

# THE FURPHY

**ARMADALE SUB-BRANCH OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER**

*July 2023 Edition*



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Social media: [Facebook](#)

**General Meetings:**                      **Second Sunday of the month at 1030hrs**  
**Annual General Meeting:**            **Second Sunday of September**

## Committee Positions

<b>Armadale Sub-Branch Committee</b>	
President	Mr Ken Hepburn
Vice President	Mr Hans van de Velde
Secretary	Ms Carol King
Assistant Secretary	Mr Mike Fairweather
Treasurer	Mrs Cheryl Cowie
Assistant Treasurer	Vacant
Warden	Mr Graeme Cowie
Warden	Mr Bob Giles
Membership Officer	Mr Tom Rynn
Committee	Mr Laurie Sargeson
Committee	Mr Keith Northcott
Advocate / Welfare Officer	Mr Brent Errington
Bar Manager	Mr Mike Fairweather

## **ADVOCATE / WELFARE REPORT** **(ERRO)**

**I currently am available as follows:**

***Operating out of RAAFA: Mondays and Fridays***

***between 0900 – 1230hrs and also at***

***Armadale RSL Sub-Branch between 0900-1400hrs on Thursdays***

**Contact Details:    *Mobile:    0407 449 150***

***e-mail:    welfare2@armadalersl.com.au***

# Diary Dates for July

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Social Committee Meeting</b>	<b>1100</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Management Committee Meeting</b>	<b>1830</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>General Meeting</b>	<b>1030</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Sub-Branch Quiz Night</b>	<b>1830</b>

*I was in the McDonalds drive-through this morning and the young lady behind me leaned on her horn and started mouthing something because I was taking too long to place my order. So, when I got to the first window, I paid for her order along with my own.*

*The cashier must have told her what I'd done because as we moved up, she leaned out her window and mouthed "Thank You", obviously embarrassed that I had repaid her rudeness with kindness.*

*When I got to the second window, I showed them both receipts and took her food too. Now she has to go back to the end of the queue and start all over again.*

*The moral is – don't toot your horn at old people, they have been around a long time.*



**"DON'T APOLOGISE, MR. BROWN... IT TAKES MORE THAN A LITTLE POKE TO OFFEND ME!"**



# Secretary's Notes

*Hi Everyone,*

*We've had another busy month with the Plant Sale, Sausage Sizzle and Hall Hire (Quiz Night for Heritage FM).*

*Tickets are now on sale for our own Quiz Night to be held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July and are available from the Bar.*

*There was a hold up of almost a week in the Car Park re-profiling when an excavation exposed a bone. This was taken for forensic testing and work has now re-commenced. An update on the situation regarding parking is contained in the Metconnx report.*

*The process of closing Club Inc. is now well underway, and I believe it will be ongoing for some time.*

*Austen Tayshus tickets are now available from the Secretary at \$25 each and would make a great gift for Fathers Day.*

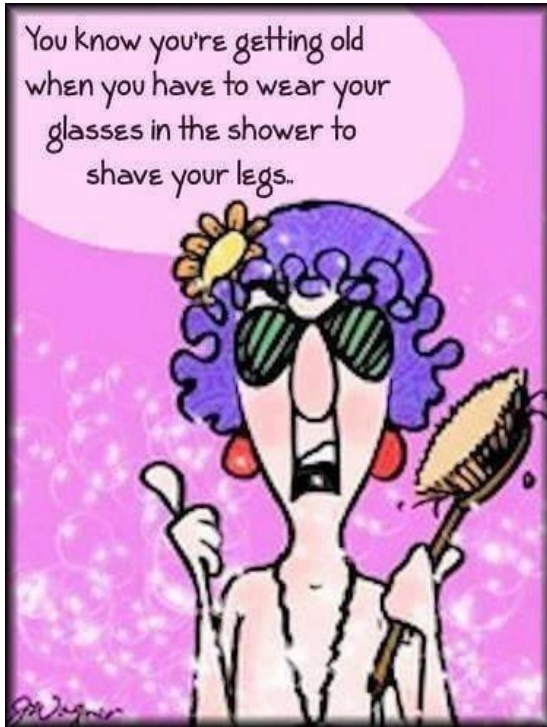
*Thanks to everyone who assisted with the planning, donations and also on the day of the Plant Sale - especially Lois who co-ordinated this very successful event.*

*Carol King*

*Sub-Branch Secretary*



*"Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life  
an' I swore I'd pay ya back.  
Here's my last pair o' dry socks."*



*The reason the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines bicker among themselves is because they don't speak the same language. For instance, here's what happens after they secure a building.*

*The Army will post guards around the building. The Navy will turn out the lights and lock all the doors. The Marines will kill everybody inside and then set up headquarters.*

*The Air Force will take out a five-year lease with an option to buy at the end.*





# PRESIDENTS REPORT

Hi Folks,

The Sub-Branch main room was partly flooded with the heavy rain we had on Monday 5th of June 2023. This was caused by the street drain, outside the club in the first parking bay, being blocked and the excess water ran straight down and into the club.

We notified State RSL, and they very quickly arranged for contractors to come and inspect the damage and start the process of drying the carpet and any other repairs needed. We have had the dance floor inspected and that will need to be replaced.

We were fortunate that the carpet dried out and were able to open on the next Friday, but we are now waiting on getting the carpet steam cleaned.

I would like to thank Stormy, Hans, and Carol for all the work they put in so quickly, to contact Armadale Council to fix the drain, informing State RSL and the moving of the tables and chairs to a dry area of the club, and then mopping up the floor where they could.

Work is ongoing on the upgrading of the Armadale Railway Car Parks, so if you come to the club, you will need to park over the road or be aware of the Parking Restriction, being only 30 minutes parking out the front of the Sub-Branch.

Please read the Secretary's page, as we have some upcoming social events, and I would like to see more members attending them.

Regards,

*Ken Hepburn*

President

Returned Services League Armadale Sub-Branch  
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ANGRY MESSIAH PRESENTS  
**40th ANNIVERSARY OF  
"AUSTRALIANA"  
NATIONAL TOUR 2023**

**AUSTEN  
TAYSHUS**

**NEW DOCUMENTARY**

**"AUSTEN TAYSHUS  
SKIN IN THE GAME"**

**Now streaming on FOXDOCOS & BINGE**

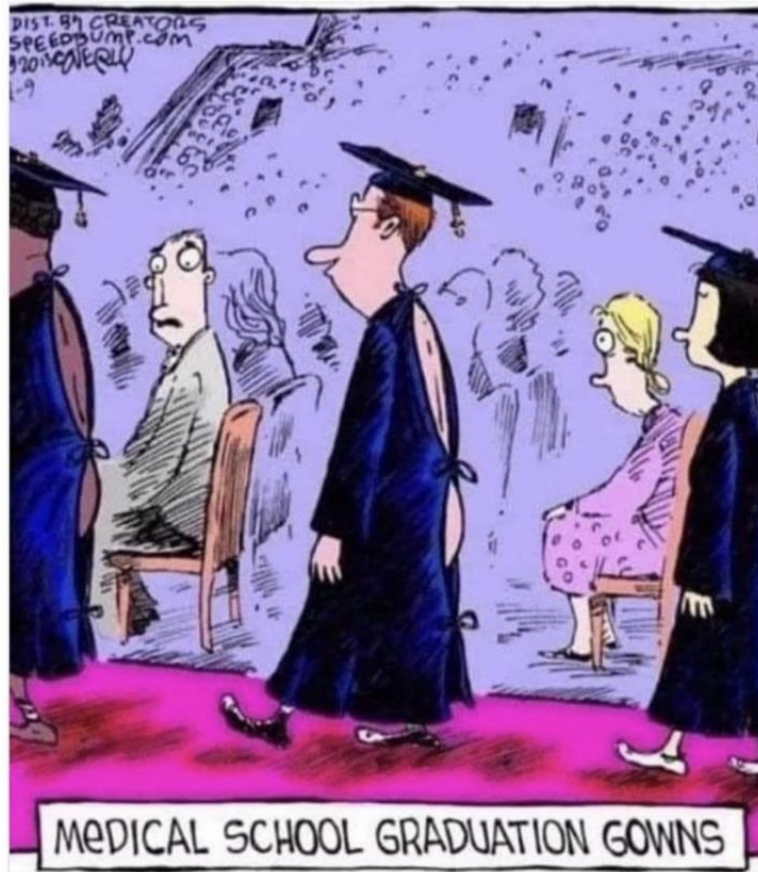
[www.austentayshus.com](http://www.austentayshus.com)

**Father's Day - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2023**

**2:00pm**

***Tickets: \$25.00 each***





My wife asked me to pick up six bottles of Sprite from Aldi. When I got home I realised I had picked 7up.



