

- Our phone line is temporarily operating with reduced hours. You can call us between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday. [Contact us](#)

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- [Get support](#)
The support you may be able to get depends on your circumstances.
[Currently serving](#)
Support while you're still serving.
[Ex-serving](#)
Support once your regular service has finished.
[Family and whānau](#)
Here's how we can support you, and how you can support your family and whānau.
[Non-military personnel](#)
Non-military personnel can have Qualifying Operational Service in certain circumstances.
- [Remembrance](#)
We're proud to honour the service of the veteran community.
[Services Cemeteries and plaques and headstones](#)
We help look after Services Cemeteries. We're also able to contribute towards plaques and headstones.
[Commemorative funding](#)
There are two types of financial contributions available from the Commemorative Fund.
[Medals and service records](#)
The NZ Defence Force's Personnel Archives and Medals team administer medals and hold most New Zealand military service records.
[When someone dies](#)
We may be able to provide support when someone who had Qualifying Service dies.
[Your family's military history](#)
Learning more about your family's military history is a great way to honour their service.
[Certificate of Appreciation and Veterans' Pins](#)
The Certificate of Appreciation and Veteran's Pin recognise operational service.
- [Eligibility](#)
To be eligible to receive support from us, you—or certain family members—need to have Qualifying Service.
[Check your eligibility](#)
Check the support, services, or entitlements you may be able to get from us.
[Qualifying Service](#)
To get support from us you — or certain family members — need to have Qualifying Service.
[Living outside NZ](#)
You can still get support from us even if you live outside NZ.
[Eligibility criteria for family and dependants](#)
You may be able to get support if you're the spouse, partner, child or dependant of someone with Qualifying Service.
[Veterans of foreign militaries](#)
Veterans' Affairs New Zealand was established to support New Zealand veterans.
- [For clients](#)
We put veterans and our clients at the heart of everything we do.

If you have a question at any stage please contact us—we're here to help.
[How we'll work with you](#)
We'll work with you to help you get the best support available.
[Your treatment card](#)
Your treatment card helps you get no-cost treatment and medication for your approved conditions.
[Your rights and responsibilities](#)
We want to make sure you have the best possible experience when you deal with us.
[Payments](#)
Information on payment rates and dates.
[How we make decisions](#)
We use a number of tools and processes to make decisions. This helps ensure each decision we make is fair and treats our clients consistently.
[Living outside NZ](#)

You can still get support from us even if you live outside NZ.

[Other benefits](#)

You may be able to access a range of discounts and benefits. Not only that, your family may get access too.

- [For providers](#)

Information for providers of services to Veterans' Affairs and our clients.

[Treatment cards and letters](#)

To help you identify our clients, we issue treatment cards and letters.

[Invoicing us](#)

How to invoice us to ensure we pay you quickly and correctly.

[Treating our clients](#)

Information for healthcare professionals providing treatment to our clients.

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Guidance for councils and local authorities relating to services cemeteries and memorials

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Forms for our clients, family and whānau, and our providers.

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The Coastwatchers of Tarawa, Kiribati

The Coastwatchers of Tarawa, Kiribati

In October 1942, seventeen New Zealand coastwatchers on the Tarawa atoll, in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) were murdered by the Japanese occupiers.

Coastwatchers were military and civilian personnel from New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Stationed throughout the Pacific, around New Zealand and even on the Auckland Islands, most were volunteers and their

role was to keep a 24-hour watch for enemy ships and aircraft.

They were an important part of the Pacific War intelligence network, and for those close to the front line, like those in the Gilbert Islands, the risk of capture was high.

Many of the Coastwatchers were telegraph operators and were or had been employed by the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department.

In 1941 coastwatching stations were established in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands were strategically important, as they are close to the Marshall Islands, which in 1941 were held by the Japanese.

Shortly after Pearl Harbour in December 1941, seven coastwatchers were captured by Japanese forces on Butaritari in the northern Gilbert Islands. They were transported to Japan as prisoners of war.

When the Japanese overran the rest of the Gilbert Islands in August and September 1942, seventeen more coastwatchers fell into their hands. These men were either Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force soldiers or civilians from the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department.

They were imprisoned in an asylum on the islet Betio, part of the Tarawa atoll.

On 15 October 1942 American warships and aircraft bombarded Tarawa.

