



Armi Nius

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

Patron: Major D. D. Graham (Ret'd)

1/2025

Welcome to members

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025. We hope the year has begun well for you. This edition offers updates, interesting items from the past, some things to think about, and some contributions from fellow PNG newsletters.

In particular, we draw your attention to the recent publication by our Association Historian Peter Jesser in the Military Historical Association of Australia journal, *Sabretache*. President Greg (below) describes it as a 'milestone in our mission' of telling the largely untold story of the PIB role in the Kokoda Campaign.

Together we're keeping alive one of Australia's great stories, which is still not given the importance it deserves in our country's history. We thank Peter for his important contribution to this mission.

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From the President

Earlier this year President Greg Ivey sent a welcome to members of the Association. In it Greg referred to a number of events – some personal, some historical – that we republish here for those who may have missed them.

Birthdays

War Veteran WO "**Jock**" **Wilkinson** (PIB and 2 NGIB) of NSW turned 104 years on 2nd April.

War Veteran Sgt **Laurie Siegle** (2 NGIB) of Qld turns 100 years with a family celebration on 10 May.

Anniversaries

2025 marks the **80th** anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

2025 marks the **50th** anniversary of PNG Independence.

AGM

Our AGM will be held on 1st June when we will celebrate the **85th** anniversary of the Papuan Infantry Battalion's official formation on 1st June 1940. Details for the meeting will be issued closer to the date.

Membership

We are advertising for New Members in the DVA national newsletter & other newsletters.

With annual membership still only \$5 a year, we find that people are happy to join our Association if you ask them. You can help by asking your acquaintances interested in PNG. It's easy to join through the Membership Page on our Website www.soldierspng.com

Promotions

Early this year, two new Articles were published promoting our Association.

Our History Officer, **Peter Jesser**, had his detailed summary of the career of Major Bill Watson (PIB Commander, 1942-44) published in the Military Historical Society of Australia journal, *Sabretache*.

Our NSW Representative, **Russ Wade**, has co-authored an article about the work of our Servicemen in Training & Educating the military leaders of PNG as Independence was anticipated. This Article was requested by the widely-read *PNG Kundu* Journal and it was published in [March](#).

Communications

If you have suggestions or questions, feel free to contact your State Rep. or our National Secretary for assistance. [NSW & ACT= Russ Wade; WA=Graeme Johnson; Regional Qld=Graham Carnes; 183 Recce Sqn=Lang Kidby; PNG=Lahui Ako; National Secretary=Kev Horton].

If you would like to submit an article for the newsletter, please do so, sending it to one of the editors, whose email addresses are published in this newsletter.

All the best for 2025,

Greg Ivey (President)

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ANZAC DAY 2025

Wherever you live in Australia the Association invites you to join the commemoration of Anzac Day this year, Friday 25th April, remembering family members and the PNG Veterans. Please take some photos of the event in your area and send them to newsletter editor Norm Hunter at nrhunter@bigpond.net.au and to Greg Ivey please.

Brisbane

Thanks go to our Brisbane ANZAC Day representatives, Phil Adam and Ian Minns for their ongoing assistance. Sincere thanks to Cameron Simpson and Jason Morris, grandsons of Sgt Frank Wust, who have agreed to be our Association Banner Bearers in Brisbane this year.

For those of you who can travel to Brisbane, we look forward to seeing you, especially our New Members, at the activities listed below.

Brisbane Event: Wreath Laying Ceremony, 9.00am

We **welcome** everyone, including partners, to this short ceremony in Anzac Square at the PNG Statue near Adelaide Street. The ceremony only takes about 20 minutes and you can simply turn up without notice.

We have confirmation that the PNG Consul General, Mr Reatau Rau and wife Susan will again join our Association this year. Mr Rau intends to march with our group.

Partners and families

After the wreath laying, partners and families can meet at the Sugar & Spice Cafe, just around the corner in Adelaide Street for coffee and to watch the march.

Marchers - meet by 10.05am for 10.25 form up. (Army is first in march order this year)

We invite everyone who wishes to march to meet under our (pale blue) Association Banner in George Street (near the intersection with Charlotte Street). Information and Programs will be available from the RSL marquee in Queens Park.

