



Armi Nius

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

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

1/2026

From the editors

Welcome to the first edition of *Armi Nius* for 2026. It won't be long till Australia's most sacred day is here and we gather in our respective places to remember and express our gratitude to so many on Anzac Day. Details for the Brisbane marches will follow.

In this edition we have some truly amazing stories to share, also inviting readers to think about issues that remain important. One is the nature of war in the modern age, addressed in Ian Ogston's article. As we write, the United States and Israel have mounted a sustained attack on the Iranian regime, and the nature of modern warfare is being acted out before our eyes.

The timeless wisdom told to regular soldiers and young national servicemen in the 1960s and 70s, many of whom would serve in combat in Vietnam, is that no matter how powerful air strikes, bombing, artillery and technology are, ultimately the battle would only be won when the Infantry went in on the ground. As 21st century technology including drone warfare is unleashed by both sides in the Middle East, that wisdom is being put to the test right now.

Russ Wade reports on an important lecture about the 1917 Battle of Beersheba, Lang Kidby writes about his presence at Vanuatu's independence from Britain and France; Dave Wiilkins records a patrol he led from 1PIR in 1966 as a 21 year-old lieutenant, during which they encountered two tribes of cannibals; Norm Hunter shares his experience of organisational culture in two Army bases in the 1960s, and Kev Horton and Steve Beveridge update us on the inspiring way the vandalism and theft of the Broadbeach Kokoda Wall plaque has evolved into an uplifting story.

In a special piece, Diana Thorp writes about the till-now mostly unrecognised but hugely influential role played by young Australian women based in secret locations around Australia during World War 2, intercepting and sharing intelligence that informed Allied military strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Thorp calls these young women the 'new Anzacs'.

Enjoy reading the newsletter, and please offer any feedback that you feel can contribute to the quality of what we produce. (Feedback to: nrhunter@bigpond.net.au)

Norm Hunter (editor), Ian Ogston and Steve Beveridge (co-editors)

From the President

I'm delighted to welcome all Association members to our news and activities for 2026.

Our primary goal is to promote the cooperative and heroic work carried out by Servicemen in the defence of PNG from 1940 to 1975 and ADF personnel in PNG after 1975. Our objective for 2026 is to offer events/activities in keeping with our goals and members' interests; and to recruit new members from former Servicemen & our family.

In 2026, we celebrate the Australian Army's 125th anniversary (formation 1st March 1901) and the modern PIR's 75th anniversary (re-formation 11 March 1951). The links between the ADF and the PNGDF grow stronger each month, lessening their 1975 separation. Of course, tourism, sport, and the arts are also playing a constructive role, broadening the ties of 140 years between our people. I invite you to join this momentum of closer connection with PNG through attending our events, writing about your experiences in PNG, or following PNG posts on social media. Further on in this newsletter, you will read about the diverse activities of our members as they identify with this Australia-PNG bond, along with some fascinating stories from pre-independence.

We continue to be inspired by the service of our two War veterans living on the east coast: WO "Jock" Wilkinson (PIB & NGIB) of New South Wales approaching his 105th birthday in early April, and Sgt. Laurie Siegle (NGIB) of Queensland, turning 101 in early May.

In this busy world, I greatly appreciate your membership and ongoing contributions. I look forward to your support for our New Members drive, and your participation in our annual Commemoration Services.

Greg Ivey (President)

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Anzac Day 2026

Wherever you live in Australia the Association invites you to join the commemoration of Anzac Day this year, Saturday, 25th April. Please take some photos of the event in your area and send them to our newsletter editor, Norm Hunter at nrhunter@bigpond.net.au . Thanks go to our Brisbane Anzac Day representatives, Phil Adam and Ian Minns for their assistance this year.

As our number of former Servicemen marching is declining, we would appreciate it if you can make it, especially as this year is the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the Pacific Islands Regiment. We welcome anyone who wishes to use the Jeep option instead of walking. Just tell me if you prefer a Jeep this year.

Brisbane Event: Wreath Laying Ceremony, 9.00am

We welcome everyone including partners, to this short event in Anzac Square at the Kokoda Sculpture near Adelaide Street. The ceremony only takes about 20 minutes and you can even turn up without notice. (More details about the speakers later.)

Partners and family members

After the Wreath Laying, partners and family can meet at the "Sugar & Spice Cafe", just around the corner in Adelaide Street for coffee and to watch the march.

March route

*Our unit is presently in **Group 5 Section F number 51**. We invite everyone who wishes to march to meet under our (pale blue) Association Banner and to **form up by 10.30** along George Street in the vicinity of Charlotte Street. We then follow the usual route down Adelaide Street. After a group photo, we plan to walk directly to the Coffee Club in Charlotte Street to re-connect with family.*

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, where we gathered last year. Thanks go to 2/14th Battalion for organizing bookings this year. We will meet with members of other Kokoda Associations there.

Please phone Kev Horton on **0418 750 189** if you are having difficulty finding our group on the day. (Look for our allocated Order of March **Number 51**). I would appreciate members who intend to march and also those who are going for lunch letting me know by **Sunday 19th April** either by email at kevhorton49@gmail.com or phoning me on 0418 750 189.

Kev Horton (Hon Secretary)

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Update on the Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall desecration

In late August 2025, a large bronze plaque along with brass lettering commemorating approximately 3850 indigenous Papuan and New Guinea soldiers and the approximately 500 Australian Officers and NCO's who led them in PNG in WWII to help repulse the Japanese army, were ripped from Kokoda Memorial Wall in the Cascade Gardens, Broadbeach and sold as scrap metal. Three plaques were also taken from the nearby Korean War Memorial.

The PIB & NGIB plaque was not for the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' who did a wonderful job as carriers and helping return wounded soldiers from the Kokoda Track. It was for the little recognized PNG soldiers who fought as part of the Australian army and were known as 'Barefoot Warriors' by the Australians and 'Green Shadows' by the Japanese.



Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall- front view

The Association thanks the Gold Coast City Council for generously covering the cost of replacing the vandalised PIB & NGIB Kokoda Wall plaque with a new one, and also repairing the damaged lettering behind the Wall, both at considerable expense. The Korean plaques have also been replaced. Very sincere thanks also go to Matt Lynch, the worker at Sims Metal in Nerang, who contacted our Association with the photo of the suspiciously damaged plaque after it was tendered for sale as scrap metal.



The damaged, bent-double 60cm by 80cm, 27.5 kg bronze plaque from the Kokoda Wall (left) which was sold as scrap metal, was returned to me by the police via Memorial Wall trustee George Friend.

After initial attempts by Ian and Brian Wust (sons of Past President of our Association, the late Sgt Frank Wust PIB) to straighten the damaged plaque (which led to it snapping in half) they persisted and have done a remarkable job of restoring the plaque.

The restored PIB and NGIB plaque was officially handed over to Paul Mitrovich, curator of the Australian Army Infantry Museum (AAIM) at

Singleton in a ceremony on 27 January. It will become an important part of the permanent PNG section in the Museum. Thanks go to Association Vice President, Steve Beveridge for co-ordinating the handover and arranging for the Singleton news media to be present. Also in attendance were Garry Screen, New South Wales and

South Australia Rep Russ Wade, Sue Screen, Sue Beveridge, Lindy Horton and myself.

The Queensland Police Service are continuing to pursue the alleged offenders and hope to make arrests soon as an arrest warrant has been issued. The media gave good coverage of the vandalism in the lead up to Remembrance Day and Council has installed CCTV near the memorials to help prevent future occurrences.

