



TOO DARK FOR THE LIGHT HORSE

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the defence forces

Resource book

MEMORIAL
BOX

03

TOO DARK FOR THE LIGHT HORSE

03



OFFICIAL IDENTITY CARD

(For All Ranks)

Nº 166

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Articles marked* were written by Dr Peter Londey for the "Too dark for the Light Horse" travelling photographic display

Cover B&W image: Soldiers G Leonard and H West embarking at Sydney Wharf 2, November 1941. (AWM 010375)

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Text revised by Beatrice Barnett

Warning: Please note that this box contains photographic images and a voice recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people who are deceased. This may offend some people. Please make this clear to anyone who may be looking at the contents of this Memorial Box.

Now that you have your Memorial Box, please...

- check the contents of the box against the enclosed inventory before and after use. If any objects are damaged or missing, please notify the Australian War Memorial immediately so that they can be repaired or replaced.
- handle objects with care.
- wear conservator's gloves. The gloves are found in the bottom compartment of the box. Sweat from hands can cause objects to corrode or, in the case of material objects, to become dirty and increase the risk of damage. Please wash the gloves before the box is returned.
- when removing objects from the box, place them on clean areas clear of pencils, pens, paint, water and anything else that may contaminate them.
- do not leave the objects unattended unless you are sure anyone handling them understands how to treat the material.
- display the photographs using book/music stands or "Blu-Tack". Please don't use drawing pins or any other material to pierce the photographs.
- record your ideas on the EVALUATION FORM and post it back to the Australian War Memorial, Education and Visitor Services, PO Box 345, Canberra ACT 2601.
- return your Box on time, as the next borrowers are also keen to take delivery of their Memorial Box.

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Introduction

The invisible warriors

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have fought for Australia in all our wars through the last century, from the Boer war onwards. Often Aborigines' and Islanders' presence has been an invisible one. The services generally have not identified soldiers by race on enlistment records, and in general the Memorial has not noted a person's race in the photo captions in its collection.

But Aborigines and Islanders are there. We can find them in photos, or their families come forward with their names; often the families themselves still have old photos. Early in the 1930s, the RSL journal, *Reveille*, appealed for information about Aboriginal servicemen in the First World War. Since then other researchers have added to our knowledge, and today the contribution of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to Australia's defence is at last becoming fully recognised.

A change in attitudes

Look, these blokes are just as good as us, they fought beside us in the [second world] war, they proved themselves. ... This change in outlook is terribly important—revolutionary in a way. It has laid the basis for all the other changes that have occurred in the post war years. Len Watson, 1974

Generally Aborigines have served alongside other races in ordinary units. Conditions of service have been the same as those for Europeans. This has helped to foster understanding and respect between the races.

In the short term, however, little was changed. Aborigines who had experienced equal treatment for the first time in their lives in the armed services came back to find that civilian society treated them with the same prejudice and discrimination as before.

The title of the box, *Too dark for the Light Horse*, is based on a saying from the First World War when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were seen as "undesirable" in the armed services. The title, *Too dark for the Light Horse*, is used to link this box with the Memorial's travelling photographic exhibition of the same name, researched by David Huggonson. This exhibition is continuing its tour of the nation.

The aim of this Memorial Box is to develop an understanding of the Australian experience of war through the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel. Their experience was unique and as you delve into this box, you will unravel this unique story. There was also a wider impact of war on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and this is also explored in this box.

The Memorial holds a limited collection of items which are identifiably those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel. The few document collections also belonging to notable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel are available through the Memorial's Research Centre and are conserved by the Memorial for future historians.

Background material

A) Timeline

1901	January 1	Commonwealth of Australia established with the Federation of the colonies.
1902	June 12	The Uniform Franchise Act gives the vote to all male British subjects, of six months residence, excluding Aborigines, Asians and Africans.
	June 16	Australian women are given rights to vote in federal elections.
1903		Formal adoption of the Australian flag (amended in 1909 with an additional point on the Commonwealth star).
		Australian Defence Act written and published. (Section 61 [H] restricts enlistment of "People who are not substantially of European origin or descent, of which medical Authorities appointed under the Regulations shall be the judges".)
	December 16 December 17	Women vote for the first time in a federal election. Wright Brothers' first flight in the United States of America.
1905	March 22	Maoris given European status with respect to the White Australia Policy.
	May 14	Neck chaining banned for Aboriginal prisoners in Western Australia.
1908		Start of the Boy Scout Movement. Henry Ford starts making T-model cars.
	September 29	Compulsory defence service introduced for all male British subjects who have lived in Australia for at least six months.
1909	December 13	Defence Act provides for introduction of compulsory military training.
1910		Start of the Girl Guide Movement.
	June 20	Government sets aside 950,000 acres in the Kimberley for a reserve for Aborigines.
1911		Royal Australian Navy (RAN) established as a separate navy.
1912	May 13	Members of Parliament, Donaldson and Scobie, say children in camps should be taken from their Aboriginal mothers. Canberra established as the nation's capital.
1914	June 20	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.
	August 1	Declaration of war by Australia, Germany, France and Russia.
	August 11	Recruiting for Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force opens (AN & MEF).
1915		Australian Flying Corps formed.
	April 25	Landing at Gallipoli (Anzac Day).
1916		Formation of Returned Soldiers' & Sailors' Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA).
		Instructions for the "Guidance of enlisting officers at approved military recruiting depots" state: "Aboriginals, half-castes, or men with Asiatic blood are not to be enlisted – This applies to all coloured men".

1917		Military Order amended to state: "Half-cestes may be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force provided that the examining medical officers are satisfied that one of the parents is of European origin".
	May 16	Formation of the Australian War Records section, which then starts collecting for the Australian War Memorial Museum, which later became the Australian War Memorial.
1918	November 11	11.00 am Armistice brings fighting to an end on the Western Front.
1919	January 18 June 28	Peace conference opens at Versailles. Peace treaty signed and published. League of Nations established.
1921	March 31	Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) formed. First AIF disbanded.
1927–1932		Depression
1929		Compulsory military training suspended by the Scullin Government.
1931–1932		<i>Reveille</i> publishes a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen serving in the AIF.
1938	May 8	Australian Aborigines League urges Federal Government to establish a Department of Aboriginal Affairs.
1939	September 3	Second World War declared.
1940	May July 15	The military board advises recruiting centres that the recruitment of non-whites is not "desirable". Several Aborigines from the Lake Tyers Mission Station join the 2nd AIF.
1941	11 November December	Australian War Memorial opened by the Governor General Lord Gowrie. Japan enters the war.
1942	June 18	Aboriginal patrols organised along the northern and western coasts of Australia.
1944	November 14 November 25	Leonard Victor Waters becomes the only known Aboriginal fighter pilot to serve in the RAAF in the Second World War. Reginald William Saunders becomes the first Aboriginal officer in the Australian Army.
1945	August 15 September 3	Japan surrenders. Civilian restrictions re-imposed on Aboriginal service personnel. Japanese leaders sign surrender on USS <i>Missouri</i> .
1947	June 30	2nd AIF disbanded. Army serving in Japan now called British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF).
1948	June 16	Fighting commences in Malaya (ceases 31 July 1960).
1949	March 16	Voting rights given to Aborigines who served in the Armed Services.



1950s–60s		Many Aboriginal ex-service personnel become active in the Aboriginal advancement movement.
1950	June 27	Korean War declared.
1950–1960		Malayan Emergency.
1953	January 22 July 27	Northern Territory Aborigines are promised citizenship rights. Korean War ends. Peace Treaty signed at the Peace Pagoda at Panmunjom.
1956	September 27 September November 22	First atomic test at Maralinga in the Central Desert of Australia. Television comes to Australia. Melbourne Olympics officially opened by the Duke of Edinburgh.
1957		Albert Namatjira, an Aboriginal artist, is granted Australian citizenship.
1959	June 30	National Service training ends.
1962	August 3 December 7	Vietnam War is declared. Philip Magalhir becomes the first Australian Aborigine to vote under the new Commonwealth electoral laws granting voting rights to his people.
1963	August 8	Australia becomes the first nation to endorse the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.
1964	February 19 June 4 November 10	Fighting commences again on the Malayan Peninsula (ceases 14 August 1965). The Beatles come to Australia. National Service is reintroduced.
1965	April 29 May 26 June 30 August 2	Prime Minister Menzies commits Australian troops to fight in Vietnam. First Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) leaves for Vietnam on the aircraft carrier <i>Sydney</i> . PM Menzies declares war on Vietnam. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) deletes “White Australia” from its immigration policy.
1967	May 27 September 9	Federal Government referendum is held on Aboriginal rights. It is passed by 93% of the population. Citizenship becomes unconditionally available to all Aborigines. The five dollar note goes into circulation. The Federal Government sets up an office of Aboriginal Affairs.
1968	February 20	Lionel Rose becomes the first Aborigine to win the Bantamweight Championship of the World. He is also the first Aborigine to win the distinction of a world title.
1969	July 21	Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon.
1971	May 23 July 2 November 30	Neville Bonner chosen as the first Aboriginal Senator. Evonne Goolagong, an Aborigine, wins the Wimbledon Women’s Singles title. Australia’s combat role in Vietnam ends.

1972	January 17	Evonne Goolagong is named "Australian of the year".
	January 27	First Aboriginal Tent Embassy set up outside Parliament House, in demonstration for land rights.
1973	January 1	Cessation of hostilities in Vietnam.
	October 20	Sydney Opera House is officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II.
	November 24	Aborigines vote to elect a consultative committee to advise the government on Aboriginal needs.
1974	April 8	"Advance Australia Fair" announced as the new National Anthem.
1983	July 10	Aborigines win agreement to protect sacred tribal land from mining and exploration.
	September 27	Australia wins the America's Cup.
	November 11	Uluru, formerly Ayers Rock, goes back to its traditional owners.
1987		Aboriginal soldiers begin graduating from Royal Military College Duntroon.
1988		Bicentenary.
1991	January 17	Gulf War begins (ceases March, 1991).
1992		Mabo Legislation gives native title to Aborigines.
1994	September	Cathy Freeman causes controversy when she carries the Aboriginal flag during her lap of honour at the Commonwealth Games in Canada.



