

Letters Never Sent

In late May, the South Pacific WWII Museum welcomed a special visitor from the United States whose connection to Santo reaches back to one of the most remarkable engineering projects of the Pacific War.



Alex Moore with Museum Chairman Bradley Wood and Museum Support Officer Marina Moli.

Alex Moore travelled to Espiritu Santo to follow in the footsteps of his father, Electrician's Mate 1st Class Thomas C. Moore, who served aboard the enormous Advanced Base Sectional Dock — ABSD-1 — in Pallikulo Bay during World War II.

Before his passing at the age of 100, Thomas was believed to be the last surviving crewman from the gigantic floating dry dock.

One of the largest structures ever assembled in the South Pacific during the war, ABSD-1 arrived in Santo in ten separate sections after departing San Francisco in August 1943. Each massive pontoon section was towed independently (continued...)

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USS West Virginia (BB-48) sits high and dry in ABSD-1 in Pallikulo Bay. The ship was undergoing repairs for damaged propellers after 'touching bottom' following the Battle of Surigao Strait. Photo – Various.

across the Pacific before converging in Pallikulo Bay, where crews undertook the unprecedented task of assembling the floating dry dock into a single operational unit capable of repairing any ship in the US fleet, including Allied warships.

But the project was not without tragedy.

On 2 November 1943, during assembly operations, one of the compartments in Section C flooded unexpectedly and the pontoon sank, trapping one officer and twelve enlisted men inside. Among those lost was Herbert Carroll — Thomas Moore's closest friend aboard the dock.

In the months that followed, Herbert's widow wrote repeatedly to Thomas, desperate for answers about how "the love of her life" had been lost at sea. Three times Thomas attempted to reply, explaining the circumstances surrounding the accident. Three times his letters were intercepted by Navy censors.

The floating dry docks and their locations were considered so strategically important to Allied operations that virtually all information surrounding them remained highly classified throughout the war. After his third attempt to write back, Thomas was reportedly summoned before the captain and warned he could face court-martial if he tried again.

It was only after the war ended that he was finally able to meet Herbert Carroll's family and tell them what had happened.

More than eighty years later, that story came full circle.

Alex Moore had promised Herbert Carroll's nephew — with whom he remains in contact — that one day he would visit the place where his uncle lost his life during the war.

With the assistance of local tour operator Mayumi Green, Alex visited several wartime sites around Santo, including the museum itself, before travelling to Pallikulo Bay. Local tourism operator Jamie Ireland, whose Lope Lope Beach Bungalows overlook the historic anchorage, took Alex by boat to the very location where ABSD-1 once stood.



Alex Moore's father Electrician's Mate 1st Class Thomas C. Moore. Photo – Alex Moore.

For Alex, it was an emotional and deeply personal journey — one completed during a very tight visit schedule before returning to Port Vila and beginning the long trip home to the United States.

The museum would also like to sincerely thank Alex for generously donating photographs, copies of the wartime letters sent by Herbert Carroll's widow, and other memorabilia from his father's collection. These important historical items will help preserve the story of ABSD-1 and will be displayed by the museum in the future.

Limping into Button

By mid-1943, Espiritu Santo had grown from a sleepy colonial outpost into "Base Button"—a colossal logistical powerhouse and the primary staging ground for the Allied push through the Solomon Islands. Its deep, protected waters were a sanctuary for warships bruised and battered in the meat-grinder naval battles to the north.

The drama had unfolded the previous evening, 20 July, in the open waters of the Coral Sea. Hobart was steaming as part of Task Force 74, a combined Allied fleet under the command of British Admiral John Crutchley. The fleet was zigzagging at a brisk 23 knots through fine, clear waters, heading directly back to the safety of Espiritu Santo. Hobart was positioned exactly



HMAS Hobart (D63). Photo – State Library of Victoria/Allan Green.

