

'Track' or 'Trail'? The Kokoda Debate¹

Peter Provis

Introduction

The debate as to what should be the name of the route over the Owen Stanley Ranges, Kokoda 'Track' or 'Trail', has been persistent and spirited, despite appearing on the surface to be a minor issue of semantics. The topic has often resulted in the bitter exchange of correspondence between passionate interested parties who fervently advocate either 'track' or 'trail', offering a variety of evidence in support of what they believe to be the correct title of one of Australia's most important and revered military campaigns.

This article examines the use of the terms 'track' and 'trail' during the campaign and their use since in a variety of sources. The research was undertaken to provide an in-depth response to the innumerable inquiries the Australian War Memorial receives regarding the matter.² To determine the terms used at the time of the campaign, a wide range of material has been examined, including the war diaries of units that served in the Owen Stanley Ranges in 1942; official reports and a number of private records, especially diaries kept by servicemen, have been included. This has determined whether both versions were used at the time and how frequently they appear in the records. It has been asserted that the term 'trail' was coined by war correspondents covering the campaign. I will examine the legitimacy of these claims and

¹ This article has been peer reviewed.

² The author held a Summer Research Scholarship at the Australian War Memorial in 2003.

which terms were used in the newspapers covering the campaign. This is followed by a discussion of the use of the two phrases post 1942. There has been a dramatic shift in the preference of authors writing about the campaign to refer to it now as the 'Kokoda Track'. Many have justified their position using the arguments discussed in this paper.

Finally, the decision of the Battles Nomenclature Committee determining the official Battle Honour would be the 'Kokoda Trail' will be discussed. The decision of that committee is a key point in the Australian War Memorial's decision to use 'trail' over 'track'.

The Shaping of the Debate

The issue has gained wider public discussion since 1992 with the fiftieth anniversary of the Papuan campaign and the 'Australia Remembers' year of celebrations 1994-1995. The Australian War Memorial periodically received correspondence regarding the issue after the opening of the redeveloped Second World War gallery in 1998.³ The Memorial decided that 'trail' would be used while stating that the use of 'track' is equally acceptable. The Memorial has also received further criticism via the *Wartime* magazine after it published an article on the campaign that referred to the 'Kokoda Trail'.⁴ One reader wrote:

I was most disappointed to see in *Kokoda Commanders* by Professor David Horner that he refers to the Kokoda 'Trail'. When did track become 'trail'? I have always known the Kokoda Track as just that,

³ 98/2499: Gallery Development, AWM, 'Gallery Development – 1942-45 Gallery – Kokoda Track or Trail – Representations'

⁴ David Horner, 'Kokoda Commanders,' *Wartime* 18 (2002). *Wartime* has used 'Kokoda Track' in the past, see Richard Reid, 'The Simpson of the Kokoda Track. Major Albert Moore, Salvation Army,' *Wartime* 1997. But it is interesting to note that Albert Moore himself referred to it as 'Trail' in his radio broadcasts and there are troops quoted in the article itself that use 'Trail' also.

the term 'trail' being an Americanism: are we losing our identity to the USA⁵.

This letter is interesting in that the author believes that 'Trail' is a recent phenomenon, which is a popular perception today. However, the use of 'trail' has been in wide use since the time of the campaign, and after the war 'Trail' was preferred by most authors and official bodies. David Horner, arguably Australia's most prominent military historian, has used 'Kokoda Trail' since writing his dissertation in 1975 and has used 'trail' in his subsequent publications.⁶

Conversely, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs received much correspondence when the Department used 'track' in 1994, with many veterans urging for 'trail'. One veteran of the campaign expressed his concern that the regimental colours and association flags and banners that used 'Kokoda Trail' would have to be changed. Another wrote to the Minister asserting that 'trail' was never used by the Australian army and that 'track' was the term used at the time.⁷ The Minister for Veterans' Affairs at the time, the Honourable Con Sciacca, replied that he had sought advice on the matter and had come to the conclusion that both 'track' and 'trail' were used at the time and that there is 'no official sanctioned rendering', and that neither term is more correct. He chose to use 'track' as it 'seems to be more Australian', and trail seemed American which sat 'oddly'. The Department of Veterans' Affairs

⁵ Jim Eastwood, 'Off the Track,' *Wartime* 19 (2002).

⁶ MSS0739: Horner, D.M. 'Generals in Battle: Problems of Command in the South West Pacific Area, 1942-1943', manuscript thesis, 1975. David Horner, *High Command. Australia and Allied Strategy 1939-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1982), — — —, *Blamey. The Commander-in-Chief* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

⁷ 95/1264: Office of Director & Executive, AWM, 'Minreps M63953 By RD O'Sullivan – Kokoda Track vs Trail'. 95/1264: Office of Director & Executive, AWM, 'Minreps M63953 by RD O'Sullivan – Kokoda Track vs Trail'.

has continued to use 'Kokoda Track'.⁸

The topic continues to be raised often in the media in letters to the editors in newspapers and talk back radio.

Uses of 'Track' and 'Trail' during the Campaign, 1942

An examination of a variety of resources demonstrates that the term 'track' was the term used most by the Australian infantry battalions that met and repulsed the Japanese in the Owen Stanley Ranges. However, it must be emphasized that the phrase the 'Kokoda Track' was not used frequently. The evidence examined included the unit war diaries and private diaries and other material donated to the Memorial.

