

## Reserve Bank grant for Museum

The South Pacific WWII Museum has much pleasure in announcing that the museum has been presented with a grant from the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu.

A cheque for 500,000vt (Approx AUD\$6380) was handed to museum Chairman Bradley Wood by Reserve Bank Governor Simeon Athy.

The funds will be used to assist in the expansion of the museum in the coming months that will double the size of our exhibition space.

We'd like to thank Governor Athy and the Reserve Bank Board for their very generous support. We look forward to having them back at the opening of our new exhibition space.



Reserve Bank of Vanuatu Governor Simeon Athy presents Museum Chairman Bradley Wood with the cheque for 500,000vt.

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# News In Brief

The other stories you need to know

## A Clark, an International or a Caterpillar?

During his tour of WWII sites on Santo, PhD student Pierre Noel discovered the remarkable wreckage of a WWII dozer that had been hidden away by jungle overgrowth for the last 80 years. After posts about it on social media we had many ideas as to its identity. Further visits to the site will hopefully uncover further tell-tale ID plates and markings.



## Keeping the flags flying

Following twin cyclones Judy and Kevin back in March of this year, all of the Museum's signage was destroyed. Thankfully, Museum Project Manager James Carter has a colleague in Brisbane who could help. John Jurcic, Production Manager from Playground Studio stepped in and helped get them printed through a local supplier. Given the old ones were put up in 2017 and survived around six cyclones, we think they were about due for a freshen up. Thanks JJ for helping us organise them.



# A word or two from Miranda

## South Pacific WWII Museum Books For Schools Project, 2023

New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) volunteer Miranda Williamson has been working as a Museum Promotions & Archivist Advisor at the South Pacific WWII Museum since February 2023. One of her priorities is to ensure that the museum provides educational opportunities for the Luganville community.

After meeting with local teachers she identified a need for history books and teaching resources for schoolchildren and their teachers – particularly to learn more about the history of WWII both globally and in Vanuatu.



VSA volunteer Miranda Williamson at the South Pacific WWII Museum and her collection of books that just arrived from New Zealand.

Miranda successfully applied for a NZ\$2,500 Small Project Grant from Volunteer Service Abroad New Zealand to purchase books from both the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila and Unity Books in Wellington, New Zealand. The parcels of books include both reference books and historical fiction.

The assistance of Rachel at Unity Books was invaluable. It was quite tricky to predict the volume and weight of books and their cost of postage, but we came in on target!

As well as providing books, Miranda has also put together age-appropriate resources that teachers can use to teach WWII history.

At the successful completion of this project we will have strengthened our connection to local schools and they will be better resourced to teach the history of WWII.



Quite a box of books was awaiting pick up by Miranda from Luganville's post office.

Teachers will feel more confident about their knowledge and the students will be engaged and learn using the resources we have provided.

The project has ongoing value as it sets teachers up not just for one year, but will enable them to reuse the books and resources for years to come.



The range of titles Miranda purchased with the VSA Small Project Grant is extensive.

One set of the resources will be held at the museum itself, as we work towards creating our own lending library here.

# Stage 1 taking shape

We announced the Stage 1 build of the Museum back in May 2022. Since then, much has been going on behind the scenes to get the project moving.

Builds such as this are not easy to pull together given our somewhat isolated location in the middle

downtime he is helping us out with the necessary specifications for Stage 1 of the museum.

Once the specifications have been agreed upon, the build will go out to tender enabling us to obtain a more accurate cost for construction.

Levi has had past experience with the structural engineering of projects on Santo, where his father Richard is a builder.

We couldn't think of anyone better experienced to work with us on the museum project.



A rendering of Stage 1 of the South Pacific WWII Museum. The complex engineering specifications present a range of challenges for architects.

of the South Pacific. Everything has to be brought in by ship which requires massive amounts of logistics to ensure transport costs can be kept to a minimum – particularly these days with the costs of fuel.

