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MvM Newsletter 10

February 2010

Chris Diercke – educator and Lark Force historian

BY KEITH JACKSON

CHRIS DIERCKE JP, who died late last month, had a passion to uncover the truth of what happened to the people imprisoned in Rabaul after the Japanese invasion.



Chris was born at Vunapope in 1948, a direct descendant of Queen Emma. His mother, Gwendoline, was evacuated from Rabaul just before the Japanese invasion.

His father, Rudolf, a German national, spent most of the war in a

Japanese internment camp as punishment for helping the crew of a downed American bomber. Chris's 82-year-old great-grandmother, Phebe, died in the camp.

Gwendoline's first husband, planter Vivian Ives MC, was one of more than 30 people massacred by the Japanese in February 1944 at Kavieng Wharf.

Chris lived in PNG until moving to Australia for tertiary education. After graduating in Armidale in 1974, he spent four decades as a teacher, including many years teaching history, and principal.

In retirement he committed himself to PNG affairs as a team member of the Lark Force Wilderness Track trekking project, as PNG's representative on the International Porter Protection Group, and as a committee member of both the PNG Association and the Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust.

His passions were Lark Force history, mentoring and training, and developing the wilderness track in the Gazelle Peninsula as a

tribute to Lark Force, which had garrisoned Rabaul in the face of the Japanese invasion.

"The Australian government officials and military top brass never had any interest in Rabaul," he once said. "These buggers were trapped and the response was a real shambles. I think many want to forget it all together."

Chris lived in Newcastle, where he had spent many years as principal of the Garden Suburb Public School, but returned to PNG regularly as a teacher and mentor. He spoke fluent Pidgin and Kuanua (Tolai).

Just before he died, Chris - working in collaboration with Japanese researcher Harumi Sakaguchi - felt he was close to establishing the whereabouts of the missing nominal roll, listing the civilian and military personnel who were aboard the *Montevideo Maru* when it was sunk in 1942.

He was convinced that, instead of the accepted figure of 1,053 prisoners, there could have been 1,080 or more on the ship.

Chris has been instrumental in the development of the Lark Force Wilderness Track, which he aimed to establish as a benchmark for the fair treatment of porters in PNG.

He was also working as a volunteer for South Sea Horizons, a small group promoting New Britain treks on behalf of tribal landowners, who had embraced the project with great enthusiasm.

Chris was a good man, committee to the welfare of PNG and its people. He will be very much missed.

We extend our condolences to his wife Peta and family.

Rev John May – prisoner, chaplain and counsellor

BY KEITH JACKSON

ONE OF OUR Friends and a great Australian, Rev John May, chaplain to the Lark Force in Rabaul, died in Hobart last month at the age of 95.

John was one of two padres attached to Lark Force and, after being captured, was sent to Japan on the *Naruto Maru* and imprisoned in Zentsuji POW camp.

“Early on the morning of Sunday 22 June,” John later wrote, “the whole camp was roused and all the civilians and military personnel (except officers and eight civilians) were later marched out of camp.

“The Japanese told us that they were being taken to a ship [which was the *Montevideo Maru*]....

“None of us saw the prisoners march on to the ship because the camp was not visible from the water, but there is not the least doubt in any of our minds but that the men sailed on that day.

“While I was in Japan a certain camp official, Lt Hosotani, told certain prisoners that the ship carrying the Rabaul personnel had been sunk.”

Soon after he returned from captivity in Japan, Rev May spent some time at Oxford in England and later became chaplain at RMC Duntroon.

On behalf of all Friends, I communicated our condolences and deepest sympathy to his wife Mary, daughter Marian and the family. In a wonderful gesture, Mary asked that, instead of flowers at the funeral, friends donate to the memorial fund and I thank all those people who did so.

I never met John, but we communicated by email regularly over the last year. He mentioned in his most recent message that he was one of the very few survivors of all those who had been taken prisoner after the Japanese invasion of Rabaul.

