as Australia's Minister for Territories in 1972, with my firm view that, given the stirrings and demonstrations, if the government sought to restrain the movement towards self-government and independence, it would bring about a backlash of perhaps even horrific proportions— even in a relatively small country such as PNG.

I made something like twenty-one trips to PNG in 1972. But, as I said, I was already convinced when I first arrived that we had to move sooner rather than later, although I was constrained in the first two months because we had to await the House of Assembly elections. This election was fought on the issue of whether or not there should be internal self-government. The elections were held in late February and early March and was won by the Pangu Party headed by Michael Somare.

So, PNG now had a government comprising a national coalition that, in the case of Pangu,

wanted immediate self-government, but in the case of the People's Progress Party was more interested in the form of the government that was put together. Michael Somare said, 'I want early, not immediate, but early self-government, but at present I'm more interested in the shape of self-government.' I responded by proposing that we hold constitutional talks in June 1972. Interestingly enough he suggested a month later.

I want to emphasise that all of the travelling I did to PNG and all of the discussions I held there just reinforced the view that though Australia had been slow at moving towards acceptance of independence, we were now on the right track. The worry was always that when we did transfer power, there would be a lack of depth in the PNG civil service. It seemed to me we couldn't correct that overnight. We had established training colleges and these were doing a sound job, but there were still insufficient trained people.

On 27 and 28 July, Michael Somare and I

sat down to discuss the transfer of extensive legislative and administrative power to PNG. We had an enormous range of powers and programs to hand over. Some powers had already been transferred but even so Australia had until recently exercised a veto because the Governor General, on the advice of the Minister for External Territories, could overturn any proposal by any minister in PNG.

This period really did see the development of a framework for PNG as a fine independent nation, and I think it is important to recognise that the way in which a trustee leaves a territory is extremely important. I was always very proud of the way we finished the job.

I should add that there were also, of course, pressures in Australia, from those in favour of a federal structure, to desist from faster moves to early self-government. But I was strongly of the view then that a country, containing 500 different tribes speaking more than 700 different languages, needed not a fragmented system, but a more centralised system.

I'd always believed that Bougainville ought to have a degree of autonomy, but when the provincial system of government was first mooted in PNG, I discussed the matter with

Michael Somare, who said: 'If I don't establish a provincial system, I may lose Bougainville and PNG will end up just another exporter of coffee, tea and copra. I have to have Bougainville's copper contributing its resources and revenue to the task of nation building. Unless I give that autonomy, PNG will not be a viable entity.'

I think PNG owes the Somares and the Chans of this world an enormous amount. Particularly, at that time, Michael Somare. I had met Somare when I first went to PNG and when he was an angry young man. He was to become a very close personal friend. I suppose in those days we were both a couple of smooth operators and we probably deserved one another! But we were able to achieve a fair amount together and his astuteness, his timing, his capacity for negotiation in 1972 in putting that coalition together was something at which I marvelled.

PNG achieved independence on 16 September 1975 and here we are in December 1993. I think we are witnessing a situation where, for whatever reason, bilateral relations have drifted somewhat. I think it is a slightly ominous drift.

ANDREW PEACOCK

(Edited extract from *Lines Across the Sea: Colonial Inheritance in the Post-Colonial Pacific*, 1995)



THE NEW GENERATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS IN 1972, PREPARING FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT

(From left to right) Dr John Guise (Deputy Chief Minister), John Yocklunn (adviser to Pangu), Michael Somare (Chief Minister), Tony Voutas (Pangu strategist, partly obscured), Tos Barnett (adviser to Chief Minister) and Andrew Peacock (Australian Minister for Territories)

(Photo courtesy Donald Denoon)



Members of the first PNG National Executive Council, 24 September 1975
(Secretary of the NEC, and the author, Mark Lynch, is first left in the back row)

Flags & Freedoms

It is the afternoon of Monday, 15 September 1975, the eve of PNG Independence.

In a ceremony watched by thousands around the grounds and in the grandstand at Port Moresby's Hubert Murray Oval, Australia's flag will be lowered for the last time as the flag of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea. Queen Elizabeth II is represented by her Australian Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. Also present, are dignitaries from countries around the world.

As I take my seat, I see Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam standing about 20 metres along the row, talking with Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik. What are they discussing? In less than two months Whitlam will no longer be Australia's Prime Minister and, a month after that, Indonesia will invade East Timor.

The grassed oval below is busy. Groups of traditionally-dressed dancers are swaying and dancing to their singing and drumbeats. A large, green-uniformed, contingent of the Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR) contrasts with a smaller group of white-uniformed sailors and the white-uniformed band of the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary. Looking around, it feels

everyone is sharing a strong sense of excitement, drama and history.

The side gates open to a cavalcade of official cars that halt at the edge of the grass. The Official Party, including HRH Prince Charles in military uniform and his uncle, Lord Mountbatten, emerge and walk slowly past the dancers, towards the flagpole area in front of the grandstand. Lord Mountbatten hangs back for a minute to film a line of dancing women.

The Police Band plays as the dancing groups withdraw and the PIR soldiers, who today are part of the Australian Army and are about to become the PNG Defence Force, form into a long line across the oval, from one side to the other, facing the flagpole. A cooling breeze ensures the flag flies proudly, as if it knows it is the centre of attention.

Five unarmed soldiers march to positions beneath the flagpole. An order rings out. The soldiers raise their automatic rifles to their shoulders, pointing skywards. The crowds settle. To the order '*Commence*', a military salute of staccato rifle fire crackles in sequence, a sharp ripple of noise moving rapidly along the line from one end to the other, a military *feu de joie*.

Attention now turns to the flagpole. A soldier steps forward and unties the rope. To a slow march from the Police Band, he gently lowers the still-waving flag. The flag seems determined to put on a cheerful show despite this being the end of its seventy years reign in this land. As it nears the ground, the other four soldiers step forward. Each take a corner, stretching the flag horizontally.

As the soldiers commence a slow march to the Official Party, the famous PIR bagpipe band bursts into life with an emotional, wailing rendition of '*Auld Lang Syne*'.

I'm surprised by an unexpected surge of nostalgia. My mind flips back to when, as a young patrol officer, the flag was a powerful and practical symbol of government presence on patrol posts and when visiting remote mountain and island villages. Tribal disputes negotiated and settled beneath this flag would be accepted as official and binding.

The soldiers skilfully fold the flag into a square package. Sir John Guise, who attended the Queen's 1953 Coronation in London, and who at midnight will become PNG's first Governor General, makes a short speech pointing out the flag is not being torn but lowered with respect.

A soldier presents the folded flag onto the arms of Sir John Guise, who turns to the Australian Governor General standing behind him. In silence he steps forward and presents the flag to Sir John Kerr. He steps back to attention and, in the manner of the former police sergeant-major he was in his early years, snaps a professional, final salute to the Governor-General and the flag of Australia.

It is a moving moment for everyone, be they Papua New Guinean or Australian.

The grandstand is silent. Looking around me, I'm surprised to see many of the PNG women spectators are tearful. Are those tears rolling down cheeks, tears of sadness at the passing of an era, perhaps tinged with a sense of uncertainty and anxiety about what lies

ahead? To me, that's what it looks and feels like. But I can't know that for sure. Tomorrow, at newly-named Independence Hill, there will be a flag-raising ceremony for PNG's own new bird-of-paradise flag. If there are tears tomorrow, I expect they will be tears of pride, hope and joy.

At midnight tonight, Papuans, the inhabitants of the Australian Territory of Papua, will no longer be Australian citizens. New Guineans living in the United Nations Trusteeship of New Guinea, will no longer be UN Protected Persons. Both populations will become citizens of Papua New Guinea.

Tonight, official dinners are being hosted by senior PNG parliamentarians, at hotels and restaurants across the city, to welcome international delegations who are here to welcome and celebrate the arrival of a new member of the family of nations.

The previous week, Chief Minister Michael Somare, known to those around him as 'the Chief', made a last-minute decision to hold a private dinner the same evening. I became aware of this when presented with an invitation for my wife and me to attend, at a government house on Touaguba Hill. Guests will have a good view over Fairfax Harbour where a fireworks display is planned for a minute after midnight, the moment after Sir John Guise, as Governor General, will broadcast the Declaration of Independence on radio.

Our family lives on the banks of Laloki River, some 25 km from the city. We had already promised to take our three young children (ages eight, six and two) to town to see the fireworks. That evening, we drive them into town with us before going to dinner. We leave them all with PNG friends in a suburb about a six-minute drive from Touaguba Hill. The plan is to collect them later and bring them up to the venue before midnight.

As the guests assemble, everyone seems to have been impressed by the afternoon ceremony—the packed grounds and stadium, the spectacle of brilliantly dressed dancing

groups, the stirring poignant wails of the army bagpipe band, and the drama of the big flag fluttering down, topped by Sir John Guise's last emotional salute.

Guests are looking forward to dinner, the fireworks, and being with Michael Somare, who is about to become PNG's first Prime Minister.

Between 25 and 30 people are gathered for the evening. Looking around, it is hard to miss Gough Whitlam, and his wife, Margaret, although the Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, here with his wife, Ro Lady Lala Mara, is equally tall and impressive. They tower over the Somares and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Chief Minister, Solomon Mamaloni.

Moving in from the garden, we take our seats for dinner. At the centre of the top table, the Somares are flanked by the Whitlams on one side, and the Fijians on the other. The only other politician I see in the room is Minister for Health, Dr Rueben Taureka, accompanied by his Fijian wife, Akanisi.

During dinner, word is passed round that Prince Charles will join us later for coffee, and stay on till midnight. After the main course, Somare stands to speak.

