

**1940**



**1945**

# **2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance**

## **A.I.F**

**UNIT HISTORY**



**by**

**LLOYD TANN**

**The Unit History**  
**of**  
**2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance**  
**1940 – 1945**  
**By**  
**Lloyd Tann**

## **F O R E W O R D**

It gives me great pleasure to contribute a few remarks to this great effort by Lloyd Tann, in recording the History of 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, in which, for a time, I was privileged to serve; - first as O.C. "B" Company, then "H.Q." Company then to Command.

The unit was a fine one; and all who served in her can be justly proud, and I certainly am.

This work by Lloyd Tann is an excellent effort to record a history, before all is lost of our memories.

During the unit's service, many things happened; - some nice, - some nasty, - and some amusing; alas, most not recorded, and now dimmed by time. I would be remiss if I did not mention the famous "beer barrel mystery of Kilcoy".

The work done by Lloyd is terrific, and on behalf of us all, I offer him our thanks.

**Alex. M. MacIntosh**  
**Lt. Col. (R.L) R.A.A.M.C.**

**FORSTER**

**7th. July 1987**

## **P R E F A C E**

The record of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance is one of which all who served with the unit can feel proud.

More than 40 years have passed since the events recorded here took place. Perhaps the story should have been written many years closer to the actual events, when memories were clearer. However, better late than never!

This story deserves to be told, as a tribute to all who served with the unit; many of those who took part in the actions described have now passed on, and it is fitting that their families should have some record of their sacrifices and service.

As memories, (particularly after 45 years), are unreliable, I have done a considerable amount of research from many books (which are listed later), the Central Army Records Office, and the Unit War Diaries at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Unfortunately, there are many gaps. By the very nature of our operations, with many small detachments operating with other units, it is obvious that details of these operations do not always appear in our unit records, although they form an important part of our history.

These gaps have had to be filled in from memory, so there must be omissions and discrepancies, for which I express my regrets.

As a member of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance from its formation at Puckapunyal in May 1940, to its disbandment in Balikpapan (Borneo) in October 1945, the writing of this history has been full of interest, and a labour of love.

I hope other members of the unit will get as much pleasure from reading it, as I have from writing it.

**Lloyd Tann**

**1987**

(iii)

## HONOUR ROLL

The following members of the 2/5th. Australian Field Ambulance were killed in action, or died whilst serving with the Unit:

VX 17587	Pte.	SAGGERS A. J.	Tobruk	3/5/41
VX 2226	Pte.	SHANASY T.J.	Aleppo	4/12/41
VX 23444	L/Sgt	MASON P.W.	Aleppo	13/12/41
TX 948	L/Sgt	FLEMING F.A.	Julis	7/ 2/42
VX 14985	Pte.	WARD A.	Kilcoy	2/ 7/42
VX 50968	Pte.	MILES B.D.	Goodenough Is.	23/10/42
VX 21542	Pte.	BLACKBURN R.	Goodenough Is.	23/10/42
VX 26243	Pte.	RHODES J. F.	Buna	2/ 1/43
VX 17148		Cutts R.A	(no other details)	

**LEST WE FORGET**

## **HONOURS, DECORATIONS AND AWARDS**

The following members of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance were recognised by His Majesty King George VI for bravery in action whilst serving with the unit:

Pte.	MARRIOTT R. H.	D.C.M.
Lieut.	JACOBS C.P.	M.B.E.
A/Cpl	FORBES A.R.	M.M.
T/Maj.	LAVARACK J.O.	M.I.D. (2)
Sgt.	HEWETT V.R.	M.I.D.
Cpl.	WAUGH E.A.	M.I.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with thanks, the assistance and information I have obtained from the following sources:

**Central Army Records Office** Melbourne

**Unit War Diaries** Canberra

**Tobruk** by Chester Wilmot

**A Hospital at War (2/4th A.G.H.)** by Rupert Goodman

**Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (Series):**

The Middle East & Far East	by	Alan S. Walker
The Island Campaigns	by	Alan S. Walker
To Benghazi	by	Gavin Long
Tobruk & El Alamein	by	Barton Maughan
The New Guinea Offensive	by	David Dexter
The Final Campaign	by	Gavin Long

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I particularly wish to record my thanks to Dr Rupert Goodman for his helpful advice and for his permission to use extracts from his book, as, particularly in the early days, and in Tobruk, the 2/4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H and the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance had much in common.

Johnny Rutherford too was a great help, by providing copies of many articles he had written for books, papers and magazines, tapes and diaries; and also for providing accommodation in Canberra for two weeks whilst I was researching the War Diaries at the War Memorial.

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## GLOSSARY OF MILITARY ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS HISTORY

C.O.	Commanding Officer
O.C.	Officer Commanding (Company, Section, Post etc.)
2 I/C	'In charge of ' (2 I/C) Second in Command
D.G.M.S.	Director General of Medical Services
D.D.G.M.S.	Deputy Director General of Medical Services
D.D.M.S.	Deputy Director of Medical Services.
A.D.M.S.	Assistant Director of Medical Services.
D.A.D.M.S.	Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services.
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding.
R.A.P.	Regimental Aid Post.
M.S.P.	Medical Staging Post.
A.D.S	Advanced Dressing Station
M.D.S.	Main Dressing Station
C.C.S.	Casualty Clearing Station.
A.G.H.	Australian General Hospital.
K.I.A.	Killed in Action
W.I.A.	Wounded in Action.
R.S.M.	Regimental Sergeant Major
C.S.M.	Company Sergeant Major.
W.O.	Warrant Officer - Class (1) or (2)
Q.M.	Quartermaster
M.T.	Motor Transport
E.P.I.P.	English Patent Indian Pattern (a type of tent)
TIME	Based on 24 hour clock. eg. 0600 - 6 am, 2130 hrs - 9.30 pm etc.
A.A.M.C.	Australian Army Medical Corps
A.A.S.C.	Australian Army Service Corps.
A.N.G.A.U.	Australia/New Guinea Administration Unit
G.S.W.	Gunshot Wound
S.W.	Shrapnel Wound
B.C.	Battle Casualty
M.O.	Medical Officer
R.M.O.	Regimental Medical Officer
S.M.O.	Senior Medical Officer, also Ship's Medical Officer.
L.S.I.	Landing Ship - Infantry
A.L.C.	Assault Landing Craft.
W.E.	War Establishment
D.A.A.G.	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
WO (1 or 2)	Warrant Officer 1 or 2
Ssgt	Staff sergeant
Sgt	Sergeant
O.Rs.	"Other Ranks" - Any rank below that of a Commissioned Officer.
Cpl	Corporal
L/cpl	Lance corporal
Pte	Private

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PUCKAPUNYAL**

On the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the 2nd A.I.F. was formed, consisting originally of the 6th Division, Corps, and Base Administration Units.

By early 1940, the 6th Division units were either overseas or awaiting shipment, and the formation of the 7th Division was being planned.

As part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, the 21<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade was being formed and trained at Puckapunyal, and it was there that the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance was formed, as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade.

The responsibility of forming, commanding and training the unit, was placed on Lt. Col. A.H. Green - a fortunate choice, as he proved to be an excellent and popular commanding officer.

Lt. Col. Green, having served in the First World War, had continued his involvement with the army, and at the outbreak of war, was Commanding Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance in the Militia Forces. On his appointment to the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, he brought several members of his militia unit with him.

The origins of the unit were as follows:

On 19th April 1940, Lt. Col. Green was called up by the A.D.M.S. "to command a Field Ambulance to be raised in Victoria."

On 1st May 1940, the unit was embodied in orders from H.Q. 7 Aust, Div. and designated "2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance".

These two entries in the War Diary signalled the formation of the unit, and developments from there took place rapidly.

WO(2) W. McLellan from A.I.C. was attached as Captain Quartermaster, and on 7<sup>th</sup> May, Lt. Col. Green and WO (2) McLellan visited Puckapunyal regarding the allocation of huts to be occupied by the unit.

On 8th May, officers nominated for attachment to the unit were instructed by the D.D.M.S. Southern Command to report to RRD Caulfield forthwith. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, Major C.W. Nye was taken on strength as 2 I/C, and was joined the following day by Maj. S. Plowman, Capt's J. Ray, H.F.G. McDonald, J.O. Lavarack, and A.H. McGregor.

On 21<sup>st</sup> May, A/Capt. McLellan, Capt's McGregor and McDonald proceeded to Puckapunyal and occupied "C" Block.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May, Maj. R. McK. Rome was taken on strength, and on 27<sup>th</sup> May, the first three O.R.'s, - Ptes W.J. Gandy, J. Bernaldo, and G.A. Muir.

From 28<sup>th</sup> May on, drafts of recruits arrived almost daily, and the unit began to take shape - being divided into 3 Companies, H.Q., "A" and "B" Companies; each company having a major as O.C., with two captains, with a staff sergeant as C.S.M. Specialists such as R.S.M. Q.M. dental officers, pharmacists etc. were all attached to H.Q.

Our early basic training program was placed in the hands of an A.I.C. drill instructor, WO (2) McKenzie, who was a strict disciplinarian and very quickly converted an undisciplined mob of raw recruits into a relatively fit and disciplined unit.

N.C.O.'s were appointed, mainly from those with Militia experience.

By early June, our general training had begun in earnest; 8 personnel being sent for duties and instruction to various Melbourne hospitals, - The Royal Melbourne, St. Vincent's, Prince Henry's and the Alfred, where they worked in casualty departments.

Other nursing orderlies were attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H. to obtain practical experience in general nursing duties.

The 4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H. had originally been billeted with the 2/5th Field Ambulance, but had by now taken over the running of the camp hospital, and had acquired their complement of nursing sisters, who soon instructed us into the mysteries of emptying and washing bottles and pans, and how to make beds in the approved fashion with mitred corners etc.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June, WO (2) E.W. Berry was taken on strength from A.I.C staff and appointed R.S.M. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, he was promoted to WO (1), the appropriate rank for the position.

On 11<sup>th</sup> June, Capt. J.M. Blair was taken on strength, thus completing our complement of officers.

On 5<sup>th</sup> August, we were joined by a section of A.A.S.C. personnel, consisting of 56 O.R.'s under the command of Lt; Nason. The duties of this Section consisted of driving and maintaining all motor vehicles belonging to the unit - staff cars, trucks, and ambulance vehicles.

For several years this section was known as "AASC Attached", and jealously guarded their independence. However, eventually they became integrated as "2/5th Field Ambulance Transport Section".

In early August the unit marched out for a 4 day bivouac in the Nagambie area, learning the practical side of evacuation of casualties from RAP to ADS to MDS, including the crossing of rivers by means of rafts made on the spot, and also gas decontamination.

This bivouac had its lighter moments. We camped one night within "hitch-hiking" distance of the Chateau Tabilk winery; and once it was dark, figures could be seen disappearing through the scrub in the general direction of the road leading to the winery, where any car heading in the right direction was thumbed down.

This worked well until one group thumbed down a car - only to find the driver was none other than Lt. Col. Green!

He was definitely not amused, and immediately despatched search parties to recall everyone to camp.

The following day, the unit was marched flat-out, partly as punishment, and partly to wear off the hangovers. It was late in the day when, in trying to find out why the "miscreants" were not sobering up, it was discovered that they had taken the precaution of filling their water bottles with a choice "red" or a sparkling "white" before returning to camp from the Chateau Tabilk the previous night.

On 20<sup>th</sup> August, Maj. Nye fell and broke his leg. As he would be unfit for duty for 5 to 6 weeks, he was placed on "X" list.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, all 7th Division troops at Puckapunyal were reviewed by the Governor-general, Lord Gowrie.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September, the unit was visited by Capt. Roy Park and other members of the Victorian branch of the original 5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, 1<sup>st</sup> A.I.F; who presented the unit with a silver bugle, and the sergeants with a flag, which had been carried in all Anzac Day marches. Telegrams were received from branches of the original unit in N.S.W; S.A; Tas, and Qld, wishing the unit the best of luck overseas.

This bugle served the unit right through the war, and was a valued part of our equipment. I have been unable to find out what happened to the flag.

We played a lot of sport, holding several football matches, cross-country runs etc. Johnny Rutherford tells an interesting story regarding a cross-country run, or should I say, how not to do a cross-country run!

Apparently Johnny and Bert Veitch were having a drink in a hotel whilst on leave, and got into conversation with an ex World War 1 chap, who gave them a bit of advice on how to avoid being picked for fatigue duties:

"Never get on the end of the line, - always in the middle, and in the rear row; and never look the officer or N.C.O. in the eye. He is liable to point, and say "you, cookhouse. If he can't do this, he has to remember your name."

Johnny and Bert worked this system to perfection for months, and then we were warned of a 12 mile cross-country run to take place the following day, and told that every man had to finish, even if he had to crawl over the finish line.

On parade the next morning, Johnny and Bert changed their routine, and headed straight for the end of the line. Sure enough, the end six men were fallen out for fatigue duties. The terrible two happily waved the rest of us away as they settled down to their "spud barbering".

Later, they were enjoying a quiet cup of tea as the first runners staggered across the finish line. As a point of interest, first across the line was Ernie Curtis, with yours truly hot on his heels.

As the months passed, our main pre-occupation became trying to guess when we would leave for overseas. The news from Europe was not good. France had fallen, and the Germans had over-run most of Europe. Would the War be over before we got there?

Eventually the long awaited news came. FINAL LEAVE!

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, the unit was notified it was to take pre-embarkation leave, to be completed by 7<sup>th</sup> October.

The advance party went on leave almost immediately, and on 26<sup>th</sup> September the main body. By 3<sup>rd</sup> October, all leave was completed.

