

Sepik III

The Sepik at War 1942 - 1945



LAURIE BRAGGE

Japanese Surrender Ceremony – Cape Wom, New Guinea 13 September 1945



Watched by a large crowd of soldiers, the official party awaits the arrival of Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, General Officer Commanding XVIII Japanese Army, for the Surrender Ceremony. (AWM 02471)



Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, General Officer Commanding XVIII Japanese Army, watched by Major General H. C. H. Robertson, General Officer Commanding 6th Australian Division, leans over the table to sign the Japanese unconditional surrender. (AWM 042747)

MAJOR-GENERAL H.C.H. ROBERTSON, General Officer Commanding 6 Division, signing the Instrument of Surrender in a Surrender Ceremony held at Cape Wom airstrip. Troops of 6 Division are lined up in the background. (AWM 096462)



Foreword

Once upon a time Australians recognised names in Papua New Guinea, their colonial mandate that ended independence in 1975. They had heard, vaguely, of the Wau gold fields, of plantations on New Britain, of patrol officers in seemingly romantic places like Samarai or Salamaua. During the Second World War they heard of places like Sanananda, Finschhafen or Kaiapit, where battles had been fought 'up in the islands'. Today though, the only names that Australians recognise in Papua New Guinea are Port Moresby, its capital, and Kokoda, sadly the one action in three years of war that has stuck in the Australian public memory.

Laurie Bragge's *The Sepik at War* re-introduces readers in Australia - and also of course to those in Papua New Guinea - to a unique place and time. As is clear from his references, Laurie's book is based on much arduous archival research. But beyond that, it is founded on an archive of personal testimony that he collected while working in the Sepik region during his long career as a 'kiap', a colonial official. This record would not have existed without Laurie's devoted work, and the people of Papua New Guinea will appreciate that he has preserved something which can now never again be compiled. This is a precious collection of stories, accounts, legends and beliefs, some from people who knew the Sepik before the penetration of Australians, who experienced the profound changes they brought, and who witnessed how their country became a battle-ground between invading Japanese, and Australian and American forces.

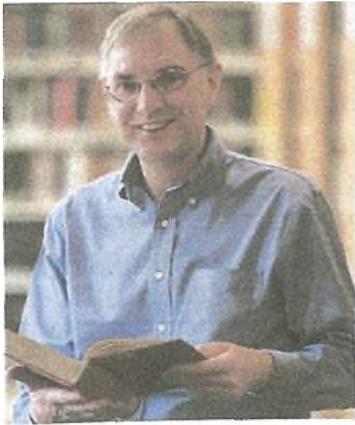
Through their words, in addition to wartime records left by expatriates as well as administration and military personnel, Laurie Bragge recreates a turbulent time in the history of the Sepik. He recounts how the Japanese invasion disrupted the relationship between Europeans and indigenous people; how the Japanese brought chaos and death to the villages of the region, and of how both sides drew its people into supporting their war-making. Running through Laurie's account is a profound knowledge of and respect for the beliefs and culture of the people he met and worked with, people who told him about the conflict that engulfed their remote river and ridge communities, as it did people. and countries across the globe.

It is in the stories that Laurie collected from villagers - almost all of whom are now dead - that the special character of this book emerges. The people of the Sepik were not merely bystanders and victims of this conflict - they saw and experienced the contest that consumed their land in their own ways - in terms of community, environment and even sorcery, a living force which influenced how war affected them and how they saw and responded to it. The book shows how in the war years the destinies of both indigenous and expatriate actors were intimately bound together, in dramatic stories of invasion and resistance, of secret operations and rescue missions - not all successful.

Laurie Bragge's working life has been one that no Australian can now replicate. He spent over forty years working in Papua New Guinea, both as an Australian administration official

- rising from cadet patrol officer to District Officer - and whilst working in private enterprise. His experience, his profound knowledge and affection for the country and its' people illuminates the Sepik at War, and it for these reasons among others that this unique historical work could not have been written by anybody else. The stories Laurie has documented will bring to the attention of Australians new places and new narratives – of Angoram, Timbunke and Begapuke - places that may once again refresh the Australian awareness of our country's relationship with our nearest neighbour in time of war. I am conscious that had he lived, prominent Pacific historian Professor Hank Nelson (1937-2012) would have been by far the most fitting person to have written this Foreword. But Hank is now dead, and those of us who glimpsed through him something of the place and people that Laurie documents and celebrates can only wish that he were still around, because he would surely have accorded Laurie's work his highest accolade: 'good words'!

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Nov. 2017



SEPIK 3 Introduction.

This introduction follows directly on from Sepik 2 Chapter 48 *Assessment of Australian Administration to 1941* as a continuum of events. Whereas Chapter. 48 looks back at the actions, issues, policy evolution, achievements and failures of the Australian administration of former German New Guinea; this Introduction looks forward from the pre-World War 2 events and decisions that shaped the way the Japanese invasion eventuated and how Australians and New Guineans responded to it.

GLOBAL ISSUES

Britain's instructions and counter instructions to Australia concerning German's Pacific colonies: It all happened very quickly:

On 4th August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany and on 6th August 1914 invited Australia *to seize German wireless stations at Yap, Nauru and New Guinea*. New Zealand was requested to seize the wireless station on Samoa. Colonel Holmes had been under instructions apart from his New Guinea commitments to also occupy German possessions north of the equator, but there were delays.

23rd August 1914 Japan declares war on Germany and Japanese fleet blockades and bombards Tsingtao [German post on the Chinese coast].

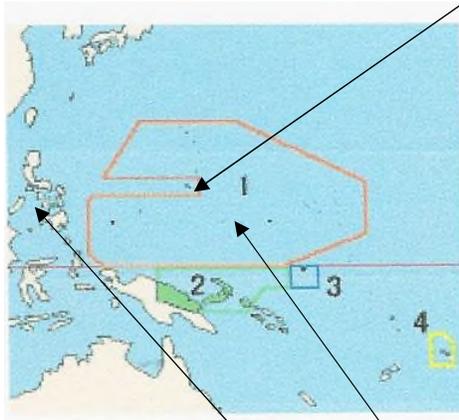
14th November 1914 Samuel Petherbridge was instructed *to proceed with troops being sent to occupy the Islands recently held by Germany north of the equator – detailed instructions to follow.*

21st November 1914 Petherbridge appointed “Australian Commissioner for the Pacific.”

23rd November 1914...*it would be discourteous and disadvantageous to the Japanese if we turned them out Angaur [Palau Islands] when they are helping us in every way with their fleet throughout the Pacific...*

3rd December 1914 *German Islands in the Pacific, as Pelew, Marianna, Caroline and Marshall Islands are all in military occupation by Japan who are at our request engaged in policing waters in North Pacific, we consider it most convenient for strategic reasons to allow them to remain in occupation, for the present...*

What of Japan's “C” class mandate of the Pacific Islands? American Guam



1. Japanese mandate of the Pacific Islands. Philippines Truk Lagoon, Caroline Islands.
2. Australian mandate of New Guinea
3. Australian mandate of Nauru
4. New Zealand mandate of Western Samoa

Despite the League of Nations prohibition on the development of military bases, naval bases or fortifications in the mandated territories, Japan developed a major naval base in the Caroline Islands, at Truk Lagoon. The United States Island of Guam, was perfectly placed to counter this and to protect the Philippines, had a major naval base been constructed there. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The success of such a Guam naval base would also depend upon vigilant intelligence which proved to be lacking at Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

NEW GUINEA SPECIFIC ISSUES

A man who foresaw the Japanese threat and made plans to counter it. Colonel Walstab, the TNG Superintendent of Police, produced a set of instructions, known as the “Blue Book”, which explained what field staff should do in the event of an invasion. Walstab was impressed by the tactics of World War 1 German General Paul von Lettow Vorbeck, who, without supplies from the fatherland, successfully fought an unwinnable war in East Africa. His objective was to tie up as many allied troops as possible and thereby keep them out of the conflict in Europe.

The “Blue Book” plan was to *“never fight a pitched battle. Hit then run. The plan called for District Officers and Patrol Officers to establish small supply dumps of food and ammunition in isolated spots in the jungle. Native police and selected native plantation workers, plus local Europeans such as planters, who knew the country and could live off it, were to be accepted as volunteer “troops”. Some of these men were to be shown how to operate radio transmitters...*

*Should New Guinea be invaded, these small parties would withdraw into the jungle and operate as quickly moving guerrilla forces, sending news back to headquarters by radio.*¹ The League of Nations condition not to give military training would seem to have nullified the Blue Book plan, which relied heavily upon the military use of New Guinea’s native police.

The outbreak of World War 2 in Europe. With the declaration of War in Europe on 3rd September 1939 many Europeans in New Guinea joined up and went to fight in Europe and North Africa. Following the 7th December attack on Pearl Harbour the Japanese rapidly advanced through South East Asia and with the bombing of Darwin, it became clear that Australia was under threat. The 6th and 7th Divisions and Australian shipping was released from service in the European conflict to return home to defend Australia. Most served in New Guinea.

The history of military background to Australian colonial officers. In addition to the 6th and 7th Division servicemen returning from Europe, we need to remember that until 1925 the only people recruited into the TNG public service were ex-servicemen. It was therefore not surprising that Department of District Services and Native Affairs staff, through its close association with the New Guinean indigenous police force constituted a formidable para-military force

Aviation and a shift away from maritime travel. The discovery of gold in the Sepik stimulated the development of the aviation industry. Delivery of goods and people was not only much quicker than delivery by shipping, delivery was also possible to remote inland places such as Telefomin, Yamil, Maprik and Green River.

The Sepik River and its Lakes and Lagoons would also allow unlimited aerial access to remote places to aircraft such as Catalina flying boats

Sepik tribal alliances. The Sepik tribes, even after head hunting ceased in the Middle Sepik continued to display a head-hunting mentality towards their traditional enemies and were quick to align themselves to form any alliance that would improve their military strength. The traditionally most aggressive Sepik tribe was the Iatmul who could be expected to align themselves with either the Japanese or the allies; whichever appeared to be stronger. This would mean, by default, the traditional enemies of the Iatmul could expect to be relegated to support the perceived weaker army.

The indentured Labour system. Given that the Sepik had become the labour pool for coastal plantations and the mines of the Morobe district and elsewhere, any sudden outbreak of war could be expected to leave Sepik men stranded in remote places, presumably without adequate means of support, and with families at home without their men folk.

Conclusion: The writer's experience of conducting risk assessments in the petroleum industry, demonstrated that the issues which were expected to present the greatest problems often turned out to be "non-events" and the greatest problems to be faced, came as complete surprises. What came out of the risk assessments that was critical, was the capacity of the staff to manage incoming information and to respond positively and in a timely manner to any problem that arose.

What could be expected in the Sepik situation, was that the District Officer would take the "top secret" Blue Book from the office safe and commence his planning according to the instructions therein. He would arrange fall back positions well away from where any enemy troops might land, rations and equipment dumps would need to be set up and the establishment of wireless communications. Beyond that, as in the game of cricket, he would play every "ball" that came his way, on its merits. He would diligently ensure that wireless communications kept Headquarters fully informed of any intelligence reports, and seek orders of any actions required of him and his staff.

If Headquarters failed to respond for whatever reason, he would apply "The Man on The Spot" logic of making and implementing the most appropriate decisions as dictated by his knowledge as it stood at that time.

End Notes Introduction

¹ J.K.McCarthy Patrol Into Yesterday F.W.Cheshire Publishing Melbourne 1963 Page 183

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Chapter 1 A Colonial Lifestyle – the War Draws Closer

The junior clerk of the District Office in Wewak was at work early. He had been unable to balance the cash the evening before and now he was determined to find his mistake. His name was Len Odgers and he revelled in what Banjo Patterson called the “... *round eternal of the cashbook and the journal*”¹

The date was 1st January 1942. The New Year’s Eve drinks at Dr. Schroeder’s last night had left him none the worse for wear; his mind was clear, yet the error in the cash continued to elude him. It was not until senior clerk Roy Smith arrived at 10.00 am that they found some journal entries Odgers had missed. With the books now more or less balanced Odgers and Smith went to Chinatown for a beer with colleagues Joe Searson, Geoff Shaw and Frank Simmcocks.

Odgers was quietly delighted, when upon returning home for lunch he found that Charlie Bates the Assistant District Officer [ADO] in charge of the Maprik Sub District in the Prince Alexander Mountains to the west, had thoughtfully sent him a lettuce and some tomatoes. It was the north west monsoon season on New Guinea’s north coast and the daily deluge descended upon the town, keeping everyone in doors for an hour or two. When the rain cleared Odgers went back to the office to write up the books.

That evening he went over to Mike Clark’s place for cold beer. Clark was Wewak’s pilot, whose main job was to transport the mail around the district and to the outside world; principally Salamaua further down the coast. His aircraft was a Fox Moth belonging to Parer Air Transport. Soon after returning from Mike’s place, Jim Hodgekiss walked up the steps and took off his muddy boots.

“Lenny” was his only greeting and acknowledgement of Odgers as he opened a beer. Hodgekiss was an old hand, a former police master, who was now serving as a patrol officer. He had just returned from a couple of weeks on patrol out among the Wewak villages. When he was in town he shared the house with Odgers. “Jim” was Odgers acknowledgement of the greeting. There was never much conversation from Hodgekiss, but when he chose to speak, he was worth listening to. Odgers opened a beer; he would join Hodgekiss in a ‘spot’, which was Odgers’ term for a few drinks.

At 5.30 pm Odgers and Hodgekiss wandered over to the Wewak Golf Club. All the expatriates in town gathered there to hear an address from the District Officer [DO] J H “Bert”¹ Jones. Three weeks earlier Japanese planes had attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The Japanese had attacked Malaya and Hong Kong on 8th December and the Philippines on the 10th² and their forward momentum seemed unstoppable. Jones provided Wewak residents with regular updates at the Golf Club and the news continued to be bad.

Today Jones instructed each of them to prepare a box in case the decision was made to evacuate the town. Such a decision might come at short notice, so they should be prepared. The box was to contain such essential things as mosquito net, blanket, boots, quinine, iron rations and personal survival items. All the boxes would be stored at Sauri, a prepared fall-

back position and emergency depot in the hills behind and overlooking the town. Hodgekiss was ordered to go to Sauri to take charge.³

The evacuation, which Jones mentioned, had in fact begun with airlifts of European women and children⁴ which included members of the families of men involved in this story :-

Mrs. Ruth Shaw, the wife of Geoff Shaw⁵, left by ship. Others were flown by light aircraft to Salamaua, then by larger aircraft – VH UZJ Kyilla and VH UZK Kurana to Port Moresby and on to Australia. Among others, these included:

Mrs. Blood and son – the family of Police Master Neptune Blood

Mrs. Betty Thurston and son – the family of gold miner Jack Thurston

Mrs. Mildred Eileen Bell – wife of RANVR Sub Lieutenant Bell, Stanley George Vincent (Occupation Miner)

Mrs. Anne Matilda Victoria Lambert – wife of Lieut. Cyril William Lambert

Mrs. Jean Marjorie Lega – wife of NG 2158 S/Sgt. Christian David Lega.

Mrs. Strudwick and two sons - - the family of Patrol Officer [PO] Richard Strudwick

Mrs. Grace Cathedra Milligan and son – the family of PO John Milligan, and

Mrs. Sylvia Abernathy Aitchison and daughter – the family of PO Thomas Aitchison.

Of the expatriate families living on Wewak hill, the Parers had probably been the first to feel the impact of the war in Europe. The *Bulolo* was not the only ship to be commandeered for war service in the northern hemisphere. Molly Parer's husband Bob relied heavily upon the Burns Philp ships for bringing supplies to his freezer works. As the ships became fewer his stocks fell lower until it became impossible for him to make a living and he went to Bougainville to prospect for gold. Molly and the children remained in Wewak.

Molly was reluctant to leave without Bob, but other members of the Parer family did not like to see her stay by herself. Kevin flew from Wau to Wewak and took young Bob back with him as a hostage, to ensure she would follow soon after.⁶ The evacuation was of European women and children was compulsory, but it excluded Chinese women and children⁷. The Chinese population of the Sepik, living mainly in Aitape and Wewak, was considerable.

Also excluded, because they chose to stay, were the missionaries. They lived among their newly converted Christian congregations throughout the District. The missionaries were of the Catholic Divine Word faith. For most of them their presence in New Guinea pre-dated the Australian administration. For the most part they were German, a residue of the former German colonial administration of New Guinea. Technically, with Australia also at war with Germany, they were enemy aliens, and views on their on-going presence in Australian territory were mixed. As for the indigenous population, the policy decided upon was to keep news of the approaching Japanese threat a secret from them⁸. After all – it was reasoned – the DO and his staff had enough on their hands without potential civil unrest that such news might generate.

As might be expected, the evacuation of the European women and children was noticed by the excluded non-Europeans in the community. The Chinese community became anxious and inquired of DO Jones what arrangements they might expect to be made for their women and children. Jones had no authority or resources to evacuate the Chinese, so he arranged that houses be erected for them at Sauri⁹. This effectively put off the need to make a final decision until and if an invasion actually happened, at which time the Chinese would be positioned with the remaining European population at Sauri or somewhere beyond and the circumstances at the time would determine what to do.

From this Anglophile perspective the Sepik District in January 1942 consisted of four small European populations centered on Wewak on the north coast – the District Headquarters under the command of J.H. Jones DO. North-west of Wewak, also on the coast, was Aitape Sub District headquarters under the command of Assistant District Officer [ADO] James L Taylor. Maprik Sub District in the Prince Alexander Mountains was under the command of ADO Charles Bates, and finally Angoram Sub District, some 67 miles up the Sepik River from the Bismarck Sea, under the command of ADO George Ellis. A further 170 miles upstream of Angoram was Ambunti, which was unmanned at that time. There was also a Patrol Post at Burui south of Maprik and an hour's walk north from Marui mission station and Pagwi on the Sepik river bank at the road head from Maprik (see Map No 2)

In addition there were Europeans scattered throughout the Sepik hinterland prospecting for gold, trading, recruiting indigenous labour, and along the coast operating copra plantations. There were also Europeans operating the Parer Air Transport Co. at But, on the coast between Wewak and Aitape. This company carried supplies for the mining community, which in January 1942 was centered mainly in the Prince Alexander Mountains at Yamil eight miles east of Maprik. There were also miners at a recent gold strike at Garamambu, west of the Chambri Lakes in the Ambunti area.

The single greatest problem facing D.O. Jones at that time was that the government store was all but out of food and other essential supplies. The arrangement in place was for supplies to be delivered in six monthly consignments. The consignment for January to June 1942 had in fact arrived in Wewak on the Burns Philp ship *MacDhui* on the 10th December 1941, just three days after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. Unloading had barely commenced when the Captain of the *MacDhui* was ordered by the Navy to immediately return his ship to Port Moresby. The ship left as instructed with the government and private cargoes still on board.

The food situation was made even more desperate by the uncertainty of how, when and if the next supplies would be received, due to the impending invasion by Japanese forces. Jones addressed this by taking control of all food supplies in the Sepik District. Inventories were taken of stocks in all Chinese stores, where certain items only were permitted to be sold in small quantities. It was forbidden to sell any European lines to natives.

Jones was aware that Jack Thurston had a large stock of European and native foods and trade goods on his gold claim at Yamil. Jones sent word for Thurston to come to Wewak to negotiate the supply of his stores to the government. As Thurston was a noted bushman he would be asked to help plan for the evacuation of Europeans, if such action became

necessary. Thurston's gold claim was five days walk from Wewak so he was not expected to arrive before 6th January.

On the 2nd January 1942, Odgers had the house to himself again as Hodgekiss had gone to Sauri as instructed. The morning wireless news indicated that the war was going badly in the Philippines. Odgers concluded that action nearer to New Guinea was expected soon.

With the war news suitably noted, Odgers turned his attention to matters at home. A dispute had erupted between his domestic servants Forok and Joseph regarding the use of the kitchen table for ironing. After a full hearing of the claims and counter claims Odgers ruled that Forok could use the table on the back verandah for ironing, but must return it to the kitchen each day in time for meals.

He felt lonely after dinner so he went to see Kevin Minogue, the radio operator but Minogue was out so Odgers wandered over to the Aitchison's house where he talked with Tommy about a possible evacuation hike across New Guinea. He was back home and in bed at his regular hour of 9.30 pm, only to be awakened again at 11.00 pm by Joe Searson and Roy Smith throwing stones on the roof – "The bastards!" was his diary notation. In keeping with the times, Odgers held himself apart from and above the status of his Sepik servants Forok and Joseph, while craving the company of his fellows, even regarding with reluctant affection the "bastards" who acknowledged him by throwing stones on his roof in the middle of the night.

His mention of the hike across New Guinea related to a possible overland escape plan that was under consideration in the event that the Japanese military presence made evacuation by sea or air too dangerous or otherwise not feasible. The genesis of the plan came from ADO James L (Jim) Taylor's knowledge of overland routes out of the Sepik.

In 1938-9 Taylor led a thirteen month patrol exploring the Highlands and crossing the Strickland Gorge into the Telefomin tribal area of the Sepik River headwaters. His patrol then travelled north from Telefomin through the Mianmin tribal territory where it came under heavy attack, with loss of life on both sides, before moving on down the May River to reach and follow the Sepik River down to its junction with the Karawari river system. From there the patrol struck inland southwards back into the Highlands to Mt Hagen following the route pioneered by gold prospector Bill Macgregor in 1929-30.

It was known that the Papuan Administration's Assistant Resident Magistrate Charles Karius and PO Ivan Champion's had crossed the Island from south to north – from the Fly River system to the Sepik River in 1927/8. The actual point of their crossing of the Fly/Sepik watersheds was somewhere close to Telefomin. The draft plan was to retrace Taylor's route up the Sepik and the May Rivers into Telefomin, and then re-trace Karius and Champion's route to and down the Fly River to Daru. Alternatively, they might follow Taylor's route up the Karawari and Maramuni Rivers then through the highlands and down any of a number of Rivers to the Papuan coast.

A "hike" on either route had been discussed and looked potentially workable. But as plans go these were very early days indeed.

End Notes Chapter 1

- ¹ From Banjo Patterson's "Clancy of the Overflow."
- ² District Officer Jones' nickname "Bert" was revealed by E.T.W.Fulton in 'No Turning Back' ANU Press 2005 Page p 140.
- ³ Campaign Series of World War 2 – Japanese Conquests 1939-42 page 5.
- ⁴ Len Odgers diary 1st January 1942.
- ⁵ Australian Military Research & Service Records – Civilian Evacuees Who Were Evacuated From Rabaul and Port Moresby – Dec 1941
- ⁶ Fleetwood, L. 'A Short History of Wewak' 1984. Wirui Press ISBN 0 86935 077 3 Page 32/3
- ⁷ Powell 'A The Third Force – ANGAU's New Guinea War 1942-46' Oxford Press 2003 page 7
- ⁸ Ryan. 'The Hot Land' - The Macmillan Company of Australia 1970 p 18
- ⁹ Jones J.H. Report on Sepik District for period 8 Dec. 41 to 31 July 42 page 1

Chapter 2 Discussions Around a Campfire in 1924

Long Term Planning for a Hostile Future

The situation in the Sepik District in January 1942 was indeed desperate, and DO Jones' responsibility to manage it, an unenviable one. However it would be wrong to assume that no preparations were in place to guide Jones in what he had to do. To understand the genesis of these preparations, it is necessary to step back 18 years and take our places around a camp fire on a remote bank of the Sepik River.

The year was 1924 and as invisible observers we find ourselves in the company of four remarkable young and not so young men. They were camped on the river bank at the foot of the first real hills between there and the river mouth 232 miles downstream. Their purpose was to investigate a headhunting raid against a group of people known as the Japandai. That however is another story, a very interesting one (see Sepik 2)

In charge of the expedition was Police Master Colonel John Walstab. Two other members of the 1924 party were POs G W L "Kassa" Townsend aged 28 years and Eric Feldt, aged 25 years. The final member was Medical Assistant Stan Christian, an older man. All four had served in the Australian Military Forces during World War 1, which was not surprising as it was administration policy until 1925 to recruit only ex-military men for field service in New Guinea.¹

John Walstab had joined the 5th Infantry Battalion in October 1914, George Townsend joined the AIF and served in Egypt, Gallipoli, France and Belgium, Eric Feldt became a naval cadet in 1913 and served in both the Royal Australian and the Royal Navy throughout World War 1. Stan Christian, a descendant of Fletcher Christian of "Bounty" fame, joined the 14th Australian General Hospital and Reinforcements in July 1916.

There is no known record of those camp fire discussions. But the incredible impact these men would have throughout Papua New Guinea during World War 2 provides us with an insight into what was presumably discussed.

Walstab would have spoken of his admiration of the East African strategies and achievements of German General Paul von Lettlow Vorbeck.² The outbreak of World War 1 found Vorbeck in the German East African Colony of Tanganyika completely cut off from his homeland, from reinforcements and from supply lines. Yet the General successfully fought an unwinnable war for over three years. His focus was not to win, but to engage as many allied troops in East Africa as possible, thereby keeping them out of the European conflict. His army consisted largely of troops recruited and trained from Tanganyikan tribes. He and his army lived off the land and prepared fall-back positions where facilities existed and gardens were planted against future need. He famously removed the four inch naval guns from the wreck of the German light cruiser SMS *Konigsberg* from where it had been sunk in shallow river water by the British navy in July 1915. The salvaged guns were manhandled across the African landscape providing his troops with artillery support against the unsuspecting British cavalry.

Based upon his understanding of Vorbeck's tactics, Walstab wrote a set of secret instructions to guide District Staff actions should the Trust Territory of New Guinea be occupied by a hostile enemy force. The instructions were known as "the blue book". A search of records has failed to produce a copy of the 'Blue Book', but the following explains what it contained as written by J.K. McCarthy :-

Thanks to the efforts of my former DO at Madang, Eric Feldt, planters and other non-officials had been appointed Admiralty Reporting Officers...

The main axiom of Colonel Walstab's Blue Book Plan was: 'Never fight a pitched battle. Hit then run'. The plan called for District Officers and Patrol Officers to establish small supply dumps of food and ammunition in isolated spots in the jungle. Native police and selected native plantation workers, plus local Europeans such as planters, who knew the country and who could live off it, were to be accepted as volunteer 'troops'. Some of these men were to be shown how to operate radio transmitters...

"The Blue Book Plan, to my mind, was made even better by the fact that it could work in conjunction with the scheme already being operated by the Royal Australian Navy. Every Administration officer in charge of a coastal station was appointed an Admiralty Reporting Officer. In war his job was to report sightings of any enemy ships or aircraft or any unusual movements. Code books were issued...

*When Walstab's Blue Book referred to 'an enemy' it might just as well have referred to the Japanese in plain language..."*³

On 8th September 1939, Walstab, then Superintendent of the Territory of New Guinea Police Force, formed the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles⁴ [NGVR] Walstab was also the man in charge of internal security - "his were the decisions that resulted in the internment of those who professed leanings towards Nazis, and he did his job calmly and justly."⁵ The Pacific Islands Monthly edition of May 1942 noted that Mr. John Walstab had enlisted to fight in the war recently declared in Europe.

The other three officers on that 1924 patrol were no less important to the coming war effort. George Townsend would head the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) and later the Far Eastern Liaison Organization (FELO). Eric Feldt RN would head the Coast Watchers⁶ organization for Papua, New Guinea and the Solomons. Stan Christian's application to enlist for service in World War 2 was rejected because of his age, but his New Guinea experience was too valuable to ignore and he was active on the Kokoda Track, patrols across New Guinea along the Wau Bulolo road, and from Wau up into the Highlands. He also guided Catalina aircraft to remote ANGAU parties operating behind Japanese lines in the Sepik⁷.

The “Blue Book” plan as DO Jones sought to implement it for the Sepik District consisted of four main elements:

1. An immediate fall-back position; the depot at Sauri village high on the hills behind Wewak. There, houses were built, food and equipment stored in readiness and a visual and radio watch maintained over the town and sea beyond. Sauri had village paths in several directions which would allow people to retreat further if need be.
2. A second assembly point in the event that an evacuation was required. This was to be Angoram on the lower reaches of the Sepik River. From there, small ships and boats had access to hundreds of miles of navigable waterways with capacity to camouflage shipping from air observation and access to routes for overland evacuation.
3. A rear base in the safety of the Sepik hinterland at Yimas Lakes in the Karawari River system. That base would be stocked with stores and equipment that would allow evacuees from the Angoram and elsewhere to take whatever course of action the future demanded. Yimas Lakes were large enough to allow a Catalina Flying boat to land. Yimas also offered access to the overland route to the Highlands pioneered by Bill Macgregor in 1929/30.
4. The fourth was the previously mentioned plan for evacuees to walk overland across the Central Range to the presumed safety of the south coast.

While the broad plan existed in January 1942, for the people in Wewak it was a waiting game with business and life going on as normally as concerns of the rapidly approaching invasion force would allow.

End Notes Chapter 2

¹ Personal communication from J.K.McCarthy at Mt Eliza in 1974.

² Personal communication from J.K.McCarthy at Mt Eliza in 1974

³ McCarthy J.K. Patrol Into Yesterday. J.W.Cheshire Printing 1963 P183/4

⁴ Powell A 2003 Page 7

⁵ McCarthy J.K. 1963 P183

⁶ Feldt E. The Coast Watchers – Geoffrey Cumberledge Oxford University Press
Leighton House, Melbourne 1946

⁷ Personal communication from Stan Christian in Minj 1974.

Chapter 3 The Round Eternal of the Cashbook and the Journal the Routine of Wewak District Office Clerk Lennie Odgers

On 3rd January 1942 Odgers prepared the mail to be flown to Maprik and after a busy day he went to Roy Smith's with Ned¹ Blood for a "spot". Although it was Saturday, PO Joe Searson was leaving that night by launch for a patrol in the Aitape area, so Odgers went back to the office to prepare the mail for the Aitape Sub District. After work and dressed appropriately, he went to the Golf Club and in the evening, down to Tommy Aitchison's place to play Mah Jong.

Next day being the Sabbath, Odgers lay in bed until 9.00 am. The wireless told that Rabaul had its first air raid at noon that day but the damage was slight. The "Japs" were dispersed over a wide area and the Australian planes could not catch them. He took this important news over to Neptune Blood's place, but Ned had already heard. As things were now happening closer to home he listened to the 9.00 pm news and tuned in to London at 11.00 pm, but learned nothing he had not already heard.

To keep himself amused Odgers was in the habit of producing and distributing copies of *The Wewak Weekly*. Roy Smith and Tommy Aitchison enjoyed his humour but DO Jones was not amused in the slightest. He called Odgers into his office and gave him a dressing down. In Jones view "the disgusting document" was a breach of national security. Further, it insulted Australia's allies and Odgers should be ashamed of himself! Odgers was well experienced in dealing with Jones in dressing down mode and so followed the course of least resistance. He made a show of being suitably penitent and as instructed, burned the offending documents - but he secretly retained one copy for his files.

That day Wewak's air-raid warning sounded, but it proved to be a false alarm. Mike Clarke's in-coming flight had momentarily been mistaken for a Japanese fighter. In the early evening Ned Blood came across to have a beer. He did not stay long as the mosquitoes were bad and Odgers decided to eat his dinner in his mosquito-proofed sleep-out. Later that night Forok came with a terrible tale of rape at the native hospital, so Odgers sent him around to Tommy Aitchison and later to Doctor Schroeder. With that matter now in the hands of the appropriate authorities, he read before retiring for the night.

On 6th January Jack Thurston arrival at the District Office in company with other miners from the Yamil field. Odgers was not prepared for the arrival of the mining fraternity who invaded his office space and disrupted his routine for a frightful two hours! Apart from Jack Thurston there were Fred Eichorne, Gerry Keogh, Jimmy Wilton, Gray Hartley and others. After such a day Odgers went with Roy Smith to the *Blue Rat* for a drinking session with the miners and Claude Rouse. He arrived back home at 9.00 pm only to discover that Joseph had not cooked any dinner and was nowhere to be found. Odgers called for the ever faithful Forok who cooked some sausages. What with the turmoil in the office, Joseph's unexplained absence and of course, the alcohol he had consumed at the *Blue Rat*, he felt decidedly unwell, so he went straight to bed.

End Notes Chapter 3

¹ "Ned", also known as "Nep" was Police Master Neptune Blood

Chapter 4 Jack Thurston – Planning an Evacuation Southward from the Sepik

Jack Thurston was a man of action, or as his gold mining partner's daughter-in-law Judy Tudor put it; *"I thought Jack was wonderful, the font from which all wisdom flowed"*. Stan Christian saw Thurston as *"not a very big chap, a naval type, immaculate. He was very straight forward, very honest. He 'belonged', if you know what I mean – he was sort of part of the country."*² He was a man who could always see the big picture and determine the best way forward.

In the parlance of bureaucracy, Thurston was a man "who needed to know", every bit as much as Len Odgers did not need to know. Thurston had been prospecting in the Sepik area since 1936 along with Ted Fulton, Harry Tudor and others until they found payable gold the Ulahau River headwaters³ in the Yamil area some eight or so miles east of Maprik. The Harry Tudor/ Jack Thurston gold sluicing lease, No 1 Gold was then applied for.

On January 6th 1942, Thurston came to Wewak with the intention of catching a flight to Rabaul via Salamaua then on to Australia to report to the Navy for service⁴, but he found that this was now out of the question because of the bombing of Rabaul. He met with DO Jones and negotiated the transfer of his three to four years of stores stock to the administration.

Jones asked Thurston if he would assist in planning an evacuation if this became necessary, and the management of the stores and labour issues involved with that. Over the next five days Jones and Thurston flew to Aitape, Maprik and Angoram. At Aitape in consultation with Jim Taylor, Thurston discussed the Karawari River route via Yimas and south into the headwaters of the Sepik as the evacuation route that he had planned for himself. Taylor who had travelled that way in 1939 agreed that it was the best option available⁵.

Discussion of the possible plan recognized that as there would be 50 to 60 Europeans ("whites" as Thurston described them) and as some would not be fit for such a journey on foot, it was agreed that somewhere in the Yimas region camps would be set up and an airstrip constructed to enable evacuation by air. There was a sufficient indigenous population along the way from Yimas up into the Highlands to enable local foods and carriers to be obtained for any walking parties. Taylor would precede the main party and prepare the way.

Lake Yimas is located off the Arafundi River, a tributary of the Karawari River, itself a major navigable southern tributary of the Sepik River. [see south-east corner of Map No 1]. Lake Yimas offered four advantages:

1. It was large enough to allow a Catalina seaplane to land.
2. It offered land access to the highlands.
3. It was accessible by motorized water craft from Angoram if an evacuation become necessary.
4. An invading force would not easily locate it. In fact it was not until September 1943 that Japanese troops were found there.

The immediate plan was that Taylor and his patrol would go from Aitape to Maprik and join Bates and together from there they would go to Burui Patrol Post and on to Pagwi on the Sepik, thence downstream to the Sepik/Karawari junction and up the Karawari to Lake Yimas. There they would commence their preparations once the order was given. Jones would bring up the rear of this overland exercise.

This plan was discussed with Bates in Maprik, as was the arrangement to acquire Thurston's stores from his Yamil claim and deliver them to Yimas via Maprik, Burui and Pagwi. In Angoram, Jones instructed Ellis to immediately move his supply of stores to a remote site to be selected by Ellis, as a time saving precaution in case of the need for a hasty evacuation⁶. Thurston returned to his claim at Yamil and started packing up stores.

Thurston's diary for the 10th January records that he started to make up self-contained packs of rations weighing between 30 and 50 pounds. Without unpacking and further re-sorting of the contents, these packs could be given out to different groups working away from the main party. The packs were clearly marked and the weight of each listed on it in the form of a dot for every 10 pounds. The carriers of these loads would receive 1/- [one shilling] for each dot. ADO Bates sent two police from Maprik to assist, and Thurston arranged carriers to shift the packs to Gerry Keogh's gold claim at Yamil which was the first stage towards Maprik.

End notes Chapter 4

¹ Tudor E.E. 'Many a Green Isle' – 1966 Sydney & Melbourne Publishing Co Ltd Page 77-8

² Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 – page 56

³ PNGAA Vale June 1998 – Obituary of E.E. "Judy" Tudor.

⁴ Thurston diary 20th March 1942 – Report of the Evacuation from Wewak. Entry of 6th January 1942

⁵ Thurston diary 20th March 1942 entry of 6th January 1942.

⁶ Thurston Diary 20th March 1942. Entry of 6th January 1942.

Chapter 5 The Lull Before the Storm – Heightening Tensions as the Japanese Approach

We left clerk Odgers on the 6th feeling ill. Happily his 7th January diary entry notes that he felt a great deal better and thoroughly enjoyed his breakfast. At the office he was busy cleaning up the mess from the previous day. He even had morning tea brought in, which he enjoyed as he balanced the postage stamps against the outward correspondence register.

On 8th January he found no need to go to work because the DO was still away with Thurston. So instead he went to Ned Blood's for a "spot" then listened to Toad of Toad Hall on the wireless. The DO returned on the 10th and Odgers joined him and others at the Gold Club for a few beers. So life continued as "normal" on this remote Sepik outpost.

After work on 13th January Odgers returned home to find Joseph asleep and the washing up still not done. Clearly, something had to be done about Joseph! Odgers had a whisky and soda as a "sundowner" while he pondered Joseph's fate. Next day, with decision made, Joseph was charged before the court with an unstated summary offense which saw him sentenced to 14 days hard labour. The sentence would be under the supervision of Police Master Ned Blood. Odgers noted in his diary a wish that Ned would be tough on him. However, things got even worse for Joseph. Odgers found that Joseph had either drunk, stolen or disposed of half a bottle of whisky, half a bottle of Gin and some wine.

On the 15th after being made aware of the new charges, Joseph confessed to drinking half a bottle of beer on Boxing Day and so was sentenced to six months hard labour "*being a native who did drink intoxicating liquor, to wit, beer.*" This discriminatory legislation remained in force until 1962. It was another sign of the times that Odgers' daily drinking bouts caused him no apparent embarrassment, even though it was a criminal offense for New Guineans in his house to drink alcohol.

On Friday 16th he made up the Salamaua mail and gave money to the pilot to buy him tobacco and "Neko" soap, whilst in Salamaua. That same day Joe Searson arrived back from patrol and his cash advance had to be acquitted back into the District Office safe. With that done Odgers went down to Claude Rouse's with Smith and Searson for a few beers.

January 20th had been another dull day at the office. That evening he tuned into the news as usual. The news reader's grim voice announced that Rabaul had been bombed and strafed by wave after wave of Japanese bombers and fighters – presumed to be operating from an aircraft carrier – and that the aerodrome and defences were damaged, though full details were not yet to hand. Odgers immediately wrote a note to Roy Smith inviting him to come and listen to the 11.00pm news, which might have more details.

Then at 9.42pm the Wewak air raid warning sounded. This brought Forok running and shouting "*Belo Masta, Belo bilong Balus*" (warning air-raid warning). Odgers had not heard it himself, but he was so convinced by Forok's state of excitement that he went across to Blood's to tell him, whereupon there was a loud peeling of warning bells, which everyone heard. Odgers rushed home and got dressed, then, with no clear instruction as to what to do next he wandered across to Roy Smith's. This was another false alarm and the all clear was sounded at 10.08pm.

On the 21st he had a great time writing up the motor licenses and registrations in a register he had created the previous day. Details of yesterday's raid on Rabaul were announced in the noon bulletin. One hundred fighters and bombers... damage to harbour installations and a medium sized ship bombed... eleven dead and six wounded. On the local front, word was received that the Catholic Mission ship *Gabriel* which was due to arrive in Wewak had not made port by 5.00pm; could something have happened to her? The evening news was even worse than the noon bulletin. Rabaul, Salamaua, Lae and Bulolo have been bombed and three planes also appeared over Madang. There was also mention that Lorengau on Manus Island and Kavieng on New Ireland had been bombed in previous raids.

Jack Thurston's diary noted that when Rabaul, Salamaua, Lae and Bulolo were bombed on 21st January DO Jones signalled that the Yimas plan was to be implemented. Carriers were arranged and the stores at Yamil found their way down to Burui and on to Pagwi on the bank of the Sepik. Thurston received word from Jones that he was going to evacuate the Chinese women to his Yamil camp, but when this did not eventuate, Thurston left Yamil and reported to Bates in Maprik. In accordance with Jones radio instructions from Wewak, Thurston left Bates in Maprik and started making his own way to Lake Yimas.

Jones' Sepik District report¹ stated that when news of the bombing of Salamaua, Lae and Madang reached the miners in the Maprik area, it was pointed out that the evacuation plan was purely voluntary - no one was obliged to participate. Nevertheless all of the Yamil miners left their claims and went to the Karawari River and Yimas, where a camp had been established under the control of POs Richard Strudwick and John Preston-White, with Thurston to be in charge of supervising the stores.

On 4th February 1942 Thurston reached Burui after walking all night and then walked on to Pagwi. He was pleased to find that most of the cargo had gone on to Yimas by launches and that the miners had done a good job of arranging the transport, particularly Mr. Broadbent who had taken it upon himself to be the receiver of cargoes. To Thurston's satisfaction no cargo went missing during this exercise.

At Pagwi, Thurston met with an assemblage of miners who were confused about what was happening. Thurston explained DO Jones' plan and pointed out to them that evacuation was strictly voluntary. He invited the miners to come with him to Yimas to meet with Jones, who Thurston assured them would be there. Thurston undertook to arrange for their return from Yimas if they decided that they did not want to join the government party. The miners seemed satisfied with this and accompanied Thurston downstream to the Karawari and on to Lake Yimas².

The Sepik District report in covering this situation recorded a cautionary note: "*The idea was, of course, that if the threatened danger passed the stores would be returned.*" The pre-war administration had always run on a tight budget and Jones was making certain that no financial doors were left even slightly ajar.

Jones' Sepik report confirmed all of the above and added that ADO Taylor was transferred to the Karawari via Maprik and Burui to prepare the necessary advance depots at the head of the river. PO John Milligan took over from Taylor as acting ADO at Aitape.

Jones explained to the public, excluding the indigenous population, that administration officers would continue their duty of service and not leave the District unless ordered to do so, or unless the enemy actually occupied the District and pushed on into the hinterland. There was no sign of an immediate arrival of the Japanese in the Sepik, so the position was again explained to those in camp at the Yimas Lakes.

On the 22nd January Odgers had listened to the news, but the only additional detail on yesterday's raids was that some civilian planes were damaged at Salamaua or Bulolo. Everyone in Wewak was wondering whether the pilots Mike Clarke and Kevin Parer, who were then in Salamaua, were OK. There was a lot of talk in Wewak about what to do, but no orders were received from Rabaul or Lae. People felt they should be doing something!

Following 1937's volcanic eruption in Rabaul, a start was made on shifting the headquarters of the Territory from Rabaul to Lae. The transition was still in progress in 1942 so Wewak kept a listening watch for instructions from both Rabaul and Lae. Most of the Chinese had now gone to Sauri behind Wewak. Odgers noted with some amusement what an unusual procession of baggage, chairs, boxes, beds etc. was to be witnessed when a Chinese family was on the move. The noon news told that Rabaul was bombed again at 9am that morning. This prompted Claude Rouse and Roy Smith to go to see the DO that afternoon to explain their proposal to go down the coast to safety in the Boram pinnace. Apparently the DO did not agree to their request.

Odgers felt the need to do something! He bundled up the cash and bulk postage stamps just in case there was a need to move quickly. After that he went down to Chinatown to make a few purchases at Asongs and then had a drink or two with Claude Rouse. Ted Haynes came across at 8.00 pm. They discussed the war news and its repercussions on those left stranded in Wewak.

The 23rd dawned with still no news or orders being received from Rabaul since 4pm yesterday. The *Gabriel* arrived that morning bringing nine bags of mail. Odgers' share included some accounts and personal letters. There was also a fresh supply of newspapers which Lenny wistfully noted in his diary that he would have to read before the Japs came.

Also on the 23rd Joe Searson went to Kairiru Island off Wewak on the *Gabriel*. The evening news told that Rabaul and Kieta had been invaded. The news was followed by a speech from Deputy Prime Minister Forde, a speech Odgers described in his diary as "*horrible and drivelling.*" On the 24th Odgers packed his bag and had it carried down to the office. He learned that the DO sent a long radio message to the Administrator the previous night. No one knew what it said. People were frustrated - they wanted someone to make decisions. Something constructive needed to be done!

The Sepik District report noted that new instructions had been received that frustrated DO Jones and his counter-parts throughout New Guinea. Of the instructions, Jones wrote :-

"...It is desired to make quite clear that after Rabaul, Salamaua, and Lae had been attacked, instructions were received which made the Civil Defense Plan unworkable, and the promulgation of the decision that the Native Constabulary were a non-combatant unit, which scrapped the Blue Book, no instructions or advice could be obtained from the senior executive officers of the Administration on policy to be adopted under the new

circumstances...It is regretted that these facts have to be mentioned, but it is necessary to illustrate the position at the time the writer decided to act on his own initiative”.

The reason the Native Police had been declared as “non-combatant” was in accordance with a conditional clause in the League of Nations document granting the New Guinea mandate to Australia to administer and develop. This was a condition to which the Commonwealth of Australia had agreed and the bureaucracy in Rabaul had no power to change. However the problem of not being allowed to use the New Guinea Constabulary does not seem to have been resolved until 7/4/1942, when a number of members of the New Guinea Constabulary were recruited into the Royal Papuan Constabulary. The prohibition on using New Guinea Police as combatants did not apply to members of the Royal Papuan Constabulary³, as Papua was an Australian territory.

J K McCarthy ADO Talasea in New Britain, explained that he met disarmed and dejected police escaping from Rabaul. They were very bitter that they had been disarmed and were not permitted to defend their own country against an invader.⁴ Rabaul had fallen and outstation staff throughout New Guinea, like Jones in Wewak, were left to their own devices, without reliable information or instructions and without any certainty about delivery of future rations and supplies.

The fall of Rabaul just six weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbour was more than just an outcome of the extremely rapid Japanese advance down through Asia; it was a specific strategic objective as mentioned by Kengoro Tanaka in his book “Operations of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces in the Papua New Guinea during World War 11”⁵ :-

...the Truk Atolls in the Caroline Islands⁶ group had become an important advanced operations base concerning the Japanese Combined Fleet on that front. Rabaul in the Bismarck Archipelago, the Australian mandated territory in the British commonwealth is located 1,500 nautical miles to the south of Truk and at the time it was seen as a potential threat to Truk once the battle against both the forces of the United States and Britain had started. Especially with the appearance of the new heavy U.S. bomber the B-17, fears had occurred that Truk would be attacked by these land based bombers from Rabaul. It was thought that, in order to prevent such an attack and to maintain Truk as a safe fleet base, that the capture of Rabaul was vital.”

The attack on the Islands in the Bismarck Sea was a special plan code named “R Invasion Operation”. Japanese successes in Malaya, Singapore and elsewhere allowed the implementation of this plan to be brought forward.⁷

End Notes Chapter 5.

- ¹Footnote :- “Jones Sepik Report” refers to his Report on Sepik District for period 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42
- ²Thurston Diary 20th March 1942. Entry of 4th February 1942.³ Personal communication J.K.McCarthy Mt Eliza 1974
- ⁴ ANGAU War Diary 14 Feb 42 to 28 Feb 42
- ⁵ Kengoro Tanaka ‘Operations Of The Imperial Japanese Armed Forces In Papua New Guinea During World War 11’ – Japan PNG Goodwill Society March 1980 Page 2
- ⁶ At the outbreak of World War 1, Japan captured the German controlled Caroline, Mariana, Marshall Islands and Palau. In 1919 Japan was granted a League of Nations mandate to administer these Islands. This mandate gave Japan control of a vast area of the north Pacific Ocean down to the equator; the border with former German New Guinea - the Australian mandate over the Territory of New Guinea.
- ⁷ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page2

Chapter 6 Disabling Wewak Facilities and the Fall-back to Sauri 24/1/42 – 1/2/42

As January 24th 1942 dragged on in the Wewak District Office, Odgers looked for work to keep himself busy. He wrote up his financial books to date and then he read and dozed until Joe Searson arrived back from Kairiru Island at 1.30 pm. At 4.30 pm Searson came to Odgers' house for a yarn until it was time to go to the Golf Club at 5.30 pm, to hear a statement by the D O.

Jones told them all that the town was to be evacuated – non-Administration people were to go to Angoram on the *Gabriel* the next day, while the official population would go to Sauri taking everything with them. Aitape aerodrome was to be destroyed. The Sepik District reports show that the last radio telegram received from Rabaul, signed by the Administrator, ordered the destruction of the Parer Air Transport Moth plane, the hanger, workshop and fuel supplies. Temporary obstructions were to be placed on all aerodromes, while more permanent destructive measures were under way.

The 25th dawned with the sound of a tropical downpour drumming on Odgers' roof. Upon waking, his first thought was that he hoped he would not have to go to Sauri in this weather. He was in the office by 8.00 am again looking for last minute tasks to work on. He opened a new bank account for Ned Blood and banked 20 pounds for Smith, after which he and Smith went down to Claude Rouse's where they had a beer with "Jim" Malische¹ and Bill Scannell, who Odgers noted was a very sick man. These men represented additional gold miners who had made their way in from the Yamil gold field.

Back at the office, the DO ordered Roy Smith and Odgers to have all the important records packed up in mail bags. Later Odgers felt honoured when the DO asked him to go out to the aerodrome to assist Ned Blood. To get there he borrowed a bicycle from the police office and started very precariously on his way. He fell off more than once and had to ask a *kanaka*² to help him on once, and even then Odgers ended up walking the bike.

At the aerodrome Odgers noted that he supervised "coons³" digging ditches across the runway. While there he saw the "Moth", the hanger and machinery burnt; a sight which, more than any other so far, brought home the reality of the war. He was able to get a ride back home on a lorry and while en-route saw the non-official members of the community leave on the *Gabriel*. It was a momentous day. In the evening he went to Kevin Minogue's to drink beer and to discuss it all.

Next day, the 26th of January 1942, he was awake at 6.00am. He packed a few last minute things as he listened to the news. Then he went over to Ned Blood's to catch a ride out to the aerodrome where he marked out more ditches to be dug across the runway. At 8.45am Ned rushed up and skidding the vehicle to a halt near Odgers, informed the latter that the DO had sighted three ships off Kairiru Island. On the DO's orders, Odgers was to go to Sauri immediately.

The Sepik Report noted that the ships were an aircraft carrier escorted by two destroyers and they were headed direct for Wewak, but when still some distance off and partly obscured by haze, they turned about and headed out to sea.

Odgers commenced his hike to Sauri immediately and about an hour later Smith came riding up and Odgers walked along beside the horse. At first the going was easy but then the track became “oily” and churned up by the mission cattle. Even the carriers found the path difficult and Odgers almost lost his shoes in the mud on several occasions. Smith had to walk and jump his pony in more than one place. For the first hour on the level ground Odgers made good time, but soon he became thirsty and asked for a *kulau* (green coconut) to drink. He was told *Planti kulau istap antap* [plenty of green coconuts up there – at Sauri].

He was carried over a small creek where he was able to have a drink and a rest which was shortened by the presence of very determined mosquitoes. Up, up and ever upwards they went and on a track that was as slippery as it was steep, so by the time he reached the top, Odgers was exhausted. Short rests became more frequent. The sight of village houses ahead had him thinking that they were about to arrive, but these hopes were dashed: there was still some distance to go to the “haus kiap⁴”. They arrived at 11.25am and Smith produced a decent whisky which revived Odgers considerably. When he removed his boots he felt much better.

Hodgekiss arrived back from patrol at noon. Searson came up from his work and they had lunch. Wireless operator Minogue arrived and had a late lunch then Searson went back to Wewak on Smith’s pony at 2pm. Hodgekiss and Minogue sought a site for the radio station and decided to move the radio station to the *haus kiap*. The aerials were erected and then a few more snorts of whisky were consumed.

They had not left Wewak any too soon. Bombing of the town started at 10am that morning – no doubt by aircraft from the carrier Jones had seen. Odgers noted that he slept well that night despite the noise of the *coons* under the houses. Next morning he was awake at 6.00am and wandered around in his pyjamas while Minogue got his wireless going and made contact with Port Moresby at 7am. Breakfast was at 9.30am after which he found himself a job checking goods into the store. A great deal of cargo was being carried up from Wewak, including three *Electrolux* refrigerators and some beer. Hodgekiss went back to Wewak that morning.

Dr. Schroeder and Gray Hartley arrived at 2.00pm and Odgers joined them in some steady whisky drinking. They finished the Doc’s bottle and most of Odgers’ whisky by the time that Tommy Aitchison arrived at 6.15pm. After dinner more whisky was consumed by the men at Sauri as they kept their ears to the wireless for any war news. The importance of wireless communications in the Sepik at this time, throughout the war and into the future cannot be over stated as Lawrence Durrant explains in his book the “Sea Watchers” 1986 :-

“By 1920 the high powered station at Bita Paka (Rabaul Radio) provided communications to the outside world from the Mandated Territory of New Guinea and supervised other stations in the New Guinea network⁵. The technology used was that of Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited (AWA).

There was also a wireless in Aitape (then the Sepik Headquarters) in 1920. This was transferred to Wewak when the headquarters was shifted there in 1937, with a Coast Watch radio being left at Aitape as well. By 1939 the New Guinea network included stations at Rabaul, Kavieng, Kieta, Manus, Wewak, Madang, Lae, Salamaua, Wau and Bulolo.

The radio operators were a select body of men known to be resourceful and adaptable and positioned among the colonial elite. Kevin Minogue in Wewak was such a man. He was assisted by a radio operator called Ah Kau. The Wewak station went by the call sign VJZ. A portable wireless station was established in the haus kiap at Sauri in Late January 1942. It used the call sign KEV – the first three letters in the operator, Kevin Minogue’s name”.

District Officer Jones’ Sepik report notes that: “*On 1st February, the coast watching station at Wewak was removed to a site on the hills behind the town. The telescope was mounted on a platform in the branches of a tall tree. This enabled a large expanse of ocean to be covered*”. Jones report also noted that the radio at Sauri was able to communicate with “*most of the Territory’s stations; Chimbu, Gasmata, Ramu, Bogia, Talasea, Finschafen, Mt Hagen, Ewo and Manus*”.

End Notes Chapter 6

¹ Jim Malicke known as “Jimmy the one” Jones Report on Sepik District 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 said he was of Polish descent. He had worked for the Catholic mission before becoming a gold miner. His name is spelt several ways in different documents.

² Used in this sense “Kanaka” is a derogatory term for an indigenous person. The term is not derogatory when used to mean “bush man” or a person living the traditional life style.

³ This is another derogatory term for New Guineans. The use of such words was common and is more a sign of the time than of Odgers personally.

⁴ Rest house, a building built in villages where patrols stayed over night

⁵ Durrant L. ‘The Seawatchers’, Angus & Robertson 1986⁵ Durrant L. 1986 Page 86

Chapter 7 The Waiting Game Plays on Peoples Nerves

- DO Jones Explains Strategy to both Expatriates and Locals

As Sauri is high in the hills, Odgers noticed that it was very cold first thing on the morning of 28th January 1942. He applied himself to re-stacking the contents of the luluai's (senior village official) store before diverting the rest of the cargo to the new store in the middle of the village. After the job was finished, Tommy Aitchison decided that only food was to be stored in the lock up shed and all personal gear was to go into the new store. It seemed to Odgers that all his work had gone for nothing and that his status among the Europeans in the Sepik was the lowest of the low. Not surprisingly, he decided that he was sick with the "flu". He took some aspirin and had an hour's sleep, after which he felt much better. Smith then took over household arrangements at Sauri and had a row with Aitchison which made Odgers feel even better still.

Odgers now straightened out his personal gear and had all the shotguns placed in the store, giving everyone even more room. A few more "spots" were consumed before and after dinner that night. It rained a great deal and the morning dawned so cold that few of the men at Sauri shaved. After breakfast a note arrived to tell Dr. Schroeder to report at Wewak and go up river to Angoram on the *Gabriel* that afternoon. Dr. Schroeder and his gear left at 10.00am.

DO Jones was critical of Dr. Schroeder and later reported that the doctor had been sent to Angoram to look after the medical side of things, but he remained at Angoram the whole time not even visiting the camp site at Yimas Lakes when an influenza epidemic broke out there. As happens in such stressful situations, clashes of personality over real or imagined issues tend to blur people's judgment.

DO Jones arrived at Sauri at 11 am on the 29th. Soon thereafter Odgers was sent down to Wewak on the important mission of establishing where Ning Hee had buried his whisky and of retrieving same. He was back in Sauri by 2.30pm with mission accomplished and reviewed Sauri's storage arrangements with the DO who returned to Wewak at 4 pm. The usually quiet Jimmy Hodgekiss entertained the evening gathering with stories about Sepik initiation ceremonies of youths becoming warriors and of labour recruiters blackmailing headmen to sign on extra recruits and similar stories that only someone of his long Sepik experience could know. If there was a difficult task to be performed in the Sepik – Jimmy Hodgekiss was the first man you would turn to. Stan Christian who knew him well said he was a very deliberate person, who could sense when something was wrong. On a pre-war patrol inland from Vanimo Hodgekiss insisted they stay another night in a particular village. "*I am not comfortable here*" he said "*something is wrong*". The outcome was the discovery that a murder had been committed but not reported.¹

On the 30th the wireless broadcast the news that Kevin Parer had been killed at Salamaua. Three Japanese aircraft had attacked and instead of diving for cover as others did Kevin ran to his aircraft on the runway and tried to take off. With the stationary old plane on the ground Kevin never had a chance. Saddened by this news, Odgers and Smith had morning tea as they watched the "coons" build a house for the DO. After lunch Odgers wandered around the

village and had another look at things in the store. He had a few beers after work and typed a menu for dinner. The dinner company enjoyed a sherry or two while they listened to the news.

By the 31st, the DO's residence was complete, so after the bitterly cold morning when the rain eased and lunch had been consumed, Odgers had all the DO's gear moved to his house preparatory to Jones' arrival. With nothing else to do he played euchre with Gray Hartley and had a beer or two before having his evening shower and changing into his pajamas. Some fresh beef then arrived however, having been brought up from Wewak, so he went in his pajamas to help Hodgekiss weigh it.

The news that night told that Bulolo and Salamaua had again been bombed while some evacuees from Rabaul had reached Australia. There was a general restlessness that night and few slept. Hodgekiss decided to listen in to the wireless and was pleased when he logged 89 stations in five minutes.

After reporting to the DO how cold it had been over recent days, the 1st of February turned out to be beautifully warm for Jones' arrival at Sauri. At 11am a schooner was sighted off Wewak. Visibility through their field glasses was poor, but it was assumed that it was *Gabriel*. Odgers rushed off to tell Roy Smith, but the rain closed out all vision and Odgers got wet through for his troubles.

The waiting game was playing on people's nerves. No one knew what was going to happen and most had serious doubts whether DO Jones' plans would save them from the Japanese. Probably every expatriate in the Sepik was trying to decide their own best course of action. So it was that Ning Hee decided to go with his wife and family to Siling River in the Sepik gold fields. He came that day to Sauri to seek the DO's permission and to withdraw some money from his accounts. It is not known what was said between Ning Hee and Jones, but the move to the Siling River did not occur as Ning Hee planned.

On the 2nd February Odgers went to the DO's house where Jones dictated letters which he took down in short hand and later typed. After lunch he opened his Commonwealth Savings Bank Agency and paid out ten shillings to a local native. The news that evening told how Japanese planes had carried out reconnaissance over the Solomon Islands and bombed Tulagi. Next day Odgers was in his element and felt on top of the world as he set up his office and paid off indentured labourers from Wau. The busy period soon ended and for Odgers time then dragged - with nothing to do he spent the afternoon reading. The news that night was very serious. For the first time Port Moresby had been bombed - two planes, six bombs, one killed and five injured were the curt details.

The indentured labour system used the Sepik District as a labour pool to provide workers for the gold fields as well the plantations. The usual contract term was three years, with labour receiving a portion of their pay during their indenture, with the remainder held in trust and paid to them as they went home at the end of their contract. One such labourer was Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis, who would later be elected to the PNG National Parliament. Nauwi explained his experience of the outbreak of war:

"I had spent three years on a plantation and was serving a second three years when the war came. This was in Madang. When the Japs bombed Madang we saw bombs hit the water and the water boiled. We were surprised and tested the water tentatively with our

hands to see if it was in fact hot. It was not. The kiaps told us Australia would be leaving Madang and we should go back to our places, but he said that Australia would return and win the war. We came with a Sergeant (of Police) and came through the Madang mountains and crossed the Ramu River on rafts. We came to Watam on the Sepik. We were a long line, over one hundred people. Others saw us going and they joined us. The kiap said keep your rifles to defend yourselves, but you must not kill indiscriminately. Australia will return. We were initially given our rifles in Madang. And we gave the arms back to the kiap at Kopar”².

The gold mine labour from Wau and Bulolo mentioned by Odgers would have walked overland back to their homes in the Sepik just as Nauwi described, and appeared at Sauri to receive their “finish pay” from the Sepik Cash Office. Had Europeans made these treks across country, it would have been a major exercise, but the natives seemed to take it all in their stride – they had little choice.

The presence of DO Jones at Sauri instilled both discipline and urgency into the work of the public servants there. So it was on the 4th February that just as Odgers was about to have his morning cup of tea the DO sent for him and ordered him to draw up a nominal roll of labourers (“Kanakas” as Odgers’ diary recorded them) recruited to assist at Sauri and to carry to and from Wewak. After breakfast he helped the DO unpack, sort and repack the European foodstuffs in the new mess. As Jim Hodgekiss was assigned duties elsewhere he took down his wireless aerial, so Odgers erected his aerial in its place.

The cache of whisky retrieved from Wewak days before had been closely guarded until Jones was at Sauri and ready to distribute it. Odgers’ share was four bottles, of which he put one aside for after dinner that evening. As was his duty Jones had taken control of the available food supplies. After dinner he addressed the expatriates at Sauri informing them of the number of stores each person was required to contribute to the “common fund”. Odgers noted that this offended Kevin Minogue.

On 5th February 1942 DO Jones had Odgers on the job early – taking the nominal roll of the carriers who had arrived up from Wewak last night. Jim Hodgekiss and Kevin Minogue had an early breakfast so that by 8am the *muddle of coons* had begun to take shape... The DO addressed them pointing out the government was not going finish, and would come back again... *“although we do not have many warships and planes here we have them elsewhere and would soon defeat the Japanese and come back...therefore it behoves every ‘boy’ to do all he could to help the government.... Just as a “kanaka³” would not fight under unfavourable conditions, we are going to go ‘bush’ because we can fight better there than on the beach at Wewak.”*

Jones announced that all expatriates between the ages of 18 and 45 years in the Eighth Military District (New Guinea) had been called up to service in the Citizen Forces⁴. No details were given as to how the call up could to be achieved. It was a sombre gathering at Sauri as the men in the Sepik pondered their predicament; they were now completely cut off from the rest of the world.

Odgers' diary noted that Hodgekiss and Minogue together with Conboy left with a long laden carrier line at 9am. His diary gave no hint of their destination or purpose, so he presumably "did not need to know". Hodgekiss, Minogue and Conboy's task was, in fact, to move further inland, taking with them the main radio transmitter from Wewak⁵ to establish a "No 2" depot and wireless station midway between Wewak and Timbunke. This strategic location could facilitate the movement of people escaping from Wewak to the Sepik River and its routes out of the District in the event that the Japanese invaded - a classic "Blue book" strategy.

The carrier line observed leaving Sauri consisted of 360 people. The transmitter required 15 men to carry it and the two and a half horsepower Moffat Virtue engine which powered the transmitter required another 32.⁶ The walk to the new destination took three days. The site chosen was Yamundo, a village in a swamp which was reached via a track cut through dense bamboo (see Map 1).

On 6th February 1942 the Administrator (of Papua) broadcast to all outstations:

"Commonwealth authorized temporary cessation of Civil Administration. Release prisoners, disband police and Crown servants. Pay in Government goods where money useless. Officers and civilians over 45 come Port Moresby any means without delay with view evacuation. Officers under 45 await Army instructions. Use own judgment, unprecedented situation."

On the 7th February the Australian Prime Minister cabled to advise that:

*...power was vested in the Commandant 8th Military District to give any directions or orders necessary to existing circumstances even though such directions be inconsistent with existing laws in the Territory. The Commandant has supreme control of all Territorial affairs, and all persons in the Territory to be subject to the directions of the Commandant."*⁷

End Notes Chapter 7

¹ Bragge L.W. Vol. 19 Bragge notes – Interview with Stan Christian at Minj 1974 page 536

² Kopar is the village at the mouth of the Sepik River. Quote from Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 66

³ This is the inoffensive use of the word "Kanaka" meaning "bush man" or in this sense "warrior"

⁴ Odgers Diary 5th February 1942

⁵ Durrant L 1986 pages 138/9

⁶ Durrant L 1986 page 138.

⁷ ANGAU War Diary 14 Feb 42 to 28 Feb 42 – Appendix 3 and Appendix 4

Chapter 8 Garamambu Gold Miners Split re Evacuation 2-4th Feb. 1942

Undercurrent of Tensions

The Garamambu field [lower central Map 2] had been recently discovered as reported by the Pacific Islands Monthly on page 7 of the September 1941 edition:

The Morobe News of August 16 reported another gold discovery about 6 to 8 hours up the Sepik from Marui, on the west side of the Chambri Lakes. Messrs. Beckett and Eichorn found the gold and have been doing reasonably well, and a number of other pioneer miners have gone in from Wewak and Madang. The newspaper said that the big drawback of the region is mosquitoes – “and one can believe it. This part of the Sepik is swampy, unpleasant and generally lousy”.

At least some of the Garamambu miners had recently transferred their operations from the Siling River/Yamil gold field in the Prince Alexander Mountains. In a note to Len Tudor dated 11th November 1938, Bill Macgregor wrote from the Siling River - “*Things are pretty quiet here, very little gold, just about a living if I keep very busy.*”

As for Freddy Eichorn, we have him coming into Wewak with Jack Thurston from the Yamil gold field on 6th January 1942. As the plans for the evacuation commenced at that time, it seems he went to be with his father George at Garamambu. DO Jones sought the assistance of reliable private sector men in this time of great need. As Jack Thurston had his hands full organizing the transfer of his rations, Jones asked Roy Macgregor to go up river and discuss voluntary evacuation with the miners at Garamambu. Macgregor would also arrange canoes and paddlers to assist Thurston’s movement of men and rations from Pagwi to Lake Yimas.

There were two Macgregor brothers. Roy Macgregor was a respected Madang resident. He was the owner of Duai, Erimabush and Bogajim copra plantations¹ and the boat *Duai*. Roy was also a member of the NGVR. His brother Bill Macgregor was a gold miner and labour recruiter. In Angoram, about a mile upstream of the wharf in what would be later known as the *Service Camp* was Macgregor’s station. This was the Angoram base used by Roy and Bill, for Bill to provide indentured labor for Roy’s and other plantations.

The only known record of Roy Macgregor’s visit to the Garamambu miners appears in a pencil entry on a slip of paper in the Avatip village. The Administration issued a village book for every village and it was kept in the care of the village Luluai. These books were tall and narrow books with heavy brown cardboard covers. Each Administration officer wrote comments in the village book as a record of facts and instructions given, for the next officer to visit that village. The entry in the Avatip village book reads :-

“Avatip 2/2/42. Called here to arrange canoe transport for Avatip² miners, also party waiting at Pagwi. Sent line of canoes to transport cargo to Korogo and return so as to enable near-by villages to be available for Marui. Whilst transport was proceeding and on the return trip to Avatip a fight developed at Yamunumbu in which timber was used and Barangowi (Tultul) was injured. One native called Simbongandimi was alleged to be the leader. The Luluai with Wondakuma and Dungenan were also ring leaders although

instructions were given by me to the Luluai personally and others to give food to the Police Boys and (their wives?) Meris. This was not done whilst we were there. Malu and Yambon – 4 each canoes were brought down to assist evacuation of all from Pagwi.

*Messrs. Macgregor, F and G Eichorn, Mitchell, Bell and Beckett have no wish at present to evacuate so were left. Leaving here this morning 3rd February per Excel to pick up Pagwi party and transport them down stream. signed 1007 Rfl
.R.Macgregor. N.G.V.R.”*

The mention of the fight between Yamunumbu and Avatip/Malu men is significant. Yamunumbu people are of the Nyaula section of the large Iatmul tribal group of the Middle Sepik, whereas Avatip, Malu and Yambon are of another linguistic group known as the Manambu. Located between Yamunumbu and Avatip were two settlements – Japandai (of the Nyaula/Iatmul people) and Lavongai of the Manambu. All had been involved in the Japandai massacre of 1923/4 and the years of events leading up to it. The hatreds which ran deep in 1942 are still evident in the 21st Century. Issues would come to a head again in 1945 when tribal allegiances by one party supporting Japan would come in conflict with another with allegiances to Australia.

Back in 1942, the Parembei village book (Parembei is some 50 miles downstream of Avatip) carries another Macgregor notation :-

4/2/42 Sent police boy yesterday to warn natives to supply canoes for continuation of evacuation scheme re the transportation of goods and natives en route Pagwi to the Karawari. Have three big canoes and pullers (paddlers) reported at Yentchan this morning as requested. Payment if any to be adjusted later by the ADO or other Administration officials.

1007 Rfl R.Macgregor N.G.V.R.

Of the miners who declined evacuation, Reg Beckett had been Clerk and Store man at Ambunti in 1930 when J. K. McCarthy was posted there³. Bill Macgregor was respected by the Sepik’s best known former District Officer, George “Kassa” Townsend as a great bushman and explorer, an opinion that was shared by the elders of the Middle Sepik who remembered him in awe as the red headed *Masta Mek*.

Meanwhile at Marienberg, five Catholic nuns made their decision to move from there to the more remote mission station at Timbunke. The Marienberg priests decided to remain at their post. The nuns were mother superior Helena, [pronounced Alena] and Sisters Arnoldine - the nurturer, Vinciana - the scribe, Antionella - the healer and Auxilia the organiser. All were long term residents of Marienberg, all were rotund middle aged Germans, of whom only one spoke a little English. We shall meet them again later in our story.⁴

End notes Chapter 8

¹ J.Sinclair, Madang DWU Press, 2005 page 98

² Avatip is the nearest large Sepik River village to the Garamambu gold field.

³ MacCarthy J.K. 1963 – page 44

⁴ Studdy-Clift P. ‘When Nuns Wore Soldiers Trousers’ –. Hesperian Press, Carlisle, Western Australia 2009.

Chapter 9 **Orderly withdrawal From Sauri to Angoram** - Discussions with ADO George Ellis, and Administrative Adjustments

On February 6th 1942 at Sauri the rain stopped at 7am and a pleasant day followed. Odgers closed off and balanced the cash book. He was interested to observe a delegation of the Chinese residents at Sauri who were dismayed to hear Jones speech yesterday and to observe the departure of the laden carrier line for the bush – where they were not invited to go. The Chinese told Jones that their “life” (courage) had run away during the night. They were becoming frightened and considered that if nothing else was to be done for them that it was in their best interests to deposit their silver in bank accounts, rather than carrying it with them into the uncertainty of the future. Ping Shee, for example opened a new savings account with a deposit of £110.

That afternoon Jones decided Odgers’ new wireless aerial was too conspicuous. Under instruction he took it down and re-erected it less conspicuously between two trees. The news told that Port Moresby had an “alert” at 3am but no details were given. After dinner, the DO divided the tobacco that Ah Ham had sent up from Wewak – each of the expatriates getting 1½ lbs. After the DO and Aitchison went home Gray Hartley, Roy Smith and Odgers drank whisky and talked.

Odgers’ diary noted that the 7th brought a beautiful morning reminiscent of a summer’s morning in Sydney - “*Oh Sydney; How I wished I was there now*”. After breakfast he decided to re-arrange his living space. He took over Minogue’s office table as his desk and firmly entrenched himself in the corner where the wireless set had been.

Later the DO called him to his house and dictated a long memo which Odgers typed. Joe Searson and Ned Blood arrived from Wewak at 4.30 pm. That was an adequate excuse for them all to have a “spot” or two. Meanwhile at Angoram on 7th February, George Ellis ADO addressed a letter to the officers and civilians at Lake Yimas. It read :-

*“Mr. Patrol Officer Strudwick,
Mr. Patrol Officer White and
To all Europeans whom it may concern.*

*Dear Sirs,
From enquiries at this office by Europeans it appears that an unfortunate misunderstanding has arisen, that there has been an “ORDER FOR EVACUATION OF EUROPEANS” to Yimas issued. I took the matter up with the District Officer, and he advises me that he has issued no ORDER FOR EVACUATION OF EUROPEANS TO YIMAS, and wishes me to explain the position fully to you.”*

The letter went on to explain that the positioning of rations at Yimas was “*merely in readiness for evacuation, should that drastic measure be necessary*”, that participation would be purely voluntary and “*any European is free to return to his or their natural routine of life*” and that the officer in charge of the Depot would make transport arrangements for them¹

While this letter was accurate in what it said, it did nothing to reassure the worried men at Yimas that the management of their desperate situation was in capable hands.

Back at Sauri, Odgers' diary of 8th February describes a mundane day of drinking beer and listening to the news. Then at 9.15pm someone saw a light flashing down in Wewak - the pre-arranged signal that a ship had been sighted. All lights at Sauri were immediately extinguished and a sense of uneasiness descended on the camp as the observers pondered what might now be happening in Wewak. If the enemy had landed, just how long would they be safe at Sauri? As there was no way of knowing, Odgers went to bed at 9.30pm.

At first light Wewak looked unchanged. No ship was visible in the harbor. Later it was learned that a duty policeman thought he saw a blue light out at sea and gave the signal. Nothing further was seen of the light, but there was no way to send the "all clear". As Odgers attended to his duties, senior clerk Roy Smith spent the whole day coding and de-coding messages.

Odgers was again looking for something useful to do so he ordered the every faithful Forok to erect a shower so that he could enjoy a decent ablution for a change. Meanwhile the DO decided to send a long radio message to headquarters asking for information and instructions, so Smith was up until 2.30am encoding the message.

The morning news of 10th February told how the Administrator and Steve Lonergan both escaped the Japanese and reached Sydney in the *Faith in Australia*. Jones had not received any clear response to the previous evening's coded message and made no secret of his disgust. This disgust and whatever Jones said about it demoralised Odgers. His diary asked rhetorical questions which he had presumably picked up from Jones :-

"Are we going to be left to the Japs simply because the Administration has no policy? Or failed to carry out that policy? ... Is it all due to the hush-hush policy of the Commonwealth of Australia?"

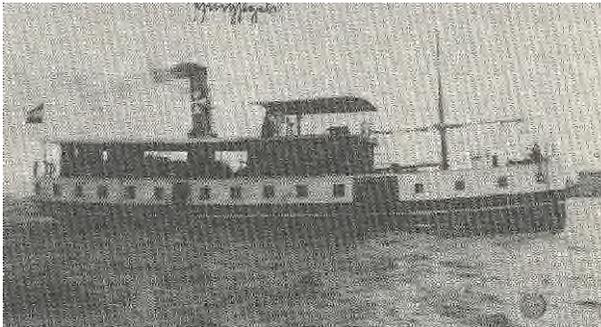
Ned Blood and Joe Searson went to Wewak to do some odd jobs including going to Boram to slaughter two cattle. During the day Father Manion paid a visit to Sauri and had a whisky with Odgers and the others. Searson and Blood arrived back at 3.30pm and delivered some items Odgers had ordered from Chinatown. The evening news spoke of the Japanese arriving in Singapore and landing in Gasmata on New Britain. After dinner, beer was consumed following which Jones announced that Smith and Odgers were to go to Angoram tomorrow on the *Gabriel*. As was Odgers' habit, he did some packing that evening so as to save time in the morning, after which he had a 'spot' or two before turning in.

As it turned out the transfer to Angoram required more packing than just his personal gear - he also had to pack the office records. When it became known that he was leaving there was a minor rush of Commonwealth Savings Bank business. Then the DO required that Odgers type several memos. Odgers made a point of paying for the goods recently received from the Chinese stores. By 11am he and Smith were ready to go but the carriers had not arrived to carry their gear. Meanwhile the DO announced that ADO McMullen had been given full control of the TNG administration with the right to the signature "Administrator". DO Jones was seriously displeased by this decision.

The carriers finally arrived at 3.30pm. Loads were organized and at 5pm they started their descent back to Wewak. The going was easy as the track was dry. When they crossed the creek, seniority prevailed and Smith was given the only horse available. Odgers walked

despite the fact a nail in his boot was digging into his heel. They took a different track from the one they had come up and it brought them through the extensive lands of the Catholic mission. They arrived at the mission copra shed at 6.20pm where Odgers changed his boots before continuing on to the marine store by the beach.

Father Manion came along in a lorry and gave them a lift to the mission buildings and an invitation to dine at the mission. At 8.30pm the priest accompanied them to the beach. Odgers was amazed to see a tree full of fire flies – a beautiful sight! The tree was lit up like a Christmas tree. Father Manion took them aboard the *Gabriel* and introduced them to Brother Amanias the skipper. After settling into their cabin they shared a whisky or two before Odgers turned his attention to writing up his diary.



The *Gabriel* (opposite) left Wewak for Vokeo in the Schouten Islands at midnight on 11th February. It was a clear moonlit night and the sea was calm, so the passengers slept soundly until 5am when they were awaked by the anchor chain rattling out at Vokeo. Map No 1 shows the course the *Gabriel* took as a sweeping eastwardly

arc through the Bismarck Sea to Vokeo Island and then continuing the arc back to the mainland coast to enter the Sepik River mouth before proceeding upstream to Marienberg and Angoram.

Sunrise on the 12th brought the delightful aroma of fish being fried in the galley. Vokeo Island stood steeply out of the deep blue sea that seemed to stretch forever in every direction. The sky was equally as endless and thankfully empty of aircraft – at least for now. The *Gabriel* left Vokeo at 7am heading generally southwards for the Sepik River mouth. For hour after hour they sailed on, out of the sight of land, apart from several small islands. They scanned the sky for enemy aircraft which would make short work of *Gabriel* had she been spotted.

They talked in low tones about seizing the *Gabriel* and sailing her to Australia. But neither of them had the will or the ability to put such an adventure into action and the topic was dropped. After breakfast Odgers returned to his cabin as it was pleasantly cool and free from the stench of the ship's cargo of sheep and poultry that would provide protein for the assembled miners and government officers as they awaited their future in Angoram.

His diary inevitably equated the *Gabriel* with *Noah's Ark*. From his bunk Odgers alternately read and watched the water passing by. At 12.15pm he noticed the water change colour from beautiful blue to greenish brown. They were now in sight of land. The water became browner and at 1.15pm the vessel entered the mouth of the Sepik River. They marvelled at what a remarkable river the Sepik is. They guessed the current was running at about four knots and the river about a mile or so in width at the mouth.

The *Gabriel* hugged the river bank and it seemed strange to the passengers to be so close to the tangled masses of Nipa and sago palms, bamboo and the cane grass that looked like sugar cane. At 2pm a canoe came alongside the *Gabriel* at Kopar village. To Odgers' eye the canoe was just a hollow log with some carved decoration. It had no outrigger for stability

against the waves and the men paddling it did so while standing. They looked precarious, but at no stage looked like losing their balance.

The *Gabriel* continued surging her way upstream and at around 5pm Odgers saw his first floating grass island. It was about 30 yards square and had one small tree growing on it. They made themselves comfortable in a lifeboat and passed their enforced leisure drinking whisky. Dinner that evening was a chicken from the hold which mysteriously died shortly before sunset. The *Gabriel* arrived at the village of Singrin at 8pm. The village people were happy to see the ship and came down to the river bank in a colourful display sweeping and ducking red flames of fire sticks against the night sky. Odgers and Smith watched enthralled. Forok was sent into the hold to bring Odgers' wireless, the aerial and a mosquito net, which were set upon the deck so they were able to listen to the evening programs in style sipping an evening whisky before turning in.

The *Gabriel* cast off from the Singrin river bank at 6am the next morning, the 13th of February, and continued her journey upstream. Odgers was disappointed not to have a good look at the village, but on the other hand the air outside his net was buzzing with a million mosquitoes which the breeze of the *Gabriel's* forward motion dissipated. Besides, he reasoned, it was perhaps just as well as ignorance of the reality that daylight might reveal allowed him to retain the romantic memories of their late arrival last night, with the fire sticks...

Upon arriving at Marienberg mission station at 8.50am they went ashore. But there was no reason to linger as the priests were away. They inspected the carpenter's shop and admired a carved altar under construction there. They re-embarked and left Marienberg at 9.20am. There was little to see for the remainder of the trip to Angoram because a rain storm moved out onto the river and hammered the *Gabriel* with such force that all the windows and port holes had to be closed. All that was left for them to do was to pack their goods and watch the river go by.

At 2 pm the *Gabriel* tied up at the Angoram wharf. ADO Ellis came down to the waterfront to meet the ship as he had not been informed that they were coming. Odgers and Smith told him all the news and the three of them shared some whiskies before walking up to the office. They saw that Angoram station is built on low ridges, so unlike the wetlands along the Sepik they had seen to date - it was a steady climb up and away from the river through a grove of rain trees and grasslands, to reach the office which Odgers described as a "nice little building".

In the office, they yarned and drank some more whisky from two rain gauges and one glass tumbler. From there they made their way to Ellis's house, which was further back from the river and where more drinking and yarning was the order of the day. George Ellis was a congenial host. As evening fell Odgers had a good shower and dressed himself in his pajamas. After dinner they were re-united with Dr. Schroeder who came over to join the company and who stayed until 11pm at which time Smith turned in, leaving George Ellis and Odgers yarning until after midnight.

Although mellowed by the alcohol consumed since early afternoon, Odgers was surprised to learn that Ellis did not intend to join in the DO's *Blue Book* scheme and had sent Pickwell to Yimas to withdraw the stores from the camp. Meanwhile, DO Jones' Sepik District report outlined his plans for an evacuation :-

“As food supplies were limited I had decided to send the civilians overland to Papua, with several reliable officers, when it appeared on advice from Wau, that it may be possible to evacuate them by air. Plans were therefore held up...

By this time the civilians had elected a committee who advised me that they considered the overland trip impossible and demanded to be evacuated by air.

On 15 February advice was received that the Territories were under Military Control, and that G W L Townsend had been appointed Staff Officer for this Territory. This was explained to the citizens who quieted down for a while, but when no action was taken they again insisted on air transport, even after the Army Commandant had advised “Air transport absolutely impossible.”

When the public heard (18th February) that all boats and fuel were being sent out of the District they evidently became exasperated, as to them it appeared that their only method of evacuation was being taken away. Some of them cleared out in small boats and their whereabouts are unknown. During this time and later the writer became suspicious that ADO Ellis was not carrying out his instructions and that the civilians were being misled, particularly as they refused to go to the Ramu by any route. But as a boat was not available the writer was not in a position to immediately visit Angoram and make inquiries.”²

Soon after the formation of the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit in late February 1942, the ANGAU war diaries became the repository of incoming and outgoing documentation. The First War Diaries Volume - February to April 1942, opens with a report covering February 14 to February 28. It contains a useful summary of events :-

“Following the (volcanic) eruption in 1937 temporary administration headquarters was established in 1941 in Lae, the site of the new Capital. The Administrator, Sir Walter McNicoll was at Lae, and the Deputy Administrator, Mr. H. Page remained at Rabaul awaiting the completion of the transfer of the departments at Lae.

In late December 1941³ and in January, 1942 Rabaul was subjected to Japanese air attacks. On 21st January 1942, Rabaul, Lae and Salamaua were attacked by Japanese aircraft, following which civilian populations were evacuated from Lae and Salamaua.

On 23rd January 1942 Rabaul and adjacent areas were invaded by the Japanese, whereupon civilians including the Deputy Administrator and heads of the administration then in Rabaul, together with Army personnel unable to make their escape, were taken prisoner.

On 24th January 1942, the Administrator of New Guinea, then in low condition following a serious illness, was moved to Wau by air for evacuation to Australia. Mr. McMullen was appointed as Deputy Administrator pending the arrival of a more senior officer. Henceforward until the establishment of a military administration on 14th Feb 1942, the Sepik, Morobe, Madang and Manus Districts continued to be administered.”

As of 14th February the civil administration of Papua came to an end through Government gazettal – Gazette Vol 37 – No 3, signed H.W.Champion (Papuan) Government Secretary. Commandant Major General Morris directed that two administration organizations be established :-

- Lieutenant S. Elliott-Smith in charge of Papua Admin Unit [PAU]
- Captain G.W.L. Townsend in charge of New Guinea Admin Unit [NGAU].

15/2/1942 Major General Morris assumed powers of administration of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea from 24/2/1942 onwards – Personnel who had been members of the civil administration of Papua were enlisted into the PAU with military ranks. The same would apply to the NGAU and later ANGAU.

28/2/1942 District Officers instructed all fit Europeans under the age of 45 except Missionaries to be held for medical examination and attested for military service.

7/4/1942 Correspondence directed to Major Elliot-Smith noted that 14 members of the New Guinea Constabulary were being accepted into the Royal Papuan Constabulary. As previously mentioned the use of members of the New Guinea Constabulary as combatants was prohibited under the League of Nations Mandate documentation. No such prohibition existed for members of the Royal Papua Constabulary. Consequently, ANGAU parties in New Guinea as well as Papua were supported by Royal Papua Constabulary detachments.

On 10th April 1942 both PAU and NGAU administrations were combined to form the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit ANGAU. The functions of ANGAU were :-

1. Provide utmost extent support the requirements of the fighting services.
2. Maintain the closest liaison with the Military commander of each District.
3. Assist in ejecting the enemy from the Territory
4. CIVIL. Policing the Territory and maintain law and order – the value of a loyal, law-abiding native population cannot be over-estimated.
5. PRODUCTION. Maximize the production of rubber and copra in support of Australia's war effort.
6. COMPOSITION OF ANGAU: Two branches:
 - a. District Services: - Policing and welfare of health of inhabitants. Provide labour as required.
 - b. Production services: - Food for natives, transport for District Services, staff for plantations and technical direction.

In June 1942 the Far Eastern Liaison Office FELO was established to lower the morale of the Japanese force and impair their fighting ability, to mislead the enemy regarding allied military intentions and to influence native populations in enemy held territory so they would impair the Japanese efforts and assist the Allies.⁴ Townsend left ANGAU in October 1942 and joined FELO.

End notes Chapter 9

¹ ANGAU war diaries appendix 30 page 2

² Jones Report on Sepik District for period 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42

³ This appears to be incorrect. The first bombing raid on Rabaul was on 20th January 1942?

⁴ G.W.L.Townsend 'District Officer' Pacific Publications 1968 Page 257

Chapter 10 Booze, Dysfunction and Insurrection at Angoram 14 – 20th Feb. 1942 – Boats on the Sepik Become Vital Assets

On 14th February 1942 at Angoram, district office junior clerk Lenny Odgers listened to the news while enjoying his morning cup of tea. Breakfast was 8.30am and he went to the office at 9am. From the office he went to the waterfront and looked over the *Osprey*, which was a forty foot wooden vessel, known as a workboat. Townsend, in his book 'District Officer', stated that the Sepik people called the boat *Chaun* [Saun] meaning Osprey. He asked why, and was told that the boat like the bird was white and anywhere you can find water, you can find it.

Later Odgers supervised the *Gabriel* being unloaded and the delivered goods placed in the government store where ADO Ellis was issuing rations to the Angoram station staff and police. Then they went back to Ellis' house for lunch. In the afternoon Ellis, district office senior clerk Roy Smith and Odgers went upriver in the *Osprey* to where the *Thetis* was hidden from possible observation by Japanese aircraft. *Thetis* was a 50ft ketch, sometimes described as a trawler. All was well with the vessel, so they returned downstream to Angoram. It was 5.30pm when Smith and Odgers went to Macgregor's station to see gold miner Len Bridger for a yarn. Macgregor's station was located slightly upstream of Angoram government station, on the river bank of a backwater of the Sepik in what became known as the *Service Camp*, as noted earlier – a little downstream of Angoram native village.

Later, Roy Macgregor's boat *Duai* arrived from Yimas bringing Roy Macgregor and "Blue" Cook, Hunter Karce, Garry Keogh, Geoff Shaw and Frank Simmcocks. Roy Macgregor came to George Ellis's place and ate dinner with Ellis and his house guests. Roy Macgregor explained the position at Yimas and how a deputation had come down asking for information. After dinner Dr. Schroeder joined the party and they left for Macgregor's station about 9 pm, after each had consumed several whiskies. At Macgregor's station they found all the "citizens" in pyjamas sitting around the whisky bottle – Odgers noted that Simmcocks was the highlight of the group in a gorgeous green silk creation.

From the outset it was obvious that the meeting was not going to be a success. Roy Macgregor appointed himself chairman, but this was afterwards objected to by "Blue" Cook who declared that it had been decided to have a "social" night and not discuss business. Ellis denied all knowledge of the DO's evacuation order and read several confidential radios to the men. Later, Simmcocks explained how the committee had come to be appointed. After a great deal of squabbling, with the meeting going no-where, Roy Macgregor withdrew.

After much talk and consumption of whisky, it was at last decided that the committee comprising Cook, Kirke, Macgregor and Shaw, should draw up a radio transmission to the DO in the morning. Ellis ill-advisedly told the committee that unless the radio was in his hands within half an hour he would refuse to transmit it. Ellis thereby provoked a fist-fight between himself and Kirke, which Kirke won after a rough and tumble bout. The meeting finally settled down and it was promised that the radio would be delivered by 8am next morning. Dr. Schroeder became more intoxicated than most and had to be helped home.

Not surprisingly on the 15th Odgers noticed that Ellis had a beautiful black eye. While Odgers was shaving, the "Citizens" arrived in full force with their radio message for the DO. Odgers' last bottle of whisky was "pooled" to give everyone a 'spot' and radio message was sent. The "Citizens" sat drinking, arguing and reiterated their previous points until 11.30am,

by which time Ellis was half drunk. That afternoon Odgers and Ellis slept to be awakened by miner Broadbent who had missed the meeting having arrived by canoe late the previous night. He was seriously unhappy and was talking about walking to Port Moresby.

The DO replied to the “citizens” committee’s radio message, stating that he had been in touch with Australia regarding the evacuation and sent an extract of his radio. The *Gabriel* left for Marienberg and the *Thetis* was sent back to her anchorage up river. The ships were thereby placed out of reach of the “citizens” who were in a desperate mood and might have seized one or both in a bid to reach Australia.

The war news on 16th February 1942 was that Singapore had unconditionally surrendered and that Salamaua had been evacuated. In the face of such terrible news, Odgers needed to be busy. At the office after breakfast he was finalising his books from Wewak and Sauri. The “citizens” response to the bad news was to send another long radio to the DO which Odgers encoded. They wanted definite evacuation action!

Roy Macgregor came for lunch and waited until the 307 group coded response arrived in relation to the “citizens” message, which Smith and Odgers decoded. It stated that all administration employees under age 45 would be absorbed into the Military Administration under G.W.L. “Kassa” Townsend with headquarters at Lae. Civilians under 45 years old would go to the NGVR and those over 45 would be evacuated compulsorily. This neither answered the “citizens” call, nor explained how the NGVR enlistment or the evacuation of those over 45 year old would be achieved. Roy Macgregor came back to Ellis’s house to hear the 9 pm news and later the “citizens” arrived as well. Talk and whisky flowed freely. To the “citizens” credit, they were now easier of mind and inclined to see reason. After all, they agreed, Jones was not a magician.

Odgers encoded yet another radio message from the “citizens” to the DO on the 17th before completing his cash balance. At 10.30am the *Pius* arrived from Yimas bringing Ted Haynes, Dan Power, Ian Spencer, Nifty Nixon, Claude Rouse, Bill Scannell and Jim Malische. Later Archer and Reason arrived on the *Kingfisher*. These miners were feeling out of it up at Lake Yimas and needed to be where a decision might be taken. After afternoon tea, Ellis and his guests walked around Angoram station and inspected the police barracks, the married quarters and the extension works to the aerodrome.

After lunch the next day, Ellis received yet another deputation from the “citizens” and again explained the situation to them. He asked that when a proposed convoy of small ships went to Madang under the command of Roy Macgregor, they try to restrain the “hot-heads” from jumping ship. There was concern that desperate “citizens” could commandeer boats and try to make their escape. Geoff Shaw and Garry Keogh came and told Ellis and Odgers of steps they had taken to safeguard the *Fanny*.

Not surprisingly, none of the Sepik documents to which the writer had access explained the reason for this convoy going to Madang; not even Odgers’ diary held the secret which would have been the subject of some of the messages he encoded and decoded between ADO Ellis and DO Jones. The Sepik convoy was part of the desperate planning of ADO J.K. McCarthy’s evacuation of military and civilian survivors from New Britain.

After lunch on 19th February the *Winon*, *Duai* and *Thetis* left for Madang via Marienberg. Later it was reported that Shaw, Cook, Keogh and Kirk had gone down river presumably with

an idea of getting to Australia. The news that night was that Darwin had been bombed. Back in Angoram, Ellis put an armed guard on the radio shack. New arrivals in Angoram that afternoon were Jack Young, Ben Hall and Jack West. Hall brought some mail from Madang. To Odgers' delight he received four letters!!

On 20th February it was learned that five men - Nixon, Rouse, Haynes, Spencer and Reason - had vanished during the night. A check of the waterfront revealed the *Kingfisher* left at 4am. That afternoon Odgers paid off "Nifty" Nixon's labourers - the miners for the most part came from their claims with their indentured labourer teams. Odgers noted that up until that time a total of 83 labourers had been deserted by their masters.

Post Script regarding the *Kingfisher* :- An ANGAU war diary's entry dated 20th March 1942 from Samarai District Officer Abau (on the Papuan south coast) reports that a party of six refugees from the Sepik District departed for Port Moresby by launch *Kingfisher*.¹

On the afternoon of 20th February a message was received from DO Jones telling Ellis to appoint Smith and Odgers as Special Constables. With that duty performed, Ellis lined up all his police and gave them instructions to shoot any Europeans found around the wireless station. Amazingly Odgers' diary did not report this as being at all unusual. That evening, over a few whiskies, George Ellis and his house guests debated "Democracy and Dictatorship".²

End notes Chapter 10

¹ ANGAU War Diaries entry 20th March 1942

² Odger's diary 20th February 1942

Chapter 11 “New Britain’s Little Dunkirk”

Sepik Boats to the Rescue January-March 1942

The small flotilla, consisting of *Thetis*, *Duai*, *Nereus* and *Winon* which left Angoram on 19th February 1942, departed under a shroud of deep secrecy. Unknown to those on board they were bound for the Talasea area in New Britain to assist in the evacuation of survivors of the Japanese invasion of Rabaul on 23rd January 1942.

The Sepik ships reached Madang where, under HQ radio instructions, they were fuelled for a long voyage – destination undisclosed. They stood by for further instructions. R.E.[Bob] Emery of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, as senior NCO, received an instruction to ... “*Proceed Lutherhafen, contact Harris. Travel at night, hide during the day*”.

Emery continues his story :-

“Chu Leong, myself and another bloke [Alan Strachen] went off in the ‘Win Non’ [Winon]. It was only a small boat, it could carry about 15 tons of cargo and we had it filled up with rice and cases of meat and stuff like that, and we travelled down the coast from Madang and hid during the day. The second night we pulled in very close to Sialum...by now we had found out that Lutherhafen was a small anchorage on the end of Umboi Island. We sailed across there at night and that was a pretty nerve-racking trip because it got very rough...The Japanese had got complete control of all this area, air, sea and, well, they didn’t have all the land under their control yet – so we had to be pretty careful.

We arrived at Lutherhafen about 10 o’clock in the morning and there was the ‘Totol’ and on it now was Blue Harris...He took me off the ‘Win Non’, and we shifted all of our cargo onto the ‘Totol’...Harris sent the ‘Win Non’ back to where it had come from.”¹

The Sepik flotilla included just some of the many ships that were assembled to take part in the evacuation. Another important flotilla was that belonging to the Lutheran Mission. The Lutheran ships included the *Totol*, an 80 ft vessel of 35 tonnes, *Bavaria*, a larger vessel which was based at Finschhafen, the *Umboi* and the *Iowa*, a small boat based at Kranket Island in Madang Harbour.

([Attachment A](#), which follows this Chapter, introduces Madang’s Lutherans, some of whom manned the ships and others who are involved in the Sepik in Chapters 43 and 45).

On the 4th March 1942 assembled vessels, with the exception of the *Iowa* met with the *Gnair* at Rooke Island [Umboi] in the Dampier Strait between the New Guinea mainland and New Britain. There Patrol Officer Blue Harris who was stationed at Lae took command of what became known as “Harris’ Navy”. Their objective was to evacuate as many survivors as possible. Although the *Bavaria* was larger, Harris chose the *Umboi* as his flag ship because of her radio communications. On the ground the operation was co-ordinated by ADO J.K.McCarthy who was in charge of the Talasea sub district. He called the expedition the “*Little Dunkirk of New Britain.*”

The Sepik vessels and the men on board were noted by Captain Radke as standing in reserve ... “*in case the first attempt at the rescue failed... the ‘Thetis’ was manned by Gerry*

Keogh, Jeff Shaw and “Blue” Cook, the ‘Nereus’ manned by Jock Laird and the ‘Winon’ was owned [and operated] by Chu Leong with Alan Strachen on board ...”.

Captain Radke continues :-

“Word of the Tol Plantation massacre had been learned about two days before the ships sailed: A large party of Australian troops was intercepted by the enemy at Tol Plantation Wide Bay, and massacred in cold blood¹. – This news spread fear through the Europeans in and around Madang. It disheartened Superintendent Fleihler in particular; he had depended on being able to broker peace with the Japanese for his missionaries”.

(The recorded facts of the battle of Rabaul and the Tol massacre are summarized below :-

Of the over 1,000 Australian soldiers who were taken prisoner, around 160 were massacred on or about 4 February 1942 in four separate incidents around Tol and Waitavalo. Six men survived these killings and later described what had happened to a Court of Inquiry. The Australian government concluded the prisoners were marched into the jungle near Tol Plantation in small groups and were then bayoneted by Japanese soldiers. At the nearby Waitavalo Plantation, another group of Australian prisoners were shot.

The Allies later placed responsibility for the incident on Masao Kusunose, the commanding officer of the 144th Infantry Regiment. However in late 1946 he starved himself to death before he could stand trial.

At least 800 soldiers and 200 civilian prisoners of war - most of them Australian - lost their lives on 1 July 1942, when the ship on which they were being transported from Rabaul to Japan, the ‘Montevideo Maru’, was sunk off the north coast of Luzon by the U.S. submarine USS ‘Sturgeon’)²

From Rooke Island, Harris’ navy went to Cape Gloucester and on to Walindi plantation where refugees were arriving daily. The *Umboi* ferried refugees to the *Bavaria* and the *Totol* both of which had been hidden from the view of enemy aircraft. The Burns Philp vessel the *Lakatoi* of 300 tonnes had been ordered by the Japanese to Peterhof in the Witu Islands and to remain there awaiting further orders. The Japanese stated that should she try to escape they would sink her. By way of tele-radio the Captain reminded McCarthy that he had surrendered and that making a dash for Queensland, through the Japanese surveillance, was sheer lunacy.

However when McCarthy went aboard and stated his intention to command the *Lakatoi*, the captain decided he would throw all Japanese threats to the wind; no one but he would captain his ship. In preparation, copra bags were emptied of copra and filled with sand for ballast. Cattle were slaughtered, butchered and stored in the ships refrigerators and the refugees came aboard. The plan was to make a run at 12 knot per hour through the night in order to avoid detection and to take shelter at Luthor Anchorage on the north side of Umboi Island before making a dash for Queensland.

After a hazardous voyage from New Britain through the Trobriand Islands, the M.V. *Lakatoi* arrived safely in Cairns on 28 March 1942 with 214 souls on board.³ With their tasks

successfully completed the ships of 'Harris' Navy' including the Sepik vessels returned to their home ports.

There was another part to this story.

In February 1942 the *Laurabada*, the official yacht of the Papuan Administration, was at anchor behind Tatana Island in Port Moresby Harbour. Ivan Champion, [who we met in Sepik 2 chapters 30 & 31 – the 1927-28 crossing from the Fly River to the Sepik River] was placed in charge of her.

Champion received orders to report to Commander Hunt. Champion remembers 'Are you ready for sea and fit to go anywhere?' he said and I said, yes. 'Right', he said. 'Leave tonight for New Britain'. Alan Timperley [who we will meet in Sepik 4 as District Commissioner of the Sepik in 1953-4] had gone over in the launch Mascot, and had sent back messages that he had found Major Owen and a lot of Australian troops who'd escaped from Rabaul at Palmalmal plantation. We had to go and get them...There were 150 troops, some in pretty bad order.

Upon arriving off Palmalmal the *Laurabada* was met by Timperley who guided them in.

The Laurabada and the Mascot, full of troops set sail at dusk, into the teeth of a violent tropical thunderstorm – hard on the exhausted, sea sick passengers, but excellent cover from Japanese warplanes. During the night a soldier died, from dysentery. Champion read the burial service and the body was slipped into the sea sewed into a canvas shroud...They reached Port Moresby without incident and the troops sailed that night for Australia on the MacDhui.⁴

Among those rescued from Palmalmal, by Ivan Champion was the owner of Tokua Plantation at Koroko, Mr. Victor Bolton Pennefather, a former AN&MEF District Officer at Aitape. Mr Pennefather was involved in four wars; The Boer War, the Zulu Rebellion, World War 1 and World War 2.⁵

Footnote :- Another who escaped on the *Lakatoi* was David Crawley, a Warrant Officer with the European Constabulary in the New Guinea Police Force based in Rabaul. He subsequently became an officer with ANGAU, and after the War rose to the rank of senior inspector with the RPNGC before retiring in 1963.

He was a musician. He established the first New Guinea Police Force Band in 1937, and subsequently received many awards in recognition of his achievements in introducing band music to the people of PNG. (ref. Internet Lost Lives – People. WW2 ... and New Guinea)

End Notes Chapter 11

¹ R.E.Emery – When The Japanese Bombed Madang – recorded 1/5/1996. Bragge Reference Vol. 12 item 396.

² E.Feldt. 1946 – P 60.

³ Gamble B. 'Darkest Hour: The Story Of Lark Force At Rabaul' – ISBN = 0760323496 2006 Page 176

⁴ Sinclair J. Last Frontiers – The explorations of Ivan Champion of Papua. Pacific Press Qld 1988 P 282/3

⁵ Personal Communication from PO David Pennefather – a distant relative of V.B.Pennefather

Attachment A – Background on Madang’s Lutheran Missionaries in Relation to Sepik 3 Chapters 11, 42 and 44.

In 1914 six mission societies were active in German New Guinea - three Protestant and three Catholic. With one exception they were all working in different geographical areas.. They were: The Marist mission in the North Solomons [Bougainville], the Sacred Heart and the Methodist mission in the Bismarck Archipelago, the Neuendettelsau mission in eastern Kaiser Wilhelmsland [mainland New Guinea], the Rhenish [Lutheran] mission in the centre and the Divine Word [Catholic] to the west.¹

The Divine Word Mission [Catholic] had been established by the dynamic Father Limbrock on Tumbleo Island at Berlinhafen [off Aitape] in 1896. Alexishafen and Sek Island, 15km north of Madang was established in 1905² as part of the Mission expansion. The Lutheran mission headquarters was established on Ragetta Island in Madang harbour. Ragetta is now known as Kranket Island – just a few hundred metres across the water from today’s Madang Resort hotel. The war time story is taken up by Esther Dockter Wagenast’s “Go Softly the Darkness”:

As in the Sepik and throughout the Papua and the mandated Territory of New Guinea, within 2 weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, European women and children were evacuated. Many missionaries left on the first available ships, which included the *Malaita*, *Melanesia*, *Ambon*, the SDA boats *Advant Herald*, and *Diari*, The Oil exploration boats *Patrero*, *Matoubra*, and Lever & Kitchen’s *Giligili*. Father John Glover made epic flights across the mountains with refugees – in an open cockpit Gypsy Moth and a DH 60 Moth. A skeleton of administration, mission and business remained at their posts.

Lutheran missionaries who remained at their posts in the Madang area included³:

At Ragetta HQ: Superintendent Fliehler and Capt Radke of MV *Total*.

At Bogadjim: Rev. Dott and Brother Wenz

At Amele: Rev. Welsch, Dr Braun & Mrs Braun, Sister Klotzbuecher, Sister Kroeger, and Brother Keuhn

At Nagada: Brother Bertelsmeier

At Amron: Rev. Mager Brothers Siemers & Krebs

At Nobonob: Rev. Ander

At Bunabun: Rev. Henkelmann and Brother Barber

At Karkar Island: Rev. Hafermann and Brother Mild

At Sattelberg: Rev. Wagner.

Despite the German surnames by 1939 many of these missionaries were Americans. With their evacuation tasks [Chapter completed Harris Navy returned to their home ports: the *Gnair* to Lae, the *Umboi* with Captain Freund to Rooke Island and the *Total* to Ragetta Island.

Back on the mission stations, the missionaries nervously awaited the arrival of the Japanese, with the additional knowledge that with no supply vessels coming in, their food would soon run out. The situation, which would seem desperate to most people, came down to the question whether the missionaries would leave if the chance occurred. The consensus among them was that unless total evacuation became law, they would not; it would be their choice to remain. Someone must administer the Sacraments as so far no native was ordained

to administer the sacraments. Nevertheless word of the Japanese advance meant that the burden of remaining at their posts became ever heavier.

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End Notes Attachment A

¹ Peter Sack 1980 Page 11

² Matbob P. Fr. Eberhard Limbrock – leader of the first SVD mission in New Guinea – 2001 Page 3.

³ Wegenast E,D, 1998 Page 74

Chapter 12 ADOs Jim Taylor and Charlie Bates visit Angoram 23rd Feb. – 2nd March 1942 - Awaiting the Inevitable Takes Its Toll

ADO's Jim Taylor and Charlie Bates arrived in Angoram from Yimas on 23rd February 1942 and after eating dinner with Ellis and his guests, talked through until 11.30pm. Next day Odgers was in the Angoram office when Taylor and Bates met there with Ellis. There was a great deal of discussion and reviewing of radio messages. In Odgers' view there were obvious differences of opinion, and he did not think the parties came close to reaching consensus on the current situation or a viable way forward.

Odgers busied himself by arranging for the 84 labourers he had paid to make their way overland back to the Maprik area via Wewak. Next he transacted Commonwealth Savings Bank deposits and withdrawals by members of the public. After lunch he paid off more labourers, this time for Len Bridger's team. After work he joined Eric Petterson, Bob Moody and Roy Smith in a game of golf on the Angoram airstrip.

The desperate situation regarding the approaching war, the hopeless situation for the men trapped in the Sepik and the miseries of life in general saw Odgers' morale hit rock bottom on the 25th. His diary indicates that he restlessly tried to write a letter to his mother and another to a girlfriend, but he was not in the mood. His thoughts turned to joining the miners if they attempt to go down the coast in a launch. Charlie Bates somehow sensed Odgers' mood and gave him a pep talk, after which Odgers noted that he felt much better.

He was ill on the 26th with something that felt like influenza. Dr. Schroeder was called and proscribed aspirin and rest. From his sick bed Odgers listened to the news and the on-going discussions between Ellis, Bates and Taylor. On the 27th he was still feeling "wonky" and stayed in bed. It was not until the 28th that he felt well enough to go to the office, but by then Bates pep talk had worn off and Odgers wrote a note to Jack Thurston about the prospects of a dash to Port Moresby or Australia in the *Fanny*.

At 10am Jim Taylor left for Wewak in the *Osprey*. Bates came to lunch and he and Ellis entertained the guests with tales of their travels in Asia. A radio message arrived from Jones, agreeing to Ellis' proposal to set up a radio station at Kopar, at the mouth of the Sepik. The logic was that Angoram needed a day's notice if an enemy vessel entered the river mouth 67 miles downstream; it would take a day to reach Angoram.

Angoram's social calendar then saw Odgers visit Dr. Schroeder in an attempt to arrange a four to play bridge but this failed. The only event of note in Odgers' diary on 1st March was that Ellis produced a bottle of whisky before lunch and his house guests each had a nip. Bates came to the house after lunch for a yarn. As he was to go to Kopar next day to set up the coast watching station there, Odgers loaned him his wireless so he could listen to the news. Bates left in the *Osprey* at 11am on 2nd March for the Sepik River mouth.

Johnny Young arrived from Lake Yimas and told of the second Japanese raid on Madang. Odgers wrote up Ellis' cash book and balanced his books for him. On the 3rd he wrote to his mother and another and gave the letters to Smith just in case he did not survive the overland expedition with Jack Thurston. It follows that Thurston's response to his suggestion a few days earlier to commandeer the *Fanny* was an assurance that Odgers would be a vital member of his overland evacuation to the Papuan coast. The news that day told of enemy air attacks on Broome and Wyndham in Western Australia and a day light raid (the third) on Port

Moresby. The Japanese invasion was very widespread and moving ever closer. His final diary entry for the day read: “*Any scheme of reaching Australia by canoe is now impossible.*”

On 4th March they turned the Angoram radio on for the noon schedule and heard Bates call from Kopar. Now the men at Angoram had a day’s warning if a Japanese vessel entered the Sepik River. Bates reported that there were no enemy vessels in sight. Odgers deduced from the news next morning that Java would fall within another week because of insufficient air support. There was nothing he could do about that so he had his hair cut and played patience with Eric Petterson. Then after dinner he went across to Doc Schroeder’s to play bridge. He played very badly by his standards, losing eight shillings and six pence.

Bad news continued on 6th March: Lae and Bulolo were bombed again on the 5th. Again however there was nothing to be done, so on the 7th at 10.30am Odgers wandered over to watch the “citizens” playing Chinese checkers. He even played a game and that evening, despite holding fair cards he lost three shillings and six pence playing bridge. He spent that night restlessly thinking through possible schemes for the future; should they walk to Madang to join the NGVR? He made a note to ask Ellis in the morning how far Madang is from Kopar.

As if by mental telepathy a radio message received from DO Jones next morning, 8th March advised all civilians and officers over 45 to march to Madang to join up with District Officer Oakley. They were to take six weeks rations with them and the party was to be ready to leave within eight days. Odgers sent a radio to the DO “*AS NGVR RESERVIST MAY I PROCEED MADANG REJOIN UNIT?*” Immediate responses to radio messages had not yet been invented, so while he waited he played patience through the afternoon as the rain bucketed down outside.

The news on the 9th March was that the Japs had occupied Salamaua. Any chance of retreat in that direction was completely out of the question. The bad news brought deputations of civilians to see Ellis. Then everyone assembled at Ellis’s house to hear the news, which confirmed the reports about Lae and Salamaua. A radio message also arrived for Odgers “*REGRET YOUR APPLICATION CANNOT BE GRANTED*”

End Notes Chapter 12

This Chapter comes from Len Odger’s diary.

Chapter 13 Taylor Instructed to Relieve Ellis of his Command at Angoram

- Coastwatching Confusion at the Mouth of the Sepik

DO Jones Sepik report for the period records that on the 9th of March 1942, the coast watching Station at Aitape closed. Milligan and Searson were brought to Wewak. This action was necessary owing to the shortage of “B” batteries – Navy was duly notified. On 10th March ADO Taylor was instructed to take over the Sepik River Sub District from ADO Ellis. In other words Taylor had been given the unpleasant task of relieving Ellis of his command.

Meanwhile in Angoram, Odgers decided that the time had come to make up his mind about what he was going to do. After lunch he went down to the “citizens” camp and spoke with Len Bridger about the walking track to Madang but no one there could give him any helpful information. This left him somewhat “*dead in the water*” as far as his plans went. Meanwhile he was distracted by things he needed to do. A canoe had arrived from Bates at Kopar bringing in a broken wireless part. He would have to do something about fixing that. Then Jack Thurston arrived from Yimas by canoe. Would the overland expedition be starting soon? And finally DO Jones ordered Odgers to Kopar to temporarily relieve Bates. All this meant that his morning’s resolve to make up his mind about his future now had to be put on hold.

What was not on hold was the Japanese advance. The news that night reported that Finschhafen has been invaded. The Japanese were moving rapidly in Lenny’s direction.

Jack Thurston now takes up the story. His diary noted that after leaving Yimas of 7th March to report to Jim Taylor for instructions, he arrived at Angoram on the 10th. There was a number of “whites” there and it seemed to him there was a lot of confusion resulting from the many instructions that had come from the Angoram Sub District Office. Most of the “whites” did not understand that the situation all over the Territory was changing so much every day - that it necessitated regular changes of plans.

ADO Taylor had gone to Wewak to see DO Jones and ADO Bates at Kopar with radio transmitters to give warning if Japs started to come up the river. Instructions had been received that evacuation by water was impossible, and for over age officers and civilians to proceed to Oakley at Ramu - and that Ellis was to take charge. This was clearly impossible to do as previously everyone was told to send all their labourers home and keep only one: as a result there were no carriers. Moreover Ellis refused to go. Thurston’s diary noted on the 11th that the civilians were examined for fitness to make the trip to Ramu, and Dr. Schroeder only passed two out of nine civilians.

Furthermore on the 11th, Odgers left Angoram in the *Fanny* and arrived at Kopar at 6pm, where he spoke with the *tultul* [village official and interpreter]. The *Fanny* anchored out in the surf from where Odgers went ashore by canoe and was met on the beach by Bates. The coast watching campsite Bates had chosen was a small distance from Kopar village at Cape Girgir which offered an unobstructed view of the sea. After they reached the camp, Odgers repaired the damaged wireless and contacted Ellis at 8pm on call sign WGE (Angoram). Kopar was identified by call sign WGK and Wewak as WBJ.

There was a false alarm regarding a light seen by the police watch at 11pm. The camp was awake and active at dawn next morning with the police conducting the daily flag raising ceremony. Odgers saw to Bates’ departure and almost immediately trouble began. The

battery charger would not start and he spent all morning trying to fix it before noticing there was water in the petrol. With the problem identified, he soon had the machine running. Following the 2pm radio schedule, being a good Sydney boy Odgers did some body-surfing. The water is brackish rather than salt, muddy instead of the sparkling blue, and the beach "sand" was coarse black gravel from the nearby volcanic islands of Blupblup and Manam, rather than the shimmering gold of Sydney - but it was surf nevertheless.

With him at Kopar was a mixed-race radio operator called Leslie. That day Leslie intercepted the 3pm wireless messages between Wewak-Angoram and later Odgers decoded them, so that he could remain informed of current events. At 5pm the *Gabriel* was sighted coming along the west coast from Terebu. He informed WGE (Angoram) of this at 6.30pm. A message and two bottles of beer were sent ashore from Taylor on the *Gabriel*.

Next morning, 13th March, he had his morning cup of tea and then encoded the message from Taylor to be transmitted at 8am. He then spent the day intercepting coded radio messages between WGE (Angoram) and WBJ (Wewak) and in the morning de-coding them. The *Nereus* was sighted at 8.15am and a police boy sent to investigate ascertained that she was carrying Jock Laird, one soldier and one civilian as passengers. WGE was sent a message to that effect. He waited until after 5pm to drink one of his bottles of beer while he relaxed and had a quiet read.

On the 14th Odgers was displeased when for the third morning running WGE failed to come up on the 6.30am schedule. Such things become important to people posted to remote locations for the very purpose of maintaining radio communications. He called upon all hands to clean up the Cape Girgir camp and was well satisfied that an appreciable difference had been made.

He purchased some sago, bananas, pumpkins and shell fish from Singrin people, and being unaware of the values gave them one pound for the lot. He decided that he had probably over paid them. Later the Luluai of Murik arrived with a note from Bates informing him that he would be at Kopar for another two or three days. To remain informed, he decoded an interesting message from Angoram to Wewak concerning an evacuation by the *Gabriel*. Facts would prove that the plan involved the *Nereus*, not the *Gabriel*. He drank his second bottle of beer while reading on the veranda.

In Angoram the story is resumed by Jack Thurston's diary entry for 14th March 1942 which noted that the *Gabriel* arrived with ADO Taylor to take over station from ADO Ellis who refused to hand it over. Thurston advised Taylor that Ellis had armed his police and may make trouble, and that Ellis said he will not leave the station unless it was to go upriver. Thurston also reported to Taylor that Ellis had stocks of fuel for the *Osprey* hidden in his house. Ellis was also talking about destroying the AWA wireless which was now at Yamundo, half way between Wewak and Timbunke.

The *Nereus* arrived on the evening of the 14th with Jock Laird in charge, and two members of the NGVR on board. On the 15th ADO Taylor put Thurston in charge of the *Nereus* and wired Jones that he would evacuate the civilians and some officers by boat with Thurston in command and take her to Australia. On the basis of this Thurston then set about making protective shade awnings for the *Nereus* and began to stow cargo for the voyage. Jock Laird, meanwhile stripped and overhauled the ship's engines. Among Thurston's wide

experience and many skills was that he was an expert sailor, having been the mate on the W.R.Carpenter Ltd vessel the *Meklong* in the 1920s.¹

Back at Cape Girgir confusion reigned. On the 15th March Odgers received a radio message from Taylor ordering him to close the camp and to return with all the gear and personnel to Angoram. In accordance with his instruction, next day Odgers put the personnel to work packing the gear and at 9.30am the first load of cargo was taken down to the beach and then to Kopar in a big sailing canoe. At 10am he sent a radio message saying that WGK (Kopar) would be closing down after the 12 midday call.

Much to his surprise back came a message that the station was to remain open under the control of Sgt. Lauri and Leslie, and the balance of the police were to return with Odgers to Angoram. These conflicting instructions frustrated Odgers who admitted in his diary that he was fed up and decided to go to Madang in a Murik Lakes canoe and join the NGVR. He radioed in his resignation and was about to depart at 2pm, for Madang, when back came a message that all previous instructions were cancelled and he was to remain at Kopar! If he was disgusted before – he was very disgusted now, but he was also under direct orders. He called all his personnel back and recalled all the cargo amid much cursing, then he radioed to cancel his resignation stating that he would remain at Kopar as instructed.

At about 8am on 17th of March the *Thetis* was sighted so he reported in to WGE. The *Thetis* entered the river at 9.30am and anchored at Kopar. Odgers hurried along the beach with Sgt. Lauri but the tide was in and he had to wade practically the whole way. They were almost to Kopar when the *Thetis* continued on upstream. Much to Odgers' disgust he had to wade back again. He read for the remainder of the morning, went surfing, read some more and played patience – what else was there to do? Feeling miserable, Odgers became even more depressed by re-reading letters from home. That evening he listened to the news and learned that someone called General MacArthur was in charge of the ANZAC area and that American troops had arrived in Australia.

Meanwhile DO Jones ordered that the *Nereus* was not to go to Australia, but proceed to Bogajim plantation, Madang, with over age officers and civilians who were then to walk to the Ramu River to join the Madang evacuation². Upon hearing this, the civilians refused to go. George Ellis had already refused an order to lead the civilians to the Ramu via the Keram River and now he also refused to lead them via Bogajim. A very serious situation was developing, which decided DO Jones that he needed to go to Angoram.

Meanwhile the *Thetis* arrived in Angoram with Shaw, Keogh, Cook and Price of the AIF. Price had escaped from Rabaul. ADO Taylor now placed Thurston in charge of *Thetis*. At 10 am on 19th March Odgers received a radio from Taylor telling him to pack up and move to Kopar village preparatory to being taken by the *Gabriel* to Angoram. This additional conflicting instruction convinced him to rejoin the NGVR. Enough was enough! He worded a radio message to that effect but could not make radio contact with Angoram at noon so the message was not sent.

He again packed up all the gear and left Cape GirGir at 2pm. His party arrived at Kopar village at 4pm after a very slow trip by canoe. The village rest house was in such poor condition that it was necessary to put tarpaulins on the roof. The radio was set up and Odgers sent a message to Taylor asking if the scheme for evacuation by the *Gabriel* was still planned

to happen. Odgers experienced a noisy night; an accompaniment of pigs grunting and *kanaka* dogs rooting around the kitchen.

The *Gabriel* was sighted in the distance at 7.57am on 20th and arrived at Kopar at 10.50am. After a discussion with DO Jones, Odgers broke camp and loaded his gear onto the ship which departed Kopar at 11.05am. He now took his opportunity to talk with the DO regarding things at Angoram and explained why he wished to go to Madang. The *Gabriel* moved steadily upstream as this discussion took place and when they were about an hour from Marienberg, the *Fanny* was sighted coming the other way. Bates was on board and he had a terrible tale to tell³

End Notes Chapter 13

¹ No Turning Back – E.T.W.Fulton page 19 Pandanus Books 2005.

² Thurston diary 18th March Report of evacuation from Wewak, Territory of New Guinea

³ Len Odgers diary 20th March 1942.

Chapter 14 **The Angoram Incident** – Armed Parties Exchange Gunfire - the Demise of ADO Ellis 20th March 1942.

Jack Thurston was best placed to explain how that terrible tale unfolded. On the 19th March 1942 Ellis finally agreed to hand the station over to Taylor. Taylor now swore Thurston in as a special constable and ordered him to take the *Thetis* to Timbunke with a load¹ of cargo as Angoram was too exposed to have vital stores kept there - stores that would be needed later. Sixteen police were to go with the *Thetis* as were Dr. Schroeder and Messrs. Fisher, Petterson, Mason and Hindwood.

Taylor had not informed DO Jones of this plan and would explain it to him when he arrived in Angoram, and then take him to Timbunke. The proven approach to avoid micro management is to announce courses of action after their successful completion!

At Timbunke Thurston was to establish a base. The loading of the *Thetis* was completed at 10am and Thurston sent his police to cook their rice while he made his way up to Ellis' house to say good bye. He found Ellis packing his gear and indicated to Thurston that he was planning to go to a place somewhere up river. He asked for a couple of bags of rice, and as Thurston was in charge of stores, he agreed and arranged for the bags to be sent up to Ellis' house. Thurston returned to the waterfront and left with the *Thetis* from in front of the district office to go about half a mile upstream to Macgregor's station and trade store where he had other cargo to load.

Meanwhile Taylor was in the sub district office when Ellis walked in with a revolver in his hand, backed up by police. Ellis told Taylor that he would give him and the others half an hour to get off the station. Taylor approached Ellis who brought the revolver up and threatened to shoot it he came closer. Taylor tried to reason with Ellis, but to no effect. Bates was in the background on the veranda and could have shot Ellis, but the police were behind Ellis and would have shot Taylor had Ellis been shot. From there Ellis retired with the police to his house.

At 10.30am Bates ran down to the *Thetis* to say that Ellis had all the police up at his house with loaded rifles and that Ellis had given him and Taylor half an hour to get off the station. The police Thurston had sent to cook their rice had not returned and were also at Ellis' house.

Thurston with gun in hand made his way to the patrol officer's bungalow and from there worked his way on to the ridge and along it around towards Ellis' place until he had a good view of the house and the gully on either side of it. The police were in trenches in front of the house and commenced firing at Taylor's party on the foreshore, and at Thurston on the ridge. Thurston fired shots which prevented the police retiring from their trenches. At this point he saw Ellis running around to the back of his house with a revolver in his hand. Thurston fired several shots at Ellis but missed.

Unfortunately Thurston's party on the waterfront was unaware that he Thurston was on the ridge and commenced firing on him as well as at the police. This put him in the cross fire from the waterfront and the police in the trenches, so with some difficulty he retired and took advantage of the cover from the hill near the patrol officer's bungalow to extricate himself.

Taylor came up and met him there and they discussed the situation. They noted that there were about 50 police armed with .303 rifles, secure in trenches with an open field of fire

against anyone approaching their position. Moreover, as there were only eight or so people opposing them, it would be wise for the smaller party to retreat downstream. Thurston returned to the *Thetis* with Mason, Hindwood, Cook and Fisher – running the gauntlet of fire as by now the police had occupied the ridge overlooking the *Thetis*.

Fisher got into difficulty by falling into the river while taking cover. The current was strong and he could not swim. Two of the Manus Island crew from the *Thetis* lowered a boat and rescued him while under fire from the police. As somewhat of an understatement, Thurston noted that this was “*quite a good piece of work on their part.*”

Once everyone was aboard the *Thetis*, Thurston ordered Dr. Schroeder and Petterson to protect the boat in case the police attempted to board her. They were under constant fire, but they had cover and the range was too great to be effective. Thurston started the engines and pulled away from the river bank and went upstream and then over to the far bank in order to get as far away as possible from the rifle fire, and from there headed downstream.

All seemed well, but just as the *Thetis* came abeam of Angoram station there was a signal from the *Nereus*. She was loaded and ready for her voyage to Bogajim but her engines would not start and she was fast aground in the mud. The *Thetis* now turned back into the danger zone to assist the *Nereus*. A tow line was attached, but it came away. Thurston manoeuvred the *Thetis* in against the river bank so that another line could be attached. Taylor and Bates went ashore to provide covering fire if necessary. With the line re-attached to the *Nereus*, Taylor and Bates re-boarded the *Thetis*. With the engine set on slow-ahead the *Thetis* dislodged the *Nereus* and towed her downstream.

At this point there was a lull in the firing, but as the *Thetis* came abeam of the hospital the police were found to have moved into the trenches around the air raid shelter. They again opened fire on the *Thetis*. Those on board took cover as best they could, but Taylor who was up forward was hit in the groin. Dr. Schroeder administered morphine to make him as comfortable as possible.

The *Thetis* then picked up Herman, the mixed race skipper of the *Osprey* who had gone to the office and seized the vessel's magneto and hidden it in the bush. The *Osprey* was going nowhere without that vital part. The *Thetis* also picked up Herman's wife and child and two others who were hiding in the pitpit (cane grass) by the river. From there it took about two hours to reach Marienberg at 4pm. Taylor was taken ashore to be operated upon by Dr. Schroeder. Bates boarded the *Fanny* to go off in search of the DO downstream².

Odgers again takes up the story³. Having heard Bates version of events, the *Gabriel* continued upstream and arrived at Marienberg at 7.35pm. Odgers talked with Thurston and Hodgekiss on their way to the Catholic mission where a council of war was held. Once DO Jones was satisfied that he had all the facts, he called on Odgers to help encode radio messages. This took him until 3am. Among the messages sent was one to Major General Morris, Commandant of the Eighth Military District – based in Port Moresby.

Odgers was up and about at 6.30am and had a cup of tea with Hodgekiss before helping Bates set up the wireless. Then he had morning tea with the DO aboard the *Gabriel*. From there he walked to where the *Nereus* was moored and saw Smith and the others. The *Nereus* with its engines functioning again departed at 4.15pm on 21st March. Those on board included Jock Laird, Roy Smith, Harry Ceal, Garry Keogh, Frank Simmcocks, Len Bridger,

Joe Taylor, Bob Moody, Alf Price (AIF), ...Graham,....Lynch, and McConnell, E J Cook, Jack Lang and Geoff Shaw.

DO Jones Sepik District report states that the majority of the civilians were ready to go anywhere, so he sent 16 of them on the *Nereus* to Bogadjim with instructions to pick up ADO Black at Bogia, en route. As the Medical Officer had reported that senior clerk Smith was medically unfit, he was allowed to accompany the party.

(*Nereus Post Script* Even though the instructions were for the *Nereus* to go to Bogajim, the civilians on board had refused to go there. Taylor had previously planned that *Nereus* would take the civilians to Australia, but Jones cancelled that instruction. The ship sailed from Angoram and ended up in an Australian port with sixteen civilians on board in time to make the news on 20th April. DO Jones' Sepik District report which runs to early July makes no mention of the Australian arrival of the *Nereus* –which had sailed south in contravention of his orders.

The log of the *Nereus* for this voyage is held by the State Library of New South Wales. The *Nereus* made landfall at “*Flying Fish Point Brisbane*”. This most likely refers to Flying Fish Point near Innisfail in North Queensland).

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Odgers shaved and groomed himself before going up to the mission station hoping to see Taylor. Unfortunately Jones and Bates had already been, so Odgers did not get to see him. Instead he turned his attention to other things. Since the mosquitoes were so bad at night he rigged his net over the table in the *Gabriel's* saloon so all could eat without being bitten. A European watch was set at night with Bates drawing the first watch and Odgers the third; he would be relieved by Hodgekiss at 12.30am.

Odgers' diary noted “*The Winon arrived from Madang, but the 'Kong' did not have any fresh news*”. *Kong* is short in Pidgin for a Chinese – *Kongkong*. The Chinese in question was Chu Leong, owner of the *Winon* and himself a longstanding respected trader in Angoram and throughout the Sepik, who we will meet again later in the story.

Jones' Sepik District Report provides a good understanding of the sense of responsibility that prevailed at that time :-

“*When A.D.O. Bates heard of my intentions (to visit Angoram station next day to investigate) he applied to accompany me, and Messrs. Thurston, Hindwood, Petterson, Mason, Malische and Odgers also volunteered. As it appeared that there was a stiff job ahead, I was glad of their help⁴*”

Next morning the 22nd March 1942, preparations were made for a trip upriver in the *Thetis*. Two of Ellis' personal boys arrived at Marienberg and stated that all the police had run away. Nevertheless the *Thetis* decks were fitted with protective barriers of sand bags, cast iron and timber to make it somewhat bullet proof. The *Thetis* departed Marienberg at 12.15pm. En route to Angoram Jones swore in Hindwood, Pettersen, Mason, Malische and Odgers as special constables. Arms and ammunition were distributed and everyone was given a position to occupy. The *Thetis* passed Angoram at 5.05pm with everyone lying behind the protective sand bags ready for an ambush, but apart from flags flying from the ADOs bungalow there was no sign of life.

The decision was taken to go to Angoram village which was reached at 5.45pm. The village had been recently deserted. The mosquitoes were very bad and DO Jones complained bitterly. Two police boys were sent to the station and they returned saying they could not see anyone, although they thought they saw matches being struck. Dinner was prepared and consumed under a big mosquito net erected in the church. The party then settled in for the night, but the mosquitoes were so bad that very little sleep was possible.

With the dawn on the 23rd, more of Jones' police visited Angoram station and returned to report no signs of life there. The *Thetis* left the village at 7.30am. Jones, Pettersen, Hindwood and several police went ashore at the native hospital at 7.45am. Upstream of the patrol officer's bungalow where the ship tied up, the second party consisting of Bates, Mason, Malische and police went ashore. Thurston and Odgers were left as a guard on the ship but as time dragged by with nothing happening they slipped ashore to examine the POs bungalow.

At 9.22am the "all clear" was given and the *Thetis* was brought around into the main portion of the river and everyone went to the ADO's bungalow. The house was a shambles with bullet holes everywhere. Ellis had written a note for his sister and then shot himself. All his police had run away. Odgers observed that the scene was far different from the one he left on the 11th to go to Kopar and Cape Girgir. All Ellis' personal gear had been burnt and with it, some of Odgers'.

DO Jones' Sepik District Report stated simply that Ellis body was buried. During a visit to Angoram in January 1974 the writer's enquiries failed to locate his unmarked grave. I was taken to a cemetery near the power house at the end of the airstrip. Chu Leong and Shanghai Brown are buried there. It was assumed that Ellis was buried in that area.⁵

From there the party adjourned to the medical officer's house for a cup of tea and time for everyone to gather their thoughts. Jones recorded the situation to date and left Odgers to encode the message. After everyone listened to the 11.30am news, Odgers arranged a buffet luncheon. Everyone, except Odgers and Bates, who would be on guard duty at Angoram, re-boarded the *Thetis*, which departed at 3.10pm for Marienberg.

End Notes Chapter 14

¹ Thurston Diary 20th March 1942

² Thurston diary 20th March 1942

³ Odgers Diary 20th March 1942

⁴ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42

⁵ Bragge L.W. Vol. 21 Bragge Sepik Research Notes page 215

Chapter 15 Renegade Police and the Murder of PO Richard Strudwick at Timbunke on 22nd March – Thurston’s Preparations Begin for the Journey to Papua

Following the dramas at Angoram, Jack Thurston takes up the story :-

After the fight on the 20th March 1942 the renegade police left the Angoram station, some going to the coast, some up the Ramu and others up the main river. Most of them just wanted to make their way home. On the 21st of March District Officer Jones (not knowing that probably by then Ellis had shot himself) sent a message to the Lake Yimas call sign which said words to the effect:

“Ellis with 40 police has driven all whites from Angoram which he holds(.) Proceed to No 2 Depot, Yamundo, via Timbunke immediately, travelling night and day.”

PO Strudwick, upon receipt of this message, proceeded at once to Timbunke. He was not certain whether it was intended that everyone at Lake Yimas should go to Timbunke, but as there was a large quantity of stores there (at Yimas), Preston White, Atkinson, Gallin, and Pickwell stayed and Strudwick went, taking with him a Corporal of Police and two constables. Although they carried their rifles, they had not been issued with any ammunition.

Strudwick arrived at Timbunke just before dusk on 22nd March and was met by the policeman stationed at Timbunke and he walked to the rest house. He noticed other police standing near the house and questioned them. They said that they had been sent upstream on some work by Ellis. Strudwick went into the rest house and his personal boys prepared his meal. About 7pm when sitting down with his meal, one of the police crept up and shot him. They dragged him still alive but unconscious and threw him into the Sepik.

