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NO TURNING BACK
NO TURNING BACK

a memoir

E. T. W. Fulton

Edited, with an introduction and afterword by Elizabeth Fulton Thurston

PANDANUS BOOKS
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
It is 1985 and my dreams in the isolation of a mining camp on a river in the Sepik mountains, 50 years ago, have now been replaced by memories. Memories of prospectors, recruiters, missionaries, patrol officers, planters, seafarers and the people of New Guinea.

Memories of a war and of men who died or have grown old. I am proud to have been one of their cobbers.

Memories of a beautiful girl, Gwen, who became my wife. I thank God for the years we had together and I dedicate this story to her memory and to our three daughters Mary, Elizabeth and Catherine, and our grandchildren.

Ted Fulton
Sydney 1985
There are many people I would like to thank for their assistance and encouragement in making the publication of Ted’s book possible. I know Ted, if he were alive, would be the first to acknowledge their contribution. Through Ted, and my role as editor, I have come to know wonderful interesting people who have generously given me their time and knowledge.

I owe an enormous debt to Dr Bryant Allen from the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University. Bryant met Ted in the 70s and is familiar with the Sepik District and many of the tracks Ted walked and the villages he visited. With his extensive knowledge of the war in New Guinea and careful reading of Ted’s Patrol Reports, he has clarified parts of the text and supplied vital maps for each of the chapters in this section. Since before the manuscript was submitted for publication, I have had many long and interesting conversations with Bryant, who has generously shared his knowledge with me and patiently answered my questions.

Stuart Inder MBE has been a specialist writer and publisher on Pacific Islands affairs for over 50 years. Stuart was a colleague of the late Judy Tudor who was gold mining with Ted in the Sepik. He knew Ted and has kindly read many drafts of the book. With his sensitive editorial suggestions — particularly concerning the Greek Campaign — and extraordinary wisdom, Stuart has given me both practical and moral support in times when I felt overwhelmed.

Professor Donald Denoon, from the ANU, has been my Consultant Editor and his perceptive and incisive guidance from the time the manuscript arrived at Pandanus Books has helped
me fine tune the structure and expand on the themes running through Ted’s work.

From the Australian 6th Division, I am privileged to have had assistance from Major Ted Wood (retired) who was Ted’s Gun Position Officer in Greece, John Hynes ‘Keeper of the spirit of the Regiment’, Ken Jorgenson and Ossie Pearce. Ossie was the Recruiting Sergeant for the artillery and signed Ted up. They were both on the first troopship leaving Sydney in 1940 and served together in Egypt, Libya, Greece, Crete and Ceylon. These reluctant heroes have their own stories to tell.

From the ANGAU years of the war in New Guinea I am grateful to Bob Cole. Bob, who knew Ted in Aitape before the war, was also behind enemy lines and he has helped me understand and confront the similar experiences he and Ted shared. He has supplied valuable details. Also connected with New Guinea I thank Albert Speer, Harry West and Warwick Parer, son of the late Kevin Parer.

Chris Rowell worked tirelessly on Ted’s 16 millimetre films and her interest in Ted encouraged me to keep working on the manuscript. Bruce Blake interviewed Ted and recorded his voice for the films. He drew much information from Ted. Les Fiddess did an amazing job in cleaning and transferring Ted’s cassette recordings from the 70s onto CD. I was able to include part of these transcripts into the book. Thank you Chris, Bruce and Les.

It has been a pleasure working with Pandanus Books and I thank Ian Templeman and Justine Molony for their belief in Ted’s story and for their commitment to Pacific and Asian literature.

The most important people for me to thank are all my family and my sisters and parents: Gwen for her unselfish gentleness, beauty and strength and Ted for the brave, loving and inspirational father that he was.

Elizabeth Fulton Thurston 2005
Editor’s Introduction

THIS BOOK by my father is the result of years of memories, conversations and correspondence. It is a story of adventure and is a rare account of an era that has disappeared forever. Ted Fulton spent 40 years in New Guinea and knew the country from just about every angle. Inspired by the book The Coral Island, he went to Rabaul as a clerk for W. R. Carpenter’s Trading Company in 1926. He later worked in government administration before throwing in an office job to go gold prospecting in the Sepik mountains with Jack Thurston and the Tudor family.

When World War II was declared in 1939, Ted flew back to Australia to enlist with the 6th Division. He served in the Middle East and Greek campaigns and when the 6th was sent to New Guinea, he was seconded into ANGAU (Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit) and sent on forward intelligence patrols behind enemy lines because of his pre-war knowledge of the country, the people and their language. ANGAU held a dual civil and military role from 10 April 1942 after the government had been disrupted by war. ANGAU officers had to be both combat soldiers and patrol officers: they were expected to maintain law and order and oversee the welfare of the local population.

The conditions under which the ANGAU officers and their Papua and New Guinean allies fought and defended New Guinea soil were often intolerable. Torrential rain, leeches, malaria, dysentery and hookworm were a daily part of patrols that lasted for weeks and often months. In the course of his service with ANGAU, Ted patrolled hundreds of miles on foot from Port Moresby across the Owen Stanley Ranges — up the Bulldog Track and into the Lower Ramu and Sepik areas. He spent months in country that was hitherto unpatrolled and unmapped.
He was one of a handful of Australians to take part in the landing at Aitape with MacArthur’s United States Persecution Task Force after which he conducted fighting patrols along the coast and inland to the Torricelli Mountains and Maprik. In 1945 he was sent as a Task Force Commander to Labuan in Borneo to organise the cooperation of the local people while awaiting the 9th Division occupation of Sandakan. This never happened as the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, Japan, and the war was suddenly over.

Ted’s brother, Jack, served with the 2/15th Field Regiment Division and was taken prisoner in Changi; his diary is in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Another brother, Henry, who was crippled by polio and unable to enlist, was taken prisoner by the Japanese when they invaded Rabaul in 1942. He was lost on the Japanese prison ship, *Montevideo Maru* when it was torpedoed off The Philippines. His eldest brother, Frank, served with the RAAF.

My parents were married in Australia in 1945 (my mother was formerly Gwen Dobinson) and after the war my father, with a new bride and a young baby — my sister, Mary — returned, like other civilians, to New Guinea to pick up the pieces and carve out a future in a country that had been ravaged by years of Japanese occupation. Knowing that many basic items would be in demand, Ted set up the first post-war import agency in Rabaul before purchasing Makurapau Plantation past Kokopo. Over the next two decades he established a flourishing copra and cocoa plantation and was an active member of the Planters Association and travelled to Canberra to represent their interests.

Along with my two sisters, my early childhood was spent between the plantation and Australia. The characters and stories that filled our lives appear, in hindsight, to have sprung from the pages of a *Boy’s Own Annual* — they are larger than life but at the time they seemed nothing out of the ordinary. Pioneers, explorers and planters were a constant part of our lives.

There are not many of the ‘Befores’ left. (This was a name given to those who had been in the Territory before World War II.) My father died at the end of 1999 at the age of 95. Jack Thurston
died in 1985, but fortunately I had organised in the 70s for Ted and Jack to make a series of recordings of their pre-war activities. Jack was a great raconteur — a slight but charismatic man who lived life with an energy that gave us an adrenalin rush just listening to all his plans and ideas. As Judy Tudor would say, ‘Jack never walked if he could run’. Of all the Europeans Ted had known in New Guinea, he said there was no finer bushman than Jack. This was borne out during the war when Jack evacuated civilians from Japanese-occupied territory by leading them on a six-month walk across the unknown heart of New Guinea into Papua. It was an epic trip that has been likened to Ivan Champion and Charles Karius’s famous walk in the other direction.

All of us children of the ‘Befores’ have grown up with a heritage of extraordinary true-life adventure stories that echo the hardships, tragedy and romance that come with a rugged pioneering life. Combined with a mythology that is unique to the ancient cultures of New Guinea, it is not hard to imagine how these stories held a powerful place in our lives. They stimulated our imagination, they drew us closer to events of the past and they gave us the confidence to search for adventure in our own lives.

It was after my mother, Gwen, died in 1979 that I urged my father to sit down and write his memoirs for the family. Ted was not a literary man but he had a great collection of books and he had been meticulous at keeping diaries, letters and press cuttings plus he had a formidable memory. He had been a good amateur photographer and had taken 16-millimetre film in New Guinea and during the war when he became the ‘official’ unofficial photographer for the unit. He worked steadily on the manuscript and the result is a priceless legacy for his family of a time and a place that either no longer exists or is no longer recognisable.

When I was writing the eulogy for his memorial service I became aware not only of what Ted had left behind, but what he had taken with him. For me he had been a living index to the past. Once he started telling his stories, the past suddenly became the present and he had a way of making the listener feel a part of
it. Not wanting to let go of this past I immersed myself in his papers and correspondence. I brought the manuscript out from the cupboard and for the past few years I have sifted through all his correspondence and photographs.

Long after he left New Guinea, Ted was visited or contacted by researchers or history students seeking information. He was generous with his time and knowledge but mindful of the fact that events in the past, when taken out of context, can be distorted or manipulated according to the lens through which they are viewed. In the 60s and 70s the world looked disapprovingly on any form of colonialism and suddenly everyone, whether they had been to New Guinea or not had an opinion on what should happen there. Many believe — and I am one — that independence came too hastily as a result of outside pressures. A sharp backlash whipped the expatriate community and inevitably planters, recruiters, prospectors and patrol officers all came under the microscope of political analysts. New Guinea became independent in 1975 and while no reasonable person would suggest that political and social change were not inevitable and necessary, administrative solutions that look simple and equitable on paper have not been easy to implement in a country that remains divided culturally, linguistically and geographically. In spite of the beating colonialism has taken, even the most politically correct analysts concede that enormous affection and respect exists between many of the white mastas and Papua New Guineans — particularly between those who pioneered together and fought together in the war. With the rise in violence, there are those now who look back on the Australian Administration as the good old days. A Papua New Guinean, Kevin Pamba, wrote in an article in Papua New Guinea’s newspaper, The National, 8 July 2001:

Our time contrasts starkly with the era that our elders recall. Ours is an era where we have grown used to living with vocabularies like corruption, mismanagement, nepotism, vote buying, votes of no confidence, slackness, incompetence, lack of this and that and so forth.
What our elders perhaps do not quiz themselves enough, is why this good management and work ethos prevailed during taim blong masta. Good management and work ethos prevailed because, as educated Papua New Guineans know, the Australians were simply applying those very practices and values from their home country they brought up here with them. In other words, it was an extension of how Australia was run.

When the Australians left in 1975, they thought they were leaving behind locals capable of following in their footsteps and managing the country they had established just as well as they did. But it was a serious miscalculation as it is now evident, 26 years on.

There is at last a greater awareness and appreciation for the role the Australian soldiers played in defending New Guinea and in halting the Japanese advance towards Australia, but the contribution of ANGAU field officers and their Papua New Guinean allies has still to be fully addressed and appreciated. Many stories of personal heroism and sacrifice will, sadly, never be told — acts of unyielding bravery and courage exhibited by Australians and Papua New Guineans under appalling conditions.

The men of the 39th battalion and the battle-weary men of the 6th Division, who had already served in the Middle East and Greece, fought a very different war in the jungles of New Guinea. They and the men of ANGAU relied on police and local village recruits whose loyalty was often stretched to breaking point. These men of ANGAU — always one step ahead of the enemy — were the eyes and ears of the Allied Forces. Major-General B. M. Morris DSO said at the disbandment of ANGAU on 24 June 1946:

The value of the work of ANGAU hasn’t been fully publicised, nor indeed understood, but some day historians will write the full story …
Fifty years later the historian Hank Nelson writes:

Where the coast watchers, have from the publication of Eric Feldt’s popular account of their work in 1946, been given much praise and publicity, ANGAU Officers in their role in battle have either been ignored or dealt with in isolation from their unit. Had all the ANGAU exploits been brought together by a gifted writer immediately after the war, ANGAU might have secured a place in Australian popular histories of the war in New Guinea.

The ANGAU field officer’s life was one of relentless pressure, isolation and hardship: he had to be tough both mentally and physically. Too few men on patrol for too many months on end — all the time trying to outsmart the enemy while reporting Japanese activity back to headquarters. Trying to stay hidden while wondering if eyes concealed by dense jungle were watching you. Added to this was the uncertainty of native loyalty in the remote areas that had had little or no contact with Australians. If the locals had been persuaded to collaborate with the Japanese it would mean certain death to those on patrol and extreme danger for all the ANGAU bases. As Ted writes, ‘We thought we were normal but after years of war we didn’t know what normal was’.

Alan Powell’s book, *The Third Force* (Oxford University Press, 2003), examines the achievements of ANGAU and its enormous contribution to the war in New Guinea. But as Powell himself admits, it still only touches the surface. The impact of the Australian military and administrative involvement in New Guinea will, I am sure, continue to be discussed from all angles. Nothing, however, will change the fact that the events in this book belong to another century and are written from the perspective of a man who was deeply in love with the country and its people and not a detached observer. Like any memoir it is a human story and, like all humans, it will undoubtedly be flawed. Others may remember events and episodes described by Ted differently.
In editing Ted’s story, I have included some of the transcript from the tapes he made with Jack Thurston; a meshing of what he wrote and what he spoke about. He trusted my editorial discretion and we discussed the contents at length. Like many from his generation and background, Ted writes with laconic understatement. He refused to embellish or dramatise episodes that were by any measure extraordinary in their exhibition of courage and fortitude: as the editor I have had to resist the temptation to compensate for this understatement. I believe authenticity is more important than style. At times there is a frustrating reluctance of Ted to expose his feelings and invite the reader into the emotional intimacy and vulnerability of his experiences so that we may better understand the man and the significance of his time.

Perhaps, though, survival depends on suppressing emotion. As Ted would say he was not in the habit of looking backwards. He had learnt not to complicate life by over analysing it. I believe the section on ANGAU and the war in New Guinea is certainly told with the matter-of-fact pragmatism of someone who has almost forgotten a world without war. On patrol for months in unmapped areas, engaged in guerrilla-style warfare and often with scant food supplies, he had long left behind the camaraderie and idealism that characterised the first desert campaigns and the rowdy leave parties in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. He was by his own admission, ‘tired of it all’ and doubted many times that he ‘would ever come out alive’ from New Guinea.

Like those men from the 6th Division whom I have had the privilege of getting to know, Ted did not respect those who attempted to glamourise war or the part they played in it. He had a particular aversion to war films produced in Hollywood. He would laughingly say that he never remembered hearing all that loud music when he was in battle! The code of unquestioning duty that led the men of the 6th to volunteer in the first place preceded their first-hand experience of the horror of war. Today these men are characterised by quiet humility: they honour sacrifice and friendship and bravery but never war itself.
I have written into this story my own chapters (which are clearly identified as my own) about our years as a family in New Guinea and the importance of my mother, Gwen, in Ted’s life: these chapters include Ted’s unexpected return to the islands in the 80s. I hope they add to the picture of a family’s involvement in a country which all began when an adventurous young man answered an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1926.

_Elizabeth Fulton Thurston,_
Sydney 2004
North west Papua New Guinea
Contents

Acknowledgements viii
Editor’s Introduction x

PART I — Green Islands and Gold Mountains 1
1. A Sydney boy 2
2. Off to the Pacific 14
3. Down and out in Hong Kong 21
4. Back where I began — Sydney 1927 27
5. Rabaul 1930 33
6. Jack Thurston, the Sepik and Number One Gold 37
7. My first recruiting trip. Aitape — Palai — Wapi Districts 50
8. Starlight 56
9. Parer’s Air Transport opens up the Sepik 61
10. Another recruiting trip 67
11. War is declared 78

PART II — The Cold Desert Winds —
War in the middle east 95
12. Signing up with the 6th Division 96
13. The 6th Division arrives in the Middle East 100
14. The first Australian action — Bardia and Tobruk 106
15. The longest day of my life — the Greek Campaign 113
16. Back in Palestine 121
17. From Egypt to Ceylon 127
At last we came among the Coral Islands of the Pacific and I shall never forget the delight with which I gazed … at the pure, white, dazzling shores, and the verdant palm trees, which looked bright and beautiful in the sunshine. And often did we three long to be landed on one, imagining that we should certainly find perfect happiness there!

_The Coral Island_, R. M. Ballantyne
A SYDNEY BOY

*THE CORAL ISLAND* by R. M. Ballantyne is a book I read and loved when I was a young boy. It is not an overstatement to say that it changed the course of my life by opening up a world of travel and adventure. Like Ralph and Peterkin, I visualised myself living in a tropical paradise, eating coconuts and having amazing adventures from which I always emerged victorious. I knew from a very young age that I wanted to control my own destiny but making it happen proved to be a lot harder than I could ever have imagined and things certainly didn’t always go to plan.

My journey has taken me from a cricket-mad Sydney boy to the islands and mountains of New Guinea, a country I came to call home for many years. I’ve travelled all over the world and lived abroad but Sydney is the place I have returned to. Perhaps all adventurers do finally come full circle to the place where the journey began.

Sydney today is a far cry from the Sydney of 1904 when I was born. I walk along the cliffs of Bronte and Tamarama through the Waverley Cemetery where my mother and father are buried and remember an earlier time when there were no flats and houses, only scrub and bushland. But some things never change
— the roar of the Pacific that pounds against the foot of the cliffs on a bright blue Sydney day takes me back to the time when my brothers and I would run full pelt down through the Bronte scrub and hurl ourselves into the breaking surf pitting our youthful vigour against the power of the ocean.

I was born in Paddington, Sydney on 4 July 1904, the second son (and child) of Thomas Benedict Fulton and his wife Mary Margaret. My father was born in Bath, England, and had been educated at Downside School and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. His father was Major-General John Jeffreys Fulton, Madras Staff Corps and his uncles were General Graeme Auchmuty Fulton and Colonel James Robert Fulton. Their father, my great grandfather, was Major John Fulton of the Honourable East India Company. Coming from a long line of officers, a military life was taken for granted and on graduation my father was posted to the King’s Own Scottish Borderers and served with the 2nd West India Regiment in Sierra Leone.

The life of a regular officer in the 19th century entailed social obligations that depended on a private income. Because my father didn’t have this income, he resigned his commission and, being fluent in French, accepted a post as secretary to a nickel mining company in New Caledonia.

The mining company failed and he went on to Australia to look for a job. He met and married my mother in Newcastle, New South Wales in 1901 and they eventually came to Sydney where my father, with only his military training, found it difficult to find employment. He found jobs as a representative on a small retainer and commission.

We were brought up in modest circumstances in Waverley and my parents did not mix locally or appear to have much social life. This is understandable as they were fully involved in trying to support and educate five children. There had been six but a younger brother, Charles, died at the age of one from meningitis. He, too, is buried at Waverley cemetery and I used to visit his grave every Sunday with my father to trim the grass and pull out any weeds.
My father was a keen philatelist and was up late most nights working on his collection or attending stamp meetings. His interests were confined to his family and his stamps and he must have found his circumstances and environment a contrast to the life of a gentleman in England.

My elder brother Frank went to a convent school at the age of five and shortly after, when I was discovered striking matches under a bed, I was packed off with him at the age of four, in the care of an older boy, Frank O’Keeffe. Frank and I were classmates for the remainder of our school days and carried this closeness through into our sporting careers. Father encouraged our interest in cricket at an early age: when we were past the stage for toy soldiers and horses, our Christmas stockings would contain a cricket ball and stumps. On Christmas afternoon he would begin our cricket tuition.

When we were old enough we attended Waverley College. The older boys made a great impression on us, especially in the sporting field. Not long after they left school, a number of those boys were killed at Gallipoli and in France. We must have been reasonably bright as most of our class were older than us but our school days were not really happy since our English background was often the subject for abuse from other students from predominantly Irish descent.

I was terrified of the straps some of the Brothers wielded and many a time fought back tears as I returned to my desk with my numb hands under my armpits after receiving ‘two’ or ‘four’ for not knowing work I had done my best to learn. The Brother I feared most in class was ironically the most kindly and friendly on the playing fields.

My father took us to our first cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground to see Warner’s Test with Australia. Every Saturday afternoon we went to watch Waverley Cricket Club matches. Our weekly pocket money of three pence, if we had behaved and done all Mother’s messages after school, would buy enough sweets to last the afternoon. Well before the game
commenced we had ‘staked’ our positions, preferably on the roller leaning against the picket fence. This was the closest we could get to the hallowed turf as the bearded groundsman, ‘Boss’ Reid would leave his horse drawn roller and chase off any trespasser on the oval.

My only successful trespass was one Empire Day holiday when the state schools were parading on the ground and the ceremony concluded with each pupil being given a bag of sweets. I jumped the fence and joined the line, collected the sweets — then bolted!

Shortly before World War I we moved to Randwick and early in 1915 my father died at the age of 46. His death left me desolated. I had loved and idolised him. He was strict and I always obeyed him without question but he was a kind and loving father who encouraged our interest in English history and taught us cricket. In the evenings he had made us recite the order of the British kings. He had always hoped we would attend his school, Downside; but this was no more than a pipedream for his assets consisted only of his stamp collection. This realised approximately £400 as he had won two medals at a recent Exhibition for his Papuan collection.

At the age of 39 my mother was left with five children to raise. The youngest, Henry, was three and Frank was the eldest at 12. Mum was unable to keep us at Waverley College and we were sent to the Parish School where most, if not all the boys, were also from poor families. Some were often bare footed and sold newspapers out of school hours. The Irish Brother in charge was sympathetic and did his best to help us. Despite this, Frank and I felt humiliated by ‘our loss of status’ in leaving the College, particularly as some former classmates would pass us in the street without speaking. I did not realise it then, but I was getting an early lesson in how the world operates.

In the winter months our bedclothes were supplemented by coats and overcoats for warmth. We lived opposite the police station, and since we did not own a clock, one of us would dash across the road to check the time by the station clock.
Frank and I had to walk from Randwick to Waverley as we did not have the penny tram fare. This meant leaving home early and returning late with our bags of heavy books for several hours of homework.

We were growing up and without the supervision of a father, we filled the dual role of ‘Little Angels’ and ‘Little Devils’. The former as altar boys on Sundays at Mary Immaculate Church, Randwick, and the latter during the week. We would sneak out to the tram stops and practice ‘scaling’ and hopping on and off moving trams. This was considered an achievement by the young boys of the period and we became quite adept in this dangerous and sometimes fatal ‘sport’ but fortunately did not add to my mother’s problems as she never knew of our activities. My worst experience happened when I was sent on an errand two tram stops away. I decided to ‘scale.’ It was only a conditional stop and I took a chance but instead of slowing down the tram gathered speed. I accepted the challenge in the dusk and leapt from the tram. My ‘skill’ did not match the speed and I went flat on the road and rolled into the gutter. The next thing I knew an elderly lady was bending over me and saying something about ‘little devil’. I jumped to my feet and ran, explaining my dusty clothes when I reached home by saying that ‘I had fallen over’.

On one occasion I was caught between stops by the conductor and held in his cabin with the threat of being handed to the Inspector. My crocodile tears worked, because after a few stops he snatched my cap from my head and flung it on the road, gave me a cuff on the ear and told me to ‘Get home’.

Frank and I would also go bird nesting and one day with a number of other boys, went farther afield from our usual hunting ground. When Frank fell out of a tree one of the boys ran to our home and told my poor mother that ‘Frank has fallen out of a tree and is dead’. On her way to the scene she met a procession of guilty boys, with Frank on the back of the biggest boy. A horse-drawn cab (which cost three shillings extra for Frank being sick on the mat) took him to St Vincents Hospital with slight concussion.
Our school holidays were spent at Coogee Beach and we taught ourselves to swim in the baths and caught fish from the rocks. On Sundays we would walk to the Moore Park Zoo and back as a penny was all that was needed for admission. Our long distance excursions were to the Sydney Art Gallery — Museum or Botanical Gardens (we were forbidden to go to the adjoining Domain where the Sunday Speakers gathered) as admission was free and all we required was a penny each way in the tram.

About a year after my father’s death we returned to Waverley to be closer to the school since all the children were now of school age. Frank and I spent our weekends and holidays in Waverley Park with other boys playing cricket. Our equipment was meagre but we were generally able to produce an old bat and a ball from our joint resources. Two four-gallon rusty kerosene tins made an excellent substitute for stumps, being the approximate height and width. We didn’t need bails as the hollow bang when the ball made contact with the tins left the batsman in no doubt that he was bowled.

Teams would be arranged by two appointed ‘Captains’ having alternate ‘picks’ from the prospective players. The matches were evenly balanced and attracted the interest of a number of adults. This was an era when playing games on Sunday was looked on with disapproval and although out of earshot, we were visible from houses adjoining the park. For a while we played undisturbed but later were made to pack up by the local police sergeant — no doubt as a result of complaining residents. The game would resume next Sunday until we saw the slow burly figure of the sergeant appear on the hill. Then coats would be gathered and we would disappear long before he arrived on the scene.

In 1917 when he was 14, the permissible age to leave school, Frank went to work in an office. I, too, wanted to leave school and obtained my Qualifying Certificate at the end of the year. This permitted me to leave at 13 and a half and in January 1918, to my great delight, I found a job as an office boy at 15 shillings per week, with Harry Shelley, Wholesale Grocer and Wine and Spirit Merchant.
A horse and lorry passed our house each morning going to the city. It had brightly coloured side panels ‘Watsons No. 10 Whisky’. One morning, when I did not have the tram fare, I hitched a ride as Watsons No. 10 Whisky office was near where I worked. I sat on the tailboard with my legs dangling over the side. I repeated this for a few mornings and one day the driver, who had placed a box alongside his own box seat, invited me to join him up front. This became a regular event and Mr Pearce would look out for me each morning. He would sometimes stop at a laundry in Paddington where his sister worked and I enjoyed travelling with him.

One day my mother asked me to take my father’s brass clock to a small foundry near where we lived and ask the man if he would buy it. He gave me seven shillings and six pence. Gradually most articles of value went. Mother’s silver, including wedding gifts, antique furniture inherited from her mother, and finally her precious piano. This had been her one escape from the worries of trying to keep a home and provide for her young family, as she sat and played each evening in our tiny cottage.

My first duty at Shelley’s was to deliver letters in the city. My employer had two of us, one on the ‘Front Run’ and the other the ‘Back Run’, Although postage was only a penny he must have shown a margin on our wages with the postage saved as well as the use of our services from 9.00 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. We also worked three and a half hours on Saturdays and were general dogsbodies at everyone’s beck and call to do all the menial jobs including struggling with heavy parcels. The ‘Front Run’ took in the then smart office area, and the ‘Back Run’ the warehouse, produce and wharf areas. I was given the ‘Back Run’ and a guide for a few days (an older boy who was leaving). We were expected to deliver our letters en route to our furthest address which was in the area of Sydney Railway Station and return by tram (fare one and a half pence). It did not take me long to become familiar with my area which embraced two-thirds of the city or to learn the ‘short cuts’ that would permit me to read a few chapters of Sexton Blake
in the sunshine of Belmore and Wynyard Parks or linger on the
wharves with dreams of travel and adventure aboard one of
the many cargo tramps and still get back to the office without
being late.

These were the days of horse-drawn vehicles and I often felt
sorry for the teams pulling their loads up Druitt and Bathurst
Street hills from the wharves in Sussex Street with sparks flying
from their shoes on the cobbled stones. Sometimes they would fall,
and twice I witnessed a policeman shoot a horse with a broken leg.

Like the other errand boys and telegram boys I became
expert at riding on the back of empty lorries as one of our ‘short
cut’ methods, but was always alert for the whip of an uncooper-
ative driver. I also made sure that the seat of my pants did not
land on oil, tea or flour as I swung myself into position, with legs
dangling at the rear. I made the acquaintance of some of the
‘sparrowstarvers’ — these were block boys who swept the horse
manure from the streets.

On rare occasions my employer wanted a letter delivered
urgently and he took six pence out of his waistcoat pocket with
‘Here lad, take a cab and hurry up.’ There was a horse cab stand
opposite the office and I used to enjoy this luxury though my
vision was restricted to the hindquarters and tail of the horse.

After some time, I was transferred to the ‘Front Run’ which
embraced Circular Quay with smart offices and clerks in suits.
I did not enjoy this so much but it rounded off my knowledge of
the city.

When I had been an ‘office boy’ for eight months, I asked
my employer for a rise. This was not my idea but the older office
boys told me that after six months it was usual to ask for it. This
was before trade union days but since I did not wish to let the
‘Office Boys Union’ down I timidly approached Mr Shelley and
asked, ‘Do you think I could have a rise, please, Sir?’

‘How long have you been here, lad?’

‘Eight months, Sir.’

‘All right, I will look into it.’
Next week I received 17 shillings and six pence and when I thanked him was told, ‘All right lad! You look after your work and I will look after you.’

I was then promoted to the switchboard which was a lofty platform overlooking the glass partitioned offices. From here I could be observed and the clerks below shouted orders. It was boring seated in my lofty perch and the only bright spots were ‘chats’ with the office girls.

Mr Shelley called each member of the staff to his private office at the end of the year and gave them a bonus. When my turn came he handed me an envelope with a few words, then said, ‘Tell Jones to come in.’

I opened the envelope which contained two one pound notes and knew I would be able to buy the cricket bat I had seen in the window of a second-hand shop for 10 shillings. I had checked it each time I passed to see if it had been sold.

On my way home from the office I went straight to the shop and bought it. My joy was not shared by my mother when I handed her 30 shillings and showed her the bat. She was not pleased with my ‘extravagance’ when we had so little for rent, food and clothing.

The next Sunday Frank was playing cricket at Centennial Park in Woollahra and as I had not been included I stayed at home. Frank returned in the evening and confessed he had taken my bat without asking me and it had been stolen, probably by the boys they had been playing against, so I never got to use the first bat I had ever owned!

At the end of my first year at Shelley’s I received a pay envelope, which was so light that I immediately knew I had moved to the one pound per week class. I was transferred to the Ledger and Accounts department. This promotion, though I was only the ‘boy’ of the department took me out of the office on a more elevated level than before as I would do the daily banking and at the end of the month collect the cheques payable to Shelleys. I grew closer to the other four men in the department who were all returned soldiers.
Meanwhile, Frank and I retained our interest in sport and our greatest ambition was to play cricket and baseball for Waverley. We played cricket in men’s teams on matting wickets in Moore Park and Centennial Park competitions and though only teenagers we were more than able to hold our own with the men. It was a different matter when it came to gaining selection in the lower rung of District (turf) Cricket. At the commencement of the summer up to 200 would attend the practice sessions. With four grade teams, only 44 were required. When the established players were selected, very few aspirants were successful and the rest drifted back to the matting wickets. It was equally difficult to break into the baseball teams in winter. However as cricket and baseball completely absorbed our lives, we persevered and eventually played with the Waverley Cricket and Baseball Clubs for several seasons.

For me, life revolved around work at the office, cricket and swimming in summer and baseball in winter. We did not consider dancing an achievement and left this to ‘sissies’ who did not play sport. We preferred a game of billiards or snooker on the local fire brigade table with the firemen. We had no money to spare but our financial positions improved with the family growing up and Frank and I earning. Our needs were modest and we were able to get by.

It was now 1926; I had turned 21 the previous July and was on the adult wage of £4.2.6d. I started to think seriously about my future particularly since far from achieving test cricket heights, I was still hovering around the lower grades of Waverley, without any outstanding performances to give me hope of ever wearing the baggy green. I was quite happy with my work and very attached to everyone at the office but I was filled with a dread that I might end up catching the same tram to and from Bronte each day; might end up sitting opposite the same people, and doing the same things in the same place, until I retired when I would be too old to see anything of the wide world.

My only travel had been to Newcastle for a week. It was all I could afford but I wished to see my mother’s home place. I travelled there by train and found a cheap boarding house where
I shared a room with a man who worked at the steelworks. On my return to the office I felt I could hold my own with my colleagues who took holidays at Katoomba or went fishing at Woy Woy or Port Hacking.

I remembered books of adventure in the South Seas. The one that particularly influenced me was *The Coral Island* by R. M. Ballantyne and I imagined turning my back on the lights of the city for the simple life among the natives, trading and copra planting. A job in the islands was my only means of getting there and perhaps of realising my dream. But how was I going to make it happen?
Notes
1. Frank O’Keeffe, after his return from World War I, played First Grade cricket for Waverley. He was not selected to play for New South Wales and moved to Victoria. He was included in the Victorian Sheffield Shield team to play New South Wales and made a century in each innings against the State that had rejected him. He moved to England to further his cricket career which was cut short by his untimely death after an appendix operation at the age of 28.
2. ‘Plum’ Warners MCC Test at Sydney Cricket Ground and later Victor Trumpers Benefit were our early introduction to the ‘Greats’ — Noble — Gregory — Cotter and seeing R. J. A. Massie hitting the ball into the Members Stand. Our spectator impressions included ‘Chidley’ in his bathing costume moving among the crowd with his paper ‘Answers’.
3. We recall the Waverley Players Syd Gregory, ‘Sep’ Carter, Wally Pite, Harrie Davis, Ben Warburton, Wharton, Flynn, ‘Oakey’ O’Connor, Norman Callay and ‘Ocker’ Stevens. In the winter we followed the baseball but our father and his English background did not like the talk and barracking of the American game and did not attend. Our earlier Waverley Players were the American Charlie Vaughan, Bert Hearden and Arthur Bragg.
4. The boys included Tom and Frank Conway, Waldo and Wendell Bill, Bruce Sutche, Ernie Abigail, Gordon Lovett, Noel and Roy Levy.
IT WAS A Saturday morning, the day jobs were advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I scanned the ‘Positions Vacant’ and spotted ‘Wanted for Rabaul, book-keeper with Island Merchants, apply with written application today ...’

‘Where is Rabaul?’ I asked Frank.

‘It’s the capital of New Guinea, I think,’ he said.

I had only one suit which was kept for Sundays and special occasions as coat and trousers were acceptable for work. I purposely ripped a couple of buttons off my ordinary clothes and said, ‘Mum will you please sew on these buttons, I will have to wear my suit to the office this morning.’ I had not discussed with her my thoughts of leaving home since I felt it would be time enough if and when it happened. When I arrived at work, I carefully wrote out my application and asked permission to go out for a short time. I reached the address in O’Connell Street, handed in my application and was told to wait. There were a number of older men ahead of me. Conversation centred on the tropics, Cairns, Singapore, Malaya, and everyone seemed to have been around these parts. What chance did I stand against these experienced men? It seemed hardly worth waiting.
Time ticked by and I was worried about my long absence from the office, but having come so far I wasn’t going to give up. Eventually my turn came and I was shown into Mr Carpenter’s office. I apparently answered his questions satisfactorily and I was heartened when he told me the salary was £20 per month. My hopes fell when he said he had others to interview. Despondently I returned to the office. At 12.30 p.m., as I was hurrying out to Saturday cricket, I was called to the phone and a girl’s voice said ‘Mr Carpenter would like you to call at the office at 9.00 on Monday morning.’

I was walking on air — surely I must be getting the job. I made a duck at cricket and for the first time ever it did not seem a disaster. The weekend dragged; I thought the clocks had stopped and Monday would never come.

I was in the city well ahead of time and lingered until the GPO clock struck 9.00. Mr Carpenter did not keep me in suspense, instead he asked straight away, ‘Will you be able to sail for Rabaul next week?’ He introduced me to Ern Britten who would be going with me. He had been appointed to another position and when we left the office we called into the ‘King’s Head’ to celebrate our good fortune. Ern was eight years older than me but we immediately became friends. I now had to face the ordeal of telling my mother and employer of my move.

My mother bravely concealed the feelings she undoubtedly held and said, ‘Eddie, I do not wish to influence your life and progress.’ Mr Shelley was also very understanding and said, ‘Provided your health is good, there should be more opportunities for you in a new and little known place like New Guinea than in the city of Sydney.’ Generously he made me a gift of a sporting rifle. Some of my friends were more pessimistic with their predictions: ‘Eddie, you will die of malaria!’ or ‘You will be killed by the natives!’ I dismissed these comments as negative and anyway the decision had been made. The risk of being ‘killed by natives’ only added to the adventure.

I sailed from Sydney on 3 March 1926 in an old cargo vessel the SS *Calulu* which traded between Australia and the Far East. She
had improvised accommodation for about 20 passengers. It was 11.00 a.m. when we left our berth in Darling Harbour and with the blast of our siren came my first feelings of apprehension. I thought of my mother with enormous affection, and the brothers and sister I was leaving. The realisation hit me that I was on a two-year contract and should anything happen to my family or myself, I’d be completely isolated.

Ern and I shared a tiny cubicle that served as a cabin and the thin wallboard separating us from a missionary and his wife did little for privacy. We soon met our fellow travellers: four new chums like ourselves and three ladies joining their husbands in Rabaul. One of these ladies was Mrs Lyall with four children. The eldest son, Dave was 16 and a great help to his mother. Ern and I were impressed by his mature and responsible outlook. Bill Theobald, Arthur Sherwin and Bill Dutton were all going in the employ of the Expropriation Board and Cameron, a ship’s officer, was to join an island vessel. I learnt that the Expropriation Board was important, because its task was to take possession of former German plantations and sell them.

The *Calulu* called at Brisbane where Ern and I had our last beer. We made a pact not to drink for six months since we had been warned of the dangers of alcohol in the tropics. Not wishing to become ‘beachcombers’, we optimistically expected to save most of our £20 per month salary.

We arrived at Rabaul on the afternoon of 12 March. I will never forget the scene as we pulled in to the old burnt NDL wharf. My first impressions were just as I had anticipated. The natives on the wharf fascinated me and I watched as Captain Luxmoore, the labour overseer, gave directions. His tall lean figure was clad in whites and he wore a pith helmet. He had a long grey moustache and looked like a character from a Somerset Maughan story.

Rabaul is on the island of New Britain and was part of the former German New Guinea, which Germany had annexed in 1884. When I arrived it was administered by Australia under the League of Nations, Australia having occupied it in World War I.
The inhabitants consisted of about 200 Europeans and 2,000 Chinese with a large native population both local and from the mainland of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The town is situated on the harbour which is the crater of an extinct volcano, ringed by a series of volcanic mountains of which one — Matupit — is still active. It lived up to its reputation as the most beautiful town in the Pacific. The streets were lined with colourful shrubs and huge trees formed a canopy of shady branches. The commercial and residential buildings were wooden bungalows on stilts with wide verandahs.

Ern and I were shown to our quarters, but as my room was occupied for a few days I was put up at the hotel. W. R. Carpenter and Co. was one of Rabaul’s main stores. The other was Burns Philp and Co., but there were also a number of Chinese owned stores and shops in Chinatown. Carpenters also had plantations and small ships to service them and the stations on the many outlying islands. The company also purchased copra from island traders.

Percy Pickering ran the office, and I was to be his assistant and bookkeeper. Jack Sedgers whose place I was taking was transferring to Kavieng; Frank Geraghty was the manager’s secretary and typist and the store staff were Graham Reid, Bill Hawthorn, Dave Page, ‘Stiffy’ Mitchell as well as three Malays Joe Tahia in the office and Wenno and Martin Hitipew in the stores. Later we met the manager Mr Perriman.

Frank Geraghty, whom we looked upon as old — he was 48 and had spent many years in Shanghai — took us to Ah Tek, a Chinese tailor, to have our tropical clothes made. These consisted of white and khaki trousers and shirts. When I had purchased a new helmet we were on the same level as the ‘old hands’.

Frank then introduced us to Ah Wong who ran a small café in Chinatown where we could eat cheaply in the evenings. After dinner Frank took us for a walk along the tree-lined gravel streets. The only lights were from fireflies and it was necessary to carry a torch. After leaving Frank and Ern at the staff bungalow, I found my way back to the hotel.
I was starting to have doubts about my whole venture and suddenly wondered what I’d let myself in for. I undressed and took off my white cricket boots, from which I had removed the studs to use for walking. I flung them on the floor and thought, ‘So this is the romantic islands. Two years here in stagnation and the end of all my cricket ambitions.’ I didn’t realise I was in only half a room separated by a curtain until my noise drew a protest from the fellow on the other side who was in bed with a tropical ulcer. I apologised to Andrew MacHutchinson, a recruiter from Bougainville and we became good friends.

Next day Ern and I started work. I became the company bookkeeper/cashier and also tally clerk on the ships which called about every six weeks for copra to the UK. There were a few wives and one single girl of about 16 but most of the men lived in quarters. After work there was not a lot to do and in the weekend we would play cricket when two sides could be mustered. Otherwise we walked over Namanula to swim on the coast at Nordup. On the way home we would stop for a six penny bottle of Sarsaparilla at Wong’s Café. It had a concrete floor with four tables and Wong’s Malay wife cooked in an annexe surrounded by her small children. Wong would shuffle in and recite his menu. ‘I got roast pork — roast beef — mutton chop — ham and eggs.’ Invariably he would return from the kitchen to announce ‘No got roast beef’ or whatever else had been ordered, and we would usually settle for ham and eggs.

The Edie Creek goldfields just discovered on the mainland of New Guinea was the talk of the town. The other diners at Ah Wong’s would discuss the comings and goings at the goldfields, particularly George Washington, who had recently sold his cordial works to Gilbert Renton in order to take over Kabaira plantation from the Expropriation Board. George and Tom Goss were regular diners along with cadets McMullen, Vertigan, Ross, Roberts, McDonald and Penhallurick. We would listen avidly to the goldfields talk, particularly since we now realised that any saving from our £20 per month meant existing on the barest
of necessities. We heard of Salamaua on the New Guinea mainland, the point where the journey into the mountains started and of Burleigh Gorman’s store. The rumours of rich claims and names of prospectors like Ned Coakley, ‘Sharkeye’ Park, Bill Royal, Dick Glasson, Bill Money and others rang in our ears.

The weeks passed into months and Ern and I became restless and unsettled particularly as our pay and conditions were far below the Administration and Expropriation Board employees, and we were often called on to work at night for no extra pay. Our dissatisfaction reached its peak when we learned that the bonus previously paid to staff (and which we had been banking on) was to be discontinued.

I had become friendly with Jack Thurston when he was mate of the company’s small trading vessel Meklong. Jack, who was eight years older and an expert sailor, fired my enthusiasm to get away from the store office and books and do the things I dreamed of before coming to the Islands. Jack had given up his job on the Meklong and formed a syndicate to purchase a schooner and mining equipment, and he sailed his ship the Boina to Salamaua which had sprung to life as a port for the Edie Creek goldfields.

Bill Theobald had resigned from the Expropriation Board and joined the gold rush. Jerry Kemp, one of the town’s four policemen, had resigned and with Joe Cassells made a quick recruiting trip to the Bainings for a week and returned with 30 native recruits signed on to Carpenters for £10 per head. As I handed him the cheque for £300, which was more than I received in a year, Joe told me they were off to the goldfields. I thought, ‘What the hell am I staying here for?’

That evening as Ern, Frank and I took our nightly walk to Malaguna after dinner, we decided it was time to make the break. Frank knew the Chinese community well, and spoke Mandarin. He would frequently mark a pak-a-pu ticket for one shilling in the hopes of a big lottery win. Frank had a family in Sydney and his physical condition would not permit him to consider the hardship of gold prospecting in the mountains, but he was willing to give us what
assistance he could. Chinese were not permitted on the goldfield but some of the wealthy storekeepers of Chinatown were rumoured to have backed some prospectors.

Next day I approached Seeto Hoi, who ran a store and was the local photographer. He agreed to back Ern and me. The early rush to Salamaua had created problems for the Administration with miners arriving from Australia with no money, tools or labour. They had no experience of New Guinea and many fell ill. They had to be given medical treatment and food, and repatriated at government expense. It was now necessary for a prospector to have the proper equipment, tools, supplies and carriers to take the route from the coast to the mountains, and maintain supplies when prospecting.

Our first step was to obtain a line of natives. We approached Dave Lyall — young Dave’s father — who was Captain of the John Douglas which he ran for a German called Schnackenberg. Dave carried miners, natives and stores to the goldfields and often arranged for native recruits. We told him our story and he thought he could help us when he returned from his next trip.

We made our plans and patiently waited the return of the John Douglas. To our disappointment she had no natives for us and Dave told us recruits were now very difficult to get because word had got back to the villages of the hardships, sickness and death of carriers in the Kaindi Mountains. Natives were afraid to go to the mainland of New Guinea and preferred the plantations on New Britain and New Ireland. We could see no hope of getting labour as there were planters and others more experienced than ourselves unable to obtain recruits. We did not know anything about the bush or where to go and were still dependent on our jobs, though we were as keen as ever to make the break.

Jack Thurston had lent me a National Geographic magazine in which I read an article about Singapore that fuelled my enthusiasm for further travel. With our hopes of goldmining fast fading, a trip to Singapore seemed the next best thing.
A CARGO SHIP, the *Indianola* was at the Rabaul wharf loading copra for Europe and calling at Singapore for bunkers. I had saved £40 and told the captain I wanted to join ‘my brother’ in Singapore. The ship was not permitted to carry passengers but he agreed to take me and for £10 signed me on as a steward saying I could sleep on the settee in the chart room. We agreed that Ern would keep working until I found a job in Singapore, then he would join me. This made sense as only one of us would be temporarily out of work. We also brought Ray Galloway, a friend from the Expropriation Board into the scheme and things seemed at last to be happening.

Carpenters’ Manager, Mr Perriman, was not happy when I told him of my plan to leave since replacement staff would have to come from Sydney, probably a month later. However, he released me from my contract and I sailed when all the holds were full of copra.

The *Indianola* was a really slow tramp and it took nearly two weeks to Singapore with little to break the monotony of corned beef, cheese with copra beetles, and the daily ‘bath’ in half
I was relieved when we reached Singapore but this was short-lived because the Harbour Master would not sign me off the ship’s articles. He insisted that I be paid off at the home port, London. I became an embarrassment to the captain who suggested that I ‘miss’ the ship when she sailed.

The agent threatened to lock me up and deport me if I deserted. Finally the Harbour Master agreed to sign me off if I produced a ticket to Hong Kong. A second class passage by P&O to Hong Kong took most of my £30, but I had no option. The third engineer, Butterworth, who came from Rangoon was paid off also and was awaiting a ship to Rangoon. As I had to wait two days for the P&O vessel to Hong Kong, he suggested that, instead of going to the Seamen’s Institute, I came to the Morris Institute for ships’ officers with him. This was quite comfortable after the Indianola.

At dinner we met an Englishman who had left his job in a bank in Singapore and was awaiting a ship to Yokohama. He was travelling third class and the ship was calling at Hong Kong. Every dollar was precious so I exchanged my ticket for a third class ticket on the French vessel Angkor. The banker was well dressed, as befitted an Englishman in the East, but like me, he was broke and going to try his luck in Yokohama. We shared a cabin with a Frenchman and a Japanese who got drunk every night on the cheap wine supplied on board.

After leaving Singapore we called at Saigon where we were delayed for several days, but with no money we could do little more than walk or sit in the streets of the city. I decided to use the money I had left on a radiogram to Ern and Ray asking for £20 to be sent to Hong Kong. It was my last hope as Ray had a bit saved from his salary from the Expro Board. In the China Sea we were caught by a typhoon. The sea crashed over the bow and the conditions below were dreadful: I was certainly glad to leave the Angkor and the misery of third class travel.

The shock came when the purser presented me with the bill for my radiogram to Rabaul. I did not realise how expensive it
would be and the few dollars I had were well short of what I owed. I was told that my baggage, such as it was, would be held at the agent’s office in Hong Kong until the bill was paid. So I was put in a launch and dumped on the pier in Hong Kong. It was mid-morning and there I was standing in my white suit and white pith helmet and not a possession to my name. I had no idea what the future held but I knew I needed a job.

My first call was Whiteway Laidlaws store where the manager, Mr Smith, originally from Adelaide told me that only Asians were employed locally and all European staff was sent out from England. None-the-less he was sympathetic and gave me a good hearing.

I continued my search; but it was the same story everywhere, ‘Europeans appointed only from Head Office’. By late afternoon I was worn out and depressed. I saw a shed in the grounds of what looked to be a religious institution and rang the bell. I asked the old priest who answered the door if I could sleep the night in the shed but he told me to go to the police. This was the last thing I was going to do as I certainly didn’t want to be deported as a distressed British seaman. I thought of Mr Smith and decided to go back before the store closed and ask for his help. He was so kind and when he knew I had nowhere to sleep, arranged for the shipping agent to let me have my shaving gear from my suitcase and, as his wife was in Australia, took me to his apartment across the bay at Kowloon. He had to attend a Masonic dinner that night but left me with a delicious meal prepared by his Chinese cook. I looked at the beautiful bedroom with its snowy white sheets and thought, ‘Fancy, down-and-out me sleeping here!’ I had lived so hard for so long I had forgotten that luxury existed.

Next morning Mr Smith told me he would give me a temporary job in the store but that he could not break the company regulations and employ me on a European basis. This was to let me earn enough for food and accommodation. He arranged for me to collect my baggage and stay at a Seaman’s Institute run by a church organisation at Wanchai.
I worked in the toy department and helped with office work. It was too far to return to Wanchai at lunchtime and, having barely any money, I would walk the city streets tormented by the tantalising cooking smells as I passed a hotel or restaurant. My dinner generally consisted of liver and bacon for 30 cents because it was the cheapest.

In the evening I would often go into the Sailor’s Institute and watch the sailors playing billiards. Hong Kong was then used by the British Far East Fleet and HMS *Hawkins* was in port. One evening a party of sailors decided to play snooker and each put a dollar in the pool. One, ‘Dusty’ Miller, invited me to join them. I declined saying I had no money. They insisted that I play and put in my stake. I won the game more by default than skill for the others gave points away. The pool was handed to me and neither Dusty nor his friends would take any part of it. They were good blokes and happy to help a chap ‘on the beach’. It was only nine dollars but it was the only money I had handled for some time. I was feeling shabby as my white clothes were not too clean and I wore my jacket buttoned to the neck to cover my old shirt. I had not had a reply from Ern and I began to wonder how on earth I would get out of Hong Kong.

The American Dollar Line vessels which passed through Hong Kong on the way to and from Manila would berth at Kowloon. At weekends or after work when one of these vessels was in port I would go across to Kowloon in the Star Ferry. Most Europeans, many of whom lived in Kowloon, walked through the gate for season pass holders. I would confidently join them striding past the Chinese gatekeepers. Once I was aboard these vessels, I would enquire from the American seaman of the chances of a job. I had offers to stow me away and give me meals. Only once did I have any hope when a wiper in the engine room had deserted in Manila. The Chief Engineer showed interest in me and told me the pay was $US100 per month but when he learnt I was Australian and not a United States citizen, he said he could not sign me on.

When I thought my luck couldn’t get much worse, I woke one Sunday morning feeling ill. I managed to find my way
by tram and foot to the Hong Kong Civilian Hospital. I was immediately admitted with renal colic and spent 10 days in bed. I remember clearly the other fellows in the ward. One was a sailor who had fallen from the mast of a ship and broken his back. One was a Russian who could not sleep and walked around at all hours of the night and another was an Australian who shouted from his bed that he, too, was a seaman and in hospital with venereal disease which he’d caught from a whore in Sydney Domain!

On my discharge, I received a letter from Frank Geraghty which had taken weeks to reach me as it had to go by ship from Rabaul to Sydney then by another vessel from Sydney to Hong Kong. Enclosed was £11 (£10 from Ray and one pound from Frank) with the news that Ern had left Rabaul before receiving my radiogram and Dave Page had gone with him to join four others to prospect for gold in New Britain.

Mr Smith was concerned for me and as a Japanese vessel was due in Hong Kong en route to Australia, he arranged a steerage passage which cost £20. He did not pay me any wages but offset them against my accommodation and food at the Seaman’s Institute, the cost of the radiogram paid to the shipping agent and my £20 passage to Australia. I am ever grateful to him for the kindness and help he gave me when I had no one else to turn to and nowhere else to go.

I thought of how the priest had refused to help me and of the charity of Mr Smith, a Mason. It was ironic that I had been taught at a Catholic school to treat Freemasonry with suspicion.

I eagerly went aboard the Mishima Maru. Steerage accommodation was a bunk in the hold between decks and the bathing facilities were primitive. My meals were served on a tin plate and I sat at a wooden bench. There were Japanese families also travelling steerage, going to the Philippines but they were not in my section. The only other person was a Russian woman whom I seldom saw.

It was a relief to be on my way but I wondered what I would do when I reached Australia, with no money and no job. I was
restricted to a section of the cargo deck but after a while some of the second-class passengers invited me up to their deck. Two American missionary girls occasionally produced some fruit from their table and I played deck golf with three of the male passengers. This was fine while it lasted but if the Japanese stewards saw me they would order me back to my steerage area.

We called at Manila and Davao in the Philippines before reaching Thursday Island where my friends bought some Australian newspapers. I had not seen an Australian paper for months and was enjoying my reading when I came across a reference to the Nakanai murders in New Britain. There were scant details, but I saw my friends’ names in print. On arrival in Brisbane, I learnt that some time after I had sailed for Singapore, Ern had the offer to join a party to go to Nakanai, where a former patrol officer, Ginger Nicholls, had thought there were good prospects of finding gold.

