

## Len Kentish General Notes

In 1948 Japanese military and civilian leaders for alleged war crimes.  
One of these Allied war crimes trials opened

On 21 May 1948 at Kowloon, Hong Kong. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East began a war crimes trial to prosecute three Japanese prisoners (two members of the Imperial Japanese Navy and one civilian) had been charged with the murder of the Australian missionary, the Reverend Leonard Neil Kentish, on 5 February 1943.

The Adjutant of 3 Australian Prisoner of War Contact and Enquiry Unit reported on the circumstances of the Reverend Leonard Kentish's death at Dobo in the Aru Islands (now part of Indonesia):

1. The Rev KENTISH was taken on board a Jap float plane on Jan 22 43 after it had sunk the patrol vessel HMAS "PATRICIA CAM" off WESSEL IS.
2. Unfortunately no info can be obtained of the whereabouts of the Rev KENTISH until 13 Apr 43, when he arrived at DOBO.
3. The Rev KENTISH was held at DOBO as a prisoner till the 4 May 43. Throughout this period he was subjected to ill treatment by severe bashings, the most common being punches in the nose and eyes to such an extent that his nose was broken, and he had great difficulty in seeing. His diet, as such, was just sufficient to keep him alive.
4. On the morning of 4 May he was taken in to the scrub, (a distance of under 200 yds from the township of DOBO) where a grave had been prepared, and executed.
5. The execution was carried out by the order of 1st Lieut SAKIDJIMA.
6. The remains of the Rev KENTISH have been recovered, and handed over to Capt. STOCKWELL, of the War Graves Unit. They will be transported to AMBON, and buried in the Internees cemetery there.
7. This case is now considered closed. All dates must be treated as approx.

Thanks lots for the work you did on those pics.

Most of what I know about my father comes, as you would expect, from my mother and was, by its nature, a biased account. Some facts of which I have no doubt are:- He was the son of pioneering settlers in The Gums District of southern inland Queensland, who moved from Victoria when dad was 2 years old. Schoolwork was combined with clearing land and farming. Studied at Dalby High School.

When his family moved to Ipswich and then Brisbane he worked in the State Public Service as a clerk.

He volunteered to be a Home Missionary in the Methodist Church and in that capacity worked one year at Mitchell in 1927.

The following year he was transferred to Woodford (where he met my mother) and was engaged to her by year's end (1928).

He entered King's College for ministerial training and university studies, becoming a tutor in Hebrew and Greek, President of the College Club, won a scholarship for a fourth year and gained college "blues" for rugby, cricket, tennis and athletics.

He worked as second minister at Indooroopilly Methodist Circuit while completing his honours thesis for the BA degree.

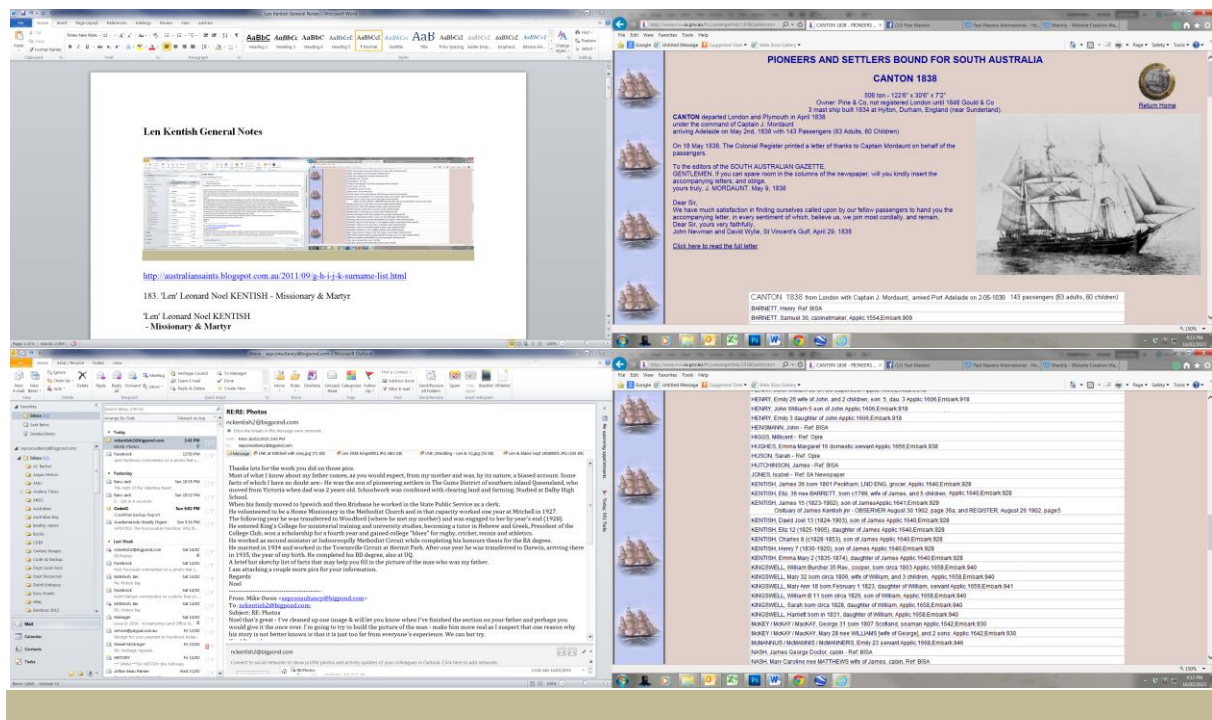
He married in 1934 and worked in the Townsville Circuit at Hermit Park. After one year he was transferred to Darwin, arriving there in 1935, the year of my birth. He completed his BD degree, also at UQ.

