

Member	Martin Cameron	Electorate	Morwell
Period	1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$11,646.84
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$0.00

Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	\$0.00
Member did not receive the motor vehicle allowance in the previous quarter and member has elected to receive the motor vehicle allowance for this quarter	No

Regulation 9 - Parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	
Total amount paid to member for parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	\$0.00
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	n/a

Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation
29-Jul-24	01-Aug-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$504.00	Melbourne	\$504.00
02-Jul-24	03-Jul-24	Join Kokoda Trek Exploration which is ex-Brisbane	\$295.08	Brisbane	\$269.00
12-Aug-24	15-Aug-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$624.00	Melbourne	\$624.00
26-Aug-24	29-Aug-24	Parliamentary Sitings and Committee Meeting	\$621.18	Melbourne	\$612.00
09-Sep-24	12-Sep-24	Parliamentary Sitings	\$556.32	Melbourne	\$548.10

Total number of nights for travel allowance claims 13
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance \$2,600.58

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
02-Jul-24	13-Jul-24	Melbourne to Brisbane - Join Kokoda trek expedition which is ex-Brisbane	\$893.44	Flights	\$893.44

Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims 11
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance \$893.44

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
02-Jul-24	13-Jul-24	Kokoda Adventure:9 day trek ex Brisbane	\$6,991.33

Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims 11
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance \$6,991.33
See attached travel report for further details

Kokoda July 3-13, 2024

This is the travel report for Martin Cameron, Member for Morwell.

Travelling with Tim Bull – Member for Gippsland East, John Pesutto – Member for Hawthorn , Cindy McLeish – Member for Eildon and Wayne Farnham – Member for Narracan.



Travelled to Papua New Guinea from 3 July to 13 July 2024. Participated in Adventure Kokoda Trek from Kokoda to Owers Corner. Travel relates to electorate business to undertake research and represent the view and interests of constituents on Kokoda Trail.

Background

The Kokoda Trail campaign of 1942 and subsequent Beach Heads battle is a part of Australian history that many believe is not as well understood as it should be.

While many have a knowledge of the basics of the Gallipoli campaign, where we fought on foreign shores for the Allies and were defeated, most Australians will say they have “heard of Kokoda” but do not really know the details.

Of course, in this battle we were fighting on what was then Australian territory in what is now known as the battle to save Australia – and we won.

Having had their initial effort to capture Port Moresby by a seaborne landing disrupted by the battle of the Coral Sea, the Japanese saw the Kokoda Trail as a means by which to advance on it overland.

Such was the terrain, few believed they would make this attempt.

Troops of the South Seas Detachment began landing at Gona on 21 July 1942, intending initially just to test the feasibility of the Kokoda Trail as a route of advance, but a full-scale offensive soon developed.

The first defence was the Victorian raised 39th Battalion (militia). They were poorly equipped, had not yet developed effective jungle warfare tactics, and were at the end of a very long and difficult supply line.

They were initially reinforced at Isurava by the 2/14th (also from Victoria) and this was the first time our militia and AIF fought alongside each other. Prior to this the AIF referred to the militia as “chockos” – an abbreviation for chocolate soldiers and they believed they would melt in the heat of battle.

However, the AIF was in awe of what the 39th had achieved as they became known as “those ragged bloody heroes”.

A number of desperate delaying actions were fought as the Australians conducted a fighting withdrawal along the Trail. They finally stopped on 17 September at Imita Ridge, the last natural obstacle, a mere 8 km from the junction with the road to Port Moresby. The Japanese held the opposite ridge, 6 km distant at Ioribaiwa.

By this stage much had changed in favour of the Australians. Their artillery at Ower's Corner was now in range and their supplies could be trucked most of the way forward; whereas Japanese supplies had to be carried all the way from the north coast.

The Japanese were emaciated, racked with disease and starving to the stage where some engaged in cannibalism. Despite this, it was another reason the final battle never occurred.

As a result of severe losses suffered by the Japanese on Guadalcanal following the American landing there, the South Seas Detachment was ordered to withdraw to the north coast of Papua and establish a defensive position there.

As a result they were pursued back over the Trail to the northern beaches, which became a significant battle site in its own right.

The Australians lost 625 killed, 1,055 wounded and 4,000 sick. Japanese losses were higher..

The Australian troops were marred by a command that never understood the territory, geography, fighting conditions or challenges.

It was jungle warfare at its worst with hand to hand fighting, disease ever prevalent and extreme wet and heat conditions prevailing.

There were two treks and the MP's were split into two groups, one heading south to north and the other north to south. The groups met at the half way point. On these treks, our group was accompanied by 25 students from across Victoria who had won scholarships to better understand the sacrifices their forebears made, as well as develop leadership skills.

Each was allocated a soldier from their community. They visited where that soldier died, had it explained to them what occurred and how he died - and then they visited the graves of their soldier to say thanks, reflect and make a commitment to their soldier to how they will live their lives – very powerful.

Following is a precis of the trip and it will cover those who trekked north to south. However, both groups visited all these sites, so it remains pertinent to all.