Prior to embarkation, the brigade held a ceremonial parade and march-past with Brigadier Stevens taking the salute. This parade signalled the end of our rookie training, and our readiness for active service.

On 26<sup>th</sup> September, Maj. J.E. Gillespie was taken on strength as a replacement for the injured Maj. Nye.

Attached, as a matter of interest, is a copy of the embarkation roll. This should bring back a few memories to original members.









## EMBARKATION ROLL

The following personal embarked on 20/10/1940 for overseas and disembarked in the Middle East on 25<sup>th</sup> November unless marked with \* (signifying evacuated to hospital).

VX 11503	Lt. Col.	Green A.H
VX 12974	Capt.	Blair J.M.
VX 15188	Maj.	Gillespie J.E.
VX 14704	Capt.	MacDonald H.F.G.
VX 14706	“	Lavarack J.O.
VX 16148	“	Jacobs I
VX 8304	“	McGregor A.H
VX 14017	“	McLellan W.H.
VX 14908	Lieut.	Nason F.S.
VX 14749	Maj.	Plowman S.
VX 14488	Capt.	Ray J.
VX 14049	Maj.	Rome R. McK.
VX 634	Sgt.	Jenkins C.E.
SX 1679	Pte.	Fox A.M.
VX 4714	Cpl	Carlton W.H.
VX 8363	“	Taplin E.K.
VX 9910	S/Sgt	Freeman G.A.
VX 9942	“	Raine T.J.
VX 11525	Pte.	Shipway H.C ,
VX 13198	“	Gilpin W.J.
VX 14140	Cpl	Laidlaw H.G.
VX 14150	Pte.	Bollard R.F.
VX 14151	L/Cpl.	Blair A.E.
VX 14153	Pte.	Bell M.H.

VX 14722	“	Evans H.P.
VX 14893	Sgt.	Muir G.A.
VX 14933	“	Gregg E.A.
VX 14935	Pte.	Ward A.
VX 14958	Cpl.	Reeve C.
VX 14984	A/WO(1)	Berry E.W.
VX 15335	Sgt.	Behan V.J.
VX 15345	Cpl	Stevens C.C.
VX 15516	“	Hewett R.T.
VX 15745	WO (2)	Dunwoodie W.
VX 15787	Pte	Saggers A.J.
VX 15881	“	Jessen J.
VX 15947	“	Scholes J.
VX 15970	Cpl.	Connard N.E.
VX 15981	“	Duncan D.McL .
VX 15985	Sgt,	Leeder R.M.
VX 15986	Pte.	Brown R.F.
VX 15987	Sgt.	Hollis W.B.
VX 16018	Pte.	McIntosh D.
VX 16039	“	McNab C.L.
VX 16153	Sgt.	Bernaldo J.
VX 16154	“	King A.T.
VX 16177	Cpl.	Case B.K.
VX 16240	Pte.	Grover R.A.
VX 16814	“	Kelly S.T.
VX 16819	“	Wilson E.J.
VX 16885	“	Balcombe D.
VX 16890	“	Singer R.A.

VX 16891	“	Simmons S.E.
X 16901	“	Naylor A.J.
VX 16903	“	Pearce H.J.J.
VX 16920	“	McGowan D.E.
VX 16921	“	McGowan J.D.
VX 16948	“	Cameron C.R.W.
VX 16954	Pte.	Toll S.R.J.
VX 17148	L/Cpl	Cutts R.A.
VX 17149	Pte.	Burke R.J.T.
VX 17150	Pte.	Smith A.J.
VX 17160	“	Murray A.E.
VX 17468	Cpl.	Bradley F.
VX 17546	Pte.	Vaughan E.G.
VX 17511	“	Thompson W.R.R.
VX 17583	“	Eldridge A.H.
VX 17592	“	Wagner R.K.
VX 17665	“	Curtis E.E.
VX 17697	“	O'Grady G.
VX 17698	A/WO(2)	Cuxon S.G.
VX 17723	L/Cpl	Stephens W.E.
VX 17726	Pte.	Marney W.G.
VX 17741	“	Burrell J.A.
VX 17759	Sgt	Lones E.H.
VX 17820	Pte.	Waterfall W.T.
VX 17859	L/Cpl	Jacobs C.P.
VX 17900	Pte.	Leed D.C.
VX 17910	“	Benson L.M.
VX 17924	“	Davis J.

VX 17935	“	Williams G.R,
VX 17962	“	Bell D.W.
VX 18041	“	Taplin F.G.
VX 18046	“	Wade F.T.
VX 18114	“	Connor M.J.
VX 18186	Sgt.	Edwards F.A.
VX 18225	Pte.	Knuckey R.
VX 18251	“	Rowbottom W.O.
VX 18264	“	Storer A.T.
VX 18291	“	Imray F.S.J.
VX 18322	“	Spokes R.A.
VX 18400	“	Milne C.E.
VX 18476	“	Reed W.W.
VX 18510	“	Whyatt J.
VX 18516	“	McLeod I.
VX 18545	“	Boys E.L.
VX 18548	Cpl	Haines J.W.
VX 18566	Pte.	Tann L.A.
VX 18586	“	Yewers J.G.
VX 18591	Cpl.	Wintle N.H.
VX 18602	Pte.	Usher P.H.A.
VX 18608	“	Smart J.D.
VX 18628	“	Sims B.P.
VX 18632	“	Hill R.W.
VX 18634	“	Nind S.E.P.
VX 18671	“	Miller J.B.
VX 18689	Sgt.	Gillard G.J.
VX 18832	Pte.	Hanks A.G.



VX 18835	“	Lynch A. (Hospital Bombay) *
VX 18867	“	Wright L.J.
VX 18900	“	Le Page J.R.A.
VX 18902	“	Ballard D.V.
VX 18942	“	Cummins T.A.
VX 19214	“	Dredge F.
VX 19217	“	Scholer J.W. –
VX 19226	“	Henderson J. McF.
VX 19234	“	Churchill M.J.
VX 19236	Pte.	Shaw R.B.
VX 19239	S/Sgt	Easton J.J.
VX 19241	Pte.	Fenney G.R.
VX 19410	“	Harper H.H.
VX 19541	“	Brady B.J.V.
VX 19660	“	Miln J.
VX 19875	“	Warfe W.M.H.
VX 19877	“	Edwards F.
VX 19878	“	Edwards E.
VX 19880	“	Ellis T.
VX 19884	“	Pattie S.A.
VX 19889	“	Fisher R.
VX 19903	“	Jermyn J.E.
VX 19906	“	Ward H.
VX 19967	L/Cpl.	Fields A.S,
VX 20152	S/Sgt	Heriot E.G.
VX 20168	Pte.	Nicholas R.H.
VX 20225	Pte.	Butler D.R.T.
VX 20237	“	Holdsworth S.P.

VX 20300	“	Hazelman L.V.
VX 20337	“	Spokes A.A,
VX 20429	“	Martin S.H.
VX 20433	“	McPhail I.B.
VX 20470	“	James G.A.W.
VX 20490	“	Pengelly C.H.
VX 20546	“	Baker J.H.
VX 20578	“	Barrie N.C.
VX 21588	“	Pearce R.E.
VX 20630	L/Cpl	Stock D.
VX 20637	Pte.	Roberts E.L.
VX 20697	“	Sullivan V.F.
VX 20717	“	Selwood G.A.K.
VX 20723	“	Munday W.F.
VX 20743	“	McDonald A.J.
VX 20755	“	Johnstone B.
VX 20759	“	Woolcock C.R.
VX 20784	“	Bowden T.A.
VX 20788	“	Julien S.J.V.
VX 20791	“	Squire L.R.W.
VX 20792	“	McNamara J.T.
VX 20831	“	Buck R.K.
VX 20836	“	Stuchberry E.M
VX 20849	L/Cpl	Ryan E.J.
VX 20880	Pte.	May G.J.
VX 20916	Cpl	Jackson W.J.H.
VX 20925	Pte	Butters E.W. ( Hospital Deolali) *
VX 20954	Pte.	Fowler A.

VX 20960	“	Marriott R.H.
VX 20971	“	Massey T.P.
VX 21036	“	Joy D.S,
VX 21060	“	Joy S.J.
VX 21285	“	Abson K.O.C.
VX 21315	“	Wilshire R H.
VX 21316	“	Ellis F.W.
VX 21336	“	Carden J.W,
VX 21378	“	Wilcox G.W.
VX 21472	“	Ball A.E.
VX 21542	“	Blackburn R.
VX 21728	Pte	Saggers C.A.
VX 21734	“	Gibbs A.E.
VX 21863	“	Stack W.C (Hospital Freemantle ) *
VX 21904	“	King A.F.
VX 22139	L/Cpl	Stevens S.V.
VX 22159	Pte.	Houston J.A.
VX 22473	“	Brown A.H.
VX 22543	“	Bryant C.C.
VX 22571	“	Dennis J.R,
VX 22584	“	Sutton A.E.
VX 22660	“	Langford R.J.
VX 22689	“	Wood A.E.
VX 22834	“	Chandler B.C.
VX 22850	“	Jenkins R.T.
VX 22941	Col.	Anderon V.J.
VX 23090	Pte.	Allen F.J.
VX 23179	“	Ellis R.J.



VX 23187	“	Ashman W.H.
VX 23344	Cpl.	Mason P.W.
VX 23374	Pte.	Robinson G.J.
VX 23395	Pte.	Walsh P.W.R.B.
VX 23401	“	Mills J.R.
VX 23437	“	Hoppner J
VX 23441	“	Pritchard T.P.
VX 23447	“	Veitch B.A.
VX 23464	“	Rutherford J.D
VX 23470	“	Short R.A.
VX 23551	“	Bourchier J.F.
VX 23571	“	Haig A.T.
VX 24235	Cpl	McCallum S.J.
NX 25529	Pte.	Simpson F.S.
VX 25963	“	Adams T.J.
VX 26175	“	Shaw A.G.
VX 26178	Cpl.	Robinson R.D.
VX 26395	Pte.	Cook K.G.
VX 27307	“	Spokes D. McA.
VX 27765	“	Hutchinson M.L.
VX 30088	“	Irvin W.G.
VX 30405	“	Buck R.G.
VX 30551	“	Martin J.R.
VX 30912	“	Hewett V.R.
VX 31088	“	Crockett H.C.
VX 31464	“	Harvey J.
VX 31863	“	Crow E.L.
VX 33170	“	Tabor A.K.

VX 33529	“	Armitage R.A.
<b>II</b> X 34091	:	Hogan M.H.
VX 35312	“	Forbes W.G.
VX 36273	“	Blake J.
VX 36424	“	Forbes A.R.
VX 36682	“	Bilger E.
VX 38724	“	Wallace W.J.
VX 41339	“	Waugh R.S.
VX 41342	“	Stone V.E.
VX 41352	“	Waugh E.A,
VX 41354	“	Hamer J.R. (Hospital Deolali) *
VX 41362	“	Richards F.C.
VX 42996	“	Cushing F.H.
VX 42997	“	Tyers S.
VX 43105	Pte.	Faulkiner P.O.
VX 43587	‘	Howell W.R.
VX 44409	“	Moore R.P.
VX 44473	“	Harry R.T.
VX 44730	“	Doyle H.P.
VX 44838	“	Marks R.G.
VX 44848	“	Smith F.C.
VX 45354	“	Killeen F.P.
VX 45489	“	Wilkinson H.J.
VX 46376	“	Prosser D.A.

#### TOTAL STRENGTH

<b>Officers</b>	12
<b>Other Ranks</b>	233
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>

## CHAPTER 2

### EMBARKATION

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1940 at 0745 hrs, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance broke camp and moved out of Puckapunyal by M.T. and entrained at Dysart Siding (near Seymour) for Port Melbourne.

Despite all the security precautions, hundreds of civilians mostly families and friends lined the railway line at strategic points to wave us on our way.

On arrival at Port Melbourne, we were greeted with the sight of the R.M.S. MAURETANIA, (officially HMT X2), towering over the wharf. Approximately 38000 tons this luxury vessel was to be our home for the next few weeks. As most of the original fittings were still intact, this gave us a touch of luxury most of us had only read about until now.

I was berthed in a first class stateroom, amidships on the main deck, in accommodation that would have cost a small fortune in peace time. Two extra bunks had been fitted, but otherwise the fittings were intact. Most other members were in comparable accommodation.

We had barely unpacked, before H.Q. Company was ordered to take over the ship's hospital and Sgt; Ted Lones nailed me for night duty before we had even left the wharf.

At 0800 hrs on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1940, the Mauretania left the wharf, sailing down Port Philip Bay, but anchoring off Sorrento for some hours before passing through the Heads and proceeding into Bass Strait, where at 1600 hrs, we met up with Convoy U S 6, consisting of two other ships, the Queen Mary and the Aquitania, which had sailed from Sydney. The convoy was escorted by the Cruiser HMAS Perth.

At our first parade on board, among all the "do's" and "don'ts" and instructions for shipboard life, Lt. Col. Green gave us his memorable exhortation, "You have a good ship, a fine ship. Don't knock the furniture about". This almost became the unit motto!

Very rough seas through the bight soon found out who were the good sailors, but after the first few days most had adjusted to the conditions.

At 0915 hrs on 25<sup>th</sup> October, we reached Fremantle. Being the smallest of the three ships, the Mauretania was the only one able to tie up at the wharf. The other ships anchored in Gage Roads, while we all had shore leave from 1100 to 2400 hours.

