



# ARMI NIUS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

1/2024

Patron: Major-General B.W. (Hori) Howard AO MC ESM (Ret'd)

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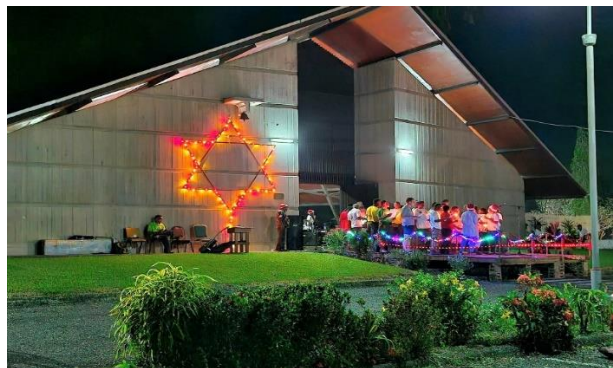
Welcome to the first edition of *Armi Nius* for 2024. As well as the usual updates, this edition has a particular focus on Kokoda, with an update on the pavers at the Broadbeach Kokoda Memorial, Greg Ivey's account and reflections on his expedition across the track, the 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Pacific Islands Regiment, a quiz to test your knowledge, an invitation to contribute to the Kokoda story, an article about the Caribou, and that's just to whet your appetite. Enjoy reading, and please give us your feedback.

Norm Hunter & Ian Ogston

(Editors).....

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## From 2023



*Igam Barracks Christmas Carols, Lae 2023*

*(courtesy Nicky Eato & Gold Coast PNG Club)*

## Association plans for 2024

Our plans for the next 6 months include:

- **Marching** behind our Banners in Sydney and Brisbane on Anzac Day;
- **Lunch** and **AGM** in north Brisbane in late July;
- **National Reunion** for all Members and Partners at Broadbeach, Gold Coast, on 8 August to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the official formation of NGIB in 1944.  
**Participation** in the annual Kokoda Service at Broadbeach on 8 August.

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## ANZAC DAY 2024

Wherever you live in Australia the Association invites you to join the Anzac Day commemoration this year, remembering family members and the PNG Veterans. Please take some photos of the event in your area and send them to our newsletter co-editor, Norm Hunter at [nrhunter@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nrhunter@bigpond.net.au) . Our thanks to our Brisbane ANZAC Day representatives, Phil Adam and Ian Minns for their assistance this year. Sincere thanks again to the Wust family who have agreed to once again be our Association Banner Bearers in Brisbane. For those of you who can travel to Brisbane, we look forward to seeing you, especially our new members, at the activities listed below. **Sydney, Townsville**, and other venues' details are expected soon.

### Brisbane

**Wreath Laying Ceremony: 9.00am** at Anzac Square, South-West Pacific Statue. All welcome.

**Marchers:** Meet by **10.30am** for **11.05** step off.

A copy of the program and other information can be accessed at <https://www.rslsouthqueensland.org/anzac-day-parade/>

**Lunch:** Ian Minns has made a Booking at the Stock Exchange Hotel for 12.30pm.

More information will be sent to Qld members by Email before ANZAC Day.  
Kev Horton (Hon Secretary)

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## The Kokoda Campaign: *What is their story?*

In 1839 the slave ship *La Amistad* was carrying a group of African men to Cuba where they were to be sold as slaves to work on the sugar plantations. The Africans overwhelmed the captain and crew and took over the ship. In trying to sail back to Africa they were intercepted by an American naval ship and taken to Connecticut, where in January 1840 they were being tried in the United States Supreme Court for piracy and murder.



Theodore Joadson was one of the attorneys supporting the defence case for the Africans, but it was not going well. Joadson approached John Quincy Adams, ex-President of the United States, a lawyer and a strong anti-slavery advocate, asking his advice on how they might be able to turn things around to influence the jury and win the case.

The conversation is captured in the 1997 movie *Amistad*, directed by Steven Spielberg. According to the writer of the screenplay, David Franzoni, historically the following dialogue from the film captures the essence of what was said when Joadson met with Adams and asked his advice:

**John Quincy Adams:** *Well, when I was an attorney, a long time ago, young man, I realised after much trial and error, that in a courtroom, whoever tells the best story wins. In un-lawyer-like fashion, I give you that scrap of wisdom free of charge. ... What is their story, by the way?*

**Theodore Joadson:** - *Sir?*

**Adams:** *What is their story?*

**Joadson:** *Why, they're, um,... from West Africa.*

**Adams:** *No. What is their **story**? Mr. Joadson, you're from where originally?*

**Joadson:** *Why, Georgia, sir.*

**Adams:** - *Georgia.*

**Joadson:** - *Yes, sir.*

**Adams:** *Does that sum up who you are? A Georgian? Is that your story? No. You're an ex-slave, who's devoted his life to the abolition of slavery, and overcoming great hardships along the way, I should imagine. That's your story, isn't it?*

(Screenplay, *Amistad*, 1997)

Joadson and his legal team took Adams's advice, presented their 'story' to the jury, and against the odds, including political intervention against them by the then-President of the United States, they won the case on behalf of the Africans.