The first military unit to cross the Ranges on reconnaissance was a small group from the 3rd Australian Infantry Battalion (Militia). On 13 June 1942 Lieutenant W.A. Palmer of that battalion received an order to reconnoitre and report on the 'KOKODA-SOGERI Track' to determine best defensive positions and the possibility of construction of a road between the villages. As pointed out in correspondence to the Memorial, the word 'track' was used seven times in the subsequent report written by Lieutenants W.A. Palmer and W.E. Young.

Topographic Units and Maps

The maps produced by the topographic units in New Guinea did not provide significant answers or evidence for either side of the debate. A part of the problem is a lack of maps of New Guinea prior to the outbreak of war with Japan. Early exploration maps examined mostly followed the courses of rivers and not native tracks.⁹ A survey section was raised as part of the New Guinea

⁸ *Kokoda 1942. Papua New Guinea. July-November 1942* (Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002).

⁹ NLA, Map section, 'New Guinea-Historical-Exploration and discovery-collection of

Force in March 1942, but it focused on surveying around barracks and airstrips in the Port Moresby area. The unit suffered from a lack of resources and training and was complicated further by Japanese air raids. The survey unit was expanded on 5 July but did not begin to survey the Kokoda Trail until 15 August. By this stage the Japanese advance was so rapid that it prevented any work on the route until September, when it became less important as the Japanese were pushed to the beachheads. Therefore, the lack of mapping of the path to Kokoda that existed prior to the Japanese landings continued.¹⁰

An unpublished letter to the editor of *Wartime* by an army surveyor stated that the topography units knew it as the 'Kokoda Trail' and that was how it was referred to on army maps. Although he acknowledges that it was often referred to as 'the track', he states that the preference to trail was because 'the bastard isn't even good enough to be called a track'.

Early survey maps held by the National Library and the Australian War Memorial do not offer any support to these claims, with 'Road' appearing in one map and 'track' being used by many other maps produced at the time. A map produced by the New Guinea Force on 21 June 1942 uses 'Kokoda Road' and extends from Ioribaiwa to Kokoda.¹¹ Only one of the maps held in the Memorial's collection refers to 'Kokoda Trail'.¹² However, this map does not have a date recording when it was produced. An interesting map is the 'Kagi-Naoro Area' map, compiled by the 2nd

exploration maps of Papua New Guinea by National Mapping C 19205. Call number G8161.512.

¹⁰ Chris D. Coulthard-Clark, *Australia's Military Map-Makers. The Royal Australian Survey Corps 1915-96* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88-91.

¹¹ NLA, Map Section, G8161.R1, 'Kokoda Road – Brown River – Reconnaissance', N.G.F. Survey Section, Scale 4 miles to 1 inch.

¹² The maps examined are contained in the collection under the call number G8140svarK79.

Australian Field Survey Section and reproduced by the 2/1st Australian Army Topographic Survey Company. The map covers the area between Kagi (near Myola) and Ioribaiwa, and the collection contains a number of copies with various additions made to it. The first copy had the date 8 September 1942 and had marked 'main track' and 'police track' (east of the main track). The same map with the date 28 September 1942 has 'old Kokoda track' and in pencil 'The Kokoda Track' marked. Another copy has 'Kokoda Track' written in pencil under the printed title 'Kagi-Naoro Area'. On the back of the map, a card attached reads: '2271 (3rd S.) Map of Kagi-Naoro area of the KOKODA TRACK. Prepare by 2 Aust Field Svy Sec 8 Sep 42'. Therefore, the evidence of contemporary maps supports the use of 'track'.

Unit War Diaries and Reports

In the unit war diaries 'track' was often used in a generic sense in that reference would be made to a track leading to a particular village or between villages, for example 'ALOLA-ERORA CK. track' or 'track to Efogi'. 'Track' was used in all of the war diaries of the infantry battalions, with 'trail' appearing only in an entry by the 2/31st Battalion on 11 September 1942, but with reference to 'track' as well:

Transported by lorries as far as UBERI track which was trafficable. Proceeded per foot along UBERI trail – through OWER'S CORNER down to GOLDIE RIVER – up to UBERI where night was spent. This track was particularly tough.

As the campaign began to turn in favour of the Australians in October, the terms 'old Kokoda track' and 'Kokoda track' began to appear. The 2/27th Battalion reported on 11 October: 'Chaforce commenced trek up KOKODA TRACK taking with them some of the best troops of this Bn'. On 28 October, the 2/27th reported that the Battalion went and saw a 'film of KOKODA track'. The 2/31st

on October 12 recorded 'C Coy moved about 1-1½ hrs along KOKODA track'. However, it must be noted that references to the 'Kokoda track' were rare in the war diaries and that the generic uses of tracks to or between villages were more common. When referring to the route as a whole, often battalion war diaries would refer to the 'main track'. This would be to distinguish it from the numerous side tracks that were used when outflanking the Japanese and retreating. Frequently units recorded their movements and positions as 'astride main track' or 'adjacent main track'. Therefore, there is little doubt that 'track' was the preferred term used by infantry battalions serving on the main route over the Owen Stanley Ranges.

