

“The track”

A historical desktop study of the Kokoda Track

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Abbreviations

AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANGAU	Australian New Guinea Administration Unit
AJRP	Australia–Japan Research Project
ATIS	Allied Translator and Interpreter Service
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BM	Brigade Major
DCC	Document Control Centre
DEWHA	Department of Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts
CMF	Citizens Military Force
GPS	Global Positioning System
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NFG	New Guinea Force
NIDS	National Institute of Defence Studies
NLA	National Library of Australia
PNG	Papua New Guinea
O	Officer
OP	Observation Post
ORS	Other Ranks
PIB	Papuan Infantry Battalion
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAP	Regimental Aid Post
US	United States
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
UTM	Universal Transverse Mercator

Introduction

“We are at war with Japan”

John Curtin, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1941

During 1942 Australia faced what many feared was its darkest hour, following Japan’s sudden entry into the Second World War on 7 December 1941 and the rapid advance of Japanese forces southwards through Asia and the Pacific. As they came south, the Japanese appeared invincible, even attacking the Australian mainland with the bombing of Darwin and northern Australia, and the submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour. Despite a deep-rooted historical fear of Asia, Australia was ill-prepared for the Japanese thrust when it came.

When Japan entered the war, all three of Australia’s services were dispersed to other areas. Most of the warships of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) were either serving around Singapore or in the Mediterranean, or were on convoy escort duties. The aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) were only suitable for training or were twin-engine aircraft used for maritime and reconnaissance roles. Most of the RAAF’s trained personnel were serving in Britain or were being trained in different parts of the Commonwealth through the Empire Air Training Scheme. The land forces were in an equally poor state. The four trained infantry divisions of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF) – except for one of its infantry brigades, whose battalions were scattered around Rabaul, Ambon, and Timor – were in the Middle East and Malaya. There was an AIF armoured division in Australia, though it had few tanks. Australia’s defence instead relied on the part-time soldiers of the Militia, men who were either too young for the AIF or who had been called up for military service.

“Well, it has come,” said Australia’s Prime Minister John Curtin when he woke early on 8 December 1941. The next day Curtin announced to the nation that “We are at war with Japan” because of Japan’s “unprovoked attack on British and United States territory”.¹ The Allies fared poorly during the first months of the Pacific War. The victorious Japanese moved quickly through Malaya, captured Singapore and the Philippines, and occupied the Netherlands East Indies. Hundreds of thousands of Allied servicemen were captured, included 20,000 Australians from the 8th Division, captured on Singapore and the islands. Forecasting what he felt sure was to come, Curtin described the Fall of Singapore as “Australia’s Dunkirk”, which heralded the

¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, late edition, 9 December 1941.

opening of the “battle for Australia”.² Such fears were reasonable but fortunately that battle never eventuated. The Japanese had no firm plans to invade Australia.

At the start of the year, some Japanese naval officers had pressed for an invasion of Australia, but army planners disagreed, arguing that the army had too few troops for a successful invasion of Australia. The army estimated that it would need up to 12 divisions to occupy the country. The Japanese army was already heavily committed in China, where it had been fighting for years, and now it had to occupy the territories recently captured in the Pacific. The army also wanted a reserve in case the Soviet Union attacked in Manchuria. The navy, too, soon realised that there were too few merchant ships to transport an invasion force, and they had too few warships to protect them. The idea of an invasion of Australia had been dropped by March 1942. The Japanese plans to invade Australia were never more than an idea discussed by a handful of officers in Tokyo.³

Japanese intentions, of course, were not known to either American or Australian military commanders nor to the general public at the time. For most Australians, the threat of a Japanese invasion was real and imminent. In March the battle-hardened AIF, and its commander General Thomas Blamey, began to return to Australia, and the American General Douglas MacArthur arrived. MacArthur was greeted publicly and privately as a “hero” and the “saviour of Australia”.⁴ His arrival signalled America’s support for the war against Japan. MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in the South-West Pacific Area, and Australian forces were assigned to his command. The relationship between Blamey and MacArthur would prove difficult. But it would take time for the Americans to arrive in large numbers, so for most of 1942 and 1943 Australian troops carried the burden of the fighting. Until the Allies were in a position to counter-attack, the war would be fought on Australia’s doorstep, in the island barrier to Australia’s north – New Guinea.

During the war, eastern New Guinea was divided into two areas. Papua, with its capital Port Moresby, had been Australian territory since 1906. The Mandated Territory of New Guinea – which included a wide arc of islands from the Admiralties, New Britain and its capital Rabaul, New Ireland, and Bougainville – had been mandated to Australia from Germany by the League of Nations after the First World War.

The first Japanese attack on New Guinea began in January 1942, quickly capturing Rabaul. Rabaul had been the administrative centre of New Guinea; the Japanese rapidly developed it as their heavily fortified main base in the South Pacific. The Allies were to spend much of the next two years carrying out operations to reduce and isolate Rabaul.

Two months earlier, Papua and New Guinea had been backwaters. Australia had done virtually nothing to prepare defences in either territory until 1939. In December 1941 the military commander in New Guinea, Brigadier (later Major General) Basil Morris,

² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 1942.

³ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, pp. 78-82. See Stanley, *Invading Australia* and Wurth, *1942* for the debate over the extent of the Japanese plans to invade Australia.

⁴ Manchester, *American Caesar*, pp 280-288.

called up the local Militia unit and was also able to raise another local unit, the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB). The PIB consisted of Australian officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and Papuan soldiers. Morris's largest formation was the 30th Brigade, which arrived in Moresby in early 1942. But the brigade's battalions (the 39th, 49th and 53rd) comprised young militiamen who were poorly trained and ill-equipped. They were soon in action as the first Japanese air raids against Moresby began in February. Morris also later received two more Militia brigades; one went to Moresby while the other was sent to Milne Bay to protect the airfield that was being built there.

The Japanese, rather than invading Australia, adopted a strategy of isolating it. They planned to attempt to blockade supply lines with the United States in an operation known as the FS Operation, under which Japan would invade New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji, and other islands in the South Pacific. The invasion included Port Moresby and the southern Solomons, "thus bringing the Coral Sea under control and smashing enemy plans for a counter-offensive" in the region.⁵ The Japanese planned to form a defensive ring around the Greater East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and did not want Australia or Papua to be used as a base for an American counter-attack against their recently won territory.

The Japanese had scheduled the FS Operation to begin in mid-May. Following their losses during the battle of the Coral Sea earlier that month, however, the operation was postponed, and then cancelled after their defeat during the battle of Midway in June. Rather than taking Moresby in a seaborne landing, the Japanese instead started to devise plans to take Moresby by land, across the rugged mountains of the Owen Stanley Range.

The Kokoda campaign fought between July and November 1942 was part of a larger campaign fought in Papua. During August and September, Australian forces defeated a Japanese amphibious force at Milne Bay, while at the end of the year, from November to January 1943, Australian and American forces fought the bloody beachhead battles of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda which cleared the Japanese from Papua. Beyond Papua, Australian forces were also in action against the Japanese in New Guinea, fighting in the mountains between Wau and Salamaua, while in the Solomon Islands, American and Japanese forces bitterly contested the island of Guadalcanal.

It is the Kokoda campaign, however, that holds a central place in the Australian public's consciousness. Often described as a "battle that saved Australia", Kokoda has come, during the last ten years or so, to rival Gallipoli as a focus of national commemoration and reflection. The attributes of those diggers who fought the campaign – such as loyalty and, above all else, mateship – have come to be closely associated with supposed "Australian values". The commercial and critical success of Peter Brune's (2003), Peter FitzSimons's (2004), and Paul Ham's (2004) books on Kokoda, as well as Alister Grierson's feature film (2006), demonstrate the widespread interest in the campaign.⁶ So too does the ever growing number of trekkers who walk the Kokoda Track each year. Even for those people who are not interested

⁵ Miller, *Victory in Papua*, p. 13; Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 86.

⁶ Grierson's *Kokoda* was released in the United Kingdom as *Kokoda: 39th Battalion*.

in its military history, the physicality of the track and its formidable reputation as a test of endurance hold a certain allure.

It is this passionate interest in the Kokoda Track, and an awareness of the need for its preservation and management, that have motivated the present historical study. This study was funded by the Department of Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts (DEHWA) as part of the Joint Understanding on the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges signed by the Australian and Papua New Guinean (PNG) governments. The PNG government has placed the Kokoda Track and the surrounding Owen Stanley Ranges on its *World Heritage Tentative List* as a mixed cultural and natural site, with a view to developing a formal nomination later. Similarly, the Australian government has placed the Kokoda Track on its *List of Overseas Places of Historic Significance* because of its importance to Australia's wartime history.

One of the key issues relating to the Kokoda Track is the location of its actual route. The modern route used today by Papua New Guineans and trekking tourists is very similar to the main wartime track, but there are some subtle variations. The aims of this desktop study of the Kokoda Track has been to provide a discussion of the original wartime routes of the track, as well as providing a concise history of the military campaign that was fought along it. This study serves more as a "fact file" on the Kokoda campaign rather than a single study or narrative. It is envisaged that it will be more dipped into than read.

The first chapter is a brief narrative of the Kokoda campaign, looking at why the Japanese decided to invade Papua and the key events of the campaign. This chapter relies heavily on Dudley McCarthy's volume in the Australian official history of the campaign, *South-West Pacific Area first year: Kokoda to Wau* (1959) and the Japanese official history, the *Senshi sosho* (*War history series*), recently translated by Steven Bullard as *Army operations in the South Pacific Area: Papua campaigns, 1942–1943* (2007). When writing Japanese names, the author has followed the traditional Japanese order, that is, family name followed by personal name.

The second chapter describes the different tracks that were used during the war, as well as the history of the mapping of the Kokoda Track. Before the war there were few maps of New Guinea's interior and virtually none that were of any military value. It was not until September 1942 that the Australian army was able to produce good quality maps of the Kokoda Track. By the end of the year the battlefronts had moved on to other areas of New Guinea, and the military were only able to produce one thoroughly surveyed map of the track from Uberi to Nauro. The specific route of the war track, or more correctly tracks, has received scant attention until recently. Little research has been published on its route apart from Bill James's excellent *Field guide to the Kokoda Track* (2006 and revised in 2007).

The vexed issue of the debate over the terms "Kokoda Track" and "Kokoda Trail" is discussed in the final chapter. Both names were used almost interchangeably during the war, although the majority of Australian soldiers who fought the campaign at the time would probably have called it a "track". The use of "Kokoda Trail" as a battle honour by the army in the late 1950s started the official recognition of it as a title; this was confirmed in the early 1970s when the PNG government formally gazetted the track from Owers' Corner to Kokoda village as the "Kokoda Trail". I have used

“Kokoda Track” throughout this study because this is now the preferred term of the Papua New Guinean government.

The study’s brief conclusion discusses the public’s growing awareness of the significance of the Kokoda Track, and also makes some observations and recommendations for further study. The appendix lists the principal Australian and Japanese units involved in the Kokoda campaign, sets out the known Australian and Japanese casualty figures, and lists the major memorials along the track. There is also a detailed discussion of Australian and Japanese war graves and cemeteries located along the track and in Papua.

Chapter 1

The Kokoda campaign, 1942

They were met with Bren-gun and Tommy-gun, with bayonet and grenade; but still they came to close with the buffet of fist and boot and rifle-butt, the steel of crashing helmets and of straining, strangling fingers.

Ralph Honner, "The 39th at Isurava", 1956

A convoy of Japanese cruisers, destroyers, and merchant ships steamed towards Gona, on Papua's north coast, throughout the day of 21 July 1942. The convoy had been at sea since the previous evening when it had left Rabaul, New Britain, which had been captured by the Japanese six months earlier. The Japanese thrust had earlier occupied much of south-east Asia and the Pacific, and had established bases at Salamaua and Lae on the New Guinea mainland. From these bases and Rabaul, Japanese aircraft had been attacking and bombing Port Moresby since early in the year. Japanese forces were now about to come ashore in Papua and menace Moresby by land.

Early in the afternoon, a beach patrol from the Australian government station at Buna reported an approaching aircraft. A few minutes later, a low flying Japanese floatplane circled the station at tree-top height and fired several bursts from its machine-guns. The aircraft returned four more times that afternoon, and at about 5.15 pm Captain Alan Champion, the officer in charge of the station, reported seeing the convoy heading towards Gona. Fifteen minutes later, the Japanese warships fired a few salvos into the foreshore east of Gona. Soon afterwards, Champion received a report that the Japanese were landing troops in the Sanananda area.

Four months earlier, on 10 March, Champion, with two Australian signallers and two Papuan police constables, had driven off a Japanese floatplane that had landed in Buna bay after having bombed and machine-gunned two small vessels belonging to the missionaries. In that "first battle of Buna", as one witness called it, the fire from the five rifles had been enough to drive off the lone Japanese aircraft, but Champion knew it was pointless to try a similar stand against the Japanese landing force. Collecting codes, ciphers, and other official records, Champion burnt the documents and then destroyed the radio set before he withdrew his small party. At Soputa, he received a report from a corporal from the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB) that Japanese troops were coming ashore in barges. Champion's party arrived at Awala

early the next morning, where he reported to Major William Watson, the PIB's commanding officer.¹

The Japanese met little resistance as they began to land their troops. At 5.30 pm the convoy was attacked by a single B17 (an American-made four-engined heavy bomber) and five Mitchells (two-engined medium bombers), which claimed a hit on one of the transports.² As the Japanese opened up with their screen of defensive fire, the Reverend James Benson, an Anglican missionary at Gona, heard the deafening barrage. It seemed as "though hundreds of guns were spitting fire" from the destroyers and transports; and

the deep woof! Crump! Crump! of bursting bombs a mile away, gave me a queer feeling in the pit of my stomach. But we still continued to sit on as though it were all a play.³

Benson and two mission sisters watched the attacks on the warships until they saw boats being lowered over the sides of the transports with hundreds of men tumbling into them. It was only then that the missionaries, with a few of their possessions hastily thrown together, started to make their way towards Kokoda.⁴ As the missionaries fled Gona, the small Australian force in the area began to concentrate between Kokoda and Awala. Watson had 105 Papuan soldiers, with three Australian officers and three Australian NCOs, under his command.⁵

By the end of the day, 430 men from the Japanese 5th Sasebo Special Naval Landing Party and naval base units had disembarked at Giruwa, five kilometres north-west of Buna, where they soon began constructing a base. Meanwhile troops of the Yokoyama Advance Party, consisting of about 900 infantry and combat engineers, had landed at Gona. One of its forward units moved quickly towards Kokoda as soon as it had landed. Early the next morning, the main strength of the Yokoyama Advance Party pushed inland to prepare roads and supply lines for the imminent advance of the main invading force.⁶

¹ Report of the Japanese invasion of Buna, by Capt F A Champion, ADO, ANGAU war diary July–August 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 1/10/1; Prologue by James Benson to "Lost Troops" by Seizo Okada, p. 20, AWM, MSS732, item 1.

² McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 132.

³ Prologue by James Benson to "Lost Troops" by Seizo Okada, p. 20, AWM, MSS732, item 1.

⁴ The missionaries eventually met a small group of five Australian soldiers and five downed American airmen led by Lieutenant Arthur Smith from the PIB. Smith tried to lead the group to Port Moresby but they were ambushed by the Japanese, who killed four Australians. Smith and the two female missionaries, Miss Mavis Parkinson and Miss May Hayman, were captured by the Japanese and were executed. Benson was captured but survived; the Americans were killed. The missionaries and civilians from Sangara Mission and plantation, including two priests and two sisters, were also captured and executed by the Japanese. The Australian government had encouraged women and children to leave New Guinea and the territories as early as March 1941, and by the end of the year 600 women and children had been evacuated to Australia. A number of women remained behind, though, including missionaries and nurses. Prologue by James Benson to "Lost Troops" by Seizo Okada, p. 21, AWM, MSS732, item 1; McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 42, p. 132 and p. 139.

⁵ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, pp. 123–24. The strength of the PIB should have been about 20 or 30 officers and 280 other ranks. It is not clear what happened to the other half of the battalion and why they were not with Watson. New Guinea Force Headquarters and General (Air) war diary, June 1942, New Guinea Force Operational Instruction No 18, 15 June 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 1/5/51.

⁶ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 124.

Throughout 22 July the PIB patrolled the area and tracks around Awala. The first major skirmish occurred in the afternoon of the 23rd when a small patrol engaged a group of Japanese just east of Awala. The Japanese, armed with mortars, machine-guns and a field piece, eagerly returned fire and the PIB patrol largely melted away. At about this time a platoon from the Australian 39th Battalion's B Company arrived at Awala. The platoon was to have held Awala, but after exchanging fire with the Japanese fell back to Wairopi. Here, Watson tried to organise what was left of the PIB, which now consisted of just a few Australian officers and NCOs and a handful of Papuans – the rest having “gone bush”. By the morning of the 24th, the Australian platoon and Watson's small group were on the western side of the Kumusi River, having destroyed the bridge behind them. B Company's two other platoons were deployed between Kokoda and Gorari.

Since May, prior to the Japanese invasion of Papua, Allied intelligence had been aware of the Japanese interest in taking Port Moresby by land.⁷ On 9 June General MacArthur wrote to General Blamey saying that there was increasing evidence to suggest that the Japanese were interested in developing a route from Buna through Kokoda to Port Moresby and that minor forces might try either to attack Moresby or use it as a base to support a seaborne operation. Three days earlier General Morris, whose command was now called New Guinea Force (NGF), had decided to send Watson's PIB to Kokoda on foot. The PIB were not specifically to engage the enemy; theirs was a reconnaissance role to observe the different approaches to Kokoda from the coast.⁸

Several days later Blamey ordered Morris to take further steps to defend the north coast and secure the Kokoda area, and on 22 June Morris received orders to “send white troops” to defend the overland route. The code name for the operation was “Maroubra”. The following day, Morris told Brigadier Selwyn Porter that a company from the 39th Battalion of his 30th Brigade would be sent to Kokoda. The rest of the battalion was to follow. Maroubra Force, as it became known, was to consist of the 39th Battalion, the PIB, and attached supporting units. The force was to delay any enemy advance from Awala to Kokoda, and stop any Japanese movement towards Moresby.⁹

Morris was sceptical that a Japanese overland advance on Port Moresby across the mountains could succeed, but did as he was ordered. As far as he was concerned, the track to Kokoda was suitable not even for mules but only for men, who would have to carry their weapons and equipment with them. He was more concerned with securing Moresby's coastline, as he considered that the real threat of invasion would be from the sea. When Morris handed over command of NGF to Lieutenant General Sydney

⁷ On 19 May Allied code-breakers in Melbourne intercepted a Japanese radio message which mentioned they intended to take Moresby by land but that they considered the Allied “air strength in the Australian area at present will make it impossible to keep Moresby supplied by the sea route between Rabaul and Moresby after the latter is occupied.” Bleakley, *The eavesdroppers*, p. 43.

⁸ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 114; New Guinea Force Operational Instruction No. 16, 12 June 1942, New Guinea Force Headquarters and General (Air) war diary, June 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 1/5/51.

⁹ New Guinea Force war diary, 22 and 23 June 1942; New Guinea Force Operational Instruction No. 16, 12 June 1942, New Guinea Force Headquarters and General (Air) war diary, June 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 1/5/51.

Rowell in August, he said to Rowell, “The mountains will beat the Nips and we must be careful they don’t beat us.”¹⁰

The 39th Battalion’s B Company, commanded by Captain Samuel “Uncle Sam” Templeton, were the first Australian troops sent up the Kokoda Track. The company numbered five officers and 103 other ranks when it reached Kokoda on 14 July, having been guided there by Lieutenant Herbert “Bert” Kienzle, a pre-war rubber planter from the Yodda Valley and now an officer in the Australian New Guinea Administration Unit (ANGAU).¹¹

Following the Japanese landings at Buna, the rest of the 39th was hurriedly sent to reinforce Kokoda. On 22 July, C Company was ordered to move up the track from Iloilo on foot while the rest of the battalion was held in readiness to move. Lieutenant Colonel William Owen, the battalion’s new commanding officer, was appointed to command Maroubra Force. He was able to fly into Kokoda on the 24th. With one rifle company already making its way on foot, Owen asked if his two others could be flown into Kokoda. The aircraft were not available and the best he could get were 30 men from D Company, who were flown in two days later.¹² The advance platoons from B Company and the remnants of the PIB meanwhile engaged a Japanese patrol on the east bank of the Kumusi River before falling back to Gorari. The Australians fought a series of smaller actions at Gorari and fought their way out of encirclement at Oivi.

By the time they had withdrawn to Kokoda, Owen’s force was down to about 80 men (including 20 Papuans), and took a defensive position along a high spur on the east side of the airstrip. At around 2 am on the 29th, the Japanese began to lay down heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, and half an hour later, the Japanese made an emphatic attack up the steep slope at the northern end of the plateau. Owen was in the most forward position, in the thick of the fighting, when he was mortally wounded, hit by a bullet just above his right eye. He was taken to the makeshift Regimental Aid Post (RAP) in a hut, but Captain Geoffrey “Doc” Vernon, an ANGAU medical officer who had earlier offered his services to Owen, could see that there was little that could be done for him.¹³ As Owen lay dying, the Kokoda defenders began to withdraw. Vernon was one of the last Australians out of Kokoda, leaving his hut shortly afterwards.

¹⁰ Comments on draft chapters of the official history, Major General B. Morris, p. 8, AWM, AWM67, item 3/274.

¹¹ 39th Battalion war diary, 14 July 1942, July–December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/78. The Australian New Guinea Administration Unit (ANGAU) was formed in Port Moresby in April 1942 to bring those areas in Papua and New Guinea not occupied by the Japanese under a single military administration. ANGAU’s activities included recruiting and managing indigenous labourers, carrying out propaganda among the indigenous population, supervising the indigenous police force, maintaining law and order, and providing health and education services. For more on ANGAU see Powell, *The third force*.

¹² Summary of operations New Guinea Area Buna–Kokoda–Ioribaiwa from 21 Jul to 3 Oct, AWM, AWM54, item 577/7/29.

¹³ Diary of field services on the Owen Stanley – Buna campaign, 1942. By Captain G.H. Vernon MC AAMC, att ANGAU, NGF, 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 253/5/8, part 2. McCarthy’s official history stated that Owen had been throwing grenades when he was hit, whereas the 39th Battalion’s war diary says he had been firing a rifle. Most likely he was doing both in the moments before his death.

The Australians moved back to Deniki. Maroubra Force now only numbered five officers and 67 other ranks. They were “very tired and morale was low”. Twenty men were reported as “probably missing”.¹⁴ Fortunately there was a lull in the fighting for the next few days while the 39th Battalion’s other companies began to reach them. There was little contact with the Japanese during the first few days in August. On 4 August, Major Alan Cameron, the Brigade Major (BM) of the 30th Brigade, arrived at Deniki to take over temporary command of the 39th Battalion and Maroubra Force, which now had a strength of about 500 men, all ranks. Another Militia battalion from the 30th Brigade, the 53rd, was also beginning to move up the track, company by company. An aggressive commander, Cameron “loathed idleness and a defensive outlook”.¹⁵ He had a bold plan to counter-attack the Japanese.

Cameron thought that there were several hundred Japanese in the Kokoda area who were patrolling forward towards Yodda and Deniki. Between 5 and 7 August, patrols from the 39th Battalion clashed with small Japanese parties north of Deniki, and on the 8th the battalion’s A Company recaptured the Kokoda Plateau. The two other companies participating in the attack met strong Japanese resistance, however, and fell back to Deniki, where they were attacked again that night. The Japanese continued harassing Deniki for the next two days. The company at Kokoda, meanwhile, also repelled several attacks but it was running out of food and ammunition. By late afternoon on the 10th, the Australians abandoned Kokoda yet again. With little or no chance of reinforcement and little support, and virtually nonexistent communications between Deniki and Kokoda, Cameron’s counter-attack “seemed doomed to failure”. It was a waste of limited resources and as Frank Sublet, a company commander during the campaign and a later battalion commander, has pointed out, it seems only to have encouraged the Japanese to push on beyond Kokoda.¹⁶

The Japanese attacked Deniki throughout the 13th and the early hours of the following morning. Faced with superior numbers and with food and ammunition running low, the exhausted defenders withdrew to Isurava where they dug in “using their bayonets, bully beef tins and steel helmets”. It was here at Isurava on 16 August that the 39th received its new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner, who also assumed command of Maroubra Force. Years later, Honner described his first impression of his new battalion:

Physically, the pathetically young warriors of the 39th were in poor shape. Worn out by strenuous fighting and exhausting movement, and weakened by lack of food and sleep and shelter, many of them had literally come to a standstill. Practically every day torrential rains fell all through the afternoon and night, cascading into their cheerless weapon pits and soaking the clothes they wore – the only ones they had. In these they shivered through the long

¹⁴ 39th Battalion war diary, 29 July 1942. July–December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/78.

¹⁵ Both Paul and McCarthy give similar figures for the strength of Maroubra Force, although Paul does not count the Papuans. The 39th Battalion numbered 31 officers, 433 other ranks; the PIB numbered five Australian officers and three NCOs with 35 Papuans; and two ANGAU officers, six other ranks and 14 “native police”. Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda*, pp. 80–81 and McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 132.

¹⁶ Sublet, *Kokoda to the sea*, p. 30.

chill vigil of the lonely nights when they were required to stand awake and alert, but still silent.¹⁷

Relief was finally coming. Following Honner were two companies from the 53rd Battalion and, further behind, the first battalions from the AIF, Middle East veterans, were making their way up the track. Knowing that fresh troops were coming forward, Honner decided to leave the 53rd with the PIB at Alola and gave them the task of patrolling the neighbouring tracks.¹⁸ Porter and his brigade headquarters had also moved forward to Alola in preparation for the arrival of Brigadier Arnold Potts and the 21st Brigade, AIF, from the 7th Division

After the Japanese landings at Buna, General MacArthur did not at first take the Japanese threat seriously. He believed that once the US Marines made their amphibious landing on Guadalcanal in August, the Japanese would withdraw from Buna. General Blamey, though, was not so sure and when the 39th Battalion was driven out of Kokoda on 29 July, it became clear that reinforcements were needed. It was decided to send Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell to assume command of NGF and other AIF units to New Guinea, including the 21st and the 18th Brigades from the 7th Division. The 21st Brigade was to go to Port Moresby while the 18th Brigade reinforced the Militia brigade at Milne Bay.¹⁹ After a week at sea, the troops of the 21st Brigade arrived in Moresby on 13 August. Days later, the 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions began the long trek to reinforce Maroubra Force.²⁰

The Japanese were also reorganising and strengthening their forces. The naval landing units had been strengthened with approximately 3,000 men to develop the positions along the coast; they had also employed local labour. These preparations had developed to such an extent that six Zeros were operating from an airstrip at Buna when the main body of the South Seas Force landed.²¹

Up until mid-July, just before the first Japanese troops landed at Girawaua and Buna, the Japanese high command had been contemplating the feasibility of an overland attack on Port Moresby. The Ri Operation Study, as the operation was named, was to research the possibility of, and make the necessary preparations for, an overland attack on Moresby. The Japanese command knew little of conditions in Papua apart from the discovery of a book by a European explorer that referred to a “Kokoda Road”, and some aerial reconnaissance that had confirmed the presence of a vehicle road between Buna and Kokoda. Major General Horii Tomitaro’s South Seas Force, which had previously captured Guam and participated in the capture of Rabaul, was given the task of carrying out the Ri Operation Study.²²

Horii, however, was unenthusiastic about an overland offensive. He thought it would be extremely difficult, with a high risk of failure. Ironically, the reasons for Horii’s scepticism were very similar to Morris’s. He knew the problem was always going to

¹⁷ Honner, “The 39th at Isurava”, p. 9.

