



# Memorial News 25

## April 2011

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

### **CANBERRA MEMORIAL EVENTS - JULY 2011**

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society is hosting two special events in Canberra on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2011. These events will commemorate the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion of the New Guinea islands and the sinking of the Montevideo Maru. Highlights will be a commemorative luncheon and an historic memorial service.

We hope to see as many members as possible come along and support these events. We already have a considerable number of acceptances and you are urged to get in touch with us quickly.

#### **SATURDAY 2 July 2011**

Luncheon 12nn - 5pm

Venue: National Press Club Canberra

Guest Speaker Maj-Gen (Prof) John Pearn

#### **SUNDAY 3 July 2011**

An ecumenical memorial service will be held at St Paul's Chapel, Royal Military College of Australia, Duntroon, from 11.30 am-12.30pm. A special contribution by the Tuggeranong Salvation Army Band will include music composed by Arthur Gullidge.

PLEASE RSVP prior to 12 June 2011.

Further details on page 9.

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**As ANZAC DAY approaches you are encouraged to let your local media and Federal politicians know about our 69<sup>th</sup> commemorative events in July 2011 and our urgent need for funds to go towards the memorial at the AWM.**

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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

### **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. For amounts over \$10,000 please contact Phil Ainsworth

E: [P.Ainsworth@Kingco.com.au](mailto:P.Ainsworth@Kingco.com.au)

M: 0418 730 348

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.

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### **CANBERRA MEETINGS**

#### **Phil Ainsworth**

Don Hook, Andrea Williams and I, the Society's members of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial Advisory Committee, had several very useful meetings in Canberra on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> and Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

We met with Dr Steve Bullard who was involved with the Australia-Japan Research Project at the Australian War Memorial and is currently a Senior Historian in the Military History Section of the AWM. Amongst other matters, we particularly discussed the recently discovered Allied Prisoner of War cards in Japan. We also discussed the less publicized Mortuary Roll which was discovered in the same place. Our concern was the necessity for an independent scrutiny of them from handover through to final depositary and research to minimize possible controversy about the authenticity of their contents and results of the research- we do not want a replay of the "Nominal Roll" controversy.

Following on was a Memorial Advisory Group meeting to view initial concept designs from

the artists. Out of the original six artists chosen, one was unable to accept due to other commitments; another pulled out due to tightness of the timings and therefore four remained. The artists had done their homework, the concepts were well thought through and all designs met the budget of \$400,000. Interestingly the two artists chosen for the shortlist used a similar concept. For various reasons including AWM's not wanting to personalise any memorial and maintenance, health and safety issues, these concepts would require further consideration, if selected.

After some reflection, we reluctantly felt that the designs did not adequately encompass the whole story and therefore it is in our interest to discuss issues with the two selected artists with a view to them working on new designs. This may cost more. We need the final design to assist with our fundraising and, above all, to meet our dedication deadline of 1 July 2012.

Unfortunately our meeting at the AWM was slightly shortened as we had a further meeting with our Patron, Minister Peter Garrett at Parliament House. None the less, we also briefly discussed the text for the sculpture, POW cards and Mortuary Roll as well as fund raising.

This was Phil's, Don's and Andrea's first meeting with the Society's Patron. Minister Peter Garrett was briefed on the current status of the Society; on the challenges of fund-raising with other competing events such as floods and bushfires, the delays due to the tax deductibility status and obtaining a site for the memorial, both of which were achieved only two months previously and all of which has meant a late start for fundraising. For example most foundations would have set their budgets by February and we are now well past that. The urgency of the project was discussed, including the need for funds by end July 2011 in order to complete the memorial by the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, July 2012. Our impression was that Minister Garrett was well briefed and clearly interested and engaged with the Society. He expressed a desire to be kept informed of our approaches to individuals/organizations etc. He also had ideas to pursue in assisting to meet our self-imposed deadline. Additionally we discussed

the scrutiny issue concerning the POW cards and Mortuary Roll. An invitation to the Canberra memorial events of July 2 and 3 was extended.

A further meeting with James Rogers, Director - Commemorations, DVA, was held on Friday morning. We reviewed where the Society is at regarding the memorial, fundraising and our goal of dedicating the memorial on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1 July 2012. He was most supportive and indicated that several 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary events are shaping up for 2012 and planning will need to begin very soon. It was a busy but productive couple of days and displayed our commitment to achieving the memorial at the AWM on time.

Fund raising for the Memorial is now proceeding with the current emphasis of using April's Anzac Day commemorations to approach Victorian organisations and individuals for promotion of the cause and for funds. Victoria has been given priority because the majority of Lark Force was enlisted from and trained in Victoria - they were Victorian units. Fundraising efforts by the Memorial Advisory Committee have been assisted by committee and sub-committee members including Liz Thurston, Marg Curtis, Patrick Bourke and other Society members. All assistance and ideas are greatly appreciated. Please contact one of the Memorial Advisory Committee if you can help in any way.

The planning and preparations for the 69<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru Commemorative events are proceeding. The NGVR & PNGVR Association will hold its annual Service at 10am on 1 July in the Hall of Memories, Brisbane Cenotaph followed by a free morning tea in the adjoining RSL committee room. The Cenotaph is in Anzac Square, Adelaide Street, Brisbane. Our Society's commemorative events will be held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July in Canberra, the details of which are on pages 1 and 9 of this newsletter. Everyone is invited to these events and we wish to publicise these as widely as possible using the coming Anzac Day as a focus for the press and other media.

April, 2011

## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is now a priority activity for the Society to ensure that funds are received by July 2011 enabling the memorial to be completed by July 2012, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Society is required to encourage corporate Australia - private-sector companies, organisations, community groups and individuals - to contribute to this memorial. Your committee is working on that but would appreciate as much assistance as possible.

## MEDIA

With Anzac Day approaching, why don't you approach your local newspaper and radio and television station to tell them about this major wartime event, its impact on your family and our efforts to erect a memorial on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In preparing scripts, these points could enhance your presenters' statements:

- The men of the 2/22 carry the memories of the one-sided battle they fought against the mighty Japanese Military Machine that invaded Rabaul in 1942.
- Australian military leaders had no evacuation plan for them
- These survivors travelled without food, maps, medicines or ammunition through jungle to escape
- Most of their mates were captured
- 160 of them died at the Tol Plantation massacre
- The majority of them were among about 1050 men drowned when the Japanese Prisoner-of-War ship, *Montevideo Maru* sank while taking them to forced labour camps in China.

Let them know that funds are being raised for a special Memorial outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra - and there will be a 69<sup>th</sup> commemorative weekend in Canberra early July 2011.

