



# Curtin University

JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY  
CURTIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

# INFORMATION UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2012

## Broome 1942 exhibition launching soon

**An exhibition about the bombing of Broome in 1942 is set to launch on 28 February 2012.**

**The exhibition focuses on the relationship between the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and the Curtin government following the entry of Japan into World War Two.**

On display will be secret cablegrams, notes, minutes, and letters recording negotiations between the two governments on establishing a radiotelegraph service, the transfer of Japanese interned soldiers to Australian territory, Australian training of NEI air crew, evacuation of Australian citizens from NEI and the exchange of diplomatic representation.

The collection, made up of materials from JCPML and personal items donated from the Dutch community in Perth, includes documents about the bombing of Broome while the NEI had its government in exile based there under Curtin's Prime Ministership.

The Broome 1942 exhibition will go on display from February to April 2012 at Curtin University's Robertson Library.

Please find your invitation to the exhibition launch inside.

Top: Quilt by Francis Lader, photo courtesy of Nonja Peters.

Bottom: Netherlands East Indies presence in Australia, photo courtesy of Nonja Peters.



## Visiting Scholar announced

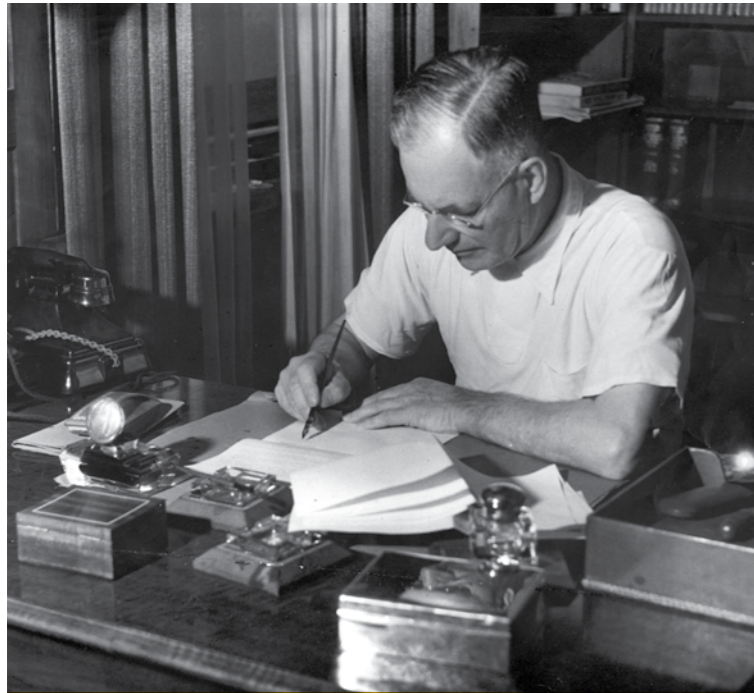
Curtin University Associate Professor of History Dr Bobbie Oliver is the JCPML Visiting Scholar for 2012. In her role as Visiting Scholar she will research the life of Elsie Curtin and present a public lecture on this theme later in 2012.

Dr Oliver will also write the text for a more comprehensive online biography of Elsie Curtin which the JCPML will publish as a web resource.

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# MEMORIES OF BROOME AIR BATTLE LINGER 70 YEARS ON



Left: Records of the Curtin Family. John Curtin Working on a Sunday morning, Lodge Study, Canberra, 1942. JCPML00376/6. Middle: Quilt *Bowing to the Japanese*, photo courtesy of Nonja Peters. Right: Netherlands East Indies presence in Australia, photo courtesy of Nonja Peters.

**Director of the Home of Migration Experiences Centre at Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, Dr Nonja Peters, writes about the Broome Air Battle on 3 March 1942.**

**A largely unacknowledged aspect of the Dutch presence in Australia is the major airlift out of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI), via Broome on the WA coast, in front of the Japanese Occupation in 1942. It was provoked by the Pacific War on 7 December 1941, which forged a three and a half year alliance between American, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA) military in the interests of the defence of the Region, including Australia. However, the Allies proved powerless against both the Japanese army and advancing navy.**

Evacuation to Australia of selected NEI bureaucrats and military personnel with the expertise to continue the war effort began two days after the Fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, but only after the NEI Administration had assured John Curtin's Government that they would cover all financial responsibilities associated with their exile in Australia.

Broome was chosen because it was the closest port to Java and could take both land-based aircraft and flying boats. RAAF official historian Douglas Gillison reported how the evacuation operation transformed the sleepy pearling town of Broome into high air traffic port, which he likened to La Guardia Field (New York's airport) at its busiest. Around 57

aircraft were being processed in one day and between 7,000 and 8,000 refugees passed through Broome in the 14 days before the Japanese Occupation of Java.

However, the window of opportunity it provided was limited. All shuttle flights were discontinued the day after the Battle of the Java Sea on 28 February, which in itself had seen a valiant attempt, to no avail, by the combined Allied fleet to stop the invasion of the NEI.

