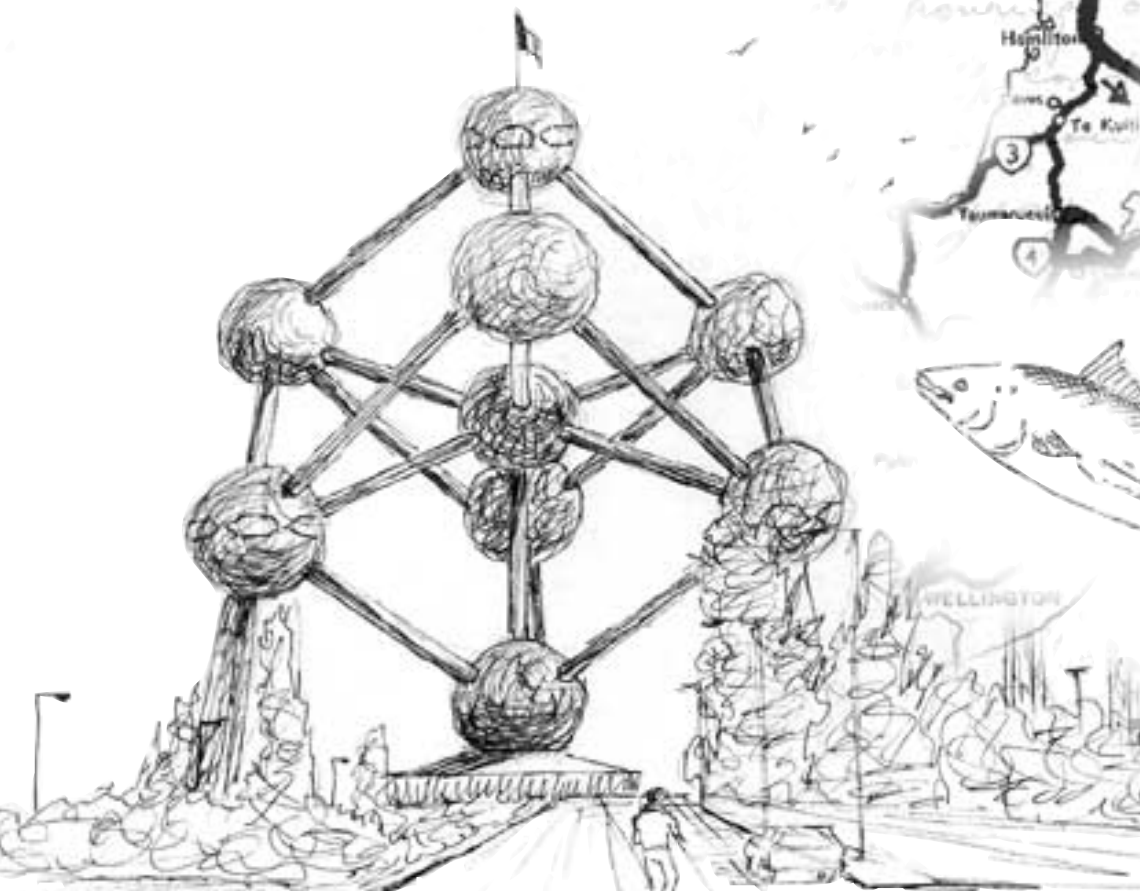
a thumbnail sketch of my past

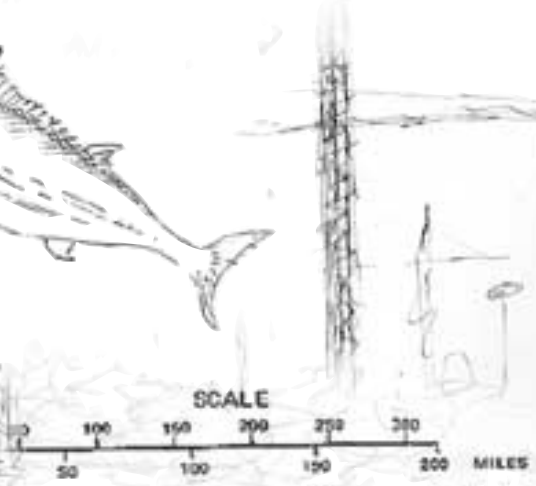
Fred Holland

December 2000


Cape Reinga
Kaitaia
Whangarei
AUCKLAND
Hamilton
Te Kuiti


NORTH ISLAND

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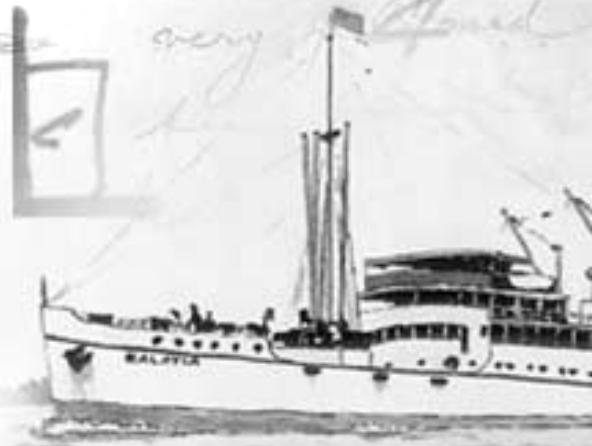
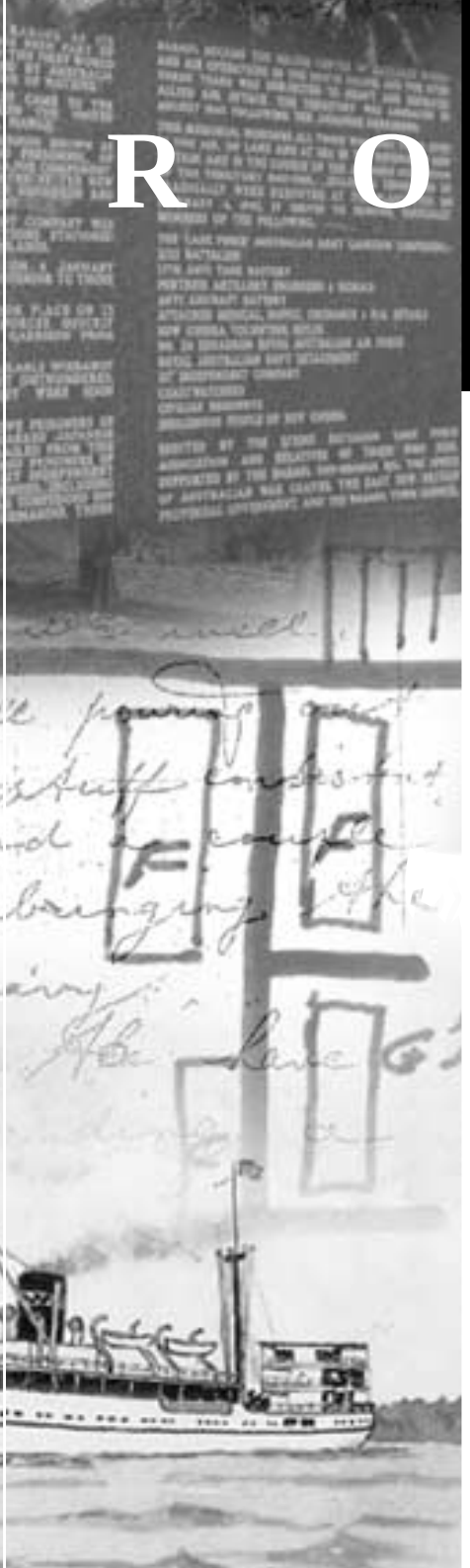




R O D U C T I O N

Working to a strict chronological sequence is not very practical as I don't have a diary for reference and, through the effluxion of time, my memory of times and dates is somewhat wanting. Therefore, the date for switching from one part to the next is purely arbitrary.

Per force this narrative concerns me. Very many people, in one way or another have shaped my life. All of them cannot be mentioned specifically. But occasionally there will be references to some people who are peripheral, but pertinent to this tale and well known to the family. All of them can't be mentioned specifically, and to do so would make this a heavy, boring tome which nobody would bother to read anyway.

Also, and importantly, this is not for general publication. It has been written strictly for the private benefit of my family. After all, it is my family who agitated for this story.

I have included a simplified family tree and some early photographs of my mother and father, but to add any more photos of people would turn this into a photographic album and that's not my purpose.

U.K. ORIGIN UNCERTAIN

JOHN JAMES THOMAS HOLLAND
M
HARRIET NELSON

THOMAS HOLLAND
M
MABEL FALKINGHAM

HARRY | TAS | RENA | BILL | TRAV | BIDDY | JOHN | JIM | RUS

HARRY
M
WINNIE LARARD

FRED
M
MARY BAKER

BETTY
M
MICK WOOD

HELEN
M
JEFF LARSEN

MIKE
M
DIANNE

PATRICIA | ELEANOR

MARK
M
JULIE BUTTERFIELD

JULIA
M
ERNEST LITERA

STUART
M
LINDA WILLIAMS

HARRY
M
LONNI URBANEK

CLAIRE
M
PETER INCHBOLD

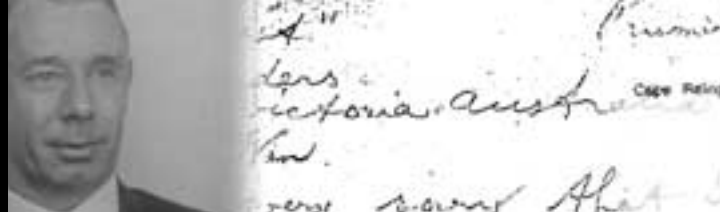
JUSTIN | BREANNA

ALEX | BRONWYN

EDWARD | PHOEBE

TOM | HUGH | MITCHELL

growing up in *New Guinea*
PART I



The island of New Guinea was first inhabited about 50 thousand years ago; the settlers originating from Indonesia. Today's people are known as Melanesian, and are intelligent and can be quite industrious.

New Guinea first appeared on a map and referred to as New Guinea by one Gerardus Mercator in the year of 1569. The earliest recorded contact was made by Gorge de Menses, a Portuguese. There were also several other contacts before this. Luis Varez de Torres in 1606, however, did fix the southern bounds of New Guinea when navigating what is now known as Torres Strait. Abel Tasman was next and when, on his second voyage in 1642 - 1643, he must have passed by quite close to Panakondu and Kavieng in his fluyt, the Zeehaen and the Heemskerck.

Colonisation of New Guinea and its outlying islands would make an interesting study for an historian.

The western half was Dutch until in more recent times (after World War II) it became a part of Indonesia.

Between 1883 and 1886, Britain and Germany reached agreement to leave Papua to Britain, with control from Australia and the rest, including the Solomon Islands, to be controlled by Germany.

After World War I, Britain, through The League of Nations, took over the mandated territory of New Guinea and New Zealand took over the management of the Solomon Islands. The mandated territory was, of course, being managed by Australia together with Papua.

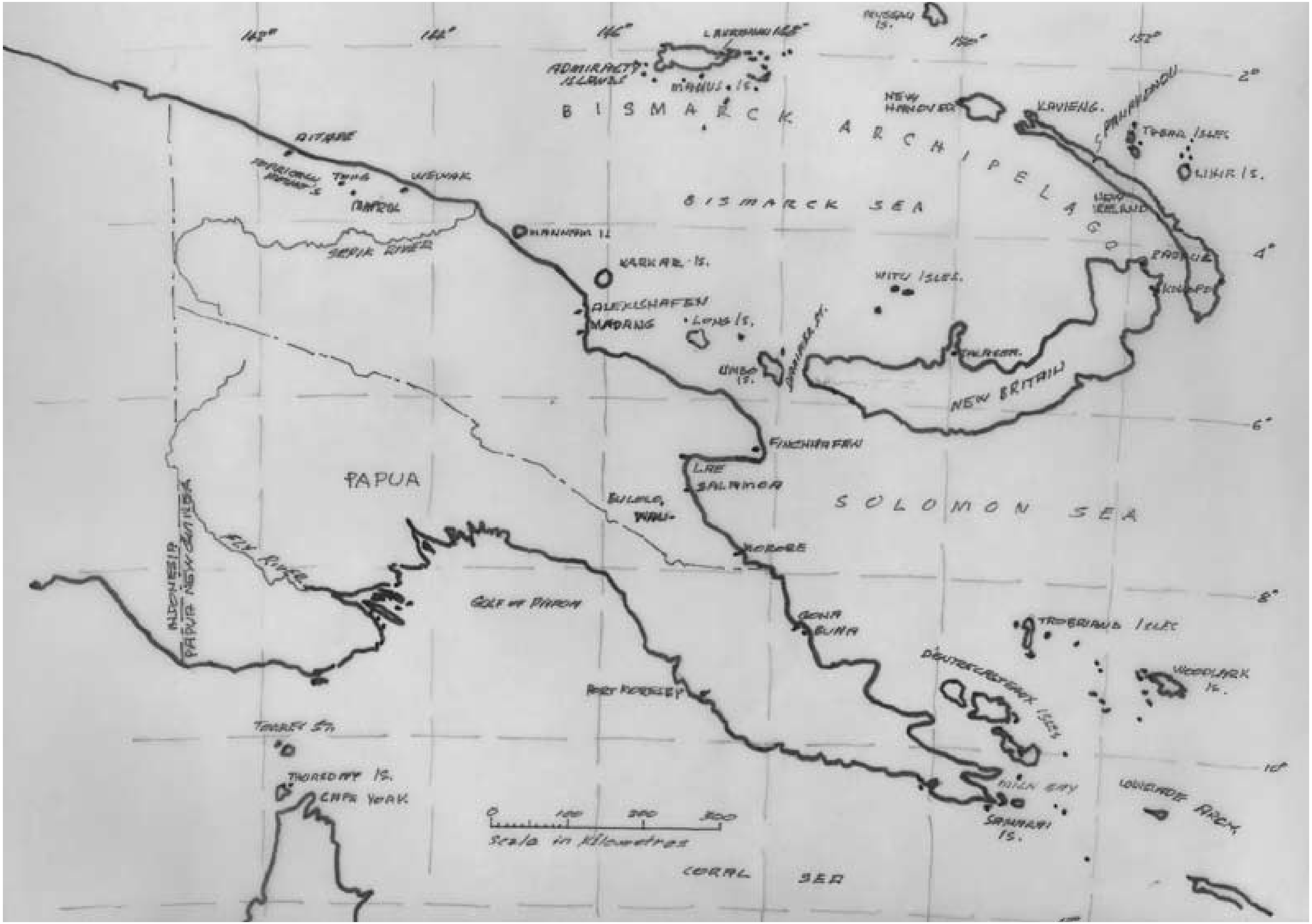
Papua and New Guinea became an independent nation on the sixteenth of September 1975. But Australia is still pouring money into the country to prop up its economy.

Just before Germany and Britain settled their colonial boundaries in New Guinea, a French man, one Charles Bonaventure du Breil, marquis de Rays, promoted a scheme to found the free colony of New France at Port Breton (Port Praslin, or Gower Harbour) on the south west corner of New Ireland. He sent about one thousand colonists in four expeditions. But the whole venture failed; he was put on trial and sentenced to six years imprisonment. (The marquis never did visit the colony himself).

New Guinea was home to me almost continuously until 1937. The exceptions being whenever we went "down south" on leave, and also when Dad spent about twelve months in Sydney at La Pérouse.

This was a time of growing up. In many ways the time was reminiscent of, and really was probably an extension of the days of the Indian Raj. Growing up in a foreign country, I became bilingual and thereby understanding and enjoying the cultures of two worlds - three worlds if you count nature as another world. It couldn't have been a more idyllic place to grow and thrive.

