

T4EK HAPPENINGS

By Mark Capper

Welcome to our 5th edition of T4EK HAPPENINGS, this will be our last newsletter before we head off to PNG this week.

Over the past few months we have had a few fundraisers which have not only raised much needed funds for the kids education but also awareness of what the people who are our closest neighbours are enduring to educate themselves and their children.

A special thanks to the Keysborough CFA for having their truck at the Meet the Porters BBQ event in February.



The Factis non Verbis in May was, at the last minute relocated to our home, thank you to everyone who came, supported and enjoyed the night.



Also we are very honoured to be awarded a Bendigo Bank Dingley Village Community Grant; this substantial grant has helped go beyond our fundraising target of \$9000.00. We would like to thank the Board and branch manager Anne McAllister for their continuing support.



This year the donations raised will go towards desks and chairs for the schools in and around Kagi. As you can appreciate we are unable to trek these in so a fair amount of the funds are going to towards airlifting them from Port Moresby to Kagi, not a cheap exercise but well worth it.

The trekking group this year is 8, Gillian and Michael Armstrong are returning with us. If you read our last edition, Gill lost her dad on the morning of the day we started trekking in 2014, it was a very emotional trek for them both, their courage and endurance shone and inspired us all on that trek.

The other trekkers are Kelly Steegstra, Jacinta Drake and her dad David Drake and Benjamin Marshall all from Ballarat. See page 5 for some of their bios.

BOOKS ARE OFF TO PNG!

This year we have teamed up with Books 4 PNG Kids a Brisbane based book collection organisation. Through donations from local schools, libraries, and often individuals, we receive and ship out hundreds of boxes of books to various areas of Papua New Guinea each year.

Early in the year T4EK drove to Wangaratta to pick what we thought were few boxes of schools supplies donated, it turned out to a full car load of boxes with books and educational supplies and learning aids.

There was no way we could get these to PNG without some help, in came Kate Augu, a young local girl who is in the Face of the Globe Australia pageant, where contestants help a NFP charity. Kate is helping Books 4 PNG Kids and has collected 12 boxes of books for all ages of children after we ad sorted them all out.

Since meeting Kate, we have been in contact with Heather Doonan, the CEO of Books 4 PNG Kids; T4EK is looking at helping her in future to continue helping the kids of PNG with their education. As Heather said “just because you live in highlands of PNG does not mean you can’t have a good education”



www.books4pngkids.org
and on [Facebook](#)

A NIGHT FOR COMMUNITY HELPERS

On Wednesday May 25, we were invited to the Dingley Village Bendigo Bank Community Grants Award night, held at the Southern Golf Club. T4EK was awarded a community grant on the night and I gave a presentation on what and how T4EK make a difference. Some of the attendees included Councillor Sean O'Reilly from City of Greater Dandenong, former AFL Melbourne FC player and Fremantle coach Chris Connelly, Bendigo Bank Chairman David Starvaggi, Anne McAllister, Dingley Village Branch Manager, Regional Bendigo Bank management and others from the local community. Also attending was our good friend and supporter Simone Hardham who was awarded the 2016 the Ron Vogt Community Service Award - for outstanding community service, Simone donated part of her award to T4EK, thank you Simone.

We would like to thank Anne McAllister, Dingley Village Branch Manager, Anne has supported T4EK since its inception and with this support we would not be making the difference we are today.



Bendigo Bank Chairman David Starvaggi



Simone Hardham 2016 recipient of the Ron Vogt Community Service Award - for outstanding community service



Anne McAllister, Dingley Village Branch Manager



Photos courtesy of David Trchala

SOME OF THE 2016 TREKKERS:

Name: Kelly Steegstra

Town you live in: Ballarat

Age: 39



Why Kokoda? When I was in year 10 I learned about the battle fought by Australians in World War II. Since then I have been in awe of the diggers and their Papuan allies. I also love to challenge myself both physically and mentally so when I heard Gill and Mick were going to walk the track again I decided it's now or never!

What is the one thing you know about PNG? When I see pictures of PNG I see smiling faces and beautiful landscapes. Other than that I feel like I'm entering the unknown.

What is the most adventurous trek you have done so far? I only really started doing this trekking thing late last year. Mount Abrupt at the Grampians has been my favourite so far.

What is your favourite food? I like all food (except vegemite!) but I think my favourites are chocolate and Thai food.

What is your favourite drink? Nothing beats my morning coffee.

Do you like to sing? Yes. Not well but at least I try!

What is your favourite song? I don't really have a favourite song but I'm enjoying anything from Rudimental and The Script at the moment.

