

About the Authors

The authors of this book have quite different professional backgrounds, yet they share a strong, long-lived interest in the Rabaul area of New Britain, Papua New Guinea (PNG)—its history, people and volcanoes. Both first came to New Britain in the 1960s: Neville Threlfall in 1961 as a missionary involved in pastoral ministry for the Methodist and later United Church, Wally Johnson in 1969 as a member of an Australian Government field party mapping the geology of New Britain.

Wally Johnson was born on Tyneside in the north-east of England and is a graduate of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London. He is an honorary associate professor in the Department of Pacific Affairs, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University (ANU). Johnson worked for many years for the Australian Government's geoscientific agency in Canberra, Geoscience Australia, first as a volcanic geologist and research scientist and later in senior management roles. Most of his research career has focused on the volcanology of Papua New Guinea, much of which was undertaken in close association with colleagues at the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory, headquarters of the national volcanological service of Papua New Guinea. Johnson is an honorary life member of the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior and an honorary fellow of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics. His previous publications with ANU Press are *Fire Mountains of the Islands: A History of Volcanic Eruptions and Disaster Management in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands* (2013) and *Roars from the Mountain: Colonial Management of the 1951 Volcanic Disaster at Mount Lamington* (2020).

Neville Threlfall was born in Western Australia and grew up on a farm in the north-east Wheatbelt. He attended Perth Modern School and the University of Western Australia, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in history and French, and then undertook theological studies and pastoral ministry for

the Methodist Church. Offering to serve in Methodist Overseas Missions, Threlfall was posted to PNG, and, while in the Rabaul region (1961–80), became heavily involved in working with the Methodist Mission Press (later Trinity Press) in the production of literature in English and several PNG languages. He also worked with the Bible Society of PNG on the Bible in Kuanua and Tok Pisin. He lived for over nine years in Rabaul town and on nearby Matupit Island, an island that plays a key role in *Return to Volcano Town*. Threlfall wrote *One Hundred Years in the Islands: The Methodist/United Church in the New Guinea Islands Region 1875–1975* (1975), and, in 1980, was invited to write a history of Rabaul. The research and writing for this history were conducted in part at The Australian National University during tenure of a visiting fellowship in 1981–82. Threlfall next returned to parish ministry in Western Australia, and later in New South Wales, where he is now retired on the Central Coast. His book *Mangroves, Coconuts and Frangipani: The Story of Rabaul* was published in 2012 by the Rabaul Historical Society. He was awarded the PNG Companion of the Order of the Star of Melanesia in 2020 for his pastoral ministry, Bible translation and historical writing.

This text is taken from *Return to Volcano Town: Reassessing the 1937–1943 Volcanic Eruptions at Rabaul*, by R. Wally Johnson and Neville A. Threlfall, published 2023 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.