

Following the declaration of war in the Pacific on December 7, 1941, the Japanese armed forces carried out a remarkably swift series of operations to establish a perimeter of defence well away from the Japanese homeland. A key bastion of that defensive arc would be the main island of Papua and New Guinea.

On January 21, 1942, only six weeks after the start of the war, a Japanese force captured Rabaul (see *After the Battle* No. 133), thus providing a vital anchorage and staging post for further attacks against Papua and New Guinea to the south and the Solomon Islands to the south-east. Then on March 8, a Japanese naval force landed at Lae and Salamaua, on the northern New Guinea coastline. Their aim was to establish an airbase able to support the critical landing to be made at Port Moresby. However a US carrier-based raid from the *Lexington* and *Yorktown* sank three transport ships and thus delayed the planned landing. It would not be until May 7 that the Japanese invasion convoy would sail from Rabaul for Port Moresby. Again the two American aircraft carriers played a vital role in stopping the invasion, though both were badly damaged, the *Lexington* sinking on May 8. But critically, the Japanese attack force returned to Rabaul.

With their naval invasion force stymied, and with the critical loss of most of their carrier force at Midway in early June, the Japanese command decided on June 14 that the advance on Port Moresby would be undertaken by a land force that would cross Papua overland from north to south. On the night of July 21/22, Japanese landings took place at Gona, on the Papuan northern coast. The landing force, the Yokohama Advance Butai, included Lieutenant-Colonel Moto Tsukamoto's 1st Battalion from Colonel Masao Kusunose's 144th Regiment plus the 15th Independent Engineer Regiment, a company from the 5th Sasebo Naval Landing Force and attached artillery and pioneers.

A basic road wound its way south-west from the Japanese beach-heads at Gona and Buna to the small government station at Kokoda. Here the mountains of the Owen Stanley Range towered over the Yodda Valley, barring any movement towards the south coast except by foot over what would become known as the Kokoda Trail. The



AWM 027054

For the heavily-laden troops, it was a matter of sheer determination to achieve the steep climbs and slippery descents of the trail, their toiling made even more strenuous by the humid climate with its hot days and chilly nights, the torrential rain and mud, the wet boughs and vines, the mosquitoes and leeches, the malaria and dengue. Here men of the Australian 16th Brigade move up the trail in October 1942.

THE KOKODA TRAIL

By Phillip Bradley

trail meandered some 50 miles through the jungle-covered mountain ranges until it emerged at the Sogeri Plateau above Port Moresby. No more than a native track, its possible use as an invasion route had been

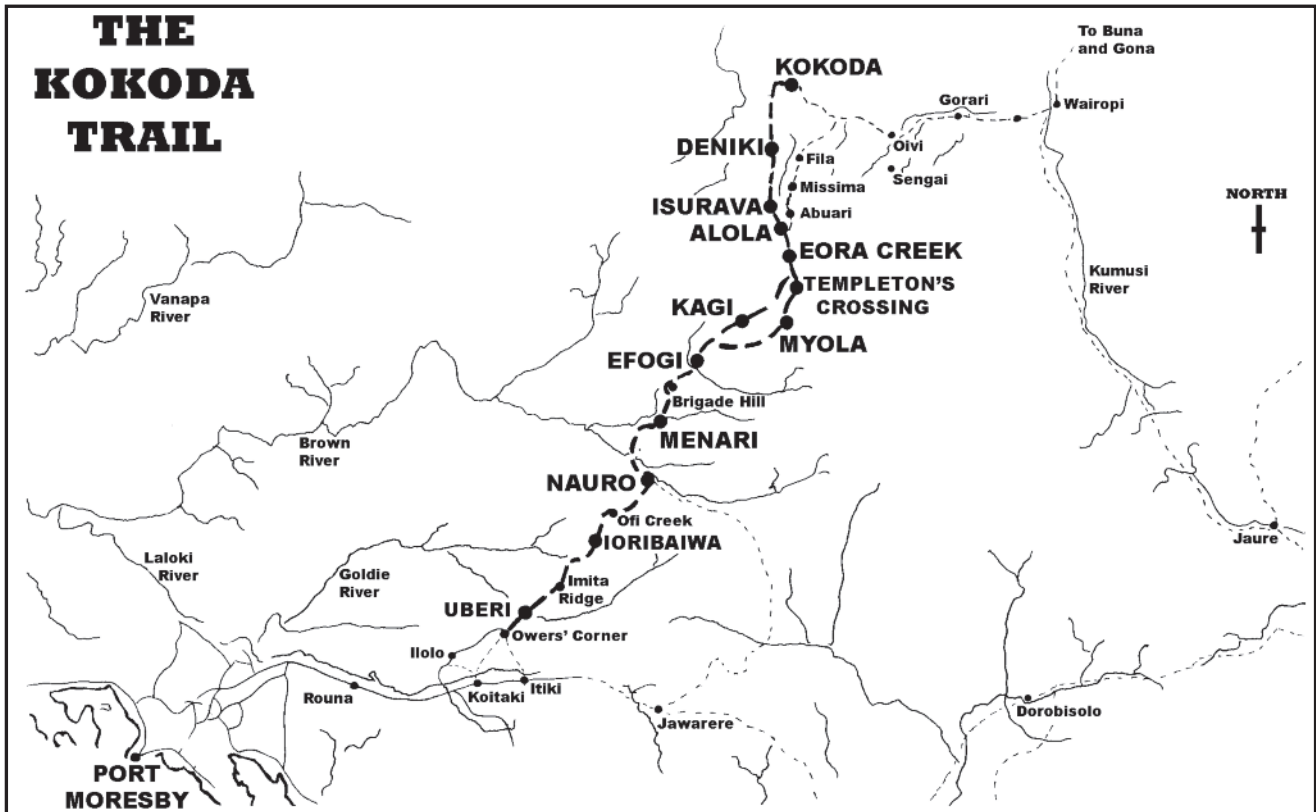
given scant consideration by the Australian command.



PHIL BRADLEY

Another group on the Kokoda Trail, August 2006. Our author, Phil Bradley, joined nine high school students and two teachers from London's Dulwich College for the trek along the historic track. The group made the expedition in the spirit of one of Dulwich College's most renowned old

boys, the explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. Under the expert guidance of Frank Taylor, from Kokoda Treks and Tours, they experienced a remarkable journey in the footsteps of history. The current trail follows a somewhat easier route than that used in 1942.



A Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB), comprising 30 officers and 280 men under Major Bill Watson, had been deployed between Kokoda and the coast. The Papuans were reinforced by the Australian 39th Battalion, despatched from Port Moresby in early July. The 39th was a militia battalion that had been raised for service in Australia (including Australian territories). This was distinct from the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) battalions that had been raised for service worldwide and considered the cream of the Australian army. The 39th was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel William Owen, who had served with the AIF 2/22nd Battalion in Rabaul during the Japanese invasion. A number of other AIF officers also came into the battalion. Most of the men in the unit were very young, with an average age under 20, and their proud commander later called them his 'pathetically young warriors'.

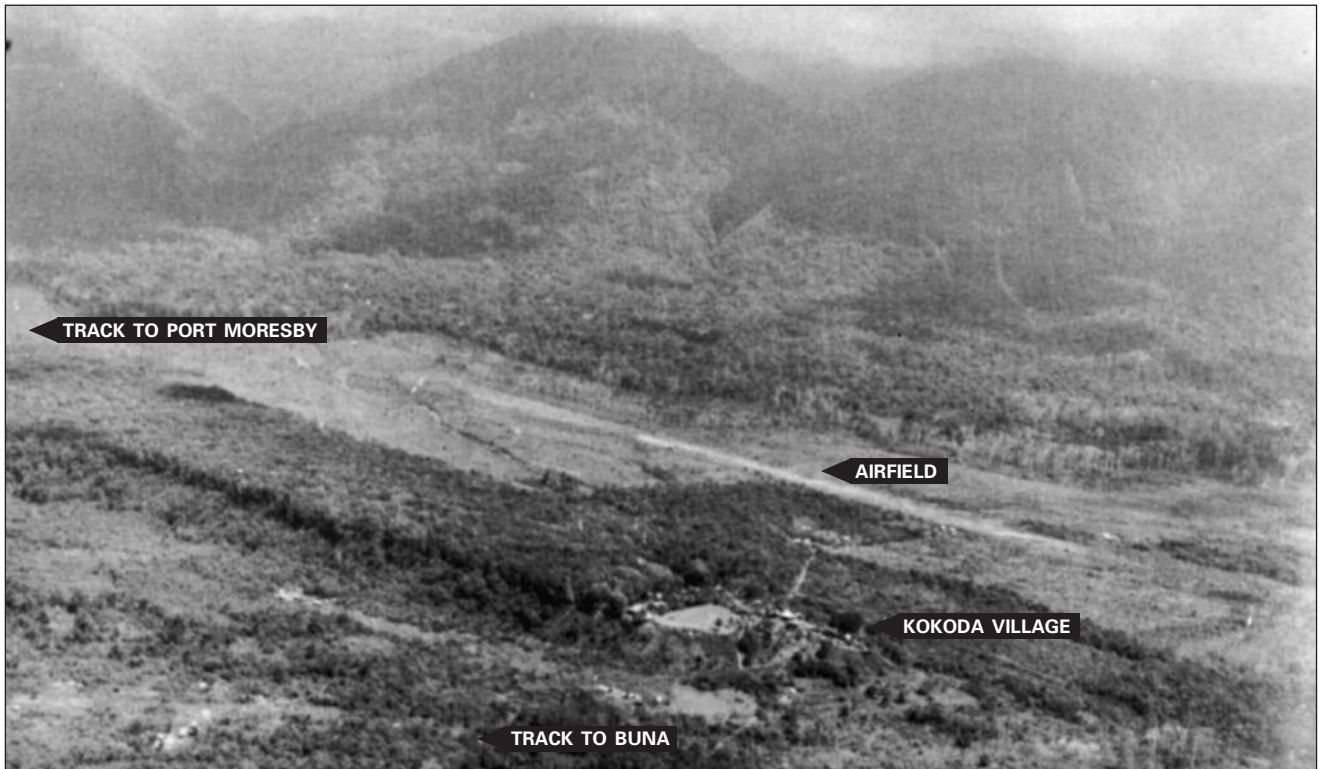
With native carriers helping, the first company from the 39th Battalion crossed the Owen Stanley Range via the Kokoda Trail and arrived in Kokoda on July 15. The carriers were arranged by a Yodda Valley plantation owner, Bert Keinzle, who would prove to be the vital cog in organising the all-important supply line for the Australians.

