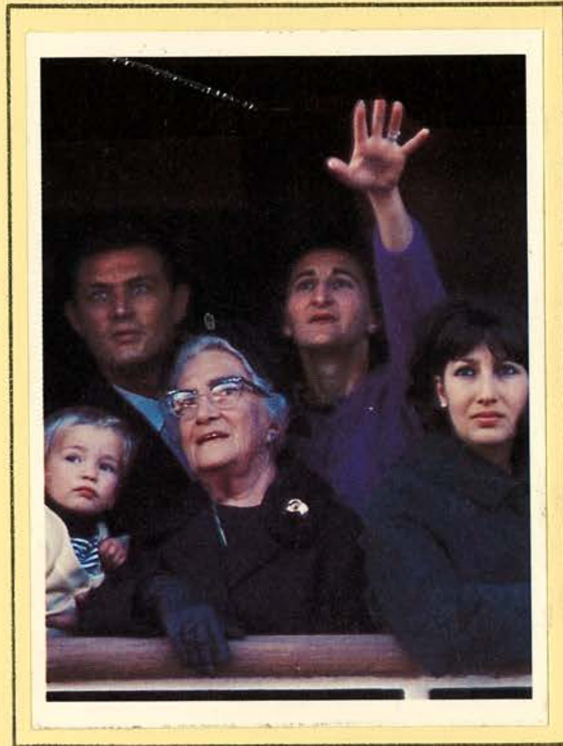
AUSTRALIANS



FROM 1939

AUSTRALIANS

FROM 1939

John Brack, Collins Street, 5 p.m., *1956. Oil on canvas.*
NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

AUSTRALIANS

FROM 1939

EDITORS

ANN CURTHOYS

A. W. MARTIN

TIM ROWSE

FAIRFAX, SYME & WELDON ASSOCIATES

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AUSTRALIANS FROM 1939

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Publishing Director
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Editorial Director
Elaine Russell

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Kim Anderson

Editors
Beverley Barnes
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Production Manager
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Art Director
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Bull's Graphics

Designers
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Michelle Dunbar

Assembly Artist
Shelley Bright

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Monica Stuardo

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European migrants arriving in Sydney,
photograph by David Moore, 1960.
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY

Foreword

THIS BOOK and its ten companions have been ten years in the making. They have been created to mark the bicentenary of European settlement in this country, and they are the outcome of collaboration on a scale never before attempted in the writing of Australian history. Hundreds of people in and beyond universities have joined together to re-create the experience of people living in Australia since 1788 and to place that experience in the wider context of a human occupation that began tens of thousands of years ago.

The editors and contributors have worked in a variety of modes: from slicing into the past at fifty-year intervals (*Australians 1838, 1888* and *1938*) to laying out, in terse chronology, events as they happened year by year (*Events and places*), and from portraying processes and movements on maps of the country (*A historical atlas*) to briefing readers for explorations of their own (*A guide to sources*). The authors represent diverse approaches, in terms both of occupation—historian, economist, archaeologist, geographer, librarian, journalist—and of outlook. We have sought the best person for each part of the job, and not altered or muffled anybody's voice. We have also tried to make the work of scholars readily accessible to general readers.

In this aspiration we have been strengthened by a close working relationship with the publishers. From early days the project has benefited from continuous consultation with representatives of Fairfax, Syme & Weldon about its form and presentation. Their confidence in our enterprise has heartened us throughout the long journey.

Together, we and they present *Australians: a historical library* to the people of Australia as an offering for 1988 and beyond.

OLIVER MACDONAGH

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Australian Defence Force Academy

VOLUME EDITORS

AUSTRALIANS TO 1788

D.J. Mulvaney
Emeritus Professor of Prehistory,
Australian National University

J. Peter White
Reader in Prehistory, University of Sydney

AUSTRALIANS 1838

Alan Atkinson
Senior Lecturer in History,
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Marian Aveling
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AUSTRALIANS 1888

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J.W. McCarty
Professor of Economic History,
Monash University

Ailsa McLeary
Research Assistant in Economic History,
Monash University

AUSTRALIANS 1938

Bill Gammage
Senior Lecturer in History,
University of Adelaide

Peter Spearritt
Associate Professor of Politics,
Macquarie University

ORAL HISTORY CO-ORDINATOR

Louise Douglas
Curator of Social History,
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney

AUSTRALIANS FROM 1939

Ann Curthoys
Associate Head,
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
New South Wales Institute
of Technology

A.W. Martin
Senior Fellow in History,
Research School of Social Sciences,
Australian National University

Tim Rowse
Writer and researcher,
Sydney

AUSTRALIANS: A HISTORICAL ATLAS

J.C.R. Camm
Senior Lecturer in Geography,
University of Newcastle

John McQuilton
Senior Project Officer,
University of New South Wales,
Australian Defence Force Academy

CHIEF CARTOGRAPHER

Steven Yorke
Division of National Mapping,
Department of Resources and Energy,
Canberra

AUSTRALIANS: A GUIDE TO SOURCES

D.H. Borchardt
Librarian and bibliographer,
Melbourne

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Victor Crittenden
Librarian and bibliographer,
Canberra

AUSTRALIANS: EVENTS AND PLACES

Graeme Aplin
Senior Lecturer in Geography,
Macquarie University

S.G. Foster
Senior Research Fellow,
Research School of Social Sciences,
Australian National University

Michael McKernan
Assistant Director,
Research and Publications,
Australian War Memorial

AUSTRALIANS: A HISTORICAL DICTIONARY

Graeme Aplin
Senior Lecturer in Geography,
Macquarie University

S.G. Foster
Senior Research Fellow,
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

Michael McKernan
Assistant Director,
Research and Publications,
Australian War Memorial

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Ian Howie-Willis
Senior Teacher,
Australian Capital Territory
Schools Authority

AUSTRALIANS: HISTORICAL STATISTICS

Wray Vamplew
Reader in Economic History,
Flinders University of South Australia

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
S. G. FOSTER

AUSTRALIANS: FROM 1939
CONTRIBUTORS

Ann Curthoys
Associate Head
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
New South Wales Institute of Technology

P. G. Edwards
Official Historian
Australian War Memorial

E. C. Fry
Reader in History
Faculty of Arts
Australian National University

Stephen Garton
Lecturer in Humanities
Griffith University

Alan D. Gilbert
Deputy Rector and Professor of History
University of New South Wales
Australian Defence Force Academy

Neville Hicks
Senior Lecturer in Community Medicine
University of Adelaide

K. S. Inglis
Professor of History
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

Sylvia Lawson
Lecturer in Humanities
Griffith University

Rodney Maddock
Professor of Economics
Universidad de Antioguia
Colombia

A. W. Martin
Senior Fellow in History
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

Howard Morphy
Lecturer in Ethnology and Prehistory
Pitt Rivers Museum
Oxford University

Hank Nelson
Senior Fellow in Pacific History
Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University

Tim Rowse
Writer and Researcher
Sydney

Tom Sheridan
Senior Lecturer in Economics
University of Adelaide

Peter Spearritt
Associate Professor of Politics
Macquarie University

G. F. R. Spenceley
Senior Lecturer in Economic History
Monash University

Frank Stilwell
Associate Professor of Economics
University of Sydney

John Warhurst
Professor of Politics
University of New England

Franca Arena
Sydney

Allan Ashbolt
Sydney

Gordon Barton
London

Dame Beryl Beaurepaire
Melbourne

Audrey Blake
Westgate, NSW

Charles Copeman
Sydney

Elizabeth Evatt
Sydney

Al Grassby
Canberra

Stephen Murray-Smith
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Kath Walker
Sydney

PROJECT STAFF

EDITORIAL
Anne Gollan, Eliza Hill, Kathleen Hobbs, Marion K. Stell, Ruth Thompson, Ian Howie-Willis
PICTORIAL
Deborah J. Clark, Audrey Young
SECRETARIAL
Jean M. Hughes

AUSTRALIANS FROM 1939

PHOTOGRAPHIC
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RESEARCH AND EDITORIAL
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SECRETARIAL
Beverley Gallina
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Elmar Zalums

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Preface

When Australians commemorate the lengthening history of British settlement on this continent, they are adding to a tradition established by new societies and regimes. The French in 1889 proclaimed that their republican history was a century deep. Americans in 1876 celebrated the enduring success of what their founding fathers had begun by revolution in 1776, and late in the nineteenth century they coined the word 'bicentennial' to proclaim the even greater age of cities, churches and schools founded before the revolution. 'Sesquicentennial' was invented at the same time to honour American institutions only fifty years younger.

In Australia, New South Wales had patriots keen to designate 1838 as a year of jubilee. Half a century later, the idea of a centennial festivity was initiated in Sydney and taken up with more or less enthusiasm by people in other colonies who were unsure whether they wanted their shorter histories to be connected with that of the old penal colony. 'Sesquicentennial' became a word for Australians to get their mouths around in 1938, when organisers of the 150th anniversary commemoration did their best to engage citizens of other states in festivities centred on New South Wales. Readers of *Australians 1838*, *Australians 1888*, and *Australians 1938* will find these jubilee, centennial and sesquicentennial celebrations explored. Their occurrence, indeed, is a reason why we have picked those years as vehicles for one of the approaches employed in these books.

Historians are professionally interested in the passing of time, and in 1977 a few historians in Canberra began to think about 1988 as a year offering a special opportunity to their craft. That year, we guessed, would inspire a larger and more general commemoration than Australians had organised at the end of any previous half-century. The coming occasion was sure to be more *national* than those others, for advances in central government, transport and communication had accelerated the transformation of states that had once been separate colonies into provinces of a single polity, whose people travelled about as never before, talked to each other on STD, watched all over the continent the same prime ministerial news

conference and the same cricket match. Moreover, Australian history itself was gaining a new popularity, as Stuart Macintyre comments at the end of the first chapter in *Australians: a guide to sources.* The names of Manning Clark and Geoffrey Blainey were better known than those of any scholarly historian in earlier times; historical and genealogical societies were burgeoning, and tourists flocked to Ballarat to see goldrush days reconstructed at Sovereign Hill and to Old Sydney Town to see convict floggings re-enacted. Television viewers switched on to Australian costume dramas; and cinema audiences were offered, in 1977 alone, eight feature films based on life in the remote and recent Australian past.

All in all, it appeared likely that public and private enterprise would make 1988 a year for intense consciousness of Australian history. What might historians contribute? Individually, of course, whatever scholarly article or biography or general history an author was moved to attempt. Collectively? The Canberra group, consulting widely, found some antipathy towards the very idea of collaborative enterprise—'history by committee'—and some particular doubts about proposed approaches. But it also found much interest and enthusiasm, and eventually enough support to embark on the project that has become *Australians: a historical library.*

The makers of these books do not see them as official history in any sense. The project has had no money from the Australian Bicentennial Authority. Money for general administration and for research on different volumes has been provided from universities (especially the Australian National University and the University of New South Wales), and from the Australian Research Grants Scheme. General and volume editors have taken on the job as part of their work in universities and colleges of advanced education. With few exceptions, contributors are also unpaid. Royalties will go into a fund to support Australian studies. Some advance royalties, paid years ahead of publication, have been ploughed into research for the books.

That was a source of funds unforeseen when we began. Some potential publishers told us that they would need a subsidy; Fairfax, Syme and Weldon asked for no subsidy, anticipated larger sales than any other publisher we approached, and encouraged us to plan without any inhibitions the size of the books and the quantity and quality of illustrations. The scale on which the publishers have been willing to undertake the project has helped us keep two early resolutions: to write for general readers, addressing them with respect but without assuming prior knowledge and to illustrate the books richly, not for mere decorative effect but to integrate visual material with text.

One half of our enterprise was quickly decided on. Anniversaries, like royal visits, can yield amenities that were needed anyway but required the special occasion to provoke someone into providing them. The celebrations of 1888 endowed Sydney with Centennial Park and the approach of 1988 induced politicians in Canberra to put up a new and permanent Parliament House. Historians had long lamented the absence of a set of reference books that would deliver essential information about Australian history to students, authors and browsers. Our series therefore includes *Australians: a historical atlas*, *Australians: events and places*, *Australians: a historical dictionary*, *Australians: historical statistics* and *Australians: a guide to sources.*

When we wondered about other ways of throwing new light on the past, we considered and set aside a number of approaches. In particular we decided not to add to the shelves one more general narrative history by many hands, which (it seemed to us) would merely elaborate our present understandings of the past without providing any fresh vision. We began to talk about an approach that invited and even required all authors to break new ground. Instead of inviting a

team of contributors to divide up history into chronological sections and have each fill in a stage in his or her own way, we thought of asking groups of writers to work together on a very short period; instead of inviting historians to pass the baton along a familiar track, we proposed a series of survey camps; instead of stringing events on a thread of narrative, we imagined cutting slices.

A book about Australia in a particular year would have at least some qualities in common with Sovereign Hill and Old Sydney Town—exhibitions built to show what our society was like at one moment in its past. Such a book would resemble Elie Halévy's *England in 1815* (1912), or the third chapter of Lord Macaulay's *History of England* (1848), which dealt with the nation in 1685. Both are works in which authors reconstruct a society in a particular year, and contrive perceptions of earlier events by means other than continuous narrative. Adopted by a group of writers, the approach would invite intimate collaboration between scholars with different skills. An economic historian working with a historical geographer, or a historian of medicine exchanging ideas with a social historian, would, we believed, win for readers a richer understanding of the lives Australians were living at a chosen time than any one scholar, working alone, could have achieved.

By writing about one year in people's lives, moreover, historians could avoid creating the most common illusion conveyed by narrative approaches: that history is a stream, carrying people towards a predetermined destination clearly visible to us, if not to them. Slicing through a year, we might hope to see and hear people living as we do, taking some things for granted—the sun rises and sets, the seasons pass, people grow older—but at the same time surrounded by choices and uncertainties. We might recognise people more easily as our own kind if we met them living out the daily, weekly, seasonal, annual and biological rhythms of their lives; and we would certainly understand them more fully by grasping the truth that the future that beckoned or alarmed them was not necessarily *our* past—what actually happened—but rather a hidden destiny, a precarious vision of probabilities, possibilities and uncertainties.

