

## **2011 NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarships**

**Name:** David Ardley

**Scholarship:** 2011 Premier's Commonwealth Bank Foundation Australian History Scholarship

**School:** Henry Kendall High School

**Study Tour Dates:** Departing: 2 June 2012  
Returning: 29 June 2012

### **Brief description of Study Tour:**

This study tour was designed to look at what it was like to fight the Australian soldiers during the Kokoda campaign of WWII. To do this I was able to experience firsthand the conditions in New Guinea by walking the Kokoda Trek. I will never really know what it was like to fight there 70 years ago but I am now very familiar with the physical features and the demands of the environment. This personal experience will make the teaching of the topic much more engaging for students.

After New Guinea I travelled to Japan and visited a number of museums and shrines related to the Japanese experience in this conflict. Significantly I was also able to meet a number of Japanese veterans and veteran's families to discuss with them their views. Many were surprised and pleased to find out that I was looking at the Japanese perspective and that I knew more about this part of Japanese history than most Japanese.

The final stage was to visit Canberra and the Australian War Memorial so as reflect on the Australian perspective.

### **Key locations visited:**

Starting in Port Moresby my group crossed New Guinea via the Kokoda Trek all the way to the battlefields of the northern beaches. Kokoda was an amazing experience and I was able to visit many of the key locations related to the campaign from Imita Ridge, Ioribaiwa, Menari, Templeton's Crossing, Isurava and Kokoda as well as Buna and Gona on the Northern Beaches.

While in Japan there were many places of significance such as;

#### **The Yasukuni Shinto Shrine and the Showakan Museum**

It was here that I noticed Australia was missing for the history of WWII as Australia was not mentioned as part of the Kokoda campaign or indeed any as any part of the Pacific campaigns. Nor was there any mention of military actions like the bombing of Darwin or the attack on Sydney.

#### **Kochi Prefecture**

I was able to visit the former Regimental Base of the 144<sup>th</sup>. The base is now a University and many people do not remember any of its former history. Seen below are two photos. One of the parade ground and the other the University sports ground. The same location now has a very different function some 80 years later.



I have indeed had a unique opportunity to see both where these soldiers began their journey and where many of them still remain in the battlefields of what for most people is a forgotten part of World War II.

I also met with local school teachers who were interested to hear more about my project and compare notes on our different styles of teaching.

Before leaving Kochi I met with some of the staff of Kochi TV and was given a copy of a documentary on Nishimura that had recently aired on local TV and was soon to air nationally. I and students from my school were interviewed earlier in the year and we are now a part of this documentary *"The Promise of the Bone Man"*.

#### **Hiroshima Peace Museum**

This was particularly confronting for the graphic nature of its displays and interesting in the way the history of this event is presented to the public.

#### **The Koyasan Temples**

This world heritage site is significant for its religious importance. Within its grounds I visited a memorial to the memory of the soldiers of Japan and Australia who died in North Borneo. Flying here together were the flags of Japan, Australia and Malaysia. It was also here that I visited a monument to the Japanese who were executed for their war crimes.

In Canberra most of my time was spent at the Australian War Memorial looking at the way in which the Kokoda campaign is presented. I also visited both houses of old Parliament House so as to reflect and read over my notes in the very rooms that the government of the day dealt with Australia's wartime involvement.

#### **Educational institutions visited:**

Without doubt the Kokoda Track itself is an education. There were many times, in the mountains and the swamps that I wished there was an easy way to bring my students to the places where soldiers fought and died for their countries.

Every day in Japan was an educational experience. In addition to the places mentioned above I should also include the homes of the Japanese veterans and their families, homes where I was warmly welcomed by those who share a common history with Australia of personal loss and grief.

#### **Key contacts/experts consulted:**

**Here are some examples;**

**Frank Taylor** "Kokoda Treks & Tours Pty Ltd" - who led our group across the mountains from Port Moresby to the northern beaches. I am very grateful that he was part of my experience and his respect for the significance of the battlefields for the history of both Japan and Australia was clearly evident.



**Hajime Marutani** – co-author with Craig Collie of the book *“The Path of Infinite Sorrow. The Japanese on the Kokoda Track”*. It was this book that I carried across the mountains of New Guinea and it was this book that helped me better understand the Japanese perspective. Hajime was also my guide for ten days in Japan. He put in a significant amount of time and effort to help me with this project. What was achieved during my study tour was significantly enhanced in its depth and scope because of Hajime's contribution.



**Kokichi Nishimuro** “The Bone Man of Kokoda”. Nishimuro was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 144<sup>th</sup> regiment and survived the New Guinea campaign. He also spent 26 years of his life searching the mountains of New Guinea for the remains of Japanese soldiers.