See *George Oakes’ transcription of a speech by John May on pages 10 and 11.*

Govt pursues MvM war grave issue

BY MAJ GEN PAUL STEVENS
Director Australian Office of War Graves

YOU MAY have noted recent media reports stating that the *Centaur* has been declared a war grave.

Technically speaking no declaration has been made. The ship is in a protection zone under the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976. One of the reasons the ship is being protected is that it is a military maritime gravesite, thus the interpretation by reporters and others that it has been declared a war grave.

We are continuing to investigate measures to protect the remains on the *Montevideo Maru*.

In the meeting with the Minister, [Keith] mentioned *SS Mendi*... listed under the UK Protection of Military Remains Act. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has confirmed it has not been declared a war grave.

The Historic Shipwrecks Act, which applies only to Australian waters, is under review by the Department of Environment. Submissions have raised the issue of including a declaration when a wreck contains military or civilian casualties, and the Department is considering incorporating such a provision in any amendments.

The review has also raised the issue of consistency with the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, which Australia is considering signing. If signed, the Convention would be the means through which Australia could negotiate or signal a desire for protection for wrecks of Australian vessels and aircraft outside [our] waters.

[Normally] under the Convention nations would be dealing with sovereign vessels. We are continuing to investigate whether and how Australia might be able to negotiate protection for the *Montevideo Maru*: a vessel in which Australia has a great and obvious interest, but which belongs to another party. We will keep you advised of any progress as we go along.

Discussions begin on a Montevideo Maru memorial

BY KEITH JACKSON

A NUMBER of committee members were in Canberra late January for meetings with the Director and Assistant Director of the Australian War Memorial, Steve Gower and Nola Anderson, and with our legal advisers, Bernard Collaery and Kellie Irvine.

The lawyers briefed us on incorporating our organisation, which will be done soon. Bernard has most generously agreed to pay all expenses associated with this process as a gift to the Trust. At an appropriate time we will want to officially launch the Trust, although this may not happen until later in 2010.

War Memorial officials are enthusiastic about the commemorative project and we hope to obtain in-principle approval for the installation of a monument in the grounds at the March meeting of the War Memorial Council.

A project advisory group, including representatives of the AWM and the Trust, will be established to guide this project. As you might imagine, constructing a memorial of this type is both a complex and an expensive exercise.

Over the next few weeks we will develop a more precise figure of what an appropriate sculpture will cost. Half a million dollars is our notional budget ceiling but, while maintaining quality, we will try to get this figure down as much as possible. Ideally, we will dedicate the memorial some time in 2012.

The AWM will identify an appropriate outdoor site for the memorial and will partner the Trust as we move through the many steps required to design, build and dedicate it.

The committee members present, who were in Canberra at their own expense, held two meetings during the day. It was recommended that, when it is incorporated, that the Trust levy an annual membership fee of \$50. for the many legitimate expenses that have to be borne and which are so far being met privately.

Phil Ainsworth, co-convenor of the memorial sub-committee, produced a concept marketing plan for fundraising. The next step, in which all Friends can participate, especially if you have an existing contact, is to identify which companies or organisations might be invited to become major sponsors. Email Phil at p.ainsworth@kingco.com.au with suggestions.

I hope that Kerry Sibraa and I will meet with Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin late February or early March to discuss the respective contributions of the Trust and the Federal government to what is an important national project.

Meanwhile, Page Harrison & Co of Milsons Point in Sydney have just agreed to be honorary auditors to the Trust.

On a final, unrelated, matter of the various views that are held about what happened to the civilians and troops who were isolated in Rabaul. Our submission to the Federal government canvassed the facts as best they can be determined at this great distance.

That said, the committee doesn't see itself as an arbiter of truth - history is written by historians and I guess they get as close to it as their researches permit. In making its submission, the committee provided as accurate a version as we could of the events in question, in consultation with people like Hank Nelson and Rod Miller and after taking into account the many books that have been written, as well as the views of individuals.

The main function of the committee is to make sure that the victims and their relatives are adequately recognised.

People are entitled to their own views, and I hope that nothing we shall do will get in the way of that.

