



PATRON: Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO Governor of NSW

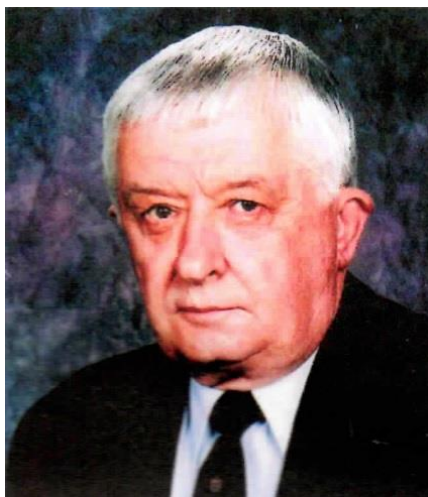


COMMEMORATING THE DEEDS AND SACRIFICES OF OUR PREDECESSORS IN THE CENTURY OF ANZAC

NEWSLETTER

PO Box 410 Paddington NSW 2021 August / September 2014

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Major General Warren Glenny

The nation now, and over the next four years, will commemorate the period that saw Australia involved in WW1. A period that, by commitment and incredible sacrifice, saw us develop a sense of identity and emerge not only as a nation but also as one recognised on the World stage. The end of WW1 had passed but 21 years when the nation was again challenged. WW2 saw us facing challenges not only away from our shores but immediately to the North, within Australia and ultimately around our Coast.

Again we saw Australians rally to the nation, including many veterans of WW1 who without hesitation again volunteered, joining all those who came forward to defend Australia. This time, war came close to Australia and we as a nation experienced actions that then, but importantly now, we recognised as the "Battle for Australia".

I invite readers to reflect on all of the actions that we commemorate. Among those who gather at the Cenotaph will be those who *experienced*; *took part*; who *suffered*; or wish to *remember* those who did. While no listing can be complete, I would like to mention but a number of the events/actions that can be seen as part of the *Battle for Australia*. A battle that involved each of our three services and our Merchant Navy, supported by all of those National organisations involved in the War.

Major activities that were the key elements of the *Battle for Australia* were:

- The Battle for Singapore-Malaya.
- The campaigns across the island chain to our North, not limited to, but including, Timor, Rabaul and New Guinea.
- The Bombing of Darwin (all three of our Services being involved) the losses of the RAN and RAAF, and subsequent bombing of a number of our coastal towns.
- The Sea battles and activities involving our Navy, including, but not limited to, HMAS PERTH and HMAS SYDNEY.
- The little-known battle around our Coast, as enemy submarines extensively engaged our Merchant Navy. We remember with sadness the loss of Hospital Ship CENTAUR and more than 30 Merchant ships that were lost to enemy action off the Australian Coast.

The War lost some of its remoteness when Darwin was attacked and when Japanese submarines shelled Newcastle and Sydney and mounted a major mini-sub operation against shipping in Sydney Harbour.

Dramatically, the commencement of both World Wars in Australia saw Fort Nepean (at Queenscliff Vic.) firing warning shots at German ships attempting to leave Australia.

As we remember, whenever we gather, not only "all of those who served" but also those who *waited*, who *lost loved ones* and who, by their efforts, made a considerable *sacrifice* in the Defence of Australia.

Thank you for your support to *Battle of Australia* activities and your contribution as we all seek to give substance to:

"We will remember them."

Sincerely, **Warren Glenny**. AO RFD ED
Major General (Rtd). Chairman, Battle for Australia Association.

A NURSE'S TALE

Sister Ewart and the 2/9th AGH in New Guinea



Following her experiences during the Bombing of Darwin, (recorded in a previous newsletter) Sister Margaret (Meg) Ewart went on leave in May

1942, after which she worked for a short time at the 119th AGH (Australian General Hospital) Concord.

During this posting Meg says... 'I was sent with a member from each service to travel

around the factories to tell of our war experiences (censored of course), which the Government hoped would encourage people to invest in the *Austerity Loan Bonds*.'

Having never been required to do public speaking, Meg found the experience rather daunting and a challenge.

She continues her story... 'On the 24th of December 1942, having been posted as a reinforcement to 2/9th AGH, I boarded 2/1 AHS (Australia Hospital Ship) *Manunda* arriving in Port Moresby 29 December 1942. The Kokoda Track Campaign was in progress; all our wards were very busy. The hospital had 1200 beds under canvas but at the time had 2000 patients, the overflow were on stretchers under the beds. It was a hectic time. The medical wards were as busy as the surgical wards, lots of all types of malaria, scrub typhus, pneumonia, and dysentery. The ENT (ear-nose-throat) and Psychiatric wards were busy too.

