



Armi Nius

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

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

2/2026

From the editors

Welcome to Edition 2 of *Armi Nius* for 2026. This edition has a special focus on Anzac Day, including from Papua New Guinea, as well as some important updates and news about our veterans, along with Association activities and as usual, some historical articles and some to invite your thinking about important issues.

Each year our numbers are fewer, and the servicemen from the 50s, 60s and 70s are among the last group to have long-term involvement in the Australian armed forces in Papua New Guinea. In his introduction below, President Greg has made an important request of members about the future of our Association. Please give it your attention and if possible, your action.

Norm Hunter OAM (editor); Steve Beveridge (Vice President & co-editor); Ian Ogston (co-editor).

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From the President

I'm pleased to introduce and recommend the second edition of *Armi Nius* for 2026, with its special focus on Anzac Day.



Your Association is recruiting new members, and I ask you to help us in this effort. There are many former servicemen, posted to PNG after 1951, who could be invited to join our network and enjoy the benefits. There are also civilians in Australia and PNG with a family connection or business connection to PNG and its military history. Further, many of us have adult children who may be busy but are open to learning more about your connection to PNG. So, there is scope for you to help us find new members

The alternative scenario would be a decline in our membership and, more importantly, a decline in our ability to tell the essential stories about the Australia-PNG connection, for example the War-time bonding of our two peoples; the constructive Army programs leading towards self-government; the ongoing roles of Australians in PNG's vital sectors like Education, Health, Aviation, the Judiciary, Tourism etc. Sadly, a decline in membership is causing other military associations to disband or withdraw from their key activities, including publishing newsletters that keep the story alive.

Our Association is rare in having continuity since the end of the War: two surviving war veterans over 100 years of age, a contingent of National Servicemen who served in the PIR or HQ between 1966 and 1973, and an historic link with the current PNG Defence Force. We need new members to boost our annual events, to grow our connections with PNG, and to promote the valiant role of our living and deceased Veterans. It is a great story – at least as important as the Anzac story - in its importance to the Australia of today.

Please invite your friends or family members to join this Association; *people are often just waiting to be invited*. The membership form is now easier to find on the Home Page of our association website: www.soldierspng.com (Dues remain only \$5 a year or \$50 for life.)

Thanks for your help, and your continuing support.

Greg Ivey (Association President)

Anzac Day 2026: A reflection

As this edition goes to press, our country appears to be struggling to understand what it means to be Australian. Events in the Middle East since October 2023 have brought to the surface, amongst other things, that most ancient and evil of prejudices – anti-semitism – a malevolence that has always been alien to Australian values and beliefs, and something which Australian servicemen died fighting against in World War II. As it rears its ugly head here in Australia, the

words of the Nobel poet W.B. Yeats come to mind, writing as he observed the rise of fascism across Europe in the 1920s and 30s:

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are filled with passionate intensity.*

We are divided on other issues too: how to address the reality of climate change; identity politics that include race, religion, sex and gender; the limits to freedom of speech including in the media; whether our generous immigration policies are undermining our social cohesion; how actions committed under the pressure of war should be understood and judged; the appropriateness of when to include – or not include - Welcome to Country in our rituals; and how to conceptualise and strengthen the three historical layers of who we are today - our first people, our British heritage, and the waves of immigration that have taken place since World War II.



Despite these tensions, there is one element in the current milieu of Australia's values and beliefs that remains uncontested: our gratitude to those who made great sacrifices to protect our culture, including for many the supreme sacrifice of their lives. In Australia, on one day of the year, the internal differences and conflicts seem to go quiet, and we come together, gathering at war memorials, in streets and suburbs, villages, towns and cities across the nation, to honour those men and women, and their loved ones, who paid the ultimate price ... for us.

On Anzac Day, that one day of the year, we do what many of those who are 'filled with passionate intensity' could do more of : we gather in silence, pause and take time to reflect on our deep appreciation and gratitude for what we have - not what we don't have – and thank those who defended it when it was under threat.

Look at any photo of crowds who gathered on the streets and at special places across the nation on 25 April, and you'll see the full spectrum of Australian society: different ethnic and indigenous groups, young and old, men and women, veterans who have been to war and civilians who have no idea what that means. We all gather as Australians, divisions aside, to say thanks: a thread holding the tapestry of Australia together.



Darwin, Anzac Day march spectators, 2026

There's a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn't change. People wonder about what you are pursuing.

You have to explain about the thread.

(William Stafford)

Our Association's mission is to explain and keep alive that thread: the story about the people – many of high school age or just beyond - who held the line against the odds at Isurava, Gona, Milne Bay and the other PNG battle fields, and in doing so rose above a better equipped enemy and an environment that posed as many threats as the human enemy. The bigger story, though, so relevant to Australia in 2026, is *why* they did it: it was their pride in who we are as a nation, and their sacrifice in defending it that have gifted us with the freedoms and opportunities we have today. That is a very powerful story.

There are other threads binding us as a nation, some now under threat. At the same time, none of them brings us together like this across the nation on what has become our unique sacred day, homing in on a set of values and beliefs held by all who are proud to call themselves Australians. And from that, the key word for everyone who wants to live here, is *proud*.

In his introduction to this newsletter, President Greg is asking us to contribute in a small way to furthering and strengthening that thread by keeping the story alive. Let's all commit to what he's asking.

Norm Hunter

Anzac Day 2026

Sydney



Peter Porteous acquired the Pacific Islands Regiment banner and led the contingent.

Those marching included John Morris, Bob Strachan, Peter Porteous, Wayne Bensley and Mia Porteous as the flag bearer.

ABC footage was extracted from coverage of the March.

Peter Porteous was also interviewed on the March, by Channel 10 News.

Leeton

Association Vice President Dr Steve Beveridge and NSW Representative Russ Wade took the original PIB NGIB banner to Leeton at the request of Jock Wilkinson's family. The Dawn Service was held at the memorial in the centre of the town at 6.00am, and was well attended by the local community and school children in uniform.



The March commenced at 9.45am, with Jock, his family and the banner being preceded by a stirring Pipes and Drums band, fitting for Jock with his Scottish background.

Standing behind Jock (L to R): Peter Wilkinson, Russ Wade, Steve Beveridge, Susie Rowe (Jock's daughter) and Sam Wilkinson

After the March, Jock's family met at the Leeton Soldiers' Club for lunch. Claire Wilkinson (Peter's wife) gave Steve Beveridge a link to the 15 January 2014 interview with Jock, then aged 93, by the Australian War Memorial's Richard Apsden. (See below)

"Sister Anna will carry the banner"

You'll all recall Al Hunter's lyrical rendition of a dubious biblical story where Sister Anna was told to "carry the banner" and remonstrated that she had "carried it last time".