That historical episode is a great example of the power of story, especially when the story is about victory in the face of what appear to be overwhelming odds, and when it is based on a moral purpose. Our Association was partly founded for that reason: to ensure that the story of the Kokoda Campaign is told, and retold, so it is never forgotten.

The newsletter editors, Norm and Ian, would like to invite members of the Association to ask the same question John Quincy Adams asked in 1840, but in 2024, and to ask it about the Kokoda campaign: *What is their story?* and *Why is it so important to keep the Kokoda story alive in the minds of everyone who was born here, or who has chosen to live here?*

To kick things off, here's our response:

*The Kokoda story is one of sacrifice of the highest order, for a moral purpose of the highest order. It needs to continue to be told because young men, many not even out of their teens, were prepared to put their lives on the line and endure great hardship to protect their country. And what does 'protect their country' mean? It means protecting the values and beliefs we hold dear, and which were threatened by tyranny and foreign domination. We owe to those men, many of whom made the greatest sacrifice of all, the enduring respect and honour that they deserve for ensuring that we can live in the Australia of today.*

**So, what do you think the Kokoda story is, and why is keeping the story alive so important today?** In a paragraph of a few sentences, no more, we invite you to tell members of the Association what you think the Kokoda story is, and why it's so important to keep it alive. We'll publish your responses in a special section in the next newsletter. You're a member of this Association for a reason. Let's hear it. Email your responses to either of us via our email addresses, provided at the end of the newsletter. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

## Young voices keeping the story alive

In his book *The Spirit of Kokoda* (2002, Hardie Grant Books), Patrick Lindsay has included reflections from young people who have walked the Track. Young people don't always get good press these days, but reading what some of them have said should be uplifting to anyone thinking about the future of Australia:

*Kokoda is a very humbling experience. We were humbled because we began to understand the sacrifices that were made by those Diggers, who fought against all odds in the most nightmarish conditions. We were humbled because we would return home as heroes, yet these men, these boys, died for a country that will not remember. And every one of us was humbled by the people of the Kokoda Track.*  
(Sharni)

And another:

*I'm not known as an emotional person, but as I sat in front of the small memorial, reading about the battle on Brigade Hill, I wept. I cried for about 20 minutes, thanking the hundreds of soldiers that peacefully lay, literally inches below my feet. I couldn't help but think: 'How did they do all this for a generation yet to be born? How could they sacrifice so much? How did they conjure up the courage to fight so completely?' These questions still plague me.*  
(Alira)

When they wrote those words, Sharni and Alira were the same age as some of the young men who fought and died in the Kokoda Campaign. Do their words move you to reflect on the power of the Kokoda story?

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## A LASTING TRIBUTE TO VETERANS OF PNG

Veterans of the Second World War in New Guinea can be remembered in a lasting tribute at the impressive Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall at Cascade Gardens in Broadbeach, Qld. Through a partnership with the Gold Coast City Council and Wall Trustees, you can honour a family Serviceman or friend with their name inscribed on a paver and laid under their Battalion insignia (2/14, 2/16, 39th, PIB, NGIB, PIR).



There are two types of pavers. The first is placed in the Honour Roll for those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the PNG campaigns. Their surnames are in capitals on the paver.

The other type is for veterans who survived the PNG campaigns. The lettering of their names is in lower case. The cost per paver is approximately \$80 including laying.

Orders can be placed by completing the order form (with payment details) on our Website ([www.soldierspng.com](http://www.soldierspng.com)). Recognition of new Pavers will form part of future Kokoda Day services held at Broadbeach on August 8 each year. General enquiries can be made to Kev Horton (Hon Sec.) 0418 750 189 or [kevhorton49@gmail.com](mailto:kevhorton49@gmail.com)

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## 73rd Anniversary of the Pacific Islands Regiment

On Monday 11 March 2024, the Pacific Islands Regiment celebrated its 73rd Anniversary. In a meaningful gathering, the 1st Royal Pacific Islands Regiment at Taurama Barracks orchestrated a poignant Church service to commemorate this milestone, culminating in the ceremonial cutting of a cake to honour the occasion.

During the gathering, homage was paid to service personnel, both past and present, as well as to the local and bilateral partners whose unwavering support has propelled the Pacific Islands Regiment from strength to strength.



Emerging during World War II as a fighting element against the Japanese onslaught, the Pacific Islands Regiment traces its roots to the Papuan Infantry Battalion of 1940. Comprising indigenous soldiers alongside Australian Officers and non-commissioned officers, this regiment was assembled to confront the threat in 1940. Although disbanded in the aftermath of the war, it experienced a rebirth in 1951 under the support of the Australian Army, serving with steadfast dedication until Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, where it integrated into the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.