*Our hardworking Committee members who did a great job erecting the new storage shed. Thanks Stormy and Keith for at least thinking they had their "Guns out"*

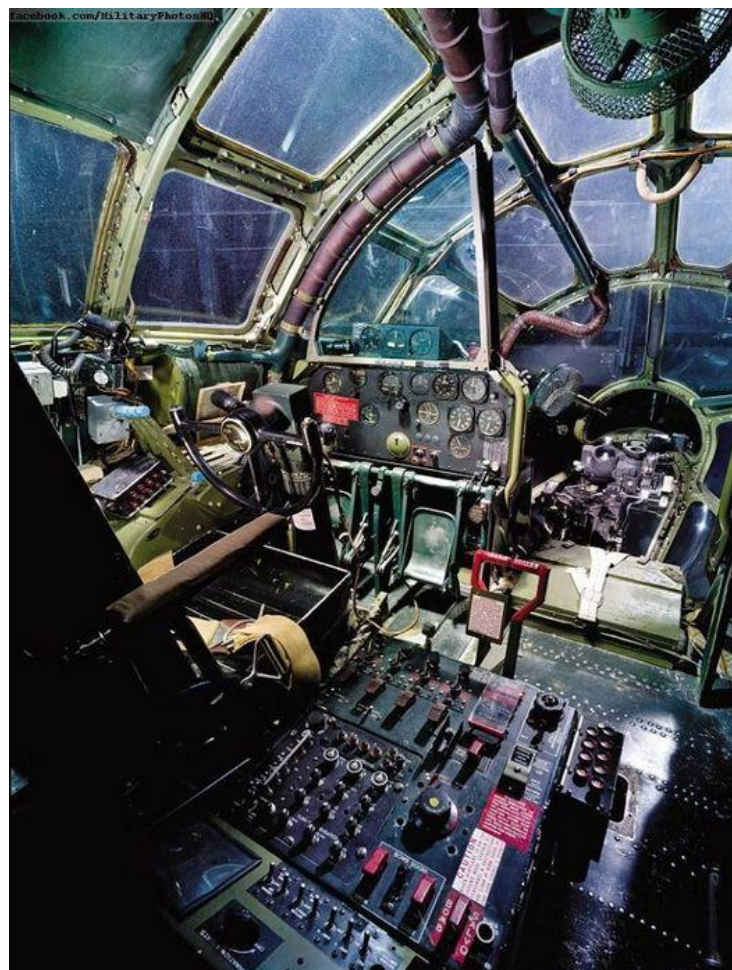


An old veteran walks into a grocery store. Immediately, the cashier stops him and says, "sir, your *barracks door* is open." At first, he pays zero attention to her because he doesn't live in the barracks. So, he continues shopping until he spots a man stocking some shelves. He tells him what the cashier said and asks what she could've meant.

He tells the veteran that his fly is open.

After completing his shopping, he goes back to the same cashier and says, "ma'am, you told me my barracks door was open. While you were looking, did you see a Marine standing at attention, saluting?"

The cashier replies, "no, sir. I just saw an old, retired veteran lying on two seabags."



*The cockpit of the Enola Gay - the first aircraft to drop an atomic bomb*



*Mark, a dog ammunition carrier, delivers ammo to a British Bren machine-gun team, Eastern Command, 20 August 1941*

## Membership Update

*as at 30th June, 2023*

Service Members:	178
Affiliate Members:	43
Social Members:	58
<b>Total:</b>	<b><u>279</u></b>

Vale - John Craster. The Executive and Committee of the Armadale RSL Sub-Branch extend their sincere condolences to Irene and family at this difficult time.

Please contact me for any information on membership.

*Tom Rynn*

Membership Officer: Mobile: 0439 934 285  
E-mail: [tomrynn@bigpond.com](mailto:tomrynn@bigpond.com)





**July Service Members:**

Dew	Mr	Damien	16/07
Draper	Mr	Jonathon	01/07
Dunn	Mr	Richard	14/07
Flavel	Mr	Marc	30/07
Gardiner	Mrs	Shirley	13/07
Hibbert	Mr	Glenn	23/07
Robson	Mr	Brent	05/07
Sargeson	Mr	Laurence	21/07
Whitley	Mr	Gary	15/07

**July Affiliate Members:**

Adams	Mrs	Yvonne	25/07
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**July Social Members:**

Borger	Mrs	Julie	24/07
Feeney	Ms	Jackie	08/07
Hagemann	Mr	Ingo	24/07
Hodge	Mrs	Pauline	02/07
Houkamau	Mr	Jason	04/07
Skehan	Mr	Josh	23/07
Sue	Ms	Corbie	12/07

*If anyone has been missed off the list, please advise  
Tom Rynn (Membership Officer)*

*These members may collect a free drink of their choice  
during the month*

***We hope you have a very special Birthday***

# *Bar Manager's Report*

*G'day All,*

*Heritage FM held a Quiz Night in the hall on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> and it was a very successful night from a Bar perspective.*

*We are having to look at adjusting the cost of all drinks but any change will need to be passed by members at a GM so we will keep you informed.*

*Just a reminder that non-members can only be signed in 5 times before they will be requested to join, so as to adhere to Club Constitutional requirements.*

*Thanks go out to Josh for introducing new people to the Sub-Branch as Members, your effort is very much appreciated.*

*Stormy*



*Spitfire Lost for Almost 50 years Flies again*



# Quiz Night

## **Armadale RSL Sub-Branch**

***Tickets - \$10 per Person - (Table of 8)***

***Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023***

***Heads down at 6:30pm***

***Raising Funds to help Veterans and their Families who are in need***

***Tickets now on Sale from the Bar***

A soldier shows up for military training, but realizes he forgot to bring his gun.

The sergeant hands him a stick and gestures to the training field.

"You'll have to use this, soldier. If you need to shoot someone, just aim your stick at them and shout 'Bangity bang-bang'. If someone gets too close to you, poke them in the gut with it as though it was a bayonette and shout 'Stabbity stab-stab'. Now get moving."

The soldier thinks this is pretty ridiculous, but to his surprise, when he aims his stick at a fellow trainee across the field and shouts "Bangity bang-bang!" the other soldier goes down in a theatrical display. Then, another trainee tries to run past him, so he pokes the guy in the ribs and shouts "Stabbity stab-stab!" and he too goes down, pretending to be dead.

So, the soldier starts running through the mock-battlefield, shouting "Bangity bang-bang" and occasionally "Stabbity-stab-stab", until eventually he realizes he's the last man standing.

He's feeling pretty proud of himself until another soldier rounds a corner and starts walking toward him. Slowly. Stiffly. Menacingly.

The soldier takes aim with his stick and shouts, "Bangity-bang-bang!"

But the other soldier doesn't go down this time. He keeps approaching, arms stiff at his sides, boots stomping aggressively into the ground.

