

2005

The final campaigns: Bougainville 1944-1945

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James, Karl, The final campaigns: Bougainville 1944-1945, PhD thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, 2005. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/467>

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The Final Campaigns: Bougainville 1944-1945

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Karl James, BA (Hons)

**School of History and Politics
2005**

CERTIFICATION

I, Karl James, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Karl James

20 July 2005

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADC | Aide-de-camp |
| AIF | Australian Imperial Force |
| AIB | Allied Intelligence Bureau |
| ALCA | Australian Landing Craft Assault |
| ALC | Australian Landing Craft |
| AMF | Australian Military Forces |
| ANGAU | Australian New Guinea Administration Unit |
| Aust | Australian |
| AWAS | Australian Women's Army Service |
| AWM | Australian War Memorial, Canberra |
| | |
| Bde | Brigade |
| BGS | Brigadier, General Staff |
| BM | Brigade Major |
| Bn | Battalion |
| Bty | Battery |
| | |
| CARO | Central Army Records Office, Melbourne |
| Cav | Cavalry |
| Cdo | Commando |
| C-in-C | Commander-in-Chief |
| CMF | Citizen's Military Forces |
| CO | Commanding Officer |
| Coy | Company |
| Cpt | Captain |
| Cpl | Corporal |
| | |
| DA&QMG | Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General |
| Div | Division |
| | |
| Fd | Field |
| FOO | Forward Observation Officer |
| | |
| Gen | General |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| | |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| | |
| IMB | Independent Mixed Brigade |
| Inf | Infantry |
| | |
| JCPML | John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library |
| | |
| LHQ | Land headquarters |
| LMG | Light Machine Gun |
| Lt | Lieutenant |
| Lt-Col | Lieutenant-Colonel |

| | |
|--------|---|
| Lt-Gen | Lieutenant-General |
| MC | Military Cross |
| MM | Military Medal |
| mm | millimetre |
| NAA | National Archives of Australia |
| NGF | New Guinea Force |
| NGIB | New Guinea Infantry Battalion |
| NLA | National Library of Australia, Canberra |
| No | Number |
| OC | Officer Commanding |
| PIB | Papuan Infantry Battalion |
| Pl | Platoon |
| Pte | Private |
| RAAF | Royal Australian Air Force |
| RAN | Royal Australian Navy |
| RNZAF | Royal New Zealand Air Force |
| Sgt | Sergeant |
| Sqd | Squadron |
| SWPA | South West Pacific Area |
| US | United States |
| USMC | United States Marine Corps |
| VC | Victoria Cross |

Conversions

In accordance with the period of the Second World War, I have retained the then convention for writing army ranks, so Lieutenant-Colonel and Lieutenant-General are hyphenated. I have also kept imperial measures.

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| 1 inch | 2.45 centimetres |
| 1 foot | 30.5 centimetres |
| 1 mile | 0.91 metres |
| 1 stone | 6.35 kilograms |
| 1 gallon | 4.55 litres |

On 14 February 1966, Australian currency changed from pounds, shillings and pence (£, s, d) to dollars and cents (\$, c) at the rate of £1= \$2.

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| 12 pence | 1 shilling |
| 20 shillings | 1 pound |
| 1 pound and 1 shilling | 1 Guinea |

Amounts such as 2s 6d were frequently written as 2/6.

Abstract

Although Australian troops fought on Bougainville during 1944 and 1945, few people today know much about the campaign. The little discussion there is, merges the Bougainville campaign with the Australian army's other final campaigns, which have all been dismissed as just 'mopping-up' operations. The Bougainville campaign deserves to be remembered.

This thesis is an examination of the campaign fought on Bougainville. It has a clear operational framework and adapted the methodology developed by Peter Stanley in *Tarakan*, which contrasts and explores the experiences of the commanders with those of the men. Time is spent developing the personalities and characteristics of the various commanders as this influenced the decisions made during the campaign. Each commander had his own strengths and weaknesses; each had his own peculiarities and eccentricities. The Corps commander, for example, micromanaged the campaign even down to the level of platoon, while one infantry brigadier was widely recognised as being 'mad'. Some commanders were keen to commence the campaign and engage the Japanese, and pushed their men into battle accordingly. Yet others were less than enthusiastic and resented serving in militia units.

The view of the men was very different to that of their commanders. Tactics, strategy and commanders' idiosyncrasies, meant little to the men who did the fighting and dying. This thesis also examines the experiences of the men, their thoughts, feelings and fears. It gives a sense of jungle warfare and the nature of the fighting: the strain of patrolling, the fear of constant Japanese attacks, and the men's reaction to combat.

From a close study of the commanders and men, two sub-themes have also emerged as they appeared throughout the campaign. The first was the ever-present AIF and militia debate. The Bougainville campaign demonstrated that the rivalry between the two groups had not completely dissipated with the creation of the AMF and was, in fact, still an emotive issue in 1945. The second was the legacy of the First AIF, the prevalence of the 'Anzac legend' and the 'Digger myth', and the 'big-noting' Australian soldiers in official reports and unit war diaries.

Although the focus of the thesis is on the Australians, some attention is also given to the Japanese and the Bougainville Islanders.

Acknowledgements

So many people have contributed to make this thesis possible. I am indebted to the staff of the Australian War Memorial. They were ever helpful, answered enquires and were always seemingly willing to carry out my requests for photocopying. Similarly, thank you to the staff of the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia, and Mr Mal Black, from the 9th Battalions Memorial Museum, for their assistance and encouragement. Thank you also to the veterans, who entrusted me with their memories and experiences, I hope you will not be disappointed.

I owe an enormous debt of thanks to my supervisors, Associate Professor John McQuilton and Dr Stephen Brown. John – despite your insistence that I include the ‘female impersonator’ on Bougainville, you are a mentor and a friend, I do not know where to start, except to say thank you for everything. Stephen you have taught me since I was an undergraduate, thank you for helping me find my voice. My thanks also goes to the staff of the School of History and Politics, the Faculty of Arts, and all of my fellow postgraduates, especially Megan Brown, Dr Damien Cahill, Deborah Gough, Jen Hawksley, Renee Kyle, Natalie Peters, Kylie Smith, Linda Wade, Nathan Wise, and, of course, Kazuhiro Monden. Kaz, there is no one else I would rather share an office with or have as a best mate. I also need to acknowledge Amy Rossiter for her encouragement.

I have only been able to write this thesis, because of the love and support I have received from my family and friends. To my wonderful sister, Laura, you are an inspiration to me. Dad, Trevor, I attribute my love of history to you, thank you for that and your ever sound advice. Mum, Lorraine, you have been my rock, you have read every essay I have written since first year and yet you were still willing to look over my draft chapters, version after version, after version. And thank you to my beautiful girlfriend Alisa Williams, for reading my numerous drafts, introducing me to the joy and frustration of grammar, and for never losing patience with me.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Doug and Coral, Tom and Nan, and all of their generation who fought the Second World War.