

Darwin NT

WARTIME TERRITORY



Produced by the National Trust (NT), with assistance from Frontline and the NT Tourist Commission to promote the Territory's wartime heritage

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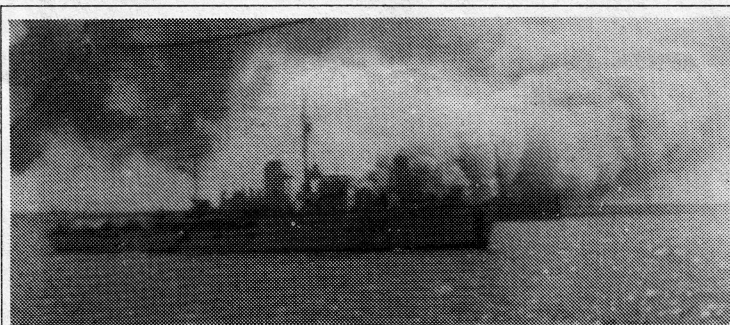
DARWIN, FEBRUARY 19, 1942--

SIRENS SOUND AS BOMBS DROP; HARBOUR AN INFERNO

Fifty years ago the Top End of the Northern Territory was under enemy attack and Darwin, shaken from its usual lethargy, was dramatically thrust into the role of Australia's 'frontline'.

On the morning of February 19, 1942, Japanese bombers launched the first, and most devastating, of their attacks on the Top End - attacks which would continue until November 1943.

In that first memorable raid the bombs began dropping as the air raid sirens began wailing, giving the civilian and military population of the town virtually no advance warning. The bombers struck with precision—heading first for the harbour where they knew a fleet of allied ships was moored and for the little stone post office where a dedicated staff had volunteered to remain working to keep vital communication links open with the rest of Australia.



Bombing takes its early toll in Darwin Harbour as the Zealandia burns in the background - Wheeler Collection - NT State Library

Within minutes the harbour was an inferno, with scores of people struggling for survival as burning oil covered the water. On shore nine of the civilian postal staff were dead - tragic victims of a direct hit on their carefully constructed slit trench. An hour later a second raid targeted the RAAF Station, leaving another trail of destruction behind. By early afternoon, at least 243 people were dead - a number which many who experienced the events of that day still believe far below the real toll.

This year thousands of Territorians and visitors will relive that day. They will share memories—some happy, some tragic, some courageous, some perhaps shameful - and they will renew friendships. And hopefully some of the stories that emerge will help the rest of Australia to better appreciate the role these people played - both in civilian and military arenas - during a time of national crisis.

In the first five pages of this issue of Wartime Territory we have chosen a few people who experienced the first raids and we hope their tales will encourage others to share their memories with us:

'UNSENT' LETTERS TELL OF DRAMATIC DAY

As mentioned in the last issue, Able Seaman Harry Dale, ex-RAN who served on the Karangi servicing the boom net, recorded the events of the day.

He wrote to his mother but never posted the letters because of the censorship. Instead he delivered them to her when he came home on leave in December of 1942. They provide a vivid eye-witness account of the events:

The time is near 2400 hours (midnight). Boy I'll never forget today; a lot has happened in a short time... I'll try and fill in the details as they happened:

Cecil Dobell and I were on duty this morning just before 1000, we were up on the gun deck together, just skulking around having a smoke. Anyway we heard this low droning sound. It was a plane but sounded pretty high up. Then it came into view. It wasn't one, but many. They all glistened silver in the sun, like they were painted with silver frost. It looked like nine, then another nine, then another nine. They were flying in arrow head formation with one leader.

Cec said "They're Japs; we don't own that many." By now they were well into view coming across the harbour in a line which to me was taking them straight up the town. We reckon they were 30,000 feet high. I raced into the wheel house and pressed the alarm button; then I stood in the doorway. As they got closer I could see their bombs starting to fall. The first looked as if it hit between the signal station and the ships tied up alongside the wharf. I looked at the ship's clock.

It was showing 0958 hours (two minutes to 10 am - that's one time I shouldn't forget).

I know there is a ship there unloading depth charges (Neptuna). I'd say it copped a hit...we were a little lucky. Our anchor was not on the anchor cable but on a "blake slip stopper" which meant we didn't have to use up any steam to raise it. We were able to see all the ships belching out smoke as the stokers are really stoking the boilers right up, trying to get up

a head of steam quickly so they can get under weigh.

The dive bombers are now in action. The USS Peary who is only a few hundred yards from us on our port quarter is putting up plenty of flack and machine gun fire. There is a small cloud just above her. There are five dive bombers. They seem to be hidden in the cloud. They are dropping everything at her. Our little 12 pounder is going great; haven't hit anything yet.

The Peary has just been hit again. She is on fire. She never managed to get up any speed before she got hit again.

The ships alongside the wharf have just blown up. Can't see the old Platypus. I think she must be gone.

We have all ducked for cover. Shrapnel is falling everywhere.

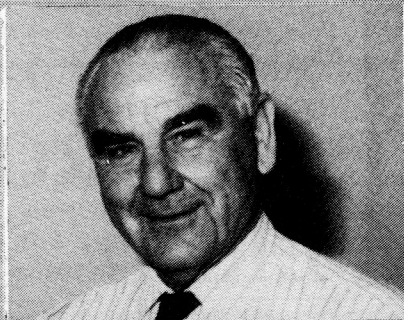
The "Manunda" the hospital ship is only a few hundred yards off our port bow.

Here comes a Kittyhawk. Its belly light is flashing dot dash' all the time. There's a bloody Zero after the Kitty.

Welcome to edition two of 'Wartime Territory'. It contains reminiscences of some of those in Darwin at the time of the first bombing raids and of the wartime role the town of Katherine played.

1942 FIFTY YEARS ON THE TERRITORY'S YEAR OF COMMEMORATION

*A Message from the Patron
Northern Territory War Service Memorial Year
Sir William Keys, AC, OBE, MC*



The Northern Territory was Australia's home front during the Second World War—the scene of the first and only sustained conflict on Australian soil.

Darwin, devastated by Japan's Pearl Harbour veterans on 19th February 1942, was subjected to air attack until late 1943. In all there were 64 Japanese air raids.

However, the Territory was not defenceless. It became a huge armed base from which countless long-range bombing sorties were flown, some of 14 hours duration, among the longest of the war in any theatre. Their goal: disrupt the flow of oil and rubber to Japan from the occupied Netherlands East Indies—now Indonesia.

From Darwin, soldiers were despatched to defend the nearby islands of Timor and Ambon, many to die in action or to serve out the war in POW camps. Darwin was home base for commando teams despatched on missions behind enemy lines, and as the tide of war turned many others passed through the Territory bound for action in other theatres.

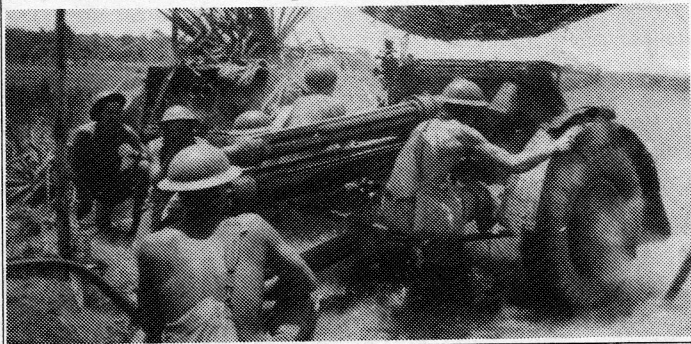
Darwin Harbour is the resting place for Allied naval and merchant ships caught in that first ferocious raid in February 1942. Throughout the war the port served as a resupply refuge for our naval vessels which saw action in the seas to our north, and in 1945 it became the first home landfall for many of our POWs.

The Northern Territory's military heritage is unique in Australia. During the war years at least 250,000 Allied personnel served on this our home front. They came from many nations, but in the main were Australians, Americans, British and Dutch.

Throughout the Territory in 1992, the Battle of Australia War Service memorial year is being held to honour those who served on our home front. This unique year, which runs through to November, is a combined effort between the Northern Territory Government, the Territory RSL, the defence forces, council and numerous individuals and community organisations.

The Territory is to be congratulated for creating one of the most significant World War II commemorations in the Asia Pacific Region. It is an historic memorial to an eventful period in our history and I am honoured to be a part of it.

