



Armi Nius

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

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

3/2025

Welcome to Newsletter 3 for 2025.

This edition focuses on the celebrations of Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of Independence Day. Association President Greg Ivey recently attended an Independence event in Port Moresby with Committee member Lang Kidby (and Bev Kidby).

As usual we have updates, articles and memories, a quiz, and other items for your interest. Enjoy the read, and please offer your feedback if you have any thoughts to share.

Norm Hunter, Ian Ogston, Steve Beveridge – Editors

*

From the President

Yumi stap wantaim

In July 2025, the new PIR Veterans League of PNG invited some former Australian Servicemen in PNG to attend their inaugural, black-tie Regimental Dinner in Port Moresby to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of PNG Independence. Our Patron, Don Graham, was unable to attend, so I accepted this invitation as did fellow Committee Member, Lang Kidby. We sent acceptances to the Dinner organiser, (retired) Major General J. Singirok of Port Moresby, a twice-appointed Commander of the PNGDF. I then made plans to arrive in PNG one week before the Dinner in order to visit my former postings at Vanimo barracks and Moem barracks. I have provided details of those visits elsewhere in my Long Report.

Air Niugini delivered me to the suggested Ela Beach Hotel, located conveniently for the small party of Aussie Servicemen and wives attending the PIR Dinner. Before the Dinner, General Singirok arranged for the Aussie visitors to see the Bomana War Cemetery and then Owers Corner (near the Sogeri Plateau).

At Bomana, I photographed each of the PIB headstones for our website. We were escorted, during this day trip in a borrowed minibus, by three uniformed Lieutenants from 1 RPIR (Taurama Barracks) for security. The road was sealed, although narrow and twisted in the elevated areas, as far as Sogeri then corrugated but thankfully dry to McDonalds Corner and Owers Corner.



The PIR Regimental Dinner outgrew the capacity of Taurama Barracks, so the support of sponsors enabled the choice of the well-appointed APEC Haus built in 2018. President Singirok and his Committee hosted a thoughtfully-staged event attended by H.E. Sir Bob Dadae, Governor-General, and H.E. Sir Gibuna Gibbs Salika, Chief Justice.



The six-hour program paid tribute to civic and military leaders of PNG since 1975; to the 91 RPIR Servicemen killed during the Bougainville Crisis; and to outstanding Servicemen from PNG and Australia before and after Independence Day.

Left: PIB Warrior images, National Museum

It was an honour to be seated with senior Aussie (and Kiwi) officers and also to have conversations with respected former and current PNG Commanders.

I was able to present a book gift from our Association to the Governor-General and sets of pre-Independence photos to the COs of Moem and Taurama Barracks. Major Lang Kidby, others and I were each given a gift from the PIR Veterans League.

This inaugural PIR-RPIR Dinner was judged very successful by all present including our PNG Representative, Lahui Ako, and the President of the Port Moresby RSL Sub-Branch, Glenn Maitland.

Right: Greg receives a gift from PIR Veterans League



The Veterans League of PNG is now established with Vice-Regal endorsement, and we look forward to reciprocal events for our mutual benefit.

Greg Ivey

*

A Papua New Guinean's Reflection on Pride, Paradox, and Promise

by Fabian Mamare FCS UPNG, Project Manager (son of W.O. Peter Mamare, 2 PIR)



September 16, 1975 to 2025:

Fifty years. A lifetime for a person, a beginning for a nation.

I was there. At six years old, amidst the palpable electricity of the crowd at the Hubert Murray Stadium, I witnessed the fabric of our destiny change. I saw the Australian flag descend, and with a collective, heart-stopping surge of emotion, I watched the Kumul, our beautiful bird of paradise, soar for the very first time.



Left: Lowering of the Australian Flag, Hubert Murray Stadium Monday September 15th, 1975

You had to be there to feel it. It wasn't just sight; it was a flood of emotion, a profound sense of pride, a trembling hope, and the unshakeable belief that we, the people of Papua New Guinea, were

stepping into our own glorious future. That moment is seared into my memory, a defining touchstone of my life.

