



Purpose

The Committee's purpose is to gain greater national recognition and understanding of the tragedies of the fall of Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands in January 1942 and the sinking of the Montevidéo Maru on 1 July 1942 with the loss of 1053 lives.

Objectives

1. To secure national recognition of the Montevidéo Maru tragedy.
2. To facilitate comfort and closure in the minds of relatives.
3. To urge government action to locate the nominal roll of prisoners aboard the Montevidéo Maru and to identify the burial places of the other men of Rabaul whose graves are unknown
4. To achieve greater public knowledge of the fall of Rabaul.
5. To enhance awareness of Australia's role in Papua New Guinea.

Newsletter

This newsletter is made available in electronic (email) format to any person interested in this issue.

These people are registered as 'Friends of Montevidéo Maru' and are entitled to receive this monthly publication free of charge.

They should contact Keith Jackson at kjackson@jacksonwells.com.au to be added to the mailing list.

Contributions from readers are always welcome.

Keith Jackson

Canberra meeting to discuss proposal

KIM BEAZLEY and I will meet Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin in Canberra next month to discuss whether the federal government is prepared to take steps for the greater recognition of the Montevidéo Maru tragedy.

The submission, which asks the government to agree to three main proposals, has already been sent to Mr Griffin in draft form.

It recommends that the government:

- (1) Construct a memorial, inscribed with the names of the dead, in Canberra to commemorate the sacrifice of those who died defending Rabaul and the islands.
- (2) Initiate action to have the site of the sinking of the Montevidéo Maru declared an official war grave and arrange for a vessel carrying relatives and friends to visit the site for a memorial and wreath-laying service.
- (3) Appoint an official group including Friends of Montevidéo Maru to develop strategies to ensure that the fall of Rabaul and the sinking of the Montevidéo Maru remain an enduring part of Australia's history.

The Ministerial discussion will be Mr Beazley's last official act on behalf of the committee before he takes up his new role as Australia's Ambassador to the United States early next year.

Mr Beazley has said the diplomatic appointment necessitates his resignation as patron of the committee.

After receiving the submission, Mr Griffin called to say he is looking forward to meeting with Kim Beazley and me next month to discuss it. The committee is appreciative of Mr Griffin's positive response in this matter.

Readers will recall, I'm sure, his landmark speech in parliament last June which - while largely unreported in the media - paid tribute to the men who died on the Montevidéo Maru and to their families, and asked Australians to remember this tragedy.

It was one of the most significant speeches to be made in parliament on this matter and indicated Mr Griffin's understanding of the issues involved, something that has rarely been the case with previous ministers and even other ministers in this government.

We hope this bodes well for the future of the submission.

Committee

Prof Kim Beazley AC, Patron
Keith Jackson AM, Chairman
Phil Ainsworth
Gerald Borthwick
John Cleary
Lindsay Cox
Chris Diercke
Rod Miller
Nils T Selvik
Albert Speer MBE
Aage Henning Stavenes
Hooky (Philip) Street
Liz Thurston
Clive Troy
Max Uechtritz
Andrea Williams
Historical Adviser -
Prof Hank Nelson

Websites

Rod Miller
www.montevidemarufilm.com

Hell Ships Memorial
www.hellshipsmemorial.com

John Schindler
www.montevidemarufilm.com

Montevideo Maru Foundation
www.montevidemarufilm.com

Salvation Army Museum
<http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/museum/>

Lost Lives
www.ije.info/lostlives/places/montevidemarufilm.html

Rabaul Nurses
www.rabaulnurses.com.au/Montevidemarufilm.html

POWs - Lark Force & Civilians
www.australian-pow-ww2.com/montevidemarufilm_11.html

Australian War Memorial
www.awm.gov.au/atwar/remembering1942/montevidemarufilm/transcript.asp

Ballarat Memorial
www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/ex_pos/montevidemarufilm.html

Pacific Wrecks
<http://www.pacificwrecks.com/ships/maru/montevidemarufilm.html>

PNG Attitude
<http://asopa.typepad.com/>

Hellships Memorial
www.hellshipsmemorial.org

Revelations promised in documentary

FILM PRODUCER John Schindler's two-hour documentary on the **Montevideo Maru** (two 60-minute episodes) is to be broadcast in November.

