



Operation

'SECRET

To Be Destroyed in

DAMIAN COLE EXAMINES SOME OF THE MILITARY MAPS
IN THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION, INCLUDING A NEW
ACQUISITION OF SECOND WORLD WAR ESCAPE MAPS

MAPS HAVE AN INTEGRAL connection to the military: they are used to plan military actions and to chart results; they are used to inform the home-front audience of movements abroad and they are used extensively by military historians to understand and interpret past events. The National Library of Australia has a broad collection of maps relating to places in which Australia's military forces have fought, ranging from the tablelands of South Africa, the cliffs of Gallipoli and the fields of Flanders to the jungles of New Guinea and the deserts of Iraq. While much of this material has an Australian perspective, many of the most intriguing maps present major conflicts from the point of view of the 'other side'. Particularly in times of conflict, maps containing vital topographic and operational information are guarded so carefully by each side that they are destroyed in preference to allowing enemy access.

The history of mapping in Australia owes much to the military. It was British naval surveys by James Cook, Matthew Flinders and Phillip Parker King that provided the first reliable charts of the Australian coastline. With Federation in 1901, the newly formed Commonwealth realised that it had almost no reliable topographic maps of any sort of national standard. In 1910, the surveyors and cartographers of the Commonwealth Military Forces were assigned to begin a topographic map survey of the country. In the time long before satellites and GPS (Global Positioning System) units, even before aerial photography, 'plane table surveys' were hand drawn in the field on a board set on a tripod. The Library has almost 200 early plane

table survey maps, representing a method of cartography that has long been superseded, as well as the published maps generated from this work.

A unique piece of militaria held by the Library is an atlas titled *The Maori Wars, New Zealand*, which is part of the Rex Nan Kivell Collection. The atlas is a compilation of engraved and hand-drawn maps and plans detailing engagements and Maori Pā (fortified villages). The New Zealand Land Wars were a series of campaigns fought in New Zealand from 1845 to 1872, marking the first time that men from Australia fought abroad for the British Empire. The maps and plans are unique for their detailed information and beautiful imagery and there is little with which to compare them, even in New Zealand collections.

The next overseas military campaign in which Australia was involved is represented in the Library by a small selection of informative home-front maps of the Boer War (1899–1902). During this time, the people at home were fed a regular, sanitised view of the war abroad, in which maps were used to make

OPPOSITE
M19, Great Britain
French Indo China (Central) ...
1944? (detail)
two-sided coloured rayon
map; 57.0 x 91.0 cm
Maps Collection
MAP G8001.S7 [1944?]

BELOW
T.A. White, Government
Interpreter
The Positions Occupied by the
Different Tribes at Rangiriri
1863
coloured manuscript map
30.0 x 38.5 cm
Maps Collection
nla.map-ra148-11



Event of Attack'

OPPOSITE
The Daily Mail
Bird's Eye Map of the British
Front between 1916 and 1918
coloured map; 105.0 x 66.0 cm
Maps Collection
nla.map-gmod77

BELOW
Frank Hurley (1885–1962)
Troops Waiting in the Trenches
before an Attack: World War I
between 1914 and 1918
half of full-plate glass negative
Pictures Collection
nla.pic-an23478264

sense of the strange placenames that they heard about in reports or in stories told by returned soldiers. These maps helped to keep home morale high by presenting a positive account of progress on the front and were a profitable enterprise for commercial publishers satisfying the public demand and curiosity for news.

Another fine example of a 'rosy' portrayal of war is a set of two maps produced by the British *Daily Mail* during the First World War. Both titled *Bird's Eye Map of the British Front*, these stylised oblique views of an exaggerated topography were a popular medium in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Covering the Western Front areas of Arras, Ypres and Lille, the maps are like tourist posters, with picturesque and rolling green hills dotted with quaint little villages—appealing landscapes to which to send off a son or husband to fight the Hun.

