

BROOME

3 MARCH 1942 – 3 MARCH 2012



Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Canberra.
Western Australian Museum.

Published in honour of the 70th anniversary of the Japanese air raid on Broome, this publication is dedicated to the victims and all who have suffered losses as part of the Australian–Dutch Alliance during World War II.

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WARNING

This book contains names and images of people who are deceased.

Cover: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter and aerial photo of burning flying boats in Roebuck Bay, Broome, taken by a Japanese 'Babs' reconnaissance plane during the raid on Broome.

Please note: This booklet aims to provide a varied overview of the events in Broome on 3 March 1942, as well as background information on the Australian–Dutch alliance during World War II. While making this booklet, many more stories connected with the air raid resurfaced, all equally interesting and worth remembering. Unfortunately, it was impossible to incorporate all of these stories into this booklet.



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FOREWORD

Australia and the Netherlands are at opposing ends of the globe. But in spite of the distance, or perhaps even because of this, we share a common history and an age-old friendship.

Relations between the Dutch and the Australians go back a long way. To 1606, to be precise, when the Dutch merchant ship *Duyfken* went on an exploratory mission from Indonesia — or the East Indies as they were called then — and made landfall in Queensland. Her skipper, Willem Jansz, and his 20-man crew were the first Dutch to set foot on Australian soil. Jansz's visit was the start of a series of contacts that grew in number and intensity through the centuries.

Developments in the East Indies during World War II brought the Dutch and Australians closer together. In the first months of 1942, after the Battle of the Java Sea was lost, Dutch forces in Indonesia were relocated to Australia. These forces included navy ships, troops and aircraft. Together with a considerable number of Dutch merchant ships, they subsequently provided a valuable contribution to the Australian war effort in Asia and the Pacific.

In those days of advancing Japanese

troops, Dutch civilians living in Indonesia were evacuated to Australia. The flying boats in which they travelled to Australia would generally make a stopover in Broome for refuelling purposes. Hence, the presence of several flying boats, carrying Dutch civilian evacuees, in Roebuck Bay, Broome, on the morning of 3 March 1942.

On that eventful day, nine Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter aircraft launched a surprise attack on the flying boats in Roebuck Bay, as well as on other allied aircraft stationed at Broome airfield, causing numerous casualties among the crew and passengers aboard the aircraft.

Little is known about the Japanese air raid on Broome. I am very grateful to Nonja Peters, Doug Hurst, Cees Nooteboom, Henny Crijns, Rudolf Idzerda, Mykeljon Winckel and Silvano Jung for sharing their knowledge on the events of 3 March 1942 in Broome, explaining the context and highlighting some remarkable acts of courage that were shown that day.

The story deserves to be told. I hope many will read it.

Willem Andraea

Ambassador of the Netherlands



INTRODUCTION

In many ways, this publication is long overdue. Speak to people in Western Australia, and many will have a vague notion that Broome suffered an attack by hostile Japanese forces in World War II. However, it is unlikely that their knowledge will be much more than that.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that outside the Dutch community many people will realise the role that the Netherlands played in World War II in Australia. In fact, the Netherlands is often described as the fourth ally, fighting beside their Australian, American and British comrades.

It is appropriate, therefore, to mark the 70th anniversary of the attack with this publication. It is also fortunate that the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been prepared to support this publication, a fact that in no small part reflects the personal passion and drive of Willem Andreae, the Netherlands' Ambassador to Australia. Willem's knowledge of Australian–Dutch history and his commitment to making it more accessible to a wider audience has been the driving force behind this publication.

The third of March 1942 is a date that will live in infamy: as Rudolf Idzerda characterises it in this publication, it was the darkest day in the history of the Netherlands Naval Air Service. Passengers evacuated from the Netherlands East Indies that day included military personnel

and state bureaucrats, but it was also their wives, husbands and children that suffered in the attack.

It is for this reason that the Dutch Community in Perth remembers the victims of Broome every year and why the Western Australian Museum is proud to have played its part in producing this publication.

In 2002, as a result of well over a decade of fieldwork, research and lobbying by the WA Museum, all the Broome flying boat wrecks were protected under the Heritage of Western Australia Act.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the inception, development and production of this booklet, especially the authors, the Netherlands Embassy staff in Canberra and of course our own production team.

For those reading this, I thank you for acquainting yourself with this important story and all I ask of you is that you bring it to the attention of others. This is an episode in Australian and Dutch history that should never be forgotten, not least out of respect for the memory of all of those who perished on that tragic day.

Alec Coles

*Chief Executive Officer,
Western Australian Museum*

*Left: Broome jetty.
(Australian War Memorial, 051751.)*

THE BROOME AIR BATTLE

3 March 1942

Dr Nonja Peters

Founding Director of the Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship (MERC)
Research Unit, Division of Humanities, Curtin University. Her research focus is on preservation
of Dutch Australians' Cultural Heritage.

A largely unacknowledged aspect of the Dutch presence in Australia is the major airlift out of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) via Broome on the Western Australian coast, in advance of the Japanese Occupation in 1942.¹ It was occasioned by the outbreak of the Pacific War on 7 December 1941, which forged a three and a half year alliance between the American, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA) military in the interests of the defence of the region which included Australia.²

Evacuation to Australia of select NEI bureaucrats and military personnel, with the expertise to continue the war effort, began two days after the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, but only after the NEI Administration had assured John Curtin's Government that they would cover all financial responsibilities associated with their exile in Australia.³

Broome was chosen as the point of entry because it was the closest port to Java and could take both land-based aircraft and flying boats. Reports by Douglas Gillison, the RAAF's official historian, note how the evacuation operation transformed the sleepy pearling town of Broome into a high air traffic port, which he likened to La Guardia Field (New York's airport) at its busiest.⁴ Around 57 aircraft were being processed in one day and between 7,000 and 8,000 refugees passed through Broome in the 14 days before the Japanese Occupation of Java.⁵

LAST CHANCE

However, the window of opportunity was limited. In fact, all shuttle flights were discontinued the day after the Battle of the Java Sea on 27 February, which in itself had seen a valiant attempt, to no avail, by the combined allied fleet to stop

the invasion of the NEI.⁶ However, the Java route was briefly reopened again on the night of 2 March 1942, to enable the *Marineluchtvaartdienst* (Naval Air Service, or *MLD*) to evacuate their last nine flying boats (5 Dorniers, 4 Catalinas). This unexpected evacuation gave the boats' crews and their families, a few remaining VIPs and some of the Java Sea Battle orphans and widows a last chance to exit the NEI. The flying boats departed Java at night by stealth from secret hiding places in Lake Grati, Lengkong, Teloengagoeng and Tjilatjap, with 80 crew and 81 civilians.⁷ They arrived at Broome seven-hours later, on 3 March 1942, where they joined six United States Navy (USN) and Royal Air Force Squadron flying boats already lying at anchor on Roebuck Bay, awaiting refuelling for their flight to Perth.⁸

Now in Australia, the Dutch evacuees thought themselves safe from the Japanese. Consequently, as they waited, the last thing on their minds was an air raid. In fact most adults were busy making sure their children did not fall in the water.⁹ However, at 9.30am nine Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters and a Japanese reconnaissance plane, on orders to close the evacuation route, entered Roebuck Bay airspace, and on sighting the flying boat squadron levied a brutal attack on the entirely unprotected aircraft.¹⁰ As

the Zeros made slow flypasts with open cockpits, parents then started pushing their children into the water in an effort to save them.¹¹

HORRIFIC MASSACRE

Eye-witness reports describe the ensuing 20 minute attack, as a horrific massacre. Before long all the flying boats had burst into flames. Survivors recall that even under water you could hear the noise and feel the pressure of the Japanese bullets.¹² The Japanese raid resulted in the loss of 26 aircraft, including one Zero,¹³ those at Broome Aerodrome, a DC-3 at Carnot Bay just north of Broome and a B-24A 'Liberator' off Cable Beach — killing all but one of the 21 people on board.

For the Dutch, it was a dark day in the history of the *MLD*. All told, 48 of the 161 on board the flying boats lost their lives by gunfire or while swimming through burning oil — 16 men, 12 women and 20 children.¹⁴

Also many heroic acts took place. For example Willy Josina Maria van Aggeren, who lost both her parents that day, was ferried to safety on the chest of the pilot who later adopted her. David Sjerp, only sixteen months old, was saved by his father

Left: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter.

Bastiaan Sjerp, captain of Dornier X-20.

Albert van Vliet, a crewmember on Catalina Y-70 blames the lack of warning, together with the large number of people (26) on board, for the massive loss of life, three crew and ten passengers (6 children), on Y-70. They included four Lokman children, while both parents and two siblings survived. The bodies of Hendrika, Jeanette, Jan and Johannes Lokman were never recovered. The entire Brandenburg family, father, mother and child were killed. Pieter Schraver and his wife and Mrs Kuin and her child all died, as did the Hendrikse, who were found dead wrapped in an embrace — she could not swim. He made the ultimate sacrifice.¹⁵ The many more courageous stories are beyond the scope of this article.

The Dutch community in Perth holds a service at the Perth War Cemetery in May every year to commemorate the end of war at the Dutch Annex. It includes laying a rose on the gravestones of the 35 Broome victims buried there.

A Dutch translation of this article has been published in *Lees het NA* magazine by Nationaal Archief in the Netherlands on 29 February 2012. For more information, visit: <http://www.gahetna.nl/over-ons/vrienden-nationaal-archief/lees-na-magazine>

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DUTCH FORCES

IN AUSTRALIA IN WORLD WAR II

Doug Hurst

Retired RAAF navigator and staff officer, and author of the book

The Fourth Ally: The Dutch Forces in Australia in WWII.



In the three months following their attack on Pearl Harbour powerful Japanese forces over-ran much of South-East Asia and the Islands to Australia's north. Such was their superiority that they quickly occupied most of the Dutch colony of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI). Captured territory included Timor from which they launched their attack on Dutch aircraft in Broome on 3 March 1942.

The countries of South-East Asia had feared Japan's growing military power for some years. In response to Japanese aggression in China during the 1930s the Dutch had built up land and sea forces, each with air support. As the threat increased in 1941 they formed a hasty alliance with American, British and Australian regional forces, based on Singapore as the hub. Called ABDA, the alliance was never a cohesive force and was soon defeated by the more powerful, unified and better led Japanese.

When ABDA forces lost the Battle of the Java Sea on 27 February 1942, all hope of saving the NEI was gone and selected remnants of NEI forces relocated to Australia. As well as the aircraft destroyed in Broome, these forces included a cruiser (later joined by three more warships), three submarines (later joined by three more), a minesweeper, a few hundred troops and some aircraft, mostly transports, trainers and flying boats. Over two hundred more aircraft, mostly B-25 bombers, P-40 Kittyhawks and C-47 Dakotas, were added during 1942–43.

These resources were warmly welcomed and quickly integrated with allied forces still fighting frantically to stop further Japanese advances into Australia's northern approaches. But even more important were the KPM (Royal Packet Line) merchant ships, some already at a permanent base in Sydney and others relocated to Australia from throughout the NEI.



Above: Flying boat engine and propeller.