This Anzac Day, for the second year in a row, it was my privilege to travel to Leeton in NSW and carry the original Papuan and New Guinea Infantry Battalions' banner behind the last surviving member of both the PIB and NGIB, John "Jock" Wilkinson, who turned 105 in early April 2026. This continued a long tradition of Jock marching with the banner.



Jock Wilkinson, aged 100, marching in front of the Sydney contingent, Anzac Day 2021.



Jock Wilkinson, aged 105, Leeton, Anzac Day 2026

The Papuan Infantry Battalion and New Guinea Infantry Battalions served with distinction during World War 2. It was the PIB that first engaged with mainland Japanese troops on 23 July 1942. The Japanese called them the “Green Shadows”. Since the war, there has been little recognition of the role and achievements of the PIB and NGIB units, other than by units that they served with.

Jock is an extraordinary veteran. In 2014, at the age of 93, he recorded his wartime and post-war experiences with the Australian War Memorial’s Richard Apsden. The first hour is compelling listening about his wartime experiences. You can find it at:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/S05786>

After the war, Jock went back to farming and later was a cameleer until he turned 98.

Dispelling our wartime mythology

As NSW Representative on the PIB NGIB HQ PIR Association, I circulate items of interest to our members, including monthly presentations by the Military History Society of NSW and attend these sessions at the Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, when in Sydney.

In March this year, there was an interesting presentation by Professor Mesut Uyar, a visiting lecturer at University of New South Wales on “Who won the Battle of Beersheba, 1917” subtitled “The British Infantry did most of the killing and dying”. We were all led to



believe that General Chauvel’s cavalry overran the city, when in effect, the British infantry successfully carried out the frontal assault and captured the city, but not the wells, leaving that to the Australians, as planned and carried out later in the day.

Professor Uyar (left) also confirmed my own discovery during a visit to Gallipoli that the initial Australian landing was opposed by 80 riflemen, as

Colonel Mustafa Kemal (later Turkish leader Ataturk) assessed Anzac Cove as the least likely landing place. We were all led to believe that the Australians landed under heavy machine gun fire, when in effect, the machine guns were not brought forward until 1630 hours.

Having seen a recent TV program about the displays being assembled in the new extension to the Australian War Memorial, I’m convinced that our military history is being presented to meet palatable interpretations of what is politically acceptable. The G for George Lancaster from my father’s 460 Squadron that we could see during the 2016 reunion dinner in the AWM has been relocated to another facility for maintenance and I suspect it will never appear in the new facility.



Finally, on the weekend I was talking to an F-35 avionics technician. The average cost of an F-35 according to Parliament House papers is 90 million USD (or about \$127 million AUD). The amount to bring war crimes case against Afghanistan veterans is about \$331 million and another \$42 million has been committed to pursue cases, totalling \$373 million. That is close to the cost for three F-35 fighter jets.

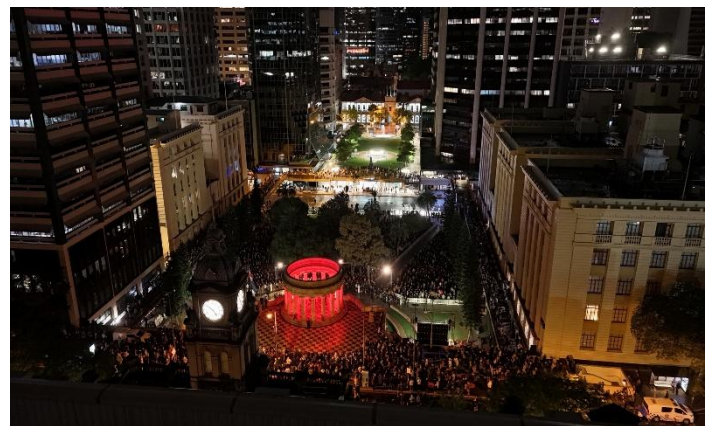
Capability versus culpability should be the yardstick for measuring Defence expenditure.

Russ Wade, NSW & SA Representative

Brisbane

It was another wet Anzac Day in Brisbane, but the Servicemen and women were undaunted. As always, the Dawn service was well-attended, including by many young people.

Our members travelled from the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast to join their mates at Anzac Square for the annual multi-unit wreath laying ceremony.



Dawn service, Anzac Square, Brisbane (Photo Danny Hicks)

At 9am, this ceremony included the reading of literary extracts, the laying of wreaths and the reciting of the Ode. The audience comprised our members and wives as well as the public plus representatives of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, the 2/14th and 2/16th Battalion Associations. The 39th Battalion was acknowledged although their Cadet group was delayed by security

officials in arriving. The opening speaker again was the PNG Consul-General, honourable Mr Reatau M. Rau, ASA. Secretary Kev Horton was the ceremony MC again this year.



The marchers then moved off to the forming-up location while family members found a position among the spectators along the march route. After the customary RAAF fly-over, our Unit stepped off accompanied by band music and applause from spectators. Our Queensland Banner was again carried by the descendants of our inaugural President,

Sgt. Frank Wust (PIB & 1 NGIB). Marching behind our Banner were the families of deceased War veterans and former national service 'Chalkies'. The son of the PNG Consul, Mick Rau, marched with us wearing his grandfather's PIB medals. Several of our members took the option of jeep transport, including our Patron, Don Graham, and they received hearty applause and the attention of the media.



On leaving the jeeps, these members joined the marchers for the traditional group photos outside the Brisbane GPO.

Next, the former servicemen and family members gathered at a nearby restaurant for lunch joined by other Kokoda battalion representatives. Patron Don Graham and Barbara were the centre of attention at a large table including their family from Cairns and several former servicemen.

Despite the rain, this concluded one of our most successful Anzac Day events in Brisbane. I'd like to thank our Brisbane coordinator Kev Horton for a hard job well done, over many hours. The Secretary's work never ends but I hope that Kev has taken a well-earned break.

Greg Ivey

Caloundra



Our indefatigable and highly esteemed World War II veteran Laurie Siegle (NGIB), as usual, took part in the march at Caloundra, accompanied by his family.

Left: Laurie proudly displays his Association Certificate during the march.

Western Australia



The Cottesloe RSL Sub-Branch has conducted the local Anzac Day Service at the Cottesloe Civic Centre in conjunction with the Town of Cottesloe for many years. This year, MC for the event was expertly handled by Michael Elderfield, RSL Sub-Branch member and former Army pilot. The President, Nigel Earnshaw, a retired infantry officer, excelled in the overall planning and smooth conduct of the

Service and gave a very moving address related to his distinguished Army service over the past several decades.

