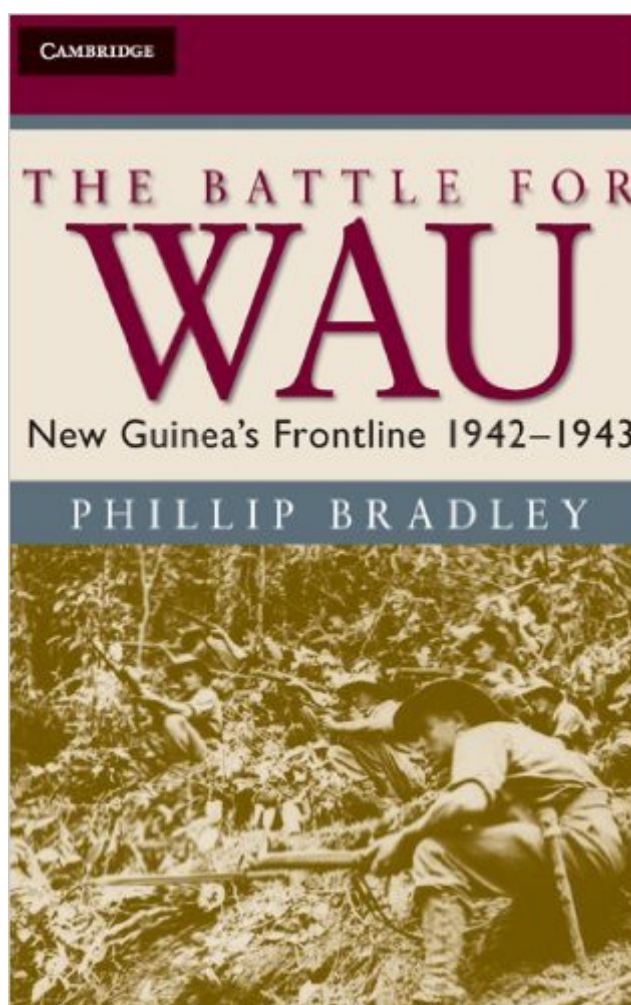


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# The Battle For Wau: New Guinea's Frontline 1942-1943 (Australian Army History Series)



## Synopsis

The Battle for Wau brings together for the first time the full story of the early World War II conflicts in New Guinea, from the landing of the Japanese at Salamaua in March 1942 to their defeat at Wau in February 1943. Phillip Bradley draws on the recollections of over 70 veterans from the campaign and on his own first-hand knowledge of the region. Beginning with the early commando operations in Salamaua, the story unfolds with the burning of Wau, the clashes around Mubo, the Japanese convoy to Lae and the United States air operation to Wau. The book climaxes with the fortitude of Captain Sherlock's outnumbered company. Desperately fighting an enemy regiment debouching from the rugged unguarded ranges to the east, Sherlock's men fought to hold Wau airfield open for the arrival of vital reinforcements.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are a number of battlefields that continue to remind us of the sacrifices and struggles that took place throughout the Pacific during World War II. We often think of Guadalcanal, the Battle of the Coral Sea, Midway and Kokoda as special places where many lives were lost and important victories secured. Phillip Bradley's book, *The Battle for Wau: New Guinean's Frontline, 1942-1943*, reminds us of another important conflict in the Allied effort. Having failed to take Port Moresby in the Battle of the Coral Sea and vis the push along the Kokoda Trail, Japanese forces were sent from Rabaul to Salamaua and Lae. Wau became the barrier for a final push by the Japanese across New Guinea, and initially only a small Australian Army force stood in the way. However, ANZAC forces

combined with American airpower to ensure that this did not happen; Wau did not fall. Bradley's book is a well-researched account of this decisive battle and the efforts of Kanga Force, an independent company combining troops of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and parts of the Australian 1st and 2/5th Independent Companies. While many women and children were evacuated as Japanese forces advanced into Papua New Guinea, Kanga Force was mobilised to ensure that Wau and its significant airstrip remained in Allied hands. Bradley's account begins in 1942 with the Japanese invasion of Lae and Salamaua, and then follows Kanga Force's formation and subsequent raids on Japanese positions along the coast. He then takes us through a detailed account of battles and skirmishes as the Japanese moved toward the Bulolo Valley along old mining trails, before recounting the final battle and the use of air transport to fly the 17th Infantry Brigade into Wau.

This is a review of two books, "The Battle for Wau" and "To Salamaua", as the second follows on from the other, in what was essentially one campaign, and the style and detail are the same. As a young officer, I walked from Wau to Salamaua via the Buisaval Track passing through the country in which these two excellent books are set. The terrain was tortuous comprising narrow, twisting ridges falling sharply into steep valleys which, in some cases, the bottoms of which were unseen and could only be discerned by the roar of the river in the mist below. For much of the journey it rained incessantly and dense jungle limited vision to a few metres, except on the odd occasion when we burst on to a vantage point to view a never ending series of jungle clad ridges ahead of us. Dotted along the trail was the detritus of fighting 25 years previously - bayonets, abandoned machine guns, a scattering of spent cartridges, the wing of an aircraft and weapon pits. I remember thinking I was thankful I didn't have to fight in that area. In "The Battle for Wau" and "To Salamaua" Phillip Bradley confirms my initial thought, and brings the story of this campaign vividly to life. "The Battle For Wau" focuses on a little known but quite remarkable battle.

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