

‘THESE WERE WILD TIMES’: THE EVACUATION OF DUTCH NATIONALS FROM THE FORMER NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1945-46

Sue Summers

What was happening? Out of nowhere, it seemed, there was a deluge of phone calls and dozens of letters appearing on my desk daily. The mobile was ringing from 5.45am, this rate of contact continuing for more than two months, with many communications still arriving a year later. In the midst of phone conversations, I gleaned that the Dutch organisation *Stichting Het Gebaar*¹ had generously sent letters to some 3,500 survivors of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps in the former Netherlands East Indies (NEI) – now Indonesia – to partake in the combined Dutch studies at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia.²

At that time in 2006, I was a Research Associate working with Nonja Peters and the year before we had travelled around Australia collecting more than 450 interviews and archival information on the Dutch presence in Australia. Yet why did this particular invitation to our studies garner such interest, especially given that 60 years had passed since their release from Japanese POW camps? In conversations and interviews the words piled out, one after the other, and when an extended questionnaire was sent out there was an astounding 50 per cent return rate. It was not unusual to receive 60 page responses, additional life histories, a range of photographs, historic documents and, at a later date, supplements to both questionnaires and interviews. As one woman pointed out, “After receiving your request regarding my experiences during the war, it was as if the load was lifted from my shoulders. At last someone is interested in what that time was like. I’m 80 now, but those awful happenings are as clear in my mind as yesterday”. Another said, “I owe it to my mother to be part of this study. Nobody knows about the Dutch evacuees; they don’t know what you’re talking about”. Collectively their stories and comments were very revealing of public knowledge and sympathies. “People know about the Holocaust,” I was told, “but they don’t care what happened in the East”. This person was referring to the largely silenced personal and collective holocaust faced by the ‘Other Dutch’ who were caught in the NEI at the onset of the Pacific War.

To give a brief overview, prior to the Japanese invasion on 1 March 1942, there were 220,000 Dutch nationals living in the NEI. The Japanese quickly overwhelmed Dutch and Allied forces and, when the Dutch surrendered, 40,000 military men were rounded up and interned in Japanese POW camps and 100,000 men, women and children in civilian interment camps for the next three-and-a-half years. The conditions were so primitive and appalling that 27 per cent of Dutch and Allied prisoners died in captivity,

an exceptionally high figure compared to the four per cent of British and American POWs who perished in Nazi German and Italian camps. Nine days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 the Japanese surrendered and two days later the Indonesians declared their independence from Dutch colonial rule.³ At this point, the Dutch who had been interned, then briefly liberated, were caught in the middle of a nationalist guerilla war as the Netherlands sought to retain its colony and the Indonesians to assert their independence. Survivors clearly recall their terror as young Indonesian freedom fighters took advantage of the ensuing power vacuum by overrunning the streets, forcibly entering homes and villages, climbing fences of the camps from which many Japanese soldiers had fled, attacking lorries and convoys attempting to evacuate the Dutch, and killing thousands of Dutch nationals and others *en masse*. The Australian Government of the time was very sympathetic to the plight of the Indies Dutch and was willing, in principle, to take as many evacuees as this country was able to accommodate.⁴ Dutch representatives in Java anticipated that 10,000 would be sent to Australia, 53,000 to the Netherlands and the remainder to various countries willing and able to accept them.⁵ An Australian Government representative in Java witness to the severity and scale of the disaster called upon Australia to receive an even larger number – at least 50,000 ex-internees.⁶ The logistics however were enormous. Several hundred Japanese POW camps were scattered throughout South East Asia, and it could take months for Australian, American, British and Gurkha forces to reach embattled civilians and ex-internees, let alone safely liberate and evacuate them to Australia, Singapore, India, Ceylon or the Netherlands.⁷

There is no precise tally of those evacuated to Australia, but archival documentation and newspaper sources suggest some six thousand evacuees entered the country over eight to ten months. Six hundred evacuees reached Perth by mid-November 1945 and by late January 1946 the numbers had increased to one thousand. Some moved on to the Eastern states and by May 1946, just 625 evacuees remained in WA.⁸ The evacuations faltered due to lack of foreign currency and lack of ships and in April 1946 NEI authorities based in Melbourne were forced to bring the evacuations to a halt.⁹ By the end of the year, most of the evacuees had been repatriated to the Netherlands or to the NEI.¹⁰

According to the people in this study, “these were wild times”. Four years earlier, in 1942, the Dutch had been evacuated to Australia in Catalina, Qantas and Dutch Dornier Flying Boats, Lockheed Lodestars, B-25 Bombers, DC Tens, submarines, cargo and hospital ships—in just about anything that had the capacity to fly or float. In one instance, joint Dutch-RAAF 18th Squadron member Gus Winckel told me that his Lockheed Lodestar was so damaged it was considered unfit for flight, until one of the evacuees agreed to sit huddled inside the nose of this small plane to provide ballast, to act as an anchor, so that crew and evacuees could safely cross Western Australia. On another occasion, fuel ran so low that a group of evacuees were dropped

NIWOE



Figure 1a-1d
A range of Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees (NIWOE) pins and badges that Janie Hardey wore upon her Red Cross uniform. Courtesy: Janie Hardey.

off in a paddock in remote WA, left to find their own way to the nearest town. What happened to them, nobody knows.¹¹

The 1945-46 evacuations were – as much as circumstances would allow – far better organised with the majority of evacuees arriving in Australia by ship, including the Dutch *Tjibadak*, *Oranjefontein* and the *MS Oranje* (a former passenger liner converted to a hospital ship during the war), and with the NEI Air Force. However, not everyone entered Australia via designated procedures and pathways. In their attempts to flee a desperate situation some utilised their ‘connections’ with friends, acquaintances and family members to ‘hitch’ a ride with Allied Forces to Australia and, in some instances, even bypassed the necessary paper work on entry.¹² Others in this study came on an assortment of aircraft including B-25 Bombers, Douglas DC-6 transport aircraft, American Flyers and, in one instance, a family spent the journey wedged to a make-shift wooden bench in an old army plane that had lost its side door. Some spoke of informally boarding freight steamers, cargo and troop ships, with one person recalling the manner in which the family was “dumped” onto the wharf at Fremantle with no money, no contacts, wondering what to do and where to go. They were by far the minority, for those arriving by official channels were met by representatives of the Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees (NIWOE) or members of the Australian Red Cross.

The Australian Government was well aware of haphazard and unlawful arrivals and had been on the alert for “enemy agents” from the NEI since the beginning of war. They were also on the lookout for non-Dutch citizens said to be exploiting every avenue of influence to leave the war zone, often by presenting themselves as Dutch nationals in a bid for evacuee status. They would enter the country without visas to their passports or other documentary credentials and would “refuse”, or were unable, to provide a “satisfactory account” of their arrival.¹³ Thus, it was not surprising to hear that the formal reception of evacuees was mixed, especially as entry criteria was shaped by the White Australia Policy which favoured those of Anglo-Celtic and northern European background. The majority of those whom I spoke with, however, say they were treated well on arrival, although some hold memories of being “doused with DDT powder”, their bodies inspected for nits and scabies and their blonde hair inspected for the dark roots which may have suggested, to a sceptical Immigration or Customs Officer, that they were of Dutch-Indonesian or non-Dutch heritage.

