

In roads to defence

A Queensland Anzac Centenary publication
from the Department of Transport and
Main Roads

April 2016



**Queensland
Government**



Contents

*Trucks of the 148th general transport company
parked for the night at the Elliott Staging Camp on
the Larrimah-Mount Isa Road, 1944-01-07/08.
Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/063426*

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Preface



Kalinga, Queensland, Australia. 1945-07. Troops of the special wireless group marching through their camp area. Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/o69987

To mark the Anzac Centenary, this commemorative publication *In roads to defence*, acknowledges the role played by transportation in Queensland's defence history during the First and Second World War. It is a tribute to the men and women of the department and its previous iterations who served in these wars, both at home and abroad.

The stories included are based on literature searches conducted by the staff of the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads Library Services and Communication Services. Information was sourced from a wide range of current, contemporary and historical sources. The department's own publications held unique stories. Publications such as the departmental annual reports (which commenced in 1922), the Queensland Roads journal, and the department's oral histories collection yielded a wealth of information.

The oral histories capture the reflections of departmental employees, on the times in which they lived and their work for the department, including their experiences of time 'at war'.

Contained within this publication are stories about the construction of roads such as Anzac Memorial Avenue; the provision of employment for returned servicemen (1925); the North Australia Defence Road (1941); the role of Queensland ports, including the attack on the Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur* (1943); the role of the Queensland Harbours and Marine Department and its hydrographic surveyors and seamen, such as Captain Tom Roberts; the naming of the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge; the role of women; and the role of Queensland engineers, including Lieutenant-Colonel William James Reinhold.

We both had family who fought in both World Wars; and we are eternally grateful to them, and those who have fought and died for our country and for the freedoms we enjoy today.

Lest we forget.

**Maryellen and Wendy
Transport and Main Roads
Library Services**

The oral histories capture the reflections of departmental employees, on the times in which they lived and their work for the department, including their experiences of time 'at war'.



All aboard the recruiting train!

A total of 416,809 Australian men enlisted voluntarily in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War; 57,705 of these were Queenslanders. By the latter half of 1915, national enthusiasm for enlistment was on the wane. Ongoing publication of casualty lists meant people at home were becoming aware of the harsh realities of war. Over 60,000 men were killed and 156,000 wounded or taken prisoner.

As enlistment rates declined, recruiters employed a variety of methods to increase the numbers of volunteers such as press advertising, billboards, and even recruitment trains. To commemorate the Anzac Centenary, a re-enactment of a recruiting train was held in 2015 travelling from Winton to Brisbane in time for the Anzac Day service.



Wallumbilla, Queensland. c. 1916. A touring recruiting train at the railway station with some of the town's citizens. (Donor Queensland Recruiting Committee) Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/H02211A



Image courtesy of State Library of Queensland

Queensland's last Anzac

Edward 'Ted' Smout OAM, Queensland's last surviving veteran of the First World War, lied about his age to enlist in the Australian Army and join the Imperial Forces fighting in Europe, where he witnessed the death of the legendary German fighter pilot, the Red Baron.

Born Edward David Smout in Brisbane in 1898, Ted was raised in Cunnamulla and Brisbane. He worked in the Auditor-General's department before enlisting in the Australian Army in September 1915.

Far from being frightened by the prospect of fighting in a war on the other side of the world, 17-year-old Ted Smout was impatient to get to Europe, telling the ABC's 7:30 Report in 1999, that his "main worry was that the war would be over before I got there."

Once in France, Ted soon discovered the horrors of the war on the Western Front. He witnessed shocking casualties and injuries working as a stretcher-bearer on some of the toughest battlefields of the First World War, including the Somme. Ted had another role in the Army Medical Corps, working as the only water sanitation specialist for the Australian troops – testing and treating wells to ensure the troops had sanitary drinking water.

During an engagement near the Somme River on 21 April 1918, he was an eyewitness to the final moments of the famous German fighter pilot Manfred von Richthofen (also known as the 'Red Baron'), whose aeroplane had crash-landed nearby after he was fatally shot.

Ted reported that Richthofen's last word was 'kaputt' ('finished') just before he died.

Ted spent four years in service and was discharged from the army on 8 September 1919.

