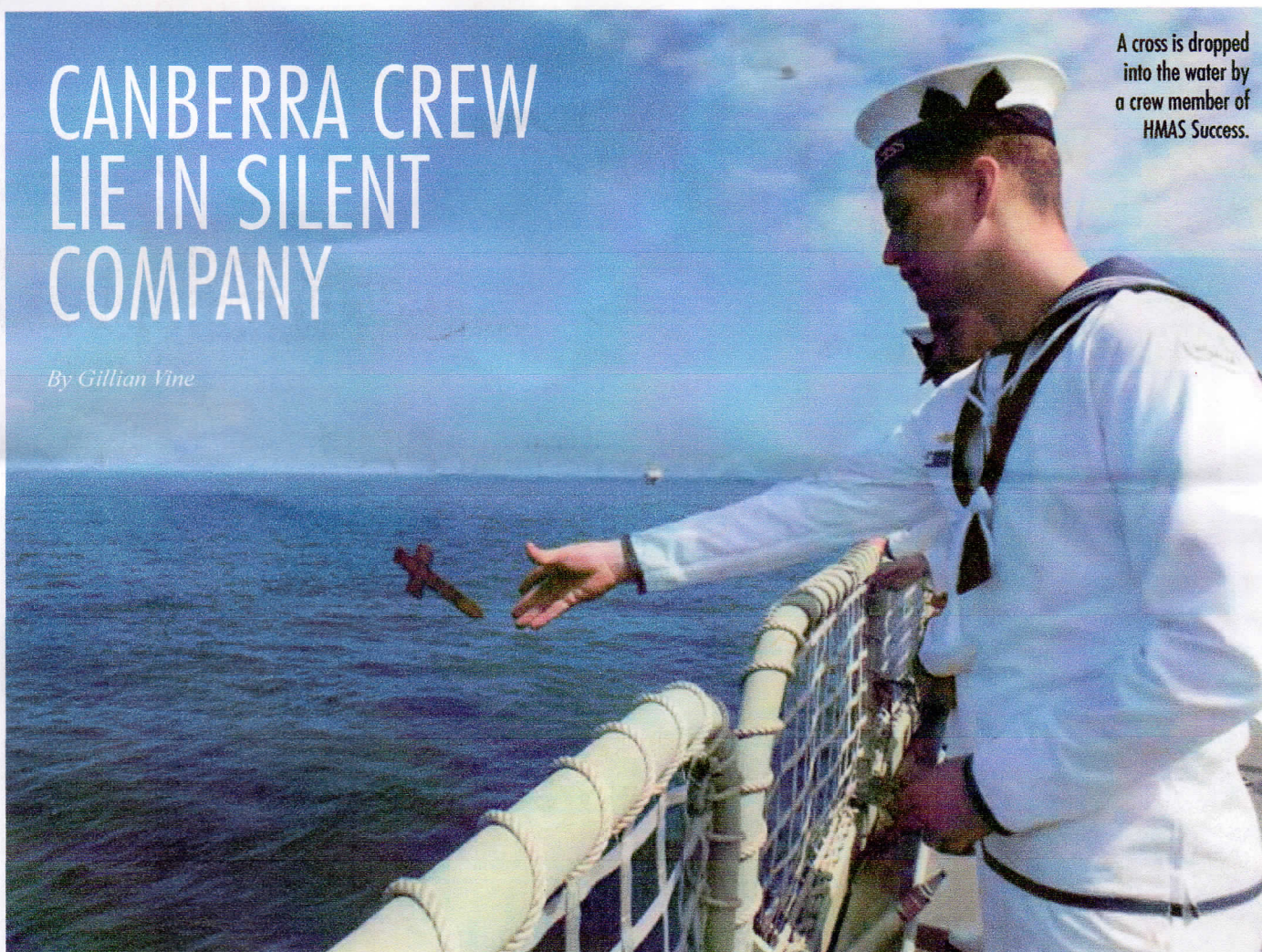


CANBERRA CREW LIE IN SILENT COMPANY

By Gillian Vine

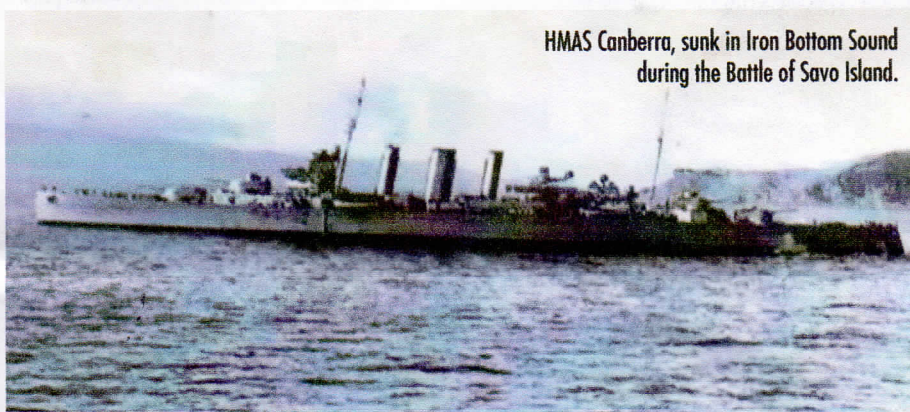
A cross is dropped
into the water by
a crew member of
HMAS Success.



A moving ceremony at the site of Australia's worst wartime naval loss ended a week of commemorations of the World War II Battle of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

In the early hours of 9 August 1942, the heavy cruiser HMAS *Canberra* was severely damaged in the Battle of Savo Island, being hit 24 times in two minutes in a surprise attack by Japanese naval vessels. The attack left 84 of *Canberra's* crew dead, including the captain, and 109 men wounded. The US lost 939 men and three cruisers – USS *Quincey*, USS *Vincennes* and USS *Astoria* – that night.

Canberra was crippled and unable to be moved, so the order was given to abandon ship and the following morning she was scuttled by a US torpedo. One of 32 ships and hundreds of aircraft that



HMAS *Canberra*, sunk in Iron Bottom Sound during the Battle of Savo Island.

went to the bottom during the Battle of Guadalcanal, she now lies more than 700m below the ocean off Savo Island, HMAS *Success* took officials and naval representatives from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Solomon Islands – including Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare – to the site of the sinking for the memorial service.

