

# FROM SHOE BOX TO SHIPPING CONTAINER

## CCGS Maprik High School Expedition 2008

*Donor School – Central Coast Grammar, NSW, Australia*

*Recipient School - Maprik High School, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea*

**By Richard Lornie**

**Headmaster, Central Coast Grammar School, NSW, Australia**

### THE 2008 EXPEDITION

On Monday 29 September eight students from Central Coast Grammar School set off to journey to sister school Maprik High in the remote East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. The students were accompanied by their Headmaster, Mr Richard Lornie, and a group of ten other adults. Their objective was fourfold: (i) to build on the success of previous visits<sup>1</sup>; (ii) to unload a container of educational supplies donated by the CCGS community and sent earlier to Maprik; (iii) to buy paint and refurbish the School library and some of the other rooms at the School; and (iv) for Mr Lornie to continue to negotiate with Government officials his plans to establish a Community Learning Centre at Maprik High School.



The Moresby to Wewak Express

The students were: Maddi Fleetwood, Mitchell Greenwood, Matthew Harrison, Lauren Holz, Tori Perrow, James Ralph, Brittany Stillone and Will Thomas. They were accompanied by CCGS Headmaster Mr Richard Lornie, his fiancée, Ms Lindy Bracey, his son Saun (born in the East Sepik in 1973) and a party of adults consisting of Graeme Murphy, James Brighton, Fiona Grant, Kathy Hay, Pam Johnston, Peter Ralph, Brian Rees and Marilyn Spence.

The group arrived in the East Sepik Provincial Capital city of Wewak on the evening of 29 September. The following morning we went to the Australian War Memorial at Cape Wom before setting off in four 4x4 vehicles on a two-hour road trip to Maprik High. The group received a special welcome with a sing-sing group performing special dances and songs and then speeches of welcome were made and the anthems of both nations were played. The

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<sup>1</sup> The first visit was in 2006 to organise the Operation Christmas Child distribution of gifts. The distribution took place later that year. A follow up visit took place in 2007. In 2005 my School participated in Operation Christmas Child for the first time. This programme is the work of the Samaritans Purse Organisation and involves the distribution of Christmas Gifts in small boxes (shoe boxes) to children in developing nations. In 2005 our school community collected gifts for boxes destined for SE Asian recipients. The impact of the programme had a profound effect on me. The CCGS coordinator of the project, Mrs Sue Braund, shared my enthusiasm and suggested that when it came to the 2006 programme we try to centre it on an area close to my heart – Maprik, in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

group then had a meal with the local staff members and then made themselves comfortable in their quarters in two of the staff houses.

The following day Graeme Murphy, the Group's Superintendent of Works, got work underway. Work parties were dispatched to paint the outside and inside of the Library, the outside and inside of the Home Economics Building, and as many blackboards as possible.



Work gets underway – Graeme Murphy (far left - standing) supervising

Later that day, to everyone's absolute delight the shipping container that had been despatched from CCGS for Maprik on 11 July turned up at the School on the back of a large truck.



The container arrives at Maprik High School

The container was emptied and a large force of Maprik students rallied round to help. Peter Ralph supervised the unloading of the photocopiers he had so generously donated and the other supplies were placed in a safe place. Peter then spent much of the rest of the day installing the electronic equipment in one of only two areas in the school with an air conditioning unit. Other items donated to the school included tools and gardening equipment, two thousand library books, three sets of encyclopaedias, three sewing machines, rolls of material, science equipment, a dozen filing cabinets, tables and chairs, teachers desks, whiteboards, blackboards, notice boards, TV sets, art and equipment, school bags, track suits, curtains and sports gear.



Peter Ralph helps to unload the first of the photocopiers (left)



**Many hands make light work**

That night (Tuesday) our caterers Pam Johnston and Lindy Bracey prepared a superb meal from local produce and afterwards everyone spoke about their feelings about the trip up to that time.



**Marilyn Spence, Lindy Bracey, Pam Johnston and Kathy Hay in the kitchen (left)**

The following day (Wednesday) work commenced early and many of the Maprik students joined in to help. By the end of the day work on the Library and Home Economics rooms was complete and many blackboards had been painted as well as the main school notice board. The photocopiers were all installed and working and three local teachers had been trained in their use. In addition James Brighton had supervised the work of ensuring that the staff computers at the school were all working properly.



