

ISSUE 75

Solomon Islands



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Mr Brett Gebers

In writing this column, I would like to start by paying tribute to my recent predecessors, Ron Sumsum and Gus Kraus who, together with all the past and present employees of Solomon Airlines, have kept the airline flying for over 55 years.

The vastness (28,400 km²) coupled with remoteness means that aviation is essential to daily business in the Solomon Islands. We have received justified criticism about our domestic services which have been erratic in recent times. The reasons for cancelling services include weather, earthquakes and unserviceable aircraft. Whilst we carry a substantial stock of spares in Honiara, like all airlines, we do not carry parts for every eventuality due to the prohibitive cost. As our only direct link to a major city currently is Brisbane, it is often difficult to quickly source essential spare parts not in stock. What may be an overnight delivery for airlines in other parts of the world often takes 5 or more days in the Solomon Islands. A hiccup in the schedule is compounded by the 'daylight only' limitation imposed on the airline due to the lack of night flying facilities in the Solomon Islands.

As I promised at a recent Chamber of Commerce meeting, improving our domestic service is our priority. The New Zealand Government has kindly agreed to assist with the upgrading and refurbishment of several domestic airports. The New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs, Murray McCully, recently travelled to the Solomon Islands to inspect Munda which has been resurfaced. Minister McCully later announced that he was keen to aid in the upgrading of other airports.

Whilst the spectacular unspoiled natural beauty found in the Solomon Islands has something for everyone, the facilities

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To all our valued customers

and infrastructure traditionally expected by and available to tourists in other parts of the world are limited here. There is a general acknowledgement that tourism provides the most viable opportunity for economic growth. This goes hand in hand with the inevitable debate about the role of the Government versus the private sector in stimulating tourism.

I am thrilled to report that the private sector is not waiting for things to happen. I found it refreshing to meet people like Viliame Koyamaibole who proudly explained the building extensions to Agnes Lodge in Munda, Belinda Botha who excitedly told me about the dive packages available at Munda and Grant and Jill Kelly who have built the stunning Uepi Lodge near Seghe. These people and many others whom I look forward to meeting soon, are getting on with building the needed infrastructure to cater for the growing number of tourists who want to experience the pristine exclusivity of the Solomon Islands. This airline and related services can only grow if the infrastructure grows.

We are approaching the 75th anniversary of the major battle of Guadalcanal fought on 7 August 1942. We honour and remember the many thousands of people who died on both sides of this battle which proved to be the turning point of World War II in the Pacific.

You may be interested in the article on the Britten Norman Islander aircraft that has recently been retired after providing exceptional service to Solomon Airlines.

All of us at Solomon Airlines are committed to working with everyone to make visiting this special part of the world exciting and memorable and we really appreciate your business.

Tengiu tumas.

Mr Brett Gebers
Chief Executive Officer



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WHAT'S ON WHEN & WHERE 2017



MAY
Spear Festival, Makira Province

JUNE
Huki (Banana) Festival, Makira Province

JULY
Independence Day

AUGUST
*75th anniversary of Battle of Guadalacanal
& 100 year anniversary of John F Kennedy*

SEPTEMBER
Chief Festival (Isabel Province)

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OUT & ABOUT

Food court



Patrons inside The Coffe Bar at the new ANZ Building in Ranadi.

Eating out in Honiara

Barista culture and eating out is a fast growing business in Honiara, judging from the good array of cafes and restaurants now available in the city.

Newest is Tenkaj Sushj Café, located in what used to be the popular

Kokonut Café on the city waterfront, behind the main complex of government building. It has been tastefully renovated with a bias towards outdoor eating to take in the amazing view of Iron Bottom Sound.



Students enjoying lunch at The Food Alley



The Food Alley is located at the EMC building, KGV in Ranadi.

Not far from Henderson International Airport, at Ranadi is The Food Alley, which as the name declares, offers patrons sumptuous meals. Its popular with office workers including expatriate managers who work in Ranadi, and their curry beef is wickedly delicious.

Coffee Bar is not far from The Food Alley. You will fall in love with the rustic ambiance of the home of the barista in Honiara. You won't have much difficulty locating it as it's on the ground floor of the big ANZ Building on Ranadi.

Behind the ANZ Building is another popular eatery, Ghaseali Food Tavern but if you are in town, Honiara's answer to KFC is available at the Anglican Church of Melanesia buildings in downtown Honiara with the HFC initial, acronym for Honiara Fried Chicken.



The new cafe at what used to be Kokonat Cafe.

To market, to market

One of the greatest pleasures of island holiday is visits to its general food market and this is true particularly for the general markets in Gizo, Western Province and Auki in Malaita Province.

An assortment of foods, colour and peoples will greet you no matter what day or time you call into these markets, where growers, fisherpeople, craftspersons and artists sell their wares.

Tropical fruits, root-crops, vegetables, coconuts and other nuts, fish and seafood in all its variety and species are on full display, available



Vegetables galore at the Auki market.



Tuna at the Gizo Market.

at generally very reasonable prices.

Gizo is the unofficial fish capital of the nation, as the province hosts the country's sole cannery. Auki on the other hand, due to its proximity to the famous Langa Langa Lagoon, has a special section on shell-money. They tend to be much cheaper here than anywhere else in the country.

Honiara General Market in the capital of course is a mega-version of these two provincial markets. It offers a greater choice in foods right down to second-hand clothing and materials for traditional leaf houses.

The Battles of Bloody Ridge – Part One

By Robert Bochman

To mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, this 75th edition is focusing heavily on that historic yet key battle for the Pacific. We are also reprinting two additional war stories from previous editions of Solomons.

OF ALL THE WORLD WAR II BATTLES in the Solomon Islands, the skirmishes at Bloody Ridge is the one that is the most famous. It was the first of two major battles that took place on Bloody Ridge as the Japanese Army attempted to re-take the airfield (Henderson Field) from the defending US forces.

The battle for Guadalcanal is recognised as the turning point of the Pacific War in WW II. In turn the battles for Bloody Ridge are seen as battles that saved Guadalcanal. As a result Bloody Ridge has achieved iconic status, fame and world-wide recognition.

It is for this reason that the Solomon Islands Government took the decision to declare Bloody Ridge a national park. By preserving this battle area, future generations of Solomon Islanders, schools, students, overseas visitors and historians can walk and ‘smell’ the battle field. The jungle, the foxholes, the barbed wire are still in place. The ambience of the battle surrounds the visitor. Three US Medals of

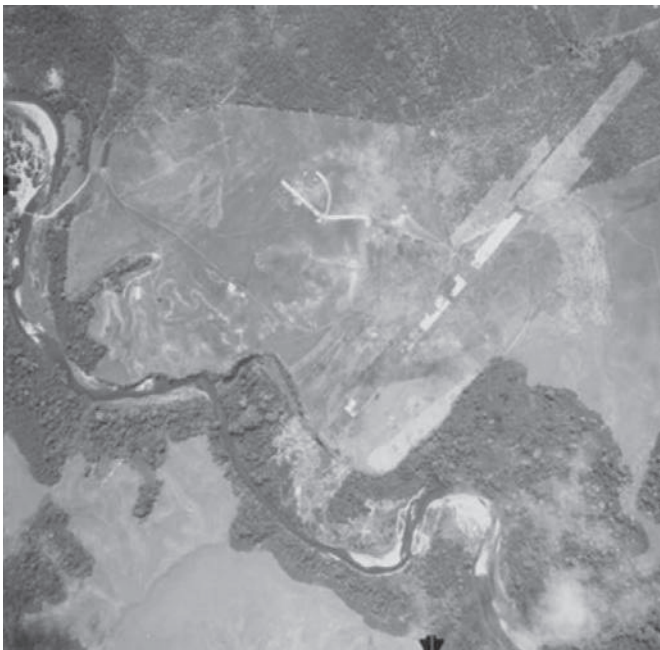
Honour were won here. As much of the battlefield should be retained as is possible.

Already it is a drawcard for overseas visitors. An example of its special appeal was further demonstrated by the visit in 2016 of US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who insisted on going to Bloody Ridge. Generals, Admirals, historians, enthusiast and thousands of others want to go to the Ridge. It is a special place that is treated with great reverence.

The story behind Bloody Ridge

On 3rd May 1942, Japanese Imperial Forces landed and took over Tulagi in Central Province as part of their WWII conquests and expansion into the Pacific. They immediately set up a seaplane base on the nearby islands of Gavutu/Tanambogo.

Exploring Guadalcanal, the Japanese discovered a grassy field in the Lunga area suitable for an airfield. Three thousand Japanese construction workers were brought to Guadalcanal to build the strip. A photograph taken by an American B17 bomber on 31 July, 1942 showed much progress in the airfield construction by the Japanese forces. Once Japanese fighters and bombers began using the airfield their ability to repel American attacks would be considerable. Recognising the danger a Japanese airfield posed, the Americans



This photo showing progress of Japanese construction was taken by an American B17 bomber on 31st July 1942. “Once Japanese fighters and bombers began using the airfield their ability to repel American attacks would be considerable.”



It is interesting to compare a modern day photo of the airfield now known as Henderson Field. The strip is at an identical position and significantly lengthened to the east. Note how the Lunga River has altered its course due to cyclonic flooding.

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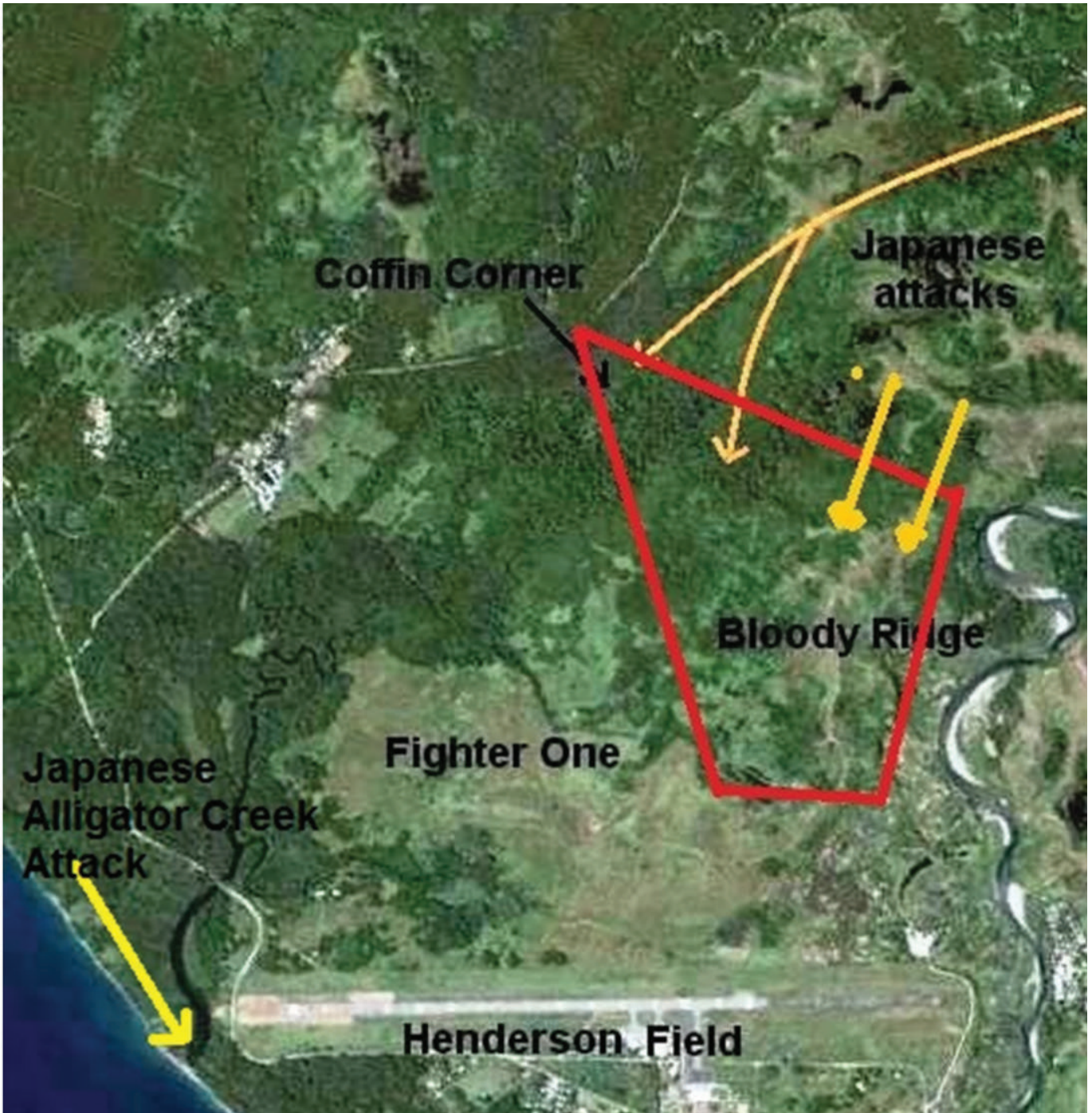
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Marked in red is the proposed Bloody Ridge National Park.

decided to attack and take the airfield before the Japanese could complete and use it. On 7th August, eleven thousand US Marines landed at nearby Red Beach and quickly took over the almost completed airfield. The Japanese construction workers and guards withdrew to some distance to the west side of the Matanikau River where present day Honiara sits.