Ron Jackson sent us this photo of his regiment at target practice



SURVIVORS TELL OF BOMB HORROR

(Cont. from 1)

The Nip is firing all guns. They have just hopped over the Manunda. (looks like the Manunda was strafed by the Nip as he flew past).

Bullets are flying everywhere...We are underway. The Zealandia is astern of the Manunda and has been hit. She is ablaze down the stern, big fire.

They are taking to the life boat; we are heading toward them.

They are rowing toward the Manunda.

Looks like a direct hit on the Peary's magazine.

OH! She has blown sky high!!

What an explosion we have copped the full force of the blast - I've got bells in my ears.

She's sinking stern first - nearly under now. The forward turret is still firing. We are pumping shells out as fast as we can. I can see the form of a sailor right on top of the blast. The Peary is nearly under. Can see another life boat being rowed away from the wharf. Don't know how they have survived. The old Platypus is still afloat. We are firing at anything our gun can reach. It's useless wasting ammo trying to reach the high level bombers. We are just fending off any low level fighters or dive bombers.

The Catalina's went with one run of bombs. They have sunk the lot. There's a torpedo bomber carrying a great big torpedo under its belly. It's keeping out of the way. Reckon they expected to find the USS Houston - bloody glad she got away yesterday.

Wherever you look there are burning or sinking ships. The air is filled with the smell of cordite, gunfire and exploding bombs. There are still explosions going on.

The bombers haven't let up. We are making weigh towards the boom gate. Probably only four or five knots. The time is 1215. There is nothing we can do here. The Japs are now bombing what looks like the RAAF base. Here comes another wave of 27, the first wave has flown out over the harbour...There musn't be anything left of the RAAF base.

It's been about four hours since the Japs' first raid. We have been going to each ship that's sunk looking for survivors.

They have either got away in the lifeboats, been trapped in their hulls or are floating about with the wreckage. The harbour is littered with debris of all sorts.

Still a few hours till dusk. Can't come soon enough for me. The engines seem to have stopped...seems we are stopping here for the night.

The death of the Peary

Three others who will never forget the day are three survivors of the Peary who arranged to reunite in Darwin this year for the commemorative events. They are Melvin Duke (known as 'Duke'), Dallis Widick and Sam Ashman.

The Destroyer Peary had only anchored an hour before the raid after returning from convoy duty.

Duke, a bosun's mate, was sitting around with a few shipmates when they heard the drone of planes. "Well, here comes the air cover President Roosevelt promised, we thought," recalls Duke. "It was air cover but it was the Japanese. We heaved the anchor and I was ordered to go back and try to get one of the boats away when the first and second bombs hit. Then a third bomb hit the bridge.

I dived overboard—I said later I think I swam 50 feet before I got wet—and started swimming towards the Manunda when she came under attack as well. I then saw a liferaft with two men in it and tried to help get it out of the burning oil when one of the lifeboats picked us up. About then the Neptuna exploded.

Like Dallis, Duke has vivid memories of large pieces of metal going 'sky high' in the air and of the enormous concussion that shook the water and land. When he got to shore he remembers walking past the post office and seeing people recovering some of the bodies there. He then went to the hospital to be treated for shrapnel wounds and was there when the second raid came.

Dallis Widick was bringing in the anchor when a bomb hit the bridge, breaking the ship in two. "It blew up and everything was on fire. There's not a person who would not be frightened in such a situation but your training takes over and you automatically do what you are trained to do. Of course I wasn't trained to jump over the side but I didn't

Not Hospital Ship and Hospital Among Targets

have any problem doing that," he adds. "I was in the water when the Neptuna blew up. It was unbelievable—great big pieces of metal and even human bodies flying through the air—and an enormous concussion in the water. It's something you never forget."

In an interview with the NT News in 1982, Sam Ashman recalled the suddenness of the attack: "It was plain hell. We had just got the first bell from the engine room when the first bomb hit. She practically sank on the spot. It happened so quickly that all we could do was get off."

"I saw a life raft nearby and hollered over to them. Someone called out 'Sam over here' and I tried to swim toward them. A man reached over the side and said 'I can't give you a hand but grab hold of this. He stuck what was his left arm with the burned flesh still on it, over the side for me to grab. The Japs kept strafing us while we were still swimming and when a bomb dropped you could feel it through the water. When I got on the boat I was sick because I had swallowed so much oil and water. There was a man in the bottom of the boat burned all over. I think he was dead. The boat just went around picking up men in the water but most of them were dead."

Hospital Ship Hit

A graphic description of the fate of the hospital ship Manunda is found in a statutory declaration by John Reid Barclay, a fourth mate on the ship.

"A motor driven lifeboat was launched from Manunda and Junior Engineer Angus Campbell and I proceeded in it with two A.B.'s. for the purpose of pick-

ing up survivors from Peary. We proceeded as close as possible, at times getting within a boat's length of the burning ship and picked up between 30 and 40 survivors.

"While we were engaged in this task someone called out 'They've got the Manunda'. I looked towards the ship and saw debris flying from amidships about No. 3 hatch.

About the same time I noticed a single aeroplane turn and travel in a shallow dive towards Manunda. This plane passed over our lifeboat at a low level (about 200 to 300 feet) with its machine guns blazing. I saw a bomb released from this plane as it was about mast high (about 200 feet) near the Manunda. I watched this bomb fall. It struck the water between our lifeboat and Manunda. It fell very close to the [ship] and exploded."

A bomb pierced the music room skylight and two decks killing nine crew, and three military personnel including a nurse, Margaret de Mestre.

Thirty-six hours after the raid the Manunda set out for Fremantle, carrying 385 wounded.

Bank Records, Money Ordered South

Clarrie Read, the manager of the Commonwealth bank describes his experience in a letter to bank officials after the raid:

"The air raid alarm sounded a few minutes before the raid actually commenced. Cash, ledgers and records were rushed into the strong room.

"We were ordered to be ready for evacuation together with cash and essential records in two hours time...by the light of matches and dimmed torches the staff trans-



*Deck of the hospital ship Manunda after bombing
Wheeler collection. State Library*

ferred all cash and essential records into trunks. We left Darwin about 1 am and arrived at Adelaide River at 8 am."

Like many others, Reid estimated the losses at much more than the official total, writing "While paper reports state the damage and loss of life was small, I can assure you that between 600 and 1000 died."

A Child's Memory

There were very few children left in Darwin at the time of the first raid but two who were will never forget the experience. Elsa Herron, who was only 11, and her sister Rose, who was nine, were playing on Dinah Beach when they saw the large group of planes coming towards them. "We thought they were American planes as my Uncle Dolph had said they were expecting them any time," Elsa recalls.

"Then all of a sudden they started diving down at us - bombs were dropping, machine guns were going and things were blowing up in the harbour. Uncle came out and said 'oh, my God, that's not the Americans that's the enemy'. My brother Leo and uncle Dolph grabbed us and we ran down to the beach and into an old quarry where we were thrown in and jammed

against the wall up to our necks in mud and slush, terrified as they machine gunned all around us."

Emerging after the raid, they looked out over the harbour.

"We saw bodies crawling out of the water and ships blowing up - smoke and flames - it was really horrible."

When they got back to their house they found that it had been machine gunned. Later in the day the children were evacuated to Alice Springs where they joined their mother.

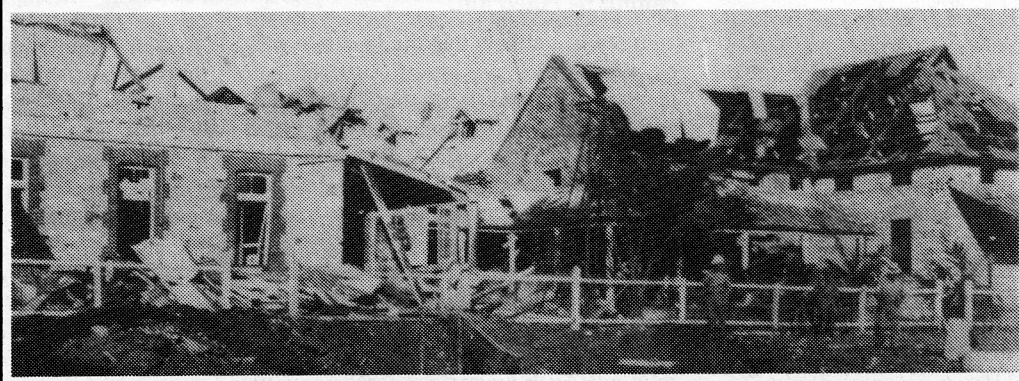
Their brother and uncle Dolph (Cubillo) remained behind. Another uncle, Dolph's brother John, who was working on the wharf, was killed when the Neptuna blew up. (Leo is writing to us about his memories of the time and we will be printing them in the next newsletter).

