

# *The* SANTONIAN

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Luganville, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu

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## Bienvenue au Santonien

The extra quarterly newsletter for our Museum members.

Welcome to The Santonian, our quarterly series for our Museum supporters with special articles of interest on the war in the South Pacific.

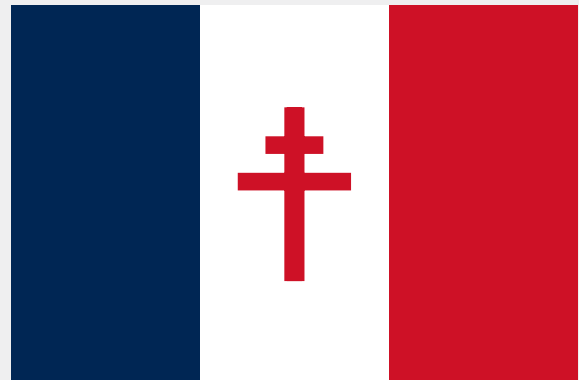
The last issue of the Santonian featured a piece on unravelling a rare colour footage of the US fleet in the theatre and showed that the images were shot in Espiritu Santo in September 1943.

This issue, featuring a decidedly French flavour, peels back further history related to that – with the sometimes mysterious story of the Free French vessel, Cap Des Palmes.

We've also picked apart a 1942 intelligence report from New Caledonia, which shows the lengths to which the lives of civilians were analysed – it's a tale of possible spies, and maybe not so secret liaisons.

And we've got some more Ni Vanuatu memories from the war – courtesy of Margaret and Bruce Moon's 1998 book.

We hope you enjoy this all.



The Free French flag from 1940 to 1944.

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# The mystery ship of Free France

*In the grainy footage we pored over that was actually shot in Espiritu Santo's mighty fleet anchorage, the cameraman lingered over the long, elegant lines of what appeared to be a merchant ship. Given the carriers, cruisers, and destroyers also in the harbour, it seemed an odd ship to zoom in on.*

We looked at the ship logs for that day in the harbour, and it showed the presence of a vessel called the Cap Des Palmes. Some further research showed other images of the said ship. It was indeed the Cap Des Palmes in the footage – her distinctive lines marked her out as something different from the run of the mill. But what was she doing there?



The grainy footage of the Cap Des Palmes anchored in the Segond Channel, between Aore Island and Santo.

The images aside, the record of the Cap Des Palmes was sketchy. She was however clearly serving in the Free French navy at the time of the video shooting.

Sketchy that was until we discovered that Australian historian and businessman Peter Ingman had written something definitive about what he dubbed the obscure story of the Cap Des Palmes. It was published in the Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs in 2011.

Peter's kindly agreed to share the fruits of his work with the readers of the Santonian so we can get to learn more about this vessel. Even so, he had to admit there were aspects of her past that remain unclear.

Perhaps a side digression in some naval terminology would be helpful at this point.

The two terms relevant are AMC – standing for Armed Merchant Cruiser – and Q-Ship.

AMCs were the concept of taking a suitable large merchant vessel and equipping it with guns more commonly seen on large warships. Thus armed, they could offer at least some protection to convoys against the threat of surface raiders – i.e., enemy warships.

AMCs by their nature had to be faster than usual, often larger to accommodate their new weaponry, and with an ability to cruise longer distances than usual. Fast liners were one example that could be converted.

An AMC could also of course serve as a merchant raider itself, by remaining disguised in its original role.

No-one pretended that an AMC was a substitute for a proper warship. It could not carry the same protective armour, or the fire control. But it still had teeth, and with real warships always in short supply, was a useful

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stopgap in World War One – and at least in the early days of World War Two.

Most famously in the latter war, two British AMCs – the Jervis Bay and the Rawalpindi - had a fought brave but doomed actions against German pocket battleships and battlecruisers. And a German raider, the Kormoran, sank the Australian light cruiser Sydney in 1940 in a battle off Western Australia in which she was also sunk.