He welcomes everyone and says some may wonder about the variety of people gathered here tonight. He asserts that all of us are here because each in his or her own way has made a special contribution to bringing about the event that we will celebrate at midnight. He wants us to share the occasion together.

To Ratu Mara, Somare speaks of how he had watched with great interest, and had drawn inspiration from, how he had achieved Fijian Independence in 1970. He is honoured to have him and his wife present tonight.

Turning to Gough Whitlam directly, he especially wants to thank him. He recalls talking with him about Independence, about this night, one evening as they walked along Wewak beach in his home town. That was 1970, five years ago, when both of them were in Opposition.

Somare reminds Whitlam that since 1972, when they both formed their respective governments, they have worked together to achieve an enormous number of necessary legal, political, financial and administrative tasks in Canberra, Port Moresby, and the United Nations, to enable Independence to become a reality. This includes widespread consultation across PNG to prepare a home-grown Constitution.

Somare observes that while they had some difficulties and the occasional disagreement along the way, both were determined to reach the same goal. And so, it is truly an enormous honour to be able share this night together with Gough and Margaret Whitlam.

After warm applause, Whitlam stands to speak. He thanks Somare for his kind words. He praises the manner in which PNG undertook a highly consultative process in developing its Constitution. *'In fact', he says, 'I am envious that you will have only one parliamentary chamber, and 5-year parliamentary terms.'*

Whitlam emphasises Australia and PNG will always be close neighbours, sharing a common border and the waters of the Torres Strait. History and geography dictate there will always be a close relationship between us.

He asserts that, while tonight is undoubtedly a night of freedom for PNG, it is in some ways also a night of freedom for Australia. In his view, Australia cannot be truly free as a nation while it retains authority over lands and people not directly represented in the Australian Parliament.

'Today the Australian Flag was lowered with dignity and affection, in a splendid yet moving ceremony. Now ... tonight ... it is such ... a great honour ...'

At this point, Whitlam's words slow and falter, his voice changes, more hesitant, more choked. Everyone is looking at him, the room totally quiet. His words stop flowing but not the tears in his eyes. He seems quite overcome.

Gough recovers and regains composure. He tells the Chief what an extraordinary and wonderful honour it is to be with him tonight—to be able to share this historic occasion of the birth of a new nation of which he is about to become the first Prime Minister.

Afterwards, while chatting over coffee, I ask Margaret Whitlam, *'Does your husband get worked up like that very often?'*

'No, not at all,' she replies. *'I was very surprised. I've never ever seen him like that before.'*

Soon after, Prince Charles arrives. It strikes me as incongruous that he's wearing riding boots with silver spurs on the back, as if he has just dismounted from a horse, but he seems at ease mingling with the guests. I notice Dr Taureka's two teenage daughters have also joined us since dinner and seem fascinated to be in the company of a real prince.

Shortly after 11.00 pm it's time to collect our children to be back by 12 midnight. Outside, we explain to the security police what we are doing and walk to our car parked nearby.

But the street outside has changed. I have failed to take into account how many people are flocking into the city. Cars are already parked all along the street and people are milling around looking for vantage points. As I drive down the hill and towards the nearby suburb, there is a continuous stream of headlights coming in the opposite direction.

At our friend's house, the children are quickly on board and we soon join the slow traffic crawling into town. When we finally reach Touaguba Hill, the nearest space to park is hundreds of metres from the house and it is already five minutes to midnight! Hope is fading fast that we can get there in time. As usual, it's a hot and humid night.

With my son piggy-backing, and the two girls holding hands, we set off uphill as briskly as we can. It's soon obvious we will not make it. We are still more than 100 yards from the house when the first fireworks explode into the air. We slow down.

As we enter the house, the children are still hot and flustered from rushing up the hill. Inside, the mood is buoyant. Most people have a glass in hand. I'm guessing they have already been raised in a toast to Independence.

Michael Somare comes over. *'Where have you been, Mark?'*

'Collecting the children. We had to park a long way away,' I reply.

He looks down. *'You kids are looking very hot.'* Two-year-old Damien looks up, *'I want a drink.'*

Somare responds, *'Would you like a cold drink of lemonade?'* They all nod, *'Yes, please.'*

I thought he would signal a waiter but, before I can protest, he has gone. Two minutes later he's back with drinks for the three of them.

So, who cares if we missed the actual moment of Independence? Of all that has happened this eventful day, for my wife and me, this simple act of kindness from the man who now leads the new nation of Papua New Guinea, will always be the most memorable.

MARK LYNCH OL, ISO
Former Secretary to the NEC, 1975



Lamari Valley 1963: Mark Lynch as a *kia*p at Wonenara Patrol Post, at the time one of the last 3 Restricted Areas in PNG. The Wonenara jurisdiction covered the southern side of the Lamari River. Villagers are watching and wondering what Mark is doing talking to something, as he makes a radio call back to the patrol post.

(Theses photos have been digitally colourised.)



Independence Day in Angoram

Angoram was one of the sites selected by Film Australia to be featured in a film to mark this important occasion in the life of the new nation. I worked as a teacher, inspector and educational administrator in PNG from 1963 to 1986.

In our last year at Angoram—1975—Papua New Guinea celebrated its independence from Australia. In preparation, one of the junior *kiaps*, Dick Blackburn, went into Wewak and attended a workshop on the safe handling of fireworks, and at its end, was issued with a box of them to bring back. They were formidable, heavy-looking objects that had to be put out each day for a spell in the hot sun to be kept as dry as possible for the big night.

At sunset on 15 September, Independence Eve, John Blyth, the Assistant District Commissioner (ADC), had organised a simple but impressive ceremony around the flagpole outside the Sub-District Office. A solitary bugle played and the police lined up and saluted as the Australian flag was solemnly lowered for the very last time. A made-to-order breeze sprang up, and for a while, it did what flags are supposed to do—flutter and flap. No observer could miss the holes in the cloth that were made very obvious against the fading pink of the sunset.

After dark, the fireworks were let off out in the park/common in front of our house. We took our four-year-old, Sophy, out to see the spectacle. I had warned her of what to expect and Helen, my wife, Sophy, and I sat on a bank sufficiently far away from the launching place, my protective arm about my daughter. Despite her preparation,

Sophy flinched in alarm beside me like a nervous little faun as each of the fireworks went off with a gut-wrenching thud. She enjoyed the new experience despite this.

Another flag ceremony was organised for the morning of Independence Day itself. The ADC, John Blyth, gave a speech to the large assembly. Then the new PNG flag, tied up in a bundle, was slowly hoisted on a temporary bamboo flagpole. When it reached the top, the halyard was given a sharp pull to break out the flag. However, all that happened was that the tip of the bamboo pole bent earthwards. Embarrassingly, the flag remained furled. Those aware of the deep symbolism of the occasion held their collective breath. To the relief of the breath-holders the flag soon displayed itself after a few more tugs, and a choir of schoolkids sang the National Song—‘This is our flag, etc ...’—to welcome the striking new icon of the world’s newest state. A *sing-sing* followed by participating groups from up and down the Sepik.

The Muriks’ contribution was memorable. They performed a very balletic dance representing the flight of the sea hawk. Later, there were games—softball, soccer, canoe races, etc. A pig daubed with grease was released and squealed with alarm as it ran wildly about through the legs of the crowd, energetically eluding capture. Only when most of the grease had been rubbed off could someone maintain a grip on it and claim it as their prize.

We were told to expect a visit from the Prince of Wales on the day following. However, there was a late change of plans and instead of Prince Charles, our new Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, brought along Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara for the VIP visit (*featured above*). Sir Kamisese was the Prime Minister of Fiji and stood at two metres in height. I remember he gave a witty address, congratulating the PNG PM on PNG’s Independence, commenting that although quite tall, his country was small compared to the shorter Mr Somare’s country.

PAUL DENNETT

Prayers, Planes and a Prince

When in 1975 Gough Whitlam asked Michael Somare to provide a date for PNG Independence, Somare set the date and gave me the job of organising the events. We had two and a half months to do it, but getting people to join me in seeing the job done was difficult. It had to be a PNG show, yet there was no expertise amongst the indigenous people or government for it, and government departments were reluctant to release their more senior staff.

Also there were some early concerns over micro nationalistic movements that had sprung up, cults and also emotional talk from university students.

But when I had a general picture in my mind of the ceremonies that were required, the people to invite, the security, transport, accommodation, etc., I gathered a few staunch souls together and started on the detail. We raised funds from businesses, organised fireworks for each district and provided cash to make other district activities possible, paid for the West Indies Cricket Team to play in Port Moresby and Lae, had an Independence Medal made and issued all sorts of literature and badges.

During the six days of celebrations between 14 and 19 September there were exhibits, church services, sporting events, bands, pageants, formal addresses, dinners and ceremonies.

The two outstanding ceremonies in Port Moresby were the Flag Lowering Ceremony at sunset on 15 September and the Flag Raising Ceremony the next day. I selected the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium for the first—and that marvellous sunset, together with Sir John Guise’s words, ‘*We are lowering this flag, not tearing it down*’, made it a memorable occasion.

The Flag Raising Ceremony was conducted on Independence Hill, where there had been an anti-aircraft gun during the war.

At one minute past midnight on 16 September, the Proclamation of Independence was announced by the Governor-General in

a radio broadcast, followed by the National Anthem and a 101-gun salute provided by the RAN. At 9.30 am the Flag Raising Ceremony commenced.

Prince Charles inspected the Royal Guard before taking his place on the VIP dais. Cultural groups then handed the PNG flag to the Governor-General who then handed it to the Commander of the PNG Defence Force, asking him to raise it on behalf of the people of PNG. Two chaplains blessed the flag and it was raised at 10 am.