This year, we were fortunate to host the presence of LS Nicholas from HMAS *Kuttabul*, headquartered in Sydney.

Right: Cottesloe RSL Sub-Branch President Nigel Earnshaw and LS Nicholas



He was visiting his family in Cottesloe and made contact with President Nigel who warmly invited him to be involved in the Service. Nicholas recited the Ode and laid the Australian wreath on behalf of the Sub-Branch.

A wreath was also placed on behalf of our cross-Tasman comrades in New Zealand.

The march-in from the Civic Centre front entry was led by Mr Berkeley Allen, flag bearer, followed by a piper, both giving some meaning and purpose to the occasion. Berkeley undertook National Service in the first scheme during the 1950s. This was followed by esteemed long service in the CMF.

The procession also included ex-service personnel, along with Local and State Government representatives and the general public.

The service was very well patronised by local residents, with an estimated 400 plus attendees in perfect weather, mindful it was a little cool in the early morning. Following the Service, refreshments were provided courtesy of the Town of Cottesloe. The barbecue was manned by Cottesloe Surf Veterans members along with a relative of a Town of Cottesloe staff member whose assistance was greatly appreciated.

Numerous wreaths were also placed on behalf of the Sub-Branch, Town of Cottesloe, politicians, district schools, scout troop and local sporting clubs including both surf lifesaving clubs, which are prominent in the area. Town staff keenly decorated the concrete balustrades and steps of the elevated area where the speeches were delivered with native flowers and greenery making a very pleasant sight for attendees.

Right: PNG marchers, Perth (Photo Michael Gau)



Graeme Johnson, WA representative

Townsville

The Townsville National Service Association has 2 former PIR soldiers: Secretary Major Ian Kuhl who raised and trained the first Preventive Medical Platoon which treated diseases in PNG; and Minutes Secretary Graham Carnes who was the first Nasho Chalkie to be posted to Lae.

Ian Kuhl and Graham Carnes both participated in the Townsville Anzac Day march with Ian in a jeep and Graham leading the marchers who this year were close to the front of the parade to commemorate 75 years of National Service.



Ian and Graham also travelled to Cardwell on the 3rd May to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea with a march, service and lunch at the Cardwell RSL. Both Ian and Graham marched. A highlight was a Spitfire which did several low sweeps.

Left: Townsville march (Photo by Judy Carnes)

Graham Carnes, Regional Qld Representative

Norfolk Island



As serendipity would have it, Rae and I were on Norfolk Island for Anzac Day this year.

Left: Lone Pine, Norfolk Island

There was a traditional Dawn Service held near Lone Pine, then later in the morning a march from

near Lone Pine followed by a ceremony at the island's war memorial, which the locals call The Cenotaph.



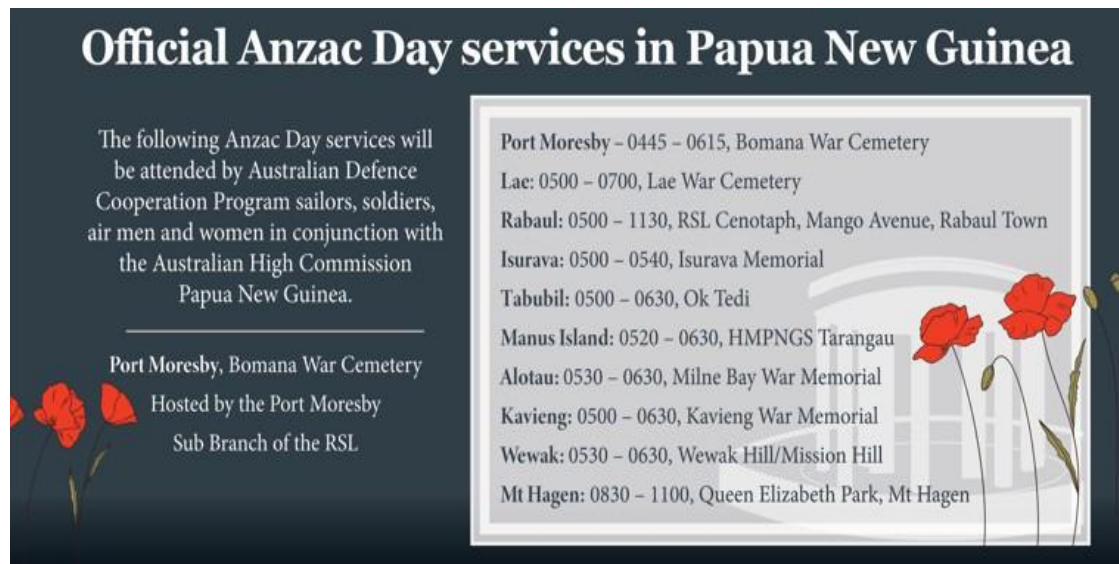
We found the ceremony very uplifting. It was a special combination of informality with dignity, all to the background of Slaughter Bay; that saw several shipwrecks in the past – hence the name. Despite its name it's a lovely stretch of beach with an offshore reef. A highlight of the ceremony was that the march was led by Victoria Cross recipient Keith Payne (left), who spends time on the island each year. Many locals lined up for 'selfies' with him. I had a brief conversation with him but passed on the 'selfie': somehow it just didn't feel appropriate.

During one of the speeches a reference was made to the American ritual of Thanksgiving. Evolving from historical visits by American whalers and ships stopping over to restock with supplies, Norfolk Island is the one place in Australia that celebrates Thanksgiving each year on the third Thursday of November, including a public holiday. The reference was about gratitude and thanks, for the beautiful, peaceful island that has benefited from the sacrifices of those who defended Australia during World War II.

Norm Hunter

Papua New Guinea

Communities around the country at first light Saturday morning stood fast as the trumpet sounded off the “Last Post”, marking Anzac Day as Australia and New Zealand along with Papua New Guinea (PNG) standing by them, remember the sacrifices the Anzac soldiers made on the battle fields of the world.



Official Anzac Day services in Papua New Guinea

The following Anzac Day services will be attended by Australian Defence Cooperation Program sailors, soldiers, air men and women in conjunction with the Australian High Commission Papua New Guinea.

Port Moresby, Bomana War Cemetery
Hosted by the Port Moresby Sub Branch of the RSL

- Port Moresby – 0445 – 0615, Bomana War Cemetery
- Lae: 0500 – 0700, Lae War Cemetery
- Rabaul: 0500 – 1130, RSL Cenotaph, Mango Avenue, Rabaul Town
- Isurava: 0500 – 0540, Isurava Memorial
- Tabubil: 0500 – 0630, Ok Tedi
- Manus Island: 0520 – 0630, HMPNGS Tarangau
- Alotau: 0530 – 0630, Milne Bay War Memorial
- Kavieng: 0500 – 0630, Kavieng War Memorial
- Wewak: 0530 – 0630, Wewak Hill/Mission Hill
- Mt Hagen: 0830 – 1100, Queen Elizabeth Park, Mt Hagen

The Anzac Dawn services were held in places of historic military significance across the country from Port Moresby to Kavieng, honouring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and reaffirmed the enduring bonds forged through shared history and service. The breadth of these commemorations highlights the extent to which this shared history remains part of communities across PNG.

