Aboriginal History

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ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1992

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Aboriginal History aims to present articles and information in the field of Australian ethnohistory, particularly in the post-contact history of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, will be welcomed. Future issues will include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, resumes of current events, archival and bibliographical articles, and book reviews.

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ABORIGINAL HISTORY
FOREWORD

This volume of Aboriginal History is a tribute to a number of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who served Australia in times of war, for it is important for all Australians to be aware of this contribution.

The size of the journal has only permitted selected articles. Undoubtedly there are many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who served in the Australian armed forces and have experiences which could be presented in article form, or simply as oral history.

Included in this volume is an outline of the procedures which individuals involved, or their relatives, could adopt if they wish to seek further information and details.

Nevertheless, we would welcome individuals approaching us with information about Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who have served, or are still serving, in the Australian armed forces. The response may encourage the production of a further volume in the future. Preferably the information should be in written form, or on tape. Attention is directed to the appeal for records in this volume by the Australian War Memorial. We acknowledge the co-operation of the Australian War Memorial in permitting us to reproduce relevant sketches and paintings of Aboriginal people held within its art collection.

We hope readers will enjoy this volume. It has been our privilege to have helped make these personal experiences more widely known.

D.J. Mulvaney
P.J. Grimshaw
SPECIAL NOTE

The editors of volume 15 apologise to Dr Malcolm Prentis, for printing an earlier version of his article on 'the life and death of Johnny Campbell', instead of his later revised version.
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This extensive report is a difficult-to-read carbon copy of Squadron Leader Donald Thomson’s official submission in April 1943. There are 71 pages of report and many appendices.1

The report is repetitious, and the appendices frequently contain material already discussed. As the central concern of *Aboriginal History* is with Aboriginal people, I have edited the closely typed manuscript. Those sections which are reproduced include those which explain the background to this remarkable enterprise, or are necessary to the understanding of activities, and particularly all sections which refer to the participation of Aboriginal men and the one Torres Strait Islander enlisted man. I have indicated those sections where omissions were made, which sometimes are extensive. The final text has been reduced to fewer than 30,000 words from probably twice that length. Pagination in the original manuscript is provided in brackets at the beginning of relevant sections.

The text is reproduced as Thomson wrote it in 1943, so that errors in spelling personal names are retained. Fifty years ago terms such as ‘half caste’ were standard, while ‘Aboriginal’ was not capitalised. To preserve the true ethos of the times, they are reproduced as written.

It is significant that Thomson’s participation in a scheme to organise Aboriginal warriors in the defence of the northern coast began in June 1941, five months before Japan bombed Pearl Harbour. It indicates military concern for the defence of the north and the expectation of a Japanese landing once hostilities commenced. Because the plan was implemented before the bombing of Darwin in February 1942, its background is reproduced here.

Donald F. Thomson (1901-1970) graduated in biology from the University of Melbourne in 1925, before studying anthropology under A.R. Radcliffe-Brown in the newly established department at the University of Sydney. He spent periods of anthropological fieldwork in Cape York between 1928 and 1932. In the latter year he became a research fellow (later senior research fellow) at Melbourne University. Except for his period of war service and a year in Britain, Thomson remained there until his retirement, by which time he held a personal chair.

During 1932-33 incidents occurred in eastern Arnhem Land involving Aborigines and Japanese pearlers. When some Japanese were killed by Aborigines, followed by three Europeans including a police constable, there were demands for drastic punitive action. That the Aboriginal people had justifiable grounds for their reaction was virtually ignored. In a travesty of justice, Judge Wells in Darwin sentenced three Caledon Bay men to long prison terms and sentenced Tukiar (Taklara, Tackiar, Dagiar) to death. Pressure from southern

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1 Archived at the Australian War Memorial as AWM54 741/5/9. The assistance is acknowledged of Mrs Dorita Thomson, who provided permission for the reproduction of Donald Thomson’s photographs, most of them hitherto unpublished. Mr Michael O’Sullivan, Assistant Curator, Private Records, Australian War Memorial, provided varied support and information, which assisted considerably in deciphering a difficult text.
capitals resulted in the quashing of Tukiar’s sentence by the High Court. He disappeared without trace once he was released, possibly a victim of police action.

It was in this tense situation that Thomson sought permission to enter Arnhem Land as a mediator. Between 1935 and 1937 Thomson traversed wide areas of north eastern Arnhem Land, and established close relations with the people. He made extensive ethnographic collections, documented diverse aspects of traditional social and economic life and took many superb photographs. Most importantly, he treated the people as normal humans and understood their problems in the face of Japanese and European inroads into their territory.

To assist comprehension of Thomson’s narrative, it is necessary to explain another independent organisation. Thomson’s small coastal patrol and Aboriginal unit paralleled another initiative, the formation of the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU). This unit was largely the creation of [Professor] W.E.H. Stanner (1905-1981), who also graduated in anthropology from Radcliffe-Brown’s Sydney department. When Thomson was in Arnhem Land during 1935, Stanner was amongst the Aboriginal people in the Daly River - Port Keats region. As a research officer on the staff of the Minister for the Army in early 1942, Stanner played a crucial role in suggesting the formation of a flexible land observer unit, to alert authorities of any Japanese landings. By May, when decisions were finalised, Major Stanner found himself in charge of recruiting 400 men. From September he commanded NAOU from its Katherine headquarters, which took over many of the functions of Thomson’s command.

With the Japanese emergency waning, in October 1943 Stanner was promoted and transferred to General Blamey’s staff. By that date Thomson’s energies were directed towards activities in New Guinea coastal waters, until he was severely wounded in an attack by warriors in Dutch New Guinea.

On 11 June 1941, the then Flight Lieutenant Thomson delivered a lecture at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, on ‘Arnhem Land and the Native Tribes who inhabit that area’. Top level officers from the three Services attended this lecture and saw his ‘moving pictures’.  
Tragically those priceless 20,000 feet of movie film, taken by Thomson in Arnhem Land during 1936-37, were destroyed in a fire in 1946.

The manner in which Thomson’s lecture stimulated Lieutenant Colonel Scott, Director of Special Operations, to obtain Thomson’s secondment to the army (with promotion to Squadron Leader), is clearly presented by Robert A. Hall. The document reproduced here supplements the account of Thomson’s career, presented by Nicholas Peterson, in Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land. Peterson re-arranged and reproduced parts of Thomson’s report in that study. Betty Meehan and Rhys Jones have made the most extensive use of the document, in their chapter ‘The Arnhem salient’, in Desmond Ball (ed.), Aborigines in the defence of Australia, reviewed elsewhere in this volume. Further information on army activities during the period of Thomson’s patrol is contained in Curtin’s cowboys. A list of abbreviations of military terms is provided at the end of this article.

2 Described by Thomson in AWM54 741/5/9, appendix 1:2.
4 Melbourne, 1983.
5 Ibid. 113-39.
NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTAL PATROL

Introduction

In June 1941 I was sent by RAAF headquarters to observe and report upon the training of the Independent Companies which were then being formed at 7th Infantry Training Centre recently established on Wilson's Promontory. While at Foster I was borrowed by the General Staff, Army Headquarters, for discussions on the disposition of Independent Companies in the territories to the North of Australia.

During August 1941 I was sent by the DMO to the Northern Territory with the Director of Special Operations (Lt Col Scott, DSO) to discuss with the Commandant the disposition of Independent Companies and their employment on the flanks of the Darwin area. Subsequently I was seconded to Army Headquarters 'to be Officer Commanding Coastal Patrol and Reconnaissance for a period of six months' as from 15th September, 1941.

Following on the discussions which had taken place in Darwin and later at Army Headquarters, I was entrusted with the task of organising a coastal patrol in the Northern Territory. I was also entrusted with the task of obtaining and making arrangements for the purchase of a suitable vessel as well as the selection of special personnel for the undertaking. It was intended at first to organise a sea patrol to cover the flanks of the Darwin area and particularly the eastern flank, extending from the Clarence Straits along the northern and western shore lines of Arnhem Land - the coasts of the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Islands such as the Crocodile Group and Wessel Island, off the coast. But later, after the purchase of the ship, and while she was being fitted out in Townsville, the scope was further enlarged to cover, in addition to the sea patrol, a land reconnaissance on both flanks. Accordingly, a second party in addition to the first, to operate on land on the western side of Darwin was then organised. After seeing the ship in the hands of the shipwrights in Townsville I left her in charge of Sergeant, later Lieut Palmer, and again proceeded to Darwin to confer with the Commandant and to take the Land Reconnaissance Party to the Victoria River area and to establish them there for the wet season of 1941-42.

The enterprise to inaugurate which I was originally seconded for a period of six months, has occupied some twenty months of close, intensive hard work. During this period, extended reconnaissance of both flanks of the Darwin lines of communication, as well as the hinterland and distant flanks, has been made, in preparation for the arrival of other flank forces, i.e. No 4 Independent Company, and later, the NAOU [North Australia Observer Unit].

The Special Reconnaissance Unit (now, April 1943, called the 'Northern Territory Coastal Reconnaissance Unit, RAE'), with the Auxiliary Ketch Aroetta, has been equipped to maintain armed reconnaissance patrols on the coast of Arnhem Land and the Gulf of Carpentaria. At the same time, native detachments were raised among fighting men of Arnhem Land, already well experienced in the killing of Japanese who landed in their territory, and these detachments were regularly trained for guerilla fighting and scouting and were fed and maintained to harass enemy landings in this area during the critical months of 1942.

This undertaking has now been completed, and a full report, covering the initial organisation, as well as the organisation in the field, with appreciations and other documents prepared chiefly by the Director Special Operations Section (Lt Col W.J.R. Scott, DSO) included as appendices to the main report, is presented herewith.
Organisation

Selection of ship and engine:

... it was decided by Army Headquarters ... that I should make an inspection of any ships in Australia which might be suitable and make a recommendation to AHQ. Ships of the type required - easily handled with a reasonably small crew, but big enough to carry a large amount of cargo, and if necessary, a detachment of troops, and at the same time fit to operate for extended periods in the open sea - were not easily obtained for many of the best small ships had already been taken over by the Navy, but I had in mind a large ketch which I had seen near Northern Territory Waters in 1936. This ship was newly built by Norman Wright of Brisbane, and had then only recently come off the slips. She was of exceptionally strong construction, built to sail and carried Bermuda or Marconi rig.

[p3] Corporal Palmer was sent in advance to Brisbane to endeavour to ascertain the present whereabouts of this ship from the builder, Messrs Norman Wright. It was learned that the Aroetta was then fishing between Gladstone and Townsville ... An inspection of this ship, and of several other vessels was made.... The purchase of the Aroetta was completed early in September and the 120 HP Ruston Hornsby engine was acquired by impressment....

Selection and training of personnel:

Even more important than the selection of the ship was the choice of suitable personnel for the special work to be carried out. It was essential firstly that they should be thoroughly experienced with small ships, for the inshore waters of Arnhem Land are shallow, with many shoals and reefs and still largely uncharted....

Secondly, it was necessary that the men selected should have experience of natives, a factor which proved later to be of first class importance. Above all, however, ranks the 'mental attitude'. The men must be temperamentally suited for life on a small boat, cramped and comfortless, and capable of standing up to long periods of exacting service under conditions that were monotonous, always exacting, and sometimes severe.

... I was asked to name twelve picked men from personal experience to serve with me. I knew of only two ... I had met recently while serving with the RAAF in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate..... Both had owned and operated small ships in tropical waters for years; they were accustomed to living alone for long periods, and both were thoroughly used to natives and had been earning their living as recruiters of native labour in the Solomon Islands. These two men were A.E. Palmer and T.H. Elkington. I had with them taken part in crocodile hunting expeditions at night in the Solomon Islands, and I knew at once that they were well suited to this special enterprise.

A.E. Palmer was at this time serving as a Corporal in the Field Security Police in Queensland; Elkington was still a civilian. Palmer and Elkington were approached by Army and asked to volunteer for special service on a hazardous enterprise. Both accepted immediately and they were enlisted in the AIF and sent as Corporals to 7th Infantry Training Centre at Foster, for special training in Small Arms and Demolition work there. On leaving Foster both men were promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and Palmer was subsequently commissioned.

A third white man was selected from the RAAF and seconded to Army to serve as WT [Wireless Transmission] operator on the A.K. Aroetta. This man was Sergeant K.R. Harvey, who had served with me in the first RAAF detachment at Tulagi, British Solomon Islands, and whom I knew therefore to be well fitted for this undertaking.

[p4] In view of the nature of the work and the difficulty of obtaining personnel at short notice with the qualifications as well as the ability to stand up to the rough conditions that
could be expected, a strong recommendation was made that the remainder of the party should be comprised of natives who had served with me, or with Palmer and Elkington, chiefly from the Solomon Islands.

The shoreline of the Northern Territory is fringed with mud and mangroves; flies, mosquitoes and sand flies are troublesome and the climate is hot. Under these conditions life on a small ship is monotonous. From experience I knew that natives are generally more contented and are not under the same strain and restrain as most white men. They do not grouch or become “bloody minded” and are more easily handled. One discontented man may upset the morale of a ship’s company. As it later transpired conditions were exceptionally severe on the first patrol; the wireless operator served for 10 months without a break or relief 7 days a week; Sergeant Kapiu, Native of Badu, served continuously for 18 months without any leave.

The recommendation that a selected native crew should be used was adopted by Army and the reason for the employment of natives was stressed by the Director of Special Operations Section in his initial ‘Appreciation’ ... and arrangements made to obtain, through the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and the Queensland Government, respectively, the natives who were selected.

In October, 1941, Sergeant Elkington was sent by Army to Tulagi, BSIP [British Solomon Islands Protectorate], to escort the natives, six in number, to Brisbane where they were enlisted in the Army before being despatched to Townsville to join the Aroetta.

One of these natives, Gege, a Melanesian from Choiseul Island in the Western Solomon, had been my personal boy during a long initial period of detachment in the Solomon Islands during 1940/41 and later was personal boy and cook at the RAAF AOB at Gavutu.

In addition to the Solomon Island Natives, one Torres Straits Islander who had served with me for a considerable period as Bosun on the ketch St Nicholas in Northern Territory waters was also selected. He was not only a fine seaman, experienced in sail, but knew the waters of the Arnhem Land coast well. He was also on good terms with the natives of Arnhem Land, and knew their language. Kapiu was enlisted in the Army, became Bosun of the Aroetta throughout the whole of the period of his service, and was finally made a full sergeant.

One additional native was specially enlisted. This was Raiwalla, a full-blooded aborigine from the Glyde River in Central Arnhem Land, who had been with me in this area and had proved his loyalty and faithfulness under severe conditions. Of the faithfulness, devotion to duty, and loyalty of these two men I shall have cause to tell later.

After completing the special course of training at Foster, Sergeant Palmer proceeded to Townsville, where he remained with the Aroetta while she was refitted, and Sergeant Elkington was sent to Tulagi to bring the Solomon Island crew to Australia.

All the members of the crew were known personally to us, and all were experienced seamen. As soon as they arrived in Townsville they were employed on the rigging and painting of the Aroetta. At the same time they were given regular instruction in rifle exercises and drill, as well as bayonet drill and musketry. They were also instructed on the Vickers ground guns, [which] were to be mounted on the ship for A.A. defence, and all received some firing practice on the range with Vickers MG [Machine Guns].

Refitting of the Aroetta:

Immediately after her purchase, the Aroetta was slipped in Townsville ... Substantial alterations were necessary to convert the ship into a patrol vessel. These alterations involved the removal of large refrigerating plant and auxiliary engine which occupied most
of the space amidships; the removal of the old Elwee diesel engine which was handed to the vendors; the provision of cargo holds (two) for the stowage of stores, arms and ammunition and equipment sufficient to serve for a cruise of six months ... the overhaul and repairs to running gear; the whole of the rigging; scraping and oiling of masts and spars and the chipping and painting of the hull and fittings, had to be carried out by the crew under the supervision of ... Palmer.

**Land reconnaissance party**

After the *Aroetta* had been purchased it was decided by Army Headquarters to organise a second party, in addition to the party on the Ship, to carry out a reconnaissance by land on the west flank of Darwin at least as far as Wyndham operating independently of the sea patrol but under the same command ... I was again requested to select personnel, this time however from the independent Company cadres already in training at Foster ... that this party should consist at first of one officer, to hold the rank of Captain (who was also to be Second-in-Command of the Northern Territory Reconnaissance Unit) and two sergeants.

On account of his experience in the mining fields of the north west of Western Australia WX10583 Lieutenant (later Captain) H.G. Morgan of No 4 Independent Company was chosen for this undertaking, and as he was to work to a large extent independently of the main party on the *Aroetta*, the choice of the two NCO's for this party was left to Captain Morgan. The two NCO's selected by Captain Morgan were:

- NX 18128 A/Sgt Mazaraki A.E., No 4 Independent Company,
- QX 20202 A/Sgt McDonald J.R., No 3 Independent Company.

It was further arranged that as soon as alterations to the *Aroetta* were sufficiently well in hand the OC Reconnaissance Party was to proceed again to Darwin and to meet the 2 i/c, Captain Morgan, there and to report to the Commandant before proceeding with the land party on a preliminary reconnaissance of the western flank of the Darwin area....

[p6] ... In the meantime, Sergeant T.H. Elkington had been sent to Tulagi ... to escort the Solomon Islanders ... who were being enlisted by special arrangement made with the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific at Fiji, through the Prime Minister's Department.

Arrangements were made by Army Headquarters with Air Board for the installation of the wireless equipment in the vessel to be carried out by RAAF Townsville ... Sergeant E.R. Harvey was seconded for duty on the ship ... It was arranged that all WT communications were to be carried out through RAAF channels, using RAAF codes to pass messages to Army.

By the beginning of November, 1941 work on the ketch *Aroetta* was well in hand. Sergeant Palmer was placed in charge of the ship in Townsville, and on November 7th I proceeded by flying boat to Darwin and reported to the Commandant 7 MD [Military District].... I was joined by Captain Morgan and the two sergeants, Mazaraki and McDonald ....

A conference was held with the Commandant, and instructions were issued for a reconnaissance by land, of the coastal area on the west flank, commencing at Katherine where in the meantime No 2 Independent Company had arrived in camp, and extending to Victoria River and thence across to Wyndham. It was arranged that I should proceed with Captain Morgan and party, travelling by MT [Motor Transport] via Katherine to Victoria River, with equipment and stores sufficient to carry this party through the approaching wet season and that I should then return alone to Darwin proceeding thence to Townsville to bring the *Aroetta* around by sea for work in the east flank. One Chevrolet 1 ton truck was made available for the transport of supplies and equipment ...
Establishment of Coastal Patrol and Special Reconnaissance Unit: proposed plan and itinerary (October 1941, February 1942)

It is understood that the objects are:
(a) Reconnaissance.
   (i) To carry out a thorough reconnaissance of the area, including islands off the coast, Borrooloola [sic] on the Macarthur River, Gulf of Carpentaria, to Wyndham in the north west of Western Australia.
   (ii) To re-establish friendly relations with the natives of this area, which were established in 1935, 1936 and 1937; to assess the kind and degree of influence exerted upon the natives, especially in Arnhem Land, by the Japanese who have visited the area in numbers; to take active steps to dispel any Japanese influence and to undermine their prestige.
(b) Flank Protection for Darwin.
   (i) To provide flank protection for Darwin by organising the natives of this coastline to form an efficient coastwatching organisation, based on their own local organisation, and reporting, in each district, through posts equipped with WT.
   (ii) To organise the natives into a potential mobile force or patrol, retaining for the most part their local grouping so that the natives can be readily gathered into efficient units to carry out guerilla warfare in the event of landing by enemy forces, and led by the reconnaissance party.
(c) Instruction in Bush Craft [sic].
   To gather together a small unit of the aborigines who possess special powers in hunting, in craftsmanship and bush craft, and who are skilled in guerilla warfare and ambush, and to use those natives for the instruction of members of the independent companies in tropical bushcraft [sic] and in living off the resources of the country.

Considerations:
The lateness of the season, and the rapid approach of the north west monsoon period, (from January to April) which is dangerous for small boats, make it inadvisable for any portion of the work on the west side of Darwin to be attempted by the sea during the present year. The reconnaissance party is therefore divided into two separate units, a land and a sea party.

[p8] The land party, consisting of Lieutenant Morgan and two Sergeants, which will operate on the west side of Darwin, will be ready to leave during October, and after a preliminary reconnaissance of the area ... will remain in this region for the ensuing wet season.

As the ... Aroetta ... will not reach Eastern Arnhem Land until about the middle of December when storms have already commenced and when most small vessels are laid up, it will be advisable for the vessel to be employed during January, February and March, on the Gulf of Carpentaria and on the coast of Western Arnhem Land where shelter and reasonably safe anchorages are available.

It is proposed, therefore, we make an initial visit to Darwin during December. For the purpose the vessel will proceed rapidly on the journey westwards, and leave the work of re-establishing contact with the natives, which must necessarily occupy many months and cannot be carried out to a timetable, to be carried out on the return journey from Darwin before the heavy storms of the north west have set in strongly.

On this eastward journey natives for the training work in connection with the Independent Company can be collected together and take[n] to the Roper River, where ...
the bushcraft training can be carried out most conveniently. The Roper River is navigable for a craft of the size of the *Aroetta* for a distance of about 80 miles, and a rendezvous could be arranged in the vicinity of the junction of the Wilton and Roper Rivers, or at Roper Bar Police Station, a little further upstream with a section of a platoon of the Independent Company. This locality would have the advantage that it is accessible from Katherine, the headquarters of the Company, and would also provide experience for members of the Independent Company in handling pack animals, which would, during the wet season provide the only suitable transport for this journey....

[p9] **Objectives:**

1. By building up the existing coastwatching organisation chiefly by intensive work among the natives of the area, so that regular reports, even if negative, will be received at Headquarters 7 MD from each area.

2. By conducting a thorough reconnaissance on the flank of Darwin to assist in detecting and reporting any enemy ships or aircraft, and by assessing the kind and the degree of influence exerted upon the natives by the Japanese... by establishing such contact with the natives as to enable the prestige and influence of the Japanese to be undermined...

3. [p10] By the organisation of reconnaissance and fighting patrols of natives whose hunting and fighting prowess is already well established, such patrols to be maintained and led as far as possible, by the Officer in charge of the reconnaissance party. It is considered that such patrols will prove of great value for night reconnaissance, guerilla warfare and ambush at night on the flank or behind the lines of an enemy landing force.

4. By establishing itself in this area behind and on the flanks of Darwin and acquiring such local knowledge as will be of value to the Intelligence Branch. It would also be possible to provide guides and scouts with local knowledge for any parties, which may work in the bush, or detached from the main forces.

5. By providing men to undertake sabotage or demolition work at points of enemy concentration or where landings were being attempted.... Under proper leadership it is believed that the small native force to be raised will prove capable of giving a good account of itself in surprise attacks at night and for actual fighting on a guerilla basis.

**Plan:**

... the *Aroetta* can best commence its work by proceeding Eastwards from Darwin to the Roper River area. The reasons for this are twofold:

(a) The north west monsoon season, with heavy north west weather and possible cyclonic disturbances render the exposed area to the west of Darwin dangerous to the operation of small ships at the present time.

(b) The natives, who are best known to me, and on whom I place great reliance, are in Arnhem Land. On the journey eastwards contact can be made with all these natives, efforts can be directed to undermining the influence and prestige of the Japanese in this area, and the nucleus of a native force for guerilla fighting and for scouting can be gathered together from among the natives who are well known to me, and whose language I speak.

(c) On arrival at the Roper River, contact will have been made with a large number of the natives with whom the Japanese made determined efforts to establish friendly relations, and the nucleus of a fighting body referred to above can be gathered together by the time the Roper River has been reached.^[8]

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In order to hold these natives together and to make real use of their potentialities, it will be necessary to live and to travel with them. It is natives be taken up the Roper River as far as the junction of the Roper and Wilton Rivers by the ketch *Aroetta*, led overland up the valley of the Roper River to the Railway line and then across to the Valley of the Daly or the Victoria Rivers, wherever it may be decided by Headquarters 7 MD this party can operate to most advantage.

**Time:**
It is considered that a careful reconnaissance could be completed and these natives collected together in six or seven weeks, ie approximately by March 21st.

On disembarking the body of natives on the Rover River under the control of the OC Reconnaissance Party, it is proposed that the *Aroetta* in charge of Sgt A.E. Palmer proceed back to Darwin. At Darwin she could take aboard fresh supplies of stores and fuel, and proceed thence to the west flank, where she will meet or await the native detachment which will proceed overland.

If this tentative plan be approved it is proposed to make one or more dumps of arms for emergency use some distance inland, in Eastern Arnhem Land, and to transport stores of weapons and ammunition required by the land force, by pack horses or mules to be acquired by hire or purchase, on the Roper River....

7 MD Operation Instruction No 13, 5 Apr 42

Ref Map: Northern Territory 30 Miles - 1 inch

Sqn Ldr: Thomson, OC 7 MD Special Recce Unit.

1 You will command:
(a) The Auxiliary ketch *Aroetta* and crew
(b) The party of natives raised by you and such additional native personnel as may be added to the party. This force will be known as the Special Recce Unit.

2 The role of this force will be:
(a) To undermine and forestall Japanese influence and maintain the present good relations established in Arnhem Land, the Roper River area, and the islands of the east coast from Sir E. Pellew Group to Elcho Is. and to prepare the Roper Area for reception of No 5 Coy.
(b) To harass enemy landings and progress in the event of landings on the East Coast.
(c) To obtain and pass information to Adv HQ, 7 MD.
(d) To order evacuation of civilians when considered necessary, and to assist in evacuation when the situation permits, from the area north of the Roper River.
(e) To organise a party for recce and contact with No 4 Independent Coy on the West Coast in order to prepare natives for a similar role.

3 (a) *A.K. Aroetta* will proceed to the East Coast under orders of Sqn Ldr Thomson to be used for coast and island patrol, and should the situation demand, the disposal of this vessel, will be as directed by Sqn Ldr Thomson.
(b) The Special Recce Unit will move as ordered by Sqn Ldr Thomson north of a line through Nutwood Downs and Sir E. Pellew Group.
(c) In view of the special assistance which can be rendered by this force to Ind Coys, close co-operation should be maintained with the No 5 Ind Coy and such with forces as may be sent to the Roper area, and with No 4 Coy working towards the East Coast.

4 Arrangements will be made for special rations, [tropical] equipment and ammunition for this force.
Plate 1. The ketch *Aretta* and crew off Dunk Island 1942/43 (Courtesy Mrs Dorita Thomson, National Museum of Victoria (NMV), Donald Thomson Coll).
5. Communications will be maintained with ADV HQ 7 MD through RAAF channels. In addition, Army Channels, when established by Ind. Coys, will be made available for Special Recce Unit.

(Sgd) G.N. Nunn, Col,
General Staff 7 MD.

7 MD Operation [Instruction] No 15, 8 Apr 42


1. Your Coy will operate under Comd of 7 MD, and will cooperate with Sqn Ldr Thomson to ensure economy of force and communications.

2. The primary role of your Coy will be operational:
   (a) To harass and disorganise enemy forces during and after landings, and to continue to fight in the area defined.
   (b) To pass operational information direct to Adv HQ 7 MD.

Your secondary role will be intelligence and security.

3. Authorisations: You will be authorised to order and implement evacuation of local population, when considered necessary, from areas beyond 50 miles from the railway. You will also enrol, equip, train and use any VDC forces which can be raised.

You will be authorised to carry out demolitions, where considered necessary, after enemy landings, but this will exclude RAAF dromes or installations and all areas within 50 miles of the railway.

You will have authority to impress vehicles, boats, livestock and other materials from areas outside 20 miles from the railway.

You are authorised to frank messages to Adv HQ: priority 'immediate', but such franking to be limited to operational messages.

4. Base: Your Coy will be based on Katherine and disposed within the area allotted, so as to carry out your role and to cover the 3 rivers: Roper River, Daly River, Victoria River ...

[Thomson's] Appreciation of the situation

[p16] ... The situation in the North of Australia had changed considerably since the original discussions with the Commandant in August; there were reports of pro-Japanese activities along the Arnhem Land coast, in the Arafura Sea, and anxiety was felt about the position at the Roper River on the East Coast and the Daly and Victoria Rivers on the West, which were considered to be extremely vulnerable.

After being held up in Darwin for some days by cyclonic conditions the Aroetta sailed from Darwin on February 12th.... The preliminary reconnaissance carried out on the journey westward from Groote Eylandt to Darwin had only served to stress the vulnerability of this area, when in the whole of the voyage from Groote Eylandt to Darwin, a distance of some 6-700 miles, we had not sighted a ship, or once been challenged by an aircraft.

Probable enemy approaches:

It was not considered likely that the Japanese would land at any point on the coast of Arnhem Land or that there would be any advantage in this, but it was considered possible that we would have to meet: landings by aircraft; infiltrations by paratroops; or parties landed from small ships or submarines [which] might occupy the aerodromes at Milingimbi and Groote Eylandt. It was also considered possible that such parties, operating on a...

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Evidently this 'appreciation' was written in April 1943, so it was retrospective.
commando basis, might land in the vicinity of the Alligator Rivers, the Roper River or the McArthur, and from these points, infiltrate the near flanks and lines of communication.

Further, in view of the very great interest that the Japanese had, to my knowledge and experience, evinced in this area during 1936 and 1937, and possibly even more recently, and their efforts to ingratiate themselves with the natives, it was considered possible that they might attempt to make use of the natives of Liverpool River and Cape Stewart areas (some of whom they had actually transported to Darwin on lugers in 1937), as pilots for craft approaching the rear flanks of Darwin. The natives are expert pilots in inshore waters, and have an infallible sense of direction even at night.

It was known that Japanese interest and contact had not been equal along the length of the Arnhem Land coast, but that the area of most intensive interest and contact with the natives was between Melville and Bathurst Islands north of Darwin, west as far as Cape Stewart. From Cape Stewart to the Wessel Islands including especially the islands of the Crocodile Group, and Elcho Island, the Japanese had also congregated; but while they made some contacts with the natives here, they had not met with the success that they had encountered to the west - at the King River, the Liverpool, the Blythe and at Cape Stewart itself.

Since 1932 they do not appear to have attempted to land in the area to the south of Cape Arnhem, for the fighting natives of Caledon and Blue Mud bays had always disliked the Japanese and had massacred many of the crews of visiting lugers, the last occasion being in 1932, when they attacked and killed most of the crews of two lugers at Caledon Bay.

During 1937 there were many Japanese vessels on this coast, and I had seen some 70 vessels at anchor and in sight at one time off Mooroonga in the Crocodile Group. During an aerial reconnaissance of this area in a RAAF Seagull in May of that year, I obtained a series of official photographs of these fleets of vessels, and also boarded several of them. They carried about fifteen men each, so that there must have been about 1,000 Japanese in the area at that time. The crews of these vessels had gone to great lengths to ingratiate themselves with the natives and had given them presents of cloths, knives, axes, mirrors and tobacco, out of all proportion to the services rendered.10

These facts were reported fully at that time, but in the meantime no attempt had been made since I left the area in 1937, to make contact systematically with these nomadic seafaring tribes, and nothing had been done to undermine or minimise the effects of Japanese contacts with them....

It was evident, therefore, that in order to carry out effectively the undertaking with which I had been entrusted, a considerable amount of work would have to be carried out, especially between Van Diemen Gulf and Cape Stewart, to destroy Japanese influence among these natives with whom the Japanese had undoubtedly been able to establish a footing.

It was, therefore, necessary to allocate the time available in order to make thorough contact with these natives, who by reason of their comparative proximity to Darwin, had already much contact with trepang fishermen and in the past, with buffalo hunters and were therefore moderately civilised and sophisticated, in order to deny them to the enemy as aides or pilots, if landing should be attempted on the near flanks of Darwin.

At the same time their contacts with the Japanese rendered these natives less suitable for inclusion in a force intended for guerrilla fighting and it was, therefore, planned to raise

this force from among the people in Eastern Arnhem Land who were notoriously hostile to
the Japanese, having already killed many of them, who were skilled in guerilla fighting and
expert in ambush, and who still engaged in intermittent tribal warfare. Moreover I already
knew these people well and had won their respect and allegiance, was thoroughly trusted by
them and knew their language.

But important though the work to be carried out among the natives was, particularly in
getting them as guides and pilots to the enemy vessels, there were other factors to be
considered.

In any appreciation this fact stood out that there were three very vulnerable points in
the area in which this Unit was to operate - Milingimbi, Groote Eylandt, and the Roper
River. At Milingimbi and at Groote Eylandt there were ‘A’ class aerodromes, and at Groote
Eylandt there was, in addition, a well equipped Flying Boat Base, with fuel tanks, fuelling
facilities, ... [indecipherable] and tenders and an Aeradio [sic] Station. Groote Eylandt
Flying Boat Base was quite undefended, and at each of the aerodromes there were two or
three personnel rated as ‘aerodrome guards’. In the state of our defences at that time and with
the great lack of aircraft for the defence even of Darwin itself, it appeared that these advanced
aerodromes were a liability rather than an asset of greater potential value to the enemy than
to ourselves. Moreover as it was not possible to carry out regular searches by naval patrols
of the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria, it was evident that enemy forces moving out
to sea in the middle of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and making its final approach at night could
reach the Roper River undetected....

Plan:

On this appreciation the following general plan was made:
1 After leaving Darwin the Aroetta would sail to the eastern side of Van Diemen Gulf.
2 On the eastward journey the first objective would be to locate the principal native
groups in the area. Where possible, this work would be carried out by sea, but
necessary land patrols would be made to ensure maximum contact with the natives.
3 It was considered particularly important to establish contact with the natives between
Cape Don and Cape Stewart to enable the accurate assessment to be made of the extent
of Japanese influence among the people and their present attitude, and to commence
systematically to destroy this influence.
4 Although it was not considered advisable to recruit any substantial proportion of
the native force among these natives ... it was intended to enlist two or three reliable
men to carry them on the vessel and to train them for the work thoroughly so that if
Japanese should land on the near flanks of Darwin, these natives would be available to
act as guides, and to assist us in penetrating enemy occupied territory.
5 On the completion of this part of the programme, it was intended to enlist natives for
the force required, from among groups east of Cape Stewart, over as wide an area as
possible, and particularly in the Arnhem-Caledon Bay districts, selecting representative
members of the groups in each area so that if a larger force should later be required, the
natives already enlisted could be used to gather their own clansmen.
6 To reconnoitre carefully each probable point of enemy attack, and its hinterland,
particularly the aerodromes at Milingimbi and Groote Eylandt; the Flying Boat Base at
Groote, and the approaches to the Roper River. The recently recruited native force to be
used for this work, in order that we should become sufficiently familiar with these
areas to be able to penetrate them even under cover of darkness ... to carry out
demolition and sabotage work. It was envisaged that if the enemy should occupy the
aerodromes mentioned, it would be possible to lead a party composed chiefly of natives
who themselves specialise in night attacks, to destroy aircraft on the ground, equipment and fuel depots, using Molotov cocktails, hand grenades....

To select suitable sites for depots in which stores and ammunition could be dispersed and concealed, so that in the event of the Aroetta being lost by enemy action, we would still possess sufficient reserve of equipment, arms and ammunition, including demolition materials, to be able to carry on a guerilla campaign indefinitely.

Narrative: The A.K.Aroetta on patrol, 1942-1943

Advantage was taken of the period spent in Darwin to learn as much as possible of the plans for the defence of the area and of the disposition of troops defending the lines of communication so that if an enemy landing should take place, (which at this period seemed not improbable),...

The ship was loaded to capacity with fuel and stores, the latter sufficient for six months isolated service, not only for the crew of the vessel, but also for a small native force.... It must be borne in mind also that the situation at this time was such that it was quite probable that the vessel might not be able to return to Darwin for any further stores or ammunition. It was aimed therefore to secure sufficient stores and equipment to enable this flank force to hold out and continue to fight in the event of an enemy occupation of the area.

Although ammunition has been allotted initially up to the full scale for the number of weapons held, I had not felt justified in using any of this for necessary practice until I was assured of replacement. In Darwin we set out to obtain additional AA [Anti-Aircraft] protection and also sufficient ammunition to enable that practice to be carried out with all the weapons which gives men confidence in their fire power, and in their own ability to handle them, which is vital to the morale of a small, self contained Unit.

At the end of January and early in February, severe, almost cyclonic, storms swept the Darwin area, delaying the departure of the ship for some 10 days. This delay was used to full advantage however, and during this period we were able to obtain a twin Browning .50 calibre gun, and to have a mount made for this. We were able to obtain the services of United States armourer to mount the gun and to give instruction in stripping and maintenance.

We obtained, through the good offices of the Air Officer Commanding RAAF Darwin (Group Captain Scherger) 60,000 rounds of 'hang-fire' ammunition .303, which though it was condemned for synchronised aircraft guns, was of great value to this Unit, and for the first time we had sufficient ammunition for adequate practice.

The .50 calibre Browning gun had just come from Manila in a [Boeing] B17 that had been riddled with bullets. The gun was very foul and showed signs of its ordeal. We declined an offer to leave the guns to be stripped and cleaned, however, realising that at this time the chief consideration was to get them aboard the vessel and to see that they did not leave again under any pretext. For the remainder of our stay in port these guns were guarded jealously. The aircraft mounting was retained, and this adapted to a heavy mount on the top of the chartthouse, where the best arc of fire could be obtained.

When the guns were mounted however, we found that we could obtain only 200 rounds. It was some months before .50 calibre ammunition was available in any quantity except for aircraft. As a special favour I obtained a further small quantity from the US Ordnance Officer and having exhausted all other avenues, made a requisition through the AAQMG (Lt Col Peters, DFC) at & MD Headquarters. Col Peters passed me to the Military Liaison Officer with US Forces, who in turn passed me to the Colonel in Command. The Colonel received my request for 2,000 rounds of link loaded AP [Armour
Plate 2. Aborigines and turtle eggs aboard Aroetta (Thomson Coll, NMV).
Piercing] and tracer ammunition with the greatest courtesy, approved the issue of this amount and, to my dismay passed me to the same Ordnance Officer with whom I had been dealing previously, and to whom I was already indebted for all the ammunition obtained. This Officer received the request however without flinching, and parted with the 2,000 rounds as if we had never met before.

In Darwin we had one long air raid alert, and the members of the US Army Air Corps, with whom we met frequently, prophesied that the Japanese would be over in force at any time. By the end of the first week in February we were fully equipped, and the ship was loaded down to the copper line.... On February 12th we sailed from Darwin....

Before leaving Darwin we were warned by the Naval Examination Service that a Japanese mine field had been laid in Clarence Straits and that this area was closed to shipping. A look out was posted on the mainmast....

February 12th: The Aroetta anchored under the lee of South Vernon Island. A small double ended craft was then anchored in a bay to the southward and an examination was made of this ship. The vessel proved to be owned by a buffalo shooter named Black and had on board a party including Black and some of the lightkeepers from Cape Don Lighthouse, en route for Darwin.

[p21] A landing was made on the mainland opposite South Vernon Island and a report obtained from a white man resident there, of enemy mines which were said to be stranded well above high water mark in Shoal Bay, close to Gunn Point, was passed by WT to Headquarters, 7 MD on that date.

During the night of February 12th, a native sentry reported that a flying-boat had landed under one of the Vernon Islands. An aircraft, apparently a flying-boat, showing a single white light was subsequently observed flying in the general direction of Darwin, and this was also reported by WT.

It was considered advisable to break WT silence to enable these two reports to be transmitted, in view of the close proximity of the ship to Darwin.

February 14-15th: On Feb 14th moderately rough condition with a following sea were experienced in Van Diemen Gulf. The Aroetta entered a broad but comparatively shallow river to the eastward of Mogogout Island on the eastern side of Van Diemen Gulf. The leadline had to be used constantly as the inshore waters are unchartered.

A party consisting of the OC Reconnaissance party, and one aboriginal, Raiwalla, was landed here and commenced the work of making contact with natives who might have been in touch with Japanese pearlers in recent years. The Aroetta in charge of ... Palmer, then sailed for Mountnorris Bay via Dundas Strait where a rendezvous was arranged on 15th or 16th.

The objective of the shore party was to locate the camp of Mr Rueben Cooper, a half-caste aboriginal who was understood to have been operating a saw mill in this neighbourhood for some years and who has been in close contact with the natives of the Coburg [sic] Peninsula.11

A course to the north east, towards the hinterland of Mountnorris Bay on the northern shore line was set, but during the whole journey which occupied two days, during February 14th and 15th no recent tracks or signs of occupation were noted.

The country between Van Diemen Gulf and Mountnorris is generally low and swampy .... The whole of this area was found to be completely depopulated and no evidence of recent occupation by natives was seen until the northern shoreline was reached. Native

11 Reuben Cooper, son of R.J. Cooper and his Jwaidja wife Alice Rose, had a series of timber mills on the Cobourg Peninsula. He also introduced Australian Rules football to Darwin after his schooling in Adelaide ended in 1915.
foods, especially vegetable foods and yams were very abundant and it would have been easy to subsist on the country. Inland game was not plentiful, but fish was abundant on the northern shoreline and easily procured. It was later ascertained that Cooper's camp and sawmill is now to the westward of the course followed - about three miles inland from the eastern entrance to Bowen Straits, and also that the natives of this area are now all concentrated at Cooper's camp, the newly established Croker Island (Methodist) Mission for half-castes, which is situated at the head of a bay on the east side of Croker Island, and at Goulburn Island. This means however that they are the more sophisticated and more closely in touch with movements.

Mountnorris Bay was reached by the overland party about midday.... On February 16th, at 1015 hrs, the *Aroetta* anchored in this Bay. A heavy NW squall was encountered and an anchorage made on the east of Croker Island, a few hours later.

[p22] February 16th: ... a landing was located at which there was two huts and signs of recent occupation, at the eastern end of Bowen Strait. A motor car track leading away from this landing was followed inland for about two miles.... Heavy rains had just fallen and the area was inundated for miles. There was an excellent supply of permanent water in a running creek; (Apparently permanent). It was subsequently learned that the present camp and saw mill of Mr R. Cooper was situated about a mile inland from the point at which my party turned back.

February 17th: ... a visit was made to the Mission Station at Croker Island. There is an excellent harbour at the mission, with deep water to within 2 or 3 hundred yards of the beach. The white personnel then at the Island consisted of three men and four women. There were about eighty half-castes, including girls up to the age of 16 or 17 at the mission station. There was also a native camp on the beach at the anchorage.12

The WT set, which was employed for Naval coastwatching, as well as on private traffic, was unserviceable and Sergeant Harvey RAAF was sent ashore to examine the set, which he was able to repair, restoring communication with VID Darwin.

February 18th: ... the ship sailed for Malay Bay where I was anxious to examine the country thoroughly for any sign of recent occupation of Japanese, and also to make contact with any natives ... No signs of recent occupation by natives was noted, and it was afterwards learned that the entire area from Van Diemen Gulf to Goulburn Is is depopulated and the native population now gathered into the mission stations. Game was plentiful in the country surrounding Malay Bay and old tracks of water buffalo were noted, but no buffalo were met with either here or on the overland journey carried out on foot from Van Diemen Gulf to Mountnorris Bay. Game including fish, and native vegetable foods are abundant throughout this area of coastline fringing the Arafura Sea, and would undoubtedly support large bodies of men who were skilled in fieldcraft; but it is appreciated that there appears at present to be no valid reason why this country should be occupied by Japanese forces and the information is merely reported for record purposes.

