



Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society

MvM Newsletter 15

June 2010

Huge turn-out for memorial resolution

SOME 350 FRIENDS of Montevideo Maru will gather in Canberra on 21 June as the Australian Parliament honours military personnel and civilians who died as a result of the New Guinea Islands conflict - and thanks their relatives.

Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Minister, Alan Griffin, will make a Ministerial statement on the matter and the historic private members' motion will be debated in the evening, starting at about 9 o'clock. The same resolution will pass through the Senate the same day.

Friends should plan to arrive at Parliament House no later than 3 pm on the Monday. Special seating will be available.

[See also IMPORTANT INFORMATION on page 2]

Present will be a number of Lark Force veterans in their nineties: Stan Cooper, Fred Kollmorgen, David Harper, Lionel Veale and young Norm Furness (88).

It is hoped Lorna Whyte, one of 18 Australian women taken to Japan from Rabaul as prisoners-of-war, can join the group as well as the wives of Rev John May and David Selby, who later wrote *Hell and High Fever*, as well as 12 siblings and 33 children of the men who were lost.

[See more about the survivors on page 4]

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society was established to ensure national recognition of the fall of Rabaul and Australia's greatest maritime disaster, a shocking tragedy of war. Contact the Society at belong@bigpond.net.au

You can also donate to the construction of a Rabaul & Montevideo Maru memorial at the Australian War Memorial. Cheques to 'Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee' at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. Or make a direct deposit to the Society's bank account: BSB 082-401 Account No 16-083-2367, including your name.

How proceedings will pan out on the day

BY DARREN LOASBY

THE PRINCIPAL public debate on the [Rabaul and Montevideo Maru] matter will occur between 3.30 pm and 4.30 pm on Monday 21 June.

It will take the form of a Ministerial Statement in the House of Representatives by the Hon Alan Griffin MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel.

This will be responded to by Mrs Louise Markus, Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs. The exact starting time for this debate will depend upon when Question Time concludes on the day.

However everyone attending on the day should arrive at the public entrance of Parliament House by no later than 3 pm.

Arrangements have been made to reserve space in the public galleries for those you have notified me will be attending, and all attendees should be seated in the gallery by 3.15 pm to ensure they do not miss the proceedings.

The Ministerial Statement and response is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

Following the Ministerial Statement, guests will make their way to the reception and afternoon tea being hosted by Mr Griffin in the Queens Terrace Gallery from 4.30 pm.

It is expected that the reception will be finished between 5.30 pm and 6 pm depending on when the Ministerial Statement concludes.

During Private Members' Business from approximately 9 pm that evening, a motion will be debated in the House of Representatives Chamber or Main Committee room recognising the tragedy and honouring those who lost their lives.

It is not yet known if this debate will take place in the House of Representatives Chamber or the Main Committee. If the debate takes place in the Main Committee, up to 45 seats will be available for people to watch this debate.

Arrangements will also be made for any others present at Parliament House to view the event live on a television screen within the building.

If the debate takes place in the House of Representatives Chamber, we will be able to accommodate all of those staying to watch in the gallery area.

Anyone wishing to remain for this debate is free to do so, however we expect that given the timing most people will depart once the reception concludes.

Anyone unable to make it on the day can watch the Ministerial Statement and the debate during Private Members' Business live on the Parliament House website through a webcast.

We understand the significance of the event and that particularly those older guests, many of whom have been waiting a very long time for closure, need to get back to their accommodation or make flights out before dinner.

These arrangements ensure that parliamentary recognition and the reception can occur, and those who wish to do so can depart by 6 pm. The motion and the associated debate will still occur later that night as previously discussed.

As you know, we are also expecting the motion to be carried in the Senate on the same day, however due to the way the Senate conducts its business, there will be no debate.

Darren Loasby is Assistant Adviser to Hon Alan Griffin MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel. Darren has undertaken much of the organisational work at Parliament House and has been working very closely with the Society's Andrea Williams.

Timetable

2.00 pm - From about this time buses will pick up people who have registered for transport from city locations.

3.00 pm - Guests arrive at Parliament House

3.15 pm - Guests seated in House of Representatives chamber

3.30 pm - Ministerial statement followed by response from Shadow Minister

4.30 pm - Reception and afternoon tea hosted by Mr Griffin in the Queens Terrace Gallery

6.00 pm - Reception concludes

6.15 pm - Bus leaves Parliament House

9.00 pm - Private members' motion

Evening - Senate passes the resolution

Important information

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE. People who need special assistance should contact Andrea Williams immediately to ensure she has them properly registered and so appropriate arrangements can be made. Get in touch with Andrea at any of these contacts:

andrea.williams@bigpond.com

02 9449 4129

0409 031 889

TRANSPORT. Buses [Canberra Charter Coaches] will pick people up to get them to Parliament House in time and will depart Parliament House at 6pm. Andrea will email people with more precise bus times during the next week. The Society is chartering the buses.