Right: Catalina flying boat.
(Courtesy Doug Hurst.)

Previous page: Dornier flying boat.
(Courtesy Doug Hurst.)




to allied fighting men — the *Balikpapan*, for instance, served throughout the war, ferrying troops back and forth to the fighting. Naval ships too became well known, operating in the Indian and Pacific oceans. In early 1943, Royal Netherlands Navy (RNN) ships based in Fremantle helped escort the Australian 9th Division back from the Middle East.

When the multi-national US 7th Fleet was formed, at first it was mostly made up of Dutch and Australian ships, the Dutch contributing two cruisers (*Tromp* and *Jacob van Heemskerck*), two destroyers (*Van Galen* and *Tjerk Hiddes*), two submarines and a minesweeper. The RNN's Australian headquarter was in Melbourne and the Dutch had a permanent officer on staff with the USN in San Francisco. Ship's crews were almost entirely Dutch with only occasional supplementary manning from allied personnel.

Australia had virtually no merchant navy and the 28 KPM ships became the major allied supply line during the most critical stages of the decisive New Guinea campaigns of 1942–43.

Indeed, KPM ships became a life-line to Australian and US forces in PNG in those times, delivering some 1,000,000 tons of supplies and 100,000 troops to the allied forces. Their contribution is hard to overstate. Of the 27 merchant ships allocated to General MacArthur's command, 19 were Dutch, mostly from KPM. In all probability, without these Dutch ships, the Allies could not have beaten the Japanese in PNG in 1942–43 and the war would have been a longer and harder affair for the Allies. Many Dutch merchant ships became well known

The NEI Army, the KNIL, was mostly destroyed or captured during the Japanese invasion, and during 1942 only 1,074 of the original 90,000 strong force reached Australia. By mid-1942 they were headquartered in Melbourne



and 745 men were garrisoning some parts of the NEI not occupied by the Japanese. Not surprisingly, this small force was outnumbered everywhere and withdrew to Australia, to operate mainly with the Australian Army until the closing stages of the war.

KNIL numbers grew during the war, boosted by recruits from Dutch colonies like Surinam and the Dutch Antillies. By 1944 the KNIL could supply infantry, guides and interpreters to assist the Australians re-taking Dutch territories. With time, the KNIL also included an Intelligence Service that conducted special operations (sabotage, setting up local underground operations, etc) in former Dutch territories, including the NEI — very dangerous work, with 42 of the 250 captured and killed, during 36 operations. By war's end the KNIL numbered some 5,000, including a Women's Corps, the VK (in which 1,059 women served during and after the war), and a Papua Battalion formed and based in New Guinea. Two air combat squadrons (Nos 18 and 120) and two transport flights were formed in Australia, assisted by an Australian allocation of 700 personnel to fill maintenance and other support roles and by access to Australian facilities, like airfields and workshops. No. 18 was a B-25 Mitchell bomber squadron, formed

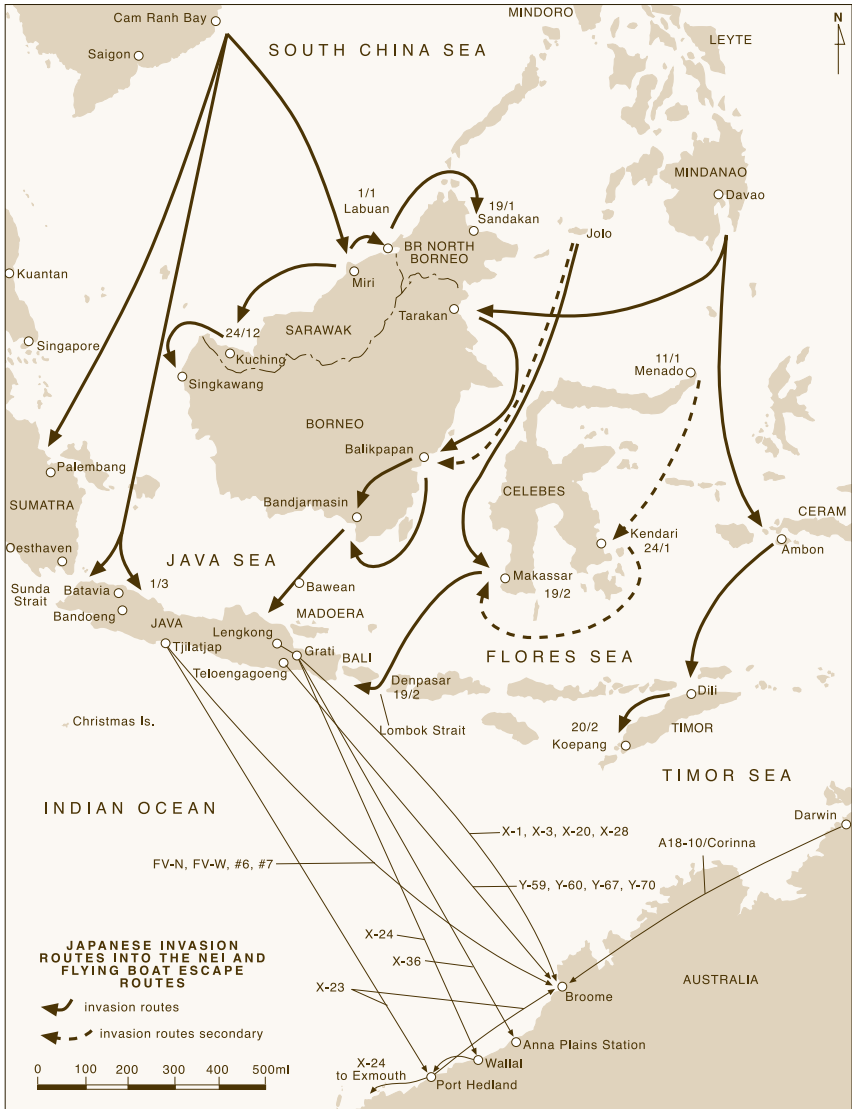
in Canberra and deployed to the Northern Territory in late 1942 where it operated mostly from the large allied airfield at Batchelor, south of Darwin. An outline of these times and the squadron's sudden fame when they sank a submarine off the NSW coast in June 1942 is given in the accompanying article on Gus Winckel.

Equally important is the fact that No. 18, and later on No. 120 squadron, were both composite squadrons within the RAAF, under RAAF operational command, but commanded by Dutch officers, and manned roughly 50% by Australian and Dutch/Indonesians. This unique arrangement eventually worked well, but only after special measures were taken to handle language problems and discipline. Orders were printed in Dutch and English and squadron management always included an RAAF Squadron Leader. These arrangements were further modified in 1944 when students from a Dutch flying school in Jackson Mississippi — run with the assistance of the USAAF — began arriving.

Students from Jackson included escapees from occupied Holland and the NEI and Dutch citizens from unoccupied Dutch territories or allied or neutral countries. More than 700 trained in Jackson, the bulk of whom finished up in Australia. In combination with arrivals from other

JAPANESE INVASION ROUTES INTO THE NEI AND FLYING BOAT ESCAPE ROUTES.

Jung 2007, Dutch in WA Figures. Map from: C. Shores, C. Cull and Y. Izawa, *Bloody shambles, volume two: the defence of Sumatra to the fall of Burma*. Grub Street, London, 1992.



sources this made the Dutch squadrons very 'multi-cultural' decades before the term was invented.

In July 1944 the 18th Squadron welcomed 34 West Indians and 38 men from the NEI (including six Chinese nationals), many of whom were escaped POWs. Soon after, the squadron included 38 nationalities speaking 13 different languages. Special measures to cope with this diversity included a special mess to provide Asian food and when the Queen's Birthday parade was held on 31 August the Commanding Officer addressed the squadron in Dutch, English and Malay. No. 120 Squadron, flying P-40 Kittyhawks, was also formed in Canberra, along with the PEP — the Personnel and Equipment Pool — a training and support unit for both Mitchells and Kittyhawks that remained in Canberra.

No. 120 Squadron, with 24 aircraft, 28 pilots and 260 ground staff initially operated from various Australian bases until being relocated to Merauke, in the unoccupied part of what was then Dutch New Guinea, from April 1944 on. Their main roles were army support, bombing and anti-shipping. Pilots were mostly Dutch, but Australians frequently flew with the squadron and all specialist fighter combat instruction was done in the RAAF.

The two transport flights were based in

various southern locations, with the main role of supporting the combat squadrons in the north. The main aircraft used were converted Mitchells and C-47 Dakota. The transport flights, unlike the combat squadrons, were not part of the RAAF until the very end of the war, when they became No.19 Squadron, RAAF, on 15 August 1945.

As such, they routinely operated from Australia to NEI for the next two years, despite union black bans on Dutch shipping to NEI. Most other Dutch aviators, along with their aircraft, were transferred to NEI at war's end to support Dutch efforts to re-establish the NEI. Army personnel too were sent there, as were some ships and their crews.

It was all in vain for the Dutch, whose re-colonisation aims were, in the main, not supported by their World War II allies and opposed by increasing numbers in Holland. When Indonesia was formed on 27 December 1949, the peace settlement included the handover of a good deal of Dutch equipment, including most of their aircraft. Some Dutch servicemen stayed on in the peace-time defence forces, some returned to Holland, and quite a few settled in Australia, the country they had helped defend during the Pacific War.

THE NETHERLANDS' OWN DUNKIRK

Cees Nooteboom

Dutch novelist, traveller, poet and art-reviewer. Nooteboom has received much praise for his work world-wide and was on *Newsweek's* list of the ten best writers of travelling literature of the last 100 years.

It is 3 March, 1942. In Broome, a small town in the tropical north-west of Australia, everyone is still asleep. It has been unusually busy there lately. The Japanese have landed in the Dutch East Indies, and a kind of Dunkirk has been organised, a mass exodus of Dutch citizens taking everything that is still airworthy and travelling the thousand kilometres from Cilacap in Java to this northerly point in Australia. It involves flying over the Timor Sea. Timor itself has already been occupied by the Japanese, who have established an air and naval base in Kupang for the 3rd Naval Air Squadron of the Imperial Japanese Fleet. Eight thousand Dutch people have flown from Bandung, Tulung Agung and Cilacap to Broome, on their way to Sydney or Perth, and the safety of Australia, which is itself uncertain, because a Japanese invasion is expected there too.

FATAL MISCALCULATION

As Broome slept, Japanese pilots prepared their surprise attack. On 3 March, a Mitsubishi had carried out a reconnaissance flight over Roebuck Bay, near Broome. This had not gone unnoticed. A DC-3 from the KNILM (Royal Netherlands East Indies Airways) arrived in Broome that same day with someone on board whose experiences in Java had made him certain that a Japanese attack would follow soon, as he had attempted to convince the flight command. It was the usual story: no one believes the bearer of bad tidings. The local commanders thought they knew better: the distance was too great, the Japanese would never make it that far. This proved a fatal miscalculation, because the Japanese reconnaissance aircraft had seen eight large allied planes on the small airstrip, and another three flying boats in the bay, which was reason enough for Takeo

Shibata, the commander in Kupang, to send out a squadron under the command of Lieutenant Zenziro Miyano, with orders to eliminate the enemy aircraft. However, what the Japanese could not know at that time was that in the night of 2 March, many other aeroplanes would join their numbers, half an allied air fleet. That night, no fewer than fifteen flying boats were in Roebuck Bay, including five Dorniers and four Catalinas belonging to the Royal Netherlands East Indies Airways, in addition to seven bombers and transport planes from the American and Australian air forces on the airstrip, and a Royal Netherlands East Indies Airways DC-3.

