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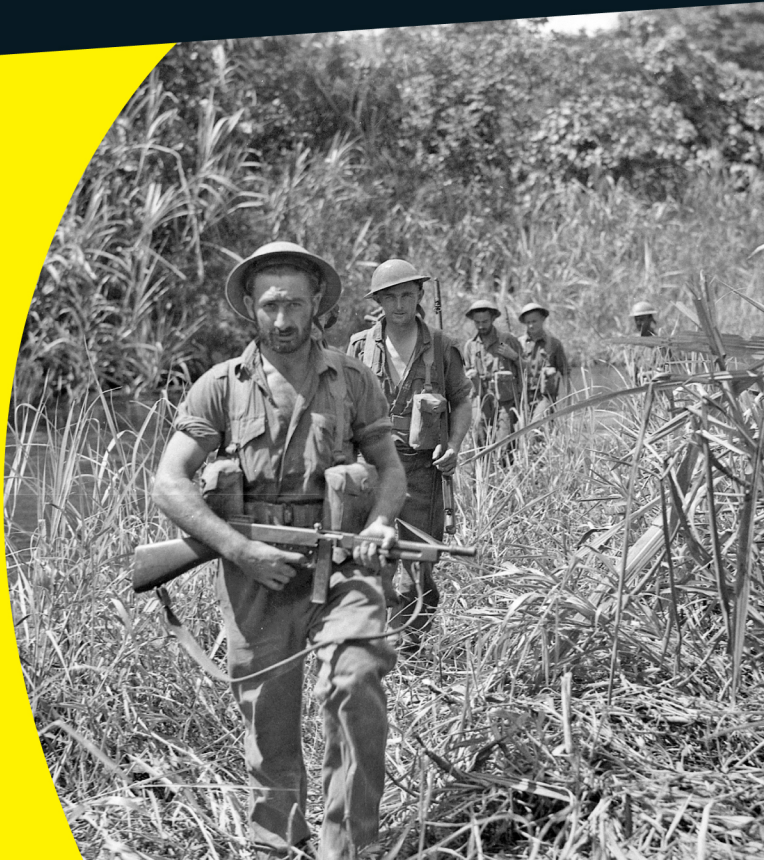
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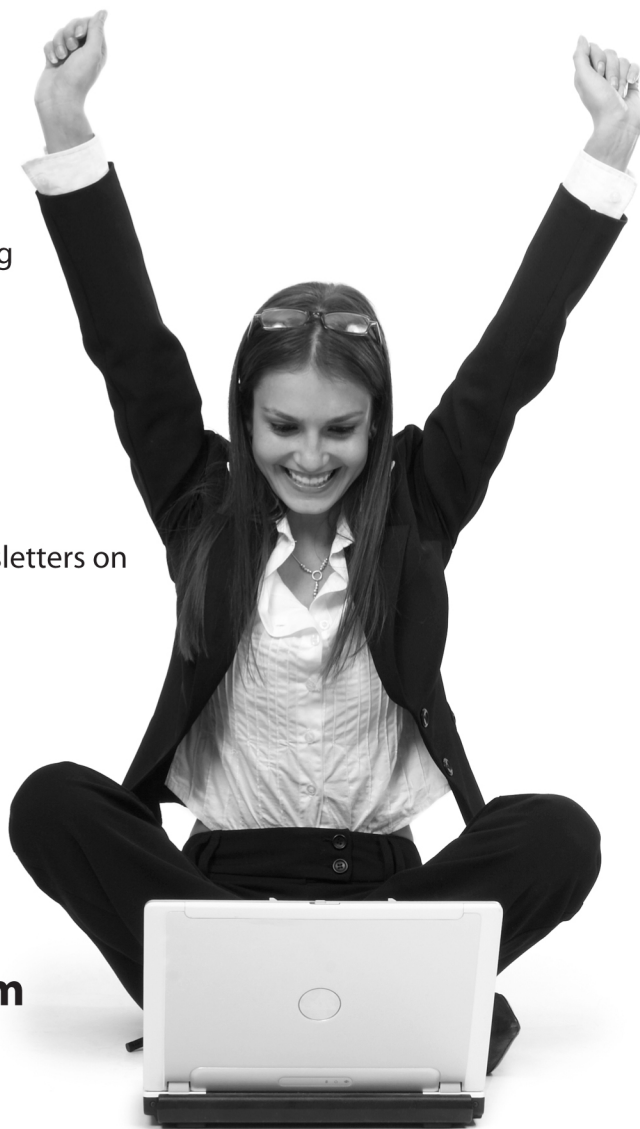
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**Dr Peter Williams** is the author of six books and websites on Australian military history including *The Battle of Anzac Ridge 1915* (2006), *Australia's Involvement in the Korean War* (2010) and *The Kokoda Campaign 1942: Myth and Reality* (2012). Before he became a military historian, Peter was a teacher of history and English in Australia and Japan. He lives in Canberra where he is a researcher for the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal.