This was followed by a fly-past of RAAF and PNGDF aircraft. Prince Charles unveiled a plaque and then joined Sir John Guise and Sir John Kerr in planting trees to commemorate the occasion. The individual officers in charge of each official occasion all did very well and Government Departments—especially Public Works, the Government Printer, Department of Information—all rose to the great occasion.

DAVID MARSH

PNG’s Last District Commissioner



HRH Prince Charles inspecting the guard at PNG Independence Celebrations, Port Moresby

They Didn't Tear Down the Flag

It was radio which really took the news of Independence to Papua New Guinea on 16 September 1975. A vast hook-up by the country's National Broadcasting Commission, planned for three months, reported it to an estimated 1.5 million of Papua New Guinea's 2.6 millions scattered throughout the country.

At one minute past midnight they heard the brief proclamation of independence by the Governor-General, Sir John Guise, preceded by speeches by Prime Minister Michael Somare and lesser leaders. And, for the next two days, they had detailed reports or direct broadcasts of the festivities in the national capital and the main towns. Most of PNG's population does not live in the urban areas. Even those who do, who had a village to go to, had gone home—to be back in the womb, as it were, at a momentous time.

So, in fact, Papua New Guinea has had two kinds of independence celebrations: the quiet grass-roots independence of the vast majority, and the busy, efficiently organised, smooth-running celebration in the national capital, dominated by VIPs from 37 nations and by white faces.

Both celebrations have been a success. After nearly a century under Australian influence of one degree or another, the Australian flag came down with due deference. It was replaced by the already familiar scarlet and black flag with the soaring yellow bird of paradise.



Sir John Guise receiving the Australian flag after its formal lowering from George Ibo (in charge of the flag party)

A church leader used *pidgin* to bless the national flag at the Port Moresby ceremony which set the seal on independence:

'Mak bilong bung wantaim long mipela' (The mark of unity of you and me) said Bishop Herman Topaivu of the Roman Catholic Church, one of two chaplains who bowed their heads to bless the brilliant bird of paradise flag.

Then the flag was raised above the tree-studded hill where PNG will one day build its national parliament. Independence Hill will be the official name of the area where the formal flag-raising ceremony was held.

The ceremony followed the formal lowering the previous day of the Australian flag after nearly a century of colonial administration in PNG.

A cloud of gas-filled balloons in the red, gold and black colours of the PNG flag rose beside the hill at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Huge crowds—far greater than anticipated—created congestion on the roads and foot tracks leading to the ceremony.

The area is at Waigani, an outer Port Moresby suburb, site of PNG's national civic centre which is still under construction in partly-cleared land.

During World War II, the area was dotted with fighter dispersal bays, and it was from one of these—near the new Supreme Court building—that the cloud of coloured balloons was released.

Some of the access roads were sealed only five days before in the rush to get the area ready for the independence celebrations, and during the ceremonies bulldozers and graders stood silently at some of the approaches.

Australia's flag comes down for the last time in Port Moresby, at sunset on Independence Eve.

STUART INDER

Extract from *Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1975

Be Specific, Say South Pacific

Returning to PNG after an absence of five years, we arrived in Port Moresby on 12 September 1975. After depositing our baggage, we headed for the stores for some necessities. Here, we found, to

our horror, that the most important item on the shopping list was unavailable, as an embargo on the sale of liquor prior to Independence Day was in place. The great occasion looked like being anything but a celebration. However, the day was saved by an old DCA hand who, bless him, had taken the motto *'Be Specific, Say South Pacific'* to heart; had stocked up for a few rainy days, and helped us out so that we were able to greet the dawn of a new era in the manner to which we had grown accustomed.

JOHN & CHRISTINA DOWNIE

Lowering the Flag

It was a sad moment for many of us when our flag was lowered for the last time as the official one. The raising and lowering of it had been a daily ritual in our lives for many years. At sunrise and sunset, on every government station, right throughout the country, no matter how small, the police paraded first in front of the District Office and then marched to the residence of the officer in charge and raised or lowered the flags. If there was a bugler on the station, 'Reveille' was played at sunrise and the 'Retreat' at sunset and, in places where there was no bugler, a Kibi shell was blown to signal the ritual was in progress. Any person outside, at these times, stopped and faced the direction of the flagpole and stood at attention. Even in the primitive areas, the patrolling officers 'showed the flag' wherever they stopped during their patrols.

NANCY JOHNSTON

From the *Memoirs of the late William J Johnston*

A Wonderful Time

Independence Day was a wonderful time of celebration after preparation following on from Self-Government. Young, educated, Papua New Guineans eager for the job of running their own country were aware that there would be many challenges, but they felt ready. Their desire was for the Konedobu workforce with both Australian and local staff to carry on with the daily administration. This routine work generally

ended up with a qualified PNG national, ably assisted by a former office bearer.

A number of celebrations both before and after the big day were enjoyed by old and young, as well as those in between. These included three different church services, with the Papuan one held at Poreporena, Hanuabada Village, in the United Church, a Pidgin one held at the Lutheran Church, Koki, with the English one at the Catholic Cathedral, Ela Beach. All these attended by dignitaries and people from all walks of life.

On 15 September a special ceremony at the stadium was held to lower the Australian flag. Rather sad in a way but, as mentioned by the Governor-General Elect, it had been lowered and not torn down.

Night brought a storm with its own fireworks and typical heavy rain. After the storm had moved on there were local fireworks and, on midnight, the Governor-General Sir John Guise announced via National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) that the country was now Papua New Guinea and independent.

The big day dawned calm and the early sunshine saw all roads leading to Waigani. As the United Church Volunteer Business Manager, together with Margaret Peterson, a senior educationist, we hailed the first passing truck, already pretty well packed with local enthusiastic Papuans and made a joyous bumpy ride to about as far as transports were allowed. This was followed by a rather boggy walk until reaching newly-laid bitumen leading to where the morning's event was to take place.

A very important part was the dedication of the Foundation Stone for the new Parliament House. Not the privilege of politicians but, as a Christian country, religious ministers did the honours. Bishop Ravu Henao of the United Church to pray in Motu and Bishop of the Catholic Church to pray in Tok Pisin.

Prince Charles, representing Queen Elizabeth II, was dressed in Dress Army Uniform and walked right past me having a rather animated



Patrol Officers 'showed the flag' wherever they stopped during their patrols

conversation with the Commander of the Defence Force. Their backgrounds could not have been more different with one having an upbringing providing his needs, the other from a remote village in the Owen Stanley Ranges, early mission education before chosen for further study and training in Australia.

The afternoon and days to follow were spent winding up celebrations before the real work began.

NITA TOBIN

Independence Day & Imelda

Papua New Guinea had two kinds of independence celebrations: the quiet grass-roots independence of the vast majority of the population, which was enhanced through a vast national hook-up by the National Broadcasting Commission, and the busy, efficiently-organised, smooth-running celebration in Port Moresby, dominated by the presence of VIPs from 37 nations.

The Story of the Flag

The story of the crest and flag commenced during the life of the first House of Assembly when the Select Committee on Constitutional Development under the Chairmanship of the late Dr John Guise called upon the people and schools throughout PNG for submissions about their country's flag. Hundreds of entries were submitted which, due to time restraints, were handed over to the Second Select Committee of Constitutional Development under the Chairmanship of the late Paulus Arek.

In covering that week for the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, I was able to report both kinds of celebrations were resoundingly successful. But that's not to say there weren't unexpected, off-beat, or exasperating occasions—and in that latter department one of the official guests, Imelda Marcos, First Lady of the Philippines, contributed more than her share.

To start with, she insisted on flying in to Jacksons in her own stretch DC8 with a huge entourage, despite the fact she had been warned of Port Moresby's doubts whether the runway could take the load. The greater part of that entourage comprised security men, who surrounded her in a flying wedge wherever she moved. Others of her entourage invaded the press room of the big international media contingent, piling our desks unasked with expensive glossy publications outrageously extolling the virtues of Imelda, who did so much for her people.

Meanwhile, she arrived late at the flag-raising ceremony and was unpardonably late for the State Opening of the National Parliament by Prince Charles, and thus interrupting proceedings and, later at Government House by attempting to take precedence at the formal presentation of diplomatic credentials to the Governor-General, so enraging one diplomat that he walked out.

But this was 1975, and I regret I probably missed a good story angle by failing to ask about the number of expensive pairs of shoes Imelda brought with her.

STUART INDER

Armed with this information, the Committee in October 1970 had its executive staff analyse these designs to find the most suitable colours and symbols for a crest and flag. They found the popular colours were gold, green and blue and the symbols, birds, drums, spears and stars.

This information was passed to Hal Holman, an artist with the Department of Information and Extension Services, for him to design a crest and flag using these colours and symbols.

The committee ran with his designs—a

tricolour flag in green, gold and blue with the Southern Cross and a white bird of paradise superimposed.

The committee divided into two groups to tour the country in January and February 1971. The people universally accepted the crest although there was some parochial discussion about the design of the spear and drum.

However, the people were quite outspoken when shown the proposed design for the flag. Mostly they regarded the design as a mechanically contrived outcome designed by the Select Committee and not produced by a real person. It lacked warmth and charisma. Our group visited Yule Island on 12 February 1971 where, at a meeting, a schoolgirl, Susan Karike, a pupil of the Catholic Mission School, gave me a revamped design of the proposed flag drawn on a page taken from an exercise book. It had instant appeal and I immediately thought, 'This is the flag'.

Susan replaced the tricolour by making the lower segment of the flag black with the stars of the Southern Cross in white. The top segment was red with the stylised bird of paradise in gold. Susan described the colours as those most commonly used by the people in their traditional ceremonies.