The party comprised Nicholls, Collins, Fisher and Marlay, Ern Britten and Dave Page who had decided to give up his job with Carpenters and go with Ern. It appears that when they arrived in the Nakanai area their camp was raided by natives who killed Collins, Fisher, Marlay and Page. Ern and Nicholls escaped into the bush and survived. I thought if I had remained in Rabaul, I might have been the one killed instead of Dave.
IT WAS GOOD to be back in Sydney with my family, and how beautiful every girl in the street looked after nine months abroad. I looked forward eagerly to meeting up with my old friends, imagining that nothing would have changed. They were glad to see me but I soon realised they were too involved in their own lives to be much interested in what I had done or where I had been. I came to understand that life never stands still and it was I who had changed.

I simply had to earn some money as soon as possible. I found a job with an estate agent at Paddington collecting rents. For this uninspiring work I was paid £2.10s a week.

Mr Shelley had told me when I left, if my health was not good in New Guinea to come back to him; but I was reluctant to do so. I felt foolish returning less than a year after my big adventure had begun. I could see no alternative though as jobs in Sydney were scarce and I didn’t want to keep on rent collecting. Mr Shelley could not give me back my old job but he made an opening for me in another department.
New Year of 1927 came and I was back where I had left off, travelling by tram to and from the city and the daily 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. office routine. At weekends I was back in the Waverley District Cricket and Baseball teams but I never really picked up the threads with my old friends, and local events seemed to have lost their importance. I would dream of life in New Guinea and my friends there and when an island vessel came to Sydney, I would go to the wharf to see who might be aboard. The smell of copra set me longing to return to the tropics.

One lunch hour I met Percy Pickering in King Street. He was down on leave and I told him how I longed to return to Rabaul. I was now thinking what a stupid young fool I’d been to leave it. That afternoon Con Page, Dave’s brother, who worked in Carpenters’ Sydney office called by and told me that Percy had passed on my wish to return to Rabaul. He said Mr Carpenter wanted to see me. Next day Mr Carpenter (later Sir Walter) ushered me into his office. He was a tall man with glasses, ‘Well, Fulton,’ he said while sharpening his pencil, ‘if we send you to Rabaul again will you stay there this time?’

‘Yes Sir!’ I replied. I was to receive £30 per month and take over the books again as they were apparently in an unsatisfactory state. I accepted the offer subject to discussing it with Mr Shelley. Luckily for me he was most supportive.

I returned to Rabaul in the Burns Philp steamer Marsina. Ern had joined the Administration and Ray had been transferred to Maron in the Admiralty Islands. At first I settled back into the life of this delightful tropical centre with its shady tree-lined avenues and colourful gardens. Apart from the occasional bout of malaria, things went well, but as the months passed my restlessness returned. I wanted to get away and do the things I had read about in The Coral Island.

I’m afraid I was a rather difficult young man in some respects because I never wanted to go to the islands to work in an office. I wanted to do something adventurous out in the open air. When Tom Page, a director of Carpenters, came up from Sydney
he was astounded to learn that the height of my ambition was to get out on a trading boat. He told me he had other plans in store for me but I persuaded him to let me work as a supercargo on one of Carpenters’ ships. I got my wish to go to sea as supercargo on the company’s small trading vessel the SS *Dourour*.

The *Dourour* would leave Rabaul for several weeks, her holds full of stores for outstations and plantations where she would pick up copra for discharge at depots to await shipment to Europe. She had once belonged to the Prince of Monaco who had used her for marine archaeology. Skipper Dave Irvine was a capable master but a tough one. He shouted his orders and expected results. The ship carried a trade store, which it was my job to run as well as being responsible for victualling the ship and the medical care of the native passengers we carried on deck. We would anchor offshore, outside the reef, and lower a pinnace and flat bottom surf boats into the sea. The pinnace would tow the surf boats to the reef, where an entrance had been blasted through the coral. They would be sculled to the beach and the copra carried through the surf. When loaded, the surf boats would be sculled to the waiting pinnace and towed back to the ship.

We always got under way early in the morning when the sea was usually flat and we could make it through the reef without getting the copra wet. Invariably the wind and afternoon surf would make the reef crossing hazardous and on occasions we would all be tossed into the sea.

This was the life for me, and I loved every minute of it. I wore only shorts and sandshoes, for protection from coral cuts. The sea, the beach, coconuts and trading with the natives was more like the ‘Coral Island’ of my dreams and I could never imagine working in an office again. I’d be wet half the time going ashore in the boat but that never worried me.

My first voyage of eight weeks was very successful. We had covered most of the outlying islands — New Hanover, New Ireland, The Admiralty and Hermit groups and the north east coast of the New Guinea mainland. The company was pleased because I had, in my enthusiasm, topped the trade store figures of
previous voyages by a big margin, and I, too, felt good as in
addition to saving all my salary, I had established a lucrative
sideline by trading with outlying natives for curios and handicrafts
which had a ready market in Rabaul.

When we sailed on our next voyage we little thought it would
be the last for two of us. Wally Hird, our second officer, took ill
with malaria and was put ashore at Madang where he died aged 28.
We carried many native passengers recruited from the Aitape area
for work on various plantations. Some became ill with dysentery
and I had to treat them. Later, when we were loading off the east
coast of New Ireland, I too became ill and the skipper rushed the
Durour to Kavieng where a doctor was located and a bungalow
hospital was manned by a medical assistant. I had amoebic
dysentery — the first recorded case in New Guinea. It was due to
the care of the medical assistant, Jim McGuigan, that I recovered
sufficiently to be taken by schooner to Rabaul. The Director of
Public Health, Dr Brennan, ordered me to Sydney for specialist
treatment and I returned once more under the care of a medical
assistant, Ernie Hitchcock, who was going on leave.

It seemed unbelievable that, again, I was back in Sydney just
when everything had been going so well in New Guinea. I was weak
and under specialist care. I was frustrated as, apart from being
unable to do much, I was once again in need of a job. When I was
well enough, I read the ‘Positions Vacant’. I would wait for the
postman each day without receiving any replies to my applications
until at last, I received a letter from Reckitts which raised my hopes.
After an interview, I wrote to Mr Shelley requesting my reference be
brought up to date to include my second period in his employ
during 1927. In his reply he suggested I call and see him.

‘Fulton,’ he said, ‘Why didn’t you let me know you were
back in Sydney?’ I told him that he had given me my job back
once and I had left his employ twice, I could not presume on his
kindness again. He said, ‘You have always done your work well,
why wouldn’t I employ you?’ and so I commenced my third
period with Shellesys.
Life in 1929 reverted to the pattern from which I had so wished to escape. Again I played cricket and baseball with the Waverley District Clubs and I gained my Surf Life Saving Association Bronze Medallion with the Bronte Surf Club but I was starting to feel jinxed. I thought of the Durour and the wonderful life I had just left — if only I hadn’t picked up that damn dysentery.

Apart from attending an occasional parish dance, I had no real social life. I became interested in boxing and went to the Stadium on most Saturday nights. My mother disapproved of my tastes and would say, ‘If you meet anyone don’t say where you are going.’ I even tried my hand at swimming club and Theo Green’s gymnasium a few times with little success. On one occasion I made the mistake of being too serious with an ex pug, who was only playing with me and was promptly out on my back with a left hook to the jaw to teach me a lesson.

I used to wonder what my future was, but the Depression of 1930 changed everything. It affected Mr Shelley’s business. Orders fell away and business became slacker and slacker. Mr Shelley was reluctantly compelled to put off staff. I would feel embarrassed sitting at my desk with a bundle of papers that did not require any action and wondered what Mr Shelley was thinking. I had just sufficient money for a passage to Rabaul so I went to Burns Philp and bought a ticket for the Montoro, sailing in March. I told Mr Shelley what I had done because I knew he would not have wanted to put me out of a job. I told him how much I had appreciated his help, so for the third time he wished me luck!

Once aboard the Montoro I saw a number of people I knew, and I had come to feel in my heart that New Guinea was where I belonged. Among the people who were travelling was Steve Lonergan, the chief clerk in the Administration and Mr Symington with whom I had worked in W. R. Carpenters; he was a senior man in the company. It was common knowledge that I was just going back on spec. and I was asked, ‘What are you going to do when you get up there, Ted?’
'Oh, I don’t know, I just hope something turns up when I arrive.’

Before we left the ship, Steve Lonergan said, ‘Well, Ted you’d better come up to the Central Administration, I’ll have a chat to ‘Whitie’ (Alan Whiteman, who was staff clerk) and see if he can fit you in.’ Also as I was leaving the ship Mr Symington stopped me on the gangway and said, ‘Oh, Fulton, you might call and see me in the office when you get settled.’ Things were looking good.

I stayed with my old friend Ernie Britten, who had joined the Administration after the Nakanai tragedy. He was still a bachelor and shared a bungalow with Keith Norris. The code of the islands was one of esprit de corps and it was no problem for them to put me up.

I called in to the Central Administration, saw Alan Whiteman, and he told me that they could give me a clerical position in the Treasury. Mr Symington too had discussed me with Mr Carpenter and Mr Carpenter told me that there was a job on the wharf that I would be able to have. I was embarrassed to have to tell them both that I had already accepted a job in the Administration.
I was back in Rabaul where I had left off, except that instead of being in private enterprise I was now in the Administration. As much as I didn’t want to be doing clerical work, the effects of the Depression were hitting the islands and I was lucky to have a job at all. Until then, it had been difficult to attract staff from Australia, but all that had changed and people who wouldn’t have considered working abroad now looked to the islands for employment.

For the next two years I worked in the Treasury for part of the time, the Post Office and government stores. I was not classified and was sent where relieving positions occurred for a matter of months when people went on leave. The next six years covered a period of intense personal frustration. It was impossible to save money on my salary, and the system of seniority ruled out all prospects of worthwhile promotion.

In the evening, if we had the money, a group of us would get together over bottles of beer. In 1930 I used to have my dinner at the Rabaul Hotel. The Hotel was ‘L’ shaped with two long wings and a verandah each side of the rows of rooms. This allowed the air to circulate as electric fans and air-conditioning had not yet arrived. Bathrooms were cubicles with a bucket and spray rose
attached to a rope and pulley and hauled to above head height. The dining room was at ground level with a concrete floor and at meal times the air was kept moving by a series of punkas attached to a rope and pulled by a native outside the room. The punkas would gradually slow to a stop when the operator, deciding to do it the easy way, would rest in a chair with the rope attached to his foot and kick backwards and forwards until he fell asleep.

One evening when I came into the dining room there was a young man at my table. The manageress, Mrs Luxmoore, came over and said, ‘Ted this is Mr Flynn, he has just arrived on the ship from Australia and I thought it would be nice for him to meet you and find out about the local scene.’

He told me his name was ‘Errol’ and we shared a couple of bottles of beer. Over dinner I learnt he had come to New Guinea to work for the Administration.

I did not see much of Errol as he was transferred to Kavieng in New Ireland. In Kavieng he was involved in a fight in the local hotel and shortly after left the Administration to join an Irishman, Paddy Hawkes, running a small schooner named Maski. Paddy, an old pugilist, would refer to him as a ‘Broth of a Boy’ after the fight in the pub.

Sometime later I caught up with Errol in Madang when I was transferred there as Customs and Native Labour Officer. He had spent quite a lot of time in the Morobe goldfield area. I last saw him in Rabaul when he was leaving New Guinea. He was a passenger aboard the Tanda a ship from Australia, which had called at Salamaua and Rabaul en route to the Far East. I met him in the street and he said, ‘Ted, do you know where I can insure diamonds.’ I referred him to Bill Marquis who was the representative of an Australian insurance company. Some time later we heard that the diamonds had been reported stolen on the voyage from Rabaul to Hong Kong but I never heard if any insurance claim was paid.

A few years later when we were gold prospecting in the Sepik mountains I heard of his Hollywood success. I thought, ‘Good
luck to you Errol!’ I always regarded him as a happy-go-lucky, likeable person. He was no angel but it annoyed me when I read some distorted and inaccurate reports of his life in New Guinea.

About this time I received a letter from Australia telling me that Mr Shelley, who was so depressed owing to the decline in business and the necessity to put off staff, had gone into his garage one Sunday afternoon and shot himself. His death left me shocked and saddened. He was strict and demanding but fair and kind. Having lost my own father at a young age I looked up to him and remembered him always with affection and respect.

I took my first leave in 1932. Since we were not that well paid, it was all I could do to exist on my leave pay. I used to go to Ushers Hotel in Castlereagh Street. It was the haunt of people from New Guinea and Ethel and Lil, whose bar we used, knew most of us. People would congregate there as early as 10.00 a.m. If you wanted to see somebody who you knew was down in Australia, or just recently come down from New Guinea, Ethel had a book with addresses, telephone numbers and messages.

Time was moving on and I wasn’t getting any younger. I had gone to New Guinea with a purpose which, from 1926 until 1935, I hadn’t realised. I had got to know my way around the islands and knew a lot about the natives’ conditions; I was well known, but as far as setting myself up in any type of business, I was still as far away from that as ever.

It was the end of 1935 and I was now 31. I had not taken the three months leave due in 1934 and I did not apply until the end of 1935 when I was eligible for long leave plus six months after six years’ service. This was my opportunity to make the break. With a leave cheque of approximately £300 I had more money than I had ever had or was ever likely to accumulate.

I returned from Sydney in the Burns Philp vessel *Macdhui* and while in Rabaul, en route to Wewak, I called on the Government Secretary, Mr Page, and told him I was spending my ‘leave’ visiting Jack Thurston at Wewak. I had not yet resigned and an Administration Officer was not permitted to engage in
private enterprise. Mr Page, who knew of my friendship with Jack, called out as I left, ‘I hope you find bucketsful, Ted!’

At Wewak Jack met me on the beach and his first words were, ‘You are never going back to the Administration, Ted!’
JACK THURSTON HAD arrived in New Guinea in 1924 and had spent most of the time sailing small ships around the islands carrying cargo. At one stage he owned a schooner called the *Boina* in partnership with Dr Raphael Cilento, who was conducting medical research in the islands. In 1926 Jack established a coconut plantation at Drina on the south coast of New Britain. Phoebe Parkinson, who was the sister of Queen Emma, had negotiated with the locals for the purchase of the land and Drina, with its white beaches and pretty lagoon, was to remain forever his favourite plantation. When I first met Jack he seemed to me to be a fountain of knowledge and in the language of the day he was ‘experienced’.

In 1926 he had prospected for gold at Nakanai in New Britain with Dyson Hore-Lacy. They had come into the area on the heels of Nicholls’ party, four of whom had been killed. Jack was speared through the legs by hostile natives but managed to
escape with the help of Kina, his devoted Manus boy. Later Jack prospected in the Morobe district before going to the Sepik.

In 1934 indications of gold had been reported two days walk inland from Wewak and Jack had pegged a claim on the Siling River. A few other prospectors were also in the area on the Siling and Nagum Rivers. Jack had not been back to Australia for several years and it was his intention to make a short trip while I looked after his claim and native labour.

Jack made this record of his arrival at the Sepik:

At the time there was a recession in copra so I decided to go across from New Britain into the Wewak area. Actually there was no town called Wewak then — only a village. The party consisted of Dick Moore, Tex Roberts and myself and we went on the *Drina* which was the M/V that I owned. There was no District Office there at the time — only a *kunai* [grass] house on the point that Jim Appleby, a patrol officer, used when he came down from Aitape where Sepik District Headquarters was then established.

From Wewak we went first to the Siling River, about a day’s walk inland. We made camp there and put in our sluice boxes and tested a creek. We found quite good prospects and decided to make this camp permanent and to work the Siling. We were the only ones there. I had previously been in that country recruiting labour and had found indications of gold in the river. That was what decided me to return there and look for gold. Edie Creek, in the Morobe District, was well populated but the Sepik was a completely new field.

Corrigan joined us and I think Cobb and his wife came over later. Corrigan and Cobb were in partnership as well. Other miners started to drift in until there were quite a number of us. In those days the ships didn’t come to Wewak but went to Boram where Tom Ifould and his wife Mollie had a plantation. Tom had built a kunai
house where miners could stay over. It was called the Blood House. They also had a trade store — Ifould brought in goods to sell to miners. Later on, amongst those who came to the Sepik field via Boram and the Blood House were Jack Mullaley, Vic Penenefather, Axel Eilertz and Eric Rondahl.

Our party was there for about a year altogether and we did quite well. We took out about £9,000 worth of gold but it cost us about £9,000 to get there and work it, so all we really gained was the experience. After the year was up we decided to pull out and go back to Rabaul. Dick Moore and Tex Roberts went down South for a holiday but I didn't have any money for travel and instead I went up to Edie Creek and looked around. I was offered several tributes, including one from Bill Money, but it seemed to me that the prospects there weren't any better than in the Sepik so I decided to go back to Wewak.

I met up with Bill Chapman whom I’d known before and who was working just below Mrs Booth near Bulolo. I told him about Wewak and he decided to come with me. We took the boat to Madang and then chartered the Balangat which was owned by Ernie Wauchope and went to Wewak since the main vessels didn’t call there at that time. From there we walked in to the Nagum River which I had previously prospected. It was a much bigger river than the Siling and as a result of continuing good prospects, I got in touch with a mining company in Sydney. They decided to look at the dredging and sluicing claims that we had pegged. We didn't know much about this company but when they sent their mining engineer up we went to Boram to meet him and bring him to our camp — little over a day's walk.

The company men tested the claims but all they were interested in was sending telegrams South that ‘the party had arrived’ or that they had ‘started to drill’ or ‘test'
— apparently in the expectation that the shares would go up. Although they found the prospects quite good, nothing eventuated although I expect that the shareholders, or the original promoters of the company, did quite well out of it. All I got was a very beautiful tent with brass knobs on the poles; also some balances for testing the gold.

Bill Chapman decided to go back to his mine at Bulolo and I decided to stop on my own on the Nagum. I reckoned that I could look out for myself and I had my team of Sepik and Manus boys with me.

This would have been the end of 1934 or the beginning of 1935. I set up a permanent camp and decided to prospect right along the Alexander and Torricelli Range — on the Sepik fall; that is, all the rivers ran eventually into the Sepik River. I had one team of boys putting boxes into the Nagum to work it while I was away. It was a pretty big river and it was the creeks that ran into it that were worked as ‘river and creek claims’. Where we were the following year (early 1936) the river was steep sided with no beaches and would have been impossible to work with anything less than a 1000 tons dredge or a diversion dam. We used sluice boxes in a creek that ran into it. I would go out for about a month perhaps, prospecting every river and creek as I came along the range and I found gold in most of them but not really payable gold. I’d prospect the river down on the flats and then if I found a trace I’d work up-river to the headwaters. If I decided that there was nothing worthwhile then I’d go onto the next stream. It was just a matter of elimination.

Eventually I came to the Parchee River which was nearer Maprik and found quite good gold on the flats. There had been a very big earthquake while I had my camp on the Nagum and that had changed the course of the rivers. It was a really big upheaval and had it
happened down in Australia it would have wrecked cities. Where it had cut a new course for the Parchee it had exposed the old wash and that’s where I found good gold. I decided to trace this river to its source and where it ran into very high gorges I had to sidle along the gorge to make sure that I was on the right river. I eventually came out again where it opened up high in the mountains. I took prospects again and found that they were excellent. It gave me great hope that I was on to something.

I remember that I stopped in a saksak [sago] swamp. I didn’t have much food left at the time; I had an old piece of ham and boiled the skin up again and again for soup. It was all right when it was hot but not when it was cold — just fatty. Next morning I continued up the river and came to two branches. I decided to go up the left-hand one but the gold started to cut out. I then back tracked and went up the right-hand branch which I should have done to begin with, because it was the older branch. You can tell the older branch of a river if you lie flat on the ground to see if it has been worn down a bit more than the other, which shows that it has been flowing for a longer time. I put in a box — old axe-cases were used as prospecting boxes — and got the boys to start sluicing while I continued up to the source of the river. There, where there was only a trickle, I could pick a lot of gold off the bottom. I decided then to peg the river.

I put in my pegs for a dredging and sluicing claim. There were several sorts of claims that you could peg — an ordinary claim which was very small but with this you could get 10 claims as a ‘reward’ for discovering the field — but I decided to go for a dredging and sluicing lease which was 200 hectares. It could be as long as you liked, off the river or in the river, but I put in my datum peg and pegged 100 metres wide. [The New Guinea Mandate still retained the old German units of measurement.]
According to mining regulations you had to put the particulars of the claim on a datum peg — usually inside an old tobacco tin to keep the weather out. The particulars included the miner's right number and a description of the area claimed. Then you had to go to Wewak to make the necessary application to the Mining Warden.

By this time the government had set up an office at Wewak and moved the Sepik District Headquarters from Aitape to there. Kassa Townsend was the District Officer. Wewak was a four or five days' walk from the Parchee (if you ran down all the mountains and hurried up the other side!) and there my application was posted on the public notice board, with all particulars and a description of the location, so that anyone could go and find it. That was the official idea. In reality you put in a description that seemed clear but was as confusing as possible to anyone actually trying to find the spot. If you had pegged correctly no one else could work the ground but none the less they could object to the granting of a dredging and sluicing lease and claim that the area was really 'river and creek' or 'river and creek extended' claim country. Along with the application was a fee which I think was £10 and also a proportion of the survey fee which was quite considerable. In return you got a paper to say that you had filed the necessary information. You had to take this back to your claim and enter the particulars at your datum peg to let everyone know you had made application for a dredging and sluicing claim.

After Bill Chapman had gone back to Bulolo and I had remained on the Nagum there were many miners around and one of them was Harry Tudor. He'd been mining in Western Australia and all over Australia. I met up with him on the Nagum where he was working on a tributary with his sons Don and Len and Len's wife
Ethel [later known as Judy]. He didn’t have any labour and couldn’t speak Pidgin so I lent him some of my boys and on one of my prospecting trips Harry came along too.

We walked for days and eventually came to the vicinity of Maprik where Harry crossed over the range to the seaward fall while I prospected the Parchee. Harry Tudor had found some prospects on the other side of the range but when we met again at my camp on the Nagum and I told him what I had found on the Parchee, we decided to go in together. He had good mining experience but only a small amount of money and since fees for dredging and sluicing claims were costly and annual rent had to be paid, I stipulated that I should control the show.

It was about this time that you, Ted, arrived in Wewak since we had previously arranged that you should come to the Sepik and join me. I picked you up at Wewak and we walked into my Nagum camp where I had made a bit of a bush house for you.

When Jack and I left Wewak for his camp on the Nagum River I had little enough in the way of belongings but Jack decided it was far too much to be carried into the mountains and ruthlessly threw out everything except the bare essentials to be carried in our canvas bed rolls. I had my first experience of negotiating the swamps and mountain tracks — not to mention leeches. Jack, tough and fit, set a merry pace in the tropical heat. It made me wonder if all the gold in New Guinea was worth it and I was still wondering as I stumbled into Jack’s austere camp next night.

We left Jack’s camp on the Nagum River on 21 February 1936 and met Harry Tudor at the track from his camp. We had a team of Jack’s boys with mining equipment and stores to establish a base at the Screw River. The excess cargo was carried in relays by natives en route which included the villages of Sauli, Kamun, Dunogi, Kaboibus, Bonahetum and Ulahanoitu.
We arrived at the Youibi River on 29 February and Jack and Harry wasted no time in following up the river to plant the Datum Peg and stake out their claim with me acting as Chairman. This was my first lesson in prospecting and claim pegging, and after our rugged journey from the coast I could now call myself a ‘Prospector’.

Jack had to make the journey back to Wewak to register the claim at the District Office as the District Officer, ‘Kassa’ Townsend, was also the Mining Warden. Harry and the boys were working sluice-boxes in the river and getting very rich gold while I had the job of clearing a garden to plant vegetables for ourselves and the labourers. Since it took a native nearly a week to carry in a 50 lb pack of rice, or tinned meat, and flour etc. and since he would eat at least 10 lbs of rice en route, it was essential that we supplement our diet with local produce.

Harry’s sons, Len and Don, and Len’s wife, Ethel, had remained at Harry’s camp on the Nagum. Jack and Harry had told them to say they were going recruiting for labour in order to throw other prospectors off their trail in case it was suspected they had made a new gold find.

As our camp became established we received visits from the local natives. At first they were hostile to our mining activities which sent muddy water downstream to their own water supply. They had had little contact, if any, with white patrols and were curious of our presence. They wore no clothes and were always armed with bows and arrows. It was not long before friendly relations were established and they brought their women to the camp with food from their vegetable gardens. They traded the vegetables for spoonfuls of salt on a banana leaf. When the women first came to our camp they were naked but later they added a brief covering of hand made fabric which was probably a result of the gaze of our coastal natives or perhaps ourselves. On their return to the village this was discarded again.

Jack had brought in a big supply of trade goods to pay for carriers and establish good relations: razor blades, mirrors, beads, salt, stick tobacco, singlets and belts. The local men were impressed
with the belts and instead of naked men visiting us, we soon had men — naked except for a belt or singlet that hung as low as the navel, which accentuated their nudity.

One day Harry’s son, Don, arrived in the camp with some natives, having received directions from villagers en route. He had become restless and decided to find his father. This further complicated my situation as I had come to join Jack, who had, of necessity, teamed up with Harry in the prospecting trip which led them to the Youibi (Parchee) River. I could not expect to share in something which belonged to Jack and Harry. It was not discussed but I sensed that Harry was conscious of my presence and I was not sure where I stood.

The word had filtered through on the ‘bush wireless’ that Jack and Harry were getting kerosene tins full of gold and their claim became known as ‘Number One Gold’. Pegged in February 1936, it got that name by being one of the richest mines in New Guinea held by an individual. It was the year that Edward VIII was supposed to come to the throne and officially it was called Edward VIII. Other prospectors started to hunt us out and we received visits from Bill MacGregor, Frank Luff and Bill Bell.

Things were all right at first, but it was not long before a real mining quarrel developed over the extent of river that had been pegged by Jack and Harry. Word came through that Alf Belfield and other prospectors were making their way in from the coast and the situation was very tense.

Jack was playing for time, until his Dredging and Sluicing Lease was granted. He managed to cool things with Bill and Frank, and when Kassa Townsend granted the lease he also declared the area a goldfield. This immediately started a gold rush of miners from Salamaua – Wau – Morobe areas, 400 miles down the coast. The Sepik was never considered a rich goldfield compared with Morobe but it did yield good returns for those who put in the money and energy to mine it over time.

I told Jack that I thought I should get out and do some prospecting on my own account and he, too, sensed that Harry
did not wish to have me involved in their partnership. He agreed to lend me a few natives and equipment to enable me to explore the rivers and creeks in the mountains. We did not tell Harry or Don and next morning at daylight I was equipped for the road and went into our mess hut for coffee. Harry saw me in bush gear and said, ‘Where are you going, Ted?’

‘I’m going prospecting Harry, to try and find a claim for myself.’

He said, ‘Don’s going prospecting too.’ This was a remarkable coincidence as I had rarely spoken to Don. He was about my own age — 31. He was married with a little girl of five but his wife and daughter were in Australia. He was morose and mostly sat with his arms folded and I had given up trying to make conversation with him since I felt he resented me. When Don came into the hut and saw me he asked in which direction I was going. It is an unwritten law that a prospector does not follow another but leaves him some area: I knew enough to say, ‘I’m going upstream Don’. But instead of saying, ‘Well, I’m going downstream,’ Don said, ‘I was going upstream, too, so why not go together, pool our natives and stores and share if we find anything.’ I was amazed and pleased to know Don was prepared to go with me. Although I could never get through to him, I had nothing against him and the arrangement was a sensible solution for both of us.

We prospected the creeks upstream and pegged two creeks that met above Number One Gold, one in Don’s name and the other in mine. Don then told me that he had an arrangement to share everything with his brother Len who was back at Nagum River.

I said, ‘OK, Len can share with us and when he comes out we can stake a claim in his name.’ We established our base and worked one box with the few natives we had, and shortly after Len and his wife Ethel arrived at Jack and Harry’s camp. MacGregor and Luff were still there, and the presence of this girl in what was considered a hazardous area of unexplored New Guinea territory was not welcomed by anyone.
I had actually travelled up with Ethel on the *Macdhui* and we had sat at the same table. She was a very quiet, uncommunicative girl and she made very little conversation — kept to herself — and I didn’t know much about her at all. I couldn’t understand why a young woman like that was going out to places where not many men in New Guinea even thought of going to. When I learned that her husband was coming out to finish up where we were, I subscribed to the view of Bill MacGregor and Jack and others that it was rather a crazy idea and thought that she was only going to be an encumbrance. Now, I’m the very first to admit how wrong I was and how I had misjudged her. Judy (as she became known) never complained about anything and she had a really adventurous spirit. I hadn’t in my wildest thoughts imagined when I travelled on that ship that I’d finish up being her husband’s partner in a goldmining venture.

We had barely started to work our claim when Don took ill with malaria. We looked after him in a hut at Number One Gold but as the days passed with no improvement we became increasingly worried. We decided to carry him to the coast for treatment. Our isolation was suddenly very real and it would take more than a week to carry him out by the same route we had taken in. It was decided to try and reach the coast north of Wewak, where a missionary was located at But. This was the closest point in a direct line from where we were situated in the mountains. The route was a series of narrow tracks between the few sparsely populated villages in rugged mountainous country.

Jack, being a superb bushman, went ahead with a team of mining boys who with axes and knives hacked a way through the jungle and Len and I followed with Don carried on a rough stretcher we made. The natives did everything possible to help under the intolerable conditions but much of the journey in the hot sun was a terrible ordeal for poor Don as it was impossible to always carry the stretcher horizontally when weaving through narrow jungle tracks and up and down steep mountains.
We arrived at But after three days and next day took Don to Boram by pinnace. The nearest doctor was 200 miles down the coast at Madang but there was a medical assistant, Stan Christian, at Wewak across the bay. Stan came across to Boram and gave Don what treatment he could and returned to Wewak. There were no hospital facilities and Don was in the native built ‘Rest House’ used by miners and prospectors on the beach. But Don was too far gone, his temperature suddenly went up to some phenomenal degree — 109 or 110 and that evening he died.

Jack, Len and I took him back to Wewak and arranged the funeral there. I know he would have died if we had left him at the camp but the ordeal of getting him to the coast and treatment was too much. The fever had weakened him and he was homesick for his wife and little girl. It was a tragic end to our partnership. Stephenson, the police master at Wewak organised the native prisoners to dig a grave in the coral and the Chinese carpenter made a rough coffin. Kassa Townsend read the service at the graveside and Jimmy Hodgekiss, patrol officer, Jack, Len and I buried Don on the Wewak cliff overlooking the sea.
North coast of New Guinea, Sepik district, showing Number One Gold which was the claim mined by Jack Thurston and Harry Tudor. My claim was Starlight.
LEN WAS VERY cut up about losing his brother and he and Jack were anxious to get back to Number One Gold to tell Harry and Judy. Harry saw them returning and of course he sensed at once that the news was bad. It was a sad business and I never felt Don should have been out there in the first place.

It was necessary for Len and me to recruit native labour to work our claim and I applied to the District Officer and was granted a General Recruiters Licence.

There were two types of licences — a personal one which restricted you to recruiting labour for yourself, and a general recruiter’s licence which meant you could recruit labour for anybody at all. It was more difficult to get a general one but apparently I was sufficiently well regarded to be granted one. Recruiters’ licences were only granted after the Director of District
Services was satisfied the applicant was of good character and experience, was suitably equipped and capable of dealing with situations that arise in primitive areas. Restraint in the use of firearms was one of the most important criteria in assessing suitability. The idea of getting a general one meant that if Jack or somebody else wanted labour too, I had the authority to get labour for them, although Jack had his own licence and was self-sufficient.

People talk about recruiting as blackbirding but it was an essential occupation and a very hard one. There were not many professional recruiters. The labour supply was mostly from remote parts of the mainland such as where I was in the Sepik and Aitape districts, places where the natives were not sophisticated. Recruiters came in and displayed knives and mirrors and cloth, salt and tobacco. This was their way of attracting the men to sign up.

When the men were signed on they had to be examined by a medical assistant. Most of the out-station people of the medical and patrol service were good officers and helpful and understanding and they did their job. In spite of some of the derogatory things said about Australian administration in the League of Nations and other places for political purposes, the Australian government had done nothing to be ashamed of. In looking after the welfare of the natives they were always watchful to see that they were not tricked into anything. What generally happened was some native who had been working for Europeans would tell the others that it was a good way of life and, of course, the presence of a head man in the village would persuade them to go. In the long-term taking them away from their villages meant they benefited physically because when you'd take them away they were invariably in poor physical shape, not having had a proper diet.

They often got signed on and taken to a plantation only to find they weren't strong enough to do the work initially. I witnessed this on the trading boat bringing these recruits over from the island in 1928 and I couldn't believe it when I went to the plantations on New Ireland six months later and saw these big muscular men with shiny oily skins carry a bag of copra around
as though it was a light balloon. Six months previously their skin had been scaly because of poor diet.

Some recruits were married men but they would be in the minority and the government was strict on over-recruiting from one area. If they found the area was being denuded of young males and left with only children and old men and women, there wouldn’t be enough young men to keep the population going and to help with the essential economy of the village such as clearing for new gardens. Men did all the heavy work, but the women worked in the gardens. Men did the hunting and where necessary the fighting.

After burying Don, instead of going straight back into the mountains, I set off with my one native Melhei (known as ‘Geko’) to walk up the coast to Aitape and make my way inland. On the way I picked up another native, Antananta, from Melhei’s village, inland at Selni. The other member of our party was ‘Cus Cus’ my dog, who I had carried in as a tiny pup from Wewak.

Walking up the coast along 90 miles of beach was vastly different from the jungle, mountains and rivers of the inland. We walked in the glare of the tropical sun with breaks inland to skirt the headlands. We made good progress if the beach was flat and I could travel on the firm sand close to the tide but it was a slow leaden drag if my feet sank above the ankles in the sand. I was to repeat this journey a number of times in subsequent years.

At this time Aitape had an Assistant District Officer, Medical Assistant and a Wireless Operator. Charlie Gough and Ning Hee both had stores, and Wally Hook, a recruiter, had a house on the beach. Either Gerry Keogh or Woodman was ADO and Jack Boto was the Radio Operator.

I purchased stores and trade goods and set off on my first recruiting trip to the Palai area. At the Nigea River I made camp on the bank with the intention of crossing next day. During the night the river flooded and I lost two days waiting to cross. I never forgot the lesson, ‘cross when you can’. I also lost some village carriers who abandoned my cargo and with constant rain and four carriers
I found this recruiting game not much fun. Still I was desperate. We needed labour to get gold to pay our way. I pressed on with the help of my two boys and eventually arrived in the Palai area.

With no success in the first places I tried, I came to a village where I sensed all was not well. After leaving the previous village and crossing the river and valley I could hear the garamut (a hollow tree trunk drum) sending messages ‘boom, boom, boom’ which I optimistically hoped meant ‘He’s on the way prepare food and water.’ This was certainly not the case. The village was deserted and the fires were still hot. I had a revolver which I had bought from ‘Tommy’, Captain Thomson of Muliama, but I had never used it. I kept calling out but there was no sign of life. It was obvious that I was not welcome and I sensed I was being watched from the jungle.

All my senses were alert and the adrenalin was coursing through my veins but I had to remain calm. As a precaution I sat with my back against a coconut tree thinking perhaps there may be an arrow or spear coming. Then I fired off my revolver to give the message that I was armed but when the cartridge case spread and stuck I became really alarmed and kept banging my revolver on the ground in a futile attempt to clear it. I shouted all sorts of threats and was very relieved when in walked a short native with only a cock-box and bow and arrows which he placed against a tree. He was followed at intervals by others and soon they were all inspecting the mirrors, beads, cloth, knives, tomahawks and trade goods. It was mid-afternoon and I did not wish to be in the village at night. Through an interpreter I preached the advantage of coming to work with me for two years and the gifts of tomahawks I would make to their folk.

The first man to come forward was the one who had first appeared. He took off his cock-box and gave it to a relative then he squatted near me. He was followed in ones and twos by six others. I was delighted — my first recruits, who we needed so badly. I was anxious to leave since I wanted to be as far as possible from the village by nightfall.
We travelled until dark as the farther away from their village we got, the less chance they had of changing their minds and running away. It was not until well into the next day that I could be sure they would stay with me as they would then be in unfamiliar country where the natives were not friendly towards them. In those days contact between the tribes was limited and it was not unusual for a man’s horizon and therefore his world to be defined by the next ridge or valley.

When we arrived back at Aitape the recruits were examined by the Medical Assistant and signed on to me for two years by the ADO.

I then started the return journey down the coast to But. En route I met up first with Father Lutmer, a German missionary, and farther down the coast I stayed with ‘Diwai’ Woods (diwai is Pidgin English for wood) in his native material house at Yakamul. Diwai had a small coconut plantation not yet in production and kept things going by recruiting trips inland for natives he signed on to work elsewhere. At But we camped for the night before setting off into the mountains.

The recruits, who appeared quite settled, went to a creek to wash rice for the evening meal. Shortly after Geko came and said, ‘All boi run away.’ The recruits had vanished, apparently scared at the prospect of going into the unknown mountains next day. So much for the success of my first recruiting trip. There was nothing for it but to make my way back up the coast to get them back or recruit others.

On my arrival back at Yakamul I found that the runaways had been apprehended by natives of Diwai Woods and Father Lutmer. They had passed through the beach villages and were recognised as natives from inland, the other side of the Torricelli mountains. They were ‘bush kanakas’ and easily identified; they were also scared of the beach natives. Coastal people are superstitious of the ‘Tamberan’, a spirit that lives in the mountains and bush people are afraid of the ‘Maselai’ a spirit that lives in the sea.
I took the seven men back to Aitape and charged the two who I thought were ringleaders with desertion. The ADO gave each a month in the *kalabus* [gaol]. It was the only way to discourage running away and a term in the *kalabus* was no real hardship or social stigma. This was borne out by the fact that after two years, when I took them home to their village after their contract was up, the two who had deserted me wished to sign on for another term. They were the two who served the month in the *kalabus* and they actually persuaded a new line of 12 to accompany them back to the goldfields, saying that the food and the pay were good.

I went down the coast again with the remaining five and we eventually reached our claim without any more problems.
WHEN I RETURNED from recruiting, Len had built a rough house for us on the site we had picked out before Don took ill. It was on the hill beside the creek and he and Judy were living in it and working a sluice box. They were getting a little gold on the creek pegged in Don’s name.

Our Palai recruits slowly learned to use a pick and shovel and eventually became a good team assisted by some of the local natives who worked on a casual basis.

In the evening Len and Judy used to go to where the two creeks met because there was a bit of a scour there and a small mudstone basin where you could sit and have a bath. After I returned from recruiting, Len produced a matchbox with some gold in it and told me he thought my creek was the ‘pea’. I asked him what he meant and he said he thought we were working the wrong creek where there was not as much gold. He went on to tell me that when he was having a bath he had played the wash through his fingers and picked out the gold that was now in the match box. Being the kind of chap he was, Len didn’t assume he had any share in the creek pegged in my name. I told him of the arrangement I had made with Don. We’d agreed to each
peg a creek and share what we found. We had also agreed that when Len joined us he would also become a partner and as far as I was concerned the arrangement still stood.

Len was relieved and we moved our boxes on to my creek. We started to get better returns but we realised it would only be a matter of time before we cut out of gold altogether. Len said to me one day.

‘Look, Ted, I think I’ll take some boys and go out prospecting. Judy is coming with me.’ This surprised me — but if I’d known Judy as well as I do now, I wouldn’t have been at all surprised. She was a slip of a girl but very adaptable to tough conditions and lived a rugged life with great spirit and cheerfulness.

And so with a tent fly and some boys, the pair set off. They went to an area Len and I had previously prospected without any success. The river had been blocked by landslides as a result of an earthquake and this time Len intended to prospect more thoroughly. However they discovered it was now pegged and occupied by Vic Fryer and Jack Lang who were getting good-sized pieces of gold.

Miners were arriving at Wewak as the word had got around of our gold strike. Harry Aiken and later Graham Jackson passed through my camp. Then word came through that another miner, Dan Egan, had committed suicide by cutting his throat. A former patrol officer prospecting near by was reported hanged. Jack Thurston and Jack Chipper went to his camp and found his body hanging from a fish line. The circumstances were suspicious and though it was never proven, it was believed he had been murdered.

Len and Judy finding the area occupied by Vic Fryer set off in another direction. I had expected them to be away for a week or 10 days and I was surprised when after only a day or two, a boy came back to camp with a matchbox of gold and a note from Len asking me to first take the gold down to Harry and have it weighed on his scales and then to accompany the boy back to where he and Judy were.

I took the matchbox to Harry at Number One Gold and his hand trembled when he took it and saw the gold inside.
‘Where did Len find this, Ted?’

‘I don’t know, Harry.’ This was true but I had learnt enough about gold mining not to tell even Len’s father. Gold was in his blood and though he and Jack were working a very rich claim, the fever of discovering more is never appeased.

I returned to our claim and quietly slipped upstream with my guide. We walked into the mountains and along the ridges until we came to a fair-sized river which we later knew as the Ulahau and which joined the Sowom River that ran down to the coast. We followed the Ulahau until it branched and was joined by the Bulibidiwa Creek, and came to where Len and Judy had pitched their tent fly upstream. Len was all for us pegging River and Creek claims but I persuaded him to peg a Dredging and Sluicing claim taking all of Bulibidiwa Creek and about a mile of the Ulahau River downstream. It meant 30 days’ notice and posting plan at the Warden’s Office in Wewak during which period another prospector could object, but we decided it was better to take the risk since we needed the area to justify the establishment of a worthwhile base.

We were quite confident nobody knew of Len’s find or our location since we had been particularly careful and I had not said a word to anyone. Next day we were surprised when one of our boys called out, ‘Wanpela masta i kam,’ and a tall, rangy figure ambled up the creek. He introduced himself as Eric Archibald from Cairns and said, ‘Nice of you to leave your visiting card at the creek junction,’ referring to the dish containing some gold washed in a prospect taken there and which we had carelessly left on the river bank thinking nobody was within miles of us.

Eric Archibald was a really good prospector. He had a mug of tea with us and then said, ‘Well I’ll get on my way and leave you blokes alone. I hope to find another creek in the mountains.’ We were delighted when we heard some time later that Archie and his partner Joe Taylor were getting some gold on the Mangam River.

Having pegged our Dredging and Sluicing claim, which we named ‘Starlight’, I made my way out to the coast to buy more
stores and equipment and to get a line of carriers. We worked our small claims while we counted the days until our lease would be granted. We were elated when this came through and quickly moved our equipment and started work. We selected a high point on a bend of the river and built ourselves a reasonably comfortable house with bush materials.

We soon required more labour and since Len had the mining experience and I was the recruiter, off I went, this time into the Wapi area over the Torricelli Mountains behind Aitape.

I was successful and was returning to Aitape to sign the labour on when one evening we camped at a river and along came Wally Hook and with him a one armed zoologist from Australia called Jock Marshall. He later became Professor Marshall, author of *Men and Birds of Paradise*. Wally, a professional recruiter, was on his way into the area from where I was returning and no doubt would have obtained some of the natives I had recruited if he’d been ahead of me. However, such was Wally that instead of being resentful he said, ‘Ted, when you get back to Aitape use my house. Una will look after you, and use my typewriter to make out the natives’ contracts.’

Later, when the Japanese invaded New Guinea, Wally would not leave. He moved Una and his child over the mountains into the flat grass country. I was distressed to learn that in order to gain favour with the Japanese the coastal natives went inland and killed Wally with knives and axes.

Having signed on my 30 recruits, I set off down the coast again and arrived at But without any problems. In the village was Commander Wauchope, ex Royal Navy. He was in the *Haus Kiap* [Patrol Officer’s House] surrounded by his cargo which had been dumped on the beach and had been there for days waiting for carriers to take him into the mountains. The Commander wasn’t worried. He had plenty of food and rum, and greeted me, ‘Fulton old boy, come and have a drink.’ I can still see him seated on his bed-sail wearing a singlet and shorts that were once white, a battered felt hat and shabby sandshoes that destined in the sand
as he recounted the days in Malta with the Mediterranean Fleet. The less rum in the bottle the more ‘Pukka’ his voice became as he lived again with Lord Willoughby de Broke and the Senior Service. I’m glad to say he eventually made it into Alf Belfield’s claim in the mountains (carried by the natives) and shortly before the war was able to return to England.

At Starlight we built houses for ourselves and our labour, and were obtaining gold from six sluice boxes. Len worked three boxes upstream and I worked three downstream. We sent our gold in Bushells tea tins, by special runner to Wewak to catch the steamer to Sydney which called every three weeks. Burns Philp had opened a store at Wewak and Carpenters one at But. It was 1937 and the greatest change to our way of life was about to come.
WITH THE INCREASING number of prospectors, it was no longer possible to get carriers to bring in stores from the coast. There were not enough natives for the job and they were understandably unwilling to continue the exhausting days of carrying into the mountains.

Wewak was about five days away (we measured distance by time rather than miles) and perhaps more than that when carrying loads of cargo. Jack Thurston had gone down the coast and established a depot at But. He had built a lock-up hut and we carried the cargo in from there. It was a shorter distance but since there were no villages on the way we had to rely on natives from around Yamil and Number One Gold and take them down to the beach to carry for us.

Jack used to line the cargo up. It was usually sewn up in bags and he put a dot — a stencil mark — on each one, one dot for each 10 lbs weight. If it weighed 50 lbs it had five dots. He would
put a shilling on each dot, meaning that whoever took that particular pack would get five shillings for carrying for five days. Some would have eight dots, which would be eight shillings. One boy used to carry in a case of kerosene which weighed about 80 lbs. Jack used to give this boy 10 shillings if he landed the two tins inside the case at the camp without them springing a leak. That boy was always called ‘Masta Kerosene’.

Eventually an airstrip was made at Maprik. A strip of flat grass land on a bend of the Screw River was cleared and the ground made firm enough to take a small plane. This was the brainchild of the Patrol Officer, who was now stationed in the area. He arranged a huge sing sing for the people from surrounding villages which lasted three days when Sir Walter McNicoll, the Administrator, and Frank Clune visited. The dancing of 7,000 pairs of feet completed an excellent grass drome. Jack Thurston made a smaller drome on the side of a hill at Yamil using a similar method and arranged for veteran pilot, Ray Parer, to bring in 600 lbs of cargo from Wewak on a flight that took only 30 minutes. Jack describes it on tape.

‘The Yamil drome was built on a ridge with a slope. There was only one way you could land on it — uphill. The strip was made by local natives. It was grass but a lot of levelling had to be done and we got hundreds of locals to do it. When it was completed and had been going for a while we had a very big sing sing. Several thousands came along to celebrate the opening of the drome with a big kai kai, [feast] greasy poles and all the rest.

‘The Maprik drome was at the side of the river and didn’t have many trees on it. It was cleared and later extended without any trouble.’

This trip of Ray’s was a great advancement on 12 natives each carrying 50 lbs of food and taking nearly a week (during which
each one would eat at least 10 lbs). Ray flew an old Fox Moth biplane and later his cousin Kevin Parer took over and made a drome at But, which reduced the journey to 20 minutes. Later still he flew a Dragon which carried 1,400 lbs.

Ray Parer had been involved in aviation in New Guinea since 1927 when he started the Bulolo Goldfields Aeroplane Service. Although Ray was a brilliant pilot he was not a businessman and was always beset by financial problems. In 1934 he and Geoff Hemsworth in a Fairey Fox had competed in the England to Australia air race to mark the centenary of the city of Melbourne. Parer eventually bought a Fairey 111F that had also been in the air race, and he flew it to New Guinea in April 1935.

When Ray flew into Maprik, Jack Thurston was there to welcome him. It was quite a good drome but Ray reckoned a couple of trees needed to be removed and this was duly done. Then he started moving a bit of cargo. He used to fly from Mom. Guinea Airways also brought a bit of cargo into Maprik and Jack used them but they weren’t providing a regular service. Jackie Turner, the pilot, would come over, pick up all the cargo and when he had delivered it, go back to Wau. Jack Thurston was getting fed up with the unreliability of Guinea Airways and he told me the following story:

‘Jack Chipper and I arranged to be flown from Maprik to Wewak but the plane didn’t turn up. I had written to them [Guinea Airways] and at the same time sent a cheque for my air cargo but the pilot went back to Wau without picking me up. So Jack Chipper and I had to walk into Wewak — about a five-day walk.

‘Kevin Parer had written to me previously wanting to start up an airfreight business and also a store business. So after being let down by Guinea Airways I sent him a telegram straight away telling him to buy a plane. I was very hot under the collar at Guinea Airways leaving me on the drome at Maprik. So Kevin bought a Fox Moth
which I think cost about £1,200, and he came in and established an air service — Parer's Air Transport.

‘We built a drome at Yamil and Kevin flew into there and also to Maprik. The government also found a great use for this plane. Previously officers had walked, now they caught this plane. Kevin Parer was therefore able to establish his air service. I remember the cargo rate was three pence per pound. He later bought a second Fox Moth and later again, a Dragon. As it happens I have a silver model of the Dragon and the two Fox Moths, made by Angus and Coote in 1939 which he gave me in appreciation of my backing him to start the show — Parer's Air Transport. Kevin was a marvellous pilot, he never had an accident. He was also very grateful and never forgot what we had done for him. No more cargo was ever carried in from the beach after that.

‘Kevin was a very tidy person, tidy in his business and tidy in everything. Ray — we all loved Ray — but he wasn’t so business oriented. As far as Ray was concerned, I would sooner be up with him in a plane that was going to have trouble than anyone else in the world because he was a fantastic pilot. I’ve flown with him when he left the drome at Maprik and he’d just fly round and round to get height as he never knew what drome he might have to land on. It happened once when I was going back to Mom with him that we got into trouble and landed at But, just when the strip was being built. In fact, we had told the natives to go ahead and had marked the area for them and told them what to do. They’d cleared it but we hadn’t landed on it before. We were forced to do so on this occasion without knowing exactly its condition — they might have left a few stumps there but fortunately had not.

‘When we landed Ray got out his tools — he had an old carpenter’s bag made of canvas. He’d have a blow lamp going and would give you some chewing gum to
chew straight away. Because the cylinders on the engine had rusted through, there were little pin holes through which water used to spray onto the magneto. He used to tie an old sandshoe around it. When the radiator was leaking the chewing gum was used to plug up the holes. But he really was a fantastic pilot.

‘Kevin was in New Guinea right to the beginning of the war. He actually flew my wife Betty out, she was the last person to leave the Sepik area as all women were supposed to leave New Guinea at that time. She flew to Salamaua then Kevin took her over to Moresby. He landed there, said goodbye to her on the strip, then flew back to Salamaua. He landed at Salamaua, got out of his plane, the engine was still running and he started to walk away as three Japanese Zeros came sweeping down. Instead of running to the side of the drome and getting into a trench, old Kevin ran back to his plane and jumped in to take off. They got him and he was killed. It was an absolute tragedy as Kevin left a wife and young children.’

Harry Cecil was a retired Royal Navy officer who came to Maprik after he had been on a plantation on New Ireland. At the drome he set up a *kunai* trade-store and sent a note to Vic Fryer, Archibald and those close to Maprik, saying that he would act as an agent, collecting our cargo from Kevin when he flew in, and sending the bundles out to our claims. All we had to do was arrange for local natives to go down when we were expecting cargo. Old Harry was the soul of hospitality but enjoyed his rum like a real navy man. He would go for long periods without it but then he would break out and go on a bender. His place became a sort of gathering point — we’d just carry a bed sail and sleep in Harry’s *kunai* house. I remember on more than one occasion, having sent 30 or 40 natives down to collect cargo, only to have them back without anything, saying: ‘*Masta he like fight ‘em me*’. Old Harry, when he got on the rum would go berserk and chase everyone away.
Of course, when he’d sobered up, he’d be sorry. I’ve had a note on more than one occasion full of regrets and apologies.

He finally went out on the government schooner *Poseidon* from Angoram having been there at the Battle of Angoram. When the Japanese invasion occurred the men of the Sepik District were left to shift for themselves. Around March 1942 a number of them had congregated at Angoram on the Sepik River. At the same time, the European Assistant District Officer in charge of the station, George Ellis, became mentally ill, and refused to hand over to the officer sent to relieve him. He sent his native police to resist the change-over and later the police went on a rampage, killing several unsuspecting Europeans elsewhere on the river. Ellis committed suicide. Due to wartime chaos in New Guinea, nothing was heard of the incident outside for over a year, and then very little.

It was 1937 and we all needed a holiday, which we could now afford. Len and Judy flew out to Wewak and caught the ship to Sydney, then went on to Melbourne where Len bought a home.

