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Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society

# MvM Newsletter 16

## July 2010

### At last, recognition & resolution

*'Warmed by the embrace of the dear lost of the Montevideo Maru'* – Hon Kim Beazley

**MONDAY 21 JUNE** proved an historic day with **Australia's Parliament** for the first time offering regrets for the *Montevideo Maru* tragedy.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence personnel, Hon Alan Griffin, expressed regret to 350 veterans, relatives and friends gathered in Parliament House on behalf of the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament.

"I would like to express our sincere regret and sorrow for the tragedy that occurred with the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 1942," Mr Griffin said.

"I would especially like to acknowledge the great emotional suffering of the families and friends they left behind. These people endured many long and painful years waiting for news of their loved ones and they deserve to be remembered."

Mr Griffin said the Australian Government will continue to work with the Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* Society to ensure the *Montevideo Maru* remains a part of the nation's living history.

Shadow Minister, Louise Markus, said it was an "important day, tinged with sadness for survivors and families of the lost.

"Equally, it is a day for Australia to remember and commemorate those who gave their lives and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Sixty-eight years is a long time to wait for such a moment," she said.

Society president Keith Jackson paid tribute to "all those other people who refused to let the flame be extinguished".

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The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society was established to ensure national recognition and commemoration of the tragedies that ensued from the Japanese invasion of the New Guinea Islands in early 1942, including Australia's greatest maritime disaster, the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* with the loss of more than 1,050 lives.

You can join the Society (ordinary membership costs \$50 a year) and donate to the construction of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial at the Australian War Memorial by sending an email to [benelong@bigpond.net.au](mailto:benelong@bigpond.net.au) or writing to PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

You can also remit funds by direct deposit to the Society's bank account: BSB 082-401 Account No 16-083-2367.

### Ahead: the permanent memorial

*'We commit \$100,000 to the construction of a national memorial'* – Hon Alan Griffin, MP

**THE FEDERAL** government has offered **\$100,000** towards the construction of a memorial at the Australian War Memorial

This is the first significant step in providing enduring national recognition of the *Montevideo Maru* tragedy.

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial project is slated for completion by July 2012, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*, and is expected to have a budget of \$400-500,000 dollars.

"The Society needs to begin serious fundraising," said President Keith Jackson.

"We're working with the Australian War Memorial to ensure an appropriate monument is designed and constructed.

"The AWM's job is to find a good site for the memorial in its grounds; it's up to us to find the money."

Mr Jackson said that so far the Society has relied on donations from Friends and pro bono assistance to ensure it meets its running costs, "which have so far and will continue to be minimal."

"The vast bulk of money we receive will go towards the memorial. The Society's operations are based on free labour, philanthropy and altruism.

"We have now reached a point where we need to charge for membership, seek corporate sponsors and stage fundraising events to ensure the memorial can be built within a reasonable time," he said.

"The government has provided a generous initial contribution, but it is not nearly enough to get a memorial in place."

The Society's membership has burgeoned to more than 400, and Mr Jackson believes three-quarters of these people will be willing to pay a joining fee.

"This will be the only way people will be able to legitimately receive the newsletter and participate freely in a range of Society events."

Mr Jackson said people who become financial members before the end of August will also receive a free copy of a booklet containing the full text of the 21 June Parliamentary speeches.

They will also receive a massive \$20 discount on the DVD of Phil Donnison's documentary recording the events of the day, which will retail for \$40.

## It's now time to join the Society

**ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP** of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society will cost \$50 a year for people who live at the same address.

For members who can afford it, the Society also offers a gold membership for \$100 a year and life membership for \$500.

After August this monthly newsletter will be available only to financial members.

Financial members will also receive a free booklet including all the historic speeches given in Parliament on Monday 21 June.

They will also be eligible to purchase Phil Donnison's documentary of the day's events for half price.

Gold and Life members will receive a Certificate recording their special membership of the Society.

### How to join the Society (& order your DVD)

**Electronically.** Transfer the appropriate funds to the Society's bank account: Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee BSB 082-401 Account No 16-083-2367. Notify us of the deposit in an email to [belong@bigpond.net.au](mailto:belong@bigpond.net.au)

**By mail.** Post a cheque made out to the Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee to the Society at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

Membership (one postal or email address) - \$50  
Gold membership - \$100  
Life membership - \$500  
DVD (financial members) - \$20  
DVD (retail price) - \$40

**Remember, the only way you can receive the *MvM Newsletter* after August is by becoming a financial member of the Society.**

## New information on MvM story

Rod Miller, historian and author of *The Lost Women of Rabaul*, is to deliver the Brigadier EJH Howard commemorative lecture for the Military History Society of NSW on Saturday 20 November.