The slice approach could help us to recover the richness of everyday life. James Joyce, inspired to write fiction about what some people in Dublin were doing and thinking and feeling on one day in 1904, had made the discovery, his biographer Richard Ellmann suggests, 'that the ordinary is the extraordinary'. Great novelists make worlds of their own, but the historian can also seek the extraordinary in the ordinary. Indeed, that is one way of describing the kind of history newly attempted in the age of democracy, whose subject is not just public and powerful heroes and villains, but the myriad men and women who are their constituents, victims, contemporaries from womb to grave. The writers of *Australians 1838*, *Australians 1888* and *Australians 1938* have searched hard for sources giving access to the private, the domestic, the workaday, the realms of family and community, the lives of ordinary men, women and children. This is not, as G. M. Trevelyan said of his pioneering social history of England, history with the politics left out; politics is in, but placed in its social, economic and cultural contexts.

While charting the rhythms of existence, we have not ignored change and conflict. In 1838 an unprecedented overland movement of people and animals was under way across southeastern Australia. One consequence of that movement was intensified hostility between white settlers and Aborigines, and the killing of Aborigines by pastoral workers at Myall Creek is a central event in *Australians 1838*. In *Australians 1888* colonists celebrate a century of British settlement and politicians try their hardest to exclude the Chinese. *Australians 1938* records both the mild improvement in material conditions experienced by most people since the depression years, and the strike at Port Kembla about the export of pig iron to Japan.

The years 1838, 1888 and 1938 attracted us not only because they were times of commemoration, but also because they do not have historians' labels attached to them, as, say, does 1851 (gold), or 1914 (war) or 1929 (depression). Exploring years not already identified with familiar themes would serve well, we thought, our purpose of discovering things not yet in the history books about what life was like for earlier generations of Australians.

These are also years that are almost one person's lifetime apart. The slice approach does not ignore everything that happened in the intervening half-centuries. Like Australians today, the people of our chosen years were, in important ways, what their past made them, for every moment in time is at once the culmination of past events and the beginning of the future, and every generation is shaped by its own past—and by *its own* vision of the future. Slicing does not obliterate the long view backwards or forwards: instead, it tries to capture visions of the past and future as they seemed to earlier generations.

One book, we resolved, should examine the longest period of all in Australian history, the epoch in which Australia was occupied solely by Aboriginal people. The richest evidence about this ancient Aboriginal heritage often dates from initial contact with Europeans. For the people of the Sydney region, that took place in 1788; elsewhere, the experience of 1788 was re-enacted in various ways as European settlement spread. Where possible, archaeological, linguistic and other techniques of prehistory have been used in *Australians to 1788* to explore changes and continuities in Aboriginal society over thousands of years; nevertheless, the idea of '1788' as the point of contact rather than as a specific calendar year gives this first book something in common with the slice volumes. And if the concern to reconstruct Aboriginal society and culture at the coming of the European intruders involves a kind of slicing, the final chapter of *Australians to 1788* adopts the approach quite specifically. By exploring the first year of British settlement it enables the first four volumes of *Australians* to present a series of slices at half-century intervals. A twenty-year-old convict who knew the Sydney described in that chapter might, in old age, have known also the world of *Australians 1838*, just as a young woman immigrant of 1838 might, after fifty years in the colonies, have witnessed the centennial celebrations of 1888, or Aborigines alive in 1888 have watched their people incorporated into the sesquicentennial pageantry of 1938. Our slice years are thus linked by the living memories of several generations of Australians.

We decided to devote the fifth book—the last volume before the reference works—to the whole period from 1939, so that in the bicentennial year Australians old and new could read about the society they inhabited. In the pages of *Australians: a historical library*, as in all the other ways in which Australians will mark the significance of 1988, a future generation of historians may perhaps find evidence about the contemporary society. But as we write, that slice still lies in our future.

Introduction

AUSTRALIANS FROM 1939 covers a period partly or wholly within the memory of its writers and readers. For the writers, reminiscence has accompanied research, and autobiographical undertones enliven several of the chapters. Just as surely, the personal memories of readers will influence the ways in which the book is understood and enjoyed.

But history is more than reminiscence. In early discussions about writing this volume, Tim Rowse, one of the editors, wrote a paper entitled 'The history of the people is not in the people's heads' to warn us against uncritically accepting the remembered past as accurate history. Time plays tricks on memory. So do unconscious prejudices. And as any policeman or lawyer knows, the same event can be remembered very differently by different observers, depending on their particular perspectives.

Yet however distorted by partiality or prejudice, reminiscence is part of history. Memory is one medium through which the past influences the present, and taken in conjunction with other evidence it has always been an important part of the historical record. Through it, historians of the recent past, especially, can make fuller sense of the statistical, literary and other sources at their disposal.

Australians from 1939 has taken advantage of the living memories of the period. It begins with memories of World War II, and ends with a section called 'Taking stock' in which a series of reminiscences is combined with a discussion of the ways in which historians have interpreted recent decades. In between these sections, it draws on memory as one of the many sources of evidence which history affords.

The history of the people is certainly not in the people's heads. Some of it is. But some of what is remembered as history is a mixture of half-memories, myths, illusions and prejudices. So the writers of *Australians from 1939* have made use of a host of evidence—visual, written and statistical—to sharpen and fill out their own and other memories. In parts of the book, modern historical scholarship and the much older art of reminiscence come together in a single analysis; elsewhere, at the end of the more general historical chapters, readers are left to reflect on the ways in which other Australians have seen and remembered the years from 1939. The book will have fulfilled the hopes of its authors if it provides readers with an accurate, informed context for taking stock themselves of their country's recent past.

ALAN D. GILBERT

John Curtin (1885–1945), leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party from 1935, became Prime Minister in October 1941 and led Australia until his death just before the end of the pacific war. In a famous speech on 27 December 1941, when Australia seemed threatened by Japanese invasion, Curtin advocated a re-alignment of Australian defence policy, arguing 'that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'. While it heralded no sudden, irreversable transformation of Australian policy or diplomacy, 'Curtin's Call' anticipated a major switch in dependency relationships which would dominate Australia's external relations after the war. Oil by A. Dattilo-Rubbo, 1947.

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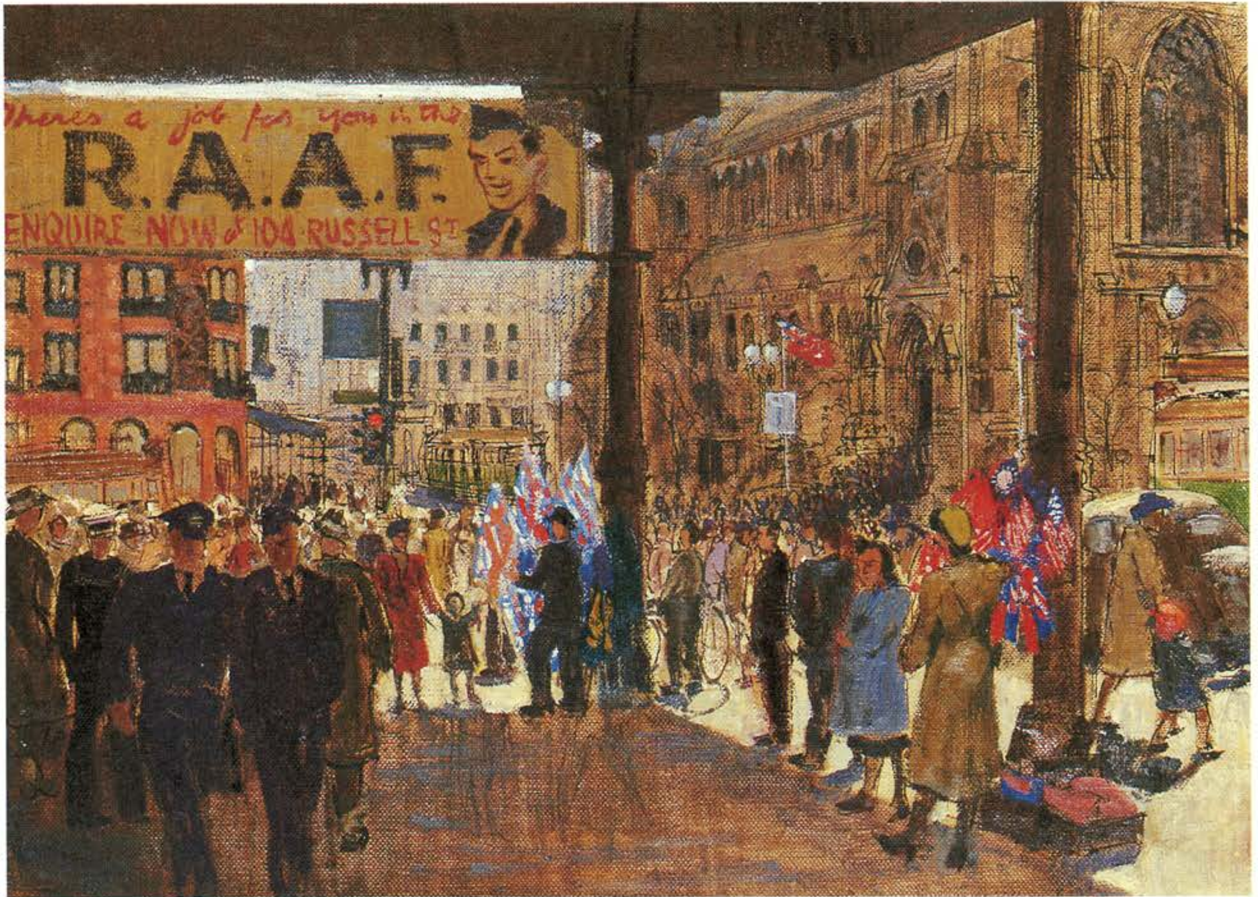
I

AUSTRALIANS AND THE WORLD



VE Day in Melbourne, *1945. Oil painting by George Browning. From Flinders Street railway station the artist depicts people leaving a thanksgiving service in St Paul's Cathedral to celebrate the end of the war in Europe.*
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

CHAPTER 1

AT WAR

K. S. INGLIS

ON THE EVENING of Friday 1 September 1939, my mother took me to the Planet Theatre, Preston, to see Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy as *Sweethearts.* The screen was filled with the lovers' technicolour singing faces when a handwritten message slid under them, saying that German forces had entered Poland. On Sunday evening at home we heard the sad English voice of Neville Chamberlain declaring through the crackle of short-wave that England was at war with Germany, and a little later R.G. Menzies saying that as a result Australia was at war too. On Monday morning I crossed the back paddock to Queen Street and walked to school down Joffre and Foch streets, named in honour of the French who were now our allies again.

That other war had not borne heavily on our family. In 1914 both my grandfathers were too old to think of enlisting, and my father was nine, as I was now. On Anzac days I envied children whose fathers marched; and the day before, on the asphalt at Tyler Street state school, my chest felt naked as I stood alongside boys and girls wearing medals and ribbons won in Turkey, France, Belgium and Palestine. My friend Wally Dey was among the most honoured few who wore the medals of dead men. I provoked unexplained adult smirks at home for saying of Wally (born in 1928) that his father had been killed in the war. Wally often spoke of something called Legacy, which helped his widowed mother raise him and his three brothers and two sisters after their father died. Legacy, we knew, had bought the suit on whose lapel his father's medals were pinned.

'The Great War' became 'the last war', and though nothing much was happening so far in this one it felt like the resumption of an adjourned contest between good and evil. In my favourite comic from England, the *Champion*, 'Rockfist' Rogan, RAF, was winning the old war one week in an ancient biplane and next week, apparently no older, he was flying a Spitfire in the new one. In real life and nearer home, another khaki expeditionary force began to be assembled, in a uniform that looked slightly more comfortable than the first one, and marching three abreast, not four—as we, too, were now marshalled for schoolground drilling.

ELLIOTT'S DRY GINGER ALE

The Argus.

LAWRENCE

"ALL-IN" WAR EFFORT FOR AUSTRALIA

INTENSE FIGHTING IN FRANCE

BOLD ACTION BY MR. MENZIES

WEALTH AND MAN POWER

PARLIAMENT SUMMONED

250,000 MEN FOR HOME DEFENCE

The Argus.

AUSTRALIA'S DECLARATION – Page 2

BRITAIN AND FRANCE AT WAR WITH GERMANY

CHAMBERLAIN'S DECLARATION

"OUR CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR"

AUSTRALIA PLEDGES FULL SUPPORT

October 1940: Britannia's dominion over sea and air is acknowledged by the Australian women's weekly. *Cover by John Santry.*

Two months into the new war we celebrated as usual the signing of the armistice in 1918. In 1939 11 November was a Saturday, so the schoolchildren of Australia were mustered on the Friday to wear red poppies and be silent for two minutes at eleven o'clock. The art historian Bernard Smith experienced that day as a young teacher at Liverpool, near Sydney. He remembers the least conscientious of the staff standing in the shade of the school building while the children stood in the sun, silently marking the memory of those who died in battle. Time dragged on beyond the customary two minutes until finally Teasdale, the headmaster, shouted violently across the silence to wake the boy at the bell, who had dozed off in the warm sun. The bell rang, and from across the river came sounds of guns at the Holsworthy military camp while the headmaster began telling the children of the horrors of the last war. In Smith's memory of the scene Teasdale

> looks amazingly like Hitler, standing there against the wall with his short-clipped military moustache, as he reads the Armistice message from the Minister to the children, saying that we must bring the war to a just conclusion. We are fighting for civilisation and a lasting peace.

At Tyler Street the silence must have lasted only two minutes, but it felt longer. We too were standing in the sun, bareheaded, and during the silence one child, then another, and another, fell down in a faint. By the time the bell rang, more than 30 children were lying as if dead, and teachers moved among the ranks like ambulance men. That scene is my last memory of primary school.

