

# The meaning of VJ-Day

Guy Griffiths, Peter Ryan, Neville McNamara & Joan Dowson

The recent sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II saw numerous newspaper articles and television programs try, with varying success, to cover the momentous events of August and September 1945 and their meaning to those involved — and now their descendants.

With the aim of commemorating the many sacrifices that were made in achieving victory, and the long peace and relative prosperity which followed, *Defender* invited four respected World War II veterans to contribute short articles describing what they were doing when the war ended. We also asked how they felt on receiving the news, what it meant for them and their friends, and what they did in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender. A secondary aim of these first-hand recollections is to draw some strategic lessons for contemporary readers.

Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths, AO, DSO, DSC (Retd) has provided a naval viewpoint. Peter Ryan, MM, has tackled our questions from an Army perspective. Air Chief Marshal Sir Neville McNamara, KBE, AO, AFC. AE (Retd) addresses the issues involved from an Air Force view. Finally, Mrs Joan Dowson, MBE, OAM, tells us how it felt as one of the many young women serving with the defence force both home and overseas.

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Guy Griffiths

During the recent events and publicity surrounding the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, it seems quite possible that many have the impression that the war in the Pacific ended with the amphibious landing of the Australian 7<sup>th</sup> Division at Balikpapan on 01 July 1945, preceded by successful land battles in the New Guinea area. Little is known of the wider role of the Royal Australian Navy in the South West Pacific, where our relatively limited number of ships operated with the US Seventh Fleet through to the signing of the surrender in Tokyo Bay on 02 September 1945. The land battles in the South West and Central Pacific could not have been fought and won without the major factor of sea power. Sea power provided the means to transport, land, cover and support troops with seaborne air power, gunfire support and air defence.

On 13 August 1945 I was a member of the ship's company of HMAS *Shropshire* which was in Subic Bay as part of Task Force 74 in the US Seventh Fleet. That evening we were informed of Japanese peace overtures but it was not until 15 August that the news was received of the unconditional surrender which was officially announced next day. There was an enormous sense of relief that the long war had ceased and we certainly did not debate the pros and cons of the atomic bomb. As far as we were concerned it possibly saved thousands of allied lives. *Shropshire* held an 'At Home' for some 400 officers of TF74, it was a great success. Basically life had changed, especially for 'Hostilities Only' and Reserve personnel — demob (demobilisation) and going home became the dominant topics of conversation.

Little did we know at the time that plans had been developed for the final assault on Japan, 'Operation Olympic'. Apparently bombardment areas had been settled and *Shropshire* would be positioned off the landing beaches at Kyushu. Fortunately we had been spared the thought of facing more Kamikaze attacks after the experience at Leyte and Lingayen Gulf. But what had the RAN been doing in the lead up to the surrender.

It is well known that US strategy against Japanese aggression in the Pacific essentially consisted of a two-pronged counter-offensive. That directed by Admiral Nimitz, thrusting with sea power and amphibious landings through the Central Pacific to Japan; together with that by General Macarthur, pushing through the Solomons and New Guinea with the immediate goal being to retake the Philippines then continue to Japan. In each strategic thrust sea power was the dominant factor.

In the months from about October 1944, RAN ships were spread widely, serving with the US Seventh Fleet, the British Pacific Fleet (BPF), plus the many engaged on support operations in Bougainville, New Britain, New Guinea and Borneo waters.