However, we're not quite at the build stage yet. Right now we are scoping out the structural engineering required to ensure the building meets the demands of Vanuatu's challenging natural environment. Of particular importance is ensuring the building can withstand the regular cyclones and earthquakes of the South Pacific region.

Thankfully for the museum, we have access to a world authority on structural engineering, particularly in those areas that suffer from serious geological instability.

Levi Grady is a Chartered Senior Structural Engineer with New Zealand company Beca. He is currently in PNG working on a large-scale project. In his



Levi Grady is the man behind the engineering, ensuring the building can withstand all manner of climatic conditions.



A rendering of the interior of the South Pacific WWII Museum.

# Unearthing History

## Pierre Noel's remarkable journey through New Hebrides' past

In the remote corners of the Pacific, where the azure waters blend with the endless horizon, lies an archipelago steeped in history. We know it to this day as Vanuatu. Until 1980, it was called the New Hebrides.

Tucked away in this scenic landscape, Pierre Noel, a dedicated PhD student from the University of New Caledonia, has been embarking on a remarkable research journey for the past three years.



On a recent research trip to Espiritu Santo, Pierre Noel visited the former Bomber #3 airfield. The former runway is now a main road.

Armed with a passion for unravelling the secrets of the past, Pierre has been meticulously documenting and photographing the sites and relics from the tumultuous era between 1939 and 1946. His dedication to preserving the patrimony of the New Hebrides will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on historical scholarship and tourism alike.

Pierre's odyssey commenced with countless hours spent combing through archives across the world. From the bustling streets of Paris to the idyllic shores of Noumea, he delved into the rich repositories of the past. Pierre's unwavering determination led him to the UK Archives in London, the US Archives in Washington D.C. and the National Archives of Australia in Canberra. These voyages through time resulted in the

compilation of a staggering 20,000 pages of invaluable historical records. And it's still growing.

Under the mentorship of two esteemed PhD directors, Fanny Pascual from the University of New



The Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (University of New Caledonia), hosts around 3000 students. Photo - Wikipedia.

Caledonia and Jean-François Murracchiole from Paul Valéry Montpellier University, Pierre Noel's work has blossomed into a profound scholarly endeavour. Their guidance and expertise have provided him with the necessary tools to navigate the intricate tapestry of historical research and guiding him through the corridors of time.

The heart of Pierre's thesis lies in the exploration of the patrimony of the New Hebrides. Forging a comprehensive inventory of WWII relics, his work serves as a testament to preserving the legacy of a bygone era. Through his meticulous documentation, he's breathing life into forgotten artefacts, giving a voice to the past and illuminating the narratives of those who lived through the tumultuous years.

The significance of Pierre's work extends beyond academia. By creating an accessible resource of historical data, his findings will be a wellspring of knowledge for institutions, schools, and museums. Moreover, Pierre's efforts will prove invaluable to the tourism industry in Vanuatu. (continued...)

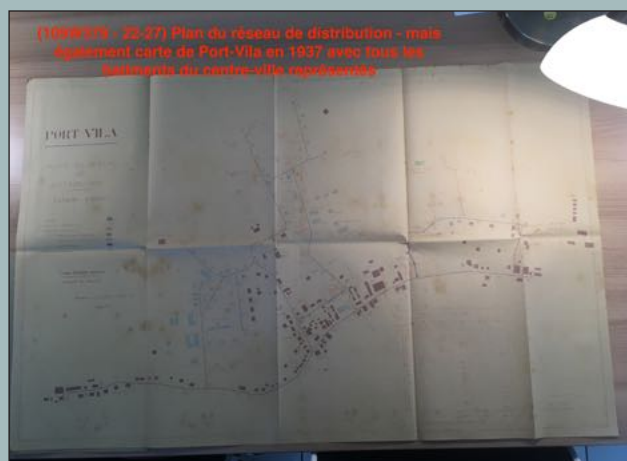


The search goes on. Pierre is documenting the crashed B-17 bomber near the old Bomber #1 airfield at Pallikulo Bay.