'Gone to Berlin. Back in 6 months.' That jaunty message was painted in white on the wall of a grocer's shop near Northcote High, my next school, early in 1940. The shop's owner had sailed off to the Middle East with the new Australian Imperial Force; his parting slogan had been prompted by English songs popular on the wireless during what the papers were calling the phoney war:

> We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line

and

> Ven der Fuhrer says 'Ve is der master race'
> Ve Heil! (Pht!) Heil! (Pht!) right in der Fuhrer's face.

The sign stayed on the grocer's wall for the whole of my five years at Northcote High School.

For us 600 boys the school week always began with a patriotic ceremony. On Mondays we assembled in a hollow square around the flagpole, sprang to attention, saluted the flag and declared in unison:

> I love God and my country; I honour the flag; I will serve the King, and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers and the law.

The oath had been devised in peacetime. Now that the empire was at war, 'I will serve the King' became a promise to enlist in the armed forces; and even before Hitler's soldiers overran France in mid-1940, Northcote High boys, from the 16-year-olds in fifth form to us first-formers fresh from state school, were thinking of service in the army or navy or the air force (in rising order of preference) as their future occupation. In R.D. Fitzgerald's words:

> for no lad chose a calling who heard instead a call,
> and just beyond a boy's years (so the lesson ran)
> the one work waited fitting for a man.

While we were growing to an age fit to be warriors, we could help the war effort. 'Many have already answered the call to the colours,' said a message circulated in

In 1940, with the 'phoney war' over in Europe and German forces pouring into France, Australia prepared for 'all-in' war. Militia and AIF units were augmented by the Volunteer Defence Corps, or 'Home Guard', formed in June 1940 and integrated into the Australian Military Forces in May 1941. The VDC comprised mostly older men who had fought in the 1st AIF, and it reached a strength of 80 000 during the war. Harold Abbott's oil painting of 1943 shows a VDC unit preparing for a night patrol.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

schools, 'whilst others are waiting, ready to give their all, as soon as they are called . . .' Australians not in a position to fight could share in maintaining and expanding the supply of munitions, planes and other equipment for our forces by purchasing the War Savings Certificates. As a certificate costing 16s would be worth £1 at the end of the war, and as inflation was an unfamiliar notion, our parent-financed purchase of 6d stamps towards a certificate was a painless exercise in patriotism. Pennies not to be returned were squeezed out of us each week for the State Schools' War Relief Effort. Bins took all we could scavenge at home of waste paper, tinfoil, tobacco tins and toothpaste tubes. The woodwork teacher, Daddy Day, got us to make trains and hobbyhorses to be sold to buy 'comforts' for the troops. He taught by scolding, and when my chisel slipped, or I thinned the paint with water instead of turpentine, Daddy Day would abuse me scornfully for hindering the war effort.

I did better for the Comforts Fund at home. My seven-year-old sister Shirley and I put on a concert, charging the neighbours a penny for admission to the garage, where I did recitations and magic tricks, and Shirley, got up to imitate a Hollywood cigarette girl, sold bags of lollies re-retailed from G.J. Coles, and flowers picked from our garden. We carried more than 6s in pennies and halfpennies to the home of the nearest municipal councillor, and saw our effort acknowledged next week in the *Preston Post.*

Argus, *18 July 1942.*

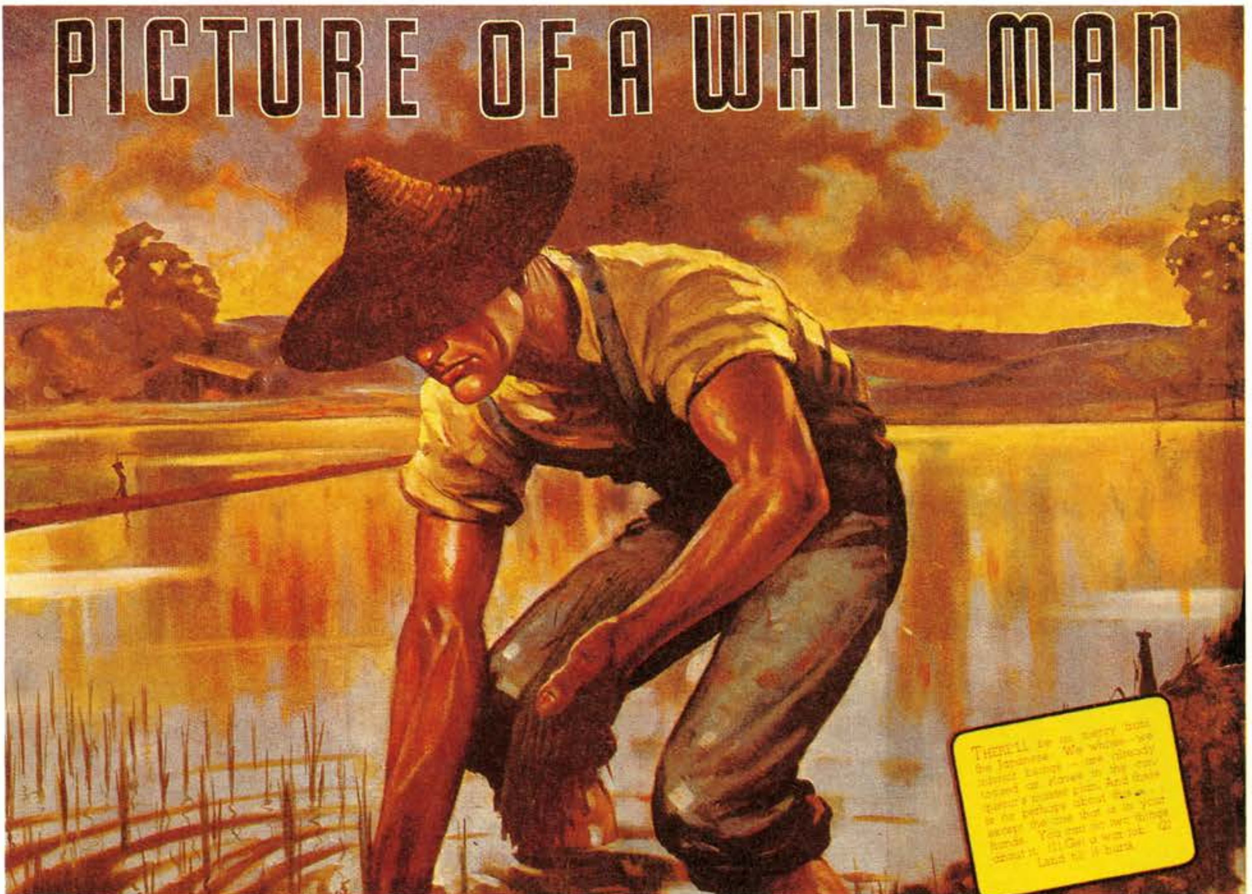
Like many families, ours was doing better in war than in peace. Depression in the building industry had almost ruined the family timber and hardware firm, and forced Dad to sell the house built when he married Mother in 1928. Now business was brisk. The value of new dwellings in greater Melbourne went down by a third from 1929 to 1934, the year we had had to move, and then more than doubled between 1934 and 1940. One of the new houses that year was ours. For the first time we had a refrigerator and a washing machine. Fewer houses were built in 1941 and hardly any after that, but my father's timber yard and joinery were kept busy with orders for the armed forces. I used to drive with Dad on Saturday afternoon to an RAAF establishment at Fishermen's Bend, where he talked with men in blue uniforms about the size and strength of palettes, the wooden platforms on which stacked stores were moved about.

AUSTRALIA POST

Although nearly all of the war was happening on the other side of the world, sometimes it came closer. On Armistice Day 1940 the papers reported that two ships had been sunk by enemy mines in waters near Australia. The silence that day was signalled in Melbourne by newly installed air-raid sirens.

More and more people went into uniform during 1941. Wally Dey's brothers Ben and Ted joined the air force. My friend Bruce Sprigg's father, a Presbyterian minister, wore the chaplain's strange combination of an officer's outfit with black stock and white clerical collar. Wally's and Bruce's sisters wore the khaki skirt, jacket and hat of the Australian Women's Army Service, going off each day to office work at the Victoria Barracks. At Cubs our Akela disappeared, then turned up one night in air force uniform, the white flash in his cap showing that he was training for air crew. Dad's younger brothers Frank and Rob were in the army.

Dad and Mother also had uniforms of sorts. Nobody was pressing Dad—aged 36, father of two, managing a firm making war supplies—to join up, except possibly his 10-year-old son: memory blurs, but I suspect that at least I asked him whether he thought of enlisting, and I may well have nudged him towards becoming an air-raid warden, in blue overalls, white steel helmet and gasmask haversack, practising to shovel sand on incendiary bombs. Mother rode her bike one day a week to the Heidelberg Military Hospital, wearing the beige linen uniform of a Red Cross aide as she pushed a trolley of books and magazines around



The white man in Japanese Australia. 'There'll be no mercy from the Japanese. We whites—we inferior beings—are already tagged as slaves in the conqueror's master plan. And there is no perhaps about this . . . except the one that is in your hands. You can do two things about it. (1) Get a war job (2) Lend till it hurts.' Man *magazine, July 1943.*

the wards. After Uncle Frank and the other men left for the war, she went to work part-time in Dad's office, returning to the paid workforce for the first time since she had left the State Savings Bank to get married.

At school a former teacher in uniform sometimes dropped in to visit. Jack Baker, maths teacher and Sheffield Shield cricketer, was in the air force; Micky Fleming, dashing music teacher, was in the army. But I think most of our teachers were too old to enlist; certainly some wore the old badge from the last war. In the staffroom they saw in each month's *Education gazette* obituaries and photographs of teachers killed in north Africa or over Europe. In the assembly hall our headmaster told us from time to time of an old boy who had died for country and empire. By the end of the war nearly 40 names of 'the Fallen' were inscribed on an honour board. I have to be reminded by documents that we honoured each of them by standing for a minute's silence, and I wonder if this ritual would have meant more to us had we been pupils of an older school, especially a 'public' one, where an English tradition of service had been better assimilated, 'school spirit' was more powerful, and the sacrifice of old boys in the last war was visibly commemorated already. But my age-mate Gavin Souter writes of his similar experience at the Scots College, Warwick: 'I cannot remember that any of these announcements affected me much, or that they appeared to have much effect on any of my companions.' I suppose it was simply that those dead heroes were no more than names. Certainly we did not mourn them as we mourned our friend Bluey Gilmour, who broke his neck diving at the Northcote Baths. The first serviceman I grieved for was Akela the cubmaster, presumed killed over France in a Spitfire.

We bought and wore 'V for Victory' badges, and put on concerts for the War Relief Effort. 'Without the fourth arm', we were told, 'The Silent Savings Service—our direct and vital place in the fight for freedom could not be maintained. This is an "all-in" war, a fight to the finish.' But it did not feel 'all-in', at home or at school. Nothing was rationed except petrol, tobacco and newsprint. Dad always travelled to work by tram anyway, and he used the firm's ute as much as he needed; for his own reasons he had given up smoking, and Mother smoked about two a day; and it was no hardship to read a *Sun*, *Age*, *Argus* or *Herald* grown slightly thinner. What we learned in the classroom was hardly affected by the war. Our textbooks had been written in peacetime, and teachers rarely imported wartime references into their lessons.

Cartoonist and his cast. Mick Armstrong depicts his stock of world leaders as artists' models demanding a higher sitting fee. From left: Curtin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Goering, Mussolini, Tojo. Argus, *31 Oct 1941.*

In the History and Civics exam paper at the end of 1941, though, we had to expect a question about a happening our generation of schoolchildren had not yet experienced: a change of federal government. Mr Menzies had given way to Mr Fadden in August. Then Mr Fadden and his coalition government yielded to Mr Curtin, the Labor leader, on my twelfth birthday, 7 October. Dad thought up mnemonic devices for me to retain the new ministers' names: Mr Makin, Minister for Munitions, was makin' munitions; the L, A and W in Mr Lawson, Minister for Transport, stood for Land, Air and Water. This knowledge turned out to be of no immediate use, for the only Civics questions in the one-hour paper were a general one on parliamentary government and another asking us to: 'Say all you can about four of the following people: M Laval; Mr Churchill; Sir Thomas Blamey; M Stalin; Herr Rudolph Hess; Mr Franklin Roosevelt.' I saw all but General Blamey through the eyes of the *Argus* cartoonist Mick Armstrong. Laval: fat and jowled, French traitor. Churchill: John Bull and British bulldog, growling inspiration. Stalin: once Hitler's wicked playmate, but since mid-1941 jovial ally. Hess: crazed Nazi whose flight to Scotland had made it seem for a moment that this war might be a lot shorter than the last. Roosevelt: benign crippled well-wisher to the forces of good.

December 1941: in preparation for the coming 'brownout', customers at Anthony Hordern's department store in Sydney rush to buy blackout paper. The rope netting, sandbags and warning bells were intended as a protection against aerial bombing raids. FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY

By the time the exam papers were marked, Roosevelt sat alongside Churchill in the cartoons, our guardian in a war that now engaged the whole world.

Speech night on 16 December in the Northcote Town Hall began and ended with 'God save the King', and the school sang two songs that had become auxiliary imperial anthems. 'Land of hope and glory' we had learned at Tyler Street; 'There'll always be an England', composed for the new war, was heard everywhere now. It had words about us as well as England:

> The Empire too
> We can depend on you . . .

But for what could we depend on England? Three days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, six days before speech night, Japanese planes had sunk two British battleships—symbols, in our world, of indestructible might, guarantors of our lifeline to the motherland. By Christmas everybody was putting screens on windows to darken the city against Japanese bombers. End-of-year riddle:

> Why can't they black out Parliament House?
> Because they have to wait till Fadden Menzies Curtin.

The days of summer 1941–42 were longer than we had ever known—wonderful for mucking about on back lawns or bikes—because the government had imposed daylight-saving to conserve fuel. The nights were dark. Headlamps on crawling cars and trams and trains peered through metal slits; shielded globes on lamp posts cast small pools of light. Not quite a blackout, as in England, but a *brownout*: that new word of early 1942, I learn from the *Oxford English dictionary*, was an Australian contribution to the language. White lines were painted along kerbs, as for the nearly blind. Overhead, the sky was raked by searchlights, which from time to time formed a brilliant cone as they concentrated on a single aircraft impersonating the expected Japanese attack.