I have often considered making a pilgrimage to this land of my early youth,



142°
144°
146°
150°
152°
2°
4°
6°
8°
10°
ADMIRALTY ISLANDS
MANUS IS.
BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO
NEW HANOVER
KAVIENG
NEW IRELAND
RABAUL
AITAPE
WEWAK
BISMARCK SEA
SEPIK RIVER
KARKAR IS.
ALEXISHAFEN
MADANG
LONG IS.
WITU ISLES
NEW BRITAIN
FINSCHHAFEN
LAE
SALAMAUA
SOLOMON SEA
PAPUA
BULOLO
WAU
FLY RIVER
GULF OF PAPUA
GONA
BUNA
TROBRIAND ISLES
WOODLARK IS.
PORT MORESBY
MILNE BAY
SAMARAI IS.
THURSDAY IS.
CAPE YORK
0
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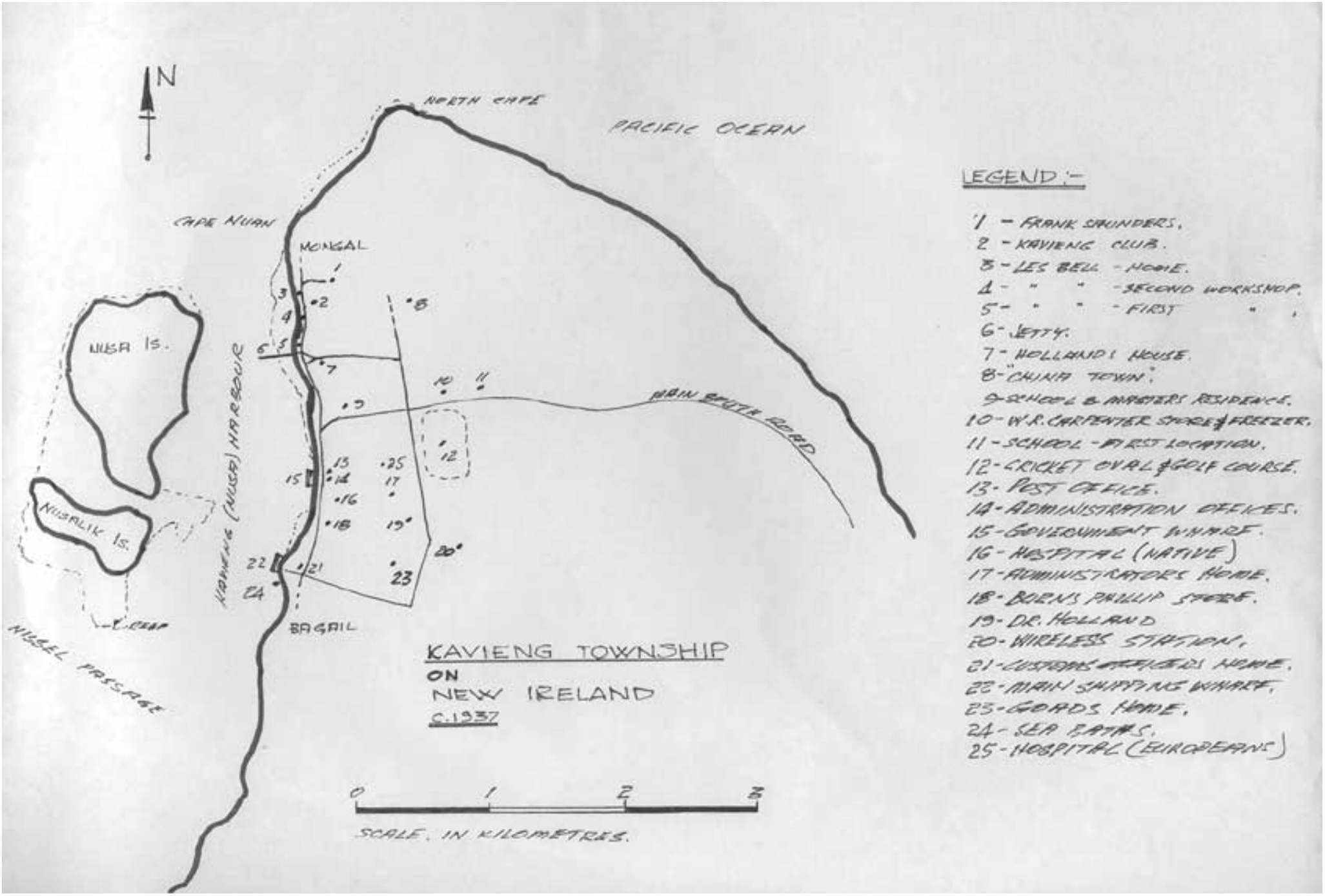
scale in Kilometres
CORAL SEA



LEGEND :-

1 - FRANK SAUNDERS.
2 - KAVIENG CLUB.
3 - LES BELL - HOME.
4 - " " - SECOND WORKSHOP.
5 - " " - FIRST " .
6 - JETTY.
7 - HOLLAND'S HOUSE.
8 - "CHINA TOWN".
9 - SCHOOL & MASTERS RESIDENCE.
10 - W.R. CARPENTER STORE & FREEZER.
11 - SCHOOL - FIRST LOCATION.
12 - CRICKET OVAL & GOLF COURSE.
13 - POST OFFICE.
14 - ADMINISTRATION OFFICES.
15 - GOVERNMENT WHARF.
16 - HOSPITAL (NATIVE)
17 - ADMINISTRATORS HOME.
18 - BURNS PHILLIP STORE.
19 - DR. HOLLAND
20 - WIRELESS STATION.
21 - CUSTODIAN OFFICER'S HOME.
22 - MAIN SHIPPING WHARF.
23 - GOODS HOUSE.
24 - SEA BATHS.
25 - HOSPITAL (EUROPEANS)

but where to start? What might I expect? I know it wouldn't be the same as I knew it once. Why spoil those fond memories? So, here in part, is something about New Guinea and growing up in the colonial climate of the 1920's and 30's.

A glance at the maps accompanying this section will identify the town of Kavieng on the northern tip of New Ireland. It is about two and a half degrees (about 280 km) south of the equator, ie: very much in the tropics. This is where I lived for most of my early youth.

Here, the temperature was mostly in the 27 to 30 degree Celsius range during the day and always cooled off at sundown when a sea breeze could get up. Occasionally, temperatures would rise to 38 degrees and, on one memorable occasion, it even reached a then record 46 degrees. By nightfall, though, it had dropped back to about 25 degrees.

The town shoreline was closely backed by a parallel low ridge of overgrown coral limestone. The foreshore is mainly reef or seaweed covered sand. The only sandy beach is that expanse of sand exposed at low tide. There was, however, a good, clean sandy beach in the area where the swimming baths were located.

The two islands, Nusa and Nusalik (little Nusa) did have good beaches; particularly at the passage between these two islands. Whilst the water in this channel was crystal clear, it was quite deceptively deep in the centre and, when the tide was running, the current was very strong. I got caught in this once, but managed to swim to the southern reef and scamper back to Nusalik from there. It was like swimming across a river. You just have to go diagonally across it and that's about what I had to do in order to return to our picnic site on the southern tip of Nusa.

The map of Kavieng township is presented and is the result of my best recollection of what the place was like when I left in 1937. Probably quite different today. The town had a European policeman who led a small troop of native police. Their barracks were just a little bit south of the cricket oval. There was also a native jail somewhere between Carpenter's store and Chinatown. This jail had a very loud ship's-type bell which sounded bellow-beck at 5 am every morning (rise and shine time for the inmates). The jailbirds were usefully employed during the day doing odd road maintenance jobs about the town and included cutting the grass on the oval and the golf course. Nobody had such fancy equipment as a lawn mower, so the grass was cut by a gang of prisoners armed with a type of scythe, locally called a sarrif. This was a piece of hoop iron, salvaged from packing cases, and probably about 1.2 metres long and about 1.5 mm thick by 20mm wide in cross-section. One end was wrapped in old cloth for about 150 mm to form a bit of a hand grip and one edge was hammered to form a sharp cutting edge. This action, of course, bent the strip into a shallow arc. By holding the scythe just below knee height and swinging it like one would with a scythe, it performed very well as a grass cutter (the golf course greens didn't need cutting, as, they were, needless to say, the traditional sand scrapes).

The main foreshore road was made from local coral limestone and, therefore very white and glary. However, an avenue of casuarina trees provided a welcome shade for anybody walking along the road.

It seems I first went to Kavieng on New Ireland in New Guinea when about two years old, by which time sister Betty had arrived as well. My earliest impressions or recollections of Kavieng is living in what became the customs officer's home: a typical, tropical building on stilts and always a concern to Mum for Betty's safety at the stairs. A bannis (gate) at the top of the stairs solved this problem. Nothing's new today, is it?

I remember, vaguely, learning to speak (English) and being thoroughly frustrated because the natives spoke a different language. Very quickly became bilingual.

After a while we moved to another house almost at ground level, opposite the Government Wharf which later became the post master's home.

From here we moved to our final house which Dad acquired - it was originally a club/hotel during the German Colonial days.

Probably the most vivid memories that I have of my early childhood revolve around fishing.

Probably the most vivid memories that I have of my early childhood revolve around fishing. There was no reason for not indulging in this pastime (nay passion!). Virtually at our doorstep was the sea complete with coral reef and a small ship's jetty and who could ask for anything more?

The jetty was about one hundred metres long and was about three-fifths of rock fill with coronas (crushed coral limestone) on the surface and the seaward end was timber-piled with a heavy planking deck, probably Quila. The small boats using this jetty were miscalled pinnaces. They were mostly about ten metres long, decked over and with a stern wheel house and usually powered by diesel engines. For economy and emergency they also sported a single mast, jib and main sail and steered by a hand operated tiller. These vessels were owned and operated by various plantation owners located on the outlying islands and/or coastal locations accessible only from the water. Some of them were operated as itinerant traders and others by various missions. The harbour sea bed was pure white sand shelving all the way into the shell lined beach from some seven metres plus at the jetty head. It was fortuitously located in a reef passage with the outer edge of the reef only as far away as a good hefty cast with a hand line.

So this was the idyllic fishing site .At high tide, you fish from the jetty head, or, if permitted, from the deck of a boat and at low tide wander over the exposed reef with a spear, single or multi-pronged. If the sea wasn't up and the tide ebbing, hand lining off the reef edge was usually quite productive, where the reef dropped almost vertically down to a mostly sandy or weedy bottom in six metres or so of water.

Sometimes a shoal of fish would shoal just off the jetty head and, in order to reach them with a hand cast line, I'd stand on one of the pile caps (some nine hundred to twelve hundred millimetres above the deck level): a rather precarious action as the pile caps were rounded and not flat and sometimes resulted in an unintentional ducking. Mum was watching one day when this happened and later, when I returned home actually asked me why I didn't come home and change out of my wet clothes. (I was a hundred percent dried off by then, of course.) It was quite embarrassing as on this occasion, I had not believed anyone saw what happened.

In the beginning New Guinea was attached to Australia as part of the great southern landmass known as Jandwarra. About 40 million years ago Australia and New Guinea (then still combined) separated from Antarctica and commenced drifting northward.

The northern part of this drifting Australian Plate was then fairly flat. However about 25 million years ago it encountered the Pacific Plate which knocked up its leading edge thus creating the great central Cordillera of New Guinea with present day peaks of 4-5,000 metres above sea level. (Puneok Jaya is 5,030m. high).

Some of the adjoining islands are the result of further wrinkling. The coral reefs which now garland these eruptions developed a bit later.

Torres Strait is the result of troughing behind the buckling leading edge and thus formed the separation between Australia and New Guinea. Subsequent Ice Ages have raised and lowered the sea level and thus bridging and/or disconnecting the two land masses at various times.

An interesting recent press release from the international body of geographers revealed that Australia's position had to be relocated by some 200cm further to the north-east on charts of the world. Satellite navigation aids identified this error. The earth not being a true sphere also compounded this error.

One day Betty came down and wanted to fish with me. So I duly gave her a line with baited hook and left her to it. Nothing was happening and she was getting bored so I wandered over to see why. In the crystal clear water I could see a hook on the seabed with something attached to it so up came the line to yield a very small coral fish about 50 millimetres long on the hook. But it was hooked through the eye! "Knowall" told her that's no way to catch a fish and I believe she's never fished again since.

I soon got to know the seasons for the different species and the bait that they'd each prefer. When the monsoon season arrived and stirred up the seabed, fish were very hard to catch and therefore it was a very frustrating period for me.

As I got older and ranged further afield the government wharf became a favourite attraction. It was a land backed timber wharf with about fifteen to eighteen metres of deep blue water at its head. I would view with great envy such denizens of the deep as tuna, kingfish, shark and, on one memorable occasion, a great manta ray which spoiled the fishing for an hour or so.

The Postmaster was a keen fisherman and I'd often join him on the wharf. One day he caught a shark off the wharf and I very soon learned of this by the native bush telegraph. On going down to see the trophy I discovered its mate was still about. So quickly home for my trawling line and with a large hook into a steak cut off from the first shark I set about catching his mate. I conned one of the boys to take the baited hook out as far as my line would reach and drop it. In no time the shark was hooked. But the line pull was so high that I had to be given a hand pulling it in. Eventually one of the boys gave a hand but even he couldn't manoeuvre it away from the nigger head corals in the nearby reef. Here the shark got himself and the line tangled in the reef and my end of the line broke off leaving the shark securely tethered to the reef!

The excitement of the catch soon attracted the Postmaster who fetched a .303 rifle. But of course yon shark was too deep for this to be effective. Fortunately it broke free never to be seen again. It would have been about ten to twelve feet long, I suspect. And it makes a good story about the one that got away.

Straightening bent hooks between one's teeth is not to be recommended. Doing this I chipped one of my front teeth as a small boy and it's still evident today. The coral reef was the main cause of bent hooks although

occasionally an oversize fish would be caught and become the culprit.

Marine life has always held a great fascination for me and for a young boy it was a veritable wonderland. Neither of my parents imparted much knowledge in this direction. However I learnt a lot from the natives who of necessity lived very close to nature.

Snorkels and scuba gear hadn't even been thought about at this time. However water goggles were all that was required to see underwater. Without these sea water inflames the eyes after a while and becomes quite unpleasant so wearing goggles and, armed with a spear having a single iron prong which in turn had a barbed point and fitted into a bamboo haft for buoyancy, one could spend hours floating over the edge of the reef observing the infinite varieties of coral, urchins, worms, small and large fish, seaweeds, eels, rays and so on and so on. Occasionally you'd disturb a turtle and boy, oh boy, could they travel. Sharks weren't encountered as a problem but one got to know instinctively what parts of the reef to avoid when swimming, particularly when alone which I was about ninety per cent of the time.

Rowing a canoe, (native outrigger type), covered the ground quicker and was a useful fishing platform but you missed seeing a lot beneath the surface that way. Sometimes after a heavy storm a lot of ocean kelp would be dumped against the shore and this brought to hand a whole new marine ecosystem. The small animals living on this flotsam is remarkable - small fish, crabs, shrimps, sea snails and even sea snakes.

Speaking of sea snakes the most common one was the black and white banded type which grew up to about two metres at which length their bodies would be as thick as a man's forearm. They never got aggressive and if encountered while swimming splashing water usually sent them on their way. Interestingly and disturbingly in retrospect I subsequently learned that this species has the reputation of being extremely poisonous.

Sailing was something I didn't get to do very much but thoroughly enjoyed it whenever an opportunity arose. Simply for the want of a boat or a canoe. Occasionally however I was able to con a native owner into letting me borrow his craft. Joy oh joy!

Kavieng however is a sailor's delight really. Sheltered from the ocean and having very deep water it's just perfect. These native canoes were rigged with a little pocket handkerchief sized jib and a large mainsail plus a cantilever board on which one sat for added stability and of course a bit of speed - no fancy trapeze wires on these craft! Steering was just a hand held paddle which was a bit tricky and tiring after a while. So a bit of a run down wind gave one some respite. Remembering never to go about to starboard was critical as doing so would bury the outriggers with all its disagreeable consequences.

My Postmaster fishing friend had a small cutter in which he would sail up and down the harbour trawling a line. One day he hooked something (never identified) which stopped him dead in the water and proceeded to tow him backwards towards the harbour entrance passage. At this stage he decided discretion was called for and cut the line! I've often speculated as to what it was, possibly a very large shark. But he could also have hooked onto a large manta ray.

One of my great joys was an all day trip to one of the outlying islands with the local Methodist missionary - one Ben Chenowth. His base was at a village just a few miles down the road south of Kavieng. Part of his responsibility was a leper colony on one of the islands and sometimes I'd be lucky enough to join him on his launch for one of these trips. Trawling off its stern for kingfish was the big attraction. Caught a few too when trawling in open waters. However the rule was "up lines" whenever he'd slow to negotiate a reef in between a pair of islands which barred our course. The object being to avoid snagging the line on deeper rocks. I wasn't quick enough on one occasion when entering Kavieng Harbour on the way home

somewhere near Nusalik and managed to catch a very large rock cod. To get him my line, (some 50 metres of it), must have been dragging through the bottom because when landed on board he was covered in seabed slime which stank to high heaven (Mary knows all about catching these creatures!). Big ones are not so good eating. But the boat crew enjoyed it that night.

New Ireland is part of a chain of islands in a highly active volcanic area and probably had its geological origins somewhere between the Triassic Era (70 million years ago) and the more likely recent Cainozoic Era (some 2 million years ago). In any event its surface consists largely of coral limestone. In many places this material has been leeched out to fashion limestone caves. Rather too recent to have developed much in the way of stalactites or stalagmites. These just had to be explored by any young boy. The most popular, just a few kilometres down the road, was known as The Grotto. This was originally a large subterranean cavity of which half its roof collapsed a long time ago and so gave access to its remains and provided a wonderful freshwater swimming venue; the whole floor being flooded and, as the remaining roof shaded the water, the water was decidedly cool. Another cave was much closer. In fact its entrance was at the back of Mongol village and went straight into a coral limestone cliff face directly below Frank Saunders' house. Its interior was strewn with far too many rocks and inhabited by many snakes and land crabs. Its claim to fame was the altar rock at its entrance. Native legend says it was used for sacrificial offerings. They didn't or most likely wouldn't, elaborate any further to me on this subject. Suffice to say there was a very distinct eeriness about the whole place. The young minds conjuring up visions of cannibal duk-duks (witch doctors) and other ethereal apparitions!

Probably the most memorable cave was the Bat cave. This was very deeply secreted in the jungle; a fair walk from the Methodist Mission. The first time I went there was in the company of Ben Chenowth. Betty came too. For some reason we two were staying at the Mission for a few days (respite for parents no doubt). This cave is a large underground cavern entered by clambering bent double down a very narrow declining adit; the entrance being largely concealed by scrub. We didn't venture too far into the cavern mainly because its floor was under some water and of uncertain depth. The exposed surface rock was also treacherously slippery; being covered with bat guano! The ceiling, which our torch beams could only just illuminate was a seething mass of bats squeaking their protests at our intrusion into their domain. This too was a young cave in a geological sense; there being no stalactites or stalagmites (at least as far as our torches could probe). Having disturbed the inhabitants the air was full of flying creatures; some exiting through the entrance and others re-entering all the time.

An archaeologist would have a field day investigating the floors of all these caves.

Les Bell and his wife Bertha are very old friends of the family dating back to the origins of our time in Kavieng. Les owned and operated the town's workshop where all manner of engineering activities were undertaken. He also ran a coconut plantation. Frank Saunders was his partner for some time and when he relinquished this interest my father became a partner. I think it must have been about this time that Les became interested in radio and Dad would teach him Morse Code and other standard radio procedures in exchange for him (Dad) being taught some of the intricacies of the engineering trade.

As I grew up and my fishing skills improved, by now I was a good strong swimmer, the need for a good harpoon type spear was on the agenda. I always made my own spears. So having found a suitable length of 6mm diameter rod I approached Les with a view to using his forge in order to create a sharp point on it and of course fit it with a barb. I'd watched him and others doing blacksmiths work previously. So he left me to the task and the outcome was a highly successful harpoon prong which lasted a long time and caught many fish for me. However that afternoon I arrived home just as did Dad who took one look at my thoroughly blackened clothes and body

and told me that the hallmark of a good tradesman is not measured by the amount of dirt he accumulates!

Panakondu was our coconut plantation and took its name from an adjacent native village I think.

It's interesting to note that several early explorers very likely passed close by Panakondu while running off the east coast of New Ireland. For example: Shouten and Le Maire in June 1616; Tasman in April 1643 and Bougainville in September 1768.

