



MvM Newsletter 11

March 2010

Menzies government knocked back POW offer

IN 1955 THE federal government of Robert Menzies refused a Japanese offer to provide documents that might have led to the disclosure of the identities of the men who died on the *Montevideo Maru*.

And the Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust has now asked the current federal government to follow up the case.

One of the last remaining great mysteries of Australia's involvement in World War II involves the identities of each of the estimated 1053 men who died in Australia's worst maritime disaster when the Japanese POW ship *Montevideo Maru* was sunk by the US submarine *Sturgeon* off the Philippines.

Eight years after the war, on 15 October 1953, ten Allied governments including Australia, received a communication from Japan, known as a *note verbale*, seeking a reciprocal program to exchange prisoner of war name cards (*meimeihyou*) in accordance with the Geneva conventions.

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that, although it did not feel bound by the conventions, it desired to "deliver the records of individual prisoners of war ... who were in the hands of Japan during the Second World War".

The Australian government did not respond to the request for 15 months, and when it did - on 18 January 1955 - it put a dampener on the exercise.

The Australian Embassy in Japan said that all the information Australia had on Japanese POWs and casualties had already been sent to Japan and concluded with these extraordinary words: "No useful purpose would be served by a further exchange of information... [The] Australian government does not wish to receive the records concerned..."

Australia was the only one of the ten countries involved, including New Zealand, not to exchange records.

A sombre Japanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs responded on 28 January 1955, just ten days

later, that "if the Australian government does not desire to exchange the PW name card relating to Australians, we recognize that we have fulfilled our obligation...."

End of story. Until now, when these critical documents have surfaced in Japan after much effort by a diligent Japanese researcher and Friend of MvM, Mr Harumi Sakaguchi.

The unearthing of the documents raises fascinating questions. Why did Australia opt out of the document exchange program? Was our government thoroughly convinced it had acquired all the data on the missing men during its occupation of Japan? And why, as the original Japanese roll had disappeared after it was brought back to Australia, did the Menzies' government knock back an opportunity to confirm the names of the prisoners on the ship?

The uncovering of these documents suggests there may still be more relevant papers locked away in the official archives of Australia and Japan.

This amazing twist in the *Montevideo Maru* saga comes at a time when there is a renewed focus on trying to determine exactly who was aboard the ship when it was sunk on 1 July 1942.

The Federal government has intensified its efforts to locate the missing 'nominal roll'.

At a meeting in Canberra early this month, Trust president, Keith Jackson, asked the office of Defence Personnel Minister, Greg Combet, to follow up the mystery of the missing name cards.

The Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust was established to ensure national recognition of Australia's greatest maritime disaster, a tragedy of war that cost well over 1,000 lives and affected thousand more.

You can contact the Trust at PO Box 1743 Neutral Bay, NSW 2089 Australia or email kjackson@jacksonwells.com.au

More information on the Trust is contained in the Notes at page 9 of this newsletter.

Lark Force Association has achieved much

By Norm Furness

Hon Secretary, 2/22 Lark Force Association

I RECEIVED the MVM Newsletter No 10 through my son in law, Tim Watkins.

I found it most interesting, but was sad to read about Chris Diercke who I was talking to only a few weeks ago. The other-sad news was John May's death. He was a wonderful man.

In reading the newsletter I saw the section about myself and got totally confused. I know I am getting old and my writing is not crash hot but I am sure that what I said was properly recorded.

The remaining survivors of Lark Force are all about 90 plus, most are in poor health and we can only do so much. But that is better than "all ready to go" - even though it stated we were in good health!

Now that I have cleared that up I thought I might list some of the things our Association has been involved in over many years.

In conjunction with the New Guinea Women's Association, we built three widow units at Frankston Veteran Homes. Later we built a recreation room, aptly named *Haus Niugini*. In recent years we have stocked it with books about Rabaul and other parts of New Guinea. We recently helped finance a BBQ area for them.