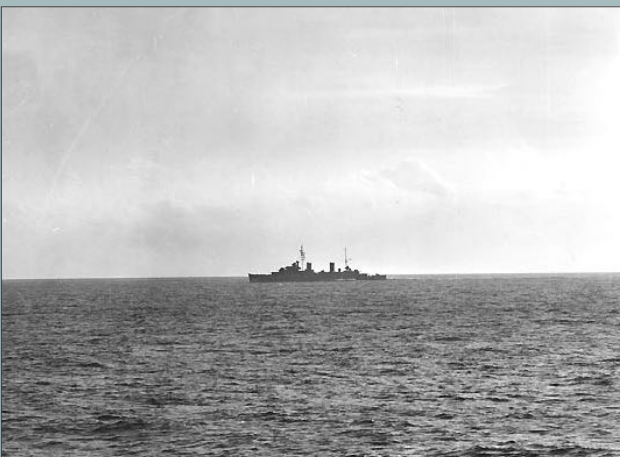
Never was this sanctuary more vital than on the morning of 21 July 1943, when the Royal Australian Navy light cruiser HMAS Hobart (D63) limped through the channel, missing a massive portion of her stern.

600 yards astern of the heavy cruiser HMAS Australia, with three U.S. Navy destroyers providing an anti-submarine screen.

At 1845 hours, just as dusk cast heavy shadows across the water, a Japanese submarine—later identified as the I-11—spotted the Allied ships silhouetted cleanly against the fading sunset.

Operating from long range, the submarine fired a fan-shaped spread of torpedoes aimed at the massive Australia. The flagship's high speed saved her, and the deadly fish zipped completely past her hull. Tragically, one of the torpedoes at the outer edge of the spread tracked cleanly into the path of the trailing Hobart.

The detonation was catastrophic. The torpedo slammed directly into the Hobart's port quarter, right in the vicinity of the officers' wardroom. (continued..)



HMAS Hobart about two hours before she was torpedoed, July 1943. Photo - U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

The immense explosion killed 13 crew members instantly, including a US Navy liaison officer, and severely wounded seven others. The physical damage to the cruiser was staggering. Both of her portside propellers were violently sheared off, major bulkheads were crushed, and high-power electrical cables and steering controls were severed completely across the aft section of the ship.



View taken at Espiritu Santo on 29 July 1943, showing damage inflicted when Hobart was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 20 July. Photographed looking aft from the centre line of the Ward Room from about 179 station, after clearing away the majority of the wreckage. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

The cruiser immediately took on a list to port, her structural spine badly distorted. Amidst the chaos, an incredible engineering drama occurred in the engine rooms. The explosion had blown away a propeller, causing the port turbine to violently overspeed under the sudden lack of resistance.



Hobart photographed on the quarterdeck, looking forward from about 207 frame port side, showing the ship's badly distorted aft deck and the after 6-inch gun turrets. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

The centrifugal forces were so extreme they stretched the solid forged steel of the turbine wheel beyond its elastic limit. Had the engineers not stopped the spinning turbine when they did, it would have disintegrated entirely, tearing through the hull and sinking the ship.



HMAS Hobart at Espiritu Santo on 23 July 1943, showing damage off the port side and the ship's badly distorted stern, aft 6-inch gun turrets, anti-splinter mats on the aft superstructure and surface search radar (probably Type 271) at left. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

Through pure grit, the crew managed to restore basic electrical power and auxiliary steering within hours. Escorted by the American destroyers USS Nicholas and USS Radford, the crippled cruiser proudly managed to steam into Espiritu Santo under her own power the next day. There, the crew of the American repair ship USS Vestal worked tirelessly alongside the Australians, patching her ruptured hull and stabilising her broken stern.

This critical, emergency intervention at Base Button saved the Hobart, allowing her to safely return to Sydney for a full reconstruction.