I am one of the few who can say they have literally witnessed the entire first 50-year journey of this nation. From that dizzying high, I have seen the spectrum of our experience. I enjoyed the golden economic times when our Kina stood shoulder-to-

shoulder with the US dollar. I felt the immense potential coursing through our young nation, rich in culture and boundless natural resources.

My journey, like our nation's, took me overseas. I had a taste of another life, the opportunity for a different citizenship. Yet, the call of home was undeniable. I chose to come back to this beloved, complicated land. It was a choice of heart over convenience, of belief over ease.

And that is why the view from here today is so bittersweet.

For I have also seen the drop. I have felt the palpable impact of short-sighted decisions that, in my view, robbed us of our trajectory toward becoming the developed economic powerhouse we were destined to be. We are a nation of unparalleled resource wealth, yet our social indicators too often place us at the bottom, still dependent on the aid of others. This is our great paradox.

It brings to mind the old Roman strategy: keep the population entertained with sports and spectacle; provide just enough to distract from the hard truths of governance. Sometimes, I fear we are living that reality. We cheer for our teams, we engage in the political theatre, while the fundamental challenges, healthcare, education, infrastructure, true economic empowerment, remain unaddressed for the many. The population struggles while a select few flourish. The truth is in our faces, yet a weary silence often prevails.

This forces a difficult question: Is our adopted Western democratic model truly 'fit for purpose' in our unique Melanesian context? Or have we merely inherited a system that we execute poorly? When the system consistently fails to deliver for the majority, is it not our sovereign right to question, to adapt, and to innovate? Perhaps it is time to courageously re-imagine a model of governance that is authentically 'our own' one that respects our traditions of community and consensus while delivering modern results.

At the end of the day, it boils down to one thing: leadership. The buck stops at the top. Visionary, selfless, and accountable leadership is the non-negotiable catalyst we have desperately needed.

I will celebrate this 50th anniversary in my own way. I will honour the pride of that six-year-old boy and the hope he held. My love for Papua New Guinea is not blind; it is clear-eyed and fierce. It is that love which fuels my belief that we can still reclaim our promise.

We have the resources, the people, and the spirit. We can yet stamp our stance as a true powerhouse of the region, not just in rhetoric, but in a reality where every citizen feels the prosperity and pride we felt fifty years ago.

The first chapter is written. The next is ours to author. Let's write a better one.

*

A rare photo capturing Independence



Association NSW member, Mark Fletcher was there on 16th September 1975 as Papua New Guinea's independence was formally declared and celebrated in Lae.

Mark has captured an historic moment, showing the Australian Flag coming down as the PNG Flag is going up. Mark comments: *"At Igam Barracks, Lae, a Tri-Service Parade was conducted for the Flag Ceremony on Independence Day. Parade music was provided by the 1st Military District Australian Army Band."*

President Greg comments that Mark's Lae photo is very rare, and potentially iconic for the people of PNG.

*

An historical artifact

Artifact: An object made or modified by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest. (Oxford Dictionary)

Most of us brought back souvenirs that we acquired during our service in Papua New Guinea. These may have been tossed into a cupboard, not forgotten, and very occasionally taken out on a whim or accident and allowing a flood of memories (usually pleasant) to flood through our minds. These are tangible reminders of an exotic and unique episode of our lives that we keep in a special place in our consciousness.

These artifacts have survived neglect, interest by children and grandchildren and most surprisingly, multiple house moves. As such, they are as special as they are important. Perhaps we have carvings, military items and assorted other objects.

With this year's celebrations of Papua New Guinea's 50th anniversary of independence, the artifact (pictured below) from my time in PNG came to mind.



I picked this up in 1970-71, some years before independence in 1975 and it demonstrates that there was considerable planning for the expected separation from Australia. In a small way, this might put to rest the notion that the country was unprepared for its coming change of status.

I note that recent commentary suggests that if PNG did not become independent in 1975, there is no doubt that under the post-Whitlam governments, independence would have come within five years.

So, this is my special 'artifact' which plays into my contemplation of this year's celebrations in the second biggest country in the South Pacific. And by the way, it is my personal belief that the people ended up with a much better choice of flag AND name for the country.

Do you agree?

