

# MELBOURNE AT WAR

Recent archaeological digs around the city are helping reveal how civilians survived fear and deprivations on the home front during World War II. Story: Mike Rosel.

**W**hen young archaeologist Barry Green and his wife and fellow archaeologist Alana investigated a building site at the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind in St Kilda Road in 2014, they hoped to unearth a 19th-century fever hospital. But the excavator also yielded evidence of a condition just as alarming: the invasion fear that dominated Australian life for most of 1942.

The pair found the unmistakable outline of a WWII air-raid trench, its zig-zag pattern intended to limit blast damage. This one had an unusual horseshoe design which Barry surmises might have been for area defence of the RAAF and naval units that served here.

While their nearby digs had turned up 19th-century relics including clay pipes, bottles and broken plates marked Victorian Asylum & School for the Blind, their cross-sections of the trench found nothing.

Recalling how archaeologists sought 'crop marks' on early aerial photographs for indications of vanished structures, Barry searched photographs of 1945 without seeing his trench outline. He eventually found his ghosts in the grass on Google Earth images.

Other ghosts of this unsettling period – prime ministers Menzies and Curtin, US General Douglas MacArthur and more – were easily conjured up when RoyalAuto visited the well-preserved War Cabinet Room at Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road where Australia's war was managed from 1939 to 1945. Wartime photographs look down on original leather chairs and radiators, blackout curtains, roller maps of empires now dust, a map board easily concealed by lockable panels and a black rotary-dial telephone.

Our guide waved a brass ashtray: "Everybody smoked cigarettes, pipes or cigars... sometimes sessions lasted 18 hours ... they installed fans above the door to suck the worst of the smoke into the typing pool." It's regrettable that the barracks were closed to public tours following the 2009 terrorist plot aimed at Holsworthy Army Barracks outside Sydney.

Irish-born Barry Green, who emigrated to Melbourne in 2009 with his Australian wife, had done a crash course in our war-

time history, and was startled to discover how little younger generations knew of the near hysteria that followed Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, and Japan's military advance across South-East Asia.

"I was surprised to find how quickly the civilian experience of the war had been forgotten, including the pivotal role Melbourne played," he says.

His reading included *On The Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*, by historian Professor Kate Darian-Smith from Melbourne University. Prominent buildings were sand-bagged or partly bricked up; thousands of volunteer air-raid wardens tried to enforce a blackout; some scared families departed for distant refuges; key museum treasures were removed for safe keeping. There was heavy censorship, rationing and no private petrol.

"There were hundreds of slit trenches," Barry says. "Almost two kilometres of trenches around the city alone, notably in Treasury Gardens outside State Government offices, with uncounted others in municipal parks, schools and institutions, and backyards." These were not the coffin-deep narrow slits you might imagine: a regulation trench was only 1.22 metres deep and a metre wide at the top, built shallow to reduce the chance of walls toppling.

Professor Darian-Smith noted that "civilian morale plunged to an unprecedented low" after military disasters. "Australia was a nation living in fear during 1942, as was clear in my interviews with more than 100 people who endured the wartime city," she says. "The separation of families, the nightly blackout and air-raid drills, and the constant uncertainty about the future contributed to feelings of stress and heightened emotions."

This was a spirit-sapping rollercoaster. Australians were stunned by Singapore's fall on 15 February 1942 (with some 15,000 Australian soldiers captured) and the first bombing of Darwin on 19 February, with around 300 deaths.

Rumours flourished. For instance, some people had claimed to see a small Japanese floatplane over Melbourne early on 26 February. This rumour turned out to be true, if not officially acknowledged until 1945. It was 50 years before author David Jenkins tracked down pilot Nobuo Fujita, and Australians



Luxury 'Gold Class' fleet

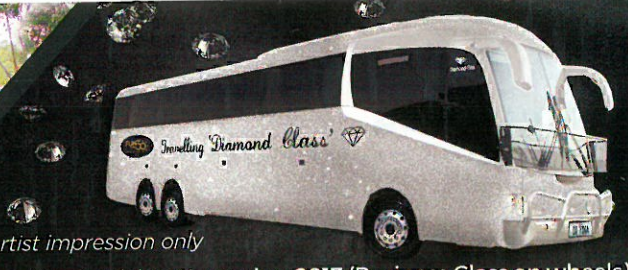
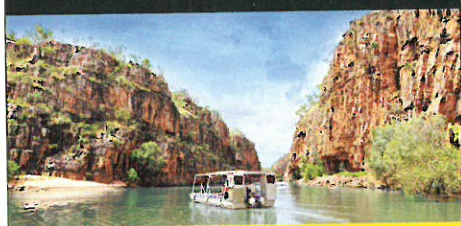


