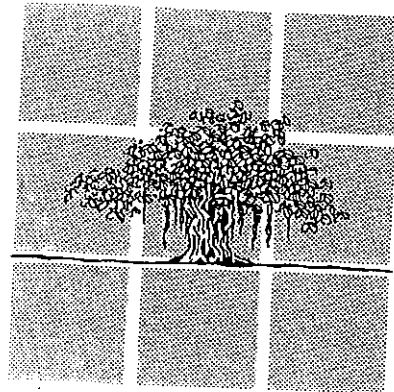


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VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC:
Fiftieth anniversary
commemorations in the
Northern Territory

Research Paper No. 6
August 1995

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VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC:
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
COMMEMORATIONS IN THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY

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SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

by

MAJOR GENERAL J. J. MURRAY, DSO, MC, VD

Commanding

NORTHERN TERRITORY FORCE

=====

By divine providence and the courage of our arms we have overcome that which assailed the peace of the world, and we have now the vast responsibility of creating a new heart superseding passion, selfishness and greed to build a new world where common justice will transcend every emotion.

We should be deeply grateful to those who lie in the waste spaces of the four corners of the earth with their sightless eyes turned to heaven, for their sacrifice is the price of our freedom.

Let no one forget his obligations. Each and every action of ours should be in service and not in gain, for true happiness lies only in service.

J. J. Murray,
Major General,
COMMANDING

NORTHERN TERRITORY FORCE

.15th. Aug., .1945

(copy)

TABLE OF CONTENTS:	2.
1. Special Order of the Day	1.
2. Table of Contents	2.
3. Introduction	2.
4. Victory in the Pacific: Fiftieth anniversary in the Northern Territory	3-8.
5. Reading List	9.
6. Key Articles	10-20.

INTRODUCTION:

The 50th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day will be celebrated in Darwin on the 15th of August 1995. Major events in August include:

Saturday 12th August - *Red Cross Victory Ball* at Parliament House.

Sunday 13th August - *Memorial Service* at the Uniting Church, the arrival and display of the *Back to the Track* vehicles and the *1995 Darwin Tattoo*.

Tuesday 15th August - *Dedication Ceremony*.

Wednesday 16th August - *Dedication of Medals and Awards* to the late Charles "Moth" Eaton at Parliament House.

This research paper has been published to help you with background information to VP Day and the events which you may be attending. Attached are also some further reading, photographs and information about celebrations occurring in the Northern Territory over the coming weeks.

This research papers is your own personal copy. Please do not hesitate to call the library on the hot line in the lobby room for any further enquiries. For your convenience, during the sittings the library is staffed from 8am to 8pm.

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC: FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

BACK TO THE TRACK:

The construction of the road from Alice Springs to Darwin during World War Two is commemorated as a major engineering and human feat by *Back to the Track*, a movement of over 90 original vehicles and 250 people travelling over 1600 kilometres. Original tracks were forged in 1862 and further developed by the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line in 1870-72. It was not until 1940 that the Darwin Overland Maintenance Force (DOMF) was ordered to supply Darwin by land and the first dispatch did not leave Alice Springs until March 1941. By June of 1942 the road surface was becoming unusable and resulted in the enormous task of upgrading and sealing the road. The task was completed but conditions remained difficult with some parts of the road becoming broken as the wet took its toll, tyres burst from the heat and medical problems added to the obstacles of getting supplies up north.¹