Those assessed as genuine evacuees could enter Australia for ‘recuperative purposes’ on condition that they were of Dutch-European descent, were free from communicable diseases, and that NEI authorities in Australia would take full responsibility for their maintenance and accommodation.¹⁴ The Queensland-based NEI government-in-exile – mostly referred to as the ‘Dutch Administration’ – was well prepared for their arrival. They had set up branches of Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees (NIWOE), which, in Perth, was based at the Cloisters at 200 St Georges Terrace. The

role of NIWOE was to receive and process the evacuees, to pay all expenses associated with their 'recuperation', and to organise accommodation in private homes, hotels and boarding houses.

The Dutch authorities had proved to be astute and far-sighted. During the war, Fremantle was the biggest submarine base in the SW Pacific for US Navy forces that had successfully requisitioned residential facilities in most of Perth's larger hotels. As US forces departed at the end of war, the Dutch quickly took advantage of the existing infrastructure by booking – and paying for – accommodation for evacuees up to five months in advance of their arrival. Newspaper articles of the time suggest that publicans throughout the country were delighted for this was a financial bonanza they had only dreamed about.¹⁵ The Australian government, however, was far from impressed. There was an acute accommodation shortage in the post-war years, and the efficacy and largesse of the Dutch Administration reflected badly on the facilities and services available to Australian servicemen returning from overseas duty.

Archival and newspaper documents reflect the tensions between Australian and Dutch authorities. The Department of External Affairs detailed the "impropriety" of Dutch consular officials in booking up available hotels and boarding houses, saying it was "viewed with disfavor" by the Australian Government, that it could "only react against the Dutch in this country if Australians find themselves thereby deprived of accommodation," and that the Dutch "should make no further bookings and not take up reservations already made". The Department referred to an earlier agreement in which the Commonwealth had agreed to take in Dutch evacuees to the limit of the country's accommodation capacity, but on the understanding that this did not exclude the use of existing camps sites such as those Cowra, Harvey and Mt. Martha. Two weeks later the Department outlined the response of Mr Wessells, the Vice Consul of the Netherlands, who clearly stated his view that accommodation in disused army camps would not be beneficial to Dutch nationals previously interned in Japanese POW camps, particularly when the object of their evacuation to Australia was to recuperate them to health. Wessells also pointed out that the Army camps, in the main, had been erected for the "temporary accommodation of troops" and were "not suitable for mixed sexes and children".¹⁶

The Department of External Affairs then wrote to 'Her Netherlands Majesty's Envoy International' in Canberra explaining that:

... the housing position in Australia being at present what it is, a great many of these man and women must look for accommodation in hotels and boarding-houses ... It is my understanding that Netherlands officials have in the past made a considerable number of hotel and boarding house bookings for evacuees ... and that they have continued to make these bookings. You will appreciate that where large numbers of evacuees are involved, this practice, if continued, will have the effect of depriving our own necessitous cases

of accommodation, and actually places them at a serious disadvantage since no similar agency to yours exists to obtain accommodation for them. It is for this reason ... that the Counselor of the Royal Netherlands Legation has been asked to convey the request of the Commonwealth Government that no further bookings of hotel and boarding-house accommodation be made by Netherlands officials for evacuees from the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁷

Returned Service organisations expressed outrage. They sent a telegram to Prime Minister Ben Chifley in February 1946 claiming that real estate agents were “inundated with enquiries and offers of high rentals and awards” for finding accommodation for Dutch evacuees while Australian ex-servicemen “had to walk the streets seeking urgent accommodation for themselves and their families”. They demanded Chifley “take immediate action under national security regulations forbidding the renting of houses flats etc to alien evacuees”.¹⁸

In responding to the sheer practicalities of the situation, the Australian government set aside calls to receive 10 to 50 thousand Dutch nationals and limited the intake to six thousand evacuees, which was just three per cent of those endeavouring to flee the carnage in Java.¹⁹ The response to this decision was mixed. The Melbourne *Argus* criticised this “miserly” intake and all the talk of how to feed the men or where to house them when the nation had already proven capable of feeding an army of Americans.²⁰ In Western Australia, a decision was made that old army camps were not suitable for the Dutch, and that the evacuees would be better accommodated in “hotels, rooms or flats in the metropolitan area to be handy to available medical facilities”.²¹

The Dutch evacuees, however, were barely aware of these issues: from their point of view they had gone from Hell in the camps to Heaven in Perth. But they do recall feeling “extremely embarrassed” on arrival as all they had to wear was the tattered remnants of clothes that had survived the camps and their physical appearance reflected years of malnutrition and ill-treatment. Many were barefoot, while others wore make-shift shoes that had been put together from bits of wood and old car tyres. From their point of view they were “very skinny”, “shabby” and “s-o-o-o horrible”, yet their plight did inspire compassion within much of the Australian public. There was one notable exception: a number of unions including the Australian Waterside Workers Union, the Australian Seamen’s Union and the Australian Carpenter’s Union, who were all actively supporting Indonesia’s fight for independence, had placed Black Bans on Dutch vessels and refused to load, re-fuel, or to tug a number of Dutch ships in or out of port.²² They also refused to load thousands of tons of Red Cross supplies for the 200,000 Dutch nationals awaiting evacuation from Java.²³ The pro-Indonesia stance of the Unions failed to recognise that the Dutch were an integral part of the joint Australian, American, and British (ABDA) forces that had helped



Figure 2
Janie Hardey next to the Pontiac she drove with the registration 'RNF [Royal Netherlands Forces] 680' - at Fremantle Wharf with the historic C.Y. O'Connor Statue and the Tourist Information Bureau in the background. Courtesy: Janie Hardey.

to defend the south west Pacific, including Australian waters, and that the Dutch had played a particularly active role in taking supplies through enemy lines to Australian forces fighting in the Pacific War.²⁴

Once they passed the hurdles of entry, the evacuees found themselves in a whole new world. They were picked up from the Port of Fremantle by drivers employed by NIWOE and taken to the Dutch Club at the Cloisters for processing. Perth woman, Janie Hardey, was one of at least eight drivers who chauffeured the evacuees to various hotels and boarding houses including the Majestic Hotel at Raine Square, the Wentworth Hotel at the corner of Murray and William Street, the King Edward Hotel in Hay Street, the Commonwealth Hotel in North Perth, the Windsor Hotel at South Perth, the Crawley Reception Centre, and the Manly Hostel and Ocean Beach Hotel in Cottesloe.²⁵ They were also taken to the Fairbridge School Farm in Pinjarra, and to a number of sites and appointments including the 28-bed Westminster Hospital in Adelaide Terrace. As NIWOE's role was to take financial responsibility for the health needs of evacuees, the hospital had been brought under the control of the Netherlands' representative of the International Red Cross and functioned exclusively as the 'Dutch Medical Centre' from December 1945 to September 1946. This was a boon to incoming evacuees for they could then bypass the long waiting lists at local Perth hospitals to be given "a thorough medical overhaul".²⁶

NIWOE headquarters, situated at the historic Cloisters building in the city, was popularly known as 'The Dutch Club' and there is a 1946 article in the *Sunday Times* that describes the WA-based headquarters very well. The Dutch administration had spent £4000 refurbishing the Club with "tastefully decorated" accommodation, provided meals for up to 60 persons, and a range of amenities "not available to the ordinary citizens of this State". Titled, 'We give refugees warm welcome,' the article was written to help dispel the impression widely held amongst Dutch nationals in the NEI that



Figure 3
The Dutch Club and also the Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees headquarters in St Georges Terrace. Courtesy: Janie Hardey.



