

2/C Stinton Avenue
Newtown
Geelong
Victoria 3220.

Dear John,

Further to our discussion on the wharf at Darwin prior to the guys departing for Ambon I have gone through my bits & pieces to endeavour to collect some memorabilia for Cathryn relative to her project on Ambon.

I apologise for not having sent it to her direct but for some unknown reason I do not appear to have your private address. Had it once but it appears it has gone into the too hard file.

Sincerely hope the data supplied will be of some use to Cathryn and that she will be able to put it to good purpose.

All the items have been photo statted but the originals are available if so desired.

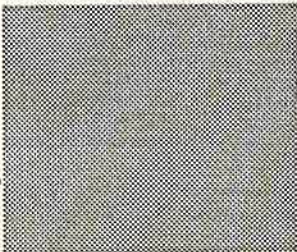
Thanks again for your hospitality during our stay in Darwin & hope some day we may be in a position to return same.

Kind regards to self & family.

Russ Lavery

P.S. There is a small para among the items which may well deter you from inviting me again to a Mayoral function, trust you do not believe all you read.

R. Lavery
2c Sinton Avenue
NEWTOWN VIC 3220
Ph: 211973



All correspondence to:

Russ Lavery

Regards,

project.

As mentioned on the tape I was a to
locate the submission made by our eldest grandson as
his submission for year 12 whilst at Geelong Grammar.
He is presently doing architecture at
Deakin University Geelong.
Trust it may be of some help in your

Dear Caitlyn,

In February 1941 many Australian soldiers were sent to defend a very small Island called Ambon, just north of Australia. The Australian soldiers (2/21st Battalion and other auxillary units, otherwise called Gull Force) numbered 1156 men when they left Australia, but only 306 men returned home alive. Using the Island gave many strategic advantages to whoever held the Island under their leadership. Gull Force was deposited on Ambon to aid the Dutch in their battle for the Island against the Japanese. The Australians fought to hold a plan, set about by the Dutch, that they were latter told was faulty. The Australian soldiers were given orders to which they obeyed to the best of their ability. Although the Australians had had specific training before hand, the sheer numbers of the Japanese made it impossible to defend the Island any longer. As a result the defence collapsed and the Japanese took over, taking many soldiers prisoner. These prisoners were then treated to the three longest, hardest years they will ever remember, and will fail to forget.

Australians were sent to Ambon to assist the Dutch against the Japanese. In February 1941 the Australian and Dutch governments came to an agreement, guaranteeing Australian support for the defence of Ambon and west Timor in the event of a Japanese attack on the Netherlands East Indies. In discussions with the British, it was revealed how inadequate British air and naval defences in the area were. The Australians, Dutch and British then felt that Japan may wish to expand eastwards, therefore coming into conflict with Britian, the Netherlands and the United states of America. With this the Australian government changed a plan to send Gull Force to the Middle East. Instead they were sent to Ambon to be in reserve for the defence of the Islands to Australia's north. The attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941 brought the agreement between the Australians and the Dutch into action.

After 1156 Australian troops were sent to Ambon during December 1941, several hundred of these were sent to defend the air strip at Laha on Ambon to enable the Australians and the Dutch to hold a staged base between Australia and Indonesia for their airforce. The airforce at the time consisted of twelve Hudson bombers, three Dutch-Brewsters and a small number of American flying boats that were docked in the Harbour at Halong. Although the plane numbers were low there were enough to defend Ambon and Northern Australia from an air raid by the Japanese (or so they thought). The main reason for having an air field on Ambon instead of Australia was because these planes would fly about 1500 miles without a fuel stop. As Indonesia was very close to 1500 miles from Australia. If the Japanese attacked these planes on route to Indonesia (or back

to Australia), they would face the high probability of running out of fuel. The airfield at Laha was therefore established to enable the Dutch to have easy access to Indonesia. The airbase was the most important physical aspect of Ambon worth defending from Japanese attack, but for some unknown reason it was one of the least guarded places on Ambon. The list of events that led up to the attack on Ambon were:

January 6th 1942: Japanese flying boats bombed the airfield damaging buildings and workshops belonging to the Dutch, as well as two native villages, thus creating a shortage of labour to rebuild the air strip.

January 10th 1942: A Hudson crew ran out of fuel while chasing a Japanese flying boat.

January 11th 1942: Japanese bombers dropped some 200 bombs almost totally destroying the air field area.

January 15th 1942: 12'C' type Japanese fighters destroyed petrol dumps and barracks, one Hudson plane and two Dutch flying boats. Two Dutch Brewsters were shot down by the Japanese army.

January 16th 1942: More Japanese planes appeared and destroyed more grounded Dutch planes.

January 20th-21st 1942: Radio stations and anti-aircraft guns were destroyed.

January 23rd-25th 1942: The Japanese made their daily destruction of the camp at Laha.

January 27th: A Hudson bomber spotted Japanese ships moving towards Ambon, as well as the two ships "Sorya" and "Hirya" where all the Japanese planes were coming from.

January 28th 1942: Mass evacuation was ordered. Forty two airforce personnel returned to Darwin in Hudsons and short flying boats. During the night 20 more personnel were successfully evacuated. With the knowledge of the Japanese ships approaching the engineers were ordered to destroy what things were left which could be of some use to the Japanese.

January 30th 1942: the Japanese landed on the northern coast at Hitu peninsular as well as the southern coast peninsular.

When they landed on Ambon in December 1941, Gull force found themselves in unfamiliar terrain, with what was later to be a faulty Dutch plan. Before landing on Ambon Gull force spent some time training in terrain suited to the Middle East where they thought they were going in the first place. Therefore the Middle East terrain was reasonably familiar to Gull Force, but Ambon was a different story, it was densely covered with forests, to which no tracks, roads or airfields bypassed the Island at all. The only form of Human life on this Island were the Ambonese people. These people had "set up" various villages on the Island (which later became of great use to the Australians and the Dutch). The Ambonese people were totally against the Japanese attacking Ambon and all for Gull Force and the Dutch defending it. The Ambonese did everything within

their capabilities: to stop the Japanese from attacking, to help to rebuild the area after bombs had destroyed it and to help the Australians escape from the war camps.

Escaping became a major part of life for the P.O.W's. Many were devising ways of escaping which would either lead to freedom or more likely, death. After the massacre at Laha, and the capture of some two hundred men, all remaining troops immediately made plans of escape before the Japanese found them. Although many were caught in their attempt. For those who had not heard the news of the fall of Laha, it was too late, they too would almost certainly be captured, and most were. For those who did escape they had a rough ride back to Australia usually by Island hopping.

In many ways the defence of Ambon was a total failure. To start with, the Japanese far outnumbered the Australians and the Dutch, and they did not really stand a chance at all. Many Australian officers made the comment that the Japanese soldiers really had had no training whatsoever but their large numbers were enough to defeat the Australian and the Dutch soldiers. After the war when some 307 Australians returned home, it was discovered that very few lived longer than 10 year, suffering from various diseases they had caught in the P.O.W. camps. For those who survived the war, the battle began almost instantly back here in Australia, this time between the soldiers and the Australian Government. The soldiers wanted compensation for every day they spent in P.O.W camps, but as usual the Government refused. To this day the battle goes on with no end in sight.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Non Fiction Joan Beaumont Gull Force. (1988, First edition).

Newspaper The Age (23rd July 1988).

Hamish McColl
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Newtown
Geelong 3220.

*Hamish
McColl*

110

U.S. AIR RAIDS

TO SOFTEN

MASS AIR RAIDS

JAP WARSHIPS AND TRANSPORTS

JAP TROOPS

JAP TROOPS

JAP TROOPS

23 JAP WARSHIPS AND TRANSPORTS

OIL TANKS DEMOLISHED

MACHINE GUN SINKS DESTROYER

LATA AIRSTRIP

AMBON TOWN

MT. KOEDAMAT

AMBON'S ONLY ROAD

SURVIVORS ISOLATED ON PENINSULA

JAPS ATTACK AMBON OVER "IMPOSSIBLE" APPROACHES—SACK TOWN

AMBON INVASION:

A 10-day mass air attack and a heavy bombardment softened up the defenses. Ground forces (black arrows) then attacked the perimeter, closed on town and airport. The harbor was swept of mines to allow the invaders to overwhelm the outnumbered defenders.

SUICIDE ATTACK BY RAAF PILOTS



Private R. J. Lavery, who is a prisoner of war. He is the husband of Mrs. J. Lavery, 103 Garden Street, East Geelong, and youngest son of the late Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Lavery, Geelong. Before enlisting he was employed at the Returned Soldiers' Mill.

Summary of "Gull Force".

2/21st. Battalion & Attached Troops.

Ambon - Laha - Hainan.

Total all ranks = 1094. 48 Officers - 1046 Other Ranks

Disbursement

AMBON PERSONNEL 831.	Laha Personnel 263.	
Killed in action 5.	Taken Prisoner and/or	
Escaped 24.	killed in action	Not known.
Taken Prisoner 802.	Presumed executed	248
Total 831	Escaped	13
	Plus two returned	
	to Ambon.	2
	Total	263.

Tan Toey P.O.W. Camp Ambon.

Total P.O.Ws 795.

Disbursement

Remaining on Ambon for	267 P.O.W. were shipped to Hainan
the duration of the war.	Island for the duration of the war.
528	from Ambon.

Ambon Statistics.

Hainan Island Statistics.

Escapees 7.	Escapees to Chinese 10 (2 Died)
Killed by bomb attack 13.	Killed in Chinese
Executed by Japanese 17	ambush 9
Died as P.O.W. 370	Died as P.O.W. 67
Recovered 121	Returned to Australia 181
Died after recovery 2.	
Returned to Australia 119	
Total Casualties 402	Total Casualties 76
Survivors 120.	Survivors 181.
Total= 528.	Total= 267.

Statistics have proven, and there is certainly no prestige attached to it, that Ambon, with a mortality rate of 87%, was to be known as one of the worst, if not the worst camp in the South Pacific.

GULL FORCE

by Caitlyn Antella

Gull Force (2/21st Battalion) was first formed in Central Victoria in August 1940. The unit was extremely ill-equipped and it was thought that the training was being given for a possible Middle East battle.

Australians were sent to Ambon to assist the Dutch against the Japanese. In February 1941 the Australian and Dutch governments came to an agreement guaranteeing Australian support for the defence of Ambon and west Timor in the event of a Japanese attack on the Netherlands East Indies.

Gull Force moved to Darwin on April 20th 1941 and continued their training for what they thought was their Middle East departure for almost a year.

In discussions with the British, it was revealed how inadequate British air and naval defences in the area were. The Australians, Dutch and British then felt that Japan may wish to expand eastwards, therefore coming into conflict with Britain, the Netherlands and the United States of America. With this the Australian government changed a plan to send Gull Force to the Middle East. Instead they were sent to Ambon to be in reserve for the defence of the Islands to Australia's north.

On December 17th 1941, the 1156 men that comprised Gull Force arrived in Ambon. On the night of January 30th, the Japanese landed on Ambon. The Japanese invasion fleet consisted of 23 warships, 28 transports and 32 000 troops. The Australian, Dutch and Ambonese soldiers held back the advancing Japanese forces for five days but then eventually surrendered when they ran out of ammunition, food and water (they were outnumbered 26 to 1!!).

During the Australians 3 years and 9 months in a P.O.W camp, they suffered many severe beatings and whippings. Escaping became a major part of life for the P.O.W'S. Many were devising ways of escaping which would either lead to freedom or more likely, death. The P.O.W'S that died on Ambon died of either; malnutrition, starvation, disease, malaria, beatings or were beheaded or bayoneted (see attached sheet).

After the war, the Japanese who were mainly to blame for the high number of Australian deaths on both Ambon and Hainan Island were either shot or sentenced to jail from 18 months to 20 years.

The men of the Gull Force Association now return to Ambon every Anzac Day to remember their dead comrades and to remember their time in the P.O.W camp. The Association now sponsors an orphaned girl and gives aid to the hospital to buy various types of new equipment that is needed.

There is also a special memorial in Ambon that commemorates one man's personal battle against the Japanese. It is said that he ambushed three trucks of Japanese soldiers (80) but was later shot while hiding up in a tree by a sniper. This special memorial is called "The Doolan Memorial".

The original Australian Military camp became the P.O.W camp and is now the site of the Australian War Cemetery.

The video "Blood Oath" - starring Bryan Brown and Jason Donovan is about the Ambon War Trials.

GULL FORCE: SURVIVAL AND LEADERSHIP IN CAPTIVITY

PAGE

3. Australian service men captured on the Island of Ambon in Feb. 1942 and held there and on Hainan Island for 3 and a half years
4. Captivity in Ambon for Gull Force was unusually harsh. The death rate was over 77% compared to the death rate on Hainan Island of 31%, (some prisoners were transferred there in October 1942). The 2/21st Battalion which formed the major part of Gull Force claimed to have unusual strengths in regard, as a result of the long months it had spent training in Australia under a popular commander before its dispatch overseas
5. (lower part of page to top of page 6)
9. Australian War Crimes Board of Inquiry tried Japs for Maltreatment. In Ambon it was held in Jan to Feb. 1946 but in Hainan, not until Jan 1948
12. (lower half)
13. (whole)
17. (lower half)
- 18 - 29. Talks about Darwin and training
- 30 - 32. Ambon - Island and history
- 33 - 43. Weapons, no planes or boats, Dutch not trained properly, Aussies think it's paradise on Ambon, Commander Roach wants Gull Force sent home, Roach is replaced
44. Defend Ambon to keep the Dutch as allies
- 45 - 60. Jap air raids, carrying supplies 30 - 31st Jan, Japs invade, fighting on the island, surrendering, Laha executions, bitterness towards the leaders and the Dutch
- 61 - 71. Escape parties from Ambon, (island-hopping)
- 72 - 74. Diary of escapee's escape
74. (lower half) - Jap threats to intending escapees
- 75 - 76. (lower half) - Australian rescue plans
- 79 - 84. Kind Japs to Aussies, lots of food - freedom to collect food, stealing some foodstuffs, vegie gardens

