



NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

4/2023

Welcome

Welcome to our fourth and final newsletter for 2023. Much has happened since the July issue, and we're bringing members up-to-date as well as offering some interesting articles ranging through recent news from Papua New Guinea about the Kokoda Track, continuing our theme of exploring leadership, a book review, and even a story about The Phantom, who not only resides in the Deep Woods, but has had a presence in Papua New Guinea since the days of the Kokoda Campaign.

We pay our respects to Veterans and members who have recently passed away, and offer condolences to their families from all members of the Association. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, and we will ensure that their bravery and sacrifices continue to be remembered.

This is the final edition of the newsletter for 2023. We wish you all a peaceful and uplifting Christmas and New Year, and we look forward to continuing to bring the members of the Association together through the newsletter in 2024. And of course, we welcome any input and feedback you choose to offer.

Norm Hunter & Ian Ogston - Editors

Remembrance Day, 11 November 2023

The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them. We don't know them all - but we owe them all. Forever shall we remember them.

Czeslaw Milosz

Brisbane

Association members participated in the RSL Memorial Service at Anzac Square and paid their respects later at the PIB & NGIB Plaque in the downstairs Gallery. Several of our leaders and their wives were unwell so Vice President Greg Ivey laid the Association Wreath and co-operated with media interviews.



New Members, Margot (and Duncan) Baillie joined the Memorial Service for the first time and then placed a poppy below our plaque in honour of her late

father, Major Alex Tolmer (1 NGIB). Those members who did not have other commitments adjourned to a nearby restaurant for a social lunch. Thanks to our new Assistant Secretary, Ian Minns, for co-ordinating the lunch venue.



(Sgt) Greg Ivey, 2PIR & Murray Barracks, 1969-70

Perth

The Remembrance Day Service was again conducted at the Flame of Remembrance in King's Park. This is located adjacent to the State War Memorial which overlooks the city of Perth, with the Swan River and Darling Range in the distance. Being a Saturday this year, the service was very well supported by the general public with numbers well in excess of previous years.



The address was given by Lt Col. Daniel Wright, CO of 10th Light Horse Regiment, a unit with a proud history of service. It is currently an Army Reserve Unit based at Irwin Barracks. The Ode was read by Mr Duncan Anderson, RSLWA State President, and music was supplied by the Churchlands Senior High School Band.

His Excellency, Chris Dawson, the State Governor, attended along with service chiefs and many ex-service organisation representatives.

Wreaths were laid around the Flame of Remembrance. The poppies placed in the adjacent garden beds were knitted by a group of dedicated ladies who support the ideals of the RSL.

(Sgt) Graeme Johnson 2PIR 1969-70

Townsville

Remembrance Day in Townsville can't be missed as service organisations in Townsville take the occurrence as a time to sell red poppy items to the general public, including badges, jewellery, stubby coolers, two-up items, and plain poppies. This occurs for two weeks prior, with some only selling for three or four days. These activities provide the organisations with funds to help in their work with veterans and their families.

11 November brings the more solemn side of the event, with Remembrance Day services held by hospitals and nursing homes, with the Townsville RSL conducting the main service on the Strand and the Sub-Branch conducting a service in Thuringowa. This year the main speaker at the Strand service was the 16 year old daughter of a serving officer, offering a young person's view of the commemoration.



I represented the Townsville Branch of the National Servicemen's Association by laying a book at the Mater Hospital Commemoration service. It was a short service containing all the essential parts to allow hospital in-patients, workers and visitors to commemorate the day.

You can see my PIR connection with the beret and medal.

(Sgt) Graham Carnes 1PIR Taurama & OCS Lae 1968-69

Keeping the PIR dream alive in North Queensland

Two former PIR National Servicemen are members of the Townsville Branch of the National Servicemen's Association. Major Ian Kuhl who served in PIR from 1973-1976 raised and commanded the first PNGDF Preventative Medical Platoon. The platoon dealt with outbreaks of malaria in several places, provided safe water wells, and Ian is the current Branch Secretary.

Education Sergeant Graham (Nobby) Carnes was attached to I PIR at Taurama, and when Igam Barracks at Lae opened he went to Lae with B Company, becoming the first 'Chalkie' to serve in Lae. He later also taught at the Officer Cadet School in Lae. Graham is the current Minutes Secretary of the Townsville Branch. In past years, he has marched in the Brisbane ANZAC Parade behind our banner, and has attended Kokoda services on the Gold Coast. He is the current Queensland Country Representative for the Association.



In 2023 Graham encouraged the Townsville Branch to march on The Strand to commemorate ANZAC Day, and was one of 16 marchers. The branch provided a bus for those unable to complete the march and both Graham and Ian Kuhl participated.

National Service groups in North Queensland also participate in the ANZAC Day Battle of the Coral Sea commemoration in Cardwell. This year was the 81st Anniversary, and Graham travelled in a bus supplied by the Townsville National Service Branch for its members. The commemoration started with a march, followed by a service in the Cardwell Memorial Park, then a barbecue

lunch. Once again, Graham wore his PIR beret and medal. Unfortunately, Ian Kuhl took sick on the previous day and was unable to attend.

Graham recommends the Memorial Park in Cardwell as well worth a stop for anybody travelling to North Queensland.

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Kokoda Day ceremony Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch

Annually, on the Sunday closest to Qld Kokoda Day (8 August), a memorial service is held at Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Club. The service honours those who served the Allies' cause on the Kokoda Track, a campaign that resulted in the deaths of 625 Australian soldiers and many more Papuans: the soldiers and the 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' who carried supplies and the casualties.

From the beginning of the campaign Papuan soldiers were on active service with Australian soldiers, together forming the Papuan Infantry Battalion (the PIB). They too are honoured at the Kokoda Day service.