The first contact between the opposing forces took place in the afternoon of July 23 when a PIB patrol encountered part of Tsukamoto's battalion just east of Awala, approximately halfway between Kokoda and the coast. Colonel Owen moved Captain Sam Templeton's B Company of the 39th Battalion up to reinforce the PIB and form a blocking position east of Gorari, some 20 miles east of Kokoda. On July 25 the Japanese attacked and forced Templeton's company back towards Kokoda. Owen's second company, Captain Arthur Dean's C Company, was still moving along the Kokoda Trail and he therefore decided to have his remaining two companies flown into Kokoda. However, with only two aircraft available, only a platoon could be carried and this joined Templeton's men at Oivi on July 26. Again the Japanese pressure forced the Australians back, this time leaving the brave Templeton behind.

For the Japanese troops moving south, the track began at Kokoda. From there the path leads along the western side of the Eora Creek valley, passing through the native villages of Deniki, Isurava and Alola, after which it crosses to the eastern side of Eora Creek, and ascends to the first spur of the main range at 7,000 feet just before Templeton's Crossing — a total climb of 5,500 feet in less than 20 miles. Just past Templeton's Crossing is the Gap, a broken, jungle-covered saddle in the main range, about 7,000 feet high at its central point, with higher mountains on either side. The trail runs about six miles across the gap over a muddy, broken track, in places just wide enough for one man to pass, and then goes downward to either Myola or Kagi, and on to Efoji, Menari, Nauro, Ioribaiwa, the Imita Range and UBERI, traversing peaks 5,000 and 6,000 feet high and sharp east-west ridges with altitudes ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 feet. The southern edge of the Owen Stanley Range is at Iloilo and Koitaki, where the elevation is 2,000 feet. The distance between Kokoda and Iloilo is only 50 miles as the crow flies but due to the mountainous climbs and descents the actual distance to be covered by the troops was nearly twice as much.



The first Australian troops to experience the vagaries of operating along the trail were from the 39th Battalion, a militia unit, despatched north from Port Moresby on July 7 — two weeks before the Japanese landings — to reinforce the Papuan Infantry Battalion that was guarding the sector between Kokoda and the Papuan northern shore. Their first contact with the Japanese occurred on July 24 near Gorari. This picture of men of the 39th Battalion making their way back along the trail was taken in August 1942.



USNA

Kokoda, from which the trail received its name, is a little village set on a small plateau around 1,500 feet above sea level. It contained a Papuan Administration post, a rubber plantation

and a mountain airfield. By July 28 the Australians had been forced back to Kokoda, where they distributed their meagre forces in defensive positions around the plateau.

Owen now defended Kokoda with some 80 men from the 39th Battalion and the PIB, dispersed around the raised plateau of the administrative centre. In the early morning hours of July 29 the Japanese began their attack and, though it was repulsed, Colonel Owen was shot and he later died. With Major Watson now in command, the Australians pulled back into the mountains at Deniki. On

July 30, Captain Dean arrived with C Company and, two days later, Captain Noel Symington joined with A Company. To help ease the supply situation, Bert Keinzle had managed to open an air dropping zone at the Myola grasslands.

On August 4, Lieutenant-Colonel Allan Cameron, like Owen another veteran from the invasion of Rabaul, arrived to take com-

mand of what was now termed Maroubra Force. On the 6th, Captain Max Bidstrup arrived with 39th Battalion's D Company. Total Australian strength at Deniki was now 36 officers and 471 men and Cameron was planning to retake Kokoda. Symington's company managed to get into the town and on August 10 his men held a series of Japanese attacks before withdrawing.

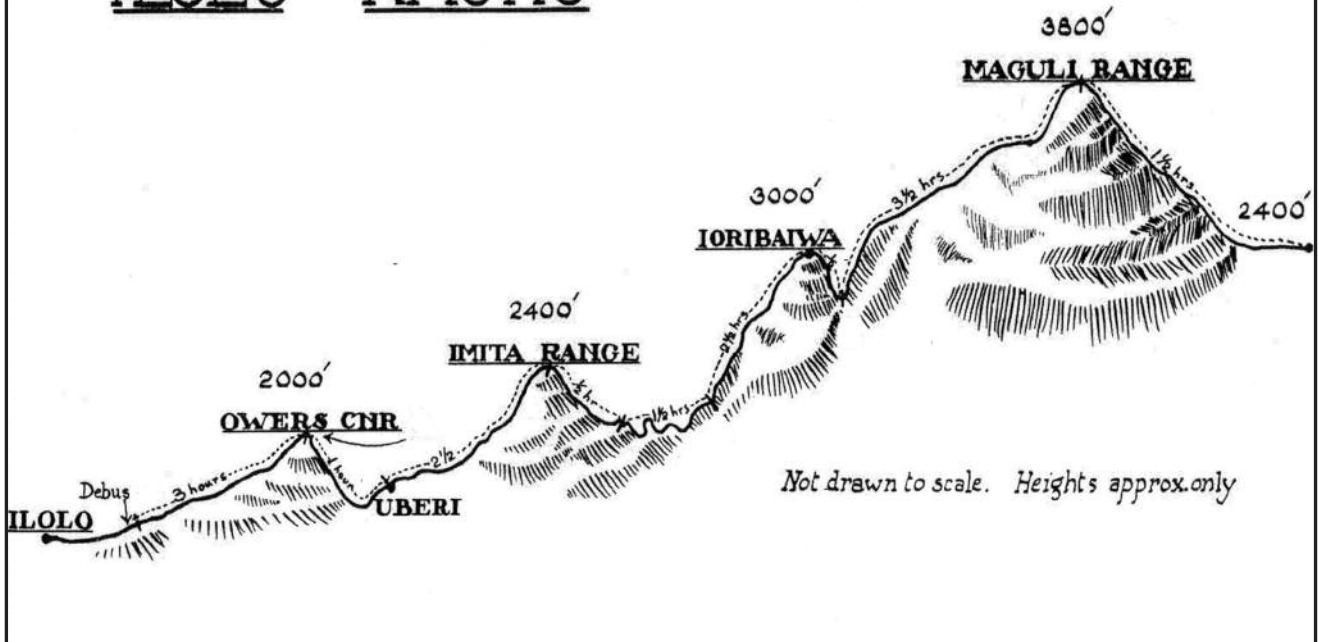


PHIL BRADLEY

The view from the plateau towards the airfield today. Lieutenant-Colonel William Owen, the commander of the 39th Battalion, was mortally wounded in this area in the early morning

hours of July 29, when a sharp engagement with the Japanese advanced units forced the Australians out of the village and back into the mountains.

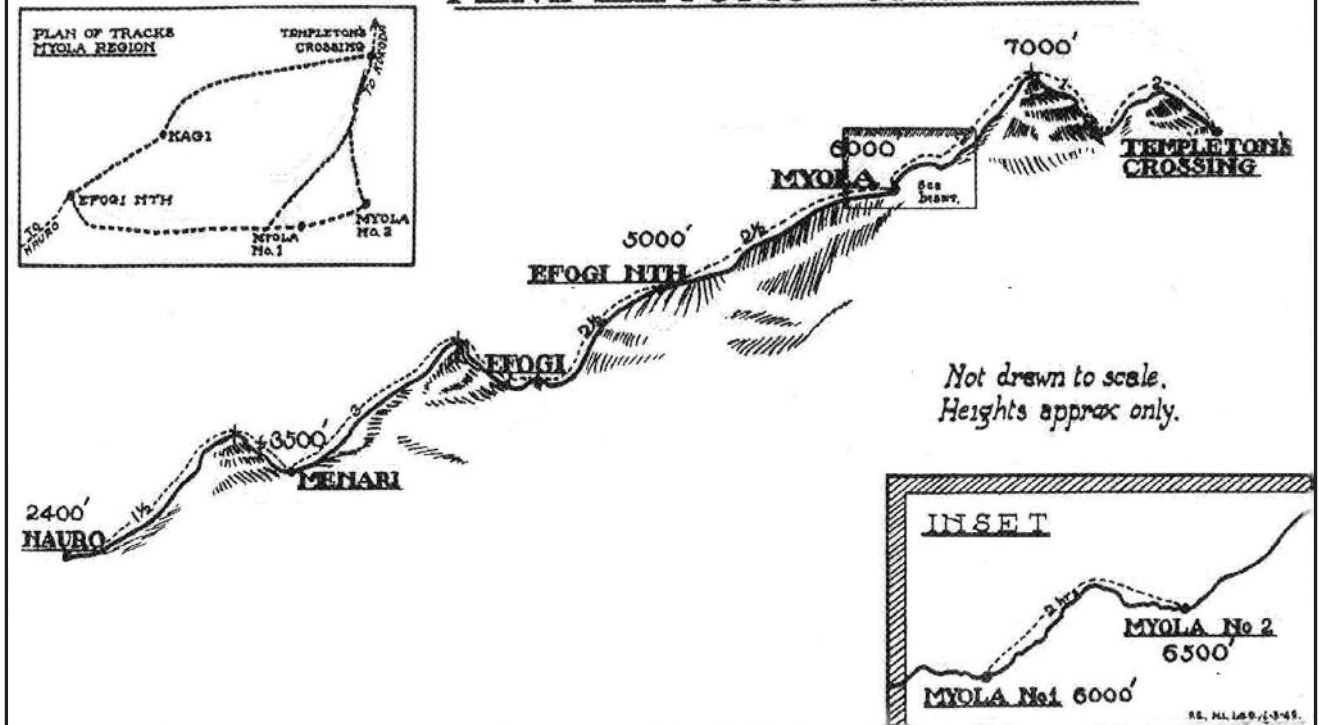
SECTIONAL SKETCH ILOLO - NAURO



For the Australian troops moving north from Port Moresby, the Kokoda Trail began just north of Iloilo plantation, the first climb taking them 1,200 feet up to Owers' Corner, which lies at 2,000 feet. (Later during the campaign, Australian engineers pushed the access road from Port Moresby north to Owers' Corner, thus shortening the jungle footway by around three miles.)