Our unit is presently Number 35 in the draft order of march placed in front of the 39th Battalion Association. We then follow the usual route down Adelaide St and finish in Creek Street.

After a group photo, we plan to walk directly to the Coffee Club in Charlotte Street to re-connect with members & family. A copy of the RSL program and other information can be accessed at <https://www.rslsouthqueensland.org/anzac-day-parade/>

Lunch after the march

A lunch booking beginning at 11.30am has been made at the Coffee Club, 128 Charlotte Street between Edward and Albert streets. Thanks go to Ken Boyne, from the 2nd/14th for organizing this. We will meet with members of other kindred PNG Associations there.

Please phone Kev Horton on 0418 750189 if you are having difficulty finding our group on the day. (Look for our allocated Order of March Number 35)

I would appreciate members who intend to march and also those who are going for lunch letting me know by Easter Sunday 20th April either by email at kevhorton49@gmail.com or phoning me on 0418 750 189.

Kev Horton (Hon Secretary)

NSW & ACT

The family of WO "Jock" Wilkinson have requested that the Sydney PIB and NGIB banner be brought to Leeton NSW, so that the banner can be behind Jock and the Leeton RSL President, as they lead the March through Leeton on 25 April 2025.

President Greg Ivey and I will take the banner to Leeton on the 24th and carry the banner on Anzac Day, so that Jock's family can be with him during the March. There will be local media coverage on the Leeton march.

Should any members be interested in attending the March in Leeton, you are very welcome but please let me know.

Peter Porteous, who normally organises the Association contingent at the Sydney March, has advised that the contingent will march with the **ANGAU Unit** this year.

Russ Wade, NSW & ACT Rep.

Perth

Members are warmly invited to take part in the March.

The main march in the city commences on St George's Terrace at 0900 hours, concluding at approximately 10.30 hours dispersing on Langley Park.

Some 144 groups are marching who are supported by 18 bands of various types with the RAN Band Perth leading.

Within the groups marching will be members of the Papua New Guinea Association (WA Branch).

At the conclusion of the march, a church service will be conducted at St George's Cathedral. Anzac House, also on St George's Terrace, will be open for ship, unit & squadron reunions.

Due to the expected crowds, an adjoining street will be closed to vehicular traffic, functioning as a hospitality area.

Graeme Johnson, WA Rep.

Kokoda related 2/14th and 2/16th Battalion Association newsletters

I have received the latest newsletters from these Associations and can provide them on request, so as to minimise attachments to this email.

Greg Ivey and I have had an article on "Pathways for Papua New Guinea's Future Military Leaders 1951-75" published in the PNG Association of Australia's quarterly journal *PNG Kundu*. This may feature in the Association's next *Armi Nius* edition.

PIR exhibition at the Australian Army Infantry Museum at Singleton

Vice President Steve Beveridge and I are working with the Curator of the AAIM on the restoration of the PIR exhibition, which has been recently removed as part of the museum's program of restorations of exhibits. There will be further updates through the Association's newsletter.

Russ Wade, NSW & ACT Representative

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A Milestone Achievement

Our History Officer, Peter Jesser, has achieved a milestone for our mission of honouring the officers and soldiers who have served in PNG during the Second World War or after the war .



Peter has published an account of the life of one of the legends of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (1940 - 1946) and its Commanding Officer, **Major Bill Watson**. I was happy to assist Peter in having his article published in the highly-respected journal *Sabretache* by the Military Historical Society of Australia.

Peter's article is a success on many levels:

- a comprehensive account of this Wallaby, First World War hero, New Guinea adventurer, Battalion CO in the Second World War, finally an Australian Diplomat;
- a very detailed description of the PIB role in the Kokoda Campaign from the Officers' perspective, written by a man with military experience & insight;
- a challenge to some inaccuracies published by professional Historians;
- a credible essay based on primary sources (including Peter's father) and respected secondary sources;
- a balanced insight into the July-August period of the Kokoda Campaign which our Association can use to address the under-estimated PIB role.

Our first step is to congratulate Peter on his comprehensive research and the quality of his work. Other steps would include circulating it to key people in the Kokoda network.