As travellers venture to this enchanting region seeking not only paradise but also a deeper connection with history, Pierre's work will serve as a guide, offering profound insights into the past.

His tireless commitment to the preservation and dissemination of historical records stands as an inspiration to future generations of researchers, scholars, and enthusiasts.

More importantly, the true essence of this project's significance lies, above all, in its impact on school



A fantastic map of Port Vila from 1937 was discovered by Pierre in the US Archives during his research.

children. As the primary audience of museums in New Caledonia and beyond, these young minds engage with the discipline of history throughout their academic

journey. Understanding the period that witnessed the New Hebrides' journey into globalisation and decolonisation is of utmost importance. This pivotal era laid the very groundwork for the future nation of Vanuatu.

As they delve into this rich historical narrative, these students are not just learning about the past; they are forging a deeper connection with their heritage and shaping the path towards a more enlightened future.



A lot of work lies ahead for Pierre. We wish him the best of luck and look forward to bringing you more on his amazing journey.

Pierre Noel's PhD will no doubt be a testament to the power of dedication, and the enduring pursuit of history. We are all eagerly awaiting the culmination of Pierre's journey and the publication of his thesis, with the treasures it will no doubt hold.

In the journals of history, there are those who bring the past to life and gift it to the world. Pierre Noel is undeniably one of those remarkable individuals, whose contribution to the study of New Hebrides during WWII will forever shape our understanding of the past and illuminate the path to a brighter future.

# Museum set to grow

Big news from the South Pacific WWII Museum! Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our Luganville Museum staff, we will be doubling the size of our mini museum.

If you know our current site, it's a little squeezey at times – particularly at the moment with the Coolidge Exhibition taking up most of the museum's exhibition space.



The current exhibition space at the museum is devoted to our President Coolidge exhibition. An expansion next door will allow us to double that space.

However, we are excited to announce that we now have access to the other half of our building in Unity Park. The plan now is to knock through the wall into the new space that will be refitted to match our current museum. It will mean we can keep the Coolidge display in one half and a more general display of WWII items in the other.



The interior of the space next door will require some work to bring it up to the standard of existing museum. However, it does have a pitched roof which allows for further space to hang specific exhibits.

While the renovations aren't major, the cost of electrical work, climate control, the new doorways and general fit out will add up. Therefore some additional fund raising will be necessary.



The new space looking out into Unity Park. The display cabinets were recovered from a local business that was throwing them out.

Thankfully, the generous grant from the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu (featured on our cover this month), will greatly assist in paying for some of the necessary upgrades to the new space.



The museum has a lot of more general WWII items in its collection that have been recovered from Santo. They will go on display next door.

We've waited a long time for this so we're very excited. Congratulations to everyone on site and a massive thank you to the Museum crew.

# The Unyielding Spirit

Tales of steadfast dedication and unshakable honour have often captivated the world. One such remarkable chapter unfolds from the closing days of World War II when a handful of Japanese soldiers chose to continue fighting, not for victory, but for doubts about the surrender's veracity, isolation from communications, or the unshakeable code of honour.



Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signs the Japanese Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri as American General Richard K. Sutherland watches, 2 September 1945. Wikipedia photo.

These soldiers, known as Japanese 'holdouts', persisted in their remote hideouts long after Japan's official surrender. The awe-inspiring stories of the last Japanese soldiers who held out for years, even into the 1970s, embody steadfastness against unimaginable odds.

The term "Japanese holdouts" refers to soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army and Imperial Japanese Navy who persisted in combat even after Japan's surrender at the conclusion of World War II. Their motivations varied, but they all shared an unyielding determination to continue the fight, be it due to disbelief in the surrender, severed communications, or their unwavering bushido code of never surrendering.

## Private Teruo Nakamura - The Last Verified Holdout

Private Teruo Nakamura, also known as Attun Paladin, emerged as the last verified Japanese holdout. Although he was not ethnically Japanese but a Taiwanese native conscripted into the Imperial Japanese Army, he found himself stationed on the Indonesian island of Morotai,

(continued...)