Greg Farr at the Kokoda Stone

Our Association – the PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR – participates with the laying of a wreath at the Kokoda Stone, an impressive conglomerate rock sourced from near the Track. In recent years, along with laying the wreath, we have placed books, donated to the nearby Corinda State High School. This year's books focused on the Gallipoli and Desert Campaigns of World War 1.

(Sgt) Greg Farr Murray Barracks 1970-71

The gospel according to Russ

Our thanks to Russ Wade (1 PIR 1971-73, PNGDF 1983-84) who offers some memorable quotes, accompanied by his personal take on them:

'Greater love hath no man': from John 15:13, on my hometown memorial in Edwardstown, South Australia. ***Life is about being prepared to make sacrifices.***

'I have work for tenors, too!' from the film Zulu by Lt John Chard, Royal Engineers, while building a river crossing at Rorke's Drift, during the Anglo-Zulu War. ***Employ people gainfully, regardless of their skills.***

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The deep military budget cuts affected both enlisted soldiers and officers alike.



" We're out of crayons . . . "

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From our Patron: A tale from Vanimo, 1961

Our OC, who shall remain nameless, became friendly with a Didiman (agricultural officer) from Wewak, who was visiting the Vanimo area. For a reason unknown to we lesser mortals they decided that it would be a good idea if we had a fishpond. The OC arranged for a decent sized hole to be dug near the beach so the water could run in and out without the fish escaping. This was quite a feat and we the subalterns were very curious about what was going on until a large package of small fish arrived from Wewak on the weekly Norseman. They were ceremonially poured into their new home and the OC was happy. He fed them regularly and checked out the pond every morning.



Moem Barracks Wewak: photo (Sgt) Kevin Smith 1967-68

One morning, he woke up to see a ring of local people squatting around the pool. Beside them were most of his beloved fish, which were very dead. He was very angry as it was obvious the locals had emptied the pool of his beloved fish in order to eat them. Being fluent in Tok Pisin he berated them for their actions. But they explained they walked along this beach every week or so, and seeing all these fish, decided that they would make an excellent meal for their village of Vanimo. We didn't dare laugh out loud, but we knew what they had done.

The local people used derris root to block the gills of local fish which they found in ponds. They called it *rop dinamite* (rope dynamite) The OC was eventually quite understanding but was most disappointed that his contribution to the ecology of our camp had come to nothing. Being a

good bloke though, our OC eventually joined in the mirth, and it was some time until we were game to make a joke of what had occurred.

Also in our time at Vanimo, there was a piggery, which provided the meat for the periodic sing sings. The pigs were fed from the scraps from the cook house, and as their main food was brown rice, they grew to enormous proportions. One of them, a very large boar had an ingrown tusk which had to be removed, and as he was the father to ensure that our piggery was stocked, he couldn't be put down. Our CQ, who was friendly with the local Australian *liklik dokta* (First Aider) from the Vanimo patrol post, came up with a plan to put the boar to sleep using chloroform and sawing off the offending tusk while the boar was asleep.

The day arrived and everyone in the company wanted to watch this momentous occasion. The boar was quite tame, so it was easy to place a chloroform pad over his face and put him to sleep. So far so good, but the tusk was very large and half-way through the 'operation' he woke up. He was not in a good mood and chased anyone who was nearby, which was most of the company. Some soldiers even managed to shimmy up coconut trees unaided, but the rest fled to the buildings.

There was no use trying chloroform again as by now no-one could get near the boar. Sadly, he had to be put down which took some time as all the ammunition was stored in the armoury which was not far from the piggery. Several soldiers, fortunately good runners, distracted him while the ammunition was obtained. And the deed was done. This was an exciting afternoon in what was expected to be a typical quiet afternoon and the meat was delicious.

Major-General (Ret'd) Brian 'Hori' Howard AO, MC, ESM (Association Patron)

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News and Updates

Presentation of Honorary Life Membership to Peter Jesser

All those present were delighted that Peter and his wife Rochele, had made the trip from Toowoomba to be at the Brisbane AGM in spite of Peter still recovering from a recent stroke.



President Don congratulated Peter and presented him with his framed Honorary Life Membership Certificate listing the following achievements which led to him being a worthy recipient. Peter has the PIB & NGIB story in his blood because his father Harold was a senior PIB Officer during the War. Peter was a W.O. in 1PIR. He was Vice President of the old PIR Association until it was closed down and has been an active member of our Association since it began in 2007. He has been History Officer for 16 years and helped us answer questions on

many occasions. Peter has given talks to our AGM and has written detailed historical articles for our newsletter and website. We are very grateful to him for his long and valued contributions to the Association.

Peter responded and indicated his willingness to continue in his role, and that one new article was already completed and another on the way. (You can't keep a good man down!)

(Sgt) Kev Horton Hon Sec PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR Assoc

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Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall Ceremony

Disappointingly, the official Kokoda Day Ceremony at the Kokoda Wall, Broadbeach, was cancelled this year. It is an important annual ceremony, and the wall is a beautiful, respectful commemoration of the bravery and sacrifice of young Australian and PNG servicemen defending their country on the Kokoda Track. In respect of this, a small group held a private ceremony at the wall including Dr Steve Beveridge (wearing the green beret) who represented our Association on 8 August.



Wreaths were placed at the wall, and solemn words of gratitude were offered by those present.

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Veteran Photo Exhibition 2023

A new Photo Exhibition featuring current and former Veterans went on public display during October in Brisbane and Townsville, sponsored by Qld RSL. This exhibition, initiated by Point Assist of Tasmania in 2020, is aiming to uncover previously-unseen photos and stories of ADF personnel engaged in modern-day activities in Australia and overseas. Veterans were invited to submit images and captions



to the “Point and Shoot” organisers who then selected a varied set of photos for the public exhibition lasting three days in each city.