In the lead-up to Anzac Day, I really hope you can find the time to read this Article because it is a signature study that will be appreciated by historians & many others.

(Email the Editors or Greg Ivey to receive a digital copy of this Bill Watson article.)

Greg Ivey

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‘The times they are a-changing’



Bob Dylan wrote those words in 1965, at a time when the world was going through troubled and disruptive times.

As Anzac Day approaches 60 years on, for many of us Dylan's words are resonating again.

There is a noticeably higher profile this year in the media and other sources about national defence, and the nature of warfare in general. This appears to be prompted by three linked events: the continuing struggle by Ukraine against the Russian invasion of 2022, the Israel-Hamas war after October 7 2023, and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in November 2024.

There is a general view among defence experts that the global balance of power is rapidly changing, as is the nature of warfare itself. They offer several reasons:

- (i) President Trump has immediately embarked on a reduced role for America in global affairs. Gone is John F. Kennedy's famous promise in his inaugural presidential address in January 1961:

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

That is now replaced by a demand from the recently-elected US President for nations to contribute much more to their own defence rather than rely on American support if they are threatened by an aggressive foreign power.

- (ii) The way the Israel-Hamas and Ukraine-Russia conflicts are being fought is a reflection on the huge technological changes that have occurred globally over



the last few years, especially the development of artificial intelligence. Where jet fighters might have been used in the past, AI guided drones and missiles are being deployed with almost equal effectiveness, and especially in the Israel-Hamas conflict technology is enabling pin-point accuracy in targeting individual enemy military personnel.

- (iii) Military intelligence is now dominated by computer power: nations' civil and military communication systems can be disrupted, false information can be deployed including to influence elections in another country, and widely used satellite information and communication sources are both widely used and vulnerable to enemy manipulation or destruction. A nation can be rendered immobile by a hacking invasion by people sitting at a desk in another country.

With democracy under threat from at least four aggressive and powerful anti-western nations, the immediate and long-term future of defence is in a state of massive change and re-thinking by political and military leaders and their advisers. How do they invest in their future defence when things are changing so rapidly around them?

Our Association's core mission is to keep alive the story of the defence of Australia as it unfolded in Papua New Guinea in the 1940s. The courage, ingenuity and resilience of the Australian, Papuan and New Guinean soldiers and civilians is one of the landmark events in Australian history. It was fought in a world away from the way the current conflicts are being fought, but there are still some common factors: troops on the ground are still needed to follow up the technological strikes, and a nation's young people need

to have such deep-seated pride in their own country that they are prepared to make the kinds of sacrifices young Australians made as they fought a better-equipped enemy on the Kokoda Track, at Milne Bay and the other battlegrounds of Papua New Guinea.

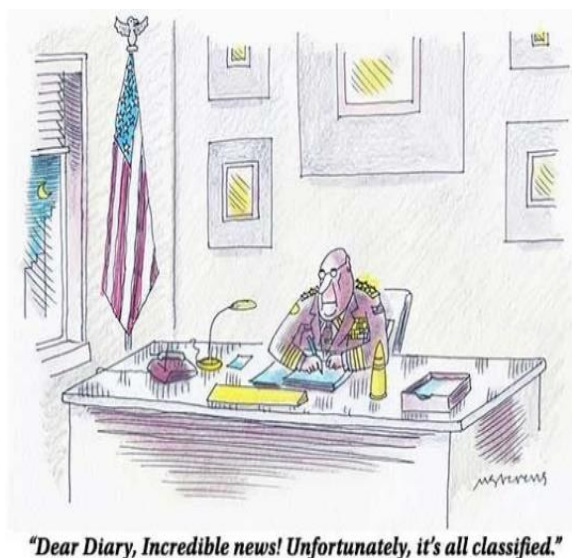
The spirit of the Anzacs was alive and well in those young men, and in those back home supporting them. It's time to ask: Is it still there?



There are implications for our society, governments, and for our education systems, including at university level, especially with many western democratic countries experiencing internal social division based more on identity of groups and individuals and on historical grievances rather than on any national sense of pride and belonging.