B) The Coloured Digger

(Note: the gaps ' _____ ' are as it appeared in the original).

The following poem was written by Bert Beros, a soldier who fought in the Second World War, about his mate, an Aborigine. The poem was written while on active service and it tells of the bravery of this Aborigine, Private West, who attacked a Japanese machine-gun pit single handed.

Dedicated to Private West, ' _____ ' Brigade, AIF

*He came and joined the colours,
When the War God's anvil rang,
He took up modern weapons
To replace his boomerang,
He waited for no call-up,
He didn't need a push,
He came in from the stations
And the townships of the bush.*

*He helped when help was wanting,
Just because he wasn't deaf;
He is right amongst the columns
Of the fighting A.I.F.
He is always there when wanted,
With his Owen gun or Bren,
He is in the forward area,
The place where men are men.*

*He proved he's still a warrior,
In action not afraid,
He faced the blasting red-hot fire
From mortar and grenade;
He didn't mind when food was low,
And we were getting thin,
He didn't growl or worry then,
He'd cheer us with his grin.*

*He'd heard us talk Democracy –
They preach it to his face –
Yet knows that in our Federal House
There's no one of his race.
He feels we push his kinsmen out,
Where cities do not reach,
And Parliament has yet to hear
The abo's maiden speech.*

*One day he'll leave the Army,
Then join the League he shall,
And he hopes we'll give a better deal
To the aboriginal.*

Written at Donadabu Rest Camp (near Moresby) by Sapper, H.E. "Bert" Beros, NX6925, RAE, AIF

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Pte. West was an Aboriginal (sic) who fought the Japs in his own tribal way. To avenge his Aboriginal cobbler who was killed in the Owen Stanleys, he went naked and stalked the Japanese machine-gun pits, into which he hurled grenades. He died from illness after the campaign. He is well remembered by the men of the ' _____ ' Brigade, AIF.

From *The fuzzy wuzzy angels, and other verses*, by Sapper H.E. Bert Beros, Sydney, F.H. Johnston Publishing Company, [1943]. This poem is published on the basis of good faith. All reasonable efforts were made to track down the author to gain copyright approval. If any reader knows of the whereabouts of H.E. Beros we would like to make contact with him with regard to copyright approval.

C) Aborigines in the First World War



www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia

look under "First World War 1914–1918"

Over 400 Aborigines fought for Australia in the First World War. They came from a section of society with few rights, low wages and poor living conditions. Most Aborigines could not vote and none were counted in the census. But once in the Australian Imperial Force, they were treated as equals. They were paid the same as other soldiers, and generally accepted without prejudice.

Enlistment

When war broke out in 1914, many Aborigines who tried to enlist were rejected on the grounds of race; others slipped through the net. By October 1917, when recruits were harder to find and one conscription referendum had already been lost, white Australia cautiously eased its restriction on recruiting blacks. A new Military Order stated:

Half-castes may be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force provided that the examining Medical Officers are satisfied that one of the parents is of European origin.

This was as far as Australia—officially—would go.

Why did they fight?

Loyalty and patriotism may have encouraged Aborigines to enlist, while some saw it as a chance to prove themselves the equal of Europeans, or to push for better treatment after the war.

For many Australians in 1914, the offer of 6 shillings a day for a trip overseas was simply too good to miss. The offer was even better for Aborigines, whose average wage was far lower than that of whites.

See:

- **First World War case study:**
Douglas Grant
- **First World War document study:**
William Reginald Rawlings MM

D) Aborigines and the aftermath of the Great War

by David Huggonson

(Reprinted from *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1993/No. 1 with permission of the author)

David Huggonson was a teacher for seven years and during his time at Bourke High School developed a strong rapport with a group of Wangkamara elders. He recorded their language and published the first dictionary and teaching program in Wangkamara. Mr Huggonson has written numerous articles on Aboriginal educational policy and Aboriginal history. In 1984, Mr Huggonson joined the former Aboriginal Development Commission and was a regional manager at Kempsey and Wagga Wagga. At the time of writing this article he was employed as a senior officer in the local government section of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.



Private Charles George Martyn (circled) of the 26th Battalion Australian Imperial Force (AIF) prior to embarking in mid -1916, Enoggera camp, Brisbane.

Prologue

When the tiny town of Goombungee on the Darling Downs unveiled its memorial to the war dead of the district there were the usual ritual proceedings, with prayers, hymns, and a bugler who played the Last Post. When the names of all the fallen soldiers were read out, many people became emotional. At the back of the crowd stood a solitary dark woman. Her son had also been killed and she stood weeping throughout the whole ceremony. However, not one person sought to comfort her or bring her forward into the throng. She was, according to Eileen Parlour who witnessed the proceedings as a child, ostracised.¹ The Aboriginal mother's name was Rose Martyn and her son, Charles, had been killed during an assault, led by two Australian Divisions, east of Ypres on 20 September 1917. The battle became known in British military history as the Battle of Menin Road and was the first time that two Australian Divisions had attacked side by side, employing a rolling barrage of artillery fire to cover their advance (Bean 1961, chapter 21).

1 Reminiscences of Goombungee District by Mrs Eileen Parlour supplied to the author by Mrs Dorothy Jack of Jindalee, 18 July 1987



Jim Lingwoodock (right) cutting cane in the Bundaberg district between the wars. By gaining a certificate of exemption from the provisions of the *Aborigines Protection Act*, returned Aboriginal soldiers received their pay directly rather than having their wages paid into a trust account system. Photo courtesy Mercy Steele.

Private Charles Martyn was a member of the 26th Battalion. His section leader, Corporal Jim Montgomery, wrote to Charlie's mother shortly after his death. Corporal Jim Montgomery also saw to it that Charlie Martyn was given the best possible burial under the conditions that the Queensland battalion was experiencing at the time, and ensured that Charlie's personal effects were sent home to the correct address. Corporal Montgomery, who also came from Goombungee, was killed the following year. Sadly, the other Goombungee residents were not to follow Jim Montgomery's example and publicly show any compassion or friendship towards his dark comrade's mother. The name C.S. Martyn does appear on the Goombungee War Memorial and on one of the thousands of white concrete headstones in the Zillebeke cemetery in Belgium.²

Exemption Certificates

If Charlie Martyn had survived the war he might have been granted an exemption certificate, under section 33 of Queensland's *Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* later the *Aborigines Protection Act*, because of his war service. The certificate, which was not granted automatically to all Aboriginal returned servicemen, would have allowed Charlie to receive white award wages for his labour instead of the two-thirds rate which was struck for Aboriginal pastoral workers following the McCauley award of 1918. The motivation behind the

new Aboriginal rate, which increased the minimum wages for Aboriginal pastoral workers from the 1902 level of five shillings a month to two pounds a week, was the fear of unfair competition from Aboriginal labour and its use to circumvent the new white award conditions. A certificate of exemption also freed Aboriginal workers from the hated trust account system. The Australian Workers Union with the assistance of the Equal Wages for Aborigines Committee finally managed, in 1966, to have "full-blooded" Aborigines included in the Queensland Pastoral Industry Awards. However, the trust account system remained in force until 9 February 1985 when the regulations were formally repealed by a government order-in-council.³

Exemption certificates were the documentary evidence of an Aborigine being deemed civilised and able to be assimilated into white society. Any Aboriginal survivor of the Western Front must have seen the irony in any European claims to being civilised. Exemption certificates also acted as a means of political control, because they could be revoked at any time by the Chief Protector of Aborigines on the recommendation of any local protector. However, this threat did not prevent the Aboriginal returned servicemen of the western Queensland town of Mitchell from extracting a promise from State Premier Theodore to make Aboriginal returned servicemen eligible to vote in parliamentary elections (*Adelaide Advertiser* 29 July 1921). In the winter of 1921, Theodore was visiting Mitchell while campaigning for election to a federal seat, and his promise was reported widely in the city press. The Chifley Labor Government finally fulfilled this promise 28 years later in the March 1949 session of Federal Parliament when the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* was amended to give the federal vote to Aboriginal returned servicemen.

Given that the average wage of Aboriginal workers in Queensland in 1914 was seven shillings and six pence per week,⁴ it is not surprising that men like Charlie Martyn found the pay for a private in the Australian Imperial Force attractive. A private was paid the princely sum of five shillings a day plus a shilling a day deferred pay which they were to receive as a lump sum when they were demobilised. Many soldiers had allotments taken out of their pay for their mothers or wives. Private George Graham, another Aboriginal digger of the 26th Battalion, allotted four shillings a day to his wife, Emily, who was then living at Tweed Heads. George died of wounds on 9 July 1918 and is buried in the cemetery at Crouy in France.

² Letter from Jim Montgomery to his sister Eileen dated 24 September 1917, supplied to the author with photograph of Goombungee War Memorial by Mrs Dorothy Jack of Jindalee, 21 December 1987

³ For more information on the history of the Aboriginal Trust Account System in Queensland see Huggonson 1990

⁴ Sec 1914 Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland Parliamentary Papers 1915–16



A group of Aborigines at Corowa camp, c. 1925. The shack in the background is indicative of the living conditions of many rural Aborigines between the wars. Photo by Reginald W. Sharpless, jackaroo at Mossgiel Station, far western New South Wales. Photo courtesy of Riviera Archive, Charles Sturt University.