Since the end of 1943 *Australia*, *Shropshire*, *Warramunga* and *Arunta* had operated in TF74, a combined USN-RAN force which continued in various forms until the end of the war. In October 1944, these ships as part of the bombardment group, plus *Gascoyne* and HDML 1074 surveying, *Westralia*, *Manoora* and *Kanimbla* landing ships infantry, supported

by supply ships *Bishopdale*, *Poyang*, *Yunnan* and *Merkur*, participated in the huge armada which executed a successful amphibious landing in Leyte Gulf. On 21 October *Australia* was hit on the bridge and director-control towers by a Kamikaze aircraft and suffered 30 officers and men killed or died of wounds, plus 64 officers and men wounded. *Australia* withdrew to Manus escorted by *Warramunga*. Shortly thereafter on 25 October *Shropshire* and *Arunta* took part in the last great naval surface battle in Surigao Strait, where *Shropshire* contributed to the sinking of the battleship *Yamashiro*. Overall in the Leyte landing, *Shropshire* in the covering force also gained great praise from the USN for an outstanding performance in air raid reporting.

Prior to Leyte on 16 and 17 October the destroyers *Quiberon* and *Norman* were with the British Eastern Fleet in an air and bombardment assault in the Malaya and Nicobar Islands area in an effort to divert Japanese attention away from Leyte Gulf. This mission did not succeed and Japanese strategy was directed to the Philippines.

In early January 1945 the next major landing was executed at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon. Our ships in TF74 were part of the bombardment group. *Australia* had returned from repairs and *Warrego* had joined *Gascoyne* for surveying and sweeping duties. This was the second operation subjected to Kamikaze attacks. During the period 6-9 January *Australia* was hit by five Kamikazes and suffered 3 officers and 41 sailors killed, but throughout *Australia* met all its bombardment tasks. The damaged cruiser withdrew, her war had ended. *Shropshire* was one of the few ships which escaped damage, on one occasion being saved from a Kamikaze by an accurate shot from *Gascoyne*. On 16 February *Shropshire* supported the landing on Corregidor.

Meanwhile, the BPF having assembled in Australia from the end of 1944, reported for duty with the US Fifth Fleet on 23 March 1945. It was designated TF57 and operated as a fourth task force in the US fast carrier force. RAN destroyers *Quickmatch* and *Quiberon* were escorts with the main force, with *Norman*, *Nizam* and *Napier* and the corvettes as escorts for the BPF replenishment group.

On 01 April 1945 American forces invaded Okinawa and began an operation which resulted in a large number of casualties ashore, together with heavy casualties in ships and personnel of the covering naval force. However Okinawa saw the demise of the last Japanese surface force plus the virtual elimination of any effective effort by enemy air forces. Subsequently throughout June and July the Fifth Fleet, including (the BPF) TF57, continued heavy air and bombardment attacks on the Japanese mainland. It was a busy time and left little doubt in the minds of the enemy that a landing on the homeland would be the next move. The invasion of Kyushu was planned for 01 November.

HMAS *Hobart* returned to service and joined TF74 in March 1945 after a prolonged refit, having suffered torpedo damage and casualties off the Solomons in July 1943. In June and July 1945 TF74 supported the landings at Brunei, Tarakan and Labuan, finally culminating in the large and successful amphibious landing which put the 7<sup>th</sup> Division ashore at Balikpapan on 01 July. This was virtually the

first and last large-scale landing where RAN ships directly supported Australian troops. The Balikpapan operation saw the associated Australian ships firing their last shots in World War II, and it also recorded once again the outstanding work of our survey vessels and the three Landing Ships Infantry. From Balikpapan the task force returned to Subic Bay at the end of July but continued to exercise for the future, and were in harbour for the momentous announcement on 16 August.

On 31 August HMA Ships *Shropshire*, *Hobart*, *Warramunga* and *Bataan* anchored in Tokyo Bay. Previous arrivals were destroyers *Napier* and *Nizam* on 27<sup>th</sup>, and corvettes *Ballarat*, *Ipswich*, *Cessnock* and *Pirie* on 30 August. Regrettably *Arunta*, which had a significant operational record in the Pacific, was not present, at that time being in refit in Sydney. The RAN ships were in Tokyo Bay to proudly represent Australia in the huge gathering of some 258 Allied ships for the signing of the surrender onboard the USS *Missouri* on 02 September.

