

ADELAIDE RIVER WAR CEMETERY



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

OFFICE OF AUSTRALIAN WAR GRAVES

THE DEFENCE OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

By late 1941, Darwin and the Northern Territory were assuming a role as a strategic base for defence forces and this role increased with the entry of Japan into the Second World War on 7 December 1941. By early 1942 the Territory was used for deploying American and Allied forces to the Dutch East Indies (now known as Indonesia). American bombers operated from Batchelor and US artillery units were bolstered by various units of the Australian Army. The Royal Australian Navy increased its presence and was instrumental in sinking a Japanese submarine north of Darwin on 20 December 1941.

On 19 February 1942 at 0958 hrs, the Japanese struck Darwin following the return of an Allied convoy to Darwin from Timor the day before. Two hours after the first devastating raid, fighter aircraft, diver bombers and heavy bombers struck Darwin again, as well as the RAAF airfield. Two hundred and forty-three people died in the raids, twenty-three aircraft were destroyed and eight ships were sunk and many damaged. Material losses were heavy, communications were cut and the township of Darwin shattered. Between February 1942 and November 1943 the Darwin area was bombed on 64 occasions.

By late 1942, with the development of Radio Direction Finding (later Radar) facilities, the Australian forces had consolidated to the extent that they were able to take over a number of roles previously undertaken by US forces. The RAAF took delivery of new aircraft, which included Beaufighters and Spitfires and, together with an RAF squadron, this saw the revitalisation of Darwin's air defences. Heavy bomber units of the USAAF, based at Fenton, Manbulloo and Long airfields, continued their raids and the RAAF Hudsons, although depleted by

numerous bombing raids by the Japanese, continued to operate over the Dutch East Indies.

Allied success during 1943–44 saw the strategic importance of Northern Australia lessen as the war moved northwards. Allied bombers continued their long-range missions against the Japanese. USAAF Liberator bombers raided as far north as Balikpapan. Their role was taken over by RAAF Liberators in late 1944. Two RAAF squadrons continued heavy bomber raids and were later joined by a further two squadrons. In mid-1944, two further RAF Spitfire units arrived, allowing the RAAF to deploy to Morotai. Other squadrons subsequently moved north to the Dutch East Indies in early 1945.



The graves of the post office workers killed in Darwin air-raid — Adelaide River Civil Cemetery

Large hangars and aircraft facilities were built in Darwin to accommodate the expected B29 Superfortress bombers but the aircraft were instead deployed to Pacific bases from which they attacked the Japanese islands. The war was brought to an abrupt end with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan surrendered unconditionally on 15 August 1945.



THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

During the Second World War, the Northern Territory contained the largest operational base in the South West Pacific. Darwin, the capital, became a naval base and suffered its first air attack on 19 February 1942. Within a month of the first air raid, Darwin became the heart of this important operational base. From its airfields, the Royal Australian Air Force raided Timor, Dutch New Guinea, Borneo and islands in the Arafura Sea. It was from Darwin that the Services Reconnaissance Department moved by aeroplane, flying-boat or submarine to their operational areas. Throughout the Territory there were many Royal Australian Air Force stations, some were new and some were civilian aerodromes taken over 'for the duration'. The main body of the Australian Liberator wing was for some time located at Fenton; two British, a Dutch and an American Squadron were among those defending the Darwin area. RAAF bases were to be found at Alice Springs, Batchelor, Darwin, Katherine and many other locations. Both Adelaide River and Alice Springs were the headquarters of large base establishments and the main north-south road from Darwin to the railhead at Alice Springs was built during the war. Nos. 107 and 129 Australian General Hospitals were based at Darwin and Nos. 101 and 121 at Katherine, while No. 119 Australian General Hospital was at Adelaide River and No. 65 Camp Hospital at Pine Creek.





THE ADELAIDE RIVER WAR CEMETERY

Adelaide River is a township lying 113kms south of Darwin, on the Stuart Highway, which is the main north–south road from Darwin to the railhead at Alice Springs.

During the Second World War, Adelaide River was the headquarters of a large base and the Adelaide River War Cemetery was created especially for the burial of servicemen and women who died in this part of Australia. It was used by Australian General Hospitals 101, 107, 119, 121 and 129.

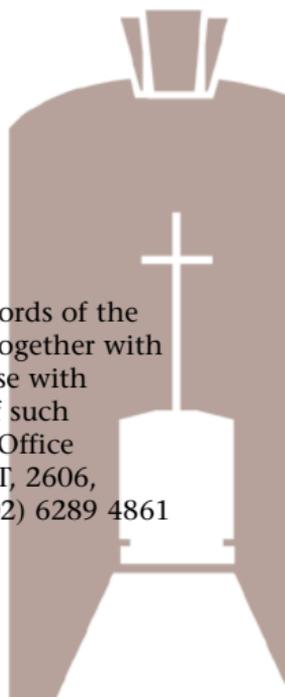
After the war, the Army Graves Service moved graves from civil cemeteries, isolated sites and temporary military burial grounds, into the Adelaide River War Cemetery. These included Bagot Hospital Cemetery, Berrimah Hospital and War Cemetery, Daly Waters Civil Cemetery, Darwin Public Cemetery, Gove War Cemetery, Hughes Cemetery in Darwin, Katherine Civil and War Cemeteries, Larrimah War Cemetery, Milingimbi War Cemetery, Mt Isa War Cemetery in Queensland, where No 74 Camp Hospital once operated, South Goulburn Island Mission Cemetery and Truscott War Cemetery.