After the end of the war Ted returned to Brisbane but unfortunately went on to experience delayed shell shock. He travelled through western Queensland for six months, taking time to heal physically and mentally. After returning to Brisbane he went on to establish a long career in insurance.

During the Second World War (1939-1945) Ted worked extensively with the Red Cross and became a Legatee with Legacy Australia. He was awarded France's highest honour, being made a Chevalier (Knight) of the Legion d'Honneur in 1998, having previously been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to the community in 1978. A regular participant in Anzac Day marches, Ted became one of the most celebrated war veterans in Queensland as one of Australia's last surviving First World War veterans. He passed away in 2004 aged 106, leaving a widow of 69 years, Ella and a son, Dr Westall 'Westy' Smout, himself a Second World War veteran.

As part of Queensland's 150th birthday celebrations in 2009, the newly formed Department of Transport and Main Roads asked local residents to suggest a name for the new 2.7km bridge linking Brisbane's Brighton with the Redcliffe peninsula. Brian Cantwell suggested naming the bridge after local Sandgate resident Ted Smout to honour the former Brisbane Citizen of the Year, French Legion of Honour and Order of Australia Medal recipient.

When the bridge was completed by the department in July 2010, it became Australia's longest bridge, providing three lanes of traffic and an additional cycle/pedestrian lane, greatly improving access within the region. The bridge's innovative design includes increased elevation and the ability to withstand a 1-in-2000 year storm event – a resilience of which the distinguished Ted Smout himself would have been proud.



Opening of the Ted Smout Memorial Bridge, Houghton Highway Duplication, July 2010. Vintage cars crossing the bridge during the open day celebrations.



Main Roads at the centre of defence works

Events in Europe in the late 1930s had the world on high alert. With the impact of the First World War still being felt, Australia had begun preparing for the potential of a war on home soil.

In Queensland, the Main Roads Commission was the chief agency for war-time defence works. These works extended far beyond building roads, with responsibility for the construction and maintenance of aerodromes, munitions factories, coastal fortifications, railways and wharves.

Top priority for the Commission was the construction of an inland defence road: less vulnerable to attack than the coastal highway, and able to provide an alternative route for military supplies.

When the war moved to the Pacific in 1941, Australia became totally focused on war both abroad and at home. With the formation of the Commonwealth Allied Works Council (AWC) in 1942, the Main Roads Commission was directed to shift its entire workload towards defence projects.

Overseeing this significant body of work was John Kemp who, in addition to his roles as Commissioner of Main Roads and Coordinator General, was appointed Deputy Director-General of Allied Works in 1942¹. Kemp was required to make available all Main Roads' resources for AWC war projects, at the same time as hundreds of employees were enlisting in the Armed Forces².

The inland defence road was completed in 1943 and linked Ipswich with Charters Towers, a distance of 1,412 kilometres. Queensland Main Roads Commission was responsible for the Ipswich to Duaranga section (762km) while the New South Wales Department of Main Roads was responsible for the Duaranga to Charters Towers section (650km)³.

Below: An Australian Army motor transport convoy on the road between Woodford and Caboolture, 1942-07.
Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/o26383



Did you know?

- The shortage of labour and tight timeframes for construction during the Second World War led to an increase in use of labour-saving equipment in Queensland. Before the war, Main Roads did a lot of construction work using horses, but the impetus of defence meant the Commission was able to quickly grow its stock equipment such as tractors and graders between 1939 and 1945.
- Main Roads was responsible for the repair and maintenance of the equipment of the Australian and American forces stationed in Brisbane during the Second World War. The Commission's workshops at Nundah were a vital resource and were expanded to cope with the demand between 1940 and 1943.
- Main Roads Commission worked in close association with American engineers on some of its defence projects. The Americans were said to be shocked at some of the primitive equipment still being used by the Commission in its construction works. With labour scarce and time critical, the war was a real impetus for developing efficiencies.

The inland defence road was completed in 1943 and linked Ipswich with Charters Towers, a distance of 1,412 km.

¹ From *Bulldust to Beef Road and Beyond: Main Roads – the first 50 years*, page 79.