¹⁸ 39th Battalion war diary, 16 August 1942, July–December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/78.

¹⁹ For a further discussion see Honner, *Crisis of command*.

²⁰ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. ii, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

²¹ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 154.

²² Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 110.

be logistics. As there was not even a “pack-horse trail” across the mountains, all supplies would have to be carried across. Horii’s headquarters had estimated that his force of about 5,000 men would need about 4,600 carriers if they were to reach the saddle of the Owen Stanley Range in 20 days. They would then need an immense number of carriers to push on beyond this to Moresby. Unless a vehicle road could be pushed out from Buna, Horii did not think it was possible to reach Moresby by the overland route. Yet despite his concerns about keeping his force supplied, when asked, he did not object very strongly to the operation and the plans went ahead.²³

Before the deployment of the South Seas Force, preparations for its arrival were made by the Yokoyama Advance Party. The advance party was built around Colonel Yokoyama Yosuke’s 15th Independent Engineering Regiment, and also included the 1st Battalion from the 144th Infantry Regiment and a company from the 1st Battalion of the 55th Mountain Artillery Regiment. This force also included about 2,000 men commandeered from Rabaul, and around 500 Formosan and Korean labourers. The Japanese official history makes the point that while Yokoyama was given the task of preparing for the arrival of the main force by repairing roads and determining if an overland offensive was possible, the Yokoyama Advance Party should be recognised as a unit that was deployed to prepare for an attack rather than one sent to reconnoitre an attack.²⁴

Although the Japanese high command was probably leaning towards an overland attack, they were prepared to wait for Yokoyama’s judgement – that is, until the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Tsuji Masanobu, a staff officer from Imperial Headquarters, at Rabaul on 15 July. Tsuji was a graduate of the prestigious Military Staff College in Tokyo, and during the Malayan campaign he had won the reputation of being the “god of strategy”. Although he was only a colonel, Tsuji was far more influential and respected than this rank would suggest. It seems that, without waiting for Yokoyama’s reconnaissance reports, Tsuji gave the go-ahead for the overland assault on Moresby on his own authority, claiming that he had orders from Imperial Headquarters. Imperial Headquarters did retrospectively issue orders to support Tsuji’s decision, but by then the Japanese invasion of Papua had already begun.²⁵

The main body of the South Seas Force, built around the 144th Infantry Regiment and the 1st Battalion, 55th Mountain Artillery Regiment, landed at Buna during the afternoon of 18 August and began to proceed to Kokoda the next day. They were joined several days later by the 41st Infantry Regiment. Horii arrived at Kokoda on the 23rd and, after discussing the situation with Yokoyama, decided to destroy the Australians at Isurava and then quickly penetrate further across the Owen Stanley Range. To do this the Yokoyama Advance Party would be disbanded and its units would return to the South Seas Force.²⁶

²³ To supply his force with the 3 tonnes of supplies it would need daily, Horii’s headquarters estimated that it would need up to 32,000 carriers if they were to reach Moresby. Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 114.

²⁴ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 117.

²⁵ For a fuller discussion of Tsuji’s controversial career, see Steven Bullard, “The ‘God of Strategy’”, *Wartime* 39 2007, pp. 42–45.

²⁶ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 161.

For several days the Australians had been patrolling and skirmishing with the Japanese. The intensity of these contacts continued to build until just after dawn on 26 August, when Japanese troops from the 1st Battalion, 144th Regiment crashed headlong into the 39th Battalion's defensive position at Isurava in the first major battle of the campaign. Subjected to fire from Japanese mountain artillery, the 39th grimly held their defences. Bitter, close-quarter fighting ensued over the next few days as the 144th Infantry Regiment's 3rd Battalion and then troops of the 41st Infantry Regiment were drawn into the battle against the remnants of 39th, and then the fresh AIF troops from the 2/14th Battalion. Honner later wrote a graphic account of the battle that captured the noise and the desperation of the fighting. Such scenes were repeated many times during the campaign.

Heavy machine-guns – the dread “wood-peckers” – chopped through the trees ... the enveloping forest erupted into violent action as Nippon's screaming warriors streamed out of its shadows to the assault ... The enemy came on in waves over a short stretch of open ground, regardless of casualties ... They were met with Bren-gun and Tommy-gun, with bayonet and grenade; but still they came, to close with the buffet of fist and boot and rifle-butt, the steel of crashing helmets and of straining, strangling fingers. [It was] vicious fighting, man to man and hand to hand.²⁷

During the fighting, on 29 August, the Japanese broke through the lines of the 2/14th Battalion and threatened to penetrate deeper into the battalion's perimeter. One of the few survivors of the platoon that had been overrun was Private Bruce Kingsbury. Kingsbury immediately volunteered to join another platoon that was to counter-attack the Japanese. He rushed forward through heavy fire, firing a Bren light machine-gun from his hip, and cleared a path through a line of approaching Japanese troops. Inflicting heavy casualties, Kingsbury's charge broke the line of Japanese, who then fled back into the jungle. As the other men in the platoon were about to catch up to him, Kingsbury was seen to fall to the ground, shot dead. His citation states that his “coolness, determination and devotion to duty in the face of great odds was an inspiration to his comrades.”²⁸ Kingsbury was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross (VC). His was the first VC awarded on Australian soil. Kingsbury was killed beside a large rock now known as Kingsbury's Rock near the Isurava Memorial.²⁹ Heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides, yet despite Kingsbury's bravery, the Australians had to fall back to Isurava Rest House the next day.

While the fighting at Isurava was taking place, the Australian 53rd and 2/16th Battalions became involved in a confused action along the Alola–Abuari track against the 144th Regiment's 2nd Battalion. Two companies of the 53rd were to have attacked Abuari, but the attack failed after the battalion's commanding officer was killed on 27 August. It was later reported that one of the 53rd's companies did engage the Japanese but then “broke and scattered”, while it seems as though the other company did little more than fire at the Japanese. Seventy men were later found to have “taken to the bush” and deserted.³⁰ Reports of the 53rd's failures may have been

²⁷ Honner, “The 39th at Kokoda”, p. 12.

²⁸ Wigmore, *They dared mightily*, p. 237.

²⁹ James, *Field guild to the Kokoda Track*, p. 340.

³⁰ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. 7, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

exaggerated, although the consequences were clear: the battalion was considered a liability. Brigadier Potts, who had taken over command of Maroubra Force, withdrew it from the fighting as soon as he could, even though he desperately needed riflemen. It also meant that the 2/16th Battalion had to remain at Alola, rather than reinforce Isurava, to protect the eastern flank against the Japanese advancing along the Missima–Abuari track and outflanking Maroubra Force. Potts also relieved the 39th Battalion, whose numbers had been so far reduced through casualties and sickness that it could only muster enough men for two merged companies. Just 185 men from the 39th marched into Menari, where they handed over their automatic weapons to the 2/27th Battalion.³¹

Having finally captured Isurava, the Japanese continued their success against the hard-pressed Australians. Fearing being outflanked, and with limited supplies, Potts ordered a series of withdrawals back along the track. From 30 August to 5 September, the 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions fought a rear-guard action in often close and confused engagements against the 41st Infantry Regiment. During the night of 30 to 31 August, for example, as the 2/14th Battalion was withdrawing it was subjected to Japanese attack on two sides, which effectively scattered the battalion. Most of the troops managed to find their way back to the Australian lines during the night, but by morning 172 men were still missing, including the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Key, and several other officers.³²

The withdrawal continued through Eora Creek and Templeton's Crossing. When the Japanese threatened to bypass Myola by taking the track through Kagi to Efogi, the Australians had to abandon Myola, where some reserves had been built up. By this stage, Potts's men had had nearly a week of constant fighting and his brigade was pathetically depleted. McCarthy wrote:

During this time most of them had been unable even to brew themselves a mug of tea and certainly had not had a hot meal. Now, shelterless, their feet pulpy and shrivelled from the constant wet, they were soaked by continuous rain. They were worn out by fighting in country where movement alone for even unencumbered men was a hardship.³³

By 5 September, the beleaguered Australian column reached Efogi, where it met the leading companies from the 2/27th Battalion, the final battalion of the 21st Brigade. The 2/27th Battalion, approximately 28 officers and 560 other ranks strong, moved into position along the track on Mission Ridge behind Efogi. The 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions moved through the 2/27th while Potts's brigade headquarters was located further behind towards Menari.

In the seemingly endless mountains, the Japanese too were suffering, with mounting casualties. When Horii met Yokohama at Kokoda, Yokohama had told him that he had control of the high ground following the capture of Deniki. Horii was under orders to restrict his advance to the southern slopes of the Owen Stanley Range. The problem for Horii was that he did not know which range held the highest peaks. The

³¹ 39th Battalion war diary, 31 August 1942, July–December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/78; 2/27th Battalion war diary, 4 September 1942, September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/27.

³² 2/14th Battalion war diary, 30–31 August 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/14.

³³ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 217.

Japanese knew even less about the track than the Australians – their maps were practically non-existent. The capture of Isurava was only the first in a series of mountain ridges. Horii would have considered it essential to continue moving up to capture the high ground.

On 5 September, the Japanese found the Australians had abandoned Templeton's Crossing. Having crossed the highest peaks of the Owen Stanley Range, the Japanese greeted the dawn with shouts of *banzai*. Horii decided to relieve the 41st with the 144th Infantry Regiment. The Japanese troops now expected that they would shortly reach the plains outside Moresby; but these hopes were soon dashed as the relieving troops realised that mountain after mountain stretched in front of them.³⁴ The Japanese instead reached Efogi and soon clashed with the Australians.

What happened next was one of the most savage battles of the Kokoda campaign, fought out on what has now become known as Brigade Hill and on nearby Mission Ridge. The expected attack began just before dawn on 8 September when the Japanese attacked the 2/27th Battalion. The battalion replied with what their war diary described as the "liberal use" of hand grenades.³⁵ The fighting continued all morning and on into the next day. In two days of fighting this battalion alone had fired 100 rounds of ammunition per man and had thrown 1200 grenades.³⁶

Despite fierce resistance, the Japanese attack continued and later that morning, in a surprise move, encircled and attacked Potts's brigade headquarters – cutting the Australian line in two, separating the 2/27th, 2/14th and some of the 2/16th Battalion from brigade headquarters and rest of the 2/16th. Three Australian companies tried to break through the new Japanese line, now atop Brigade Hill where the 21st Brigade's headquarters had been, but were driven back. One company came through the jungle, right into the sights of a well-placed Japanese machine-gun. More than a dozen Australians fell dead across the grass. Further attacks were thought to be suicidal and were abandoned.

Potts and part of the 2/16th fell back to Menari. The rest of the Australians left the main track and went bush, cutting their way through the jungle. The 2/14th and 2/16th made it back to Menari by the next day, but the 2/27th, later called the "lost battalion", had gone deeper into the jungle. They did not reach Australian lines until 25 September, when about 300 starved and sick men made it to Jawarere. They had been forced to leave their stretcher cases and some of their wounded along the way. The last of these men, who went "through a living hell", did not reach Australian positions until 9 October. Seventy-five Australians died in the battles of Efogi and Brigade Hill, also called Butcher's Hill. The Japanese lost 200 men. "Corpses were piled high," a Japanese officer wrote in his diary. "It was a tragic sight."

After reaching Menari, Potts's embattled brigade withdrew further to Nauro. Potts's superiors, however, felt that his command was no longer tenable. Arriving at Nauro on the 9th, Potts received a telephone call from Porter, instructing him to temporarily hand over command. The continued series of withdrawals had caused MacArthur increasing concern and he placed mounting pressure on the Australian chain of

³⁴ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, pp. 163–65.

³⁵ 2/27th Battalion war diary, 8 September 1942, September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/27.

³⁶ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 221.

command. Potts was the first senior commander to be sacked during the campaign. In the coming weeks, Lieutenant General Rowell and Major General Allen would also be dismissed. Much has already been written about these sackings in Papua, but the consensus is that they were unjust – having been brought on by a crisis of command among MacArthur, Blamey, and senior Australian officers and politicians.³⁷

Potts handed over command to Porter the next day; his battalions numbered just 307 men, with only about 100 men in the 2/14th and a little over 200 in the 2/16th. These survivors formed a composite battalion deployed between Nauro and Ioribaiwa.³⁸ Relief was almost at hand. Porter's task was to hold the Japanese and gain whatever ground he could. In addition to his exhausted 300 or so men, he also had under his command the fresh 3rd Battalion and a Militia battalion, as well as the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and the 2/6th Independent Company, who were patrolling from Ioribaiwa. Porter withdrew the 21st Brigade back to Ioribaiwa.

Contact with the Japanese occurred daily. On 14 September the first troops from the 25th Brigade, the 2/31st, and the 2/33rd Battalions deployed around Ioribaiwa, followed the next day by the 2/25th Battalion. Brigadier Ken Eather now took over command. In the face of further Japanese attacks, in the morning of 17 September Eather withdrew to Imita Ridge, which offered a better defensive position. This was the last Australian withdrawal of the campaign. The Japanese reached the limits of their advance with the occupation of Ioribaiwa.

According to Japanese sources, the South Seas Force had suffered approximately 1,000 casualties, including deaths from both battle and sickness. The remaining men were weary; many were close to exhaustion, and starving because their supply lines had broken down. By the start of September, their rations had been cut to just a small handful of rice per day. One motivation for the Japanese to continue was the hope that they would discover supplies abandoned by the Australians or that rations would be carried forward; neither happened. Horii and his staff had assumed that they would be able to capture rations during the campaign, but during the withdrawal Potts had ordered a "scorched earth" policy under which the Australians destroyed their supply dumps before retreating.³⁹

Okada Seizo, a Japanese war correspondent travelling with the South Seas Force, later described the pathetic plight of the Japanese soldiers, who were suffering from malaria, diarrhoea, pneumonia, fevers, and other sicknesses caused by exhausting marches and exposure to the elements: the heat and humidity, as well as the wet and the cold of the mountains. "All the troops," Okada wrote, "showed unmistakable signs of weakness and exhaustion." Nonetheless they pressed on until they finally reached Ioribaiwa, where:

³⁷ See Horner, *Crisis of command*; Braga, *Kokoda commander*; Edgar, *Warrior of Kokoda*; Gower, "Command in New Guinea".

³⁸ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. 15, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

³⁹ Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 183; John Moreman, "Advance of the South Seas Force", Australia–Japan Research Project, <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/pages/NT00010DD2?openDocument>, <accessed 1 February 2009>.

The endless waves of mountains upon mountains that had wearied our eyes had suddenly vanished, and we saw through the trees a wide expanse of green wood gradually sloping away before us, and beyond that a sheet of misty light. “The sea! Look! It’s the sea of Port Moresby!” With joy, the soldiers, who were stained all over with mud and blood, threw themselves into each other’s arms and wept.⁴⁰

One of the great problems the Japanese experienced was logistics. The further they advanced, the longer and weaker their supply lines became. Even though the Japanese navy had been able to land a large amount of stores and equipment at their beachhead bases, they soon experienced problems carrying this material forward and distributing it to the troops. The Japanese had brought carriers from Rabaul and some Korean and Formosan labourers with them, but this number, even when supplemented with carriers from around the Buna area, proved too few and too poorly organised. They were also constantly harassed by Allied aircraft.

A main objective of the Allied air forces supporting the ground forces was the disruption, if not the destruction, of the Japanese supply lines. A key target in these operations was the suspension bridge across the Kumusi River at Wairopi, which was repeatedly attacked. Bombs, machine-gun and cannon fire damaged the bridge but the Japanese worked assiduously to repair it. Between 20 September and 20 October, 80 sorties were made against the bridge in which 76,000 pounds of bombs and more than 28,000 rounds of cannon and machine-gun ammunition were fired. It was finally destroyed on 18 October.⁴¹

Although the Australians conceded ground during the withdrawal, the advantage turned in favour of the Australians the closer they came to Moresby. They did not suffer from being harried by enemy aircraft, and were resupplied, though with mixed success, from the air. The Australians also had the benefit of a better organised carrier and supply system. This was largely due to the efforts of one man, Lieutenant Bert Kienzle. Kienzle was one of the outstanding Australian personalities of the campaign. Indeed, the historian Alan Powell considered that no man on the Kokoda Track did more to ensure the Australian victory than Kienzle.⁴²

Kienzle had been an early enlistment in ANGAU; at the start of July he arrived at Iloilo to take charge of the Papuan labourers who were to build a road from Iloilo to Kokoda. He later wrote that such an undertaking would have been a “colossal engineering job” for his labour force of 600 men.⁴³ While at Iloilo, he found Captain Templeton’s B Company, 39th Battalion, waiting for a guide across the mountains. Kienzle arranged to guide Templeton to Kokoda and also organised the groups of carriers to go forward to accompany the Australians.

Kienzle, Templeton, and these Papuan carriers were quickly overtaken by the events of the campaign. The number of Kienzle’s carriers along the Kokoda Track grew from

⁴⁰ “Lost Troops” by Seizo Okada, p. 14, AWM, MSS732, item 1.

⁴¹ Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–1942*, p. 631.

⁴² Powell, *The third force*, p. 50.

⁴³ Report on Kokoda L of C native carriers during campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna, by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, p. 1, AWM, AWM54, item 557/6/8.

600 to over 1,600 by the end of the campaign.⁴⁴ Many, many more carriers worked along the track, and numbers varied as men came and went due to sickness and desertion. The author Paul Ham estimated that as many as 3,000 carriers worked the track.⁴⁵

The Papuans would carry forward ammunition and supplies to the troops, and act as stretcher bearers carrying back the wounded on improvised stretchers built from one or two blankets lashed to poles. A report from Brigadier Pott's 21st Brigade acknowledged that generally speaking, the work done by the carriers "cannot be too highly praised. They performed all tasks asked of them, tasks that few white men could have stood up to, if called upon to do so."⁴⁶ The report also conceded that the carriers were overworked, often going without rest, and consequently sickness and desertion rates were sometimes high. It seems, however, that comparatively few carriers deserted because of the proximity of the front line and the noise of battle.

It was for their work as bearers though that the Papuans received the highest praise. A 7th Division medical report described the care and meticulous attention the Papuans gave the wounded they carried on stretchers.

Along the track, day after day, plodded the walking sick and wounded, the stretcher cases being carried by native carriers. With improvised stretchers ... as many as eight or ten native bearers would carry day after day. To watch them descend steep slippery spurs into a mountain stream, along the bed and up the steep ascent, was an object lesson in stretcher bearing. They carry stretchers over seemingly impassable barriers, with the patient reasonably comfortable. The care which they show to the patient is magnificent.⁴⁷

For this skill and kindness, the carriers were immortalised as "Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels" with their "fuzzy wuzzy hair" in a poem by Sapper Herbert "Bert" Beros.

Despite the difficulties, after weeks of struggling against the Australians, the environment, and their own hunger, the Japanese occupied Ioribaiwa in mid-September; but it was as close as they would come to their objective. At night the Japanese could see the lights of Port Moresby. But now they also came under artillery fire from a section of 25-pounder guns from the 14th Field Regiment at Owers' Corner. Previously it had been the withdrawing Australians who had been subjected to harassing fire from Japanese mountain artillery, but now it was the Japanese who came under fire from the guns.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ By the end of October, there were 1,650 carriers working on the Kokoda lines of communications. Native labour section, Headquarters ANGAU war diary, 31 October 1942, October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 1/10/1.

⁴⁵ Ham, *Kokoda*, p. 211.

⁴⁶ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. 24, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

⁴⁷ Medical service 7 Aust Div during Papuan campaign, Jan 43, AWM, AWM54, item 481/12/13.

⁴⁸ A gun from the regiment was later manhandled forward from Owers' Corner to Imita Ridge. It took 50 men seven days to move the gun into position and by the time it was in place the Japanese had withdrawn out of range. Later, during the Australian advance, a single 3.7-inch pack howitzer was manhandled completely across the Owen Stanley Range. Gower, *Guns of the regiment*, p. 87. See also Report of movement of 25-pdr to Ubiri Valley, AWM, AWM54, item 577/7/22.

The war was also turning against the Japanese elsewhere. Their amphibious landing at Milne Bay, which would have supported the overland advance on Moresby, failed and the campaign on Guadalcanal was going badly. Even the base at Buna and the beachheads were coming under increasing attack from Allied aircraft. Such was their concern, on 8 September the Japanese commanders at Rabaul signalled Horii to withdraw the 41st Infantry Regiment to the Kokoda area. A week later, on 14 September, Rabaul ordered Horii to give the “highest priority” to stationing a battalion at Buna. It is not clear whether these orders reached Horii or, if continuing to push on to Ioribaiwa, he chose to ignore them. On 14 September Horii, choking back his tears, cancelled the offensive. Two days later the 41st Infantry Regiment began withdrawing towards Kokoda while the 144th Infantry Regiment covered the retreat.⁴⁹

On the ridge opposite the 144th, the Australian 25th Brigade was well dug in. Commanded by Brigadier Eather, the brigade had been rushed from Queensland to Papua. It had had virtually no time to acclimatise before being sent into battle. After eight days at sea the brigade arrived in Moresby on 9 September, and the following morning the first company from the 2/31st Battalion set off for the track, soon followed by the rest of brigade. Each of the brigade’s battalions was about 600 men strong, all ranks. Before heading up the track, they were issued with “jungle greens” – green shirts and trousers – and American gaiters. Maroubra Force was now stronger and better equipped than it had been at any other time during the campaign. Eather’s orders were to halt the Japanese advance and regain control of the route to Kokoda with a view to its recapture.⁵⁰

From their strongly defended position across Imita Ridge, each Australian battalion heavily patrolled no man’s land between the ridge and Ioribaiwa, clashing with the Japanese, mainly from the 144th Infantry Regiment’s 3rd Battalion, who were protecting the main force’s withdrawal. On 28 September the Australians discovered Ioribaiwa had been abandoned; by the end of the day it was occupied by the 2/25th, 2/31st and the 2/33rd Battalions, followed by the 3rd Battalion the next day. Offensive patrols were already pushing as far forward as Nauro.

Thereafter, the nature of the campaign was very similar to the earlier Australian withdrawal, although the roles were reversed. This time it was small numbers of Japanese troops fighting desperate rearguard actions closely pursued by the Australian battalions. By early October the Australians had reached the old Brigade Hill battlefield. Sergeant Bede Tongs, from the 3rd Battalion, recalled the “devastating sight” of the bodies of dead Australians lying about the ground. Abandoned and damaged weapons and equipment, now rusting, were scattered here and there.⁵¹ A soldier from the 2/33rd Battalion described the area where the 2/27th Battalion had been forced from the track: “Dead men were found in tree tops. Others were sitting in

⁴⁹ When the Japanese commander at Rabaul heard that the 144th Infantry Regiment had occupied Ioribaiwa on 19 September, he immediately issued strict orders to withdraw the front line. It took three days for telegrams issued by the South Seas Force headquarters to reach Rabaul. It is unclear how long it took for telegrams from Rabaul to reach the force headquarters, but it must have been three days. Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 165 and pp. 184-185.

⁵⁰ 25th Brigade war diary, 9–18 September 1942, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25.

⁵¹ Ham, *Kokoda*, p. 329.

their trenches, with the bones of their fingers clutched around the triggers of their weapons.” The smell of putrefaction lingered over the whole area.⁵²

The Japanese retreat was bitter and demoralising. Okada wrote that the order to retreat “had crushed the spirit of the troops” which had only been kept up through “sheer pride”. Closely pursued by the Australians and frequently harried by Allied aircraft, the men’s nerves were becoming frayed and their rations were running out. Every day, Okada recalled, the rumbling of the enemy guns behind them came closer and closer, and the attacks from the air force grew; “we gathered our weakening strength and quickened our pace of retreat.”⁵³

The soldiers discarded all but the most essential items, anything that would lighten their load. Foraging parties failed to find so much as sweet potatoes. The Australians even discovered a few isolated cases of cannibalism.⁵⁴ Japanese casualties quickly mounted and there was little comfort to be had as more and more succumbed to beriberi, malaria, dysentery, and tropical ulcers. Many, it seems, were left to fend for themselves.

At Templeton’s Crossing and later at Eora Creek, the Japanese rearguard demonstrated that it was still lethal. The main body of the South Seas Force reached Kokoda on 4 October. The Stanley Detachment, commanded by Major Horie Tadashi, was deployed to defend the track through the mountains. This detachment was based on the 2nd Battalion of the 144th Infantry Regiment, a company from the mountain artillery, and an engineering company. The 2nd Battalion from the 41st Regiment was deployed behind.

The weather was very cold, with incessant fog, and the light passing through the dense overhead canopy was dim. Only probing attacks could be made before mid-morning. Scrambling on hands and knees up the precipitous slopes and along the ridge, attack after attack was repulsed because of the Japanese territorial advantage; but gradually the Australians, with great tenacity, gained ground and the ridge was finally cleared on 16 October. In the fighting around Templeton’s, 50 Australians were killed and 133 wounded. It was sickness, though, that had the greatest effect: 730 officers and men had been evacuated.⁵⁵

Determined Japanese resistance, the terrain, and the weather were combining to wear down the 25th Brigade. Eather’s men were almost spent. His brigade war diary noted: “2/25, 2/33 and 3 Bn personnel now quite exhausted and relief almost imperative.”⁵⁶ General Allen, who had earlier taken over command of Maroubra Force, ordered its relief by the 16th Brigade from the 6th Division. These men had served in the Middle East, Greece, and Crete earlier in the war and now began their first campaign against the Japanese.

⁵² Crooks, *The footsoldiers*, p. 192

⁵³ “Lost Troops” by Seizo Okada, pp. 18–19, AWM, MSS732, item 1.

