

The PNG Adventurous Training Guide 2017

By Reg Yates RFD

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“Time spent on reconnaissance is seldom wasted”

“Planning & Preparation Prevents Poor Performance”

This Guide provides outline military or colonial history notes on the following, 8 day - 10 day activities; it does not contain sketch maps, photos or images; readers should consult the various books listed (though some are out of print, or very expensive) and the survey maps suggested; there is no index. Subject to Reg Yates' copyright as author this Guide may be circulated free to anyone wanting to read and learn more about Australians in Papua & New Guinea since the First World War.

Bougainville; including Porton Plantation, Slater's Knoll, Torokina and Panguna's abandoned mine.

Shaggy Ridge; including Nadzab, Lae War Cemetery and Kaiapit.

Huon Peninsula including Finschafen, Scarlet Beach and Sattelberg;

“Fear Drive My Feet” by the late Peter Ryan, MM, MID; Mt Saruwaged and Kitamoto's IJA escape route;

Wau-Salamaua including the Black Cat and Skin Diwai tracks;

Bulldog-Wau Army Road and the Bulldog Track;

Rabaul- Bita Paka and AE-1; Lark Force and Tol Plantation; the IJA underground hospital

Mt Wilhelm; with local guides

Walindi Plantation, as a base for battlefield survey tours to Cape Gloucester, Willaumez Peninsula and Awul/Uvol; reconnaissance for caving in the Nakanai mountains; and scuba-diving and snorkelling;

Sepik River; Houna Mission to Angoram paddling a dugout canoe; Wewak and Dagua by 4WD;

White-water rafting on the Watut River;

Mt Victoria trek;

Karius & Champion's 1926-1928 crossing of the Fly River-Sepik River headwaters; Hindenburg Range.

This Guide is for experienced trekkers, familiar with walking in Papua New Guinea or working with PNG villagers; and for ADF personnel with or without overseas service. The Guide outlines treks and water-borne activities in Papua New Guinea which can be carried out by small groups over several days or a fortnight including travel time. It is based on the Reg Yates' original “ADF Guide to Adventurous Training in PNG”, a demi-official handout which circulated mainly among Army Alpine Association members during 1988 – 1995.

Reg visited PNG almost annually and at his own expense on ADF Adventurous Training activities or study tours during 1984-1998; continuing as a trek leader since 1997. Reg was an Army Reserve Infantry Captain during 1971-2001, with no Active Service; a Qualified Ambulance Paramedic with MAS/ASV during 1973-2009; ‘Tok save man’ for KTF for 8

months when the Kokoda Trail was at risk of being blocked by local villagers in 2008; paramedic on a cargo ship in Asian waters during 2009-2010, and paramedic on four tours with Medcons on PNG seismic sites during 2011-2013; currently a part-time paramedic with Colbrow Medics; a trek leader with Charlie Lynn of Adventure Kokoda on the Kokoda Trail; and with Zac Zaharias of Peak Learning elsewhere in PNG. Soc' Kienzle of Komplete Kokoda is recognised for his knowledge of the Trail, the Beachheads and Mt Victoria. Soc' is the son of Bert Kienzle, CBE, MBE (Military), MID; he grew up at the family home "Mamba" in the Yodda Valley.

Reg wrote the original, demi-official "PNG Guide to Adventurous Training for ADF Personnel" at the suggestion of Lt Col Robin Letts, MC of DGAT during 1988-1995. During the 1980's and early '90's few ADF members served overseas, other than on exchange, Embassy or UN postings; since 1999 the ADF has had numerous overseas commitments involving significant numbers of personnel. The merits of Adventurous Training are well known within Commonwealth military forces: Ralph Bagnold's explorations by vehicle in Libya and Sinai during the 1920's and 1930's; John Hunt's appointment to the Everest expedition in 1953; Ewen Southby-Tailyour sailing and boating around the Falkland Islands in the late 1970's; the Army Alpine Association's expedition to climb Mt Everest as part of Australia's 1988 Bi-Centennial celebrations.

If approved, ADF Adventurous Training allows small groups of military personnel to visit isolated areas and conduct activities which must be well-planned, physically arduous, mentally challenging, promote teamwork and leadership, and have an element of risk or perceived danger. ADF team members should hire local guides but must carry their own backpacks; weapons are neither required nor carried. Unlike tactical training where experienced NCO's and officers, as military 'umpires' direct and control events ("that bridge is deemed destroyed; find another way around"), any and all problems during adventurous training must be solved by the team, as they occur. Safety is paramount and the team's Risk Assessment must be documented with appropriate solutions. A Post-activity Report including 'Lessons Learned' must be submitted on completion.

Few commercial operators offer the treks or activities listed here; route reconnaissance, arranging accommodation, transport, guides and carriers takes time and money; insurance may be prohibitive for commercial operators; finding enough trekkers to cover costs may be difficult and leave little or no profit for the operator; charter flights, 4WD hire and banana-boats (always risky in poor weather) are expensive even if team members fill all the seats. Individual trekkers must be absolutely clear about the activities for which they seek insurance, to cover personal injuries, emergency treatment and medical evacuation from remote areas back to Australia.

The town-based PNG operators shown here will do their best to look after trekkers and visitors by hiring gear or making local arrangements, sometimes for much time and effort with little profit, simply because they welcome overseas visitors who appreciate PNG and its people. This Guide may also interest 'armchair adventurers' and former residents who are happy to read about PNG and its people today; also Australian, American or Japanese citizens whose forebears served in Papua and New Guinea during World War Two.

Reg Yates has walked or carried out all of the above at least once between 1984 and 2016. Reg will lead more Kokoda Trail treks during 2017 and hopes to revisit some of the activities described here this year and next. The Kokoda Trail is well documented and not included here; intending trekkers should obtain Bill James' "Field Guide to the Kokoda Trail" and contact Charlie Lynn of Adventure Kokoda or Zac Zaharias of Peak Learning.

Bougainville

Slater's Knoll, Torokina, Porton Plantation, Panguna's abandoned mine, Numa Numa Trail (No access at present), Mt Balbi (No access at present).

Recommended Reading:

"The Hard Slog; Australians in the Bougainville Campaign 1944-45" by Karl James; Cambridge.

"Jack Read – Coast Watcher 1941-43; His Bougainville Reports"; Papua New Guinea Printing.

"The Coast Watchers" by Eric Feldt; Australian War Classics Giant.

"Porton; a Deadly Trap", by Audrey Davidson; Boolarong Press.

"War in the Shadows" by Peter Medcalfe; AWM-Collins.

"My War on Bougainville" by Ted Schact; AMHP.

"Militia Battalion at War" by Russell Matthews; 58/59th Battalion Association.

"Bougainville Campaign Diary" by Yauka Liria; Indra Publishing.

"On Ops" by Frame & Palazzo; UNSW.

"The Good Neighbour; Australian Peace Support Operations in the Pacific Islands; 1980-2006", by Bob Breen; Cambridge.

Maps:

Joint Operations Graphics (JOG maps) BUKA and KIETA; 1:250,000; Sheets SB 56-8 and SB 56-12; joined together they show the entire island.

Note: If landowners re-open the Numa Numa Trail and Mt Balbi trek, relevant 1:100,000 series PNG topographic maps can be obtained from the National Mapping Bureau, Port Moresby.

Local Contacts:

Greg & Patricia Wong, Toyena Lodge, Buka

Zhon (John) Bosco, Bougainville Experience Tours, Arawa

Laurens Belehe (pronounced Bell-ay), Kuri Village Resort, Buka; a PNG Tourism/Cultural official.

WW II Australian Coast Watchers on Bougainville in 1942-43, notably Jack Read and Paul Mason reported Japanese airstrikes coming from Rabaul: signals in clear, such as "27 bombers and at least 24 fighters going yours" gave the Americans two hours' notice to get their fighter planes aloft and ships to 'action stations'. According to USN Admiral Halsey, "Australian Coast Watchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific".

During late 1944-45 more than 30,000 Australians served on Bougainville and more than 500 Australian soldiers were killed in action against Imperial Japanese soldiers on the island. At the same time 6th Division AIF fought to clear Imperial Japanese from Aitape to Wewak on the north coast of New Guinea; Australia was responsible for both areas by League of Nations mandate as Territory of Papua & New Guinea.

Three Victoria Crosses were awarded on Bougainville in WW II: Pte Frank Partridge, 7th Battalion AMF on "Part Ridge" to the south of Porton Plantation; Pte Sefanaia Sukanaivalu (Posthumous) of the Fijian Battalion serving with American forces at Torokina; and Cpl Reg Rattey, 25th Battalion AMF, near Slater's Knoll.

Today, Bougainvillean adults know something of WW II, but most North Solomons' experience of armed conflict started with 'Secession' in the 60's and 70's, becoming the 'Crisis' by the late 1980's, after disagreement over mining royalties, land ownership, environmental concerns, and lack of consultation. Electricity pylons delivering power to Panguna mine were dropped with stolen explosives; mining was abandoned by BCL; the island was blockaded by PNG police and soldiers; the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and later, the opposing Bougainville Resistance Force came into being; villages were burned, Government soldiers and Provincial civilians were killed or injured, famine and disease took their toll. The Sandline International affair, the Kangu Beach massacre and the Burnham and Lincoln Agreements in NZ all played their parts, as did the deployment of the Truce Monitoring Group and, later, the Peace Monitoring Group to Bougainville for periods of time in the 1990's, staffed by Australian, New Zealand, Fijian and Vanuatu military, civilian and police personnel.

More than 3500 Australian service personnel and 300 civilians served with the Peace Monitoring Group during the 'Crisis'. A further 3000 ADF ship's companies, aircrew and security specialists supported them and their regional allies at a cost of \$243 million since late 1997. Bougainville is now peaceful; most weapons have been surrendered and destroyed; a referendum to decide on 'regional autonomy' or remaining part of PNG is some time away; taxation arrangements and possibly a revised constitution may also be required.

Tourism

The PNG government is keen to develop tourism to boost the nation's economy and provide local employment. It plans to make Bougainville one of five 'tourism hubs': no funds are available specifically for tourism but projected funds for roads, hospitals and community projects are to be allocated in areas where tourism might also benefit.

Bougainville has great locations, activities and operators for short, one, two or three day visits by tourists, but access is being denied to its two best treks, each of several days: First, the WW II Numa Numa Trail has been closed to 'white men' because Me'ekamui faction leaders in the hinterland have genuine grievances about the sale of a plantation and loss of livelihood on their traditional land; they feel ignored or cheated by authorities; their followers have the training and wherewithal to protect their land; and second, the track from Red River near Wakunai, to Mt Balbi has been closed, partly because of clan rivalry and associated land ownership problems; Mt Balbi, 2970 metres approximately, is Bougainville's highest peak, with four cones, one active and steaming. If reopened, both tracks combined will provide 6-10 days of military history and 'adventure' trekking, akin to the Kokoda Trail and other WW II journeys in PNG.

Wakunai leaders were unable to help with access to Numa Numa Trail or Mt Balbi from the east coast; clan rivalry was apparent. Accompanied by a guide and three carriers from Torokina, Reg Yates met Me'ekamui faction leader John Tuarairi at Topiriaka, north of the Laruma River, but was refused access to Numa Numa Trail from the west coast; 'white men' are not welcome and their safety cannot be guaranteed. The Me'ekamui consider government to be corrupt, and that tourism only benefits airlines, hotels and big-business, but not villagers; fair comment, up to a point. However it costs villagers' little to provide tent space on grass, a clean long-drop toilet, firewood, access to clean water for drinking, as well as downstream washing; perhaps use of a Haus Win (thatch roof, raised pandanus floor, low side walls, no insect screens) where trekkers and villagers can talk. Village leaders, guides and carriers all have stories to tell; cash from trekkers goes direct to those providing it.

Reg Yates put an inexpensive solution to Bougainville and expatriate contacts: provide funding for trained staff and medicines for a health clinic at each end of the Numa Numa Trail; and fund a school with approved school text books and a salaried teacher at the eastern end. Reg Yates is happy to return to Bougainville and talk further to local leaders.

Logistics

Buka has an efficient airport terminal, in need of redecorating; apparently there are plans to rebuild the passenger and cargo area soon. There are no light aircraft or helicopter services based on Bougainville; the nearest are based hours away at Kokopo or Kimbe, New Britain. Trekking groups should have sufficient guide/carriers (2:1 ratio recommended) to make a bush-material stretcher and carry anyone injured to the nearest road, plus a Sat-Phone to call for pre-arranged vehicle pick-up. Mobile phones work in and around towns and may work line-of-sight to mobile network towers in the general area.

There are wharves and jetties for coastal shipping at Buka, Loloho (near Arawa), Kieta and Buin. Cruise ship requirements for pilotage, dockside berths, ship-to-shore ferrying and transit-passenger shelter (possibly arriving with several hundred or more passengers seeking several hours or a couple of days' touring) need expert assessment. Cruise ships visit most ports in PNG from time to time; Bougainville has tourism operators able to provide basic transport and provisioning for modest numbers, given reasonable notice.

Buka General Hospital was visited informally; it serves the local populace and supports outlying health clinics. Rubbish collection and sewage disposal within Buka town needs continuing maintenance at best; or significant overhaul.

Bougainville has well-made crushed-rock roads and bridges with numerous 'wet crossings' (fords), occasionally cut by flooding rain; fortunately there is a well-managed, long-term road maintenance program. Travel by hired 4WD with a local driver is efficient but very expensive; such vehicles are usually kept on the Bougainville side of Buka Passage rather than ferrying them back and forth; a local guide or driver to introduce the visitor and find particular locals is essential. By contrast PMV fares are inexpensive and cover the main routes, stopping frequently and always crowded; there is no guarantee that the PMV driver or other passengers know where to find the desired address or particular person; the visitor may have to stay at the nearest accommodation and make enquiries.

The road from Buka follows the east coast through Wakunai, Arawa and Kieta around to Buin. Buin town is some distance from the coast; it has a police station and some administration offices but no actual town centre. Most 'war relics' in Buin are Japanese; Yamamoto's crash site is well known. Visitors continuing northwards from Buin around the west coast can drive through Panguna mine-site without difficulty, then be waved through the boom gate on the Arawa side. However south-bound visitors arriving from Buka or Arawa will find a 'T' junction and roadside market, then the boom gate across the road to Panguna. If on a tour with John Bosco, part of his fee goes to the gate-keeper(s); otherwise visitors should expect to pay them direct. Consider buying cooked food from women at the market, then sitting down with the gate-keepers, to share a meal and hear their stories.

Locating WW II battlefields on Bougainville requires a vehicle, map-reading skills, some tactical knowledge and approval from a local elder.

The US Marine Corps' 3rd Division landed at Torokina in Empress Augusta Bay in late 1943; Marine Sgt Robert Owens died silencing a single well-served 75mm gun which sank a dozen landing craft, to be awarded a posthumous Medal of Honour. Marines were followed by US Army's 37th Division and Americal Division; Imperial Japanese forces took many weeks to advance on foot from Numa Numa and Buin and attack, to be soundly defeated by American artillery, USAAF Corsair airstrikes from newly constructed airfields, and infantry with machine guns dug in behind barbed wire; 320 Americans were killed whereas 5,522 Imperial Japanese dead were counted and American intelligence estimated 8,500 Japanese killed in total. Australians relieved the Americans in late 1944.

Torokina can only be reached by banana-boat from Buka; 3 hours each way, sea-state permitting; access via the Numa Numa Trail is currently denied, as above. Local people can guide visitors to decaying Amtraks (LVT; tracked landing vehicles) and trucks; abandoned

aircraft disappeared for scrap years ago; rainforest and occasional food or cash-crop gardens cover the former WW II base. Concrete foundation slabs are common with occasional 44-gallon drum pit toilets to be avoided but both wartime airfields have disappeared; there are hamlets, occasional villages but no town, airstrip or jetty. The coastal scenery is a delight; the general area where Jack Read had one of his coast-watching locations near Aravia can be seen.

Porton Plantation is best reached by road, less than an hour from Buka by vehicle. 31st/51st Battalion AMF sustained the only Australian defeat on Bougainville; fringing coral (on which landing craft ran aground) and the remains of the jetty destroyed in WW II can still be seen. Chabai Mission will lend a guide and local villagers can point out a small plaque on an obscure tree stump, back from the beach. Local women may offer to wash visitors' feet as a welcoming gesture; offering hands rather than removing boots is acceptable; make a small donation to the villagers' church.

