



Armi Nius

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

Edition 3, September 2024

Welcome

Welcome to edition 3 of *Armi Nius* for 2024. As usual, we have updates, along with a number of articles that we think you'll find interesting, informative, and some that will invite you to put your thinking cap on. And you'll also find some heartfelt words from young people after walking the Track, drawn from Patrick Lindsay's book, *The Spirit of Kokoda*. The impact it had on these young people makes it clear that this is a story we must continue to tell, so its historical importance to Australia today is never forgotten.

We hope you enjoy the updates and stories as we continue to honour those who created it.

2024-25 AGM

The 2024-25 AGM/GM of the Association was held at the Geebung RSL on July 21. It was a special privilege for those in attendance that L/Sgt Laurie Siegle (99 years young), an original member of the NGIB during the Second World War, was in attendance. Laurie cut the NGIB 80th Anniversary cake to begin the meeting.

Also of note was the ratification of Maj. Don Graham as our new Patron, and the election of Greg Ivey as Association President. Time moves on, even for heroes. At the meeting national serviceman (Sgt) Greg Ivey formally stepped into the role. Greg brings the good wishes of all members of the Association with him as he embarks on the leadership of the Association.

Nominations for all office bearers' positions were called for by the Secretary, and nominations were also sought from the floor.

The Association's new committee is:

Patron – Major (Ret'd) Donald Graham

President - Greg Ivey

Vice President – Steve Beveridge

Secretary - Kev Horton

Treasurer - Frankie Maclean

Assistant Secretary - Ian Minns

Newsletter Editors - Norm Hunter, Ian Ogston, Steve Beveridge

Website Managers - Kevin Smith & Frank Cordingley

History Officer - Peter Jesser

Membership Officer - Kevin Smith

Medallic Recognition Officer - Russ Wade

Brisbane Rep - Phil Adam

Regional Qld Rep - Graham Carnes

WA Rep – Graeme Johnson

NSW & ACT Rep - Russ Wade

Victoria Rep – **Vacant**

183 Sqn Rep – **Vacant**

PNG Rep -Lahui Ako

There are still two unfilled positions - Victoria Rep and 183 Squadron Rep. Association members are encouraged to nominate themselves for those positions by email to the Secretary, to help complete the full committee numbers.

*

From the President

At the recent AGM on 21 July, I was honoured to accept the role of President of our Association, replacing Maj (Ret'd) Don Graham who has stepped up as Patron on the passing of General 'Hori' Howard. I pay my respects to 'Hori' and thank Don for his dedicated work and behind the scenes efforts to promote the Association. Thanks also to Don's wife Barbara for her support to Don and for taking an active role at our events. I have encouraged Don and Barbara to continue their participation such as leading us on Anzac Day in Brisbane.

As your new President, I will sometimes be unsure what to do so I will turn to you for advice or options on what is best for the Association. I will respect your opinions and your need to prioritise your health and your family. After some 20 years as Vice President, it could be hard to change my email habits now, but I am open to other ways to improve communications with Members. I much appreciate your faith in me, and I will do my best in the role of President.

Our annual commemoration events won't change, and the newsletter and website remain in very capable hands. I trust that you, the Members, don't change and that you will stay

part of this Papua New Guinea family. I look forward to continuing our important work in keeping alive the spirit and the story of our role in PNG, both in war and peace.

Greg Ivey

*

Kokoda has given me my spirit. I recognise it, and although I cannot yet describe it, I know it. Memories, photos and physical reminders are all that remain, yet I will forever hold a part of Kokoda inside me. I have the spirit now. It has shown me who I am, and for that I will never let it go. I now know what matters in life.

Linda, student

*

Remembrance Day 2024 Brisbane City

Association Members are invited to attend the 2024 Queensland RSL Remembrance Day ceremony which will take place around the Shrine of Remembrance from 10.15 am at the Ann Street entrance to ANZAC Square on **Monday 11 November**.

Remembrance Day is an important national occasion marking the anniversary of the ceasefire of the First World War, and a time to honour those who have served, died or suffered in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

As a part of the ceremony, a wreath will be laid by Patron Don or President Greg on behalf of all Association members. Members meet in the shaded section in front of the Grand Central Hotel opposite and move to the viewing/listening area near the Eternal Flame for the ceremony.

Immediately following the ceremony, it has been traditional for our group to visit the Memorial Galleries below the Shrine and lay a poppy and then to meet for lunch in the dining room of the Grand Central Hotel opposite the Shrine. Please contact **Ian Minns** if you have questions about this Brisbane event (0434 555 618).

Association members from all over Australia are encouraged to take photos of ceremonies that take place in their locale and forward them to our Newsletter editors.

Kev Horton (Secretary)

*



Kokoda Day 8 August 2024, Gold Coast



Wreaths at the Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall, 2024. PIB warriors at far right: WO Kari MM, Sgt Major Katue MM, Sgt Sanopa LSM (photo courtesy of Gold Coast PNG Club)

Paver Address, 8 August, Gold Coast

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, current and ex- servicemen, ladies and gentlemen and students,

Each year we sit and admire this magnificent Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall, but there is another extremely important aspect of this monument. It consists of pavers laid behind the wall as part of the Peace Garden. Each of these pavers represents a soldier from the Battalions who served in the Second World War in New Guinea. Those depicted in lower case represent soldiers who survived the campaign and those in upper case represent those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.



This year is the 80th Anniversary of the formation of the New Guinea Infantry Battalions in 1944. As an example of the ongoing co-operation between Australia and PNG, it is fitting that 8 pavers recognising servicemen from both PNG and Australia, who were members of the PIB or NGIB and the 2/16th Battalion have been laid this year. A special welcome goes to the several descendants of these men who are with us today, some from as far as W.A. and Victoria. We also welcome His

Excellency Mr John Kali, High Commissioner to Australia together with the Qld Consul General, Mr Reatau Rau and Mrs Susan Rau.



We all know of the role played by the fuzzy wuzzy angels, but as exemplified by the pioneering book, *Nameless Warriors*, by Lahui Ako, there has been minimal recognition paid to the 3, 850 PIB and NGIB 'barefoot warriors' and the 500 Australian Officers and NCOs who led and fought alongside them on the Kokoda Track, and in war theatres throughout Papua and New Guinea.

Our Association also promotes the role played by the Australian Army in helping develop the Pacific Island Regiment, which evolved later, mainly from the coalition of the PIB and NGIB wartime units.