Prior to that, it is likely to be launched at a special screening in Sydney's Chauvel Cinema on Friday 30 November.

The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru is will premiere on Foxtel's History Channel - most likely on Thursday 11 November, Remembrance Day.

Schindler promises fireworks.

"I've done the research and there will be surprises and revelations," he says.

"The re-enactments we shot are spine-chilling. I just hope the relatives of the men who died will be OK with them."

"But they were expensive to put together and there's not even enough in the kitty for a launch party."

Schindler spent all his money, and more, on the film. Earlier this year he mortgaged his house because he wanted the final result to be an appropriate tribute to one of Australia's greatest, if unheralded, tragedies.

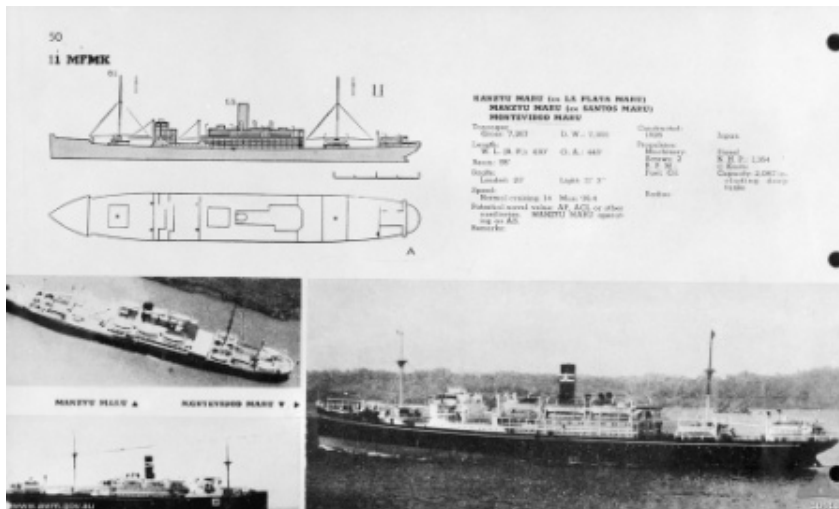
You've just got to be awestruck by that kind of commitment.



The story of the South American Marus

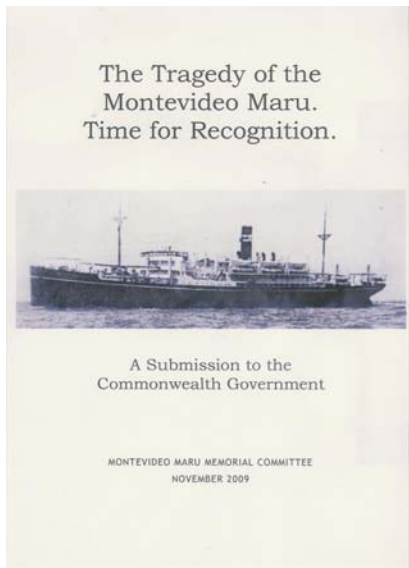
During the middle of the 1920's the Osaka Shosen Kaisha ordered three passenger ships for service to South America. The Santos Maru, La Plata Maru and Montevideo Maru provided a westbound round-the-world service, shown in the company's publicity literature of the time as the South American & African Joint Line.

At this time there was a substantial immigration flow from Japan to Brazil. The Japanese population in Brazil in 1925 was about 50,000 which had increased to 193,000 by 1935, immigrants on this service could expect a forty five day voyage from Kobe to Santos.



Extract from the MMMC submission

Feeling different, the families of the Montevideo Maru



DESPITE THE length of time since the tragedy of Rabaul, its consequences continue to be powerfully imprinted on the people directly affected and their descendants.

The sacrifice of fathers, grandfathers, brothers and friends killed under Japanese occupation - and the lack of knowledge about how and where many of them met their deaths - ensures lingering grief and uncertainty.