PT 109: An American Epic of War, Survival, and the Destiny of John F. Kennedy

By William Doyle

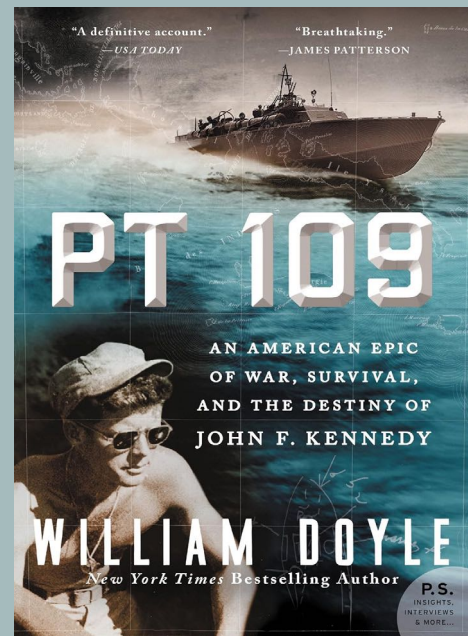
A book review by Tammi Johnson

While on Santo in July of 2024, one of the truly historic spots I visited was right behind the South Pacific WWII Museum, and that was remains of the PT boat base at the mouth of the Sarakata River. The future president of the United States of America ran his boat out of this base, their "port of embarkation." Due to the sinking and the horrific ordeal of the men of his crew, Kennedy only did seven months in the South Pacific. While still recovering, he left for home from Espiritu Santo on December 23rd, 1943, on USS Breton, an escort carrier. A quote from the book: "John Kennedy had begun the war as a pampered, globe-trotting young man barely out of college. But now, after seven months in the combat zone, the PT 109 crash and the rescues of his crewmen.....Kennedy had proven to himself and to others that he was capable of leadership and command and possessed considerable courage under fire."

In all my research over the years I discovered that my uncle Billy crossed paths with JFK during his V-7 training. Kennedy and Billy were both in Midshipmen training at Northwestern between July and September of 1942, and both were housed at Abbott Hall. Kennedy's father asked a favor of a friend who helped get John into the PT boat training program at the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center in Melville, Rhode Island, where he headed straight after Northwestern.

Mr. Doyle does an excellent job of taking John from a child to a young man in command of a PT boat and the deadly crash in the Blackett Strait of the Solomon Islands (just a few miles to the southwest of the Strong sinking site in the Kula Gulf) to the command of a

nation as president. A team with Dr. Robert Ballard on an expedition with the National Geographic Society, located the wreck of PT 109 in May 2002.



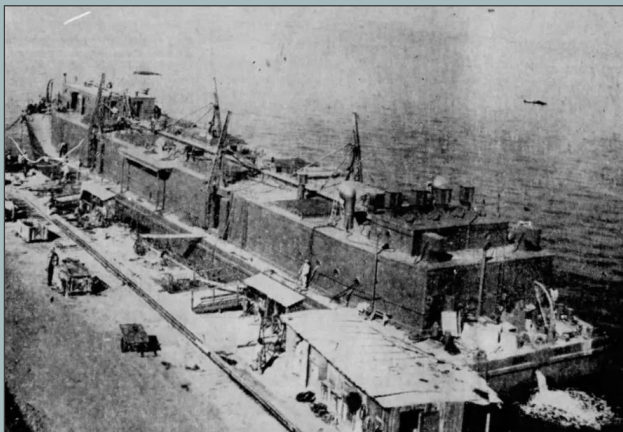
The team was accompanied by the son of his brother Robert, Maxwell Taylor Kennedy, and a documentary was filmed of this endeavor. While in the Solomon Islands Max and the team met an islander who was responsible for helping the survivors of the crash with the Japanese vessel Amagiri. The man was so moved by his experience he named his son John Kennedy.

Doyle is a New York Times Best-Selling author, and this book was released in 2015. Another highly recommended read!

Tammi Johnson
May 2026

The Coolest Craft in the Pacific

When people think about the vast military machine that supported Allied operations in the South Pacific during World War II, they usually picture towering cargo ships, sprawling airfields, or endless convoys of trucks and fuel tankers. But among the thousands of vessels serving the Pacific fleet was one of the strangest — and perhaps most popular — craft of the entire war — It was a floating ice cream factory.



One of the US Navy's ice cream factories under construction. Photo – funnyjunk.com

The story really began in 1914, when the United States Navy banned alcohol aboard its ships. Seeking some way to offset the loss of beer and spirits at sea, Navy officials soon discovered that sailors had a particular fondness for ice cream. By World War II, ice cream had become a staple of life aboard larger US Navy vessels, many of which carried their own small ice cream-making machines.



Ice cream being served on board a US Navy ship. Photo – funnyjunk.com

But conditions in the Pacific were unlike anything most servicemen had ever experienced. The heat and humidity were relentless. Sailors and soldiers battled mud, tropical disease, exhaustion and long periods far from home. Military planners increasingly recognised that morale was almost as important as ammunition.

So in 1945, the Navy unveiled one of its most unusual logistical experiments — a giant floating ice cream barge.