Influenza Epidemic

Returning Australian troops unintentionally brought home with them a severe strain of the influenza virus in 1919.⁵ The dispossessed and detribalised Aboriginal communities of south-east Australia were not in a strong position to resist the virulent attack because of the substandard accommodation available to them and the low income levels of most Aboriginal families during an era when Commonwealth social security payments were denied to them. Furthermore, many Aboriginal communities like Barambah Settlement had little understanding of how to treat the combined symptoms of heavy cold, fever, headaches and aching limbs. When the epidemic struck the government-run reserve, many residents “took to the bush” as the *Melbourne Argus* reported on 10 June 1919. The officials in charge of the reserve had great difficulty in coaxing the Aboriginal people away from traditional remedies and getting them to return to the settlement for European treatment. Eighty-seven residents died as a result of the epidemic at Barambah and 31 at Taroom Settlement.⁶ The population of Taroom at the time of the explosive outbreak of the epidemic was 400 people and within 24 hours more than half had contracted pneumonic influenza. All the buildings, including the school and outbuildings, were pressed into service as wards for the sick. Mr C.A. Maxwell, the superintendent at Taroom, although suffering from a severe attack, nobly stuck to his post, directing operations from his bedroom window. He suffered a relapse of the disease and died as a result.

The Chief Protector’s report for the year ending 31 December 1919 estimated 298 Aboriginal deaths largely in the southern camps. In the early part of 1920, pneumonic influenza outbreaks were reported in the Torres Strait Islands and in the Cape York camps. During the year, 105 deaths occurred in the Somerset district alone, principally from the influenza.

On the New South Wales Aboriginal reserves, the death toll from the influenza epidemic was much lighter, with the exception of Denawan reserve where 22 residents died.⁷ At the Karuah reserve one of the casualties of the epidemic was the widely-respected elder, William Ridgeway. He succumbed to the illness on 8 July 1919.⁸ The Government Statistician in New South Wales was reported to have stated that total deaths from influenza in that state from 1 January to 10 July 1919, were 4266 (*Kyogle Advertiser*, 15 July 1919). The percentage of these deaths that were Aboriginal is not recorded.

5 For a fuller discussion of the epidemic see McQueen 1976

6 See page 8 of the Queensland Chief Protector’s report for year ending 31 December 1919

7 See page 5 of *Our Aim*, December 1919, a magazine of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia founded in 1905

8 See page 7 of *Our Aim*, December 1919



Private Archie Murphy, a former Police Tracker from Hay, New South Wales, and John Morwick Smith, (seated) of the 6th Light Horse regiment, taken in the Middle east in early 1918. Photo courtesy of Marie Smith.

Police–Aboriginal Relations

The key to understanding the spasmodic nature of the Aboriginal struggle for equal rights in the two decades after the Great War is the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal communities. The relationship has its roots in the decision of the British Government to treat the colonies of Australia as settled colonies, thus, under British law of the time the land, being deemed deserted and uncultivated, and was claimed by right of occupancy. The British Privy Council ruled in 1889 that in settled colonies British laws were applicable to the colonies immediately on British occupation. Thus all land was vested in the crown and the only legal land titles were those granted or purchased from the British Crown. Aboriginal groups who resisted British occupation were subjected to British justice. They were treated as rebels against the Crown rather than prisoners of war.

From 1839, with the establishment of the Border Police Force, the police became the main agents of the state for controlling dissenting Aboriginal groups, thus reinforcing their rebel status because from that date British military units were rarely used against them in the eastern colonies. The successful guerrilla tactics used by Aboriginal warriors to defend their traditional lands forced the New South Wales Government to take the unorthodox step of appointing Frederick Walker on 6 December 1848 as Commandant of a Corps of Native Police. The Corps, despite numerous parliamentary inquiries into its operations, was to remain in existence until 1905 in the Cape York district of Queensland when the remaining Aboriginal Troopers were reassigned to mainstream police stations as trackers (Rowley 1972; Reynolds 1982).

Interestingly, two recruits to the Australian Light Horse during World War I were police trackers before their enlistment in 1917. They were Trooper Archie Murphy of Hay, New South Wales, who served with B squadron, 6th Light Horse Regiment and Trooper Harry Peel of Port Pirie, South Australia, who sailed with the 29th Reinforcements to the 3rd Light Horse Regiment.

The police had a long history of dealing with Aboriginal people and in many remote locations of Australia were the only agent of the State that existed. Therefore, when the colonial governments were enacting their Aboriginal Protection Acts, police officers were gazetted as local protectors of Aborigines and senior police officers were appointed to the boards to oversee the application of the legislation. The result was that any public criticism of the system of protection, its regulations or its officers was brought to the notice of the police in a most immediate way.

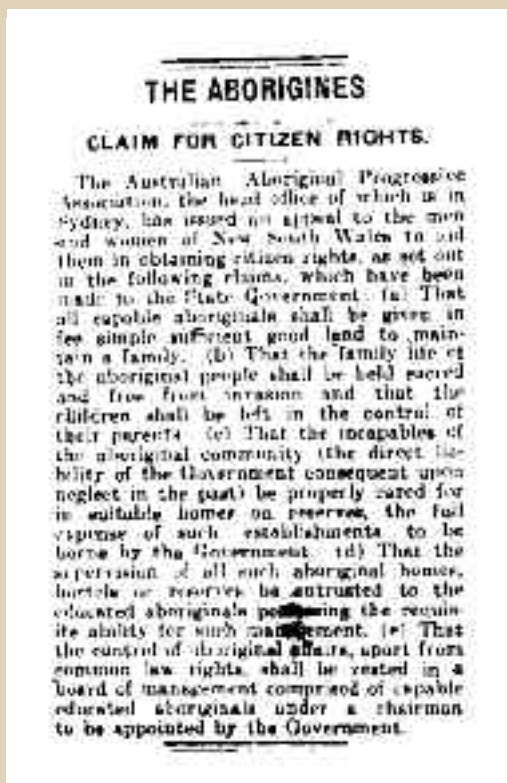
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Removal of Aboriginal Children

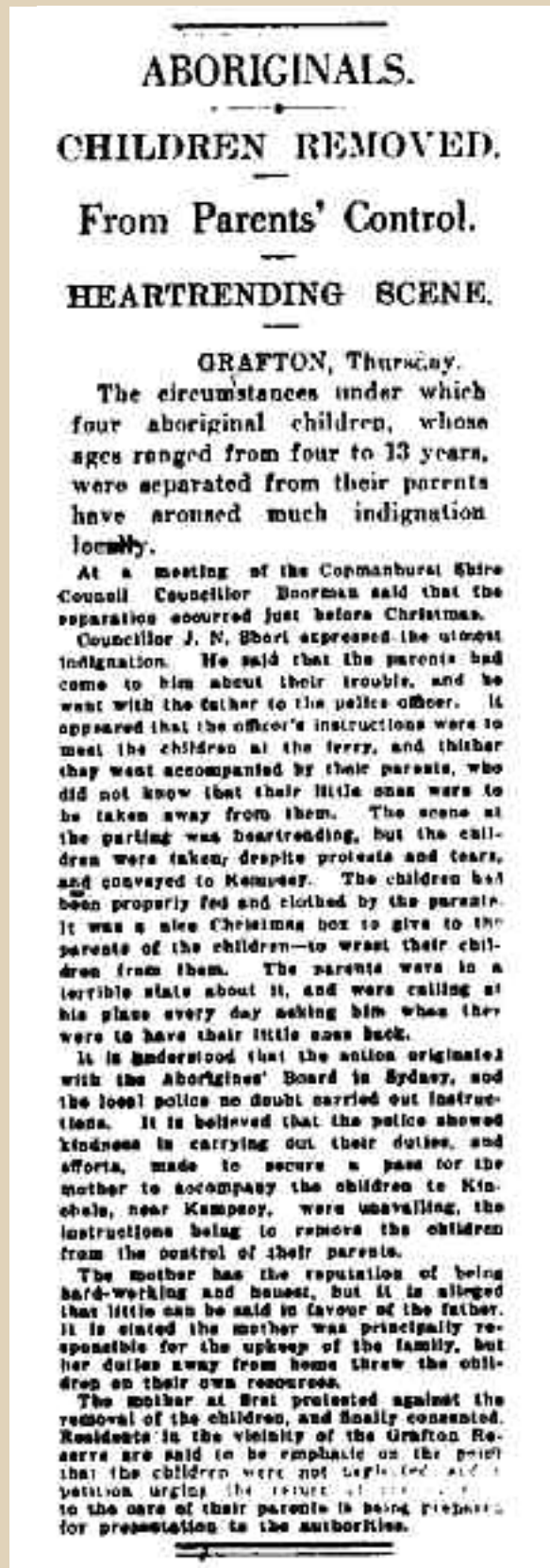
Beside enforcing the prohibition on the supply of alcohol to Aborigines, local police officers also had the onerous task of separating Aboriginal children from their parents at the direction of the Aborigines Protection Board or the Chief Protector, depending on the state. *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 January 1925 reported on the part the police played in the removal of four Aboriginal children aged from four to thirteen from their parents who were residents of the Grafton reserve.

The Aborigines Protection Board had obtained the power to act in *loco parentis* over all Aboriginal children in 1915 and, under the regulations, Aboriginal parents had no right of appeal against any decisions made by the Board. In the case of Mick Flick, an Aboriginal serviceman who had fought in France for four years with the 29th Battalion, this power was used repeatedly as a threat to stop his persistent protests against the refusal of Collarenebri Public school to admit his six children (Flick 1988).

In New South Wales by 1920 an almost totally segregated education system was operating for some 1,100 Aboriginal pupils in 35 separate Aboriginal schools. A syllabus introduced for Aboriginal schools in 1916, while including reading, writing and arithmetic, stressed manual training for a life of labour in primary industry as its special feature. A high school education was never viewed as a possibility for Aboriginal children.



