



BLHN WW2 WALKING TOUR ITINERARY- HISTORIC WARTIME BRISBANE

Length: Approx. 2 hours.

1. Begin at **Queens Park- Servicewomen's Memorial**, between William, George and Elizabeth Streets.
2. Down Queen's Wharf Rd to the QUT City Cat stop. **View: River, South Brisbane docks, Somerville House, South Brisbane Town Hall, QLD Maritime Museum.**
3. Up to the **Netherlands Memorial** on the cnr. George and Alice Streets.
4. Up George Street, past Charlotte Street, look over to the **Pancake Parlour/St. Luke's Church.**
5. Continue along George Street to **Queen's Park- RAAF Memorial**, on the cnr. Elizabeth and George Streets.
6. Continue along George Street to the City Plaza, on the corner of Adelaide Street, to the **old Lennon's Hotel site.**
7. Up Adelaide Street to **City Hall and King George Square.**
8. Continue along Adelaide Street to **Anzac Square** to the Kokoda Memorial.
9. Go across the park to the **Nurses Memorial** and up to the Adelaide Street overpass to the site of the **Battle of Brisbane.**
10. Through Post Office Square to the **GPO.**
11. Down to the corner of Queen & Edward Streets to the **Macarthur Museum.**



BLHN WW2 WALKING TOUR NOTES- SITES OF INTEREST

1. Queens Park- Servicewomen's' Memorial

The Monument of Memories was dedicated to the 70 000 women who served Australia in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Auxiliary Services who tended the wounded and the sick during the Boer War, WW1, WW2, Malaya, Korea and Vietnam.

2. River, South Brisbane docks, Somerville House

Image- aerial view of South Brisbane.

Photo attribution is "U.S. Army from U.S. National Archives."

US submarine Growler awaits its Evans Deakin built bow in the dry dock at the South Brisbane Ship Repair Yard.

During the Pacific war 200 ships were serviced and repaired at the dock--153 of them Australian, British, US, and French warships.

Above the dock **South Brisbane Town Hall** housed the US Army Provost Marshall and **Somerville House** was Brisbane's US Army headquarters.

Air raid shelters were in Stanley and Dock streets.

Across the river is the **Queensland Maritime Museum**. The **HMAS Forceful** is available for day trips on the Brisbane River. Forceful continued its usual work until the British government chartered her on 4 Dec 1941 for Middle East service. In Jan 1942 the Australian government withdrew approval when Forceful was transiting Fremantle. On 16 Feb she became HMAS Forceful. She worked around Fremantle until she left for Darwin 20 Oct 1942. Worked around Darwin including tows to Thursday Is. and Merauke, and rescued a US B26 crew off Bathurst Is. She was returned to owners in Oct 1943.

The **Victoria Bridge** was the limit for ocean going shipping. The **South Brisbane wharves** mainly served Australian coastal ships. The city side wharves were for river and bay pleasure ships and government vessels. Navy personnel accommodation, men and women was at The Domain.

A railway line linked all the **South Brisbane wharves**, the dry dock, and the coal wharves with the state railway system via the Woolloongabba railway yards (where the Gabba bus station, Gov. Print. and Dental Hospital now are). In the picture a train is visible near the dry dock.

The coal from Ipswich was exported or used as fuel for ships. Ships either loaded it direct at the wharf or barges, like the one beside the wharf, and took it to them downstream.

The Mirimar

The 70 year old Lone Pine motor vessel **Mirimar** served in both the navy and the army. The navy requisitioned her from Hayles Cruises in September 1939 only to return her two months later.

Then, in January 1943, the army impressed Mirimar. Until her return in August 1945, as AM113 of 52nd Australian Water Transport Company, Mirimar carried supplies and troops to and from the coast artillery batteries on Moreton and Bribie Islands and towed targets for practice shoots—reputedly being hit herself more than once.

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3. Netherlands Memorial

- This memorial recognizes those men and women from the Netherlands East Indies who joined the people of Australia in the defence of their country in the years 1941-1945. Unveiled 4 May 2004. 'Opdat wij niet vergeten' translates to 'So that we do not forget'.
- In 1942 the Dutch Netherlands East Indies civil administration transferred to Brisbane. Some Dutch troops were based at Wacol. In 1942 c.4000 Dutch were in Brisbane.
- In 1943 some 300 Javanese political prisoners were brought to Australia from Tanah Merah in Dutch New Guinea. The Australian government did not wish to be jailer for someone else's political prisoners and insisted on the Tanah Merah prisoners being released into the general community. Strong anti-Dutch sentiment developed in Queensland, particularly in Brisbane where many of the prisoners ended up.