PARKING. See article below.

SECURITY. Guests will be required to go through security screening at the main front entrance and again at the House of Representatives gallery.

EQUIPMENT. Cameras, video equipment, mobile phones etc need to be deposited in the Cloak Room on the first floor adjacent to the House of Representatives Chamber prior to going through the second screening process for entry to the public gallery.

PHOTOGRAPHY. Guests are welcome to take photos while they are in the public areas of Parliament House, including the exterior areas and forecourt. However, photography and filming are not permitted within the Chambers.'

SEATING. It is anticipated that all guests attending Parliament House for this special occasion will be seated in an allocated section of the Gallery for the Ministerial statement.

SERVICE MEDALS. Veterans (and family if they desire) are encouraged to wear service medals.

DVD. Film-maker Phil Donnison is making a documentary of the event, which will be available on DVD. Phil suggests you bring memorabilia that could feature in the film.

MEDIA. Bob Lawrence is dealing with the media and is looking for people with stories to tell. Email Bob at blawrence@jacksonwells.com.au or contact him on 02 9904 4333 or 0428 280 222. You are also encouraged to let your local media and Federal politicians know about this event. Encourage the MPs to be in Parliament when the speeches are being made.

DISPLAY. The story of the *Montevideo Maru* was also a tragedy for the Salvation Army, whose Brunswick Band provided the bulk of the complement of the 2/22nd Battalion band, most of

whom were lost on the ship. Lindsay Cox, a Friend and archivist for the Salvation Army, will set up a Montevideo Maru display in the Queen's Terrace Gallery.

HON PETER GARRETT. Unfortunately Peter Garrett, the patron of the Society, will be on Ministerial duties overseas and cannot be present on the day.

WEBCAST. Proceedings will be webcast live on the internet as they occur in the chamber. See Parliament's live broadcasting schedule at <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

TELEVISION. John Schindler's documentary The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru will be repeated on Foxtel's History Channel on the evening of 21 June to coincide with the event.

Parking at Parliament House

BY GEORGINA SKOUNTZOS

Being a Sitting Week, parking (which is for a maximum of three hours) is at a premium in the public car park under Parliament House.

If you feel that you will be in the building for longer than three hours, there is additional parking along Federation Mall (east and west side).

I can safely say that the parking on Federation Mall is long stay and free.

When looking at a map, if you are coming from the Sydney side of Canberra (north) you will come to Parliament House crossing the Commonwealth Avenue bridge, then turning left on to Parliament Drive and following the signs to the underground parking.

Alternatively, you can head north towards Old Parliament House along Federation Mall and park in the (West) car park there (about 50 metres from Parliament Drive).

If that car park is full, keep going down Federation Mall, turn right at the back of Old Parliament House then right again and head back up towards the House. Then about 50 metres from Parliament Drive is the other (East) car park.

I hope everything goes very well for everyone. It will be quite an emotional moment, I feel.

If it gets too much for some, we do have well trained first aid officers and a registered nurse on site.

A footnote on numbers. In the three months from February to mid-June the number of Friends of Montevideo Maru nearly doubled from 200 to 380.

So what happens next? From national recognition to national commemoration

BY KEITH JACKSON

THE DAY AFTER the events in Canberra, the Society be initiating discussions on the next stage of our project.

Andrea Williams, Phil Ainsworth, Clive Troy and Donald Hook will meet with Nola Anderson, Assistant Director of the Australian War Memorial, to begin planning for a Rabaul and Montevideo Maru memorial in the grounds of the AWM.

Sculptor and artist Hal Holman OL OAM, himself a commando (Purple Devils) and veteran of the landings in Rabaul at the end of the war, has developed a notional design for the memorial, which we hope we will be able to share with Friends in the near future.

But now comes the hard part. The Society will need to seriously turn its attention to fund-raising and the first step in this process, after our lawyers, Collaery & Associates, steer us through incorporation, will be to establish a membership fee for the Society.

This is likely to be of the order of \$50 a year, which will include monthly issues of this newsletter and a continuing effort from our voluntary committee to commemorate the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the Montevideo Maru as major parts of our nation's story.

