



You are warmly invited to attend
our annual George Blair Memorial Lecture,
at Millbank (*directions below*), also on Zoom
1830hrs Friday 27 October 2023

Our joint speakers, Soundararajan Jagdish and Matthew Roberts,
present

'Medical Support at the Siege of Kohima, April 1944'

Proceeds will be donated to the [Kohima Educational Trust](#)

The Asian theatre of World War II is often overlooked other than by those with a special family or history interest. For a fateful couple of weeks in April 1944, a hastily assembled and vastly outnumbered force of Indian and British combat and support troops held off the seemingly invincible Japanese Imperial Army at India's doorstep in Kohima. Unsurprisingly, the siege and battle of Kohima have achieved mythic and iconic status in the history of modern warfare. The story of the siege of Kohima continues to inspire post-war generations and has become synonymous with courage, determination, and leadership.

This joint presentation describes the remarkable performance, against all odds, of medical personnel in Kohima who themselves suffered many casualties and also highlights those qualities of leadership that ensured the garrison's survival.

An aspect that often goes unnoticed is the critical role played by the indomitable Naga tribespeople. After all, it was on their homeland that these ferocious engagements were fought. In this context, the speakers thank Friends of Millbank for generously and readily agreeing to their request to support the Kohima Educational Trust, a charitable organisation that provides educational assistance to the young people of Nagaland, India.

***Soundararajan Jagdish** is an independent researcher. He has served in the Defence Medical Services and the NHS, specialising in anaesthesia and pain management.*

***Matthew Roberts** is an Attending Anesthesiologist at Denver Health in Colorado, USA. He served in the British Army as an anaesthetist and has an abiding interest in military medical history.*

For more detail on our George Blair Memorial Lectures, see <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/lectures/>

Prior registration required. Refreshments 1730hrs, supper at Millbank 2000hrs.
All are welcome. Register [HERE](#) or via www.friendsofmillbank.org



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Chairman's Extras on the Siege of Kohima:



NO. 14,962 ONE PENNY

Daily Mail

FOR KING AND EMPIRE

LATE WAR NEWS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 1944



Japs Fear Allies May Strike for Banda Sea

THE Japanese fear that the Allies may soon start operations in the Banda Sea, north of Port Darwin, Australia. Their fears, according to a Tokyo spokesman, are based on a big increase in Allied air operations over the area in March amounting to 165 planes in March against 974 in April. The Banda Sea offers the Allies a big choice of targets, for it is bounded by the Celebes in the west, by Timor in the south, by the Moluccas in the north, and by Dutch New Guinea in the east. The Japs are also watching the Karier. The Americans have completed new air bases in the Moluccas, according to Tokyo, and have doubled attacks on the Karier.

Red Army Storm Sebastopol

NEMESIS

One Momentous Day - The Story

YESTERDAY'S BOMBING SUNDAY AND BONGAI



800 PLANES OUT - ONE LOST

Big Night Force Out After Day-long Blitz

BRITISH ARMIES ADVANCE ON TWO FRONTS

Burma Japs Hurlled Back; Coast Towns Rocked by French Explosions

Eighth Gain 10 Miles

GOOD news comes today from two distant British fronts. In Burma, the Japanese threat to India has been smashed. Their Kohima force are everywhere being flung back into the jungles, suffering massive losses as they go. In the central Italy zone - the Forgotten Front of Europe - the Germans, possibly because the food supplies at the front are spreading, across their rear communications, have been forced to withdraw for many miles. The Eighth Army are following hard on their heels, taking over each position as it is abandoned. Where the withdrawal will stop is not yet known.

CRUSHING JAP DEFEAT ROUND KOHIMA

From Daily Mail Special Correspondent

CAROL, Tuesday.

EVERY report from the front tonight points to a crushing Jap defeat in the battle of Kohima. Battered enemy units, outworn and outmanoeuvred, are facing annihilation by massed Allied forces.

Tokio's dream of seizing bases in India before the monsoon breaks has been shattered. Already more than half the Japanese troops have been destroyed. Planes, artillery, and infantry are concentrated against them and our tanks are rolling straight over their bunker positions, smashing them or blowing them up.

Their casualties are disproportionately heavy and still increasing. They have had no tanks to support them, and now the enemy command have little hope of getting armour through to their surrounded troops.

There are signs that supplies of food and ammunition are being cut off, though to what extent they are is difficult to say.

From Dusk to Dawn with 'L' for London

The story is told behind a whole lifetime of adventure packed by a little group of men into the few hours between dusk and dawn.

The heroes of the story are the crew of a Lancaster bomber. In one short night their experience included a hand-to-hand battle, a rescue in mid-air, a "ditch-landing" in a marshy area, and a dramatic rescue from the sea.

The night began quietly enough. The Lancaster for London reached its target, Rotterdam, at midnight. It was a few minutes past midnight when the plane was hit by a "ditch-landing" in a marshy area, and a dramatic rescue from the sea.

Peace Moves in Bevan 'Trial' Today

By WILSON BRADBENT, Political Correspondent

STRENDUS efforts will be made in the morning to bring the Bevan trial to a close. The Government will try to get the trial to a close in the morning.

Daily Mail, 10 May 1944 (Soundararajan Jagdish, personal collection)

Suggested reading:

[The Battles of Imphal and Kohima](http://www.national-army-museum.org.uk) – National Army Museum website

Road of Bones: The Epic Siege of Kohima 1944. Fergal Keane. Harper Press, 2011.

Burma '44: The Battle That Turned Britain's War in the East. James Holland. Corgi Books, 2017.

The road to Kohima : The Naga experience in the Second World War. Charles Chasie & Harry Fecitt. Infinite Ideas, 2020.

Kohima 1944 - The battle that saved India. Robert Lyman. Osprey Publishing, 2010.