On a positive note, the invaluable role of the Papuan Infantry Battalion and New Guinea Infantry Battalions in WWII will be brought to many more people with the restored Plaque on display in the permanent PNG section at the AAIM later this year.

(Kev Horton)

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Presentation of the Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall Plaque to the Australian Army Infantry Museum, Singleton, 27 January 2026

Our secretary, vice-president, and NSW Rep, Russ Wade, delivered the following address at the presentation of the restored Plaque to the museum:

Everyone has heard of the invaluable work that the “Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels” did in assisting the war effort in Papua and New Guinea during WWII. They were responsible for saving many Australian soldiers’ lives.

However very little is known by many veterans and ‘the man in the street’ about the 3850 Indigenous Papuan and New Guinea soldiers who fought alongside approximately 500 Australian troops as members of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) and the New Guinea Infantry Battalions (NGIB).



On June 24, 1942, HQ and C Company of the PIB, consisting of four Officers and two NCOs together with 70 Papuan Soldiers, left Port Moresby moving to the Kokoda-Awala area. In conjunction with the 39th Battalion they became Maroubra Force. The PIB was responsible for the first ambush of the Japanese Army in the Kokoda campaign.

L to R: Steve & Sue Beveridge, Garry & Sue Screen; Kev & Lindy Horton; Russ Wade

On 23 July 1942 Lt Chalk, Lt Wort and WO2 McWatters with 35 men from PIB took up an ambush position east of Awala. Their instruction from MAJ Watson (CO PIB) was ‘You will engage the enemy’. Corporal Meta first reported the approaching Japanese. This party then attacked with .303 rifles, mindful they

would not be able to match the weapons the Japanese would be carrying. The burst of fire took the enemy by surprise, causing numerous casualties. As expected, the enemy retaliated with machine gun and mortar fire. After this contact, PIB forces withdrew (rapidly) towards Awala.

This was the first time PIB forces attacked enemy land forces.

These often-barefoot soldiers, with the exception of the Milne Bay campaign in Eastern Papua, fought with Australian troops in every campaign in PNG including New Britain and Bougainville. They provided 'behind the lines' intelligence of the land, the local people and enemy movements, apart from causing many casualties amongst the enemy. Their skills helped enable the Australian troops to eventually gain the upper hand.

By the end of the campaigns the number of PIB and NGIB soldiers killed or wounded, although significant, was small in relation to the number of Japanese they killed or wounded. The number of Papuan and New Guinea soldiers who served in the conflict was relatively small in comparison to the Australian and Americans, but their role in scouting and patrolling, often attached to far larger formations or in support of Allied intelligence, filled an important role out of proportion to their size.



The PIB and NGIB battalions are estimated to have killed in excess of 2000 Japanese soldiers during the operations they were involved in. Such was the effectiveness of the PIB & NGIB that they became known as the Ryokuin or 'Green Shadows' by the Japanese due to their ability to fade into and appear from the jungle unexpectedly, with the soldiers becoming noted for their ferocity and tenacity.

L to R: Kev Horton; Russ Wade; Garry Screen; Steve Beveridge with Queensland Banner

'Moving silently in the jungle, inflicting casualties on us – then gone, like green shadows' - (These words were written in the diary of a Japanese officer killed in the bitter fighting in PNG.) Despite initial disapproval from some prominent settlers prior to the war, the Papuan and New Guinean soldiers also came to be thought of highly by many senior Australian officers who considered them "..... fighters skilled in stealth and surprise attack, men whose knowledge of the bush and experience in tribal warfare could advance the Allied cause." The average age of these Papuan men mainly recruited from the Royal Papuan Constabulary was 19.

The PIB & NGIB indigenous troops deserve the highest respect for the crucial role they and their fellow Aussie diggers, from 1942 onwards, played in saving Australia from the Japanese forces.

It is important that indigenous Papuan and New Guinea soldiers continue to be recognized, especially on Anzac Day, along with their Australian comrades. Awards and decorations received by members of the PIB and NGIB in the period July 22, 1942 to August 15, 1945 were:

<i>Distinguished Service Order DSO</i>	1
<i>Military Cross MC</i>	6
<i>Distinguished Conduct Medal DCM</i>	3
<i>Military Medal MM</i>	20
<i>Mentioned in Dispatches MID</i>	10
<i>US Legion of Merit</i>	1
<i>George Medal</i>	2

Kev Horton, Secretary; Steve Beveridge, Vice President; Russ Wade, NSW & SA Rep.

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The Battle of Beersheba, 1917: Historical lecture



This article is based on Professor Mesut Uyar's lecture at the Anzac Memorial Hyde Park on Saturday 7 March 2026 on the subject of the Battle of Beersheba 1917 and the role of the British Infantry Divisions in the preparatory fighting to the Australian Light Horse charge.

Left: Prof. Mesut Uyar (Antalya Bilim University, Turkey)

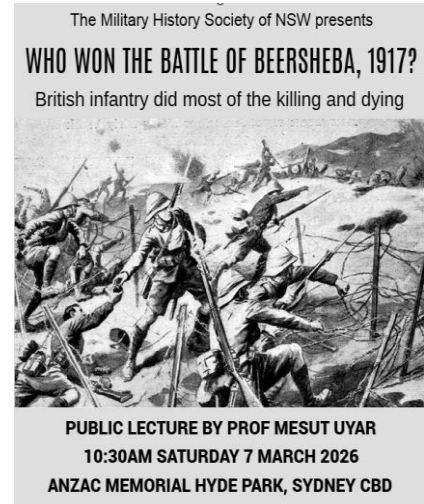
With the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, and the disturbing use of technology-based misinformation, it is timely to reflect on how we have promoted the mythology of massed cavalry charges and distorted the true history of this battle. We have subtly engaged in misinformation both in the Beersheba battle and the first landings at Gallipoli, where the Australians were opposed by 80 riflemen and not massed machine guns, which were not brought forward until 4.30 that afternoon. I found this from my own visit in 2012 and confirmed it last year with Professor Uyar.

Firstly and emphatically, Professor Uyar dispelled recent interpretations that the Jews were engaged with the Light Horse in the charge on Beersheba. He showed pictures of the Israeli Prime Minister and Prime Minister Turnbull laying wreaths together and of Light Horse re-enactors carrying a Star of David flag alongside the Australian flag. In fact, because the Ottoman Empire embraced Jerusalem, Jewish people fought in Ottoman uniforms.

Professor Uyar then summarised the British failings in the Middle East, with two assaults on Gaza both being defeated by the Ottomans. British Generals planned a frontal assault by British Territorial units, with massive preparatory artillery bombardments and then a Light Horse assault. The objectives were to capture the

wells at Beersheba to provide water for the British advance. The British forces had a substantial numerical advantage over the Ottomans.

The initial bombardment damaged the Ottoman defences, but not the barbed wire obstacles, requiring a second bombardment, which generated an enormous dust cloud, blinding views of the objective. The artillery failed to neutralise the Ottoman artillery, which then dropped shells on the assaulting infantry. There was no counter-battery fire plan. The infantry assault eventually overcame the defences, but the three divisions failed to reorganise and exploit the objective and capture the wells, which the Ottomans planned to poison, before retreating.