The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association outlines its agenda in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* 2 July 1927



An article from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 1925, reporting the part played by police in the removal of four Aboriginal children from their parents, who were residents of the Grafton reserve. The boys were taken to the Kinchela Institution for Aboriginal Boys near Kempsey, New South Wales.

Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association

Towards the end of 1923, Aboriginal political activists led by the 44 year old Frederick Maynard formed the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association and began writing to the government and the newspapers with their demands for freehold land for Aboriginal families to engage in farming and for the immediate cessation of the removal of children from their families. The Aboriginal reserves, where most rural Aboriginal families were forced to live, were essentially crown lands reserved from sale by notification in the NSW Government Gazette. The title of the land remained with the Crown and classification of the land could be revoked at any time by the government, hence Maynard's call for freehold land title (Marshall-Stoneking 1988).

At no time in the history of Aboriginal reserves in New South Wales did the total area of land designated for the use of Aborigines exceed 27,000 acres. Most of the state's Aboriginal reserves were less than 100 acres in area. In fact, a number of Aboriginal reserves were revoked or reduced in size so that the land could be allotted to returned soldiers under the Soldier Settlement Scheme. For example, two areas of land totalling 1410 acres at Warangesda near Darling Point, that had been gazetted in the 1880s as Aboriginal reserves, were revoked on 16 April 1926. A number of former residents of Warangesda established an unofficial camp on a quiet flat beside the Murrumbidgee River about five miles from Narranderra. The camp became known as the "Sandhills" and by 1941 had thirty semi-permanent dwellings on the site (Goodall 1982; Read 1984).



Ted Gallagher, Jim (George Kennedy's father from Darlington Point), Millie Hall (later Mitchell), Ida Singh (girl), Margaret (George Kennedy's mother from Jerilderee), George Kennedy, Mick Gallagher, brother of Ted, from Hay, at the 17,000 acre Returned Soldier's Block at Yelty, seven miles southwest of Ivanhoe, New South Wales, c. 1923. Photograph courtesy of Tamsin Donaldson Collection AIATSIS.

The only Aboriginal soldier known to have received a soldier settler's block in New South Wales was Farrier Quarter Master Sergeant George Kennedy of the 6th Light Horse Regiment. George drew a 17,000 acre block at Yelty seven miles outside of Ivanhoe. However, under-capitalisation and drought conditions forced George to sell the block after five years and he and his young Aboriginal wife, Eliza, became itinerant pastoral workers.

The political campaign of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association began to receive some coverage in the Newcastle newspaper, the *Voice of the North*, during 1925. The Protection Board and the Kempsey Shire Council on five separate occasions, from January to October 1925, tried to force 120 Aboriginal squatters off a parcel of Crown land at Greenhills on the banks of the Macleay River three miles west of the town of Kempsey. The Aboriginal camp at this site was a long-standing one and despite eviction orders delivered by the police the Aboriginal residents refused to move. To gain publicity for the Aboriginal squatters' struggle, Maynard's association organised a conference in Kempsey (*Macleay Argus*, 7 April 1925 and 9 October 1925). The October conference was well attended and the resultant publicity, particularly the coverage in the Newcastle newspaper, forced the Board to allow the continued existence of the camp. However, it was not formally gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve until December 1956.

Frederick Maynard was the son of an Aboriginal woman and an Englishman. His mother died when he was five years of age and the father abandoned his children. The children were taken in by a strict Methodist minister until they were old enough to fend for themselves. Fred's descendants still hold the Scottish dictionary which he used extensively for much of his correspondence. The police and officers of the Protection Board used a number of smear tactics in attempts to discredit Maynard and his fellow office bearers. The secretary of the association was a white woman named Mrs McKenzie-Hatton who ran a girls' home in the Sydney suburb of Homebush. The home catered for Aboriginal girls who had absconded from the Board's system of apprenticeships, whereby the girls were taken from their rural families and after some domestic training were placed as servants in upper-class white homes. Mrs McKenzie-Hatton's home was subjected to continual police surveillance.

The Board responded to public criticism by arranging for the publication in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of lengthy articles emphasising the virtues of their apprenticeship scheme.

Once Fred Maynard married in 1928 and began having children of his own he ceased his political activities. One can only speculate as to the threats that officers of the Board may have made in relation to taking Maynard's children into state care if he continued his agitation.

In Western Australia, an Aboriginal farmer named William Harris formed a union for Aboriginal rights. In 1928 he led a delegation to meet with the state premier. The union campaigned for legal equality particularly for part-Aboriginal families who, under the 1905 Act entitled "An Act to make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia", were for the first time legally classified as Aborigines. Section 33 of the 1905 Act gave the Chief Protector the power to take possession of any land held by a person classified as Aboriginal and section 8 made the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and "half-caste" child up to the age of 16. These provisions were the most abhorrent to the few land owning "part-Aboriginal" farmers like William Harris, particularly as exemption certificates proved exceedingly hard to obtain and could be revoked at any time. Private Fred Smith, who owned a farm at Darkan, Western Australia, and served with the 44th Battalion in France, managed to obtain an exemption certificate, while, for some now obscure reason, Private Tom Massey of the 28th Battalion was refused a certificate.



Girls at Cootamundra Girls Home, Cootamundra, New South Wales. (If any reader can identify any of the girls in the photograph please contact the Pictorial Collection, AIATSIS).

Conclusion

Despite war service by over 400 men of Aboriginal descent, conditions for Aboriginal people by the end of the 1920s were, in all Australian States, worse than they were at the birth of the Commonwealth in 1901. Aborigines were no longer a threat to the white occupation of the continent and the majority of the general public saw them as a dying race and as a subject for ridicule. The public outrage in the capital cities over the police atrocities in the Kimberley district in 1927 and in Central Australia in 1928 were the only hopeful signs for the Aboriginal people that the white voters of Australia were becoming more sympathetic to their plight. However, it was not until 1967 that a referendum on the question of giving the Commonwealth Government power to legislate on Aboriginal matters was successfully put to the people.

Agitation by the political successors to Maynard and Harris was largely responsible for forcing the Commonwealth Government to put the referendum question rather than any sense of obligation resulting from the gallant war service by a significant number of Aboriginal men in two world wars.

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E) Aborigines in the Second World War

www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia
look under "Second World War 1939–1945"

To serve or not to serve

In 1939 Aborigines were divided over whether they should serve. Some Aboriginal organisations believed that war service would help them push their claims for full citizenship rights, and proposed the formation of special Aboriginal battalions to maximise their public visibility.

Others, such as William Cooper, the Secretary of the Australian Aborigines' League, argued that Aborigines should not fight for white Australia. Cooper's own son had been killed in the First World War, and Cooper was bitter that Aboriginal sacrifice then had not brought any improvement in rights and conditions. He likened conditions in white-administered Aboriginal settlements to those suffered by Jews under Hitler, and demanded that the Aborigines' lot be improved at home before they take up "the privilege of defending the land which was taken from him by the white race without compensation or even kindness".

However, in the Middle East, in the jungles of the Pacific, and in Australia itself, Aborigines and Islanders served side by side with white Australians, suffering the same dangers and discomforts, and enjoying the same comradeship. Many were killed fighting; at least a dozen died as prisoners of war.

Enlistment in the Second World War

At first Aborigines and Islanders were able to enlist, and many did so. But in 1940 the Defence Committee decided that the enlistment of Aborigines was "neither necessary nor desirable", partly because of the fear that white Australians would object to serving with them.

When Japan entered the war, manpower needs forced the loosening of restrictions. Torres Strait Islanders were recruited in large numbers, and Aborigines increasingly enlisted as soldiers and were recruited or conscripted into labour corps.

In the front line

With the Japanese advance in 1942, Aborigines and Islanders in the north found themselves in the front line against the attackers. There were fears that Aboriginal contact with Japanese pearlers before the war might lead to their giving assistance to the enemy. Like the peoples of Southeast Asia under colonial regimes, Aborigines might easily have seen the Japanese as liberators from white rule. Many did express bitterness at their treatment, but, overwhelmingly, Aborigines and Islanders supported Australia's defence effort.

Service in the army

Hundreds of Aborigines served in the 2nd AIF and in the militia. In these regular units, Aborigines served under the same conditions and on the same pay as whites, and in most cases with the promise of full citizenship rights after the war. Generally, there seems to have been little racism between fellow soldiers.

Other services

Little is known about how many Aborigines have served in the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Australian Navy. Probably the numbers are lower than for the army, but future research may tell a different story.

Throughout the Second World War the RAAF, with its huge need for manpower, was less restrictive in its recruiting than the army, but not many Aboriginal aircrew are known. Aborigines were also employed for surveillance in northern Australia and to rescue downed pilots.

As well as an unknown number of formally enlisted Aborigines and Islanders, the RAN also employed some informal units. For example, Jack Gribble, a coastwatcher on Melville Island, formed a unit of thirty-six Aborigines which patrolled a large area of coast and islands. Despite promises, the men were never formally enlisted and remained unpaid throughout the war.

Women

Aboriginal women also played an important role. Many enlisted in the women's services or worked in war industries. In northern Australia Aboriginal and Islander women worked hard to support isolated RAAF outposts, and even helped to salvage crashed aircraft.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) joined the Australian Women's Army Service in 1942 after her two brothers were captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore. Serving as a signaller in Brisbane, she met many black American soldiers as well as European Australians. These contacts helped to lay the foundations for her later advocacy of Aboriginal rights.

Home front

The war brought greater contact than ever before between the whites of southern Australia and the Aborigines and Islanders of the north. For the whites it was a chance to learn about Aboriginal culture and to see the poor conditions imposed on Aborigines. For the Aborigines the war accelerated the process of cultural change, and in the long term ensured a position of greater equality in Australian society.

