

Fighting the People's War

Fighting the People's War is an unprecedented, panoramic history of the 'citizen armies' of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa, the core of the British and Commonwealth Armies in the Second World War. Drawing on new sources to reveal the true wartime experience of the ordinary rank and file, Jonathan Fennell fundamentally challenges our understanding of the war and of the relationship between conflict and socio-political change. He uncovers how fractures on the home front had profound implications for the performance of the British and Commonwealth Armies and he traces how soldiers' political beliefs, many of which emerged as a consequence of their combat experience, proved instrumental to the socio-political changes of the post-war era. *Fighting the People's War* transforms our understanding of how the great battles were won and lost as well as how the post-war societies were forged.

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Fighting the People's War

The British and Commonwealth
Armies and the Second World War

Jonathan Fennell



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CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page xi
<i>List of Figures</i>	xiii
<i>List of Maps</i>	xv
<i>List of Tables</i>	xxii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxiv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxix
<i>Overview of Maps</i>	xxxiii
Introduction	I
Part I The Military and Political Context	23
1 Interwar	23
Materiel and Manpower	23
Doctrine	32
Training and Organisation	36
Politics and Public Morale	39
Structure and Contingency	49
2 Mobilisation	52
The Political Context	53
Mobilisation	63
Equality of Sacrifice?	81
The Social Contract	89
Rhetoric and Reality	91
Part II The Great Crisis of Empire	95
3 Defeat in the West	95
The 'Phoney War'	95
The Norwegian Campaign	99
The Battle of France	100
Assessments and Recriminations	108
Preparing for Invasion	115

viii / Contents

4	The Middle East	117
	Operation 'Compass'	119
	From East Africa to the Balkans	123
	The Battle for Crete	132
	Strategic Overstretch	141
	Operation 'Crusader'	145
	Spring 1942	155
	Gazala	158
	The July Battles	176
5	The Far East	183
	The Strategic Context	183
	Preparations	187
	The Malaya Campaign	193
	The Invasion of Burma	200
	The Fall of Singapore	204
	Retreat to India	209
	The Cost of Failure	214
6	The Great Imperial Morale Crisis	216
	The Anatomy of Defeat	216
	Morale Crisis	227
	The Ideological Deficit	229
	The Soldier and the State	254
Part III Transformation		257
7	Victory in North Africa	257
	No Retreat	257
	Alam Halfa	262
	Colossal Cracks	267
	War Office Initiatives	269
	El Alamein	291
	The Tunisian Campaign	304
8	New Guinea and Burma	310
	The 'Battle for Australia'	310
	Kokoda	317
	Wau	322
	Quit India	326
	The Arakan	329

Part IV	The Limits of Attrition	337
9	The Mediterranean	337
	Strategy and Preparation	337
	The Sicilian Campaign	341
	Opportunity Lost	345
	The Invasion of Italy	351
	Advance to the 'Gustav Line'	355
	Winter in Italy	360
10	Remobilisation?	367
	The British Army and the Beveridge Report	372
	The New Zealand Furlough Mutiny	379
	The UDF and the 'Blue Oath'	390
	Procedural Justice	396
11	Cassino	398
	Anzio and the First Battle of Cassino	398
	The Second Battle of Cassino	405
	The Third Battle of Cassino	406
	The Fourth Battle of Cassino (Operation 'Diadem')	422
12	Transformation in the Jungle	434
	Training and Doctrine	434
	Institutional Reform	442
	The South-West Pacific Area	450
	Operation 'Postern'	453
	Burma	459
	Second Arakan	461
	Imphal and Kohima	465
	Turn Around	469
Part V	Redemption	471
13	D-Day	471
	Training and Doctrine	473
	Selection and Morale	479
	The Assault	486
	Controversy	498
14	Normandy	503
	The Battle for Caen	506
	Operation 'Goodwood'	519

