



WW2 Lost At Sea



Friday 14 October 2022 - Mona Vale Headland, Robert Dunn Reserve

An initiative of
Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch
Northern Beaches Council
NSW Government

In memory of the 1,800 people who lost their
lives at sea due to enemy and Allied action
whilst being transported to Japan and islands
in the South-West Pacific during
World War II, 1942 -1945.

Those who died include
Australian Prisoners of War, nurses from
Singapore, civilian internees from Rabaul,
and casualties on hospital ships.

Welcome and Address
Deborah Carter JP
President, Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch

Our very special guests were:
The Hon. David Elliott MP, Minister for Transport, Minister for Veterans;
The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, Member for Pittwater; Mayor Michael Regan, Northern Beaches Council;
RFS Chaplain Wes Brown.

Other special guests were: Ray James OAM State President RSL NSW; Pauline James OAM RSL NSW Auxiliaries State Co-Ordinator; The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop AO; Bob Lunnon, President NBDC; Barbara Lunnon; Sandy Howard representing 2/19 Btn; John Balfour OAM Ceremonial Protocol; Jason Manning CEO Pittwater RSL Club Ltd; Leigh Arnold, President Pittwater RSL Club Ltd; Neil and Doris Williams, son of the late Wal Williams OAM, and grandson Robert; Michelle Fraser, Author of Wal's Memoirs; Apologies from Andrea Williams, Montevideo Association, who was represented by Rod Miller, Author, and Kylie Adams-Collier (her Grandfather was on the Montevideo Maru); Cr Rory Amon, Northern Beaches Council; Eliza and Alex Barrell, Deputy Commissioner Marine Rescue NSW; Adelaide Channon, Bugler; Michael Mannington OAM Photographer; and Dale Cohen, Editor and Photographer, Northern Beaches Advocate.

WW2 Lost At Sea Dedication Service



The late Mr Walter 'Wal' Williams OAM,
WW2 Army NX57223.
Battalion: 2/19 Australian Imperial Force.

Wal started this campaign about 25 years ago when he set up a committee with other POWs and Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch members to have a memorial installed at Mona Vale Headland.

More about Wal on page 3.

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Deborah Carter, Neil Williams



Mayor Michael Regan, Ray James OAM, The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, Deborah Carter, The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop AO, The Hon. David Elliott.



John Balfour OAM, The Hon. David Elliott, The Hon. Rob Stokes, Mayor Michael Regan.

Lest We Forget



Deborah Carter - Tribute to the late Wal Williams OAM, and reading of Wal's Message

WW2 Army NX57223. Battalion: 2/19 Australian Imperial Force.

With the capitulation of Singapore on 15th February 1942, Wal was taken prisoner of the Japanese and spent all of his time as a POW. Wal was in Changi prison, he worked on the infamous Thai-Burma Rail and on his way to Japan on board the Rakuyo Maru, which was torpedoed by Allied forces, he survived and transported to Japan and worked at the Kawasaki Camp 11D.

Wal was repatriated to Australia on his 23rd birthday on 10th October 1945.

Wal Williams was awarded the Order of Australia, in the Queen's Birthday Honours list 14th June 2021 for services to veterans and their families.

Beautiful nurse Eliza Barrell took care of Wal at Kokoda Hostel.

Wal continued his work with veterans when he was in Kokoda Hostel by encouraging Samuel Barrell, son of Eliza and Alex Barrell, here today, to join the Army. Sam graduated from Duntroon in June this year and was awarded the Sword of Honour.

Lt. Sam Barrell is now posted to 2RAR Townsville.

At Remembrance Day last year Rob Stokes approached me regarding a tribute to the Montevideo Maru in anticipation of their 80th Anniversary on 1st July 2022. I then said to Rob that's very interesting, but I would like the dedication to also be about POW's on the Rakuyo Maru and the Kachidoki Maru who lost their lives at sea at the hands of the Japanese.

Rob has long been a fan of Wal Williams and knew the importance of including him in this service.

Wal started this campaign about 25 years ago when he set up a committee with other POWs and Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch members to have a memorial installed at Mona Vale Headland. This was strongly supported by The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, who was then appointed to the Shadow Ministry portfolio of Veterans' Affairs. Sadly, this memorial never took place.

As a compensation, a memorial plaque dedicated to the 1,800 Prisoners of War and Internees lost at sea, was installed on our Upper Cenotaph on 2nd December 2016. Wal was the VIP guest to this Dedication.

This was the last function Wal attended at the Club before he was admitted to Kokoda Hostel.