Trefoil (IX-149) class concrete barges on 10 February 1944 before conversion to ice cream barges. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

Officially known as a Barge, Refrigerated, Large, or BRL, the vessel was constructed from reinforced concrete rather than steel, which was desperately needed for warships and landing craft. Towed from anchorage to anchorage throughout the Pacific, the barge functioned as a fully operational floating dairy capable of producing enormous quantities of ice cream for Allied forces.

And not just a few tubs here and there.

The Navy proudly claimed the barge could produce ten gallons of ice cream every seven minutes, with storage space for some 2,000 gallons at a time. Inside the insulated concrete walls sat a remarkably sophisticated refrigeration plant, alongside giant freezers storing ingredients and huge blocks of ice. (continued..)

For smaller ships — particularly destroyers, patrol craft and support vessels that lacked their own ice cream-making facilities — the floating dairy quickly became legendary.

To modern eyes, the whole idea sounds faintly absurd. But to young servicemen who had spent months living on powdered eggs, canned food and warm drinking water under the tropical sun, a scoop of cold ice cream represented something far greater than a simple dessert.

It was a brief reminder of home.

In many ways, the floating ice cream barge perfectly captured the staggering industrial power of the United States during the war. The Allies weren't simply moving troops and weapons across the Pacific — they were moving comfort, morale and a small piece of normal life as well.

And somewhere among the palm-fringed anchorages of the South Pacific, one of the war's strangest vessels quietly became one of its most appreciated.



Photo - funnyjunk.com

Battle-weary sailors would pull alongside in small boats or motor launches carrying empty insulated containers, hoping to return to their ships with chocolate, vanilla or strawberry ice cream. Informal trades soon became common. Spare mechanical parts, fresh water or supplies were often swapped for precious frozen cargo.



A pilot enjoys fresh ice-cream somewhere in the South Pacific. Photo - Various.

BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

“Hey—it’s the ice cream factory!”

There's plenty of excitement in Pacific outposts when this curious craft heaves over the horizon.

It's officially a BRL (Barge, Refrigerated, Large). Built of concrete, 265 feet long, it cost a million dollars. And it's worth every penny of that to lonely American boys who are fed up with alphabet rations, however nutritious.

Each BRL (the Army operates three) is a floating refrigerator and food factory. It carries 1500 tons of frozen meat, 500 tons of fresh vegetables, eggs, cheese and milk. And a big ice cream freezer.

The machine can make 500 gallons of ice cream a day—with storage space for 1500 gallons more. Can you imagine a greater tonic to body and spirit than real ice cream served in steaming jungles or on hard-won beachheads? It's a touch of home as well as a valuable food. Many tons of the powdered ice cream mix that makes this possible are furnished by National Dairy.

Meantime, back home, National Dairy Laboratories are working constantly to bring to soldiers and civilians alike—in newer, better, more useful forms—all the health inherent in milk—nature's most nearly perfect food.

Dedicated to the wider use and better understanding of dairy products as human food . . . as a basis for the development of new products and materials . . . as a source of health and enduring progress on the farms and in the towns and cities of America.

NATIONAL DAIRY PRODUCTS CORPORATION
AND AFFILIATED COMPANIES

A 1945 advertisement for National Dairy Products Corporation describing the ice cream barge. Image - Various.

Blowing the Fuel Budget

In the long history of the United States Navy, the transition from sail to steam was considered absolute by the early 20th century.

By the time the Mahan-class destroyers were introduced in the mid-1930s, they were considered the pinnacle of modern, oil-burning naval architecture. Fast, agile, and packing a ferocious punch with five 5-inch dual-purpose guns, these vessels were designed for high-speed fleet manoeuvres, not for navigating by the whims of the breeze.

to steam to a station off Wake Island to participate in large-scale tactical problems.

Station-keeping in the open ocean is notoriously demanding on a ship's fuel bunkers. A destroyer must constantly burn oil just to maintain its position, battle currents, and keep its systems alive.

As the exercises dragged on for days, LCDR Gearing grew increasingly concerned with his ship's fuel reserves.