We have made provision for an award to be given at the Defence School of Music, Watsonia, to an outstanding musician each year and we have paid up till 2020. I doubt whether any of Lark Force will be around. The award is named the Arthur Gullidge Award, after the bandmaster of the 2/22 Battalion. He with nearly all the band was lost on the MVM.

We have assisted in payments for memorials at Rabaul, Tol, Canberra, Trawool, Ballarat POW site, plus a few smaller plaques.

About six years ago we gave Malabunga High School, Rabaul, \$6,000 - giving three students a chance for university education.

We support the Brunswick Salvation Army Corp when we can. Another cause is the Royal Australian Regiment's Association where we are Life Governors.

I have listed the above as I'm sure some of your readers would not know how active we have been as a small band of aged people. So in conclusion keep up the good work and most of all keep well.

Wanted: Australian veterans of NG war

By Noriko Miyake-Mcclintock

I AM AN overseas consultant and freelance media researcher working for Japanese national broadcasting company NHK.

My task is to locate Australian war veterans who witnessed PNG Aitape-Wawak campaign in 1944-1945. I have spent hours and hours in front of my PC searching for vain until this evening.

I finally reached your site and saw peoples names like Des Martin, Albert Speer and the father of Barbara Knowles. I believe these are the very people I have been looking for.

NHK has been making a World War II documentary film on the war in PNG toward its end, especially in Aitape-Wewak. As one of the Japanese generations born long after the war, I did not know much about what happened in PNG until five years ago.

My first task was to research the Cowra incident at the Japanese POW camp. We visited Australian witnesses in the NSW and Victorian countryside and interviewed them.

My work on PNG began last year and my main research objective has been to look into the records archived at the Australian War Memorial. At that time, I tried to find war veterans who served in PNG but I ran out of my time and gave up further search.

This year, we have resumed work on another film which is scheduled to be broadcast next year. My main task is to locate relevant witnesses and see if we can contact them to hear their stories.

I would very much appreciate it if you could pass my message to those people to see if I could get in touch with them.

I thank you for your time and look forward to hearing from you.

You can contact Noriko Miyake, who is based in Australia, at email noriko@with-ryugaku.com or fax 02 9984 8923.

2/1 INDEPENDENT COMPANY

Thanks to Don Hook, we have been able to add 10 surviving members of the 2/1 Independent Company as Friends this month: Lionel Veale, Jack Ranken George Macleod, Dave Harper, Jack Dunkerton, Norm Randall, Bill Coker, Jack Borns, Colin Francis and Mick Morell. Lex Fraser was already a Friend. *Hamamas tru long sekan long yupela ologeta.*

The task of bringing home the dead continues

By Keith Jackson

HARUMI SAKAGUCHI is a very special person. He is concerned that those who sacrificed their lives in PNG in World War II - on whatever side - are known.

Through his dedication to recovering the remains of Japanese war dead and his work assisting the Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust, Harumi - an independent researcher - has gone beyond the call of duty.

Harumi was born in 1946, just after World War II. He studied in the USA and then spent more than 35 years in the field of development assistance, mostly with the United Nations. Along the way, he served in Geneva and New York; but it was his last posting to PNG, from 2004-08, that proved a significant part of his career and his life.

Now retired in Japan, the essence of Harumi's current research is the location of the remains of Japanese victims of World War II, some of which he believes are buried near Port Moresby. And, as he points out, while the war is long ago, the task of recovering the war dead and bringing closure to their families must continue.

"The task of recovery and repatriation is far from over. A huge number of Japanese families hope for final closure," says Harumi.

This is where you - or a relative of yours - may be able to help.

Harumi wants to make contact with Australians and Papua New Guineans - whether ex-servicemen or other folks - who may have been engaged directly or indirectly in the burial of Japanese servicemen, especially prisoners of war. He hopes Australians or Papua New Guineans can help provide information that may assist the final recovery of these servicemen.

