

VETERANS

World War II veteran returns to Mon Repos to reflect on and address past tragedies

A chance to pay respect

By MURRAY WENZEL

IT was a bitter sweet feeling as Ken Briggs returned to the scene of two good mates' deaths in 1945.

The World War II submarine veteran served at Mon Repos briefly, as part of a training exercise where teams of miniature submarines were practising for missions to stop enemy communication in Saigon and Hong Kong.

An unused communication cable running from Mon Repos to New Caledonia was the practice target, and in the space of two days David Carey and Bruce Edward Ezner lost their lives while trialling new free-diving gear.

"It was a really nice thing to be able to come back to Bundaberg and pay our respects to two of our fallen buddies. I really enjoyed the opportunity," Mr Briggs said.

President of the Queensland Submarines Association of Australia (QSAA) Don Currell said it was amazing to have a "living relic" as a speaker.

"He had about six pages of stories and spoke beautifully about fallen mates, which can be difficult — it was a huge success and shows we need to do more regional visits," Mr Currell said.

A crowd of about 60 people, including four Bundaberg QSAA members, gathered to listen to Mr Briggs recount his days of service, including his successful mission to Saigon, which helped end Japan's capability to send and receive high command messages from Singapore to Hong Kong.

"The midget subs were fairly secret back then. The Japanese didn't know much about them, and we were working with the Royal (English) Navy as part of the Australian Navy — we weren't doing much so the US



President of the Queensland Submarines Association of Australia Don Currell and veteran Ken Briggs with the statue of Able Seaman Reid, which travels around the world. The original statue resides in Westminster Abbey.

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Navy organised us to start training for a mission to cut these cables," he said.

The QSAA member had not returned to the sight since the monument was opened in 1995.

"But it was great to get address all the members who can't always make it to Brisbane," he said.

Bundaberg Regional Councillor Danny Rowleson was on hand at the service held by Reverend Robert Perry.

"It was magnificent to hear a first-hand account from someone who served off the Bundaberg coast," he said.

Mr Rowleson said the council had set aside \$30,000 to



Councillor Danny Rowleson lays a wreath at the commemorative service.

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fund a memorial garden in Jack Strathdee Park that would remember mariners

lost off the coast of Bundaberg like David Carey and Bruce Edward Ezner.



Ken Briggs, a submariner in the second world war, in XE class miniature attack subs was responsible for cutting enemy lines of communication.

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