

Australian Jungle Warfare Advisers to the Indian Army in World War Two

While India and Australia both share membership of the Commonwealth, in the popular imagination the relationship between the two countries has been closer in terms of cricket than in military activities. However, a wide range of close military links existed in the period between the 1880s and Indian Independence in 1947, with several thousand Australian service personnel serving in India both in peace and in war. By 1943 Australian success against the Japanese in New Guinea had led to calls for those with expertise in jungle warfare to be sent to India to help train the Indian Army for their forthcoming campaign to retake Burma. Among those sent was a Toowoomba man, Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) William Parry-Okeden DSO MID. This paper will discuss his secondment to India Command and his often surprising observations of conditions in British India and of the Indian Army at war. His experiences, and the experiences of other officers, provide us with fresh insights into a neglected period of Australian military history.

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