

Symposium Bios and Abstracts

Biography: Meghan Adams

Meghan Adams is an historian at the Sea Power Centre in Canberra. She has worked for the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Australian War Memorial and is a PhD candidate at the University of New England. Meghan's research has focused on Australia's wartime experience, specifically grief and memory during the First World War as well as women's history and the home front during Second World War. She has published a number of articles with the Australian Dictionary of Biography and was a contributor to the 2024 publication *In the Fight: Australians and the War in Burma 1942-1945*. She is currently writing a chapter for a forthcoming publication on Australia's links with India during the World Wars which will be published in 2026.

Abstract: Repair, refit and resupply: Brisbane as a naval base during the Second World War

From the outbreak of the Second World War, Brisbane proved to be an important base for Allied Forces. While this aspect of the city's history has been well recognised, its significance as a hub for industry, ship building, repair and resupply is lesser known. However, it was these functions that allowed Brisbane to play a key role in equipping and supporting allied navies, particularly the Royal Australian Navy, Britain's Royal Navy and the United States Navy, as they fought to win the war in the Pacific. Over the course of the conflict, Brisbane's military and naval importance only continued to increase. By the end of the war, Brisbane was home to two notable dry docks which allowed significant repairs to be made to allied vessels in closer proximity to the front. It had numerous replenishment and stores depots as well as victualling yards and facilities which kept ships and personnel well equipped, and it maintained a shipbuilding industry which was responsible for the construction of new ships as well as the refitting of numerous peacetime and merchant vessels for wartime service. This presentation will explore the development and expansion of these facilities, and the crucial role that they, and Brisbane more broadly, played as part of the allied campaign during the Second World War.

Biography: Gerard Benjamin

Gerard Benjamin is a longtime resident in Newstead and has been associated with the New Farm and Districts Historical Society for more than 20 years. He regularly conducts history walks in the area and is the author of three popular books about the history of the locality, the most recent being "New Farm: 50 Stories". He has assisted many people with the editing

and production of their memoirs. Research into his own family history led to the discovery that a great-great-grandfather penned Queensland's second novel.

Abstract: Submarine base and the Navy 134 facilities at New Farm

The arrival in Brisbane in April 1942 of the submarine tender USS Griffin along with 15 subs, signalled the establishment of the New Farm submarine base. Initially, the small numbers of USN personnel were accommodated in hotels or boarding houses. By June, the naval facilities had expanded, and Brisbane was designated "USN Base 134".

Barracks, mess halls and many more facilities were developed in New Farm Park and on riverfront land belonging to the CSR refinery to form the "USN New Farm Receiving Station". A Naval Officers Club was built nearby at 50 Oxlade Drive.

If the arriving personnel were struck by the quaintness of houses on stilts, the locals of New Farm were in turn fascinated by both the naval installations and the cultural differences. Oral histories collected by the New Farm and Districts Historical Society record many fascinating impressions and stories from that era, and a selection of these will feature in the presentation.

Each Anzac Day on 25 April, the Submariners Walk Heritage Trail on Macquarie Street is the venue for commemorating the story of New Farm's wartime contribution. Meanwhile, the former USN Officers' Club at Oxlade Drive still stands and has been repurposed as a magnificent dining spot overlooking the river, aptly named the "Officers Mess".

Biography: David Dufty

David Dufty is a historian and author who lives in Canberra. His book about Australian code-breaking, *The Secret Code Breakers of Central Bureau*, won the 2017 Nib Military History Prize. His other works include *How to Build an Android*, *Radio Girl*, *Nabbing Ned Kelly*, and *Charles Todd's Magnificent Obsession*.

Abstract: Central Bureau – Australia's version of Bletchley Park

During the second world war, Australia was home to the largest wartime code-breaking operation outside of Bletchley Park. Central Bureau was a joint allied unit comprising mostly Australian and United States Personnel. It was founded in April 1942 in Melbourne, but soon relocated to Brisbane, following the relocation of General Macarthur's headquarters. Central Bureau broke numerous Japanese army and air force codes, and also performed traffic analysis on enemy communication patterns. From its small beginnings, by the end of the war, Central Bureau and its intercept stations around the South West Pacific Area comprised 4,000 personnel. Due to its secretive nature, the contributions of those who served in Central Bureau were not recognised until many years.

Biography: Alan Graham

Alan has delivered presentations, training and information sessions in and for a range of organisations and tertiary institutions. In retirement Alan has a range of interests. One of these is aviation. This has resulted in his interest in the activities of ATAIU and the events that occurred and resulted from the activities at Hangar 7. Alan has delivered presentations on this subject. One at the Aviation Historical Society of Australia, Queensland. Alan has hosted groups and individuals on tours of Hangar 7 and shared information on the activities of ATAIU. One group comprised family members of a key member of ATAIU.