At 1600 hrs the following day we cast off from the wharf, anchoring for the night with the rest of the convoy, before moving off at 0645 on the 27<sup>th</sup> October.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October, HMAS Perth handed over the convoy to HMAS Canberra; then passed down the convoy on the starboard side with all the sailors lining the rail to farewell us, and wish us luck; quite a moving experience. Three cheers rang out from the troopships as she went past.

The "Crossing the Line" ceremony was carried out as we crossed the equator, at 1400 hrs on 31<sup>st</sup> October; with the 2/5th Field Ambulance being represented by Maj. Plowman, Lieut; Nason, Sgt. Hollis and Pte. Abson. The ship's staff gave every possible help for the occasion.

At 0915 hrs on 4<sup>th</sup> November, we arrived at Bombay, and dropped anchor in the harbour for the night. Because of the danger to these huge liners in taking them any nearer to the war zones, the plan was to tranship into smaller troopships for the remainder of the voyage.

With the thousands of troops involved, this took time to effect; and it was necessary to accommodate all troops ashore in the meantime.

For this reason, all troops entrained the following day, some going to Poona; others, including the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, to Deolali; a British Army permanent camp, about 100 miles inland.

After entraining at 1700 hrs, we arrived at Deolali at 2400 hrs, detrained, and then had to march 2 miles to camp, laden down with all our gear.

At Deolali, we had our first introduction to the E.P.I.P. tents, which were to be our accommodation at most camps whilst in the Middle East.

Deolali, being a small Indian village, proved a very interesting interlude; shopping in the bazaars for souvenirs etc. We soon caught on to the British army system of having Indians perform the menial tasks around camp.

For a few annas a week, each tent had their own "batman" to clean shoes, make beds, and tidy up; while the "dhobi wallah" did the laundry. We were almost sorry when it was time to move on'

Here, also, we were intrigued with some of the local customs. Cows, which are sacred to the Hindu religion, would wander through the shopping area, helping themselves to cabbages etc. from the shops or lying down in the middle of the road, forcing all traffic to either stop or go round them until they were ready to move.

The "kite", (a type of hawk) also caused some problems. A scavenger, the sky was full of them continually, and most of us lost our meal between cookhouse and mess tent, as these birds dived and took the meat from our plate before we could reach cover.

To keep us fit, we were taken on route marches most days. The heat was sweltering, and very soon our commanders were told that in India you do as the Indians do, siesta during the heat of the day, and exercise morning and evening.

At 0745 hrs on 9<sup>th</sup> November, we marched out of camp, and entrained for Bombay, to find a fleet of smaller British - Indian army troopships awaiting us for the next stage of our voyage. The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance boarded the "Dilwara", where we found much more spartan accommodation,

On 10<sup>th</sup> November, the unit was granted shore leave from 0900 to 1500 hrs. For most of the troops this was a fascinating experience, being their first visit to a foreign country.



**On the Steps of the Gateway to India – Bombay**  
**Jack Dennis, Lloyd Tann, Garnet Gillard, Stan McCallum**



**The Gateway to India – Bombay**



**Laundry day at Deolali**

At 1630 hrs the Dilwara moved out of Bombay harbour to anchor. Armistice Day was celebrated the following day with the customary two minutes silence.

At 1400 hrs on the 12<sup>th</sup> November the convoy sailed from Bombay, The convoy consisted of 11 troopships, 2 auxiliary cruisers and minesweepers. Vessels in the convoy were, RMS RANCHI, HMS HECTOR, HMT's DILWARA, ROHNA, LANCASHIRE, PRESIDENT DUMAS, RAJULA, INDRAPUERA, NEVASA, CHRISTIAN HUYGENS, EGRA, SLAMAT and TAKLIWA, and the convoy travelled at 12 knots.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November at 1130 hours, HMS Ranchi left the convoy, returning towards India. The following morning we were joined by HMS SHROPSHIRE, which took over escort duties.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November, HMS Hector left the convoy and on the 18<sup>th</sup> the Sloop HMS PARRAMATTA and the AA Cruiser HMS CARLISLE joined us. For some time, a British twin-engine plane gave us aerial cover and then later in the morning we were joined by three other vessels, - CLAN CAMERON, KHEDEV ISMAEL, RHESUS and the sloop HMS FLAMINGO.

Later in the day, we passed another convoy of 24 - 26 ships. Although the two convoys, amounting to a probable half a million tons, was within cooee of Italian Somaliland, we passed unmolested through the Straits of Bab el Mandeb into the Red Sea, where we saw a well lit hospital ship sailing south.

At 0915 hrs on 19<sup>th</sup> November, the AA Cruiser Carlisle fired on an Italian recce plane, which immediately retired. At 1400 hrs a plane was seen to crash into the sea, well astern of the convoy, but no details were available.

On 21<sup>st</sup>, we passed another convoy of about 20 ships, and our escort was reduced to two sloops, as being well north of the border of Eritrea, we were considered safe from attack.

In the afternoon of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we entered the Gulf of Suez, and the following morning, anchored in Suez Bay, before entering the Suez Canal at 0630 hrs on 24<sup>th</sup>; travelling through the Canal, past Ismailia, and tying up for the night near Kantara East. The officers of all units on board, plus nurses, held a farewell party during the afternoon.

At 0500 hrs on 25<sup>th</sup> November, HMT Dilwara moved into El Kantara and tied up. Disembarkation commenced at 1000 hrs, and after lunch on shore, the unit entrained for Palestine.

Our train accommodation was in cattle trucks, far from pleasant, for the hot dusty trip across the Sinai Desert; particularly as the trucks had not been cleaned out very thoroughly beforehand.

After crossing the Egyptian - Palestine border at 1700 hrs, we arrived at the Gaza railway station, where 10 personnel were evacuated to the 2/1<sup>st</sup> A.G.H.

At 1900 hrs we arrived at El Majdal, detrained, and embussed for Camp No.6 - Julis, which we reached at 2000 hrs, to find the camp had been prepared for us by the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Pioneers, enabling us to move straight into our tents. This was very welcome after a long hot day.

The following day was spent settling in, changing our money into Palestine currency, and we received our first mail since leaving home.



## CHAPTER 3

### PALESTINE

The area of Palestine, between Gaza in the west and Tel Aviv in the east, was the main camp area for Australian army camps, with camps at Gaza Ridge, Kilo 89, Dier Sunied, Beit Jirja, Barbara and Qastina, apart from our camp at Julis.

Here, we were again accommodated in E.P.I.P. tents, an excellent, roomy tent, well suited to the climate, as the 5 foot walls could be rolled back to the corners to allow maximum circulation of air in hot weather, while the high roof and space between the tent and fly also made for comfort.

We soon settled into our new home, and the first few days were spent digging slit trenches, camouflaging tents, and filling in holes where tents had previously been dug in.

On several nights towards the end of November, we had very heavy storms, causing extensive damage; buildings were unroofed, tents damaged, and the contents of many tents were wet with the rain.

Basic training was soon resumed to get us fit again after five weeks of shipboard life, and route marches out into the desert or past orange groves were a daily occurrence.

On these occasions, it never ceased to amaze us how, on stopping for a smoke-o out in the desert, miles from anywhere, an Arab with a donkey would suddenly appear, selling oranges or watermelons; or Arab kids after "Baksheesh".

Guard duty in the camp area was rather more interesting than usual, owing to an order that, due to the prevalence of rabies in the area, all dogs entering the camp boundaries were to be shot on sight. This gave those on guard duty a welcome chance for some target practice. If there were no dogs around, a tin can in the distance could look remarkably like a dog!

On 10<sup>th</sup> December, a review of the 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade took place, with inspection by Brig. J.E.S. Stevens; and Maj. Gen. Lavarack took the salute during the march past. This was a most impressive parade, and the brigade was complimented on the steadiness of the men on parade.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December, Lt. Gen. Sir Thomas Blamey, after a visit to the 2/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion, addressed the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance on our own parade ground. Brig. Stephens later complimented the unit on its marching.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, we had our first issue of leave, with 50 OR's having one day's leave to Tel Aviv.

After this, leave was available most weekends to either Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. This was looked forward to as a welcome break in the routine. Tel Aviv is a modern Jewish city, with all modern facilities, built on the seafront of the Mediterranean.

Jerusalem, of course, is living history, being the birthplace of Christianity; with its many churches marking most historic sites, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Church of the Nativity, etc.



**2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Group at Mosque of Omar – Jerusalem**



**Church of All Nations**



### **Damascus Gate in old city wall - Jerusalem**

All troops made the most of any opportunity to visit either city. In Jerusalem, the Hotel Fast had been taken over as the Australian Services Club, This was our headquarters whilst on leave, and from there visits could be made to all places of interest - Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee (nowadays known as Lake Tiberius), the Dead Sea, Jordan and many other places.

The huge wall surrounding the Old City was fascinating, as were the many gateways which pierced the wall - the Damascus Gate, Saint Stephens Gate etc; to allow entry of camel trains. These gates are closed at sundown each day, with only the adjoining small pedestrian gateway being left open.

During December, a detachment from the Transport Section was sent to Suez to pick up our vehicles, which were due to arrive. After waiting several days in the transit camp at Port Tewfik, the group returned to Julis by train.

I travelled with the party as medical orderly to the convoy, but I never did find out what happened to the vehicles. However, they eventually turned up.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December, the unit was warned by the A.D.M.S. to prepare for a move on, or after 1<sup>st</sup> January. This warning added some excitement to the celebration of our first Christmas overseas.

On Christmas Day, we attended a Church Parade at 2/27<sup>th</sup> Batt., before returning to camp for Christmas dinner. In accordance with army tradition, the officers and sergeants waited on table for the men, before the officers entertained the sergeants in the Officers' Mess, and the sergeants entertained the officers in the Sergeants' Mess. On 29<sup>th</sup> December, we received orders to move to Egypt on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1941, and on 31<sup>st</sup> December, the advance party consisting of Maj. Gillespie Capt. MacDonald, 19 OR's and 8 OR's from A.S.C. Section, left for Amirya.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January, Maj. Gen. Lavarack, Brig. Stevens and C.O.'s and 2 I/Cs of all units at Julis attended a farewell meal in the Officers' Mess and the following day all units at Julis and Qastina attended a parade at Julis and were addressed by Lt. Gen Sir Thomas Blamey and Mr Percy Spender (Minister for Defence).

On 4<sup>th</sup> January the unit moved out of Julis en route to Ikingi Mariut in Egypt. This move was a particularly momentous one for the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd Ambulance, as it marked our transfer from 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade in 7th Div. to 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade formed part of the 6th Division, and when sailing to the Middle East early in 1940, were diverted to England. After spending several months there, they were eventually shipped back to the Middle East.

For some reason, not known to the writer, they arrived without their Field Ambulance, and as they were about to go into action in Libya, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> was transferred to fill the gap. From this time on, we remained part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

The next few weeks were spent getting ready for our first action, sorting out vehicle loads of men and equipment, so that each group was complete for their allocated task.

On 21<sup>st</sup> January, Maj. Gillespie was transferred to 2/2nd CCS at Kantara, and Capt. Blair took over as O/C "A" Company.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, the unit was instructed to be ready to move at 24 hours notice.

## CHAPTER 4

### CYRENAICA & EGYPT

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 1941, we moved out in convoy with the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, reaching Mersa Matruah by nightfall. Though we had not yet caught up with the war, we saw for the first time the results of the war. Buildings, ruined from bombing and shelling, the countryside littered with the debris of war, arms, ammunition, vehicles and ordinance dumps all left behind as the Italian troops retreated.

The following day we travelled through Sidi Barrani, Bug Bug Fort Capuzzo to Sollum, where we spent the night. The devastation of war was evident everywhere. Fortunately, the civilian population had been evacuated, so although the townships were in ruins, they were deserted.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January, we moved from Sollum, through Bardia to Tobruk, and the following day, were directed to our camp area, at Fort Pilastrino, about 5 miles inland from the town. This was an Italian fortress, captured with Tobruk during the last few days.

Here, we dug in for a stay of some weeks. We either took over Italian dug-outs, or dug our own with sand bag defences for protection. These proved hardly necessary however, as the Italian troops still in the vicinity surrendered in their thousands.

History has shown that the 6th Australian Division of approx. 15,000 men took about 250,000 prisoners.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February, we took over the Italian hospital at Fort Pilastrino, evacuating all Italians, and having to clean out the mass of accumulated filth before we could use it.

As we were temporarily separated from the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which had moved inland to Giarabub, we were assigned to service the 16th Brigade and any other units stationed in the area, as the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Field Ambulance was scattered over a large area.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February, two motor ambulances, driven by Ernie and Bob Waugh, with ambulance orderlies Fred Taplin and John Rutherford, were attached to 2/2nd C.C.S to assist with the movement of casualties..

Unit members spent much of their spare time scrounging among discarded Italian equipment for anything that would make life more interesting or comfortable. Among the many items collected, were a number of field telephones; and soon there was quite a network of phones, connecting most of the dug-outs.

One night the C.O. who was working late in the Office, sent the orderly runner to instruct the R.S.M. to report to him. Sar-Major Berry happened to be enjoying a quiet game of cards when he received the message, so he rang through to the C.O. on the phone; only to be told very smartly, "Sergeant Major, when I send word for you to report to me, I expect you to report personally, not to ring me up on the telephone."



**SIDI – BARRANI - 1941**



**Fort CAPUZZO – 1941**





### **Captured Italian Coastal Battery Gun – Tobruk 1941**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> February, the unit suffered its first battle casualties. L/Cpl A.R. Winks trod on an Italian hand grenade buried in the sand. He was wounded in the heel. This same burst also slightly wounded Ptes. R. Knuckey, R.W. Reed, D. Balcombe and I. McLeod.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February, a party of 5 nursing orderlies: J. Dennis, E. Ellis, J. Churchill, G. Williams and T. Wade; and 7 stretcher bearers: J. - Blake, R. Harry, P. Faulkner, A. Fowler, K. Abson, G. Fenney, and R. Short, was detached for duty with the 2/2nd C.C.S.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February, we were advised the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> C.C.S. would be taking over our hospital, and the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance would be moving to a wadi west of Tobruk.