x / Contents

	Breakout	530
	Encirclement	539
	The Trap	545
15	The Victory Campaigns	551
	Operation 'Market Garden'	555
	Operation 'Olive'	561
	Manpower Crisis	566
	The Scheldt and the 'Siegfried Line'	580
	Operational and Tactical Transformations	591
	Victory in Italy	595
	The Surrender of Germany	601
	The South-West Pacific Area	608
	Burma	614
	Operations 'Capital' and 'Extended Capital'	620
Part VI	The Post-War World	627
16	Soldiers and Social Change	627
	From Combat Cohesion to Social Cohesion	629
	The Forces Vote and the 1945 British General Election	634
	The Forces Vote and New Zealand's Great Experiment in Social Citizenship	646
	The Forces Vote and the Formalisation of Apartheid in South Africa	651
	Soldiers, Veterans and the Partition of India	667
	Soldiers, Veterans and Social Change	674
	Conclusion	678
	A Deficit of Political Legitimacy	679
	Military Performance	683
	Consequences	690
	Fighting the People's War	695
	<i>Appendix 1 The Censorship Summaries</i>	698
	<i>Appendix 2 The Morale Reports</i>	702
	<i>Appendix 3 Quantitative Indicators of Morale</i>	704
	<i>Appendix 4 Defining Morale</i>	707
	Notes	709
	Select Bibliography	861
	Index	899

ILLUSTRATIONS

0.1	A soldier writing a letter, New Guinea, 1943. AWM 060579.	<i>page</i> 10
0.2	Soldiers voting in the Australian federal election, 1943. AWM 05588.	13
2.1	Farewell parade, Auckland, 1940. Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: DA-07085-F.	80
3.1	The evacuation from Dunkirk, May/June 1940. IWM HU 41240.	105
4.1	The battle for Crete, May 1941. E. K. S. Rowe, Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: DA-07085-F.	137
4.2	British troops surrender at Tobruk, 1942. IWM MH 5577.	182
5.1	Training in the jungle, May 1941. AWM, 007182.	192
5.2	General William Slim. IWM IND 4545.	212
6.1	The relationship between home and front, October 1942. IWM E 17880.	233
6.2	Soldiers receiving letters, Malaya, January 1942. AWM 011303/25.	252
7.1	General Bernard Montgomery. IWM NA 9799.	259
7.2	General Ronald Adam. LHCMA Adam Papers 3/12.	270
8.1	The Kokoda Trail, October 1942. AWM 027081.	321
8.2	Indian soldiers fighting in the Arakan. IWM IND 3457.	331
10.1	Army education in the Middle East, April 1943. IWM E 23887.	376
10.2	The New Zealand furlough draft arrives in Wellington, July 1943. Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: DA-02231-F.	382
11.1	The battle for Cassino, April 1943. IWM NA 13800.	415
13.1	D-Day, 6 June 1944. IWM FLM 2570.	493
13.2	The advance inland, 6 June 1944. IWM MH 2349.	501
14.1	Operation 'Goodwood', July 1944. IWM B 7649.	524
14.2	Operation 'Totalize', August 1944. LAC, MIKAN 4164905.	542

xii / List of Illustrations

- | | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 15.1 | Infantry and armour co-operation, May 1945.
IWM BU 4990. | 606 |
| 16.1 | The Cairo Forces Parliament, February 1944.
IWM E 27266. | 637 |
| 16.2 | <i>Daily Mirror</i> front page, 5 July 1945. | 645 |