This left a serious question over the head of the policeman stationed at Timbunke – why did he not warn Strudwick? Investigation showed that when the renegade police arrived at Timbunke they boasted that they had killed all the Europeans at Angoram and that Ellis had sent them up river with instructions to kill all the whites they met. Upon hearing this, the policeman later claimed that he thought they were only boasting and that the story was untrue. Probably closer to the truth is the likelihood that he was too scared to warn Strudwick, fearing for his own safety. He did tell Strudwick’s police, but they also were apparently too frightened to speak.

The story is continued by Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai who was in Angoram when the Angoram Incident took place. Nonguru told how Kiap Ellis had told his police :-

“Go into the villages. You are married to Sepik women and the Sepiks are your friends. You wait there and later the Government will come and get you.”¹

I was at Chu Leong’s place where I was employed as a labour recruiter for Mr. Macgregor. We used to recruit from Chu Leong’s ship the Winon. After the shooting stopped and the ships were gone and Kiap Ellis had committed suicide, the police threatened to beat the village and station people and coerced them into paddling canoes to take them and their families upstream. I was one of the ones ‘recruited’. We moved fifteen police and families upstream.

When we reached Timbunke we heard that there was a kiap there. Constable Mansa, a Markham said “Why leave this kiap – let’s kill him” Constable Lontubil went up and shot him while he was in his house. I do not know the kiaps name. I saw the constable go into

the house and I heard the shot. I saw them pull the body down the steps and I ran away when they threw the body into the river.”

Writers Note: Nonguru names Constable Lontubil as the killer but Odgers’ diary states on 17th April 1942 that Father Creusberg said Constable Sini had confessed. As I spoke to Nonguru three decades after the event. I would accept “Sini” not “Lontubil” was the killer.

Nonguru continues :-

I ran to the house of a relative who was working in Timbunke and I hid in his house until the police had left. The killing was not where the Mission is now, but on the river bank which has eroded away where the kiaps house was then. As for the police they were paddled up to Mindimbit. Then the Mindimbits paddled them to Kaminimbit. The Kaminimbits paddled them to Kararau, who in turn paddled them to Tego, who in turn paddled them to Kanganaman. From there they went in through Parembai and ended up on Sambugundei Island. I came later with my relatives and returned to home to Japandai. [See central lower right of Map 2]

Meanwhile back in Angoram after an early night on 23rd, Odgers² sorted out all the groceries from Ellis’ house and got some of the baggage put away in the store. Next day the 25th he helped Bates search for the valves of the office radio. Apparently Ellis had disabled the radio by removing the valves. A missionary arrived from Kambot with a report that ten of the rebel police were at his Mission station. He was requested to tell the police to return to Angoram. Then a letter was received from Timbunke saying that a party of police arrived there on Sunday night (22/3/42) and had shot down a police master from Yimas.

The *Thetis* arrived from Marienberg bringing Jim Hodgekiss, Jack Thurston, Eric Petterson, Theo Mason, Harold Hindwood and Jim Malicke Herman, skipper of the *Osprey*. Jim Hodgekiss stayed with Bates and Odgers. A long radio message was sent to DO Jones concerning the reported happenings at Timbunke. Thurston and the others came after dinner and plans for the future were discussed. Prominent in the discussion was the long discussed trek across the Island to the safety of the Papuan coast.

Jones Sepik District Report mentioned that he was anxious to get all civilians away. Thurston, Petterson, Mason, Hindwood and Malische wished to walk overland to Papua from May River - they were to be transported to this point on the *Thetis*. Medical Assistant Pickwell and Clerk Odgers were to accompany the party, as it was considered advisable that a medical man should be with them, and Odgers with only one pair of spectacles (his vision was so poor that he was useless without them) was considered better off out of the District.

On the 26th Odgers re-packed his clothes for the trip across New Guinea and explained the position to Forok. At the office he typed out sections of Jim Taylor’s 1938/9 Patrol report as a guide for Thurston. At the house he selected crockery and cutlery for the trip. The *Winon* arrived from Marienberg bringing Fisher with bad news concerning Taylor’s condition. Odgers played bridge that night with Jack Thurston, Theo Mason and Charlie Bates and held wonderful cards all night.

Next morning Odgers had his gear packed just in case the *Thetis* sailed that day. While waiting he went to the office and typed out some of the Kelefolmin (Telefomin) vocabulary from Taylor’s report. DO Jones radioed in three times that day. The first asked if there was any further news from Timbunke. Then at 2pm Jones ordered Thurston and party to remain at

Angoram. Finally at 4pm Jones agreed that the party was free to go to Timbunke as it was understood that the murderers were making for Maprik. It was not clear how Jones came by that mistaken information. At 8.12am 28th March the *Thetis* left Angoram on its way to Timbunke. Odgers' diary noted that this would probably be his last day in civilization until he reached Australia in three months' time. Just before passing Magendo they picked up the Mission brother from Timbunke who told them that PO John (Preston) White had been shot by six police at about 8pm on Sunday night. It was not discovered until days later that they had the wrong name.

The journey on the *Thetis* that day involved hour after hour of the usual river scenery of *pitpit* covered river banks, wet-lands and incessant pouring rain. The men on board passed the hours playing Chinese checkers and reading. The *Thetis* passed the mouth of the Yuat River at 4.50pm and then at 5.30pm arrived at Kambrinjo. (Kambrindo). They met Father Meyer and walked with him to the mission houses. Back onboard the *Thetis* Odgers rigged up the big net on the hatch and they all had their meal under it. When the dishes were cleared away Pettersen, Hindwood and Odgers made up their beds on the hatch cover. There was not much room and to make things worse Odgers managed to tear a large hole in the net, through which a cloud of mosquitoes flew making him very unpopular.

Next morning after folding their beds, they said their farewells to Father Meyer and his staff. The *Thetis* pulled out from the river bank and headed upstream at 6.45am. It was the same river scenery hour after hour, mile after mile until 11.15am they landed at Kanduanam, and Thurston recruited some carriers for the trek overland from the May River headwaters.

The huge village of Tambanum (which is marked on Map no 1) was reached at 3.15pm. Odgers went ashore with Thurston. The *Haus Kiap* was about 35ft x 20 ft. and very tall. The building was highly decorated with the house posts daubed with blue, yellow and black bands and two wooden figures. Although Odgers was apparently unaware of it, Tambanum is the first of the so called "Middle Sepik" villages. They had now left the Lower Sepik behind. The Middle Sepik village people speak the Iatmul language. The Iatmul people had a reputation as being aggressive head hunters until a decade or so earlier. By 1942 their head hunting days were over, but their toughness lived on.

The *Thetis* left Tambanum at 3.30 pm and arrived at Timbunke at 6.20pm where they were met by Father Schafer. The Father took them to the house where he said "John Preston-White" had been shot down. The *Thetis* was then moored at the Mission. It had been a long day and as there were mosquitoes about they prepared their beds and yarned into the night from under their nets.

They unloaded the ship on the 30th with the cargo being stored in the Mission shed. Odgers and Theo Mason worked on repairing an unserviceable Briggs and Stratton battery charger. Odgers took his evening wash in the Sepik River alongside the ship. The mosquitoes at Timbunke were the worst they had yet experienced. Life there would be simply unbearable without mosquito nets. Everyone sought their mosquito net sanctuaries early that evening. Then at about midnight Thurston came and told them that two of the renegade police had arrived back, and had revealed that it was Richard Strudwick who had been shot and killed and not John Preston-White. **End Notes Chapter 15**

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18. P 79

² Odgers Diary continues.

Chapter 16 Attending to Preparations and Logistics - the Journey to Yimas Lakes and Back by River

Thurston decided to go to Yimas on 1st April. No reason was given for this trip, other than the buying of canoes for the May River leg of their journey and perhaps to confirm the terrible news from Angoram and Timbunke for the men there.

The journey from Timbunke to Lake Yimas can be followed on Map 1 & 2. Departing Timbunke Mission at 9.15am, the *Thetis* unloaded all surplus fuel at Timbunke village. The boat then left the village with the *Fanny* following close behind. The trip up the Sepik as far as Mindimbit at the mouth of the Karawari River was uneventful. They arrived off Mindimbit at 1.15pm with all hands standing by with rifles until the rest house was passed. When nothing was seen of the renegade police, the *Thetis* moved on and entered the mouth of the Karawari River at 1.40pm, but not before the *Thetis* rammed the river bank. The ship progressed smoothly up the river until 2.50pm when they ran aground in a difficult position where both the wind and the river current drove them further aground.

With much swearing and excitement the *Fanny* attempted to tow the *Thetis* off – she eventually floated free at 3.20pm. Progress against the current after that was slow and at 5pm it began to rain and visibility became very bad. After dinner Thurston, Mason and Odgers went to the bow to observe the river ahead and direct the steersman as necessary. They reached Manjamai at 11.05pm and the villagers ran away, but soon returned when they recognized that it was the *Thetis* that was tied up to their river bank for the night.

On the 2nd April the *Thetis* left for the Yimas Lakes and travelled through clearer river water and between low hills, with higher mountains visible in the distance. The country became much more appealing when they turned from the Karawari into the tributary called the Arafundi River. It was a narrow strip of water with lush vegetation coming right down to the water with mirror reflections. Odgers could not resist going to the bow to enjoy the beauty of the passing scene.

The *Thetis* arrived at Yimas at 12.40pm with the *Fanny* close behind. They went ashore and met the Europeans there. These included John Preston-White, Keith Atkinson, Jim Gallin, and Ron Pickwell. There was much to talk about and first-hand accounts to share of what had occurred at Angoram a fortnight ago and more recently at Timbunke. Odgers walked around the village with John Preston-White and told him of the lead up to the proposed trip across New Guinea. Later that afternoon he helped Preston-White with the sad duty of going through Richard Strudwick's effects and picking out a few pathetic badges and buttons to be sent to Mrs. Strudwick¹.

Odgers slept very well until Keith Atkinson woke him at 3am on 3rd April to stand the early morning watch. He had a cup of tea with fellow early morning shift men Theo Mason and Jim Gallin before they started their rounds. They watched the sun rise then Mason began work on the rafts of canoes the ships would tow for use on the May River beyond where the ships could go. The rain came down at 8am curtailing work for the time being, so the Chinese checkers set was brought out. Then at 10.15am the sun shone again and more progress was made on the rafts. There were showers on and off all day.

It was decided to move off next morning so another day was to be spent at Yimas; an uneventful day through until 11pm that evening when Keith Atkinson had to wake Odgers

who discovered to his dismay that his watch was broken. On 4th April the *Thetis* was loaded and left Yimas at 10.40am. Thurston, Preston-White, Pickwell, Atkinson, Gallin, Mason and Odgers were on the *Fanny* towing the canoes. It was 11.25am before the canoes were lined up properly for towing and they were able to go.

They kept a close watch because occasionally the last canoe towed would hit a snag. Progress down-stream was slow as a result, and the *Thetis* stopped occasionally to see how the *Fanny* was going. Finally the *Thetis* signalled the *Fanny* to pass her and go on ahead. Later when there was no sign of the *Thetis*, investigation found her stuck fast on a mud bank. The canoes were then tied off on the river bank and the *Fanny* returned upstream to try and tow the bigger ship off. This did not work, so most of the cargo was unloaded on to the *Fanny* and ferried to Kundiman village. After several trips, disaster struck when the *Fanny's* water pump became blocked and required repairs. Luckily they had lightened the ship enough and Thurston was able to get the *Thetis* off. At Kundiman the *Thetis* was re-loaded and spent the night there.

On 5th April the *Thetis* left Kundiman at 9.30am with the disabled *Fanny*, a dinghy and the rafts of canoes in tow. Odgers and Mason spent the day working on the water pump. Apart from the rain that fell nearly all day, there were no serious incidents until the ships arrived in Timbunke at 6.12pm.

The message received that afternoon was that on the 1st of April all the police, carriers and servants had ran away from Tommy Aitchison's No 2 depot camp up in the hills at Yamundo, half way between Wewak and Timbunke. As a result the *Thetis* was to take the stores they had brought for Yamundo back to Angoram before going up to May River.

As Odgers was not required on the trip back to Angoram on the 6th, he collected all his gear from the *Thetis*, which departed at 11am with the bulk of the cargo from Yimas. The mosquitoes were very bad and his diary noted that he was nearly eaten alive while having his ablutions. His diary questioned whether it is better to be clean and bitten or dirty and unbitten.

With him at Timbunke awaiting the return of the *Thetis* were Hodgekiss and Mason. Hodgekiss was approached by a villager from upriver with a report that the renegade police were abducting women in the Chambri Lakes and allegedly had killed one person and wounded another. As this indicated a state of civil unrest in the direction they were heading Hodgekiss sent a radio message to Jones recommending that two officers be sent to Timbunke before the *Thetis* left for May River. If none arrived in time Odgers agreed to remain at Timbunke, while Hodgekiss went on the *Thetis*.

At 11.30am on 10th April the *Thetis* arrived back at Timbunke. In the afternoon the expedition members assisted Thurston to re-pack and re-stock their stores. Thirteen labourers were signed on to serve jointly with the administration and Jack Thurston. In this way the preparations for and fine tuning of the Thurston expedition continued.

On Sunday 12th April the expedition members attended the church service at the Mission Station. To Odgers it was a strange service as it was conducted with all the pagan pomp, ceremony and vestments in that native-built church. The church was decorated with banners and Father Schafer gave an excellent sermon in Pidgin on St Thomas the Doubter.

Later Pettersen and Hindwood made a curry and fruit salad for dinner for which Odgers typed a menu which all the expedition members autographed and presented to Father Schafer who was very pleased to receive it.

The preparations were completed on 13th of April with the fuelling of the *Thetis* and the recruitment of an additional twenty four carriers for whom Odgers drew up employment contracts. In order to be recognized as a military man, Odgers sewed Australian Military Force buttons and NGVR badges on one of his shirts.

End Notes Chapter 16

¹ Odgers' Diary continues.

Chapter 17 Rape, Murder and Pillage in the Chambri Lakes
the Renegade Police Continue to Run Amok

Reports from the Chambri Lakes indicated a serious situation had developed there. DO Jones explained what he then knew in his Sepik District report in the following words :-

“On 15th April advice was received from Bates that five miners and two Chinese had been killed by rebel police from Angoram. (It had been clearly ascertained that Ellis had instructed his police to kill every white man they met and take their cargo.) This news was very surprising as Bates had advised me some days earlier that these miners had been warned. It was later discovered that about 30 natives of the Chambri area had assisted the eight rebels in these murders. Instructions were immediately given to Bates to go with Blood, White and as many police as possible on a patrol of this area and to capture or shoot the natives concerned.

Bates later advised that the eight rebel police, together with a large number of natives, all armed, were strongly entrenched on an Island in the Chambri Lakes and they had a big pinnace at their disposal with plenty of fuel. With the force at his disposal and insufficient fuel for the Osprey it seemed unreasonable to ask officers to make an attack by canoe which would have certainly led to an unnecessary loss of life.

For this reason and the fact that Bates advised that a native rising was imminent, I suggested the services of a bomber. Bates, who had been previously instructed to make every effort to gain the confidence and trust of the natives, was now told to intensify the effort and to offer rewards for the capture of the known murderers dead or alive.”

What Jones did not indicate was that he had given the Thurston expedition the go ahead to proceed through the danger area as his information was that the rebel police had gone to the Maprik area. He also made no mention of Hodgekiss, a capable officer travelling with the expedition on board the *Thetis*. Ex-Sergeant of Police Yimbien of Tego takes up the story¹ from the time after Nonguru of Japandai fled from Timbunke after witnessing the murder of Strudwick :-

“Village by village the people paddled them upstream... Five police went into the channel to Aibom and Chambri and they came to Sambugundei Island. They were Baugwi, Bun, Tangwan, Mense² and Gaia. Gaia stayed at Chambri like a sentry pre-war, so he knew the place and the Chambri people.

*The other police Saima, Taneiwa and Alowali stayed at Korogo and did not participate in the trouble that was to come. The Korogos gave them women and they were living in Korogo as village people, so when Kiap “Whisky” (Hodgekiss) came on the *Thetis* the Korogo people concealed their presence.*

Many police had been assembled at Angoram from all the Sepik stations. [50 police were stated to have participated in the Angoram incident]. When they came upriver some went inland from Timbunke. Eight came as far as Kanganaman and five of these went into Chambri Lakes”.

The story is continued by Paul Banji of Japanaut³ :-

“One of the paddlers who brought the police from Angoram was a Japanaut man called Yaugarat. He brought them in doubled canoes to Sambugundei Island in the Chambri Lakes where Yabisaun of Japanaut lived. The police were not good people. They made trouble with my mother’s generation including Yabisaun’s sister Singei. Yabisaun plotted his revenge”.

A proper understanding of what happened concerning the renegade police and their actions in the Chambri Lakes requires an insight into tribal politics including the concept of hegemony exercised by the Iatmul over other ethnic groups.

On the Sepik from Tambanum upstream to Japandai, the people are of the Iatmul language and tribal group. The Iatmul settlement patterns evolved in three phases. The most recent phase of Iatmul settlement involved villages known as the “Nyaula”. The “mother village” of the Nyaula is Nyaurengai/Kandingei just north of the Chambri Lakes. “Daughter” Nyaula villages which broke away from Nyaurengai/Kandingei included Japandai, Yamunumbu, Japanaut, Yentchanmangua and Korogo, as shown on Map no 2.

During the 1930s the Nyaula commenced colonizing islands in the Chambri Lakes. These included Timbunmeri, Lukluk, Arinjone and Sambugundei. This colonization placed the Nyaula in severe conflict with the Chambri language speaking people of Wombun, Indingai and Kilimbit. The Nyaula held the upper hand as they were aggressive, whereas the Chambri were not fighters as traditionally throughout history they did not need to be. No-one attacked Chambri in ancient times because they depended upon Chambri to make and supply the all-important stone axe blades. However when steel made stone blades redundant, the Nyaulas found they had a lot of ‘getting even’ to do and the Chambri people were a soft target.

Yabisaun and his people were Nyaulas and they now found themselves hosting the renegade police. To divert unwanted attention from the Nyaula women on the Island and at the same time to further the on-going hatred of their long standing enemies, Yabisaun and his Nyaula people were not averse to assisting with the abduction and rape of Chambri girls. Councillor Mebiangen of Wombun [Chambri] takes up the story⁴ :-

...first Yabisaun led the renegade police on the track to the Korosameri River in quest of several miners who were reported to be there. Yabisaun led the renegades southwards through the Aiul channel in the Changriman and Yambiyambi areas at the southern edge of the lakes. They went to Sigabika, the then new camp of the Yambiyambi people on the Salumei River, where the miners were camped. [Sigabika is occasionally also called Sigamtok] The Salumei is the western major tributary of the Korosameri river, itself a tributary of the Karawari river.

The police located and spied out the camp in daylight and took up their positions under cover of darkness then attacked in the light of early morning. With the killing done they made the Yambiyambi people carry the spoils from the camp back to the Aiul channel and from there the Chambri people took it to Sambugundei. The police also brought back three women from the miner’s camp. One I think was the wife of one of the Europeans who was killed.”

Tobi of Mensuat tells his story⁵

“...they killed three Europeans and a Chinese [these would be Reg Beckett, George Eichorn, Jack Mitchell and Ah Fang]. The police returned via Changriman. The cargo and the ship (George Eichorn’s pinnace the ‘Pat’) came back down the Korosameri River. The women, how many I do not know, came back with the police. I saw them, but I was small and I did not count them... Yambimo knew his daughter was at Duatuk. He went to see her.”

Writers Note :- Tobi in talking to me left out information of which he knew I was aware. I now need to fill in the gaps ...

Sigabika - where the murders took place, is on the Salumei River. The police led by Yabisaun travelled overland to get there. The ship *Pat* was taken back to Sambugundei Island by travelling down the Salumei River, into the Korosameri River, into the Karawari River, into the Sepik River, thence upstream and into the Kamilio channel to the Chambri Lakes.

Women with miners – There appeared to be a differing social fabric and codes of behaviour on the two gold fields in this part of the Sepik. At Yamil, European wives Judy Tudor, Betty Thurston, Mildred Bell and others were living with their husbands. This situation combined with the unofficial authority of Jack Thurston may have resulted in a level of decorum concerning miners having sexual relationships with native women. This did not apply at Garamambu, for the added reason that just upstream from Garamambu’s supply base Angoram was the village of Kambaramba which traditionally thrived upon prostitution⁶. Willing female flesh was amply available there to anyone who wanted to partake.

Luluai Yambimo of Mensuat was Tobi’s and Weinak’s father. Weinak, a young lady who we will meet shortly was at that time living with Bill Macgregor at Duatuk. This may at least in part explain how Bill Macgregor survived the police raid; he was some distance away mining in a different area of the Garamambu gold field.

DO Jones’ Sepik District report continues :-

“On 23rd April, the good news was received that Messrs. Wilton and Eichorn Junior, after spending 13 days in the pitpit, had been picked up by a patrol led by (W/O Blood) at Timbunke. At the same time advice was also received that the position on the river above Timbunke was deteriorating⁷.”

Ex Luluai Wapi of Indingai continues the story⁸ :-

“After killing the miners in the Korosameri (tributary – the Salumai River) the police went to Garamambu looking for Bill Macgregor and anyone else who might be there, but Macgregor had escaped to the bush before they came. They broke into his store and took everything. I was the Tultul at Indingai – Chambri then and the police indicated that they would kill me and I pleaded with them ‘Why do you want to kill me? I have done nothing to you.’

They lined up all the people of Indingai and Kilimbit and from the line they took the young girls back to Sambugundei with them. The Indingai girls taken were Kamiagwi, Yerimanga and Nambai. There was also one Kilimbit girl Kamiagwi (name duplication will be a Bragge transcription error.) They had sex with the girls that night.

Next day I shot a pig and took it plus £3 to Sambugundei to buy the girls back from the police and delivered them back to Chambri. Then I went in a canoe to Pagwi [Marui] and reported to the Father there. (Father Hansen at Marui Mission). He sent word to Angoram.

There was also a Wombun woman called Nambandoa. She was forcefully taken to Sambugundei like the others, but she was there also through her own desire. She became Mansa's woman. It was a bad time, but you (i.e. the writer) are young and would not know of such things. Nambandoa told the police all about our bad ways and the Nyaula ways in the past conflicts and the police came and beat us with canes and rifle butts. They beat our women and children as well. Initially we wondered why the police were beating us and then we realized that this woman Nambandoa must be telling the police and giving them reason to punish us. I wanted to kill Nambandoa, but for now at least she was safe with her man Mansa on Sambugundei."

The people now assembled on Sambugundei Island were a large complex group. There were the five renegade police, their wives and families. There was Yabisaun and his Nyaula people – some of whom were reluctant hosts, and others aligned with the power of the police to enjoy any spin-offs that might come their way. Then there were the women abducted from Chambri and the miner's camp. Also there were some of the miner's labour line and the crew of the 'Pat'. However, as Wapi reported :- "One night all the mine workers from the lower Sepik, then on Sambugundei, took the ship and escaped down river to Angoram."

Before we examine the dramatic events soon to impact on the remaining group on Sambugundei Island, we'll return to Thurston's party who were still trying to depart on their journey south to Papua. It is noteworthy that, although the Japanese had not quite yet brought the Pacific war to the Sepik, both the Europeans and natives in this locality were preoccupied with civil violence, murder and mayhem in their midst. This of course was a reflection of the fabric of law and order established by the pre-war administration being torn asunder by the pressures at Angoram – precipitated by the stress engendered by the advancing Japanese.

End Notes Chapter 17

¹ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 277/8

² "Mensel" was known as "Mansa" by Nonguru and as "Sergeant Minja" by Councillor Mebiangen of Wombun.

³ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19. Page 392.

⁴ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19. Page 328

⁵ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 345.

⁶ McCarthy J.K. 1963 Page 67

⁷ Jones J.H. 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42

⁸ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes page Vol 19 P 330/1

Chapter 18 A Nervous Start for the Thurston Expedition 14 – 17th April 1942 - PO Hodgekiss Arms Special Constables in Anticipation of Violence

The members of the Thurston expedition were :-

Jack Thurston – miner and leader.
Keith Atkinson – miner
Jim Malicki “Jimmy the one” – miner
Theo Mason – miner
Eric Pettersen – miner
Ron Pickwell – public servant & medical assistant
Len Odgers – public servant & clerk

Also accompanying was Constables Silia of Kieta and Porhau of Manus and 83 Sepik porters or carriers as they are known in PNG.

PO Jim Hodgekiss and Father Hansen of Marui also initially accompanied the expedition, and returned downstream from May River on the *Thetis*.

On the 14th of April 1942 at Timbunke, Father Schafer gathered the expedition members together and they drank each other’s health in home-made wine – a sort of Hock. After receiving final blessings for a safe journey, they boarded the *Thetis* and left the Mission Station at 10.10am and went as far upstream as Timbunke village. There were scenes of deep grief at the departure of the Timbunke men who had signed on as carriers for the expedition. Women were crying at the departure of sons and husbands and the village elders expressing their disapproval.¹

Jones Sepik District report² continues :-

The writer has since discovered that the carriers obtained by this party were signed on by Odgers to ‘The Administration and J.Thurston.’ and that Bates supplied the party with two police. Both actions were unauthorized.

Writers Note :- An assessment of this situation raises several questions. Did Jones in his capacity as District Officer ...

1. Appoint Thurston to organize stores and assist with planning the evacuation of civilians?
2. Provide the use of the Government vessel *Thetis*?
3. Specifically approve the expedition as it took civilians out of the Sepik via May River?
4. Require that two Public Servants (Odgers & medical assistant Pickwell) be allowed to accompany the expedition?

It would seem that the “Thurston expedition” was administration sponsored and therefore the administration was responsible to pay the costs. Against this, Odgers’ administrative experience should have indicated to him that a cash funds certificate allocating the funds was the normal way that administration expenditure was authorized for any specific project. It is fair to say that the administration’s part in planning the Thurston expedition left a number of loose ends.

Back with the departure from Timbunke village, one old man was particularly distraught and Odgers placated his concerns by giving him a NGVR shoulder stripe and told him that

whoever held it would always be a friend of his! The elder responded in Iatmul language, which Odgers did not understand, but took to be a suitable expression of gratitude and recognition of a new friend.

Odgers' diary mentioned that Thurston now said goodbye to Kina, his loyal Manus Island companion and helper throughout his Sepik gold mining years. Both Thurston and Kina cried, and Odgers who had recently departed from his own loyal servant Forok without an apparent second thought, tactlessly drew Eric Pettersen's attention to it for which he was afterwards sorry and tried to make amends. His diary entry that day noted "*actually such displays are all too rare these days*"³

The *Thetis* headed upstream from Timbunke village at 11am with the *Fanny* following. Thurston decided to go to Angriman to seek more recruits, arriving there at 3.15pm. But an argument broke out between Thurston and Hodgekiss and the anchor was winched in before recruits could be sought. Mindimbit was chosen as the overnight stop. The ships arrived there at 4.30pm. Mason and Odgers ferried the labour recruits to the village in the *Fanny*. During the second trip the engine stopped, resulting in the two of them being late for dinner. The expedition members bathed in the Sepik and settled into the Mindimbit rest house for the night.

On the 15th of April the *Fanny's* engine problem was repaired. No recruits were available in Mindimbit, and to Thurston's displeasure the people chose to vacate the village. The expedition left there at 8.30am. Soon after leaving Kaminimbit at midday, the *Thetis* met Eichorn's pinnacle the *Pat* coming downstream. While Hodgekiss and Thurston questioned the crew, Odgers boarded the *Pat* and searched it, seizing all guns, ammunition and European goods and any papers. The crew told how George and Freddy Eichorn, Beckett, Mitchell, Wilton and Ah Fang had been murdered by the renegade police boys at the Korosameri River on Friday 10th at 6pm.

Odgers recorded what they learned in separate letters to Bates and Father Schafer advising them of the position and advising the missionaries, for their own safety, to go to Angoram. The *Pat* was allowed to go on its way with the letters to be delivered at Timbunke and Angoram. The expedition departed Kaminimbit at 2.10pm now proceeding with great caution and rifles close to hand.

The journey was pleasant enough until Kanganaman was reached, at which point the *Fanny* again broke down and had to be towed to Yentchan where they stayed that night. Guards were set with Odgers sharing the 11pm to 1am shift, with "Jimmy the one" Malicki.

Thurston did not call Odgers to go on guard until 11.30pm. Then at 12.35pm a village house caught fire but was soon doused. This brought a noisy commotion, but calm soon returned. After breakfast on 16th April 1942 four Yentchan men were recruited. The *Thetis* departed Yentchan at 9.20am with the *Fanny* in tow. Hindwood and Odgers were up forward on watch, but saw nothing untoward. The next village was Suapmeri but the people ran away as the ships approached.

The *Thetis* arrived at Korogo at 2pm. The village people spoke with concern about the renegade police in the nearby Chambri Lakes but there was little solid reliable intelligence available. Of course they did not mention that three of the renegades were hidden in their village. A close security watch was maintained all day. Finally at 4.30pm Thurston

maneuvered the *Thetis* close in shore by the *Haus Kiap* to moor it for the night. Odgers drew the 1 – 3am watch and everyone remained watchful until after breakfast. The ships left Korogo at 8.35am and anchored at Yenchanmangua at 10am. There they heard a great deal more talk about the five police at Chambri. Odgers' diary recorded that another .303 and some ammunition were issued making a total of three rifles so far handed out by Hodgekiss to ex members of the New Guinea Constabulary, whom he swore in as 'special constables' and instructed to take action against the renegades.

The ships left Yentchanmangua at 1pm and reached Pagwi at 2.20pm. Father Crusberg met them and reported that Constable Sini had confessed to the killing of Strudwick claiming that he had gone *long-long* (mad). It is not clear from Odgers' diary where Constable Sini then was or what was done about him.

Post Script for Sini :- From Jones' report there was mention of a letter received from PO Milligan around this time advising that Sini was dead and most of the Yamundo deserters from Aitchison's camp on 1st April were recovered.⁴

Thurston asked Father Crusberg if he would accompany the expedition as far as May River and he promised to ask Father Hansen. The party then crossed the Sepik to Yamunumbu village at 4.40pm and settled into the *Haus Kiap* for the night. During Odgers' watch on the night of the 17th at Yamunumbu, the haus tambaran suddenly collapsed. Later that morning Thurston, Hodgekiss and Mason went back to the mission in the *Fanny*, while Odgers brought the employment contracts up to date for all labour recruited since Magendo village near Angoram. Thurston and party returned at 2pm. Father Hansen was with them and would accompany the expedition and assist Hodgekiss on the *Thetis* and *Fanny* on the return leg of the journey from May River.

The expedition again commenced its upstream journey at 2.45pm reaching Japandai at 4.55pm where they spent the night. Guards were set with Odgers drawing the 9 - 11pm watch. At Japandai, Hodgekiss would have consulted with Luluai Kemerabi, a former headhunting leader who became Australia's strongest ally in the Middle Sepik. There is no record of what was said and arranged between them.

PO Hodgekiss' decision to arm former members of the New Guinea constabulary carried a risk. These men were from what had until recently had been head hunting communities. Head hunting had only stopped in the Middle Sepik in the mid-1930s. But what choice did Hodgekiss have? The priority was to capture or kill these renegades before they caused any more devastation in the Middle Sepik and this was the option he chose.

Attachment A continues the story of the Thurston expedition, which diverges from the primary text as Thurston led his party out of the Sepik District.

End Notes Chapter 18

¹ Odgers' Diary entry 14/4/42.

² Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42

³ Odgers' Diary entry 14/4/42.

⁴ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42

Sepik 3 ATTACHMENT B

Writers Note :- We left the two small ships *Thetis* and *Fanny* carrying members of the Thurston expedition up the Sepik River towards the May River at the end of Chapter 18. There, the journey of the Thurston expedition diverges from the primary text of the narrative.

The story of their eventful struggle away from the Japanese and southwards towards Papua continues here in Attachment B.

The Thurston Expedition

Leaves the Mayhem of the Middle Sepik and Continues Upstream to the Limit of Navigation on the May River.

On 19th April 1942 the *Thetis* left Japandai at 8am with Len Odgers on watch until Avatip was reached at 10.05am and the *Thetis* tied up there.

Japandai being furthest upstream of the Iatmul speaking villages¹ is usually regarded as the western extremity of the Middle Sepik. The next language group upstream, including Avatip, is Manambu. In Avatip, Thurston called upon the Tultul to supply carriers, but it was only after the police were called upon to assist that five recruits arrived, and this was not until after lunch. Avatip village people remember there were only four recruits who were Weynak/Jagir, Kwatawiyugw/Vikikamil, Kamangabw/Takaay and Kamatip/Wakilaan.²

The *Thetis* moved on at 2.15pm with Odgers and Mason navigating the *Fanny* through heavy rain and very poor visibility until she ran out of fuel. After refueling *Fanny* they reached the abandoned Ambunti Government station at 6pm. They found the *Thetis* aground there on a mud bank. With the danger from the renegades now assumed to have been reduced by distance, night guards were reduced to one man shifts of one hour each.

Next morning at 6.30am the *Thetis* was freed from where she was aground and the *Fanny* took Thurston, Mason and Odgers back downstream to Malu village where Thurston explained the administration situation and the need for carriers for the overland journey. Five recruits quickly came forward. Thurston then brought out the trade box.

The trade box, as the name describes, contained items of value to village people, for which local goods and services could be traded or purchased. Men of wide experience like Thurston were well positioned to know what items would be most popular. Steel knives and axes were usually in strong demand as well a small glass beads. But some popular items were less obvious – for example the Sepik people of that era wanted pearl shell buttons, but only those with four holes.

The appearance of the trade box created great excitement among the people of Malu and the trade stock was soon exhausted. Malu people accompanied the *Fanny* back to the *Thetis* to continue trading. The *Thetis* left Ambunti at 1.15pm with expedition members playing dominoes until the ship reached Yambon at 3.50pm.

Yambon is an attractive village close to the site where 68 Japandai people had been killed and be-headed in 1923/4. The village houses are situated on ridges on either side of the Sepik. These ridges

constrict the huge river to a width of less than 100 yards in a feature known as the Yambon Gate. A navigation chart seen at Ambunti in 1970, indicate the depth of water in the Yambon Gate to be 31 fathoms (57 metres / 62 yards). At any time the river conditions in the Gate are turbulent, but in flood times conditions can be very dangerous to canoes and small craft. The Sepik River in general, but the Yambon Gate in particular, is referred to by Sepik people as “*bulkstore bilong mipela*” [our bulk store]; this being a reference to possessions lost to the river from capsized river craft.

Odgers’ diary noted that Yambon was one of the last ‘controlled’ villages. The expedition reached Yessan at 6.15pm. No guards were posted for the first night since leaving Timbunke. Jim Hodgekiss and Harold Hindwood went ashore and purchased local food produce. On the wireless news that night was a mention that the *Nereus* had reached an Australian port with 16 Europeans on board. Odgers’ letter would now be posted by Roy Shaw and Odgers’ mother would soon know he was alive.

After leaving Yessan the last ‘controlled’ village on 21st April, the country the ships passed through reverted to low lying *pit-pit* covered wet-lands on either side. Finding dry land for camp sites was now a problem. The men of Swagup were met on the river and Thurston gave them gifts of salt and fish hooks. One of them came aboard as he knew some of the Malu recruits. This was the first New Guinean Odgers met who could not speak Pidgin. As darkness fell and there was nowhere to camp, Thurston anchored for the night at 8pm. With nothing to keep them, they weighed anchored and were again underway at 6am.

Off Wogamush many canoes came out to meet them. Pickwell counted 70 men in the canoes with each canoe carrying a quota of bows, arrows and spears. They indicated their desire to come aboard but Thurston decided there were too many of them. One highly decorated old man pointed to his dirty singlet apparently assuming that this garment of European origin would earn him some recognition.

Thurston was able to buy five paddles with small knives. The Wogamush were very keen to trade for calico. The ships continued on their way with the Wogamush canoes following them for a considerable distance. Off Kubkain the *Thetis* again ran aground but soon freed itself. Natives approached in canoes and sought to trade. (At this point the party was leaving Map 2 and progressing upstream onto Map 4).

Not much further upstream a suitable camp site was identified. The ships tied up and tents were erected ashore and bush houses erected for the recruits. Odgers erected his mosquito net on the cabin roof of the *Thetis* and because the mosquitoes were bad he was not long out of bed. It rained in the night, but his bedding remained dry.

On the 23rd April after breaking camp they were under way at 7am. That morning they met many canoe loads of people wanting to trade but Thurston decided to wait and trade with the May River people who he hoped would sell canoes and paddles. They passed the mouth of the Frieda River at 3.15pm and from that time onwards all eyes scanned the river bank for a suitable place to camp until one was found just before 5pm and the *Thetis* tied up to the river bank.

Four canoe loads of people calling themselves the Nugurei [presumably from Iniok] visited the party wanting to trade. Odgers learned several words in their language. After ablutions and dinner Odgers lost his glasses overboard while ‘*playing around with Jack.*’ Despite what Jones reported, Odgers still had his old glasses but they were not as good.

Next day the ships had barely left the camp site at 6.50am when the Nugerei were seen going over the camp site looking for anything of use to them. The ships entered the mouth of the May River at 10.40am. May River is very narrow and twists and turns a great deal. Soon steady rain was falling with the *Thetis* making good progress against the current. It was decided to camp at the first village they encountered, but the villagers ran away.

Presents were left to demonstrate the party's good will. Next day, the 25th villagers soon began to appear at the outskirts of the settlement. They came in and traded three canoes and several paddles but all attempts to learn the name of the village failed. The *Thetis* departed at 9.20am still towing the unserviceable *Fanny*. The narrowness of the river and its sharp bends brought the *Fanny* close in shore at times at the end of the tow rope. At one stage a low branch caught the canvas awning above her fore-deck and dislodged it. At the same time several of the towed canoes broke loose and had to be hurriedly retrieved before the current took them too far downstream. Then at 3.30pm the *Thetis* again ran aground. Thurston engaged reverse and the vessel came free.

The junction of the Left and Right May Rivers was reached at 4.30pm and camp was made for the night. The German geographer and explorer Walter Behrmann named the Left May the *Linker* River. At this point Thurston was expressing his disgust with Taylor's patrol report. Odgers considered Thurston was unreasonable in this but happily for him confined these views to his diary. That night he drew the 4 - 5am watch.

After Thurston purchased more canoes, the *Thetis* departed from the camp site at 9.35 and moved into the Linker River. The Linker proved to be full of snags as the water level had fallen between 3 and 4 feet overnight. An hour's journey brought the *Thetis* to a village on the left bank. The *Fanny*, now again operational, took Pettersen, Atkinson and Mason ashore to seek more canoes and they were able to trade for four.

On the 27th, there was much discussion about the size of the individual packs that were to be carried on the walking stage which was soon to start. Pettersen and Mason tested *Fanny's* capacity to tow canoes, while Odgers typed a report that Thurston wrote, addressed to the DO.

On 28th April the *Thetis* had come as far into the May River headwaters as it could. It was planned that the first half of the party with 45 carriers and much of the cargo and many of the towed canoes would go ahead on the first leg. Odgers said farewell to Hodgekiss and Father Hansen and boarded the *Fanny*. Progress was very slow being estimated at one mile per hour; a boring day despite the festoons of beautiful D'Albertis creeper with its masses of red hanging flowers. By late afternoon snags were becoming more frequent and the current much swifter. The width of the river was now 50-60 yards. They made camp and it rained nearly all night.

They awoke on the 29th to find that the river had risen a little and yesterday's clear water was now dirty brown. The *Fanny* could not tow all the canoes against the current so they tried it again towing only two canoes, leaving Pickwell and "Jimmy the one" looking after the camp. The *Fanny* made reasonable speed until the engine had to be shut down as it was running on only one cylinder. The spark plugs were cleaned and the *Fanny* got underway again - then at 11.30am with the river much shallower the *Fanny* lost her rudder. The cargo was unloaded onto the river bank and a camp set up. With improvised steering Pettersen and Mason took the vessel downstream to the previous camp.

Pickwell and “Jimmy the one” and the cargo from the previous camp arrived at 6pm. Clearly the *Fanny* was unable to continue so they returned to the *Thetis*. The Thurston expedition from here on would rely on canoes to take it as far as canoes could go, and from then on they would be walking.

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Overland South from May River to Telefomin – Food an Ever-present Problem 2-30th May 1942

The expedition plan³ was based upon the calculations of :-

- 14 days walk from where the canoes are left on the May River to Bolivip on the other side of the mountains at the base of the Hindenberg wall.
- 6 days from Bolivip to where the Fly River is navigable
- 10 days to D’Albertis Island
- 5 days to Strachan Island

That is a total of 35 days from the May River headwaters to the Papuan Coast. The party included eight Europeans, two native police and 83 Sepik carriers, each carrying a pack of about 40 pounds. Apart from camping equipment, trade items, medicines etc. the key food items carried were 1,000 pounds of rice and 12 carrier loads of tinned meat.

In retrospect one cannot help but wonder how it was planned that these carriers would be repatriated and, moreover, what the recruits were told concerning repatriation. The carriers probably took some satisfaction that they were signing on for standard 3 year indentured labour contracts which included repatriation clauses.

The expedition would pass through the Mianmin tribal lands. The little that was known of them was that they were extremely aggressive and they ate their victims. The Mianmin had heavily attacked Jim Taylor’s 1938/39 patrol on two successive days with deaths on both sides. The danger, the time factor and the food required for such a journey were each apparently vastly under-estimated. Looked at another way, this was a measure of the desperation of the situation from which they sought to escape. The journey ahead was incredibly difficult and the survival and endurance of each expedition member depended a great deal upon Thurston’s decisions, leadership and bush skills.

Odgers’ diary picks up the story on 2nd May 1942 :- ⁴

“Exactly five weeks since I left Angoram so full of hope. What a five weeks it has been! And now we do not know where we are”.

Thurston was having difficulty back tracking Taylor’s 1938/9 steps as recorded in the latter’s patrol diary which like most patrol diaries was a narrative of daily events, not a precise road map for people who followed later. Added to the problem was that Taylor had followed the May River headwaters downstream to the May River proper and thence to the Sepik. Finding his way was not a problem as any tributary in the May River watershed would take his patrol where it needed to go.

Thurston on the other hand followed the May upstream which, equated to climbing a tree with a thousand branches reaching out in a giant arc sweeping from east to west. The task at hand was to identify and follow the branch that lead due south. This, Thurston discovered, involved time and energy consuming trial and error.

The *Thetis* and *Fanny* had brought them and their stores as far upstream as possible - from there canoes were used. By the afternoon of the 6th of May the river was too swift, shallow and filled with stones to make further use of the canoes. It rained so heavily that night and the following morning that the river was in high flood so the 7th May was spent in camp.

Thurston's report on this expedition noted that so far they had found very little sago and that what they had cut proved to be no good. Clearly he intended that the expedition would live off the land as much as possible with sago forming a major part of the expedition diet.

The walking part of the expedition commenced on the 8th May. The track that day was alternately muddy on the flats near the river and then slippery when small hills were encountered. Occasionally the track was lost and bush knives were used to cut the way. Then at 1.30pm a native was sighted. He immediately ran away but a well-used track was found that lead to two houses with fires still burning in each. As they made camp an unseen native called something in his language from the vegetation along the far side of the creek. No-one was seen but clearly the expedition was being watched. Guards were posted.

On the 9th the going was good on generally rising ground but the track was taking them too far to the south east so camp was made with Odgers drawing the 2-3am watch. Next morning Thurston and Mason set off on a scouting trip to find higher ground so they could plot a route to the south. The hills at this point were running right down to the water's edge; the flat lands were now behind them.

While Thurston and Mason were away, natives arrived on the far bank of the creek and indicated by holding up taro that they would like to trade but they also indicated by making gestures as if firing a bow and arrow that they were frightened. Finally they indicated that they would cross the creek and trade if the expedition members would sit on the open gravel beach of the creek with their arms folded. The carriers came down to the beach and sat with the expatriates with their arms folded. A woman and a small boy crossed and traded at a rate of four taros for one cowrie shell. Their strategy had been to test the situation using the members of their group that they considered most expendable. When nothing bad happened to the woman and the boy, more of the group crossed and more taros were traded. Odgers noted that these people had no steel and were hungry to trade for it.

Odgers' diary noted that the men they saw were '*of a good type*' and they wore possum skin headdresses. When asked to bring pigs to trade, they indicated that they would do so next morning. The traders crossed back to the far bank and vanished into the forest. The expedition prepared for the night and Odgers drew the 3.30 - 5am watch.

The party christened this camp Odgersville and appointed Len Odgers as Mayor. The natives returned soon after 9am and although they came with no pigs they brought more taro. One of them agreed to act as a guide and several men agreed to serve as carriers for two cowries each. The guide led them to a track which ascended to an elevation of 2,000' following a spur between two rivers and finally back down to a hamlet of 10 houses by the mouth of a gorge. There was a cane suspension bridge over the river at that point. At 5pm they made camp by the gorge and then discovered that a case of tinned meat was missing. The police went to investigate but returned empty handed.

The people came back in to trade the next morning bringing two pigs which were purchased with a tomahawk for each. Taro was also traded. The expedition departed at 1.30pm led by a local guide. The track ascended steeply and another hamlet was passed an hour later. The people seen there did not include women or children which was a bad sign. They agreed to bring taro to trade at the next camp, the site of which was selected at 3.30pm at an elevation of 1,650'.

On the 13th of May they were led by local guides and reached a hamlet the locals called *Nabit* at an elevation of 3,250'. The party continued on walking through heavy rain until 3.30pm when it was decided to make camp at an elevation of 3,500'. Odgers, Mason and "Jimmy the one" drew the first watch. The guides now indicated that they could not accompany the party further. They warned the people ahead were cannibals and would kill and eat them. It seems they were about to enter the country of the dreaded Mianmin.

The party departed late on the 14th as fine weather that morning allowed them to dry their clothes. The track was steep at times with members having to climb hand over hand. On the 15th of May, they came upon a dead woman lying beside the track. Soon afterwards, they arrived at a hamlet with no people visible, but with an abundance of bows and arrows in evidence. There was a large taro garden nearby so Pettersen and Odgers took carriers there and harvested twelve bags full of the best taro they had seen yet. Taking the taro was Thurston's decision. He knew he needed to conserve his dwindling rice supply to sustain his party through the uninhabited country they would encounter. Later a lone native entered the camp and Thurston paid him a knife and cowrie shells for the taro.

Next morning two Mianmin men came into camp and indicated the hamlet name was *Iabrem*. They agreed to lead the party to *Faktomin* and then on to *Telefomin*, which they said was two days walk away. The party left at 10am but, after showing the party a track the guides refused to go further. At this Thurston and Constable Porhau scouted ahead and found a good track. The going which was initially precipitous later became easier. They reached a crest and had a clear view of the Donner Range about 12 miles to their south.

On the 17th May they continued their journey on a track leading to the south east until it reached a large river flowing westwards. This they concluded must be the *Fu* or *Clear* River. The river was flowing strongly and the party managed to ford it in three feet of water and make camp on the south bank. The *Clear* River is better known to *Telefomin* and *Mianmin* peoples as the *Fak* (pronounced as the four letter "F" word!) and is the boundary between those two then warring *Telefomin* and *Mianmin* tribes.

(- the Thurston Expedition had now left Map 4 and moved onto Map 5 -).

Thurston decided to cut a track due south across the Donner range in the hope of being on the other side when their rice ran out in two days. The carrier loads were re-arranged so each carrier had a more equitable weight to carry.

On the 19th the newly cut path led upward and ever upward. They reached several false crests with daylight through the trees ahead suggesting they had reached the top but each time there was another higher crest ahead. At 6,800' and then 7,000' they were in the silent world of the moss forest with tangled moss covered roots under foot and no creeks to provide them with water. The carriers took hands full of moss and drank the water they squeezed from it. They made camp at 7,000 feet. It was not possible to pitch tents so they wrapped themselves in dressing gowns, overcoats and blankets and made themselves as comfortable as they could among the cargo. Odgers awoke after an ice cold night with his feet feeling like they no longer belonged to him.

Next day they continued on and at one stage caught a glimpse of a hillside ahead with gardens on it. This encouraged them but by 5.30 pm when they made camp at 6,000' they had found neither a garden nor water.

On the 21st Thurston noted :-

“We are now out of rice and must locate a village. The carriers are showing the effect of the trip. Of our 82 boys we have no mountain natives. Some are from Manus (Island), over half are from the Sepik and the rest from the lowlands so they are not used to this mountain work”.

That day they set off following a track but when it was judged to be heading too far to the east they re-traced their steps to another track which headed south but soon gave out and they again had to cut their way. The going was difficult and at one stage they made their way across a cliff face *‘like flies clinging to a wall’* before descending to 2,800’ on the bank of a large river, which could only be the *Elip* otherwise known as the *Donner*. They decided they would stay at this camp site for two days. Their camp site was next to a garden which the carriers were told was out of bounds but some of them still stole food from it.

A jar of Marmite was opened and a rich hot drink was made from it. But Odgers’ second cup proved too much for his empty stomach and he was violently ill. On the 22nd during the expedition’s rest day local people came in to trade sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers, bananas, taro and a suckling pig. Some of them spoke a little Pidgin. They identified themselves as *Misinmin* people. One of them wore a thermometer through his nose as an ornament. The day was spent washing and drying clothes, swimming and bathing in the muddy water of the *Elip* and enjoying a dinner of spit-cooked suckling pig along with pumpkin and sweet potatoes.

Thurston was satisfied that he had retraced Taylor and Black’s track of 1938. The party moved on again on 23rd over a slippery track at elevations between 2,900 and 5,500’. At 3.30pm they reached a village of 11 houses perched on a crest and it was decided to camp some 800 yards beyond this settlement. There were women in evidence but they were in no hurry to trade until Thurston became insistent. They brought in a good selection of vegetables plus a large and a smaller pig. Odgers drew the 12-1am guard duty. There was rain early in the morning and a fine day followed which allowed clothes to be dried. Abundant food was brought in to trade. It was a short day’s walk to reach a waterhole at 6,500’. The local people accompanying said they would lead them to Telefomin the next day. Odgers drew the 1-2am watch and observed that it rained heavily all night.

On the 25th of May they did not leave their camp site until 11.30am because of steady rain. The guides lead them to a crest at 7,300’ and from there they could see the Promised Land – Telefomin :-

“Far below us was a wide valley...Little hamlets and gardens were scattered about the floor and the sides of the valley. Columns of smoke rose lazily in the soft air...then a rain squall came up to obscure the view”.

They climbed down a steep incline to the first of the Telefomin villages. They talked with elders there before coming to a river where they made camp. It was a fine night for a change and Odgers watched the sun rise on the 26th, noting that it was quite cold, reminding him of Australia. Breakfast was a cup of tea and either a sweet potato or a taro each.

*“It is funny how nice baked taro and kau-kau (sweet potato) sound to us now. Once I would have turned my nose up at such fare”.*⁵

The track that day led through open and lightly forested country and later through open grassy plains. Odgers was thinking how much the country reminded him of Botany in New South Wales when he heard several shots from back towards the end of the carrier line. He ordered the carriers to

load their firearms and sit together out in the open while he rushed back to find out what had happened. Pickwell had fired at a pig and missed, much to the disgust of the carriers around him.

At 12.30 pm they arrived at a cluster of three hamlets which they were told was the home of Taylor's guide Femsep. They made camp between two of the hamlets and traded for vegetables and a pig. On the 27th Thurston decided to shift the camp to where Black and Taylor had camped on a small dry rise about a mile away overlooking the three hamlets and the airstrip that Black and Taylor had used. The camp site described is just south of the present day Telefomin station.

Femsep arrived in the afternoon and reported that food was short because of a drought but when scouts found a large taro garden nearby, Thurston encouraged Femsep and his friends to take some of the carriers to go and harvest taro. They came back with 15 and a half bags for which Thurston paid three small knives and a quantity of cowrie shells. The party would remain in camp until 30th May to allow the carriers a well-earned rest. Of Telefomin, Thurston wrote. *"The natives are very friendly...the climate in this valley is wonderful and a really lovely spot. The valley is small, enclosed by mountains on all sides and some of them going up to 12,000 feet. The population is not very large."*

Writer's Note: So far we have considered the Thurston expedition from the perspective of the European members of the expedition. In 1970 at Avatip I met Kwatawiyugw who was one of the carriers Thurston recruited on 19th April 1942. Kwatawiyugw recalled that :-

"Mr. Jack took the men from the gold field and went to Angoram then came back up river and picked us up at Avatip...after picking up Timbunkes on the way. From Avatip there was me – Kwatawiyugw, Kamatip Waynak and Kamangam.

We went up river to a barat (channel) whose name I do not know (May River). The Thetis came back and we walked about in the bush cutting a track on compass bearings as we went. The Europeans said we should not take anything [from gardens] as Mr. Taylor was following us and so we just went.

If we took food we had to pay for it. If it was an empty garden we would take the food and leave the payment with the taro shoots. (Taro grows as a single tuber and is replanted from the shoot of the harvested tuber.)

There was nothing at Telefomin, (the Station was not yet built) there were just marks where an airstrip had been. We did not see any natives until we reached the kunai (grasslands) at Telefomin. They received us well and did not fight with us. We did not follow a track we just went. In the cold places we were short of water. The Telefomins sold us a pig."⁶

Kwatawiyugw will continue his story later.

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Struggling Through the Limestone, Crosses From the Sepik Watershed into Papua 30th May-10th June 1942

With Femsep and others as guides the expedition set off for Feramin⁷. Upon reaching the Sol River the guides took off penis gourds and personal ornamentation and donned *laplaps* (loin cloths).

They tried thus to disguise themselves as the Feramin are their enemies. Rain set in so they camped at the Sol River on 30th May with guards posted.

The next day on the march "Jimmy-the-one" fell ill with what was thought to be blackwater fever. A litter was made and he was carried. Thurston and Odgers went ahead and found a large sweet potato garden, from which point Femsep wanted to go back. He was encouraged to stay and as it turned out the people at the garden were friendly and keen to trade. Seven bags of sweet potatoes were purchased with cowrie shells. In addition to Jimmy-the one being ill, Constable Silia was found to have dysentery.

Thurston decided to go to Bolivip with half of the party leaving the sick to recover and to follow later. He would take 41 carriers plus Hindwood, Mason and Odgers and so it was that on the 4th June, half the expedition forded the Sepik headwaters at knee depth and climbed low foothills leading to the main range. They made camp for the night after four hours walking. They did not know where Karius and Champion had crossed the range in 1927. As for their food supplies, for the remainder of the journey they were totally reliant upon native foods. They had only ten 12 ounce tins of meat left.

On 5th June 1942 their guides said the only way to Bolivip was over the pass but that the limestone was sharp and could cut the carriers' feet. The track took them to 7,300' where it was discovered that the leaders among the guides had stolen some knives and run away. They continued on into an area where a fire had burnt the vegetation exposing sharp pinnacle limestone. Odgers' diary described the scene as *Dante's Inferno*. Thurston saw it as chasms on every side – 50 to 100 feet deep and yet others in which they could not see the bottom. At 5.30pm they were at 8,800' and after descending a few hundred feet made a bush shelter as it became dark. To move in the dark was to risk falling down one of the many chasms.

Odgers was making his own way down from the top with seven carriers when darkness fell. As it was impossible to move safely in the dark they made camp as best they could where they were. The carriers supplied him with three of their blankets so he was warm enough but very uncomfortable due to the limestone under him. They were unable to get a fire going, so they did not eat. In the early light of morning they did get a fire going and cooked sweet potatoes for breakfast. They pushed on and found Thurston and Hindwood after just thirty minutes. However it was 11.30am before the rest of the party caught them up.

They moved off at 1.30pm and walked through limestone country similar to the day before, until at 3.30pm at an altitude of 8,450' they made camp early enough to get a big fire going to keep them warm. Next morning the 7th June they commenced their walking at 8.30am again through waterless *broken bottle* country. At one point they were able to drink a little from some seepage but terrible thirst continued to affect everyone. Again they found no water and made camp in limestone country at 8,200'

On the 8th they continued on through what they were now calling *Walt Disney* country as it resembled the grotesque and fantastic country Disney drew in his cartoons. They climbed to 9,300' and enjoyed a view over the country they had crossed yesterday – moss covered country with pre - historic looking moss clad trees and fearsome looking ferns. At about this point Thurston lost his aneroid barometer. From that point on, there would be no more altitude readings.

Odgers felt feverish so took quinine and aspirin. This in turn weakened him so much that Mason offered to carry his heavy cartridge belt but much as Odgers wanted to hand it over he declined and struggled on. Constable Porhau who had gone ahead with the Feramin guides was met at 3.30pm.

His guides had dug a hole and found water so everyone could have their first real drink in two days. Odgers even had a wash and then endured their coldest night yet.

On the 9th before moving off at 8.30am they drank hot coffee and ate sweet potato for breakfast. The track took them down a dry watercourse until a small stream was found. They continued to descend. Odgers' diary noted that "*the climb down that mountain side must be the most perpendicular in New Guinea or Papua.*" They descended an estimated 5,000' and at the bottom met one Bolivip man waiting to greet them. They made camp as heavy rain was falling, but allowed the carriers to go onto Bolivip for the night. Although the views throughout the day must have been incredible, they saw nothing as they were blanketed in fog. What they had just descended was the geographic feature known as the Hindenburg Wall.

On the 10th they could not get a fire going to cook, and believing that Bolivip was close they postponed breakfast. They departed at 10am following the creek down. They expected to see the village around the next bend and then the next and the next. They eventually arrived and moved into village houses. Bolivip was found to be a 'hungry' place with little food although a pig was brought in and traded. Not feeling like pork again they ate mashed sweet potato and tinned meat and a small baked taro each and then another taro each with coffee for supper. Odgers treated himself to a smoke from his rapidly dwindling tobacco supply.

If there was a cause to celebrate it may have been that the expedition had now left the Sepik District and was in the Fly River watershed of Papua.

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Mixed Reception from Locals – Bolivip to Oroville 10th June to 19th Aug.'42

On the 11th of June scouts found evidence that the Bolivip people were harvesting their taro gardens and hiding the produce so it would not fall into the hands of the expedition. Like the expedition members, the Bolivip people were hungry. Thurston knew that his party could not move on without food so he decided to force the issue. A Bolivip war shield was placed in front of two thick logs and a .303 bullet was fired through all three. Two pigs were found and shot. Payment was made with a knife and a tomahawk. The village leader was told to bring in taro next morning to trade or the expedition would help itself to the Bolivip gardens using whatever force was necessary.

At 6.30am twenty patrol carriers with bags accompanied Bolivip people to their gardens. A large amount of taro was brought in and paid for with shells although it was clear that the Bolivip people would have preferred payment in knives and axes. The party left Bolivip on 13th June 1942 paying careful attention to their security in case of treachery from the Bolivips, who Odgers' diary noted '*had no cause to love us.*'⁸

On the morning of 14th June Constable Porhau announced that the Bolivip people had stolen five knives and two axes. Plans were made for retribution and an armed party went back in search of Bolivip people. A large garden was located and a consultation was held. It was decided to take taro from the garden and proceed to the village but upon arrival in heavy rain the village was found deserted. All the houses were searched and a large number of spears and arrows were collected as a security measure. Guards were posted that night.

The expedition remained in the village from the 15th to 17th June. Three pigs that walked into the village were shot and butchered and a four day supply of taro was taken from a nearby garden. Call of *Seno* (friend) went unheeded. In case of attack the party cleared obstructions from around the

house they had occupied. Then at 3pm on the 16th the local people came in and one of their former guides was captured. It was explained that the expedition would remain in the village until the knives and axes were returned and in the meantime the former guide was kept under close arrest in the house. Finally one of the stolen knives was recovered and Thurston took the decision that it was time to move on.

By the 18th June the diet of pig meat and taro had inflicted the expedition members with diarrhoea. The expedition re-traced its steps to the camp site from which they had turned back in quest of the stolen knives and axes. From there they continued moving in a south westerly direction until on the 20th they were in the country of the *Faormin* people, who proved to be friendly and brought in taro and pigs to trade. On the 22nd twenty bags sent out with *Faormin* people and carriers were brought back full of food, together with a small pig for which they were amply rewarded.

With a full stomach for a change Odgers drafted a set of rules for the *Society of Senos*. He would have these typed when he reached Sydney and distribute them among the expedition members. To keep himself and his friends amused back in Wewak, Odgers had produced the *Wewak Weekly* until the District Officer ordered him to stop. The *Society of Senos* [Friendly Society] was apparently Odgers' recognition of the special bond that had developed between the expedition members and his self-imposed duty to keep them entertained and in good spirits.

Importantly the *Faormin* people confirmed that canoes are used on the *Feneng* river which was still somewhere ahead. In the not too distant future the walking would be over! Another sign of change was that on the 25th they were able to acquire sago for the first time since leaving May River.

On the 26th of June they left *Faormin* and descended to the *Wenek* River which they followed all that day. They were moving in a generally westerly direction but also making some progress to the south. They camped that night near the junction of the *Wenek* and *Feneng* Rivers. The *Feneng* at that point was a swiftly flowing stream some 50 yards wide and seven feet deep. It flowed generally towards the south east. Thurston assessed the river was canoeable but not raftable so the expedition was faced with more days of walking.

On the 30th June it was learned that several members of the carrier line led by Constable Porhou and Anis had raped a woman in an unnamed location but presumably in Bolivip. Thurston '*cleaned up*' the culprits (punished them). Apart from the criminal issue itself, the problem was that the second half of the party left at Feramin could walk into trouble when they came through that community and there was no way of getting a warning back to them.

The food ran out on 1st July and the 2nd passed without food. On the 3rd Thurston sent a party to occupy a garden to ensure their food source. Others were sent to cut sago. The 2nd July was Odgers' 28th birthday – he was sure it was the worst birthday he had ever experienced. However in the evening Thurston opened a bottle of brandy and found some taro for a celebratory meal.

Thurston scouted ahead seeking a route around a Feneng River gorge. The only safe course of action was for the expedition to back track to the last village as food was available there. The prospect of seeking a route around the gorge ahead without an assured food supply placed the expedition at too great a risk. On the 3rd of July the carriers sent out to steal taro reported that they had found a canoe paddle in one of the houses they had searched. They also brought in a local village man who had in his possession an old milk tin which he indicated had come from Korn. It was known that Bill Korn come up the Fly River and into the Telefomin valley in 1936 with the Ward Williams expedition prospecting for gold.

On the 4th of July, a green called *Aibika* was added to the diet of taro and it met with Odgers' approval. Late that day they received word that Eric Petterson and party who they left at Feramin a month before were now close behind them. Thurston took eight bags of taro and walked back to join them. On the 5th Thurston led the other party in. Each member including the forty carriers was welcomed with open arms. With the party back together again there was so much to talk about! When the talking was done the Chinese checkers and cards came out for a few games. As if in reward for the whole expedition being back together, the hunters came back with five pigeons.

An enforced delay through until 18th July was required for the making and drying of sago to sustain the expedition over the coming days. Three local guides were kept as prisoners in the camp throughout this time. That day Thurston and Odgers left the remainder of the party and scouted ahead on a faint track that required much cutting to get through. They were encouraged to see old knife marks on trees and at one stage came upon one of Korn's old camp sites. The guides pointed to old cans lying around the site and indicated by sign language that this was where Korn had received an airdrop of supplies. This news was a disappointment to Thurston and Odgers, who had heard of this place and believed it to be an aerodrome when all it turned out to be was an airdrop site. They were seeing ever more signs that Korn and his party had spent time in that area some years before. Nearly out of food again on 23rd, they found themselves in open flat country. The Feneng River when they reached it was found to be 200 feet wide and apparently deep and as Odgers' diary put it '*flowing swiftly towards civilization and Mother.*'⁹ Pettersen and the remainder of the party caught them up on 24th July having covered in three days what had taken Thurston and Odgers six days. On the 25th Pettersen cooked some flying foxes. Despite these bats being boiled twice in fresh water and then baked, their taste according to Odgers was frightful.

The following day a large sago palm was located and it was decided to make camp there and process the sago from that tree and a large stand a further hours' walk downstream. Several local men came into the camp and were paid for the sago palms. These people were encouraged to bring in some canoes and paddles, which they agreed to do. Unfortunately what they brought in was one poor canoe that was little more than a hollow log and a very crude paddle. The expedition also discovered that the value of the shells they had been trading was now diminished. These people wanted beads, fish hooks and razors.

On the 31st July Thurston decided it was time to build canoes to carry the whole party and their stores. The task next day would be to locate suitable trees and start making canoes while others of the party continued to make sago. By the 7th August a fleet of three canoes had been made and launched. The canoe made by the Timbunke carriers was launched on the 10th of August. The final canoe was launched on the 16th, making a fleet of nine. The carriers who were not making sago were now put to work making canoe paddles. Thurston's diary of 17th August noted that, "*All the whites are showing the lack of food. It has been three months now they have been living on native food and never more than two meals per day.*" Hunting parties were sent out regularly. When pigeons and other birds were shot the meat was cooked for the evening meal and the bones boiled down as soup for breakfast.

On the 17th August the canoes were bound together in pairs with platforms built between them upon which the cargo was placed. The flotilla finally left at 8.30am. Odgers described how wonderful it felt to be floating downstream at a speed that in half an hour had covered the distance it would have taken him two hours to walk! They camped that night on the river bank far downstream. The canoe made by the Yenchan carriers came in late. The reason given was that the crew had

stopped to pick leaves from an old garden area. The punishment for this indiscretion was that each of the Yenchan offenders received four strokes of a cane.

On the 19th the expedition passed a hamlet on the river bank. Expedition members called from the forward canoe that the inhabitants were aggressive having drawn their bows but by the time Odgers canoe was abeam of the hamlet the people there were calling *Seno* and making friendly gestures. Then at 3.50pm they saw the first signs of civilization since they left Yessan on the Sepik. It was a hill, not unlike Ambunti with old house sites, pineapples, coconut palms, mango and citrus trees. They landed there and managed to shoot three pigs.

This was the then abandoned Oroville station which had been established as the base camp for the Ward Williams expedition in 1936. This is the site of present day Kiunga some five hundred miles up the Fly River from the Gulf of Papua, Daru and Torres Strait.

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Oroville to Daru 20th Aug. to 25th Sept '42 Floating Down the Fly, and Back to Wartime Reality

The expedition would now be taken where it wanted to go by the Fly River current but they still needed to break that journey in order to get food. On the 20th August they still had a three day supply of sago but they needed to find another good sago stand soon. So it was that the party again stopped at a large sago stand on the 21st and by 27th August they had made 1,600 pounds, sufficient for eight more days. Very early morning departures meant that the canoe journey was making up to 13 hours per day.

On 28th August for example, Thurston departed at 3.15am and the remainder followed at 3.35am in drizzling rain and passing between river banks clad in inundated bush. At 8.30am they arrived at Thurston's breakfast camp which was a welcome sight as everyone was hungry and sick of sitting in the canoes. Thurston had shot three Goura Pigeons. The canoes were again on their way at 10.20am. Soon afterwards they collected green coconuts and green pawpaws from an abandoned settlement site. At 5.30pm the expedition members went ashore again where Thurston had landed and commenced setting up camp.

On the evening of 30th August, the carrier line caught three fish overnight so fried fish was on the breakfast menu. The carriers were again put to work processing sago on the 31st August. On 1st September a cassowary was killed and rump steaks were butchered from it. The next day they ate a wallaby along with pigeon breasts. With a new store of sago on board they were again under way on the 7th September and by the late afternoon they could see no sign of Thurston who as always had gone ahead. Finally they caught up with him at 8pm and after a consultation it was agreed to continue drifting throughout the night. The mosquitoes proved to be very bad out on the river at night.

They made camp early on the 9th near a big clump of bamboo. Thurston's diary :-

*"...during the night, I was awakened by the boys crying out and found that one of the Manus monkeys (lads) Samuel had a python wound all around him from his legs to his neck. I had my revolver with me and a torch and I shot the snake. The bullet went through the snake and the boy's leg but only just under the skin. I had to take the risk of perhaps injuring the boy's leg as the python would have soon crushed him. Put two bullets into the snake. It was 18 feet long."*¹⁰

Kwatawiyugw of Avatip now resumes his story :-

“Whenever we found sago we cut it and washed (processed) it for a week or so then put tomahawks and knives on the stumps as payment. We would wash enough sago to eat and to carry and that is how we went. We finally came to a big river in a bad place and we made a cane suspension bridge. We kept going and found a big river and made canoes and washed sago there. We drifted down the river to a Government station (Oroville). We killed pigs and ate them. We rested there for a week and then we drifted further down the river.

We went ashore and slept at the foot of a clump of bamboo. The Mankimasta (Cook/ personal servant) was a Manus and a huge python came and wrapped itself around him while he was rolled up in his blanket. The cook was still alive but we could not get the snake off. Mr. Jack told us to come and witness that it was necessary for him to shoot the snake and if the man was hurt we were to tell what happened and be Mr. Jack’s witness. Mr. Jack took out his revolver then and shot the snake four times and it let go of the man and went into the river. The Manus was shot through both legs. The doctor looked after him and he lived and got back to Moresby”.¹¹

Odgers’ diary continues 10th September 1942 :- ¹²

“We did not leave until 11.15am. (We saw) a wonderful sight at 12.25 pm when we passed a large muddy river coming in on the left bank. This was obviously the Strickland... When we again caught up with Thurston we ate, and distributed rations to the carriers then as it was a beautiful star-lit night we went on our way again at 8.15pm”.

On 11th September they slept through the night and awakened at 5.30am to find that they were still drifting along at a steady speed...They stopped to collect coconuts then continued on to pass *Ellengowan* Island at 2.30pm. Again they travelled all night. At 10.30am next morning they passed *Cassowary* Island. When they made camp that night they discovered that they were now in the tidal region and that the tide was rising quickly.

On 13th September at 8.30am they passed *Tidal* Island and took the right hand fork which brought them to a deserted village. Odgers noted that this was one of the most eerie sights he had ever seen. The village was quite large with well-built houses. It was very clean and tidy but there was no sign whatever of human inhabitants. A pig noticed their arrival and unwisely came over to investigate and was promptly shot.

They continued on their way at 12.30pm on a rapidly falling tide. Half an hour later they came upon the local people busily working on a garden beside the water. They were keen to trade tobacco and said that their village was called *Tinunga*. The tide then started coming in and they paddled against it. At 4pm the tide changed and they again made rapid progress.

On 18th September at *Baramura* the village constable showed them the village book which carried an entry dated 29/8/1942 less than three weeks ago! The entry showed that a patrol officer had visited there with a native medical orderly. The village constable sold them a great amount of bananas, sweet potatoes, sago, pumpkins, a pineapple and “*four wonderful tomatoes*”. Although Thurston wanted to continue on, the weather was against them so they stayed the night. On the 19th they were underway at 6am. The Fly River estuary was now so wide that the far bank was over the horizon and sea conditions were experienced. The sea that morning was comparatively calm and they made good progress. They reached *Tureture* village and received directions to nearby *Madiri* Plantation where they arrived at 9am. Thurston was already there and introduced the plantation manager, a Mr. Wood.

Until they discovered that Madiri Plantation and Daru were still manned by Australians, the Thurston expedition had, if necessary, intended to cross Torres Strait to Australia. Happily this now proved not to be necessary. Odgers' diary explains his pleasure at again being in civilization ...” *A wonderful lunch of meat and vegetables scones and butter. Talked and talked this afternoon during which we ate and drank innumerable cups of tea...After dinner we drank a toast to Jack whose birthday it is tomorrow, then we sat and yarned until 11.15pm.”*

Thurston went ahead and on the 21st September arrived in Daru where he reported to District Officer Captain Vertigan and handed over responsibility for the carrier line to him. He went to Port Moresby and reported for duty with ANGAU.

Kwatawiyugw continues his story¹³-

“We did not sleep more we drifted day and night. Mr. Jack said if we saw the waves of the sea we would go ashore and clear a camp site and a house for the injured Manus. Mr. Jack was a strong man and had gone ahead of us and when we saw the waves we also saw Mr. Jack in a clearing he had made on the shore.

We found some natives and some of the Europeans spoke Motu language to them. They said that the kiap had been there yesterday and censused the village. We went ashore at a plantation near the river mouth and a Missus (European woman) looked after us. We radioed from this place we knew as Gumi and a ship came to pick us up and took us to Daru. Gumi on that river is like Kopar on the Sepik. (i.e. at the river mouth)

The sea trip to Moresby took one week. We went to Kerema and they sent two sentry planes to fly over us and guard against Jap submarines...The first thing we heard was that the Japs were about to take Moresby. The big fights were on at Kokoda and Buna. The strong men among us [carriers] were given uniforms and rifles. Those of us were not strong enough yet were sent to 12-mile (A settlement 12 miles inland of Port Moresby) to prepare food for the soldiers...When we were strong again we went to the Depot and were given uniforms and guns...They sent me in a plane to Aitape and we parachuted down onto Tadjji and Raihu...”

We will rejoin this adventure after the remainder of the Sepik story has caught up to the Aitape allied landings of 22nd April 1944.

Writers Note :- The Thurston party began walking south from the May River on 8th May, and arrived at Madiri Plantation near the mouth of the Fly River then on 19th September, a period of approx. four and a half months, having crossed the inhospitable Central Range of New Guinea from the Sepik to the Fly.

The reader may recall that we noted that the original estimate for the journey overland was 35 days. This may have reflected a poor understanding of the potential difficulty of the trek, and perhaps inadequate preparation propelled by desperation. Whatever the judgement of history, the leadership and ability demonstrated by Jack Thurston was extraordinary, as was the endurance of all the expedition members.

End Notes Attachment B

¹ It can be argued that there are two Iatmul villages upstream of Japandai. As explained in Sepik 2 – the Japandai migrations established the Nyaula/Iatmul village of Brugnowi between Yambon and Yessan. Also Laycock's preliminary linguistic classification lists Swagup as a Iatmul speaking community. The Swagup link is apparently so ancient so ancient that existing Iatmul communities of the middle Sepik are unaware of it.

² Email from Ken Nayau of Avatip dated 18th April 2012

³ Odgers' Diary appendix A & B Pages 102 and 103

⁴ Odgers' Diary 2nd May 1942 =>

⁵ Odgers' Diary Page 52

⁶ Bragge L.W. Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 43

⁷ Odgers' Diary continues 30th May 1942 =.

⁸ Odgers' Diary 13th June 1942

⁹ Odgers' Diary 23rd July 1942

¹⁰ Thurston Diary extract

¹¹ Bragge L.W. Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 43

¹² Odgers' diary continues

Chapter 19 **Blood Flows at Sambugundai** - Renegade Police are Dealt with by the Nyaula Under Orders from PO Hodgekiss 17/4/1942 =>

The killing of the renegade police actually started prior to Hodgekiss's issuing firearms. It started not from Hodgekiss' instruction but from Yabisaun's lust for revenge over the sexual assault on his sister Singei. Yabisaun schemed to separate two police from the rest and to kill them. Constables Bun and Tangwan agreed to go with Yabisaun to the Changriman market to buy sago.

The Ex-Luluai of Changriman explained that because of the trouble in the Lakes, which he called "war time" his people had retreated back to the security of their ancestral village site in the remoteness of the hills south of the Chambri Lakes. Yabisaun beat the garamut message from the Changriman market place 'come down and we will kill these two (police) here at the market place.' [The police of course, not being Middle Sepik men, did not understand the drum message]. The Changriman people heard and understood the message but no one came. So Yabisaun turned the canoe over at the market place and he and the Nyaula paddlers killed Bun and Tangwan in the water using axes and spears. The Changriman people whom Yabisaun called did not take part in the killing but they did bury the bodies at the market place.¹

Ex-Sergeant Yimbien of Tego² resumes the story :-

Kiap Whisky [Hodgekiss] came up river and met a man at Mindimbit called Yimoliban and told him he had a plan he wanted to discuss. Yimoliban was taken aboard the 'Thetis' and brought to Yentchanmangua. At Yentchanmangua Kiap Whiskey explained his plan and the men there agreed. He gave them six rifles and three boxes of ammunition. They discussed the matter in the big haus tambaran that has since burned down. Talk was sent to Korogo, Nyauarengai, Kandingei, Japanaut and Japandai. They agreed to raid the renegade police at Sambugundei

In preparation Yabisaun had disposed of Bun and Tangwan. Yabisaun came and reported this to us and we were pleased. They had been killed that morning long before the current preparations were made. Now there were only three police .

The rifles were distributed to ex-police who knew how to handle them. Kupma who was on leave held one, Gumboliban held one, Yandimi held one, Malindambwi held one (and the other two names were unintelligible). In addition to the six who held the rifles there were many paddlers and spearmen. As darkness fell the canoes were close to Sambugundei. My father's canoe went ahead after he had made protective magic. They paddled around the Island and came back and reported 'Everything is alright, we can go'. The canoes went in and the men went stealthily ashore looking ahead.

The fighting started but was inconclusive with only Tandambwi being shot (he was a supporter not a policeman). Then the police called out 'It is alright, we can fight at night, but we would prefer to fight in the day light tomorrow.' We replied 'That is OK wontok (friend) we will wait.'

We retreated to the canoes and went away and waited sleeping in the canoes. As dawn came we came in again to fight. There was a clump of bamboo with a platform next to it. One policeman was firing from there alternately retreating into the bamboo before

coming out to fire again. Mamber of Korogo came around to his side and shot him. It was Bauken (Baugwi?). He had been firing a .22 rifle and when he was hit he threw the rifle away from himself. The raiders went through the Island then and killed the others. Gaia was swimming away in the water when they speared him to death. The other policeman Mansel escaped as far away as Kambaramba and was killed there.

There are several reports of Mansel's escape to Kambaramba or Korogopa in the Grass country near Angoram but the reports of his death were incorrect as Jones Sepik District report of 7th May states "Angoram advised that Munsia (one connected with the murder of Strudwick) had been captured"³.

Ex-Sergeant Yimbien of Tegoi continues :-

"After the killing, we went back to Yentchanmangua. The kiap who had gone upstream came back down and we gave the rifles and cartridges to him".

Nonguru son of Luluai Kemerabi of Japandai saw events somewhat differently:-

Kiap Whiskey came up river and gave .303s and cartridges to the men of Korogo, Japanaut, Yamunumbu, Nyauengai and Yentchanmangua. When he came to our place (Japandai) he told my father ... 'If you are strong, go and kill these men with axes and knives.'⁴

During the German Era and afterwards, Kemerabi was arguably the most feared head hunting leader on the Sepik. Townsend managed to befriend him and used him as an Australian administration ambassador to bring peace to the Sepik Plains. Nonguru, then a young man, lived in his father's shadow, but was about to emerge. It is also necessary to introduce an 'adopted' son, Kwonji of Burui who Townsend also 'adopted' for the reason that he was bi-lingual in Iatmul and the Sawos language of the Plains. As Kemerabi spoke no Pidgin, he and Kwonji were a team. We will meet Kwonji later. Nonguru continues :-

"We went down and found that Yabisaun had already killed two police and taken their rifles. He gave me one of the rifles and I went ashore at Sambugundei and stayed under Yabisaun's house. The police were camped down near the point. I saw the police preparing to fight the Nyaula people. In the morning we fired volleys into three houses, but we found them to be empty. From the 4th house Pawen, (Baugwe??), an Aitape returned our fire. I was standing with Mamber of Korogo as we fired. Mamber fired a shot that hit him in the chest and he fell. We ran then and the police and their supporters threw their weapons away and swam out in the lake to escape us. We caught them and killed them with axes. They cut the heads off the dead and threw the bodies in the lake. The victors took the spoils from the police camp and I told them:

'No! I heard the kiap's talk. He said not to touch the women or children and not to touch the cargo.' Biendimi of Yentchanmangua answered me 'I was a policeman before and who are you? A mere youth trying to tell me what to do!' So I could do nothing to stop them. You know the Sepik fashion to big-head. They did not follow what I said. Among those killed were four women. Gaia's wife, a Finschhafen and we took her alive. Her name was Anuk. There were also two (of her) children, one was killed [in the fight] and the other died as well, but I do not know how he died. I put her in my canoe and told my brothers to paddle her away while I went back to the fighting. In my absence the

Tultul of Japanaut was angry and took her back. I discovered this later and had to accept it. There was nothing I could do.

I paddled to Chambri seeking Manja who had escaped. He was too quick for me and got away to the Grass country near Angoram. He was later imprisoned in Wewak but was there only a week when Japanese bombing caused the prisoners to be transferred from Wewak to Burui gaol. He escaped from Burui gaol and fled to villages around Maprik.

Anuk was taken to Yentchanmangua. She was supposed to be in the custody of Biambindimi, but from the time of her capture onwards she was raped repeatedly. Father Hansen sent me to Yentchanmangua to get her. I did that and brought her back to Marui and left her in his custody.⁵

Kwonji of Burui adds some additional details⁶:-

Hodgekiss asked Luluai Kemerabi of Japandai to go to Sambugundei with the raid, but Kemerabi remained at Japandai. Nonguru, Kwonji and others went. Kwonji had a cut foot so remained in the canoe and did not take part in the fighting.

When the fight was called off in the night, to be resumed next morning, Kwonji explained that the fighting had been one of disorganized actions with terrified village people up against disciplined and organized police. What happened next, in Kwonji's words, was that the police called out – *“We are strong. We can shovel any place that comes our way, Korogo, Yamunumbu, Japanaut, Yentchanmangua.... They the Nyaulas came back and made power and soon they were brave again. [“made power” presumably means that they conducted the rituals used in headhunting to build courage before engaging in head hunting raids]. They called out that they would come and fight in the morning. The police replied insultingly - ‘All right. You are my wife and I am the man. You will cook food for me’ ”.*

Having been requested by the kiap to kill these renegades and then, in order to succeed with that, having activated age-old headhunting ritual, there was no way that the blood lust, so stimulated, could be immediately turned off when the kiap's objective had been achieved. The result was the outcome that Nonguru described.

Gauai Local Government Councillor Mebiangen of Wombun continues⁷:-

“We stopped eating fish from the lake for a time. The bodies were not buried – they were thrown in the lake and they rotted there. I was fishing and I found a human hip bone, I speared a big fish and inside were was a big piece of human meat. It was not yet rotten. Human meat does not rot quickly like game meat.”

Ex-Luluai Wapi of Indingai continues⁸ :-

“Yabisaun and his line asked us if they could come and live here (Chambri Island) for a while as the stench of the bodies made Sambugundei a bad place to live. We refused. The smell of rotting bodies made us leave the water as a source of food and washing for a full year. In that time we lived on garden crops and coconuts.

Manja's woman, Nambandoa of Wombun survived the action at Sambugundei and returned to Chambri. I wanted to kill her. She was paddling a canoe off Indingai and I

threw a spear at her. She was paddling and the spear hit her as her arm passed her leg. The spear transfixed her arm to her leg and the point emerged in her groin.

Later kiap Whiskey who had issued the firearms in the first place came into Chambri and took this woman to Pagwi (Burui gaol?). He said that being speared served her right and was her punishment. Kiap Whisky came to see Sambugundei and bury any bodies. While there he killed the pigs at Sambugundei and brought them to Chambri and told us to cook them and eat them as compensation.”

End Notes Chapter 19

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- ¹ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes vol 19 Page 362
 - ² Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes vol 18 Page 278
 - ³ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42
 - ⁴ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 18 pages 78-79
 - ⁵ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 18 pages 79-80
 - ⁶ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 18 pages 180 - 181
 - ⁷ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 page 329
 - ⁸ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 page 331

Chapter 20 DO Jones' Plans For The Sepik - Grappling With An Increasingly Unmanageable Situation 23/4/1942 – 3/7/1942

Our story last mentioned District Officer Jones on 23rd April 1942 when he reported Freddy Eichorn and Wilton had been found alive by Neptune Blood at Timbunke. Prior to that we left him in Angoram and Marienberg in late March after Taylor was shot. After the departure of the Thurston expedition, Jones came under the impression that the Morobe District hinterland was occupied by the Japanese.¹ Accordingly, in late March 1942 he planned to establish a fixed radio transmitter in the May River area. This plan ran into trouble from the very start. To achieve the plan Milligan, Hartley and Searson were sent to join Aitchison and Minogue at the No 2 depot at Yamundo. Together with Aitchison, they would proceed to Timbunke from where they would be picked up and taken to May River.

However on 1st April Aitchison's police and staff deserted so he was ordered back to Sauri. Warrant Officer Blood was then ordered to take charge of the police party that was to go to May River. Blood was chosen because Jones '*knew they [the police] would stick to him*²' Blood's party left Angoram on 15th April and got as far as Timbunke. Then came the news of the murder of the miners and the upstream instability caused by the renegade police. Other situations were also afoot so one way or another, by the 1st June the May River communications plan had been abandoned.

Bates was on patrol in the Sepik and learned that the renegade police had been killed at Sambugundei. Upon Bates reporting this on 11th May, Jones ordered him to go to Sambugundei Island to salvage the pinnace [the Pat, which by that time was already back in Angoram] and any stores he could find. The patrol would then go to Marui and Maprik.

On 19th May Father Clerkim, stationed at Vanimo, reported that natives who had visited Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea told him that the Japanese had occupied the town. Jones then reported '*Although advice had been received that Hollandia had been occupied by the enemy, I decided that it was advisable to pay a visit to the area...*³

On 25th May accompanied by Sgt. Russell and Privates West and Esson, Jones left on the *Edith* for Hollandia. They arrived off Tumleo Island, near Aitape at 10am, and next morning they found themselves off Vanimo. Arriving at Wutung and the Dutch border at 8 am, scouts were sent to check and returned to say the Japanese had been there but had left a few days before. On 28th the *Edith* entered Hollandia harbour and called at a village where it was confirmed that the Japanese had indeed left. The *Edith* then went to the Hollandia jetty where a flag pole was erected and the Australian flag raised with due ceremony, an event which included Jones and his staff all being in Australian military uniform. The attitude of 80 to 90 Asiatics at the jetty, [not surprisingly] was sullen.

Jones made his way to the home of an English-speaking Javanese Medical Officer who was friendly but understandably uncomfortable at the presence of the Australians. He said the Japanese had arrived in an aircraft carrier and two destroyers. Officers and 200 marines landed. Government stores were ransacked and the marines drank Hollandia dry of alcohol. The Dutch Controller and family were taken away on the carrier. The Japanese confiscated all the Hollandia police weapons and ammunition and said they would be back in three weeks. Nothing was learned as to whether there were any Japanese agents or representatives in Hollandia. At 6pm the Australian flag was lowered with due ceremony. The *Edith* returned the way she had come arriving at Wewak at 10am on 31st May.

Upon Jones' return Milligan informed him that Dr. Schroeder and Medical Assistants Fisher, Lambert and Hartley had left the district without authority and were said to be headed for the Ramu. Jones recorded Schroeder's reported behaviour as selfish and despicable particularly as the medical staff left patients unattended and deprived the Sepik administration of its medical capacity⁴.

Jones information on the medical staff was incorrect and his scathing attack seemingly unjustified. The Annual report for the Sepik for 1942, submitted by Charles Bates, listed the following staff and ranks and their locations as at 20th September as:

Dr. A.G.Schroeder – Medical officer, Captain AAMV – Wewak.
G.Hartley – Medical Assistant, Warrant Officer 2 – Burui.
C.Lambert – Medical Assistant, Warrant Officer 2 – Wewak.
L.J.M.Fisher – Medical Assistant, Warrant Officer 2 – Angoram
R.Pickwell - Medical Assistant, Warrant Officer 2 was with the Thurston expedition.

The remaining staff and their locations were previously described by Jones as:

Aitchison and Bates – Angoram to control the river.
Searson – coast watch station at Kopar
Hodgekiss, [Preston]White and Blood – Sauri

Jones had reported that Taylor had recovered from his wound but was still below his normal weight. A new station was to be opened on the Ramu (at Annanberg) to work in with Black at Bogia. Taylor was posted there to give him more time to recover.

Had anyone gone to Annanberg looking for Taylor they would be disappointed. In keeping with "Blue Book" strategies Taylor had selected his camp site with great care. The Keram River headwaters, a Sepik tributary [Also known as the Little Ramu}, does not actually link with the Ramu River in terms of navigable water except during floods, but they do pass within about four kilometers of Annanberg; just two hours walk away on a well concealed track.

Taylor selected the small settlement of Ramdapu on the Upper Keram as his base. In the event of trouble the current of the Keram would take his party by boat or canoe downstream to the Sepik District and eventually to the Sepik River itself.

Jones mentioned that on 7th June Blood arrived with the *Thetis* bringing with him Angoram natives connected with the murder of Europeans. On 23rd June Jones was instructed to hand over to Bates. Jones left on July 3rd via Sek in the Madang District.

DO Jones' Sepik report for the period 8th December 1941 to 31st July 1942 describes very well the difficulties and uncertainties facing the Administration in the Sepik and the complexity of the decisions he had to make without headquarters guidance. This was made more complicated by the presence of the fifty "citizens" of the mining fraternity, who lacked the discipline that Jones expected and who were in no hurry to follow any orders that did not suit them. This and things that went wrong, such as the Angoram incident, the murders of Strudwick and the Garamambu miners, the *Nereus* going to Australia against his explicit orders, the forced abandonment of No 2 Depot at Yamundo, his own questionable journey to Hollandia and related issues must have played on Jones' mind.

The report starts out reading well but towards the end it seems to be so critical of most of his staff particularly Dr. Schroeder and ADO Bates, to whom he was ordered to hand over the District, that it is difficult not to read some self-justification into his words.

End Notes Chapter 20

¹ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 Page 4

² Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 page 5

³ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 page 6

⁴ Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 pages 8 & 9

Chapter 21 Bates Patrol to Sambugundei and Beyond – Rough Justice and Compensation with Freddy Eichorn and Bill Macgregor May & June 1942

No report on this Bates' patrol was found, so reliance is placed upon the Sepik elders' oral accounts. Maliangen of Wombun in Chapter 19 suggests that it was Hodgekiss, rather than Bates who conducted the patrol. Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai continues the story :-

“Plenty of people were with the renegade police in their time at Sambugundei. They guided them, helped them and supported them. In the time when we killed the police, we did not kill these other people and they came back to the villages and wanted to hide their involvement. Some of these men were Yaganaut, an ex-policeman from Angoram, Yabisaun, Yimuruk, Waskat, Sindambwi, Kunganjindimi and others. It was my father Kemerabi who informed the kiap about them. The kiap arrested them and locked them in the hold of the ship and took them to Wewak¹ Neptune Blood delivered the prisoners.²

The prisoners were awaiting trial when Wewak was bombed. They had been in Wewak only a week when the bombing caused the kiaps to bring the prisoners to the gaol at Burui patrol post. All the kiaps came, Mr. Tom (Aitchison), Mr. Pes (Bates). Father Hansen showed them a letter with my name on it (presumably re the rescue of Gaia's wife Anuk from Yentchanmangua.) and they asked to see me. Mr. Pes (Bates) asked me if I would stay and help look after Burui patrol post as Mr. Haviland's (Nonguru means 'Aitchison') police had deserted him. I agreed and I stayed with Mr. Pes.

Later when Mr. Milligan came to take over Burui Patrol Post he asked me if I would be prepared to join the police. I said that I was not afraid to die as I had plenty of brothers. He said he would ask my father's permission first. Kemerabi agreed.³”

Two miners had unfinished business in the Chambri Lakes and surrounds following the killing of the renegade police. It is safe to assume that neither told Bates of their plans. Freddy Eichorn's quest was to kill Yabisaun to avenge his father's death⁴. Bill Macgregor needed to rebuild his gold mining enterprise at Garamambu. Nonguru continues :-

“Mr. Boli (Freddy Eichorn) escaped the massacre on the Korosameri River and he came back and burned Sambugundei settlement and killed the pigs there and put the carcasses on his boat. He was looking for Yabisaun, but he and his family were in hiding at a distant place called Kamanjau in order to escape Mr. Boli's revenge.

Next he (Freddy Eichorn) went to Japanaut on the Sepik River and killed pigs there loading the carcasses onto his ship. He sought Yabisaun's brother Timbun and would have killed him, but Timbun eluded him. Next he went to Nangarameri⁵ and killed the pigs there. In each of these places he searched and confiscated anything he found that was of value – as compensation for the death of his father.

The patrol that came to investigate at Sambugundei and the excesses of the Nyaulas who killed the police and others [Bates patrol?] ordered each of the seven Nyaula villages – Korogo, Yentchanmangua, Japanaut, Yamunumbu, Japandai, Nyaurengai and Kandingei to pay £35 compensation for the loss of the stores. We think this was paid to Mr. Boli. Yabisaun did not come out of hiding until after the arrival of the Japanese.

Maimban and Wani of Yerikai⁶ remember :-

“Masta Mek (Macgregor) was absent when the police broke into his store at Waikaran near Garamambu and stole all his cargo. When he returned, the Avatips told him that the Yerikais and Garamambus were responsible. Owing to this lie, the men of Yerikai and Garamambu each received 10, 15 or 20 lashes with a cane. Afterwards they could lie down but not sit down.”

Macgregor also insisted upon compensation for his losses. Dumondi of Garamambu said that Macgregor made the Garamambu people work without pay to fill a jar with gold. Ex-Luluai Wapi of Indingai⁷ explains about Bill Macgregor :-

“Masta Mek was at Garamambu working gold before the war. He was married to Weinak. She was a Chambri woman not a Kambaramba. [The reference to Kambaramba is because Beckett’s woman Kangan was from there as were most women living with miners.] When the war came, he stayed with Weinak and they went bush together.

The Aid Post Orderly from here (Indingai), Mari, had stolen some calico and three axes from Masta Mek’s store and hidden them. Masta Mek came... and beat Mari severely until I found £3 and paid it to Masta Mek as compensation and asked him to stop beating Mari.

When the Government ship came and the kiap [Bates?] went ashore at Garamambu and asked for Macgregor, Kambagaratmeri and Subigumban led the kiap to Changriman. From there they went into the mountains of Mari and Milae and brought Masta Mek back with them. After going on board the ship and meeting with the kiap, Masta Mek went back into the bush again.”

End Notes Chapter 21

¹ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 78

² Jones: 8 Dec. 41 to 31 Jul 42 page 10

³ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 78

⁴ L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 392

⁵ This place name is not known to the writer.

⁶ L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 294

⁷ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 334

Chapter 22 Bill Macgregor Living Dangerously – Tribal Violence Erupts Around Kamasiut Lands mid '42 – April '43

Tobi of Mensuat takes up the story :-

Weinak was at Mensuat when our father Yambimo who was the Luluai of Mensuat sent her to Chambri to be married. At Chambri she went astray until before the war, she married a policeman called Selio. Then at about the time the war¹ started, she met Mr. Mac. I think they met in Angoram and they went around together.

They prospected for gold through the Karawari River system and then the Korosameri River system with their line of Aitape District workers. They set up camp near Big Mari at a place called Duatuk. I went to see my sister there. They had a small ship, whose name I do not recall and it went back and forth to Angoram for supplies. From Duatuk they went back to the Karawari prospecting and then back again to Duatuk. They were not always in the one place”.

Wapi of Indingai also remembers Weinak :-

She was a woman of Mensuat and she came (to Indingai) to marry Wolinagwan the father of Mathias Yambumbe. But she was regarded as “public”, not really a prostitute but open to anyone reasonable who wanted to have sex. At this time Mr. Mac was mining at Garamambu as a single man. Then when the war broke out he came and found Weinak and took her with him as his woman. He did not pay a formal bride price but gave Weinak gifts and the necessities of life and he gave some gifts locally. There was no local animosity over this relationship as Weinak was regarded as public property. He took her to the bush and they stayed there mining gold during the war².

As Macgregor and Weinak went about their mining, other things were coming to a head in the Hunstein Mountains behind the Garamambu gold fields. From 1924 onwards the lower and middle Sepik had been progressively explored and pacified. So it was that by 1942, in “contolled areas” such as the Chambri Lakes the rule of “British” law had become the norm. However with the departure of the administration officers in early January 1943, there was no longer a physical presence as a deterrent to breaking the law. It was just a matter of time before the strength of traditional beliefs, obligations, vendettas and values overran the ‘rule of law’. The pace at which this happened varied from place to place. In the Hunstein Mountains it took about three months before tribal warfare again become the norm.

The recorded background to the Hunstein situation was that in 1930 a Hunstein community known as the Kamasiut³ raided into the Garamambu lands killing five people and taking their heads. Kamasiut had not been contacted by the government and while it was not the New Guinea policy to contact such groups simply for the sake of contacting them, it was policy that communities already under government influence must be protected against such attacks.

PO J. K. McCarthy led a patrol into the Kamasiut tribal lands to investigate. After a war of nerves employed by the Kamasuit, the patrol came under such sudden and intense attack that one of McCarthy's police had no option but to defend the party by shooting and killing the Kamasiut leader. The patrol withdrew, the Kamasiut remained "uncontacted" and the murder of the five Garamambu remained unavenged. The lack of a Government presence soon saw the Garamambu raid the Kamasiut to pay back their dead. Other Hunstein enemies of the Kamasiut were quickly on the side of Garamambu. Yamali and Yabau of Milae explain :-

They (the Kamasiut) did not live in one place, they were like pigs, they moved around a lot seeking food. In their past they had many different camps throughout the area. It was for this reason that they found themselves close to enemies. Our Luluai went to bring them back to safety and that was when the trouble started⁴.

Following raids upon the Kamasiut by other Hunstein peoples, the Milae, who considered themselves to be allies of Kamasiut, sent a delegation to the Kamasiut camp on the [south west] side of Mt. Maiwan to encourage them to move further east and so be out of the danger area. The delegation consisted of the Luluai and Tultul of Milae and their wives and a female child.

When the Milae people arrived, the Kamasiut assembled and attacked the unsuspecting Milae delegation. When the Milae Luluai was struck on the head with a knife and fell, the Tultul and his wife fled back to Milae. When the Luluai and his family did not return, a search party found the Luluai alive, but his wife and child had been killed by arrows and their bodies eaten by the Kamasiut.

Milae sent ginger to Mari. [ginger is the fight totem plant - when sent in this way it is an invitation to fight as an ally against a common enemy]. The combined Milae/Mari party raided the Kamasiut camp called Naliba in the early morning and killed a big man called Yango, a woman called Yadaus and a younger girl called Keku. Others escaped. The heads were not taken nor the flesh eaten because the Kamasiut had been their friends. The Kamasiut survivors left Naliba and went to live at Sorokuma, where the Garamambu's attacked them, killing four men and three women. The survivors went further westward near Yigei and Wagu who killed, beheaded and ate two men, a youth, eight women and a young girl.

Ex Constable Gigio of Garamambu said :-

"Gambi became cross and said we should not have taken the heads as when the white-man returned there would be trouble over it. But the heads had already been severed so they were left in the bush to rot."⁵

The outcome was summed up in Ambunti Patrol Report 6/1971-72 :-

'Following this (McCarthy's 1930 patrol) the Kamasiut existed in isolation until the war, when enemy groups Yerikai, Garamambu, Milae, Mari, Yigei, Wagu and Namu fought back and forth with the Kamasiut causing them to retreat back into the eastern end

of the Hunstein Mountains and their ancestral cave known as Biba. The group camped in the cave and in a nearby house. The final raid allegedly by the Namu people killed the people in the cave. The people from the house fled to their village site Wa'abas which is less than a day's walk from the present Milae site. The Milae and Changriman went and collected these remnants and absorbed them, and the Kamasiut group ceased to exist. The remnants were absorbed thus:

- *A woman and a man were taken in by Changiman.*
- *A woman taken by Timbunmeri.*
- *A woman taken by Milae (the informant Yamili)*
- *A woman taken by Yigei*

Since then the raiders have tallied up the people accounted for in the raids and passed on a story to their descendants that several men and women escaped and still live on the traditional Kamasiut lands. People gave weight to this rumour from evidence of unknown people leaving tracks, sand castles, broken branches found on the Kamasiut as well as their own lands. No group has as yet claimed to own the Kamasiut lands. This land remains a buffer between the groups encircling it. But this is a story belonging to a later time”.

Tobi of Mensuat continues the story :-

“After the Japanese arrived in the Sepik, Luluai Yambimo went to see his daughter Weinak at Duatuk to warn her and Macgregor that the Japanese were now in the area and that they should flee to safety. While he was at Duatuk Yambimo was given an axe and a knife. He brought these things back to the village and there the Chambri people saw them and reported to the Japanese. The Japanese came and took Yambimo to the gaol at Marui. He was there for a month until we went with a pig and some money to pay for his release⁶.”

Dumondi of Garamambu continues the story⁷ :-

“The incident with Yigei happened while Garamambu’s Number 3 banis [Enclosure – meaning Haus Tambaran and related village ward] were still having their singsing over the fight with [victory over] Kamasiut. We are of the Number 2 banis and we combined with some warriors from the number 1 banis who went to fight against Yigei. It started like this:

Mr. Mac tried to go to the Sepik by passing through the Wagu and Yigei lands. He had his labour line of Aitape men with him. Yigei attacked his party and all his labour line ran away back to Garamambu and Mr. Mac followed them. He was angry with Yigei. We took Mr. Mac inside to Yau’umbak and from there he went to the Sepik (i.e. instead of going west by the direct route to the Sepik River via Yigei, they detoured miles to the north and joined the river perhaps 15 miles downstream).

Back in Garamambu, at the first sounds of approaching morning we went. We did not take torches and we were like pigs blundering through the bush. When we came to a swamp we sat down without shelter and waited. We started hearing noises and we were

drawn to them. A woman called out then it seemed that her man who we could not yet see said something and she laughed. We were at the Yigei settlement called Dabiabu. We could see her dropping hot stones into a saucepan making hot water sago. We crawled quietly closer and put ginger into our mouths and latched our teeth onto it. My brother Kaimbu speared the man. Another brother Noku speared another man. We killed and beheaded two men and one woman. We brought the heads back and put them in our Haus Tambaran. This was the payback for Mr. Mac.

The Garamambu people maintain that Macgregor asked them to fight Yigei on his behalf. The outcome of that fight and whether Macgregor instigated it was investigated after the war by *Masta Jack* (Jack Cahill) who was patrol officer in charge of Ambunti when it was reopened in the late 1940s. Village officials from Malu supported the Yigei people who presented three sets of bones, less the skulls, as evidence. Dumondi and others of Garamambu represented themselves. The evidence was heard and the case was dismissed.⁸ There was no documentary record of this case in the Ambunti files.

What of MacGregor? Having been delivered to Yau'umbak by his Garamambu friends, Macgregor had to make decisions about his escape. Logic suggests that the first decision he appears to have made was to leave Weinak in the safety of her immediate family. The Garamambu informants make no mention of her travelling to Yau'umbak. The decision as to where he should go was simple. Thirteen years earlier, he had explored the route up into the Highlands via the Yuat and Maramuni Rivers; that was where he now needed to go.

Tobi mentioned that Macgregor had a boat. It turned out to be Eichorn's *Pat*. We do not know how he travelled undetected down the Sepik and into the Yuat before starting to walk into the Highlands. We meet Macgregor again later.

End Notes Chapter 22.

⁹⁹ "The war" for Chambri people was said to have started with the renegade police at Sambugunde

¹⁰⁰ Bragge L.W Bragge. Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 335/6

¹⁰¹ J.K.McCarthy 1963 called them the Kamchua, see Pages 59-62

¹⁰² Bragge L.W. Bragge Notes Vol 19 Page 371.

¹⁰³ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 379

¹⁰⁴ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 345

¹⁰⁵ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 379-381

¹⁰⁶ Bragge L.W Bragge. Sepik Research Notes Vol. 19 Page 380

Chapter 23 District Officer Bates' Management of the Sepik – the Japanese Arrive
– Plight of the Chinese and Their Evacuation July '42 - March '43

The departure of DO Captain Jones in July 1942 left the newly appointed DO Bates with a staff, which included the still recovering ADO Jim Taylor at a supply base near Annanberg on the Ramu River, and PO Milligan at Aitape. Radio Operator Kevin Minogue alternated between Sauri and Wewak.

POs Searson, Aitchison, Hodgekiss and Blood alternated as required between coast-watching duties at Kopar and working at Angoram, Wewak, Maprik and Burui. A lot of focus was now placed upon Burui patrol post just north of the Sepik River. As mentioned with the bombing of Wewak, the prisoners from Wewak jail were transferred there. Burui also had an airstrip.

With the desertion of Aitchison's police and staff from No 2 depot and wireless station Yamundo on the 1st of April, the base radio was moved back to Sauri. As time went by without the Japanese doing more than sending the occasional reconnaissance plane over Wewak, the wireless station and staff moved back there. The little community took up the way of life it had abandoned in the first month of the year. But now they were in that state of mind that exists when uncertainty and tension are constant companions that have to be accepted and accommodated like bad weather or a constant ache. ¹

Meanwhile the ANGAU war diaries made little mention of the Sepik in late 1942 as little was happening there. Life continued nervously on in Wewak and the other Sepik stations. On 3rd June Taylor, Hodgekiss, Aitchison, Preston-White and Searson were promoted to Lieutenant. Lambert Pickwell Fisher and Blood were promoted to Warrant Officer Class 2 and Dr. Schroeder was promoted to Captain in the AAMC (medical corps)

On the 15th November 1942 the District Officer Sepik was instructed to immediately clear, and put in order the aerodromes at Wewak, Burui and Angoram² A similar instruction was issued the same day to the District Officer at Madang concerning Madang aerodrome. On the 19th November Captain Bates sent the following message :-

“My 1530K/21. Japs released German brother named Schniedergers but imprisoned Dutch Brother named Theo Wiescamp. Schniedergers was interrogated twice on the second occasion by Japs able to speak German but maintains he did not disclose information about our activities. This I do not believe. Schniedergers states he was informed that a Dutch Father was murdered by Japs at Manakwari. Japs appear to be well established at Manakwari and now confirmed they visit Hollandia frequently. What action desired against Schniedergers who is enemy alien for going to Hollandia?”³

The question of whether or not to trust enemy aliens was a difficult one. German Missionaries had been in the Sepik since before World War 1 and long before the Nazi era back in Europe. Moreover their knowledge of the Sepik and its peoples was second to none. But the question remained: Where did their true loyalties rest? Would their knowledge and experience favour the Allies or the Japanese? The issue was discussed in depth by Major N Penglase in his paper ‘The Administration of the Territory of New Guinea’⁴-

“At the inception of the civil administration in 1921 there were 258 Missionaries in the Territory of whom 221 were Germans. In 1939 there were in the Territory 682

Missionaries, 546 of whom were non-British and 431 were Germans. Many were interned particularly those of Lutheran faith, but many still remain. Administration policy was amended in 1941...no further Missionaries of enemy nationality would be permitted to enter the Territory...This policy envisaged the gradual replacement of the German element by British-born missionaries, preferably Australians.

For many years, non-British missionaries have worked against the Administration. They have missed no opportunity to discredit the Government and belittle its officers in the eyes of the natives. The majority report of the Royal Commission, Murray, Hunt & Lucas (Sir Hubert Murray dissenting) recommended the expulsion of German missionaries, but no action was taken.”

Even in the field there were severe differences of opinion. Taylor’s intelligence reports through 1943 relied upon “reliable” Mission sources, and Neptune Blood wrote in March 1943 :-

“Glad to say the missionaries of this District are with us to the man – they have been ill-treated regardless of Nationality and the first person to be placed under strict watch by them on their arrival was the Dentist Brother (Schneidergers) whom we more or less suspected after his trip to Hollandia...They were cross with him because he hid his dental equipment”.

Ted Fulton seemed to be more of Penglase’ (a major at Wau) opinion back in 1939 and during his patrol No 6/1943-44, which we will examine in Chapter 28. On 30/12/1939 Ted Fulton resigned as Chairman of the Miners Citizens Association of the Sepik District in Maprik, in order to enlist to fight in Europe. The minutes of the Association meeting of 14/10/1939 included the words :-

Vital questions affecting all people in New Guinea relating to how New Guinea is to be defended as part of the whole scheme of Australian Defense. Representations have been made to various ministers and members of parliament requesting:

- 1. New Guinea to be adequately defended as part of an Australian defense scheme.*
- 2. All enemy subjects to be immediately deported to Australia.*
- 3. All monies raised in New Guinea by special tax (without representation) be spent in New Guinea for its defence and development.*

The missionaries of enemy nationalities were allowed to stay but had their names recorded in an “alien register” and were required to report to District authorities weekly. The Japanese also suspected the Missionary loyalties were not with them :-

If you were good Germans, the Australians would have taken you prisoner. Because you are friends of theirs and spies, they let you stay⁵

Anyone who spoke German was under suspicion by Australian authorities. Wewak Resident Emil Glaus (of Swiss origins) and Gold Miner Ludi Schmidt [Junior] were interned in Australia before being allowed to join the A.I.F.⁶

Back in Wewak, with District Officer Bates: on the 20th November, a radio message again ordered that Wewak be evacuated. After disabling the base wireless, Minogue and others evacuated to Sambokau village some five hours walk west of Wewak where an emergency

transmitter had already been installed. But when that wireless ceased functioning the whole party moved back to Wewak and continued living there⁷. The Chinese community had long since moved back to Wewak from Sauri.

On the 10th December 1942, ANGAU announced that Lieut. J. L. Taylor was promoted to the rank of Captain effective from 26th November 1942⁸. Then at 4 pm on the 18th December patrolling police sighted four Japanese ships off the coast at Moem.⁹ Lawrence Durrant's *The Sea Watchers* explains how Captain Bates watched through his binoculars from Wewak and although he could see it was an invasion fleet, he remained watching until he had an accurate description of the shipping to report back to ANGAU.

While Bates was doing this, wireless operator Minogue was shuttling some 60 Chinese to the start of the walking track to Sauri, their first stop on what would be an epic journey.

2018 Note by Adam Liu [grandson of pre-war Wewak trader Simon Chen Song Chow]
“I have seen the figure of 60 Chinese quoted in one of the newspaper articles...I believe this figure is inflated. I've attempted to account for every single Chinese who was on that trek using National Archive records and personal accounts of the trek and pre-war population of Wewak. My conclusion is that there were only about 28-30 Chinese on that trek. If the Tang Mow, Ning Hee and Seeto Nam families had been on the trek as well, then the number would still have been only 44-46...There was a non-Chinese mixed race family – surname Bruten who also appear to have been on the trek, and they might have contributed to this figure of 60.

Minogue returned to find Bates attempting to encode a message concerning the invasion fleet. He told Bates that there was not enough time for codes. Bates agreed and they sent the message in plain language. Minogue disabled the wireless before he and Bates departed for Sauri as the Japanese commenced landing on nearby beaches.

Bates ordered that garamuts be sounded from Sauri calling for carriers to assist the Chinese with their gear. Bates and Minogue remained at Sauri that night watching the lights and activity down in the town and around the harbour. Next day they left Sauri on their journey that would eventually bring them to Burui and the Sepik River for onward movement by canoe. A policeman left on watch at Sauri followed them up with the news that a Japanese patrol had arrived in Sauri just 30 minutes after their departure. Later Bates and Minogue heard bombing from the direction of Wewak. Clearly their wireless message concerning the Japanese landings had got through.

Bates went ahead on horseback to Burui while Milligan was walking from Aitape across the Torricelli Mountains via Maprik to Burui. They would meet Aitchison at Burui and there arrange the next leg of their journey. Meanwhile Minogue continued on foot with the Chinese and after difficulties obtaining carriers the whole party was re-united at Burui.

At Burui Bates called the village people in from far and wide as described by former government interpreter Kwonji (opposite). He is proudly wearing a length of hangman's rope around his neck – he approved of DO Townsend's practice of cutting the rope into lengths following hangings and sending one to each of the haus tambarans as cause to think again when planning the next head hunting raid. Kwonji said:

“They have called me Kwonji since 1946 but my real name is Yemanagwan. Mr. Tom (Aitchison) had their wireless in my house (at Burui)¹. Before the Japanese came the Government and the Mission killed six cattle and seven pigs and made a big party. All the



Sepiks and the bush people came. The intention of this was to make the people well disposed towards the Government and the Australians generally so they would help them against the Japanese. As for me, I gathered all the shell money I could find and I took it up to Maprik and made friends up there so they would send talk quickly when Japanese came. This would allow me to warn the Government so that they could get away.”

The patrol Bates was about to lead would take his party down the Sepik to the Ramu via the Keram River and thence via Bundi over the Bismarck Range to Chimbu and on to the Australian base at Bena Bena. In the eyes of the Sepik people this patrol marked the departure of Australian civil administration from the Sepik. The only civilian Europeans left in the Sepik apart from missionaries were Bill Macgregor at Garamambu, Wally Hook, a plantation owner and labour recruiter at Yakamul and J.M.Woods the owner of Drimboi plantation at Yakamul.

Milligan joined Bates party by walking overland from Aitape through the Torricelli Mountains and Maprik. He met Wally Hook and his Chinese/Yakamul wife Una at Musebelim village which is about two kilometers from present day Dreikikir Patrol Post. As Una was six months pregnant, Hook knew that she was unable to make the walk up into the Highlands so he opted to stay as Mesembelim where he believed they were safe¹⁰.

Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai (now Constable 2426 Nunguru) tells what happened at the Sepik River :-¹¹

“I went and got Malus and Avatips and took them down to Pagwi where with Japandais and Japanauts we doubled big canoes and evacuated all the Chinese from Wewak. We took them down river as far as Kambaramba where we left the double canoes. We took single canoes then to move the Chinese through the Grass country and into the Ramu River system which we followed to Annanberg. (at Annanberg they were met and

resupplied by Captain J.L.Taylor) *From there we walked overland to Bundi (mountains area of Madang District) and from there to Kundiawa (in the Chimbu tribal area, of the Central Highlands) where we rested for two days. We killed cattle at the Mission and ate the beef. We next walked to Goroka and rested again and finally we came to BenaBena. Kiap Pes (Bates) and I left the Chinese at Bena Bena and flew to Port Moresby. Two weeks later I saw the Chinese in Moresby.*”

In March 1943 the Melbourne newspaper “Argus” reported on the journey as follows :-

“After one of the biggest treks in the history of the war in New Guinea, a party of Chinese refugees has arrived safely in Port Moresby under the guidance of three experienced officers of ANGAU. The Party left Wewak on the north coast, when the Japs occupied the town, and covered several hundred miles in terrible terrain in six weeks.

Although all members of the party suffered from malaria and had to be carried for part of the journey, they arrived without a single casualty, and are now awaiting transport to Australia. They include two babies in arms and two men nearly 70, who stood up to the gruelling marches without flinching.

The journey began at the wish of the Chinese themselves. Virtually every member of the little community of traders and artisans left the town when the Japanese arrived and asked the officers to take them to free territory. They carried camping equipment and mosquito netting, beads, buttons and cowrie shells for trading and enough rice to last for ten days. After that they had to trust to luck.

Part of the journey was through patrolled areas, where the experience of ANGAU enabled them to find their way without difficulty. Passing to the upland country they came on uncontrolled territory, where they needed all their ingenuity. They did not shoot wild pigs for fear of killing the natives’ livestock and antagonizing villagers. Beads and cowrie shells were useful to barter and they found in one area that the natives would accept white buttons, but only if they had four holes in them. The reason for this fetish they could not discover.

Some of the hardest going was where the party had to climb a 9,000’ range. The ridges were covered with thick forest and only rudimentary native pads existed to guide them. In the high ranges they came upon sodden rain forest, where the ground was covered with thick moss and the party suffered from cold and damp. With its bearers, the caravan sometimes numbered more than 200, with two or three fever patients being carried each day.

At one place the party found another Chinese waiting to join them. He is a well-known figure – known as “Lucky Sam” who has been setting out on hazardous journeys for years and always turning up smiling. For seven years he had traded along the coast in a condemned lugger, and when the Japanese came and sunk it he escaped drowning and slipped out ahead of them. Hearing by bush telegraph that a party of Chinese was on the way down from Wewak he decided to tag along with them. His arrival encouraged the other Chinese immensely.”

Comment on the ‘Argus’ article: “Lucky Sam” was in fact Chu Leong who we met in Sepik 2 – *The Winds of Change*. He arrived in German New Guinea in 1913, and by

December 1942 was a very well established and trusted Sepik trader of the old school¹². The *Winon* was requisitioned by the Government and was of great assistance to ANGAU in 1942/3, and went with Jim Taylor to Annanberg before returning to the Sepik. As the Japanese occupied the Sepik Chu Leong decided to cut the vessel in half to prevent the Japanese making use of her.

As described earlier in this narrative, in December 1942 District Officer Charles Bates, Patrol Officers Aitchison and Milligan and radio operator Minogue evacuated the Sepik's Chinese population via the Keram River to Annanberg base, then up into the Highlands at BenaBena, arriving there in March 1943. Chu Leong accompanied this party. He left his wife and children in her home village of Kiwim, successfully anticipating that the children would pass at Sepik children and not be recognized as mixed race Chinese. There was a pregnant woman among the Chinese evacuees. She was experiencing labour pains and Chu Leong stayed with her until the baby was born. The baby was left in the care of Chu Leong's wife's people at Kiwim, while he and the mother re-joined the party. After the war the family went to Kiwim where they reclaimed the child and compensated the village people for caring for it.¹³

<p>2018 Note by Adam Liu: I am not aware that this occurred and have no information on it. Certainly this hasn't been mentioned by anyone I've spoken to.</p>
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From Bena Bena, Chu Leong was flown to Port Moresby and then to Australia. J.K.McCarthy recalls meeting him a couple of years after the war when he was once again in business on the Sepik River :-

He spoke in Pidgin and smiled as he told me, "I arrived in Australia with only one thought in mind, and that was to work for the war effort. I told them I was a carpenter and boat builder so they put me to work in an aircraft factory.

It was my job to make jigs and patterns and so I worked as hard as I could. The pay was good and I did my best to earn it. After a week the foreman came and told me to 'go slow' on the job as I was producing too much and the rest of the workers could not keep up" After another warning he was discharged. The official reason for his sacking was that he was uncooperative.

He told me how he put his money into a restaurant...'I cooked Chinese food and there were thousands of American soldiers and sailors to pay for it. I worked as hard as I liked and there was no bloody foreman to stop me!'

The 'Argus' article continues :-

Credit for the remarkable feat of bringing the party through the heart of wild New Guinea belongs largely to three experienced officers of ANGAU, led by Capt. C.D.Bates, formerly Assistant District Officer at Maprik, who has been in the service for 14 years. The other officers were Capt. T.G. Aitchison, former Assistant District Officer at Wewak and Capt. J.S.Milligan former patrol officer at Aitape.

Also accompanying the party but unmentioned was Wireless Operator Kevin Minogue.



*Port Moresby 2/03/1943. A group of Chinese whose ages range from 10 months to 70 years who walked 500 miles from Wewak to Bena Bena in the Central Highlands from where they were flown to Port Moresby. (Negative by M Brown).
AWM 014361*

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There were at least three notable Chinese families and individuals who did not travel to the Highlands with Bates' patrol. They were "Gabriel" Chow Chen On, the Ning Hee family and the Tang Mow family.

"Gabriel" [Now known to be Raphael] Chow Chen On was making his escape with Bill Macgregor in April 1943 by following the Yuat River and its tributaries into the Central Highlands when they met operation LOCUST [the combined Fryer and Dutch party] coming the other way. They changed their plans and joined the Fryer/Dutch party. Macgregor was to turn back at Maimai due to ill health, but Chow Chen On remained as an active member of the Fryer party through its activities in the Wapei area.

2018 Note by Adam Liu: The three Chinese families that were left behind were the Ning Hee family, the Tang Mow family and the Seehoo Nam family. Eventually, later in the war and through other events the Seehoo Nam and Ning Hee families were evacuated to Australia. Tang Mow's was the only family who remained for the whole duration.

...Chow Chen On's [Adam's great uncle] English name was not "Gabriel", he was Raphael or "Ray"...he was unmarried and without children. His own parents, two brothers and two sisters were on the trek.

Ning Hee was a highly respected pre-war trader in both Aitape and Wewak. What follows are extracts from a statement made by Ning Hee to Major G.W.L Townsend.¹⁴ :-

I was in charge of my store in Wewak and my wife managed my other store in Aitape. In December 1941 the family met in Wewak for the Chinese New Year. While there all Chinese were ordered to go to Sauri in case the Japanese invaded.

Sauri was not suitable, so we went first to Sassoia Mission station then to Kairiru Island, at the suggestion of Bishop Loerks and in March 1942 to Karawop Plantation 18 miles west of Wewak, where we stayed in the manager's house until December 1942. Then District Officer Bates called me to Wewak to pack up as there was an evacuation plan involving the 'Thetis' which was to take us to Madang. Soon after I returned to Karawop the Japanese landed in Wewak.

Together with Ah Nam, a Wewak tailor and his family I appealed to the Father at Boiken to provide guides so we could travel overland to Burui, but he said it was unnecessary as the Japanese had no argument with the Chinese. He therefore provided no guide. He did agree to hire the party horses for the payment £120 from Ning Hee and £50 from Ah Nam. The combined Chinese families consisted of six adults, five children and an infant born during the trek.

From Dagua we headed inland towards Ulupu Mission, but at Pokila mission employees took the horses back and the efforts to obtain carriers were unsuccessful so we struggled back to Boiken Mission, where the Father refused to help us any further. The Father also refused to allow two children to be left at the Mission, but the Sisters agreed and took the children.

We could carry only some food and bedding, and we struggled inland without help from the village people until we reached Wihun and Aliton where the village people provided food and carriers and took us to Dunigi, from where the village people took us to Ulupu Mission, where the two priests looked after us and sent a Mission Brother with horses and carriers to bring the party to Burui Patrol Post and then on to Marui Mission on the Sepik River. There they learned that Bates patrol with the Chinese party from Wewak had departed downstream just two days earlier.

The fathers at Marui and then at Timbunke helped us with food and clothing and helped us on our way. The Sepik people passed us on from village to village, providing food, canoes and paddlers and refusing payment as they said it was a “time no good” and they clearly did not like the thought of the Japanese.

We branched into the Keram River and the Father at Kambot mission further assisted us. We continued on up the Keram and then crossed over to the Ramu where we met Kiap Taylor at Annanberg. We rested three days there with him. Then as my wife was crying for the children we left behind I decided to go back for them, but this was not allowed. With both me and my wife ill we stayed in the area for some time until told that there was no more rice for us.

Attempts to be evacuated were not successful and I protested to Kiap Taylor who said we were in Lieut Montgomery’s hands as he (Taylor) was under orders to go towards the Japanese in the Sepik. As I returned from speaking with Kiap Taylor my wife went to the river for water. I saw the natives carrying her back. They said she had fallen in the river and drowned. I thought then that the loss of our children had upset her mind.

Then we met Mr. (Sergeant) Power, who I knew when he worked with Kevin Parer. He was now a patrol officer working for Lieut Montgomery and he provided us with food and assistance. Then a party was arranged to go overland to Mt Hagen. The party was led by Lieutenant Montgomery and consisted of us Chinese, two Fathers and two Brothers. We stayed in Mt Hagen for five days and were flown to Port Moresby on 4th April 1943.

Lorna Fleetwood’s “A Short History of Wewak” tells how Tang Mow built watch towers on the Wewak headland. These were manned by the Chinese community to give warning of the Japanese approach. With the arrival of the Japanese in Wewak on 18th December 1942, Tang Mow and family packed up as did the remainder of the Chinese population and made their way towards Sauri, but only got as far as the Catholic Mission. They were slowed down

by the fact that Mrs. Tang had a sore leg and two small children, Milton and Eric, in tow. At the Mission they were overtaken by the Japanese.

Next morning after interrogation the Tang family was blindfolded and Mrs. Tang believed that they were about to be killed. Instead they were taken by truck to domestic living quarters next to the European hospital on the Wewak Headland and there they spent the next two months. After their food ran out, Mr. Tang cooked for the Japanese and cleaned houses in exchange for food for his family. They would be transferred to Kairiru Island and eventually to Hollandia from where they were liberated by US forces and ANGAU representatives in April 1944.

End Notes Chapter 23

¹ Durrant L. 1986 Page 139

² ANGAU War diaries 15/11/1942

³ ANGAU War diaries 19/11/1942

⁴ ANGAU War diaries – Conference of Officers of Headquarters and Officers of District Staff 7th to 12th February 1944

⁵ Hagen Bill, Dorish Maru Massacre

⁶ Fleetwood L 1984.

⁷ Durrant L. 1986 Page 139

⁸ ANGAU War Diaries 10th December 1942

⁹ Fleetwood, L 1984 page 2.

¹⁰ Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson – The Pacific War in Papua New Guinea – Memories & Realities – Rikkyo University Centre for Asian Studies Tokyo 2006 Page 18

¹¹ Bragge L.W. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 80

¹² Hilder R As described in “Sepik Trader of the Old School – Pacific Islands Monthly February 1962

¹³ Chu Anna – The Kapiak Tree Page. 13.

¹⁴ Far Eastern Liaison Office reference G 281.1 of 24th April 1943.

Chapter 24 Captain Taylor Behind Japanese Lines Jan. 1st - March 31st '43 Gathering and Passing On Intelligence

The key reason for having ANGAU personnel in the Sepik in early 1943 was to gather information on the enemy, to allow the planning of offensives against them. In doing this, ANGAU's function was purely one of information gathering; a key information source was German Missionaries, themselves considered to be enemy aliens. Taylor's party was not intended to take a combat role.

The incredible courage and effectiveness of Taylor and the men with him over the coming months was to earn all of them high military honours. The intelligence that was gleaned and sent to headquarters, the issues that faced Taylor's party and the strategies he was forced to adopt from time to time are gleaned from scant notations in the ANGAU war diaries. The real meat of the story comes from the memories of the Sepik men, who in their youth found themselves either on the side of the allies or the Japanese, and who lived to talk about it.

Through late 1942 and into January 1943 Captain Jim Taylor was in charge of the Annanberg depot which he established as he recuperated from the bullet wound he received on 19th March 1942 at Angoram. As mentioned, Annanberg depot was not on the Ramu River at Annanberg Mission, it was actually located nearby at the hidden location known as Ramdapu on the Upper Keram River.

Our story now links up with Captain Charlie Bates, Aitchison, Milligan and Minogue who brought the party of Chinese refugees through, en-route to Bena Bena. They followed the Keram River upstream to the Annanberg depot and there they met Taylor. Bates handed over responsibility as District Officer-in-Charge of the Sepik District to Taylor at that time. The ANGAU war diaries reveal that Bogia and the Middle and Lower Ramu River areas, which geographically included Annanberg was under the control of Captain (Assistant District Officer) John Black. Black had accompanied Taylor on the Hagen Sepik Patrol in 1938-39. Whilst stationed at the Annanberg depot, Taylor made a journey up the Ramu River as far as Usino (Usini according to Gammage) and met there with Black to discuss their ANGAU roles and inter-actions.¹

The District boundaries of the former civil administration stood for little against the common threat of the Japanese aggressor and the fact that a key access to, and escape route from the Sepik District crossed into Madang District territory from the Keram River into the Ramu River, via Bundi, over the Bismarck Range and into the Central Highlands at Kundiawa and beyond.

As Taylor indicated to Ning Hee, he was under instructions to leave Annanberg depot and go back into the Sepik to monitor the Japanese and report intelligence on them. To do this Taylor needed men of Sepik experience with him to undertake the task ahead. The two chosen were Stan Christian, the Medical Assistant who had accompanied the 1924 patrol to Ambunti, and Ted Fulton.

Ted Fulton had been a gold miner on the Yamil field with Jack Thurston in the late 1930s. At the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939, he had arranged for partners to continue working his gold claim, while he enlisted. He arrived back in New Guinea with the 16th Brigade when Australian troops were recalled in 1942 to defend their own country against the new aggressor Japan. Given his pre-war New Guinea experience, he was posted to ANGAU.

Also recalled from Europe was a pre-war New Guinea Medical Assistant called Joseph Barracluff whom we shall meet later.

In December 1942 Fulton, Stan Christian and Preston-White served as spotters looking for areas to drop supplies to Taylor, Bates, Blood, Milligan and Hodgekiss.²

In January 1943 Taylor awaited the arrival of Fulton and Christian who had left Port Moresby on 18th December 1942 to take a patrol over the Wau-Bulldog road to deliver stores to Major Penglase at Wau. From there they were to await instructions to proceed to the Sepik District³. Those instructions reached them in Wau on 3rd January 1943. They were to proceed from Wau to Bena Bena. This patrol took them from 9th January to 26th January 1943. Fulton's report on this journey mentioned uneasiness among the village people along the way. Rumours were circulating of alleged enemy occupation of areas north of the Ramu River. Fulton also reported tribal fighting as far as Kainantu.

The roll-out of events therefore indicated that there was no great urgency for Fulton and Christian's rendezvous with Taylor. Taylor received a wireless message from Bena Bena on 1st January 1943 :-

*"Received advice from WO2 Blood that he is proceeding to Bundi via Chimbu with his party all stores wireless and charger(.) He did not give his whereabouts(.) Am advising Lieuts. Black and Taylor."*⁴

The mystery of Blood's whereabouts was cleared up on 3rd January 1943 in a message relayed from Taylor via Costello in Chimbu to Bena Bena :-

"Latest advice from Lieut Taylor is that he met WO2 Blood about 31st December 42 and together proceeded to Burui where they should arrive soon(.) I am asking Aitchison⁵ to advise(.) Wireless gear guns etc. with Searson who leaves Chimbu tomorrow for Burui".

Given that Blood sank the *Thetis* in Madang harbour on 20th December and made his escape from there in time to meet Taylor just eleven days later, it is safe to assume he travelled on foot overland from Madang to the Ramu River, probably near Usino, and then either rafted or canoed downstream to meet Taylor at Annanberg. "*Proceeding Bundi via Chimbu with all stores wireless and charger*" is confusing and it can only be assumed that it was purposeful mis-information to divert attention from his actual route, but at the same time letting Taylor know to expect him.

With the approach of the Japanese, Bates staff at Angoram would have hidden the *Osprey* somewhere upstream of Angoram, just as Ellis had hidden the *Thetis* a year earlier. From Annanberg depot Taylor and Blood would have travelled back down the Keram River to retrieve the *Osprey* and necessary fuel. The *Osprey* would have delivered Blood upstream to Marui, near Burui. Taylor on the *Osprey* then returned downstream. Blood would remain on patrol in the Sepik and rejoin Taylor in late March 1943.

Full and specific details of Blood's patrol are not known, other than information contained in an undated personal letter to Major Jones, in which he wrote of his sinking of the *Thetis* in Madang on 20th December 1942. His letter continues in part :-

"...Natives on the main river are 100% (with us) and rushed me trying to join me in any capacity, police or otherwise, and I was at Korogo with Tele-radio from Burui when

the first 'Pidgin' broadcast came over and the whole village heard it. You should have seen their faces light up – that talk should spread right down the river... Police and others here when they heard your voice today rushed all over the place and yelled to others who had not yet arrived 'Come quick kiap bilong yumi e tok'” (Come quickly our kiap is speaking)⁶

The benefit of hindsight suggests the leader among the young Korogo men seeking to 'join up in any capacity' would have been Mamba. We glimpsed his leadership qualities in as he fought shoulder to shoulder with Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai in the action to eliminate the renegade police on Sambugundei Island. At that time Mamba was a young Catechist and Medical Orderly with the Catholic Church. He was also clearly someone seeking to step out from under the influences of traditional Sepik leadership. As Blood did not recruit him on that occasion, he was not about to miss his next opportunity, one which would come with the arrival of the Japanese at Korogo just a few months in the future.

In early February 1943, upon arrival in Bena Bena, Lieut. Fulton received new instructions from Capt. Black in Bogia. He was to go to Waimeriba junction on the Ramu River to investigate rumours that the Japanese had crossed the river at that point. The Ramu River at Waimeriba is a broad shallow braided stream, which can be forded if the river is not in flood.

Fulton left Bena Bena on foot on 7th February following roughly the route of the Highlands Highway of today; westward to where Goroka township would later be established, then via Warabung and over the Wahgi/Ramu divide through the Daulo Pass. After descending to Chuave, he continued on through Kundiawa before turning north to follow the Chimbu River upstream and cross the Bismarck range near Mt Wilhelm. From there he descended to Bundi, arriving on the 10th February. He continued on to the Waimeriba junction and discovered that the Japanese had not been able to cross. He recovered rifles and equipment which had been looted by the local village people from a forward observation post at Weisa. The return journey to Bena Bena took until the 16th February 1943⁷

Back at Annanberg depot on 10th February 1943 Taylor radioed to Bena Bena – “*Must leave here soon(.) Will arrange Christian and Fulton to join me later(.)*” On 26th February 1943 he again signalled Bena Bena – “*Thanks for mail(.) Preparing to move according yours(.) Have collected benzine sufficient immediate needs but will require more later(.)*”

Taylor's task was an unenviable one in the extreme as he headed upstream on the Sepik River in the *Osprey*. Ahead was 30,000 square miles of the Sepik District's swamp, river, plains and mountains. Wewak on the coast and areas with easy river access on the lower reaches of the Sepik were occupied by the Japanese 18th Army. Taylor could not have known, but the four ships that arrived in Wewak on 18th December had unloaded 2,000 troops. Tens of thousands more would arrive in the District in the coming weeks and months.

At this point, he and the allied United States and Australian military forces had very little idea of where the Japanese were in the Sepik and what they were doing. It was up to Taylor's party to find that out and report, while avoiding capture. His advantage was that he knew the Sepik River and its people, who had been pro-Australian, but of course that could change. He also knew two overland routes out of the Sepik River area to safety, i.e. via the May River,

the way the Thurston Expedition had gone, and via the Karawari, Maramuni and Yuat River headwaters to Wabag in the Highlands.