- 84 - 89. Work becomes harder, less concerts, sports, readings etc.. Japs become harsher (more beatings for no reason)
- 90 - 92. Torture, beatings
- 101 - 102. 15th Oct 1942, Ikeuchi announces one third of prisoners will go to another camp, 25th Oct 1942, prisoners and Japs depart for Hainan Island
- 103 - 108. US air raids on Ambon, huge bombings on 15th Feb 1943, many important men died (priest, doctor etc..), talks about Dutch P.O.W's unwilling to help the injured Dutch women and children
109. 300 Aussies died between Aug 44 to Sept 1945
- 109 - 113. (lower half) severe beatings, punishment
- 114 - 115. (top half) kind Japs, given extra food or cigarettes by kind Jap soldiers
- 115 - 117. Less food given to prisoners, less variety, trading for food between prisoners began
- 118 - 124. (top) people stealing other peoples chickens and food because food was very scarce, no more contact allowed with the Ambonese for the Aussies, stealing from the Japs (food and clothes - later traded), many Aussies died trying to steal food from the Japs, some were executed, new shoes had to be made of wood or rubber, men who went barefoot caught infections of the foot
- 125 - 129. Different diseases caught by men (plus the number who died), no medical aid given to the prisoners or doctors by the Japs
- 130 - 133. (top) how news about the war travelled, second major attack on Ambon - 28 Aug 1944 1st attack: 15 Feb 1943; bombed by the US. In Nov 44, Japs made prisoners carry bombs and cement 13 km (40kg cement) (113kg bombs) up and down jungle paths between two villages, this went on for six weeks and was called "the long carry"
- 133 - 138. (top) smaller food rations, horrible food, Jan - 2 deaths, May - 48, June - 72, July 98 (all Aussies through diseases etc..) men suffering from ulcer's had them kicked and some were used as guinea pigs to test vaccines and were given more food but almost all died
- 138 - 139. (top) Japan surrenders but on Ambon, they surrendered on 21st Aug 1945, work parties ceased, more food given (765g rice), meat, fish

and fresh vegies, 10th Sept 1945, four RAN Navy ships came to Ambon - only 123 men greeted the ships

- 147 - 148. Describes "the boob" (cage) used for punishing the Aussies
- 203 - 216. (top) on 13th Aug, two frigates; "Burdekin" and "Bacoo" and four corvettes; "Bundaberg", "Cootamundra", "Latrobe" and "Caverell" sailed from Morotai in an attempt to liberate Gull Force. They failed but succeeded on 10 Sept after radio contact was established with the Advanced Land Headquarters at Morotai on Sept 8th. That evening "Glenelg", "Cootamundra", "Latrobe" and "Junee" set off to rescue Gull Force. Ikeuchi went to Halong to escape but was tricked by the Aussies in being needed as an interpreter so he returned to be interned in a small vegetable locker. Twenty of the fitter surviving P.W.O's sailed on later to Piru Bay, Ceram to rescue a number of Indian Army P.O.W's. When the other ships left Ambon on the same day, the flag was lowered to half mast and the "still" was sounded in memory of all those of Gull Force who died.
216. (lower part) talks about humanity etc..
217. Postscript
219. Gull Force contacts with Ambon

TIMOR 1942

(pages; 20, 35-36, 38,42)

The force allocated to defend Ambon was code named "Gull Force". On December 5 1941, the Netherlands East Indies asked Australia to send aircraft to Timor and Ambon in accordance to the agreement because war with Japan became more likely. On December 7, a flight of Hudson bombers from the No. 2 Squadron flew to Ambon. Also on December 7, Brigadier Lind received orders to detach 2/21st and 2/40th Battalions from his brigade for the movement to Ambon and Timor. Lieutenant-Colonel Roach commanding Gull Force on Ambon had been protesting strongly to Army Headquarters in Melbourne at having been "dumped" without instructions and with inadequate troops and equipment to defend his area of responsibility. As a result of his protests, he was recalled to Australia and replaced as commander of Gull Force by Lieutenant-Colonel W.J.R Scott. On Roach's way back to Darwin on January 17 1942, he found Leggart entirely in agreement that the forces in both Ambon and Timor were inadequate and ill-equipped for their tasks. On January 30 1942, a Japanese force had landed on Ambon. On February 3, Japanese forces were in control of Ambon Island because Australia had given up after hard fighting.

News, Bruce might you may be interested.

AMBON RESEMBLED



Story: Denis Warner

Out of the horrors of war in the Pacific, comes a story of courage, sacrifice and kindness, that transcends race and color and from the forgotten tragedies, a new heart-warming association of peoples is beginning to flourish.

New Year's Day, 1942, and the Japanese armies were rolling south towards Australia with crushing force. On the island of Darwin, 1125 km north A.I.F., with a handful of supporting troops, had been thrown into their path like pebbles in front of a steamroller.

With a heavy heart, Lieutenant Colonel L. N. Roach, the commanding officer, sat down to write a letter to Army Headquarters in Melbourne. "I find it difficult to overcome a feeling of disgust, and more than a little concern," he wrote, "at the way we have seemingly been 'dumped' at this outpost position."

His force had no anti-aircraft guns, and no artillery. It was pitifully supplied with anti-tank

forces is to put up the best defence possible with the resources at your disposal," Major-General Sydney Rowell, Deputy Chief of the Australian General Staff, replied on Boxing Day.

On January 13, Colonel Roach told Army Headquarters in Melbourne that he could not expect to hold out for more than a day and recommended the immediate evacuation of the combined force.

Australian Army Headquarters sought the opinion of General Sir Archibald Wavell in Singapore. He replied that as far as he could judge the position at Ambon was not critical, and, in any case, he was "opposed to handing important objectives to the enemy without making a fight for it."

So Colonel Roach was given a "bowler hat" and into his place as commanding officer of "Gull

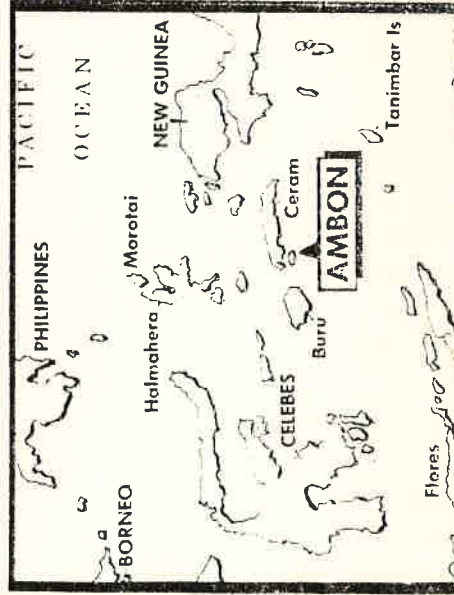
more that it could do at Ambon. "Nothing ever written could convey the gallantry of the pilots and crews of No. 13 Squadron," wrote Major John M. Turner, a "Gull Force" company commander. "Their aircraft ranged far and wide attacking Japanese convoys and positions until one by one they were shot out of the air." But with feelings that may best be imagined the Australian troops watched the last plane go. "One wonders why we weren't called Shags instead of Gulls," says Major Turner. "For that's exactly what we were."

Ambon is shaped like a crocodile's head, with the jaws gaping open toward the west. Laba airfield is on the snout, with the mouth forming the outer bay, which narrows to form the

smaller Binner Bay, where ships of up to 15,000 tonnes can be serviced.

Lacking sufficient strength to guard the entire coastline, the Dutch and Australians had concentrated on strategic points. Whether they were well informed, or merely lucky, the Japanese 38th Division landed on the southern beaches almost unopposed.

The Australians had hoped to integrate the two forces and to face the Japanese invasion with Dutch colonial companies fighting alongside the Biggers. They were over-ruled, and the Dutch forces responsible for defending the neck of land between Binner Bay and the open sea destroyed the guns protecting the western



**CONTINUED
NEXT PAGE**

air support was outmatched before the land battle began. The Navy could provide no support. Never in the history of the Australian Army had so few men been asked to do so much with so little against so many.

Today, more than thirty years later, the story of the 2-21st Battalion, still only partly told in Australia, has gone into legend on Amboin, and from the forgotten tragedy of war a new, heart-warming association of peoples is beginning to flourish.

Time and again, the Amboinese risked their lives to help the 2-21st Battalion. From small beginnings the few survivors have set in motion an aid programme that has become one of the most meaningful human relationships in the links that are beginning to bind Australia more closely to its Asian neighbours.

For a long time during the early days of the war the 2-21st Battalion had regarded itself as the unwanted orphan of the 2nd A.I.F. It was born of the patriotic response to the fall of France in 1940, when Australians in their thousands besieged the recruiting offices.

The men of the 2-21st saw their friends go off to the Middle East and Singapore. After nine months of training, the 2-21st found itself sent, of all places, to Darwin — the Siberia of the South Pacific. There, for another ten months the only fight was against boredom.

On December 5, 1941, three days before the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbour, the Government of the Netherlands East Indies asked Australia to send aircraft to Amboin and Timor in

fulfilment of a long-standing agreement.

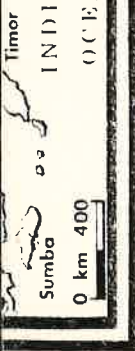
Two days later No. 13 Squadron, RAAF, in Lockheed Hudsons, flew to Amboin. There, on December 17, they were joined by "Gull Force," consisting of the 2-21st Battalion and 213 auxiliary troops.

Amboin is a tiny, rugged island, only 52 km long and 18 km wide, with a rainfall of 335 cm a year. The racquet-tailed kingfisher, the largest and handsomest of the family, and a crimson, bush-tongued parrot are among the rare birds in its dense tropical jungle. Rarer still in a world once hungry for spices are its clove and nutmeg trees.

Centuries

before the birth of Christ, envoys from Java bore cloves from Amboin to the court of Peking, and by the 1st century, A.D., southern Arabian sailors were risking their lives on the long journey across the Indian Ocean to carry its spices back to the Mediterranean. Francis Drake put in there after crossing the Pacific.

Cloves led the Portuguese to Amboin in 1521. The Dutch came in 1559 and six years later threw out the Portuguese. The English wanted a slice of the trade and were summarily dispatched by the Dutch. Twice thereafter, in 1795 and 1810, the English seized the island, but each time the Dutch returned and won it back.



Now, at the end of 1941, when "Gull Force" went ashore, they were still in precarious possession.

Neither cloves nor nutmeg, but Amboin's superb deep water harbour, about 23 km long and up to 6.5 km wide, the best between Sydney and Subic Bay in the Philippines, its airfield at Laha, and its pure water for the south-bound transports made it an immediate target for the Japanese. A full division of troops was assigned the task of seizing the island.

Colonel Roach, who commanded both the 2-21st and "Gull Force," assessed the situation and did not care for what he found. The Netherlands' garrison in the Moluccas consisted of about 2500 men divided into several understrength companies of Indonesian troops, mostly with Dutch officers. The bulk of this force was on Amboin. The Dutch had some coastal guns, but there was no field artillery to support the combined force.

Six days after "Gull Force" landed, Colonel Roach sent an urgent message to Melbourne asking for two additional infantry companies and more automatic weapons, "if you can spare them," to supplement an earlier request for a troop of 25-pounders, six mortars and more anti-tank guns.

His message elicited a rebuke — but no guns. "Your task in co-operation with local Dutch

W. J. R. Scott, whose last operational experience had been at Gallipoli.

As staff officer at Headquarters for "Gull Force," Major Scott had been at the receiving end of Colonel Roach's messages and therefore had no illusions about the task that lay ahead of him.

He arrived at Amboin on January 16, together with the Japanese Air Force. Thirty six Japanese planes made a daylight raid, destroying some of the Hudsons on the ground. Colonel Roach flew out on January 17, leaving behind a force outraged by his dismissal. But there was not much time left for recriminations. Five days later two Japanese aircraft carriers, Soryu and Hiryu, making their first appearance since the attack on Pearl Harbour, blasted the island. The Hiryu, which subsequently sank the U.S. aircraft carrier, Yorktown, carried seventy-three aircraft, and the Soryu, which was sunk by the Yorktown, seventy-one. Against this massive air strength the RAAF could do nothing, and most of the remaining Hudsons were instructed to return to Australia.

On January 29, the one surviving Hudson at Amboin took off on reconnaissance and spotted a Japanese convoy of five warships and 17 transports, with some five other unidentified vessels about six hours behind the main formation, approaching the island.

That night the Hudson, stacked with pilots and air and ground crews, staggered into the air and headed south for Australia. There was nothing

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AMBON REMEMBERED

CONTINUED
FROM PAGE 3

approaches and surrendered on February 1, leaving the Australian rear uncovered on the northern jaw of the "crocodile."

Here, C Company of the 2-21st, two platoons of B Company, two carrier sections and two mortar sections had the task of defending Laha airfield, 13 km across the bay from Ambon town.

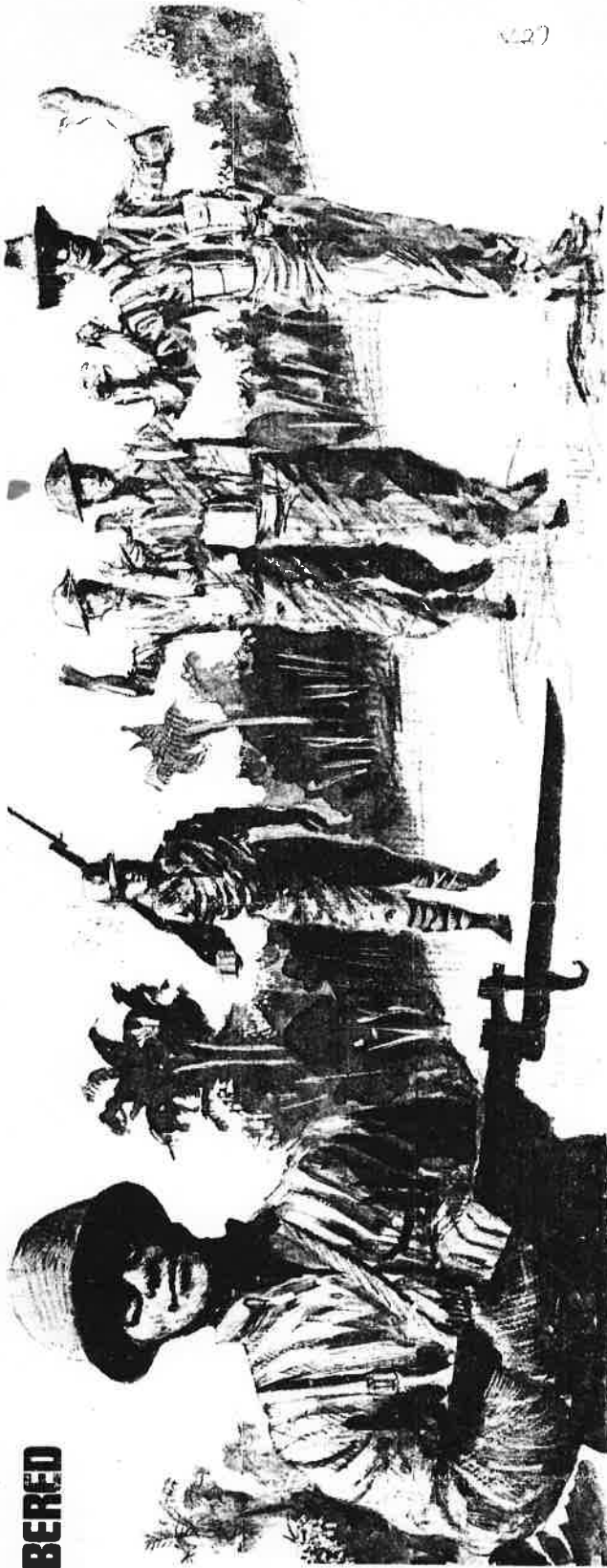
The rest of "Gull Force," outnumbered by something like ten to one, was also in serious trouble.