On Outbreak of Pacific War

The forces available in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) comprised The Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL), a Royal Netherlands Navy (RNN) and the KNIL Air Service. Additionally the Dutch Royal Packet Navigation Company began the war with 150 ships totalling over 340,000 tons.

The KNIL looked much stronger on paper than was actually the case. It comprised 121,200 officers and men, if local militia and home guards were included. Many of the later were poorly equipped and lacked proper training. Australian factories had rebored some 17,100 rifles to take .303 ammunition and had supplied 46,700,000 rounds of ammunition. By the time of invasion 240 Vickers machine guns had been supplied from Australia, but the 54 tanks on order from the USA had not been delivered.

The KNIL Air Service had 120 Glenn Martin 139 bombers with a range of up to 2,000km with a 2,000kg bombload. The fighter force was old Brewster Buffalo's - hardly a match for the Japanese Zero. The RNN Air Arm had 59 flying boats for reconnaissance and rescue work. Spare parts for the 34 German Dorniers were cut off when Germany invaded the Netherlands on 10 May 1940.

The RNN had a number of warships stationed in NEI at the outbreak of the Pacific War. These included a mixture of modern and outdated vessels, including three light cruisers, seven destroyers, 15 submarines and 13 motor torpedo boats.

Engagements

The initial engagements saw Dutch forces fighting as part of a combined ABDA force. The cruisers *Java* and *De Ruyter* were sunk on 27 Feb 1942, while the *Tromp* escaped to Australia. *Tromp* created some difficulties in the logistic system due to the use of German 5.9in main armament ammunition, and while her light displacement suited inshore work she was generally unsuited to a major fleet action.

The earlier Dutch submarines were particularly uncomfortable and three were quickly lost to enemy action the more modern were among the first submarines to be fitted with schnorkels and were formidable vessels. Most RNN ships were based on the West Coast of Australia,

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including three of the oldest submarines to survive K8, K9 and K12 (4 newer boats went to Ceylon). Of the KPM fleet only 71 of the 150 reached safety. They had been purpose built for the island trade and rendered valuable service in the New Guinea campaign, many operating along the East Coast of Australia.

During the critical period 1942/43 these ships delivered about one million tons of supplies and 100,000 troops in the SWPA.

The KNIL Air Service after the fall of Singapore a decision was made by the NEI Government to evacuate women and children to Australia. About 12,000 Dutch civilians and service personnel were evacuated but large numbers were left behind in accordance with the NEI Government policy. About 70,000 women and children were imprisoned by the Japanese. Many died of deliberate starvation. The few aircraft that escaped from NEI were without aircrew or spares and were taken over by either the US Air Force or the RAAF.

In March 1942 the Dutch were about to take delivery of 18 new B-25 Mitchell bombers at Archerfield, Brisbane only to find the USAF had requisitioned them all before arrival. Later No 18 (NEI) Squadron was formed at Archerfield but soon moved to Canberra as Archerfield was too crowded. Frequent trips were required to Archerfield though as it retained the main stores for B-25 aircraft for most of the war. No 18 Sqn always had a large number of Australians on establishment under a SQNLDR of the RAAF. By July 1944 the RAAF component was still larger than the Dutch.

On 5 June 1942 one of the sqn aircraft was credited (at the time) with sinking a Japanese submarine off the coast of NSW. In late 1942 the sqn moved to McDonald airfield south of Darwin. No 119 Sqn was formed in Canberra in September 1943 and disbanded on 10 Dec 1943 when No 120 Sqn was formed. 120 became a fighter squadron with Kittyhawks. No 1 Transport Sqn (NEI) was formed at Brisbane on 7 November 1944.

The Dutch Secret Intelligence and Special Operations was based at Camp Columbia at Wacol, Brisbane along with the NEI Government in Exile. On 15 August 1945 No 19 Transport Sqn was formed at Archerfield

End of War

At the end of the Pacific War the Dutch Personnel and Employment Pool moved to Bundaberg in Queensland in preparation for the re-occupation of NEI. At the end of the war the KNIL had 1766 men and 213 women in Australia. A further 3228 men in Dutch New Guinea and 1214 in Borneo. The air force strength was 1225 and the RNN strength was 2,200.