Four days later the Americans had finished the airfield sufficient to land their planes. Responding to the American landings, the Japanese

began landing soldiers on Guadalcanal intending to overwhelm the US Marines and to win back the airfield. The airfield with its new American name, Henderson Field, became the target of all Japanese attacks and the reason for the Battle of Guadalcanal.

For the next eight months, both sides shipped more men into the fight for control of the airfield. Furious sea battles were fought in Iron Bottom Sound just offshore from the airfield. The sea, air and land fighting continued until February 1943 by which time 38,000 had

lost their lives. American planes flying off Henderson Field severely mauled Japanese shipping, planes and land forces proving a key factor in the American victory at Guadalcanal.

Japanese land attacks on Henderson Field

There were three Japanese land attacks directly against the airfield (as illustrated on page 14). The area the Solomon Island Government wants to include in the proposed national park is encompassed in the red lines. The two major battles that seriously threatened the airfield were fought in this proposed national park area in September and October of 1942. The September battle is often referred to as the Battle of Bloody Ridge. The October battle is referred to as the battle of Coffin Corner.

The first Japanese attack

Japanese planners in Tokyo estimated that between 2,000 and



Marine Commandant General Amos and Sergeant Major Barrett at southern end of Bloody Ridge.



Barbed wire is still in place.

3,000 Americans had landed on 7th August 1942 and taken the airfield. They also believed that the American fighting ability was poor. With that in mind they sent just 910 elite troops under the command of Colonel Ichiki to destroy the Americans. They landed at Taivu Point on 18th August 1942. Taking 800 soldiers with him Ichiki marched west to the eastern end of the airfield at Alligator Creek and attacked the Americans. Facing them were not 2,000 Marines who couldn't fight but 11,000 fighting US Marines well dug in with automatic weapons supported with artillery and tanks. The Japanese fought bravely but with no chance of success and were destroyed.

The Japanese planners now realised that much larger forces were needed to reclaim the airfield and significantly increased the number of soldiers they sent to Guadalcanal. They expected the larger forces would certainly defeat the Americans. These additional forces engaged the Americans in two

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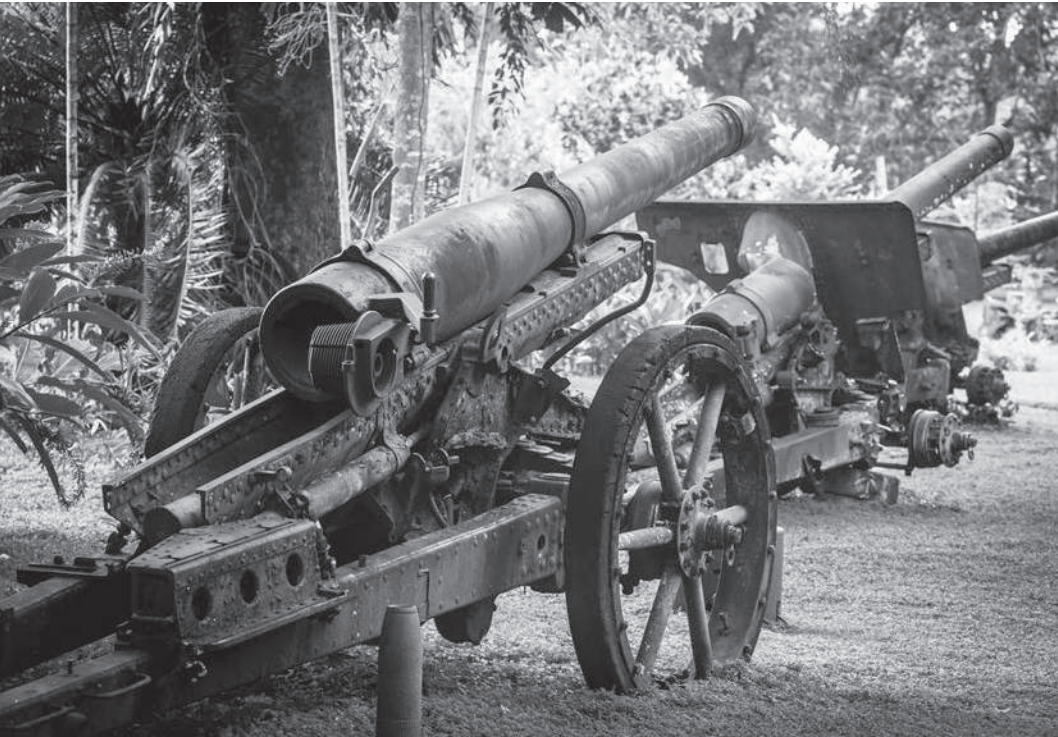
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Relics from a bloody war on Guadalcanal during World War II.

major battles in the area the national government intends to make a National Park.

The second Japanese attack

In late August 1942, 3,000 Japanese troops landed at Aola confident they had enough men to win back the airfield. Their plan was to approach the airfield from an inland direction. Reconnaissance had shown that American defensive positions were only facing the sea. By approaching the airfield from an inland direction they would surprise the Americans. They identified a nearby grassy ridge unoccupied by the Americans that led directly to the airfield. Clear of any impeding jungle or defending Marines this ridge was ideal for an attack on the unsuspecting Americans. The Japanese planned their attack for 12th September.

Unfortunately for the Japanese the day before the Japanese attack the Americans decided to put Marines on the ridge. 760 Marines dug into three defensive lines about 200 metres behind each other. This gave the Marines defense in depth but thin lines. Those lines surely could not have withstood a Japanese attack with 3,000 men.

Fortunately for the Americans the Japanese struggled to maintain contact with each other in the thick jungle conditions as they approached the ridge. When the time came for the attack the Japanese force was spread out over the trail and had become disorganised. A concerted night attack had been ordered but only a small number of Japanese arrived in time for the planned attack time. In the darkness the Japanese commander, General Kawaguchi, had lost control of his force.

The small number of Japanese that had arrived at the ridge on time dutifully attacked a part of the American line, battled their way


through about 100 metres and were stopped. The planned coordinated attack with the entire force failed to happen. Americans who were not expecting an attack at the Ridge now were alerted that a large Japanese force was getting ready to attack the ridge and from an inland direction. The next night when the Japanese attacked in numbers the Americans were ready.

During the day the American commander, Colonel Edson, prepared his defenses for the expected Japanese night attack. He shortened the line and brought back Marines from exposed forward positions to make closer and stronger defensive lines. He was also allocated artillery to support the Marines defending the ridge. Twelve 105 millimetre howitzers spent all that day registering its guns (establishing known target points) in preparation for the defence of the ridge.

When the Japanese began their attack on the night of the 13th September Edson pulled his men back even further to a strengthened final defensive line.

The Japanese attacked in strength but had lost the element of surprise. The alerted Marines held their positions and their fire power plus supporting artillery tore Japanese attacks to shreds. Some small numbers of Japanese managed to filter past the Marines but in far too few numbers to win the day. The result was that the Japanese suffered another bloody defeat.

After a week in the jungle behind the ridge the battered remnants of the Japanese forces withdrew west to the Matanikau river. The ridge and the airfield for the moment had been saved. After the battle that now famous ridge was given a name. Often called Edson's Ridge after the commander of the Marines defending the ridge, Bloody Ridge is its most popular name.

Many years later the Japanese placed a memorial to their soldiers who fought here at the ridge (and elsewhere on Guadalcanal). The sadness in the words on the memorial is felt even if the English translation is not perfect. 

***During the 6 months since the end of August 1942
At the south far out from our fatherland
Under offensive from the superior allied forces
Had not the ammunition for firing
Also had not the rations for eating
There were the misery beyond the limitations as could not say
Those who died the victim-
3,179 Soldiers of Kawaguchi Brigade.***

(Part II look forward to the next edition.)



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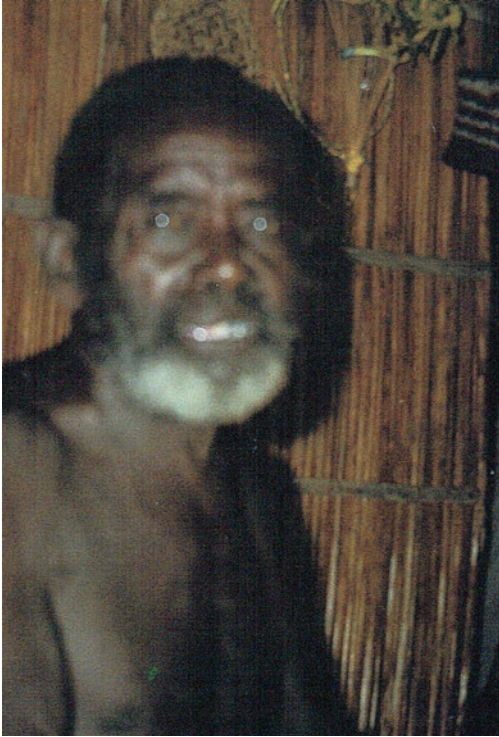
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Islanders at War

Biuku' story - From Solomons' 8th Edition, 1992

BIUKA GASA WAS ONE OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDERS who rescued the future president of the United States, John F Kennedy in World War Two. This is his account from an unpublished manuscript made available to the magazine by the Information Office of the Western Province in Gizo. This version has been condensed and edited.

"The first we knew of the war was seeing all the planes coming. We started to see the Japanese come from the west on their way to Guadalcanal. The Americans sent planes to look for them and try to chase them out. We saw fighting at Munda-the Japanese built the airstrip at Munda and used it as their main base. When they were finished, American and British planes came to bomb the airfield. They bombed Kolombangara too.

I was interested in becoming a scout from the time I saw the planes come to Munda.

Biuka Gasa: "When Kennedy saw us, he put water down and ran over and embraced us."

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It was arranged with Sereke, the big boss at Sepo Island.