There was plenty of will to fight but precious little means. With typical Digger humour, Driver W. T. Doolan of Melbourne made a joke of it. "Give me a yard of bike chain and I'll do 'em over," he told his mates. "Just give me a yard of bike chain."

With no trucks to drive, or anywhere to drive them, Doolan was posted to the village of Koedamardie on the main Australian defences. Here, high in the branches of a gandra tree, he built a machine gun nest that commanded a motorable track along which it was expected the Japanese might advance.

Three Japanese trucks, loaded with troops, approached. Doolan held his fire and waited. When the trucks were almost to the tree, he opened fire. According to the Ambonese, the Japanese dead lay in circles around the tree. Doolan, they say, killed at least 80 Japanese before a sniper shot him dead.

The Japanese advance moved on and Doolan lay where he had fallen until the Ambonese buried his body at the base of the tree. Until the end of the war the grave was never without flowers.



but eventually, on February 5, with its ammunition expended, it also laid down its arms. On February 6 and again on February 15 and February 20, the Japanese executed the survivors of a force of 309 men, and buried them in two mass graves.

Various reasons are given for these massacres. One is that the Japanese were determined to exact revenge for their losses in the land fighting, another that it was a reprisal for the loss of Japanese lives when two Japanese destroyers struck mines in Ambon Bay on February 1.

After this, escape was upmost in the minds of the surviving Australians. Lieutenant I. H. McBride, who had been in hospital, and eight others, got to the nearby, and much larger, island of Ceram in a prahu and there with Dutch assistance set sail for the Aru islands. Here, they joined up with a large party of Dutch marines and in two motor boats headed for Dutch New Guinea, picking up another

Doolan, killed many men of Japan.

He did not run away or move back until at last he was killed by the men of Japan."

The song had several verses. The last ran:

"The tale is told everywhere.
The Australian soldier, Doolan, killed many Japanese
Then died by the bullets of the men of Japan,
Calling his mother, father, wife and children,
But they did not hear him."

One of the luckiest men was Laurie Benvie, who was wounded in the fighting at Laha. After the Australians surrendered, he escaped from the Regimental Aid Post and was hidden by an Ambonese named Kerimas Rismasu for five months in Hatu village. There he learned that the surviving members of this part of the force had been executed.

Rather than continue to risk the lives of his friends, all of whom had been threatened with death if they were found to be sheltering Dutch or Australian

how to sail a boat that size and we would have been a sitting duck for the Japanese."

Bill Gaspersz made all the final arrangements. He provided Jinkins with one of the family st. if to run messages from the camp, and to accompany him on the first part of the escape, and also a canoe and eight paddlers. Six weeks after the Australians surrendered Jinkins and six others followed Lieutenant McBride's party to Ceram.

Back on Ambon the Australians did their best to cover the disappearance of Jinkins and the others. Since many were now suffering from dysentery, the troops used to fall out of line during roll calls and re-enter the lines at another point so that the Japanese counted them not once but twice.

Still, they could not in- definitely conceal the absence of the missing men, and thereafter Japanese precautions doubled. Gaspersz's man returned from Ceram after seeing Jinkins off on his perilous way back to Australia was arrested and then executed.

dent, many Ambonese chose Dutch citizenship and left Indonesia to live in Holland. Others were active in the break-away movement, the Republic of the South Moluccas, and visited by Australians were discouraged by Jakarta.

Time did not erase the memories of the bitter years of imprisonment among the "Gull Force" survivors — or the warmth of their feeling for the Ambonese who had risked so much to help them. While Sukarno remained in power in Indonesia they knew that their long-cherished dream of sending a pilgrimage to the island was unlikely to be realised. The Russians, with Sukarno's encouragement, were extremely interested in the island and as part of their aid programme were busy establishing an institute of oceanography there. According to rumour, they were even building a submarine base at Binner Bay.

The collapse of the Sukarno regime revived the idea of making the pilgrimage, and Bill Jinkins, who had become a major

cern about the loyalty of the South Moluccas had not been entirely eliminated by the fall of Sukarno, and in 1968, when a large party from "Gull Force" planned to go to Ambon for the dedication of the war cemetery, the Indonesians at the last moment cancelled arrangements for a charter flight. Instead, only eight members of "Gull Force" Association, led by Lieut-Colonel Roach, went with the official party. But in Ambon the day was declared a public holiday. In tens of thousands the Ambonese turned out to honour the Australian dead.

The memorial on the site of Doolan's last stand was unveiled in heavy rain on the same day by the Indonesians. Some of the 675 kg of medical supplies and food which had been assembled for the charter flight were subsequently taken to Ambon by Cessna, which picked up Bill Gaspersz, now senior administrator of the Moluccas, and his wife, and took them to Australia on a goodwill visit sponsored by the Department of External Affairs.

and ammunition exhausted, the main Australian force had no option but to surrender. To a young Victorian, Lieutenant W. T. Jinkins, fell the unhappy task of contacting the Japanese, and he approached a Japanese road block with the request to be taken to someone in authority.

An English-speaking Japanese attempted to interrogate him. Jinkins counted up to ten each time before answering the questions and then gave non-committal replies.

"Why do you answer so slowly?" asked the exasperated Japanese.

"Because you don't speak good English," Jinkins replied.

A month or two later a remark like that would have been the end of Jinkins, but the Japanese officer merely resheathed his sword and walked away.

And so the surrender was negotiated.

The force at Laha continued to hold out for another ten days

soldiers, a Dutchman and his wife and child on the way.

In the urgency of their preparations to meet the Japanese invasion, the Australians had little time to make friends with the local population. They had noticed the numerous Christian churches and were aware that the islanders were of Melanesian origin.

Now they learned that there were to be few collaborators among the Christian Ambonese, who shared the Australian feelings for the Japanese and were prepared at great risk to help.

Doolan was the hero of the island. His grave became a shrine for the Ambonese. Australian work parties used to sing a popular musical hall song, "The Rose in Her Hair." The Ambonese picked up the tune and added their own words:

"Caught by the great guns, Thousands of Japanese lay dead and wounded.

From his tree, the Australian

troops, he gave himself up and survived to tell the tale.

With no ready-made prison, the Japanese allowed the Australians to use their original camp at Tan Tuoy and to go out on food foraging expeditions.

Lieutenant Jinkins managed to attach himself to every party and used the food foraging as a cover for his contact with the Ambonese. He soon found willing helpers among the English-speaking Gaspersz family. The father, who was chief of police, closed a blind eye when his son agreed to help Jinkins escape.

After his first contact with Bill Gaspersz, who was then about 18 to 20 years of age, Jinkins crawled under the wire of the prison camp at night to work on his escape plans. The first idea was to steal a boat, but about a fortnight before Jinkins and his men were ready to go, the owner removed the rudder.

"Just as well for us, too," says Jinkins. "We didn't know

Australians that if any escapees were not recovered an equal number of prisoners of equivalent rank would be executed.

To show that they meant business, they brought a group of 34 Dutch officers and men, including a padre, to a hill within full view of the Australian camp. Here they tied the men's hands and then beat them unconscious with pickhandles. "They fell upon the Dutch like wild beasts," said Major Scott.

The Australians were not treated much better. On a starvation diet, without proper medical care, they were forced to work literally as slaves. The Gaspersz family constantly risked their lives to smuggle food and news to the prisoners. One of Bill Gaspersz's two brothers was caught in the act by the Japanese and executed. Bill and his father was imprisoned.

In September, 1942, about half of the Australian survivors were shipped to Hainan island, off the coast of China. Here, malaria, beriberi, dysentery and starvation took a heavy toll.

Altogether 405 of the 528 Australians who remained on Ambon died in captivity. And of the 1300 men who carried their kits bags ashore just before Christmas, 1941, only 363 came home. When they got back, emaciated and ill from years in prison camp, few other Australians knew where Ambon was, or ever that our troops had fought there.

The "Gull Force" Association did not forget.

For a long time, however, Ambon was not easily accessible. After the Netherlands East Indies became independent,

in the commandos after his escape from Ambon in 1942, was appointed organiser.

Others who went along included Ian McCrae, second in command of "Gull Force," and president of the "Gull Force" Association, Laurie Benvie.

Even the kindnesses of the Ambonese during the war years had not prepared the Australians for the welcome they received. The war, they thought, would seem a remote event to the Ambonese. But no son returning to his family after years away could have been received with more tears and smiles than Laurie Benvie when he went back to the village of Hatu to meet Jerimas Risamasu. More than 600 villagers turned out

The party got the freedom of the island from Colonel Latumahina, the acting governor, and were feted by the Indonesian Veterans' Association. In return, they gave some drugs they had brought with them to the Ambon Hospital and food packages to families who had helped them during the war.

To Colonel Latumahina they presented a bronze plaque to commemorate the pilgrimage and also a bronze replica of the RSL badge. After the pilgrims had left, the Gaspersz family presented land at the village of Koedarmardie for an Australian memorial.

Here, at the site of Doolan's last stand, surrounded by a wrought iron fence built at the instruction of Colonel Latumahina, the plaque and the badge have been enshrined.

All was still not quite plain sailing, however. Jakarta's con-

Things have snowballed since.

The next step involved the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital in Melbourne. Dr. John Forbes, the medical superintendent, was finishing a tour in Vietnam when, as he put it, "A bloke I knew who was associated with Gull Force wrote to me and asked if I would mind dropping in on Ambon on my way home to see how two or three thousand dollars could best be spent."

With difficulty and delay he finally got to Ambon and he concluded that the medical problem was quite beyond the unaided efforts of the "Gull Force" Association.

The Indonesian Government earmarked \$10,000 of Australian aid specifically for Ambon.

Fairfield Hospital became directly involved and agreed to accept technical responsibility for the programme. Meanwhile, "Gull Force" Association continued with its fund-raising, and four consignments of drugs and medical equipment valued at about \$26,000 were shipped to Ambon between 1970 and the beginning of 1973.

The next step was the visit of an Australian medical team led by Dr. Forbes.

It took place in March last year.

In both Ambon and Jakarta the Indonesian authorities have asked that the scheme should continue.

Dr. Forbes calls the Ambon project basically a human story. And that precisely is what it is, a tale that has its origins in man's inhumanity to man, and a tale, also, of courage, of sacrifice, and kindness that transcends race and color.



4 The Sunday Mail Color Magazine, November 17, 1974

ITAL TRAIN BRINGS SICK P.O.W.'S

SHEVIVARD'S / 178th Victoria

A HOSPITAL train carrying 178 Victorian former prisoners of war, all hospital cases, arrived in Melbourne from Sydney yesterday.

They were brought to Sydney in the hospital ship Wanganella. There were 155 walking cases and 23 stretcher cases, including some of the remnants of the 2/21st Battalion, captured on Ambon.

The British aircraft carrier, H.M.S. Formidable, also arrived in Sydney on Saturday with men from Manila.

In spite of warnings to the public against crowding the cars which carried the men to Heidelberg Hospital yesterday, thousands of people surged forward to shake them by the hand as they drove out of the station.

A Melbourne journalist, Lt./Cpl. L. ("Barney") Porter, who was among the repatriated men, said they had received wonderful treatment from the medical staffs and the Red Cross on up to two homes. The men had put on up to 20 stone in weight since their release.

The men felt the cold very much after spending so long in the tropics, and blankets were in high demand on the train journey from Sydney to Melbourne, he said.

Only 305 Of Battalion

Crimes Commission, Judge Kirby, a number of the commission, was at Morotai at the same time as the 2/21st men.

Some of the latter actually brought their No. 1 War Criminal, the Ouchi, out with them and saw him safely in Allied hands later.

Two men of the 2/21st said that Ouchi, a Jap. civilian interpreter, who was given officers ranking, was as bad as any Jap war criminal they knew. He was directly responsible for the deaths of more than 400 men at the camp.

The camp executed 16 Australians on Amboina — 11 in November, 1942, and five in April this year, according to Sgt. Percy Elsum, of Brighton, who was one of only two survivors of 13 A.I.F. men accused of escaping. The men were all beheaded, four had been accused of stealing food and the other five of escaping.

Elsum said the men beheaded after the 1942 escape attempt had first been bashed by the Japs for more than five days.



CONFETTI STILL CLUNG TO HIS HAIR as Mrs. Bertram Davis entered the car after her marriage to Lt.-Col. Bertram Davis, R.A.A.F., at the Thornbury Presbyterian Church on Saturday. The bride was Miss Catherine Williams.

BRIG. H. H. HAMMER TO DIRECT STATE DISCHARGES

BRIGADIER H. H. HAMMER has been appointed State Controller of Demobilisation for Victoria.

The appointment was announced last night by the Co-ordinator of Demobilisation and Disposal (Lt.-Gen. S. G. Savage).

The State controllers of demobilisation for N.S.W., Queensland and Tasmania, respectively, are:—Wing-Commander S. P. Higgin, Col. F. W. Maclean, and Lt.-Col. S. T. Hodgson.

The controllers for South Australia and West Australia will be appointed to-day.

Brig. Hammer will immediately take charge of the demobilisation disposal centre at Royal Park, where his office will be 800 discharges a day. About 350,000 Victorians are to be demobilised next, it is expected, within the next 15 months.



MOTHER OF FIVE SONS in the A.I.F., Mrs. Stephens welcomes home one of her boys, Private L. C. Stephens, who was a prisoner of war in Singapore. Pte. Stephens arrived home on Saturday, his 35th birthday.

BIG BOMBER AIDS WAR LOAN 100,000 SEE SUPER-FORT AND ANTI-CORRUPT APPEALS

MORE than 100,000 people at the week-end saw the American Super-Fortress and types of Australian-built aircraft displayed at Fishermen's Bend to assist the Fourth Victory Loan.

At the opening of the spring racing carnival at Caulfield on Saturday, 107 racers subscribed £2510. The money will be credited to the Sportsmen's success.