The army had employed Aborigines in the Northern Territory since 1933, on conditions similar to those endured by Aboriginal workers on pastoral stations: long hours, poor housing and diet, and low pay. But as the army took over control of settlements from the Native Affairs Branch during the war, conditions improved greatly. For the first time Aborigines were given adequate housing and sanitation, fixed working hours, proper rations, and access to medical treatment in army hospitals.

Pay rates remained low. The army tried to increase pay above the standard 5 shillings a week, and at one stage the RAAF was paying Aborigines 5 shillings a day. But in both cases pressure from the civilian administration and pastoralists forced pay back to the standard rate.

In some areas the war provided great hardship. In the islands of Torres Strait, the pearling luggers which provided most of the local income were confiscated in case they fell into Japanese hands. The Islanders enlisted in units such as the Torres Strait Light Infantry, in which their pay was much lower than that of whites, and often could not send enough home to feed their families.

Labour units

During the Second World War the army and RAAF depended heavily on Aboriginal labour in northern Australia. Aborigines worked on construction sites, in army butcheries and on army farms. They also drove trucks, handled cargo, and provided general labour around camps. The RAAF sited airfields and radar stations near missions which could provide Aboriginal labour. At a time when Australia was drawing on all its reserves of men and women to support the war effort, the Aboriginal contribution was vital.

29th Btn.

K. in not.

"I knew Casualty.
dark complexion, about 30 years
on the 9th August in front of
and while repelling this attack
a machine gun bullet killing him
the time and saw him go down.
there was a cross erected."

Private address:-
Peaf Street,
Wedderburn,

N.A.T.
6/6/19.

Defenders of the north

Since early this century, proposals have been made to train the Aborigines of northern Australia as a defence force. In the Second World War these ideas were tried out.

Donald Thomson was an anthropologist from Melbourne who had lived with the East Arnhem Land Aborigines for 2 years in the 1930s. In 1941 he set up and led the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit, an irregular army unit consisting of fifty-one Aborigines, five whites and a number of Pacific and Torres Strait Islanders. Three of the men had been to gaol for killing the crews of two Japanese pearling luggers in 1932. Now they were told that it was their duty to kill Japanese.

The members of the unit were to use their traditional bushcraft and fighting skills to patrol the coastal area, establish coastwatchers, and fight a guerrilla war against any Japanese who landed. Living off the country and using traditional weapons, they were mobile and had no supply line to protect. Thomson shared the group's hardships and used his knowledge of Aboriginal custom to help deal with traditional rivalries. The unit was eventually disbanded, once the fear of a Japanese landing had disappeared.

The Aborigines in the unit received no monetary pay until, in 1992, back-pay and medals were finally awarded.

See:

- **Second World War case study:**
Reginald Saunders
- **Second World War document study:**
Leonard Waters
- **Second World War oral history:**
Charles Mene MM

F) The post-war period

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.

Max Carroll, an infantry officer who served in Malaya and Vietnam.

Returned soldiers

Wartime service had given many Aborigines and Islanders pride and confidence in demanding their rights. Moreover, the army in northern Australia had been a benevolent employer compared to pre-war pastoralists, and had helped to change attitudes to Aborigines as employees.

Nevertheless, Aborigines who had fought for their country came back to face much the same discrimination as before. They might even, for example, find themselves barred from RSL clubs except on Anzac Day. Many of them were not to have the vote for another 17 years.

Enlistment after the war

Once the intense demands of the war were gone, the army re-imposed its old restrictions on enlistment. But attitudes had changed, and restrictions based on race were abandoned altogether in 1949.

Since then, Aborigines and Islanders have served in every one of Australia's conflicts. They continue to serve with distinction today in the Australian Defence Force.

See:

- **Vietnam War case study:**
Don Beale
- **Royal Australian Navy case study:**
Gary Oakley

OFFICIAL IDENTITY

(For All Ranks)

G) They were foremost Australian soldiers

by Colonel O.M. (Max) Carroll (RL)

*An oral account of Aboriginal and Thursday Island soldiers who served in Malaya and Vietnam: 1957 to 1967
Reprinted from Aboriginal History, 16:1, 1992 with permission of the author.*

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.



Bruce Fletcher, *Landing at Xuyen Moc, Operation Paddington, 1967*, oil on canvas on hardboard, 102 x 133.3 cm, Australian War Memorial (ART 40578). "Darky" Butler is third from the left.

I shall speak now on the 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 soldiers occupied!) 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 bush craft, 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 quick, 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 fine 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. 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 Regiment (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 Queensland, 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 a 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 delouse 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 distinction.

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



Bruce Fletcher, *Private "Darky" Butler*, 1967, oil on canvas on hardboard, 74.5 x 59.4 cm, Australian War Memorial (ART 40563).

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 delouse. 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.

L INSTRUCTIONS FOR
LISTING OFFICERS.

(dated to 14th December, 1916.)

may enlist at any time, and at time of
y specify any definite subsequent date,
convenience, on which they will go into
date is not to be extended without the
the A.A.G.

D FOR RECRUITS—

18 to 45 years.
(minimum)—5 ft. 2 in.
(fully expanded)—33 inches.

et have the written consent of both parents

t "SUBSTANTIALLY OF EUROPEAN ORIGIN"
e not to be enlisted. Doubtful cases should
o the Medical Officer.

r subjects are NOT to be enlisted.

N, FRENCH, OR SERBIAN subjects, if certi-
Consul, and having
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owing:—

What's in the box

Not all items appear in all boxes. Check the contents list for your box.

Printed material

- Australian War Memorial
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 - Don Beale, Vietnam War
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- Document studies
 - William Rawlings, First World War
 - Leonard Waters, Second World War
- Oral history transcript
 - Charles Mene MM

Objects and uniforms

Disruptive Camouflage Pattern Uniform (DCPU) – shirt, pants

These army uniform items are currently worn by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers. Indigenous soldiers make up a large proportion of the total enlistment the army's three Regional Force Surveillance units—the 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment, based in Cairns; the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE), based in Darwin; and the Pilbara Regiment, whose headquarters are in Port Hedland.

The three units form a chain of surveillance and reconnaissance across northern Australia. The units cover vast distances in conditions that include extreme heat and cold, choking red dust, flood, drought, flies, desert, tropical rainforest, impenetrable mangroves, and crocodiles!

As thorough local knowledge is often a matter of life and death, emphasis is on local recruitment. Patrols must have the ability to operate for several days without re-supply, so survival techniques and a high level of physical fitness are essential qualities. Soldiers who have grown up in this hostile environment, and who have an intimate knowledge of it, bring skills to the job that even the most comprehensive briefing will never match. "In their own area Aboriginal guys know where everything is without a map. They know where you can cam up vehicles, and where to find water and food". [P. Rosenzweig, *Ever Vigilant: The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force NORFORCE 1981–2001* (Larrakeyah, NT, 2001, p. 46)]

These uniforms have to protect their wearers in the most extreme conditions. The disruptive camouflage pattern makes the wearer less visible. The long sleeves and trousers protect against the sun's rays and windburn as the soldiers move around in open patrol cars. They also offer some protection against insect bites, which are a major cause of discomfort.

Webbing, belt, pouches

As soldiers on surveillance may have to act independently for days at a time, they need to be able to carry with them all they need for survival. Soldiers wear a system of webbing, which comprises a belt to which are attached pouches that are designed to carry water bottles, rations packs, ammunition, maps and any other requirements for the task. A full day patrol kit may weigh up to 20 kilograms.

Keppi Hat

Made from the same DCP fabric as the uniform, the Keppi hat is used by soldiers in extreme weather conditions as in northern Australia. Reminiscent of the French legionnaire's hat, it provides shade to the back of the neck. Soldiers however often fold up the flap while on parade, for a more regimented "look".

Shemagh

The shemagh is a soft cloth scarf that is part of the issue of soldiers in extreme climates. It has many uses, but is mainly used as a sun protector or as a mask to prevent dust being inhaled. It can be soaked in water and wrapped around the head to get the cooling effect of evaporation. It also comes in handy as a soft pillow when sleeping rough, and makes an effective shaving towel in the morning.

Military Medal

This is a replica of the Military Medal awarded to William Reginald Rawlings, for the courage he displayed during an action at Morlancourt in France on the night of 18/19 July 1918. (See First World War document study).

The same medal was awarded to another Aboriginal soldier, Charles Mene, while he was serving in Korea. (See Oral History, Charles Mene). The Military Medal has also been awarded to several other Aboriginal soldiers during our major conflicts.

The Military Medal was instituted in 1916 for bravery in the field and devotion to duty under fire. The design of the medal has remained the same since it was first introduced, with the exception that the contemporary monarch is depicted on the reverse of the medal.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

This medal is awarded for conspicuous gallantry for warrant officers or lower ranks.

As Aborigines were not accepted officially into the armed services during the First World War, we can only estimate the numbers that did actually serve. Similarly, it is difficult to determine the number of Aboriginal soldiers who were awarded medals for their conduct.

However, we do know that at least two Aboriginal soldiers received the Distinguished Conduct Medal during the First World War. William Allen Irwin and Albert Knight both received the medal in 1918.

The citation for Private Irwin refers to operations on the Western Front in August 1918:

Single-handed and in face of extremely heavy fire, Private Irwin rushed three separate machine gun posts and captured the three guns and crews. It was while rushing a fourth machine gun that he was severely wounded.

On his irresistible dash and magnificent gallantry this man materially assisted our advance through this strongly held and defended wood; and by his daring actions he greatly inspired the whole of his Company.