After the signing of the surrender, South West Pacific Command under General MacArthur ceased to exist and Australian ships came under the overall command of the Australian Naval Board. The ships in Tokyo Bay became part of the Japanese Occupation Force and were rotated for duty, those headed for Sydney, such as *Hobart* in September, transported a number of personnel with high priority for demobilisation. Logistic support for the Australian Squadron which had caused problems during 1944 and 1945, continued. During earlier operations the supply of mail and victuals

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had suffered badly. At times the standard of food onboard *Shropshire* could only have been considered deplorable.

Throughout the South West Pacific the small ships such as corvettes, motor launches, harbour defence motor launches, and including *Stuart* and *Vendetta* of Scrap Iron Flotilla fame, were fully occupied endeavouring to restore places and people to some degree of normalcy. Earlier the corvettes had been widely deployed as far afield as the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Closer to home in the Pacific they had escorted convoys supplying logistic support to Army units, especially in the Solomons, New Guinea and Borneo. Corvettes had also transported Army detachments to such places as Bougainville and Buna. In their minesweeping role they had cleared channels for amphibious landings, with the approaches then clearly marked by survey vessels.

After the signing of the surrender on 02 September the small ships were directly involved in receiving, or being present at, the signing by the various isolated Japanese commands which had been bypassed enroute to Tokyo. By mid September there were 19 corvettes in Hong Kong and many were involved in the surrender of such places as Rabaul, New Britain, New Ireland, Wewak, Balikpapan, Morotai, Kuching, Timor, Nauru, Ocean Island, Ambon and Macassar. They also recovered allied Prisoners of War.

This is not the place to revisit the lessons arising from the strategies and operations of World War II. However it is appropriate to note the demise of the battleship and the dominance of seaborne air power which virtually remains the key factor in sea power today. Throughout the war in

all theatres close co-operation between the Army and Navy was the key factor in a number of operations, beginning in the Mediterranean and later in the South West Pacific and culminating in the amphibious landing of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division at Balikpapan. The present ADF should not overlook this previous capability.

Over the years there have been occasions when our strategic thinking and planning have been less than realistic. Recently it was heartening to hear calls for an ADF able to mount expeditionary operations in the defence of Australia and its interests at home and further afield. In fact over the last century we have been mounting mainly expeditionary operations, so little has changed. In such a strategy it is important to remember that the well-known Army battles in the past could not have been fought unless sea power had provided all the necessary support. ♦

*Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths, AO, DSO, DSC (Retd) served in the RAN from 1937 to 1980. He served on HMS Repulse and HMAS Shropshire in World War II, HMAS Sydney and HMAS Anzac in the Korean War, and commanded HMAS Hobart during the Vietnam War. He also commanded HMAS Parramatta in the early 1960s and the flagship HMAS Melbourne in the mid 1970s.*


## A Miracle of Deliverance

Peter Ryan

I recall exactly (as people are wont to say of the assassination of President Kennedy) how I heard of the dropping of the Hiroshima atom bomb. I learned at breakfast in the Officers' Mess of the Land Headquarters School of Civil Affairs in the grounds of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. That morning's *Canberra Times* had squeezed in just the bare announcement – maybe half a dozen lines. They were spotted instantly by the 60-year-old but still gimlet eyes of Major Ida Leeson, the remarkable woman who in civil life was Sydney's Mitchell Librarian. To the dozen or so CivSchool officers finishing their coffee, she read the paragraph verbatim.

Even the least scientifically-minded of us grasped that we had just heard the most awesome news of the twentieth century; there and then, we sensed that the world in which we had sat down to breakfast was not the world in which we would rise from the long mess table. But this sombre truth lay well subdued beneath an overwhelming sensation of joy and deliverance: the Japanese will now surrender; the war is virtually over; and we were almost dizzily grateful that the atom bomb had so swiftly brought it all to pass.

