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New Zealand's Forgotten Warriors:  
3NZ Division in the South Pacific in World War II

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Reginald Hedley Newell

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*The author, Reginald Hedley Newell, asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.*

# **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the origins, deployment, operations and demise of 3NZ Division. It argues that the forces that became the Division were sent to Fiji because of a perceived strategic threat, particularly from airpower, if the islands were seized by the Japanese. The Division was relieved in Fiji by the Americans but returned to the Pacific in 1943 because New Zealand wanted to earn a place at the peace table and the Americans lacked troops in the theatre. Whether the Division was primarily an offensive or garrison unit remained unclear throughout its existence and influenced its constitution. Major General Harold Barrowclough, its commander from 1942 to 1944, had somewhat different strengths from his fellow divisional commander Major General Bernard Freyberg, and operated in a very different environment, with amphibious operations at brigade level. Furthermore, his division operated in an area dominated by the United States Navy rather than the more familiar culture of the British Army. More generally, the relationship between the New Zealanders and the Americans in the South Pacific was complex, generally symbiotic but occasionally unfriendly and even lethal. The perception in New Zealand that service in the South Pacific was less onerous than service in the Mediterranean ignores the often unpleasant and even deadly conditions faced by the soldiers of 3NZ Division. The Division's combat operations contributed significantly to the neutralisation of the Japanese stronghold of Rabaul.

Except for a brief period in 1942, 3NZ Division took second place in New Zealand's war effort to 2NZ Division. This reflected Wellington's general inclination to favour Commonwealth over local defence, and, despite some wavering, New Zealand declined to follow Australia and focus its efforts in the Pacific. Lack of manpower to field two divisions resulted in 3NZ Division having only two brigades and growing demands from the Air Force, industry and agriculture ultimately led to its disbandment. Thereafter it faded from the public consciousness and its contribution disregarded. The men and women of 3NZ Division have undeservedly become New Zealand's forgotten warriors.



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I wish to dedicate this work to the one-eyed Vickers Machine Gunner who defended the Waimakariri River and the lady ambulance driver on the West Coast (my father and mother), and the men and women of 3NZ Division.

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Any errors are mine alone.

Reg Newell

Upper Hutt

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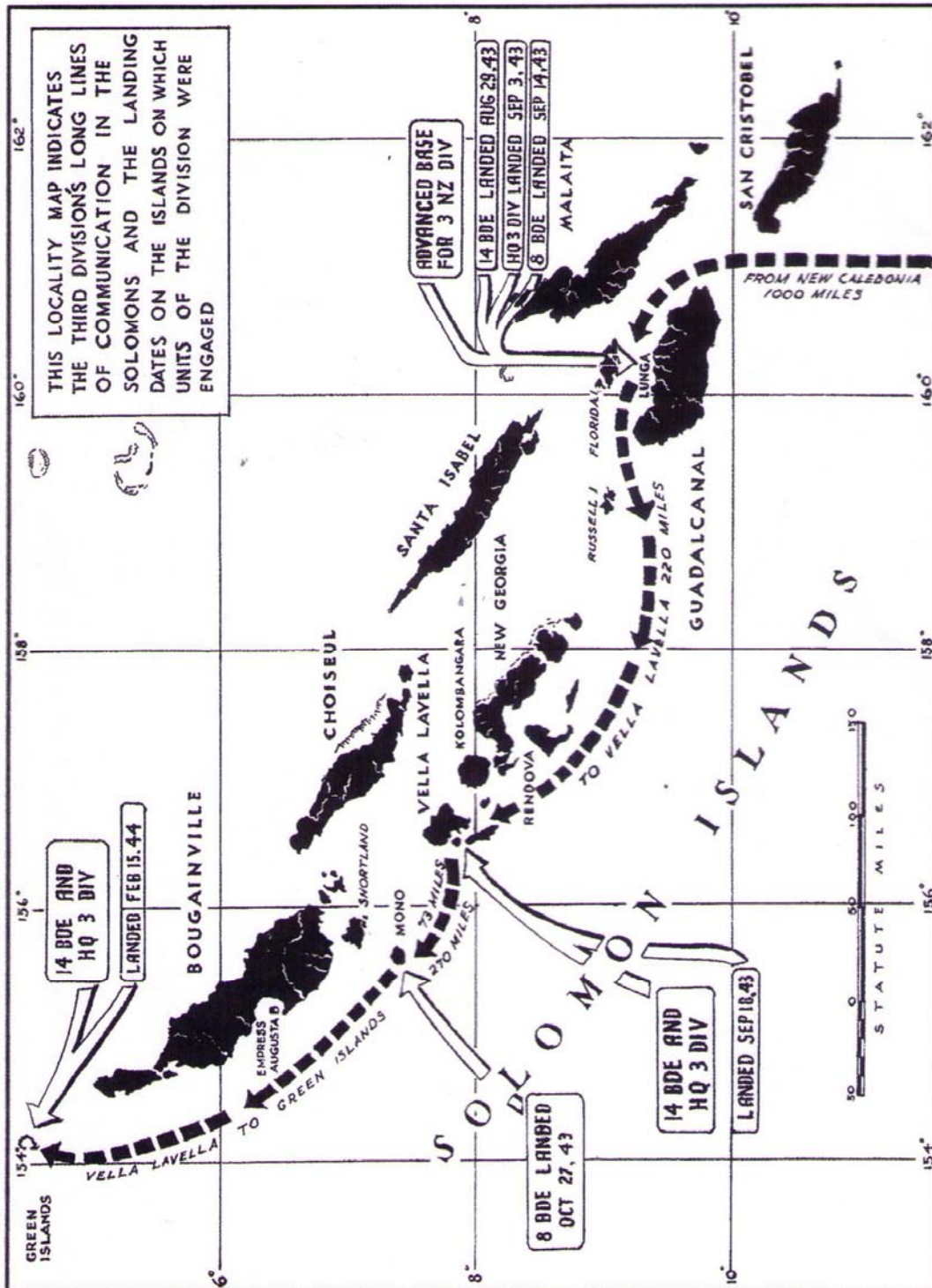
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PAINING BY RUSSELL CLARK  
STUDY OF SOLDIER, MONO ISLAND - ARCHIVES NZ AAAC898NCWA153 898



THE SOLOMON ISLANDS, THIRD DIVISION HISTORIES COMMITTEE, PACIFIC SAGA,  
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