FIGURES

0.1	British Commonwealth divisions in fighting contact with the Axis, Western and Eastern theatres, 1940–5	<i>page 6</i>
4.1	Monthly sick (including NYD(N)) admissions per thousand, Eighth Army, the British North African Force (BNAF), 2NZEAF and 1st South African Division, North Africa, August 1941–July 1943	171
8.1	Sick rate, Eastern Army, 11 Army Group and Allied Land Forces South-East Asia, January 1943–April 1945	335
9.1	Ratio of infantry to armour and artillery personnel (British troops only), Eighth Army, North Africa, 1942–3	347
9.2	Monthly sick admissions per thousand, the Italian campaign, September 1943–May 1945	362
10.1	Furlough men's letter of protest, 5 January 1944	385
11.1	Monthly sick admissions per thousand, 2NZEAF 1941–5	418
11.2	2NZEAF exhaustion and neurosis casualties in relation to battle casualties, June 1942–September 1944	419
11.3	2NZEAF desertion statistics, 1941–5	420
11.4	Weekly sick admissions per thousand, Eighth Army, I Canadian Corps, 1st Canadian Division and 5th Canadian Armoured Division, 1943–5	430
11.5	Cost of a prisoner, Italian campaign, September 1943–May 1945	431
14.1	Percentage of Canadian mail that is 'keen for action' and percentage of Canadian mail that addresses the issue of morale that is 'keen for action', May 1944–June 1945	514
14.2	Second Army (including Canadian troops under command), monthly admissions per thousand to general hospitals and casualty clearing stations for sickness, battle exhaustion, desertion, AWOL and SIW, June 1944–April 1945	515
14.3	British Second Army (including Canadian troops under command), First Canadian Army (Canadian troops only) and First Canadian Army (all troops under command),	

xiv / List of Figures

	weekly admissions per thousand to general hospitals and casualty clearing stations for sickness and battle exhaustion, 11 June 1944 to 5 May 1945	516
14.4	The cost of a German prisoner, British Second Army (including Canadian troops under command), North-West Europe, 1944–5	518
14.5	21st Army Group, area of advance in ten-day periods to ammunition expended (1 July 1944 to 28 March 1945)	525
15.1	VD admissions per thousand troops, British Second Army, First Canadian Army, Line of Command troops, 21st Army Group and Eighth Army, 1944–5	572
15.2	VD admissions per thousand troops, British and Commonwealth troops, Italy, 1944–5	573
17.1	Number of British Commonwealth and American Army divisions in fighting contact with the enemy (Western and Eastern theatres), 1942–5	691

MAPS

- 0.1 Overview of maps page xxxiii
- 3.1 The German breakthrough and the Allied retreat,
 10 May–4 June 1940. Sources: Brian Bond, *France and Belgium, 1939–1940* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), p. 126; John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 87; United States Military Academy West Point, World War II European Theatre Maps, www.westpoint.edu/history/sitepages/wwii%20european%20theater.aspx; L. F. Ellis, *The War in France and Flanders* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press, 2004 [1953]), p. 15. 103
- 4.1 Operation ‘Compass’, December 1940–February 1941. Sources: Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Map 5; John Bierman and Colin Smith, *Alamein: War Without Hate* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 45. 121
- 4.2 East African campaign, 1941. Sources: Barrie Pitt, *The Crucible of War: Wavell’s Command* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001 [1980]), p. 197; Andrew Stewart, *The First Victory: The Second World War and the East Africa Campaign* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 127, 155; John Keegan (ed.), *The Times Atlas of the Second World War* (London: Times Books Ltd, 1989), p. 51; Alexander Swanston and Malcolm Swanston, *The Historical Atlas of World War II* (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2007), p. 81. 124
- 4.3 The campaigns in Greece and Crete, April–May 1941. Sources: John Keegan (ed.), *The Times Atlas of the Second World War* (London: Times Books Ltd, 1989), p. 55; Alexander Swanston and Malcolm Swanston, *The Historical Atlas of World War II* (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2007), pp. 225–6; Douglas Porch, *Hitler’s Mediterranean Gamble: The North African and the*