After several days hiking to the site, Australian Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh MP spoke at the Dawn Service in Isurava in honour of those who served on the Kokoda Track during World War II.

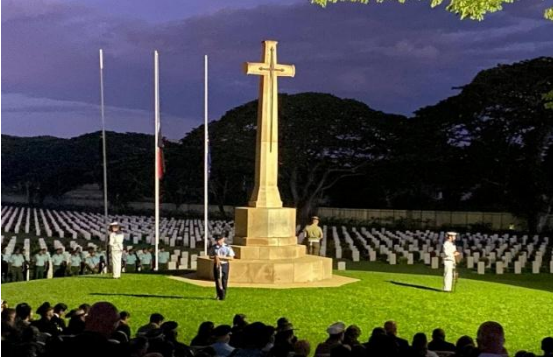
Right: Dawn Service Isurava



Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Mr. Ewen McDonald, made remarks at Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby, along with Australian Defence Force Major General Matt Burr.

Below: Dawn Service, Bomana

Morning service, Bomana (4 800 in attendance)



‘This moment represents a bridge between the present and what was a defining moment in our nations’ shared history. Every year on 25 April, the stillness of the early morning is broken by the same solemn vigil. Australians and New Zealanders come together in the darkness, awaiting the dawn of a new day,’ said High Commissioner McDonald. Major General Matt Burr added that Anzac Day in Papua New Guinea reminds us that Australia did not fight alone.

‘Papua New Guinean soldiers, carriers, and villagers stood by Australians, fought shoulder to shoulder, guiding them, supporting them and saving lives. That contribution was decisive, and it is remembered with the deepest gratitude and respect,’ said the Major General. Papua New Guinea and Australia continue to stand side by side, as they did during World War II, continuing to develop the strong partnership that was founded in these areas, decades ago.’ The Dawn Services were held in Manus, Wewak, Mt. Hagen city, Kavieng, Lae, Isurava, Alotau, Ok Tedi and Port Moresby.

(Courtesy of PNG Haus Bung News)



Lae: Dawn Service, Memorial Cemetery



Lae: USA staff lay a wreath at Morning service

Below: Mission Hill Wewak Dawn Service



Dawn Service Rabaul (Courtesy Pt Moresby Sub-branch)



PNGDF Chief of Force Preparation, Lieutenant Colonel Eddie Miro, described the joint service at Kavieng as a milestone. He noted that while ANZAC services are traditionally held in Port Moresby and Lae, they are now expanding to provinces like New Ireland, Mount Hagen, and Alotau to bring remembrance closer to the communities directly impacted by wartime history.

Right: Dawn Service Kavieng

Colonel Miro specifically highlighted July 23, which serves as both PNGDF Remembrance Day and New Ireland Day, suggesting that dawn services could become a staple of local celebrations to help the younger generation connect with their history.



Our History team member, Aidan Grimes of the Gold Coast, attended the Dawn Service at Bomana on Anzac Day and laid a wreath on behalf of our Association.

Left: Aidan Grimes lays our wreath at the Cross of Sacrifice during the Dawn Service at Bomana War Cemetery, after leading his 138th group across the Kokoda Track.

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Dr Steve Beveridge Anzac Day 2026 Ceremony Invitation & Address

In February I was honoured to be invited to present the Anzac Day 2026 address for the Remembrance Service at the head office of the NSW Department of Education, Phillip St Parramatta on Thursday 23 April.



The invitation was extended by Mr Ken Stevenson, Coordinator of the event on behalf of Conjoint Assoc Professor Murat Dizdar, Secretary, NSW Department of Education. My association with Ken Stevenson goes back to October 2019 when the NSW Department of Education presented a Roll of Service, recording the names of all NSW Education Staff who served in Papua and New Guinea during the period of their National Service, 1965-73. It was Ken's drive over some months which generated the Roll. October 2019 marked the point when we Chalkies significantly expanded the PIR Exhibit of the Australian Army Infantry Museum located at Lone Pine Barracks, Singleton.

The audience for the Anzac Day Service were senior Department of Education staff, including the Secretary of the Department, the Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Early Learning, retired Senior Educational Administrators, Teachers Federation representatives, RSL sub-branch officers, teachers, parents of the students from the NSW Department of Education who formed the choir, and other invitees: approximately 200 attendees in total, including the choir and Cadet Unit.

Right: Will Donaldson, Newtown High School of the Performing Arts plays the Last Post



My objective in the address was twofold.

Firstly, to present a link between the Anzac story and those who defended Australia during the Kokoda and subsequent campaigns throughout Papua and New Guinea in World War II. While the Anzac story is now embedded in our understanding of how the emerging nation perceived itself following the Great War, our understanding of the war which was just on our northern doorstep is not well appreciated.

Yet it was the 18 year-olds from Melbourne who first shouldered the responsibility of defending Australia in mid-1942. Expected to fail by the senior military commanders at the time, they bought time until the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) arrived back from Egypt and the Middle East.

And that is just part of the story. It is important that the full story of the young troops and the AIF who were critical defending our northern border be known by all Australians, especially our young people. It remains a key part of our nation's history.

Secondly, to show there were indigenous Papuan and New Guineans who fought with Australia in Papua New Guinea during the war. The role of the 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' is well known and was significant in saving the lives of many Australian soldiers who had been wounded on the Kokoda track; however very few are aware of the 3,850 indigenous soldiers who fought with Australian officers and NCOs from 1941-1945. The role they played in defending Australia during the Kokoda and other campaigns in both Papua and New Guinea, as well as the other theatres of war in the adjacent islands, is unfortunately not well known and consequently, not recognised.



As readers will be aware, one of our key Association objectives is to increase recognition of the role played by Indigenous Papuan and New Guinean soldiers in defending Australia.

Responses to my presentation were very positive. In several cases, folk sought me out and thanked me for giving credit to relatives who served in the 2/14th Battalion on the Kokoda Track. Quite a few commented that they were not aware of the role of the indigenous Papuan and New Guinean soldiers in defending Australia and appreciated being made aware of the fact.

Steve Beveridge (Association Vice President)

Photos Gary Lawrence

Anzac Day: Memories and reflections from Peter Dornan

My most interesting and memorable Anzac Day was in 1989 as we, myself and my wife Dimity, attended the service at Anzac Cove itself.



