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BSP & Tropex help our Navara grow

We are delighted to recognize the support of our two newest Navara Fund members, Vanuatu's Bank of the South Pacific (BSP), and New Zealand's Tropex Exports.



Both companies will be assisting with the running costs of the project office in Luganville over the next three years.

The chairman of the Museum Association's board, Bradley Wood, says they are delighted with the support and the faith being shown in the project by both sponsors.

Nik Regenvanu, the country head for BSP, says they are proud to be playing a role in nourishing the Vanuatu community, such as the recent VT1 million contribution to medical emergency services.

BSP is also demonstrating a commitment to supporting educational change in Vanuatu, with scholarship support for educating young women.

BSP's Vanuatu Country Manager Nik Regenvanu and Head of Retail Banking Moana Korikalo presenting BSP's support, received by SPWWIIM Chairman Brad Wood & Manager Alma



Tropex Exports is a New Zealand company that has been a supporter of the Museum project for two years, and has recently committed to a further three years of support.

Tropex was established in 1968 to provide representation for manufacturers exporting to the Pacific region.

With over 50 years experience it now represents many highly-respected manufacturers from a number of industries including construction, agriculture, steel & wire through to air conditioning and refrigeration.

Steve Hirst, the financial director of Tropex, says they are delighted to be a Navara Fund member. "We have built strong relationships with the families, businesses and industries of the Pacific, and are very keen to see the Museum project succeed."

If you wish to know more about becoming a Navara Fund member, you can see more [here](#).

Inspiring Everyday Heroes

This month we mark the graduation of Katura Marae as a Bachelor of Aviation from Massey University, NZ

Vanuatu's newest Bachelor of Aviation, Katura Marae. Picture courtesy of Massey University, New Zealand.



Katura last year became Air Vanuatu's first female pilot to fly internationally on a new ATR aircraft. Air Vanuatu is part of the Navara Fund supporting the Museum.

She has now completed her studies from Vanuatu, and says her advice to others is to do something you really want to, "so that every day you are doing something you love, and not just for the sake of doing it".

Katura says she is now looking forward to furthering her career in the aviation industry.

Our museum motto is "Inspiring Everyday Heroes" which means how the stories of yesteryear and our project can inspire today's new generation.

Working with the Vanuatu Cultural Center - Vanuatu National Museum

The Museum has joined forces with the national museum of Vanuatu.

We've signed a memorandum of understanding with the VCC which is based in Port Vila.

This basically means both parties will share information where appropriate and work to strengthen each other.

The VCC is a rich repository of oral history, historic photos and other files, which will be able to be accessed by the Museum to improve its own archives and displays over time.

Especially valuable will be the stories of Ni-Van people who were part of the wartime experience.

Our Museum will work to include information about the history of Vanuatu so that visitors can put the war years into context from what came before, and what followed.

Director of Cultural Center, Richard Shing at the MOU signing



This month in Military History

On May 28th, 1942, the first aircraft landed on the US airstrip we now know as Bauerfield international airport on Efate Island.

It was a remarkable feat to complete the strip in so short a space of time, but essential if the US was to begin building up to stop any Japanese drive through the New Hebrides.

A Marine detachment started the work when they arrived on Efate in April – and they were then joined by a battalion of Seabees in early May, expanding the runway to 6000 foot length.

Find out more [here](#).

Images: Bauerfield from early site clearance to what it is today



In the News



Alma is filmed by a Chinese TV Crew

International media from Australia, China and Japan have been visiting the Museum in the past month.

The visits began with the Sydney Morning Herald's security correspondent interviewing chairman Bradley Wood. The newspaper was doing a series about China's involvement in Vanuatu.

A Sydney-based team from Japan's Asahi Shimbun newspaper was the next to visit. They were doing a piece profiling Vanuatu ahead of Japan hosting a forum for Pacific leaders.

And the third visit was from China's CCTV documentary channel. They spent two hours filming here, and we hope to be able to share more when the documentary comes out at the end of the year.

Tips from a Military Historian

Australian military historian Dr Peter Williams, has spent some time with the Museum this month, learning about what's proposed, and giving us some insights into his involvement with another military history museum.

Dr Williams specializes in the Pacific Theatre of WWII, has specialist knowledge of how to access Japanese military records and has interviewed many Japanese war veterans, something he began doing in the 80s when he lived there for four years as a language teacher.

He and his wife were closely involved in the development of Darwin's impressive military history museum which has over 60,000 visitors a year.

Image to the right: Dr Peter Williams with the tail of a crashed B17 near Bomber One Airfield, Espiritu Santo

Peter says he's interested in seeing what can be found on the untold Japanese side of the story of Espiritu Santo and has offered to start by checking out decrypts of Japanese intelligence held by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. They may refer to Espiritu Santo and New Hebrides.

"We know there is a record from the US side of a few Japanese incursions around the island. That's no surprise, they knew this was a major base, and every military in the world does the same, which is to find out what is happening at such places."

"What we don't know is how often the Japanese came here on scouting missions – and the US was unaware."


Peter's best-known book, *The Kokoda Campaign, Myth and Reality*, used Japanese records to reassess the historical record on the famous Australian battles on the Kokoda Trail, and his findings did not always please some.

Japanese army records showed that the Australians in some famous actions were nowhere near as outnumbered as they thought they were at the time. "It's no reflection on the bravery of those who fought, but it did upset some people, who preferred the traditional version of events."

In the meantime, Peter's promising to write a special article for the next edition of **The Santonian** on just why Espiritu Santo was so crucial for the war in the South Pacific. **The Santonian** is the quarterly special newsletter packed with extra value for our museum members.

You can become a member [here](#).



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"Inspiring
everyday
heroes"



Managed by Elwood J Euart Association (INC)
Vanuatu Charitable Trust No. 039632, Phone +678 37000
P O Box 850, Luganville, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu
Email: info@southpacificwwiimuseum.com
Website: www.southpacificwwiimuseum.com