

# ARMI WANTOKS JOURNAL

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**The Journal of the Australian teachers who served in Papua New Guinea in the Royal Australian Army Educational Corps from 1966 to 1973.**

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## **EDITORIAL**

Hello All,

In this edition of *Armi Wantoks Journal* we would like to cover an aspect of the Chalkie experience that has not had much attention before. This is the creative side of Chalkies while in TPNG.

All histories rely on creative expression by the individuals involved in critical events. These personal records (e.g. diaries, art, short stories, poetry and letters) provide a deeper insight into the experience under examination. The telling of the Chalkie story is no different.

We have recently become aware of a treasure trove of excellent writing that has survived the years since TPNG. Vlad Cizauskis, a Chalkie at Igam Barracks (Military Cadet School) has passed on to us copies of a magazine that he and other Chalkies produced there in 1971 and 1972. It is a rich store of information about Igam, the cadets and the work of the Chalkies.

We have reproduced a small selection of pieces written by the Cadets (who were taught by the Chalkies) and by the Chalkies themselves.

As well, in this edition where we are celebrating creativeness in TPNG, we are including a cartoon by Rod Cassidy (Moem Barracks, 1970-71). This shows the various characters that inhabited the Education world at Wewak.

We hope you enjoy the richness of these productions from our time in TPNG.

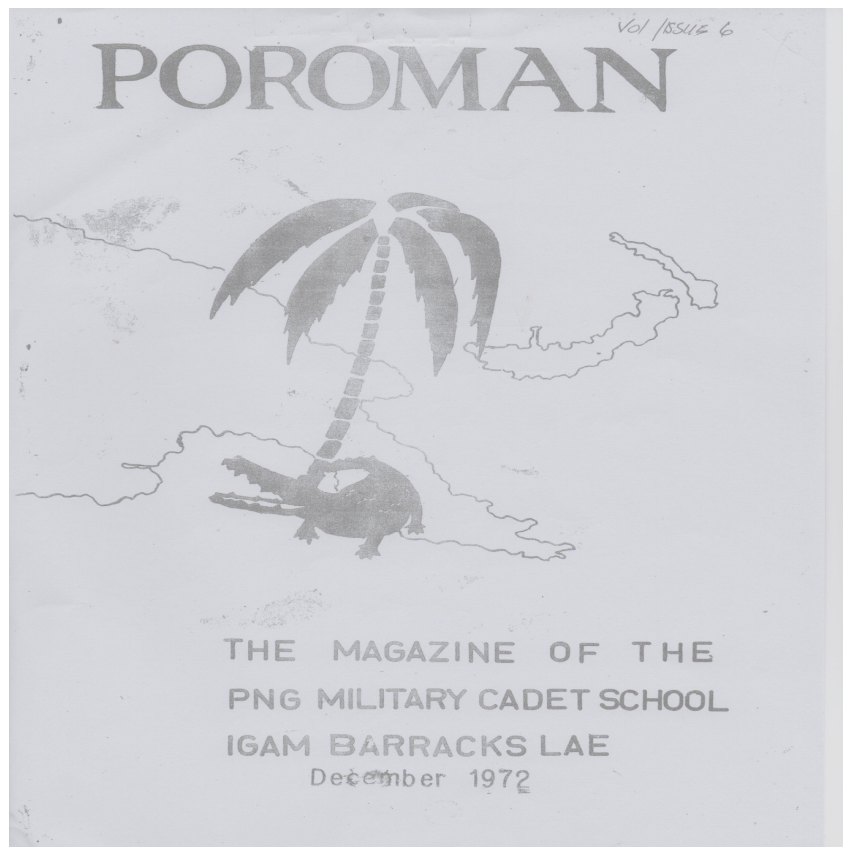
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## **WRITINGS FROM THE MILITARY CADET SCHOOL AT IGAM BARRACKS, LAE.**

The material which follows has been taken from a magazine produced by the MCS Chalkies called POROMAN (which means 'friends'). Below, is the front cover of the December 1972 edition of this magazine.



## **THE BUS DRIVER**

*(This is a short story from 'Poroman', written by Sgt Ian Minns, a Chalkie at MCS. It is a creative piece relating to the annual trip of the MCS Cadets to Australia as part of their course.)*

He walked up to the door and pushed it open. He paused to kick some of the dust off his shoes before going in.

'Is that you, dear?' a feminine voice questioned from somewhere inside the house.

'Yes, Love,' he answered as he closed the door behind him.

He moved to the lounge room and settled himself in his big armchair by the window.

'Where did you go today, dear?' the voice came again from the kitchen.

'Into Sydney,' he answered absently. Then he continued, 'I took a bus load of black people in to see the town.'

'Black people?' This time the voice had a note of disapproval.

'I didn't mean it like that. I should not have said black people. I meant that I drove a load of soldiers into town.'