Airport

On arrival at the airport, it is a significant location as it was also the wartime airport where lives were lost. Among those killed in the vicinity were:

- Stan Snow (Cpl 2/33rd Battalion), of Rochester. Killed in action September 11, 1943. Buried in Bomana War Cemetery. Grave C1.D.4 On 7 September, while the battalion's personnel waited to fly out to Nadzab from here. A US bomber laden with bombs and petrol, crashed into trucks carrying the battalion members, killing 60 and injuring a further 92, including Stan. He sustained severe 2nd and 3rd degree burns to the face, neck, arms and hands, from which he would not recover and succumbed to his wounds four days later.
- Stewart Devine (Fl Lt, RAAF 36 Sqd), 38, Warragul. KIA September 14, 1942. Killed in accident when his Douglas DC2 crashed near Seven Mile Runway, Port Moresby, killing all five on board. Grave B2. D. 6 Accident was 2kms from here. All five service on personnel board were killed.

Kokoda

The 39th departed Owers' on July 8 and arrived here on July 14. The Japanese landed at the northern beaches on July 21, about 100 kilometres from here. There were skirmishes to the north of here in places like Oivi and Gorari.

But it was here in the first battle of Kokoda that a small band of troops of around 100 from B Company first encountered the 2000 strong advancing Yokoyama Advance Guard. They were forced back into the jungle on the 29th July 1942.

They were not well trained and had inferior weapons, but Japanese accounts later stated they felt they were fighting a force of over 1,000. To make matters worse, commanding officer, Colonel Owen – one of the few with any experience, was killed.

Lieutenant Garland later said: *He (Owen) was a fine man. He formed us up around the perimeter of Kokoda because that was where the Japanese would attack ... and he walked around the top of the perimeter where we were all lying down ... And I said 'Sir' I think you are taking an unnecessary risk walking around among the troops like that'. 'Well', he said 'I've got to do it.' I suppose a half hour later he got shot right through the forehead.'*

William Parr of Wonthaggi was one of the last to leave the Plateau. He and his mate Horace "Rusty" Hollow from Mildura provided the covering fire for others to escape, killing around 20 Japanese before running out of ammunition and Parr turned to Rusty and casually said "Come on Rusty, time to go" as they headed for Deniki.

Three months later, on November 3 our ragged troops stood here again and raised the flag after one of the most epic campaigns in Australian military history.

A total of 22 were killed in the first and second battles of Kokoda and many of the fox holes and trenches can still be seen there today.

Killed in action at Kokoda included:

- Owen, William Taylor (Bill) (Lt Col 39th) 37, of **Leongatha** and Moonee Ponds. KIA 29 July 1942 at Kokoda, aged 37 years. Grave reference C6. E. 4
- Reg Hunter (Pte 2/14th), of Axedale, died October 4, 1942. Buried at Bomana War Cemetery Grave C7.B.15
- Donald Howlett (Cpl, 39th), 17, of Snake Valley, Victoria. Killed on Aug 10, 1942. No known grave. Remembered on Panel 7 at Bomana. Don is significant as he is the youngest person buried or remembered at Bomana. Last seen in the vicinity of the airfield and believed killed near there.

Hoi

It was near here that Cameron met strong opposition (just up the hill and when you walk up this hill today there were men killed and lost there.

Also between here and Kovello is the are where Reg Tierney died.

- Tierney, Reginald (Pte 39th), aged 33, of **Morwell**. KIA July 29, 1942. Reg was killed in the first battle of Kokoda and his body was never recovered. Panel 5 Bomana War Cemetery.

Deniki

After the first battle of Kokoda, fought over July 28–29, the outnumbered Australians of B Company of the 39th who survived, withdrew to here.

With commanding officer, Colonel Owen killed, it was here the remaining companies arrived and joined up with B Company.

Major Allan Cameron was in command and planned to retake Kokoda. He planned an attack for 8 August, with three companies advancing on different lines. Two of the companies were held up and forced to retire.

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

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

D Company was sent for an ambush but found themselves pinned down near Pirivi and this is where Dwyer (Bdale) and Robinson (Orbost) were killed.

B Company was having a well earned rest.

The separated companies didn't know what was happening to each other. By 10 August, Kokoda was abandoned by A Company and all units returned to Deniki. It was on this withdrawal Cpl Donald Howlett was killed. He is the youngest person buried at Bomana aged 17.

They were soon under attack at Deniki and with the threat of envelopment, the battalion commenced to withdraw towards Isurava on the morning of 14 August.

When the Japs had the high ground many of the troops had to get through an open field of fire in their effort to get to Isurava.

A total of 16 killed in this are which included the effort to re-take Kokoda:

- Balfour, Leslie (Pte 39th), of Drouin, aged 21. KIA August 9, 1942. Originally buried at Deniki but it seems grave not reidentified. Grave unknown. Panel 5 Bomana Memorial.
- Dwyer, Joseph (Pte, 39th), of Bairnsdale, aged 32. KIA August 8, 1942 near Pirivi. Following an ambush, Dwyer went off to fill water bottles for wounded soldiers and was never seen again. Grave unknown. Panel 5 Bomana memorial.
- Robinson, John (Pte 39th), of Orbost aged 27. KIA on August 8 near Pirivi. Robinson went to look for Dwyer (above) and was also never seen again. The Japanese held the Creek where they were retrieving water for the wounded. Grave unknown. Panel 7 Bomana cemetery.
- Hackett, Dennis (L Cpl 39th), of Jeetho near Korumburra, aged 24. KIA August 13 in Deniki area with no known grave in the Deniki area. Panel 5 Bomana War Cemetery.