February 19th: On the morning ... the OC Recce party, set off overland on foot to the northern shoreline, arranging a rendezvous with the *Aroetta* which proceeded ahead to an anchorage there.

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12 Shortly after this visit, the mission was evacuated following the Japanese bombing of Darwin on 19 February. Thomson later encountered the evacuees, see below, Thomson [p27]. During the fiftieth anniversary year, 1992, one of those evacuated children, Bob Randall, now Australian National University Aboriginal Liason Officer, arranged for about sixty of the evacuees to revisit the site of the Croker Island Methodist Mission. On this episode, which saw 95 children transported to Thirroul, NSW, see Somerville, M. *They crossed a continent*. Methodist Overseas Mission, ND.
February 20th: The vessel sailed from the anchorage at 0615 hours and anchored at South Goulburn Island the same day. Mr and Mrs Kentish, Methodist Missionaries, were still in residence at the Mission with their three children. It was learned that arrangements were being made by the Methodist Missionary Society and the Department of Native Affairs to evacuate Mrs Kentish and her children, but that Mr Kentish proposed to remain. It was stated by Mr Kentish that evacuation through Darwin was being arranged and that a vessel would be sent by Govt or Defence authorities from Darwin to move the mission personnel, possibly with the aid of the Mission vessel Larrapan [sic], from Milingimbi.

[Footnote added at bottom of p23: Mr Kentish was captured by the Japanese, and is now a prisoner. He was aboard the Patricia Cam when this vessel was sunk by a Japanese float plane near the Wessel Islands in Jan 1943. After the ship was sunk the float plane landed on the water and took Mr Kentish aboard the aircraft. It is reported that on the following day the Goulburn Island Station was machine gunned.

Note: The foregoing portion of the Narrative was written some time before the remainder of the report. In order to avoid unduly lengthening the narrative it will be necessary to curtail this considerably. The log of the vessel, covering the entire voyage, is however attached as an appendix to the report.]

A consultation was held by the OC Reconnaissance Party with Mr Kentish during this evening regarding his own role after the evacuation of Mrs Kentish. As Mr Kentish has been carrying out naval coast watching work, and as the proximity of the mission buildings with the conspicuous wireless aerials close to the landing ground rendered his station liable to attack by reconnaissance aircraft, Mr Kentish was advised to move his WT set some distance into the bush to a bark hut or other inconspicuous shelter where he could continue his work of reporting ships and aircraft with less risk of detection and interference. Mr Kentish undertook to adopt this suggestion. He also asked what assistance he could render to the country in the event of active enemy operations.

The importance of denying the natives to the enemy as guides and informants was impressed upon Mr Kentish, and the necessity of keeping in the closest possible contact with these people was also stressed. This was considered particularly important ... as they were closely associated with the Japanese in recent years, it is considered that they constitute a very real danger. It seems not impossible that if enemy landings should be contemplated on the near flanks of Darwin by enemy forces employing small boats, Japanese fishermen who manned luggers which formerly worked on this coast, might be employed by the enemy to collect natives with special local knowledge....

Mr Kentish expressed his willingness to carry on this ‘propaganda’ work, which I commenced and which I made my first objective along the entire coastline; but, as a missionary, he expressed doubt when it was suggested that he might also encourage the natives to harry landing parties and to kill them from ambush, an undertaking in which they excel. It is hoped that in the event of Japanese activities in this region, or of any sign of renewed Japanese interest, to visit the area in person or to detach a member of the party, with some of the enlisted native force so as to prevent active co-operation by the natives with the enemy.

[p24] The fact (which had not been made clear to the natives by the missionaries) that they were not at liberty to lend their services as guides, or to bestow their allegiance at will, was impressed upon them. They were given clearly to understand that any active

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13 Rev. Leonard Kentish was captured at sea by the crew of a Japanese seaplane, after his boat was sunk. He was beheaded by his captors on 5 February 1943, in the Aru Islands.
assistance rendered to the enemy would inevitably result in their being themselves treated as enemies and it is anticipated that this will have a strong deterrent effect.

February 21st: ... the Aroetta sailed from Goulburn Island. No native camps were seen along the coast or in the vicinity of Rolling Bay and the vessel was therefore taken into the Liverpool River where there is a safe anchorage and abundant fresh water, to enable contact to be made with the natives of this area. The Liverpool River was a region of intensive Japanese contact from 1936 and 1937 onwards. Two reliable natives from this territory who were at Goulburn Island, were taken aboard the vessel there as crew, and with the aid of these natives contact was made with the people at the Liverpool River where there was a large camp.

A reconnaissance was made by motor launch for some distance up the Liverpool to determine the upper limit to which a small craft could be taken, and to survey the country generally along the river....

February 24th: ... the ship sailed east, passing Cape Stewart, to enter the Crocodile Islands during the same afternoon. A call was made at Milingimbi, and the vessel then taken up the Derby Creek where it was desired to establish contact with the natives of the camp from which Raiwalla, who had been enlisted in Darwin, had been taken on the journey west. On the afternoon of the following day I set out with the motor launch for Cape Stewart where it was especially desired to make contact with the natives, returning the following night. An important ceremony was about to take place there, and in consequence there was a very large gathering of the groups from the neighbouring territory.

Throughout this voyage eastwards, every effort was made to impress the natives with the armament and striking force of the ship, so that a greatly exaggerated idea of its size and armament would be spread among the people. The natives were shown the racks containing tiers of rifles in the main cabin, and whenever possible machine gun practice was carried out to impress them, particularly at night when the most effective use could be made of tracer ammunition.

The object of these demonstrations was to impress upon the natives the fact that the vessel was very much better equipped and more powerfully armed than the Japanese craft of a somewhat similar type as the Aroetta, which had been on this coast in large numbers. During this time valuable service was rendered by Raiwalla, whose loyalty never flagged and who carried on anti-Japanese propaganda in their language.

On leaving Derby Creek the vessel proceeded, via Milingimbi through the outlying Islands of the Crocodile Group, across Castlereagh Bay and thence into the Goyder River. In the meantime Raiwalla had been sent to carry out a patrol overland from Derby Creek to old Arafura Station site, thence across the Glyde River to muster the natives from that area at the mouth of the Goyder. Some natives were enlisted in the guerilla unit at Derby Creek, and additional members were attached from the groups which now accompanies Raiwalla on his overland journey.

[p25] A reconnaissance was made of Elcho Island, and the vessel taken through Cadell Straits, where a further reconnaissance on foot was carried out on the Napier Peninsula region west of Buckingham Bay. On March 4th the Aroetta sailed to an anchorage behind Hardy Island on the western side of Arnhem Bay. I was anxious to establish contact with a native of this area, Bindjarpuma, also known as ‘Slippery’, who was at this time the most powerful and aggressive man in this part of Arnhem Land, and who had for some years led the life of a predatory border chief, making periodical raids on his neighbours and then returning to the hills. At the same time, while searching for the man and his group, it was planned to employ the interval in unloading the heavy cargo from the ship, and to careen
her in a sheltered sandy corner under Hardy Island, to clean the copper. This work was carried out on March 5th and 6th, and the vessel refloated and loaded again.

Meanwhile, patrols were carried out in the neighbouring country and the native Bindjarpuma and his group located. A meeting was held with this man and his fighting band, and Bindjarpuma and most of the able bodied fighting young men of the group were enlisted. By the evening of the 7th of March, 36 picked men, all good travellers and hunters, some of them renowned as fighting men in single combat, had been collected. Only a nucleus was required to travel on the ship, and as I decided to limit the enlistment in the meantime as I wished to select a number from my old friends at Caledon Bay, no further natives were enlisted on the north coast. An account of the enlistment and organisation of the detachment being formed is set out in a section which follows.

The whole of the detachment was taken aboard the Aroetta on the afternoon of March 7th, and landed again that night on the south-east corner of the Bay. On the following morning I joined these men and set out with them on a patrol overland to Caledon Bay. After landing me here the Aroetta in charge of Sergeant... Palmer, sailed for Caledon Bay where the vessel arrived the following day.

The distance overland between Arnhem Bay and Caledon Bay is little more than 40 miles, but the country is rough, with many rugged hills outcropping with rock, and some swamps and rivers. Most of the native detachment completed the journey by the following night, but some were unable to maintain the pace and came a day later.

Again no natives were found at Caledon Bay, and it was apparent that the group which belonged to the area must be farther to the south.

On March 12th the ship left Caledon Bay for Trial Bay, an unchartered bay a little to the south. The Caledon Bay group was located in the bush a little to the south west, and moved down to the sand beach close to the ship. Friendly relations which I had established years before with these fine, bold and warlike people were renewed, and we were inundated with offers from the men to join the detachment. As a nucleus only was required at this stage the number had to be limited. The men selected were especially fine specimens, all people who had grown up in an area where tribal feuds were still carried on, and where guerilla fighting still plays an important part in their lives. Many of these men were renowned warriors with almost legendary reputations for their prowess as spear fighters, and some of them had already killed Japanese.

[Footnote added at bottom of p25: In 1932-33 the natives of the Caledon-Blue Mud bay areas, besides killing most of the crews of two Japanese manned luggers, to which reference has already been made, also killed two white men, Traynor and Fagan at Woodah Island, and at the same place, in the same year, ambushed a party of the NT Police and killed one of their number (Constable McColl). All these parties were armed with firearms and were expecting attack, but the natives, using only their own spears, suffered no casualties.14]

[p26] It was possible to make only brief contacts with all these natives, for time was now short for the completion of the programme laid down, by March 21st. Wherever possible I went inland on foot, travelling and living with the natives, and re-establishing contacts. The allegiance of the natives of this area was never in doubt however, for the Japanese are almost hereditary enemies, and they needed little encouragement to begin preparing for the reception of possible landing parties, by forging their own 'shovel' spears from odds and ends of metal. Anything of iron, ranging from heavy oil drums and iron bars

14 This was the celebrated Tukiari trial before Mr Justice Wells.
Plate 3. "Law and order: Makarrata at Trial Bay, March 1942 (Thomson Coll, NMV)."
to galvanised water pipes, and horse shoes are beaten out cold, and skilfully forged into spear heads.

On March 13th a signal was received from Headquarters with notification of Sgt Palmer’s commission.

On March 14th we left Trial Bay for Groote Eylandt, anchoring off the Advanced Operational Base at the SW corner of the Island. The following day was spent in watering the vessel, and Lieut Palmer was sent overland by MT from the RAAF AOB to take delivery of safe hand mail from the Flying Boat Base. While the Aroetta lay at anchor off the AOB on March 16th, two multi-engined aircraft, apparently Japanese long range reconnaissance flying boats, flew low over the AOB and passed, one on each side of the Aroetta, at apparently 3,000 feet, without dropping a bomb or making any demonstration. It is assumed that these aircraft were engaged in photographic reconnaissance, particularly as this incident almost immediately preceded the raid on Katherine. We were handicapped in challenging the aircraft to ascertain definitely their identity, as the WT Operator was receiving a signal of ‘immediate’ priority while the aircraft passed over. In view of the priority of this message, and its possible relation to the aircraft then overhead, I deemed it advisable first to receive the incoming message and to decode it, rather than break off with the risk of losing contact, to permit the operator to use the Aldis Signalling Lamp.

A message was sent recalling Lieutenant Palmer, so that the ship could be moved from the vicinity without delay, as she was at that time carrying the whole of the equipment of the Unit, no suitable opportunity having yet occurred for its dispersal.

On March 17th we arrived off the mouth of the Roper River, and the following day proceeded upstream. Two boats were lowered when the ship arrived off the estuary, and most of the native detachment was then landed to avoid exposing all these men on deck in view of the presence of enemy A/C. Just when the two boats, fully loaded, were leaving the ship, a heavy bomber approached, but it proved to be a United States machine.

The mouth and approaches to the Roper River have changed considerably during recent years, and there is now a bar with little more than one fathom of water, nearly five miles out to sea, and a vessel, missing the narrow and unmarked passage, would probably be driven on to a bank, with the risk of breaking up, if a heavy squall arose from the weather quarter before she was refloated.

Progress upstream was slow, on account of the depth of the Aroetta. Fully loaded, the vessel was now drawing 8-9 feet, and owing to the ‘drag’ over shallow areas, she had to wait for the tide at several places. Meanwhile the native detachment was put ashore and carried out a thorough reconnaissance along the banks of the country fringing the river in preparation for possible future operations against an enemy using the river.... On March 19th, the Aroetta arrived at the ... Roper River Anglican Mission.... The natives, who had not tasted fresh meat for some time and who had been working hard on foot patrols, had been promised a bullock on arrival at the Roper River, and a steer was now obtained from the Mission, slaughtered, and handed over intact to the detachment.

Advantage was taken of this period in the Roper River to drill the crew again regularly and to take in hand the newly recruited detachment, which now numbered fifty fighting men and to get them into some shape. A parade was held each morning in order to instil the elements of discipline into those nomadic hunting people. Some account of the training of the native detachment will be given in section 8 which deals with the organisation of the native force.

The MV Larrpan [sic], which is normally stationed at Milingimbi ... and is employed in the transport of stores to the Methodist Missions on the North Coast, had arrived in the Roper River with evacuees from the Methodist Mission Stations. These people, the white
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1992 16:1

women, have [sic, half-] castes, and Figian [sic] women from the Missions of Croker, Goulburn and Milingimbi Islands, as well as from Yirrkala, were conveyed from Roper River to the Railway line by military transport which had come down to meet them.

From March 19 to March 23rd, the Aroetta remained at the Roper River Mission. In addition to the drilling of the crew and the native unit, a considerable amount of general reconnaissance was carried out on both banks of the River. An appreciation of the situation in the Roper River at this time revealed the fact that it was wide open to any enemy party which might come upstream. No watching organisation of any kind existed and there was not even a native camp for the first sixty or seventy miles from the mouth to give warning of an enemy landing or approach.

Arrangements were made with the missionary in charge (Mr Port) in the meantime, pending the setting up of a more permanent OP [Observation Post], to send a party down to watch the mouth of the river and to build a pyre on a high hill as a warning. Some weeks later, a permanent OP equipped with wireless, was established at Gulnare Bluff commanding a view of the mouth of the river and its approaches, in order to cover this very vulnerable area.

On March 23rd the Aroetta proceeded upstream to the Four Mile Landing, which is the limit of navigation for a vessel deeper than a dinghy. This landing is situated on the south bank of the River four miles from Leichardt [sic] Bar, at which the Roper Bar Police depot is situated. Here we awaited the arrival of MT which was to transport the native detachment to Katherine as had been laid down in the Operation Instruction (No 1).

On March 27th, two 3-ton MT from No 4 Independent Company which had recently replaced No 2 Independent Coy at Katherine, arrived and on the 29th the detachment of 50 natives, together with arms and ammunition and equipment left for Katherine with OC Reconnaissance Party. On the same day the Aroetta, under Lieutenant Palmer, sailed down the river en route for Darwin, under orders from 7 MD Headquarters.

On night of March 30th, a camp was made with the native detachment on the Roper River at the Elsey Station, and contact again established with the Manager Mr Harold Giles, whom I had known for some years. Mr Giles was born in the Northern Territory and has had life long experience in this area. He is an expert bushman and knows the Territory terrain as few white men know it. Arrangements were made to enlist the cooperation of Mr Giles in the event of later operations in this area.

Furthermore, Elsey Station was so situated as to form a good depot for reserve of ammunition, and equipment for any small mobile force working on the Roper River, which might be unable to transport bulk stores farther down the river in times of heavy rains and floods.

On March 31st the party arrived in Katherine. In order to avoid the possibility of disorganising the natives, and to maintain discipline, which had been very good to date, it was considered advisable to establish a separate camp some distance from the regular camp area. A site was selected some two miles down stream on the banks of the Katherine River which, by arrangement with the Camp Commandant, was placed out of bounds to all the

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15 Thomson omitted to mention his warlike night encounter with ‘A’ Company of Stanner’s NAOU. When the Aroetta ignored warning signals when sailing up the Roper River, and failed to provide identification, it was fired upon and hit. Thomson was enraged, but Major Stanner wryly observed, ‘Thomson had the idea that he and his men owned the sea and the river; this was nonsense, because I and my men owned the sea, the rivers and the land’ Walker and Walker 1986:69.

16 Harold Giles, a former member of the Northern Territory Mounted Police and manager of Elsey station for over thirty years, was son of Alfred Giles (1846-1931), associated with Springvale and Bonrook stations in the Katherine-Pine Creek area.
NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTAL PATROL

white troops in the area. No difficulty was experienced in keeping the natives within their own zone, but as their arrival had created some interest among the troops it was very difficult to enforce the prohibition. An undesirable feature was the fact that whereas the natives had been encouraged to carry, and maintain always, a certain number of spears, both for hunting and fighting [which], for reasons which will be apparent later, were to be their chief weapons in the event of guerilla operations against an enemy landing force, the white troops persistently endeavoured to induce the natives to trade these. This had not only left the men without proper arms, but once the edict had been issued, had to be enforced or discipline would have broken down.

A conference was held with Major Walker, OC No 4 Independent Company, and Lieutenant Burton of that Company who was about to leave with a section for the Roper River, in order to inform them fully of the situation on the Roper River and to pass to No 4 AIC the results of the recent reconnaissance there.

As information was to be obtained at Katherine as to the movement [sic] which we had just raised and which I had been instructed to bring to Katherine, and intended role of the native detachment, and as there had been changes in Command, I considered it advisable to proceed to Headquarters for a general discussion and for new orders. A request was therefore made for authority to leave the detachment at Katherine, and to proceed to Darwin by air. I was reluctant to be away from the natives for any length of time, as I was alone with them having no NCO to bring with me in view of the smallness of the Unit and the danger of undermanning the ship. I had promised these men when they enlisted that I would never desert them whatever befell, and did not wish to leave them now in a strange military camp, hundreds of miles from their own territory. Approval was granted to my request and on April 5th I proceeded to Darwin by Lockheed leaving Raiwalla in charge of the camp and detachment at Katherine.

At Advanced Headquarters I reported to Operations section and a conference was held with the GSO II (Major now Lieut-Col G.N. Nunn) and subsequently with the GOC (Major-General Herring) who then issued a new Operation Order (7 MD Operation Instruction No 13). This amplified and also greatly extended the scope of the previous order (7 MD Op Instruction No 1) under which we have been working since we had left Darwin. This new Operation Instruction laid down that the Force consisting of the crew of the Aroetta and the native unit already formed, together with any other native personnel who might be added to it, was to be known as the Special Reconnaissance Unit, and so definitely established this Unit as an independent command to operate on the distant flanks of the area, with a reconnaissance and fighting role. One of the functions of the Special Reconnaissance Unit was to pave the way for the Independent Companies and other flank forces, and to co-operate with these forces.

On the morning of April 7th I returned to Katherine, as I was anxious to see the natives as soon as possible. This visit to Force Headquarters had occupied only two days, but I left with a clear understanding of our role, and full appreciation of just what our tasks and responsibilities were.

[p29] We knew that we had the entire coastline from Cape Don to the McArthur River, as well as Groote Eylandt and the other islands off the coast, to watch, and to prepare against possible enemy landings - a coast line of more than 1000 miles. We knew also, for we had been told clearly, that we could expect no help. I can still recall now the feeling of pride that we all drew from this order and which told us to remain on the flanks and 'to harass enemy landings and progress in the event of landings on the east coast', and the determination that we felt that whatever befell us we would remain at our station. We did not overlook the fact that we were only four white men with a 43 ton ship. But we knew
Plate 4. NT Special Reconnaissance Unit on parade, 1942, with shovel-nosed spears. The Solomon Islander boat crew head each line (Thomson Coll, NMV).
that if the enemy should land on this coast we were entrusted with a responsibility so great, and an opportunity to serve that might never again be given to so small a body of men. It gave us fresh encouragement in the task of raising the native unit and training these nomadic people. Hitherto we had heard nothing but disparagement of this native force. We knew now that our faith in the native force that we had been sent out to raise and which had been so laboriously built up and trained, was shared by the GOC and his Staff, and we returned with fresh heart to a task that had proved always exacting and difficult, and often disappointing.

I am proud to be able to tell now of the work carried out in the six months which followed by the handful of men, white and native, under my command, and to record the story of relentless unremitting hard work, unselfish service and initiative, displayed by these men working with one objective. In all that time not one of these men obtained, or asked for, any leave or relief, there was no grumbling or discontent, but every man in this unit carried out willingly and cheerfully what should have been the work of two men. Guards were maintained throughout every night; the men did armament as well as deck and other duties, they handled all the cargo; they fuelled the ship, often swimming out with the heavy drums of fuel; they watered the vessel, filling the tanks of the vessel with drums from wells that they dug ashore; they cut firewood, they cared for the ship and cleaned the copper, and at the same time they were drilled, trained in the use of small arms and turned gradually into soldiers as well as sailors.

At one period, the Unit was divided into three detachments, operating hundreds of miles apart - one Sergeant ashore in charge of an OP; Lieutenant Palmer and the WT Operator on the Arroetta while I was away on reconnaissance with MT, operating between the Roper River and Borroloola on the McArthur.

Most of us expected that following the heavy raid on Darwin and the raid on Katherine, when reconnaissance aircraft were frequently sighted, that the enemy would make a landing somewhere on the east coast as Milingimbi, Groote Eylandt or the Roper River, and we set out at once to prepare for this.

It was obvious that any plan, to be of any real use must be carefully prepared and rehearsed and skilfully executed. My first objective therefore was to establish a good and effective OP equipped with WT commanding a view of the approaches to the Roper River which at this time was wide open, since early warning of the approach of an enemy would be vital to Headquarters. The fact was not overlooked that, important as might be the guerilla operations we might be able to carry on, the most vital role was the rapid passing of information of an enemy movement to HQ.

The next most important point was to disperse ammunition and equipment so that if the ship should be lost we would still possess arms and ammunition to carry on. Finally, it was necessary to establish and maintain an OP apart from that to be set up as the Roper is an area where the following conditions would be found:

1. The OP must be situated in sufficiently close proximity to the most vulnerable points - Milingimbi, Groote Eylandt, and the Roper River - to enable raids to be carried out at night with natives to destroy enemy aircraft on the ground and to sabotage fuel dumps and equipment.

2. It must be situated in an area where the natives were well disposed and absolutely to be relied on in the event of an enemy landing, and where in the meantime regular contacts could be maintained with the natives to prepare them for the role they were to play, and to enable them to be mustered at the first warning of enemy approach.
Though located close to a likely point of enemy attack, the OP should, if possible, be situated at point not likely itself to be attractive to the enemy, and therefore one at which they were unlikely to land.

Before leaving Darwin on return to the east coast, where the Aroetta was to meet me at the Four Mile Landing near Roper Bar, arrangements were made to replenish all stores on the Aroetta to enable the vessel to remain for six months without further supplies except of fuel, and plans had been made to lay down a fuel depot at Groote Eylandt so that the ship need not leave her station at a critical time to refuel.

In view of the plan to attack enemy aircraft on the ground, certain special stores had to be obtained. The vessel was already well equipped with demolition materials, but materials for the making of Molotov cocktails were inadequate. For this purpose a drum of bitumen was obtained in Darwin and a raid then conducted on all the hotels which remained after the first air raid to secure as many clear glass bottles as possible since these are the most suitable for this work. From these forays, conducted independently, the crew returned each with a sack of empty bottles on his back. Every man put his heart into the acquisition of equipment for the task ahead with a zeal that would not be denied.

Narrative: (ii) Return to Roper River: establishment of depots and OP

On return to Katherine, arrangements were made to transport the native detachment of 50 men back to the Roper River. A convoy of two 3-ton trucks was made available and in addition a 30-cwt vehicle was taken on charge by the Special Reconnaissance Unit for land transport in the Roper-McArthur areas where necessary.

It was considered imperative that the OP which I intended to establish at the mouth of the Roper River should be equipped with wireless. It had not been possible to obtain the necessary equipment at Headquarters at this time, as there was a heavy call for WT transmitters and equipment had already been issued. A WT set was therefore impressed from Roper Valley Station for this OP.

On route from Katherine to the Leichardt Bar, Roper River, a depot was laid down at Elsie [sic] Station, containing a reserve of SA [small arms] ammunition and rations. A second depot was established at the Roper Bar Police Depot, containing further reserves of ammunition and in this depot which was considered reasonably safe, certain weapons, including a Bren, LMG, and a number of TSMGs rifles and ammunition, were laid down. As Roper Bar was at the end of the Road up to the L of O [sic], the motor vehicle and fuel supplies were also laid down at this point. In establishing a reserve store of arms and leaving the MT here, consideration was given to the fact that headquarters of a Platoon from No 4 Independent Company, was being set up at Roper Bar Police Depot. Subsequently, a small cache of two cases of SAA ball ammunition was secreted in the rocks on a hill overlooking the river close to the Four Mile Landing, which could be reached overnight in extreme emergency even if the area should be strongly held by an enemy force.

On April 15th the Aroetta arrived on return from Darwin, and on the following day the whole of the native detachment was taken aboard the vessel and proceeded downstream to the Roper River Mission. Natives were landed on the north bank, under Pte Raiwalla, to make a foot reconnaissance of the north bank of the stream between the ... Mission and of the mouth of the River.... On April 22nd the vessel was anchored at No 1 Survey Camp close to the mouth of the river and intensive reconnaissance work carried [out].

A local patrol was carried out on foot by Lieutenant Palmer, with a detail of natives, to the south of the mouth of the river.... As no high ground exists in this vicinity and as no water could be found even in native wells at this time, the vessel proceeded upstream to
Gulnare Bluff (Mt Moore) where a further reconnaissance was made to determine the suitability of this site for an OP, for I was anxious to select a site and set up this post for observation without loss of time.

The fact that Gulnare Bluff (Mt Moore) was situated only six miles from the mouth of the river, and that it commanded a view over the estuary of the river and also covered the mouth and approaches, made it eminently suitable as a site for an OP. But no water was found at this time, other than surface water. It was decided, however, that the OP must be established and a search for water conducted while this work was in progress.17

Narrative: (iii) Reconnaissance on foot northward to Rose River

Instructions had meanwhile been received from Headquarters for a reconnaissance to be carried out for a distance of 40 miles to the north of the Roper River Mouth to search for possible enemy fuel depots and landing areas.

I decided to carry out this patrol on foot while the OP was being prepared. A party was selected from the native detachment and leaving Lieutenant Palmer in charge of the ship, I proceeded north of the Rose River. The area was extremely arid and on the forty mile patrol to the Rose River only two wells were found. These had to be cleaned out and deepened and even then provided very little water. On the afternoon of the second day we arrived at the estuary of the Rose River after a long hard stage - only to find that the only native well was dry, and after we had therefore to retrace our steps at once to the well where we had last obtained water....

[p32] Work on the OP had meanwhile progressed well and in order to camouflage the site to the best effect, the camp was partially excavated in the ground among the rocks. It was then roofed with galvanised iron obtained from an abandoned camp near the mouth of the river, and this was then camouflaged with boughs so that it was almost impossible to detect from the air. Some difficulty was experienced first in inducing the natives to approach the post in such a way that tracks would not be worn leading direct from the river to the site.

As the search for water in the area had proved fruitless, this had to be supplied in the meantime from the ship, until tanks could be obtained to hold a supply adequate for the needs of the OP.

By 28th April the work was completed; the WT set installed ... and satisfactory tests had been carried out. An 'Iron Horse' charging motor ... was provided, for the charging of batteries. Sergeant Elkington, who was the only one of the white personnel who could be detached, was placed in charge of the OP with a detachment of twelve picked natives from the detachment of 50, headed by their own section leader, Binjarpuma or 'Slippers'.... Sergeant Elkington ... remained in charge for two months (until July 5th) when the post was handed over to No 4 Independent Company....

On May 1st the Araetta again proceeded up stream to carry water for the OP. Two 400 gallon heavy galvanised tanks were secured from Roper Bar, and these were subsequently installed at Gulnare Bluff. Both the tanks had been filled with water up stream, but the additional weight had increased the draught of the vessel sufficiently to prevent the ship from crossing some of the sand bars except on a very full tide, and one of the tanks eventually slipped overboard. The tank was retrieved, but only four hundred gallons of water remained and the second tank had to be filled laboriously with surface water scooped from the shallow pools that still remained on the surrounding plains.

17 Gulnare Bluff on Mt Moore, an isolated hill less than 50m high surrounded by mudflats, offered excellent panoramic views. After the army took over the post, drinking water was transported from Darwin. Walker and Walker 1986:69, 79.
As much difficulty was being experienced in securing a propellor of the same pitch and
diameter as the one now on the ship which had been damaged, I at length obtained authority
to send Lieutenant Palmer by Flying Boat from Groote Eylandt to Brisbane to assure [sic]
that the replacement would be of the right diameter and pitch and tapered to fit the shaft. On
May 23rd the Aroetta arrived at the Flying Boat Base and anchored in Little Lagoon. While
awaiting the arrival of the flying boat on which Lieutenant Palmer was to proceed to
Brisbane, we put the stern of the Aroetta up for examination of the propellor and to obtain
correct specifications for the replacement. Now that I was assured of obtaining another
propellor I decided to take the risk of beating out the damaged blades of the propellor in the
hope that, pending replacement, this would increase its efficiency at least a little. Working
in four feet of water, we were able to bend the blades out with heavy hammers and to
remove the rough edges with files.

On May 26th Lieutenant Palmer left by Flying Boat, and I employed the period of his
absence in patrols of Bennet Bay, Blue Mud Bay and the Caledon Bay areas, in order to
maintain the closest possible contact with these natives.

The Aroetta left Groote Eylandt for Blue Mud Bay, on May 27th, anchoring in Bennet
Bay, near Cape Barrow. The ship was now much under manned, as I had with me only the
WT Operator in addition to the natives. Sergeant Elkington, who had served as engineer,
was at Gulnare Bluff OP and the native who had acted as assistant, Pte E. Richardson, had
been sent to Katherine Hospital and later invalided out of the Unit.

[p33] During the ensuing week the Aroetta worked along the shoreline of Blue Mud
Bay, calling also at Woodah and Round Hill Islands, and at various points of the mainland.
This is a dangerous shoreline for vessels drawing much water; it is shallow and uncharted
with many banks and reefs, the more dangerous because the water is always dirty and
discoloured. In the SE season the sea rolls straight into the wide, open, shallow bay.
Throughout almost the whole of the period in which the Aroetta was cruising in this area
the engine had to be run at greatly reduced speed and the lead line used constantly to feel the
way.

At each anchorage, detachments of natives were sent ashore to reconnoitre and to
examine the area for signs of recent occupation by strangers or by native hunting parties
with whom it was desired to establish contact. A report had been received from HQ that an
RAAF Gannet Aircraft was reported to be missing over Arnhem Land. Sgt Elkington was
instructed by WT to send out patrols in his territory, and an extended search was carried out
by natives from the Aroetta at each anchorage without result. On June 2nd a detachment in
charge of Raiwalla was put ashore west of Woodah Island and instructed to carry out a
patrol north of Blue Mud Bay to Trial Bay, and to meet with the ship there. On June 4th I
took the Aroetta out of Blue Mud Bay and sailed north along the coast, anchoring in Trial
Bay, where Raiwalla arrived with his detachment on the following night, after a severe
journey in very rough country.

Many natives were living here and it was at this time the chief camp of the people
whose territories extended over a long stretch of coastline. Contact was made with Wongo,
headman of the Caledon Bay people at Trial Bay. Except for reports of aircraft sighted, these
natives had little to report, and no signs of strange ships or if Japanese activities had
occurred in our absence.

A number of natives from the detachment had been recruited in this area, who had tired
of the routine work, and gone AWL and these men arrived back in their home camp while
the Aroetta was anchored in Trial Bay. They readily rejoined the vessel however, and all
served for a further period on an extended reconnaissance on the Roper and McArthur
Rivers....
I remained in Trial Bay with these natives for more than a week ... working hard with these people from amongst whom we had already recruited many men. The value of an OP in close proximity to Groote Eylandt and the approach to the Roper River, was stressed earlier in this report, and I had already planned to establish this base ... among the Caledon Bay people.... These people offered just what was required; they were so notoriously hostile to the Japanese fishermen in recent years, that it was unlikely that the Japanese would select their territory, as a landing point for small parties, even if it had otherwise any advantage. They were warlike, and numerically strong, and as I myself was on very friendly terms with them and spoke their language, their territory would afford an excellent base. But being high spirited and independent, they were not easy to handle, and discipline came hard to them, as it does to most natives.

On June 13th, I took aboard the whole of the detachment again and sailed south to Groote Eylandt.... The ship proceeded thence to Port Langdon to pick up Lieutenant Palmer who returned on June 21st ... [and] brought a new propellor and shaft.... The straightening out of the blades ... had proved so satisfactory that it was now possible to run the engine at the full normal speed of 1000 revolutions without excessive vibration, and as it was now considered advisable to slip the vessel before the end of the year, the damaged propellor was not removed ... instead the replacement was held in reserve....

[p.34] On June 29th the Aroetta anchored off the OP at Gulnare Bluff. Sgt Elkington had nothing of importance to report. Both he, and all the members of the detachment, were in good health and spirits, but they were suffering severely with the mosquitoes which were present in great numbers, and came out in hordes at night, and during the day were much troubled by flies. Conditions at the OP were severe and extremely monotonous. The surrounding country was flat and uninteresting, consisting merely of miles of salt pans and plains intersected with mangroves. Nevertheless Sgt Elkington and the detachment of natives had carried on their work at this OP maintaining a constant lookout, keeping regular schedule with the ship each day, and carrying out patrols in the surrounding country....

In the meantime arrangements had been made to hand over ... to No 4 Independent Company, which was now in a position to supply the necessary personnel to take over the whole of the Roper River area and so to free the Aroetta for patrol work farther out on the flanks.18

It had now been arranged that I was again to visit Force Headquarters to report. As this Unit was responsible for reconnaissance of the area as far south as Pellew Group and the McArthur River, and the territory generally north of Nutwood Downs, it was considered most economical to send the Aroetta after landing me at Roper Bar to carry out reconnaissance of Maria Island, the Pellew Group, and the McArthur River. It was planned that I should then proceed overland on the return from Darwin, to make an extended reconnaissance by land, meeting the Aroetta at Borroloola on the McArthur River.

On June 29th the ship was again taken upstream to the 4 Mile Landing near Roper Bay, the whole of the cargo was removed to enable a general check to be made, and to clean out the holds. Meanwhile the depot which had been maintained at Roper Bar Police Depot was withdrawn, including the arms and ammunition, and loaded on the vessel. While this was in progress, the crew was sent ashore regularly to drill and for bayonet exercises, a routine which had been suspended while the ship was at sea on patrol.

18 When troops of NAOU controlled Gulnare outpost, it 'topped the list of "worst outposts". The abundance of insects, heat and mud, and the shortage of water ...'. It had to be abandoned during the 1942-43 wet season Walker and Walker 1986:69, 80. No 4 Independent Company was a unit of NAOU.
Arrangements were made with Captain Thompson of No 4 Independent Company to proceed down the river on the Aroetta and to take over the OP. This post was handed over on July 5th when Sergeant Elkington, together with the detachment of 12 natives, rejoined the ship and resumed duty as engineer. Lieutenant Palmer then proceeded with the Aroetta via Maria Island to the Sir Edward Pellew Group and the McArthur River, carrying out the work laid down in Operation Order No 4.

Meanwhile, on July 4th I left Roper Bay by MT with a detachment of six natives - one Solomon Island member of the crew and five other natives, for Force Headquarters.

At Force Headquarters a discussion was held on the future role and identity of the Special Reconnaissance Unit, and as a result an application was made at this time for a definite establishment for the Unit, and for a separate colour patch. It was felt that such establishment and definite identity would assist in holding together this force and that it would further serve to foster a pride in the Unit and build up a solidarity which is essential in the success of any organisation of men however small.

Approval was given for the Aroetta immediately upon completion of the programme upon which the vessel was now engaged to proceed to Townsville to be slipped and refitted, in order that the ship could return to her station before the onset of the next wet season (December to March).

On July 9th, I set out on return to Katherine, where stores were obtained for the vessel and for the native detachment of 50 men working with the ship. On the following day I proceeded by MT at Mataranka and confirmed the arrangement made at HQ for the 30 cwt vehicle now on charge to be exchanged for a three ton GS wagon with front wheeled drive for the overland journey. I arranged for this vehicle to be taken out to Elsey Station with a load of stores and handed over to me there.

The stores which had been left in the depot at Elsey Station were resorted and the 3 ton vehicle loaded for the journey to the McArthur River, about 300 miles away.... It was decided to put a full load on the three ton vehicle to demonstrate the extent to which territory could be transversed by heavily laden AFVs, which might without any difficulty at this time have been landed on the coast between the Roper and the McArthur Rivers.

The country throughout was rugged, some of the hills outcropping with stone, and it was intersected with watercourses. Rapid progress was made to Hodgson Downs, but just after leaving the Station a mechanical breakdown occurred which involved a total delay of some ten days. When this had been finally rectified the journey to Borroloola was resumed and was completed in three days with a vehicle deliberately overloaded and driven by one who was not a motor transport driver, for no driver was carried on the strength of the Unit. My only companions on this journey were the six natives who had accompanied me from the Aroetta. The vulnerability of this low lying area on the east flank, and the ease with which it could have been used by sea borne MT was therefore further demonstrated.

On July 25th I rejoined the party on the Aroetta. In the meantime Lieutenant Palmer had completed a careful reconnaissance of the lower reaches of the McArthur River....

On July 29th the Aroetta sailed from the McArthur River for the Pellew Group, where the vessel was anchored under Vanderlin Island and a further short reconnaissance carried out. On July 31st the ship sailed again for Groote Eylandt. On the following day I landed at Groote Eylandt, with a detachment of natives and established a temporary camp, with certain of the equipment, sending the Aroetta back to Maria Island, off the mouth of the Roper River, to pick up a detachment of natives who had been put ashore there some time previously. On August 3rd the vessel returned with this detachment to Groote.
Plate 5. Detachment of Aboriginal Special Reconnaissance Unit in camp at Katherine, April 1942, wearing identification tags (Thomson Coll, NMV).
Narrative: (iv) Return of native detachments and final patrol

The completion of the reconnaissance of the coastal area, and of the Roper and McArthur Rivers and the handing over of the OP [at] the mouth of the Roper River marked the end of the first phase of the undertaking with which this Unit had been entrusted.

Simultaneously with the reconnaissance of this area, the nucleus of the native Unit had been thoroughly and systematically trained.... Most of them had now been away from their own territories and their women folk for several months, and it was considered that no useful purpose would be served by keeping them longer with the vessel, but that they [p36] should be repatriated and rewarded with gifts in return for the faithful services that they had given. It was intended that these men, generally representative and influential members of their groups, would form the nucleus of an efficient coast watching system and that by making regular contacts with them on each subsequent patrol they would be available when called upon, to muster their own clansmen in the event of enemy action in the area.

It was considered, therefore, that the most important undertaking that remained to be carried out was the establishment of a permanent OP ... to serve as a base from which to conduct patrols or sorties, and particularly to serve as a permanent rendezvous where contacts would be maintained with the natives. It was further planned that once the nucleus had been trained, instead of attempting to maintain a large force which must grow ‘stale’ with inactivity, a few representative members only of each group should be held at the OP. These men could be ready to collect their groups together if required. Meanwhile the others would be encouraged to continue to lead their normal existence as nomadic hunters. In this way it was considered that the most effective use could be made of these people, and their morale maintained at a high level.

... Caledon Bay was finally selected as the site for the OP and on August 4th the Aroetta again in the area known as ‘Gray’s Camp’, at the head of the arm or Bay to the east of Middle Point in Caledon Bay.19 The whole of the native force was landed here and a site selected for a house and garden - the house to be built of stringy bark. Good water was found in shallow wells close to the beach.

Some 15 days, from August 4 to 20th, were devoted to the establishment of the OP including the building of a house and garden....

As soon as the work ... had been completed the Aroetta proceeded on a final patrol around Cape Arnhem into the Arafura Sea west as far as the Liverpool River. Visits were made to the outlying islands, including Wessell Island, Elcho Island, and the Crocodile Group [Milingimbi], and the natives who had been recruited for the special force were repatriated and rewarded with presents of knives, tomahawks and tobacco....

... On September 19th Sergeant Elkington was placed in charge of the OP at Caledon Bay and the Aroetta proceeded to Groote Eylandt en route for Townsville to refit.

At Groote Eylandt in response to reports from RAAF personnel who had reported strange lights an extended search was conducted, covering three sides of the Island with nil results. The dates on which these lights were reported coincided with those on which electrical storms were observed.

On September 23rd a course was set for Pera Head on Cape York Peninsula, a landfall was made on September 25th and in the afternoon of that day the ship anchored at Mapoon in Port Musgrave.

[p37] At Mapoon reports were brought in of a B17 of the US Air Corps which had recently crashed, and under orders from NE AREA RAAF the ship remained at Mapoon for

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19 Fred Gray during the 1930s worked as a trepanger around Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, selling his harvest at Thursday Island.
several days while a search was conducted for a missing member of the crew, without result. On September 30 the voyage was resumed. On October 15th the Aroetta arrived in Townsville after an absence of nearly ten months on patrol.

Medical work among natives

As no medical officer was carried on account of the small size of the Special Reconnaissance Unit, adequate supplies of medical equipment and a small dental kit, had to be carried for the crew in case of accident or sickness.

Besides this however, a considerable amount of medical work was carried out regularly among the natives, and for this purpose large quantities of drugs and other medical stores had been provided ... in view of value of medical attention among natives in promoting goodwill and winning friendship. These people, especially the children, suffer severely from yaws and from many other tropical diseases. The lesions of yaws disfigure and deform but fortunately are readily cleared up by a few injections of certain arsenical preparations, particularly NAB which is administered intravenously. Large supplies of NAB had been provided by Army for this work, and a full medical kit was always kept in readiness. At almost every anchorage throughout the whole of the 16 months covered by our patrols, the people would bring their sick, especially the children who were suffering from yaws, for injections and other treatment.

As an instance of the faith of these natives may be cited a case that occurred just before the ship sailed finally from Caledon Bay in April. A woman was brought to me who had had her arm badly broken in two places by the falling limb of a tree. No apparatus was available, and at first I was at a loss as to what I could do. At length however, a sheet of stringy bark was obtained and by cutting this so that it could be bent to form an elbow joint, a good and comfortable splint was improvised; and after the rather painful task of setting the broken bones had been completed and a sling made from a strip of calico, the woman went off happy.

Although this work was exacting and laborious and occupied a considerable amount of time, it was one of the most important influences in maintaining the friendship and goodwill of the people throughout the area, and therefore, apart altogether from the human aspect, well repaid the labour and expense involved. Even the most difficult and otherwise unapproachable people are often won over by attentions to their children, and at length the natives learn to depend [sic] to trust the man who will always help them, and will bring all their troubles to him.

Raising of the native force for Guerilla fighting and scouting

Simultaneous with the reconnaissance of the coast of Arnhem Land and the establishment of a coastal patrol to cover this area during the early part of 1942, the work of raising and training the nucleus of the native force, which was laid down as one of the primary tasks of this Unit, was carried out...

[p38] ... It is proposed now to set out in more detail the problems associated with this task, and the organisation of the detachment which was formed, as well as to give some account of its training and work.

(i) Natives of Arnhem Land.

