



Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society

# Memorial News 24

## March 2011

*Warmed by the embrace of the dear lost of the Montevideo Maru - Kim Beazley*

### DONATIONS ELIGIBLE FOR TAX DEDUCTIBILITY

All donations made to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society for the Memorial are now eligible for tax deductibility. Receipts will be issued close to the end of the financial year.

To commission an artist and achieve the memorial by the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru, all funds need to be received by July 2011.

### CANBERRA MEMORIAL EVENTS - JULY 2011

Highlights will be a commemorative luncheon and an historic memorial service. Cost for both luncheon on Saturday and refreshments Sunday \$55. Payment will confirm booking. Please RSVP and pay as soon as possible.

Payment can be made to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society as follows: **Electronically.** Transfer funds to the Society's bank account: Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society BSB 082-401 Account 16-083-2367. Bank NAB. Please include your name and the word 'Canberra' for this deposit. Also, please notify the deposit by email to:

[tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au](mailto:tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au)).

**By mail.** Cheque to Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

**By Visa or Mastercard** - details at end of newsletter.

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The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society was established to ensure national recognition and commemoration of the tragedies that ensued after 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 1,000 lives. The Society is registered in the Australian Capital Territory (No A04977). ABN 960 583 442 11

### JAPAN TO RETURN RECORDS OF AUSTRALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR

BY DON HOOK

In a historical breakthrough, Japan is to return to Australia records of Australian prisoners of war held by Japan during World War Two. The Japanese Foreign Minister Maehara announced the return of the records 'in a spirit of reconciliation' during a visit to Japan by five former Australian POWs, under the auspices of the Japan-POW Friendship Group.

Australia's Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs Warren Snowdon thanked the Japanese Government for its offer. Mr Rudd said the offer was made in the spirit of cooperation.

"These index cards were originally offered to Australia by the Japanese Government in 1953, but the Australian Government of the time chose not to take up the offer, believing that they would not contain any new information," he said.

Mr Snowdon said the Japanese records might shed new light on the fate of the members of Lark Force, many of whom were lost when the Japanese transport, Montevideo Maru, was sunk by an American submarine on July 1, 1942.

A total of 1,053 Australian POWs and civilian internees died in what remains Australia's greatest maritime disaster.

Mr Snowdon said the government recognised that there were families who remained uncertain about the fate of those captured by the Japanese during World War Two.

"In recent years, the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society has maintained interest in the fate of Australian prisoners of war and has pressed the Australian Government to seek access to the card system," he said.

The records are expected to be housed in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

On 15 February 2011 Keith Jackson wrote to all members to advise that, due to ill health, he would be resigning the Presidency of the Society. We thank Keith for his many initiatives and his tremendous energy - our goals, whilst high, are realistic and have already provided much comfort to many relatives. We wish Keith well and hope that, when it is possible, he may again become involved with the Society.

There is still an enormous task ahead and the Committee was quick to appoint Phil Ainsworth as the new President and appreciated him stepping in to the role so promptly. A letter from Phil was sent to members just after Keith's letter went out but it seems there may have been a small glitch as some people did not receive it. For that reason it is being reproduced here.

**Andrea Williams**

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## **LETTER FROM PHIL AINSWORTH TO MEMBERS:**

**This confirms that Keith Jackson has resigned as President of the Society, effective immediately, for health reasons. Keith has also distributed a personal letter to members.**

Keith's extraordinary contribution with his leadership, his vision and his passion for the cause, especially for someone without personal association with the events of war-time Rabaul, has been an inspiration to us all.

One of the reasons this tragedy has taken so long to gain recognition was because those affected were scattered far and wide. Despite this, and the length of time involved, Keith has given us unity and purpose.

After 68 years, acknowledgement in our national Parliament ensured that this story remains a significant part of our Australian history.

Many of us know that Keith would shy away from accolades, but his quiet generosity to philanthropic causes must be recognised. His huge contribution to the Society's cause is but one measure of his generosity.

Thank you, Keith.

Keith has confirmed that Jackson Wells will continue to support the Society's work and we are very grateful to John Wells and the firm of

Jackson Wells for this generous offer and for continuing to carry our Society as a pro bono client.

The Committee of the Society has elected me as Keith's replacement until an AGM is held under the terms of the Constitution. The Committee assures you that it is committed to achieving the important goals of the Society. We feel confident that, having had the benefit of Keith's vision, we will accomplish successfully the tasks that lie ahead.

On a positive note, we are delighted to share some important news with you. As the Australian War Memorial is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office, an arrangement has been confirmed whereby the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society can transfer donations to the AWM for the purpose of erecting its memorial. These donations will be eligible for tax deductibility and tax receipts will be issued towards the end of the financial year.

Now the Society has all the requirements in place to seek funding from private sources, we need the services of about 3 to 6 members to undertake research and assist in approaching the prospective donors. If you are interested or know someone who may be interested, in or out of the Society, please get in touch with me as soon as possible - we need the funds quickly if we are to meet our self-imposed deadline for dedicating the memorial on 1 July 2012, the 70th Anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru.

It will be a challenging but exciting time ahead and we look forward to your involvement and continuing support.

**Phil Ainsworth**

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### **Another Term for Maj-Gen Steve Gower AO**

The Australian Government has re-appointed Steve Gower as Director of the Australian War Memorial for a further 18 months. Major General Gower, 70, a Vietnam veteran, has held the job since March 1996. He has worked closely with the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society in planning our memorial to those who died as a result of the Japanese invasion of the New Guinea islands in January 1942.

