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CHAPTER XXV

ENSURING THE SAFETY OF THE SETTLERS

The Defence of the Frontiers*

The first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, seemed essentially a soldier. His letter of appointment dated 29 April 1859, from Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton (later Lord Lytton), Minister of State for Colonies, included, among much sound advice as to the duties and bearing of a Colonial Governor, the following comments upon that of defence:

"You will, as soon as possible, exert all energy and persuasion to induce the Colonists to see to their self-defence internally. Try to establish a good police: if you can then get the superior class of Colonist to assist in forming a Militia or Volunteer Corps, spare no pains to do so. It is at the commencement of the Colonies that this object can be best effected. A Colony that is once accustomed to pains to do so. It is at the commencement of the Colonies that this object can be best effected. A Colony that is once accustomed to dependence on Imperial soldiers for aid never grows up into vigorous manhood."

Precisely two months after Bowen assumed office, it was announced (10 Feb. 1860) that lists would be opened for volunteers to form (with their own horses) one troop of 25 Mounted Rifles and two companies (each of 50) to serve as infantry. In the Government Gazette of 3 March 1860 the services of the Brisbane Troop of the Queensland Mounted Rifles were accepted on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Victoria; Ipswich followed (G.G. 26 May 1860); then the Pt. Curtis (Gladstone) troop was established on 1 December 1860, and on the last day of the year the Rockhampton Coy. of the Queensland Rifle Brigade. Uniforms were of the Imperial pattern and were provided by the volunteers at their own expense; officers were elected by their individual units; while the Gazette of 25 August 1860 announced that Hon. Maurice Charles O'Connell, M.L.C. (formerly Captain of H.M. 28th Reg.) was appointed Commandant, with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel. A long and honourable record of service, unexcelled by any other Colony or State of Australasia, was begun.

* Based largely on a paper prepared by Commander N. Pixley, D.S.O.

(149) The first officers were:—Brisbane (Q.M.R.) Captain: John Bramston; 1st Lieut. (Major): Edwin Lewis Burrowes; 2nd Lieut.: Francis Robert Chester Master. Ipswich Q.M.R. Cavalry: Captain: Arthur Delves Broughton; 1st Lieut.: Richard Joseph Smith; 2nd Lieut.: Louis Heite; Infantry: Captain: Lt.-Col. Charles George Gray; 1st Lieut.: John Kent; 2nd Lieut.: Donald Bethune; Corps Secretary and Q.M.: C. J. Chubb. The first captain of the Queensland Rifle Brigade at Rockhampton was John Jardine, Police Magistrate, who, very soon afterwards, was posted to Somerset, C. York Peninsula. Hon. Maurice Charles O'Connell (later Knighted) was Commissioner of Crown Lands at Gladstone in 1854 (see footnote 97).

Meanwhile Governor Bowen had announced this development to the Duke of Newcastle (18 May 1860) as follows:

"Again, Queensland is the only Colony in the Australian Group—indeed it is the only Colony of importance in any part of the Empire—where (not to speak of defence against external aggression) the dignity of the Crown and the authority of the law are entirely deprived of the support and prestige of a detachment of Her Majesty's troops. On my first assumption of office it could hardly be said that any public force whatsoever existed in Queensland. By dint of personal exertion and influence, I have now succeeded in organising a police corps, and also a body of rifle volunteers."

As the Imperial Government considered its obligations to the Colony would be discharged in the main by the Royal Navy, Queensland continued to concentrate on its land defences.

Sir George Bowen sailed on 27 August 1862 in H.M.S. "Pioneer" to inspect the northern coast of Queensland and, on his return, recommended to the Imperial authorities the establishment of a harbour of refuge and coaling station at Somerset, Port Albany, on the Cape York Peninsula. In the following year his proposal was adopted and a detachment of Marines under Lieutenant Pascoe, with Dr. Horan as medical officer, was sent to Port Albany from England.

H.M. sloop "Salamander," a wooden paddle-wheel vessel, Commander the Hon. John Carnegie, visited the station once a quarter. During the continuance of the station at Somerset (later transferred to Thursday Island, which was afterwards fortified) it was visited by several distinguished officers of the Royal Navy who continued the surveying of Torres Straits and the coast. Commander Duke Young followed Commander Carnegie and was relieved by Sir George Nares. Other officers were: Captain Bingham, H.M.S. "Virago," and Commander Moresby in H.M.S. "Basilisk," the ship associated with so much of her captain's work in Torres Straits and on the New Guinea coast. Captain Blackwood, H.M.S. "Fly," had previously made an examination of the Great Barrier Reef (1842-1845).