xvi / List of Maps

- Mediterranean Campaigns in World War II* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), p. 151. 130
- 4.4 Operation 'Crusader', November–December 1941.
 Sources: B. H. Liddell Hart (ed.), *The Rommel Papers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), pp. 157, 165; J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton and L. C. F. Turner, *The Sidi Rezegh Battles 1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957). 150
- 4.5 Gazala, 26–27 May 1942. Sources: Barrie Pitt, *The Crucible of War: Auchinleck's Command: The Definitive History of the Desert War, Vol. II* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001 [1980]), p. 191; and J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, and L. C. F. Turner, *Crisis in the Desert, May–July 1942* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952). 164
- 5.1 The Malaya campaign, 8 December 1941–15 February 1942. Sources: A. E. Percival, *The War in Malaya* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949), pp. 107, 189, 223, 267; Brian P. Farrell, *The Defence and Fall of Singapore 1940–1942* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), Map 4; Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: AWM, 1957), pp. 54, 280. 194
- 5.2 The Japanese invasion of Burma, January–May 1942.
 Sources: John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 100; Alexander Swanston and Malcolm Swanston, *The Historical Atlas of World War II* (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2007), p. 163. 201
- 7.1 The Battle of Alam Halfa, 30 August–5 September 1942.
 Sources: Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Map 12; Stephen Bungay, *Alamein* (London: Aurum Press, 2002), p. 137. 264
- 7.2 The Battle of El Alamein, 23 October–5 November 1942.
 Sources: Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Map 13; Robin Neillands, *Eighth Army: From the Western Desert*

xvii / List of Maps

- to the Alps, 1939–1945* (London: John Murray, 2004), p. xvi. 298
- 7.3 The Tunisian campaign, November 1942–May 1943. Sources: David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army in the Second World War* (London: Cassell & Co., 1999 [1983]), p. 249; Alexander Swanston and Malcolm Swanston, *The Historical Atlas of World War II* (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2007), pp. 100–1. 307
- 8.1 Extent of the Japanese advance, 1941–2. Sources: Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. xxiv, xxv. 311
- 8.2 Allied operations: New Guinea to Guadalcanal, January 1942–February 1943. Source: Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 104, 160. 316
- 9.1 The Sicilian campaign, 1943. Sources: John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 164; Ian Gooderson, *A Hard Way to Make a War: The Allied Campaign in Italy in the Second World War* (London: Conway, 2008), p. 80. 342
- 9.2 The invasion of Italy, September–December 1943. Sources: John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), pp. 168, 174; John Ellis, *Cassino: The Hollow Victory* (London: Sphere Books, 1985), pp. 18–19; Wikipedia ‘Volturno line’, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volturno_Line#/media/File:ItalyDefenseLinesSouthofRome1943_4.jpg; C. J. C. Molony, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, Vol. V: The Campaign in Sicily 1943 and the Campaign in Italy, 3rd September 1943 to 31st March 1944* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2004 [1973]), pp. 333, 433. 352
- 11.1 Anzio and the First Battle of Cassino, January 1944. Sources: Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *The Tug of War: The Battle for Italy, 1943–45* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), p. 120; John Ellis, *Cassino: The Hollow Victory* (London: Sphere Books, 1985), p. 70; Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943–1944* (London: Little, Brown, 2007), p. 358; United States Military Academy West Point, World War II European

xviii / List of Maps

- Theatre Maps, www.westpoint.edu/history/sitepages/wwii%20european%20theater.aspx. 400
- 11.2 The Third Battle of Cassino, March 1944. Sources: Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *The Tug of War: The Battle for Italy, 1943–45* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), p. 217; John Ellis, *Cassino: The Hollow Victory* (London: Sphere Books, 1985), p. 227; www.flamesofwar.com/hobby.aspx?art_id=242. 407
- 11.3 Operation ‘Diadem’, 11 May–4 June 1944. Sources: John Ellis, *Cassino: The Hollow Victory* (London: Sphere Books, 1985), pp. 288–9; Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), pp. 86–7; John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 181. 426
- 12.1 Plan for Operation ‘Cartwheel’, 1943. Source: Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 55. 452
- 12.2 Operation ‘Postern’, September 1943–April 1944. Sources: Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 219, 286; David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives* (Canberra: AWM, 1961), p. 396. 453
- 12.3 The Battles of Imphal and Kohima, March–June 1944. Sources: Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War, 1941–45* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000 [1984]), p. 200; S. W. Kirby, *The War against Japan, Vol. III: The Decisive Battles* (London: HMSO, 1962), pp. 204, 352. 466
- 13.1 D-Day, 6 June 1944. Sources: Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009), front cover and p. 134; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), pp. 28, 89, 110. 490
- 14.1 Operation ‘Perch’, 11–14 June 1944. Sources: Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009), p. 190; Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984), p. 134; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), p. 78. 505

