

# Bombing Australia.

The Japanese air attacks on Australia  
during WW II.

Source: Australian Government website.

# Almost 100 attacks.

- During the Second World War, the Japanese flew 64 bombing/strafing raids on Darwin and 33 bombing/strafing raids on other targets in Northern Australia.



# Northern territory bombings.

- Katherine,
- Millingimbi,
- Darwin.



# Queensland and Torres Strait Island bombings.

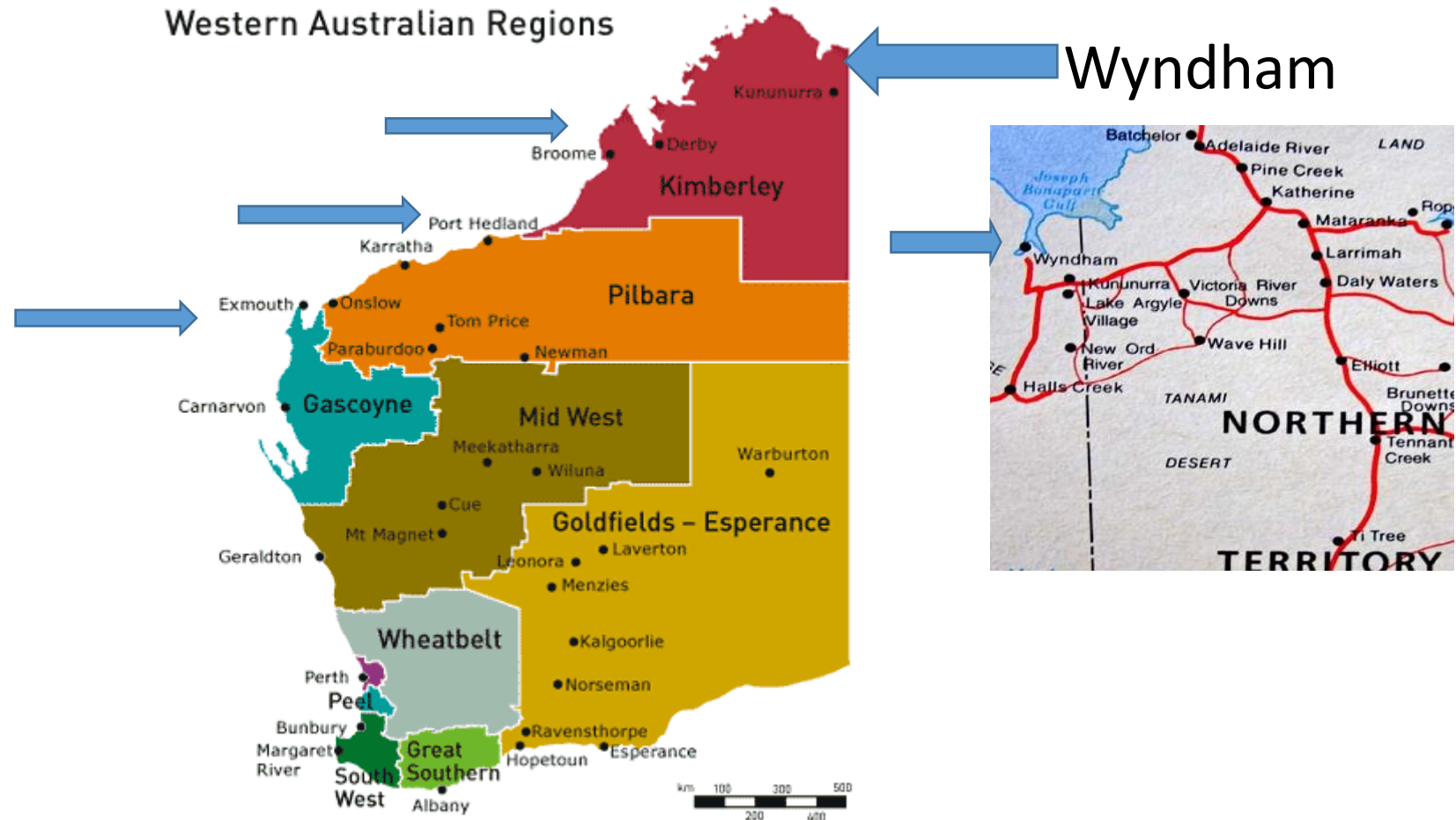
- Horn Island
- Thursday Island.
- Townsville.