On the west coast, south of Empress Augusta Bay, Slater's Knoll is small, some 30 metres high and 300 metres long; it proved ideal for the HQ of 25th Battalion AMF and part of a Rifle Company to dig in and defend; it is still covered in rainforest and contained on three sides by the horse-shoe bend in the Puriata River. The Puriata is narrow, 30 metres wide and now diverges on one side from the original horseshoe bend. Access is by 4WD vehicle via remnants of the WW II Army Road which connects from the more widely used Buin-Arawa Road (originally the WW II 'Commando Road'); both are roughly parallel with the west coast, 5 km and 10 km inland respectively. Regis Kokobe at Siwai can direct visitors to local elder Gabriel Kamusi who should be invited to accompany visitors about 3km along the Army Road to Slater's Knoll; 'Galvin's Crossing' and 'Kero Creek' (with the remains of a rusting 'American' bridge) can be found nearby. The Australian defenders dug in and sited machine guns behind barbed wire covering the open 'horseshoe bend', the only possible approach. Other 25th Battalion Rifle Companies dug in elsewhere covering the 'roads' to Slater's Knoll, all supported by artillery, 2/4th Armoured Regiment's Matilda tanks and RNZAF Corsair airstrikes. The Australians fought for eight days to defeat the Imperial Japanese 23rd and 13th Infantry Regiments. Almost 300 Japanese were buried in three mass graves in front of Slater's Knoll; all told some 620 Japanese dead were counted. An Australian WW II Matilda tank with a large piece of the glacis plate missing and a large Japanese field gun at each side, stands at a 'T' junction near the Hongarai River where the Army Road leads to the Commando Road (See image in "Militia Battalion at War", page 165). Locals refer to it as 'machine gun place', meaning any 'war relic' with a gun!

Japanese citizens, over the years, have attempted to locate mass graves of Imperial Japanese soldiers in PNG to exhume, cremate and repatriate the ashes to Japan. Unfortunately, without detailed knowledge they have sometimes dug in the wrong place or asked those with no particular connection to the location, finding nothing as a result. Australians who have walked the Kokoda Trail or read "The Bone Man" will know of Nishimura, sole survivor of his Imperial Japanese Rifle Company, who returned to PNG many years ago, staying to recover the remains of his fellow soldiers at Brigade Hill, the Beachheads at Gona, Buna and Sananada; later near Lae. The Japanese Government is not involved. From other visits, Reg Yates is aware of a smaller mass grave site at Scarlet Beach, near Finschafen, plus one site along the approximate escape route marked by Kitamoto from Lae across the Saruwaged Range. There is no animosity from locals towards Japanese visitors; tourist money is welcome.

RAAF Catalina A24-43 crashed near Aita while dropping supplies to Coast Watchers on the night of 26 April 1943; three crew were killed instantly and six injured survivors found: F/O Dunn, P/O Twist, Cpl Yates, Cpl Fenwick, Cpl Wettenhall, and Sgt Thompson. Of these four were captured and killed near Tikorapaia along with some members of another Coast Watcher party led by Lt Bedkober, AIF; two RAAF members were evacuated with Lt Paul Mason and party on 24 July 1943. Aita is on the Aita River which rises east of Mt Balbi;

Tikoriapaia is southwest of Mt Balbi; both Aita and Tikoriapaia are relatively near Rotokas and the Numa Numa Trail (see “Jack Read – Coast Watcher, 1941-43”).

One of the last Australian’s killed-in-action on Bougainville in August 1945 was a Victorian, Pte Eric Bahr of 7th Battalion AMF, on the Numa Numa Trail. If the Me’ekamui agree to reopen it, Reg Yates intends to identify the WW II battlefields (George Hill, Pearl Ridge, etc) along the Trail; and say a prayer for Private Eric Bahr and the other Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen who died returning Bougainville to its traditional owners. A simple ceremony paying respects to all who died throughout the Bougainville ‘Crisis’ will also be appropriate.

Shaggy Ridge

The Lakes, Pallier's Hill, Don's Post, Johns' Knoll, McCaughey's Knoll, Kankiryo Saddle, Crater Hill, Kaiapit and Mission Hill in the Markham Valley, Lae War Cemetery.

Recommended Reading:

"On Shaggy Ridge" by Phil Bradley; or "Hell's Battlefield" by the same author.

"The Purple Devils; 2/6th Australian Commando Squadron" by S. Trigellis-Smith.

"2/4th Field Regiment" by RL Henry; Merrion Press.

"In the Footsteps of Ghosts" by Bill Spencer; Ullan & Unwin.

"Militia Battalion at War; 58/59th Australian Infantry Battalion" by Russell Matthews; 58/59th Bn Assoc.

"Jungle Warfare", a wartime publication for the AMF; Australian War Memorial.

Maps:

DUMPU 8086; 1:100,000

MADANG 8087; 1:100,000

MADANG Joint Operations Graphic (JOG Map) 1:250,000 – optional.

Local Contacts:

Karen Quinn of Melanesian Arts, Lae.

Ray Lee of Corporate Security Transport, Lae

Prior to the Shaggy Ridge campaign, American 503rd Regiment paratroopers with some twenty-seven gunners of 2/4th Field Regiment and two Australian 'short' 25-pounder guns parachuted onto Nadzab airfield, in the Markham Valley on 5 September 1943. The following day 7th Division AIF was air-landed at Nadzab while 9th Division AIF made an amphibious landing from the Huon Gulf, four rivers east of Lae; both 7th and 9th Divisions proceeded to capture Lae in a pincer action.

Forewarned by Allied code-breaking, 2/6th Australian Commando Squadron air-landed from American C-47's at Sangan in the grassy Markham Valley, advancing to capture Kaiapit and destroy three full-strength Imperial Japanese infantry companies in a brilliant two day action, without armour, artillery or air support; Captain Gordon King as OC was awarded DSO for this battle some 60km forward of 7th and 9th Divisions. Thereafter 7th Division AIF advanced along the Markham and Ramu Valley's to eventually capture Shaggy Ridge; 9th Division re-embarked to capture Finschafen and Sattelberg on the Huon Peninsula.

General George Kenney's 5th USAAF made the campaign possible; an Australian infantry battalion required 48 planeloads to move it; an artillery battery of six guns required 30 planeloads; an engineering company 24 planeloads. Ammunition replenishment required another one to eight planes with a 7 day reserve built up at Dumpu and 21 days built up at Nadzab. Daily maintenance of 7th Division in the Ramu Valley required 29 planeloads a day, plus another 8 flights for periodic personnel and freight movements. 42,000 tons of freight were supplied by air during the campaign (See Phil Bradley's "On Shaggy Ridge").

For today's trekkers, Shaggy Ridge in Ramu Valley is best walked as a 6 or 7 day circuit: Onge village and back to Onge, allowing two days to stage through Moresby and visit Lae War Cemetery, plus another couple of days returning to Lae and staging through Moresby on the way home.

There is tent and tarpaulin space for no more than 9 or 10 trekkers plus 20 guide/carriers to camp at the top of the south end of Shaggy Ridge. Karen Quinn requires definite numbers

and several weeks' notice to confirm arrangements and payments with the guide, Titus Silsilio at Onge Village; Titus has guided Reg Yates on 6 Shaggy Ridge treks since 2003; Titus arranges carriers from all villages involved. Karen provides envelopes with agreed amounts for various landowners, to be handed over by the trek leader en route.

Trek companies or individual trekkers planning to arrive unannounced at Onge village and make their own arrangements should consider the problems resulting from the 2013 attack and murders on the Black Cat track. Karen and other Lae-based expats' are long familiar with local rivalries in Morobe Province and effective ways of either resolving clashes, or avoiding them.

Bring sufficient empty large backpacks for the group carriers (2:1 ratio), plus large back packs and 'two-man' tents, one for each trekker. On request, Karen will buy rations at appropriate scales for carriers and trekkers from supermarkets in Lae; also, new 4 or 5 litre plastic water containers which are donated to the Aginau people on completion. Calculate drinking/cooking water requirements for Shaggy Ridge as one litre per head for the entire group, per meal, for two lunches, one dinner and one breakfast; e.g. for five trekkers and 10 carriers provide 15 litres per meal or 60 litres total. (Do NOT use second-hand plastic containers, which may have held solvents, etc. Carry new water containers empty and fill them at Aginau). Karen can hire an axe, spade, bush knives, safety rope, cook pots, cooking utensils and tarps, etc, to be returned on completion.

1st morning: leave Lae around 7 AM; allow a 4 hour drive to Dumpu and Onge village. The start point is Onge village, diagonally across from Dumpu on the Ramu Valley Highway and beside the Faria River. Karen's assistant and the security crew wait for an hour or so while Titus and carriers sort rations and gear into carrier loads; discuss and confirm pay rates, bonus pay, daily duties, etc; trekkers and carriers then walk 4 hours via 'The Lakes', where the Australian 2/4th Field Regiment artillery 25 pounders were sited, to Aginau village underneath Shaggy Ridge.

2nd morning: leave Aginau early to walk 4km down the Faria River and onto Pallier's Hill, then return to Aginau. Lt Noel Pallier, Sgt Lindsay Bear and Capt Stan Bissett of 2/14th Battalion were key figures in this battle, supported by a Vickers machine gun and artillery; capturing the hill gave the Australians access to the Faria River and Shaggy Ridge. Further east is the 4100 feature captured by 2/32nd Battalion in a similar swift action. Allow several hours and start early, avoiding the afternoon sun and heat.

3rd morning: arrange for water carriers to fill 4 or 5 litre plastic water containers on the way to Don's Post. Pay those water carriers at the crest of Shaggy Ridge after a 3-4 hours walk; thank them personally and send them back to Aginau or the entire group will run short of the water intended for the next 24 hours. Lt Bob 'Shaggy' Clampett of 2/27th Battalion AIF led the way in 1943. Halfway to the campsite at the top are both old and recent diggings, not typical of Australian defences; unknown villagers dug these looking for WW II ammunition or explosives. Take care to avoid landslips on the left before the top; just below the summit ask the carriers to point out a 44 gallon drum on its side, once used by army cooks to bake bread-rolls as a change from army biscuits. During WW II 'non-essential, or sight-seeing' military visitors were given a 4 gallon 'Jerry-can' of drinking water to carry up with them.

4th morning: Within 500 metres of leaving the campsite at the south end of Shaggy Ridge, looking left from the first razorback ridge, Mt Wilhelm may be visible on the skyline to the west. Also west of Shaggy Ridge, out of sight and later in the campaign, 2/6th Commando occupied positions at Kumbarum some 10 km away and, together with two rifle companies of 2/25th Battalion with a Vickers gun, blocked an Imperial Japanese attack from the north. Walk north along Shaggy Ridge to the Pimple, Intermediate Pimple, Green Snipers Pimple and McCaughey's Knoll, where Lt Sam McCaughey of 2/16th Battalion was killed in action. The eastern flank of the ridge has a 60 degree, grass-covered slope, and a narrow crest which allowed only a "one man front" during the campaign. The crest is 700 metres above the Faria

River; the track continues under canopy on the western flank from time to time. Later in the campaign 2/9th Battalion advanced along Shaggy Ridge, while 2/12th Battalion advanced via Don's Post, down and along the Mene River and up Canning's Saddle, to attack the Imperial Japanese mountain gun position from the rear. At the same time 2/10th Battalion attacked from the east along Faria Ridge. Continue to the lunch place; Titus and the group carriers will go ahead to Kankiryō Saddle to find water and make camp. Trekkers continue to the Japanese mountain gun position at Prothero One, above Canning's Saddle; the bunker has been dug over but traces remain. The Forward Observer, Capt Colin Stirling, 2/4th Field Regiment attached to 2/12th Battalion skilfully used dangerous but very effective 'splinter ranging' and 'salvo adjustment' to call artillery fire through the rainforest canopy towards himself as 2/12th Battalion dug in on Prothero One, to disrupt and defeat Japanese counter-attacks that night; Stirling was awarded MC; his signaller the MM. After the battle at Prothero, twenty-three stretcher cases had to be carried down Canning's Saddle to the Mene River, west of Shaggy Ridge, then up to the Advanced Dressing Station at Geyton's Post. The only surgeon, Captain Clarence Leggett operated for three days and nights, with 2 hours sleep each morning to prepare the wounded for movement to the jeep road to Dumpu and evacuation. After visiting Prothero One, trekkers descend to Kankiryō Saddle (pronounced Kanki-ryō) meaning, ironically, Place of Joy. There may be clean water in a spring nearby, or if necessary carriers may go further to collect water from the Faria River headwaters. Two Japanese mountain guns (one 'spiked', with its muzzle destroyed) and an abandoned Japanese anti-aircraft gun can be seen; the latter may have shot down Flt Lt 'Bob' Staley's Boomerang which crashed west of Prothero; a Commando patrol buried him.

5th morning: walk up Crater Hill and the start of Faria Ridge with camera and water-bottle, then return to Kankiryō for big packs and walk past the other mountain gun; then descend to the Faria River bed (secondary growth has covered much of the 2014 landslip; avoid stepping on slippery logs) to Mouska (WW II 'Mainstream'). Consider walking onto John's Knoll and returning, or arranging a 'Sing sing' by school children, shooting a bow and arrow (bonara in Tok Pisin) and traditional fire-lighting; make a donation to the local school; join students in 'The Hokey-pokey' and coach trekkers to sing "Once a Jolly Swagman" in reply.

6th morning (or 7th morning, depending on trekkers' fitness and prior arrangements with Karen Quinn): walk southeast onto John's Knoll (Lt Bob Johns platoon of 2/27th Battalion blocked the Imperial Japanese supply route here) and return to Mouska; then visit an Australian Vickers gun position and walk down the Faria River to Aginau; stay overnight (away from the main road) and text Karen Quinn by Sat-Phone to meet the security vehicle at 1000 on the 7th morning. Lay out tents to dry and collect all borrowed gear; pay Titus and the carriers; drive back to Lae, visiting Kaiapit and Mission hill en route. Point out Atzera Ridge from 7 Mile where Pte Richard Kelliher was awarded a Victoria Cross; visit the Markham Bridge; visit Nadzab, captured by US paratroops on 5 September 1943; the Australian 7th Division was flown into Nadzab the following day from Moresby and Tsili Tsili.

Reg Yates has walked twice along Shaggy Ridge to Kankiryō Saddle; then continued north through Saipa and Paipa to the Mindjim Gorge and Bogadjim on the coast. The only safe period is the 'Dry Season' in late July - early August. Being caught in the Gorge by flash-flooding during the 'Wet Season' will be extremely dangerous for the entire group, if not fatal. In heavy rain it might even be necessary to abandon the trek before entering the Gorge and return to Onge. The Mindjim Gorge is parallel with the start/finish of the Imperial Japanese motor road and merely allows access to the coast; the surrounding terrain is difficult, with numerous cliffs (See patrol report excerpts by the late Lt Jack Pimm, MC of 58/59th Battalion in "Militia Battalion at War", page 121). There is an aerial image of the Japanese motor-road from Bogadjim to Yaula opposite p.749 in "The New Guinea Offensives" but no remaining bridges or foot track exist today. If determined to go to Bogadjim, detailed arrangements must be made via Karen Quinn to have everyone picked up from the coastal road and taken to Madang, without relying on PMV's; have cash to pay the

guide/carriers, including PMV fare to get them from Madang back to Onge; book accommodation for trekkers in Madang; and return Karen's trek gear to her in Lae. Madang hotels can arrange fishing trips; the Coast Watchers' Memorial is well worth a visit; the airport is a vehicle ride away. Bear in mind that the road through the hills out of Madang to Lae can be cut during the 'Wet Season'.

Huon Peninsula

Finschafen, Scarlet Beach, Sattelberg, Jivivenang (pronounced 'Jiwonning') and its post-war 'mud map' made of river stones & concrete, Fougasse Corner, Pabu Hill and 'Horace the Horse'

Recommended Reading:

"Bravery above Blunder" by General John Coates; Oxford

"Reconquest: New Guinea 1943-1944" AMF wartime publication.

"Derrick VC" by Murray Farquhar; Rigby

"Jungle Warfare" a wartime publication for the AMF; Australian War Memorial

Maps:

FINSCHAFEN 8484; 1:100,000

Local Contacts:

Karen Quin; Melanesian Arts, Lae

Sattelberg dominates the battlefield including Dreger Harbour, Finschafen, Katika, Scarlet Beach, Pabu Hill and Wareo. Sgt Tom 'Diver' Derrick, VC, DCM of 2/48th Battalion AIF was awarded a Victoria Cross for capturing Sattelberg on 24-25 November 1943, supported by his platoon. Tragically Sgt Derrick 'died-of-wounds' in May 1945 on Tarakan, Borneo. An AWM photo in "Bravery above Blunder" shows Sattelberg bare of vegetation after bombing and shelling; rainforest covers the feature today. There is an excellent AWM sketch map in "Derrick VC" showing the road from Jivevaneng ('Jiwonning') rising uphill to Sattelberg, including Derrick's route from 'Turn off Corner'; this is shown above and parallel with Siki Creek, turning uphill onto the objective at the third re-entrant; it should be retraceable with little difficulty, given local approval and a guide.

There is a post-war guesthouse at Sattelberg, managed by local women; comfortably fitted out; if planning to stay overnight bring food from Lae or Dreger Harbour and enquire about buying local vegetables; the driver and vehicle may be required to return to Dreger Harbour overnight and collect visitors next day. There is a foot track from Sattelberg down to Scarlet Beach with panoramic views; slippery underfoot; about 3 hours; arrange for the driver to collect you.

The entire battlefield excepting Wareo can be visited over two or three days by vehicle, with a local driver. There is no road access to Wareo; it becomes impassable after The Lakes, beyond Pabu Hill. Pabu Hill is a feature within "Horace the Horse", so named because of its resemblance on air-photos to a Disney cartoon character. 2/32nd Battalion AIF occupied Pabu Hill for ten days to cut the Imperial Japanese supply line; the fighting was so intense that medics treating casualties had to lie prone, feel for wounds and bandage them, in the dark. Lt Col Kiernan Dorney, CO 2/3rd Field Ambulance was awarded DSO; his ABC journalist son is Sean Dorney.