Meanwhile from his headquarters in Australia, General MacArthur and his staff were planning strategies that would have far reaching direct and indirect impacts on the Sepik and its peoples. Following the Japanese land defeats in the battle of Milne Bay, on the Kokoda Track, at the battles of Buna and Gona and the great sea battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, MacArthur displayed his military genius by hitting the enemy at its weakest points, cutting their supply lines and leaving their fortified and heavily manned positions to wither on the vine.

This was known as Operation Cartwheel and was first employed at Rabaul, which the Japanese had reinforced with 100,000 crack troops, assuming MacArthur would attack there following his conquest of Buna and Gona in January 1943. Instead, when ready he would attack Hollandia and Aitape far to the west, leaving the Japanese in Rabaul to make their preparations for an attack that would never come. It is reported that when Japan finally surrendered and the news was broken to the Japanese in Rabaul, many soldiers had great difficulty with their shame of defeat and the fact that they had been denied the opportunity to fight.⁸

The impact of MacArthur's strategy effectively isolated Lieut. General Adachi's 18th army in the Sepik District. The cutting of the supply lines did not take immediate effect and as we shall see, ships were still arriving in Wewak harbor throughout mid-1943, to be unloaded at night, but when the supplies ceased and the army tried to live off the land, they began to starve. This of course had severe consequences for the Sepik people who found themselves in the unenviable position of having to feed the Japanese army.

In early 1943 of course, none of this was yet evident as we re-join Captain Jim Taylor cautiously navigating his way upstream into a very uncertain future in the *Osprey*. On 6th March Cpt. Taylor signalled to HQ and in doing so commenced fulfilling his key ANGAU role of intelligence gathering and reporting :-

“Proceeding Kuvinmas first instance but intend crossing River to Wewak hinterland immediately after(.) Kuvinmas ideal for plane boat(.) Can Catalina bring Lieuts. Christian and Fulton and 2 A I F, benzine in quantity, telradio-complete with batteries, matches and Atebrin [an anti-malarial drug](.) Will advise arrival at Lake(.) Please press airforce recce and bomb workshop Marienberg, and vessels there or on lower river on the 11 Feb 43 or thereafter and advise results(.) Size of vessels not known probably schooners and river craft(.) shall make Lake Kuvinmas temporary rear base(.)

At present Marienberg and Angoram unoccupied but enemy has visited both(.) He intends making Marienberg HQ for the Sepik River(.) On 11th March 1943 10 vessels are expected Marienberg with troops for Sepik(.) Encampments with barges vicinity Kopar and Murik Lakes(.) Mission sisters from Marienberg removed to Timbunke(.) Mission station at Wewak taken over completely by Japanese authorities(.) Missions confined to Kairiru(.) Troops mainly Manchukuo Chinese rapacious and thieving Japanese(.) Commander courteous and English speaking has excellent maps of the district – expresses opinion Buna campaign hardest so far(.) 1,000 natives employed Wewak (positioning) enemy mortars(.) Ships making Wewak at night(.) All mission vessels taken over by enemy(.) Apparently they are short of food - have taken all food from mission(.)

Have collected all scrap metal and are using Australian money(.) Troops arrived with sub-machine guns(.) Have been inland as far as Ambrauri beyond Sauri also along coast to Aitape(.) Are expected to patrol Ramu and Keram Rivers shortly(.) Source of information reliable European Missionary(.)”⁹

On 10th March 1943 all District Officers were advised as follows :-

“A compensation scheme for natives suffering war injuries has been suggested(.) You should record and continue to record and forward to this headquarters the following:

- 1. Name and full particulars.*
- 2. Nature of injury.*
- 3. Whether permanent or temporary*
- 4. In case of death relevant particulars and dependants (.)¹⁰*

A prime responsibility of ANGAU was to look after the interests of the Papua and New Guinea Indigenous population. At times this responsibility would not be completely aligned with the strictly military objective of defeating the enemy. Years after the war, a parallel situation existed in PNG’s resource industries. Technical staff who were there to “pump oil” were less interested in management of project area landowners on whose land the petroleum facilities were located and who therefore posed arguably the greatest threat to oil production.

Also on the 10th March Captain Taylor reported :-

“Japs are building galvanized iron encampment between Boram and Wewak (and) at Kairiru Island(.) They have AA guns on mountain-side above main mission, and other mountain side of boat shed(.) Ships unloading cargo at night return and hide at anchorage near hot springs in vicinity of Victoria Bay during day(.) Name of commander Japanese Forces, Sepik, is General Yamita(.) Has informed Mission two months they will have Moresby, six months Australia(.) Mission buildings Wewak used exclusively by enemy”.

The original hinterland supply base required by the Blue Book plan was established at the Yimas Lakes on the Arafundi River, a tributary of the Karawari River. The new focus of allied hinterland operations had now become Lake Kuvinmas on the Korosameri River, another Karawari River tributary. No reason is recorded for this, but two suggestions seem likely as to why the change was made.

1. The Japanese would quickly learn from Angoram and Sepik River people about the base at Lake Yimas, but presumably not Lake Kuvinmas.
2. Lake Kuvinmas proved to be a superior water area for Catalina operations.

Taylor arrived at Lake Kuvinmas on the 14th March and on the 18th he reported :-

Lake Kuvinmas which is larger than at first thought(.) Probably six miles long(.) Native listeners visibly impressed and pleased¹¹ (.) Enemy maintaining great secrecy re Kairiru what is happening there is not known yet(.) He is operating about 100 Pinnaces in the vicinity of Wewak Kairiru – also 12 US lorries also many US and British motorcycles(.) Missionaries appreciate pamphlets dropped by our aircraft, but state they are not allowed to use any craft(.) About 300 troops at But, defending dromes there, also 300 at Wewak Mission(.) Some time ago damaged war ships towed to Kairiru(.)

Fathers Jaksi and Broemanuel murdered at But(.) Missionaries in a bad way for food as enemy has pilfered much, and destroyed livestock(.) Burui drome under enemy air recce several occasions recently(.) Australian Officer 3 AIF and 3 native police landed Yessan recently- proceed via Burui to interior(.) who are they and whither bound(?) Native Situation Sepik River good(.) Coastal area not so good Vailala Madness (cargo cult) ideas prevalent(.) No news Aitape end(.) No Missionaries my party and no evacuations intended(.) Blood after meritorious patrol Burui now severely jaundiced(.) If no improvement 24 hours shall ask you evacuate him by air(.)”

On 23rd March 1943, Taylor was notified that the information he supplied is most useful and important and that news received from a reliable source indicated that natives at Ulupu village of the Sepik were wearing white arm bands with Japanese characters and assisting the enemy. On 28th March, Taylor was instructed by District Services :-

“Transport yours 29th or 30th March 43(.) Full preparation to facilitate easy identification from air(.) Provide facilities to expedite unloading supplies(.) Advise immediately depth of water over full length of run and other essential particulars(.)”

On 31st March, Taylor reported :-

“WO2 Blood recovered from jaundice(.) Is as indispensable as possible to be(.) Wishes to remain and I will keep him(.) Two landing runs available average 30 feet, shallow west of 15 feet(.) Length of one and a half miles North east-south west and two miles east-west(.) Pinnacle and canoe with white sheets will give wind but usually calm(?) here morning(.) Run approx. 1,000 yards wide approx. at narrowest(.)”

End Notes Chapter 24

¹ Gammage W – The Sky Travellers 1998 Page P 223

² Fulton E.T.W. 2005 Page 145

³ Fulton E.T.W. 2005 Page 144

⁴ ANGAU War Diaries

⁵ Aitchison at this time was with Bates' party which would have just left Taylor's supply depot near Annanberg.

⁶ Extracts from a personal letter received by Major Jones from WO Blood covering the Japanese landings in Madang. Angau War Diaries Diaries appendix 49 Vol 2

⁷ Fulton E.T.W. 2005 Pages 152-153

⁸ Internet “Winning the War – Douglas MacArthur and the victory in the Pacific”.

⁹ ANGAU War Diaries 6th March 1943

¹⁰ ANGAU War Diaries 10th March 1943

¹¹ This presumably relates to FELO radio propaganda

**Chapter 25 Epic Evacuation of Missionaries Overland from Sepik to the Highlands
3/4/1943=> Sepik Non-combatants Murdered at Sea**

Author's note: The information on the Nuns and the efforts of Danny Leahy in assisting with their evacuation is drawn from a 2009 publication entitled *When Nuns wore soldier's trousers* by Pat Studdy-Clift. While the document provides excellent, otherwise unknown details, it needs to be recognized primarily as a tribute to Sergeant Danny Leahy and the intrepid nuns: a tribute written 66 years after the event by someone who was not there. In this chapter Studdy-Clift's version of events are blended with ANGAU war diaries' records of this incredible expedition.

This chapter takes us upstream on Map 2 to Lake Kuvinmas and then further upstream and beyond Ambunti and the Yambon Gate to where Ashton and party flew out.

In early April 1943 a Japanese plane spotted the *Maria* at her river bank mooring at Timbunke Mission. In response, Japanese guards arrived and placed a curfew on travel and the directive that "*all mission work must cease.*" The nuns noted that it was frightening just how quickly the happy thriving Timbunke mission station changed from a place of healing and peace to one of fear.

The Japanese soon departed, taking one priest and two brothers with them. Soon after one of the brothers [Tiberius] arrived back at Timbunke. He told how the others had been executed, but how he escaped. Father Schafer who had not long since farewelled the Thurston expedition had been absent when the Japanese arrived. He had been tending his flock on an outstation when rain prevented his return. Upon arriving back at Timbunke, Father Schafer became aware that the remaining mission personnel were classified as prisoners of war. Then when they heard that Marienberg had been bombed by American planes, he and Brother Januarius slipped away to try and help. Although Father Schafer's fate was not conclusively known, the Timbunke people went into mourning for him. This was a particularly difficult time for the German missionaries as they did not know who was friend and who was foe.

Father Laumann then returned from an outstation [Ulupu] with Father Cruysberg from Marui. At this point some information from the allies reached Timbunke. The news suggested that if they could get to Kanengara in the Blackwater region, they could be taken to safety by aircraft. Father Cruysberg and Brother Kaltbrunn had come to Timbunke to evacuate the nuns in early March 1943, but for reasons unknown, this did not happen at that time. We know that Father Cruysberg was back in Marui in early April to assist the Ashton party move upstream along the Sepik to join Taylor. A contributing factor may also have been hesitancy on the part of the nuns themselves, a hesitancy which became more evident as the evacuation progressed.

Alois Kawan confirmed that the Torembei people paddled Hamilton to Marui and gave him into the care of Fr. *Krisbel* [Cruysberg]. Then a canoe went down and picked up the sisters at Timbunke and Father and a soldier [Lieut. Searson] went with them up the Karawari River¹.

Meanwhile Taylor was at Lake Kuvinmas, oblivious to the fact that there were missionaries to be evacuated. On the 3rd April he heard radio traffic from Black in Bogia involving an officer who would soon join Taylor's party :-

“Barracuff reports ran into 5 Japs outside Korepa on 30th Mar 43(.) Neither side opened fire(.) Kesawai village burnt by Japs(.) Approx. 5 Japs and 5 natives passed through Kesawai proceeding towards Dumpu about 23 Mar(.) Tracks only seen by Barracuff(.)”

Taylor was in the process of planning his journey upstream to meet with the Ashton party when on 13th April he received intelligence about Japanese movements in the Sepik River. He reported this information thus :-

“‘Pius’ 15 ton vessel with Japanese at Greman² 12th April(.) Probably proceeding upstream Am endeavouring pick up Ashton(.) Can aircraft put ‘Pius’ out of action immediately and so clear river to allow us to proceed up stream(.) Please advise by our 5 PM schedule(.)”

On 15th Taylor corrected his report of 13th :-

Further inquiries reveal the vessel reported to be ‘Pius’ was the ‘Maria’ repeat ‘Maria’(.) Japanese troops landed Mindimbit obtained native food, and then returned to Timbunke on Maria(.) Enemy used signs all unable to speak Pidgin our party in two vessels painted green will now proceed upstream(.)”

On 16th April the District Officer Bena Bena reported that Dr. Schroeder, Lambert and Hartley were shortly due in Wabag. They would need an experienced officer and carriers with essential supplies to be at Wabag by 23 April to escort this party to Hagen, and then to Bena Bena for onward movement. No record has been found to indicate the circumstances of this late evacuation from the Sepik. It is most likely that they were manning the Lake Yimas Base camp and walked out via the Macgregor route up the Yuat and Maramuni rivers.

On the 18th April ‘43 the ANGAU War Diaries report WO2 Blood commenting upon the condition of Kerowagi airstrip in the Chimbu tribal area, Central Highlands. It follows that Taylor’s plea of 31st March to retain Blood’s services was overruled and that Blood was flown out by one of the Catalina flights from Kuvinmas. Also on the 18th April, some 900 miles east of the Sepik, Japanese Commander in Chief Admiral Yamamoto and staff were flown in two aircraft with six fighters in support when they were attacked near Buin on Bougainville by 24 allied aircraft. The Admiral and 20 of his staff were killed.³ The mission of the US aircraft was specifically to kill Yamamoto and was based on US Navy Intelligence on Yamamoto’s travel plans. The death of Yamamoto reportedly damaged the morale of Japanese Naval personnel and boosted the morale of the allied forces, and controversially, may have been intended as an act of revenge by US leaders who blamed Yamamoto for the Pearl Harbour attack.⁴

On 28th April 1943 Taylor reported :-

“Two Priests and five mission sisters proceeding Kuvinmas for evacuation by air(.) Four of party Netherlands subjects(.) Expect arrival Kuvinmas 13(.) Please ensure quick getaway for them as they may be executed if captured(.)”

As it was reported on 15th that both the *Osprey* and the *Pat* were proceeding to Ashton, it is assumed that Taylor did not meet the mission party, but had left Searson at or near Lake

Kuvinmas to attend to their evacuation. It is further assumed that Taylor's radio traffic concerning Searson's party and the nuns were relayed messages from Searson.

On 29th April 1943 Taylor signalled :-

"For information of pilot(.) close examination shows length of runway 2.5 miles(.) width 300 width at narrowest(.) smoke fires will be lighted at each end(.) Launch Osprey will be Lake at time of landing(.) Landing from west end preferable(.)"

As noted in Chapter 8 above, the five nuns left Marienberg as fear of the Japanese grew. They moved to Timbunke mission station well upstream. Then we learned of the nun's daring return to Marienberg to get food, and of Mother Superior Helena's attempt to rescue Father Meyer from Kambrindo mission station. The nun's story continues :-

"After the arrival of Fathers Laumann and Cruysberg and word of the possibility of rescue from Kaningara, the two priests, Brother Tiberius and the nuns attended midnight mass. At 2.30am they boarded the Maria and headed upstream on the Sepik River. 'Maria' turned into the Karawari River system, arriving at Mumeri towards evening. The Mumeri village people were openly hostile to the missionaries, who did not know why this was and they spent a nervous night there. They moved on in the morning received a friendly reception from the Kanengara people, with whom they spent a night. On the way to Kanengara the 'Maria' broke a fuel line and makeshift repairs were made with a length of rubber tubing.

Lieut. Searson met them at Kanengara and told them that the aircraft was having difficulty reaching them. Then they were told that a Catalina would land at Lake Kuvinmas, so they went there."

ANGAU War diaries entry of 4th May 1943 reported :-

The District Officer, Sepik, was advised to expect transport on 5th or 6th May and to arrange all facilities for identification purposes. Taylor was advised also that the plane could not now call at Lake Kuvinmas owing to enemy activity in that area.

The nun's story continues :-

"They heard shooting and the Catalina was unable to land. Searson now suggested they escape overland to Mt Hagen. This seemed an impossible dream for overweight middle aged nuns. Explorer Danny Leahy was now assigned to the expedition. He understood tribal culture and the land, but hardship was already affecting his health and particularly his sight. Searson found himself in charge of the evacuees. He told the missionaries to wait while he made preparations. Fr Lautmann decided to return to Timbunke for more supplies. The missionaries agonized whether to go back or to stay."

The difficulties with the missionaries continued and Taylor relayed the messages sent by Searson. On 7th May Taylor reported that the missionaries began the journey from Lake Kuvinmas but did not continue. He instructed Searson to take them with him to Highlands, but that Searson would require assistance from Hagen in the form of 100 carriers from Hagen to proceed via Maramuni towards Yimas. The party would meet Searson and party on a well-defined track probably near Maramuni. Also needed would be portable rations – European and native.

Taylor reported on the 8th May that the missionaries left Kuvinmas but became afraid of the hazardous journey. They stopped and decided to return to Timbunke. *"This would have*

been disastrous for them and to us.” Taylor then ordered Searson to take them Wabag. The tone of the radio traffic made it clear that the missionaries no longer had a choice in the matter. However their problems were to continue – as the radio traffic indicated.

On the 24th May 1943 the District Officer Bena Bena picked up and relayed a radio message that Searson was in difficulties and required aid. He inquired on what date the party left Hagen to meet Searson. The District Officer Bena Bena went on to explain that the District staff position was acute and suggested that Lieut. Fienberg and Barracluff be flown to Hagen. One would assist Sgt Leahy to go to Searson while the other remained in Hagen. He asked whether stores could be dropped to Searson.

An airdrop was organized, but as Taylor reported on 30th May, unfortunately the parachute failed and that only four packages were salvaged with the remainder now resting on the bottom of the lake. No forewarning was received to be ready to receive a drop. Taylor suggested that fish lines with floats be attached to each package in future drops.

The nun’s story continues :-

“The plan was that Searson would accompany them to Maramuni where they would be met by Danny Leahy who would take over as their guide into the mountains⁵. They progressed up the Karawari River [they would have gone back down the Blackwater River and into Karawari main stream, then into the Arafundi River, via Lake Yimas] with Searson and his police going on ahead of the ‘Maria’.

By the 30th of May the river was too narrow so they abandoned the ‘Maria’ and started walking. The nuns found Lieut. Searson to be a pleasant caring man, but he had difficulty comprehending the need for the nuns to iron the starched parts of their habits. Their habits were important to the nuns, as they related to their identity within the church and in their own thinking, although clearly nun’s habits were not ideal apparel for tracking through New Guinea jungles. Father Laumann had brought back from Timbunke a “Mother’s Pot” Iron. Washing the habits and nun’s bodies was a problem that was overcome by rigging blankets shelters to provide the necessary privacy”.

On the 6th June 1943 Capt. Black signaled to ask Barracluff whether he is in touch with Searson, and if so by what means and where is Searson? On 31st July Barracluff reported that he had not heard from Searson since he arrived at Limpi (which is 42 miles northwest of Wabag). It is assumed that Barracluff was flown to Mt Hagen, that he did not accompany Leahy to Maramuni, but remained in Mt Hagen to coordinate radio traffic and airdrops as required.

The nun’s story continues :-

“Danny Leahy met them as planned. He was accompanied by his bull terrier “Snowy”. Of the nuns, only Mother Superior Helena could speak English. Leahy and Searson could not speak German, but everyone could speak Pidgin English and that became the language of the expedition. The nuns were the first white women the Maramuni people had seen. Once the nuns were recognized as women a local lady appointed herself as their protector. It rained nearly every day and the nun’s rain soaked voluminous blue habits became a problem as did their foot wear which was unsuited to the mountains and the mud. In the Maramuni valley two nuns became sick and were

carried on stretchers and others in the party were allowed two helpers each. Carriers and police went ahead and made camp each day in readiness for the slower members of the party.

Sr Vinciana brought a calendar from Timbunke. The calendar depicted the Saints days that they would celebrate during their journey. They collected flowers, palms and orchids to decorate their make shift altars. An airdrop of food and “Bombay Bloomers” was requested. Boots were added to the order. Meanwhile the two priests gave their boots to the nuns and walked bare foot. The evacuees were in constant fear that the assumed pursuit by the Japanese would catch up with them.

The arduous trek saw the rotund nuns lose weight. The carriers devised ways of helping them up the steep escarpments. They attached vine around each nun’s waist in the form of a harness and hooked a tow rope to the front. One carrier pulled while another pushed. The system was reversed when going downhill. Mother Superior Helena became ill so Sister Vinciana and Father Cruysberg stayed with her to administering medicine and making her comfortable as they could. The party left them with some strong carriers and moved on to the next camp site. The carriers then took turns “piggy backing” the two women up the mountains.

When the air drop was received the nuns wore trousers and boots, but tradition saw them “dress for dinner” by changing back into what was left of their habits. They never once neglected their daily devotions – rising before dawn and wearing their long habits, before changing into their hiking gear.

In Cinilo [Sinilo?] they were in friendly country again where women and girls greeted the nuns. Searson purchased several pigs as a reward for the efforts of the police and carriers. They arrived at Wabag, but by this time Mother Superior Helena had broken down and could not go on. The carriers made a sedan chair for her and she was carried. Fires were lit inside the tents to keep them warm in the high altitude places.”

On the 5th August 1943 Taylor reported that Searson and party had arrived in Wabag. Then on 17th August District Officer RAMU relayed a message to HQ from OIC Mt Hagen that eight mission personnel had arrived with Leahy and Searson and that they were unfit to proceed on foot to Bena Bena – aircraft were requested to move them. On 19th August came the reply from HQ that they were unable to arrange air transport for missionaries and that arrangements were to be made for them to go by road to Bena. The womenfolk were to be carried on litters. Leahy and Searson were to accompany them.

The nun’s story continues :-

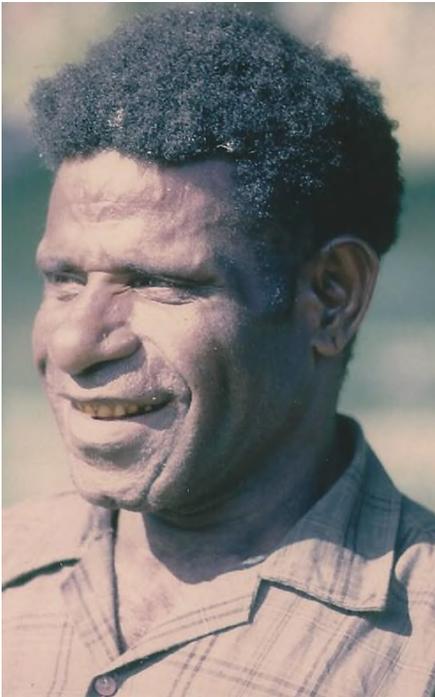
After leaving the Arafundi River the route they followed was via the Maramuni River to Maramuni, to Rakamundi, to Keman, to the Lai River, to Wabag, to Wapanamunda, to Mt Hagen Mission station “Kuli”, to the Wahgi River, to Minj, to Awagl, to Mingendi Mission, to Kundiawa, to Chuave, via the Daulo Pass to Bena Bena.

Upon arrival in Mt Hagen on 17th August they learned that Father Ross had been forced to evacuate. At Mt Hagen more sedan chairs were made to carry the Nuns on to Benabena accompanied by Leahy and Searson, Brother Tiberius and the

two priests on foot. They were flown out of Bena Bena and eventually found themselves in Australia.”

Taylor’s immediate priority was to facilitate the onward movements of the Fryer and Dutch parties, Bill Macgregor and the Ashton party from an as yet undisclosed location upstream of Ambunti.

The Lake from which Ashton and party would be picked up was Lake Paiangal near Brugnowi village.⁶ On 7th May 1943 Taylor communicated by radio concerning the pickup of the Ashton party. He indicated that he would expect the first trip on the 8th of May – weather permitting, otherwise he would expect the flight on a daily basis after that. The Catalina duly landed on Lake Paiangal and picked up the Ashton party. With Barracluff’s radio coordination duties completed as of 5th August, he joined Taylor’s party in the Sepik – presumably flown in by Catalina.



Baras of Japandai [opposite] takes up the story :-

“When the war started, I was a student at the Catholic Mission School at Marui, where Father Enjin (Hansen) was the priest. When we heard that the Japanese had taken Wewak the priest took us students up river. The students included Augwi (later Sgt Augwi), me, Caspar of Japanaut and Dambwi who is now in Rabaul. We came to Japandai and left the priests’ things with Luluai Kemerabi. We continued on by canoe, paddling all night and at dawn we arrived at Brugnowi.

Mr. Taylor, Mr. Poison (Boisen) and others were on the Korosameri River with Andrias. They came up river by ship and met us at Brugnowi and made camp with us there. Mr. Taylor lined us up and told us that the strong men among us could be soldiers. He gave a rifle, ammunition and a uniform to me first, then to Augwi, then Gaii. We had firing practice aiming

at a breadfruit tree. I aimed at the tree and hit the top most leaves. Gaii hit the middle heights of the tree. We practised and we improved.

Then one dawn we moved to Mino (Waskuk Hills area) where the Brugnowi people went to market. Our objective was to identify an overland route to the Maimai area. Mr. Boisen, Gaii, Sani and I went upstream to Ablatak in search of a track to Maimai. The people were uncontacted and as we went into the villages the people wanted to fight with us, but we gave them gifts and they accepted us.”

Lieut. Frank Boisen had worked for the Education Department in the Sepik before the war⁷ He, like E. T. W. Fulton, J. T. Barracluff and others serving in New Guinea, had joined the AIF to fight in Europe when war was declared against Germany in 1939. Fulton, Boisen

and Barracluff had been with an anti-tank unit on Crete⁸. They were returned to Australia with the 6th Division in March 1942 and now Boisen was a member of the Taylor party in the Sepik. In 1938, Jim Hodgekiss, while attached to the Oil Search party⁹, including Fryer and Aiken, had opened an airstrip and Patrol Post at Maimai. This strip had been used in 1939 to bring District Officer Townsend and others to site to investigate the murders of PO Neil Elliott and Constable Aipaum at Wanali.

Then in mid-1943, walking access to Maimai was needed to position Fryer's and the Dutch party. The obvious route was to follow the Sanchi River up from Ablatak. The Sanchi headwaters appeared to be to the north-west and Maimai was just 28 map miles away in a north-westerly direction. The alternative was to head back down the Sepik to Avatip and to follow the Screw River upstream. That was a longer route with greater danger of discovery by the Japanese.

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There were many other missionaries in the Sepik at the time, and what happened to them would not be revealed until after the war.¹⁰ The German missionaries in the Sepik were regarded by the Japanese as neutral rather than allied civilians. In mid-January 1943 the Japanese moved the missionaries to Kairiru Island off Wewak as it was reasoned that the German's local knowledge might result in collaboration with the local people who at that time were perceived to be anti-Japanese.

The Japanese 2nd Special Naval Base Force was stationed in Wewak and in March the destroyer 'Akikaze' visited Wewak to deliver supplies and medicines. The 'Akikaze' then sailed to Kairiru Island on 17th March, where 40 civilians - mainly German missionaries - were delivered on board. The 'Akikaze' then sailed for Manus Island, where another 20 neutral civilians were taken aboard and from there it went to Kavieng on New Ireland.

Lieutenant Commander Sabe called all the officer class crew together soon after the 'Akikaze' departed from Kavieng for Rabaul. He informed them that he had received an order from the 8th Fleet Headquarters to dispose of all neutral civilians on board. The civilians were moved from the rear cabin under the pretence of its being cleaned. Preparations were then made at the rear of the ship for the executions. A wooden structure was erected from which each civilian would be suspended by the wrists and shot. Matting was positioned to absorb the blood and thereby facilitate the clean up afterwards.

The 'Akikaze' speed was increased to maximum so the engine noise and that of the wind and the sea prevented the shots being heard by the unsuspecting civilians at the front of the ship. They were taken one by one and executed; the men first, then the women and each body was thrown overboard. Two Chinese infants were thrown into the sea. The 'Akikaze' arrived in Rabaul about 8pm on 18th of March 1943 with no civilians on board.

The Australian War Crimes Commission investigation sought to identify who gave the order for the executions. Attempts were made to blame a Lieut. Kami who was said to have acted alone without higher approval and for some time it was claimed the 'Akikazi' did not belong to the 8th Fleet, but to the 11th Fleet, but this was not so. It was also established that

under standing orders, Lieut. Kami would have required two additional signatures to give such an order; that of the Chief of Staff and the Commander in Chief. This could not be verified because by the time the War Crimes Tribunal investigated the matter Lieut. Kami Commander Mori Torao, Ando the officer in charge of signals and the chief cipher officer Sub-Lieutenant Maeda Minoru were all dead. The problem was further complicated by the legal definition of a “War Crime” in the Australian War Crimes Act included the words :-

“...apply to war crimes...against British subjects or any power allied or associated with His Majesty in any war, in like manner as they apply in relation to war crimes committed against persons who were at any time residents of Australia”.

There was nothing to prevent exceptions to be made to this definition. The German missionaries had been resident in an Australian Territory and developed close relations with Australians working there. The decision taken not to prosecute stemmed not only from the definition of the law, but also because of the political considerations related to the enemy alien status of the victims. ¹¹.

End Notes Chapter 25

¹ Bragge Sepik Research notes” Vol 18 page 284

² *Greman* is not a Sepik location known to the writer

³ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 56

⁴ Wikipedia “Operation Vengeance”

⁵ This is not believed to be true. Searson with the rank of Lieutenant outranked Sergeant Leahy. Lieut. Searson was technically in charge. But clearly the nuns identified more closely with Danny Leahy.

⁶ Informant Baras of Japandai – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 70

⁷ Personal communication Patricia Johnson, daughter of Charles Bates

⁸ E T W Fulton “No Turning Back” Pandanus Books 2005 Page 120

⁹ Townsend – ‘District Officer’ (re the death of Elliott) Pages 235 + 242

¹⁰ Their story as reported here was drawn in the account by Yuki Tanaka in his book ‘Hidden Horrors – Japanese War Crimes in World War 2’ 1996 Pages 167-182:

¹¹ Tanaka Y Hidden Horrors 1996 Page 181.

Chapter 26 Japanese Strategies - The Tide of Battle Turns Against Them in the South West Pacific, Both on Land and Sea Dec '42 – March '43.

Battles in the war against Japan fought far from the Sepik were pivotal in turning the outcome in favour of the allies, and in so doing brought the Sepik into the heart of the conflict. The first of these battles was that of Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

This battle followed the battle of Milne Bay and the conclusion of the Kokoda Track campaign and lasted from 16 November 1942 until 22 January 1943. Buna, Gona and Sanananda were the beach heads from which Japanese forces had launched their overland attack on Port Moresby via Kokoda. In light of developments in the Solomon Islands campaign, Japanese forces approaching Port Moresby were ordered to withdraw to and secure these bases on the northern coast. Australian forces maintained contact as the Japanese conducted a well ordered rear-guard action. The Allied objective was to eject the Japanese forces from these positions and deny them their further use. The Japanese forces were skilful, well prepared and resolute in their defence. They had developed a strong network of well concealed defences.

Allied air power interrupted the Japanese capacity to reinforce and resupply the beachheads from Rabaul. This ultimately made the Japanese position untenable. In the closing stages of the battle, significant numbers of the defenders were withdrawn by sea or escaped overland toward the west and the Japanese base around Salamaua and Lae. The remaining garrison fought to the death, almost to the man. Australians killed numbered 1,204, U.S. 671 and Japanese 7,000. Allied losses in the battle were at a rate higher than that experienced at Guadalcanal.¹

The defence of Buna, Gona and Sanananda was part of the Japanese plan to keep a line of communications open along the New Guinea north coast through to Palau and the Philippines. This required control of Finschhafen, Tulubu, Madang Wewak and Hollandia. There were successful landings at Finschhafen, Tulubu and Madang on 17th-20th December 1942 and Wewak on 18th December 1942. In Madang the focus was on intelligence duties and on fortifying the airstrip and harbor facilities. In Wewak, Wirui airstrip was occupied and intelligence operations were undertaken.²

The Japanese command issued orders on 4th January 1943 to withdraw from Guadalcanal. These orders shifted the emphasis from the Solomons to New Guinea with an intended counter attack on Port Moresby. The troops intended for Lae were to support this strategy. Japanese soldiers intended for Guadalcanal were now sent to Wewak in order to construct Boram airstrip. They arrived in Wewak on 19th January and 12th February 1943.³

As part of a huge re-location of troops from China and Japan to New Guinea, the 20th and 41st Divisions had been landed in Wewak in late February 1943. The 51st Infantry Division had arrived in Rabaul and was to be onward moved to Lae, even though it was known that allied air cover was strong over the Vitiaz Straits between New Britain and New Guinea, through which the convoy would have to pass.

On 28th February 1943 the Japanese assembled a convoy. It consisted of eight destroyers, eight troop transport ships and air cover from approximately 100 Japanese planes, departing from Simpson Harbour in Rabaul. The convoy remained undetected until 1st March, when a patrolling Liberator bomber spotted and reported in. Air attacks continued through until the 4th of March. All eight troop transports and the destroyers 'Shirayuki', 'Arashio' and

'Tokitsukaze' were sunk and of the 6,900 troops that were to have gone to Lae, only 800 reached there. It was estimated that 2,890 Japanese soldiers and sailors were killed.⁴

One of those rescued from the sea and taken back to Rabaul was stated to be Lieutenant General Hanzo Adachi of the 18th Army. The Battle of the Bismarck Sea was the last Japanese attempt to land large troop reinforcements on the shores of New Guinea.⁵ From 3rd to 5th March, allied patrol boats and planes attacked Japanese rescue boats, life rafts and survivors in the water. This was later justified on the grounds that rescued servicemen would have landed at their military destination and returned to active service.⁶

The same battle from a Japanese perspective was even more devastating as reported by Kangoro Tanaka :-

“On the 3rd March in 20 minutes 130 (Allied) planes sunk three destroyers and set fire to or sunk all eight transports. Three thousand men were killed. The Japanese air-support for the convoy – twenty six planes flying at high level were taken by surprise by the low level attack. Two thousand seven hundred men were saved from the sea and returned to Rabaul.⁷”

Following the battles of Milne Bay, Kokoda, Guadalcanal, the decisive allied victory at Buna, Gona and Sanananda had Japanese forces in retreat and being steadily pushed westward until they were concentrated in the Sepik, where the allies contained them until the Sepik campaign was launched in April 1944.

End notes Chapter 26.

¹ Wikipedia Buna Gone Sanananda.

² Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Pages 41-2

³ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Pages 41-2

⁴ Wikipedia – The Battle of the Bismarck Sea

⁵ Lorna Fleetwood “A short history of Wewak” – Wirui Press 1985

⁶ Wikipedia – The Battle of the Bismarck Sea

⁷ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Pages 50-53

Chapter 27 Need for Intelligence on Japanese Disposition in and Around Wewak –the Failure of the Ashton Surveillance Expedition Feb. - May 1943

Taylor had been able to regularly report valuable intelligence during his travel up the Sepik River on the *Osprey*, but he knew it was critically important to obtain firsthand information on the Japanese disposition in and around Wewak. So it was on the 6th March 1943 that he announced his intention to cross the Sepik and visit the Wewak hinterland. He had still not done this when on the 19th March his intelligence sources at Kuvinmas told of an Australian party that had been landed at Yessan, and gone inland from Marui. He asked who they were and where they were going.

The party that landed at Yessan consisted of eight people. They were led by Lieut. Lea Ashton, who was accompanied by Geoffrey Archer, Mac Hamilton and Lionel Veale of the AIF, Sgt Nokeban and Constable Angoui of the Royal Papuan Constabulary and two Wewak men whose names are sadly not recorded.¹ Their task was to travel overland from the Sepik and through the Prince Alexander mountains to a position from which they could observe Wewak and report what was happening there. Collectively the party had abundant New Guinea experience, but the leader did not know the Sepik.

Lieutenant Ashton had been an Assistant Resident Magistrate in the Papuan Administration (equivalent to an Assistant District Officer) before resigning to become a gold miner in the Edie Creek Gold rush of the late 1920s and early 1930s. He became a member of the NGVR and fought the Japanese at Salamaua in February 1942. With him at Salamaua was Geoffrey Archer, a former employee of Bulolo Gold Dredging Co. Mac Hamilton, who had been rescued along with many others from New Britain by ADO J K McCarthy's "Little Dunkirk" operation. Sergeant Nokeban was a native of Avatip village on the Sepik. A Constable Karlo would be recruited at Marui Mission.

In February 1943, the planning of the expedition in Port Moresby had been led by Major J K McCarthy and Commander Eric Feldt, both former Patrol Officers with Sepik experience in the 1920s and 1930s. The expedition flew out of Port Moresby by Catalina aircraft in late February. The choice of landing place on the Sepik River was Yessan village. This choice was dictated by the fact that Yessan was far enough upstream to presumably be safe from the Japanese and as we learned from the Thurston expedition, it was the most upstream village that was under Australian administration control.

Ashton knew that communication in the Sepik was conducted very effectively by *Garamut* drums. He told the Yessan people not to announce their presence with the drums. However the Catalina had been seen going into Yessan and soon drums were sounding from downstream. The drums asked, '*Why is Yessan not talking?*'

Inquisitive men from Malu village some 40 miles downstream soon arrived at Yessan by canoe to investigate. Ashton recruited them as paddlers to take his party and stores downstream. They travelled at night and stayed at Constable Nokeban's village of Avatip. The following night they reached Japandai where they were welcomed by Luluai Kemerabi whom McCarthy had told them was influential and could be trusted. The next night they travelled to Marui where they met Fr. Hansen, Fr. Anthony Cruysberg and Brother Cherubin Kaltbrunn.

After initial concern about Fr. Hansen, a German and therefore an enemy alien, they decided that he could be trusted. The other Priest Fr. Crusberg was a Dutchman and therefore considered to be an ally. The first job at hand was to acquire carriers to take their party inland. The Middle Sepik men however were afraid to carry cargo into, what was for them, enemy country. The immediate first stage of the journey from Marui was solved when Fr. Hansen negotiated with Luluai Kemerabi that the Japandai men would carry the cargo to Kunjingini.

Meanwhile Fr. Hansen had problems of his own. He had received word that the Japanese had visited the Catholic Mission at Timbunke and taken the priests away. They indicated that they would soon return to remove the Nuns as well. On the day Ashton's party headed north towards Maprik, Fr. Hansen sent Fr. Cruysberg and Brother Kaltbrunn down river to Timbunke to assist the Nuns in their escape. They would eventually go up into the Karawari and Korosameri River systems in search of the District Officer who was rumoured to be up there somewhere.

Meanwhile when Ashton's party reached Kunjingini, the Japandai carrier line was paid off and returned to the Sepik River. It was already becoming evident that the two short months since the withdrawal of the Australian civil administration had shaped Sepik opinion. Most of the Sepik had not yet seen the Japanese, but the belief was widespread that they represented the "new" government and that the Australian administration was finished. These sentiments were evident in a general reluctance to carry for the patrol, occasional threatening behaviour and in statements reflecting the Sepik belief that the Australians had run away.

After staying overnight in Kunjingini, the party awoke to find that the Kunjingini men were gone, leaving only their women and children in the village. Ashton pressed the women into service as carriers. Closer to Maprik, they were able again to get men to carry for them. They arrived in Maprik to find the station was deserted and overgrown.

They learned there that there was a European living some five days to the north at Yakamul, the recruiter Wally Hook. Ashton believed that Hook with his local knowledge and experience would be of value to them if they could meet with him. They discovered also that there was a mission station close by at Ulupu, with priests in residence. Ulupu was a great deal closer than Yakamul, and also in the direction of Wewak, so Ashton and Veale left the others and went to Ulupu to investigate.

There they met Fr. Andrew Gertner and Fr. Karl Laumann and again after a period of suspicion about the loyalties of these Germans, they decided that they could trust them. The priests had heard a rumour that the Yakamul people, having learned the Japanese were coming and that the Australians were finished in the Sepik, had murdered Wally Hook and raped his mixed race Chinese Yakamul wife. The priests were not sure of the accuracy of this information, but this was what they had heard.

The presence of Japanese in the Maprik and Ulupu areas had not previously been reported, but on 23rd March District Services Port Moresby reported to Taylor, presumably from an Ashton signal, that the Japanese had appointed indigenous officials at Ulupu and that they were seen to be wearing white armbands with Japanese characters².

The unconfirmed rumoured death of Wally Hook was enough to convince Ashton that his duty lay behind Wewak and not in going north to Yakamul, so he focused his strategies

towards the east. Ulupu is just south of the now deserted gold claims of Thurston and others at and around Yamil. The priests said that there was a solid store room there which may be of use to Ashton. The day before, in Maprik, Ashton's party had been approached by a Constable Yarli, who claimed he had been left behind when Bates and party evacuated.

Yarli still had his uniform and rifle and was keen to join Ashton's party. He was pressed back into service and given the task of guarding half their stock of rations, which would be kept in reserve in the miners store house. The remainder of the rations was taken with the party as they moved eastward along the mountain range closer to Wewak. The party would not learn until later that just four days after they left Yarli at Yamil, under threat to himself and his family from local village people, he was forced to allow the reserve stores to be pilfered.

Meanwhile the garamuts broadcast news of their movements and so it seemed inevitable that the Japanese knew of their presence. Ashton took villagers hostage in an attempt to silence the drums. Then, by a stroke of luck, they encountered a mission worker by the name of Sang, who was able to guide them at night along tracks that avoided villages and kept to the higher land where observation of Wewak and the coast was good. Their first destination was the trig. point on Mount Turu. From there they could clearly see the lights of Wewak some 20 miles to the east. However the location was too far away and visibility was often obscured by mist. They needed to travel further to the east along the range to a better and closer observation point.

Footnote :- Mount Turu, and particularly the trig. point, was destined to be the focus of a huge cargo cult movement in 1971, when thousands of locals assembled on or near the mountain in anticipation of the magical arrival of European manufactured goods sent by the ancestors.

From their position high in the Prince Alexander Ranges, the party spied upon Wewak and using their ATR4 wireless, call sign "Bravo Uniform Yankee" was able to contact Major McCarthy in Port Moresby. Two of Ashton's three police, Angoui and Karlo, circulated among the Wewak villages and discovered that the village people were well aware of Ashton's party in the Prince Alexander Mountains. The two police reported to Ashton's camp about 12 miles out of Wewak on 31st March 1943 with bad news. They said that a villager had been spying on their camp and was now leading a Japanese patrol of 25 to 30 soldiers to their location. They were just two hours away and another patrol was positioning itself to cut them off³ when they moved westward as the Japanese anticipated they would.

It was necessary for Ashton's party to depart forthwith. The immediate question was whether to take the ATR4 wireless or not. In recent times, although it seemed to be operational, they had not been able to hear any return signals. They decided to take it with them even though it meant leaving other supplies behind. They set off that night, walking by the light of the moon and seeking out the track to Maprik and their supply base at Yamil, still unaware that it had already been pilfered.

Seeking to put as much distance as possible between them and the Japanese they walked all the next day and the one after that. Late on the second afternoon they decided to set up the wireless in a village in order to advise McCarthy of developments. They took off their sweat drenched clothes and replaced them with dry shorts. All but Veale took off their boots. Hamilton was still tuning the set when a shot rang out and a fuselage of shots followed. They

threw themselves out the back of the house and ran for the trees as dusk was falling. They were now in three separate parties. Hamilton was alone, Ashton, Veale and Archer were together and the three Police were together as the third party. They each separately made the same decision: to make for the Sepik River by following the water courses down through the plains and the swamps to the big river. All waterways that side of the Prince Alexander Mountains flowed into the Sepik River. They travelled for four days without food wearing just shorts and three of them without boots.

Yapi of Torembei takes up the story⁴-

“... a kiap was running from the approaching Japanese. He followed the river down to Torembei. He passed Jiginimbu and we met him at dawn at Torembei No 2. We took him in and cleaned him up. He had only a small pistol. We fed him and told him ‘There is a Father here, you can stay with him’. But he said ‘No, I will follow the Sepik up and I will reach my own people.’ We brought him as far as Ambunti and left him.”

Yapi was speaking of Hamilton. Alois Kawan of Marap told how⁵:-

“Some Australians or Americans had a camp on Mt Turu and they watched for the approach of the Japs. Their reports directed the Moresby aircraft as to where to go and bomb. Then these men ran away from Mt Turu and came to the river at Watabung [river junction] where the (Marap) market is now. There were three of them and they finally came to Father Krisbel (Crusberg) and he looked after them with food and care at Marui. He took them to Ambunti and a plane came and took them away.

Another of them came up in the pitpit beside the river at Torembei. He had followed the river down. The people went to wash in the river and they saw him and cried out thinking he was a spirit. Luluai Wiune saw him and the soldier said to them, ‘I know your law, so if you want to kill me, kill me now, but I know if you give me food that you will not kill me.’ The Luluai gave him bananas to eat and said, ‘No we will not kill you. You are not our enemy’. The people cared for him and that night paddled him to Marui to Father Krisbel [Crusberg].”

The European members of the Ashton party, thus re-united at Marui, proceeded some miles upstream to Ambunti to meet Captain Jim Taylor’s party. There they were re-united with their police who had reached the Sepik in the same manner as did the Europeans, but came out some distance upstream of them. Not long after their arrival, the *Osprey* and *Pat* arrived from downstream with Jim Taylor, Bill Macgregor, Chow Chen On, and the Dutch and Fryer parties.

Meanwhile the progress of the joint Dutch/Fryer party through the Central Highlands had been slow mainly because of its size and the huge number of carriers that had to be recruited to move it forward. Fryer’s patrol report on this journey indicated that it had been written in haste and that a full patrol diary would be provided at a later time. It is not known if this was actually done.

The mission thus far had been plagued by a running quarrel between Stavermann and Topman; Topman returned to Moresby...⁶

The others continued their journey on the route pioneered by Bill Macgregor with the Akmana expedition in 1929/30⁷ which followed the Yuat and Maramuni Rivers to their source. It was as Fryer and the Dutch party descended the Maramuni that they met Macgregor himself and Chow Chen On from Wewak [who also known as Gabriel Chow Chen On. Reports of the murders at Sigabika listed two Chinese killed, but in fact only one was killed. It is presumed that Chow Chen On was the second Chinese with the miners; that he survived and teamed up with Macgregor to make his escape.]

Macgregor as we know, left the Garamambu gold field when warned of the approaching Japanese and was retracing his steps to his route into the Highlands. The Fryer and Dutch party, coming the other way, recruited Macgregor and Raphael Chow Chen On, re-launched the *Pat* and headed back down the Yuat to the Sepik and then met up with Taylor's party presumably in the Korosameri River system. Taylor's radio message on 29th April stated Macgregor was "*here*".

Feldt's *The Coastwatchers* indicates the Fryer and the Dutch party met up with Ashton before Taylor arrived from downstream. The ANGAU War Diary entries indicate that Taylor met Fryer, Macgregor and the Dutch party before they went upstream to meet Ashton. It is assumed that the War diaries are correct. The Ashton expedition, according to Feldt, had been a failure largely because of the Japanese new-found strategy of actively pushing patrols out into the hinterland.⁸

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Introducing Attachment C. At this point in the chronology of our story – May 1943 - it is necessary to introduce the tragic saga of Indian prisoners of war transported by the Japanese to the Sepik from Singapore as coolie labour.

End Notes Chapter 27

¹ Veale L. Wewak Mission. That Watana Panich Press Co Ltd 1996 Page 12

² ANGAU War diaries 23/3/43

³ Feldt E 'The Coast Watchers' Page 233

⁴ Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 222

⁵ Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 284

⁶ Garth Pratten – Len Siffleet and the Whiting Mission page 34

⁷ Townsend G.W.L. 'District Officer' page 232

⁸ Feldt – The Coastwatchers 1946 Page 235

ATTACHMENT C –

Writers Note :-

In accord with the chronology of our narrative, at this point in May 1943, it is necessary to introduce the tragic saga of the Indian Prisoners-of-War in the Sepik.

The Saga of the Indian Prisoners-of-War in the Sepik – the Brutality Begins *May 1943 =>*

Singapore was the major British naval and military base in South East Asia and nicknamed the ‘Gibraltar of the East’. The fighting in Singapore lasted a mere week, from 8th February 1942 to 15th February 1942. It resulted in the fall of Singapore and the largest surrender of British-led military personnel in history. About 80,000 British, Australian and Indian troops became prisoners of war, joining 50,000 taken by the Japanese in the Malayan campaign. Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the ignominious fall of Singapore to the Japanese the “*worst disaster*” and “*largest capitulation*” in British history. {Wikipedia}

The story of some of those captured Indian troops is told in the words of one of those prisoners, Major Chint Singh, as written in Wewak after the Japanese surrender. Extracts from the diary is reproduced here with the kind permission of Major Singh’s son Narinda ...

**Wewak,
New Guinea.
4/11/1945.**

A brief sketch of the fate of 3,000 Indian POWs in the Sepik 16/5/43 to 30/9/45. by Chint Singh – Major, Indian Army.

It was the most unlucky day for 3,000 Indians who touched the soil of New Guinea on 16th May 1943. We left Singapore on 5th May 1943 in seven parties each consisting of about 600 – three of the parties went to New Britain and the other four came to New Guinea.

The Japs had two cargo boats and we were kept in hell throughout the journey. There was not enough space for us to sleep with our legs out-stretched. Many of us contracted dysentery and no sanitation arrangements were made for the patients. We requested several times that we be allowed to sit out in the cool breeze for a while but all was in vain. We were not told where we were going or where they were taking us. One day we found our boat anchored near a point and one of the crew told me the point was Wewak and that we had to disembark there. When we saw some buildings and the red roofed church on the hill, we were a little pleased and thought there would be some good roads and a town.

When we came onto the road after unloading ours and the Japs cargo we saw for the first time, black natives, with strange features, and we were a little frightened of them. We had no knowledge that these ugly looking faces would feed us and save our lives in the long run and that we would love them.

On the same day about midday the Japs ordered us to carry our bundles and the Japs rations and marched us along the beach. When we did not find any road; but on one side the sea and the other swamps, we were very much disheartened, but kept marching, still thinking there might be a road or a town further on. The guards themselves did not know where to go. We passed three small streams by walking through them – the night set in and we were ordered to stop on the beach. During the night we were again sent back to Wewak Point, a distance of about three miles, to bring the remaining goods.

This was the worst day and night that I had spent in my life. We were hungry and thirsty and were kept marching throughout the night. Early in the morning we came back from Wewak having had very little sleep. Besides the Japs the seas also was very angry with us, and while we were sleeping big tides came up and our blankets and we became very wet. Then after sunrise we marched on further and were ordered to make our huts in the swamps at Cape Wom. We used to walk to Wewak every morning at 5.30am and return to our huts at 6.30pm. This process continued for about two months and then we were ordered to make our huts about two miles from Wewak point.

One day we received orders that a Japanese Colonel would inspect the Indian huts and the sick men. We were a little happy and thought he would listen to our grievances. Before his arrival all the sick men were lined up. The Colonel walked along the line and touched each man's forehead. The men who were hot he slapped in the face and sent to his hut and the men whose heads were cold he kicked and sent to the aerodrome to work. Most of the patients were suffering from Beri Beri, Dysentery and Tropical Ulcers and could not walk, and their heads were continually hot from Malaria. Some of them would not reach the aerodrome before 3 or 4pm while others were severely beaten and left by the way. Those who went to the aerodrome returned to their huts at 10 or 11pm .

After inspecting the sick men we asked the Japanese Colonel for the following:

1. Human treatment as laid out in the International Laws.
2. Medicine and medical aid for the sick men.
3. Sick men should not be made to work.
4. Sufficient rations to keep ourselves fit – the ration being issued was not enough for 2 meals
4. Fixed hours of work.
5. Cooks should not be taken to work, but left to prepare a meal for the men when they came back.
6. Officers should not be taken to work, but should be treated as Officers.
7. The punishment of beating and kicking should be stopped as no Army in the world uses that punishment, nor is it written in any of the regulations.
8. Our medical staff should not be forced to work and should be left in the huts to look after the patients.

This was translated to him by an interpreter by the name of Fukai. The Colonel listened and growled. *'I do not know of any international laws therefore your requests cannot be granted. If you speak of this matter again we will shoot you.'* We had shown him a copy of the International law and told him that it was signed by his Government, but he threw it away. Then he lectured our guard (Japanese) and I came to know through the interpreter that he told them that Indian work very slowly therefore beat and kick them.

On another occasion we were informed that their doctor would inspect the sick Indians. We were happy as we thought that he would give them some medicine and treat them gently, but to our greatest disappointment the Doctor carried out the same process as the Colonel had. When requested for medicine he replied they had no medicine for POWs. He informed us that grass and leaves off the trees from the swamps would cure Beri Beri. When asked for something to dress the men suffering

from tropical ulcers whose wounds were getting very bad and full of maggots, he answered that if the ulcers were bathed in salt water they would be cured.

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Saga of the Indian POWs Continues – Under the Bombs at Wewak and the Forced March Towards Hollandia Aug. '43 – April '44

Major Chint Singh continued his story :-

“ It was 17th August 1943 when we were working on the Wewak Aerodrome (Boram) that at about 9.30am there was a sudden attack of Allied dive bombers. This was the first time we saw bombers flying so low and hitting the Japanese planes one by one. There were about two hundred planes on the ground and not a single one was left capable of flying. We lost about ten of our men and a similar number were wounded. After the raid was over we saw the Japs turn very pale and frightened. In the evening we saw that they were burning the Jap dead in big heaps. Colonel Thakana came to us and asked the Japs whether any of the Indians had died or not and when informed he was - very much surprised and said ‘That is not a big number more should have died.’ Then he put our wounded men in a truck and brought them to our huts. When he reached the huts he stopped the truck and we took out our wounded men who were crying with pain. The Colonel got off the truck and with his hands started throwing dust on the wounded men saying that was the medical treatment they deserved. Our Doctors dressed them and did everything in their power they could but on account of not having good food and medical aid the wounded men died shortly after.

After this, during the night the Japs used to bring in their cargo boats and we had to unload them before the sunrise. There was no time to sleep and rest but we used to slip away in small groups for some time turn by turn. This was always the time for us to make up the discrepancy of the rations issued to us by the Japs. Some of our men used to have two trips during the night carrying as much stolen rations as they could.

One day our huts were searched by the guard and they found about 40 bags of rice and other stolen foodstuffs. The guard called all the Indian Officers and beat them severely and threatened them with death penalty if it occurred again.. There were only two courses for us to take:

1. To steal and live to be shot by the Japs, or
2. To die through hunger.

We preferred the first so organized our men in regular parties for stealing rations and medicine. We used to keep the stolen rations in the swamp where the Japs could not go and during the night we used to cook and eat. Some of the rations we used to bury in the ground in tins. Many of our men were shot and many were severely punished with corporal and religious punishments such as burning the beards of Sikhs, cutting the sacred hair of the Hindus and burning our religious bibles; but none of these punishments could stop us. We had to steal to keep ourselves alive and this was the only way we could live.

The rations issued by the Japs were never more than two meals and moreover it was so poor that within the first two months we had about 200 cases of beriberi. One day a Formosan workman came with a bundle of food under his arm. I asked him what he had with him. He showed me some sugar and demanded a pair of shorts in return. I agreed as for a long time before I had not had any sugar. I told him our rations difficulties and he showed some sympathy and told me that we should steal from

the Jap supplies otherwise we would die of starvation. He also told me that the Japs would not give anything to anybody so the only alternative was to steal.

His words stuck in my mind and I discussed this with our senior officer Captain Nirpal Chand. He also agreed that we should steal, so we made certain groups and started on our campaign of stealing. We kept on doing so as long as the Jap stores and dumps were not made ashes by the bombers. Thus we saved our men from starvation for one year but after that the Japanese ships did not come. Our way of stealing became so crafty that we used to rob the trucks while going from one place to another and also Japs walking along the road with the rations on their backs. Many times when there was an air alarm the Japs used to run away leaving behind the dixies of cooked rice or vegetables – we used to eat out of them with satisfaction.

There were certain men among our guard who used to send our men to steal cigarettes, sugar, milk and they used to take a share of the stolen articles. Sergeant Tekai, Cpl Hanada, Ptes Yasusak and Tukura were men of our guard who used to send our men to steal. Later on when the ration problem became more difficult Lt Mitsuba also joined the group. Sgt Tekai used to select strong men from us and send them to the supply stores and sometimes used to accompany them. Once when L/Cpl Bawa Singh and Pte Biara did not give the Japs their share from the stolen foods they were tied to a tree, severely beaten and later shot by the Japs. From October 1943 and onwards the bombing became so terrible the Japs used to run away two or three miles from the beach and used to come back in the afternoon as the time of the bombers was always 8am to 11 o'clock, in the morning.

One day it was about 9.30 am when one double bodied aero plane (American Lightning?) engaged about ten Japanese fighters over Mushu Island. I was enjoying the tactics of the American fighter and suddenly it fired a long burst and I saw two Japanese catch fire and go down in the sea. The others ran away. One of the Japanese pilots parachuted and landed on the sea. I could see the Jap pilot for about 30 minutes and no Jap boat went to rescue him, I said to our Lt Izumi our guard commander. "You have got no regard for your men, look, a pilot fighting for your country and trying to save his life, but you people do not care for him. If that pilot was ours and we would have been in the same position as you are having all the facilities to save him, we would have sent as many boats as possible to rescue him." He replied "The brains of our commanders have turned mad."

By the end of March 1944, the Wewak area and aerodrome were cleared. One could see only one or two Japanese aero planes coming in, in the afternoon from Hollandia and going back a few hours later. The anti-aircraft and other guns could be seen without their crews, while the Japs were scolding others who had run away leaving their guns behind. There were few drums of Rice, Fish and dried Vegetables and in the evening one could see a lot of Japs stealing from one side (of the storage) and Indians the other. It gave me much pleasure when one evening I was with my stealing party, I saw that there was a case of tinned fish – The Japs and the Indians rushed to take it at the same time. There was about ten Japs and six Indians. The Indians pushed them away and knocked them to the ground, took the box and made their way through the swamps to their huts. The Japs kept watching like owls but could not chase the Indians.

The Japanese Colonel Thakana ordered our guards to teach the Indians the Japanese language and drill. The program was laid out – one hour before our march to fatigue and one hour when we came back in the evening. We objected to learn and told them that our brains were not good enough to learn the language and drill; but the guards insisted upon it. We held a little conference among ourselves and decided not to learn, so when the Japs ordered turn left, some of us would turn right and some of us would about turn. When they ordered us and taught us counting we used to say one

four seven and so on. In one month of training we could not count up to ten in Japanese. We were severely beaten, especially the officers.

The Japs used to say 'You officers no good. Your head fool.' The guard was very tired of us so they went to report to Col Thakana who became very annoyed and beat the Jap officers saying that their method of teaching was no good. Then the guards made big charts and painted them in different colours but all these had no meaning to us. Thakana used to send his adjutant with new charts and new proposals but was merely beating about the bush. In the end they became very tired of us and disposed of the idea saying "Indians fools, no head, very low race." In this way after one month's struggle we succeeded in our mission, and the Japs with their inferiority complex never again ordered us the two hour beating parade.

The bombing on the coast had become so intense that the Japs were frightened of an allied landing. We heard rumours that the Americans had occupied Lae. It was the month of March 1944 that one night a submarine shelled the coast. Our guard ordered us to run into the bush as there would be a big fight on the beach with the Americans. We went into the bush and there rejoiced very much as we thought that soon we would be in a new world, we did not even care for the mosquitoes which used to come in large groups and feed on us. The hearts of the guards sank and they forgot to growl as before. We did not know that our happy feelings would turn on us and there would be something worse in store for us. As the night vanished, with it vanished our hopes. 'The Americans did not land.' The boys said with a bleeding heart.

The following morning the same program of beating, abusing and torture started. On the 9th April, 1944 we received orders to march to Hollandia, a distance of about three hundred miles. We had to carry one month's rations for ourselves plus the Japs luggage. We requested to them that some arrangement should be made for a boat or some other transport to carry the rations and the luggage, but they snorted in a negative way with fury. We told them that no army in the world had marched like that and moreover we were weak and not in good health to stand up to the march. We were given the threat of shooting, which was a common reply from a Jap soldier. Up to this time we had lost about 100 men out of about 539 since our arrival in New Guinea. On 13th April 1944, 400 men started marching to Hollandia.

Before the march we had a secret conference and decided not to march beyond But a distance of about 40 miles; but to slip away in groups into the bush. We heard rumours that the Americans had occupied Hansa Bay, so we expected them in about a month's time. We had one month rations issued by the Japanese and about two months extra in our hidden stores.

On 13th April our march to Hollandia started. Our average march per night was about four miles. (Nobody used to march on the beach during the day on account of intense bombing). Our sick men suffering from malaria, dysentery and beriberi were left by the Japs on the way unattended. We requested them to give us some medical aid but were told to let them die on the beach, so with our sick men we left five healthy men who were pretending to be sick. Our scheme was successfully carried out and on 21st April 1944, 31 men reached But. We were severely beaten on the way and the Japs became very tired of us.

On 21st April Lt Mitsuba and Lt Imamura took our senior officer Capt. Nirpal Chand into the bush and we never saw him again. He left us leaving behind his encouraging words as usual 'Don't worry, there are good times ahead.' Before he was taken into the bush he was told by Lt Mitsuba that 'Either you collect your men here or I shoot you, as you have instigated them not to go to Hollandia.' But leaving behind all those threats he did not care for his life and gave a daring reply 'You make

transport arrangements and give medical aid to our sick. We have never marched like that and cannot march.' His loss is irreparable to us.

He has guided us through many dangers of life and used to encourage us through times of bombing and shelling. He himself never took shelter but used to watch steadily the American bombing and fighting in the sky. When he used to see the Jap fighters burning in the sky and crashing down into the sea he used to cry out 'Look Chint Singh, two Japs have caught fire and are crashing into the sea', I used to raise my head out of my hole and used to tremble but enjoy the sight. He could not resist his joy and would cry out 'Look the four engine bomber has dropped 20 bombs on Wewak Point and 30 in the harbour.' and then 'God has saved us from unloading the big ship. The planes have unloaded their bombs on her. See how the flames are sending their message to Tojo.'

Captain Chand had fifteen years commissioned service in the Indian Army, fought on the North West Frontier of India, in the Desert Campaign, in Malaya and Singapore. His father is a pensioner Captain, fought in France, Mesopotamia in the Great War.

Today 19th October 1945 the Japs admitted before the War Crimes Commission at Cape Wom HQ 6th Aust. Div. that they had killed Capt. Chand because he instigated his men not to go to Hollandia and he also refused to go himself. Today I find myself lucky enough to see the criminals being tried and will also see them executed. I have given a little solace to my heart and I have written to his father's wife and son explaining that the executors of their dear one have been caught and will be executed – their dear one died a glorious death which will be described in Military History and other books. I hope this will give them a little ease from pain and grief ..."

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Dark and Gloomy Days in Jungle and Swamps – Death March To The Sepik *April – Dec. 1944*

Writer's note: In the route of the death march, Major Singh describes a sequence of village names from which I have attempted to trace the route they took. Wewak to Rainboa (Rainimbo) is clear as both names appear on the map. Then via the Hawaiiin River and over the Prince Alexander Ranges close to Mt Turu is also traceable. Their stated destination was the Sepik River via Maprik. However the village names Ain, Yakano and Yawa or any approximation to the spelling cannot be found on current maps.

Laycock's Sepik Language Checklist¹ was consulted as it lists all Sepik village names but again no village names were recognized. This was not helped by the fact that the writer has no field experience of the Yangoru and Maprik areas through which the POWs walked.

However once their route entered the Ambunti Sub District after leaving Yakano, they visited Bangwi and from there went to Sengu. These names meant something to me. Bangwingei and Sengo are on a route from the Maprik area to the Sepik; a southerly corridor between the Marui Maprik road and the Amagu River. Map no 2 shows the region through which they walked, but the precise route is not clearly defined.

Having reached the Sepik River from Sengo, they proceeded downstream and into the "Kuchmeri" tributary, (Korosameri) and reached "Mamori" (Mumeri). At that point they could have followed either the Korosameri or the Blackwater branches of the river. The fact that they arrived at "Kuwenbus" (Kuinmas) shows they went by the Blackwater.

“On 22nd April 1944 we heard big guns from the Aitape direction and we visualized that the landing was taking place. We were ordered by the Japs back to Wewak – there we would be under the bombing. We marched back to Wewak, this time very happy in our minds, counting the days and hours for our release from the clutches of the Japs.

We had passed counting the days and months since the heaviest American bombardment on 17th August 1943, for our release; but our hopes were in vain and miseries and troubles increased with the time. We came back to Wewak and stayed nearly one mile from the beach in the jungle. The Japs used to take out parties to steal rations for them. They also used to give a little share to the men whom they used to take to steal. We lost some of our men while doing the above. One day L/CPL. Bawa Singh and PTE. Piara Singh (Both of the 6/14 Punjab Rgmt) did not give a share of the stolen soap and butter to Jap PTE Yasusaka who reported the matter to LT Mitsuba. Both men were tied to a tree and beaten and bayoneted. This crime also has been admitted by PTE Yasusaka before the War Crimes Commission on 30th October 1945.

Then we marched through the swamps to Rainboa about 10 miles from Wewak. It was the month of June 1944 – the Japanese refused to give us any rations and would not give us any salt. We were ordered to make Sac Sac (sago – pidgin spelling is saksak) and eat it. The grass in the jungles was our vegetables and lizards, grass-hoppers and mice were our vitamins. In the swamps of New Guinea you can see the sac sac trees, just as you see the palm trees in India. We had to cut them, chop them and pound them, soak in water – the sac sac (white substance) sinks to the bottom and the wooden materials float, in other words you can call it the juice of the trees. It has no taste and is hard to eat – we lived on it for one year and two months.

The sac sac we used to make was put before the guard and it was up to them whether they gave it for one or two meals. We had to work from morning until 5 o'clock in the evening and we used to steal sac sac during the daytime and thus have our full meals.

At Rainboa in the month of August, two Japanese namely PTE Ishiyama and Yasuska tied one officer Risaidar Rashind Mhod and L/CPL. Mashuq Ali of 3rd Indian Cavalry and shot them for stealing a watch and a piece of gold from them. This incident has also been admitted by these two criminals before the War Crimes Commission at 6 Aust Div HQ, Cape Wom 1st November 1945. The natives of Rainboa were very wild on us and one day they beat our two to such an extent that one died the following morning and the other about a month later. Their little boys used to beat us and the Japs made them our commanders while we were making sac sac. They used to ridicule us in their presence.

At Rainboa in the months of July, August and September 1944 we suffered very much by the Jap, natives and nature. The wild grass which we used as our vegetable could not last for more than a month. The rains became so heavy that our huts could not bear them and we had to live in the mud and the damp. The small stream was usually in flood, washing our huts every day. We could not cook our sac sac as the fuel was always wet and the fear of aeroplanes increased by the Japs was too much.

One day PTE Yasuska searched the hut of Jem. Kitial Singh and found some paw paws, so tied him to a tree for two days, beat him with sticks and kicked him. The other two incidents related to the shooting of Risaldar Rashino Mohd and L/CPL Mashuq Ali of 3rd Indian Cavalry and Hav Waryam Singh and L/CPL Hazaea Singh of 2/12 F.F.R. increased our terror very much. The shooting and killing of about 100 Indians at But and about eighty at Boiken made the time very bad

for us. We always used to count and think the hour of death by the Japs against the day of release by the Allied Troops.

The problem of our rations, particularly salt was acute. The Japanese supplies were all but out of existence. Our hidden stores of rations also exhausted. Four men of one party were bayoneted to death through trying to escape. Hidden and secret prayers did not help. The thundering of clouds in the midnight used to wake us up as if we were hearing the heavy pounding guns of the Allies firing at Wewak. The limit of happiness used to get out of control and the whole camp would start building castles in the air. Every one of us whether literate or illiterate, had some knowledge about Australia. What was then – during the midnight you could hear in every hut, even the patient on his death bed (on many occasions many died in the morning) men buying leather suitcases, woollen clothing for the coming winter – in the cities of Australia. The officers would be heard buying something more, gramophones, wireless sets, wrist watches besides the above mentioned articles. But in the morning everything seemed an illusion. Every morning was full of hope while the day was full of terror. The orders came to march to Maprik, but the midnight guns did not stop firing and hopes did not shatter. The most terrible time of our lives was still ahead.

Two hundred and forty P.O.W.s marched to the mouth of death on 29 Sept. 1944. One hundred and forty six were left behind at Rainboa at the mercy of God. They had nothing to eat and no medical or other aid. I did not hear of them until now – most probably the Japanese might have killed them or eaten them as it had proven in later stages. There were about 500 packages of Jap luggage and we used to carry it in stages of five miles making a distance to and from of about 20 miles per day. It took us three months to reach the Sepik River after marching in all about 1500 miles. Only 19 Indians out of the whole lot reached the Sepik.

When we left Rainboa on 29th Sept. 1944 we had 15 days sac sac and little salt to feed on. We were all barefooted and had nothing to protect ourselves from the rain and mosquitoes. We were driven along the Hawaiiin River without any track of path. The Japs had stolen rations and tried to keep themselves off the path so that other higher ranks may not take the rations.

On the first day when we were loaded like pack animals it rained heavily and the loads became very heavy. The river was in flood and four men were swept away, but were rescued. The night was spent in the mud and we suffered very much by it. On the third day after we had left the first stop, we left behind four men who could not walk. We had to cross the river about 20 times per day for three weeks of our trip. The tropical ulcers, malaria and beriberi increased in large numbers and in various stages of the march 50 men were left behind.

When we left the river we came upon very high mountains. We had never climbed such mountains and with such loads. Our sac sac had finished and we suffered very much on account of starvation. The Japs ordered our sick men to make sac sac and the others they continued using as pack animals. We used to steal a little quantity from the bags of rice and salt every day.

In the month of November 1944 there were about 150 Indians left. We had made the packages less by stealing and also by throwing others in the water as we crossed the river. The bags were broken and the weight less but the power of endurance had decreased and the number of men greatly lessened.

One day early in the morning near the village of Ain 1, Cpl. Tekai and Ptes. Hibano and Yasusaka came and caught Sepoys Kirpa Ram and Harman Singh of 5/14 Punjab regt. They tied their hands behind their backs and started beating them. They then took them before LT Mitsuba

who kicked them, put them in a nearby river and shot them. They were killed because they had stolen a handful of rice and were carrying it in their pockets. Nursing Orderly Maida had caught them.

The following day, Cpl. Hanada searched the hut of JEM. Harnam Singh of 6/14 Punjab Regt and found a little bottle of quinine. He tied him to a tree and all the Jap guards started beating him with sticks and kicking him. He was then left tied to the tree throughout the night and in the heavy rain. In the morning LT Mitsuba and CPL Shimizu took him into the bush where LT Mitsuba cut his head off with a sword. This execution has been admitted before the War Crimes Commission Board.

After a few days we reached Ain III where our sick men started to make sac sac. In this area there were two mango trees – the mangoes being good to eat with the sac sac, but the repercussions proved very bad and all the men suffered trouble with their legs. One could see the man's face and body healthy but the legs could not carry the weight. Many could not stand or even bring water for themselves. Only about 60 men who could walk remained. Those men who could walk two miles and steal bananas and taro from the native gardens, recovered, as these things helped to keep the body fit.

Towards the end of November we reached a place called Singu where we made another fifteen days rations of sac sac. Many who were still lingering on with the party died at this place. The natives gave us much to eat and many who were weak grew strong again.

We left this place on 1 December 1944 leaving behind 12 Indians who could not walk. One of them was Girdhari Lal of 2/12 Frontier Force, my school mate. He was a good religious teacher with good knowledge. He used to encourage the men by relating old chivalrous stories of Indian Rulers and Princes.

On the next day 2 December 1944, Havildar Karam Singh of 2/12 F.F.R. revisited the camp to see a relative who was too weak to walk and who had been left at Singu. When Karam Singh revisited the camp and again joined us at Pachang he told us that the men we had left behind had been shot by the Japanese. I had some knowledge of the Japs we left behind on the day of the march and brought them before the War Crimes Commission. CPL Shimizu who was one of them, admitted that with the order of LT Mitsuba he and PTEs Yasusaka and Tokura shot the Indians who were unable to walk with the party. This was enough proof of the fate of sick Indians who couldn't march with the party and were left behind."

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Struggle Through the Sepik Plains to the Sepik River, Surviving on Native Handouts Dec. '44 – Feb. '45

Major Chint Singh continues his story :-

“ We reached Yawa on 15th December 1944 and from this place Capt. Ishar Singh with eleven other Indians escaped. I did not hear of them again. One officer Jem Lechhman Singh and L/Cpl Angrezu Ram escaped and were caught by natives and brought back to the guard. They were beheaded by LT Mitsuba, in the presence of all Indians. During this time seven men of the 17th Indian POW work party, who had escaped, were caught by the natives and were shot by the Japanese. We were strictly prohibited by the Japs to talk to the natives or to get anything from them. Many of the natives were frightened of the Japanese who had killed many natives in the presence of others to scare them. Capt. Hanover of 5/14 Punjab Regt was shot by the Japanese in this area. The

natives used to give him plenty of food and one day some fish, pig meat and vegetables were found on him by LT Wimori, who tied him and killed him.

At Yawa the sac sac trees were very bad and the output of sac sac was very small and there were no gardens nearby from where we could steal. Many of us died of ulcers and starvation.

On 1st February 1945 we left Yakona, a village about 12 miles south of Yawa. Four officers and a party Sub. Ishar Singh, Sub Ganda Singh, Jem Ran Singh and Jem Bahadur Singh who could not march with the party and were left behind and shot by LT Mitsuba and his party. After two days march we reached Yakano. This was a very bad place with the problem of sac sac being worse than at Yawa. There were about six Japanese of road construction party, one of them a LT. They were very weak and used to get some fish and pig meat and sac sac from the natives. I had only one pair of trousers which I gave him and in return he gave me some fish and pig meat.

One day I was very sad and had gone to the jungle to get some fuel for the Japs. I sat down under a big tree and many waves of different ideas came into my mind. I cursed my fate and cursed all the Gods we worship in India. I wept bitterly and could not do anything. There were thick jungles and swamps all around the camp and we could not escape. Everything was against us. The trust in the natives was lost. The Japs used to kill the escapees in a very cruel manner.

There was darkness all around us. The life was a great burden. Many times the idea of committing suicide came into mind but the heart was not very strong to do it. When the tears flowed from my eyes, I had a little repose of mind and the cool breeze made me sleep.

When I opened my eyes, I found a good looking pair of natives standing nearby and they were completely naked... I stood up, bowed to them and started chatting. The wife of the native was a very good woman. Both of them showed some sympathy for me, and when I requested something to eat, the wife went at once to her house a mile away, advising her husband and me to wait... We kept talking until the wife returned with a very large bundle in her arms. She opened the bundle and offered me two large pumpkins, fish, bananas, sac sac and sac sac cakes. I had a razor blade with me which I gave her in return and it proved a valuable gift as she was very pleased indeed and told me she would come to the same spot every day with food for me. I remained three weeks at Yakano and every day she used to give me something that kept my health in good condition. Many of our boys suffered very much at this place.

Our talk and thoughts were almost continually about food – food we had enjoyed in the past, food we craved as prisoners-of-war and food we intended to enjoy after our release. I remembered my mother who used to give me the best food possible and how I used to complain. My mother would say ‘Look dear boy, one day you will lament and remember how you used to discard the mother’s offerings and were insolent.’ The memory of those words pierced my heart and I wept bitterly.

One day an officer named Sub Sukhdar-Shan Singh said ‘I have RS. 150 and I can give them to anyone who can offer me a cup of tea.’ We used to say to each other ‘I will invite you to some festival and serve you with special dishes.’ Capt. Gopal Dass, who was a very jolly man and a doctor used to jump in and say. ‘I will invite you all to the wedding of my daughter and serve you with sac sac and lizard dishes.’

To say many of our men kept alive on hopes is no exaggeration, but the hopes always ended and they died saying two words ‘India’ and ‘America’. We could see American aircraft flying every day and had hopes the Americans would soon come and rescue us. Many of our boys even on their death

beds used to ask me. 'Sir so the Americans come at the end of the month?' I would encourage them with high hopes, but the end of the month invariably the end of the lives of many of the men who were lingering on with hopes only.

The hopes that glimmered in the eyes of the dying men were too much for me. I told them many times that I was confident that the Americans would come at the end of such and such a month and they had to pull themselves together and grow strong.

There were many instances that men died at the dates that were fixed by themselves, one or two months prior to their dying. For example Sepoy Lahori Ram of 6/14 Punjab Regiment told us on 5th March 1945 that on the 15th April 1945, either we would be released by the Americans or that he would be released by death, and it actually happened that on the 15th April 1945, early in the morning, he told us that the day of the end of his life had come and he died in the evening.

We left Yakona on the 18th February 1945 for the Sepik River. On our way we halted at a place called Bangwi for one night. There I met some Indians of the 18th Indian POW working party. They also were very weak. They were also ordered to leave the place on the following day with us. There were about two Sepoys of that party about 40 yards from the rest. During the night I went to the native village as usual. The natives of that village were very good and welcomed us. Many babies, women and men came around me offering me bananas, pig-meat and fish.

While I was there a native boy came running and told me 'Capt., two Indians die pinis. Jap doctor masta givim needle.' The other natives who were there realized what had happened and were very sorry. They told me that the Japanese had not given them anything to eat for two months and made them look after them. The Indians were very good they told me, and they used to sew their clothes for them. I told them to take me to where the Indians were. I accompanied them to a hut where I found two Indians lying unconscious on the ground, breathing as if they were going to die in a short time. I covered them with their blankets and requested that if they die, to bury them the following morning. They were very sorry as they said they had fed them for two months and they were looking as though would be all right.

On the following morning we started again towards the Sepik carrying our loads. We reached a village called Singu (Sengo) at midnight after passing through swamps and jungles. One native named Medigama, who had three wives had worked as a labourer with white men. He came to me stealthily and started telling me his story of how he had worked in several places with white men – he did not like to see the Japs but was under direct supervision of them and was forced to work for them. He brought me some sac sac and a large fish which he had smoked. We all ate this meal for that evening and did not cook our own sac sac. We brought fuel and water for the Japs but could not do so for ourselves as we were very much tired. After cleaning the Jap dixies [large cooking containers] we left Medigama and returned to sleep.

Early in the morning, Medigama and one of his wives gave us some more cooked sac sac, fish and bananas. I thanked him very much for his help then we left the place and later reached the Sepik River. We were put in canoes which were paddled downstream. It was very hot, that day and very difficult sitting in the canoes. The natives paddled for about five hours and then the sun was behind the horizon. We got out of the canoes and the Japs ordered us to carry ours and their cargo to a small dirty hut given to them by the natives. Within a few minutes every native gathered around us and started addressing me as Captain. I do not know from where they got this information. As we were not allowed to talk to the natives, I did not pay any attention to them, but by certain signs I made them understand to wait until it was dark and the Japs were sleeping. One guard was very much

annoyed when the natives gave one of my men some fish and vegetables. The Jap snatched the food from him and threatened the natives who ran away saying “Pig tasol”, meaning that the Japs were just like pigs.

When it grew dark I went into the village. The natives were anxiously waiting for me. Their ‘marys’ [wives] brought cooked sac sac, fish, bananas and pig meat. I had my meal to my greatest satisfaction. I talked to them for a long time. They did not like the Japanese. They told me that the Japanese had burned a native village, and shot the men. Their way of addressing themselves was very touching to the heart. During our conversation one boy of about eight years old jumped up and said ‘Capt. Paps, mama, brother belong mi-fella Japan man kilim idai pinis.’ [the Japs had killed his father, mother and brother]. Jap no good, white masta good tumas’ [Japanese are very bad, but white people are very good].

I told them not to worry and said ‘Liklik time behind, plenty white masta come, Japan Man bugger up finis. Balus bilong white masta strong tumas. Japan wantain sip belong Japan, algeta killim finis.’ [White people are coming very shortly. Japanese army has been defeated and the white man’s aeroplanes are very strong. They have sunk all the Japanese ships and killed all the Japanese.] They were very pleased to hear it. They told me they wanted to give all the Indians something to eat. I thanked them very much, then returned to my hut and sent my men one by one to the village. The natives fed them very well and gave them something for the following day.

On the following day we again sailed in the canoes, spending another night on the Sepik. We met eight other Indians of the 18th POW working party who were also going towards the south. Our guard did not allow us to talk with the other Indians. The natives of this place were also very good, and I did the same as usual, went into their village and received a hearty welcome.

The third day in the canoes was very troublesome. The canoes were very small and water seeped into them with the slightest movement of the body. The night too was not as good as the others. Our next stop was a place called Mamori [Mumeri] which is on the Kuchmeri [Korosameri] which is a tributary of the Sepik. The natives were pro-Japanese. They did not give us anything even at our requests. One of our men stole some vegetables and the natives caught him and beat him severely but we thanked them as they did not tell the Japanese.

The following morning there was great turmoil and I imagined that some Jap Commander would be there. The Jap guard told us that high Jap Captain was coming. We thought of our own sakes that the Captain perhaps would consider our condition and instruct the guards in our favour. Within a short time the Captain arrived in a canoe. With him were two Jap Officers and three Jap Privates. The most attractive thing was a big tall native with six red stripes on his right arm, armed with a pistol and dressed in Japanese uniform [This was almost certainly Mamba of Korogo] The Japanese Captain turned out to be a Major-General as I noticed his rank pinned on the left breast of his shirt.

The natives in the village were all lined up including the old and young men and women. There were eight pregnant women among them, due to deliver in a couple of days. All these things were very strange to the Japanese, and even now my mind and hands do not bare me out that whatever I am writing is really a fact and not a dream. The Japanese were also lined up, but the Indians were left sitting in the hut watching it all. I was a little anxious so stood outside of the hut hoping that the Jap officer would see me and ask me something or instruct the guard for our good, but after inspecting the Japanese he talked to them and I could understand that he told them that the Japanese forces and aeroplanes were very busy in India. They had finished with China and had received orders from Japan to continue the fight in New Guinea. Within a short time many reinforcements would come.

I smiled a little at this foolish speech but these words were sent by God in Japan to his sons in New Guinea. My smile was noticed by one Jap named L/Cpl. Issi. When the Captain dismissed then he came straight towards me and signaled for me to go to him. I thought that the Jap Captain might have instructed something good which I did not understand, but when I came to him he gave me four slaps across the face and told me that I was a bloody fool for smiling at him. I went back and sat down quietly. After that the Jap Captain and the big native Captain turned towards the natives. According to the instructions of the Jap officer, the natives were told to help the Japanese and supply them with food and fish. He then dismissed them, turned towards us, ignored us and went into his house.

It is interesting to add that by this time i.e. February 1945 there were only 2 Indians in the 25th Indian POW. working party, none in the 17th party, none in the 16th party, 8 in the 18th party and 19, including myself in the 19th party. The place was very unhealthy and our hut was in the swamp and jungle which was infested with brown coloured mosquitoes – the blood suckers. These mosquitoes do not carry the germs of Malaria but they suck the blood and any time whether day or night one could see them swarming around in hundreds. We suffered very much by them at that place. We had no mosquito nets or enough clothing to cover our body. Our ration was very poor both in quantity and quality and could not make up for the deficiency of blood sucked by the mosquitoes. As a result we suffered acute beriberi.

One day Pte Maida (Jap nursing orderly) was suffering from dysentery and his boots became dirty with his uncontrolled motion. He ordered one of our officers Jem Kitial Singh to clean his boots. The officer cleaned the boots but did not examine them for a little dirt remained. Pte Maida took a big stick and mercilessly beat the officer over the head. Kitial Singh became unconscious but the Jap did not stop beating him. His head started bleeding and the blood flowed over his face and shirt. The officer remained very ill for over a month and then died...

Another day we were making sac sac and Lt Murai came there. As we were weak we were not working as quickly as a strong man would. LT Murai called me and demonstrated our work comparing it with the work of natives. He said “You India work no good, slowly. Kanaka work very good hurry.” I replied “Sir. Kanakas plenty kaikai, pig, fish, sac-sac, plenty strong. India no strong, plenty malaria, no pig-meat, no fish, no salt and no vegetables for kaikai” The ugly looking face of LT Murai became even more ugly and he picked up a piece of wood about 4 feet long and 4 inches in diameter. He struck it hard at my head and I moved a little and it struck my shoulder. I once again came to attention, and bowed four or five times and apologized for saying what I had. He was not satisfied with this and ordered the guards not to give even a small ration of sac sac. The effect of this was that we stole a double quantity.”

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**Pitiful Survivors - Last Days in Captivity and First Days of Freedom –Kuinmas & Angoram
Feb. – Sept. 1945**

Major Chint Singh continues his story :-

“ Our sick men used to work in the gardens while the others made sac sac every day. The Japanese promised us that if we worked hard on the gardens that they would give us some vegetables from it, but when the gardens were flourishing the Japanese did not give us even one vegetable. Their formula was ‘*Plenty work, plenty kaikai. India plenty work, no kaikai.*’ I have not been able to understand this formula until now.

We worked sometimes continually for five or six days and nights for 18 hours a day, working in the scorching heat of the tropics throughout the day, carried our loads like pack animals through the swamps and jungles, climbed mountains 3,700 feet high, but the Japs were never satisfied until 3,000 Indians died through the bestialities and brutalities of the Japanese. Was it not a deliberate cruelty to the Indians? There was nothing we could do in retaliation. Striking a guard or talking back meant almost certain beatings. The ugliest things we could do were to steal and sabotage, which we did.

When the gardens were ready the Japanese refused to give us any pumpkin from them, we would not let any pumpkin grow but would lick the flowers, and hence the Japs (also) went without. They used to say amongst themselves that the birds must have eaten them.

One day LT Murai caught Sepoy Ram Singh of 6/14 P.R. with four lemons in his possession. He tied him to a tree and the whole guard, in turn, started beating him. They beat him for a day and a night until he became unconscious. The following day he was untied and put in the sun. In the morning the Japs ordered us to dig a grave for the man, which we did. SGT Kibbe, L/CPL. Igaraashi, PTE Tokura and LT Murai took him to the grave. L/CPL Iga Rashi and PTE Tokura bayoneted and buried him.

I made friends with one native called Buist. He was a cook for the padri [padre] who had lived at Karkar¹ [Kaningara]. He used to give me fish, pig-meat and sometimes vegetables and coconuts. I told him of my plan to escape and asked for help. He agreed to it but explained that there was no track out of the village but jungle and swamp all around it. It was just like an Island in a swamp, the only means of communication was by canoe.

The date and time of the escape was fixed for the night of June 13th 1945 - we had a little store of sac sac and had cooked enough for about four days rations. We were ready and waiting but Buist did not come until the morning, consequently we were very disappointed. I met him on the following day and he told me that the natives of Barmori had run away to the jungle for fear of the Japanese. Some Japanese, and the natives of Sungriman [Sangriman] who were pro-Japanese had chased them and it was dangerous to pass that way. Besides this, Buist too was very frightened of the Japs as they recently bayoneted five natives. He told me to wait until a little time hence so we withheld our plan. Without him we could not get out of the swamp as we had no knowledge of the country.

The Japs made about 200 hooks for catching fish. They used to throw them into the river on lines in the evening and in the morning would take any fish from them. I used to slip away after midnight, search the hooks and steal the fish. Many nights were full of success. I had also stolen some of the hooks so used to throw them in on a line and copy the process of the Japs.

One day I saw two Japs halting on their way to Barmori near Karkar [Kanengara]. One, a sergeant, was picking lice from his shirt and eating them. I asked him for the reason for his actions and he stated that he was suffering from beriberi and as lice contained vitamin "B" it would help him recover from the disease. These Japs were from some road construction unit – the Sergeant's actions surprised me very much. One day I requested LT Murai to give us some medicine they had to cure beriberi. But he told me to go away and eat red ants and grass. Only once a week did the Japs allow one man to go and collect grass for us to use as vegetables.

Once W/O Adachi, one of our guards, suffered from dysentery and had made his bed, body and clothes filthy from his uncontrollable motions. No Jap cared for him so he ordered us to clean him and his clothes and look after him. He was in charge of the gardens where we used to work, and in

the absence of others, used to eat the pumpkin and bananas. One day he stole a pumpkin, cooked and ate it in the jungle, this was the cause of his getting dysentery. On the same day SGT Takashi went into the gardens but could not find the pumpkin. He asked Adachi who told him that the Indians had stolen it. Takashi made us fall in and started beating us - we had seen Adachi take the pumpkin, cook and eat it. We preferred to take the beating, otherwise by telling what we had seen Adachi would have beaten us more.

In the month of August the Japs took us to Kuvenbus [Kuinmas] a distance of about 10 miles from Karkar (Kaningara). We were employed there only on the garden. The natives used to make sac sac, give it to the Japs who would ration it out to us. Before the war there was a hospital and Mission at this place. There is a big lake near the village where flying boats used to land. The people of this place loved the white men but had a great hatred of the Japanese.

This was the only place where the natives compelled the Japanese to catch fish and grow vegetables for themselves. They never gave the Japs any pig-meat. One day a Jap named L/Cpl Agarashi stole some sugar cane and sweet potatoes from the native garden. He was caught by the natives who took him before Capt. Izumi. Capt Izumi and Sergeant Takashi called the whole village together and lined them up. Takashi got a rope and threatened the natives, telling them that they could not call a Japanese soldier a thief. Everything belonged to the Japs and the Japanese had all rights to take anything from the village. He caught the native who had referred to the Japs as thieves; but at the request of all natives he was set free. The natives were told that in future if they referred to the Japs as thieves they would be killed.

After that happened the natives became more anti-Japanese and that was very good for us. They started giving us 4 sticks of sugar cane and some vegetables every day – it helped us a lot and our health improved. The nature, the natives and the place itself turned in our favour and after a few days even the Japanese treatment changed. We were more surprised as to how the Japs had changed their mood. We concluded that either good times were ahead, or that the Japanese would kill us after one or two days of good treatment, because we had heard of such like stories of the Japanese butchery. The Japs divided us 10 Indians into three separate parties and sent us to different places and our suspicions became stronger. I tried to communicate with the other places and plan an escape.

On 16th September 1945, about 9 o'clock at night, when one Jap came and instructed our guard to take us to their headquarters. They ordered us to get ready at once, so we took our sac sac and blanket and started. The natives of this village were very sorry especially one, Ribantua as they had suspicions that the Japs would kill us. They had heard many stories of this nature. A few days ago, Ribantua had advised us not to signal aircraft (a thing which I had done in his presence three or four times, without success) as the Japanese had killed seven Indians at Sungriman. [Sangriman]. They had signaled the aircraft and were seen by the natives who handed them over to the Japanese. It was on this information that I have now caught Major Kudo, commanding officer of that area, and brought him before the War Crimes Commission. He had admitted that he had given orders to two Captains of his staff to kill Sub.Rasil Singh, Jem Piara Singh, Hav Major Sant Ram, Sepoy Ram and Ganga Ram of 3/17 Dogra Rgt. He admitted that they had signalled the aircraft and were working as spies.

Ribantua followed us and we reached the Hqrs. It was early in the morning of 17th September 1945 that a Jap Sergeant with papers in his hands appeared. He was the chief clerk in Major Kudo's department. He told us that the Japanese Government wanted to send information to our homes so took our home addresses and wrote them in two papers. We bowed to him and thanked him for his kindness. We concluded that one of the following would be the result :-

- a. They would kill us and before killing us, wanted our addresses for their records.
- b. They were forced by the Allies to send information with regards to Indian P.O.W.s to India, or
- c. The Japanese had surrendered and had been ordered by the Allies to submit returns about Indian P.O.W.s

We thought them over again and again but could not arrive at any conclusion, and the ideas concerned us. The Japanese must admit now that they are universally hated and feared, through their own savagery, arrogance, cannibalism, immorality and inability to protect the innocent people, as even the most primitive natives of New Guinea had run away from their approach. The Japanese have lost their face on the world.

On the following day one native who had been in another village came to me very excited and very happy and told me “Pite Pinish. Sungriman Big Captain one taim olgeta Jap soldier go pinish. White masta Wewak stop.” (Fight finished, the Captain at Sangriman and all the Jap soldiers have gone) He was very happy and made us happy too, but we could not indicate our happiness as the pressure of the Japs was still on us.

After a few hours the officer commanding the guard ordered us to fall in and then addressed us saying, *‘The Japanese Government has stopped fighting, our king does not want to fight any more. Tomorrow we will take you to Wewak from where you will be sent to India, but mind you are still in our hands and are not allowed talk to the natives.’* After this we went off and started our work, cleaning the dixies, washing the clothes, fetching the water, bringing fuel and so on, as usual.

In the evening the natives called us to their ‘Mararo² House’, one by one they entertained us. A Mararo [malolo] house is a central place for sing sing songs and entertaining – in all villages one can find the mararo houses which vary in size according to the population. Generally there are two story houses. Their marys [wives] offered us meat, fresh fish, sticks of sugar cane and sac sac for the journey the following day. I thanked them and promised to reward them for their help. LT F.D.Monk – ANGAU – recently promised me that he himself would go to the village and reward these people with some good prizes.

The next day we the only survivors of 539 – 19th work party got into canoes and paddled towards the Sepik River. All the inhabitants of the village came to say goodbye to us and as a result of their love, I could not check myself so waved my hand and bid them goodbye. In its response all of them waved their hands, even the little babies waved their hands and shouted goodbye. LT Murai turned his ugly face towards me but did not have the courage to say anything. At this hour the secret of our relationship with the natives was disclosed to the Japanese; but it was too late, as I learnt later the Sergeant who had taken our addresses had submitted a nominal role to the Australian forces.

In the evening we reached Singriman [Sangriman], where we met the only two survivors of the 18th working party, whose original strength was 565, Hav.Major Munshi Ram and L/CPL Dina Naht. We discussed all the happenings and in the morning started again in the canoes

After two days journey, we reached Tanbanam, [Tambanum] the largest native village on the Sepik. Here we met Jem. Abdul Latif and Sepoy Abraham, the two survivors of the 26th working party, whose original strength was 309, and Sepoy Jogindar Singh the only survivor of the 16th working party whose original strength was 560. I met the guard of the 17th working party and they told me that not one Indian of that party was alive. The party’s original strength was 500 strong.

Thus on 26th September, 1945, we were only 13 left out of about 3,000 Indians who had not been accounted for in the declaration of peace.

Tanbanam was the Japanese headquarters of Major General Shoge, Commanding Officer of the Sepik Force who recently had left for Kara Roo [Kararau] One of his staff officers who was a Lieut. Colonel came and addressed us with the following “*We are now friends, war finished. You will go to India but do not tell bad things of Japanese armies to Australians and Indians.*” He then ordered LT Murai and three other Japs to take us to Marienberg and hand us over to the Australians. On 25th September we reached Marienberg and were feeling very excited about meeting the Australians, but to our greatest disappointment there were no Australians there. One native came to me and gave me a leaflet, dropped by the planes which read as follows:-

OL BOI HARIM TOK

Mi, Tseneral Sir TOMAS BLEIMI, nambawan long ol soldia INGLIS, salim dispela tok ikam long yupela boi bilog NUKINI TRU, NUBRIKEN, NUAILAN, MANUS, BIK BUKA, MUSAU, LAWANGAI, nau ol liklik ailan Japan I kam pait sitil long em.

Long namba tu dei long dispela mun, long ples tru bilong Japan, King nau Gavman nau kiap bilog Japan ol I tokim sampela nambawan bilog ol I raitim wanpela pas nau gipim long ol nambawan bilong AMERIKA, KONG KONG, INGLIS nau BASA I stap weitim. Guvman Bilog INGLIS I makim mi long ko kisim dispela pas nau holim.

Dispela pas I tok olsem : Olgeta nambawan soldia bilog, Japan nau man bilog narapela plea I wok wantaim long im, YU MAS TOKIM OLGETA MAN BILOG YU NOKEN PAIT MOR. Ol I mas toromwoi masket nau samtig bilog pait nau stap gut long ol ples. Oli mas weitim tok bilog nambawan bilog mipela HARIM GUT NAU I NOKEN SAKIM. Pas itok olsem.

Nau yupela bilog olgeta ples pastaim Japan I sitilim, nau tu long ol man ibin kalabus long Japan. Long dispela tai mol soldia bilog yumi I rausim pinis ol Japan long ples bilong yu. MI HAMAMAS TUMAS LONG YU..

Yu mas harim tok bilog ol nambawan nau kiap bilog yu, nau yu noken ran nabaut nabaut – stap gut long ples bilog yu. NAU WEITIM TOK MOR I KAMAP.

Nambatu dei.

T.A. Blamey

Long namba nain mun 1945

**Tomas Bleimi Nambawan Long ol
Soldia – Ingilis**

TOK BILOG GUVAN

Translation

I am General Thomas Blamey, in charge of the Australian military send this talk to you people of New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, Manus, Bougainville, Musau, Lanangai and all the smaller Islands where Japan came and fought.

On the second of this month the Emperor, the Government and the officers of Japan ordered that a document be written and given to America, China, England and Russia. The English Government selected me to go and get this document and keep it.

The document says “You Japanese generals and men allied to Japan YOU MUST TELL ALL YOUR MEN TO CEASE FIGHTING. They must throw away their firearms and other weapons and remain quietly where you are and await instructions. HEAR THIS AND DO NOT DISOBEY! The document said this.

Now, you people of all the places Japan invaded and you people who were imprisoned by Japan. At this time our soldiers have defeated the Japanese in your villages. I AM VERY HAPPY WITH YOU.

Hear the talk of the leaders and your kiap. Do not misbehave. Remain in your villages. WAIT FOR SOME MORE TALK THAT WILL COME.

9th September

T.A.Blamey, General
[THIS] IS THE TALK OF THE GOVERNMENT
ooo000ooo

After reading the leaflet it gave us the fullest satisfaction to know that the Japanese had lost the war, and we were naturally very pleased indeed, but LT Murai became very sad and disappointed. To us the world had been in darkness and we had no knowledge that Germany too had surrendered. Everything had been guessed by us and now it was proving true.

Lieut. Murai's sadness and disappointment was more fully explained by Masamichi Kitamoto, who was fighting in another part of the Sepik :-

"We had just come down the mountains to the bank of the Sepik River when an enemy plane suddenly appeared, flying low over our heads. We jumped into the jungle to hide expecting to be strafed with machine gun bullets. However, nothing happened and as we looked into the sky, we saw hundreds of leaflets come floating down.

On August 15, 1945, Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces. Give up your unnecessary resistance. Unconditional surrender...For soldiers of Japan, the Land of the Gods this was impossible to believe...The surrender of Japan which I still doubted during the return trip turned out to be true. It was a great shock which filled me with great emptiness.

*Experiencing one death march after another, thrown into battle against superior enemy at heavy odds, holding out regardless of lack of food and water, the men were able to bear it all because they believed in the ultimate victory of Japan. To ask them to surrender now was like asking them to die. I felt tears coming out of my eyes and quietly left the barracks."*³

Major Chint Singh continues :-

On the morning of 20th, September, 1945, Sepoys Jai Ram and Abraham died in an interval of one and half hours. They died happily. Early in the morning Sepoy Jai Ram told me :-

'Sir, I know that I will not see India and the new happy world, as I am happy now to know that we are no longer POWs. I think that I am like a free man and will die like a free man and my soul shall be free. I am not dying as the other Indians have died by breathing their last breath under Japanese pressure. They will not find any rest, but I am confident that I am dying a peaceful death and it is enough for me. I wish that you all go safely home and see your families but alas for me. When you reach home, see my parents and tell them that Jai Ram had died a peaceful death and that there was no need for them to worry.'

One and a half hours later Jai Ram departed from us forever. He and Abraham sleep a heavy sleep at Marienberg on the bank of the Sepik River, quite calm and in repose. Just after we finished their burials, there came a prominent turning point in our life which has been expressed in the following which I wrote on 4th October, 1945, at Angoram:-

WE ARE REBORN AT ANGORAM ON 30 SEP. 1945

It was the loveliest Sunday of 30th Sept, 1945, when I was sitting in a native hut at Marienberg on the left bank of the Sepik River. Suddenly a Jap boat buzzed and stopped in front of the hut. A Jap soldier came out with a letter in his hand and asked for the Indian Officer. I went forward, took the letter, opened it and read as follows:-

ANGORAM.
29th Sept. 1945

To O.T. Indian Troops,
Marienberg.

I am sorry I was not at Angoram when you called two days ago. I would like you to bring your Indian soldiers back to Angoram in the Japanese boat. We have a doctor here and plenty of good food.

A boat from Wewak will be here at Angoram on Thursday or Friday and will take you to Wewak.

(Sgd) F.D.Monk
OC Angoram

It was the letter which fetched us from the oblivion of darkness into the new and happy world, and changed the whole course of our life. The sympathetic and kind words served as a hundred doses of Vitamin 'B' to us the sufferers of beriberi. The soldiers started singing and forgot the miseries suffered, while the hearts of the Japs standing guard over us sank down. The faces of the guard turned pale when I told them that we had been called to Angoram by the Australian Commander. After saluting our two dead who unfortunately breathed their last breath in the early morning at the interval of one and a half hours, we left the place.

After three hours the boat reached Angoram. The black boys were waiting for us at the river bank. They hurriedly carried the cargo from the boat. A boy sent by LT Monk guided me to his bungalow. I found the three officers [LT Monk, the doctor and W/O P.F. Feinberg] busy talking to kanakas. They left their job, welcomed me and accompanied me to see the other Indians who were anxiously waiting to meet their sympathizers. Out of great happiness we had a little parade of three cheers to His Majesty the King, Emperor of India, and the Allied forces who had saved us from the brutalities of the Japanese.

Lieut. Monk recalled :-

*"It was heart wrenching. Ten of these poor fellows were lined up in two ranks, some were sitting because of the sores on their feet or their condition generally was such that they could not stand, but all were rigidly at attention despite their rags and their pitiable condition. In charge was a smart looking man Jemadar Chint Singh, also in rags but with most military bearing, who marched up, saluted and said "Sir, one officer two NCOs and eight other ranks reporting for whatever duty the King and the Australian Army require of us." I found it very hard to reply to him. I still feel much emotion when recalling it"*⁴

Major Chint Singh continues :-

The commander inspected the men and spoke encouraging words to them. Now three men started their job. The doctor attended to the serious cases and gave them proper medical aid, without which hundreds of POWs had died worse than a dog's death. The commander guided us to a newly built house and instructed the black boys to make new and comfortable beds and supply all the necessities.

The commander and W/O brought clothes, soap and other good materials we had not seen for many years. The first thing which every one of us impatiently tasted was salt, not used since July 1944. The three gentlemen were busy with supplying all available comforts. In the meantime, tea was ready and we had biscuits and tea to our greatest satisfaction.

Suddenly one of the Indians remarked, “*Sir, today we have been reborn at Angoram.*” True, as the soldier said, we have been out of existence for three and a half years. We did not know the world and the world knew nothing about us. Our residing places were in the swamps and jungles and our food was a little sago, grass and insects. We did not know of the greatest achievements won by the Allies and the other happenings of the world. The only news communicated to us was that the Japanese had reached New Delhi. For us, this world was nothing but a hell, and for many years we did not find anyone to drag us from it. We were not allowed to write any letters either to home nor anybody else. We, pale and swollen, suffered from beriberi were tired of life and within some months were going to join our dead.

After having tea to our satisfaction we parted with the long used pair of clothes and a blanket the only issues since May 1943. We had a hot bath and were provided with new clothes. The three officers did not rest until dinner was ready and everything neat and satisfactorily arranged. The commander said “*I would be very glad to see you comfortable and eating good meals to your satisfaction.*” With these words they departed and the night set in. We offered our prayers and sang songs of happiness after a long period of three and a half years. In this way our re-birth took place in this land of Angoram on 30th September 1945.

We were only 11 out of 3,000 Indians who disembarked at Wewak on 15th May 1943. A large number died of beriberi, caused on account of insufficient food both in quantity and quality, improper medical aid, hard labour for days and nights, long marches with heavy baggage and unhygienic surroundings. The other deaths were mainly due to malaria, tropical ulcers, dysentery, bombings and also by being killed and eaten by the man-eaters of Japan. It makes me shudder when I recollect the worst period of our life, which no human being can imagine. There is a long tale to tell about this unknown period of our life.”

END of ATTACHMENT C

Thus with the long-suffering Indian POW’s finally enjoying fresh air, food and freedom, we conclude this Attachment and continue their story in the primary text of this narrative, under *Chapter 62 Freed Indian POWs On The Road To Recovery – Remembering The Brutality and Confronting Their Captors Oct. 1945*

End Notes Attachment C

¹ KARKAR is an Island off the Madang Coast. But Major Singh is clearly referring to a Catholic mission station in or near the Blackwater. He is referring to Kanengara.

² Mararo or Malalo is the pidgin word meaning Rest

³ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King’s Enemies – Australian Military History Publications 1988 Page 319

⁴ From a letter from Mr Monk to Narinda Singh Parmar son of Major Chint Singh, copied here with Narinda’s approval.

Chapter 28 Lieut. Fulton's Patrol No 6/1943-44.¹ **– Complex Manouvres Behind the Scenes**

Lieut. Ted Fulton's patrol described in this chapter is shown on Map 1 as Patrol Route K through the lower East Sepik. In following Fulton's day by day experiences, it is worth noting the changes in Sepik village attitudes towards Australian patrols. Blood's Sepik visit between January and March 1943 reported that the Sepik people were "*with us 100%*". Then in March Ashton's presence behind Wewak was reported by a village spy to the Japanese and garamut messages broadcast their position, with near fatal results. Now in April and May 1943, Fulton reported a continuation in that trend.

The objective of Patrol No 6 was for Fulton to report to Capt. Taylor, the Sepik District Officer and to perform duties as instructed en route. The patrol initially consisted of Fulton, four native police and two natives, one being Kooka, who had accompanied the Thurston expedition to Daru. We left Lieut. Fulton in late January in Bena Bena after his eleven day return trek to Waimberiba crossing on the Ramu River. This was the first of a number of enforced diversions that deflected Fulton from joining Taylor's team.

The next task to be performed en route was to proceed to Bundi and take over the station pending the arrival there of Capt. O'Donnell. The shortage of ANGAU field staff resulted in the development of two agendum concerning duties given to Lieut. Fulton over the coming weeks and months. To get to the Sepik agenda, which had been in place since late 1942, Fulton needed to pass through the Ramu River area and the ANGAU domain and agenda of Capt. Black at Bogia.

On 21st March 1943, the patrol left Bena Bena on foot following the route taken during his February patrol to Bundi and Waimberiba crossing. The first night was spent at Goroka where Lieutenant Barracluff was on station. The following night was spent with Lieut. Fienberg at Asaloka. The night of the 23rd was spent at Watabung and the 24th beyond Chuave to Masul where an abundance of food was provided by the village people. Upon arriving at Kundiawa (Chimbu) on 25th March, Fulton was handed a radio message by Capt. Costello. It had been relayed from Capt. Black at Bogia, and it read :- "*Cancelling instructions to take over Bundi wait at Chimbu or Mingendi for instructions to preceed Bogia.*" Fulton waited for six days at Kundiawa, during which time Capt. O'Donnell and Lieut English passed through on their way to Bundi. On 31st March 1943 Black signaled :- "*To proceed to Bundi with Sig (signals) personnel for Bogia and Sepik and wait (Sgt.) Power and stores.*"

On 1st April Signals Officers Hughes, Carra and Elton arrived from Mingendi with 50 carrier loads of signals equipment and emergency stores. Instead of following the Chimbu River upstream and crossing the Bismarck Range from its headwaters, this time they went further west to Kerowagi before crossing the range to arrive in Bundi on April 5th. There was a radio message from Black the following day :- "*Proceed Gueibe and await stores to proceed on road Power maxing from Sirrinibu.*"

On April 7th Fulton and his patrol started walking at 8.50am on a reasonable walking track, with steep climbs and descents and four river crossings. They arrived at Gueibi at 7.30pm where they were met by Lieut. English. On the 8th English went on patrol, leaving Fulton in charge at Gueibi. He established radio communications and supervised the labourers working around the station. On the 9th it was discovered that Constable Likin had developed a tropical ulcer and so he was sent back to

¹ The detail in this chapter, where not otherwise annotated is from Fulton's patrol report, which I have from his daughter Elizabeth Thurston.

Costello in Kundiawa. Then on the 11th word was received that Private Davis was accompanying missionaries Kasparius and Malcharek and required assistance with food for themselves and a carrier line of 30. The assistance was given and the missionaries sent on their way via Bundi.

Fulton's patrol diary entries included his request to raft his supplies down the Ramu River in order to commence his Sepik patrol. The information to hand was that the Atembre, Wabusarek, Sepu route was clear with no report of enemy activity. He was instructed to meet Sgt. Power, but of Power there was no sign. Fulton therefore remained at Gueibe awaiting stores and movement orders. A decision was taken that Signalman Elton should be replaced with Signalman Hughes, who would be better able to handle Sepik conditions and work load. Then on 18th April two messages came through that allowed the patrol to move out ... 1/ From DO Ramu – "... *proceed Sepik as requested if stores sufficient stop every care rafts difficult to steer snags suggest desirable use canoes stop Graham en route with stores.*" 2/ From DO Wau " ... *advises twenty six deserters stop Endeavour to apprehend*".

The patrol departed the next morning the 19th April over a rough track with hard going. They made camp in the bush that night. On the 20th they found the track much better and arrived at Sepu at 5pm. The village food situation there was "*acute*".

On 21st April, Fulton arranged that the camp be set up on the south bank of the Ramu River. The wireless was set up, communications established and work commenced with Sepu village help on the construction of canoe raft. The wireless traffic reported that Lieut Barry was following and would join the rafting party. On 23rd Fulton reported :-

"DO Ramu (i.e. Capt. Black at Bogia) from Fulton six double canoes on Ramu between Sepu and Atembre twenty fifth and twenty sixth conveying Fulton's and Barry's parties stop Fulton proceeding one canoe to Annanberg twenty seventh or twenty eighth stop inform allied aircraft through HGF. (Warrant Officer) England from Fulton proceeding Annanberg by rafts due Atembre twenty sixth stop can you meet me with carriers to collect Sig Personnel and cargo for you. Taylor from Fulton arriving Annanberg twenty seventh advise your location."

On 24th the radio was closed down and the rafts loaded and covered with foliage. The six double canoe rafts would carry five Europeans, 49 natives and 185 carrier loads. Most of the natives were Annanberg and Atembre people who had been employed to carry to Gueibe and who were now being repatriated. The rafts were loaded and anchored. The police and carriers from Kundiawa were handed over to Capt. O'Donnell to pay off and repatriate to Kundiawa, complete with time sheets.

The raft flotilla commenced its journey down the Ramu River at 6.30am on 25th and progress was good until 11am when shots from a .22 rifle were heard. The canoe rafts pulled in to the south bank. Investigation located Sgt. Power and his party of natives who were trying to travel from Apanam to Bundi, but when they ran out of food, they were trying to build a raft to take them back to Atembre. Power and his policeman were taken on board Fulton's raft, but the natives had to walk because all the rafts were fully loaded. They were given a bag of rice from England's cargo to eat en route.

The flotilla again set off at 1pm, but at 2.30pm word came from upstream that one raft had sunk. It was Elton's raft. The crew of the raft was told to walk along the river to where the remaining rafts were anchored. Then at 7pm one of Power's natives reported that one of them was missing after a canoe capsized upstream. They camped the night, but there was no sign of the native from the lost raft. Time was spent on the morning of 26th searching for the missing native until it was assumed that he may have gone to Musak (an inland village towards Madang). The other hazard met that day was

dangerous rapids, but these were negotiated without mishap. Again the canoes were anchored in the late afternoon and camp was made for the night on the south bank of the Ramu River.

On the 27th the canoe rafts reached Atemble at noon. The Annanberg and Atemble men brought from Gueibe were paid off and returned to their homes. The following day the Signalmen Elton and Carra left for Apanam with Private Hunt. The wireless was set up and communications established on 29th April. Taylor instructed Fulton :-

“Proceed Kuvinmas overland via Yiblis Karawari Kaningara or thereabouts stop further instructions Kuvinmas stop Is Johnny Young joining us tell him to travel to Kuvinmas with you I shall arrange transport from there stop Tell him also Bill Macgregor here.”

Johnny Young was met on the 2nd May when Fulton’s party arrived at SIRRINIBU on the Ramu River. Young apparently had no plans to join Taylor’s party, but provided Fulton with stores, trade goods and cash (20 pounds) for the patrol into the Sepik.

The responsibility on a patrol such as Fulton was conducting brought into play the all-important ANGAU and *kiap* principle of *the man on the spot*. That meant that the officer should seek to achieve his objective by making whatever decisions he deemed necessary in light of the circumstances at the time. He must then live with the consequences. Critical to the success of this principle was that the *man on the spot* was experienced in the environment in which the objective was to be achieved. In the Ramu/Sepik environment, Lieut. Fulton was very well experienced.

Three hours into the canoe raft journey down the Ramu from SIRRINIBU, Fulton heard an engine and immediately took his canoe rafts into the shelter of the south bank of the Ramu. The engine sound was initially taken to be that of a boat on the river. The stores were hurriedly taken ashore at a point one mile upstream of Annanberg. When the engine sound faded into the distance Fulton concluded that it had been an aircraft. Contact was made with the *Luluai* and *Tultul* of Annanberg and the canoe rafts were given to them. Signalman Hughes who had been ill for several days was noted as still being ill on 3rd May.

On the 4th of May the *Tultul* of Annanberg lead Fulton’s patrol over a hidden track away from the left bank of the Ramu River in a south westerly direction for two and a half hours to reach a settlement called Jimbebu on the upper Keram River in the Sepik drainage. Here Fulton purchased two canoes from the village people and commenced travelling down the Keram River. An hour and a half later he arrived at Ramdapu, Jim Taylor’s old base camp known as the Annanberg depot. The settlement was now abandoned and overgrown. The patrol moved on down the river for another hour and a half to reach the settlement of Sitor in the late afternoon. To the north they heard the sounds of aircraft in an aerial dog fight. They set up camp for the night.

Next day the 5th May the patrol continued its journey downstream passing the settlements of Glera, Nalitsabu and Goombi – none of which appear on current maps as it seems the population of the area stayed only for short periods in any one place. At 12.30pm they met Constable TUMAL who had been sent back from Taylor’s party on the 4th April for medical attention. When Fulton met TUMAL, the latter was no longer able to walk. He had travelled overland from Yimas via the Upper Yuat River to the Upper Keram. He reported that the Upper Yuat people had refused to assist him with food or transport and that he had spent his own money on these things. TUMAL also reported that the missionary at Kambot was instructing the village people to remain in the villages as the Japanese had no fight with the village people. The *Tultul* of Annanberg who had assisted Fulton’s party now took TUMAL with him back upstream with instructions to deliver him to WO2 England at Apanam.

Fulton's patrol continued its journey downstream arriving at the settlement of Bulingar at 3pm and stayed the night there. Next day they reached Kiwim² village, which is the home of Chu Leong's wife. The village was deserted when the patrol arrived there, but the *Luluai* and *Tutul* arrived from the bush in the late afternoon. Fulton was now looking for a route westward from the Keram River to reach the Yuat River, but the village officials indicated that there was no easy route. Fulton then sent Constable Lakiok downstream to Yar to try to arrange canoes to take the patrol through to Pushiten, which was on a Keram River tributary in the westward direction in which they wanted to go.

The patrol moved on downstream from Kiwim at 8.30am and arrived at Bugaram at 1pm. Father Jocham was in the village but made no apparent attempt to meet Fulton so Fulton went to the house where the Priest was staying and introduced himself. Father Jocham spoke very little English and stated that he had no information on local talk concerning the enemy. Fulton discussed the routes westward and learned that it would be impractical to go via Pushiten as he had proposed. The only way was to go further downstream via Bobten (Bobtain in Fulton's diary). The patrol moved on and stayed that night at Yar. Fulton was now having misgivings about the instructions that the missionaries were giving the local people. That afternoon he countermanded what the missionaries had said and told the people of Yar to evacuate.

On the 9th of May Fulton sent Hughes with the cargo downstream to Bobten with instructions to wait for him at Korogopa (Gologopa in Fulton's diary) or Yamen. Fulton, being the man on the spot noted his reasoning in his diary as follows :-

"In view of the unsatisfactory position of German missionaries in the area and influences in keeping natives in villages also liability of discovering Captain Taylor's whereabouts by following my route either voluntarily or under enemy pressure, decided to evacuate missionaries from the area."

He then sent to Bugaram for Father Jocham who arrived at Yar at 1pm. Fr. Jocham was then instructed that all missionaries were to be evacuated from Kambot Mission immediately. Then travelling with the priest, Fulton proceeded down river, arriving at Bobten at 5pm en route to Kambot. Fr. Jocham argued that the *"Japs had envoy at Vatican and contract with the Pope to recognize religious rites and that there were thousands of Japanese Catholics."*

At 1.30am. on 10th May Fulton left Kambot and travelled upstream by moonlight arriving at Bobten at 7am. Hughes, as instructed had arrived back in Bobten from Korogopa with the patrol cargo during the night. He then escorted the missionaries upstream with instructions to hand them over to Warrant Officer England at Apanam for evacuation to Hagen. Fulton then sent the following radio signal :-

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

² Fulton's diary spells it "KIBIM"

Given Taylor's reliance on German missionaries for intelligence information and assistance with Coastwatchers in need such as the Ashton party, not to mention the fact Sepik native people were at least as likely as German missionaries to give Taylor's position away, it seems likely that Taylor would have been displeased when he received this message.

Fulton and Brother Schneiderguss departed from Bobten at 10am and reached Korogopa at 1.30pm. The tracks they walked along had recently been cleaned so Fulton instructed the *Tultul* to leave the village and the tracks to deteriorate. At Korogopa Fulton was approached by a man who introduced himself as Constable Moris. He claimed to have been left behind at Angoram when the administration officers left there. Now he was keen to join the party and to proceed to join up with the Taylor party. Fulton agreed. The party left Korogopa in the early afternoon by canoe and later continued on foot. They arrived at Yamen at 6.15pm and found Father Cshwab there. Father Cshwab said that he knew from the garamut messages that Fulton and his party were in the area. Some villagers who heard the drums believed the patrol mentioned was a Japanese patrol.

Father Cshwab said that he had received a letter from a catechist at Banaro that his village (Upper Keram River) had been visited by a Jap patrol at the end of April. The patrol had been guided by Angom of Bien. The patrol objective had been to find a route from the Bien area to the upper Keram. Clearly the Japanese were actively patrolling the area.

On the 11th May Constable Moris was given a rifle and 10 rounds of ammunition. He and Constable Atoga accompanied Brother Schneiderguss bound for Biwat (Bimat in Fulton's diary) to bring the two missionaries believed to be at Biwat to Fulton further upstream on the Yuat River at Sipisipi. From Biwat Constable Moris was to proceed down the Yuat River to Kambrindo on the Sepik to collect any missionaries who might be there. Fulton intended then to follow Macgregor's route up the Yuat and into the Highlands, as this would draw less attention to Taylor's whereabouts. With help from Father Cshwab, Fulton recruited Yamen carriers and the patrol headed west via Maruwat to arrive at Gangamba on the Yuat River at dusk.

On 12th May Fulton travelled upstream on the Yuat River and arrived at Sipisipi at 3.30pm. At 5.30pm. Constable Atonga together with Brother Schneiderguss, Father Kremiensi and Brother Sozubek arrived in Biwat canoes. The following day, 13th May, they went upstream on foot with canoes bringing the cargo. They travelled via Asangimut to arrive at Mundamba (Moondamba in Fulton's diary) at 3pm and made camp for the night.

However the Mundamba village people refused to assist the party - they refused to provide carriers or to disclose the whereabouts of tracks. They spoke negatively to the Yamen and Biwat carriers who had accompanied the patrol to Mundamba, convincing them of the dangers of following the Yuat River up into the mountains. This made the carriers nervous. Finally at 2pm the Biwat carriers reluctantly departed with the three missionaries for the junction of the Yuat and Maramuni Rivers. The Mundamba people reluctantly disclosed the whereabouts of the track and charged exorbitantly for food and carrying.

Fulton followed the missionaries the next day, and being able to muster only a few reluctant carriers was forced to leave some cargo behind. He camped overnight en route and after one and a half hours walk on 16th May, caught up with the missionaries and Constable Atoga. By the morning of the 17th, all carriers, including Kooka of the Thurston expedition, deserted. Rumours of the dangers in the mountains of the Upper Yuat and Maramuni Rivers were just too great.

The patrol now had no choice but to return the way they had come, or to go further west to meet Taylor at Kuvinmas, but the carriers also refused to go that way. Kooka returned to re-join the patrol that afternoon, very shame faced and admitted to being very frightened of the talk about the dangers in the mountains. The patrol arrived back on the Yamen River on 20th May and at Yamen village on the 21st. There the *Tultul* had a story to tell :-

“ ‘Constable’ Moris had passed through Yamen with a woman from Bugaram who he had taken from the Biwat Mission. He had also stolen articles from the Yamen mission house, including ammunition.”

It now became known that Moris was a police deserter and that he had been in the Madang area for a month after the Japanese occupation. He was from Ulupu in the Maprik area and joined up with the patrol with the purpose of returning home. Fulton left Yamen and went downstream where he met Korogopa men. He learned from the *Tultul* that two nights previously Moris had attempted at gun-point to abduct a Bogia woman who was married to Egowa of Korogopa. When the *Tultul* tried to intervene Moris told him to throw away his hat (authority) and go back to sleep as the Government was finished.

As Moris was reported to be living in the Bobten bush with the Bugaram woman, Fulton continued downstream to Korogopa where he interviewed the woman who Moris had tried to abduct and she confirmed the *Tultul*'s story. Fulton walked overland to Bobten arriving at 6pm. The village was deserted except for the *Tultul* who was ordered to produce Moris. Just as this instruction was given, Moris with loaded rifle and the Bugaram woman arrived by canoe on the opposite bank of the Keram River. Not yet having seen Fulton, he crossed to the Bobten side. By the time he became aware of Fulton, he was covered by the Tommy gun in Fulton's hands and was ordered to keep coming. Upon stepping ashore he was disarmed and handcuffed.

Now Moris told the story as he would have it. He claimed to have gone to Kambrindo as instructed and returned to Biwat with two missionaries, but then the *Tultul* and people of Biwat turned upon him. The issue seems to have been the abduction of the Bugaram woman. His arrival back in Bobten with a rifle appeared to have been welcomed there. A Bobten accomplice by the name of Yamep was also arrested, but made his escape in the growing darkness. Fulton reported that the attitude of the Bobten people now turned sour. They refused to provide paddlers and hid their paddles. The *Tultul* was told to change the attitude or face reprisals and was again ordered to evacuate the village. Father Cshwab's Yamen people paddled Fulton, Constable Atoga and the prisoner upstream to Yar where they arrived at 5.30am next morning – the 22nd of May.

Private Grey was asleep in the Yar village. Gray had no knowledge of the Fulton party downstream and no mention was made at Bobten of his presence upstream at Yar. He had been sent to deliver a radio message for Fulton; a message which had been made redundant by Fulton's changed patrol plans:-

“England from Taylor Peter K abandoned stop get word to Fulton to return to Black and await transport or further instructions. “ Peter K” is read to mean Lake Kuvenmas

At 9am the patrol left Yar and reached Bugaram at 11am. The Bugaram woman was taken from Moris and handed over to the *Luluai*. The patrol continued on from there on foot at 11.30am then at midday a large flight of aircraft was heard. At 12.30pm eight aircraft were seen flying low in the direction of Wewak with their wheels down.

Fulton now split the patrol in two. The main party was to continue following the Keram up stream by canoe, while Fulton went due east to investigate reports of the Japanese seeking an overland route from the Bien River. There had been reports of men claiming to be Japanese appointed officials visiting the bush villages, abducting women and stealing pigs. The patrol stayed overnight at Kitchikan on 22nd, Pokoran on 23rd and via Jita to re-join Pte. Gray, the three missionaries and Moris on 24th at Jablis on the Upper Keram River.

Then on 26th May at Bulingar, the river was in flood and the current so strong that it was feared canoes may overturn. As a safety measure one hand cuff was released on Moris in case of capsizing. At 8.30am Father Kremisenski and some carrier thought they heard the engine of a boat coming upstream. The canoes went in close to the bank for safety and Moris took the opportunity to make a dash for it. The boat did not eventuate and it was assumed that what had been heard was an aircraft engine.

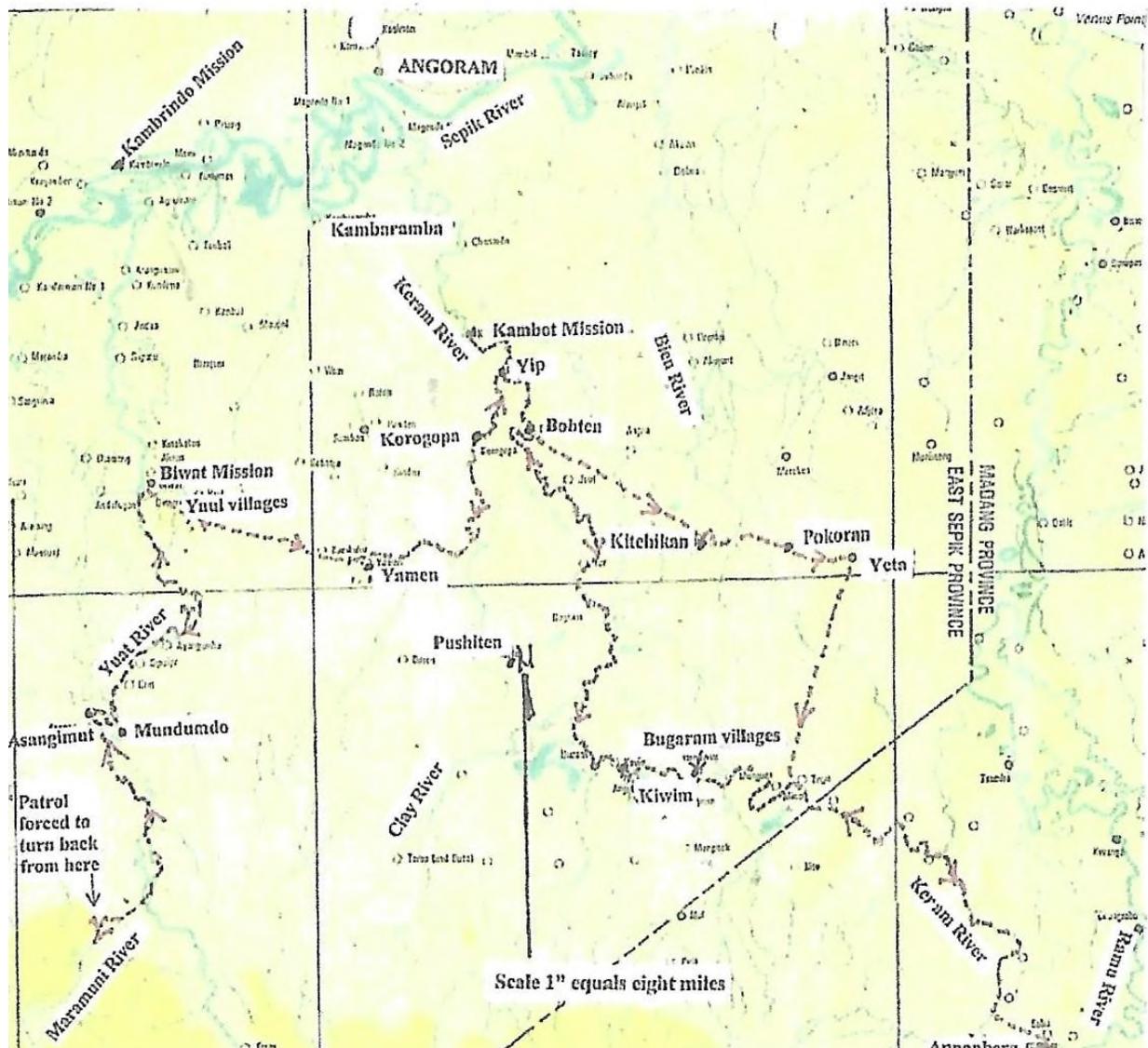
Private Gray had gone ahead, and a message was sent to him to send a reliable constable or go himself back to Bugaram in an attempt to re-capture Moris, as it was assumed he would go back to Bugaram seeking the Bugaram woman the patrol had taken from him and given back to the *Luluai*. Meanwhile the party with the missionaries arrived at Annanberg and on 29th May moved upstream on the Ramu River by canoe arriving at Sirrinibu at 4.30pm, only to find the base deserted. On the 30th they reached Apanam which was manned by Warrant Officer England and from there Fulton sent out radio messages covering his journey and the intelligence information he had gathered.

Black responded from Bogia indicating that Captain Upson had a carrier line heading up into the Highlands and this would be the best opportunity to evacuate the missionaries. So on the 4th of June Corporal Elton accompanied the missionary party to link up with Upson's carrier line. Also on the 4th a local man called Yelan arrived at Warrant Officer England's base at Apanam. He brought bad news from Kambot mission. He had been with Private Grey and told how, after visiting Bugaram on 28th May they went to the Kambot Mission station. On 29th a Father and a Brother arrived at Kambot and dined in the Mission house with Pte. Grey. Also on the 29th the *Tultul* of Bugaram arrived at Kambot by canoe, bringing with him Moris whom he handed into the custody of Pte. Grey.

At daylight on 30th of May the Father rose, and taking a lamp went to Kambot village. He returned to the Mission house bringing with him Japanese, followed by natives of Kambot and Magendo. The leader of the Japanese wore fancy knee length boots. He directed the Japanese to surround the house. Yelan was in the Mission kitchen preparing tea when the Japanese came on to the verandah and ordered him away, saying *Raus Boi!*. The Japanese fired shots and blew whistles outside the house and when Pte. Grey jumped out of bed he was shot twice through the doorway of the room he was in. Constable Porban was sleeping in an adjoining building and he was shot while trying to run away. Yelan ran away with two Annanberg men of Pte. Grey's party.

Fulton noted that at this point that Yelan became excited and confused stating that the Japanese had arrived by rubber boat in the night of 29th. This is considered to be supposition as he and the others were unaware of the Japanese presence until they arrived at the Mission house. Yelan also said that the Father was in league with the Japanese and went down to the village to bring them to the Mission house. This is also considered to be supposition based on the Father's movements and return with the Japanese. A possible explanation was that as it was Sunday the Father went to the village church for the purpose of saying mass and there encountered the Japanese. It seems significant that no warning was given by the Kambot people of the arrival of the Japanese and the apparent good treatment afforded the Father by the Japanese.

The objective of patrol No 6/1942-3 was to proceed into the Sepik District and join up with Taylor's party. Fulton did not achieve that objective. Captain Black required him to take over from Warrant Officer England at Apenam. Fulton agreed, but pointed out that after one hundred and forty two days on patrol he needed urgent medical attention.



The scale of 1" to 8 miles is now incorrect as the map size has been adjusted to fit the text

On the 5th of June Constable Atoga arrived at Apanam after his journey in pursuit of Pte. Grey. Atoga reported that he had followed Pte. Grey down the Keram River as far as Bobten. The people of Bobten and Korogopa at first withheld information of the Japanese visit to Kambot but then stated they had struck the Mission Brother with a bayonet without injuring him. After Pte. Grey was killed, the Japanese party split, with one group departing with the missionaries while the other party remained at Kambot with Moris. Atoga also reported that a Japanese plane circled low over the Mission House at Kambot on both the mornings of 29th and 30th. The people of Korogopa and Bobten were keen to meet with the Japanese and refused to supply Atoga with canoes to investigate the strength of the Japanese party at Kambot. Only the *Tutul* of Korogopa remained loyal and was trying to evacuate the village as instructed. Fulton reported his findings by radio :-

“Constable Atoga returned from Lower Keram reports natives of Bobten, Korogopa and Kambot still in villages despite my instructions to leave and warning that contact with Japs would result in bombing(.) His report of lack of assistance confirms my opinion and reports of Mission propaganda that Japs not at war with natives(.) Reports indicate that Gray was ambushed in Mission house and killed through assistance given by Missionaries from Marienberg accompanied by natives of Magendo and Kambot(.) Tultul of Korogopa left village owing to pro Jap attitude of village(.) Strongly recommend bombing of four villages concerned as deterrent(.) Natives report Japs returned to Marienberg with Missionaries but party remaining at Kambot(.) Moris apprehended by natives of Bugaram and in Gray’s custody at Kambot released by Japs and now with them.

At an unspecified time before the Japanese occupied Marienberg, Mother Superior Helena who, months before, had moved her nuns from Marienberg to the perceived relative safety of Timbunke, decided to rectify the food shortage that was beginning to be evident at Timbunke mission. She and her nuns went downstream back to Marienberg where they killed a cow and cooked the meat. They also harvested their gardens and brought the food back to Timbunke.

At about the time of Fulton’s patrol, Mother Superior Helena became concerned about the safety of Father Meyer at Kambrindo. She went by canoe to warn him, but men in a canoe coming the opposite way urged her to go back; it was too late, the Japanese had arrived at Kambrindo. The paddlers who had paddled all day with the current now turned around and paddled back to Timbunke.