EASY PREY

At five past seven, the Japanese took off from Kupang: nine Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters and a C5M2 Babs reconnaissance aircraft. They reached Broome at half past nine and launched their attack, only to find that there were not three flying boats in the bay, but fifteen. Some of these planes still had refugees on board, as they had only just arrived from Java, and there was not enough accommodation in Broome for everyone. The first three Zeros dived over the bay, while three more bombarded the airstrip and everything on it. The other Zeros, which were to serve as cover against any enemy fighters, could now

join in, because there were no fighters to defend the airbase. The surprise was complete. The Babs reconnaissance plane hung above the battle, directing the operations. The flying boats lay helpless in the bay as the fighters raced towards this easy prey. The people on board were unable to escape, and the three-engine Dorniers went up in flames or sank. Before the Zeros dived, they jettisoned their long-distance fuel tanks, which many people believed to be bombs, but that was not the case. The Japanese commander had in fact given orders that only military targets should be attacked, but of course they had no way of knowing that women and children were inside the Dorniers and Catalinas.

On the small airstrip, a few allied planes succeeded in getting off the ground, but they were immediately attacked by one of the Zeros. An American Liberator was brought down by Warrant Officer Osamu Kudo, crashing on Cable Beach and killing nearly all of the 33 people on board. One of the planes on the airstrip was an Australian air force Lockheed Hudson, which was about to leave, but had not yet taken off because the pilot had forgotten his navigational charts and codes. He

Left: Dornier flying boats at Roebuck Bay, Broome.

saw Kudo's Zero bearing down on the Liberator and realised there was no point taking off, as they would not last a second. Zigzagging, the crew ran away from the plane and watched from a distance as it became a sea of flames. The other planes fared no better: fifteen aircraft were destroyed on the airstrip and in the bay, and most of those who were on board did not survive. The graves with their names on are in the Perth War Cemetery at Karakatta. They had escaped the Japanese camps, but died far away from their homeland that was occupied by Germany and which they would never see again.

ONE JAPANESE VICTIM

One of the men out in the bay, Sergeant H. M. Jutta, later described how he had crawled out of the confined space of the Catalina and was sitting with his wife and young son on the wing, looking out at their strange surroundings, when he saw a number of planes approaching. At first

he thought they were Australian aircraft, but when they started shooting, he knew better. He pushed his wife and child into the water and jumped in after them. They made for the coast, swimming under water as much as possible. Most of the others were not so fortunate; they ended up in the water dead or injured, where some of them were taken by sharks. In total, there were around 100 deaths; the exact number has never been established. The list of Dutch victims runs from Albinus to Wissel. Three women and children have never been identified.

There was only one Japanese fatality, Osamu Kudo in his Zero, shot down by Dutch Flight Lieutenant W. (Gus) Winckel, who fired his machine gun from the ground. There are two versions of this story, but one thing is certain: Flight Lieutenant Winckel had just landed after a seven-hour flight from Bandung in his KNILM Lockheed Lodestar as one of the American Liberators was about to take off. The passengers on the Dutch aircraft were preparing to disembark and Winckel was taxiing to refuel. When he got to the





Above: B24A Liberator burning on the airstrip.

Below: B24A Liberator aircraft damaged on the aerodrome.

refuelling station, he said, 'Listen, is the RAAF flying today?' and when they asked him why, he pointed at the sky, where the nine planes were approaching, still just distant dots on the horizon. He hurried his passengers off the plane and told them to run for cover. Then he fetched his air-cooled Colt machine gun from the plane and started shooting at the Japanese aircraft. He had four hundred bullets and he kept on firing until his gun was red hot and burned through the skin of his arm. That was the end of Osamu Kudo, whose body has never been found.

But Kudo struck one last blow. The American Liberator, already on the runway, must have been unaware of everything that was going on outside. The aircraft was full of wounded soldiers from Java, who were on their way to Perth. Kudo saw the plane and attacked, minutes before he himself was shot out of the sky by Winckel. The Liberator flew for a few

more kilometres before breaking in two over Gantheaume Point. The only two survivors were thrown out during the crash and had to watch as the large plane slowly sank, with everyone on board.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

All of this is history. Such an endless series of events led up to that moment when a small Australian coastal town, for one day, became the theatre for a scene from a world war: Commander Perry forcing the Japanese to open up their country to international trade in 1856; the Netherlands, centuries before, founding a colonial empire in what is now Indonesia; the Japanese pushed into a corner by the rest of the world and with few raw materials of their own; the Americans forced by Pearl Harbor to enter into a war that was initially a reaction by Germany to the perceived injustice of Versailles. A thousand tributaries flow together to form something, and that something branches off into another thousand streams, one of which leads here, to this tropical backwater, which is closer to New Guinea than to Sydney or Perth.

How did I find my way there? I was invited to a festival in Perth, in 2000. I bought the books that tell the story of 1942 back then: *Flight of Diamonds* by W. H. Tyler, *Port of Pearls* by Hugh Edwards, *Broome's One Day War* by Mervyn W. Prime. Those stories stayed with me and

were in fact the reason for my return. The request from the festival organisers in 2000 was a simple one: ‘Now that you’re here, how would you like to do two readings in the regions too?’

But what is a region? In Australia, that can easily encompass a few thousand kilometres. And so it was Broome, and Derby, and love at first sight. Why? It’s hard to explain. Unique enclaves, I’ve always loved them. You look at the map, and you’re lost. Ideally, I’d have liked to drive out there for that very first visit, over two thousand kilometres with practically nothing on the way, but it wasn’t possible that year. And so I flew.

FROM GAMELAN TO ROWDY

The plane makes a slow circle above Roebuck Bay, the same place where all those Dorniers went down, but I did not know that then. It was March when I went there for the first time, as it is now, and as it was in 1942, when I was nine years old.

I had wanted to drive on to Fitzroy Crossing, but it was the ‘Wet’, the flood season, and the roads were impassable even for four-wheel drives, a landscape of rivers. On the map, the Great Northern Highway was an orange line through white terrain with coloured hatching, the channel of the Fitzroy River, the whiteness an empty and dry area extending to the Great Sandy Desert, land without roads, without names, emptiness. There are still

words just before that immense emptiness begins: the world is still called Yarri Yarri, or Pyramid Hill, Djilimbardi, Outpost Hill, but my car is not good enough to deal with all that sand — not the water, and not the sand. I read the words written in small red letters among all of that whiteness: ‘The magnificent Fitzroy River flows through rugged hills and plains for over 750 km. When in flood, it can reach up to 15 km wide and the flood waters have carved through the limestone of the Devonian reef to form the Geikie Gorge. The area marked in grey on this map shows where access to the river is closed to control Noogoora burr, a noxious weed.’

And now? Now I am back in Broome. The pull was too strong. I came via Perth from Bali — it’s impossible to experience a greater clash of cultures within just a couple of hours. From gamelan, floral offerings and temples full of graceful figures to rowdy and blond and double-sized bodies — impossible, but then you turn yourself inside out and it proves to be possible after all. By an irony of history, I rented a Mitsubishi four-wheel drive at the airport. Japan won the war in the end: the Zeros have flown away and returned in the form of cars. The motel looks like a motel, tautological certainties — you know what you’re getting. The rattan bed, the two-metre terrace with two plastic chairs, the murmuring of the man in the next room, the news from the distant capital, the whisper of the air

conditioning, the singsong of the large refrigerator, the strange machine you can cook your dinner in, and everything else the colour of bleached daffodils: my home. Someone has left a car radio on outside, advertisements for batteries and washing machines: the world.

I always feel wonderfully content in such places. Now it is time to rediscover the town that once was, a town that is not a town, with no high-rise buildings, just low, tropical homes along wide avenues full of huge tropical trees. As I sit peering at the map of the town and its surroundings, searching for the places I walked all those years ago, I suddenly see the words 'Carnot Bay'.

My inner Google, infinitely more primitive than the instrument that is aiming to put our memories out of action within a few generations — after all, why would you remember anything if somewhere in the world there's a machine that can remember everything for you? — is rattling off what little it knows and informing me that Carnot Bay is a keyword in the story of 1942, and suddenly the name Smirnoff appears on my inner screen, and diamonds, and Bandung, and a dead woman and a dead child. The war and all it implies.

This is Dutch history and I don't think many people know about it, even though the history of Ivan Smirnoff merits a novel all of its own. He wrote a book about it himself and there are stories about that

day floating around the internet, where nothing is ever lost.

THREE AGAINST ONE

Back to Tuesday 3 March 1942. While no one in occupied Holland is any the wiser, the *Pelikaan*, a Royal Netherlands East Indies Airways Douglas DC-3, is taking off in Bandung, which will be captured by the Japanese three days later. The pilot is a White Russian who is every bit the adventurer, one of the three musketeers, who has left the other two behind somewhere else in the world. It will be an eventful flight and not everyone on board will survive. Ivan Vasilievich Smirnoff, whose friends call him the Turk, shot down twelve German fighters in World War I. He is famous among pilots, with the same aura as Von Richthofen, the Red Baron, knights of the air who have fought dramatic duels in their one-man planes.

Now war has come again and Smirnoff knows the flight may be dangerous. Shortly before leaving, he is handed a small brown packet, which is heavier than it looks. He does not know what is inside, only that it is important. It is addressed to the Commonwealth Bank in Melbourne. One thing he does know is that, no matter what happens, he must keep the parcel with him until someone comes to collect it from him when they've reached the safety of Australia. There are twelve people on board, a few soldiers, the crew. There is no room for seats, so they lie on the floor.



Only the one woman on the flight, Maria van Tuyn, the wife of another pilot, with her baby, who is less than a year old, has a place to sit.

We are so accustomed to Australia as a land on its own that it comes as a shock to look at the map of South-East Asia and see how close countries can be geographically when history has placed them at a far greater distance from each other. If you want to know how that feels, you need to fly the three hours from Bali to Perth. It is not another continent — it's another planet.

The DC-3's destination is Broome. Smirnoff has seven hours to get there. As they approach the Australian coast, radio operator Muller asks for landing instructions. The answer he receives is puzzling: 'Airstrip is okay for the time being', but the doubt in the voice suggests

Feind hört mit — the enemy's listening — and then that enemy comes into sight, first as dots, which soon become large enough to recognise as Japanese Zeros, which swiftly launch their attack.

This is Smirnoff's first battle in over twenty years, but his DC-3 is not a fighter plane, and it's three against one. His three opponents are Lieutenant Zenziro Miyano, Sergeant Takashi Kurano and Private Zempei Matsumoto. Commander Miyano gives the other two the order to attack. Smirnoff tries to evade the two fighters using all kinds of tricks that he learned in that other war so long ago — diving, turning, quickly climbing — but he does not stand a chance against the much more nimble Japanese planes. The engine is on fire, he has passengers in the plane, he has been wounded several times, and yet he still manages to get the plane onto the

ground on the beach at Carnot Bay. In the old photograph I later see, the PK-AFV is lying there like a stranded whale; the impact must have been immense, nothing is left of the landing gear, the small square windows are the colour of ash, and black, the plane is burned out.