FEEDBACK

HARUMI SAKAGUCHI

Independent researcher, Japan

Some feedback so there won't be any misunderstanding amongst readers. I am far from close to establishing the whereabouts of the nominal roll. What I did finally get to do last week at the National Archives of Japan is to sight what I firmly believe is an authentic copy of the original English translation of the 6 January 1943 letter prepared by the Japanese Navy forwarding the Roll Book to the PW Information Bureau.

I understand that Maj H Williams took a nominal roll out of Japan back to Australia. I believe it is this Roll Book that he returned to Australia with. Incredibly, the nominal roll was then reportedly lost. I have absolutely no notion of where and how exactly it was lost and who was responsible for the loss.

Based on my study so far, I have some initial idea of how and where I might be able to explore around the subject here in Japan but I am not yet ready to write about my feasible research direction.

BERNARD COLLAERY

I should be honoured and pleased to assist your Committee pro bono with incorporation pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Act (ACT) and to seek tax deductible status from the Treasury/ATO.

My father has no known grave and I often visit the memorial at Runnymede to the 20,000 odd WW2 Europe theatre aviators with no grave. He was a RAAF Beaufighter pilot who went missing in action in June '44 after ditching in the North Sea shortly before I was born.

GREG HARRISON

I would be delighted to act as honorary auditor of the Trust. There is a slight and obscure family connection with New Guinea and the evacuation therefrom during the Second World War. No doubt I'll bore you with that some other day.

NORI NAGASAWA

Member, POW Research Network, Japan

We are in big sorrow of Mr John May's sudden death and remember his thought for tragedy of Montevideo Maru. We wish to contribute small donation to your Memorial Committee.

NORM FURNESS

President, 2/22 Battalion Lark Force Association

Please find enclosed two cheques to help assist your project re the Montevideo Maru Memorial. We have over many years supported the erection of memorial but now all the few remaining survivors of Lark Force are all about to go or over plus more are in good health we can only do so much. So keep up the good work so our lost mates will never be forgotten.

ALAN GILL

In your January newsletter Edna Oakes makes several criticisms of my article in the Catholic Weekly about the affair of the *Montevideo Maru*. Some are valid; others are not.

The picture in the article was of Edna's father, the Rev Arthur Brawn, not her father-in-law, the Rev Dan Oakes. It was correctly captioned, other than a sub-editor's unfortunate insertion of the word "survivor".

Edna disputes my claim that the old man (her father) carried a “grouse”. Perhaps the word “grievance” would have been better. He was certainly angry with a perceived lack of interest in the affair on the part of government and public officials.

I also detected, during a long interview at the *Sydney Morning Herald* offices some 30 years ago, a sense of guilt that his own life had been spared and his mates’ had not. I was touched by this at the time, and did not consider it a human failing on his part.

The use of the word “missos” was my own, and was in quotation marks as an example of Australian slang. It was not intended as a direct quote from him.

When Arthur Brawn made his visit to the SMH office with a large bundle of papers under his arm his purpose was not just to talk about the *Montevideo Maru*, but to talk about the Dreadnought Scheme, which brought “farm lads” from Britain to Australia in the inter-war years. Thanks largely to Arthur Brawn and Edna and George Oakes I was prompted to take a lifelong interest in both.

PETER STONE

Oceans Enterprises, 303 Commercial Road, Yarram VIC 3971

Another excellent newsletter, thankyou. As my *Hostages to Freedom - The Fall of Rabaul* has been mentioned a few times (and frequently by those in personal contact), I would like Friends to be aware of an error in the book, highlighted several years ago I might add, by a secondary school student.

On page 275, I mention that Minister Ward made an announcement in the House of Representatives about the *Montevideo Maru* in July 1942. The Erratum printed in the 2006 edition of *Hostages to Freedom* reads: *Page 275. Third paragraph. The announcement by Minister Ward was made during a Parliamentary debate on 5 October 1945. (The incorrect date shown as July 1942 was in fact the date of the loss of the Montevideo Maru). The Australian government was not aware of the loss of the Montevideo Maru until after the surrender. Ref: (Victoria) State Library, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, Book Number LT 328.9402.*

The error is entirely mine due no doubt to a lapse in concentration at the time and I apologise to owners of the first two printings of the book.