The lack of infantry reorganisation held up the Light Horse charge, which had to be concluded by last light. Chauvel's senior officers pressed for the attack and it went ahead. Fortunately, Ottoman engineers had been sent to the frontal defences and were not available to destroy the wells, which were captured intact.

Professor Uyar's lecture was well received by an almost full auditorium.

Russ Wade, NSW & SA Representative

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75th Anniversary of the establishment of the modern PNG Army



On 11 March a small group gathered in Brisbane at the Gallery beneath the Eternal Flame to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the modern PNG Army. The group were honoured with a surprise visit from Brisbane Lord Mayor, Adrian Schrinner, who accepted an invitation from Major Quinlivan shortly before the gathering.

(L to R) Kevin Smith, Dr Darryl Dymock, Greg Ivey (Association President), Right Hon. Adrian Schrinner, Jian & Laurence Quinlivan, Norm Hunter, George Friend (39th Bn), Dr John Worthington

After the gathering the group enjoyed lunch together at the Grand Central Hotel.



Anniversary Parades were held in PNG at 2 RPIR Wewak, 1 RPIR Taurama, Murray Barracks, Goldie River and Igam Barracks. At 2 RPIR the regiment received the new King's Colour and a new Regimental Colour in a special parade on 11 March attended by the Governor-General and the PNGDF Commander.

Photo from the office of the PNG Governor-General

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Trooping the colours at 1 RPIR, Taurama Barracks

The Royal Pacific Islands Regiment (RPIR) marked its 75th anniversary with the Trooping of the Regimental Colours yesterday, commemorating the regiment's continuity since it was re-formed in 1951.

Deputy Chief of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, Brigadier General Opa Lari, thanked members of the media for covering the significant event, describing it as an important moment in the regiment's history.



Brigadier General Opa explained that the Trooping of the Colours is a long-standing military tradition carried out on special occasions, particularly on the regiment's birthday.

He said the Regimental Colours may also be displayed when dignitaries visit the unit or when foreign army generals visit the regiment. However, the full trooping ceremony is conducted only on the regiment's birthday.

(Photo & text courtesy PNG Haus Bung news)

The Deputy Chief said the regiment holds two colours: The King's Colour and the Regimental Colour.

He explained that the King's Colour is only trooped when a member of the royal family is present on parade or when a representative of the sovereign, normally the Governor-General, is in attendance.

Because the sovereign's representative was not present at the anniversary celebration at 1 RPIR, only the Regimental Colour was trooped.

Brigadier General Opa also highlighted that the regiment received new colours from the Duke of Edinburgh last year. He said this year's ceremony marks the first time the colours have been trooped on the regiment's birthday since they were received.

He said the King's Colour is a rare privilege granted to regiments that have distinguished themselves in battles or conflicts, reflecting long-standing Commonwealth military traditions.

Brigadier General Opa noted that members of the British royal family are traditionally appointed as Colonel-in-Chief of certain regiments. Up until the reign of His Majesty King Charles III, Prince Charles held the honorary title of Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Pacific Islands Regiment.

He said it is not yet clear who will inherit that title.

Meanwhile, the Regimental Colour carries the battle honours of the unit. Brigadier General Opa said the honours recognize the contributions of the Papuan Infantry Battalion and the New Guinea Infantry Battalions during the Second World War.

He said the battles and campaigns in which they fought successfully are inscribed on the Regimental Colour.

Currently, ten battle honours are displayed on the colour.

Brigadier General Opa added that new battle honours could be added in the future if the 1st Battalion or the 2nd Battalion is deployed in an active campaign and achieves success in those operations.

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75th anniversary of the commencement of modern National Service

2026 marks the 75th anniversary of the commencement of the 1951 National Service Scheme. On 14 February this milestone was commemorated with a national commemorative service in the Great Hall at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra on National Servicemen's Day, honouring the more than 280,000 Australian men who were called up for national service in the 1951–1959 and 1965–1972 schemes.



National servicemen or 'Nashos' were an integral part of Australia's defence forces in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.

National servicemen, also known as 'Nashos', were an integral part of our armed forces during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, serving in Australia, Borneo, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam and in the waters off the Korean peninsula. Whether their service included deployment overseas, or on home soil, each and every national serviceman contributed to the defence of our nation, and we acknowledge their dedication to duty and commitment to serve.

On National Servicemen's Day, 14 February, veterans, families and community members came together and attended the national commemorative service in Canberra. The service was broadcast live on ABC iView for those unable to attend in person.

We invite you to honour the service and sacrifice of national servicemen in a way that is personal to you. A unique way you can share in the commemorative spirit is through a personal reflection on the **Wall of Remembrance**. The 'Wall' is a living, evolving, community-led tribute for all Australians to share a reflection or memory of a loved one connected to the Australian Defence Force. We invite you to share yours. For more information, you can visit dva.gov.au/Nashos75

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PIR Tie wanted!

Does anyone know how I can purchase a PIR tie? (dark green colour with gold, palm tree symbols). I have an Education Corps tie but would especially like to wear a PIR tie when I represent the Association at formal events as Vice President. Greg Ivey was kind enough to lend me his PIR tie for the recent event at the Infantry Museum in January, but I would like to get hold of a PIR tie for my own use.

Steve Beveridge (Association Vice President) Email: steve.b@internode.on.net

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Because of our shared history of connection with the military, I would expect we would have a close interest in the present world of things 'military'. I would propose consequently that the following article may be of some interest and takes us into a new place of thinking about the world that we were once most familiar with – the future of armies and conflict.

Philosophers lead the way in this area, and below are the thoughts of one philosopher, Yuval Noah Harari.



I would also suggest that his writing might help us understand more completely the nature of current conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Most interestingly, at least for some of us, was his belief that in the future, armies would no longer need the mass conscription of earlier wars. Those Nashos caught up in conscription – particularly those who served in the Infantry - would look upon this with their own thoughts and assessments – and perhaps relief!!

Armies and Conflict in the Future

Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow (2015) by Yuval Noah Harari

“... In the twenty-first century, the majority of both men and women might lose their economic and military value. Gone is the mass conscription of the two world wars. The most advanced armies of the twenty first century rely far more on cutting-edge technology. Instead of limitless cannon fodder, countries now need only small numbers of highly trained soldiers, even smaller numbers of special forces super warriors and a handful of experts who know how to produce and use sophisticated technology. Hi-tech forces ‘manned’ by pilotless drones and cyber-worms are replacing the mass armies of the twentieth century, and generals delegate more and more critical decisions to algorithms.

Aside from their unpredictability and their susceptibility to fear, hunger and fatigue, flesh and blood soldiers think and move on an increasingly irrelevant timescale. From the days of Nebuchadnezzar to those of Saddam Hussein, despite myriad technological improvements, war was waged on an organic timetable. Discussions lasted for hours, battles took days and wars dragged on for years. Cyber wars, however, may just last a few minutes.

When a lieutenant on a shift at a cyber-command notices something odd going on, she picks up the phone to call her superior, who immediately alerts the White House. Alas, by the time the president reaches for his red handset, the war has already been lost. Within seconds a sufficiently sophisticated cyber strike has shut down the US power grid, wrecked US flight control centres, caused numerous industrial accidents in nuclear power plants and chemical installations, disrupted the police, army and intelligence communication networks – and wiped out financial records so that trillions of dollars simply vanish without a trace and nobody know who owns what. The only thing curbing public hysteria is that, with the internet, television and radio down, people will not be aware of the full magnitude of the disaster.” (pp 358-361)

(**Homo Deus**: from Latin "Homo" meaning man or human and "Deus" from Latin meaning God – translated: “human gods”)

Do readers have any thoughts on this article that they might like to share? If so send them to the editor and we 'll publish them in the next newsletter.