The soldier begins to sweat. He clears his throat, adjusts grip on his stick and hollers, "Bangity bang-bang!"

But nothing happens. The other soldier keeps marching toward him.

Now the soldier panics. He pretends to reload his stick and desperately cries out, "Bangity bang-bang! Bangity bang-bang! Stabbity stab-stab!"

But to his dismay, nothing works.

Finally, the other soldier reaches him, kicks him in the shin and knocks him onto the ground.

He stands over the fallen soldier and says: "Tankity tank-tank."

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## Byford Rail Extension - Update



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Due to the recent inclement weather and a bone being excavated during the Car Park upgrade, the target date for re-opening is now 10<sup>th</sup> July. If there are any further changes, we will advise.

Perth Transport Authority have requested that the Project move existing Parking Ticket machines to the area between the existing station and the RSL.

These will be operational Monday to Friday at a cost of \$2 Transperth parking fee. There is no cost on a weekend.

This may impact our parking on a Friday afternoon however the Sub Branch and Metconnx will attempt to negotiate some sort of exemption for our members and we will keep you informed of developments in this regard.



# *Significant July Event*

## **Battle of Kokoda**

*July – November, 1942*

### **Australia Between Wars**

Economic good times followed the Great War, with massive technological and communications leaps and an amassing of material wealth the young Australian nation had never seen before. The golden twenties not only heralded a time of wealth but also an international ideology of pacifism and, as a consequence, disarmament. Why wouldn't they? Europe had just gone through the Great War, the war to end all wars. They were weary from battle and believed there was a better way.

It was during this period that the armament gap between the western powers and their would-be antagonists narrowed. Prime Minister Hughes put nearly half of the Navy's ships out of commission, reduced the militia to 25% of its former self, and diminished the permanent army by discharging 72 officers.

Coinciding with this downgrade of forces, was the British rationalisation of its own forces. A 40% cut in military spending saw the British reduce its Pacific presence, namely around Fortress Singapore. Coupled with a vulnerability to an attack from its landward side and a population that was neither trained nor skilled to furnish a proper remote base, Singapore became a disaster waiting to happen.

While Australian Governments watched Germany and Japan expanding within their own spheres of influence, they continued to place full faith in British naval and air power, Fortress Singapore and British diplomacy of appeasement. By 1939, it was apparent appeasement was not going to work on the Germans and the Japanese were not about to slow their great Asian ambitions either.

In the 1930s, the reduced armed forces in the West were handed a second blow by something as powerful as the pacifist ideology, The Great Depression.

Mass unemployment, bankruptcy, poverty and a general diminishing of economic indicators, left governments powerless to expand the military, as taxes were needed elsewhere.



*PNG stretcher bearers*

## **Japan and why they went to War**

### **League of Nations and Racial Equality**

Japan was on the Allied side in World War I, though it hadn't done much fighting. In fact Japan had transported Australian troops to Europe. The Japanese had three goals for the Paris Peace Conference after the war:

- to get a clause on racial equality written into the covenant of the League of Nations,
- to control the north Pacific islands (the Marshalls, the Marianas and the Carolines), and
- to keep the German concessions in Shantung, China.

In the end, they got what they wanted in relation to two out of their three aims. It says something about the other major powers of the time that they didn't get the most legitimate of their goals.



*Captured Japanese Cannon*

The racial equality clause was born out of the discrimination and humiliation that the Japanese faced in the West. When the Japanese made their intentions known about introducing this clause, the most vehement opposition came from Australia, which was part of the British Empire delegation. This is what the British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour said about the clause:

“The notion that all men were created equal was an interesting one, he found, but he did not believe it. You could scarcely say that a man in Central Africa was equal to a European.”

It was an issue that was very popular in Japan and very unpopular in the western states of the US. President Wilson wasn't exactly an enlightened person when it came to race. An example of US conduct is that African American troops were put under French command for the Great War.

The greatest opposition, however, was from Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes who was concerned about the future of “White Australia” if the clause was accepted. He refused all compromise attempts by the US delegate Edward House. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, William Massey, agreed with Hughes. After British efforts to reach a compromise, Hughes put a condition that he might accept the racial equality clause if it had a proviso exempting national immigration policies. The Japanese balked at that.



Finally, the Japanese delegation introduced a watered-down version which simply asked for “the principle of equality of nations and just treatment of their nationals.”

Delegates from Greece, Italy, China, France and Czechoslovakia spoke in favour of the Japanese amendment to the League Covenant. The British delegation opposed it. US President Woodrow Wilson was worried that the League of Nations Covenant might not get the support of US senators from the western states if it included the racial equality provision. (Remember that the western states had put in a lot of restrictions on Japanese immigrants at the time.) He asked the Japanese to withdraw their amendment, but the Japanese insisted on a vote.



*The Golden Staircase*

What do you think happened next? Well, the majority of the delegates voted for the Japanese amendment. But Wilson announced that the amendment could not be carried because there were strong objections to it.



*ANGU colour patch*

As a result, the Japanese threatened to not sign the peace treaty. That threat played some part in getting Japan the Shantung area that it had captured from Germany.

### **Japan Signs Pact with Germany**

Between the wars, Japan and Russia became enemies, with the Japanese navy delivering the first ever Asian naval blow on a western power. Germany signed a treaty with Japan to offer protection against the growing and industrialising Russia that appeared in the thirties. It gave Japan increased access to the German economy (the largest in the west at that time and the fastest growing while the rest of the Western world fell into depression in the 30s) and an additional threat to counter Russian interest in Manchuria. Japan had no interest in a European war and never intended to honour the treaty to attack German enemies except Russia and then only in the East. The treaty gave Germany another threat against the Russians in case war happened with them. Germany was afraid of the extremely rapid economic growth of the new Soviet empire. It promised to be twice the size of the German economy within five years, ten at the most.

At the time these treaties were signed, Hitler was still the darling of the capitalist world because he was opposed to communism and the Soviet Union. Hitler, at this time, was also the biggest supporter for the creation of a Jewish state in the English controlled Palestine. This support existed from 1928 through to 1940.

Japan finally invaded China in 1931, without declaration of war, when Japan unilaterally annexed Manchuria, i.e. northern China. They then continued with the annexation of the large province of Jehol in 1934. In 1937, Japan launched a full scale invasion into the remaining China.



*Japanese dead soldiers helmets*



*Comforting an injured soldier*

### **Japan Lacks Resources and Has Grand Plans for Asia**

Lack of resources due to American trade restrictions left the Japanese with two choices: either end expansionism or go to war with America. At the time, the U.S. was supplying Japan with oil and scrap metal, both of which were being used to fight the war in China. The U.S. placed an embargo on trade with Japan and



demanded their withdrawal from China. Do bear in mind the Japanese had no way of making reparations to China demanded by the Americans in return for the resumption of normal trade. While most agree with the American stance against Japan it was still the reason for the attack on Pearl Harbour; basically it would not have happened if those restrictions hadn't been imposed.

One must also bear in mind, that Western powers controlled most Asian territories and thus could exert even more pressure on Japan's economy by preventing delivery of goods from the colonies.

### **War Breaks Out**

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. With Britain declaring war on Germany, so too, was Australia dragged back into another European war. However, unlike the First World War where Japan was an ally, now Japan was expanding and was a treaty signatory with Germany.

Australia's meagre armed forces were not ready for an overseas expedition. The Government was loath to use conscription for overseas service, so they were forced to establish a two-army system, one used to fight for the Empire overseas (the AIF Australian Infantry Force) and one to defend Australian territory (the Militia). This two-army system would dog the government and the Army for the entirety of the war. However, the powers-that-be believed that they had avoided the controversy that conscription for an overseas expeditionary force would have created.