... Westwards from the Liverpool River the native population has been already decimated by contact with white men and Asiatics, chiefly cattle men, buffalo shooters, beche-de-mer fishermen, pearlers and beachcombers. East of the Liverpool and particularly east of Cape Stewart the native population is much more numerous and more primitive,
and in parts of central Arnhem Land, around Arnhem Bay across to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, the natives are still living unmodified, the lives of primitive nomadic hunters.

These people are great hunters and great travellers. Many of them are fierce and warlike in disposition, especially the so-called Caledon Bay people, the Balamumu or Tjapu who inhabit the country extending from the south of Arnhem Bay across to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, including the hinterland of Blue Mud Bay and Woodah Island.

The density of the population is nowhere great in Arnhem Land. In 1935 I made a rough census, while engaged under commission from the Commonwealth Government, and estimated that these were then approximately only 3000 natives in Arnhem Land of which about 1500 lived in the country east of Cape Stewart. About 3 or 600 inhabited Caledon and Blue Mud Bay areas and the hinterland.

From time immemorial these people have been engaged on 'intertribal' warfare on a guerilla basis. They are extremely skilful in stealthy approach and specialise in attack from ambush. They are never at peace for any length of time, but are almost constantly organising raids, which take the form of long forced marches into the territories of their intended victims. These raiding parties are called *miringo* and at these times they travel generally in a single file, until the party is near its objective when they call a halt, while they send out two selected scouts called *miling* or spies to reconnoitre the enemy camp, to determine numbers and dispositions of the enemy.

The *miling* or scouts return to the main body which has meanwhile remained in concealment and report the results of their reconnaissance, and a plan of attack is formulated. The objective is to swoop suddenly upon the camp, attacking generally under cover of darkness, in the hour just before dawn. When they are about to attack the *miringo* or raiding party smear their bodies with white clay, which they say has the effect of exaggerating their numbers when seen in the dim light, and helps to throw their enemies into a state of confusion. The raiders now surround the camp and at a prearranged signal, rush in with [p39] a war cry calculated further to demoralise the surprised camp. They kill as many people as they can and then break away. The party disperses, each man making his escape individually so that it is the more difficult for the victims to organise and pursue them effectively. Later the *miringo* remuster at a rendezvous and travel by forced marches back to their own territory.

It has been pointed out elsewhere in this report that the natives are very different in many respects from the typical Australian aborigines, for they have long had contacts with Malay, and probably even earlier Proto-Malay peoples, who visited the area from Indonesia, coming down with the North west monsoon and returning with the South east. These contacts probably extended over hundreds of years and left a distinct impression on the people of the south coast of the Arafura Sea and the Gulf Coast of Arnhem Land. Much of their culture, their social and religious life as well as material culture, shows distinctly the profound effect of these contacts. The importance of this background will be appreciated too when these people are considered as potential guerilla soldiers. They are bold and fearless, they have long been accustomed to defend their country and their birthright against invaders from the sea, and are skilled in the practise of guerilla warfare, and often depend for their lives upon their skill. They live by their prowess in hunting, in laying an ambush, and in bushcraft.... Just as the natives of Arnhem Land differ greatly from those of all other parts of Australia by reason of these earlier contacts with more advanced peoples ... so also the people [are] ... not homogeneous.

There is a definite change in the people along the north coast - the lines of demarkation occurring in the vicinity of Cape Stewart. To the west ... the people were readily accessible to the Japanese who invaded the coast from 1936 onwards; they welcomed the Japanese and
NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTAL PATROL

traded their women to them, becoming demoralised and degraded by their contacts with these crews.

But to the east of Cape Stewart the demeanour of the natives was more reserved. It is true that they sold turtle and fish, and that they cut firewood for the Japanese, in return for tobacco and knives, but they could not be induced to trade their women; they sometimes quarrelled with the Japanese.

Farther east the attitude of reserve became intensified, until south of Arnhem Bay and at Caledon Bay the show of friendship was only superficial. It was the friendship of treachery, and as soon as the crews relaxed their vigilance the natives attacked and killed them. These people proved themselves masters in the art of dissembling; they approached vessels off the coast in their canoes. If their approach was seen, they were merely on a friendly visit, unarmed, for their weapons lay concealed on the floor of the canoe. But if they were not detected they boarded the ship, rushed the crew, and overwhelmed them. This ruse succeeded over and over.

[p40] These people formed the raw material from which [the] guerrilla fighting unit was to be formed. They needed no tuition in the more subtle forms of ambush or in the harassing of an enemy. They needed only to be organised and led. I knew them well, for I had lived, hunted and travelled with them, knew their language and had their confidence, and believed that I could lead them. But in the art of guerrilla fighting it was they who taught and I who came to learn.

Many of their guerrilla raids could be taken as models of how such raids should be carried out - models in the ingenuity of their conception [and] in the minute detail of their clever organisation, as well as in the brilliance of their execution.

(ii) Organisation of Nucleus of Native Force.

On the initial voyage from Townsville to Darwin in January 1942 a call had been made at Derby River to pick up Raiwalla, a native of the Glyde River district who had served with me on two long expeditions in Arnhem Land....

In Darwin Raiwalla, though a full-blooded aboriginal, had been enlisted in the Army (No D 198) in February 1942, and he served constantly as my right hand man and as leader of the native detachments, in the raising of which he also rendered sterling assistance until April 1943. He accompanied me on all patrols on foot, and in addition, frequently took charge of detachments of the native Units and himself led many patrol and reconnaissance tasks, sometimes of an extended nature. Raiwalla was a fine hunter and was renowned throughout eastern Arnhem Land for his prowess as a spear fighter in single combat, though by this reputation he commanded the respect of the natives of the special force, he could be depended on at all times to act as peacemaker in quarrels or disputes....

Reference was made above to the native Bindjarpuma and his group at Arnhem Bay. Bindjarpuma had some experience of white men while serving with a police detachment at Caledon Bay, in 1926, and had since retired to the hills behind Arnhem Bay, his own clan territory, where he had established himself as leader of a band of outlaws, who waged an almost constant war with neighbouring groups. They conducted frequent raids and were responsible for many deaths in the area. In 1935 I organised a patrol and followed this man into his stronghold, made friends with him and remained some time with him. It was later reported in a communication from the NT Police to Dept of Interior that this man had succeeded in eluding me during the whole of the period in which I was working in this area, to stamp out tribal warfare. I had not been in the area since but I now made it my first objective in 1942 to re-establish contact with Bindjarpuma and to enlist him and eleven picked men from his group. If the statement that I had been unable to make contact with
this man, and that he had been able to elude my patrols, had been true, my influence among
these people would have [p41] so dwindled that formation of a really effective fighting
group would have been impossible. It was imperative that in each area where recruiting was
to be carried out, the men chosen should be representative of the dominant fighting men of
the area and these men trained and disciplined. Some of these had of course to be left to
guard their territory in the meantime....

... The enlistment of this Arnhem Bay Group was completed on March 7th and we
were then ready to proceed to Caledon Bay.... Bindjarpuma had been long engaged in raids
upon his neighbours, and he was therefore very bad friends with the people of Caledon Bay.
As these peoples represented the best of the fighting tribes, and I intended to work with
them in one unit, it was essential that they should first be brought together. In order to
effect this, and to avoid the possibility of a clash between them when I was not there to
prevent this, I set off overland on March 8th for Caledon Bay with this detachment.

At the onset I had promised the natives that I would remain with them and lead them
myself, for they knew me well and I knew their language, so that they had no fear that they
might be led into a trap as might otherwise have been the case.

The journey across to Caledon Bay was a severe one, for the men were in first class
training and vied with one another to set the pace. It is necessary on at least some of these
journeys to take the initiative from the leaders and force the pace for them in order to retain
their respect as a leader. This is not difficult for a few hours, but to sustain it over two long
days without letting up and without appearing to flag or tire is a very severe ordeal.

Once again no natives were found at Caledon Bay, but they were eventually located
inland behind Trial Bay. Wongo, the head man of this territory is a man with an influence
greater than that of any other native I have known, and a reputation certainly never
approached by that of any other Australian aborigine. This he owes even more to his
remarkable personality than to his renown as a fighting man. I had not seen Wongo since
1937 and the old man greeted me now like a son. When I had seen him first I had had to
convey him a message from the Government, that it was not pleased with him, and that he
must maintain peace in his territory. But in spite of his sinister reputation for treachery,
and the many attacks he was reputed to have organised on luggers and other small craft in
these waters, I liked and respected him for his strength and character. I found him at all
times straightforward; he never broke a promise to me and I felt that I had his regard and
respect. In 1935 when I first met Wongo, three of his sons - Natjialma, Mau and Ngarkaiya
were serving life sentences in Fanny Bay Gaol for the killing of Japanese. I promised to
take a message to his sons, whom I believed to have been wrongly sentenced, and in the
following year I was able to secure their release and to take them back to their territory.20

This time I had to tell the old man that I had come to enlist his support in preventing
the Japanese from landing in his country, to tell him that the Government now wanted his
sons to kill Japanese, and to recruit some of his men for service and training. He promised
me at once the men I wanted, and [p42] offered me five of his six sons who were with him,
to serve with me, including the three men, Natjialma, Mau and Ngarkaiya.... But it took
some time to convince these people that they could really kill Japanese who landed in this
territory, without incurring the ire of the Government, and being visited with yet another
punitive expedition, and Mau for long remained sceptical. But that night the ring of iron on
iron, the sound of forging of the 'shovel' spears were heard in camp, and the rasp of

20 For further details concerning the influential men and their Darwin trials, see Bermdt R.M. and Bermdt
Plate 6. Concealing a fuel dump by the sea. Wongo is the seated person (Thomson Call, NMV).
whetstones on spear blades. From this time on, it would have been difficult indeed for even a large enemy landing party to have progressed far in the territory of these warrior people.

Negotiations were carried out between Bindjarumpa's group, now working as a section with the ship, who were camped apart, for the formal 'squaring up' to settle their differences and to terminate the feud. In the meantime, to avoid a possible clash, I lived ashore with these people in their camp.

This 'squaring up' means a formalised ordeal, in which the culprits or scapegoats in each group, who are held responsible for the killing of a member or members of the other group, become the champions and run the gauntlet of spears thrown at them before the assembled people. It is a spectacular pageant like a joust of which there is no time to tell here. If the culprit escapes and comes through the ordeal unmarked by a spear, he must still present his thigh to be speared, and a spear is thrust right through the leg muscles to let blood flow, after which the wrong which has been suffered is considered to have been expiated and friendly relations are re-established between the parties. After this ordeal two of our men were crippled for a couple of weeks, but the bad blood had passed and the group had been brought together to work in unity.

It may appear that this has little to do with the raising of a native Unit, but as the relationship which exists between the members of the group and the success of team work depend on the appreciation of just these things, it is essential to understand native customs and behaviour. To have the full confidence of these complex 'primitive' people sufficiently to lead them it is necessary to know their language and be prepared literally to live and work with them. In return, however, they will give loyalty and an unswerving devotion to duty which, if it rests on personal respect and attachment and has something of hero worship, is nevertheless very real. Properly led, under the severe conditions of their own territory, these people are capable of enduring hardships and suffering sustained privations without flinching, that would be impossible to most white soldiers.

Discipline, which is essential in this, as in any other organisation, rests on very subtle factors, and is closely linked with that regard and respect which must be won and which the native himself must bestow.

Enlistment of the force required was now completed, and the fifty natives of this small force were organised roughly into sections on a territorial basis, so that each section would be led by a man from its own group.

The names of the personnel of this force, and their territories are set out here with other data in tabular form.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Native Name</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Children male/female</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Mildjingi</td>
<td>Glyde River</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enlisted as a soldier at Darwin (D178) 1942. Paybook No 2976; a renowned fighting man who accompanied me across Arnhem Land on foot in 1935, and was with me in 1936-7 on many long journeys on foot.</td>
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<td>River/Location</td>
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**[Details omitted from original]**

Members of group 'outlaws' led by Bindjarpuma during 1936-37, No 2 Section.

Raiwala (No 1) and Wurawul accompanied me on a journey across Arnhem Land on foot in 1935 and both went with me throughout the whole of the work carried out in Arnhem Land during 1936-37

Bindjarpuma is a man of the Wanguri clan of Arnhem Bay. He went to the Caledon Bay about 1926 with a party of police, and has for some years lived the life of an outlaw in the hinterland of Arnhem Bay. He has carried out much guerilla fighting and figured in many avenging expeditions, so that his name has become feared throughout Arnhem Land. He is a great traveller as well as a renowned leader of a fighting band. The best of his group, the men whose numbers range from 22-31 were recruited with Bindjarpuma, these men served with Unmut for six months. They were at Katherine; at the OP at Guinare Bluff with Sgt Elkington throughout, on Maria Island, the McArthur River and Groote Eylandt and O. They were returned to their own territory and released in September, 1942.
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<td>44</td>
<td>Bullambi</td>
<td>Wanguri</td>
<td>South Arnhem Bay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Kumuk</td>
<td>Dallwango</td>
<td>South Arnhem Bay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Mangirri</td>
<td>Gunibidgi</td>
<td>South Arnhem Bay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Nos 32-37 are all sons to Wongo of Caledon Bay. Natjialma, Mau and Ngarkalya were released from Fanny Bay Gaol, Darwin, in 1936, on my recommendation to Commonwealth Government and taken back by me to Caledon Bay, 1936.

Crossed Arnhem Land and accompanied me on extensive journey on foot in 1935. No 38-44 all sons of one man of the Blue Mud Bay area, Kararambo.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Recruited Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Yirindilli</td>
<td>Gunibidgi</td>
<td>Liverpool River</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Liverpool River area: belong to No 1 Section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Kuninbai</td>
<td>Gunibidgi</td>
<td>Liverpool River</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Liverpool River area: belong to No 1 Section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Wulngana</td>
<td>Tjapu</td>
<td>Inland, South of Caledon Bay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recruited at the Roper River where he was a fugitive from his people 24/3/42. In expedition of 1935.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Marrilyauwoi</td>
<td>Wagillak</td>
<td>Walker River, Blue Mud Bay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Djungi</td>
<td>Tjapu</td>
<td>Trial Bay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Son of Takaira [sic] who was released from Fanny Bay Gaol but who never returned home. Enlisted on second visit to Trial Bay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

[1] Indicates Section Leader, Raiwalla, No 1 Section, gathered from the area extending from the Liverpool River, Cape Stewart, the Derby, Glyde and Goyer Rivers, to Buckingham Bay. No 14, Gatepapoi, belongs to No 2 Section below. See also note on history of Raiwalla. Nos 1-13 plus 15, 16, 47 & 48. Total of 17 men.

[2] Section Leader, No 2 Section, consisting of 21-31 plus Nos 14, 17, 18, 19, & 20, a total of 16 men.

Nos 21-31 have been issued with wires for spears, knives and axes.

[3] Natjialma, leader of No 3 Section, which includes Nos 32-46, plus 49, 50 and 51. Total of 18 men. Natjialma, Mau and Ngarkaiya figured in the attacks on the Japanese at Caledon Bay some years ago, which had led to the disturbances of 1933-34. All are renowned fighters. These people were recruited in the Caledon-Blue Mud Bay Area. All natives 32-34 issued with wire for spears and with knives and fishing lines and hooks. Nos 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 44, 46 & 48 issued with axes.

[4] These groups are localised totemic clans; the social grouping in Eastern Arnhem Land is aberrant and there is nothing exactly comparable with the 'Tribe' of most other parts of Australia.
Arms, equipment and training of native police

[p48] It was not intended ... in training these nomadic people, to attempt to turn them into orthodox soldiers or train them in parade ground tactics, although they were drilled with the crew, but merely to instil into them the elements of discipline, so that they would be capable of carrying out scouting work in conjunction with regular formations.

Nor was it intended at any stage to arm them with rifles. It was decided to encourage them to use their own weapons, the spear and the spear thrower, which they understood, and with which they displayed great skill; furthermore, in jungle warfare, where a small force was expected to harry a much larger and stronger force, this would have taken the form of harassing tactics chiefly from ambush - picking off sentries and stragglers from the main body, killing men as they went to water, killing scouts and attacking detachments and OPs. And for these tactics, which would be carried out largely at night, the effect on enemy morale, of having men constantly picked off or wounded with spears would be considerable, particularly as they would have no means of assessing the numbers of so elusive an enemy.

The natives were encouraged therefore, to carry as a full complement of weapons, one spear thrower, three fighting spears, either 'shovel nosed' or stone tipped, and one wire fish spear, so that they would be prepared at any time to hunt fish or game, as well as to fight. In addition, certain items of equipment, directed to assist and encourage the members of the detachment in hunting for food and game, were issued on a set scale. These consisted of tomahawks, knives, fishing lines and fish hooks. Two pieces of strong calico and a blanket were also issued to each man. Each of the men were issued with a number carved on a brass disc around his neck.

Each man received a weekly issue of at least three sticks of tobacco at all times. When they were carried with the ship, or were working in camp, so that they could not hunt, they were issued regularly with rice, flour and some tinned food. At other times they hunted for their food and in this way alone they do not become dependent and so lose their skill in hunting and stalking, the qualities which are essential to the successful operation of such a force.

Each day for weeks the crew of the vessel were sent ashore regularly for rifle and bayonet drill to maintain their alertness and efficiency, and to prepare them to handle a boarding party. At the same time as this work was in progress, the native force was turned out on parade and drilled in elementary movements. They were taught to come to attention, to dress, and to know right and left turns. Regular inspections of kit and weapons were held to ensure that these were well maintained. It was, however, considered highly undesirable to teach the natives to move in any orthodox formations which would at once reveal to an enemy the fact that they had been trained. They were instructed, in the event of a landing, to return the metal discs with their numbers inscribed which had been issued to them, and to abandon the calico which might suggest a 'uniform' or at least indicate the presence of white men in the area.

None was issued with rifles or taught to handle these with the exception of Raiwalla who was an enlisted soldier, and who was trained to use rifle and bayonet, and carried out regularly the duties of sentry, but the natives were given frequent demonstrations on the avoidance of MG [machine gun] fire. They were also shown that an MG nest was as vulnerable to attack by stealth as another post.

All the natives were however instructed, and given practice in the use of Molotov cocktails, in view of the plan to employ these to attack aircraft on the ground or fuel dumps if the [p49] enemy should attempt to occupy the aerodromes on the islands off the coast. The natives proved adept in the handling of Molotov cocktails and looked forward eagerly to an opportunity of demonstrating their skill.
The members of the native detachment were issued with the following items of personal equipment - two pieces of calico to serve as loin cloths or 'lava lavas', fishing lines, fish hooks, wire for fish spears, sheath knives and what tomahawks were available, the object of this issue being to assist the natives in hunting and fishing and so to render them more independent of stores supplied from the ship, since, with efficient equipment less time was required to secure game, fish, 'sugar bag' or wild honey, and vegetable foods. In addition, it was intended by this means to demonstrate to the Solomon Island natives, as well as to the white personnel, the methods of food capture and food preparation employed by these aborigines.

Blankets were issued to the initial nucleus of the native forces, but these were used only when they were aboard the ship or in working or training camps close to the main party. At all other times the natives travelled with their weapons and tomahawks only, for these people are expert in the arts of travelling light and living hard.

The work of organising and leading the natives was my own special responsibility as I was the only one who knew the natives and their language, and particularly because ... discipline among these people depends on personal relationships and loyalties. This is probably to a large extent the reason why station owners and cattle men speak with disparagement of the loyalty and constancy of the aborigine; they very often work the natives, but rarely understand them, and there appears to the native no very good reason why he should give the dog-like loyalty and devotion of which he is capable to men who openly show their contempt for him.

During the months of 1942 in which we were engaged primarily in raising and training these natives, I took advantage of every opportunity of keeping up and improving my own training in bush travel, in hunting and living on the country. I made a number of long severe patrols on foot with the natives and during this time I accustomed myself to travelling long distances in the bush, even across the rugged stony hills, barefooted, and strove to keep my feet hard by travelling wherever possible without boots. The object of this training was to equip myself to lead the natives on night raids without leaving boot tracks to indicate the presence of a white leader with the natives.

The necessity for this rigid training may now be doubted, but it must be remembered that at this time, during 1942, we were preparing to meet a Japanese landing which seemed almost certain, and to continue to live and fight on in this country it was necessary to be prepared to live like a blackfellow. I had already lived, travelled and hunted with these people for more than two years, almost as one of themselves, and it did not take long to adapt myself again. We were able to promise the natives that they would not be short of tobacco, and to assure [sic] this we obtained several hundredweights of trade tobacco. They in turn agreed to remain with me and to help to feed the white personnel if the Japanese should land on the eastern flank.

The great value of a detachment of this kind lies in the astonishing capacity possessed by the natives to find their way at night through dense rough country without landmarks and without the use of a compass. In this way they are able to reach an objective noiselessly and unerringly, to attack, to disperse and to re-assemble at a rendezvous in a way that would not be possible to any white scouts, however well trained they were. I have swum mangrove fringed creeks with these people in the [p50] darkness to reach objectives which with white troops would have been impossible, and would merely have resulted in their being injured and hopelessly lost. But it has to be admitted that they could only be led by men who knew them and whom they would follow without question.
Operations of native unit

During 1942 a thorough reconnaissance was carried out by the natives of both banks of the Roper River, as well as of the Hodgson and the Wilton. An extended patrol was carried out by a small party (detached at the Roper River), right across Arnhem Land to the Crocodile Islands on the Arafura Sea where a rendezvous was made with the ship party and was kept.

The whole of the detachment of 51 natives was transported to Katherine in anticipation of a similar role on the west flank, where Captain Morgan and his party had already been working in advance... Subsequently ... a detachment of 12 natives under Bindjarpuma (No 21 to 31 and No 14) were stationed with Sergeant Elkington at the OP at Gulnare Bluff for more than two months, and did excellent work not only in watching the entrance and approaches to the Roper River, but also in carrying out extensive scouting patrols to the north and south.

Subsequently, these same men were divided into three detachments of which two were on the Aroetta and of these two detachments, one was landed at Maria Island while the ship proceeded to the McArther River. The second detachment was employed on an extensive reconnaissance of the mouth and estuarine reaches of the McArther River and of Vanderlin Island in the Pellew Group, and the third detachment accompanied me to Adelaide River, and thence across the Hodgson overland by MT to Borroloola on the McArther.

Further reconnaissance with this native force was carried out on Groote Eylandt at various times in order to familiarise the natives with the approaches to the landing areas which might have been occupied by enemy forces.

Some reference has been made to the question of discipline among the members of this native Unit, and the importance of maintaining control and authority. With one exception the discipline and obedience of these natives was very good, but, once in the initial stages of the work with the native force, a detachment from Caledon Bay, who afterwards proved themselves among the best and most reliable men, absented themselves and finally set off overland to their own territory. This was in part due to the dislike of discipline and restraint natural in a nomadic people whose territory has never been brought under administrative control, and partly due to interference by white men on the Roper River. While the Unit was camped at the Four Mile Landing the owner of Urapunga Station reported to the Police at Roper Bar his premises had been entered, and alleged that clothing and food had been stolen. Without any evidence other than the supposition of his own station boys he accused the Caledon Bay members of the native force of having entered his property. Subsequent enquiry proved that the Caledon Bay natives had nothing whatever to do with this matter. Investigation showed that the building had not been locked, that the station natives were left in charge, and also that none of the tracks resembled those of the Caledon Bay detachment. It appeared probable that the sophisticated natives of the settled station country, or the Roper area, who were well aware of the sinister reputation of the Caledon Bay natives, against whom several excursions of a punitive character had already been organised by Roper Police, took advantage of the presence of these people in the area, knowing that suspicion would inevitably fall on them. The Police Constable then at the Roper River made a call at the Aroetta during my absence inland at Katherine with Lieutenant Palmer, when an NCO only was in charge of the ship. [p51] The Caledon Bay and other natives were camped at this time beside the ship, but when the Police took the unwarranted action of visiting the ship in my absence the natives whose previous experience of the Police was when they came to their territory and shot up the area, became uneasy, and a few days later slipped away and set off overland for Caledon Bay.
NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTAL PATROL

A few weeks elapsed before I was able to return to their territory, but on 8th June they arrived home at the camp at Trial Bay when the Aroetta was anchored there. Wongo, the head man of this area, was then summoned, and a meeting was held at which all the natives, including those who had been AWL, was held and the seriousness of this action in returning without permission was instilled into them. Tact and compromise has to be used to temper discipline among these natives, as indeed must be the case among all primitive people, especially those of a proud and warlike disposition. This incident actually was a landmark in the development of this force, for the old men of the group upheld me staunchly and as a result, all the men who had returned home volunteered to serve again, and returned with the vessel for a further period of work on the Roper and McArthur Rivers, where they completed their service with credit. A few days before the ship sailed the natives made a ceremonial presentation to me of a sacred object of great value which is one of their methods of expiating a serious offence, generally a killing, when it is desired to make peace and avoid the starting of a blood feud.

In this way, therefore, by gaining the support of Wongo of Caledon Bay and the other influential old men, and by establishing among the people themselves, a sense of pride in service and shame in the idea of breaking faith in the undertaking that they agreed to complete, this incident was turned to good account. It should be added that these people served for the remainder of the reconnaissance with credit. None deserted again and all were eventually returned to their home territories in the Aroetta.

But this was not the only work on which this force was engaged, and after the completion of the reconnaissance of eastern Arnhem Land including Groote Eylandt, the Roper and McArthur Rivers and the outlying Islands, the members of the native unit were employed at Caledon Bay on the construction of a house and store at the OP and in the clearing and making a garden there.

By September 1942, when the Aroetta was due to proceed to Townsville to refit, the most important part of the work of the natives had been completed. The nucleus of the force required had been trained as far as it was considered advisable ... and they were then returned to their own country where it was considered that they would serve a useful function in spreading amongst the members of their own groups the information as to what would be required of them in the event of a Japanese force landing in this region. Arrangements were also made to maintain regular contact with representative members of this skeleton force in the future, through the OP ... at Caledon Bay.

In conclusion I feel that I cannot leave this subject without stressing the importance of the work carried out by these people, who, from a sense of duty and goodwill gave unselfishly all that they had to give, their service and their freedom. The other side of the picture is too often shown. While the work that I have described was in progress ... [p52] the following, which was published in Sydney on March 15, 1942, is typical of the statements which appeared in the press regarding these natives:

... Thousands of wild aborigines in the Coastal Areas of the vast Northern Territory constitute one of the greatest potential fifth columns. These wild blacks ... for gifts of tobacco and food would be willing to aid anybody, whether white or yellow....

But these people whose territory had never been brought under control, whose only experience in many cases, of the white man was of the police who had visited them intermittently to carry out punitive raids to 'disperse' them, who left voluntarily the peace and security of their country, their wives and the children who mean more than life to them, gave their liberty for month after month. Freely, and without complaint, they submitted to the rigorous discipline, and without pay, without any guarantee of reward, with only the
most primitive equipment, and without arms or weapons, they gave their best in loyalty, unrelenting hard work and sweat, in the stronghold of the people from whom they had known neither justice nor understanding. When they had killed Japanese before in defence of their own territories they had been exiled and imprisoned. But now, they prepared again to kill Japanese with weapons that they forged for themselves, beating out their spearheads, cold, from odds and ends of metal such as old drums, water tanks from wrecked ships, old horse shoes, and even from odd pieces of galvanised water pipe.

I would be failing in my duty therefore if I did not bring forward for very special notice the names of two men who gave unswerving loyalty, who displayed a devotion to duty that served as an example to all who worked with them. These men are Raiwalla, a native of the Gyle River, North-central Arnhem Land, and Natjialma of Caledon Bay, two full-blooded natives of Arnhem Land of whose outstanding service special mention is made in Section 14, in which they have been recommended for special awards.

Reconnaissance (Roper River & Booroloola [sic] areas)

[p53] Short reconnaissance reports on these areas, with maps prepared during the patrols, are included in Appendix IV at the end of this report.

Establishment of the O.P. at Caledon Bay

We arrived at Caledon Bay on August 4th [1942].... An excellent site, with a good water supply near the beach, was found at the north end of the Bay, to the east of Point Middle. Work was commenced at once on the construction of a house of two rooms, one of which was to serve as a store, and the other as living quarters. An area of about an acre was cleared, fenced with bush timber and sown with vegetables. The detachment of natives, still 50 strong, was employed on the clearing of ground for the garden, and [on] stripping stringy bark for the walls and roof of the house, the construction of which was carried out under Lieutenant Palmer's supervision.

The soil in this area is ..., relatively poor and sandy but to compensate for this we called at Low Rock on return from the Roper River and collected many bags and barrels of guano there which, though an unpleasant and laborious business, was well repaid, for the garden responded to an extraordinary degree and within eight weeks of clearing the area it was yielding beans and salads for the crew. During my visit to HQ I had obtained some vegetable seeds from Lieut Campbell at Adelaide River and also secured additional plants such as bananas and pawpaw at Groote Eylandt, Yirkala [sic] and Milingimbi when on patrol.

On account of the reputation of the Caledon Bay people for aggressiveness I undertook the work of establishing the garden and OP in person and remained there for two or three weeks to set up the organisation. As arrangements had been completed at Norforce for the refit of the ship in Townsville before the end of the dry season it was necessary that the departure ..., should not be delayed for long if the vessel was to return to her station before the onset of the north west monsoon.... Before the ship left the area the natives who had been recruited for the special unit had to be returned to their own territory and I planned in conjunction with this, to carry out a final extended patrol along the coast of the Arafura Sea as far west as the Liverpool River, and to visit Cape Stewart, the Crocodile Islands, and the Wessels, before leaving the area.

[p54] By August 18th work on the OP was completed and fully equipped, and Pte Kapiu ... Bosun on the Aroetta, was placed in full charge of the OP. Kapiu knew these natives well, was on a friendly footing with them and was therefore deemed the most suitable man to place in charge at this time.
On August 19th the *Aroetta* sailed on a further extensive patrol to the North. A visit was made to Port Bradshaw where a rough survey of the small boat or flying boat anchorages was made by Lieutenant Palmer and myself....

By September 13th this patrol of the Northern coastline and the Wessel Islands had been completed, the natives all returned home, and the vessel returned to Caledon Bay. Everything had progressed smoothly there, and Pte Kapiu had nothing of importance to report during the absence of the *Aroetta*.

It was now necessary to prepare the OP to carry on during the absence of the vessel in Queensland, and to establish two way WT communication. The set which had been impressed for the OP at Gulnare Bluff was not giving satisfactory service, and accordingly I sent the *Aroetta* to Groote Eylandt to the Civil Aviation Flying Boat Base and to the RAAF AOB to endeavour to have the set repaired and tested, and to secure other WT material. Meanwhile I remained at the OP to complete work on the station.

Very little additional WT equipment was available at Groote, but Sgt Harvey ... was able to establish satisfactory two way communication with Groote Eylandt with this equipment brought back with the ship. On account of the limited range of the set and the uncertainty of communication direct with Darwin it was considered advisable to arrange schedules with RAAF at Groote and to arrange for this station to pass to Advance HQ Norforce all reports and messages from the OP.

... Sgt Elkington was selected to take charge of the OP and to remain there during the absence of the ship in Queensland. It was estimated that the refit would occupy about six weeks, although as no priority was given to the work when the vessel first arrived in Townsville, a long delay occurred and this period was much extended. Sgt Elkington, who had been in charge of the OP at Gulnare Bluff and who had done excellent work there, volunteered to remain. It was not possible to leave the WT Operator as he was essential on the ship and in addition, the period of his secondment from the RAAF had long expired.

By September 19th all arrangements had been completed and Sgt Elkington was placed in charge of the OP with Operation Order 9 ... setting out the work with which he was entrusted. In particular, the maintenance of good relations with the natives of the area....

On September 20th the *Aroetta* sailed for Groote Eylandt en route for Townsville....

[p55] While the vessel was still at Townsville in December, a signal was received ... from Norforce reporting that Sgt Elkington had experienced some trouble with the natives at Caledon Bay, and requesting that steps be taken to reinforce the post with another white man. I was at this time absent from Townsville on duty, it was impossible to judge the nature of the trouble at that distance and ... the only white members of the Unit at this time were Palmer, who was in charge of the *Aroetta* and crew in Townsville and who did not know the natives of the Caledon Bay area, and myself (engaged in obtaining necessary stores and equipment to complete the refit)....

And in view of the implication of the post and the risk of seriously upsetting the whole of the organisation so painstakingly built up among the natives, it was decided that I should return by air to clear up the trouble, and leave Lieut Palmer to bring the ship around later.

I returned to Groote Eylandt by flying boat at the end of December, and proceeded to Caledon Bay on the following day by Civil Aviation Department's launch, which was made available for this purpose.

On arrival at Caledon Bay it was found that all but a few of the natives had dispersed, and that the trouble which had occurred was primarily caused by the NCO who had been left in charge. It was ascertained that although sliding doors with secure fastenings and a padlock had been provided, and that he was provided with a strong box with padlock, to
protect tobacco, he had been in the habit of leaving the post unlocked while he went on hunting trips in the bush. For some time it appeared, the natives had been helping themselves to small quantities of food and tobacco, and at first this had passed unnoticed. These depredations continued for some time, growing progressively larger, until they were at length discovered by Sgt Elkington, who then threatened the natives with a bren gun. Further troubles also occurred between this NCO and the natives with whom he adopted an aggressive and overbearing attitude. If it had not been for the goodwill and faithfulness of Natjialma of Caledon Bay ... and certain others of these people serious consequences would probably have resulted. As it was, Natjialma and Wongo, headman of Caledon Bay, kept the promise they had made to me, and guarded Sgt Elkington and the post until my return, dispersing the other natives in the meantime. The attitude of Sgt Elkington, and his unsuitability for work among natives, is indicated by entries in a log kept by him at the Caledon Bay Post, from which the following are quoted:

October 14 1942: Slippery and his gang turned up today, and this afternoon had a makarata at the beginning of which there was nearly a row, so had to put my foot down and use the .303 as umpire.

October 18th: Slippery very peeved because some one wants to pinch his wife, bullets are the only things these people understand, they need a good swift kick in the crutch.

It was particularly unfortunate that this NCO had been entrusted with the maintenance of this important post. Although the trouble which he experienced was largely brought about by his own actions, the signals which he originated at the time resulted in the visit of people to Caledon Bay who knew nothing of the territory or its people and which greatly increased the difficulty of the task I had to face when I returned.21

[p56] As soon as the Aroetta returned to Arnhem Land in charge of Lieut Palmer Sgt Elkington was returned to the ship, and I remained ashore at the Post to restore order and re-establish the good relations with the people. In spite of my own analysis of the cause of the small thefts of food and tobacco that had occurred, it was essential for purposes of discipline and control, that once the natives knew that I was aware that they had stolen these things, some adequate form of punishment should be meted out. Under the conditions which prevailed, this was a matter of some difficulty. I collected the most reliable of the men whom I worked with over a number of years and ordered them to muster all the men who had been concerned in the trouble at the OP in my absence, setting a time limit on the date of their return.

Bindjarpuma and his group were brought from Arnhem Bay on the Arafura Sea Coast, but it speaks much for the sense of justice and the faithfulness of these people, when once they have been treated with consideration and fairness, that every one of the natives concerned returned to Caledon Bay and not only admitted, but told me in detail, what he had done. One of the groups was formed into a labour gang, and given some weeks of hard labour in the garden. They were also required to make a payment of a large number of fish. During this period they were ordered to remain at the OP and were not permitted to leave the area on hunting expeditions. Every one of the natives, when the reason for this punishment was explained to him in his own language, admitted its justice and not one of them defaulted.

From the leader of another group, a large sea-going canoe was demanded, this being the only wealth that he possessed. It was an object of great material value involving probably

21 In fairness to Elkington, however, Thomson selected him and he enlisted at his request. Until this wet season episode, Thomson praised his actions.
days of search for a suitable tree, and then weeks of laborious work by a specialist in canoe building. But the most difficult problem, was that of dealing with Bindjarrpuma and his followers, the most warlike group in the area who were ... a predatory band of outlaws in the hills between Caledon Bay and Arnhem Bay. It was necessary to punish this man, to humiliate him, as well as deprive him and his group of material possessions of value and to do this publicly. But it was equally necessary to convince him of the justice of the penalty. This would only have been possible to one he knew well or fighting would have ensued. On his arrival I greeted him as usual and then told him to fall in with his group of followers in full fighting array. This he did with a fine show of pride, for he was now on his mettle before his rivals the people of Caledon Bay itself. Then I spoke to these people of the trust that they had betrayed, and finally ordered each man to lay down his spears on the ground. This was a tense moment. So far I had carried them with me, but to have lifted these spears at once would have been a fatal mistake. For a few minutes I talked to them, stressing the enormity of the betrayal of the trust I, as their leader, had placed in them, and the depth of my own humiliation. Then I told them that I was taking forty two of their finest spears in expiation of their offence. After this I sent them back to their camp. For twenty four hours they remained. If they had left instantly, this would have portended trouble. As it was, within twenty four hours we were on our old footing except that my prestige had greatly been increased throughout the whole area, but it had been touch and go. At such times it requires but one man to hook his spear in haste and the harm is done. Once finished, such a matter must never be held up before them; they must never be reminded of it or they have what they know as ‘heart jump’, and they go berserk. These are fighting people, killers, whom I would have liked to lead in action against the Japanese. In a week or two after my return there were nearly two hundred natives in camp at the OP once more.

For some time it was necessary for me to leave this post and on this occasion Pte Kapiu, who had carried out the duties here so well on a previous occasion, was made Acting Sgt and again placed in full charge. [p57] He carried out this undertaking with great credit.

On March 1st, after discussion at Norforce, the OP was withdrawn from Caledon Bay prior to the reorganisation of the Special Reconnaissance Unit and my relinquishment of command, on account of the difficulty of obtaining officers who could handle these people. [A report dated 8-11-42 on the establishment of an Operational Post at Caledon Bay is omitted (ms pp 57-8).]
NORTHERN TERRITORY COASTAL PATROL

[Special mention of meritorious service]

[p70] Sgt Kapiu, Native of Badu, Torres Strait Islands: Kapiu served throughout from October 1941 to May 1943 as Bosun on the A.K. Aroetta. He rendered exceptionally meritorious service and set a splendid example to his fellows. He was a fine seaman, experienced in sail, knew the Arnhem Land coast well, and became also an expert Vickers gunner. During the whole of these 19 months Kapiu served continuously without leave or respite.

When called for this special undertaking Sgt Kapiu was working at Thursday Island close to his home. Although then an old man he willingly left his work and his home from a sense of duty and loyalty. Of his fine service, his sense of responsibility and his great devotion to duty, I cannot speak too highly. Sgt Kapiu showed real qualities of leadership and by his loyal and unselfish service set a fine personal example to the other native members of the crew and to the whole of the native detachment.

Pte Makau, Polynesian Native from British Solomon Islands: Pte Makau was enlisted in the Solomon Islands with other members of the native crew for special service on a hazardous undertaking in 1941 and served until May 1943. He was in charge of the guard throughout the whole of his period of service and acquired considerable experience of armament. Pte Makau rendered service of outstanding merit. He set an example by his devotion to duty, which assisted materially in maintaining a high standard of discipline among the crew of this ship.

No D178 - Pte Raiwalla, Aborigine of Arnhem Land: For extraordinary loyalty, devotion to duty under difficulty and adverse conditions. Of all members of the Special Reconnaissance Unit, the service of this man stood apart. A full-blooded Aborigine, Raiwalla set an example of loyalty and selfless devotion to duty of a standard that few could follow. Pte Raiwalla, a nomadic Aborigine who had hitherto suffered only punishment for a native offence in an area not under control, gave his liberty, and placed service to country before love of family, which these people value more than life. [p71] Raiwalla was enlisted in Darwin in February 1942 and served until April 1943. He had established a reputation throughout Eastern Arnhem Land for his fighting prowess, and when enlisted he devoted the whole of his energies and influence to the work of undermining and destroying of Japanese influence and prestige and to assisting with the formation and training of the native Unit. Raiwalla made many long hard patrols over all sorts of country, often pressing on throughout the night without rest, in order to keep faith and to arrive at a rendezvous on time. This man's unflattering loyalty and whole hearted devotion, more than any other single factor, contributed to the building up of the native unit and the maintenance of order and discipline within this. Such was this man's sense of duty that when in the beginning of 1943 after his return to Townsville in the Aroetta, he found that his wife and two young children had been stolen and carried off into the Interior and he was offered his release, he refused to desert his post but insisted on remaining on duty until I relinquished command and he felt free from his obligation to remain with me.

This fine native soldier, by his high standard of duty and honour set an example to the crew of the Aroetta and to all members of the native force, and won the regard, affection and respect of every member of the unit.

Natjialma, Aborigine of Caledon Bay, Arnhem Land: Natjialma was one of the sons of the headman of Caledon Bay, five of whom were enlisted in the native force in 1942. Natjialma had been sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing of Japanese who had invaded his country some years ago, but in spite of this fact he served with the native force and was selected as leader of the Caledon Bay section. This man showed extraordinary
faithfulness throughout and rendered exceptionally meritorious service. Later when the OP was established at Caledon Bay he gave most valuable assistance in organising natives and maintaining order and discipline. It was largely faithfulness and sense of responsibility of this man that averted disaster to the NCO who was left in charge of the Caledon Bay Post in 1942.

Appendix 1

[This excerpt from the 28-page Appendix 1 is included to indicate the far-reaching expectations of Thomson concerning the involvement of Aboriginal warriors in Arnhem Land and island Southeast Asia. This was written in June 1941 before Japan entered the war.]

[p11] Preliminary reconnaissance

9 It is suggested that immediately approval for the development of the scheme under consideration has been obtained and the boat placed in commission, a careful reconnaissance be made of the coast-line ... It will enable an appreciation of the situation to be made, including an investigation of the extent of Japanese influence among the natives following the great influx of these people which occurred during 1936-7, when they took an unprecedented interest in this region and went out of their way to ingratiate themselves with the natives.

10 To attain this object, the Japanese lay for long periods close in shore and encouraged the natives to congregate at watering places - particularly at Elcho Island, Cape Stewart, the Liverpool and the King Rivers - and to come off to their vessels in canoes, by paying them for such trifling services as the cutting of firewood, the getting of water, fish, turtles, etc, at rates out of proportion to the value of the service rendered.

11 ... It will be appreciated that although their skill in bushcraft is of a high order, comparatively few of these men would be suitable for this work away from their own territories, and that these must be chosen with care. They cannot be drafted at a moment and they should not be collected into a regular military camp.

12 As I know the language of these people well and can trust and depend upon them, it is proposed that certain of their number may be of value in assisting to set up the coast watching organisation on the Western Australian side. [p12] There are some Arnhem Land natives who have previously had contact with natives from the West side of Darwin, and these men would be of special value in this connection, particularly as this area, though much better known than the Arnhem Land side, presents some difficulties in the establishment of an efficient coast watching system.

Training of personnel of Independent Companies in tropical bushcraft and in 'living on the country'

13 It is understood that one or more Independent Companies may be stationed in the vicinity of Darwin, and that ... personnel of this Company be taken in Sections and camped in a suitable area to be instructed in bushcraft under tropical conditions. For this work it is suggested that natives with special technological ability, such as good trackers, hunters, canoe builders, etc, should be selected to assist in equipping the personnel of the section on living in the bush under tropical conditions.

