

Brisbane in WW2





Australia in the Second World War

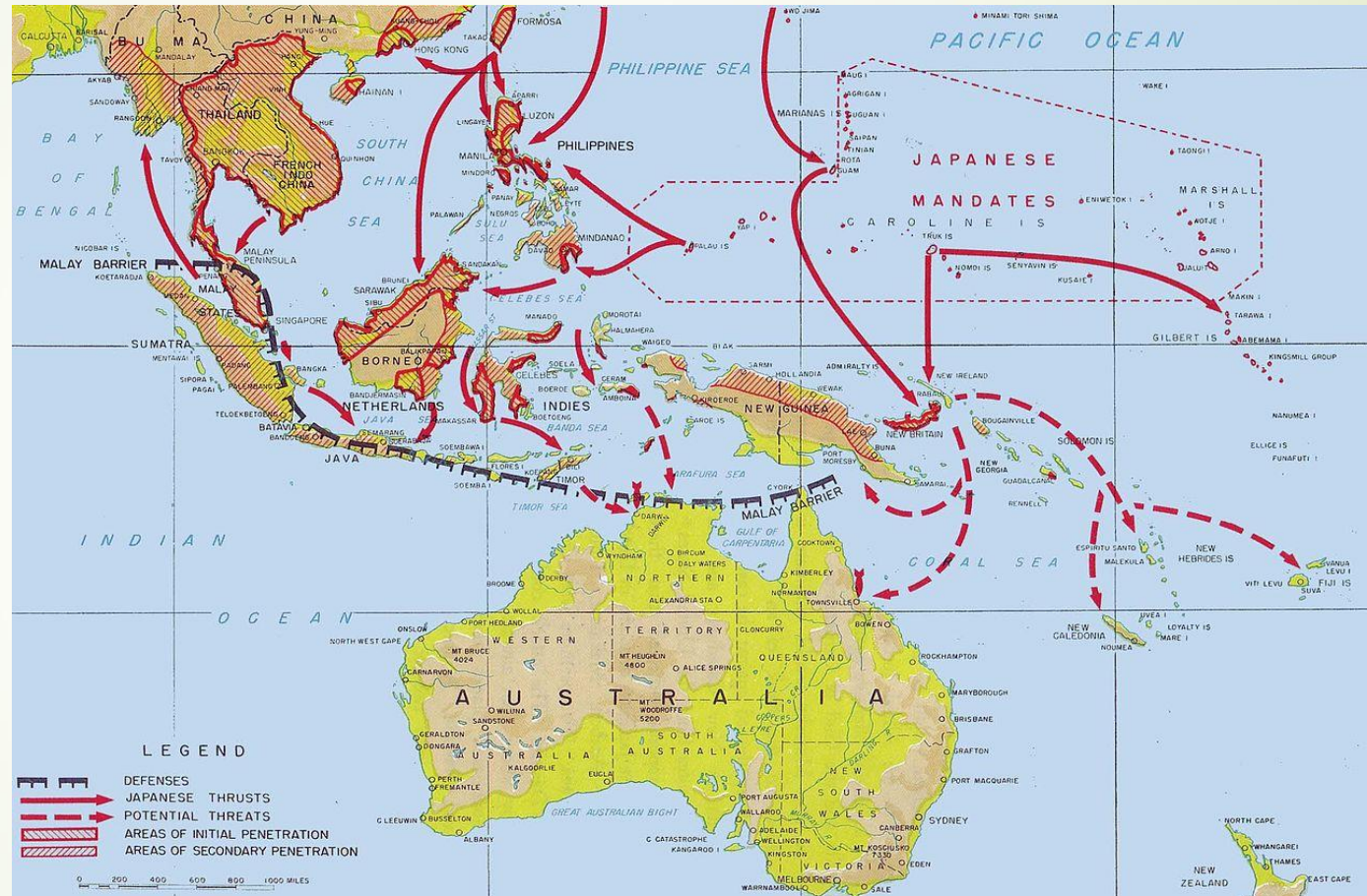
- Australia: population 7 million
- 550,000 served;
- 39,000 killed; 66,563 wounded
- 30,000 PoWs (22,000 of the Japanese, 8,500 in other theatres)
- Australian forces contributed to an Imperial defence strategy
- 6th and 7th Divisions to Middle East, March and October 1940
- 8th Division to Malaya, for defence of Singapore, mid-1941

Pacific War: initial Japanese advance

December 1941
to February 1942:
defence of Malaya
and defeat in
Singapore

ABDA Command

Japanese capture
of Dutch East
Indies,
March 1942



1942

- February 1942: Darwin bombed
- March 11: MacArthur leaves Philippines
- 7-8 May: Battle of the Coral Sea
- 31 May: Japanese submarines in Sydney Harbour
- 25-29 July: Townsville bombed
- 25 August to 7 September: Battle of Milne Bay (New Guinea)