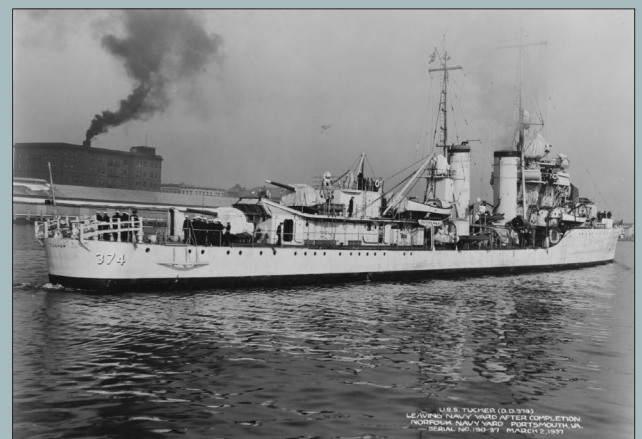


The USS Tucker off the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, 11 March 1942. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

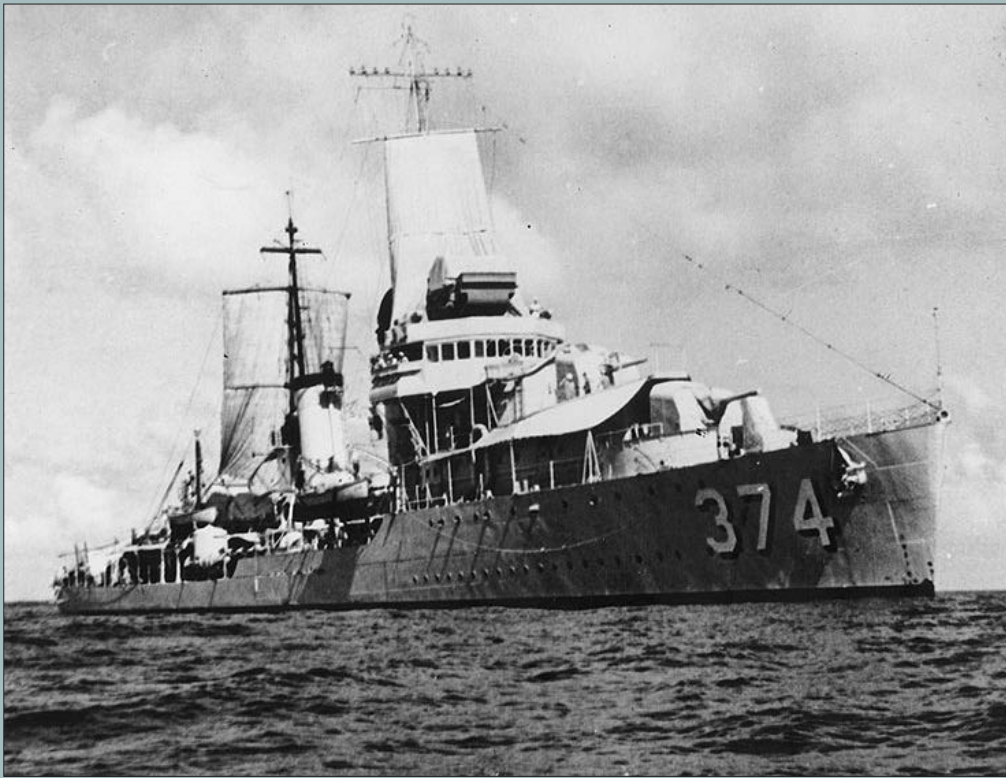
Yet, in June 1940, the crew of the USS Tucker (DD-374) turned back the clock to write one of the most unusual, innovative chapters in pre-war naval lore.

The setting was the vast, isolated expanse of the Pacific Ocean, east of Wake Island. Europe was already engulfed in WWII, and although the United States remained technically neutral, the U.S. Pacific Fleet was operating on a heightened state of alert. Fleet exercises were intense, demanding, and constant.

The Tucker, under the strict but inventive command of Lieutenant Commander Hilyer F. Gearing, was ordered



The Tucker leaves the Norfolk Navy Yard after completion in 1937. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command. (continued...)



With canvas hung from her masts, the USS Tucker 'sails' across the Pacific at just over 3 knots. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

The Tucker was hundreds of miles from the nearest primary refuelling depot, and every drop of bunker oil was precious.

Rather than requesting a replenishment oiler or burning through his reserves, Gearing looked up at the ship's prominent, steel tripod foremast and had a flash of eccentric genius. If the wind was blowing for free, why not use it?

Gearing called his boatswain's mates to the bridge and laid out a plan that surely left the crew questioning their sanity: they were going to turn a 1,500-ton, modern steel warship into a sailing vessel.

