

## Biography

Lynette Ramsay Silver

Lynette Ramsay Silver's main interest lies in investigating various aspects of Australian history. Her work in this field was recognised in 1989 when, following the publication of her books *A Fool's Gold?* and *The Battle of Vinegar Hill*, she was made a Fellow of the Australian Institute of History and the Arts.

Since then a centennial history on St Peter's Church, Hornsby, and five more investigative histories published. These include the official bicentennial work *Unsung Heroes and Heroines of Australia*, to which a number of writers contributed; two World War II books, *Heroes of Rimau* and *Krait: The Fishing Boat that went to War*, and *Fabulous Furphies - Ten Great Myths from Australia's Past*. Lynette is also the author of a number of children's non-fiction books on ballet, craft and games.

In 1995, following lengthy research into the fall of Singapore, she was appointed official Historian to the Australian 8th Division Association, a post she held for seven years. Her highly successful book, *Sandakan - A Conspiracy of Silence*, concerns the loss of almost 2,500 Allied POWs in British North Borneo. Now into its fifth printing in Australia, a new Malaysian edition was launched in 2007. Since 1999, Lynette has travelled to Borneo each year with a group of POW relatives, to hold commemorative services for Anzac Day at the site of the infamous Sandakan Camp. The research undertaken for her book, recognised world-wide as the definitive history, led to her appointment as adviser and consultant to novelist Bryce Courtenay in his blockbuster, *Four Fires*, which reached Number 1 on the bestseller list. *The Battle of Vinegar Hill*, extensively updated and revised for the bi-centenary in 2004, was re-released in 2003. Although originally published in 1989, it remains the only full-length account of the battle and is cited as the leading authority in *The Oxford Guide to Australian History*.

*The Bridge at Parit Sulong*, released in 2004, is described by Major General Duncan Lewis, Australia's Special Forces commander as "one of the finest pieces of investigative history you will read". The book, which took six years to research and write, deals with one of the least known, and most gallant fighting retreats of World War II and its terrible aftermath.

In 2003 Lynette received a Defence Forces Commendation and Medal from Special Operations Command Australia, for her work during the 60th Anniversary of Operation Jaywick, the first civilian ever to receive this prestigious award. In January 2004 she was awarded an OAM in the Australia Day Honours for her services to veterans and their families for her work on Sandakan.

In her latest book *Marcel Caux: A Life Unravelling* Lynette unmasks the true identity of Australia's last WW I combat soldier who, for 85 years, passed himself off as someone else. In 2006, she teamed up with Di Elliott, an experienced researcher, to revise and re-compile the unit history of 2/18 Infantry Battalion, entitled *A History of the 2/18th Infantry Battalion, AIF*. This book is available through the 2/18th Battalion Association's website at [www.218battalion.org.au](http://www.218battalion.org.au)

Lynette is a recognised expert in isolating and identifying previously unidentified graves of servicemen killed in action or who died as prisoners of war. Since 1995, she has been a consultant to the Office of Australian War Graves and Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

She has been made an Honorary Member of the 2/18th Battalion and 2/19th Battalion AIF; the NSW Commando Association; and RUSI, QLD. She is a Patron of the M V Cape Don Society and The Sandakan Family, NSW, and Trustee of the Sandakan Memorial Window Project and Sandakan Memorial Scholarship Scheme. Each Anzac Day she organises a tour for POW relatives to Sabah, to co-incide with Anzac Day and also accompanies groups along the Sandakan Track, which had been 'lost' for 60 years and which she located and established with trekking expert Mr. Tham Yau Kong in 2006.

Her latest project, completed in September 2007, and which took her ten years to bring to fruition, was to establish the Parit Sulong Memorial, at the village Parit Sulong, West Malaysia, to honour all those who fought and died at Muar, Bakri and Parit Sulong in January 1942. With the memorial established, she is now working closely with the Australian Army History Unit to establish the whereabouts of the remains of a large number of Australians and Indians, massacred near the bridge and, if they can be located, recover them for reburial in Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore. (see *The Bridge at Parit Sulong*)

Lynette has two children and is the grandmother of three. She lives in Sydney with her husband, Neil.

When not researching and writing Lynette's time is fully occupied in consultative work with various organisations, raising money for her special projects, public speaking, and accompanying tour groups to Singapore and British North Borneo (Sabah).

In December 2006, one of her long term goals regarding Sandakan was realised.

"I have just learned that my ultimate aim - to have Sandakan become the Gallipoli of the Far East, by growing important enough to be recognised on Anzac Day by the Australian Government, will be realised next year. As you know, I have been holding an Anzac Day service there since 1999.

For the first time, Anzac Day will be officially commemorated with a Dawn Service organised by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

I can't tell you how satisfying it is to see the commemoration grow from a small group of relatives to a gathering large enough to be officially recognised.

We will, of course, still hold a private service of remembrance, at a different time, for the family members who travel with me to Sandakan."