Isurava

It was here the 39th made a stand against the Japs and hopelessly outnumbered stood firm awaiting the support of the 2/14th who arrived in the nick of time before they were over run. The battle raged between Aug 26-31.

Colonel Honner chose this site due to the front and back Creeks and it was a natural defensive location due to its geography.

Perhaps the best understanding of this battle is from Colonel Ralph Honner, who said:

'Through the widening breach poured another flood of the attackers . . . met with Bren gun and Tommy gun, with bayonet and grenade, but still they came, to close with the buffet of fist and boot and rifle-butt, the steel of crashing helmets and of straining, strangling fingers. In this vicious fighting, man-to-man and hand-to-hand the men were in imminent peril of annihilation.'

Another made the following comments: *Our young warriors did not yield against the odds they faced during the hour of their peril. As the battle raged there were so many acts of courage and self-sacrifice that it is impossible to acknowledge them all. Even so the battle was to yield more Allied decorations than in any other single battle in the Pacific. These were not blind heroics; they were calculated initiatives by Australian privates, corporals and platoon commanders determined to hold off the enemy.*

Private Wakefield, a Sydney wool worker, held up a Japanese charge as his section fell back; he won the Military Medal.

Captain Maurice Treacy, a shop assistant, 'parried every thrust levelled at him'. He got a Military Cross.

Though wounded in the hand and foot, Corporal 'Teddy' Bear, a die-cast operator from Moonee Ponds, killed a reported 15 Japanese with his Bren gun at point blank range'; he was later awarded the Military Medal and the DCM.

Lieutenant Mason, a draughtsman, led his platoon in four counterattacks in one hell raising afternoon; as did Lieutenant Butch Bissett, a jackeroo, whose platoon fought off fourteen Japanese charges.

Then there was Charle McCallum of Sale. As the weight of enemy soldiers became too heavy, 12 platoon, B Company was forced to withdraw.

At this desperate time the wounded Corporal McCallum singlehandedly held off the advancing enemy, allowing his comrades to withdraw. McCallum coolly stood his ground with a Bren gun in his right hand and a Thompson sub-machine gun in his left, reloading one as he fired the other.

At all times in action, McCallum was calm and steady. On this occasion his utter disregard for his own safety, devotion to duty and magnificent courage was an inspiration to all and allowed the withdrawal to proceed without loss.

McCallum's foes came so close to him in the encounter that one was able to wrench a piece of equipment from his belt. When he himself withdrew from the fray, his comrades counted the bodies of 40 Japanese soldiers.

McCallum was recommended for the Victoria Cross by his superiors but received the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). On this trek we had is great great newpew, Fletcher Doherty.

But despite these and many other acts of incredible bravery - the fate of the battalion hung in the balance - then a young Australian, Private Bruce Kingsbury, seized the initiative.

He rushed forward firing his Bren light machine-gun from the hip, through terrific machine-gun fire, and succeeded in clearing a path through the enemy; a courageous action which made it possible for recapture of the position.

He continued on, still sweeping the enemy positions with his Bren gun and inflicting an extremely high number of casualties on the enemy.

Those who were there say it turned the battle, even the Japanese recounted his bravery with awe. But Kingsbury, while reloading, was killed by a sniper.

Whilst the Australians eventually withdrew as part of their fighting withdrawal, this heroic stand against overwhelming odds caused the Japanese to suffer unacceptable casualties and use up valuable stocks of ammunition and supplies.

What made Isurava unique in the annals of war was the devastating closeness of combat. The armies were fighting within earshot and, unlike their medieval forebears, with guns and grenades. It was often hand to hand.

It was also at this site that 30 wounded members of the 39th had been sent back for urgent medical care, but 27 of the 30 turned around and returned to battle knowing their brothers were in trouble.

From here the delaying tactics that proved to be so successful commenced.

It was a balancing act. To retreat too quickly would have given the Japanese too great an opportunity for a quick pathway over the Trail and to retreat too slowly would entail running the risk of being outflanked.

We visited Surgeons Rock, an area is known for three things – operations and amputations took place here, it was the location where Stan Bisset nursed his brother Butch who was died in his arms and it is where the cut off troops in Buckler's party started their long walk through jungle to safety for the survivors.

Here is a precis of the story of Buckler's party:

Many Australian soldiers found themselves trapped behind enemy lines following the Battle of Isurava. Corporal John Arthur Metson, shot through the ankle and unable to walk, was one.

Metson was fortunate to be found by Captain Buckler who was leading a party of Australian soldiers through the jungle to safety.

Buckler arranged a stretcher party of eight to carry Metson, but Metson knew the difficulties that lay ahead and insisted on crawling, to spare his comrades the burden of carrying him. He asked only for his hands and knees be bandaged for protection.

The Japanese held the main track at Alola and Buckler's party was forced to turn off the track. They wandered through the jungle for three weeks, searching for an alternative route.

Metson spent this entire period crawling in agony. His cheerful attitude while facing death inspired the other men in the party.

Eventually, Captain Buckler had to make a tough call and decided that the seriously wounded cases would have to be left in the care of the villagers of Sangai.

This would allow the able-bodied to carry on more quickly to find help. A stretcher-bearer, Corporal Tom Fletcher, volunteered to stay at Sangai to care for Metson and the other wounded.