He is particularly keen to contact and consult people who may have knowledge of:

- (1) the burials of Japanese prisoners who died at the 2/9 Australian General Hospital near Port Moresby
- (2) the remains of Japanese naval airmen recovered after being shot down during raids on Port Moresby
- (3) the Japanese servicemen and war prisoners initially buried in a Japanese war cemetery constructed by an Australian force in Torokina on Bougainville

You can contact Harumi at zerosenhs@jcom.home.ne.jp and I sincerely hope you do.

Make sure the curriculum covers PNG's stories

By Andrea Williams

THE KINDERGARTEN-YEAR 10 draft Australian curriculum has come out and is available for comment until 23 May 23.

This is a wonderful opportunity to ensure that the role Australia played in PNG as an Australian administered territory is significantly covered.

It is an opportunity to ensure that our nation learns more about Australia's greatest maritime tragedy, the loss of over 1000 men on 1 July 1942. After surviving several months as prisoners of war, on what was Australian territory, they were torpedoed by allied fire on the Montevideo Maru after leaving Rabaul and travelling towards Hainan. What happened in the early stages of World War II in the New Guinea islands needs better recognition.

In developing the draft curriculum, there will be state and territory consultation forums to gather feedback. In addition national forums are scheduled for March/April 2010 'inviting teachers, national professional associations, education and discipline academics and other stakeholders from the broader education community, to provide expert feedback.'

The website to check on the draft curriculum is www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Book review: *Hell and High Fever* by David Selby

By Elizabeth Thurston

THIS HISTORICALLY significant and compelling World War II memoir was first published in 1956 by Currawong and has now been reprinted by David Selby's family.

It is a valuable first-hand account of the invasion of Rabaul in 1942 by Japanese forces which outnumbered the 1400 Australians of Lark Force and the small civilian population left to suffer the consequences of the carefully orchestrated invasion of New Britain on 22 January by 5500 Japanese troops supported by a strong naval force.

Selby commanded the only anti-aircraft artillery the defenders possessed, with 54 officers and men mostly under the age of 19. That he, and the others he led, escaped the Japanese is a testament to his leadership and courage and the sheer dogged determination of those who managed to survive the appalling conditions of jungle warfare.

Aware of their perilous situation after the first Japanese air raids, Selby wrote:

Again about the middle of January [1942] I went down to headquarters and asked what the plans were should a withdrawal become necessary. Despite my lowly rank, I had been present as a unit commander at various conferences, but this particular matter had never been raised.

The reply I received to my question was disconcerting - "That is a defeatist attitude Selby!" I was referred to an order of the day which had been promulgated on the first of January. This order which I learned later had come from Australia, exhorted every man to fight to the last, and ended with the words underlined and in capitals- "THERE SHALL BE NO WITHDRAWAL."

...isolated and vulnerable as we were, we were later to regret bitterly the absence of a comprehensive plan for a fighting retirement.

Knowing the 'dim grey [Japanese] ships on the horizon would disgorge their troops by the thousand', Selby prepared his men for the inevitable onslaught. The Battle for Rabaul was over quickly, and operating under the orders of 'Every man for himself', Selby set out to escape the Japanese by leading his party south from Rabaul on a gruelling walk through swamps, rivers and malaria-infested jungle.

The route took them through Lamingi, past Wide Bay and Jacquinot Bay and on to Drina plantation on the south coast, some hundreds of miles from Rabaul. Drina belonged to Jack Thurston, who at the time was on the mainland, evacuating civilians from the Sepik.

The place had been looted, the manager murdered and his wife raped. Against this sombre backdrop, Selby set up his headquarters in the homestead and it was from Drina that the remainder of the party finally escaped on the vessel *Laurabada* anchored at Palmalmal.

As his family states, 'David Selby did not glorify war, his book is a factual account of the reactions to the worst side of war of normal men who volunteered to serve in defence of Australia. His understated style enhances the pathos, humility and courage of not only the men who made it to safety but of those who died a futile and harrowing death in their comrades' arms after giving every ounce of moral and physical strength to the service of liberty and democracy.'