If you need further advice on what to say and do, contact Bob Lawrence on 02 9904 4333.

## JAPAN PRISONER OF WAR RESEARCH NETWORK (JPOWRN):

working towards a 'practical' apology

## MARIAN MAY

The Japan POW Research Network (JPOWRN) is a loosely connected, non-government organisation of around 50 members from diverse backgrounds in Japan and elsewhere in the world (Australia, the United States, and the Netherlands, for example, as countries with significant numbers of POWs of the Japanese). Their interest is in raising awareness of Japan's treatment of POWs, reconciliation and peace-building. Members include journalists, teachers, researchers, government officials, activists, and JSP (Japan Surrendered Personnel); some are retired, others starting out on their careers. JPOWRN began in 2002 and since then has been conducting what Dr Rowley Richards calls "a very practical form of apology" to former POWs. One Canberra member, Dr Keiko Tamura, attended the *Montevideo Maru* event in Parliament House in July 2010.

JPOWRN members have focused on developing relationships with former POWs, mainly from the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands. They visit former POWs in their home countries; they hold meetings to inform members and the general public about the experiences of POWs; they conduct research on a wide range of places and events, digging out photos and maps, and unearthing stories related to POW experience. When ex-POWs or their friends and families visit Japan, they are linked with Japanese people who have a connection with the relevant camp, often family of staff at the camp or researchers who have information to contribute. These significant visits are often very emotional for all concerned. At JPOWRN meetings, stories are shared and efforts made to circulate information as widely as possible in Japan, through publication and translation. JPOWRN members also make it their business to inform politicians and members of the Japanese parliament, with the realisation that few Japanese are aware of Japan's harsh treatment of its prisoners.

In Canberra in August 2006 JPOWRN and the Division of Pacific and Asian History, ANU,

held a joint seminar, *Towards a Better Understanding of Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese*. Six JPOWRN members and six Australians (researchers, former POWs and their relatives) gave presentations and others contributed writing on a variety of topics. Following the seminar, JPOWRN members made visits to ex-POWs in various parts of Australia. Nori Nagasawa, Fuyuko Nishisato and Yohko Ishizuka, for example, visited Hobart to talk with Arch Flanagan (POW on the Burma-Thai railway) and John May (POW in Rabaul, Zentsuji and Nishi Ashibetsu).

In the last month I have been given a small grant by the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy to research JPOWRN, as some of their founding members, like the ex-POWs, are now in their 80s and their stories in danger of disappearing. Some were children during the war, or influenced by their fathers' and other relatives' experiences in the Japanese Army; others were aware of camps and prisoners in their neighbourhood. I am talking with JPOWRN members about their backgrounds and reasons for becoming interested in POWs and reconciliation.

JPOWRN members have been instrumental in facilitating the recent visit of the five Australian ex-POWs, the first Australian POWs to be invited officially by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following an earlier visit by Australian RSL members. After (now former) Minister Seiji Maehara's apology on behalf of the Japanese Government, a meeting was held with the International Initiatives for Change Parliamentary Friendship Group, a group of MPs and politicians working, among other things, for change in recognition of POW treatment. The role of JPOWRN was publicly acknowledged by the Chair, Mr Yukihiisa Fujita when he attended the public meeting.

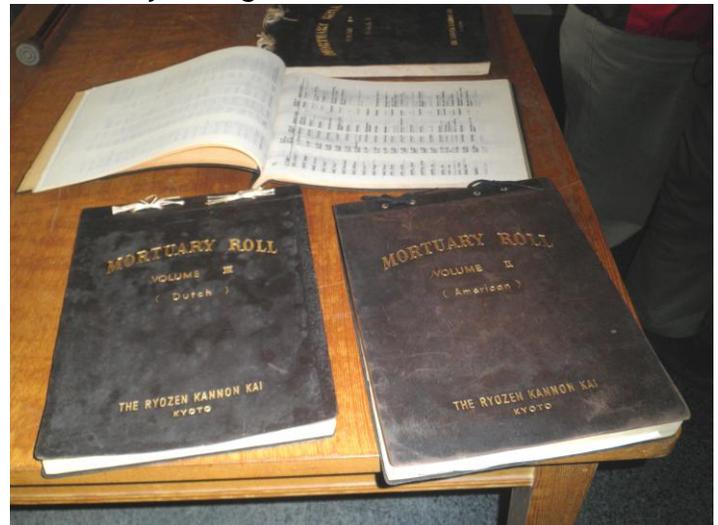
JPOWRN members accompanied the five Australian POWs throughout their visit - going to their former camps, linking them with people who were connected with those camps, providing interpreter and translation services, handing over photographs, press clippings and other information to add to knowledge, and talking with them on many occasions. In Kyoto and Tokyo JPOWRN organised well-attended meetings for

members of the general community where each POW told of his experiences and answered questions. I have indeed been honoured to be able to travel with the ex-POW group on this historic occasion, to meet the JPOWRN members and to observe at first hand the enormous effort made by JPOWRN members to give them a warm welcome, in such contrast to what they experienced some 70 years ago.

## **KYOTO TEMPLE MORTUARY ROLL CONTAINS NAMES OF POWs WHO DIED ON THE MONTEVIDEO MARU MARIAN MAY**

On 6 March 2011 I visited Kyoto and Nara with the group of five Australian former POWs, who were in Japan at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. After the formal apology by Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara (who resigned a few days later), the ex-POWs visited their former camps and other places of interest related to their POW experience.

Ryozen Kannon (also known as Ryozen Kwan-on), a temple in Kyoto, holds an extraordinary historical record: several volumes of lists of names of deceased POWs of the Japanese, collected up into blue, hard covers and inscribed in silver lettering with the country of origin of the names -



**Kyoto Ryozen Kwan-on mort rolls: The mortuary rolls, several volumes shown here at Ryozen Kannon temple in Kyoto**

among those countries, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, Canada and the Netherlands are represented. The individual names have also been transcribed onto cards, held in a wall of card-catalogue drawers, like those used for cataloguing in libraries before the days of digitised collections.

No-one knows exactly how the records came to be at the temple. It is thought that they must have been copied and provided by someone fairly high in the government hierarchy, someone with access to records of the lists of names of deceased POWs and someone strategically located to translate and type the records at the time.

Before we visited the temple, one of the Japan POW Research Network members, David Moreton, a teacher at Tokushima Bunri University, Shikoku, contacted the temple monks by letter. He had previously viewed the mortuary rolls while researching his grandfather's time on the Thailand-Burma railway. He wanted to ensure that it would be possible for the Australian ex-POWs to look at the mortuary rolls, not simply be told about them.