The track then dropped 1,600 feet to Uberi only to rise again, 2,000 feet up the Imita Range, part of it up the infamous 'Golden Staircase'. Down from Imita it followed the course of a rushing stream for about three miles and then climbed out again across the 3,000-foot Ioribaiwa ridge and 3,800-foot Maguli range to reach Nauro at 2,400 feet.

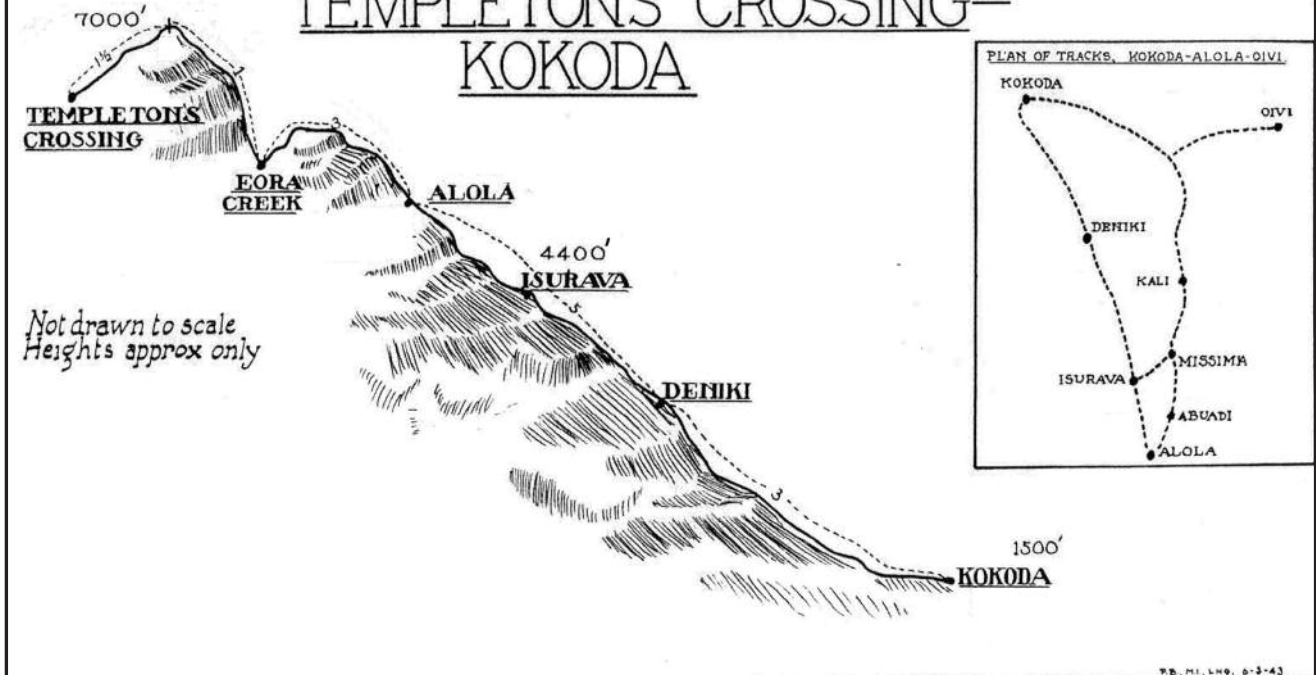
SECTIONAL SKETCH NAURO - TEMPLETONS CROSSING



After Nauro, there were the ranges and gorges through Menari and Efofi (where the track split, one route going through Kagi and another through Myola) and the long upward climb to the

centre ridge of the Owen Stanley Range, where the track passed across the Gap at around 7,000 feet. It then dropped sharply down to Templeton's Crossing at Eora Creek.

SECTIONAL SKETCH TEMPLETON'S CROSSING— KOKODA



From there the track followed the course of the Eora Creek, past the village of that name and then steadily downhill for about ten miles through Alola, Isurava and Deniki to Kokoda. Ever since the war there has been considerable debate about whether the historic path should be called the Kokoda Trail or the Kokoda Track. 'Trail' is probably of American origin but has

been used in many Australian history books, and was adopted by the Australian Army as an official battle honour for the units that served in Papua in 1942. 'Track' comes from the language of the Australian bush, is used in the relevant volume of the official history, and is commonly used by veterans. Thus, both are correct.

ISURAVA

On August 13 the Japanese moved on Deniki and, though their attacks were again held, they came again the next day and forced Colonel Cameron to pull his men back to Isurava. There they dug in using their bayonets and helmets. On the 16th a new commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Honner, arrived at Isurava to take over the 39th Battalion. Honner had previously served as a company commander with the 2/11th Battalion in the Middle East. He found the 39th in poor shape, suffering from a lack of food, sleep and shelter but could only tell them that they had to stand and fight.

Also on August 16, the first company of the 53rd Battalion arrived at Alola, the second company following on the next day. Like the 39th, the 53rd was a militia battalion but had spent most of its time in Port Moresby unloading shipping and was not well trained. The clashes at Kokoda had set off alarm bells back at New Guinea Force HQ and Brigadier Arnold Potts' 21st Brigade from the 7th Division AIF had been rapidly despatched to Port Moresby, assembling at the southern end of the Kokoda Trail by August 15. Another AIF brigade, the 18th, was sent to Milne Bay where another Japanese landing was anticipated.

On August 15 Brigadier Potts had been ordered to use his brigade (which comprised the 2/14th, 2/16th and 2/27th Battalions) to recapture Kokoda. The first of his battalions sent off along the track was Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Key's 2/14th Battalion. Carrying loads of some 30 kilograms, the men set off over the trail, beset by the poor track conditions, in particular the steepness of the climbs and descents and the incessant mud that became worse as more men traversed the path. The 2/16th Battalion followed two days later. The 46-year-old Potts, who had

served throughout WW1, now shared the toil of his men in this new war, so far removed from any previous experience. His main concern was that, despite Keinzle's sterling efforts, there was a critical lack of the promised supply along the track. Potts took

over command of Maroubra Force on August 23, although, due to the supply issues, his two advance battalions remained at Myola and his third, the 2/27th Battalion, remained in Port Moresby. Potts had his hands tied from the start.



The native carriers, nicknamed the 'fuzzy wuzzy angels', provided a priceless service to the Australian army throughout the Kokoda Trail campaign and beyond. After bringing forward 40-pound supply loads over the diabolical track, the carriers would then take the wounded soldiers back. At the start of the campaign in August, the Australians controlled around 5,000 carriers and, by October, some 11,000 men though only 1,250 were forward of Myola. Given little more than basic food and occasional shelter, they gave their all, including hope to the wounded in their care. In this picture, taken during the later coastal fighting, four native Papuans are carrying a wounded soldier but along the rugged Kokoda Trail eight or more sure-footed carriers were often required to traverse the treacherous climbs and descents.

From August 19 to 21, the Japanese landed the main body of Major-General Tomitaro Hori's Nankai Shitai, or South Seas Detached Force, at Buna. The force comprised the remaining two battalions of the 144th Regiment, two battalions from Colonel Kiyomi Yazawa's 41st Regiment plus significant artillery and support units. The latter included 875 native carriers from Rabaul and 400 horses. Lieutenant-Colonel Genjiro Kuwada's 3rd Battalion of the 144th Regiment would join up with Tsukamoto's battalion in front of Isurava, while Major Tadashi Horiye's 2nd Battalion of the 144th would advance along the east side of the Eora Creek valley via Missima to Abuari.

On the morning of August 27, Potts ordered the 53rd Battalion, now deployed across the other side of Eora Creek at Abuari, to retake Missima, further forward. During the move, the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Ward, was ambushed and killed. Having also failed to retake Missima, a concerned Potts pulled the 53rd back to defend Abuari and thus protect the critical Alola and Isurava positions. At 1600 hours, just as the first units of the 2/14th Battalion were reaching the front line, the Japanese attacked the 39th Battalion positions at Isurava. Under heavy supporting fire, the Japanese broke into Honner's left flank, but swift counter-attacks restored the position though the fighting went on through the night.