Wal wished for a memorial plinth and seat to be installed at Mona Vale Headland, north facing where our community and visitors can see and hear the sea and **reflect**.

What Wal was not aware of is that a plaque would be installed honouring his commitment to "Lost At Sea". This was fortunately attached to the memorial plinth, because Wal had stated "no one reads plaques on seats!"

Wal also stipulated that the Chaplain should wear ceremonial robes when he performs the consecration of the memorial plinth.

Wal passed away on 04 June 2022.

Four days before his death, Wal was in and out of consciousness and still able to dictate what he wanted me to tell you today! Wal would have been 100 years of age last Monday 10th October 2022.

Wal was my hero, my mentor, and my friend.

An attendee at the Service sent an email to Deborah Carter the following day, on Saturday 15 October...

"I returned to the Memorial later in the morning, sat on the seat, looked out to sea and had a good cry. Flowers blew in the wind, dogs sniffed around the new sandstone and the sun beat down on the waves rolling in from the distant horizon. I took some photographs and posted them on the Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Group and PNGAA Facebook pages with order of service."

The Hon. Rob Stokes MP - History and Significance

Member for Pittwater Rob Stokes paid tribute to Mr Williams, saying the memorial was a testament to him and the people whose memory he had carried for so long.



"Behind me, as we look out on the depths of the Pacific Ocean, beyond the horizon to the north, we come to the great port city of Singapore. There, between 1942 and 1945, a wicked convoy of effectively slave ships, hell ships, was dispatched.

"They carried internees, service personnel, prisoners of war, nurses, public servants, administrators, civilians, women and children. More than 130,000 people in total, were kept in conditions that can only be described as inhuman.

"To take one example, the Rakuyo Maru, evidence presented after the war indicated that in a storage compartment designed to accommodate 139 people, more than 1,300 Australian prisoners of war were detained in two makeshift decks, no more than four feet high. They were allotted less than two square feet each, for a voyage that was projected to last many days.

"These were the conditions that our fellow citizens, our ancestors, the ones who we are here to remember today, were forced to endure. Ultimately, these ships were not identified as non-combatants because they also carried Japanese troops, munitions and raw materials to support the Japanese war effort.

"As a result, submarines from the Royal Navy and the US Navy were sent to destroy these convoys, and unwittingly caused the deaths of more than 20,000 internees, including more than 1,800 Australians. It's those brave men and women that we are here to remember.

"The courage, the resilience and the sacrifice of those of our citizens and our allies who we are here to remember today, was Wal's mission and his vision. I couldn't be prouder to have known him and call him friend. We have an incredible inheritance. We have a noble heritage to share and be proud of, and an incredible legacy to live on. Lest we forget," said Minister Stokes.

The Hon. David Elliott - Minister's Comments and Unveiling

NSW Minister for Veterans David Elliott paid tribute to Mr Williams, and said the memorial was an important place for reflection of the sacrifice of others.



"When Rob [Stokes] came into my office and explained Wal's [Walter Williams OAM] vision for this memorial, he didn't need to finish the first sentence. One of the great things that the Indigenous Australians gave us is the concept of sacred space and sacred place. Indigenous Australians have loved the concept of a sacred place, a sacred site.

"My view is that war memorials littered across Australia, and indeed overseas, are our sacred sites for everybody. When you consider the 100,000 Australians that lost their lives in the theatre of wars over 120 years, we actually have to consider the fact that this is the cemetery for all of those fallen soldiers, sailors and airmen, and particularly those whose bodies we never found and never repatriated.

"With this memorial, the community and veterans can come together in times of reflection, they can come together on commemorative days. They can come alone, or with others, and reflect on the sacrifice that has made this nation great," said Minister Elliott.

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The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, The Hon. David Elliott, Bob Lunn
NBDC President, Ray James OAM, RSL NSW State President



Neil Williams, Deborah Carter,
The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop OAM



Doris and Neil Williams, their son, Robert.



Chaplain Wes Brown



Eliza and Alex Barrell



WW2 Lost At Sea Dedication Service



Bugler, Adelaide Channon



Mayor Michael Regan



Thank you to the Management and Staff of Pittwater RSL Club Ltd for their invaluable assistance.

This Dedication Service was filmed by RSL NSW for presentation at State Congress at Newcastle Convention and Exhibition Centre on 31 October 2022.

Thank you to photographers:

Michael Mannington OAM Community Photography; Dale Cohen, Editor Northern Beaches Advocate, Deborah Carter, President Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch and Darren Crabb, Vice President Pittwater RSL Club Ltd.