



BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA

Association NSW Inc.



PATRON: Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AO CVO Governor of New South Wales



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

NEWSLETTER

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A NURSING SISTER WITNESSED THE FIRST RAID ON DARWIN

A Nursing Sister Witnessed the First raid on Darwin

[An excerpt from an article written by Margaret (Meg) Archibald Ewart for: 1985-1998 *The Story of the Medicos*.] ...Early January, 1941, I was called up to join the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and was immediately sent to Bathurst where some of the 8th Division were training. This was a most interesting experience learning about army ranks and procedures.

Already some of the battalions were embarking for overseas and my excitement was running high. Imagine my disappointment when four Sisters were posted to Darwin and I was one of that group. We called on the Principal Matron, pleading to go with the 8th Division, but she informed us, in no uncertain manner that we were in the army now and must do as we were told.

During April, 1941, we embarked on the *Katoomba* to join the male members of the 119 AGH who were to set-up a 1200-bed hospital in Darwin.

The 119 AGH was to take over from 19 AGH at Bagot, an ex-aboriginal compound, with 150 beds in huts and under canvas; poor drainage; faulty septic system. Also our equipment hadn't been unloaded from *Katoomba* owing to a wharf labourers' strike - not a happy start. By the end of December, part of the new hospital being built for us at Berrimah, 15 miles from town, was ready for use. I was one of the group being sent to the new facility.

The day of the first large raid, 19 February 1942 I was a patient suffering from dengue fever, a most debilitating illness. I had lost 2 stone (nearly 13 kg) in weight but that morning had felt a little better so decided to have a shower and wash my hair. As I was returning to my room, everyone was looking up into the sky where lots of planes were flying in formation, so high up they looked like silver moths. We all thought that they were

USA planes when all of a sudden there were white puffs in the sky and someone called out 'ack-ack fire'. Then things moved quickly; patients and staff went out into the bush or into the few slit-trenches. The patients too ill to walk were lifted on the mattresses and placed under their beds with other mattresses placed round for protection and a Sister or an orderly stayed with each patient.

I hastily slipped into my uniform and tin hat with wet hair dangling down and jumped into a nearby trench. It was heart-breaking to watch these planes diving down over the town, harbour, RAAF and civilian aerodromes knowing there was no way they could be stopped. Huge clouds of black smoke filled the sky and we were worried about our friends at Bagot which was situated between the two aerodromes. All of a sudden two fighter planes swooped down over our hospital, so low we could see the pilots although we were crouched down as far as possible and they proceeded to strafe the wards. It was a frightening experience, that rat-a-tat-tat just above our heads; I felt a bullet would go through me at any minute. Unfortunately one of our patients under his bed was killed. After the initial large raid we had smaller ones on and off all day and for days to follow.

Matron didn't think I was well enough to resume duty, but said I could take the place of home Sister, which turned out to be a busy job. The RAAF Sisters, in a shocked condition arrived, their 'drome had been completely destroyed; their padre found the girls in a trench and hailed a passing truck to bring them down to us. The civilian nurses and any women left in Darwin came too. They all had to be fed, watered and beds found for them. Often the Sisters coming off duty in the early hours of the morning would find their bed occupied, so had to hop in with another Sister.

Very soon the wards and verandas were filled with casualties. Some doctors and men from the 2/12 Field Ambulance came to help.



Nursing Sister Margaret Ewart

Many of the cases were severe burns and our facilities for treatment were pretty poor - we used 'tulle gras' made from mosquito-netting soaked in petroleum jelly given to us by the RAAF.

The day after that horrifying experience I took myself on duty to help get patients ready to be evacuated on the *Manunda*, sailing that night. Thirteen of the staff on that hospital ship had been killed, including one Sister and many wounded which necessitated four of our 119 AGH Sisters transferring to augment their staff.

Our matron accompanied the patients in the ambulances to the wharf and when she returned told us of the utter destruction to the town and harbour where many ships had been sunk. Others were badly damaged and still smouldering and troops were collecting bodies from the water...

THE CRITICAL YEARS

Japan followed up its treacherous attacks of 7 December 1941 (principally on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii) by massive thrusts against British and American possessions. These were speedily successful binging Japanese forces close to Australia. Rabaul fell on 23 January 1942, Lae two days later, and the persistent bombing of Darwin commenced on 19 February, 1942.

Australia was completely defenceless; it lacked trained troops, essential equipment and air and naval support; however, with well trained troops of the 2nd AIF returning from overseas and with American aid we brought the Japanese to a halt, first at Milne Bay (6 September) and at Ioribaiwa on the Kokoda Trail (16 September). Nevertheless there were years of savage fighting still to come.

This year is the 70th Anniversary of some of that savage fighting, commencing in January 1943 when the capture of Sanananda marked the end of the 'Battle for the Beaches', which could more appropriately be called 'The Battle for the Swamps'. It was also the start of the Battle for Wau which we won in February at a cost of 300 Australian lives.

