

# Sources for Military History

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*This paper deals with the sources for military history in the New South Wales Regional Office of the Australian Archives. It is a shortened version of the paper presented by Mr Ling to the Australian Society of Archivists' Sydney Branch workshop on the Archives of Military History, 24 March, 1984.*

## **Introduction**

The Australian Archives performs two major functions within the Commonwealth Government. It is a central service agency, providing for the broad management of Commonwealth records, that is, disposal, temporary or permanent retention, storage, conservation and a lending service. In addition, it is a cultural institution, identifying records that have permanent value to the government and citizens of Australia, and regulating access to them. To this end the Australian Archives provides finding aids and a reference service, a library, access clearance, and research facilities. These services are provided in all capital cities, and Townsville.

Its New South Wales Regional Office operates from three locations, ie.,

- \* Raymond Engineers Building, 24 Market Street, Sydney — headquarters of the region and centre for information services and containing the Search Room and Library.
- \* 76 Miller Road, Villawood — principle storage facility for records of Commonwealth agencies in N.S.W.
- \* Commonwealth Government Centre, Chifley Square, Sydney — lending service for Commonwealth agencies.

## **Some Military Source Material Held by Australian Archives, N.S.W.**

This paper is concerned with providing a brief resume of records relating to military history held by the Australian Archives, N.S.W. To present a full listing would of course not be practical, however, there is an outline in chronological sections of some of the major series in our custody. A small source analysis, which lists some of the major holdings, is appended to the end of this paper. It is important for the military historian to remember that relevant records will be found not only for agencies which form part of

the Department of Defence (previously Army, Navy and Air) but also for 'civilian' agencies. Particularly in time of war, many activities of Government generate records which can complement those of the military.

Such activity could include censorship, espionage, internment, rationing and combatting sabotage.

*Pre Federation:* A few Army correspondence registers are still in existence, as is a small quantity of letters received from persons volunteering for service in the South African War. There is a very large collection of log books for various naval ships, dating from 1855 to the present.

*1901 — 1908:* A few volumes of Army pay lists (dating from 1904) are held, as well as naval correspondence relating to the maintenance of warships, and a register and photograph album for persons interned in New South Wales during World War I.

*1918 — 1939:* There are substantial holdings of correspondence from Headquarters, 2nd Military District, although this correspondence has been heavily culled. The major series covers the years 1923 to 1964. The numerical registers (L14's) for these records are held, but not the subject indexes, which are held by the registry at Victoria Barracks.

The holdings of naval correspondence are excellent, particularly for the Flag Officer Commanding, H.M. Australian Fleet, and the General Manager Garden Island Dockyard. These records deal with naval administration, ship construction and maintenance and they increase in size and scope with the expansion of the fleet in the 1930's.

On the civilian side, the 1930's saw the emergence of radical political organisations which were of concern to the security agencies of the time. Organisations such as the "New Guard" and later "Australian First" attracted much notoriety. Agencies such as the Investigation Branch compiled a great deal of information on these organisations, and whilst not all of these records survive, there are still many sources available for users.

*1939 — 1945:* There is naturally an enormous amount of material relating to the World War II conflict in the Archives' custody. A reference guide, "Selected items covering topics relating to the Second World War" was produced by our Central Office in 1972, and is an invaluable place to begin research. Although it does not provide an exhaustive coverage of the field, it offers a good indication of the type of material available.

Apart from policy and administrative material of the Department of Defence and the armed forces, and the records of civilian agencies in times of war, there are records of particular interest which relate to the Civil Constructional Corps, Australian Women's Land Army, Aliens Control Tribunals, Prisoners of War (including material on the Cowra break-out), rationing, civil defence, ABC war correspondents and field units records (including audio-visual material), and civilian censorship (which is very

important material, touching as it does on all aspects of the military and home campaigns). Furthermore, records created by the Security Service form a valuable source of information for users. The Service (a forerunner of ASIO) was created in 1941 and greatly expanded in 1942 (many of its functions being inherited from Army Intelligence). Its records, a large proportion of which still survive, deal with detection and prevention of espionage, sabotage and subversion; and prosecution and internment of enemy aliens.

**1945 + :** Army and naval correspondence continued as before, although the scope of naval correspondence is wider with the introduction of the Fleet Air Arm (and acquisition of air stations and aircraft carriers).

Holdings of RAAF correspondence (from Operational Command and its predecessors) commence in this period. There are, of course, substantial quantities of records relating to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts (the latter not yet eligible for release).

It should be noted that personnel records (apart from some Army and RAAF pay ledgers) are not held. Such records are held by Central Army Records Office (Army) and the Department of Defence in Canberra (Navy and RAAF).