² Cohen, Kay, *J.R. Kemp, the "Grand Pooh-Bah": a study of technocracy and state development in Queensland, 1920-1955* (2002) <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:190073/THE16655a.pdf>

³ From *Bulldust to Beef Road and Beyond*, pages 78–79.



Section under construction steam roller operating on dirt section of Redcliffe Road.

Anzac Memorial Avenue (or Anzac Avenue as it is also known) is now heritage listed, having been added to the Queensland Heritage Register in 2009.

As part of the Centenary of Anzac 2014–2018, the Anzac Memorial Avenue Centenary Committee has been formed to steer upgrades to the road.

These upgrades have been designed with the support of local businesses and community groups so they can be enjoyed by everyone in the area.

The projects include:

- 100 new trees planted
- Anzac Park redeveloped with a mock-up bunker
- New signage and plaques, commemorating battles
- Collages and artwork by local school students and artists
- Replica of HMAS AE2, the first submarine to conduct a torpedo attack against an enemy warship, installed in Ruth Whitfield Park
- Four sentries representing a navy sailor, nurse and Australian and New Zealand soldiers to be installed on each corner of the bridge over the highway.

More memorials are planned from the Petrie roundabout to the North Lakes overpass. They are designed to allow the community and future generations of Australians to continue to commemorate the Anzacs and remember their service and sacrifice for our country.

An Anzac road in every sense

As the name suggests, Anzac Memorial Avenue, was built as a memorial to the First World War. But interestingly, it was also built by ex-servicemen, recently returned from the atrocities of the war in Europe.

The 18-kilometre arterial road, which links the northern outskirts of Brisbane with the seaside town of Redcliffe, was also Queensland's first bitumen road – a result of the growing use of motorcars in the 1920s.

The tremendous loss of lives during the First World War 1914–1918, had a profound impact on the Australian population with memorials and monuments established to demonstrate the community's gratitude and remembrance.

The community, business leaders and government recognised the need to provide meaningful employment for returned servicemen, and preference was given to ex-soldiers on a number of memorial projects.

The impetus for the new road came from Brisbane Motor Traders Association who 'desired one good road in the vicinity of

Brisbane'. This push also coincided with the Returned Services League's public appeal for 'Work Not Charity' in support of the large number of ex-soldiers unemployed at the time.

Brisbane businessman, Thomas Rothwell, together with the RACQ, seized the opportunity to construct a superior bitumen road for motorists that would also provide employment to returned servicemen. By December 1922, 25 returned servicemen had begun construction and by March 1923, this number had increased to 50.

An avenue of trees was planted alongside to become a significant war memorial: more than 2000 trees were established, making it the largest avenue of trees in Queensland.

Anzac Memorial Avenue was opened to traffic on 5 December 1925.



Photograph by courtesy of the Australian War Memorial

William James Reinhold

(1889–1966)

First World War:

Awarded the Military Cross

Second World War:

Awarded Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

Biography

Decorated army officer and civil engineer, William James Reinhold (1889-1966), was the first Supervising Engineer for the Main Roads Board in north Queensland.

After graduating from the University of Queensland in 1914, Reinhold was selected with nine other engineering graduates to serve with the Royal Engineers on the battlefields of the First World War.

Reinhold had a busy war, serving on the Western Front with the 90th Field Company: he was wounded three times, mentioned in despatches and awarded the Military Cross for acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations.

Returning to Queensland at the end of the war, he served simultaneously as Northern Engineer for the Department of Public Lands and the first Supervising Engineer for the Main Roads Board in north Queensland. In this latter role, he travelled by pack-horse locating routes for main roads through virgin tropical rain forest in mountainous country, including the Gillies Highway from Gordonvale to Yungaburra. The construction of culverts, bridges and sugar-cane tramlines, the location, design and construction of roads in the Maria Creek soldier settlement, Boonjee main road, the Bloomfield and Tully rivers areas, and the siting of the Tully central sugar mill were all carried out under Reinhold's direction. (Whitemore, 1984).

Reinhold's engineering practice was closely linked with the Main Roads Board and many local authorities including the Boat Mountain road in the shire of Murgon. Constructed in 1923 and supervised by Reinhold; the mountain section is still in use on its original alignment.