On 11 February 1863 a despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies intimated that the Imperial Government had agreed, at the request of the Queensland Government, to surrender the old barracks and ground (on the site of the present Government Printing Office, and erected in 1830 for the Foot under Captain Logan) provided, that the Colony would give another site and erect the proper buildings on it for accommodation of troops, according to plans approved by the Imperial authorities.(150)

In 1864 Parliament repealed the New South Wales Defence Act and replaced it by the Queensland Defence Act, and on 6 August 1864 announced that the Queensland Mounted Rifles would, in future, be styled the "Queensland Light Horse."

The course of the corps was, by no means, smooth running, as

(150) Tenders were subsequently accepted for the new "Victoria Barracks" in 1866 at a cost of £5,659 and a start was made that year on the construction.
various resignations, disbandments, and so on indicate. For example, on 29 December 1865 the Governor notified through the Government Gazette that:

“Funds provided by Parliament for volunteer purposes were exhausted and no further payments would be made; that 275 uniforms had been supplied at public expense and the least the Volunteers could do was to continue; that an Armourer would be paid £100 per annum to look after arms and military stores; and would also be required to give instruction and assistance to Volunteers.”

Nevertheless the various units managed to keep going and by 1875 a series of annual encampments for training was inaugurated, the first being held at Toowoomba under Captain John McDonnell. Numbers had not grown to any great extent, but the turning point in the fortunes of the unit was not far away.

In 1877 General Sir William Jervois and Colonel (later Major-General Sir) Peter Scratchley (see Chapter XV, page 175) advised upon the situation and General Jervois commented and reported upon recommendations made by Major McDonnell, who, in 1878, was promoted Lieut.-Colonel and Commandant.

The era of real development began in the year 1882.

Indications earlier of possible hostilities with Russia and the fact that, in this event, Great Britain might be unable to assist the Colonies, had focussed their attention more strongly on their own defences.

At the request of the Queensland Government a memorandum, with proposals for Queensland defence based on the general outline for the defence of Australia recommended by Sir William Jervois, was submitted by Colonel Scratchley to the Colonial Secretary on 24 April 1882. The Government, on receiving the memorandum, took early steps to implement its recommendations, which were far-reaching, and stressed, in addition to the military forces, the "paramount necessity for floating defences for the protection of commerce and the seaboard of the Colony."

The plans included a battery at Lytton, and torpedoes (controlled mines) in the river; a gunboat, and one or more torpedo-boats; floating defences to impede landings, and a field force on land—these to be extended to include Maryborough and Rockhampton; additional telegraph stations along the coast; a gunboat (for general purposes in times of peace); and considerable provision for small vessels, used at other times for ordinary harbour purposes. With this a force of 1,370 men was advocated.

On 18 July 1882 Mr. S. W. Griffith, Q.C., Member for North Brisbane (later to become Sir Samuel Griffith, the first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia) asked the Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, if it were the intention of the Government, “in view of the present state of affairs in Europe, to invite the immediate attention of the House to the question of the defences of the Colony.” Later, the Colonial Treasurer (Hon. A. Archer) moved in the estimates for £60,000 for Defence, to be allocated from surplus revenue of the 1882-3 estimates, for the purchase of two gunboats, one to be stationed in the Thursday Island area and one in the Moreton Bay area.

Orders were placed for these two ships with Sir W. G. Armstrong, Mitchell and Co., of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and, in due course, the “Gayundah” and the “Paluma” (abo. “Lightning” and “Thunder”) were launched. (They were engaged for years on marine surveying duty (see Chapter XIX, The Maritime Frontier, p. 229 et seq.)

Considerable public interest was aroused when the “Mosquito,” a second-class torpedo boat, launched 16 July 1884, was the first unit of the Queensland Marine Defence Force to arrive in the Colony. While the ships were on their somewhat devious way from England, a meeting was held (29 November 1884) to form a Volunteer Naval Force and a committee waited upon the Premier to offer the services of its members. The Premier, who had introduced the Defence Bill of 1884 on 6 August, accepted, and took action accordingly.