End Notes Chapter 28

**Chapter 29 Japanese Occupy Burui & Taylor distances his party from the Japanese
9/5/1943 – 5/6/1943 - Sepik Natives Tell Their Story**

We left Baras with a party on the Sanchi River seeking a track to Maimai for the Fryer and Dutch parties. Baras continues :-

“Then we heard on the wireless one day that the Japanese had come up river and taken Avatip. This message was brought by Linauwi of Japandai who came and reported to the Kiap (Taylor) at Mino. We abandoned our Maimai quest and rejoined Mr. Taylor and party at Mino.”¹

Baras does not say so, but the party split, with Baras and others returning to Taylor at Mino, and Fryer and the Dutch party continuing on to Maimai. Fryer’s report tells us that Bill Macgregor accompanied the joint party from Ablatak as far as Maimai before turning back to re-join Taylor due to ill health. Taylor’s radio communications confirm that Macgregor was back with him on the 9th June 1943 and that he had re-joined the main party. Then on 12th June Taylor received the following radio message from Fryer :-

For Macgregor arrived OK (at Lumi) after seven days travel.

Kwonji of Burui resumes his story :-

“So it was that I sent word to Kiap Taylor to move out of Mino because the Japanese had arrived on the Sepik. I did not actually see them arrive because I was (inland) at Burui patrol post looking after the station and the Government property.

Then the Japanese came (inland also) and surrounded the patrol post and I threw my hands in the air above my head in surrender. Sumatalan, the first of the Japanese came and held my hands and said ‘You Singlis soldier eh?’ I said no I was not an English soldier I was a bush kanaka. Then he said ‘Em plis kumbuku’ I did not understand. I was speaking pidgin to him and he did not understand that. They tied me up with rope and my son Bai came running, thinking they were going to kill me. Bai was only a child then. His mother too came running and they captured her as well. All the time they were asking Kiap Taylor igo we? and Kiap Ellis igo we? (where is Kiap Taylor and where is Kiap Ellis?) I then explained in simple pidgin ‘He went on the road to the water at Marui and then he went on the water. He is gone.’

‘You lie!! You Singlis soldier.’ It went on and on. They brought two Maiwis² in – all the Buruis had run away. I did not give Kiap Taylor’s position away. They left me in jail while they went looking for him. When they came back they loosened the ropes. I begged them ‘Do not kill the child. Kill me, but not the child.’ They did not understand me. Then a Japanese called Kobias came forward and spoke a strange sort of pidgin to me. ‘Yu whata palais?’ and I said that I was from Burui. ‘Yu Polisaman?’ I said no, that I was a bush kanaka and that I had been looking after the Government station. He spoke to Sumalatan and the Japanese leader Ama [Hama] saying ‘I think we can free him, he is just a bush man and this is his child.’

*They untied the rope, but they kept on questioning me ‘Yu Singlis soldier?’
‘No I am not an English soldier, I am a kanaka’
‘Yu Lie!!’*

'If you want to cut me, then go ahead and cut me'

At this point Kamanaut of Maiwi ran to see me and they imprisoned him as well. They fed me and I said to them – 'If you are going to kill me then do not feed me' Kobias translated.

'Ahh Kiap Taylor istap we...istap we??'

'He has gone'

'Yu lie!!'

'An aero plane took him brrrr...(engine noise)'

On the third day another Maiwi came and they threw him into jail as well. He thought that they had killed me. They untied me and in the late afternoon I ran away to the bush where my camp was. But No!, they tracked me and although an old Wosera man warned me, they held me. My house and garden were full of food...bang a cartridge fired...they killed my chickens and they tied up my pig and Kobias said 'You are the man we held prisoner yesterday?'

'Yes' I replied 'And why are your men taking all my belongings, my pigs, my chickens. You fired one cartridge, shoot me first, but not before.' He heard this and said to the Japanese . 'You are wrong, he is not afraid' They untied me then and brought me and all the food from my place to the station.

The Japanese called Ama³ was very angry with the Japanese soldiers. He made them stand in line and slapped each one... Slap...Arh!!...Slap... Arh!!...Slap Arh!!... and blood came up. .

'Are you mad?' he asked, 'Why did you kill his livestock?' They tied the food up again but I said. 'It is here now, eat it' But Ama was not pleased and he would not have any."

Meanwhile an elder of Japandai remembered :-

"We heard that the Japanese had come to Wewak. Then we heard that they had come inland from Wewak and had come as far as Torembei. The village people ran away in fear. I went with Mamba (of Korogo) to see them. My father sent us. We went to Torembei and the Torembei people told us they were at Aurimbit. We met them there at Aurimbit and introduced ourselves as Korogo men. Then we took them back with us to Korogo. Upon seeing the Sepik River they made up a line from cane to measure the width of the river.

They told us that they had come to fight Australia and asked where the Australians were. We said Ambunti Angoram and Wewak. We gave them food and they left at dawn the next day by themselves. They returned in force and made camp at Kurumba (Korogo)⁴".

Captain Watanabe Masaichi, a commander of the 4th Company of the 239th Regiment of the 41 division recalled :-

Mamba, a chief of Korog, had an armband provided by the Japanese, and commanded 50 to 100 villagers to assist them by carrying supplies and providing food. Mamba greeted Hoshino Kazuo, a staff officer of the 41st Division with three big fish and

*bananas, which looked to him as though it were the customary way for these villagers to greet a visitor.*⁵

Capt. Taylor now radioed in a sequence of reports as they came to him from Kwonji and others. On 23rd May 1943 he reported that native information indicates enemy recently visited Burui, cleared landing ground and departed. Then on 31st May 1943 he reported that natives reported that Burui occupied on the 30th May. He was investigating that and in the meanwhile a planned air drop should not take place until he further advised.

The confirmation he sought of the information came and he reported on the 4th June that there was a heavy Jap occupation at both Burui Patrol Post and Marui Mission and that the Japanese knew approximately where his party was. He indicated that the Japanese Commander said that at end of the month warships and planes will search the Sepik for his party. All houses including latrines were occupied at both places as buildings are insufficient to billet the troops. There were no new buildings. The Japs have old shabby clothes, no food and they carry arms, picks, shovels etc. On the march all under care of an officer. When bivouacked there are no sentries posted day or night. Taylor suggested air strikes against Burui and Marui as such action would improve Australian prestige immensely in the eyes of the community.

The straight line distance between the Japanese at Burui and Marui and Taylor's party on the *Osprey* at Mino was a mere 25 miles. Taylor held position long enough to obtain the detailed intelligence necessary and for Macgregor to re-join his party. Only then did he implement his plans for the protection of his own party. The excellent map of the Sepik prepared by Dr. Walter Behrmann during the German expedition of 1912-1913 indicated that south of the Hunstein Mountains there was an area of low country that would presumably allow easy access back into the Krosameri River system with access to the southern edge of the Chambri Lakes and the Lake Kuvinmas country with escape routes back up into Wabag if the need arose.

Taylor's immediate goal was to quickly put as much distance as possible between his party and the Japanese. He decided on a camp site somewhere along the April River south or west of Mt Hunstein. Baras continues :-

"We discussed setting up an ambush at the Yambon Gate⁶, but Mr. Taylor said not unless we get more ammunition and guns. That night we went downstream from Mino to the Sepik River then upstream past Brugnowi to Karamu Lake between Yessan and Swagup. We had two ships; the Government ship 'Osprey' and the 'Pat' which belonged to Mr. Boli (Fred) Eichorn.

The Swagup people upstream of Yessan have always been very warlike and as a result all people who used to live near them had retreated some distance away. We did not see the Swagup people as we progressed upstream. In the years after the war Swagup would conduct a head hunting raid at this lake that would have far reaching consequences. But that was still in the future."

Kalinaui of Yau'umbak tells what was happening back downstream :-

When the Japs came to Pagwi the big men of Avatip; Gumgwan, Wakalan, Galimi, Awanjui and Jambundu went to hear their talk and the Japs gave them ranks. The

Nyaulas brought the Japs upriver. They stopped at Avatip and we prepared our canoes by tying them together as the Japs would not travel in single canoes. We paddled them up to Malu and the Malu people paddled them further. This first line went to Yessan.

The second line of Japs to come examined Avatip and then went back again. Then we went down and were given Japanese ranks - me, Mamabuan and Apwio. Australian planes came and bombed Pagwi [Marui Mission station and Burui Patrol Post]. The Jap houses were all destroyed and the Japs lived around in the bush. Then a third line of Japs came up river. There were 20 of them and they settled at Avatip. When they became sick they moved to Avatip's old place which is called Yentchangai and lived there⁷.

End notes Chapter 29

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 70.

² People from the nearby village of Maiwi

³ In Ormsby's notes on the Timbunke massacre he refers to "Ama" as Captain Hama

⁴ Bragge Research Notes Vol 18 Informant Elder of Japandai. Page 117-118

⁵ Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson *The Pacific War in Papua New Guinea: Memories and Realities*. Sanbi Printing Co Ltd Tokyo 2006 Page 291.

⁶ The Yambon Gate is a geographic feature of stony ridges on either side of the Sepik, constricting the river's width to less than 100 yards. It is located nearby downstream from where the "Osprey" re-entered the Sepik River from Mino.

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 51

Chapter 30 Establishing Begapuke Base on April River and a Journey to Abau – Tensions With Erratic Airdrops.

This chapter starts on Map 2 with Patrol route **H** taking us north-westward onto Map 4 and Taylor's journey into the April River and then to Abau [Green River] near the Dutch New Guinea border.

Baras continues :-

Kiap Taylor said we would go up the April River so we went upstream to Yambunumbu at the mouth of the April. We moved on without seeing any sign of Japs. We went to Bitara and continued on upstream until finally we reached Begapuke, where there was a narrow channel running in from the river [left or south side] bank, all overhung with trees. The ships were hidden there and covered with branches. The camp was established three miles inland on a small hillock in the swamp. We made the main camp site there and an air drop site”.

Taylor radioed in on the 5th June 1943 that :-

“ ... the next dropping will be required in the vicinity of “Z” mountain but [we] will not be there until 12th June. From now on for security reasons Mt Hunstein should be known as Mount “Z”. Taylor reported that his fuel supply was sufficient to get his party to Mount Z.

The radio traffic back and forth between Taylor and Port Moresby through early June included his suggestion that the best way to conserve fuel was to send outboard motors to his party when it arrived at Mt “Z”. He argued that scouting and coast watching patrol duties in such a remote location makes one essential. He went on to ask that his request be put before higher authority if all else failed.

On the 9th June Taylor inquired about the position regarding his supplies and wanted to know what difficulties there were and whether he could help. He went on to say that it is now his intention to put a base near Mt Hunstein in a sheltered position for aircraft landing on water or dropping, and that he wished to move northwards at the earliest and if it means a protracted waiting at new base he would not consider going there in person. He pointed out in addition fuel must be landed or dropped to make that base a real advantage to them. Also :-

“Yours re fuel noted presume this means no further landings(.) May I point out that work in this District is of an amphibious nature and that if no fuel is landed it must be parachuted.”

The rising frustration evident in Taylor's communications would not have been helped by the instruction he received from headquarters on 14th June 1943. He was to send two of his party to the Hauser River with W/T set to report fully on the landing ground. The party sent was to remain at Abau in anticipation of using Abau as a base. 'Abau', not to be confused with the Abau on the coast east of Port Moresby, is the local name for the area where Green River Patrol Post would be later established. The Green River itself is a major tributary of the Hauser River. An airstrip had been made on a stretch of limestone gravel there by Hodgekiss and Oil Search Ltd in 1938. Taylor responded :-

“Fuel and oil insufficient stock(.) Journey will take 108 gallons benzene and 15 gallons oil(.) Our stocks now 100 gallons and 8 gallons oil for total purposes(.)”

HQ nevertheless was insistent on 15th June :-

“Proceed upstream Sepik – If fuel insufficient en route Abau suitable position for drop or landing when food and fuel will be forwarded”.

When this did not bring a reply from Taylor, on the 16th June HQ instructed :-

“If food and fuel insufficient for whole party to proceed upstream signal immediately as ready for drop at “Z” giving map reference and ground signals you will use(.) We will then endeavor arrange drop and land supplies to enable remainder your party proceed Abau(.) Immediately you have sent your signal about drop send one Pinnacle with two officers and wireless set to mark out present strip to 1,000 yards”.

Taylor gave the coordinates of his drop site and his frustration obviously continued; the next day he radioed :-

“We and the country police and loyal natives have had a tough time – have not eaten meat for months(.) Plane should approach camp on a bearing of 250 degrees keeping to the river bank and not the River(.) Landing marks will be white sheets with aero bull’s eyes smoke fires will be lighted in vicinity (.) Regard situation as grave(.) Will expect drop Friday morning(.) Camp Latitude 4 degrees 32 minutes’ South longitude 142 degrees 30 minutes East(.) Imperative that I receive drop of European and native rations(.) Police line in danger of starvation and consequent dissolution(.) Local sago has no food content(.) In addition to stores already packed the following (.) 1,000 pounds dried mutton(.) 1,000 pounds rice(.) 700 pounds sugar(.) 20 tins biscuits(.) 140 pounds Marmite(.) 40 cases tinned meat(.) 112 pounds dripping(.) 288 tins milk(.) 200 pounds Jam(.) six feet 3/8 stern tube packing(.) one packet Phi acid, One square foot zinc strips, Copper or Gal tacks 7/8”(.) This drop should occur immediately as launch depends upon condition river(.) That area now favourable(.) Fragile tools should be parachuted others dumped(.) Rice sugar – double bagged and outer bag slack(.)”

Frustrations were to continue for Taylor. The drop scheduled for 19th June was cancelled. By return message Taylor reported that the natives in his party consisted of 4 original police, 57 police recruits and 24 labourers. On 20th HQ responded :-

“Regret plane unable to locate you(.) report if plane seen(.) Give again your location and name of River(.) Behrmann’s map not available here(.) ensure you have selected most suitable place for drop (.) Second that you make three large smoke fires interrupted signals at 0930 22nd June.”

And so the messages came and went. Taylor made the important point :-

*“...If directions followed we can be located, but pilot must identify April River first(.) It is a major tributary of the Sepik River and we are on the left bank(.) After locating this river, pilot must fly low altitudes along its tortuous course(.) This is **not** a large clearing, but it is flush with the river at the toe of a timbered spur or hill marked on the strat. map half a mile above point marked **head of launch navigation**(.) Three white parachutes mark where to drop but care must be taken not to drop in River.”*

Finally on 25th June, 10 parachutes and 40 out of 61 packages dropped were recovered and the *Osprey* was sent on her way down the April and up the Sepik River. Then on 29th Taylor was notified :-

“Party under Lieut. Stanley arriving by air any day from 2 July(.) Important launch with guard a representative and wireless meet upon arrival(.) Your main base to remain April River present site(.) Full information future plans from Stanley(.) After consideration there you will be better able to decide your future camp(.) Additional fuel for launch will be dropped Yibiri”¹

In view of the mention on 14th June of Abau becoming Taylor’s new base he responded on 27th June :-

“Present location preferable, and has considerable possibilities our work(.) Abau journey represents 300 miles by water(.) ‘Osprey’ requires two and a half gallons per hour for a run of fifty hours – that is 125 gallons no margins.”

Remarkably, the unsuitability of Abau as a base due to its remoteness would also apply to the Moss Troops base soon to be established at Yellow River. Baras continues :-

“While we were camped at Begapuke we made a trip with Mr. Boisen, Mr. Boli Eichorn, Sgt Markus from Manus, Lisau from Arawei to the very top of the Sepik above where Green River Patrol Post is now to where the Sepik comes out of the mountains. That place we knew as Miaui. The Osprey was loaded full of drums of fuel and we hid in side channels during the day and covered her with branches. We hid like this around 0700 or 0730 each day and from 0800 onwards we watched through field glasses for planes flying overhead. Once we reached Miaui we made camp there. We wanted to hold the head of the river to prevent Japanese access.

We waited for planes to bring in replacement soldiers from Moresby to replace us.² Finally the planes came – there were seven of them. While five circled two Catalinas landed. They brought four black soldiers and five Europeans only³... The planes came twice and brought us food and then went back. Meanwhile Mr. Boisen and a small group were walking overland on the Maimai track.”

This was the Stanley party – Boisen would have been assisting them into the field just as Macgregor assisted Fryer. Lieut G.A.V.Stanley was another Oil Search pre-war employee. He and his party were to be located south of Lumi and the Torricelli mountains to the west of where Fryer’s party would be concentrating their efforts. Baras continues :-

“On their fourth night out he (Boisen) sent a message that was to be delivered to Kiap Taylor. We had the mail from Moresby also to deliver from the planes that landed at Miaui to Kiap Taylor at Begapuke. ... We radioed to Kiap Taylor that the trip would take two weeks and that he would look for us in the third week. Travelling in the canoe with me were Arnold, and Markus.

All the people along the Sepik hid in the bush and it was only now and then they came out on the Sepik River itself. Most of the time you would think the Sepik was uninhabited until the people ambushed you from the water’s edge. We had no trouble until we reached Chenapian. Now, we had standing instructions as to what we should do if attacked. We were to let the first arrow come, and then the second, we needed to collect them as evidence then, when we collected the third arrow we were permitted to return their fire.

The river was very low and there were mud banks showing here and there. The Chenapian people had come down to fish and there were a lot of people on the banks.

Then there were three canoes full of men upstream of us and another three canoes downstream. They watched us and we watched them. Markus had a little of their language and he told us that they were talking of killing us. As we watched the six canoes turned in to battle formation and they were close enough that we could see the black war paint on their faces. Then the arrows started coming and we were deflecting them with our paddles. It was after I picked up the third arrow and I fired. I aimed for the stomach but the bullet went through the head of a man who had been standing on a mud bank at the river's edge. My next shot was aimed at people attacking us from canoes and the one bullet hit two people. One man was hit in the leg and I'm not sure where the other was hit.

I fired another shot without aiming and the people drew back a little, we were still drifting down with the current towards the lower three canoes and as we drifted among them we could see the black painted faces looking like thunder. I fired another shot and we were able to disengage. I have been to Chenapien since and one man told me how he had been wounded in the leg by a bullet fired by an Australian soldier. I did not enlighten him more.

We travelled at night until about 3am then we would stop and cook then at about 4.30 or 5.00 o'clock we would start to drift again until we came to Biaga. Then Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and on Friday we arrived. They were getting ready to send a party of six police to look for us. I reported to Kiap Taylor and gave him the three arrows and told him of the attack. He said that it was nothing. He would report it by radio to Port Moresby. I have said here that the attackers were Chenapians but I did not know that at the time. I have only found out since."

The policy of 'peaceful penetration of new areas' of which Taylor was the champion was to be reinforced in the late 1940s and applied throughout the post war period. The instructions that Constable Baras followed were consistent with the requirement of no indiscriminate killing but at the same time to protect the lives of patrol members going about their legal business. The collection of three arrows that had been fired at Baras' party was *prima facie* evidence both that an attack had taken place and that Baras' party had used restraint in their response.

End Notes Chapter 30

¹ Yibiri' does not appear on current Sepik Maps, but is near the Yellow/ Sepik River junction – offering good access to the Wapei tribal area.

² A misunderstanding on Baras' part, probably reflecting his lack of a "need to know".

³ This would have been Stanley's party.

Chapter 31 Aitape and Hollandia Expeditions Living Dangerously – Betrayal and Retribution - Fryer's Party Neutralized & Dutch Party Eliminated

As we have noted the need for surveillance of Japanese movements on the north-west coast of New Guinea saw the formation of two groups which became known as the Dutch and Fryer parties. The plan was to insert them into the mountains behind Hollandia, Vanimo and Aitape to observe and pass on intelligence, and to interact positively with the locals to demonstrate that they hadn't been abandoned by the Australians. Unfortunately, transport and logistical difficulties compelled the joint party to walk across country from Bena Bena in the Highlands to their operational area, thus delaying their important mission for months.

Fryer's '*Intelligence report: Bena Bena – Aitape 31st January – 2nd October 1943*' is disjointed in terms of chronology and frustrating in the information it provides, and what it omits to provide. The events of his journeys through the Maimai/Palei/Wapei areas in the second half of 1943 have been pieced back together as follows :-

On the 12th June 1943 Fryer sent a radio message to Taylor for Bill Macgregor that he had arrived safely in Lumi. At Lumi, Fryer and Aiken contacted some thirty of their former Oil Search Ltd employees. Of these, four 'joined up' and a further 21 were recruited to fill the patrol's casual labour requirements. The patrol also established supply dumps at Maimai, Elif and Lumi.

Stevermann's Dutch party which had accompanied Fryer to Lumi with the intention of continuing on to a position behind Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea did not leave Fryer until a month later. It is assumed that given the Dutch party's lack of New Guinea experience [Sgt. Stavermann was 19 years old, when the party set out¹], the intervening month was required to establish the security of their presence in the region before going their separate ways. As Fryer's report puts it :-

"While in Lumi in June we had no evidence to suggest they (the Wapei) were anything but neutral... Quite happy with the state of affairs, Stavermann and myself parted at Lumi on 8th July."

Fryer provided guides to lead the Dutch party over the crest of the Torricelli Mountains and northwards down the Beiri (Arnold) river to its western tributary, the Piori River. Fryer's instructions were to retain the guides until further advised. Fryer was therefore concerned when Stevermann reported that he was sending the guides back from Mori village. He was even more concerned when the guides failed to arrive at Lumi and he assumed they had returned to their own villages.

The way forward for Stavermann's party from Mori was obvious: the Piori River, if followed upstream, would take them due west behind a low coastal range called the Serra Hills. Upon reaching the low divide between the Piori and the westward flowing Pual River headwaters, they could proceed west to the border within the Bewani Mountains foothills, a western extension of the Torricellis. They established a base camp known as Woma very close to the Dutch New Guinea border and received an air drop there on the 6th September and reported by radio that all the cargo had been successfully recovered. On the 10th of September Stavermann reported that he intended to leave with a patrol on the 12th of September to go over to the Dutch side of the border. Logically he would have followed the old bird of paradise hunters' route along the Tami River towards the coast east of Hollandia. It seemed that Stavermann's plans were on track.

Now free of his obligations to the Dutch party, Fryer's prime objective was to obtain and forward intelligence information of the Japanese positions, and to disseminate propaganda. He patrolled through the Wapei area but did not venture towards Aitape. Given the identified shift in Japanese tactics towards active patrolling and seeking out Coastwatchers behind their lines as was experienced by Ashton and others around the same time, Fryer did not try to approach the Japanese positions in quest of hard information. Instead he found himself dealing with a flood of rumours which could not be easily substantiated. His propaganda efforts were also hamstrung by local perceptions of the current state of affairs. He attributed his difficulties to :-

- 1) Strongly developed local beliefs in Japanese power which had grown during and because of the absence of resident Europeans since January 1942.
- 2) Difficulties in explaining why Australia deserted the area and in representing his party as front line troops rather than remnants of a vanishing race.
- 3) Local fears of retribution for assisting Europeans and greed for rewards from the Japanese for capturing Europeans.
- 4) Locally fabricated stories to deliberately mislead and terrify patrol carriers.
- 5) The fact that the Wapei/Palei language extended from south of the Torricelli Mountains all the way to the coast at Aitape was listed as a mixed blessing.
 - a) It was positive in that it allowed a free flow of information from the coast, although verification of such information was difficult.
 - b) Negative as the free flow of information could equally benefit the Japanese.

The Wapei/Palei language stock consists of 12 Wapei languages located mainly in the Lumi area, seven Palei languages located mainly in the Nuku area and the Urat language in the Dreikikir area.²

Taking into account all of the above, Fryer's typical propaganda described the allied victories in Papua resulting in a retreating rabble that might come along the beach to Aitape, thus explaining the Jap occupation of Aitape. The Australian retreat from the area was usually explained as being because all Europeans went south to 'school'. Now the allies have all returned with our invincible air force, navy and army, to rid this land of our children the New Guineans of these 'bighead' yellow skins. Woe to those Sepik lunatics who mistook them for brothers. This regularly repeated story line was strengthened by local knowledge of the bombing raids on But and Wewak. Fryer's report indicates that his party believed that they were making good progress.

Fryer needed to visit Lumi in late August 1943 to obtain news of his three trusted scouts sent with Stavermann - Bras, Niwani and Amite - and to retrieve stores from his supply dump. The Lumi visit would also establish whether the Japanese had visited Lumi since Fryer's visit in June and related intelligence. It would also allow the recruitment of labour for Stanley camped on the Wamala Creek two days walk to the south and possible action against deserters from Fryer's party.

Fryer placed strong reliance upon a former policeman Bras³, a native of Warapu on the coast, who was married to a woman from Wititoi southwest of Angugenak. Bras' pro-Australian loyalty had been strengthened by a propaganda leaflet which a priest read to him at St. Anna plantation near Aitape. On the basis of this information he led the Wapei people

employed at St. Anna back to their homes to remain there in safety until the return of better times. This coincided with the time when the Yakumul village people began to run wild, killing and looting along the coast.

On their way to Lumi, on the 29th August at Nigre, Fryer's party met a party of Wapei people who were traders in meat and shell rings. One of the party returned north at night under peculiar but not suspicious circumstances. The patrol camped at the Yula River on 30th and at Lolebil rest house on 31st. The next day while en route to Timiter bridge, they met people from Yukilo, Nigre and Lolebil who were coming from Seinum and later, natives of Wetali who had also come from Seinum. Food was brought by the *Luluai* who appeared very friendly. All these excursions are not unusual in a trading community such as the Wapei so no suspicions were aroused.

On the 2nd of September the patrol was heading to Seinum. In the river they were met by a body of about 50 natives from a number of villages complete with *Luluais*, *Tultuls* and *Doctor Boys* all with hats of Village Official authority who were very pleased to welcome the patrol. They carried a little food thinking Fryer's party might still be at Timiter creek. The patrol was brought to Seinum with ceremony. The natives even wanted to carry the guns for the fifteen permanent line boys. The patrol reached the rest house at noon and as the weather was threatening they decided to stay.

Heavy rain fell later in the afternoon and the six village officials and four others were in the hut to listen to the general talk covering propaganda, recruits and related topics. The gathering was very friendly and expressed sympathy for the patrol members. Meanwhile, the natives had gathered outside presumably for the usual barter for food stuffs and to get out of the rain. Some of the patrol's carriers were asleep in an adjoining hut. One of the patrol's permanent employees was in the hut with a gun partially hidden by the dark shadows some five feet from Aiken. Fryer was telling of the Wewak raids when the *Tultul* of Seinum, the late Walwari said "*Em Nau*" ('lets do it') and dived for Fryer. Others grabbed his revolver from under the bed. Fryer pulled three or four natives around the bed in order to be able to grab his Owen gun but by then at least five natives were grappling with him. Fryer found it to be impossible to cock the gun and release the safety catch. The gun was then dragged from him. Now unarmed, Fryer resorted to unarmed combat and managed to reduce his attackers to two when Aiken, who had clutched the Granad rifle, managed to release the safety catch and fire a shot.

Meanwhile the armed labourer cocked his gun and fired at the *Tultul* but the cartridge was a dud. He dodged a tomahawk and went to Fryer and Aiken's assistance with hands only. At the sound of the shot the natives partially relinquished holds, allowing Fryer to throw the *Tultul* to the floor. As the *Tultul* scrambled out he was shot dead.

At the same time Fryer and Aiken were attacked, three or four natives grappled with each line boy. Some were carried out of their house. At the sound of the first shot some line boys managed to release themselves and came to Fryer/Aiken's assistance. All but a few guns had been stolen. Aiken fired five shots at natives who were shooting arrows over village huts, and a hand grenade helped to disburse them while the patrol members hurriedly packed up.

The weapons lost were one Tommy gun, one Owen, one shotgun, one .22 rifle, one revolver and two .303 rifles. Fryer's belt containing compass and revolver ammunition was also taken. No injuries were sustained by Fryer's party apart from abrasions.

Further attacks were made on the patrol as it was moving off, and along the track for several miles. One .303 and one Garand rifle kept the patrol carrier line secure. That night they slept near Timiter Creek and on the 4th of September they re-joined Stanley on Wamala Creek. The Lolebil natives were contacted en route and they reported that the natives involved in the affray were from Lumi, Seinum, Talbipi, Tebali, Telote, Urite and Miliom. It can only be assumed that the treachery of the villagers at Seinum was carried out in the expectation of reward from the nearby Japanese, as we shall see shortly. The loss of the firearms etc. was a serious blow to Fryer and his party as they were in no position to quickly replace them.

A brief digression ... Fryer's report makes a passing reference to the *Black King of Wapei*, a cargo cult leader who was prominent in 1941 in the Lumi area. Fryer reported that Teni of Tauwete had led a movement of believers who claimed '*the white-man has long robbed the Wapei people of the cargo sent by the ancestors...*' If this was a form of propaganda introduced by the Japs in advance, it was successful. The cult leader was jailed in Aitape in December 1941 for a month. By 1943, Fryer could see no remnant of the cult, and he noted also that Bras had told him in July that Teni was a Jap agent.

Writers Note :- Cargo cult is a religious practice that has appeared in many pre-industrial tribal societies in the wake of interaction with technologically advanced cultures. The cults focus on obtaining material wealth - the cargo - of the advanced cultures through magic and religious rituals and practices. The cult members believe the wealth was intended for them by their deities and ancestors. Cargo cults developed primarily in remote parts of New Guinea and other Melanesian societies in the South West Pacific beginning with the first arrivals of Europeans.

From Stanley's camp Fryer arranged aerial attacks on the offending villages. On 19th September 1943, two P38s flew in over Wapei and shot up the friendly village of Lolibil which they mistook for Seinum.⁴ This unfortunate event exemplifies the confusion and dysfunction with which the European parties in the Sepik had to deal on a regular basis. Although Fryer and party remained in the field, their direct village contact intelligence and propaganda activities were now curtailed. On the 30th they did the next best thing - on a scheduled supply drop, they also arranged the dropping of propaganda leaflets over specified Wapei villages.

Subsequent to the events above, ANGAU Lieut. and Patrol Officer R.Watson⁵ who was attached to the Moss Troops at Yellow River reported on 3rd November 1943 the outcomes of his investigation into the betrayal of Lieut. Fryer and party. He interrogated village officials and others from upper, middle and lower Wapei villages and learned that the Seinum incident was instigated by three people:

Teni the self-proclaimed *Black King of the Wapei* was from Tauwetei a village four miles north east of Lumi. Assisting Teni was Makian the medical orderly of Lumi who was also an agent for the Japanese and Mulo of Sikoia who was the runner for Makian to the Japanese at Aitape. Subordinates of these three were Yaipa of Narita and Suwaiba of Seinum.

Teni and Makian contacted the Japanese at Aitape and both were given badges marking them No 1 and No 2 ranking officials of the Wapei region. Their duty was to keep internal

peace among the Wapei and to actively engage in reporting any foreign movement in the Wapei area. The chain of events concerning Fryer and party was reported to be:

On Lieut. Fryer's first trip to Lumi, he obtained an air drop of cargo and left a cache of supplies in the care of medical orderly Makian before going in the direction of Maimai. Makian immediately sent Mulo to Aitape and reported Fryer's movements and supply dump to the Japanese. In response, two Japanese patrols of 10 men each then arrived in the Wapei area. One patrol went towards Maimai on Fryer's trail and the other arrived in Lumi where Makian handed over the cache of supplies and received as a present a few 6d Jap paper notes and odd trinkets from the cargo. The Japanese officer took most of the cargo to Aitape.



Fryer remained unsuspecting and after patrolling the area, intended to return to Lumi. Makian, hearing of this and no doubt fearing for his own safety in the event that Fryer discovered his double dealings, again sent Mulu to Aitape with the information. It appears that the Japanese commander, remembering the previous trek which failed to capture Fryer, sent word back to Makian to take Fryer and Aiken prisoner. The prisoners were to be brought to Aitape tied to poles as pigs are carried.

Makian sent word to Seinum to at first be friendly to Fryer's party and then lay hold of them and fasten both. Initially the Seinum people were not keen to do this, but after a lot of talk from Makian they did attempt to capture Fryer and Aiken. When this failed, Makian himself went to Aitape with the index fingers of the two attackers Aiken had killed together with all firearms with the exception of one .303 rifle they had taken during the affray. These they gave to the Japanese. Makian told the story of what had happened and asked for payment for his dead comrades. The Japanese took no action and told Makian and his people that it was their fault that the attempted taking of Fryer and Aiken had failed.

Watson stated the opinion that most of the Wapei people were on the side of the allies, the exceptions being the people of the villages with Japanese appointed officials. He even said that despite the aerial attack being directed at a friendly village, the action was seen as a big thing locally and was convincing to villagers who had been doubters. Other things that Watson said which were strengthening the allied cause, included the fact that Teni, 'The Black King' of the Wapei people had set a date for the cargo to arrive. That date had come and gone without any cargo arriving. As it was the Japs who were supposed to deliver the cargo, and failed to do so, so the people were reportedly turning away from Japanese influence. Also against the Japanese was the fact that they paid nothing or just a few 6d notes for what they took from the people. Finally a policeman called Boio from Erite village, who had been to Australia, was promoting the allied cause to seemingly very positive affect.

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Sgt Siffleet contacted Sepik Intelligence on 1st October and reported :-

“Ainbai natives report that Pagi⁶ natives travelled to Vanimo and informed enemy of our presence also that a large party is proceeding to our base. Sgt Stavermann and Cpl. Padiwail left here two weeks ago and I have not contacted them since. It is also reported that enemy attacked and killed them. Also that a large boat landed Japs at Warapu on the Sissano Lagoon.”

War Diaries entry 2nd October :-

“Sgt. Siffleet instructed to withdraw to Fryer and Stanley. Destroy radio if necessary. Approve destroying codes, continue present password”.

On the 4th October from Siffleet at Woma Base :-

“Native carriers confirm that Sgt Savermann and Cpl Padiwail were killed. The enemy is moving to attack base. Party is withdrawing.”

Fryer went to try to locate Siffleet who had gone off the air. He reported that Japanese were in strength at Sissano and being supplied by warship. Natives were reported to be training in the use of firearms.

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Post Script

Garth Pratten's War Memorial history fills in some of the gaps:

Despite a warning from a local that the mission had been compromised, Stavermann opted to press on towards Hollandia. Together with Pattiwael he scouted ahead while Siffleet and Reharin remained at Woma with the radio. These are the last details that remain of the Whiting party's [The Dutch Party] movements. Through August and September little was heard, Siffleet probably trying to minimise use of his radio to avoid detection. What follows has been pieced together from interrogation of Japanese prisoners and translation of Japanese documents.

Sometime in mid-September Pattiwael and Stavermann were ambushed near the village of Nemo south of Hollandia. Stavermann was killed but Pattiwael managed to escape and warned Siffleet and Reharin at Woma. Siffleet sent one last message that Stavermann had been killed and that he would destroy his codes and radio and head south towards Wamala Creek, the base of another AIB party. [Stanley and Fryer]

Siffleet and his party never made it, at Wantipi, a group of about 100 local supporters of the Japanese surrounded them when they stopped for a meal. Siffleet fired at his attackers, wounding one, and managed to break free but was quickly caught. He and his companions were beaten and abused by their captors as they were led to the Japanese outpost at Malol, where they were exchanged on 24th September for some Japanese occupation money and a roll of fabric.

At Malol the prisoners were interrogated by Yunome and Hiro... Siffleet at first said nothing. He was slapped and beaten and then Hiroa beat him again using both a long stick and a club. Siffleet in the end apparently said quite a lot, as revealed in Yunome's report, perhaps another indicator of the brutality of his ordeal...

The interrogation lasted three days and the prisoners spent two weeks at Malol before being taken to Aitape.

Admiral Kamada, the Japanese commander at Wewak, was informed of the capture of the prisoners. He did not regard them as being important and they languished, at first at Malol and then at Aitape, while their captors waited for word on what should be done. On 22 or 23rd October, Captain Noto, Kamada's chief staff officer, reported to him that a barge was about to leave for Aitape.

Almost as a second thought Kamada told Noto to instruct the barge's captain to pass on to Warrant Officer Watanabe, the commander of the Japanese marines at Aitape, orders to kill the prisoners. Noto later claimed the decision had been reached after a "military punishment tribunal" had been convened by Kamada. In the light of contradictory statements by all involved, it would seem that this tribunal never took place.

Following the receipt of his orders on 23 October, Watanabe intended to shoot the prisoners the next day. As a matter of procedure he consulted Yasuno, the civilian administrator and his nominal superior. Yasuno was indignant. Minseibu personnel had captured the prisoners so they should have the honour of executing them in accordance with Japanese tradition.⁷

Just after 3pm on the afternoon of 24 October 1943, three haggard prisoners, an Australian and two Ambonese, were escorted onto Aitape beach by a party of Japanese marines. The prisoners were stopped by a large hole... Yasuno Chikao read a short statement. Yunome Kunio...related what happened next to an Australian interrogator in February 1946.

The prisoners were each given a cigarette. They were blindfolded. Yasuno made the Australian sit down by the hole then cut his head off.

Siffleet, Reharin and Pattiwael were beheaded by three Japanese civilians: Yasuno Chikao, an administrator, Yunome Kunio, an interpreter and Mitsuashi Masuyo, a clerk. Siffleet went quietly to his death. They were buried where they died, below the tide line. Later that afternoon the three executioners returned to place flowers on the grave. The next day, there would be little trace of the horrible events that had taken place.⁸

In 1946 the Japanese responsible for the deaths of Len Siffleet and his companions stood trial for war crimes. Noto, Watanabe and Yunome were all found guilty. Noto was sentenced to twenty seven years imprisonment, Watanabe to seven and Yunome was sentenced to hang... Yunome's death sentence was commuted to 10 years' imprisonment.

Kamada and Mitsuashi were captured and tried by the Dutch. Kamada was subsequently executed for the murder of a number of other prisoners at Balikpapan, while the fate of Mitsuashi, removed from a repatriation ship for Japan, is unknown.⁹

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Travis McCombe, son of Aitape colleague Patrol Officer Daryl McCombe, researched Len Siffleet's story, made contact with the deceased's relatives and raised money for the brass plaque featured below. Local Sandaun [West Sepik] Province authorities agreed to build the monument to which to attach the plaque and soon after ANZAC day 2015 the monument was established with due ceremony.

As the plaque states *Lest we forget*. It is notable that neither Daryl nor I knew of Len Siffleet during the years we were stationed at Aitape in the 1970s.



End Notes Chapter 31

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- ¹ Garth Pratten – Len Siffleet and the Whiting mission. Australian War Memorial. P 33
- ² D.C.Laycock – Sepik Languages checklist and preliminary classification – Australian National University 1973 Page 73
- ³ Not to be confused with Baras of Japandai
- ⁴ E.Watson, PO “Patrol Report and Native Affairs Wapi Area” dated “Melip” 3/11/43 page 2
- ⁵ Lieut. Ray Watson was the brother-in-law of Captain Neptune Blood. Ray and his sister Olga [Watson] Blood were the children of Samoan/German parents. German interests in Samoa in the mid to late 19th century were fundamental to Germany’s colonizing Kaiser Wilhelmsland and the Bismarck Archipelago. (See Bragge; *Sepik 2 – the Winds of Change*.)
- ⁶ Pagi is the village where Bewani Patrol Post is now located.
- ⁷ Garth Pratten – Len Siffleet and the Whiting mission. Australian War Memorial. P35
- ⁸ Garth Pratten – Len Siffleet and the Whiting mission. Australian War Memorial.P35
- ⁹ Garth Pratten – Len Siffleet and the Whiting mission. Australian War Memorial.P36

**Chapter 32 Establishment of “Z” Special Unit’s Guerilla Column in the Sepik –
The Moss Troops - Taylor to Lake Kuvinmas 25th July – 22nd Aug. ‘43**

In July 1940 after the fall of France and the evacuation of the British Army, the Special Operations Executive SOE was formed in Great Britain – in the words of Winston Churchill – ‘... to set Europe ablaze’ through passive and active resistance to the enemy.¹

Special Operations Australia (SOA), an offshoot of SOE, was proposed by General Blamey C in C of Australian Military forces and approved by General Douglas McArthur. For reasons of security SOA was code named IASD – Inter Allied Services Department, which itself was usually abbreviated to ISD. In addition to all of the acronyms above, we need to add SRD ‘Special Reconnaissance Department’ which was a department within ISD.

All Australian service personnel [on Coast watching duties] were then to be administered by a holding unit, specially created for the purpose in June 1942. The holding unit within SRD was code named ‘Z’ Special Unit. This group faced an uphill task in being accepted by the SWPA – South West Pacific Area General HQ – US operations and Intelligence personnel did not intend to allow independent action by any foreign intelligence organization in an area they regarded as a solely U.S. sphere of influence.

In order to coordinate and control the Australian, British and Dutch agencies operating from Australia at that time in June 1942, GHQ - SWPA formed AIB, the Allied Intelligence Bureau. The Americans maintained a controlling hand in AIB by having an American appointed as the Finance Controller. There was strong suspicion in GHQ – SWPA that the British and Dutch undisclosed primary interest was in regaining the Colonial territories of which they had been deprived by the Japanese. AIB became fully operational in December 1942.²

The application of ‘Z’ Special Operations authority and planning in New Guinea commenced in April 1943 when SRD was requested to provide a plan to shield forward reconnaissance teams from Japanese patrols. The plan was jointly developed by SRD and FELO – Far Eastern Liaison Organization, which was the propaganda arm of AIB. The plan was submitted to General Blamey who approved it on 15th July 1943 and directed that it be under the operational control of New Guinea Force. The plan was code named “Moss Troops”.³

New Guinea Force Commander Lieut. General Edmund Herring, upon receiving the plan, ordered that ANGAU be the control agency of all intelligence gathering agencies. This was justified as ANGAU had an appropriate administration network and was responsible for native issues. The order of ANGAU control did not please either FELO or AIB. The plan provided that staff already on active field service would be transferred to ‘Z’ Special Unit for the duration of the field operation. To add to possible confusion and the endless military acronyms, Taylor, who would have been unaware at the time of ‘Z’ Special Unit, had code named Mt Hunstein ‘Z’ Mountain.

The Moss Troops’ principal officers were :-

- Capt. A.E.B.Trappes Lomax of AIB’s SRD.
- Capt. J K McCarthy of NEA – Near Eastern Area

- Major H M Farlow of ANGAU – Operational Commander, and a former Assistant District Officer in Rabaul.⁴

The plan was that the Moss Troops operational base was to be Lake Kuvinmas,⁵ located on the Blackwater River approximately 30 miles south east of the Chambri Lakes. We know from the message delivered from Stanley via Constable Baras to Jim Taylor at Begapuke that this plan would have included plans for the guerilla column. The ANGAU War Diaries record that plan as follows :-

To be really cognizant of the subsequent recordings as on and from 1st July 1943, a brief outline of the setup of this operational project is necessary. At the moment ANGAU has a group of four Officers who are moving from Ambunti into the Hunstein Range.⁶ The Japanese have an estimated strength at Wewak of 20,000. Enemy patrols have reached Marui. There are 300 Japs at But, 200 at Aitape, 500 at Vanimo and 500 at Burui. It is known that the coastal natives are carrying for the Japanese. Activity among the Sepik natives appears to be imminent.

To deny the enemy unrestricted activity in the Sepik is a major task, and the protection of forward parties in this district is of great importance. It is thought that a small guerilla force should be put into the Sepik area before it becomes really influenced by the Japanese and in order to prevent it coming under Japanese control.

OBJECTS:

- i) *To provide a covering force for the protection of forward agents in the Sepik District, and behind this covering force to obtain the maximum resistance to the Japanese, and by moderate terrorism to ensure that no coast natives will act as guides or porters for Japanese patrols.*
- ii) *To coordinate with parties in the areas, siting caches of arms, food and clothing to ensure their rapid and secure movement.*
- iii) *To restore the belief of the Native in White rule in showing that ‘The Old Government’ is still operating and effective.*
- iv) *To succor Allied airmen who have bailed out in the Sepik, to forward meteorological reports and to report movements of aircraft.*
- v) *To reconnoiter and report on the situation in view of plans being made to restrict the activities in the area by means of offensive partisan action.*
- vi) *To obtain intelligence.⁷*

Taylor’s party at Begapuke consisted of nearly 100 people, consisting of four European service men, four regular police, nearly four dozen police recruits and a labour line. Included in the ‘labour line’ was an array of people Taylor took from villages along the way in order to protect them – people who were ‘different’ and might be expected to be victimized by the Japanese, or the Sepik officials the Japanese appointed. They included :-

- Father Hansen from Marui – a Catholic Missionary of German origin.
- School teachers and their wives from other Districts.
- Village prostitutes

The perceived safety achieved through the remoteness of their Begapuke base was countered by the inability of Taylor and his men to obtain accurate intelligence information. As Taylor had reported in earlier radio traffic, it was his intention to move northwards at the earliest opportunity to obtain intelligence. To do that with any real chance of success, he

would have to separate his party and take only those with him who could contribute to the intelligence gathering exercise. This included three of the four European service personnel; Taylor, Eichorn and Boisen plus most of the police and police recruits.

Left in charge at Begapuke with the ships, the priest, prostitutes, teachers as well as some police and others was Lieut. Barracluff. He would man the base radio and relay messages from Taylor and others as required. The two parties separated on the 25th July 1943 with Taylor and his team heading upstream along the April River.

The essential task of making canoes caused Taylor's party a delay in reaching Lake Kuvinmas. The logical route they would have followed from Begapuke to the Korosameri River is to follow the April upstream to its junction with the Sitifa River, thence upstream on the Sitifa and overland to the Salumei River, a major tributary of the Korosameri. Taylor finally arrived at Lake Kuvinmas on or about August 20th.

Baras continues his story :-

“Kiap Taylor split the party – some to stay and some to go. Mr. Barracluff and Father Hansen were to stay. Kiap Taylor, Mr. Boisen and Mr. Eichorn were to go. I went with Kiap Taylor. We crossed the mountain called Karen (in the Hunstein range) and came out at the head of the Korosameri River [Salumei tributary] where we camped in the bush and made two canoes. Kiap Taylor, called his ‘Jim’ and Mr. Boisen called his ‘Sepik’.”

In 1972 Luluai Kwebo of Moli confirmed to the writer through an interpreter that he, Kwebo and his brother Kina met the party at Pabo on the Salumei River above Moli. The ANGAU party was making canoes when the Moli group came. At first the Molis observed from a distance and went away unobserved and on the second trip the kiap gave them an axe. Through sign language the kiap indicated that they had come through the Sitifa to the Salumei. After making their canoes, they departed down river and were not seen again.

In order to put the Moss Troop plan into action, Intelligence instructed Taylor on 28 July:-

Proceed to Lake Kuvinmas with radio as soon as possible (.) Essential you with party be at Kuvinmas as intended Blood land Kuvinmas, you are to return Port Moresby(.) Signal your approx. date arrive at Kuvinmas.

Taylor was already on his way, but the “Z” Special unit concept obviously troubled him. He replied :-

“Proceeding Kuvinmas started 25 July (.) What degree of preparation expected (.) Are my staff and police to be absorbed? (.)”

Port Moresby Intelligence responded on 29th July :-

“Prepare Kuvinmas for landing(.) Buoy sweep and mark landing area (.) Select defense points (.) Your staff will be absorbed with exception of yourself and any Hagen police you may bring to Port Moresby (.) Signal when Kuvinmas is ready giving full details.”

Taylor reported the following intelligence on 29th July :-

“Yeschan [Yessan] occupied by the enemy strength 83(.) Report of evacuation of Burui Marui probable.”

Lieut. Barracluff reported from Begapuke on 30th July :-

“Party for Lake Kuinmas will advise approximate date of arrival as soon as possible(.) Party includes Capt. Taylor, Eichorn and Boisen April River Base maintains direct communication with you until Capt. Taylor arrives Kuinmas (.) April to Taylor contact twice daily (.)”

... and again on 31st July :-

“And further: Andrews⁸ is with Taylor (.) Yeschan is occupied by Japs in five houses on top of Yeschan hill (.) Japs very timid (.) Have local food only (.) Have wireless (.) Do not move from hill for fear of natives (.) Transport canoes only well-armed rifles Air-raid shelter top of hill (.) Locals say Japs state English getting lot of ground how are we to get here (.)”

(Writer’s Note: This is understood to mean the Japanese asking how to get to Begapuke.)

Port Moresby Intelligence instructed Capt. Taylor by signal on the 4th August :-

“Advise estimated date of arrival Lake Kuinmas. Also Reference enemy at Yeschan (.) Advise source of information and degree of reliability you place on report (.)”

Capt. Taylor replied on 5th August :-

Expect to arrive Lake Kuinmas approx. 15th August (.) Searson (and missionaries) now at Wabag (.) Reference Yeschan information my patrol 24th July from scout who entered village (.)

Footnote :-

(On 11th February 1944 Major General Morris signed an ANGAU HQ memo entitled LOYAL SERVICE MEDALS (NATIVES) , which stated :-

T/Major J.L.Taylor has now submitted that Constables NUNGWAI and PETRUS are ...Special Constables recruited by him for a specific task....PETRUS has now returned to his village as a civilian native and it is therefore requested that award of Loyal Service Medal be approved in this instance. Relevant citation is repeated hereunder.

PETRUS of BRUGNOWI Village SEPIK DISTRICT.

On 24th July 1943, Petrus volunteered to make a reconnaissance of the enemy position at Yessan. At great personal risk, he successfully completed his mission and returned with valuable information of the enemy strength and disposition.)

On 9th of August 1943 Port Moresby Intelligence instructed Taylor :-

“Inform Kuinmas Party Capt. Blood landed Kuinmas 9th Aug Blood has radio (.) Blood yourself to contact (.)”

Capt. Taylor responded on the 10th August that a reliable observer reports small party of enemy in position at Angriman village Sepik River having arrived there several weeks ago.

On the 12th August Port Moresby Intelligence reported :-

“Tame party of 2 Europeans and 6 police proceeded to Lake Kuinmas by Catalina(.) Previous report of enemy party at Angerman not verified, but reliable source reports 10 enemy at Mindimbit.”

On the 13th August Port Moresby Intelligence asked Captain Taylor to advise if petrol held at the April River base was sufficient for the *Osprey* to proceed to Yellow River in the near future. Then on the 15th August Blood was on the air to report that the enemy patrol at Mindimbit visited villages Kabriman, Kaningara and Kuvinmas during the month, and that an unknown number of enemy reported by natives to be occupying all Mission buildings Timbunke.

Also on 15th August Taylor reported :-

“Blood and Tame parties raided by enemy(.) All equipment and stores lost but personnel believed safe.”

Even though Taylor’s party departed Begapuke for Lake Kuvinmas three days before ordered to do so, his party had not arrived there when the Catalinas landed at Lake Kuvinmas with near fatal results. The value of accurate intelligence of the situation on the ground was highlighted by these events and the fact that nothing had been heard from the any of radios of the now separated Taylor, Boisen, Barracluff, and Blood parties since the 15th August. It was clear that if they were alive, they faced the difficult task of extricating themselves from what seems to have become an ant’s nest of enemy activity.

It is ironic that the Moss Troops’ planned operation in the Sepik was to protect advanced reconnaissance parties, but was itself the very operation that placed those advanced parties in the greatest danger. The concern was shared by Port Moresby Intelligence advised on 20th August 1943:

“Signal to Blood, Taylor, Barracluff and Milne⁹ :-

Owing to your not signaling VIC since 14 Aug Liberator will recce your site 21 Aug(.) Show yourselves if Taylor is with you or if you require Catalina to land on 22nd Aug(.) If Taylor is not with you and you do not require Catalina to land on 22nd August show white cross of paper or clothing or canoes on the Lake(.) Liberator will drop message in tin on Lake.”

The story of how Neptune Blood led the survivors of the raid is continued in Chapter 34.

End Notes Chapter 32

¹ G B Courtney – Silent Feet – The history of ‘Z’ Special Operations 1942-1945 Slouch Hat Publications 1993 Forward ix

² G B Courtney – Silent Feet 1993 Pages 1-2

³ G.B.Courtney - Silent Feet 1993 Pages 156-158

⁴ A Powell The Third Force ANGAU’s New Guinea War 1942-46 - Oxford Press 2003 Pages 60-61

⁵ A Powell The Third Force Page 156

⁶ By deduction the four would have been Taylor, Boisen, Eichorn and Barracluff.

⁷ ANGAU War Diaries 1st July to 31st July 1943.

⁸ ANGAU War Diaries make no identity of Andrews or how he came to be with Taylor. Suspect “Andrews” is a code word re the source of the Yessan intelligence.

⁹ “Milne” was with the Stanley Party in the Wapei area.

**Chapter 33 Karandaman of Malu, and the Death of Lieut. Barracluff at Begapuke
July 1943–15/8/43 - Begapuke Revisited 1971.**

The situation of the Japanese at Yessan, recently reported by Barracluff at Begapuke, was about to be changed by a Malu village man called Karandaman. Karandaman was a man of character and importance in his own community as his description of his background reveals:-¹

“When Ambunti station was still new, a Yambon girl called Melinyaut ran away to me. She said ‘I do not want to marry an old man. I like you and we are of the same age’ I said ‘Yes’.

All the big men of Yambon wanted to fight me with knives and axes and I ran away to Ambunti where I was a cook. I took her to the kiap and he wrote a note to the Doctor. I took the note and the girl to see the Doctor. He read the note and made us lift our arms so he could see our arm pits. He looked and he said ‘Yes you are old enough to marry.’ He wrote a note back to the kiap who read it and said ‘You two are married now.’

Kiap ‘Howman²’ (Harold Woodman) said there was a lot of trouble around and that he wanted me to go back to my village and look after my people. He appointed me as Tultul of Malu and gave me the hat of office. Melinyaut had her first child and later it died and I married the Brugnowi woman then as my second wife – after that I married another three widows, they are all dead now except one.

The Brugnowi woman was expensive. They wanted a lot of pay – three pigs, ten chickens, ten paddles, ten canoes, four boxes and a lot of native valuables. I still have the sticks to indicate the amount. This high bride price was the reason she was available to marry outside Brugnowi; she was too expensive for any of the Brugnowis to afford. The Brugnowi people explained that her mother is not young and they had to pay a high bride price for her and now we have to repay it. This refers to the customary practice that ideally the bride price of the daughter should repay the bride price paid originally for the mother. But she had several daughters married, so why the high bride price for this one? My clansmen at Brugnowi made the arrangements and we were married in the war time.”

The payment of bride price is a community activity reflecting community acceptance of the groom and the marriage. It is often a matter of prestige if the bride price is high as it reflects the importance with which the groom and the marriage are perceived. Karandaman explained that he retired as *Tultul* and went to work at Salamaua for three years and then back in the Sepik he worked with Kiap Woodman on the construction of the Pagwi to Maprik Road. He continued his story :-

“The Japanese came to Pagwi and then to Yambon and when they saw me they said ‘You are a fat man you are appointed as the big captain now’. They gave me seven stripes on each arm. The officer who appointed me was Gumi Captain. There was also Tanaka Captain, Sagina Captain, Yamamoto Captain. The Ama Captain was at Pagwi (Marui). He was approached and agreed to my appointment. I was the big captain for this river area (The Upper Sepik). There were also big captains down river. My area of authority was Malu, Bangwis, Melawei, Yambon, Saseriman, Beglam, Tongwinjamb, Urumbanj, Yessan, Maio, Swagup, Kwaka, Amaki, Ablatak, Wagu, Yigei, Brugnowi and Wogamush. A total of 35 named³ village officials of varying ranks were appointed in these villages.

(Writers Note - The Nggalla people of Swagup are a surprise inclusion here as they were a powerful and warlike people until well after the war.)

The Japanese contact with Swagup was achieved when Swagup representatives came to Yessan to investigate the Japanese there. They asked of the Yessan people that they were not to be killed; they wanted to see the “Men no good” [Japanese]. The Swagups were Gasup and one other. The Japanese made Gasup ‘captain’ and gave him an arm band. They [The Swagups] stayed two nights and then came back [to Swagup] and described the Japanese to us in supernatural terms. Half a dozen Swagups went down to their school at Yessan.”⁴

Karandaman’s network of village officials covered parts of five Middle and Upper Sepik Language groups; The Manambu, Bahinemo, Nggalla, Iatmul [Nyaula dialect] and Wogamush. These men under Karandaman’s command were tasked to provide information and to provide food to sustain the Japanese troops. Karandaman continues :-

“None of the Japanese made trouble with our women. They were very strict about this. They had come to fight and they wanted us on their side so we would give them food. They were concerned that if they offended us we would not feed them. I was looking after the detachment. I was living by the track from Sirimbu to Saseriman and when they needed food they sent word and I got the food for them.

The Japanese station was established at Yessan and I was in charge of the school boys there. Ten school boys came from each of the villages. They were taught singsings and physical education. There were fifty Japanese at the School and another fifty on the hill behind Yessan. They were mainly watching for Australians. My guiding thought was that the Australians would return and that I would be in trouble if I did anything bad like the big captains down river were doing – killing people and beating people.”

Karandaman’s 20/20 hindsight appears to be on display here. The attitude which was rapidly establishing itself in the Middle Sepik at this time was that the Japanese were the new Government and they were there to stay. The Australians would not return and any suggestion of a return to white rule was fanciful rubbish. “Officials” like Karandaman saw themselves as the new indigenous leaders of the Sepik. Karandaman continues :-

“The Swagup people came down to Yessan bringing food for their school boys there. Some of the Swagup men had cigarette tins hanging around their necks. There were eight of them and there were also eight fish tins. The Japanese saw them and asked where they had got them from. They said from the ‘Masta’.

‘Where is the Masta?’ asked the Japanese.

‘At Begapuke near the mouth of the channel’ they replied.

‘Could we go there?’

‘Yes’ The Swagups replied.

The Japanese called all the Captains (village officials) from all of the villages, the soldiers and the native paddlers together to go to Begapuke. We got as far as Swagup where the Swagups showed us a bottle with kerosene in it”.

Namgualimbol of Swagup recalls it thus :-

“The Japs came with Yessans, Maios, Brugnowis, Avatips and Malus to our place. They came to see if there were any Australians here. They went after we said that the

Australians had gone up river. Whilst here they flew their flag. Later we heard the ships come back downstream in the night.”

Minibier of Kombuliap [Yambunumbu] says that he went aboard a Japanese vessel which stopped at Kombuliap and went after the Japanese party which had gone in canoes up the April River. The ship anchored at Yahagul just above Bitara⁵ where it waited for the canoes to come back down. Karandaman continues his version of events :-

“We went into the April River through its Yamanumbu river mouth. We paddled upstream and slept one night. That night a flood came down the April River. We paddled on upstream next day.”

One of the Japanese patrol members was Lance Corporal Masnichi Watanabe⁶ who recalled that they saw no sign of the Australians or any sign of the reported ships. They continued upstream until the river was no longer capable of taking the ships, so they turned around and were travelling back down the April River when they heard a shot gun blast. Apparently the sentries on the hidden ships had not seen the Japanese patrol go by out on the April River, and in their ignorance alerted the Japanese by firing at a Goura pigeon with a shotgun. Karandaman continues :-

“We went into the channel [known as Duahuk channel ⁷] and we took the ships that were hidden there. This was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Three Malus saw the Japanese and ran away. Two policemen, a Madang and an Avatip and the woman Kabumbo, a prostitute from Yambon were plucking the Guria pigeon they shot. They also saw the Japanese and ran off. We continued on until we were in the sago at the base of the ridge. It was dark by then and up ahead of us we could hear the battery charger engine running. The Japanese gathered us together and quietly told us ‘All you kananas sit down and hide behind the trees. We do not want you hurt or killed by accident in the fight’. Some of us remained back with the canoes. We waited as the night dragged on. We huddled together as heavy rain fell, then near dawn the noise of sudden fighting shook the trees and made the ground shake. We huddled together while that terrifying noise went on.”

Former Lance Corporal Watanabe recalls that when the fight started the officer came out from under a green parachute that he had strung as a tent. He was wearing underpants and firing an Owen gun. He fought very bravely but was killed by a burst of machine gun fire. They buried his body in honor of the bravery with which he had fought. He was buried in a single grave and the seven (?) native troops were buried in a mass grave. Karandaman continues :-

*“After dawn the Japanese called us to go up and I saw they had captured our Priest Father Hanson who had a long beard at that time. When Father Hanson saw me he said, ‘Ahh Karandaman’
‘Yes Father’
‘So you came with them?’
‘Yes Father.’
He asked ‘How many places sent men with the Japanese?’ I told him and he replied ‘You natives can have all our things here. Do not allow the Japanese to have them. I am sorry for you people.’
‘No Father’ I replied ‘If we take these things the Japanese will execute us’*

*Father understood because he said 'It is their way.'
'Yes Father.'*

We buried Barracluff and four (?) other men killed in the fight. Plenty of people had been there and most of them ran away. After the burial we carried all the cargo down from the camp and we slept there for one night. As the evening wore on Malu and Yambon men who had been with the Australian party started to drift into our camp in ones and twos. The Japanese said 'We will execute them' but I said - 'If you do that and later the Australians hear of it, things will be very bad for us.' We did not execute them, we fed them.

There was a young Kavieng woman called Simen. She had been with her husband but he ran away and now she was alone. The men of all the villages who came with us wanted to rape her. They knew prostitutes had run away and they felt deprived. They said that the Japanese would not be able to stop them. Simen came to me in fear and I told her 'They will not touch you. The others are known prostitutes and so they are fair game, but you are different.' Now she told me. 'I have a lot of money; it belongs to the half cast radio operator. I was looking after it for him and when I ran I took it with me.'

I said 'It is alright, keep it with you and do not worry about rape, I am here and I will look after you. I am the link between the Japanese and the people. But I know the Australians will return and I want to keep a good name.' “

They came down with the missionary and the two ships. They fastened the three ships together and came down river through the night intending to reach Yessan in the morning. The three ships ran aground where the Sepik divides below Waskuk [Kutbug].

Minimber of Yambunumbu continues :-

*“We from Yambunumbu were following the ships in our war canoe SUSI. We pulled the ships off the bar and followed the ships down to Yessan. At Yessan the Japanese paid us in paper money. We were paddling up river again when Karandaman called us back and said **what are you going to do with money back in your place. Buy axes and other things to take home.** We did this. The axes we purchased were of two types. With a hammer on one end, and with a round hole. We paddled upstream and arrived back in Kombuliap.”⁸*

Karandaman continues :-

“We travelled back down to Yessan and arrived there in the late afternoon. The two captured ships the Pat and the Osprey were brought down with us. They were sent further downstream and I do not know what became of them. The Japanese now came and told me that they knew some of the natives had stolen things from the camp. I was to line them all up to be executed. I told those who had stolen things to return them immediately. They did and there were no executions.

Mamba and other Native Captains from further downstream on the Sepik came to Yessan after news of the fight at Begapuke reached them. Simen wanted to stay with me but I had three wives at that time and they would have thought that I wanted to marry her as well and there would have been trouble. I said to the Japanese 'This woman Simen should be sent down river now. She cannot stay here.' The Japanese gave her a note to carry with her, authorizing her return to Kavieng. Mamba took her back down stream and

she took her money with her. I never heard if she got back to Kavieng or not. Her husband who ran away finally came out of the bush at Changriman. I do not know if the two were ever re-united.

Other survivors who ventured back into the Japanese held areas later included Linauwi, Tungwi, Jinjimba and Gaui from Japandai. Gaui and his line came with their guns and came ashore later at Brugnowi. Others from Brugnowi were Kangau, Labangau, Kwandamboli, Taramoi, Kwondambagi and Andrias who finally turned up at Chambri. From Malu were: Dindamas, Kisagabi and Yumbwian. From Avatip Meligaman.

*The women in the camp apart from the Kavieng woman Simen were:
Two Aitape women, one I do not know the other was Tambisanogwan. One Aitape woman was shot in the night with her man.*

There were two Yambon prostitutes – Kabumbo and Koromaran. Kabumbo came back to Yambon with some men and I asked the Japanese what they wanted to do with them. They said she and the men could carry water for them as their punishment. As for Koromaran she turned up at Chambri. She came back with Andrias from Chambri and came to Yambon in stages.

The Japanese washed and medicated Father Hansen and finally sent him to Wewak via Pagwi. I did not hear what happened to him.”

Precise details of the fate of Father Hansen are unclear. Lionel Veale's book *Sepik Mission* indicates he was beheaded in Wewak.⁹ Kwonji of Burui states Father Hansen was killed by an allied bomb dropped on Wewak¹⁰. Bill Macgregor who flew by Catalina into the Sepik District on an intelligence mission on 25th April 1944 interviewed Wau of Timbunke who had been a Mission school boy at Kairiru Island. Wau claimed to have seen Father Hansen as he was brought by the Japanese from the Upper Sepik on his way to Wewak. He heard through Mission contacts that Father Hansen had been taken to Rabaul¹¹. Wau was asked whether he heard of anyone else captured with Father Hansen but he had not.

Post Script -

In the late 1960s and in 1970, the District Officer Mr. Kerry Leen, a keen historian, was arranging the 'Return to Wewak' celebrations and publication on the 25th anniversary of the Japanese surrender. Kerry wanted the remains of Lieut. Barracluff recovered. The lieutenant was still listed as missing-in-action. He sent Assistant District Officer Murray Tomlinson to the April River to investigate. Tomlinson's patrol Ambunti 9/1969-70 patrol diary of 31st January 1970 reported :-

“...guide continued inland to find grave believed to be that of Lieut Barracluff...two depressions in the ground were pointed out...In spite of digging no remains or signs of identification were found.”¹²

Soon after I, the writer, arrived at Ambunti in 1970, I was summoned to Wewak by Mr Leen and shown the letter and a sketch map from former Lance Corporal Watanabe (then a Japanese businessman) who was in the party that had attacked Barracluff's camp.. Sadly Wewak District Office had no photo copier so all I could do was make notes of Mr. Watanabe's directions to the graves.

In preparation for my own patrol to the reported grave sites I interviewed everyone I could locate who either accompanied the Japanese patrol or had been with the Taylor and Barracluff parties at Begapuke in 1943. This included Karandaman and Baras. They accompanied me to the site during my patrol Ambunti 3/1971-72 – 3rd to August 8th 1971.

The site location was as described by Mr. Watanabe and by Karandaman and others. We crossed a minor tributary of the April River joining the April left bank. It had been in this tributary that the Osprey and the Pat had been hidden. From there we walked south for over an hour into the rain forest and swamp country before reaching a low ridge. This was identified to me by the Sepik Elders as well as Begapuke men. The grave sites which Mr. Tomlinson had excavated were clearly visible. The scrub was cleared from the whole of the camp site and a sketch map prepared of it from the memory of the witnesses present. The graves were re-excavated as was the top soil from the camp site. No human remains were found but a number of relics were recovered. These included broken crockery, broken clear and brown glass, and two marbles. Also recovered was a Japanese cartridge case, a bullet head, rusty wire and four perfectly preserved ends of the corner posts from the radio shack. These were all sent in with the patrol report.

District Officer Leen later described to me how he showed the relics to Mr Watanabe who was again visiting Wewak, and how he broke down and cried.

In 1971 the Begapuke people were still very primitive and a Begapuke elder I met - Baiyu/Manauai - did not speak pidgin. Through interpreter Tabaru of Begapuke, Baiyu's statement was recorded and included as Appendix A to Ambunti Patrol Report 3/1971-2 :-

“Before the fight we went and came from the patrol camp and sold sago and pigs. We heard the fighting and ran away. We came to the patrol camp later but did not go close because of the smell. Later when the smell stopped we went into the camp and saw two graves upset by pigs and bones were scattered about. A ‘sail’ (tarpaulin) was with the rubbish and has been pulled about by the pigs.

We found a jaw bone and hung it in a tree and it stayed there for a long time and we saw it as we came and went. That was a long time ago. Both arms and the jaw bone had been broken by the pigs and only the thick chin section remained and we hung it up. The houses in the camp had been burnt down when we came after the raid.”

The writer understands that Lieut Joseph Barracluff is still listed as Missing-In-Action. Sadly I was unable to locate human remains that could be positively identified as his, and which could be buried with honour in an appropriately marked grave. On a more positive note I do believe that the evidence of Mr. Watanabe and Sepik Elders accurately place on record the circumstances of Lieutenant Barracluff's death.

End Notes Chapter 33

- ¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 pages 15-34
- ² Harold Woodman was later ADO Madang and assisted prospector Ludwig Schmidt make his way to the Kainantu gold field. Schmidt was later hanged in Rabaul.
- ³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 lists the Names and ranks of each Pages 26-27
- ⁴ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 – Namgualimbol of Swagup Page 448
- ⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 –Minimber of Yambunumbu Page 457
- ⁶ Post Courier 24th May 1971
- ⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 –Minimber of Yambunumbu Page 457
- ⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 –Minimber of Yambunumbu Page 457
- ⁹ Lionel Veale – Wewak Mission Thai Watana Panich Press Co Ltd 1996 Page 304
- ¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 176
- ¹¹ ANGAU War Diaries – Intelligence report on Recce by Lieut W.Macgregor in Catalina to Sepik Rv
- ¹² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 extract of Ambunti Patrol Report 9/1969-70 31/1/70. P 114

Sepik 3 ATTACHMENT D -

The Search to Recover Lieut. Barracluff's Remains 1970 / 1971

Writers Note :-

This attachment continues the story of the unfortunate Lieut. Barracluff, as told up to the end of Chapter 33 of *Sepik 3 – The Sepik At War*. It describes the efforts to relocate his remains long after the end of the war.

This attachment also helps to provide another dimension to Chapter 2 of *Sepik 4 – Coming to Grips With the Future*, a chapter which describes the dramatic circumstances of an earlier abortive attempt to recover Lieut. Barracluff's remains at Begapuke on the April River in 1946.

.....

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¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 extract of Ambunti Patrol Report 9/1969-70
31/1/70. P 11

and brown glass, and two marbles. Also recovered was a Japanese cartridge case, a bullet head, rusty wire and four perfectly preserved ends of the corner posts from the radio shack. These were all sent in with the patrol report.

District Officer Leen later described to me how he showed the relics to former Japanese Lance Corporal Mr. Watanabe who was again visiting Wewak, and how he broke down and cried.

In 1971 the Begapuke people were still very primitive and a Begapuke elder I met - Baiyu/Manauai - did not speak pidgin. Through interpreter Tabaru of Begapuke, Baiyu's statement was recorded and included as Appendix A to Ambunti Patrol Report 3/1971-2 :-

“Before the fight we went and came from the patrol camp and sold sago and pigs. We heard the fighting and ran away. We came to the patrol camp later but did not go close because of the smell. Later when the smell stopped we went into the camp and saw two graves upset by pigs and bones were scattered about. A ‘sail’ (tarpaulin) was with the rubbish and has been pulled about by the pigs.

We found a jaw bone and hung it in a tree and it stayed there for a long time and we saw it as we came and went. That was a long time ago. Both arms and the jaw bone had been broken by the pigs and only the thick chin section remained and we hung it up. The houses in the camp had been burnt down when we came after the raid.”

The writer understands that Lieut Joseph Barracluff is still listed as Missing-In-Action. Sadly I was unable to locate human remains that could be positively identified as his, and which could be buried with honour in an appropriately marked grave. On a more positive note I do believe that the evidence of Mr. Watanabe and Sepik Elders accurately place on record the circumstances of Lieutenant Barracluff's death.

Chapter 34 Japanese Patrols Compel Moss Troops to Relocate from Lake Kivinmas to Yellow River Aug.-Sept. '43

The advance party for the Moss Troops consisting of Captains Blood and MacNamara, Lieut Tame, four other ranks, a signalman and ten native police landed at Lake Kivinmas on the 9th and 10th of August 1943. At the time, Captain Taylor and his ground party who were moving in to meet them was still several days walk away. Blood was in contact with the local village people and on or about the 14th August, the *Luluai* informed him that two Japanese patrols were approaching the Lake. On the 15th the party of 30 to 40 Japanese troops and a similar number of armed natives were observed making no attempt to seek cover.

Blood and his party opened fire and in Blood's words the '*Native constables stood firm using their .303s like veterans*'. After a 50 minute battle it was only when the Japanese brought up mortars and sent troops to cut Blood's men off that Blood and party retired into the sago with weapons, ammunition and code books intact, but his party was now separated from Capt. MacNamara and Sgt Parish.¹

Lieut Frank Boisen² at that time was still approaching Lake Kivinmas and unaware of Blood's party being attacked. On 17th August he reported that he arrived with four natives at Lake Kivinmas opposite Blood's camp. Seeing no sign of life, he assumed that Blood had made a new camp in the hills. On the 18th he flashed a mirror at Blood's camp and received an answering flash. He waited for a canoe to cross the lake to his position but none came.

That afternoon WO2 Freddie Eichorn arrived from Boisen's rear base to inform him that Blood had gone off the air. Boisen was not concerned at this news, assuming Blood's wireless had a mal-function. It was not until the afternoon of the 19th that he realized something was wrong. As his party had been without food for three days Boisen decided to go back an hour to a sago patch and put his men to work making sago. This was done on 20th August.

On 21st August, while Boisen was moving back to Kivinmas village, he saw that Capt. Taylor and party had arrived at the lake by a different route. Boisen rejoined his own party near Watagataui after dark. There he received a note from Capt. Taylor and learned that Taylor had picked up McNamara and Parish of the Moss Troops after the Japanese attack on Blood's party.

The note from Taylor to Boisen had been delivered by Constable Baras, who described its delivery thus³:-

Mr. Boisen went ahead with Joel of Kaminimbit. Kiap Taylor and the rest of us stayed in the camp and later we heard a radio message to bring food to them at 4 pm. I put the food in a canoe and I went. Soon it became dark and I slept under a tree, I did not want to blunder into their camp in the dark and get shot. They had been camped away from us for two days and had been watching for Japanese at Kivinmas... At dawn I moved on cautiously and at 0700 I called out softly -

'Whoever is the sentry down there. This is Baras and I am bringing food for the kiap.'

Mr. Boisen now showed himself and he looked relieved and he said 'Sorry Baras, I nearly shot you.' He had an Owen gun in his hands. 'It is alright' I said."

Boisen now recalled Eichorn from the Lake area and left him with the sago party. With twelve reliable armed Sepik men Boisen made his way into Taylor's camp near Lake Kuvinmas. An airdrop was taken on the 23rd but the cargo proved difficult to collect and they were still searching for some bags on the 24th August.

MacNamara and Parish had not had an easy time of it. After being separated from Blood and the others during the battle and knowing that Capt. Taylor and Lieut Boisen were making their way to Lake Kuvinmas, they took cover in the sago and waited. On the 20th August six Japanese and a dozen armed natives attacked again but withdrew after MacNamara and Parish fired on them and held their position until Taylor arrived.⁴

We know from the citation of the award of the Military Cross to Lieut Boisen that his patrol report failed to mention a number of his activities and achievements. Given the attack on Blood's party, it was necessary to ensure that Lake Kuvinmas was secure from Japanese attack in order that the Catalina could land and take Captain Taylor and others out. While Boisen's report is silent in regard to this. Baras had the following to say :-

"I went with Mr. Boisen and we climbed a thickly foliated ficus tree about 200 yards from the Japanese camp and watched the Japanese through the glasses. When we went back to our camp we radioed to Port Moresby. Next morning seven planes came – two were bombers and five were fighters that stayed high during the bombing, then they came and strafed the village and the Japanese were killed. We stayed and watched through the glasses but we did not go down there to check the number of dead because there might still have been some alive. We were across the lake from them and we did not have a boat or canoe to cross the water."

The Patrol Officer in charge of Amboin Patrol Post on the Karawari River told the writer in the 1970s that the Kuvinmas village people remembered that some of the Japanese went out to stand in the open during the air raid, presumably in order to be honourably killed. Incredibly the Kuvinmas people added '*sampela long mipela tu isanap wantaim ol.*' (some of us went and stood with them).

The ANGAU war diaries report that on 26th August 1943 :-

"Catalina landed at Lake Kuvinmas and evacuated Taylor, MacNamara, Parish and 10 natives".

Lieut Boisen, WO2 Eichorn, Wireless Operator KEWAN and 31 armed natives were left at Lake Kuvinmas to continue their patrol. They spent the 25th to 29th August collecting the stores and taking them to their camp at Watagatawi. On 27th August WO2 Eichorn was sent to Sigantok⁵ searching for Lieut. Blood. From the 29th August to the 1st September all tracks in the Watagatawi area were searched for signs of Lieut. Blood and party, but no signs were found. From the 2nd to the 4th September Boisen moved his whole patrol to Sigantok, but the river was in flood and they were unable to make camp or set up the wireless. Boisen reasoned that if Blood were still alive, he would have made for Yimas and the known route up into the Highlands via the Maramuni River.

Meanwhile, the search for Lieut Barracluff continued. On 2nd September 1943 New Guinea Force gave approval of an emergency air drop for Lieut Barracluff, should he be sighted. Twelve parachute loads were prepared. On 3rd September a B24 took off from Port Moresby with Capt. Taylor as guide and Major Walshe as observer. They overflew the

Begapuke camp site and saw no sign of life there and returned to Port Moresby without dropping the parachutes.

On 5th September Boisen radioed his intention of making Yimas his new base from which to further his search, but permission was refused, without his being notified that Macgregor and party landed there the previous day. Boisen was instructed to remain at Sigantok. On the 7th September Boisen sent patrols in all directions seeking evidence that either Blood or Barracluff had come that way. Then on the 10th of September a radio message had been received from HQ that Macgregor and party had landed at Yimas and been attacked by Japanese. Boisen signalled his intention of going to Macgregor's assistance. Word was sent out for all patrols to return to Boisen's base at Sigantok. By 17th September, all the patrols were back in. Blood's camp on Lake Kuvinmas had been re-visited and found to be free of Japanese. There was a rumour that Blood had moved out of the area.

What of Macgregor? On 4th September 1943 Catalina No 49 left Port Moresby for Lake Yimas with Major Farlow, Capt. Grimson and Lieut. Bill Macgregor and Sgt. Curren on board. The Catalina landed safely. Grimson and Macgregor disembarked with stores. On 5th September Catalinas 49 and 50 each flew into Lake Yimas and dropped the remainder of the party, being Capt. Cardew, Sgts. Mackay, Dennis and Roberts, 6 native police and more stores.

Local Manjamai village people on the Karawari River told the writer a story in the 1990s, which, at the time, I considered to be reflective of the larger than life image in which the Sepik elders held Bill Macgregor and I therefore thought to be unreliable. They told how "Masta Mek" landed on Lake Yimas in a Catalina and that he and one other were in a dinghy on the lake when canoes appeared with Japanese who opened fire on them. The boat overturned and Macgregor managed to get ashore safely and from there fired a machine gun killing all of the Japanese in the canoes. It now turns out that the Manjamai version of events is verified by G B Courtney's account⁶:-

"That afternoon some canoes paddled by natives were seen approaching the camp. Macgregor and a policeman went out to meet them in a foldboat, but were fired upon by some Japanese soldiers concealed in the canoes. They made it to shore at their camp, where the rest of the party lay in ambush and opened fire on the Japanese when they were close and killed them all."

At six o'clock that afternoon the party was able to transmit a radio message :-

"Attacked by Japs(.) Can Cat. land tonight (Most important)"

The reply stated that it was impossible to land at night and suggested withdrawal to Macgregor's camp and implementation of emergency operations. Macgregor's and Cardew's parties were already together and had acted effectively to eliminate the immediate threat. They had already implemented emergency operations procedures. As their presence was obviously known to the enemy, they abandoned the heaviest of their stores and started walking back to the Highlands on the route pioneered by Macgregor some 13 years before - via the Maramuni River.

Both Catalinas were sent back to Lake Yimas on the 6th in the hope of establishing communications with the party on the ground, but by then the ground party had gone. Unfortunately, in doing so and in their abandonment of stores, they had left behind the main

food pack. By the 16th of September they were out of food and had to stop to cut sago. They received a small air drop of food on 22nd September, which also included tobacco and a bottle of whisky. They received a larger drop on 2nd October and finally arrived in Mt Hagen on 18th November from where they were flown to Port Moresby.⁷

ANGAU and Moss Troops HQ reached some obvious conclusions and made strategic decisions, which they implemented immediately. It was clear from the Japanese patrols that met Blood's party at Lake Kuvinmas and Macgregor's party at Lake Yimas that Japanese intelligence was well aware of these landing areas and locations of both former Australian bases in the Sepik hinterland. The silence from Barracluff also suggested that the April River base at Begapuke may have been neutralized.

The Moss Troops now looked to the area around the junction of the Sepik and Yellow Rivers as their new centre of operations. This was attractive for the reasons of an apparent lack of Japanese and the fact that the Fryer, Stanley and Stavermann forward parties could presumably be accessed via the Maimai track at Yellow River.

The first of twenty five US and RAAF Catalina flights into Lake Panewai and the Sepik headwaters commenced on 7th September with the insertion of the Moss Troops completed on 1st October 1943. Experienced ANGAU men were included in the party, namely Cpts. Milligan, Fienberg, Cole, and Fulton

As might be expected, Boisen remained unaware of these plans. So it was that on 17th September he proposed that he move to Lake Kuvinmas and make it his base – provided reinforcements could be sent in. There was no HQ reply to this. Then on about 20th September he was ordered to rendezvous with Macgregor. An airdrop would be made to facilitate this. The drop was received on 25th and with it came fresh instructions. He would no longer go east to meet Macgregor. He was to go west back to Begapuke to retrieve the *Osprey* from Begapuke and take it to Yellow River. He asked for the result of the air reconnaissance of Begapuke conducted on 2nd/3rd September and learned :- “*Camp appeared deserted and no pinnaces sighted.*”

The patrol moved between Watagatauwi, Sigantok [Sigantok is also known as the ‘murder camp’ and Sigabika] and Yambiyambi between 28th September and 1st October 1943. On the 1st of October fresh native and Japanese tracks were seen on the river bank. The patrol camped for the night and then at midnight Boisen was awakened by the sound of two shots from some distance upstream. The patrol stood to. It was assumed that the Japanese would go no further upstream than Mari and then return. Ambushes were set at Sigantok and two miles further upstream towards Mari - however the Japanese did not return that way.

On 4th October Boisen sent a patrol to Yambiyambi village. It found that the Japanese had gone up a small stream. There had been ten of them with twenty natives in four canoes. From Mari they had gone overland to the main Sepik. Boisen also received information that nineteen Aitape natives from Barracluff's camp had passed through Yambiyambi five days previously on their way to the Sepik and that they had fallen into Japanese hands at Mindimbit.

Wireless communication was made with Moss Troops HQ and Boisen suggested that he take a party through the Chambri Lakes and to the main Sepik in order to obtain information – particularly about Barracluff's party. He was instructed to continue on with his present

journey to retrieve the 'Osprey' and go on to Yellow River. Boisen's police were keen to go into the Chambri Lakes, just as Constable Petrus had gone into Yessan and obtained intelligence on the Japanese dispositions there. Boisen's report noted :-

"...so (I) sent in Andrias, Baras, Agwe (Augwi), and Conimeri (Kandimeri of Yambon) with instructions to follow and to re-join us at April River."

Constable Baras explained how this played out :-

"We assumed the news was bad at Begapuke – they failed to come up on the radio, so we suspected the worst. Planes flew over the camp for two days, but could not detect any sign of life. It seemed everyone was either dead or gone."

We moved downstream to where Mr. Bolly Eichorn and his father had been mining gold at Yambiyambi. We landed and set up camp there. But, unbeknown to us the ex-Luluai and father of Weinak – Mr. Macgregor's woman - saw us and hurried off to report to the Japanese at Chambri.

We stood guard as sentries – Augwi, Kandamari of Yambon, Petrus Kanumeri of Brugnowi, Andrias and I. We were keeping an eye on the activities on the lake. Then Mr. Boisen⁸ called me and said that I was to replace Petrus (on a planned intelligence mission) who had an infected foot. Mr. Boisen explained to me:

'I want you to go with Sgt Augwi and Kandamari to get information about Japanese positions and other intelligence from Luluai Kemerabi at Japandai.' Kiap (Boisen) explained that he would wait for us for two days at Yambiyambi and on the third he would leave and would go back to Begapuke. There he would wait for us for a further two weeks and if we did not come in that time then he would assume that we had been captured by the Japanese. The instructions were clear.

*I proposed that we go to Lukluk Island to my relatives there and get a canoe from them in order to visit Kemerabi at Japandai as instructed, get the information, then go to Garamambu by canoe and then from there two or three days overland to Begapuke on the April River.*⁹ This story continues in the next chapter.

What of Captain Blood? Mrs. Blood takes up the story :-

"On 15th August, 1943, my husband [and party] was waiting to link up with [Captain] Taylor when they were 'jumped' by the Japs. It is understood that they swapped fire for some time, but were outnumbered...and so deciding caution was the better part of valor, they decamped out the back door, which happened to be an almost impenetrable swamp. None of the party was captured by the Japs, they all managed to escape in only what they stood up in, no food, no blankets, no medicines, and as Neptune had slippers on after a shower at the time of the attack, he lost those early in the piece – sucked off in the mud and slime of the swamp.

The party walked from where they were attacked, through a lot of limestone country without habitation of any kind, managing to survive and eventually reach Wabag. Two of the native police died en route, one swept away by a torrent while crossing a river and the other from causes I can't remember. Both the Australian Lieutenants [Tame and Barnes] lost their eyesight temporarily and had to be led, but Neptune ate the tiny embryo fern

fronds, which he later credited for him keeping his eye sight. Normally he weighed over twelve stone, but after being weighed after the trek he was just over eight stone.”¹⁰

After the fight with the Japanese patrol, Blood, Lieuts. Tame, Barnes and seven of the original ten police and his party moved to Yimas as Boisen predicted, thence by the known route towards Wabag. They arrived in Wabag on 23rd September, and received a drop of supplies. Blood was also able to report that the Japanese were in numbers at Lake Yimas and that they had destroyed the bridge near Iliia on the Maramuni River. This news of course came two and a half weeks too late for Macgregor and party who were attacked by the Japanese at Yimas when they landed there on Sept 5th.

On the 28th September 1943, radio communication from Wabag indicated that after their arduous journey, Blood and the members of his party were still unfit to walk, so commencing on 29th September, they would be carried to Mt Hagen. The Highlands region and the key stations of Benabena, Kundiawa [Chimbu], Mt Hagen and Wabag were the safe haven of the Australians. The Japanese were aware that infrastructure and facilities had been built at these airstrips. Their plans to capture Bena Bena and Mt Hagen were set back on 16th and 17th August 1943 when allied aircraft destroyed over 100 planes at Wewak and But. At that time Japan had only 38 operational planes left in the area.¹¹

Neptune Blood had been commissioned as a Lieutenant [Patrol Officer] with ANGAU as of 28th November 1942. In recognition of his ability and endurance in leading his party to safety in Wabag in September, Lieutenant [temporary Captain] Blood, ANGAU was Mentioned in Despatches :-

“in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the South West Pacific Area.”

End Notes Chapter 34

¹ Dexter D. ‘The New Guinea Offensives’, Hogbin Poole (printers) Pty Ltd Syney – Page 261

² Boisen’s “Report on Activities SEPIK PATROL 18th August 1943 to 8th February 1944.

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 70-71

⁴ D.Dexter – The New Guinea Offensives. Page 261

⁵ Sigamtok – the Salumei River site of the murders of Beckett and party in early 1942.

⁶ G B Courtney Silent Feet – Slouch Hat publications Page 157

⁷ G B Courtney Silent Feet Page 157

⁸ Baras interview states erroneously that “kiap Taylor” told him this. It was Frank Boisen – as Taylor had already departed by Catalina days before,

⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 70-74

¹⁰ Taken from a statement provided by Philip Selth who was documenting a biography on Neptune Blood.

¹¹ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 64.

Chapter 35 The Capture and Fate of Constable Baras and Party – Playing a Dangerous Game With the Japanese 4/10/1943 =>

Baras continues his story :-

“We left Mr. Boisen and party and set off on our intelligence expedition. We had walked only a very short distance when we came upon Mamba and some other men in the channel. Mamba was wearing a Japanese hat and was standing in the shallows washing his legs. It was 6am and they had not yet seen us. They had clearly come to ambush us. I thought that we had best not go back or we would give Mr. Boisen’s position away. I wanted to shoot these Japanese collaborators but Andrias would not let me. Instead we launched a canoe into the channel and I stood in the front with my Owen gun. We landed near them and approached Mamba who asked. ‘Where have you come from?’

I said that we had been with the kiap but that we had now deserted because the work was too hard. I assured him that we were not sentries but deserters. Mamba and Magindimi of Nyaurengai asked us questions. We would not hand over our arms to them but we had to go with them. We went ahead and they followed. We went to the Yambiyambi rest house and found it and the whole area to be full of Japanese. Mamba now went ahead and explained to the Japanese that they had captured us. Also there were men there from Yentchanmangua, Korogo and Nyaurengai who with the approval of the Japanese would have killed anyone from outside who was captured, but we were locals.

Mamba said that we could retain our uniforms and arms. He insisted that as he had found us we were his prisoners, not prisoners of the Japanese.

Mamba’s family came originally from Kamanjau with my own ancestors, so we were distant brothers. My father had adopted Mamba as his son. Mamba was now a high ranking officer and outranked the Japanese present. We stayed there overnight and next day went by canoe to Mensuat. All the Japanese officers were there - Tanaka, Kubiasi, Ama, Asata, Kambarota and Sinowara. They stood in formation as we approached holding their swords. Mamba told us not to be afraid. The Japanese jabbed us with their swords trying to intimidate us. Now we got to tell our story again and Mamba supported us. He was a good man. He now fed us very well to celebrate our safe arrival. The Japanese lined us up and we were told ‘You with the Owen gun cock it.’ I did so ‘And you three with the .303’s cock them’. They did as they were told. ‘Now fire them’. Thus we gave a demonstration of our firearms. The response to this was approval.

‘True!! Did you come from Port Moresby?’ and we explained that we had been at Begapuke and that we had come from there. They interrogated us and all the time Mr. Boisen and Mr. Boli Eichorn were close by. Next day we travelled in a total of eleven canoes to Chambri and then we went onto Kandingei. At Kandingei we found that all the men were out in the bush avoiding the Japanese. Only one old man was in the village and he recognized me and was overjoyed. He told me that the people had been told I was killed at Begapuke. He beat the garamut and the people came back to the village in response to see us.

We continued on in the eleven canoes and went to Japanaut where my sisters and mother had been mourning for me. They were covered in mourning clay and had the trunk of a banana tree in the house to represent my body. Gaui had been at Begapuke and had

seen a man of my build killed there. He reported that it was me. It had in fact been a man from Dagua. I stepped into the house and asked 'Why are you mourning?' They saw it was me. I threw away my uniform then and told mother to keep it and if I die then for them to tell Mamba to get my body and bring it back. Mother said 'A man must make his choice'. My big brother Mondi was there and he also cried. He was siding with the Japanese and was a Bossboi or foremen working with them.

The four of us went to Marui dressed as Australian soldiers and armed. We saw that there were Japanese everywhere and we went ashore very hesitantly. A Japanese officer called Kubiassi met us. Mamba and Timbun took us to see the Ama Captain. This man visited Ambunti last year.(1971). Mamba told us that if they cut you then they can cut him as well. The Japanese took out his sword and swung it at us to frighten us but we just stood there. They now took our arms and field glasses from us and then he (Ama Captain) wrote a note. And next morning sent us to see the senior officer who was called Ajata at Burui. Ajata addressed us saying that Japan did not come here to fight the local people but to fight the English and have no argument with us. He said that if anyone harms you he will answer to him. He gave us a note and many times that day we carried notes back and forth from Marui to Burui and back until we were very tired.

The local people killed a pig that night and fed it to us. The Ama Captain let us go then and we went back to the village for a week. Then they brought us back to Marui and we attended their school for two weeks. Then they sent us back to the village and after that we came back to jail. Linauwi, Augwi, Gaui, Gawi, Tungwi and I were brought to the jail to be executed. The wives of these men were brought along to be executed with us. The wives were:

*Tigembi wife of Gaui,
Karabanganawi wife of Gawi,
Wolli wife of Tungi and
Gwai wife of Linauwi.*

My wife Kawiambu was taken just after the war started when I joined the Australians. She was raped and given to Sumbaba of Japanaut. She did not want to re-marry because she did not really know that I was dead as she had not seen my body. They went up into her house and pulled her out and said 'Will the English win? Is that why you speak like that?'

We had been married in the church and so they pulled the ring from her finger to signify that our marriage was over. The men who did this were Timbun who is now dead, Anjin who is now dead and Jungwaimak who is still alive. When I returned to the village my mother and sisters told me what my relatives and fellow villagers had done to my wife. I wanted to take it further but I was told that if I did the Japanese and their supporters would kill me. I believed them. Kawiambu had complained at what was done to her and the outcome was that they jailed her.

We all believed at that time that the Japanese had won. We saw no chance of justice. Later when the Australians returned I reported this but they did not help me and by then it was too late for her. I saw her when I returned but I did not speak to her and I did not try to take her back. They had treated her like a prostitute. I obtained my bride price back from Jungwaimak Sumbaba and a year later Kawiambu was dead. I believe this treatment and the shame she experienced was the reason she died before the war ended.

These four women wives of Australian soldiers like my wife had been left in the village. The Japanese and the village people treated them as outcasts. The village men raped and abused them at will. The Japanese patrols and village men took them to Ablatak and other places as they sought out the Australian soldiers. Nonguru's wife and children were left alone because Nonguru, although an Australian soldier, was the son of Luluai Kemerabi and he looked after them.

The Japanese wanted to kill Kemerabi. They tied him up and gave him water torture. They gave him ten buckets and after that if you live you live or if you die you die. After much torture some of the Japanese supporters pleaded for Kemerabi because he was their kin and so they let him live.

So we went to jail at Marui to be executed. At 0800 the next morning we were lined up. We had not eaten and we had been poorly housed in a building that was too small. A grave had been dug that was large enough for all our bodies including the four wives. It was then that Timbun went to the Ama Captain's house and made a show of resting his neck on the verandah rail and asking for his head to be cut off as well if we were to be executed. He told Ama Captain:

'I have looked after you ever since you arrived and you may kill me now.'

Ama Captain spoke to Timbun and sent a note to Ajata at Burui. Ajata came with all the Japanese from Burui. He was very angry but he released us and we went back to our village. Our lives were made very uncomfortable and for the rest of the war we were outcasts and made to do the very worst jobs.

I re-married. My new wife was Gini, the sister of Nonguru and daughter of Kemerabi. Gini's mother came from Burui and I knew her as Buginja. The bride price I paid was \$100 cash and 2 pounds sixteen shillings in native pay [spoken of in this way the 2/16/- is a method of counting units of traditional bride price wealth – 56 items/shillings] plus a big pig called Malinginbiei. Jigi helped me pay this price. Jigi's mother and my mother are sisters. Their father was Jangameri of Japanaut. His ancestor was also called Jangameri who was pole man [equal] to Tungwimeri and Ambalangsambi of Yaugusambi.

Boisen and Baras party had apparently discussed in detail the story to be told if they fell into Japanese hands. A convincing tale of desertion because of hard work and conditions was their best chance of survival. We know the actual facts of the mission from Boisen's patrol report, but how well could Baras and the others sell the perception of desertion? They sold it well enough to survive the Japanese and to be looked down upon by fellow Sepiks. The widely held Sepik view on this, as expressed by Kwonji was :-

*"Baras, Tungwi and Andrias ran away from Taylor's party and came back here [Burui]. He left them when they got to where they shot Mr. Eichorn [i.e. Sigantok on the Salumei River.] I took Baras to the Japanese who were not too hard. They threatened 'Singlis soldier we will shoot you' but they did not."*¹

End Notes Chapter 35

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes page Vol 18– informant Kwonji. Page 179

Chapter 36 The Moss Troops Attacked at Yellow River, and Forced to Withdraw
Aug. – Dec. '43

Experienced Sepik ANGAU men were with the Moss Troops as they established themselves near the Yellow River junction with the Sepik. Capt. Milligan, formerly ADO at Aitape, was landed and established a base on the Sepik and when it flooded he chose a new base camp on Lake Panewai inland from the south bank of the river. Staging camps were established at Makeme, Birin and Abrau and communications were set up between them. The main unloading point for Catalinas became Kochiabu just downstream of the junction of the Sepik and Yellow Rivers.

A full month before the Moss Troops were fully established in the Yellow River area, the Seinum people had attempted to capture Fryer and Aiken on instruction from the Japanese at Aitape. Although this had failed, it meant the effectiveness of the Fryer party as an intelligence gathering and propaganda unit was greatly reduced. Fryer was now operating in close association with Stanley. Stanley was still able to obtain valuable intelligence such as that of 28th August 1943 concerning Aitape station :-

“District Officer’s house, gaol and district office empty. House on site of district office in 1928 occupied by five officers. Machine gun post on ridge 20 yards to East. House on windy ridge occupied by 20 troops and 2 officers. Medical Assistant’s house 10 troops 1 officer. Machine gun post near latrine. Native hospital used for cook house and store. Ning Hee and Carey’s stores empty, but house at Carey’s used by 2 native clerks for sleeping. They are Sop of Tumleo and Kali of Boigin (Boiken). No Ack Ack guns, ammo or petrol dumps reported. No regular posting of sentries. Physical drills and digging of slit trenches only work done by troops”¹.

From the 7th September to 14th October, the ANGAU War diaries are filled with the record of dozens of air movements in and out of the Yellow River sites Kochiabu, Lake Panewai and Lake Iviva, plus airdrops to Fryer and Capt. Cardew (Macgregor party) escaping from Lake Yimas.

Karandaman of Malu continues his story :-²

“Sometime after the Begapuke incident in which Barracluff died, Kablagame of Brugnowi said he knew of where there was a government station upstream, so he and I and a Japanese detachment went up river in two motorized river craft. These craft had no superstructure and each had a machine gun on the bow and on the stern. We approached where Kablagame said the government station was supposed to be in the Yellow River area. We were in the lead boat with Sagina Captain and ten soldiers. In the second boat were Ama Captain and Gumi Captain and they were about half or three quarters of a mile behind us.

Above Ieumombui but still downstream of Panewai, Kablagame showed us a building that just looked like a normal house. It was on a slight rise. The Japanese said ‘That is just Kanaka house’ but Kablagame said ‘No it is a Government Station. The Government people are there.’ The Japanese were not convinced and said that it was just a kanaka house. Our guide was equally insistent that it was a Government Station and that we would soon see that it had a bridge. There was indeed a bridge over the river and the Japanese boat would not fit under it, so the Japanese moved forward to push the bridge aside. Suddenly there was machine gun fire and the bullets came like rain. I jumped into

the water. The engine boy was shot and the Japanese Captain dodged back and forth and was not hit. The ten Japanese soldiers fell into the water and the boat reversed away. The second ship was not hit by the machine gun fire and it took cover in the channel.

I crawled out of the water. I stood and looked at the house. I could not see any of the Australians or Americans who had fired upon us. I made my way back down river and Gumi Captain called quietly to me "Ah Kakameijos (that was what they called me) come with us". We went forward again but still we did not see anyone. We fired indiscriminately and the fire was returned. They shot a native Captain from Burui whose name I have forgotten. I recall he had a lot of old scars.

They fought on into the bush and I stayed by the house. They collected me on their way back. They said that they had not seen any of the Australians. They covered the body of the dead Burui Captain and put him on the ship. I did not know he was under the cover and I sat on him. My ass became cold so I went down into the hatch.

We came back down from Yellow River taking care as we came to watch for aircraft. We would hide during the daylight hours until noon with the ships covered with branches. At noon we would start back down again. The ship that had taken the brunt of the attack was used to carry the bodies plus the wounded engine boy and the two guards. The rest of us came on the other ship. We came through the Swagup channel to Yessan.

The Brugnowi and Maio women were given the job of collecting a lot of firewood next day. They brought the firewood to Yessan and the Japanese cremated the ten Japanese soldiers and then collected their ashes. They explained to us that men killed in this way and then cremated would be reincarnated. Five other Japanese bodies went into the water and were not recovered. Our guide Kablagame also jumped into the water at the first burst of machine gun fire. He was not seen again until six days later when he paddled a canoe into Yessan. He had been paddling downstream at night and hiding during the day fearing aircraft. His relatives didn't know whether he was alive or dead until he arrived".

Published accounts of the fighting between the Japanese and Australians at Yellow River are slightly at variance with the above :-

On 20th October a strong party of Japanese in two pinnaces landed at East Post, forcing the five men at the base there to withdraw. Next day a group under Capt. Fienberg arrived from Panewai and found that the enemy had gone, after taking the wireless set and other gear. East post was again attacked on 20th November but the Japanese were driven off with losses.³

Another account states :-

"...Captain Milligan (was) in charge of the natives at this Yellow River post...about this time the Japanese sent a captured Mission launch, the 'Gabriel', up the river and the post at the Yellow opened fire on it and sunk it, in the Sepik's only naval engagement."⁴

No other record has been found to confirm this and Karandaman, who knew the 'Gabriel', would surely have mentioned its involvement. Questions of Catholic Mission authorities in Wewak reveal that while the Gabriel did not survive the war, there is no record of her fate.

Karandaman continues :-

"On our (the Japanese) second expedition to Yellow River we took four ships to engage

whatever forces were there. Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis went as did the Naiuri man Beliebi plus Uraguwai and six other Yambons. I went, plus one other Malu and a Maio. There was a point below the Australian camp and the Japanese went ashore there and found the tracks of someone wearing boots and someone in bare feet. So we knew there had been a sentry there watching our approach. The Japanese then sat and ate rice and pawpaw. We were surprised, but they said 'We have come to fight, so we will eat and be strong and then we will fight.'

Five Yambons, two soldiers and Sagina Captain went ahead scouting the way. Others followed and we heard a machine gun start up from the area of the camp. The Japanese fell into the water and swam downstream. The scouts had observed that the Australians were entrenched behind barbed wire barricades and that they could not be approached because of the machine gun fire. Night fell and wounded Japanese came back into the camp in twos and threes. Machine gun fire and exploding grenades sounded throughout the night and the trees and leaves shook.

We established that none of the Japanese party had been killed and after everyone was accounted for we boarded the ships in the night and by dawn we were opposite the mouth of the May River (Mowi barat) and we returned all the way downstream to Yessan. We did not go again up into the Yellow River area and the Australians up there did not come down. At this time allied aircraft were bombing and strafing our houses at Yessan. The air attacks became intense and many of the Japanese were killed."

General Blamey was in support of the Moss Troops remaining in the field but on 6th December 1943 General Chamberlin advised MacArthur that the original purpose of the Moss Troops was not being accomplished and Blamey agreed to withdraw the Moss Troops. This decision was reinforced on 8th December when Japanese aircraft attacked Kochiabu base. On the 14th December Major Farlow was instructed that all parties were to be removed. Between 16th and 19th December, 102 Europeans and 127 natives were flown out in a total of 20 plane loads.⁵

Fryer's party was flown out followed soon after by Stanley's party. Their capacity to influence native opinion in favour of the allied cause was extremely limited in the face of the obvious strength of Japanese. To add insult to injury, when Stanley was taking his final air drop at Edwaki on 21st November, the Edwaki people also lit their own guiding smoke fires when they heard the plane approaching and it was they and not Stanley who received the drop. This disgusted Stanley but not as much as did the perceived impact of the bombing on the work that he and Fryer had been doing and the progress that had made (in the villages). From the stand point of the local natives, the effect of the evacuation was confusing, to say the least. It appeared to the local people that the Europeans throughout the area had abandoned their camp and stores and fled. It was quite impossible to reconcile the evacuation with the general propaganda which had been used by Lieuts. Fryer and Stanley from July to November.⁶

End Notes Chapter 36

¹ ANGAU War Diaries 28th August 1943.

² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 12

³ Dexter D The New Guinea Offensives Pages 262-263

⁴ O Ruhen – Tangaroa's Godchild – Macdonald, London 1961 Page165.

⁵ Dexter D. The New Guinea Offensives Page 263

⁶ A Powell The Third Force Oxford Press 2003 Page 63

Chapter 37 Lieutenant Boisen's Patrol Continues Behind Japanese Lines – Living off the Land and Playing Cat-and-Mouse with the Enemy Oct.'43 - Feb.'44

Soon after sending Sergeant Augwi, Constables Baras, Andrias and Kandimeri on their intelligence mission into the Chambri Lakes¹, Boisen received discouraging news from Tobi the *Tutul* of Mari village. Tobi said a Japanese patrol in the Chambri Lakes had sent a party to Yambiyambi at the time Baras' party commenced their journey and nothing had been heard from Baras' party since. It would now be a matter of seeing if they re-joined Boisen's patrol at Begapuke but the signs were not good.

Boisen and his patrol continued on their journey towards the April River by following the Salumei River upstream by canoe. They broke their travel to make sago en route and accumulated a nine day stockpile. On the 12th October 1943 the patrol reached the camp "Wima" where he and Taylor had made their canoes back in early August. From there they proceeded overland to the west.

Boisen sent a party ahead to make a preliminary recce of Barracluff's camp while the main party spent the week until the 19th relaying the cargo and sago reserve from Wima to the April River. The technique of relaying was in common use on patrols before the use of air drops. The available patrol personnel would each carry a load for a full day's march in the direction they wanted to go, stay overnight, then return for the remainder of the cargo next day. Once everything had been moved to the forward camp it became the new base camp. Another forward camp would be established a further days march ahead and everything would be relayed to it. This tedious procedure continued until rations or sago consumed in the process reduced the loads to a point where everything could be carried forward the same day. To understand this it is important to differentiate between 'permanent loads' and 'food loads'.

Boisen's 'permanent' loads would have included his wireless, battery charger and petrol, cooking utensils, buckets and the like. His 'food' loads had to be restricted to the manpower he had left after people were allocated to carry the 'permanent' loads. The more men he had, the more sago he needed to make, feeding men to carry food to feed men to...and so on.

Upon reaching the April River they spent a further three days making canoes for the journey down to Begapuke. At this point the patrol had no European rations left and local staff was on half native rations. Eichorn and Boisen had been smoking native tobacco for the last two months and now even that was in very short supply. Boisen had no choice but to again stop his patrol and set his men to work making sago. To make things worse wireless communications with the Moss Troops had broken down and it was only on the 25th of October that radio operator Kenaiu was able to make contact with HQ.

On the 24th October his party reached Barracluff's No 1 camp. The signs there were of an orderly move from there to the next camp. The next day they reached Barracluff's No 2 camp which like camp No 1 showed signs of an orderly move. At 3pm Boisen's party reached Barracluff's No 3 camp. The camp had been looted and burnt. There were bullet holes in some of the house timbers and Japanese cartridge cases were found in the vicinity.² He checked the mooring place where the pinnaces *Osprey* and *Pat* had been hidden. There were no pinnaces and there was evidence that the ropes had been cut. It is difficult to understand why Boisen or his men did not report seeing evidence of the graves that the Japanese had ordered dug for Barracluff and seven of his New Guinean troops just ten weeks earlier, as

shortly after the event the Begapuke people saw how wild pigs had rooted the graves open. Decades later in 1971 the two grave depressions were clearly visible (see Chapter 40).

Boisen's patrol report indicates he had other problems to consider at that time. Firstly Baras and his patrol were not at Begapuke so it had to be assumed that they were either captured or dead. If they had been captured, they would have been interrogated so Boisen had to work on the assumption that the Japanese were probably fully aware of his location and plans.

HQ offered to deliver an airdrop but although Boisen's patrol badly needed supplies he did not have enough canoes or men to carry the extra stores. Also the possibility of Japanese troops searching for them made it a bad time to be encumbered with extra stores. HQ also reported the news that the Moss Troops had been attacked at Yellow River by Japanese from two pinnacles, and that they the Japanese had been successfully driven off.

Boisen made his decision. He would make his main base on the April River itself and continue his search for Barracluff from there. However on 26th October he received instructions from HQ to depart the area via Sigantok and the Maramuni River. Meanwhile in his continued search for Barracluff he made contact with natives who confirmed that there had been a fight and (amazingly) that Father Hansen had headed south - upstream. No mention was made of Barracluff. Boisen did not state where these native informants were from.

From the 28th to 30th October 1943 his party made sago near Barracluff's No 1 camp while Boisen took a party for a day's journey upstream. No sign of Barracluff or Father Hansen was found. From the 31st October to 3rd November the patrol moved upstream to the canoe camp on the April River. Boisen sent a message to HQ suggesting that the main party depart the area as instructed but that he and a small party remain. However he was told to proceed to Wabag as ordered.

Contact was then made with Wagu natives who reported that Yambon natives were hiding from the Japanese near a lake at the northern base of the Hunstein Mountains. From the Wagu men's description, the lake was large enough to allow a Catalina to land and as such it might be a possible base for future operations.

It took the patrol from the 4th to the 6th of November to travel from the April River overland to the canoe camp, Wima, on the Salumei River. At this point the patrol had three days sago left but was now completely out of tobacco. Due to suspected increased presence of Japanese in the area, Boisen did not travel down the Salumei River to its junction with the Korosameri River as he and Taylor had done in August. Instead, the patrol continued on foot east of the Salumei to reach the Korosameri well upstream of the Salumei/Korosameri junction. This involved crossing several spurs which rose to about 3000 feet above sea level. They were in new country and Boisen noted that the route seemed fair. He noted the presence of a large lake about nine miles north of their route. During this journey no natives were contacted, although upon reaching the Korosameri River he noted the presence of 'tree' houses. This indicates that the patrol had passed through the northern territories of the hunter gatherer communities of the Central Range who would later be known as the 'Hewa' and classified linguistically as belonging to the 'Sepik Hill language group.'

Boisen knew that there was a large belt of swamp to the west of Sigantok so he decided that the patrol should go there by canoe. To achieve this, the patrol spent the 11th to the 16th of November making sago and canoes. It took them a further two days canoeing down the Korosameri River to reach Sigantok; a journey made through heavy downpours of rain. Near Sigantok they observed over 30 rafts with Japanese clothing and equipment on the river bank. Investigation showed that a large party of Japanese had proceeded overland in the direction of Kuvinmas. From this discarded equipment, Boisen picked up a notebook which among other things laid out a diagram of the Japanese patrol route. At Sigantok he noted that the Japanese demolished the walls of the houses to open up lines of fire before sleeping in them.

Having reached Sigantok the patrol was again out of food. The 20th to 23rd November was therefore spent making sago but the quality of the palms was poor and each day's work failed to produce enough food for that day. As they worked the local people came in and Boisen was able to learn more about the Japanese patrol.

Between 80 and a 100 Japanese had arrived at Sigantok at noon of the day Boisen's patrol had left on their journey across to the April River. The *Tultul* of Watagatauwi had gone to the Japanese at Kuvinmas and reported Boisen's presence. The patrol had come with five machine guns and a wireless set. There had been a raft mishap in crossing the river and the wireless set and two machine guns had been lost. Boisen also learned that word had again already been sent to Kuvinmas that his patrol had returned. At this point Boisen's report indicates that this bad news and the lack of tobacco and food had dispirited his patrol. Two men deserted.

On 23rd November the patrol broke camp and commenced heading overland to the Karawari River headwaters. On the 25th November an airdrop of much needed supplies was received. The local people came in and said that there was no track from there across to the Karawari River headwaters. The patrol continued on to the south into difficult mountain country. From the 26th of November to the 5th of December they relayed their equipment and rations towards the Karawari headwaters. The going was very tough and they reached altitudes between 8,000 and 10,000 feet in conglomerate rock country. Then, high above the Karawari headwaters, they spent four fruitless days trying to descent only to find their way repeatedly blocked by sheer conglomerate rock cliffs. Eventually being forced in a west-nor'westerly direction by the terrain they found a way and descended to reach a good sago stand near Denakatau on the left branch of the Karawari River [the Wogupmeri River].

The patrol was again completely out of food after Boisen and Eichorn had shared the last of their rations with the police so yet again they set about making sago on 15th December and remained there for a number of days. In that time people from Benakatau, Wolimittago, and Sumporok³ came in and confirmed that there was a trade route across to the Maramuni River. These village people also confirmed the presence of the Japanese detachment at Kuvinmas. Then to Boisen's great satisfaction they repeated back to him almost word for word the propaganda that he had sent to the Sepik with Baras and his party. Clearly the propaganda had been successfully spread.

The Karawari men also reported that the pro-Japanese natives were now becoming nervous as knowledge of the allied successes reached them. There were reports of heavy death rates among village people living around Japanese garrisons. As for the Japanese themselves, they reportedly boasted that they would go via the Keram and Ramu Rivers and

capture Port Moresby. Boisen also provided his share of misinformation in the hope of luring the Japanese back through the flooded tracks to Sigantok.

On 27th December 1943 the patrol arrived on the right bank of the Karawari River after crossing it by canoe. They stopped there to make more sago and to search for a guide across to the Maramuni River. On the 1st January they crossed the Arafundi headwaters and made camp within sight of Macgregor's camp No 10 on the Maramuni. At this point the recently acquired guides deserted. As there had been no signs of the Japanese in this area in recent months, Boisen decided to follow Macgregor's track.

By the 5th January 1944 they reached Kuengi. They were again out of food and as there was no food at Kuengi and none expected for the next three days walking, Boisen asked for an airdrop of supplies, which was successfully delivered on 7th January. The equipment and rations were relayed forward from the 7th to 15th January by which time they had made contact with the local people and been able to trade for local foods.

From the 15th January to 31st January the patrol made its way to Wabag over 'Bock's track'. They were able to trade for food along the way and found the people to be friendly. The track was classed as 'reasonably good' and took them up over 10,000 feet. Then three days before Wabag they were in densely populated areas at Kumiva. Any remaining troubles the patrol had ended when a carrier line sent by Major Jim Taylor met them. The patrol rested for three days in Wabag with Lieut. Clark then continued on to Mt Hagen; a five day journey over good tracks with rest houses, abundant food and plentiful carriers. They arrived in Mt Hagen on 8th February 1944.

The narrative of Boisen's report reflects his relief at having achieved an incredible feat and come through it alive. These comments from his patrol report:-

"REMARKS :-

EICHORN did an excellent job throughout – good bushman, he cut the track for most of the journey. Cheerful, always ready to do more than his share of the job.

KENIAU, excellent [wireless] operator, cheerful, very reliable, game and particularly good with natives

LOYALTY, endurance and cheerfulness of my natives made successful journey possible. No natives lost through illness on whole trip. All came out fully equipped and armed. Acting Sergeant Banak and Anis, acting Corporal, did a particularly good job.

W/T COMMUNICATIONS, All stations with the exception of 7BM4 went to great trouble to receive us when our set was functioning badly.

SUPPLIES, Although short of food at times, it was because we preferred to travel lightly and risk temporary shortages. All requests for drops were answered promptly. – over last 3 months quality of packing of drops was excellent. Pilots also exercised great care putting them on the spot.

Cooperation by other members of ANGAU in sending information re tracks, native food etc., very helpful and much appreciated.

NATIVE FOODS. Sago generally plentiful in Sepik and Karawari, less so in April headwaters and on mountains. Native planted sago can be found up to 2,500 feet in places. Sago was found along the whole track up to Macgregor's camp 10. From camp 10 to Wanures there is no native food. From Wanures to Hagen abundant kaukau (sweet potato) and pigs. Cumo ["kumo" pidgin for "greens"] is fairly abundant except in mountain areas. Cumuncora (ringwood) is plentiful in lowlands and leaves should be cooked and eaten to combat vegetable deficiencies. Sago grubs can be collected from fallen sago trees, Flavour and food value of same are good.

SEPIK NATIVES. In my opinion the Sepiks are like the Irish 'agin the Government'. When we were running the recognized authority on the Sepik, they were against us. Now that the Japs are the recognized authority, they are ready to turn against them; fear is holding them back. A couple of successes by our troops in the area will bring them to us en masse. There is a small section that have stuck to us throughout. Note the case of the Luluai of Japandai (Kemerabi) who refused to accept a Jap arm band (even) after being tied to a tree and threatened with a bayonet. Japs even went to the length of offering to allow him to keep his English cap and wear the arm band in addition.

Brugnowi and Yessan people also befriended us and tried to conceal our whereabouts long after the Japs were a power on the river: the feeding and sheltering of Ashton's party by Avatip and Japandai natives; and the warning brought to Blood by the old Luluai of Kabrیمان. Sgd. Lieut. F.N.Boisen 17th Feb '44."

On 15th March 1945 Lieutenant Boisen was awarded the Military Cross. The citation reads :-

"Lieut. Boisen was responsible for the maintenance of a native force of irregulars which provided an effective intelligence system regarding enemy movements in the Sepik District during the period Aug 43 to Jan 44. This force was the only land force facing the enemy between the left of 7 Aust. Div. and the right flank of Moss-Troops several hundred miles to the West. He was responsible for the continued distribution of Allied Propaganda to the native population in one of the most difficult and primitive areas in New Guinea, and also supplied HQ with information about the enemy whenever possible. His presence in the area was well known to the Japanese who were continually searching for him with strong and well-armed patrols. He outwitted the Japs on every occasion and when ordered to withdraw, brought his party through via WABAG to BENA BENA without casualty. On one occasion whilst proceeding to a rendezvous with a Moss-Troops party the latter party was attacked by the enemy and Lieut Boisen was responsible for the rescue of several of the members⁴. He was also responsible for the rescue of several allied pilots and an A I B patrol.

During the whole of his duty in the Sepik area, Lieut Boisen has displayed courage and determination of a very high degree, and by his superb bushcraft and inspiring leadership has provided our forces with much valuable intelligence".

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¹ Boisen's "Report on Activities SEPIK PATROL 18th August 1943 to 8th February 1944.

² Boisen's Patrol Report 18th Aug '43 to 8 Feb '44

³ These village names do not appear on maps available to the writer.

⁴ Neither Boisen's diary nor the ANGAU War Diaries sheds any light on this incident.

38 Civil Administration Under the Japanese-appointed Native Officials – Tribal Politics, Intrigue and Violence May '43 – Sept '45

The consensus among Sepik elders was that the Japanese were focused upon two things. The first was the military effort and the second was their survival from starvation. They appeared to be quite satisfied to leave the management of civil issues in the hands of the Sepik officials they appointed. The Sepik elders also agreed that the Japanese occupation period was one of great uncertainty and danger for the village people, primarily because of the activities of these Sepik officials, many of whom used their appointments for personal lust and gain or to even old scores.

Horie Masao, an ex-staff officer of the Japanese 18th Army, confirmed that the Army had no administration for the villagers and he could not recall that the headquarters ever issued instructions on how to rule the villages.¹ The Japanese, to their credit, actively sought out respected people in the community to manage civil affairs. One of these was Alois Kawan of Yamuk who said :-²

“The Japanese gathered all the people from Ambunti to Tambanum at Burui and I came with all the men who held Japanese rank. The Number 1 of the Japs called out my name. I was fearful that the Sepiks had reported me and that I was to be cut with their swords... ‘Right’ he said ‘Give them the talk of God’...They were concerned about the killing that was going on among the people and the Jap at Yamuk had reported me as being a good man, so they asked me to speak and influence the people. There were many people there. I told them ...

‘We are all brothers, now it is war time and there is big work. We have to be strong to make sure we live well together. The war is between two foreign countries, we should not fight among ourselves. It would be bad if we ceased to exist. We are all children of the one father.’ And so the war came and the war went.”

However as Alois had said, the Japanese and people like Alois and the community at large were concerned about the breakdown in law and order that was happening around them. The catalyst which allowed this to happen was the lack of either active or passive authority requiring that a universal rule of ‘Japanese’ or any other form of law should prevail. This void was filled by the Sepik officials appointed by the Japanese who owing to lack of supervision or control become a law unto themselves.

By comparison the Australian civil administration actively enforced two levels of criminal law in New Guinea and recognized a third. The Queensland Criminal Code as adopted in the Trust Territory of New Guinea was applied in relation to indictable offences such as rape, murder and theft. The Native Administration Regulations (NARs) were applied in relation to Summary Offences such as minor assaults, census evasion and enforcement of health issues. Adultery was even an offense under the NARs. For the village people, it was a face saving mechanism as a sentence of six months jail usually cancelled out the tribal obligation to kill the offender. This in turn reduced the number of murders with which the courts needed to deal.

The third level of law recognized was customary law which was and is regarded as Common Law. In later years the Native Custom Recognition Act would acknowledge that ‘native’ custom was recognized except in cases where it was repugnant to statute law. This

would for instance allow Yam ceremonies and even initiation ceremonies but outlawed head hunting as it involved murder. A problem area in later years would be cannibalism which itself was not against the law. Recognition of 'native' custom was often a cause of differences between the Administration and the Missions as what the Missions regarded as 'pagan' for the most part was not against the law.

Knowledge that the law was there and brought punishment when contravened, meant the rule of law had become a passive norm of most tribal communities as long as there were *kiaps* and police in evidence in the community. As it was, the Sepik officials in 1943-44 behaved in a pseudo-military manner based upon their observation of the Japanese, and they fell back on the rules of traditional Sepik religious and customary practices focused on male initiation and progression through a patriarchal age class system. A key part of this had been the now outlawed custom of headhunting.

Headhunting resulted in and co-existed with a military hegemony under which warriors of certain tribal communities dominated other tribal communities. The authority for instance given by the Japanese to Mamba of Korogo coincided with the pre-existing hegemony in that region. Korogo villagers spoke the Nyaula dialect of the Iatmul language. The Iatmul were the former dominant headhunters of the Middle Sepik. Moreover, of the three Iatmul dialects, the Nyaula was the youngest and most aggressive. The primary victims of the Nyaula were the Sawos of the swamps and plains north of the Sepik River, the Chambri of the Chambri Lakes to the south, where Nyaula had been colonizing Islands since the 1930s, were also enemies. To a lesser extent some of their own people such as the Japandai and non-Iatmul peoples of the upstream Sepik River were also enemies on a periodic basis.³

In line with this 'traditional' authority, we saw the excesses of the Nyaula when called upon by Hodgekiss to kill the police at Sambugunde, and in the treatment of wives of village men absent fighting on the side of the Australians. Such wives left behind then found themselves under the authority of Japanese appointed Sepik officials. Given the opportunity, some Sepik men like men anywhere pursue personal interest, lust and greed when given the opportunity.

Bowdimi of Bangwingei tells of combined Japanese and Sepik official's attacks on his Manja people of the Sepik Plains :-

"Sarangu hamlet was wiped out by the Japanese and I who was just a child then was the only survivor. They killed my father Sur and another uncle Kabagauia. The Maiwis who were with the Japs came and shot us in this raid...It was soon after the Japs arrived that the Maiwi raided. Then the Sengos raided us...They took my mother Miwia and uncle Mandibanga back to Sengo and killed them with axes. Wogilagi a young man was shot with his wife Puragwa. Puragwa's child Wambilagwa was taken to Sengo and killed at the same time as Miwia.

Then the Japanese came, they were accompanied by (officials) Mamba and Timbun and Sui of Yanget. This last raid was near the end of the war. The raid occurred in the afternoon about 5pm. They had sent word that we were to gather meat and yams ready for the Japs. The group who gathered the food for the Japanese were men, women and children all together. The Japs came and accepted the food and then held the people by the arms – one Japanese to one Manja. They started bayoneting people and they shot the people who ran. The bayonets were held in the hand and they cut the necks and down into

the chests [swords – not bayonets]. They lined the bodies up in the men's house before they left. Six men were killed and two wounded.

They [the Sepik officials appointed by the Japanese] lied, saying that when the Americans were near Nungwaia and Bermok we reported to them about the Japanese and helped the Americans".⁴

The Manja people and the Kwimba nearby were traditional headhunting victims of the Nyaula, Maiwis and others. They were simple bush people who were easy victims, and no match for their Middle Sepik enemies. The full truth of any Manja association with Americans at Nungwaia is not known but it is easy to believe that all Mamba, Timbun and Sui needed to do was to plant an 'American' seed in the minds of the Japanese to further their traditional blood lust. There were many similar cases of killings by Nyaula officials against Sawos language communities. The actual source of the Japanese concern probably related to the fact that in February 1945 an Allied Intelligence Bureau party used Nungwaia as a temporary base behind Japanese lines. They had worked east from their operations around Kaflei south of present day Nuku.⁵

Other traditional victims of the Nyaula were the Chambri people of Wombun, Indingai and Kilimbit villages. Kabiwan of Kilimbit tells his story⁶:-

"I Kabiwan had four stripes Andiawi had five stripes. Andiawi took Kosimanga who was the wife of his brother Kisameri. She was brought to Andiawi's house. Then he took the young women from all his brothers and kept them in a house. His brothers and uncles complained and asked him to give them back. They came and complained to me and I went up to his house and spoke to him saying

'You are doing wrong. If you keep this up they will kill you' He replied:

'No they will not kill me' he replied. 'You can take these women back to their families, but the wife of Kosimanga stays. She is my wife now.'

I returned the other women to their families. Kisomeri went to Pagwi and complained to the Japanese. Ama Captain, the Japanese and the Nyaulas came. They went to our haus tambaran Koromogwi and they held a meeting. There were many Nyaulas there. They called for us two captains, Andiawi and I. We saw many Japs and Nyaulas sitting around and we were afraid. They asked Andiawi :

'What have you done with Kisomeri's wife?'

'She is my wife' He replied 'I paid for her so I have taken her'

'No, that is not good enough,' they said, 'you have made plenty of trouble'

The Japs, Nyaulas and Chambri's had already agreed (upon Andiawi's fate). He was brought up for court three times. They asked:

'Did you take an axe and strike Kisomeri?'

'Yes' . They asked about a spear and club as well and he admitted each.

I spoke up and said that I took each of the weapons from him to prevent a fight. But the Japs and the Nyaulas said 'He is a bad man and we will kill him.' They tied his hands and legs and he lay on the floor of the Koromogwi haus tambaran. I stood near Captain Sagimoto our Japanese detachment commander at Kilimbit. He told me.

'You go to the house they are going to kill Andiawi now.'

Later the Korogo captain our big leader Mambawandimi (Mamba) called me and said ‘They have killed your equal. Now are you afraid?’ We went together to the haus tambaran and I saw Andiawi’s body. It was all bloody because he had been killed with axes and spears. The Nyaulas said to Mamba and me ‘We could kill you too.’

*Mambawandimi said ‘Go back to your villages, or do you want me to call the Chambris to come and kill you?’ Now Mambawandimi told me.
‘We will burn down his house and cut down all his trees,’*

I objected. ‘We must not burn his house. Leave his things he has wives and children. His death is punishment enough.’

*Andiawi’s wives were brought outside and Mambawandimi addressed them.
‘It was not my desire to kill Andiawi. The Chambris and the Nyaulas conspired together to kill him and so your husband has been killed. I am telling you the truth.’...Andiawi left four widows. They were distributed among the Chambri captains so that they would not be mistreated by the village men. The 5th wife Kosimanga, over who the trouble had been, was returned to her husband Kisameri.”*

Kwonji takes up the story of Nambugei, a woman captured in a village whose name was not recorded :-

She was brought to Burui as a prisoner by Yisimblat. Several Burui had “married her”. I asked if she would like to return home. She said ‘No!’ because she had three children here now. Her father Uramo came to see her and I arranged for bride price/compensation price for her and he took it back with him.

The Australian and the Japanese fought openly. The fighting between different groups of Sepik people was hidden underneath [covert – sorcery implied]. This is still not settled; there are no compensation payments or peace as yet. The Japs did not take action against their captains [native officials] when they killed people. The officials lied to the Japs about supposed Australian allegiance held by the people [they killed] ...The Japs never inquired too deeply they just said “Gutpela! Gutpela!” [Good ! good!].”⁷

Ambunti Patrol report 2/1955-56 (Burui, Torembei & Middle Sepik- led by Patrol Officer Denys Faithful takes up Kwonji’s theme of unresolved issues⁸:-

“There has been and still is a lot of marital unrest in this area as a result of certain incidents, which occurred during the Japanese occupation. During that time many of the old troubles and disputes were revived and in the ensuing fights many people were killed in several groups. As a result of this certain headmen sought to make amends by presenting young women as wives to men of the group in which the former group had killed persons. Now many of the wives so won are seeking to leave their so-called husbands. Consequently the headmen responsible for the presentation of gift wives are finding themselves in an embarrassing situation.”

With the departure of the Japanese, came the previously unthinkable realization to those who had believed Japan to be the new colonial power in New Guinea, that the rule of Australian law would return. And with it, that there would be an accounting of wrong-doings perpetrated during the Japanese occupation. The rules of reciprocity were applied to

compensate for these 'wrongs', by providing compensations in the ever popular commodity of young female flesh. In some cases it worked e.g. Nambugei at Burui, and in others it did not as Kiap Denys Faithful reported. The village wounds of the Japanese occupation would take a long time to heal.

Mamba of Korogo became regarded by the Sepik Elders as the single worst of all the Sepik officials appointed by the Japanese. We met Mamba first in Chapter 19 playing his part at Sambugunde Island in the killing of the renegade police. Then in Chapter 24 he would have led the young Korogo men seeking recruitment by Captain Neptune Blood. In Chapter 29 he sought out the vanguard of the Japanese forces as they moved to occupy the Sepik villages, and was appointed as an official in their service. In Chapter 35 he captured Constable Baras and party at Yambiyambi.

Mamba became the leading Middle Sepik official and was the equal and counter-part of Karandaman of Malu in the Upper Sepik. He was described as a strong thickset young man of about 5feet 10 inches tall ['like Joseph Anganjuan'⁹] and the same age as Gauimeri [born approx. 1915] who said of Mamba.

"We played together as children at Korogo. He went first to Rabaul as a cook and then came to Angoram where he signed on as a Medical Orderly to work at Ambunti. After five years there he was transferred to Maprik. Then he came back to Korogo and became Catechist in place of Bonjui"¹⁰.

Nonguru recalls that Mamba was particularly hard on Japandai village people, and what they did to remedy Mamba's attitude :-

"The Korogos and Japanauts were like dogs after a pig; they sought Kiap Taylor. They beat our people with canes and gave water torture. Mamba's harshness was curbed a little when our people asked him to remember that in the past his own parents had been protected and looked after at Yaugusambi during their fight with Parembei. In his mellowed mood they gave him the girl Patjo. Her father told her that if she loved her father she would be strong and do as he told her and go to Mamba. She obeyed her father and she went. Mamba is now dead, and Patjo is still alive...she was like a bank for Japandai and for Australia; she was our insurance. Mamba was using his position to even old scores and the Japandai elders feared for their lives¹. When Mamba got Patjo the pressure was off both us and Kiap Taylor."¹¹

There was also an historic reason underlying Korogo village hatred of Japandai and in particular of Luluai Kemerabi. In the German colonial era Korogo was ousted for misdeeds from Nyauengai/Kandingai, the mother villages of the Nyaula people. The main war leader fighting against Korogo was the head-hunting leader Kemerabi who in 1942/3 was the old and respected Luluai of Japandai and father of informant Nonguru.

The Korogos went to their present village site at Lake Kuburuba which was just inside enemy Parembei tribal area. The Korogos being unable to turn back to Nyauengai and the war leader Kemerabi threw themselves on the mercy of Parembei and made a peace offering of teenage Korogo girls. To the immediate north of Korogo is Torembei village of the enemy Sawos people and along with Parembei they settled their differences with the Korogo outcasts and allowed them to live and reside on their land.¹²

Gau of Sengo explained that Mamba is credited with killing or being a party to killings in many villages.

“Mamba, Timbun and their line killed two of our people. One was our Japanese official Gau. He [Gau] had gone to Avatip by canoe to the market. They captured him at the Japanese camp at Avatip and took him back down to Japandai. They broke his arms and burnt him to death. Mamba and Kambugumeri were responsible. They did not eat him but buried the cooked body after mutilating him with axes as it is the fashion of fighting. The other man they took down to the mouth of the [Sengo] barat at the Sepik. They shot him. We brought the body back and buried him here. We have never back [pay back killing] these two men.”¹³

Towards the end of the war Kwonji of Burui was approached by the leaders of many Sepik communities to arbitrate on the fate of Sepik men who abused the rank the Japanese had given them. From this arbitration role Kwonji was able to provide an alternate perspective on the Sengo killings :-

“Sengo had an official – Gauinjamba. He was bad. Even before the war he was bad. Kiap Taylor knew him. I found that he was doing the wrong things so I took the Japandais with me. I shot him and I burned his body in a fire. His bosboi Wanebi we took down close to Avatip [where] Mamba shot him. When the Australians came back I told them and they said ‘Good. We gave him five years jail before the war and the war came and he was freed – Good work Kwonji...’”

Mamba was only indirectly involved in the death of highly respected Tultul Webieli of Parembei :-

“Our Tultul Webieli was an Australian supporter. He was our strong man. He brought the Yentchans from the bush of the Nogosop and he put the Suapmeri’s back on their land. He brought the Chambri’s back after they had gone to hide in the Timbunmeri bush and he made the peace with Korogo.”¹⁴

“Webieli was shot by the Japs. They said that he was meeting Catalinas and helping the allies. When I was a [Japanese] captain I always said stand your ground, never run...he ran and they shot him.”¹⁵

Informants Paila/Malasui and Taun/Gusangut of Parembei take up the story:-¹⁶

“The Japs decided to kill him. They came from Korogo...It was about 4 pm when they arrived. They told the people to gather. They sent us out to find the Tultul, on threat of one man being killed if we did not bring him in. We were afraid and went and hid in the bush. The Tultul and his wife had gone to Aibom and he came back while the Japs were still there. The Japs said – stand up in a line and take our baskets and fill them with sago and bring them down to the haus boi (Haus Tambaran) where a big talk is to be made. We did as they said. The Tultul came with a big bilum of sago. We assembled and the Japs took the Tultul. Webieli said:

‘You may have this large amount of sago that I have put on the bench. Plenty of times you have beaten me and threatened to kill me. Now you want to kill me’.