Abstract: ATAIU and Hangar7

After General MacArthur was evacuated from the Philippines in March 1942, he authorised the Directorate of Intelligence, Allied Air Forces, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne to *“take complete charge of all enemy crashed or captured aircraft or personnel in the Southwest Pacific Area”*. This role was assigned to the Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit (ATAIU). The ATAIU was a joint USAAF, USN and RAAF unit. Captain Frank T. McCoy Jr was appointed commanding officer. He was based on the second floor of General Douglas MacArthur’s Headquarters which was in the AMP building in the Brisbane CBD. This is the building now known as MacArthur Chambers. The operational section of the ATAIU was based at Hangar 7, Eagle Farm, Brisbane. Lt. Clyde Gessel was in charge of operations at Hangar 7. The primary focus of ATAIU was intelligence gathering and information dissemination. The presentation will provide details on the activities of ATAIU, and the practical impact of those activities in the Southwest Pacific Area.

Biography: David Horner

David Horner, AM, FASSA, is an emeritus professor in the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University. A graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, he saw active service in Vietnam and later headed the Army’s Land Warfare Studies Centre. He is the author or editor of 38 books on Australian military history, defence and intelligence. As the Official Historian of Australian peacekeeping, he was General Editor of the six-volume series. The first volume of his Official History of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation was joint winner of the Prime Minister’s Literary Award for history, and the UK Intelligence Book of the Year.

Abstract: When War Came to Queensland

More than any other state, the Second World War had a major and lasting impact on Queensland. Professor Horner’s keynote address provides an overview of why and how Queensland played an important role during the war. After the outbreak of the Pacific War the state was the most likely to be invaded. Military units were rushed north from southern

Australia and defences were strengthened. But as the war turned, Queensland became the base for defensive operations in New Guinea and then for Allied offensives through New Guinea and beyond. Brisbane became the main allied headquarters. Military schools were established, the Atherton Tableland became the main training area for the Australian Army, and amphibious landings were practised along the coast. The legacy is evident. Many present-day Army and Air Force units and military training areas are still located in Queensland. The presence of major military headquarters and units in wartime Brisbane swelled the city's population and set it on a course to become the nation's third largest city. The presence of thousands of United States servicemen also had a lasting social impact, both in Brisbane and beyond. This symposium will provide further depth to this remarkable story.

Biography: David Jones

I was born and brought up in Brisbane where I gained a life-long interest in shipping, observing and photographing vessels on the river. I served a full and satisfying career of 37 years in the Queensland Audit Office. Since retirement I have developed my interest in maritime history by research, writing and public speaking. I have written or shared in writing ten books on maritime history. I regularly volunteer at the Queensland Maritime Museum where I serve in the library. With my wife Heather, I gain much enjoyment from our family and grandchildren, church activities, and travel.

Abstract: The British Pacific Fleet.

As the war in Europe moved towards victory, Great Britain had naval forces available to contribute to the defeat of Japan. Named the British Pacific Fleet (BPF), these ships were based in Australia and began arriving early in 1945.

Support and maintenance were provided at Sydney and Brisbane, while a forward base was established at Manus Island. Brisbane was used to supply and maintain the fleet train of supply ships, tankers and their escorts, providing welcome support for the ships and their crews.

Centred around a balanced aircraft carrier task force and fully self-supporting, the BPF operated with US forces as they closed in on Japan. Their first actions were off Okinawa where they suffered enemy Kamikaze attacks, then off Japan until its surrender in August.

Australian assistance continued until Great Britain re-established its own bases in Singapore and Hong Kong after the war.

Biography: Frances Larder

Frances was born in Bandung, West Java and arrived in Australia with her family at the age of 14. She is a Graduate of City Art Institute and Meadowbank TAFE, Sydney, and completed her PHIL MA at Curtin University, WA. Frances has travelled extensively through Europe, England, USA and parts of Asia. She has exhibited in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout Australia, USA, and Manilla. Her work is now in private collections in Australia, USA, Netherlands and Belgium. She has conducted numerous workshops within Australia. This also includes curating and instigating two major group projects with the Dutch community located in Sydney.