By 1941, the AIF had committed the 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions to the Middle East (approx 30000 men). All that remained in Australia was the 8th Division and the Militia. (There were other Divisions but they were undermanned, under-trained and under-equipped). To make matters worse, remnants of the 8th Division were divvied up to places like Rabaul, Timor and Ambon, not allowing for any sort of concentration of power.

Initially, the 49th Battalion (approx 850 men) from Queensland was the first unit sent to Port Moresby in March 1941. By July 1941, this Battalion was ranked the worst battalion in Australia. No reconnaissance was done on the Kokoda Track for the next 12 months even though the clouds of war were looming over the Pacific.

In later 1941, it was deemed that PNG needed to be reinforced to Brigade strength, so the 53rd Battalion from NSW and the 39th Battalion from Victoria were sent. Both Battalions arrived in January 1942.



*Isurava Memorial*

In December 1941, with growing pressure from the U.S. trade embargo, an escalating theatre of war in China, a sense of discrimination from the Western powers in international bodies such as The League of Nations (superseded by the United Nations) and a growing influence of the Armed forces on domestic and international policy, Japan believed the only way they could secure their future was to continue expanding and wipe U.S. military and political influence out of the region. Pearl Harbor was bombed, starting the Japanese war machine's rampage through South East Asia.



*Water crossing - a good one!*

By February, only six weeks after the 30th Militia Brigade 3300 men (made up of the 49th, 53rd and the 39th Battalions) the Japanese had attacked, captured and slaughtered Australian units in Rabaul, bombed Port Moresby, captured Singapore (15 Feb 1942), landed in Timor and invaded Java. PNG was totally vulnerable. The defence of the Australian mainland was paramount. That is why the 7th Division (approx 10000 men) with its great successes in the Middle East was kept in Australia awaiting an imminent Japanese attack. And this is why the 30th Brigade was sent to PNG to temporarily delay Japanese attacks but by no means were they considered able to stop the Japanese war machine. They were to be lambs to the slaughter.



*Inspecting rounds for Japanese cannon*



The 7th Division was sent to PNG eventually. Why? Because for the first time in the Pacific War, the Japanese navy was checked by allied forces in the Battle for the Coral Sea from 6-9 May. Japanese troop carriers and battle ships were heading for Port Moresby but were turned back creating a great delay for the allies. The Battle of Midway (4-6 June) with its Allied victory again reinforced the belief that Japan could be defeated and after this battle, the 7th AIF Division was sent to PNG. PNG was now seen as the front line of the war against Japan, not Australia. Brigadier Porter took control in April 1942 and effectively started training up inexperienced Militia Battalions. These units still remained poorly trained and poorly equipped and inexperienced.

Why did the Japanese want Port Moresby?

1. It would protect their right flank (the Dutch East Indies or Indonesia) which had oil fields, tin mines and rubber plantations.
2. It would deny the Allies a strong base to launch attacks against strategic targets such as Rabaul.
3. It would provide a base suitable to launch bombing missions on Australia, frustrating American attempts to reinforce and strengthen that land.
4. It would close the Torres Strait and the Timor Sea to Allied shipping.



*Carriers moving up a steep hill*

## Japanese land in PNG

Templeton's B Company (approx 120 men) arrived at Kokoda on the 15 July. The Japanese landed at Gona on 21 July 1942.

The Japanese Master Plan was to include overall 13,500 seasoned troops, some of whom were from the crack 5th Sasebo Naval Landing Force. They were well trained, well experienced, well equipped with field artillery and mortars and many were big men averaging six feet in height.



*Weeks and weeks of heavy rain!*

Initially, only one Company (B Company) from the 39th Militia was sent to Kokoda to delay this Japanese army. This force is now known as Maroubra Force.

11th Platoon first units went to battle with the Japanese at Kumusi River on the 24th July. At this stage, the Japanese were thought to have 2000 troops at Gona.

Lieutenant Colonel Owen arrived at Kokoda by plane on 25 July and decided to make a stand at Gorari. He returned to Kokoda expecting reinforcements by air.

The Japanese attacked Gorari with such conviction that all Australian units pulled back to Oivi.

On 26th July only two flights with 32 men (one Platoon) arrived in Kokoda and reinforced Oivi. D Company which was meant to leave Port Moresby that day, didn't. Templeton knew that if Oivi fell:

1. 10 Platoon which guarded Kokoda would be annihilated.
2. The Japanese would be able to advance far down the Track without any opposition.
3. Most importantly, Australian forces would not be able to be quickly reinforced by air (the airstrip would be gone).

The battle at Oivi was at close quarters, many Japanese getting within metres of a 50 metre perimeter. It was during this battle that Sam Templeton disappeared never to be seen again.

The Australians were surrounded and certain defeat and death seemed imminent, when a Papuan Police Officer, Lance Corporal Sanopa, found a creek that led away through Japanese lines all the way to Deniki. Sanopa saved two Platoons from getting wiped out.



*Air supply drops Myola Lakes*

## **The Two Battles For Kokoda Village**

Owen, who was waiting for reinforcements in Kokoda was told of the fate of the Australian units at Oivi. In the morning of 27 July, Owen had to abandon Kokoda leaving several buildings ablaze and head for Deniki. There, he found the remnants of the units from Oivi. Owen now had 80 men at his disposal.

Owen was surprised to find out from remnants of the Oivi battle that Kokoda was not taken by the Japanese. While Owen believed that the Track would be easier to defend than Kokoda, the airstrip at Kokoda was key to the provision of reinforcements.

By 28 July, Owen had deployed his force around the administration area of Kokoda (which is the tip of the plateau). He radioed back to Port Moresby telling them he had retaken Kokoda and that he was in desperate need of reinforcements and mortars. He also told them the airfield had reopened to Allied aircraft. Later that day, two Douglas transport planes filled with a platoon of men flew over the airfield. The American pilots would not land as they thought there were Japanese troops nearby. The last realistic chance for reinforcements at Kokoda airfield was lost.

This lack of effort by the high command and the pilots to reinforce Kokoda was put down to:

1. A belief the Japanese were merely procuring ground for an advanced air base
2. That the Japanese couldn't cross the Owen Stanley Ranges anyway because they could be held up at the Kokoda Gap
3. There was no appreciation of the terrain Owen and his men were fighting on.

This cycle of deficient supplies and reinforcements would plague Maroubra Force until Ioribawa some two months later down the Track.

That night, a thick mist settled in the Yodda valley and over Kokoda Village. At 2 am on 29 July, the Japanese opened up with mortar and machine gun fire on Australian positions. Thirty minutes later, the Japanese advanced on the northern tip of the plateau. Owen walked and talked with his men, seemingly oblivious to the gunfire around him. He was shot through the head with a single bullet and died. The 39th Battalion had lost their commanding officer and was rapidly losing the plateau.



Close combat continued and confusion reigned as the darkness and thick fog obscured perceptions. Australian forces retreated back to Deniki through the plantations that we still walk through today. The Battle for the Kokoda Track was about to begin.

For the next week, both the Australians and the dominant Japanese forces consolidated their positions. Why did the Japanese stop? They, like the Australians, were unsure of the number of their enemy. The commanding officer, Major General Horii, wanted to make sure he had enough force to defeat the Australians completely.

The Australians still had two problems, concentration of force and supply. The problem of supply would continue throughout the campaign. However, Lieutenant Kienzle had found the 'dry lake beds' of Myola, on 3 August, that would later become the location where the biscuit bombers would drop supplies.

The problem of concentration of force also dogged Australian forces for much of the Kokoda campaign. While the rest of the 39th Militia headed for Deniki, they were under-trained and they lacked ground sheets, spare clothes, spare boots, spare laces and had a uniform unfit for jungle warfare.