The high command has been blamed for the use of 'trail' during the campaign, being influenced by General MacArthur's General Headquarters of Allied forces in the South-West Pacific Area. This claim has merit. In August, US Major-General Sutherland (Chief of Staff) sent Lieutenant-General Rowell (Commander of New Guinea Force) a message suggesting a scheme to demolish the Owen Stanley Ranges at 'The Gap' to make it impassable for the Japanese. The significance of this correspondence is that Sutherland refers to the 'Kokoda Trail', and Rowell's hand-written reply also refers to it as the 'Kokoda Trail'. However, the typed copy uses 'Kokoda Track'.¹³ A 7th Division Report on Operations August to December 1942 used similar terms to those that appear in the Battalion war diaries, with 'main track' and 'main Kokoda track'.¹⁴ The New Guinea Force Head Quarters war diary entry for

¹³ AWM 54 item 244/2/35 Specific directions and reports on Missima, Apininaipi, Robinson River Bulola. Preparations of the demolition of the Kokoda Track. Report on demolition of Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited plants and equipment in New Guinea (Jul 1942)

¹⁴ AWM 54 item 577/7/34: Kokoda Trail. Gona. 7th Division Report on Operations. 13 August to 2 December 1942.

25 August reported a clash at Deniki: 'Patrol encounter KOKODA track 10 Japs killed, own 1 wounded'. However, this was rare, as the NGF war diary usually used the generic terms such a 'Japs clearing right foot track from KOKODA to DENIKI' (20 August).¹⁵ Therefore, it would appear that use of the term 'track' by the Australian high command in the Kokoda campaign was similar to that of the infantry battalions, and that the use of 'trail' may have American origins.

It would also appear that the term 'Kokoda track' was used by members of the Royal Australian Air Force. Although referring to the track on the northern side of Kokoda, the Operation report of the 30 Squadron on 18 September 1942 recorded: 'Attack stores concentrations at Ambeviba and pack trains on Wairope-Kokoda track'. The following day it was reported the strafing of 'store and pack trains Buna- Kokoda track'. However, in the Operation Record Book for October there was an entry that used 'BUNA-KAKODA [sic] Road'¹⁶.

The AWM 54 series holds a number of reports by medical units that served in the Kokoda campaign. These reports refer to 'the track' and the 'Kokoda area'.¹⁷ However, in a report, Brigadier W. W. Johnson (Deputy Director of Medical Services, New Guinea Force) wrote that a post was established 'along the KOKODA-MORESBY track'.¹⁸ Similarly, the Minister for the Army, the Hon.

¹⁵ AWM 1/5/51 NGF HQ

¹⁶ AWM 64 item 1/122: Operations Record Book No 30 Squadron, Richmond NSW 19 June 1942 to 31 October 1945

¹⁷ AWM 54 item 481/12/15: Report of No 1 Medical Detachment, 14 Australian Field Ambulance, Kokoda area, 24 July-8 Sep 1942.

AWM 54 item 481/12/20: Report on Medical Services of the Kokoda Area and L of C, by Maj JR Magarey, SMI Maroubra, 17 Aug-10 Sep 1942.

¹⁸ AWM 54 item 481/12/48: Medical notes on the New Guinea Campaign, by Brig W W S Johnson DDMS, New Guinea Force (includes: general conclusions of a report by Capt W W McClaren, 14 Australian Field Ambulance on the Kokoda Area; Extracts

F. M. Forde, visited New Guinea on 3 October 1942 and was taken to Uberi. In his report, Forde used 'Kokoda track'.¹⁹

However, 'trail' was also used at the time by participants. Bert Kienzle's report regarding the lines of communication and the use of native carriers illustrates that both versions were used at the time and provides a local PNG resource. Kienzle owned a plantation near Kokoda before the war. He was recruited into the ANGAU and became widely known for his work with the native carriers. In his report, Kienzle uses both terms, often in close proximity, for example:

...the old Kokoda trail leading off a ridge to west of our positions. I sent Cpl SAURO...to reconnoiter as far as possible along the old Kokoda track toward Nauro.²⁰

This variation is present in his diary, which is an appendix to the ANGAU War Diary. However, the diary may have been written in early 1943 when he was on leave in Australia.²¹

The Japanese called the path a road, and it is interesting that in a translation of the *Nankei Shitei War Book of the 144th Regiment Japanese*, the translator F.C. Jorgenson uses 'track', stating: 'I have used the word 'track' here on the assumption that roads were non-existent at the time'.²²

from a report of Col S R Norris, 7 Australian Division following a visit to Maroubra Force; and recommendations from a report of Maj M S Alexander, 7 Australian Division) (Oct-Nov 1942)

¹⁹ AWM 54 item 123/293: Operations in New Guinea – Report of visit by Minister for the Army (Hon F M Forde).

²⁰ AWM 54 item 577/6/8: 'Report on Kokoda L of C native carriers during Campaign Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda, Gona, Buna' (Abbrev), by Capt H T Kienzle ANGAU (Feb 1943).

²¹ Hank Nelson, 'Kokoda: The Track from History to Politics,' (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002), 19 & 24n.

²² This copy of the *War Book of the 144th Regiment Japanese* is held in AWM PR00297: the Papers of Salmon, Alfred William (Lieutenant, b: 1907, d: 1979). Also see, Timothy Hall, *New Guinea 1942-44* (Sydney: Methuen Australia, 1981), 88.

