



# 100 SITES OF MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE

Please note that some of the locations listed will not be represented by a sample of soil, as it is not possible or appropriate to collect soil at this point in time



## THE SITES & THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### AFGHANISTAN

- **SHAHI KOT:** *In March 2002, Australian SAS members distinguished themselves on Operation Anaconda.*
- **TA KHOUT:** *The September 2005 attack on coalition forces by a large Taliban force was resisted by units including Australian Army aviators and troops from 4RAR (Commando).*
- **CHORA VALLEY:** *In 2005–06 this was the site of multiple operations by ADF special forces north of the Australian operating base at Tarin Kot.*
- **SHAH WALI KOT:** *The Shah Wali Kot offensive was a five-day joint operation conducted by Australian special forces and the Afghan National Army, with US air support, in June 2010.*
- **KABUL:** *Kabul was the base for the Australian headquarters in Afghanistan and the site of ongoing security operations undertaken by the ADF.*



## THE SITES & THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### AUSTRALIA

- **COCOS-KEELING ISLANDS:** *Site of the first naval victory by the Royal Australian Navy in the Great War. HMAS Sydney destroyed the German surface raider SMS Emden in just over 90 minutes on 9 November 1914.*
- **WESTERN AUSTRALIA:** *The disappearance of HMAS Sydney with all hands on 19 November 1941 was not only a loss for the RAN but also had a devastating impact on morale on the home front. The mystery of Sydney's disappearance was not solved for 67 years.*
- **DARWIN:** *RAN, Australian Military Forces (AMF) and RAAF personnel from NSW saw action in defence of northern Australia during Japanese air and sea operations between 1942 and 1944.*
- **CORAL SEA:** *RAN personnel from NSW saw action on board Australian ships during the battle of Coral Sea (4–8 May 1942).*
- **PACIFIC OCEAN:** *Townsville was the nearest major Allied port during the battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. It was bombed by Japanese forces on three occasions in July 1942 but remained a vital supply and logistics base for the rest of the war in the Pacific.*
- **SYDNEY HARBOUR:** *RAN and Civil Defence personnel from NSW saw action against the Japanese navy during the midget submarine attack on Sydney on the night of 31 May–1 June 1942 and the shelling of Sydney and Newcastle a week later. RAAF personnel from NSW joined the RAN in maritime patrols off the east coast of Australia for the duration of the war.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### BELGIUM

- **MESSINES:** *This was the NSW-raised 9th Brigade's first great battle on the Western Front, fought in June 1917.*
- **YPRES:** *The Ypres Salient, which was the heart of operations for this sector of the Western Front in the second half of 1917, takes in operations by the AIF, RAA gunners from the Heavy Artillery Group, and the first operations flown by No. 3 Squadron, AFC.*
- **MENIN ROAD:** *This battle, fought on 20 September 1917, involved I ANZAC Corps in the first of the successful advances of British General Herbert Plumer's "bite and hold" tactics in the Salient.*
- **POLYGON WOOD:** *In its first major battle since being rebuilt after the disaster of Fromelles, the NSW-raised 14th Brigade captured Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917.*
- **PASSCHENDAELE:** *In October 1917 I and II ANZAC Corps fought alongside each other for the first time and broke into the massive German Flanders defence complex and the Passchendaele ridge line.*

### CAMBODIA

- **BATTAMBANG:** *ADF personnel participated in the following UN operations related to Cambodia: UNBRO (1989–93), UNAMIC (1991–92), UNTAC (1992–93) and CMAC (1994–99). Australian military signallers provided logistic support for the implementation of successful elections. Battambang was one of the bases from which the Australian forces.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### CHINA

- **PEKING:** *The New South Wales Naval Contingent provided military aid in support of the civil administration, including police and fire brigades, to restore order and public services during the tumultuous period in China following the siege of international legations in Peking in the summer of 1900.*

### EGYPT

- **ROMANI:** *NSW-raised light horse regiments played a pivotal role in guarding the southern flank of the British line and delaying the Turkish advance into Sinai (4–5 August 1916).*
- **EL ALAMEIN:** *El Alamein (23 October–5 November 1942) was the defining battle of the war in North Africa. NSW units of the 9th Division played a significant role in the battle, as did RAAF personnel serving in the RAF's Desert Air Force.*
- **MEDITERRANEAN SEA:** *RAN and RAAF personnel from NSW participated in the war in the Mediterranean, from maintaining the vital supply lines to Tobruk to supporting the invasions of Sicily and the Italian mainland.*