Name: Michael Armstrong



Town you live in: Elaine

Age: 53

Why Kokoda? Must to do again loved it so much, the kids smile

What is the most adventurous trek you have done so far? This and the fair star cruise lol

What is your favourite food? Pasta

What is your favourite drink? Beer or three

What is your favourite song? Carlton club song and Jimmy Barnes working class man

Name: Gillian Armstrong



Town you live in: Elaine

Age: 53

Why Kokoda? 1st did Kokoda in 2014 it was on the bucket list and we did it with the t4e group. The look on the kids' faces at Kagi when we delivered school supplies to the local school melted my heart and have not been able to shake the feeling since, so now it's time to do it all again.

What is the one thing you know about PNG? The one thing I know about PNG is that the villagers along the track are wonderful people and life for them can be a daily struggle.

What is the most adventurous trek you have done so far? The Kokoda Track by far

What is your favourite food? Cadburys chocolate

What is your favourite drink? Ginger spice mojitos

What is your favourite song? As for songs and singing.... Well I don't really have a favourite but I do love Robbie Williams, John Farnham but pretty much sing along to anything!

Name: Julie Capper

Town you live in: Keysborough

Age: Old



Why Kokoda? I keep asking myself that question!

What is the one thing you know about PNG? The people are awesome

What is the most adventurous trek you have done so far? Kokoda

What is your favourite food? Curry. Oh wait Pizza mmh too hard

What is your favourite drink? Sav Blanc

Do you like to sing? No way

What is your favourite song? To hard



THE KOKODA TRACK

More than 600 Australians were killed and some 1 680 wounded during perhaps the most significant battle fought by Australians in World War II.

Forced to repel a Japanese invasion force, which landed at Gona on the north coast of Papua on 21 July 1942, the Australians fought in appalling conditions over the next four months. The Japanese objective was to capture Port Moresby, the main Australian base in New Guinea, by an overland strike across the Owen Stanley Range. The most direct way across these rugged mountains was by a jungle pathway known as the Kokoda Track. During the next four months, until 16 November 1942, Australian soldiers fought the Japanese, first to keep them from reaching Port Moresby and then to push them back over the Owen Stanleys to their north coast strongholds at Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

In late July 1942, as the Japanese advanced towards Kokoda village, they were engaged by forward elements of the Papuan Infantry Battalion and the Australian 39th Infantry Battalion. Despite the Australians' stubborn resistance, Kokoda fell to the larger Japanese force and by 27 August the Australians and the few Papuan troops who had stayed with them had been forced back to Isurava. Reinforcements were sent from Port Moresby: first the 53rd Battalion, which protected a side-track behind Isurava, and then the veteran 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions, which had previously served in the Middle East.

At Isurava, in the last days of August, the 39th and the 2/14th Battalions, with support further back from the 2/16th and 53rd Battalions, were able to temporarily hold the Japanese during an intense five-day action. Three days into the battle, on 29 August, in the face of yet another enemy assault, Private Bruce Kingsbury, 2/14th Battalion, was killed as he rushed forward with his Bren gun, driving back the enemy in a determined counter-attack. He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, the first VC awarded during the New Guinea campaigns.

Throughout September, the Australian units withdrew down the Kokoda Track, being joined by the 2/27th Battalion. They made further stands against the Japanese at Eora Creek, Templeton's Crossing, Efogi, Mission Ridge and Ioribaiwa. Allied airmen dropped supplies and made repeated attacks on the enemy's supply lines. During those gruelling days, the

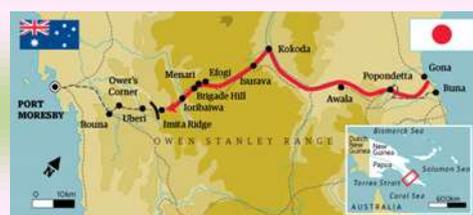
Papuan men employed as carriers played a vital role in the battle. They carried supplies forward for the troops and then, as the number of troops who were wounded or fell sick increased, carried back to safety those who were unable to walk.

Between August 26 and September 25, 1942 the Australians made a strategic withdrawal from Kokoda back to Imita Ridge. On 25 September the Japanese abandoned their attempt to reach Port Moresby.

By 16 September, after more troops had come forward from Port Moresby and dug into a defensive position at Imita Ridge, the Japanese were exhausted. They had been forced to fight hard to cross the mountains and had run out of many supplies. Following setbacks on other battlefields against Australian and American forces, which robbed them of further reinforcements, the Japanese on the Kokoda Track were ordered to withdraw. As Australian patrols pushed forward of Imita Ridge on 28 September, they found that the enemy had slipped away.