14 Natives can be employed to show them how to utilise bark and other materials for the erection of wet weather houses. Such houses of native materials are also more effectively camouflaged than tents. They are cooler and dispose of the need of cartage of
heavy equipment. Instruction can also be given in the building of rafts, canoes of bark and wood, in the use of swimming logs. The making of ropes and twine and the use of fire sticks can also be taught. It would also be of value to give each of the Sections some instruction in various methods of fish capture from improved traps, wires and fences, and to equip them to live on the country in emergency by some systematic instruction in the identification of food plants, shell fish and other resources on which a guerilla party might be obliged to depend.

15 The importance of a correct 'mental attitude' in living for long periods in the bush is stressed. This largely depends upon the confidence that comes with skill and experience. It is probable that a suitable area in which game, fish and vegetable foods are still abundant, could be selected as a training ground, reasonably close to Darwin. . . . [16 suggests areas where training possible.]

17 Concurrently, with the training of Sections of the Independent Company in tracking, bushcraft and in hunting and finding food, a selected band of native scouts might also be trained in the use of fire-arms and such elementary drill and discipline as would be necessary for efficient service and cohesion.

The organisation of native patrols

18 While it is felt that members of the Independent Company can readily be given instruction and practice in adapting themselves to live on the country or with a minimum of stores, in emergency, it is also felt that it will be very difficult to maintain a body of men, already highly trained and eager for active service, in a contented state for any considerable length of time. For this reason, it is proposed that if instruction is to be given in bushcraft as mentioned above, the main body should be stationed as near to civilisation and its amenities as is possible, that only small sections be taken to advanced camps at any one time, and that the period of time during which they remain detached in the bush away from the main body of the Company, should be strictly limited.

19 [p13] It is felt that this difficulty, which is anticipated in maintaining the morale of white troops chafing for action, has an important bearing on the suggestion to organise one or two sections of natives to be employed on patrol work, either for the flank protection of Darwin, in conjunction with Independent Companies, or for later infiltration in the Malay Archipelago.

20 The existence of such a body of scouts on a permanent basis would supply a continuity which would do much to compensate a frequent change in white personnel as the Company or Companies were moved elsewhere. They would form a useful standing body which could be employed for any long reconnaissance patrols that might be required, and they would form the nucleus of fighting patrols of natives which would be of incalculable value in active guerilla operations against the Japanese if an invasion should ever come to pass.

21 At the risk of labouring this point, the absolute necessity of permitting only specially selected officers, with proven ability in this direction, to handle natives, is pointed out. While I have no doubt whatever that the natives, especially a selected group from Arnhem Land, would make scouts without equal, and would also be capable of severely harassing a Japanese force by guerilla tactics, it would be worse that useless to place them under charge of an officer whose attitude was unsympathetic or who regarded them with contempt. Nowhere would the question of leadership be more important than in relation to these special troops.
22 In employing these natives it is also pointed out that they should never be brought into regular camp lines or barracks, nor should they be quartered in or near Darwin or any other large town. Where it is necessary to hold a section in one place they should be in an encampment of their own making, apart from other troops.

23 Where possible, their employment should be based on a modification of their own tactics and organisation. In other words, it is suggested that successful handling of these, and probably of most other native troops, rests on the ability of the officers to adapt their organisation and methods, and to modify these skilfully when employing them, rather than to endeavour to insist on training the natives in orthodox military methods. The officer can then employ his own initiative to bridge the gap.

Service in Malay Archipelago

24 In initial discussions on this scheme, I was under the belief that the possibility of using a small body of Arnhem Land natives for infiltration and reconnaissance in the islands of the Malay Peninsula was contemplated.

25 That the natives of Arnhem Land are peculiarly fitted for service in this area to the Northward is apparent. They have had long contact with the Malays from Timor and Macassar who were accustomed to visit them each year....

26 The natives have a tradition of respect for the Malays and many of the old men can still speak Malay. They state that many of their number visited Timor and Macassar with the Malays, returning to their own country with the return of the Malays in the following year.

27 It is not suggested that large numbers such as would depopulate their own country should be enlisted, but merely that a small body consisting of, say, one section, might in emergency perform valuable service in the Malay Archipelago, in conjunction with Independent Companies. [p 14] They would quickly establish themselves on a friendly footing among the native population, and once they had been landed and had dispersed in an area which it has intended to infiltrate or attack, their presence would not be easily detected by the Japanese intelligence in a situation where the presence of even a single European stranger would be very conspicuous, and would arouse immediate suspicion.

28 Finally, it is pointed out that in all approaches to the natives of Northern Australia the greatest care would be exercised in handling them. Contacts with them should be controlled at least to some extent and be made the responsibility of selected officers. Some elementary information instructing in native custom would probably be useful as a preliminary.

29 It should be stressed from the outset that nothing must be done which will disrupt or disturb the organisation of these people, especially in Arnhem Land, unless this is made unavoidable by the threat of active invasion in the Northern Territory. In these circumstances, invaluable service could be rendered by the natives in guerrilla warfare, on both flanks of Darwin, but the organisation of a small number of natives in the initial stages would be all that is required to serve as a Cadre or nucleus for any larger organisation which might have to be set in motion in extreme emergency.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Anti-aircraft</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFV</td>
<td>Armoured fighting vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHQ</td>
<td>Army headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>Auxiliary ketch</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOB</td>
<td>Air Observer Base</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWL</td>
<td>Absent without leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>Director of military operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSO</td>
<td>Director of special operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOC</td>
<td>General officer commanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSO</td>
<td>General staff officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHQ</td>
<td>Land headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMG</td>
<td>Light machine gun</td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Military district</td>
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<tr>
<td>MG</td>
<td>Machine gun</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Motor transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV</td>
<td>Mission vessel</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAOU</td>
<td>North Australia Observer Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>Novarsenobenzol</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Non-commissioned officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>OC</td>
<td>Officer commanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>Observation post</td>
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<tr>
<td>QMG</td>
<td>Quartermaster-general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>Small arms ammunition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSMG</td>
<td>Thompson sub-machine gun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Volunteer Defence Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WT</td>
<td>Wireless transmission</td>
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FINDING THE BLACK PARTS OF THE DIGGER LEGEND: A GUIDE TO ARCHIVAL SOURCES ON THE ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Robert A. Hall

Each year about one million visitors walk through the imposing entrance to the Australian War Memorial to pay homage at the shrine to the digger legend. It is a shrine of massive proportions on which the dominant society in Australia lavishes a large annual budget. It is also a shrine which reflects an almost exclusively white Australian view of the national war effort. Far fewer people visit the nearby memorial to those black Australians who helped defend their country. In sharp contrast to the Australian War Memorial, this modest memorial consists of a simple plaque affixed to a boulder in a piece of untouched bushland. And where is it? If one were to imagine the Australian War Memorial as a north Australian homestead, this memorial to black servicemen and women would be the wood-heap - 200 metres out the back door towards Mount Ainslie. Not surprisingly, those visitors to the Australian War Memorial are unlikely to come away with the belief that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (not to mention other visible minorities within the Australian community, like Chinese Australians) have a legitimate part in the digger legend. The galleries of the War Memorial contain few reminders of the military service of Aborigines and Islanders though, to be fair, their number and prominence is slowly growing.

In a sense, this lack of public acknowledgement of the role of Aborigines and Islanders is understandable. Many white Australians are ignorant of the scale of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national defence effort and even those who are aware of it sometimes attempt to dismiss it as being numerically insignificant when compared to the effort of white Australians. Others have argued that all Australians are represented within the Memorial and that therefore the service of Aborigines and Islanders should not be marked by a display which sets them apart from other participants. Neither of these arguments makes sense. Clearly, the criterion for determining that which is or is not displayed within the Memorial is its historical significance, not its numerical significance.

Until fairly recently the historical significance of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national war effort was not established. As a result, it has been easy for the Australian War Memorial to ignore pressure to include displays reflecting Aboriginal participation within the Memorial. However, much more work is now being done on the Aboriginal involvement in Australia's wars - this edition of *Aboriginal History* demonstrates that fact. This work will eventually cause the Australian War Memorial to invite Aborigines and Islanders to leave the wood-heap and come inside. Once that happens, those million visitors each year will start to see Aborigines and Islanders in new and refreshing ways.

An initial case for the historical significance of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the Second World War is made in Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*. Briefly, the case is that an understanding of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national defence effort during that war

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1 Sydney, 1989.
Plate 1. This photograph shows a squad of soldiers being drilled by their officer. The men were part of an Islander Light Infantry Battalion raised for the protection and security of the Torres Strait against Japanese attack. The Torres Strait was strategically important to the Australian defence effort in the Second World War because supplies of men and equipment bound for Darwin had to pass through it. The photograph is one of many depicting the military service of Aborigines and Islanders held by the Australian War Memorial photographic collection. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial (AWM). Negative number 119170.)
forces us to see Aborigines and Islanders and the post-war history of Black-White relations differently. It forces us to reject the widely held view that Aborigines and Islander people and white Australians are in a state of unremitting conflict. In the Second World War Aborigines and Islanders were faced with a number of options concerning their support or otherwise for the national defence effort, yet overwhelmingly, they chose to join with white Australians against the external enemy. They did this by serving in the Navy, Army or Air Force, by joining irregular guerilla units operating in northern Australia, by providing their labour to support the armed forces and by working in defence or defence related industries. The scale of their contribution - approximately 3000 served as formally enlisted personnel and another 3000 worked as civilian labourers - and the fact that many served for far less reward than their white comrades in arms, underlines their willingness to cooperate with whites in the national emergency. The history of the Aboriginal and Islander involvement in the Second World War also forces us to acknowledge that the digger legend, which encapsulates all that is supposed to be good and worthy in the Australian character, applies equally to Aboriginal and Islander people as to whites.

Ironically, further research on the historical significance of Aboriginal and Islander war service will draw heavily on the archives of the Australian War Memorial. Despite its seeming reluctance to give Aborigines and Islanders a place in the public galleries, the Australian War Memorial nevertheless holds in its archives a large amount of material relating to the military service of Aborigines and Islanders. Other major sources are the Melbourne, Canberra and Darwin offices of Australian Archives and the State Archives offices, particularly in Western Australia. Some guides to selected sources have been published, and they include material relevant to Aboriginal and Islander war service. They include two contributions to Aboriginal History by Myrna Deverall and Ros Fraser, and an Australian Archives publication, Relations in records: a guide to family history sources in the Australian Archives. Before considering what these holdings have to offer in relation to the Second World War, it is important for those researching aspects of the Aboriginal or Islander participation in Australia's war efforts to keep in mind that a distinction has to be drawn between Aboriginal and Islander military service:

• as formally enlisted members of the Navy, Army or Air Force;
• as informally enlisted members or de facto members of irregular forces; and
• as civilian labourers working directly for the defence forces or indirectly in the defence industrial effort.

Each of these categories of service requires the use of different groups of sources. For example, while records relating to the formal enlisted service of Aborigines and Islanders may be available in the Australian War Memorial, records relating to civilian war workers are more likely to be found in the records of the Department of the Interior held by regional offices of the Australian Archives, or in mission records.

Before proceeding to consider some of the collections in detail, a note of caution is necessary. Those interested in researching aspects of Aboriginal or Islander involvement in the Second World War will quickly find that the Army, Navy and Air Force made

2 For a more complete bibliography see Robert A. Hall, 'The relationship between Aborigines, Islanders and the Armed Forces in the Second World War', PhD thesis, 1987. Copies of this thesis are held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, the Australian Defence Force Academy library and the Private Records collection of the Australian War Memorial. A copy of the bibliography is held by the Canberra office of Australian Archives.


4 Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988, esp. sections 2.4 and 3.3.
LOCATING ABORIGINAL ARCHIVAL WAR MATERIAL

considerable use of the 'native' populations wherever they were deployed on operations. Although this opens some useful opportunities for comparative study, many will find that it leads to frustration. In many documents indigenes are referred to as 'natives' regardless of whether they are Aborigines, Papuans, Solomon Islanders, Malays or other peoples. Sometimes this makes it extremely difficult to discern the subject of the document or whether the contents refer to all 'natives' or just one particular group. Secondly, even among those documents which deal specifically with Aborigines and Islanders, the term 'native' is often used where much more complete identification is provided for white personnel. For example, in ships' logs it is not uncommon to find that white personnel are listed giving full rank and name while Aboriginal crewmen are lumped under a phrase like '... and three native boys'. This can be extremely annoying if one is trying to trace a particular individual. Researchers should also be aware that many of the file titles and documents contain terms and ideas which are offensive to Aborigines and Islanders and care should be exercised in their use.

An important first point of call for any researcher attempting to trace an individual's military career are the three service personnel records areas. Their addresses are:

**Navy:**
Director of Sailors Postings
Navy Office
Department of Defence
Russell Offices
Canberra ACT

**Army:**
Soldier Career Management Agency
366 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Victoria

**Air Force:**
Director of Personnel Services
Air Force Office
Department of Defence
Russell Offices
Canberra ACT

These organisations hold files on every sailor, soldier or airman who has ever been formally enlisted, from the Boer War to the present, and consequently their file holdings are vast. The files themselves are confidential and will only be released to the researcher with the written approval of the service man or woman concerned. However, persons who can establish their bona fides as researchers or authors may be able to obtain an extract or summary of the personal file which contains only those pieces of information which do not require privacy protection. In order to identify the right file the researcher needs to provide accurate information about the full name, service number and preferably, unit, of the individual concerned. The agencies may be unable to locate the correct file unless this information can be supplied. However, if they are able quickly to identify the right file they can provide a short extract of the service career which might include the person's dates of enlistment and discharge, the units in which the person served, promotions, honours and awards and so on. This information makes the job of tracing individuals through other
records much easier. It is also important for researchers to note that personal records maintained by these organisations do not show the race of the service man or woman they describe. Consequently, a request to these organisations to provide information on all Aboriginal and Islander service personnel will probably be met with a polite refusal because it cannot be done.

From Anzac Day 1993, those interested in tracing men who served in the First Australian Imperial Force should also write to the following address:

AIF Project  
Department of History  
University College  
University of New South Wales  
Australian Defence Force Academy  
Northcott Drive  
Campbell ACT

The AIF project has collected publicly available information on the members of the First AIF from a wide variety of sources including embarkation rolls and newspaper death notices and has brought these together on a single computer data base. Beginning on Anzac Day 1993 the project team will produce a print-out of all the information it holds on a particular individual for a small fee. Once again, the project team needs an accurate name before it can do this.

The Australian War Memorial

Records held by the Australian War Memorial relate mainly to military operations rather than to policy direction and the higher administration of the Army, Navy or Air Force. However, included among the records are many which refer to or provide background information about the military service of Aborigines and Islanders. The Australian War Memorial Research Centre collections contain many series of records and depending on the limits of the research being undertaken, most could be worth examination.

AWM 52, AWM 64 and AWM 78 are 2nd AIF and CMF unit war diaries, RAAF formation and unit records and reports of proceedings, HMA ships and establishments respectively, for the Second World War. These records consist of monthly diaries usually containing a brief daily entry for each Army or Air Force unit or Navy ship or shore establishment. Some with particular relevance to the service of Aborigines in the Second World War are:

AWM 52: 2nd AIF and CMF unit war diaries  
1/5/58 - Headquarters Torres Strait Force.  
1/6/8 - Headquarters Thursday Island Fortress.  
5/45/6 - 56 Port Craft Company.  
8/4/7 - Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.  
8/4/9 - Torres Strait Infantry.  
25/1/2 - 2/1 North Australia Observer Unit.
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Plate 2. G.W. Lambert, Trooper James Hubbard, Rough Rider - Australian Remount, January 1918 (AWM, pencil drawing, 19 x 30.4 cm, 02729).
AWM 64: RAAF formation and unit records
54/a - Operations Record Book, Service Police Unit (Darwin Section) 1942-1944/5.
16/3 - Operations Record Book, Number 51 Operational Base Unit, Groote Eylandt.
16/3 - Operations Record Book, Number 58 Operational Base Unit, Drysdale Mission.
9/8 - Operations Record Book, Number 313 Radar Station, Mornington Island.

AWM 78: Reports of proceedings, HMA ships and establishments
400/2 - Naval HQ Darwin War Diary.
401/1 - Darwin Lugger Sightings 1941.
Researchers attempting to trace individual sailors, soldiers or airmen and who have first obtained an extract of service from the relevant service personnel records office, can easily identify the appropriate war diaries, unit history sheets or ships' logs they need to examine.

AWM 54: Written records, 1939-45 war
This series contains correspondence files on a wide variety of subjects some of which may be relevant to researchers interested in the role of Aborigines and Islanders in the Second World War. A similar series exists for First World War records. Below are a sample of the files in this series and the range of the topics they cover. Most of the file titles are self-explanatory but additional explanatory notes have been added where necessary.
13/2/12 - Report to General Headquarters by Captain R.W. Dungan - on Aerodromes in North West Australia - 1943.
39/1/2 - Commonwealth of Australia - Protected and Controlled Areas Native and Coastal - 1942. This file refers to the draconian security controls exercised by the army over Aborigines in Western Australia during the Second World War.
85/10/5 - Hints to aircrew - Coastal Area of North West Australia. This file refers to the role of Aborigines in rescuing downed airmen.
380/6/1 - Kimberley Ranges Patrol; by 3rd Australian Corps Guerilla Warfare Group, 1943.
506/5/10 - Native Labour: Torres Strait Malayans serving with the Australian Military Forces - Conditions of Service 1944.
605/7/2 - Patrol reports by Wing Commander D.F. Thomson and Captain C.C. Wolfe, 1943-44. This patrol employed Torres Strait Islander soldiers and was conducted in contested areas of Dutch New Guinea.
625/4/2 - Notes on protection of Bathurst Island.
628/1/1 - Torres Strait Islanders, 1944 - Enlistment, pay, etc.
628/4/5 - Report on Sibai Island, etc. This file covers Torres Strait Islanders pay issue and Moa Island sit-down strike.
741/5/9 - Report: The Organisation of the Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit 1941-1943. This is a lengthy report prepared by Donald Thomson on the establishment, men, equipment, role, training and day-to-day activities of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit. This unit was raised by Thomson and consisted of a small nucleus of white Australians, six Solomon Islanders, a Torres Strait Islander and fifty east Arnhem Land Aborigines.
963/22/14 - Water Transport - Luggers and small craft.

AWM 60: Northern Command registry files
The Army's Northern Command encompassed Queensland and this file series therefore includes some with a bearing on the military employment of Islanders and Aborigines in the defence of Queensland. Some examples are:
13/1/42 - Enlistment of Torres Strait Islanders.
13/1277/43 - 7th Australian Employment Company - Chinese. This file and others dealing with black American soldiers in Queensland provides interesting comparative data for the study of military attitudes to ethnic minorities during the Second World War.

59/1/730 - American coloured soldiers.
66/1/88 - Aboriginal missions in north Queensland.
87/1/1035 - Enlistment of half-castes.
200/3/249 - Enlistment of Aboriginals and half-castes in the AIF.

Other collections within the Australian War Memorial should also be examined. The Blamey papers (3DRL 6643) within the Private Records collection include files on 'Native' units (item 32.3) and 'Special' units (item 56.8) which refer to attempts to raise guerilla units of Aborigines in the Kimberley district. The Private Records Collection also includes a collection of correspondence to Mr Don Cameron MHR (PR 87/78) which lists many Aborigines and Islanders who participated in all of Australia's wars. Series AWM 88, which consists of the Governor General's Office honours and awards files, should be consulted in the case of Aboriginal or Islander servicemen or women who have won an honour or award.

Researchers should also consult the War Memorial's oral history collection, still photo collection, film collection and art collection. The Memorial has probably the best photographic record of the Aboriginal contribution to the national war effort in the Second World War of any collection. It includes good coverage of the employment of Aborigines as civilian labourers as well as of serving Aborigines and Islanders. The film collection is also interesting. However, the film collection is dominated by footage of events which might have titillated the tastes of white Australians back home in Sydney or Melbourne. As a result, there is much footage of Aborigines dancing and demonstrating boomerang and spear throwing to crowds of appreciative white servicemen, but very little showing Aborigines performing their wartime work. The Memorial's art collection contains a number of works by war artists depicting Aboriginal and Islander servicemen. Furthermore, the Memorial recently acquired its first work by an Aboriginal artist, Paddy Wainburraga, depicting an Aboriginal view of the Second World War.

**Australian Archives, Melbourne**

Many of the files relating to the policy questions of Aboriginal military service are held in Australian Archives, Melbourne. A number of series are worth examining. During the Second World War there existed a Department of Defence as well as Departments of Navy, Army and Air. The most useful Department of Defence file series are MP431/1 and MP729/6. These series are quite large and should be examined in detail, but the following files indicate the range of subjects that might be useful:

*CRS B1535: Army headquarters, Department of Defence, general correspondence files, multiple number series, 1930-1939*
849/3/1644 - Enlistment of selected half-castes into Darwin militia.
929/19/912 - Australian Aborigines' League - Proposals for training Aboriginal men and boys.

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5 Researchers interested in the depiction of Aborigines and Islanders in war art should see Rensch, Elena, 'Aborigines in war: depictions of Aborigines in the art collection of the Australian War Memorial', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2, 1990. Elena Rensch is the Acting Curator of Special Art Collections at the Australian War Memorial. Most of these images are reproduced in this number of *Aboriginal History*.

6 Paddy Wainburraga's bark painting is titled 'World War II Supply Ships', but it is a recent painting, not a wartime image.
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929/19/1049 - Enlistment of Aborigines for defence purposes.
929/19/1162 - Liability of Aborigines for compulsory military training under the Defence Act.

MP729/6: Department of the Army, secret and confidential correspondence files, multiple number series (class 401), 1936-1945
15/401/243 - Darwin - employment of native labour.
16/402/111 - Transfer of mission natives, Cape York. This file refers to an army plan to evacuate Aborigines from Cape York because of their supposed support for the Japanese and the belief that they were responsible for the high rates of venereal diseases among allied servicemen based in the area.
29/401/626 - Japanese activities amongst Aborigines.
37/401/1609 - Formation, Torres Strait Pioneer Company.

The following Department of Army series contains many files dealing with the army's higher policy decisions relating to the military service of Aborigines and Islanders.

MP508/1: Department of the Army, correspondence files, multiple number series, '701 plus', secondary number, 1939-1942
50/703/12 - Refusal to enlist World War I veteran and other Aborigines.
61/701/68 - Employment of Aboriginal labour - Darwin.
240/701/217 - Role of Aborigines in defence of Australia - suggestion of Professor Elkin.
247/704/56 - Employment of Torres Strait Islanders on military duty at Thursday Island.
247/704/62 - Torres Strait Infantry.
275/701/556 - Enlistment of Aborigines 1942.
275/705/10 - Utilisation of Chinese - March 1942. Like other files relating to the military service of Chinese, this file provides useful comparative data on the military attitude to other ethnic minorities.
275/750/1310 - Aborigines - enlistment in AIF.

MP742/1: Department of Army, correspondence series, multiple number series, 1943-1951
85/1/445 - Torres Strait Islanders - discipline.
92/1/302 - Employment of Aboriginal labour in the army.
164/1/209 - Australian Aborigines - participation in the war effort.
175/1/189 - Hermannsburg mission - use of wireless transceiver equipment. This file refers to the army's concerns that Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg might use their radio transmitter to pass military secrets to Germany. Many white citizens in central Australia believed that the missionaries were also indoctrinating the Aborigines with Nazi propaganda.
240/1/358 - Formation of native auxiliary corps - Kimberleys.
247/1/1290 - Conditions of service - natives of Papua/New Guinea and Torres Strait.
275/1/222 - Ban on Aborigines in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The British Commonwealth Occupation Force was formed after the Second World War to provide an occupying force for Japan. Some of the units in this force were later to become involved in the Korean War.
275/1/696 - Enlistment in Australian Regular Army - Persons not of European origin - 1949.
Service of half-castes in the Volunteer Defence Corps. The Volunteer Defence Corps was a voluntary, unpaid, part-time force made up of persons who, because of their age, reserved occupation or other reasons, could not serve in the regular elements of the defence forces.

R/1/3617 - Raiwalla - Darwin Aborigine for ANZAC March 1949.

There are also some Navy files in the Melbourne office of Australian Archives which include items of relevance to Aboriginal and Islander participation in the war effort.

MP138/1: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
603/217/1277 - Inventories - requisitioned luggers, 1942-1945.

MP151/1: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
463/208/1142 - Australian native labour for luggers - Thursday Island [not yet cleared for public use].
474/201/435 - Proceeds of sale of wild dingo scalps from natives. This file describes how Naval officers traded with Aborigines along the Kimberley coast to encourage them to stay near the coast where they might see and be able to report any signs of Japanese activity.
556/226/1920 - Lugger Heather - crew. Heather was another Navy lugger which patrolled the Kimberley coast looking for signs of Japanese interest in the area. Its crew included two Aborigines.

MP1049/3: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
603/201/770 - Luggers - Thursday Island.
712/205/621 - Employment of natives, Royal Australian Navy - Darwin.

Other series worth attention in the Melbourne office of Australian Archives include:

CRS B551: Directorate of Man Power, Central Office, correspondence files, single number series with year and subject significant prefixes, 1942-1946.

CRS B550: Employment Division [ii], Central Office, Department of Labour and National Service, correspondence files, annual single number series with subject significant infixes, 1946-1953

CRS B356: Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Lake Tyers correspondence files 1865-1968
This second series is useful for the light it sheds on the impact of the war on an Aboriginal settlement.

Australian Archives, Canberra
The Canberra office of Australian Archives holds many file series which contain relevant files. Whereas many of the army and navy administrative files are held by the Melbourne office of Australian Archives, the Canberra office holds many air force administrative files.
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CRS A705: Department of Air, correspondence files, 1922-1960
7/1/657 - Bathurst Island Advanced Operational Base - aerodrome works. Much of the construction effort done on remote airfields like those at Bathurst Island, Port Keats, Milingimbi and other northern missions, was done by the local Aboriginal people.
7/1/694 - RAAF Milingimbi Advanced Operational Base aerodrome.
68/1/700 - Use of Aboriginal labour by RAAF.

CRS A1196: Department of Air, correspondence files, 1935-1960
12/501/185 - Inter-departmental conference to discuss conditions of service - native units.
59/501/4 - Admission of aliens/suspected persons to RAAF.

CRS A1564: Royal Australian Air Force, North Western Area, correspondence files, 1942-1955
1229/8/P3 - Native labour employment 1950.

In addition to these Air Force records, the Canberra office of Australian Archives holds other useful sources.

CRS A2653: Department of the Army, Military Board proceedings, 1905-1976
1942, vol 5, agenda item 8 - Aliens - military service for.
1944, vol 1, agenda item 31 - Gold lip shell for ANGAU. This Military Board agenda item concerns the employment of Islander soldiers as divers to harvest gold lip shell which was then used as currency to employ Papuan and New Guinean labour to support military operations in New Guinea.

CRS A816: Department of Defence, correspondence files, 1935-1958
40/301/312 - Control of pearling luggers north and west Australia. After Japan entered the war, the military became concerned that the large numbers of pearling luggers in north Australia might be captured by the Japanese and used to support the invasion of Australia. The Department of Defence was keen to control the luggers to keep them out of Japanese hands and to put them to its own use. This caused great hardship among Islanders who depended upon the luggers for their livelihood.
72/301/23 - Requirement to be of substantially European origin.

CRS AA1978/215: Department of Defence, files concerning Northern Territory Aboriginals
The whole of this series is worthy of examination but the following files given an idea of data to be found here.
21 - Native personnel.
34 - NT employment of mission natives.
55 - NT raising native Employment Companies. Employment Companies were military units which had the role of providing labour to support other elements of the army. Many Aborigines served in Employment Companies.

CRS A431: Department of the Interior, correspondence files 1946
The Department of the Interior was responsible for the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory and its files are a useful source of material concerning not
only the military employment of Aborigines, but also the impact of the war on the Northern Territory, including the civil administration and the pastoral industry, and hence, the impact of the war on Aborigines there. However, the following two files relate specifically to the military employment of Aborigines:

46/915 - Employment of natives on work for army (NT).
46/1357 - Aboriginal ex-servicemen - restrictions in civil life - easing of.

CRS A659: Department of the Interior, Correspondence files 1939-1950
39/1/12995 - Enlistment of half-caste Aborigines.
42/1/3043 - Co-operation - Aborigines/Whites after invasion.

CRS A1308: Treasury, Defence Division, correspondence files, 1941-1963
762/1/67 - Torres Strait Islanders - conditions of service 1944.
762/1/135 - Torres Strait Islanders - clothing allowance on discharge.

CRS A2671: War Cabinet Secretariat, War Cabinet agenda files 1939-1946
45/1940 - Enlistment in defence forces of aliens and of persons of non-European descent.
145/1944 - Rates of pay and conditions of service - Torres Strait Islanders enlisted in the forces.

Other regional branches of Australian Archives

Although other regional branches of Australian Archives may have some records relating to the war service of Aborigines and Islanders, by far the most useful source, at least for records relating to the Second World War, is the Northern Territory regional office. Its series F1 is a particularly rich source.

CRS F1: Administrator, Northern Territory, correspondence files, 1915-1978
40/382 - Official aerodrome Milingimbi mission.
42/286 - Part 2: Finke River mission - Hermannsburg - Mr Battarbee's fortnightly reports to December 1943.
42/415 - Aboriginals - Removals from vicinity of military camps north of Mataranka.
42/435 - Native labour gangs - control camps at Mataranka, Tennant Creek, Katherine etc. - Employment of natives by army.
42/461 - Native labour - request for by station managers etc.
44/275 - Patrol officer W.E. Harney - patrols and reports.

State archives

State governments retained control of Aboriginal and Islander affairs in their states throughout the years of the Second World War and therefore, they had a vital interest in how the war was affecting Aborigines and Islanders. Like some of the regional offices of Australian Archives, the State Archives offices vary quite considerably in the extent of the records they hold and their willingness to assist the researcher. For example, while the Western Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs [check] encouraged my research and readily gave me access to its archives (housed in the Battye Library), the response in Queensland was quite different. With its large Aboriginal and Islander population and their heavy involvement in the Second World War, one would think that the bureaucrats in Brisbane would be pleased to publicise the war effort of Queenslanders and would assist researchers. However, despite letters to the Premier, the State Department of Community Services, which inherited responsibility for Aboriginal and Islander affairs, refused direct
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access to the records which it still held. Relatively few records of the Second World War era had been passed to the State Archives, and those which had were subject to a closed period which does not expire until 1995. The State Department of Community Services did offer to provide answers to specific questions but no historian should be satisfied with this inadequate access to the sources and in any case, my letters asking specific questions were never answered.

Although access to the Queensland records would be valuable in understanding how the Queensland government reacted to Aboriginal and Islander military service, it is not essential. Many documents relating to the response of the Queensland government are available on files held by Australian Archives in the series discussed earlier.

State Archives of Western Australia

ANI Native Welfare Department, acc 993, files 1926-1970
For access to the records in this series, researchers should first obtain permission from the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority of Western Australia. The series contains numerous files relating to the impact of the Second World War on Aborigines in Western Australia including:
38/40 - Military and defence - liability of natives for military service.
529/40 - Military and defence - List of natives under the Native Administration Act in the 2nd AIF. This file appears to be the only serious attempt by a State government to maintain a record of Aborigines who had enlisted. The file lists 112 Aborigines who had enlisted before the administrative effort of maintaining a record collapsed under wartime manpower constraints.
4/42 - Unemployed natives - Utilisation of services during war period.
102/42 - Natives - North West Areas - Evacuation of all nomadic, unemployed, aged and infirm natives from coastal areas between Derby and Carnarvon to areas 100 miles inland.
1032/42 - Native auxiliary corps in the Kimberley district - proposal re organisation of.
592/43 - Evacuation and military control of natives in coastal areas south of Northampton.
365/44; - Effects of war in tropical Australia on future White development with particular reference to welfare of natives - Pamphlet by Professor A.P. Elkin for Institute of International Affairs.

MN 158: Cyril Longmore Papers, acc 1298A
1298A/40 - Cyril Longmore - Dispatches as war correspondent in north west in 1942. Cyril Longmore, together with Major Mitchell, trained white and black Australians to fight as guerillas in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Longmore argued that this experiment should have been extended to create a large unit of Aborigines.
1298A/41 - Newspaper articles on bombing of Broome and training of native guerillas.
1298A/44 - Letters between Longmore and Curtin re use of Aborigines in war.

The Northern Territory Archives Service

The Northern Territory Archives Service has a continuing oral history programme which includes taped interviews and transcripts of many of the Northern Territory participants in the Second World War. For example, TS64 is a transcript of Len Harris, wartime missionary on Groote Eylandt, speaking about the role played by the Aborigines of Emerald River mission during the war. The collection includes many other useful recollections.
Other archival sources

For those particularly interested in the impact of the war years on Aboriginal employment on northern cattle stations, the Archives of Business and Labour at the Australian National University has a useful collection of union and cattle station records.

Aborigines and Islanders made a significant contribution to the defence of Australia in the Second World War and have been represented in the defence forces in every other war Australia has fought this century. It is fitting that their contribution should receive public recognition within the Australian War Memorial and within the broader Australian community. The achievement of that recognition will largely depend on greater exploration of the many questions raised by the Aboriginal and Islander involvement in Australia’s defence by historians and others using the sources described.

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Approximately 3000 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders participated in the Second World War as formally enlisted servicemen or women. Yet despite the scale of their war effort, and the fact that some like Tim Hughes and Clive Upright displayed outstanding courage in battle, few Australians, especially white Australians, know much of their contribution to national defence. Tim Hughes, a soldier in the 2/10th Battalion, won the Military Medal for outstanding bravery in the tough fighting around Buna airstrip in New Guinea in 1943. Clive Upright also won the Military Medal when, in the fighting around Sauri village on Bougainville on 11 May 1945, he coolly stood up and in full view of the enemy, directed the fire of an Australian machinegun onto nearby Japanese positions. But during the Second World War, news of the scale and quality of the participation of Aborigines and Islanders was overwhelmed by other war news judged to be of more immediate importance to white Australians. Since the war this silence has been maintained. As a result, Aboriginal military heroes have so far emerged from among those who participated in the frontier wars; men like Pemulwuy and Pigeon (Jandamarra) who demonstrated their military prowess in the struggle against Whites. With the possible exception of Reg Saunders who was the only Aborigine to be promoted to commissioned rank in the Australian forces during the Second World War, those who gave outstanding service in defence of their country in Australia's numerous wars this century, have been overlooked. Nevertheless, many of the Aboriginal and Islander participants in Australia's defence effort did demonstrate a particular kind of heroism; that despite the disadvantages forced upon them by the dominant white society, once given the opportunity that often comes with war, they showed high levels of determination, achievement, skill and leadership. One such man to emerge from the Second World War was Leonard Waters.

Len Waters was born at Boomi, northern New South Wales, in 1924. When he was just two or three years of age he moved with his parents Donald and Grace Waters and his two older brothers and an older sister to Toomelah, where he began his education in a one-room shed with 150 students and a single teacher. A Kamilaroi, Len remembered the corroborees and get-togethers that enlivened the Toomelah settlement.

In the early 1930s, he moved with his family to Nindigully, Queensland. There he continued his education until, at the height of the Great Depression, he was forced to leave school so that he could help to support his family. He joined his father in a ring-barking team earning just ten shillings a week for seven days' work, later becoming a trainee shearer for slightly better pay.

When the war broke out in September 1939, Len was keen to enlist in the Royal Australian Air Force. His brother, Jim, was equally keen to enlist in the army. Whereas the army and navy quickly barred the service of persons not of 'predominantly European origin

1 For a full account of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution to the defence of Australia during the Second World War see Hall 1989.
2 Australian War Memorial, series AWM88; Governor General's Office, honours and awards files: SX1570 Timothy Hughes. See also McCarthy 1959:471.
3 Australian War Memorial, series AWM88; Governor General's Office, honours and awards files: VX89336 Clive Upright.
Plate 1. Leonard Waters from Nindigully, Queensland, a Warrant Officer in Number 78 Fighter Squadron. Len achieved his dream of becoming a fighter pilot in the Second World War partly because of his determination and raw ability. At the end of the war Len was forced to give up his dream and return to his pre-war work of shearing (photo courtesy of Len Waters).
or descent', the air force remained open to the enlistment of non-Europeans. This was because the air force faced the heavy personnel commitments imposed by the Empire Air Training Scheme under which Australia supplied some 27,000 partially trained aircrew to Britain. To meet this demand while simultaneously providing for the air defence of Australia, the air force cast its net wide and accepted recruits the army and navy would reject on racial grounds.

However, when Japan entered the war in December 1941, the army and navy were also faced with heavy demands for additional manpower to meet the growing threat. Under this pressure, they too abandoned their racist policies of excluding non-Europeans from service and began to enlist Aborigines and Islanders as well as other ethnic minorities like Australian Chinese, in relatively large numbers. It was during 1942, when all three services were accepting Aboriginal and Islander recruits more freely, that both Len and Jim Waters enlisted - Len in the air force and Jim in the army.

Most Aborigines and Islanders served in the army, which was the largest of the three services, but others served in the air force and navy. In addition to Len Waters, other Aborigines to serve in the air force included Alex Taylor, a flight rigger, Reginald Barnes, an electrical fitter, George Tongarie, a flight mechanic and Arnold Lockyer, a flight engineer and air gunner. Arnold Lockyer's bomber was shot down during an operation over the Celebes, Dutch East Indies, on 17 July 1945 and he died while a prisoner of war on 21 August 1945, six days after the war had ended.

Despite the tragedy of deaths like Arnold Lockyer's, service in the air force gave Aborigines the opportunity to acquire skills they might not otherwise have had. There were other, broader benefits for Aborigines too. Military service provided the opportunity to establish firm friendships with white Australians and it exposed both black and white Australians to a variety of cultural models most had not previously seen. Black American servicemen presented a model of competent, skilled workers capable of commanding high wages, demonstrating to both black and white Australians that Aborigines were capable of doing the same. The indigenous people of the various theatres of operations in which Australians fought presented a wide range of responses to the problems of living and helped erode the ethnocentricity and insularity of white Australians.

Despite the interruption to his education, through hard work matched with personal talent and determination, Len Waters achieved his dream. He qualified as a fighter pilot in the air force, and took part in the defence of his country. It was the custom among combat pilots to name their aircraft. Len named his Kittyhawk 'Black Magic', an apt description of his achievement in becoming a pilot, as well as of his aeroplane.

Len tells the story of his wartime service:

When the war broke out in '39 I couldn't get into it quick enough. As a matter of fact I tried to enlist before I turned 17. I always had ... you know ...

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4 Australian Archives, A2671, 45/1940; War Cabinet Agendum number 45/1940.
5 Ibid.
6 Brief details of the service careers of these men were provided by the Director of Personnel Services, Air Force Office, Russell Offices, Canberra and letters, George Tongarie to the author, 12 November 1986 and 28 April 1987.
7 The war ended on 15 August 1945 but the surrender was not signed till 2 September 1945. Three other members of the Lockyer family also served in the army and one, Eric Lockyer, was also killed in action.
8 Potts and Potts 1985,188-189.
9 Leonard Waters' story is made up of edited interviews conducted on 1 September 1986 and 21 November 1991.
Kingsford-Smith and Amy Johnston and those sort of things. I followed all those. But I was too young.

Then eventually, in August 1942, I wrote in to enlist, and in the meantime they had those mobile units going around for compulsory service and they came to St George [Queensland] and we all had to have our medicals there and we all passed the medical - even my father. He was 48 and he was passed as fit as we were, which he was too. During the next week I got my call from the RAAF so I enlisted straight off. My brother got his call at the same time, for the Militia.10

We got to the [Brisbane] Exhibition Ground and I went in the one door here and he went into another door there and that was the last time we saw each other until we were at Morotai [in the Dutch East Indies] in 1944.

I began my RAAF training at Maryborough. You do your drilling, the same as army rookies. Drill and physical training and everything like that, unarmed combat and everything ... you know. We did a six weeks course there to get you fit and do cross-country and all that sort of thing ... bivouacs ... and you go before a Categorisation Board and select your vocation or whatever you want to do. And of course, I put in for flight mechanics. I thought that would be something, thinking ahead again, for the future.

I was always interested in motors too. Any rate, then I went from there to Sydney and we did the basic course of engines and that sort of thing. Actually, I was always mechanically minded. We used to work on the old cars that Dad had, the old 'T' model Fords. We used to do all our own maintenance work, and it came pretty easy to me, the flight mechanics course. If there hadn't been a war on, you couldn't have got a better place for a holiday! In the Oceanic Hotel, right on Coogee beach.

But any rate, then I went to Mildura and I swatted just about every night I was there apart from when I came home on leave. I was there for twelve months and then they asked for recruits to what they call remuster to air crew. That was in about December 1943. You go back to school again. You go to Initial Training School at Somers, Victoria. Then you go before a Categorisation Board again. They categorised us into different sections, like pilots, navigators, observers, flight engineers, wireless air gunners, air gunners, just about seven or eight different categories. And of course everyone wanted to be a pilot. Pilots or navigators, they were the main ones. And you might be the brightest student on the course but you quite easily finish up a tail gunner, like, you know - a WAG [wireless air gunner] - because everything that you do while you're there is taken note of.

I was terribly keen to prove myself in the elite, which it is. There is no doubt about that. The flying part of the air force was the elite. Well, I was the coloured boy in it and I might add that there there was 169 of us I think there was, started, on the course, and there were 44 or 46 finished up as pilots that graduated and got our wings ... they cut us down a bit.

10 During the Second World War the Australian Army consisted of a number of discrete parts the largest of which were the Second Australian Imperial Force and the Militia. The Second Australian Imperial Force consisted entirely of volunteers and could be despatched for service anywhere in the world. The Militia consisted of both volunteers and conscripts and under the Defence Act could be despatched for service only within the Australian region. Militiamen could volunteer for transfer to the Second Australian Imperial Force.
The end result when we got our wings ... there were only three blokes in front of me on my average. So, from my humble beginning I was pretty proud of what I am ... accomplished like.

One thing I was good on was morse code. The required standard was 18 words a minute - 32 words a minute on key and 18 words a minute on visual - the Aldis Lamp. I reached the required standard after two weeks and of course I was doing other subjects while the other blokes were still practising that sort of thing.

Nearing the end of his initial flight training, Len faced the Categorisation Board again, this time to determine if he would be chosen as a pilot or as some other member of air crew. He believed his skill at morse code which had given him more time to study other subjects, was now going tell against him. He knew that the demand for wireless air gunners was very high as a result of the high casualties they suffered in the bombing raids on Germany. He recalled that air gunners in the European theatre would often be 'chopped to pieces' by the enemy fighters and that sometimes their remains would be hosed out of their shredded turrets when the bombers got back to Britain. He feared the Categorisation Board would allocate him to that branch - not only because he thought his chances of survival might be slim, but because he was desperately keen to fly.

I went before the Categorisation Board again and the commanding officer said 'Have you ever considered yourself a wireless air gunner?'. I said 'No'. He said 'Just close your eyes and just sit there and imagine yourself sitting in the tail of a Halifax or a Lancaster [bomber] with four .303s in front of you'. 'Well', he said, 'how do you look?'. I said 'I've got a very disappointed look on my face, sir!'.

Of course, you don't know. The next day it goes up on Station Standing Orders on the [notice] board. Actually, I lost three five quid bets on it. A bloke from Canada, he said to me, he said 'You'll be right. You'll be on of the first pilots picked'. I said 'I don't know. I've got no confidence'. He said 'I'll bet you. I'll bet you a fiver!' and a couple of others did too. I lost fifteen quid over it, but I was the third one picked.