### ENGLAND

- **ATLANTIC CONVOYS:** *Large numbers of RAN personnel served in RN and other Allied surface vessels and submarines during the Second World War. They established a reputation for courage and endurance on the Atlantic convoys and in fleet operations in the sea war against the Germans. RAAF Coastal Command squadrons gained a similar reputation on escort, anti-submarine and rescue missions.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### FRANCE

- **ALBERT:** *The site of the base of operations of the 1916 Somme campaign was saved from the German spring offensive of 1918 (Operation Michael) by the Australians.*
- **AMIENS:** *The Australian Corps and three squadrons of the AFC were involved in the opening attack of the great allied counter-offensive known as the battle of Amiens, which began on 8 August 1918.*
- **BULLECOURT:** *Units from NSW participated in both the First and Second Battles of Bullecourt (11 April and 3–17 May 1917).*
- **DERNACOURT:** *Australian defence of the town and the railway embankment (March–April 1918) prevented the German spring offensive breaking the British Lines north of the Somme.*
- **FROMELLES:** *The NSW-raised 14th Brigade formed the centre of the 5th Division's attack on the German lines on the night of 19–20 July 1916, and was almost wiped out.*
- **HAMEL:** *Monash's great demonstration battle, fought on 4 July 1918 (US Independence Day), included soldiers and airmen from New South Wales.*
- **HAZEBROUCK:** *In April 1918 New South Wales units were among the Australian forces that prevented the German spring offensive breaking through to the English Channel.*
- **HINDENBURG OUTPOST LINE:** *Australians helped breach the Hindenburg Outpost Line on 18 September 1918. As a result, Germany was forced to surrender or see the war carried onto its own soil.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### **FRANCE cont.**

- **MONT ST QUENTIN:** *On 31 August 1918 the NSW-raised 5th Brigade led the assault on Mont St Quentin, the heights overlooking the great bend on the Somme River.*
- **NORMANDY:** *RAAF squadrons and RAAF personnel serving in RAF squadrons provided aircrew for air operations against German positions on the Normandy coast in support of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Europe, launched on D-Day, 6 June 1944.*
- **PERONNE:** *The fortress that had resisted invaders since the days of the great 17th-century military architect Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban fell to the Australian 5th Division on 1–2 September 1918.*
- **POZIERES:** *“The Windmill site [at Pozières] ... marks a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth.” (Charles Bean, Anzac to Amiens). Almost a third of the Australian troops committed to the battle of Pozières (23 July–5 August 1916) were from units raised in NSW.*
- **VILLERS-BRETONNEUX:** *The successful defence by Australian troops in both battles of Villers-Bretonneux (April 1918) prevented the Germans breaking through to Amiens during their spring offensive. The 9th Brigade from New South Wales played a pivotal role in the defence of the village during the first battle.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### GREECE

- **CAPE SPADA:** *The most famous action fought by the RAN in the Mediterranean occurred off Cape Spada on 19 July 1940 when HMAS Sydney engaged two Italian cruisers, sinking one and inflicted heavy damage on the other.*
- **RETIMO:** *Retimo Force was led by the all-NSW 2/1st Battalion. Of the three battles on Crete, Retimo (20–30 May 1941) lasted the longest and caused the longest delay to the German conquest of the island.*
- **TEMPE GORGE:** *On 18 April 1941, NSW-raised units of the 16th Brigade defended the vital road and rail line of communication through Tempe Gorge.*
- **VEVI PASS:** *The first battle fought against the Nazi invasion of Greece was the defence of the Vevi Pass by the NSW-raised 2/4th Battalion with other AIF, New Zealand Expeditionary Force and Greek units (11–13 April 1941).*





## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### INDONESIA

- **BALIKPAPAN:** *On 1 July 1945, the port of Balikpapan on the south-east coast of Borneo “became the scene of the largest (and last) Australian amphibious landing of the Second World War” (Clark, Encyclopaedia of Australia’s Battles). The campaign lasted until August.*
- **KINDAU:** *This was a successful Claret Operation (15 June 1965) in which companies from 3RAR, supported by artillery, ambushed a large Indonesian force.*
- **SUNDA STRAIT:** *On 27 February 1942 HMAS Perth was lost after a battle fought off the northern coast of Java against overwhelming odds. Before sinking, Perth inflicted massive casualties on the Japanese fleet it had engaged while trying to escort a crippled American cruiser to safety.*
- **SUNGEI KOEMBA:** *This was the scene, in May–June 1965, of two of the most successful Claret Operations by the companies from 3RAR against Indonesians in Kalimantan.*
- **TARAKAN:** *On 1 May 1945 an Australian brigade group from the 9th Division captured this strategic island, with its vital airbase, off the coast of Borneo. The campaign lasted until August.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### IRAQ

- **AL ASAD:** *The Iraqi airbase at Al Asad was captured in April 2003, in a combined operation involving Australian SAS, 4RAR and air strikes from No. 75 Squadron, RAAF.*
- **AL RUMAYTHAH:** *In September 2006, Australian infantry and cavalry were targeted by insurgents in an attack on the police barracks in the city of Al Rumaythah.*
- **BAGHDAD:** *The Iraqi capital was the base for Australian headquarters in that country and the site of ongoing security operations by the ADF.*
- **GULF OF OMAN:** *In September–October 1990 RAN vessels successfully enforced maritime trade sanctions imposed by the UN against Iraq.*

### ISRAEL

- **BEERSHEBA:** *The NSW-raised 12th Light Horse Regiment was one of the two assault regiments in the most famous Australian cavalry charge in history, at Beersheba on 31 October 1917.*
- **JERUSALEM:** *NSW-raised light horse regiments were part of the Australian Mounted Division that rode into this strategically significant and historically famous biblical city in December 1917.*
- **MEGIDDO:** *In September 1918 NSW-raised light horse regiments were part of the most extensive advance by men and horses of the war. The Great Ride across the biblical Plain of Sharon split the Ottoman army. No. 1 Squadron, AFC, also played a major role in this operation.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### **JORDAN (or Palestinian Territories)**

- **JORDAN VALLEY:** *NSW-raised light horse regiments were part of the Anzac Mounted Division that fought a campaign in the Jordan Valley to outflank the Ottoman army in Palestine and cut its lines of supply and communication.*

### **KOREAN DMZ**

- **MARYANG SAN:** *The capture of Hill 317 (Maryang San) by 3RAR in October 1951 was acclaimed by the British as one of the great battalion actions in military history.*
- **SAMICHON RIVER:** *In the last battle of the Korean War involving Australians, fought on 24–26 July 1953, 2RAR and 3RAR denied the vital high ground above the Samichon River to the enemy despite overwhelming Chinese Communist attacks in the days preceding the armistice.*

### **LEBANON**

- **MERDJAYOUN:** *One of the earliest and bitterest battles of the Syrian campaign was fought by the Australian 25th Brigade at Merdjayoun. The Australians captured the town on 11 June 1941, but the largest Vichy French counter-offensive of the war retook it. Then the Australians took it again. Almost a third of AIF casualties during the Syrian campaign were sustained at Merdjayoun. For his actions at Merdjayoun and Damour (where he lost a leg) in June–July, Sydney-born Lieutenant Roden Cutler won the VC. He was later knighted and served as Governor of New South Wales.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### LIBYA

- **BARDIA:** *NSW-raised units of the 6th Division played a significant role in the capture of the Italian fortress at Bardia on 3–5 January 1941*
- **TOBRUK:** *NSW-raised units of the 6th Division played a significant role in the capture of the Italian fortified port of Tobruk on 21–22 January 1941, and NSW-raised units of the 9th Division were instrumental in its defence during the subsequent siege (April–December). The RAN was also involved.*

### MALAYSIA

- **GEMAS:** *In mid-January 1942 the 2/30th Battalion from central and northern New South Wales fought the first battle of the Malayan campaign. The battalion inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese but was forced to withdraw.*
- **MUAR:** *In early 1942 NSW-raised units of the 8th Division played a vital role in delaying the Japanese advance down the Malay peninsula in battles around the Muar River.*
- **SUNGEI KESANG:** *Occurring on 29–30 October 1964, this was the only action in which Australian infantry (3RAR) and Australian artillery (102 Field Battery) operated together to defeat Indonesian infiltration on the Malaysian mainland.*
- **SUNGEI SIPUT:** *In late 1958, 3RAR engaged in successful patrol actions against Communist bases in the jungle north of Sungai Siput, Perak State, Malaya.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### NEW ZEALAND