Abstract:

Frances was born and raised in the Dutch East Indies. (NEI). Her particular interest is the study and research of the Dutch and Dutch/ Indonesian history, concentrating on the issues of their lost identity, migration, sense of place and belonging. These issues are portrayed by expressing and transforming them into art forms, in the hope that visually, they would have more of an impact on the viewer. Her first project "*Odyssey*" was developed to visually document women's migration experiences. These women came to Australia from the Netherlands and Indonesia after WWII, reflecting the hardships they overcame when moving away from their families, homes and to a new country. This project is now part of the Sydney Powerhouse Museum. Her second project "*Echoes from the Past*" documents the history and culture of the Dutch, portraying the differences from Australian culture. Her opus for "*Landscape of the Soul*" explores her childhood, and a group of European Dutch and Dutch Eurasian children during the Japanese occupation of the NEI, the Indonesian Revolution of Independence and the aftermath. These children were not interned during Japanese Occupation and Dutch researchers label this cohort "Buitenkampers" (translated "outsider of camp"). Recognising the importance of social history, exhibitions are a visual way of teaching audiences about the past, it's relevance to modern society, and multiculturalism through immigration.

Biography: Jan Lingard

Jan has had a long career teaching Indonesian at the Australian National University in Canberra, and at the University of Sydney. She has now retired. She is the author of 'Refugees and Rebels: Indonesian Exiles in Wartime Australia'. Her previous publications are in the field of Literary Translation, including 'Diverse Lives' and 'The Outlaw and other stories', Oxford University Press, and 'Eye Witness' by Seno Gumira Ajidarma, which was awarded the the Victorian Premier's Prize for literary translation.

Abstract.

When Japan invaded and occupied the then Netherlands East Indies (NEI) in 1942, many evacuees, both Dutch and Indonesian took refuge in Australia.

Senior Dutch officials established the Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand in Melbourne and a Government Information Service.

It is estimated that some 5.000 Indonesians were in Australia between 1942 and 1945 when the war ended. They comprised merchant seamen serving on Dutch ships, members of the NEI armed forces, navy, army and air force, clerical workers with the Dutch administration, domestic servants, and in 1943, a group of political prisoners with their families, who had been exiled to a jungle camp in Boven Digul in Dutch New Guinea, because they had taken part in various uprisings against the colonial regime in the 1920s and 30s. On arrival in Australia, they were initially interned in the Prisoner of War camp in Cowra NSW, before they were released after their detention in Australia was determined to be illegal. The Indonesians were dispersed to capital cities and rural towns, with the result that many Australians and Indonesians engaged with each other in unprecedented ways. Friendships were formed, cultural experience shared, marriages took place, all of which became the social context for the political actions when the war ended, the Japanese surrendered, and Soekarno unilaterally proclaimed Indonesian independence. Australian support for the independence movement started at grass roots level and widespread with the help of the Communist Party, and the wharf labourers who put a wide-reaching Black Ban on loading Dutch ships heading back to Indonesia with equipment including weapons. Eventually this support spread through many parts of the Australian community until it came from the government itself which took the case for the Indonesian Republic to the United Nations.

Biography: Roger Marks

Roger Marks, Queensland born, early Primary school Bundaberg (WW2 yrs), Secondary Maryborough Boys State High, graduated Civil Engineering UQ, 26 years 'work experience', 99% centered Brisbane, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Cairns, Rockhampton, retiring Brisbane, now Sunshine Coast. Boyhood exposure to 'planes' saw 'Aeronautical settle to Civil', flying lessons till the money ran out, but an enduring interest in 'those wartime aerodromes', several visited during working career. Early retirement due retinal detachment forced the 'what to do next' review. A lifelong love of woodwork suggested antique aircraft restoration but reality became what the rear cover of QAWW2 says *"An attempt to thoroughly address all of the WW2 airstrips of Queensland..show where they were, what they became etc!"*

Abstract: Airfields in Queensland during WWII

'QAWW2', is an acronym for Queensland Airfields WW2 – 50 Years On", my 1994 self-published book, a once only 3000 print run. My wife and I promised ourselves, 'never again'. Persistent requests led to a pdf cover to cover version of the book on CD (2003). This later morphed into the current USB memory stick version. Recent additions to this USB copy are the crux of this presentation. In 2011, a kind customer assisted in making most of the pdf 'word searchable' and in 2021, another customer offered a 'kmz file'. This 'file' introduces a blanket of star markers in your Google Earth (GE) screen to all 60 sites given Illustrated text

in QAWW2 and similarly to the 130 odd lesser airfields. Not only does clicking on any of the listed airfields sweep you straight to its location in Queensland on your GE screen, you can then open that airfield's companion pdf, including around a dozen maps and more photos, received *apres* publication. This is a wealth of information never feasible to include in QAWW2. GE has a great image overlay tool allowing a WW2 aerial to be fitted over the GE site and to vary its transparency from 'then to now'.