As part of our work, we scouts would paddle out to the small islands, especially this island called Naru. We would go to stay on the island watching for planes and ships. We would stay for one week and then two men would replace us, so that Gerguson Passage was always watched. We would also paddle around Gizo, always two of us in each canoe.

We were always interested to find men who parachuted out of wrecked planes. We found two, one on the BP hill in Gizo. We saw another one, a Japanese and we just killed him. If we took prisoners, we would take them to Seghe by relay.

In my time I saw a great number of destroyers and even some submarines. Some really big ones, I remember one big Japanese destroyer sinking in Ferguson Passage.

I worked for about five months as a scout before the incident with Captain Kennedy. One morning we heard a big explosion. It was near Kolombangara opposite Poroporo Village, just at dawn. We saw a huge column of black smoke and afterward, we saw a Japanese destroyer steaming at full speed through the Vella Gulf toward Choiseul. We thought a plane had bombed the destroyer. We had no idea it was a collision.

Three days later, we saw some Japanese come ashore at Gizo. We went to check, swimming with just half our heads out of the water, and at daylight, we were told to take a map of the area to the Coast-watchers at Kolombangara.

We saw Mr. Evans, a Coast-watcher and gave our report. He sent a message and shortly after, you couldn't see the sun from all the bombers in the sky. We were told to return to Sepo, and I was told to stand up in the canoe and raise my right hand if an American plane came close.

On the way back, an American plane came really low, almost hitting the sail (of my canoe). I stood up but I was trembling with fear. I managed to get my right hand up. The two men inside the plane waved at us, so we knew all was right.

A ship had wrecked at Naru. We swam up and went inside. Lots of things were in there. Aaron saw a white man walking along Naru, so we took what we could, and swam away. We went to Olasana. As I was going ashore, I saw a white man crawling out from the bushes near the shore.

He stood up, waved, and said 'come.'

I said, 'Nomoa, lu Japan.' I think he understood me because he said:

'I'm an American – look at my skin.'

I said, 'no matter skin white or red, you Japan.'

I thought of the Tommy gun we had found in the wreck. But the bullets we had didn't fit, so we put the gun back. Some big planes came, the Americans were bombing Gizo. I stood up and gave the signal. Then the white man said: 'that's our sign – don't be afraid.'

Then another white man crawled out of the bushes. He walked straight toward us and said: 'Do you know John Kari from Rendova?'

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and I answered, 'yes, I know him.' We then felt good and forgot our worries. We went ashore and went to see the rest of the men. These two men told us not to shake hands with the others since some of them were badly burned from the collision. The first thing they asked for was cigarettes.

I managed to understand that they were men from PT109. We told them that we saw a Japanese on Naru, but they said it wasn't a Japanese but it was their captain, Kennedy.

Two of them asked us to take them to Rendova, the PT Base. But the wind was strong and we had to turn back.

At this time, Kennedy was swimming back to us at Olasana from Naru. He was bringing water, inside a tin in a broken canoe, and towing the whole thing and swimming. When Kennedy saw us, he put the water down and ran over and embraced us. He asked if it was us who came near the wreck the previous day. He knew pidgin. We said yes, and he said why didn't we come when he waved. We answered we thought he was a Japanese.

We paddled him across to Naru, covered in coconut leaves so he could look for Allied ships. As we paddled, we heard the sound of a man swimming. It was Barney Ross. We told him to get in the canoe but he wanted to stay in the water. He was heavy and we didn't reach Naru until morning.

Kennedy told me, 'Biuku, I feel sorry for my crew. I need paper.' So I told Aaron to climb a coconut. Then I said to Kennedy, 'we natives have lots of papers, you can write a message on the inside of this coconut.' He looked at me and said, 'Jesus Christ, Biuku, how did you think of that?' He came over and held my head with both hands, twisting it slowly and studying it.

The message on the husk said: "These 2 natives know where we 11 are." Then he told us the full story of their wreck with the destroyer so we could report it back at Rendova. He told me how they hit blindly, how their torpedoes exploded and how they reached Sagarughombe, then Kasolo, then Naru. But Naru was too close to the passage, so they went over to Olasana. In some of their moving around the islands, Kennedy swam with some of his men on tow.

Then they said, what if the coconut gets into enemy hands. Kennedy had given me his pocketknife and I was to scratch off the message and

wait to die. It rained as we paddled. We got to Rarumana and met Ben Kevu. He was the scout for Vona Vona Lagoon at Boeboe. Ben told some people to go to Olasana with food and smokes. We went to get a canoe to go to Rendova.

We reached Roviana but all the Americans were Marines and they didn't know any Captain Kennedy. John Kari finally got a message to Rendova and they sent a barge to collect us. At Rendova, there was a Japanese man, he was an interpreter for the Americans. We went inside a room with a big map. A man with lots of decorations on his uniform asked for our letter. I showed him the husk, 'who wrote this,' he asked?

'Captain Kennedy,' I replied.

We went inside a PT boat. The boats were really fast. Afterwards, we found out that Ben Kevu had taken Kennedy to Ghomu to talk to Evans on the radio, and then paddled him to Naru. We picked up Kennedy and then the rest at Olasana.


Later we had a small feast at Lumbaghea and Kennedy said thank you to us for saving his life and the lives of his crew. He said, 'if I'm alive at the end of the war, I'll come and see you.'

We took the wounded to a hospital at Rendova.

I had pretty much forgotten about Captain Kennedy. Then when he became President of the United States, he sent out a letter saying that if it weren't for these two men who saved him at Naru, he wouldn't be where he was. I would like the two men to contact me, he had written.

After the war, I worked for the mission at Madou and Mr Leadley asked me if I had ever written anything. I said yes and he asked me what was it that I wrote. I told him I wrote on a coconut husk, 'these 2 natives know where we 11 are.'

When President Kennedy invited Aaron and me to go to America, we found out first at the Gizo Post Office. They said, 'you two will be going to America.' But after a short time, they were looking for us again and the postmaster told me that we wouldn't be going. He said Ben Kevu was going instead because he can speak English and we can't.

I don't think Ben Kevu asked to go. I think the government thought it would be better for him to go." 

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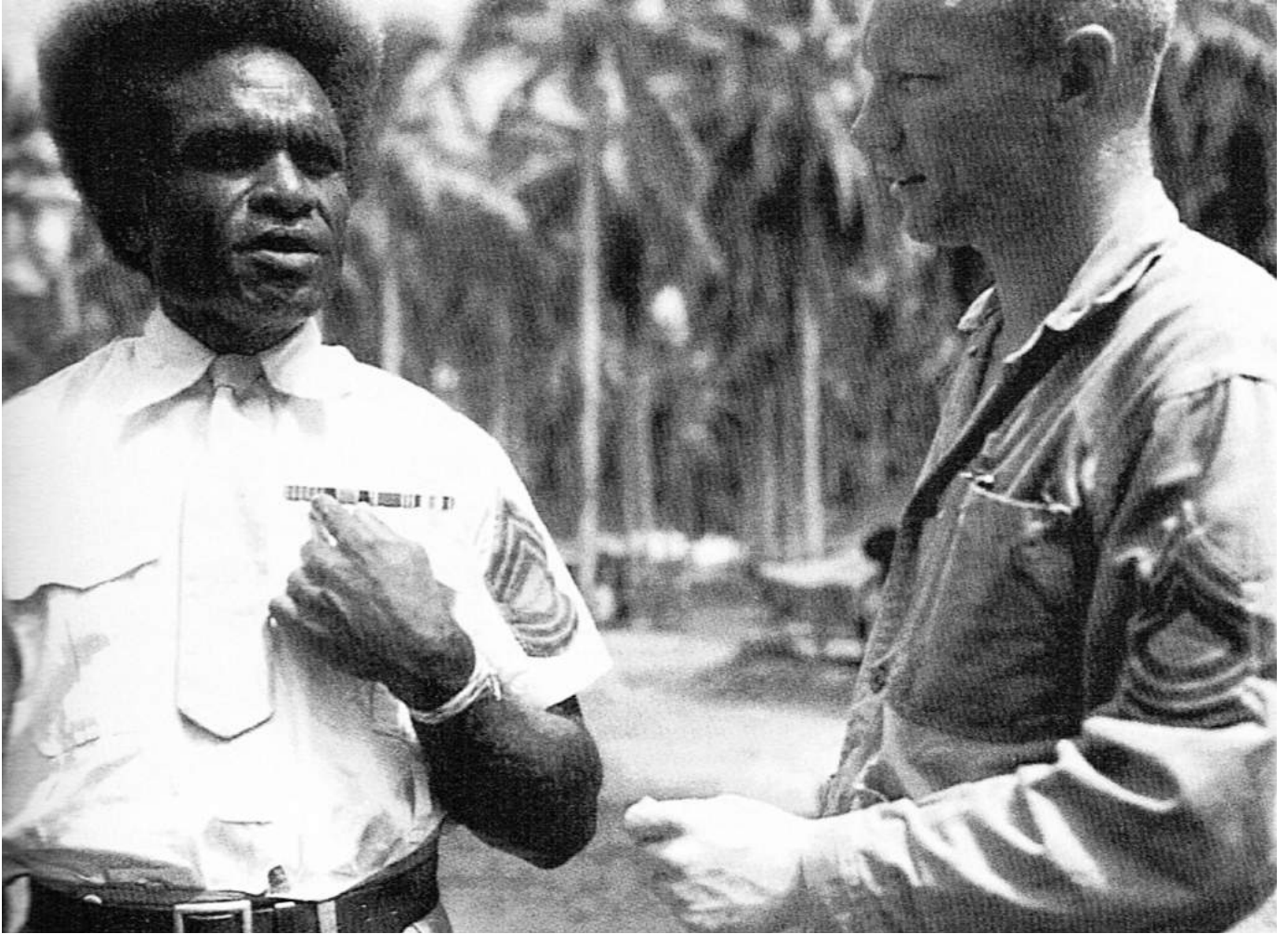
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Solomon Islands WWII hero Sergeant-Major Jacob Vouza (left).

Vouza – the man who would not talk

- *Solomons 8th Edition, 1992 on the special 50th anniversary of the WWII*

AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SERVICE with the police force, Jacob Vouza retired, or so he thought. It was 1940, Vouza's police work, ending as a sergeant, had taken him to most regions of the Solomon Islands.

Vouza was an exceptional man. His British officers regarded him with particular respect, even affection. He was reliable, calm, trustworthy. His record was unblemished.

Vouza was well into his 40s. A Guadalcanal man, he settled down on family land. Living on a modest police pension, he would be quite comfortable and his police record made him a man of some standing in his community.

War was underway in Europe. It wasn't to reach the Pacific for nearly two more years. When it did, Vouza did not hesitate. The

protectorate didn't have an army; it hadn't needed one since the police were armed, when they needed to be, to deal with local unrest. The British administration set up the Solomon Islands Defence Force, which came to be described as the newest and smallest army of the British Empire, never being bigger than 800 men.

The officers were the administration's former district officers, mostly. As the tide of war swept into the Solomon Islands, island by island the defence force split up into small groups of scouts and guides for the American, New Zealand and Fijian troops who had landed in response to the advance of the Japanese.

Vouza volunteered for the force. His fine record got him snapped up as a Sergeant-Major. His knowledge of the area in which the Americans intended to land made him a godsend for military commanders

fretting about their lack of information about the geography of the island and the sketchiness of the few available maps.

Vouza became a scout. After leading raids and search parties, he was captured. Tied to a tree and threatened by a sword-wielding officer, he would not talk. 'Where are the Americans?' was the demand screamed again and again in his face. He was kicked, beaten and stabbed. But Sergeant-Major Vouza did not speak. The Japanese lost patience. Torture has not worked. The Solomon Islander would pay for his loyalty to the Allies. A steel blade plunged into the helpless man's body; his body, his neck and his face.