In the beginning the plantation was a partnership with one Tom Prince. Tom Prince saw the initial estate carved out of the jungle and the palms planted. However the Depression years I think took their toll and Dad eventually bought him out. We had about 400 hectares which was being developed progressively.

Wild boars, domestic pigs gone feral, were often a problem around the kilns

Panakondu plantation was isolated by swamp from its north and west boundaries. Just over the northern swamp was a village called Pinikindo and the area where our plantation was located was known as Rangalas. It was Dad who christened the plantation Panakondu and I am not too sure how this name originated. I suspect it might just have been a distortion or mispronunciation of Pinikindo.

Panakondu is just under 160 kilometres from Kavieng and follows the east coastline and would take us all day to make the trip. The trip was of necessity protracted by numerous stops to see good friends at various other plantations on the way. We would also bring what mail there was for them. The bridge over the river at Fissoa was always a problem. If, as often happened, the deck was washed away by floods. These New Ireland rivers are very short. Because of the gradient out of the mountains they can run very fast. But even so they couldn't always cope with tropical deluges. In this event you'd wait until dead low tide when the old car could just ford the sandbar on the delta out over the reef.

Our car at that time was a 1923 vintage single seater Buick with a dicky seat on the back. There wasn't much room for luggage and if it happened to rain the front seating became rather crowded! We'd often send a lot of luggage ahead via one of the Chinese trader's trucks. The day to day running of the estate was in the hands of a boss boy. For the first four years it was largely a task of keeping the jungle at bay and cutting the kuni down. Kuni is tall, head high grass.

After about four years the palms started to return something on the investment. The ripe nuts are collected, the husk stripped, and the kernel extracted from its shell and then carted back to the kiln near our house where in turn it was sundried to form copra. One of the Chinese traders would then truck it to the wharfside warehouse in Kavieng to await export.

The sundrying kiln is very simple. Large trays shelter under a thatched roof at night and/or during rain. On dry sunny days the trays are rolled out for the sun to do its job. Some plantations were more complex and sophisticated with their arrangements using the heat from burning the husks and/or the coconut shells. We just left the husks to rot into compost, but used the shells for cooking. The shells also made good coke with which to heat laundry irons (no electricity for this chore).

Wild boars, domestic pigs gone feral, were often a problem around the kilns - particularly at night time. They were present on the mainland of New

Guinea somewhere about 6,000 BP (Before Present) according to archaeological evidence. The copra trays were nicely arranged within easy reach for them to get at the copra and they would wreck the trays in the process. The trays were either woven bamboo slats or chicken wire mesh if you could afford to import it.

So begins the bizarre story of my pig hunting. One night when the pigs were on the prowl and raiding the kiln I decided to spear one if possible, in the near dark conditions. (Fresh meat was not always readily available down here). I got one of the beasties straightaway but he disappeared into the jungle and I was not prepared to trail him at night. Set out on the trail next morning but neither I nor the boys who went with me found him. This was a worry because to leave a wounded animal was not according to Hoyle. However some several weeks later some kanakas from the village found the carcase and returned the spear to me. He had not gone very far at all before dying it seems. Anyway, Dad said no more pig hunting with a spear.

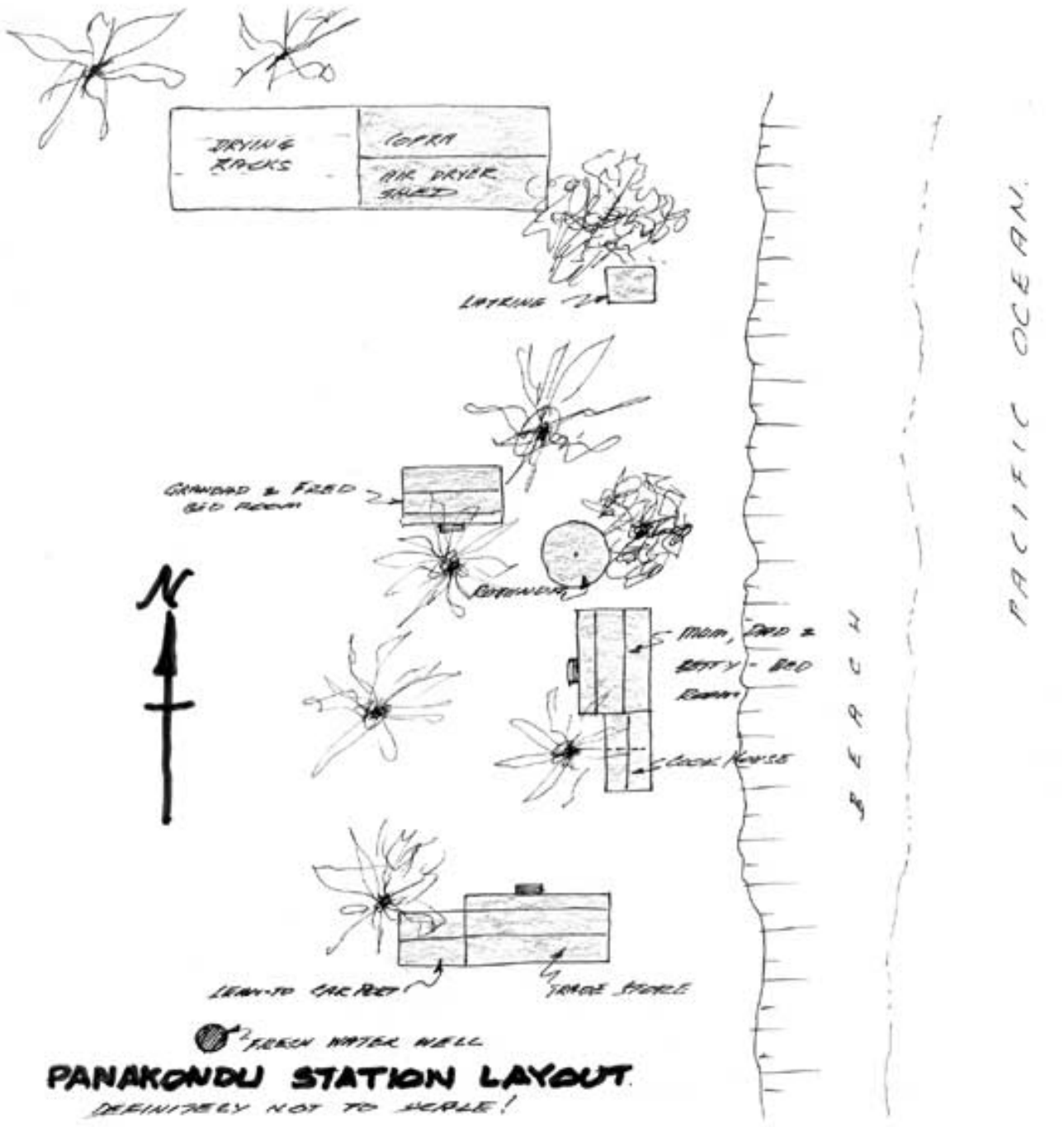
It's rather interesting you know that the natives told me that when the spear was returned to me it would never again be any good again for hunting fish. They said that the fish could smell the grease of the pig on it. I think I managed to prove their theories were rather far-fetched.

Many people are critical of the natives for being light fingered. Yet here is a case of returning lost property to the owner. They knew it was mine because none of them owned an iron pointed spear and to have kept it would have identified the culprit straight away.

One of the perks of landownership with an ocean frontage was that the owner had all the rights to the beach and the reef between the limits of his boundaries extending out to the limits of the reef. This meant that as Dad could fish for trochus shell within these bounds, (outside these bounds was native domain) it provided an extra source of income. The shell is conical in shape and was used mainly for making mother of pearl buttons.

In the accompanying sketch (page 15) of our accommodation at Panakondu the building on the right was where Grandad and I slept. The rotunda with the conic roof was our living dining area. The building behind was Mum and Dad's bedroom and included bathroom facilities excepting that the pit type toilet was away to the right in the foreground of my sketch. Betty slept with Mum and Dad. The house cook was a separate building behind Mum and Dad's rooms. Some distance behind these structures again were the line boys barracks.


REMINISCENT OF PANAKONDU - CJ 1937.



PANAKONDU STATION LAYOUT

DEFINITELY NOT TO SCALE!

Plantation maintenance was a continuous, labour intensive operation. No fancy machinery available in those days to slash around newly planted palms. The secondary undergrowth intruding from the adjoining jungle around the border was always a problem. "Passa Flora", a ground covering creeper, was used with partial success. Its fruit, like passion fruit, is delicious. When ripe it appears in a yellow leathery ball of about 20 mm in diameter. I've seen it in the wild in northern parts of Australia sometimes as well.

The plantation covered some 400 hectares and of course was only progressively developed. Even so supervision of the work force had its problems. To solve this problem Dad decided one day to put his glass eye on an adjacent tree stump and told the crew that thus would he keep an eye on their progress whilst he was away. He returned some time later only to find a distinct lack of progress and that somebody had placed a large taro plant leaf over his glass eye. Can't fool these people! (Dad lost an eye at Gallipoli in World War I to a shell splinter).

Dad didn't originate the glass eye tactic. Like me he'd read about it being exploited elsewhere around the world and with similar results, it was worth a try anyway.

Dad was very popular with the local village and didn't have too much trouble recruiting a work force. But to some extent he did depend on whether or not anyone wanted more funds with which to buy more trade goods. Plantation owners always had some trade goods in stock such as tobacco, beads, cloth for clothing and such like. Accumulating wealth was not a consideration with the natives. It's not part of their culture to do so. I do remember the village and our line boys arranging a sing sing (dance) for Dad in honour of something or other which I don't recall (a "line" was the plantation work force). The sing sing was conducted on the quadrangle between our dwellings and the line boys quarters - a very colourful affair with much work going into decorating their "kundus" (drums), "sup sups" (spears) and their head and body gear.

The kundu is a hand held drum made by laboriously hollowing out a piece of soft wood and fixing to it a drumhead made from goanna skin or a large snake skin, or rarely a small puk puk (crocodile) skin. Tension to the drumhead was achieved by binding a wet skin using cane straps then allowing it to dry. The larger village signalling drum was called a "garamut". This was carved out of a larger tree trunk about two and a half to three metres long and about 900mm diameter. The ends were left closed and sometimes decorated. The top had a narrow slot for almost the full length of the drum and somewhere between 100 to 150mms wide through which the interior was removed. One or sometimes two men would play it by thumping the sides with the ends of a heavy stick. On a still night the low pitched sound would carry over quite vast distances.

On another occasion when we were all in residence at Panakondu - possibly one Christmas time - Dad was invited by the village elders to join them in their "haus tamberan". This is a "long house" wherein the elders conduct their affairs and in which they store all manner of trophies including skulls of opposing warriors from bygone times. An anthropologist would have a field day in this place. Dad never did let on as to what was the purpose and/or what was discussed at this meeting - other than to say that is was a great honour to have been so invited. Most other plantation owners were generally too arrogant to enjoy the same sort of respect as did Dad.

A glance at my sketch of our quarters at Panakondu shows just how close we were situated in relation to the sea. A very severe storm would occasionally flood the reef to the point where some waves would wash right under Mum and Dad's bedroom. A bit unnerving in the dark of the night. No real damage was ever experienced while we were there though. There were lots of little patches uncluttered with coral or seagrass and therefore these became our main swimming holes. A native trick for catching fish was to

pile up a heap of coral and rock in the middle of one of these sandy patches and then leave it alone for two or three tidal cycles. At low tide this artificial reef would then be surrounded by a fish net and the rocks would be removed to outside the net and thus denuding the fish of their habitat. Closing the net soon provided a feast of fish. The inedible species, and other creatures so captured, were of course set free.

I had some success myself with this tactic with the aid of a borrowed net. However, parrot fish and rock cod were the main edible fish in these catches and they are not really as tasty as the shoal fish. Just to the north of our habitat near the swamp was a patch of quicksand just on the edge of the water when the tide was low. Betty and I often played in this and we thought it great fun to trick unwary people into it. The kanakas had made it safe by piling coconut palm trunks into so it was only about 600mm deep. The sand in this pit is extremely fine and the natives use it for cleaning their teeth. Very effective too even if it is somewhat abrasive.

The Kavieng Club was originally built as the German residency in about 1900, from which the northern part of New Ireland and New Hanover were administered. Perched on a hill, just as our house was along the same ridge, it overlooked the harbour with a coconut plantation in the foreground. Les Bell's home was just to the seaward side of the road past the Club in the foreground of the picture.

As viewed in the picture, the left hand element was Maxwells' accommodation (Maxwell being the club manager) the middle was a billiard room and dining room, including offices with some accommodation for visitors. The right hand element was the club bar and it was somewhere in here that dances and such entertainment were enjoyed by the members.

We were only allowed to stay up for a little while to see the entertainment. Then off to bed in the manager's quarters. For special occasions the verandahs would be decorated with coconut palm fronds, and flowers such as masses of frangipani, hibiscus and probably zinnias which grew so well up there. The houseboys were very good at this sort of task and would also make origami-like birds from palm leaves using the spine of the leaf to support the bird. These looked very effective and quite spectacular dancing in the breeze. Incidentally the local natives could make what the Australian aboriginals call howlers out of palm leaves and they certainly did howl. If you heard these things coming at you through the jungle I can imagine how people would beat a hasty retreat not knowing how many people were out there actually doing the howling.

Bill Mossman, son of the customs officer, lived in the house by the main wharf in which we first lived when we first came to Kavieng. From here it was about a stone's throw to the native village called Bagail. Behind this was good verdant bush into which Bill and I would go hunting "balus" (balus is native generic term for all birds including aeroplanes!). Bill had a .22 rifle and I had an airgun of somewhat limited range. We had very minimal success at this caper. Bill was not a very good shot and my gun was rather useless against birds high up in the trees of this forest and snakes were pretty common in the bush; the largest to be encountered would be a rock python of up to about 4 metres in length. Anytime we would encounter a snake Bill would usually dispatch it with his rifle. Dad didn't really believe our snake encounter stories so one day I brought home this rather large python to prove a point.

On the day in question we had ranged quite a distance through the bush before we got the snake and the problem was how to get it home. So I cut a piece of vine off a tree, tied it around his middle and decided to short cut through the bush to the north south road and hope somebody would come along and give us a lift back to town. It was Ben Chenowth's misfortune to find us. But he bravely took us home aboard his truck and all I got from Dad when he saw my trophy was " Get rid of it quickly."

Most natives of New Guinea have a distinct aversion to reptiles of any sort and to get rid of it quickly I put it in our rubbish tin. Next morning shrieks and howls from the garbos alerted me to my mistake! - much to the mirth of our houseboys.

When I left Kavieng to go south to school in 1937 we had three houseboys. Panalui was the wireless boy who worked all day with Dad at the radio station delivering telegrams and operating the generator used for transmitting.

Bossap was the cookboy and a very fine one he became under Mother's tutelage. Lapan was the general rouseabout and handyman and generally quite useful.

We also had a "Mary" who did the washing, initially one Sakoparna and then later on one Rumbalin (Mary was the generic term for females).

To hire boys the local administrator had to be satisfied there was mutual understanding of the standard terms and conditions before they could be employed - full board and keep and weekly rations of tobacco and some cash. Lap laps were also provide (that's a loin cloth). Most times they supplemented their diet with native foods which they obtained from the boong (market). Contracts usually lasted about 12 months before renewal if both parties wished so to do. But each boy had to be allowed time to return to his home village before a renewal could be effected.

The natives were generally referred to as kanakas. The native men who worked in the town were mostly referred to as a boy; usually wireless boy, doctor boy, government boy, etc which identified for whomever he worked. A female was a "Mary" as I've just said and young boys were known as monkeys.

I don't know the origins of the word kanaka. But it certainly goes back to the blackbirding days (slaving days) when the south sea islanders were used in the sugar plantations of Queensland - yes, Australia did have its share of slave labour.

Other terms when referring to the natives were "coons", "boong" more recently, and fuzzy wuzzy angels came out of World War II, which I think was a newspaper invention actually. All rather demeaning to my mind. And to tell a "boy" that he was just a bush kanaka was the most insulting remark that you could heap on him. Most town boys as such really regarded themselves a cut above their cousins who had never worked or been in the towns.

Old Panalui was a remarkable old character. He had a great sense of humour but had this ongoing hate relationship with our resident goanna. The goanna was quite a sizeable animal about a metre in length I suppose and was forever raiding Panalui's chooks; mostly taking eggs but occasionally there was a bonus of a chicken or two. He tried everything to get rid of the raider including an attempt to smoke him out of his hollow tree. All to no avail and when I left to come south to school I think he was reconciled to having to live with nature with all its singular and various peculiarities.

Some European people would resort to bashing natives whenever they didn't perform exactly as ordered and/or committed some minor misdemeanour. I can recall only once did Dad clout a native and that must surely have been for some major infringement or misconduct about which I really never found out. Probably the boy in question should have been taken to the District

Officer for his punishment which in turn would have been more severe. To be clouted by someone you respected was probably sufficient punishment in itself. We children very quickly learned to respect native people - never order them to do menial things, never demand that it be done - always ask for it be done, and in respecting the people you automatically respect their customs.

Growing up in their environment made this aspect of living amongst them very simple and our behaviour was therefore virtually instinctive and not affected in any way. In general these people were much closer to nature than we were and from them I learned a lot. I do still like and respect them despite some of the unhappy reports one reads or hears about in the media these days. Let's face it, like any other community they can't all be bad.

Cricket was the sporting interest for the whole population although some of the people did play tennis - in particular the womenfolk.

We boys would play tip and run cricket between ourselves on the town oval and when we reached the ripe old age of about ten we were sometimes invited to play with the men on Saturday afternoon. This was something of a mixed blessing. Trying to handle the balls from Frank Boyson (the government schoolmaster), who was also the town's fast bowler!

Then there was the cricket event of the year; the challenge match played against a team from Rabaul played alternatively in Rabaul or Kavieng.