Ian Ogston (co-editor)

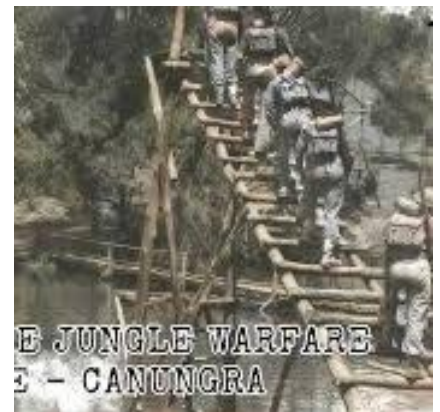
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The establishment of the Jungle Warfare Training Centre, Canungra Qld

The Need

In the Second World War, the Australian Army faced significant challenges in adapting to jungle warfare, a drastically different environment from the desert warfare they had previously experienced.

The Canungra Jungle Training Centre evolved from an earlier institution, the Independent Company Training School, which had been based outside of Foster in East Gippsland. The terrain and climate of Victoria were not representative of the tropical environments Australian soldiers would face in the Southwest Pacific, and this spurred the decision in October 1942 to move to Canungra in south-east Queensland. It was a crucial step in ensuring that Australian soldiers would be adequately prepared for jungle combat.



Evolution of the Centre



The appointment of Brigadier Irving (pictured left) as Director of Military Training at Land Headquarters (LHQ) played a significant role in the development of the training program. Canungra was not just a single training facility but rather a combination of several specialized schools, including an LHQ Tactical School for officers, a Reinforcement Training Centre for individual soldiers, and an Independent Company Training School.

This comprehensive approach ensured that soldiers were trained not only in individual soldier skills but also in platoon and company-level operations. The centre quickly became a corner-stone of the Australian Army's preparation for jungle warfare. The curriculum and training regimens were continuously refined, based on feedback from the battlefield. For example, early reports from officers and soldiers in New Guinea emphasized the importance of training in actual jungle conditions to prevent troops from being 'dominated by their environment.'

Early Challenges

Many of the initial instructors were deemed unfit for the rigours of jungle warfare training, leading to significant turnover in the instructional staff. Over time the army managed to deploy younger, more experienced officers who had served in jungle campaigns like Kokoda. This enabled the officers to get a respite from combat whilst sharing their jungle experience with the trainees.

By April 1943, Canungra had become an effective training ground, with over 1,400 soldiers under training at any given time. By mid-1944, the centre was training between 4,000 and 5,000 men, a testament to its importance in preparing Australian forces for the challenges of jungle warfare

Legacy and Impact

The Jungle Training Centre at Canungra played a critical role in ensuring the success of Australian troops in the South-West Pacific. Its comprehensive training programs, based on real battlefield experiences and constantly updated to reflect the latest tactical developments, made Australian soldiers some of the best-prepared jungle fighters of the war.

Right: Troops training at Canungra Jungle Training Centre, 1943
(Photo courtesy Australian War Memorial)



The lessons learned stretched further to other units around Australia, passing on the knowledge and skills developed at Canungra, ensuring that even those who could not attend the training centre directly benefited from its expertise.

(Adapted from an article in *Harim Tok Tok* Vol.1 February 2026 – with thanks)

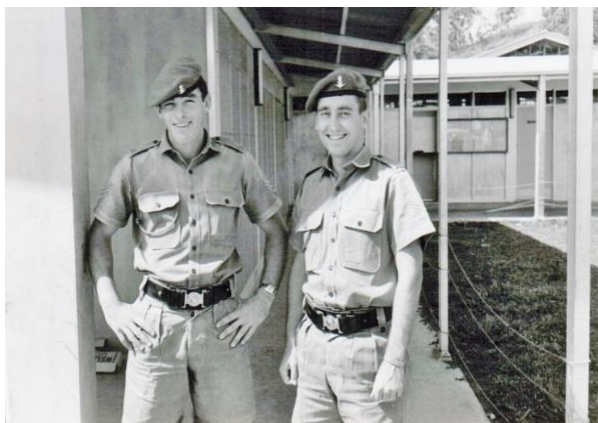
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Leadership and the Power of Trust

Trust matters. Trust comes from being part of a culture or organisation with a common set of values and beliefs. Trust is maintained when the values and beliefs are actively managed. (Simon Sinek)

I had an early inkling of the power of trust in leadership and decision-making during my time in the armed forces, though I was too young at the time to fully understand how important that experience would be.

In 1967 and '68, during the Vietnam War years, I was conscripted into National Service and spent two years in the Australian Army. After six months' training, it was my good fortune to be posted to the Education Section of the 1st Pacific Islands Regiment (1 PIR) in Papua New Guinea: the almost all-indigenous infantry battalion based at Taurama Barracks near Port Moresby.



Australia was sponsoring Papua New Guinea to nationhood through the United Nations Organisation Trusteeship Council, and that included responsibility for training the armed forces.

Left: Sgts Norm Hunter & John Gibson, 1 PIR 1968

Part of that training was an education program, taught almost exclusively by young teachers like me, conscripted into National Service. They called us the 'Chalkies'.

In those two years I became familiar with the culture of the Australian Army, finding more subtleties and nuances than appear on the surface. While it is essentially a top-down command system with structures to support that, I found that the culture differed significantly from one battalion to another, depending on the leadership approach of key people. In the two different postings I experienced – Singleton in New South Wales and Taurama, Port Moresby, in Papua New Guinea – this was strongly apparent.

Singleton had an authoritarian, unquestioning, at times brutal culture, faithfully implemented by many – though not all – people of rank, driven largely by external motivation based on positional authority. As a member of the battalion rugby team, which comprised mostly regular soldiers and officers, I picked up that the battalion was not a happy place, and morale was quite low.

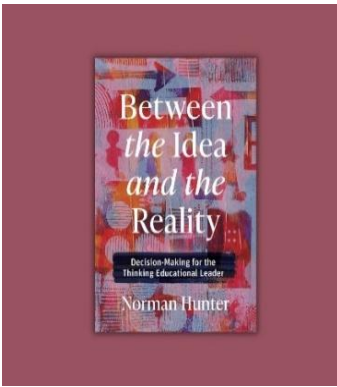
Six months later, in the 1st Pacific Islands Regiment, despite the same systems and structures, the culture was vibrant and uplifting, with widespread trust bestowed on people by their superiors, including on young, inexperienced national service teachers. Like Singleton, it became clear to me that this culture was driven by people in key positions in the regiment, and that this was why morale was high in 1 PIR. (One of the company commanders, Major Michael Jeffery, went on to be Governor-General of Australia.)

My response to this 1 PIR organisational culture as a 21-year-old teacher was to be highly motivated and committed to my work and be accountable for it. It also aroused the thought in my mind that I could lead. In 1968 I was elected captain of the battalion rugby team, despite the team containing some high-ranking officers. At training and on the playing field they deferred to me. Back at the regiment, I deferred to them. All this was unspoken: it just appeared to happen quite naturally.



Right: 1968 Port Moresby Districts Rugby Grand Final. (Army 13-Moripi 12)

What I didn't understand at the time was that this came from the top, and it was deliberate. It didn't just happen.