To equal the grand total of 421,000 subscribers to the Third Victory Loan, applications will have to come before on each of the remaining 15 days at the rate of 28,000 a day, or more than four times the best daily average of 7,000.

At the opening of the spring racing carnival at Caulfield on Saturday, 107 racers subscribed £2510. The money will be credited to the Sportsmen's success.

Mr. Norman Sparr, owner of the Guinness, has again placed her winning stakes in the bank.

The chairman of the Association of Victors (A.V.), Mr. G. J. ... national brooder ... night, said that ... involving heavy ... financial obligations ... Victory Loan would not ... destruction and death ... applied to construction ... No financial ... controls, no ... policy can ... partly changeover ... beacetime economy ...

...in on board an Australian vessel after their arrested and eventually had him released.

TWO PRIORS LIBERATED

These opportunities came his way when he became ill with malaria and was sent to work at Jap H.Q. "I had some fun talking to the Japs in their own tongue after the capitulation," he said. "They were amazed and thought I must have been some sort of a secret service lieutenant or a spy."

Christmas Day, 1942, was to have been a great day for the Australians at Ambonia. A big supply of mail arrived that day—but the first of it was not delivered until 16 months later. Some was even withheld until the men were freed in September. Sgt. E. M. Kelly, of Prahran, tells of this instance of the Jap commanding officer's pettiness, said when the mail arrived the Australians had to sort it and the C.O. of the camp then said he had to censor all of it, although it already bore the marks of three censors.

There was only the one delivery of mail during the three and a half years the men were held at Ambonia, and they were not allowed to write even one letter from there, Kelly said.

INTRUDER SHOT

BY WIDOW

SWIDNEY, Sunday.—One of two men who were disturbed early today while trying to break into a basement flat in Macleay-st., Potts Point, was shot in the arm by the occupant, Mrs. Greta Dease.

Mrs. Dease, who lives alone, kept a revolver for protection. At the time, detectives were in an upstairs flat investigating a robbery believed to have been committed by the same men.

A man whose arm had been shattered by a bullet was admitted to Mater Misericordiae Hospital, North Sydney, this morning. Later a police guard was placed in the ward.

£34,000 Sandringham School
A tender for the new £34,000 technical school at Sandringham has been let, and the Education Department expects the school to be finished by the end of next year. It will relieve pressure on the Hampton High School and the Brighton Technical School.

...training and not being else. Many of the men have already been interviewed by officials of the War

TWO PRIORS LIBERATED

Two Melbourne Catholic priests of the Franciscan Order were among the returning men on the Wanganella. They were Fathers Aloysius O'Donovan, formerly of Toorak, and Brendan Rogers, formerly of Camberwell. They were taken prisoner at Singapore, transferred to Sandakan until October, 1943, and then sent to the divided Kuching camp.

Mr. R. H. Wilson, of Frankston, who was the only Red Cross Commissioner at Kuching and Sandakan, was also on the Wanganella. Pte. Russ Lavery, of Geelong, was one of a handful of men whom members of the 2-21 declare to be the champion food scavengers of the A.I.F. Sgt. Tom Jenkins, Gosgrove (Vic.), and Pte. H. Braetner, Manly (N.S.W.), were two of the others.

Learning that the Japanese were prisoner by the aid of dictionaries and grammars, Pte. Wal Hicks, of Ormond, learnt much of the good news of the Philippines campaign—from the Allied point of view—from broadcasts over Japanese radio stations.



THE SUN SHONE for Mr. Robert E. Luckman, ex-A.I.F., and his bride, who was Miss Lily Horbury, for their marriage on Saturday at St. Paul's Church, Caulfield. Here they are seen leaving the church after the ceremony.

...He is a resident of Bendigo and is well known in Melbourne business circles.

Action Against Strikes: Pica

By Mr. Menzies

There was no excuse for the Federal Government's feeble attitude on the wave of grave industrial disputes in Australia, the leader of the Federal Opposition (Mr. Menzies) said at the weekend.

The Government seemed terrified to use the power it possessed to order back to work men acting in concert, but had not hesitated to mobilise its agencies against individual employers and employees. An order made some time ago in the Barrowong dispute had never been enforced.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) was presiding too far on the public's generosity if he thought a policy of important inaction on industrial backlogs would be regarded as power by the people.

How, then, the Government propose to fulfil its guarantee of full employment when scores of thousands of men absented themselves from work or the flimsiest pretexts? Mr. Menzies asked.

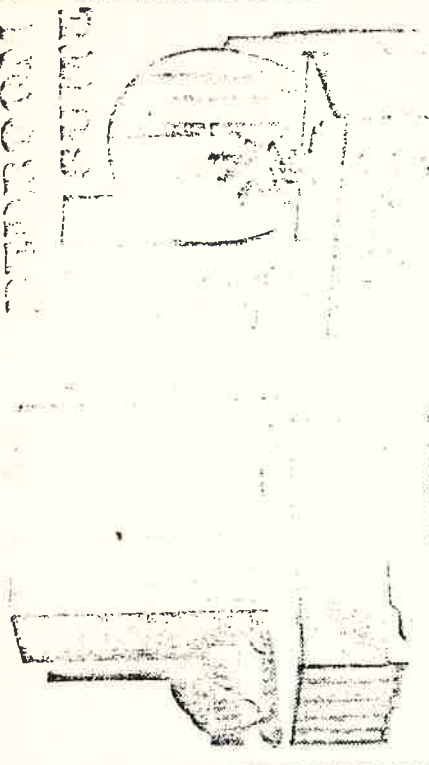
There could be no continuous employment without reasonable and sensible discipline in industry and proper backing up of the authority of industrial tribunals, he added.

400 COUPONS A DAY FOR FOOD APPEAL

ABOUT 400 coupons a day were being given to the Food for Britain Appeal, the Lord Mayor (Mr. Campbell) said at the weekend.

Lord Mayor Campbell, the major honoree, which arrived in Melbourne a few days ago, presented Mr. Campbell with £59 from himself and G. J. Coles and Co. Ltd. had established depots in their stores for the collection of coupons and he helped many other city firms would do the same.

CAUTION! AT THE PATENT



This lovely dining table is finished in Walnut or Oak and is constructed of the finest quality materials. The table is double-ended, and is fitted with a full size bed ends are figured to match, and the handles are beautifully polished. The table is available in 4 ft. 6 in. or 6 ft. 6 in. sizes. The price is £11.15.0 or £13.15.0. The table is available in 4 ft. 6 in. or 6 ft. 6 in. sizes. The price is £11.15.0 or £13.15.0.

INNER SPRING

Inner Spring Mattresses are the most modern bedstead and are unsurpassed for comfort and sleep. They are made of the finest quality materials, and are available in 4 ft. 6 in. or 6 ft. 6 in. sizes. The price is £11.15.0 or £13.15.0.

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THE AMBON BATTLE

HERE is in Australia a small band of unsung war heroes. They went through torments for their country and most still bear, on their bodies and in their minds, the scars of the sufferings they endured. Theirs was one of the most gallant and tragic actions in the annals of Australian arms. These forgotten men are the survivors of the Australian garrison which defended Ambon Island in the South Moluccas against overwhelmingly superior enemy forces in the opening phase of the war against Japan. More than 13 years have passed but their story has never been fully told.

The story is a glorious one, worthy to rank beside that of Gallipoli and Tobruk. But it is also, the forgotten men say, one of political ineptitude and fuzzy strategical planning. The force sent to defend Ambon was hopelessly inadequate. No provision was made to reinforce or evacuate it, and, when the fighting started, it was left to its fate. The Ambon garrison consisted of a single battalion, plus ancillary troops, a total of

1396 men. It was attacked by a Japanese division numbering some 27,000 men. Taking into account the soldiers held in reserve aboard the Jap transports and the sailors and seamen who manned the invasion fleet, the odds against the Australians were about 80 to 1. Yet the Australians, armed with World War I weapons, managed to hold out for five days before being borne down by weight of numbers.

Of the 1396 men who fought on Ambon only 305 lived to return to Australia. That is one of the highest casualty rates in military history, 20 per cent higher than that suffered by the Light Brigade in its famous charge. Although there is no definite record of the Ambon casualties, about 600 men are believed to have been killed in the fighting. Nearly 500 more died in hell-hole prison camps on Ambon and Hainan Island, off the south coast of China. After the war evidence was given that 68 Australians, captured during the fighting, had been butchered on the spot by the Japanese.

Although the Ambon defenders have never received from their country proper acknowledgment of their heroism on Ambon they are not forgotten. The Ambonese, good fighters themselves, still honor their valiant stand.

The story of the men of Ambon begins in December, 1941. In that month the American-British-Dutch-Australian unified command, set up after the outbreak of war with Japan, decided to send small Australian forces to defend Ambon, Timor and Rabaul. The task of defending Ambon fell to the 2/21st Battalion. The battalion and its ancillary forces were

Gull Force left Darwin for Ambon a week after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 8. The 21st, a Victorian battalion, was commanded by Lieut-Colonel L. M. Roach MC. Soon after its arrival at Ambon on December 17 Colonel Roach was replaced by Lieut-Colonel W. R. J. Scott, DSO, a World War I veteran flew into Ambon.

Best fighters in islands

Ambon, then part of the Netherlands East Indies and a Dutch naval base, is in the Ceram Sea off the western tip of Dutch New Guinea, about 580 miles north of Darwin. It is about 266 square miles in area and has a fine harbor, 14 miles long and three to six miles wide, which almost cuts the island in two. Its native inhabitants are renowned as the best fighters in the Indonesian archipelago. For the past four years they have been the spearhead of the South Moluccan revolt against the Indonesian Republic.

Among the men who took part in the defence of Ambon was Sydney caterer Philip Miskin, a 43-year-old Welshman who migrated to Australia in 1936 and enlisted in the AIF at the outbreak of World War II. Miskin, a former secretary and vice-president of the 8th Division Association Council, gathered much of the Ambon story at first hand and filled in other details after the war. He does not seek personal publicity but gives his account in the hope that it will bring to the public attention the service rendered to Australia by his comrades living and dead.

Force was poorly armed

He says that Gull Force was excellently trained but poorly armed. It had no artillery support and there were only about 20 automatic weapons for the 1396 men. The weapons, with the exception of between 200 and 300 rifles and a few Vickers machine-guns, were of World War I vintage.

The battalion got a slight, but welcome addition to its armament from an unexpected source.

American airmen fleeing from the Philippines stripped the air-cooled Browning machine-guns from their planes before leaving Ambon for Australia and the Australians eagerly seized the discarded weapons.

Requests for reinforcements drew little response from a Higher Command, troubled by its commitments in other areas. A few days before the Jap invasion the transport *Kanimbla* berthed at Ambon with a draft of 30 raw recruits. Some of them didn't even know how to load a rifle. A Jap air raid started as they were about to disembark.

The Japs began to raid Ambon early in January, 1940. The invasion was heralded by 10 days of intensive bombing. Each day the Japs launched 70-plane raids in an attempt to "soften up" the island's defences. The Australians, however, were well dug in and suffering surprisingly few casualties.

First news of the approach of the Jap armada was received on January 28, two days before the actual invasion. RAAF reconnais-

The first kamikaze

But one pilot refused to desert his army coppers. He lingered behind on Ambon and, when the Jap task force appeared, made a lone attack. Miskin saw him plunge into the middle of the Jap fleet. According to one report the plane crashed on to a Jap transport and sank it. "That," says Miskin, "seems to have been the first kamikaze action of the Pacific War."

The Jap invasion fleet consisted of 23 warships including three cruisers and five destroyers, and 28 transports. It carried 32,000 troops, 27,000 of whom were used in the Ambon fighting. The assault on Ambon began on the night of January 30. Had the Australians been able to keep to their original plan of defence, the Japs might have been held off much longer.

The key to the defence of Ambon was the harbor, which thrusts like a knife into the heart of the island. It was obvious that an enemy in control of this water could deal the defenders a death blow. So the harbor was mined and a Dutch battery posted on the shore to prevent the entry of Jap mine sweepers.

These measures could have made the harbor impregnable. The Australians assumed that they had, and concentrated on the defence of the aerodrome at Laha, on the northern side of the harbor, and the most likely lines of attack around the island perimeter. B and C companies and a detachment of HQ company were set to guard the aerodrome. The rest of the battalion was scattered on the southern side of the harbor. A company was stationed at Latahalot near the mouth of the harbor. A detachment of pioneers was posted on Mount Nona, highest point on the island. Don company, Battalion HQ and B Echelon were strung out below Mount Nona on the harbor side. B Echelon entrenched itself in a coconut grove on top of Koedamati Hill, which overlooks the harbor and the town of Ambon.

Tombstone camouflage

On the hillside immediately below B Echelon was a Christian, Moslem and Chinese cemetery. The dead were to help the living in the battle for Ambon. Miskin safeguarded his ammunition from air attack by white-washing the ammunition cases and laying them along the graves in the cemetery. From the air they looked like tombstones and the Jap pilots passed over without giving them a second glance.

No such success attended the general strategy of the Australians. Within two days the Japs had thrown the whole defence system out of gear. They attacked along supposedly

That afternoon the Jap warships, followed by the transports, swept into the harbor and began to bombard the Australian defences at pointblank range. B Echelon, normally in the rear of the battalion, found itself in front as a result of this unexpected attack. Miskin's position was only 500yds from the belching muzzles of the Jap naval guns. Miskin says the first Japanese writing he ever saw was inscriptions on the guns which shelled him.

Odds were too heavy

The odds and ends of B Echelon fought back magnificently under the terrible pounding of the naval barrage. They swept the decks of the warships with rifle, machine-gun and mortar fire. But the exchange was unequal. In return for .303 and .5 inch bullets and 3-inch mortar bombs they got 4 and 6in shells.

Nevertheless fire from a Browning, manned by a Corporal

Hawkins, made things so hot for one Japanese destroyer that it retreated crab-wise into the stream. It was the first sizeable warship to fall victim to a medium machine-gun. As it squirmed out it ran into the only mine overlooked by the minesweepers and blew up. A column of smoke, flame and debris shot 1200 feet into the air. Hawkins claimed the destroyer as a "kill." Miskin told him to chalk it up and promised that after the war he'd give him the Browning as a prize. But Hawkins did not live to collect his trophy. He died in a prison camp.

The destroyer was sunk on the third day of the invasion. On the first day the Japs had infiltrated between the Australian positions, isolating the different units. By the end of the day most of the 100 men in B Echelon had either been wounded, battered by shell blast or grazed by shrapnel and spattering coral. The sky was red with the glow from oil storage tanks near the town, exploded by Dutch and Australian engineers. The town itself had been set afire by a Jap column which had penetrated from the coast. B Echelon, looking down on the smoke and flames, heard the screams of the inhabitants as the Japs marched through the streets, killing, raping and pillaging.