Simplest access to the Huon Peninsula is by banana-boat from Lae to the jetty at Dreger Harbour, south of Finschafen; 3 hours travel, sea-state permitting. Karen Quin can arrange this, including Personal Flotation Devices (PFD; i.e. life-jackets or buoyancy vests) and delivery to/from the boat area at Lae wharf; also a driver and 4WD on arrival to take visitors to the township. Karen can also provide supermarket food items suitable for sandwiches or 'slow-cooker' meals. Two motel-style places provide self-catering accommodation with town generator power (lights out around 10pm); there are no cafes or hotels. There is a crushed-coral WW II airfield near Finschafen, originally some 2km in length and now overgrown

except for some 700 metres kept clear for light aircraft; it lacks fuel and other services. Charter flights may be available from Nadzab and must carry enough fuel to return.

Visit the Local Government offices which have a post-war bronze battlefield plaque on a plinth outside, plus a couple of small Imperial Japanese mountain guns nearby; make courtesy calls on the District Administrator and Police Commander. There is no bank but the accommodation owner may take a credit card imprint using the old-style multi-carbon docket and 'slide' device, cashing it at the local store.

Drive from Finschafen to Scarlet Beach; visit the Headmaster who can arrange a boat ride to photograph the foreshore as 2/13th and 2/17th Battalions AIF in the landing craft would have seen it. Siki Cove is at the south end of Scarlet Beach where the landing craft landed in error. The Headmaster can point out a location by the school's boundary fence where some 20 Imperial Japanese killed during the landing were buried in a mass grave. Later in the campaign, from his weapon-pit near Scarlet Beach, US Army Private Nathan Van Noy Jr, 532nd Engineer Boat & Shore Regiment continued firing his .50" calibre machine-gun into three attacking Imperial Japanese barges though mortally wounded; he was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honour.

There is a post-war concrete and river stone "mud map" beside the road at Jivivenang (Jiwonning), complete with concrete surround, plinth and steps down allowing visitors to orientate themselves with the approaches to Sattelberg at eye-level. It is similar to a photo of the original "mud map" in "Bravery above Blunder" showing Lt Vic Nelson, Intelligence Officer 2/48th Battalion AIF applying finishing touches. After the war, visiting Australian NCO's and officers were briefed on WW II combined-arms tactics from this model.

During the campaign heavy rain turned the 'road' to Sattelberg into a quagmire, which stopped resupply jeeps fitted with tyre-chains; artillery caterpillar tractors were required to tow these 'jeep trains' through; today the road is all-weather crushed rock. Matilda tanks protected by Infantry cooperated with Engineer teams locating Imperial Japanese anti-tank mines and buried artillery rounds (as IED - Improvised Explosive Devices) during the advance towards Sattelberg; the Japanese had no anti-armour weapons able to defeat the Matilda tanks; fortunately they made no attempt to demolish the road itself along its narrow ridges or steep hillsides which tactic might well have stopped the Matilda's cold.

Finschafen harbour has a small, well-constructed wharf and buildings but little activity, possibly resulting from the sinking of an overloaded Rabaul-Lae coastal ship some three years ago; banana-boats predominate with occasional coastal cargo ships still working. Finschafen harbour's inlet sheltered the original wharf allowing Imperial Japanese submarines and barges to arrive unseen, unload overnight and depart unmolested. Kakakog has a gothic-style church and steeple which overlooks Finschafen from a nearby hillside. A post-war "Japan-New Guinea Peace Association" plaque on a tiny plinth; abandoned American tracked landing-craft (LVT); and the fuselage of a large American cargo plane can also be found near the coastal road.

'Fear Drive My Feet' by the late Peter Ryan MM MID

Mt Saruwaged and Kitamoto's Escape Route.

Nadzab, Lae War Cemetery, Boana, the Peter Ryan School, Mogom, Mt Saruwaged.

Recommended Reading:

"Fear Drive My Feet" by Peter Ryan; Print Classics (latest edition)

Maps:

SARUWAGED 8285; 1:100,000

KABWUM 8385; 1:100,000

Sketch Map "Villages & Tracks in Huon Peninsula"; 1: 126,720 (1 inch = 2 Miles) by Woodward & King; June 1975. (PNGUT Explorers' Club).

Local Contacts

Karen Quinn of Melanesian Arts, Lae

Hezron Wenge, of Morobe Government, Lae.

The late Peter Ryan, MM, MID went to war as an 18 year old Private with a Searchlight unit in Port Moresby in 1942. He volunteered for 'special duties' and was promoted to Warrant Officer (WO II) with ANGAU in 1942-43. He served at Wau and then "behind the lines" in the Wain District south-west of Mt Saruwaged with Capt Les Howlett. Protected as much as possible by the Paramount Chief, 'Possum' Singin, they gathered intelligence on Imperial Japanese activity in Lae from Chinese released on parole. When Japanese patrols pursued them (along parts of Kitamoto's 'escape' route; see further) they had to escape across the Saruwaged Range, but were ambushed on 21 June 1943 as they returned through Chivasing on the Markham River; Capt Howlett was killed and Peter escaped by hiding in a pig-wallow, breathing through a straw.

In early September 1943, 7th Division AIF was flown into Nadzab and the 9th Division AIF landed on the Huon Gulf beaches to capture Lae in a pincer action. 8000 Japanese soldiers attempted to escape from Lae on a route marked by the 1932 Olympic athlete and Imperial Japanese soldier Lt Masamichi Kitamoto; 3,500 died from starvation and cold weather. Reg Yates has a sketch map drawn by a local in July 2016, showing the river junctions and wartime villages along the route; village elders can point out where some of those Japanese soldiers died. In conversation, this local man talked about "King Tomato" which proved to be a phonetic version of 'Kitamoto', hence the sketch map. He remembered seeing me at Mogom in 1987 and 1988 as an 11 year old child but was too shy to speak to a visiting white-man; interestingly villagers' recalled seeing only two other white-men during those years.

Peter Ryan taught at Duntroon and joined the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs after WW II; he was Director of Melbourne University Press during 1962-1988. Amongst other books, MUP published the 3 volume "Encyclopaedia of Papua & New Guinea"; Peter Ryan's "Fear Drive My Feet" is still in print. He was Secretary to the Supreme Court of Victoria's Board of Examiners for 15 years until 2003.

Reg Yates first met Peter Ryan in 1987 and walked from Boana to Mogom, (the 'top' village) that same year but the track up and over the Saruwaged Range was too slippery and cold to cross safely. Reg returned in 1988 and walked across the Range in better weather with five carriers, descending to Yalumet village and flying back to Lae by light aircraft. Such scheduled flights stopped some years ago.

Peter died in December 2015 and Reg returned to Boana and Mogom in July 2016, intending to walk onto Mt Saruwaged as a 'tribute' with four carriers, but the weather was not kind.

During April-October 2017 Reg intends to take cold weather gear for the same four carriers and walk onto Mt Saruwaged, aka Mt Bangeta, 4121 metres and say a prayer for Peter Ryan, 'Possum' Singin and Captain Les Howlett. The round trip, Boana to Mt Saruwaged and back to Boana is expected to take about 12 days.

Given notice, Karen is able to hire 2 or 3 large backpacks, cook pots, tarps, safety rope & bush knives, etc; and purchase rations for everyone from Lae supermarkets (take ample tinned meat and fish but minimal rice; take small Kina notes and buy fresh vegetables en-route). Karen can also arrange a hired 4WD vehicle ride with Hezron Wenge from Lae to Boana; continue past Nadzab and turn off beside the Erap River, on 20 km of winding, muddy road. Boana's airstrip is no longer in use; meet Possum Singin's daughter Dongau at her guesthouse; meet carriers arranged by Hezron, confirm arrangements and pay rates, issue warm clothing, rain jackets and gum boots, allow the guide to organise stores into backpack loads. Hezron should then be able to drive the group another 12 km towards the Peter Ryan School; head teacher Jerry Keputong can arrange floor space or a campsite.

Wau – Salamaua ‘Black Cat’ & Buisaval Tracks

Wau airfield, Wandumi, B-17 wreck, Skin Diwai, Mubo, Mt Tambu, Komiatum, Timbered Knoll, Ambush Knoll, Old Vickers, Salamaua.

Recommended Reading:

“The Battle for Wau; New Guinea’s Frontline 1942-43” by Phillip Bradley; Cambridge;

“To Salamaua” by Phillip Bradley; Cambridge.

“Nothing Lasts Forever: 2/3rd Commandos” by Colonel Ron Garland, MC and Bar; Ligare Press.

“Commando Double Black; 2/5th Commando Company” by Andy Pirie; 2/5 Commando Trust.

“Double Diamonds: Australian Commandos in the Pacific War, 1941-45” by Karl James; AWM.

“Nothing Over Us; 2/6th Battalion AIF” by David Hay; AWM.

“As It Seemed to Us; 1st Australian Mountain Battery, RAA”; edited by Allan & Cutts; Aebis.

“Southern Cross” by Yoshihara, Tsutomu (aka Yoshiwara, Kane; Yoshihara, Noni); translated by Doris Heath; an account of the Japanese Eastern New Guinea Campaign 1942-1945; AWM Library M 725

Maps:

WAU 8283; 1:100,000

NASAU 8383; 1:100,000

Local Contacts:

Karen Quinn, Melanesian Arts, Lae

Ray Lee, Corporate Security Transport, Lae

Most Australians interested in PNG will know of the murder of two village guide/carriers on the “Black Cat” Track in late 2013 near Wau, as reported at the time and on the ABC’s “Australian Story”. Reg Yates walked with other trekkers and that same PNG guide 6 months and 12 months before the murders. Accepted local practice was that carriers changed at each village, so all villagers shared the money; tragically the guide ignored such warnings. The masked attackers ran off leaving two dead carriers, one severely injured and most others with legs slashed; the bashed trekkers were unable to stretcher-carry all the injured carriers to safety. The trek leader gave First Aid and called expat’ friends in Lae by Sat-Phone to help; the surviving carriers stayed at the campsite overnight awaiting rescue while the trek leader led the trekkers to safety and sent local villagers to retrieve the injured. An Australian surgeon flew to Lae to assist; trekkers were treated at a private clinic. The carriers were taken to the ANGAU Memorial Hospital but were found the following morning, still untreated. A trek company representative stated on “Australian Story” that insurance to treat the carriers had not been sorted out; honouring ‘Duty of Care’ to the carriers and an on-the-spot payment with cash or a Trek Company credit card would have solved this. The trek leader, Christie King received a Bravery Award for her actions, getting everyone to safety.

An experienced trek leader from another company walked the ‘Black Cat’ tracks in 2014 with one or two paying customers and an RNPGC policeman escort; villagers were happy to see trekkers again; the attackers had been identified and jailed but one escaped. Reg Yates is considering walking the tracks again in 2017, including visits to the Biaweng and Kaisenik people, subject to advice from Karen Quinn and Lae-based expats’.

Gold was discovered at Wau and Bulolo in the 1920's; Salamaua was the township and port at that time (as Lae was then too shallow); it was an 8 day trek to Wau which was land-locked. Airfields were built at Salamaua, Bulolo and Wau; trucks and massive gold dredges were carefully cut into aircraft loads and reassembled on the goldfields. Wau was the busiest airfield in the world in 1934; its' airfield slopes 10 degrees over its 1000 metres length, with Mt Kaindi at the high end; pilots' touching down to land must immediately add power and 'fly the plane uphill' to avoid structural damage, unlike landing on flat airfields. Wau, Salamaua and Lae were defended by the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, a militia force of local Europeans, whereas Australian soldiers were sent to defend Rabaul and Port Moresby.

On 12 December 1941, a few days after Pearl Harbour, evacuation of all European women and children was ordered; some escaped by canoe and pinnace to be flown out from Gona; others walked up to Wau and were flown out; or continued south to Moresby via the Bulldog Track.

In March 1942 USN carriers *Yorktown* and *Lexington* launched an airstrike from the Papuan Gulf northwards across the New Guinea Range, sinking or damaging Japanese ships at Lae and Salamaua. The flight leader had gliding experience and found a thermal over grasslands, enabling the heavily laden strike aircraft to follow him.

Imperial Japanese invaded Salamaua on 8 March 1942; they were kept under observation by the NGVR; reinforced by 2/5th Independent Company (Commando) which arrived by air, leading to the well-executed attack by Kanga Force on Salamaua in June '42; delaying battles around Mubo and subsequent ill-timed "scorching" of anything of value in the Bulolo Valley; and the surprise attack on Wau by the Okabe detachment in December '42. Wau airfield was strategically important, being halfway between the Allies at Port Moresby and the Imperial Japanese at Lae.

Flt Lt Bill Newton, VC (Posthumous) was shot down attacking Imperial Japanese positions at Salamaua in 1942; his twin-engine Boston bomber crashed into the Huon Gulf and he and his crew were captured; he was beheaded at nearby Kela Point with a samurai sword, apparently indicating to the executioner by gesture or words, "One cut", meaning 'Get it right, first time'! His remains were later recovered from a bomb crater by Carl Jacobsen, a nearby plantation owner. Bill Newton's two aircrew were executed at Lae, by bayoneting. British artillery pieces captured at Singapore can be seen on the small hill at the end of Salamaua isthmus; Japanese anti-aircraft guns with bomb-splinter damage can be seen on the beach.

American C-47 (military version of the DC-3) transports of the 374th and 317th Troop Carrier Groups of General Kenney's 5th USAAF arrived in New Guinea in late 1942, early 1943; these aircraft gave Australian troops mobility and logistic support; they carried Australian soldiers and 25 pounder guns into Wau in the nick of time to defeat the Okabe Detachment which had advanced within rifle-shot of the airfield.

There are two tracks from Wau which join at Guadagasal and continue to Salamaua. The nearest and more difficult track starts from Wau airfield, crosses Big Wau Creek, then the Bulolo River and goes past the Black Cat mine before passing the start of the "Jap Track" and continuing to Waipali, arriving above Guadagasal, the junction with the Buisaval Track; this takes 3 or 4 days; there is a single track of another 3 or 4 days to Salamaua thereafter.

The Buisaval Track, also known as Ballam's or the Skin Diwai Track, became a wartime 'jeep road' which starts beyond Kaisenik at the far end of Wau. Instead of the 'jeep track', trekkers can walk up to the B-17 Flying Fortress wreck, continuing to 'Donki Banis' (Tok pisin for donkey fence; the yard where mules or ponies were kept as pack animals; also where the 2013 murders took place). The Buisaval track continues to Skin Diwai, (Tok pisin for Bark of Tree, meaning a bark hut), once a thriving village with beef cattle and now relocated close by the Buisaval River, then another two days to reach Guadagasal, crossing four steep landslides. Villagers once kept this former mule track in good repair, complete with bush-

material ladders in steep places; it was established in the late 1920's to supply gold mining at Edie Creek and Bulolo. Nowadays most village men have left to pan for gold or seek work in Lae.

Wandumi is midway between the Black Cat and Buisaval Tracks, across the Bulolo River on rising ground near Crystal Creek. Captain Bill Sherlock's A Company, 2/6th Battalion fought an epic delaying battle for 36 hours at Wandumi when some 1,500 Imperial Japanese of the Okabe Detachment commanded by Maj Gen Toru Okabe, 51st Division, appeared from the jungle at the Wau end of the wartime 'Jap Track'. Captain Bill Sherlock was killed leading his men during their withdrawal.

From Guadagasal the Buisaval River is to the east; the track descends west to the Bitoi River and Mubo; Lababia Ridge dominates Mubo to the east.

In the Mubo area the 1st Mountain Battery used two 3.7" mountain guns to great effect, able to bring fire to within 10 metres of Australian soldiers. The battery had served previously at Buna; their guns were acquired from the Royal New Zealand Navy, of a British design used earlier on the Northwest Frontier; the barrel has a 'collar' with an interrupted thread allowing the barrel to be man-packed in two halves, then reassembled at the next position. Both guns were well worn and their ammunition became unobtainable; they were abandoned near Mt Tambu and the Battery used US 75mm pack howitzers thereafter.

After Mubo the Bitoi River turns east towards the north coast; the 1/126th Regiment of the US 41st Division landed at Nassau Bay, south of the Bitoi River mouth on 29 June 1943, met by a 2/6th Battalion patrol which placed lights to mark the landing area. Many landing craft broached and were lost in big seas but all soldiers came ashore safely. Other 126th Regiment battalions arrived thereafter, with American 75mm and 105mm artillery, plus Australian 2/6th Field Regiment 25 pounder guns; later Bofors guns and two 155mm medium artillery guns. American soldiers fought on Mt Tambu and, later Scout Ridge, Roosevelt Ridge and at Tambu Bay.