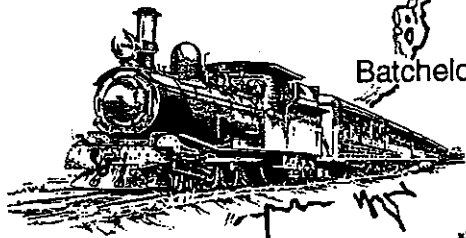
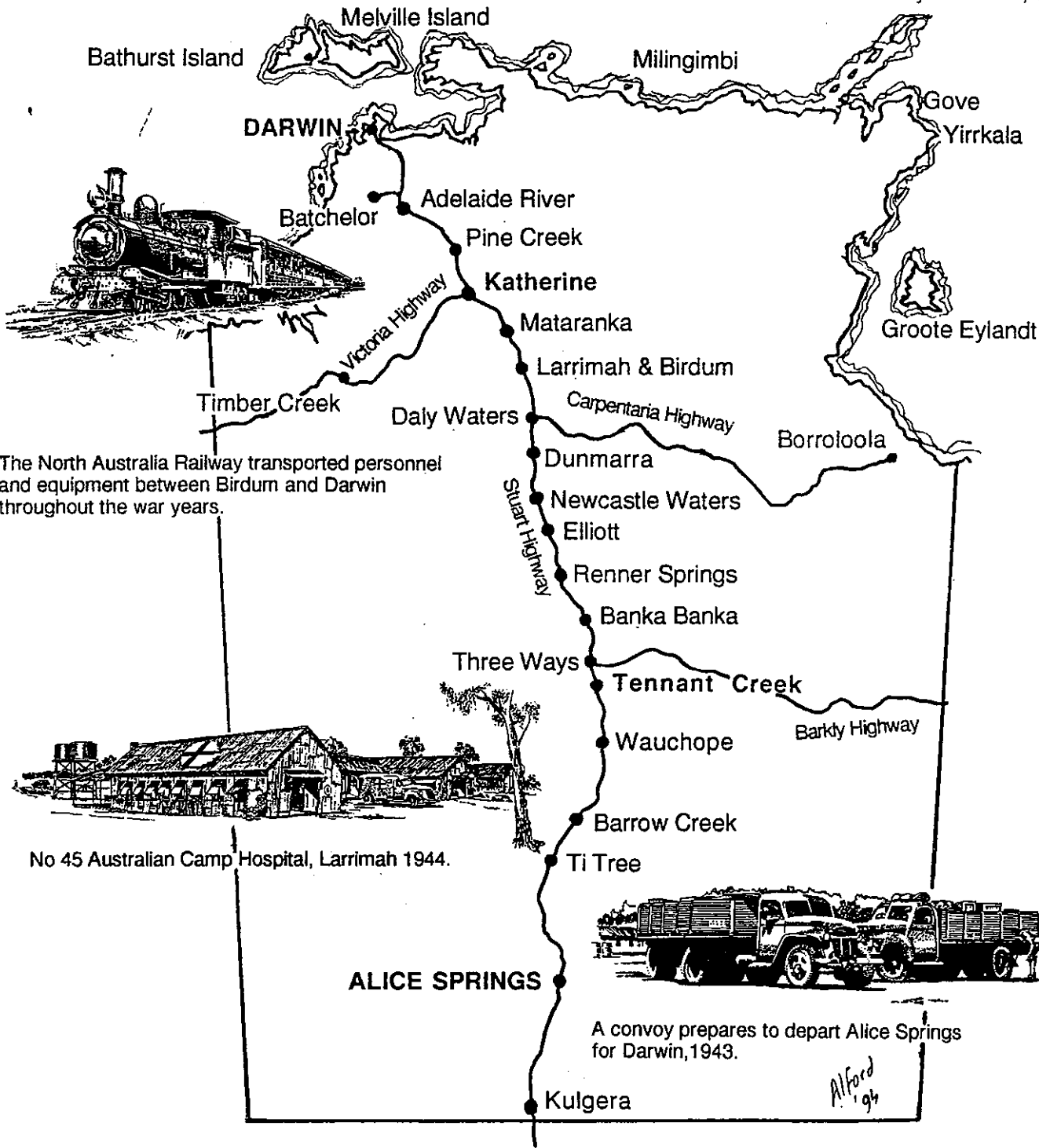
Convoy trucks stop between Alice Springs and Birdum on Stuart Highway 1941.

1

"Back to the Track: Northern Territory history comes alive in 1995", *Commemoration: Darwin and Australia's north withstand Japanese air offensive. (Australia Remembers 1945-1995)*. Sydney: The Open Road Publications, 1995.



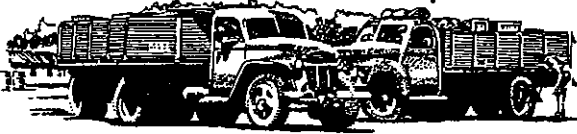
A RAAF Catalina flying boat on patrol from Melville Bay near Gove, 1944.



The North Australia Railway transported personnel and equipment between Birdum and Darwin throughout the war years.



