



BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA

Association NSW Inc.



Patron: His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor of New South Wales

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NEWSLETTER

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

COMMEMORATING THE
DEEDS AND SACRIFICES
OF OUR PREDECESSORS



The title Battle For Australia (BFA) was a term originating in the early days of WW2. After the attack on Pearl Harbour and Malaya on December 7, 1941 Prime Minister John Curtin advised by radio that Australia was at war with Japan.

The Prime Minister on February 15, 1942 within hours of the fall of Singapore issued a Press Release commenting that the fall of Singapore opened the Battle for Australia.

The battle which along with overseas conflict saw Australia engaged in WW2 until 1945 and throughout the war and to war's end, conflict was not only overseas in countries such as Malaya, Singapore, Timor, New Guinea, but to our cities, Darwin, Sydney, Newcastle, many other towns in the north and also to the waters around Australia.

There was no formal National BFA commemorative organisation, ceremonies were held in Melbourne in June 1998 and Sydney in September 1999.

The Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC on the June 19, 2008 proclaimed that the Battle for Australia was to be a national day of remembrance to be held each year on the first Wednesday in September.

Following the Governor General's announcement Battle for Australia associations were formed. The committee that is in existence in NSW has as its structure - members, a committee and an executive. Membership is drawn from the RSL and its

Sub branches, Army units, Divisional associations, associations from the Navy and Airforce, Merchant Navy and families of present or past serving service members. Members of the committee are all volunteers with a past Defence Service background.

The main activity of the Association is the conduct of the Sydney commemorative service and where appropriate, support to Community organisations as they celebrate/commemorate or mark the Battle for Australia. The association's web site, Battle For Australia, provides a wealth of information, guides as to the Battle For Australia and the campaigns fought. It is useful when planning for commemorative services. It offers a POC with the Association. It is a useful tool for individuals and organisations wishing to conduct BFA remembrance services.

The Association remains grateful that the Cenotaph service is attended by the Consular representatives from those nations that stood with us during those dark days,

- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- Malaysia, Singapore
- PNG
- The Netherlands and
- Timor

The service is also attended by representatives from,

- The Defence Services
- NSW Police

And the schools that have constantly participated,

- Mater Maria College
- Mosman Preparatory School
- Scots College
- Saint Andrews Cathedral School
- Tempe High School
- St John Ambulance

The Defence Associations, RSL Sub Branches, ex-service associations and all those for whom BFA has a special meaning. The fly past by the RAAF is a reminder of the of the link between those fighting on the Kokoda Trail and the air support by the RAAF Biscuit Bombers.

This year the guest speaker is Commander Rebecca Jeffcoat a Naval officer who has served in the Gulf and is currently Commanding Officer of HMAS Kuttabul.

Warren Glenny AO RFD ED

Major General (Rtd)

President of Battle For Australia Association (NSW)



Norm Ensor, 92, long time committee member of the Battle For Australia Commemoration Committee, has been named in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Norm Ensor, from Revesby, was named in the Queens Birthday Honours List receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to veterans and their families. Every Sunday the World War II veteran plays the organ at the Padstow Anglican Church, and regularly gives talks to service clubs on a life well lived.

"You couldn't kill me with an ax"

- Norm said when asked about slowing down.

Norm said he was honoured to be included on the honours' list.

"I was wondering what the letter from the governor was all about," he said. "I was very surprised, and honoured after opening it."

Norm has been the senior vice-president of the 7th Division Australian Imperial Force Association, since 2009 and was secretary/treasurer from 2004-2009.

He is best known for his work as a volunteer at the Kokoda Memorial Walkway at Concord West, where he has guides hundreds of students and visitors. Norm has been involved in the building the Situm Primary School in Lae, Papua New Guinea, with the Rotary Club of Lae Huon Gulf. He returned for memorial celebrations at the school in 2013 where he was given a hero's welcome. Norm is also an executive member of the Padstow RSL Sub-Branch.

GUEST SPEAKER:

COMMANDER REBECCA JEFFCOAT



Commander Rebecca Jeffcoat was a country girl who has made a career of the navy, including active service in the Middle East.