# Western Australia bombings.

- Derby
- Broome
- Port Hedland,
- Exmouth,
- Wyndham,



# Darwin raids. 1

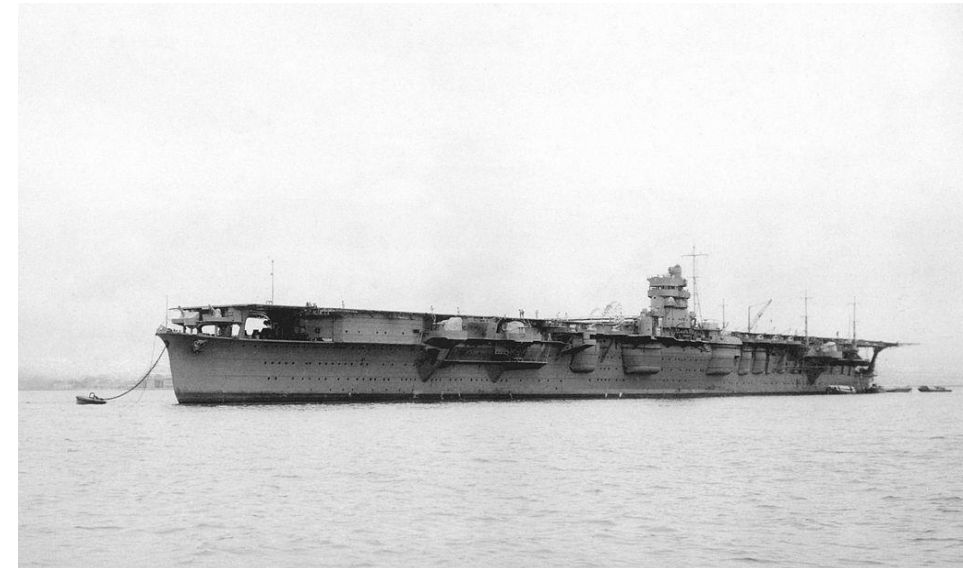
- The Japanese first attacked Darwin on the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942.
- This attack, and the one that was to follow later that day were planned and led by captain Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese commander responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbour.
- Fuchida and Jimmy Doolittle.



## Darwin raids. 2

- The Japanese attacked with around 188 planes that had been launched from Japanese land bases and aircraft carriers in the Timor Sea.
- The naval squadron comprised the aircraft carriers Akagi, Kaga, Hiryū, and Sōryū and a powerful force of escorting surface ships.
- The carriers had attacked at Pearl Harbour, and were later sunk in the **pivotal Battle of Midway**.

Hiryū on completion 1939.



# Darwin raids. 3

- Japanese fighters strafed land targets and shipping.
- Dive bombers attacked the ships in the harbour, the military and civilian aerodromes and the hospital.





# Darwin raids. 4

- The first attack lasted approximately forty minutes.
- The land targets included the Post Office, Telegraph Office, Cable Office and the Postmaster's Residence, where postal workers were killed.



# Darwin raids. 5

- The second attack began an hour after the first ended.
- Heavy bombers attacked the Royal Australian Air Force Base at Parap for about 25 minutes.
- In the two raids twenty military aircraft were destroyed, eight ships at anchor in the harbour were sunk and most civil and military facilities in Darwin were destroyed.



# Darwin raids. 6

- The two raids killed at least 243 Australians and allies.
- Almost 400 were wounded.



# Ill-prepared for air raids.

- Despite Darwin's strategic importance to the defence of Australia, the city was poorly defended.
- The Australian Army's anti-aircraft defences comprised sixteen 3.7 inch AA guns, two 3-inch AA guns to counter aircraft flying at high altitude and a small number of Lewis Guns for use against low-flying raiders.



# Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Wirraways.

- The crews of these guns had conducted little recent training due to ammunition shortages.
- The air forces stationed in and near the town comprised No. 12 Squadron, which was equipped with CAC Wirraways advanced trainers (which had been pressed into service as fighters).
- None of the six Wirraways at Darwin on the day of the raid were serviceable.





