

Maritime tragedy recalled

By Kath Gannaway

DON Ritchie read The Ode at Yarra Glen on Remembrance Day, 11 November.

"I got through it all right," he said later.

It's still a tough call for the 87-year-old returned soldier who lost his older brother, Garnet, in the haunting tragedy of the Montevideo Maru.

Mr Ritchie was still a teenager when he joined and his brother was in his early 20s.

"Garnet was with the Second 22nd Unit whose members were taken prisoner by the Japs (in Rabaul, New Britain) and loaded onto the Japanese Montevideo Maru with the intention of taking them to Japan as slaves," he said.

"They didn't get far when they were sunk by the American submarine (USS Sturgeon) who didn't know the boat was full of Australian prisoners.

"Every one of them was lost."

Garnet Ritchie was one of 1050 Australians who died on 1 July 1942 in the greatest single maritime tragedy in Australia's history.

Mr Ritchie thinks of his brother often, but Remembrance Day is a special day each year dedicated to that memory.

"It still plays heavy on me because there was only four years difference in our ages," Mr Ritchie said.



Don Ritchie pays silent tribute and remembers his brother Garnet at the Yarra Glen RSL service. 56549

At the Healesville service, held at the town's RSL memorial, a younger generation delivered the Remembrance Day message – lest we forget individuals like Garnet Ritchie who made the ultimate sacrifice, and his brother Don who continues shares that sacrifice.

Healesville High School captains Jake Chandler and Mikhaela Shafran read the elegy For the Fallen of which The Ode is the

fourth verse and the Badger Creek Primary School choir sang the National Anthem. And an evening commemoration was held for the Healesville scout group which was not able to attend the morning service, scouts laid a wreath of hand-made crosses and poppies and meet with RSL members Neil Skinner, John Robinson and Mark Jones for a talk and a vigorous question and answer session.



Healesville Joey's Lakota Scopel and Jasmin Kennedy pay silent respect.