He ran from the haus tambaran to his house and took the shot gun. He fired from the house and the Japs surrounded him. We did not move from the haus tambaran. He went to a second house and cut the walls down so he had a clear line of vision and he fired twice. There was a flood and there was very little dry land. He went to a ficus tree and

positioned himself in a fork. He rested the gun and waited for the Japs – they came by canoe. He had only five cartridges – all bird shot. He fired all five to no effect. The Japs shot him through the right forearm and through the lower stomach – the shot came out through his back.

We had great sorrow. We gathered and heard the Jap's talk on the high ground near the present rest house. They said -

*'This big head of the English, we have now removed it. There will be no mourning for this man, not one woman or child will cry for him.'
We dug a grave and buried him.'*

Unfortunately for the Sepik people and for Mamba himself, his story does not end here.

End Notes Chapter 38

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- ¹ Yukio Toyoda & Hank Nelson – 2006 Page 290.
 - ² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 285
 - ³ Bragge L.W. The Japandai Migrations in Sepik Heritage Letkehaus et al Carolina Academic Press 1991
 - ⁴ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 204
 - ⁵ Patrol Report 22/45 Lieut Monk 8th to 18th Feb 1945
 - ⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 337
 - ⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Interviewee – Kwonji Page 185
 - ⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 Page 81
 - ⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Informant Nonguru. The writer knew Joseph Anganjuan and Mamba's description comes from the writers memory of Joseph Anganjuan Page 85
 - ¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 240 & 242. Bonjui was arguably Korogo's most famous man. He was a member of the Papua New Guinea Legislative Council in the early 1960s. His grave has place on honor in the centre of Korogo village.
 - ¹¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 85
 - ¹² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 pages 120 (Suapmeri), 123 (Indabu), 130
 - ¹³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 199
 - ¹⁴ These are all references to important Middle Sepik tribal movements and resolutions of the early 20th century.
 - ¹⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Gaudi of Indabu Page 123
 - ¹⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 145-6

Chapter 39 Issues of Sorcery – Manifestations in the Wartime Sepik - Payback and Retribution

It is the writer's firm belief that all Papuans and New Guineans, no matter how well educated or how well established in a professional career, acknowledge that sorcery is a real phenomenon and that it impacts the lives and thought processes of their people on a day to day basis. This applies equally in the 21st century as it did in 1943. Sorcery is a part of village life, in as much as it has been said that sorcery is the village policeman; the regulator that keeps personal behaviour within the confines of what is acceptable to custom. If someone does something that is unacceptable and fails to compensate – he or she should expect a sorcery consequence, the ultimate of which is “black magic” that kills people.

Sorcery is not just a thing of the past. As this is written in April 2015, four people have been accused of sorcery and could be put to death by burning. They currently await the arrival of a “Glassman” with mystical powers to prove whether they are sorcerers. The final line of the news item reads :-

Law reforms mean than any black magic killing is now treated as murder punishable by death in PNG.¹

If sorcery is such a powerful force, then why does it not work on Europeans? Nonguru/Kemerabi explained :-

“Sorcery works against us because the people who make the sorcery are our own. They know of our origins and can use this and their power to kill us. Sorcery will not work against you because we do not know your origins.”²

Prof. Peter Lawrence argued :-

“To be studied properly, sorcery and healing practices must be placed within the total cosmic framework that the people conceive to exist; not only in the human socio-political structure, and not only in the religious system, but simultaneously in both...”

What issues must...the people...settle if they opt to abandon sorcery as a logical system?...Legislative decrees...on their own will have little effect...The repeal of the Witchcraft Act in England in 1736 was possible only after the belief in the Black Art had been so discredited during the previous century that in the last witchcraft trial in 1718, the Judge remarked in response to one lurid piece of evidence that he knew of no law against flying...If villagers opt to abandon sorcery, they must achieve a comparative transformation of their cosmos...Like other peoples, the Garia claim that sorcery is used now more frequently than in the past because of the elimination of traditional fighting.”³

During the Japanese occupation, sorcery became a special focus for some village officials appointed by the Japanese. These officials were strongly of the view that the Australian administration, its legislators and law enforcers dismissed sorcery and did not punish sorcery offences with equal focus and sentences as they treated wilful murder. In Sepik eyes, killing was killing whether done openly as in headhunting or done covertly by sorcery. In their view the penalty should be the same.

The Legislators and Law enforcers were faced with problems of the laws of evidence as required by the British Justice system. They failed to find ‘hard evidence’ in sworn

statements based on traditional Melanesian religious beliefs which typically include the activities of spirits, magic, spells, invisibility and unassisted human flight.

The legislated penalties themselves were also a problem; it was not until the passing of the PNG Sorcery Ordinance in 1971 [later to become the Sorcery Act] that the maximum penalty for a sorcery conviction was raised from six months imprisonment with hard labour under the Native Administration Regulations (NARs) of 1924, to five years imprisonment. Even then section 5 of the Sorcery Act states :-

“Even though this Act may speak as if the powers of sorcery really exist [which is necessary if the law is to deal adequately with all legal problems of sorcery and the traditional belief in the powers of sorcerers], nevertheless nothing in this Act recognizes the existence or effectiveness of sorcery in any factual sense except only for the purpose of, and of proceedings under or by virtue of, this Act, or denies the existence or effectiveness of such powers.”

Townsend and other law enforcement officers stopped headhunting first by warnings during the investigation of the Japandai massacre of 1923/4 and then by arrests and willful murder convictions in the Supreme Court, which handed down death sentences. The convicted men were executed in public hangings of Sepik people at Ambunti, Jama, and Wewak. The hanging ropes were cut into lengths; one for each Haus Tambaran as a deterrent to any future plans for head hunting.

The hangings were said by the elders to have turned Sepik River head hunting off like a tap but, as with the Garia of the Madang District⁴, killing in the Sepik continued as before. But now the killing was done covertly by sorcery rather than overtly through warfare and violence at the points of spears and arrows. Sepik people had a problem with the Australian Administration which hanged those who killed openly, while those who killed through sorcery, for the most part went unpunished.

The cessation of the “Rule of Law” during the Japanese occupation meant that a mere accusation that an individual was a sorcerer amounted to a death sentence, as the following examples demonstrate :-

“The Korogos took the Torembei leaders Simbalanga and Yaramali to Korogo and killed them. They said they were sorcerers. These men were the two Torembei leaders who had taken the Korogos in [back in German times]. They should have respected these fathers and not killed them. This is still unsettled. There are still strong feelings over it.”⁵

Banji of Japanaut was accused of the sorcery killing of a man, a woman and a child. Complaints were made to the Japanese at Korogo. Mamba and Maliandambwi came, tied him up and put him in a canoe and took him to Korogo. At Korogo they cut him to death. It was the Korogos, not the Japanese who killed him. Killed with him was Jinjinmuruk [of Yamanumbu].

Mangaiwan & Tugwandimi of Korogo were both accused of being sorcerers and were killed at Korogo. Sugundalabi of Yamuk was accused of being a sorcerer. They took him to Korogo and killed him there”.⁶

Of critical importance in the Sepik cosmos are beliefs that all ceremonial and ritual matters were originally controlled by women. Sepik society is believed to have changed from matriarchal to patriarchal in ancient times. One of many legends on this transition relates the events as follows :-

“After the killing of Mai’imp⁷ the men went back to the place. The women were in their house playing their bamboo flutes. The men surrounded the house and killed the women. The flutes and tambarans, we now use, were originally the property of women. The men speared the woman and took the flutes and the tambarans, and this is why only men have them today. The women were originally the “big brother” and the men “the small brother” [meaning society was originally primarily matriarchal not patriarchal as it is today]. Just one woman escaped. She was a sorcerer who ran away with one flute.⁸ The implication is that women still have the power of sorcery passed down through time.

The Japanese lack of direct involvement in civil matters allowed an opening to correct this perceived wrong of the Australian Administration, by punishing the sorcerers. The Japanese appointed Gauimeri of Yamuk as an official and he was the man for the job of punishing the sorcerers. Gauimeri himself explains :-

“I was born in 1915 and... I went to Ambunti for a court over the murder of my mother and father by Torembei and Yamuk people. Then I went Sek Mission in Madang at age 9 with Father Kirschbaum at the time when Ambunti was being established (1924) I stayed there for 9 years and became a Catechist and went to Marui. I worked at Aibom, Chambri, Gaikarobi and Nogosop for six years in the pre-war period and then I worked with Dr. Christian (Medical Assistant) as a Doctor Boi (Medical Orderly). When Kiap Ellis committed suicide I came with two Korogo women and we went ashore at Korogo.

The Japanese came to Marui and I went to see them... Planes came and bombed Marui and the Mission house burnt down. The Japanese scattered and all the villages had a detachment of Japanese. I was appointed (as a Jap official) with three stripes...

Yaugundimi of Sarum, Mainbanga and Jigi of Marap and Oungawi of Yakiap came to me and reported sorcery. They asked to kill the sorcerers, so I said ‘Kill them’. The Japs said ‘We want nothing to do with this, it is your affair. We came to fight another country’

The Japanese Captain I spoke to was Seima who was under the big Captain Amatai Tasutana. The Japs did not see the women or the killings. We killed 26 of them all told. We did not see the sorcery or the sorcery implements. It was on the report of the people that I authorized them to be killed. But I took pity on two – Guwabi from Sarum and Mabuoli from Yakiap because they were young and I could not see them killed. I thought: ‘They will have families later I will risk their sorcery’.⁹”

Ex Luluai and four stripes Jap official Usinbanga of Yakiap takes up the story :-

“A Yamuk woman died and a report went to the Japanese. Men came and took eight women from here, eight women from Sarum and eight women from Marap... The line with Gauimeri came around to collect the women, they came first to Marap then to Sarum and by the time they reached here it was night... They came to the haus kiap and they called me and told me to line the people for a meeting but there was no meeting. They just

marked the women who were to go with them. They told me I could come with them...we went and they imprisoned the women in a house at Yamuk and they raped them until dawn. I went close and they said 'go and find somewhere to sleep'. I went to a house and heard the screams and cries until dawn.

In the morning they planted two posts, one at each end of a house and put a beam across. They tied the women's hands to the beam. They took their skirts off and they came with coconut frond torches and burned their vaginas until all the hair was gone...They decorated them with flowers...They were raped and tortured for two days and two nights. Some were distributed to Korogo. At Yamuk they dug...a grave and killed them one at a time. They were held on the edge of the hole and cut until the meat hung off their legs and arms then they were speared and shot and thrown into the hole. I was there, but I took no part I was afraid of them [i.e. afraid of the rapists and killers].

After killing them they all took part in a traditional head hunting singsing. They killed pigs and made a big feast. After the war when the Australians returned I went to Burui to court with Mr. Tom. [Aitchison] All the Yamuks went to jail. They marked eight girls from Yamuk to come here but they did not send them. We just got one and she was from Miambai. [She] married here and had eight children and they are the replacement for our eight dead.”¹⁰

Patrol Officer Kershaw, during a patrol in June & July 1946, noted a patrol aim :-

“To investigate reports of 16 female native deaths at Yakiap and Sarum in Jap occupation. Separate report forwarded”.¹¹ “In the village of Vagiput and Yanget two suicides have been reported. These resulted from ostracism and beatings administered by two natives of Wereman. It was claimed that the two had carried out acts of sorcery so those offenders took it upon themselves to administer punishment. The deceased, unable to stand the indignity of being accused of such an act coupled with the agony as a result of the beatings, committed suicide by hanging themselves.”¹²

The ultimate Sepik judgment of Gauimeri's action against alleged sorcerers appears to be that he survived the retribution of being killed, as many other Jap appointed officials had survived, during or following the Japanese surrender. The probable conclusion to be drawn is that his stand against sorcery was widely seen as a just cause.

End Notes Chapter 39

¹ ABC news Wednesday 22nd April 2015 – Four accused of witchcraft in Papua New Guinea's Highlands; Locals threaten to burn them to death.

² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 82.

³ Lawrence P The Garia view of Sorcery in Sorcerer and Witch in Melanesia ed M Stephen. Melbourne University Press 1987 Page 33.

⁴ Lawrence P argo Cult and Religious Beliefs among the Garia

⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 217 – informant Titus Warabung of Torembei

⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 392 – informant Paul Banji

⁷ An important cultural Iatmul and Sawos hero often equated to Jesus.

⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – informant Councillor Dambwi of Gaikarabi Page 264

⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 240-241

¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 246-248

¹¹ No copy of that report was found on the Ambunti or Pagwi files

¹² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 Page 72.

**Attachment E Allied Planning for Post War PNG - the Changing Role of
ANGAU Personnel Feb. 1944 =>**

From August 1943 onwards the Japanese had spread throughout the Sepik hinterland in such numbers as to make the continued presence of ANGAU personnel impractical. The Moss Troops base of operations was shifted from Lake Kuvinmas to Yellow River after Japanese patrols engaged Blood's party at Kuvinmas in August, and Macgregor's party at Yimas in September. Even the Yellow River operation was called off after the Japanese bombed the base there. Finally on 6th February 1944 Boisen's patrol was stood down having safely returned to Mt Hagen. Thus the last ANGAU presence in the Sepik District was withdrawn.

While the war continued along the north coast with the Japanese 18th Army being driven westward towards and into the Sepik District, senior ANGAU staff were called to a meeting in Port Moresby. They were required to produce discussion papers for the meeting that was held from the 7th to 12th February 1944¹.

Major General Morris said in his opening address that ANGAU was a military unit and as such it had no power to commit any future civil administration to any policy or course of action. However :-

"...we can and will build up such an organization for the benefit of the natives in particular and the Territories in general, that when it comes time to hand over to our successors, we can say 'This is a going concern.'...we have the chance of a lifetime. Those who have been in the Territories' Service before, know that we are now not hampered to anything like the former degree in the matter of finance. I venture to say that, if we build on the right lines, there will be no government of the Commonwealth of Australia which will say that it is too costly and that it will have to be cut out again".

General Morris cautioned the meeting of the military as well as the civil nature of ANGAU operations :-

"...in certain areas, ...native administration as we know it, and as we want it to be, must take a back seat because of operational necessities...However, as soon as it is possible (and it is happening in some districts already), we shall revert to the principles under which we consider native administration should be carried out... Shortly we hope that there will be no District where actual fighting is in progress..."

General Morris concluded by saying :-

"...it is the 'visionaries' who create the germs of ideas which later develop into big policies. Remember Ion Idriess' book 'Flynn of the Inland'. There was a man with vision from which great good came. Let us have vision lest the Territories perish."

The chairman of the conference, Brigadier Cleland, described how on the outbreak of war, the Commonwealth of Australia suspended the two separate civil administrations of Papua and New Guinea and they were placed under the military administration. ANGAU was formed and of necessity in facing a common foe, administering Papua and New Guinea as a single entity.

He cautioned that after cessation of hostilities, it was not for ANGAU to assume that there would be an amalgamation of both Territories but the seeds were planted in fertile minds.

Cleland said that for the immediate purposes of ANGAU, the conference needed to address two considerations:

1. Establishment of the status quo in each Territory with such administrative variations as are essential under existing conditions, and
2. An examination of the policies of each Administration with a view to formulating a common progressive policy applicable to both Territories. That policy must be of such a nature that even if the Territories are not eventually amalgamated, it can still be applied in and to the separate entities.

The conference papers were then presented in pairs on related topics.

Major N.Penglase spoke on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea.

Captain W R Humphries spoke on the Administration of Papua.

Major L Austen (Papua) and Major J.L.Taylor (NG) spoke on Native Welfare.

Major D Vertigan (NG) and Lt S.Elliott-Smith (Papua) spoke on Native Labour.

Lieut J.B.McAdam spoke on Land tenure and policy

There were also papers on Agriculture, and Native Education.

The Territory of New Guinea had the principles of the League of Nations Mandate upon which native policy was based, but these principles were dated and very basic:

1. The material and moral well-being and social progress of the natives.
2. The prohibition of slavery and forced labour.
3. The prohibition of the supply of intoxicating liquor and beverages to natives.

Humphries discussion of the Papuan administration reflected the ghost and philosophies of the recently deceased (1940) Governor Sir Hubert Murray as the font of all policy...and wistful personal reverence for a great man... *'To most of us magistrates he was a brother, a stern elder brother...'*

In areas of policy, both strengths and short comings were evident. A fundamental feature of the land policy of Papua was to be found in the promises made to the natives of the country in 1884 in the name of Queen Victoria. These promises made it clear that native ownership of land would be recognized and protected by the Government of the country. On the other hand nothing was done directly by the Administration in the way of native education. What little that was done was done by the Missions. In this way the representatives of each Territory set out the then current status quo.

It is clear from the active discussion of each topic and obvious interest in the history of how things were done by the 'other' administration, that the carefully chosen words of General Morris and Brigadier Cleland had captured the imagination of the officers who would soon be the Department heads and senior officers in the post war administration - which from 1947 would be amalgamated into the single entity of Papua New Guinea.

Major J L Taylor, perhaps more than any other presenter in the conference, had taken up General Morris' challenge to be a visionary. He concluded his presentation by saying that his paper was intended to be provocative and that :-

"I am aware that all my recommendations may not be acceptable at the present time... but I hope that those that are, will be implemented by the Command with a vigour that past civil administrations have not been capable of, and that there will be close liaison between the Army and the Department of External Territories of the Commonwealth"

Government, in order that what we achieve now will dovetail into the structure that is to be set up by the future civil administration”

His recommendations were divided into immediate and future:

IMMEDIATE

1. The return home now of all married indentured labourers who desire to do so.
2. Anthropological research and demographic investigation into the present condition of the native population.
3. Economic survey of the coastal and sub-coastal areas with a view to resumption of such plantations as may be necessary for the establishment of a native agricultural industry.
4. The recognition of ANGAU as a specialist unit, advising the Command as to the correct attitude to native people.
5. The injustice of charging New Guinea natives with treason.
6. That the financial side of the problems involved receive immediate consideration and that the Commonwealth Government be requested, through the correct channels, to set aside the necessary funds.

FUTURE

1. That the aim of Australian rule in these parts is to build up a vigorous native population of ten million with an Australian outlook and culture, and that in consequence of this, native industry and agriculture will be encouraged and that no alienation of land will be permitted which is dependent on large numbers of native employees, until it is proven that the employment of such numbers will not be injurious to the native population.
2. That a policy of compulsory free secular education be established as soon as the enemy is expelled from the country.
3. That the Commonwealth Government be advised that returned soldiers be trained as teachers, medical assistants, agricultural and veterinary advisers, native administrators etc., and that any system of soldier settlement be along the lines suggested – that is – as public servants, not as agricultural settlers.
4. That the indentured labour system be revised as soon as practicable, and that on resumption of Civil Government, a Native Labour Bureau be established to facilitate the employment of labour, employment to be on the basis of one month’s notice either way.
5. That special provision is made for the employment of nursing sisters, adequately paid, in the Health Department of the country to work among the native people in an endeavour to increase the survival rate of women and children.

It was not surprising then, given this level of concern for Papuan and New Guinean welfare, that Major Taylor was selected along with anthropologist Ian Hogbin to be appointed to a committee chaired by barrister J V Barry. The committee was to make recommendations to the Australian Government concerning war damage compensation. As a result, a generous scheme was adopted that allowed compensation for death, injury, and loss of property that was directly or indirectly connected with the war and whether caused by the Japanese or the Allies.²

End Notes Attachment E

¹ The quotes in this Chapter all come from the papers presented at the “Conference of Officers of Headquarters and Officers of District Staff” Port Moresby 7th to 12th February 1942. – Paper entitled THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORY OF PAPUA

² Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson – Tokyo 2006 Pages 341/2

Chapter 40 Allied and Japanese Actions and Strategies Which Impacted the Sepik – the Tide of Battle Turns and Tribesmen Re-adjust Feb. - April 1944

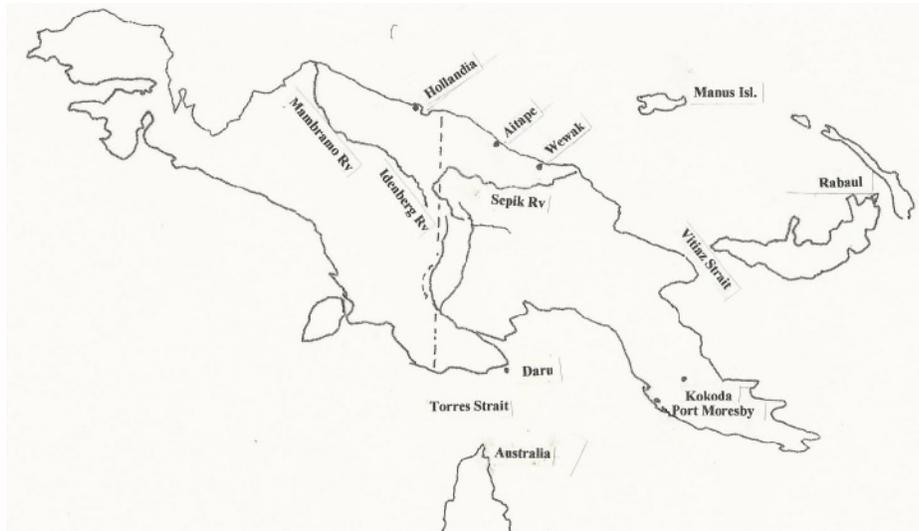
On 17th February 1944 there was a large scale air raid on Japanese facilities at Truk in the Caroline Islands. In this raid nearly all the aircraft at Truk were destroyed. The Japanese Commander in chief of the combined fleet replenished lost aircraft by ordering the transfer of all air force units stationed in Rabaul to Truk. So from 20th February 1944 Rabaul had no naval air cover. US troops, with full knowledge of the weakened Japanese air support, landed on Manus in the Admiralty Islands on 29th February and captured Hyane airstrip within a day¹, although it was not until 18th May that Manus was wholly re-captured. Its strategic importance for the Japanese was effectively neutralized as soon as they lost their air cover. For the Allies, there were at least four strategic consequences of this:

1. Rabaul was isolated and with it 75,000 Japanese troops and about 40,000 Japanese sailors and marines on New Britain and New Ireland who became unavailable to the war effort.
2. The allies now had free passage through the Dampier Straits and with it, unlimited capacity to wage military operations against the Japanese along the New Guinea north coast.
3. Japan's New Guinea supply line from Truk to Rabaul was disrupted.
4. Momote air base in the Admiralty Islands would be of strategic importance in the allied offensive to re-capture the Philippines.

Under this growing allied threat, on the 14th March 1944 Imperial Headquarters ordered the transfer of the Japanese 18th Army and the 4th Air Army to West New Guinea. Once transferred, and as from the 25th March, all troops would be under the command of the Commander in Chief of the 2nd Air Army, Korechika Anami. It would be his task to plan a decisive battle with US forces in West New Guinea.²

The orders of the U.S. Integrated General Staff as of March 28, 1943 were that after the capture of the Admiralty Islands, US forces were to attack Rabaul. This order changed in August 1943 to undertake landings at Hansa Bay. Then on March 5th 1944 McArthur proposed to the Integrated General Staff that he isolate the Japanese forces in Madang, Hansa Bay and Wewak by attacking Aitape and Hollandia towards the end of April. Such a strategy would also hasten the progress towards the Philippines by several months.

The Americans had cracked the Japanese radio code and so were aware of the instructions that Lieut. General Adachi was to move his 18th Army westwards. New Guinea's river systems could easily facilitate such a movement. The Sepik River in the Australian mandate and the Idenberg/Mambramo River system in Dutch New Guinea each flows northwards from the central range. The Idenberg/Mambramo River then swings to the west. The Sepik, after its northern leg, turns east in a mirror image of the Mambramo system. In the area of the Green and October River tributaries of the Sepik, each of the Sepik and Mambramo River systems have navigable water with a mere 40 kilometers or so separating them. Despite formidable logistical challenges, it was feared that Adachi's army could achieve this transfer by moving up the Sepik River, then cross the 40 kilometers of low-lying easy country and then canoe or raft their way west-north-westward down the Idenberg/Mambramo Rivers to reach the Pacific Ocean some 800 kilometers west of the mouth of the Sepik River.



The possibility of such a move had been inhibited until December 1943 by the presence of the Moss Troops at the Yellow River/Sepik River junction. But in early 1944 there was no intelligence capacity in the region to observe anything that the Japanese might be doing. The decision was taken then to return Stanley to the area south of Lumi he had occupied up until the previous December. This was done in March 1944. At a later date two additional parties led by Lieutenants Hall and Fryer would be placed into the Sepik River area to monitor Japanese movement.³

Meanwhile the progressive re-capture of airbases such as Nadzab in the Markham valley allowed the air offensive to rapidly penetrate ever further into Japanese controlled areas. The story of the US 345 Bombardment Group as told in Floyd Raymond Jensen's *'Southwest Pacific Tour of Duty February 1944 to May 1945'*⁴ provides a summary of the impact of allied air superiority during this part of the war :-

"In early 1944 the 345th was very active along the Sepik coastline. During this period the Japanese had been ferrying in new planes and there were so many of them the planes were placed at airfields around Wewak. On the 2nd February 1944 twenty one straffers from the 345th attacked Dagua exactly at noon. They found seventy Japanese aircraft parked out in the open and swept the airstrip and parked aircraft from end to end with machine gun fire and Para frags. Included in the tally were a dozen Japanese bombers lined up along the airstrip ready to take off on an apparent mission. Fuel dumps and Anti-Aircraft positions were also destroyed in the attack."

The ship 'Dorish Maru' and the civilians on board had the misfortune to sail into such an air-offensive on the 6th February 1944. [The 'Dorish Maru' incident is discussed in Chapters 42 and 44] . Floyd Jensen continues :-

"On the 19th of March 1944 the 345th scrambled planes to attack a reported supply convoy of three merchant ships, a small 'sea-truck' and three escorting 100 ton sub-chasers, which had unloaded at Wewak on the night of the 18th March. The attack aircraft arrived to find the ships fleeing the area. They left the sea 'swept clear of ships'. Thereafter the Japanese sent no more resupply convoys to Wewak. The air offensive over Wewak continued from 20th to 31st March 1944 hitting troop camps, AA positions and any shipping or barge movements at sea. It was known that the 4th Air Army had been ordered to withdraw to Hollandia, so the efforts of the 345th shifted in that direction."

General Adachi at this time must have been in a seriously unenviable position having to decide between various orders and realities that were pressed upon him and his troops. He was ordered to move his army westward but did not have the means of transport to do so. His supply lines were cut and his army as a result was starving. He was aware that the heavily populated Prince Alexander Mountains centered on Maprik could provide the best chance for his army to live off the land but the intensity of allied air action against his troop concentrations at Hansa Bay and Wewak gave every indication of a pending allied landing and assault in either of these areas, thus requiring defenders to be in place to repulse attempted landings.

Meanwhile a coast watching party was landed near Hollandia to obtain information prior to the landings there. Captain G.C. 'Blue' Harris, whom we met during "New Britain's Little Dunkirk operation", led a party which was put ashore from a submarine at Tanamerah Bay some 30 miles west of Hollandia. The party landed on a beach on the night of 22nd/23rd March 1944 and contacted native people in huts on the beach. Harris was not comfortable with what he sensed of these people and sent a message to the submarine 'Washout' which meant - do not land the rest of the party. The message was misunderstood and the remainder of the party [Lieut. R.B. Weber, Sgt R.J. Cream, Privates J.I. Bunning, G. Shortis and P.C. Jeune and of the RPC Sgt Major Yali, Sgts. Mas and Buka and Pte. Mariba plus Indonesian interpreter Sgt Lancelot] were landed.

The natives in the meanwhile had informed the Japanese and the coast watching party came under attack. Harris, Bunning and Shortis drew the fire while Yali [later of Cargo Cult fame on Madang's Rai coast] Buka, Mariba, Webber and Jeune remained under cover. Mariba was then killed and Yali and Buka made their escape. Not knowing where else to go they headed east in the hope of reaching Australian territory. Yali made it to Aitape and reported to the ANGAU officer in charge. Buka who was weak from exhaustion near Vanimo was separated from Yali and apparently captured by the Japanese.

After Bunning and Shortis were killed, Harris who was severely wounded and out of ammunition was captured and interrogated. He refused to talk and he was bayoneted to death. Webber, Jeune [and presumably the rest of the party] remained undetected and survived on almost no food for four weeks until the US landing enabled them to make contact with friendly troops.⁵ The full tale of this sad episode is told by Feldt in Chapter 22 of his book 'The Coastwatchers'.

The allied air campaign against Hollandia commenced on 30th March with two daylight raids by B-24s with strong fighter support. Aerial photography indicated that over 200 aircraft were destroyed on the ground. The attack continued on the 1st to the 3rd of April when the largest air attack to that time was launched against Hollandia. The primary targets were the revetments containing aircraft. The Hollandia raids cost the Japanese nearly four hundred aircraft in less than a week.⁶ These airstrikes were leading up to the allied landings on 22nd April. The situation as reviewed by Kengoro Tanaka was :-

*"On April 21, about 600 planes including enemy carrier borne planes bombed and strafed our positions and our air-force were annihilated. The enemy's landing was carried out under such conditions."*⁷

In January 1944 ANGAU's District Services issued a report which analysed what ANGAU officers might expect of local communities as they re-captured Japanese held areas. The report said in part⁸:-

“The following comment from a District Officer on the effect of Japanese Military occupation on the native inhabitants may be taken as indicative of the experience to be met with in the immediate future:

...in the case of natives in areas which have been completely dominated by the Japs, it appears to me that when the Japs were in control, the greater number of natives were inclined to scoff at our ability to drive them off – a typical kanaka attitude. There were however, small but influential groups who resented the Jap invasion and rendered invaluable service to our troops. The majority were elated to some degree by the fact that our control over them had been removed and that the Japs, being new, would be much the same to deal with and as easily imposed upon as a ‘new master.’ They placed him in the same category as they placed, in civil times, a new European arrival in the Territory. To some degree their expectations were realized. This attitude was somewhat modified when the Japs killed some of their animals, robbed their gardens, beheaded one native and threatened to behead more if they did not obey Jap orders to come and work. These incidents took place in early days of occupation but the Jap quickly realized his error and swung native opinion in his favour by stopping such actions.

The natives favoured the Japs, not from any dislike of us, but because of the fact that they were able to throw off the obligations and restrictions placed on them by our Administration. They did not really care who was in control of the country so long as they were left alone.

Since the re-occupation by our troops the opinions, feelings and attitude of these natives towards us have undergone revolutionary changes. They consider that as we are sufficiently strong to rout the Japs, we are to be admired and respected for our strength and they feel it is good to be administered in the old way to which they had become accustomed.

The position of those natives who have been under our control is completely different – the question is not so much the change of attitude of the native towards us, but the change in our attitude towards him. We have learned to treat him with sympathy and understanding whereas formerly we were inclined to regard him as a child to be led and disciplined into observing law and order, and a source of cheap labour, we have grown to admire his resource and courage, his ability to overcome individualism and his ability to co-operate in a common enterprise. Our attitude towards him has changed and he has responded in a manner, we in our fondest dreams, had never anticipated. When the Jap was successful and we were being driven back, but fought the Jap while retreating, the native’s attitude was ‘wait until the masters are ready and have the equipment, they will drive the Japs out.’

Having driven the Japs out, the admiration and respect towards us of these natives has increased to a remarkable degree, and further because of our [by ‘our’ I mean those who have been with him in forward areas and in isolated posts] new understanding of them, I am of the opinion that their admiration and respect towards us increased. They are elated at what we and they regard as a mutual achievement through co-operation.

Natives in recaptured areas have been more greatly impressed by our return because officers informed them before evacuation that we would return in a year or two.

All natives, except a few opportunists who seized power during the Jap occupation, have been most impressed by our ability to drive the Japs from captured areas. Those who have worked with us are elated and inclined to look down on natives who remained 'neutral'; their attitude towards natives who helped the Japs is hostile and during the first week in this area strict watch has to be kept on natives suspected of helping the Japs in order that boys from carrier lines and RPC did not "do them over."

The attitude of the natives in areas formerly under Jap control, upon our return, was one of fearful anticipation – this was indicated by their general demeanor – they wanted to welcome our return but were not sure of the attitude we would adopt towards them. Since seeing that we are continuing with our former methods of administration they have been cooperating enthusiastically in the work of reconstruction."

ANGAU tended to divide the population of areas occupied by the Japanese into three categories:

1. The loyal – police and some village officials and volunteers who fought alongside and sometimes died with the Australians.
2. Innocent villagers who were caught in the middle and who were sometimes forced to cooperate with the Japanese. This group was the majority of the population.
3. The disloyal, who voluntarily joined the Japanese, spoke of their support and who used their position with the Japanese to rape, murder and assault the civil population. These were identified, quietly hunted down and exterminated.⁹

As for the Allied and Japanese troops facing each other, it was their duty to their respective Governments to kill or be killed. The convention of war covering the treatment of prisoners of war, was contained in The Hague Regulations of 1899 and 1907. These were found wanting in several areas by the experiences of World War 1. ***The Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva July 27th 1929*** as drawn up by the International Red Cross, did not replace the Hague regulations, but corrected the identified deficiencies.¹⁰ The international community, including Japan, signed the Geneva Convention covering treatment of POWs. But Japan did not ratify it because it claimed that surrender was contrary to the beliefs of Japanese soldiers.

The Japanese code of battlefield conduct (*Sebjinkun*), which was issued to all Japanese soldiers, included a prohibition upon being taken prisoner. Propaganda on the subject celebrated people who fought to the death rather than surrendering.¹¹

The chances of the Golden Rule of Reciprocity, i.e. treat the enemy as you would have him treat you - an occasional feature of conflict between Britain and Germany in World War 1 - had little chance of shining through each side's fear of atrocities by the other in New Guinea in World War 2.

These realities included Japanese fears of being killed if taken prisoner. For their part, the Allies were reluctant to take prisoners because of the Japanese practice of booby trapping their own dead and wounded to prevent surrender, or pretending to surrender in order to lure allied troops into ambushes. Allied attitudes hardened. Ultimately it was accepted that the Japanese would not surrender, and that any indication of a willingness to surrender was taken as a deception.¹²

End Notes Chapter 40

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- ¹ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Pages 79-80
 - ² Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Pages 79-81
 - ³ Feldt 1946 Pages 375-376
 - ⁴ Wikipedia entry
 - ⁵ Feldt Pages 367-373
 - ⁶ Floyd Raymond Jensen's *Southwest Pacific Tour of duty February 1944 to May 1945* Pages 4&5
 - ⁷ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 85.
 - ⁸ ANGAU War Diaries Appendix A Feb 44 file reference DS 29/18/7 January 1944 Pages 2-4
 - ⁹ Yulio Toyoda & Hank Nelson Tokyo 2006 22
 - ¹⁰ Wikipedia – The Geneva Convention (1929)
 - ¹¹ Wikipedia – Japanese prisoners of war in World War 2 pages 3&4 of 11
 - ¹² Wikipedia – Japanese prisoners of war in World War 2 Pages 3&4 of 11

Chapter 41 Starvation, Malnutrition and Related Illnesses Take Their Toll on Both Japanese and Sepik Locals

With supply lines cut, the Japanese occupation of the Sepik could only be sustained by the 18th Army being supplied with food by host villagers. The circumstances of each detachment and each host village varied greatly. The personalities and attitudes of people on either side, the relative populations and whether the Japanese were long term residents with organized supply arrangements in place, or merely passing through, all influenced the situation. A cross section of village experiences is recorded here. The feature in common to all was that the Japanese were desperate for food and a combination of the lack of it and the poor food value of sago meant that many died of starvation, malnutrition and related illnesses. As the Allies entered the Japanese held areas, they found evidence of sickness, starvation and death not only among the Japanese, but also among the village people as well.

Tamandi of Yanget said the Japanese came to their place...

“ We worked hard looking after them...they made no trouble while they were here. If we did not help them they would have killed us, so we helped them and they did not kill us. We killed pigs and found fish. We traded food for them and grew gardens for them. Some places did not help them and they killed the people and the people killed them.

They went with the women to make sago. Some of them died while they were here...died of starvation. The bombers came and their compasses told them that we were with the Japanese but we were over here and the Japs were over there. They dropped the bombs to kill the Japs but they did not kill Japs they killed two of us. One Jap died his name was Gumaji. He had not been exhumed. His grave is not marked. He was buried with our two. Six other Japs died here too.”¹

At Nagotimbit, the elder Painbanga told how relations between Japanese and locals were less amicable :-

“They finished our food and killed our pigs and dogs. They tied us, me in particular to coconut palms, with our necks tied back to the tree. This was to force us to provide food for them. If the food did not come, the man was not freed. A big hole near the rest house had been dug and the Japanese said they would kill us all and bury us in that hole if we did not feed them.”²

The Japanese were remembered around Yangoru in 1971 :-

“The Japanese were widely liked and respected in the Sepik District during the war. Soldiers’ names are remembered as are Japanese words and phrases. We have been told that the Japanese were good people because they behaved themselves, they lived in the villages, they ate local food and tried to learn local languages”³

The Elders of Sarum admitted :-

“We were afraid of them and we did what they wished, which was mainly to supply them with food. They did not eat well and three of them died here of illness and were buried here. They did not kill any of us and we did not kill any of them. The Japanese were not as bad as their Sepik Officials. They [the appointed Sepik Officials] came in

here and abused our women and shot our pigs and dogs for food. They lined us up and said 'your sorcery is killing us'...they took eight of our women for sorcery..."⁴

Yagi of Yerikai tells :-

"...we had to feed them and we were in fear of death if we did things wrong. We feared cannibalism from them because we heard they killed and ate a Malu man called Bandinambok at Maprik. They bayoneted him and cut him up and cooked him and some of the meat was eaten before it was properly cooked.

There were three Japs at Garamambu for about a year, the big line was at Timbunmeri [a nearby Island in the Chambri Lakes]. Our three were Takanau, Isikata and Ivoyama. They had no food and we fed them. Ivoyama was always sick. Takanau was up a tree getting food. I was in the house and saw Ivoyama write a note and put it on the table. He put a cartridge in his rifle and put the barrel up under his chin and pulled the trigger with his toe. The bullet came out through the top of his head and through the roof. Takanau up the tree nearly fell to the ground.

The two left alive said 'he was a real man'. They dressed him in full uniform. We watched the Japs closely thinking they might be going to shoot us. We were close enough to hold them if we needed to. They told us to make ourselves presentable for the burial. They cut the thumb off the body and said that they would send it to the man's parents...

He put the thumb in his pocket and we carried the body and buried him. The two Japs said he would be reincarnated as four or five men. The two went to Timbunmeri and soon after the Japs said they would be leaving because the Australians were winning the war. They made us prepare a lot of sago so they had something to eat as they went to Maprik."⁵

The Councillor of Miambei and Usinbanga of Yakiap told how :-

"Asandambuta⁶ was what the Japanese called the way to Burui via Torembei Kampupu and Bensim. Sougoranjumbuta was the way to Marui via Yamuk. These were the routes by which we carried food to Burui. We became tired of it, so we carried it to the Sepik via Yamuk and went by canoe."⁷

Councilor Mebiangen of Wombun described the situation in the Chambri Lakes :-

"There were Japanese detachments at Peliaugwi – 10 soldiers, Mensuat big place had 12 Japs led by Captain Marimoto, The Yambiyambi detachment was under Captain Yigimoto. There were also detachments at Changriman and Timbunmeri. The following Japs died of illness:

Changriman 3, Yambiyambi 1, Peliaugwi 1

They did not harm us, we had to feed them. When the war ended we took them to Chambri and the Chambris took them to Korogo and they left."

The Sepik staple food sources are sago and fish in the Middle Sepik and the Sepik Plains. Sago is pure starch. This is carbohydrate with very little food value. The Prince Alexander Mountains area supports a very large indigenous population whose staple food consists of

several species of yams. Many Japanese were living throughout this region and requiring the indigenous population to feed them. We will visit them shortly as ANGAU supported American and later Australian patrols probing into the interior from the north coast.

As combat patrols penetrated into the hinterland after the Aitape landing, Japanese dead were found along tracks through the area. They had died of starvation or related illnesses. Aitape Patrol 1/1943/44 in the Serra and Sissano Lagoon hinterland counted 18 such dead soldiers during eight days in the field in May 1944. Aitape Patrol 2/1943/44 in the area of Chinapelli and south to Yapunda and beyond did not specifically count dead Japanese but the patrol diary noted them on a daily basis in groups of three or four.

End Notes Chapter 41

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 155

² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 227/8

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 227/8

⁴ Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 17 Page 249

⁵ Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 18– Yagi of Yerikai Page 14

⁶ Sadly the spelling of these words have no doubt suffered from memory of names last heard three decades earlier and from the writer's capacity to record the phonetic spelling of what he thought he heard.

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Informant Usinbanga of Yakiap. Page 248

Chapter 42 The ‘Dorish Maru’ Incident – Missionaries Slaughtered by Friendly Fire Jan.-March 1944

Writer’s note :- This chapter and Chapter 44 combine the observations of both Lutheran and Catholic missionaries of the disastrous voyage of the Dorish Maru. Brother Hagan’s record from the Catholic perspective was based upon his personal observations at the time, whereas the Lutheran version was published by Esther Docktor Wegenast in 1998 over half a century after the event from interviews and diaries of some of the Lutherans involved.

The fundamental differences in the Christian teachings of the two missions and attitudes to each other had its root in Germany in the early 1600s as the Protestant leaders Luther and Calvin led their followers away from Catholicism. With the establishment of Lutheran and Catholic missions in German New Guinea, each sought to convert “heathen” New Guineans to the “true” Christian beliefs, which each mission said was their teachings, and not that being taught by the “other” mission. A phrase was later coined in the Sepik for the division in an ever increasing number of conflicting Christian denomination teachings – “The Sordid Scramble for Souls.”

These divisions are worthy of note in this context. Although the Lutherans and Catholics lived and died together and respected each other under the oppression of their Japanese guards, the story tellers from each side barely acknowledge the other party in their version of the ‘Dorish Maru’ voyage and related events. In writing chapters 42 and 44, I have pieced together as best I can what actually happened.

We left the Lutheran missionary prisoners-of-war on Rargetta [Kranket] Island in late February 1943. Their Catholic counterparts at Alexishafen were eventually allowed by the Japanese to move inland to Gubaya in April 1943 to plant gardens well away from the focus of increasingly intense allied bombing. The story from the Lutherans perspective continues.

Rargetta Island in Madang harbour, which became a prison for the Lutherans, is on the flight path to and from Madang airstrip. Allied air attacks on Japanese planes and bombing runs of Japanese facilities made it essential that the missionaries dug air raid trenches, and they did their best to make a copra dryer into an air raid shelter. They learned to tell the difference between the sound of a Japanese aircraft engine and that of US planes. It was the US planes they feared the most. Their nerves were quickly in tatters.

The Japanese sentries were suspicious of any prisoner activities and movements, and this resulted in fishing being forbidden and visits to the gardens on nearby Pig Island being placed out of bounds. When, of necessity, the missionaries planted gardens on Rargetta Island, the Japanese claimed that the layout of the agricultural plantings provided coded messages for allied aircraft; that the missionaries were engaging in espionage. Church Services were attended by both natives and missionaries until the Japs forbade the gathering of the two groups for fear of collaboration.

Malnutrition and beri-beri began to take their toll. The Japanese provided an occasional 50 pound bag of rice. The Lutheran ladies Mrs Braun, Marie Kuehn and Sister Klotzbuecher cooked whatever food the men found. They also did some sewing. The Japanese traded food for repairs to uniforms and the demand from the Japs increased and

contributions to the pantry also increased. Soon soldiers other than the guards were sending in uniforms for mending – together with payment in food.

Three men had privileged status because of their usefulness: Dr Braun, Captain Radke and Brother Kuehn a mechanic. They too were paid in food. The Japanese even provided a foot peddled dental drill as Dr Braun used anaesthetics and the Japanese doctors did not. Dr Braun's services provided food until the General told his troops "No more Doctor" but they still came. Brother Kuehn was skilled in repairing radios. This prompted an ethical debate as to whether repairing Japanese radios was "aiding the enemy" or a key strategy in stocking the prisoner's pantry as a hedge against starvation. The "pantry" argument won that debate.

By the 1st July 1943 only three milking cows remained, but then the Japanese shot one for meat. Then on 29th July Welsch and Henkelmann were ordered to accompany the Japanese to Nagada and Amron. Those left behind feared the worst for them, but they returned some days later. They explained that they were not allowed to speak of the situation at Nagada and Amron mission stations. Soon afterwards Henkelmann was taken to visit a mission station up the coast and again the Lutherans feared the worst. Henkelmann – did not return and was presumed dead.

On 9th August 1943 the prisoners on Rargetta Island were told to be prepared to move to Siar Island which was just one mile away. They deduced that the reason for the move was that the sweet potato gardens they had planted on Rargetta Island were nearly ready for harvesting - it would be the Japanese not the Lutherans who did the harvesting.

On Siar Island they built their new shelters with help from Siar Islanders. Dr Braun treated Siar natives until ordered by the Japanese to cease. The prisoners were now weak with sickness and subsisting at just above starvation level. The Siar people secretly brought them food. From October 1943 American planes made it impossible for Japanese supply ships to reach Madang. Japanese started to starve along with their prisoners.

On 21st October 1943 the Lutherans were made to board a ship which took them northwards along the coast during the hours of darkness and hiding from aircraft during the hours of daylight. On 22nd October they reached Manam Island. By then most of the prisoners had each lost about 50 lbs in weight. Four men carried the prisoners meagre possessions and as Brother Seimers and the women could no longer walk, Dr Braun carried them by canoe to their destination at the Catholic mission station. The Catholic missionaries had been taken elsewhere, but were soon returned.

When Catholic prisoners arrived from Alexishafen, the number of prisoners rose to 156 and with additional guards. The total list of prisoners at Manam now included:

Bishop Wolff of Alexishafen.

23 Catholic priests

36 Catholic brothers

40 Catholic nuns approx.

32 Malays and their children, including Chu Leong's eldest son Inuk.

14 Lutheran men

3 Lutheran women

Nagi and Johnson, Catholic patients from the hospital

The food situation was desperate – all cattle were slaughtered, then the horses. They trapped and ate rats, snakes and a flying fox. The Lutheran food supply ran out on 28th November 1943. A fifty pound bag of flour was provided by the Japanese and the natives brought some food. The missionaries were aware of heavy bombing of Hansa Bay opposite Manam as they planted and tended their gardens on Manam. Christmas 1943 and New Year's Day 1944 came and went. The gardens now three months old and nearly ready to harvest when the Japanese on 28th January announced that it was time to move. Again the Japanese would harvest their gardens.

The Catholics and the Lutherans prayed – next morning they were ordered to Tedeli, the landing place about eight miles around the coast of Manam Island. That evening 156 prisoners were taken in two groups to Hansa Bay. Upon arrival, they were amazed to be welcomed by name by Japanese who had been their guards at Rargetta. The guards also provided 40 lbs of rice, sugar and a tin of meat each from their own rations. While being marched, the paper bag of rice was submerged accidentally in water and disintegrated. They marched on into the night before reaching a native village. At dawn they were taken back into the sago to hide until evening.

Bill Hagan continues their story from the Catholic perspective:

“On September 1st 1943, more than fifty bombers demolished Alexishafen. Our gardens were just beginning to produce for us when on 24 October we received marching orders from our Japanese captors. We picked up what few belongings we could carry and got aboard a small wooden ship which landed us on Manam Island volcano on November 1.

The local people brought us food and in no time we began to hack down the bush and start our own gardens. We knew from much experience what it meant to enjoy the hospitality of the Emperor's army. One day the 132 of us had the luxury of eating three horses. That was the last of our meat.

Fortunately the American reconnaissance knew where we were and spared us their bombs. But day and night there were planes overhead. If ships were sunk at night, the guards blamed the missionaries for having signalled the pilots. Very few ships reached Manam unscathed. From where we were, we could see and hear that the coast from Bogia to Awar and Hansa Bay was being plastered with bombs. Something must have been happening there.

On January 24 1944 we got orders to leave Manam because it had become too open to Allied bombing. We were told we were to be brought to Hollandia for own safety and that en route the Japanese air force would escort us. Nothing remotely reminiscent of that happened at all. We departed Manam on February 3 and some were so weak that they had to be carried to the wooden schooner. We headed right in the direction of the flashing bombs along the coastline where Nubia plantation is today. We chugged along slowly and arrived at Hansa Bay at 9 p.m. the next day. We then spent the entire night and day on the beach. The old, the sick, the children were all exposed to the tropical elements. Bombs dropped around us, we scattered as best we could... bedraggled, wet, hungry, cold, lying on wet beach sand...

At 5pm on February 5 1944 the missionaries were ordered to make ready to board the ship which would take them to safer lands. The group consisted of 106 Catholic missionaries, about a dozen Lutheran missionaries from Madang, and 17 half-caste people. Among the half-caste children was eight year old Inuk Leong eldest child of Chu and Elekama Leong of Angoram.¹

The ship was not a military craft as its name 'Dorish Maru' indicates. It was a small 500 tonne cutter armed with three machine guns and one anti-aircraft gun. There were also 50 armed soldiers aboard.

The ship sailed out of Hansa Bay about 7 that evening with not a single Japanese escort plane in sight though 35 had been promised. On board we received strict orders to hide anything white. If there was an air raid warning we were to lie flat on the decks. Anyone signalling the American pilots would be shot on the spot. At 11.30 that night an American bomber appeared. The ships guns began to fire at the plane. It dropped several bombs which landed very near the ship with one soldier being wounded. We huddled together on the deck like frightened chickens. Every star in the heavens made us tremble.

On February 6 1944 at about 7.30 in the morning we were just rounding the Boram Point and coming into Wewak harbour. But there were ominous signs; straight ahead of us a transport ship was going up in flames and all along the inner harbour coastline fires were burning. Suddenly there was a diabolic scream from the captain's bridge...out to sea a squadron of about 14 American planes bore down on us. Immediately the ship opened fire and the pilots fired back. One sister wanted to stand up and wave her large white collar to signal the planes that missionaries were aboard but she wasn't allowed.

The first two planes buzzed the ship without shooting or bombing. The next two had all their machine guns firing as they dived to mast-top level. The other planes followed suit, some coming back for a second run, and then went on their way.... The last two planes came over but did not strafe or bomb though their bomb bays were open and bombs clearly visible. They must have noticed the sisters and children aboard. Just before the first strafing run Bishop Wolf stood up and gave general absolution to all. He received a machine gun bullet in his left shoulder and fell to the deck.

Within a few minutes the deck of the 'Dorish Maru' was the sight of indescribable slaughter with priests, brothers, sisters, screaming, crying, groaning, terrified, decapitated, limbs shot off, gaping wounds, blood streaming over the deck. And when it was all over there was no way to help them, no medicine, not even a first aid kit. Fifty-eight priests, brothers, sisters, and half-castes were lying around in pools of blood, dead. Some 35 others were wounded.

The following had been mercifully killed outright: Fathers Hoersch, Luttmmer, Baumert, Schebesta, Felzmann, Tranel, and Konnen. Brothers Mathias I and II, Lucidius, Marcolinus, Symphorian, Fabian, Cleophas, Cornelius, Jacobus, Jason, Metellus, and Baldomar. Sisters Imelada, Milita, Constantine, Barnaba, Ferdinanda, Matrizia, Annetta, Rotrudis, Dyonora, Bernareda, Deotilla, Hermengardis, Basiella, Annakrescens, Emiliana, Melasia, Festina, Isbalda, Gudulana, Alquirina,

Theredildus, Valentina, Doyolina, Theophane, Egilberta, Cunera, Albertista. Mixed-race children: Jacobi Mathis, Carl Mathis, Doris Mathis, Wilhelm Tehuleong, Else Kramer, Josepha Smith, Johanna Sasak. Lutheran missionaries: Mr Welsch, Mr Radke, Mr Ander, Mr Keuhn, Mrs Krebs, Miss Klotzbichler.

About forty minutes after the strafing the 'Dorish Maru' landed at Wewak. Two Japanese motor launches came alongside and removed their own dead and wounded and then the missionaries who were dead or had survived. Only about half a dozen people were able enough to assist them. The bodies of the dead and wounded were practically dropped over the side of the ship. By 11am all were ashore.... The dead were heaped up in a pile; the wounded, stretched out in rows on the beach under the blazing sun. They were dying of thirst too, but all they could find or get was water from a gutter. Whether the dead were buried or burned, we never found out. No one has ever found their graves to this day."

Lorna Fleetwood indicates that it was believed the dead were buried in a bomb crater near the Wewak Yacht Club. There is no record of the death of the boy Inuk Chu, but he was almost certainly among the dead on the beach in Wewak.

The Lutheran account adds some information :-

"A Japanese soldier, a commander of an anti-aircraft battery spoke to Dr Braun. He said he was a Baptist and would see to it the dead missionaries received a Christian burial. "No sooner did the 'Dorish Maru' pull away from its moorings than a bulldozer began shoving the dead into a bomb crater. Bodies tumbled grotesquely on their way. The brethren on the ship looked on with disbelief, faces wet with tears. Braun's thoughts were on the commander who had offered his sincere desire to perform a Christian Rite for the dead missionaries – Lutheran and Catholic. His heart went out to this Christian man who so boldly approached him with an offer of goodwill... 'Will he really manage a Christian Burial?' Dr. Braun wondered."

Brother Hagan continues his story :-

"As evening came on, it was back to the death ship for us. It was still bloody from the morning's slaughter, and also fly and mosquito infested now. Everywhere we heard the moans and cries of the wounded and dying; we had nothing with which to alleviate their suffering. There were no bandages, no medicines, and soon the maggots began to invade their open sores. On the following days Br. Aloisius bled to death from an upper thigh wound and was buried at sea near Vanimo. Br. Syrus had much of his lower abdomen blown away, died and was buried at sea near Hollandia but his body managed to float ashore later. In the course of the next several weeks, 17 others also died in unbelievable circumstances. Bishop Wolf himself suffered unspeakably from the bullet in his shoulder and lung and finally passed away on 23 February in a swamp near Hollandia."

Bill Hagan continues his story in Chapter 44 Esther Dockter Wegenast continues her Lutheran account :-

"The 'Dorish Maru' sailed all that night and into the next day. Braun declared two Catholic brothers dead. They were given as much Rite as possible and buried at sea.

The 8th of February 1944 provided another undisturbed night of sailing. They rounded a point the Americans would call White Beach 3 and headed for Hotigan on the beach in Humboldt Bay where the survivors were taken ashore.

It rained and they collected the water and drank it in any way they could. Up and down the beach there were many gardens – hundreds of farmers there brought by the Mitsubishi Corporation to grow food for the soldiers. The farmers brought squash for the missionaries. There were many large barracks along the beach, each measuring 20 ft by 100 ft, some of which were still under construction. Into one of these the Japanese ordered the wounded. They provided tent material to close in the open sides. The Japanese left them there with limited guards. Of the 92 remaining prisoners, 60 were unable to help themselves and lay side by side along both sides of this barracks as they would in a hospital ward

Those still ambulatory occupied an adjacent barracks. They collected grass to make mattresses for the wounded and dug a latrine pit between the barracks.

Very overworked Dr Braun, Hattie Braun and Brother Geroch, the Catholic medic, tended the wounded as best they could. Food was in short supply when, unexpectedly one night half a barrel of rice was brought in by the natives. A Japanese soldier called Nishira came and explained that he provided it. He said he had grown up in Singapore and knew about the Methodist Mission. He added “It is to your advantage that I keep my head – understand?” Braun not only hid the rice, he safeguarded the secret from the rest of the camp.

On 22nd February 1944 there was an air raid and most of the buildings along Hotigan Beach were damaged. At about this time it became apparent that Father Mai’s wounded leg had turned gangrenous and Dr Braun, with Father Mai’s agreement, decided to amputate. He told Seimers to clean his carpenter’s saw. No anaesthetic as such was available but the recently departed Bishop Wolff had left half a bottle of Cognac, and Dr. Braun had some pills. Mai survived the operation. In the following days six other patients died.

As the American planes intensified their attack on the Japanese at Hotigan, the prisoners were ordered to another location. They went six miles inland to an old two house village called Koya [Brother Hagan’s account called it Goya]. On the 4th March 1944 those capable of walking went to Koya to prepare it. On 15th March the patients began to arrive – carried by the weakened prisoners and some carriers. At this time there were 80 surviving prisoners.

The need to go to the bush to collect bush materials and food caused concern among the Japanese. They required each prisoner to wear a piece of bamboo around their neck with a number inscribed on it. By this time the Catholics and Lutherans shared their evening devotions. A week after they arrived at Koya the Japanese brought in 28 more Catholics including 14 sisters who on the 19th March 1943 were taken by boat from Tumleo Mission to Hollandia. Other came from Aitape. The Japanese now held roll call twice a day. The prisoners became weaker and weaker and on 30th March 1944 Marie Keuhn died. Now seven Lutherans remained – half the original lot. Half of the Catholics also remained.”

End Notes Chapter 42

¹ Anna Chu The Kapiak Tree Maskimedia 2008 Page 11.

Chapter 43 Allied Landing at Aitape With Little Resistance – ANGAU Personnel Back in the Front Line

In January 1944 following the Moss Troops evacuation from Yellow River, the ANGAU troops involved were re-assigned. Neptune Blood was posted as Assistant District Officer of Mt. Hagen and Ted Fulton was sent on a patrol of the Ialibu area¹ in what is now the Southern Highlands Province. Fienberg, Milligan, Fryer, Stanley, Cole and others received similar postings. On 1st February 1944 Blood sent the following note to Fulton :-

“How long are you supposed to stop at Ialibu? You and I are on seven days’ notice, also Ray², so I guess we are only here until they have to go to Wewak and then the wires will report ‘Blood, Fulton, Watson to proceed Moresby at once repeat at once’. The same old twenty or so that are in red on the roster.”³

As Blood predicted, Fulton was called to Mt. Hagen to go to Port Moresby. There he learned that he was to be attached to a US task force for the invasion of the north-east coast of New Guinea, the location was not disclosed, but was widely assumed to be Hansa Bay. He was flown to Finschhafen, which had been captured by the Australian 9th Division. Horrie Niall had come from Wau to be in charge of ANGAU operations. With him were Lieut. Boyan, Ken McMullen, Bill Dishon, and K.T.Allan. Even Jack Thurston was there with the Royal Australian Air force intelligence group.

Fulton was taken by Niall to US Intelligence where he was asked about the beach conditions and depths of water at Aitape. Fulton confirmed the water was deep - Intelligence needed convincing as their information was that the bottom was flat and the water shallow. Fulton’s firsthand knowledge convinced them. He explained that he had several times walked the 90 miles of beach between Wewak and Aitape on recruiting and prospecting trips and had cooled off in the water; the water was several feet deep just off shore. It looked like the landing would be at Aitape and the Americans wanted to be sure that the landing craft would not be stranded in shallow water.

John Milligan, Dave Fienberg, Gus O’Donnell and Allan Gow were next to join the waiting ANGAU contingent. They were issued with .30 carbines and placed on standby. On the 17th April 1944 they were ordered to embark and sailed on the morning of the 18th in a huge convoy which included aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, motor torpedo boats, landing craft and other vessels. Fulton and Milligan found themselves on a Liberty ship - the only two Australians, with two New Guinean NCOs among the American troops. On the 19th April they were joined by two further convoys so Fulton was unable to estimate the total number of vessels in the invasion fleet or the number of planes overhead. The flotilla sailed north and cruised around Manus that night. The force was now divided in two. There would be two landings; Aitape and Hollandia. There were in fact 217 ships carrying 80,000 troops complete with equipment and supplies for the two landings. Still and movie camera men moved around recording the event for newsreels, war records, and history books.

On 21st April a message 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 South West Pacific. Good Luck. Good hunting “

Constable Nonguru/Kemerabi recalls :-

“At Lae, Mr Milligan took charge of us and we went to Finschhafen where we embarked on ships and we went out to sea and came in to land one dawn at Aitape. The sky was full of planes bombing and strafing the Japanese. Then we went ashore and fought in from the beach and we made camp at Raihu.”⁴

Fulton continues :-

“At 0600 on the 22nd April 1944 the warships commenced shelling Aitape while planes bombed and strafed the town and the beach. Fulton, Milligan, the two NCOs climbed down the side of the Liberty ship on rope ladders into landing barges with the American troops who were mainly from the 163rd Infantry Regiment of the 41st Infantry Division. Landing with them were men from the No 62 Works Wing of the Royal Australian Air Force”.

Fulton, Milligan and the Police NCOs were in the first wave to come ashore from their ship and the 5th of the invasion. There did not appear to be any enemy fire coming from the shore. They landed, dug a hole in the sand and lay in it. There was no enemy fire, but the rate of American fire from above, from out at sea and by nervous troops, made it safer to stay in the hole for the time being. The two airstrips, Aitape and Tadjji, were occupied before noon and equipment and vehicles were landed onto the beach all day long. Milligan and Fulton contacted some natives but they were seemingly in shock at the scale and noise of the invasion and initially unable to provide information on any Japanese positions.

Out of the confusion, the ANGAU men gathered on the 23rd of April. The group included Dave Fienberg, Joe Searson, Alan Gow, Gus O'Donnell, Ted Elington and Sergeants Bill Marcutt and Wally Doe plus their Papuan Constabulary detachment. The ANGAU men and police were detailed to guide US troop patrols. The US officers leading the patrols were at liberty to accept or reject advice given as they saw fit. Lieut. Fulton, Sgt. Marcutt and six police guided a patrol along tracks to the south of Aitape looking for signs of enemy dispersal. Marcutt saw, shot and killed a Japanese soldier who proved to be alone and unarmed.

After checking the body, Fulton, Marcutt and police realized that the American troops were no longer with them. At the sound of Marcutt's shots they had retreated and taken cover. The impact of this on the morale of the police was of great concern to Fulton. The RPC detachment was the eyes and ears of the patrol and they needed to be confident that they had full back up. Fulton found the American officer in charge of the patrol, who made it clear that his troops had no battle experience and would not proceed unless Fulton's detachment did the reconnaissance to ensure that there were no Japs.

Upon returning to Aitape next day Fulton reported the situation to Captain Milligan, the ANGAU District Officer in charge of the Sepik. Fulton's next patrol was better disciplined. He and Sgt. Doe guided a patrol led by Lieut. Kreiger of Dallas Texas. The patrol moved north-west along the beach past an abandoned Japanese camp to Tepier plantation. There was movement in a shed and they surprised a Japanese soldier who immediately raised his arms in surrender. He was told through sign language to undress in order to ensure that he was not concealing a grenade. Now stripped to his underwear the soldier knelt and kissed the ground three times apparently expecting to be shot. He was told to dress and was taken back to Aitape for interrogation by two US privates.

The patrol moved on and while taking a rest, Doe saw two Japanese. The first Fulton knew of it was when Doe fired, killing both of them. There was no further contact with the enemy during that patrol. Several days were spent at Malol village which was initially deserted. When the village people filtered back out of the forest, valuable intelligence was obtained. Indications were that the Japanese had evacuated the coast and moved inland. With their supplies cut off, the starving Japanese recognized that the coastal area was unproductive so moved inland over the Torricelli Mountains to where food was more plentiful.

Meanwhile back in Aitape, village people were coming in and reporting to Captain Milligan who they recognized as their pre-war Patrol Officer and ADO after taking over from Taylor. Among those who came in was someone Milligan immediately recognized; Baugi of Sissano. Over the coming days, weeks and months, the latter would win a Loyal Service Medal. The citation reads :-

“Baugi, a civilian native, was formerly a Sgt-Major of Police in the Native Constabulary of the Administration of New Guinea. Following upon the landing of the Allied Task Force at Aitape in April 1944, Baugi reported to the O I C, ANGAU Detachment (Capt. J.S.Milligan, ADO) and was enrolled as a Special Constable in May 1944. He was appointed to lead a group of Special Constables whose duty took them into forward areas with combat patrols; the collection of intelligence information and contact of natives in enemy occupied territory.

During the period May 1944 to July 1944, this group of Special Constables, under the leadership of Baugi, carried out their duties in a very able manner and accounted for 65 Japanese stragglers, thus ensuring that the coastal native peoples in the Aitape Sub District were freed from enemy depredations. Baugi has personally accounted for 13 of the enemy. Baugi has displayed courage; leadership and initiative and demonstrated his loyalty to the Allied Forces.”

Baugi was one of a number of Aitape men who distinguished themselves and won Loyal Service Medals. Others included Martin of Kapoam village, and Maru and Banip who were both from Ulau village.

Intelligence information about Japanese dispositions and about occurrences during the occupation flooded in to be painstakingly evaluated and reported. One of the earliest such reports was submitted by Sgt. Bill Fry (ANGAU) from the HQ of “Reckless” Task Force, Hollandia on 3rd May 1944 :-

“Native Suromu brought from Aitape to Hollandia by enemy with 18 other natives as prisoners approximately 4 months ago states:- ...At the time of enemy occupation of Aitape all known natives who worked for Australian Masters were rounded up and shipped away so that they could not cause trouble with other natives who Japs wished to bring under their influence. There appeared to be no Pidgin interpreter with the enemy. One Chinese Kai at Aitape said to be captured by the enemy – whereabouts unknown. Chinese Tang Mow and wife and four children captured at Wewak and brought to Hollandia now said to be with Jap troops in hills here.

Natives state enemy treated the prisoners badly. Worked them hard, very little food but enemy did not interfere with native women who previously ran away to the bush. Malays said to be walking around freely in Hollandia and not working for the

enemy...Native heard that Mr Hooke was killed with spears by Yakamul natives. Native states that Japs have a large number of Hindus working for them at Wewak.

Native Dralio of Manus, Police Boy to Capt. Taylor at Aitape pre-war states: Chinese Yuning sent by Mr Hooke to beach at Yakamul was killed with tomahawks by Yakamul natives. Yakamul natives killed half-caste Kararo and Bananow native of Manus on road between Aitape and Wewak. Japanese landed nurses or lady doctors at Wewak approx. 6 months ago.

Native Suromu states he was Police Boy to Capt. Black (ANGAU). He had injured legs and was left by Capt. at Aitape when he left for Madang by schooner 'Thetis'.

Japs have a lot of sickness, mostly dysentery and fever. Japs in Wewak said to be very strong in arms and the high officer there wears an anchor on his hat (Obviously Naval or Marine). Japs killed Brother May and Brother Reif at Kairiru. They executed them with swords early in 1944. Native heard this but did not witness the execution.

Here Sgt. Fry describes the names and details of each of the other native prisoners brought to Hollandia from Aitape. Dralto of Manus was again interviewed by Capt. H. Hamilton, Assistant District Officer, Finschhafen whose report was dated 23rd May 1944 :-

"Statement of Native Dralto of Bipi, Manus

Dralto, duly attested, states:

My name is Dralto, I belong to Bipi, Manus...I was a native constable of police. I was sent to Kairiru Island, where the enemy interrogated me. When he discovered I had previously been a constable I was sent with five other constables to Mushu Island where we were put to work.

- 1. During the latter part of 1943 (I cannot remember what month) I saw a four engine American aircraft crash on the reef between Kairiru and Mushu Islands. Some Mushu island natives went out to it and brought five Europeans ashore. Meanwhile one native went to report to the Japanese on Kairiru Island. One of the Europeans made off into the bush but was later re-captured. Some Japanese arrived in a pinnace from Kairiru and took the five airmen back with them. I was on Mushu Island then.*

Next morning I went to Kairiru Island to work. I saw the five European prisoners there. They were interrogated for two days at Kairiru. On the third day, a senior Japanese Officer who wore yellow braid on his uniform arrived from Wewak. He questioned the five prisoners.

Next day the five prisoners were set to work digging a long trench. A plank was placed across it. The five prisoners were then blindfolded. They were in turn led onto the plank over the trench, where the officer with the braid on his uniform decapitated them with his sword. I saw the executions from a distance. The aircraft was towed from the reef and taken to Kairiru, where the engines were removed from it.

- 2. During the latter part of 1943, when there were not a great number of Allied planes yet visiting Wewak (I do not remember the month) I was at Kairiru when eight European prisoners were brought there. I heard from other natives that they were*

part of the crew of an American aircraft which crashed in the sea beyond Vokeo Island. Altogether there were ten masters, but two were drowned. The other eight made it to the mainland in a canoe. On arrival they were captured by the Japs and brought to Wewak. From there they were brought to Kairiru.

At Kairiru I saw them digging holes under the hills, in which the Japanese would take shelter during air-raids. They were engaged on this work for weeks. They were put aboard a Man o' War and I heard they were going to Rabaul.

- 3. About November or December 1943 (it was getting towards Xmas) I saw a single engine Allied aircraft crash on KAIRIRU Island. Later I saw the pilot being marched in under guard. He was badly burned. He received no treatment. He was then placed in a small bush hut. He was given food, but died four days later.*

Dralto His X Mark."

Former Wewak Chinese trader Tang Mow and family who had been transported to Hollandia were rescued there and had also witnessed the execution of air crews on Kairiru Island and recounted his story to Patrol Officer F.D.Jones, who reported thus :-

"TANG MOW arrived at Kairiru Island approx. end of May 1943. About a fortnight after his arrival, two American planes were shot down, one by Jap fighters, one by AA fire...an A 20 and a B25, both two-engined with different tail structure.

Both planes fell into the sea but natives went out in canoes and saved a total of five (5) airmen, who were put in a Jap hospital for a short while...then in a house close to where TANG MOW was living. They stayed in this house for about two months.

During this period they were questioned repeatedly but apparently would not answer questions. As a result they were tied up and flogged severely, then put to hard labour, such as digging slit trenches, without food. This went on over the whole period and TANG MOW said that he used to 'sneak' them a little food when possible and his wife sewed up some old clothes for them. TANG MOW also gave them a couple of blankets and singlets for which the airmen were grateful.

One day a Jap guard told TANG MOW that the airmen were to be killed next day, so he could say good-bye to them. The graves had been dug ready. Next morning the airmen were taken to a small building near the Mission Cemetery and four of them were put inside while the fifth was taken to the graves about thirty yards away. He... was tied in a kneeling position with a stick tied behind his knees and his hands tied to the stick. A sentry with fixed bayonet stood to each side of the kneeling man, while another Jap soldier with a sword stood behind him. The airman was then cut down by the swordsman with a blow which started at the base of the neck on the right hand side downwards through the chest towards the left side. At the same time the two sentry's plunged their bayonets into the stricken man's body. He was then callously kicked into the grave in front of him.

The remaining four airmen received the same treatment, one at a time and the graves were covered up but left unmarked by a cross of any other token. This was approx. July or August 1943.

A week later three more airmen were captured on the Island. Their plane had been shot out of a formation of three which were attacked by numerous Jap fighters. Five Jap fighters were shot down before the remaining two American aircraft turned for home. These three airmen were caught in about August and they were kept for approx. two months before receiving exactly the same treatment as the previous five airmen. They were also slaughtered in the same manner and were buried in the same place. Bombs which fell later totally destroyed the whole area of the cemetery.”

A week after the allied landing at Aitape, Captain Milligan, O/C of ANGAU's first monthly report noted that the situation at Aitape was satisfactory. Apart from the first US - ANGAU patrols probing outwards from the town to locate the Japanese, the town itself was being transformed into a major military base. Roads were under construction and coral from an outcrop on the St. Anna Mission was transported to surface the grass drome on Tadjji plantation for a bomber airstrip. Generators were set up and the work proceeded day and night. The resources seemed endless.⁵

McArthur's strategy of by-passing Hansa Bay and Wewak to attack Aitape and Hollandia took the Japanese by surprise. The Japanese force at Aitape when the Americans landed on 22nd April numbered a mere 2,000 men who were mainly supply unit and ground service personnel. Only 450 were combat troops and they retreated eastwards.

An additional 2,500 men were marching from Aitape to Hollandia in order to strengthen the defence of Hollandia. They marched under seriously bad conditions and went into the mountains behind Vanimo passing Arso to reach Genjam in mid-June. There they were ambushed by the Allied troops and almost completely annihilated.⁶

End Notes Chapter 43

¹ E.W.T.Fulton – No Turning Back Pandanus Books 2005 Page 212

² Ray is Neptune Blood's brother-in-law Ray Watson

³ 13/2/1944 Mt Hagen - letter Blood to Fulton – copy from Elizabeth Thurston

⁴ Bragge Research Notes Vol 18 Page 80

⁵ E.T.W.Fulton No Turning Back 2005 Page 219

⁶ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 Page 86-7

Chapter 44 Survivors of the ‘Dorish Maru’ Rescued by Americans at Hollandia

On the 1st April 1944 the mission prisoners at Koya heard a heavy air attack taking place at Hotigan beach and again on 22nd April they heard heavy bombing. Then at 10am a native arrived to say that plenty of men had landed. The Japanese guards were sceptical, but then Japanese soldiers came running from the direction of the beach without their packs or guns. The guards ordered the prisoners to march – the sick were left behind. An elderly nun objected to being ordered to march and was hit in the head with a rifle butt [she died two days later]. Neither the Japanese nor the prisoners seemed to know where they were going.

Then on 23rd April, the Captain in charge of the Japanese told Dr. Braun, a survivor from the ‘Dorish Maru’ :-

“I am sorry to say the Japanese Army cannot take care of you any longer. If you wish, stay where you are. My men and I have to go on. It is our duty. I declare you free”. Then he bowed.

Brother Bill Hagan, also a survivor of the “Dorish Maru’, continues his story from Chapter 42 :-

On 23rd of April 1944 the Americans landed at Hollandia and the Japanese guards with the ‘Dorish Maru’ survivors sought to escape. The survivors who had been forced to run away with the Japanese were in such a weakened condition, that several were unable to complete the day’s strenuous journey and just fell by the wayside as darkness fell. Seeing this the Japanese officer said he was very sorry to have to leave us behind to fend for ourselves. Well we could hardly believe our ears, the news was so good.

When the Japanese were gone, some of us set out to return to our sick at Goya. Others returned the following day. We intended to go down to Hotegan on White Beach immediately to see if we could make contact with the Americans whom we thought had landed at Hotegan. Two imprudent missionaries asked the lone Japanese who had stayed behind about this and he forbade anyone to leave the village without his permission under pain of being shot. There was even a rumour that all the others would be shot too....

So it was that most were in favour of sitting tight and waiting for the Americans to come and rescue us. But what if they did some bombing and strafing before the infantry came in? How many of us would then survive? Some of us thought the only thing to do was take a chance. So Brothers Berchmans, Januarius, Bogumil and I decided to take that chance.

Before breakfast on April 25 the four of us slipped out of the quiet village. We avoided the main bush road, and made a very roundabout detour through the muddy jungle. Only a few missionaries were in on the secret mission. We had to make sure the lone Japanese soldier spy left in the village did not know of our going. Japanese snipers were still at large in the jungle roundabouts, and we did not want to meet any stray Japanese soldiers. Our purpose would be too evident if we headed straight for the coast where the Americans were.

We kept silence like Carthusian monks and slogged our way through the mud and water as best we could. Often we heard queer sounds in the bush, perhaps only a dead

branch falling from a tree top or a wild animal of some sort slipping through the underbrush, even the songs of distant birds bothered us and made our hearts skip a beat here and there. We imagined all these things to be Japanese snipers crawling after us. Often we took time out to carefully reconnoitre. My rosary was in my hands all the time but I don't think I prayed many Hail Mary's without distraction.

We had now reached to within a quarter of a mile of the beach where we expected to make contact with the Americans. We sat catching our breath in a small patch of scrub bordering the large open garden we would have to cross to get to the beach. That would be our last spurt.... Suddenly there was the crackle of rifle fire and some bullets whizzed by. The Japs, we thought. Our hearts stopped. A bullet whizzed by and hit a tree under which Br Berchmans was standing. He fell as if hit, and yelled out to me, 'Duck Bill.' I only answered, 'Gosh, I'll have to wait for the next one. That one went too fast.'

More bullets came our way and so we crawled back into the bush. We did not say a word but kept looking in four directions at once. We thought we were finished now; the Japanese snipers had surely spotted us. After what seemed an hour, we regrouped and spent 15 minutes really searching the bush but could find no evidence of snipers.

Well, no use standing there.... So we took out from under our shirts the large white Turkish towels which we had wrapped around our stomachs, we cut long sticks, and fastened the towels to them. Then we marched on, two on each side of the road, but hugging the edge of the jungle. We inched ahead and had agreed that once we got to the open garden, we would not run back. One slip might cost us our lives. We scanned our surroundings for the last time and then went ahead. About half way through the garden we heard several shots, coming seemingly from behind us. With a shiver or two running up our spines, we kept going.

Suddenly I saw something move in the small wooded land that separated the garden from the coast of Humbolt Bay. Another shiver.... Then a steel helmet popped up, a yellowish face, and the barrel of a rifle that looked like it was pointing at me. With one voice the four of us said despondently, 'The Japs.' But we kept moving. We knew it was too late to turn back. Then the soldier stepped out of the jungle from where he was watching us. He was a tall well-built man... and in a flash of a moment I recognised a Yank. I called out at the top of my voice, 'Americans. We are Americans, Catholic missionaries.' He bade us come forward. I did. Then I greeted him, 'Good morning.' He by this time recognised us as Whites and my Bostonian accent must have assured him that I was a Yank.

Well, when we met, I actually hugged him and he returned the greeting. It was as if I had met a long lost brother. With tears of joy and more than one lump in my throat, I managed to tell him briefly who I was and on what mission I had come. Soon another soldier came up. Both had spotted us many minutes before and their rifles were loaded just in case we were Japs.

Home with one's own after fourteen months as a prisoner... it was one of the happiest moments of my life. I will never forget how all anxiety and fear fled from that day onwards. In ten minutes we were speaking to the OIC, Colonel Persal I believe his name was. It did not take me many minutes to tell him the story of those I had left behind. Nor did it take long before we had 200 husky soldiers ready to go back to Goya and take out

those poor missionaries on the verge of death. About 35 stretchers were carried in to bear out the sick and weak and old. Many soldiers volunteered to come and help, so many that the commanding officer had to refuse some requests.

After the boys had stuffed us with sweets and we had eaten food that we had dreamed of for many months, we put extra rations into our knapsacks for the sick back in Goya. At first I led the way back giving directions and information to the officer-in-charge. But later he insisted on sending scouts ahead. They were all alert for snipers.

During the last half of our trip rain set in. Soon paths became slippery. We were drenched to the skin and had mud all over us. It took us five hours to cover the distance that required only two in the morning. About half a mile from Goya village, the group divided in half and fanned out to surround the village and get the Jap spy still there. He was surprised lounging on his canvas bed and offered no resistance. When the soldiers came into the camp at Goya, many people who had not been happy in many months cried and leapt for joy as best they could.

My words cannot suffice to describe the scene and feelings of all. You just had to belong to that group to know and experience the joy that that meeting produced. The soldiers, who had not eaten since morning, distributed their own rations packages to the old and weak, forgetting about themselves. We did not like to take them, but they made us. Those who opened the packages had the treat of their lives. Not for more than a year had they tasted anything so good. I remember the poor sick brother who had not eaten a meal for about two weeks without throwing it up soon afterwards. He ate some biscuits and cheese and chocolates and now they stayed down.

To expect anyone to sleep that night was to expect miracles. Hearts were too happy and thousands upon thousands of thoughts reeled through our heads. After a bite to eat, it was all to bed, silence, not a single light, nobody to walk about, just stay in your hut. All bridges were torn away for the night... taking no chances whatever that the Japanese would come back that night.

I was dead tired when I got under my mosquito net. It had rained, as I had said, and all my bedding and clothes were wet. I finally managed to change, put a knapsack under my head and try to say my rosary in thanksgiving for the events of the day. I did not get many winks of sleep that night. My thoughts were over the past fourteen months and into the future.

The next day, April 26, 1944 I had the pleasure and privilege to celebrate the last Mass at Goya, Hollandia. Then we hurried to pack and began our trek back to Hotegan and White Beach. You should have seen that parade. About thirty-five stretcher cases of old, sick, weak, and wounded were borne along on the shoulders of those soldiers in a way that made one proud to be their wantok (country men).

It had rained practically the whole night through. The boys had left yesterday without dinner and had no supper that I was aware of. In the morning only a hot drink of coffee or tea and they had a day of slogging ahead of them. The paths were knee deep in mud and water. Several streams were now neck deep. The soldiers would jump into the streams, get themselves anchored, and then pass their litters across hand to hand over their heads.

It took those of us who carried our own belongings five to six hours to get to the coast, a trek which usually takes two and a half. The stretcher cases did not get in until about eight that evening.

Now in the hands of our own, the next days were like an extended Easter season. Each day seemed to be better than the last. Then on April 27, we said goodbye to those who had been so good to us at Hotegan and White Beach there in Humbolt Bay. After the first jeep ride of my life, I passed along the shoreline dotted with anti-aircraft guns and heavy artillery. My eyes blinked. I then spent three happy days at Pancake Hill, being treated royally by both officers and men.

On April 30, we bid farewell to scenes of sorrow. Many memories passed through our minds as we pulled out on the LST 459 barge out of Humbolt Bay. By now we were all wearing new Army uniforms in place of our rags, and we all looked like a bunch of new recruits. We were now in the hands of the U.S. Navy. And how well they treated us, it seemed they wanted to outdo the Army. How wonderfully they handled and treated our poor Sisters. The trip to Finschhafen was all too short. We arrived there on May 3. There we got a repetition of what had happened to us in the last week or two... nothing but the best treatment. All sores and sicknesses had been taken care of by then. Bright days were ahead.

May 7, my fortieth birthday minus one. I once read a book called 'Life Begins at Forty'. I would change the title to Thirty Nine. Today we left Finschhafen, bound for Brisbane. The trip was a pleasant one. Nothing special happened until a few days before we landed. It was a Sunday evening and we were talking to some of the officers. Among other things they told us that last night and this morning no less than six submarines were on our tail.

May 18 we arrived in Brisbane. Hospital buses met us at the ship and drove us 35 miles to Camp Cable, where we were physically overhauled from top to toe. It took two months to nurse us back to health. Then we went our various ways to homes in Australia, where we waited for the war to end so that we could come back and pick up the pieces of our New Guinea lives as we knew them."

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Chapter 45 Patrolling Out of Aitape – Establishing an Allied Foothold and Re-engaging With Indigenous Population 22/4/44=>

The American troops set up a perimeter nine miles wide and two miles deep around Aitape township and the airstrips at Aitape and Tadjil. Combat and intelligence gathering patrols now commenced probing the Aitape hinterland in all directions. The New Guinea experience and capacity of the ANGAU officers and Royal Papuan Constabulary members who accompanied these patrols to speak Pidgin English quickly made them the eyes and ears of the American advance. The village people the patrols met in the field quickly recognized that the uniformed ANGAU men were people they knew as the pre-war patrol officers, prospectors, labour recruiters and police. They talked freely with them and provided intelligence concerning the Japanese in their area; their location, officers' names, troop numbers, armament, health and supplies and recent troop movements.

The typical American response to this was expressed by Lieut. Lambert of 'M' Company, 3rd Battalion, 126 Rifle Regiment, who reported in part :-

“ANGAU and native police personnel: Lieut. 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 Sgt Pogwe...performed commendable service, killing a number of the enemy and aiding in tracking and scouting.”²

While the American officers reported the military and intelligence aspects of the patrols to their military hierarchy, the ANGAU men also presented reports through District Officer Milligan. The ANGAU reports reflected ANGAU's responsibility to first and foremost support the military operations, but also to provide information which would form the basis for the immediate as well as the eventual post war civil administration of the area. From an ANGAU perspective the recorded patrols include the following :-

Aitape Patrol 1/1943-44³ Lieut. E.T.Fulton, 2 officers & 32 men of the 3rd Battn, 126th Inf. Reg, 4 RPC one ex-Sgt of police and 50 carriers – 13th to 21st May 1944. Area Patrolled – Warapu, Sissano and Serra Hills west of Aitape.

Lieut. Lambert's patrol report read :-

“MISSION: To reconnoitre trails inland from Serra to determine enemy routes of evacuation and to destroy any enemy encountered.

RESULTS: Mission accomplished: Killed 19 enemy, found 18 dead along the trail. Enemy is generally in small groups, unarmed and in poor condition. Determined route of enemy evacuation to be through Nengian – Walwali – Ramu – Sumu and over an unmarked trail to Mori.⁴ It is estimated that approximately 300 enemy followed that trail in the past month. Enemy has severely depleted native gardens along the route having relied principally upon native foods.”

Fulton's report on the same patrol focussed on the health of the village people. He reported the health as initially poor, but then good after treatment at a native hospital which had been established at Serra. He also reported on the related topic of the cleanliness of villages. Fulton reported of his police :-

Too much praise cannot be given to the work performed by the Police and ex-police who accompanied the patrol...the example set 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.

Aitape Patrol 2/1943-44 WO2. A.F.Gow, Lieut. Londrigan and 27 men plus 2 RPC – 9th – 21st May 1944 – Palei-Asier area (south of the Torricelli Mountains). This patrol found a number of Japanese along the way who had apparently died of illness and starvation. Gow's reported observations included :-

“PROPAGANDA: ...This was fairly well received...However the general attitude of the native seems to be, that if possible he would like to be strictly neutral. Changes in administration came far too often, and were rather overwhelming, with both Japanese and ourselves making demands on the natives, which only cause the breaking up of their families and village life...

JAPANESE TREATMENT OF NATIVES: In this area the Japs apparently had not antagonized the natives by making impossible demands upon them, and as a result the natives had given the Jap quite a lot of assistance, particularly in supplying native labour. The system of appointing native Captains had been adopted; many of these boys being former Luluais and Tultuls. A Native Constabulary had been established and members of this unit were called upon to do much the same work as our R.P.C., accompanying patrols and controlling natives. Two members of this unit were arrested by the patrol, but on being questioned, their offences do not seem to have been very grave ones, however they are being held for further questioning. The natives were questioned about Japanese Courts, and stated if they had any complaints, they could take these to the Japanese Kiap at Pro, whose decision was final, and usually quite just and impartial”.

Aitape Patrol 1/1944/45 Capt. J.J.Searson, Lieut. Tucker and fourteen men and a RPC detachment – 7th to 27th June 1944 - Yakamul and Tarawain Island.

TARAWAIN ISLAND PATROL

PERSONNEL:

*Capt. J.J.Searson
1 Officer and 3 ORs US Army
1 member R.P.C.
1 Tarawain Is. Native guide*

OBJECTS:

- (a) To determine whether Japs on Island.*
- (b) To contact natives.*
- (c) If no Japs on Island find site for radar stn.*

NARRATIVE:

Patrol embarked on PT boat at night.

4am PT boat with muffled engines approached within 400 yards of N.W. tip of island. Rubber boat inflated and patrol (7) paddled towards beach. Arrived beach as dawn was breaking.

Rubber boat concealed and patrol moved some 50 yards inland. Capt. Searson with two natives moved south along beach. Found two Japs asleep under coconut trees. Returned to rest of party and instructed Radio Operator to tell PT boat to stand by.

Capt. Searson, 1 officer, 1 OR and two natives then moved 200 yards along beach to north. Two pillboxes sighted and found to be uninhabited. A few yards further on a native building was observed. Closer inspection showed it to be full of sleeping Japs. Native policeman opened fire without orders (he claimed he had been seen) and Japs commenced to leave the house. Hand grenade thrown into house. Some Japs either killed or wounded. Remainder fled to north from which direction mortar fire was brought to bear on our party.

Decided to withdraw. Gave orders for rubber boat to be floated, and after a hectic time during which the writer was almost drowned the whole party was picked up by the PT boat without casualty.

GENERAL: *But for the happy fact that all the Japs were sleeping, it is doubtful whether the patrol would have safely reached the beach in the first instance.*

Sgd J.J.Searson Capt. ADO

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REPORT OF OPERATIONAL PATROLS CARRIED OUT
IN YAKAMUL AND ON TARAWAIN ISLAND.

INTRODUCTION:

After the initial landing at AITAPE, the enemy withdrew to the east along the coast, and, at the time of the patrol our eastern out-post line extended from ANAMO on the coast generally south along the DRINIUMOR River to AFUA.

It was believed that the enemy was assembling in the HARECH River area preparatory to launching an attack on our lines.

Air reconnaissance reports indicated presence of wheeled vehicles in the area. CHAROV was suspected as being a Jap HQ. A US. recce patrol under Lieut. Tucker US Army was ordered to get as close as possible to CHAROV.

- a) To determine if this village was occupied by the enemy, and, if so his strength and dispositions.*
- b) To observe whether or not the ANAPALUK – CHAROV – HARECH River track was being used by trucks.*
- c) To determine whether or not reports of a bridge over the HARECH Rv. were true.*

This [US recce] patrol returned and reported that they were not, owing to difficulties of terrain and supplies, (able to) accomplish their mission. They maintained, however, that from a position of vantage many miles away, they observed what appeared to be a bridge over the HARECH River. The writer was ordered to proceed on the same mission.

PERSONNEL:

*PX189 Capt. J.J.Searson
1 Officer and 14 ORs, US Army*

6 members of R.P.C.

NARRATIVE:

1. Left AFUA. Followed the DRINIUMOR River to its confluence with CHAUWIN Creek. Bivouacked on this creek at map reference 22.0 – 26.2.
2. Bivouacked at 28.0 – 26.5.
3. Capt. Searson, 1 OR and 2 police to reconnoitre track leading to CHAROV. Returned in evening. No tracks seen on track but numerous shots heard in adjoining bush.
4. Followed HARECH River to 27.5 – 31.3 where patrol HQ was set up in concealed position.
5. Capt. Searson, 1 officer, 2 OR and 2 police to reconnoitre CHAROV. Small Jap outpost attacked near the village, 2 killed and remainder driven out allowing our patrol to occupy a small hill feature, directly overlooking the village about 300 yards therefrom. Japs seen in village and others seen moving up the right bank of the DRIDARIA River (approximately one coy). No installations or bridges seen. Numerous sago palms cut down by Japs for food. Patrol withdrew successfully.
6. Small patrol despatched to follow HARECH River to 26.6 – 34.2 to examine track returned. Reported numerous Japs but track unsuitable for vehicular traffic and had not been so used. No bridge existed over HARECH River.
7. In camp.
8. Capt. Searson and natives proceeded to SAMAP (24.4 – 22.8) to arrange air drop.
9. Air Drop at SAMAP. One native struck by falling parcel suffered broken arm.
10. Rations carried to 27.2 – 24.8 to which locality remainder of patrol had withdrawn.
11. At 27.2 – 24.8.
12. Capt. Searson, 3 ORs and 2 police set out on 4-day patrol to ANAPALUK and DANDINAIM River. Two ORs returned to AFUA sick.
13. Bivouacked in bush.
14. On DANDINAIM River.
15. At 32.8 – 31.4 overlooking ANAPALUK
16. Observing ANAPALUK and track. No movement seen. Village deserted.
17. Return trip commenced. Bivouacked in bush.
18. Arrived at 27.2 – 24.8. Mission completed.
19. Camped 22.0 – 26.2.
20. Arrived AFUA.
21. To ANAMO thence AITAPE.

GENERAL:

As no natives were encountered by the patrol no native administration work was performed. The patrol was purely an operational one. The country traversed is some of the most rugged and inhospitable in the AITAPE Sub-Coastal Area.”

Capt. Milligan’s comments on the patrols to Yakamul and Tarawain Island :-

“Both these patrols may be somewhat out of the sphere of ANGAU’s normal duties, but as Capt. Searson had local knowledge of both areas, he was willing to help guide the patrols. Both were extremely dangerous...Capt. Searson is to be congratulated on the courageous and resourceful matter in which he conducted both. The [Yakamul] patrol returned the way it had come to AFUA on the US outpost perimeter.”

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An unnumbered Aitape patrol report. From Yakamul to Kombio area via Harech River. 18th May – 2nd June 1944⁵ This report makes it very clear that Capt. Fienberg was an extremely capable operator :-

“ BRIEF SURVEY HINTERLAND OPERATIONS 18TH MAY 2ND JUNE.

1. Patrol ordered recce YAKAMUL Hinterland area – to make two weeks trip.
2. ANGAU Personnel: Capt. D.M.Fienberg, Sgt. McCrae, 3 RPC; US Army personnel 2/Lieut. Jonkaran and 23 men.
3. Patrol left Yakamul for Kombio via Harech River 19th May. 2 US Troops returned (1 sick) after 1 hour. Bivouacked.
4. From KOMBIO returned four tps with carriers. Proceeded Tong. Returned Sepik carriers from TONG.
5. Worked to Musembilen, thence took small party to Perembil in No 1 Urat, thence to Yambes via Musembilen, thence Tong, thence Albulum (Villages visited en route not recorded here)
6. Patrol ordered remain in area indefinitely, this up-setting my calculations somewhat.

US TPS AND DIV HQ. Constant foolish attempts by the Div. G2 to direct movements and method of work of the patrol from Base ultimately caused me to send you a signal, through the G2, clarifying my position. This was necessary as the G2 was acting under the mistaken impression that 2/Lieut. Jonkaran was in charge of the party and that I would take orders from him.

The troops with the patrol are terribly raw, this being their first work in two years overseas. I had a hard job nursing them through the Kombio particularly as I had no desire to linger on the coastal plain (subsequent events proved this anxiety to be not unfounded). From Kombio I had the tps packs carried as they are not in sufficiently good condition to do a reasonably good day's walk. I had no trouble with them or with the Lieut. I pointed out to him that he was responsible for his own tps and to his G2 and there was no necessity for them to follow me in any course of action which was contrary to the arbitrary instructions of G2. However as they are completely helpless without me, they are keen on abiding by my decisions.

Sgt McCrae, owing to his inexperience and the nature of the job, has had little to do, but is a good sound old fellow (42 years) and I have no complaints.

NATIVE SITUATION: Area generally has been under fair degree of Jap influence, mainly per medium of the following Jap boss boys:

Manawambi of Selni (i/c Wom area)

Sulingor of Perembil (i/c No 1 Urat area)

Tambulopi of Musembilem (i/c No 2 Urat area)

Apwas of Labuain (i/c Kombio - Suain area)

Yarawos of Yagrumbok (i/c Urim area and to South)

These have all been picked up save Yarawos who will probably be brought in tomorrow. En route Aitape Tambulopi was either apprehended by Japs or went off with them voluntarily, as per your signal. He will need to do some swift explaining as he knew where he stood.

Manawambi has played a remarkably shrewd game, being popular with the Japs and at the same time maintaining liaison with Gavi, Mundatan etc. Of all the police, he alone

kept his cap and belt. His present position is that he came in with thirty recruits on my instructions and has now cooked his goose with the Japs. I will make further use of him in Wori area.

Apeio Nosibrok has been chief Jap agent, provocateur, clerk, protagonist, Gestapo and procurer. Delendo est Apeione.

[Writers Note: The phrase above - *Delendo est Apeione* – is a very clever pun, and betrays Capt. Fienberg’s intelligence, wry sense of humour and likely classical education. The term is derived from a Latin phrase contained in Plutach’s ‘Life of Cato 244-149 BC’ – *Delendo est Cathago* – which means that Cathage must be destroyed. Apeio Nosibrok’s chances of remaining alive for very long after Fienberg’s observation were slim.]

Native situation is generally satisfactory. My present influence covers Kombio – NE Palei, N Ruim, both Urats down to Aimul Pelnandu etc. Results achieved through judicious mixture of terrorism, threats, past influence, friendliness and bribes.

JAP ACTIVITIES. ...*At present there is no enemy movement in the area and I do not anticipate any till Japs are either:*

1. *Forced inland through action and food shortage, or,*
2. *Decide to chase this party out (they know we are here).*

G2 is under the mistaken impression that I can cover the coastal strip from here also.

RECRUITS: *To date have sent in approx. 265, with Urim, Wom, E/Palei, Bombi etc. not yet drawn on, I am taking them on a quota basis and do not propose to seriously affect village manpower.*

YAKAMUL NATIVES: *Even in civil times the Yakamuls exerted an undesirable influence on the Kombio/Urat area. During the Jap occupation they roamed the area frequently and under the guise of Jap police threatened, abused and generally acted in an overbearing manner. There is scarcely an adult Yakamul male without something to answer for. I aim to completely neutralize Yakamul influence in this hinterland.*

MAPRIK NATIVES: *Japs have a team of these acting as “Police”. They were actually on their way (complete with hand cuffs) to arrest Gavi when I arrived at Perimbil. They took off with a five mile start.*

JAP ‘LAUNDRY WOMEN’: *Four Kombio women (procured by Apeio) kept house for the Japs at Yakamul mission. Three of these have since boasted that they will not marry any greasy Melanesian, but will wait till the Sons of Heaven have driven out the whites. I have arranged for them to be looked after, though I always admire attempts by individuals to better their station in life.*

VILLAGE BOOKS: *These were all collected and taken to the Jap CO at But. (if I ever catch the Yakamul “Kiap” I shall interview him personally). Luluais of Saihik and Yasei retained theirs and I thanked them in the appropriate manner. Sgd D.M.Fienberg Capt.*

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Additional patrols noted in correspondence during this period included:

- Capt. O’Donnell – to Ali Island and Negia River - assisting evacuees
- Cpl. Marcutt – at Pes.

WO2. Gow by PT boat to Vanimo
WO2. Gow patrol to Wapi area
Capt. Milligan patrol to Vanimo
Capt. O'Donnell – patrol to Lumi
Lieut. Fulton – Patrol Yapunda, Tong and areas south of Torricellis.

Captain Milligan's "Report of ANGAU detachment covering period 17 April to 9 May 44" drew on these reports and others to provide an overall picture :-

INTRODUCTION: A successful landing was made at dawn on 22nd April at Korako, a hamlet of Lemieng. A small ANGAU party accompanied the US troops and on the 23rd the remainder of the detachment arrived... Combat patrols have been active ever since and in every instance an ANGAU party has accompanied each patrol. The area, Aitape – Leitre – Ramu (Drome) – Walwali – Siaute – Bes (Pes) – Lavaiti – Yongiti – Lupai – Bes – Kapaom – Chinipelli – Afua – Ulau has been thoroughly patrolled, all natives contacted, settled in their villages and where necessary evacuated to one of the evacuee camps. Patrols are now active in the Yapunda area and over towards Musembilem.

NATIVE SITUATION: is very good. In the main the natives are pleased to see us even though the Japanese have not treated them harshly

On the 23rd April a few natives were found by the US forces on Tumleo Island – these were able to give us information as to the whereabouts of the local natives – all had left their villages about a month or six weeks prior to the landing and pushed back towards the foothills of the Torricelli Range to escape the constant bombing and strafing. Our patrols combined with US combat patrols were soon able to contact here and there and using them soon had all the natives of Chinipelli. Kapaom, Pes. Aiterap, Kara-Ausi, Siauti, Lemieng, Pro, Vokau, Tumleo, Ali, Seleo, Angel, Pultalul and Marok coming into the compound where they were fed, medicated, given the general picture and then passed out to our evacuee camps at Ali Island and No 2 Passage (north west side of Aitape station).

Natives of Malol, Arop, Warapu, Serra, Waliwali and Barida have been contacted and told to return and settle in their respective villages. A percentage of the adult male population has been recruited for labour.

Owing to enemy activity along the coast from Wewak, it is anticipated that Ulau, Yakamul and Paup will have to be evacuated: at the moment Ulau and Yakamul are coming back to the Negia River where they will be passed on to the evacuee camp at No2 Passage. Unless the position further deteriorates, Paup people will remain at the hamlet of Tivier and if the occasion arises they too will be evacuated.

The natives claim that the enemy has wantonly destroyed much of their gardens, coconuts and houses, but there is little evidence to support this. He has destroyed more since the landing and along the escape routes slight evidence of wanton destruction has been found. He called in all the village officials, burnt village books and hats, appointed his captains to each group, coerced them with the threat of shooting or beheading, used the Vailala Madness [cargo cult] as a means of propaganda and occasionally called upon them to build houses, carry stores and make gardens. For such work they were fed on native food and paid in invasion paper money.

The two native stalwarts in the areas contacted are Montitan, Tultul of Yakamul and ex Sgt Major Baugi of Sissano – both these natives have quietly fostered the belief that we would eventually return, and have since done an excellent job.

The most spontaneous welcome was received from all the Ali, Seleo and Angel⁶ people, who have never lost faith in us. Lemieng and a fair percentage of Yakamul regard our return as an ill omen and rightly so as will be seen later. The other groups have accepted our return, a few with slight reluctance, but all are prepared to assist and obey instructions.

Taking into account the expert way the native has in pleasing changing authority, the constant inter village political jockeying and the chance to pay back old scores under such a change, it is only to be expected that some will accept our return with reluctance, but in the main the position is excellent and gives no cause for concern.

Patrols and contacts are being pushed out further and further and reports to the south of the Torricelli's indicate, with the exception of the Wapi area, that the native situation is good. The area east of Ulau is denied us at present, and attempts are being made to contact the people of Suain, Matapau and down towards Wewak.

EVACUATION CAMPS: Two such camps have been established – one on Ali Island under WO2 Bartlett where the natives of Tumleo, Ali, Seleo and Angel are stationed, also the native hospital has been established there: and at the late W.J.Hook's property at No 2 Passage under Sgt Doe, where the natives of Lemieng, Pro, Chinipelli, Kapaom, Kara-Ausi, Pultapul, Marok and if necessary Ulau, Yakamul and Paup will be quartered. Construction of houses etc. is steadily going ahead at each of these centres.

NATIVE HOSPITAL AND GENERAL HEALTH: The native hospital under S/Sgt Hagenlocker has been established on Ali Island...Hagenlocker is kept extremely busy attending to natives suffering mainly from tropical ulcers, gramvoesis and a few dysentery cases. Two more medical assistants are urgently required.

The general health of the natives is surprisingly good – the only cases of malnutrition were among those Kombio natives who had carried for the enemy as far as Hollandia and who had run away during one of our bombing attacks on that area, and among some Karkar, Madang natives who arrived at Aitape about a week prior to the landing, under suspicious circumstances... the enemy medication was nil...

VILLAGES, GARDENS ETC: Slight damage only was done to the villages of Pes, Aiterap, Malol, Arop, Warapu, Sissano by the retreating enemy. The villages of Lemieng, Pro, Vokau, Tumleo, Ali, Seleo and Angel have been destroyed, the others are intact, and are in reasonably good order and have been kept fairly clean.

Natives in this area are all sago eaters with small scattered gardens of bananas and saior (greens); only a few of these have been destroyed. It will be some time before the Ali camp can be placed on a native diet but it is intended to use the land at the back of No 2 passage for gardens, which in time will ease the native ration position.

A few pigs were taken by the enemy, most of them were hidden in the bush and the natives state they can recover them when the time is opportune. The introduction at a later date of a new strain would be of great assistance.

BUILDINGS: The ADOs house and the Medical Assistant's house at Aitape are completely destroyed, and the two patrol officers houses, while badly knocked about by bomb

blasts and strafing, could with a great deal of work, be made habitable. The Police barracks, native quarters and native hospital cease to exist. The Jail still stands, roofless, but with a little repairing could soon be put in good order.

Private: Hook's store, Ning Hee's store and residence and Chinatown are a complete ruin. Hook's temporary residence at No 2 Passage is still intact.

Mission Buildings: The mission buildings at Sissano, Malol, Paup and Yakamul are in good order, but showing signs of deterioration due to neglect over the past 6-7 months. At St Anna, Tumleo, Ali the building have been completely destroyed, while that at Ulau has suffered damage from bomb blasts – it like Yakamul and Paup may shortly become just a shambles. [in anticipation of a Japanese counter attack).

INFORMATION: Most valuable information has been gleaned from native sources by officers and men in charge of patrols and from natives reporting here – this has been passed to G2.

COMPOUND: Labour compound established on the west bank of the Raihu River, (close to the east of Aitape) on a Tumleo hamlet site. Work on constructing houses, latrines is progressing very well under the capable hands of energetic Lt. Eglington.

ANGAU HQ is set about 100 yards beyond the compound.

PATROLS: Patrols have been constantly active since the 23rd April and led the initial combat patrols into Yakamul-Ulau area, Chinapelli, Kapoam and Serra areas and have actively assisted US patrols ever since. The work of these patrols has been excellent and too much credit cannot be given to the members of ANGAU and RPC. personnel accompanying them.

Capt. Fienberg has been in charge of ANGAU operations along the coast to the east and has been operating there with WO2. Mackie since 23rd April. He is at present on a 14 day patrol with US Recce Coy, in the Urat area. WO2. Gow has been stationed at Chinapelli and is at present on a patrol with US Recce Troops at Yapunda, Sgt. Farr in charge of activities to the west of Aitape and has Lieut. Fulton out patrolling with units of the 125th Reg.

These patrols have covered the area bounded by Ulau, Charok, Afua, Chinapelli, Palauru. Kopoam, Pes, Lavaite, Lupai, Wonongi, Walwali area, Serra and Leitre. The patrols have contacted, medicated and settled all natives within this area, as well as sending out contacts to other areas and gathered a great deal of information.

FATE OF EUROPEANS ETC. The only Europeans left in this area were the late W J Hook and the late J H Wood. Wood of Drimboi plantation died a natural death in the mission hospital at Kairiru after the enemy had occupied it. No suspicious circumstances regarding his death.

Hook whom I left at Mesembelim (2km from present day Dreikikir Patrol Post) was murdered there by natives of Yakamul sometime in March 1943. Details of his death are being generally pieced together, but for the present no action has been taken against the murderers... When the situation becomes more settled action will be taken.

PS. In none of the ANGAU reports of this period are the executions of the three men who killed Hook mentioned. A re-enactment at Musembelem with an eye witness suggests the three accused were required to dig their own grave and were lined up one behind the other

and three policemen simultaneously fired one shot each into the head of the first man in the line, knocking them all backwards into the grave. The three heads exploded “like watermelons” and blood and brains were spattered over the villagers required to watch the event.⁷

Missions: All members of the Catholic Mission were segregated at Tumleo Isl. and later sent to Hollandia. ANGAU Dept. District Services Finschhaven reports all picked up and repatriated. Enquiries re Wewak mission are being made and results will be forwarded later.

Half castes etc: Andrias Walun, a Malay ex-employee of C.M. living at Seleo and Ah Gait, and Indo-Chinese part-time employee of late W.J.Hook have been found. Gait is at HQ as a part time carpenter, Walun at Ali. Maggie, the half caste ex-wife of Walun and her three children were hiding with the Ali people at Paup. She and her children and well and being looked after.

Bonano a Manus native ex employee (??) of L.J.Taylor, and married to Maggie was cruelly murdered by natives of Yakamul and Lemieng. Vincent Kerero, a Philipino, employed by the ex Pro-Board at Allison Island Western Islands [picked up by Capt. Blood and self during visit there August 1942], Yuh Hing, brother in law of Ning Hee, a native of TUMLEO and two WAPEI natives were also murdered by these (Yakamul and Lemieng) natives. They also raped Maggie and otherwise ill-treated her. All these events are being investigated and will be dealt with in due course...”

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¹ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980

² Fulton E.T.W. No Turning Back Page 221

³ Australian financial year runs from 1st July to 30th June. The patrol reports followed this system because in civil administration times patrol expenses had to be accounted for in annual budgets.

⁴ From Mori the route taken would be to follow the Rhaimbrom River upstream and westward – The was wat Stavermann and the ill-fated “Dutch Party” went towards Hollandia.

⁵ This patrol report is written in a very informal and informative way and was probably not intended for circulation in official circles./

⁶ Three of the four Islands off Aitape.

⁷ Bryant Allen in Yukio Toyoda and Hank Nelson ed. The Pacific War in Papua New Guinea: Memories and Realities – Rikkyo University Centre for Asian Area Studies – Tokyo, 2006 Page 20

Chapter 46 Challenging Patrols into the Troubled Wapei Region – Hunting Jap Collaborators, Recruiting Labour and Restoring Calm 6/6/1944 =>

The Wapei tribal area was regarded as ‘troubled’ because the Seinum incident in which the Wapei people attempted to capture Fryer and his party and deliver them to the Japanese at Aitape. On 6th June 1944 WO2 Gow with WO2 Edwards and ten members of the constabulary departed Aitape for the Wapei area. Gow’s instructions were to advise the Wapei people of the allied activities at Aitape and to recruit labour for ANGAU.

The importance of native labour to the war effort cannot be overstated. Huge numbers of fit strong men were recruited after the return of the Australians. They were accommodated in the ANGAU labour compound at Aitape where they were properly fed and paid, just as they would have been had they been recruited as indentured labour before the war to work in the mines, plantations and gold leases. The recruitment was done with care not to deplete the village populations, which in liberated areas were engaged on village reconstruction and the planting of gardens. This would allow the indigenous people to be self-sustaining once again, and not reliant upon food supplies from the Allied refugee camps at Ail Island and No 2 Passage in Aitape.

Nowhere could the importance of a strong, well fed native labour force be better illustrated than in the contrasting situation of the Japanese army at that time. The Japanese soldiers themselves were starving and so the labour they employed was not fed, and when they were paid, they received worthless occupation currency – six penny notes. A key ANGAU role was to supply the labour necessary to support combat patrols in the field by delivering supplies and clearing access roads. They were also employed on the reconstruction effort at Aitape and Tadjji air field. All ANGAU patrols therefore recruited labour and sent them back to Aitape.

Gow’s patrol carriers were Sissano men from the flat coastal region. On the 8th of June as the patrol moved into the Torricelli Mountains from Lupai, Gow noted in his diary “*Sissanos tired on mountain slopes – progress slow.*” Upon arriving at Wilbeitei, an enthusiastic crowd had gathered to meet the patrol. Gow instructed them on the purposes of the patrol and told them to return to their villages and await the patrol’s arrival there.

Gow found that the village officials still had their village books and hats of office. Back in March, over a month before the landing at Aitape, Stanley of the FELO organization had been re-inserted into the southern Wapei area from the Sepik River/Yellow River junction. His reports in the period since confirmed that there was no movement of Japanese to the west where the 18th Army could possibly follow the Sepik upstream and make a short land crossing to the Idenberg River and be transported by its flow to the coast many hundreds of kilometers to the west of Aitape and Hollandia. Indeed, he reported little Japanese presence in the Wapei area, apart from occasional patrols.

As Gow moved into the Wapei area from the north, Stanley moved up from the south. Stanley made an entry in the Aotei village book¹ on 1st June, which reads, “*Book seen at Lumi Sgd G A V Stanley Lieut (SP) RANVR*”² On 9th Gow’s diary noted :-

“*Received a warning note from Stanley warning of 150 Japs reported at Kubriwat 2nd June who would probably follow route Womgrer, Wumerau, Monandin, Mai, Walem-Yerisi, Yuwil, Wublagil, Yili, Tangei etc..*”

In response to this Gow sent police parties towards Wublagil to the east and Lumi to the south to obtain intelligence both on the Japanese patrol and on village attitudes. He continued recruiting labour. The first intelligence report came in on 11th June indicating that there were at that time, no Japanese in the East Wapei area, so he continued patrolling to the south after sending a batch of labour recruits to Aitape, together with his Sissano carrier line.

He camped at Tangei on 12th and passed through Yili on 13th and camped that night at Tumentoni, recruiting as he went. On the 14th June, Gow reported that he contacted Stanley in the Witikam area investigating the activities of one of his agents ex-constable Bras.

On the 8th of July 1943, Fryer had sent Bras with the Stavermann party from Lumi north to Mori on the Piori River, from where they turned west, seeking to observe Japanese movements around Hollandia. Fryer waited, but Bras did not return. Gow's patrol report takes up the story :-

"...recent activities of Bras in this area definitely hampered the objects of this patrol. Bras, a dishonourably discharged ex-police Boy, was more recently employed by AIB and Moss Troops. He was allegedly sent out by Lieut (S P) G.A.V. Stanley AIB and FELO to attempt to trace movement of Jap party which passed through the Wapei area sometime towards the end of March. He was also instructed to attempt to apprehend the men concerned in the attempted attack on Fryer and Aiken and the pro-Japanese agents in the area.

Accompanied by a large number of armed natives, Bras set out to accomplish his mission. He concentrated on the second part of his orders very well, arresting some of the miscreants, and then began a campaign of rape, burning and looting, which was not only directed at the villages which had previously assisted Japanese patrols, but also against people who were quite blameless and who had previously given Allied patrols every assistance (i.e. Eritei). Many of the natives accompanying Bras were from the S E Wapei and I am sure had no thoughts or loyalty in accompanying him, but mainly the opportunity of settling old debts and gaining supplies of loot. However, I believe these matters have been dealt with at great length by Stanley."

When Gow's ³patrol entered the area, the natives' attitude was one of veiled distrust as they had just seen the activities of Bras and assumed, not unnaturally, that they would receive the same harsh treatment from all armed parties. They were convinced otherwise as quickly as possible as the patrol was accompanied by old police Nemo, Turu and Boier whom they knew and whose input rendered the job of allaying concerns easier.

Gow also reported under the report heading PROPAGANDA :-

"Japanese agents (identified as) Yaibu of Narete, Makain of Lumi, Molo of Sigaita and Teni of Tauwetei, the last being the leader of the 'Timbuna cargo'⁴ being ably assisted by Makain and Molo.

On the patrol's arrival in the Wapei area, the people tired of Teni's fruitless promises and prophecies had long since ceased to pay him fealty, and since the very eventful patrol by Bras and the arrest of the four enemy agents mentioned above, the people had more or less drifted away from their belief in the Timbuna Cargo..."

Constable Boier, himself a Wapei native of Ereitei, accompanied Gow's patrol and was soon able to pacify the still doubtful ones by recounting the sights he had seen when he visited Australia as a member of a FELO party. The natives were told that in all probability small Japanese parties would attempt to pass through their area from time to time, these being escapees from the Wewak - Maprik area. They were instructed to keep scouts on all roads so that on the approach of these parties the people could desert the villages. Furthermore, they should :-

- Not provide food or attempt to guide Japanese parties.
- Bring immediate information to the nearest ANGAU, AIB or FELO officer.

The natives seem to be pleased with the return of the Government patrol and with the arrest of trouble makers – were prepared to settle down to normal living again. The Seinum people were apparently still suffering from a 'guilty conscience' and although some recruits were taken from this village, none of the former village officials were contacted. Recruits for the journey numbered 430, most of these men being in good physical condition. In commenting upon this patrol report, Capt. Milligan wrote in part :-

“The WAPEI area has had many internal disruptions during the past two years – in late 1942 TENI of TAUWETEI was at the root of the spread of ‘Vailala Madness’ with its internal unsettling repercussions; then in 1943 the LUMI natives at the instigation of MAKAIN and MOLO attempted to capture Lieut. Fryer and party with the intention of handing them over to the enemy at Aitape – the attempt fortunately failed. This was followed by the activities of BRAS, now under arrest, so the whole area was most unsettled and inclined to a pro-Japanese feeling. Gow therefore did a fine job in bringing the area back to a state of normality. The area seethed with intrigue and suspicion but Gow handled the whole situation with a cool and strong hand. He carried out an excellent patrol. Those responsible for the assault on Lieut Fryer’s party and BRAS are all being held in custody pending further enquiries.”

As is often the case, when the pendulum of expectations swings far in one direction as it seems to have done with the positive reports on Gow's achievements, it has a habit of swinging back the other way. That swing was recorded in the Aotei village book by Capt. G C O'Donnell on 22nd July 1944. O'Donnell's patrol (Aitape No 8/1944-45) left Aitape for the Wapei area on the day before Gow's patrol returned to Aitape. O'Donnell's village book entry reads :-

“LUMI patrol established Aotei camp. Patrol then consisted of Lt.Lillie and 18 o/r of US 32 Div. Recon Troop. Capt. O.Donnell & 8 RPC and 49 Sissano carriers ANGAU communications radio.

US Personnel of patrol changed Aug 4th Lt. Onby and 23 o/r of 43 Recon Troop US – WO2 Lyons ANGAU joined patrol 1st Aug.

Lillie's group July 6th returning to Aitape met enemy at Wilbeitei – no casualties. Hike broken in two – Lillie to Aitape, Sgt. Aney to camp – a mess – all gear lost to enemy but no weapons.”

Patrol report 8/44-45 describes the incident thus :-

“...an enemy recce party arrived in the village [Wilbeitei] at approximately the same time as forward elements of Lieut Lillie’s patrol reached the rest house some 400 yards from the village. Lieut. Lillie does not seem to have reced village and made an error in halting in rest house area. Patrol opened fire which enemy vigorously returned using one light machine gun. The Patrol broke in two. The leading portion under Lieut. Lillie eventually reported to Aitape on 8th July and the rear portion under Sgt. Aney reported Aotei on 6th. There was no European or native casualties though a lot of equipment and rations were lost”.

O’Donnell’s village book entry continues :-

“Since 22/7 four enemy killed...A large group variously described by natives to be 15 – 40 rifles 2 – 5 sabres moved Sikal – Lilal - Wigote – Sarbote – Yongetei (abortive air strike Sarbote – Yongetei) – Wilbeitei – Waboli – Somero.

Libal – Wogote – Sarbotei – Yongetei natives finished variously for assisting the enemy. But endeavor made to finish only those responsible. At even date one unfinished (Jap Native Captain) of Lilal. These natives attempted ambush police arresting offenders.

PS Brother Wapei is uncontrolled – I would not send an unarmed policeman to arrest a murderer. Future officers should remember the following incidents of this Wapei area since December 1941:

- *Calaboosing (gaoling) S/M Kiama*
- *Teni’s talk of cargo – Japs being ‘Tumbuna’*
- *Seinum and other natives including Lumi attempt to ‘fasten’ Fryer and Aiken to take them to Aitape for beheading.*
- *Bras’ disastrous punitive expedition at Stanley’s instruction on the shooting of a native at Flobum. The native wealth was (such of it as was identified) – returned to the owners Aug 16th at Aotei.*
- *Assistance given by Kalingio, Tauetei, Serinam, Bien, Yili natives to enemy moving east.*
 - *Bien reinstated themselves by helping in the killing of 5 Japs.*
- *Pulling (abduction) Angugenak, Yankok and Yemnum women by Stanley’s FELO agents.*
- *Punishments of Yongetei and Sarotei for helping the enemy.*
- *The return of native wealth ex-Bras at Aotei*

Sgd G C O’Donnell Capt. ANGAU 17/8/44.”

For the time being we will leave Capt. O’Donnell in Lumi – he was to remain there until early September 1944. In that time his party was being re-supplied by airdrop every five days and employing local labour on the extension of the Lumi airstrip.

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¹ Entries from the AOTEI village book were copied by the writer during a visit to Lumi in 1992.

² RANVR = Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Rifles.

³ Gow wrote his report in the 3rd person.

⁴ “Tumbuna” should read Tumbuna – ancestor (cargo) cult

Chapter 47 Macgregor and Eichorn Secret Missions to the Sepik River – Gathering Valuable Intelligence Whilst Unsure Who is the Enemy April & June/July 44

The value of firsthand knowledge of the Sepik and its peoples saw prospectors Bill Macgregor and Freddie Eichorn called upon yet again in early/mid 1944 to enter enemy territory and bring back information.

On 25th April, just three days after the allied landings at Aitape, Bill Macgregor found himself aboard a Catalina that departed Nadzab airfield at 8am¹. He and Constables 1980 Ponogan, 2546 Shuwi, and 1978 Kagi observed the villages and surrounds carefully as the flight path took them down along the Keram River to the junction with the Sepik and then over Kambaramba village. From there they flew west upstream along the Sepik dropping leaflets at all settlements along their route. Translated the leaflet reads :-

“We² are much stronger than Japan. In New Guinea Japan is beaten. We and America have defeated them in SALAMAUA, LAE, MARKHAM, FINSCHAFEN, RAI COAST and MADANG. The kiaps are back in charge of these places. Our soldiers have gone ashore at Bun, Aitape and Hollandia. Some of the Japanese are running away here and there in the bush and on the coast. You must not remain close to the Japanese. If you do, bombs will kill you with the Japanese. The problem of the Japanese is finished. The Government says so.”

At Timbunke, on the assumption that the Catholic Mission station was occupied by Japanese, the buildings were strafed with machine gun fire. From there they flew to Angriman village and thence upstream along the Karawari River as far as the junction with the Korosameri Rivers. From there they flew to Massendei (Masendenai) where a search was made for a reported building surrounded by barbed wire. Throughout the whole flight nothing unusual was sighted. There was no unusual canoe activity; in fact very few canoes were seen. The Catalina flew very low over the villages and Macgregor observed that village upkeep appeared to be neglected. The villages also appeared to be deserted, but then the people may have fled or hidden at the sound of the aircraft.

As they flew over a lake near Timbunke, a native was observed in a canoe. He waved signalling with a piece of cloth for them to land. The pilot's observation of the lake was that it looked safe to land upon so they did. Macgregor in the blister of the aircraft waved an Australian flag. Upon seeing this, natives came from everywhere in the water-grass fringes of the lake to the Catalina on the water.

Macgregor interrogated them as to the whereabouts of the enemy and then instructed them about actions they were to take if they encountered grounded allied airmen. The instruction to care for airmen and hide them from the Japanese was to be sent far and wide through the network of village officials; the *Luluais* and *Tultuls*. He then told them of the general military situation and that the Australians would be returning very shortly. He asked for a volunteer to return on the plane with him to Nadzab to provide intelligence information. There was no shortage of volunteers and after some discussion they indicated that Wauai should go as he was a single man. With Wauai on board the Catalina took off. They now continued their search upstream along the Sepik River as far as Korogo at which point the weather turned bad and they returned to Nadzab, arriving there at 2.15pm.

Wauai turned out to be a Kairiru Islander who had been at Timbunke as a mission school boy. Wauai proved to be very well informed. He was able to name the Sepik native officials appointed by the Japanese and the fact that one of these – Mamas of Mindimbit and his men had beaten one village man to death. He also reported that the Japanese troops were under instructions on penalty of death not to violate native women. The bombing campaign was described as being very successful in that the Japanese had abandoned all buildings and locations that were logical targets and were living in hidden places in the pitpit along the river banks. In Wewak they were living in the bush south of Moem point.

He provided specific information concerning missionaries including their departure from Kairiru Island. He knew that Father Hansen had been captured up river and sent to Wewak. He spoke of three allied aircraft that had crash landed and had information on each crew. He said that there had been a language and military school at Murik, but that it had ceased its operations after being bombed. He was asked what the Japanese said about the state of the war. Amazingly ...

... they said that they were being badly beaten by the Americans, that they had no planes, and that they were escaping to get new weapons. That we [the Allies] had Lae and Salamaua, also that we had plenty of planes and cargo.

The interview was very thorough so it was surprising that no mention was made of three thousand Indian POWs who had been landed in Wewak a year earlier and who had constructed Boram air-strip.

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On an unspecified day in June 1944, WO2 Freddie Eichorn with ten special constables and two months rations were flown in a C47 to Faita airstrip on the Ramu River. His two month journey was described in HQ Northern Region's ANGAU - Lae Special Report dated 1st August 1944 – 'WO2 F G Eichorn's trip to the Sepik on Air – Sea Rescue Work'. Freddy Eichorn was an ideal man to seek intelligence in the Keram River area. He was well known there, his wife was from Korogopa and his son 'Billy' Eichorn of Yip would later be an elected member of the Papua New Guinea parliament.³

Upon arrival on the Ramu River, Eichorn put his police to work making two canoes. The canoes were completed in five days and on the sixth, the party commenced travelling down the Ramu River. With them were WO2 Peter England and a party of New Guinea Force (NGF) personnel. On the first night they camped in the deserted village of Sipu. The nights of the second and third days were spent camped in the bush on the bank of the river. On the fourth day they called in at Atemble where the village people stated that there were no Japanese at Annanberg. The NGF personnel remained at Atemble while Eichorn, England and the police continued on down the Ramu River and camped that night at Sirinibu. On the 5th day the NGF group caught up and the whole party continued on to Annanberg arriving at 2.30 pm to find the place deserted.

The police were sent out and soon came back with the village people who carried the patrol's stores to Jito, the head of pinnacle navigation during the flood season on the Keram River, in the Sepik drainage. Eichorn proceeded down the Keram by canoe with his police serving as paddlers. They camped the night at Kokulu. The local people were unsure whether there were any Japanese on the Lower Keram River or not. In the afternoon a group of 18 Madang natives walked into the village and were very surprised to see Freddie Eichorn.

They had deserted the Japanese at Marienberg some 10 days before. They were on their way to Annanberg and from there they would go back to Madang. They had come with missionaries from Sek when the bombing there became intense. With his questions answered Eichorn allowed them to continue on their way. Eichorn and his party continued down the Keram River from Kokulu basically following the route that Fulton had taken in 1943. The party travelled in the pre-dawn and reached Mungun [Magun] and spent the day resting there. All the nearby villages which were visited that day [Blomvoto, Bumbula and Mungun] had been deserted. They set off again at 7.30pm passing the Banaro villages unobserved at midnight and entered the Nemilim channel at 5am, called a halt at 10am and rested through the day.

At 7pm his party surrounded the village of Kekten [Gekten] to ensure no one got away to take a message to the Japanese that he was there. His interrogation of the people revealed that there were no Japanese in the major villages downstream – Korogopa, Kambot or Chuimondo. The party camped the night there and next morning continued down the channel to Korogopa where Eichorn set up his base of operations. He contacted surrounding villages and at Korogopa marked out an airstrip 1500 feet long by 180 feet wide and set the people to work building it.

The airstrip was completed in 10 days.⁴ At this time two Chuimondo natives reported that a Jap native captain had come upstream to their village and asked if Eichorn was at Korogopa making an airstrip. They said that they had replied 'No'.

Thus alerted, Eichorn posted guards day and night. He sent the natives away from the village and arranged that they watch for him and his party at the Yamen/ Kekten junction in the event that he was attacked. From there he would accompany them upstream to Kekten. At 7.30pm during heavy rain a heavy machine gun opened fire on the Korogopa rest house. Eichorn and his police were not there but hiding at the top end of the village. He took the decision to leave the village at 2am next morning as he knew he could not eliminate this Japanese patrol and their armed natives. His party proceeded upstream and as planned gathered together all of the Korogopa natives. They arrived at Pushiten at 5am in pouring rain and waited there until dawn before pushing on to Buten, which was a small village in the middle of a vast sago and grass swamp. Word was now received that Korogopa had been burned to the ground. Eichorne wrote a note to WO2 England and explained to him what had happened.

While awaiting a reply from England, he had the native people build an airstrip for an L 5 aircraft, which was completed in five days. Then at midnight four Yamen natives arrived to say that they had been chased from Yamen by a few armed natives. Eichorn and his police went to investigate and they encountered the raiders in the Yamen bush. The raiders took them to be Yamen natives and called out to Eichorn's party not to run away. Eichorn answered '*Who are you?*' The raiders ducked for cover. Eichorn's party opened fire and gave chase catching four of the raiders. They were taken back to Buten. Three of the raiders were from Nakata and the fourth was a youth from Angoram.

They said natives of Moim, Wom, Kambaramba, Magendo, Angoram and Yimbwando forced them to guide the party through the Yamen bush. They were allegedly looking for three Japanese native officials. The Angoram youth was questioned separately. When asked whether they were with the party that raided Korogopa and then burned it to the ground he said he was not but that he had met those who did. They were from all of the villages named

above. When asked about loot, he replied that they had taken canoe loads of pigs, fowls, coconut and sago, as well as canoes.

Eichorn took down intelligence on the Japanese positions. He noted the heavy death rate among Keram River villagers due to sickness and starvation. His report also mentioned that the Korogopa and Yamen people were hiding out at Buten. A Piper Cub aircraft landed at the Buten airstrip and took Eichorn back to Nadzab.

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¹ ANGAU war diaries Intelligence report on Recce by Lieut W.Macgregor in Catalina to Sepik Rv.

² “We” alongside the Australian coat of arms is read as “Australia”

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Interview with Nonguru/Kemerabi Page 82

⁴ June is early in the dry season in the Sepik, at which time the flat river banks can be easily cleared of Pitpit (cane grass) to make a temporary landing area.

Chapter 48 Insertion of Hall and Fryer Surveillance Parties on the Sepik –
Consequences – Massacre at Timbunke April to Sept. 1944 .

With the Japanese 18th Army's continued westward movement along the coast effectively blocked by the Americans at Aitape and Hollandia and with Stanley back in the Yellow River area to observe any movements of Japanese forces in the direction of the Idenberg River, two additional coast-watching parties were positioned in the Sepik.

Following Macgregor's intelligence gathered at and around Timbunke on 25th April 1944, two Catalina aircraft landed on the Sepik River near Timbunke on 20th May with Lieut. Hall and a party including Sgt. Dolby and Pte. McGruer. Hall moved into the jungle to the north of the river. He was unable to get support from the local people who were frightened of punishment from the Japanese if they helped the allies. Moreover Hall's presence had become known to the Japanese so it was decided to withdraw the party.¹

Professor Powell's *'The Third Force'* tells a version of the story thus :-

*"On 20th May AIB's Lieutenant B.G.Hall, three other Australians and sixteen natives landed in two Catalinas on the Sepik River near the village of Timbunke. The local villagers proved friendly and provided information that enabled Hall's party to kill five Japanese at a camp on the Timbunke-Chimbu (Chimbian) road and rout another party that came to investigate the firing. Hall had intended to stay in the area; but native reports of numerous Japanese in other villages led him to call up the Catalinas and depart on 2nd June."*²

The second party landed a week after Hall. This was Capt. Fryer's party which landed on the Yau'umbak lagoon near Avatip. Fryer again had Aiken as his second-in-command. Also with the party were Lieuts. Harlow and Walls and Sgts. Cream, Wigley and Selmes and Corporals Evans and Francis plus 25 natives. When Hall, Dolby and McGruer and eight natives were withdrawn from Timbunke, they joined Fryer's party on the Screw (Amagu) River.

Fryer's party was welcomed by the local people but as there were Japanese posts nearby at Marui downstream and Yambon upstream, they were nervous. They became even more nervous when Fryer intercepted the Japanese canoe mail service between posts and sent it out for translation. This local nervousness resulted in Fryer moving his party away from the Sepik as quickly as possible. Fryer believed he had a head start as the Marui post had been strafed on the day of the landing. The party travelled up the shallow and gravel strewn Screw (Amagu) river as far as canoes could go and then commenced walking.

After ten days (in early June) Fryer was able to make radio contact with Stanley and then with patrols working out of Aitape. Dead Japanese along the trails provided evidence of starvation and disease. Sickness now also slowed Fryer's party when Dolby contracted scrub typhus. On 20th July Fryer met Ted Fulton on a patrol out of Aitape. The evidence on the ground confirmed by Fryer, Fulton and Stanley was that the westward movement of Japanese had ceased. The Battle of Driniumor River was underway, which would prove to be decisive. The 18th Army remained trapped in the Sepik awaiting its fate. With their task accomplished Fryer's party was ordered to withdraw. To do so, he moved his party north to Aitape from where they were sent to Australia to recuperate. Fryer was awarded the M.B.E.; Dolby the B.E.M., and Evans was Mentioned in Dispatches.³

Sadly the story at Timbunke did not end with the departure of Lieut. Hall's party. The Japanese and their loyal Sepik followers would investigate Hall's sudden arrival, the killing

of a few Japanese and just as sudden departure. This part of the story is described by ex-police Sergeant Yimbien of Tegoï :-

“I went with them (the Japanese and Sepik men). The Timbunkes had signalled aircraft and soldiers landed and gave guns to the people. The soldiers and people they armed went and killed the Japanese near Timbunke. One Japanese escaped and fled through Koiwud and finally brought the talk to Korogo. Captain Hama heard the talk there. He sent Kubaïasi down to Kanganaman. They investigated and got all the stories.

Then they called out for all the Parembéis, Kanganamans, and Malingais to gather at Kanganaman. Then the Japanese came also to Kanganaman. We took all the Japanese, Mamba, Mai’indambwi, Injin and me into the canoes and we gathered at Kararau. Tegoï, Suapmeri, Yentchan and Kararau men all gathered. All these places supplied canoes and paddlers to transport the Japanese party. We waited until 5pm then we all went aboard and we drifted down the Sepik.

Mamba’s canoe and mine and Mai’indambwi’s went through the Pandendangei channel to the Timbunke place Kondumangu which was the place where the Catalina had landed. The men were gathered there. We went ashore and looked for the machine gun they had been given. We found it plus boxes of ammunition and magazines.

The Japanese went ashore at Timbunke but all they found was a mad woman called Enjinimbo. The men had gone to the bush. The Japanese stabbed her with a bayonet and threw her body into the water. The Japanese told us to go and find the Timbunke men. We went through the Timbunke bush seeking them out and we gathered all the men and women together at the place called Kondumangu. Captain Hama and Kubaïasi had sent some of us to go and cut cane and hide it in a house before the Timbunkes assembled. The place has a barat (channel) along one side of it, with a clear place to put the canoes. All the Timbunke women went into two houses. All the men went into the big house belonging to Palimbanga.

Captain Hama now told us to take the cane and tie the men up. The Timbunkes already knew. It is the way of fighting; we are men and we know. Captain Hama told us to tie them up in family lots – each man was tied on one hand only. When they were all tied we took them down the ladder. They were not organized into lines or groups. They were just a mass of people. The women were still in the houses and they did not know of this.

The Japanese told us ‘These men are of your place, you can kill them.’ We fitted bayonets on rifles and stabbed them. Some of us did not do it very well and just made marks on them. The Japanese then positioned a machine gun and finished off the Timbunkes. I was standing behind the machine gun and I counted seven magazines.