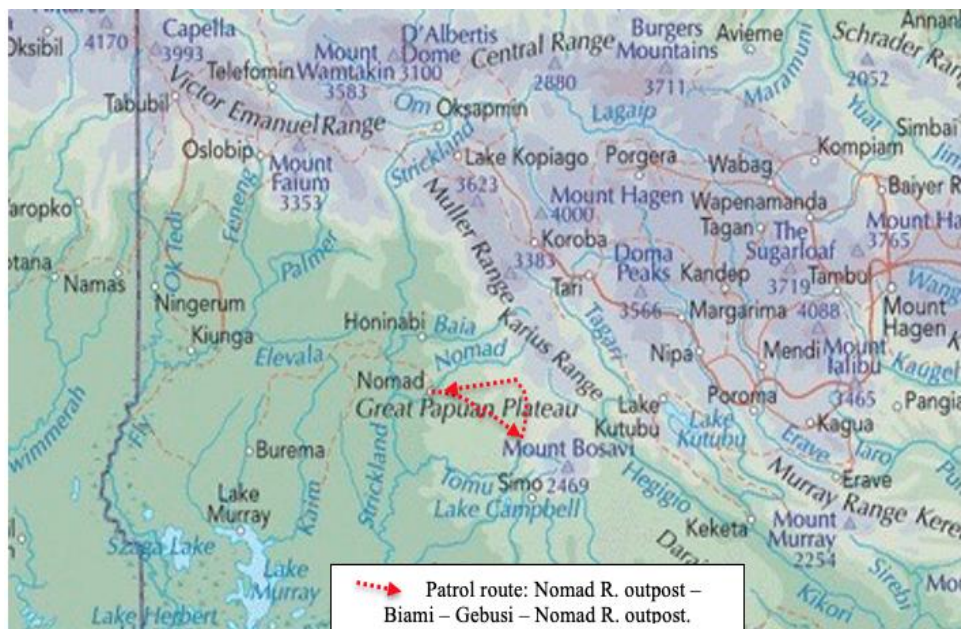
That cultural experience is something I've taken with me throughout my life, especially in my years as a high school principal. It was only later that I fully understood how powerfully the culture of 1PIR was grounded in the network of trust and respect embedded by those in leadership roles, and how that multiplied and generated internal motivation and commitment throughout the regiment to the deeper purpose of our work. The structure and systems were the same in both battalions: it was the culture that drove the levels of motivation and commitment.

(This is an excerpt from *Between the Idea and the Reality* (Amba Press, Melbourne), by Norm Hunter. The book received the Australian Council for Educational Leaders' National Hedley Beare Award for Educational Writing, 2025.)

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'Don't go there. They will eat you': A 1PIR patrol, 1966

So remote are some of the tribes in Papua New Guinea that modern man rarely contacted them, such that their ancient traditions continued to prevail. Witchcraft was one such tradition, cannibalism another: one that I encountered during a patrol in the remote north-eastern corner of Western District near the foothills of the massive Southern Highlands cordillera.



In 1966 C Company 1 PIR flew by C130 Hercules into the Nomad River Patrol Post. Australian patrol officers (*kiaps*) manned these isolated outstations, a lonely life, occasionally leading to psychological and alcohol issues.

At Nomad River however, the patrol officer was the very sane, sober and married John Kelly, who warmly welcomed this expatriate company, particularly Major Fred Albrecht who remained there for much of the time with CHQ and its radio operator as C Company's communications base.

Right: A Biami meri and pikinini

My patrol from there was into the Biami area and beyond. Usually, it was a prohibited-access zone because of the danger from these so-called primitive and aggressive tribes who at that time still practised cannibalism. My patrol received special government clearance to enter.



For these reasons, extra care had to be taken. John Kelly briefed me on the dangers and also provided me with a Nomad River native policeman and another two locals to assist with translation of the different languages to be encountered during my patrol. On the second day of walking through the dense jungle, we located a narrow track leading in the correct south-east direction necessary to locate the Biami tribe.

As part of our Army training, and because of the potential danger, my patrol followed the track in silence, well spread out in typical infantry formation to reduce vulnerability from ambush; the Kiap had informed me earlier that this was a real possibility from these aggressive tribes.

Some hours later we suspected we were being shadowed to our flanks in the thick scrub. I dispatched reconnaissance patrols to check, and indeed they detected signs of parallel movement to ours, such as overturned leaves and broken twigs where a few people had walked. No one was seen, however.

Remaining vigilant, we continued on and after several hours emerged from the jungle into a large clearing, at least the size of a rugby field. Centrally located was a single long house: thatched roof of sago leaves and split bamboo walls to ground level and measuring about 60 by 20 metres. It was eerily deserted, inside and out, with not a person to be seen anywhere.

After I had posted sentries, my patrol rested in the shade of the long house and brewed up, having been briefed by me that no one was to enter the building and to stay alert. All the troops had 60 rounds of live ammunition but just the CSM (WO2 Samuga) and I had our weapons at 'action' if required, preferably to frighten not to maim.

We conversed through a series of languages from one *ples tok* (local language) to another, then into Motu and finally into Pidgin, which I could speak

Several minutes later, from the jungle fringe, appeared some *meri* and *pikinini* (women and small children), but no men. The women were semi-naked, just wearing grass skirts, some with drab tapa bark capes fastened to rear tufts of thick, tight fuzzy hair.

The front three-quarters of the head was shaven. After talking with these women and children for a short time (using the interpreters), we noticed the warriors emerging from the surrounding jungle shadows. They approached from all around us, with bows and arrows strained at the ready. The expression wasn't used then but I think 'Be alert not

alarmed' may not have completely covered our situation. I reminded my men to remain calm and not make any sudden moves.



As the warriors advanced towards us, they slowly released the tension on their bowstrings as it became apparent we were not aggressive. They had sent their women and children ahead to test the water, all the time having each of us covered. They told us that one false move and their swarm of deadly arrows would have been released.

Left: Lt Wilkins and Biami warriors. Note the long house with its bamboo and timber walls to ground level. A native policeman has the white hat and an interpreter is shown with the dark tunic and red belt.

Some of these aggressive and suspicious warriors wore just a small piece of bark hung over their genitalia, a possum fur headband, tight bicep armbands, bamboo rope around each forearm and a short cylinder of bamboo through the nasal septum. Often their skin was unclean and scaly.

The men, women and particularly the piccaninnies were fascinated by my white skin, all crowding and wanting to touch me. Was it testing the meat content for their next meal? I asked. No, they laughed, I was the first white man they had ever seen. This was not to say that white men had not been to this remote Biami village previously in early PNG history; it was just that, in their lifetime, I was the first they had laid eyes on.

After a couple of hours talking, trading (nails, mirrors, beads, razor blades) and resting we prepared to move on. They asked which way we were headed. I said we were going to Gebusi over the distant hills. The warrior with the possum headband (in the photograph above right) immediately offered some interesting advice:

Don't go there. They will eat you.

Though conscious of this warning we nevertheless departed and eventually arrived at our new destination where there was a process of reception similar to that in Biami. When asked where we had come from, we answered '*Biami*' at which they showed their amazement, exclaiming:

And they didn't eat you?

My writing this is testimony to my not making their cooking pot.

