



Australian American Association Queensland Division - Brisbane



Newsletter Edition 25a ~ May 2024

Address: PO Box 148 Coopers Plains Qld 4108 Email: admin@aaabrisbane.com

Web: www.aaabrisbane.com

Patron: Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland.



Board of Directors Australian American Association, Brisbane:

- ❖ Mike Harris - President & Life Member,
- ❖ Tony Chau - 1st Vice President,
- ❖ Helen Stanley - 2nd Vice President,
- ❖ Alice Langford – Secretary,
- ❖ Dr Peter Glazebrook - Legal Advisor,
- ❖ Teresa Pokoj Treasurer, Assistant Secretary & Life Member.



Board of Directors from left - Tony Chau, Helen Stanley, Dr Peter Glazebrook, Teresa Pokoj, Alice Langford and Mike Harris.

The Australian American relationship is linked across both sides of the Pacific Ocean, with a common heritage and many countless and cherished ties. We also remember those who paid the price for our freedom.

Lest we forget.



President's Report on:

The 82nd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, held in Brisbane.

Dear members and friends,

This Newsletter gives an account of our recent 82nd Anniversary - Battle of Coral Sea Wreath-laying Commemoration, held at the Australian American War Memorial, Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place Newstead Park Brisbane Australia, on Saturday 4th May 2024.

I truly thank our Association's Patron - Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, her husband Professor Graeme Nimmo RFD and Aide-de-Camp Major Mervyn Ng, Australian Army, for attending this service.

As well, many thanks to the 190 guests, including the 65 wreath-layers, the representatives of government, relevant veterans associations and all other guests who attended our Service to remember those who fought and those who died, in this epic battle, from 4th to 8th May 1942, that saved Australia from invasion. Guests also attended, to lay wreaths to remember relatives, friends and loved ones, who served in all Allied theatres of war.

Attendance at event of a Very Special Guest:

We were most honoured and blessed to have seated amongst our guests, a "Very Special Guest" - the 102-year-old Royal Australian Navy Veteran Mr Bill White - the last-living RAN survivor, who served as a telegraphist on board the Australian Navy Cruiser HMAS Hobart, during the Battle of the Coral Sea. Bill's presence at our Commemoration Service made the event so much more hallowed. Bill received a standing-applause of recognition and appreciation by all 190 guests who attended. ***[Please refer to page 3 of this Newsletter, to read Bill's personal account of the Battle].***

Also, recognized at the event was US Vietnam War Veteran - Mr Rob White, a Spanish resident, who has now joined us on this occasion - for the past three years. He comes on a mission to lay a wreath in memory of his uncle - John Shin, who served on the USS Phelps - DD 360 (a Porter Class Destroyer) which participated in the Battle of the Coral Sea. USS Phelps received 12 Battle Stars for her World War 2 service).

A warm and gracious thank you to our excellent and devoted Commemoration Service Master of Ceremonies, Former Senator the Hon Santo Santoro, Life Member of the Australian American Association, Brisbane.

Gracing our Commemoration Service were:

- The Hon Christine Elder - Consul General of the United States of America,
- The Hon Junji Gomakubo - Consul General of Japan,
- The Hon Richard Cowin - Consul General of the United Kingdom,
- The Hon Alain Etchegaray - Consul General of France,
- The Hon Reatau Rau - Consul General of Papua New Guinea.
- The Hon Graham Perrett MP - representing the Prime Minister,
- The Hon Senator Paul Scarr MP representing the Federal Opposition Leader,
- The Hon Melissa McMahon MP - representing the Queensland Premier,
- The Hon Tim Nicholls MP - representing the State Opposition,
- Councilor Julia Dixon - representing the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, and
- Inspector Michelle Pikell - Queensland Police Commissioner's Representative.
- Captain Tuan Nguyen - Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Engagements, and Representative of the Commander of United States Navy 7th Fleet, and Representatives of the three Branches of our Australian Defence Force:-
- Commodore Paul O'Grady DSM CSM - Royal Australian Navy (Commodore of Flotillas),
- Group Captain Dennis Tan - RAAF Base Amber-ley,
- Brigadier Shane Gabriel, AM, DSC representing the Australian Army 1st Division.