When they returned, I flew out to Wewak and went down the coast by pinnace to Madang and caught the *Neptunia* coming from the east to Sydney. I sailed from Sydney on the *Orama* in July, arriving in London just after the Coronation of George VI. I didn’t get back to the goldfields till the end of the year.
ANOTHER RECRUITING TRIP

THE TWO YEAR contracts of my first recruits were due to expire and we decided I should take them up the coast to Aitape to be paid off, and return with them to their villages with their deferred pay and the possessions they had accumulated to let their people see how healthy they now were compared with their condition when I had taken them away.

The following extracts are from my diary for the month of April 1938. ‘Recruiting and prospecting trip into Wapi and Palai areas, Aitape sub-district, Sepik district TNG.’ They describe the sort of hardships presented by the jungle and the tough life of the bush. Also from a cultural viewpoint they reveal some of the superstitions and fears that can have a powerful effect on everyone.

*April 7th:* Left Starlight Claim 12.30 p.m. 10 boys Geko, Antananta, Yinowa, Lungi, Yaliman, Aragin, Araket, Palu, Magini, Kati. Proceeded downstream, Ulahau River. Boys in high spirits in anticipation of return to village.
Rucksacks loaded with treasures. One hour to junction of Sowom River. Proceeded steadily down Sowom to try and make village of Misuam before dark. Going pretty good but mostly gorge. 3.30 p.m. Thunder and light rain which steadily became worse and heavy downpour. Too dangerous to proceed further as Misuam still a long way off, flood due any time and liable to be trapped in gorge. Pitched fly on high bank at wide bend of river at junction of Kabliwop Creek. Rain steadily falling, dined and to bed 6.00 p.m. Distance travelled 10 miles NE.

ODE TO CUS CUS

He takes the track, where e'er I go
Be it mountain or flat land
My constant pal, the one I know
Will always be at hand.

Though the road is rough and the sun is hot
He's fit and tough and content with his lot
A friendly pat and a word that's kind
He wags his tail and jogs along behind.

April 8th: Rained all night and still coming down. River swollen but rain not so heavy now and shall fall by degrees. Yaliman threw fireworks in the air to scare ‘Tamberan’ and clear rain away. Plane flew overhead. 9.15 a.m. broke camp. River swollen and progress slow. Arrived Misuam 10.45 a.m. Spell 10 mins. Halt for lunch 12.15 p.m. Route of stream two hours NE 1 hours NW Packs up 1.30 p.m. Made camp at turn off 3.30 p.m.? hours NW 1–1? hours N. Distance travelled 20 miles. Arangin too short for deep crossings. Magini showing signs of back weakness. Plane passed to But 6.00 p.m.
April 9th: 8.45 p.m. broke camp. Crossed mountain approx. 800 ft. going not too good. Descended into river and downstream till 1.15 a.m., boys cooked rice and spelled until 12.45 p.m. Arrived at coast and village of Sowom 3.00 p.m. Village deserted all kanakas taken to kalabus by last patrol for not making Haus Kiap. Unable to obtain saksak for boys. Yinowa lame, feet cracked by water. Sandflies bad. Distance travelled 18 miles N.

April 10th: 8.00 a.m. on road. Crossed Sowom River, tide strong, had to hang on to Cus Cus's collar. Walked beach naked except for wrist watch, hat and stick until dry enough to put on clothes. Direction W. sun hot and sand glare. Passed through Matapau village 10.30 a.m. Unable to buy saksak on account of death in village. 11.30 a.m. arrived old base camp of Oil Search. Sun and sand burning and thought of all the milk bars I had walked past and the number of cold beers I had said ‘No’ to. Much better after Antananta appeared with a kulau [green coconut]. 2.30 p.m. on the road again. Travelling due west and sun direct in eyes. Arrived Suein River 4.30 p.m. Strong tide running. Anxious time crossing and Arangin in difficulties. Made a chain with Yinowa, Lungi and Antananta and pulled him across. Antananta a game kid. Crossed three times with loads. I half fell holding on to Cus Cus but Kati and Antananta helped me to rise. No chance if down properly, tide too strong and swift. 5.15 p.m. passed through Suein village and purchased saksak, on to Suein Plantation and arrived 6.00 p.m. Yinowa rather troublesome on the road. Magini lame. Distance travelled 15 miles W.

April 11th: 6.30 a.m. Boys reported one of Suein Plantation labourers Anie returned from Limlimbo at 6.00 p.m. yesterday, was caught in Suein River and carried out to sea. Two others with him succeeded in
making the crossing and brought the word here. Water
about waist high. Boys and Suein kanakas keeping watch
on the beach for his body. We were lucky to cross and
I will not take too many risks in future. 8.15 a.m. on the
road. Dull and misty rain, slight fever. 1.15 a.m. arrived
Ulau village crossed river. Purchased food for boys,
kanakas tough. Six lap laps, four spoons beads for taro
and yams. Slept in Haus Kiap until 2.00 p.m. Arrived
Diwai Wood’s house at Yakamul 4.30 p.m. Diwai away.
Pleasure to have a warm bath, first wash since leaving
Sowom River. Distance travelled NW 12 miles.

April 12th: 8.15 moved off, sun and sand terrifically hot.
Right on Equatorial line. Meridian O. Passed through
Yakamul village and arrived Paup 12.30 p.m. Boys done
in. Geko and Magini lame. Left Paup 2.15 a.m. crossed
Nigea River by canoe 5.15 p.m. River full of pukpuks
[crocodiles]. Arrived Lemingam 6.00 p.m. well ahead of
boys who straggled in up to 7.00 p.m. Delightful
moonlight over sea and through palms on the beach.

April 13th: 6.30 a.m. sent boys ahead to Aitape. Left
7.00 a.m. Passed through Pro village 8.00 a.m. Arrived
Tadji Pltn. Mission brother in charge. 9.00 passed through
St Anna Mission Plantation. 10.00 a.m. and arrived
Gough and Carey’s store Aitape. Walter Carey looking
after the store and Harold Hindwood, Toby Millar and
Ernie Bowden in from the bush. Only other occupants of
Aitape are Bill Bloxham and wife up on the hill. Heard
talk of the district. It appears that Mason, Schmidt and
Taylor are in the mountains, near Asier on the Sepik fall.
Sutherland and Johnson on a tributary of the Rio. Wilton
and Mitchell within a few days of Aitape. Cook and
Glaus in the Wapi areas, I think near Wilium. Hindwood
and Millar going to Wapi recruiting.
Easter Monday 18th: Have not had a chance to write daily events. 7.00 p.m. Now at Kapoam. Wonder if I am not a bit overstrung. Events have me jumpy and feel a fool to be affected. Arrived here 4.00 p.m. Kapoam kanakas very intelligent — close to mission have been under influence for years. After drinking kulau, taking off filthy muddy sox, putties, boots, waited for boys to arrive. 5.00 p.m. upset the women howling and wailing. A young man is dying. I went to his hut. He is nearly gone, making gargling noises but limbs are stiffening and cold and eyes glazed. Impossible to force whisky down his throat (in any case not much use) his wife with baby at breast is lying over him wailing and holding his money on his chest.

The other meris [women] are making a terrible din, wailing and crying which thank goodness drown his death gurgle. My boys are scared stiff of the ‘Tambaran’ and now he ‘dies true’ at 6.00 p.m. The din is terrific my boys are huddled over a fire talking but I have to bounce them out of their fright.

The whole time seems death overshadowing — I will admit that I have hopped into the whisky bottle in my pack. Antananta the only one with control over himself. Thank God for a bad night last night as I am too tired to be kept awake by the death wail or thoughts of the premonitions of this trip.

Before leaving Aitape I received a letter from the Assistant District Officer (ADO) warning me of danger as I was recruiting in the area where a young Cadet Patrol Officer ‘Pompey’ Elliot had recently been killed by natives of Wanili village.

Despite everything, my return to the Palai area was easier than that first visit two years before and I obtained the replacement recruits I wanted plus Yaliman and Palu who agreed to re-sign for a further period. I signed on my new recruits at
Aitape and rested for a few days at Charlie Gough's store with Theo Mason.

Charlie left on a recruiting trip inland leaving Wally Carey to look after the store, and since Theo was going to Wewak we decided to make our own way down the coast together to But where I would go inland and over the mountains back to the Ulahau River. A few days later, as we made our way down the coast we heard 'talk' in a village that 'Masta Charlie' had been killed by natives inland but we knew none of the details. It was only after I returned to my claim some time later that it was confirmed that Charlie had been killed when recruiting in Lehinga, a village in the grass country, and Keith McCarthy, ADO, had taken in a patrol to investigate. He arrested four villagers, who were later gaoled for manslaughter, not murder, as they were trying to rescue a young recruit who had agreed to sign up with Charlie.

With the HMV Gramaphone and records I had bought in London, a subscription to the *Sydney Morning Herald* received by ship a month later, and a regular supply of beer and whisky, life on the goldfields was becoming much easier. We could even follow the cricket provided we didn't cheat and look ahead to see how many runs Bradman had scored. We found that it was not essential for us both to work the claim and Len and Judy left for a visit to Melbourne and their new home.

On Len's return our mining routine was broken up by visits from Patrol Officers Johnny Miller, John Grant, Pat Mollison and Medical Assistant Tom Ellis with their carriers and police escorts. Government geologists Norman Fisher and Lyn Noakes and Jack Fryer, a surveyor, also called in.

We had formed a Citizen's Association to try and get more government assistance in setting up a medical post at Maprik which had become a focal point for the district. Another topic high on the agenda was the defence of New Guinea. This was to concern me more and more and when I went south to enlist in 1939 I wrote letters stressing the importance of representation in Canberra when the whole Australian defence issue was being
discussed. I stressed the urgency of including the defence of New Guinea within the Australian defence policy.

My birthday was 4 July, so we decided to ‘entertain’ and have a party. We sent word to all the chaps in the area to come and drink our grog and have a poker school. Our guests and their dogs arrived over the mountains and up the river, accompanied by natives carrying bedsails and a rucksack with a supply of ‘fuses’ (the local currency of a £5 roll of shillings) for the poker. Guests included Ralph Ormsby, a patrol officer from Maprik, Eric Archibald, Len Bridger, Bill Korn, Hunter Kirke, and other good chaps. It was a jolly gathering and after a couple of nights our guests departed in stages to return to their claims. That is, all except Ralph and Archie as Archie had taken ill with the symptoms of blackwater fever.

We took care not to move him in the hope that he would improve and sent a call for medical aid through Maprik to Wewak. Fred Cattell, Medical Assistant, came out to Maprik and walked into the mountains. As there was little he could do, we made a stretcher in the same way as we had made for Don, and carried Archie downstream and over the mountains to Yamil drome. From here Kevin Parer flew him to Wewak where there was now a doctor and hospital. We lived in hope, but a few days later word arrived from Kevin to say Archie had died.

The ups and downs of goldmining were now manifesting themselves. MacGregor and Luff had given up their claims below us, but Tex Archer was carrying on. Jack Chipper was working a creek about two miles downstream and Fons Parer tried a creek just below us.

We were finding that our gold was patchy. We now realised our claim was not as rich as we had first thought and that it would cut out sooner rather than later. We had each accumulated some capital but not as much as we’d hoped for when we used to plan our future in camp by the light of a hurricane lamp. Our objective was to buy a plantation. I had always seen gold mining as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. We decided that there was now not enough gold to make it worthwhile for both of us. We reluctantly
agreed to dissolve our partnership and as it suited Len, for personal
reasons, to leave and for my part, being unmarried, to stay, it
was agreed that I buy Len's share of the value of the claim and
equipment.

This was done with real sadness. It was hard to terminate
a partnership that had come about through Don's tragic death,
and which had been one of mutual trust and cooperation. Len,
Judy and I had been through a lot together and to this day I count
Judy as one of my closest friends. I remember her sitting writing
by the lamp at our rickety table. I used to tease her and say, 'What
are you doing, Judy, writing a book?'

She would glare at me and reply, 'I just might one day, Ted,
you wait and see.' Well Judy went on to be a marvellous
journalist, writer and publisher with R. W. Robson of the Pacific
Islands Monthly.

I continued to work the claim and it did not worry me being
alone since I had become used to it on my recruiting trips and
journeys in and out to the coast. Besides, I had Cus Cus for
company. With supplies coming in by plane, the long walks were
no longer necessary but I would sometimes visit Jack Thurston at
Number One Gold.

Jack, who had now bought out Harry, was well established.
He had taken a trip to Australia in 1939, and returned with
a beautiful young bride, Betty, whom he had married in his home
city of Perth. With Jack was Eric Petterson who had come from
Sydney to assist him at Number One Gold. Downstream near
Yamil was Gerry Keogh, also with a bride. He was working
a claim on the Parchee after Jack had encouraged him to leave the
Administration to mine gold.

Gerry was also an old friend of mine. He was a splendid
chap and well over six feet tall. Jack describes him as 'the most
reliable man you could find ... when you wanted him he was
right on the spot.' He was a very human chap and good company.
He wasn't entirely in the district officer pattern as officialdom
wasn't really his thing.
I had stayed with Gerry when he was ADO in Aitape. I remember a funny episode after he left the Administration. He found himself stuck in a village because the natives would not carry his cargo into the mountains. One day a boy brought a note to my claim from Gerry asking me for natives to carry for him. He was in the village of Alibus where I had previously made good friends with the luluai [head man].

I put on my bushwalking boots and set off with a few boys to find Gerry. We went over the ridge and after one-and-a-half days reached Alibus at the foot of the range. I found Gerry sitting in the Haus Kiap surrounded by picks and shovels and bags of rice. He told me he had been stuck there for days. He said to the natives ‘You always carried my cargo when I was the District Officer’ (which they were compelled to do) and they replied, ‘Yes, but you are not the District Officer now and we don’t want to go into the mountains.’

When the old luluai saw me he greeted me with open arms and then asked, ‘Is he a friend of yours? That’s different, if I’d known that we would have carried the cargo!’

This leads me to talk of the role and relationship between patrol officers and those in private enterprise. In their own district or a sub-district, the patrol officers had control over everybody. Generally they were a very good bunch of men. But there was a deep difference between the Kiaps and the ordinary masters. ‘Master Belongcompany’ they used to call us. Anybody who was not in the government was a Master Belongcompany — although he was not a company he was himself. The difference was between government and private enterprise. At times we were even referred to as ‘Masta Nothing’!

Much credit has gone in the pre-war years to the government district officers, because it would appear from records and books written by some of my very good friends — good books too — that the only people who did anything in the way of opening up the country were the district officers. Even if unintentional, it is an impression that needs to be redressed.
You can hand them credit for doing possibly 50 per cent. The other 50 per cent in my opinion should be divided between missionaries, gold prospectors, native labour recruiters, anthropologists or others.

By law, one was forbidden to go into uncontrolled territory; in other words it was the district officer and patrol officers who were supposed in theory to open up the country and then say it was safe for everyone else to go in. In fact that didn’t always happen. In our case, oil search people had been through before us. I would say we were the first in our particular area. There might have been others somewhere around in the district but no one can physically go into every area. Individually most of the patrol officers were excellent, and we got on very well, but the policy of the government and its propaganda placed emphasis on the work that the patrol staff did in distinction to what other sections of the community did. The fact that patrols were backed by government authority and had police escorts — and rightly so — did make their job easier than the private individual who performed a lot of pioneering work under more difficult circumstances. Goldminers, recruiters, missionaries, traders and planters were regarded by some district service personnel as not in the same strata as them.

Natives had to carry and do as they were told and they had to be paid and the pay was three pence a load. In our case we wouldn’t have got very far with one shilling a load. In some instances the district officers told the natives ‘you don’t have to carry for the Master Belongcompany’; in other words if they come and tell you to carry it doesn’t mean you have to do it if you don’t want to. Well that wasn’t a helpful attitude. As I say, that wasn’t the general attitude because most of the *kiaps* I knew were jolly good chaps and friends of mine.
Notes
1. Wally Carey was captured in Singapore on a sabotage mission with ‘Z’ Special Force and executed.
2. Jack Mitchell and three others were killed on 10 April 1942 by ‘rebel’ police after the ‘Battle of Angoram’ at a camp site on the Korosameri River in the Upper Sepik.
3. Gerry Keogh, acting as observer in a United States bomber, was killed when the plane flew into a hill on take-off at Port Moresby.
LEN BRIDGER, an old friend from Rabaul had a claim not far from Number One Gold that was cutting out. He came and stayed with me for a while. I had heard that there was a new weekly flying boat from Australia to England and since there was now a weekly plane service between New Guinea and Australia, I thought I would like to make the trip. I arranged with Len to look after my claim and then walked to Maprik, where I waited until Kevin came in with his Fox Moth. He flew me to Wewak where I caught a twin engine to Salamaua, and then a four engine De-Haviland 86B which stopped overnight at Townsville before proceeding to Sydney.

I arrived in London at the time of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia and the threat of war was very real. I was keen to join the army if war was declared, and meantime volunteered for service with the Civilian Air Raid Precaution force and spent some time filling sandbags and handing out gas masks at South Audley Street Library. I was staying at Artillery Mansions in Victoria Street and one evening, in a pub opposite, heard on the radio that Chamberlain had signed an agreement with Hitler.

When the threat of war subsided, I left in the Rangitata via Panama to New Zealand and then crossed the Tasman in the Awatea to Sydney where I took the Macdhui back to Wewak.
It was now 1939 — Wewak had been surveyed and permanent buildings had been put up, including the District Office, Government Store, hospital and bungalows for government officers. Kassa Townsend was the District Officer with Reg Rigby and Woodman, Assistant District Officers. Bob Cole, Dick Kyngdon and Warner Shand were patrol officers. ‘Glad’ Wells, Malcolm Jones and Sep Filan were also in the District Office. Ted Allen was the Policemaster, and Don McMillan the Radio Operator. Bob Parer had a freezer and the storekeepers were Hugh Goodwyn for Carpenters, Harris for Burns Philp, ‘Tommy’ Thompson and Simon Asong.

At But, Kevin Parer had a cargo base on the drome. His other pilot, Mabian Blackman, lived with Frank Robartson who supervised the cargo and Gordon Clarke ran a store for Carpenters.

Jack Thurston had built a lock-up cargo store on the beach at But as it was a shorter flight to Maprik than from Wewak. The cargo had to be taken from the ship through the surf and up onto the beach. This was only possible in the early morning before the sea blew up and ships’ captains were often reluctant to call there.

Jack and I made visits by ship to Rabaul twice a year with attractive orders for cargo for ourselves and others and would play off Bill Philpotts, Burns Philp’s store manager against ‘Bull’ Hamilton, Carpenters’, store manager, to persuade them to send one of their ships to But.

I had gone to Rabaul in the Macdhui on her outward trip to Sydney and was returning to Wewak from the mainland a week later in Bulolo, up from Sydney. Our first call was at Lindenhafen Plantation and I was at the gangway with my dog Cus Cus waiting to go ashore in the pinnace when one of the passengers, a beautiful fair-haired girl, put her arms around Cus Cus and said ‘Isn’t he lovely.’

I was thinking, ‘Aren’t you lovely,’ and said, ‘Would you like to come ashore with us?’ To my delight she accepted the invitation.

Just then Captain ‘Sandy’ Campbell appeared in his tropical whites and gold braid and ticked me off as Cus Cus had been seen near the cabins at night looking for me. I had tied him
up aft, but the sailors had let him loose. He said, ‘If I see that dog around the ship again I’ll have him thrown overboard.’

I was annoyed at being told off in front of this beautiful girl and snapped back, ‘And you’ll go in after him.’

The Captain was furious and strode off. I went down the stairs past the purser’s office. The purser, Ben Allen, called out, ‘Ted, give me 7/6d, the old man has just rung down to find out if your dog is on the ship’s manifest and I told him it was.’ A friend in need.

We saw Jack Levien at Lindenhafen Plantation and Cus Cus had his run. The girl told me her name was Gwen Dobinson and that she was travelling with her mother. Our next port was Salamaua and I suggested taking Gwen and her mother ashore. I introduced them to the Custom’s Officer, Bill Marshall, my very old and close friend and when the opportunity arose, he remarked, ‘Where did you meet her, Ted? Isn’t she soulful’.

After leaving Lae, some native passengers were found to have measles. Though not so serious for Europeans — measles is often fatal among natives. After we left Madang for the overnight run to Wewak, Gwen and I were sitting in the Chief Steward’s cabin listening to his radio when it was announced that Britain and Germany were at war. It was the night of 3 September 1939.

In Wewak the next morning the District Officer, Kassa Townsend, called the Europeans together and announced that a state of war existed. Dr Schroder was present and I said I wished to return to my claim as soon as possible. He told me I was in quarantine because I had come off a ship carrying measles. When I protested that I could not sit on the beach for three weeks, he threatened to have the native police sent in to apprehend me if I went into the bush.

I was not sure of his authority as the District Officer usually has the last word, and in other districts I have experienced clashes between Administrative and Medical Authorities.

Suddenly I had a bright idea. Why not return to Rabaul on the ship and wait there for the *Macdhui* to come back to Wewak.
That would cut out the three weeks nicely and after all Gwen was aboard. The ship was due to sail anytime, so I jumped on a pinnace with my gear and saw Ben Allen who gave me a spare berth. A week later and deeply smitten I said goodbye to Gwen when the ship sailed from Rabaul for Sydney. Gwen and her mother had been going to stay with Una Adams but on the outbreak of war, Harold Page advised them to return to Melbourne.

Rabaul was in a state of uncertainty with rumours coming from Australia but no one was called up. I offered my services to Page the Government Secretary and he referred me to Townsend, the Treasurer, who had at one time been my boss. Townsend appointed me to censor mail.

When it was announced in Australia that a Division of 20,000 would be enlisted, I knew I wanted to be one of them. I returned to my claim as soon as I could and arranged for ‘Mac’ McConnell and Dick Bell to take over my native labour and work my claim on tribute. I said goodbye to Cus Cus, my best mate, and left him with Mac and Dick; Kevin flew me out again to Salamaua where I took the plane to Sydney arriving on 7 October, the day before army recruiting commenced. I did not know it then but the next time I was to return to my beloved mountains they would be under attack and I would be chasing Japanese instead of gold.

Notes
1. Filan, Allen and Goodwyn drowned when a Japanese ship carrying 800 prisoners was sunk by a United States submarine off The Philippines in 1942.
2. Sandy Campbell after retirement was master of a small marine research vessel in New Guinea and ran into very bad weather off the New South Wales coast. The ship and all hands were lost. The vessel was old and probably broke up.
3. Jack Levien was a prisoner of the Japanese at Lindenhafen for two years. They executed him before retreating inland when United States Forces invaded the island in 1944.
The Waverley District Cricket Club 1922–3; I am on the ground in the front. My brother Frank is on the far right, standing.

Dressed for the tropics and on the way to Rabaul in the SS Calulu 1926.
The SS Mataram at Rabaul wharf 1926; the arrival of a ship was quite an event.

A weekend excursion to Matupit Island, 1926.
Native Police inspection, Rabaul, 1926.

Sunset over Rabaul harbour, 1926.
Geoff Evans, on the left, and me in our bungalow, Rabaul, 1928.

My sister Mary visited me in Rabaul in 1930. Here we are dressed for race day and the running of the New Guinea Cup.
The beautiful German-built Kavieng Club was the bastion of colonial life on New Ireland, 1933.

In a coastal village near Madang, 1934.
A crocodile shot in Madang, 1934.

View on the track into the Sepik, 1936.
Prospecting and recruiting trip near Aitape, 1938; with me is my dog Cus Cus and, from left to right, Kati, Melhei (known as Geko) and Antananta.

Eric Petterson and Jack Thurston at Number One Gold, Sepik, 1937.
Betty Thurston and young Jack next to Kevin Parer’s plane in 1941; taken at either Yamil or Wewak. Kevin flew Betty and young Jack from Salamaua over to Moresby when the women and children were evacuated. It was his last flight — he was killed on the airstrip by the Japanese at Salamaua.

A group of friends meet in Maprik for beers and a catch-up: Standing: Len Tudor, Gerry Keogh and Frank Robartson. Seated: Hugh Goodwyn (middle) and on the right is Ben Parer (in singlet) Front row: Danny Leahy is on the far right.
Jack Thurston box sluicing for gold at Number One Gold; we used the axe cases for our boxes.

Carriers seated with bags of cargo behind them.
Lining up for pay and rations at Starlight, Sepik, 1938.

Len and Judy Tudor, my partners, with their dog, Mike, outside the house at Starlight, Sepik, 1938.
With my best cobber, Cus Cus who I had carried into the Sepik as a pup. He was named after me as I was known as Masta Cus Cus [cus cus is Tok Pisin for clerk].

Men from a singing wearing fantastic headdress at Kaboibus, 1937.
Ladies on the Bulolo, 1939. Gwen is on the far right.

Portrait of Gwen taken by Athol Shmith, Melbourne.
'We remembered you today, you, Jimmy, and you, Doug, and Harry and Ted, and all the rest; the lost ones of the Desert and Greece and Crete and Syria and the Pacific … We could not forget Greece, with its sombre wind-bitten mountains and its rich and lovely names, Monastir Gap, Larissa and Elasson and Servia, Verria Pass; and, best of all, the Greek Soldiers and the Greek people, armed with the courage of the simple-hearted great.

You can remember a lot in two minutes, when you have a lot to remember. We had a lot to remember today. We always shall and official or not, we shall go on remembering because we cannot forget.'

From *Two Minutes Silence* by John Hetherington
*Herald* War Correspondent with the AIF in the Middle East 1940–43.
I PRESENTED MYSELF at Victoria Barracks hoping I would be accepted. The New South Wales quota for the Commonwealth Force was 6,000 with an age limit of 20 to 35. A high standard of physical fitness was required. This did not worry me as my life in the Sepik meant that I was physically tough, but I was concerned about my age. When I presented my completed form to the recruiting officer, Ossie Pearce, he said, ‘You are over 35’. I told him I had come specially from New Guinea and he said, ‘I hate to see a fellow come all that way and not get in. Go outside and complete another form’. I passed my medical with no trouble and was told to await my Call-Up notice. Two weeks later it arrived and on 24 October 1939 I was sworn in together with the civilian crowd assembled at Victoria Barracks. We were then loaded into a bus to Holdsworthy Camp, issued with a hessian palliasse and straw (to fill the palliasse and make a mattress), boots, goon suit and ‘Digger’ hat. I had become No. NX3247 Gunner E. T. Fulton, 16th Brigade, 6th Division, Australian Imperial Forces.
We were given three weeks of recruit training by NCO’s from the permanent Australian Artillery and Citizen Forces units before being transferred to Ingleburn which was under construction as a large Army training camp. Until now we were just training in sections. My section was under Sergeant Tindale from Citizens Forces. There was a shortage of officers which was eventually overcome by promotion from within the ranks. We knew someone in the section would be promoted to Lance Bombardier and receive one stripe. When the promotion came to me, Tindale told me to be on parade with my stripe; I said, ‘I don’t have one, Sergeant.’ I was told to get some plaster from the Regimental Aid Post until I’d been given my stripe from the quartermaster. This was my first rank and the one I was to find the most difficult. It was not a confirmed rank and could have been taken away by the CO. Living and eating with gunners but charged with their control calls for a balance of authority and tact.

I nearly lost it early. Being allowed to leave camp in the evening until 9.00 p.m., I caught the train one day from Liverpool to Sydney to meet Len Bridger, who had also come from New Guinea to enlist. We had a reunion at the Leagues Club and I failed to return to camp. Next morning I went into Ushers Hotel and Ethel, the barmaid, implored me to return immediately as she did not want me to lose my stripe. Len, who was a World War I soldier said, ‘Whatever you do, Ted, get a doctor’s certificate’ and we immediately thought of Dr Calov who’d been in Rabaul before becoming a tropical diseases specialist in Macquarie Street. I went and saw ‘Doc’, told him my story and he gave me a note which truthfully said he ‘had previously treated me for malaria in New Guinea’. I handed my letter into the Battery Office and reported to my Troop Commander Captain Dwyer who said, ‘You are under arrest “Bombardier”’. I heard no more of the matter as the Battery Office must have accepted my ‘illness’.

We were now an established Artillery Unit — the 2/1st Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery and I was a member of the
gun crew of C troop, 1st Battery. I soon made friends with John Dwyer, Jack Byard, Max Croudace, John Sachs, Fred Lamprill, Harry Asquith and other great fellows from all walks of life.

I wrote to Gwen in Melbourne and it happened that her father had to come to Sydney for a conference so she came up with him. We didn’t know what the future held but we put that to the back of our minds and spent a glorious day swimming at Manly before meeting up with Ray Parer in the evening.

The 16th Brigade comprising Reconnaissance Regiment, Artillery Regiment, four Infantry Battalions, Engineers and Ancillary units marched through Sydney on 4 January 1940 and the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

Six thousand young soldiers of the second AIF, proud bearers of the standard bequeathed to them by the original ANZACS, marched through the streets of Sydney yesterday. A tumultuous reception was given them by dense crowds estimated to number nearly 500,000. The long khaki columns thrilled the heart of Sydney as it had not been thrilled for a quarter of a century, since that still Spring day in 1914 when the first A.I.F. marched through the same streets on its way to ANZAC and imperishable glory.

Before we left Australia we were given final leave. I said good-bye to my mother and I can still see her little white handkerchief waving from the window as the taxi took me away and I wondered if I had said my last good-bye to her.

On 10 January 1940 we boarded the Orient liner *Orford* now serving as a troopship. Our departure was supposed to be a wartime secret but judging from the crowd and small craft that farewelled us as the convoy moved down the harbour, everyone in Sydney must have known about it. The other ships in the convoy were the *Orcades*, the *Otranto* and the *Strathnaver*. We passed through the
Heads and out to sea and as we watched the crowd lined cliffs, everyone aboard must have wondered, as I did, whether we would be among those who would not return.

Once beyond the Heads our convoy joined six other vessels containing the 4th New Zealand Brigade. The British battleship, *Ramilles*, led the way. The airforce covered our convoy with RAAF Avro Ansons patrolling overhead. In Victoria our convoy was joined by the *Empress of Japan*.

We were allotted our quarters, one half of our battery in lower cabins and the other in better accommodation on B deck. I shared with Max Croudace and, having one stripe, was appointed NCO in charge of our block of cabins. Life on board consisted of a routine of Physical Education parades, lectures and meals with tickets to purchase two glasses of beer in the canteen in the evening. I had the good fortune to supplement this with a private supply in my cabin. Our accommodation was near that of the officers’ and shortly after sailing I spotted Mortimer, the cabin steward who’d looked after me when I travelled first class to England in the *Orama*. Now I was just another soldier but he would purchase for me supplies of Bass Ale from the officer’s bar and appear with a tray covered by a napkin at an arranged time, so Max and I did not go short.

Disposing of the empties was a problem since the ship was blacked out at night and the portholes sealed. I had an ever-growing store of ‘empties’ under the bunk. One morning the troops were all called on deck for a muster parade and we were told by the CO that the ship’s canteen had been broken into during the night and everyone would be held on parade while the officers searched all the cabins. I wondered how I was going to explain my empty bottles without involving Mortimer. I thought, ‘Here goes my stripe for sure’. The parade was dismissed after what seemed an eternity and as I reached my cabin I saw two officers in the corridor. To my relief nothing was said — either they hadn’t searched it or not very thoroughly!
OUR DESTINATION WAS kept secret but the usual rumours circulated and most of us thought we were going to England. Our convoy stopped at Fremantle overnight where we received a rousing welcome. We had a few hours leave, so I called and saw Jack Thurston’s wife Betty and their new baby, Jack junior. Jack was still in the Sepik. He had already served in World War I and was too old to enlist. He was, however, deeply involved when the Japanese invaded New Guinea.

As the days passed we entered the sweltering tropics. There were times when it was compulsory to wear our gas masks (I presume, to get us accustomed to them) and sitting on deck in the stifling heat with my face covered with a rubber mask, I listened to the droning voice of a 2/1st Battalion captain. I started to nod off and then heard, ‘That Corporal, run around the deck in your gas mask, that’ll wake you up’. He later became the headmaster of a boys’ school, but I hope for the pupils’ sake his voice and lectures improved.
When the convoy arrived at the Suez Canal and anchored in the Bitter Lakes, Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, came aboard and welcomed us. We were the first Australian troops overseas in World War II. We proceeded through the canal and disembarked at El Kantara on 13 February then entrained to El Majdal in Palestine. The Reconnaissance Regiment and Field Artillery Regiment were camped at Qastina and the Infantry at Julis. We had brought our guns from Australia: 18 pounders and 4.5 Howitzers, the same as were used in World War I.

Our training was intense: we spent most of our time digging gun pits in the hard Palestinian ground and carrying out manoeuvres, filling in our gun pits and repeating the same procedure elsewhere. Our camp had been newly constructed of EPIP [English Patented Indian Product] tents with wooden construction for the Battery Office, Cook House and Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess and Canteen. The canteen with its concrete floor was a copy of the British model with a small section partitioned off for the NCO’s. Doug Russell, Ted, (‘Tiny’) Hewit and I would become ‘snobs’ after parade and sit up in austere state with our tins of beer in the NCO’s bar while the gunners milled around the canteen.

The regiment was now developing into an effective unit, due to the personnel who rushed to volunteer and were keen to learn their jobs. Though coming from all walks of life, we became one close-knit body of men the moment we changed into uniform. We were in effect brothers and proud to be the gunners of the 2/1st Field Regiment.

Our Regimental Sergeant Major (Warrant Officer F. E. Resuggan) was an experienced permanent artillery warrant officer, and we also had permanent artillery NCO’s as instructors to shape us into army efficiency and discipline. After World War I, Australian soldiers had a reputation for being the best soldiers in the British Empire. Like those who had served before us, we shared the same larrikinism and humour that sometimes got us into trouble. Because we were not victims of the British class system, we bonded in a way that I believe made us unique.
Ken Clift in his book, *War Dance* says:

Wavell recalled that the ANZAC fathers of these sixth division troops had not been noted for their angelic leave behaviour in either Egypt, France or England, but their battle discipline had been superb.

I would like to think that we were chips off the old block.

I was promoted to Bombardier. This meant that as well as my second stripe, I received an increase in pay to nine shillings per day. It was better than six shillings per day as Lance Bombardier and getting the kicks from the gunners below and kicks from the sergeants and bombardiers above. My rank was now confirmed and could only be taken away by court martial. I was the Gun Position Officer’s Assistant (GPO ‘Ack’.)

As a break from our intensive training with the 18 pounder and 4.5 howitzer guns, one-day leave parties were occasionally organised to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. My first leave was to Jerusalem in Easter 1940 and I took my watch to a prestigious jeweller for repairs. When I collected it the proprietor would not charge me, saying, ‘It was a pleasure to do it for an Australian soldier’. His name was Julius Heimann and he was a German Jew, who had left Germany and a good business before the war to escape from Hitler and the Nazi Party.

Not long after my first leave, the battery clerk handed me a letter from my mother and a telegram. The letter from Mum thanked me for some religious articles I had sent her from Jerusalem. The telegram I assumed was a bank advice of remittance and I did not open it until later. When I did I was shocked to learn of my mother’s sudden death. It gave me some comfort, however, to know that she had received the rosary beads I had sent for she was a devout Catholic.

The 17th Brigade from Victoria had arrived in Palestine in May and included the 2/2nd Field Artillery Regiment who were without guns as none were available in Australia. We were now
considered well trained so our guns were handed over to them. We merged with the 2/4th Infantry Battalion and were sent to Haifa to train as anti-aircraft gunners on 3.7 gun sites at Haifa and Mount Carmel.

We experienced our first enemy action when on the Mount Carmel gun site. We were being lectured by a British officer while the guns were being manned by the British crew. Aircraft spotters were watching the sky from their reclining chairs. A flight of aircraft in formation approached from the sea and I thought, ‘They must be OK’ as the spotters were on duty and the lecture was about aircraft identification. It was only when they reached the coast and bombs started to fall on the oil tanks in Haifa that we learnt they were Italian bombers. So much for aircraft identification.

We had been camped in buildings around the oil tanks and were promptly moved to disused ‘fowl houses’ at Acra while continuing our training. We were then formed into X and Y Anti-Aircraft Batteries and sent to Egypt. Y Battery went to Alexandria and I went with X Battery to Port Fouad across the canal from Port Said.

I was No. 1 of a 3.7 gun but, as crews rotated, we had leave every night if we were not duty crew. Port Fouad is a suburb of Port Said which was alive at night with troops, sailors and cafes — it was an escape from the army for a few hours if you had any money. The town was patrolled by the British ‘Red Caps’ (military police) and since we were the only Australians, one of our own NCO’s had to report to the British Military Police and patrol with them wearing a red MP armband. The British system of placing most good restaurants and cafes ‘out of bounds’ to troops was strictly enforced and while ‘sergeants and above’ were catered for by medium standard cafes, the troops were restricted to lower class establishments.

I had visited the Eastern Exchange Hotel when I travelled to England but now that I was a soldier it was ‘out of bounds’, being for ‘officers only’. This didn’t stop me from slipping in and I would discreetly seat myself behind an ornamental palm where
I hoped I would not be caught. I made sure I tipped the waiter generously and for a couple of hours I forgot about the army while watching the civilians and officers (base wallahs) dancing.

One evening while I was enjoying my drink, I was surprised to see my close friend John Sachs wearing an MP armband walk into the room. He came over to where I was seated and said, ‘Ted, I’ve been told to get you out of here’. So I was embarrassingly escorted from behind my palm and led across the dance floor in full view of the officers and their partners! When we got outside John told me the British MP’s had received a telephone call from a British major to ‘remove the Australian soldier’.

Our next move was to Helwan some miles out from Cairo. We handed over our anti-aircraft guns to a British battery who had come from Norway and at Helwan we took over the new 25 pounder field guns. Here we settled into intense training with this new gun. The regiment consisted of two batteries each of 12 guns, 1st and 2nd batteries. Each battery with two troops of six guns, A and B Troops. Each Troop had six gun sections, A, B, C, D, E and F. Each section comprised a gun crew of gun sergeant No. 1 with a bombardier No. 2 and four gunners. In addition, a tractor and two drivers were provided. Signallers and other specialists were divided among the sections.

Sergeant Sharman was No. 1 of B Troop and I was Bombardier No. 2. We had been together for more than six months and were now a compact unit, well disciplined and competent. However, when I was detailed Bombardier of the Guard, instead of being drawn from my own troop, the guard comprised Headquarters personnel — batmen, cooks and clerks — who were generally exempt from parades. The Guard Tent was alongside the road from Cairo and I was instructed to turn out the Guard to present arms as a car with Anthony Eden passed through. I was to be given the signal of his approach by an MP stationed along the road. My ‘Guards’ were difficult to keep alert and when the MP gave the signal late and I ordered ‘Turn Out the Guard’ the untidy scramble and shocking Present Arms made Dads Army look like Buckingham Palace.
Guards! I doubt if Anthony Eden even noticed as his car sped by but I was ordered to report to the RSM who ticked me off with a ‘Bombardier! That’s the worst Turn Out and Present I’ve ever seen’. He had been a regular soldier of many years and was responsible for regiment discipline. He probably knew I had a ragged Guard, but that was my bad luck as I was the NCO.

We had made contact with some British units, the Black Watch in Palestine and Second Highland Light Infantry at Port Said, also the 51st Field Regiment RA at Bir Aslug. Cairo was only a short train journey from Helwan and I made several trips there with John Sachs. Since our arrival in the Middle East the war reports had been full of depressing news — we learnt of the fall of Dunkirk and French and British losses. In September 1940, the Italian forces, under General Graziani, moved into Egypt and were now a threat. We moved from Helwan and took our guns to Ikingi Maryiut, west of Alexandria and remained there in dug-out tents until Christmas. We had been in the Middle East just on a year but had not yet seen action. We did not have long to wait.

Just before Christmas 1940 the regiment moved out west along the strip of bitumen that ran through the desert beside the coast. We knew that we were going into action and after we left Mersa Matruh and halted outside Sollum, we heard the sounds of gunfire. A strange feeling engulfed us — not exactly fear but certainly we were apprehensive. After all our training, this was the test of the 6th Division. We would be the first Australian troops in action since 1918. The expectation of a nation was on us. Would we be able to match the five divisions of World War I?
JANUARY 1941. WE had not long moved our guns into position on the outskirts of Bardia, when we were greeted with bursts of artillery fire. The shells fell in front of and behind our guns but we suffered no casualties. Clearly we were under observation by the Italians defending Bardia and, when dark came, our position was moved. Jack Byard brought our tractor up from the wagon lines and in total darkness we moved to a new position. This is where our months of training in Palestine and Egypt paid off. The Battery moved into position and we dug our gun pits and slit-trenches, filled sandbags and carried boxes of ammunition from vehicles all in total darkness. We were to repeat this many times in the months to come. The desert was bitterly cold and, as well as our greatcoats, we wore leather jerkins and balaclavas under our tin hats to help protect us from the icy miserable winds. The Italians thought our jerkins were a protective armour and some of the soldiers were wounded in the knees where the Italians took aim.
Before dawn on 3 January 1941, we laid down a barrage for the infantry to follow. It was deafening in the gun pit — a sound I will never forget. Although we had fired the guns in practice, it was not like ramming in 25 pound shells one after another with the six guns of the troop in line flashing in the darkness and rending the air with ear-splitting thunder. When daylight broke, we had time to take stock. As we surveyed the heaps of empty shell cases and empty ammunition tins littering the gun site we realised that we had not been shelled by counter battery fire from the Italians. It seemed strangely quiet as we made token efforts to clear up and the reaction after our first engagement was almost an anti-climax.

During the morning, word filtered through that the infantry had entered the town and that Bardia had fallen. The front-line Italian forces had put up a fierce fight inflicting heavy Australian casualties. However, inside the perimeter, the Italians offered little resistance and 6,000 had surrendered by midday. This was confirmed shortly after when a long line of Italian troops appeared in the desert in front of our guns each holding up a white surrender token. They stayed with us for a while, relieved to know they would not be harmed and one offered me part of a crust of bread he had in his overcoat pocket. With signs and smiles we indicated to them to keep on going towards our rear where eventually they would be officially taken prisoners of war. How stupid it was to think that, a few hours earlier, we had been blasting them with 25 pound shells. In total we took 40,000 POWs.

With the fall of Bardia came the first success of the war and, in response to our victory, the British and Australian press heaped praise on the Aussies. We were described as, ‘the cream of the Empire troops’. Blamey said, ‘You have abundantly justified the confidence I have always had in your leadership. By its success, the 6th Australian Division has established the new AIF’.

With the capture of so many prisoners and their equipment, General O’Connor kept up the pressure and soon we were on the
move for the attack on Tobruk. When we were allotted our gun positions it was not as easy as it had been at Bardia. Being stony ground, we could only dig down a few inches and had to build up sandbag protection. It was rather ineffective but looked ‘safe’ and if nothing else was a morale booster.

Sergeant Stickles, No. 1 of C Sub Gun was bitten by a scorpion which might have been fatal. He was evacuated for medical treatment and I was detailed to take over his gun as acting No. 1. for the attack on Tobruk.

The Italians shelled us with field and naval guns. Doug Rickard, our young pink-cheeked Command Post Officer, would stand on the parapet at night ‘Flash Spotting’. This meant observing the light from the enemy gun flashes and obtaining the angle from our guns with a director and timing the flash with the time the sound reached us to obtain the line and range. Our troops suffered no casualties but ‘Skeeter’ Pearse’s gun in A Troop received a direct hit and Bombardier Georgie Thomas, Gunners Frank Smith and Jackie Peterson were killed. At night we heard on our Signaller’s Radio vehicle, Lord ‘Haw-Haw’ broadcasting from Berlin how we were being defeated while at the same time playing the Australian’s theme, *Run Rabbit Run*. But we knew otherwise.

General Wavell’s 9th Army of the Nile was now in full pursuit of the Italians. With the fall of Tobruk and further heavy Italian losses, they kept the pressure on. We had been alongside the Northumberland Fusiliers, a machine-gun battalion in Tobruk and now followed the 7th Armoured Division (11th Hussars) in an anti-tank role towards Derna.

The one long strip of road snaking across the desert was alive with advancing vehicles. We were warned not to pick up ‘Thermos flasks’ or ‘fountain pens’ among the discarded Italian equipment as they were booby trapped with anti-personnel bombs. That did not stop some of the troops from getting into the many bottles of discarded Chianti.

As my gun followed the advancing column to our next position, the driver ran off the bitumen putting a front wheel into
the sand overturning the tractor and my gun. A bruised knee was the only damage to me, and by the time the gunners in the rear had sorted out the spilled ammunition boxes, we had lost sight of the rest of the troop. The road was chock-a-block with the advance in full swing and eventually a British vehicle with lifting equipment winched our gun and tractor off the sand and onto the road and we went forward in search of our troop location. We rejoined the other guns some miles ahead near the road outside Derna.

We began digging in the gun and our slit-trench. A light plane appeared overhead which I reported to the Command Post. The Gun Position Officer, Lieutenant Flynn, immediately ordered the troop to ‘take cover’. If no cover is available, troops are to lie still to avoid movement detection from the air. My gun crew ignored the order and kept digging. There was no way I could have stopped them as ignoring the GPO’s order, they would have certainly ignored mine. In any case I felt the order was unwarranted since the plane had already seen us and looked rather like one of our own reconnaissance planes. My own crew needed dug-in protection as quickly as possible and that was my priority.

As the plane flew off, the GPO shouted, ‘Bombardier Fulton, you are under arrest!’ I heard no more of the matter until some time later because we were occupied in battle.

With the capture of Bardia and Tobruk it was thought the main Italian resistance had been broken and a quick victory at Derna would be a formality. We had been pushed far along the road by our commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Barker MC, whose code name for the desert operation was DOAG and as he was an attacking soldier was in the habit of saying, ‘Get those guns up a thousand’ [yards]. Ever after, he was known as ‘Commander Doag Up a Thousand.’ He had pushed us up ahead of the infantry at one stage before the 2/11 Battalion came through our lines to take up position. Intelligence must have got their sums wrong as we had stiffer enemy resistance at Derna than at Bardia or Tobruk and we came under intensive shell fire. We took no direct hits but we spent a lot of time in our slit trenches as
the road alongside our position was shelled. A fragment pierced the steel helmet of infantryman Private Matheson and killed him.

With the fall of Derna the Italian resistance was broken and we swept through Barce and on to Benghazi (our objective) where the battle was halted for a while. I had been suffering with desert sores and boils on the forearms and upper legs and the medical officer sent me back to Barce where the 7th Field Ambulance had set up at an abandoned Italian hospital. In their retreat the Italians had destroyed as much as possible including the plumbing and when I arrived the toilets didn’t work and excreta covered the tiled floors. I remained there a week while my sores were treated and dressed. The patients were accommodated on stretchers and I have often wondered what happened to the pilot alongside me. His face was completely obscured by bandages like an Egyptian Mummy. His plane had been shot down in the desert and his face badly burned.

The following is taken from a letter I sent home:

We kicked off with the Bardia show and had our first real counter battery fire on Xmas Eve when the Italians got on to our first position. The Libyan story is old and as you know after intermittent firing, the barrage of 3rd Jan. set things moving and Bardia fell at 1 p.m. on the 4th of Jan. We went through Libya taking Tobruk, Derna and Benghazi and finished up a couple of hundred miles west of Benghazi. Derna was a pretty hot spot but I finished up the Libyan campaign quite intact except for two weeks spent at the Main Dressing Station at Barce for treatment to desert sores, on the arm and hands and a crack on the knee due to my gun and tractor turning over in trying to pass a bren carrier during the advance on Derna.

When I rejoined the regiment, I was summoned to the orderly room presided over by my battery commander, Major Peters, and charged with ‘Failing to Take Cover when ordered to do so’.
When Lieutenant Flynn gave his evidence Major Peters said, ‘Did you hear the order, Bombardier?’

I replied, ‘Yes Sir!’ The Troop Commander, Captain Dwyer, was also present.

Major Peters said, ‘Orders are given to be obeyed. Lives depend on orders in action being obeyed.’

I replied, ‘Yes, Sir! That’s why I did not stop my gunners digging.’ I didn’t bother to add that there was no way I could have stopped them if they wouldn’t obey the officer’s order and I knew that I was the ‘bunny’ for his panic ‘arrest’.

Major Peters said, ‘I’ll administer a Reprimand — march out.’

I had notched up my second black mark but one of which I was not ashamed. I knew I was out of favour with the troop commander, and John Sachs was promoted to Lance Sergeant and made No. 1 of my Gun and I reverted to No. 2 back on Sergeant Sharman’s Gun.

We moved on to El Agheila and Mersa Brega without resistance. There were rumours that we would push on to Cyrenacia. At Mersa Brega we had our first bath since before going into action at Bardia — it was at a well near our position. We also received mail and I remember sitting on our sandbags around the gun pit with ‘Irish’ Ingram, one of two boys who’d sold sweets on the Manly ferry before joining up. He had no letters, and told me he never received mail. He came from Northern Ireland where his father was in business, but because he wanted to marry a Catholic girl, his family sent him to Australia. He was barely 20 and I can still see his sad young face. He was soon to die in a German prisoner of war camp.

The Desert War seemed to have come to a halt. In addition to relieving the pressure on Egypt, the 9th Army had taken Libya and thousands of Italian prisoners plus their equipment. We handed over our position to a British Artillery Battery and, with our guns, retraced our way back to Mersa Matruh and Egypt.

We had a day’s leave in Alexandria and the first thing John Dwyer and I did was find a hot bath. I experienced a sense of
unreality as I sat in a porcelain bath with hot water and soap. Even standing on a tiled floor felt like a dream. We felt so good and after a couple of beers, decided to treat ourselves to a first-class meal. We presented ourselves at Pastrudis Restaurant ‘for officers only’ but were admitted without question and ‘garçon’ flourished the attractive menu ignoring our rank — or lack of it. John and I savoured the food and felt human again after months of sand and sleeping in trenches. We were amused when the only other two soldiers in the restaurant walked out, proclaiming loudly, ‘What sort of bloody place is this? They don’t serve steak, eggs and chips.’
FIRST BATTERY WAS moved to Alexandria where, at the beginning of April, we boarded the 16,000 ton troopship *Pennland* and sailed 600 miles or so across the Mediterranean to Piraeus in Greece. We were merely one troopship in a convoy escorted by naval vessels. Germany had invaded Greece from the north a week or two earlier. Landing at Piraeus, we found the situation very confused. After camping briefly at Glyfada, on the coast south of Piraeus, we were loaded — 40 to a truck — onto freight trains for the arduous three-day journey north towards the border with Yugoslavia, but Greek soldiers appeared to be going in the opposite direction. We ran out of food and the Stukas never let up their bombing all around us. One of the train stops was prolonged and it was discovered the Greek train crew had left. Our own troops took over the engine and drove us farther north. When we finally detrained, there was more confusion before we located our guns and our vehicles, which had been shipped in
another vessel in our convoy. Eventually we were sorted out and on the road.

British, Greek and Kiwi troops were all in this area, but the Germans appeared to have air control and no RAF planes were sighted. We saw only Stukas, and Dornier bombers. The road was patrolled by Stukas and, in an attempt to dodge them, our column dispersed into a clump of woods. We hadn’t been there long when the Stukas came and did us over. As we had disappeared off the road, they rightly guessed where we were. They were on us so quickly. I just dropped into a deep part of a ploughed field. Ken Hutton was in a furrow near me; Ken was short but he had a fat bottom that protruded above the furrow, and a bomb that burst near us was filled with daisy cutter shrapnel and sliced off one cheek and part of the other. The wounds were ghastly to look at and I put my first aid bandage on the more serious damage until he was transported to the medical aid units. Shortly after we received word that Captain Dwyer had been killed by a bomb fragment which shattered his head as he lay alongside the road near the vehicles.

We were constantly on the move and always harassed by enemy aircraft. There was another close shave when John Dwyer (not Captain Dwyer) and I were sheltering near a hedge alongside the road as a bomber passed overhead. There was a thud in the ground at our feet the result of hot bullets that obviously had been a greeting from the rear gunner!

The countryside we were moving through was beautiful, and the people lovely which we found an agreeable contrast to the past year spent in the desert but it was tragic to see the Greeks suffering from the bombing and strafing, the terror and the devastation.

We were all feeling the strain as constant Stuka dive bombing took its toll, particularly as we had just come from a hard three-months desert campaign. One night we had halted for a sleep alongside our guns and next morning one of my gunners, Jimmy Moore, was missing. He just disappeared during the night, probably wandering away dazed.
As the Germans continued to push down from the north, we went into position to defend the Bralos Pass. That evening all gun crew were told by the Gun Position Officer, Captain Wood, that the British troops were evacuating Greece and that we, with other batteries, would cover the withdrawal in a rearguard action. We were to shell the Bralos and also the Thermopylae Pass, which was north of it, and so delay the advance of the German tanks. Our gun crews were to be reduced in number, all were to be volunteers and no married men could volunteer. After our work was done, we were to make our escape as best we could. No drivers would be available and one of our gunners was to drive our tractor south after we had destroyed the gun mechanism. The remaining members of the battery were to leave immediately to try to get to the coast with the rest of the British, New Zealand and Australian troops for evacuation.