At this stage, it was proposed by Col. Johnston (DDMS I Aust Corps) to bring the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance to Derna to help the scattered units to concentrate their scattered components to some extent.

At this time, it was thought that the 2/5<sup>th</sup> might move forward as the Corps Field Ambulance, but before this could be implemented, altered plans caused a change of thought.

For some time, the A.I.F. in the Middle East was being reorganised, to form a new Division. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions were reduced from 4 Brigades to 3, and each brigade was reduced from 4 battalions to 3. This freed sufficient battalions to form

the 9<sup>th</sup> Division; which now took over from the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, to continue the advance beyond Derna, in a drive to clear the enemy from North Africa.

The 6th Division, including the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, was then sent back to Egypt, to form "Lustre Force", destined for Greece.

We left Tobruk on March 3<sup>rd</sup> arriving at Amriyah on the 4<sup>th</sup> and encamped. Leave into Alexandria was granted the following day, which was much appreciated after our stint in the desert.

For the next few weeks normal routine was resumed; basic training, route marches, and checking equipment in preparation for the move to Greece.

Leave to Alexandria was granted most weekends and occasionally a few members would change trains at Sidi Gaba Junction and head (illegally) for Cairo. After all, who wanted to admit that, after spending weeks in Egypt, they still hadn't seen Cairo or the pyramids!

Garnet Gillard and I spent an excellent weekend in Cairo this way, and I am still proud to be able to say I climbed to the top of Cheops's Pyramid, even if we did get arrested on the way back to Cairo for taking photographs in a prohibited area. We had to do some fast talking and barely caught the last train back to Amriyah.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March, Capt. H.E. (Pop) Rowe joined us as Dental Officer, replacing Capt. Ian Jacobs.

On 19<sup>th</sup> March, all troops camped in the Amriyah/Ikingi Mariut area were addressed by General Wavell.

By early April, all was ready for the move to Greece with the 6<sup>th</sup> Division. After 6 weeks in the Libyan Desert, we were all looking forward to seeing trees, green grass, and civilization for a change. However, this was not to be.

While passing through Cairo on 4<sup>th</sup> April, Maj. Gen. Lavarack received a message directing him to report to Gen. Wavell. In Maj. Gen. Lavarack's own words:

"General Wavell consulted me on the question of sending my 18th Brigade back to Tobruk, together with the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Company, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and a British Field Regiment, in an endeavour to forestall the danger to the 9<sup>th</sup> Aust; Division flank and rear. As the troops named were the only ones available, I agreed."

Here, I will let Johnny Rutherford take up the story, with an excellent article he wrote in the Australian War Memorial publication, "Australians at Arms":

"Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April 1941 was a quiet, yet momentous day for members of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance. In the morning there was a parade for the purpose of handing in kit bags,



preparatory, as we thought, to boarding a boat for Greece on the following Monday; and in the afternoon, a football match against 7<sup>th</sup> A.G.H. A day of relaxation.



### **AMRIYA (Egypt) Cleaning out after Dust Storm (E.P.I.P Tent)**

Then, at 8.00 PM, it was on!!

Most of the boys were over at the "swy" school at the time; the heads were falling rather thickly. Being a "tails" better myself, I was not too happy about this, so when the news suddenly hit us about the move up the desert again, I felt like wailing to high heaven. I guess we all did.

The desert! For Pete's sake, what is this all about? We knew of course, from the almost insignificant news item in that morning's "Egyptian Post", that Benghazi had fallen into German hands, and then this!

The change was not to our liking. What's more, we had only just arrived back from Tobruk, and we felt we could do with a change of scenery.

Soon, we were as busy as beavers, raising the canopies of the vehicles, re-arranging the loads to make room for personnel, and packing up in general. Back to the desert, - wouldn't it!!

And so it came about, that at 0600 hrs the following morning, a long convoy bearing the disgruntled members of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd Ambulance (less "B" Company) trundled out

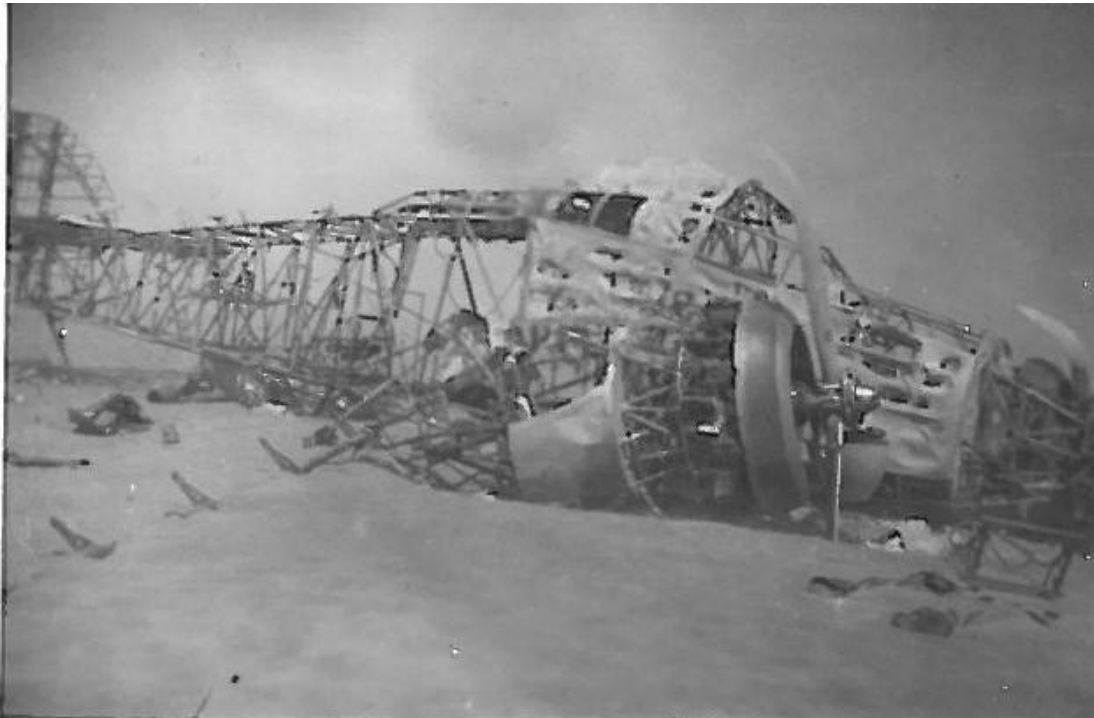
of Ikingi Maryut and headed west. "B" Coy and other units of the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade were also to head west later, via the sea.



**Taken from top of Cheops Pyramid – Cairo**

That night, we camped at Mersa Matruah. We'd seen it all before, and the following night, after a torrid day of rough roads and yellow choking dust, we hit Bug Bug. Ditto! Thoughts of Greece, of green grass and cool olive groves faded gradually into

the background, and gave way to the realities of the parched, arid, never-to-be-forgotten waste of the Libyan Desert.



**Remains of an Italian 3 engined Bomber – Tobruk January 1941**

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April dawned fine and clear, as fanned by a cool breeze, the convoy formed up again, passed through Sollum, wound its way snake-like up the scenic road to the plateau, and then, unexpectedly, halted near Fort Capuzzo.

It was there that we had our first experience of what a retreat looks like; a grandstand view of the "Benghazi Handicap". According to reports, things were not too good ahead, and judging by the disorganised rabble of retreating forces heading back from Tobruk, they were not likely to improve in a hurry.

The troops passing us were, of course, the "limit men". We guessed, however, that it would be a fairly safe bet that the "backmarkers", those fighting the rear-guard action, would turn out to be the Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division, and later events proved us right.

About sunset, the convoy reformed and plunged westwards into the oncoming tide. We could see no future in it!

Somewhere about midnight, after a hair-raising journey without lights on a traffic-choked road, we came to a halt in the Tobruk area, but about 8 miles east of the town, we were met with the news that Derna had fallen, and that Jerry was coming fast.

However, everything appeared to be quiet, so we slept on it, and waited for what the morrow might bring.

Jack Baker has a strange story to tell of his trip back to Tobruk; an unusual co-incidence:

The story really started in Perth. Whilst on leave from the "Mauretania", Jack, Reg Fisher, and Rex LePage were "adopted" for the day by three ladies, who drove them all round Perth, gave them a meal, and took them to the pictures, where they saw "Goodbye Mr. Chips"; a picture they enjoyed, and remembered.

Whilst in the convoy on the way back to Tobruk, Jack, who was driving an ambulance, was called on to pick up the body of a dead R.A.F. man, near Sollum, and take him to the nearest R.A.F. unit. As everyone was frantically packing and heading towards Egypt ahead of the retreat from Benghazi, Jack found great difficulty in disposing of the body.

Finally, at Mersa Matruah, he got rid of him, and on checking his identity from his pay book, found his name was "Chips". Jack couldn't help feeling as he handed the body over, that this really was a case of "Goodbye Mr. Chips".

Jack then had to hurry to catch up with the unit, and his was the last vehicle into Tobruk, as they closed the barbed wire behind him to seal off the Bardia Road.

## CHAPTER 5

### SIEGE of TOBRUK

During the past few days, the rate of withdrawal of the defence forces upon Tobruk had accelerated. Enemy armour and patrols were in the neighbourhood, and had shelled Mechele, and reconnaissance vehicles had appeared on the escarpment above Derna Rd. After a fight on the escarpment, these enemy patrols were repulsed, and the 18th. Brigade began the defence of the perimeter.

General Wavell, the C in C and Maj. General Lavarack, G.O.C. Cyrenaica Command, visited the area on 8<sup>th</sup> April, when Gen Wavell made the decision to hold Tobruk with a defence as mobile as possible. He hoped that in a couple of months, an attack in relief could be carried out successfully.

The brigades were to remain outside the perimeter, if possible, till the 10<sup>th</sup> April. The 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade astride the Derna Road, the 20<sup>th</sup> in the centre near El Adem, and the 24<sup>th</sup> on the left holding the Bardia Road, with the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade in reserve.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April, enemy columns were approaching, and the brigades moved within the perimeter.

Medical units in Tobruk at this stage were; 2/4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H., 2/2<sup>nd</sup> C.C.S., a section of 15<sup>th</sup> Indian General Hospital of 100 beds, the 2/3<sup>rd</sup>; 2/5<sup>th</sup>; 2/8<sup>th</sup>; and 2/11<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulances, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Aust. Field Hygiene Section, the 36<sup>th</sup> British Field Hygiene Section, the 5<sup>th</sup> Advance Depot Medical Stores, a mobile ophthalmic unit, a mobile bacterial laboratory, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Motor Ambulance Convoy. The last 5 of these were British units.

The ophthalmic unit and bacterial laboratory were soon sent back to Egypt, as they could not achieve any useful function under prevailing conditions.

On 7<sup>th</sup> April, the day the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade arrived in Tobruk, Gen. Wavell proposed to Gen. Lavarack, that he should take over the Cyrenaica command.

The following day, Wavell and Lavarack flew to Tobruk, where Wavell held a conference of senior officers. He announced that Maj. General Lavarack would take over command of all British forces in Cyrenaica. A stand had to be made at Tobruk for possibly two months, while other forces were assembled.

He then wrote in pencil, on three sheets of paper, the following instruction:

- 1. You will take over command of all troops in Cyrenaica, Certain reinforcements have already been notified as being sent to you. You will be informed of any others which it is decided to send.*
- 2. Your main task will be to hold the enemy's advance at Tobruk, in order to give time for the assembly of reinforcements, especially of armoured troops for the defence of Egypt.*
- 3. To gain time for the assembly of the required reinforcements, it may be necessary to hold Tobruk for about 2 months.*
- 4. Should you consider, after reviewing the situation in the light of the strength deployed by the enemy, that it is not possible to maintain your position at Tobruk for this length of time, you will report your views, when a decision will be taken by G.H.Q.*
- 5. You will in any case, prepare a plan for withdrawal from Tobruk, by land and by sea, should withdrawal become necessary.*
- 6. Your defence will be as mobile as possible, and you will take any opportunity of hindering the enemy's concentration by offensive action."*

Maj. Gen. Lavarack then planned a system of organisation and command for the defence of Tobruk, with the three 9<sup>th</sup> Division Brigades holding the perimeter with the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade in reserve.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April, Maj. General Lavarack was appointed to command Western Desert Force, whilst Gen. Morsehead was appointed to command Tobruk Fortress.

In the meantime, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance had moved from El Adem corner to the Wadi Auda; not without interruption, as their convoy was subjected to a dive-bombing attack during the move, fortunately without casualties.

Mobile sections were arranged under Capt. McGregor to 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion; Capt. MacDonald to 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion and Capt. Friend to 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, maintaining close touch with the R.M.O's.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April, a count of troops within the perimeter showed more than 40,000 men. 5,000 Axis prisoners, and 35,307 British, Australian and Indians, but many of these were not front line troops.

Before the end of April, some 12,000 troops and air-men, and 7,000 P.O.W.'s were withdrawn from Tobruk by sea, and the final streamlined garrison, stripped down to essential personnel, from early May to late August, averaged little more than 23,000.