The ship's crew enthusiastically raided the damage control lockers, boat boxes, and supply holds, dragging up heavy canvas tarpaulins, spare awnings, and lengths of sturdy line. Working with the precision of old-world tall ship sailors, the crew fabricated a makeshift foresail and a large mainsail.

Using the destroyer's forward rigging, booms, and tripod mast as an improvised spar, they hoisted the

canvas. The sight was nothing short of surreal. A sleek, grey greyhound of the fleet, bristling with modern weaponry, was suddenly masquerading as a 19th-century clipper. The experiment was far from a joke; it was a highly effective tactical calculation. When the wind filled the makeshift canvas, the Tucker began to glide forward.

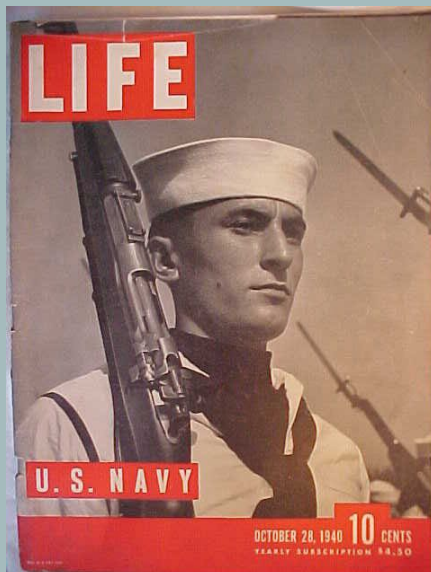
The sails successfully propelled the massive steel hull at a steady, measured 3.4 knots. While this was certainly not fast enough to intercept an enemy fleet, it was exactly



The Tucker underway on 28 April 1938. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

what the captain needed. At 3.4 knots, the Tucker generated just enough forward momentum to maintain "steerageway"—the minimum speed required for the ship's rudder to remain completely effective. This allowed the helmsman to safely steer and keep the destroyer perfectly on station for days on end without firing up her hungry boilers. The crew was able to allow the ship's massive propulsion plant to go completely cold, saving thousands of gallons of precious fuel oil.

(continued...)



Photos of the Tucker under sail were featured in this issue of Life Magazine in October 1940. Photo – Etsy.

The unusual sight did not escape the eyes of the fleet. Photographs of the Tucker under sail were captured, eventually being featured in a Life Magazine profile of the Pacific Fleet in October 1940, cementing the crew's legendary status across the pre-war Navy. Once the exercises concluded, the Tucker doused her canvas, lit her boilers, and steamed back to Hawaii under her own power, her fuel bunkers remarkably full.



Jackknifed amidships and under tow by USS YP-346 in the Bruat Channel, Espiritu Santo, at about 2330 Hrs. GCT, 3 August 1942. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

Tragically, the Tucker's story of ingenuity would ultimately meet a dark, ironic end in the waters of the New Hebrides. Following the attack on Pearl Harbour, the destroyer was thrown into the desperate, chaotic early months of the war, serving as a vital escort for reinforcements flowing into the South Pacific. On the night of 3 August 1942, the Tucker was assigned to escort the ammunition transport SS Nira Luckenbach

into the safety of the newly established Allied base at Base Button, Espiritu Santo.

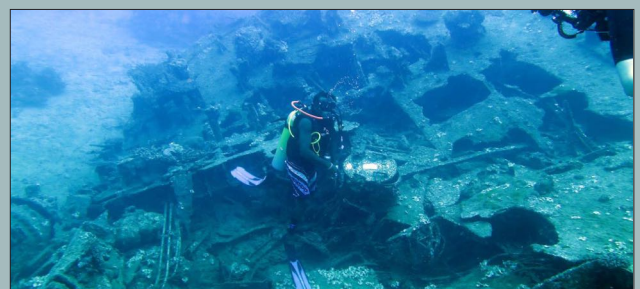
Navigating through the pitch-black night into the Segond Channel, neither the Tucker's captain nor the crew had any idea that U.S. forces had laid a defensive minefield across the entrance just 24 hours prior. Due to communications delays, the critical warning had not yet reached the incoming vessels. At 2145 hours, a horrific explosion ripped through the Tucker's hull. She had struck a friendly mine.