Getting the News Out

Three journalists who experienced the raid were correspondents Douglas Lockwood, (Melbourne Herald); Merton Woods, (Sydney Daily Telegraph) and Alex Olsen, (SMH). This was the greatest story of their career and there was no way to get it out. Lockwood reported he arrived at the post office to find it in ruins and to see the bodies of staff members being carried away. The trio decided to head for the next nearest telegraph office - Katherine. They got there 30 hours later and sent their stories, although censorship meant much of their description was cut.

For fuller accounts of the war in the Territory, there are several new books and a video available. Among them are Frank Alcorta's *Frontline*, Bob Alford's *Darwin's Air War* and Tom Lewis' book, *Wrecks in Darwin Waters*. Doug Lockwood's book, *Australia's Pearl Harbour*, has been reprinted for the occasion.

NINE POST OFFICE STAFF KILLED WHEN TRENCH GETS DIRECT HIT



Melbourne Herald, February 19, 1942

DARWIN BOMBED BY JAP RAIDERS TODAY; FIRST WAR BLAST

SYDNEY—Darwin was bombed this morning by Japanese planes.

The Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) made the first announcement earlier in the day. Speaking from his sick bed in St Vincent's Hospital, he said:—"Australia has now experienced the physical contact of war within Australia. As head of the Australian Government I know there is no need to say anything other than in these words: Total mobilisation is the Government's policy for Australia.

"Until the time elapses when all the necessary machinery can be put into effect all Australians must voluntarily answer the Government's call for the complete giving of everything to the nation. I make it clear that the statement that has been made is official and authoritative. Nothing has been hidden. There is no ground for any rumour. If rumours circulate take no notice of them and deal sharply with any person who circulates them. The Government has told you the truth. Face it as Australians."

An attack on Darwin had been expected by the Government for a considerable time—in fact since Japan secured a foothold in New Guinea by the seizure of Rabaul.

DEFENCE AREA

Darwin, principal town and administrative centre of the Northern Territory—Alice Springs is the only other settlement of any size—has a normal peacetime population of about 4000 in the last year or so greatly increased by the influx of servicemen. For years merely the port serving the cattle country of the North, its fortunes waxing and waning with those of the cattle industry, Darwin acquired a new importance with the establishment of the British and Dutch overseas airlines, when it became the 'front' door of Australia.

From the lethargy which had long afflicted it Darwin had begun to emerge when the war completely altered its character. The handful of men at the naval establishment and manning the fixed defences were suddenly reinforced by thousands of soldiers—both AIF and AMP—and airmen. Darwin is a permanent RAAF station and extensive quarters had already been contracted. The crisis found the few buildings of military headquarters 17th Military District, virtually complete but for the thousands of new troops huts and had to be built and roads constructed in virgin bush and scrub country.

This Paper is Needed for Our War Effort—Save It!

The Argus, February 20, 1942

DARWIN HEAVILY BOMBED - ATTACKS BY 93 PLANES: 4 SHOT DOWN DAMAGE 'CONSIDERABLE': CASUALTIES UNKNOWN

Mr Curtin, Prime Minister, announced last night the first attack was made by 72 twin engined bombers, accompanied by fighters. The second was by 21 twin engined bombers.

"It is known for certain that 4 enemy aircraft were brought down," he said. "Damage to property has been considerable, but reports so far to hand do not give precise particulars as to loss of life.

In a communique announcing the first raid Mr Drakeford, Air Minister, said that preliminary reports indicated that the attack was concentrated on the township. Shipping in the harbour was also bombed. There were some casualties and damage to service installations. The raid lasted about one hour.

In his announcement last night Mr Curtin said:—"The Government regards these attacks as most grave and makes it quite clear that a severe blow has been struck in this first battle on Australian soil. It will be a source of pride to the public to know that the armed forces and civilians conducted themselves with the gallantry that was traditional in people of British stock. Although the information does not disclose details of casualties, it must be obvious that we have suffered.

"We must face with fortitude the first onslaught and remember that whatever the future holds in store for us we are Australians and will fight grimly and victoriously. Let us each vow that this blow at Darwin and the loss it has involved and the suffering it has occasioned will have the effect of making us gird up our loins and nerve our steel. We, too, in every other city can face these assaults.

Let it be remembered that Darwin has been bombed, but it has not been conquered"

Adelaide Advertiser, February 23, 1942

DARWIN EVACUEES TELL OF RAID

Town Stunned by Sudden Attack Enemy Flew Straight to Targets.

The paralysing suddenness of the Japanese raid on Darwin on Thursday is emphasised by evacuees from the Darwin area who reached southern towns during the weekend. It is stated that the enemy pilots found their targets with remarkable precision. Some of them made a bee-line for the hospital, which is plainly marked with red crosses.

Although four miles of railway was destroyed in the raid, the line was restored the same evening and a packed train left for the south with civilian evacuees. Other trains followed. It was a nightmare journey, as food was extremely scarce on the three-day journey and most of the people travelled in open trucks exposed to the blazing sun and the cold nights.

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The Argus, February 21 1942

17 KILLED IN RAIDS

CANBERRA, Friday—IN THE 2 AIR RAIDS ON DARWIN YESTERDAY IT IS BELIEVED THAT TOTAL CASUALTIES WERE 17 KILLED AND 24 WOUNDED.

Nine of the fatalities in the town were members of the Darwin postal telegraphic and telephonic staffs who were killed when the post-office was bombed.

Announcing this today Senator Ashley PMG said 11 others connected with the post-office had been injured. The postmaster, his wife, daughter and the 3 telephonists, all of whom were in a trench shelter were killed by a direct hit.

Senator Ashley said the post office was bombed during the first raid and communication services interfered with. Emergency communication was however soon established between Darwin and Adelaide and through these channels the first details were sent to Adelaide post office authorities. Later another emergency service was established some distance from the town. Additional gear was being sent to Darwin.

Paying a tribute to members of the postal telegraphic and telephonic services who lost their lives, Senator Ashley said their devotion to duty, notwithstanding their knowledge of dangers that threatened them would create a profound impression among the people. In thus staying at their posts they showed courage equal to that displayed by members of the armed forces.

London Times, February 23, 1942

POSSIBILITY OF JAP. ATTACK ON DARWIN

LONDON: The possibility of an enemy descent on Darwin cannot be ruled out.

It seems unlikely that the Japanese will add to their commitments by a full-scale invasion of Australia before they have established themselves in the islands, but Darwin would give them useful naval and aerial bases from which to attack the Allies' communications. Darwin is a position from which the Japanese could not easily be dislodged if once they were in possession.

Landings to establish air bases at Broome and Wyndham seem equally possible.

It may well seem to the Japanese to be worth considerable sacrifice to gain a foothold in Australia, but Australia can be trusted to use every man and every plane to keep the enemy as far away as possible.

The Empire and the Allies will spare no effort and no sacrifice to reinforce Australia and reinforce her in time.

Adelaide Advertiser, March 21, 1942

CASUALTIES AMONG POSTAL STAFF; PO VICTIMS KNOWN HERE

There was keen sorrow in the telephone branch at the Adelaide GPO yesterday when names of the South Australian postal employees who died in the Japanese air raids on Darwin were made known. "They were all well known at city headquarters," said the Deputy Director of Posts and Telegraphs, Mr Arnold last night "and we have been greatly upset by the tragedy."

Mr Arnold reported that altogether 70 members of the Post Office staff were stationed at Darwin. Eleven more of these had been injured but full details had not yet been received....

Mr HC Bald who, with his wife and daughter, Miss I. E. Bald, was killed, is a former postmaster of the Glenelg....Mrs Bald was formerly Miss Alice Parker of Forestville. She was an Education Department teacher and taught at Port Augusta. Miss Iris Bald, 20, daughter of Mr and Mrs Bald was educated at the Methodist Ladies College. She was a member of the Commonwealth Public Service at Darwin. Peter aged 15, the only son, has been living with his uncle at Hallett.

"We wanted an efficient postmaster for Darwin last August said Mr Arnold and when Mr Bald volunteered we selected him for the position. When women and children were evacuated from the town Mrs Bald volunteered to stay and act as a telephonist. Their daughter was working in the Lands department there."