There was one exciting match that I still remember well being played at Kavieng. Rabaul was batting, the last man was in and Rabaul needed one run to win. The Rabaul batsman lofted a shot out to midoff where with the glare of the setting sun in his face the abovementioned Frank Boyson put up a hand for the catch and managed to hold it. The game was thus a draw and a fitting end to a wonderful day's cricket.

Test cricket also was a great occasion and Dad was being perpetually pestered for the latest score - the radio station being the only communication with the outside world at that time. It got worse when the test was played in England as he would be expected to stay up all night and write down the latest scores.

This arrangement changed after a few years when Dad decided to build himself a short wave long wave radio receiver for our own use at home and whenever the test was on in England, test parties were held at our place for virtually every game and everyone in the town. I don't know how he and Mum stood the strain. We two nippers weren't allowed to stay up. But next morning used to drain any leftover glasses and/or nibbles that were left from the night before. Often a battle with the cockroaches as to who got there first!

The antenna for this radio set was rigged between two very tall casuarina trees and Dad was always worried whether a severe wind storm would get up and break the line: but there was sufficient slack in the system as it never broke. (One end was reeved over a pulley block to a counterweight to allow for the wind deflecting the trees).

Swimming was also a major pastime for the whole population for whom fenced in baths were constructed just near the main wharf. Here the sandy bottom sloped down quite steeply and a 50 metre by 50 metre area was constructed parallel to the shore. The water was about 9 metres deep at the outer edge which made the baths ideal for a high diving tower at one end and a springboard at the other. The protection comprised long poles of mangrove saplings fixed vertically at fairly close centres which kept at bay any unwanted marine life. Sunday picnics were often held here, there being adequate change rooms and toilets etc.

Needless to say all we nippers made much use of this facility at other times as well. Neck to knee bathers were the proper attire then. But when we boys were on our own we'd tie the upper half around our waist and wore them as shorts. Shorts for men were just becoming fashionable.

Golf became a popular sport at a later stage of our sojourn at Kavieng. It was only nine holes and alternated alongside and/or across the cricket field. Therefore on Saturday golf was not an option. Coconut palms played havoc with wayward shots because the whole arrangement was through an old plantation. Land crab holes gobbled up many golf balls as well. These were the days (in golf) when all sticks were hickory shafted and golf balls were made with a skin of gutta-percha. This material was terribly soft and a wayward shot would leave a very sorry lump and/or indentation in the surface of the ball thus doing terrible things to its flight in the air let alone what happened to it when it was on the putting surface. The greens on this course were sandscrapes into which the crabs had a field day and the first people out each day had to fill a lot of crab holes before they could manage to putt. Nevertheless it was a start to enjoying a wonderful game.

Betty still skites that the first time she went out she had 32 and it wasn't until much later that I discovered that she meant that was for the first hole!

Life was not all beer and skittles with the monsoon season being the worst and being confined to barracks because of the rain. Waterspouts were not uncommon. These had their origins out at sea and one actually came ashore on one occasion when we were down the road at Panakondu. It ripped off some of the ventilation ridge of our house (just discernible in photograph # 7- and carried on into the back yard where it uprooted our lovely big banyan tree. I was very sorry to see that tree go even though I'd fallen out of it several times in the past; once rather badly cutting my hand in the process.

During the Wet I would often play under the house which was well elevated on concrete piers and make rivers through the dirt by collecting rainwater and running it right through to the other side of the house down which I'd float small boats cut up from pieces of balsa wood. Much fun and games. A bit like Pooh Bear, what?

Life was not all beer and skittles with the monsoon season being the worst....

Tropical rain storms occurred on a fairly regular basis every day. You could almost set your watch by the time they were going to come. When the weather was coming in from the south east, which it often did at this time you could actually hear the rain storm pelting on the coconut palms as it advanced on the town with a quite incredible roar.

Nature in the raw was a never ending source of wonder and interest. I could be kept amused for hours and days just observing green ants making a nest by literally stitching together large tree leaves. These ants were also marvellous for cleaning out the snail from sea shells which we'd find on the reef at low tide. They'd take about a week but were very very thorough! The large rhinoceros beetle on its ponderous way to boring holes into a coconut palm; the webs spun by various spiders sometimes dripping with early morning mist; the various types of crabs excavating holes (some only to have their holes flooded by the incoming tide); a great variety of butterflies and birds to watch and envy their aeronautical skills; then at night to be seen scuttling upside down across the ceiling in pursuit of small insects there would be the obsequious gecko; while outside in the dark of the night

would be seen millions of fireflies in the trees. A profusion of other life such as bats and flying foxes (fruit bats), frogs, multifarious fungi, (some small, some very large, most of them being very colourful and some also most malodorous).

All of these were very close to hand and enough to tantalise the senses and the curiosity of any young boy.

It was fascinating to watch hornets building their mud nests. They were a bit of a pest as they would build their nests anywhere given half a chance. You just had to wait until he went off for more mud and while he was away dismantle his work and he'd soon move on.

Wasps were the real menace, some up to 20 millimetres long and they built quite large nests in the trees which when disturbed made them very angry indeed. I remember only too well a day when a Monkey and I were digging crabs out of the sand on a beach just out of town (probably the Jenning's Plantation) and we were attacked. I was stung about the arms and legs and face. I wore a shirt and hat but the Monkey had only a lap lap and was in a really bad way. Our only escape was by diving into the water. I couldn't see very well for a few days after that exercise.

There was an exciting day when the Governor-General of Australia paid a visit to Kavieng. Some time in the early 1930's I think it was. His impending arrival was heralded by a seaplane flying over the town and then landing in the harbour. Then this large battleship (which may have been a cruiser, but nevertheless was a large ship) entered the harbour and anchored almost directly opposite our home.

Much pomp and ceremony as His Excellency Lord Gowrie came ashore to be officially greeted by literally the whole town parading on the cricket oval with all the children in their very best whites. We were given the day off from school and the natives turned on a great sing sing in honour of the occasion.

Curses! We never did get an invitation to go aboard the ship so we boys had to admire the navy from afar and wonder at the splendour of the whole thing.

The day came in 1932 when Mum got word that her mother - Grandma Larard hadn't long to live. So began another adventure. It was decided that Mum, Betty and I would go south as soon as possible. As it would be quite some weeks before another steamer was due in Kavieng it was arranged that we would go by schooner to Rabaul and take the first ship south from there. The schooner "Navanora" took us into Rabaul which took us several days as it called at a few coastal plantations en route. I don't think any of this greatly pleased Mum - no showers let alone much privacy and she just suffered in silence as needs must meet the end. For a young lad however this was high adventure. Fishing all day with a trawl line and "helping" the native crew with sail handling, etc. The ship had a great diesel engine which was used to navigate shoals and reef passages into the various stops. At sea at night on a sailing ship was all together another adventure. It's an experience utterly different to that of travelling on a steamer.

My sketch showing what the "Navanora" looked like is typical of many schooners of this vintage which traded all over the islands in the 1920s and 1930s. This ship would carry about 75 bags of copra (14 bags to the ton). See page 28 for sketch.

I believe the SS Nanking was the ship that we finally took from Rabaul to Sydney. This was a steamer of unknown vintage (but very old), with our accommodation over the stern which was of a wineglass configuration. Life was very uncomfortable in a storm when the propellers were half emerged whilst riding over a wave. They would rev up and then slow down upon re-entering the water again. The noise and vibrations were not conducive to a good night's sleep. Once inside the Barrier Reef though, travelling became much more tolerable. Travelling "steerage" is not to be recommended if you can possibly avoid it!

By the time we reached Brisbane however we received word that Grandma Larard had already died. So, sadly, on to Sydney to be met by Auntie Tottie and then on to Melbourne by train.

Dad was due for leave by the year's end so he joined us then.

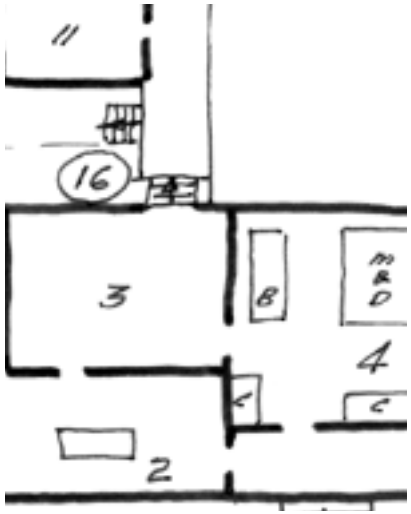
By this time Grandad Larard was getting on a bit and it was decided he should accompany us back to Kavieng. He stayed with us until 1941, when he and Mum were evacuated, and then into a retirement home in Burke Road Camberwell where he died in 1948. I was very sad to see him go. He must have had a very lonely last few years. I'd visit him occasionally as I was a student at Swinburne Tech at this time. But I suspect he had very few other visitors. Dad's family were a long way away at Flinders and the Larard tribe had long since ostracised him for losing family capital through the failure of Larard Brothers jewellers. Quite unjustly I believe. Spiteful cruelty at its worst! (I think sister Betty's treatise on the Larard family has more information on this story).

Don't really recall what Grandad did to amuse himself (grandfather Larard was called Grandad and grandfather Holland was called Grandpa just to differentiate between the two). I know he read a lot and the mandatory afternoon siesta occupied some time as did a late afternoon stroll when the heat of the day had waned. Occasionally he'd take me aside and teach me drawing.

Our house in Kavieng was originally built about 1900 as a hotel for the then local German administration. Its layout is detailed in the accompanying sketch. The photo was taken from the street corner where Les Bell's workshop was located at one time. A small boats jetty used an extension of the road which appears in the bottom left had corner of the photograph.

When we kids were small everyone of us slept together in the large master bedroom (it was so big you could literally have a ball in it). After Grandad joined us I moved into a separate room as indicated adjacent to Grandad's. Before this these two rooms were available for guests and subsequently I seem to remember the odd guest being accommodated on the verandah with some sort of screening set up for their privacy.

Most of the weather screening was by way of large hinged screens which would be closed whenever it rained. Some would be kept open most of the time for ventilation.



Because of the elevated position the house afforded a marvellous view across the harbour to Nusa Island particularly at sundown when the sun set in the west behind Nusa Island with all its coconut palms silhouetted in the view. Kavieng harbour has a reputation for being a very appealing harbour and rivals Madang harbour for its scenery.

By modern day Australian standards our house facilities were rather primitive. Nevertheless it all worked quite satisfactorily.

And the toilet was of course a pan system. You just had to be sure that the nightcart boy wasn't due to arrive.

The bathroom was serviced with water from the adjacent rainwater tank (water was always there in abundance). There was no bath. Everybody had a shower; the water for which was always heating up on the cookhouse stove and loaded up into an overhead shower by one of the boys. The shower was a cord operated affair. A quick wetting followed by soaping and then all washed off using about four gallons of water per shower. Needless to say some co-ordination with the cookhouse was essential (ladies washed their hair in a bathroom basin).

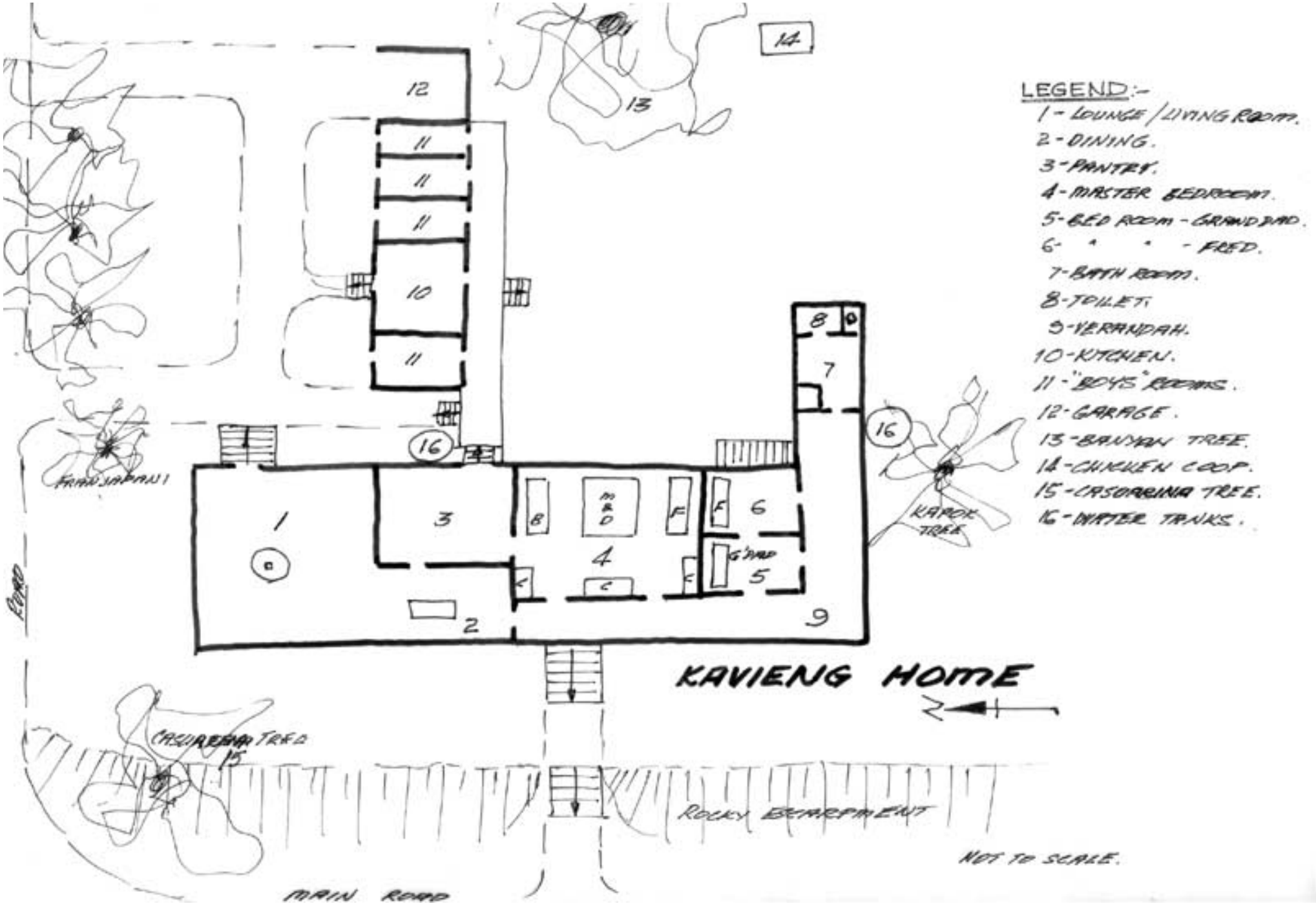
Mum's pride and joy was the "round" table which she had built out of Quila which she laboriously polished herself. It was probably about 3.5 metres in diameter and was built around one of the roof supporting columns of which there were quite a number in the open space area. It was a cantilever structure supported by struts sloping back to the column at about floor level so that the outer periphery was completely unobstructed by legs of any description.

Serving hot food from a remote kitchen was a work of art and generally carried out with great efficiency under Mum's expert tuition and guidance.

As already mentioned food came from the freezer at the rear of Carpenter's store or in tins from down south. All rather boring particularly just before a new shipment arrived.

One's diet could be supplemented by fresh food from the local boong (native market) and of course fresh fish from the sea.

Dad did some experimenting in conjunction with one or two others. The first was a flock of goats to provide fresh milk and ultimately fresh meat. It took me a long time upon going south on leave to acquire a taste for cow's milk! Then at a later stage Dad decided to try agisting sheep imported from down south. The venture was only mildly successful. I don't believe the sheep enjoyed our climate and the natural native grasses were not to their particular liking. (Sheep farming pre war in the higher parts of the mainland of New Guinea was quite successful I believe).

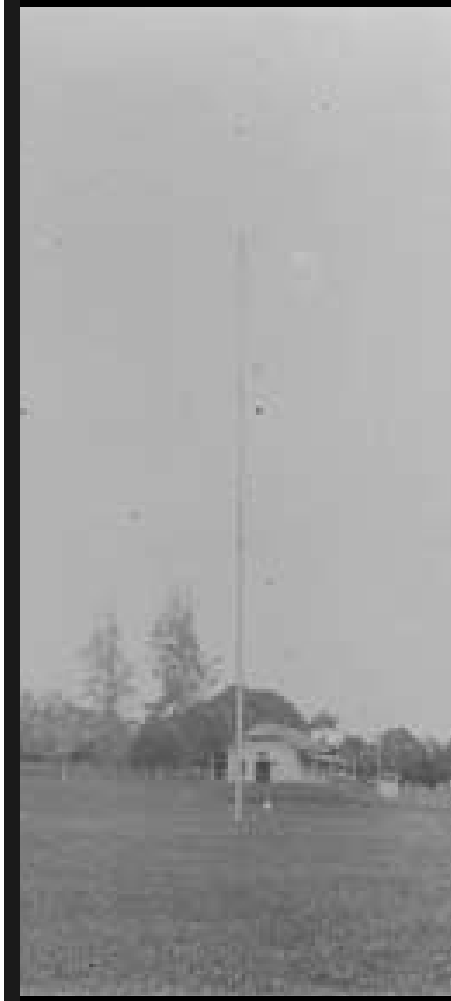

LEGEND:-
1 - LOUNGE / LIVING ROOM.
2 - DINING.
3 - PANTRY.
4 - MASTER BEDROOM.
5 - BED ROOM - GRANDDAD.
6 - " " - FRED.
7 - BATH ROOM.
8 - TOILET.
9 - VERANDAH.
10 - KITCHEN.
11 - "BOYS" ROOMS.
12 - GARAGE.
13 - BANYAN TREE.
14 - CHICKEN COOP.
15 - CASORRINA TREE.
16 - WATER TANKS.
KAVIENG HOME
ROCKY ESCARPMENT
MAIN ROAD
NOT TO SCALE.