Sunk near Malo Island on 5 August 1942. The Tucker struck a mine during the evening of 3 August and sank early the following morning. Photo – U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

The force of the blast instantly tore the destroyer's structural back, causing her steel hull to violently jackknife. Despite desperate damage control efforts by her crew and assistance from the Nira Luckenbach, the structural damage was fatal. She slowly settled into the water, finally sinking into ten fathoms of water off Malo Island the following morning.

Today, the Tucker rests as one of the most historically significant, haunting underwater monuments of Vanuatu, a stark contrast to the whimsical, sunlit days of 1940 when her crew caught the Pacific breeze on a homemade canvas wing.



Today the Tucker is one of Vanuatu's favourite WWII wreck dives at the southern end of the Segond Channel. Photo – diveplanit.com

THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY

Tulagi Before The Storm

In the middle of 1940, while a war raged in Europe, it must have been impossible still to conceive that a small island in Solomon Islands would one day be part of an historic naval battle, thousands of kilometres away.

Tulagi is not far to the north of Guadalcanal, across what is now known as Ironbottom Sound.

Prewar, no-one had heard of Guadalcanal, and the eventually fearsome graveyard of warships to the north of course had yet to be born and garner its infamous title.

Fast forward a year or so however, and it is evident the danger of war with

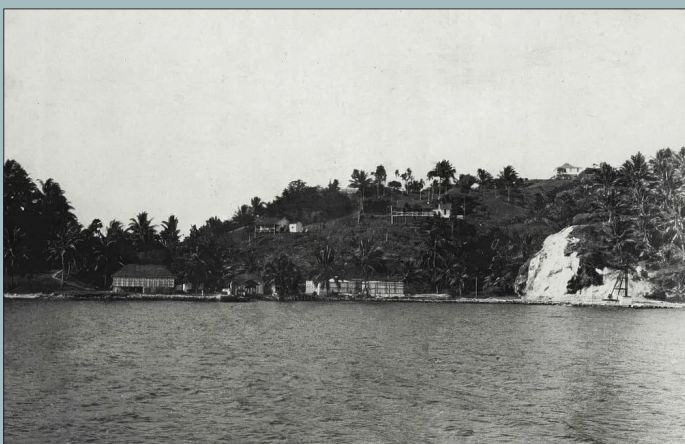
Japan is starting to exercise some minds. Australia sends a newly formed 1st Independent Company

of commandos, most to New Ireland, but with small detachments going to Port Vila, Bougainville, Manus Island, and Tulagi.

The Australian company understood its role in any invasion at these points to resist long enough to leave nothing of military value for the Japanese to find.



Australian prisoners of war at Shikoku, Japan, c. 1942-45. The prisoners came from a variety of units including the 2/22nd Infantry Battalion, the 1st Independent Company, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, and HMAS Perth. Photo – AWM/Wikipedia.



Tulagi Harbour where Australian Commandos came ashore, march 1942. Photo – Sydney Morning Herald.

The bulk of the force, based on Kavieng in New Ireland, had to retreat before an overwhelming invasion in late January, just over a month into the Pacific war.

Their attempt to sail by a schooner to safety at Port Moresby was in vain, as they were strafed and bombed by Japanese aircraft. With the vessel holed, the group surrendered and were escorted to Rabaul.

Officers were sent to Japan and captivity. A different fate faced the NCOs, enlisted men, and nearly a thousand other personnel and civilians who were loaded on a passenger ship – the Montevideo Maru.

It never made its destination, being sunk by a US submarine off Luzon in the Philippines.

(continued..)

The other detachments remained, spotting Japanese military movements as coast watchers, until they either were evacuated, or escaped.

And at Tulagi, a small group remained in early 1942. And in fact, they were there to look over an installation built in 1939, in another sign that there were forebodings of an eventual war.

This was a seaplane base that had been built at nearby Gavutu Harbour and known as Tulagi Seaplane base. From May 1941, a number of Australian Catalina reconnaissance seaplanes began to operate from the British-administered base.

It could have been a much grander operation pre-war, as the Royal Navy had recommended Tulagi as a possible base for the entire Asiatic fleet – needless to say, the latter never eventuated, and nor did a large anchorage.