NSW Senator and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, said to those assembled in silence on the flight deck of *Success*: “We gather today to remember the lives lost; the many injured; the sacrifices made during the pivotal Guadalcanal campaign and throughout the Pacific war; and the hard-fought legacy of

AUSTRALIA JOINS GUADALCANAL SERVICES



Memorial plaque at
Vilu War Museum,
near Honiara.

freedom and democracy which all of us continue to enjoy to this day.

She acknowledged the presence of family members of those who had died and RAN veteran Bill Quinn (94) who, as a 19-year-old stoker on *Canberra's* sister ship, HMAS *Australia*, watched the attack.

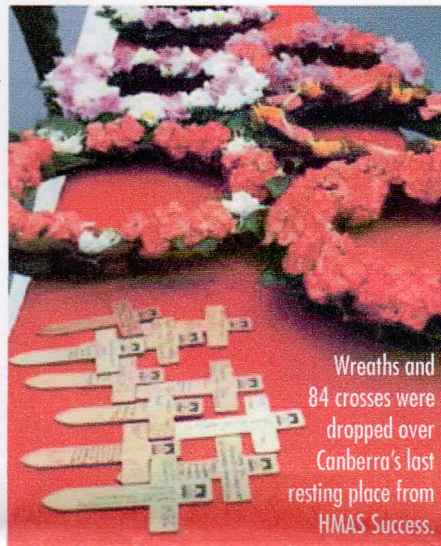
Commander of the Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Stuart Mayer praised *Canberra's* company and Captain Frank Getting: "He acted with selfless courage that is truly heroic."

Captain Getting had assumed command of *Canberra* just two months earlier and, as Senator Fierravanti-Wells said: "In the proudest traditions of the Royal Australian Navy, he remained steadfast on the bridge, refusing medical attention, and passed away later that day en route to Noumea."

RADM Mayer said that such heroism formed the basis of today's Royal Australian Navy.

"There are no graves or memorials at sea, just the silent company of their sea mates below," he said.