No 45 Australian Camp Hospital, Larrimah 1944.



A convoy prepares to depart Alice Springs for Darwin, 1943.

Alford 94

The Northern Territory - Major Locations, World War II

RED CROSS VICTORY BALL:

The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9 caused the Japanese to surrender on the 15th of August 1945. The ending of World War Two led to immediate withdrawal of troops, and Darwin began the process of welcoming home its troops, especially those who had become prisoners of war (POWs). The first contact with Singapore by a wireless link was on the 21st of September, messages being sent in English and not in code with many transmissions containing information on POWs. The woman who took the first transmission, Ethel (Campbell) Samuels, recalled that plans were made to receive the POWs in Darwin "but nothing had prepared us for their physical conditions".² Samuels remembers meeting the ships in Darwin and preparing social events to help the POWs readjust, such as picnics on Mindil Beach or dances. Men who arrived in Darwin by plane were taken to a staging camp on the outskirts where they were visited and given new supplies of clothes and bedding. Darwin was also host to Dutch women and children who had been released from prison camps in the islands and were placed in the Larrakeyah Barracks.³

The equipment contained in camps, airfields and bases that had been established in the Territory were auctioned to be used to build new homes and businesses.⁴ Radio station 5DR which had operated during the war was reopened in 1946, at a site near the Botanic Gardens, illustrating that war time efforts and constructions brought not only a sealed road to Darwin but better communications.⁵

In the Annual Report on the administration of the Northern Territory for the year ending 30th June, 1946 the acting Administrator noted that the Territory and Darwin in particular was actively involved in operational services, when the cessation of the war "imposed heavy obligations and responsibilities upon the civil administration by the transfer to it of facilities and control from a war-time to a peace-time footing".⁶

2

"Samuels, Ethel (Campbell). "An AWAS' Memories of Darwin", *Australia Remembers 1945-1995: Supplementary Education Kit Northern Territory*.

3

Ibid.

4

Alford, Bob. "The Territory at War", *Australia Remembers 1945-1995*. 1994. p.4.

5

Report on the Northern Territory for Year 1945-46. p.3.

6

Ibid.

After VP Day Darwin and the Territory began the slow process of reverting to civilian control. Many of the administrative personnel had transferred to Alice Springs during the war and many did not return until 1946:

Post, telegraph and telephone services reverted to civil control at Darwin in a temporary building on 19th February, 1946...at 30th June, 1946, all health services had reverted to civil control. Stock and veterinary services had also been taken over...The Darwin Public School re-opened on 21st May, 1946...The schools at Pine Creek and Katherine re-opened on 17th August...⁷

Banks and commercial organisations re-established themselves during 1946 as did the defence personnel. On the 17th of January the passing of the *Darwin Lands Acquisition Act 1945* had the following result:

...the Commonwealth became the owner of all privately owned lands including improvements thereon in the Darwin and suburban areas. Shops, garages, restaurants and cafes had been opened in all suitable existing buildings and soon applications to erect temporary premises on vacant lands were received.⁸

The denial of entry to civilians into Darwin was officially lifted on the 28th of February 1946 by the repeal of the National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations. Old residents, including a number of Chinese, returned to find their homes destroyed. Departmental dwellings had suffered from structural damage and the loss of many facilities including cooking and washing facilities caused many service families to live in less than adequate surroundings. With the population growing and the need for suitable accommodation becoming pressing the Minister decided: to allow leases of commercial buildings for up to five years; no compensation was to be paid to improvements to temporary buildings; to establish a Town Management Board and an Advisory Committee to make recommendations regarding new town planning.⁹