Deep down, many serving men had hidden a private dread of the bloody future campaigns which, it seemed, would be required for the final crushing of Japan. It wasn't much discussed at the time, but in later years many a comrade has confessed to me: 'Yes. It was always there at the back of the mind, wasn't it?' My own secret fear (with small rational basis) was that I might be recalled to active service for an assault on Rabaul, which the enemy maintained to the end as



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an almost inexpugnable fortress. From a myriad Australian minds, Hiroshima lifted all such clouds.

There was little Australian sympathy for the Japanese. For example, just after breakfast, in the grounds outside the mess, I asked a soldier had he heard the news. He was an NCO who had fought with distinction in the Middle East, Greece and Papua. No, he hadn't heard. My short account ended: 'And they say up to 100,000 Japanese may have been killed'. 'Huh! Is that all?'

Guilty doubts and second thoughts about 'The Bomb' emerged only with the generation which did not fight World War II, though it enjoyed to the full the age of peace and prosperity which victory bought. But today's unease about the morality of Hiroshima can claim no reasoned basis unless it begins with an honest acceptance of the facts of the time, many of which are now forgotten.

Ever since 1936, the Japanese army had bloodily marauded on the Chinese mainland. 'To kill some Chinks' (as they themselves expressly put it) young Japanese officers sought tours of duty in China, in a spirit much akin to Australian youths going off on a weekend's rabbit shooting. Thus were up to 15,000,000 Chinese civilians slaughtered. (Yes – fifteen million).

Smaller in scale but closer to home: On 04 February 1942, at Tol plantation near Rabaul, the Japanese seized 160 Australian soldiers, who were hungry, sick and unarmed. Having tied their hands, the Japanese led them into the bush, and in an orgy of sword-slashing, bayoneting and shooting, murdered them almost to the last prisoner. On 14 August 1942, on Buna beach in Papua, the invading Japanese beheaded nine civilians, including all the Anglican missionaries, male and female. Among the victims was a little boy of six, and before they cut his head off they made him watch the beheading of his father.

If the fiery finale of Hiroshima and Nagasaki closed the drama of the Pacific War, it is reasonable to inquire about the opening curtain. It had, of course, been raised by the Japanese themselves at Pearl Harbour, an act of duplicity which mocked every standard of accepted international behaviour.

Cruelty and terror towards soldier and civilian alike were part of the Japanese war-fighting style. By August 1945 it was no wonder that they commanded few reserves of international credibility – or mercy.

The Japanese were wonderfully resolute warriors, as every Australian who actually faced them in 1941-45 knows. Service to the Emperor made light of wounds, suffering or death in battle. Their acknowledged military prowess – alas for them – helped to seal their nuclear fate. Iwo Jima lay only at the fringe of the Japanese homeland, but against the invading US Marines they fought like tigers, slaughtering American troops by the thousands. The nearer to Tokyo, the more fanatical the resistance would grow. If the war against Japan had proceeded by invasion from the sea (as planned up till then) half a million dead Allied servicemen was a conservative estimate, plus perhaps three times that number of Japanese troops and civilians.

Though their economy was collapsing, there was no hint of any contemplated surrender. If some at least of the lives of our prisoners of war were to be saved, and if the suffering populations of Japanese-occupied territories were to be relieved, all possible speed was needed.

As Harry Truman faced the awful equations which presidents and prime-ministers must solve, the scientists placed the atom bomb in his hands, and re-wrote the math. Across the last sixty years, I have never doubted that his decision was morally as well as militarily right. I have gone along with the exclamation of the great US writer: 'Thank God for the atom bomb!'