Indonesia, in 1944. When Japan surrendered in 1945, Nakamura, along with other holdouts, chose to hide in the jungle until 1954, after which he struck out on his own. For the next two decades, Nakamura built a solitary existence, cultivating a garden and avoiding



Teruo Nakamura returned to Taiwan after 30 years to find his parents were dead and his wife was remarried.

human contact. In December 1974, Indonesian troops discovered his hideout, leading to the eventual end of his resistance, 29 years after Japan's surrender.

### Hiroo Onoda - A Symbol of Unyielding Devotion

Perhaps the most famous Japanese holdout, Second Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda, was an intelligence officer in the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. At the end of the war, he, like Nakamura, refused to accept the surrender and, instead, spent 29 years hiding in



Second Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda.

the Philippine jungles. Onoda's unwavering loyalty to his commanding officer and the Imperial Army led him to continue his resistance, despite missing out on any information about the war's conclusion. It was only in 1974, when his former commander personally travelled to the Philippines and ordered him to surrender, that Onoda finally laid down his arms and returned to Japan. His unwavering loyalty and devotion to duty serve as a symbol of the profound sense of honour that motivated these soldiers.

### Shoichi Yokoi - A Life in the Jungle

Another remarkable holdout, Sergeant Shoichi Yokoi, escaped capture by American forces in Guam in 1944 and retreated into the island's jungles following the American forces' takeover of the island in August 1944.



Sergeant Shoichi Yokoi,

Like Nakamura and Onoda, Yokoi refused to surrender and spent 27 years in hiding, eking out a meagre existence in the dense jungles, determined to avoid the shame of being taken as a prisoner of war. It was only in January 1972 that he was finally overpowered by two local fishermen, leading to his surrender and return to Japan.

So where does the South Pacific WWII Museum fit into these remarkable stories?

Following our social media post regarding the bulldozer we recently discovered on Santo, David Cram from Central Coast NSW got in contact with us regarding some potential museum items on a neighbouring island.

(continued...)

David manages international community based development projects. He had almost five years living in Vila from 2008 - 2012, six years in the Solomons and four years in Fiji.

David's wife's grandmother, Pizo, lived in a small village in the Solomon Islands called Zutapati on the island of Vella Lavella.



A map of the Solomon Islands not far from New Guinea. Vella Lavella is in the west of the New Georgia Groups. Wikipedia map.

The island is situated in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands. It belongs to the New Georgia Group, lying to the west of New Georgia itself and neighbouring the Treasury Islands to the west.

During the early stages of the Pacific War, the Japanese occupied the island. However, that would change with The Battle of Vella Lavella that took place from 15 August to 6 October 1943.

The conflict began with a successful landing at Barakoma on 15 August, with US troops advancing along the coast, gradually pushing the Japanese forces northward. In September,



Vella Lavella. Infantrymen of Co. "I" await the word to advance in pursuit of retreating Japanese forces. Stepping Stone Island on the Vella Lavella Island Front, Southwest Pacific. Army Signal Corps photo.



New Zealand troops from the 3rd Division land on Vella Lavella, 17 September 1943. USMC photo.

New Zealand troops relieved the Americans and continued their advancement across the island, effectively surrounding the small Japanese garrison of approximately 250 personnel. This garrison consisted of a mix of soldiers who had been evacuated from New Georgia and sailors stranded on the island's north coast.

As the situation became untenable, the Japanese initiated an evacuation operation on 6 October, leading to the Naval Battle of Vella Lavella. During this operation, the remaining troops attempted to withdraw from the island. Eventually, the Allies successfully captured Vella Lavella and transformed it into a crucial airbase.



Barakoma Airfield on Vella Lavella. A US Marine Corps Corsair taxis on the huge runway on the island. Wikipedia photo.