After the death of Templeton and Owen, the 39th Battalion came under the temporary Command of Major Allan Cameron. Cameron had under his command less than 500 men. He arrived in Deniki branding the 39th Battalion cowards and deserters. While a handful of the young Australians from the battle of Kokoda had 'gone bush', the men of the 39th didn't deserve the brand and were very bitter towards their new commanding officer.

Cameron was hell-bent on recapturing Kokoda. Why? He believed that the capture would allow for more reinforcements. However, the Australians only had 2 DC3s at their disposal. To reinforce to the level of the Japanese deployment would have taken days of continual flights, in weather that is volatile to say the least.



*Japanese soldier receiving water*

Cameron sent out three patrols, one to observe Kokoda, one to observe a traditional path to Kokoda from Deniki and one to find an ambush area on the Kokoda – Oivi Track. The first two patrols found no Japanese movement and the third found an ideal ambush spot.

Based on this information, three units were thus sent out. One was to take the airfield travelling along the old native track, one was to ambush the Kokoda – Oivi Track and thus prevent reinforcements, and the third was to take Kokoda.



*Thompson sub-machine gun*

Cameron did not know the whole Japanese operation, their equipment, where they all were, their numbers etc. Thus the attack was doomed from the outset. He knew nothing of the enemy; the goal was pointless and the Australians lacked a concentration of force (all the Companies were spread out).



*39th Battalion planning*

From 6.30 am on 8 August, Cameron's units headed out. A skeleton crew was left back in Deniki and the dispirited B Company (well under 100 men now) were deployed further down the Track at Eora Creek.

C Company, that was to head down the main Deniki-Kokoda Track, was soon under fire from the main Japanese force that had been undetected by Cameron's reconnaissance the day earlier. They were forced back to Deniki by 8 pm that night.

A Company, tasked to take Kokoda, surprisingly experienced no resistance, and took Kokoda easily, setting off their flare gun to let those in Deniki know that they had taken the village. The flare was not seen from Deniki.

D Company was sent for the ambush and found themselves pinned down. The separated companies didn't know what was happening to each other. A Company was not going to receive reinforcement from C Company, and D Company was pinned down, unable to help. By 10 August, Kokoda was abandoned and the 39th Battalion was in disarray. All units returned to Deniki.

The Japanese now knew:

1. That the Kokoda airstrip was vital to Allied supplies
2. That the Australians could only reinforce over the Owen Stanley Ranges, an eight-day walk
3. That while the airfield was important to the Australians, they could not sustain a large force to take it and keep it, thus suggesting that the Australians didn't have a large force in the first place.

The Japanese were also buoyed by the fact that Horii was about to join the battle with his crack South Seas Detachment. Maroubra Force on the other hand were a shadow of themselves with very little ammunition and food remaining.

Whatever time Cameron had gained during his fateful attack on Kokoda, he soon lost it at Deniki. The Japanese persisted with their attacks, always attacking the high ground and probing lines for weakness.



*39th Battalion on parade*



By 13 August, the depleted Australian units pulled back to Isurava. On the 16th, Maroubra Force was taken over by Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner.



*Bren machine gun*

Honner was a School Master turned Lawyer, a veteran of Libya, Greece and Crete. He was well respected by his men and officers. Honner's orders were simple:

1. Assume immediate command of Maroubra Force
2. Hold the enemy north of the ranges until relieved by the 21st Brigade (approx 3000 men)



*Arnold Potts*

The Japanese had three alternatives at Isurava:

1. Advance along the Eastern side of Eora Creek and bypass Isurava
2. Attack along the higher ground to the west from Naro and Alola
3. A direct attack on 39th Battalion at Isurava.

The Japanese decided on the 3rd option.

Honner deployed his troops down the Track at the front creek, along the eastern flank where the memorial is, to the west along a track that heads up the hill behind the Memorial and at the rear creek.

On the days leading up to the Japanese attack (26 August), Australian units conducted patrols and dug in. The Japanese assembled at the front with Major General Horii, five battalions of the South Seas Force, all three battalions of the 144th Regiment and two battalions from the 41st Regiment. They were accompanied by the 55th Mountain Artillery and engineers units – all in all nearly 6000 men.

## **26 August**

6000 Japanese against 1000 Australians. On the morning of 26 August, the Japanese unleashed the full fury of their awesome superiority of numbers and fire power upon the 39th Battalion. Mountain guns, that were manhandled along the Track, bombarded the main Isurava positions.

The already depleted 39th Battalion was holding on with grim determination. That afternoon, after a month in the jungle fighting the greatest jungle warfare army ever seen, they were reinforced by the arrival of the 2/14th Battalion and 2/16th battalion AIF from the 21st Brigade 7th Division.

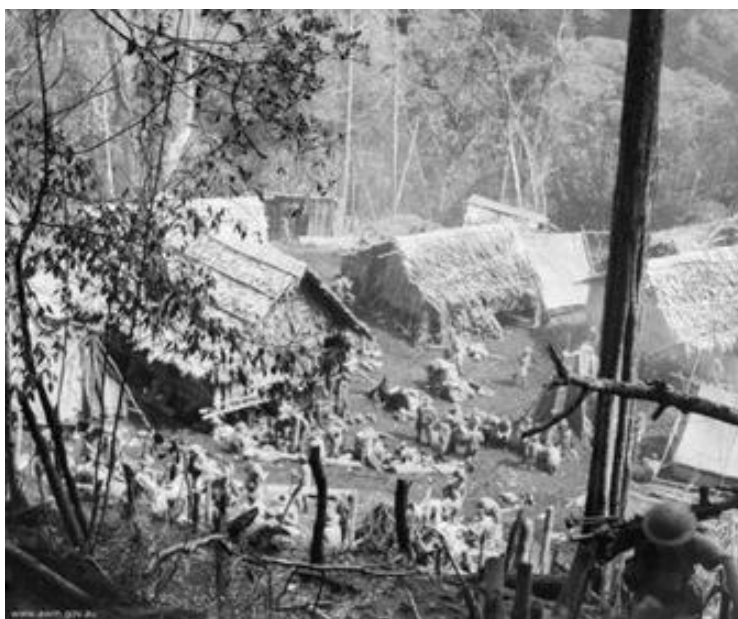
Potts assumed command of Maroubra Force on 23 August. He was promised the full 21st Brigade including the 2/27th Battalion as well as plenty of supplies at Myola. On the 15 August, he received word that the Japanese had reinforced with 4000 new troops at Gona, of which 1800 were seen as combat. Potts however felt that with the promised supplies and command of the 39th Battalion and 53rd Battalion as well as the 21st Brigade, his forces were up to the task of stopping the Japanese advance and then pushing them back.

However, two disasters struck:

1. On 17 August, the Japanese bombed two Dakota transports and three Flying Fortresses. A further five Dakotas and five Fortresses were damaged. The planes were wing tip to wing tip fully laden and fully fuelled. The Dakotas were the 'biscuit bombers'. Thus Potts only found five not twenty-five days of rations at Myola.
2. The 2/27th Battalion (approx 850 men) was held up at Milne Bay thus Potts didn't have all the forces he was promised.

Thus Potts considered three options at Isurava:

1. Keep the 39th Battalion and 53rd Battalion at the front and the 2/14th Battalion and 2/16th Battalion back at Myola. This would keep his reinforcements concealed and allow for a build up of supplies. It was rejected because of the physical condition of the 39th.
2. Keep the 39th and 53rd at the front while the 2/14th Battalion and 2/16th Battalion take the east and west flank. This would prevent an outflank and secure the supplies at Myola but the condition of the 39th again ruled this out.
3. The least attractive option which he was forced to take, was to relieve the 39th Battalion with the 2/14th, keep the 53rd Battalion at Alola and bring the 2/16th forward to Alola.



*Village taken over by war*



*Carrying the injured in stretchers*

### **The Two Battle Grounds of Isurava**

While the focus remains on Isurava Battlefield, there were in fact two theatres of war at this battle.