Anzac Cove

I had hired a car at Marmaris in Southern Turkey some days earlier, and as we approached the Cove, a strange, spontaneous silence came over us as we tried to collect our thoughts on what we should find or experience as we first viewed the hallowed ground. Between us we had many years of conditioning of the Anzac legend, of heroism, self-sacrifice, glory and tragedy. Our school years devoted a great deal of time to Anzac Day and as both of our fathers were veterans of the Second World War, we had attended many dawn services and Anzac parades, where the original Anzacs were dutifully remembered and almost deified.

This was the day before Anzac Day and, remarkably, we had the whole scene to ourselves.

In silence, we walked along the beach, bush-bashed up Shrapnel Gully, then contemplated the Nek, a murderous area where over 300 Australians died in an area smaller than three tennis courts.

Right: Overlooking the valley where New Zealanders fought the battle of Chunuk Bair

We continued on to Lone Pine where the Australians won seven Victoria Crosses after a terrifying static killing contest in the dark.



The next morning we were stunned when upon arrival we counted about eight tour buses and about 1,000 young Australians and New Zealanders milling around in the dark waiting for something to happen. Most of the young travellers were backpackers and had arrived late in the previous evening and had slept on the beach. Visiting New Zealand soldiers had organised a setting for what was to be a moving Dawn service. We had an address I shall probably remember all my days. As the grey part-light of the false dawn was forcing back the darkness, a 90-year-old veteran proudly stood up and asked us to imagine ourselves in the lighters as they were being rowed to shore at this exact time 74 years ago.



Left: Peter & Dimity with the proud veteran at the Dawn Service

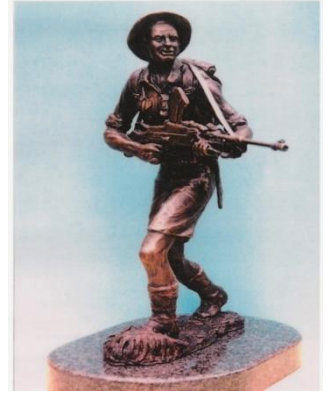
He invited us to rededicate our lives to the principles which the Anzacs fought and died for so long ago. Later, we met the veteran and he told us he had joined the AIF at 15, fought with the infantry in France, and then gained his wings and flew a fighter plane for the remainder of the war. He then became a chaplain and was now retired at Wollongong. To me, he simply embodied the Anzac Spirit.

However, an experience which surpassed that and was more personal occurred 10 years later in 1998 in Papua New Guinea. It was to be known as 'The Last Parade'. High in the mists of the Owen Stanley Ranges, our helicopter hovered a few metres above the canopied New Guinea jungle. Below, I could make out vestiges of the legendary Kokoda Track as it darted crazily from hillside to crest. Up ahead, I could see a cleared area which I knew would be Isurava. I was quietly excited, as I felt I might finally be able to answer and confront some life-long questions.

As a boy, I had always known my father was a soldier. I knew he'd fought in the Middle East and New Guinea, but that's all I knew. Then suddenly, in 1975, my father died at 60. The shock was complete when the Repatriation Commission attributed his death to attrition on the Kokoda Track.

For the next few years, I studied the war. But it wasn't until I actually walked the track myself that I really understood some of what he'd been through. I pieced some more of the puzzle when, as a classical sculptor, in 1992

I was commissioned to sculpt the only Victoria Cross winner (posthumous) of the six-month Kokoda campaign, Bruce Kingsbury of the 2/14th battalion. I sought out his battalion friends Alan Avery and Stan Bisset, who assisted me with details of Kingsbury and the campaign.



When I duly unveiled the statue (right) at the battalion's annual reunion, the event stimulated some of the veterans to share with me their experiences concerning the Isurava battle.

With the confidences of these men, I decided to write their story. As their revelations continued, I realised I had found a generation of forgotten, silent men. Of the 550 men of this battalion who entered the Track at Moresby, only 21 were still standing after Gona. (I found out my father was repatriated from Gona while serving in the 25th Brigade.) Now, Stan Bisset had organised a 'Last Parade' at Isurava, and 46 veterans answered the call.

Fifty-six years ago, on August 28, 1942, the 2/14th Battalion reinforced the besieged 39th Militia Battalion at Isurava and the PIB, who were all that stood between the Japanese and Port Moresby and arguably, Australia. Outnumbered six to one, over the next four days, the two battalions withstood wave after wave of ferocious banzai charges. Isurava had been closed down after the war. 'Bad spirits', it was said, as more than 1000 men had died there. Many strategists now consider Isurava to be the place where the advantage passed from the Japanese to the Allies.

After our chopper landed, the veterans were welcomed to a 'sing sing', but I walked alone into the jungle.

The silence calls the ghosts out. I see desperate men in green and khaki flit through the trees. The area becomes alive with sounds as gunfire shatters the peace. Shrapnel erupts and whistles like a knife, cutting trees and men to the ground. In the confusion I see wild-eyed men grapple, then falter and die.

I see 9 Platoon lined up, see Lindsay (Teddy) Bear leading the charge, his Bren gun killing 15 of the enemy. I see Kingsbury take over the gun as Bear is wounded, the Bren barking as it continues the killings. Further over in the 'cane patch', I see Butch Bisset's 10 Platoon (Stan's brother) repel charge after charge, finally leaving 200 enemy dead. I see Butch wounded and Stan comforting him until he dies in the early hours of the next morning. Across the perimeter on that one day, August 29, the battalion holds against a withering assault, earning eight citations for bravery.

Then the ghosts disappear as the men respond to the call for the last parade. As the strains of the 'Last Post' float up and wash over the little jungle patch, I can control my emotions no longer. In 1989 at Anzac Cove on Anzac Day I was silent. Today, at Isurava, I wept.

I understand now the reason for these men's reluctance to talk of the indescribable slaughter they have experienced. More importantly to me, however, through these men, I have come to know my father. There is a postscript to this story.

After leaving Bomana War Cemetery, I met my wife at Port Moresby Airport where she had flown in from Australia. We boarded a small plane to fly over to Rabaul where I planned to dive on some World War II wrecks. Strangely, the only people on the plane were ourselves and about 20 Japanese of all ages, and we all then happened to be staying at the same motel. We were curious and befriended some of the younger ones who could speak perfect English.



We found out that the older men were also veterans and were doing the same thing the Australian veterans were doing: revisiting the war scene to commemorate where they had left their dead.

In a motion of goodwill, they asked us also to accompany them around their particular battle sites where they also paid homage to their fallen comrades.

