

# Defence

INFORMATION BULLETIN  
Spring 1994

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Normie Rowe launches 'Diggers'

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Adventure on the Kokoda Track

Win a copy of the 'Diggers' book or calendar

# Training is an adventure on

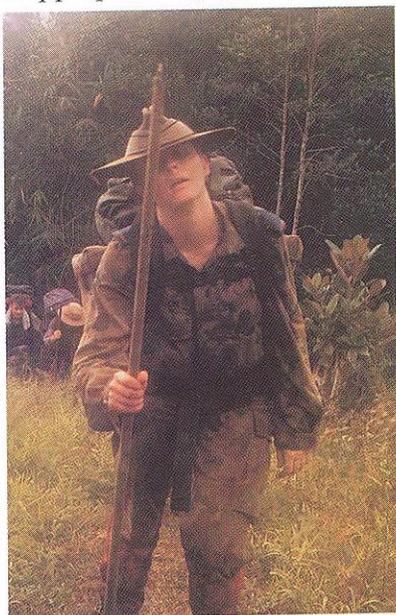
Seven days walking the infamous Kokoda Track has left a group of Defence Force members with a renewed appreciation and admiration for those who fought there.

A team of 12 Australian Defence Force Academy cadets, nine Army soldiers, two midshipman, one RAAF officer, and 12 civilians recently trekked from Kokoda to Owen's Corner as a joint adventure training exercise and pilot run for a planned 1995 commemorative trek of the Kokoda Track.

The 1995 trek, which is planned for July, will involve a similar party and will commemorate those who took part in what is considered by many to have been "the toughest fight in the world".

While all participants completed the trek and were prepared for a tough time, they agreed the enormous challenge of the mountains, river crossings, jungle, and heat exceeded their expectations.

"I guess the point that sticks mostly in my mind is that the Kokoda Track was difficult, arduous and mentally demanding in 1942. In 1942 the track was exactly the same, but there was an enemy possibly waiting at every corner, the soldiers had inappropriate equipment, and



The ascent to the top of Kokoda Gap takes its toll on OFFCDT Racheal Coulton.



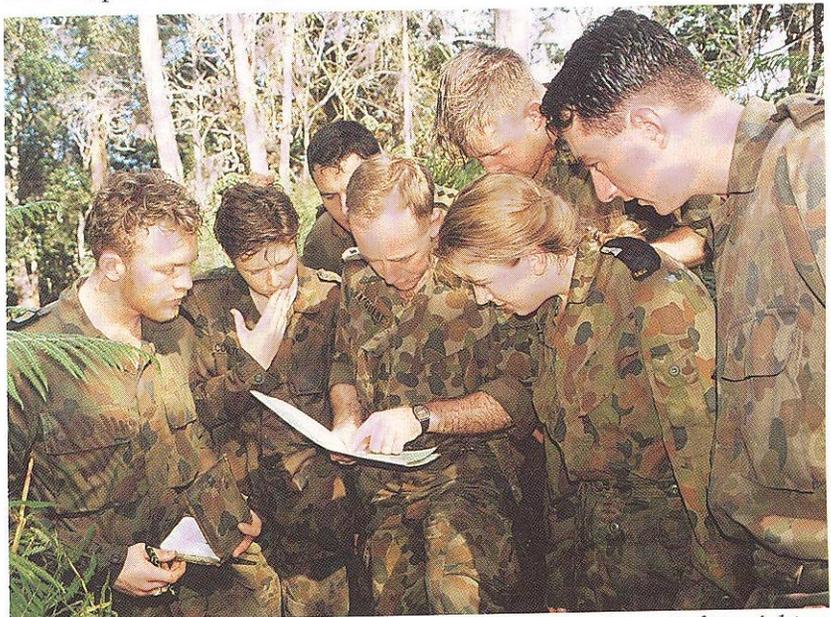
Smiles all round at the end of the trek. Left to right: Back Row: SGT Phil Blackwell, LT Mark Horn, LT Gene Walker, LT Nathan Manzi, MIDN Scott Peak, Centre: LT Leslie Beshaw, CAPT Carl Bird (US Army) CAPT David McGuire, OFFCDT Racheal Coulton, Front: LT Roger Grose, MIDN Jamin Davies, LT Matt Galton, and MIDN Alison Westwood.

were poorly supplied with food and resources. Compared to them, we had it easy," said Captain Dave McGuire.

While the trek provided participants with first-hand experience of the demanding physical requirements placed on those who fought in Papua New Guinea, presentations given

along the way gave an insight into the history of Australians on the Kokoda Track.

"Sitting on Brigade Hill where so many Australians fought and died was a sobering and moving experience. All I could think was . . . what a hell of a place to die," said Lieutenant Leslie Beshaw.



CAPT Dave McGuire gives a position brief to trek members. Left to right: MIDN Scott Peak, OFFCDT Racheal Coulton, LT Mark Horn, CAPT Dave McGuire, MIDN Jamin Davies, and MIDN Alison Westwood.

# the Kokoda Track!

The Defence team was lead by Captain Dave McGuire, and the whole excursion taken by former Australian Army Major Charlie Lynn, who, according to the participants, was a hard but much-respected leader.

Each member of the Defence trekking party, which comprised Captain David McGuire, Lieutenants Leslie Beshaw, Matt Galton, Roger Grose, Mark Horn, Nathan Manzi, Gene Walker, Midshipman Jamin Davies, Scott Peak and Alison Westwood, Officer cadet Rachael Coulton and Sergeant Phil Blackwell, carried 30 kilogram packs, containing communications equipment, clothing, four water bottles, and personal medical supplies, and ate standard army rations.

The participation of the civilians, who represented such organisations as BHP, CRA, Prudential, News Corp, The Australian, and several legal firms, was organised by the RSL as a fund-raising leadership course. All military participants agreed it certainly gave the exercise an additional dimension.

Captain McGuire said the trek had provided valuable lessons that would greatly assist them when planning next year's commemorative trek as it had highlighted potential problems and also solved many questions.

"One thing I learnt for next year was that having civilians along



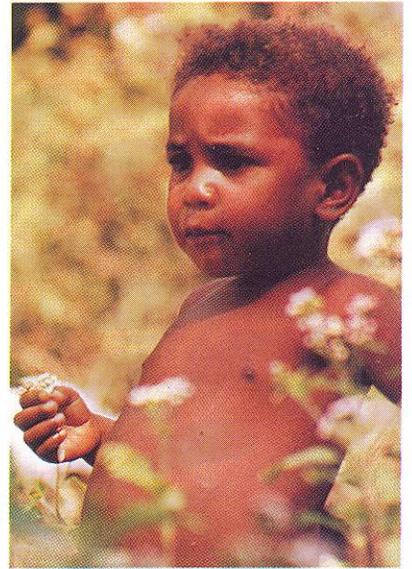
*LT Mark Horn continues the WWII diggers' tradition of "leaving his mark" on a giant bamboo stand on the decent from Efogi 1.*

was excellent public relations for the Defence Force — several influential executives walked away with a very high opinion of our junior military leaders," said Captain McGuire.

"Future activities should be undertaken with civilians to build on this PR and to give the public a first-hand opportunity to see where their tax dollars go in Defence."

Captain McGuire also stressed the value of party members giving military presentations.

"The presentations gave us a good historical perspective as well as showing us ways to avoid similar mistakes during campaigns," he said



*A local lad watches with admiration and some amusement as the party moves through his village.*

**Photos by Roger Grose.**



*Trekkers, local guides, and civilian party leader Charlie Lynn (centre) catch their breath outside Auwaiabaiwa.*