After I got my wings I went to Mildura to do operational training. That's the first taste of Kittyhawks and I'll tell you what, it was a big step from Tiger Moths to Wirraways. The top speed of a Tiger Moth is about 80 miles an hour, and you landed at 48 or 50 miles an hour. A Wirraway had a top speed of about 180 and you landed at about 80 miles an hour, which was your landing speed. But a Kittyhawk had a top speed of anything up to 300 ... a bit better, and you landed around about the 100 mark, between 90 and 100, and the power of the motors, that first take off! I tell you what, you feel the surge of power when you open the throttle, but the thrill of it, like, you know ... for the first time. It's a fantastic lift!

After the initial take-off, you find out they are not the monsters that you first think they are. After the first take-off everything seemed to be a piece of cake, and they warned us, they said, 'after four hours' ... there wasn't one prang, but they said 'after four hours, four to six hours, you get over-confident and careless'. And they said it is a well established fact that that's when the accidents happen. And it is amazing. Between four and six hours we had eight prangs even though we'd been warned. I was one of the lucky ones that didn't, but we lost one fellow. He came in to land and realised that he'd overshot the field. But instead of doing the correct thing and going right around in a circuit,
he thought he'd do a quick bank and turn and she just flicked over and went straight in. Around Mildura there with all those sand dunes and all that sort of thing there wasn't five foot of the tail sticking out. It went straight into the sand. That shook us up a little bit.

After I finished there I joined the 78th Squadron at Noemfoor, Dutch New Guinea, and almost straight away - I was only there about three days - you go for a bit of a bivouac, they call it, and they take you over some old unused landing strips or wherever the Japs had pushed back and that sort of thing. At that time there were little pockets of Japs here and there but no organised resistance or anything like that. But the last stronghold of the Japs in New Guinea was the furthest westernmost point of New Guinea. They had a big naval base and army base there. And the Yanks - this is how brave they are - they wanted it knocked out, so they detailed 78th Wing to do the job - 36 Kittyhawks!

At any rate, we went over and all hell opened up when we got over there. We went over at 16,000 feet and dived down to tree-top height and just cleared out. The next day we had to go again and it was tenfold the next day. It seemed to be ... because there was flak! I got turned over twice in the bomb ... in the blasts of the ack ack [anti-aircraft artillery fire]... and bloody hell! Flicked it ... the plane ... twice!

The shared danger experienced by all combat servicemen, including fighter pilots, helped to create highly cohesive bonds between them. This sense of cohesion tended to weld the men into a team leaving no room for racism or other divisive pressures.

My tent mate - there were two of us in little tents - he was having engine trouble all the way over and was trailing us, and he should have ... of course it was all radio silence, like, you know. But he should have had enough sense. There was a little field between where we were and Noemfoor - Middleton - a tiny little island at the top of New Guinea, and he could have turned back to there. But he didn't. He came on with us. He was only a Sergeant too, and they let him have it when he came in because he was trailing behind us, and he went into the bay just off the shore.

That commanding officer of ours, as far as I am concerned, he is one of the bravest, and that man should have been decorated several times. He flew right down with all those war ships and everything like that and circled that spot where that boy went into the water, and they threw everything at him, and he came back. I used to fly number two with him a lot of times in the earlier days like, you know, and he was inspiration to be with.

One incident ... we did a raid over in the Celebes - that's Dutch East Indies. It was fairly hot there, because we were pushing the Japs back all the time and of course, they were still resisting. We had raided this place before. It was a little bay, a depot like, a base. It had motor torpedo boats and barges and that sort of thing and we dive bombed and then we had to go down and strafe afterwards. But I dropped my bombs - I was actually leading the flight at this time - and I dropped them, and just as I pulled out of the dive I felt this clunk under me. And of course we knew ... by this time we knew what sort of ack ack fire ... anti-aircraft fire that they had and it was a 37 millimetre - and I knew it had hit pretty close to where I was sitting because I felt the jar. And I thought now this is it ... pretty close to me and I was just hoping, praying that it wasn't a high explosive one. Any rate, when I got back to base ... I told
them what I suspected, and all the other aircraft landed first, because they didn't want me landing amongst them, and I came in on my own. I tell you now, its the smoothest landing I've ever made! I'll guarantee, I could land it on eggs, because I didn't want to jar out what was there. And when I went back it was ... onto the tarmac, the armourers got this slug out and it was a live 37 millimetre. All told, I was holed seven times ... not seriously.

One of the fellows that did finish up flying number two to me ... when I was leading a flight, was Geoff Cutler, young brother of Sir Roden Cutler's, and he was a bloody sight blacker than I am. And there was another one ... Allen Britten. They used to, you know, just refer to us as 'boongs' but there was no discrimination, none at all, you know. But everyone browned up pretty well out in the tropics, like, you know. You couldn't differentiate, sort of thing. But there was never any discrimination ... I could never say that. But yeah, that Cutler, he was a fantastic bloke.

The day before peace was declared we did a bash down on the mainland of Borneo and it was a real hot place. At any rate, we got back - we were only flight sergeants, Frankie Smith and I - we were the last two of our group that went up there with the 78th Squadron. We did this bash, like, today and went across over into the briefing hut that night, after dinner, to see what was on the agenda for the next day. Another fellow who had come up with us was in 80th Squadron - Teddy Quinn - he got killed this day. When we heard about him buying it, we went across and had a look and they had us down for a flight each the next day. We were overdue, you see, twelve months is a tour and we were up there for thirteen months, and we went across to the CO to lodge a protest. We didn't want to go because our mate bought it. Anyway, he said 'Well, just hold fire. You mightn't have to fly tomorrow'. At ten o'clock that night the news came through that the Yanks had dropped the [atomic] bomb, so that saved us that next day.

With the war at an end and now with the rank of warrant officer, Len considered what he would do. Stationed at Morotai, he had been reunited with his brother, Jim, who had taken part in the landings in Borneo as an infantryman. Len and Jim discussed their future course of action.

They asked for volunteers for 77 Wing to go to Japan in the Occupation Force. At any rate, I said to Jimmy, I said 'What say we go into the Occupation Force, go over there and have a look at the enemy at their expense?'. He said 'No, I've seen enough of the slant-eyed bastards. I'll be going home on the first boat I can get on'. So I said 'Oh well, I'll go home too'.

While Len flew back to Australia in an air force transport aircraft, Jim had to wait for an army troop ship. During his wait Jim changed his mind and decided to join the Occupation Force after all.

He was eighteen months over there and had a ball, and I could have been there with him. 77 Wing was the first Wing that helped the Allies [in the Korean War]. Had I gone over there and done operations in Korea, I could have been buried on the side of a hill in Korea. [Later], I tried to join the Occupation Force ... they didn't accept me. I reckon they'd had enough of me.11

11 For a brief period following the end of the Second World War the army, navy and air force reintroduced their discriminatory legislation barring the service of non-Europeans. The discriminatory legislation
After his discharge from the air force, Len looked for civilian employment. Still keen to fly, he hoped to establish an aerial taxi service in western Queensland in partnership with a St George businessman and bookmaker. Given the deplorable state of western Queensland roads, an aerial taxi service looked to be a good business proposition. His bookmaker partner would use the service to visit country races.

Following the end of the war, many people, both black and white, who had demonstrated skill and leadership in the army, navy or air force, were forced to resume civilian employment at levels well below those they had achieved in the services. But this seems particularly poignant for those Aborigines and Islanders who might otherwise have been able to use their war service to break free from the stereotypes that the dominant white society imposed upon them. However, Len was not able to use his wartime skills to further his post-war career. His attempts to obtain a civil pilot's licence were frustrated by lengthy bureaucratic delays, and he lacked the financial backing to buy his share of an aircraft and start a taxi business. He was forced to give up his dream of flying to return to his pre-war life of shearing and bush work.

Despite his inability to benefit from his service in the air force the war years had presented Len Waters and many other Aborigines and Islanders with opportunities to develop their potential. Perhaps even more importantly the war years had presented Aborigines and Islanders (and other ethnic minorities within Australia) with the chance to show that relations between themselves and white Australians need not be unremittingly hostile as many whites seemed to believe. Indeed, Aborigines and Islanders showed that the digger legend - one of the most profound and positive of Australia's self-images - encompasses black Australians as well as white.

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THE SINKING OF THE PATRICIA CAM:
NARRITJIN'S STORY

Jeremy Long

In 1942 and 1943 the Arnhem Land coast was a forward combat area and shipping along the coast often came under attack from Japanese aircraft, mostly float planes operating from bases in the Aru and Tanimbar Islands, north of Darwin. Darwin itself was frequently attacked by Japanese bombers and fighters, while RAAF aircraft based in Darwin were raiding Timor, Ambon and other island bases to the north. Supply vessels sailing between Thursday Island and Darwin normally had a corvette escort, but local supply boats to the missions and coastwatch stations were generally not escorted.

The official war history records that HMAS Patricia Cam, an auxiliary minesweeper of 301 tons, was sunk off the Wessel Islands by a Japanese float plane on 22 January 1943.1 On 13 January the ship had left Darwin, where it had been based since April 1942, serving 'as a general purpose vessel, used mainly for carrying stores to outlying stations on the north and west coasts'. On board were two officers and seventeen ratings, Lieutenant A.C. Meldrum commanding. The ship called at Goulburn Island where the Reverend Leonard N. Kentish came on board so that he could visit the other mission stations at Milingimbi, Elcho Island and Yirrkala. Kentish was both the missionary in charge at Goulburn Island and the chairman of the district for the Methodist Church. The Patricia Cam stopped overnight at Milingimbi on 20 January and next day called at Elcho Island. When it sailed from there early on Friday 22 January, for Jack Jensen's coastwatching station on Marchinbar Island, five Aboriginal men were also aboard as passengers.

Harold Thornell, who was in charge of the Yirrkala mission at the time, has told how, on 13 January, he had 'sent three Aborigines, Naradjin, Geidjbapoi and Djimanboi in a native canoe to collect the mail' from Elcho Island.2 Lieutenant Meldrum offered to carry the men and the canoe back to Yirrkala and the canoe was roped on at the stern. Two other Aboriginal men had evidently also accepted free passages to Yirrkala.

The narrative that follows was written in about 1967 when I had interviewed Narritjin in Darwin about his wartime experiences and in particular the sinking of the Patricia Cam. The late Narritjin Maymuru, of Yirrkala and Djaragbi (Cape Shield), was probably about 30 years old at the time of the sinking and in his mid-fifties when he told me the story. The words used are not his but the story is all his: the facts are recorded as he gave them in answer to my questions. Additional information, drawn mainly from the official war history account of the incident, is given in parenthesis. I have similarly added some details from Thornell's account of the story Narritjin told when he returned to Yirrkala in February 1943; his account has far more detail about the bombing of the vessel than Narritjin gave me, but much less about Narritjin's efforts to get help for the survivors.

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2 Thornell 1986:134.
Map: Places mentioned in the text.

Narritjin's story:
The boat left Elcho Island mission about 6 o'clock in the morning. When they had breakfast they were still off Elcho Island. The plane came about dinnertime [1.30 p.m.]. [Thornell wrote that 'the three natives and Len Kentish were sitting on the middle hatch, Len learning some words of the Aborigines' language to increase his vocabulary'. 4]

On the first run the plane dropped a bomb, which sank the boat; it dropped another bomb on a second run and it made three runs firing a machine gun. Some were killed, including Djalalingba's two brothers, Djinipula and Djimanbuy, and others were wounded. [Ordinary Seaman N.G. Penglase went down with the ship; Able Seaman E.D. Nobes was killed, along with the two Aboriginal men, by the second bomb.]

[Thornell recorded how Narritjin was 'temporarily knocked out' after the first bomb and then found himself trapped under floating wreckage and a canvas awning, in which he was able to tear a hole with his teeth to escape being dragged under as the ship sank. Apparently some minutes elapsed between the first and the second bomb: Narritjin told Thornell that he and Kentish swam to the still floating stern section to try to free the canoe and the ship's]

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3 Thornell's account has the Patricia Cam leaving Elcho at 11 p.m. on 21 January (Thornell 1986:137); Maisie McKenzie's history of the Methodist missions in Arnhem Land has it sailing at midnight (McKenzie 1976:140); but the other accounts support Narritjin's recollection that it sailed early in the morning of the 22nd.

4 Thornell 1986:137.
boat. The boat was damaged but Kentish threw 'overboard drums, planks, boxes - anything that would float'. Narritjin freed the canoe and got it into the water, then paddled over to pick up 'his two companions'. Some of the crewmen tried to get in the canoe but then the second bomb exploded close by, 'wrecking the canoe and killing a number of men, including one Aborigine, and wounding others."

All were in the sea when the plane landed. Mr Kentish and Narritjin were hanging on to two small drums and were closest to the plane. They could not see the captain of the vessel. They swam closer. 'Japanee, soon as we two fella come close, tried to shoot'. They ducked behind the drums and bullets glanced off. The Japanese reloaded and was starting to shoot again but Mr Kentish and Narritjin put up their hands. He dropped his revolver. The Japanese let down a ladder and Mr Kentish climbed up. They shut the door, calling out 'Goodbye' to Narritjin in English, and the plane took off. [Howard Morphy writes that Narritjin told him that 'he was pushed away from the plane by a Japanese boot'.]

All this time the other men had been a long way off. Narritjin swam about six or eight hundred metres to a barge where the other men were gathered. They put Narritjin on the barge for a rest.

All that afternoon and all night they swam and drifted, taking turns to rest on the barge, but the wounded, including Gitjbapuy and two white men, were left on the barge all the time.

Before daylight they heard birds and got ashore on an islet at the north end of Guluwuru Island [3.30 a.m.]. All lay down on the shore exhausted. Narritjin got up and made a fire and gathered them all around it to dry. There were ten or twelve white men. [Thornell recorded that 'a pumpkin floated in from the sea and was gladly seized and cooked in a drum, a portion being given to everyone'.] Then Narritjin went to look for bush tucker - wild fruit - and at low tide he took them down and showed them how to get oysters. With Narritjin there was another Aboriginal, Babawun, a brother of Gitjbapuy.

In the afternoon they dug a grave for one white man who had died. Later Gitjbapuy also died and next morning another white man died and another grave was dug. [The official history records that two crewmen, Chief Engine Room Artificer W.R. Moffitt and Ordinary Seaman A.A. Johnston, last seen at dusk on 22 January clinging to some wreckage, failed to get ashore and that only Stoker P.J. Cameron and 'a third native' died after reaching the shore.]

Narritjin showed the men how to get food and stayed for about two days minding them. But nobody came and Narritjin decided to leave and get help. He showed them what foods they could eat raw, what they could cook and eat. Narritjin and Babawun walked south west down Guluwuru Island and swam the strait (Gugari Rip) between it and Raragala Island. He found a canoe but left it and went on to a bay where he found the owner, Dika, a Galpu man, and his son Militjbi. They sent the son back to get the other canoe and to go and help look after the party. He then took some of the men up to Jensen's post.

[The history records that on 25 January Lieutenant Meldrum 'set off with some natives by canoe for Marchinbar where, after walking 25 miles barefooted, he reached Jensen's coastwatching station at 9pm on the 26th'. Thornell wrote that a 'smoke fire' attracted the

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6 Personal communication, 22 February 1988.
7 Thornell 1986:140.
attention of "two natives in a canoe" who were then sent 'to Wessell (sic) Island to get Jensen to radio for help."

Meanwhile, Narritjin and Dika took a canoe down to Djeergaree Island where they camped. Next day they crossed to the south east shore of Drysdale Island and on to the north end of Elcho Island where they met a large party including Baradjuna, Yambi, and many others. With some of these men, Narritjin walked the length of Elcho Island to the missionary station, and reported the sinking to Mr Shepherdson, the missionary worker in charge there through the war years.

Narritjin remained for about two weeks at Elcho Island mission and then took a canoe across to Melville Bay, going around Cape Wilberforce and south to Dundas Point, where he left the canoe and walked to the Yirrkala mission.

The official history records that, when Meldrum reached Jensen's post, Jensen 'sent natives with food, first-aid kit and other items to the island and a message was teleradioed to Darwin next morning. Kuru [a former Northern Territory patrol vessel, serving as a naval tender] rescued the survivors at 8 p.m. on the 29th, and landed them at Darwin at 10 a.m. on 1st February.'

The Reverend Kentish, it was later learned, was executed by the Japanese at Dobo in the Aru Islands on 5 February 1943.

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Ibid. Gill 1968:266.
Ibid. McKenzie writes that Kentish was taken to the Aru Islands in April and beheaded on 4 May (McKenzie 1976:142). See Thornell 1986:138-9 for his speculations on the reasons for the capture and execution of the Reverend Kentish.
CAPTAIN REG SAUNDERS, MBE: AN ABORIGINAL WARRIOR AND AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Peter J. Grimshaw, MBE

A wooden shack facing Bunyip Lane in the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve, adjacent to Lake Condah in Victoria, was the birthplace of Reginald Walter Saunders. Assisting at the birth was his Aunt Mary, Lionel Rose's great-grandmother. Little did she realise at the time that she was bringing into the world an Aboriginal warrior who would be the first of his race to become a commissioned officer. Those who served under him in Korea expressed openly the view that he was 'the best officer in the world'.

What made Saunders so unique? Gordon suggests he was a misfit, and when his upbringing and military service is examined such a description is not without some justification. If his Aboriginality set him apart from others how lucky Australia and the Australian Army were to have such a 'misfit'.

Reg's father, Chris Saunders, contributed significantly to his son's upbringing. After leaving school, where he had been captain of the cricket and football teams, had won the long-jump championship and had had his name inscribed on the Honour Roll, Chris worked for a travelling circus. His ability as a footballer and runner soon enabled him to join the North Melbourne Football Club in the Victorian Football Association. Just prior to the First World War he began coaching a Western District team.

He enlisted in the First AIF and served as a machine-gunner in the Third Division. On returning from the First World War Chris returned to Lake Condah and married a 'full blood' Aboriginal girl of the Wannan tribe. Reg was born on 7 August 1920 at the time his father was working as a ganger on the Mount Gambier rail line. A brother, Harry, was born two years later. In 1924, when their mother was giving birth to a baby girl, she died of pneumonia and the baby girl died a few days later.

It was Chris Saunders who taught Reg and Harry how to recite the Lord's Prayer before they went to bed; which tree to select for posts, palings or rails; what wild bee-hives to rob and how to hunt. Completing his merit certificate (grade eight) in 1934, Reg left school and began working at a saw mill. Following in his father's footsteps he played Australian Rules football for the Western District Junior League, where he was promptly given the nickname of 'Snowy'. He continued to hunt, play football and, as a consequence of the centenary of Portland (Victoria) in 1934, was exposed to a visiting boxing troupe. Boxing provided Reg with the kind of excitement he loved; it also would prove to be an important attribute for his future army career.

The bush-fires which swept south-eastern Australia in mid-January 1939 were to affect the Saunders family. The fire of 13 January 1939 galvanised Reg and his co-workers in the timber-mill community into frantic action: building firebreaks around their homes and fighting the fires with hessian bags soaked in water. A fire of a different kind was smouldering in Europe and Reg, like many fellow-Australians, would be called on to help extinguish the flames ignited by a fascist dictator.

2 Ibid.:13
3 Ibid.:36.
4 Ibid.:32.
5 Ibid.:35.
Plate 1. Pamela Thalben-Ball, *Captain Reg Saunders*, 1978 (AWM, oil on canvas, 76.4 x 61.6 cm, 28159).
Top: Captain Reg Saunders, MBE.
Bottom: Reg Saunders receiving his commission from Lieutenant-General Sir John Northcott at the OCTU graduation ceremony, Seymour, Victoria, on 25 November, 1944.
It was the bush-fire of early 1939 which encouraged Chris Saunders and his two sons, Reg and Harry, to establish their own timber contract business. They worked throughout the district lopping stringybarks and splitting posts. Despite a lucrative contract at Oakbank, Reg announced he had decided to enlist in the army. Some months earlier he had applied to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) for acceptance as an aircrew trainee. Not having heard from the RAAF, Reg decided to enlist in the army and proceeded to the recruitment office at Portland in April 1940.

Army life appealed to Reg Saunders. At the training camp established at the Caulfield racecourse he attended every course that was being offered, including NCO courses in leadership and instruction techniques. As he had demonstrated when a youth, he applied himself with dedication and enthusiasm. He enjoyed the drill, weapon training, field firing and the night marches. Six weeks after enlisting he was made a lance corporal and three months later was promoted to the rank of sergeant.

In September 1940 Reg sailed for Palestine as a reinforcement for the 2/7th Battalion, 17th Brigade, Australian Sixth Division. His initial period in Palestine was spent at the small village of Beit-Jirja with the 17th Infantry Training Brigade. It was at this village that the legend which was subsequently to surround Reg Saunders began.

The military police had arrested an Australian soldier in Jerusalem who, in addition to being AWOL, was boisterous and rowdy. Until he could be transferred to a military prison he was confined to the small guard house at Beit-Jirja. Reg Saunders was the sergeant of the guard and when the prisoner noticed the sergeant was Aboriginal he became more beligerent and offensive in his description of Saunders. Gordon has provided a graphic account of the events which unfolded:

... the adjutant, Captain Quentin Tilley, reported to his commanding officer, Major Henry Guinn, with a fine, ringing phrase that deserves to go down in military history: 'There's a bit of a blue in the clink, sir'. And he added: 'I think you'd better come over straight away'.

The pair arrived back just in time to watch Saunders opening the door of Sharp's cell, with the observation: 'You need a wash, mate. Come and I'll take you over to the tap'.

Replied the prisoner: 'Don't call me mate, blackfeller. You're not taking me anywhere'.

Sergeant Saunders, who had kept his temper fairly well, insisted: 'I'm ordering you out of that cell. You're coming out for a wash'.

'And I'm telling you', said the prisoner, 'that I don't take orders from any black bastard'.

At the door of the cell, Saunders wordlessly began to unhitch his rifle. He laid it down on the floor, then took off the bayonet at his belt, and laid it beside the rifle. Then he unbuttoned the tunic on which were stitched his three stripes.

'Listen, mate', he said, when he had finally stripped to the waist. 'I'm going to show you once and for all what a black bastard can do to a white bastard'.

For maybe five minutes it was a good brawl. Sharp, a year or two older than the Aboriginal, had some experience as a street-fighter - and he hooked, slashed, elbowed, jolted and even kicked with some effect. He lacked the fitness of Saunders, though, and the Aboriginal had learned the right way to

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6 Ibid.:45.
throw his punches in odd fights against touring side-show troupes in the Victorian bush. He feinted and weaved, and stabbed home punishing left thrusts and vicious rips that opened up Sharp's lip and blackened one of his eyes. The white man went down twice before he jellied into a heap in a corner of the cell, refusing to get up any more. Chest heaving and nose bleeding a little, Saunders put on his tunic and other gear again, then dragged the prisoner by the feet out of the building to a tap nearby. He washed him down, and half-carried him back to his cell.7

What became legend, vividly recounted at Anzac Day reunions, is this story of a black sergeant who took off his stripes to whip a white, insubordinate private. The legend was to grow throughout Saunders' army career.

The 2/5th, 2/6th, 2/7th and 2/8th, which made up the 17th Brigade of the Australian Sixth Division, experienced their first combat action against the Italians who had established fixed positions on the outskirts of Bardia. Each Italian outpost was progressively 'neutralised' by the Australians firing Bren-guns and rifles and lobbing grenades. The problem for the Australians was how to cope with the mass of Italians who surrendered. After Bardia was captured Saunders joined the 2/7th as a reinforcement.

The desert campaign saw the 17th Brigade occupy the towns of Derna, Martuba, Giovanni Berta, Wadi Derna, Barce, Benghazì, Mersa Brega and Agedabia. The desert was to Saunders an alien land, as he had been raised in the Western District of Victoria. When he arrived in Derna and noted the lush gardens and the neat colonial settlement he felt pangs of homesickness. After Benghazì the Australian Ninth Division relieved the Sixth Division and the 2/7th returned to Amariya via Derna, Tobruk, Bardia, Sollum, Sidi Barrani and Mersa Matruh.

On 9 April 1941 Saunders' Battalion embarked on the S.S. Cameronia at Alexandria a few miles from Amariya and four days later disembarked at Athens. The battalion spent the night at a camp in Daphnis and next day entrained for the front. During the two days Saunders spent on the train he marvelled at the beauty of the countryside through which they travelled, noting the fertile valleys, the numerous hamlets and the farmers toiling in their fields. On reaching Larissa the battalion disembarked and was ordered to take up positions at Domorkos Pass.

The German drive into Greece was supported strongly by the Luftwaffe, and the rail-line the 2/7th had used was bombed and straffed by Stukas. The battalion received orders on 20 April to retire and every usable vehicle was commandeered to move the troops southward. The roads from the north converged at Larissa and the traffic was under constant attack from Stukas. Australian military police were directing the traffic at the crossroads and were achieving a measure of order out of the pandemonium. An Australian MP captain would occasionally halt the traffic and take pot shots with his tommy gun at Stukas venturing too close. (This officer is credited with downing two Stuka aircraft and was later awarded the Military Cross for his coolness under intense fire. Cable No.8176 N1, ex Headquarters, London, 1941.)

The 2/7th was evacuated from Greece at Kalamata in the Costa Rica on 27 April 1941. That afternoon the Costa Rica was subjected to its third air attack and while no direct hit occurred the bombs exploded so close to the ship that it began to take in water. Three destroyers, HMS Defender, HMS Hero and HMS Hereward, nosed alongside in turn to help with the evacuation, while the port life-boats of the Costa Rica were lowered and soon filled with troops. This was Saunders' welcome to Crete as he and his colleagues landed at

7 Ibid.: 11-12.
Suda Bay with no tents, no arms and no ammunition. Their first night was spent huddled together, cold and hungry.

Saunders' first few days on Crete were a pleasant interlude from the weariness and exhaustion he had experienced in Greece. The weather was similar to his beloved Western District and he was not pestered by flies or mosquitos. The mountain streams enabled the troops to wash themselves and their clothing. Fruit, fresh eggs and chickens augmented the army's rations of bully beef and biscuit.

The 2/7th was assigned the task of digging-in, laying anti-personnel mines and barbed wire on the beach of Suda Bay and then patrolling their sector. German air-raids on Crete intensified. Despite this the local peasants continued to tend their sheep and goats, plough the rich soil and attend to their vines. The relationship between the Australians and the peasantry was excellent and it was this form of relationship that would help Saunders and many of his colleagues in the days ahead.

The German airborne attack began on 20 May 1941. The weather conditions were ideal for a parachute drop: clear and still. As the transport planes circled the drop-zone the sky began filling with an array of coloured parachutes; white, green, red, black, yellow and blue. The first wave jumped from their aircraft at a height of only 300 feet. While descending the parachutists were vulnerable to ground fire and more so because of the colour coding used by the Wehrmacht. Those who reached the ground had to face the bayonets of the defenders. The following day the 2/7th was ordered to mount a counter-attack towards the Malene airfield, now occupied by the Germans whose numbers were increasing steadily by the hour as transports landed on the airstrip with troops and supplies. The use of the Malene airfield also allowed the Germans to increase their bombing of allied positions. In a cable the New Zealand Commander General Freyberg sent to General Wavell he included the observation that: 'A small, ill-equipped and immobile force such as ours cannot stand up against the concentrated bombing that we have been faced with during the last seven days'.

It was on 25 May 1941 that Reg Saunders secured his first 'sure kill'. Saunders, with other members of 'C' Company, 13 Platoon, of the 2/7th Battalion surprised a 400-strong German raiding party close to the battalion's new line that had been established and given the somewhat dubious name of 'Forty-second Street'. He recalled that: 'After a short distance I saw a German soldier stand up in clear view about thirty yards away. He was my first sure kill.... I can remember feeling for a moment that it was just like shooting a kangaroo ... just as remote'.8 The enemy party was rushed by a platoon equipped with an assembly of "acquired" weapons and because the bayonets issued were without scabbards they had become a fixture on each rifle. The pent up frustrations of being subject to continuous aerial bombing over the past few days was evident in the ferocity of the Australian attack. Half of the German party was wiped out and the remainder turned and fled. Despite this show of defiance the days of the structured defence of Crete were numbered.

The evacuation process began on 1 June 1941. The following day units of the 2/7th began dispersing; some along the coast, while others headed for the hills. Saunders was with a group of 15 men who, after filling their water bottles and collecting what rations remained, moved to an olive grove three miles from the beach and hid there for the rest of the day. That night the group returned to the shore-line and using a torch attempted to attract the attention of any passing ship. Their attempt was unsuccessful. The group decided to return to the inland and keep in contact with helpful villagers.

The earlier friendship the Australians had developed with the local peasantry began to play an important part in their survival. Obtaining food proved to be the most difficult of

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8 Ibid.:77.
their tasks. Although the Cretans helped them considerably it was at great risk. German reprisals were extreme. To escape from Crete was every soldier's wish. Allied troops, including some Australians, were occasionally rescued by British submarines.

Throughout the eleven-month period Saunders remained on Crete after the formal surrender he used all of the bushcraft skills his father had taught him when he moved at night, comparatively unnoticed.9 But he was also audacious. In an interview he gave Stephen Guest in 1989,10 Saunders recalled how he and some of his colleagues had entered a cafe one evening to escape the rain that was pelting down outside. A German patrol also entered the cafe to escape the wet weather. Saunders, outfitted in peasant clothing which complemented his obvious swarthy complexion, sauntered over to the Germans and asked in Greek for cigarettes. The German soldiers, always wary of groups of Cretan men, got up and left.

Ninety men, including Saunders, were eventually taken off Crete by the trawler Hedgehog on 7 May 1942 and later disembarked at Bardia. Here he was to learn that he had been posted missing in action on 4 June 1941 and, of more concern, that his brother Harry, with the 2/14th, had been wounded. The news of Japan entering the war also greeted him.

With the Japanese occupation of Rabaul (New Guinea) on 23 January 1942 the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, decided that the Sixth and Seventh Australian Divisions should return to Australia. En route to Fremantle the convoy spent four days at Colombo. On board the City of Paris, one of the ships making up the convoy, was Harry Saunders. Meanwhile, Reg was spending his time at various staging camps in Palestine where he was cautioned not to disclose the means by which he had escaped from Crete to avoid this avenue being closed to others still hoping to escape from the island.

Eventually aboard the Dutch freighter Skjellved he sailed from Port Tenfik (Palestine) on 9 August 1942 for Adelaide. The conditions on the Skjellved were primitive. Saunders was to observe, 'I enjoyed the trip only twice - when I threw eight heads straight at the ship's two-up school, and when I got off'.11 On arriving in Melbourne he spent some weeks at the Caulfield racecourse military camp, the place he had begun his initial army training in April 1940, and on 28 November 1942 was posted to the 2/17th Australian Infantry Training Battalion located at Cowra, NSW, to undergo jungle training. The following day he learned his brother, Harry, had been killed in the fighting at Gona, New Guinea.

The 2/7th Battalion had arrived in New Guinea during October, 1942. The battalion was flown from Port Moresby to Wau in January 1943. Having completed his jungle training, Saunders was placed in charge of 50 reinforcements for the 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th and arrived at Port Moresby on 3 April 1943. Within a week he had joined his battalion as it pushed towards Salamaua, encountering strong Japanese resistance at Mubo and the 'Pimple', a mountain comprising razor-back ridges. Saunders' ability to move silently in the jungle soon cast him in the role of leading long-distance patrols and organising ambushes. At one stage he was attached to the 2/5th Battalion leading patrols against the enemy occupying the area of Nassau Bay.

Saunders rejoined his battalion in time for the attack on the 'Pimple' which began on Anzac Day. The Japanese were well dug in and their strength had been underestimated by the Allies. As well as leading his platoon Saunders directed mortar fire on the Japanese fixed positions. In military terms the attack on the 'Pimple' was a failure. The Japanese had

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9 Ibid.:923.
10 Guest 1989.
the numbers - 700 to withstand a direct assault by 30 Australians. Despite being outnumbered 'A' Company of the 2/7th acquitted itself well until it was relieved by a stronger Australian force. The conditions under which the enemy was engaged, particularly the use by the enemy of the fire lane (a passage 9 metres wide, forty-five metres long and with the foliage hacked to about half a metre above the ground) added further to the mounting list of methods used by the Japanese in jungle warfare.

The condition of the troops was, however, beginning to tell. Malaria, dysentery and exposure was taking its toll on the fighting capacity of the 2/7th. The battalion was withdrawn to Wau and given a month's rest. Towards the end of July 1943 the 2/7th relieved the 58-59th Battalion to man the inside defence perimeter at Salamaua. The troops were immediately in action, repulsing numerous Japanese counter-attacks. Eventually the Japanese abandoned the plan to recapture Salamaua and began withdrawing from the area. Having been in action continuously for the past nine months the 2/7th was taken off the beach at Salamaua and transported to Milne Bay on the first leg of its journey back to Australia.

In early 1944 an army board met on the Atherton Tablelands to select officer candidates. The board consisted of Lieutenant Colonels T.M. Conroy (2/5th), F.G. Wood (2/6th) and H. Guinn (2/7th), all experienced veterans, who decided to recommend Saunders for Officer Training School. More extraordinary was the recommendation that on completing the course Saunders return to the 2/7th. When the recommendation was referred to General Blarney for approval, in view of the 'special significance' of the proposal he ruled '... that if Saunders was acceptable as an officer to the Battalion C.O., nothing else mattered'. These four men were, therefore, instrumental in bringing about Saunders' appointment as an officer in the Australian Army; he was the first Aborigine to achieve a commission.

The three-month infantry officer training course was conducted at Mangalore (Victoria). The course concentrated on leadership and tactics and each trainee worked from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. every day. During the course Saunders developed a close relationship with two of his class-mates: Lin Bear, DCM and Tom 'Diver' Derrick, VC, DCM. Saunders, Bear and Derrick graduated as infantry officers on 25 November 1944 (Bear topped the course and received the Commander-in-Chief's baton). By March 1945 Saunders was back in New Guinea as the commander of 10 Platoon, 'B' Company, 2/7th Battalion.

The battalion was assigned the task of conducting reconnaissance and fighting patrols against strong Japanese positions in the area of Maprik (New Guinea). Saunders used the terrain to advantage when positioning his platoon. Captain Clyde Baird later commented on Saunders and his platoon observing: 'I've always regarded it as a fine performance and a classic example of command. The Japs were strongly entrenched there and in difficult terrain. He [Saunders] always was an exceptionally good soldier and clever in action. Later he fitted into the officers' mess very well. He always conducted himself as a gentleman, and his colour made no difference to him or to his associates'.

By May 1945 the 2/7th was patrolling the Torricelli Ranges behind Aitape. Saunders' platoon had been assigned the task of clearing a track between two Japanese posts. Two long bursts of machine-gun fire badly wounded the platoon's scout and Saunders received five bullets in the knee. He was hospitalised for three weeks and then returned to his battalion. On 23 May 1945 he received news that his friend 'Diver' Derrick had been killed at the landing on Tarakan.

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12 Ibid.:123.
13 Ibid.:130.
News of the Japanese surrender was received on 15 August 1945, but disengagement between the Japanese and the 2/7th Battalion took a further eight days to accomplish. With the cessation of hostilities Saunders' career in the Australian Army seemed over.

Reg Saunders was 25 years old when he was demobilised towards the end of 1945 and had a wife (Dorothy) and young daughter (Barbara) to support. He had to face the task of all veterans of adjusting to civilian life. His ambition was to go on the land but this required considerable capital. Reg and his family shared a house at Cheltenham (Melbourne) with his wife's parents and for the first three months after his discharge he helped a builder living nearby with odd jobs. Chris Saunders tried to persuade his son to return to timber contracting in the Western District, but Reg preferred to remain in Melbourne. He accepted a job as tram conductor, operating out of Glenhuntly depot, and kept fit playing Australian Rules football for the tramway depot team.

The need for him to have some form of trade skills weighed heavily on Reg's mind. After nine months with the tramways an opening arose in an iron foundry operated by Harry Deverell. The foundry made parts for lawn mowers, clothes lines and car radiators, and Reg applied himself to acquiring the skills needed for the job. By early 1947 his wife Dorothy, who had served in the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force during the war, was experiencing severe bouts of asthma. Reg decided that a move to Sydney and its climate could help ease her suffering. The Gant Foundry offered him a position, where he was to remain for the next two years.

Even though his income had risen with the move to Sydney a shortage of housing forced the family to rent tenement accommodation. This prevented Reg from adding to the little savings he had already accumulated. A second daughter (Glenda) was born in December, 1947, when the family was living in two cramped rooms situated a short distance from the foundry. During a visit to Sydney in early 1948, the famous Aboriginal boomerang thrower, Bill Onus, saw Reg and promised that on his return to Melbourne he would do what he could to secure him a position as tally clerk on the Melbourne wharves. True to his word Bill Onus obtained the position for Reg, who moved back to Melbourne and began work at Station Pier. Reluctant to live with his wife's parents at Cheltenham the family rented accommodation in North Fitzroy.

A third daughter (Dorothy) was born in April, 1949. The family was barely balancing its weekly budget. A year or so later, when North Korean communist forces crossed the 38th Parallel into South Korea on 25 June 1950, the family's fortunes had not changed.

The United Nations Security Council sought assistance from member nations on 27 June 1950 and, apart from committing naval and air force personnel and materiel, Prime Minister Menzies announced Australia would raise a special force of Australian troops to serve in Korea.

Enlistment to serve in 'K' Force and the reinforcements needed for the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) began on 8 August 1950, the day after Saunders' 30th birthday. There was an enthusiastic response from ex-servicemen and young men. At the time the widespread view held by the Australian community was that it was important to demonstrate to the communist bloc that unprovoked attacks on democratic countries would not be tolerated by the West. Those who enlisted in 'K' Force were given a number in the 400000 series, prefixed by the number of their State. Because Saunders re-enlisted in Victoria he was allocated the number 3400228, with the prefix 3 denoting Victoria. At the time the serial number Saunders was allocated would have been written as 3/400228. All 'other rank' recruits were given the rank of Private 1 Star and a daily rate of pay of 2s 6d.

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14 Ibid.: 133.
While Saunders was proud to be an Australian his financial circumstances, rather than his political convictions, encouraged him to enlist in 'K' Force. At the time Saunders observed, 'Where else can I get £21 a week, all hospital expenses, three meals a day and an allowance for my wife?' Returning to active service on 28 August 1950 Saunders reported to Puckapunyal (Victoria) and began intensive training.

The first 'K' Force draft left Victoria on 4 September 1950 and boarded a Qantas DC-4 at Sydney airport bound for Iwakuni Air Base, Japan. On arrival at the air base the draft was then taken by train to Hiro, passing en route through the devastation of Hiroshima, where the 3 RAR was based. The training became more concentrated. During a six day exercise at Haramura (later to become known as the 1st Commonwealth Division Battle School) a typhoon interrupted the exercise and the troops involved had to force march back to Hiro, 25 miles away. On the evening of 27 September 1950, with steady rain falling, the Battalion embarked on the American Liberty ship *Aitken Victory* and they arrived at Pusan the following morning. What surprised all members of the Battalion was the large reception committee waiting to greet them. A cheer squad of South Korean girls and an American negro band playing the 3 RAR's march, 'Our Director' had not been expected. However there was a job to be done. The troops of the battalion were transported by train to Taegu, 100 miles to the north. The night was spent in a dry river bed and the following day 3 RAR marched to Hill 282 and occupied the charred defensive positions which had earlier been taken by the Argylls (1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlands Regiment) and then, mistakenly, napalmed by United States aircraft. Meanwhile the battalion's heavy equipment, 17-pounder anti-tank guns and Bren gun carriers, followed by road or rail.

The Argylls and the Middlesex Regiment and the 3 RAR brought into being the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade which, on 30 September 1950, was assigned to patrolling the hilly country of the Songju Waegon area. Four days later the troops of the brigade were flown to Kimpo airstrip, outside Seoul, leaving the vehicle transport to make the long journey by road in very poor conditions. Advancing to Kaesong the brigade came under the command of the 1st US Cavalry Division and began patrolling operations. The brigade was assigned the task of leading the advance to Sariwon and captured approximately 1900 North Korean troops in the process.

The North Korean capital Pyongyang fell to the 1st US Cavalry Division on 19th October. A few days later Australian troops crossed the Chonchon River at Anju and attacked a strong enemy force which had surrounded those who remained of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team.

The ensuing contact with the enemy, later referred to as the 'Battle of the Apple Orchard', resulted in 'C' Company inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and taking many prisoners. Australian troops of 3 RAR had also crossed the Taeryong River at Pakchon to hold the bridgehead at Sinanju, while 'D' Company rounded up guerrillas found hiding in a school yard at Pakchon. By 29 October Australians had entered Chongju, the most northern point Australian troops reached in the Korean War. 'D' Company came under heavy fire when crossing open paddy fields. The following day the battalion lost its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green, killed by a mortar shell. This loss was felt deeply by all the men of 3 RAR.

On 1 November 1950 communist Chinese forces joined their North Korean comrades and began pouring over the Yalu River. Within a few days it has been estimated that 26 Chinese Divisions, or 200,000 men, had crossed into Korea.

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15 Ibid.: 142.
The next five months of the Korean War became confused as the overwhelming numbers of Chinese troops made their onslaught on the United Nations forces. The fighting occurred during a winter period considered the most severe for 20 years, with temperatures falling as low as -27° centigrade. Despite the severe conditions the Chinese thrust to cut the highway to Seoul had been thwarted, but in this action the US 8th Cavalry Battalion had suffered 75% casualties. For the Australians the issue of American winter clothing brought some relief in the freezing conditions. To ensure they could be readily identified the Australians wore the 'Rising Sun' badge on the up-turned peaks of their fur-lined caps. A variety of beards began to appear amongst the troops because, apart from all water having frozen, razor blades stuck to a person's face. The American 'Snow-Pak' boot was sought eagerly by the Australians to replace the boots with steel-studded soles of their regular issue. But this brought a further problem. While ideal during the day the insoles became wet with perspiration and then froze at night causing frost-bite.

Saunders joined the battalion in late 1950 and was posted to 'A' Company. Taking out a patrol on his first day with 'A' Company he was somewhat nonplussed when the soldier on his right, who was equipped with a walkie-talkie, informed him that Comic Court had won the Melbourne Cup. 3 RAR benefited greatly from Saunders' previous combat experience. Major Ben O'Dowd, then 'A' Company's commander, regarded Saunders highly. Of Saunders he later observed: 'He [Saunders] rapidly built up his platoon into a wonderful fighting unit. He was a bloody good platoon commander, and he had the respect of his men. It's on patrol work that you see a platoon commander at his best or worst, and that's where Saunders was outstanding. He was always willing to go out, and when he got out, he was always keen to go further. He was never worried by any situation'.

Having become used to a constant diet of 'C' ration cans of frankfurters and beans, or ground meat and spaghetti, the Australians were bewildered on Thanksgiving Day (24 November) when their rations were replaced by turkey and cranberry sauce, asparagus, hard-boiled eggs, stuffed olives, tinned fruit and nuts. Few Australians knew what Thanksgiving Day meant to their US allies. As 3 RAR had spent 54 days continuously in the front line Thanksgiving Day was supposed to be the start of a rest period. However, the following day the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade was ordered to hold the Chinese thrust at the rail junction of Kunu-ri. It was at Kunu-ri that the Australians met troops of the Turkish Brigade and later came to admire the bravery of the Turkish soldiers who repelled wave after wave of Chinese infantry when their positions were attacked, with each wave accompanied by what had become the familiar bugle calls and whistle blowing the Chinese used.

