

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

A TALK SERIES PRESENTED BY THE
KOKODA TRACK MEMORIAL WALKWAY



The KTMW Board is pleased to announce their series of talks will recommence in 2023. The 'Beyond the Battlefield' talks will have a military history theme, some based on the New Guinea/Kokoda campaigns.

WHERE:

Ralph Honner Kokoda
Education Centre
Killoola St, Rhodes Park,
Concord West

WHEN:

See Program for
times and dates.

COST:

Friends of Kokoda
members will be free;
all others \$5.00.

FOOD/DRINKS:

Light refreshments
will be available on
the day.

PROGRAM

Saturday 20 May 2023 (10.30am start)

Dr Jan McLeod: 'Stout-hearted men'



Dr Jan McLeod lives in Lake Macquarie and holds a PhD in History from the University of Newcastle, where she was employed in academic, teaching, research, and professional positions across various faculties for many years. In 2021, Jan

retired to pursue her own research and writing.

Jan's research interests focus on Australian military medicine during World War II. She has presented widely at academic conferences, symposiums and community events.

Shadows on the Track: Australia's Medical War in Papua 1942-1943 (Big Sky Publishing, 2019) was part of the Australian Army History Collection. Her forthcoming work is titled *Mopping up the Casualties: Caring for Australian soldiers in the South-West Pacific Area 1943-1945*.

Jan's most recent publication, *All The Broken Soldiers: Private Kennedy's War* (November 2022), is based on the wartime diary of one of two great-

uncles who served with the 2/4th Australian Army Field Ambulance during the Middle East and South West Pacific campaigns of World War II.

'Stout-hearted men'

Jan McLeod's two great-uncles, Bill and Nick Kennedy, served as medical orderlies with the 2/4th Field Ambulance between 1940 and 1945, in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon throughout 1941 and later in New Guinea, Morotai, and Borneo. In New Guinea, the brother's unit (along with other field ambulance units) provided front line medical care for thousands of Australian soldiers fighting the Japanese, despite being under-strength and ill-equipped.

Drawing on the photographs and diary writings of Private Lawrence Nicholas (Nick) Kennedy, Jan will focus on his experiences in Papua. Not surprisingly, the brothers returned home after the war, forever changed by their experiences.

Copies of both Jan's books will be available for purchase for \$25 each on the day.



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Saturday 8 July 2023 (10.30am start)

John Hall: 'Game to give it a go'



John Hall is currently the KTMW's Project Officer, and facilitated the re-launch of the Walkway's new website, and is assisting with other projects.

John was previously a senior manager at the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) for over 21 years. During that time, in between his numerous roles, he represented DVA at numerous ex-service organisation commemorative events across the state.



John has a keen interest in military history. His (un-finished!) PhD topic focused on the Italian POW rural labour scheme in Australia during WW2, which included his home town of Inverell. John has published several articles, completed extensive archival research, undertaken oral history recordings, held numerous talks and presented at conferences on this topic. John was the historical

consultant for an ABC TV documentary ('Reluctant Enemies') which was based on his research.

'Game to give it a go'

In June 1943, a unique rural labour scheme commenced in Coonabarabran, which was then replicated across most states using the labour of Italian POWs, who had been captured in North Africa the previous years. Eligible farmers could employ up to three POWs to perform work previously undertaken by Australians, who had now enlisted or were undertaking essential war work.



A district was allocated a number of prisoners, who were distributed to farms and regularly checked by a small contingent of Army personnel based in that town.

In their magenta-coloured uniforms, the Italians were hard to miss but their presence polarised communities. Some saw them as contributing to the war effort, while others resented their presence, often based on racial or nationalistic sentiments.

John's talk will highlight the scheme from the perspective of the farmers and their families, the Italians, the Army and the rural communities where the POWs worked.

Saturday 11 November 2023 (9.45am start)

Dr David W. Cameron: The other Isurava – the Battle for Abuari.



Dr David W. Cameron is a Canberra-based author, and has written extensively on Australian military and convict history and human and primate evolution, including over 70 internationally peer reviewed papers for journals and book chapters. He is a former Australian Research Council (ARC) Post Doctoral Fellow at the Australian

National University (School of Archaeology) and an ARC QEII Fellow at the University of Sydney (Department of Anatomy and Histology).

He has participated and led several international fieldwork teams in Australia, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. He has also participated in many conferences and museum studies throughout the world.

He has just finished a four-volume history of the Kokoda campaign (*The Battles for Kokoda Plateau; The Battle for Isurava; Saving Port Moresby; and Retaking Kokoda*) and is completing a three-volume history of the Gona, Buna and Sanananda beachhead battles.



Dr Cameron is currently organising a five-year archaeological audit and survey of the Kokoda Track and associated battlefields with a number of partner organisations.

The other Isurava – the Battle for Abuari.

Most have heard of the significant fighting around Isurava in late August 1942, between the Australians of the 39th militia and the 2/14th Battalion against the Japanese from the 144th Regiment. However, how many people are aware of the truly significant fighting that occurred at the same time just east of Isurava along Misima Ridge? This fighting initially involved the militiamen of the 53rd Battalion, but the main fighting on 30 August was just as significant and horrific, with one Australian nominated for the Victoria Cross in this campaign.

Scan for more details on the Beyond the Battlefield talk series.