The Japanese left Vouza, still tied to a tree, bleeding and slumped, appearing to be dead, or very close to it. Time passed, hours probably. Vouza wasn't sure. But he didn't die. He began to revive and work at his bonds. These finally fell free and the brutally-treated man made an epic crawl through the bush in the direction of the American lines. Troops spotted him as he dragged himself across the ground. But Vouza wouldn't be rushed off to a field hospital, not until he'd reported what had happened to him and where the Japanese might be found.

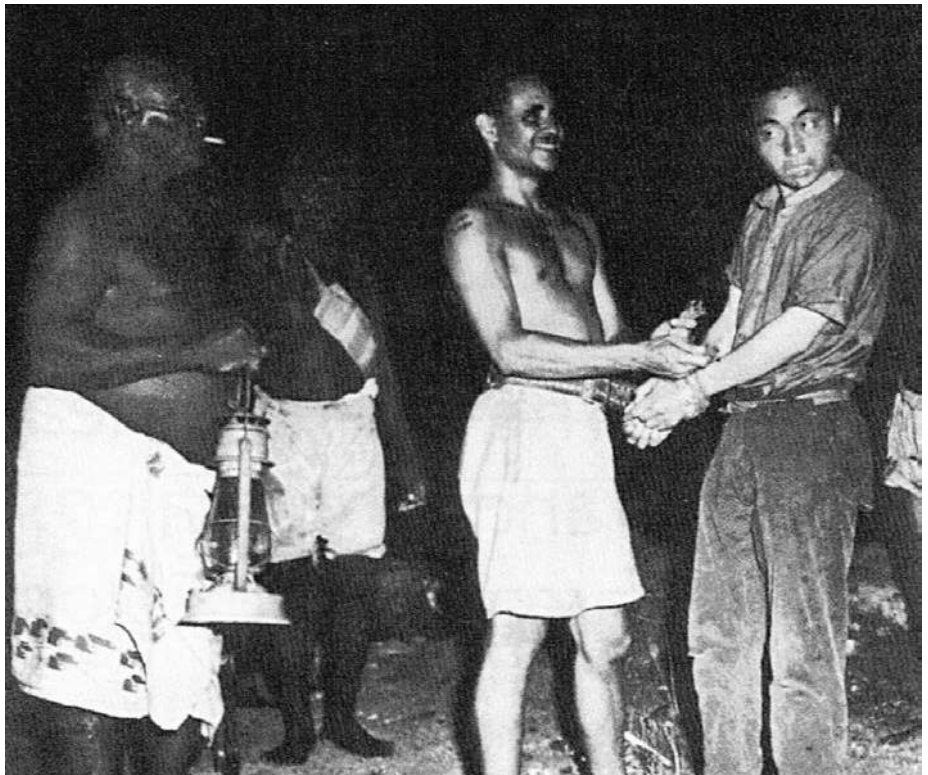
The official story of the Pacific Islands at War that was compiled by the Central Office of Information in London said: "Through all of this, Vouza remained silent. He remained silent too when the Japanese bayoneted him first in each cheek, then in the neck, then in the chest. He remained silent when a Japanese officer slash his arm contemptuously with a sword.

"The intelligence he brought enabled the marines to cut off and destroy a sizeable enemy force."

Vouza was later asked what went through his mind during his ordeal. He replied: "I remember my training in the police and how they tell me always to be faithful to my king. I think about how naughty I was when I first joined the police and how much trouble I cause government. So I tell myself this time I do something good for my king to pay him back for all that trouble. Also I thought it was better that I did this than allow the Japanese to take our island because then I know all of us will die."

Britain decorated Vouza with its George Medal for gallantry; the Americans awarded him their Silver Star. The war ebbed from the Solomon Islands but Vouza never quite retired. He became headman of his district, a member of the British Resident Commissioner's advisory council and president of the Guadalcanal Council. In 1957, another British honour arrived for him – the insignia of Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Some years after the independence of the Solomon Islands in 1978, he was knighted on the recommendation of the Solomon Islands Government.

Sir Jacob Vouza died nationally honoured in the late 1980s. 



Local knowledge helped the US and Allied Forces during WWII.

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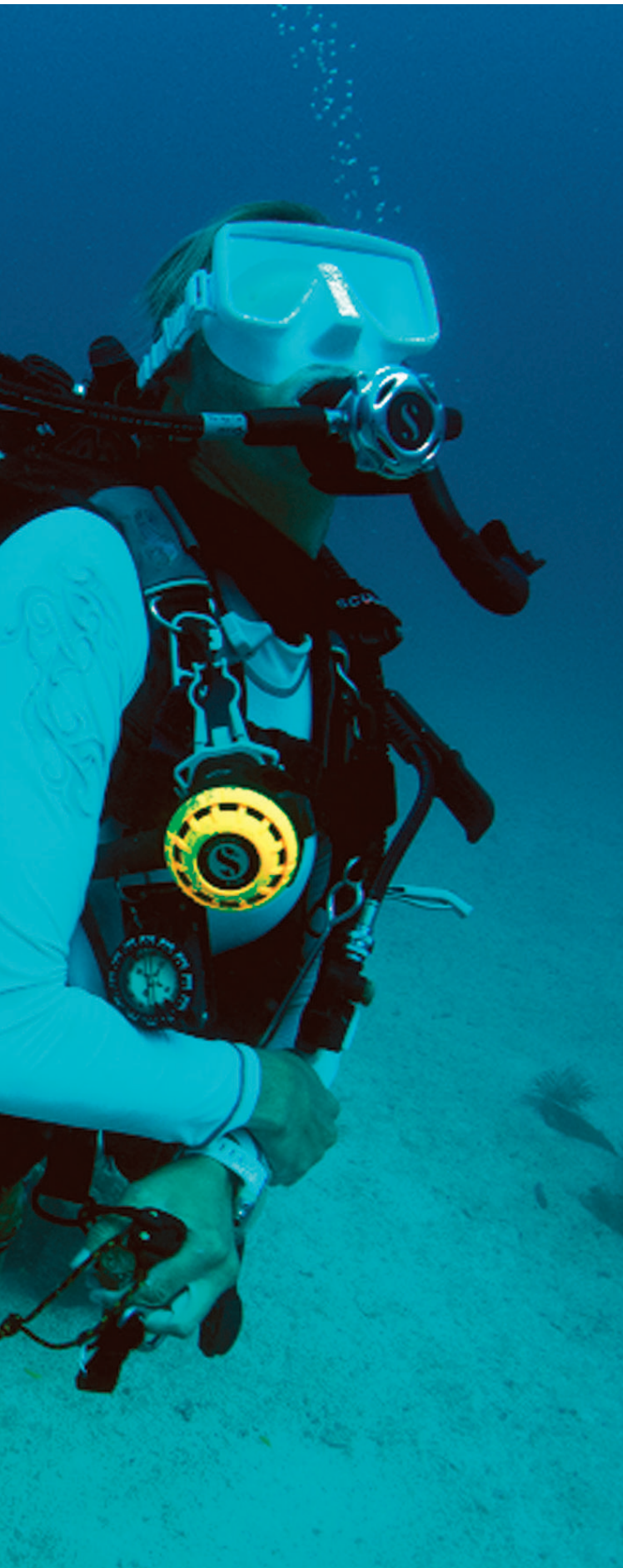


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Diving WWII wrecks





By Andrew Trahair

2017 WILL MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of the WWII battle for Guadalcanal. Much has been written about the fierce fighting between the US and Allied armies and the Japanese Imperial Forces that took place in the Solomon Islands. Many books and movies have tackled this important event in which the Japanese' advance across the Pacific was halted by the Americans. Fierce naval battles took place between the islands and hundreds of aeroplanes fought duels in the skies above the Solomons. Tens of thousands of young men stormed the beaches, stalked through the jungles and fought hand to hand to defend and defeat positions of strategic importance.

The Solomon Islands are just three hours flight from Australia and have a wealth of historical relics from this period to explore and experience first hand. Many of these can be found submerged beneath the clear tropical South Pacific waters. Several dive operators specialise in taking WWII history enthusiasts to these dive sites.

Tulagi Dive, Honiara

Tulagi Dive in Honiara, Guadalcanal, takes divers to visit two Japanese transport ships sunk near the beaches at Mbonegi. They are fascinating wrecks and easily accessible from the shore for snorkelers and divers. One of the vessels still has trucks and a bulldozer lying in the hold and anti-aircraft guns bolted to the decks. Another shore dive is the I-1 Submarine lying in 3.28m and is still quite intact despite having been salvaged over the years.

Advanced divers can descend to the USS Aaron Ward, a Destroyer resting upright in over 60 metres of water at "Iron Bottom Sound," named for the multitude of wrecks in the area. The Aaron Ward was a US Navy Destroyer sunk on 7th April 1943 and she emerges from the deep blue where the visibility is around 20-30 metres. She was discovered in 1995, long after the era of opportunistic salvage crews swept through the Solomons in the 1960s and 70s, taking anything of value and interest that could be removed from the WWII wrecks. I was struck by the quantity of tropical fish that have made the Aaron Ward their home. An astounding variety of marine life has found shelter and thrives among the rusting and twisted steel nooks and crannies across the decks. Schools of Giant Trevally swirl about, and I was surprised by the quantity of hard and soft corals growing at this depth. The Aaron Ward really is one of the premier wreck dives in a corner of the Pacific littered with wrecks. Tulagi Dive offers technical diving facilities and gas mixes.

Raiders Hotel, Tulagi

Raiders Hotel and Dive is a small boutique dive operation at Tulagi Island, taking WWII history enthusiasts to many of the sunken relics in the area. Divers can visit the Japanese "Mavis" sea plane, a large reconnaissance aeroplane bombed by the Americans on the morning of the 7th August when the "Marine Raiders" stormed the beaches of Tulagi. Nearby, divers can explore a US Catalina aeroplane and Wildcat fighter, the USS Kanawha, a US Oiler sunk in 35-60m, and the New Zealand Minesweeper RNZN Moa in around 40m. At the Ghavutu Wharf dump site, divers can explore the refuse of the Japanese war machine, discarded battle damaged aeroplane parts and other twisted wreckage lying beside discarded sake bottles.



SIDE MV Taka Liveaboard

Dive Liveaboard MV Taka sails out of Honiara and takes WWII history enthusiasts to many of the sites around Guadalcanal and Tulagi, as well as remote and less accessible sites around the Solomon Islands.

Taka visits the Florida Islands and the White Beach dump site in the Russel Islands, a former PT base used by the US Navy. A few wooden pillars visible along the shore are all that remain above the surface, but below lies an abundance of discarded military hardware, trucks and jeeps, sunken pontoons and assorted jetsam. An astounding variety of marine life has found shelter and thrives among the rusting and twisted steel. Anemone fish bob about in their protective dwellings, Archer Fish and Cardinal Fish thrive in the roots of the mangroves growing along the shoreline. Mandarin Fish come out and perform a mating dance at dusk.


In Wickham Harbour near Morovo Lagoon, several Japanese shipwrecks dating from the war rest in the gloomy and haunting waters at 28 metres depth. Several of these wrecks are still yet to be identified by WWII historians as records of Japanese losses were not always well documented.

Dive Munda, Western Province

Visitors to Munda can dive on a number of aeroplanes shot down during the fierce battle that took place at Munda airstrip. Two of these rest at the bottom of Rendova Harbour where the young lieutenant John F. Kennedy and his PT109 boat were based. A US Aerocobra Fighter rests in 27m and was only recently discovered by local "beche-de-mer" fishermen. Nearby a Douglas Dauntless dive bomber rests in 11m, and was the subject of a documentary when the elderly pilot Jim Dougherty returned to dive on the plane fifty years after he was shot down (see "Lost Warriors of the South Pacific"). A

US Corsair fighter lies on a pristine sand bottom at 51m and is almost completely intact. Now home to giant Grouper and Napoleon Wrasse.