The women were still absent and they did not know. But when the gun opened up the women heard it and they knew. When the bullets hit them blood spurted like rain. There were many men. When all the men were dead the bodies were placed in a nearby bomb crater. We put ground on top of the bodies and we slept the night.

Next morning the men of Parembéi and all the other Sepik places came and selected the Timbunke women they wanted. The old men, three of them were left. My father had spoken to save them and they had been spared. My father gathered these three and the old women. He killed pigs and fed them. He did not let them stay at Timbunke, but took them to Kararau. When they were strong again my father took them back to Timbunke and settled them there...

After the war...Kiap Ormsby...wanted me, a young man to give evidence in the court and explain what happened. I was in the witness box all morning and then all afternoon until 7pm at night. They asked me if the natives killed the Timbunkes ourselves and I told them the same story I just told you”.

Apart from old men, every resident adult male of the Timbunke village population was killed that day. J.K.McCarthy takes up the story :-

“The natives who were working with the Japanese...now reverted to complete savagery as they plundered and sacked. Native belongings that could not be carted away were thrown into the river, and eighty-two of the young women were divided up among the men and taken back to the villages of the attacking natives. One old woman who was not thought to be worth taking was raped five times. Soon there was singing in many villages in the area, and new homicidal emblems were displayed...

It was not until the end of the war that we found out the full facts of the great Timbunke massacre, for the total death toll in the slaughter was ninety-seven including one woman. ADO. Ralph Ormsby wrote in his report. ‘Let it be said that the prime cause of the whole affair was the loyalty of the Timbunke natives and their willingness to help the Allied cause without considering the possible risk to themselves.’⁴”

Ralph Ormsby made several other important points in his Angoram monthly report for August 1946⁵:-

- 1. The upper river natives are a proud, arrogant and quarrelsome people...It was not unexpected therefore, to find that with the withdrawal of the pre-war administration and the lax control exercised by the Japanese, that the natives took full advantage of the opportunity to indulge in many barbarities.*
- 2. Mambawandem (Mamba) of Korogo, since deceased, is reliably stated to have anticipated the execution which the Japanese were planning by stabbing the Luluai of Timbunke in the chest with a spear. This precipitated a general melee, which was admitted by Capt. Hama, but passed over lightly, in which pro-Jap natives attacked the bound Timbunkes...This was stopped by the Japs and the execution was completed by machine gun fire.*
- 3. ...upper river natives are proud people, one might...say the backbone of the wartime RPC and NGIB and carrier lines were drawn from this area...Now most of these have returned to their villages with a feeling that they played a large part in winning the war. They are naturally incensed when they find wrongs suffered by their wives and families during their absence have not yet been adequately punished. Many of them feel inclined to take the law into their own hands...”*

A final post script is added here by ex Sgt Yimbien of Tegoi :-

“Mamba was in jail in Angoram and he was sick and sleeping in the hospital. There were some Timbunkes there and it is believed that they together with some Korogos killed him. He was the only one killed. When he was asleep they held him and blocked off his breathing and when he gasped for air they had put lime⁶ over his nose and mouth and he breathed it in deeply and died. The Government said he died of sickness; the natives say differently. Some saw lime on his nose and mouth next day.”⁷

End Notes Chapter 48

¹ Feldt 1946 Page 377

² Powell A. The Third Force Page 210

³ Feldt 1946 Pages 375-380

⁴ J.K.McCarthy Patrol into Yesterday. F.W.Cheshire Publishing Marrickville NSW 1963 Page 217

⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20– extract from Angoram Monthly report August 1946 Page 30

⁶ “Lime” is the quick lime (Calcium Oxide) which is chewed with Betelnut and “mustard” to provide a mild narcotic effect.

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 28

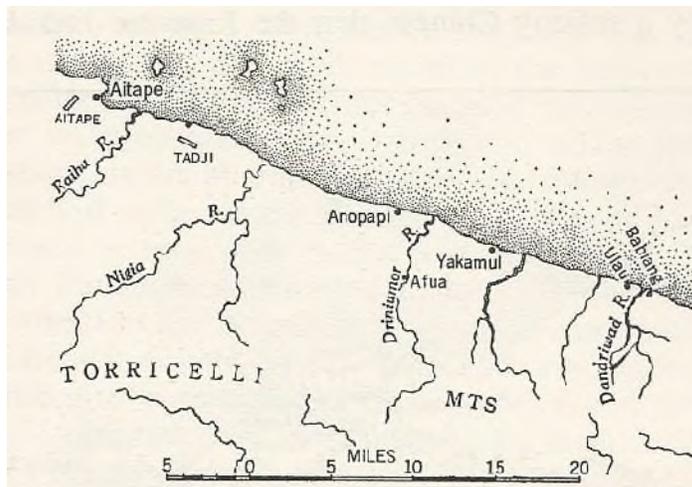
Chapter 49 Japanese Counter Attack – Decisive Battle with the Americans at the Driniumor River 10th July – 25th August 1944

The Japanese 18th Army commander Lieutenant General Adachi resolved to recapture Hollandia and Aitape, or if this proved impossible, to contribute to the military operations of the 2nd Area Army in West New Guinea by restricting westward movement of the American forces. The 18th Army had four months provisions in Wewak. At that time the army numbered about 55,000 men, of which the 35,000 from the 20th and 41st Divisions and the 66th Infantry Regiment of the 51st Division would be directed towards Aitape.

It was however 130km from Wewak to Aitape and the supply line required the building of a road, which was constructed, but constant rain made vehicular movement impossible beyond a point 60 kilometres west of Wewak. Landing barges were used to move the war materials as far as But where a forward supply base was established. The only way forward from But was to use human porters. Seven thousand men of the ordinance corps were assisted in this by the combat forces of the 41st Division and part of the 20th Division.¹ The timing of the impending battle was put back several times until the necessary accumulation of materials was achieved.

Added to these problems for the Japanese was the fact that the troops engaged in this operation were utterly exhausted by difficult operations and heavy casualties suffered in the defense of Salamaua, the retreat across the Saruwaged Range, operations at Finschhafen, the Finisterre Range and the retreat from Madang to Wewak.² They also now lacked air, sea and heavy artillery support.

The first skirmish occurred at the end of April 1944 when about 200 Japanese surrounded troops from the US 3rd Battalion. Up until 4th May it was estimated that the Japanese had lost a little over 500 dead and 25 captured, while US had lost 19 dead and 40 wounded³ During May, the 32nd American Division had established a perimeter about 9 miles wide and two miles deep around Tadjii airfield, with patrols moving up to 25 miles to the east of Aitape.



In preparation for the battle, a US defensive line was established along the left (west) bank of the Driniumor River, twenty miles east of Aitape. The Driniumor River rises in the Torricelli Mountains and flows northwards to the coast. In its headwaters and down beyond Afua it flows through a deep gorge. The left bank, continued north from Afua for about two miles as a raised plateau between 50 and 100 yards in height, and

Map from David Dexter's *The New Guinea Offensives* [1968 reprint] Page 807

after that it flattens out into open country. The distance from Afua to the sea is about four miles. Of the terrain available to the Americans, the Driniumor offered the best defensive site. Another positive feature for the Allies was that given the known Japanese logistical problems, the Driniumor River is about 38 miles from the Japanese forward supply base at But.

From 7th May major clashes were happening with strong parties of Japanese. As the leading division of Japanese troops moved towards Aitape, they met and pushed back the Americans from Ulau on the coast in May and Yakumul in late May and early June 1944 to confront the Americans across the Driniumor by mid-June.⁴ The logistical problems meant that the critical mass of Japanese materials and provisions had not yet been achieved. In the beginning of July it was assessed that if the food supply was limited to half rations and locally produced sago was relied upon, the food available could sustain the Japanese offensive only until the beginning of September.⁵

Radio messages intercepted in June 1944 suggested that the 18th Army would attack the perimeter in the first ten days of July 1944 using 20,000 men with another 11,000 in reserve. The American 43rd Division and 124th Regiment were ordered to Aitape to help meet this anticipated attack.⁶

On the night of 10th July the Japanese attacked en masse across the Driniumor River and despite suffering appalling casualties, forced a major breach in the American line. The allied counter attack commenced on 13th July supported by bombardment from two Australian cruisers and two US destroyers off shore and Australian and US fighter bombers.⁷ The Royal Australian Air-Force [RAAF] flew some 1,600 sorties from the recently re-captured Tadjai airstrip, which was just twenty miles from the Driniumor River. They bombed targets between Aitape and Wewak and dropped supplies to the American troops. The US Fifth Air Force flew sorties out of Nadzab in the Markham valley.⁸

Intense fighting continued back and forth along the Driniumor, around Afua in the south and Niumen Creek in the east. Japanese soldiers at this point were surviving by eating small quantities of uncooked rice which was consumed as soon as it arrived from rear positions. As a result they were losing their physical strength and therefore their fighting capacity. Their morale also suffered from their understanding of the deteriorating military position.

On the 3rd August the Japanese commander-in-chief assessed that combat strength and supply capacity of the 18th Army had reached its limit and ordered that as of noon on the 4th of August, the offensive against Aitape would stop and a retreat would commence as of the morning of the 5th August.

Fighting continued until 10th August and the battle of Driniumor River was officially declared over on the 25th August. The US forces suffered almost 3,000 casualties including 440 dead which was their greatest loss in any battle in the New Guinea campaign after the battle of Buna, Gona and Salamander. In the battle of the Driniumor River, a Japanese assessment was that of the 35,000 men allocated to the conflict, losses numbered about 13,000. Of these, the front line lost about 8,000 and the rear service units about 5,000.⁹

End Notes Chapter 49

¹ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 Pages 87-90

² Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 Page 201

³ Kerry Leen, Return to Wewak, Wirui Press Wewak 1970 Pages 21/22

⁴ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 Pages 201-203

⁵ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980 Pages 207-208

⁶ David Dexter – 1959 Pages 806-807

⁷ Wikipedia – Battle of Driniumor River.

⁸ Kerry Leen – Return to Wewak. Wirui Press Wewak 1970 21

⁹ Kengoro Tanaka Tokyo 1980

Chapter 50 Military Strategies, ANGAU Patrols and Skirmishing After the Drinumor Battle - Establishment of the Aitape Inland Sub District July – Oct. 1944

After the battle of Drinumor River, the Japanese moved eastwards to take up defensive positions around But and Wewak. The 18th Army was now out of provisions and the coastal region did not allow the easy procurement of food as the troops endeavoured to apply self-support measures. With an average distance to travel of between 60 and 90 miles, many of the exhausted and starving soldiers fell dead along the way. The 41st Division lost more than a third of its forces during this march¹.

At the end of July 1944 Lieut. General Adachi ordered his army to wage ‘*an honorable death defying battle*’.² There is no other case where the Commander in Chief of Japanese imperial forces had given such an order and put plans in place to implement it. This was done despite such adverse conditions, and the fact that the ultimate military outcome of the war in the Sepik District was clearly not in the Japanese favour.

The full meaning of what “*an honourable death defying battle*” meant in practical terms was spelt out by Masamichi Kitomoto in his “Record of Marathon Adventures” as the Tragic Teachings of War :-

*“A healthy soldier will fight three enemies. A wounded soldier will fight one enemy. A heavily wounded soldier will fight without moving, those who cannot move at all shall kill each other. There shall be no prisoners for the enemy to take.”*³

The fact that Japan was able to wage this battle for a total of eight months without the delivery of supplies from the outside was attributed to the support and cooperation of the native people who provided native foods to sustain the 18th Army⁴. It was not until December 1944 that the Japanese were narrowly deployed in the planned defensive positions. Self-support through the local natives was put in place.

The Japanese plan was to defend But and Wewak airfields, which would obviously be allied targets. Their focus was therefore on the coastal region east of Aitape from where the allied assault would be launched. The allied deployment of troops south of the Torricelli Mountains was unexpected by the Japanese⁵.

Ted Fulton continues the story :-

*“The Japanese lost many thousands and the 18th Army was now a beaten force. There were now 48,000 American troops in the base at Aitape. Having defeated the Japanese ...they were content to leave them alone without ammunition or food. They did not wish to pursue or destroy the enemy. Aitape had become quite comfortable with ice-cream and open-air movies. Our (ANGAU) patrols were to report any movements likely to threaten Aitape base or large scale attempts to escape to the west.”*⁶

¹ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 234

² “Honourable death defying battle” loses something in translation from Japanese to English. It presumably means that the average soldier should do his duty until death from battle or starvation; surrender not being an option.

³ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King’s Enemies – Australian Military History Publications 1988 P 318

⁴ Kengoro Tanaka Pages 1980 230

⁵ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 231

⁶ E.T.W.Fulton 2005 Page 227/8

On 15th August 1944 in commenting upon WO2 M.J.Warrick's patrol No 3 of 1944-45, Captain Milligan wrote in part :-

*"It is most unfortunate that the task force will not take any action against enemy parties in this inland area unless they are making a major attempt to escape or offer a major threat to Aitape; this means that all the excellent work done by District Staff on patrols such as these will be wasted as we cannot expect natives to remain loyal to us if we do not take action against any enemy pillaging party who are beginning to take reprisals against those natives who do not assist them."*⁷

There is no indication in the ANGAU War Diaries as to when this remarkable order not to pursue the Japanese was changed. ANGAU had a wider responsibility. Fulton continues :-

*"...we were concerned that the starving Japanese would devastate the inland areas, stripping it of food and forcing the 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 enemy forces that had moved inland."*⁸

Meanwhile ANGAU patrol activity probed through the Drinumor battle zone and beyond. Two patrols set out to achieve this. On 14th August 1944 Aitape Patrol 5/44-45 lead by Lieut. Gow moved east of the Drinumor River into the Dandriwad River area, while on 24th August 1944 Capt. Searson lead Aitape Patrol 7/44-45 parallel to the route taken by Gow, but further inland. Both patrols found the Japanese had no significant numbers west of the Dandriwad River and that the river (some 12 miles east of the Drinumor) was being used as a point of resistance as a rear guard post. Both patrols returned on 3rd September owing to the opposition encountered to the east of the Dandriwad River. The task was taken over by US combat troops.

Searson's patrol diary of 29th August 1944 noted :- 'Proceeded east. One Jap killed. Const Baket wounded'. Thus in eight words Searson dismissed his own near death experience. It was written up in detail later :-

"Baket [a native of Wosera in the Maprik Sub District] served as a Special Constable in the Sepik District and was a member of a patrol led by Capt. J J Searson of ANGAU which was charged with the duty of reconnoitering the Charov, Anaoulak, Dandriwad Rv. Trail, one of the routes of withdrawal for the remnants of the Japanese force defeated in the battle of the Drinumor Rv. During the patrol's stay, it was constantly in danger of detection.

On 28 Aug 1944, the patrol was proceeding to the Dandanain River and when climbing a declivity, Capt. Searson, who was walking on the trail, was confronted by a Japanese soldier with a grenade in his hand. Special Constable Baket who was off the trail on the right flank, at that moment appeared on the trail about ten yards closer to the enemy soldier than Capt. Searson. The Japanese was in the act of throwing the grenade when Baket calmly aimed and shot him in the shoulder. The grenade fell a few yards from Baket and exploded. He received numerous fragments in his legs and scrotum, which necessitated treatment. Capt. Searson owes his safety from serious injury and possible death to Baket's loyalty and courage. Baket was awarded the Loyal Service Medal on 6th Nov. 1944"

Major Vertigan, in commenting on Searson's patrol report, said in part :-

⁷ Milligan J.S.Captain reference APO 795 of 15th August 1944

⁸ E.T.W.Fulton 2005 Page 228

“By the end of the campaign it is estimated that the whole coastal strip from Aitape to Wewak will be completely devastated and we will need to ration the natives for a long time as well as looking after their health closely. Already nearly 9,000 enemy have been killed or found dead in the area, which is all low lying and swampy and unless we take precautions, there will probably be outbreaks of sickness and dysentery. The refugees at present are well fed and cared for and this will assist in preventing sickness when they are returned to their villages.”

Meanwhile Capt O’Donnell’s Aitape patrol 8/1944-45 was in the field in the Wapei tribal area throughout the battle of the Drinumor River and his report was critical of the lack of information and situation reports he received concerning both the area south of the Torricelli Mountains and along the coast. In particular on and after 24th June information was not passed on concerning Japanese patrol activity in the Tong and Yapunda areas. O’Donnell’s own intelligence sources revealed :-

1/ A large party (numbers unknown) including high ranking officers were at Muambual and slowly moving westward. In the weeks that followed, the party moved through Walem, Yalem, Yeribi, Sikal, Lilal, Wigote, Wilbeitei back to Wilbeitei and over the Torricelli Mountains to Somero on August 8th, 9th and 10th June. The patrol had to relay their cargo and so was slow moving. O’Donnell’s spies counted 40 rifles. The intentions of this group were assessed variously as:

- a. Non-combatant group escaping?*
- b. Patrols reconnoitering escape routes?*
- c. Combat forces attempting to attack the Aitape perimeter from the south?*

2. Various enemy parties in the vicinity of and south of Tong and Yapunda.

Tong, and Yapunda, like Wilbeitei (see Maps 2 & 3) formed a west to east arc of vital access points on routes from Aitape inland to the tribal areas south of the Torricelli Mountains.

Wilbeitei gave access to the Wapei tribal area; the post war Lumi Sub District.

Yapunda gave access to the Palei tribal area; the post war Nuku Patrol Post area.

Tong gave access to the Urat tribal area; the post war Dreikikir Patrol Post area.

East of Dreikikir was Maprik Sub District HQ which had been established in 1937 in the densely populated ABELAM tribal area. In 1944 ANGAU base camps had been established at Lumi, and 29 miles to the east at Yapunda and a further 19 miles further east at Tong. The Lumi, Yapunda and Tong areas were still being actively patrolled by the Japanese. Maprik a further 23 miles east of Tong was still in Japanese hands.

On 2nd June 1944 we left Capt. Fienberg at Tong after his Yakamul - Kombio patrol. His instructions were to remain in the Tong area indefinitely. On 5th June he was joined there by Ted Fulton, who had recently been promoted to Captain. Capt. Fulton was accompanied by Lieut Pascoe, and 15 soldiers of the 1st US Tank Destroyer Battalion and five members of the RPC.

On 21st June Capt. Fienberg and a small party departed Tong for Aitape. Fulton’s patrol would remain behind Japanese lines for the next 116 days throughout the Battle of the Drinumor River and until 28th Sept 1944. During that time the patrol was resupplied by air drop every five days on average. Drops were taken at Ringin, Tong and Yapunda depending upon the patrol’s location. Patrols by other ANGAU officers passed through Tong during this period included:

- WO2 Scholes & three RPC to patrol Ringin area 21/6/44 – 28/7/44
- WO2 Lyons, Capt. Bottcher and 20 men of US 32 Recon troop and 60 carriers 17/7/44 – 4/8/44.

- WO2. M.J.Warrick, accompanied by WO2 Mackie of ANGAU, Lieut. Barnard and nine men, eight RPC and 136 carriers 26th June to 3rd August 1944 – Drinumor headwaters to Kombio area (south of Torricelli Mountains), then returned via Tong, Yapunda and Kapoam to Aitape.

Among Capt. Fulton's police was one Constable 2808 Dopi, whom we shall meet again in the immediate post war period at Marui. On the 1st of July, while Dopi was scouting in the Yambes area, he received a challenge 'tanget'⁹ from ex-constable Duku who was now a Japanese agent. A challenge 'tanget' is a sheaf of croton leaves with each leaf signifying one day in time until the enemy parties should meet in combat, a New Guinea 1940s version of 'High-Noon'. The Japanese party with Duku moved east on the 5th of July upon hearing that four Constables were approaching to take up Duku's challenge.¹⁰

Capt. Fryer and party who had been landed by Catalina on the Yau'umbak lagoon, south of the Sepik River on or about the 27th May, had worked their way north westward along the Screw (Amagu) River and met Fulton in early July in the Salata area. Fulton had reported enemy troop movements northward from Maprik, but then no further movements west of Salata after 16th July. Fulton left Fryer's party in that area and returned to Tong. On 30th July his patrol was ordered to move west to Yapunda. No reason was given for the move but simple deduction suggests with thousands dying in the recently commenced battle of Drinumor River just a few kilometers to the north, that the move was a safety precaution allowing the RAAF and allied artillery the freedom to strike wherever and whenever required.

At Yapunda Capt. Fulton took over from Lieut. Gow, who with Lieut Baxter and 30 US troops and 10 RP Chad had been on patrol in the Yapunda, West Palei area since 3rd July. Their instructions had been *'to make reconnaissance of the immediate area surrounding Yapunda, and through native intelligence, report movement of any Japanese patrols proceeding in a westerly direction through the area.'*

Upon arrival at Yapunda on 5th July, Gow learned that a Japanese patrol of about 25 soldiers had been in the area the day before but they had moved on. For most of July, Gow received regular reports of a Japanese fortified position at Winbe some eight miles due west of Yapunda. Each side knew of the other's presence and guarded against it. Then on 1st August it was reported that the Winbe natives had deserted the Japanese. On the 5th August when Gow handed over to Capt. Fulton, the Japanese were still at Winbe.

Captain Fienberg's party again left Aitape on 9th August and went to Yapunda via the Lipan Pass. After a briefing from Capt Fulton, Fienberg's party continued to the south where he set up a temporary base at Kubriwat from where he conducted medical work among the village people, while collecting local intelligence and engaging in guerrilla tactics against small parties of Japanese in the area.

Fulton had left Constable 2414 Kaman at Tong in a custodian role of the Tong camp. On 16th August 1944 Const. Kaman received a report that an enemy party of ten was moving to Tong to burn the post down and to inflict reprisals on Tong natives. Kaman accompanied by an unarmed native called Samgis (who was soon after recruited as special Constable) proceeded to Yasile and set up an ambush. When the enemy approached Kaman opened fire killing five. A grenade thrown by Samgis wounded a sixth. The enemy was taken by surprise and withdrew after firing a few shots which

⁹ "Tanget" is the pidgin word for the Croton plant. Receipt of a parcel of croton leaves marks number of the days (one leaf per day) from present until a specified event.

¹⁰ Patrol diary Fulton's TONG-YAPUNDA patrol provided by Elizabeth Fulton Thurston.

wounded one native. Kaman returned to Tong and evacuated all natives to Ringin. Kaman and Samgis remained at Tong.

On 17th August 1944 an enemy force estimated at 20 returned to Yasile and entered the village after laying down a rifle barrage. There were no casualties as the village had been evacuated. Kaman reported the events to Captain Fienberg and took part in the attack on this patrol at Nahahang. Kaman then returned to Tong and maintained the post until the return of the patrol from Yapunda in September. Constable Kaman was awarded the Valor Badge by the C in C of the AMF.

Given the focus of patrol work south of the Torricelli Mountains around Lumi, Yapunda, Tong and towards Maprik, the decision was taken to divide the Aitape Sub District into two – Aitape to be responsible for the coastal strip north of the Torricelli Mountains from the Dutch Border at Wutung and towards Wewak, while the Aitape inland sub district for the area south of the mountains. To facilitate this, the initial base was established at Yapunda.

On September 4th 1944 WO2 Scholes with A/Sergeant Tuohy a European Medical Assistant plus ten members of the R P C and 46 indentured labourers departed Aitape and arrived at Yapunda on the 6th, where they were met by Capt. Fulton.

WO2 Scholes instructions were:

1. To relieve Capt. Fulton at Yapunda.
2. To prepare Yapunda as a staging area for troops, carriers and police.
3. To establish and erect buildings for a native hospital.
4. To carry out administrative patrols where ever possible.
5. To supply information on enemy movements.

After a briefing from Fulton on Japanese movements in the area, Fulton departed on the 10th of September on a patrol that would deliver him back to Tong. Scholes and his team worked on constructing hospital wards, storehouses, latrines and isolation wards for dysentery cases. By the 16th of September the new hospital had 100 patients and by the 21st the patient numbers had risen to 150. By September 30th the patient numbers were down to 80 people.

Also on 21st September advice was received from Aitape that Yapunda now came under the authority of ADO-Inland, Capt. Fienberg. Capt. Cole, who would take over from Fienberg, arrived at Yapunda on 4th of October and departed to join Capt. Fienberg further to the east the next day.

At Aitape an inspection was conducted between 10th and 13th September 1944 by the ANGAU officer-in-charge of medical services for the Northern Division. His visit was to assess the situation regarding the rationing of some 3,000 evacuees from battle zones and whether the Native Hospital on Ali Island, where 280 patients were being treated, should be moved to the mainland, and if so, where.

Meanwhile Fienberg received reports of larger numbers of Japanese drifting into the Wom area from the Matapau-But area. The Japanese were eating out the areas they entered. Fienberg conducted a school in grenade throwing and armed six 'sentries' with captured Japanese rifles to operate in the Wom area. A bounty of ten shillings was paid for each Japanese soldier killed. The objective of these tactics was to prevent the enemy spreading out over the whole of the inland before the promised Australian troops arrived after the withdrawal of US troops in October 1944.

In his role as ADO Inland, Fienberg commenced clearing land at Dreikikir so a base could be built there. On 3rd October his scouts confirmed a large number of Japanese troops moving into the Wom

area and occupying the Selnau village area. On the 5th they were observed making an orderly advance into the Saihik Wahlen area north of Dreikikir. Scouts brought in four escaped Indian POWs making a total of six in his care to that date.

The approaching Japanese party consisted of the Torricelli Contingent, commanded by Colonel Iwakiri. On 20th September they were dispatched by the 41st Division to the southern side of the Torricelli Mountains. A party of 30 soldiers scouted the Tong area where Australian troops were met along with combat trained natives. The Japanese were under orders to scout enemy positions in the Tong, Maimai and Lumi areas. On 7th October, they reported driving back about 40 enemy troops consisting mainly of Australians and wiped out the enemy position at Tong on 11th October.¹¹

On the 7th of October Capt. Cole caught up with Fienberg. Together their patrols took the escaped Indian POWs to Tong, two of whom had to be carried because of their weakened condition. Next day as the Japanese moved closer to Tong, the Indians, patrol equipment and stores and all non-essential personnel were moved to Ringin. At Tong, Capts. Fienberg and Cole and their police set an ambush. The lead Japanese soldiers came under Bren, Owen gun and rifle fire and after suffering at least four casualties, withdrew. However, the Australians, being aware of the superior numbers of enemy troops estimated at 200+, decided to move to Ringin. The Japanese occupied Tong. Fienberg called in an RAAF airstrike which was guided by Capts. Fulton and O'Donnell. The combined Cole/Fienberg patrol crossed the divide and descended via the Harech River to Yakama.

Capt. O'Donnell, who was then relieving Capt. Milligan at Aitape, commented on Fienberg's patrol report and placed special emphasis on Fienberg's information management skills :-

"A considerable amount of nerve was necessary to wait at Tong while a mob of well led Japs were intent on catching up. Capt. Cole has described to me how, every few minutes at this stage, natives would run up to Capt. Fienberg with the latest situation reports and that in the midst of the action a native turned up ready to lead the party out. This would explain Capt. Fienberg's well justified confidence in his control of the situation. The latest reports inform that the enemy has vacated the Tong – Yambes area."

End Notes Chapter 50

³²² Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 234

³²³ "Honourable death defying battle" loses something in translation from Japanese to English. It presumably means that the average soldier should do his duty until death from battle or starvation; surrender not being an option.

³²⁴ Trigellis-Smith S. 'All the King's Enemies' – Australian Military History Publications 1988 P 318

³²⁵ Kengoro Tanaka Pages 1980 230

³²⁶ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 231

³²⁷ E.T.W.Fulton 2005 Page 227/8

³²⁸ Milligan J.S.Captain reference APO 795 of 15th August 1944

³²⁹ E.T.W.Fulton 2005 Page 228

³³⁰ "Tanget" is the pidgin word for the Croton plant. Receipt of a parcel of croton leaves marks number of the days (one leaf per day) from present until a specified event.

³³¹ Patrol diary Fulton's TONG-YAPUNDA patrol provided by Elizabeth Fulton Thurston.

³³² Kengoro Tanaka 1980

¹¹ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 239

Chapter 51 Unknown Tribesmen Annihilate Japanese Patrol on the Sepik – Reprisal and Repercussions Post-War

During the Japanese occupation, eight Japanese troops were proceeding inland in an approximate northerly¹ direction above Wogamush for purposes unknown. They were attacked by unknown natives and six of them were killed with only two escaping with spear and arrow wounds. These two returned to the enemy base camp which was then said to be at Yambon. As far as can be ascertained, these survivors reported that the attack had been undertaken by natives of Wogamush.² Karandaman recalls :-

“One Japanese soldier came into Brugnowi after drifting down river in a canoe. He had two throwing spears broken inside his body. One was in the region of the right kidney and the other in the back in the region of the right shoulder. He was near death when he arrived. He told how he and five others had gone up a barat (channel) to a small village on a lagoon, lake or waterway of some kind. The people had welcomed them and they slept the night. During the evening the people came forward to hold and fondle their arms and legs as if testing the amount of meat on their bones.

Around the house they were in on ledges and benches were many human bones. The Japanese slept and in the early morning they were attacked. This soldier was the only one to escape. He made his way down river and reported to Captain Sigina at Sirimbu camp. He died then and was cremated”.

Writer’s Note: The discrepancies between D.O. Niall’s and Karandaman’s accounts demonstrate the lack of clarity as to which Sepik people attacked these Japanese.

The identity of the village was not learned and the reprisal attack was launched against Wogamush. Karandaman believed that the offending village was probably Mowi. At that time all the other villages existed in channels off the Sepik – Yauenien, Oum, Auom, Chenapien, Waskuk, and Kauiembi. Karandaman recalls that immediately after the war he and Masta Bob (Bob Mackie – former WO2 Mackie) from Angoram went upriver recruiting. They went to Mowi and the people gave the impression of being cannibals, keen to eat them. They went into Mowi with an escort of Inioks men and all was well.³ Namgualimbol of Swagup recalls :-

“A party of Japs went up river village by village. The Mowis took them to (hesitation)... Mianmin⁴ and the Mianmins killed them... Just two of them came down wounded from spears... My brother Gasup took them in and fed them and took them to Yessan.”⁵ The Japanese then organized a punitive expedition and visited the main Wogamush village. They were accompanied by a large force of armed natives from all the villages from Avatip to Yessan. As they arrived at Wogamush most of the people ran away and the Japanese shot and killed a woman and two children and then burned most of the village houses. The natives accompanying the Japanese looted the village and stole most of the personal possessions of the Wogamush people”.⁶

The Wogamush memory of the event was :-

“This trouble came up at Yambanumbu big place which is called Kombuliap. The Jap party included natives as well. The first time they came they took no action against us as they had Yambons and Malus with them and they are friends of the Yambanumbu; there

are clan ties. But when they came (the second time) to burn the village there were Japs with Brugnowis and some Malus whose names we did not know. The Brugnowis included Sainowi, Minglibi and Mabangai. All the men and women ran away. One woman called Namguliap, a Yambanumbu who was married to Biaka was coming from the small settlement Wanokom. She came because her brother called for her to come and wash sago at his place. She was returning back upstream when the Japanese party arrived in their canoes. She was with her child Au'un'hunu and was looking for her husband Nakisibam, but when he saw the Japanese he ran away.

The Japanese party surrounded the woman and child and the Brugnowis took them to the canoes. They seated them in the canoes and nailed their hands to the side of the canoes so they could not run away. They were still alive when the Japanese went into the village and burned the haus tambaran which was called Nau'rurihunium and then they burned all the remaining houses except one, in which they slept the night. They cut a 44 gallon drum and boiled water in it. They took the child and gutted it before cutting it up, cooking it and eating it. The child's mother was shot in the chest and died. The Biaka men took her body away and buried her on a tributary of the Niksek (April River) up near the Sitifa tributary.

[Question by writer: *If you ran away, how do you know the Japs ate the child?'*

Answer: *They left the half of the 44 gallon drum and we found the bones of the child who had been eaten'.]*

We do not know what caused the Japanese to take this action. They finished Yambanumbu and then they went inside to Waskuk, which was called Namsok. My father...brought the warning to Namsok and we ran away and hid in the swamps. The Japs came and looked at the place, but they did not burn it or do anything, they took our old flutes and a coconut shell which had a traditional story and sacred functions. These were initiation objects used to make the novices grow fat and strong. Ginger is given to these tambaran objects in the ritual. The Japs, Brugnowis and Malus took these things, so now we have nothing to initiate our men. Now we just do the initiation from memory, the sacred objects with the strength are gone.

As father ran away from the Japanese, he took the tambaran carving Nasubag with him. Then hearing shots close at hand he threw the carving at the base of a ficus tree and we ran into the deep swamps and set up camp and lived there for six to eight months. Father assumed that the Japs had found and taken the carving. It was three years after that Japs came and we were clearing the bush to make a garden near the ficus tree. The fire burned everywhere except near the ficus tree. Father went to see why and he found the carving and he cried as he called the clan together...The termites had eaten parts of the carving during the three years it had been out in the open.

Then a person died of sorcery and it was decided to see if the spirit was still alive in the carving. The carving was decorated and tried out. Among the people who held the carving and denied any involvement in the sorcery was the father of the old woman Yaulpi. His hands became claws very quickly, his feet turned in and his stomach distended and he died. It frightened all of us. We are called Wogamush or Wogamas which includes the people of Yambanumbu, Waskuk and Biaga, but not Kubkain. We call ourselves Komnau. Swagup we call Ngal. [Nggalla].”⁷

District Officer Niall reported :-

“Prior to 1941, it is understood that the policy of the Administrator Sir Walter McNichol, was that the Wogamush natives not be brought under control and that they be allowed to remain in their natural state. This policy does not appear to have borne fruit and it is considered that every effort should be made to bring them under control”⁸.

ADO R.Ormsby of Angoram stated that before the war the Wogamush were starting to visit controlled areas and at one stage a party of them was seen at Marui⁹. Niall also mentioned that during the war Taylor, Boisen, Barracluff and Eichorn had been in contact with the Wogamush and that relations had been good. Nesio of Biaga explains the impact on Wogamush of the Japanese actions. The three Wogamush settlements Kumti [Biaga] Kombuliap [Yamanumbu] and Kutbug [Waskuk] consisted of five wards, each with its own haus tambaran. Three of the wards each had three clans in residence the 4th ward had six clans in residence and the 5th ward four clans.¹⁰

“After the Jap attack, the population of Wogamush broke up and migrated back to their ancestral clan lands in and around the April River. The village site of Kumti was not re-occupied. The old ward structure was not re-established after the war. By the mid-1970s, there were only two Wogamush Haus Tambarans. ‘Nulihium’ at Yambanumbu and ‘Daiek’ at Biaga.”

In the post war era the Wogamush villages and others around them recorded between 43% and 47%¹¹ absentee rates of the fit adult male population; working as indentured labourers on coastal plantations. This placed a heavy burden on those remaining to maintain a subsistence livelihood, let alone any meaningful level of cultural activity. The Wogamush population [including absentees] in February 1974 totalled 171 people [Biaga 82, Waskuk 50, and Yambanumbu 39]

Wogamush was no longer the living museum piece McNichol may have planned. The Japanese raids resulted in the destruction of the Wogamush physical and spiritual cosmos by shooting, cannibalism, burning of ceremonial items and houses, looting of sacred objects and personal possessions. This attack was all the more tragic because it was done as a reprisal against people who were innocent of the crime of which they were accused.

End Notes Chapter 51

¹ From Karandaman’s description the direction was Westerly

² Extract from a letter dated 14th Nov 1946 & entitled WOGAMUSH VILLAGE SEPIK RIVER from Sepik District Officer H.R.Niall to Director District Services and Native Affairs Port Moresby.

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 Page 57

⁴ We can be sure the killers were not Mianmin who use(d) arrows rather than spears. Apart from the Mowi people themselves, the Iwam people of the Lower May River were all cannibals at least until the investigation of the Yellow River massacre in 1956.

⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 448

⁶ Niall 14th November 1946 cont.

⁷ Bragge Sepik Resaearch Notes Vol 19 – Informant Wuvli of Waskuk Page 450

⁸ Niall 14th November 1946 cont

⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 Page 56

¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 list all clans ward s and haus tambarans by name. Pages 450 & 464

¹¹ Ambunti Patrol Report 11a/1973-74 Area Study population distribution & trends page 4

Sepik 3 Chapter 52 Construction of an Emergency Landing Strip at Telefomin Sept. 1944 to Feb. 1945 – Locals Are Employed and Their Cosmos Changes

The Telefomin sub district files contained a document dated 15th February 1945 which described the construction of the emergency landing strip in Telefomin. The unsigned document was obviously an early draft with a number of hand-written corrections between the lines. At the end where the signature should be is “S/L X”. From the following references the writer concluded that the writer was Squadron Leader Michael Leahy, former prospector and explorer of the New Guinea Highlands, and brother of Sgt. Danny Leahy, who is also mentioned in these pages rescuing priests and nuns from Timbunke mission.

1 In 1944 US Army engineers accompanied by Squadron Leader Michael Leahy landed gliders and constructed a C-47 Dakota runway at this location [Telefomin].¹

2 Mick and some of his boys flew by glider into remote Telefomin in the Highlands to extend a small airstrip so that it could handle twin engine DC3 planes, an act that earned him the US Medal of Freedom in 1948.²

Telefomin was first visited by people of the outside world when Dr. Richard Thurnwald, a German explorer, visited there between early July and late September 1914. Then the Karius and Champion patrol passed through Telefomin in December 1927. Both the 1914 and 1927 expeditions were short of supplies and therefore their contact with the “Min” people was necessarily brief. The contacts however were quite peaceful.

The Ward Williams expedition, on the other hand, prospected in the “Min” area from October 1936 to April 1937 from their base at Oroville, later known as Kiunga, on the Fly River. It was the Ward Williams expedition which built the first airstrip in Telefomin; the strip which Mike Leahy and party developed as an emergency landing site.

The 13 month Hagen-Sepik patrol was in the “Min” area from July 1938 when Black crossed the Strickland River into the Oksapmin area, until January 1939 when his patrol returned eastwards via the Om River. Taylor who had taken a separate route caught up with Black in Telefomin and departed the “Min” area via the Mianmin tribal area of the May River headwaters, which his patrol followed down to the Sepik River in January 1939. While they were in Telefomin, they cleared the over-grown airstrip and received flights of patrol supplies and some visitors, including DO Townsend and his wife Lynette.

The unsigned report attributed to Michael Leahy, reads :-

DRAFT

15th February 1945

SUBJECT : Construction of Emergency Landing Strip at Kelafomin, Headwaters of the Sepik River.

‘1. In September 1944 the Chief Engineer, GHQ, was requested by Far East Air Forces to prepare an emergency airstrip at Kelafomin near Ifitimin village, on the headwaters of the Sepik River, approximately 195 miles from Hollandia on bearing 157 degrees, 4800’ ASL. It was decided to use a combination of local labour and glider borne machinery. I left Hollandia 11th September for Port Moresby and arranged details for securing 20 key natives experienced in handling primitive natives, with knowledge of strip

construction from Mt Hagen and Lae to accompany the party. Brigadier Cleland, ANGAU, extended all help asked for and referred me to ANGAU Lae for action. Arrived Lae 16th September and Major Vertigan, in charge of Northern Region, arranged for natives to be released and also for Capt. Black, then at Bena Bena, who had been in Kelafomin in 1939 and knew the area quite well and also had a Kelafomin native to accompany us. [This native was Interpreter Sune who accompanied the Taylor and Black patrol back to Mt Hagen].

'2. Left Lae on 17th September for Mt Hagen, travelling by jeep and foot, collecting key boys en route. Arrived Mt Hagen 22 September, collected natives and flew to Nadzab on 25th September to wait arrival of rest of party. Capt. Black was wanted on another job and Acting Sgt Fraser was sent in his place. Sgt. Fraser had pre-war experience in New Guinea.

'3. FEAF [Far East Air Force] had arranged for 4 gliders to take the party into the area from Tadjil that being the nearest takeoff point to Kelafomin. Myself, Major Wainwright, Sgt Frazer, T/5 M.Savko, of 930th Signal Bn, 20 natives and equipment left Nadzab 1 October for Hollandia. On arrival at Hollandia a reconnaissance was made in a B-25 over the Kelafomin valley and although the old airstrip was overgrown and indistinguishable from the surrounding country, there appeared to be a suitable area on which a strip could be made. A second reconnaissance was made in a C-47 on 7 October. It was decided to take the whole party back to Nadzab and start in from there instead of from Tadjil. The transfer of the whole party was completed by 12 October.

Another reconnaissance over the whole area was made with Lieut. Col. Dupont and Lieut. Col. Anderson, who were in charge of the gliders at Nadzab. Left Nadzab in four gliders towed by C-47s, 0600, 17 October, arriving Kelafomin and all gliders landed safely by 1030. Cleared the old airstrip with local labour 18 October. 20 October 2 C-47s came in to take the glider pilots and Major Wainwright left with one of them. Two gliders towed by C-47s brought in a Clark Air Dozer and grader together with Lieut. Canner and 3 operators of the 872nd. Engineering Aviation Bn. A C-47 landed November 29th (two hand written words unclear) near station 19 with slight damage, but flew off OK. C-47s were using the strip from Dec 16th.

'4 The Strip.

'a. The original strip was found to be nearly 1500' long, the approach bad, due to swampy ground at the SW end and a major job to extend in that direction. The NE end was bounded by two swampy depressions up to 6' deep, beyond that a gravel terrace covered with stunted bush presented the best bet for further extension. After eliminating the whole of the surrounding country, which was found to be soft and swampy throughout, with narrow stony ridges up to 2,000' long and up to 75' wide, but swamp at both ends, it was decided to swing the old strip to the NE, across the two depressions. This would give a strip 4400' long (of which the last 800' on the SW end is soft and swampy country but could be drained and surfaced from nearby subsurface deposits) and 50' to 100' wide.

'b. Local natives were induced to work for a period of one month then paid a hatchet or machete. Arrangements were made to exchange salt, shells or beads for native food. Had an average of 86 locals on the job and they became quite good workers, some of them doing three terms.

'c. Drainage was the first and most essential job. Deep drains were dug on the SE side [the country falls to the NW] and also for the last 1200' from station 32 to ?4 (number

unclear) on the NW side to tap subsurface seepage and dry out. Water was brought from a stream above the strip and most of the clay washed out of the gravel. We also successfully applied this washing process to gravel on sites from stations 3 to 12, running the tractors, roller, and grader in the running water to squeeze, cut and loosen the clay which was then carried away by the water. Sections 3 to 12 were the best sections of the strip when we left; the 2.5% fall on the strip made this "ground sluicing" possible. Waterlogged top soil was taken off, to a depth of 3 to 4 inches, stations 17 to 36 exposed the clay subsoil to the sun. This dried to a hard pan in a day or so, and should improve with time. It may be slick immediately after rain.

A few stumps were taken out at the SW end of the strip, but time did not permit removing the lot. They are not an obstruction being at least 800 feet below station 36, and no more than 5 feet above the ground. By early February I was advised to wind up the job and all personnel were flown to Mt Hagen, Feb 7th. After paying off the labour I left for Hollandia via Nadzab.

As the Ifitimin emergency field now stands, it is 3300' long and operational in all weather. [It is] well drained with a clear one way approach from the SW end only. Stations 3 to 12.75 is 100ft wide, 12.75 to 36 – 50ft wide and a 2.5% grade overall falling to the SW end. The heaviest load flown-off was a 2-47 with 3,000 lbs. of cargo, crew of three and approximately 400 gallons of gas in the tanks. It took off with 1,000 feet to spare.

Radio.

'a. Radio communications were established soon after we arrived and although the set brought was underpowered for the job, it never let us down thanks to the unceasing efforts of T/5 M.Savko of the 930th Signal Bn. I would like to commend him for his unstinted and praiseworthy effort.

ANGAU affairs were handled by Sgt. Fraser, whose experience and tact in handling natives was responsible for the smooth running of the native affairs, which included recruiting, feeding, medical care, housing and sanitation supervision.

Local labour was recruited from the surrounding villages, some visitors came in from up to 3 days walk away but inter-tribal wars prevented any large scale influx from these districts. However, locals have done a good job and very much regretted our leaving. They like our civilization – they don't know much about it. They were fed on their own foods purchased with salt, shells and small knives, and later on with rice, meat and biscuits. They liked the change.

Sgt. Fraser handled the medical and sanitation throughout the job and successfully coped with all medical problems that arose. The sanitation situation threatened to develop into a major problem due principally to the fact that the natives depend almost wholly on the village pigs to clean up that department in village life. We had no pigs so deep refuse and latrine pits were dug and made fly proof, with hinged lids, and the locals were induced by various means to use them. Burning out of the pits regularly and continual construction of new pits almost eliminated the flies and certainly the usual camp epidemics.

Houses were constructed out of local round timber and grass. They were fenced off and kept scrupulously clean, counteracting the tendency on the part of the locals to revert to primitive habits.

S/L "X"

The limited coverage Michael Leahy's report gives to the local community suggests, as was to be expected, that the primary focus of the 1944 task was operational rather than administrative. In November 1953, less than a decade later, the Telefomin people rebelled, trying to kill all foreigners in order to return to the world they knew prior to the arrival of the outsiders. Perhaps, more reflective of the events of 1953, are words Bill Gammage wrote :-

.... in 1944, the glider men treated [tribal leaders] Femsep and Nefinim as lackeys.”³

We saw in Attachment B that the Thurston expedition from the Sepik to the Fly River in 1942, in order to survive, took a firm stand in acquiring food from Telefomin and Bolivip gardens, when the “Min” people themselves were facing shortages following the 1941 drought. In Odger's words “*These people have no cause to love us.*” There were many factors contributing to the 1953 rebellion in Telefomin and the Eliptamin valley, but that is another story which is analysed in the Sepik 4 “Coming to Grips with the Future”

End notes Chapter 52

¹ Wikipedia – Telefomin Airfield – West Sepik Province

² Leahy M.J Explorations into Highland New Guinea. Crawford House Prese Pty Ltd, Bathurst Australia. P246-7.

³ Gammage W The Sky Travellers 1998 Page 231

Chapter 53 Captain Neptune Blood's Patrols to Bagasin to Defuse the Gomiap Movement – Stamping Out Serious Subversion Oct. – Nov. 1944

By October 1944 as Australian troops commenced replacing US forces operating out of the allied base in Aitape, the Madang District was considered to be relatively clear of enemy troops. The Japanese 18th Army and the campaign against it was located primarily to the west in the Sepik District. After his escape from the Japanese at Lake Kuvinmas a year earlier, Neptune Blood now found himself posted to Madang with the rank of Captain in the role of assistant district officer. With ANGAU's responsibilities in Madang now primarily of an administrative nature, Blood was instructed to investigate a reported indigenous subversive movement in the Bagasin area. He described the investigation as follows :-

District HQ
ANGAU
MADANG
21 DEC '44

District Officer
ANGAU
Madang.

Report of Patrol by Capt. N.B.N.Blood. ADO
To BASAGIN area. Madang District.¹

Object:

To investigate reports from native sources that a subversive movement had been established in the BAGASIN area, led by an ex-Corporal of police named GOMAIP; also [that] an unknown number of Japanese were with him.

I was instructed to proceed to the BAGASIN area and investigate the position. One officer and fourteen O/R's of the 30th. Aust. Inf. Bn. and 12 native members of the R.P.C were detailed to accompany me.

The patrol set off on the 20th October '44. Upon arrival at MAIZK² [Muzak] village I discussed the position with village officials and natives, and called for a couple of volunteers to proceed to GOMAIP, join his movement and then at an appropriate time to make their escape back to me with full details of the general set up of his organization. A native called KERI, the son of the Paramount Luluai of OUBA, had just recently returned from BUKA where he was working with Capt. W.J.Read, volunteered, as did WAGI, the Tultul of OUBA. These two natives set off the next morning in an attempt to locate GOMAIP's camp.

Our patrol moved forward and found the following villages to be deserted:- IBU, MARU, LRUBRA, WAUSIK, GASUA, NEGRI, OMAU and AUPIO – however, the inhabitants were later found hiding in the bush in a joint settlement. Questioned as to why they were not in their respective villages, they stated that GOMAIP had instructed them to leave their villages and to remain in the bush on the south side as he desired that the road to Madang be left clear for him and his troops to attack Madang. Those not heeding his instruction would be dealt with by "fire" [presumably hand grenades]. The natives stated that they believed Japanese were with GOMAIP and his black troops, but they had not seen them; all they were going on was 'talk wind.' [rumour]

The general demeanour of the natives showed them to be alarmed, and all shared the belief that it was only a matter of time before they were all killed by the "Unknown", which

they claimed GOMAIP had control over. Those natives were all instructed to return to their respective villages and in future to take no notice of GOMAIP and his instructions.

The patrol arrived at BAGASIN village on 24th October and found it deserted, so I instructed Reg. No 3945 Constable WAU [who is a native of this area], together with two natives of AUPIO village to scout the immediate vicinity and attempt to locate the BAGASIN people. Approximately three hours later the two AUPIO natives returned in an exhausted condition stating they had located the BAGASIN and BAMSOS villagers together in bush near BAMSOS. Constable WAU went up to the village officials of BAGASIN and instructed them to report to me at BAGASIN. The tulul of BAMSOS, who was in this group, immediately seized Constable Wau, with the assistance of a native called MAISAP, took his rifle away and then tied his hands behind his back and led him away, at the same time saying 'We are taking you to GOMAIP.' While all this was taking place the two natives of AUPIO ran away.

The patrol spent the rest of the afternoon watching for any native movement on the various tracks leading into BAGASIN. One native was seen in the distance viewing us from an elevated position, but ran away when we tried to contact him.

On the following morning, KERI and WAGI, our two scouts turned up in BAGASIN and reported as follows :-

"We had proceeded to GOMAIP's camp via a native pad which was seldom used. However, we had met four native sentries on the track, and we informed them that we wished to join GOMAIP's movement. We were then escorted to GOMAIP's camp, and, upon arrival, were paraded before GOMAIP. We requested that we be allowed to join him, and GOMAIP accepted us. We moved around the camp but did not ask any questions, in order to avoid suspicion. During our short stay we witnessed the following:

GOMAIP, assisted by a native named SISUMAIP, drilled hundreds of natives, who he referred to as his 'soldiers', and each recruit had a dummy rifle, cut out of wood. The drill was similar to that used by the Japanese in their exercises. After a couple of hours of drilling they were dismissed for the rest of the morning, but were detailed to report back in the afternoon. The scouts noticed that there were always two guards at the entrance to the camp – these were armed with Japanese hand grenades. KERI estimated that he saw at least a hundred natives armed with grenades in the camp. Each native with a grenade also carried a small stone, the purpose of which was to tap the head of the grenade. He also saw a Japanese soldier in the entrance of GOMAIP's house, but thought it wiser not to show any interest in this and consequently did not enquire as to the number of Japanese in the camp.

During the afternoon everyone was assembled, and GOMAIP lectured them in detail, pointing out that the Australians were stealing their ground, and that it was his job to see that they were chased out of Madang. Other points put forward by GOMAIP were:

- (i) Their present skin was not their real skin, but only like a singlet, and would be shed in the near future. Their real skin would then show, and it would be 'white'.*
- (ii) He was the new 'King' and anyone disobeying his orders would be dealt with.*

- (iii) *Should any white troops come, they would soon be dispatched by his troops with their hand grenades.*

His lecture was followed by a religious talk and the singing of hymns, after which they were all dismissed and allowed to return to their quarters. Fresh guards were then detailed, and reported to GOMAIP at his "Police House.". Just before dark we [the scouts] saw a large number of natives armed with hand grenades entering the camp. Circumspect enquiries revealed that those were the road guards – their job being to cover every road and entrance to the camp, and to report all movements to GOMAIP. Each guard saluted GOMAIP in turn.

The following morning, we approached GOMAIP and requested permission to return to our villages and collect our wives and personal effects. This was granted and we left the camp – GOMAIP provided four of his 'troops' to escort us part of the way. Using a circuitous route, we then arrived at BAGASIN, and reported to Capt. Blood."

Both scouts were firm in their belief that it would be impossible to gain a surprise entrance to the camp from BAGASIN, as every trail had a guard. As there were women and children in the camp a straight out attack would probably result in bloodshed, and this was not desirable – the main object being to capture GOMAIP and as many others in his camp as possible.

It was decided to leave BAGASIN, and return to Madang for the purpose of obtaining more police and to report full details to Headquarters. The patrol left BAGASIN on 26 October arriving in Madang on 28th October. At the same time we tried to give GOMAIP the impression that we had gone. He would then in all probability slacken his vigilance.

The patrol left Madang again on 31st October 1944 with extra police, the total now numbering 24. We arrived at DURELE at night, where Lieut. Havilland was contacted. Arrangements were made for him plus some members of the 30th. Bn., to proceed to a point close to WAGUM No 2, using the main road to let their presence be known, the idea to give GOMAIP the idea that we intended to attack from that angle, which would cause him to place most of his sentries in the WAGUM section, thus allowing our party a better chance of making a surprise attack from the route we intended to take.

Our patrol, which included the previous small party of troops from the 30th Bn., was now bolstered up with D Coy 30th Dn., plus WO2 Tuckey and 120 carriers. We left AMELE on the same day for MAIER village where we bivouacked for the night. 1 Nov. 1944 was spent at MAIER so as to allow Lieut. Havilland's party to arrive at their destination.

We left MAIER village at 8am. 2 Nov. KERI, one of our previous scouts joined the party. We proceeded in the direction of KOKUM River, travelling along a native track and arriving at KOKUM River at 3.30pm. It was decided the patrol would travel at night in order to arrive at GOMAIP's camp at first light. We crossed the KOKUM River and the patrol moved forward, now travelling through brush. Darkness set in, and the rate of progress slowed considerably, as the troops were new to "breaking bush" and travelling through the darkness. It became necessary for them to hold onto the man in front in order not to lose contact. Frequent halts were called, owing to obstacles such as fallen trees, slippery inclines and dense undergrowth.

At 10.30pm the patrol arrived at a deserted garden, and, as many of the troops were exhausted, it was decided to remain there for the rest of the night and camp the following day with the objective of moving forward the next night under cover of darkness.

The 3rd. November was spent in the garden. Police and troops were instructed to form an outer perimeter for the purpose of capturing any enemy scouts that may venture into the vicinity of our camp. At 10.30am two enemy scouts were captured, one of whom had a Jap grenade in his possession. When questioned, the captives revealed they were sent by GOMAIP to report on Havilland's party and were proceeding in a circuitous manner to their objective when captured. At 7pm our party moved forward, and whilst crossing a small creek, just prior to entering BIAMARI village, we surprised six enemy scouts who managed to escape into the darkness. We arrived at BIAMARI (deserted) at 1.00am, a halt was called until 3.30am as our objective was only approximately one hour distant, and the plan was to arrive there at first light.

At about 1.30am the sounds of horns blowing, natives yelling, and dogs barking, were heard from the vicinity of our objective, but after about ten minutes there was silence again (it was presumed that the six natives who had escaped had reported back to GOMAIP.)

At 3.30 am the patrol moved forward and approached the objective up a steep incline, arriving at the entrance to the camp without being observed. As we approached the entrance, someone, whom our prisoners informed us was GOMAIP, was heard conversing in loud tones with his followers. At this stage a quick appreciation was made and it was considered impossible to surround the camp, owing to its large size. So it was decided to make a concerted rush into the camp with a view to capturing GOMAIP, who was holding forth, and as many of his followers as possible.

The patrol then charged into the enclosure. The move completely surprised the occupants. GOMAIP and seventy of his followers were captured. It was impossible to hold more, and the rest of those in the camp were able to escape. A large number of women and children were allowed to return to their respective villages. Unfortunately, two Japanese, one of them an officer, had cleared out the previous night – GOMAIP informed me that when they heard of Lieut Havilland's party at WAGUM, they had left the camp with some natives. A search of prisoners and houses in the camp was next instituted, and a number of Japanese grenades, some invasion money and other miscellaneous articles of Jap origin were found.

GOMAIP's new settlement was built on the ridge of a mountain, and comprised 109 large houses, some capable of housing 30, also many new houses in the course of construction. The whole camp site was indescribably filthy, no latrines being present. Human faeces covered the area, plus myriads of flies. Enquiries revealed that dysentery had broken out in the camp and some deaths had occurred. The whole settlement was burnt, and a number of grenades, which had not been discovered in the search exploded while the huts were burning, but caused no casualties. At 9.30am the patrol plus prisoners left GOMAIP's camp, and arrived at the garden site, previously mentioned at midday, where we halted. Further questioning revealed that the Japanese, with some natives, had left in the direction of BAISARIR, where there was an old hut hidden in densely timbered country.

It was possible that the enemy would make for this hut, so WOII Tuckey six police and I left the garden at 4.15pm arriving in the vicinity of the hut at approximately 2.50am on the 5th Nov and rushed into the hut, but unfortunately we found only two natives. They explained that they had run away from GOMAIP's when we attacked, but they did not know anything of the Japs whereabouts. We left with these two prisoners, and returned to the main

party of the patrol at the garden at 10.30am. We moved on to the KOKUN River and remained there for the night.

At 9am. on 6th Nov 44 the patrol left KOKUN River and arrived MAIER village at 1.30am and remained the night. At 7am on 7th Nov patrol left Maiyer and after some difficulty in crossing the GOGOL River which was in flood, arrived at AMELE at 4pm and camped the night there. On 8th Nov 44 arrived at Headquarters at 11am, where all the prisoners were handed over to Lieut MacRae of the RPC Madang. The next seven days were spent obtaining statements from prisoners. The following was a statement made by GOMAIP

“My name is GOMAIP. I am the Luluai of SEKWARI. Prior to becoming the Luluai I was a Corporal in the New Guinea Constabulary. During August of this year, I decided to gather all of the natives I could in the BAGASIN area – my idea being to establish a “Native Community”. To commence, I selected a suitable area...a ridge near Sekwari... building a house for myself. I also had a “House Police” built. In a very short time natives flooded into this settlement, and buildings were erected for their use.

I had obtained a large number of Japanese hand grenades from the village of BAGASIN. These had been left there by the Japanese garrison when they vacated the area. I then selected men who I required to act as soldiers for me, and issued each with a grenade, instructing him in their use. Those to whom I was unable to issue grenades, were instructed to make dummy rifles of wood.

At various times I posted the “soldiers” with grenades, to keep watch on roads or tracks, for police or Australian troops. I instructed them that in the event of meeting a police constable they were to capture him, but should he fight or use his rifle they were to use their grenades. However if they should see Australian troops they were to return to me immediately and report.

The general routine of the settlement was:- first thing in the morning I gave them drill instructions, assisted by SISUMAIP. Then I gave them religious instructions. Upon completion of this, they were all free to move about the camp. During the afternoon I again assembled the natives and instructed them on various subjects, but mostly of a religious nature. On some occasions these lectures would stretch into the early hours of the morning.

During one of these lectures I informed deserters from Madang of whom I had many, that the “White Skins” in Madang intended to rob us of our lands, and that they were even taking away our names and substituting numbers. I pointed out that these discs with numbers³ are associated with death, and those that persisted in wearing them would not return to their homes.

I therefore told them it was necessary to remove the white skins and their soldiers. In order for this to eventuate, we had to receive more arms than we at present possessed. It was decided to clear a large area at WUSIL to make an aerodrome. I pointed out that when this aerodrome was completed, our ancestors would send planes – the first few containing rifles to replace our dummy ones. We would then be equipped and strong enough to take Madang and remove the “White Skins”. I also told them that the planes would arrive with foodstuffs, such as rice, tinned meat etc.,. But in order to receive this food it would be necessary to arrange a

barter system, and to have fresh foods, yams, taro etc. brought to the 'drome for the purpose of exchange.

I told my followers that I had received word from God that in the very near future, SEK [Catholic mission station] would go up in flames.

Every Monday assisted by Dabus, a native Lutheran mission teacher I conducted a 'Confessional Service' – Dabus using one house and I using another for this purpose. I had previously explained to the community that the "White Skins" were as one owing to the fact that they did not quarrel among themselves, and therefore it was necessary to run our community along the same lines. To further this the "confessional" was brought into operation. Those who had sins to confess went to Dabus or myself and were advised accordingly. These services were conducted quietly and were not over heard by the assembly. In this way I hoped to obtain complete unity among my followers.

It was also arranged to erect schools and in fact to run the community on similar lines as the White Skins" were doing

During the early part of September, two Japanese arrived in my camp. They were brought by my soldiers from JOBTO where they were found. One...was a Captain and the other a private. They could speak a little Pidgin. They told me that they had come from SIO passing through the following places – BOGADJIM, ERIMA, MUIA, TURIN, NANAL and BUAP...I allowed these two Japs to remain with me. They lived in my community but they became frightened when they heard there were white soldiers at BERIN and ran away in the night, just prior to your arrival at dawn, when you captured me and the others".

GOMAIP's statement has been inserted as it gives a very clear picture of the trend of events in his camp. Captain Blood's patrol report continues :-

On the 16th Nov 1944 I again set out for BAGASIN...with ten native constables. The purpose of the patrol was to establish a base and re-establish Administration influence and to try and locate the murderer of Constable 5563 WONGI. The patrol reached BAGASIN and contact was made with the people of BAGASIN and BAMSOS villages. They looked a sick and unkempt crowd – their sojourn in the bush had left its mark. Runners were dispatched to inform all village officials in the vicinity to report to me at BAGASIN.

On 23rd November many officials arrived. They were informed of their folly in becoming adherents of GOMAIP. A "talk" was given, outlining in detail the policy of the Administration. In the majority of cases the village officials stated it was fear that caused them obey GOMAIP's instructions. In BAGASIN and BOMSOS a total of 46 deaths had occurred through dysentery, all occurring during the time they came under GOMAIP and his new order, which they blame for all this.

Village officials were instructed to send all deserters to me, and during the patrol's stay a good response was met with – approximately 60 deserters were sent to Madang. A check was made of the native food position and in every case where the people had deserted their villages, an acute shortage of food existed. Gardens had been ravaged by their pigs...and communities were living on breadfruit, which happened to be in season at the time. A garden project was immediately started in this area. Taro was the staple crop in the BAGASIN area and is slow growing. On this account I dispatched natives to MAIER village

for sweet potato [kaukau] vines and gardens were made upon their arrival. Sweet potatoes give quick results...

On 25 Nov 44 I arrested a native named TAKARUPA of AMINIK who was not only a deserter, but also the murderer of Const. WONGL...Several more active participants in GOMAIP's scheme of things were also arrested, including the Tultul of BOMSOS, who had previously disarmed and captured Const. WAU.⁴

Also arrested was a native named MASIL of BOMSOS who had publically raped on two occasions the wife of a member of the RPC, now believed to be stationed in Lae. This was a brutal case – on both occasions he struck her with a dummy rifle until she was practically unconscious, and then raped her whilst the entire native community of BAGASIN and BOMSOS looked on. He informed all and sundry that he was the “No 1 kiap”, and had received this office from GOMAIP. He also assaulted practically every native of the two villages in question, pointing out that, should he be stopped or hindered in any way it would only have the effect of holding up the arrival of the ‘cargo’ which their ancestors were sending. Such was the power of this ancestor worship...that the natives meekly submitted to the thrashings by MASIL without retaliation. These offenders were sent to Madang under escort...

With regard to this ancestor worship and religious mania, it is my opinion that, if not checked in the early stages, it will reach proportions in which it will be difficult to suppress. Had GOMAIP been allowed to continue for a few months more, there would have been no native labour left in Madang – all the desertions were caused by him and over a hundred deserters were established in his camp. From observations of the size of the camp and the number of villages involved, the total number of natives in GOMAIP's settlement must have topped the 1,500 mark including women and children...

As a prisoner GOMAIP appears a meek type, but this is only a mask. Beneath the veneer lies one of the craftiest natives I have ever had contact with, and he would not have stopped at murder...I have no doubt whatsoever, that if GOMAIP and his gang had not been taken by surprise they would have used their grenades...

I respectfully request that consideration be given upon completion of GOMAIPs terms of imprisonment, to a deportation order being taken out – he should never be allowed to return to his own area... In conclusion I wish to stress the part played by the two natives KERI and WAGI. If a reward is deemed fitting, I would suggest a small pure bred boar for breeding purposes ...This would be jointly owned by them as they are from the same village – this would not only be a boon to the owners, but to the village in general.

Sgd N.B.Blood Capt. Assistant District Officer.

In March 1945 Captain Blood was again Mentioned in Despatches for “*Exceptional services in the field in New Guinea.*”

End Notes Chapter 53

¹ ANGAU War Diaries 21st Dec 24th 1944.

² The report from which this chapter is written is an unclear carbon copy. The spelling of many village and people's names are the best approximation I can make.

³ Aluminium disks were issued pre-war when head tax was paid. These were presumably the discs referred to.

⁴ Incredibly Blood's account of the GOMAIP field actions and the arrest of the Tultul of BOMSOS made no mention of what happened to Const. WAU himself.

Chapter 54 Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Propaganda – Sowing Seeds of Post-War Cargo Cult?

Beyond mention of cult leader Teni's attempted capture of the Fryer party on behalf of the Japanese, the writer found only two references to cargo cult in the Sepik during the 1942-45 period :-

1. Capt. Taylor reported on 18th March 1943 that "Vailala Madness" was prevalent in the [Wewak] coastal areas.
2. Capt. Milligan's monthly report for the Aitape District in April/May 1944 mentioned that the Japanese used "Vailala Madness" in their propaganda; As the Japanese came to understand that New Guineans were awaiting a utopian future sent by the ancestors, but that the white men diverted it to themselves, the Japanese allowed New Guineans to believe they had been sent by the ancestors to fight the white men in order to deliver New Guinea's utopian future.

The previous Chapter describes Capt. Blood's action against the Gomaip [also known as Kaumaibu and/or Kaum] cult in the Bagasin area of the Madang District.

Given the limited pre-war cargo cult activity in the Sepik [little other than the Three Kings cult is recorded], and the very significant increase in such activity post-war, we need to briefly review Japanese war-time policy and supremacist propaganda as possible contributing causes of this.

Wikipedia :- The **Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere** was an imperial concept created and promulgated for occupied Asian populations. It promoted the cultural and economic unity of the Northeast Asians, Southeast Asians, and Oceanians. It also declared the intention to create a self-sufficient "bloc of Asian nations led by the Japanese and free of Western powers".

It was announced in a radio address entitled "The International Situation and Japan's Position" by Foreign Minister Hachirō Arima on June 29, 1940...a secret document completed in 1943 — laid out that the superior position of Japan in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, showing the subordination of other nations, was not forced by the war but part of explicit policy. It explicitly states the superiority of the Japanese over other Asian races and provides evidence that the Sphere was inherently hierarchical, including Japan's true intention of domination over Asia.

The original concept was an idealistic wish to free Asia from colonizing powers, but soon, nationalists saw it as a way to gain resources to keep Japan a modern power, and militarists saw the same resources as raw materials for war. Many Japanese nationalists were drawn to it as an ideal. Many of them remained convinced, throughout the war, that the Sphere was idealistic, offering slogans in a newspaper competition, praising the sphere for constructive efforts and peace.

Pamphlets were dropped by airplane on the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, urging them to join this movement. Mutual cultural societies were founded in all conquered nations to ingratiate with the natives and try to supplant English with Japanese as the commonly used language. Multi-lingual pamphlets depicted many Asians marching or working together in happy unity, with the flags of all the nations

and a map depicting the intended sphere.

In the traditions of the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 which divided the “new” world between the powers of the day – Spain and Portugal, - the Axis powers identified the 70 degrees East line of Longitude as a projected boundary between the territorial interests of Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and those of Nazi Germany. Japan also had plans concerning the future of each of the countries and regions within its sphere. Whilst this has broad regional interest, our focus is on its impact on the people of New Guinea.

Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere propaganda must have been music to the ears of the natives of Madang, and Sepik peoples who harboured anti-colonial religious beliefs. Three examples are outlined below as being indicative of what occurred in other Japanese schools in occupied New Guinea and no doubt occupied the minds of thinking native leaders of the future:

#1 On Karkar Island the Japanese established a school, where native children were taught Japanese and Japanese servicemen were taught Pidgin English. The school was used as a centre for disseminating propaganda for the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.¹ Throughout the Territory of New Guinea how many such schools must there have been and how many receptive communities?

#2 The Tagarab cult. Tagarab of Milguk was a policeman in Madang and like many other police, he mutinied and returned to his village when the civil administration was withdrawn on the 21st January 1942. Tagarab became a cult leader. His doctrine was a variation of the ‘two brother’ myth of Kilibob and Manup; Kilibob became the God of the Europeans after visiting Jerusalem, which was apparently part of Sydney. Satan-Manup held the New Guinea natives in bondage and God-Kilibob was angry that they had not accepted his gifts and instead had developed the evils of sorcery and love magic. God-Kilibob sought to hand over gifts to the spirits of the dead who would appear in the guise of Japanese servicemen, included rifles, ammunition and other military equipment in order to drive the Europeans out. The signal of the approach of God-Kilibob would be a dream of a star. The new doctrine won immediate community acceptance in the form of support for the Japanese who were expected to provide access to the cargo. The cargo however did not come.

As the tide of war changed and the Japanese demanded more and more food and even cannibalized local Madang people, Tagarab is said to have protested to the Japanese about their behaviour. He told them that he was responsible for their coming and that he had helped them as he believed they were his friends - but now he could support them no longer. Now he would work through his ritual for the return of the Americans and Australians. The Japanese curtly replied that they too were finished with his services and shot him.² Clearly as Tagarab’s initial belief in Japan’s propaganda and resulting support of the Japanese military waned; so too did Japanese officer’s need for Tagarab.

#3 Cult leader Teni – the self-proclaimed “Black King of the Wapei”. As we saw in Chapter 31, Teni believed that the Japanese were the agents of the ancestors, sent to deliver the cargo sent by the ancestors that the white men had diverted from them. To achieve this he and his cultists became Japanese agents and at the command of the Japanese in Aitape sought to capture Fryer and party and deliver them to the Japanese at Aitape.

#4. How many other cults or nativistic movements might there have been? With ANGAU’s

primary responsibility tied to the support of military operations and kill or be killed actions against the Japanese, one can well imagine that indications of cult activities that may have come to the attention of staff probably went unrecorded, unless they related directly to military operations or strategies.

There are two pre-existing circumstances to consider here.

- (a) The established Japanese Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere propaganda, and the Japanese repeatedly statements that they were here to fight the Europeans, and not to fight the natives.
- (b) Throughout New Guinea indigenous communities there was a mental pre-disposition, albeit, usually dormant, that the western technology and wealth they first saw when white men brought it to New Guinea was sent by the ancestors for them. They believed this as there was no other explanation in their ancestral stories about the origins of these marvellous things, they must have been created by the ancestors for them; the white men had obviously diverted their entitlement to this cargo to their own use.

There is no suggestion that the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere propaganda was designed with New Guinea's cargo cult beliefs in mind. It is, however, understandable how New Guinean cargo cultists might perceive the invading Japanese fighting Australian and Dutch colonists to have been sent by the ancestors to remove the Europeans who had long been believed to be stealing the cargo sent to them by their ancestors. The Japanese of course must have been delighted to accept a serendipitous happenstance of an indigenous population opposed to European colonists and favouring the Japanese invasion – no matter what ideology motivated them. "Co-prosperity" was what the cultists sought and what the Europeans denied them by not sharing the secrets of the cargo.

There were of course other wartime activities and issues that the cultists were able to interpret to support their cultist beliefs:

1. European coast watchers erecting wire aerials then speaking into a wireless microphone to summon cargo that fell from the sky, or arrived at remote beaches at night by ship or submarine.
2. The building or airstrips which encouraged planes to land and deliver cargo.
3. "Black" Americans wearing the same uniforms as "White" Americans – apparent equality between the races.
4. The unlimited abundance of cargo that was for ever forthcoming, without any sign of payment, for the troops who fought the Japanese.

In trying to determine causes of the post war upsurge in cargo cult activity there were many identifiable causes and probably just as many covert motivations. It is safe to say that Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere propaganda was one of these. It is unlikely that "Co-Prosperity" propaganda was a more important cause than any of a multitude of other causes.

End Notes Chapter 54

¹ Lawrence P. Road *Belong Cargo*. Melbourne University Press 1964 Page 106

² Lawrence P. Road *Belong Cargo*. Melbourne University Press 1964 Page 110

Chapter 55 Changing of the Guard - Operations From Supply Base Tong – Native Support Firmly Behind Australians Oct, '44 – Jan. '45

The sacrifice made by US servicemen in the Sepik is remembered in part by the following awards of the Congressional Medals of Honor:¹

- Second Lieut. George W G Boyce Jr. 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team, US Army. Near Afua New Guinea, 23rd July 1944, posthumous award.
- Major Ralph Cheli, US Army Air Corps near Dagua, New Guinea, 18th August 1943, posthumous award.
- Second Lieut Dale Eldon Christiansen, 112th Cavalry Regiment US Army. Drinumor River, New Guinea, 19th July 1944 posthumous award.
- Staff Sergeant Gerlad L.Endl, 32nd Infantry Division US Army, near Anamo, New Guinea 11th July 1944 posthumous award.
- Colonel Neel E. Kearby, US Army Air Corps, near Dagua, New Guinea 11th October 1943 posthumous award.
- Private Donald R. Lobaugh, 32nd Infantry Division US Army near Afus, New Guinea, 22nd July 1944 posthumous award.

In October 1944 elements of the 6th Australian Division began arriving in Aitape under the command of Major General J E S Stevens who set up his HQ at Aitape on the 8th November 1944. The full relief of the American 43rd Division Aitape was completed at the end of November. The 6th Division² reached its full strength in December. The 16th, 17th and 19th Brigades were commanded by Brigadiers R King, M J Moten and J E G Martin respectively. The 71st RAAF Wing at Tadjj was under the command of Wing Commander W E Cooper who later handed over to Group Captain V Hancock.

There had been critical comment by ANGAU officers regarding the reluctance of some American military elements to engage the enemy in the Sepik. After the Battle of the Driniumor River when the Americans announced they would not pursue the enemy (having decided the Japanese were a beaten force) concern was again expressed. However it should be noted that General McArthur was focused on re-taking the Phillipines and moving towards Japan as quickly as possible. Consequently it is understandable that the Americans were not overly interested in minor skirmishing in the jungles and backwaters of New Guinea, when they had bigger targets on their radar.

Syd Trigellis-Smith's *All the King's Enemies* is a history of the 2/5th Battalion of the 17th Brigade from 1939-1946. It tells how the 2/5th disembarked at Aitape from MV Duntroon on 28th November. Their initial task was to defend the airfield and radar installations at Aitape-Tadjj. While recognizing *All the King's Men* is a Battalion story rather than a general history, it is disappointing that a more balanced account was not given, with appropriate credit given to ANGAU, the Royal Papuan Constabulary, NGIB and others who all contributed to defeating the Japanese in the Sepik Campaign.

The Australian 17th Brigade fought south of the Torricellis in the Tong, Yambes, Balif and Maprik areas, working closely with ANGAU patrols. In this campaign the 2/5th and the 2/7th would relieve each other periodically. The 16th Brigade fought along the coastal strip between the Torricellis and the ocean towards But, Dagua and Wewak.

Following their defeat at the Driniumor River, the Japanese strategy between August and December 1944 shifted to an interceptive decisive battle posture. The Japanese anticipated

the allied targets to be But and Wewak airfields. The Japanese 41st Division commanded by Lieut. General Goro Mano, the 20th Division commanded by Lieut. General Masuraro Nakai, the 51st Division commanded by Lieut. General Hidemitsu Nakano were positioned accordingly. The 27th Naval Special Base Force commanded by Rear Admiral Sato was to guard Mushu and Kairiru Islands. ³

*“Especially unexpected was the deployment of enemy [i.e Australian] troops on the southern side of the Torricelli Mountains and the intelligence information gathering that the Allied forces had included trained natives”.*⁴

Following the Japanese 238th Regiment capture of Tong on 11th October 1944, the Japanese withdrew to neighbouring Perembil and constructed a defensive line to protect the advance of the 41st Division from the north to the south side of the Torricelli Mountains. Orders were received by the Australian 2/5th to relieve the 2/7th Battalion at Tong. The 2/5th arrived at Tong on 16th December 1944 after a three day march. Their task was to seek and destroy the enemy in the Tong area. From there they advanced to Yambes and continued their patrolling. Their first encounter with the enemy was on 27th December at Perembil.⁵

By December a combination of intensified Australian attacks against the Japanese line and the fact that food sources in the area were now exhausted, saw the Japanese abandon Perembil. The Japanese 41st Division designated Balif and Salata as the new defensive line.⁶

Between 9th and 31st January the 2/5th conducted a total of 77 patrols in this area. The Japanese strongholds Perembil, Musinau and Emul were taken and successful fighting patrols cleared the villages of Asiling, Walende, Albanum Sahik and Bulamita of the enemy. On 31st January 1945 Salata was taken. On the 3rd February the ‘Mbras villages and Bonbita were taken and finally on the 6th February, Balif was captured by the Australian forces.

There was also a changing of the guard among ANGAU officers in the Aitape Inland sub district. Capt. Fulton left Tong at the end of September and after a short tour of duty in the Vanimo area returned to Australia. The Aitape Inland Monthly report for December 1944⁷ shows the ANGAU staff as Capt. R R Cole ADO, having replaced Capt. D Fienberg, Lieut. C M O’Loughlin Patrol Officer Lieut. J Monk WOII McRae, Sgt Aninstiff, Pte Lightburn (with Native Labour Division) and 20 police (11 listed as Royal Papuan Constabulary RPC and 9 ex TNG, including “Nanguru” i.e. Constable Nonguru/Kemerabi.)

An ANGAU War Diaries entry from Aitape (presumably Capt. Milligan) dated 12th January 1944 reads :-

“Signal ex Lumi. Lieut. Warrick requests interview and relief. Rang GII air to see if I could be landed there by light plane. Impossible. 14th January 1945 Message ex Lumi re Lieut. Warrick; natives say he shot himself and died instantly at Somero. Lieut. O’Loughlan to Investigate... WO Lega to Lumi to take over.”

These sad diary items flag for us the incredible stress these ANGAU men and troops of the 6th Division, let alone the Japanese troops, must have been under; and how the different individuals coped. In Chapter 46 we saw a very relaxed WO2 Alan Gow; later District Commissioner Gow, conduct an excellent patrol into the troubled Wapei region. This was immediately followed by a down-to-earth assessment by Capt. O’Donnell in July and August 1944 which explained why he firmly believed ‘*Brother Wapei is uncontrolled*’. Presumably

some combination of the Wapei situation and Lieut Warwick's personal need to mentally adapt himself to the wartime situation contributed to his suicide.

Three years later a/Director I.F.Champion wrote the following after suicide of PO Sims at Vanimo; words which may have equally applied to Lieut Warrick.

Man is a gregarious animal, and although there are men who can remain for long periods alone without being affected, the great majority cannot and suffer acutely. Their minds become warped; little problems appear to be unsurmountable, and they feel that they have been forgotten and neglected...⁸

Equally in Chapter 45 in his patrol report covering the Yakumul to Kombio patrol from 18th May to 2nd June 1944, Capt. D.Fienberg not only demonstrated his incredible ability to size up and deal with situations, which would bring him high praise again in October at Tong, but arguably, from the writer's perspective, may have sounded warning bells in military circles, i.e. ANGAU staff were there to support the military effort, not to be in charge of field operations. The reports of Capt. R.R.Cole, who replaced Capt. Fienberg as ADO in charge of Aitape Inland Sub District, provided thorough tradesman-like documentation which remained within the ANGAU duty statement, as he described the allied advance and ANGAU civil administration achievements.

Lieut. Monk and Lieut. Fulton probably met in the Ramu area. After the completion of Fulton's patrol No 6/43-44 on 4th June 1943 (Chapter 28), Fulton had been instructed to locate a position for a new base on a range beyond the Artagard River. This was achieved along with friendly contact with the local people whom Fulton described as pygmies. The new base site was called Gumika.⁹ Fulton left Gumika on 4th July and 'Garry' Monk was sent with new personnel to occupy Gumika.

Capt. Fulton took long overdue leave in Australia and married the love of his life Gwen, with his friend Dave Fienberg as best man.¹⁰ A chance call to the doctor saw him hospitalized and to his amazement, he was ruled 'unfit for overseas service.' His medical record reads :-

"This officer for some time has been developing neurasthenic syndromes [meaning an ill-defined medical condition characterised by lassitude, fatigue, headache and irritability, chiefly associated with emotional disturbance] 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)."¹¹

Back at 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."¹²

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Our story now needs to return to the day to day conduct of the Sepik Campaign, while acknowledging the mental stress that was a constant companion for the men involved. Monk was subsequently posted to Aitape Inland, in replacement for Lieut. C O'Loghlan, who was recalled to Aitape. Monk found himself based at Tong. He was on patrol close to the front and his contact with local people was largely with refugees. He recommended :-

"A temporary refugee camp has been established at Nasalum for native from Perembil, Asaling and districts to Pelnandu. These villages have been desolated, the gardens cleaned

out and up to 75% of coconuts destroyed. If the welfare of the natives is to receive any consideration, the natives must receive some subsistence rations.

- *I suggest a refugee camp at Nasalum for a month...by 10/1/1945 the number of refugees in the camp will be 450/500 and a minimum of 5,000 rations will be needed immediately. A drop site near Nasalum can be cleared within 24 hours.*
- *All houses which have been occupied by the Japanese are filthy with offal, refuse and sometimes cadavers. These houses are all burned, no compensation being due to natives who understand the danger of epidemic from this Japanese filth.*
- *Any houses which need to be destroyed for enlarging a field of fire or other operational purposes will be paid for.*
- *The patrol being with a forward element of troops, it is not practicable to reconstruct or corduroy roads so close to enemy patrols and positions”.*

As the Australian troops pushed forward their supply lines lengthened. The bulk of their supplies were carried in by native labour from Aitape. It was therefore essential that the tracks or ‘roads’ from Aitape to Tong to Yambes were built and corduroyed with logs to prevent the heavy traffic turning the route into a quagmire of mud. Monk’s December/January monthly report noted :-

“The labour situation in most cases has been a constant worry. The size of the formation necessitates a large number of carriers for each forward move and the gangs of natives must work swiftly to clear fire lines for perimeters...Without this labour the campaign would barely have left its starting point. At the time of writing movement has slowed a little and it has been predictable to commence recruiting on a 2 year contract basis to build up regular labour lines for the use of the formation.”

Capt. Cole’s monthly report noted :-

“Roads have now probed well into territory held a month ago by the enemy. Monk’s duties were almost totally of an ‘operational’ nature – supporting the military offensive. His patrol report noted that relations between the troops and the natives could not be more satisfactory. The available labour was tallied each morning and duties were allocated after discussion with the O/C. Voluntary sentries brought in valuable information re enemy positions and seem to regard enemy casualties as sufficient reward for their work.”

On 22nd Jan. 1945 two natives Ke-en and Kapuasa of Balif village, who had brought in other information previously, brought in a Japanese prisoner to the forward formation. They had not been instructed to do so, but had seen troops take a prisoner on the previous day and without broadcasting their intentions went to the perimeter of a small Japanese outpost and overpowered their sentry. These natives have been rewarded with small items of trade. Money is of no use to them and loyalty medals even less so as we are still off the beaten track.”

Monk reported that his police had shown themselves to great advantage and had earned and received great admiration from the troops - *“L/C Nemo is a tower of strength as head of the police.”*

Concerning hardship in the villages, he wrote :-

“ No village I have seen in this area has any surplus or many seed coconuts. Would it be practicable at a later date when more air transport is available to drop seed coconuts (from the plentiful supply on the coast) to inland villages? The gesture would be excellent

propaganda and of excellent service to the natives. The village with the greatest number of coconuts destroyed so far is Perembil.”

Capt. R.R.Cole's monthly report provided detailed information under the headings: District Services Staff, Police, Roads, Buildings, Rations, Native Labour, Native Health, Refugees, Native co-operation and General. Cole regarded the situation on these fronts as generally satisfactory. A Troop 2/7 CA, Comdr. Sqn. arrived on 1st Dec and immediately contacted the enemy and repulsed them. It was anticipated that the building program at Yambes would allow his headquarters to be moved forward from Tong to there in early January 1945.

Concerning operational issues Cole reported :-

“Self and police accompanying forward elements [seek] to contact...the natives in and behind the areas where conflicts are imminent...at the time of writing a much stronger enemy force has been contacted and probably some stiff fighting and long range chasing will ensue. The enemy killed or taken prisoner have been a motley crew, mostly in ill health with nondescript arms as a rule...the worst feature being the enemy habit of dragging their dead into the bush unseen, but never unsmelt. The stench around some of the village sites (from Japanese excreta and cadavers) makes one wonder if these areas will ever again be habitable.”

Capt. Milligan in Aitape's report for January 1945 reported that WO2 P.F.Fienberg [brother of Capt., D.Fienberg] was still apprehending natives involved in the Stavermann affair [Dutch Party]. The coastal natives were reported to be in bad shape and were now being fed in a refugee camp at Babiang on the coast.

Commencing from a theoretically neutral indigenous perspective, it seems obvious that local support would be shifting to favour the Australians as they had both the forward momentum and the resources, which the circumstances of the war in 1945 denied the Japanese. The Australians recruited labourers in numbers carefully calculated not to deprive the villages of the manpower required for village reconstruction and the re-establishment of gardens. The labour was employed fairly under contract conditions similar to those that existed pre-war; they were paid, rationed and accommodated.

Village populations facing food shortages caused by war devastation of their villages and gardens were taken into refugee camps where they were fed. Native Hospitals were established and ample medical treatment was provided for the sick, mal-nourished and injured.

Capt. Cole's Aitape Inland Sub District monthly report from Tong describes the factors that shaped indigenous attitudes to the Japanese as at January 1945 :-

Over the area covered to date there has been practically no liaison between the natives and the enemy. All villages were deserted and the Japanese were left to wander their own way. This no doubt resulted in more than necessary destruction of native property, but did not deter the natives, neither did it embitter them. The native neutral reaction to this wanton destruction of his property is appreciated and it is continually resulting in information being passed to us of Japanese activities.

The villages immediately to the east of operations are not so ready to cooperate but this reticence is no doubt due to the long absence of our influence in the area and the uncertainty of its permanence. “Talk” has been sent out to many villages and the results have been very

satisfying. Villagers as far east as Aupik journeyed in and gave much valuable information, whereas word has been sent out from villages in the immediate vicinity of Maprik that natives are waiting for the Australian troops.

Several 'tankets'¹³ have been sent to old TNG police known to be in the Maprik area and although nothing has resulted, hopes are still held that their assistance will soon be available. Several names are held of natives who are actively assisting the enemy in locating villages and gardens and leading Japanese patrols against our troops. Every effort is being made to apprehend these renegades.

It is past understanding to see the efforts and methods adopted by the Japanese to turn the natives against them when their cooperation at this stage could mean so much to their existence. Besides pillaging and destroying property, the Japanese fire upon any native sighted, many have been treated for gunshot wounds by the M.O. and several reports have been received of natives being killed and eaten by the Japs. This practice is revolting even to native principles.

Musinau, Perembil, Siahik and Senlaua were all very badly shattered first by the Japanese and later by bombing. No doubt other villages are in the same state...

Great assistance is being given by village natives to our patrols when either on recce or on fighting patrols. Japanese dispositions are eagerly given and patrols led over kanaka pads to obtain tactical positions. The guide work has been invaluable and without doubt kept casualties to a minimum. The native reason for this assistance is that their villages are cleared for their re-occupation and the threat of being hunted by the Japanese is relieved. The 'good times' are definitely sought by these natives and the active aggression shown by our troops encourages the natives to assist in every way.

The operation has progressed with such rapidity, very little attention could be paid to native administration. There is great scope...and it is recommended that a Patrol Officer be posted to the inland area for this sole purpose...¹⁴

End Notes Chapter 55

¹ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 p 49

² Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 p 20-25

³ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 p 231

⁴ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 p 231

⁵ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King's Enemies – Australian Military History Publications 1988 p272

⁶ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 p 239/240

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Storage Unit 2

⁸ Fulton 2005 pages 200-202.

⁹ Fulton 2005 pages 200-202.

¹⁰ Fulton – No Turning back 2005 p 246

¹¹ Fulton – No Turning Back 2005 P 248

¹² Fulton 2005 page 206.

¹³ A sheath of croton leaves marking the days to an event

¹⁴ Monthly report Storage Unit TONG – Aitape inland, Dreikikir Maprik January 1945 Capt.R.R.Cole.

Chapter 56 Allied Recapture of But, Dagua & Balif - Operational and Administrative Issues Feb.- Mar. 1945

Lieut. Monk's patrol report of early February indicated that the offensive line on the first of February 1945 linked Albinama 1, Bulaminta, Luwaita villages, as shown on the map of his patrol. The speed of the advance was such that Balif which was believed to be strongly held by the Japanese was in allied hands by 6th February – thanks to the 2/5th Battalion, Balif now became the forward command centre.

The advance was not a clearly defined orderly line on the map with a single offensive force pushing the enemy back. To illustrate this, the reports for February mention an Allied Intelligence [AIB] Force at Kaflei many kilometres to the south-west in the northern Maimai region. Also there was mention on 12th January 1945 of a long range patrol by Captain Marshall¹ who visited ADO Aitape Inland and explained his mission. He was afforded all the information he sought. In the true tradition of Military Intelligence, Capt. Cole recorded not another word of the mission itself – clearly if the authorities did not already know what Capt. Marshall was doing, they had no need to know.

The additional field staff Capt. Cole requested in January were supplied. They were WO2 F. Kaad and P. E. Fienberg who walked to Tong from Yakamul on the coast. Kaad remained at Tong and Fienberg continued on to meet Cole at Balif, where his main duty appeared to be the recruiting of labour.

In late January word was received that escaped Indian POWs and Japanese prisoners held by the AIB group at Kafle needed to be picked up and removed to safe areas where they could be processed and treated. As we heard from Major Singh in Chapter 61, on 15th December 1944 Capt. Ishar Singh and eleven other Indians escaped. It is reasonable to assume this was not an uncommon occurrence. It may well have been Capt. Ishar Singh's party who now needed to be picked up. Lieut Monk led this patrol consisting of him, three native police, forty carriers [carrying mainly rations] and his personal servant. He would recruit stretcher bearers from local villages.

The patrol had a covering force of an Australian army officer and 24 other ranks. The objectives of patrol No 22/45 were *"To contact AIB personnel and return with Japanese POWs and fourteen Indian troops rescued from enemy hands."* The original instructions were to proceed to Nungwaia, but local people indicated the AIB party had moved from there. Radio contact was made with AIB who were at Wongambitaba, further to the west. Airdropping of supplies to the patrol was out of the question as the Japanese were close by.

Monk's patrol departed from the offensive line at Albinama on the 3rd February 1944 heading slightly south of west along the line via Bulamitu to Worangom, where Monk was joined by Lieut. Miles and the covering force. They moved from there to Inakor on the 8th February.

Fresh Japanese footprints were seen and evidence of chewed and expectorated food. The patrol camped that night in Inakor and next day, the 9th, moved westward by a hidden track to meet the AIB party at Sungua Lasimbe. The AIB were preparing to abandon their camp and retreat to Wongambitaba as 80-100 enemy troops were reportedly approaching. On the 10th Monk's patrol continued westward and camped the night on a river bank. On the 11th they continued on and met the AIB party at Wongambitaba. They learned that some of the Indians were still in the Nungwaia bush and others were further west again at Kafle. The Indians who were handed over to Monk that day were judged to be unfit to travel.

An airdrop was taken and local people came in to report that around 100 Japanese had moved into Inakor from both the north and south, thereby cutting off that route back to base. On the 12th Monk left the Indians at Wongambitaba and moved north to Taunambiet via Ngasasue on a mission to scout the track and to recruit extra labour. That route was judged to be too steep for stretchers, so an alternate route was chosen from Wongambitaba to the Tau Masalanga. Monk arrived back at Wongamitaba late in the afternoon of the 14th to discover that more Indians had arrived, making a total of 14 to be moved to safety.

The patrol spent the 15th breaking the rations into carrier loads, sorting the 40 new labour recruits who had come in from the Tau villages, and construction of stretchers. The trek next day was very difficult for the Indians who were in very poor condition as there was no water along the route they took from Wongambitaba to Tauandaw.

An airdrop which was expected at 7.50am on 17th did not arrive until 12.30pm, so the 17th became an enforced rest day at Tauandaw. On the 18th the Tau village carrier line had to be increased to 53 to allow for the additional rations that were air dropped. On the 18th the patrol moved to Musendai with six Indians and one Australian on stretchers. The Japanese were feeling the strain of the march. From there Monk's patrol moved to Balif, with the Australian troops taking the Japanese prisoners and walking Indians to Bulamita.

Ron Fuller who was a member of Lieut. Miles party remembered the story thus :-

*"It was four days walk to the Sepik River² and luckily we had natives to carry the food and reserve ammunition. It was a hard slog...When we got to a small village near the river we found an ANGAU officer and four Police Boys guarding five Nips and looking after the Indians. The Nips were in fair condition but the Indians were in a shocking state, half-starved and in dirty, ragged clothes. We rested there a day and set off again to bring the party back, carrying two of the Indians on stretchers as there was no way they could walk back on their own...it was not until 19th February that we got back to camp."*³

On 21st February the 2/5th handed over to the 2/7th and commenced making their way back to Aitape, where the whole Battalion re-assembled by 6th of March. The R&R commenced with two days without duty and plenty of beer to consume. During this tour of duty the 2/5th had killed 376 Japanese, wounded another 41 and captured 12 POWs⁴

Capt. Cole's monthly report for February 1945 noted that a landing ground had been made just south of Balif. It was capable of use by an Auster Cub aircraft. It was used to evacuate serious battle casualties. The airstrip construction had been done by men and women from surrounding villages which "cooperated splendidly." Capt. Cole also indicated that throughout the campaign a constant difficulty had been in providing sufficient labour to move the troops as and when required. This problem was now eased with more labour available. The problem was now in acquiring sufficient rations to feed the labour. In commenting on the Aitape Inland report Capt. Milligan noted "...Capt. Cole has been instructed not to employ labour, as the labour now working inland is the maximum number for which rations can be dropped."⁵

His report noted that the natives now being contacted are very 'Steel hungry'. *"Their knives and tomahawks acquired pre-war are now generally unserviceable. This is a problem that cannot be overcome quickly but as and when trade stores are opened, steel is an item which should be made available in large quantities."*⁶

The Sepik campaign from Capt. Milligan's perspective in February related to :-

“ Law and Order. Major A.A.Roberts of ANGAU is at Ali Island conducting sittings of the court to hear indictable offences committed during the Japanese occupation. He and other senior ANGAU were appointed as Judges of the Supreme Court.

Refugees. A total of 3,460 natives were receiving rations.

Rations. Activities particularly in the Aitape inland area were restricted by the availability of rations. ‘It is impossible for us to maintain more than Lumi and Dreikikir base camps, plus 775 natives including RPC, labourers, sentries etc’.

On a recent recce flight over Maprik, Marui, Yentiken, Yamil and Mt Turu...I was struck with the number of new gardens...reports indicate that the enemy has died in hundreds in this area, mainly of sickness and starvation, This sudden influx of sick and dying Japanese caused the natives to go into hiding, and it is my opinion that owing to the large number of enemy casualties the area is comparatively free, and the natives are returning to their old sites and are busy planting their yams and such...

The members of the RPC are becoming perturbed at the threats and wild statements contained in letters received by them from members of the NGIB [New Guinea Infantry Battalion] recruited in this area last November. In a censored letter to a friend [extract below], Suwere NGN 964, advertises what has recently become apparent – that native infantrymen suffer from the dangerous delusion that their military status places them beyond the law and allows them to perpetrate criminal acts with impunity.

The extract is in poor pidgin which I have translated as:

‘Now brother(s), you two know this woman who before ran away from me in the time of the Japanese and she went back to her place and later I went and took her back. I made court before the No 1 and he accepted what I said. The Number 1 said – you go and get her, no problem. Your name is immune/clear [“Nain polog jou itai pinis”] and if any man is angry with you, you shoot him. No court action will be made against you. He said that in the Japanese time you can go and try to resolve it and if they want to do anything to you (then) you shoot the man who wants to make trouble for you. That is all the talk I have for you.’

A second letter from Samis contains a direct death threat against Const. Gavi who had been married to a relative of Samis. It is in better pidgin and translates thus:

‘All right you can make trouble. Just wait for me and you look out. Soon I will come and shoot you. You know that my name is clear.’⁷ [Yu save nain bilong me itai pinis].”

These notations are the first mention of the New Guinea Infantry Battalion in the Patrol Reports and monthly reports of the Aitape Inland Sub District. At this stage ANGAU was involved in recruitment of soldiers for 2 NGIB. That battalion was not yet in action. As we shall see the NGIB went on to provide distinguished service in the months to come. A Papuan Infantry Battalion [PIB]] had been formed in June 1940 and General Blamey authorized the raising of a New Guinea Infantry Battalion on 9th November 1943 but recruitment was slow. On 24th March 1944, responsibility for the NGIB was passed to ANGAU. A second New Guinea Infantry Battalion was then raised on 11th September 1944 and a third Battalion after that. The PIB and the three New Guinea Battalions combined to form the Pacific Islands Regiment [PIR] of the Australian Army in November 1944.⁸ Later this armed force would become the Defense Force of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

In his March 1945 report Capt. Cole indicates that the area west of a line from Ivom – Malik – Abungai – Aupik – Lahinga – Sinahau was free of Japanese. On operational matters he reported that people south of Balif have developed a reputation for their keenness and loyalty. Patrols had been kept well informed on enemy dispositions. To the north of Balif cooperation was not as good. People from Yamil and Maprik had visited Capt. Cole and others and expressed their willingness to assist, but they had been told to remain hidden for the present.⁹ Meanwhile from Aitape Capt. Milligan's March report succinctly stated :-

“Events on the coast moved rapidly towards the latter end of the month with the capture of But airstrip, jetty and Mission on 17th March, Dagua airstrip on 21st March and Wonginara Mission on 31st March, but on the ground it was not that simple.”

A little south of Dagua near Tokoku Pass the Japanese had their main line of communication to their inland forces – bitter fighting occurred in this spot...the 2/3rd Battalion fought right into the HQ of General Nakai, commanding the 20th Division.¹⁰ General Nakai was captured. It was in the fighting around Dagua that Lieut Albert Chowne, M.M. was killed leading a charge on feature 1410. The description of action reads thus:

On 25th March 1945 near Dagua, Chowne attacked an enemy position which was holding up further movement towards Wewak. Seeing that the leading platoon was suffering heavy casualties, Chowne rushed forward and knocked out two light machine guns with grenades and then, calling on his men to follow him and firing his sub machine gun from the hip he charged the position. Although he was twice wounded in the chest his impetus carried him forward fifty yards under intense machine gun and rifle fire and he accounted for two more of the enemy before he was killed. Chowne was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously and was buried in the Lae War Cemetery..¹¹

Capt. Milligan's report continues :-

“Law & Order Major Roberts has nearly completed hearing cases at Ali Island. Convicted natives are being quartered in the jail at this HQ pending confirmation or otherwise of sentences passed by him.

Refugees. It is anticipated that we will shortly be contacting natives from Karawop and Boiken areas and are preparing camps for them at But. It is probable that these unfortunate people will be suffering badly from mal-nutrition. 4,000 (approx.) natives are now receiving rations either whole or in part, and all are in good heart

NGIB Recruitment for this formation has ceased in this district. There are no more available areas from which suitable recruits can be obtained.”

End notes Chapter 56

¹ There were two Marshalls active in the Sepik in the 1930s A.J.Marshall, author of *Men and Birds of Paradise* who visited Aitape in 1935-36 and did a field trip with Wally Hook. Then there was an Oil Search Employee called Marshall who is mentioned in Townsend's diaries. It is assumed Captain Marshall was the latter

² The nearest the patrol came to the Sepik River was 35km.

³ Trigellis-Smith S. *All the King's Enemies* – Australian Military History Publications 1988 Page 281

⁴ Trigellis-Smith S. *All the King's Enemies* – Australian Military History Publications 1988 Page 286

⁵ District Office Aitape to NOREG ANGAU HQ 26/3/1945

⁶ Aitape Inland monthly report February 1945

⁷ Letter attached to Capt Milligan's February 1945 report

⁸ Powell A. *The Third Force* Page 236

⁹ Capt Cole's report dated 4th April 1945

¹⁰ Leen B.K. *Return to Wewak* 1970 Page 24

¹¹ Leen B.K. *Return to Wewak* 1970 Page 25

Chapter 57 The Locals Take Affirmative Action - Yessan, Avatip and Malu Are Cleared of Japanese mid '44 – Sept '45

In the time between the first and second Japanese patrols from Yessan to Yellow River to confront the Mosstroops, Karandaman recalls :-¹

“I had been to Waskuk and when I came back I saw that one of the Yigei boys was missing from the school - only the Wagu boy was there. I asked them where he was and they said that he had run away. I asked for details and demanded searches but they said that they could not find him. I coaxed and searched and investigated and I urged them to tell me about this so we can settle it because if we do not then the Yigei people will kill one of us in reprisal. We searched back and forth and finally in the lake near Yambon I saw some water grass that looked black and there was a smell of rotting flesh. One of the Yambons wanted to probe with a stick, but I told him to put his hand down. He reached down and the rotting body came up like soap and bones came away in our hands

We collected the bones and took them to the Japanese at Yessan. I established that the Yambons had killed him. We talked about punishment and agreed that the offenders would be punished by working in the gardens of the Japanese planting sweet potatoes for three months.

Following the second Japanese patrol from Yessan to Yellow river, the bombing of Yessan became so intense that the Japanese told us native captains to keep clear of them because they did not want us killed in the air raids or when the fighting started. The only thing that they needed from us was food. The Japanese abandoned Yessan and shifted back downstream to Sirimbu², where a small detachment of about ten were left. The officers and others went on further downstream. I was looking after the detachment at Sirimbu Island (also known as Palu Island). I was living by the track from Sirimbu to Saseriman and when they needed food they sent word and I got the food for them.”

Meanwhile, completely unbeknownst to Karandaman, moves were afoot in the Malu hinterland in an area known as Krikipa. An unnamed Australian³ had been dropped there. Lisindu/Dangwan of Malu takes up the story :-⁴

“Previously Catalina aircraft had landed on the Yau’umbak and Waskuk lagoons. The people ran away, but one man did not run and he was picked up. [He was] Mainoban. He gave the Australians information as to where the Japanese were camped. The Japanese had camps at Avatip, Palu [Sirimbu Island] and Yessan⁵ They were not camped in the Waskuk area, but were heavily established in the Nyaula villages down river.

Four Ambunti men had come with the Australian, one Waskuk, two Avatips and also Jambundu of Avatip. Jambundu was Tampsin’s father and my relative; we are all of the Kokomo clan. We heard a whisper that the Australians had come and wanted us to kill the Japanese. Our Luluai supported the idea. We went to see the Australian at Krikipa. Jambundu had hand grenades and a machine gun. The Australian gave four rifles to each of Avatip and Malu. From Malu, Tibet, Uriaber, Dunamp and I each received a rifle.

The Australian told us to stay out of the village (Malu) in the day time. We received our arms and hid them in the bush. At night we stayed in the village but in the day time we went into the hills. Planes came and bombed Malu.”

The party actually included more than one Australian and a small police detachment. No record of the personal identities of these people has been found apart from Constable Nokoban of Avatip. His earlier participation in the Ashton expedition is less well

remembered in Avatip in 2012.⁶ The group apparently parachuted into the Amagu River area which is accessible to Malu, Avatip and the Kwoma (Waskuk) villages – Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis, a Kwoma/Waskuk village explains :-

“The Japanese found me and made me work for them...I would go on Japanese instructions and seek out Australian soldiers and supporters. I would find them, talk to them and go back to the Japs and say I had not seen anyone. I met Yoinai, Nagumban [Nokoban] Tagundu and Kamangam⁷ at Kwaianger near Melawei, when they parachuted in. I gave them the information on what they wanted and they went on their way. Three Avatips were numbered among the four I named. This was before the Japs were killed at Avatip. We were able to do this because the men were dirty and looked the same as ordinary kanakas.”⁸

Lisindu of Malu continues his story :-

“We received the word ‘tomorrow we will kill the Japanese at Avatip’. At this time one of the Japanese had died and the Japanese from Malu detachment were at Avatip for his burial. That night we approached Avatip under cover of darkness. The only Japanese killed at Malu were two who were out on the river in a canoe when a plane came and strafed them. The paddlers dived overboard and were safe.

At Avatip Jambundu led the fight. The Japanese thought he was just another village man...he directed us in our own language...we told the Japanese we wanted to give them some pigs. We moved firewood and some cane in to give the atmosphere. We made a fence and told the Japanese it was for the pigs. The Japanese captain must have realized something was wrong because he drew his sword. Jambundu stood close to him and said in local language ‘Do not think about this officer, I will take care of him myself’ At the signal, Jambundu grabbed the sword hand of the officer. We killed the Japanese with axes. The Avatips themselves did the killing and Tibet and the Malu Luluai killed their medical orderly. We dug a large hole and threw in all the bodies and buried them. They have not been dug up yet (this was in 1970).

We killed 25 of them - all except their officer. After pleading for mercy and being advised of the Australian presence he expressed great surprise. We delivered him to the Australian at Krikipa, who tied the officer up with rope and put him in his house. He told us we will take him to Rabaul and cut his throat.”

Ex Const Baras said :-

“I had not long been married to Gini when Japanese from Japandai went to Avatip in seven canoes after receiving an invitation to go. My brother Mondi went with them and I would have gone as well, but Mondi asked me to stay back and look after our wives. The invitation was an act of treachery. The Avatips killed all the Japanese plus Mondi and four other village men. What we did not know was that the Australians had returned. We did not kill any Japanese at Japandai. The collaborators with the Japanese at Japandai were Wapi, Timbun, Enjin and Tendiman who was killed with Mondi at Avatip”⁹.

Lusindu continues :-

“We went up to Brugnowi [Sirimbu Island] and told the Japanese there that we were going to sell them a pig. They believed us and put their weapons down. A Yambon big man [called] Yuwandu [was with us]. We stood behind them and marked one each and killed them when Yuwandu gave the signal. The Japanese at Brugnowi had apparently not heard the Avatip detachment had been killed yesterday. The Japanese from Yessan were at Brugnowi at that

time and we killed them all. There were sixteen of them. We stacked the bodies up after the raid. Next morning they were gone, we do not know what happened to them. We sang our way down river”.

Karandaman, being completely unaware of this continues :-

“So it was one day that I was at Saseriman getting food from the market there, when I was surprised to see my Brugnawi wife had followed me...She told me that the Japanese at Sirimbu were all dead. They had been killed by Malu and Yambon men. These same men had sent word with my wife that I was not to worry for my own safety because Malu was my home place and they would not kill me. I knew that some at Avatip wanted me dead, but the Malus had said ‘No’ I was a Malu and that I would not be killed. They agreed that the likes of Mamba and Gauimeri from Korogo and Yamuk should be killed. The Japanese were only here about one year. First we went to Begapuke and then twice to Yellow River.”

Lisindu/Dangwan of Malu continues :-

“This left only the Japanese in the Nyaula area. We fortified our position at Lavongai and we guarded. The Australian came [and was with us]”.

Lavongai is the disputed boundary between the Manambu language group, consisting of Avatip, Malu and Yambon and the traditional enemy Nyaula dialect of the Iatmul language group, whose next downstream settlement is Japandai. From Japandai downstream, the whole of the Middle Sepik consists of Iatmul speaking people. Lisindu continues :-

“Nungwai brought all the Japanese up river in many canoes. It was a Sunday morning. We fired everything we had at them from a distance. The Japanese retreated and left us alone. They thought Australia was in force at Avatip. With the Japanese gone we rejoiced and the people came out of the bush and resumed normal village life. The Japanese were here for about two years. They arrived hungry and they stayed hungry for as long as they were here. They killed our dogs and pigs and they stole from our gardens. Their behavior otherwise was good. There was no trouble with our women.”¹⁰

End Notes Chapter 57

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 27-28

² In the Brugnawi area some miles down-stream of Yessan.

³ Lisindu later clarified “We said one Australian, there were two or three, but one was in charge and gave us our weapons”

⁴ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol18 Pages 36 & 37

⁵ The Yessan detachment, as mentioned by Karandaman, has departed down to Sirimbu at this time

⁶ Email communication between Sasha Aihenvald and Pauline Laki of Avatip 11/4/2012

⁷ Kanamgam had been one of the four Avatip men who was trained recruited in the Papuan Police after carrying for the Thurston Expedition.

⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 66

⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 77

¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 38

Chapter 58 The Capture of Maprik and Wewak by the Australians with Local Support April 1945

The Australian 16th Brigade led the offensive along the coast as far as Dagua, and then in May 1945 the 19th Brigade went ahead with the aim of capturing Wewak.¹ The 19th operated out of its Divisional HQ at the recently re-captured airstrip and jetty at But.²

Meanwhile the 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions of the 17th Brigade, operating south of the Torricelli Mountains, continued the push towards Maprik with a greater than expected momentum which resulted in General Adachi's headquarters being moved east of Maprik to Wingei on 18th April 1945 and a defensive line being established that ran through Yamilet – Gallop – Wingei and Wimba. The Australian forces captured Maprik on 21st April 1945.³

Capt. Cole's Monthly Maprik Sub-District report for April 1945 describes clearing the Maprik airstrip of three feet tall kunai grass and removing stones presumably placed on the runway as obstacles to aircraft landing. Some bomb craters required filling. Hayfield airstrip was at the time of writing [7th May] 100 yards by 50 yards, with work continuing, assisted for the previous month by WOII Kadam. The Hayfield site, 5¾ miles south of Maprik, had been identified from the air months before. One might wonder why another airstrip was required so close to the existing one at Maprik – like Mt Hagen, the original airstrip was small and located in the centre of town. Hayfield [near Maprik] and Kagamuga [near Mt Hagen] are better sites which are not limited in any way as to the size of aircraft that can land there.

Major Hay, later to be Administrator of Papua New Guinea, secured the Tamauwi site on 12th April. Work then commenced constructing the "Hayfield" runway using hundreds of local people and makeshift tools. On 29th April Wing Commander Hall was able to land there in an Auster. The construction work continued and the first DC3 landed there on 14th May.⁴ Maprik station had been cleared of the enemy on 22nd April and officially occupied with the Union Jack raised there on the 25th April 1945, the 30th anniversary of ANZAC day. Captain Cole continues:-

"Considerable work has been done on clearing the bush, Brigade buildings erected on the old station site...much work will be necessary to bring it up to the pre-war standard, this however must wait for the more important work of assisting in destroying the enemy.

Invariably the taking of a village by our troops has necessitated the burning of the houses. Unfortunately many haus tambarans have also shared this fate but Brigade has cooperated in issuing an instruction that where possible haus tambarans must not be destroyed. Many refugees sent to the coast have returned this month and it is not anticipated any more will be sent out.

Besides the routine work of interrogations and organizing native guides etc. carried out by all our staff, each patrol officer has made short patrols to nearby villages when their respective companies have been stationary.

Odd parties of enemy have been reported having filtered through our lines and acting upon native information, patrols have eliminated them successfully. One party however, some 60 in strength has settled in Seragagim, Chiginambu for approx. a fortnight...some evidence has been received of the enemy drawing south towards the Sepik River."

Milligan's Aitape District Monthly report for April 1945 elaborates further on Japanese behind the new Australian defensive line :-

“A party of 40 Japanese passed through Aganakor-Musendai-Tau-Kabriwat. En-route they were attacked by natives who claim to have killed two. While at Tau the enemy killed three natives whom they are reported to have eaten. This party of Japanese was of particular concern as they were well to the rear of the 2/7th operations, and there was a danger that lines of communications could be cut. The job to clear the party was given to the 2/5th at Aitape. As the 2/5th was officially out of operations on R&R in Aitape, volunteers were called for. Lieut C.H.Miles and 23 other ranks walked six days to Dreikikir.”⁵

Milligan’s Aitape April 1945 report continues :-

“Capt. Fienberg stationed at Dreikikir, with a platoon to assist him has this (Japanese) party under close observation and on 26th April attacked them at Kabriwat inflicting casualties and suffering four wounded.”⁶

The same story as told in *All the King’s Enemies* by Ron Fuller reads as follows :-

“Upon arrival at Dreikikir Lieut. Miles and his party met up with the ANGAU officer and Police Boys who had a patrol base there. The next day we went out to find the Japs and though we had the Police Boys with us we did not find them. On the 23rd we followed a track towards a village we could see at the bottom of the hill. We went down with our section and spread out to give covering fire for another section to go through. Half way down the track the Japs opened fire with rifles and light machine guns. One of the Police Boys went on down the track with hand grenades but was back very quickly with a nasty shoulder wound. Soon after I got hit...I suggested we pull back before we had any more casualties. Fuller and R.A. Briggs who was also wounded were evacuated.”

Lieut. Cyril Miles continues :-

“A white flag had been placed in a village separating the Japanese and Miles Force then natives brought forward to our composite platoon a surrender leaflet which they indicated had been written by an officer of the Japanese force. It was arranged that the officer who had drafted the surrender should come to the white flag. He was a Captain deputed by the Senior Officer Lieut. Colonel Tegenaka, who could not speak or write English. The Japanese Captain conversed with me for some time in very broken English, told me of the shame that he and Tegenaka had felt at laying down their arms, and made mention of our heavy firepower and expressed surprise on seeing that they had numerical superiority when he had thought they were being pursued by a force much larger than theirs...It turned out to be the largest mass-surrender of Japanese land forces before the Armistice⁷”

In commenting on the patrol, Captain Milligan indicated that the capture of these troops was made possible by Captain Fienberg having communicated with the Japanese officer with messages in French and convinced him to surrender his party.

In order to maintain control of such a large number of prisoners on the march, they were interspaced with police and village men carrying axes and bush knives. They were told the village men would not kill them if they remained on the track, but if they stepped off it they would be open game.⁸

Capt. Cole’s April 1945 report continues :-

“The occupation of Maprik Government Station and the re-establishment of its old facilities have undoubtedly influenced the natives into deserting the Jap and supporting our troops; [the populations of] whole villages are moving through his lines to us. The enemy is now concentrated in all villages east of our front and have spent some time in establishing his defenses, making each village more difficult to capture. In guiding troops over the best approaches the natives have gained a great deal of respect.”

Our story left Constable Nonguru fighting his way inland from the beach landing at Aitape on 22nd April. His story continues :-⁹

“Later I went with Kiap Milligan to fight at Vanimo and I was there for two months from there we went to Hollandia for three months. From there we returned to Aitape and from there I was sent to Maprik and Dreikikir area. We fought at Apangai and then we re-took Maprik. Kiap Milligan remained at Aitape. At Maprik we had Kiap Cole, Mr. Abaran, Kiap Kadam, Mr. Buka and Kiap [Des] Martin who was later A D O at Ambunti. He was a first platoon sergeant. Mr. [Major] Hay was there as well and we built the airstrip at Tamaui which is now called Hayfield. We spent 6 months building the airfield. We had no tools and it was all built by hand, pulling logs as rollers, digging by hand and hand carrying gravel etc. I held the rank of Senior Constable in First Company at that time and had 100 police under me.”

For Nonguru there was also other unfinished business from mid-1942. The surviving renegade police had been captured and jailed in Wewak by police master, later Captain Neptune Blood. After being there only a week however, they were moved to Burui patrol post jail when Wewak was bombed by the Japanese. Nonguru continues :-¹⁰

“They ran away from Burui. Nanduk went to Aitape and Manja went to Maprik and he married a woman there. I found him there and told the war kiap Mr. Cole. He asked if I knew his name and if I knew him well and when I said ‘Yes’ he said ‘Go and get him.’ He gave me a note and I took it to Mr. Timbet, who looked at it and called out for Manja. I tied him up and took him to Apangai and there I shot him. Mr. Milligan killed the other man (Nanduk) at Aitape.

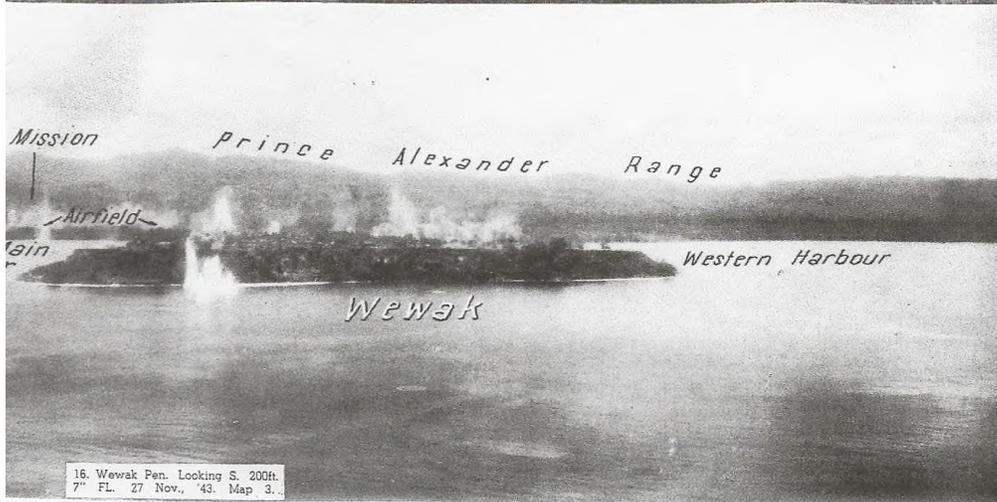
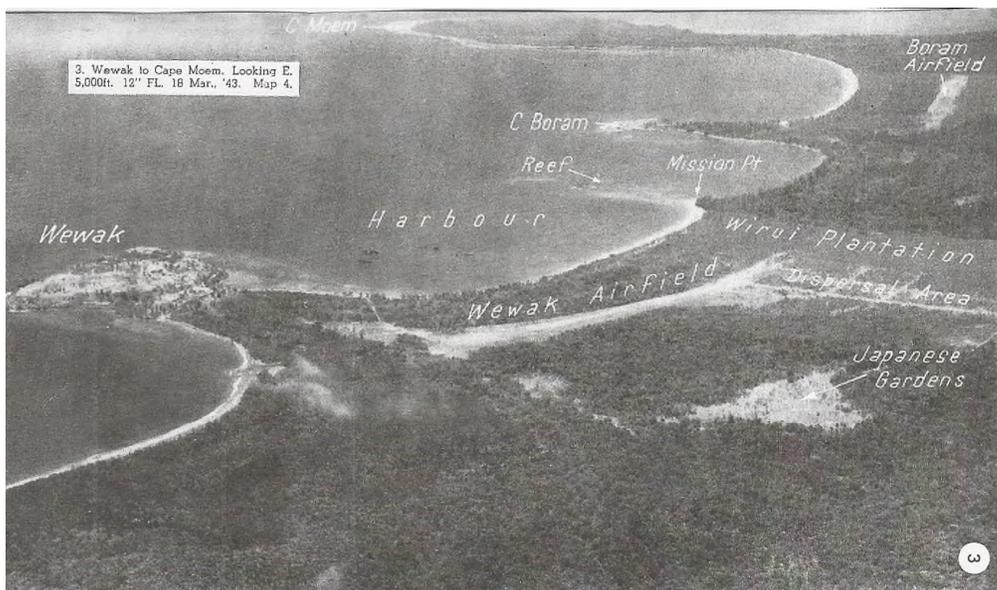
Kwonji of Burui who grew up with Nonguru as he [Kwonji] worked as G.W.L. Kassa Townsend’s interpreter with Nonguru’s father and former tribal war leader Kemerabi in bringing peace to the Sepik Plains. Kwonji recognized a change in Nonguru’s behaviour; like the concerns raised about the NGIB recruits, and Nonguru taking the law into his own hands. When challenged by Kwonji, Nonguru reportedly replied *“I am backing them. I came in the war and this is the war fashion.”*¹¹

Meanwhile on the coast in the prelude to the battle for Wewak Captain Milligan’s Aitape report for April stated :-

“Pockets of resistance remain in hilly country south of But – Dagua – Boiken...The enemy now realize that the successful attacks by our troops on his positions are due to information gained from refugee natives... Natives from Aitape to Suain are now back on their own tribal grounds, receiving 1/3 rations until they are well established.

Three thousand five hundred refugees at Kauk are now on ½ rations, supported by sak sak [sago]. Some of these natives will shortly be able to return to their own areas, as their gardens are intact and the Japanese have been cleared out.

The Battle for Wewak.

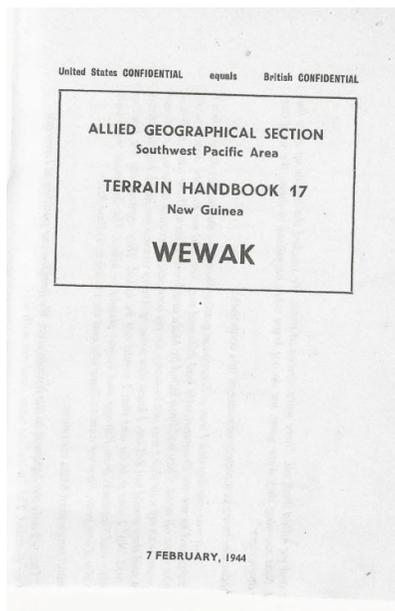


In April 1945 intelligence was required as to whether two long range guns were still in position on Muschu Island as they would pose a major threat to the Australians advance to re-take Wewak.

To gather this information eight Special Unit Commandos of Operation Copper (an operation named after the civilian profession of one of the eight – Lance Corporal Spencer Henry Walklate) boarded a HDLM1312 vessel in Aitape and disembarked off Muschu at 2 am in pitch darkness and drenching rain to paddle ashore. Both small landing craft were swamped and equipment was swept overboard. The Japanese found the washed up equipment and a reported 1,000 Japanese troops searched for the eight Australians.

The lone survivor was Mike Dennis, who was with three others when they were ambushed, after which he was alone. After days of hunger, killing and surviving close calls Dennis found a wooden plank and used it as a floatation support to cross to the mainland; a 10 hour ordeal in the water while being circled by a shark. Dennis is now a 94 year old veteran, whose story is documented in a book entitled *Against All Odds*. By Jason Stevens.

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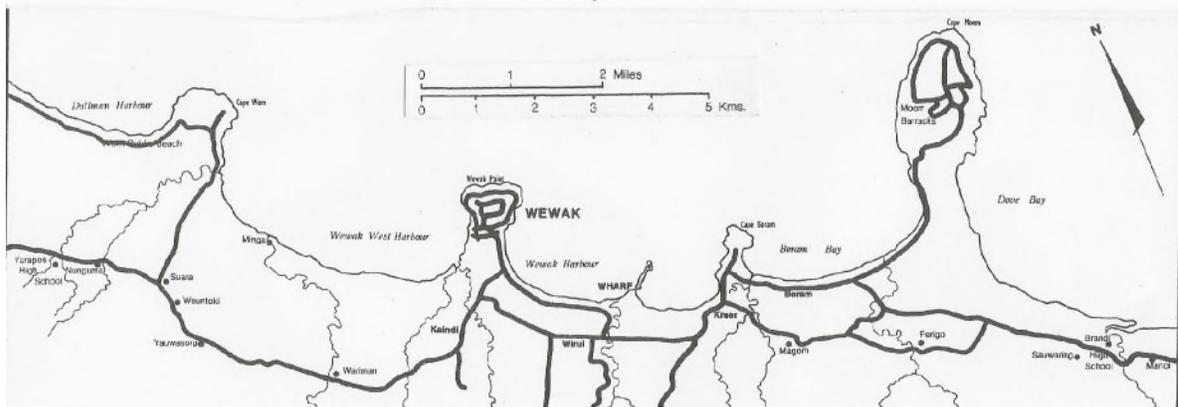
The photos on the previous page are taken from the Terrain Handbook 17–New Guinea – Wewak. The information contained in the booklet would have provided the basis of the briefing given to the troops tasked with taking Wewak back from the Japanese.

On 30th April 1945 General Blamey approved of Major General Stevenson’s plans for the capture of Wewak. The 19th Brigade was to attack and capture Wewak and Cape Moem, the 2/4th Battalion was to destroy the enemy in the Cape Wom, Yarapos and Wewak point areas, the 2/11th Battalion was to capture Mission Hill, the 2/7th Commando Regiment was to take the Sauri Area, and the 2/10th Commando Squadron was to around the back of Mushu & Kairiru Islands and move inland from Dove Bay...[Quoted from Fleetwood L 1984 P 39]

In preparation to put Major General Stevenson’s plan into action - on 3rd May the 2/4th left Hawaii and the next day reached Cape Wom Ranimboa,¹² was captured the same day and Yarapos was taken on the 7th May. Meanwhile Naval and RAAF bombardment had given attention to Wewak Point...Lieut. Colonel Cox ordered the attack on Wewak to begin on the 10th May... The attack began at 5.55am and Wewak hill had been taken by 8.00am.¹³

This battle came at the cost of two Australian dead but over 200 Japanese casualties. Mission Hill was the next objective. By the evening of 15th May the Australian Forces had reached the top of the hill, but many Japanese were still entrenched in bunkers further to the west and were able to inflict much damage. On the 16th it was the job of Private Edward Kenna’s company to capture a machine gun post which was preventing the advance of the Australians. *On his own initiative and without orders Private Kenna stood up in full view of the enemy, less than 50 yards away and engaged the bunker firing his Bren gun from the hip. The enemy machine gun immediately returned Private Kenna’s fire with such accuracy that*

bullets passed between his arms and his body. Undeterred, he remained he remained completely exposed and continued to fire at the enemy until his magazine was exhausted. Still making a target of himself Private Kenna discarded his Bren gun and called for a rifle. Despite the intense machine gun fire he seized the rifle and with amazing coolness, killed the gunner with his first round... The result of Kenna's magnificent bravery... was that the bunker was taken without further loss.¹⁴



On the 16th May Kree and Boram were heavily bombed and were taken by nightfall. Cape Moem was taken on May 22nd.¹⁵

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Operation Copper revisited:

Sydney Morning Herald articles of October 5th and 6th 2013 and 25th April 2014 as well as Telegraph.com.au of 2nd March 2014 describe the findings of former SAS Major Jack Thurgar's investigations over the years on Mushu and Kairiru Islands as well as in Tokyo. The media coverage alleged that after Walklate and Eagleton were captured, they were beaten, tortured and cannibalised.

The Walklate and Eagleton case was quietly mothballed in the 1950s after a change in foreign policy towards Japan and pressure from the US government to wrap up the war crimes trials...the file was down-graded...to "G" status...in which the accused, if convicted would be unlikely to be awarded a death sentence.¹⁶

Lance Corporal Walklate and Private Eagleton's remains were buried with full military honours at Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby¹⁷ on 12th June 2014. The media also noted that Spencer Walklate played 15 games of Rugby...with St George and that in his memory the last post was played at 4 pm before the recent 2014 Roosters – St George game.¹⁸

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Meanwhile in the Sepik in May 1945

In Maprik on the 8th May there was a celebration to commemorate the fall of Maprik and the end of the war in Europe. On the 12th May, Capt. Cole...organized a native *singing* to commemorate the fall of Maprik the previous month. During the festivities Cole informed the native people that Wewak had been captured on the 10th May; this was a terrific morale booster to the native population. It was obvious now that the war was near its end.¹⁹

End Notes Chapter 58

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- ¹ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 229
 - ² Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 25
 - ³ Kengoro Tanaka 1980 Page 246
 - ⁴ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 25
 - ⁵ Trigellis-Smith S All the King's Enemies – Australian Military History Publications 1988 Pages 287/8
 - ⁶ Aitape Monthly report – April dated 1st May 1945.
 - ⁷ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King's Enemies – Australian Military History Publications 1988 Pages 288
 - ⁸ Personal communication with N98628 Paul F. Simons, a member of Miles Force.
 - ⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 pages Pages 80-85
 - ¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 78
 - ¹¹ Bragge Research Notes Vol 18 Page 179
 - ¹² Where Major Chint Singh and his fellow prisoners spent the months of June to September 1944.
 - ¹³ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 26
 - ¹⁴ Citation for Private Edward Kenna VC – quoted in Return to Wewak 1970 – p 36
 - ¹⁵ Fleetwood L. 1984 P 44/45
 - ¹⁶ Sydney Morning Herald *Commandos' horrific end kept secret* – Oct 5th & 6th 2013 – News Review P 3
 - ¹⁷ Pacific Wrecks web page 2014
 - ¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald 25th April 2014
 - ¹⁹ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 25

Chapter 59 New Guinea Infantry Join the Fighting East of Maprik – Stubborn Pockets of Jap Resistance – Unnecessary Casualties

The fall of Wewak and Maprik did not mean the end of the war in the Sepik. As at the 10th June 1945, the shoreline as far as Mandi 7.5 miles east of Wewak Point was in Australian hands, but inland from the first line of hills the enemy was in possession with his main force deployed against the Australian force in a close semi-circle around Wewak.¹

Milligan in his monthly report stated that indications were that NGIB native troops might be posted to the Sepik District and take an active military role in the Maprik area. The fighting had been very bitter with close fought battles for every village and each feature. He wrote that it is very satisfying to report that the greater Aitape area is now clear of the enemy and is undergoing restoration. His report continued :-

“The Wapei area has been clear for some 10 months and as a result of continuous patrolling may now be described as normal. Maimai, Palei and Urim groups have received little attention administratively; they were not affected to any degree by the fighting.

Aitape east sector as far as Matapau, which has been hard stricken by fighting, is now clear and is being slowly restored, but 40% impressment (labour recruiting) is making restoration difficult. 3,300 labours have been impressed to serve as and when required. An additional refugee camp has been established at Hawaiiin River.”

The opening of Hayfield airstrip had significantly improved the supply position of the Inland area. Australian troops in early June 1945 were mortaring the Japanese defensive line, while aggressive patrolling by the garrison protecting Hayfield was clearing out substantial pockets of the enemy living in gardens south of Maprik.

Capt. Fienberg and his troops had accepted the surrender of the Japanese at Kubriwat² Capt. Fienberg was awarded the Military Cross for his contributions in the Sepik.³ On 28th of May 1945, the 2/5th returned to the field to relieve the 2/7th at Kalabu about 3.5 miles due east of Maprik. The move back to the field via Hayfield airstrip had saved a six day march over the Torricelli mountains. The Yamil – Ulupu area ahead of the 2/5th was known to be a double fortress defensive system. The 2/5th immediately started taking casualties on patrols in the Nindinga, Malinga and approaches to Ulupu. It was now confirmed that the Japanese main line of resistance ran from the Yamil villages to Malabasakum and across to Ulupu where they were strongly entrenched. See Map 2.

The fighting against the Yamil – Ulupu defenses continued through June with men being killed and wounded in significant numbers. This was all the more telling as these losses were incurred in a war that was no longer achieving any useful purpose; the campaign would have no effect on the outcome of hostilities. The Australian force was being depleted and not adequately reinforced – companies were down to 50 men instead of 120 and units down to 3 or 4 men instead of 10.⁴ As June became July and the front was pushed ever eastwards, the Torricelli Mountains became the Prince Alexander Range, not that the enemy held ridges looked any different. The July targets became the line of villages Koboibus – Ahegulim to Malabeim.

South of these three villages was a fourth group of settlements called Gwalip. The decision was taken to involve 2 NGIB, which would be based at Kwimbu, in a broad north

easterly sweep commencing south of Hayfield in the Kunjingini and Naile area with the aim of taking Gwalip by the end of July and link up with the 2/5th and 2/6th at or around the Kiarivu airstrip.

The 2 NGIB action opened on the 3rd of July 1945⁵ with platoons 3,4 and 5 attacking the Japanese position at Naile village. Lieut. Roche was wounded and Privates Dala, Andap and Andon were killed and later that day Private Lomi was also killed and five others were wounded. Fire arrows were fired into the Japanese positions, setting fire to that portion of the village. The surviving Japanese defenders fled and Naile was taken.

The importance to the Japanese of the Koboibus-Ahegulim-Malabein-Gwolai line of defense was confirmed by documents and maps captured on the 6th of July. From their base at Kwimbu, the next targets for 2 NGIB were the villages of Dumbit, Toroku and Naramuku. Fighting patrols engaged the Japanese at Yunan and Gisinambu on 9th to 12th July, killing a number of the enemy. One NGIB private was killed and in night fighting Lieut. Harris was wounded and Private Willi was wounded and presumed killed – his body was not recovered.

The settlement of Dumbit was found to have been abandoned during the night of the 13th July. Evidence of cannibalism was found – there was human flesh in abandoned cooking pots. On the 14th the village of Naramuko was entered and also found to have been abandoned, with the departing Japanese moving in a southerly direction. Then in Taiglishi No 2 village on the 15th of July Lieut. Watson was killed by a single shot. Taiglishi No 1 remained occupied by the enemy as the drive moved on to the Aoniaru villages where Private Kolin was killed. In the drive towards Gwalip the Japanese detachment at Toroku was bypassed on the 17th, and that same day the bodies of seven Japanese were found on the track near Uenge village. They had been killed by local village people; evidence of changing village loyalties as the ultimate outcome of the conflict became clear to all.

Attacks against Aoniaru continued with five Japanese and an armed native fighting alongside them all killed and in the same engagement Private Estrom died. The action against Aoniaru continued until the village was finally taken on 24th July. Night attacks on the 19th captured Kwalindu and Uenge, where maps and documents had been left by the Japanese, whose priority it was to remove the bodies of their dead during the cover of darkness.