4. St. Luke's Church (Pancake Parlour)

Built in 1904 as St Luke's Anglican Church, the hall hosted dances and other entertainment for soldiers stationed in Brisbane during WW2.

Throughout the city, people generously donated time and money to provide visiting service personnel with accommodation in hostels and clubs, and meals and light refreshments in canteens. Volunteers also worked long hours staffing recreation centres set up by Churches and other war-related organisations to meet the social needs of service personnel.

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Eighteen separate organisations were singled out for tribute at the end of the war for their services to visiting personnel.

A number of service canteens were also established elsewhere in the city including the Silver Hut Free Canteen, Terrica House in Adelaide Street, and Riverside at the bottom of Edward Street. On the south side of the river, the Dr Carver Club was established for the exclusive use of black American service personnel who were excluded from venues for white service personnel.

5. Queens Park- RAAF memorial

The RAAF Memorial honors all men and women who served in the RAAF. Especially those who in doing so gave their lives or suffered a lasting hurt. The memorial was unveiled 2 May 1996 to mark the 75th anniversary of the RAAF's formation.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENCES OF BRISBANE- DECEMBER 1941 TO AUGUST 1945

The anti-aircraft defences of Brisbane can conveniently be divided into active and passive defences. Active defences are those which seek to destroy the enemy and therefore reduce damage by preventing the firing or release of his weapons. Passive defences are those which seek to minimise the damage caused by enemy weapons once they have been fired or released.

The Threat

Two main threats were perceived during the early years of the war. The risk of attack by **enemy submarines** was always considered a possibility, however, this does not relate to this topic. The second major threat was an **air attack** from Japanese carrier based aircraft. The attack on Pearl Harbour and the raids on Singapore, Hong Kong, and more especially Darwin and Townsville, emphasised the potential of the carrier based aircraft to do enormous damage.

It was considered that the narrowness of the Brisbane River in parts created the potential for a single sunken ship to block the port, which would have seriously hampered the Allied war effort in the Pacific. Another fear, although subsequently unfounded, was that the Japanese might use poison gas to kill the population without damaging the vital port facilities. As early as December 1941 the Queensland Department of Health and Home Affairs and the Commonwealth Department of Home Security were agreed that in relation to "the use of gas in Queensland. Experts advise that it is most unlikely."

Active Defence

The **fighter aircraft based around Brisbane at Strathpine, Archerfield and Eagle Farm were the first line of defence**, but to be effective they needed time to take off and intercept the enemy, ideally well away from the city. To do this early warning was required. Initially this was by **spotters** in vantage points around the city, out on the islands of **Moreton Bay and to the north and south** of the city. Spotters came from a variety of backgrounds, such as **Volunteer Defence Corps** (founded by the RSL in 1940), **school cadets, scouts and other citizen groups**.

The first radars were US built gunnery sets modified in Australia for anti-aircraft work. They had a range of about 100 miles and were operated by the RAAF, generally using women operators. They were located at Lytton, Pt Danger, Coolangatta, Mt Lookout. Later more sophisticated British built sets were installed at Benowa and Toorbul also operated by the RAAF. By 1944 additional sets were in operation at Brisbane Airport, Archerfield and Sandgate.



The first line of air defence was the fighter and pursuit aircraft of the RAAF and USAAF. There were 12 such USAAF squadrons deployed at Amberley, Lowood, Eagle Farm, Brisbane and Strathpine.

17 RAAF squadrons were based around Brisbane and even one RAF squadron at Strathpine. The Headquarters Allied Air Force, RAAF Command, Air Defence Headquarters and 108 Fighter Sector Headquarters were co-located at the AMP Building in Brisbane.

The priority of air defences was the ships in port, the port facilities themselves, the major airports and then the city. For tactical reasons the searchlights and anti-aircraft guns were not co-located. Nevertheless, guns and searchlights were grouped along the river to protect the shipping and port facilities.

Originally the searchlights were manned by the Royal Australian Engineers, but in April 1942 they were taken over by the Royal Australian Artillery. By that time **searchlight batteries were located at Toowong, Paddington, Coorparoo, Bulimba, Eagle Farm, Gregory Terrace, Albion and Colmslie** By June further searchlight batteries were located at **Everton Park, Rocklea, Windsor, Bald Hills, West End, 17 Mile Rocks, Albany Creek, Brighton, Nudgee Beach and Mt Coot-tha.**

Fixed gun batteries of 3.7inch anti-aircraft guns were located along the Brisbane River at Lytton, Balmoral (on hill above cemetery), Hemmant, Pinkenba, Hendra, and Victoria Park. The airbase at Amberley also had a battery of 3inch guns for air defence.