Private records and other material

The preference for 'track' is supported generally by the diaries and papers held by the Memorial of troops who served in the Owen Stanley Ranges. Poetry was popular amongst troops, and many poems are reproduced in their diaries. One that is cited by many 'track' enthusiasts is the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', composed by Sapper H. 'Bert' Beros on 14 October; it refers to the 'Owen Stanley Track'. Beros was undertaking repair work on the track at the time when he became fascinated by the Papuan carriers and their aid and care given to the wounded. It was widely distributed and published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* and newspapers.²³ The poem also appears in diaries kept by the troops.²⁴ However, Bert Beros was not consistent in the use of 'track'. In the Papers of the 3rd Battalion Association, Sergeant Bede Tongs has contributed a poem that was given to him by Bert Beros at Koitaki, Papua during Christmas 1942. Although the poem has the title 'The Crosses on Kokoda Track', Beros refers to 'trail', evidently for the sake of rhyme:

We pass the crude rough crosses on the
Wild Kokoda trail
They mark the graves of soldiers who
Died that we won't fail.²⁵

Another poem that attempted to capture the toils of the track was 'The Road to Kokoda' published in 1943.²⁶ Although the poem refers to a 'road' and not 'track' or 'trail', it illustrates that there

²³ Prue Torney-Parlicki, *Somewhere in Asia. War, Journalism and Australia's Neighbours 1941-75* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000). 92

²⁴ AWM PR86/105: Papers of Makings, Clemont (Sergeant 2/6th Field Ambulance AIF b: 1910 d: 1952). AWM PR00297: Papers of Salmon, Alfred William (Lieutenant, b: 1907, d: 1979).

²⁵ AWM PR 89/11: Papers of 3rd Battalion Association.

²⁶ Gwen Bessell-Browne, *The Road to Kokoda and Other Verses* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullins, 1943).

was not a clear perception of an official title for the path that passed through the Owen Stanley Ranges. This phrase is repeated by W. A. Dutton, who also wrote a poem titled 'The Road to Kokoda'.²⁷ However, it must be noted that neither of the authors served there.

Personal diaries of troops who served in the Kokoda campaign use similar phrases to those that appear in the war diaries, and the path was widely refer to as 'the track'. Sergeant Clemont Makings, 2/6th Field Ambulance, always referred to the 'track', for example, 'Left B Comp camp & joined H.Q. in preparations for the track', and 'This track was measured in hours and not by miles'.²⁸ An entry in Corporal Albert Long's diary on 31 August states, 'track through the jungle very rough and muddy', and in November he wrote, 'I have to go back up the track again'.²⁹ Corporal Cromwell Markham of the 39th Battalion wrote on the retreat to Ioribaiwa: 'They were surprised to find the track changed so much since they last trod it, quite beyond recognition'.³⁰ The diary of Warrant Officer George William Mowat refers to both 'track' and 'trail'. As his company of the 39th began its journey towards Kokoda, an entry of 25 July states: 'Trail rough steep and slippery'. Two days later he wrote: 'Track slippery some places had to crawl'.³¹ The renowned Dr Geoff Vernon in his diary used 'Owen Stanley track'. It is unknown when he typed his diary, but it could have been in 1943.³² Captain Buckler's diary also uses 'track', for example 'main track ISURAVA-ALOLA'. However, in one entry he also described his location as 'the Isurava position on the road to PORT

²⁷ AWM MSS1481: Papers of Dutton, W A (Leading Aircraftsman, b: 1920).

²⁸ AWM PR86/105: Papers of Makings, Clemont (Sergeant 2/6th Field Ambulance AIF b: 1910 d: 1952)

²⁹ AWM PR00233: Long, Albert Edward Arthur (Corporal)

³⁰ AWM PR98/087: Markham, Reginald Cromwell (Corporal, 39th Bn, AMF)

³¹ AWM 3DRL/7137: Mowat, George W (Warrant Officer, MM, 39th Bn)

³² AWM PR00787: Vernon, G. H. MC (Captain)

MORESBY-ISURAVA-KOKODA-BUNA'.³³ What is evident in the diaries that were examined, is that although the troops referred to the 'track', they did not use the phrase 'Kokoda Track'. Rather, 'track' was used in a generic sense. However, 'trail' was only used in one diary, Mowat's, thus illustrating that 'trail' was not a word in common use by Australians on the Kokoda campaign.

Newspapers

It has been asserted that the use of 'trail' was by journalists. Austin in *To Kokoda and Beyond* declared that an American journalist encouraged the term 'Kokoda Trail', and that it was used widely in newspaper accounts of the campaign.³⁴ Furthermore, Geoffrey Reading claimed responsibility for starting the use of 'trail' in newspaper reports from 26 October, 1942. These claims have been accepted by a number of historians.³⁵

Three major papers were examined for the project, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Argus* (Melbourne) and *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney). The papers were examined on a daily basis from the first reports of the Japanese landing at Buna on July 24, 1942 to the reporting of the recapture of Kokoda on 2 November 1942. 'track' and 'path' were used in the early reports of the Japanese landing in Papua in late July. The phrase the 'Kokoda front' was used until the front line was pushed back to Myola in early September. The 11 September appears to be a key date in the conversion from 'track' to 'trail', with the three newspapers examined using trail in articles for the first time when it was revealed that the Japanese had passed what had been previously reported as the impassable

³³ AWM 3DRL/0999: Buckler, S H (Captain, 214th Bn and Aust Para Bn)

³⁴ Victor Austin, *To Kokoda and Beyond. The Story of the 39th Battalion 1941-1943* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 81n.

³⁵ Peter Doran, *The Silent Men. Syria to Kokoda and on to Gona* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), xxii.