At Mboroko Harbour, the Kashi Maru transport ship was unloading supplies to the Japanese troops garrisoned nearby when it received a direct hit from a US bomber. Scuba divers, freedivers and snorkelers can explore this wreck lying in shallow waters a few metres from the beach. The shattered chassis of trucks and jeeps are scattered around the hold, fuel drums and unexploded ordinance are littered about. Nearby a US Wildcat Fighter rests in 14m on a spectacular coral garden of giant Plate Corals hundreds of years old.

Divers of all levels have a unique opportunity to explore the relics of the WW2 Pacific Campaign in the Solomon Islands. It is a moving and exciting experience to visit the tangible reminders of an important time in modern history, preserved beneath the warm, clear waters of the South Pacific. 

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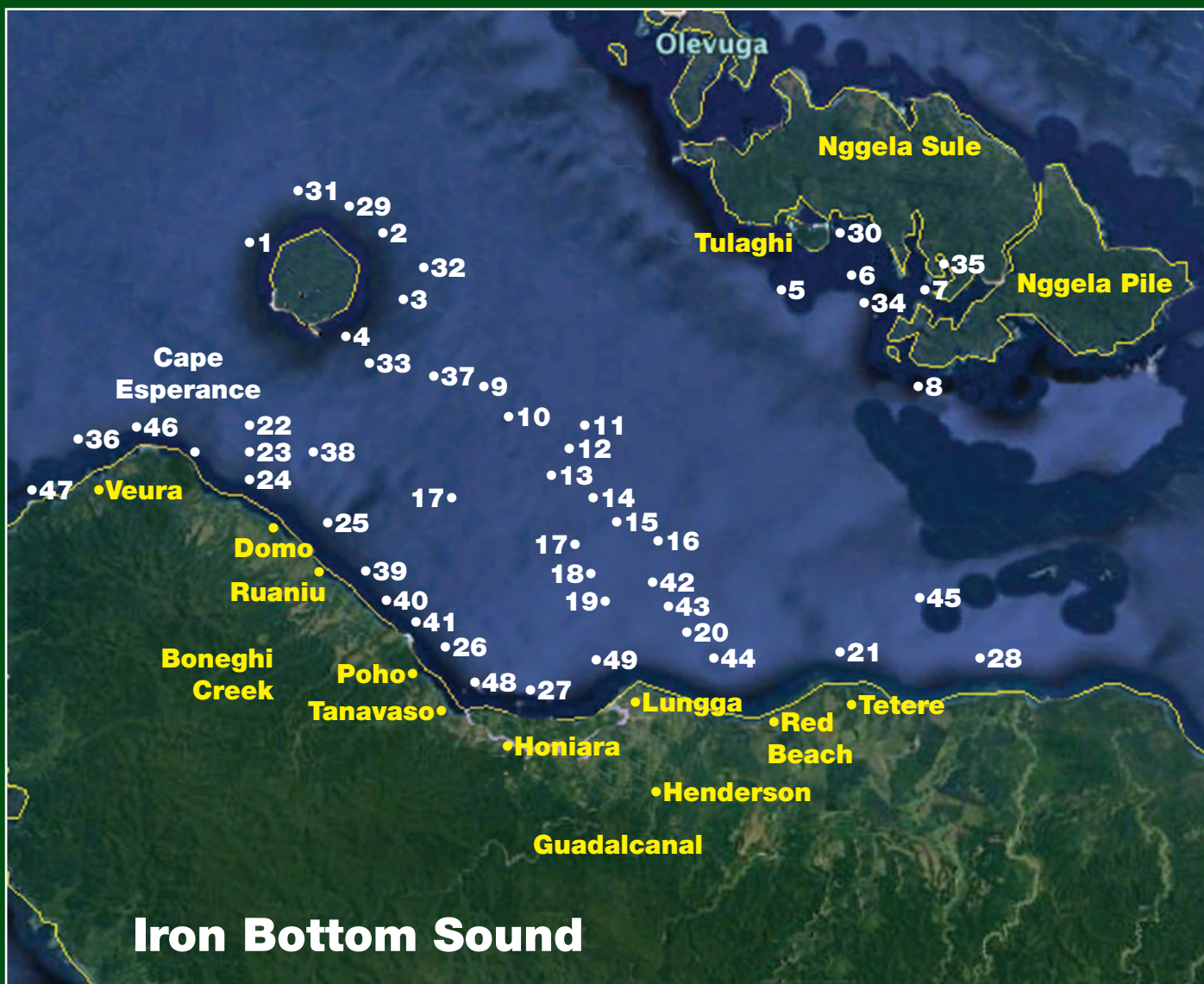
Raiders Hotel and Dive, Tulagi - <https://raidershotel.com/>

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Iron Bottom Sound casualty list:

USA

- 1. Heavy Cruiser 'Vincennes'
- 2. Destroyer 'Duncan'
- 3. Heavy Cruiser 'Astoria'
- 4. Heavy Cruiser 'Quincy'
- 5. Destroyer 'Bacton'
- 6. Tanker 'Kananwa'
- 7. Tank Landing Ship
- 8. Transport 'Elliot'
- 9. Destroyer 'Walke'
- 11. Destroyer 'Laffey'
- 12. Destroyer 'Blue'
- 13. Light Cruiser 'Juneau'
- 14. Destroyer 'Cushing'
- 15. Destroyer 'Monseen'
- 16. Transport 'Gregory'
- 17. Transport 'Little'
- 18. Heavy Cruiser 'Northampton'
- 19. Cruiser 'Atlanta'
- 20. Transport 'Calhoun'
- 21. Troopship 'John Penn'

- 22. PT Boat 'PT44'
- 23. PT Boat 'PT112'
- 24. PT Boat 'PT43'
- 25. B17 Flying Fortress Bomber
- 26. Floating Crane
- 27. Wildcat Fighter
- 28. Tug 'Seminole'

AUSTRALIA

- 29. Heavy Cruiser 'Canberra'

NEW ZEALAND

- 30. Minesweeper 'Moa'

JAPAN

- 31. Submarine 'I-3'
- 32. Destroyer 'Fubukai'
- 33. Destroyer 'Kikizuki'

- 35. Destroyer
- 36. Submarine 'I-123'
- 37. Battleship 'Kirishima'
- 38. Destroyer 'Terutsuki'
- 39. Transport 'Ruaniu'
- 40. Transport 'Bonegi 1'
- 41. Transport 'Bonegi 2'
- 42. Destroyer 'Yudughi'
- 43. Battleship 'Hiet'
- 44. Destroyer 'Akatsuki'
- 45. Heavy Cruiser 'Kinugosa'
- 46. Wrecked Plane at Takolenduna
- 47. Mystery Submarine at Paru

MODERN VESSELS

- 43. Inter-Island Schooner 'Solsea'
- 49. Japanese Tuna Boat 'Gyoshu Maru'

This map was first published on our Issue 26 in 1998.



Stone Carvers of Ranongga Island, near Gizo



Tulagi, Central Province – first capital of Solomon Islands, great dive site



Marovo Lagoon, north of Vangunu Island (near Munda)



Kennedy Island – off Gizo, where JFKennedy was rescued from Japanese forces



Kavachi submarine volcano, south of Vangunu Island



Tenaru

Solomon Islands



Langa Langa Lagoon, Malaita – home to artificial island builders, shipyards and shell money factories



Pan pipers – 'Are'Are Lagoon, Malaita.



Falls, Guadalcanal Island



Lake Te'Nggano, Rennell Island



Wogosa Festival, Santa Catalina, Makira Uluwa Province



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As the former residence for the head of the British raj

in the Western Pacific, the site of Heritage Park Hotel is on prime real estate in downtown Honiara. By the sea, and smack dabbed in the middle of a bustling and fast growing Melanesian city, Heritage Park was also the choice of the royals when future king of England Prince William and his wife, the Duchess of Cambridge toured Solomon Islands in 2012.

When Solomon Islands became independent in 1978, the British Commissioner's residence was converted into the official home of the islands' Governor



Polished timber floors of GG's Restaurant were part of the original state house. Heritage Park Hotel rooms (top photo) offer comfort and style.

General, the representative of Queen Elizabeth II. Two Solomon Islanders who took up this high office and lived at the government mansion were Sir Baddeley Devesi and Sir George Lepping. This piece of history is now captured in large portraits of the two statesmen on

the Hotel's fine dining restaurant, appropriately named, GG's.

The building traces its history back to the 1950's. The main building has been restored and renovated and today forms the main building of Heritage Park Hotel. Many of the original features of the building were retained which gives an air of elegance to this former state house. The polished timber floors on GG's are from the great hall of the original home. Towards the waterfront from the main building are the accommodation units which are built in pods of 3 levels.

The hotel was opened to the public on 27th August, 2009.

Heritage Park Hotel provides international standards of hotel comfort and service. The property has three restaurants, bars, gym, nite club, multiple conference facilities, wifi, pool and some retail shopping. The accommodation is 4.5 star standard with all units having balconies and sea and garden views. There is a mix of hotel rooms, executive apartments for long terms stays and studio apartments for overnight and short term stays.

One of the joys of a stay at Heritage Park Hotel is its park like gardens with mature trees and other tropical shrubs and flora. It is a tropical oasis right in the heart of town.

The ownership of Heritage Park Hotel is unique to Solomon Islands as the property is majority owned by the members of the National Superannuation fund of PNG (Nasfund) and by members of Solomon Islands National Provident Fund. Management reports directly to the Board which represents these two funds and Sir Kostas Constantinou OBE who is a well known hotelier in PNG and in other Pacific locations is chair of the board.