There are moments of wry dark humour when the men discuss making their own headstones. 'I am sure it was by trying to treat matters flippantly that we managed to keep going and assume an air of confidence which we did not always feel.' And, in one of his more lyrical reflections, Selby writes poignantly, 'We spoke of our wives, of philosophy, art, literature and music and, on fine nights when the stars burned with cold brilliance we tried to find our way around the heavens.'

David Selby, a barrister, wrote his memoir while recuperating in hospital. After the war he continued part-time Army service as a Legal Officer at Eastern Command, retiring in 1955 as Chief Legal Officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After a term as Acting Judge of the Supreme Court of PNG, he was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court of NSW and made a Member of the Order of Australia.

The reprint of David Selby's story returns an important voice to the contemporary debate and re-examination of the fate of civilians and soldiers at the frontier of the Japanese attack on Australian mandated territory.

'Hell and High Fever' is available through Robert Albert, GPO Box 4899, Sydney 2001 (\$30 incl postage) Email: ralbert@albertmusic.com

Trust members in Canberra for meetings

TRUST OFFICE bearers Keith Jackson, Kerry Sibraa, Don Hook and Bob Lawrence undertook a useful trip to Canberra late February to discuss various aspects of the *Montevideo Maru* project with Government and Opposition.

Amongst other people we met with Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin MP, Shadow Minister Louise Markus MP, senior Greg Combet staffer Lauren Walker, Bob Katter MP and John Murphy MP. Keith Jackson and Kerry Sibraa subsequently met with Patron, Peter Garrett MP

Resolution on Montevideo Maru

The Trust has received backing from Government and Opposition who will sponsor a resolution expressing Parliament's regret at the tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru* and the New Guinea Islands in the last Parliamentary sitting before the anniversary of the sinking on 1 July.

It is hoped the resolution will be debated in Parliament on Monday 21 June, but planning remains at a preliminary stage.

It is intended that relatives and friends be invited to visit Parliament House for this occasion. Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin has indicated he will host a private function for relatives and friends after the debate at which he and the Shadow Minister will speak.

The Trust will work with Government and Opposition on the motion, which we expect to cover:

- (1) the gratitude of the Australian nation to the military personnel and civilians in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands for their services in the defence of Australia during World War II
- (2) regret and sorrow for the sacrifices that were made in the defence of Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the invasion of 23 January 1942 and in the subsequent sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 1942
- (3) condolences to the relatives of the people who died in this conflict
- (4) thanks to the relatives for their forbearance and efforts in ensuring that the nation remembers the sacrifices made

In other meetings in Canberra, a number of MPs from around Australia have expressed enthusiasm about speaking to the motion.

It is our hope that the passage of this resolution and the event that follows it will prove a significant moment in the history of this matter and draw a line under the recognition by Parliament of the issue.

Nominal Roll

The Government continues its research into locating the nominal roll. Meanwhile, the Trust has provided the Ministry with a copy of a *Note Verbale* dated 18 January 1955 and asked it to initiate inquiries into the whereabouts of the Japanese name cards containing details of prisoners of war that were originally offered to the Australian Government by the Japanese Government in 1953 but rejected in the *Note Verbale* of 1955.

Letters to relatives

The Trust had complained to Government about the tone and factual content of some letters to relatives from politicians and bureaucrats in response to queries and requests relating to the *Montevideo Maru*. The President has spoken with the Minister and the Ministerial Correspondence Unit about this issue.

Incorporation

Progress on incorporating the Trust proceeds steadily. The Trust will not begin high profile corporate fundraising until it is incorporated. The Trust will also not be eligible for government funding or tax deductibility on donations until this happens.

In the meantime, there is a useful opportunity for Friends to give thought as to how they might assist the planned corporate fundraising effort through providing business contacts or fundraising ideas to the Memorial Sub-Committee of Phil Ainsworth, Clive Troy and Don Hook. You can contact them through kjackson@jacksonwells.com.au

FEEDBACK

NOLA ANDERSON

Assistant Director, Australian War Memorial

Thank you for meeting with us the other day, it was good to learn about the Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust and its plans.

