

# Papua New Guinea Frequently Asked Questions

## **World War**

### **Battle of Rabaul**

This article appeared in The National Newspaper on 25 April 2017

Society to celebrate Anzac Day

RABAUL Historical Society will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Rabaul today which is Anzac Day, with a dawn service.

Susie McGrade, secretary of Rabaul Historical Society, said this event was Australia's worst military disaster and Rabaul's most terrifying period in history.

"At the 5am dawn service, the Rabaul Historical Society will reflect on the brave but futile defence by an Australian Army garrison in New Britain, known as Lark Force, including the 2nd/22nd regiment, the New Guinea volunteer rifles and First Independent Commandos against an invading army of some 22,000 Japanese," she said

McGrade said this small force, comprising of approximately 1400 soldiers and six nurses, faced a vastly superior Japanese amphibious unit poised to overrun Rabaul, capital of Australia's mandated territories.

Abandoned by the Australian command, these young men fought with determination and bravery far exceeding their age and military training.

After the order "every man to himself" by Lieutenant Colonel John Scanlan, soldiers and civilians split into small groups and retreated through the bush. The inhospitable New Britain jungle took its toll on the garrison and the enemy did the rest.

Approximately 400 of the troops escaped to the mainland and another 160 were massacred senselessly at Tol Plantation.

In 1945 after a three-year battle for Rabaul, at the time of surrender, 69,000 Japanese troops remained in Rabaul.

Unique solution ID: #2362

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Last update: 2017-04-25 09:59