⁵⁴ On 14 October a patrol from the 2/25th Battalion found a large piece of raw flesh wrapped in green leaves. The next day the bodies of two men killed from the 3rd Battalion were found in old Japanese positions. One body had had both arms amputated while the other had a large piece of flesh cut away from his thigh and deep gashes down the other leg. 25th Brigade war diary, 15 October 1942, September – October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25.

⁵⁵ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, pp. 274–275.

⁵⁶ 25th Brigade war diary, 19 October 1942, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25.

The 16th Brigade had begun moving up the track at the start of October and took over the forward areas on the 20th; that morning the two leading companies of the 2/2nd Battalion successfully attacked the Japanese rearguard positions beyond Templeton's. The 2/2nd was badly bloodied in their attack, with 23 men dead in their first day. The Japanese weapons pits were so well concealed that it was not until they had opened up fire with machine-guns that the Australians had known they were there. The Australians overcame each individual pit largely through the use of grenades.⁵⁷

With the track cleared, the brigade's leading battalions, now the 2/1st and the 2/3rd Battalions, moved on and engaged the heavily fortified Japanese just beyond the huts at Eora Creek. The Japanese there held out against the Australians for six days. Finally, on 28 October, the 2/3rd Battalion worked its way around their defences and launched a ferocious charge through the bush to come in behind the Japanese. After the battle, the Australians counted at least 69 dead Japanese around their strongest point. Major Horie's Stanley Detachment, however, had inflicted a heavy cost on the 16th Brigade. In just nine days it had lost between 228 and 300 men killed and wounded.⁵⁸ Eora Creek was one of the largest and more complicated actions fought by the Australians during this campaign, yet ironically on 28 October Allen was relieved of his command and replaced by Major General George Vasey. Vasey's order to the officers of his new command was clear. "Occupation of Kokoda is expected by our troops 2nd November ... The enemy is beaten. Give him no rest and we will annihilate him." The 25th Brigade, having had a brief respite at Alola, continued the advance.

After Eora Creek, Horie withdrew his small force, now numbering only 16 fit men, first to Isurava, then Deniki, and finally to Oivi, where it rejoined the remainder of the South Seas Force. On the morning of 2 November, a platoon from the 2/31st Battalion entered the village, and Brigadier Eather established his advanced headquarters there in the afternoon. Just after midday on 3 November, Vasey hoisted the Australian flag at Kokoda before a small parade of Australian soldiers.

The final actions of the campaign were fought just beyond Kokoda, around the small villages of Oivi and Gorari. On 5 November 1942 the 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions, advancing from Kokoda, were stopped by a strong Japanese defensive position at Oivi. Frontal attacks over the next two days made no progress against the well-sited positions, so the 25th Brigade was sent along another track, on which the 2/1st Battalion had already advanced, to outflank them. By nightfall on 9 November, the 2/31st and 2/25th Battalions had enveloped the Japanese position blocking the north-south track, and the 2/33rd and 2/1st Battalions, having bypassed it through the jungle, were astride the main trail at Gorari, but inserted between two Japanese positions. Realising they were caught in a steadily closing trap, the Japanese sought desperately on 10 November to force the 2/33rd and 2/1st Battalions from their positions on the trail; bitter fighting lasted all day and into the night, but both battalions held firm. To their south, the 2/25th and 2/31st Battalions endured similarly hard fighting as they squeezed the Japanese position on the north-south track between them. The climax of the battle came on 11 November. Renewing their attacks, the

⁵⁷ 2/2nd Battalion war diary, 20 October 1942, September-December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/2.

⁵⁸ Long, *The six years war*, p. 232; Johnston, *The proud 6th*, p. 141.

2/25th and 2/31st crushed the Japanese position to the south and then moved to assist the 2/1st Battalion at Gorari. Late in the afternoon the 2/1st and the 2/31st attacked the Japanese position to the east of the 2/1st. The fighting was vicious, but eventually the Australians encircled and destroyed the position. The Japanese meanwhile abandoned their positions at Oivi. About 600 Japanese were killed during the final battle.

After Gorari, the 2/31st Battalion, with a detachment of engineers, went on to reach the Kumusi River at Wairopi on 13 November. The wire rope bridge across the river had been destroyed by Allied aircraft, so swimmers carried a line across the river and a ferry service was developed. Two flying foxes and a foot bridge were quickly built across the river. By the 17th, all seven of the Australian infantry battalions which had participated in the advance over the mountains were across the river. The Kokoda campaign was over.⁵⁹

During the four-month long campaign, more than 600 Australians were killed or died along the Kokoda Track and over 1,600 were wounded. More bloodshed was still to come. From November 1942 to the start of January 1943, Australian and American forces fought a series of bloody battles to clear the Japanese from the beachheads of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda. Ultimately, more Australians died in the Papuan campaign as a whole, from July 1942 to January 1943, than in any other campaign in the Second World War: about 2,000 in total. Japanese losses were greater. An estimated 5,000 Japanese died in Papua. It is not surprising that the survivors of the 144th Infantry Regiment called New Guinea “Hell Island”.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ The army battle honour “Kokoda Trail” gives the dates of the campaign as 22 July to 13 November 1942, whereas McCarthy implies that the dates of the campaign were 22 July to 16 November 1942. See Army Council Secretariat, *The official names of battles, actions and engagements*, p. 11; McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, pp. 334.

⁶⁰ *Going to the land below the Southern Cross*, (trans. Kazuhiro Monden), p. 1, Alf Salmon papers, PR00297, item 11.

Chapter 2

The track's wartime route

*“Track slippery some places had to crawl hand and knees.
Hills & yet more hills”*

Warrant Officer George Mowatt, diary, 27 July 1942

The track to Kokoda is becoming increasingly well trodden. Thousands of Australians each year are making the pilgrimage to Kokoda, to follow in the footsteps of the soldiers who fought along the track more than 60 years ago. Most of what they walk, from Owers' Corner to Kokoda station, is still along wartime tracks. There are some variations and deviations, but the route of the present-day track or tracks can still be considered “authentic”.

The track's historic route

After completing the draft manuscript of *South-West Pacific Area: first year*, in 1953 the historian, writer, and former soldier Dudley “Mac” McCarthy returned to Papua to explore its battlefields.¹ Before the war McCarthy had been a patrol officer in New Guinea and volunteered for the AIF in 1940. He served in the infantry in the Middle East and held a variety of staff appointments in Australia and in the islands. As an author of the Australian official histories of the Second World War, McCarthy had complete access to all official records as well as the comments, letters, and diaries of the principal participants. Yet, despite this unrestricted access and his own military experience, McCarthy felt compelled to visit Kokoda for himself. He needed, as he put it, to “test the correctness of [this] narrative against the ground”.² Shortly after returning to Australia, McCarthy wrote a brief article about his trek to Kokoda. This article later formed the basis for his description of the track's route which featured in his history. McCarthy's article began with the following introduction:

Running through the centre of Papua like a spine is the towering Owen Stanley Range. On the coast, south of these dark mountains, Port Moresby lies. On the coast, north of them, is the Buna–Sanananda–Gona area. Through the mountains between the two is only a faint track, a native pad. So it was before the war. Few then passed over this track – only the barefoot natives, now a missionary, now a patrolling officer of the Administration, now one of

¹ McCarthy walked the Kokoda Track from Owers' Corner to Sanananda as well as the Wau–Mubo tracks in New Guinea. Letter Douglas McCarthy to Gavin Long, 26 November 1953, AWM, AWM93, item 50/9/3/4B.

² McCarthy's account was broadcast on ABC radio on 12 November 1954. McCarthy, “Kokoda Re-visited”, p. 11.

those lost and wandering white men ... And then come thousands of soldiers, climbing, toiling, sweating, panting, trembling, retching, fighting and dying along the track. Now few traces of their long agony remain – and as the track was before they passed, so it is again.³

McCarthy's description evokes the physicality of the terrain as well as the human drama of the campaign. It also helped establish the now widely held belief that before the war the Kokoda Track was an almost forgotten "native pad". Elsewhere, McCarthy refers to it as a "primitive foot track". Such comments are now common. Sections of the track were routinely described as being "badly formed", "poor" or in a "bad condition", as in a September 1942 Australian engineers' report.⁴ The track was unknown to the young soldiers and their officers who had to traverse it during the war but, as Hank Nelson has pointed out, the track was well known to New Guinea residents and was far from "forgotten". Nelson has asserted that the Kokoda Track was probably one of the "best known tracks" in Papua, as it had been used regularly for nearly 40 years prior to the start of the campaign. This is a point that has often been forgotten by Australian historians, writers, politicians, and other commentators.⁵

The Kokoda Track runs 60 miles (97 kilometres) from Owers' Corner, on the southern side of the imposing Owen Stanley Range, across the mountains to the Kokoda plateau in the Yodda Valley. From Kokoda, the track slips down towards the sea on Papua's north coast. Before the start of the campaign in July 1942, the only airstrip along the length of the track between Port Moresby and the north coast was at Kokoda. Control of this grass airstrip was thus essential for any military operation conducted on Papua's north coast or in support of an overland push towards Moresby.⁶

The track across the Owen Stanley Range was first used by Australians during the 1890s to reach the Yodda goldfield on the north coast. In 1899, the government surveyor H.H. Stuart-Russell spent three months marking out and mapping the track. The track came into regular use in 1904, when a government station was established at Kokoda. An early visitor to the area described Kokoda as a "radiant spot" with the Resident Magistrate's house being "native, rambling and picturesque". The Resident Magistrate, Charles Monckton, reported that the site had been selected in part because it allowed for "regular and rapid communication with Port Moresby". With the establishment of the government station, a mail service between Port Moresby and the north coast began. The mailbags were carried by members of the Armed Native Constabulary, who operated the service until 1942. Before the overland route, mail was sent by ship around Papua's coast to Moresby; it took about six weeks to receive a reply. The mail route was used regularly by government officials, missionaries,

³ Kokoda Re-visited, p. 1, AWM, AWM67, item 13/73. This narrative was the basis for a radio broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) on 12 November 1954 and was subsequently published in the RSL journal *Stand-to*.

⁴ See Track, Uberri-Alola, 16 September 1942, from Lieut Gossip – 2/6 Aust Field Coy, att 21 Inf Bde, AWM, AWM54, item 863/4/5.

⁵ Nelson, "Kokoda", p. 115.

⁶ There was also an airstrip on the Yodda plateau which was opened in 1934, two years after the airstrip at Kokoda. The airstrip at Yodda was used to fly in heavy equipment for the mine. When the Kienzle homestead in the Yodda Valley had to be abandoned following the Japanese landings, Herbert Kienzle disabled the airfield by digging holes into the strip and dragging boxes of stores across it as obstacles. Information supplied by Soc Kienzle.

miners, explorers and, of course, Papuans. Many of these men became prominent in ANGAU during the war.⁷

At the start of the Kokoda Campaign the road from Port Moresby ran for 32 miles up to the Sogeri plateau and then on to Iloilo, on the edge of the plateau, facing the Owen Stanley Range.⁸ The road came to an end just beyond Iloilo, at a jeep head called McDonald's Corner, named after Percy "PJ" McDonald. A light horse veteran from the Great War, McDonald owned the nearby homestead and plantation.⁹ During the early part of the campaign, the trek to Kokoda began at McDonald's. It was from here that the 39th Battalion's B Company had set off on 7 July 1942.

It was a long, slow climb up from McDonald's to Owers' Corner, about 2,200 feet above sea level. At the crest of the ridge, the track descends steeply to cross the Goldie River, before rising again as it climbs towards Uberi. On 3 October 1942 General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander South-West Pacific Area, visited the 7th Division's commander Major General Arthur "Tubby" Allen at his headquarters at Owers' Corner. General Thomas Blamey, the Australian commander, had convinced MacArthur to come to Papua so the American general could see for himself the difficulties the Australians were experiencing. The inspection proved to be less than successful. Near Owers' Corner, MacArthur met Brigadier John Lloyd, whose 16th Brigade were making their way forward to reinforce the 25th Brigade along the track. MacArthur then said:

Lloyd, by some act of God, your brigade has been chosen for this job. The eyes of the western world are upon you. I have every confidence in you and your men. Good luck and don't stop.¹⁰

Journalist and author Paul Ham has suggested that MacArthur spoke with all the "pomp and circumstance of a leader of greatness".¹¹ MacArthur may have been talking to posterity but his sentiments were lost on those who heard him. Lloyd, for one, was unimpressed, noting in his war diary: "MacArthur ... insinuated that [Brigadier Potts's] 21st Bde had not fought and I deeply resented his remarks."¹² Signalman Ken Clift remembered MacArthur then left in his jeep "leaving our Brigadier bewildered and stunned by the bullshit".¹³

Owers' Corner was named after Lieutenant Noel "Jerry" Owers, a surveyor with NGF.¹⁴ He had been given the task of surveying a new route to Kokoda. Owers was

⁷ Nelson, "Kokoda", p. 111. See also Nelson, *Black, white and gold*.

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, the following material is largely based on Allied Geographic Section, *Main routes across New Guinea*, pp 2–6 and McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area: first year*, pp. 108–11.

⁹ James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, pp. 143–46.

¹⁰ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 280.

¹¹ Ham, *Kokoda*, p. 325.

¹² Darby and Taylor, "A strange encounter at Owers' Corner", *Wartime*, no. 2, April 1998, p. 42.

¹³ Johnston, *The Proud 6th*, p. 133.

¹⁴ Captain N. Owers, AWM, AWM76, item B385. This task had originally been given to Kienzle in early July 1942 before it was given to Owers. It would be a "colossal engineering job", Kienzle commented, "one not to be taken lightly!" Report on Kokoda L of C native carriers during Campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna, by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, AWM, AWM54, item 577/6/8.

able to roughly outline a new “road” to Kagi that wherever possible followed spurs and ridgelines and avoided the “big rises & falls” of the then current track.¹⁵

A plan of this sort was wildly ambitious; it was cancelled when the amount of resources and time that would be needed to build such a road were realised. A modified plan, however, for the extension of the jeep track from Iloilo to Nauro, along a route also suggested by Owers, was begun instead. By the end of September 1942, the 7th Division’s engineers had only been able to clear and develop the “road” as far as Owers’ Corner, before this plan too was cancelled. Engineers also worked on improving conditions along other sections of the Kokoda Track, but their most impressive accomplishment was the large flying fox built by the 2/6th Field Company at Owers’ Corner. The cable was 1,200 feet long and fell 400 feet to Uberi. It could carry a load of 300 pounds. The flying fox was tested for the first time on 26 September 1942. Colonel Arthur Irwin, the division’s chief engineer, reported: “Many spectators and suggestions (NOT all helpful). Cableway passed test.”¹⁶

It was a hard day’s climb from Uberi up to Ioribaiwa. In the first three miles the track toiled 1,200 feet up to the knife edge spur of Imita Ridge. This section of the track was smooth and treacherous, and hemmed in with dark trees. The famous Golden Stairs led up the southern face of Imitia Ridge, into which Australian engineers and Papuan labourers cut steps. It is thought that the term “Golden Stairs” originated with Colonel Stanley Legge, an observer accompanying Brigadier Potts on a reconnaissance patrol from Owers’ Corner to Imita Ridge on 11 August 1942. Legge is said to have gasped out the words while taking a breath a short distance from the ridge’s summit.¹⁷

The Golden Stairs

The Golden Stairs, as with other steps cut into virtually every ridge and climb along the track, were supposed to have made the going easier but they may have only added to the climb’s difficulty. Consider this oft-quoted description from the 2/14th Battalion’s unit history:

The golden stairs consisted of steps varying from ten to eighteen inches in height. The front edge of the step was a small log held by stakes. Behind the log was a puddle of mud and water. Some of the stakes had worked loose, leaving the logs slightly tilted. Anyone who stood on one of these skidded and fell with a whack in the mud, probably banging his head against a tree or being hit on the head with his own rifle. Those who had no sticks soon acquired them, not only to prevent falls, but to allow the arms to help the legs, especially with the higher steps.¹⁸

The stairs were always wet. Even in the middle of the day, very little sunlight filtered through the thick jungle canopy, leaving the rough logs that batted each step

¹⁵ Notes on Kokoda Rd location, New Guinea Force Adjutant General Branch war diary, 1942, Port Moresby to Buna, AWM, AWM52, item 1/5/52.

¹⁶ McNicoll, *The Royal Australian Engineers 1919 to 1945*, pp. 156–57.

¹⁷ Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda*, p. 108.

¹⁸ See Track, Uberri–Alola, 16 September 1942, from Lieut Gossip – 2/6 Aust Field Coy, att 21 Inf Bde, AWM, AWM54, item 863/4/5; Russell, *The Second Fourteenth Battalion*, pp. 124–25.

slippery and coated with mud. When climbing the stairs, soldiers had to lift their front leg over the log and put their foot down behind it into what was frequently a puddle of mud and water as much as six inches deep. It became a matter of sheer determination to complete the climb. Heavily burdened with weapons and equipment, the more men who used the track, the worse its condition became. Captain Frank Sublet, a company commander with the 2/16th Battalion, remembered how the tramp of hundreds of men's boots along the narrow track turned it into a "mire" in which a man could sink into the mud up to his knee.¹⁹

There has been some debate as to which were the Golden Stairs, as stairs were cut into both the southern and northern slopes of Imita Ridge. In 1953, McCarthy put the Golden Stairs on the southern side of Imita Ridge. "As we laboured up what had been the Golden Stairs (now a smooth and treacherous mountain side) our feet slipped on the narrow muddy track, our legs ached and sweat blinded us."²⁰ Raymond Paull, who wrote the first, and still one of the best, histories of the campaign, *Retreat from Kokoda* (1958), also put the stairs on the south side.²¹

Other sources though put the stairs on the ridge's northern slope. Sergeant Clem Makings, serving with the 2/6th Field Ambulance, wrote in his diary in August 1942 that the stairs were on the northern side.

At this stage of the campaign, the track was just a track, improved a great deal soon afterwards. We reached the top of [Imita] ridge after a two-hour climb. From here we could look across a deep valley and see Ioribaiwa, our goal for the day, and it appeared quite a distance away. We again descended, what is known as the Golden Stairs, said to be 1,800 steps down to the creek below. The weight on our backs and the wide steps made our legs tremble and it was hard work going downhill.²²

A military report written after the campaign also described the Golden Stairs as being on the northern side of the ridge. Heading north from Imita Ridge,

the track turns down the "Golden Stairs" south a thousand or more roughly cut steps following the razor backed subsidiary spurs into the valley below. Here the track turns east, crossing and recrossing the central stream many times. At the head of the valley the track again climbs over a thousand or more steps to Ioribaiwa.²³

The war correspondent Geoff Reading walked the track in late September 1942. He remembered that the "last lap to Imita Ridge was comparatively short". The track then fell down the slopes towards Ua-Ule Creek. The creek was in a deep valley – almost a chasm. The "rough log steps ... hewn into the precipitous side of the valley were

¹⁹ Sublet also puts the stairs on the south side. Sublet, *Kokoda to the sea*, p. 23 and p. 37.

²⁰ Kokoda Re-visited, p. 2, AWM, AWM67, item 13/73.

²¹ Paull interviewed and had access to many veterans of the campaign, including Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell, Major-General Allen, Brigadier Arnold Potts, and Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner. Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda*, p. 47.

²² Makings' diary, August 1942, Makings papers, AWM, PR86/105.

²³ Report on New Guinea operations, Buna-Ioribaiwa, 23 September 1942 – 22 January 1943, part II, the advance to the north coast, p. 4, AWM, AWM54, item 519/6/52.

called the Golden Staircase. They led down, down into a sort of blue, wraith-like pool.”²⁴

On 21 July Captain Geoffrey “Doc” Vernon, a medical officer attached to ANGAU, was making his way forward to the 39th Battalion at Kokoda, when he came across a group of soldiers cutting stairs into the long and steep descent down the north side of Imitia Ridge. Talking to the men, Vernon, a Great War veteran who had served with the Light Horse, recorded that the “road gang” had been told to have a rest because some of their stores had not yet arrived. But rather than “knock off” they volunteered to continue putting in the steps so as to make the trip easier for the carriers. They said “they pitied the poor B.....s scrambling over the slippery hillsides, so they put in their spare time to help them. This is the true digger spirit and a fine way of showing their consideration for our hard pressed carriers.”²⁵



This famous photograph in McCarthy’s official history, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, is captioned as showing the Golden Stairs, leading up the southern side of Imitia Ridge. AWM 026837

Although it is debatable whether the Golden Stairs were cut into the southern or northern slopes, most sources locate the stairs on the southern side of the ridge. It is reasonable to assume too that the “diggers” would have given a nickname to the first staircase they came to along the track. Either way, this particular staircase was only a foretaste of the difficulties to come. The climb up to Ioribaiwa was longer and steeper than the climb to Imita. Ioribaiwa was over 2,700 feet above sea level. Osmar White, another war correspondent, walked the track in August. He later wrote that there were about 1,000 steps up to Imita Ridge and about 4,000 steps up to Ioribaiwa.²⁶ The number of steps on various climbs often varies in different accounts. Doubtless many men would have tried to count each step but they would soon have lost track through exhaustion and the need to go on. The number of steps in each staircase is probably just best estimates.

The track continues

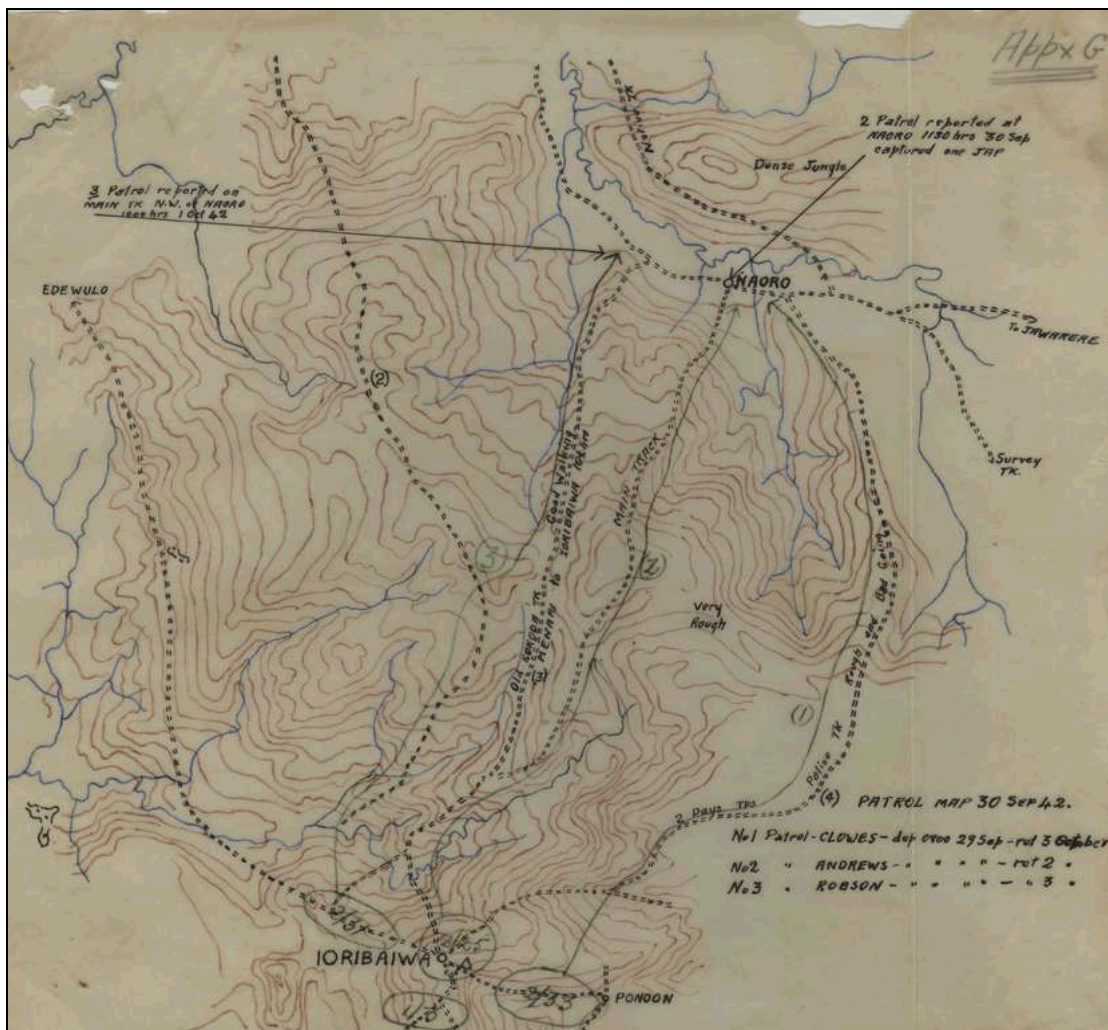
From Ioribaiwa, the track makes a brief but steep decent before crossing Ofi Creek and then makes a long climb over the crest of the Maguli Range; it is then a long

²⁴ Reading, *Papuan Story*, p. 39.

²⁵ A war diary. The Owen Stanley Campaign: July–November 1942, p. 3, Salmon papers, AWM, PR00297, item 16–17.

²⁶ White, *Green armour*, p. 190.

descent to Nauro. During the war there were several other tracks connecting Ioribaiwa and Nauro. The rough “Police Track” ran to the east of the “main track” and it took about two days walk to Nauro. The “Old Kokoda Track” came off the “main track” and ran to the west of it. At the end of September 1942, as the Australians were about to begin the advance back to Kokoda, Captain Ewan Robson from the 2/31st Battalion led a small reconnaissance patrol along the Old Kokoda Track. He found the going was “rough” and “difficult”, and that the track’s surface was “bad”, particularly when it rained, and visibility was poor. More importantly though, Robson could not find any sign of the Japanese or “any indication that they had been in [the] area”.²⁷ The Japanese, like the Australians, largely stayed to the main track, straying from it for a kilometre or two only for flanking moves.



Trace map of patrols from the 25th Brigade carried out at the end of September 1942. Captain Robson patrolled the centre track marked above as “Old Kokoda Tk – good walking”. 25th Brigade war diary, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25.

The climb up Maguli Range is one of the longer, more gruelling climbs. There are many false crests that exhausted and frustrated trekkers. Paull thought that engineers had cut 3,400 steps into the range.²⁸ Albert Long, a 33-year-old corporal who was

²⁷ Patrol report 31 Aust Inf Bn, 29 Sep – 2 Oct, 25th Brigade war diary, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25.