The airbase played a significant role in the Allied efforts to take the main Japanese base at Rabaul. Notably, Barakoma Airfield on Vella Lavella served as the home base for VMF-214, famously known as the 'Black Sheep' squadron, under the command of legendary aviator 'Pappy' Boyington. (continued...)

Fast forward almost 40 years to the 1980s, and incredibly the Japanese government were still air-dropping printed leaflets on Vella Lavella Island requesting WWII holdouts to surrender.

As far as the outside world was aware, there were no holdouts left. And yet, for some reason the Japanese Government thought otherwise.

Even Pizo spoke of the Japanese soldiers she used to see stealing food from her garden into the 1970s and 80s. Some residents of the village even reported seeing soldiers stealing clothes from their clotheslines.

David has generously donated to the South Pacific WWII Museum one of the notices the Japanese dropped over Vella Lavella island.

It's printed on a waterproof type paper and on one side is a map of the island showing flags that indicate locations of boxes containing a pen and paper in them, where a holdout could write down their name to identify themselves.

The problem was that the boxes were of such beautiful Japanese quality, the locals stole them to use as tool boxes. Who knows if any names were left behind.



The leaflet that was dropped on Vella Lavella and donated to the museum by David Cram. It's now in a protective acrylic mount.

(continued...)

What does the leaflet actually say? An approximate translation of it without the benefit of understanding the nuances and meanings behind the Japanese language says:

## Map Side

*August 1981*

*Japanese Government dispatch*

*The remaining Japanese soldiers on Vella Lavella Island will be rescued by a search team*

*Rescue search team configuration diagram*

*First, Second, third search parties*

*Fourth and fifth search parties*

*Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth Search Team*

## Text Side

*Notice to soldiers*

*We, the Japanese army, have survived on Vella Lavella Island in the Solomon Islands.*

*We will report to the Tatoi Bela Labera islanders who have seen the ap*

*We, the remaining city of Vella Lavella Island in the Solomon Islands, returned to Japan.*

*36 years ago, August 15, 1945 the war ended. Japanese military personnel returned to Japan at the end of 1945.*

*Every year, we report to the people of Vella Lavella and see what they say, and this is the eighth time.*

*This time, we're in contact/I'm missing the chance to return to Japan?*

*All the men are brave enough to make a decision, and we will wait.*

*Courageous determination of all the soldiers*

*The Japanese flag is raised and we are on standby as*

*shown on the map.*

*We will contact the search party immediately.*

*We stayed on Vella Lavella Island for about a month.*

*I earnestly hope we can return to our homeland Japan, together with the search party where our mothers wives and children are waiting.*

*In addition, at present, the islanders of Vella Lavella Island are friendly and cooperative to us.*

*Today's Japan has a new constitution, and with the people's efforts the Japanese nation will prosper.*

*Return to Japan.*

In stories told to David, some locals claim the Japanese holdouts were living in a cave in the middle of Vella Lavella Island.

Sadly, sometime during the 1980s there was an earthquake on Vella Lavella and the entrance to the cave collapsed and was covered over.

Since that day, the soldiers never returned to the vegetable patches and clothes lines of local villagers.

These stories of Japanese holdouts resonate beyond the confines of World War II. They embody the unwavering commitment to duty and the code of honour that transcends time and cultures.

The unyielding spirit exhibited by the soldiers has left a lasting legacy, reminding us of the complexity of human psychology and the tenacity of the human spirit, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

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**THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY**