The following month a Japanese convoy, carrying reinforcements for Lae, was virtually annihilated in the Battle of the Bismark Sea.

In May our hospital ship Centaur, which was prominently marked and lit, was sunk by a Japanese submarine. Only 64 of the 333 on board survived.

September saw the 9th Division carrying out an amphibious landing and, together with the 7th Division, capturing Lae.

The following month the 9th Division mounted another amphibious landing and captured Finschhafen initiating the Huon Peninsula campaign.

The last of 64 Japanese air raids on Darwin occurred in November, in which month the 9th Division captured Sattelberg.

The year ended with the 7th Division's capture of Shaggy Ridge and with the confident knowledge that we had turned the tide. The safety of Australia had been secured.

G.L.Maitland

GUEST SPEAKER



The Governor

We are doubly fortunate for our Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, ACCVO has not only accepted our invitation to attend our ceremony but has agreed to speak. As one would expect she has a most impressive history.

Professor Marie Bashir was born in Narrandera, New South Wales, and is a medical graduate of the University of Sydney. After completion of her post graduate studies in psychiatry, she was appointed to establish the Rivendell Child, Adolescent and Family Service to provide comprehensive specialist consultative services for young people with emotional and psychiatric problems. In 1971 she was appointed 'Mother of the Year'.

In 1987 she was appointed Director of the Community Health Services in the Central Sydney area.

In 1993 she was appointed Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney, and

in 1994 the Clinical Director of Mental Health Services for the Central Sydney area.

Having had a special interest over many years in indigenous health, Professor Bashir has travelled extensively to visit remote communities in Central Australia, the Kimberley and Arnhem Land to gain a closer understanding of issues of culture and history which impact significantly on health. In 1995, in a partnership with the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern, she established the Aboriginal Mental Health Unit.

In 1988 she was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia, and in 2001 a Companion in the Order. She was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2003.

In 2004 she was made an Honorary Member of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and also elected as one of Australia's Living National Treasures. Having helped many countries she has received awards from France, Lebanon and Thailand.

In 2006 she was invested by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as a Commander of the Royal Victoria Order (CVO). She was also awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Sydney University Graduate Choir and on 1 June 2007 she was elected the 17th Chancellor of The University of Sydney.

Professor Bashir is married to Sir Nicholas Shehadie AO OBE. They have two daughters and a son, and six grandchildren.



Major-General Gordon Maitland as Deputy President, meets the Governor, H.E. Professor Marie Bashir

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



General Gordon Maitland

The image of an organisation can be tarnished by having a very old president, which I unarguably am. I am therefore standing down and for a short while will be Assistant President to help my successor.

Your new president will be Major General Warren Glenny, AO RFD ED, retired but still very busy. He has just stood down as Deputy Chairman of the St John's Ambulance.

He is assisted by a splendid team and, with your support, I am sure that we can continue to develop further awareness of the significance to Australia.

Thank you for the comradely encouragement and support that you have given to me during my years on your Committee.

OUR FUZZY WUZZY

Once again our Fuzzy Wuzzy friends will be attending our Cenotaph ceremony. Not only is it an opportunity to once again convey our thanks to them, but they certainly add something unique to our service.



Special guests from Papua New Guinea

MAJOR GENERAL WARREN GLENNY AO RFD ED (RTD)

Commenced his Military Career as a Regimental Cadet with 1/15 Royal NSW Lancers staying with the regiment for 25 years, promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and, Commanding Officer. Postings on Regular and Reserve Headquarters followed including Training Command, 5 Brigade and Land Headquarters. He had a number of overseas visits/postings. Promoted to Major General he commanded 3rd Division (1990/91) and then 2nd Division (91/94) until retirement in November 1994. His civil career was in retail and overseas aid. He had some 11 years as chair/member of a number of Department of Immigration Advisory committees. He served 6 years as the Commissioner of St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) retiring in 2011.

He is currently the Chairman of the Castle Hill RSL Club Group. He is patron of:

- Fort Scratchley Historical Society
- Friends of 2nd Infantry Battalions
- Reserve Forces Day Council Newcastle
- Gilgandra Coo-ee Re-enactment March 2015



Major General Warren Glenny

- Australian Monarchist League
- Patron Royal NSW Lancer Association

General Glenny and his wife Gay live in Castle Hill and have one adult son, Andrew.

ABOUT THE LATE FRANK HAWDON



A wartime Frank Hawdon, and Hawdon as he was seen at Battle For Australia

9 October 1921 to 20 March 2013

Frank Hawdon, an early secretary of the Kokoda Committee (predecessor of the Battle For Australia Commemoration Committee), has died aged 92.

Hawdon, who had to overcome polio as a child, was keen to be soldier at the outbreak of World War 11. Though restricted in sport by his illness, he became an outstanding marksman with the rifle. He was also asked to leave Sydney Grammar for releasing thousands of cicadas into the chapel which somewhat disrupted Morning Prayer. He then attended Sydney Boys High School where he completed his education, but always dreamed of the military.

