

# TIMELINE

- **Early 1940** Japan was a threat to Australia, so 3 new Battalions were raised - Sparrow, Gull, and Lark Force. The 2/22nd Battalion, Lark Force, contained 1,400 men who all voluntarily enlisted in the Army, they were not conscripts. The 2/22nd Battalion was first based at Trawool on the road to Tallarook.
- **September 1940** the Battalion was route marched to a new training camp in Bonegilla 235 km away making the journey on foot which took several days. As they passed through the towns along the Hume Highway, they were led by the 25 Bandsmen from the Brunswick Salvation Army who enlisted together.
- **April 1941** they left Sydney, and arrived in New Britain (now part of New Guinea), at Rabaul on 22nd April 1941.
- **7 December 1941** Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States Navy Pacific Fleet was destroyed. War in the Pacific was declared by the USA and Australia. Japan started bombing New Britain.
- **23 January 1942** a large Japanese force in excess of 17,000 landed in Rabaul and overwhelmed Lark Force defenders which numbered approximately 1300.
- **22 June 1942** 845 Australian prisoners and approximately 208 civilians embarked on the Japanese ship the *Montevideo Maru* to be transported to forced labour camps.
- **1 July 1942** the *Montevideo Maru* was sighted by the submarine USS *Sturgeon*. The ship was not displaying any special markings to suggest it was carrying POWs. The submarine tracked the ship and at 2.30am on 1 July 1942, it fired torpedoes which hit the ship, and the *Montevideo Maru* broke up and sank within 11 minutes. The 1053 Prisoners of War were trapped below deck with no chance of survival.
- **October 1945** three and a half years after the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*, the fate of the POWs on board was revealed, and the relatives notified of their deaths.

**This event is known as the greatest single loss of life in Australia's maritime history**