Figure 4
Westminster Hospital, Adelaide Terrace, Perth. Courtesy: Janie Hardey.

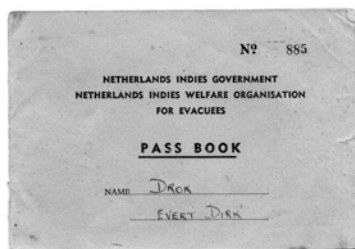


Figure 5
Dirk Drok's Netherlands Indies Welfare Organisation for Evacuees Pass Book, the documentation required allowing entry into Australia. Courtesy: Arnold Drok.

Date Paid	Place	Details	Month	Amount	Signature
20-1-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 JAN	1.80	[Signature]
20-1-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]
1-2-46	PERTH	ALLOWANCE	15 FEB	1.80	[Signature]

Figure 6
Family allowances were recorded in the Pass Book, with evacuees very well catered for by the Dutch Government in Exile in Australia. Courtesy: Arnold Drok.

Australia was “extremely hostile to refugees sheltering here”. Such perceived hostility would have arisen from the Australian Maritime Workers’ blockage of ships – some of which were said to be carrying evacuees – and to tensions rising from the competition for available housing in Australia following the war. The article pointed out that the people of Perth had shown considerable generosity in making the Dutch welcome. There was a WAAAF hut in a nursery equipped with swings, dolls and prams, scooters, tables and chairs, beds, children’s deck chairs and a rocking horse and piano. A radio and loudspeakers had been donated by a Perth firm and there were 100 chairs and 30 tables for the outside gardens that had been crafted by the Maylands Blind School in less than a month.²⁷

There is no doubt that the Australian and Netherlands Governments were very generous to the evacuees. On arrival, the Dutch Administration provided evacuees with clothing coupons and a living allowance of £40 for each adult and £20 to those under 21 years of age. Thereafter, a single person received £40, and a married couple with one child, £80 a month for living expenses.²⁸ With this largesse, the evacuees bought “suits and hats and stockings and gloves and shoes and underwear” and all manner of items before their repatriation to war-torn Netherlands. But the money rarely featured in their conversation; far more important was their new-found safety and freedom and access to copious amounts of food. Many of the youngsters could hardly contain themselves for they could play and move about without constraint for the first time in several years. Many years later, they would describe themselves as a wild and irrepressible bunch of children who made a lot of noise. But in Perth, if they were “pests” and “running amuck”, as some had claimed, most people – other than business owners – took little notice for the majority of Dutch and Australians alike were more intent on locating sons, husbands and brothers and getting on with their own lives.²⁹ At this time, these boisterous kids who had just been released from the camps were just one part of the rich kaleidoscope of post-war life.

Perth man, Jim Williams, remembers the children particularly well. In early 1946, Jim was just 14 or 15 years of age, and was the local paper-boy working from the street corner outside the Commonwealth Hotel – now known as the Hyde Park Hotel – in North Perth. He recalls some 30 Dutch evacuees, including many children, billeted at the hotel, which, in the eyes of a young teenager, was “an up-to-date, high-class, hotel with good qualities, just out of the city”. “Got yapping to them”, he said. “Made conversation with them and we played cricket with an old fruit case and a piece of picket [fence] for the bat.” To Jim, the kids were very tall, had yellow complexions, were wearing “cloppity old sandals” and were “so skinny their ribs were sticking out”. They didn’t talk to him of their experience of war, for they were far more intent on what was happening around them and what they were going to eat. “They were never late for meals,” he chuckled. He also noted they were a little “in awe of Australia” and, in what Jim described as “a glorious uncertainty”, a “little apprehensive of what was to come”.³⁰

By January 1946, 600 evacuees had already arrived in Perth and more than a 1000 were on their way. The Dutch authorities, who had earlier realised that something needed to be done for the children sent the younger of the new arrivals to join their peers at Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra, and the older arrivals to the already established Dutch High School at Burt Hall, St Georges Cathedral. Apart from its existence, we don't know much about this High School as the church records hold little detail. I asked Henriette Thomas (nee Kuneman) who was evacuated to Perth at the age of 16, what the school was like, how many children there were, and what she remembered of the teaching. And what did she say? "Nothing, Sue. I remember nothing. Not a single thing." And why? Henriette, who had the nickname of Spitfire – a suitable name for a child of the camps – said she had "discovered the world of boys". Henriette was catching up for lost time: she laughed a lot, was playful, spirited, effervescent, went to the movies, rode horses, played tennis, swam in the pool at Nedlands on the Swan River (now JoJo's Cafe), and was having the time of her life. When I mentioned the money given to evacuees by the Dutch authorities she said, "Oh, so that's why I always had £2 in my pocket".³¹ In retrospect, she described this interval between three-and-a-half years spent in an internment camp and her repatriation to the Netherlands as an "age of innocence" and as "the best time in my life".

In contrast to Henriette, Marianne Smith (nee Kleyn), was overwhelmed by change – in culture, in country, in language, in schooling – and it was only years later that she realised, like many others, that she could have enjoyed herself more, that there were many positives at this particular time of her life. She was evacuated to Sydney in 1946 at the age of 14, where she resumed her schooling after several years in a civilian internment camp. This was far from easy for she could not speak English and had no idea what the teachers were talking about. So the Education Department stepped in and gave this young girl – whose only language was Dutch – an intelligence test in the English language. When they subsequently placed her with far younger children in a domestic science school to learn cooking and needlework, she was devastated but did not have the capacity then, as she does now, to say: "I challenge any one of them to do one of those tests in Dutch!" In a short time, Marianne learned the language, adjusted to the freedom of not being in a camp, and very soon was second in her class. Marianne's father was a ship's engineer with *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij* (KPM) and when he was transferred to Fremantle in 1949, the family moved to Perth. This proved to be a good move, for Marianne was then sent to Leederville Technical School in Oxford Street that was taking in young ex-servicemen of any nationality whose education had been disrupted by the war. Her mother was very resourceful, and approached the school principal for Marianne to be included as a student. He "took a gamble" and placed her with children of her own age, and it was in this environment that she quickly moved from Year 7 to Year 10. Later she trained as a physiotherapist at the WA School of Physiotherapy, which initially was based at Royal Perth Hospital in Perth and later at the hospital's Shenton Park Annexe.³²



Figure 7
Dirk, Kitty and Arnold Drok following their recuperation from several years in a Japanese POW camp. Courtesy: Arnold Drok.