A brief but sketchy list of facts that may help you fill in the picture of the man who was my father.

I am attaching a couple more pics for your information.

Regards

Noel



<http://australiansaints.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/g-h-i-j-k-surname-list.html>

183. 'Len' Leonard Noel KENTISH - Missionary & Martyr

**'Len' Leonard Noel KENTISH  
- Missionary & Martyr**

Born: 1907 Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria

Father: Cecil Wallace KENTISH(born Adelaide SA - married Victoria 1898)

Mother: Alice Flora JACKSON (born 1873 Ondit, Gippsland, Victoria)  
Died: 5th February 1943 Dobo, Aru Islands - by Japanese beheading

From: Northern Territory Library - Characters

Len Kentish

HMAS Patricia Cam. The vessel was typical of the "Royal Darwin Navy". Built in Brisbane in 1940 for the Sydney fishing firm Cam & Sons, she was requisitioned by the navy in 1942 and sent to Darwin as a store carrier. The Patricia Cam and its crew of 17 men were taking supplies and materials to isolated coastwatching posts, airfields, and mission stations along the Arnhem Land coast between Bathurst Island and Groote Eylandt.

### **FROM - Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography - by Noel Kentish**

KENTISH, Leonard Noel 'Len' (1907-1943)

Methodist Minister, was born in Melbourne 28 August 1907. Len, as he was known by his family and friends, was one of a family of eight children born to Cecil Wallace Kentish and Alice Fay, nee Jackson. Cecil's father, Henry, was only eight years of age when his family migrated to Australia arriving at Port Adelaide on 8 May 1838.

In 1901 the Kentish family led a migratory trek of 200 Victorian families into Southern Queensland where they settled on the land as pioneer graziers at The Gums in the Tara district, near Dalby. Len attended school at The Gums and then attended Dalby State High School, passing the Junior Public Examination. Due to a series of droughts and other setbacks in the district his family was forced to move to Bundamba near Ipswich in 1923. After working briefly in the town council, he volunteered to work as a Methodist Home Missionary, being stationed at Mitchell.

He became a candidate for the Ordained ministry and under the guidance of the Master of King's College gained his matriculation to the University of Queensland, which he entered as an undergraduate student at the age of 18. While in residence at King's College he gained his Bachelor Degree with Honours in field of mental and moral philosophy. He also excelled in sports, being awarded college 'blues' in football, cricket, tennis and athletics. During a fourth year in King's College, he commenced work on the Bachelor of Divinity degree through the Melbourne College of Divinity, was the president of the student Club, and lectured in Greek and Hebrew. He was a member of the crew of the College's rowing four.

On completion of his studies in preparation for ordination, he married Violet May Simpson on 31 March 1934 in Maryborough (QLD) and the couple moved to the Hermit Park Methodist Circuit in Townsville. After a short time there, Len responded to a call to Overseas Missions work in the Northern Territory and began work in the joint European and Aboriginal Missions in Darwin.