**Fiona Grant (centre) was queen of the blackboards**

During the course of the day the Maprik staff and students worked on the construction of a wooden frame built around the container to enable it to be raised off the trailer and then lowered to the ground so the trailer could be returned to Wewak. Local initiative came to the forefront in the absence of any crane or other specialist facilities to assist the process, but by nightfall the container was still in place on the trailer.



**Significant progress was made in many areas**



On the afternoon of the Thursday a special assembly was held at which we were all thanked for our efforts and gifts were distributed to all members of the group. The Provincial Superintendent from Wewak gave a speech and other officials also spoke. That night our caterers worked with the Maprik teachers to prepare a wonderful meal, which was shared by the Maprik staff and the tour party.



**Elaborate preparations to unload the container**

The following Friday we were due to travel to Pagwi on the Sepik river to take a tour to some villages and then spend the night at the Ambunti lodge but the transport did not arrive on time. We spent the time working in the library shelving books and by the time the bus arrived at midday we had finished work and the library looked superb.



**The “new look” library**

By 2 pm we were on board three dugout canoes with 40 hp motors bound for the village of Palimbe where we visited the men’s spirit house and shopped for artefacts.



**The Sepik River**

The trip back upstream to Ambunti was slow as we were going against the current and also travelled slowly to avoid a major lightning storm. We didn't arrive at Ambunti until 10 pm with all of us wet, cold and hungry and looking forward to a hot meal and comfy bed. Next morning we returned to Pagwi by canoe and then took the bus back to Maprik High to say final farewells and collect our 4x4 vehicles for the drive back to Wewak.

On Sunday morning we flew to Port Moresby and then the main party left for Australia. Mr Lornie, Ms Bracey, and Saun Lornie remained behind. Saun planned to spend a few days with his brother (a journalist with the *Post-Courier*) in Moresby and Mr Lornie and Ms Bracey met that night with the Hon Minister for Commerce, Gabriel Kapris, the Member for Maprik, to further discuss development issues for Maprik High and also the concept of a Community learning Centre.



**Minister Kapris and officials with Mr Lornie and Ms Bracey**

We achieved a great deal on this trip but there remains a massive amount still to be done not least the major upgrade of the dormitories, the staff housing, the water supply, security fencing, the ongoing provision of teaching materials and further consideration given to the idea of establishing a Community Learning Centre at Maprik High School. Minister Kapris led us to believe funding will be made available from the PNG Government to achieve these objectives.



**The School dormitories are in dire need of repair**

## Postscript

On Monday 20 October the Hon Gabriel Kapris, Minister for Commerce, and the Hon Sani Rami, Minister for Internal Security and acting Minister for Education, visited Central Coast Grammar School to thank the community for the assistance given to Maprik High School. In a card accompanying a gift to the school community Minister Rami wrote, *“On behalf of the people and the Government of Papua New Guinea I, the Minister for Education, PNG, hope and wish that this bonding and relationship being made between Maprik High School and CCGS may be long lived through regular exchanges of students. It is our wish that it be of mutual benefits in the years to come for PNG and Australia.”*

## PREVIOUS VISITS TO MAPRIK HIGH SCHOOL

### 2006 CCGS Expedition

In October 2006 the Headmaster, Mr Lornie, went to Maprik to establish whether or not it would be possible for CCGS to deliver “love in a shoebox” Christmas gifts to Maprik High students in conjunction with the Operation Christmas Child programme organised by the Samaritans Purse charity.