On 27th July 2 NGIB received orders to move on Gwalip and on 29th July contact was made with the 2/5th. The biggest single action fought by 2NGIB in the Maprik campaign was the battle for Ulama in which Sgt. F.S.Smith and Lieut. Cornish were both killed before the position was taken. By the 31st July, an intensive campaign was underway to try to induce the now starving Japanese to cease their hopeless resistance. Patrols began to distribute pamphlets. Men called out in Pidgin urging the Japanese to surrender. Prisoners already taken volunteered to call to their countrymen telling them they had been humanely treated, and that there was plenty of food waiting for them. Some enemy soldiers came in - they were marched over a prominent kunai ridge with surrender pamphlets in their hands, so those still hiding could see they were not shot on sight.⁶

On 3rd of August the 2/5th accompanied by 2 NGIB was ordered to capture Kiarivu emergency airstrip. The plan, known as Operation Tojo, was for A Company of 2 NGIB to take the high ground near the airstrip, opening the way for the 2/7th. A Company left Sigora village at 4am on 4th August on this operation. The village people they met on the way were unexpectedly cooperative. The patrol, unobserved by the enemy, moved towards their

objective – they camped on the night of the 7th on the high ground. On the 8th they had control of the airfield by 11.30am and awaited the arrival of the 2/7th.

The 2/5th had continued its advance towards Koboibus and by the end of July the Battalion was spread in a line facing the three target positions Koboibus – Ahegulim and Malabeim. As everyone was aware that the war was ending, no one wanted to be among the last casualties. On the 1st of August Gwenik was occupied. On the 2nd Koboibus was taken and then on the 3rd, Ahegulim was taken.⁷

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Each of the NGIB battalions had an establishment of approx. 77 Europeans (who were primarily officers and non-commissioned-officers) and about 550 native soldiers. During the course of the War, more than 3,500 Papuans and New Guineans served in the ranks, suffering casualties (both European and native) of 65 killed, 16 missing in action, 75 died of other causes, and 81 wounded. Losses inflicted on the Japanese included 2,201 killed, 110 probably killed, 118 wounded and 196 captured. Although often poorly equipped, the native soldiers established a reputation for ferocity and tenacity in action. In total, NGIB soldiers, both native and non-native, were awarded one Distinguished Service Order, six Military Crosses, two George Medals, three Distinguished Conduct Medals, 20 Military Medals, nine Mentioned in Despatches, and one US legion of Merit.⁸

End Notes Chapter 59.

¹ Milligan – Aitape District Monthly Report June 1945

² Milligan – Aitape District Monthly Report June 1945

³ ANGAU War diaries entry 30/9/1945

⁴ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King's Enemies –Australian Military History Publications 1988 Page 296

⁵ J.Sinclair – To Find a Path. Boolarong Publications 1990 is the source of all the 2NGIB material in this chapter. Pages 254 -271

⁶ J.Sinclair – To Find a Path. Boolarong Publications 1990 Page 265

⁷ Trigellis-Smith S. All the King's Enemies –Australian Military History Publications 1988.

⁸ Wikipedia

Chapter 60 **Constable Nonguru's Private Payback Offensive Against the Japanese and His Countrymen – Japandai July/Aug. 1945**

Ex Constable Nonguru told his story as follows – the events described occurred presumably soon after the battle for Naile on 3rd July 1945 :-

“The Japanese were now out of Maprik and Dreikikir, but they were still as close as Kunjingini and all along the Sepik to the south. They did not attack us as we built Hayfield airstrip. We had two machine gun posts in commanding positions over Kunjingini in case they did decide to come our way. The Japanese had no aircraft left to bomb us, but before we finally attacked Kunjingini we sent in bombers to bomb them. In fact we saw only one Japanese plane; it was shot down while we were fighting the Japanese at Wosera. There were two Japanese in the plane and they were both killed when it crashed. The plane is still in the Kunai beyond the bridge near the sago on the far side of Yambi.

We killed about 300 Japanese¹ in the two days of fighting at Kunjingini, but many were buried in the earthworks when the bombs hit them. So I do not know exactly how many were killed. We lost three native soldiers and four Australian soldiers. The civilian population had left before the fight, so we killed only Japanese and their local supporters who chose to stay with the Japanese. At Wosera we found that the Japanese had run away in the night. They reportedly went up close to Bainyik and that the Americans had killed them in the river, but I do not know about that. After Wosera we went back to Hayfield.

I went to see Mr. Cole and asked if I could go down to the Sepik. He asked if I thought they would not kill me, but I said that I wanted to try. He did not like the idea, but reluctantly agreed. I went down the main road with three natives and a policeman from Timbunke with me. I saw Japanese at Jama and I asked ‘Are these the Japs who killed our four soldiers?’ I said we would wait and when it becomes dark we will kill them. There were ten Japanese at Jama and when it became dark they went into one house to eat a meal. They were sitting at a table when I poked the barrel of my Bren gun through the door and shot them all. I took their swords and some handkerchiefs to the Jama people I said ‘Be sorry for them and bury them’ I walked on to Burui that night. There were Japanese at the Patrol Post and I slept in the village.”

Nonguru's need for payback killings presumably relates to his sense of identity with the Sepik soldiers of 2 NGIB and their Australian officers who died with them. This action was probably less an early demonstration of New Guinea nationalism than the blood lust of Nonguru's head-hunting ancestors – either way it would earn him a great deal of credit with the soldiers of 2 NGIB when he returned from Japandai. Nonguru continues :-

“Next morning I sought the big man Kwonji (at Burui) and got a canoe from him to take me to Japandai. My trip to Japandai was after the Avatips had killed the Japanese at Avatip. Once at Japandai I told the village people to tell the Japanese that the man they had all heard of – Kemerabi's son Nonguru was here and if you want a fight then come and fight. The native officers went and told them. The Japanese came down and saw me behind my Bren gun. They said that they did not want to fight. They came and shook hands with me. I sent the village men to go and kill a wild pig and give it to the Japs. There were 58 Japanese in the village. I told them that the war was over – planes had flown over and dropped leaflets. I told them that they should throw their weapons in the river and that nothing would happen to them. I gave them my rations and tobacco and they were pleased. They did as I said and

threw their weapons into the river². I told the village people to take them in canoes to the big Japanese camp at Korogo. Mr. Cole came in a plane and flew over Japandai and I waved to him. He then flew back to Hayfield. I stayed that night and the next day and then went back to Maprik and I stayed there until Mr. Cole sent me to Burui to get the Patrol Post back in shape. The Japanese who had been at Burui went down the Wereman channel to Japanaut and from there to Korogo, where they were captured. Mr. Milligan came in the 'Thetis'³ to pick them up.

While we were still building Hayfield the Japanese along the Sepik River had tried to retreat towards Wewak, but had been turned back. They could not go upstream because Australian troops had landed in Telefomin and Panewai. A party of Japanese had met resistance at Kubkain and retreated down river and so they gathered at Japandai and then went to Korogo to surrender. By this time Kiap Taylor had already gone back to the Highlands from the Korosameri River [Kuinmas].

Kemerabi [Nonguru's father] protected Kiap Taylor and would not tell the Japs where he was. They were going to kill Kemerabi, but gave him water torture and still he did not tell. Kemerabi's younger brother Kambugia and another man called Sambugama also got the water torture. They – the Japs - also took my wife and the wives of my big brother, Gaui and Linai and brought them on patrol up river in the hope that the women would tell them where the Kiap and the police had gone. They did not find them and they came back. The Japanese did not interfere with our women; it was the village people from Nyaurengai, Japanaut and Yamunumbu who did this. Mamber of Korogo, and Tugwaia of Japanaut were the main offenders against our women. We believe that the Japanese did not know it was happening. The Japanese patrol brought the women back and they told Kemerabi 'If we had found Taylor and we had killed him, we would kill you now. But now we believe that perhaps you told the truth. If you kill a pig and give it to us we will let you go.' So Kemerabi gave them a pig and some food.

Kemerabi died during the war. It was not the Japanese who killed him with water torture or beatings; it was sorcery – the hidden way of our people. It was at Benabena that Kiap Taylor told me of Kemerabi's death. He took my weapons away from me and gave me two weeks off. Back in the village they buried Kemerabi. Later when I was back in Japandai I dug up his grave to get his skull so I could see it and then re-bury it later. Baras and others in the village while the Japanese were still there wanted to take Kemerabi's skull and over model it with clay and re-construct his face, so that when I saw it upon my return I would be angry at the sorcery that killed my father and wipe the village out. But the Japanese and village people heard of their plan and took Baras and the others to Burui to be executed. But they were only beaten badly and did not die. So the head was buried and not remodeled for me to see and build my rage. I carried the pain of Government duty and left my revenge.

The Japanese did not kill any Japandai village people. That was because they were required to feed them all the time. Fines were in food. The worst punishments the Japanese gave the people were beatings, hanging by the arms and water torture. The Japanese here did not touch our women. They did have relationships with women in the Grass Country and at Aitape. But these places are traditionally free with their women.

All of the Main River (Kamanimbit up to Japandai) supported the Japanese. They also helped the renegade police. They cannot be trusted. You see them now as being under your control – the Government has all the people on side, but you really cannot trust them; you

can only really trust Japandai – all the rest were pro-Japanese. The ranking native officials were Mamba, Mindingin, Tugwa, Sagwi and Yangi. Unfortunately we were forbidden to fight before we came down onto the Sepik; we should have killed these men. There was a lot of feeling against these men because of what they did to our women after we went to fight on the Australian side against the Japanese.

While I was at Burui plenty of people came to me seeking to kill the native officials of the Japanese for their ill deeds, but Government order was quickly re-established and the chance did not offer itself. We killed two of them only. They were killed at Kamanimbit. They were Nambeli and Angowandim both from Kamanimbit. They cut them up with axes, cutting them into small pieces while they were still alive; cutting their limbs into sections. They also fired arrows into them”.

Kwonji suggested to the writer that even if Nonguru did not admit to it, he did take some personal revenge for the death on Mondri [his brother in law] at Avatip. Kwonji said :-

“The Avatips did not kill those five Japandais with the Japanese for no reason. They used to come and beat the Avatips because they were accused of helping the Australians... The Avatips used to just sit down and cry... I knew of the plot [for the Avatips to kill the Japanese detachment] and warned the Japandais not to go, but they went. There was a big feast planned for them. They went into Avatip where they were ambushed and finished.

Later when Nonguru came through Burui he heard about this and he was angry about the death of his relatives. He took his Owen Gun up to Lavongai and he fired into the village [Nonguru stated he had a Bren gun] from his canoe. They also were ready to fight, but Nonguru hit them and Kainkandu, Dandangu and Sagisaun fell down and there were probably others, but I do not know who.

Nonguru came back down and I said ‘Finish now! You cannot shoot any more people’ ... I was particularly angry over the Lavongai killings because I had long since made peace with Avatip... I had invited Avatip down to Burui for Christmas. They came and there was no trouble and peace was restored. They accepted that the Lavongai killings were a valid payback for the five Japandais killed with the Japanese.”⁴

End Notes Chapter 60

¹ These figures seem to be too high – presumably Nonguru’s impression only?

² Presumably an example of not allowing the facts get in the way of a good story

³ It could not have been the Thetis because Neptune Blood had sunk it in Madang in Dec. 1942. Another ship must have been used.

⁴ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page186/7

Chapter 61 Japanese Defeated – Lieut. Monk Demands General Adachi's Unconditional Surrender In The Sepik

Capt. Cole's June report indicated that when the 17th Brigade moved to its new base at Yamil, he went with it, leaving WO2 Kaad in charge at Maprik. Yamil airstrip, which had originally been built to support Thurston's pre-war gold mining operations, was cleared during the month and was found suitable for Tiger Moth aircraft, and the road from Maprik to Yamil had been cleared by the village people to a width of 40 feet.

On the operational front, Capt. Cole noted :-

“There is a growing tendency for troops to burn all houses in all villages visited by patrols; this with the idea of discouraging the enemy from occupying the area. Disregarding the effectiveness of the practice, from a native point of view, it is most undesirable. Not only are houses burned and destroyed, but coconuts, betelnuts etc. growing in the vicinity are also ruined – this naturally leaves a poor impression among the natives.

Representations have been made to Brigade and instructions issued to only burn houses when the enemy is in occupation, but this is difficult to police. An understanding of the native point of view is something which can be imparted easily to all and every rank facing the enemy.”

Progress on both the coastal and the inland fronts were slow through June and early July, as Capt. Milligan reported on the 19th July :-

Operations Coastal: *Enemy has been slowly driven back to the present line of positions due east west and some 8,000 yards inland from the landing beach head at Wewak.*

Boiken Karawop area. Enemy patrols and raiding parties have been active in harassing camps and communications on the coast road...Again natives are playing a big part in tracking these parties and leading our forces to them.

Operations Inland: *The strong opposition that has been encountered by all units was described.*

The Americans, British and Chinese were looking for a quick end to the war and if possible the avoidance of the costly invasion of the Japanese mainland. In the Potsdam declaration, the three countries called upon Japan to surrender and threatened her with “*prompt and utter destruction*” if she failed to do so. The Japanese Government reportedly ignored this ultimatum with the consequence that atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945 and Nagasaki on the 9th August 1945.¹

Japan surrendered unconditionally on 15th August with the formal surrender documents being signed on the deck of the American battleship ‘USS Missouri’ in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September 1945. The ‘*Cease Fire*’ order went out by radio and garamut messages in mid-August 1945 onwards, but the fighting continued. Lieut. General Adachi was still at large and the war in the Sepik would not be at an end until he surrendered.

On 10th September Rear Admiral Sato signed surrender documents on board an Australian Fairmile motor launch in Kairiru Strait and handed his sword to Major General Robertson. Also on 10th September three Japanese soldiers and an orderly presented themselves to the 2/7th Battalion at Kiarivu. They delivered a message from Lieut. General Adachi. A message was sent back to Adachi to report to Australian troops the following day.

The patrol marched eastwards from Wewak for about two miles partly along a beach known to be covered by a Japanese machine gun bunker. As they neared it Monk could plainly see the camouflaged weapon pit and when, as he put it, they were 'uncomfortably close' he left his police boys and went on alone – courageous act which he dismissed as 'routine'. But it would also have been routine for the Japanese to open fire...

When he was about twenty yards from the muzzle of the gun, a Japanese Corporal 'stood up behind the sand bags and scratched his head.' Monk walked closer, waving Adachi's piece of paper, and the soldier signalled him to stop. Monk described the moment:

'The Japanese NCO came forward, read the note, bowed and said 'Ah So', and bowed again. We established that he could speak enough Pidgin English for us to be able to converse quite freely. I told him peremptorily, that I wanted one of his men to hurry on ahead and warn all the troops that we were going right through to Angoram [Japanese headquarters on the Sepik River]. I detailed the track we intended to follow and hoped that the runner he sent off immediately would follow it carefully.

I asked him had his party not been warned that we were coming, and on his answering that they had not, I asked the further question 'How is it then that you did not fire on us?' His reply was to the effect – 'Well when we all saw you wandering along like that...we couldn't believe it. We were still arguing about it when you and your kempi came right up here.'

Without wishing to detract in any way from the obvious courage of Lieut. Monk, the celebrations in nearby Wewak following the surrender would have had the Wewak coast and the Prince Alexander Mountains booming with garamut drum messages. The Japanese Corporal who was sufficiently in touch with the local community to learn Pidgin English could not have avoided being aware of the state of the celebrations in Wewak or the reason for it. The garamuts broadcast all the news of the day, so it was that two years earlier the Japanese were well informed on the presence of the Ashton's party nearby and in the 1920s Townsend at Ambunti was aware, by relayed drum messages, within hours when a ship entered the Sepik River from the sea 232 miles downstream.²

There is also a problem with the message itself. Professor Sachiko Hatanaka in association with Professor Yukio Toyoda – anthropologists in Tokyo, tried to translate the document. Professor Hatanaka indicated that the document is not a letter from Lieut. General Adachi, as it does not contain his name. It is a certificate of some sort in bad handwriting which mentions Angoram and Australian civil administration. The precise meaning however is unclear.³

Hordern continues, telling how :-

"Some days later Monk reached Angoram and confronted the commanding Japanese general there, informing him that their Emperor had surrendered and they had 'lost the war' He found the general – 'A very withdrawn remote sort of man obviously disdainful and resentful of this large uncouth Australian lieutenant sent to co-ordinate the dishonour of his troops. He appointed a couple of liaison officers, Captain Namura, who seemed a nice sort of fellow. And a ratty little man, Sergeant Kita who was later either executed or gaoled for a very long time for his war crimes.'"⁴

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As noted above, the surrender ceremony was conducted on Cape Wom airstrip on 13th September, with 3000 Allied servicemen lined up in avenues on either side, including New Guinea personnel. Lt.-General Adachi and his party were driven to the airstrip, and required to walk some distance to the surrender table. Adachi handed over his sword to the Australian commanding officer Major-General HCH Robertson, and signed the necessary documents. When the Japanese commander began to make a statement, he was brusquely interrupted by Robertson with deliberate disrespect – earlier other Australian officers had refused to shake his hand. Subsequently when Japanese officers complained about the delivery of rations, Colonel JA Bishop, senior staff officer with the Aust. 6th Division, rebuked them by noting that, “*We have just got back 6000 prisoners-of-war from Singapore – starved and emaciated. We do not want any dictation as to how details regarding ration arrangements are to be carried out – I don’t want to hear any more arguments about rations.*”⁵

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Lieutenant Monk was to take over as ADO in charge of the Angoram Sub District on behalf of ANGAU and it was he who investigated the Timbunke massacre and other issues that arose during the Japanese occupation of the Sepik River region.

End Notes Chapter 61

¹ Wikipedia “Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki”

² Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 – Informant Stan Christian Page 522

³ Personal communication from Professor Hatanaka in 2012.

⁴ Hordern M A Merciful Journey Miegunyah Press Melbourne 2005 Page 251/252

⁵ The West Australian newspaper Saturday 15th September 1945

Chapter 62 Freed Indian POWs On The Road To Recovery – Remembering The Brutality and Confronting Their Captors *Oct. 1945*

Major Chint Singh continues his story :-

“Now we are getting better and putting on weight and are well looked after every day. The Doctor attends us four or five times a day and the commander looks after us and provides us with many comforts.

At Angoram LT Monk provided us with many newspapers and books which introduced us to the new world. But the world seemed very much more complicated than at the time when we left it, and it was not the work of weeks or days to understand the mix of it. Everything which is of no importance and has got no consideration in the daily life was a big history and a miracle to us, for example, the material used for dressing Jem Abdul Latif’s foot [tropical ulcers] and other medical stuffs – the different variety of foods especially that in tins such as tomato juice, apricots or curry powder. These were the highest of luxuries to us. The use of soap, toothpaste and shaving materials was another added luxury. The use of oil in the latrines for cleaning them also brought back memories of our life which we had passed a long time ago.

We passed the happiest time in four years at Angoram until 12 October 1945. Our health improved tremendously and it was surprising to our well-wishers. None of us with the exception of Sepoy Lakhu Ram could walk continuously for more than 500 yards. We had to take rest for a further march. Within those 12 days we picked up a lot of weight, I do not know how much, but it was astonishing.

On 12th October, early in the morning, two very nice looking barges anchored on the Sepik near our hut. We enjoyed their presence and one could enjoy the latest pictures from Hollywood. Everything on them was new to us especially the crews. I was introduced to Major Fogerty, G.I. 6 Aust.Div and we were very much pleased to meet each other. He told me about the Indian troops in the desert who fought side by side with his regiment. He had great admiration for them. He told me of many daring and enterprising deeds of the Gurkhas. He was very proud of them and in the latter part of his conversation I learnt his brother-in-law was second in command in the Gurkha Rifles. It gave me great pleasure when he told me how Sub.Lalbahadur Thapa of 2nd Gurkhas won his Victoria Cross. He also told me that in this war the Indian Army was at her top in winning the Victoria Cross. I was also pleased to hear that another 192 Indians had been recovered by the 6 Aust. Div. in New Guinea prior to the peace declaration. The total survivors then amounted to 203.

After this Major Fogerty went further and ordered us to get into the barges and go to Wewak. We departed from our friends in a very sad state. Lieut. Monk and the doctor were also very sad as they loved us so much. We felt as though we were departing from members of our family and so did they. We left the place waving our handkerchiefs to them until we were out of sight.

We arrived at Marienberg again in the evening. There were about 500 Japanese under Australian guard waiting to go to Wewak in the barges. Here we found five Japanese of our guard, one of them being W/O Adachi, about whom I have spoken before and another L/Cpl Sakamoto. The latter would not allow me to relieve myself when I, with 30 other Indians, was put into a dysentery hut at But on our march to Hollandia. There were four sentries

standing over us at this hut and they did not allow us to relieve ourselves. Anything and everything we did on our beds. This NCO was the senior man at the time and that night was terribly spent. Our Captain Nirpal Chand was taken into the bush and was killed while we were confined to our beds. The hut which was already dirty became even more stinking and the life was hard. We heard the guns firing towards Aitape and saw the Japs running here and there like mad dogs.

Now our men got these Japanese of the guard and ordered them to get fuel, clean the utensils, light fires and get water for cooking our meals. They also checked them for bringing poor fuel and not washing the utensils properly, for which we had received severe beatings, for three and a half years. Our men became a little wild and repaid some of their scores. There I also saw some Japs of the local guard force who had warned me 16 days ago not to talk to the natives. The C.O. of the guard force, when he saw me, sent a man at once to get four chickens for us. He came and offered the chickens to me and bowed. I made him remember the day that he warned me and told him then to go.

I had told our stories to Lts. A.Galt and K.W.Peterson, of 43 Landing Craft Co., who were in charge of the Japanese and they informed me that we could use the Japanese. They had collected a huge dump of Japanese weapons and ammunition which they had dumped in the river. LT Peterson gave us some curry powder so we prepared curry chicken and rice for dinner. It was the first time we had had curry chicken in three and a half years. We shared it with the Australians who were very much pleased to taste it.

After this I interrogated L/CPL.Kiroka who was with LT Mitsuba when our four officers who could not walk were killed. He admitted in the presence of all the Australian soldiers, who were very interested in our sad stories and who sympathized with us very much. They gave us every sort of comfort they could.

I saw here a launch M.L.No 1347 very nicely painted. There were men with long beards, on the quarter deck. Sepoy Chain Singh who was standing near me asked, "*Are those men POWs recovered by the Australians?*" I gazed again and again and was inclined to agree with him. They were dressed only in short pants but had long beards the same as we. After a short time one Sub. Lieut. Wilkinson of the RAN came to me and talked for a while and then guided me to the launch. He introduced me to one of those bearded men as the Captain and the others as the crew of the boat. Here my guess failed, but the impression was still on my mind so I asked the Captain. "*Were you POWs sometime before?*" He was a keen witted man and replied, "*I keep the beard to keep prestige over the crew also to frighten the Japanese.*" His answer pleased me very much. He was only 24 years old thin but strong with a very cheerful and intelligent disposition. He was Lieut. Marsden Hordern of the RANVR and comes from Sydney.

Both of these gentlemen guided me to their cabin which was very nicely decorated. I felt very comfortable. Everything in that wonderful place was strange to me. There was a refrigerator, radio set and many other comforts. I had a nice cool drink of squash, my favorite drink the first being taken into captivity. In the meantime Lieuts. Galt and Peterson also joined us and I spent a very pleasant time in their company too. They were very much interested in asking of our stories and I kept "ear bashing" until midnight. Lieut. Hordern showed me some good photos and gave me very interesting novels to read.

Then I slept on the quarter deck in a very nice and easy bed. I found myself very lucky to enjoy these comforts again, for which we cherished so long. In the meantime the crew was very busy entertaining the other Indians. They gave them very new things to eat and packed them (not like the Japanese) with bundles of chocolates, biscuits, milk and so many things. They all went happily to their barges. I and Lieut Hordern kept talking until late in the night. Many times we said goodnight, but he was so keen that he used to start again, but I was overpowered by sleep on a comfortable bed, and I slept dropping the subject somewhere in the centre about which he reminded me in the morning.

On Saturday 13th October I got up at about 8 o'clock and found the launch sailing towards the mouth of the river. I went down to the cabin and went into the dressing room which is adjacent to it. I used the latrine, but could not manage the mechanical apparatus for disposing of the excreta. Lieut. Hordern was watching me and came smiling and demonstrated its function. That was the first lesson I had in mechanics that morning. I was told that I could use anything in the cabin at my discretion, and make myself comfortable which I did and found myself in an entirely new world. Then I had breakfast. Everything on the table was strange to me. When I put four tea spoons of sugar in my cup, my hosts laughed and Lieut. Hordern smilingly said '*don't finish all our sugar, we have not got enough now.*' I had a very nice breakfast. After this the second lesson in mechanics took place, and I learned about the new Tommy gun and a few new pistols. Then firing practice took place, logs in the river being the targets, I fired about 100 rounds.

At about 9.30am we left the river starting on a sea voyage. It was lovely scenery, but I felt sea-sick so went down below to sleep. I woke at 4pm, and when I came up on deck I saw the same hill and its surroundings in Wewak which had sealed the fate of 3,000 Indians when the Jap cargo boat anchored in the same place on 16th May 1943. The old memories again became fresh and it was a change of atmosphere. When we had left the place in June 1944 and went into the hills, it was almost a desert but now it looked like a big city. There was a very big ship anchored next to us taking many Australian troops home. There were many other boats that were new to us, and we had never seen so many there before when we were unloading the Jap cargo ships. The most surprising thing which I saw was a "duck" sailing on the sea and driving onto the beach and road. Then I saw the tiny vehicles called jeeps running here and there – these two were strange to me.

We felt that the world had advanced much and we really spent the period of imprisonment worse than animals. Lieut. Hordern signalled the "duck" which came and we put Jem Abdul Latif on to it and went ashore. There was an ambulance waiting and we put Latif into it and he went to the hospital. He had not slept for the last two nights on account of pain in his foot. Lieut. Hordern got a jeep and we had a ride throughout the whole area where we had worked, received beatings and suffered all the brutalities of the Japanese. It was a very fresh memory. I saw Japanese trucks, barges and aero planes burnt and destroyed all over the place. I went to Wewak Point and was very much impressed to see the new roads, fine buildings and bridges in such a short time as compared with the Japs who had built one bridge in a month using Indian labour. We went back on board in the evening and had a nice dinner.

When I sat on the quarter deck of the friend's boat I felt something also, which my diary of 13th October 1945 describes "The Wewak area is just like Amritsar on Diwali Day. The glittering of the lights on the sea is just like the scene from the Golden Temple of Darber Sahib in the Holy Tank. It seems a very big city with the works of electricity. It reminds me of the Diwali festival which I passed at Amritsar in the company of my wife in October 1940

I enjoyed the scenery very much, the value of which is known only to me, and no one else in the area could find as much pleasure as I got. I slept on the quarter deck for a second night and the following morning we sailed to Muschu Island where 10,000 Japanese POWs were kept. On our journey to Muschu I saw the coast where we used to carry Jap cargo, completely changed since we left it. Every tree, a bend of beach and all minor things brought back memories. I and Lieuts. Hordern and Peterson went ashore at Muschu, and I was very interested to see the Japs nicely fed and treated. There was a nice hospital and big dumps of food and clothing but their hygiene conditions were the same as ever. There was filth all over the area. The Australians ordered them to keep the area clean and warned them for not doing so.

We met a Japanese Captain who was a doctor. He did not pay any attention and did not pay us any respect. I called him and asked why he did not salute. Sepoy Chain Singh who was with us took a stick and started beating him but not as much as the Japanese used to beat us for the same crime. I told the doctor that, *'I and other Indians, British, Australian and American officers used to salute even your filthy and ugly looking privates, and in the beginning when we did not know whether we had to salute your privates, they had beaten us all even the officers, irrespective of their rank for not saluting'*. I told him to go and tell all the Japs to pay their respect for the Australian soldier. After a short time we met another doctor who was carrying a bag with him. I asked him to show the bag to me and found that it was full of medicines.

The Japanese had not given us any medicines since April 1944. Whenever we requested them for medicine their answers were very strange, consequently hundreds of our men died. Lieuts. Hordern and Peterson asked him why they had not given any medicine to the Indian. He replied, *'They can have it now'*. This answer made me lose my temper and I threw the bag away saying, *'I do not want any damn thing of yours now, I have got everything, send it to TOJO as a victory gift'*. The Japanese doctors were crueller to us than any other man.

We came on board again and I said goodbye to ML 1347. We sailed again from Muschu Island to Cape Wom. There I saw the swampy area we had come for two months in 1943. The most important and everlasting memory is the mango tree on the beach. When we had no vegetables and no other foods with which to eat our rice, we used to get ripe mangoes from this tree, boil them and eat them with our rice. This was all in all for us far better than anything else on earth. The delicious and nourishing food of the Punjab, the tinned fruits and milk and butter from Australia had no regard in our eyes. At this stage of adversity, when everything was hard on us, the mango tree did his best for us and fed us. I met Major Calley of 6 Aust Div. Hq. on the beach who treated us very gently and arranged transport to take us to 2/15 Aust.Field.Ambulance. When we arrived at the hospital, we were given hospital clothes and nice soft comfortable beds.

Majors Goding and Widmer of the Ambulance came and examined us, proscribing medicines and gave instructions for special dishes. We received a very hearty welcome in the hospital. Major Calley arranged to send cables and letters to our families in India. I wrote my first letter to my wife and brother since Feb 1942. It took me a long time to write it and rewrite it as I could not understand what I was writing or what I should write.

In the officer's ward I met Lieut. Haydon who was also a patient. He and other officers in the ward kept us happy. Lieut. Haydon brought a set of chess and we used to pass most of our time every day by playing. Every day he used to do something for me and Abdul Latif. Major

Widmer gave us very good books to read and he was very interested in us. Every day he used to spend some of his precious time with us and had given the ward orderlies orders to keep us very comfortable.

In the men's ward life was more pleasant. At any hour of the day one could see four or five Australians sitting talking and laughing with every individual Indian. Though the Indian soldiers could not speak or understand English, they were trained enough [by the Japanese who never gave orders in any language other than Japanese] to express their ideas which could be understood between them and there grew a great friendship between these men. Sgt. Ron Bader was exceptionally kind to them. Hamir Singh who could not speak English was the target of the ward. Sgt. Bader used to check everything and make sure there was nothing that the Indians wanted and that they were nicely treated. On many occasions he worked ward orderly for them.

He had great and keen interest in them... the Indians were eating too much and an ordinary hospital meal was not sufficient, therefore special dishes were arranged and a drum of milk was put at the disposal of the Indians every morning – every day each Indian would drink about five or six cups of milk. Sgt. Bader was so interested that he wrote letters to the Indians' families in India telling them that there was no need to worry as their sons were being well cared for. When they became a little better, then SGT Ron Bader used to take them to the pictures in the ambulance. It was a very interesting time for both sides, but the Indians enjoyed it far better than anyone else. All these things were unforgettable to the Indians.

On 16th October 1945 we were visited by a sister who took a keen interest in talking and consoling to us and was also very good to us. In the evening blood transfusions were given to L/CPL. Sher Singh and Sepoy Chain Singh. It was the first time I had ever seen blood being transfused. Both the Indians received two pints each and it improved them and their health very much. Their faces and appearance were quite different the following day.

On 18th October 1945, members of the War Crimes Commission came to see us. They were:

1. Major J.Lowry – 30 Aust. Inf. Bn.
2. Capt. D.Bruce – 30 Aust. Inf Bn.
3. Lt. C.G.Stone – 2/3 Aust. Inf Bn.

I gave them the whole story of our imprisonment with a detailed account of murder and torture which I had recorded on scrap paper all the time, in anticipation of our release. The suffering and tortures of the Japanese were so terrible that one day I made an oath that if I remained alive I would try to tell the world of their inhumanity; similar were my instructions to my men. I used to tell them that if I were to die then they must take my note book and take the first opportunity of relating the sad fate of 3,000 Indians. Today I find myself very lucky that the Almighty father has fulfilled my wish and greatest ambition in life and I am putting a part of the story before you the readers and I sincerely hope that it was his wish to bestow upon me that duty which I have taken with great interest and pleasure.

A list of the other 151 Indians who were recovered by the Allied forces during the campaign in New Guinea was shown to me and I was very pleased to see that many of the Indians I had known were listed and that there were some of my friends and relatives among them. They were taken to Australia and I could not see them. Now the total of Indians

recovered has amounted to 201 out of approx. 3,000. I had hopes that there may be someone still in the jungles.

I was taken to the pictures by Lt. Hordern and it was the first pictures I had seen since January 1942. The newsreel was very interesting. I saw the surrender of General Yamashita – “Tiger of Malaya” [so named by the Japanese] to Allied forces in the Philippines; also the pictures of many dejected and demoralized Japanese POWs. In the pictures I enjoyed the scene of a railway passing through the mountains and near water falls. It reminded me of my journey from Bombay to Poona in the electric train. It really was very exciting to me... The place where the pictures were shown was near No.3 Jap harbour which was once the filthiest area in the District, but now was nice and clean. “*This is heaven*”, said my mind to me and once again old memories clashed with the new. I did not take as much interest in looking at the pictures as I did by looking at the surroundings and the different life led by the people of this world.

The most difficult task for us as POWs was to fill our stomachs by hook or by crook, and we did not mind for any humiliations or for our lives. We ate the dirtiest things imaginable and the wild things on earth. We used to find it a pleasure to eat in the same wooden and earthen pots as the natives, and to scratch something from the Japanese dioxies. We never thought of boots or shoes or washing our ragged shirts. Our life for the day and the night was to pinch anything we could from anywhere and thus live on as long as the life would go on hope”.

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Chapter 63 ... And Then There Was Only One - Major Chint Singh and the Australian War Crimes Commission Oct. to Dec. 1945

Major Chint Singh continues his story :-

When I finished with my story and the War Crimes Commission 6th Aust Div. issued an order for the capture of all the guards of the Indians, and then brought them from Muschu Island to Cape Wom where they were kept in a barbed wire enclosure. In the evening I was taken by the Lieut. Trout of the Engineers unit in his jeep to see a concert performed by the RAAF and it was very good.

On the 19th October, 1945 I was taken by Capt. Bruce to 6 Aust. DIV HQ. to enquire and interrogate the cases. The president of the Committee was Major Lowry, and the members were Capt. Bruce. Lieut. Murray and Lieut. Stone. The first man brought before us was Lieut. Takesiko Tazaki of the 18th Japanese Army. This man had eaten an Australian soldier. After a long interrogation he admitted an attack on Suain in July 1945 when he was weak and hungry he ate the flesh of an Australian soldier so that he could bring back his strength to carry on. This was all translated by an American born Japanese Interpreter.

Then it came the turn of Lieut. Hisaneo Mitsuba one of the officers of my guard. I had arraigned him on the following charges:

1. Killing Capt. Nirpal Chand of 6/14 P.R. at But on 21st April, 1944.
2. Killing of L/CPL. Bawa Singh and Sepoy Piara Singh of 4/14 P.R. (dates unclear)
3. Killing of Hav. Waryam Singh and L/CPL. Hazara Singh of 2/12 F.F. at Parom on 27th August 1944.
4. Shooting of Sepoy Rulia Singh 2/12 F.F.R., Sepoy Kirpe Ram of 6/14 P.R. and Sepoy Hernam Singh of 6/14 P.R. near AIN 1 on 21st, 22nd and 24th Oct 1944
5. Shooting of eleven Indians, including Hav. Girdhair Lal of 2/12 F.F.R. when unable to march at Singu on 1st December, 1944.
6. Beheading of Jem. Lachhman Singh of 6/14 and L/CPL. Angrezu Ram of 2/12 F.F.R. at Yawa on 9th January 1945.
7. Shooting of Subs. Ishar Singh, Ganda Singh and JEMs. Bahadur Singh and Ham Singh of 2/12 F.F.R. at Yawa on 1st February, 1945.
8. Responsible for all atrocities and deaths of about 200 Indians on the way to the Sepik.

When LT Mitsuba saw me sitting in the room his face turned very pale and when the charges were read out to him I could read his mind. There were two thoughts:

1. He was a bloody fool that he had not killed me.
2. He should not have committed these crimes.

After a little hesitation when I put further and more detailed facts, he admitted all with the exception of a few the blame for which he put on the others. He stated that the Indians were not tried and were executed summarily by virtues of his powers as a platoon commander. Two of the Indians were killed he said because they were the leaders of two groups who were continually fighting among themselves and were holding up the work. One of the officers was beheaded for having stolen six bottles of quinine rations and ammunition and planning with his men to escape. Others were killed for stealing rations, trying to escape and disobeying orders. He also mentioned some names of other Japanese who had helped him with the executions. There were Military Photographers and War Correspondents on the spot.

After the finishing of the interrogation, Lieut. Mitsuba was told to salute me and I was told to salute him as now it was his turn to give the salute. I had saluted him and the Japanese hundreds of times during the three and a half years. I was very happy to think that the ambition at which I was aiming for so long proved with such success, and that the brutal Japs had to pay for it, but was very sorry at the recollection of the killing of my comrades. I think that their souls have helped me to take the right retribution and they were also anxiously waiting for this day "*May peace be on them.*"

On 22nd October, 1945 we were given 5 pounds each to buy the necessities. We also went to the barber shop and had our hair cut and dressed in the proper manner since March 1942. I was told by the natives at Karkar [Kanengara] that Major Kudo had killed five Indians at Sungriman [Sangriman] in July 1945. On this information he was brought before the War Crimes Commission and he admitted that with the permission of Lt General Shoge, had killed the five Indians. He had found them signalling to Aircraft [Allied] and he warned them not to do so. They signalled again as a result of which, the aircraft bombed Shoge's HQ. Therefore he ordered Captain Kobayashi Namio and Nashio Toshihiro to shoot the men.

After this Lieut. General Shoge and those two Captains were interrogated. They put the blame on to another and Lieut. General Shoge said that Major Kudo had reported to him after the execution. Then Lieut. Saito was interrogated with regards to the death of Subedar Rasil Singh and Sepoy Ganga Ram of 3/17 Dogra Regt. And he admitted killing them.

On 1st October 1945, other Japanese privates Yasusaka, Tokura and Hibano were interrogated and after a little hesitation they admitted all their crimes. That was the first day since 7th February 1942, last letter I received from my wife, that I had seen a letter. It was from my friend Lieut. Hordern who had brought us in his barges from Marienberg. This was the most-lovely letter and I wish to write part of it, As follows:-

Lieut. Hordern R.A.N.V.R.

H.M.A. M.L. 1347

C/- GPO Australia

28/10/45

My Dear Singh,

When I saw you and your men on the river bank at Marienberg I could see the marks of past sufferings on your faces and bodies, and I was amazed at your cheerful disposition and bearing.

It was then that I decided to ask you to share our mess with us until we took you to comfort and security for which you had waited and hoped for so long. You may not know it but you taught me a great lesson of fortitude and cheerfulness in adversity and it is I who cannot repay this debt to you so let us say we are equal on that account.

Sgd. Yours very sincerely.

Tony Hordern was always very kind to me and tried to keep me happy and to forget the past miseries. I am greatly indebted to him.

On this day Lieut. Murai was brought before the Commission. Smiling gravely through his gold teeth, Murai told the Commission that Mamura sat on the chest of Capt. Nirpal Chand, Lieut. Mitsuba pinned his hands to the ground and a third Jap began to strangle him. When his struggles had ceased and he was unconscious, Murai cut off his head. In executing the Indians he had instructions from Lieut. Izumi who had said that for any offence against

orders or discipline, war prisoners were to be killed without trial. Murai also made these admissions:-

- a. He had reduced the rations of the Indians who had become too ill and were unable to work. He did this to “make them recover more quickly.”
- b. When the sick Indians asked for medication he told them to eat red ants. He said that the natives had told him that red ants were a cure for coughing. So when he recommended them to the Indians he was not being facetious but merely trying to help.
- c. He admitted that Sepoy Ram Singh of 6/14 P.R. was tied to a tree and beaten, stabbed and buried. His crime was stealing four lemons from the mission garden. He also admitted that previously he had caught Ram Singh for stealing vegetables from the garden.

In the evening Lieut. Rafferty of 2 NGIB invited me to his mess. I had a very nice tea. There were many officers there and they were very interested and asked me of my experiences and the prisoners’ life. They gave me a very enjoyable evening.

On 19th October, 1945 other Indians gave their statements regarding the incidents happened and others witnessed by them. I translated them to the Commission, and in the evening Capt. Smith of 2/3 Inf. Bn. took me to his mess where I had a very nice tea and a pleasant evening. Again on the next day we continued this work, and in the evening all of the Indians were invited by Lieut. Murriss to his unit where we received wonderful treatment.



“Jemadar Chint Singh identifying alleged war criminals at Mission Point, [Wewak] in November 1945.”

From an article entitled “Great In Diversity: Indian Prisoners Of War in New Guinea – by Peter Stanley. In the Journal of the Australian War Museum.

On 11th November there was an identification parade of 165 Japanese. Military History Personnel photographed them. All of these Japanese were selected by us as War Criminals. There was a touch of fear on every yellow unsmiling face as the cameras clicked. All the Japanese were lined up and we pointed out all those who were responsible for torture, murder and cannibalism. Some of my men became very rash when they saw some of the Japanese who had tortured, beaten and been very cruel to 2,500 Indians. They were checked from time to time not to push the Japs but to point at them with their finger. Major General Iwakiri, Major General Shoge, and Major Kudo were very surprised when I pointed at them. They told the Commission that they had never seen me before, but I had seen them many times before and they had not thought of the Indians who were alive. The tables turned – we were outside of the barbed wire enclosure and they were inside.

In the evening I was invited by Brigadier Motten, Commander of the 17th Aust. Inf. Bn. to tea with him. We had a very nice time and he enquired about some of the patrols sent by them to find the Indians. They had given him information about us. I was also informed about this by one of the natives. A few days prior to Jan 1945, seven Indians were caught by the natives and killed, therefore I had lost confidence in the natives. Brigadier Motten told me much of the Indian Army and of the deeds done by them in the world war. He was very much proud of it. He expressed his sorrow on account of the Australians not being able to recover more Indians. His brigade had rescued 125 Indians so I thanked him for the rescue and for feeding and looking after them. He was very pleased to entertain me with tales of the Indian army which he described as the greatest army in the world. The words he said at the time of our goodbye will always remain in my memory, "You can call me here at any time you like, and make yourself as comfortable as if it were home." These words thrilled me with joy and also touched my heart...

It was the happiest day on 12th November, 1945 that ten of us Indians were told that we would be flying to Rabaul from where we would catch a ship home. We were feeling very happy, but sorry to miss me as I had been detained as a witness of the War Crimes. They told me that I was a lucky man, they had been with me all the time and they wanted to go with me again.

In the evening Sgt. Ron Bader arranged a party for them as he used to love them very much and they used to love him. Other friends from the hospital also joined them and it was a big party. HAV. Hamir Singh expressed his feelings in the following words to the members of the hospital and the Division:-

'Gentlemen, we think this part of our life which we have passed in your company is the most glorious in our life. The affection and love shown by you is unforgettable in our life. We had forgotten what pleasures of life are and how to enjoy them but you have taught us again and showed us the new light. You always tried to keep us happy, though the problem of understanding each other was a little difficult, yet you never became tired or disgusted with our talk.

We were in hell and according to the views of our religious teachers, the most inhuman people are sent in it, where they are beaten by the big giants and could not get any safe place. They had to walk in swamps and marches and on sharp thorns in their way. Similar was our fate. We had passed this life of hell but before we had not seen anyone coming out of it. How we find this place (hospital) a heaven, and we are firm that there is nothing after death, either hell or heaven, everything is here but it is known only to those who have passed through it.

We are feeling very much depressed for missing your lovely society and feeling lonely. You have guided us in a noble way. We had not eaten anything for such a long time and you realized our need for food, and offered us with special dishes. We also did not shrink in asking you for anything and found ourselves as happy and easy as in our homes. We cannot express our feelings or thoughts for you in such a short time or in your language. The officers and men of your division have done more than they could for our men who have been suffering from the brutalities of the Japanese. Our life is owed to you and your men, we had no contact with Australians before this time and had not the slightest idea that how you are and we had not the idea of getting such."

Sadly, the tragedy of the Indian POWs in New Guinea was not quite yet at an end, as 'Sydney Sun' reporter Noel Ottaway wrote :-

“Wewak Monday (2nd December 1945?) – One Indian Officer survives today of 2600 captured by the Japs at Singapore in 1942 and shipped to New Guinea as forced labour.

All had refused to enter the Japanese-sponsored Army being raised to fight against the allies and were sent to New Guinea as punishment. Disease, hunger, mutilation, beatings and cannibalism reduced their number from thousands to hundreds and then from hundreds to scores. Finally when the Japanese surrendered, 13 scarecrows [of whom two later died] staggered into the Australian lines.

The eleven scarecrows told their story to the Allied War Crimes Commission naming scores of alleged war criminals and identifying them in line ups. Having signed their depositions, ten of them were sent off last Thursday by transport plane to Rabaul to take a ship home. The plane crashed into a mountain and all perished.

*Prayers were said for them and one minute's silence observed in church services in Wewak yesterday. Sole survivor Chint Singh, said 'I think that what were, in effect, their dying depositions, will ensure that the suffering of my comrades will not go unpunished.'*¹

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Postscript :-

As a consequence of the evidence given to the War Crimes Commission by the Indian survivors, many of their former Japanese tormentors were convicted of war crimes and some executed. During the post-war period, a total of 99 War Crime trials were conducted by Australia which involved ill-treatment of Indian POW's (approx. one third of all such trials conducted in the South West Pacific). Of these, 66 trials recorded convictions, and 36 executions subsequently took place

Looking at the big picture post-war, a total of 296 War Crime Trials in eight different locations were held covering the former theatres of war largely in Borneo, New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville. A total of 924 Japanese and their collaborators were tried, 280 were acquitted, and 644 were convicted. Of the latter, 114 war criminals were hanged, 34 shot, 39 received a life sentence, 236 received sentences ranging from ten years to 25 years, and another 221 received sentences of less than ten years. Initially those serving sentences were confined at Rabaul and on Manus Island, but by 1953 they had all been repatriated back to Japan to complete their sentences, although most enjoyed an early release.

The conduct of these trials was difficult and protracted, partly because of the establishment of a Committee for the Concealment of War Crimes by the Japanese 18th Army, cleverly designed by the Japanese to avoid accountability. There was a shortage of court staff and resources, questions of status and jurisdiction delayed proceedings, procedural issues, admissibility of evidence, communication and interpretation, shortage of witnesses etc. – all were unique issues which the Australian military legal section had never previously been required to address.

Despite these challenges, the subsequent international assessment was that Australia had conducted the trials competently and impartially in trying circumstances. Predictably some Japanese claimed that ‘victors justice’ had prevailed, whilst many in Australia saw the sentences as being too lenient. The process dragged on into the early 1950’s when, in response to changing political landscapes, the remaining trials were quickly wound up or abandoned².

Interestingly, the War Crimes Tribunal was given no jurisdiction to deal with alleged war crimes perpetrated by Australian military personnel or their allies. In the Sepik, the natives were unencumbered by legal protocol and niceties, and meted out justice as they saw fit, perhaps at times in a manner which may well have been questionable under the so-called ‘Rules of War’. This on occasions no doubt applied to European combatants as well.

End Notes Chapter 63

¹ Hordern M A *Merciful Journey* Miegunyah Press Melbourne 2005 Page 270

² DCS Sissons ‘The Australian War Crime Trials and Investigations (1942 – 51)’ 2006
<<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/Sissons> , and, Emmi Okada ‘The Trials of Class B and Class C Japanese War Crime Suspects 1945 – 51” – Australian International Law Journal

Chapter 64 Wars End and the Abrupt Return to Civil Administration – Picking Up the Threads

The restoration of civil administration in Papua New Guinea was achieved in stages from 22nd October 1945 for Papua and areas south of the Markham River, to 24th June 1946 for Rabaul and the Gazelle Peninsular. The Sepik and other mainland Districts came back under civil administration on 28th February 1946.¹

H R L (Horrie) Niall was appointed as the first post-war District Officer of the Sepik. He took over from former Patrol Officer and ANGAU Major John Milligan. Niall had been the ADO at Aitape before handing over to James L. Taylor before the war. During the War, Major Niall was in charge of the Northern Region, stationed in Lae.

Upon arrival in Wewak in his civilian role, Niall was reported to be appalled by the task that lay ahead. All that remained of the pre-war town of Wewak were a few concrete slabs where buildings had once stood.



Devastation - Wewak hill as taken over by the civil Administration.

D.O. Niall had authority to take over from the army all buildings and rations for one hundred Europeans and 8,000 New Guineans for six months together with any equipment he felt necessary. Niall's story and that of the post war reconstruction is continued in *Sepik 4 – Coming to Grips with the Future*. "Horrie" Niall would become Sir Horrie Niall, the first speaker of the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly in 1964.

What of other people we have followed throughout these pages?

Of the renegade police, Constable Taneiwa made the wise decision to accept in marriage a Korogo village girl and to drop out of sight in May 1942. Kwonji of Burui arranged Taneiwa's repatriation to the Morobe province after the war.² In the same way Kwonji told how he helped repatriate to the Murik Lakes, a clerk called Apai, who had worked in

Angoram Sub District, a relative of the Somare family. Apai found himself in the Burui area and but for Kwonji's protection, the Nyaula people would have killed him.

District Officer Jones became the post war Director of the Department of District Services and Native Affairs, and we shall meet him again in *Sepik 4 – Coming To Grips With The Future*.

The Sepik and broader PNG indigenous population. In early 1942 the Australian colonial policy was not to tell the people of PNG about the approaching war as it might cause civil unrest and make an unnecessary problem for the administration. Three years later some 55,000³ Papuans and New Guineans were working for the allied cause. They worked as labourers, carriers, guides, police, officers and troops of the newly formed New Guinea Infantry Battalion and in many other roles. Papuans and New Guineans were awarded 4 Distinguished Conduct Medals, 2 George Medals, 15 Military Medals, 8 British Empire Medals, 297 Loyal Service Medals, 7 Mentions in Dispatches, 1 American Bronze Star and 28 Police Velour Medals.⁴

Allied and Japanese casualties can be accounted for in reasonably accurate terms. The number of Papuans and New Guineans who died as a direct or indirect cause of the war will never be known.

The unity in the common cause of defeating the enemy gained Papuans and New Guineans recognition and admiration from American, Australian, Indian and Japanese troops. Three years earlier, such recognition and admiration would have been inconceivable to any of these armed services and above all to Papuans and New Guineans themselves; the world and the PNG cosmos was changed forever, as it did for Australia after Gallipoli in 1915.

Colonialism. On the world stage, Japan's entry into World War 2 played a telling role in ending colonialism in the Pacific region. Since the end of the war in 1945, the following pre-war colonies have become independent sovereign states: India, Pakistan, Myanmar (Burma) Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu (New Hebrides), Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribas, Cook Islands, Timor, Samoa and Tonga.

In the case of Papua New Guinea, the colonial power Australia was slow to recognize the trend. As late as 1963, 18 year old recruits to the Colonial service were signed on with the expectation of a career to retirement at the age of 65 years; an assumption that Papua New Guinea would still be under Australian colonial rule in the year 2010 (echoes of empire were preserved in the name of the training institution – the Australian School of Pacific Administration). Papua New Guinea became independent 35 years earlier than that on 16th September 1975. It was not until 1971 that Australian recruitment of trainees had ceased.⁵

The Japanese POWs In late 1945 in the Sepik over 10,000 Japanese POWs were held on Muschu Island. Although they were well looked after and properly fed, their weak physical condition upon arrival resulted in up to 40 deaths per week, according to the Australian media in December 1945. Eleven hundred prisoners who were not required for war crimes hearings were repatriated to Japan on 27th November 1945 on the disarmed cruiser *Kashima*. By March 1946 all other Japanese prisoners had left Wewak. General Adachi was sentenced to life imprisonment for war crimes. He committed suicide in his cell in Rabaul on 10th September 1947 two years to the day from when Rear Admiral Sato signed the surrender documents. Lieut General Adachi's suicide note reads :-

“During the past three years of operations, more than 100,000 youthful and promising officers and men were lost and most of them died of malnutrition. When I think of this, I know not what apologies to make to His Majesty the Emperor and I feel that I myself am overwhelmed with shame. I have demanded perseverance far exceeding the limit of man’s endurance, of my officers and men, who were exhausted and emaciated as a result of my successive campaigns and for the want of supplies.

However, my officers and men followed my orders in silence without grumbling and when exhausted they succumbed to death like flowers falling in the wind. God knows how I felt when I saw them dying, my bosom was filled with pity for them though it was to their country they were dedicating their lives. At that time I made up my mind not to set foot on my country soil again but to remain as a clod of earth in the South Seas with the 100,000 officers and men, even if a time should come when I would be able to return to my country in triumph.”⁶

Horie Masao of the Japanese 18th Army. We met Horie Masao as a staff officer of the 18th Army in Chapter 46. In 2009 he was a retired General, ex-Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Japan PNG Association. At the age of 93 General Horie told Air Niugini’s Paradise Magazine that as of August 1945 the remains of 130,000 Japanese soldiers were left in East New Guinea. His map showed that 54,000 of these died in the Sepik 13,000 near Aitape and 41,000 elsewhere in what is now the East Sepik Province. His article tells of the on-going task of recovering, returning home and identifying soldier’s remains.⁷

Captain Hama whom we met at Burui and later at Timbunke when he ordered the execution of 90 Timbunke men and one woman was reportedly *“so tortured by a guilty conscience that he felt compelled to return. In 1992 a Nippon television crew filmed the contrite Captain as he knelt on the murdered men’s gravesite where he abjectly apologized to their sleeping souls. This film was shown, albeit briefly, on Japanese T.V., a fitting sequel to a tragic event.”⁸*

Some Catholic and Lutheran mission survivors of the ‘Dorish Maru’ voyage returned to their mission stations after the war. These included Dr Braun [Lutheran] and Father Mai [Catholic]. In memory of Dr Braun’s life-saving amputation of Father Mai’s gangrenous leg with an anesthetic of half a bottle of cognac and a borrowed carpenter’s saw, Father Mai gave Dr Braun a bottle of cognac each Christmas for as long as either lived.⁹

Chu Leong – trader at Angoram after his overland journey to Benabena, was evacuated to Australia. He worked in a factory in Waterloo, Sydney, and was involved in the running of a restaurant in Oxford St. Upon returning to PNG he found the halves of his 45ft ship *Winon* were where he left them as the Japanese invaders approached. He used the £4,000 in war compensation he was paid to rejoin the halves and extend *Winon* as a 60 ft vessel and then set about continuing his Sepik trading operations.¹⁰

The lure of gold: It would be gold that brought some of our characters back together after the war. During the Taylor and Black Hagen Sepik Patrol of 1938/39, they discovered gold at Porgera, in what was then the Central Highlands District.

Towards the end of the war, an ANGAU patrol led by Capt. Blood and accompanied by Bill Macgregor, Rhys Healy and Ken Gorrige was sent from Hagen to Telefomin in search of

downed allied airmen. By September 1945 the patrol had reached Porgera from whence it was ordered to return to Hagen as the war was over. Patrol members panned the creeks, and when the patrol commenced returning to Hagen via the Tari basis, Macgregor went direct to Hagen; he had seen the potential of Porgera.¹¹

When Macgregor found that he could not go back to Porgera because the Administration had declared it a Restricted Area, he went back to work as a Patrol Officer and to prospecting in the Sepik. Then in 1947, when Porgera was about to be de-restricted, he approached Bulolo Gold Dredging (BGD), a subsidiary of Placer to explore the Porgera prospect. Meanwhile, Neptune Blood, then serving as ADO Mt Hagen heard of Macgregor's plans and in 1948, assembled a team of prospectors including, J J Searson, J Black, the three Leahy Brothers and Doug Elphinstone. They formed the Strickland Syndicate and pooled their resources. Jim Taylor who was then the District Officer in charge of the Central Highlands granted them permits to visit the restricted area. The same day BGD's permit was granted. BGD arranged the cancellation of the Strickland Syndicate's permits, but the Syndicate refused to accept this. BGD reps arrived with a patrol led by patrol officer P.K.Maloney accompanied by Bill Macgregor. Incredibly BDG were discouraged by what they saw and departed the scene.

Meanwhile Ivan Champion, of Dept. of District Services and Native Affairs terminated the services of Neptune Blood for leaving his post without authority. Jim Taylor resigned from the Administration on 19th October 1949¹² and he too found his way to the Porgera gold fields and joined Joe Searson who became dedicated to Porgera and was still living on the prospect in 1972.

In 1963 the Officer-in-Charge of Porgera patrol post, Chris Maken, recalled Joe Searson and Jim Taylor's periodic visits to the patrol post from their claims. Chris particularly recalled that Jim Taylor always doffed his hat to the Porgera women at the market and wished them "*Good Morning ladies.*"¹³

The reader is probably aware that the Porgera mineral deposit, after having a series of owners, was subsequently developed in the 1990's into one of the world's great open cut gold and silver mines. This of course caused major social, economic and cultural changes to that part of the Highlands, and helped underpin the economy of Papua New Guinea.

End Notes Chapter 64

¹ Powell A The Third Force 2003 Page 244

² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Interview with Kwonji page 180

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – Interview with Kwonji page 180

⁴ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 34

⁵ Personal communication from someone who applied and learned recruitment had ended

⁶ Leen B.K. Return to Wewak 1970 Page 39

⁷ Air Niugini Paradise Magazine Vol 1 2009 Pages 62-66.

⁸ Studdy-Clift P. When nuns wore soldiers' trousers. Hesperian Press. Carlisle Western Australia 200. P 44-45

⁹ Dockter-Wegenast E. Go softly the darkness. Morris Publishing. USA 1998 pages 154-157.

¹⁰ B.Hilder. Pacific Islands Monthly February 1962: Sepik Trader of the Old School

¹¹ Jackson R.T. and Banks G The search of the Serpent's Skin 2002 – Moore Printing PNG Pages 30-32

¹² Gammage W The Sky Travellers 1998 Page 229

¹³ Personal communication from Chris Maken, Cairns

Sepik 3 Chapter 65

Transition from Military to Civil Administration – Aitape

Writer's Note: It seems appropriate that the description of the transition from military back to civil administration in the Sepik District should commence by describing the transition in Aitape. It was there that the allied landings took place of April 1944 and from there the Japanese were pushed back and were eventually defeated. It is equally appropriate that the next chapter describes the transition in Wewak, which replaced Aitape as headquarters of the Sepik District when ANGAU handed over control of the Sepik on 28th February 1946.

In each of the Sepik sub districts existing at that time - Aitape, Wewak, Maprik and Angoram - there had been preparatory work done by ANGAU for the return to civil rule, but for the officers taking over, it was immediately evident that the civil administration lacked the staff and resources which ANGAU had enjoyed, and the task ahead in dealing with the aftermath of war was immense.

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Following the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan on 6th and 9th of August 1945, Japan surrendered unconditionally on 15th August 1945. However the Japanese commander in the Sepik, Lieut. General Adachi was still at large and the Japanese 18th Army continued fighting. On 10th September Rear Admiral Sato surrendered in the Kairiru Strait off Wewak. Finally Lieut. General Adachi surrendered at Kiarivu east of Maprik, and was brought to Wewak and signed the surrender at Cape Wom on 13th September 1945. [see Sepik 3 – Chapter 61]

It takes time to demobilize armies when a war ends. The restoration of civil administration in Papua New Guinea was achieved in stages from 22nd October 1945 for Papua and areas of New Guinea south of the Markham River, to 24th June 1946 for Rabaul and the Gazelle Peninsular. The Sepik and other mainland districts came back under civil administration on 28th February 1946.¹

As of these dates the Provisional Administration assumed authority over the Trust Territory of New Guinea and the Australian Territory of Papua with J.K. Murray as Administrator of Papua – New Guinea². It was an unplanned operation with Murray arriving unannounced at Jackson's airport in late October 1945, to be found sitting on his suitcase at Port Moresby airport, and explaining to a soldier on duty that he was the Administrator.³

One of Administrator Murray's first tasks was to deal with a serious impediment to the resumption of civil administration on Manus Island where 2,000 US servicemen were left over from the war. They were under the command of Commodore Martin USN, who was :-

*'... reluctant to accord civil power to us in an area where they consider their interests dominant, while not apparently wishing to define the area as American Controlled.'*⁴

A period of diplomatic cooperation followed with the situation finally resolved when the Americans withdrew from their base at Momote on Manus Island.

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In February 1944 important planning was done by senior DDS&NA officers then in ANGAU under the guidance of Major General Morris and Brigadier Cleland. The meeting anticipated the post-war joint administration of the Australian Territory of Papua. The meeting ended with the formation of a committee comprising Major J.L. Taylor a DDS&NA field officer, Lieutenant Colonel H.I.P.

Hogbin an anthropologist, and lawyer Mr. J.V. Barry, KC to research and make recommendations. One of their research topics was how war damage compensation should be assessed and paid to the people of Papua New Guinea. They reported to the Cabinet of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, via E.J.Ward, Minister for External Territories on 5th December 1945.

The War Damage Compensation Scheme was approved in principle and was thereafter fine-tuned and presented to DDS&NA field staff to implement via a sequence of Circular Instructions from the Departmental Director. Sepik 5 Chapter 4 traces the evolution and implementation of the War Damage Compensation policy. War damage compensation investigations, assessments and payments would be a major task for field staff well into the 1950s. Widows pensions under the scheme were still being paid as late as Independence in 1975⁵.

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The story of the Aitape and “Aitape Inland” sub districts stories are resumed by ANGAU Captain R. Ormsby, in the Aitape monthly report for October 1945⁶. Captain Ormsby was temporarily relieving Captain Milligan as DO Sepik District :-

‘The Aitape area is now classed as almost completely non-operational...in a few days’ time the only Army units remaining [in the Aitape area] will be a small detachment necessary to ration the RAAF...

Communications Good tele-radio communications normally exist between Aitape, Dreikikir and Lumi as well as to Wewak and Lae.

Refugee Natives. As at 30/9/45 2,450 refugees remain, they are mainly on half rations. This position is constantly under review. Local villagers are being encouraged to bring in sago to be used as refugee rations. The October monthly report noted that the number of refugees had not been reduced, but the amount of rations issued to them had been considerably reduced.’

Two inland stations were noted as being manned by ANGAU officers: Lumi was under the command of Lieutenant Alan Gow and Dreikikir was under the command of Captain Hoggard. Both Lumi [Map 3] and Dreikikir [Map 2] were being actively patrolled, as were the Aitape and Vanimo coastal areas. It was noted in the November 1945 report that RAAF doctors were giving valuable assistance at the Aitape native hospital.

a/District Officer Ormsby noted that he prepared his December 1945 report as an annual report. This report provided an important collation of information and statistics in preparation for a return to civil administration in February 1946. Mr Ormsby’s report stated in part :-⁷

‘Reports were received here that during the month there had been trouble between the Dutch and Indonesians at Hollandia...some shooting did occur. For some time now Indonesians in Hollandia and at other places along the Dutch New Guinea coast have been reported as only waiting for the US troops to be moved out before attacking the Dutch. Apparently in Hollandia this was planned for the middle of December and the story has it that the Dutch anticipated it by shooting the ring leaders the night before it was due to commence...

Incidents such as this stress the desirability of re-opening Vanimo as soon as staff are available...I consider [there is] a strong possibility of people wanted by the Dutch seeking refuge this side of the border. The ease with which this can be done is demonstrated by the recent arrival of a Dutch Brother who walked from Hollandia to Aitape...

Native situation: The following is a summary of census figures for the district [census taken by ANGAU patrols] :-

	Absentees		Children		Adults		Totals		Grand Total	Estimated Uncounted
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Aitape E.Coast	351	2	382	354	457	629	1190	985	2175	500
Aitape W.Coast	767	21	1464	1220	1301	1815	3532	3056	6588	-
Wapi	948	-	2702	1877	3063	3399	6713	5276	11989	1000
Palei Maimai	-	-	120	125	236	210	356	335	691	10000
Dreikikir	921	11	3555	2999	4682	4438	9158	7448	16606	5000
Vanimo	209	-	475	416	708	730	1392	1146	2538	1500
Islands	160	20	197	142	150	210	507	372	879	-
Totals	3356	54	8895	7133	10597	11431	22848	18618	41466	18000

This total of 41,466 compared with the total in the annual report of 30/6/1941, which was 51,044...it is difficult to make any comments. The total of 3,356 males absent under indenture has [since] been greatly reduced.

Native morale has, on the whole, been very good throughout the District.

I understand in other districts there have been recent outbreaks of Vailala Madness and other indications of an anti-government complex. This does not appear likely to occur here unless it is brought in by returning labourers.

Refugee Natives Less than 1,000 full rations are now being issued and should be again reduced shortly.

Aitape East Coast With the exception of Lemieng, Pro and Vokau, [Map 3] all villages are back on their old sites or adjacent. [These three village communities] are awaiting the withdrawal of the RAAF. Most have been back nine months and are now nearly self-sufficient. Coconuts have been made available for re-planting...the loss of their village groves is probably the greatest loss they suffered.

Aitape West Coast. [As far as Serra –Map 3]...suffered very little from the Japanese occupation and is practically back to normal pre-war conditions.

Wapi [Map 3] The area generally was not over-affected by the war and had now re-adjusted itself. Crops are adequate and the dysentery that caused quite a few deaths in the area now appears to have been more or less eliminated.

The native hospital at Lumi has been closed down and patients are being brought to Aitape for treatment.

Palei and Maimai. [Map 3] With the exception of the Upper Palei, this area has not had much patrolling and was just brought under control when the war broke out. PO Elliott was killed at Wanali in 1939. It is highly desirable that this area be patrolled as soon as possible, but it is equally desirable that this first patrol should be by an experienced officer as there are known to be many small matters which require adjusting.

Dreikikir [Map 2]...it must not be lost from sight that this area did suffer considerable from enemy action and the loss of housing, poor diet and general upheaval must have left their mark on the natives... With the closure of Dreikikir hospital imminent, arrangements have been made for any serious cases to be sent to Maprik hospital and it might be that this could extend to District Services issues also. This might allow Dreikikir station to take over control of part of the Palei area...

Yellow River and Green River. [Map 4] There is no ANGAU contact with these areas:

Yellow River ...small scattered communities believed to be semi-nomadic. The station there in peace time was quickly abandoned as the population there did not justify its existence.

Green River area [Map 3 & 4] which included the Vanimo hinterland is still almost completely unexplored. APC parties accompanied by a PO [J.Hodgekiss] visited a portion of the area before the war but nothing is known of the mountain ranges...the only practical method of patrolling these areas is by the Sepik River. The only justification – the possibility of Jap stragglers...

It is suggested that future district policy be based as far as possible on the following :-

1. The remote areas such as the Sepik River and behind Vanimo are left to their own resources for the time being unless they start to interfere with the areas coming under control.
2. Coastal areas to be patrolled from Aitape: as regularly as possible until complete re-building is finished and with the idea of making recommendations re the expenditure of communal funds on village improvements.
3. [Three] Inland stations to be maintained as follows – Dreikikir area 1, Palei/Maimai area 1, Wapi 1.
4. Mobile hospital to be established to spend 2 of 6 months in each of the Inland stations.
5. Vanimo to be manned as a police post – occupied for various periods during the year and visited once a month by sea or air.

Major G.G. Bloxham of ANGAU Northern Command Lae responded to Captain Ormsby's report as follows :-

'Very interesting report. Upon the takeover by the civil administration in February your district will become a sub district of the former Sepik District, and will be staffed by ADO and a PO. Reconstruction of Aitape will be left to the civil administration.'

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H R L (Horrie) Niall was selected as the first post-war District Officer [DO] of the Sepik and he was stationed in Wewak. He took over from former Patrol Officer [PO] then ANGAU Major John Milligan. Before the war Mr. Niall had been the Assistant District Officer [ADO] at Aitape prior to James L Taylor holding that position. During the war Mr. Niall held the rank of Major and was in charge of the ANGAU Northern Region stationed in Lae and Fischhafen. Upon arrival in Wewak in his civilian role, DO Niall was reportedly appalled by the task ahead. All that remained of the pre-war Wewak town he had known were a few concrete slabs where buildings once stood. He had authority to take over from the army all buildings and rations for 100 Europeans and 8,000 New Guineans for six months together with any equipment he felt necessary. Some administration staff now joined DO Niall and was posted to Aitape, Maprik and Angoram.

Within Departmental policy guidelines as set out in Circular Instructions – [see Sepik 5 Attachment 1. Mr. Niall’s planned district administration policy focused on 4 key points :-

1. To restore law and order,
2. To ensure there was adequate health facilities and food for the local people,
3. To pay war compensation claims and the return of displaced people to their homes, and
4. To pay deferred wages to labourers who had been working in other districts at the outbreak of war, and had not been able to return until the war ended⁸.

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Upon the return of the civil administration to Aitape, The first Assistant District Officer of the civil administration was F.H.Moy. On the 6th March 1946 he reported to DO Wewak :-

*‘MURDER OF ALLIED AIRMEN.’*⁹

‘The following information has just been received. It is third-hand but possibly there is a semblance of truth in it. Sometime after the landing at Aitape an Allied single-engine aircraft crashed near Kabori...it contained a crew of two who were apparently uninjured.

The airmen were discovered by the natives WEIWI and WILI of Kabori, both [former] indentured labourers. These two informed one TUPEI of Kabori, apparently the headman and under his leadership the villagers surrounded and killed the two Europeans. The bodies were thrown into a common grave and whatever articles could be salvaged from the plane were handed around to the natives by TUPEI.

The native MAUWI of Piako brought the information out after a recent visit to Kabori and retailed it to Reg No 2282 Const. Paipo of that village...It is doubtful whether Kabori was ever visited by pre-war patrols – it certainly has not been since...’

Writer’s Note: *The Kabori people speak the One [pronounced ‘O-nee’] language [Map 3].*

D.O. Niall responded thus to ADO Aitape¹⁰ :- *‘No action can be taken in this matter as yet. As soon as time permits, a patrol can be organised to visit the area, and the matter of punishment must be left to the discretion of the patrolling officer. Every effort should be made to recover the bones of the Airmen, with whatever identification is possible.’*

.....

Francis Herbert Moy was recruited as a Cadet Patrol Officer on 22nd May 1935 and was appointed Patrol Officer on 22/5/1937. He served in the Sepik District pre-war. During his War service he held the rank of Captain and was awarded the OBE.¹¹ [details of his war service are not known]. ADO Moy was replaced as officer in charge at Aitape by Dudley Whitforde PO¹ who submitted a very clear record of the condition of Aitape sub-district as taken over by the civil administration.¹²

¹ While the writer can find no record that D.A.M. Young Whitforde was a member of the ANGAU or AIF. It seems apparent that he carried over his military experience into civil administration as a PO at Aitape. In 1946 he was 22 years of age and was not formally part of the civil administration until 12/12/1946 – his DDS&NA seniority date according to the

'ADO Moy left for Manus on 3rd [of May 1946]. Staff Sgt. Jarman was left by ANGAU as EMA, It is interesting to note that within days of Mr. Lambert's [Civil Administration EMA] arrival, daily [hospital] attendances doubled. During the month two official parties visited – to survey the food dumps and bomb dumps' – more detail below. '[The] station site of Hooke and Carey pre-war leases by Aitape River, which army used for its hospital [and] which was taken over by ANGAU and then civil administration [is] suitable as temporary office space only.'

Neither of the pre-war partners survived the war. Hooke, being unable to evacuate with a/ADO Milligan in December 1942 as his wife was heavily pregnant, was murdered by Yakamul natives at Musembelim near Dreikikir, [see Sepik 3 Chapter 45] and Lieutenant W.G.Carey was a member of the Rimau commando expedition which entered Singapore harbour to sink Japanese shipping in October 1944. He and ten others were captured and held prisoner until they were all beheaded in July 1945.¹³

PO Whitforde's May 1946 report continues :-

'Army - occupied Aitape proper to Raihu River three miles away. Good clean up before they left with refuse destroyed – empty drums etc. stacked beside the road for easy removal. Large quantity of stores stacked inside weatherproof sheds.

RAAF area – Raihu River to six miles east along the coast. This was the beachhead for supplies:

Army stores – measuring 18,900 cubic feet – exposed to sea air – written off, but not destroyed, so became the responsibility of civil administration...each day more tins burst creating pollution.

RAAF Bomb dump – one mile inland from Vokau and nine miles from Aitape – No stocktake available. Visiting expert suggests expert would come and explode all bombs in the area. Neat rows with average of 30 per heap – concern for safety of village people. The condition of the RAAF area is disgraceful...saucepans with food etc....Plates with unconsumed food. It took 30 labourers for two months employed in cleaning it up.'

PO Whitforde's May 1946 Monthly Report added the following :-

'Staff Sergeant Jarman – ANGAU EMA left by boat for Wewak on 28th. Earth tremor [no date] – ground opened up in several places and cement floors cracked. Two official parties came in May to examine food and bomb dumps. There are no vehicles or boats attached to the sub district. No stores requisitioned, as abundance left by the Army. Roads – from 4 miles west of Aitape to nine miles east following the shoreline – this is reduced by the Raihu River bridge being washed out.

Sub stations and posts:

ANGAU sub station **Dreikikir** – big store supply guarded by police – no stock take records but includes trade goods, parachutes, medicines and rations. Another store is located at **Lumi** guarded by a special constable of long service.

Radio communication not satisfactory. – As handed over by the army and in need of replacement. Surface mail dispatched each Saturday – runner to Wewak – 5 day round trip.

"Stud Book" – the Permanent Staff List as at 30th June 1952. It is also noted that his brother, F.St John Young Whitforde, 2.5 years older than Dudley was also a kiap with a seniority date of 24/8/46.

Native Affairs:

- ***Matrimonial.*** *Laxity is evident – divorces becoming the fashion. If a man is at fault – forfeits part of Bride Price – If by sister-exchange – pays compensation. If woman at fault, village ostracism is sufficient.*
- ***Repatriates.*** *About 1,000 natives returned Aitape this month mainly from New Ireland and Rabaul.*
- ***Recruiting.*** *No success recruiting for Manus and Lae – fear of leaving Aitape. They think their return is uncertain (as it was when war broke out) – doubt and distrust. Village Officials have good control in the villages – very few complaints.*
- ***Patrols.*** *Mr. PO Jackson currently in Wapi – compiling war damage claims, pre-war wage claims, payment of compensation to native soldiers PEDP [??], and DNE [deceased native estates].*

District Officer Niall's comments on this report :-

'...Dreikikir Police Post to be re-opened as soon as staff allow. Village Councils encouraged but not expected to be effective as sorcery is on the increase. Huge food dump disposal – let the natives take what is edible – seems the easiest solution. DO asks – Make inquiries to RAAF Norcom at Port Moresby what they intend to do with the huge bomb dump at Tadjji.'

Writer's Note: I heard mention at Aitape during my posting there as ADC from 1976-78 that at one stage a suggestion was considered that the entire bomb dump be detonated in a single explosion as a test for seismic equipment around the world. If indeed this was considered, then happily someone obviously realised the danger and cancelled the idea. The bomb dump, being on the Sepik north coast was in close proximity to the overlap of the Australian and Asian continental plates. Consequently there could have been potential tectonic outcomes, which might have rivalled the earth quake and land subsidence which created the Sissano Lagoon in 1907, the Torricelli Mountains earth quake and landslides of 1935 or the Sissano/Warapu tsunami of 1998.

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The bomb dumps were detonated in 1950, presumably in small multiple events.¹⁴

ADO R.H.Boyan arrived at Aitape on 29th June 1946 and took over from PO D.Whitforde, who would soon be posted to Dreikikir in preference to Vanimo as the latter administrative area population was regarded as too small.¹⁵ Mr. Boyan's DDS&NA seniority date was 8/12/1937. In 1942 he was an ANGAU Lieutenant stationed in Madang District from where he assisted with the evacuation of Australian soldiers from New Britain. Then in July 1942 he was posted to the Rai Coast. In January 1943 he was a member of "Bena² force" and in 1944 wrote a patrol report concerning the Karkar Is. population in the Madang District.¹⁶

During September 1946, he reported "7 A.W.C.U. visited Aitape." [Australian War Crimes Unit]. No details of their specific purpose or activities were reported. Concerning Vanimo, ADO Boyan reported that PO Whitforde would conduct a patrol of the Vanimo area, because, as Mr. Boyan stated :-

'I am anxious...because [Vanimo] contains a bunch of so-called ex-soldiers, who were discharged for disciplinary reasons and whose conduct is shown on discharge cards as 'Bad'.¹⁷

² "Bena" meaning BenaBena the ANGAU HQ of the Central Highlands, east of where Goroka was later established

In Aitape sub district's October 1946 report ADO Boyan mentioned that two trade stores were operating – one by Mr. Hunter – Kirke who was now a permanent resident of Aitape, and one by Mr. Stewart in the Aitape-Tadji area. The November monthly report mentioned that R.C.Mackie [former WO 2 in the Sepik campaign and later beachcomber at Angoram] was now an employee of Mr. Stewart, who also had trading interests in Wewak.

DDS&NA Director Jones, in commenting on the October report, noted as a direction for future policy :-

*'His Honour the Administrator wants to see more activity in the region of the Dutch Border'. DO Niall, in response, mentioned 'the desirability of re-opening Vanimo Police Post.'*¹⁸ PO John Wakeford was transferred from the Maprik Sub District to Aitape in January 1947. ADO Aitape, Boyan's Aitape March 1947 monthly report mentioned the imminent re-opening of Dreikikir and Vanimo patrol posts :-

'On 21st March [1947] Mr. Whitforde left to set up Dreikikir [Map 2]...Mr. Wakeford, PO is gathering building materials for Vanimo'[Map 3]. He went on to report :- '...serious fighting in the SE Wapi [Map 3]– returned labourers and one ex-N.G.I.B. spurred on natives from Yemlu – nine natives sentenced to three and six months. Constables 5153B Uma and 5218 Sibogi did a good job'.

DO Niall's response reflected the conservatism that came from his long experience :-

*'In future, be very careful of sending [meaning don't send] native police to investigate tribal fighting in such places as the South West Wapi, which are not fully under control. Such fighting should be investigated by a European Officer and he is to let other duties remain unattended to visit the area.'*¹⁹

The SVD missionaries, based at Aitape, had suffered severe losses of personnel during the war, particularly due to the executions conducted on the Akikazi in March 1943 as described in Sepik 3 Chapter 25. In November 1946 DO Niall was able to report :-

*'I have been informed that it is the intention of a new order, Vis., the Franciscans to take over the Aitape sub district from the present Society of the Divine Word. It is understood that all members of this mission are of British nationality, [as opposed to the primarily German SVD] and thus more cordial and friendly relations between the Mission and the Administration are expected.'*²⁰

In the March 1947 monthly report ADO Boyan reported :-

'Father Ignatius of the Franciscan mission arrived on 21st [March 1947] and indicates medical work is placed at the forefront [of plans for his group.]'

In April 1947 ADO Boyan noted a situation that was applicable not only throughout the Sepik, but through most of New Guinea when he wrote :-

'An immense amount of work still lies ahead...in connection with war damage, pre-war wages, and sundry other matters, the aftermath of war.'

In the May 1947 report ADO Boyan wrote :-

'At the end of the month natives of Yemberemba in the Maimai area [Map 2 & 3] reached Aitape and stated Mukili natives had murdered two of their women and they were afraid of further attacks. Little detail could be gathered by Mr. [PO] Morris on account of the informant's slight knowledge and lack of an interpreter...the informants left the station without notice. Mr. Morris will leave for the area on the 9th instant, to investigate. The unannounced departure of the Yemberemba

indicates they have guilty consciences and if killings have occurred they are not blameless. I would not be surprised if the complaint is a distortion of the fact.'

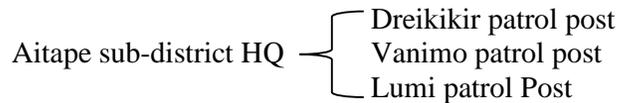
Writer's Note: Mr. Morris' patrol – Aitape No 11/1946-47 and Mr. J.D.Martin's Dreikikir Patrol No 1/1951-52 are described in Sepik 4 Chapters 5 and 6 respectively into the Maimai and Wanwan regions, which at that time were not under government control.

Mr. Boyan's Aitape May 1947 report continues :-

'Commerce Mr. B Parer [pre-war trader in Wewak and gold miner in Bougainville] *desires a trading license for Vanimo. Mr. Stewart [pre-war recruiter] plans to open a trade store in Lumi. Two trade stores in Aitape continue to do good business.'*

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The pre-war Aitape Sub-District and the wartime Aitape and Aitape inland sub districts were perceived as being made up of five separate administrative areas which were, Aitape, Dreikikir, Vanimo, Yapunda [the pre-war post which covered the Palei and Maimai tribal areas] and Lumi which covered the Wapei [also spelt Wapi and Wape] tribal area. By March 1947 the first three were re-established or in the process of re-establishment, and while there were no immediate plans for the Yapunda area of the Palei and Maimai people, re-establishment action was under way at Lumi. The immediate plans looked thus :-



Aitape Sub District: The post-war re-establishment of Dreikikir Patrol Post

ANGAU maintained excellent records for Dreikikir right up to the transition from military to civil administration. In Dreikikir monthly report January 1946 Captain Hoggard ADO noted :-

'This month's activities have been directed towards the completion of the census and other outstanding matters in anticipation of closing the station in February... Under instructions from the DO three experienced members of the NGPF [New Guinea Police Force] will be left at Dreikikir to maintain buildings and to keep contact with the sub district [i.e. Dreikikir sub district as it then was.]

Medical *The Dreikikir native hospital was officially closed on 31/1/1946. It is being maintained as a dressing station until the departure of the European personnel [NX 192254 S/Sgt Tuohy I]. Natives staying at Dreikikir are fed from their own villages.'*

P.O. D. Whitforde's May 1947 Dreikikir report stated :-

'Introduction. *The above-mentioned station was re-opened on 23rd April 1947. Prior to the war Dreikikir station itself was occupied and used as a mission station subsidiary to the one at Ulau [on the coast – Map 2]. Pre-war control was maintained through a police post at Mesimblim and another in the Salata area. During the war ANGAU opened the station at Dreikikir and it was until January 1946 classified as a sub district.*

There are approximately 17,000 natives in the area and Dreikikir is situated approximately in the centre of the main population. Villages are close to each other and the average population of each is 100-200 natives. There are four paramount Luluais amongst whom the eight native districts are divided for administrative purposes.

Mails. A letter...was sent to the Father at Ulau mission station asking if he would mind... taking care of the mail at times when the Aitape-Matapau runner passed through Ulau, before the arrival of the Dreikikir runner...In the event of urgent communications a mail runner can leave Dreikikir in the morning and arrive in Maprik in the evening. There, if W/T communications are functioning, any message can be transmitted onwards...

Native situation. With the exception of the Kombio-Anamagai areas, all seems to be well throughout the sub-division. This is mainly due to Constable Gavi working in conjunction with the paramount Luluais.

With only a few hours warning of my expected arrival at Dreikikir, it is remarkable that approximately 1,000 natives, together with their officials managed to line at the station and give welcome. On my arrival a native who had been to Australia shouted "Three Hearty Cheers", to which the natives responded...Since then there has been nothing shown but a desire to assist – it is disturbing to find natives so obviously pleased that the Government is taking an interest in them... Kombio and Anamagai are the exception.

...About the 5th March this year Sabio of Kombio [Map 2] reached Aitape with £120 in his possession. He desired to bank this money in the name of "Kombio". As the matter was irregular and there were some doubts about the origin of the money, banking was deferred and Sabio was asked to accompany the patrol to Dreikikir...

...it came out that Sabio had completely swayed all village officials and natives into believing in cargo cultism. He had organised the area into receiving the "ancestors" and their cargo. He impressed labour for the purpose of constructing an administration for this, completed, according to Constable Gavi sent to view same, includes an air landing strip, administration block, and various other buildings.

Sabio, after frightening natives to follow him, ordered each village to send him 100 shillings. This they did and this was the sum of money presented at Aitape. Village organisation and administration suffered considerably as a result of Sabio's activities. By ordering villagers to report to him on certain days for work, village maintenance was non-existent. After hearing all available information it was obvious there was nothing threatening as first thought...it was just an outbreak of mild cargo cult. It was decided to despatch a constable and the paramount Luluai of Kombio to gather together a representative village official from each village...eventually a party of 26 officials arrived at Dreikikir.'

PO Whitforde dealt with the cargo cult issue by conducting an education program to show them the error of their ways :-

'The officials, after 10 days report they are grateful for the trouble that is being taken over them...Nothing has been done about Sabio. It is suggested that he not return to his village where public disgrace...will achieve more than a prison sentence'.

DO Niall's comments on a memo date stamped 31st May 1948 and referring to a monthly report of which there is no copy on file, discussed "Sister-exchange" marriage :-

'Sister exchange will gradually die out, as it is doing in other areas, and it is thought that it will be for the best. We can only tolerate it at present as a deep-water custom, but the PO is wrong in ridiculing any native custom and such criticism will only bring about a loss of confidence and maybe induce antagonism.'

Writer's Note: Sister exchange was still strongly in evidence in the adjacent Nuku area in 1976 and the suicide of a young educated girl promised to an older village man who was unacceptable to her as a husband is discussed in Sepik 4 Chapter 55.

In commenting on the Dreikikir monthly report for January 1950, acting DO J.J. Murphy noted that the good progress on the road to Maprik was a matter of keen interest to him. Soon afterwards Dreikikir patrol post was transferred from the Aitape to the Maprik sub district. Dreikikir Patrol Reports continued to be produced – 1950 three patrol reports by PO. L.J. Doolin, 1951/2 six patrol reports by PO D.J. Martin, 1953 one patrol report by PO J.W. Macgregor. It appears that Dreikikir was then closed until 1957 when three patrol reports were produced by PO A.C.Trollope, then 1958/9 PO R.D. Donovan submitted four patrol reports and R.L. O'Connell one patrol report.

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Aitape Sub District: The post-war re-establishment of Vanimo Patrol Post

Writer's Note: Hollandia the Dutch Capital of West New Guinea, an urban centre which was established in 1910, is a mere 20 miles west of the border; the 141 degree line of longitude,. The Australian New Guinea side of the border by comparison is far remote from the centre of government; [consisting of] a lightly populated coastal plain, backing onto the Bewani Mountains.

The drift to urban centres in this area therefore resulted in border crossings, which was not a problem in the time of transition from military to civil administration. The separate issue of political refugee border crossers came in two stages; the first involved Indonesians escaping their Dutch colonial masters. The second, followed the Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea in 1962, as described in Sepik 4 Chapters 29, 30 and 33]

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Soon after arriving to re-establish Vanimo Patrol Post, PO John Wakeford found himself involved in an international political situation without adequate means with which to deal with it. He was the lone officer at Vanimo with a very small police detachment. He had no radio or means of transportation apart from mail runners who carried his communications on foot to the ADO at Aitape some days walk to the east. Raising an alert in response to the developing situation, he sent a message to Aitape which read as follows :-

'Vanimo 9/3

The ADO Aitape,

Three Indonesians came in today. They have escaped from gaol at Hollandia. Four more are on their way. There are 40 others trying to escape from gaol. It is requested this message be sent by wireless as don't feel happy in regard to this situation.

John [Wakeford]'

The answer from ADO Aitape read :-

'Spoke to the DO today by R/T telling him the contents of your note of the 9th instant. He gave the following instructions:-

- 1. You are to proceed with police to the border immediately.*
- 2. No more Indonesians are to be allowed to cross the border.*
- 3. Do not allow those in Vanimo to proceed east of Vanimo.*
- 4. Use AK. 94 if state of emergency demands it.*
- 5. I am sending you four extra police immediately one of whom shall be stationed at Serra to take over from any runner from yours or Wutung [Wutung] who may be bearing an urgent message*

AK. 94 due Vanimo today but transmitter not working' [AK 94 was presumably a motor vessel of some type]

PO Wakeford replied :-

'Vanimo 18/3

The ADO Aitape,

Your message and police came last night. [i.e. it took the mail runner nine days to go from Vanimo to Aitape and back to Vanimo] I am leaving for the border tomorrow but, I am not going to Wutung but am proceeding to Krisa then possibly Pakei [Pagi], as this is the track used by the Indonesians. They did not come down the main road by Wutung. After leaving Hollandia they proceeded west to the Dutch [NG] village of Nau then on to Sauya, then to Wambus. From there the track turns south to Skrofo, then they turn SSE and come [across the border] to either Pakei or Krisa.

No 3 of the instructions reads as follows "Do not allow those already in Vanimo to proceed east of Vanimo" I am not clear on this. Does it mean:

- 1. That they are not to proceed by ship to either Aitape or Wewak?*
- 2. Does that mean they are to be left here?*
- 3. In view of instruction 2 does that mean they are to be escorted to the border and passed over?*

...The DOs instructions must be obeyed but I do not feel happy at leaving them on the station. They are very restless and say they will die before going back to Hollandia. They are not confined in any way. They have been told not to try to walk to Aitape. How long they will obey I cannot say.'

The next document on file is Vanimo's Monthly report for March 1947 which noted :-

'Indonesian movements: On 9/3/47 seven Indonesians arrived in Vanimo from Dutch NG. They were given food, shelter and medicines and were dispatched to Wewak on 28/3/47.'

The report went on to note that the building program was underway, including a small gaol, and that the health, or ill-health, of the community included dysentery and the worst tropical ulcers yet seen. In commenting on this ADO Boyan at Aitape asked the DO – *'Is it intended to gazette a gaol for Vanimo?'*

Clearly the pragmatic PO Wakeford needed a gaol and left his ADO to tidy up the bureaucratic loose ends to make it legally happen. Vanimo's monthly report for May 1947 noted that the police detachment included a Corporal, a Lance Corporal and six constables and went on :-

'Communications. The police runner [mail service] continued to be satisfactory. The change over from Leitre to Mori [Map 3] begins this week. [Leitre is on the coast, Mori is on the Piori River – indicating a change to a more efficient inland route.]

Native Affairs. Many visitors to the station. People inquiring about war damage compensation and schools. There has been heavy traffic to Hollandia during the month.

Village Officials. VOs throughout the area continue to try to stop natives signing contracts [indentured labour contracts reflecting the fear that local men could find themselves in remote places in the event that another war occurred] – even for police recruits.

On 31st May an inspection of the Council minute book was made at Vanimo. The Council continues to work well...they settled three disputes according to native custom. The Council proposed to build a house that is to be used for Council meetings only.

31st May all VOs met at Vanimo village to discuss the scale of prices for native foodstuffs, all took part and in the end a scale was drawn up satisfactory to all.

Writer's Note: Informal councils such as these were sponsored by missions and the administration even before the war. The Vanimo council and its apparent success reflect well on the forward thinking John Wakeford. Such councils lacked any statutory base - this would be changed with the passing of the Native Local Government Council Ordinance of 1949.

DO Niall's comments to ADO Aitape on the Vanimo monthly report for May 1947 included the following :-

'Further advice is desired regarding the heavy traffic to Hollandia. The reasons for the visits should be stated, and as it is a foreign country such visits should be discouraged as much as possible. Impress upon the PO that he should inform all the natives that they are quite free to seek indenture if they so desire, and inform village officials that they must not endeavour to hinder employment as that is purely a matter of individual concern.'

The monthly report for May 1947 was PO Wakeford's last at Vanimo. In it he noted the arrival of the Franciscan mission and the commencement of medical work by them. During the month, there was a visit from the Area Education Officer, Mr. L. Stamper and the notation that he decided to leave education in the hands of the Franciscan mission. Patrols for the month had focussed on payment of War Damage compensation, with Wutung, Musu, Pibi, Yako, and the Vanimo villages [Map 3] completed, and it was noted that a patrol was currently engaged on War compensation duties in Inland villages.

Writer's Note: PO Wakeford's work in taking over from ANGAU in Maprik and in Vanimo through 1946/47 shows him to have been an extremely sound officer, who was able to think on his feet and withstand the frustrations of remote postings. He handed over to PO J.W.Sims who we shall see was a completely different type of person. This was evident in Mr. Sims' monthly reports, which unlike Mr. Wakeford's, were brief and generally uninformative documents. With Sims at Mr. Vanimo from June 1947 until June 1949 was EMA Creighton, who we will soon meet again at Ambunti.

In commenting on the Vanimo report for December 1948, ADO D.M.Routledge noted and perhaps should have been warned that something was not right with Mr Sims :-

Communications *Mr. Sims is a bit hard to follow here...Mail service once a week...hardly deplorable...However, at the present time, when there are parties of Indonesians likely to give trouble; there may be a real necessity for a [wireless] set.*

Copra. *Once more Mr. Sims is too vague. Mr Sims should advise at the first opportunity [answers to five listed questions] and how the natives' enthusiasm "has been built up with promises that have not been kept."*

General remarks. Mr. Sims had reported that Government monies were kept in a wicker basket and it was hoped that a safe would soon be provided. ADO Routledge continues :- *'I was under the impression that Mr. Sims kept his cash in a locked iron box [Army type]. But even that is not enough...if a safe cannot be supplied Mr. Sims should reduce his cash to £100...'*

Writer's Note: PO Sim's last monthly report from Vanimo was that of May 1949, in which he reported, *'Mr. Creighton left late in the month for Dreikikir.'* At this time, Mr. Sims was overdue for leave and awaiting the arrival of his replacement. His replacement was Mr. Jim Hodgekiss [recently stationed at Hayfield] who arrived to take over only to discover Mr. Sims had shot himself that morning. He is buried in the Wewak cemetery.

a/ Director of DDS&NA I.F. Champion issues a confidential memo dated 27th July 1949 to all District Officers entitled "Cadet Patrol Officers" :-

'Recently a Cadet Patrol Officer committed suicide [Mr. Sims was in fact a PO] due to melancholia. The officer had been 18 months in the Territory and had spent the last 12 months on a remote station. It is realised that owing to shortage of experienced personnel, young officers have been posted to outposts which ordinarily would have been staffed by older and more experienced officers. Remote posts like Lake Murray, Lake Kutubu, Ambunti and Telefomin should be staffed by two officers.

District Officers are to ensure that such posts are :-

- a. Visited by them as frequently as possible...visits should be some day's duration, and..*
- b. That officers occupying such posts are brought into the District HQ at least once every three months.*

Man is a gregarious animal, and although there are men who can remain for long periods alone without being affected, the great majority cannot and suffer acutely. Their minds become warped; little problems appear to be unsurmountable, and they feel that they have been forgotten and neglected...²¹

ADO Jim Hodgekiss was probably the ideal officer to be at Vanimo at that time. He had been in New Guinea since the First World War – most of that time as a kiap in the Sepik. He had served in Vanimo and conducted patrols from there in 1934. It was his initiative that resulted in the elimination of the renegade police [Chapter 19] who had rampaged up the Sepik after the Angoram incident in which ADO J.L. Taylor was shot and wounded on 20th March 1942 – Chapter 14.

Mr. Hodgekiss' Vanimo reports reflected his "business as usual" approach; making no reference to his predecessor or his suicide. The Vanimo monthly report for November 1949 noted that PO A.J. Zweck arrived in Vanimo from Maprik on 1st November 1949 and after the handover, J.W. Hodgekiss departed for Wewak on the *MV Poseidon*. The November report also noted that Mr Hodgekiss had repaired or re-built most of the station buildings in his time at Vanimo. Clearly, station personnel's minds were kept off Sim's suicide by being kept busy. Mr. Zweck remained at Vanimo until replaced by A.C. Jefferies in mid-1950. Mr. Jefferies and his wife remained at Vanimo until early-1952.

On the morning 9th March 1951, while Mr. Jefferies' patrol was camped in the Fas No 2 area in the Kwomtari area, Constable 6568 Karibagup left the camp at dawn to attend his toilet needs. He was about to squat down when he saw a native arming an arrow at him. He did not have time to call out before the arrow struck him in the stomach. He pulled the arrow out and went to the tent of Mr. Jefferies. Medical attention was applied but there was heavy loss of blood and Constable Karibagup died at 1.30pm and was buried at 4.30pm.²²

R.G. Orwin [Feb 1952] relieved A.C. Jefferies who resumed his Vanimo posting until June 1952 when he handed over to G.P. Taylor who was OIC until July 1953. The officers who followed

were: B.A. MacCabe³ Nov 1953 – Feb 1954, after which Vanimo Patrol Post was not manned until J.W. Macgregor arrived there 13th December 1954. Staff who came after Mr. Macgregor were B.A. Ryan 1956, R.[Len] Aisbett 1957, J.A. Erskine 1957-8, J. Cochrane 1958-59, L.G. Bridges 1959-60, D.J. Murphy 1959/60, D.B. Moorehouse 1961/62 and again in 1964/5 and A.F. Wadsworth 1962.

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Aitape Sub District: The post-war re-establishment of Lumi Patrol Post.

The history of the re-establishment of Lumi after World War 2 is the subject of confusing documentation as to when the administration presence at Lumi actually constituted recognition of Lumi as an administration post. The eight stages below seek to explain this :-

1. DDS&NA circular of 1964 *Notes on Establishment of Government Stations – New Guinea*²³ states that Lumi was re-established in 1946. This was only correct in that ANGAU had a presence in Lumi leading up to the handover to the civil administration on 28th February 1946. After the departure of ANGAU personnel, but before the arrival of a civil administration presence, a stock of stores was guarded there by a trusted [but not named] policeman. A similar transitional watchdog role was conducted by Constable Gavi at Dreikikir. It could be argued that this constituted a continued administration presence, but it was more a case of “holding the fort.”
2. The first post war settled European presence in Lumi post war seems to have been SVD missionaries as explained by anthropologist Bill Mitchell²⁴ :-
‘The Divine Word fathers had been visiting the Wape for several years before they established their Lumi Mission in November 1947. This was done by Fathers James O’Meara and Denis Dobson.’
3. The first post-war Administration visit to the Wapei tribal area and Lumi appears to have been a patrol from Aitape in May and June 1946²⁵ by PO Jackson, who had been a Lieutenant/CPO with ANGAU at Dreikikir²⁶ in 1945. It was reported that Jackson’s patrol was made very welcome by the Wapei people. This patrol merely visited and reported upon the area and its people. It did not re-establish Lumi as an administrative centre.
4. The apparent “unofficial” re-establishment of Lumi as an Administration post was by PO G.B. Gilbert; Bill Mitchell continues his story :-

‘[PO] G. B. Gilbert came from Ambunti as their Report Log show him making patrols from 5/7/48 - 1/8/48 and 7/9/48 - 19/9/48. The Lumi post, from what I can determine was established in 1949 by G. B. Gilbert. His first patrol to the Sepik from Lumi was from Sept 5 - 20, 1949 with Fr. James O’Meara. The Lumi mission had Fr James’ hand-written diary of the patrol that Lumi’s Fr Gerald let me read. Their joint patrol with 70 carriers was the first for the Admin to the tais [swamps] along the Sepik River.’

5. In September 1949 EMA Rhys Heally and family arrived in Lumi. In the Lumi monthly report for November 1949 PO, G.B. Gilbert, OIC wrote :-

‘Prior to the arrival of Mr. L. R. Healey of the Department of Public Health at Lumi there was no provision for ... an administrative post here. ... Duties were confined to patrolling

³ For reasons that are not understood, Vanimo was designated as the sub district HQ of the Aitape sub district from November 1953 to Feb 1954. ADO Aitape MacCabe was ordered to transfer to Vanimo for that period, by acting DO G.R.G.Wearne.

the Wapi area of which Lumi is the centre. When word was received concerning the establishment of a hospital ... sanction was given for the establishment of an administrative headquarters at Lumi. ...

Since the cessation of patrolling in September, work has been confined to the construction of the hospital and the necessary buildings of the patrol post. ... The first task undertaken in this direction was the Medicals Assistant's house which is built entirely of native building materials and took about two weeks to complete. Second on the list was the native hospital ... of native materials ... six forty-eight by eighteen feet wards each ... housing twenty patients. ...

Work on extending the airstrip is being continued ... The total length is now seven hundred and twenty yards ... [the full potential length] will be a few yards short of a thousand yards. ... If wheelbarrows were available, the work could be done much quicker. ... The PHD has a lengthy job ahead of it ... Mr. Healey has got the task well in hand and has already made great inroads of clearing up sores and diseases so prevalent in this area.²⁷

6. PO F.E. Fienberg provided the next information on the opening of Lumi Patrol Post :-

'From early December [1949] until 15 March when I took over duty as O.I.C., there was no District Services officer at Lumi. The necessary duties needed to keep the post functioning had been carried out by Mr. L. R. Healey, EMA, but he, being fully occupied with his own medical duties, had little time to spare except for the most essential matters. ...

*For the first two weeks after taking over from Mr. Healey it was necessary to concentrate on the building of a house for the O.I.C. and family, and this building was completed with the maximum speed ...during the first days of the month. The building is of similar design to the EMA's house, and is considered adequate and suitable for the area. Corrugated iron roofing for the kitchen and drums or tanks for water are still required, but the ADO Aitape advises this matter is in hand. The cost of native materials and labour used in the erection was £30.16.0.'*²⁸

7. Another way to identify the establishment of a government station is when it is listed in the DDS&NA staff postings lists. During PO G.B.Gilbert's time in Lumi he was listed as serving at Ambunti. The March 1951 list shows him to be in Telefomin. The first staff postings list the writer has seen which lists Lumi, is that of April 1951, with PO P.E.Fienberg still there as the OIC.

8. Bill Brown advises²⁹ that the first ADO at Lumi was Syd Smith. The Staff Posting lists first list him there in April 1954, which can be taken as the date the Lumi Sub District was established. The second ADO at Lumi was Frank Jones who we met in 1953-54 investigating the Telefomin uprising.

A partial listing of staff who served at Lumi included F.G. Gilbert 1949, R. Healey 1949/50 [EMA], P.E. Fienberg 1950/52, R.G. Orwin 1953. Lumi was declared to be a sub district - SS Smith ADO 1954/55, F.D. Jones ADO 1956.

End Notes Chapter 65

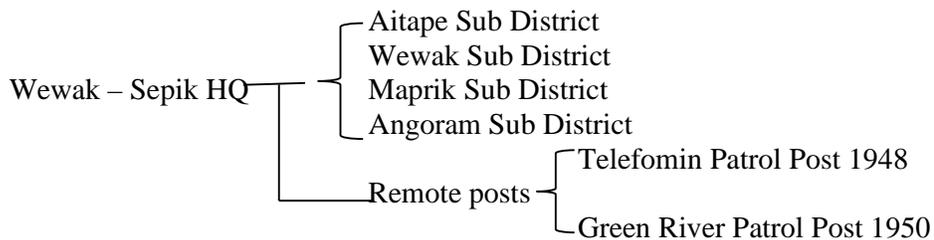
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- ¹ Powell A. 'The Third Force' P 244
- ² I.Downes. 'The Australian Trusteeship Papua New Guinea 1945-75'. Australian Government Printing Service Canberra 1980 P19-20
- ³ I.Downes. 1980 P 19
- ⁴ I.Downes. 1980 P24 quoting the Administrator following his visit to Manus,
- ⁵ Personal communication in 2014 with Mai Raka Bragge of Vabukori village, Central Province
- ⁶ R.Ormsby acting District Officer – Aitape Monthly report October 1945
- ⁷ R.Ormsby acting District Officer – Aitape Monthly report December 1945
- ⁸ Fleetwood L. A Short History of Wewak – Wirui Press 1983 Page 46
- ⁹ ADO F.H.Moy DS 1/2/3/ - District Office Aitape 6th March 1946
- ¹⁰ DO Niall's W.1/2/ or 23rd March 1946.
- ¹¹ Supplement to the London Gazette 14/2/1946 and Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 21/2/1946
- ¹² D.A.M.Whitforde PO. Aitape Monthly report May 1946
- ¹³ Wikipedia – RIMAU expedition
- ¹⁴ Notable events West Sepik P92 [The notable events document was an election aid] Now item 501. Bragge reference volume No 17.
- ¹⁵ DO Niall's comments dated 6th July 1946 on Aitape monthly report June 1946
- ¹⁶ Powell A. 'The Third Force' – ANGAU's New Guinea War 1942-46 – Oxford press 2003 PP 31-2, 121 & 197
- ¹⁷ Boyan R.H. Aitape monthly report September 1946.
- ¹⁸ Reference WK.1/2-28 of 14th November 1946.
- ¹⁹ Reference WK 29/4-2 of 2nd April 1946
- ²⁰ Reference WK 20/4-16 of 27th December 1946
- ²¹ Confidential Memo DS "Cadet Patrol Officers" – see item 497 Bragge reference Vol 16
- ²² A.C.Jefferies – WKV/SR Special Report – murder of Reg. No. 6568 Karibagup 7th June 1951
- ²³ This circular is filed as item 280 – Bragge Reference Vol 9.
- ²⁴ Email exchange Bill Mitchell & Laurie Bragge July 2015 – now item 522 Bragge Research vol 9
- ²⁵ Aitape monthly report May 1946 Page 6
- ²⁶ Dreikikir Monthly Report September 1945
- ²⁷ Lumi Monthly report for November 1949 Gilbert OIC
- ²⁸ Lumi Monthly report for June 1950 Fienberg OIC
- ²⁹ Personal email communication from Bill Brown. Mr. Brown was a long standing Sepik kiap, who was later DC Bougainville

Sepik 3 Chapter 66

Transition From Military to Civil Administration – Wewak

The immediate post war history of the Wewak sub district¹:-

In terms of its status as an administrative centre, Wewak needs to be considered separately as the **headquarters** of the Sepik District and also **as a sub district** in its own right, alongside the other three sub districts; Aitape, Maprik and Angoram – within the Sepik District. The District Officer [later the District Commissioner] in Wewak also directly administered remote patrol posts as they were established.



At the time of the changeover from Military to Civil rule, Wewak was a scene of total devastation. After the recapture of the town, the 2/11th field hospital was set up on top of Wewak Hill on and around the site of the present Wewak Hotel. Wards were simply rows of tents stretching towards the site of the present Sepik Club, which was opened soon after by converting the army kitchen and mess, together with the purchase of a piano. The few soldiers remaining in Wewak were there to guard the 10,000 Japanese prisoner of war camp on Muschu Island, and to serve as members of the War Graves Detachment.

Wewak, like the other sub districts, had an ANGAU native hospital. Wewak native hospital was built on the site of the pre-war one. Sister Stock returned to Wewak in 1946 to re-start a European hospital. Dr. Gunther later required that the European and Native hospitals be amalgamated into a general hospital, which was built on the Boram peninsular. The Boram hospital was officially opened on 9th February 1962². The writer's eldest daughter, Louisa, was born there in 1973. My then wife Beverley mentioned that it was a bit like having a baby while camping out.

Life slowly returned to Wewak in the immediate post war period. Peter England arrived as the new District Labour Officer, Peter Flanagan as the Chief Clerk and Bill Textan as the new Police Officer. Jerry Stewart, a pre-war labour recruiter, returned and opened a trade store, but soon shifted his main centre of operations to the Aitape/Tadji area. Administration offices and housing were constructed on Wewak Hill. China Town was also quickly re-built at the base of Wewak Hill, with the Tang Mow family the first to return.

SVD Brothers Joe Czubeck and Gonzaga, who arrived in Wewak in the beginning of 1946, were probably the first missionaries to return. They worked on re-building the Catholic mission at Wirui, rather than on the old site of Mission Hill. The new Bishop, replacing Bishop Loerks, executed on the *Akikazi*, was Leo Arkfeld who was appointed in 1948.

War hero Police Sgt. Yauwiga¹ from the Wewak Inland believed that education was important, and he was the prime mover behind the school at Boram. He called for volunteers to help him build the school on the site where the present Kreer Community School stands.

As already stated Mr. H.R.Niall was the first post war District Officer in the Sepik. At sub district level, the staff postings lists indicate that PO G.Greathead was a/ADO of the Wewak sub district for the last three months of 1948. a/ADO C.W.Slattery took over from him and was there until February 1949. In 1952 F.V.P. Reiatano was in charge. Among the scant records of the early Wewak sub district is the documentation of two murders.

Wogeo Island murder investigation. A three day investigation in November 1949 was conducted by ADO Slattery. Two victims were named as Sami of Badjor village and Mog of Jug village. Eight suspects were arrested and taken back to Wewak. No further records were found.³

Five murders committed at Kandamain, Wewak Sub District. On 12th March 1951, a 28 year old woman called Prathe, three of her children [the family of Indewiano of Madjum village], together with an infant of another family from Madjum village were murdered with an axe or similar weapon near Kandamain village in the Boiken area, west of Wewak.

The investigation was conducted by CPO C.E. Terrell and four members of the RP&NGC. There was an eye witness, the mother of the infant, but her identification of the killer was considered unreliable. Two suspects were identified and brought back to Wewak to assist with the investigation as the evidence statements taken in the field were conflicting and constantly changed. It would take time for the apparent truth to come out. Mr. Terrell included the following final paragraph in his report

‘Motive: During questioning it came to light that for a long time there have been arguments between the Luluai of Wainjo and the Luluais of Kandamain, Madjum and Amakanja villages, over their respective spheres of influence. The Luluai of Wainjo is not popular among his people and during recent months there have been 30 migrations from Wainjo to Amakanja, which represents about 50% of the population of Wainjo.’

There had been several disputes between these villages which may have been what initiated these murders. There is no record on file to indicate the final outcome of the case.

The Wewak Maprik Road. By November 1949 the road was built from Maprik to the Wewak Sub District boundary at Wariamba village. A survey patrol by ADO Slattery was accompanied by war-hero Yauwiga, who was reported to have provided good assistance. The report noted that such a road would require major engineering as the route necessarily crossed the Prince Alexander Mountains. From the Wewak end the road was already built as far as the top of the range beyond the Sauri villages.⁴

This original Sepik road was a typical kiap road, built by local labour with picks and shovels. The much improved Sepik Highway of today basically follows the original route. Sauri was the strategic fallback position in January 1942 for Wewak residents awaiting the Japanese invasion.

The establishment of the Remote Stations of Telefomin and Green River :-

Telefomin is located in a Highland valley 4,800 feet above sea level at the headwaters of the Sepik River [Map 5], and Green River [Map 4] is located on a plain of dazzling white limestone gravel

¹ Yauwiga was blinded and lost his left hand when a hand grenade exploded unexpectedly. He had eye transplants in Canberra, making him the only blue eyed Sepik indigenous person!

close to the international border with West New Guinea and some 500 miles – approx. 805km - up the Sepik River from its mouth.

In relation to their establishment, Telefomin and Green River had three things in common. They are very remote, both had existing airstrips, and the establishment of the stations was under the direct control of the Sepik District Officer in Wewak⁵; unlike Dreikikir, Vanimo, Lumi and Kiarivu [Yangoru] as parts of sub district developments.

Telefomin's airstrip was originally built in 1936-37 by the Ward Williams expedition which came into Telefomin overland from Kiunga while prospecting for gold. The airstrip was upgraded in 1944-45 as an emergency landing strip after the capture of Hollandia. The establishment of Telefomin Patrol Post in 1948 is described in Sepik 4 Chapter 15.

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In 1938 Patrol Officer Jim Hodgekiss was attached to the Oil Search Limited petroleum exploration teams. They established Maimai Patrol Post and airstrip south of present day Nuku, and also in 1938, established an airstrip at a place known locally as "Abau" which is a few miles north of the Hauser River, a tributary of which is called "Green River".

During August, September and October 1950, PO A.C.Jefferies established the Green River Patrol Post at the site of the 1938 airstrip. Green River is a hot desolate place where almost nothing grows and where the sunlight reflects dazzlingly from the white limestone. For years it was reputed to be a 'punishment' station for wayward kiaps. The writer's first Sepik posting in 1964 was to Green River Patrol Post, which I was assured was now a strategic post on the border with Indonesia and no longer a punishment station. By chance in the late 1960s I conducted a patrol with Alan Jefferies and I asked him "*Why did you put the station there?*" He replied that he put it where he was told to put it.

Just a few hundred metres north of the airstrip and, from memory, easily accessible to it, in dense cool rainforest is a river terrace with soils which would presumably support vegetable gardens along the Faringi River. That is where the writer would have built the station.

End Notes Chapter 66

¹ Unless referenced otherwise the section on Wewak sub district is taken from L.Fleetwood 1984 P45-50

² Fleetwood L 1984 Page 47

³ C.W.Slatery. WK 31/1 Special Report WK2 – Wogeo Isl murder investigation – 8th November 1949

⁴ C.W.Slatery ADO – reference WK 31.1 of 8/11/1947 – NAA M35699, 1/2/2 P7 of 83

⁵ Personal communication from Bill Brown.

Sepik 3 Chapter 67

Transition from Military to Civil Administration – Maprik

Background of the Maprik sub district¹:-

The Maprik pre-war history of administration was very brief. Except for very occasional patrols in the early 1930s, a temporary police post at the Yamil gold field and a medical post in Maprik in the later part of 1937, there was no permanent administration set up until 1938. The cessation of government in 1941 did not permit much progress being made in that time. However, the continuous patrolling that was carried out, was assisted fundamentally by the fact that a good type of miner was resident in the area. The result was that a satisfactory degree of influence was attained.

On the other hand, work was at all times hampered by the actions of recruiters who took great numbers of raw natives from the area and whose methods necessitated many investigatory patrols and subsequent pacifications of unsettled natives.

It is impossible to make comparisons between Maprik and the Sepik and Aitape areas where there was a continuous history of more than 20 years administration and mission work pre-war. Mission activity in the Maprik sub-district had been practically nil. Despite losses in wartime and in regular influenza epidemics, the total population of the sub district was still very large. When the administration ceased in early 1942, the Maprik natives were left in a condition which in former days was classified in patrol reports as under partial influence. Thus, the advent of the war struck them at a particularly unfortunate time.

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The ANGAU operations associated with the Australian Army recapture of Maprik, the capture of Lieutenant General Adachi at Kiarivu and the eventual end of hostilities are described in earlier chapters. [Map 2]. The first Patrol Officer posted to Maprik post-war was J.E. Wakeford who was 30 years of age in 1946. He had seen military action in Milne Bay, and was mentioned in dispatches². Although he was serving as a PO continuously from February 1946 or earlier, his seniority with DDS&NA was not formalized until 8/10/1946.³

PO Wakeford walked overland from Wewak to Maprik to take up his new posting, arriving there on 23rd February 1946 – five days before the official change over to the civil administration. He met “Nielson” [presumably of ANGAU] coming from Maprik and there was mention of “Healey” who, according to Neilson, refused to walk out, and was still in Maprik with a month’s supply of rations to hand over to PO Wakeford.⁴

On a date simply recorded as “3/1946” [March] PO Wakeford sent the following to DO Niall :- *‘Hodgekiss [Jim Hodgekiss, pre-war and war-time PO of long standing who was then apparently working at Hayfield airstrip] tells me another PO was sent to Burui...was hoping it would be myself when an ADO comes here. I really like those Sepiks. They certainly gave me a great reception at Burui... I have never worked so hard in my life. All the best – regards John.’*

On 26th March District Officer sent instructions⁵ to PO Wakeford :-

'On 29th March, Mr. Herkes, Patrol Officer will leave here for Maprik by road and be posted to Maprik S/District as Patrol Officer to assist you. You will remain in charge, and Herkes will be your assistant. After his arrival you can commence patrolling. The first patrols will be through the Yamil-Kaboibis area. Do a thorough routine patrol and check out all the census figures. A supply of new [village] books¹ is being sent to you with this memo... Pay particular attention to the food supplies. It will be hard to ration the natives in your area, because of transport difficulties. But as many rations as is possible will be sent to Burui to keep you going...'

Writer's Note: Access to Maprik in 1946 was by three possible means. By air, but aircraft were not immediately available, by foot through the Prince Alexander Mountains, or by boat 210 miles up the Sepik River to Marui/ Pagwi and then by the pre-war vehicular road built in the late 1930s for the Yamil gold rush. Niall continues :-

'...If any villages within two days walk of Wewak require sustenance, they can walk in here and carry home their rations. The Administration does not supply cigarettes, and you will have to make your own arrangements with stores in Lae or Port Moresby to supply you. In the meantime, I am sending you 400 of my own, which you will have to repay later...

You can do one patrol, and Herkes can remain on the station to run things and he can go out on another trip when you return. The idea is to have one man more or less always on patrol... With regard to payment of police, you will have to wait until the Cash Book etc. has arrived and then the whole matter can be squared up. They should not need any money at present. If any of them are due or overdue to be paid out, send them in here and we will fix them up.

Sgd. H.R. Niall District Officer'

On 10th April PO Herkes wrote the following to the DO :-

Mr. Niall,

As Mr. Wakeford is out on a short patrol, I will send this note with the mail runner who will leave for Kiarivu this afternoon.

...There seems to be a lot of confusion out here re the boundaries of the sub district. Natives from the Burui area keep coming in and asking for sustenance. I have explained to them that their area will soon have a PO and to continue with normal work and await his arrival...A map showing boundaries would be invaluable.

On my trip through from the coast, I warned the natives in the Kiarivu area of the four Japs [who were apparently previously reported]. Also told them that the Japs were to be brought in and taken to Wewak. Haven't heard any more yet but will ask the mail runner to make inquiries of the PO stationed at Kiarivu...⁶

PO Wakeford had also sent in a query dated "3/1946" over the confusion as to who was administering Burui. His primary concern was with the activities and reported bad behaviour of two police left at Burui by "Lega", who is assumed to be ANGAU Lieutenant Tom Lega. PO Wakeford had brought the alleged offenders back to Maprik and replaced them with two of his own police.

¹ The "books" were tall, narrow books with very heavy brown cardboard covers. They were used to record the village population, person by person. Subsequent patrols would revise census from this record. Each patrolling officer would record relevant comments and instructions given to the village officials, so the next officer could follow up on the last. The Village Book was left with the Village Official to present to the next visiting officer.

Writer's Note: One of the allegedly offending police at Burui was Constable Nonguru, son of Luluai Kemerabi of Japandai, whose wartime exploits are described in earlier chapters.

On the 15th April DO Niall resolved the confusion over Burui ⁷:-

'...Burui is part Sepik River sub district which is controlled by Assistant District Officer Angoram. The boundary between the Maprik and Angoram sub districts is approximately mid-way between Nanginge and Jama villages. When Mr. ADO Bridge goes to Maprik he will bring a map with boundaries definitely marked.

There are four police out in the Maprik area looking for stray Japs. Send word for them to abandon the search and return here at once... Keep at the Burui road, and get it in as good an order as possible. A road master is allocated for the job, but I have no idea when we will get one. In the meantime we will maintain it to the best of our ability.

I will not be able to send a jeep on the next trip of the 1812, [1812 is a 40 ft. work boat] but it will go as soon as possible... Mr. Eichhorn² has just arrived and is going to Angoram in a day or two, where he will be posted as Native Labour Overseer, and he will be running the launch up to Burui etc...'

On the 19th April 1946, PO Wakeford sent this message to D.O. Wewak :-

'JWDS240 stop Am at present at Yangisaugu [approx. 7.5 miles East South East of Maprik and four miles due south of Yamil - Map 2] stop The natives have gone bush stop A house to house search revealed the following Jap equipment stop Rifles, bayonets, clothing, money, cartridges, hand grenades, mortar bombs stop These have all been destroyed stop In practically every house is a body in various stages of decomposition stop In some the bones are in garamuts in others on planks and some are buried inside houses approx.. six inches deep stop Stench and flies terrific stop

Please advise what action you advise taken stop Enquiries reveal these people were very pro-Jap stop This is the only place yet seen which has retained its pigs and poultry stop There is an abundance of food of all kinds stop A full day has been spent looking at gardens and work houses but as yet only 12 natives have been contacted stop there are no village officials stop The two previous officials have been imprisoned for killing [wartime] police boys.'

On 21st April PO Wakeford sent another message :-

*'JWDS25 Further to my JWDS 24 stop Yangisaugo lined [meaning censused] new book issued stop LL TT and MTT [Luluai, Tultul and medical Tultul] appointed pro tem stop Am awaiting your instruction re bodies in various stages of decomposition.'*⁸

DO Niall's telegram⁹ reply in scrawled hand writing instructed that the bodies were to be buried and to assess the times and causes and if possible the reasons for the deaths. Unfortunately the file does not contain the outcome of PO Wakeford's investigation.

Soon after this, there was a rapid turn-over of officers in charge at Maprik; ADO K.W.T. Bridge took over from PO Wakeford; then on 19th August 1946, ADO Bridge handed the station responsibility back to Wakeford. On 14th October 1946 Wakeford handed over to ADO J.J. Searson. There must have been other changes of which no record can be located, as Bridge again in February 1947 handed over to ADO J.J. Searson. In the January 1947 report Searson noted :-

² Eichhorn is Freddy Eichhorn [also spelt Eichorn] who features heavily in earlier chapters.

'Staff: Mr. Wakeford departed on 24th January 1947 on transfer to Aitape, from where he re-established Vanimo patrol post and further added to his reputation as a dependable kiap'

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The Maprik monthly reports for 1947 reflect a more stable administration of the Maprik sub district as staffing numbers increased. ADO K.W.T. Bridge took over from J.J. Searson in January 1947 and remained in charge for the rest of the year. Also at Maprik was Patrol Officer J.W. Rogers and European Medical Assistant, K. Williamson who, late in 1947, was replaced by L. Tomlinson.

Throughout 1947 all Sepik sub districts had constant problems with the serviceability of the station radio, and on the odd occasion the radios were not absent being repaired and were functional, the motorized battery charger required to maintain the batteries was not functional. In October 1947 Mr. Bridge noted, presumably in frustration :-

'The mail service is very good nowadays and it is suggested a radio set is not really needed here.'

Writer's Note: With today's reliance on instant communications, such a suggestion is horrifying; in today's world, if the computers are "down" businesses and individual despair as to how they can do their job. By comparison, and of necessity, officers in 1947 worked self-reliantly within the policy guidelines provided by circular instructions and submitted a report at the end of the month. In the event there was something controversial to report, there was time to put reports in the desk drawer and re-read it before sending, when emotions settled or later facts had come to light.

Gold Mining: World War 2 caused the cessation of the gold rush at Yamil east of Maprik on the Parchee River, also on the nearby Ulahau, Siling and Screw Rivers [Map 2]. Mining did not quickly resume post-war. In January 1947 Mr. and Mrs. W.G. Royal arrived by air from Wewak. They took up residence at Maprik while accommodation was erected on their mining lease on the Parchee River¹⁰. While waiting, they opened a trade store in Maprik.

Also in January 1947 Messrs Warren and Nichterlien, War Damage Commission representatives stayed a week to examine and assess war damage to mining properties on the Screw River and at Yamil. Increased interest in the gold field was noted in DO Niall's comments on ADO Maprik's May 1947 report :-

'With the large amount of cargo to be shipped for miners and others at Maprik we had arranged with MAL [Mandated Airlines] that we would only use charters for urgent cargo until they have cleared all existing charters. This should be completed this week and we will be able to meet your requirements.'

Maprik's July 1947 report noted that the only work in preparation for mining at that time was being done by Mr Boness, manager for Mr. R.R. Bell, and in August it was noted that Mr Boness had completed a very fine mining camp and a good labour quarters and a large food garden. In September Mr. R.R. Bell commenced mining operations at his Screw River claim.

Also in September, Mr. Royal was having his mining equipment carried from Marui [on the Sepik River] to Burui airstrip [six miles inland] for flying to Maprik. ADO Bridge reported in November that Mr. A. Corrigan passed through Maprik to Yamil to peg the mining lease formerly occupied by Mr. J. Thurston.

As expected a dispute arose over actions on the Thurston claim, which on December 3rd, upon the urgent request of Mr. Bell, agent for Mr. J. Thurston of Yamil, Patrol Officer Rogers

proceeded with him to the Yamil claim of Mr. Thurston to watch proceedings while he took possession of gold which was being mined by natives of Messrs. Macgregor and Corrigan from Thurston's lease. Mr Bell also stopped the natives working, pending a decision of the Warden's Court regarding the ownership of the lease. Also in December 1947 Mr W.G. Royal proceeded to his camp on the Parchee River and was preparing for mining operations. Mr Bell, by that time, was producing gold on the Screw River.

War Damage investigations, compensation payments and payment of pre-war labour entitlements. These were the major field tasks of the day; the immense aftermaths of war which would take years to correct. On this point ADO Bridge commented in Maprik's Feb. 1947 report :-

'...a striking example of the carelessness of the administration in making extensive monetary payments to natives without enacting compulsory provisions for savings or endeavouring to protect the native purchasers by controlling prices in some degree. This particularly applies to the unsophisticated peoples of this area...surely his initial contact with European business could be softened by some administrative effort.'

Not surprisingly these huge payments into the community draw the attention of local traders. The first mentioned was Cecil Ah Chee who opened his store in Maprik during February 1947. W.G. Royal, awaiting preparations on his gold mine, apparently found more reliable "gold" in retail trading in Maprik. A Mr. T. Woods also opened a trade store there. Mr. Ah Chee was also recruiting labour on behalf of Mr. Stewart and sending them out to Wewak.

In May 1947 ADO Bridge instructed PO Rogers to conduct a labour inspection of Maprik's trading enterprises. The inspection found that Mr. Ah Chee was at fault both in relation to rationing and the quarters provided for his employees. Instructions were issued for immediate compliance with Labour Regulations. Mr. Bridge's September 1947 report noted a welcome change in local buying attitudes :-

'The Shopkeepers, while still maintaining a good trade, report that natives are becoming used to the handling and the value of money and now insist upon the article required or wait until such is procurable, instead of, as formerly, buying anything else for the satisfaction of purchasing.'

Also by this time, at the recommendation of DDS&NA staff, a large proportion of the War Damage compensation paid out was being deposited into Commonwealth Savings Bank books. The War Damage process itself involved an initial investigation of claims, the documented results of which were sent to Wewak HQ for approval. Once approved, the claim documents were returned to the field for payment. In the August 1947 report Mr. Bridge stated :-

'At the risk of impertinence, it is requested please that some priority be given to Maprik war damage claims sent for approval. Few payments have been made for nearly two months and the natives of unpaid villages are ill-at-ease and very envious of their paid neighbours...'

In his December 1947 report Mr. Bridge added :-

'The delays to investigation and payment of war damage tend to irritate the natives who consider that Wewak is withholding their money. The work yet to be done is immense and it is obvious that the Director DDS&NA has no knowledge of the extent of the job and the timing and detailed care necessary for the performance...two to three days are necessary in each village, and then there will be late comers.'

Native Affairs: Apart from issues involving natives as described above, there were three inter-related issues recorded in Maprik's 1947 reports:- 1/ the re-construction and consecration of

the institution of the traditional churches of the people, the haus tambarans, 2/ a movement to eradicate “Black Magic”, and 3/ evidence of cargo cult activity.

1/ The re-construction and consecration of the institution of the haus tambarans. Mr. Bridge in his July 1947 report stated :-

‘The re-construction of the haus tambarans in the sub district awaited the restoration of housing and gardens but is now in full swing and nightly ceremonies are held in this connection. At present great structures are being built in the villages of Apangai, Waigakum, Kumbungwa and others.’

2/ The movement to eradicate “black magic”¹¹

‘The very settled condition which has lasted for some months appears to have ended...an intense wave of black-magic purging is passing through the sub-district. Many natives are convinced that black-magic “poison” is the root of all their troubles and also prevents them attaining the advancement of the white men. In many conversations, they have explained that they are aware that they cannot attain education, wealth, power, industrial and agricultural advancement immediately, but what they can do is remove the curse of the witchcraft which causes the stagnation.

It was first thought that the movement which is driven mainly by police, ex-ANGAU, AIB, NGIB men together with leading Catechists and returned labourers was a result of increased mission pressure from the But area. The mission influence is very definite but, I think it is not as great as the influence of leading natives of Lae, Madang, Wewak and Aitape who have had good war records [and therefore wide and favourable recognition]. Returning labourers, police on leave and a large native mail keep members well informed of progress in other districts.

The chief ‘apostles’ all appear to be good men and earnestly desirous of working for general native advancement. The leaders are too well informed – many have been to Australia – to be known as a “cargo” unsettlement, having seen the actual manufacture of meat, vehicles etc. They do not subscribe to the former ‘cargo adherents’ belief in the manufacture of these items by their ancestors and subsequent fraudulent appropriation by white men.

The officer in charge at Yangoru reports meetings in his villages and Mr. Fienberg [PO Lumi, which was then part of Aitape sub district] states that it is all through the Aitape villages he had visited. The abolition of black-magic is unfortunately accompanied by the denouncement of haus tambarans and native rings [valuables] etc. Also garden magic appears to come under the ban. The women in many villages have been induced to give up the materials that induce abortions and others which prevent them having children.

It is known that the Missions, particularly from the But coast, have been conducting an active campaign against the institution of the haus tambaran and it is noted that some movement leaders are ardent converts. On the other hand, the natives themselves say they wish to become healthy, numerous and powerful and able to stand up to foreign – not necessarily European interference – there seems at present no hostility to the white race.

One unfortunate feature is that natives are travelling from village to village – often at the request of the villages visited, and expounding the aims of the new movement with a fanaticism

which resembles mania. Many have developed that 'look in the eye' which always seems to accompany fanaticism, religious bigotry or "high ideals."

It is feared that the movement, though of apparent goodwill to natives and no actual hostility to Europeans, will have to be slowed down or it will advance beyond its original aims. When advised to take their time and work for a slow but steady improvement in native conditions, the exponents reply that they haven't the time to lose and that, if they do not succeed in a quick conversion of the masses, the 'Old Guard' of reactionaries in the villages will reform and will wipe them out with sorcery...

We have endeavoured to guide the movement in its action against black magic and all have been advised to hasten slowly whatever the consequences. They have been advised to keep their haus tambarans and to respect the harmless and honoured beliefs of their fathers in village social and economic life. In an effort to maintain existing institutions which are not really harmful, Mr Patrol Officer Rogers has been attending the inauguration ceremonies of several haus tambarans – at the invitation of the village leaders. Some very fine ceremonies were observed – particularly at Bongiora and Bainyik villages.

The despatch from Wewak of a consignment of salt was welcomed for trade purposes and we regretted to hear that this item will no longer be available. Having in mind the value of salt to these people, Mr Rogers supervised the clearing out of the ancient salt spring at Bongiora and the construction of a rough filter and protecting fence.'

It was noted in the November monthly report for Maprik that the :-

'...unsettlement caused last month by native fanatics fiercely anxious to rid the world community of witchcraft immediately has subsided.'

3/ Cargo Cult. – Reports from November and December 1947 :-

'A report ...natives of Wosera have been caught up in a "cargo" restlessness and have ceased garden work, decorated their houses and are carrying out ceremonies pending the arrival of the cargo...the upset originated in Tolombi [Torembei] village...to date the movement is very slight. Cargo cult influence from Torembei is worrying Wosera and south Maprik – ADO investigated – no further trouble is expected.

Catechist Arimes of Torembei has arranged the "resurrection" of a native in his house and many natives have come under his influence. Arimes has reportedly sent emissaries to villages stating that he has received vast sums of money from his forebears and that they were awaiting developments.'

Writer's Note: I see Mr. Bridge's documentation above as an important foundation for what this book seeks to describe. Here we have the Abelam people of Maprik in an early stage of contact with the outside world, already seeking to come to grips with their future. To advance, they decided they first needed to remove what they saw as the primary impediment to advancement – black magic. However, as they and the Maprik DDS&NA staff quickly discovered - where does "black magic" begin and end? Are haus tambarans included? And what of garden magic, traditional medicines, abortion, birth control or human fertility rituals?

All these things were part of traditional Abelam religious beliefs and the agents of change with whom the Abelam were dealing, had very different ideas to guide the people. The Christian missions sought to eradicate traditional religious practices as “paganism” and idolatry, and replace them, in this case, with the Catholic version of Christianity. Time would demonstrate that in most Sepik societies the “acceptance” of Christianity was akin to the application of a coat of clear varnish over the pre-existing traditional religion beliefs – not a clear-cut and problem-free replacement of them.

The administration, as an agent of change, was seeking to develop a stable indigenous community in which traditional beliefs, that were not repugnant to Western law, were recognised as PNG “Common Law.” This however was not accepted by the people free of interpretation through the filter of traditional beliefs either. The best example of well-intentioned European explanations of the error of the people’s ways relates to their cargo cult beliefs. From the people’s perspective - they **knew** that the ancestors produced the cargo for them and that the white people diverted the cargo for their own use. Europeans explanations were discounted as simply vested interests in not being willing to share the cargo. The “truth”, as always, proved to be less important than strongly held beliefs.

Maprik Sub District: The post-war establishment of Kiarivu [Yangoru] Police Post.

Patrol Officer P.K. Moloney, recently of Marui on the Sepik River, arrived in Maprik on 6th March 1947 in order to establish a Police Post at Kiarivu. He spent the remainder of March engaged with signing on of native labour, investigating war damage claims and pre-war wage claims.¹² The April 1947 report noted that he had almost completed the buildings for his post at Kiarivu and had commenced village census and war damage investigations.

Mr. Moloney reported that the local people have co-operated well and that Paramount Luluai Mariningi of Kumun has great influence locally. In commenting on Maprik’s April report DO Niall ordered :-

‘Instruct PO Moloney to complete as much of the war damage claims as possible in his area because unless more staff is allotted, we will not be able to maintain that post when he proceeds on leave at the end of June.’