Upon returning to Nomad Patrol Post I asked John Kelly if he had any recent records involving cannibal behaviour. As the local government administrator, chief of police, prosecutor and magistrate, all tied up into one, he was able to provide a description from court proceedings of a deadly raid upon another tribe. I made a note of it:

Cannibalism. (A description following a deadly raid upon another tribe)

After the victims have been slain, they are picked up and carried with all possible haste to the nearest creek. Not a moment must be lost. With a few swift cuts of the bamboo knife through the stomach the bodies are halved. The head and

legs are pulled backwards, the spinal cord snaps. A few more swift cuts with the knife and the legs are separated.

Already someone has snatched up a leg and thrown it across his shoulder. If there is no more time the head, with chest and arms still attached, is filled into a string bag and carried off. But preferably the head is detached, sawed off. A rope is threaded through the nasal septum (through the bamboo nose piece) and then with much delight the triumphant victor swings the hapless head over his shoulder and carries it off.

The whole business takes only seconds. The blood is washed into the creek and they all take to their heels. Now triumphant it would be disastrous to be caught weighted down with their trophies.

Death and the Corpse.

I was also able to copy the following note from the Kiap's logbook describing the process following the death of a warrior:

.... When a person dies, and especially an adult male, he is laid out on the floor of the communal house. The women mourners gather around it, shrouded in their dismal tapa capes.

Right: A mortuary platform, Nomad River Region

For the next week or longer they keep up a continual wail whilst the corpse swells and the body fluids and greases seep out. The women occasionally caress the body and transfer some of the grease to their own skin. The hair is removed and apparently buried.



After approximately the 7th day the men prepare a mortuary platform. It is slightly elevated about 6 feet off the ground. A further platform is built around it so that after the body is placed in state, the women may climb to it and continue to weep over it.

The body is now left to decompose under the weather. The dead person's belongings, ornaments, and bundles of food are brought to the platform and laid at his feet.

As the body decays the bones become bleached by the sun and are stacked in small heaps. Still the women climb up the platform and weep over him.

When the skull is further bleached it may be put into a string bag and hung from the ceiling of the communal house.

Conclusion

This and the other two patrols published in previous editions of *Armi Nius* were just some of my patrols while serving in PNG, where the many journeys into the wilds of

this rugged and untamed land, although arduous and dangerous in parts, were always exhilarating, challenging and stimulating.

For a young officer in his early 20s it was indeed a wonderfully exciting 'Boy's Own Annual' adventure.

(David Wilkins was an infantry graduate from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, arriving in TPNG as a lieutenant and later promoted to captain. His battalion commanding officers there were Lieutenant Colonels Ken McKenzie and Bruce Hearn



MC. His company commanders were Majors Ian Throssell, Fred Albrecht and Michael Jeffery (later the Governor General of Australia). While in TPNG Wilkins captained the PIR/Army cricket and rugby teams and along with three others from PIR (Major Harry Lovelock, Captain Colin Hickton and Private Konde Kup) was selected for the PNG national rugby side that won the gold medal at the 1966 2nd South Pacific Games in Noumea. In

1969-70. Captain Wilkins served with 5RAR in the Vietnam War, initially as the battalion adjutant then as a rifle company commander.)

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Code of Silence – How Australian Women Helped Win the War – Speaker: Diana Thorp

This is the compelling and as-yet-untold story of the Australian women whose secret work helped to end World War II. Many swore they would keep their covert roles hidden, even from their families. Eighty years later, their intriguing stories are starting to emerge.

Code of Silence
How Australian Women Helped Win the War
Speaker: Diana Thorp

MHHV Zoom Speaker Event
Wednesday 18 February 2026 7:00PM-8:00PM

**MILITARY HISTORY
SPEAKER PROGRAM**

As World War II climbed to its crescendo in the Asia-Pacific, the Australian government called in a new weapon: women. Within this female arsenal was a top-secret group focused on signals intelligence.

These young women, many just teens, were soon dotted across Australia, working in discreet locations – from an outback bunker disguised as a farmhouse to a Melbourne apartment block, from the garage of a Brisbane manor to a Perth girls' school. As war inched closer to home, they became our secret weapon, intercepting enemy messages and passing intelligence between local networks and allies across the globe, from Bletchley Park to the United States and across the Asia-Pacific.

Some information was so sensitive it was burned to ensure its security. Their covert work helped the Allies win the pivotal battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, and plot the assassination of the Japanese commander behind the Pearl Harbour bombings.

When war ended, the women rejoiced. Demobilised and reminded of their oaths of secrecy, they returned to civilian lives. Some followed careers, others married and raised families. Their service remained hidden – until recently.

This is not just an extraordinary war story, but a coming-of-age tale for the nation and its women. It brings to life a new Anzac, neither male nor bloodied from battle. It is time to write these remarkable women back into our history, where they belong.

(Diana Thorp has worked for The Australian, including its weekend magazine, and The Times in London. She has studied Australian history, with a focus on gender, at Macquarie University, and ancient Egyptian literature at Monash University. After lecturing in journalism for many years, her passion for history inspired her to become a teacher, and she works at a Melbourne girls' school.)

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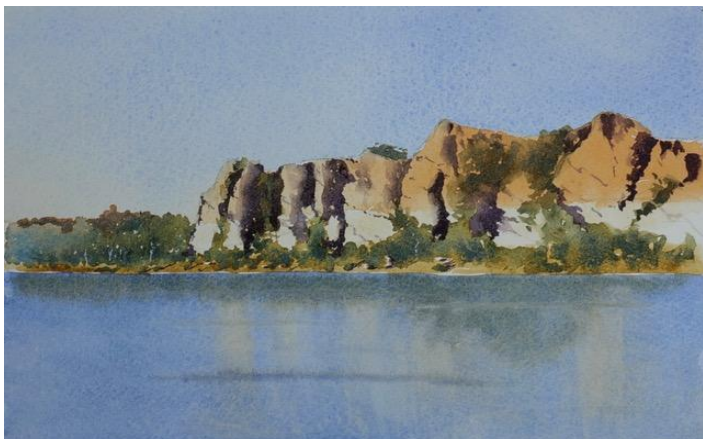
Watercolours by Nasho 'Chalkie' Peter Darmody



India Gate, New Delhi



'Old Smokey' - Cooma to Sydney train



Kimberley scene

Memories of the Vanuatu War 1980



At Port Moresby during the Welcome Home Parade for PNGDF Kumul Force, October 1980. Left to right: Maj Lang Kidby Detachment Commander, Flt Lt Jack Fanderlinden RAAF DC3 Flight Commander, Capt Peniel Kakasek PNGDF DC3 Pilot, and (unnamed) Flt Ldt RAAF Engineering Officer.

During 1980, as Ops Officer/21C of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, Air Transport Squadron, I had the pleasure of commanding the air element of the force sent to Vanuatu to suppress the rebel forces attempting to disrupt an orderly transition to Independence from the combined French/British colonial government. Our detachment of two DC 3s and one Nomad with supporting ground crews arrived about a week before independence in order to participate in the celebrations. We were then to support a full battalion plus two companies of the PNGDF in military operations.

At this time, a battalion of Royal Marines with pasty white legs sticking out from their Bombay Bloomers, sat on the airfield at Espiritu Santo, merely keeping it open and unwilling to take any action against the reasonably well-organised rebel force which controlled the island. They looked across the runway at a battalion of French Foreign Legion Paras with their crew cuts and tight camouflage uniforms. The political situation was such that fighting between these two groups was more likely than against the rebels.