1942

- MacArthur in Brisbane, July 20
- American servicemen arriving and Allied SWPA HQ in Brisbane
- Preparations: bomb shelters, building windows bricked, blackouts, air raid sirens
- Women's auxiliary units (AWAS, WAAF, WRANS)
- Home Defence: VDC ('Dad's Army'), veterans from 1st AIF



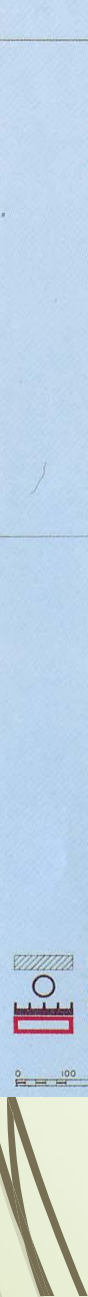
War comes to Queensland

- 'brown out' in all urban centres within 160 km of coast;
- north of Rockhampton declared a war zone; Townsville bombed 25, 27, 28 July; Mossman 31 July
- 1942: all State schools in north closed; evacuations to south and west; cattle moved south
- Evacuation from north: across, 1939-42 Townsville's civilian population reduced by 25%
- Americans quickly improved regional infrastructure: roads, bridges, aerodromes; link from Mt Isa to Darwin



The 'Brisbane Line', 1939-1942

- Openly discussed, from 1939 to October 1942
- Stark reality of geography and economic in Australia: 'boomerang coast'
- 'scorched earth' policy for north discussed
- Enemy likely to avoid well-defended cities and seize Gladstone and Bowen for supplies
- No defence of any coastal cities
- Was a de facto plan, even if never formalized
- Deeply resented in Queensland, especially north



Brisbane, 1942

“Our sleepy sub-tropical town, with its feathery palm trees and its miles of sprawling weatherboard, was on the news-reels. It was the gateway to that part of The War that was raging all over the island now, just a thousand miles away.” (David Malouf, *Johnno*, 1975)



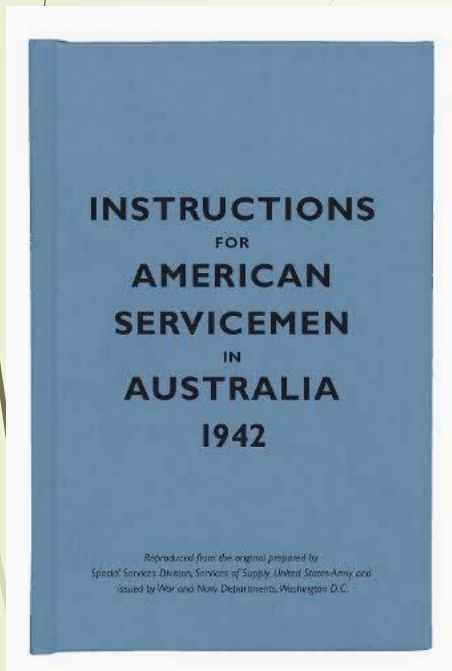


The 'American Invasion'

- Queensland the most affected of all the Australian States
- Americans in Queensland from March 1942: 2 million passed through Brisbane, up to 80,000 at any one time

Yanks Down Under

- Widely welcomed, largely good relations But also some tensions:
 - Americans were “overpaid, oversexed, and over here.”
 - Australians were “under-sexed, under-paid, and under MacArthur.”
 - Australian women: US trophies; consumer and luxury goods
 - Australian male resentment: US better paid; smarter uniforms





Japanese wartime propaganda



‘Battle of Brisbane’, 26-27 November 1942

- 40,000+ US troops in Brisbane
- Part of a build-up of trouble over long period; came to a head on Thanksgiving
- Dispute in Adelaide Street (corner of Creek Street), near the US canteen, when an intoxicated US private, talking to three Australians, was asked to produce his leave pass by a US MP and was threatened with a baton. Australians got involved
- After more US MP's were called, the riot escalated. One Australian was killed and another eight were wounded by gunshots. Six others received baton injuries
- The next night saw further riots, with groups of Australians targeting US servicemen



‘Battle of Brisbane’: censorship

- The Chief Censor's Office in Brisbane ordered that "No cabling or broadcasting of details of tonight's Brisbane servicemen's riot. Background for censors only: one Australian killed, six wounded."
- The *Courier Mail* published a heavily censored article the next day about the incident. Although the article mentioned the death and injuries it did not give any idea of nationalities involved or any specific details
- Incident was never reported by U.S. media, and American servicemen in Brisbane had their mail censored to remove any mention
- As a result, many exaggerated accounts have circulated; urban folklore