On August 28, most of the 2/14th Battalion had moved into positions at Isurava, while the 2/16th Battalion had reached Alola and then moved across to Abuari. Most of the ineffectual 53rd Battalion had withdrawn to Alola. The following day, August 29, the Japanese again pressed hard at Isurava. Having lost his platoon commander, Corporal Lindsay Bear took charge and rallied the men, accounting for some 15 enemy soldiers himself with a Bren gun before being wounded. Still the Japanese came on. A party from HQ Company, led by Sergeant Bob Thompson, went forward to restore the line. Private Bruce Kingsbury was amongst them, taking over the wounded Bear's Bren



Left: Private Bruce Kingsbury of the 2/14th Battalion, who won the Victoria Cross for action on August 29. By August 14, the Australians had been forced back to Isurava, where they built up a defensive position using the remnants of the 39th Battalion, who held the line until relieved by the veteran 2/14th Battalion, lead elements of which began arriving on August 26. On the 29th, the Japanese attacked with such force that they succeeded in breaking through the 2/14th's right flank. This created a serious threat to Battalion HQ and the whole battalion. The platoon on the flank was ordered to counter-attack and regain the position. Private Kingsbury, one of the few remaining survivors of No. 9 Platoon, which had been in constant contact with the enemy since August 27, volunteered to join them. In the counter-attack he rushed forward firing his Bren gun from the hip through terrific machine-gun fire, and succeeded in clearing a path through the enemy for the platoon, a courageous action which made it possible to recapture the position. Continuing to sweep enemy positions with his fire and inflicting an extremely high number of casualties on them, Kingsbury was then seen to fall to the ground shot dead by a bullet from a sniper. His posthumous Victoria Cross was the only one awarded during the Kokoda Trail campaign. Right: Kingsbury's present-day grave at Bomana Cemetery outside Port Moresby.

gun and firing it from the hip, wading into the enemy line, clearing a path forward. The position was restored but a sniper claimed

Kingsbury, the fallen hero later awarded his nation's highest military honour, the Victoria Cross.



The area where Kingsbury won his VC, looking east. The slope to the right goes down to Eora Creek. Kingsbury was shot dead

by a Japanese rifleman positioned on the rock. The information panel describes the action.



PHIL BRADLEY

The daunting Eora Creek valley figured prominently in the Kokoda Trail fighting. This is the view looking north along the jungle stream valley. There were tracks along both sides of the canyon but the main trail followed the left (western) side.

Alola (where the two tracks joined) and Isurava (where the 2/14th Battalion fought) are on the left of the valley, Abuari (where the 53rd Battalion and the 2/16th Battalion were deployed) on the right. Note the steepness of the slope on the right.

On the left flank, Captain Claude Nye's B Company faced continued assaults as the Japanese tried to get around the Australian position on the high ground. The commander of Nye's 10 Platoon, Lieutenant Harold 'Butch' Bisset, was one of those to fall as he moved among the forward positions. He would die the next morning with his brother, Captain Stan Bisset, the 2/14th Battalion Intelligence Officer, by his side in the last hours. Corporal Charlie McCallum, a Bren on one hand, a Tommy gun in the other, flailed the enemy, holding the line as his comrades pulled back. Brigadier Potts sent a company of the 53rd Battalion forward while some of the relieved 39th Battalion platoons returned to the front line of their own accord. One of the 2/16th Battalion men watched them head back into the fight: 'When I saw those poor bastards, tottering on their bleeding, swollen feet, turn round and go straight back to Isurava, I knew they were good.'

The Japanese were attacking at Isurava with five battalions of fresh, top-line infantry and Potts had to reconsider his position. Still denied his third AIF battalion and adequate supply, in part due to continuing concerns at Milne Bay, Potts decided he needed to keep his force intact between the Japanese and Port Moresby. He withdrew the 2/14th Battalion to the rest house area, halfway back to Alola. The Japanese companies kept pressing and, having now moved into Abuari, they were firing with machine guns across the valley into Alola village.

The 2/16th Battalion force under Major Frank Sublet held the track down to Eora Creek but, late on August 30, he too was

ordered to withdraw. Unsure of the situation at Alola, the 2/16th men made their way up Eora Creek in the night, each man holding the bayonet scabbard of the man in front and rubbing fluorescent fungi onto his pack to maintain contact. One of the intelligence sec-

tion NCOs led the men out. Up on the main track, the 2/14th Battalion also raced to get back as the Japanese flanking moves came. The battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Key, along with his staff, was cut off and never seen again.



PHIL BRADLEY

A Bren and a Thompson gun recovered from the battlefield at Alola.



AWM 055163

Many of the most memorable images of the Kokoda Trail fighting were made by Australian photographer/cinematographer Damien Parer (*left*). Appointed as Australia's first official photographer by the Department of Information (DOI), Parer sailed to the Middle East with the first contingent of the Second AIF in January 1940 and spent the next year photographing and filming Australians training for service and then in action during the early victories in Libya, the fighting in Greece and Syria and at the siege of Tobruk. Returning to Australia to cover the fighting in the Pacific, he arrived in New Guinea in June 1942, and in August and September filmed the Australians fighting along the Kokoda Trail. The eight-minute film he completed from the footage, *Kokoda Front Line*, was recognised with an Academy Award in 1943. After completing another film on the New Guinea fighting, *Assault on Salamaua*, and increasingly unhappy with DOI for its parsimony and interference, Parer resigned his position with the department on August 24, 1943, and began working for Paramount News. He went on to cover American operations, and was killed by a Japanese machine-gunner while filming US Marines at Peleliu (see *After the Battle* No. 78) in the Palau archipelago on September 16, 1944.

Brigadier Potts pulled his force back to the Eora Creek crossing and 2/16th Battalion's D Company held fast on the hill above the village. They remained till the next morning, taking a considerable toll on the Japanese, who had rapidly moved forward. The Australian rearguard was desperately trying to give the native stretcher bearer teams time to get the wounded back along the difficult track. Three hundred carriers had to be sent forward from Myola to bring out the 30-odd stretcher cases. Many men who should have been on stretchers chose to struggle back on their own, aware of the shortage of carriers. Corporal Lindsay Bear was one of them, even though he had a bullet in both ankles and another in one of his knees. Bear could only shuffle his way along, supported by his one good leg and a wooden pole. He joined up with Corporal Russ Fairburn, who had a bullet lodged near his spine and together they somehow made their way back. Another wounded man, one leg blown off below the knee, hobbled along the track. When offered a stretcher party he retorted: 'Get them for some other poor bastard! There are plenty worse off than me.'

For many other badly wounded men still in the front lines at Isurava, the situation was graver still. With the withdrawal order given, Lieutenant 'Mocca' Treacy of the 2/14th Battalion organised stretchers to be built for the



AWM 015257

A Damien Parer photo taken at Eora Creek village on August 27, 1942 — the day the Japanese launched their first attack on Isurava, four miles to the north. Australian war correspondent Osmar White, who covered the battle for the *Melbourne Herald*, wrote: 'I will never forget the scene as Eora came into sight halfway down the last ridge. Hundreds of men were standing about in mud that came up to their shins. The whole village, built of pandanus and grass, looked as if it were about to founder in the sea of mud.' Eora Creek village fell to the Japanese on August 30.

wounded. Also cut off, Captain Sydney 'Ben' Buckler took charge of the wounded group, as well as 42 other men, and moved them down into the thick jungle of the Eora Creek ravine. One of the wounded, Corporal John Metson, had been shot in the ankle and was

unable to walk. Knowing that a stretcher would take eight men to handle, Metson refused to be carried and crawled his way along behind Buckler's party. Buckler sent Lieutenant Treacy with two men to get help from Myola but Treacy found progress difficult moving alongside the main track. It took his group a week to reach Myola, by which time the area had been abandoned by the Australians. Treacy thereupon headed south-east, reaching Dorobisolo on September 22.

Buckler waited five days for Treacy before heading down Eora Creek to the Yodda Valley, keeping well to the east of the Kokoda Trail. After ten days, his group reached the village of Sengai, south-east of Kokoda, where it was decided to leave the wounded. Private Tom Fletcher volunteered to stay with the five wounded and two fever-ridden men while Buckler led the rest back to Allied lines. Before they left, Buckler's men paraded in front of the wounded. Following the Kumusi River upstream, Buckler's party met American troops on September 28 near Jaure. Supplied with food, they then climbed over the Owen Stanley Range to Dorobisolo, reaching it on September 30. After two more days walking, the group of two officers and 37 men carried out the last leg of its journey down the Kemp Welsh River to Rigo using ten crude river rafts, arriving on October 3. Meanwhile there was a tragic finale for Fletcher's small party at Sengai. Their presence at the village was betrayed to the Japanese and all were callously murdered.



PHIL BRADLEY

The comparison was taken from the track leading down into the village from Templeton's Crossing. Like before, Eora Creek is little more than a cluster of huts.



AWM 013489



PETER BUCKLER

Left: Captain Sydney 'Ben' Buckler, the 23-year-old commander of A Company, 2/14th Battalion, pictured on his return to Allied lines, after leading 39 men on an epic five-week trek across the wilderness east of the Kokoda Trail. Cut off from his unit at Isurava on August 30, Buckler's party managed to escape through the jungle moving within earshot of the Japanese positions for weeks, finally reaching friendly lines at Rigo on October 3. Right: Sydney Buckler pictured at the Anzac Day parade in April 1990. Buckler died in February 1995.

BRIGADE HILL

Brigadier Potts' strategy was now one of holding rearguard positions along the track as he withdrew, intending to make a stand at a suitable spot south of Myola. As they moved back through Myola, the Australians destroyed the food and ammunition that they could not carry. Still hounded by supply difficulties and the need for his third battalion, the 2/27th, Potts withdrew all the way across the main range back to the high ground above Efogi. Here, at Mission Ridge and Brigade Hill behind it, he deployed his three battalions to hold the Kokoda Trail and stop the Japanese advance. Potts positioned Lieutenant-Colonel Geoff Cooper's fresh 2/27th Battalion to hold Mission Ridge. The 2/14th Battalion took up positions astride the ridge behind Cooper, while, further back, Potts spread out the 2/16th Battalion along the ridgeline of Brigade Hill. On the night of September 6/7, the forward troops of the 2/27th watched the Japanese columns move down Kagi Ridge from the main range, using torches made from captured Australian insulation wire to light their way. The Australians had nothing with the range to fire on them.