²⁸ Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda*, p. 48.

already fatigued by the time he reached Uberi, was exhausted by the climb up the range. The constant rain had made the track very muddy and Long, who had earlier thrown away his blanket and spare clothes to try to lighten his load, was wet through. He was also “losing weight fast through sweating so much”. By the time he arrived at Nauro he felt “more dead than alive”.²⁹ Reading would have been sympathetic to Long’s plight, recognising a similar degree of exhaustion. He later described his own struggle with the climb.

The immediate objective is always the top of some hill or other. But the top of the hill is approached over the tops of other little hills, so that trying to work out which is the real top and which is merely a subsidiary top soon drives sober minds mad. And although every question concerning topography or distance is invariably wrong, hope springs eternal and one never tires of asking in tones of dull despair how high is the hill, or how far is the road, and being very nearly hysterical with gratitude at the comforting answer. Thus it was no matter how far or fast we walked, we could never get closer to Nauro than a half an hour’s march away. We began to consider seriously whether we were not in the middle of a mirage rather than in the middle of the mountains.³⁰

It was a day’s walk from Ioribaiwa and after having crested Maguli Range, the track then made a slippery descent to Nauro. From Nauro it was another day’s walk to Efogi. The track, largely described as being in a “bad condition” by engineers, crossed the Brown River and then followed a long climb through a heavy forest to the ridge of the mountain before running down the ridge of the spine to Menari. It was at Menari, on 6 September 1942, that Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner addressed the remnants of the 39th Battalion, “those ragged bloody heroes”. Damien Parer caught this address on film and subsequently included it in *Kokoda Frontline*.³¹

Following a ridgeline, it took about six hours to walk from Menari to Efogi. Just before reaching the wartime location of Efogi, the track broke out into the open country of a large river valley where the wartime huts were sited. Vernon thought Efogi was “one of the most exasperating places to reach on the whole track.” Having reached the gorge after a day’s long climb, the village lay beyond just one more hill – “a particularly nasty little hill at that”. This final ascent added “the last straw to the day’s exertions as you pull yourself up the rocks by roots and branches”. There are probably few more colourful descriptions of the exasperations felt by those who walked the track than Vernon’s. The final leg to Efogi was

Just another of the daily insults that the range daily hands out to the hiker, doubly annoying when you find that you have to scramble down it again on starting to the next day’s trek. At its best (or worst?), however, this little knoll is only an aperitif to a regular orgy of hillclimbing as you continue on your way to Kokoda.³²

²⁹ Diary, 5 September 1942, Long papers, AWM, PR00233.

³⁰ Reading, *Papuan story*, p. 60.

³¹ 6 September 1942, 39th Battalion war diary, July–December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/78/5.

³² A war diary. The Owen Stanley Campaign: July–November 1942, p. 4, Salmon papers, AWM, PR00297, item 16–17.

From Efogi it was possible to see the next village of Kagi. Bert Kienzle later described the track from Uberi to Kagi as a “test of endurance” a series of steep ascents and descents that cut across six ridges.³³ When Lieutenants William Palmer and William Young from the 3rd Battalion carried out a reconnaissance patrol along the track with a company from the PIB in late June 1942, they traveled to The Gap via Kagi.³⁴

As with much of the length of the “main track”, there were several other tracks also running from Efogi on to Alola. From Efogi these other tracks run through the small village at Naduli (Naduri) and past the Myola Lakes area. Reading described how the track from Efogi split: one prong led to Kagi while the other track went via Myola. Both led to Kokoda, but the Myola track became the more important. At this point, Reading later wrote, the country opened up. “We stood on a bald, blunt hill surrounded by towering mountain peaks.” Three spurs commanded the whole of the approach to Myola. A 2000-foot climb faced Reading, which he and his companions “faced without a surfeit of enthusiasm.”³⁵

The dry lakes at Myola became increasingly important as the campaign developed. As the first shots were being fired in late July, Kienzle, who had established staging posts along the track where troops could eat and rest, was already aware of how difficult it was going to be to keep large numbers of soldiers and carriers supplied. Allied aircraft were dropping supplies at Efogi and Kagi, but neither location was really suitable. Kienzle knew of two dry lakes that he had seen from the air during pre-war flights over the range. After guiding the rest of the 39th Battalion’s companies forward to Isurava, on 2 August he set off with a local policeman and three carriers to discover the location of the lakes.

Waking south along the track from Eora Creek, after nearly five hours Kienzle sighted a dry lake southeast of the track to Kagi. Moving east through very heavy jungle, Kienzle was reluctantly guided by the Papuans along a “native hunting pad”. This area was considered taboo and only a few people could use it for hunting at certain times of the year. The track had not been used for some time and it proved hard to follow. After making camp for the night, Kienzle came across the first dry lake early the next morning. It was “a magnificent sight,” he later reported, “just the very thing I had been looking for to assist us in beating the Japs.” It was an “excellent area for dropping supplies,” he concluded, but cautioned that it “could also be used by the enemy for landing paratroops.” As the local Koiari people did not have a name for the area, he named it Myola after the wife of his friend and fellow ANGAU officer, Major Sydney Elliott-Smith.³⁶

Emerging from the bush, Kienzle came to the edge of the smaller of the two lake beds. The lake beds were close to each other but were separated by a mountain spur.

³³ Report on Kokoda L of C Native carriers during campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, 12 July 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 577/6/8.

³⁴ 3rd Battalion war diary, 13 June 1942, 3rd Battalion war diary, August 1937 – July 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/39; Recce, report Sogeri–Kokoda Track, AWM, AWM54, item 587/7/23.

³⁵ Reading, *Papuan story*, p. 87.

³⁶ Myola was an Aboriginal name meaning Dawn of Day. Report on Kokoda L of C Native carriers during campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, 2–3 August 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 577/6/8.

McCarthy likened the lake to a “saucer in the high mountain tops”, well over a mile long and up to half a mile wide. The ground was flat and treeless and covered with fields of Kunai grass.³⁷ A stream, part of the headwaters of Eora Creek, cut across its centre. At first only the smaller lake, Myola No. 1, was used, but the larger lake bed, Myola No. 2, soon became the main dropping-zone.

Having found the dry lakes, Kienzle then blazed a new track northeast to Eora Creek, crossing The Gap by following a ridge. The track was “fair going, steep in places, but the trail on from the junction of the Kagi track was rough going and needed some attention.” At the junction of this new track with the Kagi–Eora River track, Kienzle established a camp and named it Templeton’s Crossing in memory of Captain Sam Templeton.³⁸ Templeton, the inspirational commander of the 39th Battalion’s B Company, had been killed just over a week earlier. Kienzle’s new track to Templeton’s Crossing from Efogi via Myola became the route of the “main track” although the track via Kagi was also used.³⁹

From Myola the track passes The Gap, sometimes called the Kokoda Gap. The Gap is a jungle-covered saddle in the main range, well over 7,000 feet above sea level at its central point. The distance through The Gap from the northern entrance to the southern side is between five and six miles. It is “more in the nature of a broken hump” rather than a level saddle and was only a gap in the sense that it allowed safe passage for aircraft flying in clear weather at altitudes of between 8,000 and 10,000 feet.⁴⁰ The idea of The Gap became fixed in the minds leading some in Moresby and Australia, leading them to conclude that it was a deep, narrow gorge amidst impenetrable jungle and towering peaks. Classicists likened The Gap to the pass at Thermopylae, where a small number of soldiers could hold off a large army. In an example of this attitude, General MacArthur’s chief of staff, Major General Richard Sutherland, signalled Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell, the NGF commander, suggesting that “necessary reconnaissance” be made of points along the track where “the pass may be blocked by demolition”. Sutherland’s signal demonstrated just how little higher command knew about the fighting conditions. Rowell curtly replied

that the amount of explosive which could be carried by native porters for the five days trip at present needed to reach the top of the Owen Stanley Range would hardly increase the present difficulties of the track. Some parts of the track have to be negotiated on hands and knees, and the use of some tons of explosive would not increase these difficulties.

He continued that if such explosives could be brought forward, it “would be better employed in facilitating our advance, than for preparing to delay the enemy!!!”⁴¹

³⁷ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 130.

³⁸ Report on Kokoda L of C Native carriers during campaign Owen-Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, 4 August 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 577/6/8.

³⁹ The author thanks Bill James and Soc Kienzle for pointing this out to him.

⁴⁰ Allied Geographic Section, *Main routes across New Guinea*, p. 3.

⁴¹ Sutherland had been passing on the suggestion from Major General Pat Casey, the American engineer-in-chief. In Rowell’s memoirs he wrote that he had sent the orders back “asking whether it was this week’s funny story?” Subject – preparations for demolitions of Kokoda Track, 22 August 42, AWM, AWM54, item 244/2/35; Rowll, *Full circle*, p. 122.

Beyond The Gap, the track descended through the valley to Eora Creek. The Australians established a supply dump here at this first river crossing, called “Dump No. 1”, being the first dump north of Myola. Continuing further north, the track intersected with the old Kagi track where it crossed Eora Creek. It was this track intersection and river crossing that Kienzle named Templeton’s Crossing. Some confusion though has arisen over the location and name of the crossing. Bill James has pointed that Dump No. 1 became known as “Templeton’s No. 1” while the original crossing has been called “Templeton’s No. 2”.⁴²

From Templeton’s Crossing it was a day’s trek to Isurava. Leaving Templeton’s, the track made one more climb before descending to Eora Creek and then Alola. The final leg of the rough and rocky track ran downhill steeply, with sharp rises over spurs which were crossed at right angles and quick, slippery descents. At the village of Deniki, the Yodda Valley comes into sight, and during the war the Kokoda airstrip was clearly visible. The “Kokoda plateau,” wrote McCarthy, was “thrust like a tongue from the frowning mountain spurs.” Into this green valley the track descended quickly and after about three hours the “bleakness of the mountains” was left behind for the “steamy warmth” of Kokoda itself.

Running roughly parallel to the “main track”, on the eastern bank of Eora Creek, the Missima–Kaile track connected Alola with Deniki. During the Australian withdrawal in August 1942, the 2/16th and the 53rd Battalions patrolled and fought along this track while the 2/14th and the 39th Battalions were engaged at Isurava.

The Kokoda Track finishes at Kokoda. From Kokoda, other tracks lead into the Yodda Valley while the main track easily slips down towards the sea, fording numerous streams and passing through the villages of Oivi and Gorari. The track ran roughly parallel to Oivi Creek until it crossed the Kumusi River at a place known as Wairopi. “Wairopi” was the pidgin rendering of “wire rope”, as a wire suspension bridge had been built across the fast flowing river.⁴³ The bridge was attacked frequently by Allied aircraft during the campaign as they sought to disrupt the Japanese supply lines. It was finally destroyed in the third week of October 1942. This proved dire for hundreds of Japanese troops who drowned trying to cross the flooded Kumusi River after the final engagements at Oivi–Gorari in which the Australians destroyed the Japanese rear guard. Major General Horii Tomitaro, the commander of the South Seas Force, was among those who drowned. His final words were reportedly, “*Banzai* to the Emperor!”⁴⁴

From Wairopi, the track then went on to Popondetta through swamps to the small settlements of Buna and Gona on the coast.

Wartime mapping of the track

Although the track had been in use for nearly four decades, there were no accurate maps of the track before the start of the Kokoda campaign. Indeed, apart from some

⁴² James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. 284.

⁴³ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ Horii actually died at sea. He and several of his officers had floated down the Kumusi on a raft and were washed out to sea. He drowned about six kilometres from the shore. Bullard, *Japanese army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 203.

geographic maps produced by mining companies, there were practically no maps of military value of either Papua or New Guinea.⁴⁵ It was another example of how ill-prepared the Australian authorities had been to meet the Japanese thrust. When Brigadier Selwyn Porter arrived to take over command of the 30th Brigade in April 1942, he was surprised by a general lack of preparedness. “It was a sorry story,” he told Gavin Long later that year. “There were no plans, the troops were untrained”, their officers were not aware of their responsibilities to their men, and there was little proper training. The brigade’s headquarters “consisted of a telephone in the corner of the mess” and there were “no maps”.⁴⁶ Porter’s intelligence officer carried out a “fruitless” search for any useful maps of New Guinea, let alone the Port Moresby area.⁴⁷ Even if the brigadier’s headquarters had had maps, they would most likely have proved to be inaccurate.

In March 1942 NGF raised a small survey section consisting of three officers, one of whom was Owers, and 22 other ranks, drawn from the different units in Moresby. In these early days there was little the section could achieve, as some of its personnel were not fully trained in surveying techniques and aerial photographs were unavailable. The section’s equipment was also basic, commandeered from government departments and oil and mining companies. Triangulation control was non-existent and surveying all had to be carried out by theodolite, stadia traverses and plane tabling. Owers later remembered how he had to assemble his theodolite from components of three others. The surveyors had only one vehicle, a commandeered civilian utility. This utility had to be abandoned more than once when it was caught on the road during a Japanese air raid.⁴⁸ The situation did improve with time.

The focus of the section’s early work focused on mapping the areas around Murray Barracks in Moresby, where the section was initially based, and the airfields that were under construction. The barracks were frequently under Japanese air attack and the section moved to near Fifteen Mile, north-east of Moresby, where it began mapping the valleys of the Laloki and Goldie rivers. By April part of the section had begun working on the Sogeri Plateau. Thus the majority of the section’s work had concentrated on the different approaches to Moresby and its surroundings. During the first week of July the section was strengthened with reinforcements from No. 3 Field Survey Company in Australia. This brought the section up to strength with three officers and fifty other ranks, but there was still far too much work.

It was not until the end of July, after the Japanese had captured Kokoda, that the section’s priorities changed from working around Moresby to concentrating on supporting the campaign; specifically, improving the flow of troops and supplies up the track as well as the evacuation of the wounded. In mid-August Owers led a small number of surveyors to find and mark a route to Nauro that the engineers could develop into a jeep road. It was only then that Owers “realised” just how “useless the maps were”: features were in fact miles off their positions on the map and rivers rose

⁴⁵ Coulthard-Clark, *Australia’s military map-makers*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ Long diary no 8, July 1942, p. 34, AWM, AWM67, item 1/8.

⁴⁷ Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Viccars, *History of New Guinea Survey Section later 8 Australian Field Survey Section*, p. 2; Long note book no. 32, p. 55, AWM, AWM67, item 2/32.

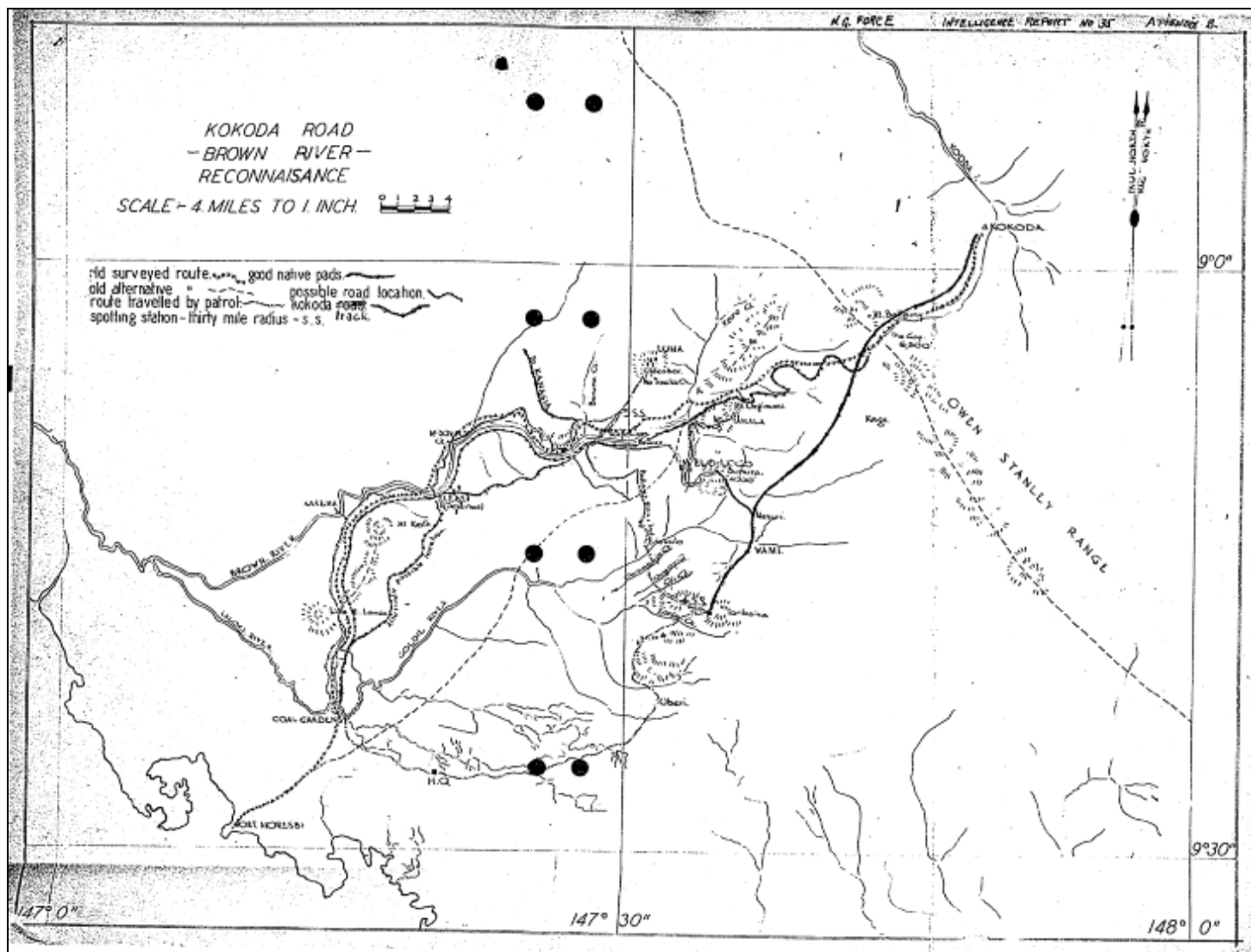
from the wrong hills. He also consulted with the Papuans as much as possible to benefit from their local knowledge.⁴⁹

The lack of accurate maps meant that the first Australian troops who were sent up the track in July and August had very little information about the way ahead, apart from what they could glean from their guides, “old hands” such as Keinzle. This also probably meant that the Australians would have followed the “main track” to Kokoda that corresponded with old mail route.

Much of the information the field commanders received in Moresby was sketchy and unreliable. Brigadier Pott’s 21st Brigade, for example, received 1,000 copies of a map of Buna, which followed the track from Kokoda and Missima eastwards to the coast, but this was later found to be inaccurate. (These maps were not used anyway, as the brigade’s battalions only reached Isurava.) Track maps and aerial photographs were unavailable, and the one report of the track between Uberi and Kokoda proved to be “almost totally inaccurate”. The only seemingly useful information the brigade had was a sketch of the track showing heights, distances, and hours on the march.⁵⁰ The Uberi–Kokoda track report was probably the one written by Lieutenants Palmer and Young when they completed walking the track in early July. The only map of the length of the track that Potts and his officers may have had was the “Kokoda Road” sketch map, at four miles to an inch (roughly 1:250,000).

⁴⁹ Long note book no 32, p. 56, AWM, AWM67, item 2/32.

⁵⁰ 21 Aust Inf Bde, report on operations, Owen Stanley Range, 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. 1, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.



The map of the "Kokoda Road" showing the route patrolled by Lieutenants William Palmer and William Young. This map was traced from a print of a map of Road Recce by NGF Survey Section on 21 June 1942. AWM, AWM54, item 587/7/25.

It was not until September, when the Australians had fallen back to Imita Ridge, that they received better quality maps. The first of these was the Kagi-Naoro [sic] Area, one inch to one mile, map issued to Brigadier Kenneth "Ken" Eather's 25th Brigade. This map, dated 8 September 1942, was produced by the 2nd Field Survey Section and was soon superseded.



Military maps were frequently updated and revised using track reports, information from people who usually had some first-hand knowledge of the ground, and aerial photographs. It was not until the arrival of American photographic squadrons that runs of tri-metrogon photographs could be produced. These photographic runs were taken from an aircraft mounted with three cameras that took overlapping photographs from one horizon to another. Yet even with aerial photographs, annotating, heightening, and compiling topographic material for the Owen Stanley Range still proved to be very difficult. Tracks between villages disappeared into the dense jungle while villages themselves could prove difficult to locate. Cloud cover was also a problem. Villages and track routes were identified through close examination of photographs and through discussions with patrol officers, “old hands”, and those who knew the ground well.⁵¹

⁵¹ Viccars, *History of New Guinea Survey Section, later 8 Australian Field Survey Section*, p. 8.

KOKODA AREA

1:126720

N. E. I. G. A. S. I.
SOUTHERN NEW GUINEA ZONE



WARNING - Local Grid



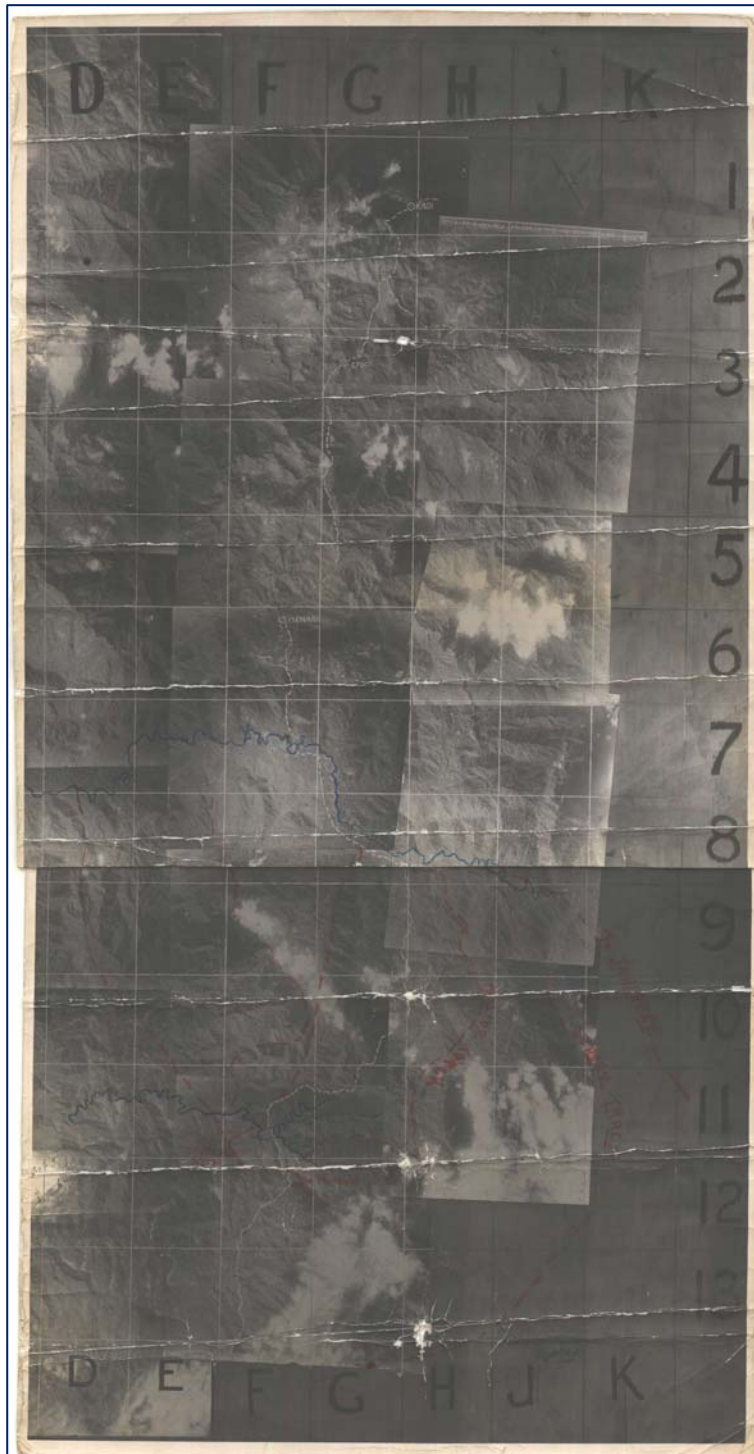
- TRACKS FROM PHOTOGRAPHY
- FOOT TRACKS
- RIVERS
- FORM LINES
- TIMBER BOUNDARIES
- HEAVY TIMBER
- LIGHT TIMBER
- SCATTERED TIMBER
- NATIVE VILLAGE
- HOUSES
- PLANTATIONS
- GRASSLANDS
- TRACKS IDENTIFIED BY MAJOR CAMERON



THIS MAP WAS COMPILED FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS WITHOUT GROUND CONTROL OR INSPECTION AND WITH INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM MAJOR CAMERON.

2nd ADJT. FIELD SURVEY SECTION
4 D - 42

K11



Surveyors used aerial composite photographs, such as this one of the Imita Ridge – Kagi area, when producing their wartime maps.

During August, for example, the section now titled the 2nd Field Survey Section and based at Seventeen Mile, worked to produce a map of the Kokoda–Gona area at two miles to an inch. This map was compiled from aerial photographs and additional information supplied by ANGAU officers who identified the villages and tracks. Major Allan Cameron, who had recently temporarily commanded the 39th Battalion, contributed by identifying villages along the track between Kokoda and Myola. The section also produced a revised map at two miles to an inch of the Kokoda area, often called the “K11 map”.⁵²

Plotted from oblique photographs and Cameron’s comments, the map of the Kokoda area was completed in early September. The section’s war diary admitted though that the “accuracy of the work” was known to be “doubtful”, as the section’s surveyors were unable to inspect the

ground. Due to the high tempo of the campaign, the emphasis was on producing usable maps quickly. “Extreme accuracy” was “NOT required”, the section was told. Their survey work was instead to focus on constantly improving each map as new

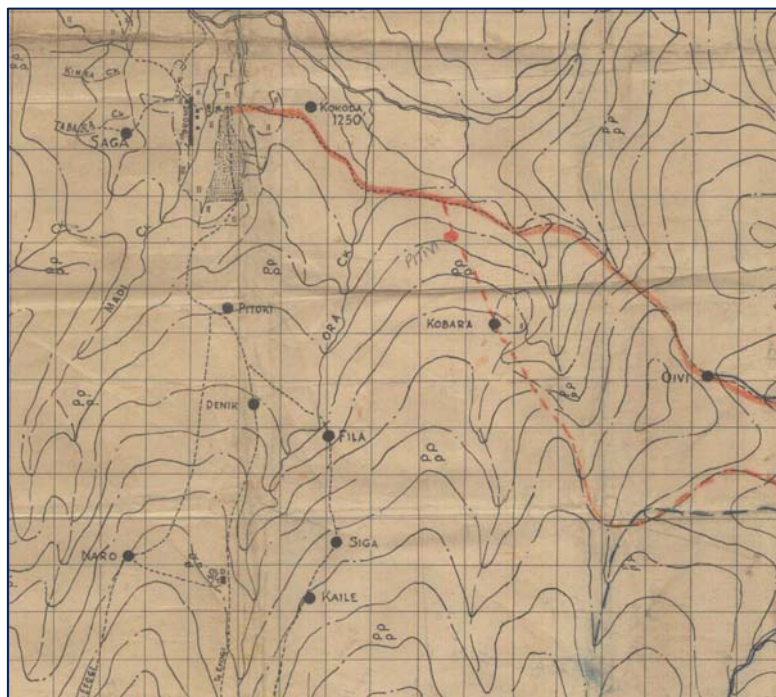
⁵² General report, 1 Aug 42 to 31 Aug 42, 2nd Field Survey Section war diary, July to September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/18.

information and details came to hand.⁵³ In mid-September, the section completed a revised version of the Kagi–Naoro [sic] Area map, which the 2/1st Topographical Survey Company, located in Toowoomba, Queensland, reproduced in colour. The company printed 3,500 copies of the map.⁵⁴

⁵³ General report, 1 Sep 42 to 30 Sep 42, 2nd Field Survey Section war diary, July to September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/18; Survey policy, HQ NG Force, 15 Oct 42, 2nd Field Survey Section war diary, October to December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/18.