*I initiated communication with Maprik High School early in 2006 in order to establish a protocol to deliver the Christmas boxes but I received no response to my letter. I therefore decided to visit Maprik to establish personal contact. This process was somewhat frustrating and I shared my concerns with my GP while organising my medical preparations for the trip. She put me in touch with local medicos Alistair and Judy Watt who had recently visited Maprik as part of a Medical Aid team. They suggested I contact Graham Leach who runs Callan Services for the Disabled at the Divine Word Campus in Wewak and has an email address. Graham answered my email and offered accommodation for me at Wewak as well as transport to Maprik and in October 2006 I went to Wewak on a scouting mission. I visited the Wewak Education Office and discovered two former students of mine were employed there – Baran Sori and Joseph Ouyomb. Joseph, formerly of Maprik High was particularly helpful and assisted with my plans to visit Maprik High. Geni Tami the Headmaster of Maprik High met with me and agreed to the visit later in the year to deliver “love in a shoebox” and Baran Sori also approved the proposal. I was shocked at the state of the School and realised that much more than Christmas gifts was needed. At this stage I resolved to develop a broader plan to assist Maprik High.*

*On returning to Australia I set about organising the team to deliver the Operation Christmas Child gifts and worked closely with Hans Von Chrismar to that end. His report summarises the 2006 expedition very nicely indeed.*

Mr Lornie received the green light and in December he returned to Maprik High with students Jessica O’Neil, Kerri Anne Schmidt and Laura Worthing together with Head of Senior School Ms Denise McDonough and volunteer Mr Hans Von Chrismar representing Samaritans Purse.

At the School Prize-giving Assembly hundreds of boxes of gifts were distributed and whilst this went well it was apparent to all members of the CCGS group that the school was in urgent need of more than Christmas gifts.

The school was dilapidated and in urgent need of major refurbishment and was also desperately short of basic educational supplies as well as suffering from low morale. On the way back to Australia the group later participated in another distribution of boxes at a squatter settlement in Port Moresby. Whilst in Port Moresby the group were invited to visit Parliament House by Dame Carol Kidu. It was at that time that the Headmaster Mr Lornie, inspired by Dame Carol’s work at Koki, conceived his plan to establish a Community Learning Centre at Maprik High.

The 2006 expedition was a success but it was obvious that there was much more to be done. We planned to return in 2007 and this time the group's objectives were to be: i) to distribute small educational packs to students; ii) to distribute some essential educational supplies to the school; iii) to establish through small group meetings with staff and students what their needs were using a SWOT analysis; and iv) to further investigate the creation of a Community Learning Centre at Maprik High.

## 2007 CCGS Expedition

Participants - Samaritan's Purse: Hans von Chrismar, CCGS staff and representatives: Sue Braund, Graeme Murphy and CCGS students: Laura Worthing and Natalie Hancox.

A SWOT analysis was conducted during the course of this visit.

### Strengths

Students were unable to verbalise strengths beyond "the girls' dorm was better than the boys' dorm"

Teachers were very keen to improve teaching resources

Teachers were able to itemise their subject needs

Students were well behaved and keen to learn – they had aspirations to achieve beyond simple village life and valued the opportunity to be at school

Acting headmaster was very keen to cooperate with any assistance we may offer

Grounds are large and flat

Students are used to maintaining the grassy areas and gardens during 'Ground Parade'

Students are kept busy

Tank rainwater, river water (and soon) town water are available

The road from Wewak to Maprik is being upgraded

Learning structure. 8 x 40 min lessons / day between 7:45 – 1:40pm

9 subjects taught – English, maths, science, practical skills (boys only due to lack of facilities), home economics (girls only) social science, agriculture, commerce and PE

Students love to play soccer

### Weaknesses

Tendency to rapid change:

Since 2006 visit, Maprik's Years 6, 7 and 8 have been returned to the Primary School as specialized staff shortages made it difficult to continue these grades in the High School. Therefore these students are not receiving specialized tuition in maths, science, etc. The teaching/learning deficit was spoken about and the headmaster was hoping to make up this lack with excellent teaching opportunities in years 9 and 10 which seemed highly optimistic given the current level of resources available.

Buildings are in very poor state

Only one stove and only one sewing machine work for 16 girls in home economics. Girls would like to do practical skills but are unable due to lack of teachers.

Basic necessities like clean water were not always available. Students said the rainwater was not always available to them and they often had to drink river water. The girls said they were often sick.

Dorms had few electric lights so candles were used between 7:00 – 9:30pm

Cooking facilities were extremely basic and unhygienic. The basic diet was boiled rice and tinned fish with no vegetables or fruit.

Plumbing problems had left 1 toilet working for 200+ girls

No additional food sources were grown or farmed despite all students being required to work approx 2 hours a day doing outdoor chores – no gardening tools were available.

