



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, Inc.

Incorporated in New South Wales - ABN 35 027 362 171
Including the former Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society

Patrons

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We wish to invite your school to use a history supplement as part of your teaching of the Second World War. Our aim is to encourage students to explore the significance of WWII in the Papua New Guinea Islands, then an Australian Mandated Territory, and what the start of the Pacific War in 1942 meant for Australia, including what remains its worst maritime disaster.

Members, teachers, of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Group of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) have prepared a history supplement titled ***Some Came Home: An Insight into the First Engagement of WWII on Australian Territory***, which history teachers can use in the teaching of the national history curriculum.

It is an outstanding electronic resource, available free, and can be taught in one or two lessons.

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Education Committee provides:

- A lesson plan following the content links which are in the Australian Curriculum
- Teacher background notes
- Student Worksheets
- The DVD - *Some Came Home* in which POWs and civilian internees are interviewed about their experiences in WWII
- A list of resources that teachers can use

The students' exercises can be completed either as individuals or in groups, over two or three periods. It can also be broken into stand-alone sections with a brief background overview.

This teaching supplement can also be used to link the two world wars and as a lead up to Kokoda as well as highlighting the effects of war on Australian POWs and civilian internees and their families.

To provide a little background information, the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society was established in 2009 to represent the interests of the families of the soldiers and civilians captured in Rabaul and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion and occupation in January 1942.

The major objective of the Society was to have a memorial erected in memory of those lost, which was achieved and unveiled at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 1 July 2012. Our Society

Rabaul and Montevideo Maru WWII Education

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then amalgamated with the PNGAA – which is a non-profit organisation with approx. 1,500 members globally including a majority in Australia and is run by volunteers. Our current members have either lived in Papua New Guinea or have an interest in it, particularly in history and culture, and strengthening the ties between the peoples of Australia and PNG. The Society's current objective is to focus on Education and to ensure that Secondary Students have the opportunity to learn an Australian Perspective of the Pacific in WW2.

Over 1000 Australian soldiers and civilians were captured in Rabaul – New Britain and the New Guinea Islands after the Japanese invasion in January 1942. After spending over five months in POW Camps in Rabaul, the prisoners were then boarded onto the *MS Montevideo Maru*, a Japanese prisoner of war 'Hell-Ship', which was torpedoed on 1 July 1942 off the coast of the Philippines by a US submarine, *USS Sturgeon*. The *MS Montevideo Maru* was the only prisoner of war 'Hell-Ship' with no allied survivors. All 1053 allied prisoners on board drowned; double the number of Australians killed in Vietnam, and many more than died in the sinking of *HMAS Sydney* (645) and the hospital ship, *AHS Centaur* (268). This remains Australia's greatest maritime disaster.

Due to many factors, including that families were not told for three and a half years after the event that their young men had died, this was an often unspoken tragedy in many families and therefore many Australians still have no idea that they have had a family member or members involved. This, often unknown, part of our history is an enormous Australian tragedy.

With its strategic location close to Australia, Rabaul's significance in our history is unique. The battle at Bitapaka, near Rabaul, in the then German Colony of New Guinea, was where Australian troops first engaged in battle on 11 September 1914 to defend Australia in World War One; and the Fall of Rabaul in January 1942 (WWII), six weeks after Pearl Harbour, was the first time an Australian territory had been occupied by enemy forces. 56 of those who died on the *Montevideo Maru* were WWI veterans, some highly decorated.

We understand that you have very little time to teach the history curriculum and we hope we are offering you a way of making the history of WWI and WWII more teachable. This remarkable story, involving a country which was very much part of our Australian history and is now Australia's nearest neighbour, deserves a more significant place in our Australian curriculum.

The Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Group, welcomes any feedback from teachers on this supplement. A list of participating schools is kept on file – if you could let us know of your interest, we would appreciate it please. Teachers using this content as part of WWII studies can also contact the association for further information:

E: education@memorial.org.au or admin@memorial.org.au or your contact person.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Williams
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