DOUGLAS STEWART

The January 2010 newsletter makes good reading with news of positive developments which I am sure all of us hope will bring a satisfactory conclusion to the aims of the Committee. However, I must admit to some personal fear that we may be a long way from that goal.

Yesterday's news about the hospital ship *Centaur* in its resting place is both wonderful and saddening, even for those who have no direct link with the tragedy which occurred simply because of the total disregard for human life and international convention by an aggressor.

But there are compelling factors why our government in Canberra might now turn attention towards a similar 'settlement' of the MvM tragedy- albeit caused by friendly fire. For it has been acknowledged that the fate of Lark Force was sealed by our government of the day. This fact was poignantly illustrated in the recent re-run of the history of the 2/22nd Battalion on the ABC TV program *Compass*.

I cannot claim any link in the loss of life on the MvM, only that several members of the Battalion Band, including its Bandmaster Sgt Arthur Gullidge were personally known to me through association in Salvation Army banding.

In 1942 whilst on leave from my unit in Albury, I was walking down the darkened street when I suddenly heard the glorious sound of a brass band on the march. It was the 2/22nd Band - possibly in a farewell appearance prior to embarkation.

JIM CLARK

11 Cemetery Road, Benalla VIC 3672

My brother-in-law, Peter Pritchard recently became a Friend of Montevideo Maru and sends me copies of the newsletter by post as I do not have a computer. I wish to become a member and buy a copy of the DVD *The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru*.

I've only found out about the tragedy but I always knew that my uncle, William Ray Mason, died at sea after being sunk by the Americans in an accident in WWII. He was my mother's brother and she did not speak much about the war. Every now and again she would share a story in quiet times, but most family tragedies were locked away behind a stoic reserve.

I was one of 11 children growing up in Benalla, a quiet country town. My mother and my Dad were trying to run a small dairy farm in Benalla in 1940. One day her brother Ray and his unit (2/22 Battalion) marched through Benalla from Trawool and camped on the showgrounds.

It's rumoured he went AWL to see her on the farm on the outskirts of Benalla - the last time she saw him. Years later she learned he was coming home from Rabaul when the ship was sunk by accident by the Americans. All we had to remind us of him was a photo in Army uniform and a mother-of-pearl oyster shell which he sent back to Australia from Vunapope.

For years these artefacts sat on the mantelpiece at home. She never spoke to me about them but they were passed on to me when she died. This is how it was for nearly 60 years.

It was only when they found the last resting place of HMAS *Sydney* that I became interested in finding out the name of the ship which carried my uncle. After participating in local ABC Radio talkback about the above story, I was inundated with information about the 2/22, Lark Force and the Montevideo tragedy.

I've been to their reunion at Trawool for the last two years and met the handful of veterans now left. I've shown them Ray's photo and the large oyster shell which has two natives carrying a pig between them. They did not remember him but one old digger broke down telling me how he himself had escaped. He'd got through the jungle to the sea on the other side of the island and was desperate to get on a small boat which was already overloaded. In the end they took him because he was small and skinny.

I've also spoken to Sister Berenice Twohill, who was a teaching nun at Vunapope when the Japanese invaded. I sent her a photo of my uncle and the oyster shell. She was so pleased with it she rang and talked for an hour and a half on the phone about Rabaul, the POWs and the government's lack of recognition for the victims and their families. She believes Ray, who she never met, probably bought the shell at a tourist place in Chinatown in Rabaul in those days where the natives took artefacts to sell.

So my knowledge of my uncle snowballs nearly every day. I'm trying to drum up local interest in the 2/22nd's march from Trawool to Bonegilla. 2010 will be the 70th anniversary. I've written to my local MP and he has contacted the Victorian minister in charge of community affairs about honouring the last remaining veterans in some way.