Arnold Drok was also evacuated to Perth with his parents and grandparents in late 1945, just before his fourth birthday. Born in February 1942, and interned later that year, he spent three years in an internment camp. In the late 1930s, just prior to war, his uncle was a boarder at Perth’s Wesley College and during this time one of his classmates was invited to stay with the family in Java for a holiday. This hospitality was reciprocated when Arnold’s family arrived in Perth as evacuees after the war. His Dutch father, Dirk, and his mother, Kitty, who was of mixed Dutch-Indonesian-Chinese heritage, met with many other evacuees at the Dutch Club where they would reminisce with the others in the lounge following the meal. He clearly remembers the St Nicholaas celebration at the Club when he said to his mother: “Hey mum, why is dad dressed up like that?” He recalls much laughter as he was quickly told to, “Sssh, shssh, shssh”.³³

Each person who responded to this study has a different story, a different experience of the former NEI, of war, of migration, and of life in Western Australia. Johannes (Joop) Bernardinus Ambrosius Saat was born in 1924 in Bandung, West Java and from 1942 served as a *Stuurmansleerling*³⁴ (Apprentice Deck Officer) and from 1944 as a 3rd Officer with the KPM fleet in the Indian Ocean and SW Pacific area. The KPM ships formed the mainstay of the Allied transport fleet and carried troops and thousands of tonnes of war supplies throughout the south-west Pacific war zone, where they were subject to bombing and strafing raids by the Japanese.³⁵ During shore leave in 1945, he met Perth woman Joan Higgins and when the opportunity arose in 1947, he took three months leave owing to him and headed right back to Perth. After successfully applying for an honourable discharge, he applied for resident status as a migrant and then settled in WA with his new wife.



Figure 8
Dirk and Kitty Drok when they married in April 1941. Courtesy: Arnold Drok.

Joop's application would have been backed by the Commonwealth Migration Officer in Perth who believed Dutch Servicemen would prove "suitable migrants" should they be able to produce evidence of an "honourable discharge", a "satisfactory medical certificate" and be able to "maintain and provide accommodation" for themselves and their dependents.³⁶ This Joop could do. His only grievance is that he was not permitted to join the Australian Merchant Navy as his Dutch qualifications were not recognised in Australia; instead he trained as a high school teacher and became a "real dinky-di Aussie and proud of it!"

Unlike Joop, who was a *bona fide* migrant and married to an Australian woman, the majority of arrivals were evacuees permitted to remain in Australia for eight to twelve months.³⁷ From May 1946, the *Tasman*, *Bloemfontein*, *Sibajak*, *Volendam* or the *Nieuw Amsterdam* carrying evacuees from the eastern states, would stop off at the Port of Fremantle each month to collect WA-based evacuees to repatriate them to the Netherlands or NEI.³⁸ It is understandable that so many were "sorry to leave 'hospitable' Perth";³⁹ especially as many families who had been interned in separate camps were to be separated yet again, as many husbands returned to the NEI, and wives and children to the safety of the Netherlands.⁴⁰ Newspaper headlines expressed their feelings: "Tears as Dutch Evacuees Leave", "Sadness Replaces Joy at Cloisters", "A 'Sorrow Ship'. The Crowded *Sibajak*. Evacuees and Brides Complain".⁴¹ For many, this was a journey to a new and unknown territory—a country most had never seen, with a climate far colder than they had ever experienced. The Netherlands was also an impoverished country due to its wartime occupation by the Germans, and its critical food and housing shortages were aggravated by the 'first wave' of 100,000 Dutch nationals from the NEI entering the country between 1945 and 1950.⁴² The bitter irony was that the Netherlands actively sought to retain the NEI as Dutch territory, including the revenue and trade it generated, yet the new arrivals were dismissed as the 'other Dutch' and portrayed as 'spoilt colonialists', with their identity as genuine Dutch nationals subject to ongoing scrutiny and debate. This was particularly difficult for those of Eurasian descent.⁴³ Tensions in the country were rife and the incoming Dutch vividly recall the "sour face" of angry crowds at the wharves holding banners commanding them to: 'GO HOME'. They were not interested in the wartime experiences of the Indies' Dutch—they were absorbed with their own troubles, and the needs and experiences of a distant people who had been incarcerated in prisoner of war camps for three-and-a-half years, who had lost country, homes and worldly possessions, and a large proportion of family members, were of secondary importance.

It appears that the majority of the children from the NEI, at least those in this study, quickly resumed their education in the Netherlands and mostly without incident—especially those who articulated a clear determination to make up for years of lost schooling. Others, however, spoke of being the targets of school bullies who, from all accounts, were totally unprepared for the capacity of young boys – particularly those separated from parents and placed alone in a male POW camp at 10 years of age – to protect themselves.



Figure 9
Henriette Thomas (left) and friend at the Fremantle Wharf on 2 September 1946, about to leave on the *Volendam* for the Netherlands. Courtesy: H. Thomas nee Kuneman.

These young boys were not to be messed with and, in many instances, the school bullies, their parents, and the teachers were both outraged and horrified by the ability of these youngsters to stand up and fend for themselves.

Henriette Thomas did not experience problems with her schooling in the Netherlands, yet her father had died in a POW camp, her mother was very ill, and when she became the ward of her aunt and uncle she was subject to ongoing emotional and physical abuse. She was “a child of the East Indies” – one whose early years were immersed in the freedom, colour and warmth of a coffee and rubber plantation – who felt trapped in a “grey and horrible” country with “stodgy and hostile” people.⁴⁴ As soon as she was old enough to be independent, Henriette joined hundreds of thousands of other Dutch nationals who sought a better life in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the USA or Brazil.⁴⁵ She was one of 10,000 NEI Dutch who migrated to Australia following the war.⁴⁶ Henriette was so very excited to return to Australia; she had relished her time in Perth when evacuated from the Japanese internment camp in 1946, and she had been given a far better reception as an evacuee in Western Australia than as a Dutch national in the Netherlands. She also was meeting up with her brother, Kim Kuneman – a former member of the joint NEI-RAAF 18th Squadron – who had already settled in Perth with his wife. She loved Western Australia, the climate, its wonderful people, believing it to be a country where she could feel at home. Similarly, Marianne Smith felt that Australia was a country she could *belong* to. “I have always felt more kinship with Australians and their way of life and attitudes,” she explained, “than with any of the Dutch I have ever met.”⁴⁷

Many of the NEI Dutch who have settled in Western Australia, indeed Australia as a whole, have been very successful. Among them is Bart Benschop, born in Java in 1939, interned as a child, and now a consultant engineer and biologist living in Perth. John [Jan] Corver was born in Java in 1940, evacuated to the Netherlands in 1945, returned to the NEI in 1946, and then migrated with his family to Perth in 1951. His family had lived in the NEI for three generations—his father was a former Inspector of Police and his mother a librarian of Dutch-Indonesian heritage. She had black hair, olive skin and was clearly of Eurasian descent. John has just a slight recollection of family conversations about the difficulties his mother encountered in entering the country, but thinks she was allowed through because the family, as a whole, presented as European and all the children had blonde hair. There was also some leeway in the interpretation of the White Australia Policy, with an immigration document indicating that “... the term Dutch can if necessary, be read as including Eurasians, but we are anxious as far as possible to keep the entries to whites”.⁴⁸ John, like so many other Dutch children with blonde hair, quickly blended in with the other kids in the playground and before long he identified as an Aussie, his memories of life in the internment camps and his Dutch-Indonesian heritage becoming more and more sparse. He later trained as a mechanical engineer at the University of Western Australia and retired in 2004.⁴⁹



Figure 10

The Corver family moving from Watermans' Bay to Medina in 1954. Jan was the Inspector of Police in the Province of Middle Java prior to the war, but in Western Australia he worked in a variety of labouring jobs until he secured a more promising position at the BP Oil Refinery at Kwinana. Courtesy: John Corver.