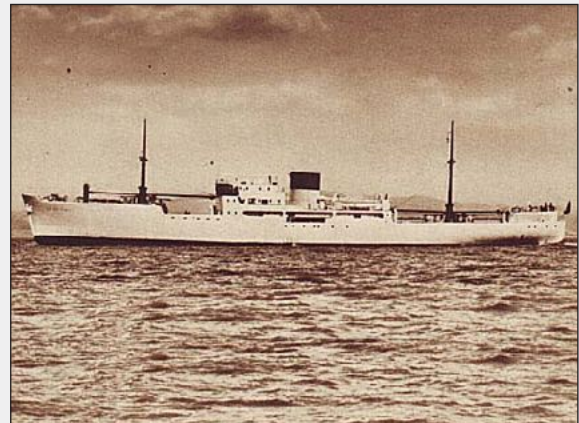
The HMS Jervis Bay in the midst of battle. Painting hmsjervisbay.com.

Q Ships were also born in the First World War. They were converted merchant ships that would mimic a helpless trade vessel in the hope that marauding U-boats would surface and approach. If they did, the Q ships would unmask hidden guns and hope to sink the surprised submarine. As part of the ruse, Q ships would have panic crews who would put on a show of climbing into lifeboats and abandoning their vessels.



British First World War Q-ship HMS Tamarisk.

Q Ships had some success, but more were lost in action than the subs they were meant to combat. However, as a concept, they would live on in some fashion into the Second World War.



An early photo of the Cap Des Palmes in her original role as a freighter. Photo Christopher Eger - laststandonzombieisland.com

In fact, at various times, both roles were given to the Cap Des Palmes – but we're getting ahead of our story at this point.

As Peter Ingman has researched, the Cap Des Palmes was built in Denmark in 1935.

The ship was a modern 3080-ton diesel powered freighter with a long range (10,000-plus miles) and a healthy maximum speed of 17 1/2 knots.

He writes:

*As a bananier she had served on the fruit trade between West Africa and Algiers. Such fruit carrying ships might seem an odd choice for such conversions, but they were second only to fast and modern passenger liners for suitability as an AMC.*

Indeed, she was - when war commenced in 1939, Cap Des Palmes was on a list of vessels planned for conversion to just that role by the French Navy - but work never began.

Instead, she came under Vichy control, answering to the south of France regime that had agreed the surrender to Nazi Germany in 1940 – and thus still held sway over vast worldwide colonies – and the considerable and potentially decisive remnants of the French surface fleet.

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Under Vichy control, Cap Des Palmes took troops from Dhaka to Gabon and remained stranded there because of a Royal Navy blockade in support of a nascent Free French movement that had vowed to fight on.

As Peter Ingman relates:

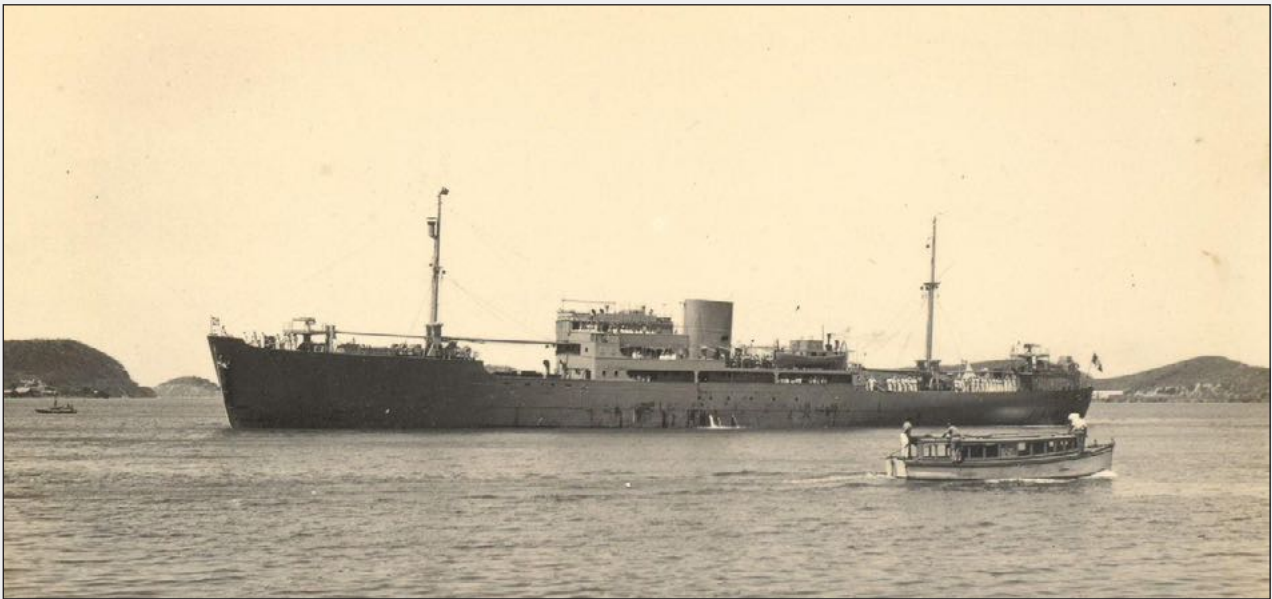
*In late 1940 she was seized as a prize by the Free French naval forces after a short battle with Vichy vessels. Recognising the quality of their newly won prize, for the next year the FNFL continued to press for conversion of Cap Des Palmes to an AMC. Formal plans were actually drawn up in the United Kingdom.*