She originally comes from north-east Victoria and attended Scots College, Albury before passing into the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra as a Midshipman in 1990. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Oceanography) and then completed the Instructor Officer Application Course at HMAS Cerberus in 1993 and became an instructor at the Technical Training School.

As a Lieutenant, CMDR Jeffcoat studied for a diploma in Meteorology moving to the Fleet Weather and Oceanographic Centre, Maritime Headquarters.

During the next two years she deployed as a member of the Mobile METOC Team, including secondments to the Australian Antarctic Division and Australian Fisheries Management Authority for deployment to Antarctica, Macquarie Island and Heard and Macdonald islands in the Southern Ocean.

After this posting with the Directorate of Meteorology and Oceanography she became ADC to the Governor General, Sir William Deane.

She then moved to Darwin in 2002 to serve with the Plans Branch at Headquarters Northern Command focusing on operational planning for the protection of Northern Australia for which she was awarded a COMNORCOM Commendation for her work on Defence Assistance to the Civil Community.

She was promoted Lieutenant Commander in September 2003. After a posting as Staff Officer, Navy International Relations, Navy Headquarters, she then accompanied her husband, a Gunner, on his posting in London living in South Kensington.

There, while on leave without pay from the Navy, she was employed as Executive Assistant to the Deputy

High Commissioner at Australia House in the Strand.

When she returned to Australia in 2007, she was posted as Personal Staff Officer to the Deputy Chief of Navy, Navy Headquarters. In January 2009, she was posted to Darwin as the Executive officer at HMAS Coonawarra.

During which time Coonawarra was awarded the Governor's Cup for Best Navy Establishment. Her promotion to Commander followed in January 2011.

She completed her Australian Command and Staff course in 2011 where she excelled. She was then posted as Chief Staff Officer Operations in Headquarters Joint Operations Command in 2012.

She then deployed to Combined Task Force 150, Operation Slipper, in October of that year. On return from deployment she was posted to Navy Strategic Command as Director Navy Reputation Management.

She played an important role in the Centenary of Anzac Commemorations in Albany, Papua New Guinea and in the Cocos Islands where HMAS Sydney defeated the German raider, Emden in 1914.

She has a Master of Arts (Maritime Policy from the University of NSW) and is currently in command of HMAS Kuttubul in Sydney.



An RAAF C130J Hercules will provide the fly past over Martin Place Cenotaph, Sydney as part of the 2016 Battle for Australia Day commemorative service.

No. 37 Squadron was formed during the Battle for Australia early in 1943 and operated in New Guinea.

SERVICE AT KINGS PARK, PERTH



The Honourable Phil Edman MLC at the Cenotaph in Kings Park, Perth. This is the site of the first Battle for Australia Ceremony in WA.

More than 50 people attended a service commemorating Battle For Australia at the war memorial in Kings Park, Perth, Western Australia.

The ceremony was organised by the Hon Phil Edman, Member for WA's South Metropolitan Region. Exhibitions of World War 11 memorabilia have been held in Rockingham and the Western Australia State Museum.

*Photos at right:*

School children being given a guided tour of the Battle for Australia exhibit at the WA State Museum in Perth.

An original Japanese military Zero pilot uniform, equipped with an authentic Japanese Katana, one of only 2 in Australia, dating back to the Second World War.



FEATURE ARTICLE:

THE WWII BOMBING OF 2/1ST AUSTRALIAN HOSPITAL SHIP MANUNDA IN DARWIN, NT.

Sister Margaret Augusta de Mestre Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) was the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) nurse killed in action in World War II.

Sister de Mestre had always wanted to be a nurse and follow her aunt who had served during World War I on AHS Grantala. Margaret trained at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney, graduating in 1938. Enlisting in the AANS in 1940 Sister de Mestre sailed twice to the Middle East on 2/1st Australian Hospital Ship (AHS) Manunda.

When Japan entered World War II in December 1941 members of the AANS had already been posted to the Northern Territory and were based at the Bagot Aboriginal Compound approximately 7 kilometres south of Darwin from July 1940 to look after the troops training in the area: first as 2/5th Australian General Hospital (AGH) then 19th AGH and finally 119th AGH from April 1941. The Hospital's Matron was Sister Edith McQuade White who became the Principle Matron of the AANS in the Northern Territory. By early 1942 the 119th AGH had 1200 beds, distributed between Bagot, Kahlin Hospital (Darwin's civilian hospital), and the new military hospital at Berrimah (aboriginal for 'make sick fella better'), 7 kilometres south of Bagot.