It was a time of high excitement and expectancy. Queensland’s annexation of New Guinea (see Chapter XV) had been stupidly disallowed, and Germany and others were shouldering aside the pretensions of Australia in the South Pacific, based on sixty years of active exploration, and small-vessel trading, over a vast area. Moreover, there was a Russian scare of some dimensions.

In moving the defence estimates for 1885-6 the Premier and Colonial Secretary (Sir Samuel Griffith) warned Parliament that the threat of war was “no idle one,” and that it was well known that arrangements (including an ample supply of coal) had been made by the Russians for attacking the Australian coast. Lieut. Walton Drake, R.N., of H.M.S. “Wolfpine,” was appointed training officer for the Naval Brigade, of which the Brisbane Division held its Easter encampment, with the military volunteers at Lytton Fort, commencing 26 March 1885.

The development of Naval shore establishments was also proceeding: a Naval Staff Office in Edward Street, Brisbane, was secured and the erection of a Naval Stores, repair and training depot at Kangaroo Point commenced. A slipway for “Mosquito” was built in the South Brisbane reach of the river behind Parliament House; the Naval Establishment at Kangaroo Point, completed in 1887, consisted of two galvanised iron buildings each of two stories, housed a gun battery for training, workshops for ship repairs, a torpedo workshop and a wharf with sheer-legs.

Training centres, with units of the Naval Brigade, were formed in Thursday Island, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Maryborough, with an instructor at each of these ports. “Gayundah” made periodical visits to these centres to carry out sea-training and gunnery exercises.

The Government steamer “Otter” was fitted as an auxiliary, as were five steam-propelled hopper barges of the Harbours and Rivers Department, each having a gun mounting forward to take a 5in. B.L. 21-ton gun. As most of the crews of these vessels were members of the Naval Brigade, manning of the auxiliaries, when required as such, presented no problem.

A fourth unit of the Queensland Marine Defence Force, “Midge,” shipped out in 1887, was a picquet boat. She had mountings for a
three-pounder Nordenfeldt forward, two machine-guns aft and, like "Mosquito," was fitted with two sets of dropping-gear for 14in. torpedoes.

Military Expansion

With the general reorganisation following the adoption of the recommendations of Sir W. Jervois, the Volunteer Defence Act provided for a considerable military organisation which included a detachment of permanent soldiers, as follows:

Permamcnt Forces: "A" Battery Q. D. F.; 100 rank and file Garrison Artillery with Mining and Engineering detachment; a Major as O.C.; a Captain and three subalterns. The main body was to be at Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, with detachments stationed at Townsville and Thursday Island. Militia Forces: 2 Batteries, Field Artillery, Brisbane and Moreton (Ipswich Headquarters) Field Batteries: 4 guns each 9 lb., muzzle loading; 1 Battery Garrison Artillery, Brisbane; 1 Battery Garrison, Townsville; 1 Company Engineers, Brisbane.

Infantry: Moreton Regiment: Headquarters, Brisbane.
Darling Downs Regiment: Headquarters, Toowoomba.
Wide Bay-Burnett Regiment: Headquarters, Rockhampton.

Kennedy Regiment: Headquarters, Townsville.

Army Service Corps and Army Medical Corps.

Several Volunteer Infantry Units were also formed, the Queensland Irish, Queensland Scottish and Teachers (all in Brisbane); Cadets and Rifle Corps.

Except for Volunteers, uniforms were all Imperial pattern. Volunteers wore grey with distinguishing facings. (Mounted officers at this time used the sabretache, the Sam Brown Belt had not yet been evolved.) Martini-Henri rifles were used, 0.45 calibre, black powder.

The Mounted Infantry uniform was of khaki with claret-coloured facings, and "Digger" hats with emu plumes. Like the other branches they were equipped with Martini-Henri rifles. Their pay was the same as for other military units, but each man received his own horse and received a horse allowance.

The Mounted Infantry was the first Regiment to see active service in South Africa, when Queensland sent three contingents, and also three for the Imperial Government.

The "Light Horse," the "Mounted Infantry" and the "digger's slouch hat" with the emu plumes were to become world-renowned in the next fifty years, and amply to merit their renown.

The Defence Act of 1884

This Act, introduced as a Bill on 6 August 1884, repealed the Act of 1878. (Qld. Parl. Debates, Vol. XLIII.)

The Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, who introduced it, mentioned that the Bill was based on the Canadian Militia System, generally admitted to be the most satisfactory system, and that the advice of Colonel French, who had been connected with the Militia in Canada, had been of great assistance to the Government.

Apart from its provision for permanent forces, and a militia, the Bill proposed to divide Queensland into a Southern and a Northern Military District.

The Premier stated that the Bill would enable the Governor to place the Defence Force, when called out for actual service, under command of Her Majesty’s regular forces in Queensland or in any other place where the force might be required to serve; or under the orders of any of the officers then in command of the forces of any other of the Australian Colonies. That is to say, if it were desirable, the Defence Force might march beyond the border of Queensland, and it might be placed under the command of any officer who may be appointed for the whole of the Colonies.

The Bill proposed that all persons who entered the Police Force in future should become members of the Defence Force and should be liable to be attached to any Corps, when ordered in case of necessity.

The Bill also provided for the Governor to sanction the establishment of rifle clubs, or corps, and of associations for the purposes of drill; arms and ammunition could be provided, but not clothing, nor any clothing allowance.

Doubtless due in some degree to the renewed interest in defence, indicated by the Government’s Defence Act in the previous year, and the consequent publicity, the year 1885 was one of great activity and new units were formed in the centres of Bundaberg, Cairns, Charters Towers, Gladstone, Gympie, Hughenden, Maryborough, Ravenswood, Roma, Townsville (the Naval Volunteer Artillery Corps), Bowen, Howard, Dalby, and Mackay.

Cadet Corps

The first of these was the Brisbane Grammar School Cadet Corps formed in 1873; subsequent units were:

1885: (16 April) The Southport Cadet Corps; (17 July) The Gympie Cadet Corps; (14 Sept.) The Maryborough Cadet Corps.

1886: (2 April) The Roma Cadet Corps.

1887: (6 Oct.) The Woolloongabba Cadet Corps.

1888: (14 Nov.) The Cairns Cadet Corps.

1889: (17 July) The Townsville Cadet Corps; (18 Sept.) Indooroopilly State School Cadet Corps; (19 Dec.) Ipswich Cadet Corps.

1890: (16 Jan.) Ipswich Grammar School Cadet Corps; (16 Jan.) Rockhampton Cadet Corps (Rockhampton Boys’ Central School).

1891: (29 Aug.) Maryborough Grammar School Cadet Corps.

1892: (14 July) Toowoomba Grammar School Cadet Corps; (20 July) Toowoomba State School Cadet Corps.

In 1903 the Bowen House School Naval Corps was established. (Bowen House School was opposite St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Ann Street and the boarding house was Hurlton House, Chelmer.)

Active Service—The Soudan

When the news of the destruction of General Gordon and his men at Khartoum reached Australia, there was a great outburst of anger and patriotic fervour and, with the commencement of the campaign in the Soudan in 1885, offers of contingents were made from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia. One contingent from New South Wales, which was equipped and ready, was accepted but as the length of time needed to prepare units from other Colonies precluded these from arriving in time, they were not despatched: the campaign terminated on 23 June 1885. This was
the first occasion on which any Australian troops were sent overseas
and the “Morning Post” in England commented:

“As at a time when many persons are puzzling their brains to devise
some scheme of Imperial Federation, it is interesting to note that our
Australian Colonies have recognised, in a very practical form, the
common bond of union which, in the hour of peril to the British
Empire, unites them to the Mother Country.”

South Africa (The Boer War)

In the year 1899, when Major-General Howel Gunther was com-
mandant, Queensland volunteers for active service in the South
African war were ordered into camp at Meeandah on 19 October
and formed a force called “The Queensland Mounted Infantry.”

The Debt of the Commonwealth to Queensland

The time was now approaching when the Defence Forces of
Queensland were to be merged with those of the other Australian
Colonies into the Defence Forces of the Commonwealth. In 1900
Colonel H. Finn became the last Commandant of the Queensland
Defence Force; he held this appointment when the Commonwealth
Military Forces came into being.

The initiative taken so early by the Colony to provide for its own
defences and the interest and devotion of its volunteer soldiers over
a period of forty years provided for Australia on Federation a large
body of volunteers with experience and tradition. This was evidenced
by the high proportion in the first A.I.F. of generals who were
Queenslanders, a greater number than from any other State. Such
men as Brudenell White, Chauvel, Glasgow, Spencer Brown, Lachlan
Wilson, Robertson, Grant, Coxen, Cannon, Sellheim, Dods, and Foote
owed their early interest and training to the Volunteer Defence
Forces of Queensland—a magnificent tribute to its worth and work.