The ridiculous system of government that existed in the New Hebrides of joint control by Britain and France led to a build-up of friction among the local population. Two Police Forces, two school systems, two hospitals. The British, naturally, had developed control of the Public Service while the French were dominant in the

commercial area such as plantations. It was the French-leaning planters who were aiding the rebels to resist a smooth transition to independence. The large Independence celebrations were to be attended by military contingents from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, PNG and others. The stars of the big parade were, of course, the Royal Marines and the Foreign Legion. Discussions, more involved than any arbitration court hearing, were undertaken. The French refused to march to a British band, the British refused to march to a French band, and they both refused to march to a neutral Fijian band. They did agree to have exactly 200 troops each on parade.

I went down to have a look at the dress rehearsal and saw the Marines march briskly on to "The British Grenadier". Simultaneously from the other side of the parade ground, so neither team would be first, came the Foreign Legion initially to a bugle band then reverted to their very impressive and intimidating silent 3/4 pace, slapping their thighs with each step.

Right: PNGDF DC3s and Nomad at airfield, Port Vila August 1980.



Just as "right dress" had been performed twice by respective RSM's (they could not agree to have one parade commander) a cry went up from the French colonel, who

was co-commander of the parade. This was followed by the two RSM's changing sides and doing a head count of the opposition. The British had sneaked on an extra man! The British RSM rushed over to a poor private soldier, obviously picked at random from the ranks, and began a face-saving tirade against the innocent kid for having crept on parade unauthorized. French-1, British-0.

Early next morning, on the day of the Parade, aircrews met for the formation planning and briefing. Present were a French Marine Major in charge of four large Puma helicopters, a British RAF Wing Commander leading three C-130 Hercules and myself with the two DC3s and the Nomad. An Australian RAAF Orion was to join in for the flypast but would be coming from Australia and returning without landing.

Much discussion followed between the French and the British about who would be first, who would be lowest etc. The bidding reached treetop height without resolving the leadership so a simultaneous overhead time 500 feet apart was agreed upon. The French got the bottom level only because the helicopters could climb out of the amphitheatre of the parade ground at such a low level better than the C-130s.

I went out to the airfield to brief the captains of the DC3s – Captain Peniel Kakasek, a PNG pilot was put safely at number one. Flight Lieutenant Jack Fanderlinden, our RAAF PNGDF Flight Commander, was positioned abreast of him while I took up a place in the Nomad tucked up between the two DC3s doing the radio work. We had not been involved in the altitude auction and were set at 1,000 feet and, of course, bringing up the rear.

A racetrack holding pattern was set up over a nearby bay, out of sight of the spectators. Only to be expected, there was both a British and French pilot stationed at the parade

ground with separate radios, on the same frequency, calling the parade timings for us. Both controllers were giving commentary in their own language with maximum use of jargon and slang.

The Pumas were holding at 500 feet, the Hercules with the Australian Orion attached were at 750 feet and the Nomad/DC 3 combination at 1,000 feet. From my vantage point I could see both lower teams jockeying for position and cutting the corner to keep each other covered like an Americas Cup yacht race. As we turned onto the outbound leg of the pattern I looked up and saw that the Pumas had climbed to our level and were coming straight towards us. With still two minutes to go to commence run-in, the onrushing Pumas pushed their noses down and rocketed underneath us.

A cry went up from the Hercules, who were travelling in the opposite direction, "Those bloody Frogs have got away!" Suddenly, black smoke poured from 12 big turbines and I swear I saw wingtip vortices coming from the strain of what looked like a formation turn at 90 degrees of bank. The Australian Orion was squealing about stalling and pleading for bank reduction, but British honour was at stake.

Meanwhile the French major was demonstrating retreating blade stall to his pilots and, no doubt, seeing the effect of the needle passing the red line on their air speed indicators. I don't know what the ground controllers thought when, after calling "Two minutes/Deux minuit", they looked up and saw eight rapidly growing specks, shrouded in black smoke, heading for the parade ground.



The timing was immaculate! Just as the new President was reaching the high point of his speech, the Pumas hit the parade ground at something like 200 knots only about 100 feet off the ground. At exactly the same time the three Hercules arrived, with the Orion hanging on like grim death, less than 300 feet above the helicopters at something like 400 knots.

Left: Major Lang Kidby is presented with the Vanuatu Independence Medal by a colourfully attired President of Vanuatu.

Screaming children and fainting women were being attended to by the time our little group flew sedately past and many thought we were the only aircraft following on from the unexplained atomic explosion of a minute previously. Most people were so disoriented that they failed to see Jack Fanderlinden pruning the trees behind the parade ground when he underestimated the height of the hills during his graceful right break.

The following morning the new nation of Vanuatu was on the ground against the rebels resulting in a number of fierce firefights and casualties on both sides. Many prisoners were captured in the initial operation. These prisoners, both native people and French planters, were taken back to Vila in our aircraft for trial and imprisonment (they all asked to go to the French jail because wine was served with meals there).

Some very nasty scenes occurred at the airport when the police settled old scores. The prisoners, with their hands tied behind their backs, were thrown the two metres out of the

DC3 doors then made to run a gauntlet of pounding truncheons to the paddy-wagons – all in front of the world press. I had a few worrying moments trying to convince the excited Chief of Police that they would not have our aircraft unless they chose to settle their scores in a more private place.

A short while after the war commenced, Captain Leigh Collins arrived from Oakey after an heroic over water flight with two Pilatus Porters. His role as the Australian Army Aviation senior officer and chain of command through the local Australian High Commissioner in Vila as opposed to my role as PNGDF aviation senior officer with a chain of command through the Australian High Commissioner in Port Moresby was interesting. It led to petty politics and nearly to direct orders not to tell each other what we were doing – but to “co-operate!” In any case, Leigh and his boys did a marvellous job every night on long overwater flights surrounded by thunderstorms and the information he provided helped us greatly.

We transferred to Santo from Vila a couple of weeks after the start of operations to give close support to the Infantry. The three planes were doing about 45 hours per week and, with only one crew per plane, we thought we were earning our keep. This was particularly so with night runs to Vila in heavy rain having to do a tight curving strobe light approach in zero visibility. The fellows in the DC3s and Porters didn't even have the luxury of radar, which I had in the Nomad.

After a couple of months, Jimmy Steven's rebels had been forced to the north of Espiritu Santo. They were held by a blocking force of two companies of PNGDF troops supported by Vanuatu para-military police. The main battalion was to make an amphibious assault using three LCM-8 landing barges, which had sailed across from PNG with a patrol boat escort.

The planning was something to dwarf D-Day. The battalion did dress rehearsals and the Nomad did numerous photographic and reconnaissance runs along the landing beach and of enemy positions. The brigadier decided he needed tactical air support and, the legalities being a little hazy, I conceded to design a mount in the door of the Nomad for an M-60 machine gun on a tripod.

An hour before dawn on D-Day, the Brigadier waited at the Nomad for the gunner to arrive (it later transpired he slept in and missed the war) and when nobody came, set off to control the assault. Right on dawn, the invasion force turned from line-astern to sweep into the beach, while the patrol boat used its main armament to soften up the enemy positions. The single Bofors gun did punishing work to a coconut tree and two sand crabs.