We will also be implementing a sponsorship scheme to encourage large Australian corporations - especially those which had a connection with Rabaul before World War II - to join our effort to raise some \$400,000 for the memorial fund.

These organisations may include Westpac (then the Bank of NSW), Telstra (then the Postmaster General's Department) and the Commonwealth Bank. Officers from each of these corporations were lost on the *Montevideo Maru*.

Some Friends have queried the construction of a memorial, perhaps considering it an unnecessary luxury, but the committee of your Society sees it as part of its task to ensure that the tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru* and the New Guinea islands is commemorated for all time at a national level.

This in addition to our work to relocate the nominal roll, designate the place where the *Montevideo Maru* sank as an official war grave and to ensure these matters remain part of Australia's recorded history as well as our commemorative history.

We honour the survivors of the invasion who will be with us

Lorna Whyte (nee Johnson)

Lorna was an army nurse in Rabaul during World War II and became a POW in Japan. The ABC has just completed a dramatisation on the Australian nurses who were captured in Rabaul and taken to Japan as prisoners. We are hopeful that Lorna will join us from her home in New Zealand.

Fred Kollmorgen (94)

The sole survivor of the 2/22nd (Salvation Army) Band. Fred escaped down the south coast of New Britain.

Stan Cooper (93)

Royal Australian Artillery Heavy Battery Officer, Lark Force. After months in Rabaul as a POW in 1942, Stan was taken on the *Naruto Maru* which left Rabaul two weeks after the *Montevideo Maru*. He spent the next three years in Zentsuji POW camp in Japan.

Lionel Veale (91)

1st Independent Company, Kavieng. Was sent to Vila (in what is now Vanuatu) to train the Free French Forces. The day he got there, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and he was told to stay. Lionel became a Coastwatcher and has written several books about his time in New Guinea during World War II.

David Harper (90)

David was with the 1st Independent Company on New Ireland and initially escaped to Rabaul on the *Induna Star*. He then caught a ship to Buka and went on to the Solomon Islands, where he caught malaria and was medivaced out.

Norm Furness (88)

President of the Lark Force Association. Norm escaped from Rabaul down the south coast of New Britain and then joined the *Laurabada* in its rescue mission of late March 1942.

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society gives thanks ...

... to the Hon Alan Griffin MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, without whose understanding, sympathy and determination nothing would have happened

... to the Minister's assistant adviser, Darren Loasby, for his professionalism, dedication and forbearance in working to create an historic moment

... to those members of Parliament - Senator Anne McEwen (ALP SA), Catherine King (ALP Vic), Louise Markus (Lib NSW), Bruce Scott (Nat Qld), John Murphy (ALP NSW), Steven Ciobo (Lib Qld), and Bob Katter (Ind Qld)- who have been so positive and helpful in their sponsorship of the resolution

... to those many members of the Parliamentary staff who have shown great enthusiasm in their support for this project

The resolution to be agreed by the Australian Parliament

That this House:

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

FEEDBACK

JANET DYKGRAAFF

I was evacuated with my mother and siblings from Rabaul to Australia in 1941, before the invasion. I was a baby of just 7 months. My father was Harold Jo Ross, employed by Burns Philp in Rabaul. I have no memory of him at all. He was born in Cremorne, NSW and was 36 years old when he was presumed drowned 1 July 1942 on the *Montevideo Maru*.

He'd joined the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles as a Rifleman, altho' in his letters to his wife safe in Sydney, he told of the very heavy Lewis machine gun used at drill and said it was very awkward to run with it bashing his legs.

My grandfather, Edmund Martin Hawnt, was head of the Telephone Department in Rabaul. He came up on the *Neptuna* as a soldier with the Australian Occupation Army after New Guinea was mandated in World War I. He switched over to the Civil Administration when the soldiers withdrew. He was born in Werrington, UK and was 60 years old when declared missing, again assumed drowned on the *Montevideo Maru*.

After the war, we all went back to Rabaul to live. It must have been very difficult for my mother and grandmother with all the associated memories of a beautifully flowered and green town, which she'd known and loved as home from the age of seven. It was so devastated and wrecked.

She could never answer any of my questions about Dad. It was that painful for her. If anyone needed a medal for courage, she did: to lose both a father and a husband. She obeyed one of Harold's loving injunctions "to keep your chin up, it comes in handy". But, she had trouble keeping his last letter's request to "not let our babies forget me".

But we all grew up knowing about the Japanese ship the *Montevideo Maru*, the unmarked ship that was sunk with the whole township of Rabaul's civilians and the garrison soldiers aboard.