'Gap'. The *Herald* wrote that the Japanese were proceeding along the 'well-known trail across the mountains'. The *Argus* headlined 'Fierce Jungle Battle along Mountain Trail', and the *Telegraph* reported advances along the 'jungle trail which passes over six mountain ranges'. However, the use of track in reporting continued. George Johnston's *New Guinea Diary* discusses how censorship in September was extremely overbearing. Many reports were paraphrases of the official communiqués to avoid having articles censored. However, there appears to be no uniformity in the use of the terms, illustrated in the following extracts from an article in the *Argus* on 22 September, by war correspondent Johnston himself: 'Strafed heavily along the Kokoda trail...a large supply dump along the Kokoda track was destroyed by fighter attack'. Thus, the use of the terms 'track' and 'trail' was inconsistent in the papers as illustrated further in the following examples. A photo published in the *Argus* on 4 November 1942 is captioned: 'ON THE KOKODA TRAIL. Native carriers travel the rough track to Kokoda which our forces have pushed back the Japanese to take control of this important strategic base'. However, an article in the *Argus Weekend Magazine* a month later had a picture captioned, 'They ploughed upward through the stinking mud of the Kokoda track'.³⁶ The *Daily Telegraph* produced a map on the front page on 30 September 1942 showing the 'Moresby-Kokoda track', while on 16 October it contained a cartoon regarding absenteeism, with 'Kokoda Trail' being used.

George Johnston published a piece in the *Argus* on 2 November 1942 addressing the various names the track was called by the troops on signage along the trail:

The slimy, precipitous, mud-caked track that leads over the Owen Stanleys starts off with a beautifully painted signboard bearing in

³⁶ 'A Portrait of a Jungle Fighter Today', *Argus Weekend Magazine*, 7 December 1942, 1.

mock Japanese characters the name Tokio Road. Getting up toward Imita Ridge, where the Australian withdrawal ended last month, it becomes quite inexplicably, 'Buna Boulevard'.

Less than a mile beyond stands a fingerpost bearing the neat inscription 'Kokoda Highway', and over the next ridge the name changes to 'Rabaul Road, via Kokoda and Buna'.

In any case, the name of the track doesn't matter much. At the moment it is Australia's road to adventure, and you must never be surprised at the people you meet or the tales you hear on this rough trail, which snakes through the green walls of the New Guinea jungle.³⁷

This is also contained in Johnston's book, *New Guinea Diary*, released in 1943.³⁸ Furthermore, in the book Johnston proclaims 'that the name of the Kokoda Trail is going to live in the minds of all Australians for generations', just like Gallipoli. Yet in the following paragraph he writes: 'These men on the Kokoda track look more unkempt, more ragged, than any of the Chinese of those old film shots'.³⁹ Johnston constantly changes between the two terms in the publication, although it must be noted that he never capitalised 'track'. Johnston's war correspondent colleague, Geoffrey Reading also uses 'Kokoda Trail' in his book, *Papuan Story*.⁴⁰

Post 1942

The title 'Kokoda Trail' for the military campaign was in greater use after the reoccupation of Kokoda village and the beachheads of Gona, Buna and Sanananda. 'Trail' appeared in many official and private records produced after the campaign, although 'track' was also frequently used.

³⁷ George H. Johnston, 'Along the Road of Adventure. Tales of New Guinea's Jungle Track', *The Argus*, November 2, 1942, 2.

³⁸ George H Johnston, *New Guinea Diary* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1943), 184-85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Reading, *Papuan Story* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1946).

In 1944, Ray B. Ewers of the Military History Section went to New Guinea to report on the construction of 'Picture Models' for the Memorial. In a letter to Colonel John Treloar, Ewers wrote: 'Having stayed the night there [Ower's Corner] we set off along the Kokoda Trail'.⁴¹ Albert Moore of the Salvation Army read a series of broadcasts on Radio Station 6KY in January-February 1945 in which he also referred to the 'Kokoda Trail'.⁴²

The Memorial holds a number of other manuscripts of personal memoirs written by Kokoda veterans which illustrate that both 'track' and 'trail' have been used since the end of the campaign. In a handwritten memoir Lieutenant Bridge wrote: 'The Japanese had reached a point only 40 miles from Port Moresby when the AIF made contact and drove them back across the Owen Stanleys on the Kokoda Trail'.⁴³ Cousens' draft memoir written in 1991 and titled 'The Kokoda Trail' opens 'This is a story in response to a request from Lt. Colonel [Frank] Sublet of the 2/16th Battalion to recount my experience relating to the Kokoda Trail'.⁴⁴ Alan Hooper (Lieutenant 1 PIB, ANGAU) in his preface wrote: 'I took part in no bloody man-to-man contests but, during the campaigns on the Kokoda Track, Buna and beyond...'⁴⁵. In his papers Corporal Lloyd, 39th Battalion, referred to the 'Kokoda Trail' in letters to his niece and nephew in 1983. Captain Vernon's typed 'Diary of Field Services on the Owen Stanley-Buna Campaign, 1942' referred to the 'Owen Stanley track'.⁴⁶ This illustrates that after the war veterans referred to both Kokoda 'Track' and 'Trail'.

⁴¹ AWM A7702 566/005/003: Construction of Picture Model

⁴² AWM MSS742: Moore, Albert (Major, Salvation Army)

⁴³ AWM MSS1117: Bridge, H K (Lieutenant, b: 1914 d: 1980)

⁴⁴ AWM MSS0659: Cousens, W F (Corporal) 2/16th Bn. It is interesting to note that Sublet is an advocate of Track.