Left: Exhibition Curator Mark Dineen with Greg Ivey & Vanimo photo behind them

The small display team plans to extend this annual travelling exhibition to other capital cities in 2024. For the exhibition originator Veteran Mark Direen, these raw images of ordinary and extraordinary experiences provide a means to document and reflect upon the demands of modern Australian military service. I submitted one black & white image (taken by Chalkie Boyd Robertson) of PIR soldiers relaxing at Vanimo as an introduction to the important story of the 1966-1973 Nasho Chalkies Scheme. My photo caption provided the Chalkie context behind that spear-fishing expedition in 1970.

(Sgt) Greg Ivey

Vale

(Sgt) Don Collins

It was a sad occasion when Anne, wife of Second World War veteran Don Collins, informed us that her husband Don passed away on 25th September in Melbourne, aged 100. Don died comfortably and with dignity in a palliative care facility after a recent serious fall at home.

During the funeral Anne spoke movingly about her loving relationship with Don, and family members followed with their own personal tributes. The celebrant’s well-briefed contribution to the service was particularly appreciated by the family.

Right: Association members at the 75th Anniversary Commemoration of Kokoda at Melbourne on 26 August 2017. (L to R) Frankie Maclean, Russell Jenkin, Andrew Dalziel, John Humphrey, President Don Graham, Graeme Johnson, Greg Ivey, Ron Inglis, Sgt Don Collins (far right) and two local school Cadets.



Association members and friends of the family unable to attend were able to join the service through live streaming on the day.

Don was one of our three surviving War veterans from the New Guinea campaigns, and was featured in the July 2023 edition of *Armi Nius*.

Don transferred to the new 2 NGIB and served with them during 1944-45.

We remember him, and offer our gratitude for his life, and our condolences to Anne.

Don's photo and interview about his War experience can be found on our website www.soldierspng.com Click on **Membership** then *Association Veterans from WW11*.

(Colonel) Ron Lange

On 30 September, in the company of her family and members of our PIB-PIR Association, Trixie Lange unveiled a Plaque for the late Colonel Ron Lange at the Vietnam memorial on Bribie Island, north of Brisbane. Secretary Kev Horton gave a summary of Ron's Army career, from WA to PNG, as part of the RSL Poppy Service conducted by Rod Mears from Bribie Island RSL. A section from Kev's speech appears below:

We are here today to recognize and honour Colonel Ronald George Lange's Military Service to his country, his dedication to his family and his personal qualities which made him a respected and well liked leader.

As a career soldier Ron's army-related service spanned from 1948 to 1983. Before enlisting permanently, a young Ron Lange spent time in CMF equivalents in the 16/28 Battalion in Perth from 1948-50 and then as a Private in the PNGVR in 1951.



Left: Ron with Lindy & Kev Horton

Ron formally enlisted in the Australian Military Forces on 3rd January 1952. He was appointed 2nd Lieutenant on 7 June 1952 and allotted to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. He was promoted to Colonel on 7 December 1977. During his service his senior appointments included: Colonel (Operations/Doctrine), Colonel Training/Operations) and Staff Officer Grade One (Operations) all at Headquarters Training Command; Instructor – Australian Staff College; Commanding Officer 1st Battalion Pacific Islands Regiment PNG

Ron resigned from the ARA in February 1983 to accept a resettlement opportunity. On his retirement he was granted the military title of Colonel by His Excellency the Governor General. Colonel Lange AM was awarded the following honours and medals for service: Member of the Order of Australia; Mentioned in Dispatches; The Vietnam Medal; The National Medal with First Clasp; The Vietnamese Campaign Medal.

After the ceremony the attendees accompanied Trixie and lunched together at the local RSL Club, across the road from the Memorial.

(Lt Colonel) Harry Smith

Lt Col Harry Smith, commander of 'D' Company at the Battle of Long Tan in August 1966, and Sunshine Coast resident, has died recently, aged 90.

Harry will be remembered for his passionate and never-ending campaign for additional recognition and awards for many of his men who fought in the battle. His enormous efforts were at least partially successful, resulting in some additional awards. Greg Ivey writes:

LTCOL Harry Smith's Funeral Service yesterday was almost a State Funeral - very impressive.

The 6 RAR Regimental and King's Colours were displayed and a Catafalque Party was in position for almost two hours. The hearse left the Chapel on a gun carriage, through a lengthy Army guard of honour with weapons, and then passed a platoon who fired three volleys.



The large crowd was dominated by elderly Veterans who chatted over Afternoon Tea with the Kiwi representatives, although most Vets went directly to Maroochy RSL for the free beers.

John Hardy (6 RAR) writes: *I was in Vietnam in 2016 for the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan when Harry and Ron Gildersleeve were there. Our coach with consulate staff on board was the second last coach in the convoy allowed to enter the Long Tan site. For political*

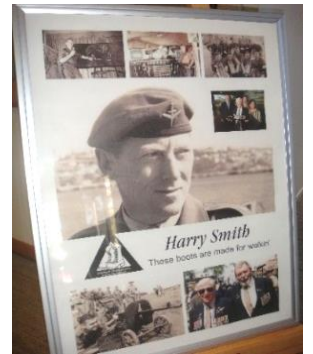
reasons at the time, Harry's coach, two behind us (and the rest of the convoy) was refused entry by officials on the day. However, we did celebrate that night with a dinner at one of the Vung Tau hotels.

Harry Smith also appeared in the recent ABC TV program on the Vietnam War.