The five POWs were seated at a small table in the room where the rolls are kept. The rolls were on the table, and they were able to leaf through, searching for names of mates. Some were found; some were not. It was particularly difficult for a relative of one ex-POW, an archivist, to see the rolls being handled without white gloves - though we were assured that the paper is waxed and therefore durable!

I was keen to check on whether *Montevideo Maru* names were included - they were, at least some. I only had a few seconds at the end, as this was an occasion for the five POWs to search for their mates. However, over someone's shoulder under 'M' I glimpsed several names, including M.H. (Max) MacGowan, a particular friend of my father's in Rabaul. In the column at the far right were the words *Montevideo Maru*.

It would be useful if the Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* Society could commission someone to list these names, compare them with the temple's card collection (and the nominal roll), and make public to relatives, families and friends another source of information of those lost on the *Montevideo*

*Maru*. It would be interesting to know also whether the names of civilians are also included. I have included a few photographs from the visit.



**Kyoto Ryozen Kwan-on mort roll close-up:** One of the Australian mortuary rolls held in Ryozen Kannon temple in Kyoto



**Kyoto Ryozen Kwan-on mortuary rolls group:** The group of five Australian former POWs of the Japanese at Ryozen Kannon temple, Kyoto, in the room where mortuary rolls and cards are held

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Melbourne's The Age newspaper will shortly be running an article thanks to Elizabeth Thurston and Betty Muller...possibly next Saturday 9 April 2011.

## EX POW HAROLD RAMSAY RETURNS TO JAPAN MARG CURTIS

With the visit of the five former Australian POWs to Japan it was reported that then Minister Maehara presented each of them with copies of "individual records" used as identification cards and other relevant documents during their time in captivity.

Committee members have spoken with two of these former POWs but they were not given the POW cards reported to be in the Kyoto Temple.

Marg Curtis spoke with Pte Harold G Ramsay VX17827 - 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion. Harold joined up at 18 years of age and went to the Middle East on the Queen Mary. On the way home they were sent to Java. Harold was captured and taken POW to work on the Burma Railway. He has said that the Japanese threatened they would kill them and they would never see their loved ones again - but he proved them wrong.

Harold was being transported on the *Rakuyo Maru* to Japan when they were sunk on September 12, 1944 by the USS Submarine Sealion. The ship was hit in two places - both on the No. 2 Hold where the POW's were held. None of the POW's was injured but as the ship was badly damaged they needed to vacate the ship. Many were in the water for six days which meant those rescued at that time had been without food and water for 144 hours - having last received same at 6.00 pm on the 11<sup>th</sup> September. A few were picked up by Japanese destroyers and were taken to their original destination of work camps in Japan - whilst a few others were fortunate enough to be rescued by the USS Submarines Pampanito, Sealion, Queenfish and Barb. Only 135 survived the tragedy and some survivors later died in Japan.

Harold was apprehensive about the recent return to Japan.

ABC online news of 4 March 2011 reported: 90-year-old Harold Ramsey said before the meeting that an apology would be worthless because it would come from a generation of Japanese who were not the ones who beat and humiliated him. But after his meeting

with the foreign minister, Mr Ramsay's scepticism had melted somewhat.

"We waited a long time but it was sincere and much better time than when I was here before in 1944 ... this is really good, very sincere," he said. (See: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/03/04/3154832.htm>)

Harold feels strongly about the return of the POW cards to Australia including that there is independent scrutiny of them.



Yokohama, Japan 1945. Release POW's who have just arrived at the railway station proudly displaying an Australian Flag which was handmade by

George Carroll and Harold Ramsay.

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## COMMEMORATING THE ANZAC CENTENARY 1914-1918

On Monday 28 March 2011 the ANZAC Centenary Commission released its report to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard. It is now available on the ANZAC Centenary Commission's web site: <http://www.anzaccentenary.gov.au/>

In essence, between 2014 and 2018 Australia will commemorate the Anzac Centenary, providing an opportunity to remember those who have fought and served in all wars in the past hundred years 'and especially remember the more than 100,000 who have given their lives in service'.

It is intended that all Australian servicemen and women including those who served in New Guinea and who were held as prisoners of war will be remembered.

The commission has made several recommendations including the establishment of an Anzac Centre for the Study of Peace, Conflict and War, to be attached to the Australian National University in Canberra and which would explore how wars happen and how they can be prevented; the refurbishment of memorials; travelling exhibitions and a special service at Gallipoli in 2015.

The report says: 'Education initiatives may also centre on promoting current activities, both within Australia and abroad, that have considerable Australian military significance.'

In order to progress the centenary program, the Commission has proposed that an independent Anzac Centenary Advisory Board be established, supported by various advisory and stakeholder groups to provide advice to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

A public submission process occurred between July and September 2010 and we are grateful to member Patrick Bourke who forwarded a submission.

At the end of the report are several key dates but, unfortunately, those concerning the fall of Rabaul and Kavieng on 23 January 1942, the Tol Massacre on 4 February 1942 and the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* on 1 July 1942 do not appear. We hope to have this rectified.

Further information is available from: [anzaccentenary@dva.gov.au](mailto:anzaccentenary@dva.gov.au) or Phone: 133 254, and for regional callers: 1800 555 254

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The following comment expresses what many members feel. It was made clear to the Society that after some initial funding, the Society was required to encourage philanthropic individuals and organisations to contribute to the memorial before approaching the government for topping up. The committee is working hard to achieve our goals and appreciates your assistance.

### **ELIZABETH THURSTON**

The government of Australia should be honouring the outstanding service and sacrifice the men who died gave to this country. I am on the committee to represent the relatives and friends of those who died in unbelievably hideous circumstances as a result of Australian government policy at the time - and I will do just that. It is a matter of PRINCIPLE and I will do everything until the death to make them show their moral compass.

The Australian government should do the right thing; only they can do it, otherwise it is selling our men short.

### **WEBSITE:**

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

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

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### **YES! WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

**Here's how...**

- computer research assistance.
- you to think about who else might be interested in contributing financially 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.

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### **RECRUIT PEOPLE AS MEMBERS**

The Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* Society has over 300 members. Each membership contributes to the memorial and is tax deductible. Please encourage family and friends to join and to receive this monthly newsletter by emailing Andrea Williams [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com) or writing to the Society c/- Jackson Wells Pty Ltd, PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089

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### **HISTORIC DVD AVAILABLE**

*Regret & Resolution* - Phil Donnison's DVD of the historic parliamentary proceedings to mark the invasion of the New Guinea Islands and the loss of the *Montevideo Maru* is available from Society Treasurer, Teddy Haryjanto, for \$20 (\$40 for non-members) including post and packing.

The DVD is in two parts: a short version, *A Flame Never Extinguished*, providing highlights of the events in Parliament on 21 June; and *Regret & Resolution*, full coverage of all the events that memorable day.