Rod - Australia's foremost authority on the *Montevideo Maru* - will present new information on the circumstances surrounding the vessel's tragic loss on 1 July 1942.

The lecture, entitled 'The Montevideo Maru - Australia's worst maritime disaster', will start at 2 pm in the Mitchell Theatre at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney.

Admission \$10. Bookings essential. Tel 02 9331 1202 or 02 9523 2486. Eml [vashtif@bigpond.net.au](mailto:vashtif@bigpond.net.au) or [philpcarey@unwired.com.au](mailto:philpcarey@unwired.com.au)

## Continuing to achieve our goals

**SO, AFTER THE recognition by the National Parliament of the tragedy of the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*, what is there still left to do., In brief, a lot.**

In addition to the massive project of constructing a memorial at the Australian War Memorial, and raising the money for this, there are three main tasks we're continuing to work on:

- (1) Identifying the whereabouts of the missing nominal roll, or a validated direct translation of it, so the names of those on board the *Montevideo Maru* might be finally verified.
- (2) Working with the government to ensure the site of the sinking is designated as an official war grave and conducting a memorial service in the waters of the South China Sea above where the ship rests.
- (3) Ensuring that the story of WW2 in the New Guinea Islands and the *Montevideo Maru* remain an enduring part of Australian history - in the schools and in our cultural institutions.

Corporate and event-based fundraising are now priority areas of activity and, if you wish to assist with these, either personally or by directing us to potential sponsors, you should contact Phil Ainsworth at [p.ainsworth@kingco.com.au](mailto:p.ainsworth@kingco.com.au).

If you wish to assist in your local area by obtaining media coverage for the Society's activities or for the story of the *Montevideo Maru*, you should contact Bob Lawrence at [blawrence@jacksonwells.com.au](mailto:blawrence@jacksonwells.com.au) for some tips on how to proceed.

And you can continue to assist the growth and success of the Society by becoming a paid-up member and by encouraging other people to join. These people should be directed to get in touch with Keith Jackson at [belong@bigpond.net.au](mailto:belong@bigpond.net.au).



Committee members of the Society at Parliament House on Monday 21 June [from left]: Keith Jackson; Hooky Street; Andrea Williams; Don Hook; Bob Lawrence; Liz Thurston; Kurt Diercke; Phil Ainsworth

## CANBERRA - WHAT THE SPEECHMAKERS SAID

**Many fine speeches were made in Parliament House on Monday 21 June. Here we present salient extracts. The Society will publish the speeches in full in a special booklet that will be provided free to people who join as financial members before the end of August.**

### HON ALAN GRIFFIN, MP

I acknowledge the presence in the House today of many of the family, friends and loved ones of those lost on the *Montevideo Maru*, some of whom have travelled great distances to be here. I also acknowledge that this tragedy has touched so many Australians, including members of Parliament - both past and present. I address this statement to the families and to the House.

On behalf of the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament, I would like to express our sincere regret and sorrow for the tragedy that occurred with the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 1942.

To date the original Japanese nominal roll has not been recovered but the Department of Defence is still undertaking a search.

Quite rightly the story of the *Montevideo Maru* will not end here. I expect historians in Australia and across the world will continue in their search for the missing pieces of the puzzle including the lost records. And I know fundraising efforts are also underway to erect a memorial here in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial.

As we stand here today I would like to formally mark the great loss of the *Montevideo Maru* and honour those who died. Australia is forever grateful for their service in defence of our nation during the Second World War. I would especially like to acknowledge the great emotional suffering of the families and friends they left behind. These people endured many long and painful years waiting for news of their loved ones and they deserve to be remembered.

The fortitude needed to survive the three years it took for the tragic news of the death of their loved ones to reach them is exemplary. And I extend to them my whole hearted condolences. Their experience is an integral part of our wartime history. I acknowledge their grief has extended beyond the years of uncertainty. Not having a marked grave to signify their loved one's life has weighed on many families - even to the present day.

The Australian Government will continue to work with them, the Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* Society and others interested in this tragedy to ensure the *Montevideo Maru* remains a part of our living history.

### LOUISE MARKUS, MP

Wives, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, those who survived the events of 1942, loved ones and friends of the *Montevideo Maru*: in this place on Monday, 21 June 2010, the Australian parliament is formally recognising remembering and commemorating the loss of lives during the fall of Rabaul, the Battle of Kavieng, the Tol Massacre and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* by torpedo in the early hours of 1 July 1942.