# *Dedication*

I dedicate this book to my wife, Sammy, who, over the years, has become a reluctant expert on things Kokoda.



## *Author's Acknowledgements*

Without Gary Traynor, this book couldn't have been completed. Gary guides tours to Australian battlefields at Gallipoli and in Papua New Guinea and has walked Kokoda ten times. Drawing on his experiences, he contributed Chapters 14, 15, 16 and 18.

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**Kokoda For Dummies, Australian Edition** \_\_\_\_\_

# Introduction

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Australians are fond of their military history, but this fondness wasn't always so. When I was growing up in the 1960s, our wars — Vietnam was going on then — were rarely the subjects of television documentaries, movies and books as they are today. Now, websites are also devoted to warfare and new books appear every week. This is all very good news for authors and fans of military history.

The two campaigns Australians want to know most about are Gallipoli in 1915 and Kokoda in 1942. When I began writing military history, those were the two topics I decided to tackle first. I wanted to understand the nuts and bolts of strategy and tactics, battles and armies, how they're supplied and what makes some soldiers stand and die while others run away. Early on I learned that to best understand a battle you have to visit the place where it was fought. What I share in this book is based on my experiences travelling to the battlefields in Papua New Guinea.

## *About This Book*

Seven years ago I began studying the fighting on the Kokoda Trail. *Kokoda For Dummies* is a summary of what I've learnt so far, as well as a practical guide for those who are considering walking the track. Do walk the track. I've never met anyone who regretted it.

I talk about more than just the fighting on the track because understanding the other events in Papua in the six months Australians fought there is important. The final report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee in 1958 divided the war in Papua from July 1942 to January 1943 into three battles. The battle I focus on in *Kokoda For Dummies* is the Battle of Kokoda. The other battles I examine are the Battle of Milne Bay and the Battle of Buna-Gona, which was fought after Kokoda and saw the destruction of the Japanese force that had advanced along the track. In official jargon the fights along the track were not battles, they were called 'actions' or 'engagements'. I call them battles though because everybody else does.

Some of the questions this book answers are:

- ✔ Why did fighting occur along the track at all?
- ✔ What were the Australians and Japanese trying to achieve?
- ✔ How did the training and preparation of the armies affect the outcome of the battles?
- ✔ What kinds of weapons did the armies have?
- ✔ What was fighting in the mountainous jungle on the track really like?
- ✔ How do I prepare to walk the track and what will I see there?

## *Conventions Used in This Book*

In this book, I've used a number of conventions:

- ✔ Armies use a lot of technical words, like battalion and battery or company and casualty clearing station, to describe their structure. They have another list of tricky words to describe what they do: Flanking the enemy, making a pinning attack, bombarding. You don't need to know them all and I've used them only where necessary. Some of these technical words are explained in the Appendix.
- ✔ Names are written in their correct order. Australian and American people put their family name (surname) last, Japanese names have the family name first.
- ✔ I use the term *Buna* to describe the Japanese base in Papua. Buna is not strictly accurate because the Japanese base was spread over a large area and the centre was at Giruwa, near Buna. Buna itself was one of the less important parts of the base; however, Buna is a name a lot of Australians know so I've used it.
- ✔ When I use the word *Kokoda* I'm talking about the track or the fighting in general. When I mean the village of Kokoda after which the fighting was named, I make that clear. I also use Kokoda Trail — the official term — or track, not Kokoda Track.
- ✔ I use the terms used in 1942, when the north part of Papua New Guinea was called the Territory of New Guinea and the south part the Territory of Papua. If I use the term 'New Guinea', I am referring generally to the whole modern country.



## *What You're Not to Read*

The fighting in Papua was full of fascinating facts, stories and personalities that aren't vital to following the main story of Kokoda. I've placed some of these stories in sidebars — the shaded boxes — where I also include excerpts from interviews with war veterans, both Australian and Japanese. You can skip the sidebars and not lose the thread, but I think they're too good to miss out on.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

Many books about Kokoda or some aspect of it have been published and more appear each day. Some are technical and hard to understand and some are simple. Working out which is which can be difficult. I assume you've picked up this book because

- ✓ You plan to walk the track and you want to know if you should, what you will see and how to get ready.
- ✓ You want an overview of Kokoda that answers the where, what, when, who and how kinds of questions.
- ✓ You want a ready reference so you can look up a battle quickly.
- ✓ You wish you knew more about Kokoda, so you can join in on conversations.

## *How This Book is Organised*

This book is divided into six parts. I start by explaining the significance of the track and convincing you to walk the track if you haven't already. Then I talk about the battles and the practical steps you have to take before the trip if you want to see the battle sites.

### *Part 1: The Essentials of Kokoda*

In this part, I tell you the basic information you need to make sense of the rest of the book. I explain why the track is significant, why you should go, what you will find and who has done it before you.