⁴⁵ AWM MSS1386: Hooper, Alan (Lieutenant 1 Papual Infantry Battalion, Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit).

⁴⁶ AWM PR00787: Vernon, G H MC (Captain)

Veterans of the New Guinea campaign have referred to both 'Track' and 'Trail' after the war. The papers of the 39th Battalion contain statements and correspondence made in the mid 1980s by unit members describing the medical impact of the Kokoda campaign on the troops. The information was used to petition for special consideration for Kokoda veterans on the basis of conditions resulting from their experiences on the track, noting the lack of medical records kept on the campaign. Sir Frank Kingsley (ADMS 7th Division) and Dr A.B. Hogan (RMO 39th Bn.) used 'trail' in their letters, while H D Steward (RMO 2/16th Bn.) and Dr John Wilkinson (39th Bn.) used Kokoda Track. The file also contained an article written by Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner, commanding officer of the 39th Battalion, in an issue of *Stand-To* in 1956, where he refers to the 'Kokoda Trail'.⁴⁷ Wallace Bursill, a signaller of the 7th Division Signals, wrote in his typescript memoirs: 'from the exhaustive Kokoda trail campaign'.⁴⁸

The Papua New Guinea government has used 'trail' on signs marking the beginning of the route at McDonald's Corner, and the monuments and plaques along the route also use 'Trail'.⁴⁹ However, times are changing, and as the Kokoda Campaign becomes enshrined in Australian mythology and national identity, 'track' will be pushed as the favoured term. Hence, the Prime Minister John Howard used 'track' in a speech at Isurava on 14 August 2002.

The Official Histories

The Official Histories occupy a position of importance in Australia's understanding of its war history. The individual official historians for the series 'Australia in the War of 1939-1945'

⁴⁷ AWM PR87/008: 39th Bn Association (39th Bn, AMF)

⁴⁸ PR89/177 Bursill, Wallace Richard (Signaller, 7th Aust Division Signals, AIF)

⁴⁹ Nelson, 'Kokoda,' 19-20.

have opted for both versions of the name. One of the earliest usages by the Memorial publication was in the 'Christmas book' of 1944, where the settings of the battles in Wau and Salamaua are described as follows:

The terrain was similar to that on the Kokoda Trail, and maintenance of the force was almost entirely dependent on air supply and native carriers.⁵⁰

That the Christmas book of the previous year referred to the 'Battle of the Ranges' and fighting in the 'Kokoda area'.⁵¹

The use of the terms is evenly split in the official histories. Allan Walker in *Island Campaigns* and David Dexter in *The New Guinea Offensives* use 'Kokoda Trail'.⁵² However, Dudley McCarthy in *South West Pacific* and Douglas Gillison in *Royal Australian Air Force* choose to use 'Kokoda Track'.⁵³ Dudley McCarthy is interesting in his preference for 'track' in two regards. His *South West Pacific* includes a map that has been reproduced in a number of subsequent histories; it is entitled the 'Kokoda Track', but it actually has the 'Kokoda Trail' inscribed along the route.⁵⁴ Walker uses the same map but has labelled it 'Kokoda Trail'.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *Jungle Warfare with the Australian Army in the South-West Pacific*, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1944), 70.

⁵¹ *Khaki and Green*, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943).

⁵² Allan S. Walker, *The Island Campaigns*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961).

⁵³ Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area - First Year. Kokoda to Wau* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1959), Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1962).

⁵⁴ McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area*, 114. This has been reproduced in a number of texts including the following: Lex McAulay, *Blood and Iron. The Battle for Kokoda 1942* (Milsons Point: Arrow Books, 1992), 22, Gordon L. Maitland, *The Second World War and Its Australian Honours* (East Roseville, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1999), Sylvia Clark and Elizabeth Pickhaver-Burness, *The Kokoda Track* (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1997), John Burns, *The Brown and Blue Diamond at War. The Story of the 2/27th Battalion A.I.F.* (Adelaide: 2/27th Battalion Ex-Servicemen's Association, 1960).

⁵⁵ Walker, *The Island Campaigns*, 48.

Furthermore, in his recommendations to the Battles Nomenclature Committee on the Pacific Area he wrote: 'As part of the Battle of the Kokoda Trail I would list the following "Actions" and "Engagements"'.⁵⁶

Other Publications

Until relatively recently authors writing about the Kokoda campaign have traditionally preferred 'Kokoda Trail'. A study by Garth Pratten for the Memorial's Gallery Development section in 1997 found that most unit histories use 'trail', only a third use 'track'.⁵⁷ But it should be noted there are examples of battalion

⁵⁶ AWM 41 417/001/005 01: Historical Records-Battle Nomenclature Committee appointed by War Office

⁵⁷ AWM 98/2499: Gallery Development, AWM, 'Gallery Development – 1942-45 Gallery – Kokoda Track or Trail – Representations'

Examples of unit histories that use 'track' include: Austin, *To Kokoda and Beyond*, Colin Kennedy, *Port Moresby to Gona Beach. 3rd Australian Infantry Battalion 1942*, S Trigellis-Smith, *The Purple Devils. A History of the 2/6 Australian Commando Squadron Formally the 2/6 Australian Independent Company 1942-1946* (Melbourne: 2/6 Commando Squadron Association, 1992), Allan W. Draydon, *Men of Courage. A History of 2/25 Australian Infantry Battalion 1940-1945* (Chermside Centre: 2/25 Australian Infantry Battalion Association, 2000), James Clulow McAllester and 2/14 Battalion Association, *Men of the 2/14 Battalion* (Melbourne: 2/14 Battalion, 1990).