Yet, the very idea of AMCs was being questioned by this time. At most, they had proved gallant but fatal in action. Thus, the British Admiralty remained non-committal. As well the Free

*Minister Winston Churchill who was a key free French supporter. Thus, the allies became wary of supplying the FNFL with long range vessels capable of undertaking such independent operations. With her extremely long range, Cap Des Palmes represented a contrast to the mainly coastal and escort vessels in the Free French fleet.*

As Peter Ingman further noted at this time, apart from an ancient battleship used as a static anti-aircraft ship Cap Des Palmes was probably the largest vessel operated by the FNFL up until 1943.

*Amid vague promises that an AMC conversion would be undertaken in either Singapore or Sydney in late 1941 she was dispatched to the Pacific where her long endurance could be fully utilised. Carrying military supplies and*



The Cap Des Palmes arriving in Noumea on November 5, 1941. Photo Christopher Eger - laststandonzombieisland.com

French rather blotted their copybook:

*On Christmas Eve 1941 the FNFL took over the tiny Vichy territory of Saint Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of Newfoundland. This set off a diplomatic storm with the United States and was an embarrassment to British Prime*

*with a political mission she arrived in Tahiti in October 1941. Over coming months, she did a good job maintaining communications within the French Pacific and also with Australia - for example she carried airfield construction workers and machinery to New Caledonia from Sydney, returning with Japanese internees.*

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The term AMC was even used to refer to her when it suited in official documents – presumably so she could carry workers without an accompanying warship escort.

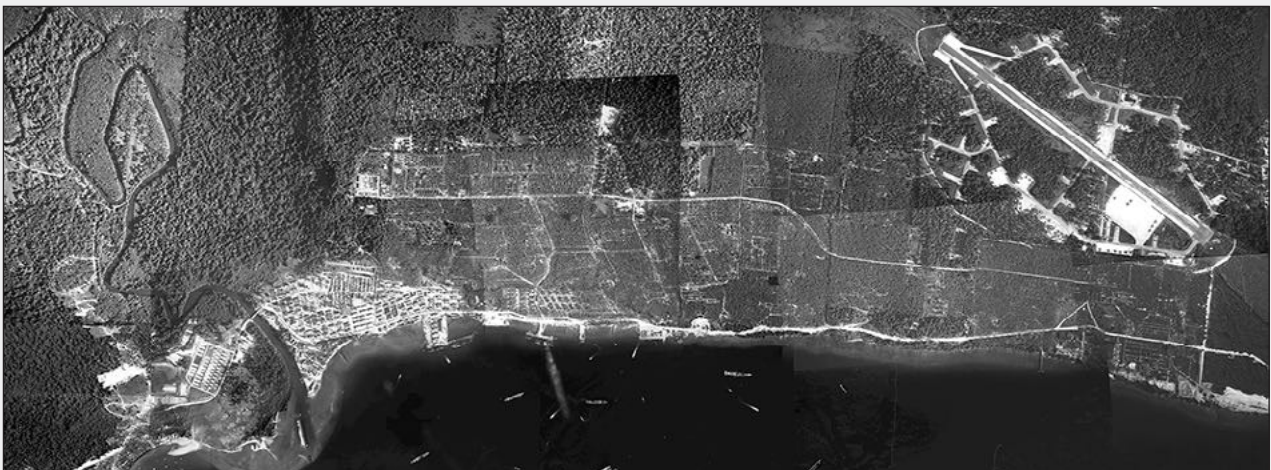
That, Peter Ingman writes, was a bit of a stretch.