## **JACK DANIELSON HEARD the CAPTAIN ORDER - 'FIRE FOUR TORPEDOES'**

**JOHN SCHINDLER**

USS Sturgeon crew member Jack Danielson has passed away in the USA. Members who watched the documentary THE TRAGEDY OF THE MONTEVIDEO MARU will recall the interview when Jack emotionally remembered witnessing through Sturgeon's periscope the demise of the men as the Montevideo Maru sank. He thought them to be enemy soldiers.

Jack and his shipmates learned that the ship was the Montevideo Maru after the war was over and says in his letter "we were all sad and sorry about this. I actually cried a couple of times".

Soon after the documentary was completed Jack wrote a letter to John Schindler explaining in detail what had happened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1942.

In his letter he explains that he has heard "bits and pieces about the incident, some right and some wrong" and then goes on to explain "this is as I saw it"

Jack explains in the letter how he heard the Captain order "fire 4 torpedoes" and felt the ship movement as each torpedo was fired. Later the Captain passed the word that hands could come to the conning tower and watch the ship sinking. Jack saw fires forward and aft and people jumping over the side and explains how at that time they thought it was a troop ship.

Jack explains how after the war he read a small article in a magazine about the sinking of the Montevideo Maru and he had kept the small clipping of this story in his wallet for over 50 years. Jack closes his letter by again saying that he is "so sorry about the loss" and then Jack says "I treasured this clipping and now I am giving it to you"

Inside the envelope was the small newspaper clipping that Jack had kept in his wallet for all those years.

The clipping and letter are now beautifully framed. When informing John Schindler of her Father's passing Jack's daughter Kathy Collins wrote that Jack really appreciated

being part of the film as it gave him closure on a terrible event in his life.

John replied to Kathy as follows: "Jack bravely served your country in the Pacific War and then did another great service to his country and his former shipmates when contributing to our film by way of his interview. Jack represented the men of the silent service extremely well with his personal and emotional account of the tragic events that occurred in the early hours of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1942 when the Sturgeon sank the prison ship Montevideo Maru.

I am pleased the interview gave your Dad closure. Jack's emotional outpouring of feelings also gave closure to many others particularly many Australian relatives who had wondered for over 69 years how STURGEON crew members felt about the inadvertent loss of their loved ones. I thought you'd like to know that from my conversations with those who have relatives, loved ones and friends on the Montevideo that they have feelings of empathy for the STURGEON crew and there is absolutely no animosity towards them."

John further informed Kathy that: "I can assure you I will also treasure Jack's letter and newspaper clipping. They are both already displayed in a beautiful frame in my study and will remain there until the day I have the pleasure of meeting Jack personally in another place.

I will always remember your Dad with the utmost respect and admiration. Lest we forget."

**Kathy responded to John as follows:**

I was deeply touched by your response to my father's death. The family is having a service to celebrate Jack's life in a couple weeks and your e-mail will be printed, framed and proudly shown with other memorabilia from his life on a table at the service.

You have permission to use any of our correspondence in any manner you would like. I'd love to receive updates on the Maru tragedy, such as the stone memorial planned and survivor family members' news.

Thank you again for your kindness and for creating that documentary.

## 69<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CANBERRA MEMORIAL EVENTS - JULY 2011

### SATURDAY 2 July 2011

Luncheon 12nn - 5pm (Drinks will be available from a cash bar)

Venue: National Press Club, 16 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 [www.npc.org.au](http://www.npc.org.au)

**Guest speaker: We are delighted that Major General (Prof) John Pearn AO RFD K St, Patron of NGVR/PNGVR Association; Honorary Colonel Queensland University Regiment can join us for this occasion.**

Professor Pearn is a prominent Australian and a former Surgeon General of the Australian Defence Force. He has published comprehensively in the areas of military medicine and military history and is a noted and inspirational speaker. He is an active member of the Australian Defence Force Human Ethics Research Committee, based in Canberra. He saw active service during Confrontation in the Sepik Region of Papua New Guinea (1966), as the consultant physician in the Vietnam War (1970), and as a "Blue Beret" doctor-soldier in the Rwandan post-genocide emergency of 1994.

In civilian life he is in fulltime clinical work as Senior Paediatrician based at the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane, and Preceptor at the School of Medicine, The University of Queensland. A leader in the field of Child Health his research is widely published. He is Patron of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles - Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles Association. His late father-in-law, Captain Athol White, as a Japanese POW, was a survivor of the Burma-Thailand railway.

### SUNDAY 3 July 2011

An ecumenical memorial service will be held at St Paul's Chapel, Royal Military College of Australia, Duntroon, from 11.30 am- 12.30pm. Enter college from Morsehead Drive and follow signage.

Defence Force chaplains will lead the service with music by the Tuggeranong (ACT) Salvation Army Band -highlights will include compositions by Arthur Gullidge.

Canberra Legacy's Southside Laurel Club has kindly offered to provide substantial refreshments immediately after the memorial service.

**COST of lunch on Saturday and refreshments on Sunday \$55 per person**

Payment will confirm booking.

**PLEASE RSVP** for both these events as soon as possible and prior to 12 June 2011.

Andrea Williams E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com) Ph: 02 9449 4129/0409 031 889  
PO Box 1743, Neutral Bay NSW 2089

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.

As the end of June in Canberra is likely to be busy we recommend confirming your accommodation as soon as possible.

To confirm, please contact Andrea Williams and provide her with this information:

- § The full name of each person who wishes to attend.
- § The age of each person who wishes to attend (optional but helpful).
- § The full postal address, phone number (home and mobile) and email of each person who wishes to attend.

§ The relationship, if any, of the person to the events of 1942 (if you did not attend the 2010 Parliamentary event in Canberra).

§ The address and phone number, where each person intends to stay while in Canberra.

§ Any other people you are travelling with.

Even if you do not have all this information at this stage, please tell us what you can.

Andrea's contact details are: Ph: 02 9449 4129/0409 031 889 E:

[andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com) 24 Melaleuca Drive, St Ives, NSW 2075

A wonderful outcome of last year's Parliamentary event in Canberra was the coming together of the relatives of the men of Rabaul and the New Guinea islands 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. Those who attended will recall the instant connections which generated such extraordinary warmth. We look forward to seeing you in Canberra in July 2011 to share more stories and experiences.

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## **DVD: THE FALL OF RABAU & KAVIENG**

4 hours over a 2 disc set, High Definition format. Cost: A\$43 incl p&p within Australia

This 2-disc edition of "The Fall of Rabaul & Kavieng" features over 10 in-depth interviews with those who survived Rabaul in 1942 - plus extensive coverage of the events at Parliament House, 21st of June 2010.