The Queensland Marine Force

In August 1884 the Earl of Northbrook, First Lord of the
Admiralty, had refused to allow the White Ensign to be flown by
Victorian men-of-war, stating that, whilst no slur was intended, the
Blue Ensign was considered the proper flag for Colonial men-of-war.
With this precedent, therefore, “Gayundah” was commissioned under
the Blue Ensign, but carrying also the badge of the Colony. In
October the Premier, Hon. S. W. Griffith, offered her to the Admiralty
for service with the Royal Naval Squadron in Australian waters, to
obviate idle periods and to gain for officers and men the advantage
of training and discipline. She was to be manned, equipped and
maintained at the expense of Queensland. Griffith emphasised, adding
that: “the proposal, in effect, is that the Colony should, to the extent
indicated, contribute to the expense of Australian defence.”

(“Paluma” had at this stage already been placed at the disposition
of the Admiralty for surveying duties.) On 21 July 1885 the offer
was accepted and in September 1886 the “Gayundah” was authorised
to “wear the White Ensign and Pendant of Her Majesty’s Fleet.”
She thus became the first ship of the Colonial Navies to have the
honour of wearing the White Ensign, an event of some significance,
indicating the broad outlook on Empire defence of Queensland, in
the naval as well as the military sphere.

Liquidation by Consent

With Federation near the end of the Colonial Navies was now
approaching also, but, as the new Commonwealth found the taking
over of all Defence, Customs and Postal Departments a tremendous
task, it was not until 1902 that the Navy of the Commonwealth
really began.

Here again, Queensland showed its initiative in Australian defence
when, at the suggestion of its Premier, a conference of Naval Officers
was held in Melbourne on 5 August 1899 to consider the question of
the Naval Defence of Australia; to provide a concerted scheme for
the formation of a Royal Naval Reserve; and to forward its recom-
mendations to the Minister for Defence.

Queensland’s part in the foundation of the Royal Australian Navy
was no small one as, apart from her ships and establishments, it will
be noted by the Commonwealth Navy List of 1904 that, of a total of
135 officers on the active and unattached list, officers from the (late)
Queensland Marine Defence Force totalled 66.

After Federation “Gayundah,” “Paluma,” “Midge” and “Mosquito”
remained stationed in Queensland for some years and were used
mainly for the training of the Naval Brigade; with universal training
(introduced in 1911) they were of value in the training of the large
influx of Naval Reservists. “Paluma” was sold out of the Service, but
her memory was honoured in 1958 by the naming of an R.A.N. survey
ship “Paluma.” “Gayundah” which, in 1903, further made history by
being the first Australian warship to use wireless telegraphy, finished
her Naval career after service in World War I.

Commander Drake was relieved as Naval Commandant in 1900 by
Captain W. R. Creswell, who became subsequently Australia’s first
Chief of the Naval Staff.

Queensland in Defence since Federation

Since Federation Queenslanders have maintained a flow of volun-
unteers for the services in high proportion to the population, and have
acquitted themselves well in many parts of the world.
During the World War I Australia was spared from hostile attack, save for the menace of one or two minefields laid by raiders off the southern coast. Queensland made notable contributions of men to the Forces, however, on a voluntary basis.

The composition of the 1st Division, Australian Imperial Force, was determined by 8th August 1914 as three infantry brigades, with ancillary artillery, engineers, pioneers, ambulance units, etc. The brigades were to be drawn as follows:

1st Infantry Brigade—New South Wales.
2nd Infantry Brigade—Victoria.
3rd Infantry Brigade—the four remaining States.

This principle was applied as far as possible, in all the divisions raised throughout the war, and, with modifications, applied to the Light Horse Brigades and all ancillary units attached to the divisions.

The first Queensland units raised were the 9th Battalion and the Second Light Horse Regiment. Both these fought on Gallipoli and, in fact, it is almost certain that the first boat to ground on Anzac Cove on the historic morning of 25th April 1915 (Anzac Day) was occupied by troopers of the 9th Battalion, and that Queenslanders were the first Australians ashore.