Examples of unit histories that use trail include: Frank Allchin, *Purple and Blue. The History of the 2/10th Battalion (the Adelaide Rifles) 1939-1945* (Adelaide: Griffin Press, 1958?), F. M. Budden, *The Chocos. The Story of the Militia Infantry Battalions in the South West Pacific Area 1941-1945* (Summer Hill, NSW: F.M. Budden, 1987), — — —, *That Mob. The Story of the 55/53rd Australian Infantry Battalion, Aif.* (Ashfield, NSW: F.M. Budden, 1973), Burns, *The Brown and Blue Diamond at War*, William Crooks, *The Footholders: The Story of the 2/33rd Australian Infantry Battalion, Aif in the War of 1939-45* (Brookvale, NSW: Printcraft Press (for the 2/33rd Australian Infantry Battalion, AIF Association, 1971), George Turnbull Dick, *Beaughters over New Guinea. No 30 Squadron Raaf 1942-1943.* (1990), E.C. Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions, *The First at War. The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45* (Earlwood, NSW: Association of First Infantry Battalions, Editorial Committee, 1987), Alex Graeme-Evans, *Of Storms and Rainbows. The Story of the Men of the 2/12th Battalion A.I.F., vol. Volume Two* (Hobart: 12th Battalion Association, 1991), E.V. Haywood, *Six Years in Support. Official History of the 2/1st Australian Field Regiment* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959), John Laffin, *Forever Forward: The Story of the 2/31st Australian Infantry Battalion, 2nd Aif, 1940-45* (Newport, NSW: 2/31st Australian Infantry Battalion Association (New South Wales Branch), 1994), William Binns Russell, *The Second Fourteenth Battalion: A History of an Australian Infantry Battalion in*

histories that use 'Kokoda Trail' in their Battle Honour list and chapter headings, but then do not use the phrase again and sometimes use 'Kokoda track' in the text. For example, McCammon and Hodge in their chapter on the history of the 2/2nd use the title 'Kokoda Trail', which is also used in the picture captions, but the actual text uses the terms of the battalion war diaries, such as 'main track'.⁵⁸

Other histories of the Kokoda campaign have traditionally preferred 'trail'. Only two books, the official histories by McCarthy and Dexter, used 'track' before 1985.⁵⁹ Recently writers have preferred to use 'Kokoda Track'.⁶⁰ However, Phillip's *Miracle of Kokoda* (2000) uses both 'trail' in the preface and 'track' in the

the Second World War (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1948), Malcom Uren, *A Thousand Men at War. The Story of the 2/16th Battalion, A.I.F.* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1959), Ian Downs, *The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles Ngvr 1939-1943. A History* (Broadbeach Waters, Queensland: Pacific Press, 1995), Gordon Osborn, ed., *The Pioneers. Unit History of the 2nd/1st Australian Pioneer Battalion Second Aif* (Beverly Hills, NSW: MD Herron, 1988).

⁵⁸ H.G. McCammon and C.H. Hodge, 'The Kokoda Trail,' in *Nulli Secundus Log*, ed. Jock Marshall (Sydney: Consolidated Press, 1946).

⁵⁹ Some of the significant histories of the Kokoda campaign that used 'Trail' include: Peter Brune, *Those Ragged Bloody Heroes: From Kokoda Trail to Gona Beach* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), Budden, *The Chocos*, Raymond Paull, *Retreat from Kokoda* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1958; reprint, November 1958), Geoffrey Scott, *The Knights of Kokoda* (Melbourne: Horwitz, 1963), H. D. Steward, *Recollections of a Regimental Medical Officer* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), McAulay, *Blood and Iron. The Battle for Kokoda 1942*.

⁶⁰ Publications that refer to 'Track' include: Lindsay, *The Spirit of Kokoda*, Frank Sublet, *Kokoda to the Sea. A History of the 1942 Campaign in Papua* (McCrae: Sloach Hat Publications, 2000), Bill Edgar, *Warrior of Kokoda: A Biography of Brigadier Arnold Potts* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999). Other recent publications of significance on Australia's military history have also preferred to use 'Track', see for example' John Coates, *An Atlas of Australia's Wars*, 7 vols., vol. VII, *The Australian Centenary of History of Defence* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), Peter Dennis et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), Peter Cochrane, *Australians at War* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001). It is interesting to note that Cochrane's book was an adaptation of the television series which was produced for the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs. However, Odger's book published in the same year and of similar content endorsed by the Australian Defence Force uses 'Trail'. George Odgers, *100 Years of Australians at War* (Frechs Forest, NSW: New Holland Publishers, 2001).

remainder of the book. The authors who have chosen to use 'track' use the justifications that the troops who were there used 'track' at the time and prefer it today, and that it is a matter of personal choice for the author which to use.⁶¹ One Australian historian, Mark Johnston, has made the switch from 'trail' to 'track' between publications.⁶² Another interesting perspective taken is in Peter Brune's *Ragged Bloody Heroes*, where both versions are used. This was in the text itself and in the foreword written by Lieutenant-Colonel Honner of the distinguished 39th Battalion. It is very clear that they attempt to use 'Kokoda Trail' in reference to the campaign and 'Kokoda track' when speaking of the actual path or experiences, for example:

Yet they may, themselves, sense some transcendent aura attending the later legend of the Kokoda Trail, burgeoning from the mud and blood of the Kokoda track they knew and flourishing from unforgetting [sic] in hearts and hands and voices.⁶³

Furthermore, it is important to note that the authors capitalize 'Trail' and not 'track'. Another important discovery was that a publication about a reunion of Kokoda veterans in 1967 by the Return Services League of Australia used 'Kokoda Trail'. This illustrates that the RSL at that stage recognized and used the official name of the campaign.