From Mubo the track rises to Mt Tambu where Cpl Les 'Bull' Allen carried 12 wounded Americans off the battlefield, under fire; his uniform had bullet-holes but 'Bull' Allen was untouched. He was earlier awarded a Military Medal at Wau and received the US Silver Star. The track descends to 'Old Komiatum', then down Komiatum Ridge towards the Francisco River. Roosevelt Ridge is to the east; Bobdubi Ridge is parallel and to the west where 2/3rd Independent Company (later 2/3rd Commando Squadron) commanded by Maj George Warfe used Vickers guns to harass Imperial Japanese supply parties on Komiatum Ridge; also when fighting at Ambush Knoll, Timbered Knoll, Old Vickers and The Coconuts. Vickers guns had been issued to 2/3rd Independent Company when it was deployed to New Caledonia to support the Free French government and defend against Vichy French subversion and Imperial Japanese attack, early in 1942. The Vickers guns should have been returned when 2/3rd deployed to New Guinea, but Major Warfe wisely kept them; they could provide harassing fire out to 4km.

There may still be crocodiles in the Francisco River; everyone should wade across together; swimming is not recommended unless at the river mouth where village activity tends to keep any crocs' away. There are still plenty of saltwater crocodiles elsewhere in PNG's rivers and estuaries. Bamboo rafts big enough to carry two trekkers, backpacks and a local steersman may be available to purchase to float down the Francisco River to its mouth; walk along the beach and isthmus to Salamaua. Haus Kibung may be available and Karen Quinn can arrange accommodation there, given enough notice. Banana-boats travel to and from Lae; they must not be used in rough weather; buoyancy vests may not be available for passengers. There is no taxi service in Lae and firm arrangements for trekkers and their gear to be transported from the banana-boat 'harbour' to pre-booked accommodation in Lae should be made in advance.

The Bulldog–Wau Army Road and the Bulldog Track

Wau airfield, Kudjeru, Centre Camp, Tekadu, Lakekamu River, Terapo/Moveave, Moresby.

Recommended Reading:

The Bulldog-Wau Road by WJ Reinhold, OBE, MC, BE, MIE; John Thomson Lecture for 1945; UQ.

“Wau to Bulldog; Across the Roof of Papua New Guinea” by Colin Freeman; Trafford Publishing.

“A Short History of 9 Field Company RAE, AIF” by Ray Gietzelt, AO; AMHP/Shannon Publishing

Maps:

WAU 8283 1:100,000

BIARU 8282 1:100,000

TAURI 8182 1:100,000

MALALAU 8181 1:100,000

Local Contacts

Karen Quinn of Melanesian Arts, Lae

Ray Lee of Corporate Security Transport, Lae

The 1943 Bulldog-Wau Army Road is the Royal Australian Army Engineers’ finest feat. All the timber bridges have long gone but the road bench is still visible from the air as well as from high parts of the Bulldog Track south of Kudjeru, when the light is right.

The ‘Bulldog Track’ which starts from Kudjeru, east of Wau, through to Centre Camp is distinct from the Army Road, which rises from Centre Camp (initially straight up, if on foot, as a short cut to Bannon’s Lookout) to the present-day Newcrest Mine around Edie Creek, atop Mt Kaindi, south of Wau. Access, or passage through the Newcrest Mine is not allowed and visitors from Centre Camp will be turned back. An expensive but effective alternative would be to start from Wau airstrip on a pre-arranged helicopter flight (cash in advance; not credit card) for drop-off on the Army Road around Johnson Gap; allow an hour’s flying time, round trip, subject to weather. Walking downhill to Centre Camp and continuing to Tekadu (which may or may not have an operational airstrip) will be straightforward. From Centre Camp south to Tekadu the Army Road and Bulldog Track are one and the same.

Wau town has dwindled since the mining company cut a new road from Bulolo, direct to the mine site behind Mt Kaindi. Tim and Danielle Vincent ran a store in Wau town and the guesthouse by Big Wau Creek but have moved elsewhere in PNG; it is unclear whether accommodation is still available. The gorge road was damaged by a landslide some years ago, requiring improvised 4WD access by another route; it has since been repaired.

Walking the Bulldog Track (as opposed to the Army Road segment) from Kudjeru at the far end of Wau valley to Centre Camp and Tekadu should be straightforward. It is not clear whether Tekadu airstrip is operational at present.

It may be possible to walk south from Tekadu to Kokoro on the Kunimaipa River to meet a pre-arranged motorised canoe or banana-boat; joining the Lakekamu River to Terapo, which may or may not have an operational airstrip. Otherwise take a boat from Terapo to Moveave near the mouth of the Lakekamu on the Gulf of Papua; then continue by pre-arranged boat to Moresby. If Terapo airstrip is open it should be possible to reach Moresby on a charter flight. Note that Bulldog airstrip was cut by the Lakekamu River years ago.

Rather than 'walking downhill' from Wau and hoping to find the boat operator on the river at Kokoro, Reg Yates is considering starting from Moresby; meeting the boat operator at Terapo and travelling by boat up the Lakekamu and Kunimaipa Rivers to Kokoro, then walking to Tekadu, then to Centre Camp, Kudjeru and Wau.

In 1985 Reg Yates (accompanied by son David 8 years and daughter Keren 4 years) travelled in an outboard 'tinny' from Moveave up the Lakekamu River to reconnoitre the route to Bulldog airstrip (not operational) with the intention of retracing the Army Road over the mountains to Wau. Later that year, Reg returned with soldiers on an Adventurous Training exercise, travelling in a large dugout canoe powered by a small outboard; the river was in flood and the dugout was stopped short of Bulldog by the current. One soldier had become unwell and the boatman had used more fuel than expected, so Reg made the decision to disembark at one of the few places where there was dry land; not as easy as it sounds. Tropical rivers, particularly during and after the 'Wet Season', in flat swampy country are contained by near-continuous stretches of tall cane-grass, rushes and other foliage and very little dry land anywhere, except at villages or occasional isolated gardens. Much of the Sepik and Fly Rivers is the same. The ill soldier agreed to go back with the boatman, then fly from Terapo to Moresby independently. Reg and the soldiers then walked and waded several hours through trackless swampy jungle before realising they had landed on the tip of a river junction, effectively an island, about 80km up river! Not checking the group's location on the map before disembarking was Reg's mistake; disembarking the group and shuttling them in small numbers to dry land just beyond the island might have solved the predicament! Muddy river water was flowing fast around both sides of the island, too deep to wade and 50 metres to swim, with crocodiles always a possibility; no one entered the water and wisely so! The soldiers camped on a patch of dry ground and advised Defence staff in Moresby of their circumstances; they had an F-1 HF radio (about the size of a briefcase) with aerial 'pre-cut' to the frequency length. Next day, having noticed a distinct 'flood line' on all the trees, everyone helped build a large platform in a suitable tree at head height; in a matter of hours big rains in the mountains started the river rising from a metre below the banks to waist-height above the banks; everyone perched on the platform overnight and the flood subsided by next morning. Options were to build a raft and float down to Terapo (neither easy, nor particularly safe); try to get a message to the Moveave boatman to return and collect everyone (not practical, with too many communication links to go wrong and no confirmation; the boatman would also need cash to buy more fuel); or request civilian helicopter extraction to Tekadu airstrip about 12km away on the Bulldog Track. (Expensive, but practical). A Pacific Helicopters' Jet Ranger flew everyone out next morning, two or three at a time with their gear, to Tekadu; the round trip flight from Moresby in 1985 cost \$2,300 or about \$300 each. Then 'Good Fortune' smiled: Reg Yates had previously applied for, and received a Peter Stuckey Mitchell Adventurous Training Award for that year of \$2,000 and everyone was reimbursed; Reg is still in touch with several of the group.

Rabaul – Tol Plantation

Rabaul Hotel, Vulcanological Observatory, North Daughter & ‘Mother’, Matupi volcano, Vunakanau airstrip (non-operational), Lakunai airfield (destroyed in the ’94 eruption), Mt Toma, the Imperial Japanese ‘underground hospital’, Bita Paka War Cemetery, Lamingi (abandoned), Adler Bay (Nongia), Karong, Marunga, Tol Plantation.

Recommended Reading:

“Hostages to Freedom; Rabaul 1942-1945” by Peter Stone; Oceans Enterprises.

“Little Hell; 2/22nd Battalion and Lark Force” by Carl Johnson; History House.

“Hell and High Fever” by David Selby (the Ack-Ack battery commander); Currawong

“If I Die” by Malcolm Wright; (Coast Watcher, with Peter Figgis); Lansdowne.

“El Tigre – Frank Holland MBE; Commando; Coast Watcher; Editor Peter Stone; Oceans Enterprises

“The Australians at Rabaul” *Volume X, Official History, Australia, 1914-1918*, by Seaforth MacKenzie; Angus & Robertson.

“Heroes before Gallipoli” by Kevin Meade; John Wiley & Sons.

“Baptism of Fire” by Greg Raffin; Five Senses Publication.

“The Mystery of AE-1 – Australia’s Lost Submarine” by Kathryn Spurling; CanPrint Communications

Maps:

RABAUL 9389; 1:100,000

MERAI 9388; 1:100,000

Local Contacts:

Susie McGrade, Rabaul Hotel; and member of the Rabaul Historical Society

The AVIS manager, Kokopo

In WW I, on 11 September 1914 the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force, comprising fewer than 100 men of the 300 strong RAN Reserve LandIng Force landed at Kabakaul jetty (Some 1,000 newly enlisted soldiers comprised the balance of the AN&MEF) from Allied warships off Blanche Bay and captured the German wireless station at Bita Paka, Rabaul in a single day; all of German New Guinea was surrendered to Australian control soon afterwards. 6 Australians, 1 German and some 30 New Guinean soldiers under German command were killed that day.

The German official report admits that the capacity of the Australians to fight in bush country had been under-estimated; the Australian advance in extended order (i.e. spread out, on both flanks, as with infantry close-country tactics) disconcerted the Germans, who had expected the Australians to be confined to the narrow road (i.e. by the dense rainforest each side); and had not contemplated the effect on native soldiers (i.e. New Guinean) of white troops (i.e. Australian) emerging suddenly from the bush and attacking them in the flanks and rear. See Volume X, “The Australians at Rabaul”.

The first Australian casualties of the First World War, Captain Brian Pockley, AAMC (i.e. a Regimental Medical Officer, or Army Doctor) and Able Seaman ‘Billy’ Williams, who both Died-of-Wounds that day, have plaques by Ross Bastiaan (Colonel, RAA Dental Corps; and Peri-orthodontist) at Bita Paka and Darebin RSL; efforts continue to install a plaque at Man O’War Steps, Sydney from which the AN&MEF embarked. The Australian submarine AE-1 with 35 officers and crew disappeared on patrol in St George’s Channel near Duke of York

Island three days later. Papua and New Guinea were mandated by the League of Nations as Australian Territory until PNG's Independence on 15 September 1975.

In WW II, on 23 January 1942 Imperial Japanese forces captured Rabaul, East New Britain overnight. When the fighting started the Australian "Lark Force" commander ignored his responsibilities to his soldiers and simply ordered, "Every man for himself"; he had unwisely followed grandiose High Command orders of "No surrender; no withdrawal" and did not plan a fighting retreat, including route reconnaissance, rally points, ration dumps and survival training; his force was "too small to fight, too big to hide". Wing Commander John Lerew of 24 Squadron RAAF, having had most of his Wirraway armed-trainer aircraft shot down in minutes, was ordered to send his remaining airmen to fight as infantry; he signalled in Latin "*Morituri vos salutamus*", the gladiators' cry: "We who are about to die salute you" and sent all the wounded out in the remaining Hudson bomber (derived from a pre-war civilian airliner). Wng Cdr Lerew then walked out with his staff and ground crew; RAAF flying boats rescued airmen from Put Put; experienced officials and businessmen like JK 'Keith' McCarthy, Ivan Champion and Frank Holland located other soldiers and rescued them by boat from elsewhere in New Britain.

Of the 1400 soldiers in "Lark Force", including soldiers of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and the Victorian 2/22nd Battalion AIF, only some 400 escaped to fight again; had withdrawal been planned and the soldiers given survival training, far more could have been evacuated. Some 160 were murdered after surrendering to Imperial Japanese soldiers at Tol Plantation; another 850, plus some 200 Australian civilians all drowned when the *Montevideo Maru* taking them to Japan to become slave labour was torpedoed by an American submarine off Luzon. This remains Australia's worst maritime disaster, the ship was not marked "POW"; Imperial Japan was not a signatory to the Geneva Convention.

Japan had been an ally during the First World War; its warships *Yahagi and Chikuma* patrolled Australian sea-lanes to protect against German Raiders (i.e. disguised, armed merchant ships); as a result Japan was granted control of former German possessions in the central Pacific (the Carolines, Marshalls and Marianas Islands) in the aftermath of WW I, which became Japanese outposts in WW II, subsequently captured at great cost by American forces as they advanced to conquer Imperial Japan.

Peter Ramm, former Reservist and experienced surveyor, accompanied by Reg Yates and local elder Rafael Battaliu located the remnants of the German wireless station in 2014; the huge concrete anchor blocks were crushed for the foundations of a TB hospital in the late 1950's; that hospital was itself demolished in the early 1970's and is now the site of Local Level Government offices, diagonally across from Bita Paka War Cemetery. All that remains are relatively small concrete anchor blocks, each about the size of a large cabin trunk; these served to anchor the AWA antenna which replaced the Telefunken antennae in the 1920's, prior to the wireless station being relocated closer to Rabaul town.

HMAS Cerberus museum, Victoria, has a large Imperial German 'Double Eagle' flag captured at Kokopo (formerly Herbertshohe, or Herbert's Heights) and the RAN chapel alongside has a memorial to the Australian AE-1 submarine, lost a few days after the capture of Bita Paka while on patrol in St George's Channel, near Rabaul, with all its crew.

Awarua wireless museum, near Invercargill, NZ has a magnificent collection of wireless, signalling, communications and film projection equipment, including a small period theatre. Nearby can be seen one of the remaining Telefunken anchor blocks, some 4 metres tall, from the wireless installation erected just before WW I, immediately taken over by New Zealand when war was declared.

The Royal Australian Signals museum at Simpson Barracks, Watsonia has an AWA 3B Coast Watcher radio/transmitter on display; a later dry cell ATR4 radio/transmitter from 1944-45 probably a fifth the size and weight; and a replica "Winnie the war winner" radio/transmitter

as made and operated from spares and captured parts by 2/2nd Independent Company on Timor. Staffed by volunteers (often former RA Signals Corps members) the museum is open one day a week; make an appointment with the museum manager, present photo ID at the gate and wait for an escort into the museum and out of the Barracks on completion (as with HMAS Cerberus or any Defence property).

The Australian War Memorial, at its Treloar Technology Centre, Mitchell, ACT comprises a vast storage warehouse, occasionally open to visitors; among numerous guns, planes and naval artefacts are a couple of tiny antique aircraft, one of which was apparently shipped to Rabaul with the AN&MEF but never assembled or used; the RAN Landing Force having captured the German wireless station in a single day.

The RAN Heritage Centre, Garden Island has a 'Rabaul Gun' captured at Herbertshohe (pronounced Herbert's Her, or heights; nowadays Kokopo); even in 1914 it was an obsolete breech-loader with tall spoked wheels, lacking elevation mechanism and sights for indirect fire; however, had this gun been correctly sited, its direct fire would have devastated any ANMEF landing at Herbertshohe. Simplest access to this RAN museum is by Watson's Bay ferry from Circular Quay; security requirements at the Potts Point road entrance will take considerable time if arriving unannounced.

Reg Yates walked across the Baining mountains to visit Tol Plantation in 1987, 2012, 2013 and 2014; a fifth visit was by boat in September 2016. Reg has walked with four Lark Force descendants: Peter Ramm, Jeff Smith and daughter Sophie Smith and Peter McGuiness. Reg was advised by 'Bill' Harry in 1987, one of the 2/22nd Battalion's soldiers who escaped. Pte 'Bill' Harry and Lt Peter Figgis were members of the Unit's Intelligence Section and the only Australian soldiers allowed to reconnoitre the hinterland, because of their Commander's refusal to plan a fighting retreat. Peter Figgis returned to New Britain as a Coast Watcher, along with Matt Foley and Malcolm Wright, all of whom Reg met in the late 1980's. (In 2016 the only surviving Coast Watchers are believed to be Jim Burrowes who served on New Britain, and Lionel Veale who served on the Sepik and Umboi Island, Vitiaz Strait).

There are five methods of travelling from Rabaul to Tol Plantation: 1. Walking through the Baining's as many in Lark Force did, but with local guides, rations and no enemy in hot pursuit; 2. By banana-boat (but not in rough weather, particularly during the south-east Trade winds around October) either from the rear of Skowhegan Service Station at Kokopo, or by banana boat after arriving at Nongia (previously Adler Bay) by vehicle from Rabaul; 3. By coastal ship from the Rabaul 'lagoon' near Vulcan, subject to its departure/arrival timetable; 4. By hired 4WD from Rabaul, only in the Dry Season via the north coast road which opened in 2015; and 5. By charter flight from Tokua airport to Tol airstrip. Charter flights are expensive unless all seats are filled by paying passengers; if passengers stay overnight two round-trip flights will be required, to take passengers to Tol and to fly them back to Rabaul again; four flights in total. There is no fuel or any other facilities at Tol for aircraft. "Niugini Islands" helicopters are based at Kokopo from time to time; there are very few, if any, places in the Bainings where a helicopter could land for casualty evacuation; trekkers are reliant on having enough carriers to evacuate a casualty by stretcher, either back to Arabam or forward to Nongia. A Sat-Phone is essential to arrange vehicle pick-up.