It is a time for us to honour the service of those who were lost, killed or are missing from the *Montevideo Maru* and from activities on and around the mandated islands of New Guinea from New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover and the surrounding islands. It is my privilege and honour to speak on behalf of the federal coalition in response to the ministerial statement of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Minister for Defence Personnel on the *Montevideo Maru*.

Today is an important day, tinged with sadness for survivors and families of the lost. Equally, it is a day for Australia to remember and commemorate those who gave their lives and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Sixty-eight years is a long time to wait for such a moment.

I am aware of five survivors of that terrible time in early 1941 who are here today with us: Stan Cooper, Lionel Veale, Norm Furness, David Harper and Fred Kollmorgen. Your stories are ones of sheer bravery, courage under fire and mateship. They are values that we honour as those of the Anzacs. Your spirit and endurance place you also in their league. While every story is significant, in the time available it is not possible to cover every one of the recollections of those who were there. One story about Fred Kollmorgen particularly caught my attention. The story given to me goes like this:

Mary May and her daughter Dr Marian May are also here with us. Mary's husband, Reverend John May OBE, was chaplain to Lark Force in Rabaul. John was a POW sent to Japan on the *Naruto Maru* before he was released in August 1945. Returning to Australia after working in Japan after the war, John May became the chaplain at the Royal Military College at Duntroon here in Canberra. Sadly, John died earlier this year. Marian has recorded: "Before his stroke in January, John was making a big extra effort to walk every day so that, should such an event take place, he would be in a fit state to attend! He'd even bought a new pair of shoes in readiness!" Marian, on behalf of the House today, we extend our condolences and sorrow that John is not here.

At the time of the Japanese landing, 24 Squadron had a small number of Wirraways on New Britain. As the Japanese arrived, Wing Commander Lerew signalled RAAF HQ in Melbourne with the Latin phrase *nos morituri te salutamus* [We who are about to die salute you]. Today it is we who are living today in freedom who salute the men and women of that time in New Guinea in 1942. Lest we forget.

## **SENATOR ANNE McEWEN**

Tonight I would like to speak about the 1942 tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru*, and the efforts of a group of supporters, families and friends to make sure Australians know the story of the *Montevideo Maru* and of those personnel and civilians who served in defence of Australia in Rabaul and the New Guinea islands during World War II.

The sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* was the worst maritime tragedy in Australia's history and the campaign to remember it was acknowledged today by motions in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. It is the first time the story of the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*, which occurred on 1 July 1942, has been officially recognised by the federal parliament.

Today, more than 300 people came to Canberra to be part of the recognition activities in this place, and it was my pleasure to meet many of them this afternoon. Although it has taken close to 70 years to get here, today is a very important day in Australia's history and I hope the formal acknowledgements in this parliament will give some solace to the families and friends of those who never returned from the islands of New Guinea after the conflict in Rabaul.

Today's events in the parliament go some way to redressing those wrongs. I would like to thank all those who worked tirelessly to get the federal parliament to the stage we were at today to make acknowledgments through our motions and through the afternoon tea that was hosted by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. It was well attended, I have to say, by members of all parties in the parliament. All of those involved in the *Montevideo Maru* campaign deserve our support.

## **CATHERINE KING, MP**

The impact of this tragedy was felt by people right across our country. Loved ones and relatives of those Australians killed have carried the unbearable and unimaginable burden of losing a loved one at war. Amongst these mourners are members and former members of this House. I respectfully acknowledge the loss of Reverend Syd Beazley, the Hon Kim Beazley's uncle, and of the grandfather of the Hon Peter Garrett, both of whom were on board the *Montevideo Maru* on that fateful morning.

The story of the *Montevideo Maru* will live in our nation's history. It is remembered on the national prisoners of war memorial in Ballarat and on other memorials across Australia and internationally. In this parliament, I formally acknowledge those who died on the *Montevideo Maru* and I pay my respects to their families and their friends who are present with us today.

## **STEVEN CIOBO, MP**

The facts of the *Montevideo Maru*—the capture of the Australian Lark Force personnel and the civilian interns, as well as what we know about the circumstances of the ship's sinking—have been, today, relatively well documented, both in the House and by the member. But it stands in contrast to the history—that for so long so many people had no real clarity about the circumstances that took place.

What I want to talk about today—and I am mindful of the presence in the public galleries of survivors, of relatives, of family and friends—is the need for closure and the need for certainty for so many Australians who lost family members either on the *Montevideo Maru* or in the days before the ship set sail. In the past I have sponsored petitions in this place calling for the government to conduct an inquiry, and for a search for the *Montevideo Maru*.

