

FEBRUARY – JUNE

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

A TALK SERIES PRESENTED BY THE
KOKODA TRACK MEMORIAL WALKWAY



Our Friends of Kokoda (FoK) Beyond the Battlefield military history talks will continue in 2024. Here are details of the first three talks and our guest speakers.

WHERE:

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

WHEN:

See Program for
times and dates.

COST:

FoK members will be free;
all others \$5.00.
Light refreshments
will be served

RSVPS:

to admin@
kokodawalkway.com.au
or call (02) 9166 0890 a
week before the talk

PROGRAM

Saturday 10 February 10.30am start

Dr Tom Lewis OAM: 'The 1942 midget submarine raid on Sydney'

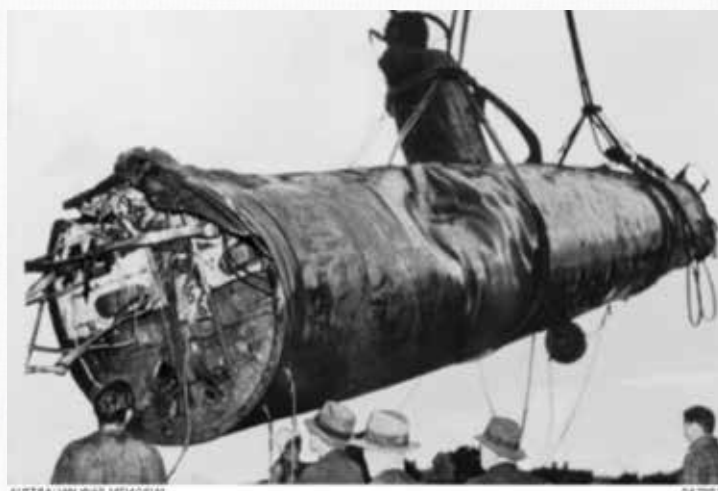


In this talk, which reveals new information about the attack of May-June 1942, Dr Tom Lewis shows from his new book *Attack on Sydney Harbour* that there was a major failure of senior

Allied
command.

The British admiral placed in charge of the harbour defences had thoroughly neglected his duty, and the American cruiser commander of the major target countermanded his crew's efforts to defend their ship. Not only that, but the small ship commanders who actually sank two of the midget raiders have gone unrewarded. The talk also analyses the successes, or otherwise, of each submarine, and the enemy aircraft flights over Sydney which were not attacked by the Australian defenders.

A retired naval officer and high school teacher, Dr Tom Lewis OAM served in the Australian Defence Force, where he saw active service as an intelligence analyst in the Middle East. Tom has written 21 history books, with his most recent being *The Sinking of HMAS Sydney*, which focuses on living, fighting and dying in WWII cruisers.



The Bombing of Darwin – Australia Remembers 4, was written for young people – while *Lethality in Combat*, republished in 2023 as *The Truth of War*, remains his most controversial. In 2003 Tom was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for meritorious service to the Royal Australian

Navy, particularly in the promotion of Australian naval history. In 2021 he was the winner of the Commodore Sam Bateman National Book Prize from the Australian Naval Institute for *Teddy Sheehan VC*.

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Saturday 13 April 10.30am start

John Tannock: 'The installation of a monument to commemorate the Battle of Oivi/Gorari'



An American professor of military history identified the Battle of Oivi/Gorari as the most significant land battle in the Pacific theatre in WWII, despite no American troops taking part in the battle. Yet, few Australians have heard of the battle and very few New Guinea campaign books or documentaries mention the battle, which cost 133 Australian lives.

John, the son of one of the diggers who fought in that battle, will outline his journey firstly to arrange the installation of a monument in the village of Gorari, and then to increase awareness of the battle and its significance in Australian military history.

John Tannock is a Civil Engineer, who has always had a keen interest in the Kokoda Track and, more recently, the Battle for Oivi/Gorari. John walked



the Kokoda Track in 2016 and has had numerous visits to PNG in recent years to explore the northern battlefields.

John's presentation to a recent State Conference of the *Institute of Public Works Engineers of Queensland* on this topic was awarded the prize for the conference's best paper. In addition to engineering, he also owns and operates an avocado farm near Toowoomba and is Chairman of the Board of the Natures Fruit Company.

Saturday 15 June 10.30am start

Dr Jan McLeod: 'War Crime or Legitimate Act of War? The 1942 Japanese bombing of Allied medical establishments at Soputa in Papua'



In November 1942, at the height of beachhead battles in Papua, Japanese pilots bombed and strafed Australian and American medical establishments at Soputa, killing and wounding dozens of unarmed medical personnel, patients and local Papuans. Newspapers reported the attack as a war crime. Politicians claimed that such crimes were committed by an enemy with 'no conception of decency'.

Between July 1943 and March 1944, His Honour Sir William Webb led the Commission For The Investigation Of War Crimes Committed Against Australians, to decide which of the reported incidents of Japanese atrocities would be forwarded to the United Nations Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes, including the Soputa attack. Many enquiries and testimonies were taken, but ultimately Webb withheld the attack from the 1945 United Nations War Crimes Commission.

The presentation invites discussion regarding broader questions relating to war crimes and the rules of war – issues that remain relevant today.

Dr Jan McLeod lives in Lake Macquarie and holds a PhD in History from the University of Newcastle, where she was employed across various faculties for many years, before retiring in 2021 to pursue her own research and writing.



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

Jan's first book was *Shadows on the Track: Australia's Medical War in Papua 1942-1943* (Big Sky Publishing, 2019). Her second publication was *All The Broken Soldiers: Private Kennedy's War* (November 2022), 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 WWII, and was the subject of our first talk in 2023.

Jan is currently researching her next book as part of Big Sky's 'A Shot of History' series, tentatively titled *Attack at Soputa 1942: Blood Guts and Mud*.



Scan for more details on the Beyond the Battlefield talk series, including payment options.