Those veterans who had Pavers laid in their honour this year are:

Major William Watson who served in the First World War and Second World War. He was Commander of the PIB, and also Acting Commander of Maroubra Force for two brief periods. He was awarded the DSO, MC and Bar, and DCM.

Major Alex Tolmer was awarded the MC and MID and served in the First New Guinea Infantry Battalion (1 NGIB).

Lieutenant Colonel Ben Dawson served as Commander of the First New Guinea Infantry Battalion (1 NGIB).

Sergeant Arch Taylor was a Senior NCO in First New Guinea Infantry Battalion (1 NGIB).

Lieutenant Alan Haddy served with the 2/16th AIF Battalion during the Syrian Campaign and the battles along the Kokoda Track. Lt Haddy was killed in action at Gona in 1942. He was twice Mentioned in Despatches.

The three Papua New Guinea soldiers who are being honoured today are:

Sergeant Gabriel Ehava who served in the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) receiving a Military Medal.

Warrant Officer Kari who was a member of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) also receiving a Military Medal.

Finally, **Sergeant Kamani** who served in the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) and guided the first war-time patrol to Kokoda, but died later of a war-related illness.

This wall has been designed and built to recognise and honour these veterans and the thousands of others who fought, were wounded or died in the defence of New Guinea and Australia during the Second World War. They march behind it now in mateship and spirit. It is our job to make sure that their sacrifices are not forgotten.



I am sure that some here today have not been aware of the pavers behind the Kokoda Wall in front of you. After today's formal ceremony has concluded, you are invited to take the time to explore the area and read the names of the many brave soldiers whom the pavers remember and honour.

'Lest We Forget'

Kev Horton, Hon Secretary, PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR Association

*

The term 'mateship' has come to mean a great deal to me. Over the last couple of weeks I have experienced true mateship firsthand. My team and I were mates before we left Sydney, but going through the Kokoda experience together has strengthened the bonds between us. Adversity creates a kneejerk reaction in people to rally together and survive as a team. And that's what we did – as mates.

Alira, student

Plaque Dedication by our PNG War Veterans



PIB & NGIB Servicemen after dedication of Brisbane Plaque at Anzac Square, 1993

The original Association (called *Papuan & New Guinean Infantry Battalions Association*) marked their 50th Anniversary with a Reunion around Tweed Heads in 1990. Probably, it was decided then to erect identical bronze Plaques honouring the PIB, PIR and RPIR in both Brisbane and Sydney.

The photo above shows former Servicemen gathered at Anzac Square, Brisbane. They have been identified by Peter Jesser as (L to R) **Sgt GM (Mick) Byrnes** [author of *Green Shadows*], **Dr Lance Robey** OAM [Medical Officer at Bougainville], **Lt. Colin Goodman**, **Major Harold Jesser** MC, **Sgt Hank Dawson** [Secretary], obscured – unknown, **Capt. John Chalk**, unknown – possibly NGIB, **Lt. Alan Hooper** [author of *Love, War & Letters*], unknown – possibly NGIB. The Plaque was organised by Mick Byrnes & Hank Dawson and dedicated by Harold Jesser.

It is the custom of the present Association to visit and honour the Brisbane Plaque each year after the RSL Service on Remembrance Day by placing Poppy Flowers adjacent to the Plaque. This Plaque and many others form part of the Cenotaph Memorial Galleries.

The Sydney Plaque was erected inside the heritage-listed (Anglican) Garrison Church, the first military church (1840-46) built in colonial Australia. This historic church is in Argyle Street, Millers Point, only a short walk from Circular Quay at Sydney Harbour.

Greg Ivey

The Track: ‘challenging’, ‘rewarding’ ‘magical’, ‘unforgettable’

In August 2016, I set off to walk the Kokoda Track in PNG – an experience that remains one of the most challenging yet rewarding of my life. My decision to do the trek came after a conversation with a work colleague who was considering going. I did some research, and read Paul Ham’s book, *Kokoda* – which gave me great historical insight into the conflicts that took place during the Second World War. On finishing the book, I contacted Paul’s guide (who was listed in his Acknowledgments). He had retired but recommended a trekking company who I signed up with as a solo traveller and joined a group of three pairs and another solo traveller.

Knowing what was ahead, the preparation motivated me to get my 45-year-old body into shape! On departing Brisbane, I felt both physically and mentally strong after six months of training.

Before leaving, I decided to do two things to give my experience personal significance. Firstly, I decided to take some items that would be of value to one of the many villages we would pass through. After consultation, the primary item I took was a solar converter – a required but infrequently received item. I left the decision about which village to provide this to with my tour company, Escape Trekking Adventures. They were regulars on the track with good relationships with the local villagers and knew where it was most needed. It was graciously received and was well worth the extra weight in the backpack.

Secondly, I decided to raise funds for a Children’s Foundation. A friend of mine whose son has significant health issues, including never being able to walk, was the inspiration. I was blown away on my return when I saw that we had raised an amazing \$8,000!

Deciding to add a couple of extra days onto the trek, we started in Buna to explore the area and get some context of the forward-moving Japanese army. This meant my journey was from Kokoda to Owers Corner – north to south. There is often debate about the harder direction to walk but my view is that either way you are climbing the same mountains!

On day one, we passed several trekkers moving in the opposite direction. They were jovial about our clean, mud-free appearance and foreboding with their comments – ‘Get ready for what’s about to come!’. At the end of our trek, we gave those same jovial expressions to the first-day trekkers coming the other way – the difference between expectation and experience was not lost on any of us.

During our trek, we would share our highlight and a lowlight of the day with the group each night over dinner. I loved this part of the day, as it allowed us to have some open and honest conversations, and the freedom to know not everything had to be positive. So I'm going to share a highlight and lowlight of my trip.



The lowlight was definitely getting the most severe case of gastro I have ever had. It was Night 2 of the trek and I had eaten some food during the day just once without sanitising my hands from my sweat-drenched muddy walking poles - and paid the price. For the best part of 10 hours, I could not keep anything in my body and ended up passing out and hitting my head on the ground in the middle of the night.



The next morning, I was absolutely spent, however, I had to keep going. I dug deep and was very grateful that Day 3 was a shorter distance to cover. That day, I ate whatever bananas were offered from the locals and drank as many hydrolyte drinks as I could. By afternoon when we arrived at camp, I felt weak but had thankfully retained all the food and water I had consumed. Knowing I was through the

worst of it, I went straight to bed and slept until the next morning. Every day after that, my strength continued to return and I was very thankful to have been as fit as I was before embarking on the trek.