By dint of his strong personality, gift of motivating men, ability to make decisions and willingness to travel extensively in primitive conditions, he built up his practice until it embraced 37 local authorities in central and southern Queensland. It was dominated by the design and construction of highways, main roads, rural roads and traffic bridges. At the same time he handled a wide variety of industrial and community assignments, including the first Olympic-standard swimming complex in Queensland outside Brisbane, completed at Dalby in 1936. (Whitemore, 1984).

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, Reinhold was appointed commanding engineer, Northern Command, in the Royal Australian Engineers, before being promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1942, and serving in Papua and New Guinea. For the drive, technical knowledge and leadership he displayed during the Second World War he was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE).

[Reinhold] was wounded three times, mentioned in despatches and awarded the Military Cross for acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations.

Sourced from *Engineers Australia*: Whitemore, R.L. (editor). (1984). 'Lieutenant-Colonel W.J. Reinhold', *Eminent Queensland engineers* (pages 62–63). The Institute of Engineers, Australia, Queensland Division (Copyright clearance requires attribution).



The fate of the AHS Centaur on Queensland's coast

Fire billows from the sinking hospital ship as two survivors cling to debris in the dark sea, while the poster's slogan rallies for Australians to join the cause and avenge the nurses. It's a haunting example of Australia's propaganda artwork during the First World War but portrays a true event that took place on Queensland's coast.



"Work, save, fight and so avenge the nurses!" by Bob Whitmore, c. 1943-45.



Following the sinking of the AHS Centaur, a number of memorials were built across Australia and the Queensland nurses established the Centaur Memorial Fund for Nurses in memory of the lives lost.

Once the war ended, community interest grew in locating the sunken vessel to help bring peace to those in the community who had lost family and friends in the attack. But it wasn't until seven years ago that the exact location of the sunken vessel was discovered.

In December 2009, the Federal and Queensland governments announced that a search for the AHS Centaur would be undertaken.

Led by British-based project manager of Bluewater Recoveries, David Mearns, the search for the AHS Centaur near Morton Island began on 14 December 2009, with the maritime expertise and logistical support of the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The wreck of the AHS Centaur was located in the early hours of Sunday, 20 December 2009 about 30 miles due east of Moreton Islands' southern tip at a depth of 2059 metres. At the close of his AHS Centaur search diary, David Mearns wrote, 'I consider it one of the great privileges in my life to have led this important project'.

On 12 January 2010, a commemorative plaque from the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association Inc. was placed on the wreck and the Centaur has been protected as a historic shipwreck and war grave.

The 3,222 ton vessel depicted in the poster is the Australian Hospital Ship Centaur. Built in Scotland's Greenock Shipyard, it originally ran between Singapore and Fremantle as a cargo ship before it was commissioned for service on 12 March 1943.

By this time, the war had reached the Australian coastline and tension was high before the AHS Centaur departed Sydney en route to Port Moresby, New Guinea in May 1943. The crew were on a mercy mission to collect Australian soldiers who had suffered illness and injury in the Battle of Buna-Gona.

The ship was well equipped with 332 personnel on board, including merchant seamen and medical staff from the Royal Australian Army, nurses from the Australian Army Nursing Service, members of the 2/12th Field Ambulance unit and Australian Army Service Corps ambulance drivers.

However, their journey was ill-fated.

As the AHS Centaur sailed east of the Cape Moreton Light on Moreton Island on 14 May, the vessel was struck by a torpedo. It was approximately 4am when the impact tore through the oil bunker tanks causing an explosion that sent flames billowing into the air with fragments of metal, wood and thousands of litres of oil.

Those who survived the blast made to escape, only to discover their lifeboats had been almost entirely destroyed in the attack. Instead they were forced to dive overboard, clinging to small rafts and floating wreckage in the hope of survival.

The AHS Centaur sank within three minutes, allowing no time to send out an SOS signal.

The AHS Centaur sank within three minutes, allowing no time to send out an SOS signal.

The Centaur's sinking killed 268 of the 332 people onboard inciting public outrage across Australia. Prime Minister Curtin described the attack as 'deliberate, wanton and barbarous' and General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief of allied forces in the Pacific, expressed his 'revulsion'.