Inside Parliament House there is an interview with Independent Member of Parliament Bob Katter. Bob was asked the question "Have we learnt from our mistakes?" Relatives will find solace and comfort when they listen to Bob's answer to the question "Did they die in vain?"

Rabaul veteran Stanley Cooper summed it up for his fellow veterans when he made this wonderful comment during his interview in Parliament House shortly before going inside to listen to the speeches *"I am honoured to be able to be here today to represent my mates who did not get the chance to grow old"*

The second 2 hour disc is titled **THE FALL OF RABAU AND KAVIENG** and includes a significant amount of interview material not included in **THE TRAGEDY OF THE MONTEVIDEO MARU**. These are fascinating accounts by those who survived the Japanese attacks on Rabaul and Kavieng in 1942. These interviews were recorded over the last 3 years and include Paul Metzler who describes in precise detail being shot down and taken prisoner. There are no punches pulled about how he feels about his former enemy. As a balance to this we have Australian Journalist Andrew McKay and his wife Ryoko (Ryoko is married to Andrew and was originally a Journalist from Japan) discussing with former Coastwatcher Jim Burrowes the attitude of young Japanese today. Jim Burrowes lost 2 brothers: one was bombing Rabaul and the other brother was lost on the **MONTEVIDEO MARU**. There is a lengthy and extensive interview with the beautifully spoken and ever so modest John May MBE, Sister Berenice talks about bravery and her feelings about the Japanese, Lorna Johnson was a young Australian Army nurse at the time and the only Australian woman POW still alive today who experienced a journey in a hell ship. Lorna details some of her experiences when Rabaul fell. Lex Fraser OAM talks about the fight at Kavieng and life as a POW in Rabaul, Colin Butterworth (Wirraway survivor) tells of the day he and 5 other Wirraway crews took on 120 Japanese carrier based aircraft. Albert Speer MBE pays tribute to Justice David Selby and his friendship with Gunner David Bloomfield.

Also featured is a superb speech by Norm Furness at a special service in Ballarat in 2008 and Executive Producer Ian Bates covers the helicopter journey by Phillip "Hooky" Street and son James to the Tol Plantation.

Schindler Communications has pledged \$3 per unit donation for every copy sold to the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society towards the building of the memorial.

To purchase this DVD visit: [www.thefallofrabaul.com](http://www.thefallofrabaul.com) or phone: 0418 740182

## RAMALIE MISSION

MAURICE SAXBY 13.12.45

Ever since we had first come to Rabaul I had been waiting a chance to visit Ramalie. In the early days, over on the Simpson Harbour site, we had cared for some of their Sisters and Priests. Chaps who went out to the mission returned with glowing reports of the place and the hospitality of the Sisters. A trip to Ramalie had become an established thing while we nursing orderlies had been busy with looking after a great variety of patients – Indians, Chinese, even civilians who had been prisoners of the Japanese. Len and I had long discussed the possibility of a visit and were awaiting a suitable opportunity.

This morning I was putting the finishing touches to my toilet when Len called out to me. He had obtained permission from Major Miller for us to make the journey out to the mission. Ernie Weston could drive us out if I could be ready by 09.30. Could I be ready! Of course I could, but it was 10 o'clock before we eventually set off – Len, Don Wilson and myself.

We couldn't have chosen a nicer day for the trip. The sun shone high in the blue heaven, the heat tempered by a cool breeze. Even as we left we knew within ourselves that we were going to have a good day. Nothing could go wrong on such a day. And nothing did go wrong.

Out along the road to Indian Army H Q we drove. Although the Indians had only evacuated the area 5-6 weeks previously, there were few signs of their occupation. Most of the buildings and huts had been burnt – the spots where they had stood already half overgrown. In places signboards nailed to the trees gave mute evidence that this was the recent site of the 2/14 Punjab Regiment or the 1 Hyderabad Battalion.

Once past what had once been the Indian camp, we entered into what was new territory for me. The entire 20 miles down the coast road to Kokopo was wrought with interest. As on Simpson Harbour the coastline was littered with wreckage. There were several destroyers, larger than I had ever seen before. In one spot a huge crane straddled the strip between the road and the sea, leaning practically right across the road. We stopped the jeep and Len took a picture of it. At the same time he took one looking across the water at the volcanoes.

Japanese camps and native fishing villages were prevalent. We could smell them around the corner. In one spot the Japanese had been living in huge tunnels along the roadside but facing the water. The interior of many of these caves had been fitted out as huge workshops. While we were busy caring for and evacuating patients after our initial landing many of the ground force troops had already discovered the caves and even looted some of the electrical and other equipment which had been stored there. We even had an electric fan which we ran from the generator and which threw me across the tent where I was specialising a guy with scrub typhus. In some of the caves the Japs were still working on the wreckage of some of their craft. In the main, the Japs around their camps were clad only in very brief loin cloths. Their huts were pretty primitive – not unlike what I remember of the sheds out at the Chinese gardens at Botany when I was a kid.

There was a surprising amount of traffic on the narrow coast road. As each of the hundreds of Japanese trucks and vehicles passed us we were flung a salute. We seemed to pass every conceivable type of Nip. The dirty, squalid type were everywhere; young, more promising-looking youths, big burly marines and obsequious old men of the comic-strip type. Their transport was everywhere blocking the road with their broken-down trucks (part of the occupation force) and annoying us with their rotten driving and lack of road sense. They appeared to be the world's worst drivers; and they needed plenty of tooting before they would move over. Or was this just arrogance! Vehicles of every kind were on the road – trucks, water carts, buses, staff cars and big Dodges of about 1930-ish models.

Of course the natives were also everywhere. Wizened old Marys (sic) squatting along the roadside; young girls suckling piccaninnies in their arms were padding along the track; strapping youths and tousle-headed old warriors. As we neared Kokopo, we saw long lines of guns on the roadside. Looking at them made us realise how hopeless it would have been had the Australians tried to take Rabaul. All day we were given proof that we would have been

blasted to kingdom come before we ever got near the place. The area was a fortified Gibraltar. In this area the Nips were busy breaking up cases of what had once been ammunition. Huge blackened areas showed up where the cordite had been burnt and ammunition had been exploded. Thousands of empty shell cases littered the area.

After we turned inland at Kokopo the landscape changed dramatically. The first few miles lay through fairly open country, undulating hills of kunai grass and semi-plantation country. ANGAU had recently come out this way and we passed many newly built compounds. Clean, long thatched huts had been built on recently cleared areas. It was here that we stopped to take a picture of a horse-drawn Dog cart. One Jap was leading the horse, another was crouched in the cart and another walking alongside. When Len pulled out the camera a ferocious-looking native appeared as though from nowhere and of course had to place himself in the background of the photo.