It is impossible not to walk the track without thinking constantly of the men who fought in the rugged and harsh terrain. Being so physically depleted from sickness made the rest of the trek more challenging than it already was, but my life was not in danger, I was not being shot at, and I had ample food, water and support. And I could leave at any time.



The highlights far outweighed the lowlights, and the highlights were daily and frequent. At the heart of almost every highlight from the nine-day trek were the local porters. Along with seven of the eight trekkers in my group, I decided to hire a porter for the duration of the trek. My decision to hire a porter was last-minute and given my illness on Day 2, I was very thankful for this decision. My main reason for hiring Leslie was because it provided employment to a young local.

Left: With Leslie, my porter

Leslie and the other porters were our constant companions. Barefoot or wearing flip-flops, our porters caught us when we slipped, chatted to us about family, and cooked for us each day and night. Who would have thought that delicious pastries, doughnuts, and chocolate cake could be made on the Kokoda Track? The porters made our trip so much richer an experience.

My fondest memory and without a doubt the key highlight was when the porters would push ahead of us during steep inclines and then once at the top, play their guitars and sing us to the top. We were drawn up to the singing - it was encouragement at its finest and a magical and unforgettable experience.

I enjoyed the Kokoda Trek very much and was truly inspired by the locals, our porters and my fellow trekkers. We came together as a group and that is what has stuck with me.

I would encourage anyone who is thinking of walking Kokoda to do so. Yes, it is a challenging experience but you will be enriched beyond expectation. You will leave with nothing but complete admiration for those brave young men who defended Australia.

Stuart Warren – (Stuart is a Brisbane-based financial adviser)

*

The war was all about endurance and the human spirit. It was fought mostly by young men, some my age, and they showed heroism beyond belief. ... During the trek I was thinking about my grandfather a lot, and what he and the other young soldiers must have been going through. With the terrain and the weather, it was one of the toughest things I've ever done – and we weren't getting shot at.

Brett, Sydney Swans junior player

*

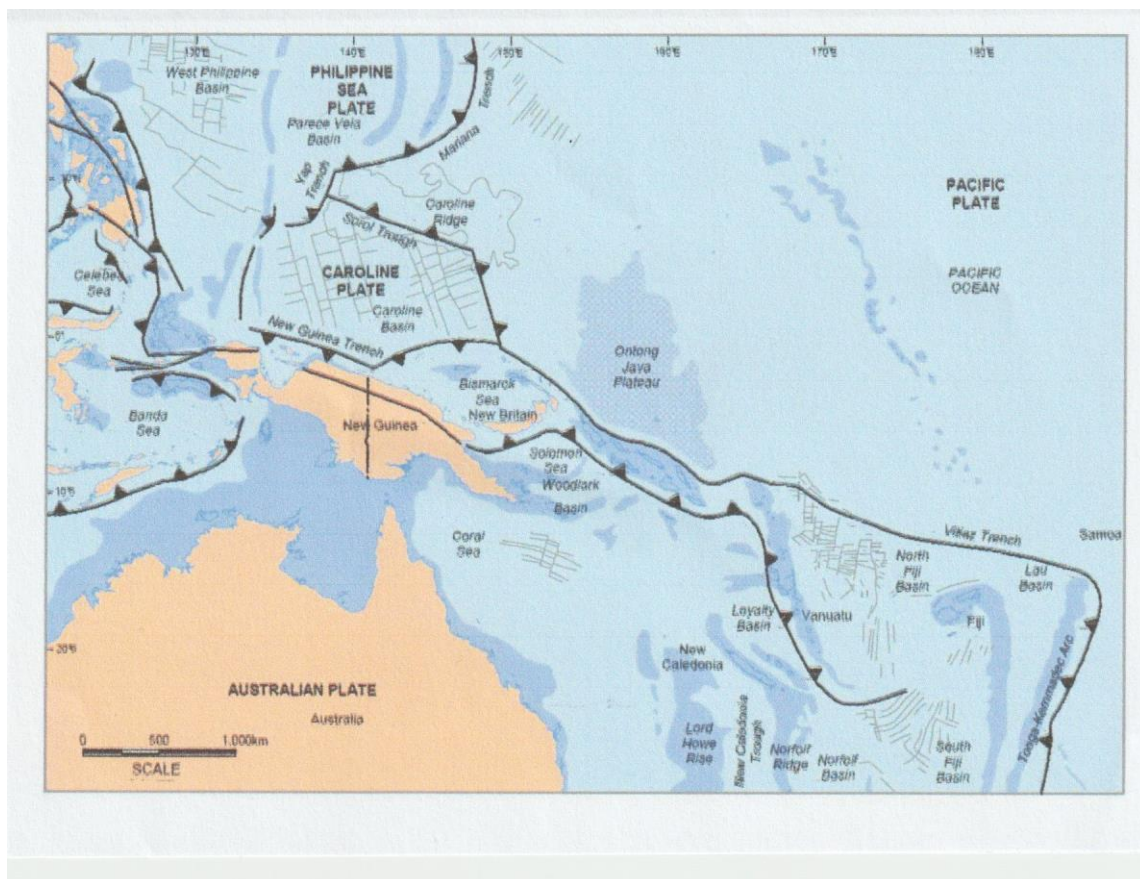
The Kokoda Track: A geographer's view

Even to the casual observer, the difference between the geography of Papua New Guinea and that of northern Australia, is astonishing. Extensive mountain ranges dominate PNG and these, for the most part, are covered with dense rainforest whereas northern Australia is characterised by a very subdued landscape.

The most continuous and inaccessible of the ranges is the Owen Stanley Range, and it is because of this that the Kokoda Track is, even today, the only land transit route across the country.

The range rises abruptly from the coastal plain to a height of 2750 metres (Mt Victoria). The range extends west to east for over 300 kilometres, and varies in width from 40 to 115 kilometres.

The explanation for the striking difference between northern Australia and PNG is that PNG occupies the northern boundary of the section of the Earth's crust called the Australian Plate. See map below:



Map source: The Geological Framework and Mineralisation of PNG (Sheppard and Cranfield)

The Australian Plate is gradually drifting northwards. As it does, it squeezes up the intervening land into long ranges that parallel the plate boundary. This can occur because the Australian Plate pushes against the Pacific Plate to the north. (This is the huge plate that mostly underlies the Pacific Ocean.) The plate boundary is represented

on the map by a continuous black line with arrowheads indicating the direction of movement. As well as creating mountainous areas, this plate movement causes volcanic activity (Rabaul, Mt Lamington) and earthquakes.