The Australians also experienced the American technique of 'buggin' out'. This entailed the American troops disengaging the enemy if they were in an unfavourable position and heading south (as in Korea) with all speed to establish a new defensive line. Saunders' view of this disengagement procedure and the conduct of the war would have been shared by many Australians when he remarked: 'We were cold and puzzled and pretty bitter about the conduct of the war. We were disgusted with the behaviour of many units around us, although we had tremendous admiration for the Middlesex and the Argylls, and we were fed up with the business of buggin' out. We were retreating under orders, and we couldn't question that, but found it hard to have to keep quitting before an enemy we considered inferior'.

By early January 1951 3 RAR acted as the rearguard at Seoul while UN troops passed through to safety. So rapid was the Chinese advance that as members of 'D' Company

16 Ibid.:147.
17 Ibid.:151.
withdrew from the southern outskirts of Seoul they exchanged fire with elements of the
advancing Chinese troops. The Australians crossed the Han River and regrouped at Hayu-ri.
Following a number of brief forays in the Inchon area the Australians took up new
positions at Changhowan, some 70 miles south of Seoul and were joined by a New Zealand
gun battery (163rd Royal New Zealand Battery). 'D' Company, 3 RAR, was assigned the
task of occupying for a night the forward position in a series of low hills. The one night
stretched into twenty-three and proved trying for the troops, who were without their
equipment. Ammunition was also in short supply. When the dressed carcass of an ox was
sent up to the Australians by the South Koreans the troops quickly named the feature 'Ox
Hill'. The wounding of Captain J.W. Callander resulted in Saunders being given command
of 'C' Company, 3 RAR.

In mid-February the United Nations forces launched the spring offensive. The
Australians, who had now been joined by the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian
Light Infantry, when it became part of the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade, were
successful in securing Hills 614 and 410 located north of the Yoju area as the offensive
gathered momentum. What did come as a surprise, but was not entirely unexpected, was the
replacement of General Douglas MacArthur by Lieutenant General Ridgway on 11 April
1951.

For 3 RAR the fighting continued. Just north of the 38th Parallel the hill nicknamed
'Sardine' was taken and then 'C' Company, led by Saunders, was responsible for securing
'Salmon' hill. Later Saunders was to tell a correspondent: 'It was just hill-fighting. Pretty
steep in parts, a lot of Chinese, plenty of grenades and 50-calibre machine-gun fire.
Nothing more to it than that'. Following these actions 3 RAR was stood down in reserve
at Kapyong, situated on the Pukhan River.

The Chinese and North Korean forces regrouped and on 22 April, with bugles sounding
and whistles blowing, attacked the 6th South Korean Division. The ferocity of the attack
enabled the communist forces to penetrate the defensive positions and 30,000 troops of the
20th Chinese Army to break through and head south. The 27th British Commonwealth
Brigade was ordered to take up a position some miles north of the Charidae area. 3 RAR,
now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel I. Ferguson, was given the task of
occupying a ridge at Chuktun-ni overlooking the cross-roads of the highway and the fords
of the Kapyong River.

It was mid-spring in Korea and the countryside was covered in greenery. The
Australians were preparing for an Anzac Day service and had invited members of the
Turkish Brigade to join them. Wild azaleas were being picked and fashioned into wreaths for
the Dawn Service on 25 April. A grove of chestnut trees provided a serene haven for a
number of Australians as they relaxed and enjoyed the balmy spring air. The wreaths would
never be used and the serene surroundings would soon become killing fields.

Under the command of Major Ben O'Dowd 'A' Company occupied a position on a high
rocky spur. The ground was so hard and rocky that the digging of trenches proved a slow
process. To the left and slightly to the rear of 'A' Company, Saunders, commanding 'C'
Company, positioned his troops on a connecting spur. Captain Nick Gravener, in command
of 'D' Company, dispersed the troops of his company over the high ground north east of 'A'
and 'C' companies; while 'B' Company, under the command of Captain D. Loughlin, took
up positions south of the other three companies but overlooking Battalion Headquarters
(BHQ). The defensive perimeter of the four companies lacked barbed-wire entanglements and
a minefield 'cushion'. This was subsequently to prove a considerable handicap and, when

18 Ibid.:153.
wave after wave of Chinese troops attacked, close hand-to-hand fighting reached a state of savagery which those involved would prefer to forget.

On the Australians' left flank was the Canadian 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, and between them was positioned the 16th New Zealand Field Regiment and a platoon of Company A US 72nd Heavy Tank Battalion. Initially the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade did not appreciate that their position was directly in the path of the Chinese advance on Seoul. However, when South Korean troops began to pass through the Australian positions, abandoning their equipment, defying the orders of their officers and showing no signs of rallying to make a stand, the situation became clear. For the UN forces the added problem was the inter-mingling of Chinese troops with the South Koreans. This had the effect of creating a Chinese fifth column which successfully created confusion and disorganisation. Late on the evening of 23 April the advancing Chinese troops reached the perimeter of 3 RAR. BHQ was cut off from its four companies when the Chinese concentrated the focus of their attack on the US Sherman tanks. Accompanied by bugle calls and whistle blowing, wave after wave of Chinese troops assaulted the Australian positions, only to be repulsed repeatedly by the bayonet charges of members of 'B' Company.

Despite the gallant defence of their positions the overall situation of 3 RAR was precarious. It was possible for the Chinese to encircle the Australian positions by penetrating the flanks. Colonel Ferguson recognised the danger and ordered a withdrawal to a new position south of the one established originally. The withdrawal was not without difficulties as the Chinese now held the high ground west of the highway. A nearby river bed provided some cover from Chinese sniper fire.

Chinese troops began a sustained assault on the new positions occupied by 'D' Company. Artillery fire from the New Zealand 25-pounders directed on the ridges up which the Chinese troops were advancing proved effective, as did the crossfire of Saunders' 'C' Company. By early morning each of these sustained attacks had been thwarted. A new position, a mile or so south west of the scene of this fierce fighting, was established and each company was directed to withdraw to the new position when an orderly disengagement proved possible. In fulfilling these orders 'B' Company was involved in fierce hand to hand fighting that followed a bayonet charge. 'D' Company had the task of covering 'B' Company's withdrawal, but was subject to sustained Chinese mortar fire. An air strike requested by Captain Ryan resulted in the US Corsair aircraft dropping napalm on No. 10 Platoon, 'D' Company, causing considerable damage.

By 2100 hours that evening the Australians had established themselves in their new position shared with the Middlesex Regiment. US troops had also arrived and took up positions for the advance to be made against a demoralised and weakened enemy. The enemy breakthrough was halted on Anzac Day.

The action of 3 RAR at Kapyong delayed the Chinese advance by at least 24 hours. This was to prove sufficient for the UN forces to retire to prepared positions north of Seoul from which the UN counter-offensive pushed the Chinese forces back across the 38th Parallel in late May 1951. Although 3 RAR was awarded a US Presidential Citation the cost had been high, with 31 killed and 59 wounded. Kapyong was the last battle that involved the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade, and 3 RAR then became part of the 1st Commonwealth Division.

Saunders' 'C' Company was subsequently involved in the savage fighting to secure Hill 317 and a mountain called the 'Hinge', which were important features of the Chinese defensive line.
In October 1951 Saunders was posted back to Australia and was stationed at Puckapunyal to train members of 2 RAR for service in Korea. He was later assigned the task of training National Servicemen, a task he did not enjoy for he queried the value of the training scheme. On 4 October 1954 Saunders resigned from the Australian Army.

So concluded the army career of one of the most colourful soldiers who ever served in the Australian Army. Those who served under him would never have regarded Saunders as a 'misfit', for he was revered and respected both as a man and as a professional. One of Saunders' prime qualities was that he understood the art of leadership. He led by example and would never ask his troops to perform a task he would not undertake himself. He contributed significantly to developing the motto of 'Duty First' of the Royal Australian Regiment.

Reg Saunders was an Aboriginal warrior who had never learned to throw a boomerang. He was a soldier of rare ability, more comfortable as a warrior when using a rifle or tommy gun. He regarded himself an Australian and, in serving his country with distinction, has been assured a place in the annals of the Australian Army's history.

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19 Ibid.21.
I am a retired infantryman of the Australian Regular Army in which I served as a commissioned officer for over 30 years and during this period saw active service on two separate occasions. The first was in Malaya from 1957 to 1959 during the Emergency. At this time I was a platoon commander with the rank of lieutenant. Malaya was a nasty little war which received relatively little publicity. This is probably due to the fact that the Australian component serving there involved regular services personnel. My second period of active service was in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 as a major. In addition to being a support company commander and battalion operations officer, I later on was commander of a rifle company. This was a war of a much larger scale which received extensive publicity, particularly through the medium of television. During both of these conflicts soldiers of Aboriginal descent or Thursday Islanders served with me. I knew some better than others, particularly those who were in my platoon or company. I am happy to provide my recollections of these Aboriginal and Thursday Island soldiers. Before beginning this account, however, I would make the point strongly that the men I am referring to were first and foremost Australian soldiers. There is no discrimination in the Australian Army on account of a man's background, his race, his colour or his creed. In an operational infantry platoon, company or battalion we rely on each other too much, as lives are at stake, for there to be any nonsense, such as misguided prejudice. A man is accepted for himself, his abilities, his skills and his contribution to the esprit de corps of the battalion. During my service we trained, fought and played together as a team. Mutual liking and respect was the norm. Today, in March 1992, I am deeply saddened by the recent adverse 'police versus Aboriginal' publicity in NSW. This goes against everything that we achieved in my units. Mutual respect between our many diverse cultural backgrounds was a reality. I’m talking of soldiers of not only Aboriginal origin but also British, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, French, Italian, Dutch, Turkish, Maltese, Greek-Egyptian and Chinese. These were my soldiers and they were all Australian. What is more they were mates. When we meet occasionally at reunions or for the Anzac Day march, the strong bond of those who served together remains intact. It is this mutual respect which must be retained for the sake of our nation and all future Australians.

I shall speak now on the Aboriginal soldiers with whom I served. Firstly in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) in the Malayan Emergency. There were five soldiers whom I can recall quite vividly. In my platoon, which was 4 Platoon, B Company, I had three Aboriginal soldiers. They were all Queenslanders, but this is not unusual as two-thirds of the whole platoon were Queenslanders. The three, whom I am speaking about, were Private N.G. (Noel) Brown, Private A.H. (Ham) Hamilton and Private K.H. (Kenny) Williams. I will deal with these first because again we served together for the best part of the first year in Malaya but, preceding that, there was the year of training in Australia to get us up to operational standard before we went overseas. Noel Brown was in the platoon when I joined it in November 1956. At this time the platoon was at a pretty low ebb because it had been without an officer for about eight months. When the battalion returned from Korea in late 1955 their training had not been organised and most of their time was spent painting stones white. (A typical army way of keeping...
Noel Brown was a bit of a scallywag although a likeable kid. At the time that I knew him he would have been about 19 or 20. As I came to know him better my respect for him increased. He was an extremely good soldier in the bush, using all of the natural skills he inherited. On account of his bushcraft skills he was a point scout throughout the tour in Malaya and proved to be a first-class soldier on operations. There is one instance which springs to mind in which my platoon had to take a surrendered terrorist back into the bush in a hurry to get to an arms dump that he had revealed during his interrogation. It was essential that we got there first, before his fellow terrorists woke up to the fact that he had absconded and could reveal where the weapons were cached. The terrorist, a Chinese, was not a particularly reliable or likeable character and, as a safeguard, I had one soldier walking two paces behind him with strict orders to keep a close eye on him and if he made any move to escape to kill him. He led us a bit of a dance initially. We entered the jungle at 4 o'clock in the morning and by 5 o'clock that evening I had a group of very tired soldiers and we still had not arrived at the weapons cache. I decided to base the platoon and go on with a small party with the surrendered terrorist, as he assured us it was not far away. I took the terrorist, a Chinese interpreter, an Iban soldier who was a Sarawak Dyak (these people were used as trackers) and Noel Brown as the other Australian soldier in the party. This emphasises the trust I had in him. We proceeded to follow the terrorist and as darkness was descending the Chinese interpreter fell over, I suspect deliberately because he was tired, and sprained his ankle. I left Brown with him and I pushed on with the terrorist and the Iban. We eventually recovered the weapons and came back in the dark, picked up Noel Brown and the Chinese interpreter and made it back to the platoon. The point I want to make here is that out of a Platoon of Australian soldiers I selected Brown because I trusted his bushcraft, and I also trusted his ability as a soldier to back me up if I had any trouble with the others. I mentioned earlier that he was a bit of a scallywag. Most young soldiers, irrespective of background, when they are overseas tend to play up while on leave. In all the time I knew Brown he was never up before me on a charge. He knew just how far to go. Nevertheless, he was a first-class field soldier and I have never had cause to change that view.

Ham Hamilton was a quiet lad, effective, never any trouble, reliable and a good soldier. Again he fitted in very well in a mixed platoon, and all members respected him.

Like Ham Hamilton, Kenny Williams had joined the battalion as a reinforcement at the time I was building the platoon up in the early part of 1957. It was a hard training year at Canungra, and both responded extremely well to the training program. I'll spend a little more time on Williams because I had him as a Bren gunner. He was a big man. I'd put Ken at 6 feet, solidly built and a very impressive character. Again quiet, a most competent Bren gunner and thoroughly sound and reliable soldier. There were never any disciplinary problems with Ken, which is more than I can say for a number of his colleagues from other Australian states of Caucasian origins. I liked Williams the same as I did Hamilton and Brown, but there was a solid reliable streak to Ken, and I would rate him as NCO potential. I lost track of these people after I returned to Australia at the end of 1959 and was promoted and posted to Western Australia.

We served together as young men in the closeness that a rifle platoon makes possible. Trust is complete at this level, you have to rely on your fellow soldiers, and rely on their instincts. A professional officer is always proud of a good platoon for it shows the results of hard training and hard work by all ranks. I was very proud of 4 Platoon, B Company 3RAR. We won the champion platoon of the battalion in 1958, being assessed as the best platoon in the battalion in training and operations. Soldiers such as Noel, Ham and Kenny made this possible.
Plate 1. Bruce Fletcher, *Landing at Xuyen Moc, Operation Paddington*, 1967 (AWM, oil on canvas on hardboard, 102 x 133.3 cm, 40578). Inscribed 'Helicopter assault landing/Xuyen Moc, Phuoc Tuy Province Vietnam' on verso. 'Darky' Butler is third from the right.
Plate 2 Bruce Fletcher, *Private 'Darky' Butler*, 1967 (AWM, oil on canvas on hardboard, 74.5 x 59.4 cm, 40565).
The other two Aborigines in 3RAR were not in my company so I cannot speak of them with the depth that I could of the preceding three. One was a chap by the name of Corporal H.W. (Bill) Power of A Company and the other was a Private W.H. (Billy) Saylor who was in the Administrative Company. Both of these soldiers were Thursday Islanders. Although not having such a close association with them I do recall Billy Saylor was an excellent footballer. He seemed to spend a lot of his time in the battalion's rugby team. He also played the guitar and ukulele and his island songs were those that were the most popular. Bill Power was a corporal; he was a section commander and thus commanded eight other Australian soldiers. He was an exceptional soldier, a first-class NCO highly regarded by his officers and colleagues in his company. Again I have not seen or heard of him since those days. The five Aboriginal soldiers I have mentioned were good soldiers and ones of whom Australia should be proud.

During my tour of duty in Vietnam (1966-67) with the 5th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regional (5RAR) my time as OC of both Support Company and A Company (a rifle company) allowed me to serve with a further four Aboriginal soldiers. In the case of the first two soldiers the tragedy is that both were killed in action. Corporal N.J. (Norman) Womal was a Queenslander, he came from Bowen and is buried in the Bowen cemetery. He was one of my NCOs in the Anti-Tank Platoon. He was smart, well turned out, always immaculate in presentation, and a good instructor. I had cause, whilst in Australia, to send Norman to run a short course of a few days for some Royal Australian Air Force ground defence people on the 106 mm recoilless rifle with which the Anti-Tank Platoon was armed. He went off on his own taking his stores and weapon with him. The letter of commendation and appreciation that I received subsequently from the Royal Australian Air Force warranted me parading him, and reading to him the contents of the letter. It also allowed me to thank him personally. Being a shy person, he was embarrassed, but that was Norm Womal, a first-class junior leader. He was most effective in the field and I had cause to see his work at close quarters when he was in my company. On 17 October 1966 at a place called Nui Thi Vai, which was a mountain complex in South Vietnam, in Phuoc Tuy Province, the Viet Cong (VC) were located in caves and were hard to locate. We were ambushed as we were sweeping up a ridge line and the signals officer was shot in the chest. The Anti-Tank Platoon, which had been leading the battalion headquarters group, had been allowed to pass through the VC ambush before it was sprung. I summoned the Anti-Tank Platoon to back down to try and take out the enemy position from above and it was during this action that Womal was hit. He was shot in the throat and, although mortally wounded, he literally held his throat together with one hand whilst he was lying in an exposed position and continued to direct the fire of his machine gunner, relaying information to both his platoon commander and myself. It was because of this extremely courageous action that we did not suffer further casualties. He was still alive when we recovered him but he died as he was being evacuated by helicopter. Everyone within 5RAR respected Norm Womal; he was a first-class junior leader and, as a result of his actions on that day, was awarded a posthumous Mention in Despatches. Sadly only an MID and/or a Victoria Cross can be awarded posthumously. Had he lived, there is no doubt in my mind Norm Womal would have been awarded a Military Medal. It was a privilege to serve with such a fine soldier.

On the next day, the 18 October 1966, I lost my second Aboriginal soldier, a lad named G.H. (Gordon) D'Antoine. Whereas Womal was of Aboriginal descent, Gordon was of mixed racial original. He came from the northwest of Western Australia, in the vicinity of Broome-Derby. He was hit in the same area where Norm Womal had been the preceding day. We were systematically clearing out the caves in which the VC had their complex.
Gordon D'Antoine was a member of the Assault Pioneer Platoon: these soldiers being experts in de-activating booby traps and explosives. We were searching the caves to de-louse these devices when D'Antoine was shot in the back, from below, at a distance of no more than ten feet. This was the extent of cover the enemy had in these cave complexes. By the time we got him out he had died. The rest of his platoon were extremely angry and savagely went through the place making a frontal assault using flame throwers. Then followed a search of the three levels that existed in one particular tunnel and cave complex. All we found were blood-stained bandages, abandoned equipment and signs of a hasty exit. Obviously we had hurt the VC but to what extent we shall never know. We could not have hurt them hard enough to make up for the loss of these two fine young Australian soldiers. I must also mention a stretcher-bearer, a young man named Peter Fraser, who went in and got Womal out. Fraser placed his own body between Womal's and the enemy who were firing at him until he got Womal free from the rock crevice in which he was wedged. Fraser had his equipment shot off him whilst he was retrieving Womal from the crevice. For this action Fraser was awarded a Military Medal, but it also helps to demonstrate that Australian soldiers worked together without any thought of racial distinctions.

Of the next two I will deal with there was a young lad named J.R. (Sam) Davis. Sam was slightly built, a 'full blood' Aborigine and came from Atherton in North Queensland. A quiet lad, he was a member of A Company, 5RAR when I took command in October-November 1966. Davis springs to mind particularly for an action that took place in late March 1967 in an area between Dat Do and Phuoc Loi where we were building a large wire obstacle as part of a task force plan. This involved constructing an extensive fence. Security elements were posted while we proceeded with the physical task of laying wire. We had piled arms at various places so that they were close at hand in the event of an attack. One section of fence had been completed and a group of about a dozen soldiers, including young Davis, were recovering their weapons before moving on to the next section. I also was close by. Suddenly, in a firm quiet voice, Davis called out for everyone to stand still and not move. In the middle of the group, barely protruding through the sand, were the three prongs of an M16 jumper mine. It was obvious that the VC had estimated the line that our fence was going to take, and even though this area had been cleared beforehand, this mine had been missed. If it had not been for Davis' sharp eyes I estimate that all of the group, including myself, would have been casualties. Everybody carefully recovered their weapons and gingerly walked away from the area, having marked the locality of the mine for our sappers to de-louse. B Company, who replaced us on the fence a few days later, were not so lucky. They had a young officer named Rinkin killed when another one of these jumper mines was activated. It was Davis' sharp eyes that saved the lives of many of his mates. I also owe him my life.

The last one I wish to mention is a chap named R.L. (Zeke) Mundine, again a Queenslander. Zeke was related to the family of boxing Mundines. At the time I served with him he was a junior NCO, a lance corporal, in the Administrative Company. He was friendly, cheerful, an obliging NCO. Zeke stayed on with 5RAR, after its first tour of duty in Vietnam, and went back to Vietnam for a second tour with the battalion a couple of years later. At this time he had been promoted and was with a rifle platoon. Sadly during his second tour he participated in a particularly savage action, was badly wounded and this resulted in him losing a leg, I believe below the knee. He was medically evacuated back to Australia. I next served with him in 1970-71, on the staff of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, where he was a staff sergeant in the Q store. With his physical disability, he had been down-graded medically to an administrative post. To the best of my knowledge Zeke is still serving in the Australian Army and I believe he is now a warrant officer. I have met...
him periodically, at Royal Australian Regiment reunions, and he is still the same Zeke - cheerful, good natured, and an outgoing person. I have the highest regard for him, as did everyone in the battalion who served with him on either the first or the second tour.

The theme I have used in this account is that the nine Aborigines I have served with were foremost Australian. They were good soldiers, two gave their lives for this country. One was awarded a posthumous Mentioned in Despatches. Finally, they were proud of their regiment and their regiment was proud of them.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY

VOLUME SIXTEEN 1992

PART 2

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PARTICIPATION IN WAR EFFORT BY AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINALS

Captain F.R. Morris

Editorial Introduction: On 20 July 1945, F.M. Forde, the Minister for the Army, received a request from A.G. Cameron MP, on behalf of Dr A. Grenfell-Price. Grenfell-Price sought data 'of an authentic character', concerning the role Aborigines played during the Second World War, for a proposed book. Forde directed the request to Northern Territory Army Headquarters. With surprising expedition, a report was completed by 8 September 1945. It was written by Captain F.R. Morris, Controller of Native Personnel, Northern Territory Force. Until his enlistment in 1942, Morris was a member of the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch (Australian Archives Victoria, accession no. MP 742/1, Department of Defence, File 164/1/209).

It is reproduced here with minor omissions irrelevant to the context indicated and the plethora of full stops deleted. Unfortunately, the report was limited to the Northern Territory, whereas Grenfell-Price had sought information from across the continent.

D.J. Mulvaney

Participation in War Effort by Australian Aboriginals.

The contributions, as far as the aboriginals of the Northern Territory are concerned, towards the War Effort have been many and varied, and to write the complete authentic story would entail much arduous research work.... The following is an outline of the part played by the Northern Territory Aboriginals housed in Army Settlements:-

LABOUR: An average of 500 male and 50 female aboriginals have been employed by the Army since March 1942 on the undermentioned tasks:

1. **Butchery:** Aboriginals have been employed at all Army Butcheries on a large scale. At present only one is operating at Katherine where 20 aboriginals are employed at various tasks. Whilst the butchery was operating at Adelaide River, where upwards to 30 were employed, some were actually performing slaughtermen's duties as well as the salting, folding and stacking of hides.

2. **Hygiene, Malaria Control and Sanitation:**
   (a) **Hygiene:** Aboriginals have been employed on this work at all Area Headquarters and many other Army Camps throughout the Northern Territory, under the supervision of white NCO's and have in all instances carried out the job successfully.
   (b) **Sanitation of Darwin:** Twenty aboriginals efficiently performed the whole of the sanitation of Darwin from the first bombing until recently when burner type latrines were installed in most camps.
   (c) **Malaria Control:** In the malarious and potentially malarious areas, the aboriginals have performed duties such as spraying waterholes, creeks etc., in the vicinity of camps, and disposal of rubbish dumps consisting of tins, bottles and other containers which by holding stagnant water provide excellent mosquito breeding grounds. At Koolpinyah Native Settlement 6 aboriginals were recently employed on similar duties and in addition were using DDT.

3. **Army Farms:** Many varied tasks have been performed efficiently despite the fact that the aboriginals of the Northern Territory are purely hunters and not agriculturalists.
4. *Mechanical and Technical Work:*
   (a) Mataranka Workshops: During 1942/43 aboriginals were employed dismantling car and truck engines and in some cases worked on the assembly lines of such engines.
   (b) 10 Aust Base Workshops: At the present time 20 aboriginals are working in the mechanical shop. Of these 9 are undergoing a special course. (Note:- Lt-Col Gumett, CO, 10 Aust Base Workshops, is so impressed with their ability that he has made representations for another 30 or 40 aboriginals.)
   (c) RSD [Returned Stores Depot] and Salvage: Aboriginals are engaged on work of a semi-skilled nature such as sorting tools and stores into two classes - those which are U/S and those fit for reconditioning. They are also used in the actual reconditioning of tools and stores.
   (d) Saw Benches and Firewood Camps: Throughout the war a considerable number of aboriginals have been engaged in getting firewood and milling it for bakeries, hospitals and other units.
   (e) MT [Motor Transport] Drivers: Several are the holders of Army Licences.

5. *Ammunition:* As mentioned in a previous report, all ammunition passing through Mataranka during the early part of 1942 was handled by a gang of 60 and in cases of emergency would handle three tons per man per hour.

6. *Hospitals:* At the various hospitals a number are employed as Orderlies and Wardsmen in the Aboriginal Wards.

7. *FSD [Field Stores Depot] Pine Creek:* At Pine Creek aboriginals loaded and unloaded practically all freights to and from trains. When this area closed a considerable quantity of petrol drums etc, (full and empty) were loaded entirely by them.

8. *Female Workers:* Women are employed as under:
   - 69 AWAS [Aust Women’s Army Service] Barracks 9
   - AWAS Hostel 3
   - 107 Aust General Hospital 5
   - 74 Aust Camp Hospital 2
   - RAAF Hospital 2
   - AWAS Barracks (Alice Springs) 4
   - AAMWS [Aust Army Medical Women’s Service] Barracks (Alice Springs) 2

At hospitals duties include (a) Orderlies; (b) personal maids to Matrons; (c) domestic duties.
At AWAS, AAMWS, Barracks and Hostel duties include (a) Washing and Ironing; (b) Household and domestic duties.

*LABOUR GENERAL:* From time to time working parties are supplied for all kinds of miscellaneous work, such as:
(a) Camp demolition in the Adelaide River Area.
(b) Clearing fire breaks at Mataranka Ammunition Depot.
(c) Grave digging and general maintenance at War Cemetery Adelaide River.
(d) Bulk Canteens.
(e) Cordial Factories.
(f) Bakeries.
(g) 8 AOD working parties, average 50 per day.
(h) Manufacture of concrete floor blocks (11 Wks and Pks).
ABORIGINALS EMPLOYED BY AUST PORT CRAFT COY: During March 1944, some 80 aboriginals were voluntarily recruited from Bathurst and Melville Islands to perform certain duties: pilots; deckhands; Shipwrights' assistants; Technical Storemen's assistants; boss boys; runners; hygiene; Officers' Mess Stewards; cooks and kitchen orderlies; general duties.
Plate 2. R. Emerson Curtis. *The chaff cutters, Gunawarra*, 1945 (AWM, watercolour and lithographic crayon with pencil, 30.4 x 35.7 cm; 25608).
Plate 3. R. Emerson Curtis, *D. Day, Aboriginal stockman, Gunnawurra cattle station*, 1945 (AWM, lithographic crayon over pencil, 46.2 x 36.4 cm; 25611).
Plate 4. R. Emerson Curtis, *Joseph Glover, Aboriginal benchman, Ryan's shipyard, 1945* (AWM, lithographic crayon, 36.8 x 26.4 cm; 25580). Glover was a champion axeman in north eastern NSW before the war.
ABORIGINES' CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIA'S WAR EFFORT

Unfortunately these people were not permitted to have their families with them as in the case of other Army Settlements. The reason for this being that they were quartered in the same camp as white troops. They worked very well under the circumstances until April 1945, when the OC of the Coy granted all of them one weeks leave at Bathurst Island, in appreciation of the good work they had performed. The majority of them remained on the Island and repeated efforts to get them back failed. This state of affairs can be attributed to the following facts:
(a) Separation from their families;
(b) Over twelve months in the one environment.
However at present 27 aboriginals, which include many former employees, are engaged on the same work.

GENERAL REMARKS: The aggregation of Aboriginals [sic] into large communities has afforded an opportunity for establishment of schools. At some centres Mission educated aboriginals have conducted schools for the children with some degree of success. These schools indicate that with suitable supervision much can be done by the aboriginals for themselves in the way of education.

Furthermore these communities have shown the aboriginals are capable of performing welfare services for one another. At various centres women are employed as welfare workers and dressmakers. These people do a particularly good job in respect of the care and cleanliness of the children.

In considering the part played by the aboriginals in the war it is important to note that they have been responsible under supervision of 2 white NCO's at each centre for the establishment, construction and running of their own settlements. There are many aboriginals who have proved that with a few tools, some of which have been improvised, that they are quite efficient as 'bush' carpenters and cement workers.

In order to work, the aboriginal and his dependents must be fed. All food is prepared and cooked by aboriginal cooks, the meals being varied and tasty.

Women have shown themselves to be very capable in domestic duties. As mentioned previously, Army Settlement staffs consist of 2 white NCO's whose time is fully occupied with Administrative work and general supervision, therefore, these women are required to carry out duties which include cooking, laundry and house work.

Finally an interesting fact is that aboriginals not only have released Army personnel for other duties, but in many instances, where the leave position was acute have made it possible for a certain amount of leave to be granted which otherwise would have been impossible.

PATROL, RESCUE AND RECOVERY WORK - Voluntary and supervised: ... it would be of great assistance to Dr Grenfell-Price to contact the following persons who, no doubt, would be only too pleased to supply authentic information concerning:
(a) Rescue of Allied airmen and seamen.
(b) Capture of Japanese airmen.
(c) Locating and salvaging crashed aircraft.
(d) Reporting presence of enemy mines etc.

The addresses of these persons and some of the particular events are enumerated hereunder:
Lt J.B.W. Gribble, C/- HMAS Leeuwin, Fremantle, WA.
1 Capture on Melville Island, by aboriginal Mathias, of first enemy pilot shot down on Australian soil.
2. Aboriginals finding and caring for 11 survivors of SS *M Florence*.

3. Rescue by aboriginals of American pilot who had bailed out of burning plane with one leg badly burned, caring for him and taking him to help.

4. Walking 119 miles to rescue American pilot Lt J. Martin who had been shot down in flames. (This pilot was later shot down over Bynoe Harbour and was again rescued by Aboriginals. See under Supt Murray.)

5. Finding of two crashed Kittyhawks.

6. Piloting rescue and security patrol ships.

7. Searching for and locating several Jap mines etc.

8. Rescuing five Dutch pilots and carrying one with a broken leg many miles.

Supt E.J. Murray, Civil Native Settlement, Katherine, NT.

1. Rescue of Lt Johnson under very dramatic conditions.

2. Rescue of Lt J. Martin who had been shot down (Second rescue - see also Lt Gribble).

3. Locating of numerous crashed aircraft, both Allied and enemy.

4. Patrol work of aboriginals under supervision of Supt Murray did many excellent jobs in locating un-exploded bombs.

Patrol Officer Harney, Civil Native Settlement, Katherine, NT.

1. This officer could give details of work done by aboriginals at Mission Stations where over 200 were employed by RAAF.

2. Officer Harney in conjunction with Professor Elkin of Sydney University has already written a book entitled *The Native and War* which is ready for publication [Editor: presumably *Taboo*, Sydney, 1944].

Petty Officer Jensen, C/- HMAS *Melville*, Darwin, NT.

1. Petty Officer Jensen can give the complete story of the sinking of the *Patricia Cam* off Wessel Island by an enemy float plane. The aboriginals did fine rescue work on this occasion.

Revd Father McGrath, Bathurst Island Catholic Mission.

1. Father McGrath can give many instances of the valuable work performed by aboriginals of both Bathurst and Melville Islands.

2. Louie, an aboriginal of this Mission captured 5 Japanese airmen who had been shot down on Melville Island.

Others are Revs Ellemore and Shepherdson of Methodist Mission, Millingimbi, Revd Father Doherty of Port Keats Catholic Mission and the Revd Harris of Church Mission Society, Groote Island.
Editorial Introduction: G.S. McIlroy, the Inspector General of Administration, the Defence Division of the Department of the Treasury, visited Darwin during July 1942. As a result, he initiated a series of letters to state Native Affairs authorities, concerning the optimal use of Aboriginal men as civilian labourers. He also sought the opinions of W.E.H. Stanner and Donald Thomson, anthropologists, but then serving officers.

Following this correspondence, he chaired a meeting in January 1943. What follows is an exact copy of:
1. His letter to Stanner and Thomson;
2. Their replies;
3. McIlroy's minutes of the January meeting. These minutes quote some of the responses of state authorities.

Other documents also are included in the file AA CRS A705 68/1/700, but not printed here.

D.J. Mulvancy

Letter to [Squadron Leader] Donald Thomson and Major W.E.H. Stanner,
7 December 1942
Dear Sir,

During an overland tour of inspection to Darwin in July and August last, having in mind the acute manpower shortage in Australia generally and NT in particular, whilst at Alice Springs I discussed with resident officials of the Commonwealth Natives Affairs Branch, the prospect of utilising aboriginal labour for certain types of manual work. Subsequently a recommendation was made that the question be fully investigated by higher Authority.

You are probably aware that the Army is now utilising several hundred natives in the NT with satisfactory results, and it is now proposed to hold a conference in Melbourne at an early date, to examine the possibilities of developing the scheme more generally in several States.

During a recent discussion with Mr Chinnery [Director of Native Affairs], he suggested that State Native Control Depts. be asked for their views and particularly stressed that your comments also be requested. I would regard it as a favour, therefore, if you would be good enough to let me have your comments at your early convenience.

Arrangements similar to those operating in the NT would also be made for control of natives by Native Affairs officials, or Missioners if available, in special camps where housing, clothing, feeding and medical attention would be provided. Particularly where women are present, these camps would be isolated at some distance from Military Camps, and the vicinity placed out of bounds to troops. Labourers would be transported daily to the work on hand and handed over to Army control until they are returned to their camps at night. A small weekly wage would also be paid.

As total application of the scheme would entail the removal of natives from Missions or Reserves, it is recognised that a long range view must be taken as to possible after effects, if natives are taken en masse and placed in labour camps for any considerable time. This may have an adverse effect later when a return to existing tribal conditions is desired. On the other hand, the present need is urgent that every available avenue should be exploited for man power.
It may be possible in cases where it is considered the break up of a tribe would be threatened, to withdraw a useful number of men only, who could be transferred without womenfolk, leaving sufficient nucleus for the continued maintenance of the tribe as at present. If practicable, this of course, would be the more desirable objective generally, providing reasonable numbers of able-bodied men could be procured. It is proposed that this angle should be first investigated before wholesale removals would be undertaken.

You will doubtless be conversant with the problem which has arisen in the Cape York Peninsula, following the high incidence of VD amongst both AMF and USAFIA troops operating in that area. The disease, it is alleged, has been contracted from gins in care of Mission Stations adjacent to Army personnel. It seems probable that this will result in the natives from those Missions concerned, being concentrated at a spot more remote from troops. A suggestion has been made that able-bodied men be transferred to NT to supplement the aboriginal labour now being used there by Army.

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd) G.S. McIlroy
Inspector of Administration

W.E.H.Stanner's reply
42/1060R
UNOFFICIAL
URGENT

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
VX 89030
Major W.E.H. Stanner,
Comd 2/1 NAOU
AIF
22 December, 1942.

Inspector-General of Administration
Department of the Treasury (Defence Division),
Melbourne SC1.

REF 42/1060R EMPLOYMENT OF NATIVE LABOUR

Sir,

1. I am honoured by the request of the Inspector of Administration, Mr G.S.McIlroy, forwarded through you, for an expression of my personal views on the employment of aboriginal labour for Army purposes.

   I should like to make brief comment upon three aspects of the proposal:
   (i) numbers available.
   (ii) methods of control.
   (iii) general policy.

   These views are entirely personal, and do not of course necessarily represent any Army or official viewpoint.

2. (i) *Numbers Available:*

   Probably far fewer natives are available than may be estimated by Department of the Army, if official figures are the basis of such estimates. Recent official estimates of the aboriginal population are not available to me in the field, but I understand that the totals published, eg, in the current Commonwealth Year Book, do not show substantial decreases from the figures published in 1935-36. These totals in 1935 were undoubtedly over-estimates by at least 30 per cent, possibly more, for remote areas of Queensland, NT, CA, and WA, personally known to me. Other professional anthropologists formed a similar conclusion in other areas. I am not in a position to say if these over-estimates are still true,
or not, or over what area of the Commonwealth, but the published figures should be treated
with caution unless given with the authority of eg, Mr Chinnery.

My first recommendation would be, therefore, that Mr Chinnery, who commands the
best personal and official information, and is in the best position to co-ordinate and assess
conclusive figures, for all parts of Australia, should be asked to estimate the total aboriginal
labour force available. To do so it will be necessary;

(i) to correct existing figures for the probable errors of calculation already referred to.
(ii) to exclude the native population in certain areas as being inaccessible, too scattered to
concentrate, or too close to their nomadic mode of life to hold and work without
ruining them.
(iii) to exclude all natives essential to cattle stations working on Army meat contracts,
police posts, etc.

A figure reached by this method should make it possible to estimate the native labour force
available at:
(iv) mission stations and non-essential cattle stations, mines, etc.
(v) Government aboriginal settlements.
(vi) town encampments and all other outback centres.

My belief is that it will be discovered that the readily available and effective aboriginal
labour force will only be found at sources such as (iv), (v), and (vi). Whether the natives
available at source (iii) are to be drawn upon is a matter for decision by the Government on
grounds of general policy. My advice would be against taking aborigines from these
sources.

I am quite certain that it would be uneconomic and unwise to try to take natives from
the sources listed under (ii) above.

I am unable to offer any estimate of the numbers which could be obtained from sources
(iv), (v), and (vi) except to say that it would obviously total some thousands for all
Australia, and may be economically worthwhile.

2. (ii) Methods of Control:
The natives involved in sources (iv), (v), and (vi) can all be regarded as civilized or
semi-civilized and, therefore, responsive to intelligent and fair control.

Without having made any close inspections, my belief is that the system now followed
in the NT, in control of natives employed by the Army is along satisfactory lines.

The following principles should be observed:
(i) Properly built camps should be established from which natives should be taken every
morning to work and to which they should be returned at night.
(ii) There should be close supervision of native health and diet. Striking results have been
obtained in South and East Africa by scientific control of native workers' diet - food
should be balanced in all elements, to eliminate deficiency diseases, and give adequate
energy for sustained manual work.
(iii) The camps should make family life possible for the working aborigines - men should
not be in any circumstances segregated from their female relations for long periods.
(iv) Ample leisure along lines understood by the aborigines should be provided for all
inhabitants of the camps, and periodic rest-periods ('walkabouts') should be arranged,
because fundamental native values are involved which cannot, without damage to the
natives and the work they are required to do, be ignored or changed by force.
(v) The camps should be arranged on a broad zoning basis so that as far as possible
aborigines should be concentrated for work in areas and climates not too far removed
from those to which they are accustomed.
(vi) Minimum rates of payment should be established, but fixed rates applicable to all natives should be avoided. A fair wage should be paid to all natives capable of earning it (some aborigines have been paid £2 and £3 a week and have thoroughly earned it). Wherever possible, some part of every natives' wage should be paid in money, and special measures taken to make available to them useful articles which they can buy with their money. Payment entirely in kind leaves too many loopholes for fraud, short-weighting, etc., and is, I believe, bad in principle. Proper control at this stage will make it possible for many natives to learn something of the value of money. Suitably stocked Camp Canteens under good control will protect natives from unscrupulous trickery, and provide them with articles of value (hand tools, workable iron and wire, personal necessities, etc.).

(vii) A trust fund, or system of deferred pay, for every native employed for a lengthy period should be established, and a worthwhile guarantee given that such trust funds will be available to them at the end of their labour period. The experience of many native employees in Queensland has been that money held in trust for them is not in practice available to them when asked for. This must not be allowed to recur under Army control. Many aborigines have had bitter experiences of worthless guarantee.

2. (iii) General Policy:

The after-effects of a rigorous policy on the above lines would be enormous. They could either ruin absolutely, or make a most valuable contribution, to native welfare. The most obvious dangers are that in a period of reaction after the war, official interest would collapse, controls be weakened or withdrawn, and the natives allowed to slip back into their pre-war state with the entire balance of their lives irrevocably and irretrievably altered. This is one reason why I have made the suggestion above, that the sources from which labour is drawn should be limited. The humanitarian reasons for doing so are reinforced by the fact that it would also be uneconomic to draw upon the sources I have excluded. There are indications already apparent in NT that where fairly liberal funds are available for native control, and some sense of urgency exists behind the organization of their labour services, the results may well be almost spectacular when compared with pre-war experience. These conditions have never existed before. Army’s urgent needs are creating entirely new native conditions.

The present search for organised native labour is a radical outside intervention in NT native policy, and may well be all to the good. The pressure of Army needs also places a high premium on good organization. The factor of cost will probably not be allowed to exercise any limitation if large scale native labour is really required.

The general context is therefore very suitable for taking progressive steps in native control. These will provide the safeguards you mention in your letter, and, of course, the better the administration the more efficiently will Army’s labour needs be met.

I take the liberty of further suggesting that certain constant factors should be kept in mind by those formulating the aboriginal labour scheme. They are:

(i) White society, habits, material comforts, and settled ways of life, exercise a compulsive and very positive attraction for the aborigines.

(ii) Once acquired, a taste for these things and these ways of living, never leaves the aborigines, and excludes any possibility of real return to the native state.

(iii) The apparently degenerate native camps around all points of white settlement in the bush indicate not degeneracy but the aborigines’ desire to move upward to European levels to whatever degree they can. Native poverty in many areas usually reflects the poverty of the white stratum to which they attach themselves. Most of the tribes have
died out because they left their old nomadic life, tried to live by an imitation of White life, lost their old skills and interests, and were wiped out by a combination of extreme poverty, new diseases, and under-nourishment, before they could work out a proper technique of adjustments.

(iv) If Army makes widespread use of aborigines it will encourage and accelerate this process of native change, and therefore commits the Government to continuous responsibility for controlling the outcome.

(v) Measures for proper control of the after-effects should therefore be integral with development of the employment scheme itself.

There are one or two special cautions I would like to express:

(i) Withdrawal from tribes, living as tribes, of numbers of able-bodied men, on the lines of indentured labour in New Guinea and Africa, is unworkable in aboriginal Australia. The tribal situations are not comparable. In Australia very few men would be available from bush tribes, and nearly all who are are required for keeping the tribe fed and under control. Taking many men away would do irreparable damage, and not enough could be taken to make the step worthwhile. It is far better to organise controlled camps of semi-civilized and civilized natives and all their relations (those who have ceased to be nomadic) and send the men out to work in organised groups.

(ii) Total application of the policy outlined in Mr. McIlroy's letter will inevitably involve the Government in some degree of conflict with Church authorities and pastoral interests.