By 1944 113 LAA and 114 LAA Regiments were deployed to Myrtle town, Newstead-Bowen Hills, Cloudland and Whinstane Station. Light anti-aircraft regiments were equipped with 40mm guns.

Many US units also had their own LAA weapons, and virtually every ship in port had anti-aircraft guns.

Passive Defence

Assuming that the air defences were breached then the passive defences would be brought into action. To warn of an approaching air raid, sirens would be sounded; "a fluctuating or wailing blast, rising and falling in pitch for a period of three minutes " for warning, a continuous tone "for a period of two minutes at a constant pitch " for all clear (Order No 5 Queensland Government Gazette 27th December 1941).

The Queensland Government Gazette of 23rd December 1941 (Order No 2) imposed a black out in coastal cities and towns on private houses, shops, business places, advertising lighting and signs, street lighting, factories and industrial premises, road vehicles, railway and shipping and navigation lights.

The same **Gazette (Order No 1) required owners of premises where "30 or more people may be congregated at any one time in 24 hours" to construct air raid accommodation for such persons.** Hotel, boarding house etc owners with 15-30 guests had to build air raid shelters or slit trenches to accommodate them. If the owner failed to carry out the required works the local authority was empowered to build the shelter and recover the cost.

Bomb shelters of brick and concrete had been constructed to house those working in the city. They offered protection against all but a direct hit from a bomb. Protection from direct hits was

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“considered not practical for general use” as 5-7 feet of reinforced concrete or a depth of 50-70 feet below ground would be needed to give adequate protection against even a 250kg bomb.

The official **air raid shelters** were designed to take 50-60 people and were 42ft 6 inches long. There were made of reinforced concrete 8 inches thick. Interestingly this level of protection would be inadequate to stop all splinters from a Japanese 250kg bomb at about 15 metres according to information published by the Queensland Government. The effectiveness of the shelters was largely due to their depth below ground as the fragmentation bomb had little effect below ground. Conversely the 250kg bomb which could penetrate about three floors of reinforced concrete from 6000 metres would be unlikely to find such a small target.

Given the large amount of timber used in construction at the time **the incendiary bomb** was a major threat. The Japanese 250kg incendiary bomb was particularly dangerous with the potential to cause a large number of fires over a 160 metre radius, within a few minutes this bomb generated such heat that a major fire was likely. This type of fire could only be dealt with effectively by organised fire brigades with large quantities of water. Evidence of preparations against this type of attack can be seen in many photographs of WWII Brisbane. **Large water pipes were laid in the streets to pump water up from the Brisbane River.**

The situation in early 1942 was so critical that the Commonwealth Department of Home Security issued a pamphlet “Advising the Public in the Event of an Invasion”. It told Australians:

- Give all the help you can to our troops
- Do not tell the enemy anything
- Do not give him anything
- Do not help him in any way.

Fortunately there was no need to put such advice into practice.

6. Old Lennons Hotel site

Located in George Street in the block bounded by **Adelaide and Ann Streets**, Lennons Hotel was one of Brisbane’s leading establishments. **Soon after the commencement of the Pacific War, Lennons Hotel became the Headquarters of the US Army in Australia, but only for a very brief period. Under the direction of General George Barnes, the headquarters known as Base 3 USFA became operational on Christmas Eve 1941.**

The **prime task of the Base** was to provide assistance to General Douglas MacArthur and his forces that were endeavouring to stem the advance of Japanese forces in the Philippines - one prime task was the redirection to Manila of the materials, men and equipment carried on the *Pensacola* convoy. The convoy arrived in Brisbane on 22 December 1941. The *Pensacola* convoy en route to Manila in early December 1941 had been diverted to Australia after the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December.

As the Japanese forces swept south and east in early 1942 and the numbers of US Forces to be stationed in Australia grew, it was decided to move the Headquarters US Forces in Australia to Melbourne. Once MacArthur arrived in Melbourne in March 1942, he established his HQ at 401 Collins Street.



It was not until General MacArthur moved his HQ to Brisbane on **21 July 1942**, that Lennons came to prominence once more. It was not to be the HQ rather; **Lennons Hotel became MacArthur's residence**. MacArthur with his wife and son took over four identical suites on the top floor of the

building - the fourth floor. MacArthur's son would play on the lawn of the Supreme Court building with the son of the Supreme Court caretaker. He would often be seen there with his maid.