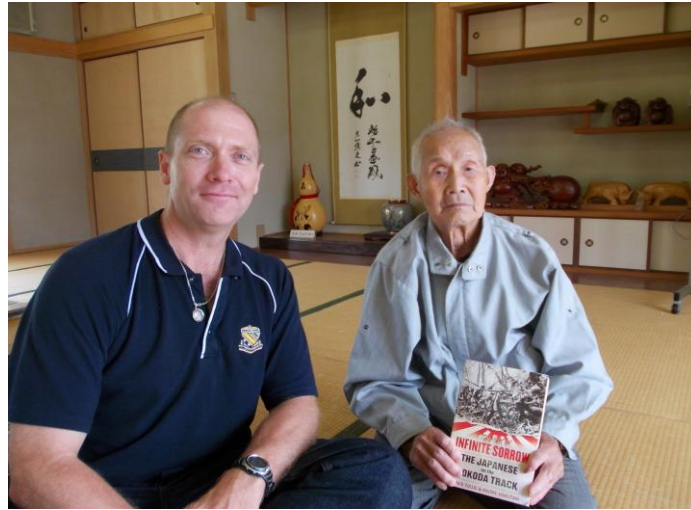


**Minoru Honda** - now 90 years old, was a Japanese Zero pilot who survived service during the war over places like Malaya, New Guinea and Guadalcanal. Near the end of the war he was in Japan and was transferring a new plane from one base to another. His flight path happened to take him near Hiroshima at the time of the detonation and days later he would be a part of the relief effort at Nagasaki. His ability to survive the war is a clear testimony to his courage and skill as a pilot.



**Ryozo Kawate** – who was also in the 144<sup>th</sup> and survived not only the New Guinea campaign but also Guam and Rabaul.





**Staff Sergeant Imanishi**



I was welcomed into the home of Mrs Yumi Imanishi, daughter of Staff Sergeant Imanishi, who had survived the advance to Ioribaiwa and the withdrawal back to the northern beaches. He is particularly remembered for saving many of his men's lives by ordering them to discard equipment that they could not use and would otherwise have carried to their deaths. In 1969 he was a part of the first expedition that returned to New Guinea battlefields to recover as many of the Japanese war dead as was at the time possible. He was greatly mourned when he passed away in 2007.

**Steven Bullard** (Head, Australia-Japan Research Project at the Australian War Memorial). Steven's support and contacts for the Japanese perspective were essential and his support for my project was appreciated. "It's important to balance our accounts of these battles with the intentions and experiences of former enemies."

#### **Summary of insights/skills gained on your Study Tour. What's changed for you?**

What's changed? This study tour has made this part of history something personal to me and not just a few words, pictures in a book or a TV documentary. Some months ago I was contacted by a local Kokoda veteran who is now 96 years of age. He had seen an article in our local paper about the scholarship and he wanted to talk to me. He was concerned that some people may not like what I was attempting in terms of looking at the Japanese perspective. His advice was clear and to the point. If anyone gave me a hard time I only need contact him and he would sort them out. At 96 this veteran,

who had personally buried many Australian soldiers, is passionate that the Japanese perspective is a story that must be told to Australian students.

#### **Proposed dissemination of Study Tour findings/outcomes:**

The methods by which I would share the learnings from my study tour research to engage both students and teachers of history would include the creation of a resource CD, participation in future History study days such as those currently held for Senior History by the HTA and submission of my research for consideration for publication. Paul Kiem, of the History Teachers' Association of NSW has given his support for possible publication in a future edition of the HTA journal.

The resource I intend to develop would engage students and teachers in aspects of historiography and the perspective of seeing the Australian soldier through the eyes of a different culture. By bringing together a variety of existing research on this topic, transcribing my interviews with historians and veterans, personal reflections from the actual experience of retracing the battlefields of Kokoda, and the inclusion of interactive student activities.

#### **How would you describe your Study Tour experience?**

While on the Kokoda Track I gave a great deal of thought to the reasons why anyone would want to go through such an experience and conversely why anyone would not. Eventually I came to the conclusion that the answer to both was the same. **It's hard!** This study tour has taken me out of the classroom and put me in the actual environment in which we share a common history with Japan.

One night in Japan I was at dinner with members of the "Bereaved Family Association of the Japanese South Seas Forces". We were talking about the sense of loss related to the still missing remains of thousands of Japanese soldiers and what I said to them that night is perhaps the best answer that I can give to this question.

*"I have seen many things over the course of my journey in New Guinea and Japan. What I have seen the most is not what makes us different but what we have in common. Our shared history in New Guinea was a time of grief and suffering for both nations, not only on the battlefields but also in the homes of the soldiers' families. Families on both sides of a conflict need closure so that they can move forward with their lives."*

#### **What has being awarded this scholarship meant to you?**

This scholarship has given me the opportunity to reflect on many aspects of history that I have previously taken for granted, particularly the events leading up to the start of the Pacific conflict. The idea of changing perspective has opened a different way to engage students who can now look at Japanese soldiers without looking at them as the enemy. This different view gives a more "human" perspective to soldiers who also had families who worried about them and for tens of thousands, families who could never properly mourn for them.

David Ardley

14 August 2012