Of these, nearly 15,000 were Australians, about 500 Indians, and the remainder British.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> April, Rommel was apparently no more ready to attack Tobruk, than the garrison was for defence. It would seem that Rommel had originally intended to go no further than Benghazi, and had intended to consolidate there before proceeding. He continued only because the Allied forces were so weak.

Consequently, by the time his vanguard got to Tobruk, he had over-reached himself, and had to pause for a few days. This gave the garrison a vital few days to prepare their defence.

By noon on Good Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup> the Germans had bypassed Tobruk, and cut the Bardia Rd. Tobruk was cut off!!

The Germans attacked repeatedly throughout Easter, but were repulsed by the infantry battalions, with strong support from artillery and anti-tank regiments.

After the Easter Battle, Gen. Lavarack issued a Special Order of the Day, congratulating all ranks of the garrison on their determined defence and finishing with, ***“Everyone can feel justly proud of the way the enemy has been dealt with. Well done Tobruk!”***

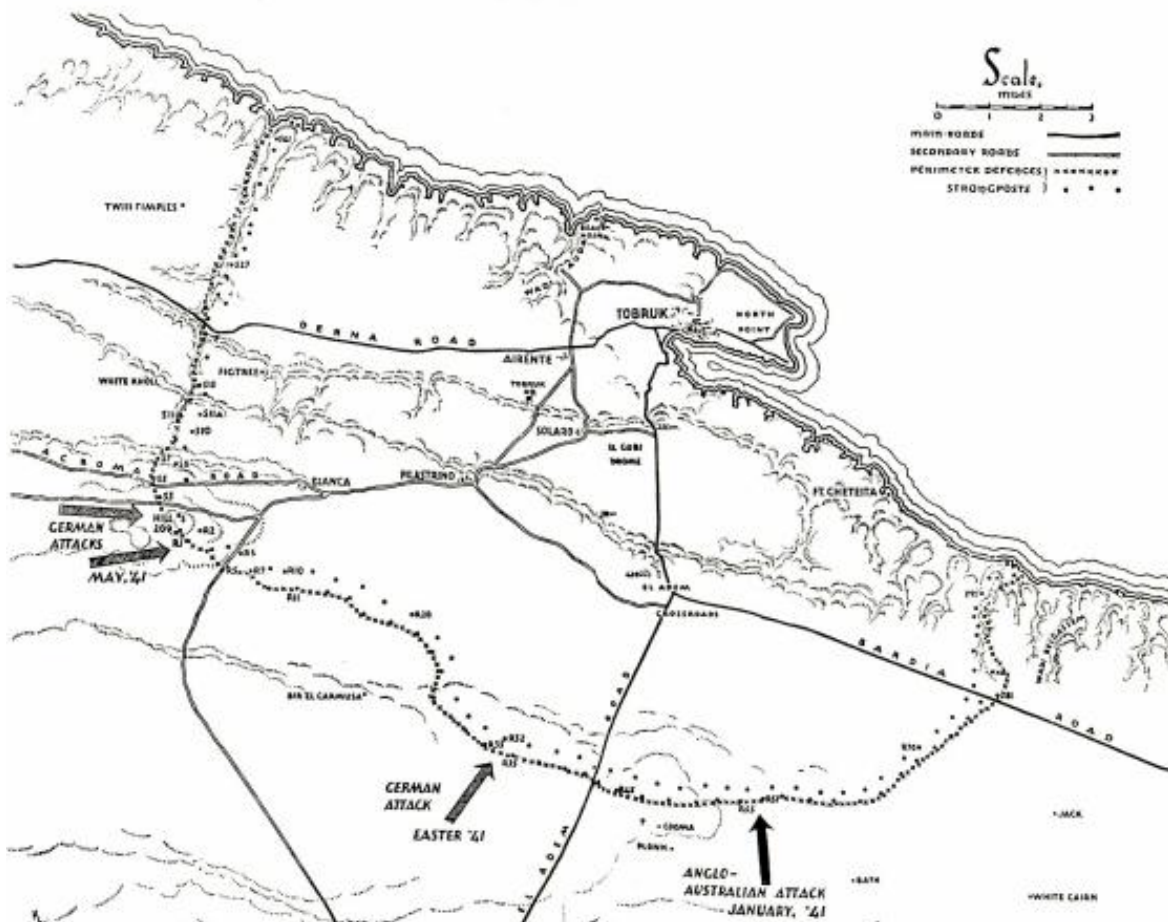
This Order of the Day was actually Gen. Lavarack's farewell message to Tobruk. As the fortress was no longer in touch with the frontier, the place for Desert Headquarters was in Egypt. Consequently, that night Gen. Lavarack handed over command of the fortress to Gen. Morsehead, and transferred his H.Q. to Marten Bagueish, 20 miles east of Mersa Matruh.

From the first day, Gen Morsehead ordered active patrolling of no - man's land, and regular raiding of the enemy's posts. In his own words, “I was determined to make no - man's land, our land.”

In early May, a shipment of 50 "I" tanks, (a heavy armoured tank, possibly a Cruiser Mk 1 or Matilda Mk 1 tank) which had been destined for Greece, were diverted to the desert, as the Greece campaign was over. With this new strength, Gen Wavell ordered an immediate attack. The plan was to capture Halfaya Pass and Sollum, and make such a show of strength that the enemy may be induced to withdraw west of Tobruk.

The relief attempt failed in its main objective. However, the British succeeded in capturing Halfaya and Sollum, and reached Capuzzo, but could not hold it. However, Rommel had to divert considerable forces from Tobruk to resist this attack, and this gave Morsehead and Tobruk breathing space.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April, the hospital ship "VITA" was attacked by eight dive-bombers as she left harbour in the afternoon sun, her Red Cross markings clearly visible. Fortunately, there were no casualties among the 422 patients on board, but the Vita was put out of action. The patients were transferred to the destroyer "Waterhen", and the Vita, though beached, was later towed back to Alexandria.



While further evacuations were carried out after dark by the hospital ship "Dorsetshire", it was obvious other methods had to be used to avoid serious loss of life.

So began the remarkable story of evacuation by destroyer, which lasted throughout the siege.

Evacuation by sea, especially on naval ships which often arrived with little warning, led to the establishment of a small evacuation hospital in an old Italian ammunition tunnel in the cliffs under Admiralty House, and facing on to the docks. Here, a section of 2/2 C.C.S. became a medical holding unit for the evacuation of patients from 2/4 A.G.H. (thus reversing the usual method of evacuation). At a later stage



during the Siege, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance was to take over this evacuation hospital, of which, more later.

In the meantime, inside the perimeter, the battle continued. In the early morning of April 14<sup>th</sup> enemy tanks broke through the perimeter, but were driven back by our anti-tank guns and tanks. Enemy air-craft were very active, and reports credited the defenders with bringing down twelve planes.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group was formally placed under the command of 9<sup>th</sup> Aust; Division.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and our mobile section with them, were shelled. We suffered our first real battle casualty when driver H. Crockett was wounded and evacuated to 2/4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, 13 OR's were detached for duty with 2/4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H. This detachment was to help in the nursing duties of the A.G.H. for many weeks, taking over several wards, including Ward 4 holding wounded German prisoners.

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Commander in Chief, Middle East issued the following Order:

***"The defence of Egypt now depends largely on your holding the enemy on your front; inflicting heavy losses on him, and taking every opportunity to strike him hard. I am glad that I have such stout-hearted and magnificent troops in Tobruk. I am very heartened by what I have heard of their fighting spirit and conduct during these operations, and I know I can count on you to hold Tobruk to the end. My best wishes to you all."***

Life in our H.Q. camp in the Wadi Auda was occasionally brightened by the irrepressible humour of the Aussie soldier, and I am including a couple of examples. (I will not identify the culprits, to protect the guilty.)

"Shorty" had a very comfortable dug-out in the side of the Wadi, with only one real complaint. It was infested with fleas! "Shorty" hated fleas, but put up with them for as long as he could, till one day he could stand them no longer.

Cleaning all his gear out, he dowsed everything with kerosene, sprinkling the kero liberally through the dug-out, and finally tossing in a lighted match.

Well satisfied, after airing his blankets, stowing all his gear away and making his bed, he went off to tell some of his mates what he had done. He did not return to his dug-out till bedtime. When he entered to go to bed, there was a howl of anguish you could hear for miles around, as he found someone had bedded down in his blankets, a flea - ridden donkey, which probably had more fleas to the square inch than any other creature for miles around".

Another story concerns two brothers, Alby and Herbie. These two were known as our walking air - raid alarms. They must have had bionic ears capable of hearing enemy planes warming up to take off from Derna, because when no - one else could hear a thing, these two would cock an ear to the sky and take off for shelter. Inevitably, in a few minutes, we would also hear the faint drone of aircraft approaching, and would take shelter

Alby and Herbie lived in a "sanger" on top of the Wadi, as they did not like the confinement of being down in the Wadi. For this reason, at mealtimes they would wait on top till the mess queue was nearly through, before slipping quickly down to grab their meal and scurry back to their sanger.

As a safety precaution, they had found a disused Italian dug-out in the Wadi not far from the cook-house, and would make a beeline for this in the event of an air raid whilst in the mess queue.

One day, they were lining up for mess, when they pricked their ears and took off for their shelter at a run. They skidded to a halt at the entrance, looked around desperately, before racing to an alternative shelter.

An inspection later by curious onlookers revealed a large notice in the entrance; "DANGER - KEEP OUT - EXPLOSIVES".



**The Wadi Audu – Tobruk 1941**



**The Sanger in Wadi Auda – Tobruk  
Tom Cummins, Terry Wade, Jim Behan**



**Shells from Bardia Bill landing near Wadi Auda  
Tobruk 1041**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April, enemy planes dive-bombed the water point at the Wadi Auda; - fortunately, without casualties.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> April, we were advised of a dawn attack by 2/23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, under the command of the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Capt. Friend was placed in charge of a mobile section, to be responsible for the collection and evacuation of casualties.

The attack commenced on Posts S6 and S7. An R.A.P. was established, but as this necessitated a long carry, it was decided to establish a mobile section at the site of the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Btn; R.A.P., and use 2/12 Btn; vehicles to carry wounded to the R.A.P. at Figtree.

On May 1<sup>st</sup> a message was received that German tanks had broken through our western defences, and formed a salient. The 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion was moved to support in rear of the salient, together with 1 motor ambulance and 4 stretcher bearers.

After a reconnaissance by Lt. Col. Green, Capt. MacDonald with 8 stretcher bearers, cooks etc. was sent forward to establish a mobile section in the region and evacuate to the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance M.D.S

Lt. Col. Green was placed in charge of the collection of all wounded in the areas covered by the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> and 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulances.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> Maj. Plowman (in the absence of Lt. Col. Green) was called to H.Q. 9<sup>th</sup> Division, and advised of a night attack by 2/9<sup>th</sup>; and 2/12<sup>th</sup> battalions to regain the perimeter. Capt. McGregor in charge of the mobile section was to proceed to the vicinity of the start line for the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Btn. and establish a post to evacuate wounded to 2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance M.D.S.

Capt. Friend, in charge of the other mobile section, was to proceed with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, establish a post, and evacuate to the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Fd. Ambulance M.D.S.

The attack commenced, and the enemy shelled the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Btn; heavily. L/Cpl Alan Saggars was severely wounded, and evacuated to 2/8<sup>th</sup> Fd. Ambulance. He died just before midnight, and thus became the first fatal casualty of the unit.

The following day, the 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalions returned to reserve positions, and the mobile sections went with them. Capt. McGregor relieved Capt. J.M. Yeates as R.M.O. of the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June, Western Desert Force again attempted to relieve Tobruk by land in an operation known as "Battleaxe". The British force attempted to drive the enemy west of Tobruk, and the 4 Brigades inside Tobruk attacked several points on the perimeter.

During this attack, the Unit was on 1 hours' notice for movement. A mobile section under Maj. Rome was attached to the R.H.A; stretcher bearer squads were attached to

the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion. One N.C.O; 8 wagon orderlies 8 stretcher bearers and 8 nursing orderlies were attached to the 2/11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance to act as reserve to the unit in the event of movement out of the perimeter.

The A.D.S. was modified in readiness to move, and we were warned that if the attack from Sollum was successful, the Brigade may sweep around the perimeter. H.Q. Company was reformed to form an M.D.S.

The Germans resisted strongly on all fronts, and after the battle had raged for 3 days, the Western Desert Force withdrew on the 19<sup>th</sup>. This was depressing news for the garrison, but attacks on enemy positions continued.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, a portion of "B" Company took over an A.D.S. manned by the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> June German planes scattered leaflets over Tobruk, reading:

### **AUSSIES**

**After Crete disaster, Anzac troops are now being ruthlessly sacrificed by England in Tobruk and Syria. Turkey has concluded a pact of friendship with Germany. England will shortly be driven out of the Mediterranean. Offensive from Egypt to relieve you totally smashed.**

### **YOU CANNOT ESCAPE**

**Our dive bombers are waiting to sink your transports. Think of your future, and your people at home. Come forward. Show white flags and you will be out of danger.**

### **SURRENDER**

Tobruk's reply was simple. A Digger took a copy of the leaflet, nailed it to the flag pole in the main square, and underneath it wrote; "***Come and get it.***" These leaflets were in great demand as souvenirs, and were selling for 2 pounds each!

The "Lord Haw Haw" broadcasts were always a bright spot in each day; and whenever a radio was tuned in, a large crowd soon gathered. Night after night, he made dire threats to exterminate the "***Rats***" in Tobruk. In dubbing them "Rats", Lord Haw Haw ensured their place in history, a symbol of defiance against overwhelming odds.