The true landscape of war is better shown by aerial photography and operational military maps of a countryside wiped away by trenches and craters. The Library has many maps of the Western Front, with smaller numbers of maps from the campaigns at Gallipoli and in Palestine. These trench maps are very different to the picturesque home-front maps and were used as operational documents in military planning and in combat. Aerial surveying was a new innovation during the First World War and an advantageous way to locate enemy trenches. It is sobering to compare



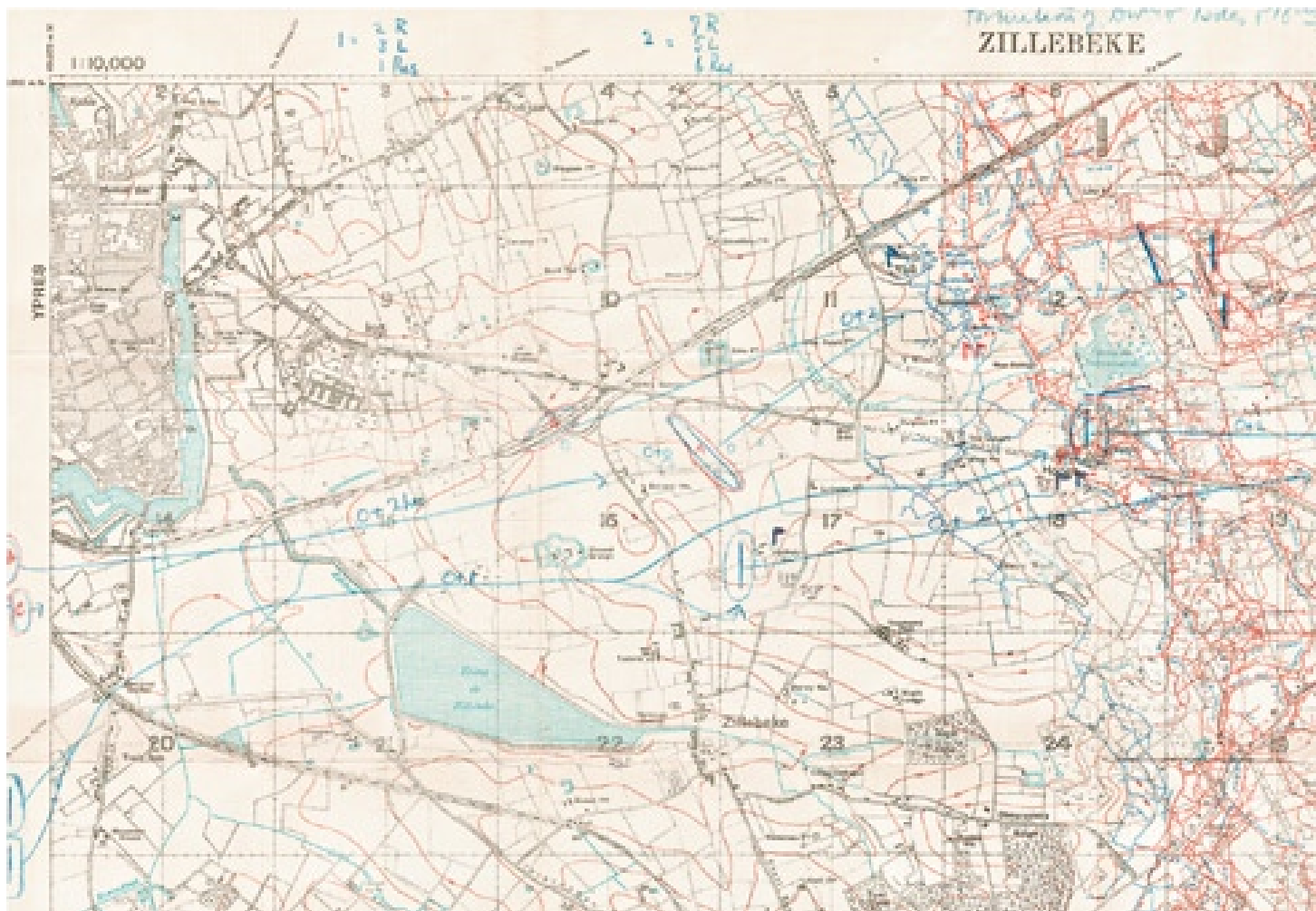
a map showing the trenches, gun positions and barbed wire along the front line with later versions of the same map, and see that, after six months or a year or more, the front line had advanced only a few hundred metres. Imagine the human cost of such an advance that can be so calmly measured off a map. Many of the trench maps show only the position of the opposing side, without any references to the



Allies' position. In the event that the map was captured, the usefulness of the document to the enemy had to be minimised. This secrecy was regarded by some at the time as an overreaction and troops often complained they had to use captured enemy trench maps to find their way around their own trenches.