The first Japanese attacks on Mission Ridge came just before dawn on September 8, hitting Captain Charlie Sims' A Company of the 2/27th on the right flank. The attack was supported by mountain gun artillery fire. The entire company ammunition supply plus the battalion and other company reserves were used up in holding the enemy attack. But even as the Australians reflected on their success, the Japanese were making the decisive move of the battle, a flanking manoeuvre by three infantry companies from Major Horiye's 2nd Battalion of the 144th Regiment. They advanced undetected around to the north of the Australian position and then up onto the ridge among the strung-out 2/16th Battalion positions further back on Brigade Hill, taking up a strong position astride the track and cutting off almost the entire 21st Brigade. It was an astonishing move, totally out-maneuvring the Australians. Potts had badly erred in underestimating his enemy and in not deploying suitable outposts on his vulnerable northern flank. Only his brigade headquarters and Captain Brett Langridge's D Company of the 2/16th remained outside the cut-off position.

To break the Japanese hold on the track, three companies attacked back from the pocket: Captain Claude Nye's B Company of the 2/14th, Captain Frank Sublet's B Company of the 2/16th and Captain Doug Goldsmith's C Company of the 2/16th. A Company of the 2/16th would support B Company in the assault down the track. Lieutenant Bill Grayden commanded 15 Platoon, part of C Company, attacking on the left flank. He watched as the forward troops were deployed in an extended line, and how they then waited beneath the steady rain with their groundsheets around their shoulders, their bayonets fixed to their rifles. A

3-inch mortar fired into the Japanese positions ahead, the dull thuds echoing back along the ridge. As the support fire ceased, the line moved forward at a steady walking pace, shouting and firing, trying to frighten the enemy troops. Small-arms fire laced through the undergrowth from both sides, but with the benefit of dug-in positions, the Japanese fire told. Though the Japanese defenders were forced back into a narrow enclave, they held the main attack along the vital track. Some of Nye's men made it through but 17 men, including Nye himself, were killed. On the left, Sublet also got some men through, Bill Grayden amongst them. Listening to the attack heading his way, Brigadier Potts was heard to remark that the intensity of the fire was far greater than that he had heard at Gallipoli.

As a last resort to open the track, Potts had Captain Langridge attack with his D Company from the brigade headquarters side. Using 18 Platoon, plus the men who had earlier broken through, Langridge made the assault. He led 18 Platoon forward on one side of the track with Grayden and the breakthrough remnants on the other. With the attackers exposed on the relatively open ground before they entered the rainforest, the stubborn Japanese defenders held the assault, the brave Langridge being killed at the head of his men only a few paces from his company's position. Lieutenant Henry 'Blue' Lambert, one of Langridge's platoon commanders, also fell. Captain David Kayler-Thomson took over the remnants of D Company and was told, 'the brigadier wants you to try again.' He replied: 'I haven't enough, but I'll try.' He then turned to Alan Haddy, the company sergeant major, and said: 'Well this looks like good night nurse, good morning Jesus, Alan.' 'Well we can't live forever, boss', Haddy replied. However, the new attack was cancelled – Potts knew he had to keep his remnants between the Japanese and Menari for as long as possible to enable the rest of the brigade to withdraw. Potts pulled out at 2000 hours that night, single file down the trail to Menari.



PHIL BRADLEY

Having withdrawn from Isurava and Eora Creek, the Australians set up a new defensive position at Mission Ridge and Brigade Hill behind it, with the 2/27th Battalion occupying positions on the ridge. This is Mission Ridge seen from the east with New Efogi village in the foreground. The initial Japanese attack at dawn on September 8 came up the ridge from Old Efogi which was off to the right (outside the picture). The 2/27th Battalion positions were near the top of the ridge. The Japanese surprise flanking attack later in the day, which cut off most of 21st Brigade, went around the back of the feature.



AVMM 072329

The bodies of the Australian soldiers killed during the Brigade Hill fighting were buried on a cleared stretch of land along the top of the hill. This photo was taken in April 1944, prior to the relocation of the graves to Bomana Cemetery at Port Moresby.

The view is along the crest towards Menari. The Japanese encircling movement that cut off the main force of 21st Brigade came up the side of the ridge from the right in this general area.



STEVE DARMODY

Today the crest of Brigade Hill remains cleared and a memorial plaque to the fallen was erected here in 1996 (visible on the

left). The positions of the original crosses are now marked by sticks in the ground.



AWM 013262

Damien Parer filmed native carriers crossing a creek on the way back from the front line. This still photo is reproduced as it

is in Parer's original footage. In some publications it has been printed in reverse.

Cut off from the main track, the remainder of 21st Brigade moved south through the jungle, attempting to rejoin the Kokoda Trail further back towards Menari and Nauro. The 2/14th and 2/16th Battalion remnants combined under Lieutenant-Colonel Albert Caro and made it back to Menari the next day. Back on Brigade Hill, Captain Mert Lee held a rearguard position with B Company of the 2/27th Battalion, buying vital time for the withdrawal, at one stage leading a brazen counter-attack against the Japanese. Carrying the brigade's casualties out with them, the 2/27th Battalion made slow progress and were beaten to Nauro by the Japanese advance. The battalion had taken seven stretcher cases and nine walking wounded with them but the main force left them behind on September 19. Corporal Johnny Burns and Private Alf Zanker remained with the wounded in the jungle east of Nauro, caring for them for two weeks until help arrived on October 2. The stretcher cases reached the 2/4th Field Ambulance on the 9th.



PHIL BRADLEY

The likely location where Parer shot the scene — the Vabuiagi River crossing on the Menari side of Brigade Hill.



PHIL BRADLEY

In July 2004, Parer's relatives and friends had a plaque in his memory placed on one of the creek boulders. 'His extraordinary war photography helped forge the nation and remains as an enduring Australian legacy.'



VIC LEMMON

Johnny Burns (left) and Alf Zanker (right), the two 2/27th Battalion medical orderlies who stayed with the stretcher cases hidden in the jungle after the withdrawal from Brigade Hill, caring for them for two weeks until help arrived.

Right: Finally relieved after weeks of fighting in dense jungle, and having proven its mettle at Gorari, Kokoda and Isurava, the depleted 39th Battalion parade at Menari before its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Honner, after their withdrawal in early September. Lieutenant Sidney Johnson stands at the head of his 'ragged bloody heroes'. The men standing behind him have been identified as (l.t.r) Arnie Wallace, Bill Sanders, Harry Hodge, Kevin Surtees, George Cudmore, George Puxley, Kevin Whelan, Len Murrell, Dick Secker, Neil Graham, Clive Gale and Jack Boland. A sturdy walking stick was as vital as a rifle on the Kokoda Trail.



AWM 013269

IORIBAIWA

Brigadier Selwyn Porter took over command of Maroubra Force at Nauro on September 10. Porter decided that the next suitable defensive position on the Kokoda Trail was back at Ioribaiwa Ridge. Fortunately, significant reinforcements were now arriving. On September 11, Caro's composite battalion began to move back through Lieutenant-Colonel Cameron's newly arrived 3rd Battalion, part of the 14th Brigade that had been defending the Port Moresby coastline.

Then, on September 14, the 2/31st and 2/33rd Battalions from the 7th Division's 25th Brigade deployed along Ioribaiwa Ridge with the 2/25th Battalion in reserve behind them. As his brigade went into the line, Brigadier Ken Eather took over operational control of what was now, the 'must hold' position in front of Port Moresby. With four fresh battalions plus Caro's composite battalion, Eather had the strength to hold a much-weakened Japanese force rapidly out-running its supply lines.

An ambush position was set up at the former supply dump at Ofi Creek below Ioribaiwa Ridge where the Australians knew the Japanese troops would gather. Captain Ron Christian's 2/16th Battalion platoon sprung the trap, causing considerable casualties before pulling back to the heights above. Corporal Brian Maloney and Private John Walker opened up with Bren guns from positions overlooking the crossing. Some 20 to 30 enemy soldiers fell before Christian's ambush party headed back to Ioribaiwa Ridge.

The Japanese responded with deadly mountain-gun fire onto the ridge. The Australians thought they would be safe dug in



PHIL BRADLEY

Menari village today, with Brigade Hill in the background.

along the crest, but the enemy shells were directed into the tree foliage above them, the

shell fragments raining down on the men below. Lieutenant Bill Grayden, who had survived the 2/16th Battalion counter-attack on Brigade Hill, sheltered in a pit while shells hit the trees above him. One of the bursts caught Private Harry Whitfield, just eight yards away from Grayden, across the forehead with a shell fragment, mortally wounding him. Private John Baker was with Whitfield in a trench and now moved behind a tree with Private Charlie Lintott, who had also been hit by shrapnel. Another burst caught Lintott a second time and during a lull in the shelling, Bill Grayden moved over to bandage his wound. Grayden saw the flash from the mountain gun down in the valley and then he was blown sideways and down the hill, his eardrums shattered. Baker and Lintott were dead.

On September 15, the Japanese made their push for Ioribaiwa Ridge but were foiled by the staunch Australian defence. They came again the next day, desperately attacking all along the line. Again the Japanese made a key move on the flank, infiltrating into some unguarded 3rd Battalion positions. One of the battalion's platoons was busy digging in at the time, apparently without sentries posted and the Japanese got past them onto a dominant knoll. Captain Bert Madigan of the 2/16th put in a counter-attack but was wounded by a mountain-gun shell as the attack stalled. From their high position on the eastern flank, the Japanese now controlled the ridge.



PHIL BRADLEY

Relics of the fighting at Menari. In the foreground is an Australian 2-inch mortar.



