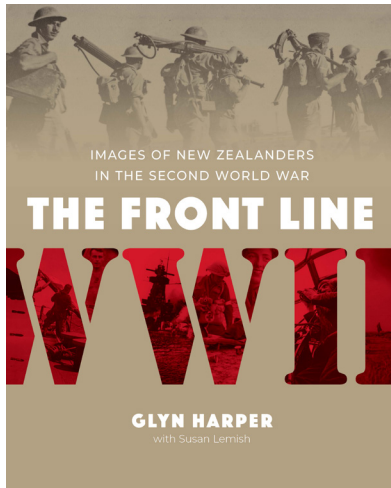


# The Front Line

## *Images of New Zealand in the Second World War*

GLYN HARPER WITH SUSAN LEMISH



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### NEW ZEALAND'S WAR THROUGH THE LENS OF THOSE WHO SERVED

A landmark book exploring New Zealand's second world war effort through over 800 photographs, many never before published and many live-action shots taken by those at the front. The images span North Africa, Europe and the Pacific, as well as action on the water and in the air — every battle and theatre in which New Zealanders fought. The text by one of New Zealand's leading military historians places the images in context. Chapters on prisoners of war, the home front and New Zealand's role in Japan after the end of hostilities in the Pacific round out this rich visual account of a conflict that dominated all aspects of New Zealand life for seven years.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**GLYN HARPER** is author of many books, including *Acts of Valour* (with Colin Richardson), *Johnny Enzed*, and *Images of War: New Zealand and the First World War in Photographs*. His most recent titles include *The Battle for North Africa* and *For King and Other Countries*, part of the First World War Centenary History Project. He is Professor of War Studies at Massey University and was Massey Project Manager of the New Zealand and the First World War Centenary History Project.

### SALES POINTS

- Of deep interest to all those whose family members fought in the war
- Hundreds of images, many never before published
- Photographs have been sourced from all three forces museums – army, navy and airforce — and the families of those who served
- Includes every battle and theatre in which New Zealanders fought
- Written by one of New Zealand's leading military historians

### PRINTABLE A3 POSTER AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



CHAPTER 5

### The War in North Africa

With vital strategic interests at stake for both countries, it was inevitable that Italy and Britain would clash in North Africa. For Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, known as Il Duce, the leader, who had ruled power in Italy, the war offered him a chance to make his nation great again. On 10 June 1940, convinced Nazi Germany was winning, Mussolini declared war on Britain and France as Germany's ally. He had two key aims: to turn the Mediterranean into an Italian lake and to conquer an empire that included North Africa and Greece. Thereby transforming Italy into a major world power. Britain, which had established a protectorate in Egypt in order to control the vital Suez Canal, regarded this area as 'the fulcrum of the British Empire'. It had also had a presence in the Mediterranean at Malta and Gibraltar since the Napoleonic Wars and was determined to remain there. The region was regarded as second only to the defence of Britain itself.

Having been expelled from the European mainland after a major defeat in France and Belgium in mid-1940, Britain could not have the German army in Europe absent. Only in North Africa and the Mediterranean, facing a weaker opponent, could Britain commit all three military services to fight. Accordingly, Egypt became the largest British military base outside Britain, built up from Commonwealth forces, including Australian and New Zealand formations. North Africa would be the location of New Zealand's longest ground campaign of the Second World War.

Nazi Germany, with its primary focus on continental Europe, did not have much interest in North Africa or the Mediterranean. From the start of the war by Italian aggression, it initially committed very few resources to it. However, after General Erwin Rommel's relatively easy victories they began to take the region more seriously. Even then, however, they never put enough manpower and material into North Africa until it was too late.

British divisions of reliable assets and forces in Greece in March 1941 coincided with Rommel's arrival in North Africa. During the formation of his Deutsche Afrika Korps (DAK), he was endorsed to take things quietly. Not one

**OPPOSITE PAGE** | Charles Upham VC (right) and Tom White in silhouette. Second Lieutenant White was captured on 13 December 1941 and, like Upham, spent most of the war as a prisoner in Germany.  
NATIONAL ARCHIVE, 2004-04-19

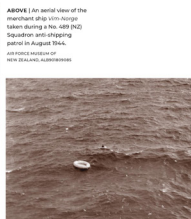
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**BELOW** | Navigator Don Kennedy looks very relaxed to be rescued. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 2008-08-08



**RIGHT** | An aerial view of a disabled ill-armed NZC evacuation vessel in October 1941. The two men, D. H. Mann and Don Kennedy, spent nine days adrift in these life rafts before being rescued. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 1990-06-20



**ABOVE** | An aerial view of the merchant ship *Vin-Angie* taken during a No. 102 Squadron anti-shipping patrol in August 1941. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 2008-08-08



**LEFT** | A ground crew views the cannon of a Spitfire fighter in 1944, when these aircraft were being used to intercept VJ flying bombs, the first of Hitler's 'Wonder Weapons'. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 2008-08-08



**RIGHT** | In mid-1941, *Lancaster 'N' for Naps'* (right) as its 100th operational trip for Bomber Command. It was only the second heavy bomber, after 'S' for 'Sugar', to complete a century of operations. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 2008-08-08

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**ABOVE** | The converted battleship and aircraft carrier HMS *Curlew* after being hit by two torpedoes fired by German U-boat U29 in the first month of the war. Consequently, the first British warship to sink by the enemy during the war, captured and sunk within 30 minutes, with the loss of 89 of her crew. All the personnel on U29 were awarded the Iron Cross. AIR FORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND, 2008-08-08

CHAPTER 6

### The War at Sea

Technically there was no New Zealand navy in 1939. There was instead a New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy – a small flotilla of an imperial navy with worldwide commitments. The demands of war, however, quickly transferred New Zealand's naval focus in terms of size, personnel and functions.

In September 1939, the two main vessels of the New Zealand Division passed to control of the British Admiralty, sailing away to link up with other parts of the Royal Navy on operations far from New Zealand's shores. While *Achilles* headed to America and the *West Indies* Station, *Leander* escorted *Tamara* convoy and was then stationed in the Indian Ocean. *Achilles* was seen in action against the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* in the Battle of the River Plate. In an action-packed deployment lasting more than a year, *Leander* escorted convoys under air attack, helped to sink an Italian submarine, clashed with Vichy French destroyers off the coast of Syria and, in February 1941, sank the Italian merchant raider *Ramb II*.

On 1 October 1941, the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy became the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN). Although this gave New Zealand the same status as other British dominions, the government had not supported or requested the change, believing it might even result in the loss of some of its ships. All that really changed, though, was that the 'HMCS' prefix to New Zealand vessels became 'HMNZS': His Majesty's New Zealand Ship.

All the New Zealanders who joined the navy during the Second World War were volunteers. Most who enlisted did so for 'His Majesty's Only', that is for the duration of the war. More than 3000 of them served in the Royal Navy. The first batch arrived in mid-1940 and a steady stream followed. Many of these initial volunteers served on minesweepers in the English Channel, protecting British shipping. From 1941, though, New Zealanders served throughout the Royal Navy and in every theatre of the naval war. The worst disaster of the war for New Zealand navy personnel occurred in December 1941 when the light cruiser HMS *Porpoise* hit a mine off the coast of Tripoli. All but one of the crew lost their lives. HMS *Porpoise* had been earmarked for transfer to the RNZN and 140 of its crew were New Zealanders. They were all killed. Another 60 New Zealanders serving with

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