Those who arrived as adults shared much in common: they quickly found work and learned the language, even speaking it in the privacy of their own homes.⁵⁰ They mostly associated with Australian rather than Dutch people as they had made a conscious decision to put the past firmly behind them. They wanted to become Australian. Yet, there was a cost: many of the children lost touch with their unique heritage and identity, their language, and their family history. This was not an issue for the children at the time, for they settled relatively easily, quickly adopted an Australian identity, typically married an Australian person and learned to accept their parents' silences as an ordinary part of life. On the whole, energy was directed towards resettlement and the needs of the family, and issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other health concerns arising from years of incarceration and ill-treatment took second place. However, delayed PTSD can emerge, or heighten, during people's later years with many of those who participated in this study expressing a sense of despair and apprehension for the once-buried memories arising to the surface.⁵¹ As one person explained, "All those years I pushed it back and pushed it back and then I had a nervous breakdown". There were some who entered the study to see if their own experiences were typical of other stories told. They needed to know they were not alone. One such person said, "My doctor tells me that I need to talk about my experiences, but there is nobody to talk to here who has a clue about the Indies".

For some, the legacy of war takes very little to re-emerge, with the unexpected sighting of a Japanese person triggering a string of memories that rush to the surface. Many like Henriette Thomas, settled well initially, but in her twenties she would awake screaming from shattering nightmares and

then, during her forties, she suffered from “acute depression”. Henriette, a feisty and ultimately resilient woman, took immediate and decisive action and managed to overcome both conditions by herself. Others were not so fortunate. Willem, for example, never caught up on the lost years of schooling and is now on a disability pension due to what he described as, “clinicle depression, chronic fatigue and Attention devesid disorder”.⁵² Another described himself as still dealing with the after effects of malnutrition including poor eyesight, ongoing bouts of malaria, and delayed PTSD. Like many others, he survived life in the camps, but today it is the memories from which there is no escape: “the memories that keep coming up and coming up more, just like my computer going to work”.

Those taken as ‘comfort women’ by the Japanese also remain traumatised, typically not speaking of their experiences, even with close family members. One woman spoke in detail of her exhaustion, her pain and terror and of the devastating impact this was to have on her marriage. It took fifty years to develop the courage to tell her family, and she later became a spokesperson for the many others who had experienced the same ordeal.⁵³

Louise Kriekhaus, who was incarcerated in a civilian camp, needed six operations on her hips following the damage incurred carrying logs and huge bags of rice on her back when interned. She found peace through her religion and was an active member of the Victory Life Church in Perth. Her husband Fries had been interned in the mountains of Sumatra and was both starving and very cold for three-and-a-half years. He rarely spoke to her of his experience of war and incarceration but, when he passed away in 2004, she discovered that he had been hoarding woollen socks and underwear and dozens of shoe laces that he had kept “just in case”. As she sifted through the written memories that he kept both hidden and silent, she found comfort: “... it makes my life really pleasant, for I am *now* finding out what he went through and what he felt”.⁵⁴

There are others who recognise positive outcomes arising from years of hardship. Bart Benschop, for example, “... gained skills and insights that others do not have”. Interned as a young child, he was determined to survive and he developed the strength and perseverance to succeed through thick and thin. Joop Saat – who was never interned but had the dangerous job of taking supplies through enemy lines to Allied Forces in the Pacific War – would bounce into the office offering to help in any way he could. He spent much time with his granddaughter, Emily Taylor, translating a war diary retrieved from Ambarawa civilian concentration camp in Central Java. He was naturalised in 1955 saying, “If you decide to make Australia your home you go the whole hog and become an Australian citizen”. His only grievance was that *Stichting Het Gebaar* had classified him as a ‘civilian’ within the Dutch Merchant Navy – when he had acted as 3rd Officer in the defence of the Indian Ocean and SW Pacific – and he was therefore deemed not eligible for compensation.

Those who were incarcerated as young children, however, typically have very few memories of this time in their lives. Many like John Corver view themselves as Australian and joined the study partly from a sense of curiosity, but more as an opportunity to learn about others and to connect with their own history. An interview with John led to a lively family gathering in which his brothers, Tony and Hans, and sister Yvonne, shared, compared and debated memories as they spread old – and now historic – documents and photographs over the kitchen table, all struggling to make meaning of the contents and translate them into the English language.⁵⁵

Arnold Drok, evacuated to Perth just before his fourth birthday, grew up to consider himself as “no different to any other Australian child”. He knows little of the experiences of his parents in war. Like others, they did not talk about their incarceration in prisoner-of-war camps, and Arnold now finds it difficult to distinguish between his own sparse memories and the little that his parents revealed to him. When his mother, well-known Western Australian ceramicist Kitty Drok died in 2001, Arnold was surprised to find a small handbag containing NIWOE ration books and meal vouchers; his baby shawl from the POW camp; gold capped teeth (typically used as currency in camp situations); food bowls made from coconut shells, and early photographs, passports, postcards, and tiny letters written by his father on rice paper and smuggled to his mother who was interned in a separate camp. All these things had been hidden for some 55 years and when found after his mother’s passing, family members could only ponder over their particular history and personal meanings.

In conclusion, the study evoked a number of issues for the Dutch from the former NEI, particularly their disappointment that their unique identity, their collective experience of war and internment, and their notable contribution to the defense of Australia and the SW Pacific during the Pacific War is barely recognised in this country. Those I spoke with were pleased to have this opportunity to share their personal accounts of the past and also to speak with someone who had some level of knowledge and understanding of what they had been through and were attempting to say. Further, the research provided a window of opportunity for the adult children and grandchildren to help parents fill in the e-questionnaires. They say they had never heard the full story before, and they delighted in the resulting “treasure hunt” – unearthing memories, documents, photos and other memorabilia – which engaged the whole family, furthered communication across the generations, and helped children reconnect with their past and to establish more clearly their connection to a unique and very interesting history in this former Dutch colony. Also significant was their amazement and wonder that thousands of people from the former NEI were living throughout Australia. Most had formed friendships with the Australian mainstream population and were not aware of the number of clubs scattered throughout the country, including the Bambu Club in Perth, Western Australia, where 30 to 100 people of similar NEI background can meet, share experiences, conversation, Indonesian food

(with a special treat being a *Ristjafel*), raise money for causes in Indonesia, and enjoy Indonesian dance performances.

For a significant number, the study also tapped into a growing need to express their stories openly, in many instances providing a viable and proactive outlet for the memories triggered by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Many spoke openly of this war-induced stress, for they wanted to know whether they were alone or if there were others in this age cohort with similar stressors. They listened carefully when told that Post Traumatic Stress is common to elderly survivors of 20th century wars, that many suffer from ongoing or delayed PTSD, and that a significant number of cases remain undiagnosed. This engagement with the past may also have provided a vital source of knowledge and understanding for the children and grandchildren of survivors as it is possible, in some instances, for PTSD to be transmitted from generation to generation. With this knowledge, it becomes easier to recognise issues and to access appropriate treatment where required.