⁵⁴ 2/1st Army Topographical Survey Company war diary, 12 September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/21.

During October, the section began working on sheets of the Uberi and Efogi area at a scale of one inch to one mile. The idea was to join all the available information between Port Moresby and Buna, but this proved to be more difficult than had been anticipated and again, there were some concerns over accuracy. The section's war diary described the work as a "thankless task", with the tie-up between the existing maps being based on "guess work". The topographical features were based mainly on the Kagi-Naoro [sic] Area map, detailed plots from the oblique photographs in the Alola to Myola area, and river features around the head waters of the Goldie and Hiwick Rivers.⁵⁵



A section of the 1943 Wairopi one inch to one mile scale map.

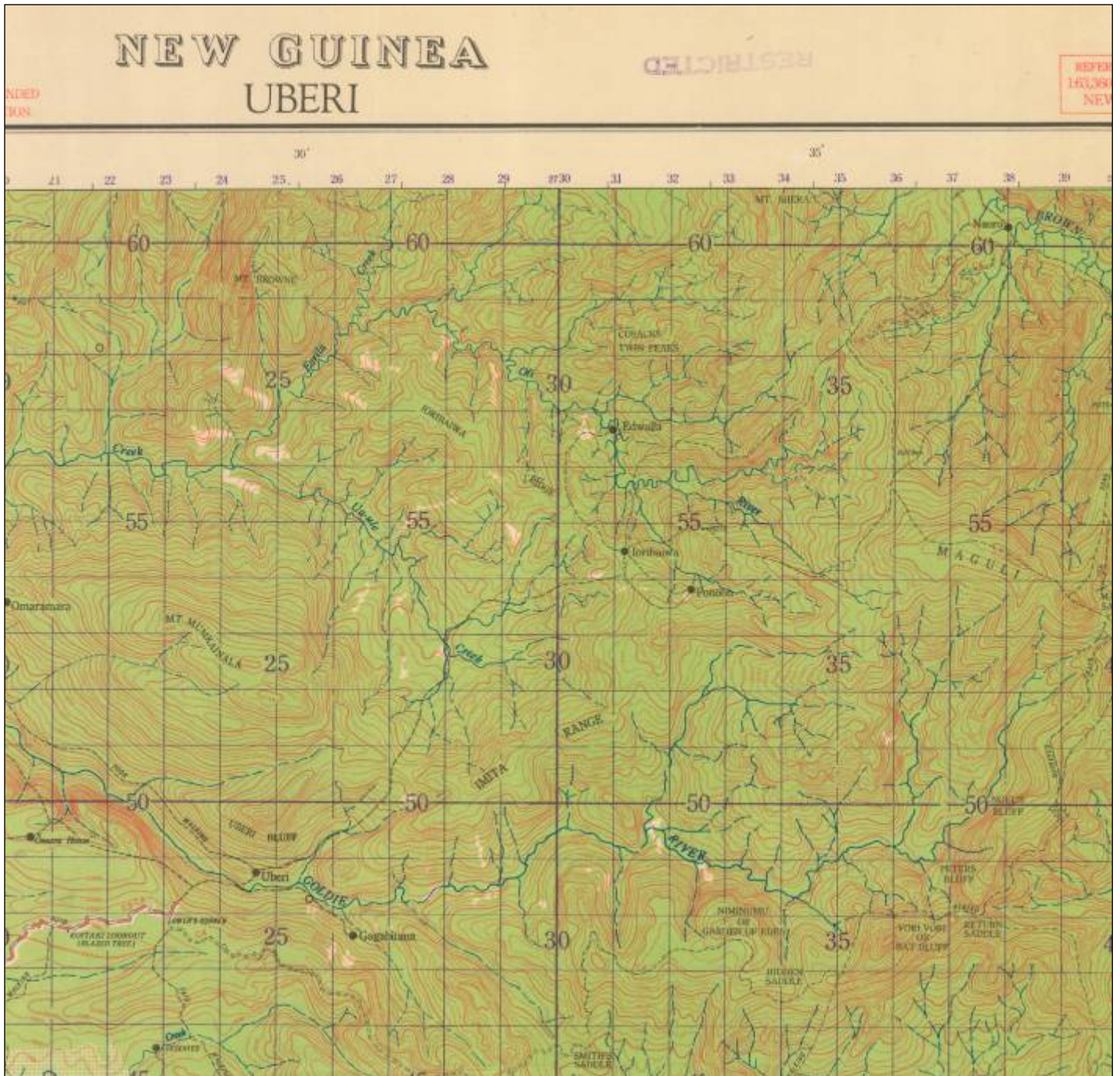
Although the section worked on these sheets, it is not clear if they were produced or printed in large numbers, as by this time the Australians were pressing the Japanese further back towards the coast. Shortly after the completion of the Uberi and Efogi sheets, the section also finished a scale map of Wairopi at one inch to one mile, which covered the tracks running from Kokoda to Wairiopi and on to Buna. From November much of the section's work was taken up with revising and updating the sheets of the beachheads area. Plans were also being made for future operations in New Guinea; the section worked on a large series of sketch maps for places such as Lae, Salamaua, and the Markham River – all areas that were to see fierce fighting during the following year.⁵⁶

The only area along the Kokoda Track to receive thorough attention was Uberi. From October to February 1943 the section, now titled the 8th Field Survey Section, surveyed and completed a detailed map of Uberi and its surrounds. This one inch to one mile scale map covered the road from Sogeri through McDonald's to Owers' Corner, and from there the track up to Ioribaiwa and on to Nauro. Sheets in the same series were to have also been produced of Myola and Kokoda, but they do not seem to have been completed. There is no mention of the section working on these sheets in its war diary, nor does the Memorial have any copies of them in its map collection. With the fighting now having moved on to other areas of New Guinea, there was no longer the immediate need for such detailed maps, nor could the army afford to have a detachment of their skilled surveyors spend four or more months working on an area that was now a rear area. A one inch to one mile map of Kokoda was reproduced by

⁵⁵ General report, 1 Oct 42 to 31 Oct 42, 2nd Field Survey Section war diary, October to December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/18.

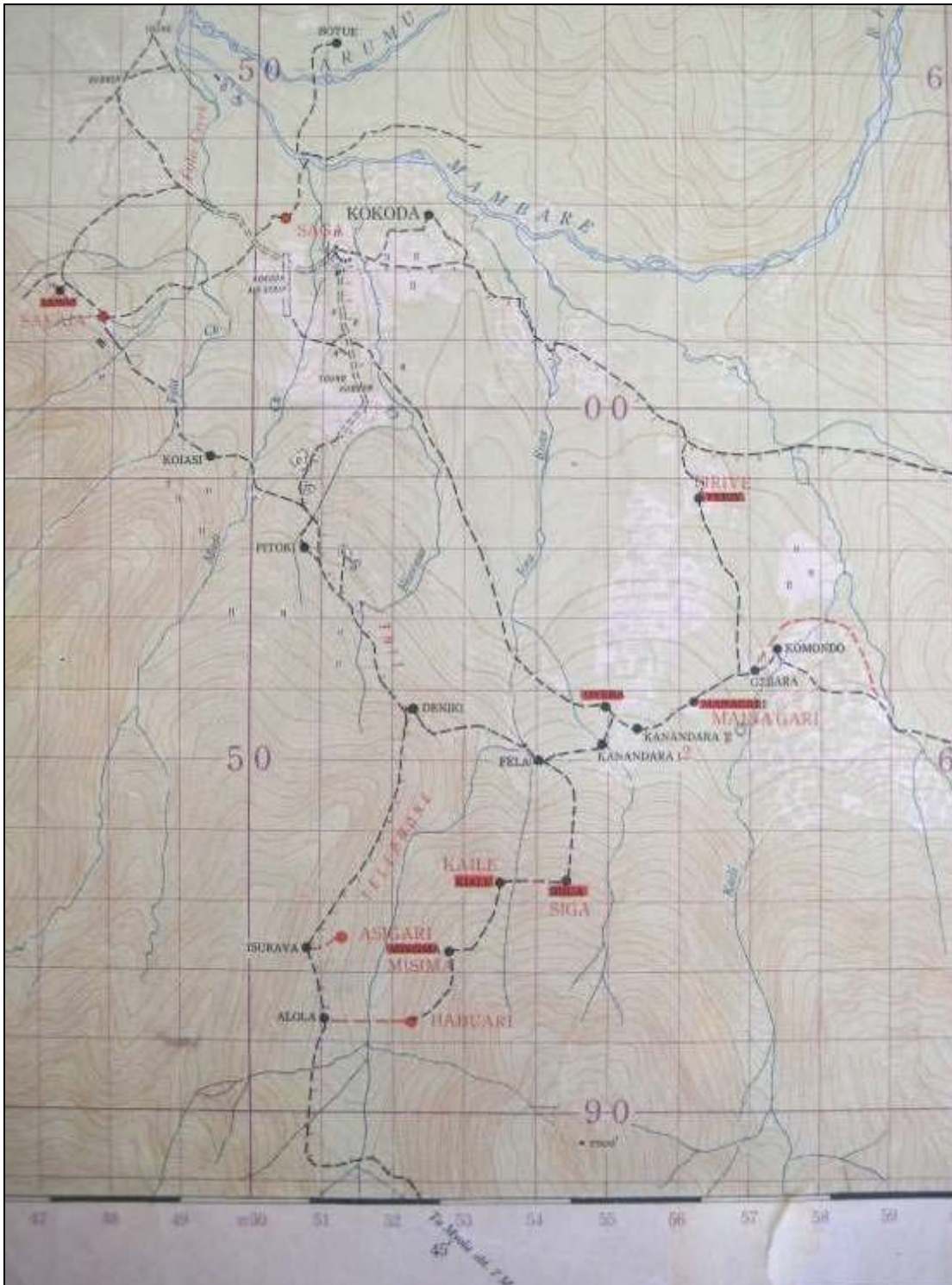
⁵⁶ General report, 1 Nov 42 to 30 Nov 42, 2nd Field Survey Section war diary, October to December 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 6/1/18.

the 2/1st Army Topographical Survey Company in March 1944 which was largely based on the earlier Wairopi map.



A section of the 1943 Ubeia 1 inch to 1 mile map. This map covers the beginning of the Kokoda Track from Owers' Corner through to Nauro. It took several months for Australian army surveyors to produce this detailed map.

During 1944 and 1945, Allied operations were carried out in New Guinea and beyond. No new survey work was carried out along the length of the Kokoda Track, although some of the earlier maps, such as Ubeia and a map of the Kokoda area, were reproduced during 1944. Australian signallers would have used these maps as they maintained the lines of communications across the Owen Stanleys.



A section of the 1944 Kokoda, one inch to one mile map. This particular map seems to have been based on the earlier Wairopi map. Note how the location of the villages of Habuari, Missima, Kaile and Siga have been amended.

During the campaign, army signallers had followed closely behind the Australian infantry, building a tree-slung signal line along the track from Iloilo to Kokoda. This signal line was operating the day after the capture of Kokoda. The line was later extended to Dobodura. During 1943, communications across the Owen Stanleys were improved when the Americans began developing airstrips along Papua's north coast. Australian signallers from the line sections of the 18th Line of Communications

Signals laid a new signal line, one capable of carrying telephone and telegraph lines, along the length of the Kokoda Track. Signal stations were located at Owers' Corner, Jap Ladder, Meneri, Brigade Hill, Efogi, Mission Hill, Templeton's Crossing, Eora Creek, Alola, and Kokoda. From Kokoda, Americans from the 5th USAAF Signals extended the line to the coast. Work on the line began on 12 May 1943 and was finished six weeks later.⁵⁷

The signal camp at Jap Ladder was located on a steep incline, north of where the main track crossed Ofi Creek and just beyond "Japanese Camp", between Ioribaiwa and Nauro. It is thought that the Japanese troops cut steps into the clay soil up Maguli Range. Doubts have been raised as to the authenticity of this claim and weathering has eroded the original earthworks. It is clear from the original captions of wartime photographs in the Memorial's collection that the name and location "Jap Ladder" can be dated to no earlier than 1944.



Signalman Ormond Leydon displays Japanese souvenirs by the sign at Jap Ladder signal station, 4 April 1944. The station was situated on the route from Owers' Corner to Nauro. AWM 072197

During the war ANGAU used police runners to carry military mail over the track, a service that was easily transferred to civilian administration in October 1945. In May of the following year, the Port Moresby–Kokoda mail service was re-established and, just as they had done before the war, armed policemen carried the mail bags. This time, though, they carried only letters; heavier parcels and newspapers were sent by sea to Buna. The overland mail service continued until 1949, when a QANTAS air service was introduced to Kokoda.⁵⁸ No mapping of the Kokoda Track seems to have taken place in the immediate post-war period. In this case, it was probably not too much of an exaggeration when Owers commented in 1944 that, had it not been for the war, maps of New Guinea would not have been made in "100 years".⁵⁹ It was not until the 1960s that new mapping and surveying began to take place.

⁵⁷ Barker, *Signals*, pp 192-194; Australian Corps of Signals, *Signals*, pp 125-127.

⁵⁸ Hawthorne, *The Kokoda Trail*, p. 229.

⁵⁹ Long note book no 32, p 63, AWM, AWM67, item 2/32.

Post-war mapping of the track

In 1962, the US Army's Map Service from the Corps of Engineers compiled two 1:250,000 scale maps named "Port Moresby" and "Buna". The reliability of much topographical information, however, was considered "poor". Beginning in 1969 the Royal Australian Army Survey Corps similarly produced a series of 1:100,000 maps of Papua New Guinea. The Australian army maps were produced as part of the national mapping program for Papua New Guinea and were not completed until 1980.⁶⁰

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a renewal of interest in the Kokoda Track, led by veterans of the campaign. During 1967 veterans from the 39th Battalion and the 25th and 16th Brigades returned to Kokoda, in August and November respectively, for the 25th Anniversary of the campaign. These groups were followed by other visitors, and in 1970 the Department of Territories produced a brief pamphlet that included a large sketch map of the "Kokoda Trail" for "intending travellers on the trail". The route identified on this map largely follows the old mail track, passing Kagi rather than Myola.⁶¹ In 1973 Bert Kienzle initiated the first race across the track. He sponsored the event for five years, offering \$200 for each year's winner.⁶²

In 1978, the Department of Works and Supply produced a "Longitudinal section of the Kokoda Trail" based on information provided by an employee who walked the track in July. This map is an annotated cross-section of the Owen Stanley Range that identifies different features, walking distances and information for trekkers. According to Soc Kienzle, it is in this map that most "errors" regarding the actual route of the wartime track begin to occur. This particular map identifies Templeton's Crossing No. 1 and No. 2, for example, and also names some features that are given in metric rather than imperial measurements. (The map was revised in May 1982.)

Soc first crossed the track in January 1964 with a policeman, Sergeant Yabi, who had been with Soc's father, Bert Kienzle, during the war. Soc, who spent his youth on the family's station in the Yodda Valley, once described the whole length of the track as "his backyard". From Uberi, the path of the track that Soc learnt skirted eastwards around a large knoll before intersecting the creek at the base of Imita Ridge. During the war this was the location of Dump 66. From here the track led up the Golden Stairs to Imita gap. Although this particular track around the knoll is not marked on any of the wartime or modern maps, Soc believes that this track corresponds to a description of the start of the track by Doc Vernon.⁶³

⁶⁰ See Royal Australian Survey Corps, *Topographic atlas Papua New Guinea*.

⁶¹ Maps and description of the Kokoda Trail prepared by Department of Territories for use of intending travellers on the Trail, 1970, AWM, AWM54, 577/1/2.

⁶² Hawthorne, *The Kokoda Trail*, p. 243.

⁶³ Information supplied by Soc Kienzle: "PNG – Mining Kokoda", *Foreign Correspondent*, ABC-TV broadcast on 4 March 2008.

The present day track

Wartime track	Present day track	Deviations and variations	Subsidiary tracks used in this section of the Track
Owers' Corner to Ua-Ule Creek	The first half to this leg follows the wartime track to the site of Dump 66.	From Dump 66, the modern track is further west of the original route but crosses Imita Ridge at the same place. The modern track then swings eastwards before rejoining the wartime track at Ua-Ule Creek.	The disused wartime track up Imita Ridge ascended the Golden Stairs.
Ua-Ule Creek to Nauro	This leg follows the main wartime track.		From Ioribaiwa, a track led south-east to Ponoon. An alternative track from Ioribaiwa to Nauro, described as the "Police track", ran further east of the main track. From Japanese Camp, a parallel track west of the main track also led to Nauro.
Nauro to Menari (Manari)	The modern track follows the main wartime track.		There is another track from Nauro, further to the west of the main track.
Menari to Efogi	Much of this leg of the track follows the wartime track, up onto Brigade Hill, to modern Efogi.	The current site of Efogi village is now further south and on a different ridge line from wartime Efogi. The modern track deviates to meet the new village.	The old track to wartime Efogi led up Mission Ridge towards Kagi
Efogi to Myola		From modern Efogi, a new track leads to Efogi 2 and from there it forks towards modern Kagi and Naduri (Naduli). From both Kagi and Naduri, the tracks follow wartime routes.	There are many tracks between Efogi and Myola, one of which is the disused track to Templeton's Crossing via Kagi, as well as several tracks around the two dry Myola lakes.
Myola to Templeton's Crossing	The routes of the two modern tracks to Templeton's Crossing follow wartime tracks		
Templeton's Crossing to Alola	The modern track follows the path of the wartime track		
Alola to Kokoda	The modern track largely follows the wartime track	North of the Isurava battle site, the modern track deviates along an easier climb, west of the original wartime track. The new track rejoins the old before arriving at the site of wartime Deniki.	From Alola, another track led to the east, through to wartime Abuari and Missima, and joins the main track at Hoi, north of wartime Deniki.

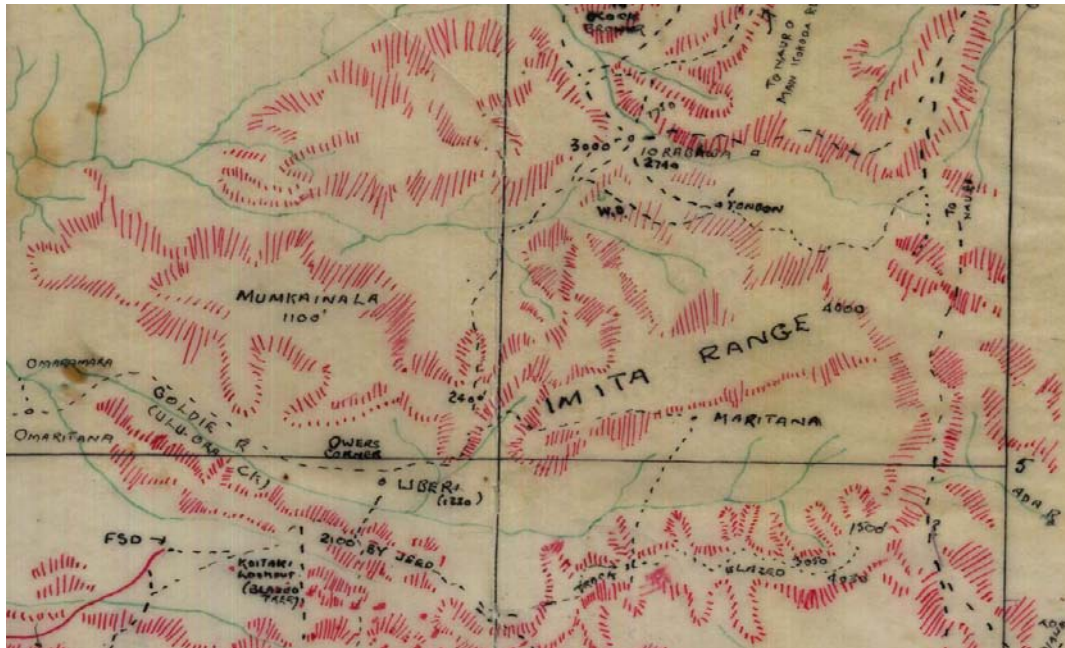
Although the numbers of tourists, battlefield pilgrims, and trekkers have steadily increased since the 1990s, it has been only relatively recently that the actual routes of the wartime tracks have received serious attention. This has come in response to threats to the track's integrity from the proposed Kodu mine, as well as the menace of deforestation. Locating and identifying the wartime tracks is more difficult than it may appear, as the villages of Nauro, Efogi, Kagi, and Isurava have all moved since the end of the war; also, new tracks between villages have been opened while unused tracks are reclaimed by the jungle. What may be part of the "main track" today does not mean that it was the "main track" in 1942. The present location of Isurava village, for example, is on a section of track between the Isurava battle site and Deniki that was opened by Soc Kienzle in the late 1960s as an easier route for driving cattle through to Kokoda. Wartime Nauro was abandoned in 2002 and a new village was established on a high spur. Ioribaiwa and Eora Creek now only exist as camp sites for trekkers.⁶⁴ The wartime Isurava village and track are further to the east.

With the attempts to "find", as is claimed, the authentic wartime tracks, debate has arisen as to the location of the track over the Imita Ridge. The current track is to the west of the original wartime path, along a gentler climb, but crosses the ridge in the same wartime location at the Imita gap. The current track then swings eastward in an arc, cutting across the wartime track once, before joining it again at Ua-Ule Creek.

In January 2008, a Kokoda trek operator announced that he and a group of men from landowning groups in the Imita area had "rediscovered" the Golden Stairs. In an interview with the ABC's Radio National, the tour operator, described the track as heading up a spur: "There's only one spur there and it's the only way you can go", as the track fell down steeply on either side. At the top of the ridge, he continued, there were "massive" rock formations. The track then swung to the west, where they then came upon a series of weapons pits.⁶⁵ (The 25th Brigade dug in across the ridge in September 1942.) Bill James, however, considers that the description corresponds with a wartime track to Maritana rather than the Golden Stairs. This particular track is further east of the wartime track and leads up the southern slope of Imita Ridge to a small village called Maritana, which is marked on few maps. The track then swung westward along the ridge, moving over the prepared Australian defensive positions, to join the main track near the Imita gap.

⁶⁴ Ham, *Kokoda*, p. 136.

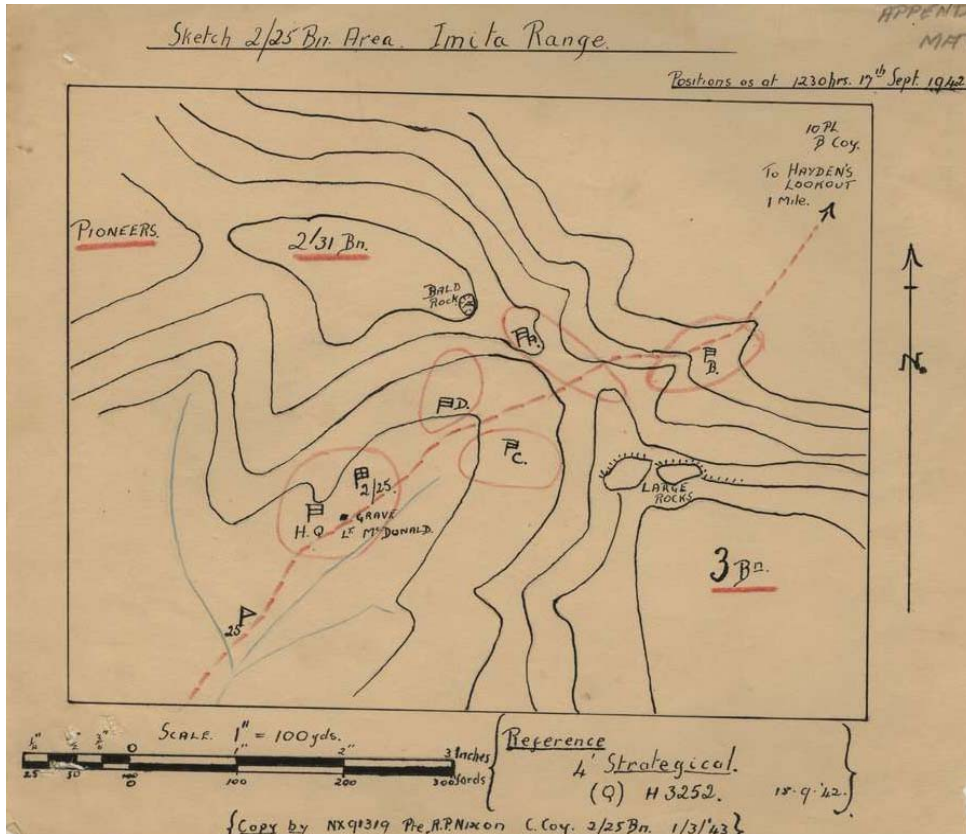
⁶⁵ "PNG: Kokoda's famous 'golden staircase' rediscovered", ABC Radio Australia, <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/programguide/stories/200801/s2149189.htm> <accessed 6 January 2009>.



