

A little help from our friends

2020 will no doubt go down as the year we'd rather forget. For the Museum and Development Office, it's also been a challenging year.

The absence of tourists has meant one of our major sources of donor income has all but disappeared.

That said, we still kept our doors open and welcomed a few local visitors who dropped by. We also hosted a number of school groups as part of our history program to educate younger generations of Ni-Vanuatu people. Plus of course we kept producing our newsletter.

For us to continue doing what we're doing for the local community until the borders re-open sometime next year, we need a little help from you.



We're appealing to our friends and supporters everywhere to assist us by making a small donation to help keep the museum open until things return to post-Covid normal.

Donations can be made via PayPal or credit card here:

<https://southpacificwwiimuseum.com/donate/>

Thank you. We do appreciate your help.



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The cemetery time forgot

A little-known area along the road to Navy Hospital #6 on Espiritu Santo, was home to a temporary military cemetery during World War II.

The existence of the cemetery wasn't even known to elderly Santo locals, who have no recollection of a military cemetery on the island. But after some research and combing through historic photographs, the Museum has confirmed the location of the site.



The entrance to the Santo Military Cemetery.



The military cemetery is shown in the red circle. Navy Hospital #6 is in the centre bottom of shot.

Additionally, records held by the US Archives have brought to light the names of those who were temporarily buried there prior to making their way to their final resting place - all 442 of them.

According to historian Donna Esposito who has been researching dog tags on behalf of the Museum, the whole cemetery process during the war was a long and convoluted one.

"People were typically buried in a temporary cemetery close to where they died and then reburied in a larger cemetery overseas, but still a temporary one," she said. "All the people buried on Santo would have been relocated to Guadalcanal in 1945 and then exhumed again in 1948. If the families didn't specify that they wanted the remains back, then they would have most likely been reburied at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines, although it's possible some of them ended up at Punch Bowl in Hawaii."

Slowly but surely, Donna is helping put families to the names and bit by bit is building a complete picture of who passed through the cemetery, that time had forgotten.

Building a complete picture

Museum Project Manager James Carter has been at it again. With Melbourne, Australia in lockdown over the preceding months thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, his free time was spent creating a couple of new displays for the Museum.

"I wanted to do something a bit different this time and actually give the pieces context," he said. "I hadn't done a diorama for some time, so I thought why not do two?"

The first depicts a Seabee Caterpillar D7 dozer with angle-dozer equipment and a LeTourneau CK7 blade, constructing the runway at Bomber #2 Airfield which today is today's Santo Airport.

The dozer is pushing a pile of crushed coral out of the way prior to rolling. To one side is a Navy officer supervising and Seabee mechanic having a smoko. For those with a keen eye,



The mighty Caterpillar D7 dozer in action in the South Pacific.

you might even spot the tiny handmade coke bottles sitting on a parts crate. Build time on the entire diorama was around two months.

The second scene depicts the Seaplane base, west of Luganville. A PBV Catalina is beaching itself up onto the Marsden matting that was laid over the seaplane 'ramp', where a waiting US Navy ground crew is ready to refuel and rearm the aircraft.

According to James, this diorama caused the most stress as he was

dealing with resins. "The problem with some resins is that they get very hot as they cure. So hot in fact, the model will actually melt during the drying process." Luckily, he found a 'cool' resin and there were no major issues with the build. Once the resin was dry, surface ripples and 'wave action' could be added including wave foam along the foreshore and around the Catalina's wheels. The build time on this diorama was around one month.

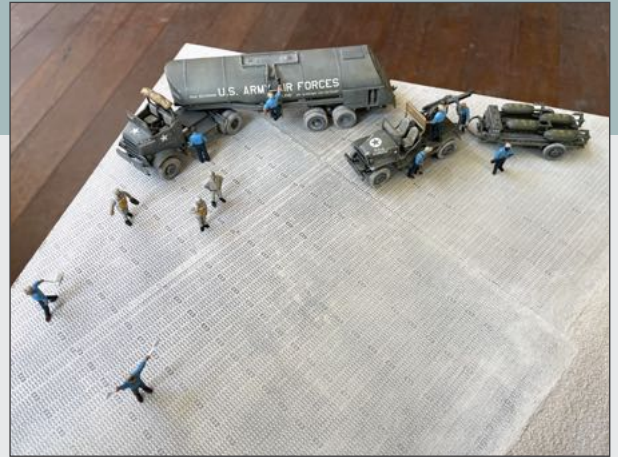
Once the borders reopen to Vanuatu, the dioramas in their custom road crates will make their way up to the Museum with James and go on display.



The two completed dioramas, ready for their journey to Espiritu Santo.



The D7 model features amazing details including actual steel tracks.