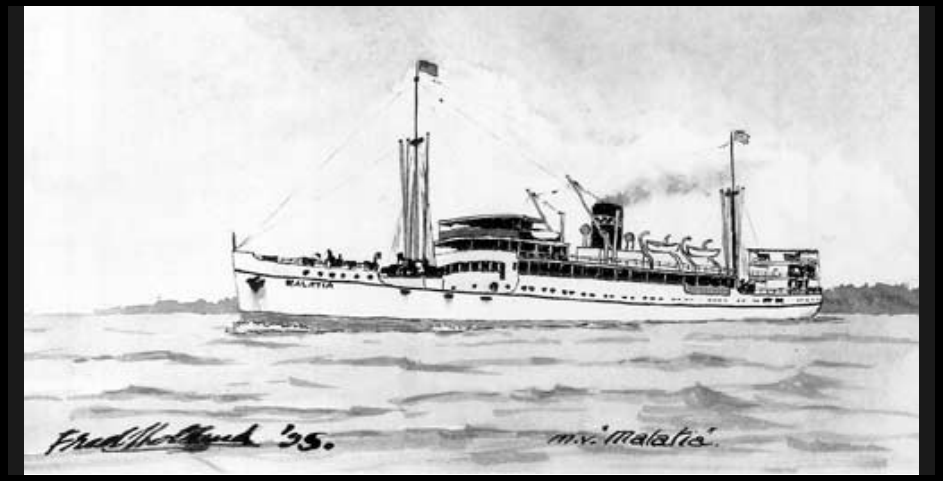
Dad's office, the wireless station, was located towards the south eastern end of town (See map of Kavieng). The building was just a large shed with a large double door at each end for drive through ability and a verandah along one side. In the photo below his office for wireless operations was just to the left of the door in the photo; partly hidden by the transmitter mast.

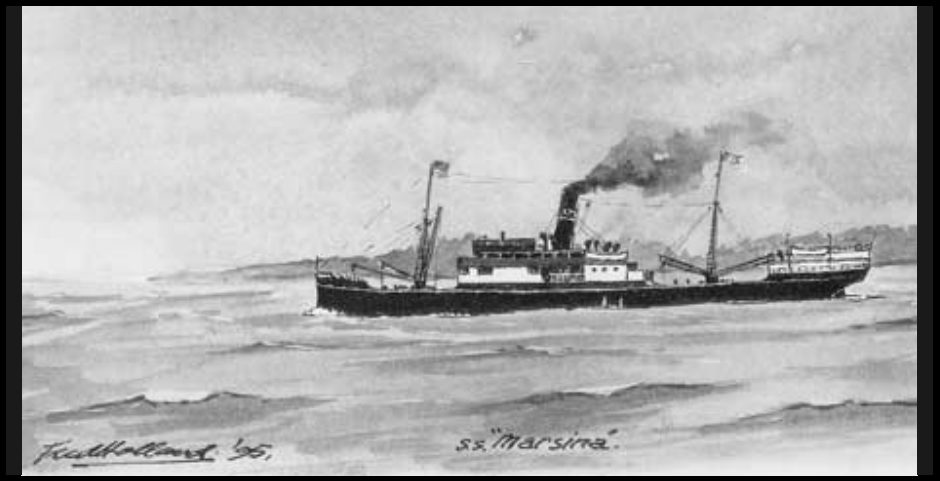
The remaining space in the shed was for storage on the verandah side. But behind his office along the other side was the spark generator etc driven by the diesel engine which old Panalui had to start up for every transmission session. The spark transmitter was a very noisy apparatus. But because of the blue, lightening like spark it created it was a fascinating contraption for a young boy to watch.

While living in New Guinea the only way to travel was by sea on a steamer. The term "steamer" was used to differentiate between sailing ships and steam powered ships. Hence the appellation "ss" before a ship's name. When diesel engines came into vogue the abbreviations "mv" for motor vessel was adopted as the prefix.

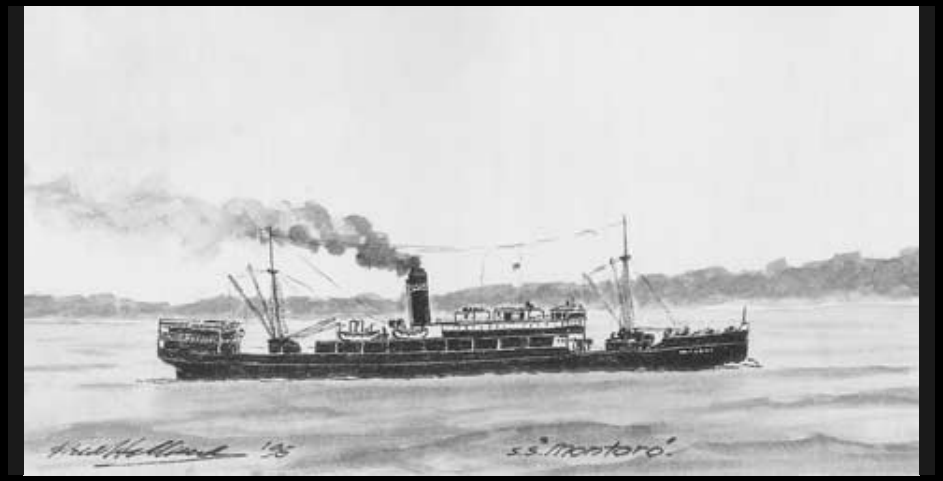
A one way trip from say Sydney to Kavieng took about 14 days. Typical ports of call on one voyage going north would be Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Cooktown (rarely), Port Moresby, Samari, Salamoa, Rabaul and then Kavieng.

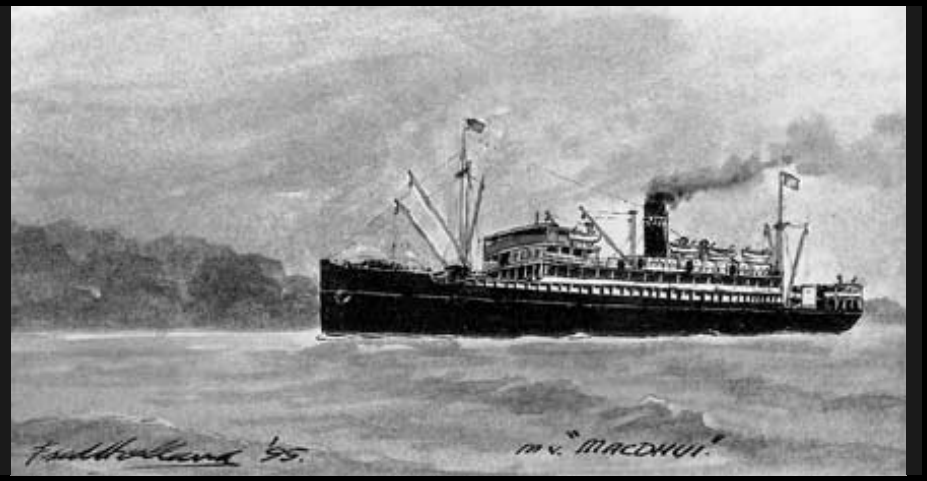


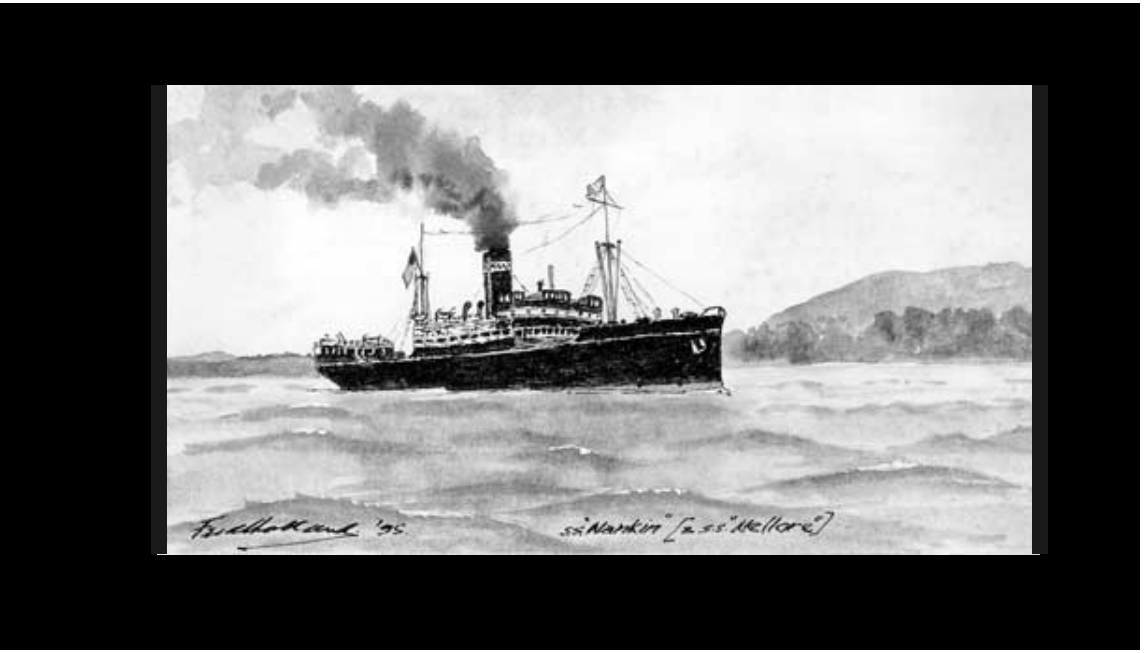




W.R. Carpenter used many ships to move copra and other cargoes around the islands but it was with Burns Philp (BP) that we mostly travelled. The accompanying sketches are of the ships on which I travelled at some time or another in no particular order:


'95
s.s. Montoro


'95.
m.v. "MACDHUI"



These ships ranged in size from about 1930 tons to 4460 tons for the Macdhui.

The Macdhui was bombed and beached in Port Moresby harbour during the war and its wreckage is still there today. However, a few years ago its funnel was salvaged and, after some refurbishment, was installed in the Port Moresby War Graves Cemetery - a fitting memorial. While on the subject of Macdhui there is a builder's model of this ship in the National War Museum in Canberra donated to the Museum of course by Burns Philp.

A grand old ship for which I have many fond memories.

The Montoro survived the war because I can recall once seeing it high and dry in The Duke and Orr dry dock in Melbourne albeit some twenty years ago by now. Having had so much to do with BP over the years it's rather interesting to reflect how this firm continued to impinge on my life in some way or another. Our Glen Waverley neighbours Audrey (Pitt) was a Miss Philp before marrying husband Ted. Then again BP was involved with the Estate Mortgage debacle. Further to this I used BP's travel facility for organising my first overseas trip. Quite amazing.

Because these ships didn't always follow the same route the arrival date at our intended destination was of necessity a bit flexible. The earlier map which accompanies these notes of Papua and New Guinea identifies most of the places visited at some time or another. Some were towns and other places were noted for being little more than a native village with perhaps a trade store, a plantation and/or a mission.

Rabaul on the northern tip of New Britain was the capital of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea as it was known pre war and is situated on the northern shore of Simpson Harbour. This is an ideal location for a major town because of its deep sheltered harbour. Unfortunately the harbour is

surrounded by active volcanoes, notably Matupi and Vulcan being the most active of the pair in these days.

Being the capital this town was port of call for all these ships and, as a general rule, the ship remained in port swapping cargoes for at least twenty four hours. We would therefore visit people we knew and Dad would have some business or another to discuss with AWA's then territory manager (James Twycross). Dad took over the territory's manager's role just after I left for school down south. The Twycross family stayed with us in Kavieng during the volcanic eruption and cleanup stages of the 1935 eruption of Matupi and the birth of Vulcan.

Trav Holland was working in Rabaul at once stage when we went through and was able to show us around in his car to see such places as Matupi and Malaguna and Kokopo. I remember the trip to Matupi being a bit hair-raising as Trav ran off the road through some bad driving and eventually wound up against an adjacent bunch of bamboo. He managed to muster a gang of natives to push and pull us back on to the road. Mum was not at all impressed as I recall!

Rabaul also had a picture theatre which was a real novelty to us (Dad always loved Laurel and Hardy comedies; reckoned he went to the pictures to be entertained not to be depressed!).

The theatre managers used to arrange special nights exclusively for the natives - mostly western movies I believe with plenty of action and language that was not too much of a problem for them to follow.

Talasea was very much an outpost sited on the Willaumez Peninsula which juts out into the Bismarck Sea midway along the north coast of New Britain. I think its claim to fame was desiccated coconut. Their machinery for shredding the coconut flesh and drying ovens intrigued me in particular.

Witu Island a bit north west of Talasea, was another copra station as was Alexis Hafen.

The Island of New Britain and the mainland of New Guinea is separated by Dampier Strait - named after that inveterate pirate-explorer who passed through here in 1700 AD, traversed the south coast of New Britain, sighted St George's Bay (later to become St. George's Channel) - he thought New Britain and New Ireland were joined. He then followed the east coast of New Ireland touching land at Slinger's Bay. He probably passed quite close to Panakondu as well as Kavieng. It was Dampier who named New Britain as such and I think it was also Dampier who named Slinger's Bay; having been stoned by the slingshots of the local natives.

Finschhafen is a plantation post on the Huon Peninsula on the mainland of New Guinea. I believe that it was from here that Dad amongst others was seconded to the then administration to assist with the repatriation to Germany those German civilians who elected not to remain under the British colonial rule which was then applied after World War I.

Lae I recall mainly because it boasted an airstrip which started at the shoreline and ran inland. From here three engined Junkers and/or Avro Ansen planes took off for the gold fields of Bulolo and Wau. It was Junkers at one time which was loaded with a five ton shaft which in turn was required to build a dredge at Bulolo. I understand it made it just! with minimum fuel on board and after waiting for perfect weather conditions.

Lae became the nominal capital of New Guinea after World War II as Rabaul was considered too unstable with its volcanos apt to explode at unpredictable times. After independence and the amalgamation of the mandated territory of New Guinea with Papua the capital became Port Moresby.

Madang, a bit north-west of Lae, is situated on what is probably the most beautiful harbour in New Guinea (next to Kavieng of course?!). Its

waterways and mountain backdrop is most picturesque and being coastal the evening sea breezes make the climate most amenable. Its claim to fame is the export of copra. BP and W.R. Carpenter also had stores here. On top of this Dad ran the wireless station here for a while before he married.

Aitapi and Wewak - I'll talk about these two places in my section on the war years. We never got around that far before the war in our travels.

Salamoa is not far from Lae and was the favoured port for access to the goldfields. The town itself nestles on the shank of a bulbous little isthmus and not much above sea level at that.

Morobe doesn't register in my memory with anything of moment about it other than that it is a plantation port or was a plantation port.

Samarai is in Papua and right on the extreme eastern toe of New Guinea and is a magical little island. It takes about half an hour to walk around it. As it is in amongst a group of other islands the tidal currents are quite tremendous and berthing a ship here requires very good seamanship.

Port Moresby was the capital of Papua and ultimately became the seat of power of PNG after independence. Being on the southern coast of New Guinea Port Moresby has a very hot humid climate. Most ships called at Port Moresby and Dad certainly had wireless business to attend to here as well, whenever passing through.

A visit to the nearby native village was a great tourist attraction. No doubt stimulated by the monkeys who would dive for coins thrown to them by the passengers when the ship was berthing.

Cars would take us to the village which is virtually all assembled over the water on piles. Their livestock and gardens were of course on shore. Here all manner of native crafts could be obtained, that is spears, bows and arrows, axes, masks, kundus, model lakatoies (canoes), bird of paradise feathers, and so on were always in demand by the tourists and of course was good trade for the local people.

Lorengau on Manus Island in the Admiralty Group is right on two degrees (220 kilometres) south of the equator and the one thing I still recall about going there was the difficulty the steamer had in navigating the surrounding islands and the numerous coral reefs associated with them. We were hove to during the night before so that this peril could be navigated in the clear light of day.

During our trips to or from New Guinea we sometimes made detours to places just a bit outside the mandated territory, ie: Noumea, Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands.

Kieta is the main town on Bougainville, just below New Ireland in the chain known as the Solomon Islands. Bougainville is now a part of PNG. Kieta in the 1920's and 30's was mainly a port for exporting copra. The natives from here have distinctively black skins; not the dark brown colour of the rest of New Guinea. Because most of these blackboys came from the nearby island of Buka they were universally known as "Buka Boys" and had a reputation for belligerence. Archaeologists believed they invaded New Britain and captured the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain about one thousand years ago. Presumably their own island had become over populated and the southern end of New Ireland is very mountainous and difficult for them to populate and so therefore New Britain was the next favoured choice.

Noumea on New Caledonia Island was a visit of which I don't have much recollection. Like most of these islands the business was trade. Noumea was under a joint administration at that time by France and Britain and a great way to confuse the unsophisticated native population I'm sure.

Another occasion saw our ship do a big loop in its way south taking in Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island. At Norfolk Island our ship anchored offshore at Cascade Bay as they do still and we went ashore by lighter. Betty recalls it being a bit rough and that I was in dire risk of losing my hand to a shark as I was trailing my hand in the water as we went along. The cable station staff on Norfolk Island would have attended to us but I have little other recollection of this occasion. I would have been about seven years old at that time.

From Norfolk Island we went to Lord Howe Island but didn't go ashore here as the ship was anchored well offshore. I still retain an impression of what a picturesque island it was.

Visiting all these places so far off the beaten track might seem strange. But you need to realise that to travel anywhere would be done only by boat. Commercial air traffic wasn't in existence until after World War II. Special cargoes and/or VIP passengers were probably the main reason for diversions of this nature.

Another event that I will never forget occurred when a young lady passenger jumped overboard (somewhere inside the barrier reef I think it must have been). It was many hours later that she was missed. But the Captain immediately turned his ship around and as a consequence of his navigational skills and understanding of the sea currents and sets and the tides along the course he'd steered he found her floating on her back and still alive but barely conscious. It was not certain she was still alive at first and I still recall being ushered away from the handrails while a lifeboat was being lowered to rescue her. Naturally I have no idea of whatever happened to her eventually.

During the depression years fossicking for gold was a popular European occupation. Guinea Gold Enterprises was a big alluvial operation a Bulolo and Edie Creek and explorers were radiating out in all directions. One day pay dirt was encountered at Tugi Tugi on the Tabar Islands off the east coast of New Ireland and just a bit north of the Lihir Islands. There is a big mining operation on Lihir underway at the moment.