The Japs, convinced that their shelling from the harbor had wiped out all opposition, began to land in strength on the second day. A whole battalion swarmed ashore on the harbor edge below B Echelon. Miskin ordered his men to hold their fire. The Japs loosed a few rounds in the direction of the Australian positions and, drawing no reply, slung their

arms and began to march up the hill in column of route.

Miskin let them get within pointblank range then gave the order to fire. The sudden hail of

That same day B Echelon repelled another attack from the east. A Jap contingent, which landed in the perimeter of the island, occupied the Dutch sanatorium, which stands on a hill dominating Koedamati. From here they were able to fire down into the Australian slit trenches. At the height of the duel between the two groups an ambulance with a large red cross on its side drove up from the town of Ambon towards the Japanese position.

Ceasefire for ambulance

Miskin, obeying the articles of war, ordered a ceasefire while the ambulance climbed to the enemy strongpoint. A moment later a rain of mortar bombs from behind the ambulance made him regret his scrupulous observance of the rules. The Japs had brought up the mortar under cover of the Red Cross.

But the Australians had their revenge. A fighting patrol, led by an engineer lieutenant named Campbell, set out to "get" the mortar, which was seriously menacing the Australian defences. It lay for a whole day within attacking range of the enemy position. After nightfall the Australians pounced on the unwary Japs, killing the mortar crew and destroying the mortar.

On the second day of fighting a Japanese party, which had advanced along a supposedly impossible route over spiny coral on the south side of the island, engaged the pioneer detachment on Mount Mona. The 18 pioneers, under Lieutenant Bill Jenkins, fought back with the ferocity of mountain lions. Miskin, busy on his own front, listened tensely to a grenade by grenade description of the clash, given over the unit wireless by a pioneer signaller. "It was the most dramatic running commentary I've ever heard," he says. The 18 pioneers held the Japs for four hours. Then their ammunition ran out and they fell back on Don Company.

Fierce fight for airfield

Meanwhile a fierce battle was raging for Laha aerodrome. From his position on Koedamati Hill Miskin could see the drome across the harbor. His brother was the lieutenant in command of 13 Platoon, C Company, one of the two companies defending the aerodrome.

The Japs had sent a whole brigade to take the aerodrome from the two Australian companies. They treated the attack as a brigade exercise. Miskin, racked by anxiety for his brother's safety, saw them throw one battalion into action, then withdraw it and send in a second fresh battalion, which in turn was rested and replaced by a third. The Australians

For three days the two companies defied every attempt of the Japanese to drive them from their positions. Then suddenly silence fell on the arena and Miskin knew the battle was over. He never saw his brother again. Not one of the Australians on the drome lived to tell of their brave resistance. Years later, at the end of the war, grim evidence of the brutality of the Jap conquerors was unearthed. The skulls of 68 skeletons dug up near the battlefield were found to be severed from the spines. Around the wrists of each skeleton was a loop of wire. It was evident from these signs that 68 Australians had survived the battle but had been beheaded by their captors.

The first few days of the Ambon saga were packed with acts of individual heroism. But none equalled that of the transport driver Doolan, whose name is now legend on Ambon. Doolan, who belonged to B Echelon, was typical of the tough, resourceful breed of Australian. During the Ambon fighting he was often heard to exclaim, "Give me a yard of bike chain and I'll do the —'s over." There is no exact account of his activities, however, because the details were lost in the heat of battle. Some say he killed and wounded 80 Japanese with a machine-gun, while perched in a tree.

But his Ambonese wash-boy told Miskin a different story. He said Doolan was a member of a Headquarters fighting patrol which attacked Japanese headquarters in Ambon town on the third day of the invasion. The attack was daring in concept and execution.

The Australians drove into the town in a truck, waving gaily to the inhabitants and the Japanese invaders. The effrontery of their tactics got them through. The Japanese assumed the truck was one of their own and let it pass. After grenading the enemy headquarters, the Australians abandoned the vehicle and fought their way out of the town, on foot.

Doolan, according to his wash-boy, made his last, magnificent stand in a clump of jungle half way between the town and the B Echelon position. He turned on his pursuers and with rifle, bayonet and grenade strewed the earth around him with two rings of Japanese dead, before falling dead himself.

As the fighting for the island progressed the plight of the Australians became more and more extreme. Their only food was bully beef and, by the fourth day, they had no water to wash it down.

The inevitable surrender

And, by this time, the Australians on the southern half of the island, with the exception of B Echelon, had been driven

which it destroyed its arms and ammunition. The men were prepared to fight on, even though their strength was nearly exhausted after five sleepless nights and tongues were black and swollen from lack of water. The coconut grove in which they had dug their trenches was a bristle of tree stumps when the fighting ended.

The lowest estimate of Japanese killed on Ambon exceeds 2000—nearly two Japanese dead for every Australian in action. Although the Australian stand lasted only five days it may have been vital to the defence of Australia. Miskin says the Japs had intended to take Ambon in 24 hours then press on to Australia. Because of the stand on Ambon it was 14 days before the Japanese were able to refuel their ships. By that time there had been a change in the strategy of the Japanese high command.

The sufferings of the Australians increased with the surrender. The Ambon prisoners were treated as brutally by the Japanese as their 8th Division comrades, captured in Malaya. They were fed on putrid scraps and beaten constantly with rifle butts, iron bars and even baseball bats. Their MO, Dr. Bill Aitken was beaten for refusing to certify as suicides men who were actually bashed to death.

But no amount of persecution could crack the Australians' morale. Within a few weeks of the surrender a daring escape plan was hatched. First several prisoners were chosen for a pre-escape party. While their mates covered up for them in camp these men sneaked out and laid food dumps along an escape route across the island. They even crossed to the neighboring island of Ceram and placed one there. Then they rejoined their comrades in prison camp.

The escape party consisted of three officers and eight other ranks. To conceal the disappearance of the three officers, three Australian privates were "commissioned" to take their places. The officers handed them their badges of rank as they were leaving.

Jap had a "sticky" end

Using native boats they crossed to Serang, then to New Guinea and Thursday Island. Six weeks after the break-out they were back in Australia. The three bogus officers left behind on Ambon were never unmasked. One died, but the other two hoaxed the Japanese throughout their years of imprisonment.

A few months after the escape about 350 Australian prisoners were sent to Hainan. As they em-

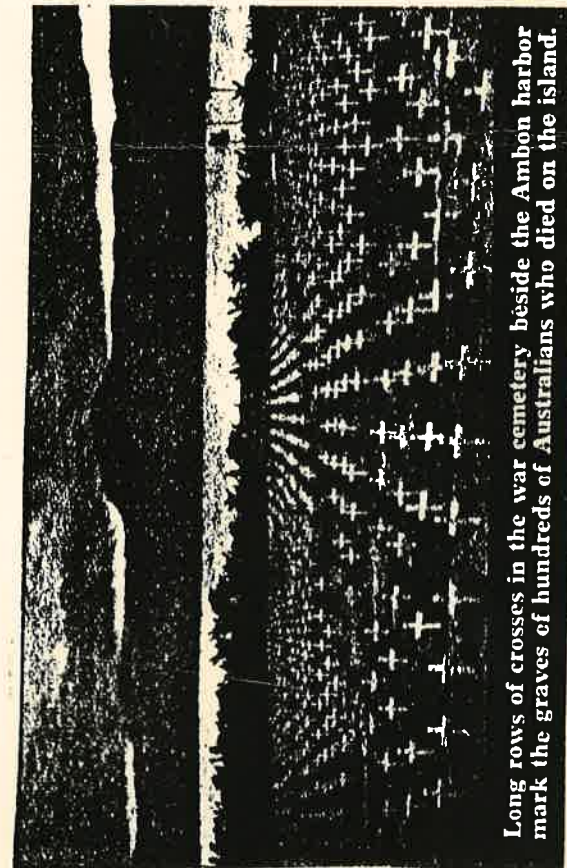
barked at Ambon, the Japanese commanding officer, Colonel Ando, himself beat each man with

They had been told they were going to a convalescent camp. When they arrived at Hainan they found they were destined for a labor camp. For the next three years they were worked seven days a week. Hundreds died from starvation, malaria and maltreatment. The prisoners on Ambon fared no better.

Most of the men who came back from Hainan and Ambon will bear to their graves the memory and the physical effects of their prison camp ordeal. Phil Miskin himself has had a permanent headache since a severe beating on Hainan. He and his 304 comrades are never likely to drive from their minds the tragic story of Ambon. They are the forgotten men who do not forget. #

FOREGOING COMMENTS APPEARED IN PEOPLE MAGAZINE 1955 .

THE MEDIA AS USUAL TEND TO ADD A TOUCH OF GLAMOUR TO THESE THINGS HOWEVER, IN THE MAIN THE MAJORITY OF EVENTS AS DETAILED ARE BASICALLY CORRECT.



Long rows of crosses in the war cemetery beside the Ambon harbor mark the graves of hundreds of Australians who died on the island.

ATROCITIES UNVEILED

The

horror of Ambon

From JOHN HOFFMAN in Canberra

The Japanese Navy held 548 allied prisoners of war at Tan Toey camp, Ambon, in October, 1942.

When the Japanese surrendered in August, 1945, only 129 of the Ambon prisoners were still alive.

The transcripts tell the fate of thousands of Australians of the 8th Division, captured in Singapore, in February, 1942. Some of the survivors died after repatriation. In series A471 of documents released today at the Commonwealth Archives in the Moluccas, now Indonesian territory. These facts were given in Australian-held war crimes trials after World War 2. The Attorney-General, Mr Enderby, has just released the transcripts.

...ustralian prisoners still alive after the surrender in Indonesia.



Ill-treated

The grounds were that the Japanese ill-treated Australian and Dutch prisoners of war through:

- Physical beating and torture.
- Compelling sick and infirm prisoners-of-war to go out on working parties.
- Failing to ensure the provision of proper food supplies, and
- Failing to ensure the provision of proper medical supplies and medical care.

Death certificates in one Tan Toey folder appear to cover the deaths in camp of 285 Australians, of whom 206 were Victorians.

Certificates in another cover 89 men, 60 of whom were Victorians.

The causes of death were mostly given as bacillary dysentery, beriberi, a combination of the two, "shock and infection as a result of injury from an accident," "accidental bomb explosion," "osteomyelitis following an American bombing raid," and epilepsy.

EXTRACT FROM THE "MELBOURNE HERALD" SEPT 1945.

BASIC COMMENTS ARE QUINE VALID & COVER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH EVENTUATED.

REMARKABLY, AFTER ALL THE PUBLICITY

IT TOOK YEARS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT, AMEON, WITH ADEATH

TOLL OF 87%, HAD THE HIGHEST DEATH TOLL

IN ALL THE PACIFIC P.C.W. CAMPS. EMBARRASSED?

With the transcripts are exhibits, in one case folders full of Japanese Navy death certificates for Australians who died in their hands from 1943 to 1945.

In series A471 of documents released today at the Commonwealth Archives is item 81709 labelled:

"War criminals. Proceedings of military tribunal. Shirozu, Wadamai and others. Death certificates (Tan Toey, Ambon-na)."

Charges at the trial concerning the Tan Toey camp said that the prisoner deaths was a war crime.



TABLE TOPS

No. 03

Issued Daily By The Australian Military Forces Abroad

Fri., 14 September 1945

US Assurance On Korea Occupation

WASHINGTON, Thurs.— Questioned yesterday about Australian concern over the American occupation policy in Korea, President Truman said Japanese officials would be removed as soon as possible. A policy for Korea would be announced soon.

AUSTRALIAN PWs BURNT TO DEATH, BEHEADED

16 ON AMBOINA ARE BEHEADED

Sixteen Australian PWs on Amboina Is., south of the Halmaheras, were beheaded by Jap guards and one was shot. A total of 164 Allied prisoners from Amboina reached Morotai on Wednesday.

Eleven of the 16 beheaded were executed for breaking out of camp. Five more were beheaded for stealing food. The Jap officers who ordered the executions are known.

The prisoners who have reached Morotai comprise 123 Australians, 26 Indians, 9 American and 6 Dutch personnel. There were 32 stretcher cases among the Australians when the prisoners were taken aboard 4 RAN corvettes on Monday.

The Australians are what remain of the original Gull Force which defended Amboina when the Japs invaded the island on January 31, 1942. There were originally 807 men in the force, which was composed of 2/21 Bn. and attached troops.

Over 400 died of beri beri, dysentery, malaria and malnutrition. One company and 2 platoons have not been heard of since they ceased fighting on Laha airstrip across the bay from Amboina town.

At various stages, 267 were removed to other camps.

The survivors took over the island's

radio station after the garrison had received official notification that the war had ended and sent calls to Morotai. The Japs provided the Morotai call sign and the wavelength only after considerable persuasion.

The 4 corvettes—HMAS Glenelg, Junee, Cootamundra and Latrobe—left Morotai on Saturday in response to the radio calls.

For 3½ years the Australians were flogged and starved. Some were hung up by the wrists by steel wire and flogged with iron bars.

Those caught breaking camp were trying to obtain food. Twenty-three were taken to a hill and tortured by having lighted cigarettes placed underneath their fingernails or toenails. Later 11 were beheaded and buried in a mass grave.

Medical supplies were short, and the daily food ration sank at times to 1oz. of rice and 6oz. of tapioca.

The men had to do military work, digging gun positions, tank defences and trenches, and handling bombs and ammunition on the wharves. Their hospital and camp were not marked against air attack and when they protested the Japs threatened to execute an officer to make an example.

Bombs were stored in their camp area and men were killed during Allied air raids. On one occasion 185,000 lb of bombs exploded when the dump was struck during a Liberator attack. Seventy were killed and over 70 wounded.

While the Australians were on the island, other PWs were brought in to work before being taken elsewhere. Australian, English, Canadian and NZ airmen appeared and, on one occasion, over 700 English prisoners from the 10th Hussars were used as labourers.

The Americans who were brought to Morotai comprised 2 parties who escaped from the Philippines in 1942 in native boats. One party was recaptured in the Halmaheras and the other off New Guinea.

EXCERPTS FROM PAPERS PRINTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN ARMED FORCES IN NEW GUINEA ETC. TABLE TOPS APPEARS REASONABLY BUT THE OTHER FROM "AMBON TIMES", WILL SAY AGAIN OP SALT.