The Owen Stanleys are geologically 'young' mountains, like the Himalayas and the Rockies. This means they have high elevations compared with the 'old' and heavily-worn-down mountain ranges of Australia. As well, they are being rapidly eroded by the action of runoff from the heavy tropical rainfall. This means rivers are cutting many steep, V-shaped valleys, all too evident on the Kokoda Track.

The heavy rainfall is the result of warm, moist air drifting in from the Bismarck Sea and rising and condensing on the high ranges. The area of the Kokoda Track is also affected by high rainfall from the NW Monsoon in the summer months.

This, along with the high equatorial temperatures, causes the mountains to be covered with dense tropical rainforest, more accurately called Tropical Vine Forest. It also contrasts with most of Northern Australia. These forests add to the difficulty of negotiating the topography and creates, perhaps, one of the most difficult landscapes on Earth.

(When I walked part of the Track from the south some years ago, my companions and I met a group of mainly young Australians walking from the north. We stopped and exchanged experiences and where we were headed next. They began by telling us of a very unpleasant experience that had befallen one of their number the night before. They had set up camp in the open after yet another gruelling day of their trek. In the morning one young girl was immensely distressed and in some pain – in her eye! Close inspection revealed that a leech had found its way into her eye during the night and attached itself to her eyeball.)

They were able to arrange an evacuation by helicopter and continued on their way. With other sobering thoughts on our minds we also trudged on, with yet more awareness of the perils of the Track.)

Ian Ogston

*

The Kokoda Track: A novelist's view

In his 1959 novel *The Last Blue Sea*, David Forrest describes in graphic detail the problems faced by Australian soldiers as they fought the Japanese in PNG during the Second World War. Although the story is set in the brutal campaigns of the north coast of Papua (Buna, Sanananda), Forrest's descriptions of the physical conditions capture vividly the sort of experiences faced by the soldiers on the Kokoda Campaign:

The clouds came in at noon so that the jungle grew darker still with the moist, dead fog. The two men climbed little by little, their boots sinking in the mud

holes with a squelch, sucking noisily as they came out again: or slipping, throwing a blow up through the legs to the body, waking up the bandaged wounds.

In the hollows, where the ground dipped, was the mud that broke men's hearts – mud that yielded to mid-calf, a grey stinking mud that in the end was smeared from boot to belt, caking on gaiter and cloth until it was a burden itself, impeding every step.

Out of the hollows when the ground rose again, was the mud that brought strong men to the verge of tears – mud that was clay, so that the hob-nails could not grip it, but won two paces and lost one, cutting vicious little streaks in the surface. Climb it to the crest. And climb the next one. And the next. Climb to the last one of all, but how many are there on the way to it?

The rain came in again, drumming in the jungle, pounding its way through the canopy crashing down to the undergrowth and the sodden mud. Grey rivulets poured down the Trail in little rapids. The Trail had led a little way up to a crest, where the going was not only steep, but now it swung away across a hollow beyond the crest and climbed sheerly into the jungle.

The rain was gone again then, leaving the two men struggling up the cruel slope, clawing their way hand and foot up thirty or forty previous feet of altitude before they took another rest.

There was something else that the rain left in its wake - the lonely, incredible silence, the silence that encompassed the mountain above the four thousand foot line.

This extract was taken from Chapter 30 Page 265 of an edition of the book published in 1989. The novel was originally published in 1959 by the Australian Print Group, Maryborough, Victoria. Sadly, it's now out of print, but copies can still be obtained from online sources.

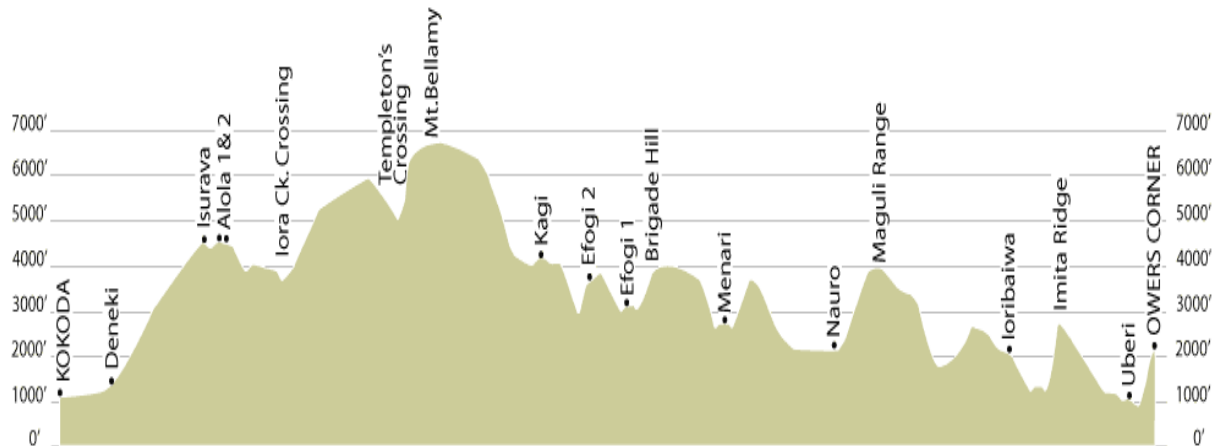
Ian Ogston



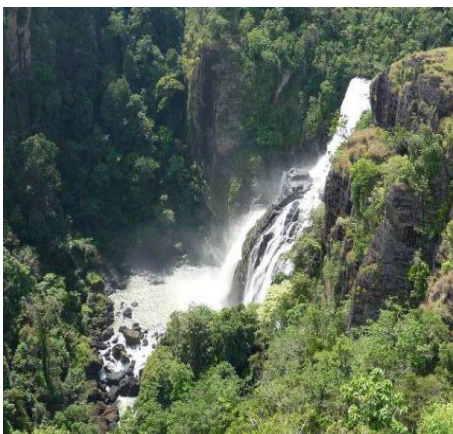
*

KOKODA QUIZ

Refer to the Kokoda Track cross section below and answer the questions which follow.
(Answers later in the Newsletter)



- Q 1. Name the highest point of the Kokoda track.
- Q 2. What was this elevation?
- Q 3. What was the Japanese objective in their Kokoda campaign?
- Q 4. What was the furthest extent of the Japanese advance?
- Q 5. What was the first location of contact with Japanese forces?
- Q 6. Name three locations where Australian troops made significant stands against the advancing Japanese.
- Q 7. How long was the campaign?