As the women and children bid farewell to their men just before Christmas 1941, they were apprehensive but had no thought they would never see them again. For these people, every Christmas remains a painful reminder of what they have lost.

Upon reaching Australia the lives of the evacuees fragmented. Friends drifted apart and families scattered, their plight subsumed within the disruptions of a nation at war. Margaret Reeson writes in *A Very Long War*:

If the fall of Rabaul and the disappearance of the Australian men in the islands had taken place at a time when the nation was not

preoccupied with a great many other military setbacks, that too may have held a larger place in the national consciousness.

As it was, both the evacuation of the women and the disappearance of the men coincided with a time when the Australian people feared invasion by the Japanese, and week after week the daily news was filled with other real and impending disasters.

The evacuation was particularly difficult for women who had been involved in plantations and other commercial enterprises. Their wealth left behind, many struggled financially. Often there was no employer to help. When Rabaul fell, the larger Pacific trading companies took the view, as the men were no longer working for them, that they need not continue paying their salaries.

While Army families received soldiers' wages throughout the war,¹ many civilian wives had no reliable income. Separated from their men, homes, livelihood and community, many struggled. There was an overwhelming feeling of loss, isolation and disempowerment.

The women took what employment they could. Sometimes this meant leaving children with grandparents to find work elsewhere. After the loss of husbands, such separation triggered anxiety and depression. The women felt humiliated by their status as "those poor evacuees". The children talk of feeling "different".

A few letters from the men got through in the weeks immediately following the evacuation of Rabaul. They mentioned air raids and the loneliness of life without families. Then they stopped arriving.

Meanwhile the women and children lived in the hope of imminent reunion, even action by the Government to rescue their men.

On 6 February 1942, Army Minister Frank Forde wrote to Prime Minister John Curtin [right]:

It is quite apparent, however, that not only the relatives of the Rabaul Garrison, but also the people of Australia are anticipating that some drastic action, which for security reason is not being divulged, is being taken by the



¹ Although it seems families of NGVR members received no pension payments during the war. There is a reported case where a family received no payment until the serviceman, listed as missing, was confirmed dead in 1946 when four years' retroactive-pension was received at once

Government and that every possible avenue of relief is being utilised.

Should the facts of the position become known to the public, I feel sure it would come as a very great shock, and they would wish to know what endeavours have been made to relieve the situation. I appreciate that there might be very severe limitation on our ability to do this...

In fact, although many of the men who succeeded in fleeing Rabaul were retrieved, nothing could be done for those who remained.

In April 1942, as part of a reciprocal agreement with the Allies, the Japanese dropped brief letters from the Rabaul prisoners while on a bombing raid over Port Moresby. These established that many people had been moved into prison camps. Nearly half the missing people either had written or were mentioned in these letters. Later, relatives were to receive letters, cards and some radio messages from officers who had been shifted from Rabaul to Japan.

But beyond this, for most families, what followed was nearly four years of official silence interspersed with disturbing rumours.

The women listened to prisoner-of-war radio broadcasts and mailed 15-word letters through the Red Cross. There were no replies, but the families never gave up hope they would be reunited with their men.

The first detailed newspaper reports of what had happened to Rabaul were released by the censor and began appearing in April 1942. Based mainly on interviews with escapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had articles like 'Gallant beach fighting and terrible retreat' and survivors' detailed accounts of the Tol massacre.

Here was an agonising puzzle for the families of the missing: there had been news of a horrific massacre and an unexpected release of letters but, after April 1942, nothing.

Within weeks of the war ending in September 1945, the terrible tragedy that had befallen Rabaul and *Montevideo Maru* became clear. Hundreds of men had died in Rabaul and more than 1000 had perished in the sinking of the ship.

The overriding need of grief-stricken families was to learn what had happened to *their* men. They had many questions but few precise answers. The government, supported by the opposition, chose not to hold a post-war inquiry into the fall of Rabaul, setting aside the 1942 suggestion by Army Minister Forde that there might be one.

The Government's position led to various theories being promulgated about what had happened to the people of Rabaul.