As part of the refurbishment of the World War II galleries, we will have a new showcase dealing with the fall of Rabaul. The *Montevideo Maru* is one of the stories we mention in the showcase. It will feature a spotlight panel, photos and original documents relating to the ship's sinking.

Although nothing is yet finalised, we have identified and short listed appropriate collection material for inclusion in the display. Thank you too for your offer of assistance. We will certainly keep that in mind.

MARY MAY

I have just re read News letter No 10 and wanted to say thank you for the bit about John. The memorial service seemed to be much appreciated . I felt very proud! It was great so see so many of his friends. Stan Cooper, the POW in Japan with John, spoke magnificently with great sincerity. People were generous with donations to the fund which would have pleased John no end - he cared so much. Thank you for all you are doing.

KORI CHAN

Director, South Sea Horizons & Lark Force Wilderness Track

Chris Diercke, historian of the Lark Force Wilderness Track, who died in January, played a huge role during the development of the Lark Force Wilderness Track in East New Britain. He joined the team in December 2007, and displayed a genuine thirst for knowledge about the battle of Rabaul, which was made evident through his ability to reconnect with Lark Force diggers and their family members.

Chris made this story worth telling again and re-ignited a passion for the fallen soldiers of Rabaul, who, as we now know, were the forgotten soldiers of World War II. In addition to the historical compilation on Lark Force that Chris engulfed himself in, he played an enormous role in training the Lark Force Wilderness Track porters and guides. He took on the role of PNG representative of the International Porters Protection Group, an NGO that aims to protect the welfare of porters worldwide. The IPPG couldn't have found a better person for the job.

In October 2009, a 20-foot container filled with medical supplies, boots and other materials was sent to Rabaul to assist local communities in the Bainings and Gazelle. The shipment had been arranged by Chris and his son Nathan. On top of this Chris was a person who never forgot his roots. Those of you who got to meet him would know him as a true Papua New Guinean dressed in a white man's body.

His love for PNG was clearly evident through his passion for his family history, which included great figures such as Queen Emma Coe and his great-grandmother, Phoebe Parkinson (Queen Emma's sister). People who had the opportunity to sit in on one of Chris' presentations on his family, would share the same sentiment as me and say that this story was one that embedded not only his family's identity but PNG's identity. I truly believe PNG has lost one of its great story-tellers. His boots will be hard to fill.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my condolences to Peta, Nathan, Emma, Kurt and Ryan. During this period of loss and sadness, I would like you to know we are sharing with you the loss of Chris, who was an inspiration to us all.

SUE PASCOE

I am so pleased to possess a copy of *The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru* DVD. Although not easy to watch, I found it very informative and it also brought a measure of healing through pain. The service at Subic Bay was beautiful and its inclusion made a fitting finale. I'm glad Mum isn't alive to see it all though! (She was finally reunited with her beloved husband in 1998.) I hope this DVD will become part of the Australian history curriculum as the event is far too important to ignore longer. Thank you once again for all you are doing to advance recognition.

BILL BERGEN

Please include me as a Friend of Montevideo Maru. Ever since I landed at Rabaul in November 1963, it has been a mission to learn more about the story of the 2/22nd. My wife ,Joan, had a cousin who as a

young chap had been sent to Rabaul in the early days of WW!!. Except for a few letters nothing more was heard of Jack O'Shea. Who left behind a grieving mother.

To add insult to his memory Jack's mother who always kept his letters close to her had those very letters stolen from her when her handbag was snatched from her aboard a Sydney tram.

While we lived in the Rabaul area I had a school at Malakuna . After a particular bad guria our house was unliveable and we moved into a house at the Bitapaka hospital . opposite the War Cemetery. There on a memorial was Jack O'Shea's name .It was of some comfort that we could send his mother a photo of this fine memorial commemorating all those fine men of the 2/22nd.