Every family was urged to make an air-raid shelter, and the newspapers printed plans for a range of types from a slit trench to an underground hut. Fathers and sons discovered how much effort it took to dig six feet down into hard clay. The shelter in our back yard was a beauty, built by Dad and his father, Pa, with token help from me. Pa had been a master builder before he started the timber and hardware business. He did not make a shelter for himself and Ma, but for ours he put on his old leather apron and attacked the job with a craftsman's relish. The steps down to the duckboarded floor were fit for a two-storey house. The walls were of fence-palings nailed flush; the roof was tongued-and-grooved hardwood, covered with a mat of stuff called malthoid to make it gas-proof. With its protective hump of earth, square wooden tower designed to admit fresh air, and water-pump sticking out of the tower, the shelter looked at first rather like a submarine moored behind the house. Then Dad grew pumpkins over it, and an enemy bomb-aimer would never have guessed that Mother, Dad, Nana, Shirley and I were beneath the foliage. Imagining us there both during the raid and waiting afterwards for the air to clear of poison gas, I suggested that we stock the shelter with reading material: magazines, digests, comics with proper stories for me and picture strips for Shirley.

The enemy as Ape-Man. Armstrong on the news of atrocities in Hong Kong. Japanese forces had now occupied most of southeast Asia. Argus, *12 Mar 1942.*

We had been brought up to see the Japs, or Nips, as yellow, imitative, untrustworthy and ineffectual. On the matter of colour, I was startled decades later to hear a New Guinean recalling the Japanese wartime occupation of his village and saying: 'They were the first white men ever to sit down with us.' White men! As for their other qualities, I had read in a digest that a town in Japan had been renamed 'Usa' so that the tinny toys produced in its factories could be labelled

MADE IN USA. As the Japs' warplanes and other weapons were supposed to be no more formidable than their toys, the victories of Japanese arms late in 1941 and early in 1942 were all the more devastating. When Singapore fell I wrote verses which began:

> The yellow hordes drove southward,
> Toward the fortress strong,
> At least we thought that it was so—
> But sadly, we were wrong.

I sent my verses to the *Preston Post*, where they were published with a note that the author was aged twelve, alongside items about a shortage of supplies for Air-raid Precautions, fund-raising for the war effort, the manufacture of synthetic rubber and the collection of scrap aluminium, a large advertisement urging men to buy suits while they could (a warning that rationing might be close) and a small one offering to dig air-raid shelters on weekends. There was also a letter from 'Australian admirer' deploring the conviction of a man who had stood outside an Italian fruiterer's and appealed to people not to buy from an enemy alien.

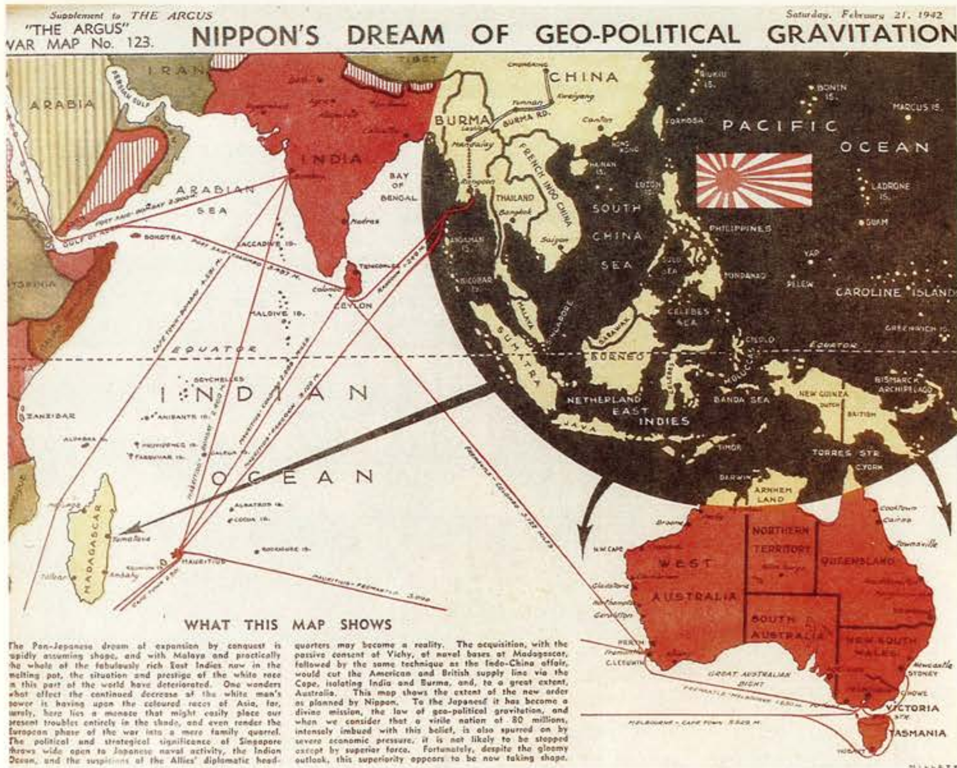
War was impelling many a young non-poet to verse. At Gavin Souter's school, one boy wrote:

> Amid the dense New Guinea jungle,
> Where the sons of Nippon crawl,
> Our soldiers bravely fought and died,
> For us they gave their all.

New Guinea drew me, too, when the Japanese took Rabaul. In a scrapbook begun in 1938 and devoted to cricket and aeroplanes I had stuck every picture and printed item I could find about a handsome single-engined low-winged monoplane with an Australian name, the Wirraway, built in Melbourne. If I had been older and wiser I might have guessed from the name of its American prototype—Harvard—that this aircraft was designed for training, not fighting. Eight Wirraways and four Lockheed Hudson bombers composed the entire air defence of Rabaul, and it was terrible to learn that when a hundred Japanese planes attacked the town on 20 January 1942, the Wirraways and their two-man crews were shot from the sky almost as easily as a warrior with a sword might behead an unarmed man. I tried verse, but some lines headed 'Sacrifice' remained stuck in an exercise book: even my twelve-year-old self could see that I had not been able to make anything of that anguish.

The Wirraway, made in Australia. Australia to-day, *26 Oct 1940.*

As the yellow hordes kept driving southwards, through the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines and into New Guinea, and as bombs fell on northern Australia, professional and amateur judges expected an invasion within weeks and made plans accordingly. In Sydney Dr Eric Dark, husband of the novelist Eleanor Dark, was assigned with other members of the Volunteer Defence Corps to find hideouts close to Sydney from which they could harass an occupying army. 'I quite expected that after a short resistance', he recalled in 1984, 'I would die fighting a guerilla war in the Blue Mountains'. Down in Melbourne I imagined taking to the hills with a pea rifle and a supply of food. My camp would be near Greensborough, a little beyond Heidelberg on the electric train line, where we had our Sunday school picnic each Melbourne Cup Day. I worked hard at learning to identify aeroplanes, swotting up from the *Argus weekend magazine* and the Penguin book of aircraft recognition the silhouettes of allied and enemy bombers, fighters, transports and reconnaissance craft: land planes and flying boats, monoplanes and biplanes, fabric-covered and metal, single-, double- and four-engined, air-cooled and radial



Supplement to THE ARGUS — Saturday, February 21, 1942

"THE ARGUS" WAR MAP No. 123.

NIPPON'S DREAM OF GEO-POLITICAL GRAVITATION

WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS

The Pan-Japanese dream of expansion by conquest is rapidly assuming shape, and with Malaya and practically the whole of the fabulously rich East Indies now in the melting pot, the situation and prestige of the white race in this part of the world have deteriorated. One wonders what effect the continued decrease of the white man's power is having upon the coloured races of Asia, for, surely, here lies a menace that might easily place our present troubles entirely in the shade, and even render the European phase of the war into a mere family quarrel. The political and strategical significance of Singapore throws wide open to Japanese naval activity, the Indian Ocean, and the suspicions of the Allies' diplomatic headquarters may become a reality. The acquisition, with the passive consent of Vichy, of naval bases at Madagascar, followed by the same technique as the Indo-China affair, would cut the American and British supply line via the Cape, isolating India and Burma, and, to a great extent, Australia. This map shows the extent of the new order as planned by Nippon. To the Japanese it has become a divine mission, the law of geo-political gravitation, and when we consider that a virile nation of 80 millions, intensely imbued with this belief, is also spurred on by severe economic pressure, it is not likely to be stopped except by superior force. Fortunately, despite the gloomy outlook, this superiority appears to be now taking shape.

Above.

Bombs on northern Australia. After Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, Australians had to face the distinct possibility of defending the country against invasion. This oil by Ray Honisett depicts the Japanese air attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Left.

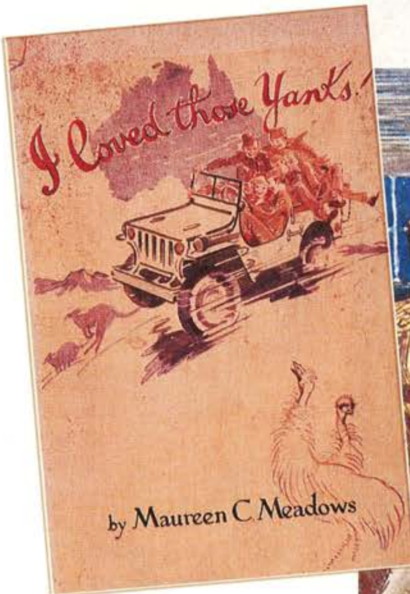
Argus, *21 Feb 1942.*

or water-cooled and pointy, with one tail-fin or two. I don't remember what I planned to do if I was the first observer in Melbourne to spot a Japanese Betty or Zero. Aim the pea rifle at it? Grab twopence and rush to the nearest public telephone? All I know is that it was wonderful to have my passion for aeroplanes turned from a hobby into war work.

The year of the brownout was a great time for listening to the wireless. News bulletins became more numerous. The government compelled commercial stations to carry news bulletins from the ABC in Canberra and made the ABC precede each one with 'Advance Australia fair'. Now that the war was so close and so eventful, people acquired the habit of hearing the news before they read it. Hit parades played songs from a Tin Pan Alley tooled up for war, about combat ('Coming in on a wing and a prayer', 'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition'), about yearning for home and peace ('I'm dreaming of a white Christmas'), about the fidelity of separated lovers ('I'll walk alone', 'Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me', 'No love, no nothin', until my baby comes home'). In 'They're either too young or too old', the girls at home vowed

I'll never ever fail ya
While you are in Australia . . .

In Australia, however, a song written by Jack O'Hagan and recorded by Joy Nichols celebrated the union of a boy from Alabama with a girl from Gundagai. She was the first war bride, and in real life about 15 000 Australian women were to marry US servicemen. Radio stations had official encouragement to play 'The



BOOROWA PRODUCTIONS

Right.
Australian women's weekly, *10 June 1944.*

Aussies and the Yanks', a song whose message was that with our two peoples in the war, the Germans and the Japanese were doomed. The words and music were written on the Pacific Ocean by one of the American soldiers who began landing in Australia early in 1942. The tune was played by bands as American soldiers and marines swung through our streets wearing uniforms which, to Australian eyes, made every private an officer.

American saviour: General Douglas MacArthur, as depicted by Wep in the Australian women's weekly, *2 May 1942.*

The next thing we noticed was that though the propagandists called them our American cousins, they were not as British as ourselves. In a pocket guide to the natives, the newcomers were told that we were nearly 100 per cent Anglo-Saxon stock and proud of it, but also that we were delighted by their own mixed ancestry. But one private with the unBritish name of Leonski damaged the visitors' reputation in May when he was arrested for 'the brownout murders', the strangling of three Melbourne girls, which became spooky as well as horrible when somebody noticed that the killer's name could be seen buried, as it were, in those of his victims: McLEod, ThompsON, HoSKIng. He was tried by an American military court and hanged in our Pentridge gaol.

The first Americans I met were Anglo-Saxon but nevertheless surprising, as they did not look or even speak like Nelson Eddy or Spencer Tracy or Mickey Rooney. The two soldiers my mother's friend Jean Paterson had out to tea were hesitant mumblers from somewhere in the midwest, shy with strangers, and one was pudgy. If they had been reading their pocket guide to us, they may have found our side of the conversation disappointingly pallid, as I think none of us used any of the 'colorful, picturesque words and phrases' they were told were 'constantly being added to the Australian speech', such as drongo or sheila or shikkered or gee-gees or woop-woop. They were very polite. I wonder whether they enjoyed the outing—Jean's scones and cakes, at least, were scrumptious—or whether they would have been happier getting shikkered at the gee-gees.

The ferry Kuttabul, *modified for depot ship duties during the war, lies half-submerged after being hit by a torpedo fired from one of three Japanese submarines to raid Sydney Harbour on the night of 31 May–1 June 1942. Nineteen naval ratings died aboard the ferry.*
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Their commanding officer sounded a true cousin, having the name of our first Merino woolgrower. General Douglas MacArthur's self-portrait as man of destiny was much mocked later, but it was profoundly comforting to learn in March that the commander of American forces in the Philippines had just stepped out of a Victorian Railways train at Spencer Street station in his battledress. I felt safer for the knowledge that, as the Yanks had taken over the new Melbourne Hospital and the MacRobertson Girls' High School and the parklands around the zoo, Melbourne had suddenly become an American garrison town.

The first good news from the Pacific war came early in May, when American planes stopped in the Coral Sea a fleet headed for Port Moresby. At the end of May the war came closer than ever when three Japanese midget submarines sneaked into Sydney Harbour with torpedoes. For readers of the *Preston Post* I interpreted this event as a win for Australia. In 'A fireside chat' (the phrase had been made famous by President Roosevelt's use of radio) I addressed the Japanese leader Tojo:

> Perhaps you thought you'd catch us
> When we were all abed.
> You'll know by now we weren't surprised
> For all your men are dead.