(Major General) Sir Phillip Bennett

General Sir Phillip Bennett, AC, KBE, DSO, died recently at the age of 94. As an infantry graduate of the Royal Military College Class of 1948, he served in Japan in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, and then in Korea with 3 RAR, where he was wounded. He completed a second tour in Korea as the senior instructor and then chief instructor at the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Junior NCO School. On return to Australia he was posted as the Adjutant of the 1st Battalion, Pacific Islands Regiment in PNG.

Sir Phillip then served in the Royal Marine Commandos in the UK, later in Malta, and on operational service in Cyprus. He attended Staff College in Australia and was posted as the Senior Instructor then Chief Instructor at the Officer Cadet School at Portsea.



In 1967 he took command of 1 RAR and the following year deployed to South Vietnam, where he was a key commander during the battles of Coral and Balmoral, the largest unit level action for Australia during the war.

Following attendance at the Royal College of Defence Studies he was promoted to Major General and took command of the 1st Division. During his time in command of the Division he undertook a senior



officer flying course at the School of Army Aviation, on completion of which he was certified on the Kiowa as Captain, day/night, and awarded Army Wings by the CO of the School.

In 1984 General Bennett became the Chief of the Defence Force. During his time in the appointment, he supported a proposal to transfer battlefield helicopters to the Army, which was approved by the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This was a major decision on the road to modern Army Aviation.

On leaving the Army General Bennett was appointed to be the Governor of Tasmania and the inaugural chair of the Australian War Memorial Foundation. He was also the long-time Patron of the Australian Army Aviation Association. General Sir Phillip Bennett was a soldier of great repute, a commander at every level, a fearless decision maker, and a great friend of Australian Army Aviation.

(Our thanks to Bill Mellor, President of the Australian Army Aviation Association)

Thai-Burma Railway survivor dies at 102

On September 28 the Gold Coast Bulletin reported that one of Australia's last-living World War II veterans to survive the infamous Thai-Burma Railway had died. Gold Coast resident Gordon Jamieson passed away in September at the age of 102. Mr Jamieson was born in the small Queensland town of Amiens on June 14, 1921, and enlisted in the army in July 1940 at the age of 19 'to go on an adventure'.

He was captured by the Japanese in Malaya in February 1942 after a 10-week battle. Mr Jamieson was imprisoned in Singapore's infamous Changi Prison, then was one of 2800 Australians sent to work on the so-called "death railway". Only five of his 16-man platoon came home from the war. *We became slaves and thus began a 42-month phase of my life, a period of tragic events the memories of which will remain for all time*, he said in 2021.



Left: Gordon Jamieson (1921-2023)

On the completion of a strenuous day at work our boys would commence the walk back to camp, several kilometres in pouring rain with little or no footwear. Then someone would start to sing a tune ... and others would follow, and the heads would be lifted proudly. The workforce had been reduced to one-third strength due to illness and death, mostly caused from diseases and tropical ulcers resulting in limb amputations.

Mr Jamieson was a prisoner-of-war for more than four years and was finally liberated in September 1945 after Japan surrendered. Returning to Australia, Mr Jamieson married his wife, Shirley. They spent 62 years together, travelling the world and having three children. 'The memories of my war are not those of victorious battles or ignominious defeat, but of the human spirit of our Australian soldiers.' In recent decades he lobbied for repatriations to be paid to former prisoners of war and spoke out against armed conflict.

In 2013 Mr Jamieson was invited to visit the set of the 2013 Nicole Kidman and Colin Firth film *The Railway Man*, which was set on the same stretch of the Thai-Burma Railway he had worked on.

(Referenced from The Gold Coast Bulletin, 28 September 2023)

Arnold Potts Oration

Graeme and Cheryl Johnson attended the above function which was held at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle on Friday 11th August (Freo.to the locals). Approximately 70 people attended in nice surroundings and company, whilst an enjoyable three course meal and drinks made a pleasurable evening.

The Oration was delivered by David W Cameron who authored the book *The Battles for Kokoda Plateau: Three weeks of hell defending the gateway to the Owen Stanleys*. The address was very much appreciated by all attendees.

David Cameron's full Oration is in the *Pigeon Post* journal of September 2023, pages 11-18. [website: www.2nd16thassoc.com.au then click on 'Events/News' to see this Newsletter]

(Sgt) Graeme Johnson

[You can read Greg Ivey's brief review of David Cameron's book on page 19.]

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From the gospel of Russ ...

'If you can keep your head, when all around you are losing theirs', by Rudyard Kipling. ***This was pre-reading for Portsea, but is guidance for life.***

'You'll like the Pacific Islands Regiment. It's good soldiering.' From Lt Col Ron Lange, Commanding Officer, 1 PIR. He was right. It was like being in a continuous episode of "Ripping Yarns". ***Adventure is good for you.***

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Exploring leadership

We continue our theme of exploring leadership as experienced and reflected on by Association members. (Part 2 of the interview with Major [Ret'd] Donald Graham, President of the Association, will be published in the first newsletter of 2024.)

A Nasho's reflection on the leadership of RSM Fred Wilson at 1PIR in the 1960s.

Bellwether, chief, commander, director, foreman, head-most, premier, ruler, senior etc. Leadership is as diverse as the people placed in that position. Some are anointed, promoted or born to that position. Many are conferred this position by those who wish to be led. We choose our leaders to guide us on life's journey. Take a certain Fredrick Alexander Wilson, for example.

Fred Wilson was born in the UK and before he reached the age of nine, his mother fell on hard times. She became socially isolated and the family lived below the bread line after Fred's father died. The family split up and Fred and his immediate older brother, Phillip were placed in the Barnardos Home from where he was sent on his own, to Australia.