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone is of the same view with respect to the relevance of that. But I have been persuaded over the years that an inquiry, and looking into the feasibility of a search, is the direction in which we should go to help to provide closure for those who still question who was on board and who was not.

In many respects, today is just a start. The formal recognition by this nation's parliament is something that has been well overdue for too long. But it is just another step on the journey. I know, from having had the opportunity just this afternoon to speak with family members, that there is still a great desire for more to be done.

## **KEITH JACKSON**

The Rev John May, who died in January, was revered by many people here today, as he was by the men and women he ministered to in the prison camps of Rabaul. John survived the war as a prisoner of the Japanese and continued to provide support and meaning to the families of the many men who did not return.

As his wife Mary has recorded, for John the tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru* did not fade with the years. Instead it increasingly occupied his mind as he worried at the lack of recognition, and resolution, for the families and friends.

John, like so many others, did not live to be here with us today in this fragment of our country's history he so profoundly wished for. But he did know this was afoot. And today, in thanking all of you for your fortitude and resolve over so many years, I pay tribute to John and all those other people who refused to let the flame be extinguished.

# CANBERRA, MONDAY 21 JUNE -THE DAY THAT WAS

## PRIME MINISTERIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (deposed from office just three days later) took the opportunity to welcome the 350 Friends who packed the galleries of Parliament. Mr Rudd acknowledged Australians are increasingly aware of the story of the *Montevideo Maru*. He had been intending to be present at the Queens Terrace Gallery reception but the tragic crash of an Australian Army helicopter in Afghanistan with the loss of three Australian lives precluded that. The accident provided a dramatic counterpoint to the recognition of the loss of the *Montevideo Maru*.

## PACKING THE GALLERIES

In a wonderful show of strength, each of the public galleries surrounding the House of Representatives chamber was packed with Friends of *Montevideo Maru*. MPs commented it was a rare site, outside of Question Time, to see the galleries so full. This gave added significance to the occasion that saw eloquent speeches given on the floor of Parliament. There was universal approval for the addresses by Minister Alan Griffin and Shadow Minister Louise Markus. "They showed they understand what it means to us," said one relative. "They showed they care."

## PUTTING FACES TO NAMES

Of almost equal importance to the formal events of the day was the coming together of the relatives of the men of Rabaul who, without ever meeting each other previously, found that their families had shared common experiences and emotions in the wake of the tragedies that had befallen them in wartime. The warmth of the instant relationships that were generated was genuine and will be sustained. The Society is now planning how relatives and friends can come together on a regular basis to share their stories and experiences.

## MPs FLEE THE CHAMBER

For some people unfamiliar with the sometimes inexplicable processes of Parliament, the desertion of MPs from the chamber after Question Time was perceived as a slight to the subsequent recognition by Parliament of the Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* tragedies. But as long-time habitués of politics observed, the 50 or so members who remained for the speeches "represented about 45 more than the usual complement after Question Time".

## IT WAS A HISTORY MYSTERY

Foxtel's History Channel repeated the documentary, *The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru*, on the afternoon of Monday 21 June. Unfortunately, as some people who weren't in Canberra pointed out, it ran through the period when the Minister was speaking on the issue. "I had my ear glued to ABC Radio for Parliament and was watching and listening to the History Channel," wrote one Friend. Timing, timing!

## THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S SHOES

PNG High Commissioner, Charles Lepani, attended the Parliamentary proceedings without standing on ceremony. In fact he was standing in his socks. Like many of us, Charles was unimpressed by having to remove his belt and shoes in order to pass through Security. Uncomfortable reminders of what happened to Sir Michael Somare I Cairns a few years ago, in an incident which triggered a freeze in the PNG-Australia relationship. But it was a magnificent gesture by this fine representative to pay tribute to those Australians who had died defending his homeland.

## THE HISTORIC MOTION

For the record, the private members' resolutions agreed in the Senate and the House of Representatives read that the Senate [the House]:

(1) expresses:

- (a) 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; and
- (b) 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; and

(2) conveys its:

- (a) condolences to the relatives and loved ones of the people who died in this conflict; and
- (b) thanks to the relatives for their forbearance and efforts in ensuring that the nation remembers the sacrifices made.

## MEMORABILIA IS NOT FORGOTTEN

Many people brought memorabilia and letters to Canberra but time did not allow a full appreciation of some of this, although a number of items proved to be great talking points on the day. When the Society's website develops in the next few months, there will be a special space for photos of your memorabilia and copies of letters, which will give provide both insights and emotional feel to the story of Rabaul and the *Montevideo Maru*. *MvM Newsletter* also looks forward to receiving your stories of the Big Day in Canberra.