An important element in maintaining morale was the supply of accurate news to counteract rumours. Sgt. W.H. Williams edited, produced, and published "The

Tobruk Truth”, “The Dinkum Oil”, every day, despite enemy attacks, which once wrecked the office and several times put radio and printing press out of action.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June, W.O. (1) Berry and 13 OR's established Tobruk Convalescent Camp in the Wadi Auda, as temporary staff, to carry on until the arrival of permanent staff.

On July 7<sup>th</sup> H.Q. Company took over buildings in the vicinity of Mersa Theregh, and established a rest camp for the Tobruk area.

On July 21<sup>st</sup> we were advised the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> C.C.S. were being evacuated from Tobruk, and that its light section in the docks hospital would be relieved by the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance. Over the next few days, the C.O. and key personnel were shown the routine, and on 24<sup>th</sup> July, H.Q. Company took over.

This hospital was established in an old Italian ammunition tunnel in the cliff, facing the docks and under Admiralty House.

Patients for evacuation to Alexandria would be moved during the day from 4th. A.G.H. and prepared for evacuation by destroyer. Each night when there was no moon, a destroyer would enter the harbour at midnight, loaded with supplies, ammunition and reinforcements. We would load patients onto barges, and rendezvous with the destroyer at a different part of the harbour each night.

As supplies were unloaded from the destroyer, the patients would be loaded on and sharp at 0200 hrs. the destroyer would head back for Alexandria. This time table was necessary, so the destroyer could clear enemy held coastal bases before daylight.

The Germans knew what was going on, and bombed the harbour almost every night, searching for the destroyer. We did not suffer a casualty during the month or so of this operation, but later, when the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Fd. Amb. took over this operation, they were not so lucky.

The evacuation procedure was a great example of co-operation by all concerned. All personnel, no matter what their normal duties, assisted, including members of a nearby field butchery; and the naval ratings cooperated magnificently.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July, the Wadi Auda was heavily shelled by "**Bardia Bill**" a 15" naval gun with sufficient range to reach us from outside the perimeter. The same day enemy planes attacked the harbour area, dropping mines. Raids continued for several hours, and heavy explosions occurred as some of the mines landed on the town and docks.

Mines prevented the destroyers from entering the harbour, and the evacuation of patients had to be abandoned for a few days, until all the mines had been cleared. During this time, the unit was widely scattered, but very busy. While H.Q. Company was running the evacuations, mobile sections from "A" and "B" Companies were still

operating with the various battalions on the perimeter; and the transport section were running shuttle services with motor ambulances between dressing stations and hospitals at various points.

# AUSSIES

AFTER CRETE DISASTER ANZAC TROOPS ARE NOW BEING RUTHLESSLY SACRIFICED BY ENGLAND IN TOBRUCH AND SYRIA.

TURKEY HAS CONCLUDED PACT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GERMANY. ENGLAND WILL SHORTLY BE DRIVEN OUT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. OFFENSIVE FROM EGYPT TO RELIEVE YOU TOTALLY SMASHED.

YOU CANNOT ESCAPE.

OUR DIVE BOMBERS ARE WAITING TO SINK YOUR TRANSPORTS. THINK OF YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR PEOPLE AT HOME.

COME FORWARD - SHOW WHITE FLAGS AND YOU WILL BE OUT OF DANGER !

# SURRENDER !

The operation of motor vehicles near the perimeter caused many problems; some of which were solved with great ingenuity. Because motor travel caused clouds of dust to arise, bringing instant enemy shellfire, daylight movement of vehicles had to be cut to the minimum. However, night travel caused its own problems when lights could not be used to find the way through minefields etc.

An ingenious method of lighting the way was devised. Kerosene tins were up-ended over a hurricane lamp, with a hole cut in one side, so a small light faced towards Tobruk. This was invisible to the enemy, but guided our ambulances and other

vehicles in the dark. The return trip had to be made as best they could, but usually at first light.

Jack Baker tells the story of one incident that happened when he was driving Maj. Plowman from the Wadi Auda to the hospital in Tobruk, when they were caught in an air - raid, and stopped to take shelter. Nearby was a derelict Italian tank, and Maj. Plowman dived under this for shelter, not realizing that the tank had been the target of some bottle throwers, and underneath was a heap of broken bottles.

After the raid was over, Maj. Plowman emerged unscathed from the air - raid, but considerably the worse for wear from his encounter with the broken glass.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> August, the A.D.M.S. proceeded to Cairo, and Lt. Col. Green was appointed acting A.D.M.S. in his absence.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August, two extremely heavy air - raids took place; one at mid-day, and one at 1730 hrs. One bomb landed directly over the docks hospital, causing no damage to the hospital, but wrecking an A.A. post on the cliff, and severely wounding the two men manning the post.

On the following day, the 18<sup>th</sup> August, we were notified that the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade was to be relieved by Polish troops and evacuated from Tobruk. The evacuation hospital was to be taken over by the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Fd. Ambulance.

An advance party of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> was instructed in the routine of evacuation procedures, before they took over.



**Oil tanker ablaze in Harbour-Tobruk 1941**





**Sinking of the Ladybird – from 2/4<sup>th</sup> A.G.H  
Tobruk 1941**



**In A.D.S. at Figtree Tobruk  
George Williams, Lloyd Tann, Herbie Ward**

Gen. Blamey had been concerned for some time at the state of health of the garrison, considering that after five months constantly in action the troops were in need of urgent relief. After much discussion, it was arranged that the Australians would be relieved by Polish troops.

It is interesting to note, that when advised of the decision, Gen Morsehead asked that the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, being his best brigade, should be the last to leave. This was refused, as Gen Blamey wanted the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade to re-join the rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division (to which we were now attached) in Syria. Accordingly, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, including the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, was the first brigade to leave.

On 21<sup>st</sup> August, the Polish troops commenced taking over our unit equipment. August 22<sup>nd</sup> was the big day for our evacuation from Tobruk. At 1045 hrs, notification was received that 9 Officers and 141 OR's were to be evacuated tonight.

At 1500 hrs, all baggage and confidential papers were delivered to a barge at Jetty No.1, and loaded on board SS Lesbos, with Sgt. Lones and L/Cpl Bowden as baggage guard.

At 1900 hrs, H.Q. personnel commenced moving to the Wadi Auda to consolidate the unit. At 2000 hrs, a dive bombing attack on the harbour resulted in 3 near misses to the "Lesbos". At 2100 hrs, the unit, less a rear party consisting of Maj. Rome, Lt. Hardy and 66 OR's, embussed and moved to the harbour for embarkation.

The drama of the evacuation was captured very well by Johnny Rutherford in an article entitled "Exit the Rats" in the Australian War Memorial publication "As you Were", published in 1949. I will let Johnny tell the story in his own words:

It was 8 o'clock on the night of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1941, and we are at the moment, taking a rather unusual and morbid interest in a particularly violent attack on the unhappy wreck - strewn harbour of Tobruk.

There is however, far more behind our strained anxiety than appears on the surface. This will be readily understood when it is realised that, in the first 90 days alone of the siege, official figures have credited the garrison with having withstood more than one thousand air attacks. Why then, this undue disturbance at such a commonplace event?

This is Tobruk. This devastated, wind - swept, heat - hazed, enemy beset land of desolation has been coping these raids, day in and day out, with monotonous regularity for the last five months or more. Tobruk without its air - raids? It just wouldn't be Tobruk!

And yet, tonight, there is a difference. A vast difference. It is, for us, a night of great expectations, for one of the few "furphies" that ever amounted to anything, and

Tobruk has had more than its fair share of these, is about to burgeon into glorious and unexpected fulfilment.

We are lined up, ready and waiting, on the brink of the Wadi Auda. The roll has been called, and each man has answered to his name. Between the ranks, our bulging packs lie stiffly at our feet. Coffee has been ladled out, and distributed to one and all, and we are raring to go.

Tonight, we are to be evacuated from Tobruk! You wouldn't read about it!

Ack - ack guns bark furiously, and there is an ominous crunch of bursting bombs, and we watch anxiously as volumes of black billowing smoke bulge heavily over the port.

Then, just as suddenly as it began, the raid is over. A heavy silence falls; a silence broken only by the faint drone of the departing planes, and the mournful whine of the jagged metal hurtling from the heavens, as we cop some of the flak from the anti-aircraft barrage.

We are glad that it is over, for soon we will have to embus, and head down to that harbour, and board our ship for Alexandria; -that is of course, if there are any ships left after Jerry has finished playing around.

Time marches on. A convoy of trucks bumps noisily into sight. Orders are rapped out. - Pick up your packs; - Put down your packs, Pick up your packs. - she's on all right - the same old rigmarole. At last we move off in sections to our trucks, and the order is given to embus.

At 9.00 pm, we are on our way, bumping tediously over the broken country until we reach the Derna Road - Musso's Victory Road to the Suez. A fast run now past the Eagle cross roads until we reach the outskirts of Tobruk township, where we pick up our guides.

Well now, here's a turn - up. Instead of heading down to the wharves, we turn right, and trundle out along the Bardia Road. There is a considerable amount of conjecture regarding this move, but we finally give it best and resolve to adopt a "wait and see" policy.

We climb steadily over the escarpment towards the old aerodrome, dip down the other side, and then, with a squeal of protesting brakes, the convoy slides suddenly to a halt, and we are ordered to debus.

It is a black night, cloudless, and by Tobruk standards, ominously quiet. There is a chill wind blowing, and over towards the perimeter, Jerry is, as usual, showing signs of a bad touch of the jitters. Flares dance madly on the horizon, searchlights flash in

the sky, and we know that somewhere over there, our patrols are out and giving the enemy merry hell.

We are led off in sections over the rough country in the general direction of the harbour. Men stumble under the load of their packs, and curse softly as though scared Jerry will hear them, and wake up to what they are doing.

A whispered order and we halt. An officer goes on ahead to find the way; then suddenly he returns, and we are on the move again. We pause momentarily at the top of the escarpment, and then commence the perilous climb in the inky darkness down the precipitous slope to the harbour.

Curses are more numerous now, as loose stones clatter noisily down the escarpment; troops lose their foothold, and lurch violently into their neighbours. Then at last, we have made the grade, and are assembled near a swinging pontoon bridge leading out into the harbour, where the hulk of the "Serenitas" lies derelict. This is to be our landing stage, and we think that at last, we are a wakeup to this move to the opposite side of the inlet.

"Bardia Bill"! Somewhere out there along the Bardia Rd he lurks in wait for the unwary; the long range gun that has been pounding away solidly at the port for some weeks now. Tonight he's silent, but if he even suspects that this move is on, there will be the devil to pay. On this side of the harbour however, we are more or less protected by the obliging escarpment, - or so we fervently hope.

We shuffle warily over the heaving bridge to the "Serenitas", slip thankfully out of our webbing, and squat patiently on our packs, prepared for a long wait. Away in the distance, an artillery battery fires a few desultory rounds, as though to warn Jerry that he is not to get into any mischief. Jerry sends his regards with a few in return, just to let us know that he is still there. Then the brooding silence again - heavy and pregnant.

We are not at ease. We are thinking of "Bardia Bill". We are thinking of the Luftwaffe. They must be about due again, and this spot is no garden of roses. Surely they won't let us slide out as easily as all this.

Somewhere out there, in the darkness, over to the left, the stern of the "Ladybird" juts defiantly out of the sea; a victim of the Luftwaffe as long ago as May last. A gallant crew of resourceful gunners have utilised her as an anti-aircraft post, and, undaunted, she still fights on.

There are other vessels out there too, liners, destroyers, oil tankers, cargo vessels and battle barges, all wrecks. The inlet is literally choked with them. Among them lie the "San Giorgio", the "Liguria", the "Benkura"; their funnels and masts rising forlornly out of the water.

A light winks out at sea. We stir expectantly, and stare fixedly in that direction in an effort to pierce the wall of darkness. Maybe, we imagined it. No, there it is again. A ship is signalling. It shouldn't be long now.

It's longer than we expect, however, and we are just about to give it away as a bad job when, just about midnight, our ship arrives. Like a ghost, she emerges from the darkness, and glides gently, yet confidently to her berth alongside the *Serenitas*. No sound of given orders, no hint of pulsing engines; not even a bump as she berths. No taxi could have pulled into the kerb as effortlessly as this. One moment there is nothing and the next, well there she is! We are deeply impressed.

The ship comes to life. Sailors appear as though by magic. Orders are given quietly. Polish troops and stores come off from one end, and we proceed to embark from the other. There is a minimum of fuss. Everything seems to be working smoothly to a pre-arranged plan.

We've heard a great deal about the efficiency of the British Navy, now we've seen it. From this day onward, the Boys of the Bulldog Breed will have no stauncher champions than the "Rats" of Tobruk.

Our ship is the British destroyer "*Jervis*", a flotilla leader. We file along the deck, scramble down the companionway, and are ushered down below into the crew's quarters. Wherever there is space, there we are bedded down. I lose a little skin during the process, as I discover that military boots were not designed for steel decks and companionways.

The whole operation is completed in almost exactly one hour, and at 1.00 am we steel slowly out of the harbour, gratefully acknowledging the forbearance of the enemy, who obligingly refrains from throwing a spanner in the works with his usual display of fireworks.

And so we say farewell to Tobruk. A sailor's farewell, as we make for the open sea, and the troops settle down for the night.

It is 6.15 am, and we have been unpleasantly awakened from our slumber. We think that we are back in Tobruk again, because all hell has broken loose. The ship is vibrating madly. Her guns blaze madly. A sickening thud hits her broadside on, dull and metallic. We heel over sharply.

We don't like this at all. Cooped up below as we are, we wonder what is going on. Expressions are strained, - extremely so. As landlubbers we are definitely out of our element.