He settled into the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra near Perth in WA. There he lived, mixing with his peers. Community living does tend to remove your rough edges. To survive, Fred found that conforming to the rules and working favourably with those around you are pathways to a successful life in that environment.

At the commencement of WW11, Fred was selected for radio operator training in the RAAF. On completion, he was chosen to travel to the UK where he became a tail gunner on the RAF Lancaster bombers. Being of only average stature, would have assisted Fred in this placement.

After surviving the war, Fred enlisted into the Australian Army. He climbed through the non-commissioned ranks, reaching the rank of sergeant, and serving in the Korean War. A posting to the Military Staff College at Fort Queenscliffe in Victoria followed. This preceded his final posting to the Territory of Papua-New Guinea as a warrant officer. From very humble beginnings, Fred had risen to be Regimental Sergeant-Major at 1PIR, Taurama Barracks.

It was not his imposing height or massive stature, nor his deep voice or overbearing personality. Fred was a man's man. It was his presence and his quiet manner that engendered respect. Fred gave respect, he received respect. He was firm but moderate with his commands. Any serious matters were dealt with quietly, away from the view of others.

An incident that has stayed with me all my life is, as a newly appointed soldier to 1PIR, I alighted from my transport jeep and commenced to ascend the stairs of the Administration building. Upon seeing me from his office, Fred came and offered me his hand in welcome and advised me of my accommodation.

'I was a stranger and you welcomed me in.'

In the six months or so that I served under Fred, I cannot remember any major disagreement taking place in the Barracks. That's leadership - quiet, confident, firm, friendly direction was Fred's way. He was a giant in his chosen profession.

(Sgt) Terry Edwinsmith 1 PIR 1967-68

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Lessons in Leadership (1): Volodymyr Zelensky

Queensland Association member Greg Farr recently sent the newsletter editors an ABC report of 30 July 2023 by John Lyons, in which Lyons discusses Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's approach to leadership. The following are excerpts from the report:

Lyons asks, 'So what is the *Zelenskyy factor*? How good a military strategist is he? And to what extent has he held the Ukrainian side together?' Lyons consulted four experts who observe Volodymyr Zelenskyy closely, and who focus on Ukraine and Russia.



Peter Tesch (former Australian ambassador to Moscow and a former deputy secretary for strategy, policy and industry in the Department of Defence):

He has proven himself since February 2022 to be a resilient, tough and inspiring leader who commands respect and support at home and abroad. He has shown personal courage, including visiting the front lines. He has remained grounded and connected with his people and his soldiers. The contrast with Putin — an aloof denizen of bunkers and gilded halls — could not be starker.

Mick Ryan (strategist and recently retired Australian Army Major General. He served in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan, and as a strategist with the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff)

He has demonstrated the ability to listen to his military advisers and make carefully calibrated decisions that incorporate this advice as well as political imperatives. He is a very strategic leader who includes military, diplomatic, economic, human and informational imperatives in his decision making.

Matthew Sussex (Associate Professor [Adjunct] at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University)

I think he's come to personify Ukrainian resistance, both at home and abroad. He's also particularly active, visiting frontline troops in person, and visible at the scene of some of the Russian military's egregious crimes — from Bucha and the sites of other massacres, to a flooded Kherson. In contrast, Putin has cultivated a sense of detachment from the conflict, especially when it has become necessary to pin the blame for failure on others.

For Ukraine at least, this one is as much a war of narratives as it is of military conquest and defence. And whereas the Russian narrative about causes and progress has shifted markedly, it's instructive that the Ukrainian one has remained the same.

Ian Parmeter (Research fellow at the Australian National University and former counsellor at the Australian Embassy in Moscow):

Very few national leaders could have worked the international stage in the way Zelenskyy has. His excellent communication skills in global forums encompass the way he presents himself. His appearance is a statement – his signature olive green sweatshirt with the Ukrainian trident on the chest, cargo pants and work boots, complemented by uneven beard growth that suggests he's too busy to shave regularly. That image gives urgency to his appeals for more, and more sophisticated, weaponry and munitions.

He seems acutely aware that Western states backing him have limited attention spans, and he is constantly in the faces of their leaders to prevent any slowdown in provision of arms and training.

His ability to connect with Western audiences in English has been a bonus. He notes himself that his command of English was limited when Russia invaded but has improved markedly with practice. After his address to Congress last December Americans were reported to have commented on social media that he spoke English better than President Biden.

Lessons in leadership (2): Kokoda

The Diggers had no respect for authority in itself. That respect had to be earned. When leaders won the Diggers' respect, they would follow them – whatever the consequences. The good leaders realised they won their men's respect when that respect was reciprocated.

(Patrick Lindsay: *The Spirit of Kokoda* 2002, Hardie-Grant Books, p121)

Much of Patrick Lindsay's account of the Kokoda campaign is told through the words of the surviving troops who held the line against a far better equipped enemy who came at them in greater numbers. The tactic of slowly withdrawing, drawing the Japanese in, inflicting significant casualties and



withdrawing further to do the same thing; slowing, then stopping the Japanese advance on the Track, proved to be a brilliant strategy – perhaps the turning point in the campaign.

Left: Lt Col Ralph Honner

In Lindsay's book that story is told by those who led it with such distinction: Brigadier Arnold Potts, Lt Col Albert Caro, Lt Col Ralph Honner, Lt Col Phil Rhoden, Capt Stan Bisset, Pte Col Blume and other survivors of that deadly encounter. When the survivors limped back into Port Moresby, they were met by their commanders – Generals Blamey and (an absent) Macarthur -

not with praise and respect, but with denigration. At a specially convened 21st Brigade parade, Blamey addressed the survivors on a fiercely hot afternoon under a tropical sun at Koitaki.