AWM 028695

Native carriers crossing Ofi Creek, between Nauro and Ioribaiwa Ridge. The stream's deep ravine created a formidable barrier. The

2/16th Battalion carried out a successful ambush here during the Australian retreat to Ioribaiwa Ridge on September 14.



STEVE DARMODY

Truly accurate comparisons are very difficult in the jungle but Steve Darmody achieved this remarkable one. The two large

boulders on the left confirm the correctness of the spot, as do several other smaller stones on the riverbank.



AVMM 061957

Imita Ridge, the final 'no further retreat' position before Port Moresby, as seen from Owers' Corner to the south. The Australian forces pulling back from Ioribaiwa Ridge deployed here on September 17 fully expecting another Japanese assault, but it never came. The Japanese high command had decided to

abandon its drive on Port Moresby and ordered their forces on the trail to pull out and withdraw to the north. Army photographer George Nicholson took this photo on December 16, 1943, when members of the Australian Military History Section visited the spot.

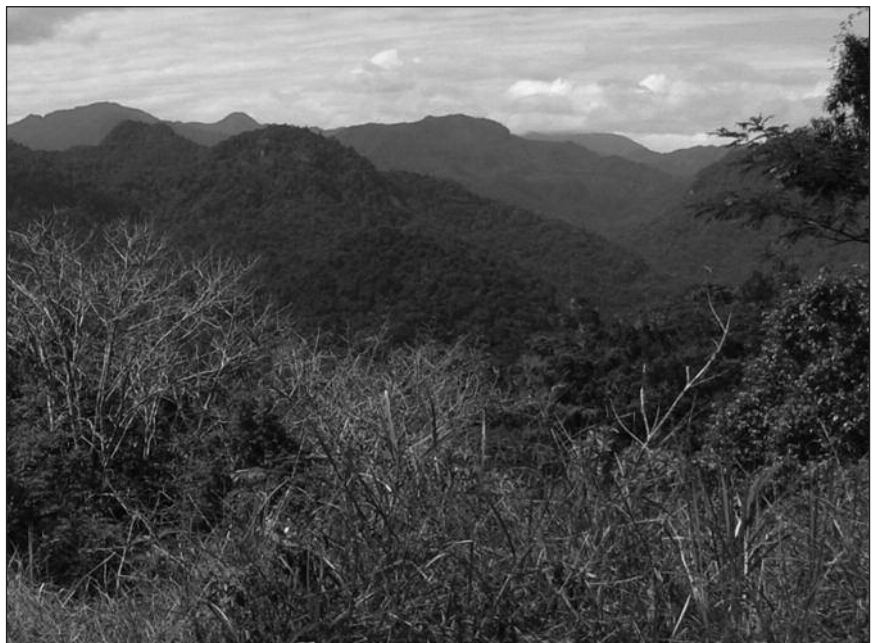
Brigadiers Eather and Porter agreed that the Australians should withdraw to Imita Ridge if it was necessary and this intention was passed on to the divisional commander, Major-General Arthur 'Tubby' Allen. Allen told Eather to hold for as long as possible but the latter decided to withdraw to a firmer base at Imita Ridge, deploying there by midday on September 17. Another fresh battalion, the 2/1st Pioneers, moved up to augment the Australian force, now numbering a considerable 2,500 fighting men. The 25-pounder guns of the 14th Field Regiment now also supported the Australian defence from Owers' Corner.

The units of 25th Brigade carried out extensive patrolling of the area between Ioribaiwa and Imita Ridges. Eather had no intention of again being caught unaware by the enemy. The patrols were of around 50 men with a good allocation of automatic weapons. Private Norm Stokes was with one of the 2/33rd Battalion patrols, intent on ambushing any enemy advance. His company had left their positions on Ioribaiwa Ridge with much noise and apparent confusion but had not gone far, lying up in a kunai grass patch just behind the ridge. Further forward was an abandoned supply dump, any remaining tinned food pierced by bayonet to spoil the contents. C Company waited throughout the night. The Japanese came the next morning, setting up two machine guns, the one on the right almost on top of a waiting Australian infantryman. His burst of Tommy gun fire was the signal for the ambush to be sprung. It was all over quickly, a whistle blast signalling the Australian withdrawal, without casualty. The Japanese came no nearer to Port Moresby than that point.

The continuing withdrawal along the Kokoda Trail, allied to the concerns over the

Japanese landing at Milne Bay, was certainly causing ructions at the headquarters of the supreme commander in the South-West Pacific Area, the American General Douglas MacArthur. Ignorant of the scale of the Japanese threat and of the supply fiasco, MacArthur blamed a lack of 'aggressive leadership' for the Australian position. The

Australian commander-in-chief, General Thomas Blamey, was ordered to New Guinea, much to the chagrin of the New Guinea Force commander, Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell. With considerable angst between them, General Blamey replaced Rowell with Lieutenant-General Ned Herring.



PHIL BRADLEY

Our comparison was taken from a slightly higher position and shows the succession of steep ridges over which the Kokoda Trail passed.



AVIM P02423

On September 28 the Australian 25th Brigade counter-attacked, starting the Australian offensive to regain the territory lost. Here two native carriers and a member of 2/4th Field Ambulance climb the so-called 'Golden Staircase' rising towards Imita Ridge. More than 1,000 steps were cut into the ridge's south slope. Each was battened at its edge by a rough log, which was sometimes broken and often slippery with a coating of mud. In climbing the stairs, soldiers had to lift their leg over the log and put their foot down on the step behind in what was frequently a puddle of mud and water up to six inches deep. The official caption of this photo taken by A. F. Hobson in October 1942 states that the carriers are climbing the stairs towards Ioribaiwa, the next ridge to the north, and it is possible that the photo was taken on the south slope of that hill, where another 4,000 stairs were cut into a much steeper gradient than at Imita Ridge (see the relief sketch of the two ridges on page 6).

THE JAPANESE WITHDRAWAL

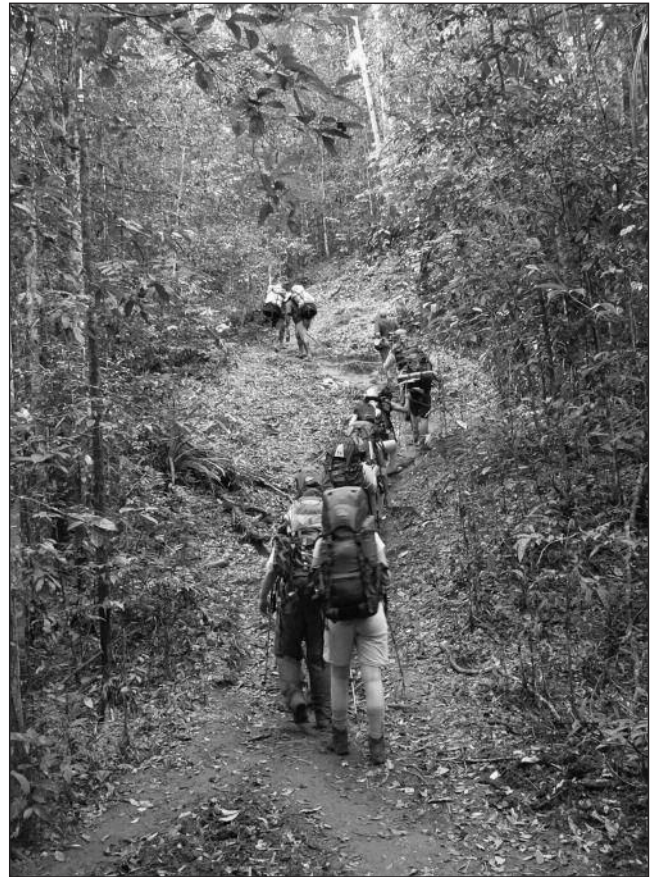
With the Australians now defending the final key ridge position in front of Port Moresby, more patrols went out to determine where the Japanese would attack. Apart from some minor clashes in no man's land, there was no further action and, on September 25, Brigadier Eather began to probe forward. On the 28th he attacked Ioribaiwa Ridge only to find the Japanese had left. On the 30th, 2/25th Battalion patrols entered Nauro and also found it unoccupied. The Japanese had gone, abandoning their attack on Port Moresby when they were on the very doorstep. The 3rd Battalion found evidence that some 2,000 Japanese troops had occupied the area between Ioribaiwa and Nauro. With similar numbers and in prepared positions on dominant terrain, the Australians may well have held any attack on Imita Ridge, but it would have been a very bloody affair.

The Japanese decision to withdraw had come about for a number of reasons. Chief among them had been the delays and losses that had been imposed on the Japanese force during the fighting withdrawal of the Australians back from Kokoda. As the Japanese advanced, their supply lines increased, and then failed. Without an effective native car-

rier system or the possibility of air supply, everything had to be manhandled forward by the troops and, by mid-September, the Japanese soldiers were starving and very low on ammunition. However, the Japanese command never had an issue with sending half-starved, ill-supplied troops into battle. The decision to withdraw had been made at a strategic level. The fighting at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands (see *After the Battle* No. 108) had taken its toll on the Japanese resources and the landing at Milne Bay on the southern Papuan coast had been repulsed. Reinforcements and supplies would now be sent to Guadalcanal as the first priority; Port Moresby would have to wait.

From General Horii's force, two battalions of Colonel Yazawa's 41st Regiment were the first to withdraw on September 16, followed by the three battalions of the 144th Regiment on September 26. A rearguard force based around the 2nd Battalion of the 41st Regiment would delay the Australians during the withdrawal.