xix / List of Maps

- 14.2 Operation ‘Epsom’, 26 June–1 July 1944. Sources: Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009), p. 230; Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984), p. 140; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), pp. 90–1. 507
- 14.3 Operation ‘Charnwood’, 8–9 July 1944. Source: Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 148. 510
- 14.4 Operation ‘Goodwood’, 18–20 July 1944. Sources: Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009), p. 312; Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), pp. 220–1; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), p. 105. 521
- 14.5 Operation ‘Bluecoat’, 30 July–4 August 1944. Sources: Charles Forrester, *Montgomery’s Functional Doctrine: Combined Arms Doctrine in British 21st Army Group in Northwest Europe, 1944–45* (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2015), p. 87; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), p. 119; L. F. Ellis, *Victory in the West, Vol. I: The Battle of Normandy* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press, 2004 [1962]), p. 410. 532
- 14.6 Operation ‘Totalize’, 7–11 August 1944. Sources: Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 230; John Man, *The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign* (London: Viking, 1994), p. 122. 541
- 14.7 Operation ‘Tractable’, 14–16 August 1944. Sources: Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 235; L. F. Ellis, *Victory in the West, Vol. I: The Battle of Normandy* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press, 2004 [1962]), p. 433. 544

xx / List of Maps

- 15.1 The Allied advance, 26 August–15 September 1944. Sources: John Buckley, *Monty's Men: The British Army and the Liberation of Europe* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. xi; Robin Neillands, *The Battle for the Rhine, 1944: Arnhem and the Ardennes: The Campaign in Europe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), pp. 10–11. 554
- 15.2 Operation 'Market Garden', 17–26 September 1944. Sources: Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944–1945* (London: Little, Brown, 2013), Map 14; Robin Neillands, *The Battle for the Rhine, 1944: Arnhem and the Ardennes: The Campaign in Europe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p. 12; Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Normandy to the Baltic* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1946), Map 34. 558
- 15.3 Operation 'Olive', 25 August–21 September 1944. Sources: C. J. C. Molony and W. Jackson, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, Vol. VI, Pt II: Victory in the Mediterranean* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2004), pp. 156, 236, 256, 272, 286; Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *The Tug of War: The Battle for Italy, 1943–45* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), p. 354; John North (ed.), *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940–1945* (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 189; James Holland, *Italy's Sorrow: A Year of War, 1944–1945* (London: Harper Press, 2009), p. 322. 563
- 15.4 The Scheldt battles, October–November 1944. Sources: Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (Bungay: Richard Clay and Company, 1954 [1952]), p. 608; Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 240; Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Normandy to the Baltic* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1946), Map 36. 582
- 15.5 Operation 'Veritable', 8 February–10 March 1945. Sources: Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Normandy to the Baltic* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1946), Map 40; Charles Whiting, *Siegfried: The Nazi's Last Stand* (London: Leo Cooper, 1983), p. 168; Jeffery Williams, *The Long Left Flank: The Hard Fought Way to the Reich, 1944–1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1988), p. 182;

xxi / List of Maps

- Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), Map 2, pp. 44–5. 588
- 15.6 Operation ‘Grapeshot’, April 1945. Sources: Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *The Tug of War: The Battle for Italy, 1943–45* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), p. 389; C. J. C. Molony and W. Jackson, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, Vol. VI, Pt III: Victory in the Mediterranean* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2004), pp. 197, 215, 269. 598
- 15.7 The crossing of the Rhine, March 1945. Sources: Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Normandy to the Baltic* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1946), Map 42; Jeffery Williams, *The Long Left Flank: The Hard Fought Way to the Reich, 1944–1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1988), p. 262. 604
- 15.8 Operations ‘Capital’ and ‘Extended Capital’, December 1944–May 1945. Sources: Alexander Swanston and Malcolm Swanston, *The Historical Atlas of World War II* (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2007), p. 345; Jon Latimer, *Burma: The Forgotten War* (London: John Murray, 2004), Map Section; John Keegan (ed.), *The Times Atlas of the Second World War* (London: Times Books Ltd, 1989), p. 163. 622