I have still not given up hope to establish where Jack fought and as to whether he attempted to flee. It is thought that he perhaps was with his mates on the ill-fated ship and went down in that terrible sinking.
Vale Jack O'Shea.

MIKE HUTCHESON

I spent a few years in Rabaul and have studied the fate of the captives of the Japanese in WW2. I became friends with Rudi Buckley while I was there, and I'm glad to see he is still alive and kicking up a fuss over this tragedy.

Please add me to your mailing list, as I would like to add my voice to those crying out to the government for the ship to be located, as was the HMAS *Sydney* and the *Centaur*. The coordinates of the sinking, from both the Japanese and Americans, are so close that it shouldn't take very long to locate. Should be faster than finding the *Sydney*!

ANDREA WILLIAMS

Just off the phone from Patricia Poircuitte nee Spence who had a half-brother in Lark Force. His name was John McIntosh Spence known as Jack, VX23625, from her father's first marriage. Her father died just after returning to PNG in 1946 and she thinks Jack was on the M.M.

Patricia lived in Rabaul at first, then the family moved to the goldfields. Apparently she is the last of that generation, and would like to have closure. She's sorry she can't be physically more involved.

She said that Jack travelled from PNG to Victoria to enlist, thinking he would go to the Middle East. He found himself back in Rabaul! Because he was her older half-brother and her father died in 1946, she doesn't know of any paperwork concerning him. Although I knew men had left PNG to enlist in Australia, I guess I hadn't realised that some of Lark Force were ex PNG.

JAN LOVEDAY

I had an uncle who was a member of the 2/22nd. (Lark Force) and, like in most other families, my grandmother went to her grave knowing only that her beloved eldest son had been taken a prisoner of the Japanese and was missing in action. My mother has a lovely photo of my grandmother standing proudly with her son, just before he left for the war. Mum says that was the last time they saw him.

My interest in the circumstances surrounding my uncle's death was stimulated by an interview of Margaret Reeson on ABC radio, in 2000. I have her book, *A Very Long War*. Since then, I've had some contact with the Lark Force Association in Melbourne. Then in April last year, I noticed a small article by Andrea Williams about the M.M. in our local newspaper. After contacting Andrea, I found out about the Memorial Trust.

I appreciate your newsletters and acknowledge the tremendous amount of work you and the committee are doing to gain greater recognition of the fall of Rabaul and the events surrounding the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*.

NORI NAGASAWA

Thank you very much for sending me Newsletter 10, which had a wonderful essay by the late Rev John May. Also, it was so kind of you adding my name and words in your newsletter. A number of members of the POW Research Network in Japan are now involved in the Memorial Trust.

ROBERT WALKER

My grandfather, Thomas Walker, was aboard the *Montevideo Maru* when it was lost. Having just found you during my research into my grandfather, I will now follow with interest the work of the Committee. I look forward to meeting you at the unveiling of the memorial!

LESLEY HOOD

Our family connection with the *Montevideo Maru* has come mainly through the contacts of my mother, Grace Pearce, before she passed away in September 2008. We have found letters she had written to many people as she was always anxious to find out exactly what happened to her brother, Colin James Morrison, who was an Australian taken prisoner of war by the Japanese and consequently killed when the *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed.

Our family and I are keen to continue the search for the truth in this dreadful disaster and therefore we're anxious to keep in touch with those involved in this part of war history and the cover-up that followed. Thank you for all you are doing to help discover this very interesting piece of war history.

ALBERT SPEER MBE

Letter to Jeffrey Bleich, US Ambassador to Australia

In June 1942 Japanese forces in New Guinea gathered 1053 captive Australians - 845 prisoners of war and 208 civilians - in Rabaul. After their defeat more than three years later, the Japanese said these 1053 Australians died in the Philippines in July 1942 when the *Montevideo Maru*, on which they had been placed, was intercepted on its way to Hainan. US records confirm the submarine *USS Sturgeon* torpedoed the *Montevideo Maru* off Luzon in the early hours after midnight on July 1, 1942. Some Japanese survived and made their way from Luzon back to Japan. There were no known survivors among the Australian prisoners.