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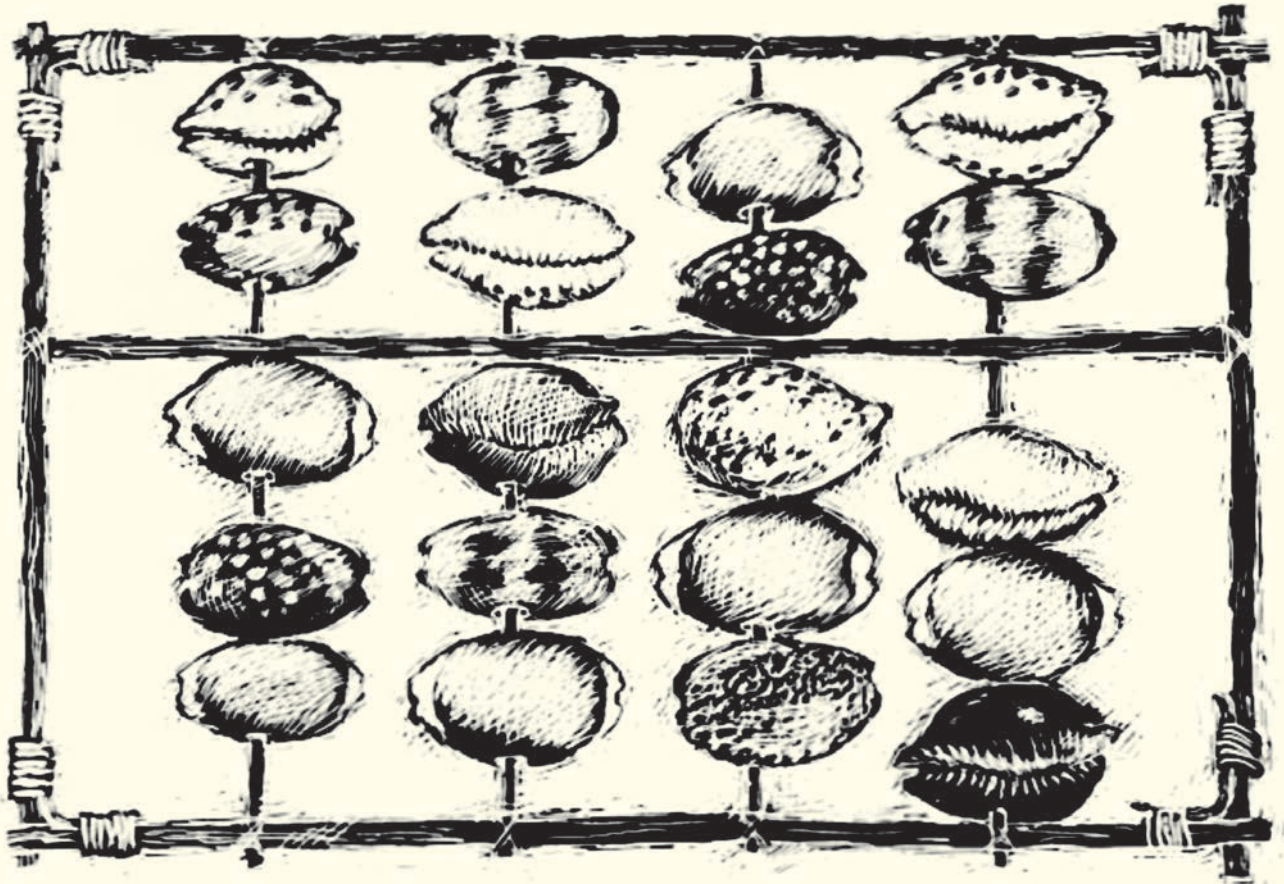
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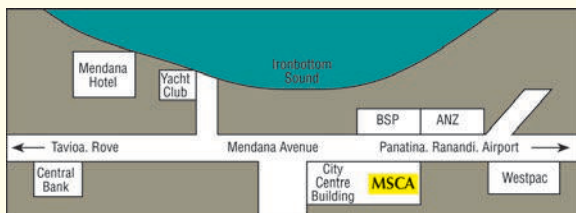
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The hotel offers war history tours for guests who would like to see the town and experience some war history and local culture. For the more adventurous there are other tours which can be organised. Dive and snorkel, village visit, rafting and even a Volcano tour are available or visitors can simply walk to the main market and experience a wonderful cultural experience.

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A timber boat under construction in one of the many artificial islands that dot Langa Langa Lagoon.

Shipyards of Langa Langa Lagoon



Custom house in Langa Langa.

Words & Images: Samisoni Pareti

VISIT LANGA LANGA LAGOON NOT FAR FROM AUKI, capital of Malaita province and you will see how the inhabitants of these man-made islands in the lagoon are intelligently skilled builders and crafts people in their own right.

They live on small islets, which they themselves painstakingly built coral slab by coral slab for some years. Such little islands took years to construct, built in and around the shallows of Langa Langa

Lagoon. Corals are stacked from the lagoon bed to around two to three feet above sea level, before soil is transported in dugout canoes from the mainland to shape these artificial islands. Today many such islands dot the lagoon with each housing families or villages ranging from a population of just under 10 people to more than a hundred for bigger artificial islands.

Langa Langa Lagoon is also famous for being the home to shell-money production. Buku Village located in one of those artificial islands hold demonstration sessions on shell-money making for visitors at a reasonable fee. Like island construction, shell money production is quite an elaborate process that involves the entire members of the community. Diving for shells is the work of young men, while women – old and young, assisted by old and little boys, help out in the design and polishing of the shellmoney.

On a recent tour of Langa Langa with Richard, owner of Riz Tourism Logistics as my guide, our speedboat sped past several artificial islands that were clearly shipyards. I am not talking about a workshop for dugouts or what locals refer to as banana boats, lifeboats that are motored by outboard engines. These are deep-ocean going vessels,



Young men in a dugout, a common mode of travel in Langa Langa Lagoon.

many being 40 to 60 feet long. As we boarded our boat next to Auki wharf, one such Langa Langa Lagoon built boat, the Saalia, was tied alongside. It sails the Auki to Honiara, the capital, route. By the looks of it, the Saalia takes to the water nicely with its all timber hull and bow. It's got a four-level deck.

Few of the artificial islands we sailed past, had similar Saalia sizes cutters up on dry dock. There is no sign of mechanical cranes on these shipyards, so I would imagine that these boats are brought to

dry docking through sheer 'people' power, by literally pulling them ashore. The whole island must have been called in. I am told that such dry-docking only takes place during high tides when the sea is almost at the same height as dry land.

Boat-builders on Langa Langa will also await high tides to put their boats back to sea. On our tour, I spied piles of logs used to prop up the boats at dry-docking. I assume that the gradual removal of these logs will slowly ease the boat back to sea. I am also assuming that the forests of native timbers up in mainland Malaita are fuelling the boat building industry of Langa Langa Lagoon.

Researchers say the people of Langa Langa have always been traditional canoe builders. These skills predated Christianity and are imbedded in their oral history of torina, the magic of canoe making.



MV Saalia at Auki Wharf. This and many others of similar size boats were constructed in the shipyards of Langa Langa, which is also famous for its shellmoney making (insert above) tradition.



Many man-made islands such as this dot the lagoon.

Pei-yi Guo, an associate research fellow at the Centre for the Asia-Pacific Area Studies in Taiwan believes the boat-builders of Langa Langa got their special crafts-making skills both from their ancestors and from early interaction with European and Asian sea-farers and traders. In fact Pei-yi believes the fascination of the people of Langa Langa with ocean-going vessels could be traced back to the black-birding years of the late 1800s, where mostly men but some women as well of Malaita were forcefully kidnapped by white sailors to work in plantations in Queensland and in Fiji.

“According to my interviews, the first group of Langa Langa men who were involved in the building of cutter boats were Maesala, Maeki, Tudia and Balifaga.” Wrote Pei-yi. “They started as helpers for the Chinese cutter boat builders who came to Solomon Islands. After picking up the technique, they made their own boats and taught others in the region.” This was during the early 1900s.

The transition from cutters to bigger 40-foot ocean-going vessels happened after World War II. Locals refer to these bigger boats as Faga, according to the Taiwanese researcher who had spent some years researching about the unique cultures of Langa Langa Lagoon. “After the decline of plantation economy, ‘faga’ nowadays are mostly used for fishing, as well as cargo and passenger transportation. They travel all over Solomon Islands but seldom go out of the country.” 🇧🇲

**For tours of Langa Langa Lagoon, contact:
Mr Richard Misi of Riz Tourism Logistic on +677 7808038,
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Pijin Speak

By Mere Tuqiri

Wantok: Iu stat kam long wea ia? [Where are you coming from?]

Bili: Mi stat kam long Kukum. [I'm coming from Kukum.]

Wantok: An iu go go wea? [Where are you off to now?]

Bili: Nomoa. Mi wakabaot nomoa. [Nowhere. I'm just walking about.]

Wantok: Mi go fo tekem samfala seleni long bank. [I'm going to get some money from the bank.]*

It has a melodic ring to it, almost sing-song-ish. Solomon Pijin – A Creole language of convenience that sprung from Solomon Islands' plantation days as a British protectorate. Merging English and aboriginal words allowed Caucasian estate managers to relay instructions to indigenous farm workers.

Like Papua New Guinea's Tok Pisin and Vanuatu's Bislama, Solomon Island Pijin has now become an intermediary language to bridge communication gaps that may exist due to the dominance of primary vernacular languages or dialects within regions. In 1996 there was even a Solomon Pijin newspaper called Solomon Grasrut which, unfortunately, had a short shelf-life.

This non-standardised Creole has not been immune to the addition of new words, colloquial phrases, and varied combinations of indigenous-Pijin terms. Moses Ramo was a Solomon Pijin instructor for American Peace Corps volunteers in the early 1990s. He shares some insights into the gradual evolution of Solomon Pijin.

New words: Staka. It means many and refers to the act of stacking





things. The word surfaced during World War Two when the labour corps (Solomon Islanders included) would stack cargo offloaded overnight from vessels. Staka was introduced into Solomon Pijin in 1971. Kasem, meaning 'to reach' is another word that came up in the 1970s. Yu kasem Gizo? You reach Gizo? Words like kasem are not plantation words because they arose after the period.

New phrases: Man talem duim means 'what you say you do'. This phrase came about in the 1980s. Another 1980s product is Mi dea tu. Two meanings – one is physical meaning 'you're there', the other is a flirtatious slang. And in the 90s there was go lo bus (literally means 'go to the bush'). It doesn't mean physically going, but you'd be telling someone to 'go away' as in 'I don't want to hear what you saying, go away' or go lo bus.


Substitutions: In English, for example, there's the pronoun he, she to distinguish male and female. Pijin uses hem to mean 'he, she, it'.

Shortcuts: Here's a proper sentence - Mifala stap lo hia lo haus blong mifala – 'we, my family live here in the house that belongs to us.' Today's shortcut version is Mifala stap lo hia – 'we live here.' Solomon Island Pijin speakers today are more prone to abbreviate words and shorten what otherwise would be longer, yet structured sentences.

That word yia: You'll hear speakers randomly inserting yia or ia in their speech. It's like decorating how you talk, you don't really need it but you'll use it. Yia could mean 'yes.' It could signal the end of a thought and beginning of another, and at some instances if you leave it out the statement can be out of context.

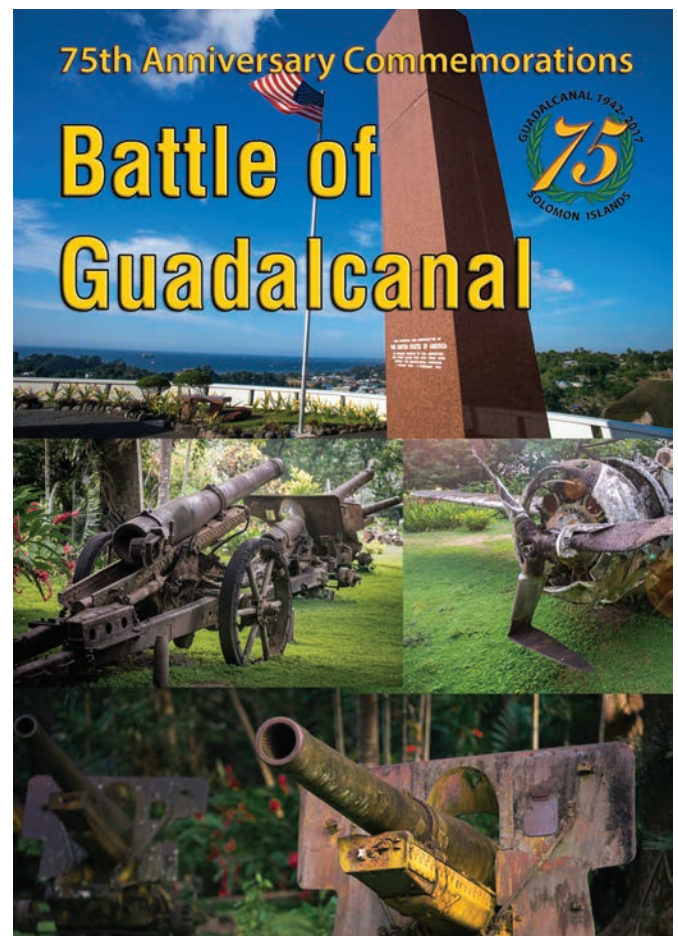
Advise: If you want to learn Solomon Pijin, learn to speak it properly and understand the jargon. It's good to know the jargon but don't use it unless you really know what it means. Why? Two things - If you're speaking to people in different provinces, what you say could be taken out of context and could lead to compensation demands.