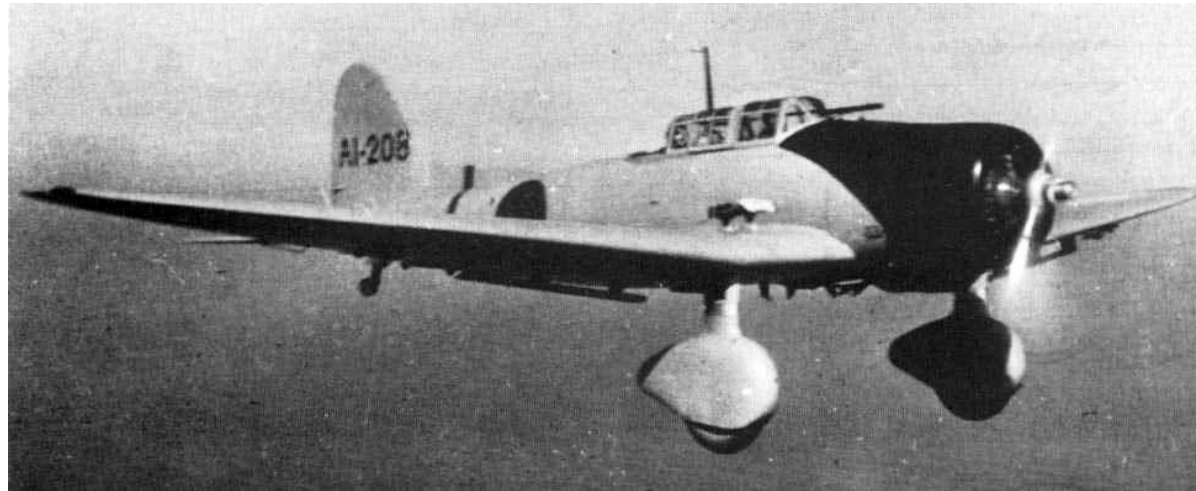
# Flying Tigers(without John Wayne) involved.

- Six Hudson bombers, 3 from No. 2 Squadron and 3 from No. 13 Squadron also arrived at Darwin on 19<sup>th</sup> February after having been evacuated from Timor.
- The only aircraft that fought the Japanese were ten United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) Curtiss P-40 Warhaws that were passing through Darwin en route to Java on the day of the attack.
- Most of the P-40 pilots had little experience in combat.
- Only one allied fighter survived the first attack, with the Japanese suffering only one or two losses.



# The primary dive bomber of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

- There is debate over the number of Japanese aircraft shot down during the air raid on 19 February 1942 – some sources report that two aircraft were shot down, while others state four aircraft were destroyed.
- Aichi D3A1 from carrier Akagi.



# According to an Australian Government website:

- From the first raid on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942 until the last on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1943, Australia and its allies lost about 900 people, 77 aircraft and several ships.
- The Japanese lost about 131 aircraft in total during the attacks.
- Nakajima B5N torpedo bomber from the Hiryū.