*CO & Soldier (1 RPIR) 11 March 2024 (courtesy of PNGDF & Gold Coast PNG Club)*

A significant milestone in 1985 heralded its transformation into the Royal Pacific Islands Regiment, marking a new chapter in its journey. Presently, the regiment stands proud with two battalions: the 1st Battalion stationed at Taurama Barracks in Port Moresby, and the 2nd Battalion stationed at Moem Barracks in Wewak.

Throughout its rich tapestry of history, the regiment has participated in numerous campaigns, undertaking active service across Vanuatu, Bougainville, and the Solomon Islands. Its diverse operations encompass a spectrum of endeavours including internal security operations, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief efforts, all in alignment with the core functions of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.

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### Reflections on a Kokoda hike in June 2005

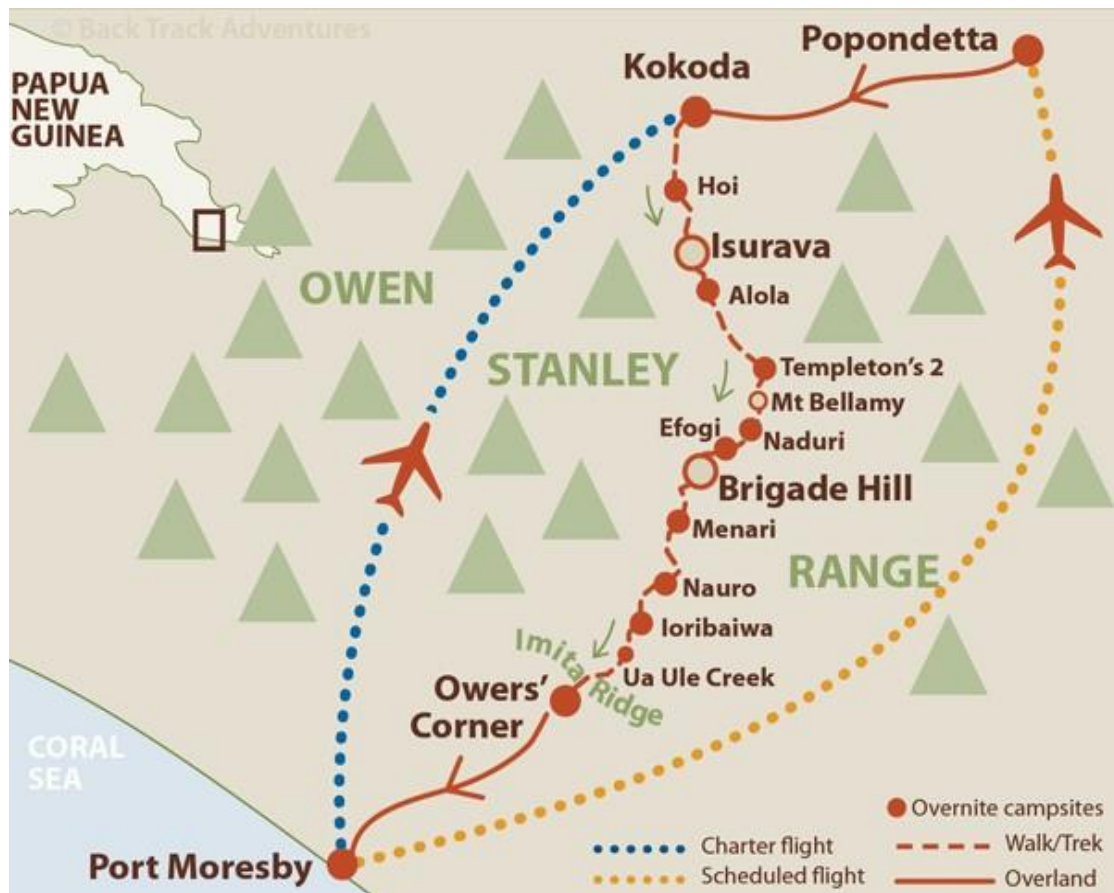
*No one could endure adversity if, while it continued, it kept the same violence its first blows had.*  
(Seneca of Rome)

#### **My beginning**

In 1970, while stationed at Murray Barracks, I had visited Mc Donald's Corner past which Australian soldiers had hiked on their way to Kokoda in 1942. By 2004, I had met the late Sgt Frank Wust (PIB & 1 NGIB) and the late Captain Stan Bisset MC (2<sup>nd</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Bn) so my interest in the Kokoda-Port Moresby Campaign was heightened. I was retiring from a demanding role in Special Education, and I was attracted to a physical challenge. I heard Aidan Grimes of the Gold Coast being interviewed on ABC radio, so I chose him as my Trek Leader because of his "track" record in PNG and his personal integrity.