## JAPANESE TRIUMPH WHERE AUSTRALIA FAILS

BY KEITH JACKSON

**THERE IT WAS**, buried at the end of the AAP news story. The revelation of a golden key that may unlock a 70-year long mystery. A mystery some Australian families still grieve over.

And the mystery is this. Who exactly was on the *Montevideo Maru* when it sank in the early hours of 1 July 1942? What names were borne by those 1,000 and more men from the New Guinea islands who drowned that night?

Eventually, yesterday, it was the Japanese government that came good with the key. And it was the Australian government that looked bad.

Because, back in 1953, the Japanese offered the Allies the individual Prisoner of War cards they'd compiled on all the Australians they'd taken as POWs.

The rest of the Allies - the British, Dutch, New Zealanders, Americans and the rest - said, yep, we'll have those cards.

The Menzies government, after an 18 month delay, spurned the offer. No one knows why. And in the ensuing years, until now, no Australian government did anything. Even when asked.

And this despite the fact the government had no idea of the fate of many of those Australians who never returned to Australia's shores and to their families.

A matter long forgotten and irrelevant today, you think? Try being a member of one of those families. They grieve still.

If it wasn't for dogged work by researcher Harumi Nakaguchi, the cards the Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara yesterday promised to return to Australia would not have come to light.

For more than twelve months Harumi had been in regular contact with me to get the Australian government to get those cards back here where they could be examined.

At Ministerial level the Labor government had been superficially enthusiastic. But in terms of actual delivery, it was pathetic.

And now the Japanese government has decided to unilaterally send the cards to

Australia. Maybe that'll motivate the government to bring closure to this matter and communicate properly with the families.

I also hope the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, now gets moving and checks those cards against other records the Army holds, many of which had "gone missing" until quite recently.

It is way past time to bring to a close the mystery of who was on the *Montevideo Maru*.

And, while it's doing that, the Australian government should also recognise the dedication, persistence and compassion of Harumi Sakaguchi.

Today, to many Australian families, the man is a true hero.

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## MORE MONEY FOR AWM

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is to receive an extra \$8 million a year. The funding will be in addition to the \$38 million the memorial has already been allocated, as well as an extra \$1.7 million to revamp its World War 1 galleries in the lead-up to the ANZAC centenary in 2015. All up, it's almost double what the AWM had initially requested for the 2010-2011 budget.

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**ROD MILLER'S TALK** on 'The Sinking of *Montevideo Maru* - Australia's Worst Maritime Disaster' at the Australian National Maritime Museum on 20 February 2010 drew approximately 120 interested people. Rod's facts and figures elicited an emotive response from the audience some of whom had flown down from Queensland. After the lecture refreshments were served in the National Maritime Museum's beautiful Terrace Room overlooking Sydney's Darling Harbour. It was a very enjoyable and informative afternoon and we thank the National Maritime Museum for their support with this event and also for the excellent article in their quarterly magazine 'Signals' issue No.93.

You can view excerpts from Rod's talk here:

<http://www.vimeo.com/20585751>

## NEW WEBSITE!!!

[www.memorial.org.au](http://www.memorial.org.au)

Whilst it is a work in progress, it is now official and live!

Have you any old photographs or letters, stories, or historical documents of the service men or civilians who lived in Rabaul and surrounding islands before WWII?

Photos of Rabaul pre-war would also be welcomed.

This information will help provide insights to the story of Rabaul, the New Guinea Islands and the Montevideo Maru.

Please contact Andrea Williams

E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com)

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO *MEMORIAL NEWS* ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

24 Melaleuca Drive, St Ives NSW 2075

Or P O Box 1743 Neutral Bay NSW 2089

E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com)

## YES! WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Here's how...

We need:

- computer research assistance.
- you to think about who else might be interested in contributing to this memorial and contacting them. Remember that you are volunteering on behalf of a cause that's in the public interest and serves the general good. The men who died deserve this national Australian recognition.

Please advise if you are able to contact any significant organisations or donors.

If you would like assistance with correspondence, or would like extra flyers, please let us know.

- We need you to encourage family members to join up - remember that funds provided to the Society are tax deductible!

- names of men listed by town they came from - if you have such a list, could contribute to it or help in researching it, we would appreciate this.



**1941 - Undergoing training in Rabaul**

Photo: DO Mick Smith Collection

Mick is 3<sup>rd</sup> from left -

Can anyone else be identified please?

## ...THEY DID FACE THE ENEMY GALLANTLY AND FEARLESSLY

*The following letter was written by Mrs Frances Ryan to the Prime Minister on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1946. It reflects the lives of so many of the women and children from the New Guinea islands who were evacuated just prior to Christmas 1941.*

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PM's File No. H.344/3/1

To the Rt Hon JB Chifley, PC., MP.,

The Prime Minister

CANBERRA ACT

Dear Sir

I have received word from Mr EJ Ward that he regrets that the back-dating of my pension to the time of my husband's death is not practicable. I have also heard from Mr Sydney Smith, the Secretary of the Prisoners of War Relatives' Association that you also regret that you cannot waive the death duties so unjustly imposed by the Government of the State of New South Wales on my husband's estate. I am deeply dismayed and most distressed to have this news.