(iii) Transfer of natives to the NT, from other areas would be possible, but will need very intelligent and informed selection of sources, and skilled control.

3. Other Comments:

It seems to me eminently possible to make use of other than aboriginal native labour in NT, and northerly areas of the Commonwealth. Two possible sources for long-range labour planning are India and New Guinea. Both are comparable climatic zones, both have experience of large-scale indentured native labour under proper control, and the amount of labour available is immensely greater than that obtainable from aboriginal sources.

I shall be glad to offer any other information or advice which may be required.

Donald Thomson's comment
42/1060R
8938
X201

CYPHER MESSAGE
FROM S/LDR. DONALD THOMSON
TO RAAF HEADQUARTERS
23rd DECEMBER, 1942.

FOR ATTENTION G.S. MCILROY INSPECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION THE TREASURY MELBOURNE YOUR COMMUNICATION 42/1060R DECEMBER 7 ACKNOWLEDGED. CONSIDER THAT ANY SCHEME TO EMPLOY ABORIGINES IN THE MANNER PROPOSED CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED AND THAT THE REMOVAL OF MEN FROM RESERVES AS SUGGESTED MUST INEVITABLY BREAK DOWN NATIVE ORGANIZATION AND AGGREGATE CONDITIONS WHICH ARE NOW LEADING TO EXTINCTION OF ABORIGINAL RACE. REGRET DELAY IN REPLY YOUR LETTER BUT HAVE BEEN IN HOSPITAL WITH MALARIA.
Notes on a meeting on 8 January 1943 with representatives of all services; E.W.P. Chinnery and V.J. White, Commonwealth Native Affairs Branch; A.D. Neville, ex-Commissioner for Native Affairs and T.J. Corteen, Inspector, Western Australia; G.S. McIlroy, chairman.

The meeting agreed during preliminary discussion that it was desirable efforts should be continued to organise native labour throughout Australia.

GENERAL:

The meeting considered reports obtained earlier from competent authorities. The reports indicate that for the purposes of review as a possible source of labour, the native population of Australia may be graded into two classes:

1. Civilized, and semi-civilized natives who have been in contact with white people and employed either regularly or intermittently in some form of labour. Excluding the appreciable number already engaged in useful work, such as employees of Stations, Government contractors or Public Institutions, there would appear to be a useful surplus which can be recruited.

2. Outback nomads who (unless located within a convenient distance from Defence Establishments in the far North), it would be uneconomical and impracticable to transfer to far distant areas, while their degree of usefulness would at first be limited.

Although opinions differ or certain aspects there is reason to believe however, that in some areas in the North-West of Western Australia and certain parts of North Queensland, provided scope exists for employment in these localities, either on Defence work or making of roads, railways lines, telegraph lines or other tasks for which manual labour is required, that it would be possible to obtain a useful percentage of able bodied natives who, under the control of experienced Native Affairs officials, could be developed into useful labourers.

In addition to the respective Native Affairs Authorities in Queensland, NSW, South Australia, Western Australia and NT, an opinion was previously obtained from such well known Anthropologists as Sq/Ldr Donald Thomson and Major Stanner....

[one page summarising their views omitted]

... It seems evident from the following information that in the NT at least, appreciable numbers of civilized and semi-civilized natives can be marshalled without drawing on the nomadic population at present, although later the possibilities in this direction will no doubt be investigated if it is found that more labour can be utilised.

So far the States of Western Australia and Queensland are concerned, there appears reasonable ground for the assumption that a useful number of natives could be obtained, both from the semi-civilized population, and also outlying natives, provided work was available adjacent to their own areas on which the latter can be employed.

NORTHERN TERRITORY:

Attention was first given to this area where considerable progress has already been made in developing the scheme. Mr White, who is the NT Administration Officer in charge of Natives, was asked to outline the position to date, and reported:

Altogether about 700 native labourers are being employed on Army work at various points as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delissaville</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koolpinyah</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide River</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Katherine - 100
Mataranka - 200 (including Railway gangs)
Alice Springs - 100 on general Army tasks 55 released by Army for work on essential services

Staging Camps - 30

Control Camps, where natives and their families are quartered, have been established at the abovementioned places, except Staging Camps. The system which has been adopted appears to be working very satisfactorily. Camps are sited not less than 5 miles from the nearest Military establishment and are placed out of bounds to troops and civilians. Labourers are under the control of Native Affairs officials while off duty, but pass to the control of Army during working hours. Labour gangs are picked up at the Camps by Army trucks each morning and returned each evening.

Army provides rations for natives and selected dependants, and clothing, etc, for the labourers only who also receive payment of 5/- [shillings] per week. Medical attention is also provided and, where no private stores are operating north of Tennants Creek, mobile dry canteens visit the Camps.

The value of this native labour is recognised, and a request was recently made by Norforce for permission to establish additional Control Camps at Larrimah and Pine Creek.

Mr White reported that recent correspondence between the Dept of Interior and His Honour the Administrator indicates that the present system should be extended. He expressed the opinion that the present number in employment by Army could be doubled by collecting suitable natives who are still available in certain districts. Such a force of approximately 1500 organised labourers would provide a most useful contribution to the existing labour problem in the Territory.

**Suggestion for Regularising Conditions of Employment:**

The conditions of employment and control of Natives which have been developed by agreement between Norforce and the Administrator, appear to be generally operating satisfactorily, although there are said to be some minor variations in certain districts.

The meeting agreed that it was desirable that conditions be regularised, and requested Mr White to submit an outline of what he considered necessary to obtain the most efficient results. In consideration of Mr. White's proposals the meeting suggested that these be forwarded through the B of BA [Brigadier of Base Area] to LHQ [Land Headquarters] for consideration and submission to GOC [General Officer Commanding] Norforce for approval or amendment and to be later confirmed by LHQ.

The following proposals, submitted by Mr White, are said to be already operating, with the exception of the proposed increase in wages from 5/- to 10/-, and that at present dependents in the Alice Springs area are not maintained by Army as is the case in the Northern Area:

(i) That labourers be engaged, and not recruited or enlisted - their mental outlook, dwarfed as it is by lack of education - would not be conducive to an appreciation of the serious import of what enlistment entails.

(ii) That engagement of labour be the function of Officers of the NT Administration who are aware of natives' capabilities and tribal distribution.

(iii) That engagement be confined or restricted (with some elasticity) to natives who have been employed previously in Darwin or other centres of settlement, Buffalo-shooting Camps, Missions (if reduced Mission activities have caused unemployment), defunct farming areas (Daly River), and Mining areas (Pine Creek), etc. The pastoral industry will absorb all competent stockmen; hence Stations can be eliminated.
Areas to be explored: Bathurst and Melville Islands, Coburg Peninsula, Coastal and Island Missions, Roper River, Maranboy, Inland town centres, all areas adjoining North-South Road (for purposes of eliminating loafing element), Daly River, Alice Springs and districts, etc.

Road, Rail or Sea Transport to be provided by Army for staff when recruiting and for transporting engaged labourers to Control Camps. (Native Affairs Branch has no transport facilities).

Uniform conditions of employment to be laid down in relation to rations, clothing and wages; the following to serve as a guide:

**Rations - to be issued by Army to Labourers and selected dependents, scale as under:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Amount per man per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>7 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>14 ozs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>3 ozs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>2 ozs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>3 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jam</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>10 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>3 ozs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking Powder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curry Powder</td>
<td>as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>to be issued if Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>is not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Clothing - Annual issue by Army to Labourers only.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boots</td>
<td>1 pair (Salvage), when required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trousers (Shorts)</td>
<td>3 pairs per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singlets</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweater</td>
<td>1 (in colder climates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanket</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate, Knife</td>
<td>1 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fork, Spoon</td>
<td>1 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pannikin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - 1 blanket extra, Alice Springs District.

**Dependants' rations and clothing:** The Army to ration dependants selected by the Native Affairs Branch. Clothing of dependants to be the responsibility of Native Affairs Branch.

**Wages:** 10/- per week minimum, with margin for skill or special labouring tasks - such margin to be determined by Army and Native Affairs officials.

Canteen: Army to make dry canteen service available to natives, as at present.

Period of Engagement: After each twelve (12) months' term a 'walkabout' period be granted.

Hours of Employment: 8 1/2 hours daily, including lunch hour, but not travelling time. Saturday afternoons and Sundays free - as is the present practice in Northern areas.
ABORIGINAL LABOUR FORCE DOCUMENTS

(x) Control: All labourers to reside in Control Camps, the sites for which will be selected by the Administrator or his officers in collaboration with Army. The Army, as at present, to provide provost assistance in the matter of prevention of trespass in vicinity of Control Camps by civilians or soldiers.

(xi) Housing: The Army to provide any material necessary for essential buildings. Hitherto those demands have been negligible and confined only to kitchens, stores etc., bush timber having been utilised wherever possible. It is unlikely that future demands would vary to any extent.

(xii) Features of Control:

(a) The Administrator reserves the right to admit, discharge, or remove any native from Control Camps for reasons disciplinary or medical, or where change in environment is indicated.

(b) The Administrator reserves the right to employ certain natives in Control Camps on functions not directly concerned with Army, e.g. buildings, cooking, sanitation, gardening, etc.

(c) Medical: The Army, as at present, to provide adequate medical facilities, and to report any case of injury sustained by labourers during employment.

(d) Army to continue to transport labourers daily to and from employment; provide personnel at camps to check labourers before departing from the Control Camps in the morning; to keep normal rolls for pay purposes; to supervise transport and drivers when at Control Camps.

(e) Administration officers to assist in assembling labourers in the mornings, and to co-operate fully in the matter of organising and maintaining efficient labour units.

(f) Administration officers to furnish list of dependents to be maintained.

(g) Visitors to Control Camps must receive sanction of Area Commandant.

(h) The Administrator to be responsible for control of Native Camps, and of all natives therein between the hours of sunset and sunrise and during off-duty periods.

(i) Disposition of labour to be decided by Army.

(xiii) Discipline: Breach of agreement to be met by loss of pay. Army to assist, where possible, in the repatriation of labourers on expiration of employment.

(xiv) Channel of Communication:


2. Routine: Area Commandant (Army); Civil Patrol Officer (NT Administration).

Increase in Native Affairs Branch Staff:

To effectively cope with the increasing organisation of Native labourers, Messrs Chinnery and White stressed the need for additional trained staff - at present Mr White with two assistants covers the whole of the Northern part of the Territory and it is not possible to give the close supervision necessary.

It was suggested that two members of the regular staff who have been called up by Army, should be transferred on loan to the Native Affairs Branch for special duty in connection with the recruiting and control of Native labour. Lieut F.R. Morris is said to be on duty in Sydney and Private F. Gubbins is a member of the Ordnance staff at Mataranka. It is understood that the Administrator is making representations that their services be made available.

QUEENSLAND:

The Director of Native Affairs stated in an interview with the Senior Inspector of Administration for Queensland, that the coloured population of that State consists of the
numbers under control of the Department; and nomadic natives who are not under control and are not employable in the ordinary sense for continued effort.

The natives under control number 2,500 mainland males and an unspecified number at Cape York and Torres Straits. (The latter, it is said, are wholly in the service of the Commonwealth in this area and under control of Service Officers). Of the mainland males, 2,000 are engaged in various employment - generally primary industry - under supervision of the Department. The balance of 500 are organised into 6 gangs or working parties under immediate control of trained departmental Supervisors. The gangs have, up to the present, been engaged in cane cutting, potato digging, maize pulling, cotton picking, etc, but the Director states there are breaks of time between jobs that need not be, if he could have assistance and support in forming a more continuous programme of work. At date (9/12/42) he had a gang on the South Coast digging arrowroot, and when that was finished no further work was in sight for them.

The Director stated it is preferable that native labour should be employed within reasonable distance of their home location, but owing to lack of a suitable programme, the gangs have followed the work offering, which has taken them long distances from home.

Possible Use of Labour at Mt Isa:

It is understood that, for certain health reasons, in the Cape York Peninsula steps are being taken to remove natives from certain Mission Stations in the vicinity of which troops are stationed, to a more remote station where contact will not be easy. In a report from within Army to the CI [Chief Inspector] (Army) dealing with this subject, a suggestion was made that if the proposed concentration of natives was carried out, some of the able bodied men might be selected and sent to NT as labourers. In view of the shortage of Army labour which is said to exist at Mount Isa, and the fact that it seems likely NT requirements may be largely filled from local sources, the question might be examined whether native labour, if any, available from the re-adjustment in the Cape York district, could not better be utilised at Mt Isa.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Information obtained from the Aborigines' Welfare Board states 'that aborigines in New South Wales are not collected together in tribes, the tribal instinct being practically unknown. Although tribal boundaries do not exist in New South Wales it would be preferable for groups of men to be employed in their own districts. It would certainly be inadvisable to employ aborigines outside the boundaries of the State.'

'The Aborigines' Welfare Board recently furnished the Director General of Manpower with particulars of youths and men living on aboriginal stations and reserves who could, if necessary, be compelled to work in pastoral or other industries. These lists included men who work in casual employment and others who were living in idleness with no attempt to seek employment in the war effort or otherwise.'

'It is quite a common practice at any time for the male aborigines to go to districts other than their own for employment, leaving their families behind.'

A subsequent memo, from the Chairman of the Board stated; 'When Mr Lipscomb, Superintendent of Aborigines' Welfare, recently visited Moree, it was reported to him that local aborigines were being refused employment in Allied Works camps and also by the pastoral community, with the result that many able bodied half-caste aborigines were now back at their camps and idle.'
The Director referred to lists of unemployed youths and young men which had been furnished to him by the Area National Service Officer of the Department of Labour and National Services, and attached a copy of this officer's report in which he states:

I feel sure that the only effective and satisfactory way that the services of these aborigines can be fully utilised is, firstly by recruiting fit men for work on Allied or Public work construction and segregating them in coloured gangs with their own quarters and with gangers or supervisors who have some understanding of the aborigine's character. From conversations with Police Officers in the districts where aboriginal stations are established, I have ascertained that the opinion of the Police is that the average aborigines are fair workers, in some instances very good under supervision, and would welcome some scheme such as the above, where they could be of some service to the country and would earn reasonable wages.

It is apparent from the above information that potential native labour in New South Wales is not being availed of at present, owing to lack of proper organisation and if the Services are in a position to absorb some or all, it would appear to be a simple matter to arrange to make use of this labour.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA:**

There are said to be approximately 26,000 natives of both sexes in WA. Most of those in the Southern areas are stated to be in employment, but an objective review should be made to ascertain whether all are engaged on essential war work.

In more remote districts such as Wyndham and Broome, Mr Neville expressed the opinion that under proper control it should be possible to collect a limited number of suitable natives at centres within 200/300 miles of their usual habitation, if Defence or other work on which they can be employed is being carried out in such localities. It is understood that to some extent RAAF has already been utilising labour at aerodromes in the North-West of WA and elsewhere.

**SUMMARY OF OPINION:**

The meeting was of the opinion that generally reasonable prospects exist for organising useful numbers of natives, but that the first essential is to ascertain whether work exists in which they can be absorbed. ... If the Services are interested, a meeting could be arranged with representatives of the State Native Control Authority to discuss details and submit proposals to the IGA [Inspector General Administration].

The meeting considered that it being a matter of national importance that all available labour be used to advantage in some form of essential work, if the Services cannot use natives directly, steps should be taken to ensure that Manpower Authorities in each State are aware of the possibilities for organising native labour.
AN APPEAL FOR RECORDS

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have actively participated in all the conflicts in which Australia has been involved in the twentieth century, from Gallipoli to the recent war in the Persian Gulf. They have served as members of front line units, as nurses, labourers, and in reconnaissance and patrol duties. Their contribution to Australia's armed services is as significant as that of any other group in Australian society.

Unfortunately this contribution is poorly represented in the collections of the Australian War Memorial, one of whose tasks is to develop and maintain a national collection of historical material. The private records sub-section of the War Memorial collects the records of individuals and organisations which are essentially private in nature, for example diaries and letters. Its objective in collecting and documenting these records is to allow future generations to see how individuals and communities responded in times of conflict, thereby complementing the holdings of official records.

Anyone who is interested in discussing the donation of private records, photographs, or any other material, or has any questions should contact:

Mr Michael O'Sullivan
Assistant Curator
Private Records
Australian War Memorial
GPO Box 345
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone: (06) 243 4326
A GUIDE TO ABORIGINAL RECORDS

During 1992 Australian Archives will publish a select guide to records held by its ACT Regional Office which are relevant in some way to Aboriginal people. The material to be included was recorded in the period between 1860 and 1960, most of it between 1911 and 1952. This volume will be followed by a similar volume about records held by the Northern Territory Regional Office. The guide was compiled by Ros Fraser between 1979 and 1983, with the assistance of grants from the AIAS (now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), and partial drafts have been available at both AIATSIS and Australian Archives since 1980.

Official records are one of the sources which can be used in interpreting history. While they do not meet some of the needs of people involved in Aboriginal history, their particular chronicle of policy, administrative actions and events not only reveals the nature of policy and administration, but may provide a useful source of information for personal, family, community and other kinds of history. The majority of the items in both volumes of the guide relate to Commonwealth administration of the Northern Territory, but there is also material relevant to people in the states.

The ACT volume includes some of the records of some 42 Commonwealth government agencies. Some of these departments generated many relevant records, others were not directly connected with Aboriginal affairs and recorded only a small amount of material. A brief note is usually included about the structure and functions of each agency, and how it came to have created relevant records, with a select list of its record series; over 200 series are listed, and others are referred to in the text. Items from some of these series also have been listed, either as examples of the kinds of things that might be found in the series, or as more comprehensive selections. Approximately 4,000 files and photographs are individually listed in this way, and pointers are given for finding others. About 850 of the item entries also have been annotated to give some idea of what is in the files they describe.

A partial index which includes name, place and subject components is included. The intention of this finding aid is to index all file titles, and also to give access to some of the known content of some files, whose content would otherwise not be apparent from file titles or the text of the guide.

The size, scope and structure of the Northern Territory volume will be very similar to that of the ACT volume. Each volume may retail for less than $20. For further information contact Gabrielle Hyslop, Assistant Director, Information Services, Australian Archives, PO Box 92, Mitchell, ACT, 2911. Phone (06) 209 9489.
BOOK REVIEWS


This book brings together papers on various aspects of the topic by five authors with a short foreword by Ken Colbung and preface and introductory chapter by Desmond Ball. Colbung, distinguished descendant of a Western Australian tribal group, links effective defence to wise use of natural resources in the age-old Aboriginal pattern. Ball's preface identifies two prevalent 'myths' about Aborigines and defence, the first encapsulated in the 1986 statement of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen that:

> The Aboriginal people wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the United States of America, together with our people who fought the Coral Sea Battle.

Given the difficulty inherent in determining the real meaning of Sir Joh's political utterances, he may have had a point if he was suggesting that all Australians, black and white, would have had a hard time without American support. If, as Ball assumes, he was denigrating the Aboriginal defence effort in the Second World War, that view has been well and truly demolished by Bob Hall in his book *The black diggers*. Hall's first chapter in *Aborigines in the defence of Australia* is a concise and well written version of the relevant parts of his earlier work. Ball's second 'myth', that the achievement of Aboriginal land rights is deleterious to national security, receives attention from several contributors who note that the Army's North West Mobile Force ('Norforce') has never been refused permission to operate on Aboriginal land; that Aboriginal survival and observation skills are vital to the defence of remote areas; and that along vast areas of our vulnerable northern coastline, Aborigines form the main, if not the only, population - and one which the establishment of land rights and the subsequent outstation movement has helped return, with the addition of modern communication links, to previously depopulated areas.

Much of the book's purpose stems from Ball's comment that 'there remains no analysis of the potential contribution which Aborigines could make to current defence efforts and in credible future contingencies'. Geographer Elspeth Young provides a background for such an analysis in considering the nature and distribution of the Northern Territory population. Aborigines form only 9% of the urban population, but no less than 55% of rural dwellers. Young divides the latter group into four: inhabitants of Aboriginal 'towns' such as Yuendumu, Milingimbi, Ali Curung; those living on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations; those living on White-owned cattle stations - as Young notes, by far the most deprived group; and outstation dwellers.

Rhys Jones and Betty Meehan follow with a lengthy chapter on the history and ethnography of eastern Arnhem Land. Much of the interest here lies in the account of the development of Milingimbi in the 1960s and its partial depopulation in later years because of the outstation movement.

Graham Neate provides a chapter on legal aspects of land rights in the Territory quoting, at one point, the perceptive comment of Mr Justice Deane that, in regard to an Aboriginal future, 'even amongst men and women of goodwill there is no obvious consensus about ultimate objectives'.

Bob Hall ends the book with sensible comments on army-Aboriginal relationships. This work has the common fault of co-authored volumes; it is disjointed and at times repetitious. It also concentrates heavily on the Northern Territory and within that context, on traditional Aboriginal lands and their holders rather than the whole Aboriginal
BOOK REVIEWS

population. It is customary amongst academics to defend land rights where they exist rather than advocate them where they do not, but it is disappointing to find that this book follows convention and omits examination of the Aboriginal situation and defence prospects in Cape York and in the Kimberleys; they are just as relevant to the defence debate as Arnhem Land. Still, it is a beginning and a very useful one at that. It is to be hoped that the momentum generated by this book will carry the energetic Professor Ball and the ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre to greater depths in analysis of this vital area.

Alan Powell
Northern Territory University


These two books seem at first sight to have little in common, but they share at least two features. One is that they are both, in part, works of history not written by academic historians; the other is that they are published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Rose, an anthropologist who has spent over a decade in the Victoria River District (VRD) of the Northern Territory, has written no ordinary history. Her starting point is the analysis of the region's history by Hobbles Danayarri, whom Rose regards as 'the most philosophically gifted of the Yarralin and Lingara historians'. About a year after she arrived in 1980, he addressed to her a fairly formal history of the area: the invasion and the establishment of White control, working life on the stations, and the strike. Rose’s history is a contextualising, a commentary and an expansion upon his words, most obviously by her organising the chapters on the same format as Hobbles’ analysis. In the concluding chapters she carries the story a little further to describe the post-strike, post-land rights history of the region. Hobbles’ analysis, of remarkable strength and insight, should be placed amongst the most powerful Aboriginal narratives in English, and although much of it appears in quotations throughout the work, I would have liked it formally set out at the front.

Some reviewers of this book, I think, have missed the novelty of history via text-analysis. Rose does not begin by asking that question implied by nearly all contact historians: 'On the basis of all the available evidence - what happened?’ Instead, by carrying the anthropologist’s attention to spoken text from the present to the past, she proposes: ‘This is what the Aborigines say about their past: let us consider it’. Close attention to the texts of Hobbles and others allows Rose to enter a number of current debates in Aboriginal history. One is whether Northern Territory Aboriginal pastoral workers enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the pastoralists, whether, as Riddett has argued, they moved ‘in and out of the industry as it suited them’. I suspect that such freedom has been greatly exaggerated by some previous historians; Rose cautiously closes her discussion with: 'There is undoubtedly some truth in [Riddett's] analysis, and it is therefore

1 Rose 1989.
important to note that the perspective which Victoria River Aboriginal historians bring to bear emphasises their confinement rather than their mobility. She uses some sophisticated genealogical techniques to calculate that the Aboriginal pre-1788 population of perhaps 4200 people had dropped to 187 by 1989, a loss of some 95%. The technique of text-analysis also brings some disadvantages. While Rose follows the events chronologically, there is sometimes a confusion as to which decade is being discussed and what forces of change were working upon whom. The picture drawn by Rose, as indeed it probably appeared to Hobbles, is sometimes more static than dynamic.

*Born of the Conquerors* is not immediately comparable because Judith Wright's book is a series of essays on ecological and Aboriginal topics written since 1976. A major theme is the metaphorical distance of white Australians from Aboriginal perceptions of the land, and from the land itself. Wright believes that Laurens Van der Post's description of 'modern man' as moving 'among a comfortable rubble of material possessions, alone and unbelonging, sick, poor, starved of meaning' describes non-Aboriginal Australians also, living in a country where 'they have no abiding title nor depth of relationship'. Herein lies a disadvantage of the re-published essay: Van der Post's sentiments are already sounding a little like nineteen-seventies rather than nineteen-nineties. The title *Born of the Conquerors* is explained by the essay 'The broken links': 'Those two strands - the love of the land we have invaded, and the guilt of the invasion - have become part of me. It is a haunted country'. Part of the amends non-Aborigines need make is keeping the country 'in the closest state we can to its original beauty'. Wright, possibly partly because of her own connection with nineteenth-century pastoralism, feels more acutely than most the burden of guilt of the invasion and dispossession.

Rose's country is not quite so haunted because it still is filled with living people whose most profound symbol of resistance was that they survived. Her position, described in chapters like 'Nyiwanawu and Bilinara deathscapes', 'Shot like a dog' and 'Terror', is that 'the early years of the VRD deathspace were violently brutal'. Despite cautions by Gordon Reid in a recent work, the evidence she provides is irrefutable, and again the technique of reflecting upon the Aboriginal texts frees her to discuss elements often missing in more conventional contact histories. Condemnation of white atrocity is mediated by her understanding that few, if any, of the European Aborigine-killers consciously undertook a systematic program of complete destruction: they believed that annihilation would happen without their having to take responsibility for it. She cautions the reader that Aboriginal memories, like those of Whites, can be self-serving. She discusses two themes not usually addressed by historians: the extent of *inter-tribal* warfare before and during the invasion (including deeds of 'horrendous violence') and the extent to which the bush people were killed not by Whites but by police trackers and Aboriginal station-hands. We can note here the anthropologist's concern for community dynamics rather than the orthodox historian's emphasis on Whites fighting Blacks (wherein such themes are held to be less relevant and less palatable) and also note that Judith Wright, by contrast, is not prepared to make public concession that Whites were not wholly guilty nor Aborigines totally good. Wright challenges a different conventional wisdom. She argues (in a paper first published in 1983, when the conflict was first becoming apparent) that environmental and Aboriginal issues do not necessarily sit comfortably together: she points out that land once declared as national park, for instance, is legally, irrevocably out of reach of any Aboriginal claim.

The first question for Wright and the last question for Rose is: what is the guilt and responsibility of the present? Rose asks, in relation to a final, chilling, account of the

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2 Reid, 1990
murder of an old man - are we the pile of ashes, the exterminator or the fearful onlooker? Guilt arises, she suggests, from accepting the viewpoint of the latter. The onlookers, modern non-Aborigines, are silent because they too are also potentially part of the ash pile. It is not only the White ringers and battlers who struggled, suffered and died in the working-man's paradise, but present-day Australians under a similar potential of colonisation by latter-day descendants of the Australian Investment Agency, the multinational companies. I would add that the onlookers share guilt also because, while fully understanding the dreadful past, they are well aware what their acknowledgement of violence and dispossession would imply. Therefore they continue to keep silent.

Wright and Rose share a hope for the future, but it is not the same hope. Rose asks us to acknowledge that VRD Aborigines, at least, are prepared to work together with non-Aborigines, whatever the past. Hobbles said:

You know before, Captain Cook made a lot of cruel, you know. Now these days, these days we'll be friendly, we'll be love each other, we'll be mates. That'll be more better. Better than making the trouble. Now we'll come and join in, no matter who...

It is up to the Whites to accept the olive-branch which the Aborigines have held out for so long. Wright maintains, however, that peace must be made with the land itself. 'We can speak [the land's] syllables, we cannot feel its meaning any more. This is what really lies at the deepest roots of [the Aborigines'] loss and of our loss too'. Her remedy is for non-Aborigines to make their own peace with the country by renewing their own sacred responsibility.

The books share another, less fortunate, characteristic. Rose's book is sold with a long list of errata, mainly concerning the position of maps and diagrams. A hand-drawn pound sterling sign looks very amateurish. The worst feature of the Wright production is the colour photographs, drawn from the AIATSIS picture file. The photos are disfigured by poor colour-separation, contrast or overall lighting, chemical blemishes and dirty negatives. Some of the problems stem from poor originals and some from poor production, but the overall pictorial effect is thoroughly unprofessional. Surely one of Australia's most distinguished writers is entitled to better treatment than this.

Rose's book won the NT's Jessie Litchfield Award for Literature for 1992. Hers will last the longer because Born of the Conquerors, though authored by one of the most perceptive observers of the environmental and the Aboriginal issues is an already somewhat dated re-publication. Wright's is also the more despairing. Rose's work challenges by exposing the VRD contact period in a way similar to R. and C. Berndt's End of an era. It is also important methodologically. While historians frequently discuss the limitations of, and alternatives to, chronological history, Rose has a fresh approach. She calls her informants 'historians', she puts their words in larger type than her own commentary throughout the book. She begins with the historical consciousness of the studied, writes a passionate meditation upon their perceived experiences, and concludes with a profound chapter 'Memory and the future' which I recommend to anybody who does not have the time to read the whole book.

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Peter Read
The Australian National University
Although Aboriginal biographies, autobiographies and life histories are today well represented there have been comparatively few occasional collections of Aboriginal commentary from lecture courses or symposia published over the years. Those which come most prominently to mind are Black viewpoints (1975) and, eight years on, We are bosses ourselves (1983). Consequently the publication of Being Aboriginal, almost the same time-span later than Bosses and culled from a series of radio programmes, is a welcome addition. The 121 pages make for a somewhat slender volume, however, and one might have hoped for a little more meat from such an important subject. The contributions are short, in keeping with the time restrictions of this kind of radio where programmes rarely last longer than half an hour, and the excerpts are often considerably briefer. Another reason for the book's short length might be the always time-consuming nature of typing transcripts within a busy work schedule. The production of oral narrative in print is for this reason never particularly easy. Nuances and original liveliness of the medium are of course lost but it is an advantage to have a written version.

The volume has eleven chapters plus a two-page introduction by Bowden and a background commentary of the same length by Bunbury midway through the book, 'A hidden history', describing the fieldwork setting and the contributors he interviewed for the programme. Not all contributors are identified by name. Perhaps some preferred anonymity but we are not told. The themes covered are by now familiar to students of Aboriginal history though probably less well known to the wider radio audience for whom they were prepared - for example: the taking of Aboriginal children from their own families and raising them in white foster homes (told articulately by Coral Edwards of Link-up); the importance of indigenous languages and Dreamtime stories (although these are often fragments, sadly, of what had been a far richer cultural heritage) in the broadcasts of CAAMA and moves in several communities towards teaching their children those things; conservation of traditional lands such as the Musgrave Park project in Brisbane (told anonymously); several personal reminiscences about relations with the police (Shorty O'Neill); and growing up in welfare homes (told poignantly by Iris Clayton for Cootamundra and by Alice Nannup for Moore River). This is a cross-section of Aboriginal comment which includes traditional 'on the site' matters such as those voiced by Paddy Roe near Broome (a chapter deserving much greater length), but on the whole the contributors mirror, and reflect upon, their urban or fringe camp experiences.

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Aboriginal languages and clans: an historical atlas of western central Victoria 1800-1900.

I.D. Clark is already known for his work in historical geography, particularly his edition of some of the Port Phillip Journals of George Augustus Robinson1 published in the same series as the present work. In Aboriginal languages and clans he continues his investigations into nineteenth-century historical sources on Victorian Aboriginal people. This book is an exhaustive and careful reconstruction of the distribution of tribal subdivisions or clans, i.e. local groups, and their wider affiliations. The study is based on all available published and unpublished materials and it gives insight into the ownership of land before the time of European settlement.

It is evident that years of dedicated research have gone into the making of this work: it will no doubt remain the definitive and authoritative work on the subject. Apart from the introduction there are ten chapters, each dealing with a specific region, since there were ten 'tribes' or major groupings of people in the area. Each section gives a summary of available material on clan organisation and location, the external relations with other 'tribes', what is known of contact history, a list of sources and a discussion of clan names and variants. The historical summaries are well written, concise and informative: they convey in a detached and therefore poignant way the tragedy that befell each group with the expansion of white settlement. As a geographer and in his understanding of nineteenth-century data Clark is outstanding and the work is a major achievement. When it comes to anthropology and linguistics the book has some minor controversial aspects. Thus on p.361 Clark quotes a clan list of Wergaia 'clans' or 'castes' published in 1904 by R.H. Mathews. He considers this list as 'problematical' because the names do not have the customary appearance of clan names, i.e. they are not formed with the use of finals like -gundidj or -balug; moreover they do not correspond to any of the clans named in other sources on Wergaia. He concludes 'the status of Mathews' clans is unresolved'. There can however be no doubt that the list published by Mathews gives the names of matrilineal descent totems, not of 'clans' in the sense of patrilocal local groups. The 'miyur' or 'home' referred to for each of these totemic subdivisions is a mythological centre. This to some extent corresponds to the information given by Howitt2 and quoted on p.339 of the present book. Yauerin is cited on this same page with a meaning that is far too vague, namely 'flesh or skin and class and totem'. In Wergaia yauer means 'meat' and yauerin literally means 'your meat' and hence 'your matrilineal descent line'. The second person form became known to ethnographers from phrases like njanja yauerin 'what is your "meat"?', i.e. 'what is your "line"?'. The use of the word for 'meat' in this context is widespread, it is found for instance in Paakantji on the Darling. The problem is that in the area covered by the present book there are at least three different types of social organisation:

1. Predominantly matrilineal moieties and patrilineally oriented local groups or clans.

The area where this type of organisation is found covers most of western Victoria (as shown on the map in Berndt and Berndt3) and it included the country of the Wergaia.

2. Patrilineal totemic clans, no moieties.

1 Clark 1988.
2 Howitt 1904.
3 Berndt and Berndt 1964:56-58.
3. Patrilineal moieties (as among the Kulin people of central Victoria). Throughout the area clans are patrilocal, and Clark’s lists are therefore accurate though the concepts differ somewhat from place to place. Clark is clearly aware of the differences in organisation and they are mentioned in a number of instances in the text, as on p.237, but they are never drawn together. It would have been particularly interesting if there had been some discussion on this important aspect, and also on the related matter of the varying attitudes towards social organisation reflected in the nineteenth century accounts. As pointed out by Barwick,4 the nineteenth-century gentlemen whose ethnographic publications influence modern research were not mere scribes: their jealousies, ambitions, loyalties and roles in colonial society shaped their enquiries and the content of their publications. This kind of diversity does not come across clearly in the present book.

Clark has been most careful and accurate in his use of primary linguistic sources, but his acceptance of some secondary sources is controversial. The source that names 'rg' as a phoneme in Dhauwurd Wurrung (p.29) is clearly wrong: there is no such phoneme in Dhauwurd Wurrung or in any other Australian language. The system of referring to what might be called a dialect as 'language\textsubscript{1}' and wider language affiliation as 'language\textsubscript{2}' is described on p.3 and is carried on through the work. Such a classification may be suitable for some kinds of areal linguistic studies, but it is depressingly schematic and does not do justice to the diversity of Aboriginal languages in Victoria.

The large number of variants for the name of particular clans as listed in nineteenth-century spellings would call for some general comments on the transcription of Aboriginal words: thus the English spellings k, ck, g, c, kk, gg could all be used to represent one and the same consonant in an Aboriginal language. Similarly the sound [i] may be rendered in English by 'e' as in 'he', 'i' as in 'him', and also by ee, ei, ey, ie. There is a brief discussion of spelling on p.15, but the matter is not made clear. The comment about 'the phonetic equivalence of the vowels a/u' is misleading. All the languages in the area make a significant distinction between the vowel [a] as in English 'but' and the vowel [u] as in English 'put', it is simply the English spelling that is ambivalent. Clark lists a 'preferred spelling' for each clan name, but it would have been valuable if in each case he had grouped together names that varied in spelling only, as opposed to those that showed other differences.

Inevitably in a work of this magnitude there are occasions where further evidence is available that has not been mentioned. Comments on Jackson Stewart - an important man who has many descendants - are quoted from the John Mathew Papers (p.339). Similar and further information appears in the work of Stone;5 moreover the myth of the Bram brothers, recounted by Jackson Stewart, has been frequently quoted elsewhere: it must have been one of the major myths of the western Kulin people.

The present book fills a gap in that it deals mostly with areas not covered by Barwick’s important papers. Clark’s command of nineteenth-century manuscript material is impeccable, and he brings many new insights. The work is of quite particular significance to various Aboriginal groups who are working on studies of their ancestry and it has been widely appreciated. It is a reference book that will be used and valued for many years to come.

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4 Barwick 1984:103.
5 Stone 1911 passim.
6 Barwick 1984.
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Luise Hercus
The Australian National University


Most readers of Aboriginal History will be familiar with Josephine Flood's earlier overview of Australia prehistory, Archaeology of the Dreamtime, now in its second edition. This new book is a better one, and complements that volume, providing descriptions and discussions of interesting and significant sites in all parts of the country. The two together form a set introducing the general public to archaeology in this country.

The riches of ancient Australia takes the reader - or the traveller - on a journey around and across the continent, touching on a wide variety of sites, ancient and modern, archaeological, cultural and natural. Interwoven with descriptions of sites are snippets of information about them, about researchers and the results of research, about Aboriginal life and mythology and history. Some entries on geological sites or features are somewhat out of place in a book really about the human, rather than the palaeontological or geomorphological, past.

With so wide a variety of sites their treatment varies, and there is no fixed format. Some places get several pages of detailed description and discussion, others get only a paragraph. It is not, therefore, a simple guidebook. Details on access are provided for most, but not all sites (some are physically inaccessible, others too sensitive). In many cases the committed visitor will still need to consult local sources (noted in the text) in order to find places.

It is an interesting book, and a useful one. But it is not without faults. Information on sites varies in quality as well as in style. This is partly due to the quality of information available. Some well researched and published sites can be given good coverage; others seem to rely on poorer, if not inaccurate, sources; some entries read a little too much like local tourist brochures. Although people with specific knowledge of individual places and their archaeology may disagree with details of fact or interpretation (my greatest personal objection is to the misleading account of western Victorian stone houses) the overall quality is high and reliable.

As in her other general work, Flood tends to gloss over the complexities of archaeological research, and to give an impression of authoritative and conclusive knowledge. For example, she strongly espouses one current view of 'intensification' in
Australian prehistory in the last few thousand years, and brings some quite unlikely data into the discussion. There is no suggestion of any alternative views or debates. Perhaps my own approach is too cynical and critical, but I am not convinced that the general public is best served by simple answers without an awareness of the problems, or at least some suggestion of uncertainty.

This book serves an important need. It invites people to visit archaeological sites, and develop an appreciation of the nature and significance of the Australian cultural and natural landscape. In doing so it confronts directly one of the most pressing problems faced by cultural resource managers today: how to open up sites to tourism, encourage an interest in them, and yet retain control and maintain protection. As Aboriginal studies, including Aboriginal prehistory, become increasingly important within school curricula and an awareness of the Aboriginal past and its remains becomes more widely spread, there will be increasing demands for access to sites and for easily understood information about them. This book is therefore very important. It will, I hope, stimulate archaeological authorities, in conjunction with Aboriginal communities, to open up and develop more sites for visitors, although this will be neither easy nor cheap. In this regard I fully endorse the underlying message in this book - that the only long-term protection will come from an educated and sympathetic population.

Some years ago I travelled much the same path taken by this book and visited many of the sites described in it. It would have been a useful companion to have on the way, and can be highly recommended for the cultural tourist, whether seated in a landcruiser or in an armchair.

David Frankel
La Trobe University


Through white eyes is a collection of eight reprinted articles published originally in the journal Historical Studies. The articles are linked by two threads: they deal with various aspects of Aboriginal-European relations since 1788; and they were written by white Australian historians. The collection begins with D.J. Mulvaney's comprehensive review (published in 1958) of the Australian historical literature on Aborigines, then passes to Peter Corris' 1973 paper 'Racialism: the Australian experience'. The rest of the chapters were published in the early and mid 1980s and range from Glyndor Williams' archival account of reactions to Aborigines from sailors on the Endeavour, to two articles (by Beverley Blaskett and Susanne Davies) on violence and the criminal law as they pertained to Aborigines in the Port Phillip area in the mid-1850s and Henry Reynolds' study of the assistance provided by Aborigines to early European explorers (a theme taken up in his recent monograph With the white people). The other two papers are Alan Frost's 'New South Wales as Terra Nullius' and Tim Rowse's 'Aborigines as historical actors'.

In addition to the reprinted articles, the book contains two papers written specifically for the collection. In 'Aftermath: the view from the window', D.J. Mulvaney seeks to relate discoveries by Australian archaeologists and prehistorians to the work of Australian historians and to Aboriginal interpretations of their own past. Mulvaney extends the
criticism levelled at historians by the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner and claims that as a group they remain unwilling to use the much larger time-scale provided by archaeological evidence to develop a more integrated Australian history. All in all Mulvaney's postscript represents a systematic and provocative overview of changes in Australian historiography during the past three decades, an overview which provides a useful context for studying the reprinted articles in the book and which brings up to date R.H.W. Reece's and James Urry's literature surveys, both published in 1979.

The other new paper in Through white eyes is the 'Response' to the book written by Jackie Huggins, a young Brisbane Murrie historian. Her thesis is that the cultural ideology brought to Australia in 1788 and underlying the subsequent frontier violence between Aborigines and Europeans is manifest also in much of the writing about Aboriginal history by white historians. She urges younger Aboriginal writers to explore from their own perspective the racial violence which loomed so large in Australia after the arrival of the first fleet. In making her challenge she acknowledges the inherent psychological difficulties and she cites some successful Aboriginal attempts at portraying our common Australian history.

As well as the endnotes pertinent to each reprinted article, the book includes a useful list of 'Additional references' and has an index of the proper names cited in the various papers. Through white eyes is a timely collection of reprints. It is 'historiography in the making' in that it contains a representation of historical writing about Aborigines, mainly published during the 1980s. It would be interesting to speculate about the contributors to and the composition of another such volume were it to be published in the year 2000.

P.A. Danaher
Brighton Grammar School (Victoria)


It is common knowledge that Aboriginal languages disappeared early in the areas of maximum initial European contact. It is less well known that in much of the 'outback' the situation is nearly as bad: practically all the languages of western Queensland are now extinct. In the sixties some of these languages were still represented by one or two speakers. It was very fortunate indeed that at that time Gavan Breen began his important work over the whole of the area, travelling year after year, for months at a time, seeking out and revisiting speakers in small townships and in the remotest of localities, on outstations and in droving camps, and recording nearly extinct languages often in the most adverse conditions.

The present work deals with two of the languages where major study was no longer possible, and only partial information was available even in the sixties. These are Pirriya and Kungkari, once spoken on the lower Barcoo and Thompson rivers. Breen recorded Kungkari from the last speaker at Belombre station. The partial Pirriya information was recorded from Albert Upperty whose father was 'said to have been the only, or almost only
survivor of a massacre of his tribe by (native?) police and whites at Poolpirree waterhole on Keerongoloo at the turn of the century' (p.6).

The other languages treated in this book are: 'Kungarditchi', Dharawala, Yandjibara, Wadjabangayi, Yiningayi, Guwa (chapter written in conjunction with B. Blake) and Yanda, all extinct earlier this century. For all these languages Gavan Breen has brought together the entire available material. He has added exhaustive comparative notes to the wordlists, and the work thus represents a definitive account. The only exception is 'Kungarditchi' for which there is some further unexpected material recorded by B. Schebeck in the sixties from a Yawarawarrka man who had a form of 'Kungarditchi' as his second language.

