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Memory, History, Nation, War

The Official Histories of New Zealand in the
Second World War 1939-45

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Abstract

The Official Histories of the Second World War are the largest historiographical project in New Zealand's history. They are still used as core reference texts for individual battles and for the war as a whole.

The War Histories were intended to fill a wide range of roles. They were to be 'at once a memorial, a souvenir, an interpretation of events and a record of experience in certain specialised fields'. The conflicting nature of these roles created a double dichotomy within the War History project, between an affirmative national memory and an empirically accurate history on the one hand and between the critical evaluation of campaigns and the recognition of service and sacrifice on the other. This thesis examines this dichotomy through a framework of memory, history, nation and war. It uses four case studies from the War History series, *Journey towards Christmas*, by S.P. Llewellyn, *23 Battalion*, by Angus Ross, *Crete*, by Dan Davin and *Battle for Egypt, the Summer of 1942*, by J.L. Scoullar, to consider the extent to which the tensions between the roles of the Histories influenced their production and their place as contemporary histories in post-war New Zealand.

While the War Histories represent the largest repository of information on New Zealand in World War Two, the thesis contends that to use the series now as reference works only is to miss a significant opportunity. The War Histories were Official, but they were also contemporary and collective in their production. Each volume in the series is a valuable historical text in its own right, and can be read and deconstructed as representative of both the individual and society that produced it.

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Abbreviations

1NZEF	First New Zealand Expeditionary Force
2NZEF	Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AR	Auckland Museum & Institute
ASC	Army Service Corps
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
Bde	Brigade
BGS	Brigadier General Staff
Bn	Battalion
CB	Companion of the Order of the Bath
CBE	Companion of the Order of the British Empire
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
Col	Colonel
CRA	Commander Royal Artillery
DCGS	Deputy Chief of General Staff
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
ED	Efficiency Decoration
GOC	General Officer Commanding
Gen	General
GSO1	General Staff Officer Class 1
HQ	Headquarters
KBE	Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire
KCB	Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath
Lt	Lieutenant
MA	Master of Arts Degree
Maj	Major
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
MC	Military Cross

NA	Archives New Zealand
NAAFI	Navy, Army, Air Force Institutes
NA, UK	National Archives, United Kingdom
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NZ Div	New Zealand Division
OBE	Order of the British Empire
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
POW	Prisoner of War
RAF	Royal Air Force
RMT	Reserve Mechanical Transport
RNZA	Royal New Zealand Artillery
RSA	Returned Services Association
R/T	Radio Telephone
Sgt	Sergeant
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNE	University of New England
VC	Victoria Cross
VD	Volunteer Officers Decoration
W/T	Wireless Telephone
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two