Ian Ogston



*

RSL Queensland recognises several Association Members

The latest edition of *Qld RSL News* (edition 3, 2025) provided recognition for several Association Members, and we add our hearty congratulations to these former Servicemen:

- Brigadier (Retd) Graeme Loughton AM DSM MSM was acknowledged for over 30 years voluntary service as Treasurer of Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Sub Branch. Graeme served as a Platoon Commander with 1 PIR in 1958-59 and resigned from the Army in 1991.
- Major (Retd) David Melandri was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for "service to veterans and their families, and to the community of Toowoomba" in the King's Birthday Honours List. David was posted to 183 Recce Squadron in 1969-71 and 1975-76.

- Sergeant Laurie Siegle was acknowledged for his 100th birthday event at Caloundra RSL Club last May.

Laurie served with the 1st New Guinea Infantry Battalion from 1944-1946 and is the last known survivor of that Battalion. (Details about Laurie are available on our website: www.soldierspng.com)



*

80th ANNIVERSARY - VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC

RSLWA resolved to commemorate this significant event in world history by conducting a Service at the State War Memorial in Kings Park on Friday 15th August 2025. Approximately twenty WW11 veterans from all Services were guests of honour with a 101-year-old veteran reciting the ODE in full voice.



Thankfully, it was conducted in perfect Perth weather in the presence of HE, the Hon Chris Dawson AC APM, Governor of WA along with Service chiefs from HMAS Stirling, Irwin Barracks and RAAF Base Pearce.

Left: State War Memorial - Kings Park - Perth, Western Australia.

Politicians representing the Premier and Leader of the Opposition also attended along with the acting Lord Mayor, City of Perth. Wreaths were laid by all the dignitaries followed by floral tributes thoughtfully placed by members of the public. A modest number of the public attended.

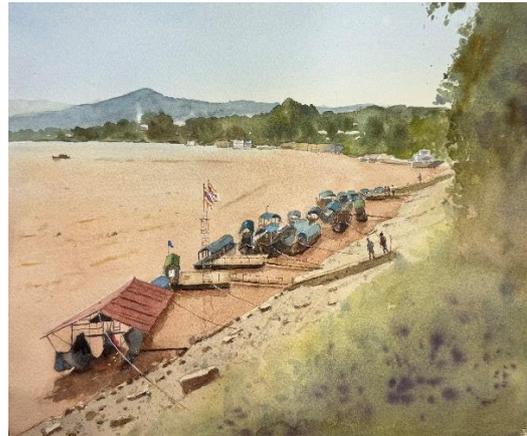
Following the Commemorative Service, there was a reception at the adjacent Fraser's State Reception Centre which overlooks Perth water and the city skyline with the Darling Range in the distance. This consisted of a light lunch and refreshments with an address by RSLWA State President Mr Duncan Anderson who emphasized the importance of the day which was well received by those present.

Graeme Johnson, WA Representative

Watercolours from Peter Darmody's travels



Mekong River, south of Ho Chi Minh City



Mekong River, looking across to Laos

*

A wet night in Naoro village

When I hiked the Kokoda Trail in 1995, we camped at Naoro (or Nauro) on the last



night. It was raining pretty solidly (the remnants of a cyclone) so a couple of us elected to roll out our swags in the hut on the right. This hut was new and, I think, intended for trekkers. So, we spent the night dry - compared to those who stuck with their tents outdoors. The sketch is from a photo I took early the next morning.

(W.O.) Peter Jesser

*

PNG Independence Quiz (and some to bring back memories)

1. Which bird of paradise species is the national bird of PNG?
2. What was the population of PNG in 1975 and the population today?
3. Which Australian Prime Minister invited Michael Somare to provide the date for PNG Independence?
4. In what year did the University of PNG produce its first graduates?
5. Who composed and wrote the National Anthem of PNG?
6. Where was the home of Susan Karike, the student who designed the national flag of PNG?
7. Which serviceman led the Flag Party on Independence Day?
8. What contribution did the Australian artist Hal Holman make to Independence Day?
9. What was the name of the political party led by Michael Somare?
10. What does 'Pangu' stand for?
11. Who was the first Governor-General of Papua New Guinea?