The Committee next met in Port Moresby in March to consider the findings from its fact-finding tour and finalise its report. Both groups found that the proposed flag was not acceptable to the people as the flag for a future independent PNG, and decided to recommend one of the alternatives submitted during its tour.

The choice was narrowed down to two designs. Susan's design I had already presented to the meeting. The other, somewhat larger, from a New Ireland group, was submitted by Mr Wally Lussick. The Committee adjourned that evening without having come to a decision. I felt a little despondent, as I needed more than a page from an exercise book to do full justice to Susan's design. That evening Ross Johnson took the initiative and had his wife, Pat, put Susan's design onto a piece of cloth slightly larger than a tea towel—see the

photo of Ross and Pat with the first flag at the PNGAA Networking Meeting in May on page 12. When this was shown to the Committee next day a consensus was soon reached. Ross and Pat's flag gave support to my presentation and the committee accepted Susan's design.

The report was presented to and adopted by the House on 4 March 1971. It said this about the crest and flag:

The crest suggested by your Committee is acceptable to the majority of the people. Many groups particularly in the New Guinea Islands region, submitted that some object representing their particular area be represented on the crest, but it would not be practicable to include a representation from all areas on the crest. As there was widespread support for the crest as it stands, your Committee recommends that it be adopted.

The Committee has chosen a flag design submitted by a young Papuan girl named Susan Karike. In her submission to the Committee Susan described the colours of the flag as being the colours most commonly used by our people in their traditional ceremonies. The Committee recommends that this flag be adopted as the flag for Niugini.

I visited PNG in August 2003 and noted the respect shown to their flag. This reinforced that the decision we made was the correct one.

GEOFF LITTLER

An official member of the Second House of Assembly, TPNG



Susan Karike, the schoolgirl who designed the flag



A Simbu boy rehearses for independence day celebrations in Port Moresby in 2005
(Photo Torsten Blackwood/Getty)

Put PNG First: *PNG atoa guna, putim PNG igo pas*

It is with great anticipation and optimism we stand here to celebrate the 30th Independence Anniversary of Papua New Guinea in 2005. Our country has been described as the 'Jewel in the Crown' of our South Pacific neighbours.

Papua New Guinea attained its Independence in 1975, from Australia under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. I was privileged to be just completing my university studies with many others in the likes of Mr Frank Kramer. Our pioneer politicians and public servants include our current Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Sir Michael Somare, former Prime Minister Sir Rabbie Namaliu and current Foreign Minister and former Prime Ministers, the Hon. Pius Wingti, Sir Julius Chan, and Sir Mekere Morauta. Independence was achieved with mixed feelings. Some critics say it was too early but be that as it may, it happened and it happened without any bloodshed as our first Governor General, Sir John Guise at the eve of Independence with the lowering of the Australian flag, and in handing the Australian Flag to the Australian Governor General Sir John Kerr, said: 'We are lowering the flag and not tearing it down.'

Our 30th Independence motto challenges us to be patriotic in our outlook and calls for renewal and commitment and a beacon of hope; solidarity in our commitment for unity, and purpose for our nation, Papua New Guinea. We must now strive to excel in the things that bring positive outcomes and ensure we work towards protecting what we have already achieved and built over the last 30 years and continue to build on them. The vibrant parliamentary democracy and the government institutions, our diverse languages, cultural heritage, our unique environmental fauna and the virgin forest which we must treasure for future generations and not destroy for quick capital gains. We must not take these for granted but continue to nurture, protect and improve on them.

We have and will continue to have many challenges of nationhood as we have learned from the Bougainville experience. We must learn that 'life is precious' and that we can resolve differences between ourselves without resorting to violence. Today we celebrate 'LIFE'; the life of Papua New Guineans and friends of PNG for the 30 years we have been together. Life, as you and I know, has many challenges, and PNG has had many such challenges, for example, the natural disasters of the tsunami, the frost and El-Nino; the Bougainville experience; the Sandline Crisis; economic short comings; the AIDS-HIV epidemic and others, but we will overcome such with equal determination and continue to strive to find solutions for the common good of our people.

What have we to look forward to in the next 20 to 30 years? By far the most significant will be the PNG Gas Project with the PNG to Queensland Gas Pipeline; the stability in our Parliamentary Democracy; the challenge to tackle AIDS-HIV, and improvement in both education and health, and the quality of life for our people.

We need to think and do things smartly and cultivate a hunger and thirst for excellence and Innovative thinking outside the box. As a Nation we must be ready to take proactive measures to embrace what is happening around us in regard

to globalisation and to capitalise on opportunities presented to us for those of us living and working in Australia and vice versa.

We need to establish a mutually sustainable partnership between Australia and PNG at the community, corporate, political and bureaucratic levels. We must grab with both hands the opportunities presented by the Gas Pipeline Project and take a holistic approach on all fronts.

Queensland, the closest neighbour to PNG, provides great opportunity which my office is promoting with the State Development and Innovation Department, the QLD/PNG Chamber of Commerce, the QLD/PNG Business Corporation Group (BCG). We look forward to strengthening this relationship with further opportunities for PNG and Australia through the accessing of Labour Market Employment Opportunities in the horticultural sector and youth training.

Today we celebrate these and say 'thank you' to our mentor, friend and neighbour, Australia, for being a true friend during the Second World War when we stood side by side at the Kokoda Track Campaign and for the assistance over the last 30 years in the provision of aid and other assistance. Also, we acknowledge other donor countries who have and continue to assist us today.

Finally let me thank the PNGAA and its members for your great contribution to our country during your days in PNG and no doubt you will continue to maintain this link through your Association. I have read from your magazine, *Una Voce*, the many adventures and tasks that many of you accomplished whilst in PNG.

What can you do as friends and brothers and sisters of our people in PNG? Currently we are negotiating the seasonal labour opportunity for fruit picking and other employment opportunities in Australia. You have your networks, both through the Association and individually, to your representatives in the Parliament. Please, I urge you to support us in this, as this will make a tremendous difference for families if we are allowed to have these job opportunities. As



National Symbols of PNG

The Sepik Blue Orchid, *Dendrobium lasianthera*, is unofficially deemed to be the national flower of the country. Unique to the Yimas Lakes region of the East

Sepik Province, it is highly regarded throughout the world because of its purity of colour and form, and is a prominent floral feature of the country.

The Raggiana bird-of-paradise, also known as the 'Kumul', is the national bird of Papua New Guinea. In 1971, this species, as *Gerrus paradisaea*, was made the national emblem and was included on the national flag. Feathers from these birds remain important in traditional ceremonies, and during sing-sing gatherings.





Governor-General Sir Paulias Matane meeting the teams at a sport to raise awareness against HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea, 2005

you and I have learned from the media, the aid to PNG does not reach the families, whilst job opportunities will have immediate effect on family disposable income. I look forward to your support and hope we can once again stand side by side as we did at the 'Kokoda Track Campaign' when we needed each other. Thank you and God Bless You All.

PAUL NERAU LLB
PNG Consul General of Brisbane
(2004–12)

PNG Flag Jump 2015

Soon after returning home in 1995 from completing Year 12 at High School in Brisbane, my daughter Melanie accepted a position as the first Supervisor of the Gold Club of the Lamana Hotel in Port Moresby.

After deciding to move to Australia, Melanie remained friends with the General Manager of the Lamana Hotel, Yiannis Nicolaou, and he told Melanie that the Minister for Sports had asked him to organise the 40th Anniversary celebrations the following year.

Yiannis proposed the idea of the 'flag jump' into the Sir John Guise Stadium as a spectacular highlight to the opening ceremonies and sought Melanie's assistance.

Upon returning to Cairns, she contacted

an associate who assisted in securing one of Australia's top 'skydivers'—Cameron 'Coops' Cooper, a veteran of 16 years of jumping. Coops had won a number of state and national awards. He was one of a handful of expert parachutists in Australia who could manage the proposed jump with a large flag. Melanie also contacted former Chief Instructor Glenn Bolton, one of only two accredited flag makers in Australia.

With specifications worked out he commenced creating the 14.4 m x 10.8 m (155.5 sq.m, or 1675 sq.ft) PNG flag weighing 20 kilograms.

Two smoke-bearers were also recruited for the event—Jeremy Roberts and Karl Eitrich. Meanwhile, in Moresby Yiannis was liaising with the Defence Force to make available one of their few aircraft for the jump. He secured the services of a PNGDF Arava transport aircraft.

As usual, during September along the Papuan coast, the south-east trade winds were generally blowing a gale most afternoons. The Ground Crew Assistant, Pepe Scoffel, had his work cut out assessing the winds to ensure compliance with safety standards. These required that winds not exceed 25 knots for a jump with such a large, cumbersome banner. Several practise/rehearsal jumps were aborted due to the strong winds before one was finally achieved. A further complication was that the official programme had the jump scheduled for late afternoon. This put the timing close to official 'last-light', before which both the aircraft and the parachutists had to be back on the ground.

As the aircraft circled in position from where the jump would commence, winds were still above 25 knots and gusting above 30 knots. Dusk was rapidly approaching with Coops and his team anxious not to disappoint the crowds that had made them feel so welcome and appreciative of their first exposure to PNG. The pilot announced one more circuit before the last-light equation forced his return to Jacksons and cautioned that winds were still above the limit but less than 30 knots. The trio jumped!

CHRIS WARRILLOW



Going Finish— My Favourite Treasure from PNG

This Highland style *bilum* (above) was made in secret for me by my *haus meri*, Agnes, when she knew I would be 'going pinis'. One of her main jobs had been to look after my beloved Siamese cats, Possum and Pixie. I was often away from Lae with my work, as was my husband.

Over many weeks Agnes had combed out the loose fur from the cat brushes.