They eventually made it back but it was six weeks before the Australians could reach Sangai. When they arrived they found the bodies of John Metson, Tom Fletcher and the other sick and wounded. They had been discovered by the Japanese and executed, tied to trees and bayoneted alive for "practice"

Captain Buckler never forgot Metson's 'courage, tenacity and unselfishness' and saw to it that he awarded a posthumous British Empire Medal.

76 killed at Isurava and another 35 at Abuari (53rd and 2/16th) and they included:

- Roy Hunter (L/Cpl, 2/14th), of Drouin. Killed in Action August 29, 1942. Grave unknown. Remembered at Bomana War Cemetery Panel 3. Age 22.
- Claude Roberts (Corporal, 2/14th), of Yarrawonga. Killed in action August 30, 1942. Buried Bomana War Cemetery, Grave C7.D.27
- Arthur Davis (2/14th Lt), 35, of Yarram and living in Leongatha. KIA at Isurava on August 28, 1942. Buried Bomana. Was part of a platoon sent to guard a track to the North of Isurava and protect against any Japanese circling efforts. They encountered heavy action and Davis was last seen, wounded, trying to make his way back alone. Body was later found and is located at Grave. C6. E. 2.
- Keith King (2/14th Pte), 22, of Wonthaggi. KIA Isurava on August 30, 1942. Buried Bomana. Grave reference A1. E. 12
- Ivan Leask (2/14th, Cpl), 19, of Bunyip. KIA at Isurava on August 30, 1942. Buried Bomana. Grave reference C7. C. 20
- Albert Missen (2/14th Pte), 24, of Foster. KIA Isurava on August 30, 1942. Buried Bomana. Grave reference B8. B. 19.
- John "Jack" Dawson (VX6481) was born in Benalla and lived with his parents at 17 Church Street Benalla. He was reported missing after being cut off from his Battalion at the battle of Isurava on August 30, 1942 and is presumed captured by the Japanese and executed with his commanding officer in the days immediately after. He was last seen on the withdrawal from Isurava near Rear Creek. His body was never recovered and he is remembered on Panel 4 of the memorial. He was 26 years of age.
- Thomas Doolan (Pte 2/14th), of Swan Hill and Koondrook. Killed in action August 30, 1942. Buried Bomana War Cemetery. Grave C6.D.24
- William Hancock (Pte 2/14th), of Chinkapook. Killed in action August 30, 1942. Buried at Bomana War Cemetery. Grave B8. B. 8.
- Leslie Walter "Wally" Croton (Cpl (2/14), of Seymour. Killed in action August 30, 1942 at Isurava. He is buried at Bomana War Cemetery. Grave B3.C.12

Among those wounded in action:

- Arthur Grassby, now of Bairnsdale,
- Gordon Bailey and Alfred Salmon of Sale. Alfred later owned the garage in Poowong,
- Thomas Mackey, of Traralgon.

Eora Creek

This is the start of an area that saw considerable action both on the Japanese advance and then the Australian advance. It was here a hospital was established by the Australians.

There is no interpretive memorial at Eora Creek, but if trees could talk they would tell of the most harrowing experiences of our wounded troops trying to escape the advancing Japanese when they were pushing forward.

As the Japanese advanced more rapidly than expected, the situation for the stretcher cases lying in the mud – and those caring for them – quickly became desperate.

Dr Magarey addressed the dozens of smeared faces blinking up from the mud and he said: *'I want every man who is capable of walking . . . to start off for the top of the hill. We haven't got enough bearers to carry everybody, but this place must be cleared tonight'*. The stretchered troops were told to drag themselves out. One soldier's recount read:

'Like slave drivers we urged them on, some hobbling, some staggering like drunks. They slithered, crawled and clawed their way through the mud, faces twisted with effort . . . Men can rise from dreadful pain to superlative heights.

All but three stretcher cases were evacuated from Eora during that desperate pre-dawn struggle. These badly injured men – two with abdominal wounds, one with an open chest wound – were given up for dead.

Dr Magarey calculated they had half an hour to live and they were left with morphine and a gun.

Later a medical patrol returned and found one of these men miraculously alive. The youth opened his eyes and asked an officer, 'You're not going to leave me here, sir? I won't be left behind?' He lived for several more days.

The defences were such that it took the Australians two weeks to fight their way through an area that takes us half-a-day to trek today.

As we began our trek towards Templeton's Crossing you could understand why it would have been so difficult for the Australians to fight given the rugged terrain and natural camouflage afforded by the high points on either side of Eora Creek.

Nine were killed here in the Japanese advance 77 killed in Australian advance.

Templeton's Crossing

This was named by Bert Kienzle after Sam Templeton and was largely a depot not a village, but the area around here to Eora Creek saw considerable action.

This area to Eora Creek is associated with two battles. The first battle was fought from 31 August to 5 September 1942, as the Australian forces were withdrawing in the face of the Japanese advance.

The second battle was fought from 11 to 28 October 1942, as the Australian forces pursued the Japanese forces withdrawing back to the north coast.

In each of the two battles, a significant engagement was fought in the vicinity of Templeton's Crossing.

In the second battle, the Japanese were well dug in and their fortified and well camouflaged defences inflicted many casualties. Total casualties amounted to 412 Australians killed or wounded against 244 Japanese.