Image is artist impression only  
Elite 'Diamond Class' arriving November 2017 (Business Class on wheels)

## BROOME, THE KIMBERLEY, KAKADU & DARWIN

Discover Rugged Wild Beauty



**INCLUDES SCENIC FLIGHTS + SAVE \$400 Per Couple**

**\$6600pp Twin Share**  
12 Days - Includes flights to Broome & from Darwin

Experience the rugged, ancient landscape of the Kimberley and wild beauty of the Northern Territory's Kakadu National Park  
• 2 Nights Broome & touring • Cable Beach Camel Trek • 1 Night Fitzroy Crossing • Cruise Geikie Gorge & Katherine Gorge • 1 Night Halls Creek • 2 Nights Kununurra • Ord River Cruise • Bungle Bungles Scenic Flight • 1 Night Katherine • 2 Nights Kakadu • Yellow Water Wetlands Cruise • Kakadu Scenic Flight • Ubirr Rock Art • Litchfield National Park • Wangi Falls • 2 Nights 5-star Darwin • 32 meals  
**Departs: 28 May; 7 June; 22 July 2018**

## THE CENTRAL WEST, GULF COUNTRY & SAVANNAH SAFARI

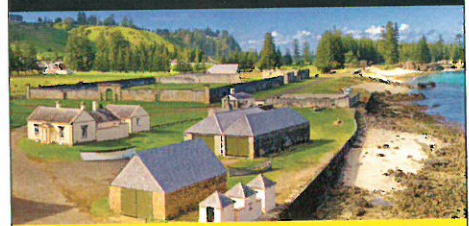


**LUXURY GOLD CLASS COACH + 2 OUTBACK RAIL JOURNEYS**

**\$5998pp Twin Share**  
15 Days - Gold Class coach ex Brisbane

Live Australia's Story through an adventure holiday in Queensland's Outback & Gulf Country  
• 1 Night Roma • 2 Nights Carnarvon Gorge with Guided Walks & Heli Flight • 3 Nights Longreach touring Stockman's Hall of Fame • Cattle Station Tour • Qantas Museum • Age of Dinosaurs at Winton • 2 Nights Cloncurry • Mt Isa Mine Tour • 2 Nights Karumba • Gulflander Rail Journey • 2 Nights Cobbold Gorge • Savannahlander Rail Journey • 2 Nights Undara & Lava Tubes Tour • 1 Night 5-star Cairns • 42 meals  
**Departs: 6 May; 13 May; 3 June; 17 June 2018**

## NORFOLK ISLAND INDULGENCE



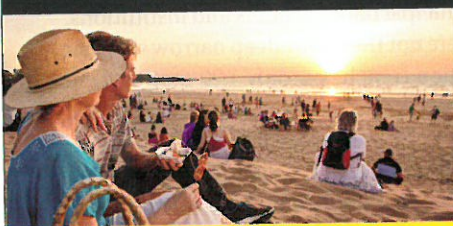
**UNPACK ONCE + SAVE \$300 Per Couple**

**\$3100pp Twin Share**  
8 Days - Includes return flights ex Brisbane

Norfolk Island offers excitement, fun, relaxation, adventure, indulgence, culture, history and surprise for everyone to experience and enjoy • Stay 7 Nights  
• 4WD Island Adventure • Progressive Dinner to local's homes • Convict Ruins • Glass Bottom Boat • Culla & Co Clydesdale Carriage Tour • Wonderland by Night Show • Night as a Convict and much more • 21 meals  
**Departs: 14 April 2018**