During January and February 1942 there were several air alerts, and alarms were sounded, but no 'planes were sighted.' However, Bagot received its first battle casualties on 18th February when eleven very badly wounded men, who had been on a convoy bound for the Islands in the north, were admitted.

At 10.45 am on the 19th February 1942 an air raid warning was heard just as the enemy bombers and fighter planes came over Darwin. The first casualties were mainly from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) aerodrome and were admitted to Berrimah from about 11.00am.

Having arrived a month earlier and anchored in Darwin Harbour with many ships was the 2/1st AHS Manunda. Expecting casualties, Sister Lorraine Blow was preparing her ward when...

"There was a terrific blast which flew me off my feet into the air and down again"...

... the bomb blast that wounded her, killed Sister Margaret de Mestre who was preparing her ward one deck below. Sister de Mestre died from shrapnel wounds to her back and abdomen, she was 26 years old. Her sacrifice is acknowledged by a commemorative chair in Christ Church Cathedral, Darwin.

One of 350 wounded, Sister Blow's shrapnel wounds were so severe that she spent the next two years in hospital. Sister de Mestre was one of 243 people killed in two air raids on Darwin, twelve from Manunda. Killed on the hospital ship were: Robert Bevir, Corporal, AAMC; Arthur Connell, Ship's cook; Margaret de Mestre, Nursing Sister AANS; Boynes Hocking, Dental Officer, AAMC; John Holmes, Ship's steward; Harold Humphries, Ship's steward; Victor Kane, Ship's steward; William McKay ship's greaser; Allan Scott Smith, Third Officer; Richard Smith, Ship's cook; William Spinney Ship's steward & Robert Thom, Assistant Purser. Forty seven others were wounded.

Although damaged, the ship remained afloat and its nurses, though badly shocked, treated numerous casualties from other ships, many suffering burns.

"On the afternoon of 20th February the wharf was still burning, and as I waited with our four sisters from 119th AGH who had volunteered to help the staff of the Manunda nurses, the whole scene was one of devastation; bodies were washed up on the beaches. Men were collecting the dead and placing them on barges for burial at sea. It was so sad to see so many ships smouldering", Matron McQuade White.

Loading of the wounded was most difficult and took hours as patients were ferried by barges from land to the Manunda which was anchored a distance out. Several of the 119th AGH nurses went with their patients on the Manunda when she sailed for Perth at 11.30pm and safety.

On board AHS Manunda

Sister de Mastre (middle)

This article is a compilation of information from:

Bassett Jan (1992). Guns and Brooches - Australian Army Nursing from Boer War to the Gulf War. Oxford University Press: pp154-155

McQuade White E (1992). Reminiscences of an AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSE. Boolarong Publications. Brisbane QLD. pp45
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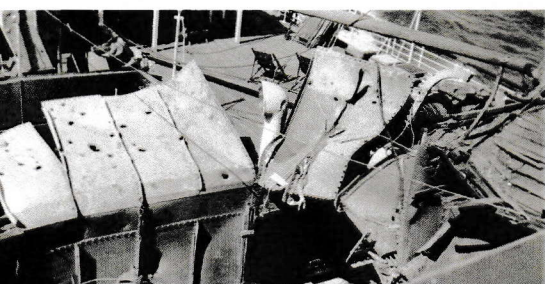
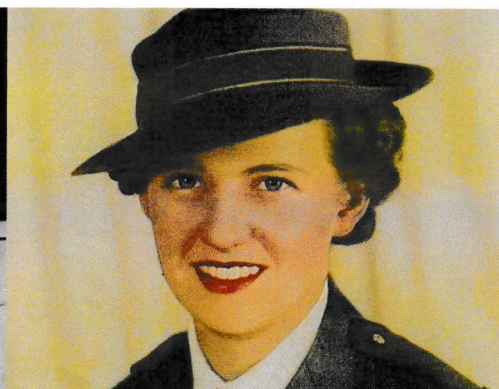


PHOTO GALLERY: A GLANCE BACK