A number of MacArthur's senior officers were also accommodated in the hotel. Many of these officers who had escaped with him from the Philippines were designated the 'Bataan' gang. Lennons Hotel itself was given the code name 'Bataan' by General MacArthur.

The US Military also established a Telephone Exchange inside the building. The switchboard which was open 24 hours a day to take important calls from all over the world was staffed by a number of female civilian operators. They were known as the 'Bataan Operators'.

MacArthur ordered a long narrow awning to be erected from the kerb to the hotel's entrance to provide a focal point for the crowds who gathered each day to see him leave his residence to drive in his car with Number Plate USA 1 to his HQ at the AMP Building on the corner of Queen and Edward Streets.

Base 3 USFA had become operational on Christmas Eve by staff associated with the newly arrived Pensacola Convoy loaded with materials and supplies bound for Manila via Australia containing Kittyhawks fighters and Dauntless dive bombers.

Bataan - the peninsular on the island of in the Philippines to which MacArthur ordered the newly mobilised Philippines Army to withdraw to defensive positions. 'Bataan forces surrendered to the Japanese forces in 1942

7. King George Square & City Hall

King George Square

The hub of many of Brisbane's war-time activities, King George Square played host to **Military parades and Recruiting Drives, salvage collections and Victory celebrations as well as numerous war-time displays and demonstrations such as those of the Civil Defence Organisation.**

Materials such as aluminium, rubber, paper and rags were in short supply and were salvaged for recycling. From time to time large bins were erected in the Square in which people could place their contributions.

With more than 60,000 members state-wide, the Civil Defence Organisation was entrusted with overall responsibility for the provision of air-raid warning systems, shelters, fire-fighting and the training of personnel in demolition and decontamination, evacuation and welfare, rescue, first-aid and canteen services. In the basement of nearby City Hall was a control room linked to other posts throughout Brisbane.

Volunteers attached to both the City Council and State Government Departments took responsibility for the preservation of essential services, as well as fire spotting and air-observation posts, decontamination and anti-gas measures.

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Over 20,000 civil defence personnel participated in Brisbane's first full-scale air-raid test in May 1942.

The war effort and postwar reconstruction were financed through a succession of Liberty, austerity and Victory Loans. Businesses and local citizens were expected to meet a nominated level of

contribution. The targets were usually met and in fact in each year of the war money raised through Loans provided more than half the funds for war requirements. Interest paid on these loans post-war was @ 3%.

In April 1945, to rally support for the Third Victory Loan, at a display in the Square, gun-crews demonstrated the operation of military equipment including a 3.7 inch gun to passers by.

City Hall

With a saluting platform erected at the foot of the stairs of **City Hall**, King George Square also witnessed many a march past including that by the Troops of the 7th Division during their march from Centenary Park to the city in August 1944. The march followed their return from successful campaigns in the south-west Pacific.

To the three hundred and fifty thousand residents of the city as well as the hundreds of thousands of service personnel stationed in or around the city, the City hall was symbolic of war-time Brisbane.

City Hall played host to a wide variety of Brisbane's wartime enterprises and organisations such as the Women's Voluntary Recruiting Centre between 1940 and 1944 and in the last years of the war, a crisis accommodation bureau. The Women's Rest room in the basement of City Hall proved a boon to many, the appearance of hurricane lamps providing an indication of the intrusion of war into everyday life. Also in the basement, the RSSAILA established a Canteen for servicemen and women.

Administrative centre and citizens' forum, it was the staging point for numerous patriotic functions, fund-raising drives and other war-related activities. The citizens welcome to Eleanor Roosevelt was staged there, so too a memorial service for her husband, President Roosevelt in 1945.

In June 1942, City Hall became a major centre for the issuing of ration books.

British Russian Unity Against Nazism

Although the USSR initially signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, it subsequently entered the war on the side of the Allies after being invaded by German forces in June 1941. This brought a change of attitude towards Russia. It was no longer regarded as a country with a dangerous political system but a valued ally. The public profile created for Stalin, the Russian leader, equated him with the revered Churchill. At a congress held in City hall in October 1941, banners showing Churchill and Stalin dominate the auditorium.