A carpenter/maintenance man is employed at the school but there was little evidence that anything was actually done – a door were missing on an upstairs boys dorm leaving a gaping hole with a drop straight to the ground. The girls' dorm had loose and missing boards on the staircase.

Tendency to assume that material help will be enough. Minister Gabriel Kapris holds a Ministerial position in Parliament gave the school 10 computers. However no technical support or training accompanied the computers. Teachers are the only ones to have access to them.

Lack of security was cited as a major problem. There are no fences and the girls in particular felt vulnerable as locals could wander freely into the school. Sewing machines, light bulbs, an electrical metre box and personal items were sited by staff and students as being stolen. Staff were more inclined to blame students, students blamed locals.

Telephone connection is not working.

## **Opportunities**

There is a general feeling that the 'time is right' to move ahead with development at Maprik High. There is a coincidence of locals in positions of power, local businessmen keen to assist, CCGS ready to assist and Acts of Parliament pointing to this kind of development being appropriate.

Dame Carol Kidu has led a major shift in public policy in PNG with the passing of the Integrated Community Development Policy in Jan 2007, which encapsulates a policy that emphasizes lifelong learning opportunities. We noted that she has established the Japaraka Learning Centre in Wewak (according to Independence 2007 South Pacific Post pg 20). Community Learning and Development Centres (CLDC) are becoming the focus for Community development for the next 10 – 20 years.

Members from PNG parliament - Minister for Trade and Industry (Gabriel Kapris) with the members from Wosera Gawi and Ambuti Dreikikir - express enthusiasm and willingness to develop Maprik as a model school in the area. Gabriel is from Maprik area. K3 million has been promised in the past with no apparent evidence of it being made available.

Yalawi Nongi is a very capable businessman who is keen to become a School Board member. There is a recognition that the composition of the school board needs to change.

Michael Tang is available to help with shipping although it is better if we do not mix our gifts with his commercial shipping – this leads to holdups at customs.

Customs official will speed up movement of gifts through customs if they are not linked to commercial containing.

A town water supply is currently under construction that will ensure good quality drinking water for the school – supposed to come on line early 2008.

The Institute of Technology in Lae is keen to establish a Distance Education provider in Maprik.

Better use of IT and internet connectivity should be a priority.

## Threats

The school is currently planned so subject areas have a central, locked storage facility between 2 classrooms. But resources have gone missing. The Headmaster now sees that a centralised storage area would be better. Teachers would therefore have to go to the Resource Centre to get their teaching resources and then be accountable for their return.

Fencing is needed but adequate fencing would be very expensive.

A fear that resources given to the school will be ‘consumed’ and benefits short lived.

A history of renegeing on promises from Government officials.

A fear of a mismatch in expectations, managerial experience and ability, resolve to get the job done in reasonable time frames and keeping to promises made without placing too much emphasis on MOU between all stakeholders.

A history of blaming and not taking responsibility for negative outcomes.

Poor roads despite upgrading

Lack of suitable visitor accommodation at Maprik

## Summary

Whilst the needs seem overwhelming, the various pointers suggest that this is indeed a good time to be trying to help Maprik High.

In the short term there is much that can be done, at minimal cost to the CCGS, until there is real evidence that the various stakeholders follow through on promises being made. If a small shipping container could be housed on school property, it could be filled without the problems of interim storage. This could be advertised with a list of things that could go into it and once filled, taken immediately by truck for shipping. I would hope for a guarantee that these things would be used for Maprik High and not be consumed for personal use or sold for profit.

