

**TASMANIAN MILITARY HISTORY  
READING LIST  
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(TASMANIA BRANCH)**



*Books are the anchors  
Left by ships that rot away. The mud  
The anchors lie in is one's recollection  
Of what life was, and never, late or soon,  
Will be again*

From 'The River In The Sky' by Clive James

## INTRODUCTION

The Tasmania military history collection contains: military biographies of Tasmanian service men and women, and books related Tasmanian participation in the colonial, pre-federation, Boer War, World War I, World War II and post WWII conflicts. Over forty volumes provide a rich repository of Tasmanian military experience.

In 1803, Van Diemen's Land was occupied by a British force under the command of Royal Navy LT John Bowen with troops from 102<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, in order to prevent France or Holland establishing a colony. During the early period the British Army provided settlement defence and guarded convict laborers. In all twenty one regiments served in Van Diemen's Land. From the mid 1820's to 1831 a guerrilla war was fought between the European population and the indigenous aboriginal people resulting in the deaths of more than 170 colonists and 250 to 400 aboriginal people. Indigenous warriors were led by Tongerlongeter from the Oyster Bay tribe. The English troops came from the East Kent Regiment (3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. South Lancashire Regiment (40<sup>th</sup> Regiment). Between 1863 and 1864 a number of Tasmanian's were recruited into the New Zealand Militia to fight in the Maori Wars. Tasmania also supplied firearms to the British forces in NZ.

When the British garrison departed in 1870 the only remaining volunteer defence force was the Launceston Volunteer Artillery. The threat from Russia in the 1870's hastened the passing of the 'Volunteer Act'. The Tasmanian Rifle Regiment was raised in Hobart and Launceston with volunteer artillery and detachments of The Tasmanian Rangers and the Tasmanian Light Horse. By 1900 Tasmanian Military Forces had expanded to three infantry battalions and added the Tasmanian Engineers to form a torpedo boat crew. At this time Hobart was defended by: Hobart Town Artillery Company from: Queens, Prince of Wales and the Albert Batteries. Launceston Volunteer Artillery Company manned Fort Cormiston on the Tamar River.

In 1899 the Colonial Military Forces responded to the request for military assistance in South Africa. Two contingents of Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen were sent during the Boer War.

Following Federation a number of Australian units were established. The Tasmanian Permanent Artillery became No 13 Company, Royal Australian Garrison Artillery while the volunteers formed Hobart and Launceston batteries of Australian Field Artillery.

Prior to World War I Tasmanian had a small citizen militia with universal military training for all males between 12 years and 26 years. At the start of hostilities more than 13,000 Tasmania embarked as members of different units, including nurses, the navy, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade and Australian Imperial Force battalions (12<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>).

During World War II approximately 31,000 Tasmania men and women enlisted. Many served in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) battalions (2/ 12<sup>th</sup> and 2/40<sup>th</sup>). Members of the 12 Field Regiment RAA from Launceston and Hobart transferred to the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RAA .

In the years since, Tasmanian men and women have served in the Korean War, Malaysian Confrontation and the Vietnam War.

Tasmania has made a significant contribution to national defence , its members being decorated more highly than any other state. Today the army, navy and RAAF Reserves continue this tradition with personnel participating in all recent peace keeping operations. At the same time Tasmanian defence industry contributes both nationally and internationally.

Readers interested in Tasmanian military memorials should consult the Headstone Project, Records of pauper headstone for war veterans, 2022 and the Tasmanian War Graves, Records of the Office of Australian War Graves, 2022.

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