The large numbers of service personnel crowding into the city ensured that City Hall became renowned as Brisbane's entertainment centre par excellence. Dances were held there several times a week as well as at other venues such as the Trocadero in South Brisbane and Cloudland at Bowen Hills. Visiting American entertainers held concerts there as did Artie Shaw and his

Navy Concert Band, and world renowned Eugene Ormandy and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

8. ANZAC Square

South West Pacific Campaign Memorial

This memorial depicts a wounded Australian soldier descending the Kokoda trail assisted by a strong dependable Papua New Guinean leading him to safety. At the base of the sculpture may be found representations of military insignia and artifacts, personal effects and memorabilia, as well as a copy of the poem "A Lady Who Waits For You". This memorial commemorates those Australians and their allies who died or served in the SW Pacific Campaign between 1942-1945. It was unveiled 29 August 1992 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Milne Bay and Kokoda campaigns.

Nurses Memorial

The memorial pays tribute to all branches of women's nursing and other services, and commemorates those Australians and their allies who died or served in WW2 between 1939-1945. The memorial was unveiled in 1992 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Milne Bay and Kokoda campaigns.

The Sinking of the Centaur

The sinking of the Hospital Ship 'Centaur' brought home to the people of Brisbane how close the Japanese were to invading Australia.

Built for the Blue Funnel Line of Britain she was 96 metres long, 14.7 metres wide, drew 6.6 metres and grossed 3,222 tons. Unlike most ships of that era she was diesel powered which resulted in a longer range but lower top speed (12.5 knots). Laid down 16 November 1923, and completed in September 1924, she left the UK for the last time in October 1924.

The Centaur picked up German survivors from the raider *Kormoran* after her clash with HMAS *Sydney*, and was involved in fruitless search for survivors of HMAS *Sydney*.

She was taken over in January 1943 for conversion to a hospital ship. On completion she was capable of carrying 252 cot cases on voyages up to 18 days length. The ship was painted all white except for 1.2 metre green band along the hull interspersed with three red crosses each two metres by two metres. Military staff were 10 officers (mainly doctors/chaplain/quartermaster), 12 nurses, 5 NCO's and 40 attendants. Major (later LTCOL) Clem Manson, a doctor from Melbourne, commanded the army troops.

On 5th February 1943 Japanese Government sent notification that *Centaur* was now hospital ship number 47.

On 26th January submarine USS Wahoo sinks Japanese troop transport and machine guns thousands of survivors in the water. After the Battle of the Bismark Sea (March 1943) Allied aircraft sink 22 Japanese ships, survivors are machine gunned - about 3000 killed. These incidents are used to explain the actions of the Japanese commander in sinking *Centaur*.

At 1044hrs 12th May 1943 *Centaur* departs wharf in Darling Harbour, Sydney. Decks crowded with men from ships company - gives rise to rumour that *Centaur* was carrying troops and therefore not immune to attack. Destination was Cairns and then Port Moresby.

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On 14th May 1943, at about 0410hrs, ***Centaur*** was struck by a single 21 inch torpedo fired from Japanese submarine I-177 (LCDR Nakagawa Haijime). The exact location is still unknown but thought to be about **23 miles ENE of Pt Lookout**. The blast penetrated the engine room and detonated the main diesel oil tanks. The forward part of the ship flooded rapidly aided by the ironstone ballast. ***Centaur*** then went down by the bows heeling over to starboard and sinking in about three minutes. At the time of her sinking ***Centaur*** carried a total of 332 persons, there were 34 military survivors (medical staff and members of 14 Field Ambulance) and 30 merchant navy seamen.

The I-177 was sunk by US Navy warships later in WWII. Her captain LCDR Nakagawa pleaded guilty to war crimes at the end of the war (but not the sinking of ***Centaur***) and was sentenced to eight years jail. He was released in 1954 after serving six years. He died without ever commenting on his motives for sinking the ***Centaur***.

At the Macarthur Museum you can scroll through The Courier Mail headlines for the days after this date, and see Eileen Savage's story. She was the only surviving nurse from the Centaur. See the DVA's report of her experience:

Sister Ellen Savage was asleep in her bunk when the Centaur collapsed around her:

Merle Morton and myself were awakened by two terrific explosions and practically thrown out of bed ...I registered mentally that it was a torpedo explosion ... In that instant the ship was in flames ... we ran into Colonel Manson, our commanding officer, in full dress even to his cap and 'Mae West' life-jacket, who kindly said 'That's right girlies, jump for it now.' The first words I spoke was to say 'Will I have time to go back for my great-coat?' as we were only in our pajamas. He said 'No' and with that climbed the deck and jumped and I followed ... the ship was commencing to go down. It all happened in three minutes.