Dad, along with many others in Kavieng, quickly pegged some claims including one in my name and another in Betty's.

Uncles Trav and Brick came up to work these claims sometime about 1933 to 1934 I think. Dad very wisely didn't relinquish his AWA job for the remote possibility of making money out of the claims. Just as well too! Because the claims did not pay and were therefore relinquished. Brick soon after went up to Bulolo and Edie Creek before returning home. But Trav went to Rabaul and worked as a Lik Lik doctor (medical assistant) in the hospital there. At a later stage Trav went prospecting round the Edie Creek area until one day he just disappeared into the wide blue yonder to turn up in Port Moresby many weeks later. He'd been through unexplored country probably inhabited by the Kukukuku tribe: (a very sturdy mountain people renowned to be insatiable cannibals). The administrator of Port Moresby was not at all amused and, said Trav, was lucky not be jailed because he had no permit, let alone did he tell anybody where he was going. Trav always was a bit of a rogue and somewhat independent. But after that episode he returned to Flinders.

Pets were a natural part of our household. Our first dog was a little fox terrier bitch called Mut and was really Dad's dog. She followed him everywhere and particularly enjoyed riding on the running board of his car or wedging herself between the mudguard and the engine bonnet.

Next came a blue heeler called Bob. Frank Saunders had a pair of these dogs and Bob was I think of their first litter. Bob was a good house dog but had one great failing - he loved to chase cars and bicycles and with our house being sited on the crest of a fairly steep hill bicycles were fair game. I have

no idea just how much Dad had to fork out in the way of compensation over the years for punctured tyres. Even walking a bike past our place wasn't necessarily a deterrent to his depredations.

We always had a cat in the house - Betty's favourite. But they didn't seem to survive very long. Tics were always a problem for all animals. But we often wondered whose cooking pot was supplemented with lapan (cat).

Tropical diseases and ailments were an ever present hazard to be guarded against. Cuts and scratches would become infected very easily unless properly treated. Small boys don't like having bandages etc appended to their limbs at the best of times and so I succumbed to large tropical ulcers. These were treated with hot poultices and the raw infection wiped out each day until healing was well under control. A very painful practice. Coral scratches were of course the worst offenders for infection. And the scars resulting from these ulcers are still visible today.

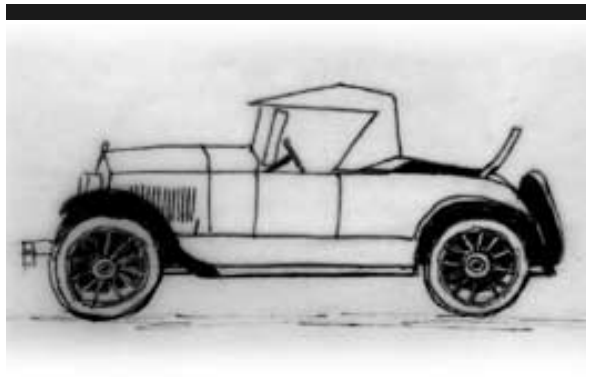
Malaria in its various forms, dengue fever, blackwater fever and hookworm are the more virulent diseases. Malaria and dengue fever are the only bugs I had to deal with. But I can remember Dad being laid very low with blackwater fever at one stage. Mum and Betty seemed to escape most of these problems. To help control the ravages of malaria we all consumed quinine with breakfast every day. Ten milligrams for adults and five milligrams for children.

The malaria I had recurred for quite some years after leaving the tropics. I could set my watch by its recurrence; it was always about my birthday time and term holiday time which roughly co-incided. Drat!
Betty and I had all the prescribed childhood diseases like measles, whooping cough, etc but strangely these occurred when on leave down south and not up in the tropics.

We were all inoculated and otherwise immunised against other diseases such as cholera, smallpox, typhoid, etc before entering New Guinea. So they were not a problem to us.

Somewhere else in this narrative I have made reference to a car. The one and only car we possessed at Kavieng was a 1923 model Buick, two seater, soft top, tourer car with a dicky seat at the back.

I don't ever remember Dad lowering the hood even though it was possible to do this. He never knew when it was going to rain and even if it didn't it was necessary to shield you from the sun.



Later on in the old car's life its chassis collapsed or was about to (due to the rust taking its toll). To obtain a new chassis from America was out of the question at the time because of the time and the cost. So Dad and Les Bell got to work with some quila (a local very hard timber) to re-inforce and/or replace the chassis. This worked perfectly well. The only remaining problem would be if the borers got into it. Not long after this work was done the Japs arrived and it became Mum's earnest wish that it fall to pieces very quickly.

Mum also learnt to drive after a fashion with lots of gear clashings but nevertheless quite safely. Unfortunately she was never a very confident driver.

Talking about cars reminds me of the time when old Father Grundal acquired a car for his diocese (an old T model Ford) and Dad was commandeered into

teaching him how to drive it. It was a most frustrating exercise for Dad because Father G. was by this time well into his 60's and could not manage to reverse the car without mentally transporting himself to the front of the car to determine which attitude the wheels would take to accomplish the desired turn.

Kavieng's population was rather small and so everybody virtually knew each other and their respective business. I think the town had about fifty Europeans and probably at least as many Chinese who concentrated themselves in the Chinatown area. The Chinese mainly traded with natives in the town as well as at the villages. They were good boat builders and obtained much work of this sort. They had a slipway at the bottom of "our hill" and, needless to say, whenever a boat was being built I had to haunt the place. At one time I was taught how to count to one hundred in Chinese. It's all gone now though.

Father Grundal and Dad were great rivals with the billiard cue. I still recall being awakened by his jubilation one night when he came home to tell all and sundry that he had beaten Father G. to take out some local knockout competition up at the Club. This didn't happen very often. I'm quite sure that having only one eye was something of a disadvantage to him; in all sports for that matter.

Father Grundal's hobby was the study of maths and physics and he took great delight showing people the charts he had developed to show when eclipses of the sun and/or the moon would occur for the next hundred years and other similar astral forecasts.

Jeoff Holmes was the one son of Josh Holmes (an Englishman) who managed W.R. Carpenter's store in Kavieng. The store manager had overall responsibility for their numerous plantations, their shipping, etc. They lived next door to W.R. Carpenter's store. Geoff's sister Heather is still a good friend of Betty's. They saw each other quite frequently in Sydney, before Betty and Mick moved to Burleigh Heads. Heather married one Bill Seal, then a patrol officer and lived most of her married life at Mt Hagan or Goroka both before and after the war. About the time I came down to school at Carey, Jeoff was sent to England to finish his education. He was another one who was killed in the Battle of Britain.

Frank Saunders and his wife Enid had two children - Peter and Ann - somewhat younger than Betty and me and so never had much to do with them. Frank was a "money man" and very much the entrepreneur. It was when he relinquished his interest in Les Bell's workshop that Dad took up this interest. Amongst others, Frank Saunders had quite a sizeable plantation going in the Tabar Islands when the gold rush was in progress there. But, like everybody else, didn't make anything out of it. Modern hard rock mining machinery and techniques could perhaps have made it pay and it still may be possible. In the meantime it will be interesting to observe how well the Lihir Island operation performs. Frank too was a war casualty; being on board the Montevideo Maru.

Our immediate neighbours were the Ray's to the north and the Pages to the south. Tom Page became a coastwatcher during the Jap occupation and was captured eventually and killed. I upset poor old Mrs Ray one day by presenting her with a beautiful fish which I had just caught - just the bare unwrapped but clean fish - and I'm afraid she didn't quite know how to take it. She eventually told me to give it to one of her houseboys in her kitchen!

After some little time Mrs Ray's sister arrived in Kavieng and it wasn't until she reached Kavieng that we learned of her predisposition to seasickness. How she survived the fortnight's voyage by sea from down south is something of a mystery; particularly as we soon discovered that she only had to set foot on a steamer moored at the wharf and she would become quite queasy.

I don't recall much about the Pages other than that Tom became a

coastwatcher as I have already mentioned and that Mrs Page had very white skin, liberally sprinkled with freckles.

Dr Holland was the town's medico. He and his family became very good family friends of ours - they were not related in any way to us other than by name. His daughter Joan was more of an age with Heather Holmes and they were generally known locally as the flappers - the in word for the modern teenagers I presume. Pat was the younger daughter of about my age.

Dr Holland's research into mosquitos as malaria carriers always intrigued me. He was well know for his researches into how malaria was transmitted and how only certain types of mosquito transmitted particular types of malaria. It's a great pity his work was not better recognised at the time.

Doc Holland's lik lik doctor was Malcolm Goad's father ie: Mr Goad was his medical assistant (something akin to a male nurse I think). I've lost touch with Malcolm over the years. He came south with his mother just before the invasion and settled in Adelaide where the pair of them ran a bakery. Malcolm was unfortunately one of those people born "just a little bit slow". His older brother Jack survived the war and worked in New Guinea with Burns Philp until he retired to live in Brisbane. Jack was very active with the local RSL in Rabaul. Malcolm had another brother Bruce aged between Malcolm and Jack. He was killed before the war by some natives down the road from Kavieng. I think his demise had something to do with a local Mary.

Wally Lussick lived on a plantation with his parents just down the road a bit from Kavieng and I just can't recall how he commuted to and from school. His mother was a rather shy half Samoan lady and his father a European. His older sister Pat is a good friend of Betty's and they are about the same age. Wally went back to New Guinea after the war and upon independence won a seat in the PNG Parliament. The last I saw of Wally was at Mum's ninetieth birthday celebrations in Sydney when he happened to be in town. Unfortunately he died of a heart attack in Sydney in 1995.

Les and Bertha Bell were great friends to Mum and Dad. Les is 95 at this time (1999) and still lives at Proserpine in Far North Queensland (Bertha died quite some years ago). Les was a highly respected man in Kavieng and all over New Guinea. Before settling in Kavieng he and his brother Lincoln literally roamed the South Seas with trading schooners and they explored the unexplored part of the New Guinea Highlands around the upper reaches of the Strickland River and eastward to the source of Parari River. He was involved with the coastwatchers and early warning radar networks in New Guinea during World War II as an RAAF officer.

Back to Kavieng after the war where he did a great deal to help Mum sort out Dad's estate and the war reparations (compensation). The Japs devastated Panakondu by shelling it from offshore during the war but never landed there! Why we will never know. At the time of this writing Les is having his memoirs written for him. It'll make most interesting reading when it's published.

The Allen's, Bill and Katie, are another couple who often stayed with us when they were in Kavieng replenishing food stocks etc. They ran the Patio Plantation on Patio Island which is some thirty kilometres due west of Kavieng as the crow flies and a long day's trip in his little pinnace. Mum took us two kids for a few days visit at one stage and I remember being intrigued by rain water pouring off the roof during a storm. It was stained brown. This particular part of the roof was a thatched roof using pandanus leaves or perhaps it was sago palm fronds which of course stained the water.

Another family who often stayed with us when they visited Kavieng was the Stanfields. He was English and ex Indian Army man before taking up plantation life down the road a bit from Panakondu. I don't have much idea

now as to what happened to all his family excepting that his daughter, Pat, returned after the war and ran the plantation herself. Betty tells me she now lives in retirement somewhere in the north coast of New South Wales. I recall Pat as being a year or two older than me and was a girl with a very loud, raucous voice.

Their plantation had a creek running nearby the house which was right on the ocean beach just like our place Panakondu. They had dammed the creek to make a fresh water swimming pool using coconut palm logs as the retaining wall and it had a depth of about three metres at the deep end. It's water was very cold but crystal clear and was great harbour for yabbies which were sometimes a bit of a pest when swimming. So the yabby population was reduced periodically by netting them with pieces of fish as bait.

Puk puks (crocodiles) were a possible hazard and therefore the creek was regularly inspected for intruders before swimming. A stick of dynamite usually solved the problem if any invaders were found. A bit drastic on the other harmless marine population though.

Puk puks (crocodiles) were a possible hazard and therefore the creek was regularly inspected for intruders before swimming.

My schooling started when I was about six or seven and the following reminiscence will just convey some picture of the times in which I grew up. The early chronology of schools attended may be a little wanting for accuracy but I don't believe that's particularly important when compiling these notes.

My earliest recollection was of a small private school in Hawthorn which wasn't too far to reach by walking and was run by a tough old biddy who had difficulty in getting me to learn the multiplication tables. Pirate games and such like were the big deal for me at that time.

My time at Maroubra is also very vague. It was probably about 1930 to 1931. This was at a time when we lived in Sydney for a while first at Maroubra and then moved out to La Perouse to be nearer Dad's work. My recollections of the Maroubra house was seeing aircraft occasionally flying over the house at very low altitude and our Alsatian dog, Dawn, being very troubled by flies on her ears and, to avoid the flies, she dug tunnels into the embankment in the back yard. Dawn was a very playful animal and loved to nuzzle into Betty's long hair by placing her fore paws on Betty's shoulders. Somewhat unnerving for a little girl only five or six years old.

When we moved to La Perouse Dad used to walk Dawn on the nearby hospital grounds until one day Dawn disgraced herself by swinging on the tail of a hospital cow. This cost Dad five pounds in compensation which was a great deal of money in those day so, soon after this, Dawn was given away and in any event we went back to New Guinea.

When we moved to La Perouse Betty and I still took the tram to Maroubra where we attended school. One day I missed the stop to alight for school and so decided to go on all the way to Circular Quay and then return to the proper stop! I managed to talk the connie into not charging us as I only had fares to get home from school.

While living at La Perouse on a Sunday we'd occasionally watch the aboriginal people demonstrating their skills with boomerangs. They were

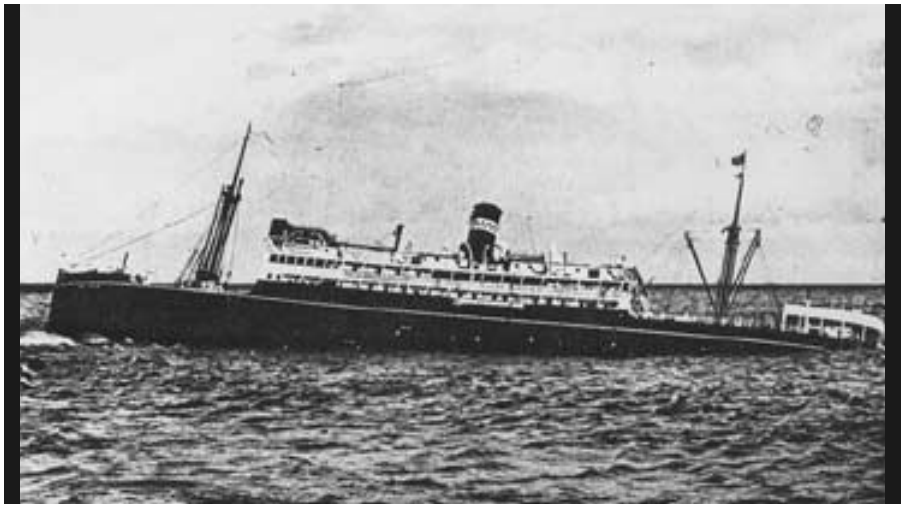
very adept at catching the returning missile with little or no movement from the original throwing spot.

Probably my most vivid recollection of living at La Perouse is the wreck of the BP ship Malabar at Naranda Point, Long Bay. The locality is now known as Mallibar and it was probably the point now known as Boora Point on which the ship founded; in calm seas, during a fog. (The captain retired shortly afterwards!)

Dad was privy to this information some time before it became public knowledge and he took us all to see the wreck from the clifftops. No lives were lost and I believe some cargo might have been salvaged. She finally broke up and swept into deep water.

When we were of school age in Kavieng Mum took on the task of teaching us (Betty and me) by correspondence and through the Queensland State School System. Kavieng couldn't justify having a school at that stage.

Kavieng was serviced by a ship about every six weeks and this brought our mail which contained six weeks plus of teaching material plus comments on past work which, as completed, was posted back to Queensland for assessment.



This worked well enough while we were grappling with simple things like pot hooks and elementary activities. But after a year or so I believe it became something of a chore for Mum. Particularly now that my abiding interest was fishing, fishing and more fishing, when I was supposed to be learning arithmetic and geography, and writing compositions and such like.

Kavieng's population of children finally reached a level sufficient to justify a full time government teacher in 1934. It wasn't for many years later that I understood the subterfuge by which the Kavieng populace inveigled its way into obtaining a proper school and a full time teacher. At this time Heather Holmes was learning shorthand and Jack Goad was studying accountancy. So they were both enrolled to make up the numbers of students! The education system for the Territory was administered by the Queensland government and I will never know just how this artifice got past the government inspector for schools when he visited Kavieng. Maybe a few kids from outlying plantations were imported for the duration of his visit!

After a while the school was relocated onto the quite copious verandah of the teacher's residence - far more economical all round as the student enrolment was very small anyway.

Jeoff Holmes, Bill Mosman and Malcolm Goad were the only ones of about my age with Wally Lussick a couple of years younger being "allowed" to join us whenever it suited us to have him along such as when playing cricket and fielders were required.

The school covered primary grades up to the state school "scholarship standard". I didn't win a scholarship for which I sat at the end of 1937. I don't know how we would have made use of it in Victoria as it was a Queensland government award anyway.

Betty and I attended Flinders State School whenever Dad was down south on extended leave. We would spend this time at The Rest at Flinders. This was all quite a new experience. All the grades were in the one room and controlled by the one lady teacher whose name I don't remember. How she managed I don't know, but manage she did. Enrolment was probably somewhere about forty students and the age spectrum spread over all of the seven grades that the school ran to at that time. After finishing at the state school level at Flinders students would either go to the elective secondary school at Red Hill or the high school at Frankston. I wasn't here long enough really to make any long term friendships at Flinders.

Betty and I used to short cut across our paddocks to and from school which route presented all types of interesting diversions. Rabbits and their kittens, occasionally a fox on the prowl, fingerling fish in the creek which just had to be caught in the process of crossing to or from school. Winter rains often flooded this creek and then we had to walk all the way around to what is now known as Rest Drive and its bridge in order to cross it. Leaving footprints in cow pats was also considered high entertainment.