*Her actual armament at this time was two ancient 90 millimeter model 1877 guns. There were also 2 8-millimeter LMG and an explosive AA kite.... Some improvement came during the course of 1942 with surplus French weapons fitted in Sydney namely - 13.2-millimeter machine guns and depth charge throwers. A couple of modern French Oerlikons were added later.*

meant negotiating with the French and the British, and in particular concerning those colonial possessions needed to build bases and airfields to stop the Japanese advance. Welcome to the world of the Condominium – or Pandemonium as the Americans wryly nicknamed governance in New Hebrides.

Peter Ingman takes up the next surprising twist, however:

*The Free French drove a hard bargain and were soon armed with Lend Lease supplies. But while shiploads of small arms and jeeps quickly arrived, provision of dockyard resources for a major naval conversion project remained more difficult to obtain. Thus, despite*



The enormous Base Button on Espiritu Santo in 1943. The Cap Des Palmes would often anchor in the channel in the lower portion of this image to unload supplies for the base. Photo US Archives.

The Free French continued to lobby for an actual conversion – but the Admiralty made a final ruling by mid-1942 that it would be a poor use of resources. Peter Ingman also suspects the British did not want any more Pierre and Miquelon style adventures facilitated by the Cap Des Palmes.

As regular readers of the Santonian will know, the South Pacific was now a major theatre of war – as least as far as those involved were concerned. For the Americans, that

*the wishes of the FNFL it seemed Cap Des Palmes would be fated to never achieve the noble status of a proper warship.*

*However, in July 1942 came a direct message from none other than the Commander in Chief U S Navy. Cap Des Palmes would be converted into an AMC in line with French requirements at a US dockyard – on the condition that the ship was returned for task assignment commander South Pacific. This was a very surprising change of heart especially as dockyard resources everywhere were already at maximum capacity. Also, the United States generally had little regard for*

*Continued...*

*the Free French and the relations between the Americans and the French in New Caledonia were extremely poor.*

*Thus, it would appear most unlikely that a political deal was done at a high level to facilitate the conversion. Instead, there must have been an American imperative converting the vessel - but what could the American U S Navy want with a converted French bananier - not to mention the political problems of integrating a foreign vessel into their operations.*

Now the answer to that question can't be answered yet. But enter again the Q ship – that World War One tactical stratagem that seemed to have a very short use by date by the time of 1942.



An example of the ingenious methods used to hide the Q-Ship guns during WWI. A 12-pounder was mounted inside a dummy row boat, that split open to fire. Photos globecomposite.com

As Peter Ingman notes, they certainly would seem a strange choice for the Cap Des Palmes.:

*The Royal Navy commissioned nine Q ships*

*in 1939 but they accomplished nothing. Two were sunk and the remainder were paid off in early 1941.*

*But in 1942 the United States was coping not only with the Japanese in the Pacific Ocean but Germany's U-boats in the Atlantic Ocean. Wholly unprepared and ignoring Britain's hard-won lessons in anti-submarine warfare among other things, a five ship Q ship fleet was secretly fitted out in the Atlantic. These ships also accomplished nothing, and the programme ceased during 1943.*

*However, an even smaller and less well-known Q ship programme was set up in the Pacific to operate against Japanese submarines. This project involved just the USS Anacapa. She was commissioned in August 1942 and cruised off US West Coast unsuccessfully hoping to attract enemy submarines.*

*Thus, as Anacapa was fitting out, the decision was taken to convert Cap Des Palmes. This was at a time when merchant ships were in great demand so presumably the proponents jumped at the proposal to use a modern diesel-powered vessel to try and prove their type of warfare. Exactly how the French felt about acting as a floating target can only be imagined. But when Cap Des Palmes did eventually enter service in this role in 1943 it was over two years since the British had abandoned the concept.*

Perhaps, as he surmises, it was a case of don't look a gift horse in the mouth, because:

*The French vessel was to get a mouthwatering array of modern weapons and sensors. So presumably the FNFL hierarchy was more than willing to play the Q ship role in return. It is possible the Q ship idea was to trap Japanese surface Raiders which had been active near the French central Pacific islands in early 1942.*

*In November 1942 Cap Des Palmes arrived*

*Continued...*

at Mare island naval yard in San Francisco to undergo the most unusual of conversions. Her newly installed main armament was disguised in the manner of an Axis raider and overall, she was painted to appear as a Soviet merchant ship.