She cleverly wove the fur into the highland-style *bilum*. She was so proud to be able to tell me 'gras bilong Possum' and 'gras bilong Pixie'.

It is far more than just a *bilum*, it is a token of love and loyalty from my humble *haus meri*. She

didn't have children herself and knew that, to me, my cats were the children I did not have. I would love to know if she still alive and around Lae.

It makes me very nostalgic for a time and place which only those who have lived there would ever understand. I have it casually draped over a framed, numbered print from an original painting by Steven Kawaie.

The hauntingly beautiful, framed print of the young Highland mother whose shy eyes really look at me, together with her baby, remind me of the loyalty and hard working women of PNG. He has captured the pure innocence and beauty of this young mother.

I pass these treasures several times a day and drift back in thoughts to the country and people with whom I was privileged to live for 26 years.

BEV MELROSE



FEATURED: The print of the young Highland mother by Steven Kawaie, with the *bilum* draped on it, and my *haus meri*, Agnes, with one of my Siamese cats

We, the people, do now establish this sovereign nation and declare ourselves, under the guiding hand of God, to be the Independent State of Papua New Guinea. We do now therefore declare that we, having resolved to enact a Constitution for the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and acting through our Constituent Assembly on 15 August 1975, hereby establish, adopt and give to ourselves this Constitution to come into effect on Independence Day, that is 16 September 1975.

Extract from the Preamble to the Constitution of the
Independent State of Papua New Guinea

Return to Papua New Guinea 49 Years On



Late in 2024, our elder daughter, Belinda, who was born at Port Moresby General Hospital in 1974, hinted that she would like to visit the place where she was born and asked if we would be interested in taking her and showing her around. Our other two children, Russell, who was born in Southport and spent his first few months in Port Moresby, and our daughter, Sarah, who was born in Dubbo, where we settled after 'going finish' in 1976, both joined the discussion.

I went to TP&NG in 1967 as a cartographer with the Department of Forests, working in various roles, mostly associated with forest assessment surveys and the mapping work involved.

My wife, Diane, had spent most of her life in PNG, except for attending boarding school in Sydney. Her father, Eric Flower, was in PNG with ANGAU during the war and, like many others, stayed on as a *kiap*. When he retired in 1975, he was the Co-ordinator of Capital Works in Treasury. Her mother, Jean, was in the WAAF and, at one time, was the personal secretary to Air Vice Marshal Cobby in Townsville.

Diane was a stenographer-secretary in various positions in Port Moresby and took down Sir Donald Cleland's memoir in shorthand, then typed the draft. She was active in the CWA, the Victoria League and other voluntary organisations and, as the wife of a *kiap* on outstations, carried out all the usual unpaid tasks. Diane was a salary clerk in Forestry, where we met, and we married in 1968.

Plans were put into motion, and in June 2025, the five of us flew to Port Moresby, spent three nights there, and then went on to Rabaul for four nights before returning to Brisbane. Rabaul was important to see because Diane spent two years in Kokopo and two years in Rabaul between the ages of four and ten.

On the flight from Rabaul to Moresby we shared the plane with an NRL team from Minj who had flown in to play the local Gurias. They lost! When checking in at Tokua airport, the female staffer stood before the waiting queue and recited a prayer before issuing boarding passes. Where else in the world??

We stayed at the Airways Hotel in Port Moresby and the Rapopo Resort in Kokopo, both of which we highly recommend. In Moresby, we hired a minibus with a driver from Corps Security. It came with a security person, which was reassuring but ultimately unnecessary. They learnt much from our history. Security is a huge industry, even with government offices being fenced and under guard.

We visited all the well-known places, Bomana, Parliament House, the Nature Park, the museum, all of which are beautifully presented, plus some markets and Owers' Corner. The displays in the museum are extraordinary, and Parliament House is quite spectacular. Visiting the United Church in Boroko, where we got married, brought back some memories.

At Parliament House, we were greeted at the top of the steps by a suited gentleman with a

briefcase and an assistant who instructed the guide we were talking to 'to show them through', even though it was after hours. As it turned out, he was the Minister for Defence!

Our family was stunned at both Bomana and Bitapaka. At Bomana, it was moving to see the graves of two airmen whose remains were found recently on New Britain, 80 years later, and interred only weeks earlier.

At our old workplace, the staff were very welcoming and keen to talk about our time there.

While visiting the site of our old townhouse in Korobosea (it has been demolished), we spoke to the families living in the units behind. They were perplexed as to why these five white people were wandering around their neighbourhood, but when we explained that we had once lived there, they were very pleased to greet and talk.

The most outgoing of them was an artist named Clement Koys (Google him) who is the President of the PNG Art Society and has exhibited in Brisbane and Melbourne. He presented us with a beautiful portrait and said, 'Thank you for coming back.' Such generosity!

His father, Dennis, said the same as we left, noting that we had lived there in the good times. This sentiment was echoed several times during our travels. To our kids, the meeting with these people, their excitement and welcome, was a highlight of their PNG experience.

Port Moresby is a dynamic city, but poverty is still very evident, and a lot of rubbish is strewn around. We were pleased to have a driver as we would easily lose our way.

In Rabaul, we climbed Tavuvur, visited Bitapaka, explored tunnels, the underground hospital, museums, Yamamoto's bunker, snorkelled, swam with dolphins and cruised the harbour. Nuigini Dive and Tour organised the lot very efficiently.

Diane's old house on Namanula Hill is gone, but we enjoyed the beautiful views of the harbour, once known as the 'Jewel of the Pacific'. Our driver found our stories so interesting that on day two, he brought his wife along for the day.

At all locations, the staff were attentive, well trained, courteous and eager to please. The people we met were friendly, curious and polite, just as we remembered. I doubt that we will return, as age creeps up, but I am sure our children will one day—to dive, to walk the track, and just to show the family. The experience was an eye-opener for them, and we are so pleased that we took the opportunity when we had it.

Our fond memories of life in PNG have been rekindled, and the way we were treated by those gentle people has reinforced our admiration for their beautiful country. We felt safe at all times.

We would be pleased to discuss our arrangements with anyone contemplating a visit.

bobanddimckeowen@bigpond.com

BOB & DI McKEOWEN



1. Korobosea residence
2. Singing welcome at Rapopo Resort

Opposite:
Our family
at the resort

'UNITY IN DIVERSITY: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PNG INDEPENDENCE'

has been featured by the PNGAA in issues of *PNG Kundu* throughout this anniversary year. There have been many new stories from members and others involved in the 50th Anniversary Celebrations—along with some articles and vignettes which were originally published over the years in celebratory issues of *Una Voce* and *PNG Kundu*. Acknowledgement and thanks are given to all contributors, creators of images and information used in the public domain and under non-profit and fair-use guidelines and to the various sources used in this publication to stress the importance of PNG's Independence journey.



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 29 September 2025, if not before, the Copy Deadline for the next issue: editor@pngaa.net

BETTERIDGE, Charles d. 22 June 2025, aged 88

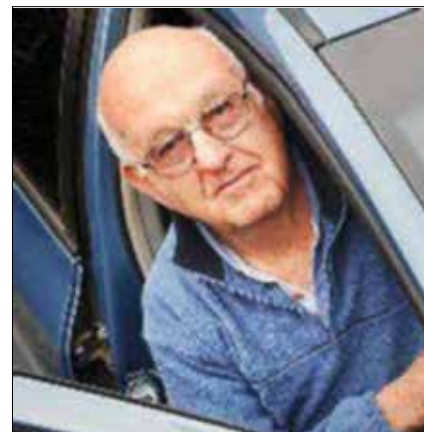
Charles was born in Lismore NSW, Australia, on 2 November 1937. Charlie, as he was also widely known, first arrived in Port Moresby, in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, on 8 April 1960 to work as a spare parts salesman for Burns Philp in Port Moresby.

Toyota Motor Corporation, Japan, approached Burns Philp in 1962 requesting the company become their agent for Toyota motor vehicles, and in February 1963 an agreement was finally reached appointing Burns Philp, through its subsidiary company, PMF. Thus commenced Charles Betteridge's 30 years direct association with Toyota in Papua New Guinea.

Over the years, Charles became well-liked by the widespread team at Ela Motors and, in his eventual role as Parts Manager PNG, he travelled regularly to the various branches around the country. He had an incredible memory for part numbers in particular, and he both established and maintained fastidious parts records nationwide.

Charles was not only associated with Papua New Guinea as, in his later years the company utilised his valuable parts experience in other locations across the South Pacific, covering Ela Motors in the Solomon Islands, and Asco Motors in Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa and the Fiji Islands as well.

Right from the beginning, Charles became a dedicated Toyota man. He was involved in



Charlie Betteridge

the first local sale of Toyota motor vehicles in 1963 through Burns Philp in Port Moresby. Records held by Charles recalled his early days in Port Moresby when he first met his charming wife, Penny, in 1966. They married a year later in the old Catholic Church near Ela Beach. Their only daughter, Ursula, was born in Wewak in October 1975.

Charles displayed a keen interest in his early days in the martial art of Judo, and joined the newly-formed Port Moresby Judo Club in 1961. He was fortunate to visit Japan a few years later in 1965 for six weeks to enhance his Judo training at the Kodakan in Tokyo, Headquarters of the world-wide Judo community.

It was recorded that Charles Betteridge was the first person from Papua New Guinea to actually train at the Kodakan. Whilst there, he also spent constructive time with Toyota Motor Corporation.

Charlie's detailed records include memorable occasions that he experienced in PNG such as self-government in December 1973, followed by the Royal Visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11 in February 1974, when the

Royal Yacht *Britannia* visited Kieta in Bougainville where Charles was located at the time. Then came Independence in 1975.

