



The History of Dutch Australian WWII Collaboration

Camp Columbia

19 May 2022

Paul Budde



Content

- **Timeline of pre-war Dutch, NEI and Australian diplomatic exchanges.**
- **American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command.**
- **Continued combined Australians and Dutch war actions.**
- **Netherlands East Indies Government-in-Exile.**
- **Camp Columbia.**
- **Truth telling.**

With thanks to: Dr. P.C Boer, Dr. Jack Ford, Ruby Todorovski, Vicky Mynott, Bass Kreuger,
Peter Dunn OAM, Margot Kohonen





Timeline of pre-war Dutch, NEI and Australian diplomatic exchanges

- Early 1940 - First contacts were largely secretive.
- May 1940 – Nazi Germany occupies Netherlands.
- October - 1940 NEI Military Exchange Visit to Australia.
- January - 1941 Robert Menzies visits Java. ORANJE converted into hospital ship for Australia & NZ.
- February 1941 - NEI Research Commission, Sydney.
- March 1941 - Darwin becomes supply port for the NEI, RAAF toured airfields in eastern NEI islands.
- May 1941- NEI goodwill flight to Darwin.
- August 1941- RAAF & Australian Army talks with Dutch Forces, Batavia.
- October 1941 - NEI Vice Governor led NEI Delegation to Australia.
- 1942 - Australia and NEI share facilities.

These were the highlight years of Dutch Australian collaboration



American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command

- Established Bandung, Java 10 January 1942 under British command.
- From Burma to Dutch New Guinea (DNG), Philippines and parts of NW Australia.
- Brits were certain to defend Singapore, aim: stop Japanese moving to NEI (oil fields). Fell in 10 days.
- ABDA promised reinforcement if needed for the defence of NEI (never arrived).
- Battle of the Java Sea was unwinnable without that support. ABDA dissolved with US and Britain retreating.
- Fall of NEI on March 9 1942 (most planes and ships already lost).
- In April SWPA Command was set up as the new Allied Force.

Australia and Netherlands felt let down by the Brits and Americans



Continued combined Australians and Dutch war actions

- Large scale destruction by Dutch of NEI oilfields, ports, airfield.
- Fighting (after surrender) continued in the Arafura Sea and DNG.
- The SE part of DNG was never occupied. Key (US) airfield in Merauke.
- Dutch Merchant Fleet key supply role at the battle at Milne Bay (PNG) –first Japanese defeat – September 1942.
- Largest combined military Australian-Dutch activity in Timor in late 1942. Lost but delayed the Japanese.
- Combined Dutch-Australian: 4 air squadrons, 3 army battalions and 19 Dutch ships to the naval fleet.
- NEI intelligence services key for the Allied Forces.
- Australians largest Allied force in DNG. Americans ousted the Japanese.
- Secret successful operation of Australian Z-Force to ‘kidnap’ pro-Dutch Sultan of Ternate (1945).
- Australian and British Army took over control of NEI, after the capitulation of Japan.

The Dutch were totally under resourced in personnel – Australian frustration



Netherlands East Indies Government-in-Exile

- Japanese invade NEI – 100,000 Dutch civilians in concentration camps, 40,000 military in POW camps.
- A lucky 20.000 Dutch/Indonesian people could flee to Australia.
- NEI-Government-in-Exile established in Australia.
- Camp Columbia became HQ, staging the liberation of NEI (1944).
- Ongoing staffing problems, (Australian) non-military personnel recruited.
- White Australia Policy ongoing problem for Indos.
- Dutch had money to buy supplies, not enough capacity in Australia.
- Australia was keen to get access to Dutch planes.
- Increased tension over Dutch recolonisation policy.
- *Australia wanted NEI to become a mandate – they wanted to control DNG and Timor*



Camp Columbia

- January 1942 Americans surveyed the site (military reserve, rail access, Archerfield).
 - Brisbane builder Hornibrook construct it (with future use in mind).
 - General MacArthur's staging camp for the war in SW Pacific.
 - Birthplace of US Sixth Army and its first HQ (Seventh Fleet).
 - June 1944 - MacArthur mover HQ to Hollandia DNG.
 - Camp Columbia becomes Dutch staging camp-liberation of NEI.
 - Most of Camp Columbia history got lost and forgotten. One of the most important WWII sites in SWPA war effort.
-
- Dutch Government co-funds archaeological research by UQ.
 - Proposal to consider collaborative heritage recognition of Camp Columbia.