## **FEEDBACK**

### **NORM FURNESS**

#### **President, 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Lark Force Association**

I was so pleased to meet up with you and other members of your group in Canberra, as previously you were only names to me. On behalf of the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Lark Force Association, I extend our many thanks for the work you are doing. Over the years we here in Victoria have done what we could in remembering not only the soldiers of Lark Force, but also the civilians, the Chinese and the native people of the Rabaul area. Unfortunately the age factor has finally caught up with us, but many relatives are now helping out.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July we hold our family get together at Trawool and this year we expect about 150 plus to attend as it will be 70 years since the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Btn was raised at this very site. If any of your group are down this way or can make it, they would be most welcome. We are having a spit roast and hope to have a brass band attending - it should be quite a day.

I will of course relate to everyone the work you are doing and expect you will get new members who will donate to the new Memorial to be built in Canberra. I will be in touch again with you shortly, but in closing, I would just like to say how much I enjoyed the few days in Canberra and delighted in the result. It was long overdue. My appearance was due mainly to Ailsa Nisbet and her daughter Margaret Curtis, as I was a bit wary of travelling solo after recent health problems.

### **HON KIM BEAZLEY AO**

#### **Ambassador to the United States**

Families of those who lost relatives and loved ones in this, our greatest loss at sea, would be deeply grateful for recognition of their sadness and pride. Most of us left now are too young to have known the fallen, but they live richly in our family legend.

Australians are good at somberly recognising the sacrifice of their fellows. Opening the nation's arms through the Parliament to embrace the dear lost of the *Montevideo Maru* is part of a fine tradition. The relatives of Syd Beazley— and, I am sure, many of those here [in Parliament] today — would be warmed by this embrace.

### **JUDITH GULLIDGE**

#### **East Coburg, Victoria**

My father was Sergeant Arthur Gullidge, the Bandmaster of the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Band and a POW on the *Montevideo Maru*. I have been very impressed with the work that you and your committee have undertaken and what you have achieved thus far. The gathering in Canberra should be a great occasion.

### **JIM NOBLE**

I would like to be added to your Friends of Montevideo Maru. I am researching family history and have found that a relative (a cousin by marriage of my mother-in-law) was in Rabaul when the Japanese invaded. It appears that nothing was heard of him again and he is assumed to have died at the hands of the Japanese in Rabaul or possibly on the *Montevideo Maru*. His name was Walter Horace Fitzgibbon and he was a civilian government employee, though we do not know in what capacity. He would have been aged in his 40s.

I would be most grateful if you could advise me how to find out whether he is remembered by name on any Memorials such as the one at Ballarat (I have tried to find a website, but without success) and whether he is on any official list of those missing presumed dead. I have noted in an article by Rod Miller that a Fitzgibbons was among those left in Rabaul after the ship left. However, we do not know whether that is Walter Fitzgibbon or another person with the same/similar surname.

*With great help from Rod Miller, it has been established that Walter Fitzgibbon remained in Rabaul as a prisoner after the Montevideo Maru sailed but disappeared around May 1944. The location of his grave is not known.*

civilians left in Rabaul and, together with nine others, was murdered by the Japanese in 1944.

### **SENATOR JOHN WILLIAMS**

#### **The Nationals Senator for NSW**

While speaking of history and war, I would like to make reference to the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* during the Second World War. On 22 June 1942, having left Rabaul Harbour, this Japanese auxiliary ship, carrying an estimated 1,050 Australian prisoners of war and civilian internees, was tragically torpedoed 110 kilometres north-west of Cape Bojeador in the Philippines. All on board were killed. This is undoubtedly Australia's worst naval catastrophe, and it is important that we formally acknowledge this disaster and offer sympathy to the relatives and descendants of those lost. It is time that a memorial to the *Montevideo Maru* was established within the grounds of the Australian War Memorial. It is vital to the Australian legend that these men be remembered and recognised for their ultimate sacrifice to our nation.

## **SENATOR ANNE McEWEN**

### **Senator for South Australia**

I was honoured to give the speech [in the Senate] and totally understand that it was a bit late in the day for people to hang around for. I am sorry I didn't get to see you at the afternoon tea function. I was there but got caught up speaking to vets and their families. Some amazing stories amongst them.

I am glad we were able to contribute \$100,000 to the memorial and will continue to lobby for more Government support. If you planning to be in the House when we sit again (and I don't know when that will be), I would like to catch up if you have time. Thanks again for all your incredible work.