## ***Part II: Australians in Retreat***

Australia and its Allies did a lot of retreating in the first ten months after Japan invaded Asia and the Pacific in December 1942. Here I explain the plans and objectives of both sides, and what went right with the Japanese plan and what went wrong with the Allied plan. I talk about what the Allies did in the war in the Pacific before the Japanese arrived in Papua and how we came to be fighting there. Part II ends at the end of the Australian retreat, at Imita Ridge 40 kilometres from Port Moresby.

## ***Part III: Fighting in the Jungle***

Here I take a break from describing what happened and explain how war in the jungle is different from any other kind of warfare. I write about tactics and disease, supply and patrolling, and describe what the nitty gritty of jungle fighting was like.

## ***Part IV: Chasing the Japanese Out of Papua***

After Imita Ridge in September 1942, the Australians went on the attack. I examine the four months of the Australian advance, from when we began driving the Japanese back along the track to January 1943 when the Japanese force in Papua was finally destroyed at the Battle of Buna–Gona.

## ***Part V: Walking the Kokoda Trail***

This is the part that helps you decide if you're going to walk the track. Walking the track isn't easy and requires preparation. Here you learn about the practical stuff, how much training to do, what you should take with you and how to avoid illness.

## ***Part VI: The Part of Tens***

In this part, I explain the common myths about the fighting in Papua. If you've read a bit about the fighting, you may be surprised by some of these myths. I also list ten things to look out for along the track and include ten interesting stories from Australian and Japanese veterans. The part of tens is a great place to start reading if you want to see if you'll like this book.

## Icons Used in This Book

Icons are those little pictures in the left margin. The picture on each gives you a clue to the content. Here's what they mean:



This icon shows where to go to find, or avoid, discussion about military strategy, tactics formation and doctrine.



This icon points you to interesting details that illuminate the story.



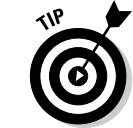
You may not want to read the technical details of organisation of equipment, especially if you're pressed for time. You can skip over the technical stuff, but it's difficult for me to imagine that many readers don't want to know how many rounds a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle held in its magazine.



When I want to summarise the key points I've just made at length I use this icon to point out an easy-to-remember sentence or two that captures the essence of the key points.



This icon serves as a warning, telling you to avoid something that's potentially harmful. Take heed!



This bulls-eye alerts you to on-target advice, insights or recommendations.



These highlight excerpts from interviews with Kokoda veterans that explain in their own words what being on the track was really like.

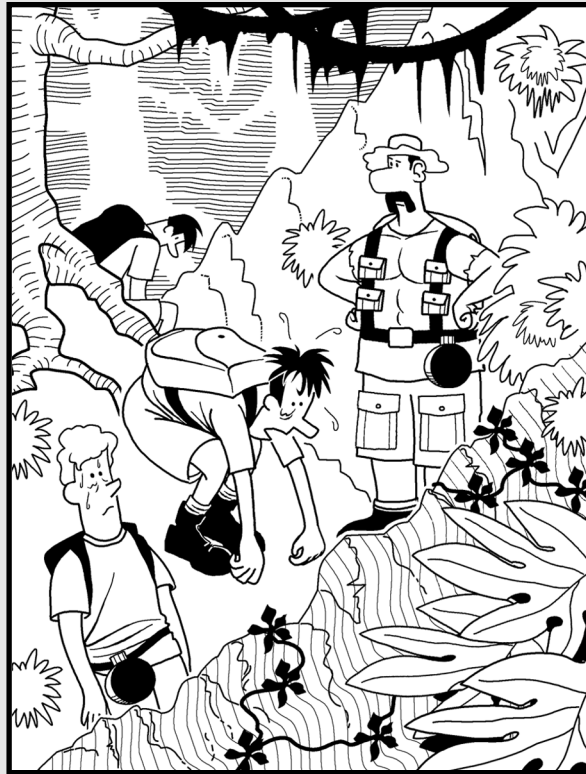
## *Where To Go From Here*

You can go anywhere you like from here because I've written the book so each part or chapter makes sense without having to read the other parts. Consult the table of contents to see where you want to go next. If you just want to read about the fighting, go to Parts II to IV. If you want to begin training for the track right now, go to Part V.

# Part I

# The Essentials of Kokoda

*Glenn Lumsden*



*'I can't believe my great-granddad  
did all this AND had people  
shooting at him as well.'*

## *In this part ...*

**W**hen I first went to Papua New Guinea in 1980, I wanted to see the Australian battlefields of World War II. I recall considering going to Kokoda but it didn't stand out in my mind. Instead I went to Buna, Lae, Shaggy Ridge, Finschhafen, Rabaul and Bougainville. Something has changed in 30 years because I can't now imagine a tourist, who wants to see where famous battles were fought in Papua New Guinea, who wouldn't have the Kokoda Trail at the top of the list.

In this part, I explore what has changed, what now gives that word 'Kokoda' a little magic, and why Kokoda is one of the best-known words in Australian military history. I explain why you should go to the track and what you're likely to see when you do.