The rearguard crews were appointed. Gun No. 1 was in charge of Sergeant Greenwood; Gun No. 2, Bombardier Fulton; Gun No. 3, Sergeant Sachs; Gun No. 4, Sergeant Hambridge; Gun No. 5, Bombardier Purcell and No. 6, Warrant Officer de Gauset. So I was once again a gun No. 1. Two married men had refused to leave the crews, Harry Hambridge (a radio announcer with 2GB Sydney) and Mick Hamilton. On my crew I had the finest boys you could wish for.

24 April 1941 was the longest day of my life, and always will be. Our gun position was set up, with Major Peters and Captain Wood in charge, but that morning passed without us firing a shot. The longer we waited for action, the more scared I became but I tried to appear calm for my gunners, Bert Holm and Des Wilson. I wonder now how they really felt? I think I was more worried about them thinking me scared, and that enabled me to appear normal. Since I did not have a watch, I kept asking Des for the time hoping for night to come. It was afternoon before we opened fire with Major Peters shouting through a megaphone above the din. Eventually, he ordered our guns out of their pits to fire through open sights at the advancing German vehicles. This
stopped them. But suddenly a tank appeared over a ridge and we were all set to directly blast it before we identified it as one of our own armoured vehicles. The following account is from a letter I wrote home after Greece and it best captures my feelings at the time.

The Germans started to break through … I never thought we would hold them until night (which means dark at 9.00 p.m.). However, it was a ding-dong go, and although we had been without sleep for two days, strange to say things were too exciting to feel weary. During the last three hours we could see the German infantry pouring through a pass and kept firing as quickly as we could load, meanwhile the guns were getting hotter and hotter. We had to shift our guns out into the open to engage the infantry through open sights and we were sitting shots from the air, but by a miracle the German Stukas that had kept us low for days, for once failed to appear that afternoon. They must have been too busy bombing the routes to the evacuation places. However, I guess we killed our quota of Germans (and some more) in that action.

After dark fell (with the German advance halted) we took the gun out of action but only got about a mile along the road when the gunner who was driving [Des Wilson] piled her up. He was right on top of an abandoned vehicle before he saw it in the bad light and swerved up a bank. The Germans were sending up flares everywhere, so all we had time to do was tip the gun over the bank after removing the firing mechanism and sights. One of our officers picked us up in a staff vehicle. We were separated from the rest of the battery and we set off to make our own way out. We travelled [south] all night but from dawn, Anzac Day [25 April 1941], the eternal Stukas never left the skies. Up and down they would
come, and as one finished his load of bombs, as regular as clockwork another took his place …

We were constantly dive-bombed and machine-gunned until we got fed up with stopping and jumping off the road for cover, and decided to make a break. However, one burst put four bullets through our vehicle, one of them into the petrol tank.

The road was just a succession of vehicles making for the coast. Tommies, Kiwis, Aussies and Greeks and there were plenty of abandoned and wrecked vehicles along the route to say nothing of all the Greek mules with their legs pointing to heaven, killed by machine gun fire from the air. Reg Therold is a wizard of a mechanic and with a petrol tin and piece of piping taken from an abandoned vehicle, rigged up an emergency tank and we eventually reached the coast and finished up at Kalamata.

It was late on 26 April that we got to the Kalamata area, a fortunate date for us because although we didn’t know it then, the night of 26/27 was the last opportunity for ships to get away from that port. Kalamata was at the southern end of the Peloponnesus, the large, historic peninsula below the Gulf of Corinth and the Corinth Canal. As we were approaching the peninsula we were signalled which road to take by a British Red Cap directing the retreating vehicles. Whatever has been said about the Provost Corps (the military police), the British Red Caps were outstanding in the performance of their duties under intense enemy activity.

Our group halted near Argos, en route but still many miles north of Kalamata when a low flying Stuka flew overhead and some of our party fired at it with .303 rifles. The plane crashed in a field nearby. We liked to think we had brought it down but from what I heard later I think it had been hit while bombing a British transport, *Ulster Prince*. We rushed into the field, but the plane and the pilot were scattered in pieces. His bare torso, minus head,
legs and arms, was there with one flying-booted leg smouldering yards away from it.

We reached a spot further south where we could go no further. There were troops milling around everywhere and no one knew what to do. Tom Howes drained the oil out of our vehicle and left the motor running to seize up the engine and deny the machine to the Germans.

We were in fact not far out of Kalamata, and while we were resting in an olive grove with all the other troops, I spotted a 2/7th Infantry Battalion sergeant who I recognised as Trav Holland, an old New Guinea friend. I didn’t know he was in the army, let alone in Greece. We were overjoyed to meet each other, but soon Trav said, ‘I’m in a hurry, Ted. We are making for Kalamata as we believe the Navy is sending in ships to take us off tonight.’

I told this to Lieutenant Wade, who was in charge of our party, and he arranged with Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, Commanding Officer of the 2/7th for us to tag on with his men.

That evening as we marched to the wharf through the boarded up streets of Kalamata, a scruffy, straggling bunch, we were farewelled by the lovely Greek people and I felt sad and somewhat ashamed that we were leaving them to a German ‘occupation’ less than a month after we had arrived. The campaign was a disaster, a small force mostly of Australian and New Zealand troops with no tanks and no air force, while the Germans, no longer committed to France, were able to use their divisions with the support of their Panzer tanks and the Luftwaffe. From beginning to end, we had been engaged in a fighting withdrawal of just a few weeks.

That night we boarded a destroyer that took us out to sea and transferred us to the waiting Dutch 8,000-tonne transport, Costa Rica. There were, we learned later, 2,500 men aboard the Costa Rica, and we also learned that in all the confusion ashore we, who had been the last to leave Bralos, had ‘jumped the queue’, as thousands of troops had been waiting ahead of us. These
included our own men who had previously been sent south, most of whom became prisoners of war.

Our convoy, which comprised a number of transports and Royal Navy destroyer escorts, including the Defender and the Hereward, was headed for Alexandria. Soon after daylight, the Costa Rica’s air-raid alarm sounded and sure enough, the German bombers were after our destroyer escort. About 10 a.m. we had another flight over. The planes would come, drop a stick of bombs and return to their base for more. The morning passed with plenty of splashes in the water. We threw everything at them from our ship, from anti-aircraft to rifle fire, and near-misses were the best the Germans could achieve. We had another visit at 1.00 p.m. and again at 3.00 p.m. In that last raid we copped a bomb that blew in the side of the Costa Rica and set the engines off their bed. The ship shuddered and stopped dead. We started to take in water, but in quick time the destroyers were alongside and we were ordered off. Many men had a high jump from the bow of the Costa Rica to the decks of the destroyers, as the ship was sinking stern first and the bow was rising.

I was taken aboard the Hereward and was impressed and inspired by the Navy coolness in action. The British behaved as though they were loading a Dover ferry. It was even more impressive since a large percentage of the sailors were mere youths. Everyone was taken off the Costa Rica with only one loss of life, and the ship sank within the hour. The convoy had meanwhile continued on its way to Alexandria, but we survivors made for Suda Bay in Crete, which was the nearest port. While the rescue was being carried out there were no further attacks on us by the German aircraft, which must have gone off for more bombs, but the Hereward put us ashore at Suda Bay just as another wave of bombers came and did us over.

The Hereward went out again that night and was sunk. That made every vessel I had travelled on since leaving Australia lost. The Pennland, the ship that took us to Greece, was sunk north of Crete on Anzac Day.
There were a lot of Australian and New Zealand troops on Crete (more than 8,000 we learned later) and we were a straggling bunch with no arms. Our group sheltered in an olive grove after being put ashore. There I ran into some New Guinea friends with an anti-tank unit — Alan Ross, Frank Boisen, Joe Barracluff and ‘Soldier’ Williams — and later we were joined in Crete by other members of our unit who had escaped from Greece in small vessels.

We eventually got away from Crete in another small vessel, the *Lesbos*, and began the slow voyage to Egypt crammed into this barely seaworthy craft. Each day was one of anxiety as we watched the sky for German bombers. Fortunately the weather remained overcast for the whole of the three-day journey. The one cheerful memory I have of that voyage is of the Salvation Army chaplain playing his accordion on deck at dusk, which kept our morale up. On arrival at Alexandria we were taken to a holding camp and resupplied with basic clothing and equipment. After a few days it was back to Palestine by train to rejoin what was left of the regiment.
WE WERE GIVEN a great welcome as we marched into the camp at Khassa where Second Battery, not having gone to Greece, was located. We were bombarded with questions about the welfare and whereabouts of particular mates. It was soon shatteringly clear that most of the 6th Division including First Battery would not be returning; 220 of our troops had been killed, 494 were wounded and 1,174 were taken prisoner of war, including our Commanding Officer, Colonel Harloch and Battery Commander, Major Peters. Of my friends, John Sachs, John Dwyer, Harry Asquith and Jack Byard were also missing but some weeks later John Sachs turned up, having escaped from the Germans. He made his way back via Turkey after exploits for which he was awarded the Military Medal.

The 7th Division was in Syria with the force fighting the Vichy French. The 8th Division in Malaya and 9th Division with the Eighth Army trying to hold Rommel in the desert. We, the 6th Division, had been decimated and needed to be reinforced and retrained. New Officer and NCO promotions were effected, Captain Holmes, now Major, succeeded Major Peters (POW) as Battery Commander, Lieutenant Rickard, now Captain Rickard,
succeeded Captain Dwyer (KIA) as Troop Commander and I was promoted to Gun Sergeant No. 1 of B Subdivision.

I now had the privilege of using the Sergeants’ Mess and no longer had to stand in line with the gunners on mess parade while some idiot behind me banged his aluminium mess gear. I was no longer at the mercy of the gunner on mess orderly duty who, if he did not like NCO’s, would ladle the smallest portion on to the plate and fix you with a stare that meant ‘move on’ while he heaped spoonfuls on to the next gunner’s plate. The Sergeants’ Mess — in gunners’ language ‘The Snake Pit’ — was situated in tents with a concrete floor. We sat at trestle tables, with mess orderlies to serve us and there was a bar in the corner.

Before we went into the desert, a recruit training camp had been established at Neusarat near Ghaza. It was now occupied by reinforcements from Australia in the troopships Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. The Battery was reformed and trained with reinforcements from Neusarat. The nucleus of permanent instructors was bolstered by NCO’s from 6th Division infantry and artillery units. The regiment sent a sergeant from each Battery to the training camp for a month and I was detailed from my battery. I reported for duty with Sergeant Keith (‘Slapsie’) Maxwell from 2nd Battery and it turned out to be the best month’s ‘holiday’ I had experienced in the army.

We were given a tent and a bunch of gunner reinforcements and told they were ours to train. The recruits were keen to prove themselves as they knew we had been in action and now had a reputation. Keith and I worked out a programme of parades, lectures and drills which we divided between us. This meant while one of us was on parade the other was lying on his bunk reading a book, and off parade the bar in the Sergeants’ Mess was a pleasant retreat.

When I returned to the regiment, Doug Rickard told me that I was to take over the catering for the Sergeants’ Mess, with a utility and a driver to take me to Jaffa market twice a week. I wasn’t happy about not being No. 1 of my gun but he assured
me it was the Commanding Officer's orders and that he had been given a similar assignment also for the Officers' Mess. He said, 'It's only a temporary measure, Ted. We're not in action, only training, and it will give Bombardier Cansdell good experience.' ‘Blue’ Cansdell, one of the boys who sold sweets on the Manly Ferry had been promoted to my Bombardier and was a very good No. 2.

Twice a week I went to Jaffa and Tel Aviv and visited the new Kibbutz for fresh vegetables and eggs. I was the most popular member of the mess when I discovered a supply of Jamaica Rum at Jaffa. It had arrived in Jerusalem during Christmas 1941. I also got on side with the Australian Canteen Services for good supplies of Australian beer.

The Battery was returning to normal and again we settled into a compact unit. The training was intense but when we were not on manoeuvres, we enjoyed ourselves in the Sergeants’ Mess. Instead of sleeping eight to a tent, I was now sharing a large square tent with John Sachs, Fred Lamprill and Joe Greenwood. Joe did not drink much but John, Fred, Bill Nobbs, Owen Saville and I enjoyed our beer and were known in the Mess as the ‘Blackmen’ — we were all olive-skinned and had dark hair.

John Sachs was a great practical joker. One night, on our way back from the mess to our tent, he said to Fred and me, ‘Let’s give Greenwood a scare!’ We knew Joe would be asleep and Sachs said loudly, ‘Let’s wake Greenwood up’. Still Joe did not move. Sachs pretended to stagger to Joe’s corner of the tent and suddenly let go a stream near his bed. Up sprang Joe cursing like the devil. Joe didn’t know that John had his water bottle in his trousers and had pulled out the cork!

Once when I was Orderly Sergeant and doing the rounds with the Orderly Officer after ‘Lights Out’, I went to a tent where the light was still on and ordered, ‘Get that light out!’ Back came the reply: ‘Right, Sarge, we’re putting it out now’, and as I passed behind the tent I heard, ‘Come on George, put the light out! He’s not a bad little chap but still he’s a Sergeant and I wouldn’t trust none of the bastards!’
On my first visit to Jerusalem after the Greek Campaign, I called to see Julius Heimann in his shop. He was so pleased as he had wondered whether I had survived the Desert and Greece campaigns. I became good friends with him and his wife, Martha, who was not Jewish, and their teenage daughters Margot and Gerdi. Whenever I was in Jerusalem they welcomed me into their home or took me to a restaurant and sightseeing in their car. I have a beautiful painting of the Dead Sea, which Julius gave me and which managed to survive my service in the Middle East. Today it hangs in my sitting room, a treasured memento of a friendship forged in the early days of a dreadful war. Knowing what happened in the holocaust, I am thankful that Julius had the foresight to remove his lovely family from Germany.

Leave parties to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv broke the army routine and kept up the spirits of the soldiers. A bus left at 8.00 a.m. for the hour to Tel Aviv or hour and a half to Jerusalem and returned at 5.00 p.m. with the gunners in various stages of insobriety. The Aussie soldier was unyielding in combat but he also knew how to let off steam when the pressure was off.

Johnny Sachs, Fred Lamprill and I were no exception and one weekend we were given leave commencing 8.00 a.m. Saturday, but we ‘beat the gun’ and slipped away on Friday evening making our way to Tel Aviv. We were asleep in a residential when it was raided by Military Police rounding up troops AWOL. There was a bang on our door in the early hours of the morning. A provost officer and sergeant entered the room. ‘That’s it,’ I thought, ‘we’ve been caught.’ I then realised the sergeant was an Infantry corporal of the 2/4th Battalion and had been on my anti-aircraft gun when we were in Haifa. We recognised each other straightaway and he reported to his Officer that our leave passes were ‘in order’. What a mate!

I was also lucky on another occasion. I had been detailed to spend two weeks Artillery exchange with the Infantry. Sergeant Ron (‘Backsie’) Bertram and I were sent with Lieutenant Lawson and Bombardier Bryden to the 2/1st Battalion. On arrival we
reported to the adjutant who welcomed us and told us parades were optional. He showed us the Sergeants’ Mess and our tent, and said ‘Make yourselves at home, boys’. The idea of the exchange was for Infantry and Artillery to become closer associated even though we had all been through the Desert and Greece campaigns together.

On the Sunday Lieutenant Lawson invited me to Tel Aviv in a car he had hired. He knew I would be AWOL but that was my concern. When he arrived, I was shocked to see my Battery Commander, Major Holmes, sitting alongside him. I saluted, and got in the back with Max Croudace who had come from the regiment on leave. Halfway to Tel Aviv, to my horror, the car was stopped at a roadblock by Military Police. They saluted the officers and poked their heads into the rear to check our leave passes. Max produced his but of course I had none. Thinking quickly I said, ‘Didn’t you collect my leave pass from the Battery Office, Max?’ Max didn’t catch on and blankly replied, ‘I didn’t know you were going on leave, Ted.’ Desperately, I lied again and told them, ‘There’s been some misunderstanding, because I arranged with the Orderly Room Bombardier to give my pass to my friend here.’ The police said, ‘You will get picked up in Tel Aviv if you don’t have a pass,’ and let the car through. The officers’ presence in the front must have helped corroborate my story but as Major Holmes sat looking straight ahead and could not have failed to hear everything, I wondered what he would do. He said nothing and I learned later that he was going into hospital so I imagine he was more preoccupied with his own worries than with me being AWOL.

One Sunday, I had a visit from Colin Marr, a New Guinea friend who was with the Army Service Corps, camped a few miles away. Since another New Guinea chum, Warrant Officer Geoff Hatton, was at 16th Brigade Headquarters nearby, I invited them both to the Sergeants’ Mess. After lunch Geoff proposed that we all go into Tel Aviv in his ute. Everyone thought it sounded like a great idea including some of my Artillery NCO’s who were
prepared to risk it with me being AWOL or ‘Breaking out of Barracks’. Hatton loaded us all into his ute and we arrived at Tel Aviv in high spirits. On our way to the Rishon Bar, we were joined by Bill Heinicke, also from New Guinea. A good time was had by all and since it was Sunday evening and the end of the Jewish Sabbath, the restaurant started to fill up with civilians. Jack Adler had decorated the walls of the Rishon Bar with many types of stuffed birds and when the ever extroverted Heinicke drew his revolver from its holster and announced, ‘Watch me get one of these birds on the wing’, there was a discreet exodus of ladies and gentlemen from the tables to the door. This was Bill’s idea of a joke, but I doubt if Jack Adler thought it was funny.

We eventually piled into the ute to return to camp calling at the Officers’ Club where I had arranged to pick up Lieutenant Lawson. The first officer I met was Doug Rickard, my Troop Commander and when he learned I had a vehicle, he took me in to the club for a drink. There were other officers who wanted to get back to camp so Hatton’s utility was loaded up with NCO’s, lieutenants and captains and we arrived back in the small hours, past the sentry. Everyone rolled out of the ute with no questions asked the next day.
FROM EGYPT TO CEYLON

THE 7TH DIVISION had returned to Australia. The 8th Division was in Malaya and the 9th Division in the Western Desert. We knew the 6th Division would soon be on the move and were not surprised when we were marched out and entrained for Suez. At Port Tewfick the British convoy was assembled for the troops’ departure from the Middle East. We were ferried out to the Westernland bound for Java where the 6th Division was originally supposed to go. However, Java fell to the Japanese the day before we arrived and we were diverted back to Ceylon because the Japanese now had their sights set on it and India. With the weakness of the British defence in those areas, it was decided to send the 6th to Ceylon until the danger of a Japanese invasion had passed. We arrived there in March 1942.

In early April, Colombo and Trincomalee were attacked by Japanese aircraft based on naval carriers. The British lost two cruisers, the Cornwall and the Dorsetshire and the RAN lost the destroyer, Vampire. The fall of Singapore and the losses in Malaya had been a disaster for the British. Mindful of this the Australian
soldiers made their camp sites on rubber and coconut plantations and were vigilant in patrolling the environment while learning new skills of jungle warfare.

During the unloading of our equipment in Colombo, two of our guns were lost in the harbour. They were put onto a lighter and left overnight. In the morning the lighter and guns had disappeared as the heavy guns had caused the leaky lighter to sink. One of the guns was mine and after problems with the British Army Ordnance — who did not work at weekends despite the fact that Singapore had fallen and the Prince of Wales and Repulse just sunk by the Japanese — I obtained a new gun and took it to Cinnamon Gardens to work on the buffer and recuperator systems. When it was ready we joined the rest of the Battery to move to our gun positions at Katakurunga airfield. On the way, my tongue became swollen and I was taken to No. 10 Army Hospital at Negumbo in a state of collapse. I was diagnosed with a streptococci infection and was listed as seriously ill. It was probably caused by chewing grass in Cinnamon Gardens where a number of Indian troops had been camped shortly before.

I was well cared for by Australian nurses. I realised it had been two-and-a-half years since I’d had any contact with an Australian girl. I was proud of the courage and devotion to duty of the two VAD girls in my ward during a Japanese air raid. Barbara Davies and Judith Kenny, in their tin hats, calmly moved patients to safer locations.

After convalescing at a military camp in the hills at Diyatalawa, I rejoined the Regiment. Four months later we boarded the Westernland again. We left in a slow convoy and had to take our chance without any escort, apart from one corvette. The Westernland had one, four inch naval gun at the stern and the gun crew comprised 11 gun sergeants. She was a cargo vessel that had been built in 1902 and the troops slept in the holds and around the deck. The food was terrible: it was cheese and biscuits for every meal. We didn’t worry too much, though, because we were at last on our way home.
When we arrived at Fremantle a representative from the Red Cross came aboard and was directed to me, seeking information on Gunner Jimmy Moore who had been a member of my gun crew in Greece. I was only able to tell him that he was missing one morning, having apparently wandered away in the night. He was not reported a prisoner of war and if still ‘missing’ is probably in an unknown grave.

We were given 10 shillings from our pay books and leave for the rest of the day. Bill Wallach and I went to Perth and, because we knew we could not do much with 10 shillings, I persuaded the accountant at the Bank of New South Wales to cash a cheque for £10 on my account in Sydney. I reckoned that at the very least we deserved a good lunch! However, I was shocked and disillusioned to hear a woman in the hotel lounge remark to her friend ‘what a shocking waste of money it is sending all these troops around the world’. We wondered how much those at home knew or cared about what was happening abroad.

Bill and I decided to stay the night in a Perth hotel and get back to Fremantle early in the morning. When we arrived at the wharf, I sighted the RSM Warrant Officer Lewitz on the deck of the Westernland. We kept out of sight behind some cargo until he had gone and then slipped aboard. The Westernland was not sailing until later in the evening and the troops had leave for the day. I was all ready to go ashore again when I was informed that I was the Ship Orderly Sergeant and would have to stay on board. There’s no doubt in my mind that the RSM had spotted us on the wharf and had detailed me for duty as a punishment for spending the night ashore. Fair enough!

It was very quiet aboard except for some troops under my control doing work in one of the holds. About mid-morning one of the chaps asked, ‘Sarge! Can we slip ashore to a pub in Fremantle?’ I replied, ‘I can’t give you permission to go but if you do I won’t be looking for you — make sure, though, some of you stay here.’ Being a sinner myself, I understood how he felt and nobody let me down.
When we arrived in Melbourne we were left at anchor in Port Phillip Bay. The word got around that there was a wharf labourers’ strike; they were demanding war risk money to unload mortars, guns and ammunition. The troops were really incensed. When the *Westernland* eventually berthed in the afternoon, the troops took over the winches and we began unloading the equipment ourselves. No one was permitted off the ship except for the working parties on the wharf and the dock gates were guarded by military police.

When we eventually disembarked we were sent by train to the camp at Bangalore near Seymour. The troops were given 14 days home leave, except a few who were required to stay with our guns and vehicles. I volunteered to remain. My mother had died and my brothers were all on service. Frank was with the RAAF, Jack was a prisoner of war on the Burma Railway and Henry, I learned later, had been taken prisoner in Rabaul and was lost when the Japanese prison ship *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed by an American submarine off the Philippines. I did not have the family reunion most were looking forward to.

The Regiment went to Sydney where the 16th Brigade marched through the city before commencing leave while those of us who remained put the muzzle covers on our guns and for the next two weeks spent most of our time in the Sergeants’ Mess. It was now that we really appreciated the food available in Australia and I was shocked to see the waste of good fresh food in the garbage bins after the rations we had existed on in the Middle East. John Sachs, having lost his mother also when we were in Egypt, stayed behind with me and our guns, as did Ossie Pearce. Fred Lamprill took his leave in Melbourne to get married and I was given leave for the day to be his best man. I had contacted Gwen who was home working with the Engineers Section of United States Army Headquarters in a civilian capacity and she was able to come to Fred’s wedding reception with me. It was wonderful to see her and to me she was even more beautiful after two-and-a-half years away. So much had changed since we had first met on the *Bulolo*. 
We took our guns by rail to Greta in New South Wales where the Regiment returned from leave. Those of us who had stayed behind in Seymour were granted an extra five days leave in addition to the 14 granted days leave. The thought of 19 days in Sydney was a pleasant one, particularly as the United States Army Headquarters was transferring to Sydney and Gwen would be arriving at the same time. I spent the first night with my sister, Mary, and the next day — Sunday — Gwen arrived by train to stay with a mutual New Guinea friend, Una Adams at Roseville.

On Monday I went to Ushers Hotel and met Alan Brown and Johnny Brennan who had also started leave. I was greeted with, ‘Did you get your telegram, Ted?’ I was told they had received telegrams to return to the Regiment immediately. At first I thought it a joke, then I phoned my brother’s wife, Chris, who confirmed that there was a telegram for me. What a disappointment after being away two-and-a-half years to find out our leave had been cancelled. I knew that our recall meant the Regiment would be on the move again. I was right — the 6th Division, the volunteers and the first to see action in World War II, was now being sent to New Guinea.
Working on our gun in the Western Desert; I am on the right.

Dressed for the icy winds of the desert; we wore balaclavas and coats; my helmet is painted with camouflage. Sandbags are piled up behind us.
After our first campaign the Italians surrender to B Troop, Bardia, 3 January 1941. I am standing to the far left.

Crete, 1941; we stopped in an olive grove to eat our rations.
With my dear friend John Sachs on leave in Tel Aviv, 3 February 1942.

I became friends with Julius Heimann after he repaired my watch in Jerusalem; here I am pictured with him and his wife Marti and daughter Gerdi.
We diggers enjoyed a game of cricket at Khassa Camp, Palestine, 1942.

With ANGAU on Intelligence Patrol, Sepik area 1944.
Our wedding day, January 1945. On the left is Dave Fienberg, my best man and next to him is Jean Hopkins, Gwen’s bridesmaid. We were married at Christ Church, South Yarra.
With Gwen in Sydney, 1945 before I was sent off to Borneo as a task force commander.
Part III

FIGHTING THE JAPANESE IN NEW GUINEA

‘I do not think that we can emphasise too much that ANGAU is a military unit … [We] have been sent here to do a military job … It is not for us to question why we are here and what we are doing here.’


‘From 6,000 feet to eye level, moss, alpine scrub and forest swept down in an unbroken avalanche of green … Deep through this tilted, eternal savagery of growth was cut the cleft of the river. Three thousand feet below, it wound like a white snake in leafy canyons — a mighty roaring stream … There are no bad men out here. Bad men don’t last.’

Osmar White, on crossing the Bulldog Track, in Green Armour: the Story of Fighting Men in New Guinea, 1945, Wren Publishing, Melbourne
RETURN TO NEW GUINEA WITH ANGAU

WE WERE ON the move again. From Greta we were sent to Doomben Racecourse in Brisbane from where we embarked for New Guinea on the American Liberty ship Joseph Lane. During the voyage, we Sergeants manned the ship’s gun but it was not needed before we disembarked at Port Moresby.

Soon after arrival, the 16th Brigade was addressed by Lieutenant General Herring who had been our brigadier in the Middle East. He made no apologies for our brief stay in Australia after two-and-a-half years away. He came straight to the point in referring to the Japanese occupation when he said, ‘Someone has got to do some fighting here and its you the 6th Division.’

Our guns were some distance from town and one evening I received an order to report to Captain Jones at New Guinea Force Headquarters. As soon as I arrived I recognised Bert Jones, who had been a New Guinea District Officer. He was now Liaison Officer on Headquarters for a new unit, the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) comprising New Guinea personnel who knew the country and natives. This unit
was to carry out patrols and organise the support and cooperation of the New Guinea people to assist the Army against the Japanese.

He asked if I was willing to transfer to ANGAU and make my way into the Sepik area, occupied by the Japanese. He wanted me to report the situation, as there was now no communication with this area. I agreed but had to obtain the consent of my Commanding Officer. Colonel O’Connell did not wish to lose experienced NCO’s who had been with the Regiment since its formation and, since he was compelled to accept reinforcement officers in the Middle East, he was insisting on the promotion of his own NCOs, now that the Regiment was back under Australian command.

John Sachs, my close friend from the Middle East campaigns, was on an officers’ course and I was marked down to follow him. John was promoted to lieutenant and transferred to Z Special Force to report enemy movements. I valued the three stripes as a sergeant in the Regiment, more than three pips as a captain in other units but now that the war had come to New Guinea, my knowledge and experience would be more useful to the Allied cause than my skills as a gunner.

O’Connell telephoned Colonel Taylor in ANGAU and told him he would release me if I was promoted to lieutenant as that was the rank due to me in the regiment. Taylor agreed and next day I reported to ANGAU Headquarters. Ted Taylor was a District Officer I had known for years and he had authority to call on any soldier with New Guinea knowledge for service with ANGAU.

Later when I was promoted to Captain, I was also promoted to Assistant District Officer (ADO) Ramu District. In my role I was working as both an infantry officer leading fighting patrols as well as being in charge of the army’s contact with the natives. Somebody had to have authority over civilians and see to their welfare. It was a role that would have been assumed by a District Officer in peacetime. As an ANGAU officer, I had to wear two hats, one as patrol officer then ADO, the other as an army captain. It proved to be difficult to carry out both roles entirely satisfactorily.
Before the war, Papua and New Guinea had been administered separately, Papua as an Australian colony and New Guinea, by Australia, as a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations. There were two administrations, with the Papua headquarters at Port Moresby and the New Guinea headquarters at Rabaul. Before the war I had very little to do with Papua. In 1941, Australian military forces in Papua and New Guinea were reorganised and placed under the single command of Brigadier-General Basil Morris, who took up his position in May 1941 in Port Moresby.

Japanese landings in Rabaul in January 1942, quickly followed by landings in Lae, Madang and Wewak, removed the civilian administration from New Guinea. The civilian administration of Papua was disbanded in February 1942 and Morris took over as supreme authority in both territories. ANGAU was created as a military unit to replace the civilian administrations. From April 1942, the two territories became the single territory of Australian New Guinea and ANGAU became the unit of the Australian Army responsible for civilian administration. ANGAU was caught between a responsibility for the welfare of the native people and meeting the needs of the Australian Army to fight and defeat the Japanese. This would be a tough role, especially deep into enemy held territory.
ON ARRIVAL AT ANGAU headquarters in Port Moresby, it was proposed that I walk from Wau in Morobe District to Wewak in Sepik District, about 600 kilometres over rugged mountains, across huge rivers and along hundreds of kilometres of wet, slippery and muddy native walking tracks. At Wewak, I should establish a native police runner service as a means of communicating with Port Moresby, where almost nothing was known of what was happening in the Sepik District.

My first assignment on 21 October 1942, was to guide the United States 126 Rifle Regiment camped at Rigo, east of Port Moresby, over the Owen Stanley range to Buna on the north coast. I had taken them as far as the Kemp Welch River crossing and was heading into the mountains, when I was recalled to Port Moresby by a police runner bearing a note.

The Japanese had occupied Lae, Madang and Wewak and the Sepik was now isolated. I was to wait for another assignment. In early December I was instructed to report to 319 Squadron, 90 United States Bomb Group to join the crew of a Liberator as an
observer, to assist in finding an area for dropping supplies to Charlie Bates, who together with Jim Taylor, John Milligan, ‘Nep’ Blood and Jim Hodgekiss, all of whom had been patrol officers, had remained at their posts in the Sepik District. The flight consisted of three bombers with Stan Christian and John Preston White as observers in the other planes.

Just before take off, I asked about a parachute because the rest of the crew were wearing them. I was told there were no spares and the Army Air Liaison Officer should have arranged one. Fortunately, our cargo was successfully dropped from the bomb bays and our six-hour mission took us first along the east coast, east of Buna, then west across the Huon Gulf keeping well clear of Lae and Salamaua. Then we flew direct to Finschhafen and northwest along the coast past Fortification Point. The recce was carried out without meeting any Japanese fighter planes.

Stan Christian and I were then ordered to take a patrol to Wau with supplies for ANGAU Major Nick Penglase. There we were to await instructions for proceeding to the Sepik. We were to travel to the Lakekamu River by boat, canoe up the river and walk across the central mountain ranges to Wau. We left Port Moresby on 18 December with five native policemen of the Royal Papuan Constabulary and Kooka, a boy about 15 years old from the Sepik who I had found in Port Moresby.

Kooka had accompanied the party of eight European and 82 natives, led by Jack Thurston, that had escaped the Japanese invasion of the Sepik District by crossing into Papua from the Sepik headwaters. This was the reverse of the much better known trip up the Fly River and down the Sepik River by Charles Karius and Ivan Champion in 1927. However, Jack’s group had had no outside support. That all of his party, except one native, survived the six months journey is a testament to Jack’s outstanding leadership and bushcraft. Kooka agreed to return to the Sepik with me to contradict reports that all the natives in the Thurston party had died.

We travelled west by schooner from Moresby and arrived at the mouth of the Lakekamu next afternoon. We stayed the night
at Terapo and next day transferred our cargo to a launch and travelled 65 kilometres upstream to Kovu. We arrived just before a terrific rainstorm. The mosquitoes were not too bad because most of them were driven away by heavy gusts of wind. Another two days took us to Otamai which was as far as the launch could go. We transferred our stores to four canoes to be poled upstream to Bulldog, from where our walk over the mountains began.

The following extracts are from my diary.

December 23

We left Bulldog with 128 Mekeo carriers. [The Mekeos lived near the coast on a flat plain and they were not used to mountains.] Carriers showed signs of being troublesome but once on the track made good time to halt at a river at 1230 hours. Track very muddy. Magnificent spectacle and we crossed where river is crossed at wire rope bridge with dashing torrent and swirling water below …

We arrived at Dead Chinaman at 1500 hours. Again just beat threatening rain. We were now in the Mandated Territory at 1,300 feet above sea level. We were very tired but refreshed by delightful bathe in rushing mountain torrent. Hot *balus* [pigeon] soup for dinner. We stayed the night with a Sergeant Baden Wales who checked cargo and carriers in OK.

December 24

Baden Wales reported that 15 of the Mekeo carriers had run away. Double loads appears to be the trouble. Will open and repack first opportunity before steep mountain climb … Left Dead Chinaman at 0900 hours. Weather fine but track still very slushy. Carriers slower on this stage and we had to make frequent halts. Arrived Fox’s camp at 1330 … Heavy rain evening and night. We are now at 2,000 feet.
December 25

Christmas Day observed with a ‘sit down’ for the carriers and I issued everyone with one stick of tobacco and two sticks to the *bosbois* [overseers]. Double loads broken as far as possible and cut down to single packs. Firearms cleaned and general maintenance to equipment. Heavy rain set in again that evening and tide in the river.

On Boxing Day we sent the carriers off at 8.00 a.m. It was a fine morning with cold air and bright clear atmosphere. The track followed a river through very steep gorges and waterfalls: it had many branches entering it that had to be negotiated. We made it to Centre Camp, 3,600 feet above sea level at 1.30 p.m. where we camped with Harry O’Kane.

On 27 December we set off in thick mist and rain and climbed to 7,800 feet where Sergeant Dan Leahy was staying in a bark hut at ‘Water Bung’ [the confluence of two streams] and spent the night beside his cosy fire sheltered from the rain and cold. We were now on top of the range with clear views to the north. The gradient down this side was easier and we made a gradual descent to Kudjeru and the Bulolo Valley. Three camps later, on 30 December, we made contact with Commandos Lieutenant Badger, Warrant Officers Blake and Crawford, Corporal Latchford and members of the 5th and 7th Independent Companies defending the outskirts of Wau. We had been on the move for two weeks.

I knew the journey from Bulldog to Wau would take me across one of the most precipitous tracks in the country but until I was on the track I could not imagine how spectacular and hazardous it really was. Two friends of mine Osmar White and Damien Parer had made the journey in June 1942 and Osmar wrote in his book *Green Armour,*
The track reared itself up a greasy precipice for four or five thousand feet. Grade of one in two with occasional vertical patches. Then sharp equally precipitous drops. Ridge after ridge. Greasy mud, looped roots, thorns, still up and up and up.

We delivered the carriers and found a place to sleep in the ANGAU lines at Wau. On 3 January 1943 a radio signal from ANGAU Headquarters instructed us to move through from Wau to Bena Bena in the highlands. We were to wait there for further orders about going on to the Sepik.

The Japanese were attacking Wau across the mountains from Salamaua on the coast south of Lae and Wau was a hive of activity with Dakota transport planes landing troops from Port Moresby on the steeply sloping grass airstrip. On 7 January the troops moved out to engage the Japanese at Mubo accompanied by Lieutenants Hicks, Shand and White of ANGAU.

Major Nick Penglase and Captain Horrie Niall of ANGAU were at Wau and helped plan our route to Bena Bena and organise supplies. We were doing this when, around midday on 8 January we saw a USAAF Flying Fortress bomber flying slowly up the valley at 2,000 feet, some of its engines out of action. The crew were throwing out ammunition and equipment as the plane, losing height, disappeared into the mountains in the vicinity of Kaisinik. It had been bombing Lae and had been hit by anti-aircraft fire.

Lieutenant Kyngdon left Wau immediately with a rescue party. At around 5.00 p.m. Penglase instructed me to take 20 natives in the truck to locate and assist Kyngdon. The truck broke down before arriving at Crystal Creek. Darkness had fallen and we continued on foot. The mountain tracks in that area are hazardous at the best of times. The plane had been skilfully crash landed near Black Cat Pass and I’m told it is still there. The crew were very relieved when they saw Kyngdon as they thought they had ditched in enemy territory.
I met Kyngdon’s carriers with a dead crew member between Crystal Creek and the swing bridge. Some of the carriers were scared of being in the dark with a body. I reassured them and pushed on to the swing bridge where I found Corporal Mills with the injured pilot on a stretcher.

Crossing the narrow swaying bridge with a stretcher in pitch dark was extremely difficult. I went ahead with the torch while two natives carefully carried the stretcher and Mills with other natives held the wires apart to stop the bridge swinging too much. We got the patients safely across. I then went on to locate the rest of the survivors and met Kyngdon on the mountainside helping four patients who were all done in. Progress in the dark was very slow and required extreme caution as slipping off the narrow path would have had fatal results. I gave Kyngdon and his party a flask of hot coffee and then went on to meet the two stretcher cases coming behind with Sergeant Hill. They were groping their way in the dark and trying to keep back about a dozen of Mills’ mules (in the care of boys) pushing their way along the track. I gave them coffee and with the aid of flares and a torch we got back to the river crossing. The going was very bad but the carriers did an excellent job with the stretchers; there was a minimum of shaking despite the fact they had to feel their foothold all the way. The mules were a menace and stampeded at the river crossing.

Kyngdon returned and went back with Hill and the stretcher cases to Crystal Creek and I went back towards Kaisinik to look for the remaining stretcher case. I arrived a Kaisinik about 1.30 a.m. without locating the party. We shouted into the darkness but had no reply and I later learnt the party had overtaken us while we were clearing a path for the mules. Our rescue mission had brought back one dead, four stretcher cases and four walking wounded. The pilot had suffered a shattered jaw. The dead man was a gunner who didn’t stand a chance when the lower ball turret shifted off its mountings and entered the fuselage where he was sitting.
Route from Bulldog to Wau. The Bulldog Track has a gradient of 1 in 2 with occasional vertical patches.
ON 9 JANUARY we left Wau and followed the Bulolo River downstream to Sunshine. There we organised carriers and followed the Watut River down to Wowas village. The Japanese had patrolled the lower Watut valley and no carrier line was available except casuals. Since our party had no trade goods, Kooka, my right-hand man, had trouble persuading the locals to carry. In addition, he had to carry a pack himself. Our progress was slow and five days after leaving Wau we arrived at ANGAU Warrant Officer Harry Lumb’s outpost at Wowas — about 40 kilometres from the Markham River on a tributary of the Watut. Harry had done a marvellous job of building a suspension bridge across the Watut, which is deep and dangerous at this point.

A further eight days across broken, forested country and a steep climb took us into the Highlands where we met Sergeant Jim McAdam of ANGAU at Aiyura. We were now 1,500 metres above sea-level. The country was open grass covered hills for the most part and easy walking along the valley floors. It was much faster walking here than in the jungle with its suffocating heat, the
baking lowlands grassland and the steep mountains. We finally arrived at Bena Bena 17 days after leaving Wau. We were shocked and saddened, however, to learn that Harry Lumb had been killed by a Japanese patrol shortly after we passed through Wowas.

Kooka was only 15 and an exceptional ally. He was from Maprik and his journey from the Sepik to Daru with Jack Thurston had been a test of his endurance and loyalty. During the first stage of my patrol from Bulldog to Wau, Kooka had the assistance of two natives — Susu, a boy trying to return to Maprik and Wagamuri from Aitape, who was suffering from the effects of ill treatment from the Japanese at Buna. (He later died from these injuries in April 1943.) Without doubt, all the camp duties fell to Kooka. We carried 119 loads of cargo through to Wau, but the Mekeo carriers were more of a liability than a help in the Highlands. During the second stage from Wau to Bena Bena, a native constable was attached to the party, but he was suffering from a venereal disease. Again Kooka coped with most of the camp duties.

Bena Bena, at 1,640 metres above sea-level, is 20 kilometres east of Goroka and one of the first airstrips built in the Highlands. It was only 25 kilometres from the Ramu Valley, but separated from the Ramu by 1,400 metres of altitude, and the rugged north facing slopes of the Central New Guinea Ranges. Bena Bena was in radio contact with ANGAU patrols in the Ramu River area. It reported Japanese troop movements and warned of approaching bombing formations. This information was relayed to Headquarters in Port Moresby for transmission to the appropriate Command. Bena Bena had a grass airstrip on which United States Dakotas could land with troops and supplies. The ANGAU OIC was Captain John Black (who had accompanied Jim Taylor on the Hagen–Sepik Patrol from Bena Bena to Telefomin from 1938–39). Also at Bena Bena were ANGAU Lieutenants Boyan, Bergin, Dave Fienberg and Warrant Officer Burnett.

ANGAU headquarters again altered our orders. Stan was to remain in the Highlands and man a post at Goroka and I was to stay at Bena Bena, pending orders to go on to the Sepik.
Shortly after we arrived, a native informant reported that the Japanese had come inland from Madang and Black was concerned that they might cross the Ramu at Waimeriba (now a few kilometres from the Lae–Madang Highway at Kesawai). Black instructed me to take a patrol down to the Ramu River to investigate. Here the river is braided and runs fast in shallow channels in a broad gravel filled bed. Black instructed Sergeant Golden by radio to move from Bundi and rendezvous with me at Weisa, five kilometres southwest of Waimeriba on the southern side of the Ramu River. I was to make a reconnaissance and, if the Japanese were not crossing the river, then Golden was to reoccupy an ANGAU forward observation post at Weisa. Weisa had been evacuated after people had looted the unoccupied camp. I was to recover the rifle bolts buried by Lieutenant Bergin.

With my patrol were Corporal Hughes and Privates Friend and Southwell of 2/7 Battalion. Kooka also accompanied me but the native leader was Native Constable Atoga. We followed the Oria River, a tributary of the Ramu, down to Matahausa village, 20 kilometres north of Bena Bena and well below it in altitude. Here we learnt that a large force of Japanese had tried to cross the river in the previous week. We heard, too, that natives from Weisa had gone to Waimeriba to contact the Japanese and that the Alivetti villagers, further down the Oria River and close to Weisa, intended to collaborate with them and show them the track to the Bena Bena base. It was possible this information was a concoction to keep us away because people feared reprisals for raiding Weisa but, if it were true, it was alarming and our patrol was in immediate danger.

I decided to leave the carriers, food and equipment at Matahausa village and move quickly down river to investigate. Kooka volunteered to go with me but I wouldn’t let him: he was, after all, only a boy and unarmed. He took the rest of the party back to Bena Bena. I took Atoga, the constable with me. We went down the Oria River for six hours and camped on the bank. The next day we left the river and, after four hours walking along
a native track, arrived at Alivetti village. The village had been burnt down and the occupants nowhere to be seen. We continued cautiously to Weisa and, after crossing the Wei River, we came upon the ruins of the ANGAU post at 4.00 p.m.

There was no sign of Japanese or residents. We recovered the rifle bolts and at sunset Golden and Woodhead joined us from Bundi, 40 kilometres to the northwest. The rain came bucketing down and the mosquitoes attacked — we were in for an uncomfortable night.

About 5.00 a.m. next morning, I left Weisa with Hughes, Atoga and Barom to make a reconnaissance of the Ramu River crossing at Waimeriba. We had hoped to be there by first light but the going was hellishly slow in the dark through the long wet grass that had overgrown the track. The Oria River was in flood and this slowed us down and delayed our crossing.

Waimeriba village was also deserted and from the appearance of the tracks, it had been unoccupied for weeks. The Ramu was in flood. I looked across the river through binoculars for any trace of movement. There was no sign of Japanese nor any other activity and the place seemed eerily deserted. We searched the empty houses for any clues and found 11 rifles, 14 blankets, axes, knives and trade goods stolen from the Weisa ANGAU base.

I discussed the situation with Jim Golden when I got back to Weisa. He had been based at Weisa for a short time and was confident he could re-establish friendly relations with the people. I arranged for Woodhead to remain with him, to re-build the post and establish and control three watch posts at Korigae, four kilometres west of Waimeriba, at Waimeriba and another, two miles upstream from Waimeriba. They would be manned by native police troops who would warn us if the Japanese crossed the Ramu. (During the war members of both the Royal Papuan Constabulary and the New Guinea Police Force were used to accompany ANGAU patrols. They belonged to different police forces but for practical purposes were amalgamated into one. They were indispensable to our ANGAU patrols and many
certainly did heroic work.) On my return to Bena Bena I intended to recommend that radio equipment be set up at Weisa to give an even earlier warning.

From Weisa we walked to Korigae village. It was the same story. The village was deserted and the tracks overgrown. On 12 February we came upon a local mission teacher called Baful. He was the first native contact we had had since leaving Matahauusa four days before. Baful told me that the villages had been abandoned a month before, following Japanese activity in the Kesawai area. He told me that Harry Dott, a German Lutheran missionary at Madang, had been forced by the Japanese to guide them from Madang to Kesawai. He had seemingly told them it was not possible to cross the Ramu River without canoes. Baful did not know where Dott was and I learned later that he had been executed.

Baful also told me that the natives had had a dispute with Bergin and this was why they had looted the outpost. However, he was confident that Golden’s re-occupation of Weisa would restore friendly relations.

Our return to Bena Bena was slow. We trudged steeply uphill through heavy rain and flooded rivers and arrived at Bena Bena on 16 February after 10 days on patrol. Because of the uncertain information about enemy movements, this patrol was severe and testing. The men experienced discomfort and there was not enough food or clothing. In spite of this, I was proud of the way they cheerfully coped with the awful conditions and I made special mention in my report of the adaptability and intelligence displayed by Corporal Hughes, an excellent NCO. I also recommended promotion for Constable Atoga whose reconnaissance work and initiative contributed much to the value of the patrol.

After we arrived at Bena Bena and before a radio could be supplied to Weisa, Corporal Woodhead made a dramatic escape to Bena Bena. A Japanese patrol had crossed the Ramu River and made a surprise attack on the base. Poor Jim Golden had been
killed. We must have come dangerously close ourselves. The whole place was alive with danger and the natives, who had not had much contact with the Australian administration, did not know who was in control.

Notes
1. Oria, originally reported as Maria River in Ted’s Patrol Report. Bryant Allen has established this river on a contemporary map as being the Oria River.
2. Alivetti, originally reported as Savetti in Ted’s Patrol Report. Bryant Allen has established this village on a contemporary map as being Alivetti.
John Black was concerned the Japanese might cross the Ramu at Waimeriba and wished to establish a forward observation post at Weisa. I took a patrol from Bena Bena to Matahausa and on to the Ramu to report on enemy activity.
A FEW DAY’S STROLL IN NEW GUINEA’S CENTRAL PLATEAU
with Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Andersen OBE

MY NEXT TWO patrols along the Highlands valleys were shorter and more pleasant. The first was to the Goroka and Asaro valleys to Koripa and Asaloka from 28 February to 3 March 1943. Compared with other patrols, it was routine and easy.

In the second, from 7 March to 13 March, I escorted Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Andersen of the Royal Australian Artillery on an assessment of the use of 25 pounder guns. A possible plan was a movement through the Highlands to outflank the Japanese withdrawing from Lae to Madang. Andersen was in command of the Royal Australian Artillery in New Guinea. He was a permanent Artillery Officer and as a captain he had been adjutant of the 2/1st Field Regiment in the Western Desert when I was a Gun
Sergeant. He was a Major General when he was killed in a car accident after the war.

He wrote a report on his visit, so I will let him describe the events of this patrol:

In February 1943, the writer was on the staff of the BRA New Guinea Force. (At this time, the Jap was being evicted from the Bulolo Valley and was straggling back over the difficult Kuiper Range). He still held Lae, and had a land L of C along the Ramu Valley to Madang. Plans were being made for movement north-west along the Markham and Ramu Valleys, and information was desired on the possibility of transporting guns by air from Moresby to either Bena Bena, Finintegu, Kainantu or Aiyura, and, if there was easy access from any of these strips to the Ramu Valley.

I was instructed to leave by air on 6 March 1943. In addition to the primary object of my recce, I was asked to report on the defence of Bena Bena, which, we had learned from captured documents, was to be attacked from the Ramu.

I duly reported to Wards Drome at Moresby at 0900 hours, and, in accordance with custom, left at 1600 hours ... We had no hope of making Bena Bena that night so we scurried west along the Gulf of Papua to a place called Weaver just west of the Purari delta.

Here we put down on the beach — it was the first time I had landed on a beach and I kept an anxious eye on the curlers that were coming in from the open sea ... We ... parked our crate well into the coconuts.

At approximately 0400 hours the following morning we took off and headed inland passing over what must surely be some of the most inhospitable country in the world. Razor back ridges came and went in a most amazing fashion and steep precipitous gorges
made one shudder to think of a forced landing. The whole scene was a blanket of green jungle and is well termed 'The Green Hell'.

We came suddenly on Bena Bena nestling between mountains. It was a pleasant green strip lined with hedges and a clean looking village. Upon deplaning I was met by the OC of the platoon, charged with the defence of the airfield, who was most enthusiastic and showed me his defensive layout and alternative positions. On the map he detailed his outlying patrol locations the closest of which would give him 9 hours warning of any Jap. approach. This platoon of the 17 Aust. Infantry Brigade was keen to maintain the high standard expected by their Brigadier and the job they were doing was in keeping with that standard. They undertook strenuous and continuous patrols taking the war right to the Jap. — there was no lack of the offensive spirit.

Bena Bena is a clean village on the central plateau. It is one place where New Guinea avoids being cut up into smaller islands, for, within a radius of thirty miles three rivers have their source: [the Purari, the Markham and the Ramu]. The rivers in this area are fast mountain streams liable to come down in spate and crossed by the most rickety of lawyer-cane or vine suspension bridges of some 60–100 foot span. The plateau has an average height just short of 6000 feet which produces an excellent climate with three blanket nights. The soil is a rich black loam in which you can grow anything; in fact, an air force squadron flies seed to Bena Bena from Australia and back loads vegetables to Moresby. Overlooking Bena Bena some 45 minutes walk away was the old mission station of Sigoya now the headquarters of an ANGAU district with Capt. John Black, a name famous in the history of the mandated territory, in command.
I met Black and we discussed the defence of the area generally and arranged for him to supply a patrol officer and some carriers for my ‘walkabout’. You can imagine my delight when I found the officer allotted to me was one Ted Fulton a sergeant major of my own regiment, lately transferred to ANGAU as a subaltern because of his local knowledge. Ted is a man of many parts, a bank officer, customs official, prospector, owner of a small gold mine and above all No. 1 of a 25 pr gun that went through Libya, Greece and Buna. He brought with him approximately fifty Chimbu boys as a carrier line and a boy called Kooka who was to amuse us greatly in our meanderings, as he was very fond of the opposite sex.

The following morning we set off. The prestige of the white master is so high that I had difficulty even in carrying my own pistol, for every native seemed keen to relieve me of any encumbrance. The setting was very like a Paul Robeson film. These wiry hill men of short stature with immensely powerful shoulders, chest, thighs and calves set off at a trot led by the native policeman chanting songs and in no time were out of sight and the only contact we had with them was to pick up their singing, echoing and re-echoing through the valleys. Never have I seen people so completely happy as these men of the Chimbu tribe, who wear nothing but pig grease and the most fantastic tail piece of bushes from their posterior with a most inadequate coverage to the fore — while all their wealth is on their faces in the shape of shells. They are known to respect and I think, love, the white man.

Ted and I set off more sedately and as he could suit his pace to any set of circumstances he allowed me to set the speed. This proved fatal for me, as full of exuberance, I set a cracking pace unmindful of the tail-spreading job I had been doing over the past few months. We had to
cross several river valleys but the divides between fanned out into five or six components which had to be climbed both up and down ad nauseum. We crossed the Dirty Water or Durnantina River, a misnomer, for at the time it was a crystal, clear mountain stream, very inviting and when bathed in, very refreshing. We camped the first night at a place called Henganofi, the local police boy rounding up the ‘Marys’ to find us Kaukau, (sweet potato) sugar cane, and a quantity of tasty limes.