With the Japanese force in retreat, Generals MacArthur and Blamey pushed hard for the Australians to retake Kokoda and then drive the Japanese out of Papua as soon as possible. With the Japanese now directing



PHIL BRADLEY

Phil Bradley took his comparison on the south slope of Imita Ridge. This is the first major climb when travelling north along the Kokoda Trail. Walking the historic trail is today rapidly becoming more popular. While there were only 67 travellers in 2001 there were 3,750 in 2005. To regulate and exploit the increasing trekking activity, the PNG government in 2002 set up the Kokoda Track Authority. It charges foreigners \$87 and students or children \$44 for a permit to walk the trail. The revenues are to be shared equally between the Authority and the provincial governments of Kokoda and Koiari, the former using it for rangers and the track's upkeep, and the latter to spend it on health care and education for the tribes along the route. However, much of the funds for the provincial governments are lost through corruption and, bereft of their support money, the landowners have repeatedly threatened to close the track if things did not improve. In 2005 the Authority raised \$300,000 from trekking permit fees.

considerable army and naval resources to Guadalcanal, it was possible they would win that battle and then be in a position to resume the attack on Port Moresby. MacArthur stated his concerns on October 17: 'It is now necessary to prepare for possible disaster in the Solomons'.

As with the earlier fighting, the key to a successful move across the Kokoda Trail would be supply. When the 3rd Battalion reached Nauro, two companies were tasked with clearing suitable air-dropping grounds in the Brown Valley. The first drops took place at Nauro on October 4, though the recovery rate was always a problem. As the Australians moved north along the Kokoda Trail, other dropping grounds were constructed at Menari and Efogi.

The Australians did not catch up with the Japanese rearguard until after they had crossed the main range and were approaching Templeton's Crossing. It was now October 8 and Brigadier Eather would need to move his battalions forward to engage the Japanese. At the same time, Brigadier John Lloyd's 16th Brigade was advancing up the track from Port Moresby. Lloyd had passed General MacArthur at Owers' Corner and been told, 'the eyes of the Western world are upon you'. If nothing else, Lloyd knew his

Right: A C-47 of the US Fifth Air Force dropping food supplies on a cleared space in the Brown River valley at Nauro during the advance of the 25th Brigade in October. The Fifth Air Force, part of South-West Pacific Theatre and responsible for supporting both the New Guinea and Guadalcanal operations, initially had only the 21st and 22nd Troop Carrier Squadrons for transport and supply duties. Their combined strength at the start of the Kokoda counter-offensive was 41 C-47s but, due to lack of maintenance personnel, only 26 of these were operational. A new troop carrier squadron, the 6th with 13 C-47s, touched down at Ward's Drome in Port Moresby on October 14 — the first such squadron to fly across the Pacific from the United States — and an additional squadron, the 33rd, would arrive later on. (The four squadrons were formed into the 374th Troop Carrier Group on November 12). However, supplying the various land forces by air remained a major problem. Cargo parachutes and containers were scarce and normally reserved for ammunition, medical supplies and bottled liquids. Rations, clothing and individual equipment were wrapped in sacking or blankets that did little to absorb the impact of the drop. Osmar White wrote: 'It was fascinating to watch cases of bully beef explode as they hit ground. The gold-coloured tins scattered like shrapnel.'



AWM 027019



AWM 027083

The road back. Looking north from Nauro across the Brown River valley towards the Menari plateau and on to Efogi in October 1942. Osmar White wrote: 'Blue valley after blue valley. Ridge and valley, and valley and ridge. Mile upon endless mile of hills seen from open patches of grassland.'



PHIL BRADLEY

The same ridges and valleys, blue in the early morning mist, in August 2006. The supply dropping took place along the valley to the right.

brigade had great expectations on it. The Japanese rearguard held the Australians until October 15 before pulling back along the track where more fighting took place.

Meanwhile, General Blamey was getting impatient with the 7th Division's commander, Major-General Allen. On October 21, General MacArthur added his comments in his own message to Allen: 'Progress on the trail is NOT repeat NOT satisfactory'. Allen had moved his HQ forward to Myola and had deployed three battalions, the maximum he could supply. He now moved Lloyd's 16th Brigade (comprising 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions) up to relieve Eather's tiring 25th Brigade. The 25th Brigade casualties starkly illustrate the difficulties of warfare along the Kokoda Trail. In their month's fighting the brigade had lost 68 men killed, 135 wounded and a staggering 771 men sick.

On October 20, the day it moved into the front line, Lieutenant-Colonel Cedric Edgar's 2/2nd Battalion made its first attacks. The Australians soon discovered how skilful the Japanese were at using the terrain and camouflaging their positions. The first the forward troops knew of the enemy presence was when a devastating blast of small-arms fire opened upon them. That night the Japanese force moved further back and took up new positions for the following day. They formed up on what was perhaps the best defensive position on the Kokoda Trail, the steep ridge on the northern side of Eora Creek, able to bring enfilade fire, including artillery, along the approach track from Templeton's Crossing. The Japanese commander, Colonel Masao Kusunose, had mustered the remnants of his 144th Regiment here, and though considerably weakened, it contained a nucleus of very experienced and determined troops.

The 16th Brigade reached Eora Creek on October 22, taking up positions on Bare Ridge, on the southern side of the ravine, opposite the Japanese fortress. The Japanese defenders opened fire on the exposed Australians, wounding the 2/3rd Battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel John Stevenson. Brigadier Lloyd decided to split Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Cullen's 2/1st Battalion and attack from two directions. Though the Japanese positions commanded the creek crossings, Lloyd wanted them, so



PHIL BRADLEY

Left: Troops of the 2/25th and 2/33rd Battalions, heading for Menari, cross the Brown River below Nauro in October 1942. **Above:** Sixty-four years on, members of Phil Bradley's hiking party find that a sturdy log still provides the best means of crossing the watercourse.

he directed Cullen to move across the bridges and then attack up the main track into the teeth of the enemy defence. Captain Basil Catterns' B Company got the thankless task.

The battalion's two other companies were sent across Eora Creek further upstream with orders to climb a steep spur up onto the high ground and attack the western flank of the Japanese position. Captains Alex Sanderson and Arch Simpson led the companies and it was planned that they would attack at the same time as Cullen's men. Unfortunately for Sanderson, two of his company's platoons and all of Simpson's company failed to find their way up onto the heights. This was not surprising given that a waterfall had to be negotiated as well as the thick scrub. Though Sanderson had only the 17 men from Lieutenant Keith Johnston's platoon with him, he led them into an attack on the Japanese flank. The platoon was then counter-attacked and surrounded and only four men survived. When Sanderson's body was later found, it was ringed by some 300 spent shells from a German Mauser pistol that he had obtained during earlier service in the Middle East.

Meanwhile the first men made their way across the bridges over Eora Creek on the night of October 22/23. The patrol, led by Lieutenant Ken Burke, was caught by Japanese machine-gun fire and suffered 13 casualties. But Brigadier Lloyd wanted the bridges taken so Colonel Cullen decided to do it himself. Together with his adjutant, Captain Geoff Cox, he crawled over the bridge and through the dead bodies from Burke's foray to find the enemy machine-gunner gone. He quickly ordered Captain Peter Barclay's company to descend Bare Ridge and cross the bridges. Most of Barclay's men made it across to the north bank but, hemmed in at the base of a ravine, the company's problems were only beginning. The breaking dawn revealed that Lieutenant Bill Politt's platoon, in trying to stay to the right of the track, was trapped between the river and a sheer rock wall. The trail here traverses a steep slope and there is no feasible alternative to it. The Japanese defenders dropped grenades down onto Politt's men until Lance-Corporal James Hunt managed to get up the slope and shoot two enemy soldiers,

thus saving the platoon. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Jim McCloy's platoon had found a spur and had succeeded in getting forward up the incline to the left of the track, though Captain Barclay was killed during this move. McCloy could hear Sanderson's flanking attack further west but the two platoons he now commanded could not move from their tenuous position below the Japanese positions.

With McCloy having cleared the way, Captain Catterns now took his B Company straight up the ridge, digging in no more than 30 yards below the Japanese positions, protected from direct rifle fire but under constant grenade attack. The bravest of the men went back down the slope and across Eora Creek each night to get food and ammunition. A Vickers gun was brought forward along Bare Ridge on October 25 but dawn brought the enemy artillery into action and a direct hit destroyed the gun position. A

3-inch mortar that began firing on the Japanese positions on the 26th was also knocked out soon thereafter by well-directed enemy mountain-gun fire. Another 3-inch mortar blew up the next day, when a bomb went off prematurely. (The bomb had come from an air resupply.) During the night of October 26/27, heavy rain made Eora Creek a flood and washed out the bridges making supply even harder. On the same day, Japanese reinforcements arrived. General Horii knew he commanded the best defensive position along the Kokoda Trail and wished to delay the Australians for as long as possible.

Brigadier Lloyd finally realised that he had to get stronger forces onto the high ground to turn the Japanese western flank. The 2/3rd Battalion, now under the command of Major Ian Hutchison, made the wide flanking move across Eora Creek, as Sanderson had earlier done. A company from the 2/2nd Battalion under Captain Bruce Brock was also



PHIL BRADLEY

The Japanese defence position above the Eora Creek ravine. It was precipitously steep and muddy, with mountain guns, mortars and machine guns deployed in support.



AWM 013572

Major-General George Vasey, commander of the Australian 7th Division, raises the flag over Kokoda on November 3, 1942.

The ceremony signalled the end of the Kokoda Trail campaign but much fighting lay ahead at the Japanese beach-heads.

attached. Hutchison took his force even further out to the north and, on October 27 and 28, attacked the Japanese western flank in three columns, each of some 200 men, keeping 300 yards apart. Corporal Lester Pett was in the forefront of the attack, wiping out four enemy bunkers as the Australians unhinged the Japanese right flank. Catterns' men rose from their positions on the front slope and stormed over the crest to find the enemy gone.