During the next six weeks, the Japanese fell back over the mountains. They were pursued by troops of the 25th Brigade – comprising the 2/25th, 2/31st and 2/33rd Battalions – and the 16th Brigade – comprising the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions – along with the 3rd Battalion and men from medical and supply units. Significant actions were fought at Templeton's Crossing, where it took more than a week of hard and costly fighting for the 25th Brigade to push back the enemy, and at Eora Creek where the 16th Brigade also doggedly attacked enemy strongpoints to slowly make ground. The Australians were plagued by supply shortages that increased the difficulties of jungle warfare. Finally, on 2 November, Kokoda was retaken. The Australians had one more tough battle to fight at Oivi-Gorari, where the Japanese were determined to make another stand, before they were able to finish the advance over the mountains. By 18 November the Australians had reached the Kumusi River. The battle for the Kokoda Track was over.

<http://www.w2australia.gov.au/asfaras/kokoda.html>



Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels

The evacuation of the wounded was a serious problem. The native bearers carried the stretchers, sometimes under fire, back to the ADS [Advanced Dressing Station]. The Papuans constructed the stretchers: blankets slung between two poles with spreaders at each end. Eight natives were allotted to each stretcher and they stayed with the same patient until they reached their destination.

The people who lived in the villages along the Kokoda Track knew little about the war until it came to them. They had lived a traditional life, with only occasional contact with Australian patrol officers. Then Australian troops began moving over the tracks, some occupying huts and trampling over gardens. As the fighting came closer, most villagers 'went bush' to camps away from the main tracks. While they were away, Australian and Japanese troops wrecked many huts and, when villages were occupied by the Japanese, Allied aircraft bombed and strafed them. Hungry soldiers raided the village crops and shot their pigs. With villages wrecked by the two armies, and dead often lying in the vicinity, the villages were no longer habitable and were not reoccupied after the battle. New villages had to be constructed nearby.

Many of the villagers also worked in support of the battle, carrying supplies forward for the troops. Teams carried seriously wounded and sick Australian soldiers all the way back to Owers' Corner. Their compassion and care of the casualties earned them admiration and respect from the Australians, who dubbed these men their 'fuzzy wuzzy angels'.

After the battle for Kokoda ended, many villagers continued working for the Allies, carrying supplies and building tracks, bridges and huts. Others joined the Papuan Infantry Battalion or the New Guinea Infantry Battalion. Gradually life returned to normal after the war but the friendship between the people of Australia and Papua New Guinea has continued to this day.

In his well-known poem, 'The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', Sapper Bert Beros praised the work of the carriers.

Many a mother in Australia,
 When the busy day is done,
 Sends a prayer to the Almighty
 For the keeping of her son,
 Asking that an Angel guide him
 And bring him safely back
 Now we see those prayers are answered
 Up on the Kokoda Track,
 Though they haven't any halos,
 Only holes slashed in the ears,
 And with faces worked with tattoos,
 With scratch pins in their hair,
 Bringing back the wounded,
 Just as steady as a hearse,
 Using leaves to keep the rain off
 And as gentle as a nurse.



Slow and steady in bad places,
 On the awful mountain track,
 And the look upon their faces,
 Makes us think that Christ was black,
 Not a move to hurt the wounded,
 As they treat him like a Saint,
 It's a picture worth recording,
 That an Artist's yet to paint.
 Many a lad will see his Mother,
 And the Husbands, wee ones and Wives,
 Just because the Fuzzy Wuzzy
 Carried them out to save their lives.



From mortar or machine gun fire,
 Or a chance surprise attack,
 To safety and the care of Doctors,
 At the bottom of the track.
 May the mothers of Australia,
 When they offer up a prayer,
 Mention those impromptu Angels,
 With the Fuzzy Wuzzy hair.

<http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/asfaras/angels.html>

On behalf of the Teachers, Parents and Kids along the Kokoda Track thank you to

- ✓ *Dingley Village Bendigo Bank*
- ✓ *Chicken Tonight Butchers*
- ✓ *MotivateHQ*
- ✓ *Outsports*
- ✓ *Hungry Caterpillar Café*
- ✓ *Keysborough Hotel*
- ✓ *No Roads Expeditions*
- ✓ *Ginger Jones Café*
- ✓ *Vast Outdoors*
- ✓ *SA-Bean International*
- ✓ *Lobster Cave Restaurant*
- ✓ *Collingwood Football Club*
- ✓ *4 Cousins Supermarket*
- ✓ *Metro Meats*
- ✓ *Bakers Delight Dingley Village*
- ✓ *Chobani Yoghurts*
- ✓ *Who Gives A Crap*
- ✓ *FastTrack V8 Experience*
- ✓ *and all the individuals who have supported and donated!*



Look out for edition 6 later in the year with our trek photos and story