During this period Sunday School was "compulsory" and the Mechanics Institute Hall was used for Sunday church services which was in turn preceded by Sunday School for us. It was years later before the current Presbyterian church was built with considerable financial help from Granny Falkingham and Grandma Holland.

By the year's end of 1937 I was aboard the m.v. Macdhui bound for school in Melbourne. Carey was selected after the Alex Munroe family was consulted - their son Ted was enrolled there - so that influenced how I became a boarder at Carey.

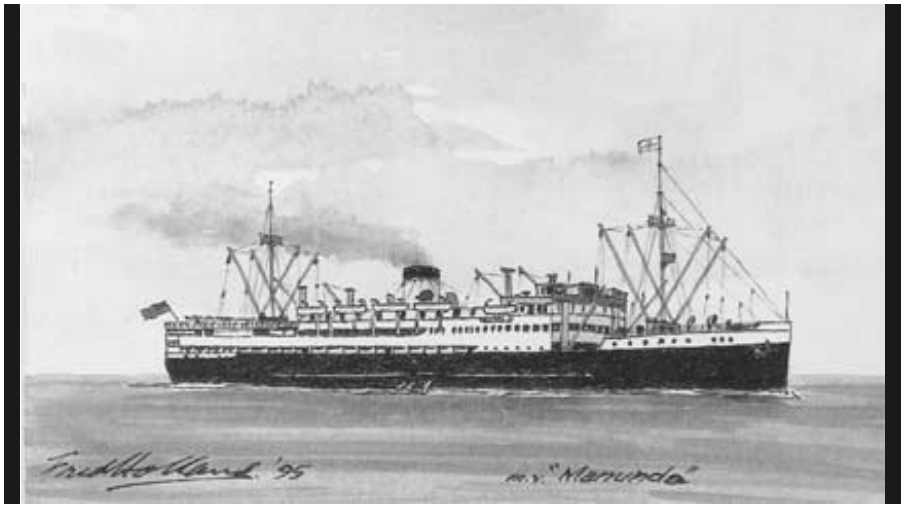
It transpired that knowledge of a new boy from New Guinea preceded my arrival and the general opinion was that I was therefore a "darkie". Instead of which I was but another whitie with sun bleached blonde hair!

Usually, when travelling as a family, we would disembark at Sydney, spend some time with Auntie Tottie (Granny Holland's sister) and so on to Melbourne by overnight train. I remember the train travel as a bit of a fag. It seemed to me that after you left Sydney at about 6pm you'd just get off to sleep only to be rudely awakened at midnight at Albury to change trains. The different rail gauges necessitating this.

However, on this occasion, I was to just change ships at Sydney. How Tottie managed all this for me I don't know as she always struck me as being somebody a bit on the vague side. So, on to Melbourne, on the m.v. Manunda. (This ship later became a hospital ship which the Japs bombed and sank in Darwin Harbour.)

Rena met me at Princess Pier and from there on to Flinders. She also took me up to Melbourne at a later date to be kitted out for school.

Nineteen thirty-eight and nineteen thirty-nine came and went and the war had started. Many senior boys from Carey talked of joining up. But I was still too young to contemplate such a move.



Academically my two years at Carey could only be described as undistinguished! I was far too interested in playing sport. But I did get to grips with the science and maths subjects which at the time were all new to me and the masters teaching these subjects really made them so interesting for me.

Photography became an interest for me whilst at Carey (black and white only in those days) and I soon acquired a Kodak "box brownie" and processed my own developing and printing.

Also, probably because of my father's influence, I built myself a crystal radio set. It worked very well too. Too bulky to hide in the dormitory to listen to after lights out in bed!

Because of my father's influence, I built myself a crystal radio set.

My two best friends, both boarders, were Barry Kemmis and Bruce Marshall. Bruce came from Tasmania (Launceston I believe) and was keen to do architecture. I lost touch with him when he went home while poor old Barry was killed in the Battle of Britain. Barry was a Spitfire pilot and was reputed to have rammed his German opponent after running out of ammunition! If true it's rather typical of the bloke in question. He just never gave up on anything he undertook and I understand it still makes a great story for ANZAC memorials at the school even today.

Ted Munroe eventually joined the RAAF and saw the war out. But many many other colleagues were killed in action - mostly in the airforce.

In my time Carey was a member of the Associated Grammar Schools and not one of the so called Public Schools as it is now. It was at one of the interschool swimming events that I met up with Bill Mosman again. He was at Trinity Grammar and was not very happy at all. Because of this I believe he only attended Trinity for one year. We never met again after this. But from time to time we learnt something of his activities in New Guinea whence he returned after the war as well. Unhappily he took his own life. I understand that the motivation for this action was an inferiority complex and a general disillusionment of his lot in life. Very sad indeed.

Got into the Engineering School at Swinburne Technical College as it was called in those days in 1940 with the intention of taking a career in Electrical Engineering and after finishing this I intended to do another course at RMIT, where in those days I could do Radio Engineering (Communications Engineering these days) following in the old man's footsteps! The Engineering course in those days was only three years.

At this time one could enter the Diploma of Engineering course without a Leaving Certificate - all I had to do was to have done maths and science subjects at Intermediate level and then take up Leaving English in the first year at Swinburne as an extra subject which of course is what I did.

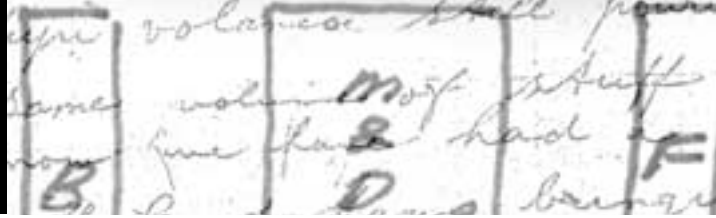
In 1938 Dad was promoted to General Manager for AWA for the mandated territory of New Guinea which appointment covered all the wireless stations in that area and of course necessitated the family moving from Kavieng to Rabaul which was where AWA had its territory headquarters. He and Mum came south on leave in 1940 and enrolled Betty in Korowa Church of England Girls' Grammar School. I still recall discussing the Engineering course I was doing with Dad and him asking me when I was going to learn about the behaviour of radio circuits and valves; particularly the then latest

development of the super heterodyne valve! I think he was a little disappointed to learn that it would be next year (second year) before that work was taken up.

After second year I had to go to work and carry on at night school. By this time Dad was captured by the Japs when they over ran Rabaul and of course Mum couldn't keep me at Swinburne without an income.

While at Swinburne I kept up my sporting interests participating in swimming, running 400 yards in those days and one mile, plus cricket and football. Through these activities new friendships developed and few good ones continue to be so to the present day. For example, Eddie Wright (became my best man), Des Knight, Lindsay McLeod (died a few years ago) and Keith Dodgson (also died a few years ago). Other names that come to mind are Max Ashworth, Bob Donovan, Bill Fricker, Lew Gwyder, Bill Mitchell, and Morris Mattingly. These people I encountered occasionally through business and such like chance encounters. Mattingly was one of those students with a mind like blotting paper or a sponge if you like. He found learning just so easy and therefore spent little time studying. So with the time to spare he'd expect everybody else to be the same and wanted us to play up with him. A real menace but a thoroughly likeable fellow. The last I heard of him his firm had transferred him to New Zealand.

the War Years
PART II



The war years brought about many privations never before encountered. The Depression rigours were bad enough, but rationing of virtually everything and shortages due to military demands made one realise that we in Australia were really involved and yet the population at large didn't feel that threatened - until Sydney was shelled and Darwin and other top end places were bombed.

With four uncles in the armed services (Trav, Brick, John and Jim) and Dad caught in the invasion of Rabaul our family's means were very severely curtailed. As already mentioned I had to get a job and so did Betty as soon as she finished school.

Dad, with Mum, was down south on leave in 1941 and that was the last time that we were all together as a family. After about three months furlough Mum and Dad with Grandad returned to Rabaul. But now Japan entered the war and by December 1941 Mum and Grandad with many other women and children were quickly shunted down south. In the rush to get these people out of the islands quickly most of their possessions were of course left behind.

Rabaul was overrun on 22 January 1942 and we heard no more from Dad until sometime about March or April the same year when we received the one and only letter from him dated 10 March 1942; a copy of which is across the page.

To Mrs H D Holland
“The Rest”
Flinders Victoria Australia

Civilians Prisoner of War
Rabaul
10/3/42

Dearest Win

Very sorry that I missed the first opportunity of sending a letter to you. Do not worry as I am quite well and we are being cared for by the Japanese.

I trust you and the children and all the family at home are well.

Matupi volcano still pouring out the same volume of stuff consistantly and now we have had a couple of South East days bringing the dust over very heavy.

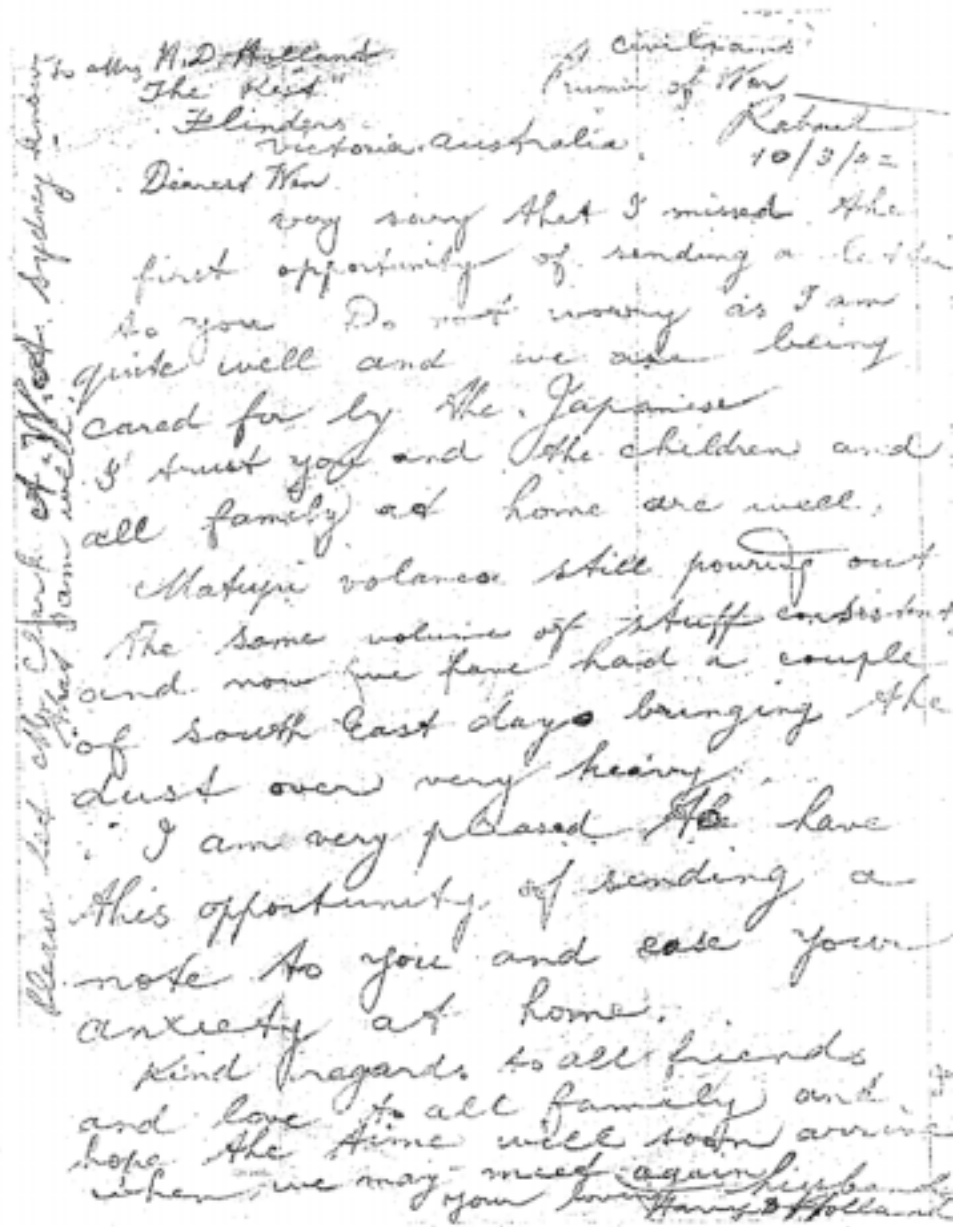
I am very pleased I have this opportunity of sending a note to you and ease your anxiety at home.

Kind regards to all friends and love to all family and hope the time will soon arise when we may meet again.

Your loving husband

Harry D Holland

Please let Mr Clarke of West Sydney know that I am well.



After leaving Carey and starting at Swinburne I was found a boarding house in Henry Street, Hawthorn with a Mr and Mrs Charlie MacDonell. They had a son Peter about my age who was working and a much younger daughter, Lexi, who went to MLC. Also boarding there was Noel Youlden, a couple of years older than me. Noel's father was a senior member of the administration in Rabaul; hence how my accommodation was found. This place was within easy walking distance from Swinburne.

Mr Mac was an accountant and was a great advocate for ability in mental arithmetic. He loved a few beers on a Saturday afternoon at the local pub with his cronies and betting on the races (SP). Mrs Mac on the other hand was one of those colourless people. Her cooking also left very much to be desired. She could never understand why we all used so much tomato sauce! However she did look after us quite well and made us feel part of the family. (We all met again at Henry Street for a reunion after the war - but after that occasion went our own several ways).

Here began the serious business of learning which kept me busy most days and nights. The only exception was some regular time off studying for sport. I played cricket, football, swimming and athletics for Swinburne in the appropriate season; an afternoon off occasionally from lectures enabled this to take place.

I also played cricket and badminton with the local church team to which I was introduced by Peter. Peter had cousins who lived at Murrumbeena who in turn invited us occasionally to a Saturday night dance at their local RSL hall. A long way to go. By tram to Malvern station and thence by train. One night there was something special on - I've no idea of just what now - and we missed the last train home. So there was only one thing to do and that was to walk home. Ah! The energy of youth!

Mr Mac had a half sized billiard table and needless to say we soon became quite handy with a cue at billiards (snooker was frowned upon in those days by some).

Another boarder whom I nearly forgot to mention was one Jack Furness. Jack was in his late twenties at this time, he was a cousin of the MacDonells and earned a living as a turner and fitter as a trade. He also had an old 1926 Bugatti which he had rebuilt himself. Apart from this he also played league football for the Melbourne Football Club as a second ruck. Jack enrolled in the airforce about six months or so after I arrived and survived the war as far as I know.

By this time (1941) Betty was boarding at Korowa and we'd get together occasionally apart from term holidays when we'd both go to Flinders.

At this time it was quite normal for Betty and me to converse in pigeon, much to the concern of anybody else nearby. Bloody foreigners! Maybe even fifth column! Even recently (1998) Ian Hosking told me how put out he was by this foreign chatter between us. I still lapse into it occasionally when talking to old Territorians although I must confess my vocabulary has shrunk somewhat through lack of use.

By the New Year of 1942 I had to earn a living for the reasons already mentioned. Along with a number of other students, most of whom had finished their third year, we were interviewed by several prospective employers. Out of this quite a few of us were taken on by the Directorate of Explosive Supply (DES).

Betty had finished school so we all thought it best if we two boarded together somewhere. Once again it was through Noel Youlden's mother that we were to board together just opposite them in Westgarth Street, Malvern. Mrs Youlden knew the Misses Little our landladies. All quite handy to transport and trains to get to and from work and/or to Swinburne at night time.

Working for the DES was my first job and where I worked as a draughtsman. During my time there I worked on explosive factories at various places such as Salisbury in South Australia, Mulwala and Villawood in New South Wales and Maribyrnong in Victoria.

This job lasted until about August 1943 by which time the Directorate had served its purpose and its staff were being transferred to other jobs by the manpower authorities. I managed to beat the gun in this respect and was enlisted by 31 August 1943 in the AIF.

Before I joined up I had a little military training - cadets at Carey and about six months with the VDC (Volunteer Defence Corps). So I wasn't exactly a raw recruit when I went to join up.

Those of us who were working at the DES got together quite a lot in our leisure time such as weekends and on an occasional evening when night school or compulsory overtime at work permitted. (Didn't get paid for this overtime - two nights per week - it was considered as being a voluntary contribution towards the war effort.)

The public transport facilities didn't always mesh in with our social needs. So, I very soon bought myself a bicycle; a motor car was out of the question. Too few available, too expensive (black market prices), and very limited petrol ration. The bike was good but a bit nasty on a wet windy night if you just had to go out on a bike instead of using public transport.

During this period we all discovered "Dancecourt" in Riversdale Road where we were taught the rudiments of ballroom dancing by one Reginald Jones and his wife. With music by gramophone Reg and his wife would demonstrate the steps and then we were expected to follow suit. All good fun particularly once a degree of proficiency was obtained then he'd run a little knockout competition amongst us as well.

By this time the war with Germany had become very aggressive and Japan was knocking on the doorstep of Australia. Even so the general population seemed to think it was all so far away and so let's all enjoy ourselves as usual anyway. Anyone with relatives in the services of course knew otherwise.

As already mentioned I enlisted on 31 August 1943 and so off to Royal Park to be indoctrinated into the AIF. It took a few days here to be kitted out, and given a medical overhaul and undertake some aptitude tests to decide upon what part of the Army would suit the best. I had no trouble with any of this and therefore had a fairly wide choice and didn't have much hesitation in opting for Signals. It was an area which was of interest to me and would stand me in good stead after the war and, meantime, it just might open a few doors to find out what was happening to Dad up in Rabaul.

Of my DES colleagues most opted for the RAAF and just a few for the AIF. The remainder were manpowered into other jobs important for the war effort.