Second World War water bottle

This is the typical water bottle given to enlisted men. You can see from the photo of two Aboriginal soldiers, G. Leonard and H. West, taken at Sydney Wharf in November 1941, that a soldier needed a lot of personal gear for his survival.

The water bottle, in a webbing carrier, has a woollen cover. This acts as a cooling device, as once the felt gets wet, evaporation lowers the temperature of the contents. The bottle holds about 1 litre of water.

NORFORCE Colour patch, hat badge and shoulder title

NORFORCE has a surveillance role from the Queensland border westward across the Northern Territory and into the Kimberleys. It also includes all the offshore islands along this section of coastline.

In the foreword to the history of the first twenty years of NORFORCE, Lieutenant General Peter Cosgrove AC, MC, Chief of Army, made these comments :

Aboriginal soldiers have always played an important role in the life of the Australian Army. It could be argued that nowhere have those indigenous soldiers made a more striking contribution than in the development of the patrolmen of NORFORCE. Uniquely in the Australian Army, NORFORCE is the community in which it served, as well as its eyes, its ears, and its first defence.

P. Rosenzweig, *Ever Vigilant: The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force NORFORCE 1981–2001*. (Larrakeyah, NT, 2001)

A colour patch is a unique combination of shapes and colours that identifies a particular unit. The NORFORCE colour patch was first adopted by its forerunner, the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU), which was raised as a “phantom” unit of the 2nd AIF to undertake surveillance and reconnaissance across the north of Australia during the Second World War. The role of Aborigines in supporting the NAOU is well documented, although they were generally not employed formally (or paid) for this role.

When NORFORCE was established in 1981 to carry on this special surveillance work, it was fitting that it adopt the colour patch of the disbanded NAOU. The double diamond of green and orange is now proudly worn by many soldiers of the force on the right side of the puggaree (hat band) on the slouch hat.

Another important insignia that gives a shared sense of belonging is the regimental badge. It was not until several years after the formation of NORFOCE that the design for the badge was finalized. The frill-necked lizard represents the fauna that is common in the Top End, but one of the regiment’s officers made the following observations that suggest its appropriateness:

The frill-necked lizard has many attributes shared with the NORFORCE soldier, most notably its remarkable camouflage. By nature it avoids a fight but if cornered will defend itself most capably and effectively, while its long hind legs allow it to turn on an impressive burst of speed when needed. On the other hand, a vital skill for a reconnaissance soldier is the ability to move stealthily, stalking its prey.

P. Rosenzweig, *Ever Vigilant: The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force NORFORCE 1981–2001*. (Larrakeyah, NT, 2001, p.172)

The shoulder title clearly identifies the wearer as belonging to NORFORCE. While not worn with camouflage gear, it is worn on all other “walking out” uniforms. The titles are attached to the shoulder epaulettes of the shirts and jackets.

NORFORCE Guidebook

This guidebook gives a good overview of the history, organisation, recruitment, and duties undertaken by members of NORFORCE.

51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment, colour patch and badge

The 51st Battalion patrols the northern part of Queensland, to the Northern Territory border. The battalion traces its history back to the Australian Imperial Force raised during the First World War from Western Australian volunteers. It was then that the battalion was granted the colour patch (chocolate brown over saxe blue) that it still retains today.

Between the two world wars, the 51st Battalion was re-raised, amalgamated, split and relocated several times. However, in 1936, the 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment, was formed and called upon to serve in the South West Pacific during the Second World War. In the 1980s the army established the northern surveillance forces in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The 51st Battalion took on this role for northern Queensland and the islands.

The battalion has extended its recruiting base to include local Aboriginal and Islander soldiers from many communities. These men bring their special knowledge and skills to the job, while the communities value the opportunity the army provides for its young men to develop leadership and technical skills.

The badge of the 51st Battalion depicts a kookaburra perched on a branch, holding a snake in its beak. It is surrounded by the motto “Ducit Amor Patriae” (meaning “love of country leads me”) lying within a wreath and surmounted by the Queen’s crown. This badge was first used by the battalion when the Far North Queensland Regiment was formed in 1936.

The Pilbara Regiment hat badge, colour patch and lanyard

The Pilbara Regiment provides a reconnaissance and surveillance capability in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia. The regiment is responsible for patrolling 1.3 million square kilometres of country from Port Hedland in the north to Carnarvon in the south, and from the west coast to the Northern Territory border. This area covers about one sixth of Australia.

Given the challenging nature of the terrain and extreme conditions, the regiment offers training in survival, water operations and tracking, as well as a range of more conventional skills, such as are required in any regiment.

Indigenous Australians bring special attributes to the Pilbara Regiment. Local knowledge and an affinity with the land often play a key role in assisting the regiment to carry out its role. At times, the survival of its members depends on this knowledge.

The badges and insignia of the Pilbara Regiment shows its connection to the desert. The hat badge depicts an emu surrounded by Sturt’s Desert Pea. The regiment’s colour patch is black and red ochre in colour, reminiscent of the red dust of the outback.

Lanyards are an item of uniform that today have a largely ornamental function—distinguishing corps and regiments by specific colours. The lanyard worn by the regiment is also ochre in colour. Originally the lanyard was a length of cord used to secure a knife or any other piece of equipment that needed to be handy, but secure. In the instance of the cavalry, the jack-knife was used for cleaning hooves or cutting free a horse in an emergency. The knife was tucked into the left breast pocket and attached to a lanyard, which was worn around the shoulder. These practical functions for the lanyard have today been largely replaced by a purely decorative function.



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN
AIR FORCE

Stimulus photos

1. Portrait of Corporal Harry Thorpe, MM. AWM P1695.002

Thorpe was born at the Lake Tyers Mission Station, near Sale, Victoria. He enlisted at Sale on 12 February 1916, embarked on overseas service in April and joined the 7th Battalion in France in July 1916. He was wounded in action at Pozières in 1916 and Bullecourt in 1917. By January 1917 he had been promoted to Lance Corporal.

On the night of 4–5 October 1917 Thorpe was conspicuous in his courage and leadership during operations at Broodseinde, near Ypres, in Belgium. For his “splendid example” he was promoted to Corporal and awarded the Military Medal, although the original recommendation was for the Distinguished Conduct Medal. During the advance on 9 August 1918 at Lihons Wood, south west of Vauvillers, France, a stretcher bearer found Thorpe shot in the stomach. He died shortly after and was buried in the Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières, with his friend William Rawlings, another Aborigine who was also awarded the Military Medal. They had both died on the same day.

2. Soldiers G. Leonard and H. West embarking at Sydney Wharf, 2 November 1941. AWM 010375

This photograph taken on the wharf at Sydney shows two Aborigines, G. Leonard and H. West, prior to embarkation for overseas service in Papua New Guinea. They were both in the 14th reinforcements to the 2/1st AIF Battalion.

Leonard was a private and was killed in action in Papua in October 1942. West was also a private, dying of illness in New Guinea in late November 1942.

These men enlisted, and died, at a time when the official view about Aborigines enlisting was that “the admission to the Army of British subjects of non-European origin or descent is neither necessary nor desirable” (from a memorandum to all units entitled “Aliens and the Australian Military Forces”).

However, with the entry of Japan into the war, manpower shortages forced a loosening of restrictions. Increasingly, Aborigines and Torres Straight Islanders enlisted in the AIF and other services, as well taking on other roles to help the war effort.

3. Corroboree, Northern Territory, 18 November 1942. AWM 013583

A group of Aboriginal dancers, painted in the traditional way, and Australian troops watching a corroboree. Many of these Aborigines were employed by the army. Both Aboriginal men and women were employed for their general labouring skills but particularly for their bushcraft. They taught them how to supplement their rations by living off the land, and how to dig soaks in the dry river beds to find fresh water. Their tracking skills were invaluable to the Northern Australia Observation Unit (“Nackaroos”), who were posted to the inhospitable north to keep watch for Japanese invasion.

However, the basis for employment of Aborigines was usually fairly informal, with the rate of pay being set at the discretion of the particular commanding officer. Payment was often in rations or tobacco and despite the dependence on Aborigines, they were largely kept in a subservient role.

4. Helping the war effort, Barmah, Victoria, 1941. AWM P1562.001

Women and girls at the Cumeragunja Government Mission knitting socks, jumpers and balaclavas for the war effort.

5. 121 Australian General Hospital, Katherine, Northern Territory, 24 November 1942. AWM 027835

Tommy, an Aboriginal orderly at 121 Australian General Hospital, assists in the treatment of Hector, who was injured when Katherine was bombed. Hector “went bush”, but later returned for treatment at the hospital.

6. Aboriginal stockmen employed by the Army, North-West Australia, 1 February 1943. AWM 014291

During the war years, the Army established its own slaughter yards, cooling chambers and delivery system about 16 kilometres north of Katherine to provide fresh meat for Allied soldiers in the north-west area. Three Aboriginal stockmen employed to drive cattle to the yards are shown here. From the left, they are Bobby, Paddy and John (12 years old). Bobby and John are members of the Alligator Aboriginal group and Paddy is from the Myall Aboriginal group.

7. Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, Thursday Island, Torres Strait, 29 October 1945. AWM 119170

Lieutenant C.V. Matters, Commander of C Company, inspecting members of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.

In proportion to population, no community in Australia contributed more to the war effort in the Second World War than the Torres Strait Islanders. In 1941 the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion was formed to defend the strategically important Torres Strait area. Other Islander units were also created, especially for water transport and as coastal artillery. The Light Infantry never had the chance to engage the enemy, but some were sent on patrol in Japanese-controlled Dutch New Guinea.

By 1944 almost every able-bodied male Torres Strait Islander had enlisted.

8. Vietnam 1966. AWM P1595.078

www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia
look under "Vietnam War"

Members of 1 Field Squadron, Royal Australia Engineers, including two Aboriginal soldiers, prepare a meal using American ration packs.