MILITARY FACILITIES 1942 - 1945

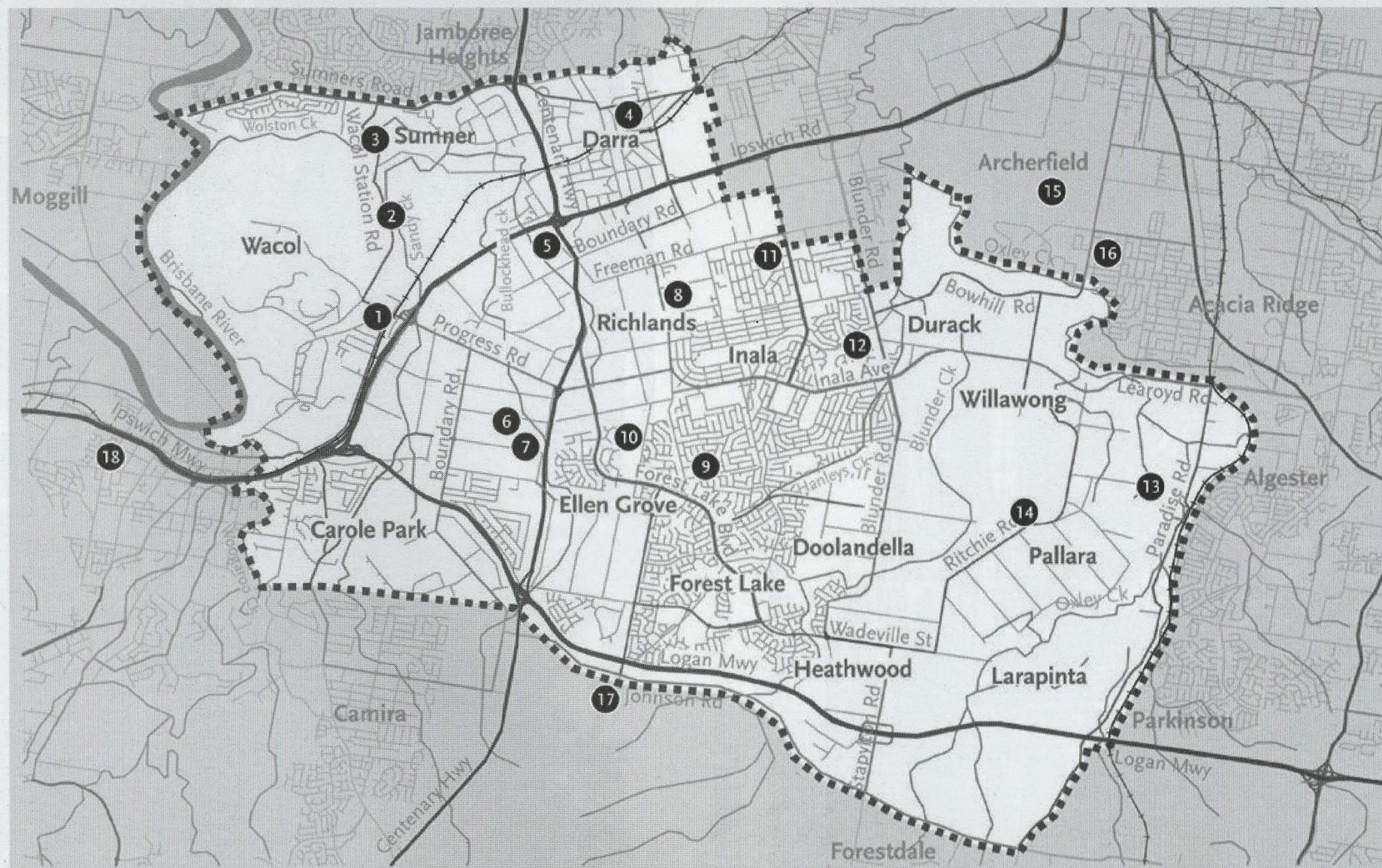


Fig 31: Military facilities in the region 1942-1945

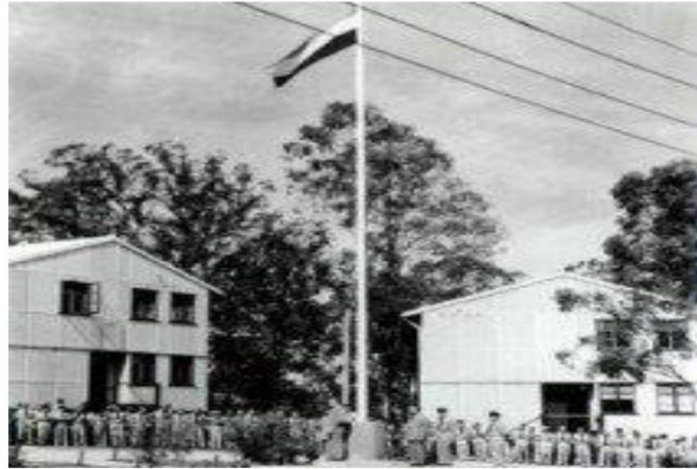
Source: Margot Korhonen



Columbia is the female national personification of the United States.