## **JAN LOVEDAY**

### **Geelong, Victoria**

I sincerely thank you, Andrea and all others involved in bringing about the MvM memorial resolution in our national parliament on 21st. June. Your relentless resolve secured an event which none of us (ordinary people) ever thought would occur. It also brought together many individuals and families with similar stories to share.

The time and effort involved in facilitating such a wonderful public acknowledgment of the sacrifices made in the defence of Rabaul and the subsequent sinking of the MvM, have been evident, but probably were far greater than we imagine. Since returning home, I have enjoyed sharing with my mother, who is in residential care, the satisfaction I experienced in honoring her eldest brother. Again I thank you all.

## **MARG CURTIS**

### **Mt Martha, Victoria**

Thanks just don't seem enough for all the work you and your committee did to achieve what happened in Parliament on Monday. It was an absolutely outstanding success with so many being so grateful for everything that went into the organisation and coordination of such a big event. I am sure everyone went away feeling like we did - satisfied and very grateful to be involved.

Everything that has been done to date has been so much appreciated and you should be so proud of what has been accomplished in what seems to be a short time. It was great to meet you and to experience first hand the acknowledgements made in Parliament. Thank you!

## **BARBARA SADLER**

### **Lesmurdie, Western Australia**

My brother was Acting Corporal Colin Jackson QX12940 of No 1 Independent Company. His wife Joyce, who died about four years ago, received a letter written by Vincent Bristow giving details of his last days and of losing his life in July 1942. I could not go to Canberra, aged being the reason, but I am very interested in all events pertaining to *Montevideo Maru*.

## **ROBERT HARDIE**

### **Office of Louise Markus, MP**

It was a very moving event, and Louise was most disappointed that she could not stay longer in the reception to meet more people. I hope the people there understood. We will most likely issue some further information shortly regarding our commitment of funds to the memorial within the AWM Grounds. Well done on your efforts to bring this event to pass.

## **MURRAY BLADWELL**

### **Chelmer, Queensland**

The warmest congratulations to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society committee and yourself as president for your dogged pursuit of the authorities to gain national recognition for those who so tragically died. A memorial located in the grounds of the national War Memorial in Canberra is a most fitting way to acknowledge the pain suffered by the families of those men whose lives were lost to history and national recognition for so many years.

## **LORNA JOHNSTON**

### **Ex POW Nurse, Rabaul 1942.**

Just to wish you and all the Friends of the Montevideo Maru a very successful and happy visit to Parliament House, Canberra. Sorry I shall not be with you. I tried, but it was not to be.

## **ANDREA WILLIAMS**

### **St Ives, NSW**

I have a huge apology - Lorna's name should be 'Lorna Johnston nee Whyte'. Lorna is a gorgeous lady and I want people to know it was my error, not yours. Sincere apologies to everyone.

## **JOHN MURPHY, MP**

### **Member for Lowe, NSW**

Yesterday was a wonderful occasion for the many Australian lives affected by the *Montevideo Maru* tragedy. It was disappointing not to speak on the motion, however those who were able to speak spoke well. Unfortunately, the events of the day didn't allow me to attend the reception on the Terrace but I am pleased the Minister was able to organise the day before our winter recess. Yesterday was also a sombre reminder of the ongoing dangers and sacrifices our ADF personnel and their families face. They, too, will not be forgotten.

## **HELEN MOULDS**

Please add my name to the newsletter. My late father, Stewart Gordon Nottage, was one of the officers captured in Rabaul and I am so pleased to know that Stan Cooper will be attending the function on 21 June. I have been corresponding with Rod Miller, who is transcribing my father's diaries, and my adult daughter Sarah Gillespie and her husband Colonel Andrew Gillespie will be attending.

I have recently been in Canberra and took a folder with many items and photographs previously not sent to the AWM after my mother died in 1989. One is a group of the officers in Rabaul soon after their arrival and Stan Cooper is shown in the back row.

I was also gratified to know that Paul Metzler and Lex Fraser are still alive and was so very sad to learn of Padre May's recent death. I corresponded with him after my parents passed away. I am the only child of Mollie and Stewart and was born on 16.6.1936 - the years certainly creep along. Daddy was born on 5.6.1905 so would now be just 105 and passed away at age 69 on 20.9.74.