The Library has a great range of maps from the Second World War. During this time in Australia, the perceived threat of Japanese invasion spurred the national mapping program, as the government realised just how poorly mapped the country was. However, some of the finest examples of Second World War maps in the Library's collection came from the 'other side'. These give a different perspective to the war and help to find out what the other side knew and why they followed that tactic. With a map from the other side, the fog of war can be lifted.

A small but illustrative example is a set of strategic maps of the Balkans produced by the German Army High Command during the



short campaign in April 1941 when Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. The defence of Greece was aided by a small force of British, New Zealand and Australian troops known as 'W' Force. The campaign ended in German victory, with the Allies ejected from Greece and with the Germans occupying Crete after a bloody airborne attack. Throughout this set of maps, one for each day of the campaign, the positions of Allied and enemy units are carefully marked, as the German army raced to its objective. From the German perspective, the Greek campaign was a swift triumph of air and armoured superiority. However, this set of maps shows that perhaps the Germans overestimated their opposition, as among the carefully labelled enemy positions and units are four full Commonwealth divisions. In reality, the Allied forces were made up of only two divisions and supporting armour, one of which was the under-strength Australian 6th Division.

Another view of the 'other side' can be seen in escape or evasion maps. These maps were made to be used behind enemy lines and were essential to the success of these risky

operations. Christopher Clayton-Hutton, who worked for the British Military Intelligence escape and evasion agency MI9, described these maps as 'the escaper's most important accessory'. Their main purpose was to give broad, informative mapping of enemy occupied areas. They were usually made from a soft material, such as silk, rayon or cotton, which could be folded without making a sound, hidden within the lining of clothes and would not be torn by rough handling or destroyed if they became wet. The fabric escape maps were issued to airmen flying missions over enemy territory or smuggled into prisoner-of-war camps in aid packages.

The Library recently acquired four escape maps produced by the MI9 office based in India in 1944. The maps cover Sumatra and Java, Burma, China and French Indochina and show important features such as roads, railways, ports, steamship routes and even radio stations. As the tide of the war turned against the Japanese, Allied aircrews flew more and more missions over enemy-held territory. These maps were issued to pilots, along with a waterproof purse of local money to help

ABOVE
Ordnance Survey
Trench Map 1:10 000 Series
GSGS 3062, Sheet Zillebeke
28NW4 at NE3 (part of) 1917
map; 50.0 cm x 82.0 cm
Maps Collection
MAP G5831.S65 s10

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP
2/1st Australian Army
Topographical Survey
Company
*New Guinea 1: 63,360 Series,
Kokoda Sheet* 1943
coloured map
44.0 cm x 58.0 cm
Maps Collection
MAP G8160 s63

Rikuchi Sokuryōbu
*Yōzu Papua gomanbun no
ichi zu Kumushi-Gawa, no 4,
Kokoda* 1942
map; 46.0 x 58.0 cm
Maps Collection
MAP Jap. Mil. Map. Coll:
Papua New Guinea/5

BELOW
MI9, Great Britain
*Sumatra (South), Java
(Extreme North-west) ...*
1944?
two-sided coloured rayon
map; 63.0 x 98.0 cm
Maps Collection
MAP G8071.S7 [1944?]

gain assistance should they be shot down. The documents add to the Library's collection of similar maps of Europe from the same period and of Vietnam produced during the 1960s by the United States Defense Intelligence Agency.

Many of the military maps in the Library's Maps Collection are labelled with a variety of secret warnings and instructions: the British 'Not to be taken beyond HQ'; the German 'Nur für den Dienstgebrauch'; the Italian 'Ne vietata la divulgazione'. Even Australian maps of Australia during the 1940s warned: 'This map is an official document. If found it must be handed in to the nearest Military Headquarters or Police Station'. To reinforce the official line, an Allied trench map of the Somme River has a handwritten note: 'Secret. To be destroyed in event of attack'. Although the information contained on these maps was of utmost importance, the secrecy sometimes went to extremes. A set of Danube River and Ports maps produced in 1944 by the British Army states:

*This chart is the property of H. M.
Government. It is intended for the use
of Officers generally, and may in certain
cases be communicated to persons in*

*His Majesty's Service below the rank of
commissioned officer who may require to be
acquainted with its contents in the course of
their duties.*

To an observer outside of the military you might think, if you cannot trust your own soldiers with His Majesty's secrets, who can you trust?

