

The men who ran Japan's war machine wanted to expand their country's Empire during late 1941 / early 1942. Ten weeks after bombing Pearl Harbor, Japanese pilots attacked the northern-Australian city of Darwin. Taking the locals (and the military) by surprise - as they had at Pearl Harbor - the Japanese had another successful mission. We learn more from the ANZAC * Day Commemoration Committee's website:

On 19 February 1942 mainland Australia came under attack for the first time when Japanese forces mounted two air raids on Darwin. The two attacks, which were planned and led by the commander responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbour ten weeks earlier, involved 54 land-based bombers and approximately 188 attack aircraft which were launched from four Japanese aircraft carriers in the Timor Sea.

In the first attack, which began just before 10.00 am, heavy bombers pattern-bombed the harbour and town; dive bombers escorted by Zero fighters then attacked shipping in the harbour, the military and civil aerodromes, and the hospital at Berrimah. The attack ceased after about 40 minutes.

The second attack, which began an hour later, involved high altitude bombing of the Royal Australian Air Force base at Parap which lasted for 20-25 minutes. The two raids killed at least 243 people and between 300 and 400 were wounded.

Twenty military aircraft were destroyed, eight ships at anchor in the harbour were sunk, and most civil and military facilities in Darwin were destroyed.

The Australian War Memorial provides this description of the historical footage featured in this video (split into paragraphs, here, for easier reading):

On the 19th of February seventy years ago [that is, in 1942], the city of Darwin was bombed. Sustaining heavy damage and civilian casualties in air raids by Japanese forces, this attack was the first of over sixty air raids conducted up until November 1943.

For footage of the actual bombing, we rely on the films of amateur filmmakers who were stationed in Darwin at the time. They also took in scenes of destruction, filmed once the danger had passed.

Though mostly black and white, faded, scratched and lacking a sound track, the films clearly convey the devastating effects of the attacks: masses of smoke rise against a clear sky, out of which a shot fighter plane drops to earth; ships stream plumes of smoke, and the wreckage of homes is clearly seen.

Here are a few selections from the Memorial's film collection of Darwin in 1942.

1. Bombing of Darwin, by Roy Wheeler.

Aboard the hospital ship Manunda moored in Darwin Harbour on February 19, Lieutenant Roy Wheeler filmed smoke rising from the USS Peary and the SS Zealandia, hit by Japanese aircraft. In other scenes, army personnel in tin hats and life jackets watch the bombing as it occurs, and the camera surveys damage done to the Manunda's rigging, deck and windows.

2. The bombing of Darwin and aftermath February-March 1942, by Francis Sheldon-Collins.

Sheldon-Collins, Captain and Commodore's cook at Darwin's Naval Headquarters, had ample opportunity to follow the bombing and its effects. In the first scene, smoke from bombs bursting on Darwin's RAAF Station can be seen. These shots were taken from a rooftop at Myilly Point.

In the second scene, Members of the 2/14th Field Regiment are seen proceeding to slit trenches. Then the camera races to keep up as bombs rapidly fall across the landscape, hitting the Naval Barracks at Myilly Point, the hospital beach, the Naval Supply stores and the Naval Paymaster's office.

In the third scene, the camera follows the course of an aircraft shot from the sky. The film donor thought it was a P-40 Kittyhawk, which, he later observed, was not a craft to match the speed of the Japanese Zeros.

In the fourth scene, we see a bomb crater by the hospital, in which the officer's cook, N.J. Phillips, standing in the crater to give an idea of the depth.

Then follows scenes of damage to the town including the Supreme Court, the Administrator's Residence, a block of flats nearby, the Post Office, and the Darwin Pier, damaged in the first air raid. Behind it, lying on its side, is the wrecked freighter Neptuna, lost when her cargo of depth charges was exploded by a bomb.

The Australian government has provided a "[Secondary School Education Resource on the Bombing of Darwin.](#)" (It's a PDF link.)

* **ANZAC** stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. On [ANZAC Day](#) - April 25 - people in both countries remember all those who served and died for their two countries. Originally the commemoration was for individuals who endured a disastrous landing at Gallipoli, during the Dardanelles Campaign of World War I, but today it includes all military operations. Among other things, people place poppies on military graves and the very-moving "The Last Post" is played.

Credits:

Clip compiling historical footage on the bombing of Darwin from the [Australian War Memorial](#). Copyright, Australian War Memorial, all rights reserved. Clip online via YouTube and provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the footage.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Japan-Attacks-Australia>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Japan-Attacks-Australia>