I now write to you personally Sir, to let you know that I am not satisfied and beg you to treat the matter again fairly and justly.

I am the widow of Walter James Ryan whose life was sacrificed on the 'Montevideo Maru' on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1942. Your Government notified me of this in October, 1945, and in extending sympathy also said that 'these men lost their lives defending their country just as surely as those who faced the enemy'. May I say that they did face the enemy gallantly and fearlessly, as I have heard from a chaplain who did get out and I am a proud woman.

In answer to questions raised in the house by Mr Anthony, MP, Mr Ward informed him that 'dependants of civilians who lost their lives on the 'Montevideo Maru' would receive pensions and benefits on the same lines as the service pensions. These pensions commence from the date of death and no duty has been charged on such estates. No inquiry into the tragedy of Rabaul has been allowed. You yourself have expressed the opinion that no good could come of it, but as a widow of one of the men I hope the inquiry will be made. Over 300 civilians were needlessly sacrificed and we women were kept in ignorance of our men's fate far too long. To us has been the years of anxiety, loneliness and sadness, and to many including myself, it has been years of hard work and separation from my children, having had one room to live in and go out to work. Money and inquiries cannot bring these men back to life, but if your Government stands for honesty and fair play, you will readily see that your debt is grievous and do all you can to make proper compensation to the widows and children who have been so desolated.

I therefore beg Sir, that you will reconsider my just claim for pension as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1942, instead of the approved date of 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1946, which has no bearing on my case whatsoever, also that I be reimbursed from the Federal Treasury for the £30 odd which has been so wantonly taken by the State Government from my two children and myself. It is adding insult to injury.

Ever since Rabaul fell in 1942 I have worked and received no help from the Government. Instead, I have paid taxes, and it would appear that I have penalised myself in trying to aid rather than be a drag on your Government.

I have heard from the Repatriation Department that they are going to assist me with my son who is just sixteen and leaves the Canberra Grammar School this term to take up an apprenticeship. I now have to try and find somewhere for him to live. My daughter who is only seven years old has also been deprived of a home and her parents, and for their sakes I intend taking this matter up until I have a satisfactory result.

I trust therefore Sir, that you will do your utmost to revoke the unfair decisions made by your Government and give to me and my children our just dues.

Thanking you, and hoping to receive a favourable reply very soon.

I remain,

Yours faithfully (sgd) Frances Ryan COPY: TREASURY (PC-ADV)



Site of the memorial is on far side of pathway.

**Phil Ainsworth, Don Hook and Andrea Williams attended a Memorial Advisory Group meeting in Canberra in late January.**

**An inspection of the proposed site showed that it is to the western side of the pathway ascending from the curved staircase near the Weary Dunlop Statue, Café and the car park at the rear of the Charles Bean Building ie the side nearest the AWM dome. The site is elevated and provides very pleasant views of the AWM, the National Servicemen's Memorial, and distant views to the south of Canberra.**

Discussion over various artists took place. The Memorial's commissioning program, as initially outlined by Charles Bean during the First World War, was to appoint artists of a high calibre that best reflect contemporary art practice. This continues today, and commissions are intended to be outstanding examples of art practice of the day. This is reinforced by a comparison with the collecting focus of other art collections of national importance, including the National Gallery of Australia, and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

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## **ARTICLES ABOUT THE RABAU AND MONTEVIDEO MARU SOCIETY**

have recently appeared in the following magazines/journals:

- the ANMM magazine 'Signals' No 93 Dec 2010 Jan, Feb 2011 p14-20
- Air Niugini's in-flight magazine 'Paradise' Vol 6 2010 p44-48
- Australian War Memorial's Wartime magazine Issue 53 p50-54
- Una Voce No 1, March 2011 p16 and Una Voce No 3, September 2010 p12-14 (Journal of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia)

**Note: The Society's most recent flyer is attached at the end of this newsletter - please advise if you would like further copies.**

## RABAUL AND MONTEVIDEO MARU MEMORIAL, AWM

The challenging task facing the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society at present is the raising of funds for a sculpted memorial to be set in the grounds of the AWM in 2012. Next year will mark the seventieth anniversary of the Japanese invasion of the New Guinea islands and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* with the loss of over 1,000 troops and civilian POWs; this stands as Australia's greatest-ever-maritime tragedy.

Put this into perspective: twice as many men died in this single tragedy as perished in the sinking of HMAS Sydney or were lost in the Vietnam War; and the nation was silent.

The memorial will commemorate the valour, fortitude and resilience of Australian troops and civilians of the Australian-administered New Guinea islands who faced the overwhelming invasion with unyielding courage.

A fine section of land has been earmarked for the memorial within the peaceful grounds of the Australian War Memorial. Five of Australia's finest sculptors are being asked to submit competing designs. A broad-based committee representing a dedicated Society membership of 300 veterans, relatives and friends is trying to raise \$400,000 for this project...*but the first sod cannot be turned until the full budget is assured.*

This is why we urge all Australians and friends of Australia to come to the aid of a great national project which will acknowledge and showcase the true horror and tragic impact of the Pacific war on the troops and families in the New Guinea islands. To date, the full story of the fall of Rabaul and the loss of the *Montevideo Maru* has often remained overlooked in deference to other events of the time.

For many of our members, though, time is running out to see their fathers, brothers, relatives and friends honoured with dignity in the land of their birth.