The suction of the sinking Centaur dragged Sister Savage down into a whirlpool of moving metal and wood. Here her ribs, nose and palate were broken, her ear drums perforated and she sustained multiple bruises. Then she was propelled to the surface in the middle of an oil slick. Sister Savage found her way to a raft that was part of the Centaur's wheel-house. During the 36 hours on this makeshift raft, Sister Savage gave whatever medical care she could to survivors despite being badly injured herself.

Sister Savage was the only nurse to survive. For her courage and inspiring behaviour during this period Sister Savage was awarded the George Medal.

9. Battle of Brisbane

- It was Thanksgiving Day, November 11, a very important US holiday
- Buildings: **Right:** American Canteen, Australian Canteen, Gresham Hotel (where WC Penfolds now stands). **Left:** US Red Cross.

The story of the battle according to Barry Ralph's book, "They Passed This Way"

Just before noon on 26 November 1942 an American MP tried to stop a fight in Albert Street. An Australian soldier was hit on the head with an MP's baton and more Aussie soldiers became involved in the incident. It was a short but violent brawl. Nothing like what was about to happen later that day.

The pubs closed at 6.50pm and the streets were cluttered with service personnel. Private James R. Stein (Service No. 36504556) of the 404th Signal Company of the US Army had been drinking in

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the Australian Army canteen. He left the Australian canteen and started to walk towards the American PX canteen which was about 50 yards up the street on the corner of Creek and Adelaide Streets. This building was still in existence in the year 2000. Private Stein had been indulging himself on the Australian XXXX beer. He meet up with 3 Aussie soldiers who had also had also been drinking. They started to chat.

As they were talking, along came Private Anthony E. O'Sullivan of the [814th MP Company](#), who challenged Private Stein for his leave pass. While Stein was fidgeting around to find his leave pass, the MP became impatient and asked Stein to hurry up as he did not have all night. At this point in time his new-found Aussie mates had a go at the MP and told the MP to take it easy and leave Stein alone.

After some cursing, etc, a baton was raised and arms and legs started to fly in all directions. More Aussie soldiers and even a few civilians came out of the dark to look after their mates. More MP's arrived on the scene from the American PX canteen after whistles were blown to attract attention to the disturbance. The MP's were outnumbered and they retreated towards the PX. Private Stein ran and stumbled in to the PX also. Private O'Sullivan however had to be carried into the PX.

By this time there were alarms bells ringing and the milling crowd outside the PX were throwing bottles, rocks and sticks at the PX building. A parking sign was thrown through a window.

Sporadic fights spread into other streets in the city area. An American GI, who had just been to the Wintergarden picture theatre had to vacate a Brisbane tram headed to New Farm to avoid a violent battle between some Australian and American soldiers.

Women workers in the city area were escorted from the area by soldiers with fixed bayonets. The Tivoli Theatre was closed by the MP's and patrons ordered back to barracks and their ships.

By 8pm between 2,000 to 5,000 people were involved in the disturbance which continued to rage. War Correspondent, John Hinde, was also on a balcony overlooking the "Battle of Brisbane". He was probably staying in the Gresham Hotel. He stated "The most furious battle I ever saw during the war was that night in Brisbane. It was like a civil war."

Other battles raged in the various Canteens around Brisbane.

By 10pm the city was quiet. The ground floor of the American PX was demolished.

The final total was as follows:-

- 1 Australian killed
- 8 minor gunshot wounds
- 6 baton injuries
- 100's with black eyes, split lips, swollen cheeks, broken noses and various abrasions

The Chief Censor's Office in Brisbane ordered, "No cabling or broadcasting of details of tonight's Brisbane servicemen's riot. Background for censors only: one Australian killed, six wounded". The Brisbane Courier Mail had a heavily censored article the next day about a disturbance in which one person was killed and several wounded. It did not give any idea of nationalities involved or any specific details of the disturbance.

On the following night, 27 November 1942, a crowd had gathered outside the American Red Cross building. The PX building was under heavy security following the previous night's disturbance. Some hand grenades had been confiscated by some NCO's in the crowd. Heavily armed American MP's were located on the first floor of the Red Cross building. The crowd moved to the corner of Queen and Edward Streets outside of [General Douglas MacArthur's](#) headquarters. They shouted abuse towards the building, but MacArthur was apparently in New Guinea at the time. He had travelled to Port Moresby in early November 1942.