Ambonese Sing Of Hard-Fighting Aus

(From "The Ambon News")

AMBON.—The original song, "Rose In Her Hair," was brought first to Ambon by the Australian forces in 1942, and it was a song that the Ambonese have heard them singing while working on the roads as prisoners of war.

When they were near the town, the townsfolk used to play or whistle the tune, and it was known as the Australians' song.

Since the Australians arrived on this island again, the song has been heard, the tune differing in some ways from the original, with Malay words in which the name Doolan can be distinguished.

Not far from the town beside a track leading to the hills stands a grave, and over it is a wooden cross marked VX 45406 Dvr. Doolan W. T., 2/21 Bn/ KIA, 1/2/42

This is the story the Ambonese tell of him:

"Doolan was known among his mates as 'Give-me-a-yard-of-bicycle-chain-and-I'll-do-em-over Doolan!' from his favorite expression.

"He was alone when he made his last stand. High in a gendaria tree near the Eatoogantong River he built a machine-gun nest and waited in it with his gun aimed

at the Japanese who were sent out to pick him off found his hiding place and he was shot through the back of the head, crashing through the branches on to the ground.

"The Japanese moved on, and the Ambonese came back, rescued his body and laid it to rest. To this day they tend his grave, but Driver Doolan has won a memorial in the folk songs of his friends, and his story is passed on wherever the people gather to gether for music and dancing."

Here is the song they sing—

On the first day of February
An Australian soldier climbed
into his strong post,
Thousands of soldiers of Japan
lay killed and wounded,
Shot by the great guns, machine-
guns and rifles
Of the Australian on Ambon.

One Australian named Doolan
Had killed many men of Japan.
He did not run away or move
back
Until at last he was

Died by the bullets from the men
of Japan,
Calling his mother, father, wife
and children,
But they cannot hear him.

MANY THANKS TO:

Rod Gabriel

Russ Lavery

John Antella

Beatrice Antella

Joan Beaumont (G F, Survival and Leadership in Captivity)

Courtney T Harrison (Ambon, Island of Mist)

Alex Chapman

Ben Amor

Ralph Godfrey

Clive Newnham

and other Gull Force survivors in included photos

ENGLISH

Record of Student's Work

Name Caitlyn Antella

School Casuarina Secondary College

MAJOR PROJECT

Score

Focus/title

Gull Force (2/21st Battalion) on Ambion (Their
Prisoner-of War experiences under the Japanese)

Other person/people involved, and nature of the interaction

Rod Gabriel, Russ Lavery,

Language activities involved (interviewing, letter-writing, surveying, compiling report, etc.)

interviews (2), letter writing,

Evidence of processes undertaken (e.g. journal)

journal, letters sent home, audio tapes, photocopies
of photos, photos

Outcome or product

Reflection

letter to Mr. Russ Lavery detailing how this
whole Major assignment was completed.

Additional material submitted

photocopies of photos, photos,

GULL

FORCE

JOURNAL

ENTRIES

Friday 22nd Feb.
1991

Dear Major,

Tonight I drove down to Malak Shopping Centre and hired the video "Blood Oath" which is about the Australian War Crime Trials of the Japanese in Ambon, Indonesia.

After the video had finished, I talked with my mum about it. To do "Gull Force" as my major assignment, I'll need to watch many videos, read many books, collect newspaper and magazine cuttings and interview some one from the Gull Force. One thing that amazed me about the video is that, all pilots shot down by the Japanese were either beheaded or bayoneted. Not one "flyer" was allowed to live!!!

Antella.

Thursday 28th Feb.
1991

Dear Major,

Today in one of my free lessons, I spoke to a librarian who helped me order the book "Gull Force". She told me that she would order it from interstate which would take about 10 days before I could read it. She also gave me a book which I borrowed because it had some references about "Gull Force". The book I borrowed is called "Timor 1942". It is basically the same story as Gull Force but in this case, "Sparrow Force", they didn't surrender to the Japanese. I will start to read it when I can find the time.

Antella

Tuesday 5th March.
1991.

Dear Major,

I returned the book "Ambon, Island of Mist" back to Casuarina Public Library because it was due back and I hadn't had time to read it also because tonight I "finally" finished my Outdoor Education assignment but I still have ~~an~~ maths project and assignment to complete so that's why I haven't had time. Tonight I also wrote down references about "Gull Force" from the book "Timor 1942" because I want to return that book to the school library tomorrow.

Antella.

4.
Monday 18th
March 1991

Dear Major,
After many talks with the school librarians I was "finally" given the book "Gull Force". The book took about 18 days to reach me from Katherine!!! I haven't time to read it yet but I'll read it when I've finished "The Diary of Anne Frank" and I have some spare time. I'll also have to write a letter soon to Rod Gabriel because he will be coming to Darwin soon and then he'll travel on to Ambon, Indonesia for Anzac Day. In many ways, I'm very lucky because last year while I was in Germany, my parents were asked to represent the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Darwin at Anzac Day Memorials in Ambon and while they were there, they met many survivors from POW camps of Gull Force and took many photos of them "relaxing". I will use many of these photos in my major English assignment.

Antella.

Monday 1st
April 1991

Dear Major,
Tonight on the 7:30 report, there was segment on the film "Blood Oath". The reporter told us that in schools and universities, students aren't taught about Japan's involvement in the Pacific War. Some university students and veterans of Ambon were invited to a screening of the movie Blood Oath and three university students said it was the first they'd ever heard about Ambon being invaded. They saw the whole movie with sub-titles in Japanese because not all of them could speak English. One girl said that while in Australia seven years ago, she was speaking Japanese to a friend when a man told her to speak English which surprised her very much. One of the main actors of "Blood Oath" wants Japanese children to be taught about Japan's involvement in the Pacific War but the government which controls all schools, says "no" and so do cinemas. They both say that it happened a long time ago and should be forgotten. This report was partly made because of the proposed invitation to the 50th Anniversary of the bombing of Darwin and partly to let people know that the Japanese don't know anything about their country's involvement in the Pacific War apart from the dropping of the Atomic Bomb by America.

Antella.

Friday 5th
April 1991

Dear Major,

Today I went to a school librarian who extended my loan on the book "Gull Force" because I had to hand the book in today but because my mother was reading it, I hadn't had the chance to read it myself. The loan was extended to May 5th 1991. When I arrived home I was told that the member of Gull Force that I wished to interview would soon be coming to Darwin

Antella.

Sunday 8th
April 1991

Japan baulks at

Films about Japanese war crimes don't go down well in Japan.

Ask Toshi Shioya — co-star of Australian-made movie *Blood Oath*, which deals with post-World War II war crimes trials on the island of Ambon, 1000 km north-west of Darwin.

In the second half of last year Toshi fought a one-man war against the Japanese movie establishment to find someone willing to show the film, which examines the ruthless execution of more than 300 Australian prisoners of war.

On the way to convincing company Toei to distribute the film, Toshi walked a tough road.

He was continually told by other companies the film was too controversial and that Japanese would hate watching a Japanese soldier beheading an innocent Australian POW.

From MATTHEW FRANKLIN in T

But there was more to the opposition than just fear of box office failure.

Toshi's quiet war mirrored the internal battles in Japan's political establishment — forced by world events to review its place in the world.

As Toshi was telling people Japan needed to see *Blood Oath*, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party was trying to create a law to allow Japanese military forces to take part in the Gulf war.

Involvement would have been Japan's first military outing since World War II.

Despite pressure to contribute to the war by the US, the war plan was defeated by opposition within Japan and surrounding Asian nations where people remembered living under the

Japanese boot heel 1940s.

At the same time were under way for enthronement of J Emperor Akihito.

Movie industry apparently thought not right to show a questioned the decision to prosecute Akihito Emperor Hirohito criminal.

"It took five months to get our goal," Toshi's premiered recent

"I think the Japanese have to see this film for education for me script."

Toshi said most little about the war nation's rulers with history to be taught



The Poor Boys IN THE COLONIAL BAR

4pm — 8pm

New Game starts Wednesday
Hey Hey... it's Lew the Lip
Overseas trip to be won!

Darwin's Home of Rock n

Live entertainment
every night from
9pm until 2am!

Monday
The best c
local band

Dear Major,

Today while reading the Sunday Territorian, I came across this article under the television guide. I've put this article in my journal because I think that this is the appropriate place for it to be put rather than on a loose pile of paper.

Antella.

Monday 9th
April 1991

Dear Major, After coming home from Casuarina Shopping Centre, I learnt that my dad had rung Rod Gabriel (the man that I wish to interview from Gull Force) and had asked him when he was coming to Darwin. Rod had replied "this Thursday" which surprised us all! This meant that I would have to read the whole book of Gull Force before Thursday starting today! I started reading the book on my bed but soon dozed off for a couple of hours. By the end of the day, I'd only read 48 pages!!!

Antella

Tuesday 10th
April 1991

Dear Major, Today I continued reading the book "Gull Force". I decided to sit out on the verandah today because I knew that being there, I'd read the book without any distractions. By the end of the day, I'd read from page 48 to page 107!!!

Antella

Wednesday 11th
April 1991

Dear Major, Today I resumed writing out the main events on a scrap piece of paper while reading the book "Gull Force". Today I read from page 109 to page 170!! So far tomorrow, all that I have to do is finish reading the book along with writing down the main events of each chapter and then when I'd finished reading the book I'd have to write out some questions which I'd later have to ask Rod Gabriel to answer. Tomorrow the book will be finished and so will part of my assignment!!!

Antella.

B.C. AMOR. B. Amor.
 R. GODFREY. *Rod Godfrey*
 C.F. NEWMHAM *C. F. Newham*
 W.A.M. CHAPMAN *W. A. M. Chapman*
 R.C. (Rod) GABRIEL *Rod Gabriel*

Thursday 11th
 April 1991
 - - -
 Thursday 11/4/91
 11 apr 91

Dear Major,

Today I finished reading the book "Gull Force" this afternoon. (I skipped the Hainan Island chapter because the man I wanted to interview didn't go to Hainan Is. and other men I'd heard that were coming were also on Ambon Island or they'd escaped). I will read the Hainan chapter soon though!! After reading the book, I wrote out a series of questions to ask Rod Gabriel and then I helped make dinner. When all the men arrived, I was introduced to them all and half an hour later I began my two hour talk with Rod Gabriel about his experiences from 1940. I used two different tapes (it was a longer interview than I'd expected!!) for my whole interview which was very good. When I asked him about whether the Japanese should be invited to special war ceremonies, he replied sharply "NO!!!". When the other four men who also came to dinner were asked the same question, they all replied "NO", we went "FORGIVE AND FORGET!!!" Towards the end of the evening, I got the men to sign my journal, my autograph book, a newspaper clipping and two books called "Gull Force, Survival and Leadership in Captivity 1942-1945" and "Ambon Island of Mist". I just hope that the libraries don't get mad in me by having them sign in the books. The men then soon

went in a bus, back to the Farrakeyah Army Barracks. They leave for Ambon on this Saturday. In my opinion, tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!!!

Antella

Ralph Godfrey, Alex Chapman, The Rod Gabriel, Clive Newham and Ben Amor.

May 7th

VIEWS ON THE NEWS

B.C. AMOR - B.C. Amor. CF NEWSPAPER
R. GODFREY R. Godfrey

Tears fall for dead cobblers

W.A.M. Chapman W.A.M. Chapman
R.C. (Rod) GABRIEL R.C. (Rod) Gabriel

Kees Lavery

Pilgrimage of war pain

By DICK MUDDIMER

A group of old soldiers was in Darwin last week after commemorating a World War II operation which evoked the finest Gallipoli tradition.

While World War I veterans returned to Anzac Cove for the 75th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, Gull Force members returned to the scene of their greatest test.

Gull Force fought a desperate action against a huge Japanese force in 1942 on the Indonesian island of Ambon.

Survivors of that action made a pilgrimage to Ambon on April 25 to remember their fallen comrades.

"In terms of comradeship, fighting the odds and never giving up, it is fair to say Ambon was our Gallipoli," ex-Gull Force Captain, Mr Rod Gabriel, said.

"Our annual pilgrimage is an emotional experience.

"I shed tears, knowing that underneath the ground where I am standing are the remains of 694 comrades."

Mr Gabriel, the Gull Force intelligence officer, survived the battle and spent four years as a POW on Ambon.



Ald Antella

The leader of the pilgrimage this year, he has returned to Ambon 17 times.

"We must never forget the men who died there," he said.

"There is apathy, though. Many people do not give a tuppenny damn.

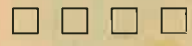
"People and the Government are apathetic with the Defence Forces short of funds.

"We do not want another war but it could happen.

"People insure their homes and cars but they will not insure their country against aggression."

Gull Force sailed from Darwin early in 1942 to help the Dutch defend Ambon from Japanese invasion.

The unit of 1131 men faced 22 000 Japanese troops.



THEY were defeated, on February 2, 1942, after a fierce four-day battle.

"At Laho aerodrome, now Ambon airport, 47 of 292 Gull Force troops were killed in action and 229 were bayoneted and beheaded," Mr Gabriel said.

"Only 11 escaped the massacre.

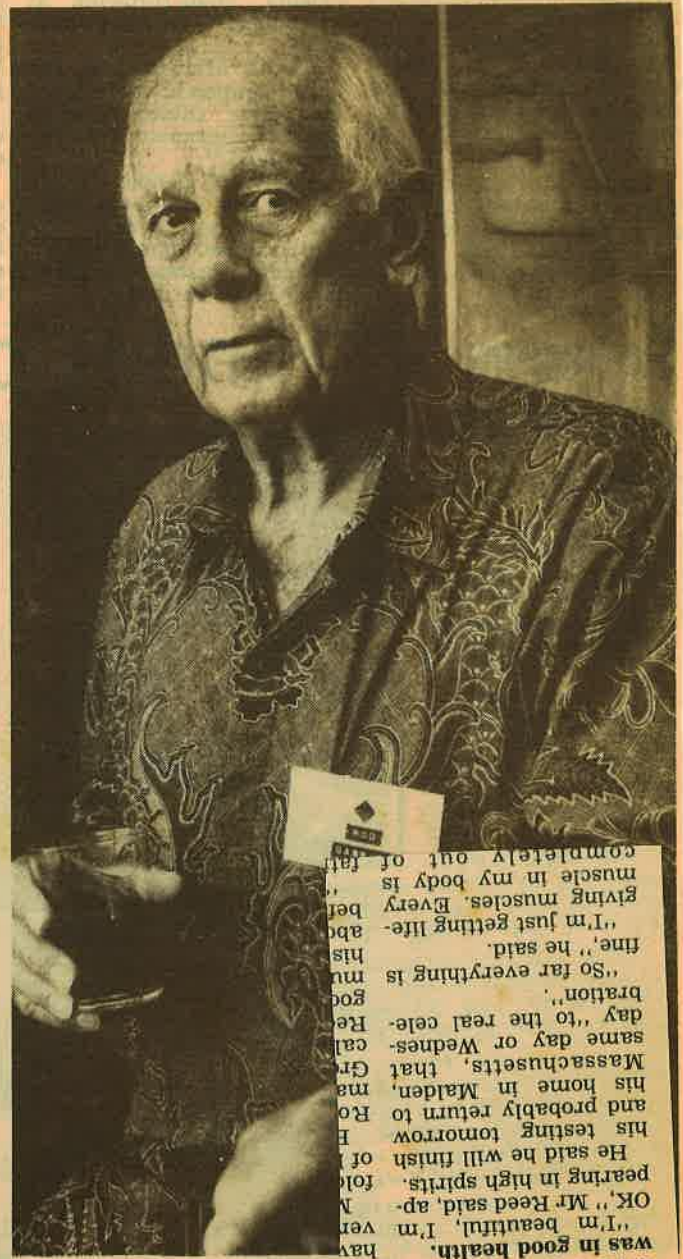
"Of 267 troops who were prisoners-of-war on the Japanese-occupied Hainan Island, 181 survived to return to Australia.