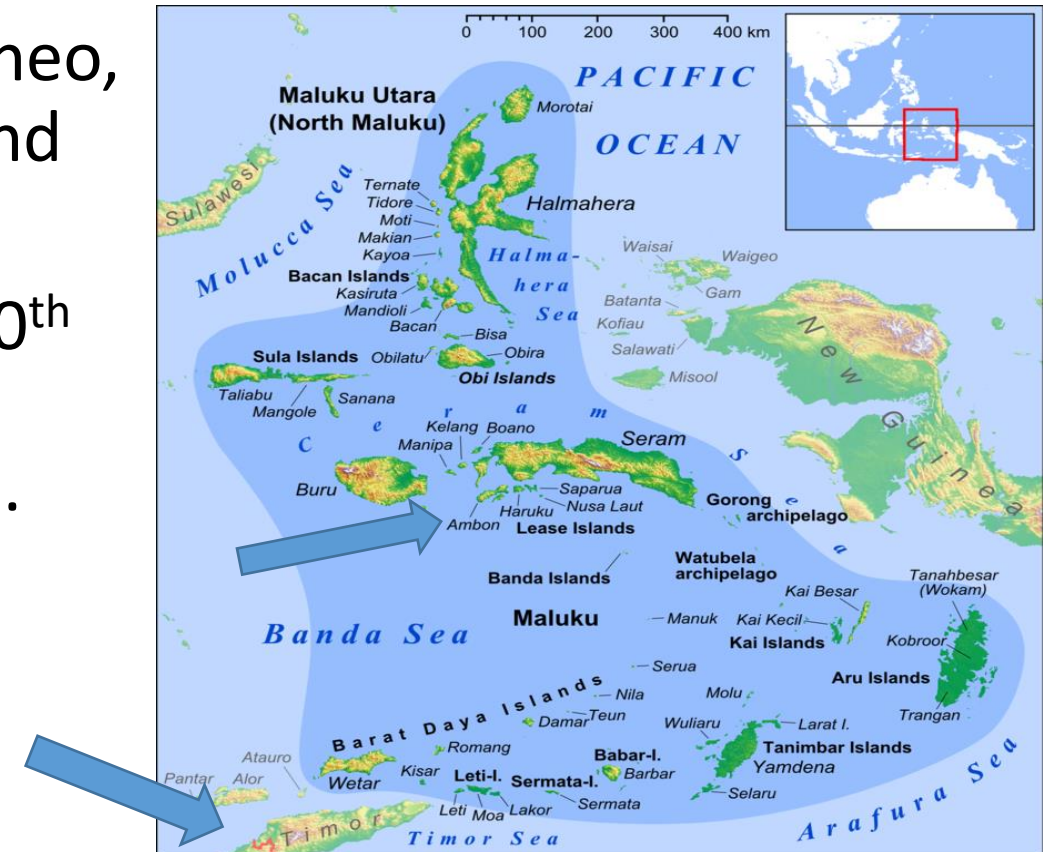
# Why did they bomb Darwin?1

- As early as **August 1941(before the Pearl Harbour attack)** Darwin was a key in the South Pacific air ferry route, designed to avoid flying through the Japanese mandate in the central Pacific, for bomber reinforcement of the Philippines.
- The first flight to use the route occurred when nine B-17D bombers of the 14th Bombardment Squadron (H) left Hawaii on 5<sup>th</sup> September and passed through Darwin 10–12<sup>th</sup> September.



# Why did they bomb Darwin?2

- By mid-February 1942 Darwin had become an important Allied base for the defence of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia etc.).
- The Japanese had captured Ambon, Borneo, and Celebes between December 1941 and early-February 1942.
- Landings on Timor were scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> February, and an invasion of Java was planned to take place shortly afterwards.