Thank you all for your committee's combined efforts resolving this grievous situation. The politicians' debate should be interesting. I assume it will be recorded in Hansard. Will the current Prime Minister be there, I wonder.

I personally would have liked confirmation that the missing men were on the *Montevideo Maru* before appealing for a memorial in Canberra. I found great solace when visiting the Australian POW Memorial at Ballarat, Victoria, last November. It has been well and imaginatively designed. Thank you for being so expedient in gaining the nation's further attention for the *Montevideo Maru*. I wonder what will be the future recorded history of this era in years to come. Honest documentation, I trust.

HELEN BOUTELL

In 1995, 50 years after the end of World War II, there was a Freedom Wall erected at Mt Cootha in Brisbane where plaques of remembrance were placed. This is one of the ones I donated:

REMEMBERING ALL ON
MONTEVIDEO MARU
SUNK 01.07.42
from
the nieces and nephews of
Charles J Campbell

TOM SCOTLAND

An ex POW who lived in Nedlands, a suburb of Perth, told me he was one of a few Aussie POWs rescued by an American submarine after the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*. Would you know the name of the US submarine?

I wonder why there is no mention of that rescue event. I will research the name of ex POW. He had been in Changi and he was part of a reunion of those who had been on the *Montevideo Maru*.

The US submarine Sturgeon sank the Montevideo Maru in the early hours of 1 July 1942. No prisoners survived. There were other POW ships that were torpedoed by US subs and Tom's contact presumably was on one of those, but not the MvM - KJ

LINDSAY COX

I have just noticed that I provided a typo in the stretcher-bearer article last month. The date Major Ackroyd submitted his recommendation for Morgan's MID should have been 5 July 1946, not 1940. Sorry!

COLIN PEARCE

I have been made aware of your support group for relatives and friends of those lost in Rabaul in 1942, presumably on the *Montevideo Maru*. Both my wife and I separately lost uncles who were members of the 17th Anti-Tank Battery. My uncle was Gunner Colin Morrison NX 54424. Helen's uncle was Lance Sergeant Paul Boyle NX 64450.

I have recently gathered a lot of information which my mother collected prior to her passing. (Grace Pearce was Colin's sister.) I have emailed Andrea Williams as both Helen and I would be very keen to attend the ceremony in Canberra on 21 June.

BOB SPILSTED

A big thank you for the newsletter and many hours of interesting reading for me. Also thank you from me, for without the drive, detection and detention of people like yourself the memory of brave men like my uncle Bill & his Mates would have been lost for ever. Lest We Forget.

KEN WOOD

My late mother's cousin, Ronald Edward Wallis QX 64944, was taken prisoner in Rabaul and was, as described by the AWM Honour Roll, lost at sea. I was surprised to stumble upon your site. My mother used to relate the story about her cousin but never had any more detail other than the ship he was on was torpedoed by the Americans.

Ronald's brother, Roy Valentine Wallis was killed in action in the Middle East two weeks prior. I was pleased to find Ronald's daughter Fay Long is also a Friend and would like to make contact with her, if she permits. My details are: Kenneth Wood, 31 Morgan St, North Lakes QLD 4509

TONY FIELD

I read the MvM newsletter for the first time yesterday. I would like to join Friends of Montevideo Maru. My father Charles Ross Field was on the *Montevideo Maru*. He was Director of Public Works in Rabaul, one-time Commanding Officer of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and, I think, a member of the Legislative Council. I was born in 1937. My mother died on 25 May 1942, not knowing what was happening to my father.

JOHN BELL

My uncle Don Bell is on the MvM manifest, although his brother Les believed he was executed in the Rabaul tunnels. My grandfather, John William Bell, was executed in the Kavieng massacre. My grandmother died many years later not knowing. Officials told her that he was lost at sea on a Japanese vessel (not the MvM).

She lost a husband and two sons to the war, and for years had no idea what happened to any of them. My father, Lincoln Bell, Coastwatcher, was involved in evacuating escapees from Rabaul as part of Harris's navy. He was killed in 1943 behind the Rai Coast whilst attempting to walk out to Moresby.

I have no letters written by my father, only one by my grandfather on New Years Eve 1941 from Kavieng to his eldest son, and one from Don Bell, same date from Rabaul, to his brother.

It is time for closure. I congratulate all those involved in the newsletter and the Society and express my personal appreciation for their tremendous efforts. My wife and I look forward to Canberra.

HENRY ASHLEY-BROWN

Thank you very much for the newsletters. I am compiling them as a history of all that has happened and continues to happen in relation to the *Montevideo Maru*.