To walk through the Bainings, hire an AVIS 4WD, plus an AVIS driver from Kokopo; drive some 45 km south-west towards the creek before Arabam (a former agricultural station), in the headwaters of the Warangoi River. Give the driver fuel money to refill the vehicle before he returns it. Meet pre-arranged Bainings' guide/carriers Sylvester, Markus and Titus from Rigel whom Reg Yates walked with previously; Reg walked with their fathers in 1987! (NB: Reg has an expat' contact with Email who will 'send a runner' with a message to the Rigel men. Do NOT bring coastal guides or carriers into the Bainings; they will NOT be welcome! The Baining people's land is under threat from oil palm developers and loggers). Walk 3 hours to Maranagi and stay overnight; be aware that the community house in the centre of the

village was boarded-up by the RPNGC in 2011-2012 after a so-called 'Black Jesus' was arrested, having disturbed villagers and preyed on their women by claiming to be a messiah. Walk three days through Rigel (incorrectly marked as Lamingi) and the abandoned Lamingi village (at the track junction in MERAI 8388, GS 0579) where the guides will point out Fr Alphons Meirhofer's grave; and the probable mass grave of Lamingi villagers massacred by Imperial Japanese for refusing to supply village foods during WW II. Stop overnight at two pig camps, cross the Merai River headwaters, walk onto Mt Uragi and descend to Nongia, (formerly Adler Bay) via a logging road; about five days in total. The guide and carriers will catch eels or fish in various creeks along the way and point out pig tracks; even 'pig nests' where sows shelter their piglets! This approximates the route taken by many Lark Force soldiers; avoid the actual route over Mt Arasum which was logged years ago and is choked with regrowth. There is another route from a track junction beyond Lamingi (the abandoned village) over Mt Isimurigarok (GS 0865) which Reg took in 2012; it gave a memorable glimpse of 'Mother' volcano some 70 km north; the track then descends to Karong village, which route Lt Col Carr and some staff took to reach Tol Plantation; they escaped the massacre.

On arrival at Nongia (Adler Bay) mention Geoffrey Miranlali and stay free at the travellers 'canvas house' by the beach, in return for minor purchases at the village store; or pay to stay at his guesthouse. Consider paying for a banana-boat ride for 3 hours to Marunga; or walking in the footsteps of Lark Force soldiers for three days around the coast, camping on the beach and at Karong before arriving at Marunga. Stay with wantoks (Tok pisin for relatives) of the Rigel guides and visit Fr Bart Advent at the RC church whom Reg first met in 1988.

From Marunga, hire a banana-boat for the 10 minute ride to Tol Plantation; or walk 5 km on the oil-palm road to Tol. Arriving alongside the jetty, walk past the two large houses towards the low hill or ridgeline to the west to find the Lark Force memorial erected by 'Bill' Harry and 3rd Brigade, ODF Townsville soldiers in 1987. Basic provisions (rice, tinned fish, etc) are available at the store; there may be accommodation available at the Women's Conference Centre. Not ideal, but the unfinished "Lark Force" school is a 10 minute walk away; built with Chinese funding in 2014 it was completed structurally; an Australian contractor installed solar panels for electric lighting and ceiling fans; however electric water pumps to bring water from the house tanks to the plumbing have yet to be installed.

Very few original Baining people remain at Tol; when oil-palm plantations began, workers came from half a dozen tribal groups throughout New Guinea: Sepik, Hagen, etc. The community earns money working oil-palm planted several years ago, selling it to the recently opened oil-palm processing plant; most logging work is done by skilled operators, mechanics or technicians. The community's leader is often away and there is no resident church leader, apart from Fr Bart Advent at Marunga. There are no teachers for the school or health staff for the clinic; both premises remain unopened. Younger men with access to money drink to excess in the absence of tribal elders or police. Near Waitavalo, in the vicinity of the logging wharf is a probable mass grave, as yet unopened, possibly containing the remains of villagers murdered during WW II by Imperial Japanese for refusing to provide village foods; such mass murders of villagers took place at Lamingi and, no doubt, elsewhere in New Guinea under Imperial Japanese control.

5th Brigade AIF attacked and occupied Waitavalo and Tol Plantation in late 1944-45 from its base at Jacquinet Bay - Palmalmal; it is probable that Imperial Japanese were buried wherever they were killed at Waitavalo rather than brought to a mass grave. Villagers showed Reg Yates three Identity Discs which they had found at Tol Plantation; these were of shiny metal, some round and others octagonal whereas 1942 Identity Discs were made of compressed fibre, similar to the insulating material seen within old valve radios. These ID tags were photographed and formally identified later as belonging to Australian soldiers who survived the war and were repatriated. Why their 'dog tags' were left at Tol is unknown, pending further enquiries. AIF "Rising Sun" hat badges were also shown to Reg Yates, who

advised that they should not be sold but displayed in a suitable cabinet or glass frame and kept at the school, in memory of the murdered Lark Force soldiers.

The 2/22nd Battalion - Lark Force Association meets annually at the Shrine of Remembrance, Victoria on a Sunday near 23rd January to honour their soldiers; Norm' Furness is the only original member today. A descendant, Tony Webster, visited Tol Plantation by light aircraft accompanied by Mark Donaldson, VC in late 2014 for a Channel 7 story courtesy of Kerry Stokes. Tony's father Pte H.J. Webster was captured, shot and wounded on 3 February 1942 at Waitavalo, close to Tol; he survived and escaped on the *Laurabada*; he returned in 1945 as Cpl Webster with two other Lark Force survivors, Sgt's B. Perkins and A.N. Taylor. Marg Curtis, committee member arranged a visit to Tol by road with some 28 members in April 2016. The Lark Force Association also meets at Trawool, near Seymour, VIC at the site of 2/22nd Battalion, AIF's original campsite; rocks painted white in 1941 as "2/22" are kept cleared and visible on the hillside; the site is nowadays a winery and hosts a Lark Force Association gathering around 1st July annually, honouring all who died on New Britain and the "Montevideo Maru". There is a small shrine at the roadside, by the gate.

Brian Manns, Head of Unrecovered War Casualties-Army arranged for a forensic expert from ANU, supported by Australian High Commission soldiers to recover bone samples buried at Tol in June 2016; the remains had been exposed by a mechanical digger some distance from where Lark Force soldiers were murdered by Imperial Japanese in early 1942; those Lark Force soldiers were never buried and their remains were gathered by Australian 5th Brigade soldiers in late 1944-45 to interred at Bita Paka War Cemetery. It is possible that the remains unearthed by the forensic expert may prove to be of Asian or Melanesian origin, rather than Caucasian.

Mt Wilhelm

Goroka, Kundiawa, Betty's Lodge, the Pindaunde Lakes National Parks Board hut, Mt Wilhelm.

Reg Yates walked onto Mt Wilhelm in 2003, travelling alone by PMV from Goroka, to Kundiawa and then, by good fortune, staying with a National teacher and his family at the last village before Betty's Lodge and the airstrip. These notes explain how NOT to walk Mt Wilhelm, but Reg returned safely because, as always, he walked with local guides and paid them fairly on completion. Reg had intended to stay at Betty's Lodge but realised that he had not brought enough cash with him. Fortunately the teacher, a fellow traveller on the PMV (Public Motor Vehicle; like a mini-bus, operating on set routes) offered a place to stay and the assistance of a couple of his teenage children as guides next day; for payment he would send the eldest with Reg to Kundiawa on departure, to draw cash from the bank for the guide fees, meals and accommodation. In 2003 credit cards could not be used to draw cash from PNG ATM's; Australian travellers had to enter the bank, ask the manager to confirm by International phone-call that the person had money in their home account and sign a withdrawal slip, whereupon the manager would pay the desired amount in PNG Kina. Always best to then pay the local recipient discreetly inside the bank; get their signature on a hand-written receipt as well.

Having shared a meal with the teacher host and stayed the night, Reg set off with two teenagers and three younger siblings, carrying basic foodstuff and blankets, etc; leaving by 7AM and arriving at the colonial-era mountain huts around 1PM. The main hut was close to one of the Pindaunde Lakes at the 3,300 metre altitude; water, firewood and shelter was available; by this time Reg had a dull headache and recommends anyone walking onto Mt Wilhelm to camp halfway in the rainforest and acclimatise gradually.

To understand the terrain, the reader should hold up their hand, palm upwards with fingers and thumb curled slightly, like claws. Imagine that the hut is in the base of the palm, near one's wrist. Imagine walking up the left digit or thumb, then go on walking up and down over the other four digits in turn; the actual summit of Mt Wilhelm is represented by the furthest digit while the Pindaunde Lakes are in the bowl of the palm, near the mountain hut. All of the peaks are bare rock with grass-cover at their bases; foot-tracks criss-cross everywhere. The four or five peaks and lakes disappear in foggy weather; having local guides who instinctively know the best tracks to follow is vital. Walking down the wrong track will be like an ant walking down into a bathtub; very difficult to walk back up and look for the correct track. An Australian Army Sergeant disappeared walking alone onto Mt Wilhelm in 1971; apparently a sandshoe or similar footwear of the period was found in the bush many years later, well down from the summit towards the Ramu Valley. An Israeli disappeared from Mt Wilhelm around 2005; apparently he became unwell, perhaps affected by altitude, and was left alone in a tent (presumably in the grasslands above the hut) while his companion continued to the peak - a fatal mistake. When the fit companion returned to the tent the sick one had disappeared, probably leaving the tent for the toilet and failing to return. A search was made; the survivor may have had to walk down to bring villagers back to help; and other Israelis may have flown in to search, to no avail.

Reg and his five youthful guides left the hut at 1AM, intending to arrive at the peak by dawn. All wore warm clothes; Reg had a Goretex jacket with woolly hat (but no sun-hat) and gloves, taking two full water bottles; should have taken at least four full bottles. The guides trotted happily ahead, lighting a fire and waiting for Reg, halfway. Finally, Reg arrived at the peak at 9AM, 3 and a half hours past dawn but still blessed by clear skies and views along the Highlands, while the sea to the north blended into the horizon. The return journey stayed fine and hot; no sunhat and the water ran out early. Reg saw scattered metal glinting on the last

peak, the remains of a wartime air crash, before descending to the mountain hut by 2PM. At the hut, dry as a chip, Reg made a large mug of cocoa with sugar, promptly losing it before keeping down cold water. Reg and his youthful guides walked down to the village by 7PM, to be met by the teacher host who had walked out to meet everyone. Next morning Reg and an older teenager went by PMV to Kundiawa where cash was drawn, a signature obtained, debts honoured and farewells made. Reg was recognised by a security guard at Jackson's Airport in 2015; the eldest teenage guide and both happy to meet again unexpectedly!

Walindi Plantation Dive Resort

Recommended Reading

“Put ‘Em Across; History of 2nd Engineer Special Brigade 1942-1945”; US Army Corps of Engineers; 1988 reprint.

“The Campaign on New Britain” by Lt Col Frank Hough & John Crown; USMC monograph.

“Hostages to Freedom; Rabaul 1942-1945” by Peter Stone; Oceans Enterprises.

“Watermen of War; History of No 43 Water Transport Operating Company (Landing Craft) AIF of the Royal Australian Engineers, by Colonel John Pearn; Amphion Press.

“Forgotten Fleet 2” by Bill & Ruth Lunney; Forfleet Press.

“Fire in the Sky” by Eric Bergerud; Westview.

Local Contacts

Cecilie & Max Benjamin of Walindi Plantation Dive Resort

Cecilie & Max Benjamin established Walindi in the early 1980’s; they had been working as agronomists at the local oil-palm plantation, enrolled in a scuba course and saw the local underwater ‘Gardens of Eden’; the rest is history. With son Cheyne (Shane) they own and operate Walindi on Kimbe Bay, East New Britain, which is among the ‘Coral Triangle’ dive sites covering the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and part of the Philippines. Walindi is renowned as one of the world’s best dive resorts.

Hoskins airport’ (sometimes referred to as Kimbe-Hoskins) is less than an hour’s flight from Tokua airport, Rabaul. As departing passengers fly out of Tokua they may see semi-active Matupi, the ‘Mother’, ‘North Daughter’ and ‘South Daughter’; later in the flight the ‘Father’ and ‘South Son’ volcanoes may appear en route; numerous other volcanic cones dot the landscape. Hoskins has a new airport terminal; Kimbe town is 30 minutes away and Walindi another 30 minutes further; when booking accommodation Walindi provides a driver and shuttle vehicle for visitors, on request.

Three alloy dive boats are available for day/half day scuba and snorkelling trips; an adjacent jetty provides for one large dive boat MV *FeBrina* able to accommodate 12 ‘Live Aboard’ divers on 7 – 10 day trips. Walindi’s Dive Instructor Liz Cotteral has extensive professional diving experience in the Coral Triangle (PNG, Solomons and parts of Indonesia); Oscar, the PNG Dive Master knows Kimbe Bay in detail.

The resort has its own generator, with handsome timber and thatch-roofed buildings set amongst tall rainforest trees, with all facilities built and maintained to a high standard. The main building has reception, dining and lounge areas, pool and bar, facing onto a shallow sandy beach area with a sheltered channel and boatshed to one side.

On land, there are guided birding walks and mountainside volcanic pools; fireflies may cluster in trees by night, blinking in unison or ‘sparkling’ like Christmas lights. Other sights include the Numundo Patrol memorial, a reasonably intact Lockheed Ventura and B-25 Mitchell which can be seen at Talasea; a Japanese Zero fighter lies at 16 metres in the bay; the San Remo Memorial in Kimbe; and Beaufighter and Japanese aero-engines at Walindi.

Readers interested in the forensic examination of aircraft wrecks to identify missing aircrew should see “A Missing Plane” by Susan Sheehan; Putnam; and “The Searchers” by Jim Eames; QUP. Also, for the merits of gathering technical intelligence from crashed enemy aircraft, albeit behind-the-lines in China rather than wartime New Guinea, see “Wen Bon – A Naval Intelligence Officer in China in WW II”, University of North Texas. Readers may know of wartime modifications to B-25 Mitchell bombers in which the aircraft’s ‘glass nose’ for the bombardier was replaced with a shortened ‘solid’ nose supporting eight fixed

forward-firing .50" calibre machine-guns, each with 500 rounds, designed and built by Lt Col Paul "Pappy" Gunn. When General George Kenney, Commander 5th USAAF enquired about the centre of gravity, "Pappy" Gunn said they threw it away to save weight! In fact, a 200 gallon fuel tank was installed thereafter to balance the plane. These became 'skip-bombers' overwhelming Imperial Japanese ships with firepower, dropping 500lb bombs with four-second delay fuses from mast-head height, allowing the bomb to skip across the sea and the plane to hurdle the ship and escape the blast. The "Battle of the Bismarck Sea" resulted in an Imperial Japanese troop convoy from Rabaul being largely destroyed en route to Lae by Allied airstrikes; thereafter, around September 1943 two Imperial Japanese destroyers ran aground near Cape Gloucester; a flight of 5th USAAF Mitchell's sank both by skip-bombing. Later versions replaced some of the .50 calibre guns with a forward-firing 75mm artillery piece; AIF soldiers saw these planes seeming to stop in mid-air each time the 75mm gun fired during airstrikes on Shaggy Ridge.

Walindi is ideal as a base for battlefield survey tours; there is no road access to Cape Gloucester but the ferry from Kimbe to Lae calls there. Awul, or Uvol on New Britain's south coast may only be reached on foot from Kimbe; possibly by air charter if the strip is operational; otherwise by boat from Rabaul, Tol or Palmalmal; such visitors should pay their respects to the memory of Fr William Culhane, MSC of Awul/Uvol who allowed a dozen escaping Lark Force soldiers to commandeer his 20' pinnace with single-cylinder diesel engine and reach Samarai, off Milne Bay after a three or four day voyage, with a compass and the page of a school atlas for navigation (see "Hostages to Freedom" by Peter Stone). Father Culhane was murdered by Imperial Japanese soon after.

At the south-western end of West New Britain the US 112th Cavalry Regiment landed at Arawe on 13 December 1943; a fortnight later the US Marines 1st Division, 'the Old Breed' landed at Cape Gloucester on Boxing Day 1943 on the north-western end of New Britain giving the Allies control of Dampier Strait. The 9th Division, AIF had earlier landed at Finschafen on the Huon Peninsula to control Vitiaz Strait; prior to those landings Coast Watcher Sgt Lionel Veale and American soldiers landed on Umboi Island, between both Straits, for preliminary intelligence gathering. The Marines described the Cape Gloucester campaign as a "Green Inferno", attacking through swamp and rugged rainforest supported by tanks, artillery and landing craft. They advanced 90 km shore-to-shore in landing craft from Cape Gloucester along the northern coast to Talasea before fighting various battles from Willaumez Peninsula southwards to Kimbe. The 1st Marine Division, the 'Old Breed' was released from New Britain in April 1944, having sustained 1400 casualties in the campaign. See "Put 'Em Across – 42nd Engineer Special Brigade 1942-45" which operated US Army landing craft in wartime New Guinea and elsewhere; also "Watermen at War – No 43 Water Transport Company (Landing Craft), AIF, RAE" which served in New Guinea from early 1944. For the story of tropical coastal shipping pressed into WW II service and largely paid for by the US Army, see "Forgotten Fleet 2", by Bill & Ruth Lunney.