While studying full-time for a career in Tourism, I prepared myself with six months exercise across the Sunshine Coast geography. Aidan's staff supplied hikers like me with travelling/hiking information, medical advice, equipment checklist, recommended reading, and an exercise program. In a break between semesters, I flew to Port Moresby with a NSW team of 17 adults

engaged in fund raising for medical equipment. I told Aidan there that my head cold and my prostate problems would not deter me from this hike.



(Map courtesy of Back Track Adventures)

### Port Moresby to Kokoda

After the flight to Popondetta airport, our team met the hired porters (called “Legends”) and we all sat in the back of two trucks for the trip into Popondetta. At our first roadside check, our local porters became serious when a Police Sergeant shouted his anger at our driver (Sam) for over-loading the truck, and leaving his Licence at home. We were permitted to continue into town where Sam had to negotiate a deal with the Police. There were many people in town sitting and talking and, as the only European visible, I got a lot of attention as I walked around the shops. After multiple conversations, I boarded our truck for the long trip to Kokoda. We were soon pulled over by a plain-clothes Policeman in a ute. Carrying a rifle, he ordered off the truck one porter who had been sitting on the tailgate. Half an hour later, we were stopped at another roadblock by a man in plain clothes with a rifle and wearing one shoulder patch marked “Police”. He questioned Sam then allowed the truck to proceed.

My prostate pain earned me a front seat where I talked to Sam and his father, a retired Government employee. They were very blunt about the “corrupt” and “violent” Police Force. They were scathing about the elected politicians who collect taxes but return nothing to the ordinary people in the villages. It was now dark, and an example of villagers’ frustration soon appeared as Sam dodged the pot-holes. We were stopped at a roadblock erected by a group of villagers demanding money from passing vehicles to help them repair the road. Sam negotiated a weekly payment for use of the road, and we were allowed to proceed to a Kokoda Guesthouse for a hot meal, welcome songs, and welcome sleep.

### **Kokoda to Isurava (9 hours)**

Next morning, we walked to the Kokoda plateau and our leader Aidan gave us a briefing about the 1942 Campaign, outside the Kokoda Museum. Following their historic War-time ambush of Japanese soldiers near Awala, the Papuan Infantry Battalion patrolled and fought valiantly around Kokoda for an extended time. PIB soldiers were later honoured for bravery here and their experienced Commander, Major Bill Watson, was awarded his DSO. Their comrades here were the Servicemen of the 39<sup>th</sup> (militia) Battalion whose new Commander, Lt Col W. T. Owen, was fatally wounded in the head by attacking Japanese soldiers. After the Museum visit, I could not walk past the Kokoda Rotary Hospital without meeting some staff.

The hike south began, and I soon felt the heat and the weight of my backpack, but I noticed a bright blue butterfly. We spread out on the 15cm-wide track but paused for smoko at Hoi village and lunch at the new Deniki village. The going got tougher with the narrow track taking us through fields of tall kunai grass, along narrow ledges on steep hillsides, all with much climbing and descending. By afternoon tea, the track was extremely steep, so I had to climb slowly. I reached the “flat” section where Aidan caught up to me and spoke of the tough conditions and enemy pressure on the 1942 soldiers, and the importance now of a positive attitude. Aidan went ahead while I tackled the steep rise to Isurava village which I reached at 5pm. (I was told days later that I looked exhausted on arrival.)

I felt great relief on reaching Isurava as I knew, from accounts of previous hikers, that success on the first day could lead to overall success. In hindsight, the first day was physically the most difficult. After cooling off under a cold-water overhead pipe, I changed into long pants/shirt and relaxed before enjoying a village meal of vegetables, choko leaves and sweet bread. About 8pm, the final hikers appeared expressing anger at their predicament but protectiveness for their mates who were suffering. I will long remember the sight of two male hikers, who had collapsed multiple times that hot afternoon, now lying on the hut floor shaking uncontrollably as if in a seizure. Fortunately, two of their mates were ambulance officers who had sustained them all day and now provided first aid during the night. (Serious consequences arise if a hiker does not follow the prior-training advice and the fluid intake advice of hike organisers.)

### **Isurava to Eora Creek (8 hours)**

After breakfast, Aidan held a meeting for all hikers with a de-brief on yesterday, very clear instructions for the day ahead, and private adjustments for the recovering hikers. With clothes still damp from yesterday but a change of synthetic socks, I set out for the short but steep walk to the Isurava Memorial.

After our rest, Aidan conducted a brief service at the Memorial with special roles for those two ambulance officers and our chaplain.



The War-time defence of Isurava is legendary in our military history. Among his many tactical decisions on the spot in 1942, Brigadier Potts selected the PIB to organise and supervise the evacuation of battle casualties, back along the Track towards Port Moresby.