Mrs Frances Ryan, who by now knew she was a widow, wrote to Prime Minister Chifley:

No inquiry into the tragedy of Rabaul has been allowed. You yourself have expressed the opinion that no good can 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 far too long. To us has [sic] been the years of anxiety, loneliness and sadness.

But the war was over and Australia was moving on. Many families chose not to discuss what had happened to their men; it was a story too dreadful to reflect upon. Margaret Reeson writes:

For the families of the men in the islands, therefore, there was little national energy left for what might, in other circumstances, have seen an outpouring of public sympathy and support.

For families of the missing there was no dramatic news, no funerals, no reunions, no visible mourning, no grave, no certainty and no end to the suspense of waiting. The families of the island men received none of the usual overflowing of concern, compassion and practical help on which Australians pride themselves...

And, of the men on *Montevideo Maru*:

There were no witnesses and no remains. How could anyone be sure who went on what ship? Was the government trying to provide a softer version of their end compared to the possibility of torture, executions or painful and lonely death of disease on a jungle track while trying to escape?

Andrea Williams writes:

At first the families had no choice but to accept the news, but then questions arose causing a pain and uncertainty which persists. There were so many rumours. Who was on the ship? Did the ship leave Rabaul loaded with the men, and then return a few days later without them? Why would an important document, the only reference as to who was on board *Montevideo Maru*, disappear from Central Army Records?

How to explain the inconsistencies between the names on various lists as to who was on the *Montevideo Maru*? Why is there not more acknowledgement of the fate of the New Guinea islands men in Australian history?

Such questions, and others like them, remain. Even now, not all are capable of being answered.

T.G. 42Y. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Office Date Stamp
18 OCT 1945

TELEGRAM

Office of Origin: Melbourne
No. of Words: 58/1
Time of Lodgment: 10 30a

Mrs D H M Rendes
Sweno Ave 4th.

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that V12000 Rendes J M. Became missing on 1st July 1942 and is for official purposes presumed to be dead. and desire to convey to you the profound sympathy of the minister for the Army

Minister for the Army

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But there is one outstanding matter that can be addressed and awaits official attention. It concerns the moral obligation of the Australian nation for the sacrifices made in Rabaul.

In late 1941, the Australian Chiefs of Staff and the Australian Government, realising the dangers involved but also believing the measure was justified in the defence of Australia, chose to retain Lark Force and civil administrators in Rabaul, and did not encourage other civilians to leave until too late.

It can be fairly said - and historian Prof Hank Nelson supports such an assertion - that this decision, made by a new government confronting the most difficult circumstances, challenges the Australian nation with a significant moral obligation to the men and women who died and their relatives.

These people were compelled to make a sacrifice emanating from a need to defend Australia. It was a sacrifice that made a great contribution to the safety and security of the nation. It is a sacrifice that has never been appropriately acknowledge or recognised.

That is what this Submission and its recommendations are designed to resolve.

Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee, Chapter 10: 'Lack of closure for relatives', The Tragedy of the Montevideo Maru: Time for Recognition. The full submission will be made public in November.

Dear Mrs Borthwick, I met your father several times...

St Mary's Presbytery
Miller St
Nth Sydney
22 11 1945

North Sydney Trained Nurses' Home, St Mary's
95 Ridge Street,
North Sydney, Nth Sydney, N.S.W.
22 11 1945

Dear Mrs Borthwick,

Learning that you are the daughter of the late Mr. Gerald Hogan, formerly Crown Law Officer at Rabaul, I am writing to give you some news of your father. I myself, incidentally, was Army Chaplain to the troops there.

I met your father several times before Pearl Harbour. As you doubtless know, he was captured with the other civilians, who were all interned in our P.O.W. camp - our former military camp - on Malaguna Rd. I saw a great deal of him during our captivity - in fact, practically every day. You will be glad to know that your father during this period went to the Sacraments, after which he was at Mass and Holy Communion each Sunday until he left Rabaul with the other civilians. He also made a retreat, a short one equivalent to a weekend retreat.