I have read various accounts of these minutes. The landing was a masterpiece. Smirnoff steered his damaged aeroplane into the surf so as to put out the fire in the left engine. Then everyone had to get out of the aircraft. It was a matter of seconds before the Zeros would return. The account I read in one of the books, *Flight of Diamonds* by W. H. Taylor, could be made directly into a movie. A few of the men on board climb out of the plane and wade through the water, which offers them a certain degree of protection because they can duck beneath the surface. But when the mechanic Blaauw tries to do the same, he gets shot in both knees. Smirnoff himself sees that the flow of blood is stemmed, so that Blaauw won't bleed to death. Only later does he realise that a bullet has passed straight through Blaauw's thigh.

After every dive from the Japanese, there's a brief moment when they can attempt to rescue the others from the plane, until the enemy uses up its ammunition. Maria van Tuyn is seriously injured; she will die later, as will her baby. Muller

climbs back on board to retrieve his radio set and attempts to make contact with the airstrip in Broome, sixty kilometres away, but he can't get through. Now that the Zeros have gone, there is only the sound of the surf, the groans of the wounded, and the heat, becoming ever more intense.

The tide comes in, lifting up the broken plane, which rises and falls on the waves.

One of the KNILM men follows Smirnoff's orders to go on board and salvage the papers, the post and the brown package, but a huge wave crashes over him, knocking him down like a heavyweight boxer, and everything he is carrying disappears into the wild water, including the package, sparking a story that has never entirely been resolved. For now, there is nothing they can do. They use the few parachutes on board to make a kind of tent, so at least they have a little protection from the sun. They barely have anything to drink and the men Smirnoff sends out in search of water return exhausted, having found nothing.

That night, Maria van Tuyn dies, followed by another of the passengers towards morning, Hendriksz, a pilot.

Left: The DC-3, Jack Palmer and the Australian Airforce team.

They bury them in shallow graves in the soft sand that will later prove their salvation when a Japanese flying boat comes over and drops a couple of bombs, which do not explode because the sand is so wet. Another night, and Blaauw dies too.

Rescue comes because an Aborigine has reported to the mission in Beagle Bay that a plane has been shot down. The following morning, a German monk from the mission goes out with someone from the army base and an Aborigine to look for the downed aircraft and any survivors. On their way, they come across two men sent out by Smirnoff. They leave them behind with the promise of help and then meet two more of the surviving Dutchmen, who are able to give them a better indication of where the plane is. Soon after that, two Australian air force Wirraways fly over and drop food, but the help they promise arrives too late for Maria van Tuyn's baby. It is 7 March by the time the monk, Brother Richard, and his helpers reach the crash, the survivors and the dead. On the ninth, he will return to bury the bodies.

BEACHCOMBER, CASANOVA

I look at the photographs in *Broome's One Day War* by Mervyn W. Prime. The paper they are printed on combines with the black and white and the old-fashioned photographic technology to create an intriguing effect. The black and white has muted into shades of grey. In a photograph from 1979, thirty-seven years after the crash, a wing of the DC-3 lies in wet, rippled sand; the ocean has tugged and eaten away at it. The stranded fuselage itself, with its now invalid call sign on the side, tells its scorched tale of death and destruction, war and history, but a photograph taken from the front shows the damaged cockpit still standing high. The shadow of a nameless man sits on the left engine. He is leaning with his arm on one of the propeller blades. Four men stand in front of the aircraft. This is a team from the Australian air force, sent out to solve the puzzle of the vanished package. Their faces, two of them beneath large Australian hats, have been wiped out by the grey of the photograph. The name of the man in a white singlet is given: Jack Palmer. I think that the small black dog standing on the group's left, his eyes vanished into the blackness of the photograph, is looking out at us from the hereafter. He

Right: Jack Palmer and the Australian Airforce team sent to look for the missing package.

has his secrets, that dog.

But a man who had even more secrets was his owner, Palmer. It's a shame that the photograph does not reveal more of his face, because he could be the hero of a picaresque novel. Beachcomber, casanova, hunter of the rare dugong, adventurer, buccaneer. And the man who found the famous parcel of diamonds. He sailed by on his lugger and pulled himself up into the wreckage of the aeroplane, where, with the genius of the true beachcomber, he felt inside all the crevices and crannies of the plane and found the package, forced by the wild ocean into a space between the fuel tank and the side of the plane. He did not know what it was, the water had soaked through the cardboard, there was still some kind of red seal on it, and when he opened it he found a sort of large wallet inside. He had no way of knowing that the parcel came from the jewellers De

Concurrent NV in Bandung. For the time being, he left the leather bag closed, but he gave a few pieces of clothing that he found on board to the two Aboriginal boys who sailed with him as his crew on the way to Beagle Bay.

A JAR FILLED WITH STONES

What comes next is a penny dreadful featuring real diamonds and a hero who eventually came out on top. The other characters are Aboriginal women, police inspectors, soldiers, two more adventurers who have sailed away from Broome in their lugger and are waiting up north for the threat of war to pass. Palmer loves women and finds plenty of them among the local Aborigines. By now he has had a good look at the contents of his find: 'white stones', large and small, which slowly find their way into the hands of women and, from there,



into the hands of men. To understand what happens, you need to know the area. Very few roads, scattered Aboriginal settlements, German missionaries, older men sailing their luggers up and down the wild coast, heat, war, lawlessness.

Palmer anchors his lugger beside another one in Beagle Bay, whose occupants live on their supplies and what they fish. Their names are Robinson and Mulgrue. Aria for bass, baritone and tenor. Setting: the gloomy interior of a small lugger. The tenor reveals his treasures and shares them out, but quickly takes back one of the larger stones. The bass can't see too well and leaves his treasure to the baritone, who later buries the stones in a bottle in the sand, where it is found by an Aboriginal woman. No idea of the value; it's used to buy tobacco. Then Palmer feels remorse, but not enough. He decides to join the army and reports to the commander in Broome, where he tells his story, but not all of it. He also hands over two pots of stones to this Major Clifford Gibson, who is aware that he has not heard the entire truth, and not received all of the stones. Palmer tells him that he has walked over 150 kilometres from Beagle Bay to enlist. He receives an assignment: a lonely observation post on Gantheaume Point.

I have been there before and written about it, about the fossilised footprint of

a dinosaur that can be seen in the rock there, a creature that walked in this place 130 million years ago and wanted us to know. As I wrote at the time, the strange thing was that people who lived millions of years later would give this beast a name when its species had long been extinct. The sea gurgles and lips around the rock. The lighthouse keeper once carved a pool out of the stone for his wife, an act of love. The woman's happiness, in her lonely pool among the elements, must have been almost indescribable. And Palmer too is in his element there. He is participating in the war, in a paid position, and all he has to do is look out over the endless ocean to see if the Japanese are coming. He has ample supplies of fish and dugongs, and his small army of available Aboriginal women is close at hand. And he knows where his diamonds are, the ones he has not yet returned. He will keep them for the rest of his life, which will last until 1958, and take his secret with him to the grave.

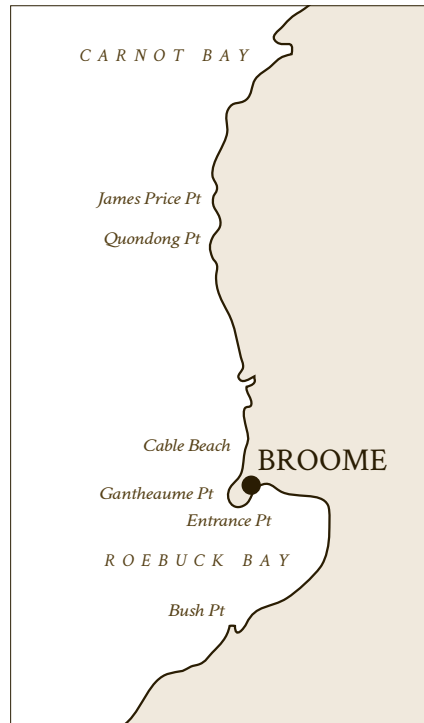
But that time has not yet come. More and more of the precious stones are trickling in to Broome, but even combined with the stones that Palmer gave back, they are still not enough; millions of pounds' worth of diamonds are still missing. Palmer is arrested, as are the two friends on the lugger, which is now in Little Creek. They all tell their stories, but Robinson does not yet know that the

pot of diamonds that he buried in the sand at Little Creek has been found by Connie Joorida, stones that are now slowly finding their way to Broome and from there to Perth, where they are counted and appraised. More and more stones turn up, are deposited here and there; the fear of God has taken hold of people now that they know the police are looking for the diamonds. Only Palmer is still guarding his secret, and he does it so well that he is acquitted, as are Robinson and Mulgrue, but they have nothing anyway.

Evening is approaching. I have driven in my small Mitsubishi to Gantheaume Point. The worst of the day's heat is over, red and gold-coloured cloud ships drift across the sky, a cardinal purple that also lies upon the sea. There are a few other people here, looking, like me, at the footprint in the rock. I cannot see what they are thinking, but it must be something to do with time — there's no escaping that here. Palmer must have been happy in this place, I think. He later bought a house in Broome, had a blue Chevrolet, and enough money for women. He did not reveal his secret even on his deathbed.

And Smirnoff? He was called as a witness in the trial and must have had his own thoughts on the subject when Palmer was acquitted. He went on to

fly for another airline in '44 and '45, before returning to Holland, and later, like so many people who had lived in the tropics, moving to Majorca. He had flown 27,000 hours since those first days with the imperial Russian air force. Ann Coupar wrote a book about his life, *The Smirnoff Story*, and his own book about his experiences was called *The Future Has Wings*. Alexander Korda and Cecil B. DeMille both wanted to make a film about him, but when Smirnoff heard which actors were to play him, he refused. He died in October 1956.



BEAGLE BAY AND THE DIAMOND MYSTERY

Source:

Prospero Productions, 'Bay of Fire'.

For many, the lure for shipwrecks is about more than historic research: it's about treasure.

During the war, much of the Aboriginal population of Broome had been evacuated to the Catholic mission. On the morning of 5 March 1942, two days after the raid, word reached the mission that a plane had been downed on the coast nearby.

George Dann, Beagle Bay Resident 1942: 'We heard about a plane crash and that there were people there, some were dead and some were still alive.'

Philip Cox, Beagle Bay resident 1942: 'And when they got to Beagle Bay and told us what had happened, the brother, one of the brothers that was in charge, brother Richard, and a couple of those boys they said: "go straight out there with water and food".'

At Carnot Bay, the pilot Captain Smirnoff and other survivors had made it to the relative safety of the beach and set up a makeshift camp. The package containing the diamonds was still somewhere aboard the wreck. By dawn, a Dutch pilot and the baby's mother had died. With drinking water desperately short, Smirnoff sent all of those fit enough out into the bush in search for help, or at least water. By nightfall, they had not returned. On the night of 5 March the Beagle Bay party came upon four of the aviators wandering around in the bush. Two days later, they finally reached the survivors on the beach. Sadly by then the baby had also died.