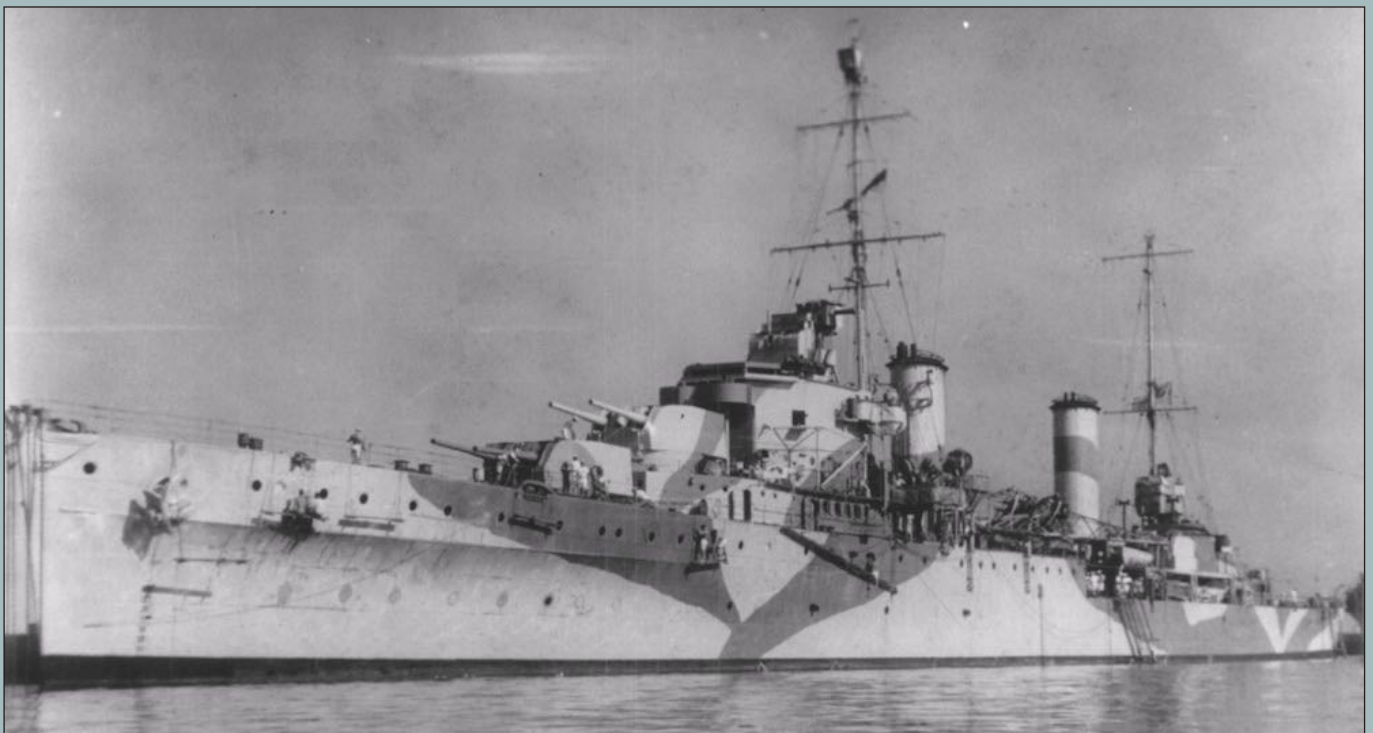
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# Out of the blue

Not for nothing were the waters around Espiritu Santo a potential hunting ground for Japanese submarines.

The Japanese did not generally target merchantmen, instead prioritising sinking warships.

So, when the Australian cruisers Hobart and Australia were setting course for Espiritu Santo on the 20th of July 1943, they had a screen of three destroyers looking for submarines. But besides that, the task force was travelling fast, at more than 23 knots, with the ships darkened, and zigzagging.



HMAS Hobart at anchor and freshly painted in her camouflage colours.

But the weather was fine, with extreme visibility and moderate seas.

Despite the precautions, at quarter to 7 that evening, a single torpedo slammed into HMAS Hobart, in the aft of the cruiser. The port side strike knocked out power and steering control, and the ship began to list slightly.

Seven officers and six ratings died, with seven others injured.

Power and steering were quickly restored however and the next day, the badly damaged Hobart was able to make Espiritu Santo.

(continued...)

The official history says there'd been no indication a submarine was on the prowl, and no direction finding fixes.