From one perspective, the losses of those who once lived in the former Netherlands East Indies are very complete. They emerged from war and incarceration as a dispossessed people who lost their homes and worldly possessions, community and family members, and their continuity with the past. Yet they were also an enterprising people who showed considerable initiative and determination in their search for a place where they could belong: they worked hard, quickly adopted the language, embraced the Australian way of life, and learned to make this country – with its sunny climate and colourful open spaces – a home away from home. As this chapter attests, those from the former NEI are more than survivors, they are a proactive and adaptive people whose personal experiences of war, displacement and resettlement deserves recognition and understanding in both Australia and the Netherlands.

ENDNOTES

- 1 In 2001, the Dutch foundation *Stichting Het Gebaar* called for claims for compensation to make amends for “suffering caused by the insensitive, formalistic and bureaucratic policies of previous Dutch governments” and “to make amends for possible shortcomings in the restoration of rights after the Second World War”. Successful claimants were awarded NLG 3,000 (approximately AUD \$2000). Predictably, there were many responses. Some described *Het Gebaar* – which translates as ‘The Gesture’ – as a Dutch ‘AALMOES’ (charity or handout) while others expressed a “heart felt thank you!” in the understanding that “at last someone in Holland finally showed recognition and a degree of care”.
- 2 Our considerable thanks to Edny Vandenbroek from Western Australia who was the original driving force behind this initiative. It was through his efforts that the organisation sent letters to Dutch migrants from the former Netherlands East Indies informing them of this research project. Thank you Edny, your contribution is valued.
- 3 Jan A. Krancha, “Introduction,” in *The Defining Years of the Dutch East Indies, 1942-1949. Survivors’ Accounts of Japanese Invasion and Enslavement of Europeans and the Revolution that Created Free Indonesia*, ed. Jan A. Kracha. Jefferson, 5-8. North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1996.
- 4 “Confidential,” correspondence from Acting Minister of State for External Affairs, Canberra to Baron F.C. van Aerssen Beyeren van Voshol, M.W.O., Her Netherlands Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, Royal Netherlands Legation, Canberra,” 12 December 1945, in “East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects”, 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

- 5 "Evacuees from the Netherlands East Indies, Draft for Cabinet," (n.d.) in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, NAA. See also, "Notes of the Third Meeting of the Dutch Refugee Co-ordinating Committee, Headquarters Supreme allied Commander South East Asia," (n.d.) in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, NAA.
- 6 "Distress in Java and the N.E.I." (n.d.) in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, NAA. See also, "Australia will take only 6,000 Dutch from Java," Melbourne *Argus*, November 30, 1945.
- 7 "Distress in Java and the N.E.I.", memorandum from Mr. W. MacMahon Ball, the Australian Government Political Representative in Batavia, (n.d.) in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, National Archives of Australia.
- 8 Figures of arrivals need to be extrapolated from a number of documents and newspaper entries. The front page of the 6 January 1946 edition of the *Sunday Times* stated that 4,500 Dutch Internees were on their way to Australia and New Zealand, and that Australia was expected to take 3000 of this number. A Department of Immigration document refers to 818 European Dutch Evacuees registered throughout Australia to 9 January 1946, with the Customs and Excise Office in Fremantle claiming an additional 600 Dutch evacuees landing in WA on 11 January 1946 ("Dutch Evacuees - Registration of," 1945-1947, Series A437, Control Symbol 1946/6/79, NAA). Mr. H. J. W. Blok, head of NIWOE in Perth also states that 600 evacuees were residing in WA in this time frame (*West Australian*, 19 November 1945). The *Sunday Times* (20 January 1946) points to an additional 420 evacuees bringing the total in WA to more than 1000, yet the 9 March 1946 edition of the *Daily News* in Perth quotes Blok as saying there were 625 evacuees in WA. The *West Australian* (2 March 1946) claims there were 5000 evacuees throughout Australia. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (30 November 1945) and the Melbourne *Argus* (30 November 1945) both refer to a limit of 6000 evacuees to Australia.
- 9 "N.E.I. Evacuees. No More for Australia. Insufficient Foreign Currency," *West Australian*, March 21, 1946, p 9.
- 10 In this chapter, I refer to the 'Netherland East Indies' (NEI) rather than to 'Indonesia', as Indonesian independence was not officially proclaimed until December 1949.
- 11 Gus Winckel and other former 18th Squadron Veterans, interviews by author, Friday 22 July 2005, Gold Coast, Queensland. Gus passed away at the age of 100 in 2013.
- 12 These narratives are backed up by archival documentation. See for example, correspondence from the Commonwealth Migrations Officer for W.A., 21 June 1946, and correspondence from the A/G Inspector of Excise & Sub-Collector, Perth, 28 May 1946, in "Aliens registration of European Dutch evacuees from Netherlands East Indies, 1945-1948, Series PP6/1, Control symbol 1945/H/595, NAA.
- 13 Correspondence, Minister for the Army, 15 May 1942, in "Enemy Agents among refugees from the Netherlands East Indies," Series A2684, Control Symbol 874, 1942, National Archives of Australia.
- 14 "Temporary Admission of Dutch Europeans and Indonesians from N.E.I. for Recuperative Purposes," Memorandum from Department of Immigration, Canberra to The Collector of Customs, Fremantle, 10 September 1945, and 1 November 1945, in "Aliens registration of European Dutch evacuees from Netherlands East Indies, 1945-1948, Series PP6/1/0; Item 1945/H/595, National Archives of Australia.
- 15 "Country Hotels Reap Harvest from Dutch," *Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 1946. NIWOE also sought places in nursing and rest homes and private hospitals in all states for the evacuees. See, for example, the "Indies Evacuees. Private Hospitals Sought", *West Australian* December 12, 1945, p. 4.
- 16 "Dutch Consular Officials. Dutch Evacuees," correspondence from the Department of External Affairs, 5 December 1945, in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, NAA. "Evacuees from Netherlands East Indies," 19 December 1945, in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, NAA.
- 17 "Confidential," correspondence to Baron F.C. van Aerssen Beyerens van Voshol, 12 December 1945, in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, NAA.
- 18 "Copy of telegram received by the Prime Minister, 8th Feb., 1946," from the "President, Queensland Branch Demobilised Sailors Soldiers Airmens Association of Australia," in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, Series 1838, Control Symbol 401/3/6/1/8, NAA.
- 19 "Australia will take only 6,000 Dutch from Java," Melbourne *Argus*, November 30, 1945. "Limit on Java Evacuees Here," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 30, 1945, p. 3.
- 20 "Canberra Trounced," *The Argus*, December 5, 1945 p 7.
- 21 "Old Army Camps not for Dutch," *Sunday Times* (WA), November 4, 1945 p 5. "Dutch Evacuees Await Shipping," *Daily News*, March 9, 1946.