Assistance is needed urgently from companies, charitable organisations and foundation boards to donate to the memorial. You can also help by providing names of people and companies/corporations who have a special connection with the history of PNG and may be interested in such philanthropy.

***Donations made to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society for the purpose of erecting its memorial will be eligible for tax deductibility and tax receipts will be issued towards the end of the financial year.***

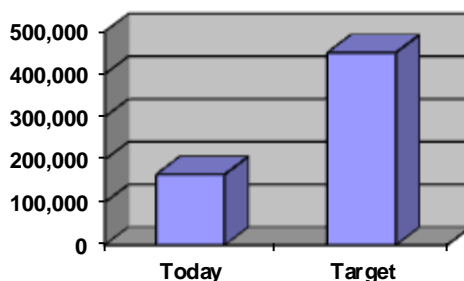
All funds raised are applied to the construction of this overdue tribute to the 1,500 Australian troops and civilians who died either in the New Guinea Islands or aboard the *Montevideo Maru*.

**IF YOU CAN HELP IN ANY WAY**, please phone or email:

Phil Ainsworth Mob: 0418 730 348 E: [P.Ainsworth@Kingco.com.au](mailto:P.Ainsworth@Kingco.com.au) or  
Andrea Williams Mob: 0409 031 889 E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com) or  
write to the President, PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

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### SOCIETY FUNDRAISING



## A BOOK REVIEW OF A LITTLE KNOWN STORY- 18 BRITISH SURVIVORS FOUND IN RABAU AFTER THE WAR

By PHIL AINSWORTH

This is a story told by a soldier, Gunner Alf (Blackie) Baker, one of 18 British survivors found in Rabaul after the surrender of the Japanese. In October 1942, 600 British Royal Artillerymen, including 63 officers, were shipped by the Japanese from Singapore to Rabaul, a journey of three weeks. There was one death amongst the prisoners during the trip.

About 3 weeks after their arrival, the 599 were sorted into 2 groups with 517, including 51 officers, declared fit for work and shipped off to build an airstrip. The remaining 82, of which 12 were officers, were kept in a camp near Kokopo. Within a month the larger group returned to Rabaul, but instead of being reunited with the others and without disembarking, they were transported to Ballalai Island in the Shortlands just south of Bougainville. Their task was to build an airstrip in support of the Japanese attempts to retake Guadalcanal. This group was never seen again.

After the war a mass grave was discovered on Ballalai Island and 435 bodies, identified as British soldiers, were disinterred. These were later re-interred in the Bomana Cemetery near Port Moresby. From various accounts, it appears that on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1943 the Americans shelled the island and the Japanese, expecting an invasion, massacred the men. Thus this massacre occurred on or about the first anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru.

Meanwhile the others on Gazelle Peninsular were assigned work but were poorly housed and fed. Their work was mainly tunnel digging. The attrition rate was high from malnutrition, beatings and sickness, with as many as 20 a month dying during the worst period. Around March/April 1943 the monthly deaths diminished and their numbers stabilized at just over 20. They were moved about and, in February 1944, they were shifted to Watom Island, about 10 km off the northern shore of the Gazelle Peninsular, close enough to Rabaul to hear and see the results of the Allied bombing of Rabaul if the conditions were favourable.

Here the men were divided into smaller groups and allocated to various Japanese units to dig tunnels. They were constantly told that should an invasion occur they would be killed. The story tells of horrific beatings and killings by the Japanese. It also mentions acts of unselfishness and heroism of fellow prisoners. An outstanding example is the story of Sgt Joe Blythe.

In September 1945 they were returned to Rabaul and handed over to the Royal Australian Navy. The Australians were surprised to find the British soldiers, as they were expecting to see, no doubt, the survivors from Lark Force. There were only 18 British survivors, none of whom were officers. He also mentions there were another eight survivors including Captain John Murphy, American officers and a New Zealander Flying Officer, who were collected by the Navy that day.

*“What Price Bushido”* speaks of the brutal treatment, physical and psychological, inflicted by vicious captors and highlights the iron will needed, over a sustained period, to overcome depression, disease, starvation and the Japanese.

Despite the horrific content, this book is a necessary read for those interested in this aspect of history. With a survival rate of only 3%, it is a story that was nearly not told; it is an uplifting story of the power of the human spirit. It also explains why so many British soldiers were interred in Bomana War Cemetery.

Publications details are: *“What Price Bushido?”* by Alfred J Baker, Torch Books, UK, 1991, first edition, 139 pp, available from [www.pacificbookhouse.com.au](http://www.pacificbookhouse.com.au) (Bill McGrath, phone 07 5522 4110). A revised and enlarged edition was published in 2000.



## C.O. (BILL) HARRY

By FRAZER HARRY

Bill, who was instrumental in forming 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Lark Force Association, led an extremely interesting and varied life in both PNG and Australia. He died in Melbourne, after several months of ill health, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, 2011, aged 94.

Bill started life in a farming family in the north central Victorian region, the youngest of five children. Pre-depression the Harry family enterprise was extremely successful, being the largest wheat growers in Victoria, and the largest Clydesdale horse breeders in Australia. The depression years altered things dramatically, and Bill, being the youngest, didn't see his future on the land. The war came along and he travelled to Melbourne. On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1940, he enlisted in the AIF. The 2/22 Infantry Battalion was formed, and in February 1941, the 1300 men were transferred to Rabaul, on the island of New Britain, in New Guinea.