The belated queasiness over Hiroshima expressed by modern moralists, pacifists and academics is shallow. So long after the event, many of them have lost perception even of the most cogent contemporary facts, so that their moralisms are formulated in an intellectual vacuum. Perhaps – with a touch of humility – they might ask themselves whether they belong with Kipling's vineyard labourers, who:

*showed us for our good,  
Deaf to mirth and blind to scorn,  
How we might have best withstood  
Burdens that he had not borne. ♦*

*Peter Ryan, MM, served in New Guinea with the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit as a coastwatcher and district officer behind enemy lines, undertaking numerous intelligence-gathering, resistance-organising and reconnaissance operations. Later he served with the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs at Land Headquarters and the Army's Civil Affairs School in Canberra. His post-war career included appointments as a senior executive with ICI 1958-62, director of Melbourne University Press 1962-88, and as a senior official with the Victorian Supreme Court 1988-2003. His wartime memoir of his experiences behind Japanese lines, 'Fear Drive My Feet', has been in print for the last 40 years.*

## On with the Next Sortie

**Neville McNamara**

With my friend Peter Murray I joined 75 Squadron RAAF in the Halmaheras (between New Guinea and Suluwesi) on 10 April 1945. We had just finished a very thorough sequence of training by way of an Elementary Instructors' Refresher Course on Wirraways at Deniliquin, NSW, a full OTU Course at Mildura on Wirraways and Kittyhawks, and a (so-called) hardening-up course at Sandgate in Queensland. We were prepared as well as we could possibly be for fighter squadron operations and we were especially pleased to be part of such a famous squadron.

There was a degree of excitement and anticipation in joining 75 Squadron in the lead up period to Operation Oboe One, the capture of Tarakan Island off north-east Borneo and the subsequent operations over Borneo including the support of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division in its attack upon Balikpapan in south-east Borneo (Operation Oboe Two). We just had time for a few flying hours of familiarisation at Morotai before the squadron prepared for embarkation and deployment. 'P-Day'

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for the assault on Tarakan was to be 01 May 1945 and the Squadron was expected to be established on the airfield at Tarakan on 07 May 1945. Regrettably, the stiff resistance of the Japanese, the surprisingly bad state of the airfield and the frequent occurrences of heavy rain resulted in the flight of 75 Squadron from Morotai to Tarakan being delayed until 28 June. Consequently, all air support for 26 Brigade on Tarakan had to be provided by longer-range aircraft of 13<sup>th</sup> Air Force, USAAF and such units as B24 squadrons of the RAAF.

Even when the Balikpapan operation commenced, 75 Squadron's attempts to give support did not fare well. From memory and my Log Book records, of all the planned attempts only two were successful; one more was cancelled before take-off and a further two were recalled due to adverse weather before we reached the area of operations. Peter was lucky and took part in the two successful missions but I happened to be in both missions that were recalled.

Other missions flown by 75 Squadron from Tarakan included strikes in support of Army officers working with native tribes against the Japanese in the interior of Borneo. These missions were rather frustrating as we simply bombed on given grid coordinates, often in thick jungle terrain, with the effect of dispersing the Japanese for the natives to pick them off. Sandakan and other targets in the northeast of Borneo came in for a fair degree of attention but there was rarely any significance in any of them.

I was with 75 Squadron for 5 ½ months, from mid-April 1945 to the end of September 1945, and flew a total of 68 hours, which included 15 operational sorties. A fairly quiet time, and a modest operational contribution, when compared with the experiences of many other RAAF aircrew members during World War II. I must admit to some personal disappointment that both of my postings to operational squadrons (13 Squadron USAAF at Laloki near Port Moresby February-March 1943 and 75 Squadron at Tarakan) were so short and so relatively unproductive.

However, I must acknowledge that life as we experienced it in a squadron such as 75 at Tarakan was very much to my liking. I was doing what I had always wanted to do, flying good aircraft in a RAAF Squadron with good friends in a tropical environment which suited me just fine. The living conditions were basic but they were adequate and a margin ahead of many other places.

So what were my thoughts when the war ended? For a few weeks the rumours were rife and there were even a few false-start celebrations. But certainly, with the official word on 15 August 1945, we all experienced a feeling of great relief, not so much for ourselves as for those such as the units of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division still battling it out with the Japanese in south-east Borneo and suffering losses up to and even beyond the deadline.