"Of 528 POWs on Ambon, 119 survived.

"Most Gull Force troops died in the POW camps because of harsh treatment, shortages of food and medical supplies, and overwork."

The survivors have made pilgrimages to Ambon since 1967 and have been returning on an annual basis since 1978.

This year's contingent included 10 Gull Force members, six sons of members and four RAN Corvette Association delegates who helped rescue the survivors in 1945.



War-time massacre survivor fallen comrades and a plea

The Gull Force Association has given practical help to the people of Ambon.

It has helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for medical aid projects and a trust fund which supports a foster family.

NEW YORK - Freed hostage Mr Frank Reed said yesterday his kidnappers "treated me fine" during the last six months of his captivity and he was in good health. "I'm beautiful, I'm OK," Mr Reed said, appearing in high spirits. He said he will finish his testing tomorrow and probably return to his home in Malden, Massachusetts, that same day or Wednesday "to the real celebration". "So far everything is fine," he said. "I'm just getting life-abo- giving muscles. Every muscle in my body is completely out of fat."

Hostage

of war pain

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"I shed tears, knowing that

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"Only 11 escaped the mass-

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"Mr Gabriel, the Gull Force

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Aid Antella

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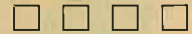
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medical aid projects and a

trust fund which supports a

rescue the survivors in 1945.

Ambon and Darwin have

ties through a sister city re-

lationship.

The bonds were strength-

ened when Darwin's Deputy

Lord Mayor, Aid John Antella,

visited the Indonesian provin-

cial capital for talks and

Anzac Day ceremonies.

The Lord Mayor of Ambon,

Mr Dicky Wattimena, is due to

come to Darwin in September.

A major aim of the relation-

War-time massacre survivor Rod Gabriel ... tears for



"We have the greatest re-

spect for the people of Ambon

for what they did during the

fighting and how they helped

us during our captivity," Mr

Gabriel said.

Ambon and Darwin have

ties through a sister city re-

lationship.

The bonds were strength-

ened when Darwin's Deputy

Lord Mayor, Aid John Antella,

visited the Indonesian provin-

cial capital for talks and

Anzac Day ceremonies.

The Lord Mayor of Ambon,

Mr Dicky Wattimena, is due to

come to Darwin in September.

A major aim of the relation-

ship is to encourage intercity

visits.

A Top End company, Air

North, is leading the way with

regular flights between Dar-

win and Ambon.

The Air North projects man-

ager, Mr Dave Cooper, said

the company hoped to develop

services beyond the present

range of eight-day packages

excursions.

Mr Antella said his welcome

in Ambon was "staggering"

reflecting the friendly spirit of

the sister city relationship.

Mr Wattimena said he

valued efforts in Darwin pro-

moting Ambon as a tourist

destination for Territorians.

9.
Saturday 13th
April 1991

Dear Major,
Today I glued this old newspaper clipping from May 7th 1990 in my journal because this is the best place for it.

Antella

Thursday 18th
April 1991

Dear Major,
Today while reading through the N.T. News, I found this newspaper article about Gull Force, which I've decided to include in my journal. On Sunday, I'll be going to the RAAF Base wharf to see (with my dad), survivors of Ambon, leaving Darwin to go to Ambon by boat.

Anzac first for Ambon

By DICK MUDDIMER

The Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Alan Markham, will lead a strong Darwin contingent attending Anzac Day ceremonies in Indonesia next week.

Darwin has special ties with the Indonesian port of Ambon through a heroic action by Australian troops during World War II.

The ceremony in Ambon — a sister city of Darwin — will also be attended by the Chief of the Defence Forces, General Peter Gratton.

It will be the first time an Australian defence chief has commemorated Anzac Day in Indonesia.

Members of Australia's Gull Force sailed from Darwin in 1942 to help the Dutch defend Ambon from a Japanese invasion.

The 1131 Australians faced a combined force of 22 000 Japanese and suffered defeat only after a bloody four-day battle.

A total of 229 Gull Force members were bayoneted or beheaded during the massacre.

Of 528 members held prisoner-of-war in Ambon only 119 survived.

Of another 287 members held in POW camps on Japanese-held Hainan Island, 181 survived.

Gull Force survivors will make their annual pilgrimage to Ambon to take part in the April 25 Anzac Day ceremonies there this year.

Twenty-four Gull Force veterans are in Darwin this week and will leave the city for Ambon at the weekend.

Mr Markham accompanied by the Lady Mayoress will travel to Ambon on Sunday aboard the patrol boat, HMAS *Launceston*.

The Darwin RAAF base commander, Group Captain Bruce Wood, and the Norforce commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Keith Jobson, will also attend.

The Royal Australian Navy will be represented by the patrol boat, HMAS *Wollongong*.

Members of the three Australian services will provide a guard of honor at the Ambon cenotaph.

Antella

Russ Lavery
GULL FORCE
2/C STINTON RD.
GEELONG
VIC 3220

Sunday 21st
April 1991.

Dear Major,
Today I went to the Karrakeyah RAAF Base Wharf to see some ex Australian POW. leave for Ambon. The name and address above is of a man who came up to me and asked me if I was doing a project on Ambon. I said "yes, Gull Force" and he then told me to write to him if I wanted any photos etc.... I instantly thought that this was very kind of him seeing that I'd never met him before!! The three ships departed (only two were going to Ambon) when everyone was on board. To my surprise, there were still some men left who were on the boat!! I later found out that they would fly to Ambon on Anzac Day rather than travel there by boat. When the boat had gone, Juliet Wills (free-lance journalist) interviewed two members of Gull Force who'd escaped from Ambon. I took some photos of this and then talked to some of the members of Gull Force for a while. After having a group photo, we all departed the wharf and drove home.



↑
Russ Lavery

Antella.

Thursday 9th
May 1991

Dear Major

Today in English I spoke with my English teacher about my major assignment. She told me that I should do the assignment on the P.O.W. camp in Ambon and also having a talk with one or two members of Gull Force. Also about a week ago, on the news was a report about Gull Force and its survivors who were back from Ambon and were staying in Darwin for a few days before leaving for their homes down south. The report was mainly on how the Japanese today could still perform atrocities today to anyone who gets in their way. The man that said all this was Rod Gabriel who I interviewed for 2 hours while the members were at my house one evening.

Antella.

Wednesday 22nd
May 1991.

Dear Major

This afternoon, my dad gave me a parcel which he received yesterday from Russ Lavery (the man I met at the wharf on 21st April 1991). He sent me a short letter, photocopies of photos and old newspaper clippings as well as a statement saying that 87% of all Australians died on Ambon. I previously read that it was only 77% but Russ would know because "he was there". I will soon write him a letter and hopefully I will be able to interview him so then I'll be able to compare his life on Ambon to Rod Gabriel's life on Ambon.

Antella.

Tuesday 18th
June 1991.

Dear Major,

Today I posted a package to Russ Lavery which included some questions I would like answers for my interview and three blank 90 minute tapes he could use and also a letter thanking him for the package he sent to me and the information that was in it. Tomorrow I will get my film developed. of all Gull Force photos so I can stick them in this journal.

Antella.

Thursday 20th
June 1991.

Dear Major,
Today I picked up my roll of 24 expose film which included several photos of Gull Force. Today I will put them in this journal.

Antella.

Monday 1st
July 1991.

Dear Major,
Today I started to write a brief history about the Island of Ambon and the Province it is capital of. While reading through a tourist booklet I found a really nice picture of the Australian War Cemetery and I also read about a memorial of a man "Dolan" who fought against the Japanese on Ambon but was later discovered and shot. Tomorrow I will start on the history of Gull Force.

The Dolan Memorial:

The memorial was erected by the Australian government in commemorating Dolan, an Australian soldier, who was killed in the Second World War, during the Japanese invasion on the island of Ambon. While his comrades has already retreated from the frontier, he himself stayed behind to mislead the Japanese invaders and shot down a considerable amount of them, before they discovered his hiding place and shot him from the rear.

The Australian War Cemetery



The Australian War Cemetery:
The Australian War Cemetery is located in Tantui, a village about 2 km from Ambon. It is the burial ground of Australian soldiers who in the Second World War fought the Japanese and died on the island. This Cemetery is under the auspices of the Australian Government. It is located in Tantui Village, 2 km from the bus terminal.

Antella

Wednesday
17th July 1991

Dear Major,
Today I received a letter back from Russ Lavery and a tape (him answering my questions. Along with the letter I was sent a copy of his grandson's essay on Gull Force which I will take notes from. His tape was very good (his answers) and he even

[Faint handwritten notes in red ink, mostly illegible]

After back from Rusa Lavery
 my questions. Along with
 of his graduation class
 of take notes from. His
 answers) and he even

Wednesday
 17th July 1991

Chikella

The enemy forbade the local people to
 bury his corpse, yet one took the courage to
 take away his decaying remains and bury them
 under a "gandaria" tree, where now the
 tombstone is located.



DOLAN Memorial

The Trikora monument :

This monument, erected in 1962 by the
 Maluku government, is to commemorate the

side a brief history about
 review it in context of.
 tourist booklet I found
 the Trikora War
 about a memorial of a
 near the Japanese on
 over and that. (Dolan)
 of gull force.

Monday 1st
 July 1991

Chikella

my roll of 24 exposure film's
 of gull force. Today I will

Thursday 20th
 June 1991

recorded onto my tape, an ABC programme (1984) about Gull Force which also interviewed me. Soon I will start to get stuck into my 1st draft.

Antella.

I AM NOW IN AMBON FOR THE ARAFURA YOUTH GAMES WHICH I HAVE BEEN TRAINING FOR!!

Monday 5th August 1991

Dear Major,

Today the athletics, basketball, soccer and volleyball teams all play or compete against other Indonesian provinces. To reach our playing destinations, we must drive for 36km around part of the island until we reach Ambon city. The drive is over numerous hills and around tight bends and makes me realise now that 1000 Australian men sure had a hard time defending the island against the Japanese invasion. The Ambonese people wave and smile at us when we drive past and they (especially the children) always want to touch our hands.



Friday it is planned that everyone will visit the Australian War Cemetery. Before we left Australia, I typed out a brief history of Gull Force and what happened to Ambon during World War 2 and these sheets were given to students to read.

Antella.



Friday 9th August 1991.

Dear Major, Today we went to the Australian War Cemetery to look at it and photograph it. I took many photos and when processed, they will be stuck in this journal. Everyone was amazed at how beautiful and well-kept the cemetery is.

was. Some people walked around looking at the graves while others walked through the cemetery looking at the flowers and monuments while others sat on the green grass (freshly cut) under trees and talked about how beautiful this cemetery was and compared it to the Indonesian War Cemetery 60 metres away!! While at



this war cemetery, I came to understand more about Gull Force's time on Ambon and I can now relate to their experiences more than before coming to Ambon.

Antella.

August 28th
(Wednesday) 1991

Dear Major,
Now that I'm back in Darwin, I can complete my major English assignment on Gull Force and hand it in in September before the one week break in October. My photos have been processed so now I will put them in this journal and Gull Force book and I will also type out my information on Gull Force into my computer at school and then print them out so that I can then stick them in my Gull Force book

Antella.

Tuesday 17th
September 1991.

Dear Major,
Today I have just completed sticking in all my Gull Force photos, typed and printed information, photo files and I have arranged my journal in a display folder and have included rough copies etc.... in it also

Antella

Sunday 22nd
September 1991

Dear Major, I have some photos which won't fit in my Gull Force book (it's full!!) so I've decided to stick them in my journal.

Royal
Australian
Navy boat
leaving
Oceania for
Auckland for
Anzac Day
Remembrance
Services
with some
men of Gull
Force aboard.



The Australian
War Cemetery
at a different
angle.

This photo is of me standing next to a memorial in the grounds of the Australian War Cemetery which I don't know the name of.

A librarian at school didn't know the name of it either so she rang up the army in Darwin and they didn't know the name of this memorial either!!! What I do know is that this is where the wreaths are laid during the Anzac Day Services on Anzac Day.

Cynthia



Friday 27th
September 1991

Dear Major,
Today I will be handing in this major assignment on Gull Force for marking. This major assignment on Gull Force has taken me since the 22nd February to complete (over 7 months!!!) and I very happy and relieved to hand it in completed today.

Since going to Ambon, I found that I could relate to Gull Force's experiences and time on Ambon and I could understand what I read about them in the books; Gull Force; Survival and Leadership in Captivity - Joan Beaumont and Ambon; Island of Mist - Courtney T. Harrison.

Now that I have completed this assignment, I will be able to tell people about Gull Force and also about how I found information about them.

I have thoroughly enjoyed researching about Gull Force because I have learnt about Australia's involvement in Indonesia during the Second World War and I have met many nice ex.P.O.W.'s who spent many painful years on Ambon.

Cynthia

Monday 4th
November 1991

Dear Major,

Today I was given a photo of my mum, dad and sister standing in front of the "Australian War Memorial". This memorial is also known as the "Doolan Memorial" because it is believed that one soldier who ambushed truckloads of Japanese soldiers was shot and killed by a sniper and left there is buried in this same spot where the memorial now stands at Mudamoni. Because I didn't have a photo of this memorial in my journal already and because my scrapbook was completed, I decided to stick this photo in my journal.



I will hand this major assignment on Gull Force in along with all my other English class work for final marking tomorrow.