Again the editor told readers that the author was aged twelve. The verses shared the front page with a story about a young soldier who had robbed an Italian market gardener, urgent appeals from the mayor for air-raid wardens and scrap rubber, a photograph of a new Russian bomber, and an advertisement offering men and women 'their last chance to procure suit or costume of other than new standard material'. The issue announced a public meeting to demand legality for the

Communist party, which was still under a ban imposed by the Menzies government in 1940, though the Soviet Union had been our ally for a year. (The ban was removed at the end of 1942.) I joined the queue to inspect a composite craft made from the wreckage of the two sunken submarines when it was exhibited at war loan rallies.

The news that stirred me most was the repulsion of a Japanese landing at Milne Bay, southeastern Papua, in August. General Slim, commander in Burma, used exactly the right words for me when he said that 'Australian soldiers ... first broke the spell of the invincibility of the Japanese Army.' By September, when other Australian soldiers began forcing the Japanese back over the Owen Stanley Range to Kokoda and beyond, we knew that we were out of danger. Soldiers mailed back from New Guinea paper money printed for the Japanese to use in a conquered Australia. By the time I saw these notes there was no fear that they would be used. They were trophies, like the midget submarines.

The world of late 1942 was austerity. 'I ask you to reconcile yourself to a season of austerity', John Curtin said to us all on 19 August, 'to make your habits of life conform to those of the fighting forces. The civil population can learn to discipline itself; it can learn to go without.' From March 1942 everybody over fourteen had to carry an identity card. In June ration books were issued for clothes and tea. Sugar was rationed in August, and so later were butter and meat. Petrol rationing became more severe. I don't recall our family feeling any hardship from rationing, or more generally from shortages. The butter allowance, we knew, was four times what the British were getting.

Petrol rationing provoked the manufacture of gas producers—contraptions of various designs attached to motor vehicles which converted charcoal into gas for internal combustion. One of our teachers for 'religious instruction'—a subject not on the syllabus and taught by volunteers from the churches—was a maker of these devices, and told us that certain passages in the book of Revelations about smoke and fire in heaven prophesied the divine use of gas producers. Dad was among many drivers who preferred to leave a vehicle in the garage rather than assault the engine with gas. Petrol rationing cleared the roads for bike riders. Whether travelling to or from school or out riding for fun, by 1942 you could almost treat the roads as bike tracks, although increasingly pot-holed ones. My favourite rides were to aerodromes, a few miles west to Essendon and a lot further south to the RAAF base at Laverton. At either place you might see some of the American combat types now reaching Australia—among fighters, Kittyhawks, Airacobras, Thunderbolts and the miraculous twin-fuselaged Lockheed Lightnings; twin-engined bombers such as Mitchells and Marauders and Bostons, and the mighty four-engined Fortresses and Liberators, bristling with defensive guns. At Laverton I inspected through the wire fence a wooden replica of a Lockheed Hudson bomber, parked far away from the real aircraft in an attempt to trick the Japanese into wasting bombs.

Rubber was so scarce that you needed a permit to replace a bike tyre or tube. You slipped canvas sleeves under bare parts of a tyre to prolong its life, and your tubes were patched again and again with pieces of synthetic rubber. In the hardware shop, where I served in school holidays, we sold bottles of 'substitute' turpentine and 'substitute' linseed oil with stoppers made of caneite instead of cork; crockery and cutlery had almost disappeared, and screws and nails were often in short supply. Firewood was scarce in the winter of 1942, but not at our place: Dad still brought home sackfuls of kiln-dried offcuts from the timber yard, which made a fine easy blaze. Beer was short, too, but nobody in our family drank alcohol. The *Women's weekly* went into what its historian Denis O'Brien calls 'battle-dress', and the

That's the idea!
ROTATE YOUR TYRES and
SAVE RUBBER
FOR OUR TANKS

6 ways to drive for Victory by making your tyres last longer!

1. Don't speed. Tyres wear out 33% faster at 50 m.p.h. than at 35. Use brakes gently.
2. Check tyre pressures every week to protect side-walls and save tread wear.
3. Keep brakes adjusted, wheels balanced and in line.
4. Rotate your tyres—reverse their direction now, and every 1,000 miles.
5. Have tyres retreaded if casings are sound. Your Goodyear Dealer will quote you lowest prices possible.
6. If you must buy new tyres, choose Goodyears. Good tyres use less rubber—last longer.

Save all you can, to save all you have.
BUY AUSTERITY LOAN BONDS.

GOODYEAR

As tyre manufacturers carefully reminded their customers, schoolboy cyclists were not the only people forced by the rubber shortage to mend their ways. Argus, *2 Nov 1942.*

O.H.M.S.

Form C.R. 3.
Civilian Registration (British Subjects.)

POST FREE.

NORTHCOTE 7 OC 43 VIC

Keep this Identity Card in a cover.
It will fit into an ordinary envelope.
Carry it with you when away from home.

IDENTITY CARD.

NUMBER.		
V 3	M 29	35989

Kenneth Stanley Inglis

Notify any change of place of living on Form C.R. 4 (obtainable at Post Offices.)

3 Southernhay Street
Regent N19

If not delivered within 14 days return to Divisional Returning Officer at NORTHCOTE

3606....

An identity card had to be carried by everybody over fourteen from March 1942. An efficient bureaucracy got this one into the post on the holders' fourteenth birthday, 7 October 1943.
K.S. INGLIS

A soldier dreams of home—and people at home are reminded of the work in the jungle. Australian women's weekly, *12 Feb 1944.*

newspapers went on shrinking: a butcher near us increased his offer for clean newspapers from twopence to twopence halfpenny a pound.

We still went to the Planet and other local picture theatres, though not so often in the brownout. League football continued, but Geelong had to drop out in 1942 because of restrictions on travel, and the grounds of four other clubs were commandeered for military use. Melbourne surrendered the ground at Richmond. Wally Dey and I, Richmond supporters, followed Jack Dyer and his team, which reached the grand final in 1942 and were premiers in 1943. I think we saw the game in 1942 in which every boy's hero, Squadron Leader Bluey Truscott, famous fighter pilot, led his old team Melbourne against Richmond on his way from the European war to the Pacific, where he was accidentally killed in Darwin while performing a stunt worthy of 'Rockfist' Rogan.

To Form 3A in 1942 came a stringy and nervous lad whose family had just managed to escape from Rabaul before the Japanese occupied New Britain late in the school holidays. Merri Park, which adjoined the school and served as our sports ground, had slit trenches dug in one corner. The Northcote Council began the job mechanically until the army took away its equipment, and the digging was finished with picks and shovels by rostered gangs of pupils. One morning we noticed military activity at the back of the park, on the edge of Merri Creek, and we raced over at lunchtime to find a searchlight, a generator, two tents and four soldiers. Until their camp was declared out-of-bounds they enthralled pubescent listeners with tales of what they did at night when they were not practising to light up enemy raiders.

We marched more than ever. The school acquired a band, in which I banged the bass drum, and marching was made a competitive sport as we swung around the park to my beat. 1942 was evidently a great year for marching in schools, by girls as well as boys. Judith O'Neill, who grew up in Mildura, puts it into her novel *Jess and the river kids.* 'The headmaster had first introduced it with a speech about being always ready and the idea had caught on like a fever.' Any day now, thinks the young heroine, 'the call might come from New Guinea or Borneo and then they'd all be marching together through the jungle, rifles on their shoulders, khaki slouch hats on their heads.'

Although Northcote High was too far out in the suburbs to be taken over for military purposes, it was put to wartime use after hours. The Air Training Corps had classes on Mondays and Fridays. Ambulance drivers were instructed on Wednesdays, leaving messes for the headmaster to administer on Thursdays. More and more teachers were being called up for military service. The school opened in 1942 with 580 pupils and 17 masters instead of the 21 to which it was entitled. (In 1984, Northcote High had 740 pupils and a staff of 60.) No wonder I recall so many of my teachers as preoccupied and snappy. In August, concerned that so many of his staff were sick and strained from overwork, the headmaster suspended classes in woodwork and sheet metal. This humane decision earned him 'grave disapproval' from departmental headquarters and the imputation that he was a kind of shirker. 'It is expected', he was told, 'that in this time of national emergency every effort will be made by both headmaster and staff to maintain the full scope of the curriculum . . .'

Poster by Ralph Malcolm Warner (1902–66), reproduced by a Victorian army cartographic company, 1939–45.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

As well as urging us to save and give, our teachers had now to discourage us from careless talk about war activities. 'Because of the rivalry of children to be first with the latest news', they were told in a memo passed on from Army Headquarters,

> and to talk to other children about their fathers and big brothers, a remark passed at the family table by a soldier or munitions worker can quickly pass to all the other children in a neighbourhood. Much good work can be done by teachers in educating children in the principles of security. An occasional brief 'security' talk, pointing out the danger of idle gossip about troop movements, naval matters, 'inside' information about munitions, planes, and other matters of military importance, is usually all that is necessary to check this practice.

Perhaps Bob Lennie should not have told me about the mysterious 'vultive engines' his father, a fitter in the RAAF, was working on at Point Cook. It took me a long time to realise that he meant Vultee Vengeance, an American dive-bomber with strangely forward-angled wings, soon to be flying in New Guinea.

Australian women's weekly, *14 June 1941.*

Even in 1942 the war barely impinged on the curriculum. Stalin, Japanese expansion and the fall of France were optional topics in the History exam, but only in French was the war a vivid presence, thanks to *Le courrier australien*, a weekly journal put out by the Free French movement at fourpence a week, to which everybody studying French subscribed; while improving our French, we perceived the progress of the war through the eyes of Charles de Gaulle and his followers.

Our American allies did not get on to the syllabus, except just a little in History, but the Education Department was enlisted like other agencies in the cause of goodwill. Americans spoke to us in the assembly hall. The Australian–American Co-operation Movement offered prizes for projects. Pen friendships were encouraged, and I began one with a girl in Kansas. Speech night at the Town Hall on 15 December was both an imperial and a Pacific occasion: the speaker and prize-giver was the commissioner for the battered British island of Malta, but to open proceedings we sang both 'God save the King' and 'The star-spangled banner'. 'There'll always be an England' was not on the program.

In 1943 the brownout ended, the air-raid shelters were filled in, and the searchlight disappeared from Merri Park. We got used to calling the Allies the United Nations, and we sang the anthems of every major ally except the Chinese. 'God save the King' we had been singing all our lives. From the stage of the assembly hall, Daddy Day—in charge of music and sport as well as woodwork—hectored us into learning 'The Marseillaise' in French, 'The star-spangled banner'

and 'The Internationale'. He liked to instruct by sarcasm. A sluggish early-morning start to 'The Internationale' invited his wit.

Arise, ye workers from your slumbers ...

Up went his hand, out poured the scorn, and we resumed more vigorously.

Then away with all your superstitions
Servile masses arise, arise ...

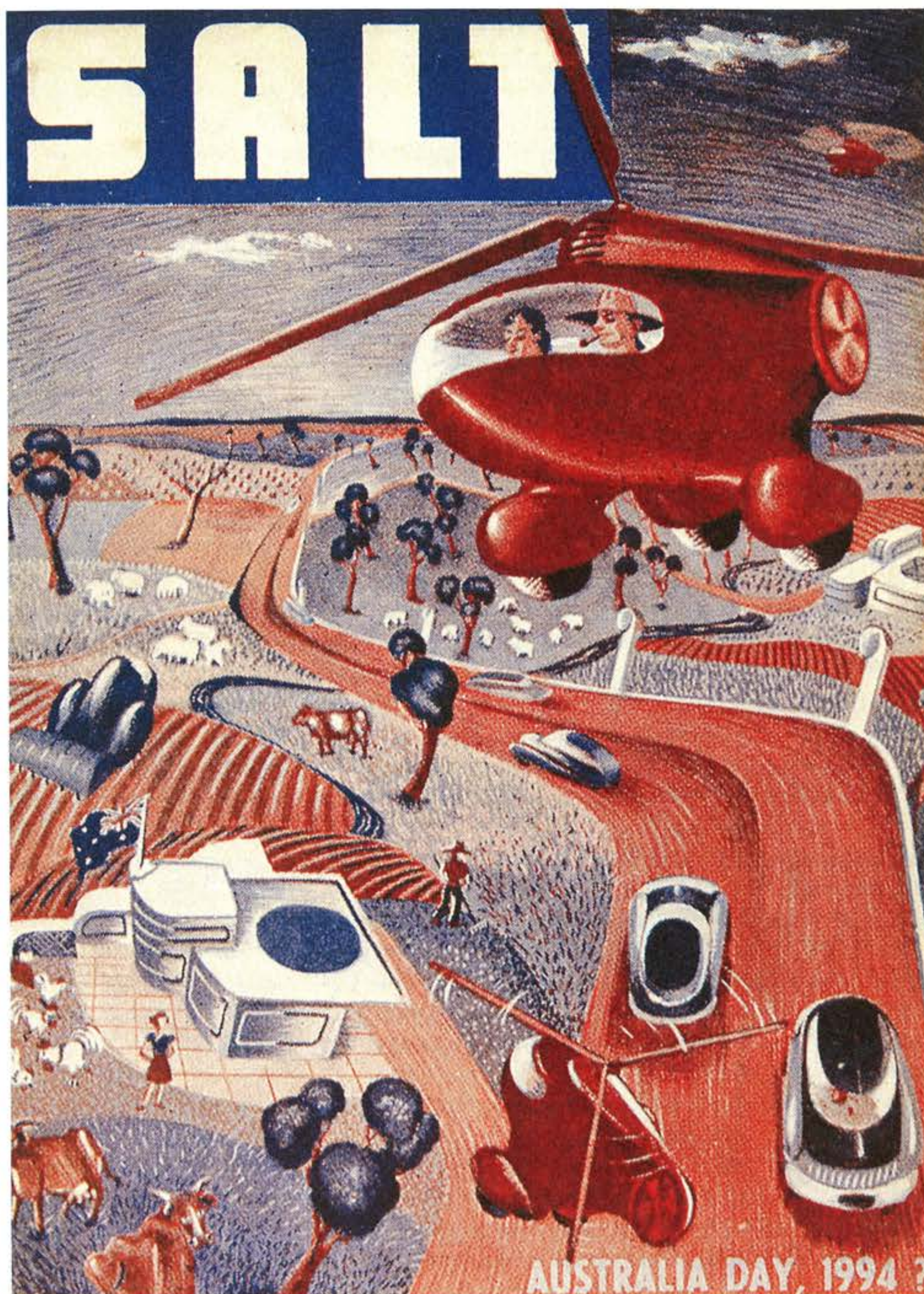
Why did we learn this song of revolution which the USSR had adopted as its anthem? We did have one communist master, or thought we had, Poppa Oke, a genial old man with a crest of white hair whose politics we inferred not from anything he said in or out of class but from knowing that his son Rick stood for the Communist party at an election. The tribute to our Russian ally owed nothing to Poppa Oke's presence. Other high school pupils were beefing it out, and I never heard that any parent complained, or that anybody objected when money from State Schools' War Relief Effort bought food for Russia. For three years from 1941 the Russians were the people bearing the brunt of the war against Germany. Photographers and cartoonists trained us to see Stalin's moustached face as benign. He beamed even from the cover of the *Women's weekly*, and a popular song from England said 'Curl the mo', Uncle Joe!' I listed among my favourite records heard on the radio a Benny Goodman number called 'Mission to Moscow', which took its title from a pro-Soviet film made in Hollywood and seen in Melbourne during 1943. *Song of Russia*, starring Robert Taylor, followed in 1944. A promising colt named Russia grew up to win the Melbourne Cup in 1946. Australia also had its mission to Moscow, led first by the left-wing Labor politician and lawyer from Melbourne, William Slater. Back home at the end of 1943 he spoke to us and our parents on speech night about the Soviet Union. The advisory council judged Slater's address inspiring; the president, a conservative grocer, thought this the best speech night ever held.