## **KEIKO TAMURA**

### **Canberra ACT**

I attended the Parliament session last week when the Minister for Veterans Affairs and opposition shadow minister made their statements on *Montevideo Maru*. It was a moving occasion and I have reported the afternoon events to Mrs. Nori Nagasawa and other Japanese members. I did not have a chance to meet you last week, so I wanted to express my appreciation. Thank you very much for putting so much efforts into organising the occasion.

## **CATRIONA BRUCE**

### **Camberwell, Victoria**

I am a second cousin of Humpfrey Walsingham who perished on the *Montevideo Maru*. His sister Mrs Winifred (Win) Halket survives him. His mother and my maternal grandmother were sisters. Hearing that there is fundraising for a memorial at the Australian War Memorial would you please send me details and add me to any mailing list that you may have so I may pass on any information to my "aunt".

Back in 1975, my mother and I did find his name on the wall at the war cemetery in Singapore. It affected my mother quite severely at the time as no-one from the family had been there previously. We have also found his name at the War Memorial in Canberra.

It is also interesting that Carey Baptist College in Kew had a Memorial Service at their Anzac Day service some three years ago where an old boy of the school who also perished was honoured. I am afraid I do not remember his name at this time but can obtain it. My Husband is an old boy of the School and a Vietnam veteran.

## **CLIVE TROY**

### **Beecroft, NSW**

I was recently in Vladivostok Russia and visited one of the many war memorials that dot the city. One memorial plaque had an English translation that struck a cord with me. I consider the quote most appropriate to our efforts and endeavours with our memorial. "A country which has forgotten its past ceases to be a nation. That's why some people put up monuments. Not for the dead - the living need them badly."

## **PETER PRITCHARD**

### **Bendigo, Victoria**

Many thanks for what you are all doing. My wife Betty and I wish you all well in Canberra on this momentous occasion. It's difficult for us to leave as my wife is still teaching. Bless all you guys for what you are doing for every family

## **RAY JOHNSTON**

Once again, a heartfelt well done for yesterday. I know these things don't just happen. It takes years of determined action. I should like to become a Friend of the organisation. My book *White Ghosts, Black Shadows* is about to be published. It is a "faction" account of how civilians, service personnel and local native people felt rather than being a history per se. I'm hoping this book does a lot to galvanise a feeling-based response (as against a technical or objective response) in the minds of many members of the public and among our national leaders.

## **PEGGY STRANSKY**

Sunday morning on Macca's ABC program I heard part of a beautiful poem - a tribute to the Australian POWs who were aboard the *Montevideo Maru* when it was sunk. Unfortunately I only heard part of the poem but was wondering whether I would be able to get a copy.

In the early 1950's, as a young girl working in the office of the then Port Kembla Stevedoring, I was witness to the entrance to the harbour of the first Japanese merchant ship since the finish of the war in 1945. Berthed alongside on the same side of the wharf was a Howard Smith cargo ship and one of the crew from that ship walked along the wharf and boarded the Japanese ship (*Kokoku Maru*) and tore down the Japanese flag. The police were called and the matter investigated but no charges were laid. The crew member had been a prisoner of the Japanese during the war and had had his tongue cut out while at the hands of his cruel captors. The Japanese ship was not a welcome sight in our port.

Sadly for us our old primary school where some of our young WWII soldiers were educated, was sold at a 'fire sale' price to the Japanese by Bob Carr and the NSW Labor Government as it adjoins a smelter which the Japanese had also bought, but which is thankfully now defunct. Bob Carr had no right to sell it to the Japanese. They still own our school and this has never sat right with those of us who lived through WWII and witnessed the sight of our returning young men who had survived POW camps. Some of them did not live very long. My own brother was in the Australian Army during the six years of the war and was one of the Rats of Tobruk.

## **HARRY WEST OAM**

### **Lane Cove, NSW**

I would like to be recorded as a member of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society, but because of my age and health will necessarily be a background supporter rather than an active participant.

## **BRUCE MILLS**

### **Tumby Bay, South Australia**

I believe my brother Jack Mills was a prisoner of war and went down on the *Montevideo Maru* but sadly cannot be certain at this stage, or of ever.

## **ANDREW COOPER**

### **Forest Hill, Victoria**

I am the grandson of Dr Robert Cooper who was believed to be on board the *Montevideo Maru*. I applaud the wonderful work that you are doing.

## **JUDE SULLIVAN**

### **Baxter, Victoria**

Just a short note to thank you very much for enabling us to attend the session in Canberra on Monday. My mum Nancy Wade was very happy to be able to attend and felt the response in Parliament was very positive. We look forward to being involved in the future. Thank you again for your wonderful work.