Amelia.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MY ENGLISH MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: GULL FORCE

I have chosen to do my Major English Assignment on the 2/21st Battalion (Gull Force) because for days I was trying to think of a topic to choose when my mum suggested I do it on Gull Force. Gull Force is the code name for the 2/21st Battalion which went to an island called Ambon which is in Indonesia, to defend the island from the advancing Japanese Navy and army Second World War.

I have chosen to do my Major English Assignment on Gull Force because I want to be able to tell young people about the 2/21st Battalions time on Ambon for three and a half years during the Second World War and what happened to them while under the guard of the Japanese and how it links with the bombing of Darwin.

Gull Force appealed to me immediately because my family went to Ambon in 1990 and met some of the men of Gull Force and have kept in contact with them since. My dad had names, addresses and photos of the men so I was pretty much "on-my-way" already.

The Arafura Youth Games is held every year between the Northern Territory and nine Indonesian Provinces in a different place each year, (it will be in Darwin in 1993). This year the Arafura Youth Games were to be held in Ambon in August 1991 so I decided to start training to make the team to travel to Ambon. I hoped to be picked in the team so that I can go to Ambon to see the island for myself and also to experience the friendliness of the Ambonese people.

I will start to read a book that is written about Gull Force and when I have finished reading it, I will prepare a set of questions for an ex-Australian P.O.W who spent three and a half years on Ambon. His name is Mr Rod Gabriel. My dad has decided to invite Mr Gabriel and some other men who were also P.O.Ws on Ambon with him to a dinner at our house one night in April before they leave for the Anzac Day Rememberence Ceremonies in Ambon.

I hope to meet more men of Gull Force in April who are travelling to Ambon for this years Anzac Day Rememberence Ceremonies by Navy Ship and others who will fly there a few days later. It is here, that I hope to meet men who will also be able to provide me with valuable information that I could use for my English major assignment.

I have started working on my Gull Force major assignment already because I want to get this assignment started before I go away to Ambon (if I get picked!!) so that I will be able to related to gull Force's experiences on Ambon.

BLOOD OATH NOTES

Ambon people tell where Aussies were buried in a clearing. Japs dig up earth and find skulls (beheaded), decomposed bodies, decomposed clothes, bones. Aussies are stunned outraged and angry. Japs are held in POW camps. Match photos with dog tags. Not many witnesses, no airforce flyers were ever taken to the camps, all were killed/executed. Japs don't know anything about being innocent until proven guilty and don't have a defence lawyer. Man overheard two japs talking about executions. Some soldiers are still in great shock. Many returned home not to see Japs stand trial. Vice Admiral Tack bought back to Ambon with a Yank. Yank makes sure Tack is granted immunity. Will use Japs rather than trial them for their (US) own use. Defence lawyer wants the Japs to tell the truth but they wont say anything. Ambonese hate Japs, they want to kill them because they tore families apart. Murder they scream, animals!! Japs only follow orders. Japs all plead "not guilty" which causes an uproar. Tack says he knows nothing about the thirty POW's executed. Tack blames Iki. Private Mitchell says he heard Tack and Iki talk about executions. Jap policy is to execute pilots. Court marshal records all bombings. Jimmy Fenton can't speak for four months, has a pilot brother "Eddie" who was beheaded. Jimmy stayed in between palm trees at night and saw his brothers' execution and three other's. Jimmy can't talk too well, the shock of seeing his brother killed is too great for him, also has a bad cough and has trouble breathing. Tack's got a law degree at Oxford and Tack says he was away in Manila at a meeting. Men who died of tropical diseases or bombing raids were buried. Aussies try to get Iki to talk but he wont dob on Tack. Yanks don't want Tak convicted. 300 Aussies were beheaded or bayoneted. Australia tries to get copies of court marshals sent from Tokyo but can't because they will take a long time to get. Can't find any of Tack's staff. Signals Officer gave himself up. Tak was acquitted of all involvement. Tanaka is one of three officers. Tanaka is told by Iki not to say a word to anyone. Jimmy now remembers where the four pilots are buried, kneels at the spot where Eddie is buried. Jimmy testifies and proves the four flyers weren't phantoms. Jimmy was beaten, orders carried out by Iki, split his skull, broke eight ribs and nearly crippled him. Iki would blow his whistle to start and stop beatings. Jimmy was saved by his mates and hid under a hut for hours. Saw a truck while hiding between banana trees. Saw four flyers. Eddie was tortured lots by Iki in isolation camps. Jimmy would give him a smoke every night to keep his spirits up. One morning, Japs put them in a truck and took them away. Jimmy followed them and heard Eddie scream and saw him get his head cut off. Jimmy calls them animals and Iki stands up smiling and them sits down. Jimmy dies. Iki blames the death of flyers on Tanaka. Tanaka and Iki are charged with murders. Both plead "not guilty". Tanaka says he pleaded with Tack to stop the mass beatings but was told "no". Iki caused a near riot by laughing at him giving evidence. A Jap soldier tries to strangle hem calling hem a "traitor". Iki them kills himself which angers Aussies. Defence lawyer is now very

embarrassed with himself for thinking Tack was innocent. Defence Lawyer says they'll all suffer for this(Iki's death). Yank comes back. Court Marshal is brought to Ambon to talk about the lost records. Yank is put on trial. All Jap signals are now and were intercepted by the US. He says they are classified and can't touch them. US wont release information on codes. Jap comes in and says no signal was sent because of heavy bombing. He says there was a court marshal but there was nothing sent. Kumers, he says court marshal was on 10 September 1944. Jap says he was scared so he head to obey an order to tell Tanaka there was one. At 10.30 am the execution was over. He says Tack was responsible for 350 prisoners executed. Baron Tack is important in Tokyo now and Yank doesn't want Tack prosecuted. US says they have to use people for their own interests but Bryan Brown says he's using them (US). Bryan Brown sums up the prosecution by saying that if Tack is found guilty, mercy should be shown to him. Nurses start to pack to leave Ambon on the day Tan is sentenced to death. Court says he should have made sure there was a court marshal. He's sentenced to death. Tan is executed in the jungle and when they led him away on a stretcher, he was still clutching his rosary beads.

BLOOD OATH STARRED:

Captain Cooper	Bryan Brown
V.A. Baron Takahashi	George Takei
Major Beckett	Terry O'Quinn
Major Roberts	John Bach
Lt. Tanaka	Toshi Shiova
Shedy	John Clarke
Private Jimmy Fenton	John Polon
Captain Ikeuchi	Tetsu Watanabe
President of the Bench	Ray Barrett
Flight Lt. Edward Fenton	David Argue

Caitlyn Antella
45 Yeadon Circ. Moil
DARWIN NT 0810

17 June 1991

Dear Mr Lavery

Thank you very much for the photocopies of the photo's and newspaper clippings that you sent to help me with my Major English Assignment. I'm sorry this letter is late but because I'm doing my last year of school this year, I'm doing a lot of homework and study.

I will be going to Ambon on August 2 for one week to compete in the Arafura Youth Games. 70 young people between the ages of 16-19 will be travelling to Ambon to participate in a sporting and cultural exchange with nine other Indonesian provinces.

I've been training to compete in these games every day just so that I could be selected to travel to Ambon to see the island that I'm doing for my Major English Assignment and the Australian War Cemetery.

Because of my knowledge about Gull Gorce, I have been asked to write a brief history of Gull Force for the Northern Territory team. If you wish, I will send you a copy of this and of my finished Major Assignment.

I was horrified to learn that 77% of all Australians on Ambon died when I read the book "Gull Force - Survival and Leadership in Captivity", but I was even more horrified to read it was 87% (from your information).

Anyway, I'm sending you some cassettes (3) so that you can answer my questions about your experiences while on the island of Ambon. If there's room, please feel free to tell of any other information you feel could help me.

Thanking You

Caitlyn Antella

P.S. I know you were the champion scrounger but I'm asking you the same questions as I asked Rod Gabriel so that in my assignment, I can compare both of your experiences while on Ambon.

Q U E S T I O N S

1. Why did you decide to join the army?
 - a). How old were you when you joined?

2. How did you feel when you heard you were going to Ambon?

3. How long did you spend on the island before you were captured?

4. Was dying from starvation/malnutrition your main concern?

5. What did you eat to keep alive?
 - a). Would you ever scrounge for food?

6. I've heard that many POW's were treated cruelly, were you ever treated cruelly?

7. Did you suffer from any diseases/infections?

8. Was it hard for you to adjust to life in Australia after returning home?

9. There's a lot of controversy over inviting the Japanese to Darwin in 1992 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. Do you think it's a good idea?

10. How do you think young people should be educated about Australia's involvement in World War 2

CAITLYN ANTELLA

This letter to Mr Russ Lavery is my final response to my English Major Assignment on "GULL FORCE". This letter is retelling how I gathered all my information about Gull Force and put it all together to form my completed assignment on Gull Force.

29/10/91

Dear Mr Lavery

Thank you for all of your information that you sent me for my English Major Assignment on Gull Force. The information about Gull Force from various newspapers and the photocopies of photos of your time in Darwin and on Ambon will help me to produce a very good English major assignment. I will now tell you how I came about choosing to do Gull Force as my major assignment in English and the different stages that this major assignment went through right up until the finished product.

When we were first told that we had to do a major assignment in English, I didn't know what topic to choose. It wasn't until my mum suggested that I do it on Gull Force because she knew quite a bit of information about Gull Force and she had many photos of the Members of Gull Force on Ambon at a War Remembrance Ceremony. I was then told that if I started training for running again, I would have a good chance at being selected in a Northern Territory team to travel to Ambon for the Arafura Youth Games. This idea for my major project appealed to me because by travelling to Ambon for one week, I would also be able to relate to Gull Force more and their time and experiences while captive and free on Ambon. There was only one problem, first of all, I would have to start training again in order to get picked in the team!!

I started to write a journal on February 22nd in which I started to explain the different types of information that I had researched and found out about Gull Force. From then on I was collecting all available information from all possible avenues about Gull Force. This took me quite a long time but with the movie "Blood Oath" which is based on Gull Force's captivity while on Ambon and the Australian War Trials of the main Japanese "offenders" on Ambon, being screened in Japan for the first time. News paper clippings were in the Northern Territory newspapers so I cut them out to stick in my journal. When there were news reports on the television about the Gull Force Association making their annual pilgrimage to Ambon each year, I would also record this on video. I would record them on video so that I could watch them over and over and I could also write about them when I had heard and remembered what had been said into my journal.

When I was told that Mr Rod Gabriel was coming to Darwin, I wanted to interview him about his personal experiences as a prisoner-of-war held captive by the Japanese on Ambon. I also wanted to meet him because my dad told me that he returns to Ambon every year for the Anzac Day Remembrance Ceremonies along with men of the Gull Force Association. I didn't know

all that much about Gull Force so I read the book titled "Gull Force, Survival and Leadership in Captivity" which is by Joan Beaumont in four days because Mr Gabriel was coming to Darwin earlier than the main group of Gull Force Association men and he would be joined by Mr Clive Newnham, Mr Ben Amor, Mr Ralph Godfrey and Mr Alex Chapman. My dad had invited these men to our house for dinner on April 11th to talk about Darwin and Ambon and also so that I could interview Mr Gabriel for my English major assignment.

When they came around for dinner, we firstly had drinks with them and made them feel at home. I then interviewed Mr Gabriel for two hours about his experiences while captive on Ambon and after the interview, we all had dinner together and spoke about Ambon. They all left in an Army Bus at 10 pm to go back to the Larrakeyah Army Barracks where they were staying until they left for Ambon.

I then found out that there would be more Australian ex-P.O.Ws arriving in Darwin in the next week and would be travelling to Ambon either by boat (on Navy patrol boats) or by airplane with Garuda Airlines.

On April 21st, (Saturday morning), I went with my dad to the Larakeyah Army Base to see some of the men leave by boat to go to Ambon. This voyage would take three days across the Timor Sea. After the boats left, I met with some of the ex-P.O.Ws who had farewelled their friends and instead were flying to Ambon in three days time. It is here that I met you Mr Lavery, and it was also here that you told me that you would send me photocopies of old photographs of yours that you thought I could use in my English Major Assignment.

I wrote a letter and sent it to you and in it, I asked you about your experiences on Ambon. Your reply included three returned tapes, a tape of your own, a short letter to me and an assignment that was written by your grandson Hamish on Gull Force. I will send you back this because it is an original after I have made a photocopy of it. The tape you included which was from an ABC documentary series on Australian Prisoners of War in Asia was a great help and let me hear about other ex-P.O.Ws personal experiences while under command of the Japanese in the Second World War.

I travelled to Ambon on August 4th and stayed there until August 10th. During this time, I competed in the Arafura Youth Games in the athletics section and won a bronze medal in discus and a silver medal in high jump. I found that the Indonesians were always looking at us Australians and trying to touch our skin and they would often say "Australia" just to get our attention. These people were very friendly to us because Gull Force had helped protect the Ambonese people and the island of Ambon during the fight for the island by the Japanese. I saw a lot of Ambon during this time including the Bay of Ambon where in the Second World War, the Japanese warships docked here, the other side of Ambon the island and the Australian War Cemetery that overlooks the Bay of Ambon. I was amazed at the beautiful gardens at this war Cemetery and

the number of unmarked graves of fallen soldiers there.

When I returned to Darwin, I set to work on my Gull Force assignment and found it very confusing at first because I didn't know where to start because I had so much information on the subject. When I had worked out just where I would begin, I started to type out information on my computer at school and then when I came home, I would cut out pictures and stick them onto the information I had just typed out at school. I found this to be very interesting and fast. I added photos to this and soon it was complete. All that was needed now was to write all this information into my journal so that I could prove that the scrap-book I made was my own. The purpose of this scrap-book was to allow people to view it and learn a great deal about Gull Force without actually having to read a thick book to learn about their experiences. I also hoped that by making this scrap-book, more people would start to realise just how much the Australian soldiers did for Australia and all Australians during their time in the Army in the Second World War.

I handed the completed major and journal to my English teacher and she said that I should write a final response in the form of a letter to you to wind up this completed major project.

I now realise just how much time and effort goes into making historical picture books and writing up interviews so that many people can use this type of information. I have spent just over nine months working on Gull Force as my English major assignment and I now know just how hectic and frustrating these things can become especially when you think you've lost bits of important information like this letter on a computer disk. Luckily for me, I found it and the cost for thorough research of this assignment, including travelling to Ambon was approximately \$570.00.

I have thoroughly enjoyed researching about Gull Force and would like to learn more about Gull Force as a whole (if I've missed anything!!) Mr Lavery. Once again, thank you for your wonderful information that you sent me for use in my major assignment

Thanking You
Caitlyn Antella