In Darwin Few Days

Mr A.T.R. Halls, 45, who was a supervisor of telegraphs arrived in Darwin only last Saturday to relieve Mr N.C. Chesterfield who had been stationed there for three years. Mr Chesterfield is now on his way back to Adelaide.

Mr Halls who is also a returned soldier, leaves a wife and four children.

Mr AW Wellington was a clerk with 11 years service in the postal department. He went to Darwin several months ago on relief work. He leaves a widow and an eight months old daughter.

Misses Frena Stasinowsky and Eileen Mullen volunteered for duty at Darwin last May and were selected because of their efficiency. Both were senior operators and had had considerable experience in Adelaide and the country.

Miss Jean Mullen joined her sister in Darwin during her holidays a few months ago and volunteered to stay there as a telephonist because of the staff shortage.

The Misses Mullen were born at Port Augusta and before their departure for Darwin lived at Edmund Avenue Unley. Just before the war they made an extensive tour of Europe together. It was because of this tour that Miss Eileen Mullen anxious to see more of her own country had volunteered to go to Darwin. A brother, Brian Mullen, solicitor, is in the RAAF.

Mrs GF Young, a temporary telephonist, was the wife of a Darwin resident. She offered her service because of the staff shortage.

Melbourne Argus, March 31, 1942

240 DEATHS IN FIRST DARWIN RAID Only 15 in Town

In the first Japanese air raid on Darwin on February 19 the number killed on land, sea and air did not exceed 240, and this number maybe reduced when further information is received.

This information is contained in a report received by Mr Curtin, Prime Minister from Mr Justice Lowe, who was appointed by the Government to inquire into many aspects of the raid.

Mr Curtin said yesterday that the report was very comprehensive and dealt with many matters which could not be made public. The figure of 240 would not be increased, but might be reduced when certain waterside workers had communicated with the Railways Commissioner or shipping agents who had employed them

Interests of security prevented me stating previously the number killed or drowned in the harbour and on the wharves," said Mr Curtin.

"The damage to the town itself was small. There is no reason to suspect espionage as a cause of the raid. There was none."

The Argus, March 2, 1942

FOOD RATIONING AT DARWIN

KATHERINE, Sunday—Tribute to the work being done at Darwin by the Administrator Mr Abbott was paid by an official who arrived at Katherine today. Since the first bombing Mr Abbott has worked tirelessly arranging evacuations and providing shelter, food, and sanitation for civilians remaining.

Ration tickets are now issued to all Darwin civilians and meals are provided at messes. All shops have been closed and supplies taken over by the Army. The bakery has been taken over and is being carried on by the Army. A daily ration of bread is issued to each civilian. In other parts of the Northern Territory there is danger of a shortage of food, as it is difficult to get supplies either from Alice Springs or Darwin.

The Age, March 12, 1942

MELVILLE ISLAND STORY

After many weary days of travelling—by boat, by lorry, by cattle truck and train; by foot—a party of four nuns and 35 halfcaste girls from our Lady of the Sacred Heart Mission station at Melville Island arrived in Melbourne....The children from 11 months to 14 years.

They had been transferred from Alice to the Island halfcaste mission home only eight months ago and evacuated to Darwin. They arrived there just in time for the raids and for some days they went bush camping in the open till they could get a truck to start them on their first part of the journey....[They are] calling for food and clothes as had nothing with them.

Brisbane Courier Mail, April 16, 1942

LOOT BARTERED, SEAMEN CLAIM

Allegations that soldiers at Darwin had given looted property, including sewing machines, radio sets, fur coats, footwear, trunks, clothing and other articles to the crew of a ship, mainly in exchange for cigarettes or tobacco, were made in the Police Court yesterday.

One man said that he obtained a refrigerator for eight pounds.

Members of the crews of two ships were charged with having had in their possession property suspected of having been stolen. Property involved in charges against 22 men of one crew was valued at 700 pounds.

Mr WJ Kennedy for all the defendants, withdrew an earlier plea of not guilty, and entered a plea of guilty....

Brisbane Courier Mail Editorial, April 17, 1942

WHAT HAPPENED AT DARWIN?

Statements alleging most infamous conduct against members of the Australian Army have been made in evidence in the Brisbane Police Court. In proceedings against a number of seamen charged with having been in possession of property suspected of having been stolen it was asserted that the property had been looted from shops and homes evacuated by Darwin people in consequence of enemy bombing and that it had been sold or bartered to the seamen by soldiers.

What action have the military authorities taken to investigate these allegations? If they are baseless the public should be told so as quickly as possible. If, on the contrary there was looting at Darwin and soldiers had any part in it the people of Australia should be assured that one of the vilest crimes that can be committed in breach of military discipline has had the punishment it deserves.

This is not a matter to be hushed up. Publication of the results of a searching inquiry into alleged theft of property from the homes of unfortunate Darwin civilians will reveal nothing of military value to the enemy. It will either clear the honour of all soldiers or it will discover culprits who disgraced their uniform and relieve the public mind of suspicion that heinous conduct has been in any way palliated or condoned. Complaints that enemy internees were robbed by members of their military escort when under transport to Australia were speedily investigated by the British authorities about a year ago, and the public was informed of its results and of the punishment meted out to those against whom charges were proved.

Let us have the truth. Only guilty men have any reason to fear it.

1992 BATTLE OF AUSTRALIA

February - Commemoration Month

- 3-29 Frontline Darwin Display, Nightcliff Public Library, Pavonia Place Nightcliff
- 12-13/3 "The Bombing of Darwin" Display - Northern Territory University Library, Darwin. Contact: Connie Gregory 466193
- 14 Battle of Australia Broadcast, ABC Radio (WA and NT)
- 15 Evacuees Reunion - Hotel Darwin Green Room - 10am - 3pm Contact: Janet Dickinson 895504
- 16 50th Anniversary Memorial Service - Darwin Memorial Uniting Church. Contact: Rev Bob Saunders 812897. This church was built between 1958 and 1960 as a memorial to all who died in World War II defending northern Australia. Crosses attached to the end of each pew and to the communion rail are made from metal salvaged from ships sunk in the harbour by the Japanese.
- 16-23 PINT Club, Darwin - full week of commemorative activities including memorabilia display, wartime songs, tours and memorial ball on 22 February. Contact Pint Club on 452452.
- 16-23 RSL Clubs - lunch and dinner for members to meet veterans.
- 17-21 Golden Oldies Activities Week - Military Display. Casuarina Public Library. Contact: Diana Leeder 822511
- 18 Official Reception for Veterans hosted by the Northern Territory Government, Darwin City Council and RSL., 5:00 - 7pm, Bicentennial Park, Darwin. Contact: Michael Barrett 814499
- 19 **Battle of Australia Day - 50th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.**
 8:30am Launch by Australia Post of Bombing of Darwin Stamp and first-day cover.
 9:30am Battle of Australia Official Ceremony, Cenotaph, Bicentennial Park, Darwin. To be officiated by Sir Zelman Cowen. Naval Ships will perform ceremonial entry into Darwin Harbour. RAAF and vintage aircraft fly-past.
 9.45 am Maritime Commemoration Service, Port of Darwin, Darwin. To commemorate waterside workers killed in first air raid on Darwin.
 3:00pm RAAF Commemoration Service, RAAF Base, Darwin to commemorate the anniversary of the second of the first two air raids on Darwin which targeted the RAAF base.
 7:30pm RSL Clubs Functions Contact: RSL Clubs
 Golden Oldies Oral History Happening—activities involving senior citizens will feature guest speakers drawn from community who were residents of Darwin in 1942. Casuarina Public Library. Contact Lois Phelps 279655
- 20 "Memories of an Army Chaplain", Rev Arch Grant, Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Bullocky Point, Darwin.
- 20-21 Frontline Variety Concert - Darwin Performing Arts Centre, produced by the Australia Day Council.
 A variety concert featuring Normie Rowe and Smoky Dawson. Ticket information: D.P.A.C. on 811222
- 20 Bombing of Darwin Commemoration Ball, Beaufort Hotel, Darwin, 7:30pm, contact: Yasmin Toro 829911
- 22 "Back to the 40s" Dinner, Dance, Entertainment, Marrara Stadium, Darwin, Contact: Steve Morton 895416.
- 23 Government House Open Day - Darwin. 2.30-4.30pm
- 23 Aviation on Show Open Day - Aviation Museum, Darwin, Contact Brian Males 472145.
- 26 Official Unveiling, Night Cliffs Camp and WWII Dump, Historical Site. 3pm. Nightcliff. Organised by Nightcliff Territory Tidy Towns. Contact: John Bartholomew 852533