- 22 See for example, “Dutch Ships Ban. Carpenters Emphatic,” *The West Australian*, December 21, 1945; “Dutch Ships. Waterside Workers’ Ban,” *The West Australian*, 18 June 1946, p. 4; Printing for N.E.I. Cancellations of Orders, Effect of Shipping Trouble,” *The West Australian*, June 15, 1946, p. 10; “Dutch Evacuees. Tasman Leaves Today. Baggage Loaded by Nationals,” *The West Australian*, July 29, 1946, p.9.
- 23 “Ships Stand by to Evacuate Internees,” *The Daily News*, November 28, 1845, p. 5.
- 24 Bart Benschop, interned by the Japanese in the NEI, explained, that the “Dutch and Australian government sent a ship to evacuate us. This ship took on a few people from our Camp because it was already nearly full. The ship never made it to Australia because Australian Maritime Workers refused to handle the ship, and the refugees were then dumped in Tandjong Priok [a harbour in Batavia/ Jakarta] without any facilities”. What may have happened to them is unclear. For the Dutch response to the boycotts, see also: “‘Haven of Refuge.’ Dutch Evacuees. 500 at Fremantle. Conditions in Java,” *The West Australian*, January 21, 1946, p 9.
- 25 Janie Hardey, interview by author, 24 April 2006, Perth WA. Janie, who passed away in 2015, wore a Red Cross Uniform as a driver, reflecting the strong links between NIWOE and the Australian Red Cross. The Wentworth Hotel was established in 1928 and the original building was still standing in 2016 with the Boheme Bar and Restaurant at street level. It is said that the evacuees were also billeted at the Globe Hotel in Wellington Street in Perth where the façade remains, and at the Royal Hotel at the corner of Wellington and William Streets which, in 2013, provided “quality budget accommodation” for backpackers.
- 26 “Dutch Evacuees. Medical Treatment. Local Hospital Taken Over”, *West Australian*, November 19, 1945 p 6. “Hospital Open”, *Sunday Times*, September 22, 1946, p 3.
- 27 “We give Refugees Warm Welcome ...” *Sunday Times*, January 20, 1946, p.15.
- 28 Figures sourced from the NIWOE Ration Book for the Drok family in 1946, a figure also reiterated in the 19 November 1945, page 6, edition of the *West Australian* which quoted Mr. H. J. W. Blok, head of NIWOE in Perth, saying that evacuees had a monthly allowance of £40. See also, Bernadine Williams. *All the World’s a Stage*. (South Australia, Griffin Press 2005) 49-50. The money provided by the Dutch administration was clearly an enormous sum of money as 1946 archival records indicate that a man employed by Fairbridge Farm School as a cook for the Dutch evacuees was paid £3 5s. per week. See: “Fairbridge Personal Files”, Records 1908 – 1981, MN 62, ACC5037A, Batty Library, WA.
- 29 Ella Bone, interview by author, 25 August 2006, Perth WA.
- 30 Jim Williams, interview by author, February 2007.
- 31 Henriette Thomas, interviews by author, April 2006, October 2008, August 2013, Perth, WA. Henriette had sufficient money to purchase a Malvern Star Bike in Dutch colours (bright orange) which she described as a sports model of the time. Its vibrant colour and air-filled tyres made quite an impression when the family was repatriated to the Netherlands, where bike tyres were typically improvised by removing strips of rubber from disused cars and binding them around the rims of the wheels. Henriette passed away on 18 March 2015.
- 32 Marianne Smith, interviews by author, February 2006 and June 2011. Information also sourced from, Marianne Smith, *Personal History: ‘As I Remember’*, unpublished manuscript (n.d.).
- 33 Arnold Drok, interviews with author, 5 May and 20 September 2006, Perth WA.
- 34 The word *leerling* means ‘the learning one’ and *stuurman* translates as ‘steering man’.
- 35 Joop Saat, email correspondence with author July 13, 2011. Joop explained that: “The twenty odd ships which managed to escape from the NEI, were chartered by the British War Administration and during the dark days of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 ‘carried the can’ as it were, as the US didn’t get going until the middle of 1943. These ships with the addition of a small number of British registered ships were sometimes referred to as the ‘Liliput Fleet’. Fully manned and with experienced crews, these ships were ideally suited to sail in some shallow waters in the SW Pacific area. During the Pacific War, the KPM lost five ships but not all crew were lost, leaving surplus crews but no ships. Thus the authorities arranged for three US built ships to be handed over to the KPM. They were named *Fort Wilhelmus*, *Fort Amsterdam* and *Fort Rensselaer*, and I became the *derde stuurman* on the latter. In April 1945 I was flown across Australia to Fremantle because the *Van Spilbergen*, then under charter by the WA State Ships was minus a Third Officer”. Information also drawn from numerous informal discussions with Joop and from his unpublished manuscript: Joop Saat, *Memoirs of Johannes Bernardinus Ambrosius Saat (1924 -??)*. Self-published: Perth, Western Australia, n.d. Joop Saat passed away in 2014.
- 36 Correspondence, The Commonwealth Migration Officer, Perth, WA, 19 August 1947, in “Dutch Servicemen, Wives and Children - Return to Australia after Visiting Netherlands East Indies,” 1947, Series PP6/1, Control Symbol 1947/H/1963, NAA.
- 37 See for example, Department of Immigration communication dated 10 September 1945, in “Dutch Evacuees – Registration of,” 1945-1947, Series A437, Control Symbol 1946/6/79, NAA, which outlines the temporary admission of the evacuees for “recuperative purposes for any period up to six months”.

- 38 Dutch Evacuees. Tasman Leaves Today," *The West Australian*, 19 July 1946, p. 9; "Farewell to Dutch Evacuees," *The West Australian*, September 5, 1946 p. 3. It appears that most evacuees had left Australia by the end of the year. According to the 27 August 1946 edition of the *Melbourne Herald*, "Fewer than 200 Dutch Nationals will be left in Melbourne by the end of next week after three ships have sailed to Holland and the Netherlands East Indies with evacuees. ... An officer of the NEI Information services said today that nearly 3190 evacuees would be cleared from Australia by the end of next week. ... with another 200 leaving Fremantle tomorrow". For those returned to the Netherlands East Indies on the s.s. *Tasman* on 9 December 1946 see, "Departure from the Commonwealth of European Dutch Evacuees," Series PP6/1, Item 1946/H/1009, NAA.
- 39 "Dutch say WA is a Paradise'," *Daily News*, July 19, 1946, p. 8.
- 40 "Dutch Families to Break Up," *Daily News*, June 1, 1946, p.4.
- 41 "Tears as Dutch Evacuees Leave," *Sunday Times*, June 16, 1946, p.1. "Sadness Replaces Joy at Cloisters," *Daily News*, June 1, 1946, p. 9. "A 'Sorrow Ship'. The Crowded Sabajak. Evacuees and Brides Complain", *West Australian*, 26 September 1946, p. 3.
- 42 "Repat/Evacuatie," *Botenlijst*, accessed 22 September 2006, http://home.planet.nl/~oost2767/html/repat_evacuatie.html. The total figure for the three waves amounted to 300 thousand Dutch nationals. My thanks to Walter Ypma for his translation from Dutch to English. See also, Nonja Peters, "Memories of a Homeland," *Inside Indonesia*, April 9, 2011; Wim Willems, "No Sheltering Sky: Migrant identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia," in *Recalling the Indies: Colonial culture and postcolonial identities*, eds Joost Coté and Loes Westerbeek, 251-287, Amsterdam: Askant, 2005, 251-252.
- 43 "There was resistance especially against admitting people who were 'Eastern oriented,' ie those of mixed descent belonging to a lower stratum of colonial society" (Willems, *No Sheltering Sky*, 257). See also, Willem Flach, *Never a Dull Moment: The memoirs of Willem Flach* (Sippy Downs, Qld: Maju Publications, 2005) 257.
- 44 Henriette Thomas, interview by author, 04 April 2006, Perth WA.
- 45 For an excellent discussion of Dutch migration see Marlou Schrover and Marijke van Faasen, "Invisibility and Selectivity: Introduction to the special issue on Dutch overseas emigration in the nineteenth and twentieth century," *Magazine for Social and Economic History (Tijdschrift voor Sociale and Economische geschiedenis)*, 7, 2 (2010): 3-31, accessed 5 October 2010, http://www.culturalheritageconnections.org/wiki/Invisibility_and_selectivity_Special_issue_on_Dutch_overseas_migration_in_the_nineteenth_and_twentieth_century%62. See also Flach, *Never a Dull Moment*, 253.
- 46 Loes Westerbeek, "An Indisch Identity in Australia," in *Recalling the Indies: Colonial Culture and Postcolonial Identities*, eds Joste Coté and Loes Westerbeek, 289-315. (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2005), 289.
- 47 Marianne Smith, interviews by author, February 2006 and June 2011.
- 48 "Evacuees from the Netherlands East Indies. Draft for Cabinet." (n.d.), in "East Indies - Evacuation from Netherlands East Indies to Australia of distressed Dutch subjects", 1945-1946, NAA. An Australian Government Department of Immigration document 45/2/1946 stated: "It is not expected that many, if any, Indonesians will be sent to Australia under this agreement" (Ref 45/2/1647, in "Dutch Evacuees - Registration of," 1945-1947, NAA.)
- 49 John Corver, interview by author, 23 March 2006, Perth WA.
- 50 "Successive population census data in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have shown that Dutch immigrants are at the top of the list of migrant groups who give up their language within one generation, and shift to English." Marlou Schrover and Marijke van Faasen, "Invisibility and Selectivity: Introduction to the special issue on Dutch overseas emigration in the nineteenth and twentieth century," *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History (TSEG)*, 7 (2010): 11.
- 51 Delayed onset and/or reactivation of combat-related post-traumatic stress in later life is well-documented in the literature. It requires treatment rather than avoidance. See, for example, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 28, 4, (1994): 625-634; *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 164, (September 2007): 1319-1326.
- 52 Willem is a pseudonym.
- 53 Interview by author, 26 June 2005 (name of interviewee withheld).
- 54 Louise Kriekhaus, interview by author, 28 March 2006, Perth WA. Louise passed away in mid-2012.
- 55 Corver family, interview by author, 23 March 2006, Perth WA.