The story of the 2/22 Battalion and what it went through is a long, tragic story. Suffice it to say that, after the Japanese invasion of Rabaul in January 1942, the Japanese attacking force, when it came, was estimated to be up to 20,000 troops (with over 40 ships including 2 aircraft carriers - up against 1300 infantry men with a meagre six Wirraway aircraft. Fewer than 400 of the original 1300 made it home - and of Bill's unit of the Intelligence Section, he was the only survivor.

Bill's role prior to the invasion was to survey the surrounding area. In addition he was friendly with some of the Methodist missionaries, particularly John Poole, and went on mission patrols with them further into the bush - gaining a greater understanding of the jungle, its tracks and villages. The area inland from Rabaul, running down the island, and in the Baining Mountains, was the only obvious means of retreat in the event of attack.

On the morning of 23rd January 1942, the Japanese did attack. Overwhelmed by the invasion, retreat became inevitable within hours. Colonel Scanlon, the commanding officer, soon declared 'every man for himself'. As there had been no official plan for retreat, a message also went out for Bill Harry. Bill's knowledge of the land was invaluable and he worked with Scanlon and Command HQ to assist in planning the belated retreat into the jungle. When Scanlon and some other officers decided to surrender, Bill opted to go it alone and hit the bush looking for his mates. From Rabaul, and the Malabunga and Vunakanau area, he travelled down to Lamingi, then across to Sum Sum on the south coast, gradually moving down past the Wide Bay area, Waterfall Bay, Palmalmal, eventually down to Gasmata.

Bill spent the next few months in the bush, sometimes by himself, sometimes in a small group, dodging the enemy and helping out as many stragglers as he could find. He always said afterwards that he was reasonably comfortable dealing with the bush - he'd take his chances there, rather than with the Japanese. It was a judgment that was to prove vital. Among other atrocities that occurred, approximately 120 Australian troops who surrendered to the Japanese at Tol plantation, in the Wide Bay area, were tied together in groups of 10 or so, marched out into the jungle just back from the beach, and bayoneted or shot. A few members of the small party Bill was with at that stage came across the terrible scene a few days later. (The other great tragedy which befell so many of the troops and civilians who were captured or surrendered, was the sinking on the 1st July 1942 of the Montevideo Maru, en route to Japan as a prisoner transport ship. Some 1200 were lost at sea, including over 800 troops as POWs, the majority members of the 2/22 Battalion).

At one stage, the party Bill was with needed to get word to another group of soldiers back up the coast re planning their escape from New Britain. Bill was the one nominated for this task. He was given 4 days to get there and return, otherwise he'd be left behind. He got there and returned in less than 2 days - virtually not stopping or sleeping the whole time. It was a remarkable effort, later referred to by some of his battalion mates as 'Bill Harry's March'. He and 120 others eventually made it off New Britain by boat, the Laurabada, in April 1942.

New Guinea drew Bill back after the war, working with Burns Philp based in Port Moresby. He became involved in the local scene, joining a cricket club, and generally getting to know the region. Around this time he and brother Lindsay had pooled their money and purchased war surplus machinery to ship back to Australia. They couldn't afford insurance, and unfortunately their ship struck a reef in the Coral Sea - they lost the lot.

Bill eventually returned to Melbourne, and took up a position as a clerk with the Soldier Settlement Commission. When this instrumentality merged with the Rural Finance Commission Bill became its Deputy Chairman which position he held until his retirement. He was primarily involved in land development and gained particular satisfaction from the Heytesbury settlement which became one of the best dairying regions in Australia. Bill had seen the disasters of land development and management from his early years, and basically spent his working life ensuring that that wouldn't happen again.

Another of Bill's real passions was helping War Veterans and their families, and he will be remembered for this as much as anything else he achieved. Bill retained a lifelong bond with his battalion mates and, after the war, was instrumental in forming the 2/22 Battalion Lark Force Association, being its President, and later Secretary, from the 1950s until 2002. It is difficult to comprehend the time and effort he put into this and it was truly appreciated by the men and their families. In addition to this, he was:

- Honorary Treasurer of the Victorian RSL for 39 years,
- On the Board of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust which raised the funds and set up the Winston Churchill Scholarship.
- On the Salvation Army Executive Committee for over 20 years,
- On the Corps of Commissionaires Board of Governors for over 30 years,
- A founding member of the Anti-Cancer Appeal,
- 26 years as Chairman of the Patriotic Funds Council of Victoria,
- A Trustee with the Necropolis Trust for 15 years from 1988.
- A Council Member of the Melbourne Lord Mayors Fund for Hospitals and Charities for 40 years.

Within the RSL he was, among other things:

- Honorary State Treasurer for 37 years
- Treasurer of the War Veterans Homes Trust
- Treasurer of the RSL Widows and Widowed Mothers Trust
- Chairman of the Anzac Appeal and Poppy Appeal
- a member of the RSL National Finance Committee
- Chairman of the RSL Cricket Competition (cricket being a great love)

On Bill's eventual forced retirement from his charitable work, due to ill health, Mark Sherlock of the RSL stated that *'Bill Harry's service to the ex-services community has never been equaled anywhere in Australia'*. Although never one for self-importance, Bill was never-the-less proud to receive an OBE in 1982, and then in 1996, an AM, for services to the ex-services community, and charitable service to the community in general.