Walindi is roughly in the middle of an enormous bay fringed with volcanic cones and studded with tiny islands and reefs; Hoskins lies to the south-east, Kimbe to the south, Talasea to the north and Willaumez

Peninsula furthest north; the mouth of the bay is some 60km wide between Willaumez and Hoskins; for small craft the entire bay is sheltered, with plenty of places for boats in bad weather.

Caving in the Nakanai mountains is possible but, like having an experienced skipper for white-water rafting in PNG, detailed reconnaissance with an experienced speleologist or caving expert is essential; flooding caves and sink-holes are dangerous and any notion of 'cave rescue' is more likely to become 'recovery of remains'. Cecilie Benjamin can introduce a local man who conducts fishing charters from his base at Baia, near the West New Britain

& East New Britain border who, in turn, may be able to find local hunters familiar with Nakanai tracks and cave entrances.

Wewak and Paddling the Sepik River by Dugout Canoe

Frieda River, Houna Mission, Ambunti, Angoram, Mission Hill, Cape Wom, Dagua and But.

Recommended Reading:

“The Proud Sixth”, by Mark Johnston; Cambridge

“Across New Guinea; from the Fly to the Sepik” by Ivan Champion

“Patrol into Yesterday” by JK McCarthy

“Black Cats” by AE Minty; RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria

“South-West Pacific Area, First Year: Kokoda to Wau” by Dudley McCarthy; AWM Official Histories 1939-‘45

“The New Guinea Offensives” by David Dexter; AWM Official Histories 1939-‘45

“War by Stealth - Australia and the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942-1945” by Alan Powell; MUP

Map

“Wewak: a Tourist Guide Map. East Sepik & Sandaun Provinces”; 1:500,000

Local Contacts:

Alois Mateos, owner/operator of Surfside Lodge, Wewak; and Ambunti Lodge, Sepik River

In the 1988 Dry Season Reg Yates and Lindsay Adams visited Mt Hagen with 5 soldiers; they were flown north to Kompian by chartered light-aircraft; attended a nearby sing-sing; then walked three days northwards to Eram with local guide/carriers; travelled by chartered motor canoe northwards down the Yuat River to stay for a few days at Tambanum on the Sepik River, departing via 4WD from Timbunke to finish in Wewak. (Such 4WD journey is impossible in the Wet).

During the 1993 Wet Season Reg Yates, travelling solo, was flown by scheduled light-aircraft from Telefomin to Frieda River and introduced by the Australian MAF pilot Chris Boyd to the headman. The headman refused to sell a canoe as the river was too dangerous for a lone white-man hoping to paddle a dugout; however he arranged for two young men to paddle Reg to Iniok, the first village on the Sepik River. At Iniok Reg bought a carved paddle and dugout canoe, had it fitted with an outrigger and paddled four days from village to village finishing at Ambunti where the Australian pilot flew him to Wewak.

By arrangement with Alois Mateos, at the end of the 2006 Wet Season Reg Yates and a river guide, Joe Kone travelled by motor canoe from Pagwi upriver to Ambunti and Houna Mission, buying a canoe and two paddles on the way. They then paddled some 360km downriver from village to village for 10 days finishing at Angoram; returning to Wewak by PMV.

Rob and Allan Kenna with brother-in-law Ian Day are sons of the late Private Ned (or Ted) Kenna, VC. Reg Yates accompanied them to Wewak in 2012, staying with local operator Alois Mateos at Surfside Lodge. A visit to the prominent Catholic Church to meet Bishop Tony Burgess, who directed us to Wirui Mission, aka Mission Hill. At the base of the hill (an intermediate feature, on the nearby ridgeline parallel with the coast) are six 75mm Imperial Japanese pedestal-mounted artillery pieces, able to fire at aircraft or armoured vehicles; one has significant splinter damage from Allied bombing.

On 14 May 1945 the forward slopes and summit of Wirui Mission were captured by 2/4th Battalion, AIF but Imperial Japanese continued fighting from the north-western crest. Just beyond the present-day war memorial on the summit Reg identified the western spur along which a 2/4th Battalion rifle company advanced (initially using the reverse slope for

concealment) to attack the Japanese bunkers; several Australians were hit and the lead section pinned down; Private Ned Kenna VC stood up 50 metres from the bunkers and opened fire with his Bren gun, then called for a rifle with which he was a crack shot, silencing one machine gunner, then using his Bren again to silence the second machine gunner. Despite bullet-holes through his clothes he was untouched; one Japanese gunner was found shot between the eyes. Reg and the Kenna's, with local tour operator Alois Mateos then located nearby Mt Kawakubo (mis-spelled and mispronounced as Kwakabu) where Pte Kenna was shot in the face and back on 5 June 1942. An older villager near the likely hill remembered the name of the Imperial Japanese commander and showed us the track to the top; from it we could see down to Mission Hill and the Wewak Church beyond, an obvious Japanese defensive position.

The following day we drove 2 hours westward on the coast road to But (pronounced Boot) and Dagua, then inland towards Wonginara Mission; steep forested hills and razor-back ridges everywhere in this Prince Alexander Range; we spoke to village leaders without learning of Tokuku Pass or the 1410 feature; on a narrow ridge on 25 March 1945 when the lead platoon was pinned down, Lt Bert Chowne, MM, VC (posthumous) of 2/2nd Battalion commanding the reserve platoon led a successful bayonet charge, running up the track firing from the hip and throwing grenades which knocked out two machine-guns; Lt Chowne and two others were killed in action.

Historical Preamble

“We had 300 miles to go before reaching the Government station of Ambunti on the Sepik which was another 280 miles from the mouth of the river. It was 17th January, 1928. ~ At 7.15 a.m. a canoe with half a dozen men appeared in sight, coming up the river; when they saw us they turned about, and shouting and pointing down river, made off in that direction ~ They disappeared round a bend still paddling furiously. With startling suddenness, from the direction in which they had gone, a rifle shot boomed out in the stillness of the morning air. ~ The rafts drifted on to round the bend. There came a silence as intense as death. Karius and I gazed, fascinated, as at a phantom; we could not speak. For there, more than 500 miles up the Sepik, her white sides gleaming in the sun, her blue ensign floating gently from the mizzen, lay the *Elevela*, with her able commander Ritchie frantically waving his white shirt from the forecastle”.

From: “Across New Guinea; from the Fly to the Sepik”, by Ivan Champion.

Charles Karius, Ivan Champion and their carriers had succeeded in travelling northwards up the Fly River from the Gulf of Papua, crossing the Star Mountains near the Hindenburg Wall and descending the headwaters of the Sepik River to somewhere above Green River before meeting the *Elevela*. Ivan Champion's book is a classic from nearly ninety years ago; it was reprinted in 1966. His writing and surveying skills, mapping ability, exploratory expertise, ability to look after his men and get the best from the local people are enviable.

Introduction

Papua New Guinea's Sepik River rises in the Star Mountains near the West Papua border and curves around to flow generally eastwards and parallel with PNG's northern coast before joining the Bismark Sea between Wewak and Madang. Counting its twists and turns, it is 1126 kilometres in length and navigable for most of that. It has one of the largest annual flows of any river in the world.

The Sepik is not turbulent “white water” but a smoothly flowing, coiling serpent, which floods for some six months of the year between January and June, allowing for a couple of months lag after the start of the monsoonal, ‘Wet Season’ around October and the beginning of the, ‘Dry Season’ around April. This ‘serpent’ flows effortlessly through a large floodplain about 500 km long from west to east and about 120 km wide from north to south, bounded by

PNG's Central Range along its southern flanks and the Bewani, Torricelli and Prince Alexander Mountains along its northern flanks.

The 'Middle Sepik' River is some 200 metres to 300 metres wide from bank to bank at Houna, Reg Yates' start point for paddling in 2006. Throughout the floodplain, the river has looped and curved back and forth over the years, leaving ox-bow lakes, lagoons, dead ends and huge swamps in its wake. When seen from the air it resembles an enormous patchwork quilt with sunlight glinting off the water. When viewed while paddling downriver in a dugout canoe at the end of the 'Wet', its 'banks' of tall kunai grasses and rainforest are deceptive, frequently with no firm ground to land on and suspended under an often infinitely blue sky, while clouds or occasional rain-squalls drift placidly above.

In the 'Dry' the water retreats; the river shrinks, leaving muddy riverbanks some metres above it; crocodile 'slides' and tracks appear on the banks; mosquitoes disappear (well, somewhat); villagers can walk around their homes; 'short cuts' for canoes vanish; the 'serpent' becomes sluggish and paddling a canoe takes longer and demands more effort. The 'Wet' brings life, a timeless and vigorous culture, tropical diseases and occasional death to the Sepik inhabitants. Western visitors can learn much about the Sepik people and their way of life while paddling downriver, but travelling with a recommended River Guide is the only safe way to learn from the experience.

Paddling Summary	Daily Totals	Actual Paddling
10/4/06 Houna to Swagup No. 2	9 hours	8 hours
11/4/06 Swagup No. 2 to Bruknowi	6¼ hours	5 hours
12/4/06 Bruknowi to Wagu	7 hours	6 hours
13/4/06 Wagu to Ambunti	5½ hours	4½ hours
14/4/06 Ambunti to Yenchimangua	7 hours	6 hours
15/4/06 Yenchimangua to Palimbei	6 hours	5 hours
16/4/06 Palimbei to Kaminabit	7 hours	4 hours
17/4/06 Kaminabit to Tambanum	8½ hours	6 hours
18/4/06 Tambanum to Moim	6¾ hours	5 hours
19/4/06 Moim to Angoram	3½ hours	2½ hours

During the ten days paddling (not counting the motor canoe trip upriver from Pagwi to Houna) Reg and Joe Kone covered approximately 360 km on the Sepik, totalling 66 hours travel, with 52 hours of actual paddling time. Total daily hours include various visits, meals and toilet stops. The Sepik flows at about 3-4 km/h in the "Wet" and we usually paddled at a similar speed to cover about 6 or 7 km an hour. Paddling on Wasui Lagoon (or any other lake for that matter) was a little slower; the water rises and falls over time but has little current in any direction.

Dugout Canoe Paddling Techniques

Dugout canoes have no keel and can be difficult for inexperienced westerners to paddle in a straight line; build up any speed without an outrigger and the canoe tends to veer off to the left or right; anywhere except where you want it to go! Dugouts are also easy for unskilled visitors to tip over! Theoretically, they can be paddled in a straight line using a "J" stroke, but this takes some practice. The canoe I used, solo, in 1993 was about 16'-18' long (5-6 Metres), fitted with a crude but stoutly made outrigger (called a German canoe, from the time when New Guinea was a German colony, until Australia seized Rabaul at the start of WW I) at my request by the local people at Inioke Village (near Frieda River junction). It may have drifted down to them, but it was serviceable and had no leaks. The hull was too narrow for

me to sit inside it, so they made a simple seat of cross-pieces for me. I could easily paddle standing up, but the outrigger prevented me from using really narrow ‘shortcuts’. Had I tangled the outrigger in a swift-flowing shortcut, I might have tipped over or fallen out! Risky on my own but I was careful; and well-briefed ...

With a River Guide to choose a dugout canoe and act as steersman from the rear, paddling a dugout canoe is simple. Our canoe was 25’ long (8 metres) and wide enough for me to sit inside the hull, with our gear between us. I sat slightly rear of centre and alternated between sitting on a small wooden block covered by a towel for padding, or else kneeling forward to paddle. My arms never got tired from paddling, but my backside or knees definitely did! Hence the alternating positions.

Joe Kone used the longer, “man pull” paddle to keep our canoe upright and steer it in the desired direction; he paddled effortlessly, whether standing or sitting. We’d both take breaks for drinks or just to look around; the river did the hard work while we just paddled to keep momentum and feel happy driving the canoe forward. I did try paddling standing up on absolutely flat water in a ‘shortcut’, but did not have the inherent balance from my toes which the locals acquire from childhood. I wasn’t bothered about falling in, but that I’d tip the canoe over if I did. Joe’s bush-knife and cooker would have sunk and our heavy food bag along with them; my backpack with its plastic-bag liner would have floated long enough to retrieve, but finding solid ground to clamber onto might have been tricky! Very tricky actually!

Joe Kone knew every village with a fresh-water tank along the Sepik; we only collected drinking water from those tanks – never from the river! Villagers have pit toilets but these are covered by a metre of water in the ‘Wet’; villagers paddle out mid-river for toilet; we would ‘raft up’ with a large log and squat.

Visitors should bring and wear their own Personal Flotation Device (PFD - buoyancy vest). I can swim; dugouts might capsize but they cannot sink. I travelled fully clothed, with boots on, plus a wide-brimmed hat to keep the sun off. Cheap cotton gloves would have kept the sun off the backs of my hands. The Sepik is flat water; its only hazards are the whirlpools at Yambon Gate, or choppy water in strong winds, or crocodiles at night. Careful paddling and common sense will cope with these. We never travelled at night but a strong torch to spot obstacles and look for crocodile eyes is strongly recommended. Joe Kone assured me that there are plenty of crocodiles in the Sepik, including really big ones. They are ‘opportunity’ hunters and soon get to know regular movement patterns by potential prey, including humans. They are unlikely to attack canoeists in daylight, touch wood!

Post-Script: Colonial and WW II Background

The following extracts will interest visitors to Wewak and the Sepik River area.

From: “Patrol into Yesterday” by JK McCarthy; a Patrol Officer (Kiap) from 1927 on; WW II Coastwatcher; and post-War administrator.

“It was the time of the May Fly when the sago grubs take wing. The white, fluttering insects were regarded as a delicacy by the Sepik natives. As they flew low over the water they were caught by the men and women who hunted them from canoes. The slender craft, often sixty feet in length, were of the dug-out type. The outrigger canoe was unknown by the river people. They were carved from logs and undecorated except for the figure of a crocodile at the prow. The canoes lay low in the water and appeared unstable until you travelled in them and realized that they could only be capsized by deliberate intent. The men paddled standing, using long sweeps with a rhythm that sent the narrow craft speeding through the water. ~ The middle-river Sepik people were perhaps the most picturesque in New Guinea. ~ The tall and awesome peaks of the Haus Tambaran were seen in every village. Inside these houses were stored the skulls of enemies as well as friends and relatives, for the human head was venerated as a trophy and as a sentimental relic. ~ But hardship makes great artists and the Sepik (people) were proof of this because they were the greatest sculptors of wood in New

Guinea ~ even their most simple belongings, whether a weapon, house or utensil, were decorated by carvings of charming and always original design. They even carved figures of flowers and crocodiles on the shoulders, chests and backs of the youths when the initiation ceremony was undergone, when the boys were said to have been eaten by the crocodile and the marks were supposed to be the result of the reptile's teeth. ~ The Sepik houses were probably the best in New Guinea and the great Haus Tambaran were monuments to their art and building ability. All of these were constructed on piles, often sixteen feet in circumference; the floor of the building starting twenty feet up. These great supporting posts were carved to represent men and gods, devils and spirits, and crocodiles and birds. The front of the house, rising to a peak of sixty feet, was fashioned in the shape of a crocodile's gaping jaws. Some of the houses were 200 to 300 feet long and I marvelled at the thickness and weight of the ridge poles and at the skill of the primitive engineers who had placed them in position. Inside, on the 'ground floor' were stored the great wooden slit-drums and the fearsome dancing masks, while in the gloom of the chamber above grinned rows of skulls. In racks lay the long bamboo pipes and hand drums; silent instruments of an orchestra that came to life for war or celebration. ~ These men's houses took a long time to build, not because of any lack of energy on the part of the river people, but because of a shortage of essential material. The great posts had to be wet with the blood of an enemy before they could be placed in the ground." (In 1988, our Tambanum host had remarked on this custom, saying that pre-war Australian Patrol Officers had stopped head-hunting, but that the ban was relaxed by patrolling ANGAU and Allied officers, "for the duration" of the war, provided only Japanese heads were taken. Accordingly, his house had been completed in 'customary' fashion at that time and he gestured at the doorposts where we talked...).

From: "South West Pacific Area, First Year; Kokoda to Wau", by Dudley McCarthy; AWM Official Histories of 1939 - '45; see pages 47-49.

"District Officer Jones was in charge of the Sepik District. He had been an original ANZAC at 19 years of age and had gone to New Guinea soon after his return from the 1914-18 War. ~ At the beginning of January he had worked out an escape route for the people of his district to follow if they were cut off by sea and air: by way of the Sepik, the Karawari (a tributary of the Sepik), overland to the Strickland River and on to Daru on the south coast of Papua. ~ He heeded the advice of J H Thurston ~ and Assistant District Officer (Jim) Taylor who had already, on a great patrol (i.e. the Hagen-Sepik Patrol of '38-'39), covered much of the country through which the proposed route passed. At this time the behaviour of the Assistant District Officer at Angoram began to disturb DO Jones ~ (who) told Taylor to take over. The (ADO's) mind had however become unhinged. He refused to leave his station and armed and entrenched about 40 of his native police ~ fought a pitched battle ~ shot (and wounded) Taylor. Next day Jones arrived ~ planned to attack the station ~ but the ADO had shot himself dead. ~ Later, rebel police also killed three European miners, two Chinese and many natives, ravaged a wide area, fomented local uprisings ~ and caused serious disorders ~ before they themselves were finally killed or apprehended. ~ After the fight at Angoram Thurston took a party as far as they could travel by water up the (Sepik and) May River to start overland, thence for Daru through the mysterious breadth of New Guinea. At the end of April (1942) 8 Europeans and 82 natives struck into the mountains on foot. Thurston and his whole party arrived safely at Daru on 21st September (1942)."