The Australians had broken the Japanese

in front of Kokoda, but the Australian division commander, General Allen, had been relieved of his command, a victim of General MacArthur's opinion that progress was unsatisfactory. The 224 soldiers of Lloyd's brigade who had been killed or wounded in the attack on the Japanese Gibraltar at Eora Creek belied MacArthur's criticism. On October 28, Major-General George Vasey was flown in to Myola to replace Allen.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cullen's 2/1st Battalion took up the pursuit of the Japanese rear-

guard back from Eora Creek, entering Aloa on the afternoon of October 30. After the 2/2nd Battalion secured the bridge across Eora Creek to Abuari, Lloyd's 16th Brigade pushed east through Abuari. Meanwhile Eather's 25th Brigade moved north via Deniki heading for Kokoda and troops from the 2/31st Battalion entered the abandoned town on November 2. The Japanese rear-guard had left two days previously. Just after 1100 hours on November 3, General Vasey hoisted the Australian flag above Kokoda.



PHIL BRADLEY

The flagpole site at Kokoda, pictured by Phil Bradley in August 2006. The white memorial stones on the open green carry

bronze plaques dedicated to all those who fell in the campaign; to the native carriers; and to the Australian units that served.

In 1943, a memorial cairn was set up at Sogeri, near the southern start of the Kokoda Trail. It reads: 'In memory of the officers, NCOs & men of the Australian Military Forces who gave their lives on the Kokoda Track, Jul — Nov 1942. To strive, to seek, to find & not to yield.' This photo was taken in October 1944. The road off to the left is the beginning of the 'Snake Road' built by the Australians in late 1942 that leads to the start of the Kokoda Trail at Owers' Corner.

The Kokoda Trail campaign was over but General Vasey continued to drive Brigadier Lloyd forward to reach the coast as soon as possible. On the day that Kokoda fell, Lloyd's men had contacted the Japanese rearguard at Oivi, some ten miles further east towards the coast, the brigadier himself coming under fire. The Australians crossed the Kumusi River on November 15 and had made the first contact with the Japanese coastal positions by the 18th. Other Allied troops had also been sea and air lifted into the area. But a great deal of costly fighting lay ahead before the Japanese beach-heads at Buna, Gona and Sanananda would be eliminated.

On November 9, General Blamey addressed the troops of the 21st Brigade at the Koitaki cricket ground, just east of Sogeri. In an unfortunate choice of words, he stated that 'it's not the man with the gun that gets shot, it's the rabbit that is running away'. The assembled men took great offence at the remark. Blamey later tried to explain his choice of words to Brigadier Ivan Dougherty, then in command of the 21st Brigade, but the damage had been done. He never again held the respect of the Australian soldiery.

One group of men who gained the utmost respect of the Australian soldiers was the native carriers, the 'fuzzy wuzzy angels'. Without their help in bringing forward the supplies, the Kokoda Trail campaign could never have been fought. But it was their selfless dedication as stretcher bearers that forever would be remembered by all those who fought and were wounded.



AWM 076622



PHIL BRADLEY

Now located in a neat little park, the memorial itself remains unchanged.



PHIL BRADLEY

The McDonald's Corner memorial, at the location where the wartime Kokoda Trail began at Ilolo (before the access road from Sogeri was pushed through to Owers' Corner). The place got its name from PJ McDonald who ran a rubber plantation here in 1942. The memorial was built in 1967, for the 25th anniversary pilgrimage of the 39th Battalion veterans. The rifle and tin hat are original, formerly issued to PJ McDonald.



PHIL BRADLEY

The memorial to the Kokoda campaign at Isurava, looking north-east along the Eora Creek valley. The four pillars of the memorial acknowledge Courage, Endurance, Mate-ship and Sacrifice. The memorial was opened in August 2002 by the Prime Ministers of Australia, John Howard, and Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare.



JASIN BOLAND

The movie *Kokoda*, released in 2006, is a clear reflection of the growing interest in Australia for the savage campaign fought in the jungles of New Guinea. For decades *Kokoda* was overshadowed by Gallipoli, the disastrous campaign of the First

World War, which is generally regarded as a defining moment in Australia's coming of age, but in recent years awareness of *Kokoda* has increased greatly and the battle is now looked upon as another crucial event in the nation's history.

Alister Grierson, who graduated from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in 2004 made an impressive debut directing his first feature film *Kokoda*, a moving commemoration of a harrowing campaign by Australian troops during WWII. The principal crew that he assembled were all students together at the school, so for most of them this was also their debut. Grierson co-wrote the script with John Lonie, who teaches scriptwriting at the AFTRS. Produced by Leesa Kahn and Catriona Hughes of GFN Productions, the film was shot on a low budget in 28 days in southern Queensland.

Working with Grierson on the film was Jules O'Loughlin a free-lance director of photography based in Sydney who began his career in the arts 15 years previously as a stills photographer, now having a portfolio of some 3,000 photographs taken in over 40 countries throughout Asia, Central America and the Middle East. O'Loughlin then pursued a career in cinematography and after gaining entry into the AFTRS, he shot over 15 short films and documentaries. *Kokoda* was also his first full-length feature film.

Only Shane Bourne, who plays the doctor, and William McInnes, portraying the colonel, were well-known actors, the remainder of the cast comprising Jack Finsterer and Simon Stone (brothers Jack and Max Scholt), Travis McMahon (Darko), Luke Ford (Burke), Tom Budge (Johnno), Steve Le Marquand (Sam), Angus Sampson (Dan), Christopher Baker (Blue), Ewen Leslie (Wilstead) and Ben Barrack as the lieutenant were relatively unknown actors.

Kokoda is a film made as a commemorative tribute to Australian fighting forces in 1942. It centres on a fictional small patrol cut off behind enemy lines from supplies and communications, attempting to rejoin their battalion in the lead-up to the decisive battle at Isurava, a village on the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea. Among those who particularly distinguished themselves on the

KOKODA — THE MOVIE

By Gail Parker

Kokoda track were the untrained and ill-equipped militia of the 39th Battalion Australian Infantry. Often never having held a rifle before, and with an average age of 18 to 19, these volunteers and conscripts were primarily engaged for ancillary services such as building roads. Instead they were sent in to mount an offensive against the Japanese until they could be relieved by Australian Imperial Force units. Regulars scornfully

called them 'chocos' — 'chocolate soldiers' — who would melt in the heat of battle. In the event they earned the respect of everyone by demonstrating courage and determination, staying on to fight after their relief arrived in the face of Japanese forces who outnumbered the Australians ten to one.



JASIN BOLAND

Kokoda tells the story of a patrol of the 39th Battalion that is cut off behind enemy lines in the run-up to the Isurava battle of August 1942. This publicity shot lines up the cast. Standing at rear: Christopher Baker (Blue) and an unnamed soldier. Middle row: Travis McMahon (Darko), Angus Sampson (Dan), Jack Finsterer (Jack Scholt), Ewen Leslie (Wilstead), Steve Le Marquand (Sam). Front row: Tom Budge (Johnno), Simon Stone (Max Scholt) and Luke Ford (Burke).



The movie contains numerous scenes that vividly portray the difficulties of jungle fighting, the ferocity of nightly combat



(left), the toils and fears of the ordinary soldier and the suffering of the wounded (right).

The film title also represents the closest Australia came to being invaded by the Japanese and a gruesome theatre of war that defines the WWII Australian fighting spirit just as Gallipoli does for WWI. Papua's infamous jungle terrain makes it the most difficult battleground on earth and it is featured as prominently and graphically as any character in this film.

Clearly captured on the screen is the contrast in the chaotic crashing progress of the inexperienced Australian patrol as opposed to the Japanese who appear camouflaged, stealthily silent and deadly, their faces unseen, therefore shown as an impersonal enemy.

Prior to filming the cast spent an intense period at a boot camp on reduced rations while being immersed in visual and reading material relevant to the script. They were also introduced to rifle practice and patrolling by the SAS. The actors were also given the opportunity to meet with some members of the original 39th Battalion, many of them claiming that this was most

important in bringing home to them exactly what these men went through in the jungle of Papua.

A similar area of dense jungle terrain was found on and around Mount Tambourine near Brisbane. Located nearby is the Canungra Military Area which dates back to the Second World War when the base was established to train soldiers in jungle warfare techniques. It now houses the headquarters of the Australian Defence Intelligence Training Centre. Filming commenced on September 29, 2005 and finished on November 4.

Having decided to film the movie largely with hand-held cameras, which gives the impression that the viewer is almost an unseen member of the patrol, cinematographer O'Loughlin comments that the physical challenge of having to hold and carry around a heavy camera while moving around with the actors on steep slopes and rocky terrain was extremely tiring.

The setting is vivid including the malarial nightmares of Jack Scholt and the dysentery and illness experienced by many others as

the film hammers home its harrowing account of a time spent in this hell-like situation.

One point of interest is that William McInnes (the colonel) played his part for free. 'I suppose in a minor way,' he said, 'doing this part is like tipping my hat to my father's generation. It's only a day's work and I decided to donate my fee to the serviceman's charity Legacy. So at least someone will get something out of it.'

Kokoda has received several nominations and awards. The Australian Film Institute nominated Phil Eagles for the best costume award, and Phil Stuart-Jones for design and best visual effects. The Film Critics Circle of Australia nominated Jules O'Loughlin for the best cinematography and he was also nominated for the same award at the Inside Film Awards in 2006. Likewise, Adrian Rostirolla was nominated for best editing and Nicholas McCallum for best production design. And in April 2007 *Kokoda* was awarded the Special Jury Award at the WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival.



The movie's final sequence includes a recreation of the famous picture (see page 14) of the weary survivors of the depleted 39th

Battalion parading in front of their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Honner, played by William McInnes (right).