### **Approaching Archives**

All Commonwealth records over 30 years of age, are eligible for release. Users wishing to examine records held by Australian Archives should contact the City Office; by letter, visit or telephone (02) 29 6352. A Record Services Officer will advise which records are mostly likely to be of relevance, and will also provide information on their access status.

### **Brief Selection of Records Relating to Military History Held by Australian Archives, N.S.W Region**

	<b>Agency, Record Series</b>	<b>Date Range</b>	<b>Accession/ Series No.</b>
<b>ARMY</b>			
1.	Correspondence created by 2nd Military District, and its predecessors	1923-1950 1940-1950 1922-1953	SP 459 SP 1008 SP 1048
2.	Numerical registers to correspondence created by 2nd Military District (L14's)	1923-1964	SP 1879
3.	Correspondence received from persons volunteering for service in the South African War	1899-1900	SP 820/1
4.	Correspondence registers and nominal rolls for various NSW units (small quantity only)	1879-1933	SP 820/2-48

	Agency, Record Series	Date Range	Accession/ Series No.
5.	Pay History Cards (in numerical order, no nominal indexes)	1914-1964	ST 1910
6.	Records of Fortress Installations, NSW	1934-1950	SP 553
7.	Numerical Registers of Enlistment (NX series)	1939-1945	SP 1429
8.	Army Personnel Next of Kin Cards	1939-1945	SP 1407
9.	Prisoners of War correspondence	1939-1947	SP 196
<b>NAVY</b>			
1.	Correspondence created by the Flag Officer Commanding, HM Australian Fleet and its predecessors	1925-1955 1902-1957 1903-1959	SP 338 SP 339 SP 483
2.	Correspondence of the General Manager, Garden Island Dockyard	1915-1957	SP 384
3.	Log Books for RAN vessels	1855-1957 1925-1960 1886-1944	SP 551 SP 707 SP 1119
4.	Hydrographic Charts	c.1930-1975 c.1930-1975	SP 1217 SP 1223
5.	Records relating to the construction of the Captain Cook Dry Dock (includes correspondence, photographs, drawings and reports). Most records were created by the Works and Services Branch, NSW	1940-1948 1941-1945 1942-1948 1944-1946	SP 217 SP 713 SP 830 SP 971
6.	Reports concerning the inspection, repair and maintenance of vessels at Garden Island	1946-1972 1943-1974	SP 1480 SP 1551
<b>RAAF</b>			
1.	Correspondence created by Headquarters Operational Command, and its predecessors	1944-1965 1944-1968 1942-1967	ST 2534 ST 2599 ST 2598
2.	Pay History Cards and Nominal Indexes	1939-1960 1940-1961	SP 504 ST 1012
<b>CIVILIAN AGENCIES (entries arranged alphabetically by subject)</b>			
1.	Advertising for Defence Recruiting, loans, war bonds, etc (created by the Commonwealth Advertising Division)		
	— posters	1942-1951	SP 50, SP 85, SP 130

	<b>Agency, Record Series</b>	<b>Date Range</b>	<b>Accession/ Series No.</b>
	— correspondence	1941-1956	SP 130/2 SP 313/1 SP 1476/3 ST 589/1
	— sound recordings	?1947-?1960	CRS C199
2.	<b>Aliens</b> (created by the Military Police Intelligence Section, and the Department of Immigration)		
	— registration forms	1939-1945	SP 11, SP 43/3
	— indexes	1939-1950	SP 267
3.	<b>Censorship</b> Correspondence (created by by State Publicity Censor, NSW)	1939-1945	SP 106
4.	<b>Civil Construction Corps</b>		
	— indexes	1942-1945 1942-1944	ST 1673/1 ST 1676/2
5.	<b>Germans</b> (Reports on the Nazi Party in Australia, prepared by the Security Service, NSW)	1939-1943	CRS C414
6.	<b>Internees, WWI</b>		
	— index register	1914-1919	CRS C440
	— photograph album	1914-1918	SP 421/4
7.	<b>Internees, WWII</b>		
	— dossiers	1939-1945	CRS C123
	— indexes	1939-1945	CRS C124- 127
	— transcripts of appeal hearings	1939-1945	CRS C329
8.	<b>Japanese</b> (correspondence relating to Japanese aliens and sympathisers, created by Security Service, NSW)	1919-1941 1934-1946	CRS C443 CRS C446
9.	<b>Manpower Directorate, WWII</b>		
	— publications, bulletins	1942-1945	SP 49
	— correspondence	1942-1945	SP 191
10.	<b>Rationing</b> (correspondence of the Rationing Commission, NSW)	1942-1949	SP 12
11.	<b>War Reporting, WWII</b>	1939-1949 1936-1949 1940-1946	SP 109/16 SP 286/6, 14 SP 300/7
12.	<b>Women's Land Army</b> (correspondence and indexes)	1943-1946	SP 60