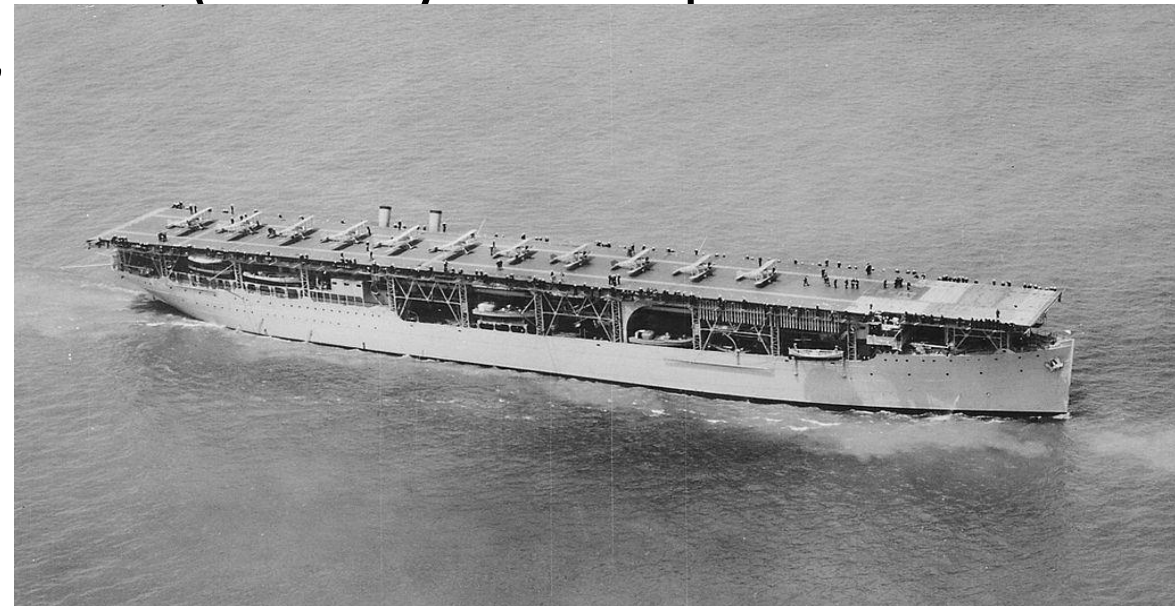




# A strategic decision, and thought to be a juicy target.

- In order to protect these landings from Allied interference, the Japanese military command decided to conduct a major air raid on Darwin.
- On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1942 a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft overflew the town, and identified an aircraft carrier (actually the seaplane tender USS *Langley*), five destroyers, and 21 merchant ships in Darwin Harbour, as well as 30 aircraft at the town's two airfields.

USS Langley 1927.



# Another misjudgement in Darwin.1

- At 9.35 am on 19<sup>th</sup> February Father McGrath of the Sacred Heart mission on Bathurst Island, who was also an Australian coastwatcher, sent a message using a pedal radio to the Amalgamated Wireless Postal Radio Station at Darwin that a large number of aircraft was flying overhead and proceeding southward.
- The message was then relayed to the Royal Australian Air Force Operations at 9.37 am.



# Another misjudgement in Darwin.2

No general alarm was given until about 10 am as the RAAF officers there wrongly judged that the aircraft which had been sighted were the ten USAAF P-40s, which were returning to Darwin at the time after reports of bad weather forced them to abort a flight to Java via Kupang, West Timor.

As a result, the air raid sirens at Darwin were not sounded before the raid.

A Second World War era British siren.



Presumably, the resources needed to defend Darwin were either underestimated or not available.

- The Lowe Commission, which was appointed to investigate the raids shortly after they occurred, was informed that the Australian military estimated that Darwin would have needed 36 heavy anti-aircraft guns and 250 fighter aircraft to defend it against a raid of the scale which occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> February.
- It is easy to be wise after an event.





# Spitfires arrive 11 months later.

- In January 1943, No.1 Fighter Wing, **RAF** moved to the **Darwin area** with three Spitfire squadrons,
- No. 54 RAF at Darwin,
- No.452 **RAAF** at Strauss and
- No.457 **RAAF** at Livingstone.
- The Spitfires had major clashes with the Japanese on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March 1943.





# Spitfires hit back.

- On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1943, the Spitfires intercepted the formation of 21 bombers and 21 fighters, shooting down nine bombers and five fighters.
- This was the most successful encounter by the RAAF over Darwin, during which the Group Captain Caldwell, an ace from the European theatre, shot down his fifth Japanese aircraft.
- The final air raid on Darwin took place on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1943.

Clive Caldwell c. 1942.



# The last raid a failure.

- In the final Japanese attack, a raid on Darwin on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1943, there were no casualties and only minor damage was caused around the town.
- In all, there were 64 air raids on Darwin.
- Caldwell with his Spitfire on Morotai in December 1944.



# Broome bombed next.

- Two weeks after the Darwin bombing, i.e. on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1942, the Western Australian town of Broome suffered Australia's second-worst air raid.
- The attack killed an estimated seventy people, perhaps as many as one hundred, and injured another forty, as well as eight large aircraft and 16 flying boats, 24 aircraft in total.
- A Dutch crew from a visiting Dornier Do 24 flying boat in Roebuck Bay being taken into Broome by launch in **1941**. Holland was occupied by the Nazis.



# A Legendary aircraft :the Douglas DC3 or Dakota, also known as the gooney bird.

- Another aircraft, a DC3, carrying refugees and a parcel of diamonds towards Broome met the departing Japanese flight, and after being **extensively damaged**, was forced to crash-land in the shallows north of the town.
- The DC3 was an incredible aircraft that continued to fly in all kinds of conditions.
- One flew when one of its wings was replaced by the wing of a DC2, because that was all that was available.