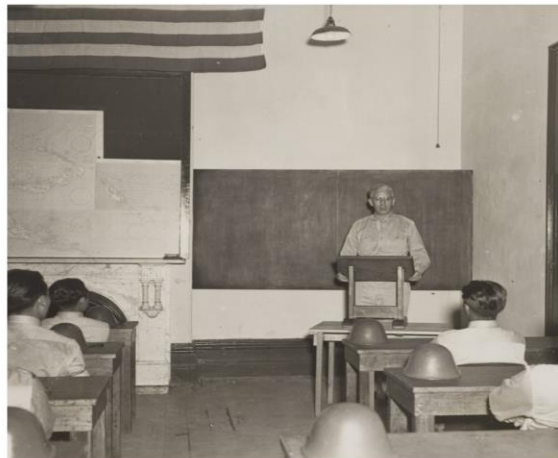


Dutch at Camp Columbia



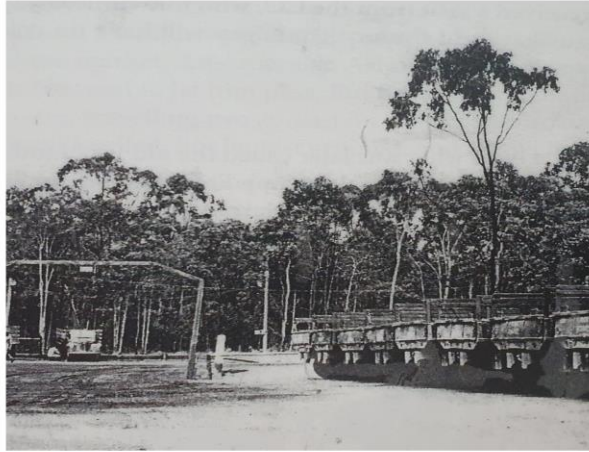


Camp Columbia





Beyond Camp Columbia





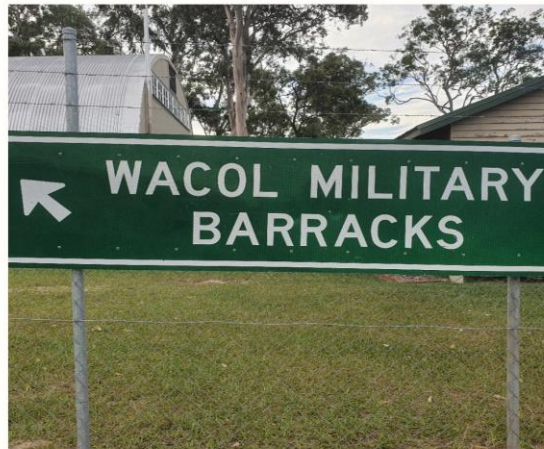
Dutch Artefacts from Camp Columbia



With thanks to Keith Stoneman and Danny Sleath



ADF at Wacol





Wacol Migration Camp





Archerfield Airport

- Established in 1931 – became a key airport for the Dutch.
- British opposition for Dutch use the airport for regular services from Europe (competition).
- One of the largest events was the landing of the Uiver in 1934.
- Regular passenger services 1938 -1942, 1945-1949.
- NEI military and aircraft fled to Archerfield 1942.
- Involved in formation of 18, 19, 120 and transport squadrons.
- Major airport for NEI Government-in-Exile.
- Dutch left in July 1947.





Truth Telling



Truth telling

- Australian Govt. had ongoing problems with the coloured people from NEI.
- The Dutch imprisoned Indonesian political prisoners in Australia.
- Australia forces the Dutch to release these prisoners.
- These Indonesian harnessed support for a free Indonesia – Black Armada.
- Dutch were adamant to recolonise NEI - increasing opposed by Australia.
- Australia wanted a mandate over Timor and DNG.
- Dutch conducted two war campaigns in Indonesia.
- Senseless killing of Dutch, Indos, Chinese, Moluccans (Bersiap) by Indonesians.
- Australia played a key role in the negotiations of a free Indonesia.
- Stranded NEI women - ruling High Court -Started end of the White Australia Policy.