The new Cap Des Palmes was turned around in pretty short order. Here was her fit out:

- Concealed 6-inch guns and torpedo tubes.
- An unconcealed 76-millimeter gun fitted aft - this added to the disguise as merchant ships were permitted to carry a defensive gun.
- Oerlikon AA guns.
- Radar, ASDIC, and depth charges.

Cap Des Palmes was also fitted with a so-called model prison for 50 prisoners as well as two cells for tough prisoners.

Peter Ingman describes both those roles as highly imaginative.

*It can only be concluded that these roles were planned in early to mid-1942 but it was not until a year later that the vessel was ready for service and by that time the strategic picture in the South Pacific had changed completely. Exactly what was intended for the vessel remains obscure. French records refer to the ship being used only as a croiseur auxiliaire on somewhat mundane escort duty.*

*There was no mention of even the Q ship role. Also, whether the prison facilities were intended for Japanese, Vichy French or other third parties remains an interesting question. Could the ill-defined sovereignty of the Free French have been a convenient factor in this regard?*

The Cap Des Palmes finally sailed for the



The Cap Des Palmes shows off some of her new armaments following her refit at Mare Island in California. Photo Christopher Eger - laststandonzombieisland.com

South Pacific on 1st of May 1943. The Cap Des Palmes was soon operational in the New Hebrides / Solomon's area. The record is not strong of how she was utilized, although the French do claim a possible submarine kill on 16th of May 1943. And as we know from the records, Cap Des Palmes was definitely in Espiritu Santo's Second Channel in September, when the famous long-range air attack by a Japanese Emily seaplane took place at night over the American fleet.



The Cap Des Palmes after her refit on the west coast of the United States undergoes sea trials off the California coast. Photo Christopher Eger - laststandonzombieisland.com

Continued...

Peter Ingman writes that there are some reports that shed some light on her activities:

*It is known that a panic crew of 30 sailors and civilian dress was maintained whenever Cap Des Palmes was engaged in Q work but how often this duty was carried out is unknown.*

While onboard board discipline was reportedly very strict a Royal Australian Navy observer reported that for a Q ship shore leave was too liberally granted and that both officers and men got most exceedingly drunk while ashore. Secrecy was further compromised by the captain often inviting women guests aboard.

Eventually, with the Q ship programme seen as insignificant. by early 1944, the Cap Des Palmes was back on the US West Coast. This time she remerged as a conventional arm transport, sporting the latest smart camouflage scheme. It was not a role the Cap Des Palmes 'commander relished, as Peter Ingman relates

*Not having a combat role closer to Japan, her Capitan Cabanier, famously complained that the Americans were under employing a well-armed 4000-ton ship in a role that could be more efficiently performed by 350-ton sub chasers. He probably had a point. However, given earlier dispute with the free French in the Pacific, the US Navy had little incentive to agree to this request.*

As the war wound down, in June 1945 she made her last voyage to Australia, and then sailed home to France – ostensibly for refitting for further war action. VJ Day occurred while she was in France, but she did in 1946 ship troops to Indochina.

Post-war she was sold to the Compagnie Maritime de Navigation Fruitière (which still exists), renamed Banfora in 1957, later transferring to a Moroccan registry under the same name.

While shipping a load of oranges from Africa to West Germany, she sprang a leak and sank under tow off Spain's Cape Villano, 17 November 1965. A total loss, but her crew was saved. Peter Ingman gives her a not-insignificant legacy:

*Back in 1941, Cap Des Palmes being the largest operational FNFL ship heading for Pacific territories where the Free French had unprecedented strategic leverage. However, the unusual status of the ship and the territories were not to last. By April 1943 French North Africa and the sizable naval forces based there including the battleship Richelieu had rallied to the Allied cause. Thus, both the French Pacific and the ships based there quickly reverted to backwater status in the eyes of the newly installed metropolitan officers at Fighting French headquarters in Algiers. However, for a brief time in 1942 one humble bananier held a much higher status.*

#### Notes:

We are indebted to Peter Ingman's permission to publish excerpts from his article in the Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs (2011) Vol 3(2). Peter has also written about the wider history of the Free French naval forces. In real life, he is a military history author of ten books and the proprietor of publisher Avonmore Books <https://avonmorebooks.com.au>

Check out their fantastic volumes on the Air War in the Pacific.