It was a bizarre situation and we were honoured, and fascinated to take part in their ceremonies. It somehow allowed me to feel as if I had done a complete circle in relation to my father's role in the war, allowing full closure.

I would like to think, as the concept of the world as a global-village becomes a reality and mutual understanding draws us closer together, that there is a better way to achieve a compromise without sacrificing the 'common soldier' for a cause that is generally anything from a quest for power to religious or racial hatred.



This Anzac Day, I continued to honour the fallen by celebrating it at the United Service Club after the Anzac Parade, and here I sang in the choir in the presence of Her Excellency, the Governor, Dr Jeannette Young AC, PSM.

Peter Dornan AM

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From The Netherlands

Hundreds of American, Canadian and British soldiers died in 'Operation Market Garden' in the battles to liberate Holland in the fall/winter of 1944. Combat operations took place in a 100-km corridor in the eastern Netherlands.

Every one of the men buried in the Dutch, Canadian and British military cemeteries, has been adopted by a Dutch family who mind the grave, decorate it, and keep alive the memory of the soldier they have adopted. It is even the custom to keep a portrait of 'their' soldier in a place of honour in their home.



On 'Liberation Day,' held on 5 May each year, memorial services are held for 'the men who died to liberate Holland'. The day concludes with a concert. The final piece is traditionally *Il Silenzio*, a memorial piece commissioned by the Dutch and first played in 1965 on the 20th anniversary of Holland's liberation. It has been the concluding piece of the memorial concert ever since.

This year, 2026, the soloist was a 13-year-old Dutch girl, Melissa Venema, backed by André Rieu and his orchestra (on this occasion the Royal Orchestra of the Netherlands). This beautiful concert piece is based upon the original version of taps and was composed by Italian composer Nino Rossi.

For a special experience, you can view this year's performance at <http://www.flixy.com/trumpet-solo-melissa-venema.htm> [1]

Command & Leadership: There's a difference

David Wilkins was an infantry graduate from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, arriving in TPNG in 1965 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). In 1969-70, Captain Wilkins served with 5RAR in the Vietnam War, initially as the battalion adjutant then as a rifle company commander.



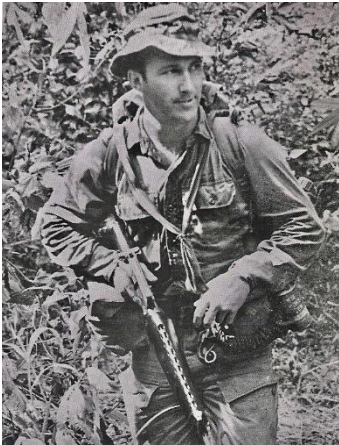
I have been invited by the editors of the Association newsletter to write an article exploring the difference between command and leadership. In doing so I recount an experience partly against my own interest, as in one situation I was plain clumsy and in the second it was an unexpected revelation that came to me in a split-second heartbeat. Fortunately however there was a positive result.

In 1969 I was an infantry captain serving with 5RAR in South Vietnam. I was the unit adjutant and assistant operations officer who usually worked in the Battalion Command Post and occasionally as point navigator for the tactical HQ when deploying on foot.

During 5RAR's involvement in the ferocious urban Battle of Binh Ba in June 1969, the commander of 11 Platoon, national serviceman Second Lieutenant John Russell, was badly wounded and incapacitated for the following operation. Major Murray Blake's D Company was very much under strength and his 2IC, Captain Tim Britten and a platoon sergeant were going on R&R leave so the CO appointed me to be acting platoon commander of 11 Platoon. It was

unusual for a captain to be in a lieutenant's position but I welcomed the opportunity as I had been pressing for more time in a rifle company.

D Company deployed into the Nui Dinh Mountain complex, which at the time was experiencing considerable enemy activity.



Once in the mountains D Company had six contacts with the enemy during the first few days in what seemed to be an enemy concentration area. Two enemy base camps were found and attacked by 11 and 12 Platoons in the upper slopes and in one of those 11 Platoon initially caught the enemy by surprise (as you will see, no thanks to me).

The enemy position confronting 11 Platoon was situated in a large system of caves beside a small gully on the side of the mountain. We had been moving through thick jungle towards a suspect enemy location when contact was made with an enemy patrol. Two of the enemy were wounded in the initial exchange and fled, the remainder also scattering to the four winds. We found the blood trail and immediately followed up, leading with a tracker team consisting

of the splendid tracking dog, the black Labrador-Kelpie cross, 'Caesar', his handler Lance Corporal 'Paddy' Walker and another visual tracker.

They followed the trail for approximately 400 metres through the scrub when Caesar suddenly stopped and pointed. This was obvious when he became motionless, having lifted his nose from the sniffing position close to the ground, and with ears erect, strained his head forward towards the enemy waiting some 50 metres ahead (although they could not be seen). It was a beautifully-executed piece of silent tracking which gave my platoon the advantage of knowing the enemy's position and presumably the enemy not knowing of our presence.

Receiving the silent field signal for the platoon commander to come forward (three fingers were placed on the signaller's shoulder, meaning my captain's rank, and then the hand was placed on his head, meaning for me to come to his position), I moved forward silently to Paddy and Caesar to assess the situation. The next moment the silence of the bush was shattered by the piercing yelp of the dog.

I had clumsily trodden on Caesar's foot.

Now, not only did this reveal our presence and lose the element of surprise, but also it did nothing to boost the Diggers' confidence in their new platoon commander, an officer of whom they had little close knowledge. This was to create an initial problem in the ensuing attack upon the enemy defensive position.

The Viet Cong were holed up in a cave system but it was a classic platoon-attack location with a small spur providing a good position for one section to observe and provide covering fire for the assaulting sections right up to the objective. This would enable them to keep the enemy heads down right up until my assault group reached the caves.

Two assault sections and platoon headquarters moved into the covered FUP (Forming-up Place) where we deployed and waited for the attack to begin. Because of the width of the enemy defences my assault sections were well spread out in an extended line to either side of me and my radio operator located on the central axis. The plan was that once we started moving forward and revealed ourselves, the fire support section was to provide covering fire from the right flank to keep the enemy pinned down until the assault sections reached the enemy positions.

The first problem, however, was getting started out of the FUP. I gave the silent field signal to stand up and commence the assault, only to be met by collective paralysis. Not a soul moved! In that split second, I realised just how the constant operations had taken their toll on these soldiers, and more particularly how they lacked confidence in me, their newly-arrived platoon commander. It was in that instant that I realised a command was not enough. Leadership had to be personally demonstrated. I said to the nearest soldiers either side of me: 'Well, I'm going. Who's coming with me?'