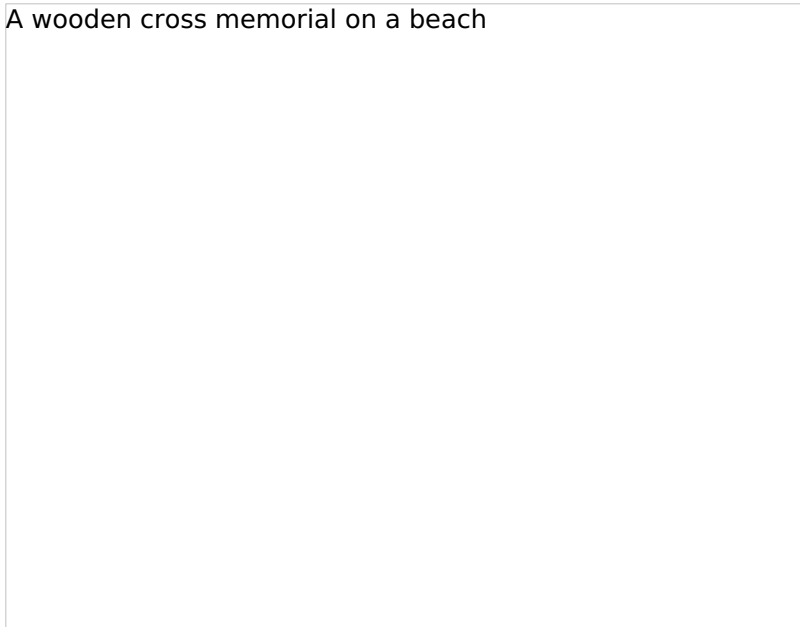
During the attack, one of the prisoners appears to have escaped from the asylum. He was hunted down and killed. Later that day the remaining prisoners and five other civilians (three British and two Australians) were beheaded.

At about the time of the Tarawa murders, the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff were considering whether or not to enlist the civilian coastwatchers. There was a concern that as they were engaged in military duties the Japanese might treat them, if captured in civilian clothing, as guerrilla fighters and shoot them.

However, being enlisted or otherwise did not save any of the coastwatchers that day in October 1942. The murdered New Zealand coastwatchers were posthumously mentioned in dispatches for "exemplary conduct in coastwatching and communications duties in the Gilbert Islands area in the face of the enemy, despite overwhelming odds and the knowledge that relief or escape was impossible".

The United States Marines erected a memorial to the coastwatchers, on Betio, Tarawa in 1944, and this was replaced in 1948 by a memorial centred on a granite cross.

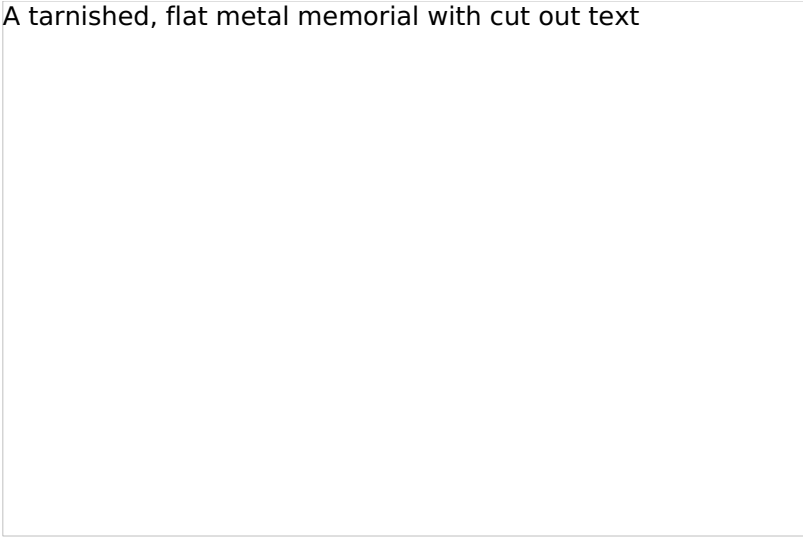
A wooden cross memorial on a beach



The first (now replaced) memorial to New Zealand coastwatchers on Tarawa.

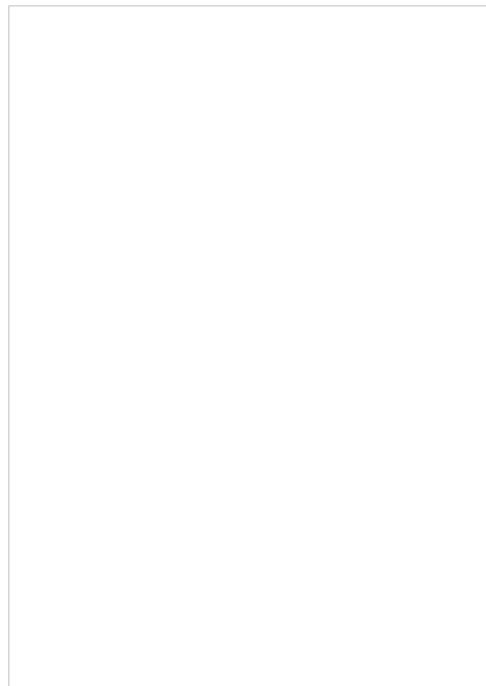
In Wellington, a memorial to the coastwatchers, close to the NZ Post building, was unveiled in October 2014.

A tarnished, flat metal memorial with cut out text



The Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) Coastwatchers Memorial on the corner of Whitmore Street and Waterloo Quay, Wellington.

You can read more stories and updates in the latest edition of the Veterans' Affairs Magazine



[\(external link\)](#)

[Read the Spring 2022 Edition of the Veterans' Affairs Magazine \[PDF, 14 MB\]](#)

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