In the Maprik May 1947 report K.W.T. Bridge ADO stated :-

‘Kiarivu Police Post is now well established. Mr. Moloney has been very active in native administration, the investigation of war damage claims and station and aerodrome construction. There is no doubt concerning the enthusiasm of the Kiarivu people for their own post and if it is at all possible, I would recommend the continued staffing of Kiarivu...’

Patrol Officer L.E. Foster was posted to Kiarivu to take over from P.K. Moloney in July 1947. ADO Bridge went on to report :-

‘...I noticed that in enquiring about Kiarivu that the name Yangauru was always used...The natives said that the Luluai of Kiarivu village east of the post gained unfair advantage...the name of the land and the adjacent stream is Yangauru...’ Soon after this the Police Post was renamed Yangoru.

Meanwhile upon arriving at his new posting in July 1947, Mr. Foster was instructed to identify the boundary between the Wewak and Maprik Sub Districts. This task was to be a joint task for him and Patrol Officer R. Bentinck, but Mr. Bentinck had returned to Wewak. Mr. Foster continued on with his patrol and quickly tuned into the thinking of the villagers :-

'...when these natives think of travelling, they think mainly in terms of going to the coast, rather than inland. The coast has provided rings [traditional shell wealth made of giant clam shells], salt and the sight of the sea and in recent years there have been ships too, and stores and fellow villagers to visit...the country inland, by comparison, had not very much to offer them.

Now it is suggested they go to Kiarivu instead of Wewak and it is possible they imagine that this will mean they will be cut off from all of the attractions of the coast... At Wewak they are able to see the District Officer, or failing him, the Assistant District Officer, where Kiarivu offers a Patrol Officer only.'

The boundary recommendation was made, and a map drawn and submitted to ADO Maprik who commented in his report to the District Officer :-

'I agree with the boundary line just west of Andara village, but native dissatisfaction will be general and long sustained. You will recall that Mr. D.O. Townsend would not recognise sub district boundaries, particularly as regards the Maprik people.

As you are aware all natives prefer to deal with the District Officer rather than a subordinate. I think the PO at Kiarivu [as it then was] will have difficulty in trying to uphold his boundaries.¹³

L.R. Foster remained at Yangoru until February 1949, M.J. Denehy [1950], W.M. Stokes [1951], C.G. Day until April 1952. Yangoru was the not manned again until December 1954 when PO J.M. Wearne took over.

The destruction of Wosera haus tambarans.

As described in Sepik Book 2 *The Winds of Change 1886 – 1941*, it was common practice for missions to destroy, or cause to be destroyed, haus tambarans and associated tradition sacred objects, which they regarded as pagan idols. Sepik Book 2 quotes cases at Warapu, Vokau near Aitape and the Bien River villages near Angoram. During the Sepik campaign, as described in Sepik Book 3 *The Sepik at War*, we noted that ANGAU's Captain Cole requested Australian senior military officers to try, where possible, to preserve rather than burn haus tambarans in their engagement of Japanese troops in the villages.

In the Wosera area south of Maprik, Father Blasig of Kunjingini mission apparently sought to take the pre-war mission stand against the haus tambarans and 'pagan idols'. John Wearne, who was PO in charge of Yangoru in late 1954 takes up the story :-

'Father Blasig of Kunjingini had burnt numerous Wosera haus tambarans not long before, but in the Supreme Court he got off. I still remember frequently walking on what had been religiously significant wooden carvings relegated to fill swampy parts of village tracks. I think in Maprik language [the carvings] were called 'meru.'¹⁴

While priest Blasig escaped conviction, his court case no doubt served as a shot across the bows of any future mission plans to destroy haus tambarans.

End Notes Chapter 67

¹ Based upon a handover report dated 22 February 1948 by ADO Maprik K.W.T.Bridge item, 532 Bragge Reference Vol 17.

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- ² PNGAA.net Vale 23/7/1 69 years 1987 died aged 69 years.
- ³ The “Stud book” – DDS&NA Permanent Staff list as at 30th June 1952. Bragge Sepik ref. Vol 17 item 528
- ⁴ Wakeford J.E. hand written letter dated 22nd February 1946 to DO Niall – NAA M3569 1/2/2 PP 42-43 of 83
- ⁵ DO Niall to PO Wakeford 26/3/1946 NAA: M3569, 1/2/2 P82 of 83
- ⁶ PO Herkes 10/4/46 NAA M 3569 1/2/2 Pages 50-51 of 83. No record has been located as to who the OIC at Kiarivu was early in 1946.
- ⁷ DO Niall NAA M 3569 1/2/2 Page 49 of 83
- ⁸ PO Wakeford NAA M 3569 1/2/2 Pages 47-48 of 83
- ⁹ DO Niall NAA M 3569 1/2/2 Page 45 of 83
- ¹⁰ Maprik Monthly report January 1947.
- ¹¹ Maprik Monthly report October 1947
- ¹² Maprik monthly report – March 1947
- ¹³ K.W.T.Bridge reference *Maprik – Wewak Sub District Boundary* 14th August 1947
- ¹⁴ Personal communication with J.M.Wearne by email – see item 415 Bragge Reference volume 13.

Sepik 3 Chapter 68 Transition from Military to Civil Administration – Angoram

Immediately following the Japanese surrender, ANGAU Lieutenant Monk was sent overland in company with an army medical man, Lieutenant J. Goreman, WO2 P.F. Fienberg and 10 members of the Royal Papua constabulary, through Japanese held territory to Angoram [Map 1] to inform the Japanese officers there that the war was over. Lieutenant Monk remained as ANGAU officer in charge at Angoram and among other duties he investigated the Timbunke massacre and received the eleven Indian POWs survivors at Angoram.

From March 1946 the Sepik River and its hinterlands were administered from Angoram by ADO R. Ormsby, who, not long before, had been with ANGAU as a District Officer at Aitape. The first Angoram monthly report on file was that of August 1946.¹ This report is lengthy so only the main points are summarized here :-

Justice:

'A meeting was conducted in Wewak between ADO Ormsby, DO Niall and Justice Phillips of the Supreme Court. A major topic of discussion was the management of indictable offences committed during the Japanese occupation. Much effort had already gone into settling issues that occurred during the Japanese occupation.

The response was reported as being better in the Lower Sepik region where the natives have always been of a more amenable disposition than those further upstream. The upper river natives, mainly of Iatmul tribal heritage, were and are proud, arrogant and quarrelsome people...it was not unexpected therefore, to find that with the withdrawal of the pre-war administration and the lax control exercised by the Japanese that these natives took full advantage of the opportunity to indulge in many barbarities²

In the case of the Timbunke massacre, which saw over 90 Timbunke men machine gunned and their widows and daughters distributed to enemy villages as concubines, it was felt at one stage that some of the ringleaders could be advantageously charged before the Supreme Court, but on more mature consideration it has been realized that much of the evidence available against them would be inadmissible in a court of law. There is only one surviving eye-witness of the whole affair, an aged man, who states that everything happened so quickly that he is unable to accurately identify who participated in the massacre and who did not.

To charge offenders and have them acquitted would have a bad effect on the native administration in the area. On the other hand, to allow them to go unpunished and remain in their villages would lead to discontent and reprisals. The report suggested deportation of the ring leaders; another suggestion was the resolution of issues by payment of compensation.'

Pre-war labour payments:

The report stated that staff duties during August were mainly involved with the payment of pre-war wages to over 1,000 labourers and that the total from that sub-district was eventually expected to eventually exceed 3,000 payees.

In his October 1946 report ADO Ormsby noted:

'The upper river natives [primarily the IATMUL] are settling down quite well now and although there is still a definite undercurrent of ill-feeling over offences committed during the Jap

occupation, they have accepted the statement that these matters are still under review and there will be a policy in due course...'

Health:

There has been a very marked and definite improvement since the 28th of February 1946, when the civil administration recommenced. During this period 2,760 natives were admitted to the hospital...The results of the Japanese occupation can be clearly seen from the fact that 65% of these admissions were sores and skin cases; detailed percentages being:

Yaws	36%
Tropical Ulcers	12%
Scabies	17%
Pneumonia	9%
Dysentery	3%
Other	23%

Far more has been achieved in the period of civil administration than was thought possible at first, and in some aspects affairs are as satisfactory as pre-war.³

War Damage Compensation:

Due to lack of forms until and including October 1946 a start has not been made on War Damage insurance, but it is expected that this will be done in November.⁴ The January 1947 report noted that a plan had been developed for war damage investigations. This involved all claims being settled in the village. Lists were being checked to ensure the natives were on the right track. Foreign claims [i.e. from other parts of the Territory] were not being recorded as it would be extremely difficult to obtain accurate corroboration of the amounts claimed.

Many claims were surprisingly moderate, others excessive. One method used was for each native to record his claim and hand it over. Later he would be asked to re-write or simply restate it. It was surprising how many discrepancies occur. Work had commenced on dividing the sub-district into set census areas.⁵

The Wogamush Incident:

In late 1946, ADO Angoram found his attention directed to the Upper Sepik where a War Graves party had been attacked near the junction of the April and Sepik Rivers. This matter and the legal issues that followed from it are covered separately in Sepik 4 Chapter 2 and Sepik 5 Chapter 2.

Future administration:

ADO Ormsby spent time at Marui mission station with a view to obtaining land for the establishment of a Government station, including a native hospital, but the old mission site was so badly overgrown that he was unable to do a proper assessment at that time.⁶

As ADO Ormsby indicated the "Upper River natives"; referring primarily to the Iatmul, were the ones who would require the most of his staff's attention to be brought back under administration control. It was therefore most desirable to establish a patrol post in their midst.

Mr. Ormsby's interest in Marui made a lot of sense. It was the only flood free high ground on the Sepik River that was central to the Iatmul villages. The Pre-war Marui Catholic Mission station had

been manned by Father Hansen, a priest of German origin and Father Cruysberg from Holland. Father Hansen had not survived the war.

Father Cruysberg was evacuated with the nuns from Marienberg via Timbunke, up the Karawari and Maramuni Rivers to Wabag and on to Benabena. Lieutenant Joe Searson had led that patrol, ably assisted by Sgt. Danny Leahy. [Chapter 25]

In May 1947 patrol instructions were issued to PO K. Kershaw to go to Marui [Map 2] per the work boat *Osprey*. Kershaw's instructions read :-

'If approval is obtained from Moresby, it is quite possible that the whole or portion of Marui mission may be taken over for the government station. In the meantime temporary buildings for yourself and police may be erected. To facilitate matters please make a sketch map of the mission lease. Local natives should be able to indicate boundaries.'

PO Maloney was then issued patrol instructions on the 16th of September 1946 to go to Marui and relieve Kershaw, who had requested a transfer. Maloney was also instructed to keep building a mosquito proof room for himself and his medical assistant, construct a native hospital and to continue obtaining building materials for other government buildings... and

'...in the near future, Mr. W.A. Macgregor [pre-war gold miner and explorer, then serving as a Patrol Officer] will arrive from Wewak to carry out certain special tasks in the upper Sepik area. While he is in the area he will act nominally as OIC Marui, though most of the responsibility will fall on you. Mr. Macgregor, while in the area will probably use Marui as a base, and he will be instructed to check upon your work and give advice or instruction as he may see fit.'

Patrolling and contacts with village people:

Angoram's December 1946 monthly report noted :-

'The 1946 Christmas celebrations in Angoram were attended by 5,000 people from as far afield as Japandai and the Madang border. This was achieved without incident.

Although patrolling in this period was less than desired due to the staff shortage and war damage work, contact had been re-established with the whole of the controlled area, the most difficult being the villages inland from Timbunke.⁷

A June/July 1946 patrol from Marui Patrol Post.⁸

Patrol officer Kershaw investigated reports of sixteen female deaths at Yakiap and Sarum during the Japanese occupation. His patrol report stated that a separate report concerning these deaths had been submitted, but that report was not located. These killings are the subject of Sepik Chapter 39 *The multi-faceted Problem of Sorcery May 1943 =>*. The facts were that Gauimeri of Yamuk, a village official appointed by the Japanese, took it upon himself to authorise an orgy of rape, torture and murder of 26 women who were accused of sorcery. In the context of the present story there were two aspects of note concerning the themes of Sepik Book 2 *The Waves of Change* and Sepik Book 4 *Coming to Grips with the Modern World*.

1. When the Australian Administration stopped head-hunting by the public hanging of convicted murderers, the killing did not stop. The difference was that killing was no longer done overtly; now it was done covertly by sorcery. The Sepik people believed killing was killing and should

bring the same penalties from the administration. This was not seen to happen before the Japanese arrived. The perceived failing of the Australian civil administration was rectified by Gauimeri and others during the Japanese occupation.

2. With the Japanese gone, there was a spate of killing by selected Japanese appointed village officials who used their positions for personal gain, lust and gratification. Gauimeri was not a victim of this as his cause against sorcery was apparently judged by Sepik opinion to be just. Most of what appears in Chapter 39 was from my interview with Gauimeri in 1972/3⁹

Angoram patrol No 5/1946-47 from Marui by patrol officer P.K. Maloney visited parts of the Manambu and Sawos language groups over five days in November 1946. His report reads in part :-¹⁰

The villages of Yau'umbak, Avatip, Yindungei, Jiginimbu and Torembei are all in possession of their village books. The Japandai village book was taken by Mr. J.L. Taylor during the evacuation.

These villages were subject to bombing raids at different times but the death toll from this was only slight. The main cause of deaths was the lack of medical treatment and minor squabbles with those natives whom the Japanese appointed as officials. [Chapter 39 suggests 'minor squabbles' is a major understatement]

Period 27th Oct. 1937 to 25th June 1941¹¹

Village	Births	Deaths
Tolombi (Torembei)	14	20
Yingundei	14	10
Jiginimbu	10	9

Period 21st January 1941 to 28th November 1946

Tolombi (Torembei)	46	34
Yingundei	20	26
Jiginimbu	15	99

Forty men were listed as indenture labourers in 1940. Of these 11 served with AIB. [Allied Intelligence Bureau] or NGIB. [New Guinea Infantry Battalion] and five with ANGAU. [Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit]. 12 were trapped in Rabaul, 10 died while away from the village and two are married and living in Namatanai.' [in New Ireland].

Native Affairs:

There was friction between returned indentured labour and the ex-Jap officials, although no specific cases were mentioned.

Extension of administration influence throughout the Kwoma & Nukuma areas: [Map 2 – North West of Ambunti]

A January 1947 patrol from Marui by patrol officer P.K. Maloney visited Waskuk in the Kwoma area. His report reads in part :-¹²

'The first reasonably complete [Kwoma] census was in 1941. The area was initially contacted in 1928¹³. Many new names were entered during the current census. There were migrations between Waskuk and Bangwis who were one group, but who have now more or less settled down as two villages.

The majority of those listed as "outs" [i.e. migrated out] from Waskuk have gone to the small hamlet of Melawei which was formed on the return of NGIB. [New Guinea Infantry Battalion] and indentured labourers. It is mainly a family concern, most of the people being from one family group... These are still listed in the Waskuk village book although all the names have been listed together in order to facilitate the census check.

The high number of deaths in proportion to the whole population was due to lack of health facilities during the war. There were thirty nine [39] indentured labourers [absent at work] from Waskuk, Bangwis and Urumbanj in 1941. Of these ten[10] died away from home. All the rest returned except one married in Lae and another unaccounted for.

When initially contacted in 1928 these people lived in small scattered family groups on the many ridges around the area. By 1941 the majority had come together to form the villages patrolled. During the war these were subjected to strafing raids and the people fled to the bush. Now they are starting to return to the villages and are rebuilding.

The house style is floor on the ground and eaves reaching almost to the ground. They are fifty feet long and twenty feet wide, each housing two families. Now they are rebuilding we may be able to make some improvements. Some people are reluctant to return as they still fear strafing.'

Health:

During the war the old custom of placing the dead on a platform to rot outside the house [after which the bones were buried] was practiced. People were warned of penalties if this continued. Cemeteries were marked out.

Native Affairs:

[Kwoma] people unlike the main river people [Iatmul], are timid. They usually go naked, but for the patrol all wear clothes, all spotless and most being worn for the first time. They were left alone by the Japanese apart from having to supply food.

These people do not visit Marui as they get little assistance from the River people. [The Kwoma "Hill People" traditionally did not use canoes.]'

Mr. Maloney's report makes mention of swamp people living to the north and north west [Numau Ablatak] and the fact they were contacted by patrol officer Moi in 1941 and they were reported as being interested to see another European. Maloney's patrol was followed up a year later by Mr. Gilbert's Angoram PR 10/47/48 which mentioned all Kwoma groups including Melawei. Gilbert's report stated in part :-

'Villages for purposes of defence are built on the tops of the highest mountains and consequently tracks are of a precipitous nature.

Yelogu was contacted and censused. They had not come into contact with outside influence until early last year.

*People would like to go out as indentured labour but are fearful of being trapped in distant places if another war came.'*¹⁴

The next patrol into this area was during September and October 1949 – Ambunti Patrol 2/1949-50 to Numau Ablatak by J. Cahill. It reported in part :-

Ambunti incident:

A native from near Ablatak speared in Amaki and a Waskuk native on Ambunti station (neither killed). Upon completion of his jail term he was returned to his area.

Initial census:

Initial census was conducted of Nageri, Kawaka, Amaki, Ambuken, Ablatak and Biananumbu.

Native Affairs:

The last raid between Amaki and Ablatak was in 1946, neither group wants to fight anymore, but fear has driven Amaki close to Kawaka and Ablatak from its old site to a site to be closer to Ambuken.

*Ambuken and Tongwinjamb guides deceived the patrol, saying the old site of Masiangana was Ablatak. The same afternoon after three hours walk the haus tambaran of the Ablataks was sighted, the Ablataks were not hostile and had run away... They were carrying spears and pig skin shields. The patrol camped in the village and the next day people came in and accompanied the patrol back to Ambuken. Amakis taken to Ambuken could not be encouraged to go into the Ablatak area, although the Ambuken welcomes them at Ambuken.*¹⁵

Angoram PR 5/48/49 Numau Ablatak by J. Cahill and Ambunti Patrol 2/1951-2 led by Orwin spent 18 days in Waskuk, Numau-Ablatak, Yessan and the Upper Sepik areas.

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Meanwhile ADO's planning for the administration of the Middle Sepik continued :-

'MARUI. A plan was drawn up and submitted to Father Cruysberg who is to return to Marui in due course. Although no agreement had been reached about obtaining the land, a native hospital was under construction. Three wards, a dressing room, cook house and medical orderly quarters had all been built. In addition a police post had been established there which was operating well under patrol officer P.K. Maloney.'

Then messages were received that the land acquisition by the administration was strongly contested by the Catholic Mission. It seemed that ADO Ormsby's admirable progressive thinking followed more the military logic of 'achieve the objective' than the civilian rights of title to property that was aligned with civil administration. The report stated that in light of mission opposition alternate suggestions for the establishment of a patrol post included :-

1. AMBUNTI. [Map 2] *The site was originally selected in the course of an investigation as the local community was being brought under control. It has an excellent defensive position and good river access, but it is in a sparsely populated area and it is 30 miles from border of the uncontrolled area (Yessan).*

2. *BURUI*. [Map 2] *Main advantage – it has an aerodrome. A good place from which to administer the inland Sepik plains, but being six miles from the river, a bad place from which to administer the river [Iatmul & Manambu populations] and the Chambri Lakes.*
3. *PAGWI*. [adjacent to *MARUI*] *All the advantages of *MARUI* and most of *BURUI*'s advantages but it floods – OK as a temporary police post, but not a permanent station.*
4. *If the objective is to open up the Upper Sepik the best station site would be YAMBON or YESSAN [Map 2] – both of which have elevated flood free land.*

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Commerce 1 - Recruiting. The January 1947 report also noted that Mr. E.D. Robinson [‘Sepik Robbie’ – pre-war District Officer now retired in Angoram – See Sepik 2 Chapter 44] recruited forty labourers from the Upper River for the Production Control Board [PCB] in Rabaul. If he continues to recruit for PCB they may provide a regular shipping service between Rabaul and either Angoram or Marienberg. Also BDG was noted as obtaining recruits as quickly as they could handle them.

Commerce 2 - The start of the Sepik Crocodile Skin industry. In May 1947 Mr. N. Giunio, a crocodile hunter arrived. He was also representing a Sydney tanning firm. He planned to kill the crocodiles himself or to arrange the purchase of skins from local natives. The price of skins varies from one shilling to one shilling and nine pence per inch; the measurement being across the body [belly] skin, exclusive of the horny ridges on the back. The skin of a ten foot crocodile could be worth approximately £2.

Mr. Giunio obtained some specimens and reports that the skins are of good quality and free from skin disease which sometimes occurs in crocodiles living in fresh water.

Commerce 3 - A sawmill was operating in Angoram from 1948 onwards.

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When Mr. Ormsby went on leave from Angoram, he was relieved by Mr. A.R. Haviland whose October 1947 report for Angoram mentioned :-

‘There appears to be a serious outbreak of the Cult. What there is appears to be confined to the area known as No 2 Porapora. This is the part bordering the Bogia sub district boundary [of the Madang District]. See Map 1.

It appears to have its origin in propaganda by a Rai Coast native called Yali. This is a little confusing as some say Yali’s propaganda was confined to talks on the betterment of village hygiene and [word obscured].’

Ex Sgt. Yali, like Sergeants Yauiga and Peta Simugon, was a highly respected war hero [Chapter 40]. His history and that of cargo cultism in the Madang district is well recorded in Peter Lawrence’s book *Road Bilong Cargo* – Melbourne University Press 1964.

‘Others claim that although Yali did not come within the Angoram sub district, his talk drifted through to this effect. “There was to be no cessation of crop planting and all food

supplies were to be maintained. On Saturdays all natives were to prepare food for feasting on Sundays. The prepared food was to be placed on tables built for the purpose and all natives [including women] were to take part in the feasting. This was calculated to eventually produce some response from the “ded man” or dead ancestors who would cause a spirit to produce motor cars, aeroplanes, tinned meat, rice, etc.etc.etc. There does not appear to be any other ceremony connected with the cult but basically it is the same as other outbreaks in other parts of the Territory.

The [village] officials were addressed, and details of past outbreaks explained and their abortive endings stressed. A lengthy description of factories and the origins of goods of European manufacture explained. They were further exhorted upon their return to their villages to quash the cult and very shortly a patrol will visit the area.

There does not appear to be any particular leader and after having them face the flag for half an hour to impress upon them the outward and visible sign of the government they were sent home. The Porapora area will be closely watched.’

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While the abandonment of the Administration interest in Marui is not documented as such, it appears to have happened at the end of February or beginning of March 1947, as the last OIC at Marui, Patrol Officer P.K. Moloney, was posted to Maprik on the 6th of March ‘47.

Of the alternative sites to Marui discussed by ADO Ormsby, Ambunti was chosen. In Angoram’s monthly report of October 1947 ADO A.R. Haviland noted that the erection of buildings at Ambunti was progressing and the shortage of sawn timber would be addressed by establishing a pit-sawing operation.

PO Gilbert’s Angoram Patrol Report No 3/48-49 of mid-1948 reported :-

‘Ambunti Station For the past 10 months work has been solely confined to the construction of the airstrip, which for small aircraft purposes is nearly complete. The present length is approximately four hundred yards.’¹⁶

The last Angoram monthly report on file at Ambunti, dated January 1949. The first Ambunti Patrol Post monthly report on file is dated April 1949. The Catholic mission at Marui was re-established by American priest Father Kowalski. In 1964 a Patrol Post was opened adjacent to Marui at flood prone Pagwi.

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It appeared that OIC Ambunti - Patrol Officer Gilbert had a wide roving assignment while based at Ambunti. We note in Chapter 65 that he was listed as patrolling the Wapei tribal region and used what was to become Lumi Patrol Post as a base camp.

Mr. Gilbert also conducted a special patrol in early 1950 to the uncontrolled area between Yessan and the Frieda River, While No copy of the report has been located, ADO Ormsby’s comments on the report¹⁷ reveal :-

‘The object of this patrol was to return 10 natives from this area, who had been employed at Angoram for 12 months and to obtain further volunteers to work at Angoram. Both matters have been successfully carried out.

The ten natives returned came from the villages of Iniok and Tauri. As far as is known neither of these villages has ever been visited by a patrol, but during the last 12 months there have been several successful contacts. The bulk of the repatriates' wages had been held back from them during their employment, and before leaving, they were given special assistance in purchasing a majority of useful trade lines rather than worthless rubbish. All of them can now speak a little Pidgin English, and should be extremely valuable for future administration...

In addition...good contact was made with natives of the Wogamush group – as Mr. Gilbert points out a marked contrast to his previous visit in November 1946. These people are well on the way to being brought under complete control.’ [This “marked contrast” refers to the “Wogamush incident” – see Sepik 4 Chapter 2.]

Angoram monthly report May 1949 – very successful patrol in *MV Poseidon* as far as Yellow River. Most interesting feature – discovery of unexpectedly large population between Kubka and the mouth of the May [River]...very little contact with these people pre-war. Some brought back to Angoram as labour in order to teach them pidgin

Ambunti monthly report June 1949 Wogamush people arrived in mourning and were assured that their children who had gone to Angoram were really OK and not dead...some went on to Angoram to see their relatives.

Ambunti monthly report July 1949 Another 150 yds. [Ambunti airstrip construction] is all but ready to use – total length will be 700 yards. The Norseman [aircraft] is handling the strip very well

The Wogamush people have told Brugnowi they have young men who want to be recruited. They have also left some feathers and personal belongings of the people killed to show they are willing to forget past animosity towards Lower Sepik natives who transported the Japs.

Chu Leong is the main actor in heavy recruiting over recent months

Ambunti monthly report for May & June 1951 - reported that European Medical Assistant [EMA] Mr. Creighton¹ was at present clearing a site for hospital buildings and this work is going ahead very rapidly. The arrival of the EMA here has been a very decided asset to the station and the natives have all expressed their delight and shown their willingness to assist in the erection of the hospital. In July - excellent progress has been made by Mr. Creighton on the new hospital site and patients are now located there; the old wards on the edge of the airstrip have now been vacated.

‘Natives from Avatip, Malu, Yambon, Yessan, Brugnowi, Waskuk and Bangwis come in to work on the new hospital. In August - a most unfortunate set back occurred...when the hospital was destroyed by fire on 14th of the month. Mr. Creighton was burning off some rubbish when gusty winds fanned the fire which caught the hospital wards. In a short space of time they were blazing fiercely. The patients became panic stricken and made no attempt to put out the fire.

By the time I arrived at the hospital about 10 minutes-walk away from the main station there was nothing that could be done except wait until the fire burnt itself out and then attempt to salvage whatever we could. All the food and medical supplies were lost as were some tools. A full report as to the loss of the stores, as per Treasury form C.I.48 has already been made out and forwarded. The hospital has now been re-built and the situation is returned to normal’ (written on 6th September 1951).

¹ Mentioned in Chapter 65 during his earlier postings at Vanimo and Dreikikir

Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited

[BGD] In October 1946 was reported to be prospecting in the Korosameri River area. Their vessel *KAURI* was making regular recruiting trips in the Sepik and obtaining full loads without difficulty.

By December 1946 BGD was pegging Exploratory Prospecting License [E.P.L.] areas in the upper Korosameri River area and was planning to commence a monthly trawler service between Lae and Angoram to facilitate the pick-up and repatriation of labourers.

In January 1947 Mr. J.D. Simpson, Field Manager of BGD and Mr. H.E. Horne, Field Engineer visited Angoram. ADO Ormsby accompanied them on a flight over the recently pegged EPLs. Commercial testing for minerals was set to commence in late February.

In May 1947 the BGD drilling party arrived with equipment and went to their base on the Korosameri River. Just prior to their arrival Mr. Cooper of the advance party advised that some of his labourers had come under attack from unidentified natives. Both these matters have been reported more fully in separate correspondence.²

In January 1949 no word has been received from the party prospecting in the uncontrolled country up the Korosameri River, but it is expected they will need supplies before very long.

April May 1949 Unofficial advice has been received that BGD propose to resume their activities in the uncontrolled area in the early future but no definite information...

October 1949 Bulolo party is working the Frieda and Leonard Schultze Rivers. Bulolo party reported happy relations with the natives met. Not one incident was reported and all natives were friendly. In July 1950 the Angoram monthly report noted that BGD was still working in the Frieda. The discovery of copper in the Frieda River headwaters is the subject of Sepik 4 Chapter 40.

Ambunti Patrol 2/1949/50 in November 1949, led by J. Cahill needs to be read in the context of Chapters 3 and. Relations had just been re-established with the Wogamush following their attack on the War Graves party in 1946. Cahill's reported :-

'The patrol went with the BGD ship M.V. Kauri. BGD was sending an expedition into the April River. The patrol visited the Wogamush hamlets of Yambunumbu, and Wonakon. Also visited were Swagup, Kubka, Yauenien and Chenap. [Chenapian].

The patrol made friendly contact with all the villagers met '...the emphasis being placed on establishing friendly relations by any means in our power.'

Things were about to change for prospectors with the passing of the 1950 Restricted Areas Ordinance. Exploration for the next two decades until the last area in PNG was de-restricted required a permit under the Restricted Areas Ordinance. In the case of The Enterprise of New Guinea Gold and Petroleum Development No Liability, [Sepik 4 Chapter 15] this required a DDS&NA escort to accompany the patrol to observe and to be its self-appointed security officer.

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² Separate correspondence was not located.

What proved to be an *emerging problem* involving the DS&NA staff at Ambunti may have first been signalled in Ambunti's monthly report for the month of July 1949 when the OIC Mr. Cahill ended an informative report with the following :-

'...charging batteries is still a problem...as I intimated to you before it would be a safer bet to depend upon the decency of people running boats on the river to charge batteries occasionally rather than trust the officious officialism of officialdom'.

DO Niall responded *'Please elucidate your remarks in your final paragraph. They appear offensive to me. Such remarks should not be included in official reports, and you will ensure that such do not occur again otherwise disciplinary action will be taken.'*¹⁸

Mr. A. Zweck took over from Mr. Cahill at Ambunti – **The writer** believes this probably reflected the time when the administration first became aware of the sexual misconduct problems described below.

The story is taken up by lawyer Paul Quinlivan¹⁹, who we will meet again in Sepik 4 with his involvement in the investigations and prosecutions concerning the 1953 Telefomin Uprising :-

On 6th November 1952 I was sent to Wewak to conduct a prosecution in the District Court. The police usually did this, but this was a very special mission because, while I was busily engaged cleaning up the backlog of cases in the New Guinea Islands, the PNG police on a remote out-station on the mainland, complained that all the Europeans in their area – the Kiap [John Pearce Cahill] the Medical Assistant [William Mervyn Creighton] and George Gilbert, [whose occupation I forget³] – were “out of control”. The complaint was immediately investigated and, as a result, all three were charged with multiple rapes. In those days rape and murder charges against Europeans had to be heard by an all-White jury despite the complaints by the Judges – and the Crown Law Office – that such trials brought the administration of justice into disrepute...Despite the fact that Andy O'Driscoll produced overwhelming evidence, Cahill and Gilbert were acquitted but Creighton, the weaker of the three, was convicted and safely moved to gaol in Australia.

The fact that the two stronger characters were free to go where ever they liked was seen as presenting a grave danger so I was sent to Wewak to see if I could get Cahill and Gilbert convicted of 'common assault'. If I could do that – and there was an abundance of evidence available – they could be immediately deported under the Expulsion of Undesirable Persons Ordinance. There was, however, a very clear danger to me, too, because unpleasant undercurrents had been reported right, left and centre and I was glad that, as in every other place I had gone, I would be billeted in a private house because nobody would seek to harm me in somebody's home...The District Commissioner...added that both Cahill and Gilbert were spending a lot of time at the Sepik Club and I should avoid it.

...I was congratulated upon my return to Port Moresby for getting Cahill and Gilbert deported...three months after...the South Pacific Post reported [13th February 1953] that an appeal by William Mervyn Creighton against his conviction for rape had been upheld in the High Court of Australia. I have not read the judgment but, since it was a jury trial, assume the appeal was on a procedural matter and not on facts.

The matter was also written up by Robert Aldrich in *Colonialism and Homosexuality* – Routledge 2002 :-

³ Patrol Officer was the occupation Mr Quinlivan forgot

'... William Mervyn Creighton, a single 32 year old Medical Assistant was charged in Wewak with raping a native woman and "with having wilfully committed an indecent act with the intent to insult or offend Kurandumm, a male native of Ambunti'.

Of this case "Kurandumm" [Karandamun²⁰] told the writer the following :-

'In the time of master Cahill and Gilbert, there were some bad women around, they were prostitutes. All villages had a few prostitutes. Brugnawi and Yambon had two each, Malu one and Japandai had fat Wina – she is still alive and Chambri had Weinak, Parembei had Gumbo...

Sagarimbo was not really a prostitute, she was in gaol and she and Yanimbet were waiting court and the kiap slept with them while they were in gaol... There was a thin doctor here...and he played with a Korogo girl who was a patient at the hospital. He said to her "pay for your medicine". The girl's husband wanted to go inside but the doctor sent him away. There was a lot of trouble over this...the two kiaps had sent word around that if there was any talk – the talker would get himself into gaol. So we were afraid...

*A policeman from Malu called Nabeli talked with all the women and got up talk. Mr Cahill was going to shoot him. The Malus then started the talk and the court got up. The two kiaps and the doctor were roused [deported] at the same time.'*²¹

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This scandal is an unfortunate note upon which to end our description of the transition from military to civil administration. The staffing instability at Ambunti continued. Mr. A Zweck handed over to PO Thomas in December 1950 and Mr. Thomas handed over to PO Orwin in March 1951. Mr. Orwin soon found himself with ADO Angoram Mr. Laurie Doolan attacked at Swagup village in February 1952 – see Sepik 4 Chapter 16 .

Finally former District Officer E.D. Robinson, better known as "Sepik Robbie", was brought out of retirement in Angoram to "hold the fort"²² at Ambunti until the situation stabilised.

End Notes Chapter 68

¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 pages 30-32

² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p31. At this point Ormsby describes the Timbunke massacre and the orgy of rape and abduction of Timbunke women. This is fully documented in Sepik Book 3 "The Sepik at War" chapter 59.

³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p33-34

⁴ Angoram Monthly Report December 1946 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 36

⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 37

⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 21 Pages 23

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 36

⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 72

⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 p 240-242

¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 71

¹¹ It is evident from the village names that Maloney's census was of the Sawos, and not the Manambu villages.

¹² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 71

¹³ Incorrect. The Behrmann expedition of 1912/13 contacted them, as presumably did the investigation into the Japandai massacre in 1924, as Waskuk took part

¹⁴ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 74

¹⁵ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 p 76

¹⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 Pages 73

¹⁷ R.G.Ormsby WKA 30/3 of 17th May 1950 *Special Report – Upper Sepik* – item 535 Bragge Ref. Vol 17

¹⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 page 40.

¹⁹ Internet – Paul Quinlivan's snapshot No 42 "Ma Schamel's place."

²⁰ Karundamun was lucky to be alive to tell this tale – he was the Japanese appointed official who went with the Japanese patrol which killed ANGAU Lieut. Barracluff at Begapuke [April River] on 15th August 1943 – Sepik 3 Chapter 33. Some thought he should have been executed.

²¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 24.

²² Simpson C *'Islands of Men'* – Angus & Robertson 1955 – page 50

Appendix A - How Japan's 7th December 1941 "surprise" attack was predicted in 1925

Included as an item of interest, this text comes from William H Honan's *Visions of Infamy – the untold story of how journalist Hector C Bywater devised the plans that led to Pearl Harbour* – St Martin's Press New York 1991 ISBN 0-312-05454-8 (<https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-312-05454-0>).

While only indirectly related to the war in the Sepik, the reported Japanese Naval history and the Roosevelt/Bywater debate suggest that the war in the Pacific might have taken a different course had the United States reacted positively to the intelligence that was available to it in the early 1920s.

Hector C. Bywater – convivial, pub-crawling English and American journalist, author, spy¹ and raconteur who knew more about the navies of the world than a room full of admirals – had an obsession. Although most of his contemporaries looked upon it as idle speculation, Bywater devoted himself to figuring out the shape of a possible future war between Japan and the United States.

By 1925, 16 years before Japanese forces struck at Pearl Harbour, he published a plan that accurately predicted the entire course of the Pacific war. What Bywater wrote powerfully influenced Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the architect of the Pearl Harbour attack and many of Japan's subsequent moves in the war, and a host of future leaders of the United States navy.¹

While serving as naval attaché in Washington in the late 1920s Yamamoto reported to Tokyo about Bywater's war plan and later lectured on the subject – adopting Bywater's plan as his own.²

Bywater's writings on Naval strategy and a future Pacific War took three forms:

His two books: *Sea Power in the Pacific*, and a novel *The Great Pacific War* and numerous articles on Pacific strategy – many written in his capacity as European naval correspondent for the New York Herald, the Baltimore Sun, and later the New York Times.

Bywater was the first analyst to publicly spell out the revolutionary concept of Island hopping cross the Marshall and Caroline chains that became a fundamental of American strategy during the war. A year and a half after Bywater published this plan, the U.S. Navy drastically revised its top-secret "War Plan Orange"² -the official contingency plan for war against Japan – discarding the idea of a reckless trans-Pacific lunge that Bywater had shown to be doomed to failure and adopting in its place, his careful step by step advance.³

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Some contextual Naval and Pacific historical background.

September 1894 – The Battle of Yalu River. The decisive sea battle of the Sino-Japanese war had been a remarkable upset victory for Japan; a squadron of unarmoured British built Japanese cruisers encountered a superior force of Chinese iron-clads, of German constructed. The Chinese ships were armed with 12 inch guns.

The battle of Yalu River was the first occasion on which high speed warships, quick-fire ordinance, smokeless powder had been tested in actual combat. The Chinese fleet

¹ Bywater – Fluent in German, was a British spy in Dresden and elsewhere during WW1

² "Orange" being the code word for Japan.

suffered the loss of five ships sunk or driven ashore, while on the Japanese side only the flag ship *Matsushima* had been seriously damaged.⁴

1897. U.S. Annexation of Hawaii. Japan reacted provocatively towards the United States in response to the introduction of a resolution in the U.S. Congress proposing the annexation of Hawaii. Japan protested through her ambassador that Hawaii's independence was "essential to the good understanding of the powers that have interest in the Pacific", and she despatched her cruiser *Naniwa* to Hawaii to drive home the point. Japan quickly backed down.

1898. The Spanish–American War was a conflict fought between Spain and the United States in 1898. Hostilities began in the aftermath of the internal explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor leading to American intervention in the Cuban War of Independence. American acquisition of Spain's Pacific possessions led to its involvement in the Philippine Revolution and ultimately in the Philippine–American War.

The US Navy battleship *Maine* was mysteriously sunk in Havana harbor; political pressures from the Democratic Party pushed Republican President William McKinley into a war that he had wished to avoid. Spain promised time and again that it would reform, but never delivered. The United States sent an ultimatum to Spain demanding that it surrender control of Cuba. First Madrid declared war, then Washington followed suit. The main issue was Cuban independence; the ten-week war was fought in both the Caribbean and Pacific.⁵

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Interim assessment: Despite early evidence of Japanese naval successes, a generally accepted opinion was that distances across the Pacific were so enormous that neither Japan nor America could significantly harm each other. This was the situation until 1897 and 1898, when America acquired interests in the Pacific – Hawaii in the central Pacific, and Guam and the Philippines in the western Pacific - south of Japan.

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8th February 1904 – the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Under the command of the British-trained Japanese Naval commander Heihachiro Togo, eleven Japanese Torpedo boats attacked the Russian Pacific Fleet of 17 war-ship in Port Arthur, northern China. This was followed by Japanese shelling from cruisers at long range.⁶

Writer's note: The Battle of Port Arthur is presented in William H.Honan's *Visions of Infamy* 1991 as a master stroke of Japanese Naval strategy, pre-empting a war that as about to erupt, whereas others report it in a different light:

Of the sixteen torpedoes fired, all but three either missed or failed to explode. But luck was against the Russians insofar as two of the three torpedoes hit their best battleships: *Retvizan* and *Tsesarevich* were put out of action for weeks, as was the cruiser *Pallada*.

Although the naval Battle of Port Arthur had resulted in no major warship losses, the Imperial Japanese Navy had been driven from the battlefield by the combined fire of the Russian battleships and shore batteries, thus attributing to them a minor victory. Although no ship was sunk on either side, several took damage. However, the Japanese had ship repair and dry-dock facilities in Sasebo with which to make repairs, whereas the Russian fleet had only very limited repair capability at Port Arthur.

The formal declaration of war between Japan and Russia was issued on 10 February 1904, a day after the battle. The attack, conducted against a largely unassuming and unprepared neutral power in peacetime, has been widely compared to the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.⁷

While the immediate battle of Port Arthur may be regarded as being won by the Russians, in terms of the wider War, Japan now had the upper hand. The Japanese Second Army landed in Manchuria and by December 1904 besieged Port Arthur. After that The Russian Pacific Fleet did not attempt to break out from their port, while the Japanese fleet dominated the waters for the duration of the war.

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27th & 28th May 1905 – Russo- Japanese War: The Battle of Tsushima. Russia despatched its Baltic fleet to relieve Port Arthur. Japan scored a tremendous naval victory at the battle of Tsushima, annihilating the entire Russian fleet on 27th and 28th May 1905...Although outnumbering the Japanese by fourteen to twelve, every major Russian vessel was sunk or captured, and on the Japanese side, not a ship was lost or crippled. The Russians lost 4,830 men, Japan only 117.⁸

The battle was fought in the Tsushima Strait between Korea and southern Japan. In this battle the Japanese fleet under Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō destroyed two-thirds of the Russian fleet, under Admiral Zinovy Rozhstvensky, which had travelled over 18,000 nautical miles (33,000 km) to reach the Far East. In London in 1906, Sir George Sydenham Clarke wrote, "The battle of Tsushima is by far the greatest and the most important naval event since Trafalgar". The destruction of the Russian navy caused a bitter reaction from the Russian public and induced a peace treaty in September 1905 without any further battles.⁹

1910. Japan's annexation of Korea. On Aug. 29 1910 the treaty annexing Korea to Japan was promulgated, a week after its signing. It was not a treaty between equal partners. The 1905 Korea-Japan Convention had already made Korea a protectorate of Japan. Under the annexation treaty, the Korean emperor handed sovereign power over his country to the Japanese emperor "completely and forever." Thus Korea became a colony of Japan.

1914. The opening of the Panama Canal, which allowed the United States to rapidly transfer its fleets between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, thereby alleviating the problem the Russians experienced in 1904-5.

21st November 1918 The surrender for internment of the German Fleet. Of this surrender Bywater wrote:

...a brief but pregnant chapter in the history of sea power was brought to a close. The next chapter may be said to have opened in August 1919, with the passage of the newly created United States Pacific Fleet through the Panama Canal to its new base in San Francisco Bay. By the disappearance of the German Navy the strategic situation throughout the globe has been profoundly modified... [There has been] a gravitation of naval power from West to East, from the Atlantic to the Pacific...the naval cosmos had instantly dissolved and regrouped itself around a new sun, the Rising Sun of Japan.¹⁰

The Japanese Mandate of the South Pacific Islands was a League of Nations mandate given to the Empire of Japan by the League of nations following World War I. The South Pacific Mandate consisted of islands in the north Pacific Ocean that were part of the German colonial empire and were occupied by Japan during World War I. Japan governed the islands until World War II when the United States captured the islands. The islands then became the United Nations-established Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands governed by the United States. The islands are now part of Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Marshall Islands.¹¹

Effectively, with the exception of American Guam, this mandate gave Japan control of the western Pacific Ocean down to the equator, where it bordered upon the Australian mandate over former German New Guinea.

Other important historic factors: which need to be noted here, but not discussed

1. **1921-22** The Washington Naval Conference and resulting Naval Treaties.
2. **1937-44** Japan's invasion of China.
3. **1940** The transfer of the base of the American Pacific Fleet from Long Beach San Francisco to Pearl Harbour¹². While this looks like a belated move it should be noted that in December 1926 [a year after Bywater's novel was published] contracts were let to dredge nine million cubic yards of coral from the channel and anchorage at Pearl Harbour for a future naval base¹³.

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In the Summer of 1920 Bywater commenced writing his book *Sea Power in the Pacific*³; *A study of the American Japanese naval problem*, and soon after, the novel *The Great Pacific War*.

Bywater expressed his writing objective in the preface to *Sea Power in the Pacific* as:

*...to bring to light certain facts concerning the strategic situation of the rival powers the full significance of which do not appear to be realised by either Japan or the United States... [intending to exerting influence] in the direction of peace rather than war.*¹⁴

Bywater noted that a study of the Pacific map's vast expanses, revealed the crucial importance of a remote speck of an Island called Guam...as a stepping stone between Hawaii and the Philippines. Bywater saw that these America's recently acquired territories west of Hawaii were so far from the nearest naval station that they could not be defended against a locally based aggressor.

He argued that while Hawaii was too far distant to defend the Philippines, Guam, just 1,500 miles to the east, was ideally situated...if Guam was developed as a first class naval station *no Power would venture to molest the Philippines*.

Bywater went on: *In view of the overwhelming strategic importance of Guam, this island would doubtless be the first objective...A simultaneous attack on the Philippines... within a fortnight after the beginning of hostilities, the United States would find itself bereft of its insular possessions in the Western Pacific, and consequently without a base for naval operations in these waters.*¹⁵

Two months after *Sea Power in the Pacific* was published in 1921, it was translated into Japanese by the office of the Imperial Navy General Staff in Tokyo, mimeographed and distributed to top naval staff as "Material for Strategic Study".

To appreciate the excitement with which Bywater's ideas were received in Japan, it is necessary to understand how different they were from the purely defensive war plans Japanese officers had lived with for the previous decade and a half – The Sato-Akiyama strategy for war against the United States had been approved at the conclusion of a full-scale defensive review in 1907...It was essentially an ambush, based upon the presumption that the United States would attack. The strategy involved wolf packs of Japanese submarines west of Hawaii ...another Tsushima.¹⁶

³ Published in 1921.



The F.D.Roosevelt – H.C.Bywater debate. While covering the Washington Conference in 1921/2 Bywater was drawn into a debate with a former United States Assistant Secretary for the Navy named Franklin D.Roosevelt – later to be the wartime President of the United States. The debate issue was – whether or not a Japanese American war was a physical possibility, given the vastness of the ocean separating the two powers. The debate was initiated by Bywater’s response to a Roosevelt article in the prestigious *Asia* magazine in 1922, in which Roosevelt argued that war with Japan was unthinkable and impossible. The debate was conducted mainly in exchanges of news-paper articles. To perhaps get the last word Bywater wrote his fourth book called *The Great Pacific War...* an imaginary yet meticulously realistic account of a future war between Japan and the United States. He sought to explain that such a war was not only a deadly possibility, but he also documented the best possible strategy for each country.¹⁷

The Japanese strategy in Bywater’s imagined future Pacific war was a surprise attack of an overwhelming force aimed at annihilating the American fleet in the first hours of the war...under the command of an imaginary Vice Admiral Hiraga a fleet of three battle cruisers, an aircraft carrier, six light cruisers and 24 destroyers, headed south hoping to catch the Americans napping at their base in Manila Bay, as Commodore Dewey had found the Spanish fleet in 1898⁴. [As noted above, the American Naval base at Pearl Harbour was not commissioned until 1940, but the principle of a surprise attack remains the same.]

Bywater’s narrative of this battle was extremely realistic and it concluded with a flash of seeming clairvoyance with “Lieutenant Elkins” report *Our squadron has been wiped out with upwards of 2,500 gallant comrades had fallen.* At Pearl Harbour in 1941 the precise number of American casualties was 2,638.¹⁸

Bywater’s continued...the Japanese follow up the destruction of the American fleet with simultaneous moves against Guam and the Philippines.

⁴ The **Battle of Manila Bay** took place on 1 May 1898, during the Spanish–American War. The American Asiatic Squadron under Commodore George Dewey engaged and destroyed the Spanish Pacific Squadron under Admiral Patricio Montojo. The battle took place in Manila Bay in the Philippines, and was the first major engagement of the Spanish–American War. The battle was one of the most decisive naval battles in history and marked the end of the Spanish colonial period in Philippine history. ^{Wikipedia.}

Bywater sought in vain, a copy of America's top secret Plan Orange. But through one of his contacts he learned the essentials of the plan and of senior naval officials' frustration with it. It was probably no coincidence then, that both Plan Orange and *The Great Pacific War* stated the Philippines could hold out against a Japanese invasion for only about two weeks.¹⁹

America's War Plan Orange [in which "Orange" meant Japan] was developed in 1903 and was updated over the next 37 years. By 1924 it reflected a headlong dash across the Pacific to relieve Manila. Bywater devoted two chapters of *The Great Pacific War* to just such a plan and its inevitable tragic outcomes.

Bywater's 1925 narrative stated that by one and a half years after the surprise attack the United States had managed to replace all naval losses and that the United States Navy was now superior force in the Pacific.

Bywater's imagined battle of Yap, like the actual battle of Midway, was the turning point in the war. Of the twelve capital ships engaged Japan lost five [at Midway she lost four] and America lost two [at Midway the Americans lost one – the Yorktown]²⁰

A contract had been signed on 8th March 1925 with Constable and Co to publish *The Great Pacific War*. Many reviewers suggested the book would serve incite war, rather than warn against it.²¹

It is not possible to prove conclusively that Bywater's book influenced American authorities, but in 1926 – fifteen months after Bywater's book was published, a vastly modified War Plan Orange was approved in October 1926. Bywater was acknowledged by William V Pratt, a major contributor to War Plan Orange as *Something of a Prophet* and William Sims noted Bywater's book as *authoritative in its assemblage of the facts*.²²



Yamamoto and Bywater first met at a London conference in 1930. In 1934 again in London, Yamamoto agreed to an interview with Bywater, reporting for the Daily Telegraph. Bywater visited him at his hotel suite at Grosvenor House on the evening of December 3rd 1934.

At the end of the interview Yamamoto signalled to his butler to roll in a portable bar and offered his guest a drink, although Yamamoto did not imbibe.



Now in more convivial tone, Yamamoto relieved Bywater of £20 in a game of Bridge – “No matter what our differences of opinion may be” Yamamoto told Bywater “we sailors get along admirably together.”²³

Virtually on the day the Washington treaty⁵ ended, Japan, in great secrecy, began building war ships like the world had never seen – displacing 72,000 tons. Hints of Japan's construction program were leaked by the Italian newspaper *Giornale d' Italia*, which noted that by 1941 Japan would possess a fleet of 289 war ships with a total displacement of

⁵ The Washington treaty restricted the construction of Naval vessels to a displacement of 36,000 tons.

1,109,150 tons. Bywater and Melville Cox pressed hard to obtain confirmation of Japan's naval strength.

During 1939 [?] Cox, the Tokyo based Reuter's correspondent, sought out Admiral Yamamoto, Vice Minister of Marine - *was Japan really building the stupendous new warships Bywater's articles described? If not, then why the secrecy?* Yamamoto's reply read:

It is quite natural for a country like Japan, with a small navy to rely upon for her own security, to need special armament, and I believe it is patient to everybody that the necessity of keeping her armaments secret is far greater than it is for Powers with larger navies...And yet they [Britain, France and the United States] request in these Notes [that we] reveal the content of our naval program, and would dogmatically assume in case of our failure to comply, that we are building beyond the limits of the treaty. This attitude cannot be called reasonable or fair.

In response to the documentation of Yamamoto reply, the London Times devoted an editorial to denouncing Yamamoto. Yamamoto cannot have been pleased. As for Bywater, Yamamoto remembered that during the Washington conference he seemed to know what the Japanese delegates were going to say even before they confided their thoughts to other delegates. Yamamoto had good reason to wonder if, with the possible approach of hostilities against the United States, something should be done about these Englishmen.²⁴

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Yamamoto was named Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet and in the fall of 1939 was charged with responsibility for preparing for war. He gravitated to the ideas outlined in his 1928 lectures to the Torpedo School. In April or May 1940 he confided his thinking about a surprise attack on the American Fleet to Shigeru Fukudome, his chief of staff. A few weeks later the American fleet shifted its base from Long Beach to Pearl Harbour - Yamamoto's planned attack would now be directed against Pearl Harbour and started planning accordingly.²⁵

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On 27th July 1940 Cox was arrested in Tokyo. The Japanese claimed Cox jumped to his death from the 3rd story of Tokyo police headquarters while being interrogated. Lord Halifax, the British foreign secretary, drew cheers in the House of Lords when he declared that his government was "entirely unable to accept" the Japanese explanation.²⁶

On 16th August 1940, Bywater was found dying and soon dead in his London apartment. The autopsy agreed with Bywater's GP's finding of alcoholic poisoning. The autopsy, conducted during London's heaviest bombing raid, may have missed evidence of foul play. Bywater was cremated making further investigation impossible.

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About all that can be said with assurance is that the sudden deaths of these two Englishmen within a fortnight of each other...came as a gift from heaven for Isoroku Yamamoto - considering the course he was now embarked upon.

End Notes Appendix A

¹ William H.Honan *Visions of Infamy - the untold story of how journalist Hector C Bywater devised the plans that led to Pearl Harbour* - St Martin's Press New York 1991 ISBN 0-312-05454-8. Preface Page xiii

² William H.Honan 1991 Preface Page xiv

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- ³ William H.Honan 1991 Preface Page xiv
 - ⁴ William H.Honan 1991 Page 3
 - ⁵ Wikipedia The Spanish American War of 1898.
 - ⁶ William H.Honan 1991 Page 10
 - ⁷ Wikipedia – The Battle of Port Arthur
 - ⁸ William H.Honan 1991 Page 14-15
 - ⁹ Wikipedia – The battle of Tsushima
 - ¹⁰ William H.Honan 1991 Page 59-60
 - ¹¹ Wikipedia – South Pacific Mandate
 - ¹² William H.Honan 1991 Page 59-60
 - ¹³ William H.Honan 1991 Page 186
 - ¹⁴ William H.Honan 1991 Page 249.
 - ¹⁵ William H.Honan 1991 Page 62-6
 - ¹⁶ William H.Honan 1991 Page 73-75
 - ¹⁷ William H.Honan 1991 Page 98-108
 - ¹⁸ William H.Honan 1991 Page 136-137
 - ¹⁹ William H.Honan 1991 Page 140
 - ²⁰ William H.Honan 1991 Page 152-156
 - ²¹ William H.Honan 1991 Page 169
 - ²² William H.Honan 1991 Page 196-197
 - ²³ William H.Honan 1991 Page 223-224
 - ²⁴ William H.Honan 1991 Page 238-239
 - ²⁵ William H.Honan 1991 Page 248
 - ²⁶ William H.Honan 1991 Page 247-248

Appendix B

Introducing the characters who appear in these pages [listed once only on first mention]

Chapter 1 **A Colonial Lifestyle Coming to an End**

Len Odgers – Junior Clerk Wewak District Office
Banjo Patterson – Australian poet.
Dr, Schroeder – District Medical Officer
Roy Smith – senior clerk
Charlie Bates – Assistant District Officer Maprik
Joe Searson Patrol Officer
Geoff Shaw. Public Servant
Frank Simmcocks – gold miner
Mike Clark – Pilot
Jim Hodgekiss Patrol Officer
J.H.”Bert” Jones – District Officer
Mrs Ruth Shaw – wife of Geoff Shaw
Mrs Blood and son – wife and child of Police Master Neptune Blood.
Mrs Betty Thurston and son – wife and child of Jack Thurston – gold miner
Mrs Mildred Eileen Bell – wife of Stanley George Vincent Bell – gold miner
Mrs Ann Victoria Matilda Lambert wife of Lieut Cyril William Lambert
Mrs Jean Margorie Lega – wife of S/Sgt Christian David Lega
Mrs Stgrudwick and two sons – family of Richard Strudwick Patrol Officer
Mrs Grace Cathedral Milligan and Son – family of John Milligan Patrol Officer
Mrs Sylvia Abernathy Aitchison and daughter – family of Thomas Aitchison Patrol Officer
Molly and Bob Parer business people
Kevin Parer – pilot
James L.Taylor -Assistant District Officer Aitape
George Ellis – Assistant District Officer Angoram
Jack Thurston – Gold Miner
Forok and Joseph – Odger’s Sepik servants
Kevin Minogue – Radio Operator
Bill Macgregor – explorer and gold miner
Charles Karius – Assistant Resident Magistrate from Papua
Ivan Champion – Patrol Officer from Papua

Chapter 2 **Discussions Around a Campfire in 1924**

Colonel John Walstab – Police Master
George W.L. “Kassa” Townsend Patrol Officer
Eric Feldt Patrol Officer
Stanley Christian – European Medical Assistant
Fletcher Christian – of Bounty fame, Stan’s ancestor
General Paul von Lettow Vorbeck – 1st World War – German Tanganyika
J.K.McCarthy Patrol officer – later director of DDS&NA

Chapter 3 **The Round Eternal of the Cashbook and the Journal**

Neptune Blood Police Master
Fred Eichorn – gold miner
Gerry Keogh – gold miner
Jim Wilton – gold miner
Gray Hartley
Claude Rouse – gold miner

Chapter 4 Jack Thurston – Planning an Evacuation Southward from the Sepik

Judy Tudor – author and wife of a gold miner

Chapter 5 The Lull Before the Storm

John Preston White – Patrol Officer

Mr Broadbent – gold Miner

Ted Haynes – gold miner

Forde – Deputy Prime Minister of Australia

Kengoro Tanaka – Japanese author

Chapter 6 Disabling Wewak Facilities and the Fallback to Sauri 24/1/42 – 1/2/42

Jim Malische – gold miner – better known as “Jimmy the One.”

Bill Scannell – gold miner

Laurence Durant – Author

Ah Kau – Radio operator, assisting Minogue

Chapter 7 The Waiting Game Plays on Peoples Nerves

Ning Hee – Chinese trader

Frank or Joe Conboy

Chapter 8 Garamambu Gold Miners Split re Evacuation 2-4th Feb. 1942

Reg, Beckett – former Ambunti clerk and discoverer of the Garamambu gold field

George Eichorn – gold miner and father of Freddy

Len Tudor – gold miner

Roy Macgregor – brother of Bill, and Madang plantation owner

Tultul Barangowi of Yamanumbu village

Mr Bell – gold miner

Mr Mitchell – gold miner

Mother Superior Helena – Catholic mission at Timbunke

Sisters Arnoldine, Vinciana, Auxilia and Antionella at Timbunke mission

Chapter 9 Orderly withdrawal From Sauri to Angoram

Ping Shee – Chinese trader

Steve Lonergan – escaped from Rabaul

McMullen – Assistant District Officer

Father Manion – Catholic Mission Wewak

Brother Amanias – Skipper of the *Gabriel*

Pickwell –

Sir Walter McNicholl – Administrator

H.Page Deputy Administrator

H.W,Champion [Papua] Government Secretary

Commandant Major General Morris

Lieut. S.Elliott Smith in charge of Papua Admin Unit

Capt. GWL Townsend in charge of NG Admin, Unit

Chapter 10 Booze, Dysfunction and Insurrection at Angoram 14 – 20th Feb. 1942

“Blue” Cook – gold miner

Karce, Kirk and Hunter – gold miners.

“Nifty” Nixon – gold miner

Ben Hall

Spencer

Reason

Jack Young

Jack West

} Presumably gold miners

Chapter 11 “New Britain’s Little Dunkirk”

R.E. “Bob” Emery – of the New Guinea Volunteer rifles,
Chu Leong – Chinese trader based in Angoram
Alan Strachan.
“Blue” Harris Patrol Officer
J.K. McCarthy ADO Talasea
Captain Radke
Jock Laird – of the *Nereus*
Fleihler [Lutheran Superintendent]
Masao Kusunose – commanding officer of the 144th Infantry Regiment
Commander Hunt
Alan Timperley
Major Owen
Victor Bolton Pennefather former Patrol Officer and owner of Tokua plantation
David Crawley Warrant officer of the European constabulary

Attachment A Madang’s Lutheran Missionaries

Father Limbrock
Esther Dockter Wagenast – author of *Go Softly the Darkness*
Father Peter Glover
Superintendent Fliehler and Captain Radke of Kranket Island
Rev Dott and Brother Wenz at Bogadjim
Rev Welsch, Dr Braun & Mrs Braun, sisters Kroeger and Koltzbuecher and brother Keuhn at
Amele
Brother Nagada at Bertlsmeier
Rev Mager and Brothers Siemers and Krebs at Amron
Rev Ander at Nobonob
Rev Henkermann and Brother Barber at Bunabun
Rev Hafermann and Brother Mild at Karkar Island
Rev Wagner at Sattleberg

Chapter 12 ADOs Jim Taylor & Charlie Bates visit Angoram

Len Bridger
Eric Petterson
Bob Moody
Johnny Young
Ward Oakley – District Officer Madang

Chapter 13 Taylor Instructed to Relieve Ellis of his Command at Angoram

Sgt Lauri of the New Guinea Constabulary
Leslie – helping Odgers at Kopar
Alf Price of the AIF

Chapter 14 The Angoram Incident

Fisher
Theo Mason
Harold Hindwood
E.J. Cook
Harry Ceal
Jack Lang
Eric Petterson

} all Gold Miners?

Shanghai Brown Trader and recruiter

Chapter 15 Renegade Police and the Murder of PO Richard Strudwick at Timbuk

Jim Gallin – gold miner
Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai village – Labour recruiter for Bill Macgregor
Constable Mansa [also spelt Manja] of the Markham valley
Constable Lontubil – killed Strudwick according to Nonguru
Constable Sini – Killed Strudwick according to Father Creusberg
Father Creusberg of Marui mission
Father Hanson of Marui mission
Herman – skipper of *Osprey*
Ron Pickwell – Medical Assistant
Father Meyer of Kambrindo mission station

Chapter 16 Attending to Preparations and Logistics

Keith Atkinson – gold miner?
Father Schafer of Timbuk mission station
St Thomas the doubter [mentioned in sermon]

Chapter 17 Rape, Murder and Pillage in the Chambri Lakes

Yimbien of Tegoi village – ex Sgt of police
Constable Baugwi
Constable Bun
Constable Tangwan
Constables Mansa and Gaia
Constable Saima
Constable Taneiwa
Constable Alowali
Paul Banji of Japanaut village – informant
Yaugarat ex-policeman - of Japanaut village
Yabisaun of Japanaut village
Local Government Councillor Mebiangen of Wombun – informant
Tobi of Mensuat village – informant
Reg Beckett
George Eichorn
Jack Mitchell
Ah Fang
J.Wilton
Freddy Eichorn
Luluai Yambimo of Mensuat – father of Tobi and Weinak
Weinak/Yambimo Bill Macgregor's woman
Kamiagwi
Yerimanga
Nambai
Wapi – ex Luluai of Indingai – informant
Nambandoa of Wombun – a willing consort of Constable Manja

Renegade police from Angoram

Stayed at Korogo – married there and blended in

Miners murdered by renegade police

Miners who escaped the renegade police attack

Indingai village girls abducted and raped at Sambugundei Island

Chapter 18 A Nervous Start for the Thurston Expedition

Jack Thurston - gold miner
Keith Atkinson - gold miner
Jim Malicki [Jimmy the one] – gold miner
Theo Mason – gold Miner
Eric Petterson – gold miner

Members of the Thurston expedition

Ron Pickwell – Medical assistant overland from Sepik to Daru 1942
 Len Odgers – clerk
 Constable Silia of Kieta
 Constable Porhau of Manus
 83 Sepik Carriers
 Kina – Thurston’s loyal Manua Island companion
 Kemerabi – Luluai of Japandai village

} Also Members of
 Thurston expedition ...

Attachment B The Thurston Expedition

Weynak/Jagir
 Kwatawiyugw/Vikikamil
 Kamangabw/Takaay
 Kamatip/Wakilaan

} Avatip village carriers recruited for
 the Thurston expedition

Walter Behrmann – German Geographer and member of the 1912/13 Sepik expedition
 John Black Patrol Officer of the 1938/39 Taylor and Black – Hagen/Sepik expedition
 Femsep, Taylor’s 1938/39 guide
Dante’s inferno
Walt Disney country
 Bill Korn of the 1936-37 Ward Williams expedition
 Samuel – of Manus, a carrier wrapped up by a python. Samuel wounded when python shot
 Mr Wood – Manager of Madiri plantation
 Vertigan – District Officer Daru

Chapter 19 Blood Flows at Sambugundai

Singei – Yabiasun’s sister sexually assaulted by Renegade police
 Yimoliban of Mindimbit village
 Kupma – Constable on leave
 Gumbaliban
 Yandimi
 Malindambwi and two others

} Recipients of six rifles and cartridges given by Jim
 Hodgekiss to kill the renegade police

Tandambwi – a renegade supporter – shot
 Kwonji of Burui village – Townsend’s interpreter and the writer’s informant
 Anuk, Constable Gaia’s wife and two children survived
 Bianbindimi of Yenchanmangua – raped Anuk repeatedly until she came to Maiwi mission

Chapter 20 DO Jones’ Plans for The Sepik

Father Clerkim of Vanimo mission
 Sergeant Russell
 Private West
 Private Esson
 Un-named Javanese medical officer in Hollandia visited by DO Jones

Chapter 21 Bates Patrol to Sambugundei and Beyond

Waskat, Sindambwi, Kungabjindimi and others – Arrested for crimes at Sambugundai
 Timbun – brother of Yabisaun
 Maimban and Wani of Yerikai – informants
 Dumondi of Garamambu
 Mari, Aid Post Orderly – beaten severely by Macgregor for theft
 Kambaratmeri and Subigumban led Bates ? to meet Macgregor’s

Chapter 22 Bill Macgregor Living Dangerously

Wolinagwan – father of Mathias Yambumbe and intended husband of Weinak
 Constable Selio married Weinak before she went with Macgregor.
 Yamali and Yabuai of Milae – informants

Yango an elder
 Yaduas an adult woman
 Keku – a younger girl
 Ex Constable Gigio of Garamambu – informant
 Kaimbu of Garamambu
 Noku of Garamambu
 Jack Cahill – post war Patrol Officer at Ambunti

} Kamasiut people killed in a Milae/Mari payback raid

Chapter 23 District Officer Bates’ Management of the Sepik

Kwonji – Government Interpreter
 Nonguru (Kemerabi) – Police Constable
 Gabriel Chou Chen On family
 Ning Hee family
 Tang Mow family

} Notable Chinese families - Wewak

Chapter 24 Captain Taylor Behind Japanese Lines

E.T.W. “Ted” Fulton – Prewar gold miner, wartime ANGAU officer.
 Joseph Barracluff – Prewar Medical Assistant, Wartime ANGAU officer
 Major Penglase stationed at Wau
 Costello – ANGAU officer at Chimbu
 Mamba of Korogo – young leader later Jap collaborator
 General Douglas MacArthur
 General Yamita in charge Japanese forces in Wewak
 Fathers Jaksi and Broemanuel murdered by Japanese at But

Chapter 25 Epic Evacuation of Missionaries Overland from Sepik to the Highlands 3/4/1943

Sgt Danny Leahy – Highlands explorer and ANGAU officer
 Pat Studdy-Clift – author *When Nuns wore soldier’s trousers*
 Brother Tiberius
 Brother Januarius
 Father Laumann of Ulupu mission station
 Brother Cherubin Kaltbrunn
 Alois Kawan, a Sepik mission worker and informant for the writer
 Commander in chief General Yamamoto
 Lieut David Fienberg
 Baras of Japandai
 Augwi
 Carpar of Japanaut
 Gai

} Middle Sepik men recruited by Taylor as Special constables

Frank Boisen – of Education Dept Wewak, then as an ANGAU officer
 Fryer – prewar oil Search Ltd employee, wartime ANGAU officer
 Aiken - prewar oil Search Ltd employee, wartime ANGAU officer
 Neil Elliott – Patrol Officer murdered at Wanali in 1939
 Constable Aipaum – murdered at Wanali in 1939
 Lieut Commanded Sabe of the *Akikazi*
 Lieut Kami. prewar oil Search Ltd employee, wartime ANGAU officer
 Commander Mori Torao
 Ando, the Japanese officer in charge of signals

Chapter 26 Japanese Strategies

Lieut General Hanzo Adachi

Chapter 27 Need for Intelligence on Japanese Disposition in and Around Wewak

Lieut Lea Aston
Geoffrey Archer
Mac Hamilton
Lionel Veale
Sgt Nokeban of Avatip
Constable Angoui
Two Wewak men not named

} The Aston party

Special constable Karlo recruited at Marui mission
Wally Hook recruiter reported murdered
Constable Yarli
Sang – mission worker
Yapi of Torembei – writer’s informant
Luluai Wiune of Marap
“Gabriel” or “Raphael” Chou Chen On – gold miner
Topman of the Dutch party returned to Port Moresby

Attachment C – Saga of Indian POWs in the Sepik

Winston Churchill – Prime Minister
Major Chint Singh – Indian army
Narinda Singh – Major Singh’s son
Fakai – Japanese interpreter
Japanese Colonel Thakana
Captain Nirpal Chand prewar oil Search Ltd employee, wartime ANGAU officer
Sgt Tekai
Cpl Hananda
Private Yasusak
Private Tukura
Lieut Mitsuba

} Japanese who sent Indian prisoners to steal rations

L/Cpl Bawa Singh & Private Biara
Lieut Mitsuba and Lieut Imamura executed Capt Nirpal Chand
Private Yasusaka
Jem Kitial Singh
Risaldar Rashino Mohd – shot
L/Cpl Hazaea Singh – shot
L/Cpl Mashuq Ali - shot
Hav Waryam Singh – shot
Sipoi Kirpa Ram – shot
Sipoi Harman Singh – shot
Japanese nursing Orderly Maida
Girdhari Lal
Japanese Cpl Shimizu
Capt Ishar Singh – escaped
Jem Lachhman Singh – escaped, recaptured, beheaded
L/Cpl Angrezu Ram – escaped, recaptured, beheaded
Captain Hanover – shot by Lieut Wimori

And much more of the same
Medigama of Sengo and his wives provided food.
Lieut F.D.Monk of ANGAU
Major General Shoge – Japanese commanding officer of the Sepik force
General Thomas Blamey
Lieut Murai – accompanying POWs to Angoram
Masamichi Kitamoto
Sipois Jai Ram and Abraham - , now free died at Marienberg
Warrant Officer P.F. Fienberg [brother of David]

Chapter 28 Lieut. Fulton's Patrol No 6/1943-44.

Capt O'Donnell – OIC Lumi
Kooka – who accompanied the Thurston expedition
Capt Costello – OIC Kundiawa
Lieut English en route Bundi
Signals officers Hughes, Carra and Elton
Constable Likin
Private Davis
Missionaries Kasparius and Malcharek
Sgt Power
Lieut Barry
Warrant Officer England
Constable Tumul
Constable Lakiok
Father Jocham of Kambot mission
Brother Schneiderguss, Schmale and Celuba – Mission personnel withdrawn by Fulton.
Moris – claimed to be a Constable, left behind at Angoram taken on by Fulton
Father Cshwab
Constable Atonga
Father Kremiensi
Brother Sozubek
Egowa of Korogopa
Yamep of Bobten
Private Grey
Captain Upson
Yelan, a local man brought news of Private Grey's death

Chapter 29 Japanese occupy Burui & Taylor Distances his party from the Japanese.

Linauwi of Japandai
Japanese man Sumatalan
Japanese office Ama [Hama]
Capt Watanabe Masaichi a commander of the 4th Company 239th Regiment of 41st division
Hoshino Kazua – staff officer
Kalinaui of Yau'umbak – informant
Gumgwan, Wakalan, Galimi, Awanjui and Jamdundu – elders of Avatip met the Japs
who gave them ranks as native officials

Chapter 30 Establishing Begapuke Base, April River and a Journey to Abau [Green River]

Lieut. G.A.V.Stanley formerly of Oil Search Ltd
Sgt Markus [police] of Manus

Chapter 31 Aitape and Hollandia Expeditions Living Dangerously

Sgt. Stevermann in charge of the Dutch Party -ambushed and killed
Bras, [former policeman] Niwani and Amite – guides sent from Lumi with Dutch party
Walwari, Tultul of Seinam
Teni of Tauwete *The black king of Wapei* – cargo cult leader and Jap agent
Lieut .Watson
Makain – Aid Post Orderly and Jap agent
Mulo of Sikoia village – message runner
Yaipa of Nariota and Suwaiba of Seinam – subordinates of the Jap agents
Cpl H. Padiwail Ambonese member of Dutch party executed at Aitape
Private M.Reharing Ambonese member of Dutch party executed at Aitape
Sgt Leonard G Siffleet of Dutch party executed at Aitape
Garth Pratten's War Memorial history

Japanese Yunome and Hiro interrogated Siffleet at Malol
Captain Noto Kamada
Yasuno civilian administrator insisted on beheading
Yasuno Chikao, Yunome Kunio and Mitsuashi Masuyo – the executioners
Travis McCombe [son of Aitape Kiap Daryl] arranged a memorial

Chapter 32 Establishment of “Z” Special Unit’s Guerrilla Column in the Sepik

Lieut General Edmund Herring
Capt A.E.B.Trappes Lomax of AIB’s SRD – Moss Troops officer.
Capt J.K.McCarthy of North East Area – Moss Troops officer
Major H.M.Farlow of ANGAU – Moss Troops officer
Luluai Kwebo of Moli
Kina of Moli
Special Constable Nungwai
Special Constable Petrus – awarded Loyal Service Medal

Chapter 33 Karandaman of Malu and the Death of Lieut. Barracluff at Begapuke

Karandaman of Malu – leader, informant and Japanese collaborator
Melinyaut of Yambon – Karandaman’s first wife
Harold Woodman – Assistant District Officer Ambunti
Gumi Captain, Tanaka Captain Sagina Catain and Ama Captain – appointed
Karandaman as a high ranking native official
Gusap of Swagup - Jap official
Namgualimbol of Swagup writer’s informant
Minimbier of Kombuliap
Kabumbu – Prostitute of Yambon
Simen a woman of Kavieng
Kerry Leen – District Officer Wewak 1970s
Murray Tomlinson Patrol Officer 1970s
Baiyu/Manauai informant of Begapuke

Attachment D The search for Lieut Barracluff’s remains

Tabaru of Begapuke – interpreter 1970s

Chapter 34 Japanese Patrols Compel Moss Troops to Relocate to Yellow River Aug-Sept ‘43

Capt. MacNamara
Lieut Tame
Sgt Parish
Lieut Barnes
Wireless operator Kewan [with Lieut Boisen]
Major Walshe
Capt Grimson
Sgt Curren
Capt Cardew
Sgt Mackai
Sgt Dennis
Sgt Roberts
G.B.Courtney – author
Special Constable Kandimeri of Yambon
Special Constable Petrus Kanumeri of Brugnawi

Chapter 35 The Capture and Fate of Constable Baras and Party

Magindimi of Nyaurengai

Mondi – Baras' elder brother
Japanese officer Kubiassi
Japanese officer Ajata
Tigembi – wife of special constable Gaui
Karabanganawi – wife of special constable Gawi
Wolli wife of special constable Tungi
Gwai wife of special constable Linauwi
Kawiambu wife of special constable Baras
Sumbada of Japanaut had controlled and raped Sumbada – she died before the war ended.
Gini of Japandai – Baras new wife

Chapter 36 Moss Troops Attacked at Yellow River and Forced to Withdraw Aug – Dec '43

Sam Carey – Aitape trader
Sop of Tumleo
Kali of Boiken
Kablagame of Brugnowi reported Yellow Rv base to the Japanese
Kakameijos – the Japanese name for Karandaman
Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis
Beliebi of Naiuri
Uraguwai and six other Yambons
General Chamberlain

Chapter 37 Lieut. Boisen's Patrol Continues Behind Japanese Lines

Lieut Clark
Keniau – wireless operator

Chapter 38 Civil Administration Under the Japanese-appointed Native Officials

Bowdimi of Bangwingei writer's informant
Sur of Bangwingei killed
Miwia [female] and Kabagau taken to Sengo and killed with axes
Wogilagi, a young man shot
His wife Puragwa and child Wambilagwa taken to Sengo and killed with axes
Sui of Yanget – Jap appointed village official
Bermok of Bangwingei
Kabiwan of Kilimbit – writer's informant, and Jap official
Andiawi of Kilimbit – Jap official
Kosimanga – wife of Kisameri of Kilimbit
Mambawandimi – the formal name for Mamba of Korogo
Nambugei, a wartime captured Plains woman at Burui
Yisimblat who captured Nambugei
Uramo, father of Nambugei – compensated
Denys Faithful – post war Patrol Officer
Patjo, a Japandai girl given to Mamba to curb his hatred of Japandai elders
Gau [also spelt Gauinjamba] of Sengo – Jap appointed official – killed
Kambugumeri – Jap appointed official
Wanebi of Sengo – Jap official - killed
Tultul Webieli of Parembei – Australian supported – executed
Paila/Malasui and Taun/Gusangut of Parembei - writer's informants

Chapter 39 Issues of Sorcery.

Professor Peter Lawrence
Simbalanga and Yaramali of Torembei executed at Korogo as accused sorcerers
Banji of Japanaut executed at Korogo as an accused sorcerer

Mangaiwan and Tugwandidi of Korogo executed at Korogo as accused sorcerers
 Sugundini of Yamuk executed at Korogo as an accused sorcerer
 Mai'imp – cultural hero [equated to Jesus]
 Gauimeri of Yamuk – Jap appointed official and killer of accused sorcerers
 Father Kirschbaum
 Guwabi of Sarum } young women accused of sorcery
 Mabuoli of Yakiap } who Gauimeri allowed go free
 Usinbanga of Yakiap – former Jap official and writer's informant
 Kershaw – post war Patrol Officer

Chapter 40 Allied and Japanese Actions and Strategies Which Impacted the Sepik

Korechika Anami – Commander in chief of the 2nd Japanese Air Army
 Lieut Hall
 Floyd Raymond Jansen – author
 Capt G.C. "Blue" Harris
 Lieut. R.B. Weber
 Sgt. R.J. Cream
 Private J.I. Bunning
 Private G. Shortis
 Private P.C. Jeune
 Sgt Major Yali - Royal Papuan Constabulary
 Sgt Mas- Royal Papuan Constabulary
 Sgt Buka - Royal Papuan Constabulary
 Private Mariba - Royal Papuan Constabulary
 Sgt Lancelot – Indonesian Interpreter

} The ill-fated "Harris" party
 landed west of Hollandia

Chapter 41 Starvation, Malnutrition and related Illnesses.

Tamandi of Yanget – writer's informant
 Gumaji – Japanese who died at Yanget
 Painbanga of Nagotimbi – writer's informant
 Yagi of Yerikai – writer's informant
 Bandinambok, a Malu man reportedly eaten by Japanese at Maprik
 Takanau }
 Isikata } Japanese fed and cared for at Garamambu for a year
 Ivoyama – suicided }
 10 Japanese fed at Peliaugwi Island
 Capt Marimoto and 10 soldiers – fed at author of Mensuat
 Capt Yigimoto and a detachment – fed at Yambiyambi

Chapter 42 The Dorish Maru Incident.

Catholic Brother Bill Hagan – diary keeper
 Bishop Wolff – Catholic at Alexishafen
 Inuk Leong – eldest child of Chu Leong
 List of casualties from friendly fire on Page 212/213
 Lorna Fleetwood author of *A short history of Wewak*
 Esther Dockter Wegenast told the story from a Lutheran perspective
 Lutheran Dr Braun }
 Mrs Hattie Braun } Cared for the wounded
 Catholic Brother Geroch – medic }
 Nishira – Japanese Christian soldier provided half a barrel of rice
 Father Mai's leg amputated with Bishop Wolff's whisky as anaesthetic

Chapter 43 Allied Landings at Aitape with Little Resistance

Captain Robert Cole
Horrie Niall
Lieut Boyan
Ken McMullen
K.T.Allen
Ted Fulton
John Milligan
David Fienberg
Gus O'Donnell
Alan F Gow
Sgt Marcutt
Joe Searson
Wally Doe
Ted Elington
And others

ANGAU men involved in preparation for the Aitape landing

U.S. Brigadier General Doe
Lieut Kreiger of Dallas Texas
Former Sgt-Major Baugi of Sissano – won Loyal Service Medal
Martin of Kapoam – Loyal Service Medal
Maru and Banip of Ulau – Loyal Service Medals
Sgt Bill Fry – ANGAU Hollandia
Kai, a Chinese captured at Aitape – whereabouts unknown
Tang Mow, wife and four children captured Wewak brought to Hollandia
Former Constable Dralio of Manus
Former Constable Saromu
Brothers Reif and May reported executed by Japanese on Kairiru Island
F.D.Jones Patrol Officer

Chapter 44 Survivors of the Dorish Maru Rescued by Americans at Hollandia

Brother Berchmans,
Brother Januaris
Brother Bogumil
Brother Hagan

Escaped Japanese guard to seek American help

Chapter 45 Patrolling out of Aitape

Lieut Lambert M Company 3rd Battalion [US]
Constables Turu, Kaman, Aiya, Aimo and ex Sgt Pogwe
US Lieut Londrigan
US Lieut Tucker
US Sgt McCrae
US Lieut Jonkaran
Manawambi of Selni [i/c Wom area]
Sulingor of Periembil [i/c No 1 Urat area]
Tambulopi of Musembilem [i/c No 2 Urat area]
Apwas of Labuain [i/c Kombio and Suain area]
Yarawos of Yagrumbok [i/c Urim areas and to South]

Jap appointed native officials

Apeio/Nosibrok – Chief Japanese agent in the area.
Montitan Tultul of Yakamul
Ex Sgt Major Baugi of Sissano

Native Stalwarts

US S/Sgt Hagenlocker i/c native hospital
WO2 Mackie
US Sgt Farr
Late J.H.Wood of Drimboi plantation
Late Wally Hook – Labour recruiter

Andrias Walun
 Ah Gait – Indo-Chinese
 Maggie mixed race wife of Walun and three children
 Banano of Manus – murdered Yakumul natives
 Vincent Kerero, a Philippino
 Yuh Hing, brother in law of Ning Hee murdered.

Chapter 46 Challenging Patrols into the Troubled Wapei Region

WO2 Gow
 WO2 Edwards
 Lieut G.A.V.Stanley
 Ex-Sgt Bras
 Yaibu of Narete }
 Molo of Sigaite } Identified Japanese agents
 Teni of Tauwete }
 Makain }
 Constable Boier of Ereitei
 US Lieut Lillie
 US Lieut Onby
 WO2 Lyon of ANGAU

Chapter 47 MacGregor and Eichorn Secret Missions to the Sepik River

Constable 1980 Ponogan
 Constable 2546 Shuwi
 Constable 1978 Kagi
 Wau of Kairiru Island
 Mamas of Mindimbit
 Billy Eichorn – Freddie’s son
 WO2 Peter England

Chapter 48 Insertion of Hall and Fryer Surveillance Parties on the Sepik

Lieut Hall }
 Sgt Dolby } Hall’s party inserted near Timbunke
 Private McGruer }
 And eight natives }
 Capt Fryer }
 Lieut Aiken }
 Lieut Harlow }
 Lieut Walls }
 Sgt Cream } Fryer’s party landed on Yau’umbak Lagoon
 Sgt Wigley }
 Sgt Selmes }
 Cpl Evans }
 Cpl Francis }
 Mamba of Korogo
 The Timbunke massacre – See pages 244-245

Chapter 49 Japanese Counter-attack – Decisive Battle with the Americans at Driniumor Rv

Lieut. General Adachi

Chapter 50 Military Strategies. ANGAU Patrols & Skirmishes After Driniumor

Masamichi Kitomoto author of *Marathon Adventures*
 Constable Baket
 US Lieut Pascoe

WO2 Scholes
 US Bottcher
 Japanese Colonel Iwkiri
 Capt RR Cole
 WO2 Warrick
 US Lieut Barnard
 Const 2808 Dopi
 Ex Constable Kuku [pro Japanese]
 US Lieut Baxter
 Constable 2414 Kaman
 Samgis

Chapter 51 Unknown Tribesmen annihilate Japanese Patrol on the Sepik.

Namgualimbol of Swagup – writer’s informant
 Sinowi of Brugnowi
 Minglibi of Brugnowi
 Mabangai of Brugnowi
 Nanguliap of Kambuliap female killed by Japanese
 Au’un’hunu – Nanguliap’s child killed and eaten by Japanese
 Nasubag – Sacred tambaran figure
 Yaulpi – old woman in 1970s

} Accompanied Japanese investigating patrol to Kambuliap

Chapter 52 Construction of an Emergency Landing Strip at Telefomin Sept ’44 to Feb. ’45

Squadron leader [explorer] Michael Leahy
 Dr. Richard Thurnwald
 Lynette Townsend – GWL Townsend’s widow
 Major Vertigan
 Sune – Telefomin interpreter
 Major Wainwright
 Sgt Fraser - Medical
 T/5 M.Savko
 US Lieut Colonel Dupont
 US Lieut Colonel Anderson
 US Lieut Canner
 3 Operators
 Bill Gammage – author

} Those involved with 4 gliders taking bulldozers into Telefomin in 1944

Chapter 53 Captain Neptune Blood’s Patrol to Bagasin to Defuse the Gomaip Movement

Capt Neptune Blood
 Ex-Cpl of Police Gomaip [also known as Kaumaibu and/or Kaum]
 Keri son of paramount Luluai Ouba
 Capt W.R.Read
 Wagi, Tultul of Ouba
 Constable 3945 Wau
 Maisap
 Sisumaip, assistant to Gomaip
 Lieut Havilland
 WO2 Tuckey
 Lieut MacRae
 Dabus – a native Lutheran teacher
 Constable 5563 Wongi – murdered
 Masil of Bombos
 Takarupa o Aminik

Chapter 54 Greater East Asia Co=Prosperity Sphere Propaganda.

Japan's Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita
Tagarab of Milguk – cult leader
Kilibob and Manup of the “Two Brother” [God – Satan] cult myth

Chapter 55 Changing of the Guard – Operations From Supply Base Tong..

Second Lieut George W.G.Boyce –112th Cavalry Regiment – Congressional Medal of Honour
Posthumous award.

Major Ralph Cheli US Army Air Corps – Congressional Medal of Honour Posthumous
award

Second Lieut. Dale Eldon Christiansen – Cavalry Regiment Congressional Medal of Honour
Posthumous award

Staff Sgt. Gerlad L.Endl – 32nd Infantry Division – Congressional Medal of Honour
Posthumous award

Colonel Neel E Kearby US Army Air Corps – Congressional Medal of Honour Posthumous
Award

Private Donald R Lobaugh 32nd Infantry Division – Congressional Medal of Honour –
Posthumous award.

Australian Major General J.E.S Stevens

Australian Brigadier R.King

Australian Brigadier M.J.Moten

Australian Brigadier J.E.G.Martin

Australian Wing Commander W.E.Cooper

Australian Group Captain V.Hancock

Syd Trigellis-Smith – author of *All the Kings Enemies*

Japanese Lieut General Goro Mano

Japanese Lieut General Masuraro Nakai

Japanese Lieut General Hidemitsu Nakano

Japanese Rear Admiral Sato

Lieut Coleman. M.O'Loghlin

Sgt Aninstiff

Chapter 56 Allied Recapture of But, Dagua and Balif

Ke-en of Balif

Kapuasi of Balif

Capt Marshall

WO2 F. Kaad

Capt Ishar Singh – escaped

Lieut Miles

Ron Fuller

Major A.A.Roberta

Constable Gavi

General Blamey

Japanese General Nakai of 20th Division

Lieut Albert Chowne – VC posthumous award

Chapter 57 Locals take Affirmative Action

Mainoban

Jambundu of Avatip

Tibet

Uriaber

Dunamp

Lisundu Dangwan

Constable Nokoban of Avatip

Nauwi Sauinambi – writer's informant of Bangwis

} Malu natives, each given a
rifle by Behind the lines Australians

Baras' brother Mondri killed by Avatips
Yuwandu of Yambon
Mamba and Gauimeri mentioned as two who should die
Nungwai Jap agent

Chapter 58 The Capture of Maprik and Wewak.

Lieut General Adachi
Capt RR Cole
WO3 Kadam
Major Hay
Wing Commander Hall
Lieut. C.H.Miles
Capt Fienberg
Ron Fuller
R.A.Briggs – wounded
Japanese Lieut Colonel Tegenaka
Capt Milligan
Constable Nonguru
Manja – renegade policeman – located and killed by Nonguru
Mr. Tibet
Nanduk Killed at Aitape
Kwonji of Burui
L/Cpl Spencer Henry Walklate } Three of the 8 man ill-fated Operation “Copper”
Mike Dennis – lone survivor } against Mushu Island
Eagleton
Jason Stevens – author
Lieut Colonel Cox
Private Edward Kenna VC
SAS Major Jack Thurgar – War graves investigator

Chapter 59 New Guinea Infantry Joins the Fighting East of Maprik

Lieut Roche – wounded
Private Dala – killed
Private Andap – killed
Private Andon – killed
Private Lomi – killed
Lieut Harris – wounded
Private Willi – wounded, presumed killed
Lieut Watson – killed
Private Kolin – killed
Private Estrom – killed
Sgt F.S. Smith – killed
Lieut Cornish – killed

Chapter 60 Constable Nonguru's Private Payback Offensive

Constable Nonguru
Kwonji of Burui
Luluai Kemerabi of Japandai
Kambugia – Kemerabi's brother
Tugwaia of Japanaut – Jap appointed village official
Nambeli of Kaminimbit
Angowandimi of Kamanimbit
Kaikandu of Lavongai¹

¹ This is a Sepik village of the Manambu language group, not the Lavongai in New Ireland

Dandangu of Lavongai
Sagisaun of Lavongai

Chapter 61 Japanese Defeated

Major General H.C.H.Robertson
Lieut Monk
Lieut Jim Gorman } Party which walked through Japanese lines Wewak to Angoram
WO P.F.Fienberg } to demand Japanese surrender
10 native police – also part of above party
Captain Namura
Sgt Kita
Colonel J.A Bishop

Chapter 62 Freed Indian POWs On the Road to Recovery

Major Chint Singh
Jem Abdul Latif
Sepoy Laku Ram
Major Fogerty
WO Adachi } Former guards of Indian POWs,
L/Cpl Sakamoto } now POWs themselves
Capt Nirpal Chand – murdered [now remembered]
Lieut A.Galt
Lieut K.W. Peterson
Japanese L/Cpl Kiroka
Lieut Mitsuba
Sepoy Chain Singh
Sub Lieut Wilkinson of the RAN
Lieut Marsden Hordern
Major Calley
Major Goding
Major Widmer
Lieut Haydon
Sgt Ron Bader
Major J.Lowry } Members of the war crimes commission
Capt D. Bruce }
Lieut C.G.Stone }
General Yamashita “Tiger of Malaya”

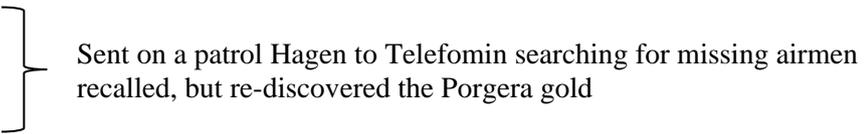
Chapter 63 And Then There Was Only One.

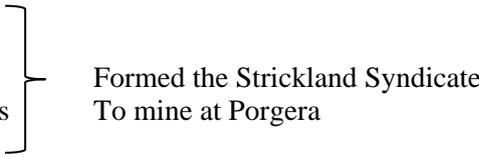
Lieut Trout
Lieut Murray
Lieut Takesiko Tazaki
Lieut Hisaneo Mitsuba
Long list of Indians Mitsuba killed and committed atrocities against [P311]
Major Kudo
Lieut General Shoge
Lieut Saito
Captain Kobauashi
Namio
Nashio Toshihiro
Private Yasusaka
Private Tokura
Private Hibano
Lieut Murai
Mamura

Lieut Izumi
 Lieut Rafferty
 Lieut Murriss
 Professor Peter Stanley
 Major General Iwakiri
 Ten Indian former refugees died in a plane crash en route to Rabaul

Chapter 64 War Ends and the Abrupt Return to Civil Administration

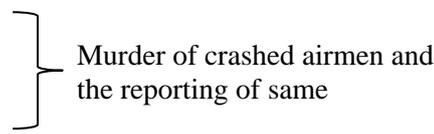
Major H.R.L “Horrie” Niall
 Major John Milligan
 Constable Taneiwa
 Kwonji of Burui
 Apai – a former clerk
 District Officer Jones
 General Adachi, sentenced to life, Suicided in Rabaul on 10thSept 1947
 Horie Masao – Chairman of Japan PNG Assn
 Capt Hama
 Dr Braun
 Father Mai
 Chu Leong
 Capt Blood
 Bill Macgregor
 Rhys Healy
 Ken Gorrige
 Neptune Bloor
 Joe Searson
 J.Black
 The three Leahy Brothers
 Doug Elphinstone
 Jim Taylor mined with Joe Serarson
 P.K.Moloney Patrol Officer
 Chris Maken Patrol Officer





Chapter 65 Transition from Military to Civil administration – Aitape

J.K.Murray – Administrator of Papua/New Guinea
 Major General Morris
 Brigadier Cleland
 Major J.L.Taylor
 Lieut Colonel H.I.P.Hogbin
 Mr. J.V Barry KC
 E.J.Ward Minister for External Affairs
 Commander Martin of the US Navy
 Capt. R. Ormsby
 Lieut Alan Gow i/c Lumi
 Capt Hoggard i/c Dreikikir
 Patrol Officer Elliott – killed at Wanali 1939
 J.Hodgekiss Patrol Officer
 Major G.G. Bloxham – Northern Command Lae
 Major H.R.L.Niall to be Post War DO Wewak
 Assistant District Officer F.H.Moi
 Weiwi of Kabori
 Wili of Kabori
 Tupei of Kabori
 Mauwi of Piako



Rhys Healy European Medical Assistant	}	of Lumi patrol post, then Sub District
Mrs Healy		
P.E.Fienberg Patrol Officer		
R.G.Orwin Patrol Officer		
S.S.Smith Assistant District Officer		
F.D.Jones Assistant District Officer		

} People involved in the early history

Chapter 66 Transition from Military to Civil administration – Wewak

Sister Stock
 Dr.Gunther
 Peter England – District Labour Officer
 Peter Flanagan – District Clerk
 Bill Textan – Police Officer
 Jerry Stewart – Trader
 Tang Mow and family
 Joe Czubeck SVD Brother
 Gonzaga SVD Brother
 Bishop Loerks – executed on *Azakazi*
 Bishop Arkfeldt – appointed in 1948
 Police Sgt Yauiga
 G.Greathead PO, acting ADO Wewak
 CW.Slattery
 FV.Reiatano
 Sami of Badjor village Wogeo Isl – murdered
 Mog of Jug village Wogeo Isl – murdered
 Prathe – a woman one of five murder victims Madjum village
 C,E.Terrell Cadet Patrol Officer

Chapter 67 Transition from Military to Civil administration – Maprik

Lieut General Adachi captured Kiarivu near Yangoru
 J.E.Wakeford – Patrol Office
 Neilson } of ANGAU - military
 Healey } Administration
 Mr Herkes Patrol Officer
 Lieut Tom Lega
 ADO K.T,. Bridge
 Mr Eichorn [Freddie] Labour Overseer at Angoram
 ADO J.J.Searson
 J.W.Rogers Patrol Officer
 K. Willianson European Medical Assistant
 L.Tomlinson European Medical Assistant
 Mr & Mrs W.G.Royal gold miners
 Mr. Boness, manager for R.R.Bell – gold miner
 Mr. A. Corrigan pegged gold claim
 Mt. J. Thurston’s claim poached
 Cecil Ah Chee – Chinese trader and recruiter
 Mr T. Wood trade store owner
 P.K.Moloney Patrol Officer
 L.F.Foster Patrol Officer
 M.J.Denehy Patrol Officer
 W.M.Stokes Patrol Officer
 C.G.Day Patrol Officer
 Father Blasig of Kunjingini mission
 John Wearne Patrol Officer

Appendix C

Acronyms used in this volume

AAMC	Australian Army Medical Corps
ADO	Assistant District Officer
AIB	Allied Intelligence Bureau
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANGAU	Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit
AN&EF	Australian Naval and Expeditionary Force [WW1]
ANZAC	Australia New Zealand Army Corps
ARM	Assistant Resident Magistrate [Papuan administration of ADO]
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless of Australia Limited
AWCU	Australian War Crimes Unit
BEM	British Empire Medal
BGD	Bulolo Gold Dredging
Capt.	Captain
C in C	Commander in Charge
Const.	Constable
CPO	Cadet Patrol Officer
DNE	Deceased Native Estates
DO	District Officer
EPL	Exploratory Prospecting Licence
FELO	Far East Liaison Organisation
GHQ	General Headquarters
GNG	German New Guinea
HQ	Headquarters
IASD	Inter Allied Services Department – abbreviated to ISD
KC	King’s Counsel
KM	Kilometre
L, LT, Lieut.	Lieutenant
LL	Luluai [village official]
M.C.	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
MTT	Medical Tultul – village official
MV	Motor Vessel
NARs	Native Administration Regulations
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NGAU	New Guinea Administrative Unit
NGIB	New Guinea Infantry Battalion
NGPF	New Guinea Police Force
NGVR	New Guinea Volunteer Rifles
Norcom	Northern Command
OBE	Order of the British Empire
OIC, O/C	Officer in Charge
OR	Other Ranks [Non commissioner]
PAU	Papua Administrative Unit
PCB	Production Control Board

PEDP	A form of compensation for native soldiers
PIR	Pacific Islands Regiment [Australian army]
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PO	Patrol Officer
POW	Prisoner of War
PT boat	US fast moving torpedo boat
Pte	Private
R&R	Rest & Recreation
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RANVR	Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Rifles
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
REV	Reverend
RN	Royal Navy
RM	Resident Magistrate [Papuan administration equivalent of DO]
RPC	Royal Papua Constabulary
RP&NGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
Sgt	Sergeant
S/L	Squadron Leader
SOA	Special Operations Australia
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SRD	Special Reconnaissance Department
SVD	Society of the Divine Word – Catholic Mission
SWPA	South West Pacific Area
TNG	Territory of New Guinea
T/R	Teleradio
TT	Tultul – village official/interpreter
USS	United
WO2	Warrant Officer grade 2
WW 2	World War 2
“Z”	Special unit – Holding unit within SRD

Appendix D

GLOSSARY of PIDGIN ENGLISH WORDS

.

<i>balus</i>	–	aircraft
<i>beten</i>	–	prayer
<i>daka</i>	–	mustard, an ingredient used when chewing betel nut
<i>em nau!</i>	–	“that’s it!”
<i>garamut</i>	–	slit gong – message drum
<i>girigiri</i>	–	small white cowries
<i>haus kiap</i>	-	rest house, village house for visiting officials
<i>haus tambaran</i>	–	spirit house – sacred house
<i>kago bilong ol tumbuna</i>	–	the cargo of the ancestors
<i>kambang</i>	–	lime an ingredient used when chewing betel nut
<i>kanaka</i>	-	bush man, also a derogatory term for indigenous person
<i>kanda</i>	–	cane
<i>kaukau</i>	–	sweet potato
<i>kiap</i>	-	officer of the Department of District Services and Native Affairs
<i>kina</i>	-	gold lip pearl shell
<i>kong kong</i>	–	person of Chinese origin
<i>kulau</i>	–	green coconut
<i>kumo</i>	–	edible greens
<i>laplap</i>	–	loin cloth/ sari
<i>limbom</i>	–	a palm tree used as building material – typically flooring
<i>lotu</i>	–	religious service
<i>lotuim tambaran</i>	–	worship traditional spirits/gods
<i>malolo</i>	–	rest, relax
<i>mami</i>	–	species of yam
<i>marila</i>	–	a spell – typically used in love magic
<i>masalai</i>	–	spirit [of the forest or waterways etc]
<i>masta tripinga</i>	–	Mr. three fingers – Chu Leong’s nickname
<i>morota</i>	–	sago thatch
<i>meri</i>	–	woman
<i>pasin kanaka</i>	–	traditional ways
<i>pulpul</i>	–	grass skirt. Pulpul can also mean flower
<i>saksak</i>	-	sago
<i>tambaran</i>	–	ancestral spirit, god [local god, not Christian God]
<i>tambu</i>	–	very small snail shells – used as currency in Tolai and other cultures
<i>tanket</i>	–	a sheaf of croton leaves denoting the number of days to a planned event
<i>tok pisin</i>	–	pidgin english
<i>tosembum</i>	–	shell valuable made from the giant green sea snail
<i>tumbuna</i>	-	ancestor
<i>umben</i>	–	fishing net
<i>wok bembe</i>	–	cargo cult
<i>wontok</i>	–	friend

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Map Information and Notations

The five maps are not completely to scale. The actual routes of patrols and positions marked are best approximations.

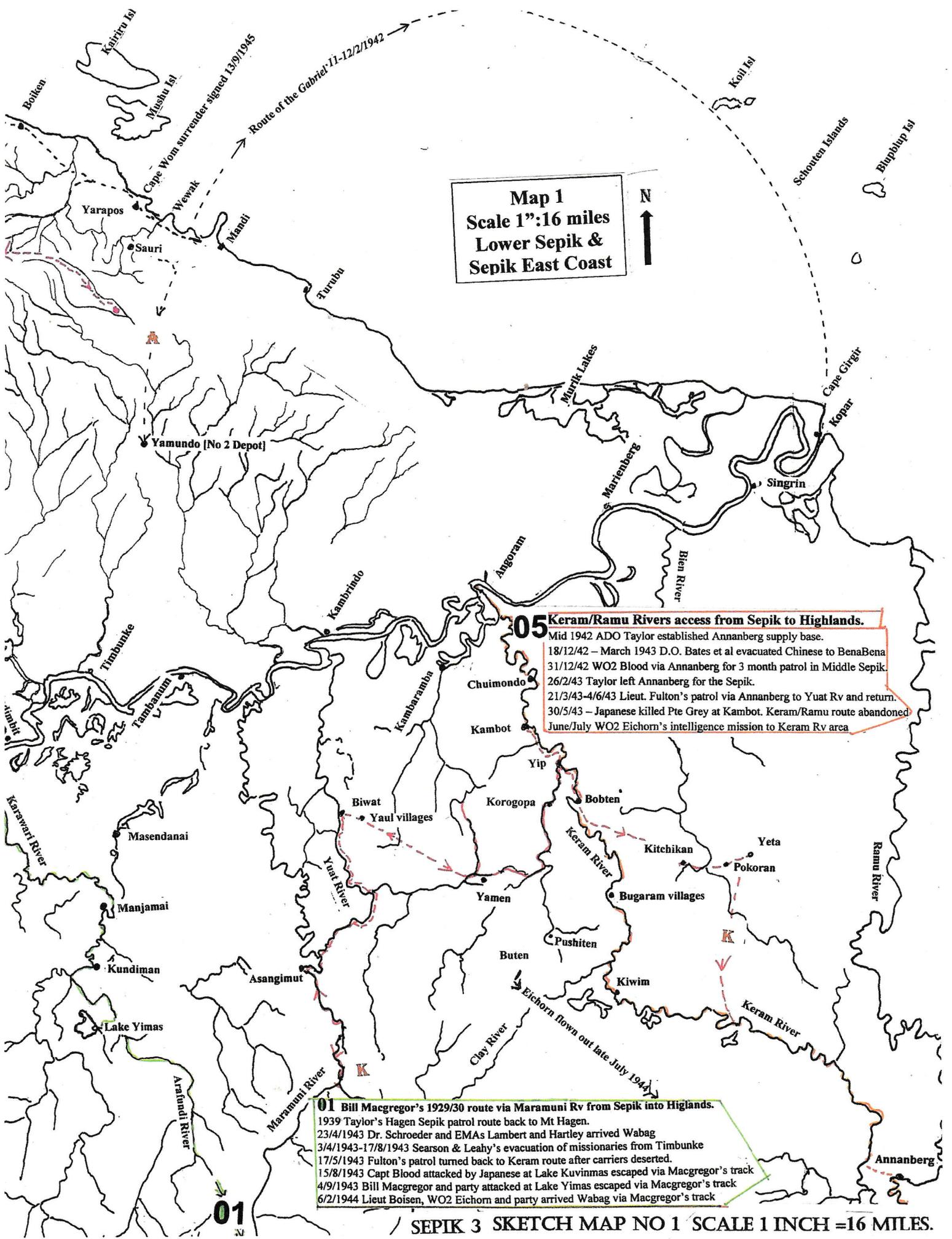
Map Notations 01-09.

- 01 Bill Macgregor's route into the highlands via Yuat and Maramuni Rivers 1929-1944
- 02 Lake Kuvanmas; a listing of events and operations there from March 1943 to war's end.
- 03 Lake Yimas; a listing of events and operations there during 1942-43
- 04 Sepik/Yellow River junction events there 1914-1956
- 05 Keram/Ramu river route from Sepik to Highlands
- 06 Sgt Stavermann's ill-fated "Dutch Party" and its Woma base [approx. position].
- 07 Operations "Persecution" and "Reckless" — US landings at Aitape and Hollandia April'44.
- 08 Telefomin airstrip; a short chronology of its history.
- 09 The Thurston expedition. April to September 1942.

Patrol Routes A — K (shown as - - - - -)

- A Hodgekiss, Minogue and Conboy Sauri to establish Supply Depot 2 at Yamundo.
- B Thurston expedition [excluding Sepik River and Yimas leg of the journey]
- C Renegade police route to and from Sigabika to murder miners 10/4/1942
- D Ashton expedition — late February 1943 to early May 1943
- E Taylor party from Mino to Kuvanmas via April Rv and Begapuke
- F Approx route taken by Indian POWs May 194 until Japanese surrender
- G Aitape Patrol 1/44-45 Searson to Tarawai Isl. And rivers east of DriniumorRv.
- H Fryer 1 via Sanchi Rv to Maimai-Ltuni to position Dutch party and out via Yellow Rv.
- I The approx. route taken by the Dutch Party.
- J Fryer 2 via Amagu Rv. Met Fulton at Salada and out via Aitape.
- K Fulton's Ramu/Sepik patrol 6/1942-43.

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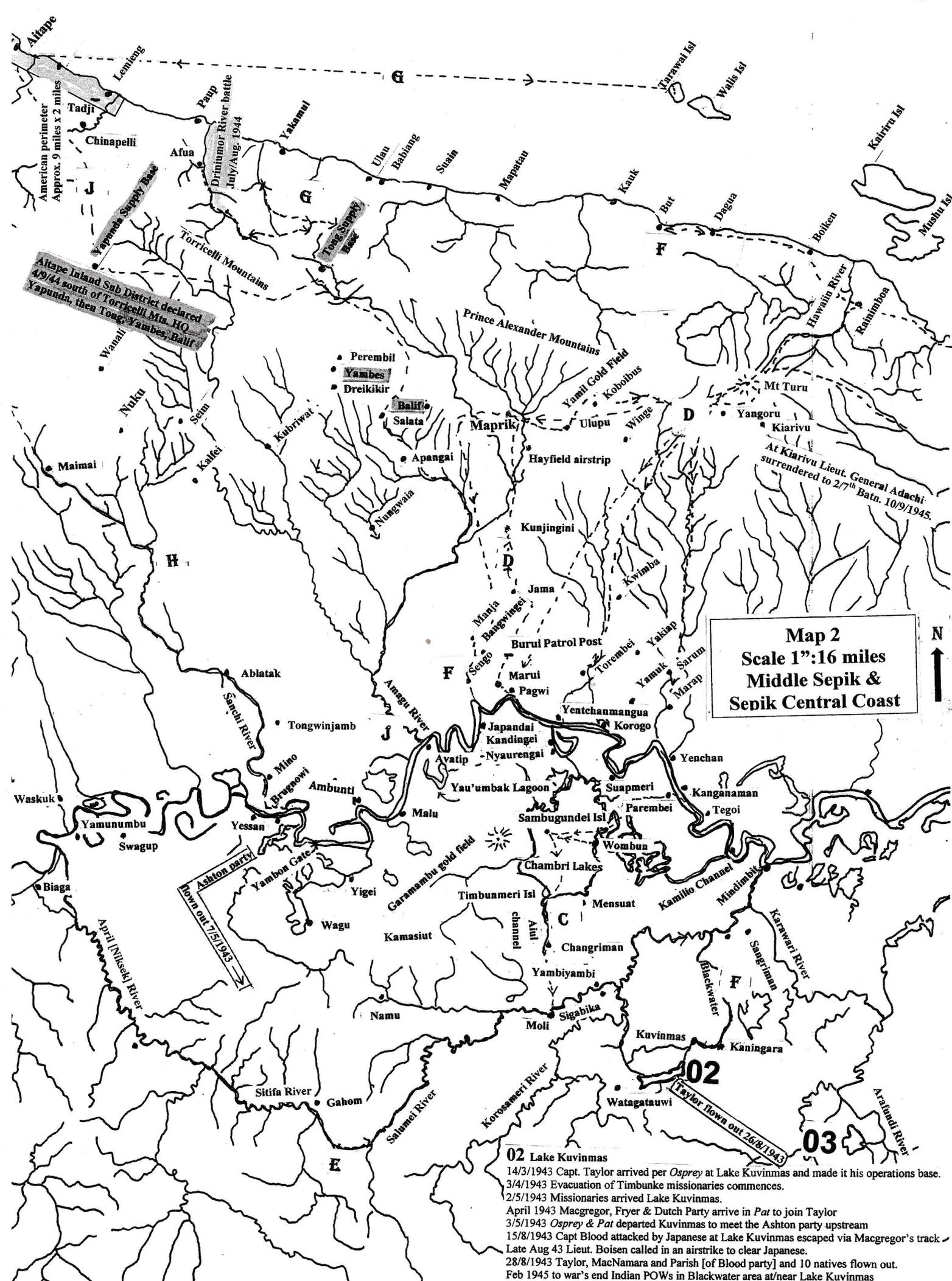


Map 1
Scale 1":16 miles
Lower Sepik &
Sepik East Coast

05 Keram/Ramu Rivers access from Sepik to Highlands.
 Mid 1942 ADO Taylor established Annanberg supply base.
 18/12/42 - March 1943 D.O. Bates et al evacuated Chinese to BenaBena
 31/12/42 WO2 Blood via Annanberg for 3 month patrol in Middle Sepik.
 26/2/43 Taylor left Annanberg for the Sepik.
 21/3/43-4/6/43 Lieut. Fulton's patrol via Annanberg to Yuat Rv and return.
 30/5/43 - Japanese killed Pte Grey at Kambot. Keram/Ramu route abandoned
 June/July WO2 Eichorn's intelligence mission to Keram Rv area

01 Bill Macgregor's 1929/30 route via Maramuni Rv from Sepik into Highlands.
 1939 Taylor's Hagen Sepik patrol route back to Mt Hagen.
 23/4/1943 Dr. Schroeder and EMAs Lambert and Hartley arrived Wabag
 3/4/1943-17/8/1943 Searson & Leahy's evacuation of missionaries from Timbunke
 17/5/1943 Fulton's patrol turned back to Keram route after carriers deserted.
 15/8/1943 Capt Blood attacked by Japanese at Lake Kuvinmas escaped via Macgregor's track
 4/9/1943 Bill Macgregor and party attacked at Lake Yimas escaped via Macgregor's track
 6/2/1944 Lieut Boisen, WO2 Eichorn and party arrived Wabag via Macgregor's track

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Map 2
 Scale 1":16 miles
 Middle Sepik &
 Sepik Central Coast

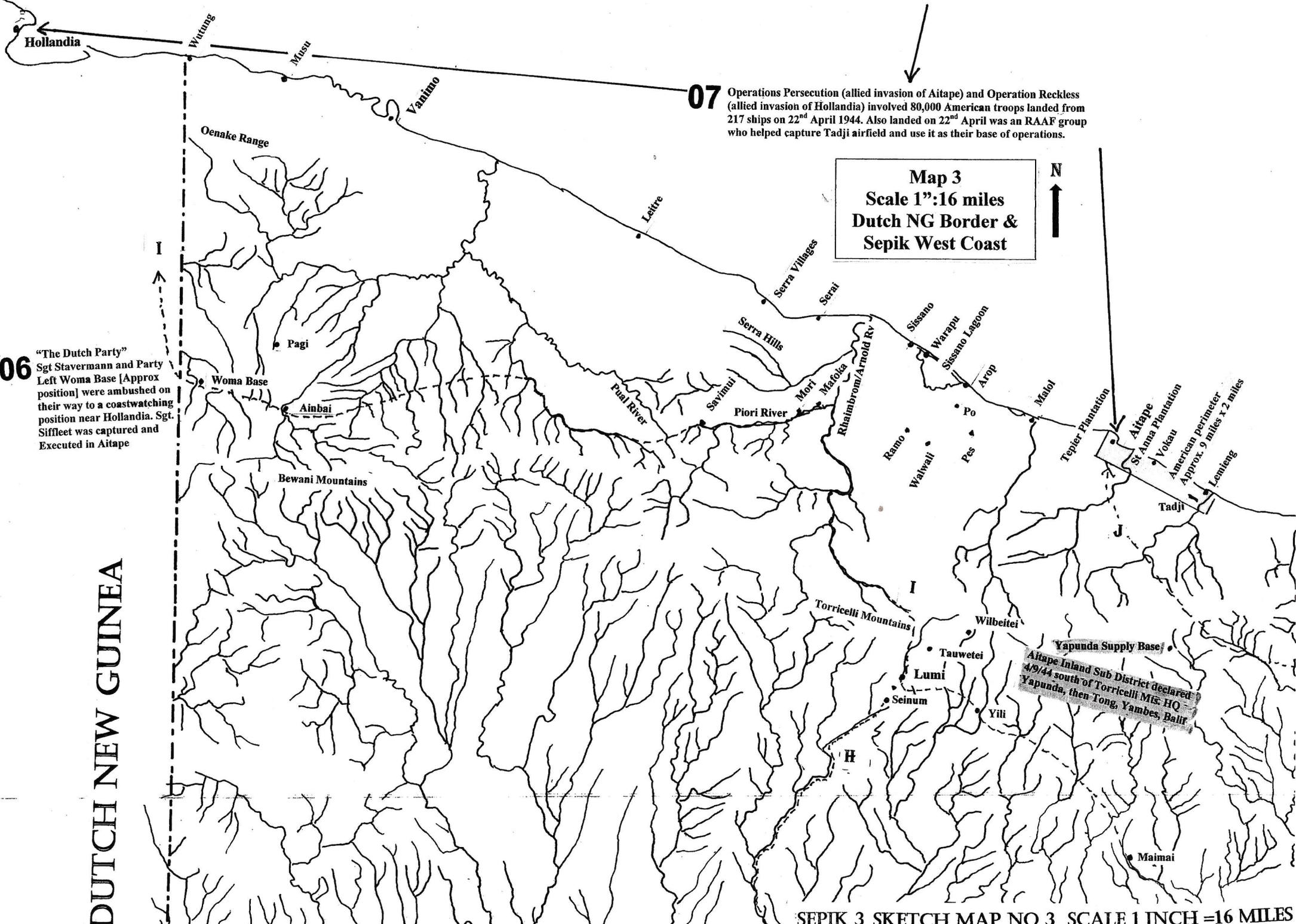
SEPIK 3

SKETCH MAP NO 2 SCALE 1 INCH = 16 MILES.

02 Lake Kuvinmas
 14/3/1943 Capt. Taylor arrived per *Osprey* at Lake Kuvinmas and made it his operations base.
 3/4/1943 Evacuation of Timbunke missionaries commences.
 2/5/1943 Missionaries arrived Lake Kuvinmas.
 April 1943 Macgregor, Fryer & Dutch Party arrive in *Pat* to join Taylor
 3/5/1943 *Osprey* & *Pat* departed Kuvinmas to meet the Ashton party upstream
 15/8/1943 Capt Blood attacked by Japanese at Lake Kuvinmas escaped via Macgregor's track
 Late Aug 43 Lieut. Boisen called in an airstrike to clear Japanese.
 28/8/1943 Taylor, MacNamara and Parish [of Blood party] and 10 natives flown out.
 Feb 1945 to war's end Indian POWs in Blackwater area at/near Lake Kuvinmas

03 Lake Yimas.
 21/1/1942. DO Jones ordered Jack Thurston to establish the rear supply base at Lake Yimas.
 21/3/1942. PO Strudwick ordered from Lake Yimas to Timbunke, where he was murdered.
 1/4/1942-10/4/1942 *Thetis* & *Fanny* Timbunke - Yimas - Timbunke

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07 Operations Persecution (allied invasion of Aitape) and Operation Reckless (allied invasion of Hollandia) involved 80,000 American troops landed from 217 ships on 22nd April 1944. Also landed on 22nd April was an RAAF group who helped capture Tadji airfield and use it as their base of operations.

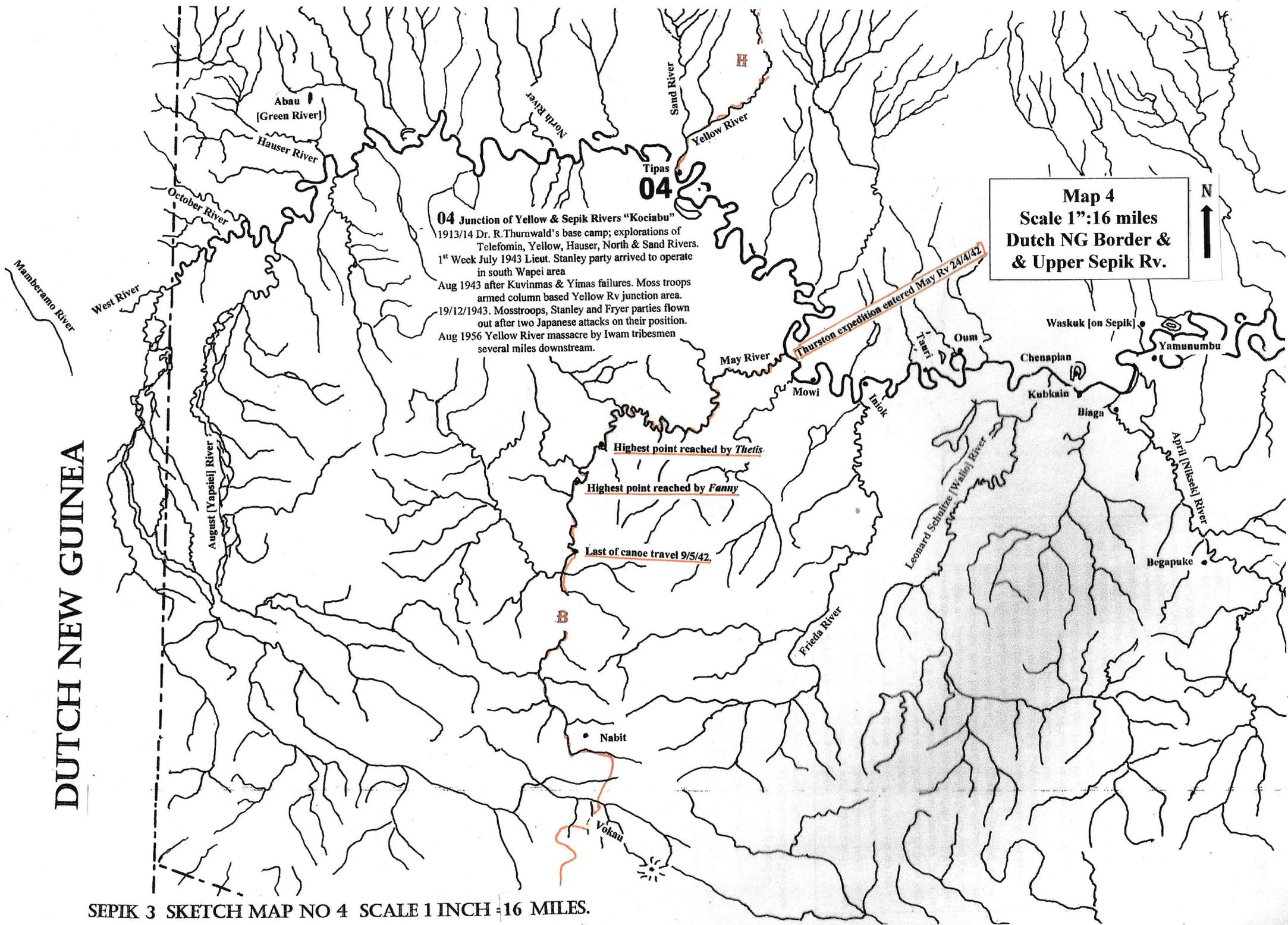
Map 3
Scale 1":16 miles
Dutch NG Border &
Sepik West Coast

06 "The Dutch Party" Sgt Stavermann and Party Left Woma Base [Approx position] were ambushed on their way to a coastwatching position near Hollandia. Sgt. Siffleet was captured and Executed in Aitape

Yapunda Supply Base
 Aitape Inland Sub District declared 4/9/44 south of Torricelli Mts: HQ Yapunda, then Tong, Yambes, Ballf

DUTCH NEW GUINEA

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Map 4
 Scale 1":16 miles
 Dutch NG Border &
 & Upper Sepik Rv.

04 Junction of Yellow & Sepik Rivers "Kociabu"
 1913/14 Dr. R.Thurnwald's base camp; explorations of
 Telefomin, Yellow, Hauser, North & Sand Rivers.
 1st Week July 1943 Lieut. Stanley party arrived to operate
 in south Wapei area
 Aug 1943 after Kuvinmas & Yimas failures. Moss troops
 armed column based Yellow Rv junction area.
 19/12/1943. Mosstroops, Stanley and Fryer parties flown
 out after two Japanese attacks on their position.
 Aug 1956 Yellow River massacre by Iwam tribesmen
 several miles downstream.

Highest point reached by *Thetis*.

Highest point reached by *Fanny*

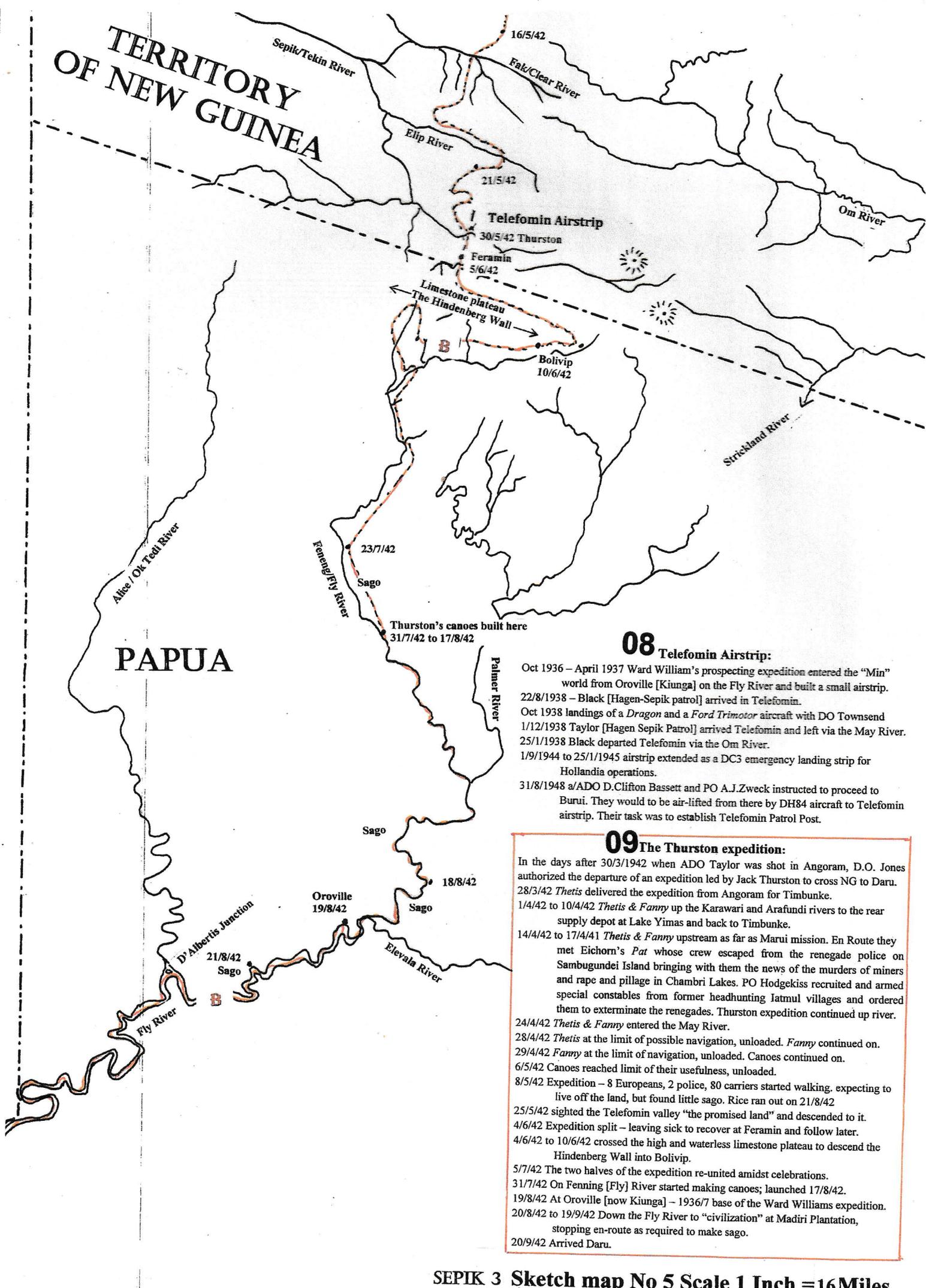
Last of canoe travel 9/5/42.

DUTCH NEW GUINEA

SEPIK 3 SKETCH MAP NO 4 SCALE 1 INCH -16 MILES.

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TERRITORY OF NEW GUINEA



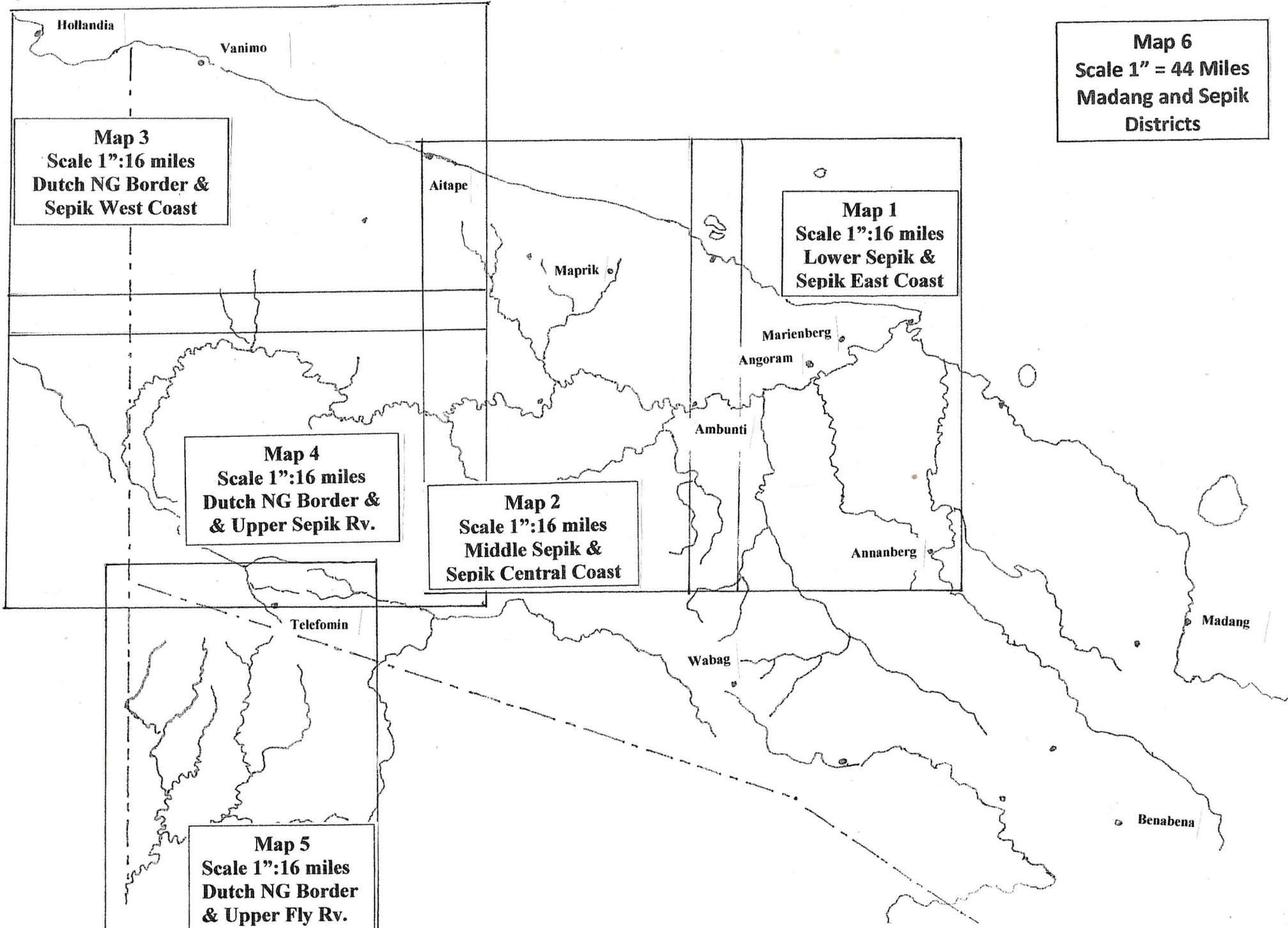
08 Telefomin Airstrip:

- Oct 1936 – April 1937 Ward William's prospecting expedition entered the "Min" world from Oroville [Kiunga] on the Fly River and built a small airstrip.
- 22/8/1938 – Black [Hagen-Sepik patrol] arrived in Telefomin.
- Oct 1938 landings of a *Dragon* and a *Ford Trimotor* aircraft with DO Townsend
- 1/12/1938 Taylor [Hagen Sepik Patrol] arrived Telefomin and left via the May River.
- 25/1/1938 Black departed Telefomin via the Om River.
- 1/9/1944 to 25/1/1945 airstrip extended as a DC3 emergency landing strip for Hollandia operations.
- 31/8/1948 a/ADO D.Clifton Bassett and PO A.J.Zweck instructed to proceed to Burui. They would be air-lifted from there by DH84 aircraft to Telefomin airstrip. Their task was to establish Telefomin Patrol Post.

09 The Thurston expedition:

- In the days after 30/3/1942 when ADO Taylor was shot in Angoram, D.O. Jones authorized the departure of an expedition led by Jack Thurston to cross NG to Daru.
- 28/3/42 *Thetis* delivered the expedition from Angoram for Timbukne.
 - 1/4/42 to 10/4/42 *Thetis* & *Fanny* up the Karawari and Arafundi rivers to the rear supply depot at Lake Yimas and back to Timbukne.
 - 14/4/42 to 17/4/41 *Thetis* & *Fanny* upstream as far as Marui mission. En Route they met Eichorn's *Pat* whose crew escaped from the renegade police on Sambugunde Island bringing with them the news of the murders of miners and rape and pillage in Chambri Lakes. PO Hodgekiss recruited and armed special constables from former headhunting Iatmul villages and ordered them to exterminate the renegades. Thurston expedition continued up river.
 - 24/4/42 *Thetis* & *Fanny* entered the May River.
 - 28/4/42 *Thetis* at the limit of possible navigation, unloaded. *Fanny* continued on.
 - 29/4/42 *Fanny* at the limit of navigation, unloaded. Canoes continued on.
 - 6/5/42 Canoes reached limit of their usefulness, unloaded.
 - 8/5/42 Expedition – 8 Europeans, 2 police, 80 carriers started walking. expecting to live off the land, but found little sago. Rice ran out on 21/8/42
 - 25/5/42 sighted the Telefomin valley "the promised land" and descended to it.
 - 4/6/42 Expedition split – leaving sick to recover at Feramin and follow later.
 - 4/6/42 to 10/6/42 crossed the high and waterless limestone plateau to descend the Hindenberg Wall into Bolivip.
 - 5/7/42 The two halves of the expedition re-united amidst celebrations.
 - 31/7/42 On Fenning [Fly] River started making canoes; launched 17/8/42.
 - 19/8/42 At Oroville [now Kiunga] – 1936/7 base of the Ward Williams expedition.
 - 20/8/42 to 19/9/42 Down the Fly River to "civilization" at Madiri Plantation, stopping en-route as required to make sago.
 - 20/9/42 Arrived Daru.

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Hollandia

Vanimo

Map 3
Scale 1":16 miles
Dutch NG Border &
Sepik West Coast

Aitape

Maprik

Map 1
Scale 1":16 miles
Lower Sepik &
Sepik East Coast

Marienberg
Angoram

Map 4
Scale 1":16 miles
Dutch NG Border &
& Upper Sepik Rv.

Map 2
Scale 1":16 miles
Middle Sepik &
Sepik Central Coast

Ambunti

Annanberg

Telefomin

Map 5
Scale 1":16 miles
Dutch NG Border
& Upper Fly Rv.

Wabag

Madang

Benabena

Map 6
Scale 1" = 44 Miles
Madang and Sepik
Districts