'You don't often drive soldiers about.'

'Yes, but these fellows were from New Guinea – Papua New Guinea it is now, isn't it?'

'Soldiers from New Guinea?' the voice from the kitchen showed deep interest.

'They are down here on some kind of course, an orientation course, I think they said. There were Australians with them - Nashos - a Lieutenant and two Sergeants.'

'Orientation course?'

'They are down here to have a look around the place,' he went on.

'Oh?'

'Not a bad looking lot of blokes, really,' he mused. 'They are not black really when you look at them. Oh, one or two were very light skinned. Quite nice people.'

'Where did you take them?' the voice was in the lounge room now and the eyes that belonged to them were intrigued.

'Oh, all over. the Cross ....the Bridge .... Australia Square .... the Gap. Boy, it was cold out there. These blokes nearly froze to death. Pity they had to see Sydney at its worst.'

'What did they think?' came the voice excitedly.

'Well, it was strange, you know. You'd think that all they would do would be to walk around with their mouths open. But, they didn't. They talk very good English. They handle money better than I can. If they did not know something, they came straight out and asked. Some of them even knew things about some of the places that that I didn't know. I felt real proud to be with them, sometimes.'

'One fellow stopped me on the footpath, you know, and asked me who they were. When I told him he said they looked very smart, indeed. He said he was in New Guinea in the war. He called them fuzzy-wuzzy angels but that name did not seem right.

Not many people took much notice. One or two stood and gawked but most just glanced and walked on. Once or twice, I thought there might be trouble in shops like they have in America but they never worried and the shop girls did not seem to mind. These blokes did not seem to be nervous about being in a new place, either. They were keen to find out all they could,' he ended with a chuckle.

'Were they very .... ah .... intelligent?'

'They're pretty bright, alright. Two of them were arguing about the way a hydrofoil works. Even the Sergeant with them could not tell them and he

comes from Sydney. There was one little bloke there with glasses and short legs. He looked at things and you could see him working everything out in his head. He didn't miss a thing.'

Some of them were a bit funny, though. They have come all this way to see the place and then they go to sleep or spend their time looking at girls,' he chuckled again. 'Just like me when I was young.'

'Don't you tell me about your younger days. I knew you then, too,' the voice scolded him. 'They were pretty good fellows, then?'

'Too right. You know these fellows can talk as well as me in my own language. I am sure that most of them know more than I do. They dress themselves well. They travelled in a jet plane which is a lot more than me or any of my mates have done. They will make pretty good officers. Papua New Guinea can be very proud of that lot.'

He got up out of his chair as he caught the smell of the evening meal as his wife set the table.

'Yes, I really enjoyed meeting those fellows.'

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THE PICTURE BELOW IS OF THE SENIOR CADET IN MCS FOR 1972, CADET Z. KUKUMA. THIS PHOTO APPEARED IN 'POROMAN.'



(It would be interesting to know the life careers of men like this Cadet.)

## **BRIDE PRICE**

*This account, also from 'Poroman' (December 1972), was written by Cadet Kowin and tells of the custom of 'Bride Price' in PNG. It will give you something to meditate on!*

Bride Price is the wealth exchanged by a male for a female partner. Bride Price does not have to be money, so long as it is of great enough value and which pleases the parents of the young lady. In the European parts of the world, we do not hear much or hardly anything about the bride price. It is well-known all over the country that a certain girl has to be paid for before she is married to the man who loves her.

Throughout the country, bride price is accepted as a source of income for the bride. Various kinds of native money are gathered from the boy's relatives and are given over to the girl's parents which is then distributed among the friends and relatives. Sometimes the price comes in as food or other artefacts. Our great-great grandparents had some form of money even long before the introduction of European money into our country. These were used for buying and exchanging things with and these are still accepted even today in many villages in the isolated areas like Manus Island.

The idea of having a Bride Price is simple. You just can't get anything in a foreigner's store for nothing. A young girl, to a father, is like a sheep which he had gone to all the trouble of looking after. When it comes to the day that somebody wants it, he sells it for a certain amount of money. This principle has descended from the grand-parents in the past centuries. In my own little village on Manus Island, people used to say that the bride price is to pay for all the hard work given by the parents of the girl up to the stage when she gets married. Some people do not accept the prices given and so similar functions are held a few years later.

To conclude, I should say that paying a Bride Price was probably the only way in which fathers and relatives of young girls in the past obtained their wealth. This also settles the sorrowfulness of the parents and offers friendships among many villagers. Bride Price cannot be forgotten for it has been carried on for years.

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## THE CHALKIES OF MOEM 1971

(AS SEEN BY ROD CASSIDY, MOEM BARRACKS 1970-1971)



Rod is back row on the left at work on his next cartoon.

**DO WE HAVE ANY MORE ART WORK FROM  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA DAYS???**

If so, please contact the Editors.