And four bonus questions to tap the memories of those who were there in the lead-up to Independence:

12. What was the name of the secondary school east of Moem Barracks?
13. What is the name of the Point that the Wewak civilian hospital is located on? (This was close to Liklik Johnson's favourite surfing spot!)
14. What were the names of the two competing merchandise businesses in Port Moresby at the time of Independence?
15. What was the name of the main Chinese Trade Store in Port Moresby?

(Answers on page 17)

*

Townsville VP 80 Pilgrimage, August 2025



We drove from Brisbane in our WW2 Army GMC ute and others came from as far as Sydney to be in the parade of about 50. The Jeeps carried the 5 surviving WW2 veterans in the parade.

Lang Kidby, 183 Recce Sqn Representative

Kokoda Day Service at Corinda, Brisbane

The annual Sherwood Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch commemoration of Kokoda Day was held on Sunday 10 August at the Kokoda Stone Memorial Precinct adjacent to the sub-branch. The commemoration is jointly hosted by the 39th Infantry Battalion Association (Queensland) and recognises their comrades-in-arms the 49th Battalion, the PIB, the 2/14 and 2/16 AIF Battalions.



Our Association was represented by Greg Farr and his wife, Sharon, Association President Greg Ivey, Ian Ogston and his wife Elizabeth, and Norm Hunter.

Left: Greg Farr, Greg Ivey, Ian Ogston, Norm Hunter

Greg (Farr) and Sharon again presented a book as a gift to the nearby Corinda State High School Library and laid a wreath on behalf of the Association.

Patrols with the Pacific Islands Regiment

I graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1963 and served with the Pacific Islands Regiment for three years based in Vanimo and Taurama Barracks (Port Moresby).

The Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG) at the time consisted of the Australian Territory of Papua and the League of Nations' mandate of New Guinea, both administered by the Australian government until independence in 1975. Prior to independence, Australian Army officers and some senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were posted to serve in TPNG, and I became part of that scheme. Gradually Pacific Islander officers took over the command positions on the move towards independence.

On arriving at Port Moresby's Jackson's Airport in January 1965, I was taken by Army Land Rover to the Barracks about 15 kms out of town and was immediately seen by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ken McKenzie, who told me not to unpack as I was to take the RAAF C130 Hercules resupply aircraft direct to Vanimo, the PIR outstation, later that day. Vanimo, on the northern coastline, was close to the West Irian border.

Early 1965 was quite a sensitive time politically for TPNG as the neighbouring President Sukarno of Indonesia was pursuing his policy of Confrontation or *Konfrontasi*. Between 1963 and 1966 Indonesia and Malaysia fought a small, undeclared war which came to involve troops from Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. The conflict resulted from President Sukarno's belief that the creation of the Federation of Malaysia, which became official in September 1963, represented a British attempt to maintain colonial rule behind the cloak of independence granted to its former colonial possessions in South-East Asia.

Konfrontasi was Sukarno's plan at that time to destabilise the new federation, with a view to breaking it up. He also believed that a war would help unify and consolidate his nation's many thousands of disparate islands. The actual war began when Indonesia launched a series of cross-border raids into Malaysian territory in 1963. This also sparked fears of possible Indonesian expansionism towards TPNG through its bordering neighbour, West Irian, (de facto) part of Indonesia since 1962.

The three platoons of our rifle company were tasked with patrolling the border areas.

Konfrontasi aside, one of the important peacetime roles of the PIR was to patrol remote areas to gain knowledge of the topography and of the many tribes that inhabit those lands while spreading the word that there was a central national government. In those roles the PIR had the full backing of the Administration.

I was still only aged 21 when I arrived in Vanimo and by the time I turned 22 some months later, the company had been relieved and returned to Taurama. From there we patrolled into many of the remote regions of this rugged land.

A senior Army officer had once described the experience gained from a posting to PIR:

When a young officer is reposted after 3-4 years' service with the Pacific Islands Regiment, he will have met a greater challenge of leadership than any other of his contemporaries. He will have been put to and passed more tests of initiative, flexibility, adaptability, judgment and common sense than any other young platoon commander in a regular unit in Australia. His knowledge of bushcraft and of operations in tropical areas will be better than most other young officers.