- **ORAKAU:** *The 2nd Waikato Regiment and most of the 4th Waikato Regiment were raised in New South Wales, and both units were present at this action, fought on 31 March–2 April 1864.*
- **TE RANGA:** *The action at Te Ranga was fought on 21 June 1864. “Te Ranga was ... the first pitched battle in which Australians enlisted into any of the four Waikato militia regiments took part.” (Clark, Encyclopaedia of Australia’s Battles).*

### NORTH KOREA

- **CHONGJU:** *On 29 October 1950, 3RAR fought its way through a powerful North Korean People’s Army force blocking the route to the Chinese frontier on the Yalu River. The battalion inflicted heavy losses while suffering nine fatal casualties – among them Australia’s land force commander and the battalion CO, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green DSO, from Grafton in northern New South Wales.*

### PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

- **GAZA:** *NSW-raised light horse regiments and elements of the Imperial Camel Corps saw action in all three battles of Gaza (26–27 March, 17–19 April, 1–2 November 1917).*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- **AITAPE:** *This was the campaign to overcome the last major Japanese garrison in New Guinea.*
- **BISMARCK SEA:** *In an action fought off the northern coast of New Guinea on 2–3 March 1943, RAAF and USAAF air attacks destroyed the massive Japanese convoy intended to reinforce their New Guinea garrison.*
- **BITAPAKA:** *Soldiers and sailors from New South Wales were heavily engaged in the 11 September 1914 fighting on the road inland from Herbertshöhe (now Kocopo), beyond the current site of the CWGC cemetery. It was during this campaign that one of Australia's first two submarines, AE1, was lost while on patrol on 14 September.*
- **BUNA:** *Second AIF troops from the 7th Division supported by AMF units, with RAAF support, captured the base of Japanese operations on the Kokoda Trail (December 1942–January 1943).*
- **FINSCHHAFEN:** *The beach landing in the morning of 22 September 1943 by the largely NSW-raised 20th Brigade (of the 9th Division) captured the strategic position on the eastern end of the Huon Peninsula.*
- **KOKODA TRAIL:** *NSW-raised AMF units took part in the withdrawal down the Kokoda Trail, as well as in the reconquest of Papua. The campaign on the Kokoda Trail (July–November 1942) also saw RAAF and RAN involvement.*
- **MILNE BAY:** *RAAF aircrew and ground staff played a significant role in the defence of Milne Bay in August–September 1942 as did AMF and Second AIF troops*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA CONT.

- **RAMU VALLEY:** *An intense and lengthy campaign was conducted against the large Japanese garrison in the Markham and Ramu Valleys in late 1943. Disease and exhaustion competed with enemy action to increase the number of casualties.*
- **SANANANDA:** *In fighting on 12–18 January 1943, Second AIF troops from the 7th Division supported by AMF units and with RAAF support captured the last Japanese stronghold on the north coast of Papua.*
- **SATTELBERG:** *NSW-raised units of the 9th Division help captured the strategically dominant position on the heights above the Huon Peninsula (October–November 1943).*
- **SHAGGY RIDGE:** *This was the famous mountaintop campaign fought by the 7th Division in late January 1944 on the steep razorback mountains north-west of Lae.*
- **WAU:** *This was the scene of the vital defence by Kanga Force of an outpost that threatened the Japanese occupation of New Guinea (28 January–1 February 1943).*
- **WEWAK:** *Wewak (May–September 1945) was the battle that overcame the last Japanese stronghold in New Guinea and led to the surrender of General Hatazō Adachi's 18th Army at Cape Wom to Major General Horace Robertson of the 6th Division on 13 September 1945.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### RWANDA

- **KIBEHO:** *This refugee camp in Rwanda was the site of the brutal massacre by members of the Rwandan Patriotic Army on 22 April 1995. Australian peacekeepers serving with UNAMIR were forced to watch and attempted to save some of the victims.*

### SCOTLAND

- **SCAPA FLOW:** *Scapa Flow was the principal fleet base for the Royal Navy during both world wars, and was therefore the home port of RAN ships from 1916 to 1919 and RAN personnel from 1939 to 1945.*