A benign Uncle Joe joins a winsome Winston to point the gun, with massive fingers on the trigger, at a cringing Hitler. Mick Armstrong's version, for Argus *readers, of the great power alliance in Europe.* Argus, *19 Aug 1942.*

When I went to the pictures now it was less often with Mother or Dad or Nana than with friends. We preferred films about the war. While the USA was neutral we had seen Hollywood stars in uniform either as conscripts training for war (Abbott and Costello in *Buck privates*, Bob Hope *Caught in the draft*) or as volunteers serving with the British (Robert Stack in *Eagle Squadron*). From England in those years we saw stiff-upper-lip documentaries about merchant ships (*San Demetrio, London*) or aeroplanes (*Target for tonight, One of our aircraft is missing*), Leslie Howard as designer of the glamorous Spitfire (*The first of the few*), and Noel Coward sentimentally bringing the naval war alive (*In which we serve*). After Pearl Harbor the American studios waged all-out war, and the pictures we chose were nearly all from Hollywood, either star-packed musicals (*This is the army, Stage door canteen*) or films of action such as Alan Ladd in *China* or Paul Muni in *The commandos strike at dawn*, which Bruce Sprigg and I saw at 5 am on 2 November 1943, catching an all-night tram into town when the State Theatre put on a free dawn session, and drowsing the day away at school.

I saw only two Australian feature films in the whole of the war, Charles Chauvel's *Forty thousand horsemen* and its successor *Rats of Tobruk*, which strengthened the feeling that this war was a resumption of the last: both starred Chips Rafferty and Grant Taylor as embodiments of the Anzac legend, and both were set in the desert sands of the Middle East. With those exceptions the cinema showed Australians at war only in the newsreels which formed part of every program.

My study of aeroplanes became less practical, since there was no chance now of spotting an enemy, but more scholarly and patriotic. I studied the English weeklies



Wartime optimism: Salt, *a fortnightly education journal published by the army, looks forward to a future Australia, technologically advanced and owing its prosperity to the soil.*
BOOROWA PRODUCTIONS

Aeroplane and *Flight.* I biked to Essendon to inspect the Lancaster bomber piloted by a Melbourne man, Peter Isaacson, as a pathfinder on raids over Europe, and touring now to advertise war loans. I collected information about the making of aircraft in Australia—the Boomerang fighter or target-spotter (like its older brother the Wirraway it had an ambiguous character), the Beaufort bomber and the Beaufighter, the Mustang fighter, the Mosquito fighter-bomber. Like many a city-bred lad I was proud that we could now produce not just wool and wheat but aeroplanes and other advanced machines. The Bren-gun carriers that roared past the school, their tracks damaging St George's Road, reassured me as defenders and

stirred me because they were made in Australia. I soaked up publicity about an all-Australian tank, known as the Cruiser or ACI, powered by a Cadillac engine and clothed with an all-welded hull containing not a single rivet, and it saddened me to learn that production of this marvel was suspended in 1943.

Even before the British and American landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944, the boys of 5A no longer expected to go to war. My diary for 10 February records good news from several fronts, as signalled in *Herald* headlines:

GERMAN CRISIS IN UKRAINE. RED DRIVE TO SEA
POWERFUL ALLIED ATTACK IN ITALY REPORTED
FEWEST ENEMY SHIPS AT RABAUL...
U-BOATS IN CHECK
FORTRESSES BOMB OCCUPIED EUROPE WITHOUT OPPOSITION

On the eve of Anzac Day 1944 Australian soldiers entered Madang, on the north coast of New Guinea, and from then on our men fought in no campaign of strategic significance. On that day a traditional ceremony for schoolchildren at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, not held in 1942 or 1943 in case of air raids, was resumed. In August the armed forces began to discharge men. Senior boys at Northcote High were offered one last hope of involvement. Once victory was ours, we were told, interpreters would be needed, first in the interrogation of Japanese prisoners, then to help administer their conquered homeland. Several of us enrolled for Saturday morning classes in Japanese at University High School. We did not last long. The language was too hard, there were accusations about a tin of biscuits in the staff room, and I withdrew from the course able to speak only a formal greeting to the defeated foe.

Wartime optimism: victory. Australian women's weekly, *18 Mar 1944.*

Our teachers were pressed harder than ever, for we were the largest Leaving class—80 strong—in the history of the school. Wartime prosperity enabled more families to let their sons stay on at school, and there was another reason I did not know until I looked at the minutes of the advisory council 40 years later. 'Boys are being kept longer at school', the headmaster told the council, 'to avoid the direction of Manpower to positions not desired by parents.' If a boy left after Form 4 at the end of 1943, the Manpower authorities might direct him to a munitions factory or a cannery; and that was not what he had been sent to Northcote High for. By the end of 1944 Manpower was less intrusive. Most boys left for white-collar jobs, and a lucky minority went on to sixth form at Melbourne High. At our last speech night on 19 December 1944, 'The star-spangled banner' had gone from the program, but 'There'll always be an England' did not return.

Melbourne High, the Tudor-towered school by the Yarra, was new to all its pupils in February 1945, not only to those transferred from Northcote and other schools that stopped at Leaving Certificate, for its buildings had just been returned by the army. During our first week there the newspapers showed Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin working amicably at Yalta on plans for finishing the war and establishing a new international order. Those photographs of the Big Three encouraged high hopes. The League of Nations, we had been taught, failed because membership was not universal. That must not happen again, and as long as FDR, Uncle Joe and Winnie sat smiling together, the future looked good. Set to write an essay on 'This dwindling world' in the last term at Northcote, I insisted that after this war the nations must be 'arbitrated over by a central body representing *all* nations', and that any that tried to withdraw would have 'all trade cut off'. *Postwar*

reconstruction was the phrase of 1945, and I was impressed by two visions of it, one delivered to our letterbox and the other on the syllabus for matriculation.

Plan for a proud Preston was an eight-page leaflet. On the cover was drawn an improved version of the municipal baths and a two-storeyed house more suggestive of Toorak or at least North Balwyn than the cramped bungalows of Preston. Inside was a sketch of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, looking 'to the day when all peoples of the world may live free lives, untouched by tyranny, and according to their varying desires and their own consciences'. The Big Three and the baths; Teheran and Preston. This rare conjunction of the great world and the suburb was the doing of the Preston branch of the Communist party, making the most of the united front to offer 'some concrete suggestions which can be acted upon immediately and others as soon as this war against Fascism is truly won'. People should have the right to own their own homes and buy them cheaply; a community hospital should be built, and so should schools of latest design and centrally heated, with free textbooks, nourishing lunches and a curriculum that would fit pupils better for everyday life. The West Preston tram should be extended beyond Gilbert Road. Landscape architects should be commissioned for 'municipal beautification'. Community centres should be created. Such proposals had little to do with communism, and some contradicted it, but they sounded refreshing to someone whose life had been lived in a place where public amenities were meagre and static, inhibited first by depression, then by war.

Wartime optimism: communist and suburban hope for postwar reconstruction. 'In presenting this first plan for the ordered development of Preston, the local branch of the Australian Communist Party is well aware that it is the merest sketch of what will eventually be needed.'

How were all these plans to be paid for? 'Well, we contend that since money can be found for War, it must also be found for Peace.' That was the sentiment of 1945. We read it also in C.E.W. Bean's *War aims of a plain Australian* (a text for a new subject called English Expression) which declared that the cost of a regenerated Australia would 'only be equivalent to that of a few days or, at most, a few weeks of the present war ...' The blood-red set of Bean's *Official history of Australia in the war of 1914–18* had formed a large proportion of the library at Northcote, and the volume containing a photographic record of the war bore more signs of fingering than anything except the article on prostitution in the adjoining *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The Bean we met now, anguished at the failure of the inter-war generation, called on us to grasp a second chance, to realise that freedom demands planning, and to make the UN work so that 'nations may at last be able to deal with other nations as honorable men deal with men'. In the masculine rhetoric of postwar reconstruction, he told us to extend the Anzac spirit of brotherhood and initiative to mates all over the world. 'When we ask, what is the main step towards bringing about the kind of New Order that we want, the answer is "Educate, educate, and educate!"'

Though school spirit was stronger south of the river, many heads were bare of the unicorn-crested caps that marked Melbourne High boys. Not until 1946, when Major-General Alan Ramsay moved from commanding the 5th Division to running the school at which he had once been a pupil, did the cap become obligatory again. On the last Anzac eve of the war we were addressed by another of the old military boys for which the school was famous: Major Maurice Ashkanasy, who had escaped in the boat that took Lieutenant-General Gordon Bennett away from his men in Singapore. A week earlier we had been called to a solemn assembly to mourn Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and with my friend John Bastin I wrote an obituary of the president for the Northcote companion of the *Preston Post*, which paid us 10s 6d and did not say how old we were. 'He had built up a strong personal and political friendship with the two other world leaders, Churchill and Stalin', one or other of us wrote, 'and had already commenced the outlining of plans for a lasting World Peace'.

Nineteen forty-five was proving a bad year for our leaders. When the Germans surrendered in May, John Curtin was ill. Australians heard the news from the gravel-voiced Ben Chifley, the acting prime minister. In July Curtin died and Churchill was removed by British electors; of the men to whom we had looked for wartime inspiration only Stalin was still there.

Dad had predicted that the European war would go on and on even after Hitler's armies had collapsed, because nobody would have authority to surrender. Admiral Doenitz quickly solved that problem by declaring himself Hitler's successor and surrendering. I have no clear memory of V-E day other than that it proved my father less than omniscient. Gavin Souter wrote a poem about the liberation of Europe which was published in the *Warwick Advertiser*. My muse was aroused only by events in the Pacific. But Souter's response to the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was exactly mine: that the atomic bomb was merely another weapon, bigger and better than our blockbusters or the Germans' flying bombs. 'How fortunate we were to have invented it! The morality and wisdom of using this weapon were matters that simply never occurred to me—or, so far as I was aware, to any of those with whom I discussed the bomb.' My only other reflection on the beginning of the atomic age was that in 1944 we had been the last Physics class in the history of the world to be taught that the atom was indivisible.

Home from school with a cold when Ben Chifley, now prime minister, announced the Japanese surrender on the morning of Wednesday 15 August, I recovered and caught the train into Princes Bridge just in time to see a *Herald* van halted by the rejoicing crowd, the driver grinning as people untied parcels of the first edition and flung into the air the news that the war was over. After six of my sixteen years, it was hard to believe. What on earth could newspaper headlines be about from now on?

The atomic bomb: science as Eve. After the bomb on Hiroshima, before the bomb on Nagasaki, Armstrong blames science for making atomic power take a chunk out of the earth. Argus, *8 Aug 1945.*

'PEACE—WORLD HAILS JAP SURRENDER', *proclaimed Melbourne's* Herald *on Wednesday evening, 15 August 1945. Although most of the flags being waved by the celebrating crowds are British, one at least is an Australian flag.*
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

'Gone to Berlin.' Going in fact to North Africa, the 17th infantry brigade, 6th Division, 2nd AIF, commanded by Brigadier S.G. Savige, salutes the governor-general in front of Parliament House, Melbourne, on 24 January 1940.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

FIGHTING THE WAR

A. W. MARTIN

When the prime minister, Mr R.G. Menzies, declared a 'state of war' with Germany on 3 September 1939, Australia remained militarily unprepared. The army had 3000 regular soldiers as well as 80 000 part-time volunteers organised into five militia divisions. It lacked modern equipment. The RAAF was even less prepared, its 3500 regular personnel and 600 members of the Citizen Air Force having no modern aircraft. Only the RAN, with two heavy and four light cruisers and two sloops, was a small but useful fighting force as the war began.