Two of my many patrols occurred in 1965-66, my recollections helped by notebooks and copies of my patrol reports. I also carried a small Kodak camera in one of my Army basic pouches attached to my belt.

David Wilkins (Capt.) PIR 1965 -1967



Along with his article, David sent a photo of the Army rugby team which won the Port Moresby Districts premiership in 1967.

Dave Wilkins (team captain) is in the front, 3rd from the left. Association Newsletter editor Norm Hunter is in the back row, 3rd from the left.

(Army also won the 1968 Port Moresby Districts premiership, this time with Norm as Captain.)

*

Sgt Major Sega Birito: memoir of a hero

The *Post Courier* of October 1976 had this remarkable obituary on the passing of Sgt. Major Sega Birito, one of PNG's great heroes whose life spanned the whole of modern PNG history from the German colonial days to Independence. We shall not see his like again.

'Sega Birito, Waria Hero: Memoir of a great Papua New Guinean' by Angus Hutton

(The author is honorary secretary of Waria sub-branch of the RSL.)



The old Sergeant-major stood straight as a ramrod as the bugle sounded its timeless song. 'Old soldiers', said the bugle, 'only fade away'. At 69, not a muscle twitched in the frame of Sgt. Major Sega Birito. The grand old man of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (Ret'd), whose life typified the highest fighting qualities of his land, was attending the 1976 Anzac Day on April 25. It was to be his last. Recently death came to claim him. But death cannot wipe away his memory. That will remain forever as an example to the brave who serve our land.

Just over 50 years ago, this young man from Sopa Village, near Garaina, set out to see the world that lay beyond the mountains of the lovely Waria Valley. Thus began a remarkable story of determination, loyalty and personal courage which will

be hard to equal.

As a child young Sega (born 1906) had seen the German patrols enter the valley before the First World War and he had seen the prospectors come and go. His father, the Luluai and other relatives, often talked far into the night of the 'old days' when they had attacked these patrols and in turn been attacked in reprisal raids and German punitive expeditions. Ion Idriess in his "Gold Dust & Ashes" vividly describes some of these incidents in chapters 9 and 10. Idriess had these stories related to him by the old people of the valley with great pride while sitting round a campfire at night.

Young Sega also eagerly listened to the stories brought back by a few adventurous youths who had joined both the German and Australian administration Police Forces between 1910 and 1926, mostly signing on at Morobe. These stories fired his imagination, and he made up his mind he would join the Police. With his father's, blessing, a good, strong body, a mind of his own and a determination to succeed - despite being totally illiterate - Sega walked over the mountains to Wau and appeared before the Kiap and demanded that he be enrolled in the Police. Even at this time in early 1926, the Warias had made a name for themselves as fearless and loyal people, both as police and as carriers for the early explorers. It was rare for a Waria hopeful to be turned down as a potential policeman and so young Sega was duly enlisted into the New Guinea Police as a constable.

He soon made a name for himself as a very tough and reliable young man; an expert in bushcraft, thus he invariably got picked for the toughest patrols into unknown country, with the early explorers and prospectors whose names are now history. Over the next 15 years Sega Birito marched thousands of miles over some of the wildest country in the world with his Kiaps helping pacify the warring tribesmen, being attacked by them, in the course of which he collected several arrow and spear wounds: making the peace and bringing law and order to the land.

He was a born leader and often his advice would be sought before some touchy situation was sorted out. He had an uncanny knack of being able to think ahead in an emergency, figure out the probable reaction of the opposition and act first. Even after his retirement, the writer often used to discuss matters with Old Sega, as he was fondly known, and take his advice. He served throughout the Highlands in newly opened Patrol Posts as

well as in the main centres. He also served in Madang, Wewak, Rabaul, and several areas in Bougainville. In Wewak he had Sergeant Ludwig Somare as his NCO.