From here on the foliage began to become thicker until we entered a leafy avenue where lush jungle vegetation hemmed us in on either side. Young palms, large coconut palms, bamboo and other leafy growth formed thick walls as we drove along. Sitting back in the jeep we could enjoy to the full the last few sequestered miles. It was about seven miles after we turned in at Kokopo that Ernie stopped the jeep and said, 'Well here we are.' The jungle was so thick that we could not believe that habitation was anywhere nearby. But passing through an entrance arch we stopped dead. Way down at our feet in a narrow gully was the mission. Steps hewn out of the soil led down to the huts and buildings below. Once we stepped into the valley it was as though we were entering a secret world. The only sound to be heard was that of fowls and bird life. Everything seemed at peace in that world. Yet that same world sheltered some sixty-three priests and Sisters, fifty or so half-castes and not a few natives.

Ernie was a regular visitor, and as we approached one of the huts we heard a pleased female voice exclaim, 'Why here is Cpl. Ernie!' We were immediately introduced to the Mother Superior and a group of the Sisters, although they quickly informed us that most of the Sisters were away on a trip. Nevertheless we were warmly welcomed.

About four miles along the road from the mission we had picked up a half-caste boy who was on his way to Ramalie to visit his brother who had been studying there for the priesthood. He was sadly disappointed when he discovered that his brother had left but two days previously for a vacation in Port Moresby from whence this boy had just travelled. The Mother Superior spoke to him in her kindly way, '*So you are the brother of Patrick. Patrick is such a nice boy. Maybe he is still in Rabaul waiting to sail. You will probably see him there.*' The lad was very well spoken but obviously disappointed at missing his brother whom he had not seen for ten years. We all felt his sadness.

It was just on midday when we arrived at the mission so the first thing was to feed us. It seemed unbelievable when the Sisters produced china plates and polished silverware. Sitting down to a civilised meal again after years of army fare meant more than can be described. Pea soup! And how tasty it was. Out of real soup plates too. Fresh beans, potato and tinned meat followed, while the desert consisted of a featherweight steamed pudding covered with a banana sauce. And I love steamed pudding! Tea in glass cups followed. I believed that I had never tasted a better three-course meal in any city restaurant.

After we had eaten the Sisters produced easy chairs for us and we proceeded to become better acquainted. The Mother Superior quickly dispelled the image of a stern-faced disciplinarian. It was easy to see that she was in charge, but there was nothing stern about her. She had a kindly old face and it was obvious that the Sisters looked upon her a mother in the flesh as well as a spiritual mother. We were disappointed that the Australian girls were away; the Mother and Sisters who spoke with us were all Dutch. There were some German Sisters who were forming part of the mission, but they were only there because of the contingencies of war. They were a different breed altogether – tight lipped and sour. Very Germanic!

The most outstanding sister of them all was most certainly Sister Agnesiana. She seemed very young compared with the older nuns and both her looks and personality were fascinating. Her

English was almost perfect, her smile a gift from heaven. Recently a young Dutch naval officer had been out to visit the mission and when the other nuns teased Agnes about him she flushed a delicate pink. Sister Petra just loved to talk (they all did for that matter). In the midst of some story she would realise that the other Sisters were laughing at her, but that did not perturb her in the slightest. There was nothing austere or unapproachable about these girls. Warmly human and sincere, they told us something of their three and a half years imprisonment by the Japanese. They showed us a tunnel in which a German doctor had performed an appendectomy on one of the girls with only a local anaesthetic.

Photos of Army sisters and their internment had featured in many Australian papers and journals; but the story of these girls and how they carried out their mission under almost unbearable conditions has yet to be publicised. We heard the story of their reactions when they first heard the joyful news of the Japanese surrender. When the first Australians arrived the Mother Superior told the Sisters to go and put on their best Habits which they had kept hidden away for three and a half years. But they told us that they were all far too excited to do that and they all rushed out in their rags. As Sister Agnes told us, it was the most joyful day of their lives. Sister Petra confessed that that day her cooking was completely ruined.

As we chatted one of the local women brought in a pile of washing to sort. She showed us squares of white linen which had been stored in boxes for the period of the internment. Despite their snowy whiteness, they had completely rotted through.

The Mother Superior went on to tell us that she had recently received a letter from her brother in Holland who had been a prisoner of the Nazis informing her that her father who had been eighty-five when she left home was now dead. One of the many stories to come out of the German and Japanese occupations.

As we talked Sister Agnes began asking us about ourselves and where we came from. When she heard that I was only twenty she said, *'Why you still need a father at that age. Ernie will have to be your father.'* (Ernie is twenty-seven!) I told her I would rather have a mother which she thought a great joke. Mother Superior was greatly excited when she heard that I came from Haberfield. *'Do you know the McMaddens?'* she asked. *'We had a sister here from Haberfield. She left for Australia but a fortnight ago. Her father, Mr McMadden worked in the Post Office at Haberfield for years. What a shame you didn't come out here earlier!'* Mother had once stayed in Kensington and had visited Haberfield.

Unfortunately we hadn't time to see all that we would have liked to, and we found our tour of inspection all too short. There was the cemetery to be seen, the creek from which water was pumped, the fowl houses and the living quarters. In the latter we found a number of half caste families who had been reared on the mission. The children were beautiful to look at, especially the girls with their curly hair and large liquid eyes. In one hut we found seven young boys in bed with fever. Standing in the centre of the hut was a dirty little ragamuffin clad in overalls. Len immediately christened him David Copperfield. Should it have been Oliver Twist? Our amusement soon turned to pity when he walked away and we could see that he was crippled.

There seemed to be no planned layout to the huts. They were clustered everywhere with steps and stairs leading from one to the other. In one corner we stumbled upon a quaint little schoolroom complete with a blackboard on which was a spelling lesson in a scholarly hand. One of the huts, a replica of the one where we had eaten, was obviously used as a chapel with a little altar set up with brass candlesticks.

While we were wandering around exploring we heard the sound of melodious singing. Tracking down the music we discovered that it was coming from a group of native Sisters who were 'in school'. We intimated that we would like to photograph them. In an instant they had all disappeared into their quarters, to reappear not more than two minutes later changed into clean grey habits along with their Rosary Beads and their white veils. They were a delightful group, far more attractive than the 'Marys' along the track. After we had taken their photo they honoured us with two songs. Their range was extraordinary – from base to soprano. Their harmonising was better than I have ever heard from any church choir at home. What a

work of art to come from such surroundings – in captivity for all that time. These young women were a living monument to the enduring work of the mission.