Family was the other great thing in Bill's life. In the 1960s, he met and fell for Ruth McMaster, a school teacher who originally hailed from Melbourne. Ruth also had a New Guinea connection, being appointed deputy principal of Malabunga High School, near Rabaul in the 1960s. Bill proposed to her on Namanula Hill in 1966, overlooking Rabaul and its stunning harbor. Ruth accepted and returned (giving up her career) to set up home in Melbourne. A year on, son Frazer came along, followed by Rohan 18 months later. In more recent years Bill lived to see grandchildren Sarah and Ryan.

PNG and ENB/Rabaul in particular, remained a lifelong passion. Bill was involved in organizing various official trips and events in the region, such as memorials to the 2/22 Battalion, and those lost on the Montevideo Maru, and the memorial Cairn at Tol. He was great mates with men such as Keith McCarthy, Frank Holland, Rod Marsland - like Bill all great contributors to PNG both during and after the war, with incredible stories of their own. Time Bill and his

family spent around Rabaul post war was always enjoyable, Rabaul returning to some of its past glory, and of course always so beautiful. Bill made over 20 trips back there, and catching up with local identities and friends, including the Cohen family, Father Frankie, Matt Foley, Jim Copeland, 'Dutchy' Shelekans, Arch Taylor, among many others, was hugely important. They were always very 'social' occasions!

Until ill health, Bill, with Ruth, was active in the church, and his other interests, and of course getting to the beach house at Mt Eliza (named 'Namanula' after that most significant place in Rabaul) and traveling extensively both in Australia and overseas.

## FEEDBACK

### DOREEN WILSON

#### Emerald Beach

I want to thank you so much for all the papers about my brother Ron Marks. You have done so much work and it is so much appreciated. I wrote to George Oakes and said that I was a teenager when we said goodbye to Ron, and since then I didn't have any definite information. It has given me peace of mind. Some people say 'It is in the past' but it has meant a lot to me.

### MARGARET HENDERSON

It is with great sadness that I read your email this morning announcing your resignation as President of "our society."

When I wrote my book "Yours sincerely Tom - A lost child of the Empire" which was first published in June 2000, I felt there was a huge wilderness out there with little knowledge of the events and people in PNG during WW 2. - This feeling banished long ago with the events that followed re; PNG.

I'm not suggesting my book was the motivating factor. This was something I felt I needed to do to perpetuate the memory of my father, but in the last ten years things have really taken off, thanks to people like yourself.

Thank you for the interest, time and energy you devoted to the history and the people of PNG, particularly the MVM.

I do hope that your ill health will be a temporary illness for you and that you are able to overcome it very quickly. Scott and I will be thinking of you and wishing you a speedy recovery.

### MAJOR KELVIN ALLEY

Major Kelvin Alley, the National Secretariat of the Salvation Army in Canberra has confirmed that the Tuggeranong Salvation Army Band will attend the Memorial Service on Sunday 3 July at RMC Duntroon.

Major Alley writes - *'We are all looking forward to it. I am actually hoping that I might pass the audition for the tuba to be able to play on that day also..'*

### LORNA JOHNSTON

#### Auckland

Just a little information to pass on to Ken Hayes, Somerton SA. Re the photos of Tootie and Andy - yes, they were taken before January 1942 - I am not sure which ones are in the book - but I have several of the same here and they were taken at our bungalow (nurse's home) on Namanula Hill, Rabaul.

There were no photos taken after we became POWs. Hope this is of a little help to you. Keith, thanks for all you and your committee are doing.

## **SANDY MCNABB**

### **Frankston**

Just had a phone call from Don Hook, asking would it be possible for me to be the No. 1 Coy representative at the July ceremony. Sadly it is not possible, though I would love to be there and finally meet you all. I am the chief cook and bottle washer here, and cannot leave my darling Lucette. It got me thinking and for sometime I have meant to give you the details of a potential member. He is the only other member of No. 3 section still with us. He is: Colin Francis.

Col is a lovely bloke, but he is not garrulous like me. He is very shy and not as likely to put himself forward as a person of interest. But you can but try.

Another likely No. 1 member is Lionel (Hooks) Veale. He likes these occasions!

That is all, Keith, keep well and keep in Touch.

## **BETTY MULLER**

### **Rivett**

Betty Muller wrote to Grace after seeing the photo of Grace's brother Frank Vale in the February 2011 Memorial News:

'Firstly I have to tell you that I was BETTY GASCOIGNE and lived in Rabaul, which is how I met your brother, Frank. When women and children were evacuated on 22 December 1941 Frank asked Mum and I if we would make contact with his stepmother, which we did and Mrs Vale kindly invited us to a meal. Unfortunately we didn't keep in touch. [comment from Grace - *'our stepmother would then be living at our home in Balwyn, Victoria'*]

We have just been reading the MvM newsletter and I noticed your note including the photos of Frank and Ralph James and friends. It was taken outside St Georges Church of England which was in St George's Avenue. I didn't really know Ralph James - first by sight - but of course Frank was easily recognisable. The fellow standing between Frank and Ralph looks familiar also but I just can't think of his name - 69 years on is a long time to recall, especially for a 90 year old!

My father, brother and Mum's brother were also lost on the MvM. They were all civilians and like your family no doubt we didn't know their fate until October 1945 although there were many rumours doing the rounds prior to that on the famous New Guinea 'grapevine'. We did receive a letter from both Dad and Ivor when three bags of mail were dropped over Port Moresby earlyish 1942. As you may know one bag was found almost immediately, the second not until the end of September or October that year (our letters were in that one) and, as far as I know, the third has never been found - it would have deteriorated now, of course, with its contents after all those years in the bush.