*Isurava Memorial (2002) & Kokoda Valley to the north [courtesy Adventure Kokoda]*

I paused at the Pte Kingsbury Plaque and the Surgical Rock before trekking through tricky country to Alola village for lunch. After difficult creek crossings, steep inclines and high humidity, fatigue set in, so I was grateful for the Legends assistance in crossing the log bridge over Eora Creek. I was the sixth hiker to arrive at the campsite, but the Legends had a fire going and were erecting individual tents. As I cooked my pasta meal, heavy cloud settled over Eora

Creek adding to the “haunted” atmosphere of this War-time temporary hospital site. Here, in mid-1942, seriously-wounded soldiers were treated by limited medical staff, or medicated before dying, in bush facilities as the enemy advanced. Later, this was the site of bloody fighting as the Australians pushed the Japanese Army back across the Track.

### **Eora Creek to Camp 1900 (8 hours )**



*Templeton’s Crossing 2023 (courtesy of Kokoda Spirit)*

It was a steep, wet climb from Eora Creek but my gaiters deterred the leeches. Jonesy and I stopped for smoko at Templeton’s Crossing No 2 then climbed again towards the lunch site of Templeton’s Crossing No 1. Here, under a tarp and next to a fire, I dried out a bit and enjoyed a sweet black coffee with my snack food. Then, Jonesy, Alias and I headed off up a steep climb in the direction of Mt Bellamy. This was a hard section through the Kokoda “Gap” but that sweet coffee helped.

Once on this mountain ridge, the track widened to double-arms width and was mainly level. We talked and noted various plants and orchids along the top. Until then, hiking had required total concentration on the path in front of you with only brief conversation possible, otherwise you lost focus and lost balance. We descended, crossed one creek, and climbed towards our destination. I enjoyed a wash in the fast-flowing and cold creek then cooked my dinner before drying my socks at the Legends fire. I practised my Tok Pisin with Robert and Fred over a cup of tea then put on extra clothes because they warned me about a cold night ahead.

### **Camp 1900 to Efogi No 1 (5.5 hours)**



The light rain of the previous day was over, so our trio hiked in hot conditions towards the Myola turnoff. This section was so narrow that the track almost disappeared amongst the tree roots. The descent was dangerous, but a break arrived with the option to climb to a lookout.

*Left: Greg & Jonesy on a steep descent*

It was not an easy climb to the lookout, but it felt great to be free of my backpack for a while. The view was worthwhile, looking at the high mountains, possibly including Mt Victoria. We continued down towards Naduri village for an early lunch in the sun. In this more open section we could see Naduri, Kagi and Efogi No 2 in the distance. Aidan had explained that we would not hike through Kagi because the villagers had closed it to hikers, following the poor behaviour of previous hikers who had not respected village (religious) values.

At Naduri village, we enjoyed fresh fruit and safe drinking water while the Legends enjoyed the betel nut and the smoked banana leaves. As we left, the views were again great but the descent to “Main” Creek required great care. Then followed a huge climb up the mountain to Efogi No 2 village. We relished the bananas and mandarins for sale then paused for football conversations with the villagers before the steep descent to Efogi No 1 village, visible below us. There, the Guesthouse facilities were well maintained and included the luxury of pillows. We arrived at this oasis in the early afternoon, so we had time to shower, wash clothes, and rest with a warm can



of Coke. Morale after dinner was good, the stars were clearly visible, and I slept comfortably for the first time.

### **Efogi No 1 to Menari (5.5 hours)**

We departed at a comfortable 8am for the steep climb up Mission Ridge then moved on towards Brigade Hill (1415 metres). Inside this fenced precinct, Aidan gave a long briefing about this crucial battle, the many casualties, and the unmarked graves underfoot. Solemnly, we took photos of the almost 360-degree views before descending towards Menari visible in the distance. At Menari Creek everyone stopped for lunch, and many of us cooled off in the wide, deep creek. Another team of hikers was at the creek for a lunch break as they moved in the opposite direction towards Kokoda and our Sparkie met his cousin hiking with that team. Fixed to a large rock in the creek was the plaque honouring Damien Parer, the brave cameraman of “Kokoda Front Line” and other films.

We re-filled our water bottles as this water was safe to drink, climbed to a plateau, then walked parallel to the new airstrip into the village of Menari. Here, we met a War-time Carrier, Faole Becoi, the father of seven children, four of whom were still living. One of his sons, Saii, acted as a translator and I learnt that Faole had carried supplies during the War for over three years. In Tok Pisin, he showed me the scar on his left thigh from the graze of a rifle round. I also met his wife sitting quietly in the background. Before dinner, several male hikers kicked around a new soccer ball with some boys, one of whom showed great ball skills. We had carried a bag of flat soccer balls for distribution to children in villages. Some female hikers played a game of Netball with young women from the village. Those hikers were soon hot, thirsty and tired from their exertion in the tropical heat.

