

[View this email in your browser](#)



KOKODA HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

Welcome to the Kokoda Historical December 2021 newsletter. Sorry you have not heard from us in awhile. We took a short break to reset and prepare for next year's trekking and touring season. With international borders opening, we are happy to say we will be back in 2022! Just in time for the 80th Anniversary of Kokoda commemorations.

The cover photo this month is of Alex who trekked with us in 2017 during the Kokoda 75th Anniversary. The trek Alex was on, saw a group of Australians wearing replica WW2 uniforms, carrying a rifle and webbing. We are already well into the planning for our 80th Anniversary Living History trek which will coincided with the retaking of Kokoda. So far we have 9 people out of 15 who have signed up. This unique opportunity will have you arrive at the Kokoda Plateau dates are 24 October-4 November 2022. To find out more please click [here](#)

Recently we attended the Kokoda Trek Operators Association (KTOA) meeting, Kokoda Historical is a founding member. The news released through the KTOA is promising and all member companies are preparing to return to PNG in 2022 with the season commencing over the Anzac Day period. Next month I will have an update for everyone on the entry requirements to PNG and the procedures we are putting in to operate in a COVID safe environment. These procedures are currently being drawn up between the PNG and Australian Governments.

Many of our PNG guides have already fully vaccinated and we anticipate that the rest of our team will complete their vaccinations by Christmas. On that note Kokoda Historical would like to wish all our past, present and future participants a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



David Howell December 2021



ONE TREE HILL-KOKODA MEMORIAL, HISTORY TALK AND BBQ

To kick off the new year, David from Kokoda Historical will deliver a history talk at the (1000 Stairs) Kokoda Memorial Walkway in Ferntree Gully, Melbourne on Sunday 9th January 2022.

Each year the 39th Battalion Association holds their annual BBQ at the Kokoda Memorial in Ferntree Gully. Before the event David Howell will take people on a guided tour of the walkway, detailing the history of the fighting that took place on Kokoda and Northern Beachheads. This will be followed by attending the annual BBQ held by the 39th Battalion Association.

This is your opportunity to start off the 80th anniversary year of Kokoda in a comfortable and relaxing setting. The talk is free and the 39th only ask for a gold coin donation of which they will supply sausages, salad, bread, sauces, coleslaw and tea & coffee.

Please let us know you are coming via the link below.

When: 930am, Sunday 9 January 2022

Where: Meet at the upper carpark, One Tree Hill Picnic Ground, Lord Somers Rd, Tremont.

RSVP: [here](#)



This Month in History **Battle of the Northern Beachheads**

Australian victories at [Milne Bay](#) (25 August – 7 September 1942) and Kokoda (21 July – 16 November 1942) destroyed Japanese plans for capturing Port Moresby but 9,000 Japanese remained entrenched in the eminently defensible northern beachheads of Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

The weary Australian units, who had pushed the Japanese across the Owen Stanley Range, were called upon to attack and capture Sanananda and Gona, even though many units were down to one-third normal strength. Two regiments of the American 32nd Division were given the task of capturing Buna.

The untried American 128th Regiment launched their attack on Buna and nearby Cape Endaiadere on 19 November 1942 but failed against experienced Japanese troops. A day later the Australian 25th Brigade attacked Gona, while the 16th Brigade advanced up the central Sanananda Track. These attacks also faltered.

To read the full article click [here](#)



Passing of Kokoda Veteran, Cec Driscoll

Sadly since our last newsletter, another Kokoda veteran has passed. VX117315 Cecil Mott Driscoll who served with both B and C Company of the 39 Australian Infantry Battalion, passed away on 15 October 2021. Cec was a great friend to Kokoda Historical and helped us with our 75th reenactment back in 2017. Cec was the second eldest of seven children and was born in Merbein, Victoria in 1920.

Cec passed away on Friday, 15th October 2021, just 2 days after his 101st birthday. He was a loving husband to Heather, dearly loved father of Daryl & Judi; Dennis & Carolyn; Karen; and Maree. He was the adored grandfather of 9, great grandfather of 19, and g.g.grandfather of 2. When Cec was in second grade, his family moved from Merbein to Moonabel, near Avoca, where his father worked as a shearer and beekeeper.

When aged 11 years old, Cec and his family suffered a tragic loss when Cecil Snr passed away suddenly. The death of his father resulted in the family moving back to Merbein, and Cec left school as soon as he turned 14 and worked to support the family. Like many young men at the time, when the Second World War broke out, Cec was eager to enlist. Several of his mates from Merbein had been called up, leaving Cec waiting for word on his own conscription. However because he didn't have a father and was the eldest son he was excluded from the call up. With that, Cec volunteered to serve in the militia, and soon joined the 39th Australian Infantry Battalion which was already in training.

Embarking for service in New Guinea soon after, this boy from the Mallee recalled his journey as the first time he'd seen the ocean, and he didn't like his time at sea. Originally part of the 39th Battalion's C Company, Cec was transferred to B Company just as they were about to make their way across the Kokoda Track – the first group to do so. There was very little military training, they were under-armed, and nothing could have prepared them for the terrible conditions they were

to face. Amongst that first group from the 39th Battalion to encounter the Japanese on the north coast, Cec would be involved in all but one battle that the 39th was involved in over the following months. Brigade Hill was the only one he missed.

Whilst Cec escaped being seriously wounded while in New Guinea, he wasn't left completely unscathed. Like so many others, he suffered dysentery, tinea, scrub typhus and malaria, and he also casually described his many near misses in conflict! The 39th battalion were taken off the track after being reinforced by the experienced soldiers of the 2/14th & 2/16th battalions of the AIF, and many were so ill they were repatriated back to Sydney by hospital ship. Cec had dropped in weight from 10 stone to 6st 8lb during his time in the jungle and, suffering from malaria, he spent a long period recovering in Concord Hospital where he met his future wife, Heather, who was nursing there. They were married in December 1944 Cec would eventually join the 2/2nd Australian Infantry Battalion in New Guinea and was discharged in January 1946.

Lest We Forget



BOOKINGS NOW OPEN FOR ANZAC DAY 2022 AND BEYOND

You can choose to trek from Kokoda to Owers' Corner, attending the Official Anzac Day Dawn Service at Bomana War Cemetery or trek Owers' Corner to Kokoda, attending the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Isurava with the option to visit the Northern Beachheads of Buna, Gona & Sanananda.

Anzac Day 2022 we are offering a choice of 3 special in-depth history treks.

1. \$3,950 12 Day Fully Australian Led Tour, Anzac Dawn Service Bomana (15-26 April 2022) Trekking Kokoda to Owers' Corner.
2. \$3,850 11 Day Fully Australian Led Tour, Anzac Day Isurava Memorial (17-27 April 2022) Trekking Owers' Corner to Kokoda.
3. \$4,245 13 Day Fully Australian Led Tour of Kokoda Track & Northern Beachheads (17-29 April 2022) Trekking Owers' Corner to Kokoda & to Buna-Gona-Sanananda.

To learn more click [here](#)

All of our 2022 and 2023 treks and yours are now available for booking. This includes all of our non-trekking and trekking options. Remember if you have made a booking with us previously you can use any credit you have on file with Kokoda Historical not just for Anzac Day but you can pick any of our 2022 or 2023 tours. Why not give us a call and start planning your journey to PNG. You can call us anytime on 0405 007 700

We look forward to welcoming you back soon.