He first joined the 30th Scottish Battalion, CMF until he was commissioned in 1941 and posted to the 35th Battalion, AIF. While his oath of allegiance was sworn on a Bible, his oath as to his age was sworn on an artillery maintenance manual. He served mainly in New Guinea, was an intelligence officer and was promoted Captain.

He was the devoted husband to Joan for 60 years and as a father, his three children were the envy of their friends.

When it came to problems he followed the army text book: first make an appreciation of the situation, devise a plan, implement and followed the plan with a willingness to improvise.

A member of his much loved church congregation in Bateman's Bay suggested that God had called him away to organise the second coming.

For more than 60 years he helped servicemen and women and their spouses obtain pensions and benefits, which work saw him awarded the Order of Australia medal. He worked tirelessly carrying out private research on the disabilities and diseases which veterans encountered while serving in the tropics. He served as Honorary Secretary of the Kokoda Committee from 1994 to 1997 and thereafter on the National Battle for Australia sub-committee, succeeding in having the first Wednesday in each September marked to celebrate the defense of Australia from Japanese attack during World War 11.

Since 1970 he had been staff officer of the Fifth Infantry Division in the NSW RSL branch Sydney Anzac Day March. His role on the March Committee was demanding, with annual frustrations, as his indomitable spirit ruffled the feathers of the changing face of the March.

Six of his former committee members attended his memorial service in Sydney where they learnt that he had free fallen from a plane aged 91.

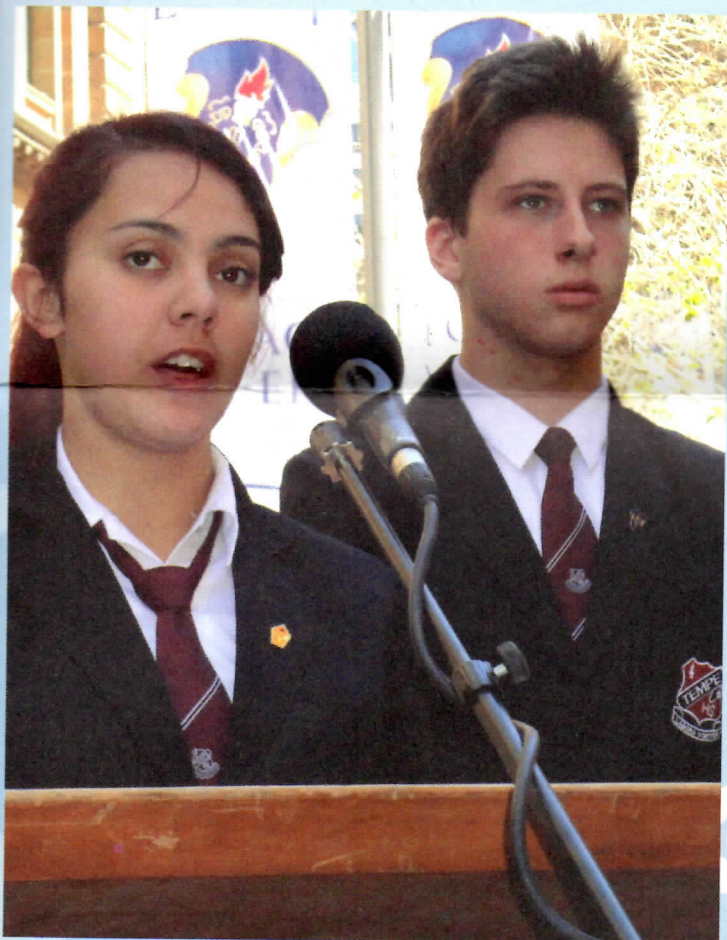
THE PASSING PARADE

Wednesday September 5, 2012 Service, Sydney Cenotaph, Martin Place. All photographs taken by Noel Christensen.



Above: Lt Colonel Ian Guild, Sir Nicholas Shedadie, his wife, H.E. the Governor, and president, Lt Colonel Brian Nebenzahl

Right: Special Guest, Fred Cassidy speaking on the Battle of the Bismarck Sea



Above: Students from Tempe High School read the Ode

Right: General Gordon Maitland and the Governor, H.E. Professor Marie Bashir





Above: The Governor, H.E. Professor Marie Bashir, Lt Colonel Nebenzahl, Mrs Nebenzahl and the Hon Mrs Bronwyn Bishop, MP



Above: Guests from New Guinea, the Fuzzy Wuzzies give colour and significance to the commemoration
Right: The Governor, H.E. Professor Marie Bashir, Lt Colonel Nebenzahl and special guests





Above Left: A Scots College Pipe Major plays the Lament
Above: Mrs Amy Taylor, a faithful wattle layer
Left: Two former presidents and generals, Ray Sharp and Gordon Maitland



NSW Police Brass Band on parade