According to Blamey's personal assistant, Major Carlyon:

He told them that they had been defeated, that he had been defeated, and that Australia had been defeated. He said this was simply not good enough. Every soldier there had to remember that he was worth three Japanese. In future he expected no further retirements, but advance at all costs. He concluded with a remark that I think was particularly ill-chosen and unfair ... 'Remember,' he said, 'it's not the man with the gun who gets shot, it's the rabbit that is running away.'

(Carlyon in Lindsay 2002 p104)

In the view of Lt Col Ralph Honner, Blamey had no idea what was happening in the mountains less than 100 kilometres from his headquarters, and neither did Macarthur, who didn't visit PNG until October 1942, and then only for a day. Yet he too chose to denigrate the outstanding efforts of the men who had fought so bravely and out-manoeuvred the Japanese forces on the Track. Both generals were regarded with disdain by the soldiers, encapsulated in an incident described by Honner soon after Blamey's put-down of the troops at Koitaki:

I was in hospital recovering from a wound and when I was up I went to a picture show in New Guinea. There'd have been about 5000 there – you know, one of those open-air things – because there were plenty of wounded in hospitals and Australians in training and so forth. And Blamey and his entourage walked into the best seats, about ten rows back or something, and as they arrived the whole audience stood up and booed continuously and kept booing until they hurriedly switched on the picture. Now, what other commander would receive that reception? (Honner in Lindsay p105)

I think we can safely say, not Zelensky. It's clear not just from Patrick Lindsay's book but also other sources, that the leadership of the Australians on the Kokoda Track was exemplary, and came from within, not above: it came from those on the ground responding to the situation and improvising as it evolved. Their superiors at headquarters appeared ignorant of what was actually happening; and, it would also appear from some of their future decisions, showed no interest in understanding the strategies that were so successfully deployed by those leading on the Track. Indeed, Blamey actually sacked some of the leaders who made it possible, including Potts and Caro.

How might Zelensky have treated those men when they returned from the horror they'd faced, not just from the enemy but also from the oppressive tropical jungle and the disease and fatigue that debilitated them to the point of exhaustion? That's a hypothetical, of course, but we can assume one thing: he would have been there with them for at least some of the time, experiencing what they were experiencing, listening to them as they explained their tactics. Can it be that Zelensky clearly understands something about leadership that Blamey and Macarthur didn't? As observed above by Patrick Lindsay:

The good leaders realised they won their men's respect when that respect was reciprocated.

(Sgt) Norm Hunter 1PIR 1967-68

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A Nasho's memories of PNG

I was one of a number of National Servicemen posted to PNG in the late 1960s and early 1970s. After being called up in July 1967, I spent a week at Puckapunyal before being selected for officer training at Scheyville, near Richmond in NSW, undertaking a 22-week course abridged from the year-long course of our Regular Army counterparts at Portsea.

After graduation I was posted to 1 PIR. On my first day at Taurama Barracks, the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Hearn, MC told me to jump in his car as he toured the barracks. Following some brief words of welcome, he said "until you learn Pidgin, you're not much use. You've got 6 months to do it."

The next day I flew to Tari, west of Mt Hagen, to join A Company under Major Jim Devitt, already on a five-week exercise split between tactical training and civic action. It was a rugged introduction to service in PNG, particularly when I found my platoon sergeant spoke barely a word of English.

The civic action task involved bridging a reasonable size river, using local timber and PSP steel matting (left throughout PNG by the US Army in WW2). Needless to say, the engineering aspects somewhat tested my infantry skills.

Right: A Company, 1PIR soldiers bridge building in the Southern Highlands, early 1968



Over the next year I gradually became proficient in Pidgin, assisted by my mission-educated soldiers who spoke English. We also had regular lessons by Major Hori Howard, MC – the acknowledged Pidgin expert in the battalion – as well as a week-long course at Murray Barracks.

On the home front, I had to leave my wife in Adelaide until the authorities allowed her to be 'called forward'. Our situation was compounded because Nashos had no entitlement to a married quarter, even though there were vacant quarters at Taurama. So when my wife arrived in March 1968, we had to rent a flat at Boroko, with me commuting to Taurama and her to Murray Barracks, where she'd transferred as an HR admin officer with the Commonwealth Public Service.

Fortunately, after a couple of months the authorities changed the rules and we were allocated a quarter at Taurama, allowing my wife to engage more fully with the other officers and their wives, as well as with my soldiers and their families.



Left: 2Lt Bob Ormston 1968

I thoroughly enjoyed the lifestyle, integrating into a different culture and language while being responsible for 30 soldiers drawn from throughout PNG.

It included numerous field exercises, and two five-week patrols a year to some of the remotest parts of the country, each typically covering 250 kms. Then enjoying life in barracks with its parades, mess functions, duty weeks, sporting activities and social life.

A particular highlight was patrolling in the Western District in August 1969 when 'free elections' were held in Irian Jaya, with the expectation some refugees would cross into PNG and that Indonesian troops would try to stop them. I was a 21-year old with 30 soldiers, plus several policemen, on the PNG side of an expected crossing point. My company commander was 400kms distant at Daru and the nearest government official was the patrol officer at Ningerum, 20 kms away. It was a character-building experience.

As my two years of National Service drew to a close, I obviously contemplated my immediate future. I'd joined the SA Police Force as a 16-year old cadet and had completed a 3-year course at Fort Largs, graduating as a constable in 1966. Being an officer in the Army, posted to PNG with my wife, seemed a far better career option.

So I volunteered to do a second stint of National Service provided I could remain in PNG. I thought there was a fair chance it would be refused, or I'd be posted to Vietnam instead.



I was therefore pleasantly surprised when it was approved, thanks I'm guessing to the advocacy of my then Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Maurie Pears, MC (pictured left).