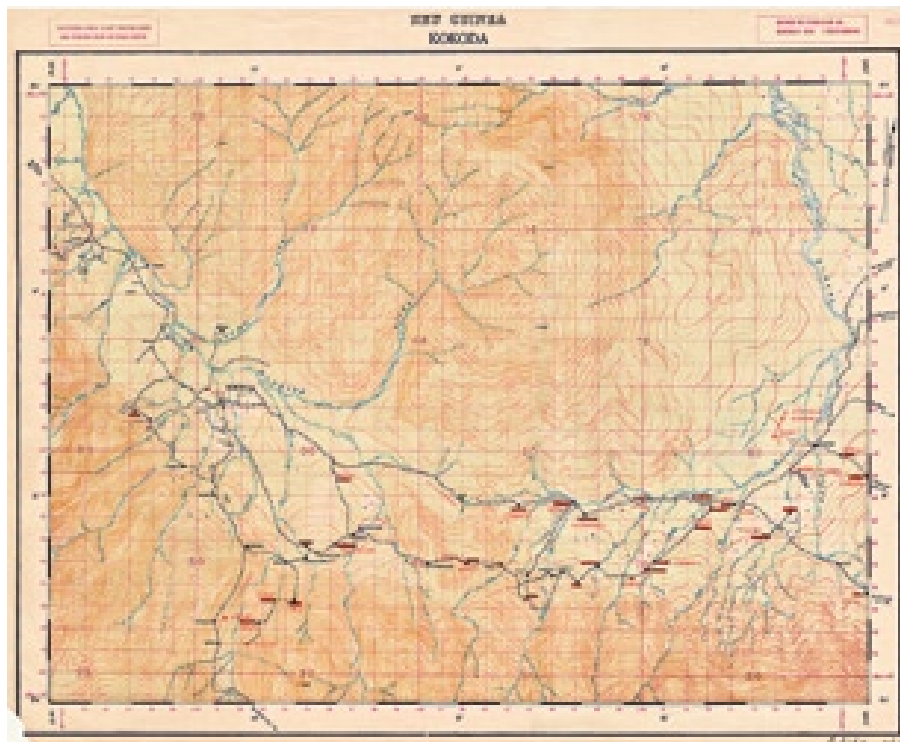
Another recent Library acquisition that shows the 'other side' contains an incomplete topographic series and other maps of the islands of Indonesia, the Solomons and Papua New Guinea produced by the Sanbō Honbu or the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff Office. Among the acquisition is a set of four, plain-looking maps covering the one battlefield of the South West Pacific campaign that ranks higher than most in Australian military history, and indeed in the national psyche: the Kokoda Trail, the rough transport line running from Port Moresby on the south coast of New Guinea to Buna on the north coast via the highland village of Kokoda. While the Library already has maps produced by the Australian Army showing the southern portion of the Kokoda Trail, this new set of maps shows the northern section occupied by the Japanese. The mapping is quite simple,



showing only basic relief and features along the Kumusi and Mambare river systems from Kokoda to the north coast. Dated July and August 1942, the maps were generated from aerial photography without the addition of ground surveying or field checking. At this stage of the war, both sides were desperate to get as much mapping printed as possible. One significant hindrance to the Australian command in New Guinea was the absence of quality and reliable mapping and, if this set of four maps is any indication of the type of mapping used by the Japanese military, it seems that they were plagued by the same problem. However, even a bad map is better than none and the information contained is still coveted: 'If you use this map at the front, keep it secret within your unit'.

Among the varied sources of cartographic information the Japanese relied on are original Dutch and Australian published maps that have been overprinted in Japanese. One example is a map of the Port Moresby region produced by the Australian military in 1942. While retaining the English key and placenames, the scale of the map has been slightly modified from the imperial measure used in Australia to the closest metric measure used in Japan. To an Australian observer the question that comes to mind is: how did the Japanese get this map to begin with?

The Library continues to collect the domestic cartographic publications of the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Australian Navy. Topographic maps, as well as nautical and aeronautical charts, are received under the government deposit scheme to build a national collection of Commonwealth publications. The Department of Defence has had a long and appreciated relationship with the Maps Collection, not only providing maps produced by the Australian Defence Force but also sourcing some hard-to-find overseas maps. These include maps of the most recent operations in which Australia has been involved, such as East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Few secrets here, however, as all mapping received through this avenue is unclassified



and intended for public use—these conflicts are too current to see the secret side of the mapping. No doubt the secrets of today will become the research topics of tomorrow and such secret maps will, as they have done in the past, become clear to read.

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