Political Prisoners

Indonesian Political Exiles

In the early 1940's Indonesians involved in the uprising of 1926/27 were still in exile in Dutch New Guinea. The Dutch Government believed these people might join with the invading Japanese and persuaded the Australian Government to imprison them. It agreed, but after they arrived in Australia, a protest movement took up their case and lobbied the Australian Government complaining that the Indonesians were political prisoners not Prisoners of War. Shortly afterwards they were released. Some worked for the Australian Military in Sydney and Melbourne, others in nursing and others to farms in Mackay in Queensland. They returned to Indonesia at the end of WWII.

There were approximately 520 men, women and children in the Camp in 1943 but prior to their arrival another group of Indonesian Merchant sailors had been imprisoned there after striking against the Dutch Government.

For more information on Cowra's WWII history, visit the Australian and Japanese War Cemeteries, the special 'hologram' display on the POW Camp at the Cowra Visitors Centre and the War Museum on the Sydney Road.



Indonesian Teachers and children in front of their class room at the Cowra POW Camp.
(Australian War Memorial Negative 030151/4)



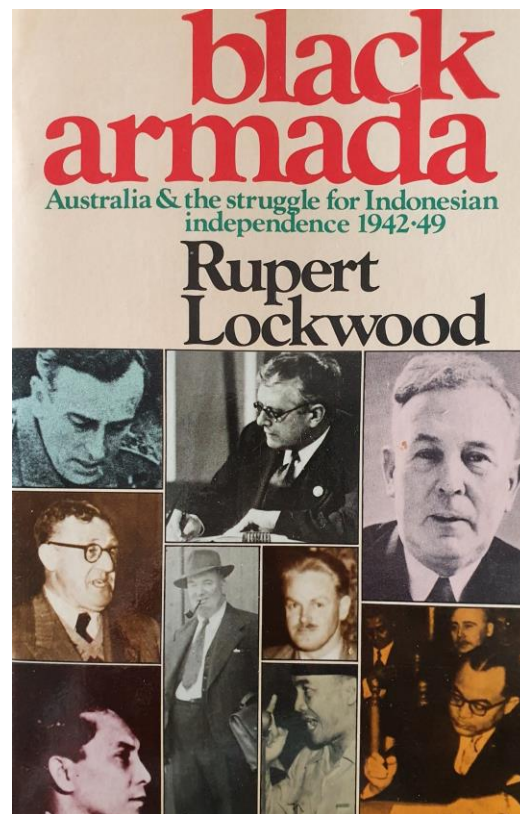


Annie O'Keefe





Boycott of Dutch ships





Thank You

For more information

[Camp Columbia at Waco!](#)

[The Dutch at Archerfield Airport](#)