In 1940 after three years of residence in Darwin he was appointed Chairman of the Methodist Overseas Missions North Australia District in which office he continued when he moved to the Mission Station on Goulburn Island. During his four years in Darwin he had completed his studies for the Bachelor of Divinity degree and had also obtained Accountancy

qualifications. On Goulburn Island he commenced work as on his Master of Arts Thesis, but gave priority to the demanding work of developing a written language in the Maung dialect of the aborigines of the island. He also found time to contribute several articles on his Territory experiences to Church journals. His published articles include "Sawdust in the dinner, in the Missionary Review, 5 April 1939, and "Sea Slugs and Crocodiles' and 'The Witness of North Australia" both in the Queensland Methodist Times, 17 March 1838 and 23 October 1941 respectively.

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the imminent threat of Japanese invasion of north Australia, Leonard Kentish became a voluntary Coast Watcher in constant radio contact with Darwin. His family travelled through Mataranka, Alice Springs, Adelaide and Melbourne before reaching Brisbane where they lived with his mother in Paddington, as they waited for Len to join them.

One year later his plans to join them in Brisbane were interrupted. The Patricia Cam, an Australian naval supply vessel on which he was travelling on a tour of his district, was attacked and sunk between Elcho Island and Cape Wessel by a Japanese float plane on 22 January 1943. He was taken prisoner and interned at Dobo in the Aru Islands on 5 February 1943 he was beheaded by his captors but news of his fate did not reach his widow and their three children, a son and two daughters, until late in 1946. The delay, not only in the notification but in the granting of a suitable pension, gave rise to much comment in the press. Len Kentish's body was later interred at the Ambon War Cemetery by the Australian War Graves Commission. His obituary records in the minutes of the New South Wales Methodist Conference of 1947 noted, in part: 'In the area in which he worked and under the uncertain conditions of war he stood continually in great personal danger but continued to give himself with humility and courage to befriending and protecting the aboriginals among whom he worked.'

Len Kentish's name was given to a memorial coconut grove on Goulburn Island. It is also on the Roll of Honour at Darwin's Memorial Uniting Church and the **Coastwatchers' memorial in Rabaul**. It is also listed in a memorial plaque honouring Methodist 'martyrs' in the foyer of **King's College at St Lucia at the University of Queensland**. It is also on a plaque honouring Methodist 'martyrs' (most of them victims of the sinking of the Montevideo Maru) located at the Uniting Church Centre for Ministry in North Parramatta. His photograph hangs in Kentish Court at Wesley Central Mission's Sinnamon Retirement Village, near Jindalee in Brisbane.

Sources: -

FROM: Australia's War 1939-1945

'war crimes'

In 1946 the International Military Tribunal for the Far East began to prosecute Japanese military and civilian leaders for alleged war crimes. More than 2000 trials were held all over south-east Asia, the Pacific and in Japan. More than 5,700 men – mostly Japanese servicemen and Korean guards – were charged with murder and brutal treatment of prisoners and civilians. Many were released due to insufficient evidence but 920 were executed and about 3000 sentenced to imprisonment.


One of these Allied war crimes trials opened on 21 May 1948 at Kowloon, Hong Kong. Three Japanese prisoners (two members of the Imperial Japanese Navy and one civilian) had been charged with the murder of the Australian missionary, the Reverend Leonard Neil Kentish, on 5 February 1943.

On 29 August 1946, the Adjutant of 3 Australian Prisoner of War Contact and Enquiry Unit reported on the circumstances of the Reverend Leonard Kentish's death at Dobo in the Aru Islands (now part of Indonesia):

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6. The remains of the Rev KENTISH have been recovered, and handed over to Capt STOCKWELL, of the War Graves Unit. They will be transported to AMBON, and buried in the Internees cemetery there.
7. This case is now considered closed. All dates must be treated as approx. Attached hereto copy of dental chart received with above report.

Leonard Kentish, a Methodist missionary and civilian coastwatcher, had been one of the passengers on the stores carrier, HMAS Patricia Cam as it travelled from Millingimbi towards Cape Wessel in the Northern Territory. On 22 January 1943, there was a tremendous explosion on board and the ship began to sink. Two men were killed in the explosion and the survivors leapt quickly into the water, some without even their life jackets. The Japanese floatplane, which had bombed the ship, flew over the men in the water. It strafed them and dropped another bomb into their midst killing more of the men. The aircraft landed in the water and one of the Japanese air crew ordered Kentish, who was nearest them, to swim over. He was hauled onto the aircraft and they flew away. The survivors from the Patricia Cam were rescued a week later but the fate of Kentish was not discovered until long after the Japanese had surrendered.