I was fortunate shortly after to be appointed Assistant Adjutant. It was a great opportunity to do something different, particularly as I'd be working at battalion headquarters for the new Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Ron Lange, AM and with the RSM, WO1 Osi Ivaraoa, BEM.

By that stage, my language skills enabled me to publish routine orders in Pidgin. I also had the unenviable task of selecting the weekly movies shown sequentially at the ORs' canteen, the Sergeants' Mess and the Officers' Mess. I copped more flak over movie selections than even over the duty officer and duty sergeant rosters.

We left PNG in mid-1971 after a wonderful 3½ years. I was fortunate in being able to transfer to the Regular Army, where I served for a further 20 years, including a second posting to PNG to the Joint Services College at Lae in 1975-76, being there for the celebration of PNG's independence.

In between, I'd been posted to the Infantry Centre, still a subaltern after 3 years of commissioned service. Very early in that posting, I was told by my superior that junior officers like myself who had served in PNG couldn't be promoted until we'd experienced 'real' leadership by commanding Australian soldiers.

Aside from the implicit racism, this overlooked that almost every one of our company commanders in 1PIR had just finished a tour of duty in Vietnam, with several awarded the Military Cross. Without exception, they provided junior officers invaluable guidance on leadership and the management of their soldiers, which replicated – and at times was even more demanding – than the command of Australian soldiers.

I certainly found that my experience as a junior officer in 1PIR stood me in good stead and well prepared me for my leadership of Australian soldiers, both at the Infantry Centre and later as a company commander at 8/9RAR.

My wife and I are thankful that our formative years in PNG positively shaped our lives and provided memories and friendships we cherish to this day. Bob Ormston 1 PIR 1967-71

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From the gospel of Russ

‘This officer's fiancée wants to marry an officer and a gentleman. She'll have to commit bigamy.’ A senior officer's legendary comment on an officer's annual report. ***Always keep your sense of humour and lighten the lives of those around you.***

‘Talks busy’. From my incisive Section Head, Frank Lewincamp in Kuala Lumpur, after we interviewed an Assistant Defence Adviser, who talked up his position on the Defence staff. ***Some people think their self-importance is greater than their value to an organisation.***

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Book review

David W. Cameron: *The Battles for Kokoda Plateau: Three weeks of hell defending the gateway to the Owen Stanleys* (Crow's Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2020) 417pages, bibliography, endnotes, index, maps, photos, ISBN 9781760529550.

The author David Cameron is qualified in archaeology and primate evolutionary biology, yet has published books predominantly about the First World War. This book appears to be his first published text about the Second World War. Cameron presents, in considerable detail, the fighting manoeuvres which occurred over two weeks (27 July to 12 August) of the 1942 Kokoda/Port Moresby Campaign. His hour-to-hour and day-to-day writing style requires a high level of motivation from readers. Cameron's extraordinary battle detail encompasses Army movements, Air Force missions, Japanese offensives, Missionary escapes and letters, ANGAU staff, and villager involvement.

On the positive side, the text mentions the Papuan Infantry Battalion participation frequently – a very rare achievement in Kokoda historiography. Also pleasing is the inclusion in the bibliography of almost all the books relating to the roles of the indigenous soldiers in that conflict. Further, Cameron's constant use of soldiers' later recollections, while hazardous, does provide an insight into the widespread and considered bravery displayed by Australian and PNG soldiers.

On the other side, the book lacks sufficient maps to accompany the detailed troop movements. In addition, the author discloses his foremost reliance on 39th Battalion sources and on one (controversial) military historian. Nevertheless, some readers who are very familiar with the Kokoda/Port Moresby Campaign may welcome this detailed account of two early weeks in a long and iconic Campaign.

Gregory J. Ivey

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The Phantom in Papua New Guinea

(from an article by Lauren Beldi posted 19 April 2019 in *Pacific Mornings*)

Do you recognise the image on this tribal war shield from the Papua New Guinea highlands? According to Lauren Beldi, the Phantom first came to PNG with US soldiers in World War II, and the comic strips were reprinted later in local newspapers in the 1970s.

Also known as 'the ghost who walks' or 'the man who cannot die', the Phantom has a special place in parts of PNG. During a renewed period of tribal fighting in the 1980s, warriors even carried his image into battle on their shields.



It's thought the Phantom first came to PNG with US soldiers in World War Two, and he's never left. In the 1970s the comic strips were republished in the country's newspapers in both English and Tok Pisin. The comic involved interactions with indigenous people, which seems to have appealed to PNG readers.

Radio Australia's Tok Pisin reporter Hilda Wayne speaks about looking forward to reading the daily strips after school when she was growing up in Mount Hagen:

'It was just four strips, every day from the *Post-Courier*, so Dad would get the paper looking for his news, and I'd be looking forward to the comic strips,' she said.

Two Phantom comics, one with The Phantom on the front declaring 'I speak Tok Pisin' have been reprinted. They are highly sought after by collectors, and it's reported that they can sell for hundreds of dollars online.





Today in PNG the Phantom is even known to make an appearance at local football matches!

(Photo supplied by Mark Eby)

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Articles

Historic military appointment

Lieutenant Colonel Boniface Aruma from Papua New Guinea will become the second-in-command of one of Australia's combat brigades in a historic move designed to shore up military ties between the two nations.

Lt Col Aruma (photo, centre) will take up the position of second-in-command of Townsville's 3rd Brigade. This is the first time a military officer from another country has been appointed to such a senior role in the history of the Australian Army.

Lieutenant Colonel Aruma has served in PNG's army for 27 years. He has previously studied in Australia, earning two master's degrees in international relations and defence studies from Deakin and Australian National Universities.