Brisbane: Allied Headquarters

General Douglas MacArthur:
HQ AMP building; lived at
Lennons Hotel

General Sir Thomas Blamey:
Main Building (Advanced Land
Headquarters, or 'Landops'),
University of Queensland



American sailors in Queen Street, c. 1942

Camp Columbia, and the Dutch East Indies Government-in-Exile



used measures for the relief war effort were announced by the Minister (Mr Chifley), recommendations had been advisory War Council and

Graduation Ceremony
Some at the graduation ceremony held at the United States Officer Candidate School at Camp Columbia today, when 370 graduates completed the last course of this type to be held in Australia. Brigadier General W. H. Donaldson, Commanding General, HQ Australian Base Section, USASOS, presented the certificates.

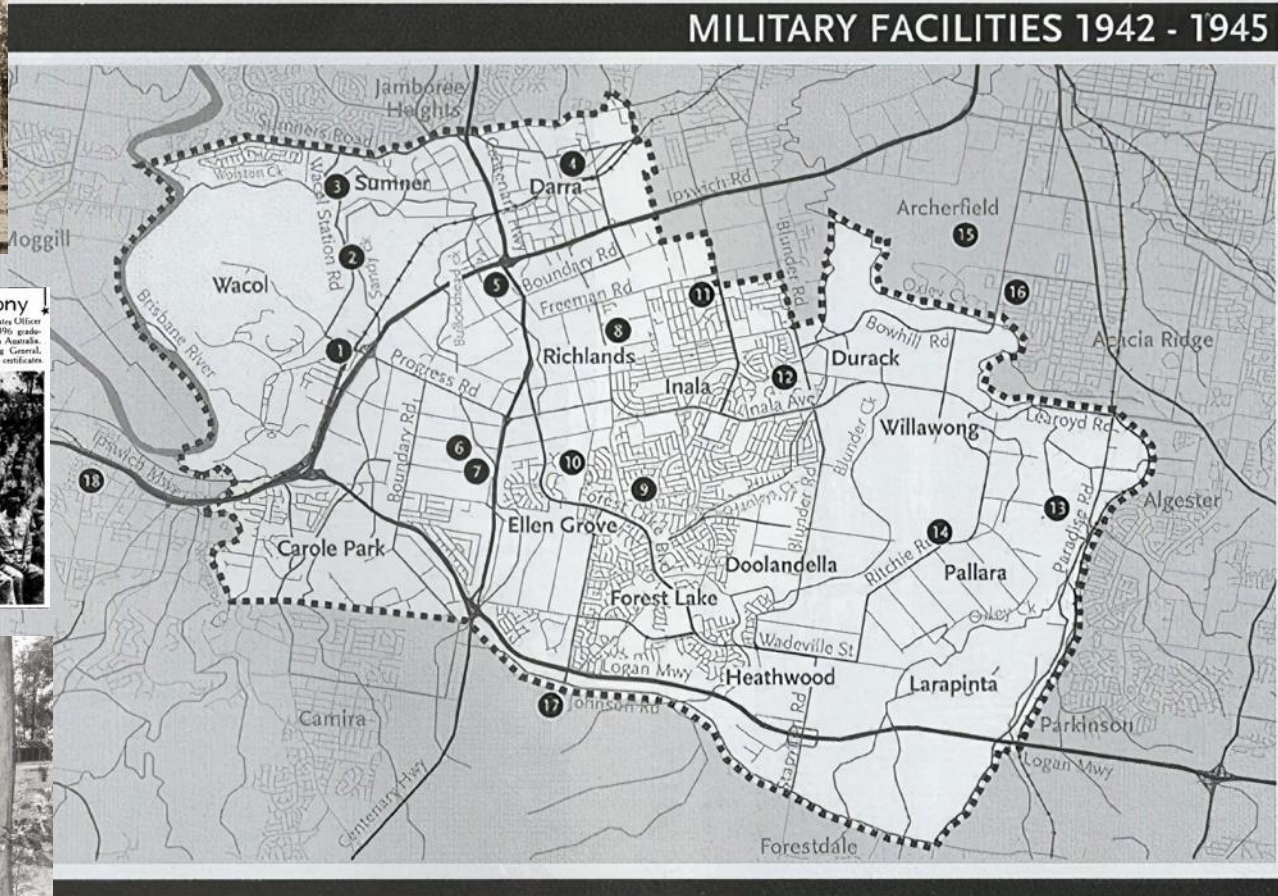


Fig 31: Military facilities in the region 1942-1945

Source: Margot Korhonen



With thanks