For many there was, understandably, much speculation as to when they might be able to get back home to Australia to wives, families and friends, but for me there was not the same feeling of anticipation. No-one in their right mind would want a continuation of the War but, as mentioned earlier, I was experiencing a life style I liked and I could now see the prospect of it coming to an end with probable discharge from

the RAAF on return to Australia. I was desperate to stay in the RAAF and even sent off a letter to Air Force Headquarters applying for a permanent commission which, of course, was far too premature and accordingly justified a response in the negative. The story ends on a happy note, however, for whilst we were preparing the Squadron for return to Australia, we were advised that volunteers were being called for to join 81 Wing at Labuan, which would move to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The icing on the cake was that we would be converting to P51 Mustangs at Labuan. I could not put my hand up quickly enough. ♦

*Air Chief Marshal Sir Neville McNamara, KBE, AO, AFC, AE (Retd) served with the RAAF 1941-1984. He served in the Pacific, Korean and Vietnam wars and commanded the RAAF contribution to the latter 1971-72. Later he was Defence Attache in Washington DC, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Chief of the Air Staff and finally Chief of the Defence Force Staff, the then senior position in the ADF.*

## From Dancing to War

**Joan Dowson**

Before the war I worked as a secretary and taught ballet and ballroom dancing. I had also been serving as a Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) reservist since 1936. As one of the 200 VADs selected for overseas service I went to the Middle East on the *Queen Mary* in early November 1941, and nursed at the 2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital (AGH). After returning home in mid February 1943 I served, under very difficult conditions, with the first group of the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) at the 2<sup>nd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> AGH in New Guinea.

Soon after my return from New Guinea in early 1944 I was transferred to the Red Cross Field Force in Western Australia. This force was formed, among other things, to assist with the rehabilitation of disabled members of our armed forces and we trained in basic occupational therapy skills. Later, in Melbourne, we were also trained to treat repatriated prisoners of war (PW) and assist them to recover from their dreadful time in captivity.

At the end of the war I was serving at an Army hospital at Redbank near Brisbane. For a long time before the end of the war my friends and I had been very despondent, as the Japanese seemed to be still in many of the islands close to Australia and we could not see how we could win the war. I was missing my parents in Perth and had lost my only brother, Pilot Officer Frank Richardson who was a RAAF officer serving with the RAF, when his Blenheim Bomber was shot down by the Japanese over Burma in March 1943.

On Friday 10 August 1945, at about 11PM, I was in bed asleep. Some of the sisters at the hospital got us all out of bed with the news that the war was over and we joined a party in the medical officers' mess. I felt quite overwhelmed by the news and there were half-hearted celebrations the following day as the peace had not yet been formally declared. The next day, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>, we went into the city where the crowds were going silly in their celebrations. After so long away I

felt very homesick and very glad that peace was coming. We were still waiting the next day for news, and celebrations and much noise also filled the streets on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A farcical victory march was even held in Brisbane before peace was formally declared.

On 14 August 1945 we heard that terms of peace had been accepted. The news was released at 9am on the 15<sup>th</sup> that the war was over and we all had a spot of sherry. My friend Jean, another Red Cross field officer, met me in Brisbane later in the day, where there were thousands of screaming school-kids, jumping about and kissing everybody. We felt that they didn't understand what we had all been through. Jean had lost a brother in the Royal Navy. Everyone everywhere was celebrating and very bright, but we left early to go back to the hospital as the enormity of the release of tension after five years of army service, and the loss of our brothers and so many other wonderful men, was overwhelming.

After VJ Day I continued with my duties at Redbank Hospital for the next few weeks and the time went quickly. Four weeks later, in September 1945, I had a call from Red Cross Headquarters ordering me to report immediately to Sydney to join the Royal Navy aircraft carrier, *HMS Formidable*, as one of the two Red Cross Field Force officers attached to assist with the repatriation of allied PWs. We were part of a complement that also included two nursing Sisters and 15 VADs. On departure day, Wednesday 19 September, we embarked and were allocated the Admiral's day cabin and lounge. The Royal Navy certainly lived up to its reputation for courtesy and consideration, and I was advised that this was the first time a Western Australian woman had been a member of an RN wardroom.