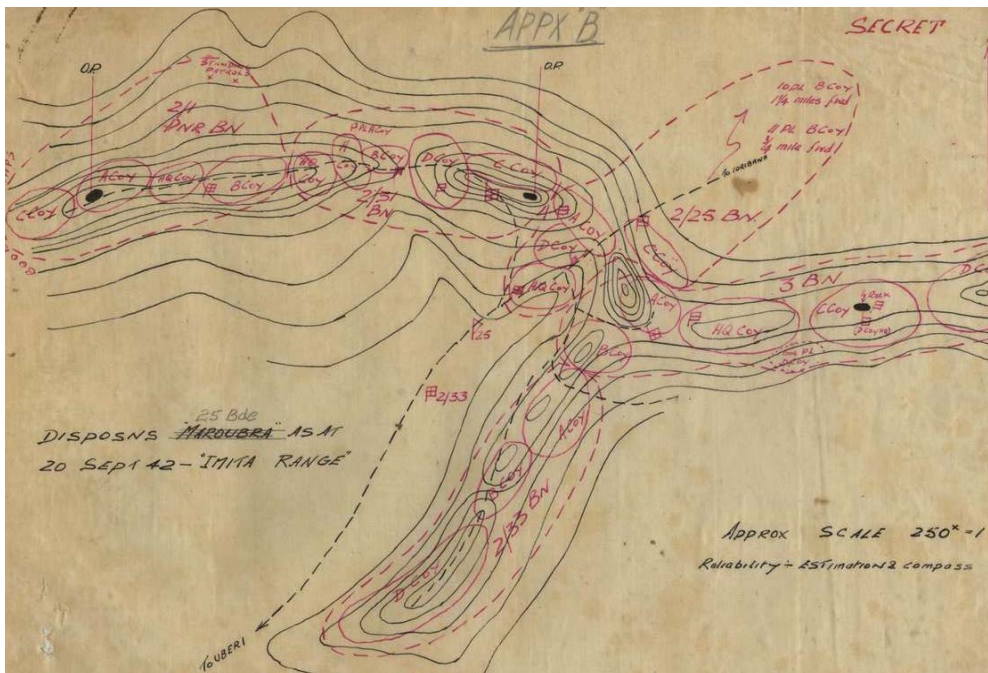
A section of the Moresby–Iorabawa [sic] two miles to one inch map. Bill James has asserted that the track a Kokoda trek operator announced he had “rediscovered” in January 2008 was the track up to Maritana, which then turned west onto Imita Ridge. 2/27th Battalion war diary, September 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/27.

Most unit diaries and veterans’ personal recollections say that the Golden Stairs were northeast of Uberi on the southern slope of Imita Ridge. According to James, the current track intersects the wartime track at the Imita gap. The detailed 1943 Uberi map shows the main track crossing the gap at the same point where the current track crosses the gap. James has also corresponded with a veteran from the 2/25th Battalion who recalled that there was a large rock with vertical sides at the Imita gap that was used as an observation post. The Golden Stairs came out at this rock. This description corresponds with wartime sketch maps and the topography is still recognisable.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Email from Bill James to a Kokoda trek operator, December 2008. Copy forwarded by James to the author, 8 December 2008.



Sketch map of the 2/25th Battalion's positions on the rise to Imita Ridge. Later in the month the battalion moved forward into positions on the north side of the ridge while their old positions were taken over by the 2/33rd Battalion. The "Bald Rock" in the 2/31st Battalion's area is the large rock referred to by the veteran from the 2/25th Battalion. 2/25th Battalion war diary, September–December 1942, AWM, AWM52 item 8/3/25.



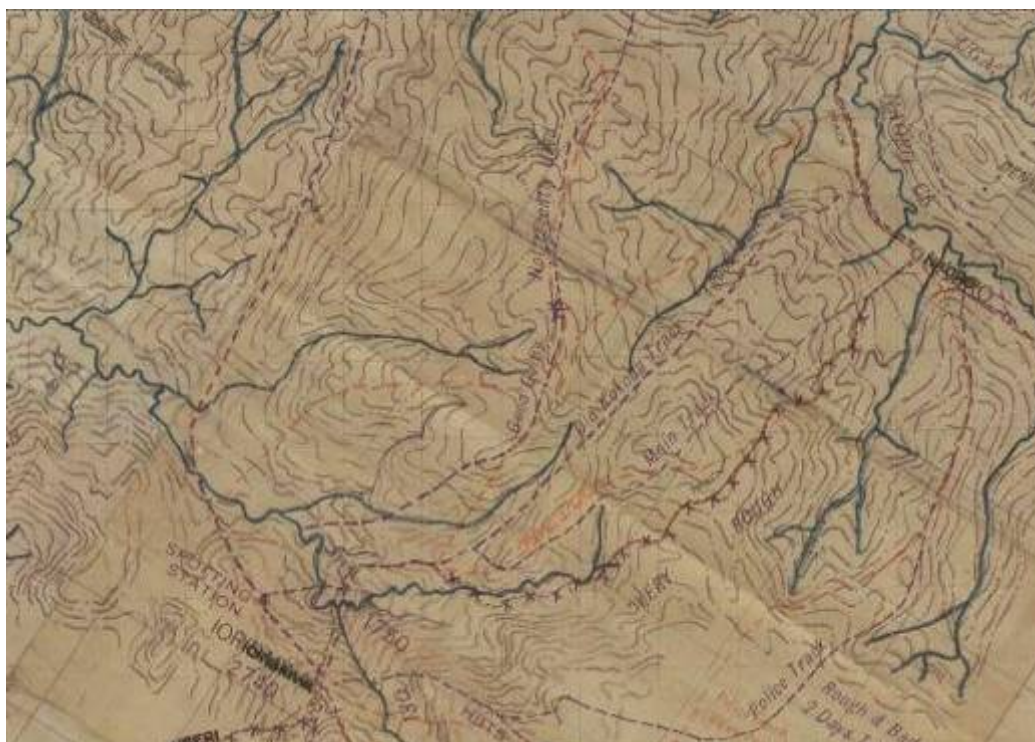
25th Brigade dispositions along Imita Ridge. This was the final Australian defensive line along the Kokoda Track. The track from Uberi, up the unmarked Golden Stairs, crossed the ridge at the Imita gap through the 2/25th Battalion's positions. This was the final Australian defensive line along the Kokoda Track. The OP position, the large rock, is clearly marked on the left. It is possible, based on his

statements in January 2008, that a Kokoda trek operator came onto the ridge from the west, through the 3rd Battalion's positions, before turning northeast along the track to Ioribaiwa.
25th Brigade war diary, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52 item 8/2/25.

An experienced traveller and writer, James first walked the Kokoda Track in 1999. He has completed it several times since and has published *Field guide to the Kokoda Track* (2006). The maps of the Kokoda tracks produced for the revised edition of this book (2008) are the most accurate that have been published. These maps include the wartime and contemporary tracks as well as battle sites.

It was actually the lack of published research on the route of the wartime track that led James to try to determine if accurate topographical maps of the Kokoda Track had been produced. During the course of his research, he and the designer of the book's maps, Peter Murray, discovered that some post-war maps, such as the American maps from the early 1960s, were less reliable than those from the war. There was also the problem that when these post-war maps were being produced, the track had already begun to deviate from its wartime path. James and Murray had to go back to the wartime maps, which were evidently more accurate than the 2nd Field Survey Section's war diary would have its readers believe. The wartime maps' contours and river systems conformed well to modern maps and aerial images that are now available through Google Maps. James and Murray then made the reasonable assumption that as the army's cartographers were good enough to get these features correct, then they would have been able to get the track routes correct as well. While this approach was able to identify the wartime tracks, James has also been able to locate significant features, such as battle sites, by carrying out extensive archival research, interviewing veterans, and consulting with Soc Kienzle, Frank Taylor, Ross Clover and others with extensive firsthand knowledge of the ground and the track's history.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Information supplied by Bill James and Peter Murray.



A blended image showing a section of the later Kagi–Naoro [sic] Area map overlaid on the earlier version of the map. By using this type of technique, and combining the images with more modern maps and aerial photographs, Bill James and Peter Murray were able to identify the wartime tracks along the Kokoda Track. Image courtesy Bill James.

James provides a list of Global Positioning System (GPS) references for a number of villages, battle sites, and numerous weapons pits along the track, from the Owers’ Corner Roadhead, via Kagi, through to the Japanese hospital that was located north of Deniki. He obtained these coordinates by using a Garmin Geko 301 hand-held GPS unit during a field survey along the track in November 2003. The coordinates were captured in the 55L Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) projection on the Australian Geodetic Datum 1966 (AGD 1966).⁶⁸ James asserts that all coordinates were accurate to within 80 metres and most were accurate to 16 metres. When using James’s coordinates, trekkers need to make sure their device is set to “UTM/UPS”.

A selection of GPS references from James’s *Field Guide to the Kokoda Track*⁶⁹

Coordinates	Easting	Northing
Owers’ Corner Roadhead	553463	8964918
Uberi	554715	8965380
Imita Ridge	557484	8967268
Pits on Ioribaiwa Ridge	560770	8971680

⁶⁸ The maps produced in the *Field guide to the Kokoda Track* use a projection system known as UTM that allows for highly accurate referencing of the Earth. Each map is overlaid with a grid of squares whose side lengths represent one kilometre. In the UTM system, Papua New Guinea mostly spans three longitudinal zones numbered, from west to east, 54, 55, and 56. The Kokoda Track falls in Zone 55. Maps that are more than 15 years old do not include a UTM. James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. ix.

⁶⁹ For additional sites and coordinates see Appendix 2 in James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, pp. 510-513.

Major Japanese position Ioribaiwa Ridge	561242	8971250
Wartime Ioribaiwa village	561577	8970996
Brigade Hill headquarters	570337	8986708
Efogi 1942	572562	8989462
Efogi Creek (wartime track)	572712	8989310
Eora Creek village site	581182	9001174
Alola	580945	9004346
Possible location of Alola 1942 (Frank Taylor's site)	580767	9004618
Possible location of Alola 1942 (Peter Bodoe's site)	581121	9004428
Isurava rest house	580717	9005670
Rearmost Isurava pits	580642	9006118
Kingsbury's Rock	580733	9006426
Deniki 1942	581890	9011758
Japanese hospital	580447	9015082

James has done much to locate the many tracks across the Owen Stanley Range to Kokoda, and his work has gone a long way to solving the vexed issue of which were the “real” wartime tracks. Much of the current track follows the wartime tracks. The only sections of significant deviation are the climb to and descent from Imita Ridge, new tracks which have been cut to Efogi, and the section of track just north of Isurava towards Deniki. It should be remembered, however, that multiple tracks were trekked, fought, and patrolled during the war. With a desktop study such as this it was not possible for the author or others to conduct their own field research or to corroborate James’s findings. Likewise, it is not possible to conclude with absolute certainty that James has correctly found these lost battlefields, but his research and his results are very convincing.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Bill James is not related to the author of this study.

Chapter 3

“Track” or “Trail”?

“That terrible track which is now known as the Kokoda Trail”
George Johnston, *New Guinea Diary*, 1943

In recent years, many hours have been wasted and much ink has been spilt debating whether the foot route across the Owen Stanley Range, connecting Port Moresby with Buna, should be called the “Kokoda Trail” or the “Kokoda Track”. Both terms were used interchangeably during the war and at the time they were not considered to be mutually exclusive. “Track” was probably more prominent in the Australian diggers’ lexicon, while “Trail” received official sanction with the granting of the battle honour “Kokoda Trail” and its subsequent gazetting by the Papua New Guinean government as the formal name.

Whereas the use of the terms “Kokoda Track” and “Kokoda Trail” once coincided, the “track” versus “trail” debate has now become impassioned and at times almost belligerent, as Kokoda takes an ever-increasing prominence in Australia’s military pantheon, second only to Gallipoli in the nation’s sentiment. Supporters of the “Kokoda Track” object to the use of the word “trail” on the grounds that “trail” is considered to be an American word, whereas “track” is strongly associated with the language of the Australian bush. Take, for an example, a letter of complaint published in the Australian War Memorial’s magazine, *Wartime*. Writing in response to an article that used “Kokoda Trail”, Jim Eastwood of Guilford, NSW wrote: “When did ‘track’ become ‘trail’? I have always known the Kokoda Track as just that, the term ‘trail’ being an Americanism: are we losing our identity to the USA?”¹ Eastwood’s complaint is typical of the criticisms levelled against the use of the word “trail”.

The Australian wartime use of both “track” and “trail” has eclipsed a third word – “road”. In his work on the history of the Kokoda Track, Canberra researcher Geoffrey Dabb has shown that pre-war colonial records in Papua often referred to it as a road. In Charles Monckton’s *Last Days in New Guinea* (1922) the route from Port Moresby across the Owen Stanley Range to Buna is marked as a “road”.² (Monckton served as a resident magistrate in Papua between 1897 and 1907, and was instrumental in establishing the government station at Kokoda Plateau.) The British New Guinea Annual Report for 1921–22 stated that there was “a pedestrian road” from Port Moresby across the Owen Stanley Range and noted that “the scenery en route is

¹ Eastwood, “Off the track”, *Wartime*, p. 4.

² Monckton, *Last days in New Guinea*, p. i.

magnificent". The annual report for the following year noted that the "natives" maintained the "main roads, in addition to and as an extra, to the ordinary village roads". In the 1930–31 annual report, the Lieutenant Governor Hubert "John" Murray wrote:

I have been visiting Kokoda, of course on foot, ever since 1907; and I walked there again this year. But this will, I think, be the last time, for the station is now linked to Port Moresby by aeroplane service. It is a pleasant road from Kokoda back to Buna so long as one passes through the forest.³

These roads were really pathways that were used regularly. The use of the name "Kokoda Road" continued into the campaign. When Lieutenants Palmer and Young, from the 3rd Battalion, carried out a reconnaissance patrol along the trail during June and July, the sketch map they produced identified the route from Ioribaiwa to Kokoda as the Kokoda Road.⁴ The term road is also used in a report written after the campaign by the 30th Brigade's commander, Brigadier Porter.

The Kokoda Road is the name given the mere goat track which threads along the steep side of the ... valley. It was apparently aimed at the lowest portion of the silhouette of the Owen Stanleys but, like all native pads, it makes no attempt at contouring the incidental spurs encountered, with the result that its altitude alters like a switchback.⁵

According to Bill James, locals today still refer to the route by its Motu name *Dala* or *Dalama*, as in the *Buna Dala* or *Kokouda Dala*, meaning the Buna Road or the Kokoda Road. *Dala*, however, can also mean "path", "track", or "way".⁶ Although *dala* has survived, with the influx of Australians new to the territory during 1942, the description "road" was largely replaced by "track".

As Stuart Hawthorne showed in his history *The Kokoda Trail*, the use of the word "track" has had a long history. The first written use of the word "track" to describe any unformed path in Papua appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, published in London in 1876. By the early twentieth century, the use of the term "track", either alone or with other words, was a regular occurrence. By comparison, the earliest written use of the word "trail" to describe paths in New Guinea was in the entomologist Evelyn Cheeseman's account of visiting Papua during the early 1930s in *The two roads in Papua* (1935).⁷

During the Kokoda campaign, the routes across the Owen Stanley Range were marked on the wartime maps as "tracks". The Kagi–Naro [sic] Area, one inch to one mile map, used by the 25th Brigade for its advance across the range, shows the Old Kokoda Track and the Main Track as well as other paths such as the Police Track. The use of "track" also applies for the Kokoda Area K11 1:126,720 scale map, the

³ Dabb, "A short explanation of the name 'Kokoda Trail'", p. 6.

⁴ Recce report Sogeri–Kokoda Track, NGF Intelligence Report no. 34, AWM, AWM54, item 5877/23.

⁵ Notes on Japanese tactics etc, and lessons learnt Kokoda–Alola Area, AWM, AWM54, item 5777/28.

⁶ James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. 32.

⁷ Hawthorne, *The Kokoda Trail*, p. 233.

Wairopi 1:63,360 scale (one inch to one mile) map, as well as the Buna (South east), one inch to two miles map. These maps were reproduced in September and October 1942.⁸

The Memorial holds a number of Kagi–Naoro [sic] maps in its collection. In the research carried out by Peter Provis, a former Memorial summer scholar, into the “track” versus “trail” debate he identified a copy of one of these maps that had “The Kokoda Track” written in pencil under the title. A card was attached to the back of the map that read: “2271 (3rd S.) Map of the Kagi–Naoro area of the KOKODA TRACK. Prepared by 2 Aust Field Svy Sect 8 Sep 42”.⁹ Similarly, in the terrain study *Main routes across New Guinea*, printed by the Allied Geographic Section in October 1942, the route from Port Moresby via Kokoda to Buna is described as a “track”.¹⁰

Provis has also shown, in a survey of unit war diaries and soldiers’ letters and diaries written during the campaign and held in the Memorial’s collection, that the overwhelming majority used “track”. The word “trail” is only used once in a war diary, in the 2/31st Battalion on 11 September 1942, but here too there were also references to “track”.¹¹

Transported by lorries as far as UBERI track which was trafficable. Proceeded per foot along UBERI trail – through OWERS CORNER down to GOLDIE RIVER – up to UBERI where night was spent. This track was particularly tough – single file – mud up to knees.¹²

Writing in his diary at the start of September 1942, for example, Corporal Albert Long stated that the “track through the jungle [is] very rough and muddy”.¹³ Even now, years after the war, many veterans still insist that “it was a track”.¹⁴

Provis found that “trail” was used only once in a soldier’s personal diary. On 25 July 1942 Warrant Officer George Mowat, a Great War veteran serving with the 39th Battalion, wrote in his diary that the “Trail [is] rough steep and slippery”. But two days later he used “track”: “Track slippery some places had to crawl.”¹⁵ Captain Kienzle was another who seemed to flip between “track” and “trail”. Consider the following entry in his report on the use of carriers during the campaign. On 9 July 1942 Kienzle wrote that he

left Ioribaiwa for Nauro at 0810 hrs with 226 carriers carrying supplies for troops, who were now feeling the effect of the steep climbs and descents only

⁸ Kagi–Naoro Area and Kokoda Area maps, 25th Brigade war diary, September–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/25; Wairopi and Buna (South East) maps, 2/31st Battalion war diary, August 1942 – March 1943, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/31.

⁹ Provis, “Kokoda: track or trail?”, p. 5.

¹⁰ Allied Geographic Section, *Main routes across New Guinea*, pp. 2–6.

¹¹ Provis, “Kokoda: track or trail?”, pp. 5–9.

¹² 2/31st Battalion war diary, 11 September 1942, August 1942 – March 1943, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/31.

¹³ Diary, 1 September 1942. Long papers, AWM, PR00233.

¹⁴ Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Rhoden, 2/14th Battalion, Imperial War Museum, London, 18384.

¹⁵ Provis, “Kokoda: track or trail?”, p. 9; Diary 25 July and 27 July 1942, Mowat papers, AWM, 3DRL/7137.

too numerous over this track. At Ioribaiwa I ordered local people to improve the trail and assist in extensions to camp. This course was adopted all along the trail and the order was issued to all Koiari people, who are not numerous but have given us much loyal assistance.¹⁶

Keinzle slipped between “track” and “trail” for the rest of his report, although he did largely use “trail” as a way of differentiating between the “main track” and other subsidiary tracks. His son, Wallace “Soc” Keinzle, asserted that his father always referred to it as the “trail”:

“One walks a ‘trail’,” he would say, “but one cuts a ‘track’.”¹⁷

Although both “track” and “trail” were used, it is clear from Provis’s survey that soldiers favoured “track”. It is also reasonable to conclude that soldiers would have also used “track” in their speech. It is worth mentioning, though, that rarely were “Kokoda Track” or “Kokoda Trail” used. “Track” was usually used in a generic sense, in reference to a particular track leading to a village or between villages.

It is commonly assumed that American war correspondents in Port Moresby were responsible for coining the term Kokoda Trail and used it to report on the campaign.¹⁸ The Australian correspondent, Geoff Reading, however, has repeatedly claimed to have been the man responsible for renaming the track the “Kokoda Trail”. His motivation was entirely practical.

I did it because along with the other correspondents at the time, I didn’t know what to call it. Communications were primitive and everything had to be spelt out. I got sick of typing descriptions such as “Imita–Ioribaiwa–Nauro track”. I called it Kokoda Trail to save typing ... I liked the word.¹⁹

Reading claimed that the first report of the Kokoda Trail was in Sydney’s *Daily Mirror* in a bold headline that read “Kokoda Trail ... a Diary of Death”. Reading dispatched the story from Port Moresby with the date line 26 October 1942.²⁰

While Reading doubtless believed he was responsible for the naming of the “Kokoda Trail”, Hawthorne, Provis, and Hank Nelson have demonstrated that other Australian correspondents had been using “trail” since September. Provis has shown that three papers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph*, and the Melbourne *Argus*, used “trail” on 11 September 1942, with “trail” being used from then on.²¹ The Kokoda “road” also made the occasional appearance, but most Papua-based correspondents used both “track” and “trail”. By the end of October there was a move for Australia-based journalists to adopt “Kokoda trail” – with a lower case “t”.²²

¹⁶ Report on Kokoda L of C Native carriers during campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda–Gona–Buna by Capt H.T. Kienzle, ANGAU NGF, 9 July 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 577/6/8.

¹⁷ James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. 33.

¹⁸ Austin, *To Kokoda and beyond*, p. 81.

¹⁹ Letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1992.

²⁰ Letter to the editor, *Weekend Australian*, 6–7 June 1998. Reading had previously reiterated this point on the *Four Corners* report, “The men who saved Australia” broadcast on the ABC on 27 April 1998.

²¹ Provis, “Kokoda: track or trail?”, p. 9.

²² Hawthorne, *The Kokoda Trail*, pp. 235–39.

According to Nelson, it was Australia-based journalists using communiqués from MacArthur’s headquarters who began to adopt the American expression “trail”.²³

The use of “trail” became increasingly popular in the years after 1942. In many manuscripts and published memoirs, veterans use both “track” and “trail”. Adding to the confusion, different volumes of the Second World War Australian official histories are also split between the “Kokoda Track” and the “Kokoda Trail”. Allan S. Walker’s medical volume *The island campaigns* (1957) and David Dexter’s army volume *The New Guinea offensives* (1961) both use “Kokoda Trail”. But Douglas Gillison’s *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–1942* (1962) and Dudley McCarthy’s *South West Pacific: first year* (1959) use “Kokoda Track”. Further complicating matters, McCarthy uses a map drawn by Hugh W. Groser, titled “The Kokoda Track”, which actually had “Kokoda Trail” inscribed along the route.²⁴

While authors declared their own preference for either name, no definitive ruling was made. According to A.J. Sweeting, who assisted with the writing and production of the official histories, Walker completed his volume first and did not raise the “track” or “trail” issue with Gavin Long, the histories’ general editor. McCarthy, a pre-war Patrol Officer in New Guinea who had walked the track after completing his manuscript, did discuss the matter with Long and decided to use the Australian “track” throughout the text, except when quoting American sources. By the time the decision to use “track” was reached, Groser already had had most place names printed ready for application to the maps, so “trail” was used on the maps.²⁵ For his own choice, Long used “Kokoda Track” in his single volume history *The six years war* (1973).

The case for the use of “trail” is given considerable weight by the granting of the battle honour “Kokoda Trail”. In May 1946 the Battles Nomenclature Committee was established in the United Kingdom to tabulate the actions fought by the land forces of the British Empire during the Second World War and to define each action. An Australian Battles Nomenclature Committee was formed the following year to tabulate Australian actions in the Pacific.²⁶

When a provisional list of Australian Pacific battle honours was completed in May 1947, the honour “Battle of the Owen Stanleys”, later corrected to the “Battle of the Owen Stanley Range”, was suggested for the Kokoda campaign. By June 1948, however, the provisional honour had changed to the “Kokoda Trail”.²⁷ Ten years later, when the committee’s final report was published, “Kokoda Trail” was the recommended honour and was adopted as the official Commonwealth battle honour.

²³ Nelson, “Kokoda: the Track from History to Politics”, p. 19.

²⁴ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area first year*, map facing p. 114.

²⁵ Letter A.J. Sweeting to Peter Stanley, 21 October 2002, AWM, DCC file 98/2499.

²⁶ Battles Nomenclature Committee interim report: final draft, AWM, DDC file 417/001/005 02; Australian Battles Nomenclature Committee initial meeting, 16 Dec 47, AWM, DDC file 417/001/005 01.

²⁷ See Battles Nomenclature – War of 1939–45 in the SWPA and Australian Battle Nomenclature Committee Pacific Area, part II Papuan campaign July 1942 – January 1943 honours, AWM, DDC file 417/001/005 01; Army Council Secretariat, *The official names of battles, actions and engagements*.

It is not clear why the Australian committee decided on the change from the “Battle of the Owen Stanley Range” to the “Kokoda Trail”, or even if the alternative “Track” was discussed as an option.²⁸ The committee consulted the authors of the military volumes of the official histories, who provided descriptions of the various actions and engagements and also advice on the spelling of place names. Consequently, it is curious that McCarthy – who advised the committee in 1950 on the definitions of the different “Actions” and “Engagements” that were fought “as part of the Battle for the Kokoda Trail” – did not object to the use of the word “trail”.²⁹ Possibly, as Sweeting suggests, McCarthy only became a “track” advocate later.

The battle honour “Kokoda Trail” was awarded to 10 infantry battalions as well as the Pacific Island Regiment. The 39th Battalion Association tried unsuccessfully to have the honour changed to the “Kokoda Track.”³⁰ Apparently other unit associations did not feel as strongly about the term or they accepted the official use of “Kokoda Trail”. In 1997, Memorial historian Garth Pratten surveyed the Memorial’s collection of published histories of all the major units involved in the Owen Stanley and Beachhead campaigns. Pratten found that of the 28 published histories, nine used “Kokoda Track” while 19 used “Kokoda Trail”. This was a majority of over 2:1 in favour of “Trail”. Most of these histories were either written, edited, or published by men who participated in the campaign. Pratten, therefore, reasonably concluded that “Kokoda Trail” was the nomenclature preferred by the veterans.³¹

The strongest case for the use of “trail” came in October 1972 when the Papua and New Guinea Place Names Committee of the PNG government’s Department of Lands gazetted its intention to formalise the route from Owers’ Corner to Kokoda as the “Kokoda Trail”.³² This caused a vigorous debate over its name, but ultimately the PNG government formally decided to name the route “Kokoda Trail”.³³

In the 60 years since the end of the Second World War, too much time and energy has been spent on the “track” versus “trail” debate. Both words were used interchangeably during the war, eclipsing the pre-war use of “road”. The diggers fighting the campaign at the time would have known it as a “track” and tracks were marked on their wartime maps. War correspondents and journalists used both “track” and “trail”, although “trail” began to be favoured and grew in popularity after the war. The move to “trail” became official with the formal granting of the battle honour “Kokoda Trail” by the army and was confirmed when the Papua New Guinean government officially named the path the “Kokoda Trail”. When the Memorial was redeveloping its Second World War galleries during the 1990s, it decided to adopt “Kokoda Trail” because it was favoured by the majority of veterans and because it appears on the battle honours of those units which served in the campaign.³⁴ Both “track” and “trail” are correct. It

²⁸ The minutes for the Australian Battles Honours Committee are kept in the National Archives of Australia in Melbourne and it was not possible for them to be examined in the time available for this study.