From: "The New Guinea Offensives" by David Dexter; AWM Official Histories of 1939 - '45; pages 258 - 263.

"In July 1943 GHQ approved a plan for establishing a guerrilla force on the Sepik (and re-supplying them by RAAF Catalina), to be known as "Mosstroops", commanded by Maj R. Fowler, formerly of 2/1 Pioneer Battalion and ANGAU. ~ A moss-trooper was "one of the freebooters who infested the mosses, or peat bogs of the Scottish border in the mid-17th Century" ~ Mosstroops would protect the special patrols operating in the area, comprising the AIB patrol of Capt Fryer (Z and M Special Units); the FELO patrol of Lt Cdr Stanley

(RANVR); the AIB – NEFIS patrol of Sgt Staverman (Netherlands Navy); Lt Barracluff's (2/1st Anti-tank Regt and ANGAU) patrol on the April River; Lt Boisen's (also 2/1st A Tk Regt and ANGAU) patrol between the April River and Kuvenmas; and Capt Jim Taylor's ANGAU patrol near Lake Kuvenmas itself."

Subsequent Allied patrols into the Sepik are mentioned elsewhere in the above volume. During July, Sgt Staverman and Sgt LG Siffleet "M" & "Z" Special Units became separated after crossing the Torricelli Range from Lumi; Staverman was reported to the Japanese by villagers and killed; Siffleet was reported by Wapi villagers, captured and tortured; he was executed by beheading on 24 October 1943 by order of Admiral Kamada, commander of Japanese Naval Forces at Aitape, New Guinea; a photo of his execution was found by American forces capturing Hollandia six months later (see "War By Stealth" by Alan Powell; page 172; AWM 101099).

From: "Black Cats" by A E Minty; published by RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria.

On 6 October 1943 Flt Lt Minty and his Catalina flying-boat crew took off from Port Moresby harbour at dawn, headed for Cape Blackwood; then climbed above Lake Kutubu; passed by Mt Ambua and Mt Avana; flew over Lake Kopiago; then descended along valleys towards Lake Panawai to avoid Japanese radar. "The navigator confirmed we were on track past the peaks of the Schatteburg Mountains. Looking out of the cockpit windows, I saw the great slopes of these mountains curving down to the broad low level swamp land where the Sepik River wound its tortuous way towards the coast just east of Wewak. ~ In the endless jungle, there was little in the way of distinguishing features to guide navigation. ~ Both of these (Yellow and Sepik) rivers flowed very strongly, bringing down tree branches and logs that were a danger to our Catalina, not only taking off and alighting but even manoeuvring on the water. One of the leading ANGAU men told me that it was not unusual to see small floating islands, complete with trees coming down the river. ~ (by comparison) the billabongs had no water velocity and hence not much floating timber. ~ The wind was minimal so I put down in the cleanest part of the river I could find. The planing hull of our flying boats was just sheet metal about one sixteenth of an inch thick. Hence, even hitting a bottle at touch-down speed of 65 knots could puncture our hull. ~ We (had previously) noticed a couple of men in a canoe paddling towards our river confluence. One was wearing an Australian Army hat and waving to us enthusiastically. ~ The two men arrived and informed us that Brannigan had never been at that camp and that ANGAU must have made a mistake. ~ One of Capt Pegg's police boys trying to talk to the natives ashore, suddenly started waving with signs that meant the Japs were about to burst out of the jungle. ~ Accumulating weather hit us with a dense tropical downpour. With the gyro compass engaged, I opened my side window and took off ~ visibility ahead in the intense rain was absolute zero ~ I kept flying ~ maintaining circular waltz type turns along the river until I came to the little ox-bows on the opposite side of the river from Lake Panawai. Quickly dropping down onto its welcome waters ~ I saw an Australian Army Captain waving to us from the shore. He sent out the usual narrow dug-out canoe that, unlike a lakatoi (large double hulled coastal sailing canoe), had no outrigger for balance. To make it worse in these crocodile infested waters, the army men and the natives all stood up rather than sat. Of course we felt it a point of honour to not only stand up in the canoe, but also show no concern. ~ In fact the canoe was so narrow that I wondered if my backside would be too wide anyhow to fit into the bottom of the canoe. The ANGAU Captain ~ led us through the jungle to his cleverly hidden camp surrounded by warning trip wires. (The weather stayed bad that afternoon; they sent a short radio message; slept in the aircraft with weapons ready for instant action; discussed the new location and air-ground signals with the two officers next day; unloaded 3500lbs {about one and three quarter tonnes} of stores and flew back to Moresby)."

From: "The New Guinea Offensives"; (as above); pages 801 – 806.

“The next Allied step - the seizure of Aitape and Hollandia (now Surabaya, West Papua)- would be the most ambitious amphibious operation yet undertaken in the South West Pacific. ~ Since the supporting aircraft carriers could remain for only a limited time and Hollandia was 500 miles from the nearest big air base, at Gusap, it was decided to capture a Japanese airfield at Tadjil near Aitape ~ simultaneously on 22 April 1944. ~ The landing at Aitape was made ~ by the (US Army) 163rd Regimental Combat Team which had fought at Sanananda in early '43. The Japanese strength, estimated at 2,000 was in fact about 1,000, of whom only 240 were fighting men and there was little opposition. The Americans lost only 2 killed and 13 wounded. Within 48 hours No. 62 Works Wing, RAAF had the Tadjil airfield ready for the Kittyhawks of No. 78 Wing RAAF. ~ Thus in a few days at a cost of 161 Allied troops killed, the XVIII Japanese Army was isolated and the main Japanese base (at Wewak) east of the Vogelkop (now in West Papua) occupied. It was a classic illustration of the advantage of possessing command of the sea and the air above it.” (The XVIII Japanese Army was cut off, to all intents and purposes from any hope of re-supply or withdrawal, whether by sea or by air; however XVIII Japanese Army refused to surrender...).

From January to August 1945, various battles were fought between Australian and Japanese forces from Aitape to Wewak, along the coast and into the Torricelli and Prince Alexander Ranges. Australian units (in approximate order of arrival) involved 2/5th Bn; 2/6th Cavalry Commando Regt; 2/8th Bn; 2/11th Bn; 2/3rd Bn; 2/3rd MG Bn; 2/6th Bn; 2/7th Bn; 2/1st Bn; 2/2nd Bn; 2/4th Armoured Regt; 2/4th Bn; and 2nd New Guinea Bn between January and August '45. Amongst the Australians two Victoria Crosses were awarded: posthumously to Lt Albert Chowne of 2/2nd Battalion on 25 March '45 near Dagua; and to Pte Ned Kenna of 2/4th Battalion on 14 May '45 near Wewak. See also, “The Second World War and its Australian Army Battle Honours” by Maj Gen Maitland, Kangaroo Press; together with “The Unnecessary War” by Peter Charlton; MacMillan.

The Japanese XVIII Army units, commanded by General Adachi, comprised 20th, 41st and 51st Divisions, (plus various service troops, grounded air crew and naval personnel) totalling about 35,000 men after their counter-attack on Aitape in August 1944. A year later (at the time of their surrender), only 13,300 Japanese had survived. In three years probably about 90,000 Japanese soldiers – (General) Adachi said “more than 100,000” – had died in the area between Milne Bay and Aitape or in the hinterland. Sentenced to life imprisonment for war crimes including the killing of prisoners, General Adachi killed himself in his quarters in the prisoners' compound at Rabaul on 10 September 1947, having first written a number of letters. In one, he said (in part): “During the past three years of operations more than 100,000 youthful and promising officers and men were lost and most of them died of malnutrition. ~ I have demanded perseverance far exceeding the limit of man's endurance of my officers and men, who were exhausted and emaciated as a result of successive campaigns and for want of supplies. However, my officers and men all followed my orders in silence without grumbling, and, when exhausted, they succumbed to death just like flowers falling in the winds. ~”

Whitewater Rafting on the Watut River

Recommended reading

“Hold Hard, Cobbers; Volume Two; the 57/60th Australian Infantry Battalion” by RS Corfield; 57/60th Battalion Association

Maps:

WAU Sheet 8283; 1:100,000; essential for the driver delivering the team and all gear to the ‘put-in’ location, vicinity Snake River and Watut River junctions, on the Lae-Bulolo Road.

ASEKI Sheet 8183; 1:100,000; optional

WASUS Sheet 8184; 1:100,000; optional

NADZAB Sheet 8284; 1:100,000; optional

MADANG 1:250,000 Joint Operations Graphic (JOG map) showing the lower Watut River-Markham River-Tsili Tsili-Chivasing-Lae area for the ‘take-out’ location via Chivasing. Also to brief the helicopter company’s Chief Pilot for Search & Rescue arrangements (subject to a helicopter being available nearby during desired dates).

Local Contacts:

Karen Quinn of Melanesian Arts, Lae

Ray Lee of Corporate Security Transport, Lae.

Murray Fletcher, retired; of Lae

In 1989 Reg Yates, Lindsay Adams and several 6 RAR soldiers successfully rafted down the Watut River. Success was due to expert advice from Murray Fletcher, a Lae-based expat’ who had rafted the Watut and other rivers in PNG. The team brought two large Army Alpine Association white-water rafts and included an experienced Australian rafting guide plus a PNG oar-boat raftsman Osbourne Bogijiwa. Murray Fletcher lent his strong aluminium gear-frame with a large commercial equipment box, plus some Dry-Sacks to carry our rations, army HF radio, medical kit and similar essentials for the trip. Rafters should know that they can take very little personal gear; camera, toiletries, mosquito net, light-weight blanket, footwear that stays on while swimming, sunhat, long-sleeves and light-weight slacks or lycra to keep the sun off, all carried in a ‘Dry-Bag’.

Most team members paddled one large raft, commanded by the experienced Australian raft skipper; two remaining soldiers and the PNG oar-boat skipper rowed the other large raft carrying all the gear in the container secured by the borrowed alloy frame. The paddle boat always led the oar boat.

Be aware that an Australian-based commercial rafting trip on the Watut River around 2006 resulted in three Israelis drowning in the first rapid! Apparently the team claimed to have white-water experience on American rivers, however it included inexperienced members with a mix of inadequate rafts and kayaks. As a favour they were lent a professional white-water raft by Murray Fletcher which was swept away along with other gear and never replaced; the company had no rescue plan and, by default, Murray and other Lae-based expats had to direct the search and recovery of team members. The group did not have a suitable rafting guide able to instruct, direct and control the entire team. A foot pad runs beside the Watut River for some of its length, but a detailed reconnaissance on foot was not carried out.

Safe alternatives are reconnaissance by helicopter or a preliminary descent by a small, skilled rafting team. On ‘put-in’, (i.e. launching the rafts) and well before entering the first rapid the team must be thoroughly practised in all boat-drills. (“Paddle right – left – forward – back – bail – lean right – lean left” etc). Before each hazardous rapid (which the rafting guide will

know from his reconnaissance) the raft should be secured while members walk forward to view the rapid, contribute solutions, agree on the final plan, take their positions in the raft and rehearse yet again, check everything and set off.

Rivers within PNG's hills and mountains are generally fast-flowing, powerful and silty; they can quickly become too dangerous for rafting; they may rise rapidly and fall equally quickly; there may be little warning of storms for the rafting team, hemmed in by steep valleys and mountains. Silty or murky waters conceal logs, branches and submerged boulders; rafters must wear buoyancy vests, securely attached light footwear and white-water safety helmets on the river. Drinking water can be collected from side-streams; the two or three villages beside the Watut River have clean water carried by bamboo pipes, with holes on top where the segments have been cut out, joined narrow end to wide end and supported on stays throughout.

At any rapid which the team considers too dangerous, portaging rafts and gear around the rapid, or simply securing the raft and waiting for the water levels to drop are obvious alternatives. Possibly the large oar-boat carrying the gear (secured by the alloy gear frame), carrying just its skipper and two paddlers might get through; raft skippers and team members must decide.

After some two days of rapids the Watut River flattens, winding past Tsili Tsili, or Marilinan, where a significant WW II airfield was built by General Kenney's 5th USAAF; remnants might be found given enough time and a local guide. 3,000 Americans, Australians and New Guineans worked under fighter cover by day and arc lights by night to build the 7,000' (2,300 metres) double runway by mid-July which could accommodate 140 C-47's in preparation for the 5 September 1943 seizure of Nadzab. Apparently General Kenney claimed Marilinan was being defended by 1,000 Aussies and some machine guns but the 57/60th book says it was two rifle companies; say 200 soldiers with just 4 machine guns. Rather than walking around looking for the airfield in lightweight footwear, rafters should paddle to the 'take-out' place for pick-up by the pre-arranged vehicle and driver; the driver may turn off the Markham Valley Highway at Chivasing to rendezvous with the rafters at the 'take out' location. Calls by mobile or SatPhone should confirm rendezvous time and place.

Mt Victoria trek

Maps

KOKODA Sheet 8480; 1:100,000

WASA Sheet 8380; 1:100,000

Local Contacts

Warren Bartlett of Sogeri Lodge; Sogeri

Michael Lucas; aka Michael Okuto of Kanga village, near Kokoda

This 12 day Mt Victoria trek was based on advice from Soc' Kienzle of Cairns, who has led groups on the route four times, most recently in 2009. Reg Yates visited Soc's father, Bert Kienzle, CBE, MBE (Military), MID in Queensland, en route during his first visit to PNG in 1984. Bert organised the vital carrier lines for the Kokoda campaign during July-November 1942; the family home was "Mamba" in the Yodda Valley, near Kokoda. Mt Victoria is 4,000 metres high; it dominates the Owen Stanley Range and can be seen from Port Moresby and the Kokoda Track.

Of the 12 or so days, six or seven are between 3,000 and 4,000 metres elevation; Day's 5 & 6 are among rolling sub-alpine grasslands with small lakes, tarns and rocky, rain-forested hills; there are no airstrips and no villages; the route is a hunting track of about 75km with no major river crossings and a daily search for water. Compare this with the Kokoda Trail, usually 8 or 9 days and highest elevation of 2,300 metres; several villages and airstrips along the way; a 94km track often cut 2 or 3 metres wide; three river crossings and frequent side streams.

'Zac' Zaharias and Reg Yates were briefed by Soc' in March 2016. Zac' is a former Regular Army Engineer officer, now Army Reserve and head of Peak Learning Adventures; he was a member of the Army Alpine Association Mt Everest expedition for the 1988 Bicentennial; a UN Observer in India/Pakistan and awarded a CSM.

This Mt Victoria trek was to be a reconnaissance, however Zac' found seven other interested trekkers. Zac contacted Soc's local guide, Michael 'Lucas' (aka Michael Okuto) from Kanga village and made an advance payment for rations for Kanga villagers to 'clean' their end of the track up to Lakes Ohma and Ranu; and the Komo and Ebei villagers to 'clean' from Komo up to the planned 'resupply' camp below Huxley Peak, aka Mt Thumb. To 'clean' or 'mark' the track involves cutting saplings and vines from around ankle level up to head height, wide enough so carriers with large backpacks can walk through without scrambling. Trekkers beware of razor sharp bamboo, cut off at ankle and calf-level.

Zac's advance of PNGK 1700 (about AUD\$800) bought rations for 11 x Kanga men for 8 days and 18 x Komo-Ebei men for 4 days; a total of 160 man-days; money well spent. As we approached Mt Victoria, Zac' arranged for some Komo-Ebei men, extra to the carriers, to bring additional rations up to the planned resupply camp some distance below Huxley Peak, to assist our descent during the final 24 hours. We had hired 24 carriers for our 9 trekkers; originally we'd planned to send 6 carriers back from Lakes Ohma and Ranu, but we kept everyone with us. Our rations were based on Warren Bartlett's ration scales for carriers; and Zac's ration scales for trekkers; all 24 carriers were happy to stay with us and we didn't run short of rations.

By agreement, Reg Yates had arrived in PNG early to buy rations in Moresby with Warren's help, securing them in Zac's storage containers, now at Sogeri Lodge. Reg then flew to Girua airport, Popondetta to meet Michael Lucas; both met three local leaders next morning who supported the proposed trek: Kila Sibolo (Kagi), Deputy Administrator, Oro Provincial Government; Remigious Souto (Kanga), Primary Teacher at Sangara and Chairman of Bouru

Land Group; and Peter Lula (Alola), Ward 9 Councillor, Kokoda LLG (the latter known to Reg Yates as a carrier and guesthouse owner on the Kokoda Trail).

Men from Yodda Valley have rarely been offered work as carriers on the Kokoda Trail; this Mt Victoria trek shared work equally among Kanga, Ebei and Komo villages; all parties expressed hope that annual Mt Victoria treks might follow; however no promises were made.