Biography: **Nonja Peters**

Nonja Peters, anthropologist, historian, and museum curator she completed her PhD at UWA. Was She is Adjunct Professor at Edith Cowan University and University Associate at Curtin University's John Curtin Institute of Public Policy. A Dutch Australian, her research focuses on migration, identity, and cultural heritage preservation, with special interest in Dutch maritime and migration history. Nonja has authored 10 books, curated 25 exhibitions, and presented extensively worldwide. She bridges academia and the public through high-impact cultural projects and has been recognized with a Dutch Knighthood and induction into the Western Australian Women's Hall of Fame.

Abstract: **The Netherlands East Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees rehabilitates Dutch children at Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra 1945-1946.**

When Japan invaded and occupied the Dutch East Indies from 1942 to 1945, Dutch nationals, including children, were interned in concentration and POW camps for over three years. This paper explores the wartime experiences of these children, their internment, and the challenges they faced during and after their release in August 1945. Liberation brought its own uncertainties, as civil unrest and political upheaval disrupted efforts to resume normal life. Many families were subsequently evacuated to Western Australia, where some children were placed at Fairbridge Farm School in Pinjarra to recover before repatriation. Their relocation was facilitated by the Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees (NIWOE), operating under the NEI government's Department of Economic Affairs from Camp Columbia, Wacol. NIWOE branches in major Australian cities coordinated medical care, accommodation, education, and cultural orientation. The first wave of evacuees—primarily women and children—arrived in a fragile state, often suffering from severe malnutrition and illnesses such as beriberi. Some children appeared years younger than their age. The second wave, beginning in October 1945, posed even greater medical needs. This presentation examines the little-known efforts made in Australia to rehabilitate these young evacuees, shedding light on the long-term impacts of war, displacement, and recovery.

Biography Robyn Vandyk

Robyn is Head of the Australian War Memorial's Research Centre. Her work involves leading the Research Centre team to develop, manage, preserve, and provide access to the Memorial's archive and library. Robyn has curated a variety of exhibitions, including co-curating the MAGNA award-winning Anzac voices (2014) and a joint exhibition with Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation, Gallipoli to Afghanistan and the future: 100 years of mapping (2015) and A Matter of Trust: Dayaks & Z Special Unit Operatives in Borneo 1945 (2018). To mark the centenary of the First World War she led a mass digitisation project Anzac connections, the Memorial's major centenary web project to enhance availability and access to digital content. Robyn has produced museum-related publications and is a regular writer for the Memorial's social media content including blogs. In October 2012, she travelled to Afghanistan as the Memorial's official curator and spent several weeks observing conditions and collecting records and objects. Robyn has recently completed a partnership with the Australian National University in an ARC-funded project researching Australians in Borneo during the Second World War. Most recently Robyn has been working on the development of the Charles Bean Research Centre which has officially opened to the public 5 June 2025.

Abstract: Second World War stories from the Australian War Memorial's collection: a Dutch view.

The Memorial's archive includes official and personal records related to the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) during the Second World War. The NEI government-in-exile was established in Melbourne and later moved to Queensland. As camps in the NEI were liberated many evacuees including the Dutch were housed in Brisbane for recuperation and became involved in the society including work and fundraising. In July 1946 all Dutch nationals including military personnel and wartime refugees were to leave Australia except for permanent residents. Dutch citizens left Brisbane on several ships, though many found ways to remain in the country.

The official records and personal diaries and papers in the Memorial's collection are valuable records of the Dutch experience. In the post-war period the collection includes impressions and memoirs written by Dutch NEI Civilians and Prisoners of war, who settled in Australia. This presentation is a discussion regarding the Memorial's resources and records related to the Dutch view. There will be stories along the way! Stories are based on the Memorial's collections with a focus on the Brisbane experience of hosting allies-in-exile and evacuees.

Biography: Adrian Vickers

Adrian Vickers is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Sydney. His many writings on Indonesian history include *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge University Press). He currently leads the OMAA project <https://omaa-arts.sydney.edu.au/> which examines Australian history through multilingual sources, including Dutch- and Indonesian-language materials on the period 1938–1963.

Abstract: Indonesians in Brisbane and the Anti-Fascist Struggle

Brisbane was one of the main sites where former Indonesian political prisoners were able to organise in anticipation of the end of World War II. Mohammad Bondan was a key leader amongst the Indonesians. For him, Camp Columbia was an important site because it was “freely open” (*bebas terbuka*). The conditions of the camp allowed him to connect with other Indonesians inside as well as sympathetic Australians outside, both individuals and members of the Labor Party and the Communist Party of Australia. The freedom that he had in Camp Columbia was the product of an uneasy collaboration between Indonesian political leaders in exile and the Netherlands Indies leadership in Australia.