During the war, the following were the Queensland units and the mixed “Queensland + other States” units:

- 9th Battalion—Queensland
- 15th Battalion—Queensland + Tasmania
- 25th Battalion—Queensland
- 26th Battalion—Queensland + Tasmania
- 31st Battalion—Queensland + Victoria
- 42nd Battalion—Queensland
- 47th Battalion—Queensland + Tasmania
- 49th Battalion—Queensland
- 69th Battalion—Queensland + Tasmania
- 2nd Light Horse Regiment—Queensland
- 5th Light Horse Regiment—Queensland
- 11th Light Horse Regiment—Queensland + South Australia

In addition there were, of course, Queensland artillery, engineers, etc.

The 9th Battalion sailed on s.s. “Omrah” from Pinkenba on 24 September 1914 and with the first Australian convoy from King George Sound, Western Australia, on 1 November 1914. These Queensland units participated in practically every major engagement in Gallipoli, France, Belgium, Sinai and Palestine. Their feats of arms are recorded in the annals of war and their memory cherished by all Queenslanders.

Two great Queenslanders associated with the distinguished Royal Flying Corps and the Australian Flying Corps were Charles Kingsford Smith, who transferred from the A.I.F. to the A.F.C., and H. J. L. (Bert) Hinkler, who enlisted in the R.F.C. Queensland airmen served with distinction: a War Office commentator in 1916 noted “the fact that the Australian temperament is specially suited to the flying services.” The truth of this remark was amply demonstrated in both wars, supremely so during the 1939-45 war.

In World War II Queensland rose magnificently to the occasion, as one might expect with her defence history. After over two years of war in theatres overseas, the morning of 7 December 1941 brought ominous tidings of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour—and, Australia was at war with Japan. Once again Naval Establishments were set up in Northern seaports: in Townsend in 1941 (in anticipation of hostilities with Japan); then, early in 1942, in Cairns and Thursday Island; but our Northern coast lacked fortifications and weapons of defence. Large numbers, in some cases all, of the civilian populations were compulsorily withdrawn from Thursday Island and other northern seaports or strategic areas at the first time any such measure had occurred in Australian history.

The garrison and population at Darwin were in a serious plight following the destruction of shipping and damage from Japanese air attacks: from early in 1942 for some months six small ships sailing regularly from Cairns kept Darwin’s only supply line open. Larger ships were so few that the risk of losing these could not be accepted, hence the little ships braved the hazards of air and submarine attack in their long trips to and from Darwin.

Troops and refugees, retreating before the Japanese advance, crossed the Coral Sea in all manner of craft, from New Guinea, New Britain and other islands, and arrived on various parts of the North Queensland coast, where they were cared for and sent South. (These included the survivors from the barbarous Tol Plantation massacre in New Britain.)

The “Coast Watchers,” a small devoted band of Australians, installed themselves in New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomon Islands, behind the enemy lines, to watch and report. They had been organised earlier and were controlled from Townsville by a Queenslander, Commander Eric Feldt, O.B.E., one of the first group of naval cadets to enter the Royal Australian Naval College, and one who had, after leaving the Navy, lived in New Guinea for many years. The work of the Coast-Watchers should be honoured always. The 19th and 20th squadrons of R.A.A.F. Catalinas were operating from Cairns from early in 1942, patrolling, making offensive sorties as far as Rabaul, and dropping supplies to the Coast-Watchers by “storepedo.”

The Torres Straits pilots carried on in the best traditions of the Merchant Navy, their work extending to New Guinea—new waters to many of them. Civil airline pilots included in their many flights from the North the flying out of refugees from Mt. Hagen, and the landing of Australian troops at Wau whilst the Japanese were on the actual perimeter of that airstrip. Through Gunboat Passage in the Barrier Reef transports and escorts from Townsville and Cairns carried to Port Moresby and Milne Bay the troops who were to administer the first defeat to the Japanese invaders.

From the northern seaports of Queensland came and went the surveying ships of the Royal Australian Navy, which were surveying the New Guinea waters, off enemy-held territory, so that the great armadas, which were later to sail from Queensland, could advance. Shipyards in Maryborough (which had built merchant ships in World War I), and in Brisbane, turned out vessels for the Navy in increasing numbers, and many barges and landing craft were built at seaports from Cairns to Brisbane.