Next morning we rose at four and after a swim and good breakfast provided by the excellent Kooka we hit the trail again. The day proved amusing in many ways. As we approached a village Kooka would linger and Ted would have to rouse him from his eternal search for the opposite sex with whom he would converse causing much laughter. Kooka considered himself a cut above the rest of the boys, for he had been to Moresby, had learned the great Australian adjective and was never slow to employ it on any occasion fitting or otherwise. During this day, I received a message from General Morris, GOC ANGAU, asking me to make a presentation of the Australian Loyal Service Medallion to one Kambumin. He had been the ‘tultul’ or medical official of the village of Bumbum and when the Japanese swept through he had taken to the bush and reported valuable information and in addition had taken it upon himself to destroy an incredible number of the little yellow heathens.

During our lunch hour halt we were overtaken by a fast moving line with two Americans. The line carried an aeroplane propeller and spare parts. A man from Yukon told me he was making a fast trip to Kainantu to repair a Navy Douglas dive bomber that had force landed there. When he told me that he had prospected in the Rockies and along the Yukon and spent most of his life walking in inaccessible regions I did not worry about the
slow pace I was making. He was great company and with the usual American generosity left us the richer by a packet of Camels and some gum. I suggested that he should hold plane and pilot at Kainantu where we would make an international parade of Kambumin’s medal. I rather hoped the plane would take me along the Ramu and up towards Madang. We stayed that night at Henganofi and while Ted was ‘tickling off’ the locals for not keeping their tracks in order I was looking at the Finintegu strip, and enjoying a most refreshing dip in a seasonable pool.

The next day we were met by a policeman leading a scraggy gray mare. He informed us that Black had wirelessed through to send a horse to meet us. I had not accepted his advice to take the horse previously but now saw his point of view and clambered aboard, making the rest of the journey a pleasure rather than labour. The little grey mare knew the route well and could walk a tight rope, for when I came to one of the many bridges I naturally dismounted to lead her across. She objected and when forced to accede to my requests hurled herself over the side into the stream. On the next bridge a native told me to ride over, not a pleasing prospect on a cane bridge, but apparently it was the mare’s custom for she successfully negotiated them all from then on.

That evening we arrived at Kainantu to be met by hordes of the most fantastically garbed natives. I thought at first that the Kukakukas from behind the Spreader Divide had decided on a white meat diet, but out of the throng, like a story from Blackwoods, stepped one Ewing the ADO of the area. He confirmed the stories I had heard of the Kukakukas during the Wau campaign but stated that this was a party for Kambumin. He told me that they had been dancing for twelve hours straight and there would be no let up for about another 36 hours. It was an amazing sight, the bucks dressed in the quaintest
arrays and the Marys in all sorts of physical conditions running ceaselessly in a mad rhythm. It would require the pen of Damon Runyan for an adequate description. At the residence I found Morgan the test pilot and Yukon's party. Ewing surprised me into reluctant acceptance of gin and nimboo and then led me into a veritable banquet. I might add here that Aiyura close by was the pre-war government agricultural experiment station. Our meal comprised chicken soup, an entrée of sweetbreads, the most luscious steak and eggs, fresh strawberries with fresh cream topped off by some excellent local coffee. I had not dared to hope for a good liqueur and a good cigar but Kainantu was equal to the occasion. I gained a lot of information from Ewing that saved me days of walking. In the morning Kambumin did not arrive for his presentation so I pursued my task while the Americans repaired the plane. All day long the ‘sing sing’ went on and finally Ewing heard that Kambumin was ill and would not be able to get up for a week. As all the locals were present, it was decided to carry on with the presentation by proxy and accordingly his next of kin was invited to receive the medal. It was decided to perform the ceremony at 0900 the following morning, the sing sing became more fantastic and furious and I felt sure they would all drop from exhaustion. When the time for the presentation had arrived Ewing assembled the natives in the compound and made them sit down and he paraded his police guard who received me at the present arms. Ewing, Fulton, Morgan and Yukon took position at the saluting base and we hoisted the Australian flag. Then the next of kin came forward and I said a few words which were translated at great length by Ewing. I was rather proud of his speech. After placing the medal around the neck of the next of kin, I took the salute in a march past and advance in review order. The drill of the constabulary was excellent.
The ceremony then terminated with a wild rush by all the audience to the scene of the barbecue. Mindful of Arab suppers in the Middle East I was quite relieved to find it was not necessary for me to eat burnt hoof or horn.

That afternoon Morgan and I decided to take off, but unfortunately, after a round of farewells, we bounced 50 yds took off again and landed fair on the propeller with the tail vertically above the prop. I performed rapid gyrations in my safety belt but fortunately suffered no damage. Morgan had the engine pushed right back on to him but apart from severe shock and some difficulty in getting him out of the cockpit, he suffered no ill effects.

I still had to return to Bena Bena and on the following morning Ted and I set off leaving the Americans to repair the plane if possible, and Ewing to his isolation after their departure. We reached Bena Bena without mishap.

During the recce I had formed the opinion that although we could land guns at Bena Bena the difficulty of getting them to the Ramu would not allow us to achieve our object. I therefore recommended that our ideas of using that circuit be consigned to the WPB and that we find other means.
Bena Bena was an ANGAU base on the central plateau. I accompanied Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Andersen on a patrol to report on the defence of Bena Bena and the Ramu.
I WAS SENT to take over the Bundi post until Captain Gus O’Donnell arrived. Bundi was an abandoned mission station deep in the mountains between the Highlands valleys and the Ramu River, directly north of Kundiawa. Kooka, four Police Boys and I left Bena Bena on 21 March and walked to Goroka where Lieutenant Barracluff was stationed.

Next day we followed the Wahgi valley to Asaroka and stayed the night with Lieutenant Dave Fienberg. Then we walked on through Asaro and Koripa and over the range to Kundiawa (Chimbu) arriving on 25 March. Captain Costelloe was stationed at Kundiawa with a radio: he handed me a message from John Black ‘Cancelling instructions to take over Bundi wait at Chimbu or Mingendi for advice to proceed Bogia.’

I was getting used to my orders being varied with ever-changing tactical conditions and enemy operations. I was to revert to
the original plan and penetrate as close to the Sepik as possible. So I stayed with Costelloe for a week. Gus O’Donnell with Lieutenant English passed through Kundiawa on their way to Bundi. On 31 March a signal came from Black: ‘Proceed to Bundi with SIG Personnel for Bogia and Sepik and await Power and stores’.

The next day, three New Guinea Air Warning Wireless Signals personnel arrived from Mingendi with 30 loads of signal equipment and emergency stores. We left for the Sepik River on 2 May and arrived at Bundi after four days of hard travel over the main New Guinea divide. At Bundi, Gus handed me a radio message ‘Proceed Gulebi and await stores to proceed on road Power making from Sirrinibu’.

Gulebi was a former patrol post about 20 kilometres northwest of Bundi on the Marum River, a tributary of the Ramu. Sirrinibu was on the Ramu River, at least 85 kilometres in a straight line from Gulebi, but travel overland and by river was anything but straight.

We left Bundi early on 7 May; by steep tracks. We had to cross four rivers with our cargo and did not arrive at Gulebi till after dark. Malcolm English was on the station when we arrived but left the next day to patrol. The Signallers set up the radio equipment and established communications.

On 11 April Ted Smythe, a civilian and two German missionaries, Brother Kasparius and Brother Malcharek, arrived at Gulebi, evacuated from Japanese territory by Private Davis. Black had instructed me to evacuate any civilians who had not left enemy-held or threatened territory. He was particularly concerned about German missionaries who might, willingly or under pressure, assist the Japanese. He told me to apprehend the mission dentist at Wewak, Brother Schneiderguss, who had visited stations in Japanese territory and whom he suspected of pro-Japanese sympathies. This was not my opinion and I considered his activities simply the result of missionary zeal.

At Gulebi for a week awaiting orders I gleaned much useful local information. I decided the best method of getting our radio
and equipment to Annenberg on the Sepik River was by rafting down the Ramu to within a few kilometres of Sepik tributaries. The overland route was thinly populated and we would have difficulty getting carriers, particularly as there was every possibility the villages had been evacuated. I had a supply of new razor sharp adze heads, which I had found in a deserted mission house. These would be useful in making canoes for the rafts.

On 13 April I sent the following message to Black: ‘Atemble Wabusarik Sepu route clear and no report of any enemy activity. No word of Power request permission to move my party and stores by raft’.

Sepu is a village on the Ramu River, north of Gulebi, in the hills. I planned to raft down to Atemble Mission which was just upstream of Sirinimbu. From there I planned to go across country, east to the Keram River. In anticipation of approval, on 14 May I sent Signaller Carra with three native Constables and 46 carriers to Sepu with instructions to the river natives to start making canoes. Shortly after they left, I received a message saying ‘Capt Black on patrol’ and ‘Await orders from him.’

It was not until 18 April that a message gave me the all clear. ‘Proceed Sepik as requested. Use every care rafts difficult to steer snags suggest desirable use canoes’ and another signal ‘Wau advises 26 Sepik deserted. Endeavour apprehend.’

This caused me concern as I knew the Sepik deserters would try to return home by following the Ramu River to Atemble and going overland to the Keram River which flowed into the Sepik, the route I proposed to take. There had been desertions by armed Sepik police after the Japanese landed at Buna. They terrorised the villages they passed through murdering, raping and looting.

We left Gulebi with the radio equipment and camped in the bush. Next day, as we approached Sepu, I sent the Signallers ahead to set up the radio because I wanted to be on the air before dark. I stayed behind the straggling carriers with our cargo to keep them on the move. At the Ramu River I was alarmed to discover the Signallers had taken the radio across the river to a village on the
north bank, which was possibly under surveillance by the Japanese, and were testing for communications. I quickly got them and their equipment back to the south bank.

The Signallers Carra, Elton and Hughes were good lads but, this was their first patrol in a forward area and I stressed the importance of escape plans in the event of a surprise attack. The village of Sepu was on the Japanese held north bank and we were vulnerable there, especially if the river flooded and we could not cross quickly. We were more secure on the south bank where we would have more warning of a Japanese patrol. I hoped we would have time to destroy our codes and scatter into the mountains. The name of the game was ‘see without being seen’ and always have a ‘scatter pack’ (haversack with emergency rations and medical supplies) handy. We made a temporary camp away from the bank and all the natives were set to work making canoes, assisted by some of the Sepu villagers, who were skilled with adzes.

Radio communication was established and a message received to say Lieutenant Barry of FELO (an Army Intelligence Unit) was making his way to Atemble with 15 natives and 80 loads of cargo to set up a FELO base. This meant extra rafts and pressure on food supplies. On 22 April, Barry arrived with Gus O’Donnell from Bundi. To conserve our stores we bought what food we could, paying with trade goods.

I was anxious to get on our way and, as there was a full moon, the natives worked through the night. I planned to construct rafts by using two canoes, with a ‘bridge’ joining them on which to place cargo. I told Black ‘Six double canoes on Ramu between Sepu and Atemble 25th and 26th conveying Fulton’s and Barry’s parties. Fulton proceeding one canoe to Annenberg 27th or 28th. Inform allied aircraft through NGF’. I did not want our party on the river to be shot up by an over-eager United States pilot.

The Signallers and the radio were to be left at Atemble for Warrant Officer England who was based at Sirrinibu and I was to go on downstream with a radio to Annenberg, a few kilometres from Sirrinibu, to make contact with Captain Taylor on the Sepik
River. On 24 April, I sent a signal ‘Taylor from Fulton arriving
Annenberg twenty seventh advise your location’. We closed the
radio down, loaded the cargo onto the rafts and covered them
with foliage. Gus paid the Sepu natives for their fine work and
returned to Bundi with four native police and 29 carriers.

The six rafts left Sepu at 4.00 p.m. with five Europeans, 49
natives and 185 loads of cargo, but a heavy storm at 4.30 p.m.
meant there was a danger of the river flooding, so we found a safe
place to wait out the storm and the possible flood.

We set off again early on the next day and made good progress
down a fast flowing river using paddles to steer around snags and
gravel banks. For me the peace and beauty of the scenery was
marred by the knowledge that a Japanese patrol might be hidden by
the undergrowth. I was in the leading canoe and held a constant
fear of what may be around the next bend. My ears were alert to the
beat of the engine of a Japanese pinnace coming upstream.

These fears sharpened when we heard a rifle shot just before
noon. I thought a Japanese patrol had sighted us. I could not see
anyone on the river bank but some of the natives called out ‘one
fella Masta!’ They assured me he was ‘no Japan’ so we pulled into
the bank. It was Sergeant Power who had been trying to find
a route from Apanam, an old rest house up the Artagard River,
a tributary of the Ramu River, to Bundi. He and his natives were
without food and were trying to make a raft to return to Atemble.
The rifle shot was to attract our attention.

Our canoes could not take all his party, so I took Power and
a police constable on mine and gave the rest of his natives a bag of
rice to last them for the walk to Atemble. Power was in a very
weakened state as he had been without food for days. We
continued downstream until the afternoon, when shouts from
behind alerted me that one of the rafts had sunk. I anchored on
the south bank and Constable Laliok went back for about two
kilometres and located Carra’s raft on the north bank. Elton and
the crew of his raft were there but their raft was lost, with Elton’s
gear. Elton joined Carra’s raft and the natives walked along the
bank. We made camp and after dark one of Power’s natives reported the loss of another canoe and I was given the upsetting news that one native had drowned. We negotiated many dangerous rapids over the next two days but with the skill of the river men we avoided further mishap.

I was relieved when we arrived at Atemble in the afternoon of 27 April. The rafts were unloaded and the cargo stored in the mission house. Private Hunt arrived from Apanam. He had been sent by Peter England to escort the Signallers and their cargo to his base up the Artagard River. The Atemble Mission house was on the north bank and people told us Japanese patrols were in the Josephstaal area, inland of Bogia and less than 50 kilometres away. Next morning Hunt left with two Signallers and the cargo for England’s post and I kept one Signaller and a radio with me. We moved to the south bank and made camp concealed under trees.

On 29 April the rest of the cargo was brought across, the rafts were hidden in a creek, the radio erected and communication established. I reported to Black:

DO Ramu repeat O’Donnell from Fulton arrived Atemble twenty seventh all personnel including Barrys party ok one canoe lost with Eltons gear and SIG codes. Located Power ten miles from Sepu without food and unable to proceed further Power returned to Atemble with me. Medium size canoe rafts suitable to transport personnel and cargo only if handled by experienced natives number of dangerous rapids above Atemble. Advise not repeat not move mountain natives by water endanger safety of craft. Native of Powers party drowned by overturning canoe crossing river.

Jim Taylor, hiding south of the Sepik River at Kuvinmas, sent me instructions on how to find him and asked me about John Young: ‘Fulton from Taylor proceed Kuvinmas overland via Yiblis Karawari and Kaningara or thereabouts. Further instructions
Kuvinmas’. I replied: ‘Fulton from Taylor is Johnny Young joining us tell him to travel to Kuvinmas with you I shall arrange transport from there. Tell him also Bill MacGregor here’.

On 30 April I informed Taylor ‘Taylor from Fulton delayed Atemble arriving Annenberg first will contact Young’.

The radio was then closed down and we were again off the air.

On 1 May England arrived from Apanam and I handed over the radio to him for his base. Hughes was to go on to Taylor with me but he was ill.

He was still ill when we left on 2 May on a big raft. We arrived at Sirrinibu in the afternoon. Privates Grey and Hunt of 2/6 Independent Company were there with civilians Johnny Young and Ted Archer, both First War veterans and pre-war Sepik friends of mine. They were staying at Sirrinibu and planned to evacuate over the mountains.

We reached Annenberg on 3 May with Hughes still ill. The raft was given to the luluai and tultul of the village. Next day the tultul gave us carriers and showed us a hidden track to Jimebu. From here the upper reaches of the Keram River are only four kilometres from the Ramu River. The Keram flows north to join the Sepik well inland, while the Ramu continues northeast to the coast. From Jimebu we went in two canoes down the Keram to Taylor’s old base at Ramdapu which was deserted and overgrown, then on to Sitor village, 10 kilometres from Jimebu.

We travelled in relentless heavy rain. Our canoes were flooded and the cargo drenched. At noon we came upon Constable Tumai at a riverside village. He had been sent by Jim Taylor a month previously to seek medical treatment. Tumai was now unable to walk and he told me that the natives of the Upper Yuat area had refused him assistance and food. It had taken him two months to get from Yimas to Upper Keram after paying several pounds of his own money for food and transport. I learnt from Tumai that the priest from Kambot had told the natives to remain in their villages and attend church, assuring them that the Japanese would not harm them. I sent Tumai to Peter England at
Apanam under the care of the *tultul* of Annenberg who had been most helpful and had accompanied us from his village. Tumai’s information suggested we were at great risk of betrayal and should travel with extreme care.

We stayed at a deserted Bulingar village but during the night people came in from the bush and made contact. Next day, 6 May, we continued downstream passing the villages of Naglu, Bromfito, Mumbla and Dogon. We camped at Mogum also unoccupied but again people made contact in the night.

We left Mogum on 7 May and arrived at Rongwik village where the *tultul* informed me that seven police deserters had passed through a few days before. We pushed on to Gorpungen and Angeji which were also occupied and made early camp at a deserted Kibim village. Without assistance from villagers, with their knowledge of local streams and swamps, I could not find the route to Yuni or organise canoes to travel to Yar via Pushten. But the tuluai and *tultul* gave me the directions I needed.

Early afternoon on 8 May we arrived at Bugaram village where we were told that a German missionary, Father Jocham, was in the village. He made no effort to contact me, so I went to the house he was occupying to see him. He spoke very little English and we talked in Pidgin. He could give me no information of Japanese activity and I was suspicious that he was withholding information and may have pro-Japanese sympathies.

We moved onto Yar where I told the people I thought they should evacuate to avoid contact with the Japanese. The next day I sent Hughes with our cargo to Bobtain and instructed him to wait for me at Golgopa or Yamen.

German missionaries had influence in keeping people in their villages and I considered that a danger to our operations. They could either voluntarily, or under threat, follow me to Jim Taylor’s hide-away.
Notes
1. Dave Fienberg changed his name to Fenbury after the war but, throughout this book, he is referred to as Fienberg.
2. In ANGAU communications, the full stop is spelt out as ‘STOP’. For the convenience of the reader, I have throughout used the full point in quoted messages.

Map showing the route I took to evacuate German missionaries from deep in enemy held territory along the Ramu. Missionaries were evacuated from Biwat and Kambot and Father Schwab from Yamen. They made it out safely to Mount Hagen.
THE EVACUATION OF GERMAN MISSIONARIES

AFTER SOME THOUGHT, I decided to evacuate all the German missionaries and sent a messenger to bring Father Jocham. I informed him that all missionaries were to be evacuated from Kambot mission station. He protested that the Japanese had an envoy at the Vatican and a contract with the Pope to recognise religious rites. He argued there were thousands of Japanese Catholics.

I did not doubt his sincerity, but we were operating in enemy-held territory and for their own safety and the risk they represented to our patrol, I thought it imperative that they leave. Father Jocham finally accepted my decision and we left Yar and arrived at Bobtain at dusk. I went stealthily downstream at night with Father Jocham and Constable Ruru to Kambot. There were three missionaries at the station, Brothers Schmale and Celuba of Kambot and Brother Schneiderguss, the dentist from Biwat.

Like Father Jocham, they were unhappy with my instructions but they accepted my decision and were fully cooperative. They told me that Japanese patrols had visited their stations without interference but had instructed them not to leave. I knew then that
we were all in extreme danger, because the Japanese would soon be
told of our presence and could return at any moment.

It was now after midnight and I was anxious to get away. We
left in the early hours of 10 May and travelled upstream by
moonlight to Bobtain where we arrived just after daylight. Hughes
had returned from Golgopa with the cargo during the night.

The Japanese would soon hear that the missionaries had left
Kambot so I told Hughes to leave immediately with Constables
Laliok and Ruru and escort most of the missionaries back up
the Keram River to Apanam where Warrant Officer England
would arrange their evacuation to Mount Hagen. I kept Brother
Schneiderguss with me to guide me to where Father Schwab was
living in the swampy grass country villages. I was also conscious of
Black’s suspicions of Brother Schneiderguss. It was my intention
to personally escort him from the area although his cooperative
attitude confirmed my view that he was not a Japanese sympathiser.

I gave Hughes a message to be sent to Taylor by Peter
England’s radio at Apanam.

Taylor repeat DO Ramu from Fulton. Have withdrawn
Schneiderguss, Schmale, Celuba and Jocham from
Kambot. Schneiderguss with me remainder en route
Ramu escorted by Hughes. Proceeding Yuat to withdraw
others. Regret action without reference you no radio and
immediate action necessary. Will not proceed direct your
location. Full details later.

Brother Schneiderguss and I left Bobtain and went to Golgopa.
Here I was approached by Native Constable Moris. He said he
had been left behind at Angoram when the Australians had
withdrawn and wished to accompany me to Jim Taylor. I accepted
his story and he joined us. He convinced me his story was true.
Sadly, it was not.

We went by canoe up the Yamen River to a swampy track
that led to Yamen village where Father Schwab was living. He
knew of my presence from *garamut* (wooden slit gong) messages penetrating to Kumbarumba. The messages reported a patrol in the area but were not clear whether it was Japanese or Australian. Father Schwab said he had heard of a Japanese patrol to the villages of Pokoran and Jeta at the end of April. They had been guided by a native from Bien called Angom. They were looking for a route to the upper Keram River.

Early on 11 May, Brother Schneiderguss escorted by Constables Atoga and Moris (to whom I had given a rifle and 10 rounds) were sent to Biwat with instructions from me to take the two missionaries thought to be there, up the Yuat River to Sisisibi. Moris was then to go on to Kambrindo to bring any missionaries who had not left for Timbunki, to me at Sisisibi.

I wanted every one out of the area quickly. It would be only a matter of time before Jim Taylor’s whereabouts was discovered. Adding to my worries, it was a problem feeding ourselves and the carriers and police. My stores were down to a few dozen tins of unlabelled army rations. I thought they contained meat but they were all cheese and smelled terrible. When a tin was opened, hungry though we were, our appetite would vanish. The only other food was sago. It grew in the river swamps, took time to make, and was equally disagreeable.

I decided our best route out would be by the upper Yuat River to Hagen. With Father Schwab’s assistance we recruited eight natives from Yamen to carry. Passing through Manu and Maruwat, we arrived at Gangamba on the Yuat River at dusk. Next morning we went in two canoes to Avagumban then on to Sisisibi arriving at midday. Brother Schneiderguss with Father Kremienski and Brother Schubek and Constable Atoga came in two canoes from Biwat at dusk.

Early the following day we sent our cargo by canoes and walked to Asangamut (Pranco) where we crossed the river and were shown a track to Mundamba.

At Mundamba the people were unwilling to assist us or show us the tracks. They told our Yamen carriers and Biwat canoe boys
that it was dangerous to follow the Yuat River into the mountains. This thoroughly alarmed them and they became very restless. I instructed the *tul tul* of Biwat to take his group and some local natives to accompany the three missionaries and carry cargo to the junction of the Yuat and Marimuni Rivers. The local natives would only disclose the tracks under pressure and I knew they were not happy at our presence.

At Mundamba I was only able to muster a few carriers at exorbitant rates, and I had to leave some loads. We travelled through a heavy storm that drenched us to the bone and I camped in a native hut at the small hamlet of Dougme. The next day, at a hamlet in the bush (Marimung), I found only Atoga, the three missionaries and my two Maprik boys, Kooka and Awei. The carriers and Biwat guides had run away during the night.

Without carriers I had to leave the cargo and take only bare essentials and try and make it through to Hagen. However, in the night — as if things weren’t bad enough — Kooka and the other Maprik boy Awei, ran away, leaving me with only the missionaries and Atoga. We would have to change plans and return to Mundamba to get to Hagen via the Keram River and Annenberg. It was highly likely that the Japanese were already on our tails, but there was no other option and all we could hope for was to dodge any patrols that might be in the area. I prayed that the local natives would not give us away. The evacuation was becoming fraught with one obstacle after another.

Tired and hungry, we reached Mundamba in the afternoon. I thought of getting through to Jim Taylor at Kuvinmas as he had a radio and, being near a lake, might be able to arrange evacuation of the missionaries by seaplane. However this idea was soon thwarted. The natives simply refused to give us information or carriers.

Our presence was extremely unwelcome to the villagers, probably because they were afraid of Japanese reprisals. Brother Schneiderguss told me that natives of the lower Yuat had brought talk that parties of Japanese estimated at 200, were in the Karawari area searching for Jim Taylor.
Kooka — to my relief — returned early that evening, very ashamed at having deserted. I was not at all angry with him as I was aware that he and all the natives were being severely tested. They shared the same fate as us if we were caught. He had already excelled himself with courage many times. How difficult it must have been for Kooka to know what was going on when we barely knew ourselves. I certainly couldn’t guarantee that any of us would get out alive. Of Kooka’s contribution I wrote later:

Kooka has been two years on service, travelling through bad country, often in enemy territory and carrying a pack. He has been responsible for camp duties and the preparation of meals from scant rations often when worn out and under trying conditions.

Apart from pardonable short outbursts due to fatigue, he has maintained a particularly cheerful attitude which has influenced native morale generally. Up to August 1942, he has received no pay or issues (apart from an occasional smoke) and sometimes very little food. What few possessions he had were discarded when all casual carriers deserted as it was essential that he carry rice for mission evacuees.

We prepared to leave at daylight without carriers. Father Schwab had brought altar wine from Kambot — he intended to celebrate Mass whenever possible. He had three bottles and as we did not have much to be cheerful about, and I did not hold out much hope of us making it out alive, we sat in the bush in the dark and drank the lot! The wine soon had us talking and laughing as we tried to forget our dire situation. One of the priests lost his glasses but luckily found them next morning.

We pushed on to Wali and Father Schwab went on to Yamen to organise the locals to send canoes up river to Bonogon to pick us up. We left at daylight in the canoes and travelled to the Yamen track where Father Schwab rejoined us. Here the *luluai* of Yamen
and the *tultul*, a man called Maripu, were waiting with gifts of fowls and native foods. After our poor diet, these were like manna from heaven.

The *tultul* told me that Constable Moris had not been at Angoram as he claimed. He had attempted to abduct a woman on 19 May from Bogia who was married to a man from Golgopa and had threatened people with his rifle. When the *tultul* had tried to intervene, Moris told him that the ‘Government’ was finished. He had also taken articles from the Yamen mission house, including ammunition.

It was now clear that Moris was a police deserter who had been a month in the Madang area after the Japanese occupation. I had given him instructions to meet me at Sisisibi but he was armed and now living in the bush with a Bugaram woman. This gave me even greater concern because he was dangerous in his own right and had possibly been collaborating with the Japanese. I had to do something about Moris, before he caused us serious trouble.

We continued downstream to the river junction where the Golgopa men were waiting with canoes to take us to Gektan. I then went downstream by canoe and arrived at Golgopa in the late afternoon. The people verified everything the *tultul* had told me about Moris. From there, I walked to Boibtain, arriving at dusk. The village was deserted except for the *tultul* and I asked him to bring me Moris. Just at that moment, Moris, carrying a loaded rifle, and accompanied by the woman, appeared in a canoe on the opposite bank. He had not seen me and was preparing to cross. I covered him with my Tommy gun and told him to keep coming. When he reached the bank, I disarmed and handcuffed him.

Moris claimed he had been to Kambrindo and returned to Biwat with the two missionaries, but the *tultul* and natives of Biwat had chased him out because of his relationship with the woman. Although Moris wasn’t welcome in Biwat, his armed presence was clearly welcomed by the Boibtain natives who were
most uncooperative. The atmosphere was distinctly hostile and I concluded these natives were now pro-Japanese. They refused us help with canoes and even hid the paddles. I warned the *tultul* of reprisals should anything happen to us but I knew it would be only a matter of time before the Japanese were informed of our whereabouts. It was 10.00 p.m. before we left Golgopa in canoes paddled by Father Schwab’s men. I made the *tultul* of Golgopa come with us to make sure he could not make off to the Japanese and we travelled by moonlight, trying to stay as quiet as possible.

Just on 5.00 a.m. we reached Yar and I was surprised to find a soldier asleep in one of the native houses. He was Private Grey of 2/6 Independent Company attached to Peter England at Apanam. He had been sent to locate me and give me a message from Jim Taylor. Grey had no idea where I was and I had not been told by any of the villagers of his presence upstream.

The message read: ‘England from Taylor Peter K abandoned. Get word to Fulton to return to Black and await transport or further instructions’.

I now knew that Jim Taylor had evacuated his Kuvinmas hideout and was hiding elsewhere or on the move. The whole area was hot and native loyalty was under threat. It was a matter of urgency to get the missionaries out quickly as our party was too large for security, mobility or sustenance.

Grey continued upstream with us to Bugaram where the woman Moris had taken was handed back to the *luluai*. While en route to Limlo, eight Japanese aircraft passed low overhead with landing wheels down, flying towards Wewak. I arranged for Grey to continue on to Jabis with the three missionaries and Moris, while I took Father Schwab with me to investigate reports of a Japanese patrol at Pokoran and Jeta. We stayed overnight at Kitchikan where the *luluai* and *tultul* were most helpful, in contrast to the attitude in the Upper Keram. I would meet up with them at Jabis next day.

Father Schwab became ill with malaria, so I let him rest for a day with Grey’s party before following on.
I sent our cargo by land and travelled to Bulingar with the missionaries and Moris in heavy rain. We left there in three small canoes but the river was in flood and the current strong. The natives warned us of fierce rapids upstream and the danger of capsizing so I relieved Moris of his pack and released the handcuffs from one of his wrists in case we capsized. However, when Father Kremienski and the natives thought they could hear a Japanese pinnace engine, I pulled the canoes into the bank to hide. Immediately Moris leapt from the canoe and escaped.

We waited with every muscle tensed. The engine beat faded so we concluded it had come from an unseen aircraft. I sent a messenger in a canoe to Grey telling him to recapture Moris who I was sure was making his way back to the woman at Bugaram.

On 28 May, a recovered Father Schwab joined us at Annenberg. He told me Grey had gone to Bugaram to apprehend Moris. It transpired that Grey sent Koyak to search for Moris along the river and he had met Moris on the river bank with the handcuffs still on one wrist. Instead of apprehending him Koyak had believed Moris when he told him the Japanese were on the Ramu and my party had all dispersed. I assumed Grey would soon find Moris and rejoin us. We left Annenberg by canoe and travelled upstream to the track to Apanam where Peter England had his radio base. Now that I was in communication, I sent messages to Taylor and Black.

31 May 1943:

Taylor repeat Black from Fulton arrived Englands with missionaries. Schneiderguss, Schwab, Schubek, Kremienski withdrawn from Biwat and Yamen. Proceeding Hagen when rested.

Taylor repeat Black from Fulton missionaries report overland Jap patrols of twenty four via Iwap to Kambrindo and overland patrol of forty eighteenth April stayed four days Timbunki and removed two missionaries. Majority
mainland missionaries removed to Kairiru [an island off Wewak].

Taylor repeat Black from Fulton Schneiderguss states led Japs overland to Marienberg under compulsion and forced to carry given two months leave from Marienberg to give dental treatment missionaries on Sepik but remained Biwat Father Manion compelled lead Japs overland to Aitape missionaries Jacob and Wagner reported shot by Japs at But.

Taylor repeat Black from Fulton no Japs stationed Angoram and missionaires and natives report irregular visits to Marienberg for paw paws. All natives evacuated Marienberg.

Taylor repeat Black from Fulton armed police deserter Moris one month with Japs Madang and subversive agent apprehended Bobtain but escaped in handcuffs near Annenberg. Party now returned to Bugarum to recapture.

Further messages were sent to Taylor advising him of the subversive activities, the names of ex-police deserters and information about Japanese activities in the Yuat, Marimuni and Keram areas.

On 1 June I received a radio from Black saying, ‘Await my instructions before proceeding Hagen’. The base at Apanam was supplied at irregular intervals by escorted carrier relays from Mount Hagen. It was the only line of communication on little known tracks in a sparsely populated region. Because of this, the fuel for the radio generator and stores for personnel had to be carefully conserved. I thought we should leave for Mount Hagen immediately and on 3 June I sent another message to Black.

DO Ramu from Fulton if I leave immediately able to get missionaries out by Upsons carriers otherwise will experience considerable difficulty getting through. Missionaries consuming England’s stores. Please reply urgently as must leave fourth to connect.

On 4 June I advised: ‘DO Ramu from Fulton will carry on permit England proceed on leave. Unable patrol in present condition 142 days on patrol in six months aggravated condition requiring surgery’.

Black replied: ‘Fulton to remain Bogia as OC. England to cooperate. Upson en route yours will evacuate missionaries to Hagen.’

So the missionaries, escorted by Corporal Elton, left Apanam to make contact with Captain Upson and were safely evacuated to Hagen. I was desperately in need of abdominal surgery no doubt caused by the exacting physical conditions under which I was operating but there was nothing I could do about it. I had been on patrol for 142 days in pretty trying conditions. My physical state was certainly not the best and no relief was in sight.
JAPANESE AMBUSH
AT KAMBOT

A FEW DAYS after the missionaries left, Yelan returned to Apanam highly agitated. Edwin Grey had been killed by a Japanese patrol at Kambot. As far as I could understand Yelan’s story, after visiting Bugaram to recapture Moris, Grey had gone on to Kambot on the afternoon of 28 May. On 29 May two missionaries from Marienberg arrived and ate and slept in the mission house with Grey. On the same day the tultul of Bugaram arrived with Moris whom he had recaptured.

The next morning, the priest rose before dawn and, taking a lamp, went to the church. He returned to the mission house with Japanese soldiers, accompanied by natives from Kambot and Magende. Yelan told us the Japanese, led by a man with ‘fancy’ knee boots, surrounded the house.

While Yelan was preparing tea in the kitchen, the Japanese came onto the veranda and ordered him away. They fired shots and blew whistles outside the house and when Grey jumped out of bed he was shot at twice through the doorway of the room in which he was sleeping. He died instantly. Constable Porban, in an
adjoining building, tried to escape but was shot as he ran for cover. Yelan ran away with two other Annenberg natives of Grey’s party.

Yelan was excited and confused. He said that the Japanese had come in force in a rubber boat during the night of 29 May. I considered this supposition since he had not seen the boat.

Yelan also said that the priest was in league with the Japanese and went down to the village to bring them to the mission house. I also considered this conjecture since, being Sunday, he may simply have gone to church to say Mass and encountered the Japanese. Yelan could not explain why Grey went on to Kambot instead of taking Moris into custody at Bugaram and returning to me at Apanam.

When Atoga returned to Apanam, he told me his version. He said that he followed Grey down the Keram River as far as Bobtain. The Bobtain and Golgopa natives at first withheld information of a Japanese visit to Kambot but, under pressure, they told Atoga that the Japanese had stuck the Brother with a bayonet but did not seriously injure him. One force of Japanese left with the missionaries and another force remained at Kambot with Moris. A Japanese plane circled low over the mission house on 30 May. Atoga’s story suggested that the natives of Bobtain and Golgopa were all now pro-Japanese and that Grey had been ambushed through the assistance of missionaries from Marienberg. If they were not pro-Japanese, why else would they refuse to assist Atoga or supply him with canoes? I communicated the events and my opinion to Black and Taylor.

Much later, towards the end of 1944, the Japanese resistance was limited to small areas and we had released a number of Indian and native prisoners. When released from capture, a Constable Dralio made a statement which largely confirmed the reports I received from Constable Atoga and Yelan. Constable Porban had warned Grey not to go to Kambot as he was convinced the natives there were pro-Japanese.
I was at Kairiru when the Japanese came to Wewak. I lived with the natives of Muschu Island but eventually they revealed that I had been a police boy and the Japanese \textit{kalabus} [imprisoned] me at Muschu. I remember Constable Porban being brought to Muschu by the Japanese, Porban told me that he had been captured at Kambot on the Keram River. He came to Kambot with an Australian soldier (Pte Grey). They arrived at Kambot on Friday. The natives of Kambot told them that there were no Japanese in the area. Porban tried to persuade Private Grey not to camp at Kambot, but Grey said it was quite safe. I understood Porban to say that they camped in the Village Rest House, but it may have been the Mission House.

Two missionaries, a Father and a Brother were also at Kambot.

The natives of Bugaram apprehended ex-police deserter and enemy agent Moris who had escaped from Capt Fulton, and brought him to Pte Grey at Kambot. Grey handcuffed Moris to Porban and the two natives slept alongside Grey’s bed.

About 4.00 a.m. on Sunday Porban awoke Pte Grey’s servant, who prepared a fire to make tea. The Father also got up and went to the Village Church to prepare to say Mass.

At about 5.00 a.m. the Father returned to the house accompanied by many Japanese soldiers. I do not know when the Japanese arrived at Kambot. The Japanese came in an invasion barge. Nobody heard the vessel’s engine. Porban heard the Japanese approaching the house and awoke Pte Grey, who sprang out of bed and fired his Owen gun until the magazine was empty — killing one Japanese soldier who came to the doorway. Porban and Moris lay on the floor under the bed. Pte Grey then drew the pin from a grenade with the intention of hurling it through the doorway, but before he could open the door.
properly, the grenade exploded in his hand, shattering his right arm and leg and he fell to the ground and expired.

After a period Porban and Moris went to the doorway and were asked by the Japanese, who were lying on the ground, covering the house — how many soldiers were inside. The Japanese did not believe their statement that Pte Grey was the only soldier, and riddled the house with machine gun fire and hand grenades.

The Brother, who was in an adjoining room, tried to escape by another doorway and was stuck with a bayonet, despite the protests of the Father (in custody), that he (the Brother) was a Missionary and not English. The Japanese left the body of Pte Grey alongside the house. The body of the Japanese soldier was wrapped in bedding, taken from the house, and carried to the barge.

The wounded Missionary was assisted to the barge and taken away with the Father and natives Porban and Moris. He was left at Marienberg and the others taken on to Wewak, with the exception of Moris, who escaped from the Japanese at Murik.

Porban was still in custody at Muschu when I left the Island.

I was taken to Hollandia by the Japanese as a carrier and was in Hollandia when the American forces landed.

Taken before me, this: Twenty third day of December 1944. Signed E. Fulton Capt.
AFTER BEING EVACUATED to Australia, Father Schwab and Ted corresponded. I have included some of the letters here which reveal Father Schwab’s love of New Guinea, his compassionate nature and his gratitude to Ted. He moved to Tasmania but fervently wished to return to the ‘wild paradise of New Guinea’:

I am very anxious to go back to the Sepik. I hate sitting idle here without a special task … I am used to be in school every day teaching and have contact with other people.

In a letter to Father Schwab dated 6 April 1946, Ted writes,

I often think of the days we spent in those swamps, wondering if we would be successful in evading the Japs and to be quite truthful I was doubtful when all the natives deserted and left us at the head of the Kawawari
and we had to return to Yamen and make our way up the Keram …

It did occur to me with your knowledge of the English language, you would be in a better position than most other missionaries … to give a report on the Jap activities from the time the Japs came to Wewak and the Sepik …

I must confess that my memory of events is rather dim now and so many other events have occurred in the Aitape and Borneo campaigns that I just put them out of my mind, being tired of it all …

The following letters mention Grey’s death and the circumstances of the ambush at Kambot. Ted did not know why he returned to Kambot and why he didn’t heed Porban’s advice. Father Schwab said ‘No doubt the bullet that was meant for me struck him’. He was disturbed that Grey had gone to Kambot, which had already been evacuated, when Ted’s orders had been to recapture Moris at Bugaram and come straight back to him.

Father Schwab proposed a memorial for Grey at Kambot if ever he should return there. In fact Father Schwab did go back to New Guinea in 1946.

Epping near Sydney
126 Midson Road
7.9.43

Dear Mr Fulton,

I am already South as you know. Therefore I have to thank you very much for your valuable help in our evacuation. You have risked your life to save ours. It is the character of a real courageous soldier. We all would be very pleased to see you here if you come south to have your well-deserved leave.
Could you tell me any thing please about Mr Grey? Was he killed or is he still alive.

I had some malaria attacks again as we are nearly out of Quinine.

Many thanks again for your actions in our favour. I'll not forget to remember you at Holy Mass.

Best regards from the whole party
Yours sincerely
(Rev.) I. Schwab

Monastery S.V.D.
Midson Road 126
Epping N.S.W.
30th November 1943

Dear Mr. Fulton,

Today I received a cheque of 5£ from Northern Command Accounts Office, Brisbane. Many thanks for same. I could not remember more this 5 £ lent or given to you for safekeeping.

I am still here in our rest home and I am feeling well.
I heard that you were in the hospital at Port Moresby.
If that is so, I wish you a quick recovery. After your troublesome bushtrips you need a good rest. Perhaps you'll be so happy and you can have leave at Christmas. Then of course you must pay us a visit, if you should come to Sydney.

I am very obliged to you, because you risked your own life to save my life and that of the other missionaries.

I am very sorry for Mr. Grey. It was reported that he was killed at Kambot. No doubt the bullet that was
meant for me struck him. So your daring hazardous enterprise saved my life.

No newspaper brought the notice of his death, perhaps you are able to confirm this reported rumour of his death.

We all are very homesick for New Guinea and hope to go back next year when the brave Aussies have chased out the Japs.

Well, I wish you plenty of luck and bright, peaceful future.

Best regards
Yours sincerely
I. Schwab

Monastery S.V.D.
Epping N.S.W.
126 Midson Road
30th December 1943

Miss Mary Fulton,

I have just received a letter from Lieut. E.T. Fulton. He informs me that you his sister are living in Waverly and you would be pleased with a short visit from me. I am very obliged to Lieut. Fulton, because he saved my life when he evacuated me from New Guinea. He made a very dangerous trip and risked his own life to save the life of 7 missionaries of whom I was in charge. You can be proud to have such a brave brother who proved himself to be a very good catholic too. However at present I can do nothing for him than remember him in my prayers.
If I should ever come to Waverley to see the Franciscan Friars — I know Bro. Allert pretty well — I should like to pay you a visit — if it is not inconvenient to you.

Yours faithfully
I. Schwab
(Rev.Fr.I.Schwab)

126 Midson Road
Epping N.S.W.
30th December 1943

Dear Mr. Fulton,

Today I received your letter from 23.12.43. Many thanks for same. I was very pleased to hear that you are again in restored health and on duty somewhere in New Guinea. I hope you’ll never miss your good luck and strong luck until we hear the peace peal sounds. That’s my wish for the coming deciding year.

All the other Fathers and Brothers were pleased to hear from you again. Bro. Seraphicus and Bro. Patroclus are at present at St. Columba’s College in Springwood. I hope to find soon a job somewhere near Melbourne, I prefer a colder climate. Here I can never get rid of Malaria. The trouble is we are too short in Quinine and here is impossible to buy some.

I am very sorry for Pte. Grey. Perhaps you can give me the address of his relatives. If I should ever return to N.G. I should like to put him a worthy memorial there.

I heard another rumour too that Mr. England died. But I could not find his name in the papers.
Before I leave Sydney I hope to find time to see your sister and tell her the story how you risked your life to bring us to safe Australia. I’ll not forget you at the altar. Best regard too from all Sepik-Missionaries.

Yours sincerely
I. Schwab

Archbishop’s House, Hobart
13th November 1944

Dear Captain E. T. Fulton,

Informed by one of your friends that you are still doing outstanding work in a forward area I will drop you a few lines and hope they will reach you some time.

Last Month I received a letter from the mother of Private Edwin Alfred Grey. She was very pleased to get a report from me about my last encounter with her brave son in New Guinea. I told her everything to the best of my knowledge and mentioned your name too. Of course I had to be careful somehow because the letter was passing through official channels. I think it would be very appropriate if you would write a few notes to her too. Both his parents seem to be in the army.

Their address is: A.J. Grey, 124 Molesworth Street, North Adelaide.

I would be pleased if you could encourage some of our catechists to write letters here to Australia. I know a few and quite a lot in Maprik and Northern District too. I guess you must be somewhere near the place where you worked for gold before the war. The Japanese would not have time enough to pinch all the nuggets, I hope
something will be left for ‘post-war-construction’. I wonder if you never heard a word about Fred Eichhorn or Jim Wilton. All my endeavours to contact through ANGAU have been in vain and I do not know if they are missing or not. I suppose there are a good many of the old hands back again in NG. Most of our missionaries are very anxious to return to the wild paradise of NG.

Wishing you every luck and best success for all your operations.

I remain
Yours sincerely
I. Schwab

Archbishop’s House, Hobart
22nd March 1946

Dear Mr. E.T. Fulton,

It is a long while since I wrote you last. But the last issue of “PIM” mentioned your name in a short note, and so I decided immediately to write you. Judy Tudor was kind enough to supply me with your present address. First of all I have to congratulate you for three reasons: I noticed that you were promoted to the rank of Major, well no doubt, you deserved it and more than that. At last you found some recognition for your outstanding deeds of bravery.

Then I must congratulate you to your marriage which was news to me. I hope and I wish sincerely that this was the luckiest hit in your Army-carrier, it should make you happier and prouder than all other distinctions. I can only congratulate Mrs. E. T. Fulton that she found
such an intimate acquaintance with a most gallant officer. May your common happiness be long and everlasting.

And then I have to congratulate you on the birth of daughter. So your conjugal union has been blessed by a lovely offspring.

So these are the main reasons for writing you a letter today. I have not yet forgotten and I never will all the hardships and courageous enterprisings from your part to bring a couple of missionaries to safety. I had good luck and struck one of the loveliest part of Australia where my health was fully recovered here in Tasmania.

However I hope to hear from you and see you again in the not distant future somewhere in New Guinea chasing after the precious gold.

With best regards to Mrs. Fulton, the Baby and you

Yours sincerely
I. Schwab

Archbishop’s House, Hobart,
15th April 1946

Dear Mr. Fulton,

Many thanks for your letter of 3rd inst. It was a pleasant surprise to me. Judy Tudor, one of your old friends, was kind enough to inform me about your whereabouts.

I am delighted to hear that you have great success not only in the military career but also in your private family-life and business-affairs. Well, I wish you great prosperity for the future. Perhaps we will have some business dealing later on when we are back in the mission.
Yes, you are very reasonable to give up prospecting, it’s no life for a family to be isolated in the jungle.

I wonder if you are allowed to tell me any details about the events in the Sepik and Keram River district. I heard some rumours that other natives from the Sepik brought the Japs to Kambot and the whole village was burnt down, except my house, where poor Grey lost his life as the story goes. I heard Fred Eichhorn was for some time in Sydney, but I could not contact him, he would know a lot of details. Nothing definite was heard so far about Father Hansen who was with Jim Taylor up the Sepik somewhere. I wonder where Jim Wilton is at present, I read some inquiries about him in the ‘PIM’.

If Gordon Thomas wants some information and certain data he should contact Father Tschouder in Haberfield. He is the only one who wrote and saved his diary. In the near future he will publish it in book-form. I never contacted the Japs, nevertheless I am willing to help him as far as possible.

It is a pity that you did not write a diary (or did you?) You could tell quite a few and very thrilling stories too. I think you must have had a very narrow escape at Mr. England’s Camp. The rumour went that the camp was stormed by the Japs soon after our departure, but it seems that no white man was lost.

Now I have a little request. Perhaps you have some old copies of ‘PIM’. I tried hard to get a complete file, but even with the assistance of Mr. Robson I had no great success. Now I try to raid a few private families who have been subscribers, maybe I’ll have more luck. However I doubt it very much.

If you could come here for a short trip to our lovely Tassie, we could have quite a few ‘schooners’ of beer. It is plentiful here, 12 hours every day, and ‘Cascade’ is a very tasty stuff too.
I will conclude with best wishes to your wife and your little darling girl. (You did not even mention her name.)

I hope to see you again somewhere in New Guinea in the not distant future and then we’ll celebrate.

With kind regards and best wishes from the other New-Guinea Missionaries too here in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely
I. Schwab
I KNEW THAT there was nothing to be done about Grey’s death, but it was upsetting. Lieutenant Barry of FELO had established a base two hours walk from the ANGAU base at Apanam. There were also personnel of Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) in the area. I went to Barry’s camp to discuss the coordination of areas of operation and, on 6 June 1943, I returned to Apanam and took over the base from Peter England.

Reports of three separate enemy patrols at Baham, Musak and Sepu indicated increased Japanese activity in our area and highlighted the vulnerability of the Apanam base to attack from the Ramu River. A Japanese pinnace could approach without us having sufficient warning to move the radio and equipment. Barry was also vulnerable.

On 7 June, Peter England and I left Apanam for Lieutenant Greathead’s AIB camp at Kunduk. We discussed the layout with Captain Chambers and Lieutenant Cambridge, and it was decided to move the ANGAU base to an area that would not interfere with Greathead’s local food supply. Peter continued from Kunduk
into the mountains on his way out to Mount Hagen and a constable escorted 17 carriers down to Apanam with instructions to Hughes to send urgent messages about our intentions and to bring the radio and equipment back to Kunduk. Constables Laliok and Ruru were sent along the range to locate a suitable base site with a reliable water supply.

I asked Headquarters if I could dispose of the pinnaces on the Ramu.

‘DO Ramu from Fulton please advise disposal of pinnaces on Ramu if not used or destroyed by us will eventually be put into commission by Japanese’.

A message was received on 10 June of native reports that a Japanese force had come by pinnace up the Keram to Sitor only five hours from Annenberg. The enemy were increasing their activity on both the Keram River from the Sepik River and the Ramu River from Madang.

Hughes had still not arrived with the radio by 11 June, so Chambers supplied 30 carriers from Mount Hagen to go and help him. They returned with Hughes, the radio and equipment and radio communication was established on 13 June and messages sent.

DO Ramu from Fulton base vulnerable from Ramu. Have moved radio and moving stores into mountains ten hours from Atemble co ord ref NG first edition bkt W bkt H five nine one seven. Permanent line essential can you supply fifty Nangam carriers.

DO Ramu from Fulton Curran Smith on patrol reports native talk Japanese force arrived by pinnace June eight Sitor on Keram five hours from Annenberg. No reports from mission scouts at Annenberg. Investigating.

Two days later I left Kunduk with a line of natives and carriers from Mount Hagen to investigate the new ANGAU base site on the next range. Our progress was slow and after crossing the
Artagard River we made camp. The natives were friendly and supplied us with good food.

Next day I came to the place identified by Laliok and Ruru, on high ground, heavily timbered and concealed from the air. The only approach was by a narrow track on an open spur, from which a surprise attack would be difficult. I organised the clearing of the secondary bush and it was not long before pygmies appeared. Despite their grotesque facial adornments they were friendly and we traded for food. We were unable to communicate verbally but by sign language we learned that the site was called Gumika.

Hughes and the radio remained at Kunduk while I supervised the camp construction. On 16 June messages were received:

From DO Ramu approve your change of location for base provided no weakening of forward watching activities. What will be altitude of new base and will it be in Malaria area. If so cannot provide you with line of upland carriers.

From DO Ramu LWH50 propose forwarding reliefs for two six indep personnel attached to you in next couple of days. How many reliefs do you require.

From DO Ramu LWH57 pinnaces will be concealed on Ramu. If possible maintain them in good order pinnaces not repeat not to be destroyed. Advise location of pinnaces immediately giving map references.

The refusal of my request to scuttle the pinnaces and instructions to conceal and maintain them revealed a deplorable ignorance of the conditions. As I predicted, the Japanese captured the pinnaces. It was my last 'request' to Headquarters. In the future, action was taken first and Headquarters informed afterwards. Lack of local knowledge by Headquarters was a continuing source of frustration for ANGAU officers.

With only eight natives, construction was slow. Word of our presence spread and visits by the pygmies increased. They were always friendly and brought large quantities of food to trade.
I kept in touch with Kunduk and Apanam and the 2/6 Independent Company personnel at Apanam were instructed to relay reports, from native scouts at Atemble and Annenberg, to Kunduk by mobile 208 radio set.

On 21 June I had a message from Hunt that all police and natives had deserted from Apanam during the night of 18 June. The police had taken their rifles and ammunition. Fear of Japanese attacks had caused the police boys and other natives to leave our forward watching posts. With increased enemy presence, they knew they were at risk if they continued to take part in our activities. The odds were too great against their survival. I had been right to move the base and radio from Apanam.

That day I received the following messages to report to Headquarters.

From DO Ramu LWH69 June 20 to XHQ Fulton to hand over immediately to Power and report here as soon as possible for onward movement Moresby XHQ advise if Fulton in contact with you.

I left Gumika and returned to Kunduk in the evening. Chambers and Cambridge (AIB), Barry (FELO) and Hughes were at the base and I told Hughes to send this message for more staff to cover the posts and protect stores.