Philip Cox: 'So we had to walk through the thick scrub to get to the plane. When we got to the other side of these sand hills, the plane was just down, straight down. We went there, to the plane, and gee ...

bullet holes, from head to toe you could see bullet holes.'

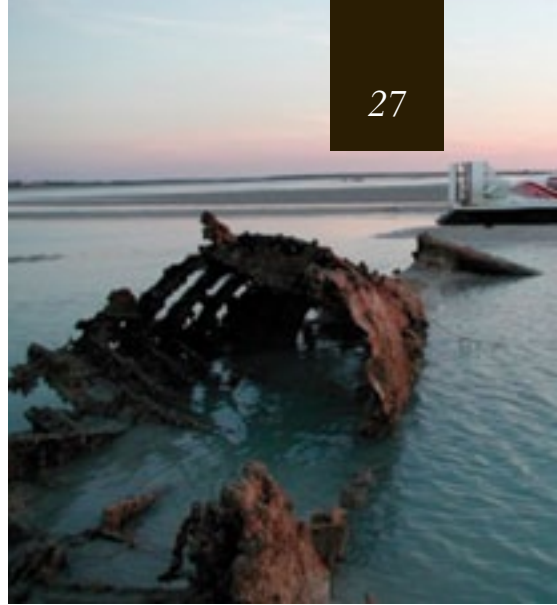
The survivors were taken to Beagle Bay to recuperate.

Tony Ozies, Beagle Bay resident in 1942: 'The pilot said: "feel my leg here," under his pajamas, and there were all these bullets sticking in his leg, they must have gone through, I don't know, in the plane and were just imbedded in his flesh.'

The authorities were still unaware the diamonds had not been recovered and their fate remained unknown. But not for long.

Philip Cox: 'There's an old man called Jack Palmer, he was a beachcomber ... and he was on his way back to his camp. He saw this plane there, and he anchored his boat and he rolled out there and he went in the plane and that's where he picked up the diamonds.'

Some weeks later back in Broome, Palmer turned over to military authorities a pair of salt and pepper shakers full of diamonds. The authorities knew this was only a small portion of the original consignment but Palmer claimed to have lost the rest in the surf. The army immediately mounted an expedition to Carnot Bay to try to recover them, taking Palmer with them. The expedition was a failure, with no sign of the missing gems.



Today, the diamonds would be worth more than 10 million dollar and their whereabouts is still a mystery. But if at the time the police had thought to ask the Aboriginal community of Beagle Bay, they would have learned that the diamonds had been turning up at the mission.

Vera Dann, Beagle Bay resident 1942: 'They were giving them out to people here and the kids were playing marbles and looking through them, and looking up at the diamonds like this you know ...'

George Dann: 'Then we heard these were the diamonds from the Dutch plane, and that was all. At that time, we didn't know the value or what it could bring, you see.'

It's uncertain how the locals came to

have the diamonds, but when word got around that the police were coming to investigate, many panicked.

George Dann: ‘When they heard that the police were coming from Broome to look for those diamonds, you know, people were throwing them all over.’

Vera Dann: ‘They were throwing it all over, everywhere, in the creek, in the springs and all.’

George Dann: ‘In those days they had lavatory pens, you know, that they emptied down here. Some have probably gone down the pen and they’d been emptied out down here somewhere. Could be around there still.’

Broome became the final resting place of ‘Diamond’ Jack Palmer, as he came to be known. He died in 1958, in the Broome hospital, where Vera Dann was working at the time.

Vera Dann: ‘I’d go to see him I’d say, “Now what do you want me for?” He said, “You’ll be my caretaker.” “Caretaker for what?” I said. He said, “Look, this little case, I lock it and you make sure that it is locked.” And I said, “What you got there?” “Oh,” he said, “have a look ...” Oooh lord, he had money! I saw it because I had to do it every night: lock the suitcase, put the keys there, and put the suitcase under the pillow he would



Above: Beagle Bay Mission. (Courtesy Olaf van Loon)

Right: B24A Liberator burning on the airstrip.

sleep on. But he died overnight, and the next day there is no suitcase no nothing. Somebody had taken the suitcase from under the pillow and there was nothing there.’

Thanks to the Beagle Bay Community,
Ed Punchard and Prospero Productions:
Episode 3, *Bay of Fire*.

ROEBUCK BAY WARRIORS

Henny Crijns

Secretary of Associated Netherlands Societies in Western Australia.

Just recently I was reading a book written by a Jan James titled *Forever Warriors*. Right in the beginning is a dedication to a Mr Charles D'Antoine. I then realised that I knew of this man many years ago — a local from the Derby/Broome area of our state and where I had lived for almost 13 years. I became engrossed once I read: 'This book is dedicated to the late Charles D'Antoine who carried out extreme acts of bravery at Roebuck Bay in Broome WA 1942'.

Charles, an Aboriginal man from One Arm Point, just 23 years of age in 1942, was waiting in Broome to join the army. Filling time he obtained a job refuelling the flying boats in Roebuck Bay. Little did Charles — or anyone else — know that on that morning of the 3 March 1942 the area of Roebuck Bay would be the scene of a horrendous yet historic event.

The Dutch refugees were all aboard the aircraft as Charles was refuelling when he noticed enemy fighter planes drawing closer and then begin their attack on the

flying boats. With the only dinghy already taken by two other people there was nothing else to do but to swim. Charles was a strong swimmer and familiar with these waters. Seeing Charles take to the water a woman clasping her child followed him and although she could swim she was in a state of shock and of course distraught; and then being weighed down by the child in the fast running tide she soon began to sink. Charles swam to her and supported her and the child, and in sign language he reassured her that they would all be okay. Once the firing had stopped some people in another boat noticed them and picked them up.

That in itself was certainly a heroic feat on the part of Mr D'Antoine, and yet he continued to assist helping others who were in the water despite his expressed concerns about sharks in Roebuck Bay. Charles received a 'Certificate of Merit' from the Royal Humane Society of Australia for rescuing the woman and her child. The Royal Netherlands Air Force awarded him

with a medal for his bravery.

On 3 March 1942 there were five other Aboriginal men who played a part in rescuing Dutch Evacuees in the North West — Jerry Dardan of Lombardina Mission, Robin Hunter and Paddy Torres of Broome and also a Joe Jinjarri and another Paddy. Extracts from a report in the *Daily News* 1942 by a War Correspondent 'Harry Potter':

NATIVE SAVES DUTCH EVACUEES IN NORTH WEST

When a party of Dutch people were stranded on the North West coast of Australia they were sorely in need of food and water. Scores of miles from any other white men and women they faced stark tragedy which would undoubtedly have overtaken the whole party but for the succour given them by a full-blooded Aboriginal.

He is 25 year old powerfully built Jerrie Dardan of the Bardi tribe (One Arm Point) and both the Dutch authorities and the West Australian Government rewarded him for what he did.

Although he worked at coastal ports Dardan has never lost his inclinations to roam the bush. Normally when evacuated inland he would have gone by truck, but he and the other 2



natives preferred to walk the 100 miles to their objective.

Some of the stranded Dutch people set out for help believing that the nearest port was about 25 miles away. Actually it was more than twice that distance. They were on the point of exhaustion when the natives encountered them.

Jerrie's companions immediately made off into the bush believing the strangers were Japanese but Dardan concealed himself until he was satisfied that they were 'white fella'. Soon he was helping them to his meagre rations and water. After guiding them to permanent water Jerrie made all speed to a native mission 40 miles away and joined in the rescue party which brought all the survivors to safety.

Without doubt there are many more stories of bravery; incidents that took place on that day in and around Broome. I thought these two were definitely worth a mention.

Above: Jack Dale, Japanese Bombing Roebuck Bay, 2003. (Courtesy Mary Mumford.)

Right: Y-59 cockpit sandle and rubber pedal.

Thanks to Jan James for information gleaned from her book 'Forever Warriors' and from the Internet.

THE DARKEST DAY

IN THE HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS
NAVAL AIR SERVICE

Rear-Admiral (ret.) Rudolf Idzerda

Rudolf Idzerda was Sergeant Navigator of Dornier X-23 during Air Raid on Broome.

When the situation became hopeless at the end of February 1942, the Netherlands Navy High Command decided that all remaining aeroplanes were to be evacuated from Java to Colombo in Ceylon, and to Australia. Our base was ordered to be destroyed on 1 March, and our Fokker T-IVs, which did not have sufficient range to reach Australia, were scuttled in the river. The crew went over to Dornier 24s and Catalina flying boats.

I was the 18 year old sergeant-navigator of a Dornier flyingboat DO-24, the X-23. Our destination was Broome, a small pearl-fishing village on Roebuck Bay. The flying distance was about 2,000 km, and this could only be attained with the Dornier by taking along a large amount of gasoline in tins. We had to pour the fuel from the inside of the aeroplane, during the flight, into the outboard tanks, which in the Dornier also served as floats. The stench of fuel in the cabin was not very conducive

to a pleasant flight — obviously smoking was not allowed — not to mention the constant fear of Japanese fighters. Apart from that I had other things on my mind for I was responsible for the navigation, which I had to do with the help of a page torn out of a small school atlas. On this map Java was in the top left corner and Australia at the bottom on the right. I drew a straight line connecting the two, and it was up to me to get there. Well, I could hardly miss Australia, but then after more than 10 hours flying we finally reached the coast, the pilot asked me: 'Port or Starboard?'

A fair question, but I had not the faintest idea, since there were no recognisable landmarks.

So I gambled with 50% chance: 'Starboard, sir'.

Wrong. Although this mistake probably saved the lives of our crew, as would appear later.

So we followed the coastline in a SW direction, and arrived with the last drop of fuel at a place that I was able to identify as Port Hedland. We landed on the sea, and taxied into the little harbour in the hope of finding some fuel, because now we realised that Broome was in the opposite direction. However the village looked deserted and I was sent ashore with the wireless operator in a rubber dinghy to investigate. Suddenly we saw a weather-beaten face under a wide-brimmed hat peering around the corner of a building, followed by the rest of the Aussie when he realised that we were not Japanese. Our Dornier with its red, white and blue roundels on the fuselage and wings had been mistaken for a Japanese aircraft with red 'sun' markings.

After refuelling we took off again and just made it to Broome before dark, where we landed and anchored in the large bay. The next morning the wireless operator and I were again sent ashore. In the meantime we had noticed that the bay was filled with our flying boats, nine Dorniers and Catalinas, all that was left of the Naval Air Service, apart from the few that had got away to Colombo. We had only just gone ashore when we heard the drone of aircraft engines high up in the sky. We looked up and saw a perfect formation of nine fighters, which first went into 'line astern', followed by a dive, one by one. I was about to comment on what modern aircraft the Australians had when all of a sudden I recognised them: the much

feared Zeros!