We sailed out of Sydney heads with a large crowd of people farewelling us from the shores. On Friday 28 September we weighed anchor at Leyte where there were hundreds of little ships crammed in the harbour. On Tuesday 02 October we were in Manila and ready to embark the PWs but it was too rough. We held a rehearsal that afternoon for the concert party I was organising for the ship's company and incoming passengers. The next day we were also delayed by a typhoon warning, so everyone was disappointed again. The PWs eventually boarded on the Thursday. Most were Australian but there were a few British and New Zealanders. The hangar below the flight deck was full of hospital beds.

My diary for Saturday 13 October 1945 reads: 'Up 6am, packed and ready on flight deck 8am. Into harbour Circular Quay 9am, boats all round the harbour making a welcome for the boys and all bed patients on flight deck. Planes flew over, taking many snaps, and reporters on board. Boys all said goodbye and what a time they had had, and that they could not thank the Red Cross and the Royal Navy enough.'

On 24 October we left Sydney on our second trip to repatriate Indian PWs from Rabaul to Bombay. They commenced embarking at Rabaul on Monday 29 October at 8.30am, and had all been loaded on the ship by 1.30pm. There were a lot of very sick Indian PWs, some with legs amputated on account of Japanese torture. During this time we were distributing rations on the flight deck. Each man received a pack of cigarettes, a cake of chocolate, matches

and a welcome note from the British and Australian Red Cross. It does not seem much now but it seemed a lot then, especially to the PW.

Afterwards we visited each man in the ship's hospital and gave him his issue plus barley sugar, a process that we repeated daily. During the voyage we operated the Red Cross cabin, where we handed out materials so the returning PWs could make lanyards, belts, hessian mats, shopping bags and handbags as presents to take home for their families. They seemed quite delighted with their efforts.

In addition to daily cigarettes, and alternatively a ration of sweets or biscuits, our daily distribution varied from toilet gear, handkerchiefs, peanuts, matches, dilly bags, washers, tomato juice, paper, pencils, envelopes, boot brushes, lifesavers and, for the Sikhs, we always had a special issue of barley sugar or sweets as their religion forbade smoking. During the voyage the Red Cross officers also helped with the ship's mending

On the return voyage we sailed from Bombay on 16 November. The ship called at Batavia (now Jakarta) before embarking 1300 long-service veterans from the Island campaigns. On 26 November we took on board troops from the 2<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Battalions and left for Tarakan and Morotai.

On the voyage back to Sydney we assisted the ship's medical staff with urgent requirements and ran the library so the troops had books and magazines to read. We also took part in a concert arranged for the troops. Just before arriving in Sydney they entertained us, together with the ship's captain and the medical staff, at an afternoon tea party. ♦

*Dorothy Joan Dowson, MBE, OAM served with the 2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> AGH in the Middle East, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> AGH in New Guinea, and with the Red Cross Field Force in Australia and with the repatriation of allied Prisoners of War from South East Asia to Australia and India. After the war she married, raised a family and never became a professional ballerina. Joan has been with the RUSI since 1947 and was a founding member of the ADA in 1975.*

## BEQUESTS TO THE ADA

Have you considered making a donation or bequest to the Australia Defence Association?

The Association runs a very lean operation and every dollar makes a difference. A suitable form of bequest is 'I bequeath the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Australia Defence Association (ABN 16 083 007 390)'.

If you have already made a will, you don't have to change it; you can simply make a codicil.

The Association can assist with the provision of will or codicil forms, or referral to a solicitor. Further details may be obtained from [bequests@ada.asn.au](mailto:bequests@ada.asn.au)