When the Japanese were ordered by higher command to withdraw from Ioribaiwa Ridge back to the beach-heads at Buna and Gona, this is where they made their first real stand.

Japanese commander Horii, from some reports, held out that his order to advance to the rear would be reversed and established heavily fortified positions bristling with machine guns. They were well camouflaged with well selected killing grounds connected with communications trenches.

For the advancing Australian scouts, it was lethal as they could not see the machine gun muzzles protruding from their firing slits until it was too late.

In this area, on the Australian advancement, such was the steepness the Japanese would roll grenades down the steep escarpment. They were only dislodged when the Australians obtained higher ground and attacked from above.

Kokoda Gap

Heading towards Kokoda Gap we cross the highest point of our trek at 2,320 metres above sea level.

The Kokoda Gap is significant in that it highlights the inability of a remote command to understand the reality of on the ground action in this area.

The troops at one stage received an order on their fighting withdrawal to 'blow the Kokoda Gap' and fill it in with rubble to delay the Japanese. Trouble is the Gap was a gap for aircraft and is 11 km wide – so you will understand our diggers just didn't have enough dynamite in their backpacks to 'blow it'! This was typical of the ignorance they had to put up with during the campaign.

From here we headed into the Moss Forest

Because rainfall and humidity are higher in the moss forest, the cycle of germination, growth, decay and death is faster. The forest lives on the product of its own wet rotteness. Mosses, ferns, lichens and fungi are everywhere.

The moss forest can be an eerie place at night as large areas have luminous fungi that outlines every trunk, branch, twig and leaf with a pale green and blue fire.

Kagi

We observed the wartime village of Kagi was located on the ridge to the south-west of the current village. This is the area where there are many elements to the Kokoda Trail as patrols spread far and wide from both sides.

Killed in action near Kagi:

Wilkinson, John Norman (Pte 2/14th), 26, born in Wangaratta, killed when standing next to Bob Iskov, September 8, 1942, somewhere in area of Kagi by a random bullet as they were walking along the Trail. Iskov later recalled he did not know where this random bullet came from, saying it was unlikely a sniper as others stood around Wilkinson and would have been easy targets also. Body later recovered, buried at Bomana. Grave reference B3. C. 9.

Bomber's Camp

The campsite was developed by one of our former Adventure Kokoda trek leaders, Martin Rama, after the discovery of an American bomber aircraft in the mid-90s.

The bodies of the crew were repatriated to the United States for a military burial at Arlington War Cemetery.

A 500lb unexploded bomb was detonated creating a crater which is now filled with water. Parts of the aircraft can be seen near the crater.

Bomber camp is the gateway to the Myola Lakes, where was where a number of supplies were dropped. The lakes are old volcanic craters where there is little vegetation and it provided the best area supplies could be dumped for the troops.

Efogi

Not the site of wartime Efogi, with the village having moved, but it was nearby.

This is a good location to mention Kokeshi Nishimura, who's monument is in Efogi. His story is incredible.

After surviving being shot three times, Nishimura was the only man of his 56-member Japanese platoon to survive the Battle of Brigade Hill / Mission Ridge, referred to by the Japanese as the Battle of Efogi due to proximity. He made a pact with his mates that if anyone survived they would come back to find the fallen.

He engaged in cannibalism to survive and was 28 kilos when evacuated.

He returned to Japan, married and established the Nishimura Machinery Research Institute which worked for Hitachi and Sony - becoming very wealthy, but when married he told his wife that on retirement he would come back on retirement and look for his mates.

When he retired in 1979, he told his children and reminded his wife of his plans to return to New Guinea post-retirement – 37 years later. She argued against it, as did his two sons.

His daughter Sachiko understood his commitment and supported him, and the family split down the middle. He gave his wife almost all of his property and wealth and never saw her or their remaining two sons again.

He spent his final decades in PNG searching for his friends but returned to live the final part of this life with his daughter in Japan before dying in 2015 at the age of 95.

Killed in this area were:

Clarry Tice (Pte 2/14th), 29. Born in Bright, lived in Omeo – Bairnsdale.

Cliff Follett (Pte 2/14th, of Trafalgar. Both missing in action on September 10, 1942. Presumed dead. KIA. Remembered on Panel 4 of Bomana Memorial. Clarry and Cliff were in a patrol from Efogi and were reported missing bodies never recovered – somewhere we walked by today.

Brigade Hill / Mission Ridge

This is where the Australians were to take a major stand to significantly delay the Japanese, their biggest stand since Isurava and it was to be a disaster.

Under mounting pressure from command back home, Potts, who was in charge of Maroubra Force at this time but was soon to be dismissed, decided he would make this stand at Mission Ridge, which runs north from Brigade Hill.

The 2/27th (South Aussies) occupied a forward position astride the track. The 2/14th Battalion was to its immediate rear and slightly to the east. Brigade headquarters was approximately 1,800 metres (2,000 yd) to the rear.

The main force of the 2/16 Battalion (West Aussies) was between brigade headquarters and the forward battalions, while its D Company was located with brigade headquarters as rear protection.

Horii had become dissatisfied with the rate of advancements being made and was pushing forward, so a large battle was brewing. From this point the Australians saw the lantern parade as the Japanese headed into Efogi with makeshift lanterns on their heads.

The Australians had no long-range weapons so had to watch, but there was much laughter when they saw a Japanese lantern crashing down the mountain after slipping. They called in an airstrike for the following morning. It wasn't effective but lifted troop morale.