## TOP END ENCOUNTER

Darwin, Litchfield National Park, Tiwi Island & Kakadu



**INCLUDES SCENIC FLIGHTS + SAVE \$300 Per Couple**

**\$3690pp Twin Share**  
7 Days - Includes return flights to & from Darwin

A Top End short break tour • 4 Nights 5-star Darwin with local sight-seeing • Mindil Beach Markets in VIP Seats • Darwin Harbour Sunset Seafood Dinner • Litchfield National Park Termite Mounds & Wangi Falls • Tiwi Island day tour • 2 Nights Kakadu • Kakadu Scenic Flight • Ubirr Rock Art Site • Yellow Waters Wetlands Cruise • 17 meals  
**Departs: 2 June; 20 June; 4 July; 13 July 2018**

## HEROES OF LONGREACH & WINTON RAIL HOLIDAY

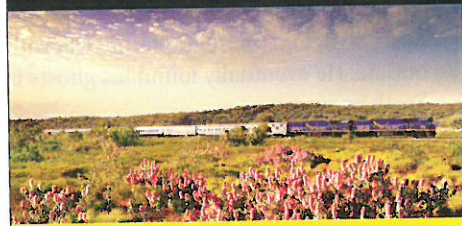


**COACH/RAIL COMBO + Save \$100 Per Couple**

**From \$2055pp Twin Share**  
7 Days - Includes Overnight Rail Journeys in First Class Cabins

Enjoy 2 Overnight Rail Journeys in First Class Cabins on the Spirit of the Outback • Choice of Diamond Class OR Gold Class coach travel  
• 4 Nights Longreach • See Stockman's Hall of Fame • Qantas Founders Museum & Jet Tour • Outback Stockman's Show • Camden Park Station Tour • Drovers Sunset Cruise & Outback Dinner & Live Show • Age of Dinosaurs Exhibit & Tour at Winton • 17 meals  
**Departs: 7 April; 12 May; 9 June; 30 June 2018**

## KANGAROO ISLAND, THE NULLARBOR & WESTERN AUSTRALIA WILDFLOWERS



**INCLUDES INDIAN PACIFIC + SAVE \$400 Per Couple**

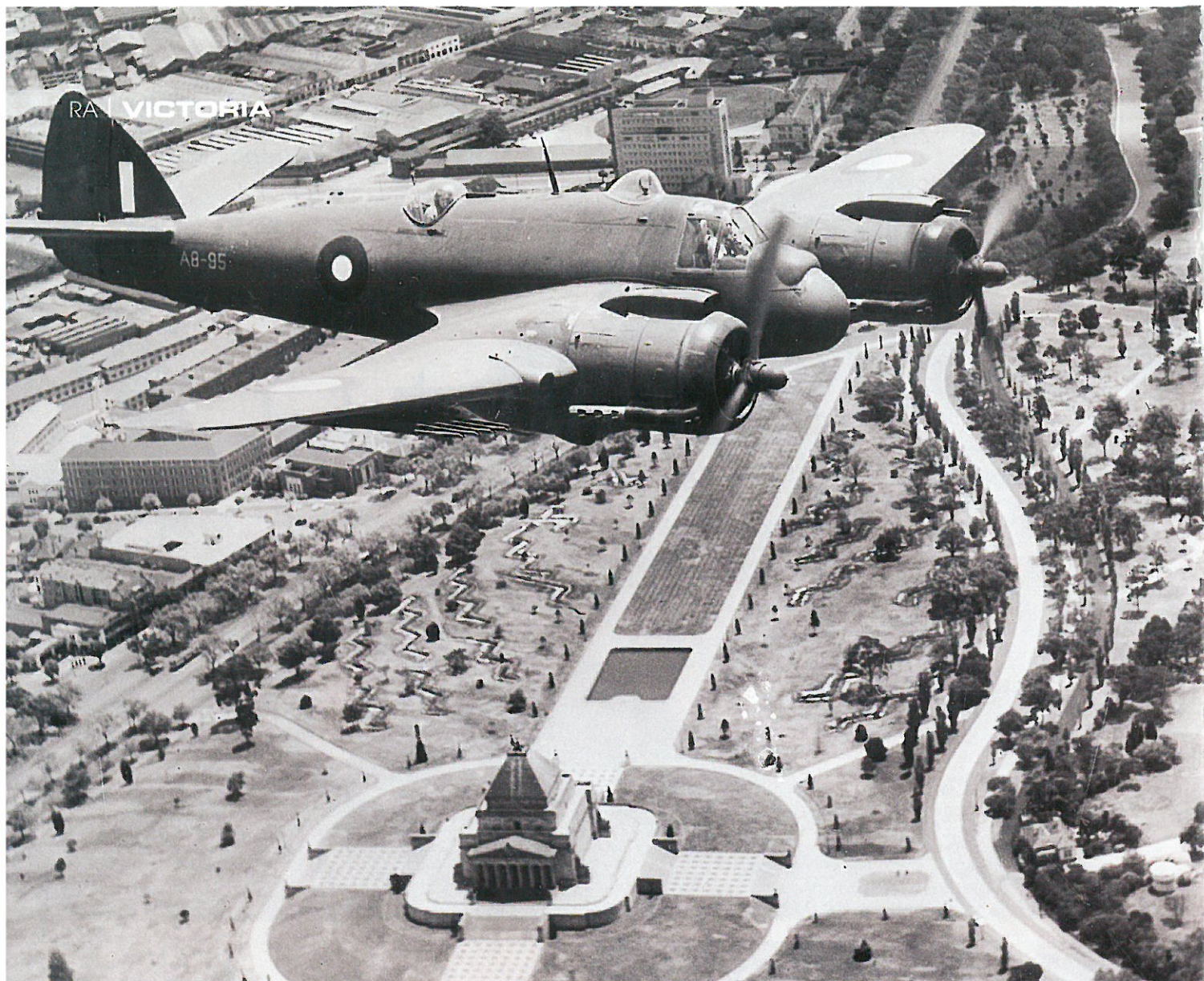
**\$6500pp Twin Share**  
14 Days - Includes flights to Adelaide & from Perth