As Anzac Day 2025 approaches, the current uncertainty in the world, including in our region, suggests that we need to be addressing those questions. It's all the more reason for Associations like ours to continue to keep the story of the PNG campaign alive – the spirit as well as the events - especially the personal and social qualities that enabled victory against the odds in the jungles of Papua New Guinea.

Norm Hunter (Co-editor)



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Classrooms as an indicator of PNG social development

Readers are invited to send to the newsletter editors their images of military or civilian classrooms in PNG in order to reveal the range of styles and cultural attitudes to education. Here are some civilian classroom images taken in the last 50 years which prompt questions such as:

- What might be the attitude of the students and their Teachers/Instructors?
- How well resourced are the classrooms?
- Who has funded the classrooms?
- How important in providing schooling were the non-government agencies?
- Is English the language of instruction? Why?



Michael Wundul, aged 75, doing his
Year 8 exams in Chimbu Province, 2023
Ruffing)

(courtesy of Gold Coast PNG Club Gold Coast)

Greg Ivey



Rabaul secondary classroom, 1969
(courtesy of The Word in the World Norman

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Australia's last two WWII coast watchers die, aged 100 and 101

The last two World War II coast watchers, Jim Burrowes (101) and Ron "Dixie" Lee (100) passed away in Melbourne on Sunday 7th July and Monday 8th July 14 hours apart.



The courageous deeds of the legendary and secretive WWII coast watchers represent one of the most illustrious chapters in Australia's military history. Despite their losses, the coast watchers' contribution to reporting on Japanese shipping and air movements had a real strategic impact. Their finest hour was in the Guadalcanal campaign, where they reported on incoming waves of enemy aircraft, rescued the future president John F Kennedy, and launched lethal guerilla raids on the Japanese with the assistance of fearless Solomon Islanders. Their actions led Admiral "Bull" Halsey to remark: "The coast watchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific."

James Burrowes: Centennial Profile

Prior to World War II, the Royal Australian Navy detailed a former New Guinea District Officer, Lieutenant Commander Eric Feldt, to establish a network of expatriates who could covertly report on enemy movements around the coastline of New Guinea and the Solomons in time of war. In short order, he recruited planters, patrol officers and even priests for this potentially dangerous assignment. When the Japanese invaded the islands in 1942, these coast watchers undertook their mission with courage and at great personal cost. Some were beheaded, others simply disappeared, while others continued their clandestine task for months on end with the help of local villagers.

As the value of the coast watcher network became fully appreciated, servicemen from the three services joined for this most dangerous of assignments. Signaller Burrowes and Able Seaman Coder Lee were among a cohort of radio operators who provided that crucial communications link using the cumbersome AWA Teleradio, portable with the help of half a dozen local men who also risked their lives.

Jim Burrowes, born in Melbourne, served both on the north coast of New Guinea and then on the island of New Britain, where he and two fellow coast watchers reported on the Japanese stronghold of Rabaul. That town had a special meaning for him, as his older brother Bob had been in the army and was captured there in 1942. Bob lost his life when the Japanese prison ship Montevideo Maru was sunk later that year by the submarine USS Sturgeon, with the loss of over 1000 prisoners of war and civilians. Jim's twin brother Tom was a wireless air gunner in a Beaufort bomber that was lost off Rabaul in 1943.

On his website The Last Coastwatcher, Jim wrote: "As one of the coast watchers, I was also a signaller, and proud to play a key role in their operations. This was because the singular mandate of coast-watching was not to confront the enemy but

to report their movements. Hence, without a radio operator, there would not have been any coast-watching parties. I am the last signaller coast watcher to tell the history of the coast watchers. "I was lucky to be selected to be a radio operator instead of infantry. I was lucky to be replaced as the radio operator in the disastrous Hollandia infiltration party when the original guy, Jack Bunning, was ambushed by the Japanese and killed."