After some front line skirmishes, the Japanese undertook their circling manoeuvre on the night of September 7 – such was the terrain, the Australians didn't think it possible.

They joined the track between brigade headquarters and the forward battalions, a disaster for the Australians. First recognition of this was a shot ringing out and Lance Corporal John Gill, who was guarding Brigadier Potts was shot by a sniper at the Brigade Headquarters latrine. The Japanese did not know the importance of the man beside him!

At much the same time, the Japanese launched an intense frontal attack. The Australians at the front were under heavy attack and their retreat path was cut off behind them. After an intense battle where the 2/27th threw 1200 grenades and fired around 5000 rounds of ammo, they held the front line, but were cut off.

Realising the gravity of the situation, Brigadier Potts ordered two attacks to try and reclaim the track. The attacks were led by Claude Nye and then by Brenton Langridge. It was a suicide mission. Lt Col Ralph Honnor later said:

"I particularly think of blokes like 'Lefty' Langridge and Claude Nye, one with a company of the 2/16 and the other with a company of the 2/14th, who were ordered to go around the right flank where the Japanese were, to try to force a way through them to Brigade Hill. They knew they couldn't do it. They knew they were going to die. Langridge handed over his pay book and his dog tags to one of his mates. He was a brave soldier. So was Claude Nye. They were both killed – along with many others."

This is also where Charlie McCallum – the hero of Isurava – died as well. We took his great great nephew, Fletcher Doherty, to the area where he was killed (Fletcher was one of our student trekkers). Being the first member of the family to travel back there, it was an emotional experience for all.

As the situation deteriorated, the headquarters group withdrew to Nauro. The 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions eventually broke away off the track into the jungle to the east and were able to rejoin the brigade later. The 2/27th Battalion, however, were unable to follow and were considered effectively lost until – to the surprise of all - they emerged from the jungle three weeks later.

What they had done, is under the command of Col Cooper they mounted an offensive and when the Japanese took cover, they went over the side and walked out three weeks later to the surprise of all. Cooper was a South Australian and part of the Coopers brewing family.

The battle at Brigade Hill – Mission Ridge was a "stunning victory" for the Japanese and a "catastrophe" for the Australians.

A total of 101 Australian Soldiers lost their lives with 77 wounded. The Japanese force lost 60 killed and 165 wounded. The fact we had more deaths than wounded indicates the suicide mission some were asked to undertake.

Killed in action in this area were:

McCallum, Charlie (2/14th A/Cpl), 35, of Yarram. Killed Brigade Hill September 8, 1942. Winner Military Medal at Isurava. Buried Bomana. Grave reference B3. C. 7.

Clark, Walter (Pte 2/14th), 30, of Yarram. Killed Brigade Hill September 8, 1942. Buried at Bomana. Grave reference B3. C. 1.

Kelton, Robert Lindsay (2/14th Act/Cpl), 24, of Wonthaggi. Killed at battle of Brigade Hill, September 8, 1942. Buried at Bomana. Grave reference B3. C. 14.

Robert Horwood (Pte, 2/14th), of Broadford (near Seymour). Killed in action September 9/10, 1942. Grave unknown. Remembered at Bomana War Cemetery Panel 4. Age 34.

All the above were killed in the attempt to reconnect with Headquarters after the Japanese broke through.

Wills, Denis George (Pte, 2/14), 24 of Archies Creek near Wonthaggi. KIA, September 8, 1942. Reported missing at the battle of Brigade Hill. Body not recovered. Name recorded on Panel 4 Port Moresby.

Menari

Another area that saw no major battles, but skirmishes. Menari is the site of one of the most famous speeches made regarding the Kokoda Track campaign by LT COL Ralph Honner. It was his inspirational thank you address to the heroic men of the 39th battalion that earned them the nickname of "those ragged bloody heroes". His speech was this:

"Now I don't know a lot of you by name, but I know you.

We met at Isurava. We fought there together and every step of the way here.

Now we are relieved and we will leave the battle.

And every day the enemy supply line stretches further. He suffers now as you have suffered.

The battle we fought for the track may have just saved your nation. At Imita we will stop him.

Brigadier wants you to know...your gallantry, your courage, your fortitude are an inspiration.

And I want you to know that you are some of the finest soldiers that I have ever seen.

You have seen things in this place that no man should witness.

Some of these things you must forget. But history will remember you, and in the years to come others will wish that they had your conviction.

And remember...remember the glory is not the exhortation of war, but the exhortation of man.

Man's nobility, made transcendent in the fiery crucible of war.

Faithfulness and fortitude. Gentleness and compassion.

I am honored to be your brother.” — Lt Col Ralph Honner DSO MC

Killed in action near Menari:

Waller Lewis L. (Cpl 2/14th), 22. Born in Warragul, lived in Picnic Point, Bairnsdale. Missing, presumed KIA on September 10, 1942. Presumed dead. KIA. Remembered on Panel 3 of Bomana Memorial.

Nauro

This is where the commanders wanted a road built to – it was an impossible request from an out of touch command who did not know the terrain. There is no road there today!

This is where the Australians regrouped after the major loss at Brigade Hill and were rejoined by some of the separated soldier groups before retreating back to Ioribaiwa,

The Village saw no major conflicts, only small skirmishes - but it was another area where biscuit bombers dropped supplies to the Australians.