DO Ramu in reply your 50 June 14 from Fulton present six Ind Coy strength two Hunt and Curran Smith who are doing all patrols. Can do with all staff you can spare for patrol duty. Permanent base staff will be one SIG only.

The police desertions and the failure of runners to report was resulting in complete disorganisation. In addition, Aiome pygmies were raiding our stores. Atoga had not returned from a mission and I assumed that he too was among the deserters.
I felt his desertion very much as he had done heroic work with me for months and was due to return to Moresby for rest and recognition. With things going against us, he must have listened to the other natives and decided enough was enough. I later learnt he had been with the Japanese in Madang but had not assisted them. The police were afraid of associating with us and, when carrying messages, they simply failed to show up. And, our labour line was down to nil.

Chambers and Barry arrived with a line of carriers from Kunduk. They were en route to Greathead’s new base in the mountains. The operations of three separate patrols, covering the same territory and reporting to three different intelligence centres, I considered ineffective. Kunduk was abandoned. The demand on Highlands and other carriers to maintain a line of communication to the radio bases and watching posts was in excess of the numbers available. The demands were also too great on the food supply. The absence of liaison between the Intelligence Commands and AIB being Naval Intelligence and FELO and ANGAU, resulted in the three groups operating separately and inefficiently.

A report was received on 1 July that Native Constable Daniel and two of Barry’s FELO police had left No. 1 Dump and deserted. The Aiome pygmies pillaged the goods and felled trees over the store. Hunt arrived from Apanam on 2 July, fixed the battery charger and established communication. A message from Black read: ‘From DO Ramu hr 3 8 June 28 has Fulton left required urgently Moresby.’

Black was advised:

DO Ramu from Fulton all police including scouts now deserted. When sent to posts or carrying messages police have failed to report and following first deserters who took all canoes from Atemble and went down Ramu. Strength now police nil labourers nil. Unable to locate influence and apparently police afraid of association with
our forces. Cpl Samurai when endeavouring complete Powers route to Gulibe aware of Japanese at Sepu but did not repeat not report it on his return. In view of unrelia-
bility police suggest European staff be increased to cover all posts and protect stores.
DO Ramu from Fulton proceeding yours fourth with upland carriers supplied by Chambers. Unable to leave earlier owing situation here with staff dispersed desertions and radio breakdown.

I did not know why I was required at Headquarters in Port Moresby. Power had not returned to Gumika to take over but the repeated instructions demanded immediate action. I told Hughes to keep contact with Black and take over until he sent an officer to relieve him. I left Gumika on 4 July.

I made the following observations in my Patrol Report.

Patrols

Patrols have been carried out by 2/6 Independent Company personnel, Ptes Curran Smith, Hunt and the late Pte Grey. Those men have been constantly on patrol and it is considered that if ANGAU personnel on lines of communication could be made available as forward scouts with Independent Company personnel, patrols could be organised to provide reliefs at watching posts and overcome the element of staleness and lack of caution that results from prolonged forward area work without relief, unfortunately in some instances with fatal results.

Increased establishment is required to effectively man watching posts, and in view of the unreliability of Native Police, protect Base and Stores Dumps. The latter duty could be alternated with forward watching.
Radio Communication

Immediate relay of intelligence requires adequate radio equipment and skilled operators, one operator at least with technical knowledge to maintain equipment.

To cover this area effectively it will be necessary to increase personnel and equipment.

If personnel cannot be supplied to cover all posts, reliable runner communication is the alternative, i.e. Native Police (not local).

Native Police

In view of the mass desertions of Native Police, some with splendid forward area service, replacements should be carefully selected and personnel drawn from areas removed from local contact.

Native Carriers

A permanent carrier line is essential. The radio control base and stores dump being located in the mountains at an average height of 4,000 feet. Upland carriers could be utilised and relieved regularly, say every three months, without endangering them to malaria infection.

Patrol supplies could be transported to forward areas by local casual natives.

Native Situation

The natives between the Main Divide and the Ramu River are uncontrolled and at the present cannot be relied
on for food supply or carriers. They will raid dumps and carrier lines if not well guarded and escorted.

It is considered that, with patrols in area and dumps established, after a short period the local natives will be induced to supply food and carriers as required.

Line of Communication

The area could be supplied by the establishment of a carrier line from Nangam to a half way base (suggest Mungambant).

Stores could be dispersed to dumps as required by permanent carrier line based at Mungambant.

It is suggested that this base be manned by an NCO who could perform the duties of patrol officer and accelerate the control of local natives.

Lay Out

The attached sketch with suggested Intelligence control and L. of S. is submitted for your consideration.

‘Gerry’ Monk was sent with new personnel to occupy Gumika. A Japanese patrol, guided by natives from the Ramu River, made a surprise attack at night killing a number of patrol and signal personnel. Monk and others escaped into the mountains and the Gumika base was abandoned for good.

My journey out to Nangam took six days of walking, climbing and river crossings with three more days of easy travel through the Wahgi Valley to Bena Bena. Here I learned that
Malcolm English and Dave Fienberg had also been recalled to Port Moresby. English had already left.

Dave and I were to leave Bena Bena on a United States Air Force Dakota cargo plane. Because there was no air or ground protection for the airstrip, the aircraft kept their engines running while the cargo was unloaded and we boarded. They wanted us out as soon as possible in case of attack from Madang or Wewak.

We had to be on the ‘drome when the planes arrived and ready to jump on board. Fienberg and I left Sigoya early in the morning and walked up to the airstrip. Jock Esson was already there with labour to unload the cargo. In a native material building on the edge of the strip I was checking a map when we heard the engines of approaching aircraft which we assumed were the cargo planes. However, we saw six small planes coming from the north and flying in formation fast and low. They were Japanese aircraft on us very quickly. As their machine guns opened fire we had just enough time to scramble into a dugout that Esson had had the foresight to excavate in the side of a nearby gully. The building we had evacuated, with some of my gear inside, went up in flames but no bombs were dropped. This was the first Japanese air attack on Bena Bena. Fortunately the strip was not damaged and nor did the Japanese planes meet the Dakotas which landed soon after.

So I returned safely to Port Moresby, seven months after walking in from the Gulf of Papua to the Sepik and back to Bena Bena — a distance of more than 2,000 kilometres.
I HAD HOPED that my recall was for overdue leave but, with the urgent signals and the recall of Malcolm and Dave, the signs were not good. Next morning we reported to Major Jones and were told that General Morris had instructed him to bring us to his headquarters for tea. While his aide handed around cigarettes, the General and Brigadier Cleland chatted to us informally.

My pessimism was confirmed when Jones told us that a special force, to be called ‘Mosstroops’, was being formed and Dave and I were to be part of it. Malcolm was to go to a force known as ‘M Special Force’.

Mosstroops personnel were to be flown by United States Navy Catalina flying boats from Port Moresby to the Sepik River. The Force was being assembled from ANGAU, AIB, FELO and other units. I was glad to be seconded to Mosstroops but I needed urgent medical attention. I told Jones that I had not had home leave since the outbreak of war in 1939. Having served in the Western Desert, Greece and Crete for two-and-a-half years, my home leave was cancelled when the 6th Division was sent straight
to New Guinea. Since then, I had been most of the time on patrol in forward areas.

A medical examination confirmed I needed immediate surgery and I was sent to the 2/9th Australian General Hospital. Major Jones agreed that, as the Force was still being assembled and equipped, I should take 14 days home leave when I was discharged. This was the maximum permitted. The 6th Division was operating against the Japanese at Lae and had some casualties in the same ward as me. Lieutenant ‘Bunny’ Roach, who had been an artillery sergeant with me in the Middle East, was in the next bed, with arm wounds. He gave me news of my old friends in the 2/1st Field Regiment.

I also had a visit from my good friend Gerry Keogh, who had left the Administration to join us gold prospecting in the Sepik and was now with FELO. He was going on leave. ‘Ted, we’ll have a party when we get to Sydney’, were his parting words.

I was sent to a convalescent camp on the Sogeri Plateau, inland from Port Moresby. New Guinea troops were not permitted liquor so we drank tomato juice and played cards. We had a tough poker ‘school’ going and as we had all been overseas for a long time with healthy pay book credits, the stakes were often high. The ‘school’ included the officers Ralph Kell, Max Rayson, Aub Schindler, Ted Exton and Bill Catanach. We played every night with a silent audience.

I was recalled from the convalescent camp to report to United States 5th Bomber Command to act as observer in a Liberator B29 Bomber. The bomber was to make a daylight search of the Sepik River area to locate Dick Cardew, Nep Blood and other personnel of a Z Special Force party who had landed by seaplane on a lake, and had been immediately ‘jumped’ by a Japanese patrol.

For most of the day we circled low without success. We were ever conscious of the Japanese base at Wewak but returned to Port Moresby without interference.

It was difficult to understand why Z Special Force planners, who operated from Melbourne, would send a party to the area Jim
Taylor had reported was occupied by Japanese. Fortunately, the party made their way to safety, some without footwear and in bad shape.

I called on Gerry Keogh at FELO Headquarters. FELO operations included dropping propaganda leaflets during bombing raids. When I was told ‘Gerry has gone’, I thought he had already left on leave. I was shocked to learn that on the previous day, Gerry had taken the place of Kassa Townsend — who was laid up with a bad foot — on a mission: the bomber flew into a hill and blew up. Another close friend gone.

I went on leave by RAAF Short Sunderland flying boat to Townsville and by troop train to Brisbane. Gwen had come to Brisbane with the United States Army when the Headquarters was moved from Sydney. She was working in the Engineers’ Section drawing maps.

When I arrived, Gwen was in hospital recovering from diphtheria. Her mother had come from Melbourne to be with her. Nevertheless, you cannot imagine my happiness at seeing them both. My leave was to Sydney so my stay in Brisbane was a transit period. My brothers were away; Frank in the RAAF and Jack and Henry prisoners of the Japanese. We did not know then that Jack was on the Burma Railway or that Henry had drowned when the *Montevideo Maru* was sunk. Mother had died when I was in the Middle East and only my sister Mary was there to greet me in Sydney. Poor Mary had to get on with life as best she could, though she was constantly anxious about her four brothers.

It did not seem long before I was on a troop train again, heading back to Brisbane. Bob Day and Theo Mason, Sepik gold prospectors, were attached to Intelligence in Brisbane. When they knew I wanted a few extra days in Brisbane with Gwen, they discovered it was ‘necessary to hold me on duty to supply up to date intelligence on the area’. This allowed me to see more of Gwen who had left hospital and was staying with her aunt.

Brisbane was full of United States soldiers. With their good pay and free-and-easy spending habits, they received top priority in hotels, restaurants and taxis. Hotel hours were restricted to one
hour, at midday, so I went along before opening time to restore my taste for a beer. As opening time approached, US servicemen in ones and twos appeared but I was near the door and had no trouble getting to the bar first. But I became ‘The Invisible Man’. Full glasses were passed over my head to the Americans behind me and the barmaid seemed deaf to my requests.

I spotted another Australian soldier with no drink and called out to him, ‘We’ve got the wrong uniform on here, Dig!’ An American behind me immediately offered me one of his full glasses. I didn’t accept but thanked him anyway. This brought me some belated service.

I had to take another troop train to Townsville. I was told there would be a delay in onward movement to New Guinea. Having in mind that Major Jones expected my immediate return, I went to the Movement Control Officer and mentioned Mosstroops. I was on a plane next morning.

From Major Jones I learned that most of the force had already flown to the Sepik. Major Farlow who was in command was flying in that afternoon and I was to go with him. When the Catalina landed on the Sepik and I entered the jungle base, the shock of coming straight from Townsville hit me. I was suddenly back to the heat, the sweat, the mosquitos and army rations, after home comforts.

I was consoled by having many old mates with me. Along with Dave Fienberg and John Milligan were 6th Division officers and NCOs who had served in Tobruk, Greece and Crete. Robin McKay and Peter Dennis of the 6th Division Cavalry Commandos, Dick Cardew, Tony Gluth and Jim Downie 2/8th Battalion, also Jack Grimson, Tommy Barnes and Stan Tame.

Mosstroops were to collect information about Japanese operations, to help downed Allied aircrew, to bolster the morale of villagers by showing them we were still there in numbers and to arm and encourage selected village men to attack Japanese patrols in guerrilla warfare. The force carried out token patrols without achieving anything of importance. We were too far from any
enemy activity and the force was too large and had a severe supply problem. To supply the base it was necessary for Catalinas to come and go all the time. This constant air activity quickly drew attention. In addition, a high powered radio was on the air to Port Moresby most of the time.

The inevitable happened and the Japanese bombed and destroyed the base. The force was withdrawn and the operation abandoned. It would have been a matter of time before the slow Catalinas were shot down and the Mosstroops stranded, so it was fortunate that only equipment and no personnel was lost.

The operation was ill conceived. The villagers were either pro-Japanese or apathetic, we had too few native police and the Japanese quickly located our main base and destroyed it.

It was January 1944 when the Mosstroops operation was called off and, on our evacuation, we reported to Major Jones. Nep Blood and I were sent to posts that for once, were not in a forward area. We were attached to Jim Taylor, now in the Highlands. Nep was to take over the Mount Hagen post and I was to take a patrol to a more remote area, south of Hagen at Ialibu. I was to investigate reports of activity which, though probably of a tribal nature, may have been enemy paratroops occupation. This was not likely but could not be disregarded. By now, the Australian 7th Division had captured Lae, and the United States Air Force had established a large base at Nadzab with 22 runways for bombers, fighters and transport planes. Transport planes took me to Nadzab and then on to Mount Hagen, together with Jim Taylor.

It took four days walk to reach Ialibu. We crossed the Nebilyer and Kaugel Rivers by suspension bridges and arrived at a ridge overlooking a large, open, grass covered valley near Mount Ialibu. This looked to me to be suitable for the radio and I decided to make the base there. I did not wish to be in a village since the natives had had very little outside contact. However, it was not long before curiosity got the better of them and we were visited by villagers carrying spears and bows and arrows. They
were bearded and wore striking headdresses. They became regular visitors as the building of the base progressed and brought food to trade and helped supply us with bush materials. There was no sign of anything unusual and I knew no enemy threat existed but I was anxious to learn what the report was about. As communication improved I learnt that it had been a tribal incident that had been exaggerated and distorted.

The harmony of our contact was suddenly terminated when police returned to the base and reported being attacked. They had shot one native in self-defence. I had no way of checking their story but knew it was a serious incident. I now know that police often caused trouble in local villages, especially when trying to seduce or abduct girls.

The night was broken with shouting and drums coming from across the valley and fires in the mountains. The countryside was aflame as news of the disaster was transmitted from village to village. I knew the natives would be mustering to attack.

With their anger mounting, I could not communicate with the people to ask what happened and I was afraid that they would attack and force us to defend ourselves. Their spears and bows and arrows could not match our .303 rifles but I could not afford to let them get close enough to use them and wound or kill some of our party. At daylight I left the two signallers with the radio and took the other NCOs and all the police and crossed the valley towards the nearest village.

We could see large numbers of warriors on the hilltops armed with bows and spears and calling out aggressively. We fired one volley at them some hundreds of yards away. It had the effect I had hoped for and they retreated to the next ridge. This enabled us to get to the village which was just two or three houses. We set fire to the unoccupied houses. The man who had been shot was lying on a bier suspended between two poles.

It was a sad and regrettable action, particularly as blame was uncertain. But I knew our base could have been attacked by scores of armed warriors. It was better to show force early and destroy
some houses in order to avoid a more serious conflict and probable deaths later. After some days we made limited contact again. Eventually things settled down and we retained regular contact with Hagen.

The Ialibu posting was too good to last. In February 1944 I received a note from Nep Blood,

How long are you supposed to stop at Ialibu? You and I are on seven days’ notice, also Ray, so I guess we are only here until they have a go at Wewak and then the wires will hum ‘Blood, Fulton, Watson to proceed Moresby at once repeat at once’. The same old twenty or so that are in ‘red’ on the roster.

Just as he predicted, I was recalled to Mount Hagen to be sent on to Port Moresby.
BACK IN PORT MORESBY, Jones informed me that I was on stand-by to be attached to a United States Task Force for an invasion on the northeast coast of New Guinea. The Americans did not disclose the location but as the force was to sail from Finschhafen, we thought it was to be Hansa Bay, between Madang and Wewak.

I flew by Dakota to Finschhafen, which had been captured by the Australian 9th Division, and transformed by the United States Navy from a quiet mission station to a large military base. Horrie Niall had come from Wau to be in charge of ANGAU at Finschhafen with Lieutenant Boyan from Bena Bena as his assistant. Other ANGAU personnel were Ken McMullen, Bill Dishon and ‘Katie’ (K. T.) Allan. Jack Thurston was also there with RAAF Intelligence.

Horrie Niall took me to United States Intelligence where I was asked about the beach and the depth of water at Aitape. When
I said it was deep, the officers said their information showed it to be flat and shallow. I repeated that I had walked the 90 miles of coast between Wewak and Aitape, on pre-war prospecting and recruiting trips a number of times and, each time I had cooled off, the water had been several feet deep just off the beach. Niall and I were now sure the landing was to be at Aitape as it was essential that landing craft not be stranded in shallow water off the shore.

Jack Milligan, Dave Fienberg, Gus O’Donnell and Alan Gow arrived to join the Task Force. We were issued with United States .30 carbines to supplement our revolvers, and placed on stand-by. On the morning of 17 April we received orders to embark. We made a final check of equipment and, after a snort of whisky with McMullen, Niall and O’Donnell, Milligan and I went aboard a United States Liberty Ship AK. The NCOs Warrant Officer Stan Bartlett and Sergeant Bill Coutts came with us. Lieutenant Harry Aiken and Lieutenant Pendlebury of AIB also came aboard in the evening.

It was a case of sleep where you can. While the Yanks chased stretchers, I staked out a position on a rope locker. I shared the locker top with an American bomber pilot having his first sea voyage.

We sailed next morning 18 April in heavy rain with everyone more or less wet, slowly heading north in a smooth sea. The convoy comprised aircraft-carriers, cruisers, destroyers, motor torpedo boats, different types of landing craft and all types of invasion vessels. We queued for meals on deck at 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Together with two native policemen and the ANGAU and AIB parties, Milligan and I were the only Australians. We got along well with the Americans.

On 19 April we were joined by two more convoys. It was impossible to estimate the number of vessels because the convoy was colossal. Movie and still photographers were busy recording the activity. We cruised around Manus Island during the night. Daylight on 20 April revealed the sea full of ships with Navy planes overhead, a magnificent spectacle beyond description.
water was like glass and the weather hot with light cloud. The Force was to divide and make two landings, one at Aitape and the other at Hollandia.

On 21 April a message to all ranks from the Task Force Commander, Brigadier General Doe, was broadcast, ‘You are part of Persecution Task Force, about to strike the biggest blow yet made in the southwest Pacific. Good luck. Good hunting’.

There was much cleaning of weapons, studying maps and final instructions. In the evening officers and men were chatting, playing cards or smoking. It was the calm before the storm. There was a quiet confidence supported by the array of aircraft carriers and warships with Navy planes in the air all day.

Next morning at 3.30 a.m. we moved into the ship’s hold in the dark to wait the dawn. At 6.00 a.m. the warships commenced shelling the shore and Navy planes were bombing and raking the beach with machine gun fire. When we clambered down the side on a rope net in full equipment and dropped into a landing barge, the din was terrific. Milligan and I, with the two NCOs, were in the first wave from our ship and the fifth wave of the invasion.

On the beach we dug a hole in the sand and lay in it. After intense bombing and shelling, there was little or no opposition but the Americans kept up a huge rate of fire and we felt safer in our hole. The Americans stormed a native material building, firing off hundred of rounds as they went. Most of those inside were killed or wounded before it was realised they were not Japanese but were Javanese boys who were POWs. They looked like Japanese and the troops, many of whom were inexperienced, lacked fire discipline. It was some time before the situation was controlled and the terrified children protected from fresh troops swarming ashore. They were 100 boys of whom possibly half were killed or wounded.

With no opposition, progress was rapid but we remained cautious of the tendency of the United States troops to fire at anything moving. United States casualties on the beach, waiting transportation back to the ships, had all been caused by their own
troops. The township and airstrip were occupied before noon and the beach became a scene of intense activity as the big landing ships dropped their ramps at the water’s edge. The flow of vehicles and DWKS (‘Ducks’) continued all day.

John Milligan and I contacted some natives. Dazed by the bombing and shelling they were too incoherent to supply details of Japanese positions. We slept in a hole on the beach as bursts of shooting went on all night despite a distinct lack of targets.

Next day more ships carrying troops and equipment anchored. I saw a five-star general dressed in United States green service dress on the beach and recognised General McArthur.

We were joined by more ANGAU officers, Dave Fienberg, Alan Gow, Joe Searson, Gus O’Donnell and Ted Eglinton with Sergeants Bill Murcutt and Wally Doe. Our role was to guide United States patrols away from the beachhead. However, American officers commanded the patrols and could take our advice or ignore it, as they saw fit. With Murcutt and native police, I was detailed to guide a United States patrol and follow tracks to the south of Aitape for signs of enemy dispersal.

In a clearing in heavy bush we discovered a new Japanese headquarters which had been occupied recently. My detachment (Murcutt and six native police) was leading the patrol. Bill Murcutt saw a Japanese moving among the trees and fired. The dead Japanese was unarmed and apparently on his own. He had probably come out of hiding to look for food. While we were searching the body for maps or notes, we realised that we had lost the Americans. On hearing the shots, they had run back down the track and were hiding behind trees. They were raw troops who had not been in action. My native troops, who had always displayed calm and control in previous situations, were alarmed by this obvious show of panic. They knew they had been deserted in the face of what could have been a larger number of the enemy and there were indications they did not want to proceed.

We returned to where the United States troops were hiding. I had words with the officer in charge. He would not proceed
unless my detachment did all the reconnaissance to ensure there were no Japanese. The patrol returned to base and next morning I withdrew my detachment, returned to Aitape and reported to Milligan. It was vital to restore the morale of my troops. They were our eyes and ears and relied on us for leadership and action.

Aitape was already transformed: heavy vehicles were moving equipment and materials in all directions for a large base. Roads were under construction and coral from an outcrop on the St Anna Mission was transported to surface the grass drome on Tadji Plantation for a bomber airstrip. Generators were set up and work proceeded day and night. The resources seemed endless.

While the base was under construction, United States infantry patrols were detailed to move out to locate the enemy. I was attached with ANGAU Sergeant Doe to a patrol led by a Lieutenant Kreiger of Dallas, Texas. We moved north along the coast, past an abandoned Japanese camp, to Tepier Plantation. Here we saw movement in a shed and surprised a Japanese soldier. He immediately put up his arms in surrender and as a precaution against concealed hand grenades, we told him, by signs, to remove his clothes.

When stripped to his underwear, he knelt and kissed the ground three times and remained kneeling. He probably expected to be shot and it was some time before he understood our signals to stand and dress. Two United States Privates escorted him to Aitape for interrogation, without footwear, to prevent an unlikely escape.

Further along the coast, Doe and I were taking a rest when he spotted two Japanese in the bushes. The first I knew was the sound of two shots as he despatched them. No further enemy contact was made and the patrol camped at Malol village. We stayed for a few days and the residents came out of hiding in the bush. They were able to supply useful information and the patrol returned to Aitape to report. There was every indication that the Japanese had evacuated the coast and moved inland.

From 13 May to 21 May, I accompanied a patrol led by United States Lieutenant Lambert of ‘M’ Company, 3rd Battalion,
126th Rifle Regiment to Serra, west of Aitape. We went up the coast by landing barge. Lambert’s patrol report provides a good summary of the situation.

COMPANY ‘M’ 126th REGIMENTAL COMSAT TEAM

A.P.O. 32

24 May 44

SUBJECT: Report of LAMBERT PATROL

TO: COMMANDING OFFICER,
Third Battalion

Designation and Size:
Combat and Reconnaissance; Composed of 2 Officers from Third Battalion, Lt Fulton, ANGAU, 32 EM of the Battalion Assault Platoon, 5 Native Constables of the R.P.N.G.C and 50 native carriers.

Mission:
To reconnoiter trails inland from Serra (See overlay #2) to determine enemy routes of evacuation and to destroy any enemy encountered.

Results:
Mission accomplished, killed 19 enemy, found 18 dead along trail. Enemy generally in small groups, unarmed and in poor physical condition. Determined route of enemy evacuation to be through Nengian-Walwali #2-Ramu-Sumu, and over an unmarked trail to Mori #2. It is estimated that approximately 300 enemy followed that trail in the past month. Enemy have severely depleted native gardens along route having relied principally on native foods.
Comments and Recommendations:
ANGAU and native police personnel: Lt Fulton, ANGAU, furnished valuable advice and definitely enabled the mission to be successfully completed by his efforts beyond his actual duties as liaison officer with the natives. Through him native information was received which materially aided the patrol. He also made tactical suggestions based on his experience in jungle fighting which were employed and proved successful.

Native Constables Turu, Kaman, Aiya, Aimo and Ex-police Sergeant Pogwe of the R.P.N.G.C performed commendable service, killing a number of the enemy and aiding in tracking and scouting.

Recommend that ANGAU Headquarters be informed of these services.

William G. Lambert
First Lt 126th Inf.
Patrol Leader.

My report stated:

Too much praise cannot be given to the work performed by the police and ex-police who accompanied the patrol. Native Constable Kaman in particular being outstanding. His eagerness to act as forward scout aroused a sense of rivalry among the others … The example set by the native police had a direct bearing on the morale of both troops and native carriers and was to a large extent responsible for the success of the patrol, each … sharing equally the hardships and danger.
The following article appeared in the *Melbourne Age*.

**DEVASTATION AND DEATH IN DUTCH N.G.**

Heavy Toll of Japanese in Germ-Infested Areas
“The Age” Special Representative

**NATIVES ASSIST IN KILLING**
Rivalry Created

Native constables operating with A.N.G.A.U. patrols in the Aitape area, compete with each other for the honor of running up the highest score of Japanese kills, with an enthusiasm resembling schoolboy eagerness.

When Lieutenant E. T. Fulton, former ship’s purser and territorial New Guinea administrative officer, returned from a nine days inspection, during which his five constables accounted for 12 of the enemy, he commented:—“The eagerness of one of the constables to act as a forward scout aroused a sense of rivalry among the others, which made it necessary to restrain him.”

The purpose of Lieut. Fulton’s mission was to mop up enemy groups, make contact with and rehabilitate natives following enemy occupation of their territory, and recruit native labor. While they were interviewing natives in a village, shots were fired nearby, and it was learned that two police boys—Kamen and Turu—had discovered five Japanese hiding in a village house. They killed four and wounded the other, who cleared, but he left a tell-tale trail of blood which enabled him to be overtaken and killed some hours afterwards.

As the patrol moved on further Japanese fell victims to the sharp eyes and hearing and accurate markmanship of the police boys. In one ambush two of the enemy were killed by them, and Lieut. Fulton chased and disposed of
a third. Native Constable Aimo, walking alone along a village track, killed a Japanese.

Lieut. Fulton described the Japanese encountered as being in poor condition. Armed with bayonets, they travelled in small parties, and many were dying from starvation and sickness, or were committing suicide.

In later years I have recalled the tightly closed eyes and clenched teeth of this Japanese soldier. My only thoughts 40 years ago, were kill or be killed. We had no way of keeping prisoners and their escape would endanger the element of surprise and the safety of the patrol.

Day to day survival influenced our thinking and actions and we came to see this as normal. It is obvious that after long periods, war and the pressure of survival, dulls the emotions and the senses. Our reactions became instinctive and vastly different from that of a person viewing television in the security and comfort of their home. We took prisoners in the African Desert and New Guinea and treated them with humanity and observed their relief as, no doubt, they were apprehensive of their fate if captured. I have seen action against the Italians in the north African desert, the Germans in Greece and Crete and the Japanese in New Guinea and Borneo. Two of my brothers were in Japanese prison camps — Jack was in Changi Prison and Henry in the ship *Montevideo Maru* — I have received threats from the Japanese, through the native ‘grapevine’, which contained details of my fate if caught by them. But I have never felt the ‘hate’ expressed by some — usually non-combatants or civilians. I have not thought of them as ‘enemies’ but adversaries from another nation. I understand it may seem a paradox that one could kill and yet not feel hatred. But our actions were not guided by personal animosities to any individual soldier. We were there to fight an invasion that was perilously close to Australia and to protect New Guinea and our own patrols. I know from first-hand experience young Japanese soldiers were as much scared of their fate as we were. They, like us, had no say in the policy of war. We were all expendable — caught in guerilla combat in impossible country. Certainly after
the war, I never wished to pursue anti-Japanese sentiments. My hope is that future generations, whatever their nationality, are spared the horror we went through. I believe those of us who have experienced it have a duty to educate the present generation but not hold them accountable for what happened in the past.

War with its military hierarchies, requires the discipline of ‘obeying orders’. Those of us who were ANGAU field officers and combat soldier in New Guinea were, by virtue of our isolation in enemy territory, forced to reconcile the difficulty in obeying orders from afar and making life and death decisions on the spot. It was no easy task.
After US Persecution Task Force landed at Aitape I conducted fighting patrols in the Torricelli Mountains behind enemy lines. Supplies were dropped by air at Tong. This technique was pioneered on the Kokoda Track in 1942.
AT THE SERRA base for a month I got on well enough with Captain Sullivan the OC and became good friends with the Medical Officer Captain Leo Hoffschneider. Things were quiet and the only enemy contacted were two sick and distressed Japanese some natives had reported on the outskirts of their village. They were alarmed when we surprised them in long grass. They were taken prisoner, then sent to Aitape for medical attention and interrogation. The Japanese, with their supply cut off and the coastal area unproductive, were moving in large parties over the mountains inland where food was more plentiful. Many were in poor condition and starving.

John Milligan recalled me to Aitape and sent me inland to meet up with Dave Fienberg, who had taken a United States patrol over the mountains to Tong in the Kombio language area, northwest of present-day Dreikikir. I had been prospecting and recruiting there for some years. Here I would make contact with
natives I knew and this would assist me in reporting enemy movements. A signal came from Port Moresby advising me of my promotion to Captain.

I was attached to a United States patrol led by Lieutenant Ben Pascoe and 15 enrolled men of 1st Tank Destroyer Battalion. We crossed the Torricelli Mountains to Kapoam by a route I had travelled a number of times. This took us across the coastal plain, where we worried about being ambushed, and up a river into the mountains, where we could hide. The inland Torricelli Mountains were heavily populated, but there were no roads or airstrips and all movement was on narrow walking tracks over very broken hill country. The villages were built along narrow ridges and people grew root crops and made sago as food.

The route from Aitape to Tong was too long and difficult to supply our base by carriers. Dave and I made a small clearing at Tong for supplies to be dropped from the air. It was an innovation motivated by necessity and had the cooperation of the RAAF. The cargo was placed in two hessian sacks and thrown out of a Dakota as it flew low over the clearing while we took protection behind a tree. A percentage of the cargo missed the clearing or burst on impact but with each dropping run the rate of recovery improved until it reached a high level. This technique was pioneered on the Kokoda Track in 1942.

In July 1944 the Japanese 18th Army counterattacked the Americans at Driniumor River, east of Aitape. Although short of food and ammunition, they fought fiercely and broke the United States lines for a time, but were eventually driven out. The battle lasted 10 days and around 300 Americans were killed and 2,000 wounded. The Japanese however lost many thousands and the 18th Army was now a broken force. There were now 48,000 American troops in the base at Aitape. Having defeated the Japanese at Driniumor River, they were content to leave them alone without ammunition or food. They did not wish to pursue and destroy the enemy. Aitape became quite comfortable with ice cream and open-air movies. Our patrols were to report any movement likely to
threaten the Aitape base, or large-scale attempts to escape around it to the west. On the other hand, we were concerned that the starving Japanese would devastate the inland area, stripping it of food and forcing village people to carry and work for them. It was our responsibility to supervise the welfare of the villagers. The withdrawal of troops from the hinterland after obtaining native cooperation we thought left them helpless victims of reprisals by the large enemy forces that had moved inland.

The United States patrols inland were relieved regularly after about a month but, owing to a shortage of ANGAU officers, Milligan had to leave us on the job for over three months at a time, something that made him feel ‘pretty rotten’. From the time I left Aitape to join Fienberg, I was on patrol for 116 days without relief, often within a one-day walk of Japanese patrols, some of which made determined efforts to track us down and kill us.

On June 5, I left Aitape with Lieutenant Pascoe and 15 men of the United States 1st Tank Destroyer Battalion, four native police and 74 carriers and joined Fienberg at Tong. I thought Tong unsuitable as a radio base and vulnerable to enemy attack. Fienberg and I moved the ANGAU detachment to Ringin. Pascoe stayed at Tong with the radio, much to the discomfort of him and his men. On June 21 Warrant Officer II Scholes and three policemen joined us at Ringin and relieved Fienberg, who returned to Aitape with 15 carriers and one unfit United States soldier. On July 18 Captain Bottcher and 20 enlisted men of 32 Division Reconnaissance Troop arrived at Tong from Aitape with Warrant Officer II Lyons and 60 carriers. The next day Pascoe returned to Aitape with Lyons accompanied by 14 enlisted men and 77 native carriers.

At Tong, Pascoe and his men reluctantly accompanied Fienberg to Yaurang village, where they surrounded a Japanese patrol in the dark. At dawn, as Japanese soldiers stood yawning and urinating on the village edge, they opened fire, killing eight, including a Major and captured documents and maps. Others who fled the village were tracked down and killed by policemen.
Pascoe was concerned that his men should not be wounded two-
days walk from medical facilities, but he acquitted himself well in
the fire fight.

Information continued to flow from village agents contacted
by policemen. Thus we learned on June 20 that a small enemy
party had moved from Matapau on the coast to Hambini in the
foothills to our east and had forced villagers to make sago. The
mission at But, west of Wewak, was reported evacuated by the
Japanese after being bombed. We also learned that the Japanese
troops moving west from Maprik into the Balif area had originated
in Madang.

My relations with the Americans were good and I was quite
friendly with the officers. However, I could not for the life of me
understand or appreciate their patrol tactics. For example, we
considered Tong unsuitable for a radio base because it was
vulnerable to enemy attack. The Japanese could get too close
before we became aware of them. Ringin was on a ridge and
accessible by a single track that could be observed and properly
defended. However, Pascoe refused to move because he had
been ordered to go to Tong, so we moved to Ringin and left him.
Without us his patrol was blind and deaf and unable to
communicate with villagers. Our absence drove home the point
that without us he could not operate in this area.

All the ANGAU officers at Aitape agreed that we could have
achieved far more on our own with a handful of native police,
than we did on patrol with the Americans. We thought some of
their officers and most of the soldiers were neither experienced
enough nor fit and tough enough to handle the conditions inland.
They certainly had no understanding of the villagers, or that some
of them were in open cooperation with the Japanese, which would
be fatal for an isolated patrol. Some, such as Pascoe and Bottcher,
were good, enthusiastic young officers, but they had no
experience of village people, the language — particularly Sepik
Pidgin which is fast — and the critical importance of persuading
them to support us.
On 27 June, our intelligence network reported that the Japanese had left 21 packs of rice at Moiwhak village, guarded by nine soldiers. The Japanese were accompanied by ex-police Constable Duku. They had taken six Moiwhak villagers hostage and threatened to behead them if the rest of the villagers refused to carry their cargo to Musendai. Most ran away and the Japanese were forced to relay their stores to Musendai. When they left with the first loads, the *tutul* of Yambes village, Yoyip, removed the rest of the packages at Moiwhak and brought them to us at Tong. The Japanese returned and burned the village in anger. More intelligence came in about increased Japanese activity between Musendai and Balif. We decided to investigate.

So, only two days after he arrived at Tong, Captain Bottcher and I, with three American soldiers and six police, left Tong and walked southeast to Musilo village via Yambes and Musembelem villages. Musilo is today just off the Sepik Highway, a few kilometres west of Dreikikir and opposite Moiwhak village across a deep valley. There in a hidden bush camp in this valley, we met an AIB party of Captain Jack Fryer, previously a surveyor with Oil Search who had mapped much of this country in the 1930s, and Lieutenant Aiken and two radio operators. We exchanged information and coordinated our activities. We decided on a joint patrol to Moiwhak village the next day to investigate. The Japanese patrol was said to have come from Salata village and threatened people with death if they failed to cooperate and their guides were said to have raped a number of women.

We walked up to nearby Moiwhak village where we interviewed people. We found Boisim, the *tutul* of Salata hiding near the village. His position was revealed by Moiwhak people who, until we arrived, were afraid of him. He was identified by three women as the person who, carrying a Japanese rifle, had accompanied a Japanese patrol and raped them. The next day we walked from Moiwhak across to Tumam village, then south down a long ridge to Musendai village.
Musendai village had been bombed while the Japanese party that had visited Moiwhak had been in the village, on information radioed by Fryer — he had agents shadowing the Japanese. However, pro-Japanese men from Salata and Timingir had revealed the location of Fryer’s patrol and he had had a very lucky escape. We were keen to find these men and discourage this sort of activity. After being bombed, the Japanese had moved east. At Musendai we caught two men, Yayale and Balisa, from Timingir village, who were identified by Musendai witnesses as the men who had disclosed Fryer’s location.

On July 23 we moved through Timinger and M’Bras villages and made contact with people hiding in bush camps. We spent the day interviewing them and spreading anti-Japanese propaganda. Then on 25 July, Jack Fryer, Bottcher, two American soldiers, some police and I reconnoitred Salata village. The Japanese had moved to Balif, a short distance to the west. Salata also had been bombed and was badly damaged. Here we made contact with people from Bombita village.

There was nothing further for us to do there and, staying close to a Japanese patrol base was asking for trouble, so the next day we moved to Pelnandu through Albinama, Luwaite and Emul. Jack Fryer’s party stayed at Pelnandu to shadow the Japanese at Balif, while my party walked to Sahik village via Samasai, Asiling and Porombil. Fryer’s party was small and mobile and could move rapidly away if a Japanese patrol came after them, whereas our larger group was much less fleet of foot. The next day we returned to Tong through Yasum and Samark villages.

This patrol established that there were no Japanese west of Salata and probably west of Balif. I was therefore ordered to leave Tong and establish another base, to the east, at Yapunda village, to check on Japanese parties coming inland. On July 30 I moved my whole party, including the Americans, to Yapunda. Scholes and three unfit men from Bottcher’s patrol returned to Aitape. The day after we arrived at Yapunda, United States Lieutenant Baxter and 20 men of 32 Division Reconnaissance Troop arrived with ANGAU Lieutenant
Gow and 10 police and 130 carriers, to relieve Bottcher's patrol. He returned to Aitape with Alan Gow. On August 13, Baxter's patrol was relieved by Lieutenant Preusser and 30 men of 43rd Division Reconnaissance Troop who arrived at Yapunda with Warrant Officer Mackie, two police and 50 carriers. On 7 September, Warrant Officer II Smith and four police constables reported to the patrol at Yapunda. We then all moved back to Tong, where, on 15 September, Fienberg, took over command of the patrol.

During these 116 days I had contacted hundreds of people in the villages, informing them that the Australian administration had returned and the old laws would be enforced. On the recce patrols we performed what administrative work we could. Regular visits between Yapunda and Ringin by ANGAU officers improved the villages and rest houses and the general health and hygiene.

Most people were relieved because local bullies and thugs who had offered their services to the Japanese had been free to commit murder, rape and assault. We used volunteer villagers as 'agents' to go into Japanese occupied areas and bring information about Japanese movements and the names of men who were cooperating with them. We armed some with captured Japanese rifles and hand grenades and paid them small allowances.

People who were helping the Japanese voluntarily were warned to abandon the Japanese and report to us. Many did and a number of former policemen, left behind when Mosstroops failed, and who had cooperated with the Japanese to survive, reported for duty at Tong or Aitape. We disapproved of those who did not and who continued to threaten our bases and patrols by guiding the Japanese to where we were. With so many lives at stake anyone who was an active enemy agent was looked upon as a traitor. We took a dim view of men against whom there was overwhelming evidence of serious crimes, such as those who killed the recruiter Wally Hook, or raped the women at Moiwhak. In these cases the suspects saw little point in denying what everyone else knew.

The Americans on the other hand, seemed to think the natives were simple-minded children with no freedom of action.
They had very little understanding of the work we had done in securing native confidence after two years of enemy influence and of what Fienberg called a ‘judicious mixture of terrorism, threats, past influence, friendliness and bribes’, that swung people over to our side and created conditions in which the United States troops could patrol relatively safely.

After the Tong disagreement, I drafted a signal to John Milligan expressing my opinion of the United States tactics and my wish to return to Australian Army Command. The message went to the United States G2, Major Bond, who was in charge of Intelligence at Aitape and Milligan was no doubt told by United States Command to rebuke me.

A signal from the G2 improved the situation: ‘To Fulton and Pascoe nice job on capturing the Japanese rice Commanding General was well pleased to hear of it PD are preparing to drop tommy guns and grenades to you Sgn Bond.’

However, when I was at Yapunda, Milligan set out his feelings and the frustration that he felt but was unable to express officially:

Dear Ted,

Thanks for your report. Your intelligence system is working well but am afraid that at the moment it’s a lost cause. I’ll give you the bad news first — perhaps not good psychology.

Corps under instructions from the Army will not do anything about any parties of Japs wandering around the inland area unless they are making a major attempt to escape or constitute a major threat to Aitape. Twas a nice blow to all our hopes and a helluva set back to all the excellent work you all have done in this area … In the meantime remain at Yapunda and keep the ball rolling as best you can. I know it’s a heartbreaking job old man, but I will let you know what HQ say about it as soon as I get back. I feel like taking everyone out of the inland area and
letting them get their own intelligence off their own bat. I am afraid to think of the repercussions and the tremendous task we will have later to say nothing of the hard time the natives are going to have. I can quite understand US Army’s point of view but I’m dashed if I can understand our own people. How in the hell they can ever expect men to carry on and how in the name of God can they expect the natives to remain loyal — I don’t know Ted it has me beaten …

Glad to hear you are feeling fit. I feel pretty rotten having to keep you out so long. Warrick is in hospital with dengue, Searson still has his boils and Gow and Scholes are just in. Gow will relieve Gus shortly and if possible Searson and Scholes will relieve you, that is if we get what we want.

I have been trying for months to get some ATR4 radios for our own use. Have two 3Bs and with the others we could operate our own patrols without worrying about the Yanks — however as yet have met with very little success, so am afraid it will just have to remain as it is for the time being — that is gaining intelligence and interrogating natives re enemy movements and assisting woe begotten patrols.

The battle down to the east is all over … As far as the Yanks are concerned this operation is all over, but our work is just starting — we are the mugs Ted — still I dare say we can survive it …

Niall is still on leave, McMullen still south and Vertigen is CO North Region. Taylor is to go to PM as 2 I/C to Jones and Black to go to Manus. Leave is as far off as ever.

Hang on at Yapunda until you hear from me Ted and in the meantime keep getting the intelligence as you are now and as soon as I find out something tangible will let you know.
In the meantime all the best old man, keep the chin up.

Cheers,
John

My fears about Tong were justified, when on 10 August, I sent Constable Kaman back to investigate a report from the village network, that a Japanese patrol was moving there. Kaman sent back news with a village runner that he had received reports that the Japanese patrol was at Yasum village, was said to number around 200, including carriers and was proceeding to Tong to burn down our houses there and to punish people for giving us assistance.

On his own initiative, Kaman and a village agent Samgis, set-up an ambush. As the Japanese climbed a steep part of the track to Tong, Kaman opened fire bringing down five. Samgis threw a hand grenade which killed a sixth. The Japanese were taken by surprise and withdrew after firing only a few shots. Kaman went back to Tong and evacuated all the villagers to Ringin. He then returned to Tong to watch for the Japanese return. They withdrew as far as Yasile village, which they entered after shooting it up to ensure it was unoccupied. Kaman then joined a patrol led by Fienberg, which attacked the Japanese at Nanaha village, killing a number of them, before Fienberg’s party were forced to withdraw under machine gun and mortar fire. He then went back to Tong and occupied the base until we returned on 11 September.

August 20 brought news that Fienberg had engaged a five-man Japanese party dug in under houses at Musembelem village. Constable Kundi had bravely, but foolishly, charged down the village, firing from the hip and been shot in the head and killed instantly. All five Japanese had been killed.

Our policemen, like Kaman and Kundi, were continually on patrol and, assisted by reliable local village scouts, were the main source of information on enemy movements. Our village ‘agents’
also demonstrated exceptional courage. When the Japanese came to Moiwhak they took Taibol captive, and accused him of being one of our agents. They burned his shoulders with firesticks to make him reveal the location of the Tong patrol, but he refused. Struck with rifle butts, he was knocked out and left to recover. The next day he escaped while being taken to Musendai and made his way through the bush for two days to Ringin, where he was given medical treatment. He told me that he thought the Japanese were going to kill him, but he knew we would pay them back if he died. I cannot emphasise enough that the courage and devotion to duty of these men was directly responsible for keeping morale high among the natives and establishing valuable contacts and support.

On 16 September, I again left Tong with Lieutenant Preusser and three other soldiers, Smith, and four police, and walked to Labuain, via Samark and Yasum villages. Labuain was a village deep in the mountains, in the headwaters of a river that flows north. Smith, the police and the carriers remained at Labuain, while Preusser and I, with his three soldiers and native guides, followed the river down until close to a village called Walum where we had reports of a Japanese party making sago. Reconnaissance of the Walum area disclosed about 20 making sago and moving around in the village. On 20 September, Pruesser and his men ambushed five but only managed to kill three. With the element of surprise gone, we moved quickly back to Labuain and with Smith, moved back to Tong. Two days later the medical tultul of Walum turned up at Tong with a Japanese sabre, two rifles and two flags and reported that the Japanese had withdrawn to Malin after the attack.

This patrol is a good illustration of the problems we ANGAU officers saw with our objectives. The United States patrols were supposed to be reconnaissance patrols and were instructed to avoid contact with the enemy. Without our assistance they were helpless but the patrols were too big to carry out proper reconnaissance. We believed we should hit the Japanese
when we could do so safely in order to disrupt their activities and to make them fearful of moving about. Some American officers insisted on avoiding contact, while others were prepared to set ambushes or to attack Japanese parties if the opportunity offered itself. We were attached to the United States patrols to organise carriers and to guide them in the bush. As attachments we could not order their officers to do anything they did not want to do.

Our other role was to contact villagers, assist with their rehabilitation and recruit labour and carriers, all tasks that required freedom of action on our part. Too much time was taken up in the supply of services to the United States troops to no good purpose. With the presence of enemy parties and patrols of 30 or 40 American soldiers, time that should have been given to villagers was reduced to providing carriers and maintaining a line of supply. Patrols of this size were too cumbersome to gather intelligence. We wanted to be detached and supplied with radios, to move freely and maintain closer contact with villagers from whom all the intelligence was gathered anyway. This way, we could promptly and accurately report on enemy movements.

Our only recompense was a small business enterprise that sold Japanese souvenirs to Americans in Aitape. Alan Gow, Dave Fienberg and I sent captured or abandoned Japanese equipment to Aitape for sale. Lieutenant Ted Eglinton, was our ‘agent’. The Americans, particularly the Base and Navy personnel, but also the aircrew when they flew up from Lae, were more than willing customers.

We knew that stories would be told of how the souvenirs had been ‘captured’ in fierce hand-to-hand fighting and so had no qualms in fixing our charges. A Japanese flag was five pounds, a rifle £30, a carbine £50 and a Samurai sword, upwards of £100. I never obtained a Japanese sword but I saw Bill Murcutt miss a sale for £95 by holding out for £100.

John Milligan held our Japanese rifles in the arms rack in ANGAU headquarters. They were identified by our names and the prices were written on a strip of plaster stuck on the butt.
General Morris OC, ANGAU was visiting Aitape and when he saw the arms rack, regular soldier that he was, he picked up a rifle to inspect it. ‘Police boys rifles, eh Milligan?’ he asked before he saw that it was a Japanese rifle with a price on the butt. He pushed it back into the rack with a grunt of disapproval but nothing more was said.

Following the Australian takeover from the Americans at Aitape, ANGAU officers were able to cooperate in far more effective ways with Australian fighting patrols, but I was soon on the move to Hollandia.
WHEN I WAS eventually recalled to Aitape at the end of September 1944 I was given a job target-spotting with the RAAF. They had Beaufort light bombers operating from Tadji and I was sent out on two missions to identify targets.

The first was with Squadron Leader Kessey of No. 8 Squadron — a single plane strike on a village in an area I had been in. But the similarity of mountain tops, villages and coconut groves meant I could not identify the target positively. We would not take the risk of killing innocent natives so the pilot dropped our bomb in an uninhabited gully.

The second was with Gus O’Donnell and we reported to No. 100 Squadron before dawn for briefing and take-off in order to be over the target at daylight. It was a three Beaufort bomber flight and I was assigned to Pilot Officer Polkinghorne. Our target was a village occupied by a party of Japanese reported from Tong by Dave Fienberg who called for the strike. The village was bombed and machine gunned from a low level but we could not observe any activity on the ground. However, on our return to
base the crew found bullet holes in the wings, so Japanese must have been in the target area. Later in the day a signal from Dave reported many Japanese casualties.

On 28 October, I was sent by landing craft up the coast to Vanimo. I had six native police and my orders were to patrol the coast to Bougainville Bay, near the village of Wutung, on the border of Dutch New Guinea. Here, I rendezvoused with Lieutenant Gardner of the United States Navy who came the other way from Hollandia. We were to establish a sawmilling site for the supply of timber. Gardner and I met and were in accord on all decisions affecting location and operations of the site. He controlled the establishment of the sawmill and I took care of security and patrols.

On 6 November I went to Hollandia by barge with Ted Gardner to make contact with the Naval Base Commander and there was Gus O’Donnell who had come from Aitape and was attached to the United States Navy. It was more than six months since Task Force Persecution had landed at Aitape and Hollandia and both bases now resembled fair sized townships. Hollandia was under United States Navy control with Humbolt Bay the headquarters of the United States 7th Fleet. We stayed three days, during which time Ted Gardner, Gus O’Donnell and I met the Base Commander (Captain King) and discussed ANGAU involvement with the United States Navy.

Ted Gardner took me to the Naval Officers’ Mess by the sea. Because I was the only Australian, I received too much hospitality and beer, which I had not touched since Brisbane a year before. When I was awakened by ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ next morning, I found myself sharing my mosquito net with dozens of blood-filled mosquitoes. I had not noticed the large tear in one side.

The United States Navy soon had barges from Hollandia bringing personnel of 113 Construction Battalion (‘Sea Bees’) to our sawmill at Bougainville Bay. They numbered over 200 of whom approximately half were African Americans and it was not long
before buildings were erected and conditions made comfortable. I established the ANGAU post with bush materials on the other side of the bay but kept in close touch with Ted Gardner and used the Navy facilities.

With Bougainville Bay up and running, I left in mid November to patrol the coastal villages. These were scattered and sparsely populated. The tracks were rough in parts with sharp limestone points: where possible we sailed by outrigger canoe.

There were no Japanese in the area and the patrol was a routine one to re-establish contact. Natives could now return to their villages and replant their gardens. A semblance of normality was coming back.

One morning shortly after our return, Kaman came to my hut and, unnoticed by me, was reaching for my carbine beside the table at which I was seated. Constable Aimo, who had followed him, rushed in and grabbed the weapon, shouting ‘Look out Masta! Kaman em i long long [crazy]!’

Word had come from Yako that a woman in Kaman’s village had died and had directed sorcery against him. Aimo told me that he and the other police had hidden all the firearms as Kaman wished to kill himself and was a danger to us all. I contacted Ted Gardner to make sure all Navy firearms were safe.

Kaman seemed dazed. He had a glazed look in his eyes and I tried to reason with him that sorcery was only for ‘bush kanakas’ but not for him. I assured him he had had many years in the police force pre-war and knew all about firearms and civilised customs. He savagely retorted, ‘Masta you no savi [understand]! Skin bilong you white! Skin bilong me black’.

After his years of service and contact with Europeans, he had not changed his beliefs. Unless the sorcery was broken by a ‘wantok’ — someone from the same tribe — he would surely die. After all these years I have come to realise how little we really know of another person’s culture.

Kaman was a Sepik River man and the sorcery could only be broken by a ‘river Sepik’. As he was a danger to himself and others
in his present condition, I reluctantly handcuffed him and told him how sorry I was to do so. Kaman was an outstanding member of the police with a gallant military record. He had been one of my greatest assets.

Ted Gardner arranged for me to take him to Hollandia where I handed him over to Gus O’Donnell to be flown to Wewak. At Wewak John Milligan met him with Police Corporal Kuvimiere, who was a river Sepik from the same village, and Kaman trusted in him to prevent the sorcery acting.