Secondly, a lot of Solomon Pijin sentences are not formal so when you speak with elders you have to mind what you say. Seriousness aside, Solomon Pijin is a beautiful language and really should be standardised. 

If you want to know more about Solomon Pijin contact Moses Ramo, T: 7404562

*** Intro dialogue extracted from: A Basic Course in Solomon Islands Pijin – Edited by Ann C. Marshall for U.S. Peace Corps/ Solomon Islands, 1978.**



Amazing Sea World

By Save Baleidravuni

A VISIT TO GOLD COAST is not complete without a visit to the renowned Sea World, the oldest Theme Park on Gold Coast's coastal strip.

Started in 1958 as Surfers Paradise Ski Gardens at Carrara, it

was later renamed and relocated to Sea World Drive in 1971.

To date, the Theme Park has continued to attract tourists from all over Australia and all over the world as it continues to educate and entertain the young and the young at heart.

We were invited to visit the Theme Park on a gloomy morning by our host Jason and Mere who have made Brisbane their home. Their daughter Georgia was not very keen on getting out of bed that morning. After failed attempts to get her out of bed, the four-year-old literally sprung out as she overheard her parents mentioned Sea World. Now, there was no way we could alter our course of the day. For Georgia, it was Sea World all the way.

And to Sea World we went. I have been in Australia with my wife Elenoa for five weeks, little did we know that this visit will be a memorable one,



Big fish...display at Seaworld.

Photos supplied by Sea World.

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Room Tip: *Overlooking the ocean is gorgeous!"*

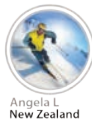
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HPHAPART.19.11.16



Angela L.
New Zealand



Hands on...children frolic with a dolphin.

and in fact one of the highlights.

Our first stop was the Ray Reef where we saw hundreds of rays swimming harmoniously together. Eagle rays, blue spotted stingrays, estuary stingrays and giant shovelnose rays, all grace the Ray Reef. I watched with excitement and awe as a spotted eagle ray swims by, “flying” gracefully through the pool as it flaps its pectoral fin up around the side of the pool into the air enjoying the gentle touch of tiny hands. I have to be called over by our host to move on as this was just the first of the many more things to come.

The Dolphin Show was next. This I would say was the best. Watching the dolphins glide through the waters with ease and elegance was simply amazing. Their sleek body serves to make swimming through water more efficient and almost effortlessly. But what amazes me the most was how they could perform the way they did.

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In a stage drama, prompters would be employed to make sure casts enter the stage at the right moment, and from the exact part of the stage. How do these dolphins know the right moment to come into a scene, where to appear, and what act they need to perform, and the moment they need to exit to allow for their other mates to come in? Wonderful questions to ponder over.

Our next stop was the Shark Bay. The shark lagoon, which is the main section, houses some of the world's largest, most feared and potentially dangerous sharks. Coming so close to these fearsome creatures helps you appreciate the marvel of creation and just by looking closely at them, you can tell the strength they have and their ability under water.


We then moved to the Polar Bear Shores. The main public exhibit features three viewing areas: underwater, water-level and above-water. Fortunately, the Polar Bears was in ‘dreamland.’ I say fortunately because we have a lot to see and so little time. I would love to revisit the Sea World and hopefully the Polar Bear would be awake.

We continued on to the Penguin Encounter. This Antarctic penguin exhibit comprise of a large pool with under and above water viewing. Two species of penguins are kept here, the king penguin and the gentoo penguin, the second and third largest species of penguins after the emperor penguin. Bringing this creature close to us offers the opportunity for a close encounter that others can only dream of.

A little break was next, and Dora’s Best Friend Adventure couldn’t have been timelier. Little Georgia stole the show as she jumped and danced away at the tunes as Diego joined in. Her shoes was the casualty as it couldn’t keep up with her inconsistent dancing rhythm!

Our final stop was the Fish Detectives show. The show is based around the fish store Alota Baloney, where Big Al is making big

profits by catching too many fish. The detective team, made up of humans and sea lions, are on the case to catch Big Al and solve this 'environmental crime.' Wonderfully done and really entertaining. At the same time, I was continually amazed at the work that was put into making all this possible.

What started as a dull day ended in a very entertaining and satisfying one. And while parts of the Gold Coast were experiencing a heavy downpour, we were oblivious to the rain storm by enjoying the sights and sounds of the amazing, and entertaining Sea World. 

Sea World contact details:

Contact Details – Sea World
Seaworld Dr., Main Beach
Gold Coast, Queensland, 4210 Australia.

For bookings & info: call 13 33 86
Reception: +61 7 5588 2222
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Website: www.seaworld.om.au



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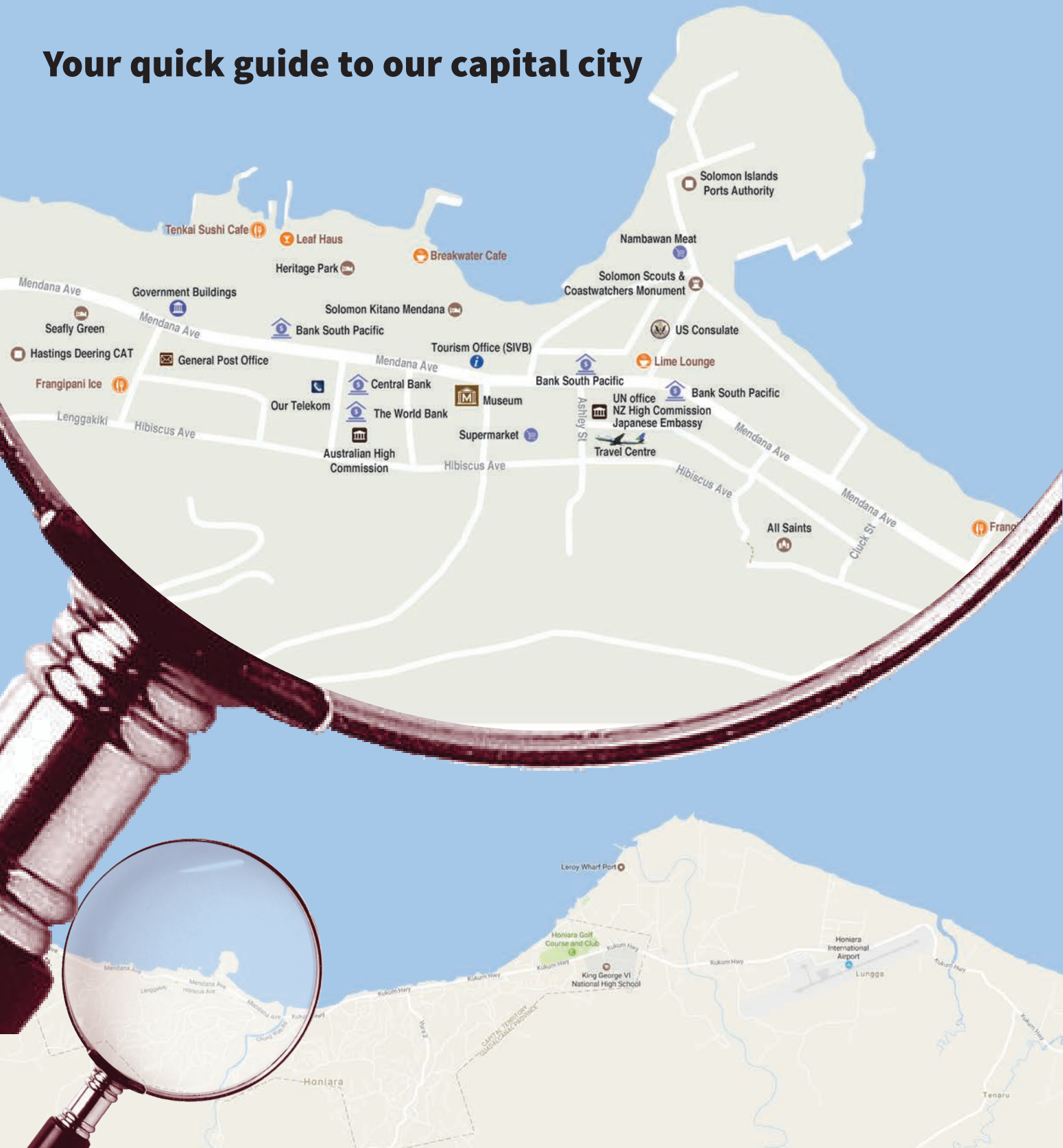
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THANK YOU AND GOODBYE: RAMSI

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) concluded on 30 June 2017, having helped return peace and stability to Solomon Islands over the last 14 years.

RAMSI thanks all Solomon Islanders for their support, friendship and hospitality. On behalf of the thousands of police, military, diplomats and advisors that came from 15 Pacific nations to help restore law and order and rebuild the economy and national institutions, we thank you – the political, traditional, church, civil society and community leaders, as well as the thousands of government officials and ordinary Solomon Islanders – that welcomed us, helped us, and worked alongside us.

Tagio tumas long iufala evriwan.

To the citizens of Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, we thank you and your governments for the strong and unwavering investment made by neighbouring countries in the RAMSI mission and the future of Solomon Islands.



Led and financed by Australia, the RAMSI mission left behind a revived and peaceful Hapi Isles. Solomon Islands is now 'open for business' and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is more than capable of being the sole policing agency.

The Pacific region rallied together in the form of RAMSI to help a friend in need. Today, that strong friendship continues in a different form. Australia, for example, has 44 police advisers in Honiara and is finalising a security treaty with Solomon Islands that will fast-track emergency assistance from Australia if it is ever needed. New Zealand is also supporting police development.

RAMSI left the Hapi Isles confident that Solomon Islands, with the ongoing support of its regional friends, will continue to build a brighter for itself and future generations. We left with optimism and hope in our hearts. This made saying goodbye and thank you a little easier.