From early in 1942 airfields were under hurried but effective construction in a chain from Horn Island (off the tip of Cape York Peninsula), Mareeba, on the Atherton Tableland, Townsville, and some centres inland, down to the Darling Downs and Brisbane. The transport alone of material, equipment, housing and provisions for the huge numbers of the Civil Construction Corps engaged in this task was a major undertaking. Mareeba aerodrome was constructed in a matter of days and from here, and from Charters Towers aerodrome, the Flying Fortresses flew their sorties in the Coral Sea Battle.

With Australian garrisons at Thursday Island and ports south, and...
the return of the 2nd A.I.F., which proceeded to the Atherton Tableland, to train in preparation for the New Guinea offensive, it might well have been thought that the resources of the State were taxed to the utmost but, in addition, 2,000,000 American troops were to pass through Queensland. General Blamey arrived in Brisbane in March 1942 and General Macarthur in July. It should be realised that for some months the whole enormous sea, land and air forces for the South-west Pacific offensive, with their bases, supplies and equipment, were concentrated in Queensland, which had to cope—and did—with enormous problems of transport by rail (e.g. fifty-one trains passed through the northern city of Charters Towers in one day), road construction, and food. (Thousands of beef cattle from the Gulf country and the Northern Territory supplied part of this need.)

Huge quantities of Queensland timber were used in the war effort and, from the far North to Brisbane on the coast, barges and landing craft were constructed to supplement the luggers of the pearling fleet, and other craft which were commandeered to supply the smaller outposts. (Plans had been laid for the destruction of all small craft after it was learnt how the Japanese had, in Malaya and other places, made use of any craft which would float—from launches to canoes—but, fortunately, this necessity did not arise; our small craft were spared for a very useful purpose and most of them went on to help later in New Guinea.)

The Key Role of Training in Tropical Disease Control

The Committee set up by the Premier, Hon. J. Forgan Smith, to report on the need or otherwise for a medical school within the University of Queensland won his support for it mainly by two arguments: one, that the necessity otherwise for intending graduates in medicine to go to other States which had medical schools, excluded, by the costs, the sons of many poorer families, of brilliant promise; and, the other, that world events indicated the vital significance that would attach to a knowledge of tropical medicine in the event of war, or of economic developments or of epidemic diseases involving the northern frontier—and that no University in Australia (33.64% a tropical land!) included special and separate attention to tropical medicine and hygiene for undergraduates as part of its routine course. When the war suddenly made the control of epidemic tropical diseases the most important of all the problems facing the Australian forces and their allies, Queensland was able to offer some (and ultimately 70) recently qualified medical men trained in those aspects that were vital to the health of the combat troops, and did so. That activity was taken over to a very great extent and considerably enlarged through the Commonwealth and the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Sydney—originally a Queensland activity, transferred there from Townsville in 1930.

With the first defeat of the Japanese by the Australians at Milne Bay at the extreme south-east end of New Guinea, and following the Coral Sea battle of May 1942 (fought so close to the shores of North Queensland), the tide of victory turned, and, again from Queensland, a seemingly endless stream of big and little ships flowed through Grafton Passage in the Great Barrier Reef, taking tens of thousands of troops from their training areas in Queensland where they had been prepared for the crushing counter-offensive that now destroyed the Japanese armies. From North Queensland, also, in ever increasing numbers went the planes that pioneered victory, which in due course came with the absolute and unconditional surrender of Japan.

Queensland, geographically, is the sentinel of the southern seas; the frontier post that must anticipate attack; and the richest of prizes. Traditionally, the race that claims and colonises it has the reputation of losing every battle, except the last! In an age where the first battle could also be the last, and where New Guinea stands as screen against, or springboard for a foe, Queensland is no longer able to contemplate either independent action for defence or the stupendous cost of local preparedness in arms—but there is little doubt that, as in her first century, her people will stoutly bear their full share in any challenge of the future.

(Acknowledgement is made for data kindly supplied by Commander N. M. Pixley.)

(152) It consisted of the following: Dr. W. N. Robertson, Vice-Chancellor of the University (ex officio); Sir Raphael Cilento; Prof. E. J. Goddard; Dr. L. J. J. Nye (alternate during absence overseas: Dr. E. S. Meyers); Dr. T. A. Price; Mr. T. L. Jones; Dr. A. D. D. Pye. (Appointed 10 June 1935.)