Only lack of time prevented us from staying longer, and after taking a photo of some of the Sisters, we had reluctantly to say goodbye. The hospitality of these warm-hearted folk had touched us deeply. So charmed were we with the Sisters that we had paid little attention to the Priests, but they nodded pleasantly to us as we now proceeded to climb the hill to our waiting jeep. When we reached it we found it laden with two large bunches of bananas. All the way home we nibbled on the sweet, plump fruit.

On the route home we branched off the road before we reached Kokopo and went almost eight and a half miles to Tobera airstrip. In the early days of their occupation this had been the largest Japanese strip on the island. Now it is all overgrown, and its entire length is pitted with bomb craters. The only evidence that this was once a large airstrip is an observation tower about twenty-five feet high, and which has miraculously been left standing.

The road to the strip wound its way through coconut plantations, and in the open spaces between them the Japanese had planted rice. I don't know how the rice grew there without irrigation, but the terrain is very high and there is a plentiful rainfall. In places the rice was already coming to a head, although to the boy from the Riverina the stalks seemed stunted. Along this same road we passed quite a few horse-drawn carts driven by surly Japanese.

Some miles past Kokopo on our way back I noticed a signboard marked '9 miles to Four Ways'. I pointed it out to Ernie who said, 'Would you like to go back to camp via Four Ways?' It was voted unanimously that we should do so. At once we began a steep ascent into the hills. Up and up we went, feeling the rush of cool air as we neared the summit. For miles we followed the mountain ridge in a large semi-circle. On our left stretching down to 'Ramalie' were vast rolling hills of kunai. The last rays of the setting sun lit up the broad grassy blades. These hills merged into the plantation near Tobera. To the right lay an aerial picture of Simpson Harbour, with the crater of Vulcan and the coastline stretching for miles. The placid waters of the harbour caught the reflection of the volcanoes in the background and mirrored the vast mountain along which we were travelling. It is hard to describe the scene that lay below us. One would have to know and experience the geography of New Britain to appreciate it fully.

Several times along the road we stopped to take our fill of this breath taking scenery. At the same time we collected large slips of russet and golden coloured crotons for the gardens which we were planting around our tents. In places hibiscus bushes formed a red hedge along the road. But for the palm trees it could have been one of the areas along the South Coast of NSW.

By the time we began our descent from the hills the sun had sunk low in the west. Cool evening shadows were drawing in on us. The road took us down past General Tumamura's HQ. A Japanese guard bowed obsequiously as we drove by. Finally we emerged onto the coast road once more at the far end of Simpson Harbour. We settled back to enjoy the last few miles of our run along the harbour foreshores, over Tunnel Hill and home. It was like returning home after a happy day's picnic in the country. It was just on dark as we stepped out of the jeep and returned to our tents laden with bananas and croton slips. already the dark clouds were looming across the bay, and the sea was belting on the beach, promising us a good night for sleeping. I at least required no rocking and drifted off to sleep immediately I hit the stretcher. But I fell asleep thankful for a wonderfully memorable day.

#### **Postscript: February 2001**

I unearthed this piece of writing when I was going through a case of old documents. I had forgotten that I had ever written it. The account is typewritten and I guess I must have done it in the Orderly Room at our second camp site across Tunnel Hill. I seem to remember that I spent a few weeks in the Office after our nursing duties were over.

When I was at Balmain Teachers' College I wrote a short story which was published in the Writers' Group magazine *Words* with the title "Help Unto Those Who Need It". It became the first story in the magazine and it is based on Ramalie. It begins, 'The torpid jungle valley

seemed to spring to life in a moment. Hidden eyes had been watching and waiting.’ Sister Agnes becomes Sister Joannita and she resists the temptation to leave the order and go off with the Dutch marine who visits the mission! One of my lecturers, Bill McGrath, asked me if the story was set around Ramalie as his sister, I think he said, had been a nun there. Strange coincidence.

Then twenty-one years later I returned to Rabaul to supervise students who were practice teaching there. One afternoon after school I knocked on the door of the convent attached to the Cathedral and explained who I was and were there any Sisters from Ramalie still in Rabaul? Unbelievably I was told to wait while they fetched a very ancient (or so she seemed to me) Sister, and I can’t recall her name – but she claimed to remember my visit to the mission. We chatted about the war years and bade one another God’s blessing. I wonder if any of those dear Sisters are alive today? They certainly live in my memory.

#### **RAMALIE MISSION: POSTSCRIPT II 18 November 2010**

On Sunday night last 14<sup>th</sup> November the ABC screened a tele film, *Sisters of War*. It tells how an Australian Army nurse was tending wounded soldiers when Japanese ships landed enemy troops on the island of New Britain in January, 1942. The Sisters were taken into captivity as prisoners of war. They remained captive for nearly four years. According to the film the group had been stationed at Vunapope along with the Nursing Nuns already there. Again, the film has it that the Australians were taken after some time as prisoners to Japan and weren’t released until after the War. The Nuns, however, were – again according to the film – sent to Ramalie to join the Missionary Sisters and Priests. There they were kept until the Japanese surrender.

At the time of the surrender we, of the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, were camped at Jacquinot Bay pushing up toward Rabaul through Wide Bay further up the coast. It was to Wide Bay that I made two sorties by barge at night – first with Tommy Morgan and then with Len McMurray, my two Sergeants – pulling off the wounded and taking them to safety by barge. The sortie with Len was written up in the Melbourne Age under the banner: ‘Wounded Don’t Complain’.

We, then, being a Medical Unit were the first troops to land in Rabaul and in less than twenty-four hours we were receiving truckloads of Indians and Chinese who had been prisoners of war transferred to Rabaul as work parties. They were in an unspeakable condition: among other things many were gangrenous their limbs crudely wrapped in stinking bandages after they had had their toes chopped off with a spade because, allegedly, they were not working hard enough. One poor fellow’s foot fell off as I was cutting away the putrid bandage.

That was a torrid time as we tended not only the released prisoners but our own troops – for example two badly burned soldiers after an explosion on board a ship.

After the first wave of such casualties were eventually evacuated to Australia by Flying-boat we began to receive civilians who had survived in the jungle, mostly being sheltered by the natives. Several Priests arrived from Ramalie and soon word came that we were to care for a couple of Nuns. Being an all-male unit this proved a problem. Tents were erected away from the large tent wards and I, being the youngest and probably the least likely to cause offence, was detailed to act as their Nursing Orderly. It was a relief all round I would think when a couple of Army Nursing Sisters were flown up from Australia to take over.