Then all hell broke loose with a deafening din. First a burst with their 7.6's to get properly in range, followed by the muffled 'pom-pom-pom' of their 20 mm cannon. They certainly were good shots, those 'short-sighted' Japanese. Our flying boats burst into flames, one after the other. Our own Dornier, which as a latecomer was lying somewhat apart, seemed at first to have escaped attention since it was partly concealed by the heavy smoke. This is probably what saved our crew, since they had time to jump overboard. Unfortunately that was not the case with the other flying boat crews, some of whom in desperation had even found the courage to shoot back with their machine guns. (It was only years later, after the war, that I read in a Japanese report, that two Zeros did not return to base, and that six of the seven Zero's that did return had several bullet holes).

As opposed to our aircraft, the others were crammed with the wives and children of navy personnel. This was against all regulations, but who could blame them if it were a choice between that and leaving them behind under Japanese occupation. The ensuing disaster was terrible. Forty-eight people were killed, including 32 women and children, and another 32 were wounded during the 20 minutes that the attack lasted. We were watching from the shore, unaware of the fact that there were women and children on board. We more

or less assumed that the crews, fit as they were, would be able to save themselves and swim to safety.

We set off in our dinghy to see if we could be of help to our mates. At a given moment I saw the round, bald and black head of someone who was obviously in trouble (for a moment I thought it was an Indonesian) so I jumped into the water to help him into our boat, and saw to my amazement that it was a European woman. Her face was terribly burnt and scorched black, and she had lost all her hair. She carried a dead baby under one arm, and crying, she told us that she had had another child with her, but we never found it. Later on it appeared that this was Mrs Amsterdam, the wife of Lieutenant-Commander Amsterdam. They lost all three of their children, and were themselves both badly burnt.

The attack was soon over, but panic and chaos remained. Everyone expected a Japanese invasion shortly, or more air raids. Everyone, also the Australian inhabitants of Broome — women and children had already been evacuated — was convinced that it was time to head for the south of Australia, where it was safe, as soon as possible. Some Australians offered to give the three of us a lift through the desert, actually more like a savannah, and it turned out to be an unforgettable trip. It seemed endless, but our Australian companions were obviously used to it. We travelled with the aid of a compass and by the sun,

and there were plenty of provisions. We got on well with the Aussies, they were rough, hearty and uncomplicated chaps, and we trusted them completely.

After a couple of days of rain and bad weather, something went wrong with the navigation. This was very unfortunate since we were also getting short of petrol. Suddenly out of nowhere a figure appeared, a black man, all by himself, adorned with long, wavy dark brown hair, and a full beard. After some deliberation and gestures, he started to trot in front of us — he refused to get on board! After an hour or so, he stopped and pointed to a telegraph pole that suddenly loomed. It was clear that as long as we followed those telegraph poles, we would end up at a place that was inhabited. The journey came to an end at an isolated sheep farm on the coast, called Anna Plains. There we met the survivors of the crew of a Douglas DC-3, belonging to the Royal Netherlands Indies Airline, under the command of a well-known pilot, Ivan Smirnoff. We heard that he had escaped from Java with his DC-3 on the same day that the Broome drama took place, and that on the way to Australia had been attacked by those same Zeros on their way back from Broome.

There was a primitive radio transmitter there, for which the current had to be generated by pedalling a mounted bicycle. Soon I and my two colleagues were picked up by plane and flown to the Australian Naval Base in Adelaide.

GUS WINCKEL, MASTER PILOT

Doug Hurst

Retired RAAF navigator and staff officer, and author of the book
The Fourth Ally: The Dutch Forces in Australia in WWII.

Of the hundreds of Dutch airmen who served in Australia in WWII, Gus Winckel was the best known. He was a fine pilot, but the Australian public first heard of him for a feat on the ground — the shooting down of a Japanese Zero fighter with a hand held machine gun.

When the Japanese attacked Broome on 3 March 1942 Gus was standing next to a Lockheed Lodestar he had flown in from Java. As an attacking Zero flashed by he grabbed a machine gun, fired at the enemy fighter and sent it down in flames. Gus always attributed his success to 'luck' — the odds of achieving a hit in such circumstances are extremely low and he knew it — but the press liked the story, portrayed him as 'a dead eye dick' Dutchman and he made the papers for the first time.

Broome was the Australian hub of an allied air evacuation from Java. The

attackers caught 15 allied flying boats in Roebuck Bay and a dozen or so land planes on the airfield nearby. More than 70 people were killed and many more wounded. The wounded had to be evacuated and surviving allied transport aircraft were quickly put to use flying them south. Gus' Lodestar had survived, but the machine gun's hot barrel had burnt his hand and he could not fly until it was treated. That done, he flew medivacs around the clock for two days without rest.

Meanwhile, the Japanese now occupied most of Java and were nearing the hill town of Bandung and the allied HQ located there. On 5 March the Allies decided that five high ranking RAF and RAAF officers in Bandung had to be rescued that night and Gus was chosen for the job. He protested that with no sleep for two days he was in no condition to find Bandung at night without electronic aids and land there in the dark. This was true.

But it was also true his Lodestar was the only aircraft suitable for the task and he was the best qualified man to fly it. Many hours as a flying instructor in Bandung had given him intimate knowledge of the area, and recent Lodestar flights to and from Borneo as the Japanese approached had honed the necessary skills.

Flown at night to avoid enemy fighters, these Borneo flights carried key personnel and supplies, like ammunition, from Java to the front lines. The weather was even worse than usual for the wet season, adding to the problems of flying about a mountainous archipelago, at night, without electronic aids and with everything blacked out. Crews nevertheless flew over 200 hours per month and Gus and the other Lodestar pilots were considered 'the best' by their peers. All of which made him the right man for the job, and Gus was soon winging his way towards Java, lack of sleep notwithstanding.

Mykeljon Winckel's accompanying article *Last Flight to Java* tells in detail how Gus found Bandung at night, landed on a road lit by jeep headlights, refuelled and flew 14 passengers on the seven hour return trip to Broome. It was an extraordinary feat of airmanship and endurance, after which Gus, who had not slept for three full days, went to bed and slept for 22 hours, his extreme tiredness overcoming the Benzedrine he had been taking to keep him awake.

BROOME AFTERMATH AND 18th SQUADRON

Once recovered, he went to Melbourne along with other evacuated Dutch aviators and began planning the future. In all, they had 110 aircraft — 50 from Indonesia and 60 just arrived from the US. Although they had aircrew in Australia, they lacked the ground crews, spares and facilities of all kinds to begin operations and their aircraft were sold to the Allies for immediate use against the Japanese still massing in Australia's north.

Fortunately, the Dutch had also bought 162 American Mitchell B-25 bombers, yet to arrive in Australia. But when the first B-25s arrived in Australia the under-resourced Dutch could not operate them and their aircraft again went to the USAAF. In response, the frustrated Dutch sought help from the Australian government, which quickly agreed to contribute up to 700 RAAF personnel to help form Dutch squadrons. The first, No. 18 Squadron, would be in Canberra as part of the RAAF. The Dutch sent 143 Air Corp personnel, including Gus Winckel, from Melbourne to get things moving and on 4 April 1942 the squadron was officially formed. The first five aircraft were delayed, however, and by June only a handful of crews were converted to Mitchells. Gus

Left: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter.

was among them and on 5 June 1942 — just five days after a midget submarine attack on Sydney — he and his crew were sent on anti-submarine patrols off the NSW coast. To the surprise of many, they found a submarine on the surface making a strong wake, attacked it with bombs and sank it. The result made the front page of many daily papers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting that the submarine rose into a vertical position and then sank 'leaving an oil stain 400 yards square'(sic). The good news in bad times was widely welcomed. Prime Minister Curtin personally congratulated Gus and his crew, and pictures and articles appeared in the national press.

HEADING BACK NORTH

The rest of 1942 was taken up with planning and training for northern operations, which began in late 1942 when 18 Squadron joined the RAAF's North-West Area Command, operating from MacDonald airfield in the Northern Territory near Pine Creek. MacDonald was barely adequate for operations, being little more than a strip and some parking areas bulldozed out of the scrub, but from it they flew their first northern sortie — an uneventful reconnaissance of the Tanimbar Islands — on 18 January 1943. The widespread cloud, massive thunderstorms and intense heat made flying difficult and stressful, but in February 1943 they still flew 87 missions against Japanese shipping and airfields, usually drawing retaliatory action from fighters or anti-aircraft fire. A number of

Mitchells were damaged, some so severely that they ditched nearby or on the return leg home.

This environment placed a heavy load on the squadron's experienced men, especially flying instructors like Gus who, in addition to flying as crew captains, had to develop and maintain specific operating procedures for the B-25s in this hostile world. Things improved on transfer to Batchelor, a much better base closer to Darwin with a sealed tarmac area, better runways and good water supply — all very welcome. From there they operated until the last weeks of the war, flying mostly in the Timor and Arafura Sea against Japanese land targets and area shipping. Throughout that time, Gus flew either with the squadron on operations, or as an instructor back in Canberra.

It was tough work. Enemy action, tropical illnesses, bad weather and stress all took their toll on the Dutch aviators in the harsh and demanding environment. The 18th Squadron lost 20 aircraft during the war and 105 men (mostly Dutch, some Australian).

When the war against Japan ended in August 1945 the Dutch sought to restore colonial rule in Indonesia. Many Dutch aviators in Australia — Gus Winckel among them — were sent there to support that aim. Sporadic fighting ensued until the United Nations oversaw an end to the fighting and the creation of the new nation of Indonesia on 27 December 1949.

By then Gus Winckel had spent eight years at war. Glad to put the fighting behind him, Gus settled in New Zealand where he still lives.

LAST FLIGHT TO JAVA

Mykeljon Winckel

Son of WWII Wartime hero Gus Winckel of 18th Squadron NEI-RAAF.

Mykeljon Winckel is the editor of *Franklin Elocal* New Zealand.



Gus Winckel of 18th Squadron NEI (Netherlands East Indies) – RAAF returned to Perth in March 1942, exhausted from flying for 29 hours straight, without rest. Behind him on Java, the Japanese were poised for total control after a relentless sweep that had seen the fall of Singapore, followed by Medan, Ambon, Makassar and Tarakan. Even the secret base of Samarinda had been discovered and gone up in flames

The flight was so risky Gus was given just a five per cent chance of survival.

Refugees fled from the violence for Bandoeng, seeking protection among the mountains. But on 8 March, the last free day on Java dawned. The army was forced to surrender to prevent a bloodbath among the women and children who had fled there. The remnants of the air fleet and the military airforce concentrated on

evacuation of vital military personnel. Gus was among those who had flown night and day, landing at an improvised airstrip situated narrowly between houses on Boea Batoe Road in Bandoeng City and flying back to Broome — which everyone imagined was safe from Japanese attack and was a gathering site for refugees. There, he had pulled a machine gun from his Lockheed Lodestar and shot down a diving Zero as flying boats in the harbour went down in flames and aircraft on the airstrip burned. Gus scorched his hand to the bone holding the red hot gun.