Ofi Creek

Aussies knew the Japs were starving and they would leave cans of meat and when starving Japs came they would mow them down. It is a lovely campsite.

Another measure was to puncture the tins of meat and leave them and the starving Japanese would find and eat them and be sick soon after as it was spoiled.

Here we cross the river in the exact position the soldiers did.

Ioribaiwa

This was as far as the Japanese made it. Upon reaching Ioribaiwa, the Japanese celebrated as from their vantage point on the hills around Ioribaiwa the soldiers could see the lights of Port Moresby and the Coral Sea beyond. But they were to make no attempt to advance on the Australian position at Imita Ridge.

This is due to, in late September, they received the order to “advance to the rear” (as retreat was not in their vocabulary). The decision was made as reinforcements were needed at Guadalcanal where the Americans had defeated the Japanese. Major General Horii was reportedly devastated with the order.

The great question is would they have made it to Port Moresby if they had not received this order?

Reality is they were starving, engaging in cannibalism and racked with disease. Their supply lines were stretched. The Australians had fresh reinforcements, artillery and short supply lines – no they would not have.

However, it was the site of a battle on the Japanese advance. The Australians had pulled back to Ioribaiwa after their routing at Brigade Hill and the Battle of Ioribaiwa took place from 13 to 16 September before withdrawing to Imita Ridge.

One of the reasons for this was concern on the western flank being guarded by the 10th militia and that the Japanese would encircle them. With this concern it assisted their rationale to withdraw to Imita.

Brigadier Eather was criticised for giving this up too easily, but felt Imita Ridge was a better defensive location. He did not know he significantly outnumbered the Japanese and they were almost a beaten force.

The Australians lost 49 killed and 121 wounded, many of which had been inflicted by the Japanese artillery which had landed on the 2/14 – 2/16th's positions. Against this, the Japanese lost 40 dead and 120 wounded.

In this area we could see both Australian and Japanese defensive positions as both occupied this site. The Japanese on the front facing Imita, the Australians on the other side.

From here it was a short trek down to the village and then down to Ua-Ule Creek area (Pronounced Fa-Lay). Then we head uphill again to Imita, another testing little stretch.

A total of 55 killed here, including 11 Victorians.

Imita Ridge

Imita Ridge was our last line of defence. The line was drawn in the sand here and there was to be no further withdrawal. (We saw Australian trenches around this escarpment).

On 17 September, Brigadier Eather was able to consolidate his position on Imita Ridge.

The 2/33rd Battalion, which was drawn from all Australian states and was formed in England from surplus troops - had been tasked to delay any further Japanese advance. A number of ambushes were set with mixed results.

The Australian position resolved the difficulty of supply and the force was soon to be bolstered by the arrival of the 16th Brigade, back from Europe.

When the Japanese were at Ioribaiwa and the Australians at Imita, the area between was somewhat of a no man's land with both sides patrolling in between.

When the Aussies heard the artillery shells passing overhead it gave them a significant morale life as it was the first time they'd had Australian artillery. It was here the Australians were anticipating the fight of their lives with the Japanese.

From Ioribaiwa the Japanese could see the lights to Port Moresby, their objective and this gave them much delight – but it was a battle that would never eventuate with the Japanese soon advised to “advance to the rear”.

Eather patrolled toward Ioribaiwa, both to harass the Japanese and to gather intelligence. He then issued orders for an "all-out" assault, but the attack found that Ioribaiwa had been abandoned.

Patrols followed up immediately, with the 2/25th Battalion finding that by 30 September, Nauro was also unoccupied. The tide had turned. The Japanese were now retreating.

Owers' Corner

Owers' Corner was named after Lieutenant Noel Owers, who was given the task of surveying a vehicle route to Nauro. – it had no hope due to the terrain and of course is still not built now.

Owers' Corner was the place where our Australian troops on Imita Ridge first received the morale boosting artillery support. Three 25pound guns fired 800 rounds over three days into Ioribaiwa Ridge. They got this artillery as far as Uberi. It took 25 seconds for the projectiles to cover the 15miles.

A flying fox was established from Owers to the Goldie River mainly for supplies. The track then like today is a zig zag track that was largely cut for animals (Light Horse) and pack mules.

This is the furthest the officer in charge of Australian forces got – Thomas Blamey who never really knew the terrain of the Trail.

McDonald's Corner

In July and August 1942 McDonald's Corner was recognised as the beginning of the Kokoda Trail and there is now a memorial at the site as well as a sign announcing the beginning of the Trail.

Percival McDonald was a WWI veteran who found his way here developing a rubber plantation. He drove the first Ford vehicle in New Guinea from the dealership to the homestead here.

This is where "B" company of the 39th Battalion commenced their walk to Kokoda. "B" company was led by Captain Sam Templeton and guided by Bert Kienzle. They departed McDonald's Corner on July 7, 1942 and arrived in Kokoda July 15, 1942.

It was here that Australian WWII soldiers disembarked their trucks and hence it was the start. The vehicle track was in place to service the McDonald homestead. Months later, around 11 kilometres was added, extending it to Owers' Corner, which is considered the start of the Trail today.