March - Batchelor/Katherine Month

- 1 Battle of Australia Military Sites Motor Rally, Darwin to Batchelor. Organised by the Multiple Sclerosis Society as a fundraiser. Contact Elaine Rosenberg 450177.
 Unveiling of Commemorative Cairn at Batchelor. Contact Paul Scott 528811
 Batchelor Aerodrome Open Day Contact Roger Teague on 760058.
- 16 Celebrating the Journey and Peace Concert—mime, puppetry, clowning, dance, song and story-telling for primary school children presented by Emmaus Productions (Thornleigh NSW). Contact Pauline Riley 410616
- 17 St Patrick's Day Race Meeting, Darwin Turf Club.
- 20 Katherine. Official launch of Katherine Commemorative weekend, welcoming function, informal bbq
- 21 Katherine Historical Society Annual Fete and a Vintage car rally
- 22 **Memorial Service - Katherine.**
 Memorial service for 50th anniversary of air raids on Katherine. Contact Katherine Town Council 721322
- 22 WWII Historic Display, Old Katherine Railway Station, Official Opening of interpretive display commemorating role of railway workers and civilians in war. Contact National Trust 812 848
 RAAF Open Day, Tindal RAAF Base. Contact Wing Commander Tony Behm 716002
- 25 "Darwin's Evacuees", Mrs Janet Dickinson. Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Bullocky Point, Darwin.
- 30-5/4 Chinese Museum, Chung Wah Hall, Woods Street, exhibiting Chinese history from war era. 9am-3pm daily. Contact Paul Wyatt 814131

April - Heritage Month

- 4-11 Pacific School Games, Darwin. Contact 450795
- 9-10 North Australian Development Council Conference (NADC) - Katherine. Theme - "Defence of the North" Contact: Mrs Prue Roubicek, 722766.
- 11 Darwin Rugby Union Grand Final, Darwin. Contact 277121
- 14-26 Trans Australian Poker Motorcycle Rally, Outback Motorcycle Rally and 24 hour Enduro, Curtin Springs.
- 17-19 Outback Rugby Festival Biennial, Alice Springs
- 18-15/5 South East Asia - Northern Territory Links, NTU Library Display, Casuarina Campus.
- 18 Daly Waters Aviation Complex, Official Opening. Contact National Trust 812848
- 18-20 Renner Springs Races and Campdraft, Tennant Creek
- 18-5/5 Alice Springs Cup Carnival. Contact Alice Springs Turf Club 524977
- 22 "Medical Facilities in War Time Darwin", Sister Ellen Kettle, Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin.
- 22-30 13 Squadron and Gull Force Association make combined trip from Darwin to Ambon
- 25 ANZAC Day Ceremonies - All Territory centres.

MEMORIAL YEAR EVENTS CALENDAR

ANZAC Day Race Meeting, Fannie Bay Race Course, Darwin. Contact: Paul Cattermole 812328

Buku-Larrngay Museum, Yirrkala, Opening historic exhibit portraying WWII coast watcher role by Arnhem Aborigines. Exhibit moves to Darwin September. Contact Steve Fox 871701

ANZAC Day Battle of Australia Race meeting, Fannie Bay Race Course. Contact Paul Cattermole 812328

26 World War II Exhibit, Official Opening, Ghan Preservation Society, Alice Springs. Contact: Steve Shearer, 555047

26 World War II Exhibit, Official Opening, East Point Military Precinct, Darwin. Contact: Chris Benton 819702.

26-2/5 NT Barramundi Classic, Daly River

26-3/5 National Trust Heritage Week - "Military Heritage" - Territory wide. Contact: National Trust 812848

May - Coral Sea Month

6 "Aspects of the Territory's Legal History" Justice Dean Mildren, Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin.

7 "Aborigines and the War," Major Bob Hall, Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8.00 pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin

8 Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea Dinner, Marrara, Darwin. Contact: Lt Barry Spencer, 801289.

8 World Red Cross Day, featuring display of war-time red cross uniforms, Darwin. Contact Michael Barrett on 814499

15 Army in Concert: Finale to K92 - Fred's Pass Reserve (south of Darwin). Contact WO Geoff Carter 410366

16-17 Fred's Pass Rural Show, WWII Heritage Displays - Darwin Rural Area.

19 "Military Mapping", Lt Col John Hillier. Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin.

23 Freedom of Entry march, City of Darwin - NORFORCE. Contact RSM Sneedeen 801346

23-24 Alice Springs weekend activities, Air Show. Contact Paul Scott 528811

24 B-24 Liberator Squadrons Reunion, Darwin, A memorial service at the Aviation Museum, followed by a BBQ in the evening at the RAAF base, Darwin. Contact: Bob Alford 812848

Commemorative cairn unveiled at Alice Springs Air Strip to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the crashing of a C47 Dakota in which 7 American and 2 Australian airmen died. Paul Scott 528811

June - Festival Month

1-27 Territory Life in the 1940's Djourra 'Djagamirri Collection, NTU Library, Casuarina Campus, Darwin.

4-6 Adelaide River Campdraft, Gymkhana & Rodeo, Adelaide River

4-13 Bougainvillea Festival Darwin. Contact 897333

5-6 Son et Lumiere Spectacular, East Point Reserve, Darwin.

6-7 Katherine Red Cross Canoe Marathon, Katherine. Contact Jillian Pease 711245

15-30 The Frank Harding Collection on Display, State Square Supreme Court Building, Darwin and Alice Springs Airport Terminal, "They Flew for the King". A unique collection of aviation combat paintings of Australian airmen during WWII. Contact Stuart Sporn, Legacy, 227235. Westpac Bank Exhibition of photos and memorabilia to commemorate the bombing of Darwin, focusing on bank and staff during WWII

17 "Women in the War", Ms Barbara James. Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin.

20-21 Adelaide River Show, Adelaide River.

26-28 NT Expo, Darwin High School grounds. Contact Simon Lattimer 815755

July - Show Month

3-4 Alice Springs Show, Alice Springs Show Ground.

4-3/8 Darwin Cup Carnival, month carnival of racing. Fannie Bay Race track. Contact Paul Cattermole on 812328

10-11 Tennant Creek Show, Tennant Creek Show Grounds.

11 King of Desert Great Train Race, Alice Springs

12 Darwin Beer can regatta

17-18 Katherine Show, Katherine Show Grounds.

23-25 Royal Darwin Show, Darwin Showgrounds.

24-1/8 Navy Week. Contact: Mike Lawson 801311.

26 Katherine Red Cross Gorge Triathlon, Katherine

31-2/8 Goldrush Folk Festival, Tennant Creek

31-1/8 1942 Services on Parade concert, Amphitheatre, The Gardens, Darwin. Contact Terry Annesley 895456

August - Asia Month

4-14 Battle of Australia Bowls Tournament, Darwin. Organised by the Darwin North RSL. Contact Tim Tyler 855652 / RSL450701

9 Daly River Festival

14 Remembering, Gardens Amphitheatre, Catholic Church Diocesan Offices, Contact: 411244.

26 "The War in the North, An Overview", Prof Alan Powell. Commemorative Lecture Series, Historical Society of the NT, 8:00pm, Northern Territory Museum Theatre, Darwin.

TBA "Under the Stars" Symphony Orchestra Concert, NT University Courtyard, Darwin.

September - Papua New Guinea Month

1-30 Papua New Guinea Festival. (Territory wide) Contact Cecilia Bos, PNG-Australia Social and Cultural Group 853239.

October - Masters Games Month

17-25 Honda Masters Games (Biennial), Alice Springs. Contact: John Dermoudy 515322

November - Remembrance Month

2-28 Aborigines and the War, Djourra 'Djagamirri Collection, Northern Territory University Library, Casuarina. Contact Annette Ford 466193.

11 Remembrance Day Ceremony. Adelaide River War Cemetery. Contact Frank Geddes, Darwin Sub-branch RSL 815437
Remembrance Day ceremonies all Territory centres

12 Commemoration of last raid on NT—Darwin, Adelaide River and Batchelor

KATHERINE 1942

Anne Cox and her husband Cyril ran a store in Katherine where, during the early 40s, the town was sheltered from the reverberations of war. "Through 1940 and most of 1941," Anne Cox says, "there was a small group of soldiers posted out near the cemetery but people used to joke about what they were doing there."



