Ancestry: stories of multicultural ANZACS written by Robyn Siers & Carlie Walker. Canberra, ACT: Department of Veterans’ Affairs in association with the Australian War Memorial, 2015. 940.4 SIE

Includes biography of Trooper Frank Fisher, born 1880 into the Wangan and Jagalingou Aboriginal communities in the town of Clermont, Qld. He enlisted in the AIF on 16th August 1917 and served with the 11th Light Horse Regiment. On return to Australia, Frank’s pay was not given to him as a lump sum, as it was to others; instead it was placed in a trust and controlled by the local Aboriginal protector.


“This important book explores the war effort of Aboriginal and Islander Australians during the Second World War, and the reasons their contribution has gone unrecognised for so long. For the very first time, here is a comprehensive account of the work of black Australians during the years when their country faced the Japanese threat. Despite suspicion and prejudice they earned a place within the digger legend.” — Back cover.

Decision: stories of leadership in the services written by Jennet Cole-Adams & Judy Gauld. [Canberra, ACT]: Department of Veterans’ Affairs in association with the Australian War Memorial, 2017. 355 COL

Includes case study of Captain Reginald Saunders. Serving Australia in two wars, Reg Saunders was the first Aboriginal serviceman to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army. In 1944 when Saunders became an Army officer, Aboriginal Australians were not allowed to vote and they were only allowed to drink alcohol if they had been granted a permit. In the wider community, Saunders did not have the same rights as the non-Indigenous men he commanded.

Fighting for country: honouring Aboriginals from South West Victoria who served Australia during war time by Peter Bakker. Ararat, Vic: Hansen Design and Print, 2014. 355 BAK

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women have only recently become recognised nationally for their war time services in the Australian military since the Boer War. Research … has revealed that many more Victorian Aboriginals have served in times of military conflict than has previously been estimated and of these approximately a third originated from the South Western region of Victoria.” — Cover. The booklet has biographies of many who served.

For country, for nation: an illustrated history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service edited by Lachlan Grant with Michael Bell. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2018. 355 FOR

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that deceased people are represented throughout this publication.

“Richly illustrated with over 230 images, For country, for nation uses artworks, photographs and objects from the Memorial’s collection, combined with the voices of Indigenous men and women, to reveal their experiences of war. In doing so, For country, for nation considers why so many volunteered to serve when faced with entrenched discrimination in wider society.” — Publisher.

Indigenous service: investigating the wartime experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the First World War to the present: a resource for primary and secondary schools by Jennet Cole-Adams & Judy Gauld. Canberra, ACT: Dept of Veterans’ Affairs, 2013. 355 IND

“[D]eveloped for primary and secondary schools in collaboration with the Shrine of Remembrance. Two versions of this education resource have been developed to target primary and secondary schools. These resources acknowledge the service and sacrifice of Indigenous men and women from the First World War to the present and provide a social and political context of their service in the light of past racial discrimination. These publications will be welcomed as a learning resource in all Australian classrooms, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The writers have drawn on well-known and well-documented stories from across the nation.” — Distributor website. This book can also be viewed online: http://www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/indigenous-service

The missing man: from the outback to Tarakan, the powerful story of Len Waters, Australia’s first Aboriginal fighter pilot by Peter Rees. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2018. 355 REE

“Len Waters was a Kamilaroi man. Born on an Aboriginal reserve, he left school at thirteen and by twenty was piloting a RAAF Kittyhawk fighter with 78 Squadron in the lethal skies over the Pacific in World War II. It was serious and dangerous work and his achievement was extraordinary. These would be the best years of his life. Respected by his peers, he was living his dream. The war over, it should have been easy. Instead, he became a missing man in Australia’s wartime flying history. Peter Rees rights that wrong in this powerful, compelling and at times tragic examination of Len Waters’ life.” — Publisher.