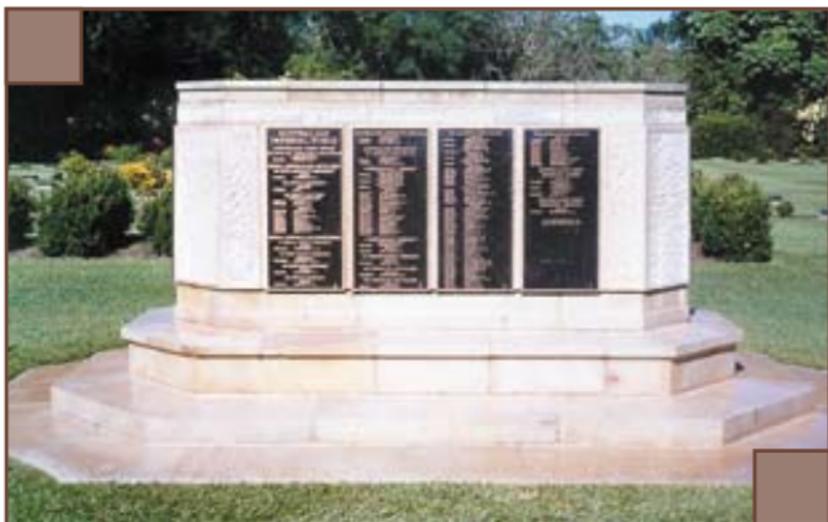
Adelaide River War Cemetery was taken over by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in September 1947 and under a formal agreement with the Australian Government, is maintained by staff of the Office of Australian War Graves. The War Cemetery adjoins the Adelaide River Civil Cemetery, in which are buried 63 civilians, including nine Post Office workers who were killed on 19 February 1942, as a result of a direct hit on the Post Office by Japanese bombs. Thirty-one Aboriginal people are among the dead who lie in that part of the cemetery. The War Cemetery is situated in savannah country about 1km from the Stuart Highway, along a short bitumen road, which runs parallel to, and 100 metres from, the Adelaide River. Within the War Cemetery the graves are set in a grassed area with low growing shrubs dotted in regular patterns among the headstones. Beyond this, there are colourful garden beds and within the boundary fence is a screen of trees and shrubs.

There are 434 burials, comprising 14 airmen of the Royal Air Force, 12 unidentified men of the British Merchant Navy, one soldier of the Canadian Army, 18 sailors, 181 soldiers and 201 airmen belonging to the Australian forces, and seven men of the Australian Merchant Navy.

The Adelaide River War Cemetery was entered in the Register of the National Estate in 1984.

The Office of Australian War Graves holds the records of the burial places of all Australians killed during war, together with the location and memorials to the missing of those with no known grave. Relatives and others in search of such information should contact the Research Officer, Office of Australian War Graves, PO Box 21, Woden, ACT, 2606, Australia. Telephone: (02) 6289 6510 Facsimile: (02) 6289 4861





THE NORTHERN TERRITORY MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING

The Northern Territory Memorial to the Missing is one of several erected around the world for those who have no known grave. This Memorial was erected especially to commemorate those of the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force and the Australian Merchant Navy who lost their lives in the South West Pacific region during the Second World War. Men of the Royal Australian Navy who lost their lives in this area and who have no known grave are commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial in England, along with many of their comrades of the Royal Navy and of other Commonwealth naval forces.

The total number honoured on the Memorial is 292, of whom 102 belong to the Australian Army, 164 to the Royal Australian Air Force and 26 to the Australian Merchant Navy. Included in the figure for the Army is a sister of the Australian Army Nursing Service.

The Memorial is placed centrally in the cemetery, between the entrance building and the Cross of Sacrifice, which is towards the rear boundary fence.



It is a low structure in the style of an altar, approached by two steps, with ten panels bearing the names of those whose memory it immortalises. Around the Memorial, above the names, is carved a dedicatory inscription.



ALICE SPRINGS WAR PLOT

Alice Springs is the chief town in the southern part of the Northern Territory. It lies midway between Darwin and Adelaide (South Australia). The main road running north to Darwin was built during the 1939–45 War to facilitate the transport of supplies and war material to Australia's most vulnerable area.

The War Plot lies within the Alice Springs Cemetery and contains the graves of one sailor, 25 soldiers and three airmen. They are grouped together with the exception of one grave which is in the Anglican plot. The grave of a Vietnam casualty lies adjacent to the War Plot.