Cyril & Anne Cox

The situation was to change dramatically after Japan entered the war in December 1941, and especially so after Darwin was first bombed on 19 February 1942.

The evacuation order was expanded to include all women and children, and 'non-essential' men, in towns such as Pine Creek and Katherine.

The troop build-up accelerated with a large number of both Australian and American units coming into the Katherine area. The entire mechanical and administrative operations of the North Australia Railway (NAR) were transferred from Darwin to Katherine. Katherine also became a centre for food production for the hundreds of thousands of troops who were to pass through the Territory.

The town was bombed on 22 March 1942.

"We heard a weird drone. The planes were easily spotted in the eastern sky. They circled the town three times before they dropped their bombs. They were very high and looked like round soccer balls", recalled Anne Cox.

One person was killed and there was damage done to the aerodrome.

The real evacuation of Katherine began very soon after the bombing.

Some flew out on Guinea Airways but most were sent by train to the southern railhead at Birdum. From there they travelled in truck convoys to Alice Springs, spending two nights on the road. From Alice it was back on the train (the 'Ghan') which could take up to four days to reach Adelaide.

It was an extraordinary journey; on Friday 27 March 1942, 164 people left Katherine by train.

There were confused elderly Chinese men. There were about 35 children under the age of 5 years and no proper facilities for their care. Troops did all they could to help young mothers, including boiling up bore water for the children.

With the departure of the civilian population the Army occupied most of the buildings in the town.

The public hall was used as general offices; a bulk store canteen operated from the Sportsman's Arms Hotel and the Signallers took over the school. Many homes were also used or their contents removed.

Over 150 units either passed through or were stationed in Katherine.

The riverbank area downstream from the railway bridge for many kilometres was occupied by military installations.

Army groups included many service units such as pay, censorship and postal detachments as well as engineers, signallers and so on. Supply and transport units maintained petroleum and oil depots and workshops.

The 'Nackeroos' were an interesting group of 500 men based in Katherine. Their job was to patrol the top end of Australia from the Kimberleys in the west to the Gulf in the East. About 2,000 horses and donkeys were provided. The Nackeroos, or 'Curtin's Cowboys' as they were also known, also established secret stores dumps; if Australia had been invaded they were to stay behind to provide intelligence on enemy movements.

The United States Army Air Force was also stationed in the Katherine area. Several Engineer groups brought in heavy equipment which was used to extend the Katherine airfield and to construct Tindal and Manbulloo airfields.

Squadrons from the U.S. 5th Air Force flew B-24 Liberators out of Manbulloo during most of 1943.

Manbulloo, to the immediate south west of Katherine, was an important place for the war effort. Large areas were excised from the station for the airfield, as well as huge meatworks.

The Army meatworks killed over 150 cattle daily during the height of the war. A contract was set up between the Army and Vestey's, a large English company which ran a number of cattle stations in the Territory.

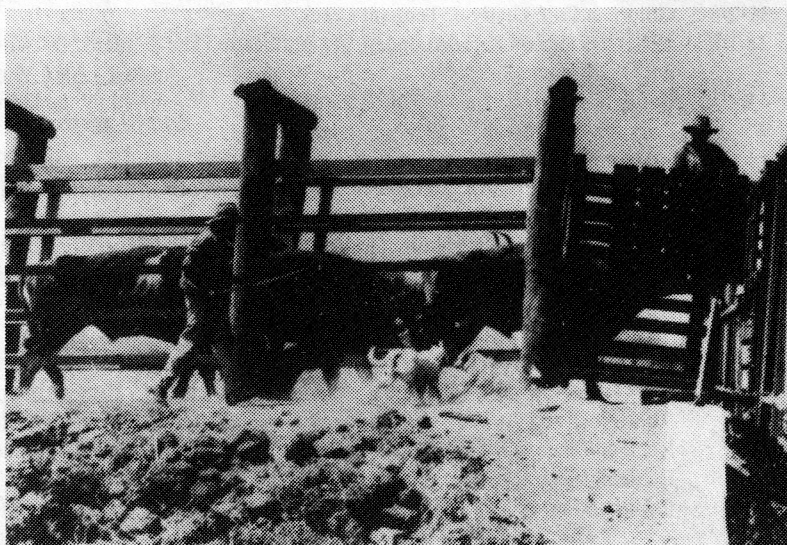
There was also adjacent ice works, which was a very popular spot.

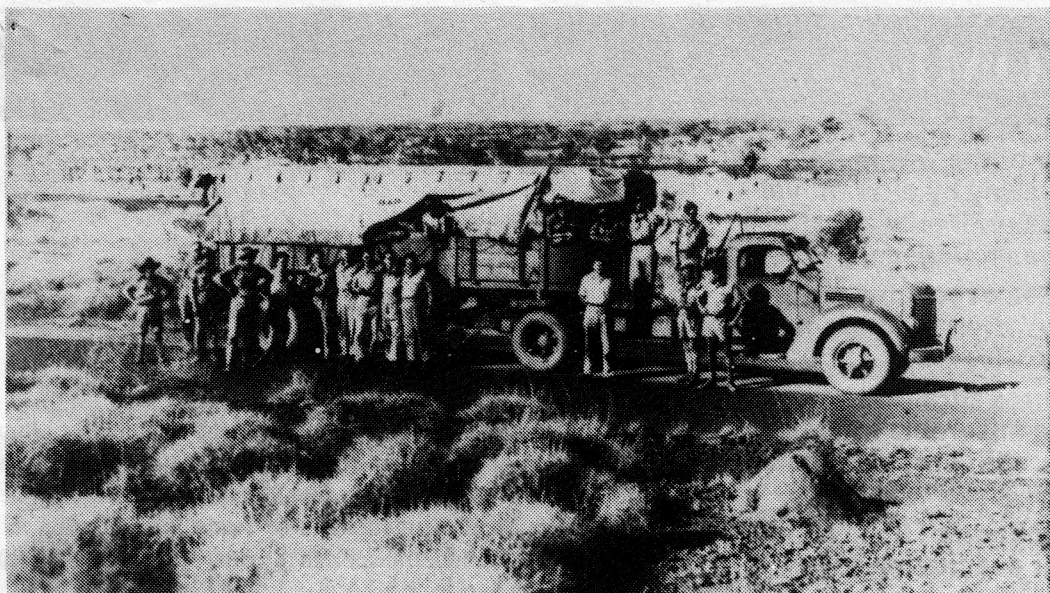
One of the Army farms was also set up at Manbulloo; there was a poultry farm as well as a huge market garden which produced tonnes of pawpaws, watermelons, tomatoes, cabbages, lettuce and cucumbers.

Also in the Manbulloo area was the 101 Australian General Hospital which was the largest installation in the Katherine area. It began with tents only in April 1942. By early July there were 472 beds and patients included evacuees from countries to the north of Australia as well as the military.

By July 1943 there were 871 beds. Staff included 28 medical officers, 96 nurses and 220 other ranks.

Loading cattle for the army meatworks at Manbulloo





A common sight for the length of the track - army supply vehicles and soldiers alongside the newly-laid bitumen surface which was to carry thousands of convoys between 1942 and 1944.

One soldier's memory is a sad one. There was a dawn funeral of a nurse, where 70 nurses walked behind dressed in the white uniforms and red capes. "It was so colourful and so sad."

The hospital also had a 'native wing' for the Aboriginal people.

No full-blood Aboriginal people were evacuated south. They either remained working on cattle stations or were placed into camps and compounds.

There was an Army Labour Camp on Manbulloo where over 100 Aboriginal people lived, 60 of those being men employed by the Army.

North of Katherine, on the river, was an Aboriginal compound called 'Donkey Camp'. The compounds were established to control Aboriginal people who were not working directly with the Army.

The Army was adamant that Aboriginal women, in particular, were not to be located near Army camps.

All able-bodied Aboriginal people worked. The average wage was five shillings per week but this wage was often the first monetary payment that most Aboriginal people had ever received.

The vast pastoral industry around Katherine did not suffer from major change during the war. However there was a lot of Army movement around the bush and station workers who were used to isolation, would often be surprised by a small convoy "belting through the bush".