The civilians, together with all the soldiers including the officers, left Rabaul by ship on June 22. I'm sure you will also be consoled

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I saw a great deal of him during our captivity, in fact practically every day. You will be glad to know that your father during this period went to the Sacraments, after which he was at Mass and Holy Communion each Sunday until he left Rabaul with the other civilians. He also made a retreat, a short one equivalent to a weekend retreat.

The civilians, together with all the soldiers excluding the officers, left Rabaul by ship on June 22. I'm sure you will also be consoled to know that two missionary priests were also aboard this ship.

During the time as POW in Rabaul, your father naturally found the life a strain at his age, but he suffered no ill-treatment, had fair health and was in good spirits. I saw him on the morning of his departure, when he was going strong carrying a pack over his shoulder.

Please accept my deep sympathy in your loss. I have often prayed at Mass for the repose of the souls of our friends who were in the Montevideo Maru, and shall continue to do so.

I shall be at the above address until the 30th, and thereafter letters will reach me at 'Mauresa', Hawthorn, Melbourne. Please let me know if there is any further that you would like to learn.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

VS Turner SJ

North Sydney Trained Nurses' Home,
95 Ridge Street,
North Sydney, N.S.W.
22 11 1945

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With renewed sympathy,
I remain,
Yours very sincerely in Christ,
V.S. Turner, S.J.

Thanks to Montevideo Maru Memorial Committee member Gerald Borthwick for sharing this touching personal letter with us

Sid Beazley & the Methodist martyrs of Rabaul

CHRIS DIERCKE is a former school principal from Newcastle, and a man with a long heritage in the Gazelle Peninsula (think Vunapope and Queen Emma).

Chris's son Nathan, who lives in the UK, is passionate about philately and, in a recent e-Bay purchase, espied and captured this first day cover from 1972 commemorating the sinking of the Montevideo Maru.

It came along with a sheet telling about the Methodist missionaries who were on board the ship.

Nathan says the items emanated from a collector in Llandudno, Wales, and they attracted quite a number of bids, eventually fetching \$25 (commemorative covers like this usually sell for around the \$2-8 mark). "It shows some interest from others out there," Nathan comments.

The document accompanying the first day cover depicts, and gives unexpectedly cheery biographical summaries of, twelve Methodist missionaries who were working in and around Rabaul when the Japanese invaded in January 1942.

The thing all these men had in common, apart from their Methodism, is that they were captured and interned by the Japanese and died on the Montevideo Maru on 1 July 1942.

Among the men is Sid Beazley, uncle of Kim Beazley - patron of our committee and Australia's next Ambassador to Washington. (It is just a little out of the ordinary that Sid died when Montevideo Maru was torpedoed by the US submarine Sturgeon.)

The paper, entitled 'A Noble Band', has an introduction that reads:

The Methodist missionaries aboard the Montevideo Maru are still remembered with love and respect by the people whom they served, including former pupils who are now leaders of the indigenous Church.

These endorse the official tribute of November 1945: "They brought to the New Guinea District a remarkable diversity of gifts combining spirituality, scholarship, administrative ability and practical and technical knowledge."

Each had his own particular qualities.



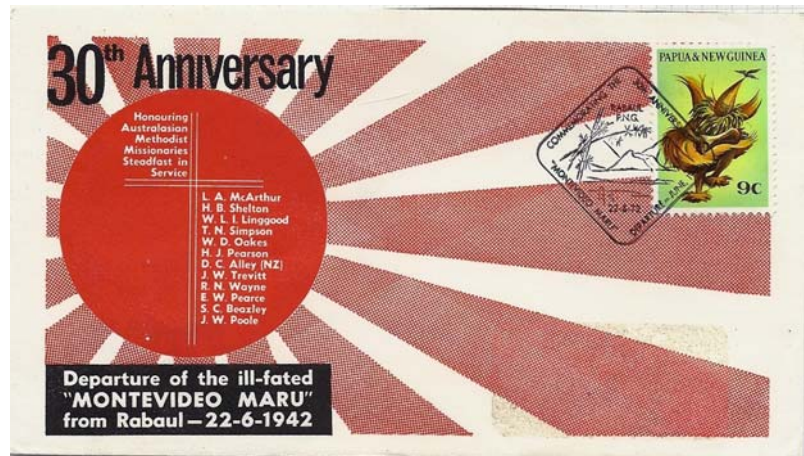
The paper proceeds with short profiles of each of the men. The profile of Sid Beazley [left] reads:

From Western Australia; served as a builder and technical instructor 1937-42.