I am most grateful for the assistance of CMDR Rosemarie Apikotoa RAN (HMAS Moreton's. Commander), the Catafalque Party and RAN Band Queensland, as well as the Quintet Band from the US Navy 7th Fleet, for providing musical support for the event. I thank Rev Dr Peter Devenish Meares, Chaplain, Queensland Police Service and currently serving as an Australian Army Chaplain, RAN Chief Bandmaster Simon Potter and Andrew Stapleton Chief Petty Officer Ceremonial Advisor HMAS Moreton, for their magnificent support in making the service a most exceptional and moving event.

As well, my compliments to the two Popular Australian Recording Artists Bernadette Gill and Johnny Greenwood who at the conclusion of the Commemoration Service. Bernadette sang the Australian favorite bush ballad "Waltzing Matilda (Queensland Version)" and Johnny sang "Jack Hogan" which incorporated "The Road to Gundagai" the Theme Song from the old Classic Aussie Radio show "Dad and Dave".

Thanks to our Secretary Alice Langford for organizing the event's catering of sandwiches and refreshments and the Naval Association's Wendy Siebrecht and our Treasurer Teresa Pokoj for their cakes. As well, our First Vice President Tony Chau, who provided the bottled water and our Association's event volunteers - 2nd Vice President Helen Stanley and Maurice Hand, Secretary Alice Langford and Peter Cumming, Board Member Dr Peter Glazebrook, Angela Lordi, the Hon Teresa Gambaro Former MP and Member of the House of Reps, Robert Duffy, Brien Doyle and Sally Elliott, and others. Also, Brisbane City Council staff - Melanie Dames, Suzanne Conner and Newstead Park Head Gardner Andrew Dunstone for their great service to us.

I thank the Queensland Police Service and Ambulance Service - You may not have seen them, but they were there, as always, to ensure the safety and good health of all of our guests.

Finally, an enormous thank you goes to our Association's Treasurer and Assistant Secretary Teresa Pokoj, for her outstanding work in partnering with me, in the planning and organizing of this Commemoration Service.

Mike Harris, President AAAB.

The following is Mr Bill White's personal account of the Battle of the Coral Sea, which has been extracted from the RAN'S Website: <https://www.navy.gov.au/biography/able-seaman-bill-white>



Able Seaman Bill White

"The HMAS Hobart sailed with HMAS Australia and USS Chicago to join the main Task Force 73 under command of RADM Fletcher in the Coral Sea. Hobart took part in the western 'extension' of the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. One of the covering force for the United States aircraft carriers. Bill later reflected on the battle: "We experienced significant exposure to the relentless and determined attack by the Japanese with limited allied air support; once again we came through with flying colours".

"I did observe a lot during this period, and in subsequent times I also reflected on why we were such an effective team. I have no doubt that our Captain must take a great deal of the credit, our ship was a floating fortress, manoeuvred by a skilled navigator and this, combined with our significant exposure to combat, moulded our ships company into a very effective force. The men held Captain Howden in high regard and he in turn looked after his men. This was very evident when we disembarked in Brisbane after the Battle of the Coral Sea, we celebrated our survival and comradeship - and Captain Howden".

The following photograph and narrative were recently received from Mr Stewart Mansbridge Manager of the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), in relation to the holding of our recent 82nd Anniversary - Battle of Coral Sea Wreath-laying Service, at the Australian American War Memorial, Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place Newstead Park Brisbane Australia:



Battle of the Coral Sea

The Australian American Association delivered a poignant commemoration service that each year welcomes more dignitaries and military leaders from both sides of the Pacific.

The ceremony honoured the Australian and American navy and air forces that repelled the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Battle of the Coral Sea from May 4-8, 1942. The battle marked the first time since the start of the war that a major Japanese advance had been turned back. And, it unfolded less than 1000 miles off the coast of Queensland. More than 500 Allied lives and over 1000 Japanese lives were lost.

Pictured standing in front of the in the Australian American War Memorial Monument for the Commemoration Service are, from left - Mr Stewart Mansbridge, Commodore Paul O'Grady DSM CSM Royal Australian Navy (Commodore of Flotillas) and the Hon Christine Elder Consul General of the United States of America.

The following letter was recently received from Commodore Paul O'Grady DSM CSM - Royal Australian Navy (Commodore of Flotillas), in relation to the holding of our recent 82nd Anniversary Battle of Coral Sea Wreath-laying Commemoration Service:



Commodore Paul O'Grady, DSM, CSM, RAN
Commodore Flotillas



Fleet Headquarters, Locked Bag 7005, Liverpool NSW 1871
02 9359 6162 | comflotoffice@dpe.protected.mil.au

COMFLOT/OUT/2024/026

Mr Mike Harris
President of the Australian American Association
Coopers Plains QLD 4108

Dear Mike,

I wanted to extend my thanks to you on behalf of my team and myself for the invitation to the 82nd anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea commemorative service. The service honoured the memory of those who fought and sacrificed during this pivotal event in our history. The Battle of the Coral Sea holds a profound significance as it marked a crucial turning point in the Pacific Theatre of World War II. It was a battle that demonstrated the resilience and bravery of our forces, and it's essential to remember and reflect on these historical moments.