A sailor appears, and informs us that there is an air - raid on, and we must keep to our quarters. A remarkably thin voice, hopeful, yet obviously seeking assurance,

volunteers; "Oh well, we should be safe enough down here." But there is an unbeliever among us. Resigned and pessimistic, he retorts sharply, "more wishful thinking"! Somebody laughs, (not me), and to a certain extent the tension is broken.

I'm thinking of rats. Somewhere I have heard of their curious habit of deserting a sinking ship, and I am hoping that if, by any chance, the Jervis should take the count, there will be nothing to impede the momentum of this "Rat", as he endeavours to scurry to safety. One thing I do know, I'll be well up with the leaders.

All's well that ends well however and before long, the action is over. We are now allowed on deck, and we discover that the worst that has happened is that we have suffered a "near miss".

To our surprise, we also discover that there are six other ships in the convoy. Three of these, the destroyers "Hastie" and "Kimberly" and the minelayer "Abdiel" have been with us since Tobruk, and have troops on board. Evidently then, whilst we were embarking from the "Serenitas", these other ships were picking up troops from other points in the harbour.

Three cruisers and an escort destroyer have just arrived as an added precaution, and their arrival was, no doubt, instrumental in causing the sudden cessation of the enemy attack.

Word goes round the ship that tea and buttered scones were being handed out, so I join the rush. BUTTER.' A magic word! We've almost forgotten there is such a commodity. I got my fair share, and am horribly disappointed. I find that during my sojourn in Tobruk, I've cultivated rather a strong palate. The tea is insipid, - it lacks that fierce chlorinated taste of the Tobruk variety.

The butter, after months of rank margarine, is but a smear of tasteless grease. The scones are delightful. However, we are grateful for the handout, and make the most of it.

Mid-morning, and it is on again!

The air - raid alert gives warning of further hazards to come. Sailors race to action stations, gun crews elevate their guns, and once again we are herded below with instructions to stay put.

The harassed Jervis, her engines racing, changes course violently, pom-poms blast into action, and that strained intentness is again apparent in our every movement.

The action is short - lived however; the awful crashing of guns ceases abruptly, and we breathe freely once more. We are informed that this time, the planes were ours, and they have just sent us a wireless message, suggesting sardonically, that we should

learn to shoot; or at least that is what the sailors tell us, and we have no reason to disbelieve them.

We continue on our journey unmolested. The sea is tranquil, and of a deep sparkling blue. Over to our right (starboard) "Abdeil" glides swiftly along, white foam curling from her bows. The other ships, like watchful terriers, keep strictly to their formation. The sun shines hotly, and somewhere ahead is Alexandria.

The sun rides high in the heavens when, dead ahead, we sight land, and as we gradually make headway, we can distinguish the barrage balloons floating high over Alexandria harbour. We also see the many ships riding at anchor.

An officer informs us that we are now to "Dress Ship". Not being sailors, we are a bit vague as to what this "Dress Ship" business is; but we are soon put wise. We line up at the ship's rail, and then, extending the line right around the ship, we stand to attention. This is a new one on us, and we can see no future in it.

We soon do however, and we are thrilled to the back teeth, and, I guess, just a little embarrassed. As we approach the harbour, our convoy strings out into one long line, and we find that we have to pass down a sort of channel between the anchored ships.

Each ship is gaily bedecked with flags. We see the colours of all the allied navies, - British, Australian, Free French, and Indian; they are all represented. We see something else too! On each of these ships, we see the sailors, dressed in their tropic whites, and they are standing rigidly to attention, as they "Dress Ship".

We are now drawing level with the first ship, a Britisher. Clearly across the water we hear an order rapped out. The ship's siren blasts out a heart-warming welcome, and the sailors take off their white caps and give us three hearty, resounding cheers. This occurs right along the line as we pass each ship. In other parts of the harbour, cargo vessels, tankers, and shabby tramp steamers join in the welcome, and the sky resounds to the tumultuous welcome.

Never before have the troops been paid such an overwhelming tribute. The "**Rats**" stand there and take it.

It is the proudest moment of my life. I look along the line of my fellow "Rats" in their battle worn uniforms. They are as shabby a collection of men as you could wish to meet; particularly in comparison with the spotless whites of the welcoming sailors, but I could hug every mother's son of them, I am so proud!

This is one day in my life that will live for ever:

And so "Jervis" completes a triumphant arrival at Alexandria. We tie up at the wharf at 2.00 pm. Disembarkation is quickly completed, and we are lined up in ranks on the

dock. Rolls are called and answered; “gyppo” wharf labourers favour us with a toothy smile, and as we await our convoy of trucks, we hear on all sides, the bustling clamour of a busy city.

She's on again! Pick up packs .... put down packs.... pick up packs! The same old rigmarole.

Back in besieged Tobruk, our pals are waiting eagerly for the ships to return to bring them out too, but we know they are in good hands.

For us, however, the long weary months of the siege are over. We don't know what the future may have in store for us, but together with the officers and men of the British and Australian Navies, who, by their gallantry and courage along the hazardous stretches of the notorious "spud run", made the withstanding of the siege possible, we can look back to our sojourn in Tobruk with quiet satisfaction, secure in the knowledge of a job well done."



## CHAPTER 6

### SYRIA

After disembarking from H.M.S. Jervis, we proceeded to Amirya Staging Camp, where we spent the night before entraining the following day (24<sup>th</sup> August) for Palestine.

There, we camped for a few days at Beit Jirja, as a staging camp, before moving to Gaza Ridge on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Arrangements were made through the A.A.Q.M.G. (Col. Hurley) for as much leave as possible to be granted. Two periods of 3 days in Tel Aviv were arranged in addition to normal week-end leave.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> September, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group was inspected by the G.O.C., Sir Thomas Blamey, and the following day we moved camp back to Beit Jirja to prepare for our next move - to Syria.

On 19<sup>th</sup> September, Capt. McLellan, with an advance party, moved to Homs to be followed a few days later (on 22<sup>nd</sup>) by the main party. As we had no vehicles or equipment of our own at this stage, transport was provided by the M.T. Company. Capt. Friend remained behind with the rear party who were to proceed the following day.

Owing to transfers and sickness, this left the unit with only 2 M.O.s, - the C.O. and Maj. Rome, for our move.

We camped the first night at Affule, near the Palestine/Syrian border, in a grove of gum trees. I think the sight and smell of the gum trees made us all a little homesick.

Moving on the following day, we passed through a totally different type of countryside; with the barren Janine Hills, and the many villages with the peculiar "beehive" style of architecture. The houses all appeared to be built of mud and straw mixture.

We camped the second night just outside Damascus, and leave for the evening was given to enable us to have a quick look round this historic city. On the 24<sup>th</sup> September, we moved to Ras Baalbeck, where "A" Company remained, taking over the equipment of one company of the 173 Field Ambulance (British), to establish an A.D.S. under Maj. Rome, to service the 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalions who were camped in the area.

The remainder of the unit proceeded to Homs, where we were billeted with the 215<sup>th</sup> British Field Ambulance who were running an M.D.S. there. Over the next few days, we took over equipment and transport from the 173<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance, and on 27<sup>th</sup> September, being now fully operational again, took over the M.D.S from the 215<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance who moved out the following day.

At the time of taking over the M.D.S. there were 65 patients. There was also an M.I. room which serviced units camped in the area, and gave first aid treatment to local inhabitants. The building was originally an American school; and housed 3 medical wards, a surgical ward, an isolation ward, an officers' ward and theatre.

The M.D.S. also operated as a staging post for evacuations from Aleppo. After holding patients overnight, Australians were evacuated to 2/1st. C.C.S. at Beirut, and all others to 14th. C.C.S. at Damascus.



**M.D.S at Homs Syria 1941**

Homs is a very old town, and is a permanent base for troops of the French Foreign Legion. Leave into the town was freely available when not on duty, and this regular contact with civilisation proved very welcome after our relative isolation for many months.

The M.D.S. was expanded to accommodate about 180 beds. A dysentery ward was opened to remove dysentery cases from the medical wards. There was also, at this time, quite an epidemic of hepatitis among troops in the area; and complete wards had to be given over to hepatitis patients.

On the 1st. October, the A.D.M.S. warned the C.O. that the unit would move to Aleppo. "A" Company would move from Ras Baalbeck to run the M.D.S. until relieved, allowing the rest of the unit to move.



**View of Homs - Taken from M.D.S.**



**Waterwheel and Aquaduct – Hama – Syria 1941**

As malaria is prevalent in the Aleppo area, the C.O. visited the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, the 2/9<sup>th</sup>, 2/10<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> battalions warning them of the dangers, and instructing them in preventive precautions to be taken.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October, Capt. MacDonald and Capt. McLellan proceeded to Aleppo to make arrangements to take over the M.D.S. there from 189 Fd. Ambulance (British). The D.D.M.S, 1 Aust. Corps (Col. Johnstone) called to discuss with the C.O. the requirements to run a small hospital, as would be necessary in Aleppo. The unit, being under strength by one major, and one captain, it was suggested that a physician and a surgeon be sent as reinforcements.

The CO. maintained that as we already had several G.P.'s with experience in surgery, one captain with physician standing would be advisable, but that the major should be selected for command of a company, rather than for medical qualifications.

Capt. N.A. Walker reported for duty on 5th October, filling one of the vacancies.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance arrived by rail to take over, and were billeted with us during the transition period, one company being sent to Ras Baalbeck to take over the A.D.S. from "A" Company, and release them to move with the rest of the unit.

On 9<sup>th</sup> October, control of the M.D.S. at Homs was handed over to the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance; and the following day we entrained at Homs and moved to Aleppo, where we were billeted initially, with the 189<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

The M.D.S. at Aleppo occupied an Italian hospital, and an adjoining Italian school. These held 110 beds. In addition, a convalescent ward of 53 beds was established in a French school.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October, the unit took over control from the 189<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, who moved out, and we settled into our new accommodation. For sleeping quarters we took over a new block of flats across the road from the M.D.S. We were also given the use of tennis courts at a Catholic Club next door to the M.D.S. This proved very popular.

The C.O. spent several days visiting the various outposts, organising lines of evacuation for patients. Many of the roads were impassable in bad weather, and as the railway from Turkey to Bagdad passed through Aleppo, it was considered this could be used, and this was later implemented.

We were kept very busy running the hospitals during this period, as the following figures will show:

From 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> October, 205 patients were admitted to the M.D.S. at Homs. The M.D.S. at Aleppo held 123 patients when we took over, and from 12<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October a further 327 patients were admitted.

In early December, a number of nurses were attached to us, two S/nurses from 2/3 C.C.S. and one sister and 5 S/nurses from 7 A.G.H. Though they helped to lighten the work load, this move was not very popular with the nursing orderlies who felt they had managed quite well on their own.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December, the Ambulance Train commenced functioning, with Capt. Forsyth (attached from 2/13<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance) as O.C. Ambulance Train. This proved a very satisfactory method of evacuation.

On 21<sup>st</sup> December, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group held a sports meeting. The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance took part, acquitting ourselves very well, and winning 2 events. Dick Armitage won the 440 yds. and Ray Warfe winning the 880 yds. Dick really won the 220 yds. also, but in a disputed finish Dick fell over the winning line without breaking the tape, and was disqualified, as he did not break the tape. A ruling was later obtained from the V.A.L. which ruled the disqualification was incorrect.

On 24<sup>th</sup> December the unit put on a Christmas party at the convalescent ward for the local kindergarten children. The kids had a wonderful time, and so did the unit members involved.

Our unit Christmas dinner was also held at the convalescent ward. As is the usual custom, the officers and N.C.O.'s waited on the men, and the cooks put on a splendid meal.

For the first time for most of us, we experienced a "White Christmas". For several weeks, Aleppo was blanketed in snow. It looked pretty, but was awfully cold, and after the heat of the desert, we found great difficulty in adjusting to the change.

Probably because of this, many of the troops were hit with a very severe respiratory infection. Unfortunately, we lost two of our members, who died within a few days of taking ill.

Pte. Tim Shanasy died on 4<sup>th</sup> December, and L/Sgt. Peter Mason died on 13<sup>th</sup> December. Thus, the respiratory infection caused us more casualties in a few weeks than the Germans did in 5 months in Tobruk.

Maj. Plowman was attached to A.D.M.S 7 Aust. Div as D.A.D.M.S., and Maj. P.C. Thomas was attached in his absence. On 31<sup>st</sup> December, Maj. A.M. MacIntosh reported for duty, and took over as O.C. "B" Company.

For recreation, an inter-company football competition was conducted during this winter period.

Total number of patients admitted to hospitals run by the unit during 1941 amounted to 2196; from Pilastrino (1/2/41) to Aleppo (31/12/41). Of this total, 1277 patients were admitted at Homs and Aleppo, between 11<sup>th</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> December.

During this time, the political situation in the area was very uncertain. We were only about 10 miles from the Turkish border, and there was a very real possibility of the Turks joining the Axis Forces. For this reason, contingency plans were drawn up for the defence of the Turko/Syrian border.



**A Snow covered Courtyard at the Hospital  
Aleppo - Syria**

An appreciation at the time drew up the following objectives:

1. To maintain the fighting strength of the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group, during the occupation of defensive positions in the Aleppo area, and extending to the Turko/Syrian frontier, between Djish Ech Choghaur and Djerablous.
2. To evacuate casualties of 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group during their delaying action against an enemy advancing from the N.E., North and N.W. and during their withdrawal into the Tripoli Fortress.