1. Isurava itself
2. The eastern slope from Eora Creek along the Missima – Abuari track opposite Alola.



*Stan Bisset MC OAM MID*



## **27 August**

The 27th of August saw the Battle of Isurava erupt in an appalling fury such as had not been witnessed throughout the campaign. The Japanese attacked the main Isurava village, as well as along the Missima-Abuari track, to outflank the Australian forces. Wave after wave of Japanese descended on the Australian lines. Wave after wave was repelled in an absolute bloodbath.

The 53rd Militia was deployed to cut off the advance along the Missima-Abuari Track. They were routed and forced Potts to send units of the 2/16th Battalion to their rescue. The 27th was a big day for the Japanese. Horii had the opportunity to wreak havoc on the Australians. He had them pinned down at Isurava and had extended their left flank after routing the 53rd militia.

Horii's goal was to encircle the Australians and then wipe them out. Why did he stop at Abuari and not continue behind the Australian lines?

1. Horii may have been unaware of the size of the Australian force
2. Horii was faced with poor communication
3. Horii may not have wanted to over-extend his left flank until Isurava fell

Whatever the reason, Horii did not take the advantage to wipe the Australians out.

## **28 August**

The bloody battle continued and Horii started to get frustrated at the delay Isurava was posing. Dysentery and Diarrhoea set in to both sides, especially the Japanese who, it has been argued, had a lower standard of personal hygiene.

## **29 August**

Horii decided to bring in reserves to finally end the battle. The Japanese reinforced the right flank towards Missima and Abuari while the 2/16th Battalion headed them off.

Back at Isurava, a titanic struggle continued with the 2/14th Battalion and the 39th Militia Battalion overcoming enormous odds by keeping the Japanese at bay.

It was a day of great heroics and sorrow. It was the day that Butch Bisset was killed and the acts of Charlie McCallum, Allen Avery, Lindsey Bear and the most famous of all, Private Kingsbury, kept the Australian lines intact but not for long.

It was also the day that 27 of the 30 wounded 39th Militia returned to battle knowing their brothers were in trouble.

While the 2/14th Battalion alone had caused over 500 Japanese casualties, the Australian forces were depleted and in need of reinforcements.

In the late hours of the 29th, Potts had no other option but to withdraw from Isurava. The withdrawal however left some units isolated and separated from the main column. One such unit was forced to trek through the trackless jungle for 21 days, 19 of those without food, meeting up with the Australian forces at Uberi.

### **The Push Back**

The 2/16th Battalion and a small group of the 53rd Battalion were still tackling a large Japanese force on the opposite side of the Valley near Abuari. These units prevented the Japanese from cutting the Track off behind the main Australian units of the 39th and the 2/14th Battalion.

At 3 pm on 30 August, Potts gave the order to withdraw all the way to Eora Creek, as Alola was not a good defensive position.

This was a fighting withdrawal, with Japanese and Australians in constant contact. Potts' goal now was to keep his units intact, knowing that his supply line was shortening and that the 2/27th Battalion, and possibly the 25th Brigade, would reinforce him.

The 2/14th Battalion took the brunt of the Japanese attack in the withdrawal. On 28 August, it had over 500 men; by 31 August it mustered 160 men: 48 were killed in the withdrawal and 44 had been cut off.

Horii now was starting to face his own supply problem. The Japanese only supplied themselves with 11 days rations. The delaying tactics of the Australians had pushed this timeframe well out. The Australians also destroyed munitions and supplies as they retreated leaving little behind for advancing Japanese units.

From 31 August until 15 September, a decisive military game of 'Cat and Mouse' was staged along the Track. Potts would not be able to make a stand until Efogi (Brigade Hill).

His tactic was obvious in conception but intricate in execution. Exhausted, sleepless and hungry men were required, company by company, platoon by platoon, to hurriedly withdraw, stop, prepare positions, defend dourly until their comrades could pass through their line and then within a mere 20-30 metres, break contact with the enemy at dawn, dusk or late at night and trudge wearily up and down muddy hills to repeat the process again and again. To retreat too quickly would have given the Japanese too great an opportunity for a quick acquisition of land and to retreat too slowly would entail running the risk of being outflanked.



*PNG carriers with supplies*

For two days, Eora Creek was held by the Western Australian 2/16th Battalion. Under constant attack, Potts decided to withdraw to Myola, sending units to Kagi to prevent being cut off from the Track completely.

This was not a simple retreat, so on the 3rd September the 2/16th moved back behind the 2/14th's lines and then later that day the 2/14th moved back past the now dug-in 2/16th again.



*Crossing creek with injured*

On the night of the 3rd and early on 4 September, the 2/14th arrived at Myola. It was, by now, fully stocked with ammunition, fresh clothes, food, beds etc. The men couldn't believe their eyes. This heaven was short lived, as the Japanese continued their pressure on the Australians.

It was also on 3 September that Potts was informed that the 25th Brigade, 7th Division was soon to arrive in Port Moresby. However, as a sign of how out of touch High Command was with the situation on the Track, they implored Potts to hold Myola and even to go on the offensive. This was impossible. He only had 400 men at his disposal.

By 5 September, Myola was abandoned. All Australian units were to retreat to what would become one of the bloodiest and bitter battles along the Track, known as Butchers Hill, Brigade Hill or Mission Ridge.



## **Brigade Hill**

Brigade Hill is the ridge line that runs south of Efogi. Potts was to finally receive the 2/27th Battalion but, by the time they arrived at Brigade Hill, they were exhausted from a forced four-day hike from base area.

Ironically, Brigade Hill would be the first place Potts had full command of all his units, but for a large part of the time he would be distracted by threats to his own personal safety and was thus unable to command them effectively. On top of this, they were severely depleted and were hardly representative of the force they appeared to be on paper.

At Brigade Hill Potts was faced with several problems:

1. His 2/14th and 2/16th were reduced to a mere 400 men
2. His 2/27th were fatigued
3. The Australians had no support artillery or heavy machine guns
4. He only had meagre medical support
5. The Australians continued to be outnumbered 6 to 1

On 4 September, the 39th Militia was finally relieved by the 2/27th's arrival. At Deniki, the 39th Militia had 470 men. Now, at Brigade Hill, they had 180 men, half of whom were really unfit to fight. Overall the Australians had 980 men and were outnumbered 6 to 1.

Overlooking Efogi, the 2/27th Rifle Companies watched as the Japanese war machine walked into the village. Thousands of lanterns trailed down the Track towards Efogi. While Potts could see this movement, he could do nothing about it as he had no long-range weapons.

So Potts ordered an air-strike on Efogi and the Efogi-Myola Track. At 8 am on 7 September, the air force made amends for its debacles at Kokoda and Myola, and bombed these positions. Eight Marauder B26s and four Kittyhawks strafed and bombed Japanese positions. The air raid raised Australian morale, but it had little impact on the Japanese position.

On the same day, Horii continued probing positions both East and West of the ridge line. Most were detected by Australian patrols, but unknown to Potts and his HQ position on Brigade Hill, several Japanese units went undetected on their flank. This would be a decided blunder on behalf of the Australians.

On 8 September, Horii unleashed his forces on the Australian units, including 1500 fresh reinforcements. A Company of the 27th bore the brunt of the attacks with some eight attacks in one morning being repelled. A Company had used 1200 hand grenades, 100 rounds of ammunition per man and all the reserve ammunition available. B Company resisted similar attacks. The blood bath that presented itself in front of both A and B Companies was reminiscent of First World War charge tactics along the Western Front.

Potts could hear the battle down the Track. As he visited the latrine with Lance Corporal John Gill from the Guard Patrol, the relative peace of HQ was shattered by a single shot. The private next to Potts fell to the ground with a bullet in his head. If only the Japanese soldier who shot the private knew that the other man was Potts, the battle for Brigade Hill may have been even more devastating.