I would like to find out the actual route because I've seen a photo of the 2/22 camping at Tarrawingee (near Wangaratta). Ray was from that area and my grand-parents had a big property there. In an ironic twist of fate Ray's cousin Roy Simmonds also went down on the *Montevideo Maru*. I assume they enlisted together and went to Rabaul together. I've met Roy Simmonds' son whom he never met, but he said he was named Ray after his father's best mate Ray Mason, my uncle. These connections just keep coming up.

One day the Australian government will realise the enormous tragedy that this was to so many citizens. Relatives and friends are still finding out today snippets of information about their loved ones. My mother and her parents pulled the curtain across years ago and bore their grief in silence, but I think the story should be told again and again to anyone who wants to listen.

FEBRUARY NOTES

MONTEVIDEO MARU DVD

JOHN SCHINDLER

The public release of *The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru* has now been classified by the Attorney General's Department and we are running to schedule with an expected release date of the DVD's of 15 February.

The DVD now has bonus material in addition to the extended version of the documentary, which runs for almost two hours.

Bonus 1 is a discussion with two internationally respected wreck experts regarding the probable condition of the ship today, the search techniques possible, what the ship would look like now and whether there might be any human remains. Both men wore poppies on their lapels as a mark of respect to the lost men.

Bonus 2 is an introduction by myself, filmed at the top of the Cape Bojeador lighthouse in the Philippines with panoramic views showing where the ship sailed on 30 June 1942. There was a magnificent sunset in the west in the direction of Hainan to pinpoint the location where the men rest.

We then move on to Subic Bay for coverage of the service at the Hellships Memorial for the 1 July 2009 dedication of the shrine to those lost on the Montevideo Maru. Our coverage includes excerpts from all speeches and shots of magnificent wreaths containing many beautiful flowers.

The extended DVD is on sale for \$40 including packaging and posting. Friends who paid the earlier price of \$35 will not be charged extra.

ORDER YOUR COPY: Cheques for \$40 to 'Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee' at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. Or make a direct deposit to the Committee's bank account: BSB 082-401 Account No 16-083-2367. If you make a direct deposit, let Teddy Haryjanto know by sending an email to tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au

NATIONAL ARCHIVES DISPLAY

DONALD HOOK

The sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* with the loss of 1,053 Allied prisoners is featured in a major display at the National Archives in Canberra. The display, *Memory of a Nation*, traces events and decisions that have shaped Australia and the lives of its people.

The display includes an extract from the nominal roll of prisoners, a plan of the ship, details from the submarine's log and a photograph of a memorial service in Rabaul on the fourth anniversary of the sinking.

There's also a Territory of New Guinea 'Form of Information of Death' relating to Ernest Charles Bye, 60, a master mariner, who'd been in Rabaul for 18 months before the Japanese invasion.

The informant, his daughter Joan, a schoolteacher in Queensland, stated on 6 April 1946 that her father had been lost when the Montevideo Maru was sunk.

A 'Military Service & Casualty Form' lists Gunner John Eshott Carr, who turned 20 just before the ship left Rabaul, as "missing". In late 1945 this was changed to "believed dead".

The display will run until 30 May. Admission is free.

RECRUIT PEOPLE AS FRIENDS

The Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust has many tasks, including fundraising for a memorial at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. There are now 200 Friends of Montevideo Maru and the more Friends we have, the more our voices will be heard in Canberra. Encourage people to join as Friends and receive this monthly newsletter by emailing Keith Jackson at benelong@bigpond.net.au (or write to PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089).

DONATE TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

Please give what you can afford and encourage friends, relatives and other people (especially companies that may see this as a good project) to do the same.

PAYMENTS. Cheques to 'Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee' at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. Or make a direct deposit to the Committee's bank account: BSB 082-401 A/c No 16-083-2367. If you make a direct deposit, let Teddy Haryjanto know by sending an email to tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au

MEMORIAL FUND. Total contributions \$4,950 (last month \$4,050). New donors: Mike Sullivan \$50, Håkan Gustafsson \$136.11, Keith Jackson \$63.89, Sandy McNab \$200, Jim Clark \$35, Patrick Bourke \$50, Peter & Betty Muller \$50, Tony Pryke \$35, 2/22nd Battalion Association \$200, Norm Furness \$100 [includes Rev John May donations and DVD sales]

PURPOSE

The Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee represents the interests of the families of the soldiers and civilians captured in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion in January 1942, many of whom are believed to have perished on the Montevideo Maru when it was torpedoed off the Philippines on 1 July 1942.