More than half a million Australian servicemen and women served outside Australia during the next six years. The rounded figures for each service were: army, 396 000; navy, 37 000; air force, 124 000; total, 557 000. Deaths from all causes—battle casualties, deaths from wounds and deaths among prisoners of war—numbered 27 000. In the 1914–18 war, by contrast, 331 700 Australians had served abroad and 60 200 had died. The historian John Robertson, characterising Australia's experience in the first war as 'slaughter with little military art', notes that between April and December 1915, in an area of 230 square kilometres on the Gallipoli peninsula, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) lost more men killed and wounded than Australia's three services lost in all their fighting against Germany and Italy from 1939 to 1945; or, again, the Australian army lost fewer men killed in action in all its campaigns against the Japanese than the 1st AIF lost at Gallipoli. In summary, Robertson writes that

> For Australians involved the war was a kaleidoscope, often bewildering, of fear, heroism, uncertainties, hard work, danger, excitement, boredom, homesickness, pain, anguish, the unfolding of great events, then victory and a sense of achievement and relief... In the Australians' battle zone the war could mean young men at Rabaul taking off in Wirraways to meet certain death from more numerous Zeros. It could mean an infantryman on a jungle patrol behind

Limbless 8th Australian Division ex-prisoners of war of the Japanese are photographed in their quarters at the Changi gaol, Singapore, 10 September 1945.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Japanese lines, or facing German tanks on the Tobruk perimeter. It was the men of the *Perth*, fighting until their ammunition was exhausted, against Japanese naval gunnery at its best; or a young man, not long out of school, flying a Lancaster on his first mission over Germany. It was waiting on Singapore Island for Japanese to cross Johore Strait, seeing one's mate killed by a sniper's bullet, being succoured by Greeks after the Germans had overrun their country, or trying to dodge a *kamikaze* attack.

Almost a third of the 27 000 Australian dead were prisoners of war, most of whom died in Japanese hands. Of the 8000 Australians captured by the Germans, only 265 died; yet on the notorious Burma railway, in mines and prison camps, those captured by the Japanese worked, starved, were brutally beaten and denied all but the most primitive forms of medical treatment. 'For the first time in history', writes Hank Nelson, 'white Australians had been caught in a great expression of human callousness; the sort of things that Australians often read about happening in some distant place among strange and violent peoples.'

Stan Arneil, one of the survivors of the gangs of POWs that had worked in Thailand on the Burma railway, has vivid memories of returning to Changi prison camp in Singapore on 21 December 1943:

> It was a moonlight night and Changi with the tropical waters round the island was so beautiful. I can still hear the squeal of the brakes as the trucks lined up. The people from Changi knew we were coming, and they came over to see us, to look for old friends, and see how we were. We got out of the trucks, a couple were dead and we laid them on the ground, and we lined up on the road. We were not ashamed because we were soldiers, and we wanted to look like soldiers. The people from Changi stood back and uttered not a word. It was really quite strange. We lined up on the road as best we could and stood up as straight as we could. Those who couldn't stand up straight were on sticks. And those who couldn't stop shaking with malaria were held up by their friends. We thought

'Sons of Australia, steady and strong.' Representatives of the three services stand ready to defend Australia as she gazes onwards and upwards. Her rising buildings and virgin bushland form the background. Cover by Virgil. Australian women's weekly, *21 Oct 1939.*

Roosevelt sitting alongside Churchill. In August 1941 the British battleship Prince of Wales *was used for a meeting between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. At Churchill's right is General George C. Marshall of the United States Army, standing beside his colleague, Admiral Ernest J. King. Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's trusted adviser, in civilian dress, is in the background with senior US and British military advisers and staff officers.*
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Right.
The Japanese drive southwards. Here Australian anti-tank guns succeed in temporarily checking the Japanese advance down the Malayan peninsula in January 1942. Tanks halted by felled trees have been reduced to smouldering wrecks. A dead Japanese soldier lies in the foreground.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

this was what we should do as soldiers to say we were not beaten. The sergeant major dressed us off and we stood in a straight line as he went over and reported to Colonel Johnston. Johnston went over to Black Jack Galleghan and he said, 'Your 2/30 all present and correct, sir'. And Galleghan said, 'Where are the rest?' The major, he was a major then, said, 'They're all here, sir'. And we were. Black Jack Galleghan, the iron man, broke down and cried. We wanted to show them we were soldiers.

The peak of organisation in Australia for 'total war' was reached early in 1943. In 1941 while the 6th, 7th and 9th divisions of the AIF fought in the Middle East, Greece and Syria, and the small Australian navy and air force served in the Mediterranean and Britain, economic and social life at home was reorganised to support these fighting forces. But for Australia the most critical phase of the war followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor late in 1941. Japan's southward drive through Malaya, leading in February to the capture of Singapore, brought, as Prime Minister Curtin put it, 'Australia's gravest hour, an imminent threat of invasion calling for a complete revision of the whole of Australian economic, domestic and industrial life'. By early 1942, when the 6th and 7th AIF divisions were brought home, the 8th Division, assigned at the end of 1941 to Malaya had already been tragically lost, mostly as prisoners in Japanese hands.

The 'Singapore strategy' had been the cornerstone of Australian security between the wars; in shattering it, the fall of Singapore raised serious doubts about the capacity of Britain to defend the empire. Moreover, the Australian government gradually became aware that Winston Churchill, despite earlier assurances, failed to deviate from his 'defeat Hitler first' strategy even after the Japanese forces entered Singapore and New Guinea and seemed poised to invade Australia. But the Japanese offensive had brought the United States into the war, and from 1942 onwards the Australian war effort fell increasingly under American influence and direction. Australian leaders had no place in the high counsels of the allied war effort, but Australians followed the deliberations of Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, and the conduct of the wider war in Europe and the Pacific, with the avidity of a people now totally involved in the global conflict.

By early 1942 recruits were needed urgently, for both the armed services and war output, and in January 1942 the government set up a Directorate of Manpower to implement a full mobilisation of the country's people and resources. Its task was to divert people from 'non-essential' occupations and draw on hitherto untapped labour to find men and women who would swell the fighting services and increase all forms of war production. During 1942 there were also urgent new demands for accommodation and provisions for American troops (120 000 by the end of 1943) who were making Australia their main Pacific base.

The directorate achieved much in the crucial months between its establishment and March 1943. The number of people engaged in direct war work, including those in the armed forces, grew from 554 000 men and boys to 1 272 000, and from 74 800 women and girls to 184 500. In June 1943 the government could claim that 'Australia's manpower is fully mobilised': 89.6 per cent of all males over 14 years of age were in the armed services, were doing direct war work or held 'essential' civilian jobs; those who remained were the sick or incapacitated, the aged, schoolboys or students. For women the figure was 29 per cent: here, it seemed, much could yet be done.

Though considerable, this shift in occupations was still not enough to meet the targets set in the desperate days of early 1942 for growth in the services: 12 army divisions, 73 air force squadrons and a modest increase in the navy. There were

Opposite.
Breaking the spell of Japanese invincibility. From July 1942 Australian forces saw action primarily in New Guinea. Here William Dargie depicts men and Kittyhawks of 75 and 76 Squadrons, RAAF, at Milne Bay on the southeast tip of New Guinea. During August–September 1942 the Kittyhawks fought several engagements against raiding Japanese Zeros and provided effective air support for ground forces. The holding of Milne Bay was an important tactical and psychological victory for Australian forces, coinciding as it did with the Kokoda campaign in the Owen Stanley Ranges 300 km northwest of Milne Bay. Oil on canvas.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Mopping up, 1945. Lance-Corporal E.E. Bicknell of Hurlstone Park, NSW, and an American serviceman, Henry H. Kanser, of Bedford, Indiana, check machine-gun belts to be carried on RAAF fighters bound for the first airstrip captured during the attack on Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

simply not enough Australians in the right age groups for so ambitious a program. By the time this became clear late in 1943, the invasion threat had receded. Australian troops still had battles to fight in New Guinea and nearby islands, but the Pacific war had moved north and involved American forces almost exclusively. Australia's main task now was to provide food; and for that labour was needed in rural industries, food processing and transport. Men and women began to be released from the army and munitions factories. In the last two years of the war the army was reduced by about 100 000, and by July 1945 those employed in aircraft and munitions production had fallen to half their 1943 numbers.

The navy had as many sailors as ever in 1945, and was involved in actions in Borneo and the Philippines in the closing months of the war. HMAS *Shropshire* and HMAS *Hobart* were present in Tokyo harbour as Japan surrendered. During the war, nearly 7500 Australian airmen served in Britain's Royal Air Force, and in 1945 many saw action in the strategic bombing offensive over Germany and in fighter squadrons supporting the advancing allied armies. RAAF squadrons 453 and 456 were heavily engaged in this great offensive; other RAAF units had been recalled to the Pacific theatre in 1942, and near the end, over New Guinea and Borneo, RAAF pilots had air supremacy at last. But the war continued to be costly. Ground operations in the Aitape–Wewak area cost 454 Australian lives after November 1944; 615 Australians died in the battle for Bougainville; 224 died in fighting in Borneo between May and August. Families with sons or husbands engaged in the air war over Europe, or facing the remnants of the Japanese forces in Borneo, New Britain, Bougainville and mainland New Guinea, followed the progress of the war with anxiety right to the end. Germany capitulated on 7 May 1945; Japan sued for peace in August and formally surrendered on 2 September.

RAAF Spitfires of 453 Squadron are serviced during a lull in air operations over the Normandy battlefield in 1944.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DEATH OF AN AIRMAN

E. C. FRY

Flying Officer C.R. Williams, DFC, was killed when his Lancaster bomber crashed in northern Germany in the Dam busters' raid of 1943. It was a long way from northwestern Queensland where Charlie Williams had spent the first 30 years of his life.

At the outbreak of the war Charlie had volunteered for the air force, to see the world and to fly. He enlisted under the Empire Air Training Scheme to which Prime Minister Menzies had committed Australia in 1939. British strategy for the coming war was to destroy German industry and civilian morale by massive bombing attacks, for which great numbers of aircrew would be needed from the empire. Charlie was to be among the first Australians to man the bombers.

He had been classified as a wireless operator/air gunner and commissioned as an officer before he arrived in England late in 1941. At first he marked time in a staging depot, writing to his family, 'I am sick of this idleness here.' He was

unprepared for his first action when he was pulled out of his training to swell the numbers for the first thousand-bomber raid, flying as the novice rear gunner of a makeshift crew in an outdated aircraft. Shaken, he wrote with unusual feeling, 'We got through although we got a few holes in the plane, we were all damn glad to have it behind us.'

His combat flying started three months earlier than had been planned. He joined 61 Squadron, flying Lancasters, the specially designed four-engined night bombers fresh off the assembly lines. As wireless operator he sat with the navigator at a table behind the pilot, surrounded by radio gear, for eight or more hours as he tensely worked or watched or warned of flak or fighters. For the next six months the pattern of his life was an exhausting night flight over enemy territory before collapsing into bed some time before dawn, a day or two of rest, then orders to prepare for the next attack. He was laconic about it in letters, noting only a quiet trip, a good trip or coming through OK. But he counted each raid towards the 30 (200 hours flying) which would complete his tour of operations:

> I have now done 22 trips for 148 hours. So I have only 52 hours or eight trips to do, and I will not be sorry to finish and have a rest as the strain is beginning to tell.

He grew weary and suffered from frequent colds, but in the words of his citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross, continued to set an example of quiet efficiency and devotion to duty in the face of the enemy. He did not know that he had been recommended for this decoration, which could be won only in combat. The award was not confirmed and gazetted until after his death.

Charlie's letters are more expansive on his everyday life than on the air war. For him, as for most Australians of his generation, England was a country of the mind before he ever saw it, so he could report that it was much as expected. The suddenness of spring and the beauty of the countryside took him by surprise: 'I am only just finding out how pretty England can look.' So did the hospitality: 'They are a great crowd over here ... and very much different from what I expected to find in England.' Distant relatives whom he located became a second family. He had travelled, mastered flying, found a full and interesting life outside it; yet when he heard a radio session about Australia he wrote: 'I would like to be back.'

Pilot Officer C.R. Williams, proudly wearing his officer's cap and badge and the AG half-wing of a qualified air gunner, on completion of his training. A studio portrait taken to give his mother before he sailed from Australia.
MRS SHEILA FRY, CANBERRA

When Japan threatened Australia Charlie had a further reason for wishing to return. 'We would all like to be back home fighting in our own country', he wrote. A couple of days before he completed his first tour of operations he took steps to hasten his return to Australia. 'Yesterday', he explained

> I made a decision which may or may not be wise. I am joining a crew with an Australian as pilot. He, like myself, has nearly finished his first tour ... we are going to another squadron and will carry on with our second tour without any rest ... and we believe when we have finished our operations we will have a much better chance of being sent home.

Charlie had volunteered for 617 Squadron which was being formed for a special mission later disclosed as the Dam busters' raid. The crew trained intensively to fly at ground level, attack a pinpoint target by night and plant their bouncing bombs. Charlie could only write: 'How I wish I could tell you everything I would like to ... but until the war is over I cannot tell anyone.' In the attack Charlie's plane hit a high-voltage cable near the Rhine. The entire crew died instantly.

His last letters tell his family that he was about to marry an English girl, Gwen, who would return with him to Australia. Gwen was shattered by his death. So was his mother, whose husband was dying when she heard that Charlie was missing.

Aborigines In The War

A. W. Martin

Australian women's weekly, *5 July 1941.*

Because Australian army records did not specify a soldier's race, we cannot tell how many Aboriginal men served in the army. Though discriminated against in the early days of the war, Aborigines were recruited in growing numbers after Japan entered the war and invasion seemed a real threat. For most of these men, army life brought an equality of pay and working conditions seldom enjoyed before. And in the smaller working group of army life there was little room for racism.

As the Japanese threat developed the wider Aboriginal community, at least in the north, experienced similar, if less intense, benefits. Troop concentration in the Northern Territory reached its peak late in 1942, when more than 100 000 servicemen and members of the Civil Constructional Corps were stationed there, chiefly near Darwin. Most of the white civilian population had been evacuated after the first raids on Darwin, and the troops who now completely outnumbered the Aboriginal population (estimated at about 14 500 in mid-1941) were largely men from the cities of southeastern Australia who were making contact with Aborigines for the first time. In the words of historian Robert Hall, 'They brought with them new attitudes which were a mixture of the more liberal if uninterested approach to Aborigines common in south-east Australia, a general ignorance of pre-war racial attitudes and conditions in the north, and the egalitarian influences of the army society.'