Q 8.

As you approach the top of the Owen Stanleys from Port Moresby on the way to Sogeri, what is the name of the waterfall that flows off the mountain?

Answers on page 27

*



*

Brigadier Arnold Potts Oration, Perth, 2024



The 2024 Brigadier Arnold Potts Oration was conducted at the Anzac Club of WA, located in Anzac House, 28 St Georges Terrace, Perth on Friday 2nd August 2024.

The guest speaker was Nova Peris OAM OLY MAICD, a past Olympian in two sports being athletics & hockey, winning a gold medal in the latter. She was the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to Federal Parliament serving as a Senator for the Northern Territory. Nova has completed the Kokoda Track on two occasions and is planning a third later this year.

Nova is the great granddaughter of the late WX 10552 Sgt. John Marcus Charles Knox (aka Jack Knox) of the WA raised 2/16th Battalion that served in Syria, PNG & Borneo in the Second World War. Nova spoke in detail of Sgt. Knox`s exploits in the Australian Army and the impact it had on his life & family.

This was a very well attended event in a convivial atmosphere with the WA Governor, His Excellency, The Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM present.

Graeme Johnson, Western Australia Representative (pictured at left, above)

Nova's address (reproduced by kind permission of *Pigeon Post*, September 2024)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, I need to pay respect to all of our fallen soldiers and the families who gave the ultimate sacrifices for the freedoms we now have.



Last year I was with a good mate named Aidan Grimes where I walked the Kokoda Track, this would be my second time. Aidan, who has covered the track more than more than anyone I know, has the most incredible encyclopaedic knowledge like no other, and he certainly gave the most detailed insight of the conditions into the ultimate service, the selfless sacrifice our heroic Diggers gave. No matter how many times anyone walks that track, I don't think anyone can ever appreciate the magnitude of what our diggers went through, and also the Papua New Guinean Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels, whose care and compassion for the casualties of war was nothing short of incredible.

On day 2 of the trek, at one point during that most remarkable journey, we came to stand on hallowed ground, at the Isurava Battle site, a place that seems to appear from nowhere, yet holds an immense significance in the heart of our nation's history. Before us stood four pillars, etched with the words *Sacrifice*, *Courage*, *Mateship*, and *Endurance* - qualities that embody the spirit of the brave soldiers who once fought there. This site, like the Kokoda Track itself, is a powerful reminder of what was at stake during those dark days of World War II. If not for the steadfast defence at Isurava by 420 young diggers from the 39th Militia Battalion, today we might be living in a world where our freedoms would be lost, where the language we speak and the values we hold dear, could be dramatically different.

To think that these young men, with an average age of just 21, stood their ground despite being vastly outnumbered, is both humbling and heartbreaking. They clung to each other, believed in their mates, and never gave up, embodying the true essence of the ANZAC spirit. As we hoisted the flags, read poetry, and observed a minute's silence, the weight of their sacrifice and the depth of their courage was deeply moving.

For me, Isurava holds a personal significance. My Great Grandfather, the late Sergeant Jack Knox of the 2/16th Australian Infantry Battalion, was one of those brave souls. He fought on the right flank of the Abuari track, part of the AIF reinforcement that held the line against overwhelming odds. To finally walk in his footsteps, to see what he saw, and to feel the weight of what he endured—it was beyond words. He, like so many others, had his life forever changed on that track, all in the defence of Port Moresby, for the freedoms we now enjoy.

Jack was a Scottish-Irish man, and the father of my Nana, Nora Peris. Jack was born in 1905, in what is now known as the Albion-Shamrock Hotel in Kalgoorlie, the Western Goldfields, widely known as the recruiting ground for men for the 2/16th who gave the battalion a hard and rough character. It was only last year I travelled to Kalgoorlie to pay homage to Jack's mother Honora, whom my Nana was named after. It was there I had realised how strong my Irish blood was. I carried little crystals, Irish Lillies, 4 leaf clovers

and placed them on the grave. I made circles with the green rocks, and placed the fairy in the middle, I had no idea about the fairy rings' significance.

I had just paid respect to a woman I'm a descendant from. To have only known his mother for 6 years, I still am in awe of Jack Knox. He made sure her name was never forgotten, coupled with his strength and endurance as well as his bravery in war. He certainly has a big family and an even bigger legacy he has left behind. To end that day, I went and had my first EVER Guinness in the Albion-Shamrock pub and told the workers and locals about my day. Cheers to my Irish / Scottish ancestors! His story, and the story of his comrades, is immortalised in the history of the 2/16th Battalion, and in the book *A Thousand Men at War*.

When I did Kokoda, I took with me my Great-Grandfather's 1939 Bible, the actual one he took with him on both the Syria-Lebanon and Kokoda Campaigns. It was a small pocket size bible, and I kept it secured and wore it around my neck when I trekked, and on my chest when I slept at night. It never left my side. Jack's bible certainly gave me the strength when I needed it. As I walked, I talked to him, feeling his presence beside me, and it was then that I began to understand the spiritual essence of Kokoda. The reality of the track, the harshness of the environment, the physical and mental demands—it all made my heart ache for what these men went through, but it also brought a deep respect and admiration for the “fuzzy wuzzy angels”, those beautiful souls who carried our wounded to safety, away from further harm. They were our most loyal allies, and their role in this history is as vital as the diggers themselves.

During the trek, I was accompanied by my own “Legend,” Jonathan, and a few others like Waggi, Jacko, and Allan. These men were not just porters; they were our guides, our protectors, and our friends. Their care, their knowledge, and their unwavering support helped us all form a bond that went beyond mere employment—it was a shared journey, one of learning and respect.

As we left Isurava, we made our way to Con's Rock, also known as Surgeon's Rock, named after Lance Corporal Constantine Vapp, where one of the many tragic, yet heroic stories of the Kokoda Track unfolded. Here, Aidan shared the story of this place and sang “Danny Boy” in honour of the late Stan Bissett of the 2/14th AIF, whose brother Butch tragically passed away. There was not a dry eye among us, as the weight of their story and the sacrifices made, resonated deeply.

Our journey continued to Alola, where my Great Grandfather, Jack Knox, became a lifeline for a group of ten diggers who had been cut off by the Japanese. His experienced bushmanship guided them safely through the jungle back to their battalion, a feat for which he was *Mentioned in Dispatches* and awarded an Oak Leaf Clasp. To know that his skills and courage saved lives here is a source of immense pride for me and my family.

On day 6, I camped on Brigade Hill. We had a huge day ahead to Naoro, 21km of trekking ahead. This morning started with our own service; we listened and watched a video (this time from a recording of a Digger's lived memory). With the sun rising over the mountains afar I couldn't help but look at those rays as an exact resemblance of “The Rising Sun Badge”. Standing on Brigade Hill, a place that now offers us breathtaking 360-degree views, it is hard to imagine the tragic and heroic events that once unfolded there. That hill, with its serene beauty, was once a battlefield filled with unimaginable horrors and the

ultimate sacrifices of our brave soldiers. It was there, at Brigade Hill, that my Great Grandfather, Sergeant Jack Knox, along with his comrades of the 2/16th Battalion, faced one of their greatest challenges. Forced to go bush, Jack used his cartographer's skills to navigate through the dense jungle, leading others to safety.

As we reflected on its history, we remembered that Brigade Hill was once the site of ghastly deaths, where in excess of 62 lives were lost, including many of our "Sons of Australia." These men, who survived the harrowing battle of Isurava, found themselves there, fighting once more to reclaim the track. Among them was Charlie McCallum, who fell in the saddle at Brigade Hill, a testament to the relentless courage of those who fought on despite overwhelming odds. We also honour the memories of Captains 'Lefty' Langridge 2/16th and Claude Nye 2/14th, who, in a futile attempt to break through to Brigade Headquarters, gave their lives knowing the odds were insurmountable. We heard how Langridge, fully aware of the fate that awaited him, handed over his pay book and dog tags to a mate, a poignant gesture of bravery and acceptance.

These stories, these sacrifices, reminded us that the ground we walked on was sacred. It is a place where ordinary men performed extraordinary deeds, where courage and camaraderie shone brightest in the face of darkness.

After the minute's silence Aidan asked me to read out a poem by H Bert Beros called "*WX Unknown*". Without knowing this poem before, I was not prepared for what followed; I had managed to read out the first 4 of the 7 paragraphs before the tears started to flow and no more words could come out, I had to get young Ky our 14yr old who trekked with us accompanied by his father to finish the rest of the poem, and he courageously did. I guess it really dawned on me, not only as a mother but also having a son who was almost 18 years of age then, safely back home in Australia, and to think young men of his age were sent to war, and some never to return. This initially was the essence of the poem for me. I gave young Ky a big hug after and thanked him.

As we took off on what would become the longest day trekking, almost 11hrs and a whopping 21km, we descended to Manari before climbing out again and descending into the swamps. After lunch at Agulogo we then climbed up the MAGULI RANGE to the Village of Naoro where for the last 2hours it poured with rain, and I ascended what they call the "seven peaks."

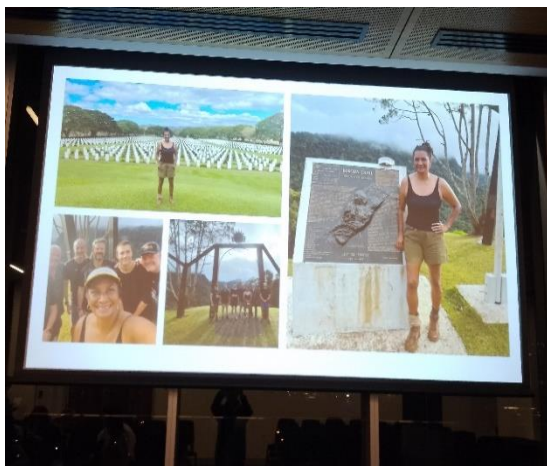
That morning I had read the poem at 7.06am, at 8.23am I recorded myself reflecting upon the morning and hearing those stories and the impact it had upon me, then at 9.17am, I, for some reason, stopped to take a picture of a tree, with the sun beaming through. I don't know why I did it, but obviously something made me do it. And that picture I took, not only were the sun's rays spectacular, but it also depicted "*That Rugged Little Cross*", it was "*Where The Trees Are Draped in Moss*". I could not believe it, was it where "*The remains of a hero under it lay*". I don't know, but I do believe in the spirit world, I do believe the entirety of that track is filled with that world of our Diggers who fought and sacrificed themselves and their families gave us what we have today. They are always reminding us that they *will never be forgotten*, that true meaning of *Lest We Forget*.

Jack returned to Kokoda twice, knowing full well the horrors he had faced the first time. It is almost incomprehensible to think that after enduring such hardship, he and hundreds of other brave diggers chose to come back. He always said, "I was just doing my job", but to us, his story is a monumental part of our family's history.

I wanted to share one more personal story with you. And that is one of the mammoth two hour trek of just river crossings, 19 times, which led to the base of Imita Ridge. Then a huge climb. In wartime they had the Golden Stairs. Well, there is nothing there now!!! Whilst already tired and exhausted, I also captured my thoughts on film including several white butterflies that wanted to land upon my face. I reckon by Day 8 I had lost about 6kgs. But that was nothing, right?! Not even an ounce of comparison to our brave soldiers. Every day I had listened to the stories from Aidan of the Diggers, the wounded, the starving, their crawling, or being carried - the horror stories went on. Each day I had challenged myself into trying to have some sort of true understanding of our soldiers.

Those words, Lest We Forget, and that red poppy became a constant revolving image circulating in my head. That, coupled with singing to myself everyday just the repeated chorus of "The Whitlam's" song, "*There's no aphrodisiac like loneliness*", - The crazy thing was it was never really an old school favourite song of mine, but that one song never left my headspace the entire trip, over 'n over again, it really was how I felt at times. Although I was alone when I trekked, Jack was with me in spirit. At times I trekked knowing full well Jono and other Legends were close by (never not more than 20m or so), but often they gave me space when the track was good.

The track does that to you, it gives you time to think and put things in perspective. Sometimes the track was a dense jungle, and I felt I couldn't see anyone, maybe they understood some people just wanted to walk alone and you do some soul searching yourself.



Nova Peris finishes her Trek
 unwavering commitment to his country and his remarkable tactical intelligence. Yet, his rightful place in history has largely been overshadowed, due in part to a dismissal by General Sir Thomas Blamey at a crucial juncture. This dismissal occurred at the very moment when Potts had fought the Japanese to exhaustion, executing a fighting withdrawal over the Kokoda Track—an action that has been called "one of the most critical triumphs in Australian military history."

Appreciate what we have, appreciate the suffering of others which gave us what we have today. The words, *Sacrifice, Endurance, Mateship* and *Courage*: what did that mean? Well leaving that track certainly gave true meaning of it all: *We Shall Remember Them*. However, tonight, we also reflect on the legacy of a man whose contributions to our nation's history, I believe have not been fully recognized—a man who displayed exceptional leadership and courage during one of the most pivotal moments in Australian military history. That man is **Brigadier Arnold Potts**. Brigadier

Potts had a distinguished career, marked by his unwavering commitment to his country and his remarkable tactical intelligence. Yet, his rightful place in history has largely been overshadowed, due in part to a dismissal by General Sir Thomas Blamey at a crucial juncture. This dismissal occurred at the very moment when Potts had fought the Japanese to exhaustion, executing a fighting withdrawal over the Kokoda Track—an action that has been called "one of the most critical triumphs in Australian military history."

Despite the significance of his achievements, our nation has yet to fully honour Brigadier Potts. His actions during the Kokoda campaign were not just a military success; they were a testament to the resilience, determination, and leadership that define the Australian spirit. The fact that his role in this triumph remains underappreciated is a

disservice not only to Potts but to all who fought alongside him. Many of Potts' contemporaries, as well as his official biographer, regard his sacking as one of the most disgraceful actions of Blamey's military career. It is a stark reminder of how political decisions can sometimes overshadow the truth of one's accomplishments and contributions. Brigadier Potts' dismissal was a decision that does not reflect his worth, nor the magnitude of his service to our country.

As we remember Brigadier Arnold Potts today, let us not allow his legacy to remain unacknowledged. It is our responsibility to ensure that his contributions are recognised and honoured, so that future generations can understand and appreciate the true depth of his service.

In honouring Potts, we also honour the countless others who have served with distinction, whose sacrifices and achievements may not always be celebrated as they should be. Let us work to correct the narrative, to give credit where it is due, and to ensure that history reflects the true heroes of our nation.



Today, as I stand before you, I reflect on how easily we toss around the word 'legend,' especially in the realm of sports. We often label our sporting stars as legends, but the truth is, they should be referred to as champions — not legends. There is a profound difference, and it's important that we recognise it. Our true legends are not those who chase personal dreams on the field, but those who serve in our armed forces—our Diggers. These men and women make the ultimate sacrifices, giving up their own freedoms so that we can enjoy ours. They leave their families, knowing they may never return, and they step into unknown dangers with the kind of bravery and tenacity that few of us can truly comprehend. As athletes, we play sport for our own dreams, our own desires. We are, in many ways, selfish individuals pursuing personal goals, and when we achieve them, it often feeds our own egos. But we are not the legends. The legends are those who put aside their own lives, who fight with every ounce of their being for the lives of others, for their country, and for the freedoms we sometimes take for granted.

On my Kokoda pilgrimage, I came to a deeper understanding of what it means to honour these true legends. My life has always been lived at one speed, fast. But there, in those sacred places, I learned that it's okay to slow down, to embrace the terrain of the jungle, and to feel the weight of the history that surrounds you. The history that belongs to everyone who served, who fought, and who sacrificed. I came to the Kokoda Track to pay my respects to those men and women—to the true legends of our nation. Let us never forget that while we may celebrate our sporting champions, it is our Diggers, our service men and women, who are the real legends. They are the ones who truly deserve our highest honour and deepest respect.

With that in mind I can't let this moment pass without expressing my horror and disgust at the appalling disrespect shown to our service men and women by those who recently defaced the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. For those who cannot travel to Kokoda or other sacred sites like Gallipoli in Turkey, Villers-Bretonneux in France or

Beersheba in Israel – the site of the charge of the Australian Light Horse in 1917 – the Australian War Memorial is our most sacred place of remembrance. It should never be defaced or dishonoured by using it for partisan political purposes. It should always remain a unifying symbol of the values and ethos that our veterans embodied, a symbol and place reflecting the very best of Australia.

They gave their tomorrows, So we could have our todays...

'Lest We Forget'

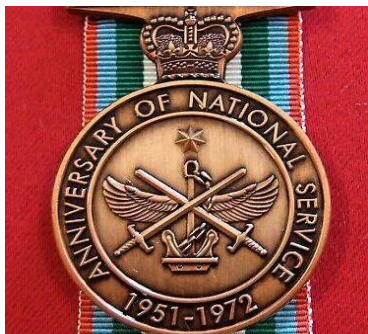
Nova Peris OAM OLY (Nova is the great grand-daughter of 2/16th Battalion A.I.F. Member WX10552 John (Jack) Marcus Charles Knox)

*

Nasho Recruit Training: a few observations

Lone Pine Barracks, Singleton

At Singleton Barracks, the first intake of 1969 (and other years) contained many Teachers College and University graduates. I identified another two Teachers in my 16-man hut (Steve Hill and Ken Falvey) with recruits from a variety of other backgrounds. Although there were limited options for spending money, mainly the “boozers” and magazines, the Teacher recruits from Qld noticed the drop in their wages. There were two or three Volunteer recruits in our hut (one of whom later suffered significantly from his Infantry posting to Viet Nam and who revealed his trauma and regrets in a published



interview). Those Volunteers initiated the ‘hazing’ (or levelling) of other recruits in our hut. What prompted their behaviour, indeed what prompted them to volunteer for the Army, remained a mystery. As recruits, we were a mix of shapes, sizes, ages and motivations who provided manpower for the Army ‘on the cheap’, as recruit Keith Werder noted later.

The vast Singleton (Lone Pine) Army Barracks had obvious advantages for the Army, and disadvantages for us, as a (Recruit) Training Centre – isolated location; very hot in summer and cold in winter; red, dusty, sandy soil supporting a few primitive trees, some clumps of grass and few animals (other than the junior NCOs) – worse than Puckapunyal, recalled Barry Heard in his book.

Intake numbers

Prime Minister Robert Menzies (who chose not to enlist in the First World War) announced in August 1965 that the Army intake would be increased to 8,400 Nashos each year. So 63,735 Nashos served from 1965 to 1972 (Australian War Memorial). Scheyville graduate Neil Leckie estimated that the Army took in about 8,400 Nasho

recruits each year in round numbers. Given 30 Intakes, and 3TB on stream in 1966, the average size of an Intake would have been 2,100 in round numbers.