TABLES

1.1	Defence expenditure of the Great Powers, 1931–40 (in millions in each national currency)	<i>page 26</i>
1.2	Expenditure by the defence departments and Army share of total defence expenditure, 1924/5 to 1939/40	29
2.1	British Army intakes, September 1939–December 1945 (excluding ATS)	64
2.2	Military Pay HQ: attestations to the Union Defence Force, Cape Corps, Indian and Malay Corps and the Native Military Corps, September 1939–March 1945	73
2.3	The 2NZEF by social class	83
2.4	A social-class breakdown of 2.5 million Other Ranks in the British Army, 1944	84
2.5	The Canadian Army by social class, 1945	85
2.6	The Union Defence Force by social class	85
2.7	Mobilisation: the British and Commonwealth Armies in the Second World War	93
7.1	Intelligence levels of a group of 2,000 RAC reinforcements sent to the Middle East, 1942	279
9.1	Monthly gross battle casualty rates, percentage of troops engaged (as shown on operational order of battle), Italian campaign, 1943–4	363
10.1	UDF, percentage of enlistees English-speaking versus Afrikaans-speaking by year, 1939–45	394
14.1	Monthly gross battle casualty rates, percentage of troops engaged (as shown on operational order of battle), British North-West Europe compared to Eighth Army Italy (all nationalities), June–October 1944	512
16.1	Percentages of party votes in the 1940 and 1943 Australian general elections and the 1944 referendum on state powers: the civilian and forces vote	632
16.2	Percentages of party votes in the 1943 New Zealand general election: the civilian and forces vote	633
16.3	Percentages of party votes in the 1945 Canadian federal election: the civilian and forces vote	634

xxiii / List of Tables

16.4	Percentages of party votes in the South African general election of 1943: the civilian and forces vote	652
17.1	Casualties, the British and Commonwealth Armies, 1939–45	696
A1	Number of censorship summaries used in this study	699
A2	Number of morale reports used in this study	703
A3	Correlation matrix for rates of sickness, battle exhaustion, desertion/AWOL, SIW, a ‘composite measure’ (total/1,000) and morale as described in the censorship summaries for British Second Army in the North-West Europe campaign of the Second World War	705

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When Michael Watson asked me to follow up *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign* with a book on the British Army, as part of Cambridge's new series on the Armies of the Second World War, I was, of course, delighted. Having spent a few years in the City after completing my doctorate, I was, at the time, still feeling my way back into academia and the opportunity to write a second book for Cambridge University Press seemed too good to be true. I was less sure, however, that, with a number of excellent books recently published on the topic, there was much new to offer in the area. I suggested to Michael that the best way to approach the project might be to look at the British and Commonwealth Armies in their entirety, rather than focusing solely on Britain; no one had yet written a comprehensive history on the subject and much might come out of a comparative analysis. Michael agreed and I got down to work.

