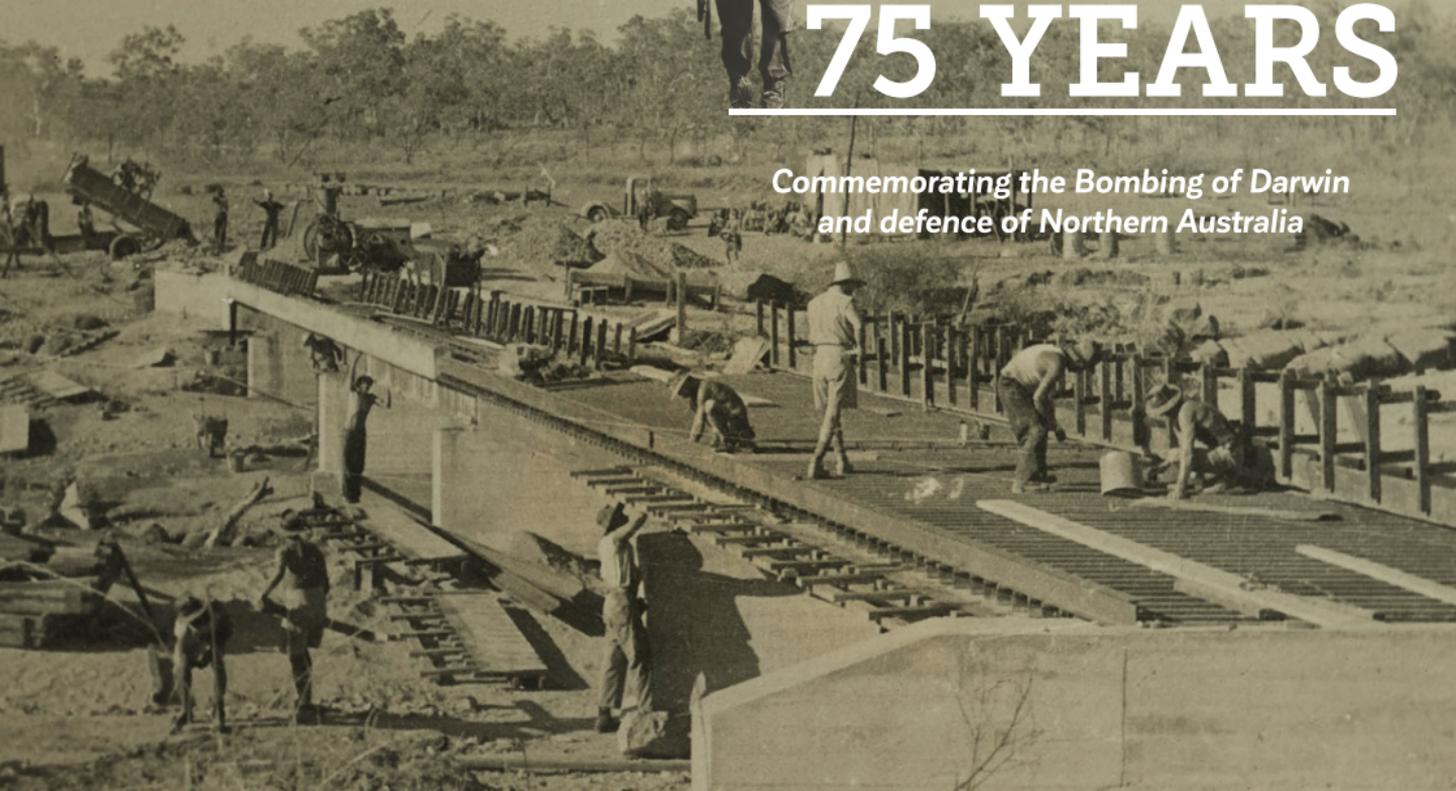




THE TERRITORY REMEMBERS 75 YEARS

*Commemorating the Bombing of Darwin
and defence of Northern Australia*



Katherine Raid

Even being 300km inland was not enough to save the town of Katherine from the Japanese bombers during World War II.

At around 1pm on 22 March 1942, nine twin-engined 'Betty' bombers of the Japanese Navy appeared over Katherine and circled at 20,000 feet, or 6000m. Probably due to another enemy flight over Darwin distracting Allied fighters at the time, there was no opposition in the skies above Katherine.

Checking wind speed with the release of an aerial balloon, the bombers soon began a run across the town aerodrome. They dropped ninety 60 kilogram bombs. There was also shrapnel damage and heavy strikes near the Gallon Licence Store and further afield.

An Aboriginal man, 42-year old Dodger Kajalwal, was sheltering behind a rock near the store when he was hit and killed by shrapnel. Another Aboriginal man, Hector, was hurt. Local man Noel Hall was also injured when one of his fingers was severed by shrapnel.

www.territoryremembers.nt.gov.au



From top: Katherine NT, 22 September 1942. Troops of the No 14A Lines of Communication Area building a Bow Roof Hut. (AWM 057389) Knott's Crossing, Katherine NT, 25 September 1943. Members of US forces filling their water tank. (AWM 057373) Knott's Crossing, Katherine NT, 22 September 1942. Residents from Knuckeyj's Bend compound on their way to work at HQ No 14A Lines of Communication area. (AWM 057376)



Following the raid, military personnel and a group of Post Master General linesmen inspected the aerodrome and assessed the damage.

They reported as follows: "About 85 bomb craters of varying sizes were located. The holes were well scattered all over. If there had been any planes on the taxiway system, they would have undoubtedly been destroyed."

The air raids on Katherine were the southernmost extent of Japanese air raids on the Northern Territory.

The Australian Army had several encampments in the Katherine area. Over the course of the war this expanded to include engineering and surveying depots, signals and observations units, supply depots, farms and military hospitals. The air raids to the north continued for another two years with Katherine an essential logistical hub.

Photo on front:
Edith River Bridge
construction, 1942.
(©NSW State Records)