In a subsequent reconstruction, the commander of the group – Task Force 74 - Admiral Crutchley concluded that the attacking submarine, on the surface, had



Photographed from off the port side showing the ship's badly distorted stern, after Hobart arrived in Espiritu Santo. AWM photo.

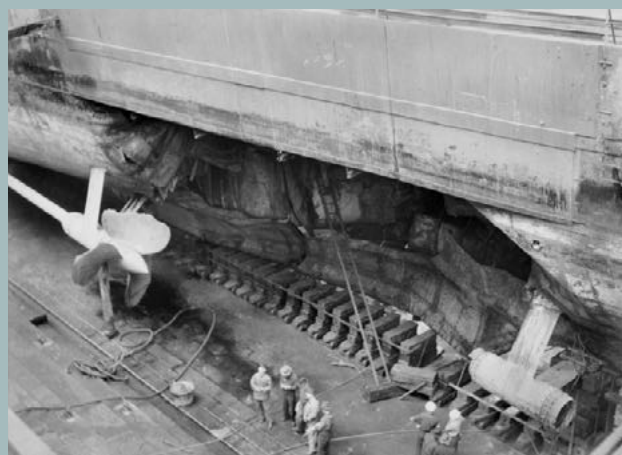
probably sighted his ships against the afterglow in the western sky half an hour earlier, at a range of about 10 miles.

It was right in the course of the Task Force, submerged, and fired a salvo of torpedoes, probably at long range, aimed at Australia and spread towards Hobart.

The torpedoes missed the lead ship, and all but the deadly one passed ahead of Hobart.

Espiritu Santo by now had the repair facilities to patch up Hobart, well enough for her to leave and sail for Sydney, arriving late August.

But there was no quick return to service. Hobart was out of action until December 1944, before returning to be part of the closing battles of the war – and having the honour of joining the force sent to witness the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on the 31st August, 1945.



In dry dock at Cockatoo Island, Sydney in 1943. The damage to the lower sections of the port side is extensive. AWM photo.



View taken at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, on 23 July 1943, showing damage inflicted when she was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 20 July. U.S. Naval Historical Center photo.

# Visitor numbers continue to grow

It's been another super-busy month at the museum in Luganville. Museum Manager Marina, her fabulous assistant Lyn and our wonderful VSA volunteer Miranda, have done an amazing job looking after all our visitors this month. In fact **522** tourists, locals and the occasional VIP dropped in to visit us. No wonder we're still the **#1** tourist destination in town.



# Inspiring everyday heroes

It's been a big cultural month for Vanuatu, with Port Vila hosting the major Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival, MACFEST.

Contingents from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, and the host country have taken part, as have indigenous groups from various other Pacific nations.

People from as far as Australia's Torres Strait Islands have rubbed shoulder with Maori performers – and of course, those from Vanuatu – all very different.

The festival includes many activities and events – from food, to weaving and carving, to music and of course, the famous Vanuatu sand drawings.



Kapa haka is a traditional Maori dance art form which is very popular, and New Zealand has a huge annual festival. The Te Toki group has been carrying the flag for New Zealand at Macfest. They travelled as well to Ilfira Island, off Port Vila. This is them performing for school students – Picture courtesy NZ High Commission.

The end of the festival also coincided with the 43rd celebration of the nation winning independence, always a time of huge pride in the country.

These are two of the stories from Macfest!



This group of young performers have had a tough journey to reach the festival but hopefully an easier path home. The PENAMA cultural dance group consisted of students from Quatui Primary school in East Ambae and have attracted the attention of many as the youngest performers at the festival. However, during their voyage to Port Vila most of them were badly seasick - since the sea was rough and it was their first time travelling by ship. But on land they've been sure-footed, even providing the escort at the festival for visiting French President Emmanuel Macron. The government decided to help the group get back home by charter flight – so they won't have to endure seasickness again. – Picture courtesy Vanuatu Daily Post.

Inspiring Everyday Heroes is our Museum brand and means how the stories of yesteryear and our project can inspire today's new generation.



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