I think the MvM Committee is doing a marvelous job although I do think it will mean a hard slog to raise so much money for the memorial here in Canberra, but fingers crossed.

Gradually more information seems to be coming to light re the mystery surrounding the Rabaul men such as the nominal roll of the MvM...Some civilians listed are known to have been killed elsewhere for instance. It would be good to know the actual story but I doubt if we ever will.'

## **GRACE LOVELL**

### **Mt Pleasant WA**

I was amazed to read all this and have already replied to Betty (I'm in the 90 - this - year bracket too.)

I've been spreading the news in the newsletter to various people not actually connected, but like most folk, they have never known about it. Thanks for printing the photo. From its very small original size it has reproduced very well and may also help other people. If anyone needs copies I could arrange that with my daughter-in-law, bless her.

## MEMORIAL NOTICEBOARD

### A NATIONAL TIME OF REMEMBRANCE - 69<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

Enrol now for a major event in Canberra to mark the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*. On Saturday 2 July there will be a reunion lunch at the National Press Club and on Sunday 3 July an ecumenical memorial service. Cost for both \$55. Payment methods are under 'Society membership' below. Contact Andrea Williams on 0409 031 889 or 02 9449 4129 or at [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com).

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### REGISTER YOUR MEMORABILIA

Register your New Guinea Islands, Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* memorabilia with Lindsay Cox at The Salvation Army Heritage Centre. Contact [lindsay.cox@salvationarmy.org](mailto:lindsay.cox@salvationarmy.org) or write to PO Box 18137, Collins Street East, Melbourne VIC 8000.

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### SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Life membership - \$500    Gold membership - \$100    Ordinary membership - \$50

### HOW TO REMIT FUNDS TO THE SOCIETY

BY INTERNET: Transfer funds to the Society's bank account BSB 082-401 Account No 16-083-2367. Notify your deposit in an email to [tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au](mailto:tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au)

BY MAIL: Cheques to Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. All funds devoted to constructing a memorial at the Australian War Memorial

BY CREDIT CARD:

### CREDIT CARD AUTHORISATION FORM

Card type:



Credit card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

CVV: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last 3 digits on back of credit card

Amount to be charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Complete mailing address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of what is being paid for:

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Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society, PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089, Australia

## HOW TO JOIN THE SOCIETY and/or DONATE TO THE MEMORIAL

Electronically. Transfer funds to the Society's bank account: Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society BSB 082-401 Account 16-083-2367. Bank NAB. Notify the deposit to tharyjanto@jacksonwells.com.au

By mail. Cheque to Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society at PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089.

By credit card [Visa or Mastercard]

Card no: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV no: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ P'code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP

(one postal/email address) - \$50

Gold membership - \$100

Life membership - \$500

### ADDITIONAL DONATION:

\$50  \$100

Other amount:

The only way you can receive Memorial News is by becoming a financial member of the Society.

Your generous support will greatly assist our memorial - thank you.



M.S. "MONTEVIDEO MARU", 7,300 TONS GROSS 昭和三十七年昭和 丸おびてんも

### OFFICE BEARERS OF THE SOCIETY

Patron: Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

President: Phil Ainsworth

Vice-President: Hon Kerry Sibraa AO

Secretary: Bob Lawrence

Treasurer: Teddy Haryjanto

Public Officer: Donald Hook

Committee Members: Lindsay Cox, Marg Curtis, Kurt Diercke, Philip 'Hooky' Street, Elizabeth Thurston, Clive Troy, Andrea Williams

Honorary Legal Adviser: Collaery Lawyers

Honorary Auditor: Page Harrison & Co

The Office Bearers of the Society are unpaid volunteers

Email: [info@jacksonwells.com.au](mailto:info@jacksonwells.com.au)

Website: [www.memorial.org.au](http://www.memorial.org.au)

### MEMORIAL

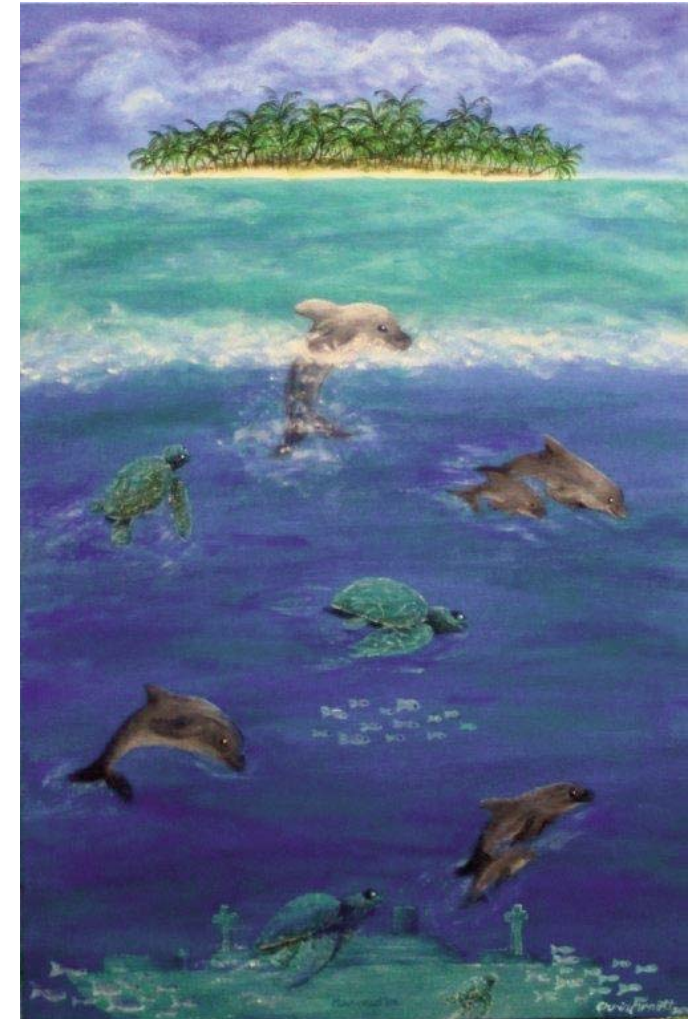
The memorial will commemorate the valour, fortitude and resilience of the Australian troops and civilians of the Australian-administered New Guinea Islands who died when left to face an overwhelming Japanese invasion in January 1942. May their spirit and courage be enduring and forever remembered by a grateful nation.