I preferred to watch one father kicking a soccer ball to his very young son for hours (and again the next morning). Adults here seemed to spend time and effort on their children and to take pride in them. Also, I went to visit the Rotary Medical Post which serves Menari and Nauro villages. The male nurse lived with his wife and daughter at this Post and cooked meals in the run-down kitchen hut next door. He had been asking the villagers for several years to repair the kitchen, to no avail. He came from another Province and the villagers, especially the women, had not accepted him as their Nurse.

### **Menari to Nauro (5.5 hours)**

Before leaving the village, I said thanks and goodbye to Faole. Saii stopped me to provide a piece of paper with his name and postal address. Our threesome started the daily descending and climbing but stopped at a vantage point with views to Mt Victoria before a terribly difficult descent to the Swamps. Eventually we came to the open, wide Brown River so we had to remove our boots to cross in sandals. After lunch, the climb was hot, slow and dangerous so one of the lead porters monitored our progress. There were several false crests, but we finally reached the dry steps leading up to the village of Nauro.

Here, the female hikers went down a steep path to the “shower” area first so, while the males waited, I talked to a group of children observing the hikers. I asked them about their school and invited them to sing a few songs which they did readily. After my very cold shower, Rosie our Chaplain told me sadly that she had lost her wooden cross while washing. With permission of Aidan and the children’s mother in Tok Pisin, I offered a reward to the children if they could find the cross in the washing area. Within five minutes one boy and his two mates brought the cross to me. They followed me to the Guesthouse where they gave the cross to a very happy Rosie and I gave them each a 2 Kina note.

That night I cooked my dinner in the Legends hut. I talked to the Legends about how dinner is cooked at my home and about going to restaurants. The Legends could not start cooking their vegetable meal until all hikers had finished cooking meals, no matter how slowly. As the hikers went to sleep, we could hear just hear the Nauro villagers singing hymns in their church.

Without musical instruments, they sang and harmonized very well. I recognised only one song, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”.

### **Nauro to Ua-Ule Creek (9 hours)**

The village bell, an empty gas cylinder, called the villagers awake at 4am. Another bell at 5am called them back to church. The hikers left at 7am for the long climb to the Maguli Range. I was counting the false crests as our threesome climbed and climbed and climbed. We inspected the site of a Japanese command post with the trenches and foxholes still evident. Then we were faced with a long, long descent to the Ofi Creek 600 metres below.

In the afternoon we climbed to the top of the Ioribaiwa Ridge and moved to the new Ioribaiwa village. Here, we were approached by Peter, a Councillor, who contrasted the protective action



of the Australian soldiers during the Kokoda Campaign as opposed to the savage behaviour of the Japanese soldiers. Peter said that, because of the number of War-time casualties, the villagers abandoned the original site for 10 years.

We moved downhill and started to cross and re-cross a creek nine times.

*Track log-bridge crossing (courtesy of Greg Pike, Gold Coast PNG Club)*

The mental factor started to affect me because the track had thrown everything at us that day: a difficult climb, a risky descent, awkward creek crossings, slippery dry stones, and our destination was still not in sight. Even though I had been expecting a long day, this was mentally the hardest day of the hike.

(I was in no mood to challenge the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, who said no man ever steps in the same river twice for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.) About 4pm we saw the welcome sight of smoke rising from the Legends campfire.

### **Ua-Ule Creek to Owers Corner (5 hours)**

One hiker mis-set her alarm and everyone awoke at 4am instead of 5am. There was moonlight as I changed clothes, put on boots and ate my breakfast rations. I saw the first group leave at 5am with a Legend, using their torches on the track. Many of us sat around waiting impatiently and uncomfortably for the dawn. Our trio left at 6am for the demanding climb to Imita Ridge. Although I knew this was our last day, this climb felt like the steepest climb of the whole hike. I paused at the top for breath, and Jonesy's energy chocolate, before we began the descent of the “Golden Stairs”. At one point, I lifted my eyes from the track to check where Alias was – and almost immediately lost balance.

At the Goldie River, we changed from boots to sandals and the cool water was refreshing. Knowing the finish line was not far away, I tackled the final climb slowly but the sweat poured out as we left the jungle canopy. Suddenly, the framed archway at Owers Corner appeared over the crest yet I could



*The arch at Owers Corner – ‘the finish line’*

hardly believe that I was at the finish line. It was only when I saw other hikers standing relaxed under the archway that I realised that I was truly at the finish of our 8-day hike.

After congratulations and photos, fresh sandwiches and cold drinks from Port Moresby, we boarded two trucks for the ride home through Sogeri. We stopped to pay our respects at the Bomana War Cemetery. All hikers and Legends linked forearms in a circle to recite the Ode then Aidan and I visited the graves of Lt “Butch” Bisset

and Pte. Bruce Kingsbury VC. Many casualties of the Kokoda and other Papuan conflicts are buried, or listed as missing, here in this multi-service and multi-racial cemetery. On return to our airport Hotel, we cleaned our gear well before relaxing in the pool. That night, Aidan co-ordinated a poolside ceremony of appreciation to everyone involved in the hike. (He and the Legends jointly nominated me as “man of the match”.)