Years later when the Prime Minister, Michael Somare, visited Garaina, Old Segga recounted to him how he remembered him as a baby. "You used to cry a lot," said salty Segga. "Your father used to detail me to go and entertain you and make you shut up." He added, with a twinkle in his eye, that he could probably still do it, if it became necessary. The Prime Minister shook with mirth.

At the outbreak of World War 2, Segga was on leave from Bougainville and thinking of getting married. This was not to be, as he was hauled into Police HQ with other outstanding young men to receive special training as scouts for the Armed Forces and to assist that fearless band of men, the Coast Watchers. His intimate knowledge of Bougainville made his selection for work in that area a foregone conclusion. He went south for training, in Brisbane, Sydney and later in Melbourne. There he was "grabbed" by the Americans and inducted into the US Navy as a member of "M" Force. He visited New Zealand and Fiji and was at the landings at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. In the Tulagi action he received a Japanese bullet through the ear. This was his only complaint against the Americans; they sewed it up crooked, thus spoiling his good looks. The overlapped ends can be seen in the photograph.

Segga was later in action at Buin and Torokina. He often was put ashore by rubber dingy from a submarine with a few soldiers. Off they would go behind the Japanese lines, making contact with friendly natives, scouting out the Japanese strength, resupplying the Coast Watchers and escaping by sea a few days later. In all these adventures not a man was lost, though they took a considerable toll on the enemy, and had a few narrow escapes. Once he spent an entire night up a tree under which a Jap patrol was encamped, only escaping after the patrol moved off early the next day. He added with glee later that he followed them and managed to pick off two of them to pay for his sleepless night, before clearing out.

During one of these patrols, he located a village strongly occupied by enemy troops. Waiting until dark he crawled about under the houses to pinpoint the enemy. He reported this information to the Americans, who returned with a combat patrol led by Segga. They attacked the village and wiped out the enemy. On a later reconnaissance, Segga located a hostile camp which he attacked single handed and killed all 14 Japanese with one burst from his Bren gun. For this action he was awarded the US Bronze Star medal, the only Papua New Guinean to win an American decoration. This information is taken from his citation which also refers to his distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement in the Solomon Islands in September 1944. Segga was invested with the decoration by General Douglas MacArthur at Wau, in the presence of a band of proud Warias.

After leaving "M" force, and his **attachment to the NGIB**, he served with ANGAU and finally returned to the police. Promoted to Sergeant, he went to Sydney with the NG police contingent for the Victory Parade, and on his return married the girl of his choice, Piera Geava of Sopa Village. He was selected to go to London for the Queen's Coronation, but at the last minute he became ill with pneumonia and could not make it. It was a bitter disappointment to him; however, he was to meet the Queen 20 years later during her visit to PNG in 1973.

Sgt. Sega continued serving in the police in various centres all over PNG including his old stamping ground of Bougainville. He was awarded the Police Medal for Loyal Service. His final posting before his retirement was at Lae police barracks. In 1965 he retired, after 39 years' service, to his home village. By this time, he had six children. Sega Birito went straight into village affairs and was elected a Councillor for his area when the Waria Local Government Council was formed in 1967. Always an advocate of roads, he supervised many of the Council road projects for the benefit of his people. His village was always a show place. When Old Sega said jump, everyone jumped. There was no argument - he was a man to be reckoned with. In 1968 he was a founder member of the Waria Sub-branch of the Returned Services League of Australia, the first all indigenous sub-branch of the RSL. He was a very active member and staunch supporter of ANZAC Day and never missed a parade.

At the Return to Lae Celebrations in September 1968, the 25th anniversary of the recapture of Lae, he marched alongside Mr. L. Hurrell, MC, at the head of the Returned Servicemen. The parade was led by Sgt. C. Turner, the first man into Lae on its recapture, who returned specially for the event. Since his retirement Sega had four more children.

After a three-year term as Councillor, he did not seek re-election, saying a younger man should take his place. He confined his activities to gardening and, despite his age, was as strong as an ox. I remember once, a Council Clerk who had been on metho went berserk and terrorised Sopa village with a bush knife. Old Sega calmly went up to him at considerable risk, disarmed him and held him in a vice-like grip until villagers came to lend a hand and turn the man over to police. He was commended for his bravery by the OIC of the station, at the later court hearing.