On the 3 February 1943 the Sisters were admitted to the AIF with NXF numbers, and also given a rank. On one occasion the Japanese bombers dropped their bombs on the hospital, fortunately no one was hurt. I was sent on leave on November 10, 1943 sailing on *Canberra*, and disembarked in Cairns; it then took two weeks by troop train to reach Sydney. I returned to 2/9th AGH arriving December 21, 1943, and remained in New Guinea until April 24, 1944'...

The 2/9th - known as 'Seventeen Mile' in New Guinea

With the rapid advance of the Japanese, between January and May 1942, it brought the threat of war closer to Australia. In early March, the Japanese landed on the northern shores of New Guinea, and proceeded to advance over the Owen Stanley Ranges. In August the enemy was moving closer, with large numbers of Australian and American troops arriving in Port Moresby. The six AANS sisters who were working at Murray Barracks in Port Moresby were sent back to Australia for safety. The first AANS sisters to return to New Guinea after this were those of the 2/9th AGH and the 2/5th CCS (Casualty Clearing Station).

The 2/9th AGH along with other AGH's and CCS's returned from the Middle East during February and March 1942 when the 6th and 7th Divisions were withdrawn to defend Australia.

In August 1942 orders came for the men of 2/9th AGH to move to Port Moresby. Because of the instability of the military situation the AANS sisters were not, at first permitted, to accompany the men. When the men arrived they were taken to a site '17 miles' out of Port Moresby, near Rouna Falls, and found all the hospital equipment dumped in huge piles where in an area of scrub had been burnt out. The hospital site was long and narrow (because of the hilly terrain) and spread out for over a mile. In less than a fortnight the hospital was admitting 46 patients per day. At the end of three weeks the men had erected 11 tented wards and had 600 beds equipped; the establishment of a General Hospital. The 2/9th AGH was the only General Hospital in New Guinea at that time.

By October there were 732 patients. Problems arose and were accentuated by the fact that the AANS sisters had not been permitted to accompany the men. In October a decision was made to send 68

exhaustion and their clothes in tatters. Medical patients far outnumbered the wounded, almost ten to one, many had dreadful malaria rigors, they were debilitated and exhausted, with a variety of medical conditions including dysentery or scrub typhus which caused semi-consciousness and heart failure and required vigilant continuous nursing. Soon after the sisters arrived there were a large number of casualties from Buna, Gona and Sanananda, patient numbers soared to 826, bringing a shortage of beds, so patients had to be nursed on ambulance stretchers under beds.

The arrival of the wet season did not help. Tents leaked, wards became 'bogs' and beds sank into the mud at all angles. In letters home the soldiers wrote that 'the sisters in their grey uniforms made them feel that they must be in a safe area', which was good for morale. However the grey uniform with starched veils, collars and cuffs was unsuitable for New Guinea so the sisters were issued with army boiler suits and boots until grey Safari Suits could be made.

By the end of 1942 there were over 2000 patients, 29 MO's, seven other Officers, 275 male other ranks, 112 AANS sisters and three female physiotherapists in the hospital. In September 1943, 96 members of the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAWMS) were sent to assist the 2/9th.

The 2/9th AGH was under the flight path of the Japanese bombers on-route to target airfields at 7 Mile or the harbour. On one occasion bombs dropped on the hospital, miraculously no one was killed. The CO commented that the staff of the 2/9th AGH were heavily overtaxed, and that the organisation would break down unless reinforced, he recommended that more accommodation be provided both in hospitals and convalescent units. In January 1943 a second hospital, the 2/5th AGH was established at Bootless Bay near Port Moresby. In March 1944 the 2/9th packed up and returned to Australia for rest before being sent to Morotai between March and June 1945 for the Borneo Campaign.

The great respect the doctors, sisters and staff had for those gallant men who fought against such odds on the Kokoda Track, helped overcome many of the difficulties at '17 Mile'. In October 1943 a group of AANS sisters, who were on leave from New Guinea, were invited by Major General V A Vasey, Commander, and men of the 7th Division AIF, to lead their March of Honour



AANS sisters to join the men.

They arrived on October 29 and started duty straight away. There was no time to acclimatise and most found, at first, the heat oppressive and tiring. Although the Japanese were being driven back the troops had to fight the enemy in a new type of jungle warfare in difficult terrain, they also had to deal with an array of tropical diseases. This was compounded by difficult casualty evacuation down the Kokoda Track. By the time men reached the 2/9th, they often had putrid fly-blown wounds, they were in states of extreme

through Sydney. The 7th Division had just returned from New Guinea. For the AANS Sisters of the 2/9th, who had diligently nursed so many of these men who fought so gallantly over the Kokoda Track, it was a very moving experience.