## **COLYN ADNUM**

### **Mt Pleasant, NSW**

I was listening to Macca last Sunday talking to Carole Worthy about our boys in Rabaul and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*. My uncle (mum's brother) was lost there. His name was William Johns, NX191435. I have his medals. All the family got was a letter, missing in action, and later another letter, missing in action presumed dead. My grandfather was devastated and never recovered and the rest of the family was destroyed as were many others at that time.

## **JAN STEINFURTH**

I was listening to ABC Radio and heard the talk on the *Montevideo Maru*. Also heard that there was an association. My wife's father, John Patrick (Jack) Beaumont, worked on Mandres Plantation. His pregnant wife was evacuated in December 1941. John was captured by the Japanese and was not on the ship. He was one of about a dozen.

## **PAM WHEELER**

On Sunday morning, Macca mentioned your name in connection with the *Montevideo Maru*. At the time of the Japanese invasion, my uncle Trevor Collett was working as a self supporting Seventh Day Adventist missionary. When his wife and daughter were evacuated to Australia, he chose to remain to support an ill colleague, who was a missionary for the same organisation. I forget his name ... he was a pastor. It's always been the belief of the family that the two men perished on the above mentioned ship. Do you have any evidence of this? I keep in contact with Trevor's only daughter who was about four years old at the time.

*We have been able to confirm that Trevor, then 29, was almost certainly aboard the Montevideo Maru.*

## THE BACK LOG

### Brisbane memorial service

The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles Ex Members Association will hold the annual *Montevideo Maru* memorial service at the Hall of Memories Cenotaph, Anzac Square, Brisbane, on Thursday Wednesday 1 July at 9.45 am for 10 am. Contact Phil Ainsworth on 0418 730 348.

### Trawool

This year is the 70th anniversary of the formation of the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in Trawool, Victoria. The date for the annual commemoration is Sunday 25 July. Norm Furness is arranging catering with a spit roast and is expecting around 150 to attend, including five of the eleven remaining 2/22<sup>nd</sup> personnel. There is a memorial on site and a brief service is held with families laying flowers. Norm has arranged a flag pole to be erected next to memorial.

### Lark Force service

Thanks to Kevin Hains for providing us with a DVD of the 2010 Memorial Service for Lark Force at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne in January. About 80 people attended. The video was an excellent effort in difficult circumstances for filming. It records Norm Furness' speech, the Old Sappers Association is mentioned and the President lays a wreath.

### New committee members

We are delighted to advise the appointment of three new members of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society committee who will help boost our efforts to establish a memorial in Canberra and achieve our other goals.

**LINDSAY COX** makes a welcome return to the committee after stepping down some time ago because of ill health, from which he has made a full recovery. Lindsay is the Melbourne-based Territorial Archivist for the Salvation Army. As a Bandsman and an ex-CMF soldier, he has long been interested in the tragic story of the 24 Salvation Army bandmen who enlisted in the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, featured in the comprehensive files and photographic collection at the Salvation Army Heritage Centre. Lindsay is author of *Brave and True*, a detailed account of the Band of the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. He has also written several other books on Australian Military history and early Salvation Army history. Lindsay will work with the committee as an important link with the Salvation Army, as person well-versed in the history of the tragedy and as a contributor to our newsletter.

**MARG CURTIS** has spent the last 25 years as Executive Assistant to the Chairman and Managing Director of Holden Special Vehicles and the Holden Racing Team outside Melbourne. Marg's uncle, John (Jack) George Groat, was in the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> and was reported missing on 23 January 1942 and reported to be a POW on 22 September 1942, presumed to be on the Montevideo Maru. Marg and her mother went to Rabaul in 1992 to see the harbour memorial and visited many places her uncle had referred to in his many letters home. Last year Marg did the Lark Force Trek in the Gazelle Peninsula and later went to Manila to attend last July's memorial service in Subic Bay. Marg will work closely with Andrea on the recognition and other programs.

**PHIL DONNISON** is a Sydney-based filmmaker and musician who first went to PNG as a teenager in 1960 when his father was sent to run an expatriate teacher training course in Rabaul. Later he returned to PNG as a high school teacher - returning to Australia in 1976 to start a new career in the burgeoning video production industry as a cameraman and director. In 2003-04 he produced *Songs Of The Volcano* filmed on location in and around Rabaul. Phil still performs with the National Junk Band and the Juglug String Band and freelances as a cameraman/director making industrial and corporate documentaries. He is currently producing a documentary on last Monday's Montevideo Maru event in Canberra. Phil will work with Bob and me on the media program.

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE *MvM* NEWSLETTER ARE ALWAYS WELCOME**

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