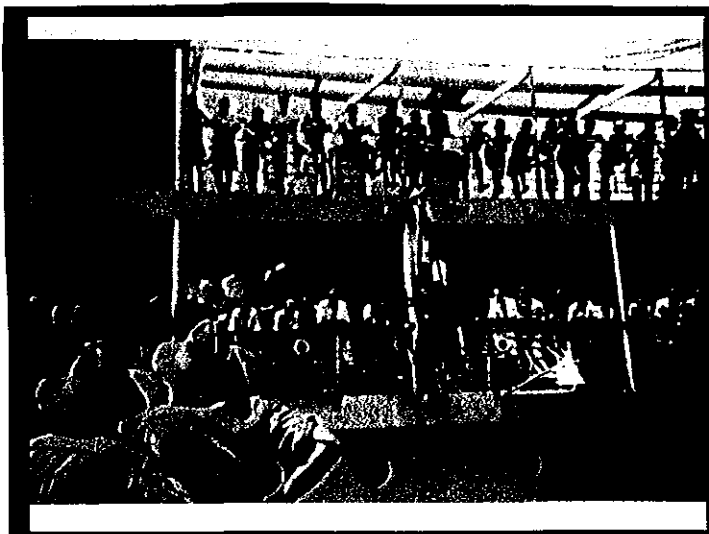
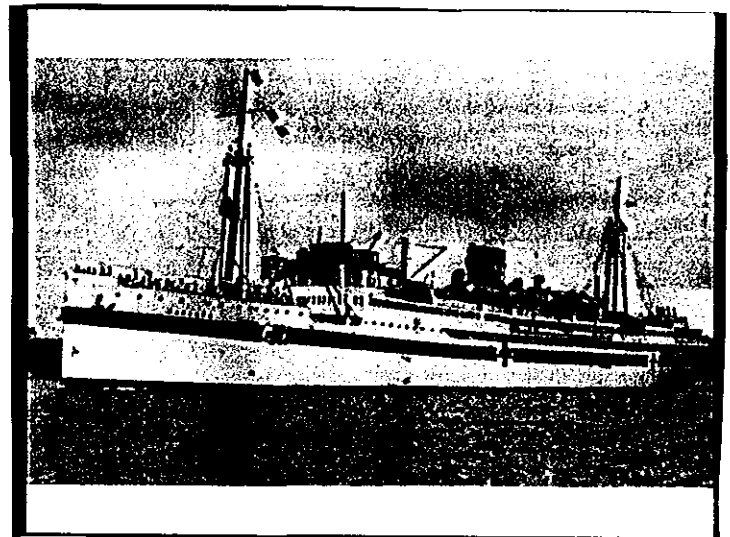
VP Day was celebrated in the Territory on the 10th of June 1946 starting with a church service and then a free picture show in Darwin. Celebrations and formal addresses were attended by defence services personnel and an estimated civilian population of 3 100 in Darwin.

⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁸

Ibid., p. 5.

⁹ Ibid.



(Top) Darwin oil tanks aflame at Stokes Hill Wharf, 1942.

(Middle) HMAS Manunda - Hospital Ship.

(Bottom) The Oranje at Darwin wharf just after the WWII ended, 1945.

CHARLES "MOTH" EATON:

Charles "Moth" Eaton (1895-1979) joined the British Army in 1914 and graduated from the Royal Flying Corps in October 1917. Eaton flew many missions and was shot down and kept in captivity for a short time in 1918. After the war Eaton was the personal pilot for British Prime Minister Lloyd George. In 1920 the Eaton family migrated to Australia and Charles joined the RAAF in 1925 as a Flying Officer. The nickname "moth" resulted from Eaton evaluating the de Havilland Moth for the RAAF. In 1929 Flight Lieutenant Eaton led the search for the lost aviators Anderson and Hitchcock in the Central Australian desert which resulted in the discovery of "The Kookaburra" wreck. As squadron leader, Eaton helped select a site for the Darwin RAAF in 1938.¹⁰

In 1939 Eaton was promoted to Wing Commander of 12 Squadron based on the old civil aerodrome (now Ross Smith Avenue). In 1940 Eaton caused controversy when he led a RAAF work party as strike breakers to unload coal from the SS *Montoro* at the Darwin Wharf. Promoted to Station Commander of the new RAAF base and acting group captain in the same year. Eaton held this position until he was transferred to a number of positions during the early 1940s including returning to the Territory as Commanding Officer of 79 Wing, Batchelor.¹¹

Retiring from the RAAF in 1946, Eaton spent a number of years in Consular activities. These included becoming the Australian Consul in Portuguese Timor and Consul-General to the Netherlands East Indies.

Charles "Moth" Eaton's awards include:
 1931 - Air Force Cross (AFC)
 1941 - Officer of the British Empire (OBE)
 1946 - Knight Commander of the Cross
 of the Oranje Nassau with Swords



¹⁰

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¹¹ Ibid., p.90.

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