Army patrols went to every station and trained people in the use of machine-guns and bren guns. Charlie Schultz of Humbert River Station remembers that he found the "anti tank guns very noisy and

(I) was hopeless at throwing hand grenades".

Katherine, as the railway headquarters, saw eight trains up and down a day carrying vast quantities of supplies, equipment and ammunition. Railway workers were mostly civilian and at the height of the war there were over 700 men stationed along the line between Darwin and Birdum.

Fred Pascoe, who was in charge of the Katherine workshops recalled that "railway kitchens had 'M & V' - meat and vegetables out of tins - and it was terrible". Eventually many of the railway men decided to look after themselves and they traded for their own food.

Civilians started to return to Katherine in 1945.

One Katherine couple set out to drive back from Queensland. The policeman at Camooweal told them to turn right at Three

Ways; they had no idea where Three Ways was as it had not existed before the war.

"All along the road up to Katherine there were deserted Army camps. The sheds were empty, everything was deserted, big doors swinging, banging back and forth in the breeze. It was very eerie."

The biggest surprise was a proper bitumen road along the main street of Katherine. Before the war it had been a dirt track.

Cyril and Anne Cox reopened their store on 17 April 1945. Other businesses including the post office gradually were re-established. Both hotels became boarding houses and cafes until licences were re-issued.

The disposal program was a boon to returning civilians. Sidney Williams huts made good homes, not only in the town but on stations and farms. Various materials as well as vehicles and engines were all disposed of, and extensively used in the pastoral industry.

As is part of Northern Territory tradition, much material was also 'acquired' by the locals. After all, it was accepted that if the Army had abandoned gear, it was there for the picking.

Some improvements had been achieved because of the war - the powerhouse was one such gain, but Katherine returned to a small service town for a vast pastoral industry.

The Melbourne Age, March 23, 1942

AIR WAR FLARES UP IN NORTH AUSTRALIA RAIDS ON DERBY; BROOME; KATHERINE AND DARWIN Striking Successes for Allied Planes in New Guinea.

CANBERRA, Sunday—Enemy raids today on Katherine, about 180 miles inland from Darwin, and on Darwin are reported in a communique issued by the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) late to-night. The communique also records a highly successful attack by Allied planes on Japanese planes and troops at Lae (New Guinea) in which at least 13 enemy planes were destroyed and several others damaged for the loss of two of our planes...

"Enemy aircraft attacked Katherine (NT) this afternoon. Bombs were dropped, killing one Aborigine and injuring another. Little damage was done during this raid.

"This morning Darwin was again raided, making its sixth raid. No bombs fell on military targets, and no damage or casualties have been reported. One enemy aircraft is reported to have been shot down.

Broome and Derby, on the northwest coast of Australia, were [also] raided by Japanese aircraft.

LEAVING HOME

Darwinians were well aware of the war in Asia and the Pacific, only hours away by aircraft, yet life went on at its usual pace until only a matter of weeks before the town was bombed.

In December 1942, authorities evacuated virtually all remaining women and children on the troop ship *Zealandia*.

The voyage through the Torres Strait and on to Brisbane and Sydney was a miserable affair in cramped, stinking quarters, with strict blackout conditions.

Following are some recollections of the journey and a few words on another evacuation to Fremantle on the *Koolama*.

Glad Litchfield - a name synonymous with the Territory, was a 28 year old mother of three young children when the order was given to evacuate. She wrote to us from her Batchelor home with the following account of her journey on the *Zealandia*.

A month before the bombing of Darwin...the town was alive with rumours of a Japanese aircraft carrier heading our way. At last, strict blackout procedure was in force, wardens patrolled the area, air-raid and all-clear sirens pierced the nights.

We were eventually given six hours to pack 36 pounds of luggage and report aboard the troop ship *Zealandia* en route to Sydney.

I was 28 years of age with three children nine months to four years.

My husband, Boyne, delivered us to the ship then waved to us from the cliffs till we were out of sight.

We were taken down to C Deck—four women and four children, in a small cabin with blackout porthole.

We were soon granted permission to allow the children to sleep in the Red Cross section between the cabins.

Our diet was ship's biscuits and brackish water till we reached Queensland.

But we did enjoy jelly and ice cream for Christmas dinner.

The ship called into Thursday Island taking aboard 200 Japanese internees.

They arrived in smart Tussor silk suits, straw hats, fanning themselves with one hand,

luggage in the other - to be housed in the hold, fed and exercised at 6 am and 6 pm daily on deck.

They seemed cheerful and friendly people and loved the children.

We were all interested watchers.

One night there was a terrific explosion. Torpedoed at last I thought as I rushed to the children.

It was the anchor chain dropping at Bowen in Queensland and just breaking day. We were allowed to disembark. I will never forget the small pineapples, the tops cut off to be eaten with a spoon—so sweet and juicy.

Most folk disembarked at Brisbane. We were not allowed ashore. At last the entrance to Sydney heads came in sight. Then the shout went up—"submarines".

How dreadful to come safely so far, but they were mine sweepers.

Our waiting families had been told we were indefinitely delayed and to go home.

Luckily I had enough for a taxi cab home to a very relieved family at 22 Birdwood Avenue Lane Cove on the north shore. The *Zealandia* loaded with troops returned to Darwin only to be bombed and sunk.

Fay Silcock (Woolley) who wrote in our last issue, was a very young evacuee on the *Zealandia*. Here, she remembers her knee high view of those times:

Friday night in Darwin in those days was shopping night. Mum tells me that on our return home that Friday night, there was a note pushed under the door advising that women and children were being evacuated and instructions to be ready for collection the following day at 6 am for transport to the wharf. We were allowed 20 pounds of luggage each.

I have a recollection of being lifted onto the back of a high-sided truck - probably an army truck - but every time I see a cattle truck I'm reminded of that drive to the wharves. We were squashed in like sardines and adult kneecaps were about all I saw.

Despite our early arrival, it wasn't until mid afternoon that things started moving.

Once underway, my first meal on the *Zealandia* was bully beef and ships biscuits. My baby teeth couldn't cope with the hard tack and I threw them over the side when we got underway.

Early in the voyage, we were allowed up on deck at night to take advantage of the cooler evenings - until some stupid person lit a cigarette; after that, we were incarcerated below with all the portholes closed and blacked out so that no light would show on the water.

It was not long after that I was hospitalised and spent the rest of the voyage in the sick bay.

There were insufficient toilet pedestals and I remember the stench of the lavatories because many people (probably mostly children) relieved themselves wherever and whenever.

We children did not appreciate the dangers, real or imagined. But I look back now and wonder how the mothers felt, imagining the prospect of Japanese submarines lurking out there in the dark, lying in wait. If a torpedo had hit the *Zealandia*, panic would have ensued - nobody would have known which way to go and no doubt many would have been knocked over and suffocated - the rest would have been trapped in a metal tomb.

I might add that I have never had any inclination to see the "Poseidon Adventure" or "Raise the Titanic".

I was allowed out of the sick bay for Christmas Day - the crew had put up some decorations for the children's benefit.

Although I was on a bland diet because of my illness, I remember pinching a mango out of a barrel as I field past with my sister - it was the best mango I had ever tasted.

Mum tells me that after we picked up the civilian Japanese internees at Thursday Island, part of the crew went out on strike and we were stranded in hot box conditions for three days while they sorted out their grievances.

Strict censorship had been imposed on the happenings in Darwin and it was many months before we heard again from Dad, during which time we lived on the charity of relatives. It was six months before Mum received an army allotment.

What happened to the civilians in Darwin from that time until the end of the war is something that too few Australians (or for that matter the rest of the world) know anything about.

I sincerely hope that the war service memorial year will engender enough publicity to reach out and touch the rest of this country.

LEAVING HOME

Natalie deJulia's father - a pioneer farmer in the Katherine region - died on the wharf in the first raid on Darwin. Natalie, her mother, three sisters and one brother were evacuated on the Koolama a month before the raid.

My family were not evacuated until January 26, 1942. My mother, Lydia deJulia, was reluctant to leave our father and resisted orders to evacuate until she realised the gravity of the situation.

For two weeks before we actually left, the authorities visited us daily informing us that we were to be prepared to evacuate either day or night and we were under constant tension waiting for the moment.

Finally, we were told one night that the ship *Koolama* had entered Darwin harbour loaded with Dutch refugees after escaping Japanese bombing in Ambon. The ship was to set sail the following morning for Fremantle. We were permitted one suitcase of clothing between us.