*Personal Interview with Sister Margaret Ewart
AANS by Eileen Henderson RAANC (Ret)*

NOTES:

The Manunda (originally a coastal passenger vessel) had been fitted out in 1939 as a DEM Ship, a defensively-equipped merchant ship, but later requisitioned by the Defence Department on 22 July 1940 and fitted out as an hospital ship).

The AANS (Australian Army Nursing Service) name came into use in 1909 but the nurses were referred to by their civilian titles as Staff Nurse, Sister or Matron so when rank was conferred in 1943 it basically became LT, CAPT and MAJOR. Initially most sisters became LT but with seniority and length of service some were promoted to CAPT. MATRON was in charge of the Hospital/CCS).

The final chapter of Meg's story it is about Borneo... 'The whole unit returned to Australia and was sent to Tamworth, some of us were sent to 2/2 AGH and others 2/6 AGH at Atherton to help for six months. Both units very busy.

We returned to our own unit October 18, 1944. I was sent to Prince of Wales, Randwick for a couple of months, then to 103 AGH at Baulkham Hills until the 2/9th reformed.

On May 26, 1945 we embarked from Newcastle to go to Morotai: 2/5 and 2/9 AGHs looked after the casualties from the Borneo Campaign, all under canvas and again very busy.

I was on night duty at the time Peace was declared, in the acute surgical ward, and felt so sad that these boys should have been so badly wounded when it was so close to finishing. Soon after we were receiving men, women and children from the prison camps, some of them I knew from the Bathurst Camp but didn't recognise them - they were so frightfully thin their features had altered. Some of us remained on the Island to gradually evacuate all the patients and close the hospital'.



OUR SPEAKER

The speaker at the Battle for Australia Commemoration service this year will be long-serving NSW MLC, Charlie Lynn. He has recently established *Network Kokoda* – a Foundation to develop a strategic plan for the Kokoda Trail to be proclaimed as a National Memorial Park and to provide health, educational and sporting assistance to the descendants of the 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels' who live along the track.

He serves on the Board of the *Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway* at Concord and represents the Leader of the Opposition as a Trustee of the Anzac Memorial Building in Sydney.

In 1991 Charlie was asked to trek across the Kokoda Trail with a view to organising an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the campaign.

He later developed the *Kokoda Adventure Leadership Program* for young executives from CRA (now Rio Tinto); the *University of Western Sydney National Leadership Program*; and the *RSL Services Clubs Kokoda Leadership Program*.

Since then, Charlie has led groups from the Sydney Swans AFL team, Youth Insearch, Camp Dare, the NSW Young Liberals and Father Chris Riley's *Youth off the Streets* programs as part of their personal development initiatives.

Lynn was born and raised in Orbost, a small town on the mouth of the Snowy River. In 1965 he was conscripted into the Army and volunteered for active service in Vietnam the following year. After Vietnam he was selected for Officer Training and graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant in 1968.

He later served with the ANZUK Force in Singapore and as an exchange instructor in airborne logistics with the United States Army. During his time with the US Army he completed the Special Forces Military Freefall course, which involved high altitude, low opening (HALO) tactical parachute jumps from 7,000 metres at night. He completed 200 parachute jumps and was appointed Captain of the Fort Lee Parachute Display Team.

He studied at the Army Command and Staff College for a year and was then assigned to the 1st Brigade at Holsworthy as the senior staff officer for Personnel and Logistics. He resigned with the rank of Major in 1986 after 21 years' service.

After leaving the Army he organised a number of special events, which included the World's longest, toughest and richest ultra-marathon, between Sydney and Melbourne, caravan safaris around Australia, the first Australian Youth Disabled Games, He was elected to the Legislative Council as a Liberal Member in 1995. His term expires in March next year.

DARWIN'S WAR STORY – THE BOMBING

Darwin Military Museum

On February 19, 72 years ago, 242 Japanese aircraft attacked ships in Darwin's harbour and the town's two airfields, in an attempt to prevent the Allies from using them as bases to contest the invasions of Timor and Java.

The *Defence of Darwin Experience* at Darwin Military Museum provides an “immersive, interactive, multimedia experience”, the story of Darwin's role in World War II.

The exhibition space includes the *Bombing of Darwin Gallery*, historic objects from that time, first-hand accounts and multimedia presentations.

The museum is surrounded by the other buildings and artifacts from World War II: artillery pieces; vehicles, uniforms, firearms, models and paintings and much more. A fully air-conditioned cafe and shop complement this presentation of Australia's north at war.

At Pearl Harbour, from the same Japanese force, 273 bombers dropped 457 bombs (including 40 torpedoes) weighing 133,560 kg., killing more than 2,400 people.