In 1973, he received a visit from Colonel Douglas Hubbard, the Director of the Admiral Nimitz Centre, Fredericksburg, Texas, USA, who interviewed him for a special audio-visual exhibit at the Centre. This involved taking several hundred photographs while Sega recounted his experiences, which I translated later into English on tape.

He also "starred" in a film made by the RSL on its role in PNG. His four eldest children were put through High School under the financial assistance provided by the RSL Jubilee Fund. His eldest daughter was a trained Welfare Assistant, who worked with the Council and is now married to a Patrol Officer at Tambul and presented the old soldier with three grandchildren. His eldest son is a Sub-Inspector of police at Konedobu. His second daughter works as head of the overseas section in the Bank of NSW in Goroka, and his second son is undergoing training as a Corrective Institutions Officer at Bomana. The others are at school or home. The youngest boy is just three years old.

In August this year Sega Birito complained of pains in his side, and a visit to a specialist at Angau Hospital confirmed his worst fears: the old man had terminal cancer of the liver. He asked to be discharged as he wanted to die at home amongst his family and friends. Other Doctors agreed his case was inoperable. Three days before his death his wits were as sharp as ever and he told me about his wartime patrols in Bougainville. During the conversation I was able to follow the routes on a recently acquired map of the area. His naming of villages, creeks and mountains was faultless.

He died peacefully on 22 September 1976, at the age of 70. His funeral, spread over two days with full Police and RSL honours that were provided by his fellow comrades, was a solemn affair with some 1,000 persons attending. The service was conducted in the Lutheran Church at Sopa, and his coffin was draped with the PNG flag and the Australian flag that he had served so faithfully for so long. On top, amongst the profusion of floral tributes, were his battered old Police beret and his magnificent array of medals. All but one of his children were able to attend the Last Rites, and a bugle sounded the Last Post at sunset. Thus was one of the Waria's greatest heroes and longest serving policemen laid to rest. A chapter in PNG history was closed, but his memory will remain. He was loved by everyone, and he had no enemies.

I feel privileged to have known Sega Birito for 13 years and his passing has left a gap in my life. Our sympathy goes out to his widow and, children; Josie, Auro, Linda, Jack, Naru, Rubeh, Amos, Eero, Marta and young William.

*

Military books in preparation

PNG author, and Association Committee Member, Lahui Ako is making progress on the writing of two new military biographies. Lahui (pictured centre) became well-known with the publication in 2012 of his biography of Lance Sergeant Ben Moide CBE from the Papuan Infantry Battalion. This landmark publication introduced a PNG soldier perspective on the War in his homeland. Titled "*Nameless Warriors: The Ben Moide Story*", this book is now out of print, but copies may be available on the Internet. A review of that book is held on our website.



One of the new books will explore the military and political career of Brigadier Edward Ramu Diro, born in 1943, (pictured right) the first PNGDF Commander, 1975-1981. Lahui's other biography will detail the career of Commodore Peter Ilau, born in 1959, (pictured

left) who was the tenth PNGDF Commander, serving from 2001 to 2009. These books will meet a growing interest among PNG Servicemen in their military history and also be of interest to Australian Service members.

Greg Ivey

*

Quiz answers

1. Raggiana bird of paradise, also known as the 'Kumul'
2. 1975- under 3 million people; 2025 – about 11 million people
3. Gough Whitlam
4. 1970
5. Police Chief Inspector Thomas Shacklady
6. Yule Island (half way between Port Moresby and Kerema)
7. PIR Warrant Officer George Aibo MBE
8. He designed the National Emblem, comprising a bird of paradise over a traditional spear and a kundu drum.
9. Pangu Pati
10. Papua and New Guinea Union
11. Sir John Guise (who served as a Sergeant in ANGAU during World War 2)

Bonus questions' answers

12. Brandi Secondary School
13. Boram Point
14. Steamships & Burns Philp (BP)
15. Luke Poy Wi (affectionately known by some as Luke Warm Pie)

*



National Parliament building (1984), Waigani



Bomana War Cemetery, 2025 (courtesy of Greg Pike)

*