Anchored a short distance from Success were HMNZS *Otago*, USS *Barry* and the



Wreaths and
84 crosses were
dropped over
Canberra's last
resting place from
HMAS Success.

Royal Solomon Islands Patrol Vessel *Auki*. Their companies stood to attention on deck and saluted as Success' flag was lowered to half-mast for the wreath-laying.

Wreaths were dropped into water from Success, then 84 sailors, including six from HMAS *Canberra III*, threw into the water wooden crosses with messages from Australian schoolchildren. The ship's warrant officer read the Naval Ode; the Last Post sounded, then, after a minute's silence, Reveille. The ceremony concluded with the Naval Prayer.

The 75th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal has been marked with memorial events in and around the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara.

Fought between August 1942 and February 1943, the battle marked a turning point in the Pacific War, effectively preventing the Japanese from isolating Australia and New Zealand.

The commemorative events began on Saturday 5 August with a symposium about the battle and culminated in a memorial service for those lost when HMAS *Canberra* sank.

A colourful service of remembrance was held at Holy Cross Catholic Cathedral on the Sunday and the following day a packed programme began with a 7am service at the United States war memorial on Skyline Ridge, Honiara. Among those present were US Ambassador Catherine Ebert Gray, Japanese Ambassador Kenichi Kimiya, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Governor-General Sir Frank Kabui.

Among those laying wreaths at the US memorial were Australian Defence Force personnel and diplomats.

"The Solomon Islands was centre stage for one of the fiercest battles of World War Two," Mr Sogavare said, adding that his country now had warm relations with Japan and the United States.

Next, at the Solomon Scouts and Coastwatchers memorial at Point Cruz, Australian Defence Commander Stephen

Allied flags seen through the wreckage of a Japanese Betty bomber (Mitsubishi G4M) at Vilu War Museum, near Honiara.



Below: Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Commander Stephen Woodall and Guadalcanal veteran Bill Quinn (94) from Tuncurry, NSW, at the Coastwatchers and Solomon Scouts memorial

Woodall presented medallions to the Solomon Islands' sole surviving Scout and the descendants of those who, like him, had watched for enemy activity and reported back to the Allies.

"We recognise what you or your ancestors did," Cdr Woodall said, adding that 20 Solomon Island Scouts were killed in the conflict. A Coastwatchers and Scouts museum project then was launched in the grounds of Honiara's National Museum.

The day's fourth major activity was the unveiling of a plaque honouring Signalman First Class Douglas Munro, of the US Coastguard. Munro was killed just off Point Cruz when he put his small vessel between US Marines and the Japanese. In doing so, he is credited with saving 500 Americans and is the only member of the Coastguard to have been awarded the US Medal of Honour.

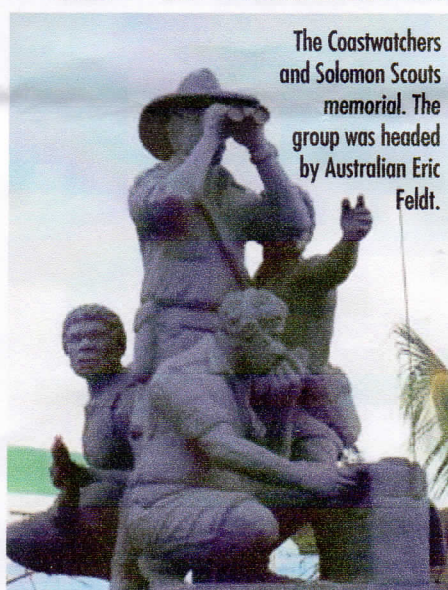
On the Tuesday morning, at Bloody Ridge, where heavy casualties were suffered on both sides, the Japanese Ambassador offered his "eternal condolences to those on both sides ... young Americans and Japanese and those of other nations who gave their lives".

The US Ambassador described the site as "holy ground" and said that, as well as those who died, "many more were carried out wounded by their exhausted comrades".

"We are here today to preserve this site for future generations... and are also here to understand the lessons of war," she said.

Prime Minister Sogavare unveiled a new monument and announced that the area would be the Solomon Islands' first national park.

"Families of the fallen can come to Bloody Ridge to remember their loved ones," he said.



The Coastwatchers and Solomon Scouts memorial. The group was headed by Australian Eric Feldt.