1RTB (Kapooka) could take 9 Platoons of 48 recruits, occupying one floor of the Company building for each Platoon. Neil has provided a modern photo below of 1RTB and commented, 'A lot of the buildings shown are different from 1969. I have marked the Company lines as they were in 1969.' 2RTB (Puckapunyal) could take in 20 Platoons of 64 recruits, each Platoon occupying 4 huts of 16 men. Neil has also provided below a modern photo of 2 RTB and marked the National Service Lines with the comment, "D Coy was on the left and C Coy on the right; A & B Coy huts were smashed down in about 2002 while I was on the base."

I have consulted Neil Leckie about 3TB (Singleton) intakes, and I believe that 3TB could take in 10 Platoons of 48 recruits each intake. My Platoon of 48 all graduated and the other three Teachers graduating were Dennis Castles, John Fennell, and Dave Pollack [RIP]. Visiting Singleton in 2019, we noted that the National Service-era huts have been re-located to another part of the Barracks. Alongside these 'averages', there were variations in Nasho Recruit Platoon size because of changes in Battalion capacity over time and the loss of some recruits before graduation.



1 RTB Kapooka with 1969 buildings marked



2 RTB Puckapunyal with National Service lines indicated

National Servicemen's Army Numbers

On enlistment in the Australian Military, each person became a military number to enable background identity and record keeping. During the period 1965 to 1972, the first digit indicated from which Military District the person enlisted and, for Nashos, the second digit 7 indicated National Service. The Military Districts were numbered as follows:

Qld – 1st; NSW & ACT – 2nd; Victoria – 3rd; SA – 4th; WA – 5th; Tas – 6th; NT – 7th.

For example, being a Banana Bender, my Number was 1735... while a Sandgroper was numbered 5712... and so on.

Army Parade Ground

During Recruit Training, Army NCOs, especially the RSMs, would shout and warn away any Recruit who wandered onto the Parade Ground. Often, a punishment would follow for the hapless recruit. Few recruits were told the historical reasons for not trespassing on the Parade Ground. I read only recently in *Vetaffairs* one reason for this rule – The Army tradition is that soldiers who marched on that Parade Ground but later died in combat, their spirit returns to that Parade Ground to wait for their mates. So, it is respected as hallowed ground.

Sources:

The Scheyvillian No. 3, 2019

Neil Leckie, personal communication, 2020

Vetaffairs newsletter, December 2022

Greg Ivey

*

Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Commemoration of Kokoda Day



On 11 August, Greg Farr and his partner Sharon attended the Kokoda Commemoration at Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Club, Brisbane, on behalf of the Association. The centre point of the commemoration is the Kokoda Stone (pictured) which was brought from the Kokoda Track for this purpose many years ago.

A book as a donation to the library of the Corinda State High School was laid in place of a wreath on behalf of our Association.

*

Vietnam Veterans Day

On Sunday 18 August Australia commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day (formerly Long Tan Day). The Viet Nam War affected most of us in varying but significant degrees. It was the signature political struggle of the 1960s and 1970s and its consequences are still with us.

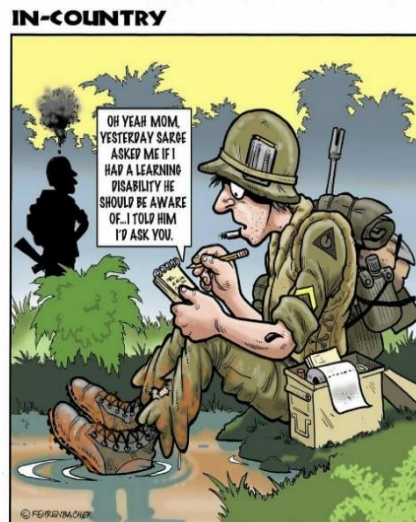
We honour those who fell and those who survived, whether Nashos or Regulars (like our current Patron, Don Graham).

*

To me, the spirit of Kokoda is much more about the battle than the victory, for at every turn in the track lay the possibility of a battle won or lost inside each of us. The spirit of Kokoda is about the Australian boys who were taken from us in the prime of their lives, about the endless generosity and sacrifice of the Papuan soldiers, civilians and Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels. It is about the young Australians who must fight to keep the spirit alive – so that no Australian or Papuan will have died in vain.

Sharni, student

*



PNGDF Soldiers Develop Aviation Skills

The PNGDF is making use of local technical institutions to upgrade the skills of its soldiers working in its Aviation sector. One example is Pte Joel Abun who has completed the first stage of his training, a Certificate 2 in Electronics, at the Port Moresby Technical College. Pte Abun's family came from East Sepik and East New Britain Provinces allowing him to grow up in Kimbe, West New Britain Province.

After his PNGDF recruit training in 2017, Joel was posted to Murray Barracks for two years before his transfer to the Air Transport Wing base at 7 Mile, Port Moresby. On completion of the full Electronics Course, he



will work on planes and avionics at 7 Mile. Joel's commander and Operations Squadron Team Leader, Lt Steven Paulty, was present at the graduation ceremony to acknowledge his progress. "The skills of Private Abun and other studying soldiers will be beneficial to the future of the Air Transport Wing because more aircraft are anticipated from the Australian Defence Force," said Lt Paulty.

(Photo & text courtesy of *Post-Courier*)

*



Remains of a C53 which crashed at Vansittart Bay, north of Broome, Western Australia on 26 February 1942. (Water-colour sketch by **Peter Darmody**)

I have now realised that you don't have to glorify war to glorify the incredible human qualities exposed through the adversity of war. Walking the Kokoda Track provided an insight into the commitment, heroism and sacrifice of those who fought for Australia's freedom. They were ordinary people who discovered the qualities of commitment, leadership, mateship and teamwork under the most challenging of circumstances. They discovered qualities in themselves and in others that they could never have imagined.

(Andrew, student and future Rhodes Scholar)

*

From the editors

We hope this edition of the Association newsletter finds you well, and that you've enjoyed reading it. We welcome feedback and suggestions: Please forward to Norm at nrhunter@bigpond.net.au.

Norm Hunter, Ian Ogston, Steve Beveridge

*

Quiz answers from page 14:

1. Mt Bellamy; 2. Elevation is about 6750 feet; 3. Capture of Port Moresby; 4. Ioribaiwa;
5. First contact (PIB) was east of Kokoda near Awala; 6. Three from the following:
Kokoda, Isurava, Eora Creek, Templeton's Crossing, Efogi, Brigade Hill, Ioribaiwa; 7.
Campaign length was 4 months (23 July to 15 November 1942); 8. Rouna Falls.



Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby

'Lest We Forget'

*