²⁹ Letter J.H. Smith to Colonel Treloar, 3 February 1950, enclosed report, Appendix D, AWM, DDC file 417/001/005 02.

³⁰ Letter to the editor by William John Guest, Honorary secretary, 39th Battalion Association, *The Australian*, 5 July 1999.

³¹ Kokoda Track or Kokoda Trail?, AWM, DCC 98/2499.

³² Papua New Guinea Government gazette 88, 12 October 1972, p. 1,362

³³ Hawthorne, *The Kokoda Trail*, pp. 232–33

³⁴ “Track or Trail?”, *Wartime* 19 p. 3.

is not possible to give a definitive ruling for one over the other. The most appropriate choice would be to follow the examples of the official historians and let authors use their own preference. Rather than debate the name, it is more important to remember the service and sacrifice of those Australians, Papuans, and Japanese who fought and died along its path.

Conclusion and recommendations

“The Australians who served here in Papua New Guinea fought and died not in defence of the old world ... they died in defence of Australia”

Paul Keating, Port Moresby, 25 April 1992

Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating made that observation in a speech at the ANZAC Day service at the Ela Beach memorial gates in Port Moresby. The Prime Minister began by acknowledging that the day was the 77th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, and made the point that what had sustained Australia after the First World War was the “spirit of ANZAC”. This spirit became the “canon of Australian life: the ideals to which we aspire, the values by which we live.” Keating then shifted his focus to the Second World War, the anniversaries of the significant battles of 1942, and Prime Minister John Curtin’s insistence on the return of the AIF to Australia. “Curtin was right,” he said. In 1942, Keating continued, the “pre-eminent claim” on loyalty was to Australia, not the British Empire:

The Australians who served here in Papua New Guinea fought and died not in defence of the old world, but the new world. Their world. They died in defence of Australia, and the civilisation and values which had grown up there. That is why it might be said that, for Australians, the battles of Papua New Guinea were the most important ever fought.

According to Keating, the belief these men fought and died for was Australia, the “democracy they had built ... the life they had made and the future they believed their country held.”¹ The next day Keating flew to Kokoda and at the Kokoda monument, he knelt and kissed the ground. If the Australian nation was founded at Gallipoli, he said, its “depth and soul” were confirmed in its defence of Kokoda. Here they fought to defend their way of life.² Between 1992 and 1995, Keating’s government did much to raise Kokoda’s profile and significance, and Australia’s other Pacific campaigns, as part of the *Australia Remembers* commemorative program.

The eminent Pacific historian Hank Nelson has argued that one of the motivations for the Keating government to promote Kokoda was its wish to redefine Australian nationhood as

¹ “Anzac Day – 25 April 1992”, The Hon. Paul Keating official website, <http://www.keating.org.au/main.cfm>, <accessed 15 February 2009>.

² Nelson, “Gallipoli, Kokoda and the making of national identity”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 53, 1997, p. 162.

stemming from a period in which the history of the country was decided by Australians acting specifically in Australia's interests. This was a deliberate move to position Australian nationalism away from Gallipoli, where Australian forces were a junior partner in the larger British Empire, to Kokoda – a battle fought and controlled largely by Australians, on Australian territory, and fought, it was thought at the time, to defend the Australian mainland from invasion.³

Much of this emphasis has centred on the experiences of Australian soldiers along the track, the spirit of mateship and the struggle against the odds, which are seen as central to Australian national identity. This connection between the digger and an Australian national type was evident during the war. In his *Soldier superb* (1943), Allen Dawes argued that Kokoda was the “ultimate test” of “Australian grit and guts.” It was “Australian courage and resource and sheer physical endurance [that] eventually beat the Japanese back to the coast.”⁴ The war correspondent George Johnston, in *New Guinea diary* (1943), had already realised the importance of the campaign. Johnston was sure that the name

“Kokoda Trail” is going to live in the minds of Australians for generations, just as another name, Gallipoli, lives on as freshly today, twenty-seven years after it first gained significance in Australian minds.⁵

Both are still strongly remembered. Keating's push to elevate Kokoda's profile has certainly been successful, and it is now probably the best known Australian campaign of the Second World War; but it is yet to seriously challenge Gallipoli's central position at the heart of Australian sentiment. Others maintain that the “spirit” shown by the Australians and Papuans along the track can serve as inspiration to overcome the adversities of everyday life. During each trekking season, sporting teams, corporate groups, and other organisations walk the track in search of mystical bonding in the mountains. The ordeal of the track can even bring on a spiritual awakening in some trekkers. One young trekker later described her epiphany after having completed the track: “Kokoda has given me my spirit. I can recognise it, and although I cannot yet describe it, I know it.” In addition to the memories, through photos of her trip she “will forever hold a part of Kokoda inside” herself. “I have the spirit now. It has shown me who I am ... I now know what matters in life.”⁶

Findings: The Kokoda Track holds a special significance for Australians. It was a bloody campaign fought on Australian territory that brought home the menace of Japanese invasion of mainland Australia. There are still many areas of the campaign that require research.

Recommendations: Original research into Kokoda needs to look beyond narratives of the campaign and the experiences of Australian soldiers. Areas that require attention include Australian war graves along the track, an analysis of the Japanese perspective on the campaign, and a study assessing the cultural significance of the Kokoda Track to the peoples of Papua New Guinea.

³ Nelson, “Gallipoli, Kokoda and the making of national identity”, p. 162.

⁴ Dawes, *Soldier superb*, p. 13.

⁵ Johnston, *New Guinea diary*, pp.1–2

⁶ Lindsay, *The spirit of Kokoda*, p. 12. See also Lindsay, *The essence of Kokoda*.

War correspondents were the first to write about the campaign, initially in newspapers and then in books such as Johnston's *New Guinea diary*, Osmar White's *Green armour* (1945), Geoff Reading's *Papuan story* (1946) and Raymond Paull's *Retreat from Kokoda* (1958). McCarthy's *South-West Pacific Area first year* was published the following year. McCarthy's and Paull's are still the most comprehensive histories of the campaign, although Paul Ham's *Kokoda* (2004), even if written in journalese, is a thorough work. Peter Brune, in *Those ragged bloody heroes* (1991), was the first author to extensively use oral history to write about the soldiers' experiences during the campaign. Since then, many more works have been published on the campaign and several documentaries have also been produced. Much of this work though has concentrated either on soldiers' reminiscences, biographies of the commanders, or narratives of the campaign of mixed quality and originality.

A subject awaiting study is the issue of war graves along the Kokoda Track. As is discussed in the appendix, after the war there were just over 200 Australians who had no known grave along the track and surrounding areas, including the beachheads. There were also the remains of several thousand Japanese in those areas. Panels dedicated to the missing in Bomana War Cemetery list the names of 160 Australians killed during the campaign. Given lobbying and the Australian public's interest in trying to locate and identify the remains of the "missing" from the First World War, particularly the recent discovery of the mass grave at Fromelles – given also the numerous searches for HMAS *Sydney* (II) lost during the Second World War, and the veterans who have taken it upon themselves to find and repatriate the six missing Australians from the Vietnam War, it is only a matter of time before someone starts asking what happened to Kokoda's missing.

A similar issue has already surfaced once before. In 1992 journalist and author Patrick Lindsay, producer of the documentary *Kokoda – the bloody track* (1992), went public with claims that there were the remains of more than 70 Australians buried at the site of the Brigade Hill cemetery. This issue received much media attention and was hotly debated. After an investigation, the Office of Australian War Graves was able to confirm that the remains of 52 Australian soldiers buried at Brigade Hill and 20 buried on Mission Hill had been removed and re-interred in Bomana War Cemetery in 1944. Doubts, however, remain.⁷ During the past 12 years a number of bodies thought to be Australian have been discovered along the Kokoda Track and around Sanananda. More recently, in November 2008, the remains from two graves found at Buna were assessed to be Australian soldiers.⁸ Virtually nothing has been published on the work of the Australian war graves units or the war graves service during the Second World War. Further research into this topic would provide a clearer understanding of how and where war graves were located along the track, and hopefully will identify the exact number of Australians who still have no known grave. Possible partnerships for this research include the Office of Australian War Graves and the Army History Unit, both based in Canberra.

While there are still areas of the Australian campaign that can be explored further, little has been published in English on the Japanese campaign. Apart from the McCarthy's official history, for a long time Lex McAulay's *Blood and iron* (1991) was the only history that

⁷ For more on the story and newspaper cuttings see, "The myth of Brigade Hill", http://www.warbooks.com.au/Kokoda%20Trial%20Page_files/Kokoda%20History/Brigade%20Hill/Myth%20of%20Brigade%20Hill.htm, <accessed 13 November 2008>.

⁸ The remains of the Australian soldiers are stored in Australia's High Commission in Port Moresby. "Forensic team to probe possible soldiers' remains in PNG", <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/19/2469149.htm?section=world>, <accessed 14 February 2009>.

provided a detailed discussion of the experiences of Japanese servicemen during the campaign. To do this McAulay made extensive use of captured Japanese letters and diaries that were translated by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) during the war. Paul Ham used a similar methodology for his *Kokoda*. He also conducted a number of interviews with surviving Japanese veterans. The translation of the Japanese official history, published as *Army operations in the South Pacific Area* (2007) has now made the Japanese story far more accessible, while the critical success of Shaun Gibbons's documentary *Beyond Kokoda* (2008) and the commercial success of Charles Happell's *The bone man of Kokoda* (2008) demonstrate the widespread interest in the Japanese experience. These works though are just the start of integrating the Australian and Japanese histories of Kokoda. New scholarship could continue this further, particularly if more Japanese sources, such as regimental and unit histories, were translated into English. Organisations that could be approached to assist in carrying out this work include the Australia–Japan Research Project (AJRP) a joint enterprise between the Australian War Memorial and the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, and the National Institute of Defence Studies (NIDS) in Tokyo.

While these historic studies can look at the importance of the track from an Australian and Japanese point of view, a specific study addressing the significance of the Kokoda Track to the people of Papua New Guinea also needs to be carried out. While much of the archival material is in Australia, time is running out to record the oral histories of the remaining few carriers who are still alive in Papua New Guinea and to record the shared experiences of the villages at war. Such a study would need to include men and women from all over Papua New Guinea, including Rabaul, and not just those villagers who live along the track or around the Buna area.

Findings: There is no definitive answer to the “Kokoda Track” versus “Kokoda Trail” debate. Both were used during the campaign. The Australian soldiers who fought the campaign called it a “track”, but “trail” became increasingly popular and eventually the route was gazetted the Kokoda Trail by the Papua New Guinea government.

Recommendations: Both Kokoda Track and Kokoda Trail are historically correct. It is at the user's discretion to choose either term.

Findings: The Kokoda Track has become a site of pilgrimage for Australians. The current track largely follows the main wartime track from Owers' Corner to Kokoda station. Other tracks were used or at least patrolled during the war. The areas where the modern track deviates largely from the wartime track are: across Imita Ridge, the track to present-day Efogi, and the track from the Isurava battle site towards Deniki.

Recommendations: Field research is necessary to confirm and compare the wartime route of the track with the modern track. This work needs to confirm the UTM coordinates of various locations along the track that have already been published, and new readings need to be made of other tracks significant to the campaign.

Identification of the wartime routes and locations of the Kokoda Track can only be confirmed through field studies. Much of this work has already been carried out by Bill James for his *Field guide to the Kokoda Track* (2008), but it can be taken further; for example, identifying the UTM coordinates for the Golden Stairs, the path from Kagi to Templeton's Crossing, the track to Myola, and the original track between the Isurava battle site and Deniki. Similarly, James's coordinates need to be corroborated. It is really only with field research – walking and plotting the track with experts who know the ground and with local land owners – that the actual wartime tracks can be identified. To understand the significance of the Kokoda Track, one needs a stout pair of boots.

Appendices

Principal units involved and their commanders

(Note: names in brackets indicate replacements in chronological order.)

New Guinea Force (NGF)¹

Major General Basil Morris
(Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell)
(Lieutenant General Edmund Herring)

7th Division headquarters
Major General Arthur Allen
(Major General George Vasey)

16th Brigade
Brigadier John Lloyd

2/1st Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Paul Cullen

2/2nd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Cedric Edgar

2/3rd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel John Stevenson

21st Brigade
Brigadier Arnold Potts
(Brigadier Ivan Dougherty)

2/14th Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Key
(Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Challen)

2/16th Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Albert Caro

2/27th Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Cooper

25th Brigade
Brigadier Kenneth Eather

¹ List of units and their commanders is based on the document Officers commanding Aust units which were engaged in the Owen Stanley–Gona–Sanananda campaign, AWM, AWM54, item 557/6/9.

2/25th Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Charles Withy
(Lieutenant Colonel Richard Marson)

2/31st Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Colin Dunbar
(Lieutenant Colonel James Miller)

2/33rd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Buttrose

30th Brigade
Brigadier Selwyn Porter

39th Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel William Owen
(temporarily Major Allan Cameron)
(Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner)

53rd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Ward
(temporarily Major Allan Cameron)

3rd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Albert Paul
(Lieutenant Colonel Allan Cameron)

2/1st Pioneer Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Arnold Brown

2/6th Independent Company
Major Harry Harcourt

14th Field Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Byrne
(Lieutenant Colonel Walter Hiscock)

Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB)
Major William Watson

2/5th Field Company
Major Bruce Buddle

2/6th Field Company
Major Douglas Thomson

2/14th Field Company
Major Ronald Tompson

2/4th Field Ambulance
Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Hobson

2/6th Field Ambulance
Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Chenhall

14th Field Ambulance
Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm Earlam

Australian New Guinea Administration Unit (ANGAU)

South Seas Force²

Major General Horii Tomitarô³

55th Infantry Group headquarters
Major General Oda Kensaku

144th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Kusunose Masao
(temporarily Tsukamoto Hatsuo)
(Colonel Yamamoto Shigemi)
(Colonel Yoshida Akio)

1st Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Tsukamoto Hatsuo

2nd Battalion
Major Horie Tadashi
(Major Katô Kôkichi)

3rd Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Kuwata Gen'ichirô

41st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yazawa Kiyoshi

1st Battalion
Major Miyamoto Kikumatsu (in Rabaul)

2nd Battalion
Major Koiwai Mitsuo

3rd Battalion
Major Kobayahi Asao
(Major Murase Gohei)

²“South Seas Force officers”, The human face of war,
<http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/AJRP2.nsf/30017f4131c6b2acca256cfb0023646c/5717cd5c4acabec4ca256f6400163722?OpenDocument>, <accessed 23 October 2008>

³ Horii was posthumously promoted to lieutenant general. Hayashi and Coox, *Kôgun*, p. 224.

55th Cavalry Regiment 3rd Company (less one platoon) plus 55th Cavalry Regiment
Pom-pom Gun Squad
Lieutenant Kawashima Seiki

55th Engineer Regiment 1st Company plus Materials Platoon (part-strength)
Captain Takamori Hachirô

55th Supply Regiment 2nd Company
Lieutenant Sakigawa Toshiharu

55th Division Disease Prevention and Water Supply Unit (part-strength)
Medical Captain Yamamoto Susumu

5th Mountain Artillery Regiment 1st Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Hozumi Shizuo

55th Division Medical Unit (one-third strength)
Captain Akao Hamakichi

55th Division 1st Field Hospital
Captain Bandô Jôbu

15th Independent Engineer Regiment
Colonel Yokoyama Yosuke

Casualties

McCarthy considered that the Japanese had committed at least 6,000 troops to the Kokoda campaign, while against them the Australians pitted three experienced AIF infantry brigades and an ill-trained Militia brigade. It was only towards the end of the campaign that more than one Australian brigade was in action.

An Australian infantry battalion of this period had a nominal strength of just over 700 men, all ranks. When going into action, a component of a battalion, usually 100 men or more, would be left out of Battle. When the 21st Brigade began moving up the Kokoda Track in August 1942, the 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions were each about 550 men strong.⁴ When the 25th and 16th Brigades moved up the track in September and October respectively, each of their battalions was around 600 men strong. Sickness, injuries and fatigue, in addition to combat casualties, quickly took a toll. When the 2/1st Battalion, for example, moved up the track on 7 October, it was 608 strong. A month later it was down to 443 men. By the end of the Kokoda campaign, on 17 November, the battalion was down to 349 men.⁵

From 22 July to 16 November 1942, 103 Australian officers and 1,577 men were killed and wounded in New Guinea (this figure does not include casualties from the battle of Milne Bay, 26 August to 7 September 1942, or those sustained on Goodenough Island). From this figure, 39 officers and 586 men were killed. These casualties were nearly all sustained during the Kokoda campaign. Accurate records for Australian casualties caused by sickness during this period do not exist, but it was thought that between two and three men were hospitalised through sickness for every battle casualty.⁶

McCarthy, similarly, does not provide figures for the number of Australians who were described as “missing” during the campaign. At any time during the fighting, particularly during the Australian withdrawal, the numbers of men missing varied: as men who had been cut off or were lost rejoined their units; when the bodies of those men who had been killed were later discovered; or even if men deserted. The 2/1st Battalion from Brigadier Lloyd’s 16th Brigade, for example, counted eight men missing as to 22 November 1942. Two weeks later, the number of missing from the battalion had risen to 18. This included two officers and 11 men who were “missing believed killed”, two men “missing”, and three men “missing believed illegally absent”.⁷ The single largest group of missing came from Brigadier Potts’s 21st Brigade, which included the 2/14th, 2/16th and 2/27th Battalions, which had 99

⁴ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p. 61, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

⁵ 2/1 Aust Inf Bn, daily strengths – New Guinea campaign 1942, 2/1st Battalion war diary, October–December 1942, Narrative New Guinea Campaign, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/1.

⁶ These figures also include the small number of casualties sustained during Japanese bombing of Port Moresby and those incurred in New Guinea by Kanga Force in the Wau area. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area: first year*, pp. 334–35.

⁷ Following figures as at 0700 22/11/42 16 Aust Inf Bde, 16th Brigade war diary, November 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/16; 2/1st Battalion war diary, 4 December 1942, October–December 1942, Narrative New Guinea Campaign, AWM, AWM52, item 8/3/1.

officers and men posted as missing up to 11 October 1942.⁸ While researching his guide book, Bill James established that there are 160 men who were killed during the campaign whose names are listed on panels to the missing in Bomana War Cemetery.⁹

Japanese casualties were far higher. More than 5,000 Japanese died in Papua. From the limited number of sources available in English, however, it is not possible to divide the Japanese casualties between the Kokoda campaign and the beachhead battles of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda, nor is it possible to know the exact number of those who died.

Abbreviations: O Officers ORS Other Ranks

Australian casualties – Kokoda to Imita Ridge

22 July – 25 September 1942¹⁰

	Killed in Action		Death presumed		Died of Wounds		Wounded in Action		Total	
	O.	ORS	O.	ORS	O.	ORS	O.	ORS	O.	ORS
21st Brigade HQ	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
25th Brigade HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30th Brigade HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Papuan Infantry Battalion	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1
39th Battalion	3	27	2	17	-	7	2	65	7	116
53rd Battalion	4	8	-	2	-	2	3	20	7	32
2/14th Battalion	4	73	1	28	1	2	6	128	12	231
2/16th Battalion	4	56	-	6	-	3	4	90	8	155
2/27th Battalion	-	35	-	2	-	1	3	44	3	82
3rd Battalion	1	6	-	-	-	1	1	6	2	13
2/25th Battalion	-	8	-	1	-	3	5	47	5	59
2/31st Battalion	-	12	-	-	1	2	3	19	4	33
2/33rd Battalion	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	12	2	13
2/1st Pioneer Battalion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
7th Division Signals	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	4
Total	19	229	3	56	2	22	28	440	52	747

⁸ 21 Aust Inf Bde Report on Operations: Owen Stanley Range 16 Aug – 20 Sep 1942, p 60, 21st Brigade war diary, August–October 1942, AWM, AWM52, item 8/2/21.

⁹ This figure was compiled by counting the names of those men who are listed on panels (rather than plots) in Bomana, from the tables naming those killed during the campaign. See James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*.

¹⁰ Battle casualties Owen Stanley campaign – Kokoda to Imita, 22 July – 25 September 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 171/2/48.

Australian casualties – Imita Ridge to Wairopi
26 September – 13 November 1942¹¹

	Killed in Action		Death presumed		Died of Wounds		Wounded in Action		Total	
	O.	ORS.	O.	ORS.	O.	ORS.	O.	ORS.	O.	ORS.
HQ 7th Division	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25th Brigade HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16th Brigade HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
21st Brigade HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2/25th Battalion	3	26	-	-	-	2	5	59	8	87
2/31st Battalion	3	28	-	-	-	3	4	61	7	92
2/33rd Battalion	2	23	-	1	1	5	3	63	7	92
3rd Battalion	-	22	-	-	-	5	1	28	1	55
2/1st Battalion	3	48	-	4	-	7	8	109	11	168
2/2nd Battalion	2	37	-	-	-	5	2	88	4	130
2/3rd Battalion	-	28	-	1	-	10	5	106	5	145
39th Battalion	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
2/14th Battalion	-	8	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	11
2/16th Battalion	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
2/27th Battalion	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3
2/1st Pioneer Battalion	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3
2/1st Field Regiment	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
2/6th Independent Company	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
7th Division Signals	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1st Mountain Battery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total	15	225	-	7	1	41	29	521	45	794

¹¹ Battle casualties Owen Stanley campaign – Imita to Wairope, 26 September – 13 November, 1942, AWM, AWM54, item 171/2/47.

Japanese casualties – losses for the South Seas Force¹²

	Mobilised in Japan	Reinforcements	Killed or lost	Survivors
55th Infantry Group headquarters	180	155	253	82
144th Infantry Regiment	3,500	1,150	3,264	1,386
55th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Company	130	30	130	30
55th Mountain Artillery Regiment, 1st Battalion	900	257	905	252
55th Engineer Regiment, 1st Company	300	50	310	40
55th Supply and Transport Regiment, 2nd Company	145	30	140	35
55th Divisional Medical Unit (one-third strength)	220	80	250	50
55th Division Disease Prevention and Water Supply Unit (part strength)	50	10	45	15
55th Divisional Veterinary Workshop (part strength)	21	5	20	6
55th Division 1st Field Hospital	140	30	115	55
Total	5,586	1,797	5,432	1,951

	Estimated strength	Killed or lost	Injured	Returned to Rabaul
41st Infantry Regiment¹³	2,200	2,000	100	200

¹² The figures above for the South Seas Force were compiled by No. 1 Demobilisation Bureau after the war and include those casualties sustained during the invasion of Guam and Rabaul, as well as Papua. The force lost heavily in Papua, where its commander and most of its officers were killed. Bullard, *Japanese Army operations in the South Pacific Area*, p. 244.

¹³ Koiwai, *Record of war in New Guinea*, p. 270.

Note: Updated figures for Japanese casualties have been supplied by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and added to the report by DEWHA with the author's permission.

Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Navy (IJN) casualties in Papua from July 1942 to January 1943 cannot be known with the same degree of accuracy as Australian, American or Papuan casualties. In a short engagement the Japanese numbers can sometimes be known precisely, but the larger the time frame or subject, the less accurate the figures are.

Total IJA and IJN casualties for Papua on land, and in sea and air operations directly related to Papua, were 19,250 of which 13,600 were killed or died of illness and 5,650 were evacuated sick or wounded.

Imperial Japanese Army		Imperial Japanese Navy	
Killed in action	8,400	Killed in action	1,800
Evacuated wounded	2,000	Evacuated wounded	650
Died of illness	3,100	Died of illness	300
Evacuated sick	2,000	Evacuated sick	1,000
IJA total casualties	15,500	IJN total casualties	3,750

Narrowing the view to the Kokoda campaign from July 1942 to November 1942, it is important to remember that the figures below are not total Nankai Shitai (South Seas Force) casualties, as half of the force did not participate in that campaign. Rather they are figures for units that were at some point west of the Kumusi River, so did participate in the Kokoda phase of the fighting in Papua.

Kokoda - Casualties in the Japanese advance to 16 September 1942

Killed in action	405
Wounded in action	480
Died of illness	50
Currently sick	480
total casualties advance	1,415

Kokoda - Casualties in the Japanese retreat to the end of Oivi-Gorari, 13 November 1942

Killed in action	618
Wounded in action	643
Died of illness	110
Sick since 16 Sept	2,300
total casualties retreat	3,671

* The sources for Japanese casualty figures given are:

- a) Japanese unit war diaries and other official documents held at the National Institute of Defence Studies in Tokyo.
- b) Regimental archives, usually held in the Regiment's home town.
- c) The private papers of Japanese veterans of the campaign.
- d) Senshi Soshō- the Japanese official history.
- e) Allied Translator and Interpreter Service records at the Australian War Memorial.
- f) Japanese monographs at the National Library of Australia.
- g) Various collections of immediate post war interviews with Japanese officers. The best known of these is that in the United States Strategic Bombing Survey. It should be noted that the Japanese officers interviewed in Rabaul in 1945-46 generally had no idea of casualties in Papua in 1942 and their estimates are best ignored.

War graves and cemeteries

There are now no longer any known graves or war cemeteries along the Kokoda Track or in the bloody beachhead areas of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda. There are a number of Australian servicemen whose remains have still not been recovered and who have no known graves. This is also true for Japanese servicemen, although on a far larger scale. The remains of thousands of Japanese in Papua and New Guinea still have not been recovered.

From 1943, Australian war graves units worked through these areas, exhuming the bodies buried in field graves and re-interring the remains in temporary war cemeteries. These war cemeteries were later consolidated into the large war cemetery at Bomana, northeast of Port Moresby. Some known Japanese graves were also moved to Bomana. After the war, official missions from the Japanese government collected these and other Japanese remains for cremation and repatriation to Japan. Since the 1950s, Japanese veterans' groups and private individuals have also been very active in searching for the remains of their lost comrades and family members.

During the war, soldiers had little time for sentiment or funeral rites. The dead were just "buried on the spot", as Sergeant Clive Edwards from the 2/27th Battalion commented years later.¹⁴ Religious rituals were left to the chaplains, recalled the 2/3rd Battalion's Corporal William "Bill" Jenkins. The infantry, Jenkins continued, would wrap the bodies in a blanket, using a length of signal wire to tie the blanket into a shroud, and bury them. Graves were marked with a small limb from a tree. Some of the tree bark would be removed and the name of the deceased and the compass bearings would be cut into the limb, using a bayonet or machete. Men from a unit would often later walk the old battlefields with personnel from war graves units, searching for bodies.¹⁵

The formal procedure for burying the dead, however, was stricter than the above reminiscences would suggest. Whenever possible, soldiers who were killed in action or died were given temporary field burials. Burial parties collected the dead, including enemy dead, identified the remains and prepared them for burial. During the Second World War, Australian soldiers wore two metal identity disks. One disk remained with the body while the other, along with the soldier's pay book, personal effects, and equipment, were forward to the unit's headquarters. When they could not be recovered, a map reference for the body was reported instead. This procedure was also followed for burying and noting enemy dead, except that their bodies were first inspected by a member of the Intelligence Corps, who examined the uniform and searched the body for papers, documents, and other sources of intelligence.