While Japan initially denied any wrongdoing, the official Japanese war history published in 1979 noted that the AHS Centaur had been hit by a torpedo fired from a submarine under the command of Lieutenant Commander Nakagawa.

For many Australians the loss of the Centaur became a symbol of determination to win the war, as the attack on the hospital ship further proved that Australia was fighting a brutal enemy.



Submarine base

The existence of a dry dock in Brisbane, near the current site of the South Bank parklands, was a major factor in the US Navy's decision to establish a large submarine base at Capricorn Wharf at New Farm during the Second World War.

The South Brisbane dry dock played a vital role in the maintenance and repair of many submarines as well as other naval vessels. Between April 1942 and December 1944, 51 US Navy submarines made 85 dockings at the South Brisbane dry dock. While many of these were to allow routine maintenance, some were required to carry out urgent repairs after damage in action against the Japanese.

Left: Brisbane, Queensland. 1944-10. Former prisoners of war, rescued after the sinking of a Japanese transport by United States Navy submarines, are transported to Strathbourne for medical care.
Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/o88936



Women and war

With thousands of men being released for active service overseas, Australian women provided vital defence services on the home front.

During the Second World War, after considerable lobbying, women were able to serve in the army, navy and air force for the first time. They were accepted into numerous trades usually reserved for men: wireless telegraphists, armament workers, electricians, fitters, flight mechanics, fabric workers, instrument makers and meteorological assistants.

More than **51,000** Australian women enlisted in auxiliary forces between 1941 and 1947.

Records show 10 female employees from Main Roads Commission served in the WAAAF and the AWAS.



Above: Brisbane, Queensland. 1945-03-22. Australian Women's Army Service personnel at Fraser's paddock, after being issued with tropical uniform during their movement to the Northern Territory.
Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/o87698/

Main Roads Honour Roll

Almost 200 Main Roads Commission salaried employees served during the Second World War. Many more waged employees also served, however these names were not included on the Commission's official records.

Of these, 16 served in the Royal Australian Navy, 89 in the Australian Army and 80 in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Ten female employees also served in the Australian Women's Army Service and the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force.

Sadly, nine employees lost their lives on service – seven were RAAF officers, two officers were from the army.

Fact files

Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF)



- **First and largest** of the Australian Women's Services; formed in **March 1941**
- By December 1941, **1,500 women** serving in the WAAF
- At its peak in October 1944, there were **18,667 officers and airwomen**
- In total, approximately **27,000 women** saw service in the WAAAF until it was **disbanded in 1947**

Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS)



- Formed in **April 1941**, with the enrolment of **14 women** at HMAS Harman, the wireless telegraphy station near Canberra
- In just **four months** the number of women enlisted in WRANS was **1,000**, and totalling more than **3,000 women** over the course of the war

Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS)



- The Australian Army established the AWAS in **August 1941**
- More than **24,000 women** enlisted as volunteers during five and a half years of operation
- AWAS was the **only non-medical women's service** to send personnel overseas during the war



Above: Australian Second World War recruitment poster by James Northfield. Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV05170



Did you know?

War effort

As a result of war traffic, Queensland's roads and transport facilities were extensively damaged during the Second World War. In its Annual Report published in October 1945, Main Roads Commission calculated the repair bill at 1,270,000 pounds.

The Commission had planned extensive road maintenance operations on the Bruce Highway north from Rockhampton to Ayr during 1939-41, however the war completely upset these plans. The war effort was focused on the construction of an inland defence road, as an alternative to Bruce Highway's coastal route.

Right: Watsonville area, Queensland. 1945-02-07. 2 Field squadron, Royal Australian Engineers troops using pick and spade on a road leading to the artillery firing range. They are assisted by 2 medium regiment, Royal Australian artillery troops and the bulldozer at the top of the picture. Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/o86536



Harbours and marine

The former Department of Harbours and Marine had a maintenance vessel called the Remora, as suction dredge, which was a reparations vessel from Germany after the First World War. The vessel served the department for almost 50 years, having been brought to Brisbane during the Second World War to assist in the dredging of berths for the navy.

The SS Remora served the department for almost 50 years.

Left: 1939-12-14. Port bow view of the Queensland Government harbour vessel SS Remora. (Naval Historical Collection). Source: www.awm.gov.au/collection/303849