Now, if the Nuns from Vunapope had been incarcerated at Ramalie it is more than likely that the Nuns that I was detailed to attend were from that number. When Len and I visited Ramalie weeks later the only Nuns there were the original ones from that Order. Certainly when we visited there were no Australians there – as I say in my account they were largely Dutch and other European Sisters who were of a Missionary Order that one joined for life, remaining forever (exigencies of war permitting) at the one placement. Certainly the Nuns that I cared for wore tatty plain habits – nothing like the cream/white habits as shown in the film. Len and I have compared notes and it seems to us that indeed we may well have cared for several of the ‘Sisters of War’ that featured in Rod Miller’s telemovie.

## FEEDBACK

ROSS TUCKER

### PALMWOODS QLD

My wife Maxine and I recently returned from an overseas trip to England and Europe. Whilst in London we decided to view the memorial in Westminster Abbey. On arrival and enquiring from the attendants, about 6 in all, none of them had heard of the Montevideo Maru and we were directed to the chief Librarian who also had not heard of the ship. After some discussion we suggested he go to the web site which he did and after further investigation he located a volume of books contained in a glass case adjacent to the rear exit on the left hand side of the Abbey. After locating the glass case an attendant who we had not previously spoken to, enquired if he could help and then opened and said the people listed were civilians who perished in World War 2 and the lists were recorded from which Borough they were born - we insisted my Uncle was born and bred in Australia with a Scottish background when another attendant arrived and by then we were about to give up when this new attendant noticed the end volume was marked 'Overseas' not very plainly we may add in the case of about 8 volumes. Going through the book alphabetically we came to the heading Montevideo Maru and further on located the name of my uncle Roy S McPherson from Kavieng. No photographs are allowed in the Abbey but they allowed us to photograph the page showing M M and my uncle's details which pleased us no end. On a quick scan of the adjoining pages we noticed a lot of names from Kavieng. The reason the civilians are recorded in the Abbey we had already found out before we left Australia because when we got Roy's name from Canberra his nationality was shown as United Kingdom and when we contacted Canberra regarding this anomaly they were aware of this and hoped to rectify it in the near future. The reason for this was that prior to World War I the islands of New Guinea, New Britain and New Ireland were German possessions and were given to Great Britain as reparations and subsequently handed to Australia as a Protectorate so that at the outbreak of WWII all civilians were regarded as UK nationals hence this anomaly. It seemed to us that no-one had visited these volumes so this may be of use to intending visitors.

## STEPHEN SPENCE

### MITTAGONG

I am the historian at Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch, and we have just installed a new memorabilia cabinet, in which we intend to house a tribute to the Army Nurses, along with other items. Having set myself this task is proving to be the easy part, obtaining a nurse's uniform and associated memorabilia is the real problem.

This is how Lorna Johnston became involved. Having seen the telemovie "Sisters at War" I contacted the ABC in the hope of gaining information regarding how they obtained the uniforms. I was given the name of the production company, spoke to the director, and was given another contact name (Jean Marshlian) who is currently trying to obtain a uniform for me, and who knows Lorna quite well as a result of the movie, and informed Lorna about what I was doing. Lorna phoned me several weeks later, and following a very enjoyable 20 minute conversation, and the offer of a deal involving a very generous gift from her, (the small rising sun lapel badge, the only remaining part of her uniform) in exchange for my gaining support from our club, in securing a donation for your association. No wonder she survived her wartime experiences. She is a living tribute to all those nurses, who have done, and continue to carry out, such a fantastic job for our defence forces, all over the world.

I have enclosed the relevant part of Lorna's letter as requested. In the first part of her letter she apologises for her hand writing, however given her age, I think she writes very well, and it is quite easy to read.

I wish you all the best in your fund raising activities, it is a very worthy cause, and all things being equal, you will soon receive our donation.

## **LORNA WHYTE JOHNSTON OSO MID**

World War II Nurse's Uniform

*(This letter from Lorna was sent to Stephen Spence of Mittagong RSL)*

How honoured and proud we were to wear the nurses uniform. In 1942 January when the Japanese invaded Rabaul New Britain the Military Hospital evacuated to Vunapope Mission Station at Kokopo. The only clothing we were able to take was our nurses uniform. During three years and eight months as Prisoner of War, we took great care of those 'uniforms', always hoping the day would come when we could return to Australia wearing them. Unfortunately it was not to be - the wear and tear was too great, all that remained was the 'Rising Sun' badge.

So please accept this Badge for your Memorial. Also two ribbons Pacific Star and 1939-45 Star with Oak Leaf. I received this in 1947. The Oak Leaf, MID, which we received for our duty to our Patients during and after the invasion.

## **SUE PASCOE**

I was most interested to read Frazer Harry's account of his father's life, but sorry to hear of Bill's passing. Please send my sympathy to Ruth and the family.

A single encounter with a former padre in S A encouraged my mother and I to contact Bill in about 1985. Strangely, he had lived much of his life a few minutes' walk from our home in Surrey Hills, Victoria! It was so reassuring to meet him as he had been in a training camp (I think for Intelligence) with Frank and remembered him. Bill also explained why my father could have been captured, in spite of knowing the terrain in the north which he had been surveying to the degree of being able to find his way in the jungle at night. Most importantly, he finally put to rest the fear which Mum and I had hidden from each other for so many years that my father may still be alive somewhere and suffering from amnesia, as Bill had seen (?) the Nominal Roll. It was a tremendous relief and I shall always be grateful to him.

Bill was such a kind, caring, self-effacing man that we had no idea of his wonderful achievements. I'm so glad that he was officially honoured for his work.

## **BESS FLORES**

**VICTOR HARBOUR**

My brother Bruce Mills and I saw in the latest newsletter your appeal for photos of Rabaul for the new website. I have on disk about a dozen photos of our brother Jack Mills, other soldiers, an Australian nurse [?], local people, volcanoes etc. We recognise only Jack, but others may recognise their own relatives. It's over 8mb so I'll send it on disk.

## **SIMON ROWELL**

**HAMPTON EAST**

I am contacting you regarding becoming a Friend of the Montevideo Maru. I am a grandson of Sgt Ralph Codd who was lost on the ship's sinking.

## **WARWICK FISHER**

**TAMWORTH**

My father, Peter Fisher, was one of the two officers manning the two anti-aircraft batteries in Rabaul in January 1942. Dad and David Selby were fortunate to escape New Britain on the *Laurabada* in April 1942. Many of Dad's mates lost their lives on the island and on the *Montevideo Maru*. Dad never talked much of his wartime experiences but I have pieced together his story since his death in January 2002.

## 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).

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEMORIAL NEWS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

E: [andrea.williams@bigpond.com](mailto:andrea.williams@bigpond.com) Or P O Box 1743 Neutral Bay NSW 2089

### 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.

### 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

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