Peter lives in Adelaide, South Australia.

# The war of secrets

No-one should need a reminder that wars are a dirty business. That's true both at the front lines and further behind, in civilian life.

In December 1942, barely a year into the war in the Pacific and with the Allies only just beginning to stem the tide, the islands of the New Hebrides and further south remained very much in the focus.

The region of course was largely untouched by the wider strategic concerns of big powers before that time. Their populations were a combination of many races and nationalities. While most were Melanesian of course, there was a mix of among others French, Vietnamese (Tonkinese), and British – as well as Japanese. As anyone familiar with Vanuatu will know, the Americans were navigating a complex political terrain with the existing French (now Free French) administration.

Inevitably, those of Japanese origin were to become particular persons of interest. So, it's fascinating to look at an example of the sort of intelligence gathering that was being done in the South Pacific. In this case, it's a file from December 24th, 1942, with the subject of "Japanese in New Caledonia" and drafted by the local US Naval Liaison Officer, for the Director of Naval Intelligence.

It was copied into other senior South Pacific commands. We've not used any of the original individual names in the report. Other than that, the language used is preserved in our excerpts.

It opens with this summary, which makes it clear what will be sufficient to cast suspicion over individuals.

*Speaking only of those generally known, there are still a number of full-blooded (naturalized) Japanese in New Caledonia, and many half-castes. They lead fairly normal lives and receive American soldiers and sell them liquor, most of it of a particularly noxious kind. Half-caste Japanese serve in the French military and naval forces, communication services, and even the staff of the French High Commissioner. Half-caste Japanese girls are associating on intimate terms with American soldiers and officers, French wives, and mistresses of departed Japanese (including intelligence officers) are numerous, some of them associating on intimate terms with American officers.*



Noumea Harbour in November 1942 is a hive of shipping activity between the South Pacific Nation and Europe. Photo Naval History and Heritage Command.

The report then goes on to detail those it describes as full-blooded Japanese.

One is:

*A naturalized Japanese of pro-Japanese and anti-American sentiments living in the Trianon district (suburb of Noumea) where he has a salt works. He is married to a*

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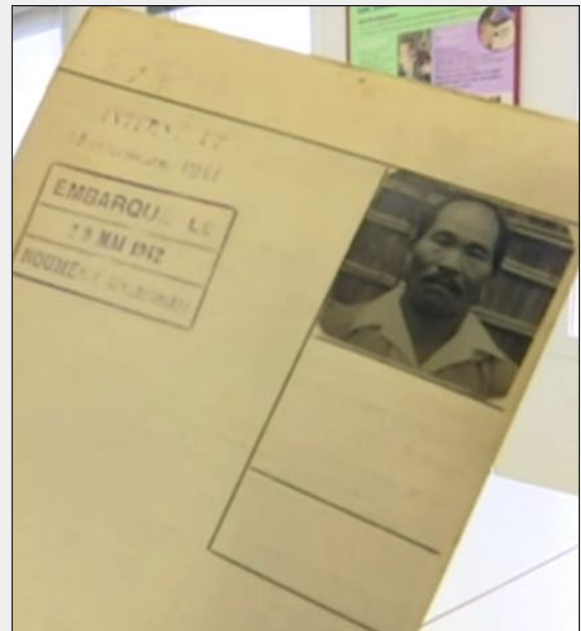
*somewhat simple-minded French woman and is the father of several children. He went to Japan about five years ago for a period of one year. At the request of the French army quartermaster, he was not interred, on the basis that there was no one else available to make the salt required by the quartermaster department. The quartermaster is one of a pro-Vichy (editor's note – Vichy was the rump French government and its overseas territories created after the surrender to Nazi Germany in 1940) clique, but it is not thought there is any ulterior motive behind his request.*



American soldiers of Company G, 182nd Infantry, pull up to the Grand Quai in Noumea, New Caledonia, March 1942. Photo 182ndinfantry.org and US National Archives.

The said gentlemen certainly became a person of interest – to the degree that he was under effective house arrest – as the report continues.