The languages studied by Gavan Breen are of quite particular interest because the area 'forms a large part of the interface between two great language groups and yet contains languages which seem to have differed in important and interesting ways from both these groups' (p.1). The two groups are the Kama languages and the Mari languages. The work gives insight into the complexity of the problems of cognates and borrowings. The comparative notes are of such great interest that one feels tempted to join in and to add a few further suggestions:

- **Kampu** 'bone' had a wider spread in the Kama languages than indicated (p.14), but with a difference in meaning: it was used for 'skeleton' in Yarluyandi and probably also in Diyari as indicated in the Diyari placename Kampumatarli.¹
- **thuru** 'sun' (p.150) could have cognates further afield towards the Gulf with *Wanyi* duru 'sun'.
- **Puralku** 'brolga' (p.151) is widespread in the Kama languages.
- **workia** 'food' (p.151) has an interesting parallel in Wangkangurru *warkanganyi* 'vegetable food'.

Regarding the placename *'Bools'* (p.104) which refers to a star, this may well be based on a misreading as suggested, but on the other hand it could possibly be linked to the widespread word *burli* 'star' found to the south in the Baagandji, Yarli and Yura languages. It might have been worthwhile adding a note on the spelling 'bohemia' for 'bauhinia' in one of the sources (p.210).

This is a thorough and authoritative work, a model of what can be learnt from languages even when there is only limited information available. It is an absolutely essential sourcebook for all who work on Australian linguistics, but it is also of wider interest to those who would like to know something about the tragic history of the Aboriginal people of western Queensland.

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Luise Hercus
The Australian National University

¹ Reuther VII:436.

This volume presents the edited proceedings of a workshop of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health held in July 1989. It is a far cry from sixty years ago when all but a few enlightened members of the medical profession worried about Aboriginal morbidity only when it threatened the health of the rest of the population. There were twenty-four participants consisting of doctors, other health workers, statisticians and demographers. All states were represented as well as the Australian Institute of Health, the National Centre for Epidemiology, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Studies.

The first section, six chapters, concerns infant and child mortality. Though rates have fallen considerably from the shocking figures of the 1960s they are still up to three times the rates for non-Aborigines. The other two sections, 'State and local studies' and 'National and comparative studies' disclose similarly disquieting figures for mortality of Aboriginal youths and adults. It seems that life expectancy for Aborigines is about twenty years less than for the rest of the population.

The final chapter deals with the Aboriginal deaths in custody about which we have recently heard a great deal. To this reviewer the real revelation of this chapter was the great number of deaths in custody of non-Aborigines; perhaps the Royal Commission should have investigated these too.

Further noteworthy figures were the high rates of deaths due to violence among adult Aboriginal males and females.

Though the papers and the subsequent discussions were concerned with statistics and not with possible measures to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal death-rates, the report gives a basis for action not only by policy-makers but also by Aborigines if they wish to regain control of their own lives - and deaths.

Isobel White
The Australian National University


Regional archaeological studies are crucial to the writing of prehistory. Over the last twenty years, however, Australian archaeologists tend to have been more concerned with questions of antiquity and colonisation than with the less spectacular results of detailed regional surveys. The publication of this revised version of Helen Brayshaw's PhD thesis on the Herbert-Burdekin district, firmly in the tradition of Isabel McBryde's pioneering work in northern New South Wales, is therefore a welcome reminder of the importance of this type of work.

The scope of the study was extremely broad, encompassing ethnographic and ethnohistorical evidence as well as archaeological survey and excavation. The result is an impressive compilation of ethnographic, historical and archaeological data from north...
Queensland, begun as a doctoral project in 1973 and completed in 1977. The introduction briefly outlines the aims of the research and highlights the responsibility to make the results more widely accessible through publication - a responsibility now fulfilled through this well-illustrated and well-produced monograph.

The scene is set in the first chapter by a review of the environment of the Herbert-Burdekin district. A brief chapter follows in which the nature and quality of the ethnohistorical evidence is critically reviewed. This evidence is then synthesised in chapters 3 to 6 under the headings 'People', 'Ritual', 'Diet' and 'Material culture', while supporting appendices provide tables detailing the nature and sources of individual observations. In chapter 7 and appendix 7A, the ethnographic collections are described. A total of 569 items specifically from the Herbert-Burdekin district was identified in the course of this study held in museum collections in Australia and overseas, and in private collections. This material is catalogued, illustrated and discussed in detail. Use of a framework similar to that of the previous chapters facilitates comparison between the two different resources, although more could have been done to integrate them explicitly.

The final three chapters are concerned with archaeological data. While the author has attempted to update the study by reference to more recently research, it is in this section that the thirteen year delay between completion of the thesis and its publication is most apparent. The discussion of the rock art sites and the various types of open site lacks a clear statement of the methods used and is rather generalised. There is little attempt to consider the reliability or representativeness of the aspects of the archaeological record described, although these problems are certainly recognised and the historical evidence is well used to identify site types that should occur in the area, but are not preserved or not visible. The survival of only 'modest midden remains' in the Herbert-Burdekin district, for example, is discussed in terms of both the probable role of shellfish in the diet, evidence from historical sources of traditional camping practices and site locations, and the destructive effects of tropical climatic conditions. It is not clear to what extent systematic field surveys were conducted during the research and it is therefore difficult to evaluate the discussions of preservation and visibility. Similar problems arise in considering the discussion of regional variation in rock art motifs. Only in the final chapter, where the results of the four excavations are presented, is any rationale given for the archaeological component of the study, namely to identify cultural variation through time and to see if the regional variations identified in rock art and other site types could be detected. In this chapter too is the most successful integration of archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence in the discussion of the human remains found in the excavated sites.

The monograph ends very abruptly and unexpectedly; there is no final synthesis and little attempt to draw together the different sections. This is disappointing in view of the wealth and variety of data presented.

Nevertheless, as Isabel McBryde points out in her Foreword, this research stands as a pioneer ethnographic and archaeological survey, and it is a pity that its publication was so long delayed. The study illustrates very well the great difficulty of successfully interweaving the documentary, material and archaeological strands of evidence to provide a unified view of Aboriginal life. From the perspective of 1991, we have a great appreciation
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of the complexity of the undertaking than was possible in the 1970s. Helen Brayshaw must be commended for an impressive compilation of material which will undoubtedly serve as a valuable resource for students of past Aboriginal society in North Queensland.

Caroline Bird
Victoria Archaeological Survey


Not only do three nation states come together in its vicinity, Torres Strait is also a topographically extremely complex area, whose shallow waters, studded with reefs and islands, are affected by salt or brackish waters from the Arafura and Coral seas and from the gulfs of Carpentaria and Papua as well as by the massive outpouring of fresh, though contaminated and heavily sediment-laden, water that the Fly River brings southward from the mountainous centre of western Papua New Guinea, site of the Ok Tedi and Porgera mines. No less complex or varied are the socio-cultural and economic influences. In or near the strait exist commercial and subsistence fishing, 'high' tourism, large-scale shipping with its potential for oil spills, the biggest marine park in the world, two or three Fourth World nations, several cultural traditions, in- and out-migration, subsistence economies, Australian federal and state bureaucracies, and communities largely dependent on welfare payments and remittances to maintain their appearance of prosperity.

The publication under review (the proceedings of a conference organised as part of the Torres Strait Baseline Study) demonstrates this complexity through some 40 papers arranged under three major headings: Physical Environment, Biological Environment, and Human Environment of the Torres Strait region. In styles that range from chemical-analytic to ethnographic-empathic, the papers cover topics as varied as sedimentation on the northernmost Great Barrier Reef, fisheries management in the Torres Strait, the effects of the Ok Tedi mine on the Fly River system, the status of the dugong in Torres Strait, the artisanal turtle fishery at Daru (PNG), the eastern islands of the Torres Strait, the assessment of the impacts of heavy metals in a complex and diverse tropical marine system, traditional fisheries in the strait, and the question of indigenous economic development in the context of sustainable development.

A notable section at the end of the volume, which is attractively arranged and well produced throughout, contains 'draft summaries' - each summary providing the five most central points of a paper, expressed in lay terms. These summaries were prepared during the conference because some of the almost 100 participants, several of whom represented Torres Strait Islander communities or communities on the PNG coast of Torres Strait, expressed concern that the physical and biological material presented was overly complex and technical and did not directly engage inhabitants' social and environmental concerns, or provide answers for the participants to take home. The draft summaries were intended to convey clearly the essential message of each paper, making the papers more useful and accessible to all.
The Torres Strait Baseline Study, which gave rise to the conference and this volume, was instigated by the Australian government in response to concerns expressed in 1985 by Torres Strait Islanders, commercial fishermen, and scientists about possible effects on the Torres Strait marine environment from mining operations in the Fly River catchment of Papua New Guinea. The objectives of the conference were: (1) to bring together current information on the strait's environment with regard to the potential impacts of mining operations, (2) to consider ways whereby environmental protection and economic development can be made compatible in the region, and (3) to consider ways whereby the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the traditional inhabitants can be sustained. To call the study 'baseline' is misleading, for it was started after major mines had begun operation (Kelleher); however, the conference can be seen to have marked another kind of baseline by bringing together physical and biological scientists with social scientists, traditional inhabitants, and government officials - a step of particular merit in integrating an understanding of bio-physical processes into social, economic, and administrative actions.

Cultural understanding is significant too in that the sea and reefs and rich marine life of Torres Strait (fish, turtles, dugong, shellfish, bêche-de-mer, and other sea creatures) figure strongly not only in subsistence and commercial economies but also in the cultural identity of Torres Strait Islanders and in movements for cultural revival. Sea territories and seascapes are a part of social and cultural space (Fitzpatrick). Even communities whose superficial prosperity depends on welfare payments and remittances retain an integrity and cultural heritage that rest importantly on catching and feasting on marine foods (Beckett). Despite this cultural significance, Johannes and MacFarlane do not find a cultural awareness among Islanders that the sea's resources are limited or that their actions could be cause of depletion - hence the authors' recommendation that there be more environmental education in formal schooling. 'It is ironic', they note (p.398), 'that developed countries such as Australia, which routinely contribute to the funding of special, locally relevant environmental education programs for third world countries, often overlook the need for similar programs in fourth world communities within their own borders'.

In an assessment of the possibilities of indigenous sustainable economic development, Arthur concludes that a commercially productive sector based solely on fishing faces limits as economic demands and numbers of people increase - a situation that requires broadening the region's economic base or modifying policies that emphasise its economic independence. With regard to environmental protection, mention must be made of the Torres Strait Treaty, signed by Australia and PNG in 1978; it contains important environmental provisions and explicitly acknowledges and seeks to preserve the traditional way of life and livelihood of traditional inhabitants. The treaty's linking of PNG's mainland with Torres Strait explains the relevance of the many contributions about PNG in the volume - beyond of course the threat to the strait's marine environment from mining operations hundreds of kilometres away (Hyndman; Ross) but directly connected by the waters of the Fly River. Although more than a quarter of the volume's papers deal with some biophysical aspect of the Fly waters that carry mining wastes and materials into the Gulf of Papua just northeast of the strait, little conclusive can yet be said about the aggregate impact of mining. As Cordell puts it (p.516): 'the numbers are still not in on Ok Tedi'. This together with many other uncertainties that surface in individual papers (such as questions about trans-cultural communication or the ability of sustainable development to lessen poverty) show this volume, massive and valuable though it is as a source of information on Torres Strait and the Fly River area of PNG, to be only an early step in learning enough to know how to
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adapt management of Torres Strait to be not only sustainable but also in accord with local needs and desires.

W.C. Clarke
Eumundi, Queensland


This major publication is part of an eight-year project undertaken by the editors to document, interpret and publicise the work of the Aranda watercolourists of the Hermannsburg Mission, and to assess their rightful place in the history of Australian culture.

The book itself is a highly significant example of revisionist history in the best sense. With its publication there should no longer be good reason for the Aranda school of watercolourists to be ignored by art historians, art critics, curators and others responsible for acquiring for our public collections, to the extent that they have been ignored in the past.

At the centre of it all stands the massive and tragic figure of Albert Namatjira. Ten essays, each by a specialist writing from a particular viewpoint, illuminate, as it has never been illuminated before, Namatjira's place in the history of Australian culture.

In his introduction J.V.S. Megaw explains that the book seeks 'to chart the evolution of the Hermannsburg Movement ... assess its place in white institutions ... and (a more difficult task) gauge its role in Aboriginal society past and present'. He stresses, and the points are made by others again and again throughout the book, that the Aranda culture was never static. It is an evolving system, and the Hermannsburg Mission, whatever its deficiencies, provided a protective role that assisted the survival of Aranda society in the face of the brutality of other white settlers.

John Morton, the LaTrobe anthropologist, opens the discussion with a detailed account of the Western Aranda and the place of Namatjira and his descendants and associates in that highly complex linguistic group. He sees the work of the watercolourists as an integral part of the evolving Aranda tradition. Robin Radford, who has specialised in the history of Lutheran missions, traces the history of Hermannsburg and the changes that took place in its policy towards Aranda culture during Namatjira's lifetime. Phillip Jones, the Curator of Social History at the South Australian Museum, provides an incisive and challenging essay on Namatjira as a 'traveller between two worlds'. He writes convincingly. The traditional art of the Aranda was no longer an option for Namatjira, he was adventurous, opportunistic (in the best sense); 'a gifted, ambitious individual'. A kind of black Nolan - but accorded a different fate. Albert distanced himself from Aranda traditions. As a Christian he played an important role in 'desanctifying and rendering harmless the potent decorative art of his ancestors'. In accepting the watercolour tradition the Aranda artists acknowledged the deeper transformations proceeding in their own society. Namatjira made a bid for his economic independence at a time when the Mission was gripped by poverty.

Jane Hardy writes of the visitors to Hermannsburg in the 1930s. Of Rex Battarbee and John Gardner, from Melbourne in 1932 inspired by the Taos painters of Mexico in the search for a new landscape style from their experience of the Centre, and of Battarbee's
growing interest in Aboriginal culture. A year later came the lesser known but important visit of Una and Violet Teague, then later Arthur Murch and William Rowell. It was not until Battarbee's second visit in 1934 that Albert Namatjira told pastor Albrecht of Hermannsburg that he wanted the chance to paint watercolours like those of Battarbee. Prior to that Albert had made and painted pokerwork plaques with scripture texts and also pokerwork boomerangs, crafts encouraged by Albrecht after he had seen similar work in Germany for sale to tourists. It was one of his several attempts to assist the economy of the mission when it survival was under threat in the 1930s.

In their essay 'Namatjira's white mask', Ian Bum and Anne Stephen provide an interesting but controversial interpretation of Namatjira's art largely grounded in Homi Bhaba's concept of mimicry in postcolonial discourse. It includes an interesting analysis of two woomeras decorated with painted landscapes by Albert. They are said to set up an ambivalence of categories, straddling as they do the usefulness of craft and the uselessness of 'high art'. This ambivalence the authors see as a double 'transgression'. Yet surely it is precisely the kind of transitional situation that we expect as tribal artefacts become commodities. It is not even certain in these particular instances whether Namatjira crafted the woomeras; so we cannot assume that he was setting up 'transgressions' deliberately across the western categories of craft, kitsch and high art. An interesting, though rather forced, comparison is made between Namatjira's painted woomeras and Duchamp's use of the ready-made. This is followed by a good discussion of the way in which Namatjira's art transgresses the modernist concept of primitivism (the basic reason of course for its relative non-acceptance by the high-art world of Australia from the 1930s to the 1960s). But when they attempt to correlate Albert's landscapes with Bhaba's concept of mimicry they are much less convincing. In their visual analysis of Albert's landscapes they argue that 'the visual emphasis on the edges holds the composition in balance without either a dominance of forms near the centre or any noticeable hierarchy of forms'.

But this is not borne out by even a casual examination of his work, indeed 'The Western MacDonnell Ranges', the painting selected as evidence for the claim, does not support it. It all sounds like Greenberg talking about Olitski and not about the work of an artist painting in a naturalistic landscape tradition. The trouble with this essay is that in seeking to apply an essentialist notion of 'difference' between Namatjira's and Heysen's approach to landscape painting it succumbs to a second-order primitivism in which Albert's paintings are endowed with sophisticated but essentially 'western' readings in order to establish 'difference'. It would probably be better to allow the Aranda themselves to state the nature of the difference. Phillip Jones's better researched, and more closely argued essay on Namatjira as a twentieth-century Aranda man is a better guide here to the understanding of his art.

Sylvia Kleinert provides a well-documented account of the reactions to the Hermannsburg School, that reveals how much the baleful effects of primitivism hindered its reception. Tim Rose discusses the economics of the marketing of the art and Daniel Thomas, in an engagingly autobiographical account, describes briefly no less than ten 'worlds of art' into which Namatjira's work was pigeon-holed (e.g. mission-encouraged art, tourist industry art etc. etc.) all of which acted to keep his work inaccessible to 'high art' valuing and the major public collections. To Thomas's exquisitely adjusted curatorial eyes, Namatjira's pokerwork boomerangs are his most significant work - 'a sign of creative accommodation to social change'. Several of the essayists see the Aranda watercolours as a reassertion of land rights, as a subversion of the European landscape tradition and its assertion of spiritual authority over the land.
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Jenny Green also shows how many of the Aranda school prefer to paint their own countries and to paint them from memory as a form of spiritual repossessing. Ruth Megaw provides a chronology from 1877 with the foundation of the Hermannsburg Mission to 1991 with the death of Otto Namatjira the last surviving son of Albert, and there is a comprehensive bibliography. The book suffers badly however from a lack of editing. Again and again different essays recycle similar facts. On p.284 we read 'there are few attempts to review his life [Namatjira's] in its historical context, or to see his life and work as a unique product of his time between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal Australians of that era'. But you will find that that, unfortunately, is an excellent summary of what the previous 283 pages are all about, should you decide to begin at the beginning and read on to the end. In short, a good book that might have been an excellent one with the help of a little intelligent, professional editing.

Bernard Smith  
Melbourne


David Horton has compiled an anthology which brings to our attention the long history of European interest in the Aboriginal past through a generous selection of extracts or abridged versions of publications spanning the period from 1699 to 1976.

The three dozen extracts are grouped into six sections: Beginnings, Palaeontology, First Syntheses, Classic Archaeology Begins, New Syntheses, Kow Swamp and Mungo. Each of these has a brief introduction, setting the general scene, and there are brief biographies and portraits of the major authors. Half a dozen co-authors are deemed less significant or less photogenic.

This selection reveals shifts in style and approach, but most illustrate a common theme: the search for human antiquity and the demonstration of major environmental change. The earliest are the most out-of-place, and really belong to an entirely different set. These are brief asides on manners and customs, rather than attempts to investigate the past. Phillip in 1788 and Oxley in 1820 describe opening (recent) graves. But it is not until Mitchell's 1839 research on fossil marsupial bones, and Dawson's and MacPherson's later excavations of Victorian mounds that we have examples of archaeological investigation of ancient sites.

Geologists take over from explorers and ethnographers in the second section (Palaeontology). In these extracts, the question of human antiquity is incidental to the investigation of environmental history and especially research on extinct marsupials.

First Syntheses include papers published between 1890 and 1928 by geologists (Etheridge, Gregory, Edgeworth David), the naturalist Pulleine, and that most significant of late nineteenth-century students of Aboriginal society, Howitt. Here we fully confront the major theme of the anthology - antiquity and environment. In these studies Tasmania plays an important role, as it was used then, as later, as a critical point of departure for geological and anthropological debate.

These overviews are followed by Classic Archaeology Begins. For Horton, 'classic' archaeology means stratigraphic excavation and the development of typological sequences exemplified by the initial work of Tindale and McCarthy, followed by Gill's first use of
radiocarbon dating, Mulvaney's excavations at Fromm's Landing and Kenniff Cave, and Jones' at Rocky Cape - this last in obvious counterpoint to Pulleine's doubts as to the value of excavation of that site.

New Syntheses (that is, those of 1957 to 1961) by Birdsell, Tindale, McCarthy and Mulvaney set the scene for the culmination of the book, the apotheosis of Kow Swamp and Mungo. There are five papers in this section by Thorne and/or Bowler with a varied supporting cast.

Horton ends 'the story of Australian archaeology' in the early 1970s. His brief coda, After Mungo, does no justice to the last twenty years of research. Important as they undoubtedly were, the initial researches at Kow Swamp and Mungo have become increasingly marginalised by later work, not only because of the scandalous lack of formal publication, but also as finer grained data from all parts of Australia and Melanesia have allowed major redefinitions of even the simple issues addressed in this book.

Stopping when it does the anthology gives no hint of the major changes in the social context of the discipline of the last fifteen years. Some of these were foreshadowed 170 years ago when John Oxley hoped that he would 'not be considered as either wantonly disturbing the remains of the dead, or needlessly violating the religious rites of an harmless people, in having caused the tomb to be opened, that we might examine its interior construction'. No such scruples are found elsewhere in this book, which (as any historical anthology should) documents more than the immediate academic concerns of the authors.

It is all too easy to criticise an anthology, to suggest alternative texts, or a different scope. Horton has chosen a particular theme of Australian archaeology, emphasising the search for human antiquity and environmental change leading up to the discoveries at Mungo and Kow Swamp. But there is far more to archaeology than that, and no necessity for a long time depth and major environmental fluctuations in order to develop significant questions. Human behaviour, rather than (material) culture history can - perhaps should - be investigated at a finer scale of time and space. Much research has never addressed the primary themes of this anthology and so finds no place in it. It is important to remember that there were parallel archaeologies in the past just as there are at present. These need to be considered in a full history of research which is, of course, more complex than would appear from the image of cumulative progress implicit in this collection.

A different editor would have chosen differently; perhaps have given more, and shorter, extracts; or provided a substantial analysis of the history of thought in the place of the brief editorial comments. I would have liked to have seen S.R. Mitchell and A.S. Kenyon represented, and a recognition of the early conscious rejection of models based on overseas typologies in developing a uniquely Australian approach to stone tools, especially by South Australian researchers. The inclusion (for example) of Elsie Brammell or Daisy Bates would have provided us with some (dare I say it?) early roses among all these thorns.

Nevertheless Horton's personal selection gives the raw material for reflection on past attitudes as well as on data and approaches. This incentive toward a critical evaluation of earlier research, when coupled with an equivalent self-consciousness in present practice, will, as Horton suggests, ensure that Australia is not doomed to an unchanging archaeology, limited to the problems addressed in this collection.

David Frankel
La Trobe University
In 1961, one of Australia's great mammalogists and animal collectors Hedley Finlayson published a paper in which he stated, 'Indeed had [the value of Aboriginal knowledge] been recognized earlier and the much greater opportunities of 50 years ago seized and vigorously exploited, we would not have to deplore the great and probably permanent hiatuses which exist in our knowledge today'. His pioneering work conducted in the arid zone during the periods 1931-35 and 1950-56 recognised not only that many mammal species were under threat of extinction but that there was a patent disregard of the knowledge of Aboriginal people who truly understood much of the biology and ecology of these species. His respect for Aborigines and Aboriginal knowledge allowed him to amass one of the most significant mammal collections in Australia and to record information about species, some of which are now extinct. Contrasting with this are the numerous biologists and collectors over the past 200 years who have risen to academic and professional prominence by their exploitation of Aborigines and Aboriginal knowledge but who have contributed little to an acknowledgement of this debt.

Fortunately, over the last ten years there has been an increasing recognition of the value of Aboriginal knowledge, the impetus to much of this being an awareness that the arid zone has lost many of its mammals particularly the medium-sized species such as bandicoots, hare-wallabies, quolls and possums. Dorothy Tunbridge's work in the Flinders Ranges with Adnyamathanha people is significant in two main respects. Firstly, it illustrates what can still be gained from a language group which is, linguistically and culturally, '... standing at the very edge of ... survival ...' and secondly, it is the first time to my knowledge that information about the mammals and their relationship to Aborigines has been published in detail, in a format that will be attractive to people from a wide range of disciplines.

The book has three main themes: the Adnyamathanha people, their language and their relationship to the mammals of the Flinders Ranges, mammal species extant in the Flinders Ranges and those now extinct, and finally, mammal extinctions and effects of these extinctions on the Adnyamathanha. For a non-linguist such as myself Tunbridge's description of the language was readily understood and presented in a most readable form. The fact that the book was written by a linguist, presumably untrained in mammalogy, is a credit to Tunbridge. The amount of biological, ecological and distributional detail provided by Adnyamathanha consultants will undoubtedly be all that will be gleaned from the Aboriginal mammal oral history of the region.

My main concern, however, is the ease with which Tunbridge points the finger at pastoralism as the main cause of extinctions without undertaking an in-depth analysis of all potential causal factors. Undoubtedly pastoralism was the catalyst for extinctions but the synergistic effects of other factors such as droughts, rabbits, foxes, cats and possibly changing fire regimes on the surrounding plains may have weighed against survival for some species. Identification of the causes of extinctions requires a major, detailed investigation not possible within the scope of this book. As she says '... the exact causes of species obliteration are still being argued over ...'.

I was particularly impressed with the layout of the book and the quality of the drawings and photographs, although the photos of the Greater Bilby (washed out), Brush-tailed Bettong (dark) and Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby (out of focus) were poor. A scattering of
typographical mistakes was offset by the accuracy of nomenclature used, particularly with bat species which have fluxed over the last few years.

One point worth mentioning is copyright. While Tunbridge acknowledges the Adnyamathanha consultants, non-Aboriginal 'ownership' of the information appears to lie with the author. This is not a criticism of the author but perhaps a point which should be taken up among Aborigines, authors and publishers where Aboriginal knowledge is being used.

Tunbridge states that, '... this book, with all its gaps and guesses, is offered as a form of redress for the past failure of "white" Australia to recognise the immense bank of knowledge that Aboriginal people have, or had until it was lost forever'. She has shown what it is possible to achieve with Aboriginal people whose traditional way of life has almost ended. Imagine what could be achieved elsewhere in Australia with many language groups whose traditional life remains relatively intact. If we are to pay more than lip service to the idea that Aboriginal people have much to contribute to mammalogy (in addition to other disciplines) then research organisations should be encouraging co-operative research arrangements with Aborigines, and Aboriginal knowledge should be considered an additional, important tool in understanding mammal distributions (past and present), and mammal biology and ecology. Overall, The story of the Flinders Ranges mammals will have a well-deserved place on every mammalogist's bookshelf.

David Gibson
Alice Springs


The history of medicine and public health needs a social and political context; this interesting anthology supplies such a background for the tropical north. All but one of the dozen essays were first given as papers at the fifty-seventh ANZAAS congress, held at Townsville in August, 1987. The collection opens with an eleven-page introduction, presumably by the editors. This discusses medical history as an interdisciplinary field, and gives a brief historical background to northern Australia and adjacent Melanesia. The essays are then presented in two parts.

The first group of essays focuses on health administration and administrators. The opening article, by Professor Donald Denoon, analyses the role of 'tropical medicine' in Papua New Guinea. In a similar vein, Dr James Gillespie relates in the fifth essay a rather curious episode from early this century, during which the Rockefeller Foundation promoted a Queensland campaign against hookworm. The efficacy and indeed the necessity of this programme are questioned; Gillespie examines the underlying bureaucratic and political agendas of its promoters.

I find the first essay rather provocative. Denoon's main argument is that public health measures in Papua New Guinea were grossly retarded by the disease-based models of tropical medicine favoured by Australian administrators. For instance, he seems disappointed at the enthusiasm with which medical authorities greeted chemotherapy for 'cosmetic or trivial' (p.22) conditions, such as hookworm or yaws. The latter condition he appears to regard as
relatively minor: "... yaws was more often inconvenient than lethal" (p.20). Would Denoon feel the same if he had caught this disfiguring disease?

Denoon decries the lack of government and medical intervention in child-birth and child rearing in the first fifty years of colonial rule, in contrast to western societies where 'parturition and nurturing were being professionalised' (p.21). Of course, there are now objections that such activities have been over-professionalised. It is ironic that at least some of the great reduction in infant, perinatal and maternal morbidity and mortality that western societies have enjoyed is the result of the same disease-based, reductionist approach to medicine that Denoon appears to dislike in 'tropical medicine'.

As another example of maladministration, Denoon records that difficulties in containing tuberculosis in the late 1930s at the Gemo Island isolation hospital were partly due to a failure 'to isolate victims from their families' (p.21). Yet earlier in the essay, he sneers at policies of quarantine and segregation as being racist, particularly those of Cilento of whom Yarwood has painted a more rounded picture (vide infra). Denoon grudgingly admits that, in the days before antimicrobial chemotherapy, there was little else that could be done: "... segregation and quarantine may not have been as stupid as they seem half a century later" (p.19). How remarkably generous!

With the help of that well-known medical instrument, the infallible retrospectoscope, it is certainly possible to argue that colonial health administration in Papua New Guinea was often misguided. Having done so, it is reasonable to enquire as to causes. However, Denoon goes much further. Denoon describes the interests that promoted tropical medicine in Papua New Guinea as actually being 'malign' (p.13) - that is, as being disposed to do evil - and labels their apparent neglect of public health as being 'criminal' (p.21). To make these serious accusations stick, Denoon should prove that the health administrators concerned really were malicious, or at least recklessly indifferent to human suffering. I consider that he has failed to do so.

Four biographical sketches included later in this first section are balanced and are particularly interesting. The first is Mr Robert McGregor's account of the attitudes and efforts of Professor Baldwin Spencer, not as an academic anthropologist but as the Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Northern Territory Aborigines for just one year (1911-1912). Spencer was unacceptably authoritarian by modern standards: for instance, he was keen to isolate Aboriginal populations. Though it may seem strange to some modern readers, he was convinced that otherwise the Aborigines were doomed to extinction. McGregor shows that Spencer was a sincere supporter of social and medical measures that he thought might arrest or avert such a fate.

Next, Ms Lorraine Harloe sympathetically describes the work - and difficulties - of Dr Anton Breinl, an expatriate Austrian bacteriologist, whose role is also mentioned in Denoon's essay. In 1910 Breinl became the first director of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville. During earlier work in Britain, Breinl had been partly responsible for introducing arsenicals as a treatment for trypanosomiasis, a great advance which was later extended by Erlich. Breinl was persecuted during the First World War and resigned afterwards. His work was however much appreciated by fellow experts, notably his successor.

The third such account reviews the life and work of a famous health administrator, Sir Raphael Cilento, who succeeded Breinl at the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine. Its author, Professor A.T. Yarwood, pulls no punches in noting his subject's marked elitism, racism and anti-semitism, but Yarwood also lists Cilento's many contributions and gives fair weight to his expertise and diligence.
In contrast to Denoon, Yarwood points out that Cilento clearly recognised that most so-called tropical diseases could be prevented or eradicated by sanitation and appropriate lifestyle. Cilento strongly recommended physical exercise and preventive medicine as a recipe for healthy life in the tropics. Yarwood notes however that Cilento's greatest medical failure was his refusal to accept a role for sun exposure in the aetiology of skin cancer.

The final biographical note, by Mr James Griffin, concerns the career and contributions of Sir John Gunther, whose memory remains esteemed in Papua New Guinea. Despite, or perhaps partly because of, an undistinguished beginning in Sydney, Dr Gunther rose from being a salaried practitioner on a Solomon Islands plantation in 1935, through valuable wartime service mainly in Papua New Guinea, to become Director of Public Health there in 1945; eventually Gunther became the Assistant Administrator.

The second group of essays is less biographical and more sociological. The first three contributions explicitly involve matters of race. Dr Clive Moore discusses the alcohol abuse that became endemic among indentured Melanesian labourers a century ago in the Mackay district, and also reviews the various and often futile attempts at legal control. Moore’s interpretation of the social significance of alcohol and associated violence has obvious recent parallels.

Also relevant is Dr Dawn May’s review of Aboriginal health on North Queensland cattle stations early this century. Aborigines there enjoyed significantly better health and diet than dwellers in town camps, in whom Cilento had reported malnutrition in 1934. May attributes this advantage to isolation, with reduced exposure to infective disease, as well as to a superior diet arising both from a certain persistence of traditional lifestyle and also from market gardening at station homesteads. Though often suffering discrimination from managers, doctors and hospital committees, station Aborigines were participants in the cash economy and could buy goods and services, including medical care.

In a pleasant essay, Dr Lyn Riddett has given a moving account of the health of women and infants in the Northern Territory in the 1930s. The descriptions of interaction between Aboriginal and European women are fascinating. Riddett provides sad, and well documented, anecdotes of various medical crises; even in the 1990s, potential dangers imposed by isolation remain.

Another three contributions take a critical look at the role of government in North Queensland public health. Dr John Maguire examines the origins and management of leprosy among Aborigines (a disease probably unknown to them before European settlement). The history of the Fantome Island Leprosarium (1939-1973), near Townsville, is revealing: although long planned by Cilento, the management was assigned to the Roman Catholic church, and in the midst of war the USA generously supplied building materials not provided by Australian governments.

In another article, Dr Peter Bell investigates the poor health and diets of gold miners in North Queensland camps a century ago, which he considers are most simply explained by poverty and deprivation. In the alluvial goldfields of the 1870s, mortality was double the Queensland average, yet there was little interest shown in sanitation or public health. Ubiquitous Chinese market gardeners were a major source of good food, in camps where scurvy was not unknown.

In the final essay, Ms Janice Wegner describes the often awkward role of local government in public health until the end of the Second World War, which in practice largely meant the supply of clean water and the disposal of sewerage and garbage. As contrasting case studies, she examines Hinchinbrook and Etheridge, two North Queensland shires.
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In Queensland, public health services have long been decentralised. Wegner finds that this devolution of power was driven by the desire of Brisbane governments to save money, rather than by a wish to promote local democracy in remote communities. Many difficulties resulted from inadequate funding and support. In the previous essay however, Bell shows that by the early twentieth century local government action greatly ameliorated the health hazards of the goldfields.

Except for the first essay, I enjoyed reading this book. The contributions cover a wide and interesting range, and each is well supplied with references for further reading. The authors, the editors, and the publishers should take pride in having made a valuable addition to Australasian medical history. Students of Aboriginal and Melanesian history should also find a place for this book on their shelves.

David Betty
The Australian National University


In 1984 the South Australian Parliament passed the Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act, handing back to the Pitjantjatjara Aborigines much of the area prohibited since the nuclear testing of the 1950s and 1960s. Some of the Yalata people reoccupied their land and established an outstation at Oak Valley, 140 km north-west of Maralinga, outside the contaminated area, which had so far undergone little of the clean-up demanded by the 1985 report of the McClelland Commission. The technological assessment group convened by the Australian government 'agreed that an anthropological study was essential to provide information on the diet and lifestyle of the Aboriginal owners of Maralinga and Emu ... similar to that which they could be expected to adopt if (and when) they could return to the rehabilitated test sites' (p.4). Kingsley Palmer and Maggie Brady were commissioned to do this study; both had already worked at Yalata and at Oak Valley.

The technical assessment group seemed to expect that a clean-up could return the contaminated area to as safe a level as before the testing program, but the authors of this study nevertheless laid great emphasis on the level of dust ingestion, suggesting that they thought complete clean-up was impossible. They observed an extremely high level of dust ingestion, particularly by the children, who spent time playing in the sand, often raising great clouds of dust. Moreover frequent high winds and willy-willies also raised clouds of dust as well as of ash from the fires. Since water has to be brought in by truck there is little used for washing persons or utensils. All the food eaten tends to be coated with dust or ash.

The authors had four twelve-day research periods at Oak Valley, in May, August, November, 1987, and February 1988, and a fifth trip to tell the community of their findings, and a further trip at the request of the technical assessment group to perform some urgent dust monitoring. On each of the four research trips they made a careful daily count of the inhabitants and of the food entering the camp, so that they could make a rough assessment of the food intake per person. There was a great deal of hunting, mostly of kangaroos, so that the intake of fresh meat was high, though this did not prevent the purchase of considerable quantities of fresh and processed meat from the store and from the
'tea and sugar' train. Gathering of vegetable foods was unimportant in the diet because the people preferred to buy food from the store (kept supplied from Yalata), the biggest quantity by weight being bread, flour and sugar, with some variety provided by tinned products. There was an extremely high consumption of soft drinks. The diet was notably deficient in fresh fruit and vegetables. Except that there was more hunted meat the diet is similar to that observed by this reviewer at Yalata more than twenty years ago.

Dwellings also are little different from those observed at Yalata in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They are bush shelters in winter and minimum windbreaks in summer. There are no toilet or washing facilities. The camps are moved every ten days or so. There is a clinic and a health sister is usually resident. Yalata school operates at Oak Valley two or three days a week (pp.7-8). The authors devote a short chapter to health, including their own observations and some figures from outside sources. One important difference from Yalata is that there is no alcohol at Oak Valley, though some of the inhabitants are suffering from the long-term effects of alcohol abuse, having left Yalata to get away from the temptation. The authors state that 'the living conditions at Oak Valley ... are not conducive to good health, because of lack of water, sanitation, garbage disposal, unhealthy dogs and a general ignorance of personal hygiene practices ...' (p.73). Later in their report they say that: 'The desert dwellers of Oak Valley have an unbalanced and unhealthy diet ... high in refined carbohydrate and protein, lacking fibre, complex carbohydrates and balance' (p.88).

In their concluding chapter, Palmer and Brady present the dilemma that these desert outstations pose to both Aborigines and non-Aborigines (for Oak Valley is fairly typical of others even though it is the only one facing the contamination threat). Many Aborigines have chosen to face the hard living conditions in these outstations because they represent 'an environment (both physically and emotionally) that is recognised by them as their own', and a refuge from the alienation they felt on missions and government settlements. For government to try to bring such outstations to a level of health and comfort demanded by non-Aboriginal Australians would be an impossible task. To force removal of the inhabitants would be in line with policy of fifty years ago and in direct contravention of today's proclaimed policy of self-determination.

The authors have presented their findings clearly and concisely, with a minimum of evaluative pronouncements. The book is short and easy to understand but brings the reader face to face with some of the problems faced by government and by Aborigines themselves. It is well worth reading.

Isobel White
The Australian National University
This book should be read alongside Anna Haebich's *For their own good*, previously reviewed by Peter Read in this journal. The two books deal with almost the same period in West Australia's history of treatment (mostly ill-treatment) of its original inhabitants. Haebich deals with the period 1900-1940 from the point of view of the Aborigines, Jacobs tells the story of the life of A.O. Neville (1875-1954), the state's Chief Protector of Aborigines from 1915-1940, and describes the effect of the Aborigines on Neville rather than his effect on them.

Auber Octavius Neville was born in 1875 in the north of England, the eighth son of a Church of England clergyman. In 1897 he joined two of his older brothers in Western Australia. They were imbued with pride of empire, believing that their duty lay in improving conditions in the British colonies, so it is not surprising that within six months of his arrival Auber Neville became a clerk in the state public service and spent the rest of his working career in that service. He proved to be a dedicated and efficient administrator, rose quickly through the ranks and in 1908 became Secretary for Immigration with responsibility for organising and settling thousands of British immigrants on the land. This flood ceased with the outbreak of war in 1914 and in 1915 Neville was appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines, much against his will, since this represented a lowering of his ranking in the public service; Aborigines, in all government service, state and Commonwealth, held a low priority, and Western Australia was no exception. But Neville, with his stern sense of duty, threw himself into his new post with his usual dedication, and though his years as Protector were bitter ones for the Aborigines they would almost certainly have fared even worse without Neville's continuous efforts to obtain more money for their welfare.

All over Australia in those years the plight of Aborigines became increasingly desperate; without mercy they were driven into missions and settlements 'For their own good' as John Forrest remarked in criticising the Act that made this possible in Western Australia (quoted on the title page of Haebich). 'Their own good' meant assimilating them to the culture of the settlers with little regard to justice or human rights; today we would condemn this as cultural genocide. Though Neville shared some of this ethnocentricity, he regarded the Aborigines as fully human, and was aware that their pitiful conditions were due to the attitudes and actions of their conquerors. He fought throughout his working life to change these attitudes, thus bringing upon himself many attacks in the state parliament and the newspapers. Many of his attempts to help the Aborigines were thwarted by a series of penny-pinching governments. Neville was particularly worried by the plight of the increasing numbers throughout the state of the part-Aborigines, and was an advocate of taking them away from their families in order that they should have the benefit of a western-type education. Neville was particularly worried by the plight of the increasing numbers throughout the state of the part-Aborigines, and was an advocate of taking them away from their families in order that they should have the benefit of a western-type education. Neville was particularly worried by the plight of the increasing numbers throughout the state of the part-Aborigines, and was an advocate of taking them away from their families in order that they should have the benefit of a western-type education. He genuinely believed that this would be 'for their own good', unable to realise that this was as cruel to the children and their families as it would be to take his own beloved children from their parents! We should remember that he came from a class in England that regarded it as proper to send their sons, and sometimes their daughters, away to boarding school. He escaped this fate because he was the eighth son of a not very wealthy family. But nevertheless we have to condemn Neville for the removal of Aboriginal children. Like others who believed in this process, he did not realise that for the Aboriginal

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1 Haebich 1988.
2 Read 1990.
children this was not merely taking them from a warm family environment but also placing them among totally foreign people, and for the families it meant the complete loss of their children, sometimes for ever.

Reading about Neville's career gives the impression that he spent most time trying, with little or no success, to get more money for what he saw as absolutely necessary improvements in conditions at the settlements and other institutions under his authority. Jacobs writes about Moore River settlement in 1932:

... many workers ... found themselves and their families enmeshed in the rules and regulations, even to the extent of ending up in Moore River Settlement through destitution. It caused more anger and bitterness towards Neville and the Department, although he hadn't instigated the practice and would have preferred fewer indigents to care for. Moore River was hopelessly overcrowded with the old and frail, orphans, the children of mixed blood the Department had removed from native camps, destitute families and law-breakers ... (p.198).

Pat Jacobs paints a picture of Neville as a model family man and as a dedicated and efficient public servant, whose acute sense of duty caused him to serve the state and the Aborigines to the best of his ability and according to his strong sense of what was right and proper. In his favour he attempted to learn all he could about the Aborigines, by travelling all over the state, even exploring areas in the north that were still almost unknown. Thus he became known throughout the whole of Australia as an authority on the administration of Aboriginal minorities. When he retired at the age of sixty-five both Aborigines and non-Aborigines paid tribute to his achievements.

I enjoyed reading this book, as a record both of a period of Western Australian history and of the attempts of a dedicated public servant to do his best in a climate of war, depression, racism and under a series of heartless and penurious governments.

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Isobel White
The Australian National University
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Typescripts must be double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Submit two hard copies and keep one. Footnotes should be as brief as possible, typed on a separate sheet and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. A short form of citation should be used for footnote references (e.g. Saunders 1976:27). The bibliography, on a separate page, should show the author's name and full publication details as given on the title page of the work, listed alphabetically by author and chronologically for each author. Tables and maps should be submitted in final form (except for size), on separate sheets, numbered on the back, and accompanied by a list of captions and photographic credits. Once manuscripts are accepted, authors may wish to submit final versions on computer disks using only Microsoft Word (Version 3.02 or 4) for Macintosh computers.

Authors should follow the usage of Style manual for authors, editors and printers, 4th edn (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988).

1 Rowley 1971:107; see also Barwick 1981.
2 Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
3 Fison and Howitt 1880:96.
4 See Cox 1821.
6 Bemdt and Bemdt 1965:xiv.
7 Colonial Secretary - In Letters (CSIL), 30/1722.
8 L.E. Threlkeld to A. M'Leay, 15 July 1831, CSIL, re Land 120, 315527 (in 45/514)

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