### **Conclusion**

Hiking this track was far tougher than I had expected, and all hikers were grateful for the help of the porters, suitably called Legends. It appeared to me that their satisfaction came from helping someone in need; and they attentively anticipated someone’s need for help. Here was an insight into the careful evacuation of wounded soldiers by indigenous carriers in 1942, supervised by the PIB. Also, the hike demonstrated that a successful project, or a successful life, is possible with only basic possessions. I could not help noticing the patience shown by our PNG helpers, under Aidan’s guidance, as they dealt with “modern” hikers.

Our hiking group learnt personally about the hardships and sacrifices associated with crossing this track, in 1942 and today. This PNG expedition challenged us physically and mentally, revealing our spirit and inspiring us to lead better lives in the future.

Gregory J. Ivey

[To better appreciate the vital role played by the indigenous soldiers of PNG, I can recommend the War chapters of *To Find a Path, volume one*, by James Sinclair.]

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### **Editors’ afterword**

Greg’s reference to the porters as ‘legends’ in the spirit of the indigenous carriers who evacuated wounded Australian soldiers from the Kokoda Track during World War 2 evokes the legendary status of the ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’ immortalised in Sapper Bert Beros’s poem. Association members will be familiar with it, but might enjoy reading it again:

#### ***The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels***

*Many a mother in Australia,  
When the busy day is done,  
Sends a prayer to the Almighty  
For the keeping of her son,  
Asking that an Angel guide him  
And bring him safely back.*

*Now we see those prayers are answered  
On the Owen Stanley track,  
For they haven't any halos,  
Only holes slashed in the ears,*

*And with faces worked by tattoos,  
With scratch pins in their hair,  
Bringing back the wounded,  
Just as steady as a hearse,  
Using leaves to keep the rain off  
And as gentle as a nurse.*

*Slow and careful in bad places,  
On the awful mountain track,  
And the look upon their faces,  
Makes us think that Christ was black.  
Not a move to hurt the carried,  
As they treat him like a Saint,  
It's a picture worth recording,  
That an Artist's yet to paint.  
Many a lad will see his Mother,  
And the Husbands, Weans and Wives,  
Just because the Fuzzy Wuzzy  
Carried them to save their lives.*



*From mortar or machine gun fire,  
Or a chance surprise attack,  
To safety and the care of Doctors,  
At the bottom of the track.  
May the Mothers in Australia,  
When they offer up a prayer,  
Mention those impromptu Angels,  
With the Fuzzy Wuzzy hair.*

(Sapper Bert Beros served in both WW1 and WW2. He wrote this poem at 4 am one morning on the Kokoda Track after having been on stand-to. It may never have been printed but for the fact that an officer sent a copy home to his mother and she was so impressed that she had it published in the Brisbane *Courier-Mail*.)

It has only recently been pointed out that history and sentiment have remembered the carriers, but less attention, respect and gratitude have been given to the indigenous soldiers of the PIB who fought and died alongside the Australians on the Track. Their story is gradually emerging after so many years, and we would welcome input from members who can help set that balance right.

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*"Serves you right - I told you not to wear those to the beach."*



### The Not-So-Trivial Kokoda Quiz

- 1 From the south, where does the Kokoda Track officially begin?
- 2 From the south, where does it officially end?
- 3 In round figures, how long is the Track?
- 4 What is generally regarded as the half-way point along the Track?
- 5 What is the highest point on the Track?
- 6 When did the Kokoda Campaign begin?
- 7 Name one of the Australian Commanders of the Kokoda Campaign.
- 8 What was the name of the Japanese Commander of the Kokoda Campaign?
- 9 Where was the Kokoda Campaign memorial erected by the governments of Australia and PNG?
- 10 How many Australian soldiers died in the Kokoda Campaign?
- 11 How many Japanese soldiers died in the Kokoda Campaign?
- 12 In May 1942 the Japanese Navy unsuccessfully tried to attack Port Moresby. What is the battle officially called?
- 13 Having failed to take Port Moresby in their southern attack, the Japanese then launched a land attack from the north. Where did they land to launch this attack?
- 14 How close to Port Moresby did the Japanese advance before they were ordered to withdraw by their Headquarters?
- 15 According to author Patrick Lindsay, when General Blamey arrived in November 1942 at an outdoor film show for around 5,000 wounded, and soldiers in training to replace them on the Track, he was:
  - (a) Cheered
  - (b) Booed
  - (c) Interviewed by the press

**(Answers on page 16)**



Members of 1RAR about to enter the southern entrance to the Track, 2024

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### The Ansett-MAL Caribou



*VH-BFC at unknown airport [image courtesy of PNGAA FB page]*

Many post-War servicemen who moved around PNG on RAAF aircraft would be familiar with the Caribou plane. If you served in PNG between 1966 and 1968, you may have sighted the commercial Caribou shown above. The internet reveals multiple images of this aircraft but only one photo was taken in PNG (at Jackson Airport in October 1966).