The visit to Papua New Guinea in July 1986 by Mr Eiji Toyoda, Chairman of TMC world-wide, was a special event and involved Charles Betteridge in his role as Parts Manager PNG, resulting in a special Award presented by Adrian Collins, Managing Director, to Charles for Long Service and loyalty to the company.

Some 27 years later, Charles and his wife Penny were cordially invited to return to PNG in September 2013, by Toyota Tsusho South Pacific, to participate in Ela Motors 50th Anniversary Gala Event held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. At the time Charles said there were over 140 guests present and it was a most memorable conclusion to his years spent in Papua New Guinea.

Charles will be sadly missed by the many people that he encountered over his decades spent in the South Pacific. He was a good friend. An honest and totally trustworthy person who could always be relied on whenever help or advice was needed. RIP Charlie. You were one of the very best. May God Bless You.

Gerry Peacock

BARNETT, Thomas Edwin (Tos)

1935–2025

Further information to come.

DWYER, Patrick Virgil d. 1 March 2025, aged 87

Pat was born in Burnie, Tasmania

on 7 April 1938. As the son of a school head-teacher he had a number of transfers and changes of primary schools before being enrolled as a border at St Virgil's College, Hobart.

Pat commenced work with the GPO in 1955 but found it boring and was never happy with Tasmania's relatively cold climate.

He successfully applied for a position, advertised by the Department of Territories, as a cadet patrol officer and attended the short course at ASOPA along with others of the August 1956 intake.

Pat's first posting was to the Southern Highlands District where he served at Mendi and Ialibu. The local population was still living in the stone-age. The climate was similar to Tasmania's!

During 1957–58 he completed the correspondence course all cadets had to undertake before attending a one-year academic course.

After his first leave Pat was posted to Kairuku, Central District, where he spent the whole of 1959. In 1960 he attended the ASOPA Long Course for patrol officers.

Returning to TPNG Pat was

posted to the Eastern Highlands District where he spent most of his time as Officer-in-Charge of Karimui Patrol Post. One of his patrols was into the Gulf District amongst the Pawaia people where he was warned that the 'big man' at Lake Tebera was boasting that he would be killing and eating the next *kiap* who tried to enter his area!

Of greater note was Pat's assistance in saving an Ansett-MAL light-aircraft's pilot from probable certain death. Taking off from Goroka for Mount Hagen the pilot became stuck and disorientated in bad weather. As darkness fell and stuck above thick cloud cover at over 5,000 metres the pilot was desperate—cold, short of oxygen and lost.

At the request of Madang air traffic controllers, a distress call was broadcast over the ABC's Port Moresby shortwave just before the 7 pm news.

Into his third Rhum Negrita and hearing the call, Pat stepped outside of his kunai house and could hear the faint sound of an aircraft. Pat raced over to his office and contacted DCA Madang on his Crammond Radio. Air traffic control was then able to give the pilot a course to steer to Madang.



Police houses at the Karimui Post



Pat Dwyer with his cherished medal

Madang, too, was blanketed by thick cloud. A flare path was illuminated along the airstrip and a DC3 sent up with all its lights blazing. It was seen by the lost pilot who was then able to follow it down to a safe landing in the dark, with hardly sufficient fuel to taxi into a parking bay.

In 1964 Pat decided to take up the position of Business Development Officer. This saw Pat assisting with co-operative societies and helping PNG small businessmen with trade stores and coffee projects.

In December 1965 Pat married Margaret McKenna whom he had met at ASOPA whilst she was undergoing her teacher's training course.

With a growing family, education needs and future career uncertainty leading up to independence, Pat took his family to Tasmania in 1975. Again, the weather was a hardship to bear, and Pat explored opportunities in Perth and resettled the family there a year later.

Whilst working in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and then the Department

of Sports and Recreation, he obtained his diploma of accountancy and joined the WA Police Force administration until retirement.

One of his proudest moments was when he received the Australian Federal Police Overseas Medal for his contribution in PNG at Parliament House in Canberra on 8 July 2013.

Pat is survived by Margaret and their five children.

Chris Warrillow

HUNTER, James (Jim) Oswald

d. 28 April 2025, aged 87

Jim was born in Gilgandra, NSW, on 17 January 1938 and passed away in Bowen NQLD, on 28 April 2025, one year and 10 months after his wife Jeanette of 60 years, predeceased him.

Jim's father, John Hunter, had also spent time in the Gulf of Papua as a young engineer in the 1920s, which probably started son Jim's later interest in working in 'The Territory'.

I'm told Jim enjoyed the local outdoors from the Castlereagh River to the local sheep and wheat farms.

After Jim finished the available secondary schooling in Gilgandra, he became a boarder at The King's School in Parramatta. He said his father took him there when he started school and his mother attended the last day of school the year that he finished. Otherwise, he travelled by train. His parents were generally not involved.

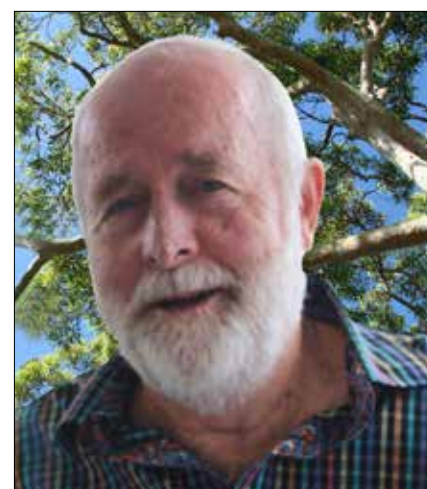
Jim enjoyed his time there,

which included participating in sports such as boxing, rowing, rugby and swimming, while excelling in subjects like English, history, and wool classing.

After finishing senior school at King's, Jim tried his hand at a few things before applying for an advertised position in the Territory of PNG. This led to the next phase with Jim working in remote areas of PNG as a patrol officer or *kiap* from 1960 to 1970.

Jim was firstly stationed on the Sepik River at Ambunti and later in the Southern Highlands at Tari and Koroba.

Jim's book, *Stone Age Moon*, recounts his key activities and experiences while working in PNG during that 10-year period. One favourite experience Jim would elaborate on after a few 'reds' was when he was called in to lead and apprehend those responsible for a massacre before it escalated. Jim performed a wonderful rugby tackle on a ringleader who had been covered in pig fat. The ringleader was running away from some of Jim's loyal Huri people who had tracked him down following the Mendi massacre.



Jim Hunter

During his time in PNG Jim met his future wife, Jeanette, at a party in Sydney whilst on leave in mid-1962, after she tried to take a bottle of rum from his back pocket. Things must have improved after a brief exchange, with Jeanette being shown the stuffed crocodile in the car while being driven home after the party.

Jim stayed there for several days. Jeanette's parents later recounted the story that Jim had become the house cat, sleeping by the fireplace each night, and they couldn't get rid of him.

In PNG, Jim also had a love of, and a deep trust in, the local people, as evidenced when going 'bush' on patrol for up to six weeks. He was often separated from his new wife, and the growing family, which eventually expanded to include three children: John, Vivienne and Gordon.

As the family reached schooling age and Jim's remote and distance legal studies advanced, our parents moved back to Sydney in 1970. We lived in Brisbane during 1971, where Jim finalised his legal studies, working as a judge's associate before being admitted to the bar as a barrister. This saw the family move to Townsville in 1972, after Cyclone Althea struck in December 1971.

Jeanette worked in Townsville part-time as a medical technologist, while Jim hung out his shingle as a new barrister in town. They purchased a block of land outside Charters Towers, where we planted grapes and citrus. We enjoyed exploring the

creek and the surrounding bush during our visits.

Jim was involved in promoting junior rugby while in Townsville and, of course, this love of rugby continued on in Bowen, resulting in the development of the Bowen Sports Complex.

In 1977, the Hunter family moved to Acacia Flats, Inverdon, Bowen, a farm they had decided to live on. The family enjoyed the rural lifestyle, which was a mix of hard work, managing cattle and mango trees, along with opportunities for activities such as boating, sailing, fishing, exploring, riding motorbikes, horses, and crabbing.

Jim worked full-time in Bowen for about 25 years in partnership as a solicitor before winding back some activities due to his health. Following some major operations, Jim and Jeanette moved off the farm in 2007 to live at Queens Beach, Bowen. Jim moved into the aged-care facility at Murroona Gardens, Bowen in February 2024, seven months after Jeanette passed away, where he remained, except for some hospital visits and some time back at home when family and close friends visited him.

Note: A longer vale is on www.pngaa.org

John Hunter

Eldest son of ex-kiap, Jim Hunter

MELLOR, Robert Hastings Cunningham MBE

d. 25 February 2025

Bob went to PNG firstly as a patrol officer and then as a lawyer.

Before and after becoming



Robert Mellor MBE

a Papua New Guinea citizen in 1985, he served in various roles in PNG (*Kiap*, Law Lecturer, Magistrate, LTI Assistant Director, Constitutional Commission Lawyer and PNG Law Society Secretary) giving PNG over 73 years of his life.

He was awarded an MBE in 2008 for services to the PNG Law Society and public administration.

Robert Mellor Jnr

TOBIN, Nita

d. 7 May 2025

Nita served the Papua Ekalesia, the first self-governing church in Papua New Guinea, for many years as an accountant, then worked for several more in the same role with The Bible Society. Nita has spent the past few years in a nursing home. A full tribute on Nita will be forthcoming.

Myra Macey



Papua Ekalesia inaugurated in Hanuabada



A TRIBUTE BY
KEITH STEBBINS

Neil Murray

21 April 1937–28 May 2025

Neil worked in PNG for 43 years
(1958–2001)

*'a country which I still feel
to be my home'*



Childhood: Neil was born on 21 April 1937 and grew up in Mackay, Queensland. His father was an active communist and often international communists visited their home. Neil applied for a Queensland Teachers Scholarship but was rejected because of his father's political views. Neil worked initially as a cadet draftsman for the Queensland Irrigation and Water Supply Commission.