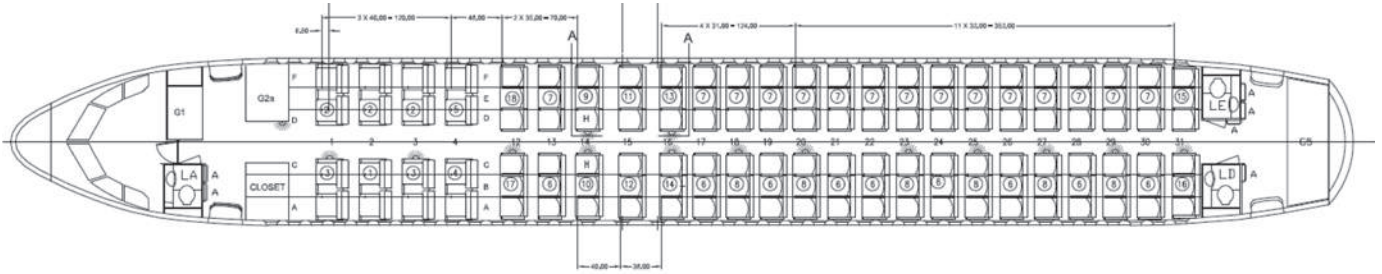


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Range: 3,000 nm
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Configuration: Business:16 Economy: 120
Current Routes: Brisbane, Nadi, Port Vila



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Seating capacity:	36
Crew:	3 Crew including 1 cabin crew
Current Routes:	Honiara; Seghe: Munda; Gizo; Kira Kira; Santa Cruz
Aircraft in Fleet:	1

AIRCRAFT: Twin Otter



Length:	15.77 m
Wing Span:	19.81 m
Range:	1350 km
Cruising Speed:	338 kph
Seating capacity:	16
Crew:	2
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Aircraft in Fleet:	2

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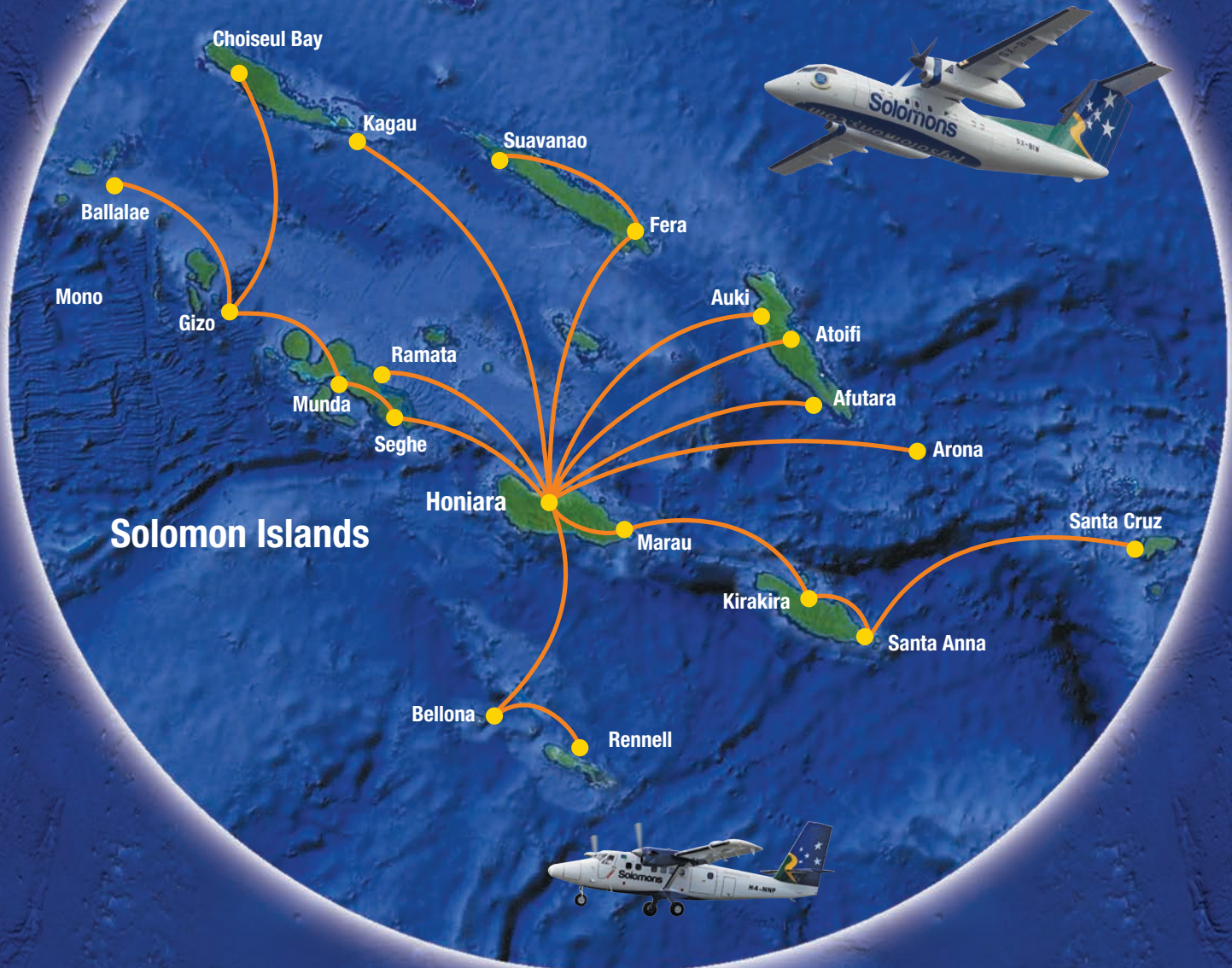
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Goodbye H4-AAI

After almost 40 years of flying our skies, H4-AAI is 'calling it a day, hanging up its 'wings,' and off to some much needed 'retirement.'

'It' is the Britten Norman Islander (above) plane, generally referred to as the workhorse of any fleet. This aircraft certainly lived up to its name in the 38 years it served the national airline's domestic route 'faithfully.'

When the call was made early this year to retire the BN Islander, the machine has clocked up 45,000 hours of flying. Put another way, that's equivalent to continuous flying with no landing for about 5.1 years!


Realistically, our workhorse did have to land, and it did so without any major incident in a total of 66,000 landings altogether since it joined our fleet in 1979. It's a nine-seater plane and can fly a load of one tonne when converted to a cargo aircraft.

BNI are British light utility manufactured planes which was introduced into the market in the 1960s. It got its name from its two designers, John Britten and Desmond Norman. 

Captain Kere reminisces

"We will certainly miss the Islander," says Captain Charles Kere (pictured right), one of our many local pilots that have flown the aircraft. "It could be heavy and slow, but it's as steady and reliable as aircraft goes and I will miss her."

As a key member of our fleet, our pilots go through the H4-AAI as part of their training and to clock up their flying time. Once a pilot becomes a captain of the Islander, he or she qualifies to be First Officer of the bigger Twin Otter plane.

"90 percent came through the ranks by having their captaincy endorsements on the Islander plane. Captain Claudia Walding, currently a captain in our A320 did her flying hours by starting from this same aircraft." 



Meet Helen and Francis

Solomon Airlines has a comprehensive and on-going training programme for its staff, for those in the frontline who interact with customers all the time, as well as for those who work at the back office, providing much needed support and back-up.

Through the help of training consultants and experts, our cockpit and cabin crews as well as our aircraft engineers are at the forefront of these training programmes. This way they keep abreast of technology changes and ensure they are good at what they do.

From this edition, we will begin profiling staff who make your travel with us a pleasant and truly wonderful experience. We are starting with two of our senior flight attendants, Helen Piringisau and Francis Cheka.

Tell us a little about yourself

Helen: I am from Makira in Temotu Province and I have been with the airline for 10 years now.

Francis: I have been with Solomon Airlines for 27 years, and while I live in Kakabona, west of Honiara with my family, I am originally from Wanderer Bay, south of Guadalcanal Island.

What do you like about your work?

Helen: Meeting different people and treating them with care so everyone feels the importance they bring to the airline.

Francis: I love meeting people and seeing new places. Working and travelling is always fun.

Why did you want to become a flight attendant?

Helen: I really didn't want to become one initially but this job has allowed me to travel and has boosted my self-confidence as I was a very shy person.

Francis: During my school days, I always had wanted to travel the world. I am sure this idea of travelling motivated me to love my job.

What is your favourite destination, and why?

Helen: Brisbane. It is different from Honiara, the standards are different, a colourful city with different people and with a different but nice shopping experience.

Francis: It has to be Brisbane. It was the first modern city I visited and I lived there for four years before I joined Solomon Airlines, so I know Brisbane inside out. Sydney, Bondi in particular is also a personal favourite.



Helen Piringisau and Francis Cheka.


What do you do when you are not flying?

Helen: Spend time with my family, do baking and sewing.

Francis: When I am not flying, you will find me chatting with friends on the streets of Honiara or walking my kids to school. I love catching up on my reading of the daily newspapers, doing some house chores, or simply chilling at home.

What's your future plans?

Helen: Fly as long as I can to help my family and Solomon Airlines.

Francis: I always ponder about the future but I am sure there would be something nice on the horizon. 

Things to know as visitors to our shores:

Climate ... Tropically warm and humid with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C (82.4F). April to November tends to be drier and November to April wetter.

What to wear ... Light and casual. Keep brief beachwear for the beach.

Immigration ... Commonwealth, United States and most European visitors do not need holiday visas but need return or onward tickets. People intending to work must have a work permit.

Honiara ... The capital is eight kilometres (4.97 miles) from Honiara International Airport.

Airport Tax ... SB\$100 payable by passengers (12 years and over) boarding international flights, and these are generally added onto your air ticket.

Health ... Malaria is a problem. Take anti-malarial medication a week before arrival, once a week during your stay, and for four weeks after departure. Consult your chemist or doctor about an appropriate brand of tablet. Maloprin is usually recommended.

Currency ... \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10, \$5 and \$2 Solomon Islands notes. Coins are \$1, 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c.

Business Hours ... Government and some business offices open Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturday 8am – noon.

Banks ... Bank South Pacific opens Monday to Friday 8.30am to 3pm; ANZ Banking Group open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. Pan Oceanic Bank Limited opens 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday, and ts Panatina Plaza branch opens 10am to 1pm on Saturday.

Telecommunications ... Local and international calls may be made from Our Telikom public card phones which are in prominent locations in Honiara and provincial centres or from GSM Mobile services. Telephone and Internet cards are readily available through shops, hotels and Our Telikom offices and bmobile and Vodafone outlets. GSM prepaid



and postpaid mobile cards are available in Honiara, Gizo and in some provincial centres.

Tipping ... Not expected and not encouraged.

Transport ... Taxis and buses are readily available in Honiara. Rental cars are also available from Avis, Economy, Travel Car Solomon and Zome.

International air ... National airline, Solomon Airlines operate out of Honiara International Airport. Other carriers include Fiji Airways, Virgin Australia, Air Niugini and Air Nauru.

Domestic ... Solomon Airlines operates services throughout the country.

Electricity ... 220-240 volts in Honiara and some outer island centres.

News Media ... The country has a vibrant media business offering choice in both English and Pidjin languages. Radio services are offered by state radio, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation and private operators PAOA FM and some religious bodies. Our Telikom relays BBC and other satellite TV networks while Island Sun are the two dailies, with a couple of monthly business and lifestyle magazines.

Provinces

The Solomon Islands is made up of 992 islands which are divided into nine provinces:

Choiseul - Provincial capital: Taro • **Central** - Provincial capital: Tulagi

• **Isabel** - Provincial capital: Buala

Rennell/Bellona - Provincial capital: Tigoa • **Guadalcanal** - Provincial (& national capital): Honiara

Makira/Ulawa - Provincial capital: Kira Kira • **Malaita** - Provincial capital: Auki

Western - Provincial capital: Gizo • **Temotu** - Provincial capital: Lata

The Solomon Islands are divided into nine provinces as follows:

Province	Area	Population	Highest Point	Capital
Guadalcanal	5,336 km ²	141,403	2,447m	Honiara
Central	1,000 km ²	27,928	510m	Tulagi
Western	5279 km ²	81,214	1661m	Gizo
Isabel	4,014 km ²	26,310	1,392m	Buala
Malaita	4,234 km ²	159,923	1,303m	Auki
Makira	3,188 km ²	40,386	1,250m	Kirakira
Temotu	926 km ²	24,412	923m	Lata
Choiseul	3,294 km ²	25,870	1,060m	Taro
Rennell & Bellona	276 km ²	3,025	220m	Tingoa

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SUPREME CASINO



Located right beside the Solomon Sea with amazing views and a cool sea breeze, the hotel offers 173 spacious, comfortable and fully air-conditioned rooms. It is conveniently located approximately 5kms from Honiara Henderson international airport and 2kms from the Honiara CBD (Point Cruise). Suites boast separate lounge areas and private balconies. Rooms include satellite TV with 24 hours in-house movie channels, IDD telephone access, tea/coffee and a mini bar fridge. Wi-Fi hotspots are available throughout the hotel.

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