



PAVER RECOGNITION – KOKODA DAY – AUGUST 8 2025

Distinguished Guests, current and ex- servicemen, ladies and gentlemen and students

David Yardley was commissioned as the designer and artist for this magnificent Rotary Kokoda Wall in 2005, from an original concept by George Friend. The wall was completed and unveiled in 2008. Both of these men are to be thanked for their ongoing commitment to the project.

While we all admire the scenes depicted on the front of this structure, there is another extremely important aspect of the Wall. It consists of pavers laid behind the wall as part of the Peace Garden. Each of these pavers represents a soldier who took part in the WWII New Guinea campaigns. Pavers in capital letters represent those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Last year, for the first time, veterans who had new pavers laid were honoured as an integral part of the Kokoda Day Ceremony with four Australian and three Papua New Guinea soldiers being recognized. It is once again a pleasure to welcome the PNG Consul General, Mr Rau and his wife Susan. We also welcome Lahui Ako who advocates for the recognition of the 3 200 invaluable Papuan and New Guinea Infantry Battalions soldiers who fought as part of the Australian Army in many theatres of war in New Guinea during WWII.

This year, to be more inclusive, a separate section has been added to enable pavers to be laid to recognize and honour those who served or assisted in the War effort in the many other campaigns in New Guinea apart from Kokoda.

There are seven veterans who had pavers laid this year and each deserves a special mention. These were not just soldiers. They were young men, sons and brothers and later family men and now, our ancestors. They returned home and helped make Australia the wonderful country it is today. A special welcome goes to the descendants of these men who are with us today.

Firstly - John Marquix Charles Knox

Sergeant Knox WX10552, Enlisted on 28 December 1940. He served with the 2/16th Battalion AIF in the Middle East and in New Guinea. He was Mentioned in Dispatches (MID). Sergeant Knox is the great-grandfather of today's guest speaker, Nova Peris.

Next is Edwin Oliver Smith

Private Smith joined the CMF at 20 in 1941. He enlisted in the AIF in 1942 in Gympie, transferred to the 2/16th Battalion AIF in 1943, and embarked from Townsville to Port Moresby. He served a total of 854 days of active service in New Guinea. Private Smith had several hospital stays due to malaria. He served in Sanananda, Shaggy Ridge, and Remu Valley and was present in Borneo, for the surrender by the Japanese.

Next we are honouring three soldiers of the 39th Battalion - George Turner, whose two sons, Neil and Ian, are present today and brothers Charlie and Samuel Pyke who also have family present.

In October 1941 these three soldiers volunteered to join the 39th Militia in Melbourne and on Boxing Day sailed together on the troop ship 'Aquitania' for New Guinea, unaware of what hardships and dangers lay ahead. *You can see the image of the 'Aquitania' on the left first panel of the wall behind me.*

While we don't have time today to tell the story of each courageous soldier, we will briefly tell the story of Charlie Pyke.

In July 1942 Charlie flew to Kokoda in the first of two DC3 aircraft to help B company's forward platoons, who were surrounded and under attack by the Japanese.

Sam was on the second aircraft but was unable to land due to fog and returned to Port Moresby. It then took Sam eight days to walk to Kokoda.

With the Japanese all around and moving in for the kill, Charlie and Lt McClean under heavy machine gun and rifle fire took two grenades each and silently crawled through the jungle. When they were about 30 feet from the Japanese machine guns, they threw their first grenades, waiting for them to go off before they threw the second.

It was this action that enabled the troops to move out safely. Charlie was the first soldier of the 39th Bn to be awarded the military medal for his bravery and Doug McClean received the Military Cross, the second highest gallantry award (after the Victoria Cross) for Officers and Other Ranks.

The last two pavers laid have special significance for my family as they are for our father, Max Horton and father-in-law Harry Lamberton, who served a total of 3 032 days or 8 years 4 months active service between them during WWII.

Max Horton, spent almost 2 ½ years in New Guinea postings including Madang, Bouganville and Port Moresby. He served in Z Force and was treated for Malaria on four occasions. Like many veterans, he seldom mentioned or discussed his war service and took many years to forgive but not forget the Japanese for the horrors experienced during the war.

Finally, Harry Lamberton - Harry grew up in an orphanage in Rockhampton until the age of fourteen. He enlisted in the CMF in 1941 and transferred to the AIF in 1942 as a Lieutenant in the Australian Field Ambulance. He served in Port Moresby and also in Dutch New Guinea as part of Merauke Force. ANZAC Day was always a special day for him to remember his mates.

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

After today's formal ceremony has concluded, you are invited to take the time to explore the area behind the wall and read the names of the many brave soldiers whom the pavers represent. **Lest We Forget!**

Kev Horton (Sgt) Hon Sec. PIB NGIB HQ PIR Assn