# The first QANTAS flying boat was acquired in 1938.

- At that time, Broome was a significant military and civilian staging post for air evacuees from Java, then part of the Dutch East Indies (part of latter day Indonesia), both military and civilian.
- Evacuees were ferried in Dutch, American and Australian military and civil aircraft, including flying boats of Qantas Empire Airways.
- In the last two weeks of February, 8,000, mostly Dutch refugees, including many women and children, passed through Broome on their way south.





# Another surprise attack.

- On the day of the attack, Japanese fighter planes attacked without warning.
- Nine Mitsubishi Zero fighters arrived over Roebuck Bay (Broome) at 9.30 am, and promptly destroyed the targets they found.
- As there were no Allied fighters in the area, the Japanese faced minimal opposition.



## *The Japanese raid on Broome, Australian War Memorial.*

- Fifteen marine aircraft, mostly Dutch Dorniers and Catalinas, but also some British and US Catalinas, as well as a pair of Australian 'Empire' Class flying boats, were burned or sunk at their moorings.*
- At the nearby airstrip, several US B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator heavy bombers were destroyed, as well as a number of twin-engined Douglas DC-3 transports of the Netherlands East Indies Airline (KNILM).*
- Not a single operational aircraft was left in Broome when the Japanese departed at 10.30 am.*

# Many civilians killed.

- Many victims were Dutch women and children packed into flying boats on the harbour either waiting to be unloaded and ferried ashore or waiting to depart for the southern states.
- Another 30 crew and passengers, mostly military personnel, were lost when an American Liberator bomber was shot down shortly after taking off.



# Horn Island.

- Nine raids were made on Horn Island.
- After the bombing of Darwin until 1944 the airstrip at Horn Island was the nearest operational airbase to the Japanese forces in New Guinea.
- It was used by Allied heavy bombers as the take-off point for attacks and to refuel on their return.
- In the bombing raid on Horn Island on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1942 there were eight Mitsubishi G4M1 heavy bombers escorted by twelve A6M2 Zeros of the 4th Kokutai.



# The bombing raid on Horn Island on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1942.

- Nine US Kittyhawks were scrambled at 1145 hours under order of Captain Bob Morrissey, Commanding Officer.
- *A dog fight persisted for 10 minutes above the Torres Straits.*
- *Morrissey shot down a Zero in flames when he fired on it from 200 yards.*
- *The Kittyhawks of 2nd Lts. Burtnette and Andrews were both riddled by machine gun fire.*
- *They both returned to Horn Island.*



# Horn Island.

- By the end of 1942, there were 5000 troops stationed on Horn Island and a further 2000 on nearby Thursday Island.
- Altogether 190 Australian and Allied personnel were killed in Torres Strait and 124 wounded.





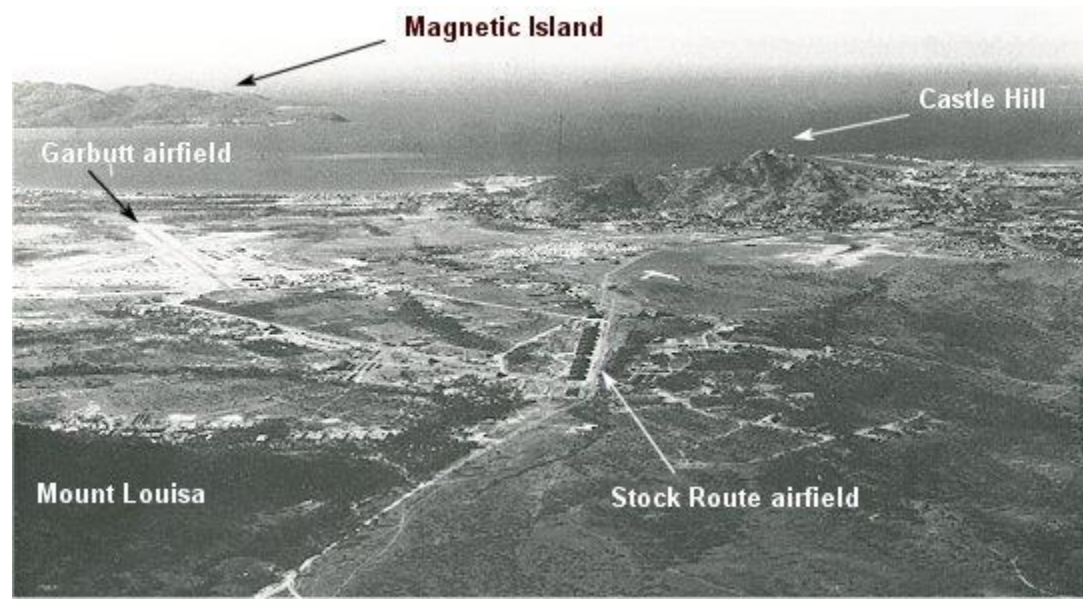
# Townsville.