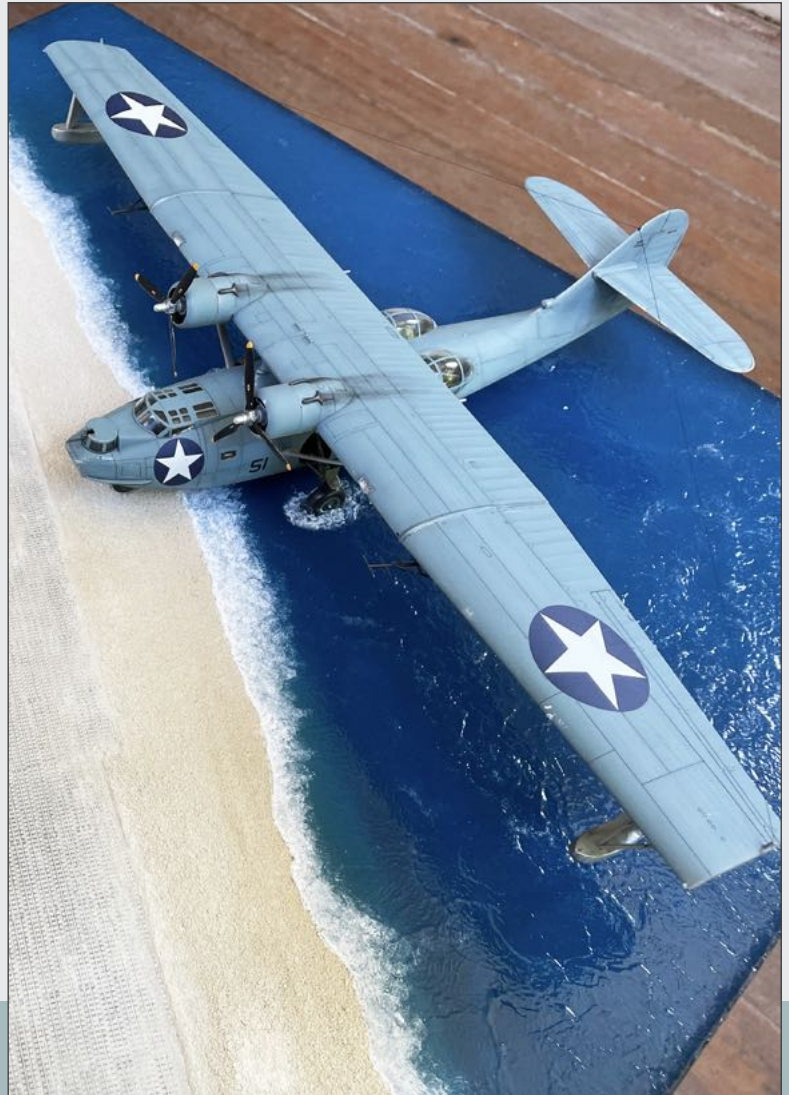
The seaplane ground crew prepare for refueling and rearming.



It's amazing how 'kitty litter' can look like crushed coral.



The seaplane base upon which the diorama is based.



The US Navy PBY Catalina comes ashore on the seaplane ramp on Santo.

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A missing memorial

Another one of those wonderful wartime stories to come out of WWII island life was uncovered by us during the month.

A letter was sent home to the wife of a missing crew member of Bombing Squadron 101. It said in part, that some of the men from the squadron and from Patrol Service Unit 1-2, erected a memorial to those fellow pilots and crew lost in the Southwest Pacific in February and March 1943.

The monument's concrete block was poured by men of the 15th Construction Battalion while the plaque itself was cast by sailors from the USS Dixie, a destroyer tender that would often visit Espiritu Santo. The Inscription on the plaque reads:

1943
IN MEMORY OF THOSE OFFICERS
AND MEN OF
VB101 AND PATSU 1-2
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

The letter to the wife of Lt. Stuart T. Cooper of Narragansett, Rhode Island, explains that the lithograph of the memorial shows its location overlooking the Second Channel.

The USS Dixie at right, at anchor in Leyte, 1945



Evidently the squadron and the service unit made a contribution to a French Mission adjoining the camp somewhere near Bomber #2 Airfield. The priest there, known as Father John, "was asked to arrange for proper care and preservation in the event that all U. S. Naval Units are withdrawn from the island."

As far as we know that memorial no longer stands. What happened to it, we can only speculate. However, we will do our best to find out and report back with any news.

Inspiring everyday heroes

Our heroes this month is a group of inspiring Luganville locals who have come together to form an incredibly unique band.

The Yumi 40 Inclusive Band was established to provide people with disabilities a voice that could be heard through their own unique style of music.



Don and Apia briefly discuss their next number.

The band wants to promote the rights of disabled people across Vanuatu and around the world.

Some of the band members struggle to do things we often take for granted, like walking unassisted, or seeing your loved ones everyday.



Yumi 40 Inclusive Band banner on the day of their dedication. "No Livim eni wan behaen" – "Leave no one behind".

With their struggle they have found other ways to share their creativity and a contribution to our society.

The band have been performing at events recently with their most recent gig performing at the opening week and closing three days of the Santo Hardware Birthday sale. Their performances drew in crowds some of whom didn't even go into the sale tent but stood to watch these humble musicians share their wonderful talents.

Congratulations to the Yumi 40 Inclusive Band committee and their Chairlady Mrs. Nellie Caleb for the incredible hard work they did getting the band formed in October of this year.

If you'd like to find out more information about the Yumi 40 Inclusive Band, visit their Facebook page [@Yumi40 Inclusive Band](#).

Inspiring Everyday Heroes is our Museum brand and means how the stories of yesteryear and our project can inspire today's new generation.



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