Fabulous Coach/Rail combo • 2 Nights Kangaroo Island & sight-seeing • 2 Nights in Gold Service on-board the Indian Pacific with Whistle-stop tours • 3 Nights 5-star Perth with local tours • 1 Night Margaret River • 2 Nights Albany • Valley of Giants • Wave Rock • Wildflower Trail • 2 Nights Hyden • The Pinnacles and more • 39 meals  
**Departs: 25 Sep; 9 Oct 2018**

**Call Toll Free Ph: 1300 554 505 for NEW free 108 page brochure**

Sole Use Prices are available in the Fun Over Fifty Brochure. Sole Use savings 50% of couple savings. Savings displayed are for set departure dates only and not applicable to all dates displayed. Savings offer expires 1st December 2017. S1896





A RAAF Beaufighter flies over the Shrine of Remembrance in 1944. Zig-zag slit trenches are visible north of the Shrine. ALL PHOTOS: Australian War Memorial.

learned how his plane had been taken from a hangar on the deck of submarine I-25 off King Island in Bass Strait. Fujita took off in the dark for his audacious dawn patrol.

While fears eased after American carrier-borne aircraft won the Battle of the Coral Sea (4-8 May), morale took another hit when three Japanese midget submarines penetrated Sydney Harbour (31 May-1 June).

Spirits soared with the sinking of four Japanese aircraft carriers in the pivotal Battle of Midway (3-7 June) – and fell as the Japanese advanced towards Port Moresby along the Kokoda Track, soon infamous for jungle warfare that ebbed and flowed until the final enemy retreat in November.

Melbourne breathed again. Trenches became playgrounds for kids such as Noel Carrick, who remembers trenches off High Street, Malvern, as “stinky and grungy” after rain. Some people focused on moral rather than military welfare complained that trenches provided privacy for lovers.