Some years later I met John Milligan in Melbourne and asked him about Kaman. He said ‘Old Kuvimiere rubbed a special vine into Kaman’s back which broke the poison and after that he was all right.’

Bougainville Bay was my best posting of the war. Life was much easier beside the sea with good food, no Japanese and light to play cards by in the evening. But early in December a signal came from John Milligan that directed me to return to Aitape. From there I was to report to Lae where our operations were now controlled from, before proceeding on leave.

The Americans, with control of the sea and air, were preparing for an attack on the Philippines, and an Australian Army Headquarters was being established at Hollandia. When I arrived to catch an Airforce plane to Aitape I experienced the Headquarters mentality. I was told to sleep in one of a number of newly erected tents. I enquired about mess facilities and saw a Warrant Officer unpacking cases of beer. I asked if any was available and he informed me that it was only for Headquarters staff. Eventually and reluctantly, he gave me a bottle.

When I went back to the tent I found my pack and equipment had been put out in the open and two ‘officers’ (clerks in uniform) told me it was ‘their’ tent. I had slept in the open too often to be worried and drank my bottle of beer seated on the grass before finding another tent.

The same atmosphere prevailed in the Officers’ Mess. I was made to feel an intruder in my jungle greens among all the smart
khaki dressed captains and lieutenants and was not included in their conversation. I was about to go to bed when a voice at the head of the long table called out ‘Ted! What are you doing here?’

It was Major Ted Wood who had been my Gun Position Officer with the Artillery in Greece: we had not seen each other since I was transferred to ANGAU. A silence fell on the table when Ted said, ‘Hans Andersen is here. He is in the Colonel’s Mess and will be pleased to see you’. I had also served under Colonel Andersen in Libya and Greece and escorted him through the Highlands. We went to his tent where he produced a bottle of whisky and we chatted well into the night.

I encountered more Headquarters red tape before I could travel to Aitape. There was now something called Movement Control and I was asked for a ‘Mob Three’ (Movement Control Order). I had never heard of a Mob Three. In forward areas, it had always been a matter of acting on the spot and both United States and RAAF pilots were not concerned with ‘Movement Orders’. However, the ‘system’ resolved itself with the appearance of Major Crawford who had also been in the 2/1st Field Regiment, as a Battery Commander in Libya. He was now with Movement Control and fixed me up with a Mob Three.

I made a brief stay in Aitape where Gus O’Donnell was relieving John Milligan as Officer in Command ANGAU. Then I went on to Lae where I reported to Horrie Niall to await a leave draft. Following my return from leave in 1943 and after the Mosstroops debacle, I had had time to do some thinking in the comparative peace of Ialibu in the Highlands. I thought it might be a good idea if Gwen and I were to marry but I was not sure whether she would feel the same way. I gave myself no more than a 50/50 chance, and decided to find out. I was far away and letters were so irregular that if Gwen were to say no, neither of us would be embarrassed. After much writing and rewriting, a letter was sealed and sent off.

When I was recalled to Port Moresby to be seconded to the Persecution Force, Lieutenant Colonel Jones had handed me
a telegram. The only telegram I had previously received in the Army informed me of my Mother’s death, so I was not expecting the contents of this one to be good. I was overjoyed at Gwen’s acceptance and happy that Bert Jones was the first to share my pleasure.

Gwen and I decided to marry when I was next given home leave. Having had little leave in five years overseas, I had a sizeable credit and was expecting a reasonable entitlement. I told Horrie Niall of our plans but he said 14 days was all that could be approved from New Guinea. He told me to make application for an extension when I was in Melbourne.
I left Lae on the ship *Charon* on 30 December 1944 and arrived at Townsville on 5 January for Sydney and Melbourne. At the Transit Depot in the morning I was told that I was on movement to Melbourne later in the day. I was dressed in jungle greens and heavy army boots since I had left my uniforms in Sydney before I had been sent on to Mosstroops.

My request to delay travel until I could collect my uniforms was refused and I went to the Transit Depot OC Major Earl. He was not very helpful and when I told him what I thought of the Army he sent his female Sergeant out of the office and asked me to calm down. When I produced evidence of my location and activities in New Guinea, Major Earl explained that, with so many troops passing through the depot, movement rules were rigidly observed to restrict the abuse of leave entitlements. He then offered to defer my movement and phoned Lieutenant Exton.
When he put the phone down I said, ‘Is that Ted Exton?’ and he replied, ‘Yes. Do you know him?’ Ted Exton had been one of my poker school friends when we were convalescing outside Port Moresby. I went to the Officers’ quarters, had a shower and met Ted in the Mess. We were having a beer when Major Earl walked in. ‘Are you feeling better now?’ he asked. I certainly was.

In Melbourne I applied for an extension of my 14 days leave and Gwen and I made preparations for our marriage. Interstate travel was restricted but I managed to get seats on an early plane to Sydney and our wedding was arranged for Christchurch, South Yarra on the morning of 29 January 1945.

It was to be a simple affair with just Gwen’s parents, her bridesmaid, Jean Hopkins and a few guests. I did not know where I was going to find a best man. Then one morning as I was walking down Collins Street I saw Dave Fienberg coming the other way. He had been on leave in Perth and was visiting his sister in Melbourne. I said, ‘Dave I’m getting married on Monday and I need a best man. It looks as though it will be you’. It was an amazing coincidence and so appropriate that Dave should share this special day with me.

This was where my good luck ended. I received a letter from Army Headquarters in Melbourne with copy of a signal from Lae that read, ‘Please inform NX3247 Capt. E. T. W. Fulton that his application for extension of leave has NOT been approved.’

I felt disillusioned and bitter. There was nothing I could do about it. Our wedding was on Monday, a public holiday, and I went to the city on the Saturday morning to collect our plane tickets and was told our reservations had been cancelled and the seats given to people with ‘priority’. This was another wartime ‘system’. Priorities for travel existed — not for soldiers on leave, only for civilians who knew the ropes or the right people.

Next stop was the Victorian Railways office in Collins Street to book two seats to Sydney on Monday night’s train. I was told that we could not travel interstate without a Priority, so I insisted on seeing the manager with the hope of some understanding. Not
a bit of it. I could not travel by train interstate. It was 12.30 p.m. and time he ‘knocked off’. I told him I had not had a weekend off for the past five years and that I would travel without a Priority. I went to Spencer Street station where I bought tickets to the Victorian border town of Albury.

Our wedding was simple and Gwen, like many wartime brides, wore an elegant suit and not a wedding dress. We spent a quiet day with the guests at her parent’s home before leaving on the late afternoon train for Albury. Once there I went to the station ticket office and bought tickets for the following night’s train to Sydney. I was now a ‘local’ with no Priority! No questions! And, no problems!

In Sydney we stayed with my sister and next morning I booked a room at the Watson’s Bay Hotel. It overlooked the harbour but did not serve meals. In the evening, we ate at the Gap Café.

I felt below par and decided to apply for sick leave when my 14 days expired. On reporting to the Leave and Transit Depot, I saw the Medical Officer. He referred me to the 113th Army Hospital where I was told that I had to be admitted next day for tests. This surprised me. Even though I was not feeling the best, I did not consider myself a hospital case. In the ward were a number of 6th Division Officers who had also served continuously in the Middle East and New Guinea and, like myself, were listed as suffering from ‘debility’.

I was kept in hospital for eight days and Gwen visited as much as she could. It was not a romantic honeymoon, staying alone in a hotel, eating by herself in a café and visiting her new husband in hospital! I was given a month’s Outpatient Leave and we found better accommodation in a hotel at Mosman which at least had a good dining room.

I returned to hospital and was re-admitted for further tests. I was kept there for over six weeks. When I was discharged and sent to the GDD I was reclassified as B1. I was now ‘Unfit for Overseas Service’ and unable to rejoin ANGAU. I was not happy.
I did not consider myself unfit and wished to remain part of the action with ANGAU. Having since seen my medical records, I now realise how close to the edge I was. At the time I thought I was healthy and in sound mind. But after five years of active service I obviously no longer knew what a ‘normal’ or a ‘sound mind’ was.

An extract from Army Medical Records reads:

This Officer for some time has been developing neurasthenic symptoms probably due to the dangerous and exacting nature of his work as a forward observation officer in enemy territory. For the last 6/12 has been very irritable and edgy. He has had long service and would seem to be a suitable case for consideration G.R.O. 598 for Outpatient Leave (rehabilitation).

Gwen later told me that I woke up in the night shouting in my nightmares — nightmares of which I had no recall. I did not then understand that I was suffering from a form of battle fatigue or war neurosis, the result of years of stress and months of forward service without proper food.

I reported to the GDD on 26 April for posting to a home unit and Gwen returned to Melbourne to stay with her parents. I can only imagine how depressed she must have been feeling; she was worried about me but she understood that I would have felt worse not to return to active duty. In hospital I heard that a unit similar to ANGAU was being formed to go to British Borneo, and some of the officers were located at Liverpool Camp. I heard Colonel McMullen’s name mentioned and I thought it must be Ken McMullen from ANGAU.

I went to Ken and told him I did not want a B1 posting and asked whether he could arrange a transfer. He introduced me to Lieutenant Colonel Conlon who had come from Army Headquarters in Melbourne to supervise the selection of personnel for Borneo.Conlon told me he would appoint me if I could be
medically upgraded to A Class. I was sent to a Medical Officer at the Engineers Depot for examination. He said, ‘If you wish to go overseas again I won’t stop you.’ He tapped my knees, listened to my heart and said, ‘OK. A Class.’

Next day, 25 May, I reported to Lieutenant Colonel Kloss at Ingleburn where the British Borneo Unit was being formed. Kloss, a permanent Artillery Officer, was in charge of Unit Administration. Other officers included Major Stuart Foot (Artillery), also Keith McCarthy and John Black from ANGAU and Bill Money and a number of British Army officers, some with experience in Borneo.

A week later, a signal came for me to report to Victoria Barracks, Melbourne and I caught the night train. I reported to Colonel Conlon next day and was told I was to be a Detachment Commander and promoted to Major. He asked where my wife was and when I told him she was in Melbourne, he said, ‘Well I suppose you wouldn’t mind some leave with her. It will take a week for your promotion to be approved and I want you to return to Ingleburn with that rank.’

He also said that Jim Taylor had advised him when making the appointment. I thought Jim Taylor was somewhere in New Guinea but he was in Melbourne assisting with the formation of the British Borneo Unit. When Colonel Conlon told me he was in the next room I hurried in to thank him. I was honoured that someone for whom I always had the greatest regard had suggested my promotion. Jim quietly replied, ‘I only told the truth, Ted’.

At Ingleburn I arranged for Gwen to stay at a small hotel in Campbelltown. Keith McCarthy also brought his wife, Jean, from Melbourne. It was a well-run hotel and we had good rooms. The atmosphere was matey! The barman slept with the proprietress — a local farmer shared the waitress’s room and a town worker lived with the kitchen maid!

It was a rather quiet time waiting for our orders and Keith and I had permission to stay out of camp at night with our wives. We called ourselves ‘Day Boys’. But all too soon we were ordered
to prepare to move. We said goodbye to Gwen and Jean before going by train to Brisbane. We then staged by RAAF and United States transport planes and eventually arrived at Labuan in Borneo. Here we were attached to the Australian 9th Division, which had occupied that part of the island and were preparing further assaults. The next few weeks were spent visiting the various occupied areas to organise the rehabilitation and cooperation of the inhabitants while awaiting the 9th Division landing at Sandakan.

However, in August 1945 we received word of the atom bomb and the surrender. I witnessed the official surrender by the Japanese Commander to Brigadier Porter of the 20th Brigade, 9th Australian Division, at Beaufort. The war was over. My mind immediately turned to how to get home.

Repatriation was slow because of a limited number of ships. It was on a priority basis according to period of overseas service, marital status and occupation. I had very high points and was sent by United States Liberty ship to Morotai in Dutch New Guinea which was a base occupied mostly by non combat troops. Here I shared tents with 9th Division Officers while we awaited a vessel to Australia. I met old friends Ted Resuggan and Graham Thorp formerly of 2/1st Field Regiment. Graham was attached to Naval Bombardment Group and had just been awarded the Military Cross; Ted was now Quartermaster with Z Special Force. What a Quartermaster Ted was! He took Graham and me to his quarters and produced a juicy steak and as much beer as we could drink.

There was growing dissent among the 9th Division troops at the delay because of the abuse of priorities by some base troops. The 9th Division Officers with whom I was friendly, were concerned that these jungle soldiers who had fought from Tobruk, through New Guinea to Borneo should mutiny when the war was over, after they had suffered so much to win it. They were eventually persuaded to be patient and on 8 October 1945 we embarked on the Westralia. My last troopship voyage was relaxed, with sunshine and blue sea and for once no aircraft, submarines or
forthcoming battles to worry about, as each day brought us closer to home.

We arrived at Brisbane on 16 October and staged at Yeronga Camp for onward movement by train. I was detailed CO of a troop train to Sydney. I appointed Captain Bill Hedger of the 9th Division my Adjutant and told him to detail someone in charge of each carriage and to share the CO’s compartment with me, where we could sleep full length instead of sitting up all night.

At Central Station, Sydney, I handed the roll of the troops to the Rail Transport Officer and completed my last military task. I was discharged on 31 October and ceased to be NX3247 after 2,200 days service, of which 1,874 were on active service overseas.

Six long years had passed. My brother Frank had been in the RAAF, Jack had been in Changi and Henry was lost on the Japanese prison ship *Montevideo Maru*. My dear mother had died. The last time I had seen her was waving her little white handkerchief from the window of her house in January 1940. My sister Mary had endured the worry of all four brothers at war. Jack and I had seen too much killing and had suffered the loss of too many comrades. We had lived day-to-day for so long that we had forgotten a world without war.
NX3247 MAJOR E. T. FULTON

Enlisted A.I.F. 24.10.1939
Embarked for Middle East 10.1.1940
Returned from Middle East 8.8.1942
Embarked for New Guinea 16.9.1942
Returned from New Guinea 15.1.1945
Embarked for Borneo 17.7.1945
Returned from Borneo 15.10.1945
Discharged from A.I.F. 31.10.1945
Service with A.I.F. 6 years, (Overseas 5 years)

Promotions  Date  Unit
L/Bdr  30.10.1939  2/1st Aust. Field Regt. R.A.A.
Bdr  1.02.1940  2/1st Aust. Field Regt. R.A.A.
A/Sgt  23.06.1941  2/1st Aust. Field Regt. R.A.A.
Sergeant  23.09.1941  2/1st Aust. Field Regt. R.A.A.
Lt  21.11.1942  ANGAU (Patrol Officer)
T/Capt  5.05.1944  ANGAU (Asst District Officer)
Capt  9.11.1944  ANGAU (Asst District Officer)
T/Major  1.06.1945  BBCAU (O/C Task Force Detachment)

Military Connection

Father: Capt T.B. Fulton, Kings Own Scottish Borderers
Grandfather: Major General John Fulton, Madras Staff Corps
Great Grandfather: Major John Fulton, Honourable East India Company

OVERSEAS SERVICE WITH 2/1 FIELD REGIMENT

Palestine  1940  3.7 A/A  Haifa  ) Gun No. 1
Egypt  1940  3.7 A/A  Port Said  ) ”
Libya  1940–1  25 pdr. F.A.  Bardia, Tobruk, ) ”
  Derna, Barce, )
  Benghazi, Mersa)
  Brega. )
Greece  Domokos, Bralos  ) ”
  rearguard  )
Aboard vessel Costa Rica sunk by air action in Mediterranean and taken to Crete by RN destroyer HMS Hereward.

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Vasey Force</td>
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<td>Ceylon</td>
<td>1942</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Guinea</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Port Moresby (No action)</td>
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OVERSEAS SERVICE WITH ANGAU — NEW GUINEA

1942 Attached to US. 126 Regiment. Owen Stanley’s crossing.

1943 Conducted Intelligence Patrol on foot from
Jan-Aug Port Moresby to Sepik

1943 River to report enemy activity Wewak area, and
Nov–Dec remained 8 months in Lower Ramu and Sepik areas.
Attached Special Force ‘Mosstroops’ landed by Catalina
Sepik–Yellow River junction to report enemy activity
Aitape area.

1944 Patrol into Central New Guinea (Mt Ialibu area)
Jan–Mar investigate report Japanese paratroop landings in central tableland and report enemy bombing formations from airfields in Wewak.

Apr–Oct Attached US. ‘Persecution’ Task Force and landed on
D-Day Aitape. Conducted fighting patrols along coastal area, and then penetrated inland to Torricelli Mountains, Maprik and Tong areas reporting enemy movements and organising native intelligence and propaganda.

Nov–Dec Rehabilitation native villages Hollandia — Vanimo area.

OVERSEAS SERVICE WITH BBCAU

Borneo

1945 S.S.I. Task Force Detachment Commander.
July–Oct
A FAMILY RETURNS TO NEW GUINEA

Makurapau Hibiscus

A cutting planted
Hopefully
In a garden
Soaked with war;
The soft rain falls

Green roots push
Down
Claim a foothold —
Defiantly almost

Leaves quiver
In the breath
Of morning and

Buds from this
New generation unfurl,
Brim with possibility,
And turn to catch the light

EFT
AS A RETURNED soldier I was permitted to wear uniform until civilian suits, which were in short supply, were available. My wardrobe for six years had consisted of jungle greens and an officer’s uniform and I wore them long after I had been discharged.

Gwen and I were living with her parents in Melbourne. There on 27 November 1945 our first daughter, Mary, was born. Gwen’s parents were doting grandparents and I could not have wished for a more loving family, though for me, it was difficult to grasp I wouldn’t be getting a telegram telling me to report for duty. While we were with Gwen’s parents, I tackled her father’s garden. I wore my jungle greens, and as the days passed I would receive favourable comments from a friend of Gwen’s father as he walked past. One day he stopped and asked, ‘I have noticed what a good job you are doing and I am wondering when you have finished Mr Dobinson’s garden if you would come along and do mine?’ When he learnt who I was, he was thoroughly embarrassed and apologetic. Seeing me in jungle greens he had taken me for a soldier who had become a gardener on discharge from the army!
It was a time of uncertainty for us all. I could not return to my mining claim since it was no place to take a wife and baby. The jungle would have grown back over the claim and flooding rivers would have destroyed evidence of my previous workings. It would be difficult to obtain equipment and stores and there would be no ships to carry them to Wewak. Planes would not yet be flying inland and I doubted, too, that I would be able to get labour to help work the sluice boxes. Even without all these obstacles, the cost of setting up again would not justify the gamble.

Having been self-employed before the war and now 41, taking a job was unthinkable since it would mean surrendering my independence. In any case, what kind of job could I expect in Australia at my age and with my New Guinea background? The only solution seemed to be to return to civilian life in New Guinea. I decided to protect my capital by putting it into stock and setting up as an Import Agent in Rabaul. Civil government was slowly being restored in Port Moresby but Rabaul was still under army control and many Japanese were awaiting repatriation while others were waiting to be tried for war crimes.

It was now 1946 and I thought about the basic requirements for living in New Guinea. I listed in order of preference what would be needed and spent many days at my typewriter composing letters to manufacturers telling them that I was the ‘best person’ available in Australia to market their products in New Guinea. With demand great and supply short they were unable to even supply the Australian market, so responses to my offer were limited. However, in Melbourne I obtained the agency for Jubilee whisky, Lanoma gin and Tom Piper tinned foods. I went to Sydney and secured the agencies for Southern Cross engines, British General Electric refrigerators, Kriesler radios and had Bennett and Barkell make me a line of bicycles which I named ‘Starlight’ (after my mining lease) and a range of goods for native trade. A visit to Brisbane won the distributorship for Hygeia Dissolvenator (a toilet seat and tank with caustic solution w.c.) and J. R. Albion Fuel Stores.
Permission to return to New Guinea was subject to the approval of the Department of Territories and with limited ships and planes, priority was given to Government employees. This meant long delays for private citizens. In March 1946 I sailed for Rabaul, with what stocks my principals could supply and my capital could afford aboard the *Montoro* carrying army personnel and three civilians — ex soldiers, Alan Campbell, Hughie Lyon and me. Gwen was to wait in Melbourne with Mary until I had established a home.

In Rabaul the *Montoro* dumped the cargo and myself on what remained of the wharf and I had to quickly find shelter. I located a disused army shed on the Kokopo Road and moved in. I met up with Arthur Cresswell who was endeavouring to re-establish his plantation in the Bainings and we shared the shelter. One morning I was recognised by a Tolai from Matupit named Toloui Towanara whom I had known for many years. He was excited to see me again and attached himself to me as my right hand man. The relationship between a native and the masta is best described by Judy Tudor:

Master-personal-boy relationships were frequently founded on respect for each other, pride of possession, each of the other; and even affection. Some lasted for years, frequently until either party decided to take a wife. Today this sort of relationship is called ‘paternalism’ and is regarded as a crime, second only in heinousness to colonialism …


I was well known in Matupit village where Toloui had much influence and enjoyed asserting it — the name Fulton brought results. Toloui produced discarded army materials ‘scrounged’ by the natives and hidden in dumps. Petrol was scarce but I reluctantly declined to share in a supply of stolen 44 gallon drums buried by the locals. The plan was to wait for a wet tropical
stormy night when nobody would be out of their house and take a truck to the dump and dig up the drums.

The disposal of army huts and materials was taking place daily as units moved out and Cresswell and I were able to buy buildings for wrecking and the materials at a nominal price.

I purchased four native material houses on the waterfront at Toboi (originally erected by a Japanese fishing unit) for one pound and turned one into living quarters and used the others for stores. In addition, returned settlers were allowed to purchase one Jeep and one truck.

With a ‘home’, ‘store’ and transport I was now ‘in business’. I erected the sign made in Sydney by Alex Campbell, a former 2/1 Field Regiment soldier who had a signwriting business.

EDWARD T. FULTON
Importer and Agent

My next task was to make a home for Gwen and Mary. The land at Toboi belonged to W. R. Carpenter and Co. but I was given permission to build a proper house there from Keith Walker who was representing the company in their effort to re-establish their storekeeping and shipping activities.

My pre-war Chinese contact, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese, located a carpenter and with timber and roofing iron salvaged from army buildings, he built a little bungalow for £100. It was no palace, but after my prospecting camps in the Sepik and six years of war, it seemed pretty good to me.

My import business was restricted only by the ability to obtain supplies from the manufacturers and ships to bring the cargo. With the postwar demand, there was a limited supply of stock and vessels to Rabaul were infrequent and space on board was restricted. My initial stocks sold quickly, especially the whisky. The stream of Jeeps and their parched drivers made it necessary for me to impose a ration of one case per person and my stocks were soon exhausted.
Toloui organised to hire out my truck on Saturdays to bring native women from outlying villages with their produce into the Bung — native market — at one shilling each. He had a liking for spirits himself and sometimes failed to return until after the weekend. His bloodshot eyes told their own tale but I always believed his story of how the ‘truck had broken down’.

The transfer from military to civilian control was slow with troops and prisoners of war needing to be repatriated. It was well into 1946 before this was complete.

Administration officers, after being discharged, were taking over from the post-war army — among them were Charlie Bates, District Officer, Ernie Britten Assistant District Officer and Chris Normoyle, Superintendent of Police. Government officers and a small community of former residents were trying to re-establish themselves in a town ravaged by war. ‘Priorities’ which favoured the army and Administration at the expense of private citizens resulted in planters, traders and others calling a meeting at which a Citizens Association was formed to protect the rights of private citizens. I was elected president and since I was returning to Australia to bring back Gwen and Mary and renew business contacts, I was asked to interview the Minister for Territories to establish some rights for private citizens.

Len Bridger, my pre-war mining cobber from the Sepik had returned to Rabaul after being discharged and had tried his luck prospecting in Bougainville without success. He agreed to look after my business while I was away. My request for travel from Rabaul to Port Moresby by plane was refused by the Administration though seats were available. Fortunately a cargo vessel called at Rabaul en route to Port Moresby and the agent manager of Burns Philp arranged with the captain to give me a berth in the chart room. I travelled by plane from Port Moresby to Australia. I had sent a telegram to Prime Minister Chifley since the situation and attitude toward civilians, and especially to returned soldiers, was disgraceful.

Eddie Ward, the Minister for Territories, granted me an appointment in Sydney. I was courteously received and our
meeting went well. I left with the impression that he was now much better informed and the interests of the Citizens Association would be protected by his parting assurance that his door was always open to me at any time.

It was well into 1947 when I returned to Rabaul in the Montoro with Gwen and little Mary to our first home together at Toboi on the opposite side of the bay from Rabaul. It must have been a shock to Gwen after life in Australia but she accepted the conditions and supported my efforts towards postwar rehabilitation. Our only neighbours were two discharged soldiers, Geoff Black and Geoff White, who had taken over the former army bakery. Geoff White was killed in a Jeep accident and a baker named Thomas was brought up from Australia. He was a strange person and used to sit by himself on a tree stump in the evenings. I shudder now to think that Gwen was often alone with little Mary and my natives in this isolated area: I later learnt that when Thomas returned to Australia he married a widow then murdered her. He hanged himself in Long Bay Gaol.

War Trials were being held in Rabaul. I had served with some of the officers sitting in the court and Gwen and I attended the trial of the Japanese commanding officer, General Inamura. He received a sentence of 10 years imprisonment; others were sentenced to death and the executions were carried out in Rabaul. Gwen took her sketchbook along and with a pencil caught some of the expressions of those on trial.

The trading firms and Chinese storekeepers were returning and erecting makeshift buildings. Their rehabilitation would be slow as the supply of building materials and merchandise was limited but I knew that I would eventually have to make way for the increased competition.

R. A. Colyer, founder of the firm of Colyer Watson, approached me to organise the re-opening of the business in Rabaul and to be the New Guinea manager. Although flattered by his offer, I only ever wanted to run my own business and my import agency was only a postwar enterprise to preserve my capital until I could buy a plantation.
LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE in New Britain, the re-establishment of plantations was slow and uncertain. Four years of jungle growth had strangled the land and palms had been decimated by bombing or cut down by Japanese troops. Local labour was impossible to find and it was doubtful that recruits would come from other areas after the upheavals of war. In addition, the world price for copra was down to £26 a ton which made the cost of clearing the jungle and replanting coconuts not viable, even if labour had been available.

One Saturday I was sitting alongside my Jeep a few miles out of Rabaul on the Kokopo Road when Oscar Rondahl drove past. He stopped, thinking I had broken down, and I told him I had some natives constructing a trade store a short distance off the road. I asked what he was doing about re-opening the plantations he had inherited from his father. The Rondahls were early German settlers. Oscar told me he was settled on a property in South Australia and no longer wished to live in New Guinea. He said he would sell his plantations if he could. I asked him
about Makurapau which was his pre-war home. ‘Come out
tomorrow and look at it, Ted, if you’re really interested’.

‘I’ll bring Gwen and Mary out, Oscar. I’d love to see it.’

Makurapau Plantation is 30 miles from Rabaul and accessible
by the road that follows the coast for 20 miles to the picturesque
town of Kokopo. The 10 miles inland from Kokopo to Makurapau
were accessible by four-wheel drive only.

In German times Kokopo was Herbertshohe and it was
between there and Rabaul that the legendary Queen Emma from
Samoa had her home at Ralum. In its heyday Kokopo was the
centre of an elegant and sophisticated German colonial life. The
soil of the Gazelle Peninsula is rich and the finest coconut
plantations were established there. After World War I the Germans
lost their land under the treaty of Versailles and many were sent
back to Germany with few if any possessions. They were, in fact,
shamefully treated.

When I first saw Makurapau after the war it was almost
unrecognisable as a plantation. In a small clearing surrounded by
bomb craters and defensive trenches dug by the Japanese
occupants was a galvanised iron shed with a cement floor about
five metres by five metres. This was Geoff Withy’s house. Geoff
who had been on plantations in the Solomon Islands before the
war had come up from Sydney to work for Oscar but he wished to
return by the next vessel. Oscar also wanted to return to South
Australia as soon as possible and told me he had been anxious to
sell. Not surprisingly Gwen was apprehensive about living in the
jungle and Oscar agreed to let me have an acre at Kabakaul on the
coast five miles away where I could build a house and live while
travelling to and from Makurapau. He named his price and
I agreed to let him know my decision in a week.

Gwen and I talked things over. We knew it was necessary for
me to start another venture. The import agency would no longer
be lucrative since stores were re-opening. It had served its purpose,
having covered all expenses while preserving my capital: the final
balance sheet showed a profit of 16 shillings and 10 pence!
I spent much time working out costs, expenses and estimating the returns of running a plantation. I consulted Bill Thomas and Noel Barry who both had plantation experience. Bill took out a notebook and a stub of a pencil and scribbled some figures which did not mean anything to me and Noel said, ‘Well, Ted! It might be a very good proposition and then again it might not.’ That evening I said to Gwen, ‘This is where we make our own decisions.’ Gwen said she would back my judgement. I decided that my capital was just short of my ability to pay if things went wrong and being determined to keep out of debt I reluctantly decided to tell Oscar I couldn’t buy Makurapau.

The following Thursday Oscar and Geoff called in on their way to Rabaul.

‘What have you decided, Ted?’ Oscar asked me.

‘I don’t think I can go ahead with it, Oscar.’ He had just lit a cigarette and when I told him my decision he was so surprised he threw the cigarette over the veranda rail. He dropped his price by a few thousand pounds and said he could not go any lower.

‘Well, Oscar,’ I said, ‘I really do want to buy Makurapau; I will do my sums on the new figure and come out and see you at the weekend.’

Gwen and I decided that we should take the step since my capital was just enough and the property would be ours. If necessary we had the means to provide our own shelter and grow our own food. Makurapau was a freehold property of approximately 650 acres with an altitude of 700 feet and being a few miles inland was reasonably cool at night.

Oscar was delighted, of course, and we arranged an early takeover. I took over from Geoff Withy soon after. I organised for Colyer Watson to take over my agency lines and closed by import business.

I had acquired much salvaged building materials and transported several loads to Makurapau in the truck. These included tent flys, tarpaulins, iron water tanks, arc mesh and rails (used later for copra skips). Brass Japanese anti-aircraft shell cans
I filled with cement and used as stilts on which to build our bungalow. Forty-four gallon drums were good for rat proof storage of rice and other goods. Nothing was wasted.

I had to leave Gwen and Mary at Toobi when I first took over from Geoff. She had two natives with her and they slept outside her mosquito proof bedroom door. Toloui helped by organising 10 casual labourers from the Bainings as it was vital to start cutting copra so I could earn some income. Geoff Withy had built a smoke drier and the coconut husks provided the fuel. I was also able to make sun dried copra on sheets of iron on the ground.

The coconut palms were obscured by four years growth of jungle and covered by vines and creepers. At the base of the palms was a thick mass of young trees where the nuts had fallen and germinated. There were hundreds of fallen nuts suitable for copra drying but it required a lot of labour to harvest them. There were no roads on the plantation and a four-wheel drive Jeep and trailer, when not bogged in the mud, was the only transport.

The planters who had returned to their properties in New Britain were quite depressed with the situation as, apart from the low price of copra, no building materials or labour were available. An atmosphere of gloom hung over the place.

Tay Rudnagel, a neighbouring planter, called to see me; as an old friend he was concerned. He thought Oscar had done a good deal unloading his property on to me. George Casbolt, W. R. Carpenter’s plantation inspector and another old friend echoed Tay’s thoughts. I was enthusiastic about the price of copra rising from £26 to £28 a ton but he said, ‘It doesn’t matter, Ted, how much it rises, we will be at war with Russia in a year.’

‘If everyone thought like you, George,’ I said, ‘we would all do nothing and achieve nothing!’ Poor old George always the complete pessimist — and even now in 1982 I’m still the eternal optimist!

The pre-war planters in New Britain had employed labour from the New Guinea mainland supplied by recruiters on whom they depended for replacements. I was fortunate in that I was known in many villages where natives could be expected to offer
for plantation work. This was one consideration that influenced me to take on Makurapau and it looked as though I would have to go to Aitape and once more ‘walk bush’ to obtain labour. I was reluctant to leave Gwen and Mary knowing I might have to be away some time.

We had travelled back on the Montoro with Bob Mackie who had been one of my sergeants in the Aitape campaign. By a stroke of luck I received a radiogram from Aitape.

Do you know where I can place 45 plantation labourers?
Mackie

Bob knew I was in Rabaul but didn’t know I now owned Makurapau and I was his only contact. I arranged with Jack Sedgers, manager of W. R. Carpenter and Co. to charter their former RAAF Catalina flying boat piloted by ‘Smoky’ Birch. I then sent Bob a radiogram to have the natives on Lake Sissano to meet the flying boat. In a few days they arrived at Makurapau and I was really in business.

I had dismantled my Toboi house as the materials were needed on the plantation and all the gear was stored under tarpaulins. We set up house in a shed with a mattress on the cement floor. It would have been all right except our sleep was often disturbed by rats. They ran over our faces and woke us when caught in one of the several rat traps. Squealing, they dragged the traps around in the dark across the cement floor.

Because the jungle had not yet been cleared, rats, snakes, cockroaches and large snails seemed a normal part of our life. I think of Gwen from a comfortable home in Melbourne and recall her trying to cook over a smoky damp wood fire or boiling clothes in an aluminium Japanese cooking basin in the searing heat. We had no amenities: no refrigeration, radio or lighting other than kerosene lamps and I know it was her courage and trust in me that made me determined to succeed.

We shared discomfort and isolation but we both loved the beauty of the islands and the friendship and loyalty of the people
who worked with us. New Guinea was in my blood and having seen much of it shed during the war, I felt a real allegiance to the country and its people. It had been my home and now it was our home.

Eventually all the jungle was cleared and we re-planted the coconuts. I then planted cocoa under the shade of the coconuts. I built staff and labour houses, a *haus sik* [infirmary] and copra and cocoa kilns. We had fermenting sheds and machinery sheds. We bought a Denis truck and installed a generator and I made a football field beside the house compound. We were in every way a self-contained community. My manager Dai Fong was part Tolai and part Chinese. It was unusual in those days to have a mixed race manager but he was capable and hard working and had very good communication skills. Having Dai Fong meant that I could leave the plantation in later years. Tim Wong, my accountant had his own home on the plantation and kept the books meticulously. Dai Fong’s cousin, Bobbin ran the trade store, which was stocked with trade items and all the basics.

When Mary was a toddler, Gwen and I built a comfortable bungalow style plantation house. Gwen loved gardening and we planted many varieties of hibiscus. We even put in a tennis court because Gwen had been an avid player at Kooyong. Jean and Keith McCarthy and other friends including Bill and Florence Cohen would come out for tennis weekends. In 1948, Elizabeth, our second daughter, was born and in 1954, Catherine.

Over the years we had many visitors, including passengers from Australia who were travelling on Burns Philp vessels. When the ships came into Rabaul the District Commissioner would often bring them out to see a working plantation. We also hosted politicians visiting New Guinea including Arthur Calwell, leader of the Australian Labor Party.

It was essential for planters to protect their interests in the matter of government administration and marketing and the Planters Association of New Guinea was an active organisation. As a Planters representative I attended conferences in Sydney with Commonwealth government and manufacturers representatives
and as president of the Planters Association I discussed planting interests with Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories. A cordial relationship grew and the Secretary for Territories, Mr Lambert accompanied by Mr Willoughby stayed with us at Makurapau to attend the Planters’ annual conference in Rabaul.

We were on good terms with Ian Mc Donald, Chairman of the Copra Marketing Board and the cocoa manufacturers, Smalls (Sydney), Hoadleys and MacRobertsons (Melbourne) and Cadburys (Hobart) and I enjoyed their hospitality when visiting their works. I sold most of my cocoa eventually to Terry’s in York and to Rowntrees. My cocoa broker was Lionel Cope whose office was in Mincing Lane, London. I visited England with the family every couple of years and Gwen and I enjoyed many Sunday lunches at Lionel’s lovely home in Surrey. We were also well entertained by Terry’s when we visited York.

Our daughters’ education and future being our prime consideration, we acquired a home in Mount Eliza (Victoria) and a farm at Shoreham (Victoria) and in 1960 a company, Makurapau Estates, was listed on the Stock Exchange in Sydney to which Makurapau Plantation was sold.

I became a director, visiting Makurapau once a year to inspect it. Dai Fong stayed on as manager. It was difficult to leave New Guinea and the people to whom we had become so attached and if I had had a son who was interested in taking over the plantation, our decision might have been different. However life is ever changing and it was time to look to new challenges. I have never been one to look back with regret.

Gwen and I travelled extensively. We settled in Sydney but when Mary married Stewart Anton, an Englishman, we bought a cottage in Worcestershire and the English countryside became our second home. Our decision to enjoy our time together with our daughters is one of the best we made. Gwen died in 1979 after a courageous battle with cancer but she has left me with our daughters and 40 years of priceless memories. I can picture her now just as she was that day on the Bulolo in 1939 when she first
met me — a rugged gold prospector from the Sepik with his little
dog, Cus Cus. Little did either of us know then the difficult,
adventurous and exhilarating journey that lay ahead of us.
AFTER THE WAR, New Guinea was still very much a man’s country. Women were there mainly in a supportive role — wives of government officers and planters, though there were of course missionaries and nurses. Later women travelled there independently to take up employment in their own right.

When my mother arrived in Rabaul straight after the war, she must have been dismayed by what she saw. Her first home at Toboi was makeshift and she spent long days alone with Mary while Dad established his business. Before marriage, Gwen had worked first as a commercial artist and then, during the war, with the Americans in the mapping section. She was a very good tennis player and every spare moment was spent on the grass courts at Kooyong. At first it was difficult to make friends as everyone was trying to pick up the pieces after war and she missed her mother and friends down south.

There was a shortage of everything in Rabaul. Even finding fresh vegetables at the market was almost impossible. The
Japanese had brought in huge snails which denuded the native gardens and Gwen said she was so desperate for a green vegetable to give Mary that she picked a type of wild fern which she cooked like spinach.

Before I was born in 1948, my mother ‘went south’ to spend the last months of her pregnancy at her parents’ home. In fact she barely had time to make it to the hospital and I was born at Epworth before the doctor arrived. I was six months old when we returned to Rabaul and that was the first time Dad saw me. Makurapau was my first family home.

My childhood memories of New Guinea are deeply sensual. Whole days and episodes can be evoked just by recalling the scent, texture or colour of images that drift into my mind — the perfume of crushed frangipani on our driveway, the pungent sweetness of copra baking in the kilns, the earthy insect smell from compost under the cocoa trees. I can clearly see mossy green clusters of mould on our shoes in damp cupboards and the red heart of a hibiscus flower unfurling on a green hedge in the early morning. I can hear the heavy warm rain plummeting on our tin roof. Even now, it is only when I am somewhere in the Pacific that I feel truly connected to my past.

Makurapau was 30 miles from Rabaul and about 10 miles from the small town of Kokopo. Rainau Plantation, which belonged to Mick and Doris Thomas was just before Makurapau and in the wet season the creek between it and Makurapau would often be in flood. The corrugated road was only passable by four wheel drive.

The house was on a rise and the last plantation after us was Kabanga owned by Jack and Jean Dunbar-Reid. The driveway to Makurapau was long and lined with frangipani trees. It swept under an arch of yellow trumpet flowers and around a huge orchid-laden Casuarina tree before reaching the front steps. The lawns were terraced and breaking up the green expanses were flower beds of canna lillies blazing red and yellow.

A huge lau lau tree marked the edge of the garden on one side and after that the land sloped away into groves of coconut
palms. If you stood on the front steps of the house you could see
to the right of the archway a tennis court surrounded by a hibiscus
hedge with a tall candle tree at one corner. Near the candle tree
was a sundial on a pedestal that had been put there by the
Rondahls when they owned the plantation. To the left of the
archway was my mother’s hibiscus garden. Taken from clippings,
she had planted many different varieties that bloomed in every
colour imaginable: pale pink, coral, apricot, yellow and red.

Our house was a comfortable, simple airy bungalow set on
stilts. We had a corrugated iron roof and when the rain fell in
opaque sheets the sound was deafening. We didn’t have a front
door or conventional windows, only shutters poled out during the
day and fastened at night. There was mosquito proofing in all the
bedrooms and muslin nets were coiled above the beds which were
made up with freshly laundered white sheets.

My mother said when she first moved into the new house, she
used packing cases as tables which she covered with fabric bought
from the trade store. She was artistic and she had the ability to
create something beautiful out of nothing. She told me that the
home that gave her the most pleasure and satisfaction in decorating
was Makurapau. Later, my parents bought furniture from the
Chinese merchants in Rabaul who imported everything from Hong
Kong: heavy cane planters chairs, camphor wood chests, tall brass
vases and nests of carved tables. I remember the chairs were covered
in a pink and green floral linen. The brass vases would be filled with
the spines of the coconut leaf and each day a fresh hibiscus would
be attached to the end of the spines and on the tables frangipani
would float in shallow bowls of water. The floors were polished
timber and in the sitting area it was covered with sea grass matting.

The shed that had been my parents first home on the
plantation was eventually pulled down and a haus wind or palm
thatched cabana built over the original concrete floor. My parents
were quite sentimental about keeping the floor on which they had
slept in those early tough years. The haus wind was furnished with
canvas directors chairs and a wooden table and became a favourite
place to take tea in the afternoon. My birthday parties were often held there or under the Casuarina tree and even though there would only be the family and our dog, Chunda, my sisters and I would put on party dresses and paper hats and everyone sang Happy Birthday while I blew out the candles.

A generator, which would be started up just before sunset supplied power to the house. Before this, we had used kerosene lamps, and even after, we still cooked only on a wood stove. A food larder stood against one wall of the kitchen with its legs standing in jam tins filled with kerosene to keep the ants at bay. Eventually we had a fridge, which was powered with gas.

We collected fresh eggs daily from the chicken coop situated next to the cocoa nursery. Paw paw trees grew wild in the garden so we always had a supply of ripe fruit sitting outside the kitchen on a mesh rack. The natives would leave stems of bananas, pineapples and watermelons there. We bought lettuces, kau kau and limes from the bung (market) at Kokopo every week.

Every day a fresh jug of lime juice was put in the fridge and it was the only soft drink we ever had. My mother did all the cooking and handling of food, though a houseboy (we had a succession of them over the years) helped with the washing-up and the cleaning. Toloui, who had attached himself to Dad after the war, lived in his own house on the plantation with his wife, Veronica and son Takinacap. Louis and Veronica were both from the Tolai tribe of New Britain.

The Tolais are a peaceful people who had had a long association with the white community. The Germans settled New Britain in 1884 and the Tolais had come to accept both the German and Australian administrations. The word ‘servant’ was never used in our house and anyone who helped was expected to be treated with respect. My parents took umbrage at the way some Europeans spoke to or treated their domestics. They regarded them as ‘second class whites’.

Veronica helped in the house and with looking after us. Later when my younger sister, Catherine was born, she would
push her around the garden in her stroller. Veronica was shy and gentle and physically fine boned. I can still see her in one of her pretty meri blouses — a large nimbus of hair framing her small face. She had learnt to sew and embroider at the mission school and she would decorate the plain cotton hankies that we bought at the trade store. Her designs were unusual and imaginative and I remember sitting beside her on the back step, aware of her musky body scent and watching her hands move nimbly over the fabric with a needle and bright cotton.

Makurapau was a community within a compound. It was a world of its own. My father knew every one on the work line and occasionally he would see someone wandering up the drive and he knew instantly if it were a stranger. As well as our house, there were homes for our manager Dai Fong and his family and for Tim Wong, our accountant. Freddy Yan did all the maintenance for the machinery and some carpentry — he was a general handyman and Bobbin Fai Man ran the trade store, which was about a mile down the road from the house. Every plantation had its own trade store stocked with essential items.

It was unusual in the 50s and 60s to have a non-European manager. In those days it was considered very much a white man’s job and carried quite a status. Dai Fong was part Chinese and part Tolai and Ted told me a few of the other planters questioned his appointment. They soon changed their mind, as Dai Fong was an exemplary man and a most efficient manager. When Makurapau was sold and floated on the stock exchange, some of these same planters approached Dad to see if Dai Fong would be available to work for them. However, a condition of the sale was that Dai Fong would continue to manage Makurapau and take credit for his input.

We employed about 120 workers and they lived in large dormitory style buildings; each tribe had its own house. These houses were situated beyond and to one side of the work compound and as children, we were strictly forbidden to go there. Only once or twice did I accompany Dad up to the houses. I was curious to see inside one of the houses but he would not let me go
further than the cooking area. Today I have only a hazy memory of the long grass cutting seraphs propped against the outside of the building and the smell of corn beef and rice cooking for the evening *kai kai*.

On the other side of the work compound was the football field with its white wooden goal posts. Every evening after work the men would play football according to their own rules. Dad would often join in for a kick or two and that brought gales of laughter from the men. The football field also became a focal point for parties, *sing sings* and celebrations. Sometimes the District Commissioner would bring visitors out to Makurapau from Rabaul to see a working plantation. When this happened, Dad would declare a holiday and arrange for a *sing sing* to be held on the field. I remember the anticipation of these occasions. A wild pig would be killed in the morning and slung between poles decorated with palm fronds and hibiscus and suspended over a fire where it slowly roasted all day. Chairs would be grouped under the pink Casuarina tree and our visitors would wait for the dancing to begin. Mary and I looked towards the labour houses watching expectantly for the fantastical adorned men to come snaking down in a dancing procession towards the oval. The garamuts beat louder and louder as they approached. Waving headdresses of feathers and shells, elaborate face paint and costumes made from leaves and grass had transformed these men back into their rightful status of tribal warrior. They were totally unrecognisable as the same men who collected and cut our coconuts or slashed the long *kunai* on the grass line. Dad was especially proud of the authenticity of these dances. Having spent so much time in the bush before the war, he was disdainful of some of the *sing sings* put on in Rabaul for the tourists.

While the dancers feasted on wild pig, a dinner back at the house awaited us and our guests. Dai Fong’s wife, Diana would prepare Chinese food. Mary and I thought her chop suey was mouth-watering and a delicious change from our mother’s good plain cooking.
When Mary and I were of school age we did correspondence courses set by the correspondence school in Melbourne. Mum supervised our lessons but we nearly drove her to distraction. We were always looking outside where more interesting things were happening. Our lessons were mailed back to Melbourne to be marked and returned to us. If we had done well there would be flat penny shaped sweets wrapped up in cellophane and squares of coloured paper in the big brown envelopes. We worked in the morning and sometimes for an hour after lunch. After that we were free to play in the garden or go with Dad in the Land Rover to collect the mail from Kokopo or accompany him on one of his inspections.

An American warplane had been shot down on Makurapau and I remember the first time I saw it lying in the kunai grass with vines and creepers growing around it. When Dad first discovered the wreck he arranged for the remains of the servicemen to be sent back to Washington. Sometimes Mary or I would ask to see the plane. It held an eerie fascination for us lying silently between the palms. In those days its markings were still distinct and the metal and paintwork bright. I wondered what the American pilot had looked like and where he came from. It seemed extraordinary to think that he had died on our land.

Just on dusk Mary and I would make what we called ‘the voyagerial voyage’. This was a journey around the house and it required us to balance on the outside skirtings and clamber all the way around from stilt to stilt without falling off. The winner was the one who either didn’t fall off or fell off the least amount of times. Our devoted dog, Chunda, would follow us around the house watching us make this ridiculous journey. Chunda was our best friend and everywhere we went he went too.

At the end of the day Dad would come back to the house to shower and change for dinner. Our parents had their pre-dinner drink listening to the news and shipping reports. The nights were full of their own special sounds; the cicadas and frogs would start their chorus after dark and occasionally you could hear a dog bark in the distance or the flying foxes raiding the lau lau tree for its
sweet pink fruit. As if touched by magic, the bushes in the garden and the hedge around the tennis court glowed with fireflies. In our bedroom we lay under our mosquito nets and watched the gekkos creeping up the walls. We could hear our parents talking in the sitting room as we drifted off to sleep.

We went to Rabaul every couple of weeks for supplies and business meetings. Mary and I looked forward to these days as it meant no schoolwork and we loved the thought of having lunch in Rabaul and visiting the shops with Mum.

After breakfast we clambered into the back of the Land Rover where we sat on pillows. Two uncomfortable metal seats ran down either side and the floor was weighted down with sandbags to stop the terrible bouncing and jogging as we rattled over the coral roads. Before he hopped into the driver’s seat, Dad would fasten down the canvas flap at the back of the car to stop the dust billowing in. Despite his best efforts, Mary and I nearly always received a mouthful of dust as we were overtaken by a speeding truck on its way into either Kokopo or Rabaul. I remember the worst section was around Vulcan where the car often skidded through black volcanic sand.

The coast road that winds and meanders from Kokopo to Rabaul is one of the prettiest in the Pacific. War wrecks cling to the reefs, rusting and half submerged and on the cliff side are dark, gaping tunnels near the Vunapope Mission. When the Japanese attacked Rabaul they took over all the mission buildings on the sea front from the Bishop’s house to the cathedral and the mission became a Japanese hospital. In October 1942, the Japanese took all Vunapope’s buildings and mission personnel were enclosed behind barbed wire. Fortunately the Bishop had taken the precaution to have air-raid shelters built. They tunneled into the hills and fortified the entrance with coconut logs. Mass was said at the entrance of the tunnel. On October 13th 1943 hundreds of allied planes raided Rapopo and Ulapia. (Ulapia was
a large food dump). This was the beginning of the mammoth raids. After it the Japanese housed soldiers and stored war materials in the hospital and Vunapope. The allied intelligence soon found this out and it spelt doom for Vunapope.


Evidence of the war in the Pacific was everywhere in New Guinea when I was a child; this is not surprising since my first trips to Rabaul were only several years after the war had ended. Vunapope the Catholic Mission was back in full operation in the fifties and we would visit the doctor there rather than make the journey into Rabaul. Set on the hill among beautiful gardens it has a view overlooking Blanche Bay. Knowing it as I do only in peacetime, it is difficult to imagine the violence and suffering endured by so many of its dedicated missionaries.

The rich, oily smell of coconut coming from the CPL docks on the harbour would tell us we were nearly into Rabaul. After driving down Malaguna Road the first stop was the New Guinea Club for bottled lemon squash. The New Guinea Club with its white colonnaded entrance was the bastion of colonial society. Planters and Administration officers and Rabaul businessmen who walked through the portals of the club were always dressed in khaki safari suits or whites and in the evening they wore long white trousers and a tie.

After our lemon squash, Dad would go off to his meetings and Mum would take us around the stores which meant visiting Burns Philp, Steamships and Colyer Watsons. In those days the department stores sold everything from Wedgewood china to Mikimoto pearls. Visiting Rabaul gave us the chance to catch up with friends who lived in Rabaul or who were visiting from plantations.
We had lunch either at the CWA or the Cosmopolitan Hotel situated on the waterfront. Mrs. Lees who ran the hotel was a blousy, good-natured woman who always wore a floral dress and had a handkerchief soaked in 4711 stuffed in her ample bosom. She would bring it out and dab her brow for Rabaul was always searingly hot despite the fans that whirred from the ceiling. I remember the dining room clearly: on each table was a bottle of tomato sauce and Worcestershire sauce. The meal was usually a set menu and it was at the Cosmopolitan that I first tasted Mulligatawny soup.

The best part of the day was after lunch when we would walk up the streets of Chinatown. The Chinese retailers imported many items from Hong Kong and their shops were treasure troves. There were satin and swansdown slippers, silk pyjama sets, Chinese costume dolls, painted fans, ivory knickknacks, jade jewellery, porcelain figurines, tea sets, hand embroidered linen, camphor wood chests and brass vases. The smell of camphor was the first thing to greet us as we stepped into the cool dark interior and away from the hot Rabaul sun.

Before driving back to Makurapau our last stop would be at Con Pappas’s store to pick up our frozen meat and the chilled apples and oranges that had come up from south. Con would make Mary and me a pineapple crush which he served in tall frosted glasses. The journey home took us first through the late afternoon shadows and then the crimson sky of sunset before darkness and the sounds of night enveloped the car.

As we approached Rainau Plantation, the headlights of the Land Rover picked out the whiteness of the coral road and the silvery-grey of the coconut trees as they arched towards our windscreen in the narrow winding track that took us down to Rainau creek and the wooden plank bridge. Once across that we were on the home stretch, passing the trade store and Bobbin’s house with the glow of light in the window. A few minutes later we would be making the turnoff to Makurapau and before we reached the house we could hear Chunda barking as he ran out to greet us as though we had been away for months instead of one
day. Everything was unloaded from the back of the car and Toloui would put the kettle on for tea and help prepare a light supper. Much as I loved our days in Rabaul, coming home to Makurapau was even better.

On Saturday morning, all the natives on the labour line received their pay and rations. This was the time when my father talked to them about any problems, or equally, it was the time when he praised their loyalty and hard work. Certainly, having spent six years in the army must have influenced his style of leadership. He was a perfectionist in the way he ran Makurapau, but he would also have been viewed as paternalistic. He knew the areas the Papua New Guineans came from and he understood their different characteristics. This knowledge was important in either averting or handling disputes and frictions with diplomacy. Although he was a no nonsense type of Masta, I am told by others he was considered fair at all times and did not betray the trust of those who worked for him.