Front: *At Peace Now* - Interpretation by Christine Arnott

Back: Image of the *Montevideo Maru* from a postcard [collected by James Hook]

Note: There is a strong feeling amongst many people associated with the Society that the site of the wreck should remain undisturbed.

## Montevideo Maru: A memorial to mark our worst disaster at sea



*"Warmed by the embrace of the dear lost of the Montevideo Maru"* - Hon Kim Beazley

Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society Inc  
PO Box 1743 Neutral Bay 2089 Australia

## THE STORY IN BRIEF

The relatives of service personnel and civilians who died as a result of the Japanese invasion of the New Guinea Islands in January 1942 - including over 1,000 men on the Montevideo Maru - believed the nation didn't care.

Put this into perspective: twice as many men died in this single tragedy as perished in the sinking of HMAS Sydney or were lost in the Vietnam war; and the nation was silent.

During World War II the families spent years not knowing what had happened to their men. After the war, they felt that their great personal tragedy had gone unrecognised. They came to the conclusion that Australia didn't care.

From time to time, relatives sought solace from government only to be told - in one form or another - that it had already done what it could. So there remained many hundreds of people for whom there had never been closure and who wanted recognition for the sacrifice made.

## A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In 2009 the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society was established to represent the interests of the families of soldiers and civilians captured in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion in January 1942.

The purpose of the Society is to gain lasting national recognition for the men who died in the Islands, and on the Montevideo Maru when the ship was torpedoed off the Philippines on 1 July 1942.

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society is a not for profit association.

## WHAT WE WANT TO DO

1. Commemorate the tragedy of the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the Montevideo Maru through the construction of a memorial at the Australian War Memorial.
2. Provide greater knowledge to Australians of events in the New Guinea Islands during World War II.
3. Take action to declare the site of the sinking an official war grave.
4. Locate the nominal roll brought back to Australia from Japan that is believed to include the names of all the prisoners on board the Montevideo Maru.
5. Provide a focal point for the families and relatives of the victims of these events in World War II.

## WHAT WE'VE ALREADY ACHIEVED

The initial activity of the Society, which is incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory, was to establish the means by which relatives and friends associated with the events in the New Guinea Islands in World War II could come together to establish and pursue common cause.

The Society was opened to any person related to or interested in this issue. Membership is \$50 a year and members receive a monthly newsletter, Memorial News, as well as receiving invitations to Society events. All funds raised are dedicated to the construction of the Canberra memorial. The Society now has about 300 members.

After conducting research into the tragedy and consulting members, the Society approached the Federal Government with the request that, after nearly seventy years, it address the issue of national recognition of this issue and so provide some closure for relatives and veterans.

On 21 June 2010, both Houses of Federal Parliament formally recognised the tragedy, paid tribute to those who had died and honoured the relatives for their long forbearance.

At the same time the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel announced a grant of \$100,000 to the Society as a contribution to constructing a memorial, the total cost of which will be about \$400,000.

Since then, the Australian War Memorial has allocated land within its grounds for the construction of the memorial. The Society is working to secure the substantial sponsorships and gifts required to achieve this objective.



Proposed site of memorial

## HISTORIC PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTION Monday, 21 June 2010

That this Parliament:

- (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.

## JOIN or DONATE TO THE RABAU AND MONTEVIDEO MARU SOCIETY

You can help commemorate an important part of the history of Australia and Papua New Guinea by joining the Society or donating to the memorial.

MEMBERSHIP of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society costs \$50 a year. The Society also offers GOLD MEMBERSHIP for \$100 a year and LIFE MEMBERSHIP for \$500.

Memorial News, the monthly newsletter is available only to members. Life Members receive a Certificate recording their special membership of the Society.

Life Members do not pay annual subscriptions and receive all Society publications and productions free of further cost.

Assistance is also needed from companies, charitable organisations and foundation boards to donate to the memorial

Donations made to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society will be eligible for tax deductibility.

The Society is committed to applying all funds to the establishment of a Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial.

## 69<sup>th</sup> COMMEMORATION - CANBERRA JULY 2011

There will be a reunion luncheon and historic memorial service in Canberra on the weekend of 2/3 July 2011.

Further enquiries E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com)