As things died down, he organised the evacuation of survivors to Perth and flew back at once to Bandoeng, bringing back more evacuees. Now, on his safe return to Perth, he was told he had to fly back once more — another 29 hours without rest, to probable capture and almost certain death. 'I protested, that there

were others with the same experience,' recalls Gus. 'But I was told there were still important officers of the RAAF to be saved before it was too late. Command from higher up had said, "there is no one but you Gus, who can do this, because of your sound knowledge of the mountains of Java at night".'

Halfway over the Indian Ocean, Gus and his radio telegraphist listened for the code signal to continue or turn back. Java may have fallen. They would reach a point of no return, when they had to decide whether to turn back while sufficient fuel remained. But Gus could not turn back. He flew on. Then came the brief signal, enough to put the radio compass on the proper course. There was one telegraphist bravely holding his post.

In the dark the jagged mountain peaks threatened, like the bayonets of the waiting Japanese. A red glow showed the destruction near Tjilatjap. Orientation was difficult through clouds and time was lost searching. One mistake would see the plane fly straight into the side of a mountain. Fuel indicators were close to nil when Gus found an opening into the Bandoeng plateau.

Jeep headlights lit the rudimentary strip



and Gus set the Lodestar down for the final time on the Boea Batoe Road. The Japanese were just outside the town. The plane was assailed by people desperate to board the last flight from Java. They were held at bay by armed soldiers while several high ranking RAAF boarded and the plane was refuelled.

For Gus, the safest route out was among the hidden mountains and half an hour later, the plane was beyond them, over the Indian Ocean, heading for Australia's Port Hedland under the welcome cover of night. Below them, Japanese aircraft carriers cruised.

When the Lodestar landed in Perth, nobody expected it to return. It was as if Gus and his passengers had returned from the dead. Gus received the Bronze Cross for shooting down the Zero in Broome, but for the 200 flying hours for each of three months leading up to that epic last flight from Java — he received no acknowledgement.

Above: Gus Winckel.

Previous Page: The Lockheed Lodestar.

Right: Roebuck Bay from the air.

THE BROOME AIR RAID

3 MARCH 1942

Dr Silvano Jung and Dr Nonja Peters***

* Maritime archaeologist. Dr Jung completed a PhD on the flying boat wrecks in Roebuck Bay, Broome.

** Founding Director of the Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship (MERC) Research Unit, Division of Humanities, Curtin University. Her research focus is on preservation of Dutch Australians' Cultural Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Seventy years ago 48 Dutch lost their lives during a strafing attack on the coastal town of Broome in Western Australia (WA). They were fleeing the invasion of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and thought themselves safe in Australia. It was a tragic miscalculation.

Theo Doorman, was six years old when Japanese fighters attacked the Catalina Y-67 on which he and his mother were sitting:

... Suddenly there was shouting, the roar of engines and the rattle of bullets piercing the aluminum. My mother grabbed me and shoved me under the bunk. Shortly after, when the plane was on fire, we climbed up to the flight deck. Mrs Lacomblé, the wife of the Captain of HMS De Ruyter, had been wounded and lay huddled on the starboard side. Apparently she told my mother to go on, as she could not swim anyhow. We jumped into the water from a hatch near the starboard pilot seat. I lost

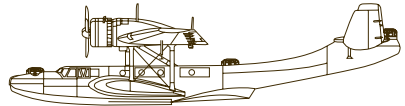
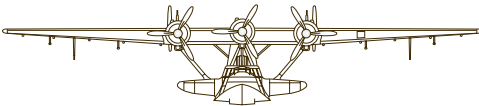
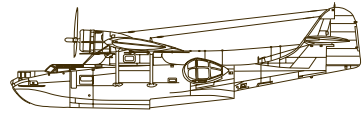
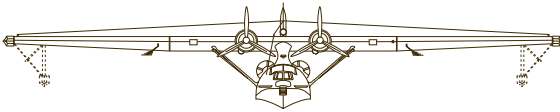
sight of my mother and I was sucked under the burning starboard wing by a fairly heavy current. I managed to swim free and after a while I saw another boy, who later appeared to be 12-year old Rob Lacomblé. Together we dived underwater whenever we heard the roar of the Zeros.¹

Rob Lacomblé's mother died that day, but a United States Navy barge picked up Rob and Theo. Mrs Doorman, recently widowed by the Battle of the Java Sea, spent another hour in the water before being rescued, totally fatigued and fearing she would lose the fight to the outgoing tide.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

On 7 December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. It forced America into World War II and signalled the outbreak of the war in the Asia-Pacific region. A three and a half year alliance between the American, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA) military was forged immediately

PBY-5 CATALINA (TOP)
AND DORNIER DO 24K (BOTTOM).



in the interests of defending the region around the NEI (now Indonesia) and Australia.² However, the Allies proved powerless against both the Japanese army and advancing navy.³ The war also prompted the exchange of a flurry of secret cablegrams, letters and notes between Australia and the NEI, on a range of topics, including the transfer of Japanese internees to Australian territory, Australian training of NEI air crew, the exchange of diplomatic representation and establishing a radio telegraph service between the two countries.⁴

The problems the alliance faced are revealed in a wireless transmission from Anip-Aneta, the official NEI wireless station. On 8 March 1942, they noted how a great part of the Dutch air force was lost in the unavailing defense of Malaya and while it was known this policy carried with it the risk of the quick exhaustion of Dutch forces, the risk had been taken with

the expectation that reinforcements would soon arrive in the Far East. However, those reinforcements never came.⁵

The Battle of the Java Sea, on 27 February 1942, was as a result a confrontation between exhausted Allies and a rapidly advancing and very strong Japanese navy. It was the pivotal naval battle of the Pacific campaign of World War II, because it sealed the fate of the NEI. During the battle, purported to have lasted seven hours, Rear Admiral Karel Doorman lost his life and the flagship he commanded — *De Ruyter*. At least two light cruisers and three destroyers were also sunk, and one heavy cruiser badly damaged. Around 2,300 naval personnel lost their lives that day. The wife and son of the *De Ruyter*'s captain as well as son of Rear Admiral Karel Doorman were among the widows and orphans evacuated on the last flight of the *Marineluchtvaartdienst* (Naval Air Service, or MLD) on 2 March 1942.⁶ It

was this turn of events that triggered the evacuation out of the NEI to Australia.

THE EVACUATION

Although estimates of numbers evacuated vary, they generally range between 8–10,000. In recent times this has been disputed by Lewis and Ingman who claim no more than 1,350 were involved.⁷ Given the circumstances, it is nonetheless a large-scale evacuation to orchestrate given the short notice and urgency.

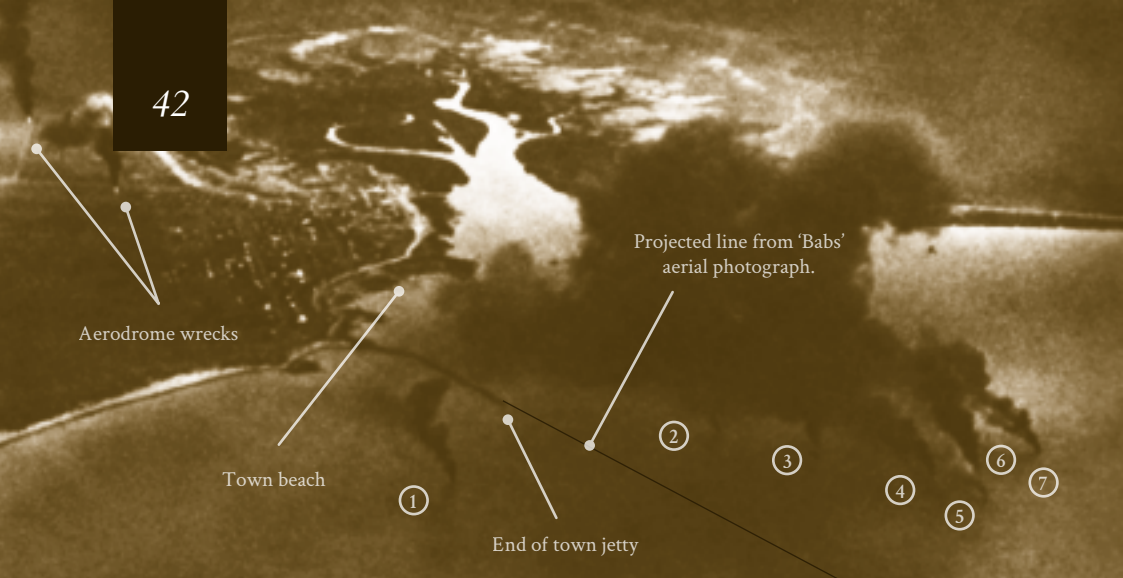
While evacuation had been an important part of the planning, there had never been a government plan for a general evacuation.⁸ This was mainly because too many of the population, 280,000 in fact (80,000 Dutch and 200,000 Indo Europeans) were of Dutch origin and thus by far too many to evacuate. But also because the Dutch thought 'Japanese occupation' would be much like it was in the Netherlands under the Nazis. Life there, for most, went on as before but now under the victor's authority. Moreover, Dutch authorities considered it the duty of military personnel to fight to the end.

Given these traditions, it was perfectly natural for Starckenborgh Stachouwer, Governor General of the NEI, to give orders that wherever possible Dutch civil and military officials should remain behind to share a common fate with the Indonesians.⁹ A lack of transport, plus a major constitutional factor, were added influences. The NEI being part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, an official

evacuation would have been deemed abandonment of home territory. Besides, few NEI-born Dutch actually wished to abandon their homeland.¹⁰ Accordingly, when war became imminent, as planned, only those government and military personnel with relevant skills, such as knowledge of warfare and the equipment to sustain it, who could help continue the fight from Australia, were given permission to leave.¹¹ Where possible, bachelors in uniform of Dutch-Indo or Indonesian origin were to go in preference to married men who were to stay with their families in the occupied zones.

However, not all families accepted the 'evacuatieverbod' (evacuation forbidden) command. First to leave, in fact, were the wives and children of ship's crews and senior well-informed KNIL (Koninklijke Nederlandse Indische Leger, Royal Netherlands Indies Army) officers, pilots and army air service aircrew who, opposed to Stachouwer's policy, had managed to force a back down from him.

Officially, evacuations of selected personnel began two days after Singapore fell, on 15 February 1942, and only after the NEI Administration had agreed to cover all financial responsibilities associated with it.¹² The first evacuees to go were shipped or airlifted out of the naval base at *Tjilatjap*, the main evacuation centre in Java. Although, the Japanese were quick to cordon off the sea route, this was not before many lives had been lost at sea trying to escape.



On 8 March 1942, the Dutch in Java under Governor General Stachower surrendered to the Japanese outside Bandung, where General Imamura of the Japanese 16th Army headed the occupation of Java.¹³ Just before this took place Hubertus van Mook, head of the government of the NEI, made a last minute dash to Australia by air. The NEI Administration directed the war effort first from Melbourne and later from Camp Columbia, Wacol, Queensland.¹⁴ The majority transited through the Java-Broome air shuttle did so in the 14 days before the Japanese Occupation of Java.¹⁵

The Java route to Broome was closed after the catastrophic Battle of the Java Sea.¹⁶ It reopened briefly on the night of 2 March 1942, to enable the MLD to evacuate nine of their flying boats. The MLD flying boats departed by stealth from various secret-hiding places in Java, with 80 crew and 81 civilians on board.¹⁷ On arrival, in Broome, seven-

hours later, on 3 March, they set down in Roebuck Bay. Here they joined the six USN, RAF, RAAF and BOAC flying boats already lying at anchor awaiting refuelling for their flight to Perth.¹⁸

THE RAID AND THE EVACUEES

Thinking themselves in a safe haven, both civilians and crew settled down to wait their turn for refuelling. The Japanese no longer a consideration, they busied themselves making sure the children didn't fall into the water. Then at 9.30 am, they were attacked by nine Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters, accompanied by a Mitsubishi C5M2 reconnaissance aircraft.

