

Making Everything Easier!™

Australian Edition

Kokoda

FOR

DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Grasp Kokoda's role in World War II and its significance for Australia
- Appreciate the courage of the soldiers who fought on the track
- Understand the unique challenges of jungle warfare
- Get ready to make the pilgrimage and walk the Kokoda Trail

Dr Peter Williams

Military historian



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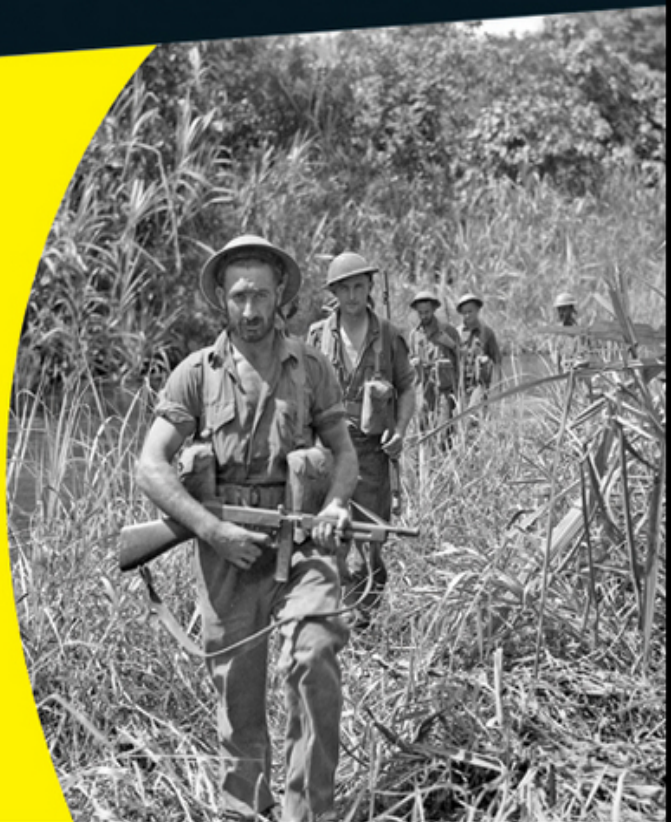
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by Dr Peter Williams



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About the Author

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.

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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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Introduction

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