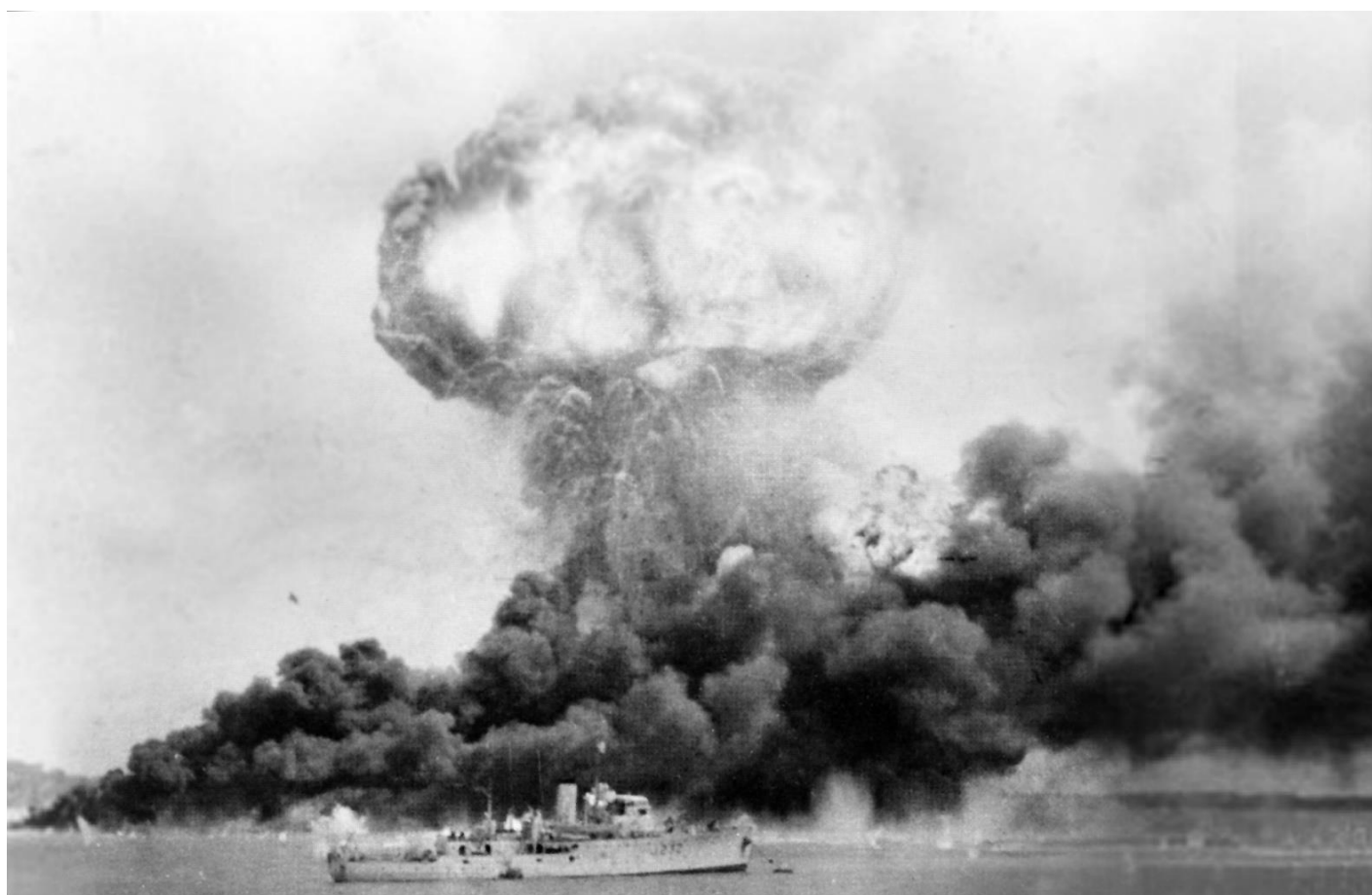
At Darwin, 205 bombers dropped 681 bombs weighing 114,100 kg., killing 235 people. The Japanese force consisted of four aircraft carriers, two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, seven destroyers and three submarines.

Eight ships were sunk, with the loss of most of the cargo shipping available to support efforts in Java and the Philippines with Java being effectively sealed off from further surface shipments from Australia.

This followed the capture of Singapore by the Japanese and the largest surrender of British-led military personnel in history.

About 80,000 British, Indian and Australian troops became prisoners of war, joining 50,000 taken by the Japanese in the earlier Malayan Campaign.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the ignominious fall of Singapore to the Japanese the “worst disaster” and “largest capitulation” in British military history.



GLANCE AT 2013