Built by de Havilland in 1961 as a DHC-4, this plane was first flown in 1962. It was upgraded to DHC-4A before its sale to Ansett-Mandated Airlines Ltd on 8 May 1965. This Ansett-MAL Caribou flew widely around PNG, but its commercial potential was not achieved. DCA regulators would not permit the Caribou's reverse thrust to be taken into account when calculating its required landing distance. When this STOL capability was ruled out, this commercial Caribou did not appear to have a performance advantage over the commercial DC-3 aircraft then prevalent in PNG.

The last commercial flight in PNG of this Caribou took place on 7 January 1969 and it was then ferried back to Melbourne. The plane next saw widespread service overseas before being cancelled from the Canadian Aircraft Register in October 1986. Detailed history and photos are available at <https://www.aussieairliners.org/dhc-4/vh-bfc/vhbfc.html>

Greg Ivey

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## Tales from Vanimo 1961

by Major-General 'Hori' Howard

The mission story as told to me:

A new priest was sent to a large village which was about two days walk from Vanimo, to establish a small Mission. He was brand new to PNG. He was welcomed by the villagers who had already built him a house. But he arrived with only a small number of carriers who were carrying mainly food and was expecting a much larger number with all his needs for several months a few days later. They duly arrived but when they reached a fast-flowing river which was on the coastal side of the village they told him that they couldn't cross. They also advised him that they had only brought with them enough food for the couple of days it would take them to go back to the coast. Being a Priest, he told them that they could feed themselves from the food which had been provided for him. They were delighted to do so, but after the best part of a week they were still enjoying his food and there was no sign of the river falling.

By now being very frustrated and somewhat suspicious, he tried to walk across the river himself.



To his surprise it was only knee deep but being muddy this could not be seen. He was very angry but quickly forgave the carriers. However, he was quite short of food, so he sent one of the carriers back to Vanimo with a note which explained what had happened.

*Barracks, Wewak: photo Kevin Smith 1967-68*

The Catholics owned a light aircraft which was based in Wewak and flown by the local bishop, so a free drop of food was arranged to take place on a set date, weather permitting. On the

due day, the plane duly arrived and circled the village to let those on the ground know that there was about to be a free drop. But instead of the villagers clearing a central space, they all came out to watch. Unfortunately, one of the boxes of tinned food was not secured and the tins fell out. One struck a villager and killed him stone dead. The others were spread all over the open area, to be grabbed by the villagers who took off with them. As far as they were concerned, it was Cargo.

(I assume that the readers of this story will be familiar with the Cargo cult.)

\*



*"Let's try this one more time, soldier - where's the other shoe?!"*

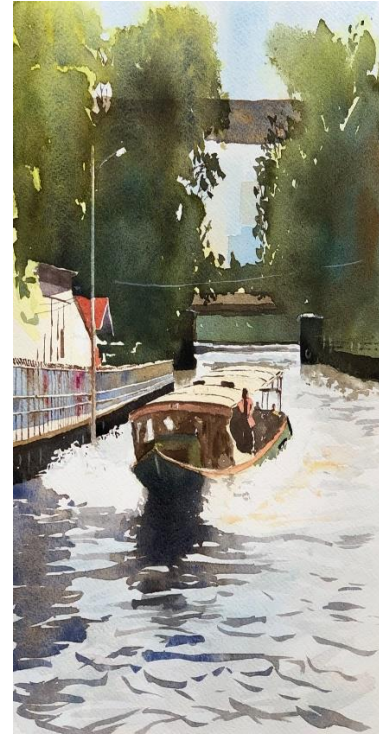


The buck stops somewhere else.

## Quiz answers

**1** Owers Corner; **2** Kokoda Village; **3** 95km; **4** Efogi village; **5** Mt Bellamy; **6** 23 July 1942; **7** Owen, Caro, Honner, Watson, Potts, Allen, Eather, etc.; **8** Maj. Gen. Tomitaro Horii; **9** Isurava; **10** 600; **11** 10, 000; **12** Battle of the Coral Sea; **13** Gona; **14** 40 km approx.; **15** (b).

\*



We had some appreciative responses to Peter Darmody's watercolours, done on his recent visit to Vietnam and Thailand in the previous newsletter. Here are two more for readers to enjoy.

Left: A boat on the Mekong River taking tourists for multiple-day trips up the river.

Right: A speedy water bus on a Bangkok canal.

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We hope you've enjoyed catching up on the news and reflecting on the Kokoda story: surely one that should be embedded in Australia's DNA. We'll continue to play our part in contributing to that.

The **next** edition will focus on another great story: one that is already there in Australia's DNA, but which also needs constant renewal and strengthening: the Anzac campaign.

We always appreciate any feedback you might like to offer on the newsletter.

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