“While Indigenous Australians have enlisted in the defence forces since the Boer War, for much of this time they defied racist restrictions and were denied full citizenship rights on their return to civilian life … [Contributors] reveal the courage, resilience, and trauma of Indigenous defence personnel and their families, and document the long struggle to gain recognition for their role in the defence of Australia.” – Publisher.


“Today all Australians have equal rights by law, but this was not always the case. For Aboriginal soldiers returning from active service in the Second World War, the inequalities were made especially stark. Why didn’t they have a voice in society? Despite generations of unfair treatment, Indigenous people have made significant contributions to Australian society and identity. Discover the experiences of one Aboriginal soldier, Eddie Albert, and how laws and attitudes impacted on his life.” – Back cover.

DVDs

Anzacs: remembering our heroes. 11 x 15 min. SBS, 2015. 355 DVD

A series of 11 15-minute documentaries produced by NITV which acknowledges the contributions of Indigenous people to Australia’s military efforts from the time of the Boer War to the present day. Classification: PG (Mild themes)

The forgotten written, produced & directed by Glen Stasiuk. 27 min. Sydney: ABC Commercial, 2002. 355 DVD

“[A] film about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander servicemen & women who have served, fought and died for their country in all of the wars and peace-keeping missions that the Australian Armed Forces were involved in [in] the 20th Century. It also contains a personal story about four Nyungar brothers from the South-West of Western Australia, one of whom is acknowledged as the first Aboriginal Soldier to receive a military medal in the First World War. The forgotten features war veterans and family member’s personal experiences and thoughts from both World Wars, as well as veterans who served in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and East Timor.” – ABC website.

Harry’s war written & directed by Richard Frankland. 27 min. West Brunswick, Vic: Front Row Video Distribution, 1999. 355 DVD

“Focuses on the life of a young Aboriginal soldier, Harry who leaves Coniah Mission to fight for his country in Papua New Guinea during the Second World War. He joins his mate Mitch a non-Aboriginal Australian. It is a story of mateship, brothers in arms and friendship that embraces culture, war and death. Based on the experiences of the director’s uncle, Harry Saunders.” – Back cover. Classification: M

Not forgotten written, produced and directed by Jane Jeffes. 84 min. SBS; Madman Entertainment distributor, 2009. 355 DVD

In the third of the four segments which comprise the DVD, Mark Lee visits Cherbourg. “In 1914, it was an Aboriginal mission controlled by state and church. Full blooded Indigenous men were not allowed to enlist unless they could prove they had one parent of European descent. But thousands attempted. Vincent Law and Benjamin Combo were some of the 500 or more Indigenous servicemen who saw the war as their first experience of equal opportunity.” – Inside cover. The section commences at about the 24-minute mark and runs for 6-7 minutes. Classification: G

The Sapphires written by Tony Briggs. 103 min. Chippenendale, NSW: distributed by Hopscotch Films, 2012. 355 DVD

“It is set in 1968 (a year after the referendum expanding the rights of Aborigines) and it tells the story of The Sapphires, a singing group of four Koori women who tour Vietnam during the war. It was inspired by the true story of Briggs’s mother, Laurel Robinson, and aunt, Lois Peeler, who toured Vietnam as singers. The pair slept on the stage, as Robinson recalled: ‘It was so scary one night a bomb went off, the bed fell down and the place shook.’ Though set at the time of increasing calls for Aboriginal rights the play takes these issues seriously but in a way that doesn’t detract from its fun and humour and adds to its entertainment value.” – Distributor website. Classification: PG

ONLINE

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are warned that the following pages may contain images of deceased persons.

Our mob, serving country 100 years and beyond: stories of Indigenous servicemen and women by Australian Government. Department of Veteran’s Affairs.


Australian War Memorial resources for teachers and schools

Classroom resources, memorial boxes, virtual excursions, publications, and more.

In particular, the resource Anzac diversity, for Year 6 and up, features several case studies of Indigenous people who served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the First World War.

https://www.awm.gov.au/learn/schools