There were many investigations into the cause of the disturbance and many a discussion on how to ease the tensions and avoid a similar event. Besides the obvious effect of the liquor imbibed on the night of the disturbance, the other main contributing factors, that seem to have raised the deep-seated frustration amongst the Australian servicemen, were:

American pay levels compared to the Australians, smarter American uniforms, shops and hotels favoring the well-paid Americans, Americans taking Australian brides, better rations available to American service personnel.

10. GPO

- Brisbane was a communication hub for the Pacific during WW2. Victoria Barracks on Petrie Terrace was a major part of this hub.
- The GPO clock was a significant meeting place for people.
- Patriotic stalls were all around the GPO, they raised money for the war effort as well as providing goods to send to the troops. The Comfort Fund was located here. Red Cross stall and café were also here.
- Honour rolls featuring the names of those Postal Officers who served in WW1 and WW2 are on the archway from the pedestrian crossing.
- A PMG civilian war memorial is around the side of the GPO. Memorial for those PMG employees who were taken as POWs.

AUSTRALIAN

There were three main forms of communication used within the Australian Military Forces (AMF) and RAAF based in Brisbane:

- a. Telephone for local (insecure or SECREPHONE) communication
- b. Line or cable for teletype communication (could be encrypted if required)
- c. Wireless/radio which could be voice or morse code (encrypted if required)

There were two major centres dealing with communications for Australian military forces in Brisbane:

- a. The General Post Office - Brisbane which handled all telephone communications. Line (teletype) communications were switched through equipment at the GPO but did not originate, nor were they encrypted, there. No wireless messages were received or actioned at the GPO for the AMF or US forces.
- b. HQ Lines of Communications - Victoria Barracks, Brisbane. Messages of all three types passed through Victoria Barracks. The Barracks had its own large PABX which linked it to all major AMF units in Qld. Originally operated by PMG staff this role was taken over by the women's services in late 1942. The PABX also linked through the PMG lines to local, interstate and US networks. Selected senior officers were issued with the SECREPHONE, which at the press of a button, scrambled the conversation to make it unintelligible to any listener without another SECREPHONE.

A large number of teletype machines linked Victoria Barracks to major headquarters and political centres in Australia and overseas. These centres included; London, Washington, Ottawa, Wellington, Cape Town, Cairo, Delhi and Port Moresby. The PMG provided dedicated lines for each of these links. The machines and their teletype and encrypting operators were located in the current Museum building and Royal United Service Institute hall at the Barracks. Some 70,000 words per day were received or sent from these teletype machines. Approximately, 50% of US traffic for Washington passed through the teletype machines at Victoria Barracks while MacArthur's headquarters was located in Brisbane. The volume of Australian traffic also dropped appreciably with the move of Australian Land HQ (Blamey) to Morotai later in the Pacific War.

- c. Wireless or radio transmissions were passed or received through the aerial farms located near the current University of Queensland. These messages would be decoded/encoded at the Barracks and distributed to the appropriate HQ. The decoding of Japanese traffic was done at Henry Street Ascot and not at Victoria Barracks, although the decoded messages could be passed to local commanders through the Barracks network. There was also a large volume of local training/ tactical and administrative radio traffic from units preparing for service overseas.

UNITED STATES

US military forces also used three different means to communicate in the Brisbane region:

- a. PMG Resources - Three Telephone Exchanges were built specifically for the US services at Albion (NLX network), Somerville House (JLX network) and Toowong (FLX network). These exchanges were linked to the local and interstate networks by a tie cable at the GPO. Like many major HQ's, the AMP Building had its own large PABX. (Interestingly the US Signals Corp initially intended to replace all PMG equipment with US equipment; however, when they saw the advanced equipment installed (particularly the trunk system in Melbourne) they quickly changed their mind.)
- b. Dedicated cable lines were also provided by the PMG to link major US units and bases by teletype using the US Model 15 Teletype machine. These arrived in very large numbers with the American forces and replaced the earlier British equipment in general use. Encoding and decoding of these messages was done by US Signals personnel, notably at the US HQ at Somerville House.
- c. Radio/wireless communications were operated at local unit/formation level, with the main centre being at Somerville House. The problem of so many units of different nations using radio transmissions created some difficulties. In time a coordinated allocation of frequencies helped to reduce these difficulties.

Navy/Merchant Navy Vessels in Port

The nature of maritime operations dictates that most communications will be by radio/wireless, although local communications may be available to vessels alongside. For this reason communications for warships of the RAN, RN, USN and ships of the Merchant Navies when in Brisbane have not been discussed.



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