The appointment is intended to send a strong message of solidarity to our Pacific neighbours. Townsville's 3rd Brigade has a long history of training exchanges with PNG, and Lt Col Golder expressed optimism that this will foster a 'tangible, person-to-person' relationship with the Australian ADF.

Lt Col Aruma suggested, 'You now have someone from the Pacific region who sits here, who has a little bit more understanding of how the dynamics work back home.' 'We share the same values and the same idea about what we want our region to be like – safe, secure and stable', he said. Lieutenant Colonel Aruma has recently completed ADF training in Canberra to induct him into the local armed forces.

(Referenced from an article by Rachael Merritt, ABC North Qld, 30 October 2023)

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Kokoda casualties recovered

Writing in *The Weekend Australian* 22-23 July 2023, Ellen Whinnett reported that 80 years after sacrificing their lives in defence of their country, the remains of Australian soldiers have been recovered on the Kokoda Track. Department of Defence experts spent several weeks excavating a site at Templeton's Crossing, which was used as a makeshift cemetery for more than 60 Australian soldiers killed in the Battle of Eora Creek in 1942. The remains able to be recovered were transferred to the Bomana War Cemetery outside Port Moresby after the war.

A local landholder discovered the remains on the Track and notified Australian officials in 2018, but the recovery effort could not go ahead due to Covid-19 lockdowns.



Approximately 625 Australian soldiers died on the Kokoda Track fighting to keep the Japanese Imperial Army out of Port Moresby over four months in 1942, and between 60 and 70 have no formal grave.

Left: Archaeologists & Army personnel working at Templeton's Crossing

Australian Army Colonel Nick Wilson said, 'This is a timely reminder of the sacrifice made by so many in defence of our nation.'

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Imagine the bewilderment of those diggers whose bodies were found on the Kokoda Track recently, on being told their descendants were going to be asked to 'pay the rent'.

Letter to the editor, *The Australian*, August 2023

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The Coastwatchers

In an article in *The Sunday Mail*, 23 July 2023, titled *The Allies' eyes across the Pacific*, Jayne Keogh offered a salute to the Coastwatchers: the men who faced danger every day as they sat in their concealed hideaways along the New Guinea coast, observing and reporting the movement of Japanese troops and equipment. Keogh describes them as 'the Allies' eyes across the Pacific'.

The Coastwatchers also performed rescues of damaged Allied vessels and their crews, one being the American patrol boat PT-109 captained by future US President John F. Kennedy, after it was attacked by a Japanese destroyer.

The idea for the role of the Coastwatchers came from Australian Naval Intelligence officer Commander Eric Feldt, who had been monitoring the build-up of Japanese military power in the Pacific. The Coastwatchers were equipped with radios to report Japanese air, sea and land movements back to the Navy. Their radio signals were often detectable by the Japanese,

making the role extremely dangerous, and having the men constantly on the move, sometimes one step ahead of Japanese troops hunting them. They knew that discovery would mean instant execution.



Commander Eric Feldt RAN

The Coastwatchers were commemorated in a ceremony earlier this year at the Jack Tar Navy Memorial at Brisbane's Southbank on 27 July.

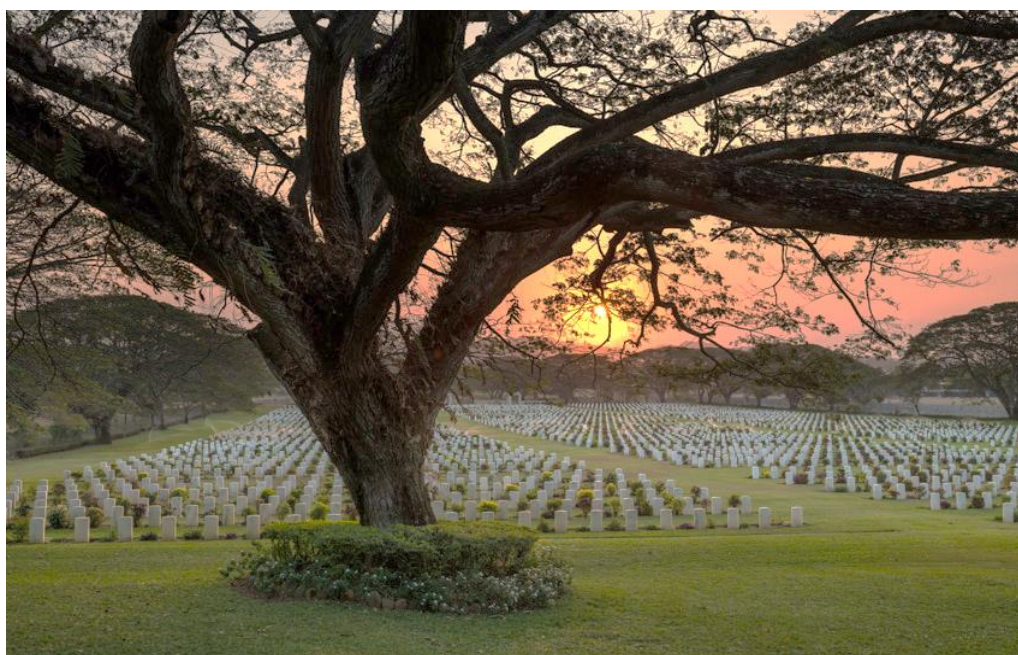
Editors' note: Qld RSL News has advertised a petition by a local Veteran seeking support for a Qld Coastwatchers Memorial in Brisbane.

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And finally from Russ:

'You know, they say that age kills the fire inside of a man': Kostandi (played by Anthony Quinn) in the film *Zorba the Greek*. **It doesn't, so never give up.**

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Bomana War Cemetery

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning ...