For their support the troops required Aborigines to carry supplies, cut timber, stack ammunition, tend vegetable gardens, wash, iron and clean. The army soon became the principal employer of Aborigines, establishing a series of labour settlements where Aborigines working for it were provided with food, housing and clothing for their dependents. Though their traditional culture suffered when different groups were thrown together in the settlements, most Aborigines enjoyed better living conditions and higher wages than they had ever known.

Women In The War

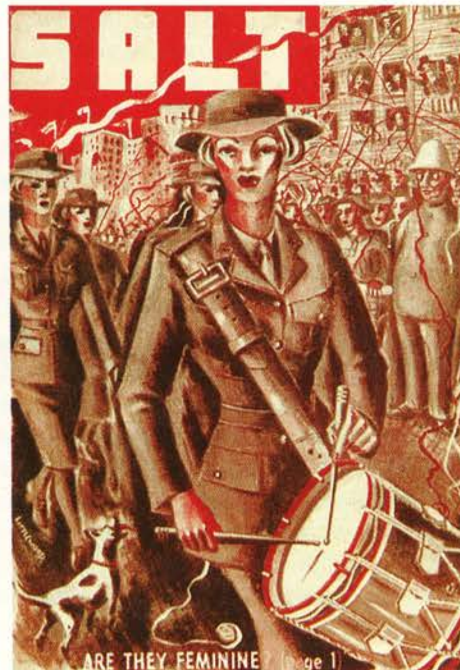
A. W. Martin

Nurses were the elite of wartime women. Accepted from the beginning in the armed forces, theirs was always an honoured role. Women who wanted to serve in other ways were for a time thought of as nuisances. In the early days of the war many formed on their own initiative a variety of women's corps, designing uniforms for themselves and training to ride motorbikes, to signal and operate morse keys, to service vehicles, fire rifles and drive ambulances. But to the authorities war was men's work, and, as the official historian Paul Hasluck ironically recalls, 'a woman in a uniform or a pair of overalls, working in the company of men, would create all sorts of unmentionable difficulties'. In 1941, however, the RAAF, short of male wireless telegraphists, recruited (after four month's resistance from the war cabinet) 308 women for the job, and the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was established. Soon after, the prime minister, won over by what he saw of women's services in Britain, pressed the war cabinet to authorise women's auxiliaries for the Australian army and navy, and the establishment of the AWAS (Australian Women's Army Service) and WRANS (Women's Royal Australian Naval Service) followed. The Japanese threat brought a spectacular growth of women's services. By mid-1943 those enlisted included 8000 nurses, 16 000 WAAAF and 18 000 AWAS. The WRANS were fewer, at 1400, and a Women's Land Army had more than 2000 members.

Except for nurses, few servicewomen served outside Australia. Their task was to release men for combatant duties. Large numbers worked in traditional female occupations as cooks and mess stewardesses, but others operated telegraphic and wireless equipment, worked as chauffeurs, mechanics and clerks, and the AWAS even had a searchlight unit. After the tense days of 1942–43 were over, servicewomen became progressively more difficult to recruit. Unattractive conditions and poor pay (two-thirds that of men) dampened patriotic enthusiasm.

Wage injustice was also a grievance among the women enticed or 'manpowered' into other jobs hitherto regarded as men's preserve, in commerce, transport, the public service and—above all—the factories. By mid-1943 the number of Australian women in paid jobs was approximately 840 000, 127 000 more than at the outbreak of the war. By then almost 70 000 women had also moved from other jobs into direct war work. A study of one group of women working in munitions production at the end of 1941 suggested the kind of switches that had been happening: a third had previously been domestic servants; the others were factory workers, shop assistants, waitresses, dressmakers, clerks and typists. Most prewar awards set women's wages at about 57 per cent of men's, but in 1942, as part of the Labor government's drive to get women into the factories, it set up a Women's Employment Board (WEB) to rule on wages and conditions for women taking on work for which women's rates had not previously been set. The WEB's life was controversial and short (it was disbanded late in 1944), but it did award wages of up to 100 per cent of the male rate to between 80 000 and 90 000 women. These decisions brought anomalies with other women workers, and bred militancy when employers resisted paying WEB rates.

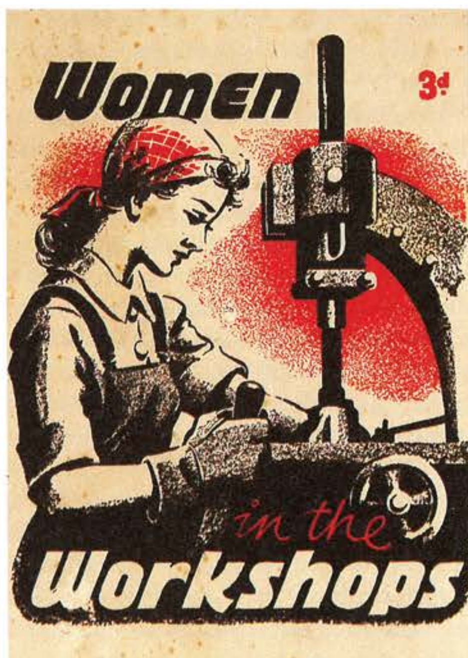
In the later years of the war the change of emphasis from producing munitions to supplying food and clothing, especially for US forces, put new stress on industries traditionally employing females at lower wages. For these jobs voluntary workers became more and more scarce: thousands of women chose to stay unemployed despite publicity campaigns and the threats from Manpower authorities. Yet despite government promises that after the war ex-servicemen would be



Women could proudly wear many uniforms . . . but Salt *asks: 'Are they feminine?'* Australian women's weekly, *13 Jan 1945.*
BOOROWA PRODUCTIONS

given preference for what jobs there were, there had been a quiet revolution. Women had shown their capacity to work in callings once thought to be exclusively male and, however haltingly, the idea of equal pay for equal work had gained ground, not least because male workers feared competition from cheap female labour.

Meanwhile, many wives and mothers pursuing ordinary, unpaid domestic roles went through a time of loneliness and difficulty, caring for children and holding families together in the absence of servicemen husbands.



To help the war effort, women took on new roles . . . but their traditional roles were not forgotten. Australian women's weekly, *21 Apr 1945.*
REEVES COLLECTION

KINGSLEY KIRAI AND THE WAR IN NEW GUINEA

HANK NELSON

Injured during fighting in New Guinea, Private F.A. Mathews of NSW is given a drink by a New Guinean (name unknown). Private D.G. Pride, also of NSW, watches for the arrival of aircraft to evacuate the wounded.
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

In 1940 Kingsley Kirai of Tabara village in northern Papua listened to the talk of the Australian patrol officer and agreed to join the Royal Papuan Constabulary. His decision did not surprise his fellow villagers. They were Binandere people, and for nearly two generations their young men had been transposing a warrior tradition into service in the armed constabulary. Kirai left the security of his clan, productive taro gardens, dense rainforest, and the Gira River with its broad curves and shelving banks where canoes were beached. He began his government work by carrying the stores of the patrol to the next village.

In Port Moresby Kirai enlisted in A Company of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB). If the patrol officer on the Gira knew about the new unit being formed he probably did not have the language to explain it to the villagers, and Kirai did not have enough knowledge of the outside world to distinguish between one armed force and another. He was pleased to begin training in 'the fashion belong army'. Unlike most military forces raised overseas by colonial powers the PIB was not just a local military force. Kirai was a private in a unit of the Australian army under a direct line of command to army headquarters in Australia. But he was paid 10s a month, the same rate as indentured plantation labourers.

Through 1941 battalion training was constantly disrupted by lack of equipment

and by demands for the recruits to work at the Nine Mile quarry to supply gravel for airstrips, dig trenches and unload ships. They were labouring and training around Port Moresby when the first Japanese air-raids began in February 1942. The town was deserted by most Papuans and looted by Australian servicemen.

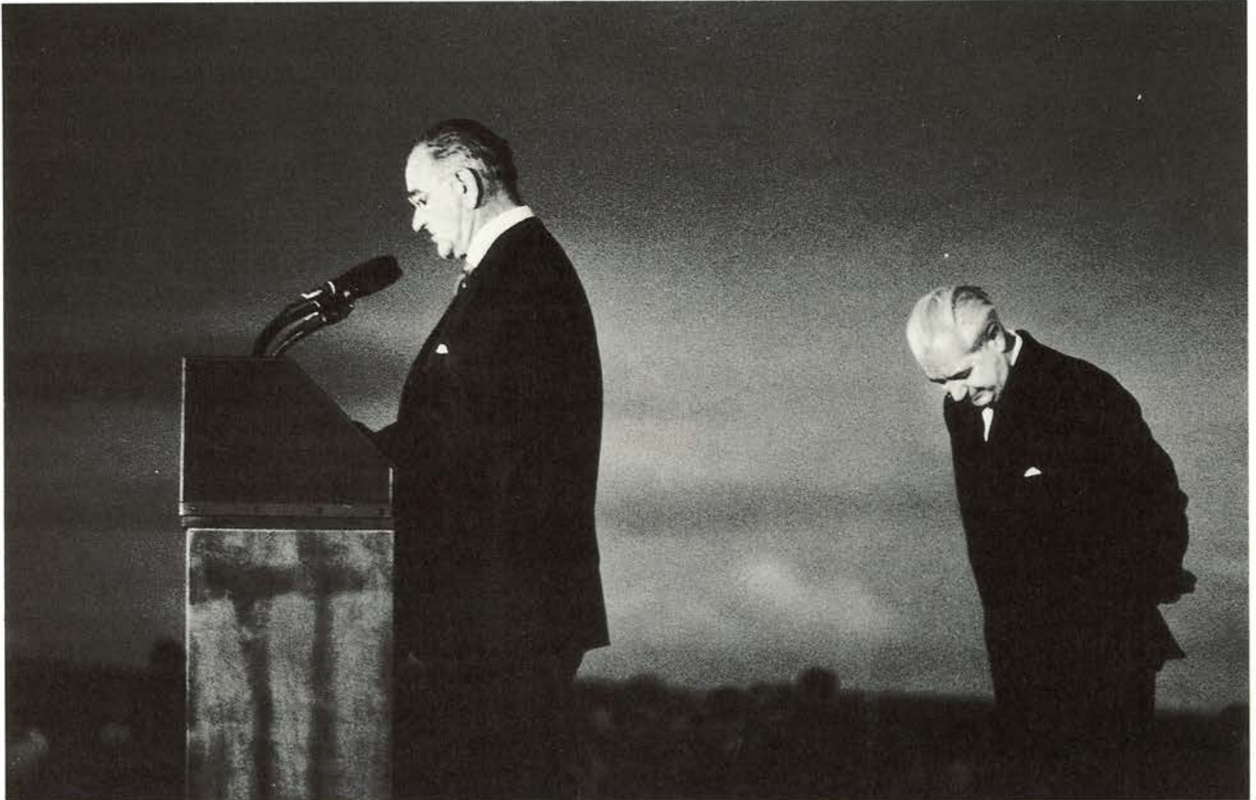
In mid-1942 Kirai went into action on the Kokoda Trail, the track he had walked on his way to sign on. After a brief period of rest and retraining he returned to pursue Japanese escaping from the fighting at Buna and Gona. He crossed the Kumusi River and was back in Binandere country. Within the dislocation of world war some of Kirai's fellow soldiers used their new weapons to settle accounts in local conflicts.

Continuing northwest along the coast Kirai was among strangers: he met people from the neighbouring Territory of New Guinea, and he patrolled with Americans of the 41st Division. Again ordered back to Port Moresby, Kirai crossed overland from Garaina to Kairuku, an exhausting mountain trek. Back in action in mid-1943 A Company travelled constantly, patrolling and skirmishing along the New Guinea coast. Promoted to corporal and transferred to C Company, Kirai sailed with the battalion to Bougainville in 1945. At the end of the war he served as a guard over the thousands of surrendered Japanese soldiers and war criminals concentrated near Rabaul on New Britain. In 1946 the PIB held its final parades: with other units of the Pacific Islands Regiment it was disbanded. Kirai went back to Tabara village.

Roy Hodgkinson, Misirai (Native boy), *1944. A Buka boy from the Solomons, Misirai was working around Rabaul when the Japanese landed in New Guinea. Watercolour.*
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

In three and a half years of war Corporal Kingsley Kirai had seen no more than most of the 3500 Papuans and New Guineans who had served in the Pacific Islands Regiment, or the 3000 who had been wartime police, the 1000 medical orderlies, the 800 in M Special Unit who had worked with the coast-watchers, the unknown numbers who had been informally enlisted to fight and the thousands conscripted as labourers and carriers for one army or another. In wartime Papuans and New Guineans travelled further, met more people, saw more of the power for good and evil of the rest of the world, had more opportunities to acquire the skills of foreigners, whether operating machine-guns or hypodermic needles, and earned more cash than ever before. The burden of war fell unevenly on those who stayed in the villages. In areas of intense fighting and long Japanese occupation on the Gazelle Peninsula and in parts of the Sepik and Bougainville about a quarter of the people died. Along the south coast where there was no fighting but all able-bodied men were conscripted to work for the Allied forces, the women took over basic roles in village economies and decision-making. Many communities at the end of the war had to decide whether or not they should return to the old ways, and some made courageous attempts to pursue change. A few peoples made their first contact with the outside world when they suddenly confronted armies; and probably a quarter of a million people enclosed in rainforest or highland valleys knew nothing of the violence that roared above and around their island.

The war in Papua and New Guinea also changed Australians. Accustomed to thinking of Europe and the Middle East as centres for the great events of the world, they were suddenly forced to look to their near north. For the first time the average Australian gained a knowledge of the area where more than a fifth of the people administered by the Commonwealth of Australia had their homes. By the end of the war many Australians mixed gratitude and admiration with the condescension they directed towards the natives. They were willing to pay to educate and improve the health of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzies', but not yet ready to relinquish real economic and political power. The new combined Territory of Papua and New Guinea was still thought to be Australia's possession, essential to Australia's defence and all the better if most foreigners and international agencies were kept away.



Four months after Harold Holt's 'All the way with LBJ' in Washington, President Johnson comes all the way to Australia. At Canberra airport on 20 October 1966, David Moore's camera catches the prime minister having the air of a provincial governor welcoming an emperor.
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY