

Donation of Restored Plaque Adds to New Guinea Display Story

BY DI SNEDDON

Most have heard of the invaluable work that the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' did in assisting the war effort in Papua and New Guinea during World War II.

They were responsible for saving many Australian soldiers' lives.

However little is known 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 Battalion (NGIB).

In 2007 The PIB NGIB HQ PIR Association was formed to raise awareness to the contributions of soldiers from the Papuan Infantry Battalion, New Guinea Infantry Battalion, and the Pacific Islands Regiment during World War II.

This invaluable role of the PIB and NGIB in WWII will now be brought to the attention of many more people with a new plaque now on display in the permanent New Guinea section at the Australian Army Infantry Museum at

Singleton.

The 27kg bronze plaque had originally been part of the Kokoda Trail and Korean War Monument at The Gold Coast that suffered a disgraceful vandalism attack with the plaque later turning up at a scrap metal business.

Fortunately, the business operator noticed the significance of the plaque and notified the authorities.

The damaged, bent double 60cm by 80cm, 27.5 kg bronze plaque was returned to Association secretary Kevin Horton by the police.

Ian and Brian Wust (sons of Past President of the Association, the late Sgt Frank Wust) even snapped the plaque in half during the restoration process but it was finally returned to almost original condition if you don't check out the plaque's back.

The incident happened days out from Remembrance Day and Gold Coast City Council acted quickly to repair the monument and replace the plaque.

So, suddenly, the Association had a spare plaque so where better to place it than with the New Guinea exhibitions at the Australian Army Infantry Museum.

Association vice president Steve Beveridge lives in



Newcastle and organised a presentation last week with museum curator Paul Mitrovich.

"It will foster memories and tell the story of one of our darkest periods of World War 2 when Australian troops faced Japanese soldiers for the first time in the Kokoda campaign," Paul said.

He said the plaque was

even more relevant exhibited next to the Bell Iroquois (Huey) No 487, that was flown in Papua New Guinea campaign.

The museum's sole purpose is to tell stories and it is opportune to use this space to tell more of the PIB and NGIB.

The PIB and NGIB battalions are estimated to have killed more than 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.

"Moving silently in the jungle, inflicting casualties on us, then gone, like green shadows (Words 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 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," said Association vice president Steve Beveridge at the presentation in Singleton.

"We are delighted at the opportunity to tell the story of the PIB and the NGIB and to present this plaque where we know it will be appreciated," he said.

Kevin Horton, Russell Wade, Australian Army Infantry Museum curator Peter Mitrovich, Garry Screen and Steve Beveridge at the handover of a plaque that acknowledges the special relationship shared between Australian and Papua New Guinea troops during World War II.



Long before it became a permanent exhibit at the Australian Army Infantry Museum, the Bell Iroquois (Huey) No 487, was flown in the Papua New Guinea campaign. The plaque will now form part of the museum's New Guinea section alongside Huey.



The plaque now on display at the museum located along Range Road at Singleton, just outside the Lone Pine Barracks.

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> **Saturday 14 February, 8:00am - 1:00pm** at Jerrys Plains Recreation Ground, corner of Wambo Street and Jerrys Plains Road, Jerrys Plains

The day forms part of the **2026 Jerrys Plains Community Fair and Car Boot Sale**

For further information please contact Nic McLaughlin **0455 782 292** or email EnvironmentandCommunity@hvo.com.au

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Friday 6th February 2026

16 HRT 6Feb