Six years later I realise now what a big project this was to take on. Thankfully, my initial concerns about the viability of the topic proved unfounded and as I travelled the world, and explored the vast archives of the Commonwealth, I discovered new sources that have allowed the development of what I hope readers will find to be a far-reaching new history of the British and Commonwealth Armies in the Second World War. I received much help in undertaking this globe-trotting adventure. Jerremie Clyde, from the University of Calgary, helped me get to Canada, courtesy of a seed grant to explore his very interesting project on a 'gamic mode of history'. A grant from the Australian Army History Unit (Reference: HMSP-A/OUT/2012) took

xxv / Acknowledgements

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xxvi / Acknowledgements

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xxvii / Acknowledgements

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As I've engaged with the reports and summaries that encapsulate the concerns expressed in the approximately 17 million letters that form the backbone of this study, the story of the Second World War has become necessarily more human. The war's vastness, technological

xxviii / Acknowledgements

terrors and geopolitical implications have been contextualised by the much more profound recognition that the war was an experience endured by people, like you and me. It was immediate, quite literally a matter of life and death. I've tried to understand the experience of these soldiers, men like my grandfather and great-uncles who served in the forces and did their duty for Britain. What was it like to carry enormous responsibility, for those around you, and for the future of your country? What was it like to have to kill, to be truly afraid, to be tired beyond endurance? I've closed my eyes and tried to imagine the desperate sudden desire to live on realising death is imminent. I've tried to imagine the depth of grief and longing, and the unfathomable sadness that these men were subject to; in equal measure, I've attempted to reflect on the camaraderie of the front line and the thrill and exhilaration that many felt in combat and in the experience of victory.

And, yet, while I cannot relive these men's experiences, I can attempt to recount and contextualise them here. Rather than simply just telling their story, I trust that this book illustrates their very real agency, the extent to which they shaped their universe, both on the battlefield and in the world that emerged post-1945 and that it demonstrates that ordinary people really did matter. I hope that it will do them justice and that where it explores the trials and tribulations of service, it is respectful and thoughtful in the way it does so.

More than anything, I hope that this book can help readers to understand the meaning of the Second World War. I hope that you enjoy it.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAES	Australian Army Education Service
ABCA	Army Bureau of Current Affairs
ABDA	American British Dutch Australian Command
ACR	Appreciation and Censorship Report
ACS	Army Council Secretariat
AFCC	Australian Field Censorship Company
AGCR	Army Group Censorship Report
ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services
AEC	Army Education Corps
AEComm	Australian Electoral Commission
AES	Army Education Scheme
AFHQ	Allied Forces Headquarters
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
AG	Adjutant-General
AI	Army Intelligence
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AJHR	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANZ	Archives New Zealand
ATS	Auxiliary Territorial Service
AWM	Australian War Memorial
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BEF	British Expeditionary Force