The broad outline of the fate of the *Montevideo Maru* and those on board is not doubted. However, doubts have been raised as to whether all 1053 Australians on the Japanese manifest of prisoners loaded were in fact on board when the *Montevideo Maru* sailed from Rabaul on June 22, 1942. Families of some of the civilian captives, including senior Australian expatriates working in the then Australian-administered territory, believe these captives were executed before or about the time the *Montevideo Maru* set sail from Rabaul. Be that as it may, the number of Australian prisoners undoubtedly on board the *Montevideo Maru* then it was torpedoed makes this the greatest loss of Australian lives in any single incident in World War II.

Nothing can erase all the pain of the families who lose loved ones in war. But there is no pain greater than doubt. It might not be possible, almost 68 years after the event, to settle all doubts about the final resting place of the Australian prisoners held in Rabaul in June 1942. A careful, scientific examination of the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru* should allow retrieval of the captain's safe and, it is hoped, the ship's manifest. That promises the best hope of laying to rest many painful uncertainties in the minds of families of Australians held by Japanese forces in Rabaul and never seen again.

On the eve of President Obama's visit to Australia, I earnestly seek to draw to his attention this painful and unresolved residue of our two nations' close involvement together in the Pacific War. Through you, I seek President Obama's support and cooperation in an examination of the present resting place of more than a thousand Australians who died in the tragic misadventure of July 1, 1942, in the hope that it will help settle doubts and so ease some of the pain still felt by many Australian families who lost loved ones on that fateful night.

REV NEVILLE THRELFALL

I enjoyed the February issue of the newsletter, and have learned more about Chris Diercke from it. I knew some of the story of his father Rudolf Diercke from Robson's *Queen Emma*. I would make one comment: Chris was Queen Emma's great-great-nephew, being the great-grandson of Emma's sister, Phoebe Parkinson. So would it not be more correct to say he was related to Queen Emma, rather than "a direct descendant". (Sorry to split hairs.)

BENN SELBY

I am David Selby's "young" nearly 96-year old surviving brother. I must tell you of an amazing coincidence that occurred recently. I was seated in the waiting room of my physiotherapist when an elderly lady sat next to me and showed me her photo seated at the Melbourne Anzac Day ceremony.

She explained her husband had been in Rabaul during the war. I surprised her by asking was he in the 2/22nd Bn. He was Lt Ted Best, later Lord Mayor of Melbourne, and mentioned in my brother's book. I now sometimes visit her and her carer daughter and I tease my offspring about my latest girlfriend!

That is more than enough introduction and I wish you and your team continued success in promoting the story of the *Montevideo Maru* and Rabaul campaign.

MARCH NOTES

DONATIONS TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

THE FUND now stands at \$6430.30 as a result of donations (\$4750), contributions in memory of Rev John May (\$985.30) and the net proceeds of DVD sales (\$895).

Personal donors during the month were Nori Nagasawa, Jan Loveday, Rev Neville Threlfall, Nick Booth, Hilda Wakelin, Lesley Hood, Benn Selby, PA & ER Pritchard.

John May donors were Margaret & Scott Henderson, Lorna Johnston, Barbara Selby, Dorothy Collings, Pat Thomas, Margaret Roe, AC & JH McLaren, Don & Lucy Wolfe, Joan Stamps, and various donors at Rev John May's funeral service.