In 1946, it was discovered that Leonard Kentish's Japanese captors had beheaded him on 5 February 1943. At 9.45 am on 21 May 1948, a Military Court was convened in Hong Kong and the three men accused of his murder appeared before the court.



Territory Characters NTL - [http://www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/northern-territory-library/the-territorys-story/territory\\_characters](http://www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/northern-territory-library/the-territorys-story/territory_characters)

**Len Kentish** Methodist missionary Len Kentish came to Darwin in 1935. At first his work was among the white parishioners of the town, but before long Kentish was spending most of his time among town Aborigines and the people of Kahlin, and then Bagot compounds. He also

Kentish was sent to Goulburn Island as Superintendent in 1938, then in 1940 he explored Croker Island for a site for a Methodist home for part Aboriginal children. The home was to be established for children who were brought to the island in late 1941, under the government's new policy of entrusting to missions those part-Aboriginal children who had been removed from their parents.

During the war emergency from early 1942 many missionaries and the children on Croker Island were evacuated, but Kentish stayed on to supervise the continuing Methodist missions in Arnhem Land.

In January 1943 he was a passenger and pilot aboard the naval patrol and cargo vessel, HMAS Patricia Cam. The vessel was typical of the "Royal Darwin Navy". Built in Brisbane in 1940 for the Sydney fishing firm Cam & Sons, she was requisitioned by the navy in 1942 and sent to Darwin as a store carrier. The Patricia Cam and its crew of 17 men were taking supplies and materials to isolated coastwatching posts, airfields, and mission stations along the Arnhem Land coast between Bathurst Island and Groote Eylandt.

At this time Japanese reconnaissance floatplanes, based at Dobo in the Aru Islands, had been harassing shipping between Darwin and Thursday Island. Not long previously, two ships had been sunk or badly damaged with heavy casualties. The floatplanes' tactic had been to cut engines as the Allied ships were neared, then to dive out of the sun onto the ships. Without radar, the ships' crews usually did not see the attackers until it was too late.

The Patricia Cam's last voyage was uneventful enough as far as Goulburn Island, where Kentish and the Aborigine Paddy were picked up. Kentish was bound for the most remote Methodist Mission station, Yirrkala, near the present mining town of Nhulunbuy. The Patricia Cam's crew were delighted to have the men aboard as they had unerring local navigational skills.

The Patricia Cam sailed on for Milingimbi and Elcho Island, where four young Aboriginal men desiring a lift back to their home at Yirrkala were picked up. The ship sailed from Elcho Island at midnight on 21st. January 1943. By dawn the Patricia Cam was well on the way to its next port, Cape Wessel.

Suddenly the ship was rocked by a tremendous explosion. Within moments it was sinking, and the "abandon ship" order was given. One crew member and one of the Yirrkala men had been killed on the ship. The survivors took to the water with nothing or just their Mae West vests, as there had been no time to launch life rafts. At first they thought the Patricia Cam had been torpedoed, and only when a Japanese floatplane flew over them in the water did the survivors realise that the plane had dropped a bomb down the ships' hatch, and that this had blown out the Patricia Cam's bottom.

Several times the Japanese plane strafed the survivors in the water and once it dropped a bomb among them. This action killed or mortally wounded another four men. The floatplane then appeared to fly off. However, it banked and returned and alighted on the sea, just outside the circle of wreckage and survivors. Kentish was swimming nearest the plane. He was covered with a revolver and ordered to swim over. Then he was hauled into the plane, which took off and flew away.

Gradually the others improvised rafts from the wreckage, and late the next night most of them washed ashore on a small island, where two more men died. The floatplane attack had so far cost eight lives, but the fate of Leonard Kentish was unknown.

Only after the war did it emerge that Kentish was taken to Dobo, and on 5th. February 1943 he was beheaded, apparently in revenge for Allied air raids. Five years later three Japanese were tried in war crimes tribunals and convicted of the killing of Kentish. One, Sagejima Mangan, was hanged, and the other two served long prison sentences.