The following items are all in great need at Maprik

- Sewing cloth and equipment

- Gardening supplies – wheelbarrows, rakes, brooms, push type lawn mowers

- Science equipment and easy textbooks

- Novels and simple reading material

- Cooking equipment – a stove, sinks

- Lighting bulbs and fluorescent tubes

- Student desks and chairs

- Outdoor tables

- Soap and cleaning products

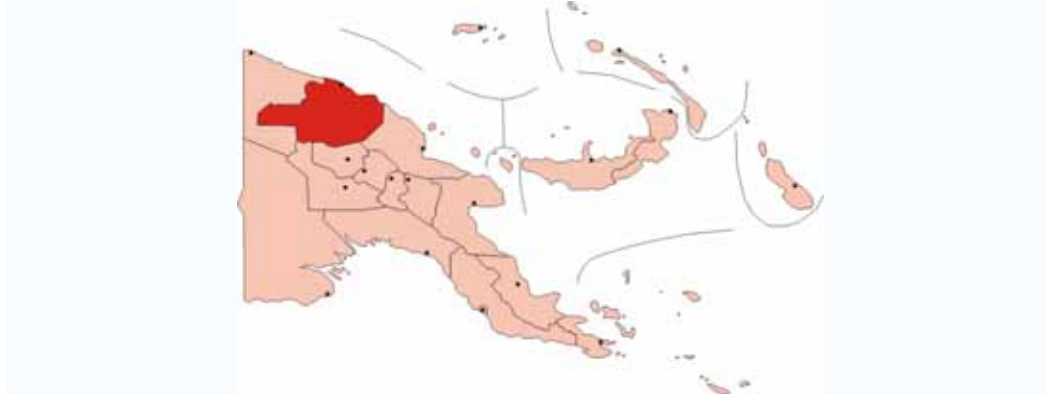
- Toilet paper

Armed with the results of the 2007 visit we plan to mount a major expedition in 2008.

## Appendix 1 - Why Maprik? Why PNG?

**By Richard Lornie**

In 1972 on New Year's Eve my young family arrived in Port Moresby. I had been recruited in London to teach in PNG and was on my way to my posting in Maprik in the East Sepik District.



*Location of the East Sepik in Papua New Guinea*

The East Sepik District as it was known, occupied an area of about 44,000 square kms with a population at the time of nearly 200,000.

Serving that huge area and population was a total of 122 Primary schools and five secondary schools. One of those secondary schools was at Maprik and that was where we were heading.

Maprik High School was established in 1971 and in 1973 when I first taught there it had about 320 pupils from Form 1 to Form 4. Many pupils left at the end of Form 2 and very few left Form 4 with the prospect of work. The lucky ones went on to Senior High School in Rabaul or Sogeri while some entered the University Preliminary Year course in Port Moresby.

I stayed at Maprik High for two years and then moved to Goroka in the Eastern Highlands to join Goroka Teachers' College which that year had been amalgamated with the University of PNG. Part way through 1976 I transferred to the Faculty of Education at the University main campus where I worked as a lecturer until I left PNG in 1981.

Today PNG is a different place. It is a place with a lot of potential but it is a place where there are many problems. It is a place that gave me a great deal of joy and professional satisfaction when I taught there. At Maprik High School I was blessed with a group of students thirsty for knowledge, particularly my Form 3 / 4 classes of 1973/74. I enjoyed my teaching and also my other roles at the School as Saike House Master, Head of English, Coordinator of the Adventure Club, Museum Coordinator, Artefact Salesman, Cultural Centre Coordinator and Haus Tambaran builder and rugby coach.

The Haus Tambaran (men's spirit house) was opened in August 1974 by Michael Somare, then as now the nation's most senior Minister. I was also able to do exciting fieldwork for my Master's degree and build a platform for my subsequent appointment as senior tutor at Goroka Teachers' College. My son David attended the primary school run by the AOG Mission at Hayfield. My second son Saun was born in Wewak Hospital on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1973.

I wanted to give something back to the area. We decided to send 1000 Christmas boxes to Maprik High School for Christmas 2006 and I determined that I wanted to be there with a couple of senior students from my School to watch the recipients' faces.

## Appendix 2 - The East Sepik Province

Wewak is the provincial capital of the Province and Maprik is one of the provincial centres. Today the East Sepik Province has an estimated population of 343,180 people (2000 census).

The Maprik area is world-famous in anthropological circles for the rich culture of the Abelam, Arapesh and Sepik River (Iatmul) communities. The Maprik area cultures are based on the Yam Cult and the Tambaran Cult (Margaret Mead studied the Mountain Arapesh and in the 1960s and 70s Anthony Forge amongst others wrote extensively about Abelam culture).