*He owns a pair of binoculars. His anti-American statements are a matter of record. For some time, he went almost daily to Magenta where there is another salt works, but since the arrival of American forces there he has been arrested several times by American soldiers. He has been advised by the Police Commissioner that he is not to leave his home. He has recently been receiving American soldiers regularly at his house and was also visited by one of the Japanese interpreters serving with the U.S. forces here.*



One of the hundreds of Japanese citizens of New Caledonia who were rounded up and sent to Australia to be interred. Video frame SBS News Australia - sbs.com.au

Another Japanese man, a store owner, was naturalised, and considered of much less suspicion.

*He is the father of several children. He was not interned like other Japanese, but after the Americans arrived he was required to remain in his home. He observes this rule meticulously. His business is being carried on by a son and a daughter.*

Another man had sons serving in the French military – but remained under suspicion.

*He is said to be a former officer in the Japanese army, was formerly a truck farmer at Magenta, close to the former Pan-Air radio station. He was naturalized and married to a French woman and has several children, including two sons under arms with the French forces here. He drew attention to himself by his pro-Japanese sentiments and when the Japanese Consul arrived in New Caledonia, he was at the head of the delegation representing the Japanese Colony, which went to the pier. He was interned for several months when he lost*

*his French nationality according to the decree of February 10, 1942. For the last three or four months he has been a patient - Noumea - suffering from a bladder complaint. He does not appear to be very ill, lives in a first class ward, walks about and visits with other Japanese patients, talking in Japanese. He is also visited by his wife and daughter and receives mail, including letters from Japanese interned in Australia, and French people up the island.*



Anais Melissa is the daughter of a Japanese Internee sent to Australia during World War II.  
Video frame SBS News Australia - sbs.com.au

The report noted the man, and three others were actually meant to be under surveillance at an insane asylum on Ile Nou, but because of the need for treatment, were at the hospital.

*They are supposed to be suffering from venereal diseases and confined to their rooms, but as a practical matter have freedom of movement, including access to the veranda, within the hospital. The veranda has a view of the port. One man has a French wife who has been seeing a great deal of the Americans and recently asked for a divorce. The request was not granted.*

The report then moved on to discuss what it called half-caste Japanese - of which it said there were some fifty at large in New Caledonia.

One woman was described thus:

*She sees many American and has apparently been intimate with an American warrant Officer. Details are available in the files of the U. S. Naval Liaison officer. News of the movements of a certain ship were traced to the woman, who learned of them through an American.*

One of the woman's brothers seemed to have sound pro-Allied credentials but was also deemed worth keeping an eye on.

*Unlike most half-castes, (he) speaks the Japanese language fluently. He has been studying communications; was in the Fighting French Marine Headquarters for several months and when last checked, was on the Fighting French naval vessel "Cap des Palmes." This ship visited Espiritu Santo during American naval operations.*

In a lengthy section the report then goes into some detail on intimate relations, "concubines" and mistresses - and possible dubious links to the Axis powers. Such as this case:

*(The woman's husband) is the younger of two brothers operating a store in Noumea who agents for various German and Japanese firms have been, specializing in cameras and radio. They are also interested in a sandwich shop next to their own shop, which caters to American soldiers. He has strong anti-British and anti-American sentiments.*

A French man was considered to be loyal but had been conducting an affair with the daughter of a part-Japanese woman, herself a daughter of a former French consul to Tokyo.

*(The mother was) very given to intrigue, and with important mining interest, she was officially considered to be in the Japanese intelligence Service. She organized a company which bought the Island of Art, to the north*

*of New Caledonia, paying 1,000,000 francs for rights which should not have been worth 100,000. This island is frequently visited by Japanese fishermen.*

The report concludes with the information that nearly 30 others of Japanese origin are interred in the insane asylum on Ile Nou. Whether their mental state was the reason for their interment is not specified, but all were noted to be over the age of 53.

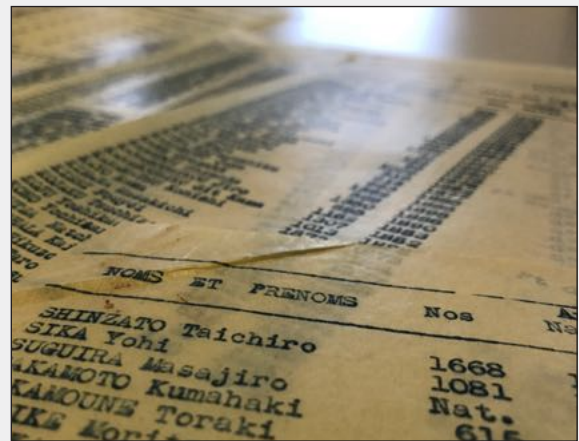
We don't know what value would have been placed on the report as a piece of intelligence that could inform the war effort.

