



TRAILBLAZER . . . Charlie Lynn at the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea after a ban on logging was signed.

Picture: Rob MacColl

Kokoda Track victory against logging

John Wright

IN PORT MORESBY

THE Kokoda Track has moved a step closer to Australian icon status with Gallipoli after moves to permanently prevent logging along the 110km wartime track.

The Sydney-based Kokoda Track Foundation said yesterday that villages along the track, in Papua New Guinea, had decided to forego logging concessions which could have virtually destroyed the track.

The track, between Kokoda in PNG's north and Owers Corner

near the capital, Port Moresby, was the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting involving Australians in World War II and is becoming increasingly popular with adventure trekkers from around the world.

Foundation chairman and NSW parliamentarian Charlie Lynn said in Port Moresby yesterday that the village ban on logging along the track had virtually guaranteed the its preservation as a historical, cultural and natural treasure.

"The Kokoda Track is already an icon which would have been lost to future generations if logging had been allowed on it," he said.

"In years to come it could become more powerful than Gallipoli in the Australian consciousness.

"In Gallipoli, we fought for Britain and lost. At Kokoda, we fought for Australia and won.

"Young Australians are starting to discover this and are walking the track in increasing numbers. About 1500 will be making the trek this year."

In the Kokoda campaign, in the second half of 1942, inexperienced and overwhelmingly outnumbered Australian troops fought a desperate defensive action against a Japanese Imperial Army advancing on Port

Moresby for a planned invasion of Australia.

The enemy eventually was pushed back and defeated by the outnumbered Australians in a victory which broke the spell of the Japanese Army's invincibility.

The privately funded Kokoda Track Foundation is spearheading moves to have the track declared a Memorial National Park and to establish it as a model for a self-sustaining, locally-controlled eco-trekking tourism industry in PNG.

Its plans include the placement of statues, war monuments, village museums and traditional walking lodges.