In later years Jim Burrowes was selected as the signaller to go on that Hollandia (now the West Papua capital, Jayapura) venture, led by Captain "Blue" Harris, but at the last minute, Bunning replaced Burrowes after recovering from sickness. "I was lucky not to be caught and killed by the Japanese while hiding in the jungle. Thirty-eight other coast watchers were killed. I was lucky to come home." For his part, Lee, born in Ulverstone, Tasmania, served in the Treasury Islands, the nearby Stirling Island, and then Finschhafen, Milne Bay and Bougainville. At the later location, he served with one of the most famous coast watchers, Lieutenant "Snowy" Rhodes, and provided some of those valuable reports of Japanese aircraft approaching Guadalcanal.

Ron "Dixie" Lee signed up as a coder with the navy aged 17. "Dixie" had joined the Royal Australian Navy as a coder at the age of 17 and was a high-spirited young rebel who got into his fair share of scrapes. He was still only 19 when he was encouraged to join the Allied Intelligence Bureau and volunteer for coast-watching duties. In 2020, he told the Australian War Memorial: "We were sent to a little island called Stirling Island in the Treasury Island group, which was just off Bougainville. "The islands were completely controlled by Japan, and we set up a little camp there. "There were three of us – an officer, a sergeant in the army, and then me, a coder from the navy. Your heart probably beats a little bit faster because you don't know what's ashore ... but I realised early on that I was immortal, so nothing frightened me. Some of our blokes were beheaded and terrible things ... But I just did my job. The fighter pilots, and tail gunners, and things; they were the brave ones."

After the war, Jim Burrowes qualified as a chartered accountant, a chartered secretary and a licensed company auditor. He joined the then-largest house-building company in Australia, A.V. Jennings Industries, as assistant to the company secretary. He was to work at Jennings for 33 years, progressively becoming executive director of the Jennings Mining and Manufacturing Groups.

After nearly five years in the navy, over half of which was as a coast watcher, Lee was discharged in early 1946. He became a successful land surveyor. In the 1970s, he hand-built a 30 foot wooden ketch but gave her up after forever chasing leaks occurring after rough weather. He then had a larger and dryer steel-hulled 45-foot ketch custom-built and sailed in her for three years through much of the South Pacific, retracing some of his wartime adventures. He was especially anxious to reach the Treasury Islands and Bougainville and, for a time, worked there as a

surveyor. It was like stepping back in time, and “Masta Dix” was reunited with many of his local wartime friends.

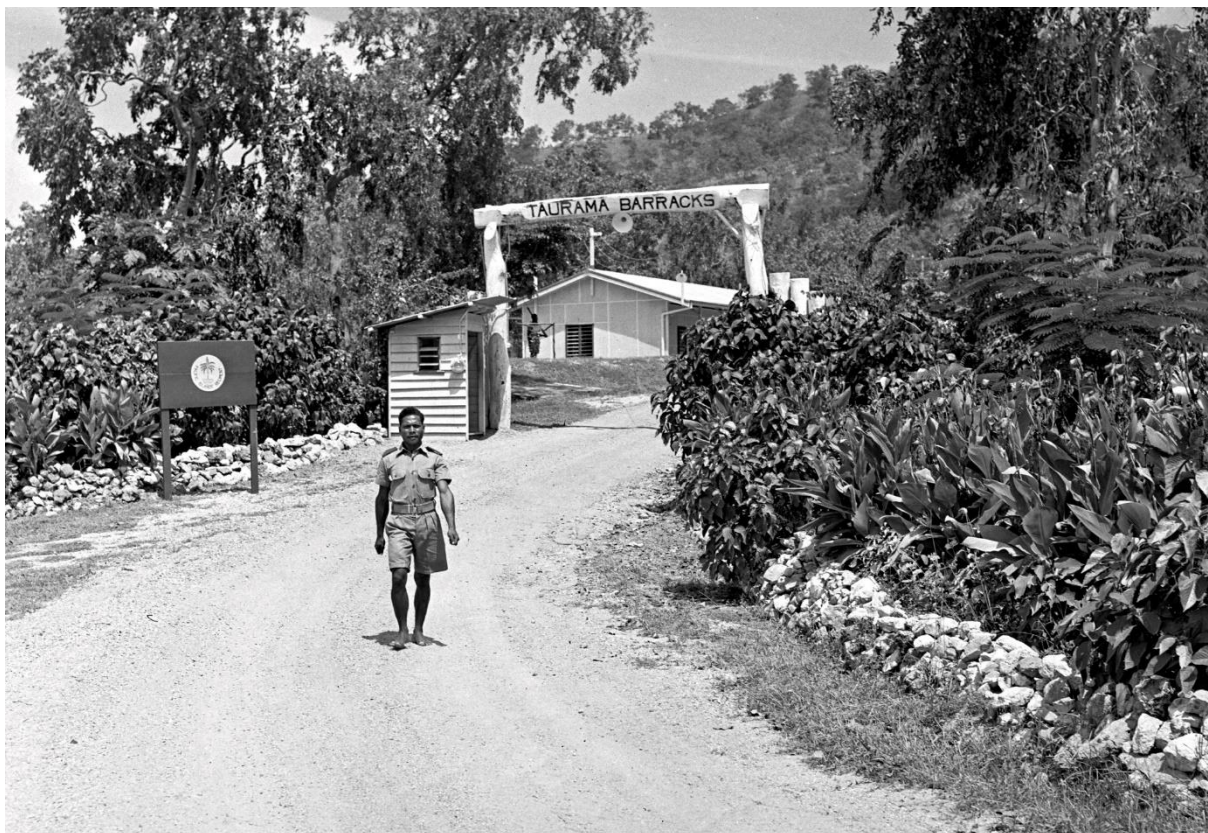
In 2015, Lee was one of a few World War II veterans selected to visit Papua New Guinea as part of a commemoration marking the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Pacific. Burrowes is survived by his wife, Beryl, four children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, while Lee is survived by his wife, Mem. He had 10 children, seventeen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The coast watchers invariably deployed to an enemy-held island as a pair, and it is fitting that Australia’s last two coast watchers joined their comrades together.