Bodies were usually buried in a single, clearly marked grave. The personnel conducting the burial service, usually a chaplain, would record the deceased's service

¹⁴ 1657 Clive Edwards, 2/27th Battalion, "The Australians at war film archive", <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/202.aspx?keywords=war+graves+kokoda> <accessed 4 November 2008>.

¹⁵ 0021 William Jenkins, 2/3rd Battalion, "The Australians at war film archive", <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/30.aspx?keywords=war+graves+kokoda>, <accessed 4 November 2008>.

number, name, rank, unit, and date of burial. This information was recorded on the underside of a registration peg that was driven into the ground at the head of the grave. Bottles and tins were also used to mark graves, with the particulars of the burial written in paper and placed inside the container. Later in the war, the metal identity disks that had been removed from the body were hung or nailed to temporary crosses as a way to mark and identify graves.

Detailed burial reports were then made, recording all the particulars and map references for the graves; these were then submitted, through unit headquarters, to the Australian War Graves Service. If the correct map references could not be provided, then a diagram and full description of the graves' locations were to be provided instead.¹⁶ The Australian War Graves Service was responsible for establishing cemeteries "for the burial of His Majesty's Armed Forces" and allies, as well as "arranging for the burial of enemy dead".¹⁷

Once the fighting had moved to another area, bodies were exhumed from their battlefield burials by the army's war graves and registration units for burial in war cemeteries. These war graves units were small affairs. The war establishment of a graves maintenance unit was an officer (a lieutenant) and 27 men, which included 20 Papuan soldiers. A graves registration unit was even smaller, consisting of an officer (a captain) and eight other ranks. War graves units also included a signwriter, who painted the deceased's religion, service number, rank, name, decorations or honours, unit, and date of death on the temporary memorials; and a photographer, who photographed each grave.¹⁸ War grave units were responsible for locating and registering graves, identifying remains, searching for and burning unburied bodies, as well as establishing and maintaining war cemeteries.¹⁹

17 War Graves Registration and Enquiry Unit, commanded by Lieutenant Robert Houghton, was the first war graves unit to work along the Kokoda Track. It operated between Uberi and Deniki. Houghton's unit spent just under a month, between late August and late September 1943, exhuming Australian and Japanese bodies from known field graves and searching for other bodies. During this month, Houghton's team spent most of its time working in the areas that had experienced the worst fighting during the Australian withdrawal the previous year. They spent over a week in the Kokoda area, and four days each around Alola (which included the Isurava battle site) and Brigade Hill.²⁰

The War Graves Service established an Australian war cemetery at Kokoda. The Japanese War Cemetery was located nearby. Japanese graves were marked with straight wooden stakes.²¹ There were also smaller war cemeteries at Eora Creek, which mainly contained men from the 2/1st Battalion, Templeton's Crossing, and

¹⁶ Field Service Pocket Book – No. 11A (Australian Edition), pp. 2–3, AWM, AWM54, item 135/2/2.

¹⁷ Australian Military Forces, *Standing orders for the Australian War Graves Service*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Graves Maintenance Unit New Guinea, War Establishment, 28 June 43, and Graves Registration Unit, War Establishment, 6 Dec '43, AWM, AWM52, 422/7/8.

¹⁹ Australian War Graves Services, technical instructions to war graves units in operational areas, p. 1, AWM, AWM54, 709/33/1.

²⁰ 17 Graves Registration and Enquiry Unit war diary, 28 August – 25 September 1943, AWM, AWM52, item 21/2/18.

²¹ Australian War Graves Services, technical instructions to war graves units in operational areas, p. 4, AWM, AWM54, 709/33/1.

Myola, as well as men from Mission and Brigade Hills. During 1943 and 1944, these cemeteries received weekly visits from Private Hicks and his team of four Papuans from the War Graves Maintenance Details Unit. As well as carrying out any necessary maintenance, Hicks also searched for the remains of missing Allied servicemen. The following is illustrative of the type of work carried out by Hicks during 1944.

Left Mission Hill on 29 Feb for Menari to exhume remains of Sgt Winter, L.E. and to try and locate the graves of Cpl Waller, L.L. and Pte Bell, A. Searched for a day around location given in letter from Capt Greve, found the grave of two Japs wearing Aust boots, after exhuming them was convinced that they were Japs by their equipment.²²

The graves of the two Victorians, 22-year old Lewis Waller and 29-year old Albert Bell, were never found.

In June 1944 the remains from Eora Creek, Templeton's Crossing, and Myola were moved to Kokoda.²³ Other war cemeteries were located on the coast at Soputa, Gona, and Cape Endaiadere, near the scene of the beachhead battles. Japanese War Cemeteries were established at Giruwa and Cape Endaiadere.²⁴

During 1943, Lieutenant Harry Lingard's 15 War Graves Registration and Enquiry Unit was based at Soputa, where it had established the cemetery at the end of January. As well as the area around the beachhead battles on the coast, Lingard's unit also worked inland as far as Popondetta.²⁵ The graves from Gona and Cape Endaiadere were later concentrated with those at Soputa.

The war cemeteries at Kokoda, Soputa, and elsewhere were established with the intention that they would become permanent cemeteries.²⁶ This is what had happened during the First World War, in which British and Commonwealth soldiers were buried close to where they fell. By the end of the Second World War, however, there were a dozen war cemeteries scattered across the Pacific, so it was decided to concentrate the dead in three major war cemeteries. The cemeteries in Papua and on Bougainville were moved to Bomana, while the graves in New Guinea were brought together at Lae. The remains of those killed on New Britain and New Ireland were buried in the cemetery at Bita Paka in Rabaul.

The War Graves Service kept the grounds of these cemeteries immaculate. Writing home to his sister in November 1944, Sergeant Reginald "Pat" Lee, who was serving in the air force, described a day's outing to Rouna Falls at the base of the Owen Stanley Range, not far from "the immortal Kokoda Trail". On his way to the falls, Lee first stopped at Bomana:

²² Report no. 29 for week ending 25 Mar 44, War Graves Maintenance Unit, New Guinea war diary, September 1943 to November 1944, AWM, AWM52, item 21/3/5.

²³ Summary of work done for the month, 1 June to 30 June 1944, War Graves Maintenance Unit, New Guinea war diary, September 1943 to November 1944, AWM, AWM52, item 21/3/5.

²⁴ British Commonwealth War Cemetery, Japan, GO 16/2/1, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

²⁵ 15 Graves Registration and Enquiry Unit war diary, June–December 1943, AWM, AWM52, item 21/2/16.

²⁶ Australian War Graves Services, technical instructions to war graves units in operational areas, p. 1, AWM, AWM54, 709/33/1.

where our Australian soldiers are buried. The men who died on the Kokoda trail and other New Guinea battle are buried. The graves are in wonderful condition. It is a big lawn with all white crosses in perfect line. Their names are on the crosses with numbers and religion. It gave one an uncanny feeling as I stood near these graves.²⁷

The decision to consolidate into three large cemeteries may have been taken as a way of reducing maintenance costs, or it may have been a consequence of the remote and somewhat isolated locations of the other, smaller war cemeteries. This process of exhuming and re-interring the remains was complicated and time-consuming. By March 1946 only the graves from Kokoda had been moved to Bomana. The remains from Milne Bay had been exhumed but were still awaiting transport, while those at Sopotata were not moved until later in the year.²⁸ Today, Bomana contains 3,819 Commonwealth burials from the war, 702 of them unidentified.²⁹

The task of consolidating the remains from the smaller cemeteries was not completed until mid-1947, when the War Graves Service handed over responsibility for the cemeteries to the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). Lae cemetery was handed over first, on 27 August, followed by Bomana on 1 September and Rabaul three days later.³⁰ These cemeteries were administered by the ANZAC Agency, part of the IMGC. The ANZAC Agency was established in Melbourne on 1 July 1946 as a way for the IWGC to administer the large number of Commonwealth war cemeteries and war graves that were scattered across the Pacific and Japan.³¹ The ANZAC Agency became the Office of Australian War Graves in 1975.³²

Despite the efforts of war graves units, it was difficult to locate all known burial sites, let alone find those of the “missing”. In the confusion and fog of combat, particularly during the Australian withdrawal along the track, it was not possible for the men to note all deaths or to recover the bodies of the dead. Captain Sam Templeton and Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Key are two renowned examples of those whose exact fates are still unknown and who have no known grave. In June 1945 there were still 113 Australian bodies in the Owen Stanleys whose graves and bodies had not been located.³³ In March of the following year, the Australian War Graves Service reported

²⁷ Letter R.T. Lee to V.E. Lee, 19 November 1944, AWM, PR00961, Lee papers.

²⁸ War cemeteries were located at: Bomana, Sopotata, Kokoda, Milne Bay, Lae, Finschhafen, Salamaua, Madang, Wewak, Rabaul, Torokina, and Jacquinot Bay. Report AWGS, Ref A99/90/8, 3 March 1946, Headquarters War Graves Group (New Guinea Area), war diary, February–December 1946, AWM, AWM52, item 21/1/6.

²⁹ Among the 702 unidentified servicemen there are 438 British artillerymen who were captured by the Japanese on Singapore and later died as prisoners in the Solomon Islands. “Port Moresby (Bomana) War Cemetery”, http://www.cwgc.org/search/cemetery_details.aspx?cemetery=2014300&mode=1 <accessed 3 November 2008>; OAWG, *War cemeteries & memorials in the Papua New Guinea and Indonesia region*, p. 6.

³⁰ Headquarters War Graves Group (New Guinea) war diary, 29 August 1947, AWM, AWM52, item 21/1/6.

³¹ Imperial War Graves Commission (ANZAC Agency), *War cemeteries and the care and marking of war graves*, pp. 7–9.

³² “About the Office of Australian War Graves”, Office of Australian War Graves, http://www.dva.gov.au/oawg/about_OAWG/ <accessed 6 November 2008>.

³³ Kokoda: monthly progress report, War graves maintenance details unit, New Guinea war diary, December 1944 to July 1945 and October 1946, AWM, AWM52, item 21/3/5.

that there were 211 graves in the Soputa area, including Kokoda, which could not be found.³⁴

New Guinea's dense jungles and terrain also presented their own difficulties and challenges for war graves units. In February 1944 Captain Douglas Pratt, whose unit was working in the rugged mountains of Salamaua, noted: "It is found that although chaplains give reasonably good map refs, sometimes it is almost impossible to locate graves even close to a track."³⁵ Houghton would have experienced similar problems along the Kokoda Track. Changing environmental conditions could also reveal previously hidden remains. In April 1947, for example, soil erosion revealed remains on the old Gona battlefield, despite the ground having been "cleared" earlier.³⁶

Because of their far higher number of deaths, from sickness and disease as well as combat, remains that have been found along the Kokoda Track in the post-war years are more likely to be those of Japanese servicemen. The Australian War Graves Service was responsible for locating and burying enemy dead, and when the smaller Australian war cemeteries were consolidated to Bomana, Lae, and Rabaul, the Japanese cemeteries were moved too. Most Japanese graves in Papua were re-interred in a new Japanese War Cemetery in Port Moresby, established in 1947, about a mile from the Australian War Cemetery at Bomana.³⁷ Many, but evidently not all, known graves were moved. Some Japanese graves may have been discovered after the war graves units had moved on. It is also probable that the Australian soldiers did not look too stringently for the remains of dead Japanese soldiers. If they had, the small war graves units would have been overwhelmed. In November 1947, the ANZAC Agency reported the location of over a thousand Japanese graves in the field, over 700 of them around Gona and Buna. Only a relatively small number of Japanese dead were actually buried in cemeteries and most of these were "unknown".³⁸

Japanese remains in cemeteries established by Australian war graves units in Papua, as of July 1952³⁹

Cemetery	Identified Japanese	Unidentified Japanese
Bomana	80	56
Cape Endaiadere	1	47
Gona	-	64
Kokoda	-	1
Milne Bay outside	1	4
Sanananda	21	41
Total	103	213

³⁴ Report AWGS, Ref A99/90/8, 3 March 1946, Headquarters War Graves Group (New Guinea Area), war diary, February–December 1946, AWM, AWM52, item 21/1/6.

³⁵ Report No 11/12, Feb 1944, 19 Graves Registration Unit war diary, January–May 1944, AWM, AWM52, item 21/2/20.

³⁶ Headquarters War Graves Group (New Guinea Area) war diary 15 April 1947, January–October 1947, AWM, AWM52, item 21/1/6.

³⁷ Headquarters War Graves Group (New Guinea) war diary, 25 July 1947, AWM, AWM52, item 21/1/6.

³⁸ Jap POW graves in the field as reported to DWGS, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

³⁹ Japanese war graves in the field, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

In the years after the war, it was not clear who would maintain the Japanese cemeteries. The ANZAC Agency of the IWGC was only responsible for maintaining enemy cemeteries near the commission's cemeteries, meaning those at Bomana, Lae, and Rabaul, but not the smaller cemeteries or the graves of individual Japanese soldiers.⁴⁰ The Australian government was similarly unprepared to take on this responsibility. In November 1947 the Administrator of the Territory of Papua New Guinea agreed to survey and carry out any necessary maintenance of Japanese graves. When the Administrator asked who would finance this undertaking, however, the matter was passed from the Department of the Army, to the Department of the External Territories, then to the Department of the Interior – which seemed to have ignored the question completely for two years. Each department either felt the issue fell outside its portfolio, or was unwilling to contribute (and uninterested). The government's inactivity and apathy went on for years. Finally, in October 1952, R.F. Sinclair, the Secretary of the Department of the Army, advised that the issue “should be deferred until such time as the intentions of the Japanese Government are known.”⁴¹ It was the Japanese custom to cremate the deceased and return their ashes to Japan. The Japanese government though was unable to make its intentions known to the Australian government until the peace treaty with Japan and the Allies came into effect.⁴²

Japan had suffered huge casualties during the war, with over two million dead. An estimated 127,000 soldiers and sailors died in New Guinea.⁴³ Nearly all had no known grave. Most relatives of the deceased know very little about how or where their loved one died. As the usual funeral customs could not be followed, many Japanese thought that the spirits of the deceased would not be satisfied and that they would be unable to go to heaven; the spirits of the dead would linger near where they were killed. Only after a formal ceremony would the spirit of the deceased be released and go to the next world.⁴⁴

This was a cause of great concern and distress to war-bereaved families in the years after the war, and they lobbied the Japanese government accordingly. Little could be done during the Allied occupation, however, and it was not until January 1953 that the Japanese government sent its first official mission to search for and repatriate soldiers' remains. The Japanese term for this was *ikotsu shushu* – “bone-collection”.⁴⁵

The first Japanese War Dead Mission was sent to the “South Seas Islands” in February 1955.⁴⁶ The mission spent just over three weeks in Papua, New Guinea, and

⁴⁰ Memorandum 47/638, Japanese war graves in the field, 3 November 1947, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

⁴¹ Memorandum, Japanese war graves in Australia and the islands, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

⁴² Memorandum 481/14/1, Japanese war graves in Australia and the trust territories, 2 November 1953, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 Part 1.

⁴³ “Dispositions and death”, Australia–Japan Research Project, <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/AJRP2.nsf/530e35f7e2ae7707ca2571e3001a112d/e7daa03b9084ad56ca257209000a85f7?OpenDocument>, <accessed 2 November 2008>.

⁴⁴ Toyoda, “Consoling the dead” in Toyoda and Nelson, *The Pacific war in Papua New Guinea*, p. 100 and p. 106.

⁴⁵ In January 1952 the US arranged for the repatriation of approximately 5,000 remains to Japan, with 85 from Iwo Jima and, in March, 2,700 from Okinawa. “Collection of remains of war dead”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 12 January 1955, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 part 1.

⁴⁶ *Nippon Times*, 11 January 1955, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 part 1.

Bougainville, where it collected the remains of 5,093 war dead. (The complete remains of individuals were not collected; only portions were gathered and cremated.) J. Howlett, an accompanying Australian official, described the type of work that this, and subsequent similar missions, carried out. During the morning of 11 February 1955 the group were at Giruwa village and were going to search the old Sanananda battlefield when a local man produced a human jawbone and showed it to the Japanese party. When asked, the local man stated that he would take the Japanese to where he had found the bone and where there were many more remains.

The party made its way through Girusa in a westerly direction parallel to the beach. Then, taking a native track, which struck directly through this for approximately half an hour, we came to native gardens which flanked the path. In close proximity to the gardens, I was told there were many remains. The party split into small groups – each with a native guide, who knew the area, to assist them. Within minutes, every group reported findings. By their appearance and the fact that the boots of the deceased were amongst the remains proved that the men died where they fell. That they were Japanese was beyond a doubt, their footwear being of a standard pattern similar to those worn by members of the party.

In 75 minutes, one or two portions of the remains of 752 individual men were collected. “With more time, the party would probably have found more, as it was known that several thousand Japanese troops perished in and around this area,” Howlett concluded.⁴⁷

Between 1955 and 1976 the Japanese government sent 11 missions to the Pacific area and collected over 230,000 remains. In New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the remains of over 36,000 Japanese from the nearly 300,000 killed have been collected.⁴⁸ In addition to these official government missions, Japanese veterans’ groups were also extremely active in conducting bone-collecting missions. In October 1969 members from the Kochi Prefecture branch of the New Guinea Veterans’ Association conducted a mission typical of those conducted by Japanese veterans. Before the war, the 144th Infantry Regiment had been based in Kochi Prefecture and more than 3,700 soldiers from Kocki died in Papua. Those “soldiers who returned alive”, wrote Nagano Tadao, president of Kochi Prefecture branch, “never forgot” their pledge to their comrades that they would “collect their bones when they died”.⁴⁹

Two veterans, Mr Nakanishi and Mr Imanishi, with a photographer from the local newspaper and a translator, flew to Papua. Nakanishi and Imanishi had both served in the area around Buna and Sanananda during 1942 and this is where they based their search: excavating old weapons pits, walking the battlefield, and looking for signs of field burials. Such excavations were often done with tears in their eyes.⁵⁰ When

⁴⁷ Japanese war dead mission. Report of tour = T/S Taisei Maru, 10 March 1955, NAA, A518, item GO16/2/1 part 2.

⁴⁸ Toyoda, “Consoling the dead” in Toyoda and Nelson (eds) *The Pacific war in Papua New Guinea*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Kazuhiro Monden, [trans.] *Going to the land below the Southern Cross*, p. 1, in AWM, PR00297, item 11, Alf Salmon papers.

⁵⁰ Kazuhiro Monden, [trans.] *Going to the land below the Southern Cross*, p. 11, in AWM, PR00297, item 11, Alf Salmon papers.

remains were found, if possible they were identified, and then cremated. At known Japanese burial sites, the mission held funeral rituals for the deceased. They also made offerings to the dead on behalf of their families, usually food and *sake*, as well as letters, photographs, and songs. After a month in Papua, Nakanishi's party returned to Kochi, where the recovered remains were interred in the local shrine, along with shells and sand collected from the battlefields.⁵¹

In addition to Nakanishi's party, an unknown number of other Japanese veterans have returned to New Guinea. Nishimura Kokichi, who served with the 144th Infantry Regiment as a corporal, returned to the island in 1979 and spent the next 25 years searching for remains and relics of his comrades. Nishimura found hundreds of remains and, where possible, tried to identify the remains and hand them over to the next of kin.⁵² It is not known how many other family members or friends have conducted their own bone-collecting missions as individuals or with tourist groups. From the 1970s until the mid-1990s, mainly in July and August, groups of Japanese battlefield pilgrims, called *irei-dan* in Japanese – literally “groups trying to console the spirit of the dead” – visited Papua New Guinea in large numbers. These groups were usually between 20 and 30 strong and toured various battle sites, praying at each location to console the spirits of the dead. When remains were found, they were cremated on the spot according to traditional Japanese customs.⁵³

⁵¹ Kazuhiro Monden, [trans.] *Going to the land below the Southern Cross*, pp. 16–17 and pp. 49–50, in AWM, PR00297, item 11, Alf Salmon papers.

⁵² See Happell, *The bone man of Kokoda*.

⁵³ Toyoda, “Consoling the dead” in Toyoda and Nelson, *The Pacific war in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 100–09.

Memorials and other structures

Today there are a number of memorials along the Kokoda Track. The first memorial was erected in 1943 while the most recent was dedicated in 2002. The first memorial commemorating the Kokoda campaign is located at the road junction beyond the Laloki River Bridge at Sogeri, along the Sogeri (Subitana) Road. During the war, this area was called Base Depot.⁵⁴

The **Kokoda Track** memorial cairn at Sogeri was designed and built by the 7th Australian Infantry Brigade in conjunction with the 2nd Australian Watercraft Workshop. The memorial stands at the junction where the road to Owers' Corner intersected with the Sogeri Road. During the 25th anniversary of the campaign, in July 1967, veterans from the 25th Australian Infantry Brigade Association provided a fence to enclose the memorial. In November 1990 an additional plaque was added to the base of the memorial in recognition of the support given by the local community, the Ianari clan of Sogeri, to the Australians. From the road junction at Base Depot, the northern road to Owers' Corner, the Uberi Road, went past McDonald's Corner.

During the first half of 1942 the road from Port Moresby stopped at McDonald's Corner. Engineers later built a jeep track to Owers' Corner. It was here, in July 1942, that the 39th Battalion's B Company set out on foot to begin their trek over the Owen Stanley Ranges. Twenty-four years later, in 1966, Robert "Bob" McDonald, son of the plantation owner P.J. McDonald, created and erected the **39th Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial**. The memorial is a stylised iron figure of a soldier with a helmet and a rifle.⁵⁵

The track itself begins at Owers' Corner. Here at the beginning of the track is the **Kokoda Memorial Arch**, which was designed by Victorian periodontist Ross Bastiaan and erected in 1999. The arch is supported by six uprights that represent the six states of the Australian Commonwealth, and also represent the connection between the people of New Guinea and Australia. The shape of the arch corresponds to the mountain range beyond.⁵⁶ Bastiaan has also installed a series of **bronze commemorative plaques** along the length of the trail. The first plaque is located near the Kokoda Track memorial at Sogeri. He has also installed plaques at Owers' Corner, Brigade Hill, Efogi village, Templeton's Crossing, Eora Creek, Alola Creek, Isurava village, and two plaques at Kokoda station.⁵⁷ Other individuals have also erected or installed several other commemorative plaques and small memorials along the track.

The newest memorial along the track is at Isurava. In August 1942 Isurava was the scene of bitter fighting between the Australian 39th and 2/14th Battalions and the

⁵⁴ James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG), *War cemeteries and memorials in the Papua New Guinea and Indonesia region*, p. 13 and p. 16; James, *Field guide to the Kokoda Track*, p. 143.

⁵⁶ "Plaque no. 122 Kokoda Arch", Australian bronze commemorative plaques, http://www.plaques.satlink.com.au/list/Asian/Papua%20New%20Guinea/kokoda_arch.htm <accessed 22 October 2008>.

⁵⁷ "Papua New Guinea (1992, 1996)" Australian bronze commemorative plaques, http://www.plaques.satlink.com.au/list/Asian/Papua%20New%20Guinea/kokoda_arch.htm <accessed 22 October 2008>.

Japanese 144th Infantry Regiment. On the sixtieth anniversary of the battle the Prime Ministers of Australia and Papua New Guinea, John Howard and Michael Somare, opened the **Isurava Memorial**. The memorial is located on the old battle site and is in remembrance of all Australians and Papua New Guineans who fought and died along the track. The memorial features four Australian black granite pillars that are each inscribed with a single word – “courage”, “endurance”, “mateship”, and “sacrifice”. Ten information panels (two in Tok Pisin) have been installed in the interpretive area of the memorial. Near the memorial is a large rock feature now called Kingsbury’s Rock and a commemorative plaque to Private Bruce Kingsbury, marking the site where he was killed.

From Isurava, the next group of memorials is at Kokoda station. The oldest is the **Kokoda** memorial cairn that is located at the edge of the old parade ground in front of what was the government station. This memorial, with its 69 word overview of the campaign, was one of 43 battle exploit memorials erected by the Australian army. In early 1945 General Thomas Blamey initiated a scheme for a series of historical monuments to be erected throughout Papua and New Guinea to commemorate the Australian Military Force’s achievements during the war.⁵⁸ When the first large pilgrimage of veterans returned to Kokoda in November 1967, to mark the 25th Anniversary of the re-taking of the village, the commemorative program was centred on the Kokoda memorial and parade ground.⁵⁹

Alongside the Kokoda memorial is the **Memorial of the native carriers of the Kokoda Trail**, also called the Papuan carriers’ memorial. This memorial, initiated and funded by Bert Kienzle, was dedicated on 2 November 1959. The memorial is in the form of a stone base surmounted by two stone pillars, linked at the top by a bronze bar, and with a bronze plaque on either side of the memorial. The bronze is meant to symbolise the unity of the Australians and Papua New Guineans in their single purpose of defeating the Japanese. One of the plaques shows carriers straining under the weight of a wounded Australian on a stretcher, while the other plaque shows carriers moving up the trail with military supplies.⁶⁰ Kienzle and Doc Vernon had hoped that the designs would have been used on a medal issued to the former carriers in recognition of their wartime service.⁶¹

A third memorial is nearby. It was built by the Japan–Papua New Guinea Goodwill Society in cooperation with the Kienzles; in February 1980 it was dedicated to all of the campaign’s war dead (Japanese, Australian, and Papuan).⁶² There are also other commemorative plaques in the station’s grounds. In 1995 Prime Ministers Paul Keating and Julius Chan opened a memorial museum in Kokoda, named after Bert Kienzle.⁶³

⁵⁸ The C-in-C’s scheme for installing permanent historical recording notices in New Guinea, 19 October 1945, AWM, 3DRL/6643 item 2/68 (2 of 2), Blamey papers.

⁵⁹ See *Return to Kokoda: November, 1967*.

⁶⁰ Background on Papuan carriers’ monument at Kokoda, 21 October 1959, NAA, A452 item 1959/4558.

⁶¹ Information supplied by Soc Kienzle.

⁶² Information supplied by Soc Kienzle.

⁶³ Hutchinson, *Pilgrimage*, p. 357.

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