As the barges dropped their ramps, the infantry charged forward, leaving a couple of wounded on the beach. A close run to point out an enemy position was going well until the skipper of the patrol boat decided to assist. Just as the aircraft swooped down on the tree line, the top of a coconut tree directly under the Nomad exploded, causing an immediate gain in height and caution. After this, directions reverted to “Reference, large bushy tree ...” from a respectable distance.

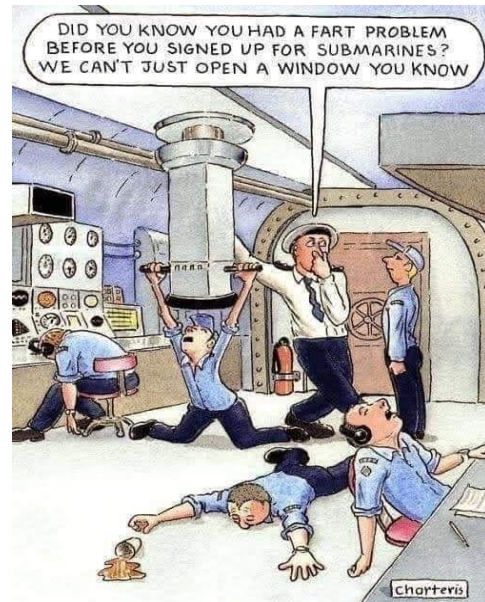
The only casualties suffered by the good guys in the initial assault were the two lying on the beach – both shot with the same bullet through the leg by one of their excited mates

behind them on the barge. Some interesting small battles followed and eventually the rebellion was suppressed and the opposition rounded up.

After handing over to the Vanuatu para-military police to restore normal security, the PNGDF “Kumul Force” returned home.

Lang Kidby

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Recommended reading

The Architect of Kokoda by Robyn Kienzle (2011; Hachette Press) is the story of Bert Kienzle, who was charged with the seemingly impossible task of establishing a supply track through the Owen Stanleys in a few short months in 1942.

With teams of local helpers Kienzle conducted a working transport route that ensured the fighters, both Australian and Papua New Guinean, got the food, munitions and medical support they needed. A quote from Bert Kienzle:

The natives did a job that will forever remain an epic in the Pacific War. They moved army provisions, blankets and all manner of stores over parts which once seemed impassable.

The Architect of Kokoda is an engrossing read, bringing to our attention the story of yet another hero whose contribution to Allied victory in the Pacific was immeasurable, but little known at the time.

Norm Hunter

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After 37 years: An airstrip!

People of the Yakona community in Lake Kopiago, Hela Province, PNG, have seen their hard work finally paying off as the first MAF plane landed on their airstrip connecting them to easier access to basic services. Since 1986, this small community, tucked away in remote Papua New Guinea, has been building their air-strip with shovels and sticks.



After the jungle has been cleared, the tree roots must be dug up, the ground must be made as level as possible, the soft topsoil must be scraped off, stones and gravel carried by hand in people's self-made bilum bags from nearby riverbeds to make a solid surface, drainage ditches must be dug all the way around. Even trees beyond the end of the airstrip need to be cut down so they don't get in the way when the plane takes off.

All this is why this community has been building their airstrip for about 37 years. The first flight landed in December 2023.

(Article and photo from *Harim Tok Tok* Vol 157 April 2026 – with thanks)

Addendum to article on Landing strip in Lake Kopiago

I found this article somewhat perplexing because in 1970, SGT John Ford, SGT John Tebera and I flew into Lake Kopiago as part of retrieval after a patrol. We flew into Kopiago on Caribou aircraft and returned to Port Moresby a few days later.

The Lake itself was characterised by floating weed 'islands'. More significantly, neither Tok Pisin nor Motu were in use at the time. We were often greeted with a salutation which sounded like "Mambo", so we responded in kind. It was remarkable – we were treated as part of the family and asked into huts and provided with fruit! A remarkable experience!

Steve Beveridge, Vice President

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The Vyner Brooke Tragedy: 84th Anniversary Commemoration Service

Both Cheryl Johnson & I attended this event on Sunday 15th February at the Pt Walter Reserve in the Bicton/Attadale region within the City of Melville, WA.

The ceremony was very well attended & conducted, with classic Perth weather to boot!

<p>Nurses on the SS Vyner Brooke (65)</p> <p>Lost at Sea (12) Louirma Bates Ellenor Calnan Mary Clarke Millicent Dorsch Caroline Ennis Kathleen Kinsella Gladys McDonald Olive Paschke Lavinia Russell Marjorie Schuman Annie Trenerry Mona Wilton</p> <p>Massacred on Bangka Island (23) Elaine Balfour-Ogilvy Alma Beard Ada Bridge Florence Casson Mary Cuthbertson Irene Drummond Dorothy Elmes Lorna Fairweather Peggy Farmaner Clarice Halligan Nancy Harris Minnie Hodgson Ellen Keats Janet Kerr Mary McGlade Kathleen Neuss Florence Salmon Esther Stewart Mona Tait Rosetta Wight Bessie Wilmott</p>	<p>Anzac Day Trust Grants</p> <p>Thank you to those involved in the Commemoration Service</p> <p>City of Melville Applecross Sub-Branch of RSLWA Inc. Members Principals, staff and students of: Presbyterian Ladies' College, Mercedes College, Iona Presentation College, St Mary's Anglican Girl's School, Applecross SHS St Mary's Anglican Girl's School, Applecross SHS One Achord Community Choir 703 Sqn Australian Air Force Cadets Relatives and friends of the Nurses Sound: Luke Savage Widdesons Hire Service Kennards Myaree Iprintplus Perth Marquees The Good Grocer - Applecross Bird Release - Ray Johnson</p> <p>Returned Home (24) Carrie Ashton Kathleen Blake Jessie Blanch Vivian Bullwinkel Veronica Clancy Cecilia DeLforce Jess Doyle Jean Greer Janet Gunther Ellen Hannah Iole Harger Nexta James Betty Jeffrey Violet McEInea Sylvia Muir Wilma Oram Christian Oxley Eileen Short Jessie Simons Vairie Smith Ada Syer Florence Trotter Joyce Tweddell Beryl Woodbridge</p>	<p>The Applecross Sub-Branch of RSLWA in conjunction with Melville welcomes you to the 84th Anniversary Commemoration Service of The Vyner Brooke Tragedy 15th February 2026</p> 
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A group titled *Theatre 180* conducts a play called *21 Hearts* currently on show in Perth with an 'over east' tour planned in the future. This tells the story of the nurses, one of so many atrocities in WW11.

Graeme Johnson, WA Representative

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Harry Saunders: A Man of Letters



Private Henry "Harry" Saunders, an Australian soldier from Victoria, was known for his service in WWII with the 2/14th Battalion and his touching letters home to his sweetheart, Dorothy Banfield, highlighting the preciousness of photos and his experiences in New Guinea.

He was the younger brother of Captain Reginald "Reg" Saunders, Australia's first Aboriginal commissioned officer. (Bruce Scott)

The detail about his letters to Dorothy Banfield is especially well known. His correspondence is often cited for how tender and grounded it is - particularly his emphasis on photographs as emotional

lifelines during the campaign. Those letters give a very human counterpoint to the brutality of the Kokoda/New Guinea fighting. (Ray Payne)

Harry Saunders lies in the Bomana War Cemetery; Service number, VX18629; Birth Date, 13/05/1919; Birthplace, Allansford, Victoria; Death Date, 9/11/1942.

Greg Ivey

*



Bomana War Cemetery

Lest we forget