Published article:

Roberts M, Jagdish S. Medical Support at the Siege of Kohima, April 1944. *Journal of Anesthesia History*, 2020; 6 (2): 54-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janh.2019.03.002>



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The [Kohima Educational Trust](#) - *Using the past to benefit the future:*



Kohima Educational Trust scholars, 2022

Nagaland, in northeast India where Kohima is situated, is mountainous and not far from the Himalayas. The fighting during the 1944 battle was close quarters and extremely fierce in harsh and treacherous terrain.

The people of Nagaland are tribespeople – they hunted with spears and were fearsome warriors who helped the British and acted as guides, porters and fellow combatants. The Battle of Kohima was the first defeat of the Japanese by the British Army, and a turning point in what became known as the Burma Campaign. Without the Naga support, it is doubtful whether the battle could have been won.

British veterans of the battle decided to do something to help their Naga friends and repay the debt owed to the Naga people. They wanted to make remembrance into something more permanent so together they created the Kohima Educational Trust. When talking to their Naga friends the response they received was delight that they had not been forgotten.

It was agreed that an excellent way to help would be to assist the young descendants of the Naga veterans with their educational needs. Some of the more remote villages in Nagaland share a school and children travel for many miles to reach it. Sometimes the cost is too high, sometimes the children are needed at home to farm the fields. The scholarship programme created by KET has given financial assistance to over 800 children over the last 15 years. KET is currently developing further programmes to assist Naga students with their educational needs. Its motto: *Using the past to benefit the future.*

Next year will be the 80th anniversary of this great battle that contributed to peace at the end of the Second World War. The Trust aims to pass on the memory to new generations to help build a brighter future – in the UK it holds a special service every year in the city of York when the families and descendants of the soldiers who fought can get together.



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Photos from the Kohima Educational Trust:



Present and future scholars



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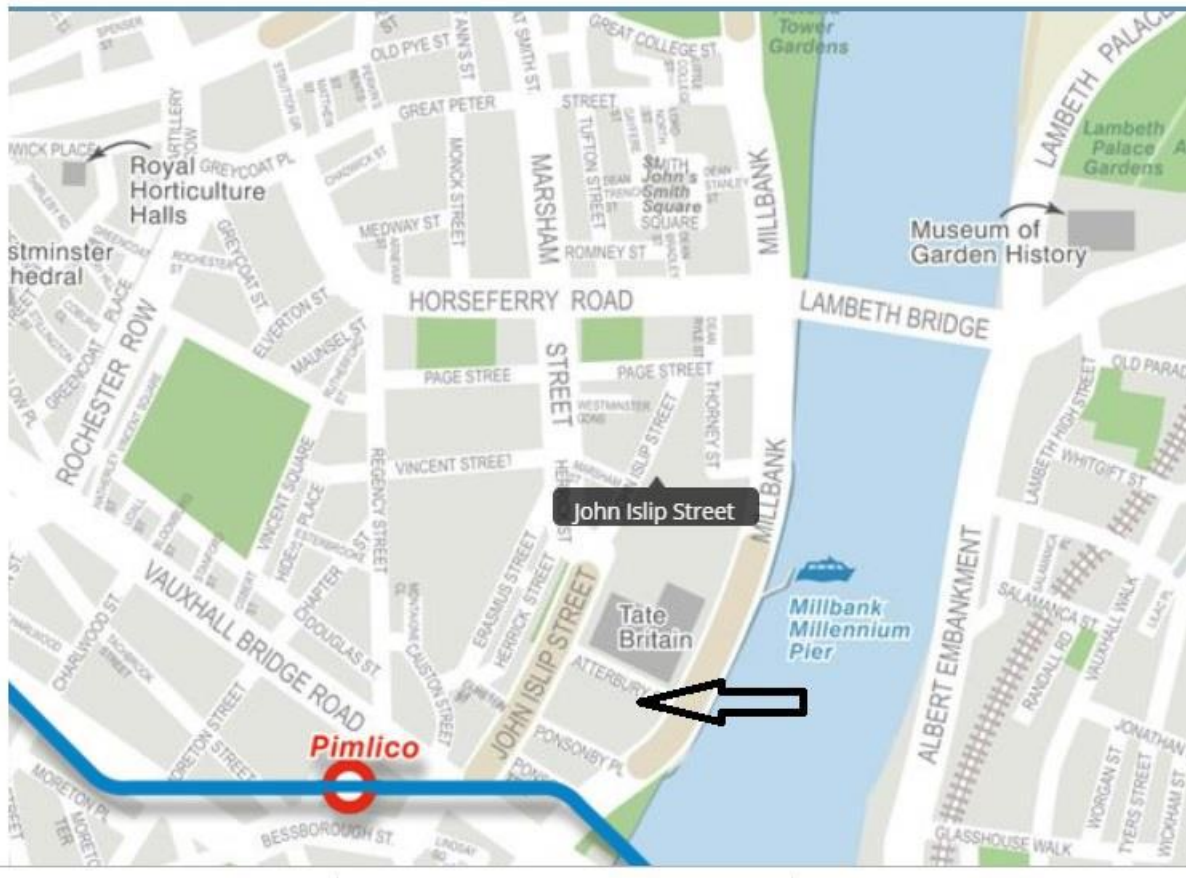
Directions for Millbank (Chelsea College of Arts, formerly the Royal Army Medical College)

The entrance to Reception is via Atterbury Street, opposite Tate Britain (arrowed on map below).

We meet for light refreshments at Reception from 1730hrs. The talk commences at 1830hrs.

Guests and non-members are very welcome. Everyone attending the talk, whether in person at Millbank or online via Zoom, is requested to register beforehand via www.friendsofmillbank.org

LondonTown.com - John Islip Street Location Map



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