A minor gold rush in 1936 attracted prospectors and in their wake came the Australian Administration who set up a patrol post in Maprik in 1937. In 1942 Japanese troops moved into the Sepik and Wewak was the centre of Japanese activity. When the Allies were looking to reclaim the area Wewak, heavily fortified by Japanese Army troops, was bypassed in favour of a landing further west at Aitape and Jayapura in Irian Jaya (West Irian). Wewak and its airfield complexes were left to 'wither on a vine', where entrenched Japanese held out until the end of the war, cut off from their supplies or any hope of reinforcement or escape. Wewak was the target of many Allied bombing missions to reduce it, and in the last months of the war was a battle ground for Japanese and Australian ground forces.

The Maprik area was adversely affected during WW2 when retreating Japanese from Wewak made their way inland to Maprik, where they held out until the end of the war. Australian troops moved to encircle them, and had cut them off from movement to the north, east or west. General Hatazo Adachi, commander of the Japanese 18th Army, had his last headquarters near Maprik, and fought until the end of the war, when he surrendered and was flown to Cape Wom, Wewak, for the official surrender to the Australians. The Hayfield Airfield area adjacent to Maprik High School witnessed intense aerial activity in the closing stages of the New Guinea war. The airfield has at one end the wreck of a C-47 Dakota aircraft A65-38 dating back to 12 December 1945 when it crash landed.

Today the East Sepik has been somewhat left behind in the present day economy compared to mineral rich provinces where mining has occurred but that is not to say that the Province has stagnated. Prime Minister Somare recently assessed the area thus on the occasion of the opening of the ANZ Bank in Wewak:

*The opening of a bank is an obvious sign of growth and prosperity and as the Regional Member for East Sepik and Prime Minister I am more than happy to witness the opening of another bank in the province and a commercial enterprise in the country. Our small town of Wewak is beautiful, but has been a sleepy little town for many years. The vanilla boom in the province put us on the map in recent years and despite the fall in vanilla prices, the spirit of industry in other commodities in the province is very encouraging and commendable. East Sepik is predominantly an agricultural province and Sepiks have proven that they are not lazy. We are among the largest producers of cocoa and rubber in the country. Recently we were able to revive the rubber factory at Gavien in Angoram District, and hopefully we will soon be processing sago commercially in the Province. PNG is made up of communal societies and we have proven in the past that cooperatives can work in our provinces. For this reason there are plans in the pipeline for the reestablishment of Sepik Coffee. These are just a few of the agricultural initiatives on the drawing board for the province. The national government is complementing the hard work of the Sepik people through the recent decision to extend the Boram Airport of Wewak to receive direct international flights as well as improving port facilities for direct Shipping in and out of Asia. But apart from agriculture, we have the first tuna loining plant in the country and I am pleased to announce that the province's investment in the factory has already gained considerable returns. Last year the provincial government received 17 million Kina from its investment in the South Seas Tuna Corporation.*

*This has significantly boosted East Sepik's portion of revenue it generates for itself to compliment the allocation by national government. As a result, I take this opportunity to assure the ANZ Bank that our province and its people are ready to do business. With three banks the competition will be healthy. From a sleepy town Wewak has the potential to become one of the faster growing towns in the country.*

**ADDRESS BY THE RT HON GRAND CHIEF SIR MICHAEL SOMARE, GCL GCMG CH CF KStJ  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE MICHAEL SOMARE FOUNDATION  
AND THE OPENING OF THE ANZ BANK IN WEWAK, MONDAY, 23 JANUARY 2006**

In spite of the confidence of the Prime Minister there do remain serious problems in the area. The East Sepik, along with the rest of PNG has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the Pacific, while malaria and other poverty-related communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis continue to be leading causes of death, particularly among children.

Papua New Guinea is today on the brink of a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic: HIV/AIDS-related illnesses are the leading cause of death at Port Moresby General Hospital. By March 2002, there were 5,239 reported cases of HIV/AIDS, and it is estimated that over 15,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea (as at 2004).

In addition to HIV/AIDS other health issues are infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, dengue fever and malaria.

The country also has an environmental issue with deforestation as a result of growing commercial demands for tropical timbers.

The Member for Maprik, Minister Kapris, has major plans for the economic development of the Sepik and for the education sector within the province.