That single shot heralded the climactic struggle for Brigade Hill. Horii had sent out some wide-ranging patrols that were undetected by Potts and they were now threatening Australian HQ. The situation was so dire that Potts had instructed Lieutenant Caro to take command if HQ was overrun.

Horii's frustration at Isurava might have now had the opportunity to be satisfied. His objectives were:

1. To attack Australian HQ and cut the command system off at the head
2. More importantly, to outflank the Australians and cut them off from the Track to the south.

Pott's was under pressure in every theatre of the battlefield:

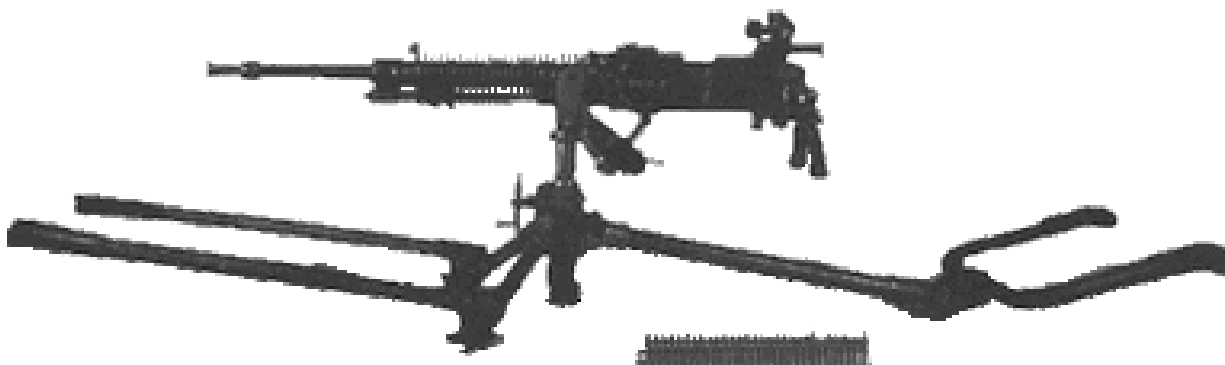
1. His own HQ was under direct attack with the enemy at times only 15m from the perimeter and cut-off from a large slab of his men
2. 2/27th on Mission Ridge was now cut off from HQ and the telephone was cut to their position

3. 2/16th Battalion HQ was also cut off without water and under heavy Japanese pressure.



*Bruce Kingsbury*

Japanese advances towards Brigade HQ were continually repelled. The combined 2/14th and 2/16th were ordered to attack down the Track towards Pott's HQ, to break through Japanese lines that were now dug in and secure a continuous Australian line. All four companies incurred severe casualties, including Charlie McCallum who won a Distinguished Conduct Medal at Isurava.



*Japanese Type 92 machine gun*

Only about 10 got through the line. In desperation, Potts ordered his HQ to attack up the Track to breach the Japanese line but this too failed.



*Always looking after your mates*

By the end of the day on 8 September, Potts had no other option but to pull back to Menari before even HQ were cut off.

But it was too late for the other Battalions. The Japanese had gained control of the Track behind them. Potts was forced to send his units down the eastern slope towards Menari via an old unused and extremely narrow path. Battalion Commanders were faced with three problems:

1. Time. All units were cut off and it was only a matter of time before the Japanese headed towards Menari.
2. The terrain was steep and thickly vegetated. For even fit, fresh troops the terrain would be difficult let alone sick, malnourished and tired men.
3. The wounded slowed everyone and in many cases there were just enough men to carry the wounded leaving no-one available to repel any Japanese attack. Eight men were needed to carry one stretcher: four to carry and four to relieve.

The units would leave Brigade Hill in this order:

1. 2/16th
2. 2/14th
3. Lastly 2/27th as they were furthest from HQ

B and D Companies of the Composite 2/14th and 16th were sent down towards the Japanese line towards Menari to hold them off while the retreat was taking place.

By the 9th September, all units traveled slowly through the jungle, handicapped by the wounded. It was decided that small armed units would press ahead of the wounded and take control of Menari. Just as these forward units of the 2/14th and 2/16th arrived in Menari, the Japanese started their bombardment of the village.

### **Menari**

All units of the 2/14 and 2/16 including the wounded had just arrived at Menari when the order for withdrawal was made at 2.30 pm that day. The 2/27th had not reached Menari in time and was going to be cut off from the remaining Australian units. Cooper, who controlled the 2/27th, sent men ahead to ascertain if Menari was safe and to also bolster Potts' forces.

When you visit Menari, you can see it is vulnerable to attack on all sides. Potts had no choice but to withdraw even though he knew the 25th Brigade were on the way (remember the 3rd September discussion with Eather), but he had no idea when they would join the battle.

Why didn't the 2/27th get to Menari in time?

1. They had further to travel than any other units.
2. They left last and had to travel more at night than any other unit.
3. They had more wounded to carry which slowed them down further.

Cooper's forward units of the 2/27th found Menari occupied when they arrived. They decided not to attack because:



1. They didn't have enough men and would need to attack over open ground.
2. The Japanese forces far outnumbered them.
3. He couldn't afford any more wounded as he didn't have enough men to carry them.

Potts had once again eluded Horii's attempt to encircle and annihilate. This time however, he had lost half his force, with the 2/27th stuck behind enemy lines.

From the 9 to 22 September, the 2/27th had to cut their own way through the PNG jungle to regain Australian lines. They had run out of food on the 9th and relied on native tucker to get them through. They had to carry wounded. They narrowly missed Potts at Menari and again at Nauro a few days later. They finally met up with the 2/14th at Nigabiafa near Iorabawa.

By the 9th of September, Potts had under his control only 300 men and no reliable position to slow the Japanese between Menari and Iorabawa. He was commanding under impossible conditions.

By 10 September, the Japanese had come close to Nauro (which during the war was just at the base of the Maguli Ranges at the end of the swamp). There were no positions to counterattack or hold off the Japanese up the Maguli Range.

Because of his "failures" at Myola and Brigade Hill, Potts was recalled to Port Moresby, and was replaced by Brigadier Porter with fresh troops from the 3rd Battalion.

It is interesting to note that on his acquisition of command, Porter immediately withdrew to Iorabawa (even though he had fresh men). He was faced with the same problems Potts had:

1. He had to react to the fact that the terrain gave no vantage point to set up defences.
2. He was severely outnumbered.



*Lee-enfield Mk III rifle*

### **Ioribaiwa**

On the morning of the 11th of September the 2/14th and 2/16th units passed through the 3rd Battalions lines, about 45 minutes north of Iorabawa. Australian ambushes continued to wreak havoc on Japanese advances.

By 12 September, the now composite 2/14th and 2/16th as well as the 3rd Battalion set up lines on the spur just north of Iorobawa awaiting the arrival of the 25th Brigade. On this same day, the 14th Field Regiment had manhandled two 25 pounder artillery pieces up to Owers Corner (This however had little impact on the final Japanese withdrawal back towards the north coast as other factors beyond Kokoda contributed to this. This will be explained later.)