by Vice Admiral Peter Jones (Retd) The Sydney Morning Herald

(published courtesy of *Harim Tok Tok* October 2024, newsletter of the NGVR and PNGVR Ex-Members Association Inc.)

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The entrance to Taurama Barracks, Port Moresby. Photo by Cec Lynch, one of a series on PIR training taken for PIX magazine in 1956, State Library of NSW.

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Reflections on writing *The Chalkies* book

A few months ago when I opened my email I found this message:

“Thank you for your application for access to an item held by the National Archives of Australia. The following item has now been examined:

TITLE: *Defence Planning Policy - The Army in PNG - 1968/71*

LOCATION: Canberra

ACCESS STATUS: OPEN.”

The ‘date of access decision’ was 1st July 2024.

I hope some researcher can now make use of that file, because I no longer need it. You see, I must have applied for access to that item at the National Archives back when I was writing my book, *The Chalkies*. I don’t have a note of when that was, but it must have been before 2016, because that’s the year *The Chalkies* was published.

I’m pretty sure that at the time National Archives advised that the likely waiting time for a decision on access was three months. Somehow that has stretched to eight years.

It would be interesting to know whether education figured in the Federal Government’s Army policy in PNG 1968-71, especially for those of us who were posted there in those years. However, for me one of the most satisfying outcomes from my research for *The Chalkies* was pinning down how the idea of sending a ‘taskforce’ of teacher Nashos to the then Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TP&NG) originated.

It didn’t come directly from Army policy, but mainly from the foresight and initiative of two senior Army officers in 1965-66: Brigadier ‘Bunny’ Austin, Deputy Adjutant-General in Canberra, and Brigadier Ian Hunter, Head of PNG Command in Port Moresby. The Army Minister at the time of Hunter’s appointment, Malcolm Fraser, also played a part when he told the Brigadier that one of his tasks in PNG was to develop an army that would be completely loyal to the government, thereby tacitly

supporting 'education' for troops, alongside military training. Hunter himself described that order as 'the real turning point'.

At the time, official Australian Government policy was that independence for PNG was many years off – clearly some 'high-up' individuals had a different view. Those two visionaries, Hunter and Austin, hatched the plan that led to the posting of some 300 conscripted teachers to Papua and New Guinea between 1966 and 1973 to upgrade the educational qualifications of Pacific Islanders serving in the Army there. Although the Army had identified the educational need earlier, when the two officers got together, things moved fast: After preliminary talks, Austin visited TP&NG in late May and early June 1966, and the first cohort of (somewhat surprised) Nasho instructors arrived there in August that year, their sergeants' stripes still fresh on their sleeves.