To modern eyes, it looks at times like a grab-bag of rumour and salacious hearsay. No doubt there was an opportunity for some in the community to settle scores or gain advantage by casting aspersions on others. Wartime is certainly a fertile time for that to flourish.

What this snapshot does show is that civilians – innocent or otherwise – had their lives dramatically reshaped and scarred by the arrival of war. Not even those living in a remote, untouched part of the globe could avoid that.



Marie-Jose Michel is Japan's Honorary Consul in Noumea. Both of her grandfathers were rounded up by the Free French government and sent to an Australian detention camp.  
Video frame SBS News Australia - sbs.com.au



Some of the many names of Japanese sent to Australia during the war. They can still be found in documents held in the New Caledonia Archives.  
Video frame SBS News Australia - sbs.com.au

# Ni-Vanuatu Memories of WWII

*Finally, we would like to again share some Ni-Vanuatu recollections of the war. These come from the excellent Ni-Vanuatu Memories of World War II, written in the 1990s by Margaret and Bruce Moon after visits to record local people.*

These particular accounts came from former residents of Lelepa Island, which stands at the principal entrance to Havannah Harbour in north Efate. People there were thus witness to many ship movements to and from the base.

The first recounting came from retired chief Natamatawea who was born in 1914 and therefore about 28 years old when the Americans arrived.

Chief Natamatawea: at the time of World War Two all the soldiers came and arrived on the beaches around here. They put machine guns all around. We were frightened and asked them why they had come.



The USS Denver slips between mines in the Hilliard Channel and into Havannah Harbour, Efate in what was then New Hebrides, April 22, 1943. Photo US Archives.

They said there was a war, and that the Japanese would come and fight. Women were frightened and came from the mainland with food and water. The men stayed in the gardens watching all the battleships come.

Large numbers of Americans came onshore on the mainland.

We were surprised to find that they spoke English (group chuckled when they recalled this). They got us young men to bring our knives and axes and cut down the trees on the hills to make positions for machine guns.



December 1943 and Ni-Vanuatu villagers employed by the US military meet with a Marine Corps officer in their village. Photo US Archives.

Some were up on the hill looking over the harbor. Soldiers put nets over them to hide them in the bush. In the night destroyers came and Havannah harbor filled up with warships. Soon they got us to go and work to make an airport at Vila.

A ship came to Lelepa to gather up men to do this and it did the same at Nguna. There was an exercise with big torches (searchlights) all over this place trying to find an aeroplane hidden in the sky at night. However, they didn't see any Japanese aircraft.

*Continued...*

We are impressed too with the American trucks which could go on both the land and sea.



A US Army DUKW or 'duck'. One of the American trucks that "could go on both the land and sea." Photo keymilitary.com

Kelsau Napar: When the Americans came, I was 18 years old and at the village school. One lot of soldiers went to Vila. Some marines came. There were two destroyers and minesweepers carrying mines. They put these on each side of Havannah harbor. The battleships came through a small passage by Leosa into the harbour where there were no mines. Then they started to make an airport at Vila. We worked for two weeks – then back to North Efate for one day. A ship brought us back to Havannah harbour. They bought 1000 boys from Tanna to do the work. We stayed here like men from Moso, Siviri, Nguna, Paunagisu and Emao.

We helped the soldiers moving things like guns and cleaning the camp. We got 15 vatu a day ( 15 American cents). Things were cheaper in the store. We got calico at three pence and sixpence a yard. It was enough money for us. We didn't worry about it; we were helping in the war.

They were here in 1942 and when they had finished, we helped them move out.



Tannese labor corps members camped at Tagabe. Photo copyright Lamont Lindstrom.



American labor corps supervisors including George Riser with Loumhan Isaac, Johnson Kiel, and Simon Nuvo. Photo copyright Lamont Lindstrom.

### Tell us what you think

Thank you for reading The Santonian. Your support for the Museum is most appreciated. If you any questions or suggestions for future topics, please contact Kevin McCarthy at: [admin@southpacificwwiimuseum.com](mailto:admin@southpacificwwiimuseum.com)

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