Your organisation of the service helped to preserve the legacy and educate future generations about the importance of this battle. From the meticulous planning to the heartfelt speeches and the respectful ceremonies, everything was executed with such dedication and care. It was a fitting tribute to the heroes of the past, and I am deeply appreciative of the work that made this commemoration possible.

Thank you again for including us in the ceremony and for the honour of sitting next to the last surviving member of HMAS *Hobart I*.

Yours Aye.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PJ O'Grady'.

PJ O'Grady, DSM, CSM
Commodore, Royal Australian Navy
Commodore Flotillas

28 May 2024

A Brief Account of the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway:

Two of the most significant naval actions in the Pacific Theatre of World War 2, were the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. The Coral Sea Battle fought from the 4th to 8th May 1942, was the first major action by opposing aircraft carriers, which exchanged aerial attacks without being in sight of each other's ships. Both sides scored heavily, with the American and Australian force losing more ships and the Japanese more aircraft.

Allied strategies considered their forces victorious because this marked the first withdrawal of the Japanese forces and caused the enemy to cancel plans for the capture of the strategically located Port Moresby in New Guinea. It is believed however, that this was only a temporary suspension of their objective, until the Battle of Midway greatly diminished their ability to initiate further plans to seize the Port.

Even as the Battle of the Coral Sea raged, the Japanese were compiling plans for the invasion of the island of Midway and committed 165 warships to the attack. But because US intelligence experts has earlier broken the Japanese code, the American defenders were aware of the invasion plan and were ready with available ships. As a result, the Battle of Midway was one of the most decisive actions in the Pacific War. In the Battle of Midway, fought from 4th to 7th June 1942 [six months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and one month after the Battle of the Coral Sea] the Americans lost 307 men, 132 aircraft, and one aircraft carrier. The Japanese toll included 3500 dead, 275 aircraft and four aircraft carriers, lessening their ability to initiate major naval actions in the future.



During the Battle of the Coral Sea, the USS Lexington was severely damaged by two enemy torpedoes and three aerial bombs. The Carrier was afterwards despatched by American torpedos to prevent it from falling into enemy hands.

Acknowledging the following generous donations received:

Many thanks to the following persons for their most generous donations, which have greatly helped us to meet our needs in the providing of Morning Tea at our Commemoration Service:

1. **Captain Kasper Kuiper**, Chairman of the Qld Maritime Museum and AAA Brisbane Honorary Member - for his Cash Donation.
2. **The Hon Tim Nicholls**, MP and Member for Clayfield and AAA Brisbane Life Member for his Cash Donation.
3. **The Hon Teresa Gambaro**, Former MP and Member of the House of Representatives - for her Cash Donation.
4. **Dr Betty Lee**, AAA Brisbane Member - for her Cash Donation.
5. **Dr Peter Glazebrook**, AAA Brisbane Board Member - for his Cash Donation.
6. **Wendy Siebrecht**, Naval Association Australia - for her Donation of Trays of Cakes.
7. **Alice Langford**, – AAA Brisbane Secretary for her Donation of Sandwiches & Wraps.
8. **Teresa Pokoj**, AAA Brisbane Life Member and Treasurer - for her Donation of Carrot Cakes & Biscuits.

Again, I express gratitude all members and guests who attended our 2024 Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration Service. I now request that you mark in your diary the proposed date for the holding of our next Battle of the Coral Sea Service, which will be Saturday 3rd May 2025.

Let us honour the past, celebrate our shared-values and look towards a future of peace and co-operation. As well, let us commemorate and honour the memory of those who fought and those who sacrificed their lives during the Battle of the Coral Sea, so that we may enjoy our liberty and freedom.

LEST WE FORGET

Please also refer to the Photographic Supplementary Newsletter Attachments - "Numbers 25b & 25c" which are being sent to you.

Yours Fraternally,

Mike Harris,
President & Life Member [Editor Newsletters],
Australian American Association,
Queensland Division, Brisbane.

Monday 10th June 2024*

