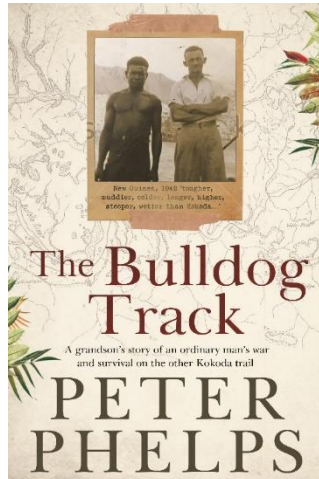


The Bulldog Track

Peter Phelps

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This is the story of Tom Phelps and the 'other Kokoda Track', a story that has never been told. Seventy-five years later, Tom's grandson, award-winning actor and writer Peter Phelps, is sharing the unforgettable tale of resilience and survival.



March 1942: The world is at war. Too old to fight and with jobs scarce at home, Tom Phelps found work as a carpenter in the goldfields of the New Guinea Highlands. No one expected the Japanese to attack in the Pacific. Then they took the northern cities of New Guinea. As word of the invasion and the atrocities being committed spread, Tom and his fellow workers, men of differing nationalities, trades and professions, were caught in the middle of it all. After the airfield was bombed, the Australian military told them to get out via the 'other' Kokoda Track. They set off through the jungle into the unknown. Kukukuku hunters and Ghurka allies would silently let them pass but did not do the same for the pursuing Japanese soldiers.

With no news of the men, back home in Sydney, his wife, Rose Phelps, their son, George, and three daughters, Joy, Shirley and Anne, were told that Tom had died. But Tom wasn't dead. Travelling by foot, canoe, raft, schooner, train, luck and cunning, Tom Phelps would eventually make it back to Sydney, turning up at Central Station half-starved, in rags, suffering from malaria and wearing the pith helmet he had kept with him the whole way.

The unforgettable escape was documented on Tom's helmet in indelible ink. And his stories of New Guinea would lead his son and grandson to their own experiences with the country. Seventy-five years later, Tom's helmet sat next to his grandson Peter as he wrote this book. *The Bulldog Track* is a grandson's story of an ordinary man's war. It is an incredible tale of survival and resilience and the indomitable Aussie spirit.

Peter Phelps is one of Australia's best-loved actors, regularly appearing in film, television and theatre productions. He is an AFI and Logie award winner and has directed episodes of *All Saints* and *Home and Away*. In 1994 he wrote the bestselling book *Sex Without Madonna: True Confessions of a Hired Gun in Tinseltown* (a wry look at his years in Hollywood). Growing up hearing the family stories about his grandfather's incredible survival in New Guinea during WWII Peter is now, with his father's encouragement, writing a very personal book about Tom Phelps and the other Kokoda Track.

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