NET FUND-RAISING REVENUE*

November - \$1405 donations + \$143 DVDs = \$1548

December - \$1315 donations + \$203 DVDs = \$1518

January - \$915 donations + \$91 DVDs + \$150 John May memorium = \$1156

February - \$755 donations + \$260 DVDs + \$785.30 John May memorium = \$1800.30

March (part) - \$360 donations + \$198 DVDs + \$50 John May memorium = \$408

Total at 7 March 2010 - \$ 6430.30

(*Net of cost of DVDs and bank charges)

Our fund-raising for a memorial in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra is a continuing endeavour. 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. Trust treasurer Teddy Haryjanto says "Would it be possible to ask for people who transfer money directly to the Montevideo Maru account to put their name in the description instead of just writing 'donation'." Done Teddy. If you make a direct deposit, you could also let Teddy know by sending an email to tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

We welcome Kurt Diercke, one of Chris's sons, as a member of the Trust committee.

After Chris's recent tragic death, Kurt expressed great interest in carrying on his father's work. Chris had made a wonderful contribution through his research into the missing nominal roll of prisoners on the *Montevideo Maru*.

Kurt, 23, was born in Albury, is a highly accomplished musician and has academic credentials in piano. Music is a big part of his life, and he is a member of the award-winning Newcastle band, the Bastilles. He lived and worked in Canada from 2007-09 and is currently studying to become a primary school teacher after working as a teacher's aide on and off for some years.

In the PNG context, Kurt is a direct descendent of Phoebe Parkinson (his great-great-grandmother), and takes great pride in preserving the family history. He's also in close contact with WWII veteran, Mick Smith, of the 2/22nd Battalion, with whom he regularly discusses the story of Lark Force.

Kurt says he "feels more at home in PNG than anywhere else in the world." He's learning Pidgin and intends to visit PNG each year, applying his teaching skills and carrying out family wishes to maintain a close relationship with the Kuradui Clan, of which he's a member. He wants to ensure the family history - locations, artefacts and relationships - are nurtured and maintained.

A Celebration of Thanksgiving for the Life of

John May



1st November 1914 ~ 24th January 2010

Kurt was schooled in the story of the *Montevideo Maru* by Chris and says he believes that our “strong, determined team” can get official recognition for the MvM, given that it is Australia’s greatest maritime loss, to provide closure for the families who lost a relative in the disaster.

MONTEVIDEO MARU DVD

The DVD of *The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru* was released last month and comes with bonus material in addition to the extended version of the documentary, which runs for almost two hours.

Bonus 1 is a discussion with two international wreck experts on the probable condition of the ship today, the search techniques possible, what the ship would look like now and whether there might be human remains.

Bonus 2 is an introduction by producer John Schindler, filmed at 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. The coverage moves on to the service at the Hellships Memorial at Subic Bay on 1 July 2009 dedicating a shrine to those lost on the *Montevideo Maru*.

ORDER YOUR COPY: The extended DVD is on sale for \$40 including packaging and posting. 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.

FRIENDS OF MONTEVIDEO MARU

The number of Friends of Montevideo Maru increased from 200 in February to 240 this month. The Montevideo Maru Memorial Trust has many tasks to undertake, including fundraising for a memorial at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. You can encourage people to join as Friends and receive this monthly newsletter by emailing Keith Jackson at benelong@bigpond.net.au or writing to PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES DISPLAY

The sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* is featured in a 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.

TRUST 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:** Kurt Diercke, Phil Ainsworth, Kurt Diercke, Philip ‘Hooky’ Street, Elizabeth Thurston, Clive Troy, Andrea Williams. **Legal Advisers:** Bernard Collaery & Kellie Irvine. **Historical Advisers:** Emeritus Professor Hank Nelson, Harumi Sakaguchi & Rod Miller. **Honorary Auditors:** Page Harrison & Co.

TRUST ORGANISATION

Memorial Sub-Committee: Convenors - Phil Ainsworth & Clive Troy (memorial fundraising and project management). **War Grave Sub-Committee:** Convenor - Elizabeth Thurston (declare site of sinking as an official war grave). **Recognition Sub-Committee:** Convenor: Andrea Williams (ensure the Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* stories are a continuing part of Australian history). **Nominal Roll Sub-Committee:** Acting Convenor: Keith Jackson (search for and locate the nominal roll)