xxx / List of Abbreviations

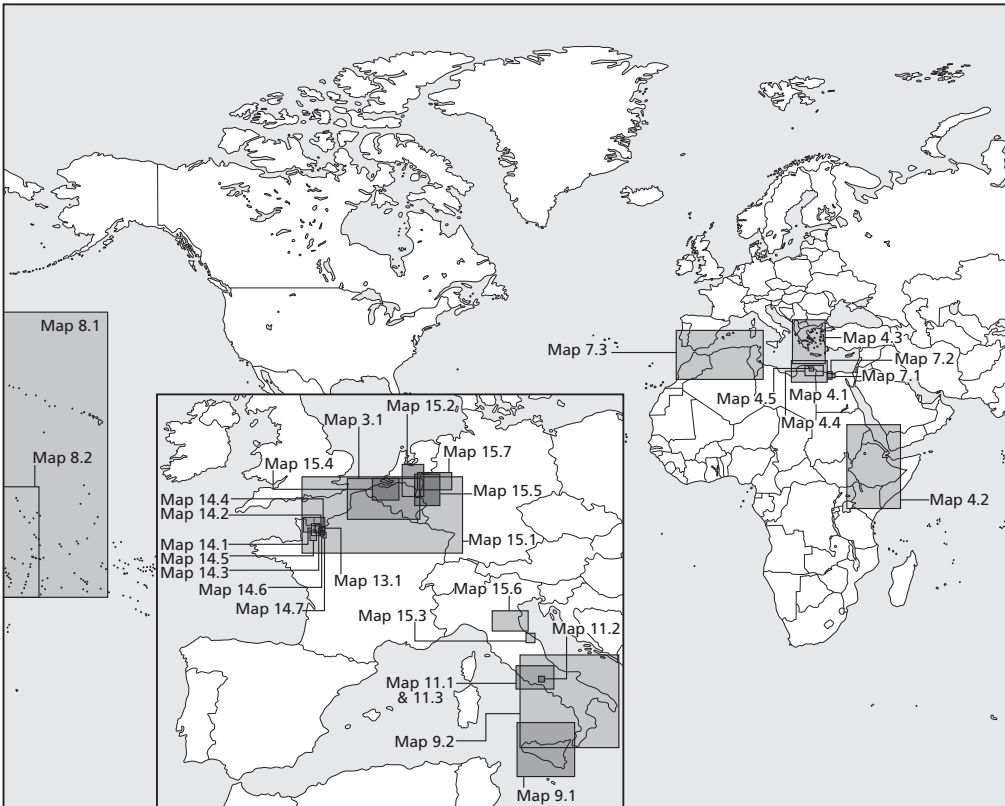
BL	British Library
BLM	Bernard Law Montgomery
Bn	Battalion
BNAF	British North African Force
Brig.	Brigadier
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office
CAO	Canadian Army Overseas
CATD	Central Army Transit Depot
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CMCR	Canadian Mail Censorship Report
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CMF	Central Mediterranean Force
CMF	Citizen Military Force
CO	Commanding Officer
Col.	Colonel
DAG	Deputy Adjutant-General
DCIGS	Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff
DCS	Deputy Chief of Staff
DDMS	Deputy Director Medical Services
DEFE	Records of the Ministry of Defence
DFMS	Durban Forces Mail Summary
DGAMS	Director-General of the Army Medical Service
DGAW&E	Director-General of Army Welfare and Education
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage
DIV. DOCS.	Divisional Documents
DMS	Director Medical Services
DRC	Defence Requirements Committee
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EAFHQ	East African Forces Headquarters
ECAC	Executive Committee of the Army Council
FCSWR	Field Censor Section Weekly Report
FCR	Field Censorship Report
FO	Records of the Foreign Office
FSR	Field Service Regulations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gen.	General
Gds	Guards

xxxi / List of Abbreviations

GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
Gp	Group
GSO	General Staff Officer
HNP	<i>Herenigde</i> (Re-united) National Party
HQ	Headquarters
IC	Intelligence Corps
ICO	Indian Commissioned Officer
INA	Indian National Army
IOR	India Office Records
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
Lieut.	Lieutenant
Maj.	Major
MC	Military Cross
MCS	Military Censorship Summary
ME	Middle East
MEF	Middle Eastern Forces
MEMCWS	Middle East Military Censorship Weekly Summary
MEFCWS	Middle East Field Censorship Weekly Summary
MI 12	Military Intelligence Section 12
NA	National Archives
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
n.d.	Not Dated
NGF	New Guinea Force
NRMA	National Resources Mobilisation Act
NYD(N)	Not Yet Diagnosed (Nervous)
NZ	New Zealand
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
OB	<i>Ossewa Brandwag</i>
OCTU	Officer Corps Training Unit
OR	Other Rank
POW	Prisoner of War
RAC	Royal Armoured Corps
RAF	Royal Air Force

xxxii / List of Abbreviations

RCAMC	Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps
RO	Routine Order
SA	South Africa
SANDF, DOC	South African National Defence Force, Documentation Centre
SEAC	South-East Asia Command
SIW	Self-Inflicted Wound
SOPAC	South Pacific Area Command
S. of S.	Secretary of State
SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
TA	Territorial Army
TEWTS	Tactical Exercises Without Troops
UAP	United Australia Party
UDF	Union Defence Force
UP	United South African National Party (usually shortened to the United Party)
US	United States
UWH	Union War Histories
VC	Victoria Cross
VD	Venereal Disease
VCIGS	Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff
WDF	Western Desert Force
WO	Records of the War Office
WOSBs	War Office Selection Boards
WR	War Records



Map o.1 Overview of Maps

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