Uncertain of the outcome, I stood up from our covered position and with my radio operator, Private Ray Ward (who didn't hesitate), began the attack on the enemy defences about 40-50 metres away through the scrub. Within seconds, as the covering fire began, I was flanked by the assault sections to my left and right. Fortunately, their training triumphed. From then on, everything went like clockwork as we fought our way with fire and movement into their defences and caves.

The attack was a success with our capture of what turned out to be a company-sized position but fortunately only occupied by an enemy squad. Further, we did not suffer any casualties. Recovered from the enemy dead and wounded were various weapons and equipment, as well as some useful intelligence information from documents.

While this was a relatively small and somewhat insignificant event, importantly I learnt a significant lesson in leadership that requires you to personally lead and not to simply rely on a command or an order.

David Wilkins

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"This here is where the course starts getting a lot tougher."



"Explain that maneuver to me, Johnson!"

Harry's story continues ...

'When Harry Met Dot': A Story of Love and Glory



*It's still the same old story
A fight for love and glory
A case of do or die -
The world will always welcome lovers
As time goes by.*

Left: 'As Time Goes By' played by Sam in *Casablanca*

Private Henry 'Harry' Saunders was a member of the noted 7 Section, 9 Platoon, of the 2/14 th Battalion, AIF. He was an Aboriginal from the Gunditjmara Tribe from the Mission at Lake Condah near Portland in South Australia.

Harry joined the 2/14 Battalion when he was 18 and quickly bonded with the other 10 men of 7 Section, in particular his two close friends Alan Avery and Bruce Kingsbury.

The Battalion moved to the Middle East where Harry was able to catch up with his older brother Reg in Jerusalem. (Reg later became the first Aboriginal to become an AIF Officer). The Battalion took part in the six weeks vicious battle against the Vichy French in Southern Lebanon, where both Harry and Alan Avery were wounded at the Battle of Jezzine. Avery was awarded a Military Medal in this action.

While recuperating side by side, Harry received a letter addressed to 'Djambie'. When queried, Harry said it meant 'Blood brothers'. From then on, Harry was 'Black Jambie' and Alan and Bruce became 'White Jambie'. Harry quickly became known to the Battalion as 'Jambie'.

On the way home to Australia on the boat, Harry met a tall Aboriginal called 'Alf' from Western Australia. Back in Australia, they went on a double date, where Harry met Dot-Dorothy Banfield. He was smitten from the beginning and they dated for three intense weeks. He knew he would be heading up to New Guinea, time was short, so he proposed. Dot hesitated and said she'd write. That was encouraging enough, a 'maybe' was better than a 'no'.

The Battalion moved to Yandina, north of Brisbane to jungle train in preparation for New Guinea. After some tender letters, Harry was excited to receive one accepting his proposal.

The Battalion moved to New Guinea and went straight up to the Kokoda Track (as it was then called). Here they met the Japanese and during the vicious four day Battle of Isurava, Harry was beside Bruce Kingsbury when he was killed. The battle was a momentous action which many historians credit the turning point, the high-water mark, in the Campaign. Kingsbury was awarded the Victoria Cross, the first awarded on an Australian Territory.

Harry himself was thrown off the Kokoda Track with about 50 other men in what was known as 'Bucklers Party', and eventually reached Port Moresby after seven desperate weeks.

Back in Moresby, he wrote to his father while he was recuperating with malaria: 'I cried when Bruce was killed, one of the finest mates a man could have'. He said goodbye to Alan Avery at Moresby who was off to become an Officer back in Australia.

Harry then continued back into battle at Gona, the other side of Kokoda. Here, on the 29th of November, 1942, he was killed in a vicious firefight as a bullet ripped through his head. He was 23. One of his mates found a locket entwined in his dog tags. Inside was written, 'Dot, Adelaide'. His distraught mate asked that the medallion be returned to Dot. Sadly it never was.

Dot eventually married Harry's brother Reg.

7 section of 9 platoon in the 2/14th battalion has been described as a the most highly decorated section in Australian and British military history. Between them the 11 original members won a Victoria Cross, a Distinguished Conduct Medal and four Military Medals.

Footnote

While I was researching for information on Harry Saunders for my book 'The Silent Men', I read the 1962 book on his brother Reg, 'The Embarrassing Australian', by Harry Gordon. I knew Harry as a Brisbane Journalist and contacted him. He told me Dot was still alive and living in Toowoomba.

I contacted Dot and interviewed her at length. She was happy to share -'It's time', she said, and she gave me a marvellous parcel of letters between her and Harry. After I extracted what I needed for the book, she didn't know what to do with them. I suggested she put them into the War Memorial in Canberra, which she did, a terrific resource for our National Collective Memory.

Dot died on Mother's Day 1997. When my book was launched in Brisbane, by 'Digger' James, then President of the United Services Club, in 1999, Dot's remaining family came down for the launch - a terrific occasion for us all.

Peter Dornan AM

Anzac Memorial Coin

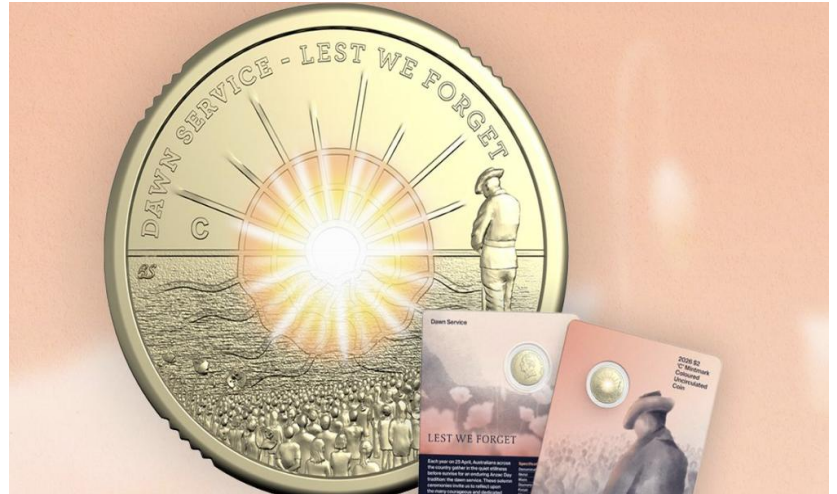
Moments of remembrance often come in quiet, powerful ways. Across Australia, traditions continue to honour those who served and sacrificed.

This Anzac Day the Royal Australian Mint has unveiled two striking commemorative coins that are sure to catch the eye of collectors.

The Dawn Service \$2 coin

For many Australians, the dawn service is at the heart of Anzac Day. Held across the country in the early hours of 25 April, these ceremonies begin in near darkness, reflecting the conditions faced by troops during the Gallipoli landing in 1915.

The new coloured \$2 coin captures that powerful atmosphere. Its design features the first light of day breaking over the horizon, with people gathered in quiet reflection.

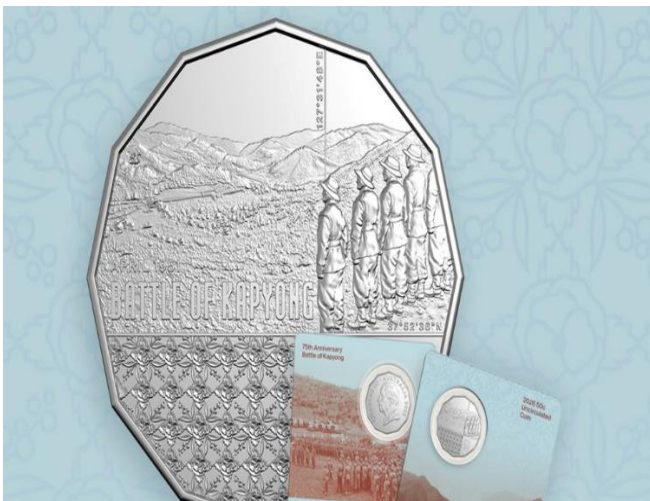


A lone soldier stands facing the sunrise, while poppies appear behind the crowd—a moving tribute to those who have served in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping missions.

Federal Assistant Minister Andrew Leigh described the coin as a lasting way to honour Australians who gave their lives in service to the nation. The fine silver proof version is limited to just 10,000 coins and priced at \$90, with a strict limit of one per person. The coloured uncirculated version is more widely available, with 100,000 coins minted at \$22.50 each and a purchase limit of five.

There's also a circulating version of the design, meaning you might come across one in your everyday change after Anzac Day—so it's worth keeping an eye out.

The Battle of Kapyong 50c coin



Marking 75 years since the Battle of Kapyong, the Mint has also released a commemorative 50c coin recognising this important moment in the Korean War. In April 1951, Australian, Canadian, and British forces held off advancing Chinese troops in the Kapyong Valley under extremely difficult conditions.

Thirty-two Australians lost their lives in the battle. This uncirculated 50c coin has a mintage of 40,000 and is priced at \$20, with a limit of one per buyer.

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How far did those big guns go on the Track?

The photo below is of B Troop, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, pulling one of their 25 pounder guns through dense jungle. As long as I've known the story of the Kokoda Trail, I had believed that the gun fired from Owers Corner was as far as these big guns were able to go. It was from there that the artillery fired over Imita Ridge to Ioribaiwa, inspiring veteran Alan Avery, still on the Track, to invite the enemy to "Mix that with your rice!"

As anyone who has walked beyond Owers Corner knows, the road ends there, and from that point there is a steep walking descent to the Goldie River followed by the ascent to Imita Ridge that included the infamous 'Golden Staircase'. These are unlikely conditions to even attempt to haul one of these huge guns, so I had believed that the photos of the guns being dragged through jungle must have been taken before they reached Owers Corner.

I was wrong!



Photo: Australian War Memorial

A recent report in 39th Battalion newsletter, *The Good Guts*, recorded the presentation of a fragment of the Cascade Gardens Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall, to Gold Coast City Council in appreciation of their support for the 8 August, Kokoda Day service. The fragment depicts a 25 pounder being hauled through the jungle and the report claimed it was being manhandled up Imita Ridge, much further than I believed they had been taken.

When I searched for the image on the Australian War Memorial website, I found the citation claimed the men were in the vicinity of Uberi, on the further side of the Goldie River from Owers Corner.

So, I made a further check of the 14th Field Regiment war diary and found that the citation is correct. In an unbelievable feat of human will power, at least one gun was hauled as far as Imita Ridge. As it turned out, the gun was never fired, as the speed of the enemy retreat rendered it unnecessary, but the efforts of the 14th Field Regiment and 2/1st Pioneer Battalion in getting as far as they did certainly needs to be acknowledged.

Jill Bear (With thanks 2-14 Battalion Newsletter, March 2026)

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Guitars for Veterans Australia (G4VA)

Guitars for Veterans Australia (G4VA) is an ACNC not-for-profit charity organization founded in 2017. Our team works to help and assist Australian veterans and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members experiencing the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) through the power of music. We have many testimonials from veterans that have found the introduction of music into their lives has greatly improved their mental health and outlook to life.



We assist those who served in the ADF by seeking donations of used or new guitars, together with financial support for lessons. G4VA co-ordinates veterans and delivers a structured professional guitar training program of 10 lessons together with a guitar. We also host and present at various events throughout the year to showcase music and also where veterans can socialize and play music in a supportive environment.

Guitars For Veterans are not "Music Therapists" however we do provide a pathway to help veterans deliver "self music therapy" as a way to assist, manage stress and cope under difficult situations. Studies in this field have suggested that listening and playing music can help the brain rewire itself to learn new skills and open new possibilities. Music can't erase old memories, but it can open new pathways of joy and happiness.

Australian music icon and Vietnam veteran Normie Rowe AM is a strong supporter of Guitars for Vets Australia (G4VA), contributing his music to their promotional albums, including "Second Tour," to support veterans with PTSD through music therapy. He is recognized as a key advocate for veterans, leveraging his legacy as a 1960s music star who served in Vietnam.



G4VA has officially thanked Normie for his strong advocacy and for gifting his music to support their cause.

For more information, visit the [G4VA website](#) or their [Facebook page](#).

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John Jackson DFC

John Francis Jackson, DFC (1908-2026) was an Australian fighter ace and squadron commander of World War II. He was credited with eight aerial victories, and led No. 75 Squadron during the Battle of Port Moresby in 1942. Port Moresby International Airport is named after him.



On Sunday May 24th at 4.30pm, the AWM 'Last Post' Ceremony was held for SQNLDR John Jackson. John was an early-WW2 3 SQN ace (Gladiator/Hurricane) and later became a key figure in the desperate defence of Port Moresby in 1942, leading 75 Squadron.

The event was live-streamed, and the video is available on YouTube and the AWM website.

John was born in New Farm, Brisbane, and attended Brisbane Grammar School then Scots College in

Warwick. While living on the family property at St George, John learnt to fly and purchased his own plane. In the 1930s, John participated in air races, pioneered interstate flying, and joined the RAAF Reserve.

After his marriage, John enlisted in the War effort when he was trained on new aircraft and posted to the Western Desert where he was awarded the DFC. Later John was posted to Port Moresby where he led air raids on Lae Airfield and defended Port Moresby. John's plane was shot down, and he died on 28 April 1942. He is buried at Bomana War Cemetery.

(Courtesy of PNGAA and AWM)

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Bomana War Cemetery

Lest we forget