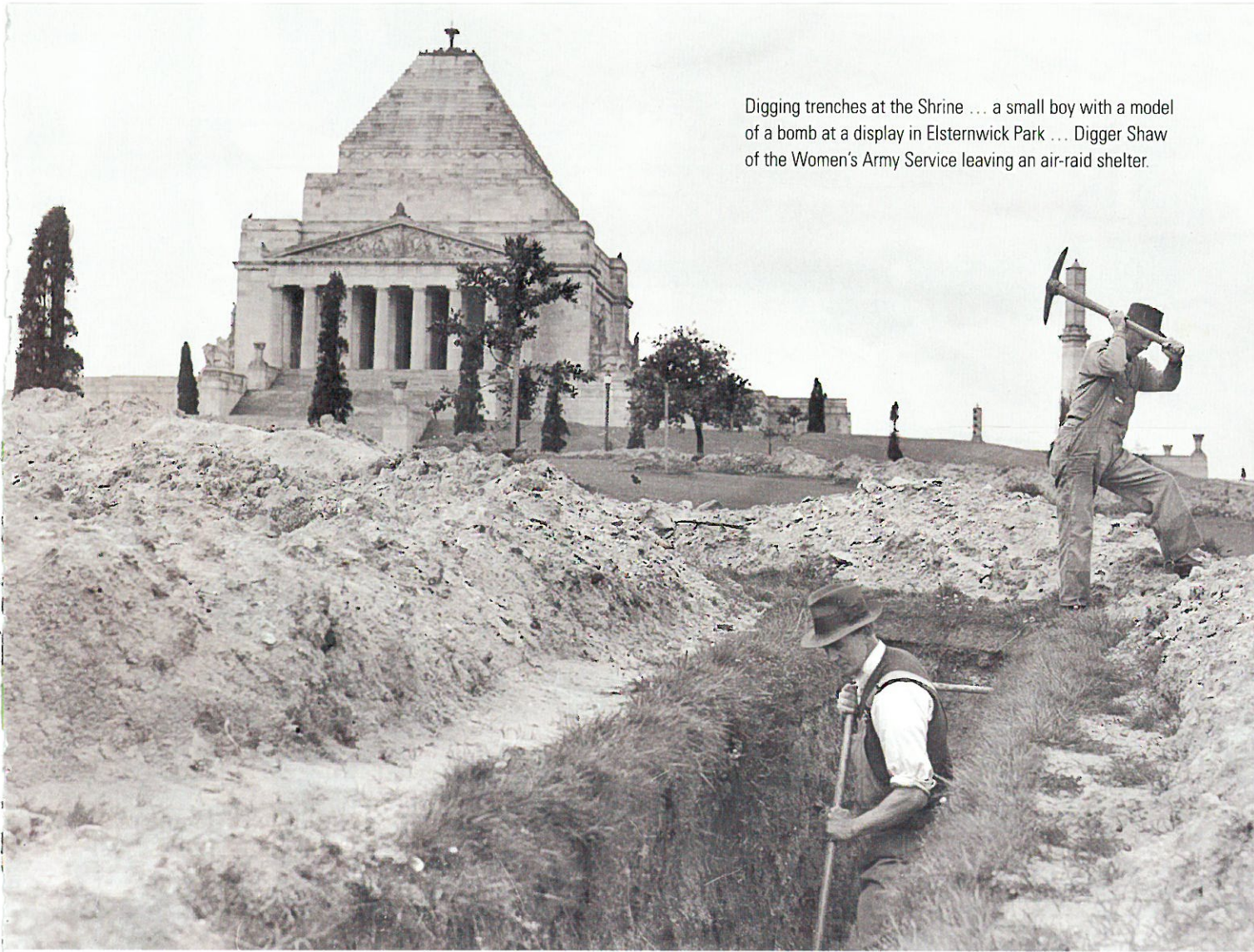
The city was invaded, of course, when the 1st US Marine Division arrived from Guadalcanal in January 1943. Melburnians

welcomed the American build-up, excepting those men who complained about their competition as “overpaid, oversexed and over here”. Citizens were shaken by the ‘Brownout Murders’, when a serial killer throttled three women in May; the arrest of US Marine Edward Leonski did little for Australian-US relations.

Professor Darian-Smith investigated recruitment of women for munitions factories and other workplaces, and social and sexual upheavals. While volunteering was popular – from air-raid precautions to “knitting circles for the troops” – human nature often conflicted with the Anzac spirit. The black market thrived, black American troops were not always welcomed, and some unions resisted the women who replaced workmen serving in the Forces. Painter Albert Tucker’s bleak vision of Melbourne’s dark side emerged in his Images of Modern Evil series.

Barry Green says he will be spending time “trying to shed more light on Melbourne’s forgotten military landscape.” ■

The Shrine of Remembrance has several activities planned for Remembrance Day, 11 November. Visit [shrine.org.au](http://shrine.org.au) for details.



Digging trenches at the Shrine ... a small boy with a model of a bomb at a display in Elsternwick Park ... Digger Shaw of the Women's Army Service leaving an air-raid shelter.