Australian eyewitnesses describe the ensuing 20-minute of the attack as a horrific massacre. Before long all the boats had burst into flames. As the Zeros made slow fly-pasts with open cockpits, the vigilant parents who had stopped



their children falling into the water, started pushing them into the water in an effort to save them.

Henk Hasselo, pilot of Dornier flying boat *X-1*, recalls how on the night of 2 March 1942, while still in the NEI, he had been ordered to take on as many refugees as his aircraft could hold.

*[So] in an aircraft designed to take only six or seven crew, the additional personnel made life on board the flying boat extremely uncomfortable. The flight itself, however, was uneventful although the machine guns had been deployed in case the Japanese spotted them.*¹⁹

THE JAPANESE ATTACK

Luckily they had spotted the Japanese before they attacked the MLD flying boats. Moreover, because they attacked the large four-engine Short Empire flying boats first, some people had the foresight to escape into the water. As for Hasselo, it gave him time to man the machine gun

in the tail turret of his Dornier and fire back at the Zeros. He recalls being in the flying boat for a considerable amount of time, before it took on a list that made it impossible to continue training the machinegun on the Japanese aircraft. He abandoned ship when the water began to rise in the flying boat, but not before he scored several non-fatal hits on the Zeros, and was himself wounded by shrapnel.

At this point Hasselo took off his shoes and dived into the water. Survivors recall that even under water you could hear the noise and feel the pressure of the Japanese bullets.²⁰ While in the water, he urged on a boy to keep swimming for the shore. The boy soon tired, but Hasselo and Jan van Persie, the *X-1*'s co-pilot who was swimming in the same direction, supported him and pulled him along with them. Fortunately, the trio was soon picked up by the refuelling lugger *Nicol Bay*, Hasselo believes that he wouldn't have survived if the *Nicol Bay* hadn't arrived when it did. He had not slept for two days and was quickly tiring in the water while supporting the child.

More people were hauled aboard *Nicol Bay* before the vessel made its way to the jetty, where Hasselo was treated for his wounds. *Nicol Bay*'s captain, Harold Mathieson, had the Order of Oranje Nassau bestowed on him by Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands for his

Above: Henk Hasselo, Pilot of the Dornier *Do 24K*, Registration *X-1*. (Broome Historical Society Museum.)

rescue of many Dutch at Broome. An Aboriginal man and a sailor on the *Nicol Bay*, Charles D'Antoine, received the Medal for Humane Actions in bronze by the Dutch queen for their bravery in helping Dutch survivors in the water.

Not all the passengers on Hasselo's *X-1* flying boat survived. Crewmember, Jan Ruiter recalls the horror of the loss of crewmember Sergeant Jan Piers' wife, Cornelia Gerardina Elisabeth, and two sons, Cornelis and Frans:

I will never forget the screaming and the crying of Jan Willem Piers calling for his wife and children. Not for the rest of my life. He had jumped into the water and tried to persuade his wife and children to do the same, but she couldn't swim and was afraid to jump, also because there was fire everywhere. She decided to stay on the flying boat (probably near the opening of the door) and was holding her sons against her. He even tried to get on the boat again that was already burning like the flames you can see when phosphorus is burning but the current was too strong. Two members of the crew had to take him

*away from the boat by force. Thanks to these men he reached the shore but he was crying and screaming all of the time. All the others survived.*²¹

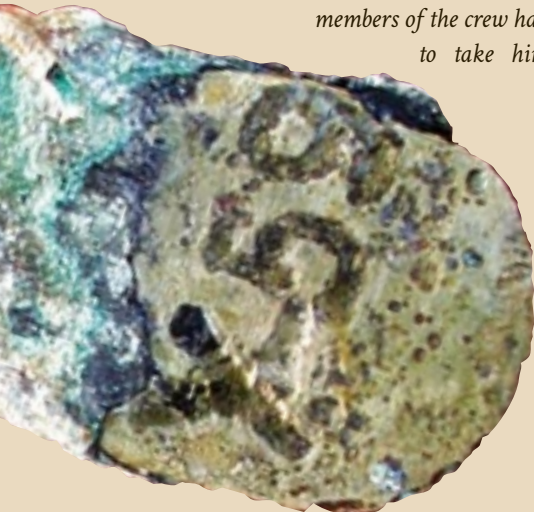
Six crewmembers on the Catalina *Y-59* died: 2nd engineer Spreeuw was killed instantly; Ltz and Mrs Borsch-Baars died, their child survived; SGT Emmerick and his child died, his wife survived; SGT van Tour and his daughter Catharina died, his wife survived; Dr J. Vermeij Arendz died, his child survived; the Bruijn family lost a young son and daughter, both parents and another child survived.

EYEWITNESSES ACCOUNTS

An Australian by the name of Xav was on a Lighter preparing to start refuelling one of the flying boats when the offensive began: 'Inside the flying boat I could hear a baby crying and against the window I could see the faces of a half a dozen children, noses flat against the glass, eyes restless and curious.'

Xav then began refuelling the flying boat from his lighter. However when the attack began he notes:

Now the faces at the window were contorted with panic, terror-stricken fingers clawing at the glass ... Two of the women and four children died in the plane. Fourteen made it to the lighter — five women and nine children and now looking at them, I did notice that ... two of the women and one of the children were badly burned, their clothes flaked and black, their skin cracking and lifting,



the flesh shriveling and turning a reddish-brown. The kid was screaming with the pain, the women were silently crying biting their lips ... I turned to the two youngsters, both little girls, who had been hit by bullets. One of them had fainted and a woman was cradling her head in her lap. The other just sat and stared at the shattered stump of her arm. After taking them to shore these military men prepared for further rescues.

Back in the lighter Xav recalls:

It was like watching a newsreel, something you know is happening but has no connection with you ... What a slaughter ... Now there were floating pools of fire about all the boats and we could see figures leaping from the boats into the fire. There were heads bobbing about in the water ... luckily the tide was coming in ... We slowed, and bent over the side of the lighter, dragging them into the lighter. I was weak inside with revulsion at the way some of them were burned ... I leaned over and lifted a little boy, whose head was singed and bald, from a man who, as soon as I took the kid, slipped back into the water and disappeared beneath the surface. The planes came in again ... I saw the nose of one dip and, standing there stunned by the inhuman brutality of it, I watched him come down growing bigger fast, blotting out the sky, and I heard the bullets coming across the lighter, and then he was gone ... I turned and the first thing I saw was the little kid I had just dragged out of the water. I leaned quickly over the side and was violently sick. A bullet had hit him in the face.²²

Another Australian, Captain Lester

Brain of Qantas Empire Airways, who had grabbed a boat, helped save two young aviators and the young exhausted woman they were supporting and another Dutch serviceman, who was swimming on his back supporting a young baby on his chest.²³

Navigator, Sergeant H. M. Juta, who was sitting on the wing of Catalina Y-67 to escape the crowded quarters, pushed his wife into the water and told her to swim for her life, then dived in after her to ensure she stayed under the surface throughout the attack:

I then heard the sound of a motorboat and a few minutes later I was hanging on the transom, utterly exhausted, whilst a Yank was pulling my wife over the gunwale ... Up front in the boat was a young girl with a badly damaged wrist caused by machine gun fire. In the middle lay a rubber dinghy, at the bottom of which were puddles of blood.

The Yank took a knife from his belt, grabbed a can out of the carton, punched two holes into it and handed it to my wife saying: 'You better drink some of this juice: it is the only thing I have' and to me he said: 'You are second — I found her', pointing to the girl, 'all alone in that dinghy'.

I looked at the girl with pity. Her wound was shocking and a tourniquet was placed on her upper arm. The Yank noticed that I was

Left: Cutlery from the Y-59 wreck.

looking and said: 'I think it was the last thing her parents did for her before putting her in the dinghy. They are both dead'.

We continued on and heard many calls for help. I drank some of the fruit juice and felt my strength slowly returning and assisted to help the Yank pulling in bodies at times and did not know whether or not they were dead or alive. Amongst them were men and women with totally burned faces, some with their hair burned.

It was not long before the boat became overcrowded and in order to make further space, I chucked out the dinghy. Even though it was only partly inflated, she floated well and could carry at least 2 or 3 persons. We pulled in more survivors and as the boat was now straining under the load and barely afloat, I decided to switch to the dinghy. One of the English Catalina crew's followed my example, thus lightening the boat by two people.

The American now made it clear that he wanted to return to the jetty. The boat was full and the wounded needed urgent medical attention ... Our overloaded boat with its burden of groaning and perhaps dying wounded slowly crawled along and it took another 20 minutes before we reached the jetty.

Arriving at the wooden stairway alongside the jetty, my English colleague and myself got out of our dinghy as fast as we could in order to help carry the wounded up the stairs.

My second load was a young woman who

did not show any sign of life. She was dressed in black slacks, a blue blouse and a blue head cloth. The remarkable thing was that there was not a trace of a wound. Another girl helped me carrying her up the stairs and once on the jetty I carefully put her down on a trolley. I turned the body over on the stomach and pulled up her blouse in order to loosen any tight-fitting garments. I could have saved myself the trouble because near her shoulder blades I discovered 2 neat bullet holes more or less going straight to the heart.

This shook me a lot and I will never forget that scene: a beautiful sunlit bay with here and there some smoke plumes; the heat of the sun and a jetty full of human misery and wrecked bodies. I looked again at the dead body of this beautiful young woman and thought what a senseless world.²⁴

All told, 48 of the 161 on board lost their lives by gunfire or while swimming through burning oil — 16 men, 12 women and 20 children.²⁵

World War II was a watershed, when civilian victims were as numerous as combatants. In this carnage more children were killed or orphaned than at any other time in history. A child is particularly vulnerable to the ravages of war. The physical, sexual and emotional violence to which they are exposed shatters their world. War undermines the very foundations of children's lives, destroying their homes, splintering their communities and breaking down their trust in adults. After treating bullet and shrapnel wounds, providing prosthesis

for mine victims, housing the displaced and refugees of ongoing conflicts we are still faced with the nutritional, environmental, emotional and psychological rehabilitation of those most vulnerable and least able to cope with the effects of conflict. The children who survived this carnage were all, nonetheless scarred by it in various emotional, physical and psychological ways possibly for life.

In almost all current conflicts, civilians are also the majority of casualties, with children suffering disproportionately. According to UNICEF, two million children have been killed by conflict over the last decade; six million children have been made homeless; 12 million have been injured or disabled; and there are at least 300,000 child soldiers operating in 30 different conflicts across the globe.

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