In 1955 he heard about a Federal advertisement for Cadet Education Officers in the Territory of Papua New Guinea. He applied and was accepted and started his training at Bathurst Teachers College on 5 March 1956. He also attended courses at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) over the two years.

Sogeri: He arrived in Port Moresby on 17 January 1958 for orientation before a challenging posting at the one-teacher Sogeri Primary A School, with European children from Prep to Grade 6. During the first school break he was transferred to Sogeri Secondary School to teach a combined Papua New Guinean Grade 8 class, where many students were older than Neil, and came from various provinces.

Neil remained teaching at Sogeri Secondary School until 1962, during which time he taught students who would become prime ministers, governors-general, heads of government departments and senior public servants.

Neil had passion for photography, and he has self-published his photos and records of his Sogeri years in his book, *Education Officer TPNG*. Neil ran a cadet program at the school and students with leadership potential attended a training camp at Taurama Barracks.

During one exercise when the cadets were divided into two groups, Ramu Diro, who was the COU, asked permission to raid the other 'Idubada' group at dawn. Neil was promised that only water bombs would be used and gave permission. At dawn there was a terrible noise with gun shots using blanks that Ramu Diro had collected during earlier exercises, and Gerega's shirt was matted with blood from a blank bullet and had to be rushed to the Taurama hospital where his surface wound quickly healed.

Neil enjoyed the irony of PNG's first Defence Commander shooting the future Minister for Defence.

He enjoyed travelling to the students' home villages along the Papuan coast and took many photographs that are included in his book.

Leadership Class: In 1962 Neil was involved in running a special Queensland Junior Certificate class for twenty

promising PNG public servants. They included students who would later be Prime Minister, Governor General, Education Secretary, Teaching Service Commissioner, Chairman of the Public Service and many other senior positions in the private and public sectors. Neil wrote:

Many of these men played critical roles in the lead up to and implementation of Independence and I am proud to have been part of it all.

Malabunga High School: Neil was appointed to Malabunga High School in Rabaul, East New Britain Province, after leaving Sogeri in 1963 where he taught for a number of years.

Hutjena High School, Buka: In 1967 Neil was appointed headmaster of Hutjena High School in Buka, Bougainville, where he remained until 1973.

Neil documented the dramatic social changes that occurred during his six years as headmaster developing a new high school from the original primary school at Hutjena on Bougainville.



Neil with Hutjena students on the school truck

Neil developed close bonds with his students and visited many of their villages travelling throughout the province taking photos that are in his book, *Hutjena High School, Buka*. Neil oversaw a major building program at the school constructing new classrooms and staff housing, water tanks and furniture that allowed the new grades to be added each year to the high school.

The school site was a Japanese base during the World War II and so many war relics were brought to the school. When Neil asked how a student knew



The Sogeri 1962 Special Queensland Junior Certificate class

OPPOSITE: Neil arriving in Port Moresby, 1958 & he was welcomed to Haku, Buka with flower leis in April 2023



Neil at the 1987 Inspector ratings conference at the end of 1986 when he handed over the position to his understudy, Damien Rapese; and with ex-Bougainville friends Christine Leonard and her mother, Merle Wall, and Keith Stebbins in Port Moresby

a pair of glasses were from a Japanese soldier the student replied that he had taken them off a Japanese soldier's skeleton.

Neil's book has photos and cultural information about the Panguna mine, and cultural information about the Polynesian Mortlock Islands.

School Inspector: Neil was appointed the East Sepik Inspector after leaving Hutjena in 1973.

Superintendent Secondary and Vocational Inspections: Neil was promoted to Superintendent Secondary & Vocational Inspections after being Inspector in the East Sepik. This was an important step as it led to Neil's prominence and influence at Waigani HQ.

After that Neil had short periods of 'retirement' in Australia but kept returning to PNG, being called back to fill various roles.

Port Moresby: Neil's organisational and publishing skills were recognised and he was promoted as a project officer and writer in the Materials Section of the Curriculum Unit in Port Moresby. He wrote a set of Social Science booklets and cultural maps during this time.

He also provided support to former Papua New Guinean students and teachers such as Peter Baki and Damien Rapese, both who held senior education positions. Their families became strong friends and Neil often visited them after he retired back in Australia.

Retirement: In 2001 Neil first retired to Mackay, but then relocated to Cairns to be closer to PNG flights and ex-PNG educationalists living there such as Dan Doyle, Herb Golightly, Brian Norris, John Hughes, Julie Andrews and myself.

Neil enjoyed exploring the world and went on many overseas trips, but most trips were to see friends in Papua New Guinea.

Neil's Support: Dan Doyle and I visited Neil in Cairns a week before he died from cancer and saw that Neil was extremely well cared for by his sister Bette, sister-in-law Tas and Aisa Golina. Neil also shared that he had supportive weekly phone calls from Peter Baki and Damien Rapese.

Vale Neil Murray

*You served Papua New Guinea
education with distinction*



MEMORIAL NEWS

RABAU & 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



The Pacific War and its Significance to the 50th Anniversary of PNG Independence

In this 50th anniversary year of PNG Independence, we remember all those who fought and who died in WWII on what was then the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea. The Pacific War was significant for Australia and Papua New Guinea. Along with the resulting family traumas, it caused mass destruction which needed rebuilding after the war ended. It also influenced the Papua New Guineans who recognised the long relationships and respect by Australians, and the support given to it by the allies when it was needed at that time—Australia and the US.

ANDREA WILLIAMS

Last Post Ceremony, AWM Canberra

1 July is always significant for this group. Following the dedication of the national Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Memorial at the AWM, Canberra, on the 70th anniversary in 2012 of the ship being sunk, the AWM's Last Post Ceremony acknowledges the story along with one of the soldiers who perished on *Montevideo Maru*. Representatives of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia and Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group (Andrea Williams), Lark Force (Rebecca Mills), NGVR/PNGVR Ex-members Association (Michael White) and Rabaul Historical Society (John Reeves) lay wreaths, together with about 15 other family members of men who did not come home. The ceremony by the Pool of Reflection (*below*), is moving and memorable as the sun is setting.





The Harrington Family at the AWM, Canberra

This year the Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, on 1 July 2025 shared the story of George Christopher Harrington NX191465. The family of Gunner George Harrington participated in the ceremony, as well as a large number of various family members joining this solemn occasion with their own floral tributes.

Some of the families present included Kylie Adams-Collier, another came from Gippsland—Ray Youlden was there to remember his grandfather, Ray Moor Youlden, who had also fought in WWI and was lost on the *Montevideo Maru*. Another family was there to commemorate Private John William McMahon VX28468 who was aboard the *Montevideo Maru*.

Attending this service as a mark of respect were members of the armed forces from numerous Asian and Pacific nations studying in Australia under the Defence Cooperation Scholarship.

See the live stream at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=fhsZ5fj2h6I>

With grateful thanks to the AWM and all who supported this special service.

Wartime Sweethearts

It was the day before the *Montevideo Maru* anniversary, where George Christopher Harrington was being honoured at the Last Post Ceremony, when the family received an email from the Australian War Memorial (AWM). The email advised that they had been contacted by a lady saying she had recently discovered original letters from George while he was away on service, and she would like to share copies. The letters were to her grandmother, Dorothy.

The details surrounding this serendipitous contact

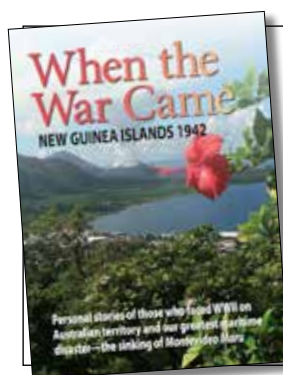
soon became clear, but the haze of amazement is still settling. After the AWM passing the email from Dorothy's granddaughter to the Harrington family the communication trail began. The granddaughter said, *'I have only this week come across some letters that George sent to my Nanna, Dorothy Haron, whilst I was cleaning out her house.'* She then searched the AWM website for Gunner Harrington and to her surprise saw there was a Last Post Ceremony on 1 July ... a day away. She very quickly contacted the AWM and thus the email trail began. It was obvious that Dorothy and George shared a friendship as sweethearts while he was in Rabaul.

Amazement did not end there. Dorothy was in fact still alive and well and now nearing 102!

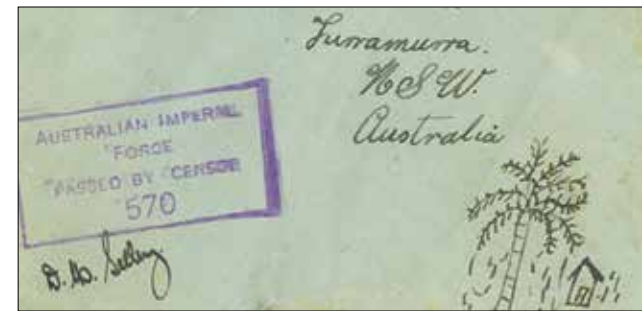
The poignancy was not lost of what might have been and thus the Harrington family added a special card from Dorothy to their wreath at the Last Post Ceremony. These cards are held by the AWM with Gunner Harrington's documents. Dorothy's letters are also being forwarded to the AWM to be placed with Gunner Harrington for future generations to view and treasure as his nieces and nephews have.