DIRK DROK VIGNETTE

Dirk Drok was a remarkable man whose meticulous research contributed to the uncovering of the wreck of the ill-fated Dutch vessel the *Batavia* in 1963 and to the celebrated publication, *Voyage to Disaster*, in the same year.

In January 1946 Dirk was evacuated with his wife, son, and parents-in-law from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and together they built a new life in Perth, Western Australia.

He became a successful mature-age student at the University of Western Australia (UWA), passing many of his examinations in French, German, Greek and Latin with Distinction. He was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in 1950, a Teacher's Certificate in May 1952, and a Diploma of Education in 1957. He tutored languages at UWA, taught at various schools in regional Western Australia, was elected to the Australian College of Education in 1971, and was Senior Master of Languages, and of Administration, at Christchurch Grammar School from 1973. He taught Latin and French and then introduced German and Indonesian into the school syllabus. He was a gentle man of the old school, very strict, and a really good teacher—just like his parents and grandparents before him.

Dirk also loved history. He worked with Henrietta Drake-Brockman (1901–1968) for a decade to help solve the mystery of the *Batavia*. Their 1963 publication *Voyage to Disaster* focuses on the ill-fated voyage of the *Batavia* in 1629 together with a biography of the ship's captain Francisco Pelsaert. Importantly it was Dirk's translations of numerous, relevant documents from the period including Pelsaert's Journal, and the complete Log of the *Batavia* and of the *Sardam* – written in the Gothic handwriting of 1629 – that helped Dirk and Henrietta Drake-Brockman to pinpoint the wreck of the *Batavia* off the Western Australian coast within a mile of their calculated position.

In a Letter to the Editor (*Western Mail*, 2 December 1985) – copies of which are also held in the Batty, National and The Hague Libraries together with a number of Australian university library archives – Dirk states that:

For a period of ten years I translated aloud to Henrietta who made written notes and together we poured over the current Admiralty Charts locating all the bearings given in relation to both ships. Together we concluded that the 'Batavia' must be in the vicinity of Noon Reef, and this decision was not an accident or a guess, it was the result of our arduous search and research. Henrietta told Hugh Edwards of our calculations, so for the next three years local fishermen were on the watch. David Johnson, a crayfisherman, spotted on Morning Reef,

objects which he believed to be canons and reported them to Max Cramer then President of the Geraldton Skindivers Club. He and Hugh Edwards visited the site and Max brought to the surface proof that the 'Batavia' lay within a mile of our calculated position. Max Cramer, Hugh Edwards and others in conjunction with the Royal Australian navy began uncovering the wreck some five months later. It was then that both Henrietta and I dived on the wreck to view it in situ.¹

Dirk's son, Arnold, remembers when the family was living in Boronia Flats opposite the Captain Stirling Hotel in Nedlands, Dirk would be up all night with the projector, with images of Pelsaert's journal – sourced from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam – projected onto the wall. He took considerable care in reading and interpreting Gothic Dutch.

We celebrate Dirk Drok's contribution to *Voyage to Disaster*² and to the finding of the wreck of the *Batavia*. He deserves a place in the rich history and ongoing exploration and research of this fascinating story and its place in Western Australian history.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Evert Dirk Drok, Letter to the Editor, *Western Mail*, 2 December 1985. In, 'Correspondence, 1973–1985,' Drok, E. D. (Evert D.), ACC 2312A, Batty Library, State Library of Western Australia (SLWA).
- 2 *Voyage to Disaster* by Henrietta Drake-Brockman was first published by Angus and Robertson, Australia, in 1963. Evert Dirk Drok is formally acknowledged as a contributor to this publication.

and at last after nine weeks travelling reached thereabout. But oh what a
 what misery! my pen stands still to write this, consequently I shall keep my
 counsel so that I write nothing of it, I shall relate only such things as we
 understood from the surviving people. After we had parted from the Ship Batavia,
 the under Merchant Jeronimus Cornelisz., being a Frisian (and erstwhile Apoth-
 ecary at Haarlem, where he had been, so it is said here, a follower of Jan
Symonsz. Torrentius) assumed supreme authority, greatly lording it, and whoever
 would not be obedient to him was murdered at once, the Women who would not
 oblige him killed and defiled. He sent a party of People, so that they should
 perish of hunger and distress, to an Island, where he thought that nothing
 would be got on which to live, so that they should perish in great affliction.
 And noticing that somehow they could maintain themselves there, he and his
 accomplices still sought to kill the same, as moreover he did nearly all. The
 Children he treated brutally, the pregnant Women were not spared, in ~~some~~^{sum} he
 lived as if there were no God. He also thought to run away with the Yacht which

Figure 1
 This image shows a translation in process by Dirk Drok in the mid 1960s. It is an extract of a letter written by Francisco Pelsaert, from the *Batavia*, at sea, on 11 December 1629. Pelsaert provided a detailed account of mutiny, terror and massacre following the grounding of the *Batavia* off the Western Australian coast in June 1629. Courtesy: Sue Summers.