On loan to the North Australia District [of the Church] 1940-41, he had just returned to set up a technical School at Vunaraima when the war came.

The buildings were destroyed but the influence of this missionary continued in the lives of the carpenters whom he trained.

We pause to think of Sid Beazley, just 33 when he died, and the many other victims of the war in New Guinea.



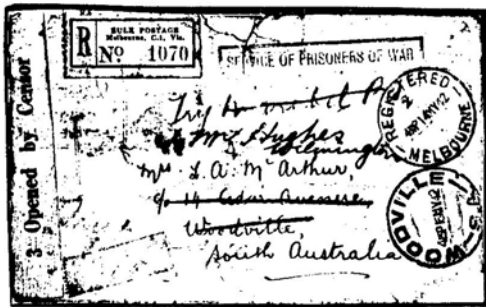
Rev AH Voyce

Messages from Rabaul: The 'letter bombing' of Moresby

WHEN THE Japanese occupied Rabaul in January 1942, they imprisoned all the military and civilian population, and amongst the latter were ten Methodist missionaries including the chairman of the district, Rev LA McArthur BA. Many of them were my personal friends

As a missionary in the New Guinea area myself, though I was on furlough in New Zealand when the Japanese invaded, I viewed with concern, as did Australia, the mounting attacks by air on Port Moresby.

Often I wondered whether any of my friends were permitted to write to their families. One day, with considerable interest, I read the following item published in a Sydney newspaper in June 1942.



Bomber brings letters

It can now be revealed how the Japanese dropped over Port Moresby last month a mailbag containing 400 letters from Australian war prisoners in Rabaul, reports Osmar White, war correspondent of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*.

A Japanese plane dropped the mailbag 'bomb' after it had released a salvo of high explosives. Long white streamers were attached to the bag, which was released at the height of a furious anti-aircraft barrage and just before our fighters

intercepted the enemy machines.

Its fall was accurately observed and it was approached cautiously by a bomb disposal squad.

It contained a message neatly typewritten:

"To: Army Headquarters, Port Moresby.

"We have granted our prisoners of war permission to write a letter to their homes in order to relieve anxiety of their families about the welfare of their beloved ones.

"This bomb of letters we are confident will never fail to receive a warm welcome from all the addressees.

"The letters are left unsealed for the convenience of censorship on your side. We sincerely hope that by your good offices the whole of the letters will find their way to the respective destinations.

"The Japanese Headquarters."

The letters - 300 from Australian soldiers and 100 from civilian prisoners - were each limited to a single sheet.



I learned later of the tragic loss of all ten missionaries when the Japanese ship on which they were being sent with many hundreds of other civilians and military prisoners to Japan, their vessel the ill-fated *Montevideo Maru* was sunk off the Philippine islands by an American submarine, with a total loss of life.

Included also in that ship at the time was my colleague who had served on the island of Bougainville, New Zealander Rev Donald C Alley.

As a keen student and collector of PNG postal history, including flights of all kinds, I kept that cutting considering that one day I would write to a relative of one of those missionaries to see if a cover included in that air drop over Port Moresby might be available for my collection.

However I got tied up in the war myself, and served as a chaplain with the New Zealand army forces in the Solomon Islands area.

Finally, when the war was over, I learned that eleven of my fellow missionaries from Rabaul and Bougainville had been lost, so felt I could not write to the sorrowing relatives to ask about such an unimportant thing as an envelope dropped during an air raid. So for years the matter was forgotten.

But in 1960 I acquired a copy of *Qantas Aeriana* and, because in that book was published details of the markings on such letters, my interest was revived.