A copy of the handwritten letters from Gunner Harrington were forwarded in time for the family to read them after the *Montevideo Maru* Anniversary Last Post Ceremony. The letters gave some context of the fine person George was and provided insight into the site of Rabaul. The volcanoes and the issues of volcanic dust, so much so that Gunner Harrington had to change his clothes every day. There was also a description of the menu items, too. A small slice of social history was treasured by the Harrington family. An envelope (*opposite*) has a drawing of a palm tree and a hut on the front.

The coincidences did not end there. Andrea Williams, President of the PNGAA, noted the censor on one of George's letters being 'DM Selby',



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.



i.e. David Mayer Selby, who was in charge of AA battery on Frisby Ridge, now the site of the Rabaul Volcano Observatory. His book, *Hell and High Fever*, was one recalled by Gunner Harrington's late sister, Doreen, in her possession. Andrea commented, *'It makes me wonder, though, if there is a little more to George's story as, from memory, many of David's men escaped with him ...'*

Andrea also said they had a few 'sweethearts' connect with the then Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society and who attended various Canberra events in the early days, some as recently as the dedication of the memorial at the AWM. Andrea had mentioned that she often thought of them—their loss often as great as family but often unrecognised. The Harrington family were so pleased they could honour Dorothy on the very special occasion of the Last Post Ceremony for their uncle, Gunner Harrington.

Another story from the PNGAA website tells of a hanky, framed and on display in the PNGVR Museum in Brisbane being the one surviving item from Rabaul POWs. It was given to Rudy Buckley, who was on the wharf when the soldiers boarded the ship. The hanky had the soldier's number and name on it.

In 2005 Rudy, now living in Brisbane, found it in an old tin and shared his story in the PNGVR newsletter. They found the number belonged to a young man from Box Hill in Victoria. The story went into the local Box Hill paper and a lady from Brisbane happened to be having two weeks in Box Hill packing up her mother's house when she saw the newspaper.

See the story at <https://pngaa.org/rudy-buckley-and-the-montevideo-maru-maxwell-r-hayes/>

After the conclusion of the 1 July 2025 *Montevideo Maru* commemoration at the AWM several people commented about a 'presence'. The Harrington

family felt it too. It was real in the cold stark evening sky above the War Memorial. The connections which are very real today.

It is stories like these, that surface today when it is felt all has been told, that maintain relevance to the work of the PNGAA and the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group. The Harrington family were honoured to have been able to be part of the ongoing story.

BARBARA HERDEN

NGVR/PNGVR Ex-members Association Montevideo Maru Service, Brisbane

The 1 July 2025 annual NGVR/PNGVR Ex-members Association ceremony at the Memorial Gallery, under the Brisbane Cenotaph, remembered the members of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles who perished alongside those soldiers of Lark Force and 1 Independent Coy as well as over 200 civilians on the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 1942.

Formed in Rabaul in 1939 to protect this Australian territory, some had left to join Australian forces in Europe, at the time unaware of the impending devastating effect to occur on their own homes.

NGVR/PNGVR Patron Maj-Gen John Pearn was the keynote speaker. President Phil Ainsworth, also spoke and Paul Brown, Curator of the PNGVR Museum at Wacol, was Master of Ceremonies.

Please note that the PNGVR Museum, at 907 Boundary Road, Wacol, Brisbane (entry from Nashos Place) is open on the first Saturday of each month from 10 am–1 pm, or by prior appointment for groups, with Curator Paul



Phil Ainsworth and Maj-Gen John Pearn at the ceremony

Brown (Mob: 0402 644 181 or Email: paul-brown475@gmail.com). It holds a great amount of fascinating historical material.

Stanhope Service and New Storyboard

The Stanhope RSL Subbranch combined with the Stanhope & District Development Committee held a remembrance service honouring those lost on the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 2025 outside the Stanhope Community Hall.

On their behalf George Gemmill, secretary of the Stanhope RSL, had arranged for a new storyboard to be made explaining how the wreckage of the *Montevideo Maru* was found on 18 April 2023. This is being added to the eight storyboards already on location explaining details of this tragic event. The RSL has also arranged seating close to the War Memorial so that the mural can be visually linked.

A presentation talk, with photos and slide show, was given on how the mural, designed and painted by Tim Bowtell, came about. Clive Toms spoke along with Lindsay Cox of the Salvation Army Museum who had a display and gave a presentation on the Salvation Army Band members who were also lost. Lisa Page spoke of her grandfather and Tol, and Marg Curtis spoke on the 2/22nd and the events of Rabaul.

Lois Newman and George Gemmill opened the



Sgt Gullidge conducting the 2/22nd Battalion Band, most of whom were lost on *Montevideo Maru*

memorial storyboard which will be put with the others near the mural.

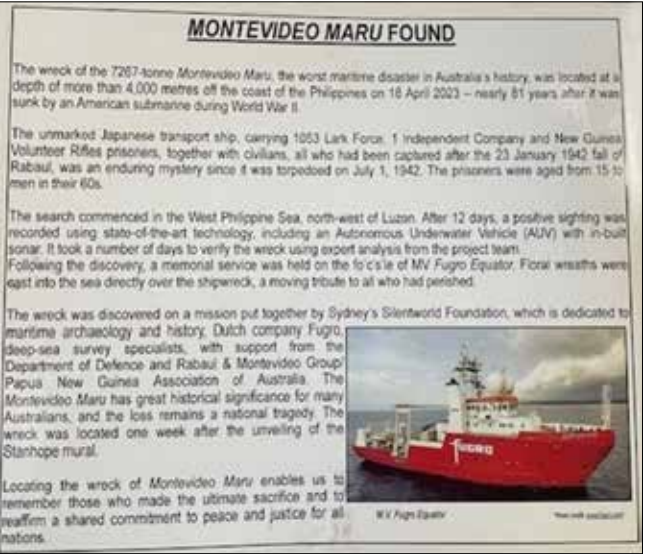
Interviewed by John Dunn of *Outback Magazine*, George Gemmill said: ‘The people of the town are very proud of their contribution to ensuring this tragic, but important historical happening is not forgotten ... It is becoming widely known and attracting an increasing number of visitors.’

The *Girgarre Gazette Extra* also wrote up the Stanhope service this year.

Letter from Beverly Fisher, a Montevideo Maru Daughter

RSL Victoria recently received a letter from the daughter of a *Montevideo Maru* widow. It told the story of loss her mother felt for the rest of her life and was a poignant reminder of the loss felt by those left behind. Below is the story of Beverley Fisher and her mother, Rene McNamar:

https://rslvic.com.au/news/a-lifetime-waiting-for-the-missing-of-the-montevideo-maru/?fbclid=IwY2xjawLvXJhleHRuA2FibQlXMAbicmlkETFDZVhrOG9iWFItc2dWM1lxAR6iulQbWxUIHcRT-7N_azevbvOd3zNZvjP9bm3KWNGZgmsctRIsds9VSQmfHA_aem_ceBnbxP0N9YOFvq4Mgblug



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

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

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

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

PNGAA Treasurer’s Corner

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Membership is available to any person with an interest in PNG. Rates are shown in the Order Form overleaf.

Members, who receive four issues of our journal per year, have access to all parts of the website and are encouraged to explore and become actively involved with all aspects of the PNGAA, and new members are always welcome.

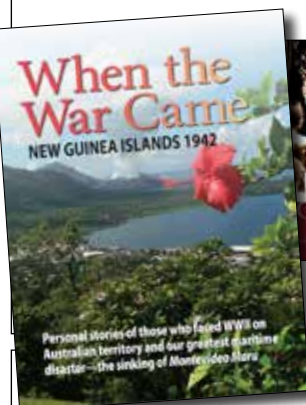
Please refer to the Treasurer's Corner Membership & Order Form overleaf for more details, or follow the link:

<https://pngaa.org/membership/become-a-member>.

Application forms are also available from the Membership Officer or our website—www.membership@pngaa.net.

For members receiving a printed journal, the address label shows the current status of your membership. Digital members can check their status by logging on to the website and clicking on *Membership* then *My Subscription*. Username is your email address. A list of the names and addresses of PNGAA members is now available on our website:

<https://pngaa.org/membership-directories/>



PNGAA STORE

If you are interested in the history, adventure and stories of Papua New Guinea, and those who helped build the nation, then any of the items in our store will be a great addition to your library or a unique gift for any occasion. Details are available on this form, or on our website:

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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 December 2025 issue: 29 September 2025** ▶

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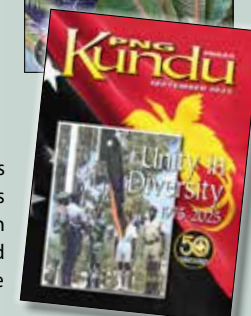
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One People, One Nation, One Country

Australia's 69-year administration in Papua New Guinea ended at midnight on 15 September 1975. Earlier that day the Australian flag, first raised on Papua New Guinean soil in 1906, was lowered ceremonially for the last time.

About 10,000 people watched the main ceremony at Port Moresby's Sir Hubert Murray Stadium. Sir John Guise, Sir John Kerr, HRH Prince Charles, the PNG Prime Minister, Mr Somare, and the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, watched with leaders of more than 20 other nations as the Australian flag, floating in a gentle breeze, was lowered by 1 Battalion Pacific Islands Regiment. The flag was folded and presented to Sir John Guise, who then presented it to the Australian Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and said:

We are lowering the flag—not tearing it down.

This moment and the past years of transition from Australian rule to independence have been happy and peaceful years. They have been so because of the foresight of both the Australian and our own leaders.

We are able to lower the flag of Australia, with Australians, and friends from many other parts of the world beside us. Independence does not mean a new isolation. Rather, independence means we join with the other free peoples of the world to choose our nation's future and to play a part, even though it may only be a small part, in choosing a future for the children of this planet.



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