Battles Nomenclature Committee

The decision of the Battles Nomenclature Committee to use 'Trail' in the Battle Honours is a crucial component to the Australian War Memorial's position. The Battles Nomenclature Committee was

⁶¹ Edgar, *Warrior of Kokoda*, 300-01n, Doran, *The Silent Men. Syria to Kokoda and on to Gona*, xxii.

⁶² Mark Johnston, *At the Front Line. Experiences of Australian Soldiers in World War Ii* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Mark Johnston, *Fighting the Enemy. Australian Soldiers and Their Adversaries in World War Ii* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶³ Brune, *Those Ragged Bloody Heroes: From Kokoda Trail to Gona Beach*, vii.

appointed in May 1946 to tabulate actions fought in the war 1939-45 within a definite system of nomenclature and to define the geographical and chronological limits of each.⁶⁴ Battle Honours are awarded to military units to recognise their active involvement in a campaign, battle, action or engagement. Battle honours are carried by lineal descendants of military units, hence Army Reserve regiments of each state hold the battle honour 'South Africa' for the Boer War. Therefore, Battle Honours are a significant element of Australian military history and provide linkages with the army of today to their predecessors.

The Australian Committee coordinated with the British Nomenclature Committee regarding all campaigns other than the South West Pacific. To prevent unnecessary work being conducted, the Committee conferred with the official historians, as previously mentioned, including Dudley McCarthy. Between January 1947 and April 1953 the meetings of the Committee were suspended due to a 'lack of detailed historical information' required to determine their findings.

Many of those who assert that 'Track' should be used for the campaign base their opinion on the view that that was how the path was known to troops who served in the Owen Stanley Ranges. It would appear that the Committee was conscious of considering the troops' views on these matters. In the terms of reference point sixteen stated:

In some cases, because of the lack of any identifiable geographical or other feature in the vicinity of the operation, we have had to resort to the descriptive or even *fanciful name by which the locality was known by*

⁶⁴ Battles of Nomenclature Committee, *The Official Names of Battles, Actions & Engagements Fought by the Land Forces of the Commonwealth During the Second World War, 1939-1945* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956), 7.

*the troops who were there at the time.*⁶⁵

Consideration of how the troops knew of the places of the battles was also prevalent in the minds of the Committee's members. This point is illustrated in correspondence regarding New Guinea place names from the committee's director John L. Treloar to Captain J.H. Smith on January 18, 1948:

I personally think that the spelling which should be adopted is the spelling which the troops used. It is just possible that correct spelling might make a place unrecognisable by the troops who took part in the operation and there is also the difficulty that it might not be easily recognisable with the spelling of the same name in the records of war.⁶⁶

The Battles Nomenclature Committee used the 'Battle of the Owen Stanleys' in a provisional list of battles, actions and engagements of the war in the South West Pacific Area produced in May 1947. For the preparation of the final list, Warren Perry, Assistant Director, wrote that the geographic boundaries required further work with 'very detailed research into the original day to day records of the various campaigns'. The Committee may have deemed that the 'Battle of the Owen Stanleys' covered a too broader area to describe the Kokoda campaign, suggesting that fighting occurred across the entire range. In June 1949 the provisional list of battles used 'Kokoda Trail'. It appears to have been a settled matter, as other battles still had a list of alternative names included. For example, the battle of Buna-Gona had as alternative suggestions 'Battle of the Beaches or Papuan Beaches or Buna or Buna Gona'. The final report, completed and published in 1958, listed the 'Kokoda Trail' as the name of the battle, which included the actions Isurava, Ioribaiwa, Eora Creek-Templeton's

⁶⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁶ AWM 41 417/001/005 01: Historical Records-Battle Nomenclature Committee appointed by War Office

Crossing II and Oivi-Gorari as well as the following engagements: Kokoda-Deniki, Eora Creek-Templeton's Crossing I and Efogi-Menari.⁶⁷

The 39th Battalion unsuccessfully protested against the decision of the Committee and members still assert that it should be the 'Kokoda Track'.⁶⁸

Conclusion

It would appear that this debate will persist, the official sanctioned Kokoda Trail will always be known to many as the 'Kokoda Track'. It is likely that 'track' is going to displace 'trail' in the literature and popular discourse on the topic, with most publications and media outlets preferring to use 'track'. The current trend at least suggests so, and future Australians may know only of the 'Kokoda Track'.

⁶⁷ Battles of Nomenclature Committee (Great Britain) and War Office, *The Official Names of Battles, Actions & Engagements Fought by the Land Forces of the Commonwealth During the Australian Campaign in the 'South-West Pacific 1942-1945' and the New Zealand Campaign in the South Pacific 1942-1944' and the 'Korean Campaign: Final Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee as Approved by the Army Council* (London: H. M. S. O., 1958).

⁶⁸ Sublet, *Kokoda to the Sea*, 31. Austin, *To Kokoda and Beyond*.