Ted’s reputation from his Sepik days and from his years with ANGAU meant he never had difficulty recruiting men to work for him and I remember when the time came for these men to return to their villages many would be sobbing as they climbed up on the truck to be taken to Rabaul to catch planes or ships back to their villages. My mother was sad on these occasions, too, because she had come to know them and had talked to them about their families and their problems.

On Sundays, Dad set aside the time for us. We would often pack a picnic lunch and head off to the beach, or to the Warangoi River for a swim. The Warangoi was home to crocodiles and we would have to stay in the shallows. If we went to the beach, we spent hours collecting shells and coral and driftwood that had been brought up by the tide. The sandflies plagued us but I do not remember us having any form of insect repellent. Calomine lotion was the only thing that would ease the itch! Sunday night was always the time when we took our camoquin for malaria — two tablets a week.
All mothers on plantations worried about their isolation in the event of an emergency. There are tragic stories of children dying simply because help was too far away. Ted had a medical certificate and he was marvellous in a crisis. He was well accustomed to survival in the bush and he treated tropical ulcers and cuts and injuries with all the appropriate creams and medicines but like any family we had our share of dramas. When I was six months old, just after Mum had come up from south with me, I developed pneumonia. My parents took me to the doctor at Vunapope Mission and his advice was to wrap me in cold wet towels to bring the fever down. He told my mother that it was my only hope if I were to survive the night. Another time Catherine was critically ill with gastroenteritis and had to be hospitalised at Namanula in Rabaul. We were luckier than those families who had to make boat trips or fly from remote areas to a medical post. I know of one family who lost their only daughter from a burst appendix, and another who lost a child through an overdose of quinine tablets.

Our journeys between Rabaul and Australia were usually made by sea. In those days Gwen had a fear of flying though she overcame it later. We travelled either on the Bulolo or the Malaita. These were Burns Philp ships skippered by Brett Hilder or Bill Wilding. At first we were frightened of Captain Wilding who used to bellow at us but we soon found that underneath his gruff exterior he had a heart of gold. When we arrived at Samarai he would take us off in a launch to collect tropical fish which he brought down to Taronga zoo. Brett Hilder, on the other hand, was a lovable personality who charmed everyone. He was a painter of repute and his father was one of Australia’s finest watercolourists, J. J. Hilder.

We didn’t mind the sea voyages but we were not allowed to eat with the adults and the two stewardesses Mrs Mac and Mrs Barrett would make the children sit in deckchairs outside the saloon while our parents went down for dinner at six o’clock.

Our parents eventually bought a home in Victoria and we travelled between New Guinea and Melbourne. Gwen’s parents
lived in Melbourne and it was decided that the three of us would attend school there. My parents did not want us to board and so Mum would often stay south with us while Dad was on the plantation. Every year he would take us out of school and bring us to New Guinea with work that had been set for us. The headmistress was accommodating and I’m sure such intelligent and cosmopolitan flexibility wouldn’t be tolerated now. Mrs Wardle would shake her finger at my father and say, ‘You’re a terrible man, Mr Fulton, but the girls will learn far more traveling with you than sitting here in Melbourne.’

Living up in New Guinea taught us to be self-sufficient. We were always in the company of adults and spent a good deal of our time in a world of make-believe. I never remember being bored for a single moment. I think our experience is fairly typical of most of our contemporaries who grew up in New Guinea.

Because we were girls, our parents set boundaries and we had less freedom than the boys we knew. There were parts of the plantation that were strictly out of bounds and, even though we ran barefoot, it was in the manicured confines of our garden. The jungle with all its mystery and temptation was always slightly at bay and when we did explore it, it was in the security of Dad’s presence.

I remember whenever we visited other plantations or homes in Rabaul, there was a great emphasis on style and keeping up a standard. The women who had the responsibility of running the home and the children took great pride in the domestic details and routines that made up the fabric of their life and they created an ambience of welcome order, elegance, and permanence in a challenging and confronting environment. Many of these women had made personal sacrifices to come and live in isolated parts of the territory. They missed their families down south, they suffered fatigue from the heat and they struggled with bouts of malaria.

Many of them felt pulled emotionally between their children, who eventually had to go south to school, and their husbands who had committed themselves to a life in the islands. However, their quiet courage, their practical ability to deal with
the unexpected and the support they gave to their families all added up to an enormous contribution to the postwar development of the Territory.

For the children it was a different story; New Guinea was a paradise of freedom and adventure — a country far removed from the political upheaval and violence that came much later on. Going south to school meant long absences from family and many a mother felt she had missed out on the growing-up years of her children’s lives. It was a dilemma that had to be faced. My mother-in-law, Betty Thurston, told me she had cried for days after she sent her two boys down to school. While her daughters diligently accepted their correspondence lessons, her sons did not. They would do anything rather than schoolwork and Michael would be off in his own canoe or trading her tinned supplies down in the village!

The women who embraced the country needed to have an adventurous and pioneering spirit — and many did. Judy Tudor took up the challenge of gold prospecting in the Sepik with my father and father-in-law before the war. She later became a journalist who covered the Pacific and all its changes in the postwar era. I admired her ability to combine a life of travel and adventure with the intellectual fulfilment of writing. Judy and her partner Robson who started the *Pacific Islands Monthly* were frequent visitors to our home and as families we were close.

As we grew up and Makurapau became well established, Gwen took to her painting again. We would go with her on her sketching excursions. With her paintbox and artists block, she would sit in the middle of a village or by the side of the road wearing her wide-brimmed straw hat. Painting and drawing helped sustain her identity and years later when she and Dad were living in Sydney, she enrolled at Julian Ashton’s Art School. Till the end of her life painting gave her enormous pleasure.

It was during one of our trips to England that, by coincidence, we met up with Arthur Creswell another New Guinea planter. Arthur had just been doing a tour of cocoa plantations in Africa...
and he felt the winds of political change that were sweeping through that continent. Arthur thought this was an omen and if the colonial system in Africa was starting to buckle under the rising tide of nationalism then he believed this could happen in New Guinea. It certainly gave my parents something to think about. Makurapau was doing well and my parents were reaping the benefits of their hard work. There was no reason to doubt that life in New Britain would continue to be successful and productive. There were no hints of unrest and in all our years on the plantation, we had not experienced difficulties with labour or even any significant hostility between different tribes.

We lived in a house that had no locks and apart from our watch dog, Chunda, we had absolutely no security. Yet I never remember feeling vulnerable or threatened. To me New Britain was a happy place. There were always the sounds of singing and laughter. If you saw a passer by on the road you would stop and give him a lift. If a truckload of villagers passed, you would wave and call ‘apinoon’. None of us could have believed that in the next decade or so this presumption of innocence and enduring stability would be replaced by fear, uncertainty, a sense of anarchy and a groundswell of political pressure and change.
AFTER MAKURAPAU WAS floated on the Australian Stock Exchange in 1960, Dad remained a director of Makurapau Estates for five years and he went back annually to inspect the plantation. He and Gwen eventually settled in Sydney and when Mary married Stewart Anton and moved to England, they divided their time between Sydney and the gentle English countryside. Wherever he was, Ted retained his love of cricket and was as happy watching a match on the village green in Worcestershire as he was at a Test Match at the Sydney Cricket Ground or Lords.

Ted retraced his father’s footsteps and it was as if all the stories his father had told him between 1904 and 1914 of a life in England, of playing polo, of the military college Sandhurst — a life that a small boy in the ‘Antipodes’ could only wonder at — suddenly made sense. Being in England brought him closer to the father he had adored. I think Ted felt that in some way he had to honour his father’s wishes and one day return to England not just as a tourist but to reclaim a heritage he’d been cheated of through his father’s early death and the family’s ensuing poverty.
When he was in Sydney, Ted worked voluntarily at the Matthew Talbot Hostel for homeless men at Woolloomooloo. He never forgot the time when he was in Hong Kong, completely broke and living at the Seamen’s Institute. Ted used to say if you had lived not knowing where the next meal was coming from, it was something you never forgot. He often spoke of Mr. Shelley who had come to his rescue and of Mr. Smith in Hong Kong. He believed that everyone deserved a second chance in life. He had not been a practising Catholic when he married Gwen, but in the fifties he turned again to his faith which became a source of great strength to him for the rest of his life.

Ted never thought he would go back to New Guinea after his last visit in the 60’s. He wanted to remember the place as he had known it and once he was no longer actively involved there he thought he should not try to recapture a part of his life that had ended.

When I married Jack and Betty Thurston’s son, Michael, in 1981 it united two families whose lives had been closely connected for years and it gave him a reason to return to New Guinea. My mother had died in 1979 leaving us all bereft and as soon as I was settled in Kimbe with Michael, Ted came to visit regularly. When he wasn’t with us he would be with Mary and her family in England or with Cathy, who had married David Bollinger, and lived in Sydney.

There were times when visits from Jack and Ted coincided and I would listen enthralled by the stories and memories that these two old ‘Befores’ would recount over the dinner table. Jack could keep an audience spellbound with his sense of timing and delivery. Ted, on the other hand, had an extraordinary talent for remembering dates and names, so he would have no hesitation in interrupting the flow of Jack’s narrative to correct him on a small point.

Jack never left New Guinea. He would talk about selling out but in spite of a home and other interests in Australia, his heart was in the ‘Territory’. Well into his 80s he was helping to develop a type of hybrid coconut palm that would bear nuts earlier
and not grow so tall. He had planted some down on Volupai Plantation and I remember him telling me in an excited voice that they would be bearing in a few years!

During Ted’s visits to New Britain we would fly to Rabaul and stay in Jack and Betty’s home on the waterfront. Kina, who had known Ted from the 20s and Number One Gold in the Sepik, was in Rabaul and he was overjoyed to see Ted again. Our first trip together back to Rabaul and Kokopo was a nostalgic time for us. We travelled the road around the coast and out to Kokopo and Makurapau. Just about all the families we knew, except for the Dunbar-Reids, had gone. The Kokopo Club was no more and Makurapau had changed beyond recognition. Although we felt we needed to make the journey together, we agreed in theory that it is best not to go back. The past is exactly that and the present is what it is.

What I can only describe as incredibly moving was Ted’s reunion with those who had worked for him. Many of the Tolais in Rabaul remembered him or had heard of him through their fathers. We tracked down Dai Fong’s two sons, Ronald and George, who were working in good companies and we found Toloui’s boy Takinacap. Toloui and Dai-Fong had died but Veronica we learnt was living at Matupit village.

On a typical humid Rabaul afternoon we drove out to Matupit village crouched in the shadow of Matupit Volcano. We stopped the car on the main road at the entrance to the village. A few curious Tolais came over to see what we wanted. Ted spoke in Pidgin to them. Yes, they knew Veronica and yes someone could go and find her.

My excitement was palpable. I had a clear memory of Veronica’s face etched in my mind. What if the woman they found wasn’t her? Ted, too, was looking edgy with anticipation. Then we saw a slight figure in a lap lap and a blue-grey meri blouse walk slowly up the road towards us with her head bowed. She did not hurry or gather pace; a few little blond-headed piccaninnies ran laughing up ahead of her. She took her time
almost as if she couldn’t see us. But we knew it was her. The fine bones of her arms; the gentle swing of her lap; the small head bowed in shyness. She suddenly moved towards Ted and buried her head into his shoulder sobbing. For a long time he just held her. When she looked at me she kept shaking her head; was I really the little girl she had known at Makurapau? Tears filled Ted’s eyes. The intervening years melted away and it was some minutes before he and Veronica spoke. She asked about my mother. ‘Missus I dai pinis [finish]’ Ted told her ‘olosem [the same as] Loui’. A deep sadness washed over Veronica’s face. Gone was the girlish smile and laughter I remembered so well; gone was the bright light from her eyes.

Ted and Veronica walked together. Ted’s fluency in Pidgin had never left him and they recounted the events of the years since they had been together on Makurapau. When it was time to leave, Veronica looked at us knowing that she would never see ‘Masta Fulton’ again.

We watched her make her way down the track to the village. Not once did she turn and look back. As her small frame slipped into the shadows on the path I felt that she took an irretrievable part of my childhood with her.

These visits Ted made to New Guinea gave him a sense of closure. He harboured no regrets at having left the Territory and he used to say that it was like visiting a new country when he came to see us. Just about all the Befores had gone. But he delighted in being with us and watching his grandchildren playing with their dogs in a tropical garden just like we had played with Chunda when we were growing up. He would sit on our veranda at dusk with his gin and tonic just gazing out at the palm trees. He used to say that nothing could make him more sentimental than looking at palm trees, particularly with the moonlight on them.

Michael and I left Kimbe in 1985 after Michael sold Kimbe Enterprises to the West New Guinea Provincial government. We were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the political
情况似乎表明那些放弃公民身份的人实际上在商业界处于不利地位。自动公民（土著巴布亚新几内亚人）和外派人员正在获得更多的特权。目标一直在变化，我们无力改变。在出售公司时，迈克尔做出了他从未想过会做出的决定。最令人担忧的是家庭中法律和秩序的破裂，以及日益严重的犯罪问题。知道过去更幸福的时光，很难接受牺牲安全，尤其是当有孩子时的情况。不幸的是，犯罪和袭击事件不仅发生在我们的社区，而且罪犯只占人口的一小部分。我相信，啤酒商利用了过去已经是一个严重问题的不负责任的饮酒习惯，而酒精是导致家庭暴力和种族暴力增多的原因。甚至住在我们隔壁的法官，有时会喝得酩酊大醉，我们可以听到他把家具胡乱扔到房子各处，但正如迈克尔所说，当他是法官时，打电话给警察有什么好处呢？

我们看不到坐在那里恐惧的意义，因为我们知道总体情况可能不会改善。迈克尔一生都在新几内亚投资，但他认为，一个进步的、多民族的社区的愿景正被少数拥有绝对权力的人的虚荣心和贪婪所破坏，他们希望利用自己的巢穴。省之间的竞争实际上正在把国家推向后退：这种形式的‘分裂’，我认为，增加了新几内亚的脆弱性。觊觎者了解国家自然资源的价值。真正的受害者，正如二战中一样，是那些受过教育的村人，不知道该怎么做。我们都深深地关心那些为我们工作的人，当业务出售时，迈克尔设定了一个条件，即他的忠实员工继续留在其位置。
Jack and Betty Thurston died in 1985 within six weeks of each other. Kina remained in Rabaul living with Jack’s manager, Brian Connelly, in the house on the waterfront. Kina never got over the loss of his ‘Masta Jack’ and he was hospitalized in Nonga probably suffering from old age and a broken heart more than anything else. Not wishing to continue living, he pulled the drip out of his arm and refused medication. Robbie, who worked in our house, went to live with his daughter at Bialla and Elenta, who helped me with the children, still works in Kimbe for friends of ours who have four sons and a daughter. She and her husband Jack have a son they named Michael.

Ted continued to travel between the three of us and he was a much-loved grandfather to all our children. He celebrated his 90th birthday at a party in Sydney in 1994 and sitting next to him was Judy Tudor. In 1999 at the age of 95 he was admitted to the Sacred Heart Hospice in Darlinghurst just a hundred metres from the church where he had been baptised. During those last weeks he would pore over photographs taken in the Sepik so long ago and he would talk brightly and animatedly of his experiences; of the excitement of walking to Number One Gold with Jack; of the first time he found gold on the claim he pegged; of flying with Kevin Parer down south to enlist; of the men of the 6th Division and of his years on the plantation with Gwen. We knew, however, that he had been separated from her for too long and that he was ready to join her.

It is difficult to imagine a life more fully lived than Ted’s. He had lived through nearly the whole of the twentieth century and he had known the worst of times and the best of times. With the same courage and grace that had sustained him through it all, he died surrounded by his family on 20th November 1999. He is buried with Gwen at Waverley Cemetery on the Bronte cliffs. From where he lies, you can see and hear the great Pacific Ocean rising and calling but for Ted the adventure is over.
The war trials were held in Rabaul and Gwen and I attended some of the sessions; Gwen did this sketch of the Japanese General Inamura Makurapau, 1948; we gradually cleared the plantation that had been overrun in the time of the Japanese occupation and established a garden. Gwen’s mother is on the left with Mary and Gwen.
Una Adams and Gwen’s father, Christopher Dobinson, beside the sundial at Makurapau, 1948.

In the garden at Makurapau, 1954. From left to right: R. W. Robson, Ted, Mary, Gwen with Catherine and Elizabeth.
The garden at Makurapau with the casuarina tree on the left; to the right of the sundial was the tennis court.

The house at Makurapau with the haus wind on the right.
Turning the copra which is dried in kilns; we used the coconut husks as fuel for the kilns.

Cocoa trees grow in the shade of the coconuts and we exported both copra and cocoa.
At the end of the day the men played football on the field I made for them.

The work area of Makurapau which included kilns, fermenting boxes and driers for processing the copra and cocoa.
With my loyal staff at Dai Fong’s house on Makurapau. Sitting left to right: Sarah Wong holding her baby, Diana (Dai Fong’s wife), Victoria (Bobbin’s wife) with their daughter. Standing left to right: Fred Yan, Dai Fong, my manager and Bobbin Fai Man. Tim Wong, my accountant, is missing from the photo.

Planters Association of New Guinea, meeting of delegates in 1953
Reunited with Veronica, Toloui’s wife at Matupit, Rabaul, 1981

With Kina in Rabaul, 1981. I had known Kina for over 50 years from the time I first met Jack Thurston; Kina and I were at Number One Gold together.
Jack Thurston and I attended a services dinner together at the Australian Club in Sydney in 1984. My daughter, Catherine, took this photo of us at home before we left. A year later Jack died; we had been friends for nearly 60 years.
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**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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<tr>
<td>ADO</td>
<td>Assistant District Officer</td>
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<td>Rail Transport Officer</td>
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<td>VAD</td>
<td>Volunteer Aid Detachment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Index

2/1st Battalion, 100, 124
2/1st Field Regiment, 97, 101, 158, 209, 243, 250, 252, 259
2/2nd Field Artillery, 102
2/4th Battalion, 103, 124
2/15th Field Regiment Division, xi
2/6th Independent Company, 172, 181, 202, 204
2/7th Battalion, 118, 152
2/8th Battalion, 211
2/11 Battalion, 109
3rd Battalion, 219
4th New Zealand Brigade, 99
5th Independent Company 146
6th Division, x, xiv, xvi, 96, 100, 102, 105, 107, 121, 122, 127, 131, 140, 208, 211, 247, 290
7th Armoured Division (11th Hussars), 108, 127, 212
7th Field Ambulance, 110
7th Independent Company, 146
8th Division, 127
9th Division, xi, 127, 215, 250, 251
16th Brigade, 96, 98, 125, 130, 140
17th Brigade, 102, 159
20th Brigade, 250
32 Division, 228, 231
39th Battalion, xiv
43rd Division, 232
51st Field Regiment RA, 105
113 Construction Battalion (‘Sea Bees’), 240

Aiken, Lieutenant Harry, 57, 216, 230
Aimo, Native Constable, 241, 221, 223
Aiome, 174 map, 202, 203
Aiya, Native Constable, 221
Aiyura, 150, 158, 163
Albinama, 231
Alexandria, 103, 105, 111, 113, 119, 120
Alibus, 75
Alivetti, 152, 153, 155, 156 map
Allan, Katie ‘K. T.’, 215
Allen, Ben, 80, 81
Allen, Ted, 79
American Dollar Line, 24
Andersen, Lieutenant Colonel J. S. ‘Hans’, 157, 165, 243
Angeji, 173
Angkor, 22
Angom, 177
Angoram, 66, 77, 176, 180, 183
Annenberg, 168, 169, 170, 172, 173, 178, 182, 183, 186, 200, 202
Antananta, 52, 67, 69, 71, 88
Apanam, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174
Bardia, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 133, 252
map, 176, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 199, 200, 202, 203

Appleby, Jim, 38
Barker, Lieutenant Colonel, 109
Aragin, 68
Barnes, Tommy, 211
Araket, 68
Barom, 153
Acher, Tex, 76, 172
Barracluff, Lieutenant Joe, 120, 166
Archibald, Eric, 58, 65, 73
Barry, Lieutenant, 169, 171, 199, 202, 203
Argos, 117
Barry, Noel, 264
Army Service Corps, 125
Bartlett, WO Stan, 216
Artergad River, 170, 171, 201
Bates, Major Charles D., 260, 144
Asaloka, 157
Baxter, Lieutenant, 231, 232
Asangamut, 174 map, 177
Belfield, Alf, 45, 60
Asaro, 157
Bell, Bill, 45
Asaroka, 166
Bell, Dick, 81
Asiling, 231
Bena Bena, 147, 150, 151, 152, 154, 156 map, 158, 159, 164, 165 map, 166, 206, 207, 215
Asong, Simon, 79
Benghazi, 110, 252
Asquith, Harry, 98, 121
Bergin, Lieutenant, 151, 152, 154
Atemble, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 200, 202, 203
Bertram, Sergeant Ron ‘Backsie’, 124
Atemble Mission, 168, 171, 174 map
Bien, 177
Atoga, Native Constable, 152, 153, 154, 177, 178, 186, 202
Bilfield, Alf, 45, 60
Australian action in the Middle East, 101–5, 106–12
Australian Administration in PNG, 19, 20, 32, 33, 35, 51, 142, 155, 232, 260, 267, 273
Australian Army Command, 141, 233
Australian Artillery and Citizens Forces, 97
Australian Labor Party, 267
Avagumban, 177
Avui, 178

Badger, Lieutenant, 146
Bill, Waldo, 13
Baful, 154
Bill, Wendell, 13
Baham, 199
Bir Aslug, 105
Bainings, the, 19, 258, 265
Birch, ‘Smoky’, 266
Balangot, 39
Bitter Lakes, 101
Balif, 229, 230, 231
Birwar, 174 map, 175, 177, 178, 180, 182, 183
Ballantyne, R. M., 2, 12, 23
Black Cat Pass, 147
Barce, 110, 252
Black, Lieutenant Geoff, 261
Black, Captain John, 151, 152, 156, 159, 160, 162, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 176, 181, 182, 183, 184, 186, 203, 204, 234, 249
Blackman, Mabian, 79
Black Watch, 105
Blake, Warrant Officer, 146
Blood, Captain N. B. ‘Nep’, 144, 209, 212, 214
Bloxham, Bill, 70
Bobbin Fai Man, 267, 274, 279, 296
Bobtain, 173, 174 map, 175, 176, 180, 183, 186
Index

Bogia, xviii–xix map, 166, 167, 171174 map, 180, 184

Boina, 19, 37
Boisen, Lieutenant Frank, 120
Bombita, 231
Bonahetum, 43
Bond, Major, 233
Bonogon, 179
Booth, Mrs D., 39
Boram, 38, 39, 48, 49 map
Boto, Jack, 52
Bottcher, Captain, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232
Bougainville Bay, 240, 241, 242
Bowden, Ernie, 70
Boyan, Lieutenant, 151, 215
Bragg, Arthur, 13
Bralos Pass, 115, 118, 252
Brenda, Johnny, 15, 28, 32, 260
Bulibidiwa Creek, 58
Bulolo, 79, 93, 130, 268, 281
Bulolo Goldfields Aeroplane Service, 63
Bulolo, 39, 40, 42, 146, 149 map, 158, 165 map
Bumbum, 161
Buna, 143, 144, 151, 160, 168
Bundi, 152, 153, 156 map, 166, 167, 169, 170, 174 map
Burnett, Warrant Officer, 151
Burns Philp & Co., 17, 28, 31, 26, 60, 79, 260, 267, 278, 281
But, 47, 48, 49 map, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 68, 72, 183, 229
Byard, Jack, 98, 106, 121

Cairo, 104, 105
Callay, Norman, 13
Calulu, 15, 16, 82
Calwell, Arthur, 267
Cambridge, Lieutenant, 199, 202
Campbell, Alan, 258
Campbell, Alex, 259
Campbell, ‘Sandy’, 79, 81
Cansdell, ‘Blue’, 123
Cardew, Captain R. C. ‘Dick’, 209, 211
Carter, Walter, 70, 72, 77
Carpenter, Sir Walter, 15, 28, 32
Carra, Signaller, 168, 169, 170
Carter, ‘Sep’, 13
Casbolt, George, 265
Cassells, Joe, 19
Catnach, Bill, 209
Cartell, Fred, 73
Cecil, Harry, 65, 74
Celuba, Brother, 175, 176
Ceylon, ix, 127, 153
Chambers, Captain, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204
Champion, Ivan, xii, 144
Chaug, xi, 251
Chapman, Bill, 39, 40, 42
Chifley, Ben, 260
Chinese merchants, 17, 20, 261, 272, 279
Chipper, Jack, 57, 63, 73
Christian, Stan, 48, 144
Cilento, Dr Raphael, 37
Citizen’s Association, 72, 260, 261
Clarke, Gordon, 79
Cleland, Brigadier D. M., 208
Clift, Ken, 102
Clune, Frank, 62
Coakley, Ned, 19
Cocoa manufacturers, 268
coconut, xi, 12, 37, 54, 262, 263, 265, 266, 271, 294, 295
Cohen, Bill & Florence, 267
Cole, Captain R. R. ‘Bob’, ix, 79
Colombo, 127, 128
Colyer, R. A., 261
Colyer Watson, 264, 278
Conlon, Lieutenant Colonel, 248, 249
Conway, Frank, 13
Conway, Tom, 13
Cope, Lionel, 268
copra, xi, 12, 17, 18, 21, 28, 29, 38, 52, 262, 264, 265, 266, 271, 294, 295
Copra Marketing Board, 268
*Coral Island, The*, x, 1, 2, 12, 28
Corinth Canal, 117
Corinth, Gulf of, 117
*Cornwall*, 127
Costelloe, Captain J., 166, 167
*Costa Rica*, 253, 118, 119
Cou Iss, Sergeant Bill, 216
Crawford, Warrant Officer, 146
Crawford, Major, 243
Cresswell, Arthur, 258, 259
Crete, ix, 119, 120, 133, 208, 211, 223, 253
Croudace, Max, 98, 99, 125
Crystal Creek, 147, 148
Cyrenacia, 111

Dai Fong, 267, 268, 274, 275, 287, 296
Daniel, Native Constable, 203
Daru, 151
Davies, Barbara, 128
Davis, Harrie, 13
Davis, Private, 167
Day, Bob, 210
Dead Chinaman, 145, 146 map
*Defender*, 119
Dennis, Peter, 211
de Gausset, Warrant Officer, 115
Dishon, Lieutenant Bill, 215
District Officers, 75–6
Diyatalawa, 128
Doe, Brigadier General, 217
Doe, Sergeant Wally, 218, 219
Dogon, 173
*Dorsetshire*, 127
Dott, Harry, 154
Dougme, 178
Downie, Jim, 211
Downside School, 3, 5
Dralio, Native Constable, 186
Drei kikir, 226, 230
*Drina*, 38
Drina Plantation, 37
Drinium River, 225 *map*, 227
Duku, Native Constable, 230
Dunbar-Reid, Jack & Jean, 271, 287
Dunogi, 43
Durnantina River, 161
*Durnour*, 29, 30, 31
Dutton, Bill, 16
Dwyer, Captain, 97, 111, 114, 122
Dwyer, John, 98, 111, 114, 121
Earl, Major, 245, 246
Eden, Anthony, 101, 104, 105
Edie Creek goldfields, 18, 19, 38, 39
Egan, Dan, 57
Eglinton, Lieutenant Ted, 218, 237
Egypt, ix, 102, 103, 105, 106, 111, 120, 127, 130, 252
Eilertz, Axel, 39
El Agheila, 111
El Kantara, 101
Elliot, ‘Pompey’, 71
Ellis, George, 66
Ellis, Tom, 72
El Majdal, 101
Elton, Signaller, 169, 170, 171, 184
Emul, 225 *map*, 231
England, Lieutenant Peter, 169, 171, 172, 176, 181, 182, 193, 184, 193, 197, 199
English, Captain Malcolm, 167, 207
Evacuation of German missionaries, 167, 173, 174, 175–84, 185–8
Evacuation of Mosstroops, 211–12
Ewing, ADO, 162, 163, 164
Expropriation Board, 16, 18, 19, 21
Exton, Lieutenant Ted, 209, 245, 240
Farlow, Major, 211
Far Eastern Liaison Office (FELO), 169, 199, 202, 203, 208, 209, 210
Fenbury, Dave see Fienberg
Filan, Sep, 79, 81
Finintegu, 158, 162
Finschhafen, 215, 144
Fisher, Norman, 72
Flynn, Errol, 34
Flynn, Lieutenant, 109, 111
Fly River, 144
Fong, George, 287
Fong, Robert, 287
Foot, Major, Stuart, 249
Fortification Point, 144
Fouad, Port, 103
Friend, Private, 152
Fryer, Captain Jack, 72, 230, 231
Fryer, Vic, 57, 65
Fulton, Catherine, 267, 273, 281, 292, 298
Fulton, Charles, 3
Fulton, Frank, xi, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 82, 130, 210, 251
Fulton, Henry, xi, 5, 130, 210, 223, 251
Fulton, Graeme Auchmuty, 3
Fulton, Gwen (nee Dobinson), ix, xi, xii, xvii, 80, 81, 93, 98, 130, 131, 136, 137, 210, 243, 244, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 270, 271, 281, 283, 285, 286, 290, 291, 292
Fulton, James Robert, 3
Fulton, John, 3
Fulton, John Jeffreys, 252, 3
Fulton, Mary, 86, 131, 192, 210, 251
Fulton, Mary Margaret, 3
Fulton, Thomas Benedict, 3, 252
Galloway, Ray, 21
Gangamba, 177
Gardner, Lieutenant Ted, 240, 241, 242
Gazelle Peninsula, 263, 269
Geko, 52, 54, 68, 70, 88
Gektan, 180
Geraghty, Frank, 17, 25
Glasson, Dick, 19
Gluth, Tony, 211
Glyfada, 113
Golden, Sergeant Jim, 152, 153, 154
Golgopa, 173, 176, 180, 181, 186
Goodwyn, Hugh, 79, 81, 89
Gorman, Burleigh, 19
Goroka, 151, 156 map, 157, 166
Gorpungen, 173
Goss, George, 18
Goss, Tom, 18
Gough, Charlie, 52, 70, 72
Gow, Lieutenant Alan, 216, 218, 232, 234, 237
Grant, John, 72
Graziani, General, 105
Greathead, Lieutenant, 199, 203
Greece; Retreat from, 115–20
Greenwood, Sergeant Joe, 115, 123
Gregory, Syd, 13
Grey, Edwin, 172, 181, 182, 204;
Death of, 185–8, 190, 191, 193,
194, 197, 199
Grimson, Jack, 211
Gulebi, 167, 168, 174 map
Gumika, 174 map, 201, 202, 204,
206
Hagen, Mount, 151, 174 map, 176,
177, 178, 182, 183, 184, 200,
212, 214,
Haifa, 103, 124, 252
Hambini, 229
Hambridge, Sergeant Harry, 115
Hamilton, ‘Bull’, 79
Hamilton, Mick, 115
Hansa Bay, 215
Harloch, Colonel, 122
Hasluck, Sir Paul, 268
Hatton, WO Geoff, 125, 126
Hawkes, Paddy, 34
Hawkins, 24
Hawthorn, Bill, 17
Hearden, Bert, 13
Heimann, Julius, 102, 124, 134
Heinicke, Bill, 126
Helwan, 104, 105
Hemsworth, Geoff, 63
Henganofi, 161, 162
Hereward, 119, 253
Hermit Islands, xvii–xix map, 29
Herring, Lieutenant General
Edmund, 140
Hewit, ‘Tiny’, 101
Hicks, Lieutenant, 147
Hilder, Brett, 281
Hill, Sergeant, 148
Hindwood, Harold, 70
Hird, Wally, 30
Hitchcock, Ernie, 30
Hitipew, Martin, 17
Hodgkiss, Jim, 48, 144
Hoffschneider, Captain Leo, 226
Hoi, Seeto, 20
Holdsworth Camp, 96
Holland, Sergeant Trav, 118
Hollandia, 188, 217, 238, 240, 242,
253
Holm, Bert, 115
Holmes, Major, 122, 125
Hong Kong, 21, 22, 23, 24, 34, 272,
279, 286
Hook, Una, 59
Hook, Wally, 52, 59, 232
Hore-Lacy, Dyson, 38
Howes, Tom, 118
Hughes, Corporal, 152, 153, 154,
169, 172, 173, 176, 200, 201,
202, 204
Humbolt Bay, 240
Huon Gulf, 144
Hunt, Private, 171, 172, 202, 203,
204
Hutton, Ken, 114
Ialibu, 212, 214, 243, 253
Ifould, Tom & Mollie, 38, 39
Inamura, General, 261, 291
Indianola, 21, 22
Ingleburn, 97, 249
Ingram, ‘Irish’, 111
Irvine, Dave, 29
Italian Army, 103, 105, 106, 109,
110, 223; Capture of at Bardia,
106–8, 133
Iwap, 182
Jackson, Graham, 57
Jacob (missionary), 183
Jaffa, 122, 123
Japanese action in the Pacific, 127,
128, 130; action in Papua New
Guinea, x, xii, xiv, xv, 59, 65, 66,
81, 89, 100, 139–42, 143, 147,
150–6, 157, 167–74, 175–84,
Jerusalem, xvi, 102, 123, 124, 134
Jeta, 177, 181
Jimebu, 172
Jocham, Father, 173, 175, 176
John Douglas, 20
Jones, Lieutenant Colonel Bert, 140, 141, 243, 244
Jones, Major, 208, 209, 211, 212, 215, 234
Jones, Malcolm, 79
Josephstaal, 171, 174, 175, 176, 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 197
Julis, 101

Kabaira plantation, 18
Kabakaul, 263
Kabanga plantation, 271
Kabliwop Creek, 68
Kabobius, 43, 49 map, 92
Kainantu, 158, 161, 162, 163, 165 map
Kaindi Mountains, 20
Kaisinik, 147, 148, 149 map
Kalamata, 117, 118
Kaman, Native Constable, 221, 235, 241, 242
Kambot Mission, 172, 174 map, 175, 176, 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 197
Kambrindo, 177, 180, 182
Kambumin, 161, 162, 163
Kamun, 44
Kaningara, 171
Kapoam, 49 map, 71, 225 map, 227
Karawari, 172, 178
Karius, Charles, xii, 144
Kasparius, Brother, 167
Kati, 67, 69, 88
Kaugel River, 212
Kavieng, xviii–xix map, 17, 30, 34, 86
Kell, Ralph, 209
Kemp, Jerry, 19
Kemp Welch River, 143
Kenny, Judith, 128
Keogh, Gerry, 52, 74, 77, 89, 209, 210
Keram River, 168, 172, 174 map
Kesawai, 152, 154, 156 map
Kessey, Squadron Leader, 239
Khassa, 121, 135
Kibim, 173
Kimbe, 286, 288, 289, 290
Kina, 38, 287, 290, 297
King, Captain, 240
Kirke, Hunter, 73
Kloss, Lieutenant Colonel, 249
Kokopo, xi, 263, 269 map, 271, 273, 276, 277, 278, 287
Kooka, 144, 150, 151, 152, 160, 161, 167, 178, 179
Korlai, 153, 154
Koripa, 157, 166
Korn, Bill, 73
Korosameri River, 77
Kovu, 145
Kowloon, 23, 24
Koyak, 182
Kreiger, Lieutenant, 219
Kremienski, Father, 177, 182
Kudjeru, 146, 149 map
Kuiper Range, 158
Kukakuka, 162
Kumbarumba, 177
Kundiawa, 166, 167
Kunduk, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203
Kuvasi, Police Corporal, 242
Kuvimire, 171, 177, 178, 181
Kyngdon, Lieutenant Dick, 79, 147, 148

Labuain, 225 map, 236
Lae, xviii–xix map, 80, 142, 143, 144, 147, 152, 158, 165 map, 209, 212, 237, 242, 243, 245, 246
Lakekamu River, 144, 149 map
Laliok, Constable, 170, 176, 200, 201
Lambert, Lieutenant William G., 219, 220–1
Lamprill, Fred, 98, 123, 124, 130
Lang, Jack, 57
Latchford, Corporal, 146
Lawson, Lieutenant, 124, 125, 126
Leahy, Sergeant Dan, 89, 146
Lees, Mrs, 279
Lehinga, 72
Lemingam, 70
Lesbos, 120
Levien, Jack, 80, 81
Levy, Noel, 13
Levy, Roy, 13
Lewitz, WO, 129
Libya, ix, 110, 111, 160, 243, 252
Limlimbo, 69
Limlo, 181
Lindenhafen Plantation, 79, 80, 81
London, 22, 66, 72, 78, 268
Lonergan, Steve, 31, 32
Lovett, Gordon, 13
Luff, Frank, 45, 46, 73
Lumb, WO Harry, 150, 151
Lungi, 68, 69
Lutmer, Father, 54
Luwaite, 225 map, 231
Luxmoore, Captain, 16
Luxmoore, Mrs, 34
Lyall, Dave, 16, 20
Lyall, Dave (snr), 20
Lyall, Mrs, 16
Lyon, Hughie, 258
M Special Force, 208
McAdam, Sergeant Jim, 150
McCarthy, Jean, 267
McCarthy, Lieutenant Colonel Keith, 72, 249, 267
McConnell, ‘Mac’, 81
Macdhui, 35, 47, 78, 79, 80
McDonald, Cadet, 18
McDonald, Ian, 268
MacGregor, Bill, 45, 46, 47, 73, 172
McGuigan, Jim, 30
MacHutchinson, Andrew, 18
McKay, Robin, 211
Mackie, WO Bob, 232, 266
McMillan, Don, 79
McMullen, Lieutenant Colonel Ken, 19, 215, 216, 234, 248
McNicoll, Sir Walter, 62
Madang, xviii–xix map, 30, 34, 39, 48, 66, 80, 86, 87, 142, 152, 154, 156 map, 157, 158, 162, 165 map, 180, 183, 200, 203, 207, 215, 229
Madras Staff Corps, 3, 252
Magende, 185
Magini, 67, 68, 69, 70
Malaguna, 19, 269 map
Malaita, 281
Malcharek, Brother, 167
Mangam River, 58
Manila, 24, 26
Manion, Father, 183
Manu, 177
Manus Island, xviii–xix map, 216, 234
Maprik, xviii–xix map, 40, 43, 49 map, 62, 63, 64, 65, 72, 73, 78, 79, 89, 151, 194, 229, 253
Marienberg, 183, 186, 188
Marimuni River, 178, 183
Markham River, 150, 159, 165 map
Markham Valley, 158
Marquis, Bill, 34
Marr, Colin, 125
Marshall, Bill, 80
Marshall, Jock, 59
Marsina, 28
Marum River, 167
Maruwat177
Maski, 34
Mason, Theo, 70, 72, 210
Matahua, 152, 154, 156 map
Matapau, 69, 229
Matheson, Private, 110
Maxwell, Sergeant Keith ‘Slapsi’, 122
M’Bras, 225 map, 231
Mekoe, 145, 151
Meklong, 19
Melhei see Geko
Mersa Brega, 111, 252
Mersa Matruh, 105, 111
Millar, Toby, 70
Miller, ‘Dusty’, 24
Miller, Johnny, 72
Milligan, John, 144, 211, 216, 217, 218, 219, 226, 228, 233, 237, 238, 242, 243
Mills, Corporal, 148
Mishima Maru, 25
Mitchell, Jack, 70, 77
Mitchell, ‘Stiffy’, 17
Mogum, 173
Moiwahk, 225 map, 230, 231, 232, 236
Mollison, Pat, 72
Mom, 63, 64
Money, Bill, 19, 39, 249
Monk, ‘Gerry’, 206
Montoro, 31, 258, 261, 266
Moore, Dick, 38, 39
Moore, Jimmy, 114, 129
Morobe, 143, 149 map, 165 map
Morobe goldfields, 34, 38, 45
Mori, 220
Moris, Native Constable, 176, 177, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190
Morris, Major General Basil, xiv, 139, 142, 161, 208, 238
Mosstroops, 208–14, 232, 243, 246, 253
Mount Carmel, 103
Mubo, 147
Mullaley, Jack, 39
Mumbla, 173
Mungambant, 206
Murcutt, Sergeant Bill, 218, 237
Murik, 188
Musak, 199
Muschu Island, 187, 188
Museumbelem, 230, 235
Musendai, 225 map, 230, 231, 236
Musilo, 230, 225 map
Nadzab, 212
Naglu, 173
Nagum River, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49 map
Nakanai murders, 26, 32, 37
Namanula, 18, 281
Nanaha, 235
Nangam, 200, 206
Native Carriers, 20, 44, 52, 59, 61, 72, 90, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 160, 168, 170, 172, 177, 178, 179, 183, 188, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, 220, 221, 227, 228, 232, 235, 236, 237
Nebilyer River, 212
Nelson, Hank, xv
Nengian, 220
Neptunia, 66
Neusarat, 122
New Britain, xviii–xix map, 16, 20, 25, 26, 37, 38, 262, 265, 273, 284, 287
New Guinea Club, 278
New Hanover, xviii–xix map, 29
New Ireland, xviii–xix map, 20, 29, 30, 34, 51, 65, 86
Newcastle, 3, 12
Niall, Major J. ‘Horrie’, 147, 215, 216, 234, 243, 244
Nicholls, Ginger, 26, 38
Nigea River, 52, 70
Ning Hee, 52
Noakes, Lyn, 72
Nobbs, Bill, 123
Nordup, 18, 269 map
Normoyle, Chris, 260
Norris, Keith, 32
Number One Gold, 37–49, 50, 57, 61, 74, 78, 88, 90, 287, 290, 297

O’Connor, ‘Oakey’, 13
O’Connor, General, 108
Oil Search, 69, 76, 230
O’Kane, Harry, 149
O’Keeffe, Frank, 4, 13
Orama, 66, 99
Oria River, 152, 153, 155
Ormsby, Ralph, 73
Owen Stanley Ranges, x, 143, 253

Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM), 74, 195, 197, 283
Page, Con, 28
Page, Dave, 17, 25, 26
Page, Harold, 35, 36, 81
Page, Tom, 28
Palai District, 52, 53, 56, 67, 71
Palestine, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 120, 121–6, 135, 252
Palu, 67, 71
Papua, Gulf of, 158, 207
Parchee River, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 74
Parer’s Air Transport, 61–6
Parer, Ben, 89
Parer, Bob, 79
Parer, Damien, 146
Parer, Fons, 73
Parer, Kevin, 63, 64, 65, 73, 79, 89, 312
Parer, Ray, 62, 63, 98
Parer, Warwick, ix
Park, ‘Sharkeye’, 19
Parkinson, Phoebe, 37
Pascoe, Lieutenant Ben, 227, 228, 229, 233

Pearce, ‘Ossie’, ix, 96, 130
Pearse, ‘Skeeter’, 108
Pennland, 231
Pendlebury, Lieutenant, 216
Penglase, Major Nick, 144, 147
Penhallurick, Cadet, 18
Pennefather, Vic, 39
Peters, Major, 110, 111, 115, 121
Peterson, Jackie, 108
Peterson, Eric, 74, 88
The Philippines, xi, 25, 26, 81, 130, 242
Philpotts, Bill, 79
Pickering, Percy, 17, 28
Piraeus, 113
Pite, Wally, 13
Planters Association of New Guinea, xi, 267, 268, 296
Pogwe, Sergeant, 221
Pokoran, 177, 181
Porban, Constable, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190
Porombil, 231
Port Moresby, x, 77, 140, 142, 143, 144, 147, 151, 191, 244, 246, 253, 247, 260
postwar conditions in Papua New Guinea, 257–61, 262–3, 270
Power, Sergeant, 167, 168, 170, 171, 202, 204
Preusser, Lieutenant, 232, 236
Prince of Wales, 128
Purari River, 158, 159
Purcell, Bombardier, 115
Pushten, 173

Qastina, 101
Queen Emma, 37, 263
Index

Rainau Plantation, 271, 279
Ralum, 263
Ramadapu, 172
Ramu River, x, xviii–xix map, 141, 151, 152, 153, 154, 156 map, 158, 159, 162, 164, 165 map, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174 map, 176, 182, 183, 184, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206, 220, 253
Ramu Valley, 151, 158
Rayson, Max, 209
recruiting, 19, 28, 44, 50–5, 67–76, 88, 216, 226
Reid, 'Boss', 5
Reid, Graham, 17
Renton, Gilbert, 18
Repulse, 128
Rickard, Captain Doug, 108, 121, 122, 126
Rigby, Reg, 79
Rigo, 143
Riring, 225 map, 228, 229, 232, 235, 236
Roach, Lieutenant ‘Bunny’, 209
Robartson, Frank, 79, 89
Roberts, Cadet, 19
Roberts, Tex, 38, 39
Robson, R. W., 74, 197, 283, 292
Rondahl, Eric, 39
Rondahl, Oscar, 262, 272
Rongwik, 173, 174 map
Ross, Alan, 120
Ross, Cadet, 18
Royal, Bill, 19
Rudnagel, Tay, 265
Ruru, Constable, 175, 176, 200, 201
Russell, Doug, 101
Sachs, Sergeant John, 98, 104, 105, 111, 115, 121, 123, 124, 130, 134, 141
Sahik, 231
Said, Port, 103, 105, 252
Saigon, 22
Salamaua, xviii–xix map, 19, 20, 34, 45, 65, 78, 80, 81, 89, 144, 147
Salata, 225 map, 230, 231
Sauli, 43
Samark, 225 map, 230, 231
Samasai, 43
Samurai, Corporal, 204, 237
Saville, Owen, 123
Schindler, Aub, 209
Schmale, Brother, 175, 176
Schneiderguss, Brother, 167, 175, 176, 177, 182, 183
Scholes, WOII, 228, 231, 234
Schroder, Dr, 80
Schubek, Brother, 177, 182
Schwab, Father, 174, 176, 177, 179, 181, 182; letters from, 189–98
Screw River, 43, 49 map, 62
Seaman's Institute, 23, 25
Searson, Captain Joe, 218, 234
Second Highland Light Infantry, 105
Sedgers, Jack, 17, 266
Sepik District Headquarters, 38, 42
Sepik River, 70, 167, 168, 169, 171, 183, 209, 241, 242
Sepu, 168, 169, 170, 171, 174 map, 199, 204
Serra, 220, 226
Shand, Lieutenant Warner, 79, 147
Sharman, Sergeant, 104, 111
Shelley, Harry, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 27, 28, 30, 31, 35, 286
Sherwin, Arthur, 16
Sigoya, 156 map, 159, 207
Siling River, 38, 39, 49 map
Singapore, 14, 20, 21, 22, 26, 77, 128
Sirrinibu, 167, 169, 172
Sisessib, 177, 180
Sissano, Lake, 26
Smith, Frank, 108
Smythe, Ted, 167
Sogori, 209
Sollum, 105
Solomon Islands, 17, 263
Southwell, Private, 152
Sowom River, 49 map, 58, 68, 69, 70
St Anna Mission, 70, 219
Starlight, 49 map, 56–60, 67, 91, 257
Stevens, ‘Ocker’, 13
Stickles, Sergeant, 108
Suda Bay, 119
Suein Plantation, 69
Suein River, 69, 70
Suez Canal, 101, 127
Sullivan, Captain, 226
Sunshine, 150, 165 map
Susu, 151
Sutche, Bruce, 13
Tadji Plantation, 49 map, 70, 219, 225 map, 239
Tahia, Joe, 17
Tame, Captain Stan, 211
Tanda, 34
Taylor, Major Jim, 144, 151, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 176, 177, 178, 181, 182, 183, 186, 197, 210, 212, 214, 234, 249
Taylor, Joe, 58, 70
Taylor, Lieutenant Colonel Ted, 141
Tel Aviv, xvi, 102, 123, 124, 125, 216, 134
Tepier Plantation, 219, 225 map
Tepapo, 145, 149 map
Theobald, Bill, 16, 19
Thermopylae Pass, 115
Thomas, Bill, 264
Thomas, Bombadier Georgie, 108
Thomas, Gordon, 197
Thomas, Mick & Doris, 271
Thompson, ‘Tommy’, 79
Thorp, Graham, 250
Thursday Island, 26
Thurston, Betty, 65, 74, 89, 100, 283, 286, 287, 290
Thurston, Jack, x, xvi, 19, 20, 35, 37–49, 57, 61, 62, 63, 74, 79, 88, 89, 90, 100, 144, 151, 215, 286, 287, 290, 297, 298
Thurston, Michael, 283, 286, 288, 289, 290
Timbunki, 177, 182
Timingir, 231
Tindale, Sergeant, 97
Toboi, 259, 261, 265, 266, 270
Tobrook, 108, 109, 110, 211, 250, 252
Tong, 225 map, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 236, 239, 253
Torricelli Mountains, xi, 40, 49 map, 54, 59, 225 map, 226–38, 253
Towanara, Takinacap, 273
Towanara, Tolou, 258, 260, 265, 273, 280, 287
Towanara, Veronica, 273, 297
Townsend, Lieutenant Colonel Kassa, 42, 44, 45, 48, 79, 80, 81, 210
Tudor, Don, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52, 56, 73, 74
Tudor, Harry, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 57, 58, 74
Tudor, Judy (Ethel), viii, xii, 43, 47, 50, 56, 57, 58, 66, 72, 74, 91, 195, 196, 258, 283, 290
Tudor, Len, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 66, 72, 74, 78, 89, 91
Tumai, Native Constable, 221, 222
Turner, Jackie, 63
Turu, Native Constable, 221, 222

Ulahanoitu, 43
Ulahau River, 58, 67, 72
Ulster Prince, 117
United States Air Force, 207, 212
United States Army, 130, 131, 210; action in Papua New Guinea, xi, 81, 143, 208–14, 215–24, 226–38, 239–44
Upson, Captain T. W., 184
US 1st Tank Destroyer Battalion, 227, 228
US 126 Rifle Regiment, 144, 220, 253

Vampire, 127
Vanimo, 240, 253
Vaughan, Charlie, 13
Vertigan, Cadet, 18
Vunapope Mission, 269 map, 277, 278, 281

Wade, Lieutenant, 118
Wagamuri, 151
Wagner (missionary), 183
Wahgi Valley, 166, 206
Waimeriba, 152, 153, 156 map
Wales, Sergeant Baden, 145
Wali, 179

Walker, Keith, 259
Walker, Lieutenant Colonel, 118
Wallach, Bill, 129
Walum, 225 map, 236
Walwali, 220
Wanili, 71
Wapi District, 59, 67, 70
Ward, E. J. ‘Eddie’, 260
Warburton, Ben, 13
Warners, ‘Plum’, 13
Washington, George, 18
Watut River, 150, 165 map
Wau, xviii–xix map, 45, 63, 143, 144, 146, 147, 149 map, 150, 151, 162, 168, 215
Wauchope, Commander Ernie, 39, 59
Wei River, 153
Weisa, 152, 153, 154, 156 map
Wells, ‘Glad’, 79
Wenno, 17
Western Desert, 127, 132, 157, 208
Westernland, 127, 128, 129, 130
Westralia, 250
Wewak, xviii–xix map, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49 map, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 89, 142, 144, 147, 148, 181, 183, 187, 188, 190, 207, 209, 214, 215, 216, 229, 242, 253, 257
Preston White, John, 144
White, Geoff, 261
White, Lieutenant, 147
White, Osmar, 139, 146
Whiteman, Alan, 32
Whiteway Laidlaws, 23
Wilding, Bill, 281
Williams, ‘Soldier’, 120
Wilson, Des, 115, 116
Withy, Geoff, 263, 264, 265
Wong, Sarah, 296
Wong, Tim, 267, 274, 296
Wood, Captain, 115
Wood, Major Ted, ix, 243
Woodhead, Corporal, 153, 154
Woods, ‘Diwai’, 54, 70
World War I, 5, 13, 16, 97, 100, 101, 105, 263
Wowas, 150, 151, 165 map
W. R. Carpenter & Co., x, 15, 17, 19, 21, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 60, 79, 259, 265, 266
Wutung, 240

Yakamul, 49 map, 54, 70, 225 map
Yako, 241
Yaliman, 37, 38, 71
Yambes, 225 map, 230
Yamen, 173, 174 map, 176, 177, 179, 180, 182, 190

Yamen River, 176
Yamil, 49 map, 61, 62, 64, 73, 74, 89
Yan, Freddy, 274, 296
Yapunda, 225 map, 231, 232, 233, 234
Yar, 173, 174 map, 175, 181
Yasile, 235
Yaurang, 228
Yayale, 231
Yelan, 185, 186
Yiblis, 171
Yimas, 172
Yinowa, 67, 69
Youibi River, 44, 45
Young, Johnny, 171, 172
Yuat River, 172, 176, 177, 178, 183
Yuni, 173

Z Special Force, 77, 141, 209, 250
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