Ex-Chalkie Ian Ogston had already recognised that this was something special when he published his two monographs, *Chalkies: Conscript teachers in Papua New Guinea 1970-71* (2003) and *Armi Wantoks: Conscript teachers in Papua New Guinea 1966-73* (2004). The indefatigable Terry Edwinsmith cemented the significance of the Army's venture as he single-mindedly pursued ex-Nashos across Australia to compile a list of conscripted teachers who'd been posted there with Army Education.

Another notable outcome for me when writing *The Chalkies* was to see in the survey responses from over 70 of those ex-Nashos that for many of them it was a significant learning experience, an unexpected recognition of their professional training in a different cultural environment. Sometimes the posting was positively life-changing personally and professionally. For a small number, however, even an educational posting to PNG was not sufficient to balance what they saw as being robbed of two years of their lives by National Service.

More recently, former Chalkies Max Quanchi and several of his ex-Wewak mates gave voice to what their 1966 New Guinea posting meant to them in a book, *Tales from the Sak-Sak* (2021). The reverberations have also been felt via a dedicated website, several reunions across Australia, a 'Chalkies in PNG' display at the Army

Infantry Museum, Singleton, video interviews with ex-Chalkies by the State Library of Queensland, and heavy Chalkie involvement in the Queensland -based PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR Association, including editing *Armi Nius*. In addition, Terry Edwinsmith circulates news and comments online from Chalkies across Australia and organises regular coffee mornings for S-E Queensland Chalkies. On the other hand, some Chalkies were happy to melt fully back into civilian life once they were demobbed, and to leave their Army life completely behind.

In any event, some of those post-Nasho activities will fall by the wayside as the number of active ex-Chalkies inevitably declines. However, the books and videos and personal memorabilia will remain, a continuing reminder of a small but arguably ultimately grounded contribution to the development of the Army in Papua New Guinea in the years immediately before the country achieved self-government (1973) and independence (1975).

And, who knows, some day another researcher may add to that history when they become the first to access the now-open file, *Defence Planning Policy - The Army in PNG - 1968/71*, at the National Archives in Canberra.

Darryl Dymock

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"It's Research and Development, General. They've come up with a Catch-23."



"How about if I just follow you on Twitter instead?"

Whatever happened to the PNG Army History?

Captain (later Major) Trevor McQuinn served in the RAAEC in PNG in 1961 and later in 1970 when he was asked by the Australian Army to compile a history of the PIR during the Second World War. From his base at Igam Barracks, McQuinn flew around PNG to interview surviving War soldiers to gain their view of the hostilities. (Often, a Nasho Chalkie, such as Sgt Ian Minns, was an assistant.) This work was completed in 1972, but the document was never published by the Army, much to the disappointment of McQuinn and his wife. Fortunately, the document formed the basis of the research for much of To Find a Path volume 1 (Brisbane, Boolarong, 1990) edited by M.B. Pears and written by James Sinclair.



clipping sourced by Chalkie Sgt, the late Bill Semple, Murray Barracks, 1971 to 1972)

Between 1972 and 1990, the location of the McQuinn document had been the subject of speculation. It was said by some Army officials that the detailed document was lacking in coherence and historical style and was therefore unsuitable for official publication. Nevertheless, McQuinn's written records of the soldier interviews proved invaluable to later authors and historians. So McQuinn's history was eventually acknowledged and released.

Greg Ivey*

Tales from Garry

With the recent passing of our previous Patron, Maj Gen Hori Howard AO MC ESM, I thought that as the last Australian 2LT posted to PIR I should document a few of the more amusing/interesting experiences I had in PNG over three decades.

Hopefully the following vignettes are entertaining and more importantly encourage others with PNG service to document their experiences in, as Sean Dorney put it, "the land of mercenaries, missionaries and misfits".

Garry Young

Arrival in PNG

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Bomana War Cemetery

Lest we forget

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