### SINGAPORE

- **SINGAPORE:** *NSW-raised units of the 8th Division, as well as air force and naval personnel, played a vital role in the doomed defence of Singapore Island, which fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942.*

### SOMALIA

- **BAIDOA:** *Australians served in a variety of UN operations in Somalia: UNOSOM I (1992–93), UNITAF (1992–93), and UNOSOM II (1993–95). In February–March 1993 the 1RAR battalion group fought a series of small clashes against armed bandits during the humanitarian crisis in Somalia.*





## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### SOUTH AFRICA

- **BOTHAVILLE:** *An unsuccessful attempt to catch Boer General Christiaan de Wet was made on 6 November 1900 in which the NSW Mounted Rifles and the WA Mounted Infantry made flank attacks.*
- **DIAMOND HILL:** *In their march to the Boer capital of Pretoria, the NSW-raised 1st Australian Horse and the NSW Lancers, with NSW Ambulance in support, attacked the major Boer stronghold at Diamond Hill (11–12 June 1900).*
- **ELANDS RIVER:** *The NSW Bushmen formed one of the largest colonial units in the garrison during the siege of this strategic outpost in the Western Transvaal (4–16 August 1900). Jan Smuts, later a senior Boer commander, said of the defenders: “All honour to these heroes who in the hour of trial rose nobly to the occasion.”*
- **KOSTER RIVER:** *Fought on 22 July 1900, this was the first battle (and defeat) for several contingents, including the NSW Citizens’ Bushmen.*
- **LANGVERWACHT:** *Major Charles Cox and his 3rd NSW Mounted Rifles failed to stop General De Wet and President Martinus Steyn escaping through the British lines (24 February 1902).*
- **STINKHOUTBOOM:** *On 24 July 1900 the NSW Mounted Rifles attacked General de Wet’s rearguard. During the battle British-born Captain Neville Howse, NSW Army Medical Corps, who had migrated to New South Wales in 1889, became the first Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross.*
- **VET RIVER:** *This was a wild charge (on foot) by the NSW Mounted Rifles on 5 May 1900 that overcame the Boer lines.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### SOUTH KOREA

- **KAPYONG:** *In Australia's most famous battle of the Korean War, fought on the eve of Anzac Day 1951, 3RAR successfully delayed a massively superior Chinese Communist advance on Seoul.*

### SUDAN

- **SUAKIN:** *The NSW Sudan Contingent was the first formed combat unit from a British colony, other than India, to deploy to one of Britain's Imperial wars.*

### TIMOR LESTE

- **DILI:** *Dili was the site of the ADF headquarters and the centre of Australian operations during the establishment of Timor-Leste. Australian elements of both INTERFET and UNTAET operated out of Dili.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### TURKEY

- **ANZAC LANDING:** *The NSW-raised 1st Brigade landed at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915, completing the arrival of the 1st Australian Division. On the morning of the landing, the brigade held the centre and right of the line, pushing inland as far as Pine Ridge.*
- **HILL 60:** *The NSW-raised 5th Brigade suffered horrendous casualties on its first day ashore on Gallipoli when it was thrown into the initial attack on Hill 60 (August 1915).*
- **LONE PINE:** *The NSW-raised 1st Brigade led the charge in the most famous action of the Gallipoli campaign, the battle of Lone Pine (6–9 August 1915).*
- **SARI BAIR RANGE:** *In August 1915, the NSW-raised 13th Battalion fought its way onto Abdul Rahman Spur in an attempt to capture Hill 971, the highest point on the Sari Bair Range.*



## THE SITES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### VIETNAM

- **BALMORAL and CORAL:** *Two fire-support bases, established by the RAR to prevent Communist forces infiltrating towards Saigon, successfully held out against successive determined VC and NVA attacks (13–28 May 1968).*
- **BINH BA:** *On 6–7 June 1969 a ready reaction force from the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF), including No. 9 Squadron, RAAF, drove a large and well-armed body of VC and NVA from the captured village.*
- **LONG KHANH:** *Fought on 7 June 1971, this was the last – and one of the few – set-piece battles fought by 1 ATF, including No. 9 Squadron, RAAF, during the Vietnam War.*
- **LONG TAN:** *Fought in a rubber plantation on 18 August 1966, this was Australia’s most famous battle of the Vietnam War; a vastly outnumbered Australian force held out against prolonged Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) attacks until reinforced.*