Reg Yates met Zac' and the seven trekkers from a charter flight at Kokoda. By mistake, Tropic Air had provided a single-engine turbo-prop "Caravan" (actually booked for the return flight) rather than a "Twin Otter" (required for the insertion flight, with all the rations). Zac' was able to buy replacement rations from the Chinese trade-store at Kokoda (and Warren bought the 'left behind' rations at Tropic Air for his next trek and reimbursed Reg/Zac' in turn).

Trekkers arrived at Kokoda on 13 June 2016, Queen's Birthday; fortunate because the only truck in the area was actually available; truck owners always need full loads to make money; fuel, maintenance and bad roads are constant problems. We visited the Kokoda battlefield, then "Mamba Estate" (the original Kienzle homestead, now leased to Higaturu Oil Palm; Reg had made contingency arrangements with Bob Wilson, Higaturu's manager, for accommodation or transport but neither was required). The two-storey weatherboard "Mamba" homestead accepts occasional guests. The truck took everyone to the end of the road near Ebei village, where we met the various carriers and walked with all our cargo for an hour to Kanga village.

A disgruntled Ebei man carrying a bush-knife complained that we had two Kokoda men as carriers yet he didn't get a job; Reg pointed out that 22 others were local men and the trek had approval from Kila Sibolo and his colleagues and, more important locally, from Jerry Abau, the Komo headman; arranging high-level local approval is always wise! Kanga villagers gave a traditional welcome with decorated arch, sing-sing dancers and flower necklaces. Backpack loads were sorted and arrangements made for surplus gear to be taken back to Komo, pending our return there. We visited the school and well-built church; a generator-powered light ran all night.

The actual 12 day trek started from Kanga village on 14 June, finishing at Komo village on 25 June 2016. It followed the same daily itinerary as Soc' Kienzle's earlier Mt Victoria treks which can be seen, day-by-day on former trekker Jeremy Scriven's colour topo' map from the 2009 trek. This involves a long approach from Kanga, climbing generally north-west to the Lakes (by Day 6); then steadily south along the Northern and Central District boundary to Mt Victoria (by Day 10), then descending steeply southeast to Komo village (by Day 12). We gave the following names to each campsite, as follows: Day 1 – Kanga; Day 2 – Surprise Camp; Day 3 – Fern Gully; Day 4 – Spilled Spaghetti; Day 5 – Wet Smokehouse; Day 6 – Lake Ranu; Day 7 – Mt Thynne; Day 8 – Chill Wind Ridge; Day 9 – Downfall Gully; Day 10 – Desperation; Day 11 – Deliverance.

The route rises and falls, mostly under canopy for the first few days; there are no villages en route; low rainfall made finding water near suitable campsites awkward some days; on any future trek scouts will go ahead with a portable radio to locate water sources and call the group forward in remaining daylight. Mt Victoria can be seen from time to time, often shrouded in cloud. Lakes Ohma and Ranu are in grassland at 3600 metres; altitude was not a concern but cold weather gear is vital; tiny glistening spider-webs appeared in grassy patches in the early mornings; sunsets, moonrise and sunrise are spectacular in the open country between the lakes and Mt Thynne. Firewood is plentiful in areas of scrub and trees; cycads and primitive ferns abound in grasslands, with boggy areas, small streams and tiny ponds sprinkled about. Black droppings and frequent turned-over soil indicate pigs; occasional white droppings from wild dogs can be seen. Michael Lucas pointed out a clearing where a previous trek found an old firearm, presumably left by McGregor in the late 1890's. Michael has it at Kanga but we didn't see it.

Approaching Mt Victoria itself, the track picks its way up steep grassy ascents dominated by rocky bluffs and peaks; in scrub we encountered the skeleton of a child, still with T-shirt and shorts around the pelvis and scapulae, apparently lost months ago and died of exposure; largely intact with connective tissue in place and all flesh consumed by tiny creatures; dogs and pigs had not disturbed it; there were no signs of injury and no footwear, bush-knife or belongings; a report and photos (each showing my empty glove for scale) was provided for RPNGC at Kokoda with burial to be arranged locally, in due course. NB: Australian & PNG law requires that unexplained deaths must be reported to the police, for a police report to the coroner; as visitors we are obliged to report accordingly; the written report also clears trekkers of any rumours of “sanguma” (Tok pisin for sorcery), criminal involvement or failure to report the death.

By midday strong winds blew up on the north-western flanks of Mt Victoria, with clouds and mist swirling by; too risky for any of us without someone being blown off the slopes; on the less windy side steep rocky bluffs and fog made the south-eastern flanks impassable. We descended several hundred metres and chanced on a sheltered place with firewood and water for the night. Next day we climbed all the way back up and over to the sunlit side, continuing a few kilometres before finally climbing steeply straight up, onto Mt Victoria itself, by midday. Glorious views of steep, barren and smaller mountains lay below us! Handshakes, photos, snacks and then the long descent through fog, heading southeast for Huxley Peak, aka Mt Thumb. In the fog, rain and broken ground we trekkers and six carriers became separated; we rigged a tarp and lit a fire for warmth while the remaining 18 carriers went on to the planned resupply campsite. We had radio contact and eventually joined them late at night; route marking is planned for future treks.

The final descent to Komo village started at 8am on 24th June, with late lunch at 4pm and trekkers arriving between 2am and 5am on the morning of 25th June, everyone having walked through the night! Planned as a two day descent, three daylight days (with NO night movement) are essential on any future trek descending from Mt Victoria to Komo village. A day can probably be saved in any future trek between Kanga and the lakes, by scouting ahead for water and walking further each day, as above.

All things being equal, Reg Yates is happy to walk this Mt Victoria trek again with Zac Zaharias in 2017; it was well organised and the local villagers and carriers benefitted; several carriers returned proudly carrying “posies” of mountain flowers for their wives and girlfriends; proof that they had been chosen to go there

The itinerary needs an extra day, being three daylight days to descend from Mt Victoria, rather than one day to reach the ‘resupply’ camp and almost 24 hours through day and night to arrive at Komo village;

The daily itinerary is dependent on finding water near each night’s campsite; sources of clean water vary from season to season. Sending scouts well ahead with hand-held radios, to liaise with the trek leader and call the group forward to clean water near suitable campsites before dark, will be invaluable.

The ascent/descent of Mt Victoria require no rock climbing skills but 60 metres of safety rope (or balance line) is required. Altitude sickness is no concern because the long approach march allows acclimatisation. Strong winds, fog, rain and cold weather around the mountain peak create significant difficulties; all carriers were issued with warm jackets, rain jackets (with waterproof over-trousers desirable next time), gumboots and socks, woolly hats, head torches, sleeping bags and groundsheets. Rocky bluffs on the mountain’s flanks must be avoided, bearing in mind that level areas, able to hold a large group, are scarce. Scrub is available for firewood, plus small ponds for water, best boiled or purified before consumption.

Michael Lucas is well-regarded in Yodda Valley, Kokoda and Northern Province; he used Zac's advance payment wisely and introduced Kila Sibolo, District Administrator and colleagues who supported the trek because of its benefits for the Kanga, Ebei and Komo villages. Michael Lucas will benefit by sharing joint responsibilities with an experienced 2IC able to teach and lead carriers on working with trekkers. Michael has worked with scientific expeditions some years ago; he is commended for his knowledge of flora and fauna in a "Birds of PNG" book.

The Kokoda Trail (officially Trail on Unit Battle Honours; or Track among early veterans) is a military history 'pilgrimage' for Australians paying homage to "the Men Who Saved Australia". This Mt Victoria trek is an 'adventure' for experienced trekkers, requiring liaison with local 'Big Men', cold weather gear for carriers, ample rations and sound leadership on and around the mountain.

There were two other recipients of the Victoria Cross in the Papuan Campaign: Pte Bruce Kingsbury VC (Posthumous) at Isurava on the Kokoda Trail; and Cpl John French VC (Posthumous) at Milne Bay.

The Hindenburg Wall: Karius & Champion's crossing from Fly River to the Sepik River, 1926–1928

Recommended Reading

“Across New Guinea – From the Fly to the Sepik” by Ivan Champion; Lansdowne (1966 reprint)

“Last Frontiers -Explorations of Ivan Champion of Papua” by James Sinclair; Pacific Press

Maps

TELEFOMIN 7287; 1:100,000

OK TEDI Joint Operations Graphic (JOG Map) 1:250,000.

Facsimile: Royal Geographical Society map 1:500,000 in “Across New Guinea”, as above.

Local Contacts

To be established.

Charles Karius was Assistant Resident Magistrate, Kambisi (on the south coast) and the Expedition leader; Ivan Champion was a 22 year old Patrol Officer with surveying and navigation skills on this North-west Patrol of 1926-28 which discovered the sources of the Fly River and headwaters of the Sepik River. There were two expeditions: December '26 to July '27; and September '27 to January '28.

They travelled up the Fly River by boat and followed the Palmer River on foot; supplies had to be staged from place to place; they were accompanied by six armed Police plus some thirty-six carriers. Near Mt Blucher they separated, Karius crossing the Dap Range northwards and eventually following the Strickland River back south while Ivan Champion headed north-west beside the Dap Range to arrive at Bolivip. At the second attempt, they crossed the mountains on foot following the Sepik from its headwaters to the border of present-day West Papua where the *Elevala* had waited for them.

Ivan Champion later said, “We had to use native porters to carry food and it doesn't matter how many porters you use you could only carry enough food for 16 days. It doesn't matter if you increase to hundreds because they still keep eating the food, so you can never get beyond 16 days. Therefore you have to carry trade goods to buy food from the local villagers”. On their second journey at Bolivip, taro was scarce; fortunately Karius and Champion had carriers with rice; also steel axes and adzes among other trade goods. (In 2016 drought, particularly in the Highlands, affected village gardens; crops failed or were stunted. The population of PNG has more than doubled in thirty years and villagers' dependent on 'slash & burn' agriculture must now crop considerably larger areas of land than a generation ago. Land disputes are always cause for concern).

Reg Yates flew from Mendi into Telefomin in 1989 (formerly known as Kelefomin in 1927-28), meeting former Kiap Tony Friend, the local administrator and wife Maria, an anthropologist with James Cook University. Tony arranged a government house to stay in and asked for a local elder to call next day with wantoks, to guide and carry to Feramin, then across the Hindenburg Range and down to Selbang. At Selbang Reg stayed with a young American couple, volunteers with an aid project. From Selbang Reg and guides walked via a well-built kunda (cane rope) bridge to Bolivip where Reg met the grandson of Tamsimara, the chief whom Ivan Champion persuaded to guide him northwards across the Hindenburg Range in 1926. The visit complete, Reg walked southwest to Olsobip for a scheduled flight to Tabubil. Whether such flights into Telefomin and out of Olsobip are still available is to be determined.

Study of the map and Champion's descriptions in "Across New Guinea" suggests that Reg was shown the "easy way" to cross the Hindenburg Range in 1989! It would be interesting to make another visit to Telefomin, then repeat the walk to Feramin, Selbang and Bolivip; sit down with villagers and enquire about guides to retrace Karius & Champion's actual route northwest across the Hindenburg Range to Feramin. It is possible that Bolivip on current survey maps is east of where Karius & Champion found it 90 years ago; villages do move over time. Retracing their route would include going via the headwaters of the Inup River and Amil River, then via Mt Map and the headwaters of the Fly River over several days to return to Feramin. Asking today's villagers whether Bolivip now has moved since Tamsimara's time, 90 years ago, would be a good start. Then asking where the Inup and Amil Rivers are; whether tracks exist and so on. The Hindenburg Range is Karst, with limestone pinnacles and numerous potholes, rivers and creeks which disappear underground; constant searches for water, firewood and campsites; chasms covered in moss or undergrowth to trap the unwary; mist, fog and freezing weather. Their highest camp was at 8,159' (2,700 metres); warm clothing and rain jackets would be required for local guide/carriers. Champion's chapter 'Across the Limestone Dap Range' includes: "Our way was confronted with a seemingly impassable wall of limestone covered in vicious looking pinnacles. Our guides led us straight at it, but a turn took us through it by an arch some 10 feet (3 metres) high and 4 feet wide (i.3 metres) decorated with small stalactites and stalagmites." The Bolivip people may know of this place; whether they can be persuaded to search for it remains to be seen.

On 6 November 1953 Patrol Officer Gerald Szarka, Cadet Patrol Officer Geoffrey Harris, Constable Buratori and Constable Purari were murdered near Telefomin in the Sepik District. The Station had been established five years earlier and most of the sub-district was still uncontrolled. Nothing like it had ever happened in Papua or New Guinea, though several Patrol Officers had been killed in isolated instances. The murderers were finally brought to the Supreme Court, Wewak and 32 men sentenced to death, later commuted to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour. It was said that resentment of the government ban on fighting and cannibalism; and that the elders believed their taro crops had suffered since the establishment of government led to the murders.

Postscript

If four fee-paying fellow-passengers can be found, Reg Yates will consider chartering a light aircraft to fly over the routes taken by Mick Leahy and Michael Dwyer, Mick & Dan Leahy and Jim Taylor, Jack Hides and Jim O'Malley, Ivan Champion and C.J. Adamson, and by Jim Taylor and John Black between 1930 and 1939.

A Cessna 182 or 206 (high wing monoplane with good observation; one piston engine and propeller in the nose) is recommended, though such aircraft are 'rare as hen's teeth'; Avgas needs to be pre-positioned to avoid shortages en route. A charter for 30 flying hours at 2 nautical miles a minute, plus ferry time is required; aircraft & pilot availability and costs have yet to be ascertained.

Detailed route maps are available for:

1. Hides & O'Malley's journeys in "Like People You See in a Dream" by Schieffelin & Crittenden; Stanford;
2. Taylor-Black in "the Sky Travellers" by Bill Gammage; Miegunyah Press/MUP; and
3. Champion and Adamson in "Last Frontiers" by James Sinclair.

Detailed route maps will be sought in due course for Mick Leahy's journeys in "Expeditions into Highland New Guinea; 1930-1935", edited by Douglas Jones; Crawford House; and also described in "First Contact" by Connelly & Anderson; Viking (including the DVD). See also the DVD, "My Father, My Country" narrated by Dame Margaret Taylor, CBE; daughter of Jim and Yerima Taylor.

"Middle Kingdom: a Colonial History of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea" by James Sinclair; Crawford House; released in 2016, has a black & white map at approximately 1: 3,000,000 scale, including rivers and other land marks, showing all the European patrols from MacGregor in 1890 to Hides & O'Malley in 1934 -35; plus a similar map showing the patrols by Jack Hides & O'Malley, 1935 (Strickland – Purari); Ivan Champion & Adamson, 1936 (Bamu – Purari); Claude Champion & Anderson, 1937 (Kutubu); and Jim Taylor & John Black, 1938-39 Hagen – Sepik). Exactly as its title states, the detailed text and images in "Middle Kingdom" are a magnificent tribute to the colonists who explored and developed the PNG Highlands; to Jim Sinclair the former 'Kiap' and author, his friends and supporters; and the people of PNG and the New Guinea Highlands.

Regarding military history books with maps, not covered elsewhere in this Guide, readers should see:

"An Atlas of Australia's Wars" (Vol VII, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*) by Lt Gen John Coates, AC, MBE (Ret); Oxford. Lieutenant-General Coates retired as CGS in 1992, having been Commandant at RMC, Duntroon and Commander of a Cavalry Squadron (APC) in South Vietnam 1970-71; he wrote "Bravery above Blunder", mentioned in this Guide's Huon Peninsula notes, as above. General Coates' Atlas has large A-3 pages with wonderful text, maps and images throughout, starting with 'Frontier Conflict' following the arrival of the British under Captain James Cook, concluding with *INTERFET* on East Timor, commanded by Maj-Gen Peter Cosgrove. Within this Atlas, Part IV *Australian Forces in the Pacific in World War II* are relevant to this Guide; particularly *Breaking the Malay Barrier* and *The New Guinea Campaign*, pages 216 - 254.

"A Bastard of a Place – The Australians in Papua" by Peter Brune; Allen & Unwin covers the Kokoda and Milne Bay campaigns with clear maps and text, including quotes from numerous veterans.

"Milne Bay 1942 – The Story of Milne Force" by Clive Baker & Greg Knight; AMHP (now known as War Books); a large book packed with veterans' stories, maps, images and details

of the local people. Reg Yates hasn't visited Milne Bay since the late 1980's; considerable logging has taken place in the area since then; Reg will take Clive and Greg's book, hire a local guide and 'walk the ground', next visit.

"The South-West Pacific 1941-45" by Colonel EG Keogh, MBE, ED (Ret); Grayflower has maps by GM Capper (and a fine drawing of Signaller Peter Pinney, 2/3rd Independent Company, later Corporal Peter Pinney, 2/8th Australian Commando Squadron, by WW II Official Artist Ivor Hele on its cover). It opens with the prelude to Pearl Harbour, continues with 'The years that the locusts ate', covers the fall of Singapore, Java, Rabaul, Ambon, Timor, then the campaigns in the Solomons, Papua and New Guinea and concludes with Borneo operations.

Finally, "Australia in the War of 1939-1945" series; published by AWM:

Vol IV. "The Japanese Thrust" by Lionel Wigmore;

Vol V "South-West Pacific Area – First Year" by Dudley McCarthy;

Vol VI "The New Guinea Offensives" by David Dexter;

Vol VII "The Final Campaigns" by Gavin Long