The purpose of the Committee is to gain national recognition and greater understanding of the tragedy and its antecedents in the interests of relatives and the historical record.

OBJECTIVES

These draft objectives are currently being modified in the light of legal advice.

1. To appropriately memorialise the tragedy of the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* to facilitate comfort and closure in the minds of the victims' relatives.
2. To secure national recognition and stimulate action to provide greater knowledge of the events that led to the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*.
3. To locate the nominal roll brought back from Japan and deposited with Central Army Records that is believed to include the names of all the prisoners on board the *Montevideo Maru*.
4. To engage the Commonwealth in declaring the site of the sinking an official war grave.
5. To undertake whatever actions are necessary in the attainment of these objectives.

OFFICE BEARERS

Patron: Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

President: Adjunct Professor Keith Jackson AM

Vice-President: Hon Kerry Sibraa AO

Secretary: Bob Lawrence

Public Officer: Donald Hook

Committee members: Andrea Williams, Clive Troy, Phil Ainsworth, Elizabeth Thurston (War Grave), Philip 'Hooky' Street

Legal Advisers: Bernard Collaery, Kellie Irvine

Historical Adviser: Emeritus Professor Hank Nelson

Honorary Auditors: Page Harrison & Co

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

The committee is organised into four functional sub-committees, each with a convenor. Membership of sub-committees is open to people with expertise even though they are not office bearers. The sub-committees and their functions are:

MEMORIAL

Co-convenors: Phil Ainsworth; Clive Troy

Task: Memorial fundraising and project management

Activities: Fundraising; memorial design and construction, AWM liaison

WAR GRAVE

Convenor: Elizabeth Thurston

Task: Declare sinking site as official war grave

Activities: Liaison with Office Australian of Australian War Graves

RECOGNITION

Convenor: Andrea Williams

Task: Ensure the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru stories are a continuing part of Australian history

Activities: Form and manage a History Working Party including government representation to ensure this important part of history is permanently entrenched in the Australian story. Education.

NOMINAL ROLL

Convenor: Vacant

Task: Search for and locate the nominal roll

Activities: Liaison with relevant authorities (e.g., Office of Minister for Defence Personnel, Defence Department, RSL), establish a joint working party

CONTACT

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The most disastrous tragedy that befell civilians

REV JOHN MAY

The late John May gave this speech on 2 July 1988 at the Uniting Theological College, North Parramatta in the process of rededicating a plaque commemorating the ten Methodist missionaries lost on the Montevideo Maru.

WHEN YOU asked me to contribute something to this occasion, you give me a very difficult task. I suspect that, like me, you will be disappointed there are no personal details about the missionaries.

There are two problems. The first is the obvious one of trying to remember details of what happened 45 years ago. The second is that, though I was in the same camp as they were, it was for only about eight weeks and, as you will see, we had little opportunity to spend time together. It seems that the best that I can do is to tell you what it was like during those eight weeks.

When the Japanese landed at Rabaul on 23 January 1942, and pushed us back at the cost of about 3,000 Japanese lives, they proceeded to round up the European men and the soldiers and put them in part of the Army camp on Malaguna Avenue in Rabaul. The Mission Sisters and Army Nurses had already taken refuge in the Mission of the Sacred Heart at Vunapope near Kokopo, about 25 miles away, and they stayed in the convent there. On Easter Day, I was able to celebrate the Eucharist for them in the convent and they gave me a rare treat, an egg for breakfast.

My place as Chaplain had been at the Army Hospital at Kokopo. On 28 April, the hospital was closed and we were taken into Rabaul. From time to time, other soldiers and civilians had been captured and brought in, so that by now the camp held about 200 civilians and 900 soldiers. The Japanese did not recognise us as internees or prisoners of war and refused to notify our names to Red Cross or anyone else.

