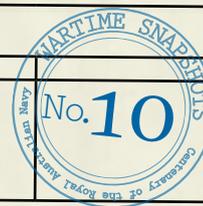


WARTIME SNAPSHOTS

70th anniversary of the Kokoda campaign



During 1942 Australian soldiers fought the savage Kokoda campaign, which first halted the Japanese advance towards Port Moresby and then drove it back, forging the way for eventual victory in New Guinea. Local people assisted in the care and evacuation of Australian casualties. Australian War Memorial 026856



Background

The Kokoda campaign began with the Japanese landings on Papua's coast on 21 July 1942. Their strategy was to conduct an overland assault on Port Moresby by crossing the Owen Stanley Range on what was known as the Kokoda Track. Capturing Port Moresby would put the Japanese in a better position to launch attacks against the Australian mainland.

Australian and Papuan troops fought the Japanese in a series of engagements along the track at Kokoda, Deniki, Isurava, Eora, Efogi, Templeton's Crossing, Ioribaiwa and Oivi-Gorari. Other important battles of the campaign occurred when the Australians and their allies defeated Japanese landings at Milne Bay.

On the Kokoda Track, the enemy was finally halted 40 kilometres from their objective in September 1942 and they retreated to the beachheads on the north coast at Buna, Gona and Sanananda. There Australian and US troops fought in battles that were more costly than those on the Kokoda Track, until they were victorious in January 1943.

While Kokoda was a successful campaign for the Australians, it was not without great cost. More than 600 Australians were killed in action and over 1 000 evacuated due to sickness in the treacherous conditions on the Kokoda Track.

About 120,000 people in total were engaged in the fighting in Papua New Guinea, either as combatants or working to support the fighting troops on both sides. Local villagers, referred to as 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', supported the Australians in battle by carrying supplies forward for the troops and transporting wounded and sick Australian soldiers back along the track. Some Papua New Guineans were also involved on the Japanese side.

The Kokoda Track appears much as it did in 1942 when the Australian soldiers fought there. Along the track, fighting pits and rusted weapons can still be seen. In recent years thousands of Australian tourists have undertaken the physically challenging task of walking the 96-kilometre Kokoda Track to admire the spectacular wild landscape and commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who once fought there.

References

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- Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific area – first year, Kokoda to Wau*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1959.

Websites

Department of Veterans' Affairs

- Kokoda campaign (Question 6) www.wv2australia.gov.au/asfaras/kokoda.html
- Victoria Cross recipient (Question 8)..... www.wv2australia.gov.au/asfaras/
- Four peoples at war (Question 1 and 9)..... kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/four-peoples-at-war/index.php
- Jungle warfare (Question 1, 2 and 3)..... kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/jungle-warfare/index.php
- About the Kokoda Track (Question 2, 6 and 9) kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/about-the-kokoda-track/
- The tide turns (Question 7) kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/battle-tide-turns/index.php
- Military engagements (Question 6) kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/fighting-retreat/index.php
- Military engagements (Question 6) kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/into-the-mountains/index.php
- Veterans' Accounts (Question 5) kokoda.commemoration.gov.au/australian-veterans-accounts/veterans-accounts.php

Australian War Memorial www.awm.gov.au

- Kokoda campaign (Question 3 and 6)..... www.awm.gov.au/units/event_291.asp
- Roll of Honour (Question 8) www.awm.gov.au/roh
- Additional information..... www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/kokoda/

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

- Kokoda initiative (Question 9) www.environment.gov.au/heritage/international-projects/kokoda/kokoda-initiative.html

Teaching Activities

Use the poster, background information and websites listed above, to answer the following questions:

1. Look at the Kokoda Anzac Day poster.
 - (a) What can you see happening in the image?
 - (b) Why do you think the locals would choose to help the Australians?
 - (c) What evidence of ingenuity and innovation can you see in the image? Why do you think it was necessary?
2. Given the campaign occurred in a mountainous, tropical environment:
 - (a) What challenges do you think the Australians encountered?
 - (b) What particular difficulties might they have faced coping with injured soldiers?
 - (c) Was evacuation possible?
3. What issues did the Australians have with food and equipment supplies?
4. How did the Japanese system of supply differ from the Australians', and how did this offer them an advantage?
5. Read two veterans' accounts of the Kokoda campaign.
 - (a) What can you learn from these sources about the living and fighting conditions during the campaign? List two points for each account.
6. The Kokoda website contains a map of the sites of key battles in the Kokoda campaign.
 - (a) Print out a copy of this map and then highlight the location of the engagements as they are mentioned in the background information in this Wartime Snapshot.
 - (b) Choose two of these engagements and write a paragraph briefly describing what happened. Make sure to include information on significant events, casualties and the final result of the engagement.
7. In the initial stages of the campaign, the Australians were forced to withdraw on numerous occasions. When did the 'tide turn' and what did this mean for the Australians?
8. One member of the Australian forces, Private Bruce Kingsbury, was awarded a Victoria Cross (VC) medal for his actions during the Kokoda Campaign. Research the VC recipient and write a paragraph describing the circumstances in which he received this award.
9. In groups, discuss and answer the following questions:
 - (a) Other than Australians, is the area along the Kokoda Track important for any other groups?
 - (b) What are some of the positive and negative impacts of the increase in commemorative trekking and tourism along the track?
 - (c) What can be done to reduce some of the negative effects?