My father, a farmer from Katherine and an early pioneer in the Territory, was working on the wharf at the time. He accompanied us to the ship but was not permitted beyond a certain point.

We and others arrived at 0900 and sat in the hot sun for six hours without refreshments being provided. Neither were we allowed to shelter in an empty shed "for security reasons" and it wasn't until we were visited by the Catholic priest Father Henschke, that we were permitted some shelter.

He brought us refreshments and said that our father should be permitted to join his family.

We said our farewells little knowing that this was the last time we would see him. We steamed out of Darwin harbour at 1600 escorted by an American ship.

The following afternoon the escort signalled us then covered us in a smoke haze. There was a deafening explosion and a great wall of water shot skywards. The *Koolama's* alarm bells rang stridently and all hell broke loose with the Dutch refugees screaming "Japanese - Japanese" hysterically as the poured on to the decks.

We waited for the order to abandon ship but eventually the all clear was given.

We were never told what had happened, but it was rumoured that a Japanese submarine had released a torpedo at us and that the escort had saved us by intercepting it with depth charges.

We will never know!!

The atmosphere on the *Koolama* was very tense after that incident and many women and children were sea sick.

One young woman played the piano and sang songs to while away the time.

Worse still, there was no method of defence against any further attacks. The *Koolama* had only one gun and that was inoperative.

The ship zig-zagged to avoid submarine or aerial attacks all the way to Fremantle, berthing on the way at Whyndam, Port Hedland, Broome and Carnarvon.

We were met in Fremantle by members of the Red Cross, and women with teenage children were billeted in hotels.

Because we were under age, we were refused accommodation in hotels.

The Dutch consulate had rented a building in Perth for their people, who kindly took us in.

They later moved to Adelaide and mother had to look for somewhere for us, eventually finding, with great difficulty, a house in Scarborough.

No sooner had we settled than we heard the devastating news that Darwin had been bombed and our beloved father had been killed in the first raid on the Harbour.

As a result of the bombing, my family and many others had lost all our possessions. We were ill-equipped to start a new life in a state where the climate was much colder than Darwin's. It was many months before my mother was given a civilian widow's pension which was barely enough to subsist on.

We moved to Narrogin because of a scare that the Japanese might shell the coast.

My mother joined the Red Cross where she worked as a volunteer. She was also asked to help out at the local hospital and when she did so, her pension was stopped.

My sister Olga and her husband Ted Garden and I will be attending the commemorative services in Darwin.

My mother asked that we cancel her seat on the plane because, I am sure, the heat and humidity, the memories and the emotion would be too much to bear for an aged lady of eighty years.



YOU ARE ENTITLED TO WEAR A "BATTLE OF AUSTRALIA" VIP PIN

**If you are a veteran or civilian who had a part in
the defence of the Northern Territory
between 1941 & 1945,**

**The pin will identify you as one
of the 250 000 Australians,
Americans, British, Canadians or
Dutch who served in the Territory.**

To collect your pin - contact:

**Battle of Australia
Information Outlet
NT Tourist Bureau
Smith St Mall
DARWIN**

**Office of the Chief Minister
Heenan House
Cnr Bath & Gregory Sts
ALICE SPRINGS**

EXPLORE HISTORIC WARTIME TRAILS AROUND THE TERRITORY

Katherine to Fenton Airfield

This is one of eight heritage trails which have been planned to provide a detailed overview of the extent of the allied presence throughout the Territory during WWII.

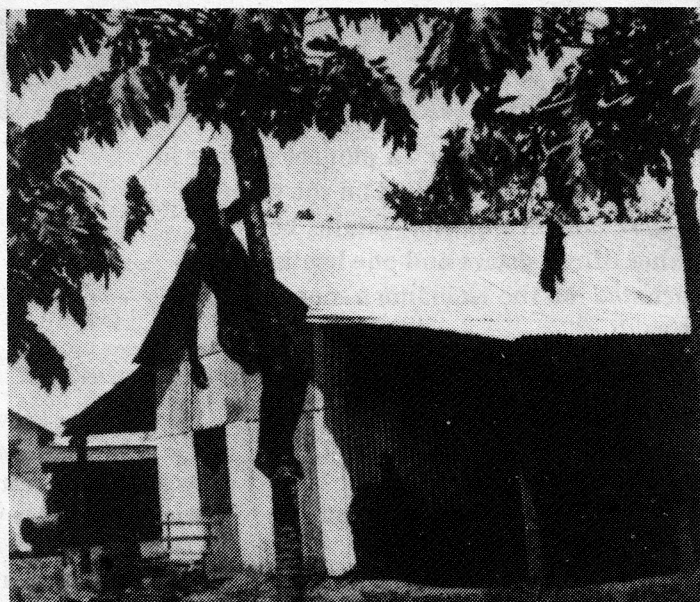
Katherine marked the southernmost point in the Territory which came under attack from the Japanese.

The trail between Katherine and Fenton covers an extensive range of wartime sites, airfields, hospitals and supply dumps which show the extent to which the area was utilised as a backup to

the extensive forces activity in and around Darwin and the Top End coast.

Sites of interest in and around Katherine include the One Gallon Store which still bears shrapnel scars - along with a bomb crater in its yard, the Katherine Historical Museum, the O'Keeffe residence and the Railway Station.

The trail also takes in the historic mining centres of Pine Creek and Brocks Creek, which were vital centres of the supply and support infrastructure for Darwin.



Picking paw-paws on Bert Nixon's farm in the Katherine region circa 1942

WHERE TO FIND THE NT GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU NEAREST YOU

NORTHERN TERRITORY

31 Smith Street Mall
DARWIN NT 0800
Telephone: (089) 81 6611
Facsimile: (089) 41 2697
Telex : AA85027

Cnr Stuart Hwy & Lindsay Ave
KATHERINE NT 0850
Telephone: (089) 72 2650
Facsimile: (089) 72 2969
Telex : AA85865

Cnr Paterson & Davidson Sts
TENNANT CREEK NT 0860
Telephone: (089) 62 3337/62 3388
Telex : AA81047

Ford Plaza Building
Todd Mall
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870
Telephone: (089) 52 1299
Facsimile: (089) 52 7404
Telex : AA81277

INTERSTATE

799 Hay Street
PERTH
(near Centroway Arcade)
WA 6000
Telephone: (09) 322 4255
Facsimile: (09) 321 1434

9 Hindley Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 212 1133
Facsimile: (08) 212 7976

48 Queen Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Telephone: (07) 229 5799
Facsimile: (07) 210 0174

Cnr Barrack & George Sts
345-347 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 262 3744
Facsimile: (02) 262 3794

415 Burke Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Telephone: (03) 670 6948
Facsimile: (03) 670 8364

SHARE YOUR WARTIME MEMORABILIA AND MEMORIES OF THE NT

Do you have stories or memorabilia relating to the Northern Territory during World War Two? Then you may be interested in sharing some of them and adding to the Territory's rich reservoir of history.

If you have stories to share, *War-time Territory* would like to hear from you for possible publication in this newspaper. You may contact us by writing to the editor, Barbara James, at PO Box 4783, Darwin, NT or phoning her on 818163 (preferably before noon); or by contacting the Frontline Office on 896293 or the National Trust on 812848 and leaving your name and contact number.

If you are a visitor to Darwin for the 1992 War Service Memorial Year, and spent time in the Territory during the war, the Oral History Unit of the NT Archives Service would like to hear from you. The Archives will be recording interviews with some of the visitors for inclusion in the NT's Oral History Collection held at the Archives and available (with permission) to researchers, writers, broadcasters and others with an interest in Territory history. For more information you may contact the Archives at PO Box 874, Darwin, NT, phone (089) 89 5188.

If you have memorabilia - diaries, photographs, paybooks, badges, you might like to consider donating these, or copies, to one of the following; the State Library of the Northern Territory's Northern Australian Collection (second floor, Library building 25 Cavenagh Street Darwin); the Northern Territory Archives Service, 10 McMinn Street, Darwin NT; and NT Museum of Arts and Sciences, Conacher Street, Bullocky Point, Fannie Bay.

The collections in these institutions are used extensively by researchers, authors, historians, members of the general community and visitors to the Territory. You will be helping to preserve the Territory's heritage and at the same time making sure that your treasured memorabilia are given the expert care that they need.

A desk will be staffed at the State Library in Cavenagh Street (two doors away from the RSL) until 29 February 1992 from 10 am to 6 pm.