Beach heads

The battle of the Beach Heads was mentioned earlier in this report an while we did not visit there as it is not part of the Kokoda trail, it is worth remembering some of those from country Victoria who fell there. They included:

- Ernest Aeschlimann (Cpl 39th), 29, of Korumburra. KIA December 8, 1942, in the Gona / Haddy's Village area – buried at Bomana. Grave reference C5. D. 11.
- Wallace Lee, of Orbost, 39th – buried at Bomana, KIA December 8, 1942, in the Gona area, aged 30. Grave reference C5. E. 22.
- Ivan Stephenson (Sgt 2/14th), of Yarram. Died of illness (scrub typhus) December 21, 1942 (scrub typhus). Grave reference B1. E. 12.
- James Truscott (Sgt, 2/14th), of Foster. Killed December 15, 1942, conducting a forward reconnaissance at Gona. Grave reference C5. F. 27
- Leslie Ryan (Pte 39th) of Leongatha, aged 20. Died of malaria, December 25, 1942. Bomana grave reference B1. E. 18

- Baldwin, John (39th, Cpl), 23, of Nilma North. Dairy farmer. KIA December 6, 1942 at Gona. Grave C5. D. 6
- Emson, Robert (A/Cpl, 2/9th), aged 37, of Sale. KIA December 29, 1942 at Buna. Grave B6. F. 27.
- Irvine Charles Cameron. (A/Sgt 2/14th) aged 23 of Sale. KIA action November 28, 1942 at Gona. Grave C6. A. 17
- Stephenson, Ivan (Sgt 2/14th), of Yarram. Died of illness (scrub typhus) December 21, 1942 (scrub typhus). Grave reference B1. E. 12.
- Kuch, Keith Arnold (Pte 2/24th and 2/4th Field Ambulance) of Sale / Stradbroke, age 23. KIA September 6 at Soputa in an air raid on his hospital camp despite it clearly displaying the Red Cross. 13 Zero fighters strafed and bombed the hospital. Grave A6. C. 22
- Anderson, Stanley Phillip (Pte, 2/14th), 23, of Leongatha/Tarwin Lower. KIA November 28, 1942, at Gona in Papua New Guinea. Grave C5 E. 9
- Cook, Ronald Henry (Staff Sfg, Royal Aus. Eng), of Moe. Died September 25, 1943 at Soputa Military Hospital, from scrub typhus. Reportedly the first soldier in WW2 to die from this disease. Grave B5. C. 25.
- Wise, John Leo (Pte 39th) of Caldermeade. Died of illness, January 13, 1943 at Northern beaches. Grave B1. F. 18.
- Frawley, John William Frawley (Pte, 2/12), 25, of Garfield. KIA January 18, 1943, age 25. Killed at Sanananda. Grave A8 A. 3 His brother was also killed in New Guinea and is buried at Lae.
- Pat O'Connor (Pte 2/14th), of Longwarry. Killed in action November 28, 1942. Buried Bomana War Cemetery. Grave C6. B. 7
- Rosevear, Charles Clinton (Pte 2/12), 33, of Bass. KIA, January 20, 1943. Originally buried on the Buna-Sanananda Road. Reburied Bomana A6. A. 25.

Commercial transport and accommodation details

Commercial flights

Domestic

- Melbourne to Brisbane – Virgin Australia, Economy – Tuesday 2 July 2024
- Brisbane to Melbourne - Virgin Australia, Economy – Saturday 13 July 2024
- Total value - \$893.44

International

- Brisbane to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea – Wednesday 3 July 2024
- Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea to Brisbane – Saturday 13 July 2024
- Total value - \$900.00

Accommodation

- Accommodation in Brisbane - Arrive 2 May 2024, depart 3 May 2024
- Total value - \$295.08

- Kokoda Adventure Historical 9 day trek – 3 July 2024 to 13 July 2024
- Total value - \$4,495

Reason: Domestic flights in Australia and accommodation on electorate business to undertake research and represent the view and interests of constituents at various events and activities on Kokoda Trail.

Summary

The trek was gruelling, hot and most challenging nine days. The experience enhanced the understanding and appreciation of the service and sacrifice of people from the Latrobe Valley on the Kokoda Track.

It was made special by the presence of the students who trekked with the group. In particular, Kurnai College student Amelia van Vliet, who awarded the Marsh/Tierney Scholarship, which aims to provide younger generation with an insight into the Gippsland connection to the Kokoda Track, and the sacrifices made by soldiers from the local area.

Amelia's astonishing story and deeply personal connection to the Kokoda Track was a perfectly fitting recipient of the inaugural Marsh/Tierney Scholarship.

When Amelia was just one-and-a-half years old, her father Euan Comrie wanted to honour his great grandfather – who served in Commando Double Black – and walk the Kokoda Track. Tragically, on the flight to Kokoda the aeroplane carrying Amelia's dad and nine other Australians crashed into a mountain and there were no survivors.

Amelia along with other Victorian MPs were able to attend the Australian High Commission to commemorate her father and 12 others who tragically died when their plane crashed near the Kokoda Track in August 2009. We were met by High Commissioner, John Feakes and Consular Officer Aina Rupert, both who were in Kokoda at the time of the crash.

Furthermore, there was an opportunity to visit the Kokoda Hospital where there is a plaque placed in honour of Amelia's father, Euan Comrie. The plaque was placed at the hospital in Kokoda when her mother walked the track on the anniversary of their deaths in 2010.