The Java route was reopened again briefly on the night of 2 March 1942, to enable the Marineluchtvaartdienst (Naval Air Service, or MLD) to evacuate their last nine flying boats (5 Dorniers, 4 Catalinas). This unexpected evacuation gave the boat's crews and their families, a few remaining VIPs and some of the Java Sea Battle orphans and widows a last chance to exit the NEI. The flying boats departed Java at night by stealth from secret hiding places in Lake Grati, Lengong, Teloengagoeng and Tjilatjap, with 80 crew and 81 civilians. They arrived at Broome seven-hours later on 3 March 1942, where they joined six United States Navy (USN) and Royal Air Force Squadron flying boats already lying at anchor on Roebuck Bay awaiting refuelling for their flight to Perth.

Now in Australia the Dutch evacuees thought themselves safe from the Japanese and as they waited the last thing on their minds was an air raid. Most adults were busy making sure their children did not fall in the water. However at 9.30am, not long after coming to rest, nine Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters and a Japanese

reconnaissance plane on orders to close the evacuation route entered the Roebuck Bay airspace. On sighting the flying boat squadron they levied a brutal attack on the entirely unprotected aircraft. As the Zeros made slow fly-pasts with open cockpits the same parents started pushing their children into the water in an effort to save them.

Eye-witness reports describe the ensuing 20 minute attack as a horrific massacre. Before long all the boats had burst into flames. Survivors recall that even under water you could hear the noise and feel the pressure of the Japanese bullets.

During the Japanese attack 26 aircraft were destroyed including one of their Zeros, those at Broome Aerodrome, a DC-3 at Carnot Bay just north of Broome and a B-24A 'Liberator' off Cable Beach, killing all but one of the twenty-one people on board.

For the Dutch it was a dark day in the history of the MLD. All told 48 of the 161 on board the flying boats lost their lives by gunfire or while swimming through burning oil - 16 men, 12 women and 20 children. Many heroic acts took place that day.

The Dutch community in Perth hold a service in May every year to commemorate the end of war at Perth War Cemetery's Dutch enclave. It includes laying a rose on the gravestones of the 35 Broome victims buried there.

*A copy of the full article will be published on the JCPML website.*

## Farewell to Lesley Wallace



Curtin University Librarian Imogen Garner and JCPML Manager Lesley Wallace at the retirement morning tea.

**After a long and successful career at the JCPML Lesley Wallace retired in December 2011.**

**Lesley commenced work as the Collections Librarian in 1999, and was appointed Manager of the JCPML in 2007 following the retirement of the Foundation Archivist Kandy-Jane Henderson. Deanne Barrett has been appointed as Lesley's successor. JCPML Historical Consultant David Black provided the following tribute to Lesley:**

*I have worked with Lesley at the JCPML for many years—I really can't be sure how many—and during that time she emerged from the engaging group of people with whom I have been associated here over all those years to become our stimulating, reliable, empathetic and always very hard working leader.*

*During all those years, and more recently under Lesley's stewardship, the JCPML has continued to build on the splendid foundation laid by Kandy Jane and today it is a marvellous resource and source of stimulating projects and lectures which are invariably of high quality and great interest to all who attend.*

*My memories of Lesley's time at the JCPML will centre on a leader who always led from the front; worked as hard as and often even harder than those in her domain; and who had the enormously valuable capacity to make a significant contribution to whatever work I was doing without ever acting other than as a facilitator.*

*My hope is that from time to time she will stay in touch and have the opportunity to see the library flourish both as a major repository for historical archives and a continuing stimulator of interest in the Curtin legacy and the records of others who have played an important role in the history and politics of Western Australia and Australia alike.*

Lesley's farewell morning tea was held at the JCPML and attended by current and past staff of the JCPML and the University Library.

# COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS LIFE OF HAZEL HAWKE



**The JCPML is excited to announce the completion of a new web resource showcasing the Hazel Hawke Collection.**

**The collection focuses on Hazel Hawke's time at the Prime Minister's Lodge (between 1983 and 1991) and her community involvement after that period.**

Granting access to transcripts of over 350 public speeches made by Hazel Hawke, the resource also holds inscriptions from some of the Hawke family library books, audio and transcripts of selected recordings of public interviews, various photographs from Hazel's public life and images

from her early family life. Also included are personal papers of Hazel Hawke, including birth certificates, school reports and employment references.

The online images from the resource are also being harvested by the National Library of Australia's Picture Australia Service. This allows the images to be more widely accessed by interested members of the public.

Hazel Hawke donated a first consignment of her papers to the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library in 1999. These records document her time at the Prime Minister's Lodge (1983 to 1991) and include a comprehensive set

of speeches she delivered in her role as the wife of Prime Minister Bob Hawke. In 1999 and 2000, the JCPML also undertook a series of interviews with Hazel Hawke and some of her family and close associates.

In 2009, a further consignment of papers which Hazel Hawke had previously identified for donation was received from her family. These records cover Hazel Hawke's life before and after her period in The Lodge and provide insights into both her public work in the community and some of her personal interests.

You can view the web resource at [john.curtin.edu.au/hawkeh](http://john.curtin.edu.au/hawkeh).



From left to right: Records of Hazel Hawke. Hazel Hawke dancing with Yuendumu women, 1988. JCPML00425/325.

Records of Hazel Hawke. Hazel Masterson and Bob Hawke on the Panther motorcycle, 1950. JCPML00425/257.

Records of Hazel Hawke. Hazel and Bob Hawke on the Royal Yacht Britannia, Port Adelaide, 13 March 1986. JCPML00425/256.

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