Restriction on enlistment based on race were lifted completely in 1949. Since then, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have served in every one of Australia's conflicts.

See the article "They were foremost Australian soldiers" for a description of the involvement of Aboriginal soldiers in Vietnam.

9. Private Tony Yamirr (NORFORCE, Kimberley Squadron) during "Exercise KANGAROO", 1992. Photo courtesy NORFORCE

Private Yamirr is dressed in a DPC (Destructive Pattern Camouflage) uniform and has special equipment to suit his surveillance role. He is wearing a camouflage net around his head and carries an angle torch, which has been blacked out to prevent reflection when not in use. He is wearing face camouflage, cut-down gloves for protection, and an army issue inflatable life jacket. These were mandatory when travelling on army boats, as in this image.

Private Yamirr is equipped with a 7.62-millimetre Self Loading Rifle (SLR) and carries ammunition in the Minimi pouch to the front of his body. As these are only training exercises, Tony's rifle has a Blank Firing Attachment (BFA).

10. Baidoa, Somalia, 22 March 1993. AWM P1735.400

www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia
look under "Peacekeeping"

Pte Graeme "Brownie" Brown, an Aboriginal member of A Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, surrounded by children on foot patrol in a street of the town. At that time he was serving with the Australian contingent to the Unified Task Force in Somalia (Unitaf).

11. Presentation of a Pukamani pole, Darwin 1995. Photo courtesy NORFORCE.

Lance Corporal Gerrard Tipiloura with the Tiwi Pukamani pole presented to the North West Mobile Force in 1995, in recognition of the strong links between the unit and Aboriginal communities across northern Australia.

Artwork

Paddy Fordham Wainburranga (Rembarrnga), born 1938

World War 11 Supply Ships, Darwin 1991

natural pigments on eucalyptus bark

180.3 x 83.5 cm

AWM ART29718

Background to Work

This painting depicts two naval supply ships, docked in Darwin during the Second World War, being unloaded by the Larrakeyah people. Before completion of the Stuart and Barkly Highways, the bulk of supplies for troops stationed in the Northern Territory had to be brought in by ship. As a result of wartime labour shortages, Aboriginal labour was sought after by the Army and became indispensable to the war effort in the Northern Territory.

Paddy Fordham Wainburranga is an elder of the Rembarrnga people and lives in the Northern Territory. He is well known for his history paintings about the contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. This painting is based on the artist's childhood memories of the war.

Paddy Fordham Wainburranga (Rembarrnga), born 1938

How World War II Began (through the eyes of the Rembarrnga). 1990

natural pigments on eucalyptus bark
65.0 x 135.0 cm
(National Gallery of Australia, Canberra)

Background to the work

The Japanese pearl divers and fisherman used to work off the coast of Arnhem land. The Japanese would exchange food and gifts with the tribal elders for women. Some husbands became very upset, as they thought the Japanese were overstepping their hospitality. Although some women were happy with the arrangements as they brought back to camp things they had never seen before, one woman took exception and refused to go with the Japanese. An argument ensued and the Japanese were forced to leave Arnhem land. The elders eventually reported the matter to the authorities in Darwin, where the Japanese had gone. The police forced the Japanese to leave Darwin too. At this stage, tribal Aborigines knew very little about how the Second World War started. They thought they had contributed to the start of the war when the Japanese started bombing northern Australia, because they had asked them to leave a few months before.

Video

Indigenous warriors

Duration 9 minutes

This video looks at the role of Aborigines in Australia's armed services from the First World War until now. It discusses the earlier official policy of rejecting non-Europeans from service and shows how those who managed to get through the system were treated as equals, often for the first time.

Race and skin colour became irrelevant on the battlefield and the Aborigines who served experienced true equality, often for the first time. But after the war, returning Aboriginal soldiers found that nothing had changed.

During the Second World War, special skills of Aborigines were harnessed to patrol areas of Australia's north, which were vulnerable to Japanese attack. But, again, after the cessation of hostilities, it took years before official Government policies stopped discriminating against the very people it had called on during its time of need.

Today, Aboriginal people are represented at the same rate as other Australians in the armed services, and over-represented in the army's Regional Force

Surveillance Units, which form a vital part of Australia's northern defence strategy. Aborigines have served with distinction in all of Australia's conflicts. However, the Aboriginal community is still waiting for formal recognition of the contribution of their forebears to Australia's military history.

(Permission to use the video in Too Light for the Dark Horse was kindly given by the Aboriginal Unit of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The footage is from a program called "Indigenous Warriors", part of the "Blackout" series.)

Oral history

Charles Mene MM

Duration 23 minutes

Charles Mene was born on Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait. He worked on pearling luggers and enlisted shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. He fought in the Middle East and the Pacific with the 2nd AIF, including service with 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion.

From 1946 to 1950 he was part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan.

Mene fought in the Korean War as a section commander (Corporal) with 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. He saw further service in Malaya with 2RAR, tracking communist terrorists during the Emergency. He retired from the Australian Army in 1961.

(This oral history interview with Charles Mene, MM, was conducted in Brisbane on 19 October 1986 by Robert Hall, who was gathering material for his book *The black diggers*.)

For school users

Memorial Boxes can be used in different ways by students of all ages, from primary through to senior secondary. They can be adapted to cover a wide range of curriculum areas, including history, social studies, politics, language, visual arts, cultural and gender studies. The boxes have been specifically designed to enable teachers to use the contents to suit their own classroom strategies. Remember that you don't have to use all the objects in the box; select those, which are appropriate for your class and curriculum area.

The Memorial Boxes are designed to promote the use of primary resource material and student-centred, hands-on learning. Any of the information folders or documents may be photocopied for classroom use.

The Education Section of the Australian War Memorial recommends an average time of two weeks for a class to use the Memorial Box.

A) Curriculum links

The learning experiences offered by this Memorial Box are applicable to many different areas of curriculum, but the strongest links are to the studies of society and environment (SOSE), especially in the area of history.

While schools in the various states and territories have developed their own history curricula, a common strand is "Time, continuity and change". An associated strand is "Investigation, communication and participation", where students learn about the techniques of inquiry and how to participate in collaborative learning and decision-making. This Memorial Box is directly relevant to teaching both these strands. As this box looks specifically at the involvement of indigenous Australians, there is also strong relevance to culture studies.

The following curriculum links refer to the document *Studies of Society and Environment – a Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools*. This profile was developed in a national curriculum development project initiated by the Australian Education Council. This document has formed the basis for individual state and territory curricula for the teaching of SOSE.

The outcomes describe the progression typically achieved by students during the years of schooling approximating Year 3 to Year 10. (NB The numbering system for these outcomes does not equate directly to year level.)

Strand: Time, continuity and change

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER:

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

- 3.1b Interprets accounts and artefacts of people in other times
- 4.1a Describes significant events and ways of life in some periods of Australia's past
- 4.1b Describes the achievements of selected people and groups
- 5.1a Describes the significant ideas, people or events that have contributed to Australian identity
- 5.1b Describes the ideas, people or events that have influenced the identity of a country
- 6.1a Describes and explains lasting and changing aspects of Australian society and environments
- 6.1b Describes and explains lasting and changing aspects of a society
- 7.1a Critically analyses the ways core values of Australian society have endured or changed over time
- 8.1 Analyses people, issues and events in the context of their time

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER:

TIME AND CHANGE

- 3.2 Constructs a sequence from a set of events
- 4.2 Constructs a sequence of some major periods and events
- 7.2 Analyses how causes, motives and consequences maybe related

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER:

INTERPRETATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

- 3.3 Gives reasons why the local community and environment have changed and are likely to change
- 4.3 Portrays an event or occasion from a particular perspective
- 5.3 Interprets people's motives and actions from various perspectives
- 6.3 Critically compares representations of people, events and issues
- 7.3 Uses knowledge about the past to explain contemporary events
- 8.3 Explains why different individuals, groups and societies have interpreted and reinterpreted history in different ways

Strand: Culture

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER: CULTURAL COHESION AND DIVERSITY

- 5.8 Describes how cultural groups, their belief systems and social organisation contribute to the identity of a society
- 6.8 Analyses the ways societies or communities maintain cohesion and allow diversity
- 8.8 Analyses the factors that bring about cultural adaptation within groups, communities or societies

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER: PERSONAL, GROUP AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

- 3.9 Describes how membership of different groups affects the identity of individuals
- 5.9 Examines how gender, race and socio-economic status influence an individual's identity
- 6.9 Analyses the core values of groups and societies
- 8.9 Evaluates moral and ethical issues and justifies personal positions

Strand: Investigation, Communication and participation

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER: INVESTIGATION

- 3.16 Frames questions and identifies sources of information
- 4.16 Identifies the types of data and sources required by a task and decides how they will be used to gain information
- 5.16 Recognises significant issues in an area of investigation and selects suitable ways of investigating them
- 6.16 Explains the various ways of viewing an issue and the information associated with it.
- 7.16 uses the methodologies of the learning area to investigate different perspectives on an issue

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER: COMMUNICATION

- 3.17 Presents information to explore a key idea
- 4.17 Translates information from one form to another
- 5.17 Uses supporting evidence to argue for a personal point of view
- 6.17 Discusses the logic of and evidence for an argument or viewpoint

OUTCOMES FOR STRAND ORGANISER: PARTICIPATION

- 6.18 Comes to an informed personal decision through discussing and considering viewpoints and evidence presented by others.
- 7.18 Judges actions of self and others in the light of available choices and avowed value positions
- 8.18 Plans action in the light of conflicting and inconsistent information and values

B) Suggested class activities

Using the document studies

Read the notes given in the document studies in the box. The questions relate directly to the documents presented to uncover the experience of a soldier in the First World War, and an airman in the Second World War.