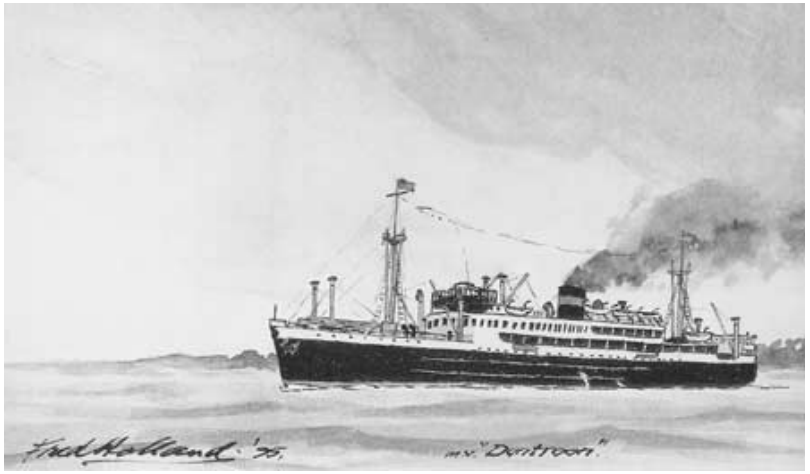
Funnily enough, at the first morning Reville rollcall when my name was called two of us responded both with the same surname. The other Holland was one Jack Holland who came from up Maryborough way and I don't really know what happened to him after our initial training.

A few days later I was off on a troop train to an ITB (Initial Training Battalion) at Dubbo. After rudimentary training here which took about six weeks I was posted off to Bonegilla by Lake Hume in Victoria to learn the art and procedures for Signalling with all sorts of devices - heliograph (mirror signalling), semaphore (flags), Alders Lamp (Navy type light), Morse Code and of course plain voice. There was also some equipment maintenance instruction as well. This course took about four weeks and

included a four day bivouac in the Yackandandah ranges - probably aimed to find out just how much we'd learned in the previous few weeks. At one stage our instructor discovered I knew more than he did about the technicalities of things electrical and wanted me to stay on as an instructor. Thank you, but no! Not part of my plans to get up to the islands a.s.a.p.

After this course I had some home leave during which I became engaged. But, this was called off some little time after I was discharged. There was somebody else.

My next move was off to Canungra Jungle Training School for another four weeks of fairly intensive training in jungle warfare. Here once again my New Guinea background was discovered and they made some use of me in that regard whilst I was there and badly wanted me to stay there with an immediate promotion to Sergeant as an instructor. Again, thank you but no. This still didn't fit my plans at all.



Bonnie Muir the world famous wrestler of the day and age was an instructor here in unarmed combat. After a bit of instruction several people thought they might floor him but he always had one more trick up his sleeve and floored them instead. He was a very nice man too.

Came out of this course as fit as the proverbial Mallee bull. A regular test of fitness was a five mile circuit which had to be done in one hour flat or better in battle order. So you ran the span of two lamp posts and walked one in order to make this time. Failure to meet the time meant doing it again a couple of days later.

From here went up to Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands where I was posted to the Headquarter Company, Signals Platoon, in the second fifth (2/5) Australian Infantry Battalion. The Battalion colour patch was made up of two horizontal rectangles - one black over one red and all enclosed in a grey border.

After a few months of foot slogging and tactical training the vanguard for leave was sent home. While they were away the Battalion had its marching orders. So as compensation I got a week's leave at an Army hostel in Cairns - nowhere long enough to get home and back again in a week. Any leave was better than none. You never knocked it back!

Did a little sight-seeing around Cairns, including a day trip out to Green Island - all free to service personnel. However, didn't have much money anyway as I'd arranged for all but one pound of my fortnightly pay to be sent home to Mum where she banked it for me, but she could draw on it if and when she might need to. You could do a lot with one pound in those days, particularly with free transport and free entree into virtually everything.

In due course I made contact with Brick Holland who was with the 2/2 Artillery Regiment up in the (Atherton) Tablelands. All part of the 6th Division. Trav was also in the 2/7 Battalion which was part of the 17th Brigade in the Middle East but was classified 'B Class' (Health) and left in Southern Command in Melbourne. In due course our embarkation orders came through, so: down to Cairns to board the troop ship M.V. Duntroon for Aitape, although we didn't know this destination until we were all aboard and well out to sea. However, I was given the job of attending the crew on

a Bofors gun for anti-aircraft action during this trip which kept me on deck the whole time - far more comfortable.

The trip was quite uneventful; calling into Madang on the way to Aitape where the 6th Division was to take over from a U.S. Army Division who in turn went on for the landing at Balikpapan in the Philippines. These people had all sorts of machinery for making life comfortable at Aitape, which was reasonably clear of the front line at this stage. Bulldozers, graders, cranes, jeeps galore, etc. but politics being what it was, we were not allowed to take over any of this equipment, even as a gift. So that which the Yanks couldn't take with them finished up in the Aitape harbour. No doubt it's still there in the form of an artificial reef today.

An amusing aftermath of all this occurred when one day our troops were unloading jeeps from one of our ships in the harbour when the sling broke. A diver went down to retrieve the jeep only to bob up again to ask for the jeep's registration number. There were so many other jeeps down there!

Food was always a questionable commodity for our troops, while right next door the Yanks lived off the fat of the land. What!? Chicken again? Three days in a row? Unbelievable! They even had icecream and clothes washers for their troops. No wonder our blokes became a little disgruntled.

Sigs. were rather regarded to be a bit eccentric most of the time but they would suddenly become very popular when somebody wanted some sig. wire and/or batteries for an illicit light in a gambling tent. (dice, poker etc.) or even an outdoor two-up school.

After we established a base camp just off the beach in Aitape, we were soon sent into action over the Toracelli mountains to take places like Tong, Maprik, etc. The 2/5 had two sorties into this area. The first time it was by truck along the coast and then walk over the ranges. But the next time we flew in by Dakota.

This was a mopping up operation and largely a waste of time and manpower in my opinion, but it was political to do it at the time, even though it cost a lot of unnecessary loss of life A patrol boat or even a submarine patrolling off- shore would have been enough to prevent any supplies reaching them and that would have starved them into submission eventually without any effort on our behalf.

Operating a Sig station at the front has its moments. Earth leakage in the wet was a real pain. If you can picture this scene: me operating a switchboard at Headquarters and the CO wants a simultaneous conference with all his Company Commanders, which could be achieved by what was known as a multiple call. All fine and dandy until one link failed in the middle of his conference. All of a sudden yon Sig is really called to task!

The one man dog watch (usually midnight through to 0600) was usually the quietest for traffic and so a good deal of chess was played on the line or by radio. Some didn't approve because it didn't keep the line open!

After a while I was allocated to Don ('D') Company as part of their up front Sigs section. Same problems as before plus having the lines cut then going out to fix the break, knowing full-well that booby traps and/or snipers could be waiting. I'd go out with a rifle man for cover, whilst dealing with any booby traps etc. and repairing the line. Sometimes you'd just get back to camp only to find that they - the Japs - had cut it again. Sometimes, though, it was our own shells or air force bombs that did the damage.

A couple of times whilst here in New Guinea I gave serious thought to transferring to ANGAU (Australian New Guinea Army Unit) where I thought I could make a greater contribution. ANGAU said they had all the Europeans that they needed at that time. It was also becoming more and more evident that the war would finish before very much longer. It was also

about this time that the Headquarter Orderly Sergeant told me that my name had been put forward for OCTU (Officer Cadet Training Unit) sometime in the near future. Going into action again, then home for leave and finally, the war ending, put a halt to all of these prospects.

Somewhere near Yamil I got yarning one night with the local 'luluai' (village head man). It transpired that he was originally from the Rabaul area and knew of 'Master Belong Wireless' but upon further questioning it seemed that he had left that area before the Jap invasion.

Sleeping on the ground was to be avoided at all costs where possible. Quite apart from all manner of ground dwellers, tropical downpours would flood everything in minutes, even if you were on high ground which we always were. So it didn't take long to scrounge a stretcher canvas (not too bulky to cart about) and a couple of bamboo rails was always available to make the framework. All of this fitted neatly into a two-man tent. About 200 mm clear underneath was all that was necessary. The back pack became a pillow and most times we slept with our boots on. Individual mosquito nets kept the flying bugs at bay.

The Poms always had that reputation for being the great unwashed - just once a week baths.

This was all possible only when the Company was static, which at this stage of the proceedings wasn't all that often as we had to keep pace with the front as it moved forward.

When on R&R in Aitape we made good use of the beach. There was usually a bit of surf but run-outs were a problem. Rescuing people using a drum of signal wire was not uncommon.

Swimming was, of course, 'au naturel' , until one day a bunch of nurses from a nearby AGH decided to join us. Amazing how quickly a pair of shorts could be manufactured out of the legs of worn out trousers.

An open air theatre was available with films and sometimes live shows. Couldn't get there very often as it was about three kilometres up the road and hitching a ride was frowned upon anyway.

A lot of this base camp time was taken up with handling the backlog of mail in between your usual shift in the Sig Room.

By April/May of 1945 we were pretty close to rounding up the Nip. He was on a near starvation diet and had resorted to cannibalism. Because of this our patrols did their utmost to withdraw any of our dead but couldn't always succeed. There was one occasion when we were forced to leave behind a dead comrade because of the Jap firepower at that time. The next day, however, we went in again and captured the position, only to find the body had been butchered by the Japs. There were no prisoners taken. This whole episode sticks in my mind because sometime later, when down on leave in Melbourne, his parents made themselves known to me at a football match and wanted to know all about his demise! (They recognised the unit colour patches on my hat.) Terribly embarrassing, but I couldn't, and didn't, enlighten them of those sorry details.

With the nip now on a near starvation diet, his new tactic was night time infiltration raids - mostly suicidal. E.g: he would sneak through the lines and plant bombs (bunches of gelignite surrounding a grenade) or just throw grenades into our perimeter.

We promptly arranged counter measures. Every night just before dusk we'd set up an array of trip wires with grenades primed for four seconds instead of the usual seven seconds. We also set out one or two man pickets just forward of our line to provide an early warning system. Two hours on duty here with a mate was about enough. But even the shorter one hour shift here, on your own, was a real nightmare with imagination running riot. With a mate you could get confirmation of movements and sounds but on your own the whole bloody Jap army was out there!

Most of our supplies were brought up to the front by Kai (Dakotas or Bristol) bombers. The air force would first bomb the Japs with their 250 pound or 500 pound bombs then drop supplies on the dropping area identified by a smoke signal. This of course was a dead give-away and more often than not we would have a real fire storm to retrieve our own supplies!

My last night at the front was near Yamil and to say the least a little unsettling. That morning I was advised from Battalion Headquarters that I was to depart for overdue home leave next morning. What with the Nip dug in only a couple of hundred metres away and our 4.2 inch mortars bombing them several times at sporadic intervals throughout the night, not much sleep was enjoyed.

By this time Wewak had been recaptured so it now became the Division base camp. This town had been the principal supply port for the Japs and to show their objection to our presence they continued to needle the area with their mountain guns hidden in caves in the ranges just behind Wewak. Plus an occasional infantry raid on our defences. This annoyance was soon dealt with too.

At Wewak we expected to be re-united with our kit bags which contained all manner of our personal possessions not wanted while at the front and included such things as books, winter clothing, family photos etc. In the move from Aitape to Wewak mine was lost, stolen, or strayed! Most annoying as I only had one change of clothing which was getting a bit worn.

Anyway, after a few days here, we boarded a troop ship which took us direct to Sydney with only one stop at Madang to pick up a few more troops due for leave. (This was early May 1945 and the war in New Guinea was very nearly over and the same further north.)

I cannot recall the name of this ship. The only recollection I have of it is that the crew were all Poms who expressed considerable wonder at why it was that the ship was always festooned with washed clothes drying off. The Poms always had that reputation for being the great unwashed - just once a week baths.

From the wharf in Sydney to the barracks at Marrackville (I think it was) thence by troop train to Melbourne. I had already wired Mum that I was on the way home but with no definite ETA.

Before I left the front to come home, my Company Commander (Captain Ken Fry) asked me to take home for him a samurai sword that he'd acquired from some Jap officer k.i.a. (killed in action). This was quite a work of art in the making - some indecipherable Japanese engraving on the blade and some jewellery on the handle. This artefact became something of a problem as souvenir hunters were everywhere. In addition to this, I had a Jap rifle as a souvenir and quite a bit of invasion money, (quite worthless in purchasing power) as my own trophies. I don't know what's happened to the money at the time of this writing. The rifle was handed in to the Police about 1983.

It was now mid-June 1945 and damned cold, Melbourne was drizzling, and I had only tropical gear to wear. So I put on two of everything (all I had), donned a ground sheet, got a leave pass and boarded a tram for home. (Which was John's flat in Toorak Road which, he in turn, had lent Mum while he was away.)

Picture, if you will, Mum's surprise when at about 2100 hours this apparition appeared on the door, shivering with cold, and tinted with a delicate shade of yellow from the Atabrin (anti-malaria tablets)! I think we celebrated with a glass or two of sherry just to keep out the cold.

Went back to Royal Park next day to be re-kitted at no charge for lost property. It was written off to being lost in action. I also took Ken Fry's sword out to his wife in Ivanhoe. I'm not sure that he'd told her of its impending arrival, but I do recall her being somewhat diffident about accepting it. In any event I was glad to get rid of it as, needless to say, it attracted a lot of attention everywhere I went with demands to know all the gory details as to how it was obtained. (In war time people at large became quite ghoulish, I found!)

By now the war was drawing rapidly to a close - Japan had been hit twice with atomic bombs with the threat of more of the same to come. On the day of the actual surrender I had been at the Melbourne Town Hall attending a concert of some sort. As I emerged from this I was suddenly accosted by a group of very excited RAAF types and told that 'It's over!' A walk round to the Argus office - which at that time was in Collins Street and which in turn posted daily bulletins on its door - and there it was proclaimed in black and white.

I think Melbourne found the news somewhat stunning at first as there seemed to be little reaction. After all it was well into the night (about 2200-2300 hours, I think) and news of any sort didn't travel all that fast in those days.

So onto a tram to Mum's flat and get her out of bed for the news which we, once again, celebrated with the ubiquitous bottle of sherry. Our sobering thoughts though were of when would we hear something about, of, or from Dad.

My leave of twenty-eight days at home eventually came to an end and back onto a troop train heading north again. I got as far as Brisbane and there was told "No more north bound troops". So here we all waited while discharge priorities were sorted out.

Since I had low priority for discharge, I tried to rejoin the battalion with a view to being part of the occupation forces. No dice! Definitely no northbound troops!

After it became apparent that we were stuck at Yerongpillie for quite some time and taking daily leave into Brisbane became a bit boring and not to mention costly. So a few of us set out to find some city work to supplement our income. Finally, I secured a labouring job to clean up an overgrown yard behind a small factory (I have no recollection now of where or what or who that was). This went on for quite a while until eventually I was posted back to Melbourne to Royal Park.

Here I was given a living out allowance, ration tickets etc. and proceeded to help process the paper war involved for those being discharged.

Finally, on the 30 October 1945, we were officially notified of Dad's fate. It seems that he, along with approximately three hundred other civilians, were dispatched for Japan on the Montevideo Maru in June 1942 and subsequently the ship was torpedoed in the Celebes Sea with all lives lost.

More recent times, however, reveal that the Montevideo Maru was sunk at dawn on the 1st July 1942 by a torpedo from the American submarine 'Sturgeon'. The ship went down stern first in about ten minutes. After this official notification, AWA were very prompt in settling with Mum all outstanding monies owed to Dad.

This news enabled me to accelerate my discharge priority on compassionate grounds with effect ultimately from the 7th of January 1946.

The war service medals I received were the:

1939-45 Star
Pacific Star
1939-45 War Medal
Australian War Medal 1939-45

This concludes my war time history. But during this period, what happened to Mum and Betty?

After leaving school, Betty went to work with AWA as a telegraphist. But when detailed reports of atrocities to POW's started coming in, she decided she couldn't tolerate these revelations any more and resigned.

These reports were mainly from Reuters to the Australian press. The local papers decided to censor much of these reports and so did not publish very much of it for a very long time to come.

From AWA Betty went to an estate agent in Prahran; Doeg and Arnold. Betty later married one or her AWA colleagues - Mick Wood - in 1948 and their subsequent sorties around the Pacific islands would make something of a book in itself, I'm sure, if Betty ever gets around to writing it.

After being evacuated from Rabaul, Mum eventually settled Grandad (Larard) into a nursing home in Kew and then went to board at Flinders with Dad's family there. When I enlisted, she moved up to Melbourne to be with Betty and boarded at several places. For example, with a Mrs. Hemming in Orrong Road, then John's flat in Toorak Road. After this, she was in Simpson Street East Melbourne for a short while until, through her life-long friend, Winnie Lambourne, she rented the unit in Lower Malvern Road, East Malvern.

Finally the War Damage Commission paid up (about one eighth of the claim which she and Les Bell put together for Panakondu). However, she was then able to buy a home of her own in Wattletree Road.

Buying a home of her own was no mean task either, because you couldn't just arbitrarily move into the home once you had bought it. There were all sorts of regulations about tenant rights and so on and so forth and eventually the tenants who were renting the place had to be taken to court to have them removed. A very unpleasant business. Betty with her contacts at Doeg and Arnold was a big help in this regard. All very distressing.

When I was discharged there was just nowhere I could call home. However, it was only a few months later that Mum secured the unit in Lower Malvern Road and so at long last we were all together again. For me it had been nine years (1937-1946) of separation.

However, after my discharge and until we got the place in Lower Malvern Road, Lindsay McLeod's family in Glenferrie were good enough to board me. At that time, the Knight family (Kevin, Brian, Des and Joan) all lived just around the corner from the McLeod's in Glenferrie Road. Many hilarious games of cards and a few beers were enjoyed on many occasions here.

Lindsay had the use of his father's car which had been laid up on blocks for the duration. We got it going again. Easter 1946 saw us all in the car complete with tent, food etc, for a few days at Lorne where we set up tent by moonlight and enjoyed those few days just on our own and no more prying questions about our war experiences to deflect.

Mum was an accomplished pianist and soon after settling into Lower Malvern Road, she acquired an upright piano. Many were the evenings of entertainment listening to her play classical music.

Anybody reading these notes could quite rightly say, 'I've heard it all before". And that comment would be quite valid. There were a great many people in the services who shared common experiences. These are events in which I was actively involved and shared with others. It is not plagiarism. It is just what happened to me in this particular period of my life.