However, one remarkable thing happened. In early April, everyone was allowed to write a letter home and the Japanese dropped them as they said, in place of a bomb on a raid over Port Moresby and a number of these letters reached home.

The Japanese treated army and civilians alike and they did not distinguish between missionaries and lay people. There were three Roman Catholic priests and two Seventh Day Adventist pastors as well as the missionaries and two Army chaplains, but none of us had any special status in Japanese eyes.

We were housed in huts and slept on bare boards. We got up and went to bed with the sun. We had few possessions apart from what we were wearing. Our food was mainly rice, poor in quality and quantity, helped out now and then with some fruit or vegetables. On rare occasions we even had a little meat.

Naturally, the climate and the lack of food meant that malaria, dysentery and other tropical illnesses attacked us. Our doctors did what they could, but they had only tiny supplies of medicines and these were soon used up. Mercifully only eight, I think, died in the Malaguna Camp.

Each morning, most of the camp marched out - usually to the wharves to load copra, unload stores or do other labouring jobs - and came back late in the afternoon. By that time everyone was too tired to think about anything but those few grains of rice - and getting flat on the back. So there was no general camp life, no concerts or anything like that.

On a few occasions we were half glad, half sorry, during the night to have to get down into the slit trenches when allied planes flew over us. We saw their navigation lights switched on

in the hope that the Japanese ack ack would open up and give away their positions, though they never did. A few incendiary bombs and cannon shells landed among us, but the worst damage was a hit on the cookpot. We were inclined to be cross about that - the battle to survive was all demanding.

If the Japanese had allowed us to keep Sunday as a rest day, no doubt we would have held church services. As it was, the best we could manage was a brief few minutes of readings, prayers, a short address before work. Also on most evenings there were good night prayers in huts which I used to visit in turn.

So each individual had to get by on his own resources of faith. However, it was wonderful the way which support and encouragement is always forthcoming when someone got a bit down. The odd remark about something or someone back home was a great help. If someone invented a derisive name for a guard or managed to steal a tin of bully or a packet of smokes or tried to sabotage a truck by pouring in a tin of treacle instead of oil, it was all part of the fight against the enemy and it gave everyone a lift.

It was on 28 April that the last of us was brought in from the hospital. In the next few days I met up with some of the missionaries, those I had known before: Laurence McArthur, WL Linggood, EW Pierce. They showed me some of their pidgin translations of scriptures and prayers, the Lords Prayer, *Papa bilong mifela, yu stap ontop long ples bilong yu*, or the Genesis story of Adam and Eve being sent out of Eden, *Na kisim bokis, na kisim blankit na raus*.

But, as you can see, there was hardly any opportunity to do more than exchange an occasional word. So far as I can recall, they managed to keep as well as anybody and had no special difficulties. Sadly, the personal reminiscences have faded.

On 22 June, with not much warning, almost the whole camp was marched out. There was no time for formal farewells. A handful of us managed ten minutes together to read part of Psalm 107, *They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their businesses in great waters. These men see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep*, to say the Lords Prayer, and they were gone.

We had learnt they had been put on board the *Montevideo Maru* and that they sailed the next day.

On 5 July, the mission sisters, army nurses and officers were put on board another ship and taken to Japan.

What can we say. The Japanese advanced across the Pacific with a speed that found everyone unprepared. If only the authorities in Canberra had been able to act with decision, things might have been different, as it was they were not up to it.

In December, the European women and children had been taken south but Canberra made no attempt to evacuate the remaining Europeans and Chinese.

The capture of Rabaul was the most disastrous tragedy that befell Australian civilians in the Second World War. The mission folk were caught up in it along with the rest. Their fate was not of their making. On the contrary, they served their native brothers and sisters to the last possible moment earning their affectionate respect. They made their way into Rabaul when there was nothing else they could do.

No one can estimate the worth of their labours. But we know that under the good hand of God their fruits have not been lost. We lament the tragedy that so cruelly claimed their lives but the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and they are indeed at peace. We salute their memory.