The documents are also artifacts relating to a particular conflict in which Aborigines were involved. They tell of the official regulations which covered the conduct of the war and they also show clearly that official regulations can be ignored, and that official records can be inaccurate.

Interpret the official documents by considering:

- What is it about?
- Who wrote it?
- Why was it written?
- When was it written?
- Where was it written?
- Is it reliable?
- How is it useful to historians?

Using the case studies

Tracking a soldier's service through official documents gives a very different account to that based on personal papers and biographies. The case studies in the box talk of personal qualities and the emotions felt by Aboriginal servicemen and their families as they experienced war and service life.

- What do you find about the subjects of the case study?
- What information do you find that would not be revealed by official documents?
- How reliable are the personal accounts of events?

Using the oral history

Charles Mene MM had a long, varied and distinguished army career. What does listening to his voice talking about some of these events tell us about him as a person? What sort of man do you think Charles Mene was?

Is there someone in your community who would tell you about their experiences?

Using the photos

- Interpret photos by considering the following:
Where was the photo taken?
When?
Who is the photo of?
How can you tell?
What is it showing?
What are the conditions like?
Why was it taken?
- Make up a story based on the photo and act it out.
- Photocopy the photos and using balloons above the heads of people write in what they are thinking or saying.
- Search the photos to try to match any of the items in the box to those in the photos.
- Develop a collage based on “remembrance”, using the photos as a stimulus.
- Sequence the photographs to tell a story.
- Look for links between photographs and other objects or stories within the Memorial Box.
- Discuss the usefulness of photographs as historical evidence.

Using the objects and uniform pieces

- Classify the objects in the box according to size and weight, metal/cloth etc.
- Interpret the objects by considering:
What is it?
How do you think it was used?
Where was it made?
Are there any markings to give us clues?
How old is it?
What is its equivalent today?
Why has it changed?
- Try on the items of uniform and encourage students to go into the situation and time the uniforms represent.
- Test observation skills by asking a student to describe an object without actually stating what it is, and have others select the object based on that description.
- Observe the insignia on the buttons and badges and take a pencil rubbing (use a soft pencil).

Other activities

- Ask students to put themselves in the position of a character they have learned about through material in the box and, as that person, to write a letter to a loved one from whom they are separated, describing their situation.
- As a mapping exercise, plot the locations mentioned in the box on a world map to see where Aboriginal Australians have served during conflicts.
- Encourage students to ask their parents, grandparents and family friends to show any memorabilia and to share stories about their experience of Australia in conflict.

C) Beyond the Memorial Box

- Design and pack a time capsule to be opened at some time in the future. Ask students what they think future students would like to see and know about their current experience at school. Gather the material and seal it in the school grounds.
- Investigate how your local community has remembered the past by looking in the school grounds, the local park, the cemetery and street names. You may find honour boards, avenues of trees, guns in parks, names on headstones which indicate that the experience of war touched many lives in your town. The students may like to continue the tradition and design an Honour Roll using the names of those veterans from your school or area who served in more recent wars, such as Korea, Vietnam or in peacekeeping operations.

 www.skp.com.au/memorials

- Plant a memorial grove. Plant trees in your school grounds and dedicate each one to a veteran from your area. Investigate the military history of the individuals. Graphic design students could design a suitable plaque.
- Initiate an oral history project of local men and women who experienced war in 1939–1945. The State branch of the Oral History Association of Australia may be willing to give advice.

Set up your own Memorial Box or mini museum

1. Gather material

Ask around your local area for relevant material; these may include medals, badges, discharge certificates, photos, old cigarette tins, uniforms, diaries, letters or you could record some oral histories.

2. Documentation

To help keep track of the items donated or lent you will need to set up a register so that you can record information on each item. Information such as: who donated the item, what it is, what condition it is in, and any background information about the item which will help you understand more about the impact of war.

3. Conservation

Once you have registered the items you will need to assess their condition to know how best to store or display them. There are different storage requirements for different materials.

Paper – remove metal paperclips and staples—plastic paperclips are safer. Metal paperclips, pins and staples can rust and cause damage. Store items flat and keep away from direct light.

Photographs – remove photographs from adhesive (sticky) photo albums. Adhesive photo albums damage photographs by making them difficult to remove if left too long. Store photographs in flip albums or acid-free paper albums. Store away from direct sunlight in a dry, dark place. Direct sunlight fades and discolours.

Protective wrapping – to store items such as photographs, metal objects and important papers use polyethylene plastic such as “GLADWRAP”. Do not store items in Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic as it causes damage; examples of PVC are cheap cling wrap and plastic shopping bags.

4. Devising an exhibition

Once your collection has started to grow you can start planning your own exhibition. This is the most exciting and rewarding part of museum work. What do you want to say through your museum display? What will visitors to the exhibition need or want to know about? What do you want to tell them—is there a story or theme that links the items together?

You will need to consider carefully what items to include and what they explain about the experience of war. You may need to purchase items from a disposal store to help illustrate the story. You might also consider using video or sound as part of your exhibition.

The location of your exhibition is important. Who do you want to see it? Suggested venues are at school during parent teacher nights or drama nights when there is a captive audience. The local library or town hall may also be available for a display. Consider having your exhibition coincide with ANZAC Day or Remembrance Day as people are already thinking about the impact of war on these anniversaries.

5. Other places to go for information:

- the Australian War Memorial’s website has extensive databases to help with your research.

 www.awm.gov.au

- your local war memorial may list the names of most of the soldiers who enlisted from your area.
- the RSL will have members who went to war and who could be called upon to tell of their experience.
- the local or state branch of the Red Cross holds a wealth of resources.
- the local newspaper office should have copies of newspapers from the war years in which you will find stories of local interest. The newspapers could also be used to send an SOS calling for more information on a specific topic or person.

Abbreviations

AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AN&MEF	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BCOF	British Commonwealth Occupation Force
Bn	Battalion
MBE	Member of the British Empire
Ord	Ordinary Seaman
POW	Prisoner of war
Pte	Private
JR	Junior recruit
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAE	Royal Australian Engineers
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RSL	Returned Soldiers' League
RSSILA	Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia
Sqn	Squadron
USA	United States of America
USS	United States Ship

29th Btn.

X.

"I knew GAB
dark complexion, about
on the 9th August in
and while repelling t
a machine gun bullet
the time and saw him
there was a cross and

Private address:-
Beef Street,
Wedderburn.

H.A.T.
6/6/19.

Resources list

Books

Patsy Adam-Smith, *Prisoners of war: From Gallipoli to Korea* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1992).

H.E. Beros, "The Coloured Digger" in *The fuzzy wuzzy angels, and other verses* (Sydney: F.H. Johnston Publishing Company, 1943).

R. Fraser, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Commonwealth records: A guide to the records in the Australian Archives*, ACT Regional Office (Canberra: Australian Archives, 1993).

Harry Gordon, *The embarrassing Australian: The story of an Aboriginal warrior* (Melbourne: Lansdown Press, 1965).

Robert Hall, *The black diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989).

D. Horton, *The encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: AIATSIS, 1994).

Alick Jackomos and Derek Farwell, *Forgotten heroes: Aborigines at war from the Somme to Vietnam*, (Melbourne The Law Printer, 1993).

Bede Nairn (ed) et. al., *Australian dictionary of biography* (Melbourne University Press, 1983).

Gordon Rowe, *Sketches of outstanding Aborigines*, (Adelaide: Aborigines' Friends' Association, 1956).

P. Rosenzweig, *Ever Vigilant* (Darwin NT: North West Mobile Force, 2001).

Journals & Newspapers

"A notable Aboriginal", in *The Australian Museum Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 9, March 15 (1952): 301.

O.M. Carroll, "They were foremost Australian soldiers: an oral account of Aboriginal and Thursday Island soldiers who served in Malaya and Vietnam: 1957 to 1967", *Aboriginal History*, 16:1 (1992) : 99–105.

Dawn, Vol. 5, No. 6, 1956.

P. Grimshaw and J. Mulvaney, (eds), "Aborigines in the services", in *Aboriginal History* Vol. 16: 1–2, ANU Press, Canberra, 1992.

David Huggonson, "Aborigines and the aftermath of the Great War", in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, Number 1 (1992).

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The Chronicle, Toowoomba, 2 December 1981.

K Coningham, "Ironmen of the Pilbara" in *Army Magazine*, No 7.

No 166

Thesis

Robert Hall, *Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, (Canberra: ANU, 1987).

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Biographical Index: Leonard Waters, Douglas Grant, Reg Saunders and William Rawlings
PMS 4750 (Reg Saunders).

Australian Archives Canberra

A1308 762/1/135, A1308 762/1/67, A1308 762/1/68, A1196 12/501/185
A816 72/301/23

Australian War Memorial Official/Private Records Index

Returns showing particulars of men of Aboriginal parentage who enlisted and served abroad with the AIF AWM 43 Item A2 & AWM 27 Item 533/7.

Work performed by NT Aborigines AWM 113 Item No.17/7/24.

1st AIF 13th Battalion war diary AWM4.

Red Cross Prisoner of War records 1 DRL 428, AWM.

Recommendations for citations AWM 28 & 88.

Personal papers relating to Leonard Waters PR 00308, AWM.

Personal papers relating to Douglas Grant PR 00009, AWM.

List of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen in the 1st and 2nd AIF, Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam PR87/078, AWM.

Sound Recording

Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australians in the war of 1939–45, Oral Recording No. S520, R. Saunders, 2/7Bn, AIF.

MEMORIAL
BOX

03

TOO DARK FOR THE LIGHT HORSE

Education Section
Australian War Memorial
GPO Box 345
Canberra ACT 2601