CHRISTMAS, 1943, in the Solomons Vella Lavella
The Revs. D. L. Francis, G. R. Thompson, and A. H. Voyce took this service



would indicate that it had originated from Rabaul and that it had been part of the 'bomb drop' of letters over Port Moresby at the height of a bombing raid.

Reverend Voyce originally published this article in the Papuan Philatelic Society's journal. It was subsequently reprinted by the Australian magazine, 'Stamp News', in September 1985 under the title 'Bombed with letters'.

The Rev Arthur Henry Voyce was born in Tasmania in March 1899 and for many years before World War II headed the Methodist Mission based at Kihili near Buin in south Bougainville.

His knowledge and experience in the region meant that he was able to provide much valuable intelligence to the US forces after the Japanese invasion of Bougainville in March 1942.

Rev Voyce continued working in the Solomons after the war before retiring to New Zealand. He authored many books and shorter publications about aspects of life in the Solomons area.

He was also a keen philatelist and remains well known for the quality of his collections and for his expertise in the postal services of this part of the Pacific.

Images:

Previous page - The obverse and reverse of the envelope that was 'bombed' on Port Moresby and which included the letter to Mrs LA McArthur.

This page - Rev AH Voyce, one of three clergymen officiating at a Christmas church service in the Solomons in 1943

LETTERS FROM READERS

Thankyou for the September newsletter

From Beverley Saunders

Very grateful to you and the fellow committee members for the time and the effort spent in moving the federal government towards action in relocating the final resting place of our Great Australian Heroes, presumed missing with the sinking of the Montevideo Maru.

Trust the final submission will be received favourably and that the Federal politicians will read the report and take positive action by instructing the Royal Australian Navy to take on the task of finding the Montevideo Maru. Continue your good work. God bless you each.

Montevideo Maru group starts in Bendigo

From Peter Pritchard

Thanks for what you and the committee are doing. I will forward this to a lady who made a call for interested folk here in the region and after three meetings we now have over 25 folk gathering. It has been a wonderful help to people who have grieved for the first time.

We currently plan to participate locally in the Remembrance Day Service with local RSL support, present a banner and lay a wreath. We may also, on a significant date, conduct a service for families involved. There is also an idea to develop a public display at the RSL facility and even an anthology.

I am happy to be involved. All this arose because my brother-in-law said he'd found something about his uncle. Today I read William Raymond Mason's war record and realise the pain that direct relatives must have felt. Keep up the excellent work,

Hon GG Hogan MLC, Crown Law Officer

From Gerald Borthwick

My grandfather, the Hon GG Hogan MLC, was the Crown Law Officer in Rabaul from 1922. He fought in World War I as a Lieutenant in Artillery, was promoted to Major, mentioned in dispatches and recommended for the Military Cross.

My grandmother also served overseas in World War I as a staff nurse at 1 Australian General Hospital. She lived to her 100th year, yet never a day passed without mourning for her husband. Just one of the many widows left to wonder how this was allowed to happen.

Presence of remains on the wreck of Manko Maru

From Allan Behm, Chief of Staff to Greg Combet AM MP

Regarding your concerns of the investigation into the wreckage of the Manko Maru, I have been informed by the Army History Unit that a US Strategic Bombing Survey Map from World War II lists a ship called the Manko Maru as sunk in Simpson Harbour, Rabaul, on 2 November 1943.

It appears that the shipwreck has become a popular destination for scuba divers and is well known by dive operators. All of the Australian Prisoners of War held captive by Japanese forces in and around Rabaul during World War II were transported to Japan in late June and early July of 1942 and there is no record of any prisoners of War being on board the ship referred to as the Manko Maru at the time of her sinking.

Defence policy requires remains, or strong evidence that remains are present, of Australian personnel before any recovery activity can be undertaken. Without any contemporary information that human remains, and evidence that they might be those of Australians [sic], there is regrettably nothing that defence is able to do at this time.

Mr Behm was responding to a letter from Albert Speer MBE to Defence Minister, Senator John Faulkner