On May 2nd, a Catalina spotted a Japanese invasion force heading through the Solomon Sea. It attacked in bad weather, without success. In fact, that was one of the opening moves in the Battle of Coral Sea, the first carrier to carrier battle in history, which would be the first real check to Japan's southward advance.



Headquarters of the Japanese Kure 3rd Special Naval Landing Force 3rd Company which participated in the capture of Tulagi in May 1942. Photo – Wikipedia.



Smoke rises from Tanambogo Island in Gavutu Harbour during the US attack on Japanese positions on August 7, 1942. Photo – US Navy.

So, when the Japanese came knocking, first with aircraft, in January, then the start of May, there were only the seaplanes, and around 50 RAAF and Australian commandos.

On tiny Tulagi, however, it was time to get out while they still could, on two small vessels headed to Port Vila. Five hundred Japanese soldiers arrived, followed by their own seaplanes.

The next day, the opening action of the Coral Sea battle saw US carrier planes hit the Japanese force at Tulagi.

A short distance away the Japanese had another force, labouring to build a new airfield on Guadalcanal.

That meant that in early August 1942, the US Marines descended on that island. At the same time, American rangers landed and captured Tulagi.

The war, very much, had finally arrived, and the first ships began sinking in what would become Ironbottom Sound.

Then and now - Bomber No.3

Few places on Espiritu Santo have changed as dramatically as the area once occupied by Bomber Field #3 — also known as Luganville Airfield. Built in 1943 by the 5th Naval Construction Regiment, the airfield quickly became one of the busiest aviation hubs in the South Pacific, supporting Allied operations at the height of the Pacific War.



Bomber No.3 when it was the island's largest bomber base. Note the huge number of ships anchored in the Segond Channel at the top of the photo. The largest ship just to the left of the end of the runway is the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. The narrow road heading on an angle towards the right from the end of the runway, is the road to the Catalina Seaplane Base on the Segond Channel. Photo – US Archives.



Amazingly today, you can clearly make out some of the taxiways to the left or east side of what was the main runway. In fact those rectangular shapes along the taxiway before you reach the property owner's house on the left side of the photo are the concrete slabs from the quonset huts and hangars you can see in the black and white photo. Photo – Google Earth Pro.

The wartime image reveals a vast military complex carved from dense tropical jungle. The runway stretched towards Segond Channel, surrounded by maintenance areas, dispersal bays and repair facilities servicing hundreds of aircraft. By 1944, Bomber #3 housed more than 650 aircraft alongside thousands of personnel. Carrier air groups rotated through the field for repairs and testing, while anti-submarine warfare squadrons trained overhead. Some of the war's most battle-hardened aircraft passed through Santo, including fighters credited with as many as 17 Japanese kills.

Today, the transformation is remarkable. The runway itself survives — not as an airfield, but as the main road running north past Santo's communications tower towards the Millenium Cave region. Though now lined with forest and small settlements, the outline of one of the Pacific war's great forgotten airfields remains clearly visible.

Inspiring everyday heroes

A top Paralympic athlete has been in Vanuatu recently to inspire people there to look at taking up what is known as Para Va'a.

Va'a is also known as outrigger canoeing.

Peter Cowen of New Zealand has achieved significant success internationally, winning two gold medals and one silver medal at the World Waka Ama Championships.

And he believes Vanuatu has the potential to produce elite Va'a racers.

Peter Cowen - who has been in the sport for more than half his life - first travelled to the Maskelyne Islands, where traditional canoes remain an important part of daily transport, culture, and custom life.

Here, along with government and High Commission guests, he saw first-hand the traditional canoeing practices of the islands.

Peter Cowen then took part in a competition involving

members of the local para community.

He says their performances – and those of other racers he saw at Port Vila – are impressive.

Although Va'a originated in Polynesia and continues to hold strong cultural and sporting significance there, Cowen says Vanuatu has shown that canoe paddling is equally part of Melanesian identity.

“We are the people of Oceania, and the ocean connects us all,” he said.

Peter Cowen believes Ni-Vanuatu athletes have the potential to compete at elite

levels, including Oceania Championships, World Championships and even the Paralympics, provided they remain committed and dedicated to training.

Information and full story, at the Vanuatu Daily Post, by reporter Vourie Molivakoro.

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



Paralympian Peter Cowen in Vanuatu – Photo Vanuatu Daily Post.



**SOUTH PACIFIC WWII
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