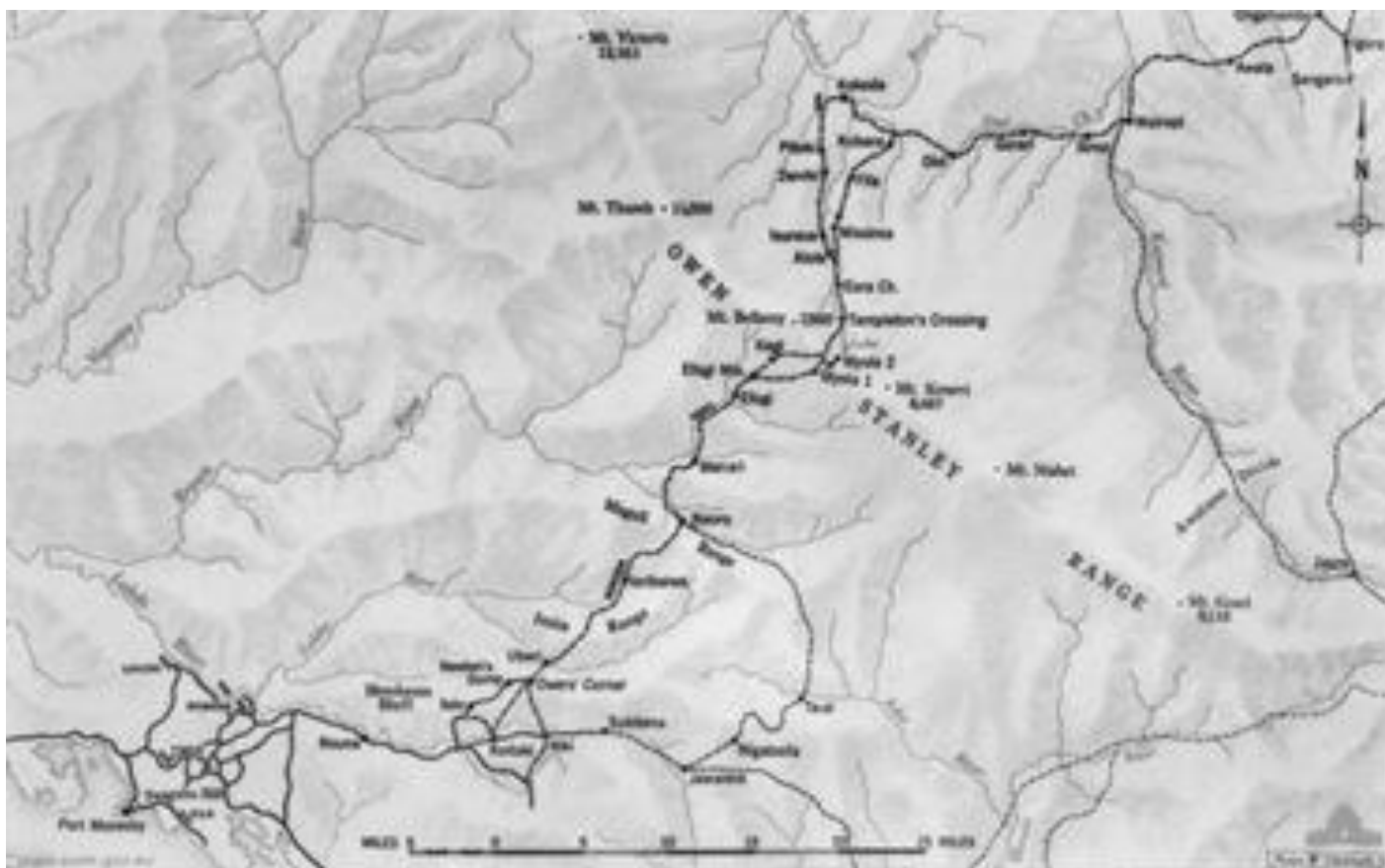
*Sir Thomas Blamey*

Eather arrived with his fresh 25th Brigade to bolster the Iorobawa line. He envisaged that his battle plan would run like this:

1. His 2/33rd Battalion would right flank the Japanese through the 3rd Battalion line.
2. 2/25th would thrust northwards through the Composite Unit
3. The left flank would be thrust by his 2/31st Battalion.

But it all went wrong.

1. 2/31st got disorientated and briefly lost
2. The inexperienced 3rd Battalion were routed from one of their positions on the high ground. (They were digging weapons pits out of reach from their weapons and with a sentry that wasn't taking notice.)



### **Imita Ridge**

The Japanese once again had the high ground and by the 16th of September, Eather found himself in a precarious position. He moved his force back to Imita Ridge. An interesting point here is that Potts was replaced because High Command thought he wasn't being effective, being constantly pushed back towards Port Moresby. Here now

you have Eather falling back with:

1. Three fresh Battalions
2. A relatively fresh 3rd Battalion
3. A relatively short supply line
4. A Japanese force that had a long supply line now, and was fatigued, sick etc.

All of Eather's forces were back at Imita Ridge by the morning of the 17th of September.

High Command had had enough. Imita Ridge was to be their last stand. Their desperation was born out of the previous four shocking events that had occurred between July and September that year.

1. The fall of Isurava. That Kokoda fell was understandable as it was defended by the 39th Militia. But the fall of Isurava, defended by the well respected 21st Brigade (minus one battalion), was considered implausible. In fact they were expected to push the Japanese back and retake Kokoda.
2. The fall of Myola and the supply dump there. This stunned Brisbane. It occurred shortly after High Command had enquired when Maroubra force would start their offensive.
3. The fall of Brigade Hill even with fresh 2/27th Battalion troops and the near loss of Head Quarters.
4. The fall of Iorobawa, with all of Eather's new battalions.



*Bomana War Cemetery*

These “shocks” were born out of a continuing ignorance and lack of appreciation of what was going on along the Track. High Command refused to understand and accept that the Australian forces were outnumbered severely (six to one), outgunned (we had no mortars, artillery or heavy machine guns and the Japanese did), and for a large part had little supply of blankets, clothing, boots and socks (whereas the Japanese were well equipped), and finally that the conditions of the Track were appalling.

While it is true that the fighting withdrawal of the 21st Brigade and the 39th and 53rd Militia had delayed the Japanese advance towards Port Moresby by nearly two months, and that they had simply ground Japanese forces into the ground by Iorobawa, events beyond the Kokoda theatre turned Horii’s forces back:

1. On the 7th August, crack U.S. marines attacked the Solomon Islands at Guadalcanal. The Japanese needed a decisive victory here as they had been defeated at Milne Bay and Maroubra Force had slowed their progress towards Port Moresby. A Japanese victory in the Solomons was not to be.
2. Japanese supply boats and lines were being bombed on the north coast and Japanese High Command believed Buna and Gona were going to be attacked by Allied forces.

### **Advance to the Rear**

Horii was thus ordered to withdraw to Buna and defend that coastal stronghold while keeping the Australian forces at bay in a strategic withdrawal much like Australia’s withdrawal.

The Australian forces were unaware that the Japanese had started their retreat; they awaited their enemy at Imita Ridge. Several days passed with no sign of any Japanese.

On the 16th September, the composite 2/14th and 2/16th regained their independent identities. By 26 September, they were relieved of duty and were sent to Koitaki (near McDonalds Corner) for R+R.

The Japanese did not put up any resistance until Templeton’s Crossing and Eora



Creek, where they held up Australian Forces for two weeks. Horii did this as he sent many of his men back to Buna to help with reinforcing this stronghold.

## **Facts:**

***Australians who served*** - About 56,000 Australians were at one time or another involved either in Papua or in sea or air operations there.

### ***Major units***

16th, 21st and 25th Brigades

Militia – 3rd, 39th and 53rd Battalions.

Papuan Infantry Battalion.

### ***Casualties***

More than 600 Australians died during the Battle of Kokoda and more than 1,600 Australians were wounded.

Over 10,000 Japanese died from January 1942 to January 1943



*1945, Marine pilot Bob Klingman used the propeller of his F4U Corsair to chop off the tail of a Japanese reconnaissance plane. Because his guns had frozen due to the high altitude, he turned his fighter into a buzzsaw to down the enemy. He then managed to fly back to base even though 6" had broken off one propeller blade while the other two blades were bent back. Chunks of the Japanese plane were also stuck in the Corsair's engine cowling. Klingman was awarded the Navy Cross and the Air Medal with Gold Star for his actions*



Formerly known as Prince





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