- There were three Japanese raids on Townsville between 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July 1942.
- The raids were undertaken with two Emily flying boats (W45 and W46) captained by Asai and Mizukura who dropped 15 bombs of 250 kg near the Townsville wharves where three vessels were berthed, believed to be: the SS *Bantam*, SS *Burwah* and the HMAS *Swan*.



# No significant damage.

- The second raid dropped eight bombs near the Garbutt airfield.
- Three American anti-aircraft batteries fired 72 rounds.



# Some payback.

- Given a 30 minute early radar warning prior to the third raid, four American Airacobras from the 8th Fighter Group were able to engage in air combat with the Japanese.
- An Airacobra, with some resemblance to the Hawker Hurricane. The Japanese pilots reported them as such (next slide).



# Mistaken identification.

- A translated Japanese log report (held at the Townsville Aviation Museum) records what happened with the Japanese Emily flying boat.
- *Hit more than 10 times by two Hurricanes.*
- *Dropped three bombs near the aerodrome causing three fires, and five more on the city, igniting two more Kingo Shoji, pilot log, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1942)*
- The Emily dumped seven bombs in Cleveland Bay, between the shore and Magnetic Island.



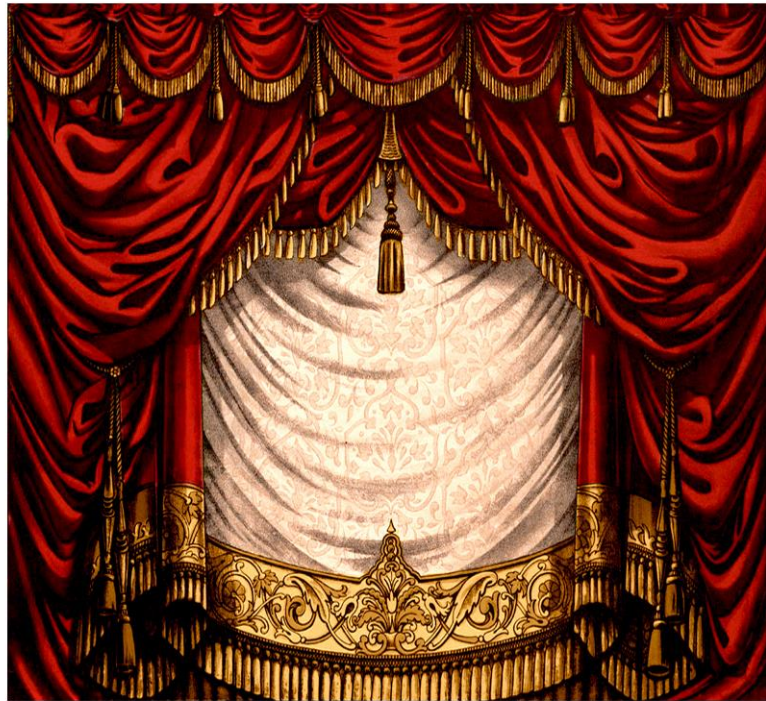


# Finally.

- In late 1942, as well as the three raids on Townsville, Queensland, Millingimbi, Northern Territory, there were four raids on the Exmouth Gulf.
- At the time many Australians believed that the Japanese planned to invade Australia.
- Many experts today, however, believe that the Japanese plan was to wipe out as much of Australia's and the Allied Forces air and sea defence in order to gain control of the resource rich countries of South East Asia and establish strong defences against any counter-attacks from the USA, Australia and any European powers in the region.



# Divider slide



*Paper Theater Curtain - based on a vintage Joseph Scholz image  
Altered by EK Duncan - Presented by "My Fanciful Muse" - 2015*