In early January the unit was placed on 48 hours' notice to move to Palestine" for training". In view of the entry of America and Japan into the war following Pearl Harbour, we wondered what the implications were as far as our future was concerned.

On 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January, the isolation and convalescent wards were evacuated. "A" Company moved to the convalescent ward, and "B" Company moved to Idlib. On 10<sup>th</sup> January "B" Company was recalled from Idlib, and moved to the convalescent ward.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January, officers of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance arrived as an advance party to take over the Aleppo M.D.S. The balance of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and were billeted with us.



### **Ready for Christmas Party at Convalescent Hospital Aleppo 1941**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> January, our advance party, under Maj. MacIntosh, left for Palestine, followed on the 17<sup>th</sup> by the main body of the unit, which proceeded as far as Tripoli, where we camped for the night. The following day, we moved as far as Acre, and arrived at Julis on the 19<sup>th</sup> and were warned of a possible further move.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, we were attached to "STEPSISTER FORCE", and placed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flight. A few days later, all vehicles were handed in to ordinance ready to move, and we waited impatiently to see what the move would be.

Unfortunately, during the period of waiting, we lost another of our members. On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> February, L/Sgt. Tony Fleming (Dental Corps attached) was found,

dead at the bottom of a newly-dug drain. Apparently, while returning to his tent in the dark the previous night, he had fallen into the drain, breaking his neck.



**Dick Arnitage wins the 400 metres at Aleppo - Syria**

His funeral, the following day, was a sad way to end the Middle East phase of our war service.



## CHAPTER 7

### RETURN to AUSTRALIA

Towards the end of 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and their rapid advance through Malaya and other areas, it was evident that the war was threatening Australia, and neighbouring areas.

Britain and Australia agreed that Australian Forces should be diverted to resist Japanese aggression, and thus, the Middle East phase was closing for most of the A.I.F.

This movement, codenamed "Stepsister", began on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1942, and from that date onwards, convoys carried the troops in 3 "flights". The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance left in the second flight, on board the "Nieuw Amsterdam" on 11<sup>th</sup> February, wondering where our next destination would be. Could it be Australia or more likely, Malaya to help the 8<sup>th</sup> Division.

From our direction of travel, it was soon evident that our first port of call would be Bombay, but news received en route of the rapid progress by the Japanese made us realise that the situation was desperate, and our future was in the melting pot.

On arrival at Bombay, we were disembarked, together with all our stores, and were transhipped on 22<sup>nd</sup> February into smaller vessels. The main body of the unit boarded the "Takliwa", but other detachments were allocated to the "Dilwara", the "Nevasa", "Clydebank" and the "Tai Yin", sailing the following day to Colombo. No shore leave was given at Colombo, possibly because of the urgency of the situation.

The "Stepsister Force" was moving in 5 convoys. A report dated 17<sup>th</sup> February, placed them as follows:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Convoy: | Orcades had reached Batavia.  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Convoy: | 21 <sup>st</sup> Brigade Group, - Between Bombay and Colombo.   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Convoy: | 25 <sup>th</sup> Brigade Group, - Due Colombo 18 <sup>th</sup> February.                                    |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Convoy: | 18 <sup>th</sup> Brigade Group, 2 days sail west of Bombay, but facing transhipment which will take 5 days. |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Convoy: | 3 days sail west of Colombo.  |

On 15<sup>th</sup> February, the "Orcades", travelling ahead of the A.I.F. convoy, arrived at Osthaven in S/W Sumatra. 2,000 troops were disembarked, but before anything further could be done, an order was received for the troops to re-embark and proceed to Batavia.

Singapore fell on 15<sup>th</sup> February; Palembang on 16<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, the remaining ships of the first two flights of the "Stepsister" movement were at sea, with the destination of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions in doubt.

It was evident that the plan of using the A.I.F. in the Netherlands East Indies had been frustrated by the rapid movements of the Japanese. As the risk of landing the troops in Java was too great, Gen. Wavell directed that the Australian convoys be re-directed to Burma.

This was strongly supported by the British and American military and political leaders, and pending the approval of the Australian government, Mr. Churchill sanctioned the diversion of the "Stepsister" convoy to Burma.

On leaving Colombo, our convoy was headed for Java, but when within sight of land, word was received that Java had fallen to the Japanese and the convoy ahead of us had landed into the hands of the enemy, and were taken prisoner. The convoy then headed north, apparently towards Burma.

At this stage, the entire group of convoys became a "political football", between PM Churchill and Pres. Roosevelt on one side, and Australian PM Curtin on the other.

The Advisory War Council considered that the 7<sup>th</sup> Division should go to Burma, and Churchill cabled P.M. Curtin for his consent. The Australian War Cabinet insisted the whole A.I.F. be returned to Australia. P.M. Curtin cabled to this effect on 17<sup>th</sup> February. During the next six days, a huge volume of cables flew back and forth.

On 18<sup>th</sup> February, Gen. Wavell recommended that the whole Australian Corps be diverted to Burma to prevent the Japanese advance towards India.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, P.M. Curtin cabled P.M. Churchill as follows: (in part).

***"We feel a primary obligation to save Australia, not only for itself, but to preserve it as a base for the war against Japan. In the circumstances, it is quite impossible to reverse our decision.***

***Our Chief of General Staff advises that although your cable of 20<sup>th</sup> February refers to the leading division only, the fact is that owing to the loading of the flights, it is impossible at the present time to separate the two divisions, and the destination of all flights will be governed by that of the first flight. This fact reinforces our decision."***

That day, Churchill informed Curtin that the convoys had been turned about, would be refuelled at Colombo, and proceed to Australia.

Churchill claimed that the early diversion of the convoy to Burma was necessary as there was insufficient fuel to reach Burma if the convoy had continued towards

Australia. He then claimed that there was insufficient fuel to reach Australia, after having been diverted to Burma. Re-fuelling then, was necessary at Colombo, when the convoy was ultimately diverted to Australia.

The convoy arrived at Colombo for refuelling on 1<sup>st</sup> March, and refuelling took several days. The harbour at this time was packed with shipping of all kinds, - troopships, battleships, destroyers, submarines, hospital ships, refugee' ships of all types from Singapore and the Indies.

We eventually left Colombo on 6<sup>th</sup> March, escorted by the battleship "Ramilles" and the H.M.A.S. "Hobart", arriving at Fremantle on 20<sup>th</sup> March and leaving on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our escort launched an attack on a submarine the following day, but there was no certainty of destruction, and we continued on our way, arriving at Port Adelaide on 27<sup>th</sup> where we disembarked, and travelled to a camp at Sandy Creek (near Gawler), where we stayed for about two weeks.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April, an advance party under Capt. McLellan left by rail for our next camp at Tenterfield (N.S.W.), followed on 12<sup>th</sup> April by a road party under Capt. Lyne.



**Nieu Amsterdam in Suez Harbour**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> April, the first portion of the main party left by rail from Mile End, while the leave party under Maj. Blair moved to Victoria for 7 days leave, by rail from Sandy Creek station. On the 18<sup>th</sup> the remainder of the unit left for Tenterfield.



**Battleship HMS “Ramillies” - Colombo Harbour**



**Hospital Ship with refugees from Singapore  
Colombo Harbour 1942**

Those who went on leave, reported back to Royal Park at the end of their leave, and were sent direct to Tenterfield, where the unit was camped on the outskirts of the town, taking over a house alongside the camp area for use as an M.D.S. With the addition of extra tent wards, this M.D.S. was expanded to 72 beds.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May, Capt. Walker, with 29 OR's from "B" Company, proceeded to Glen Innes to take over a C.D.S. from the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Field Amb. When Maj. MacIntosh returned from home leave, he proceeded to Glen Innes to take charge.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May, Lt. Col. Green returned from home leave, and was appointed C.O. of 11<sup>th</sup> A.G.H, marching out on 18<sup>th</sup>. All members of the unit were sorry to see him go. Being our original commanding officer, it seemed like the end of an era.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May, Lt. Col. J.S. Crakanthorp arrived to take over command of the unit.

Once again we were on the move, and, on 17<sup>th</sup> May, a recce party of 7 OR's under Capt. Lavarack left for Kilcoy (Qld) to locate a suitable camp site in the area. On 20<sup>th</sup> an advance party of one officer and 130 OR's departed to help prepare the site, and on 24<sup>th</sup> the main body left for Kilcoy. Due to convoy delays, it was necessary to bivouac near Gatton overnight, arriving at Kilcoy at noon the following day, where we were met by Capt. Lavarack, and found the tents pitched, and the M.D.S. functioning in a nearby house on the outskirts of the town.

From here, patients were evacuated by motor ambulance convoy or ambulance train to C.C.S's at Esk or Ipswich, or to Toowoomba where an A.G.H. was set up in the high school buildings.

During early June, a reshuffle of officers took place, with Capt. Lyne going to 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion as R.M.O. and Capt. Walker going to 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment. Capt. H.J. Edelman joined us from the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June, "A" Company left for a 3 day exercise near Harlin, and on 29<sup>th</sup> H.Q. and "A" Companies took part in a six day brigade exercise near Goomeri, while "B" Company ran the M.D.S.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, we suffered a further fatal casualty. One of our ambulances, taking part in the exercise, overturned, and Pte Albie Ward, the ambulance orderly, was seriously injured. He was taken to hospital at Nanango, where he died from a fractured skull.

Pte Ward was accorded a military funeral on 4th. July, and was buried in the Kilcoy Cemetery. For many years, the local residents tended his grave, decorating it with flowers.

General training proceeded over the next few weeks, toughening us up and getting us fit. Quite a lot of sport was played, and football, baseball, and basketball matches were arranged with other units in the area.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August, the A.D.M.S. held a conference, re the projected movement of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, and within a few days the unit began to move.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August, the C.O. Capt. Lavarack, and 15 OR's moved out as advance party on H.T. "Both". The following day, Capt. Edelman and 8 OR's moved out and embarked on the "Van Heemskerk" and on the 10<sup>th</sup> August, the main body moved out under Maj. MacIntosh and embarked on H.T. "Van Der Lyn", and headed for Milne Bay on the South-east tip of New Guinea for our first encounter with the Japanese.

## CHAPTER 8

### MILNE BAY, BUNA & SANANANDA

In June 1942, the decision was made to deny the Japanese the use of Milne Bay as a base, and a small party began to construct an airstrip in the Waigani area. In July, advance parties of the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, under Brigadier J. Field began to arrive. The 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, under Lt. Col. J.M. Blair (formerly of 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd. Amb.) was assigned the task of providing medical cover for the brigade.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August, Maj. Gen. C.A. Clowes went to Milne Bay in command of MILNE FORCE, with Col. G.B.G. Maitland as A.D.M.S.

Under depressing conditions of the wet season, the advance party of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance arrived on 15<sup>th</sup> August, and moved to a site in the Waigani area, near the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and an American station hospital.

Roads were almost impassable after heavy rain, and only 4 WD vehicles were satisfactory. Capt. Lavarack and Capt. Edelman arranged with ANGAU for a party of 30 natives to live in the unit area while they built native style huts in which to run a M.D.S. Notification was received from the A.D.M.S. that the unit would have the role of caring for infectious diseases, and possibly a convalescent hospital.

The main body of the unit arrived in Milne Bay on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and moved to the camp area the following day. On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> torrential rain fell; the whole camp area was awash, with the two main fords impassable. Every available man was used trying to drain the camp area, and erect the remainder of the tents. Due to the water-logged nature of the ground, great difficulty was experienced in digging slit trenches and latrines. Further heavy rain over the next few days compounded the problem.

On 24<sup>th</sup> August, Japanese planes raided the area. Our planes intercepted them, and reports credited them with shooting down four of the enemy. The following day, news was received that enemy troops had landed. Bombing and shelling could be heard during the night, and at 0200 hrs on 26<sup>th</sup> August, the A.D.M.S. telephoned to warn of parachutists trying to land in the Milne Bay area. One company was to be ready to move immediately. "B" Company immediately packed, ready to move, and waited all night by trucks borrowed from the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

At 0800 hrs, we were advised that Capt. Osolvsky of the U.S. Forces has been placed in command of the defence of the Waigani area.

On 27<sup>th</sup> August, Lt. Col Crakanthorp visited Milne Force H.Q. and received instructions that the unit was to function as a hospital, and was to be ready to receive patients within 24 hours. At 1600 hrs, the first patients arrived. At 2200 hrs, we were advised that Capt. Lyne, R.M.O. of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and 2 A.A.M.C. orderlies had

been wounded in action. Capt. Verco and 2 orderlies were immediately despatched to the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion to replace the wounded.

On 28<sup>th</sup> Aug. Capt. R.A.G. Holmes was sent to the ford at the end of Route 4, to establish a light section relay station to change patients over from ambulances to 4 WD 3 ton trucks. Battle casualties begin to arrive, and we are advised that Capt. Lyne had died from his wounds.

At 2200hrs on 28<sup>th</sup> August, an alarm was sounded by the U.S. hospital (2 rifle shots repeated three times). The emergency withdrawal procedure was put into operation, with a party under Capt. Edelman remaining behind to look after the patients. One hour later, the "all clear" was sounded, and all personnel returned to their duties.

At 0200 hrs on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 25 medical patients arrived in a 3 ton 4 WD truck, which had to be towed in by a U.S. engineers' caterpillar tractor, the roads being impassable even to 4 WD vehicles.

Later that day, instructions were received from the A.D.M.S. for "B" Company to move forward to form an A.D.S. at brigade H.Q. Capt. J. Lavarack was placed in charge of "B" Company. The C.O. moved with them to Milne Force H.Q. The roads were in shocking condition, and the vehicles were bogged, and had to be towed out seven times en route.

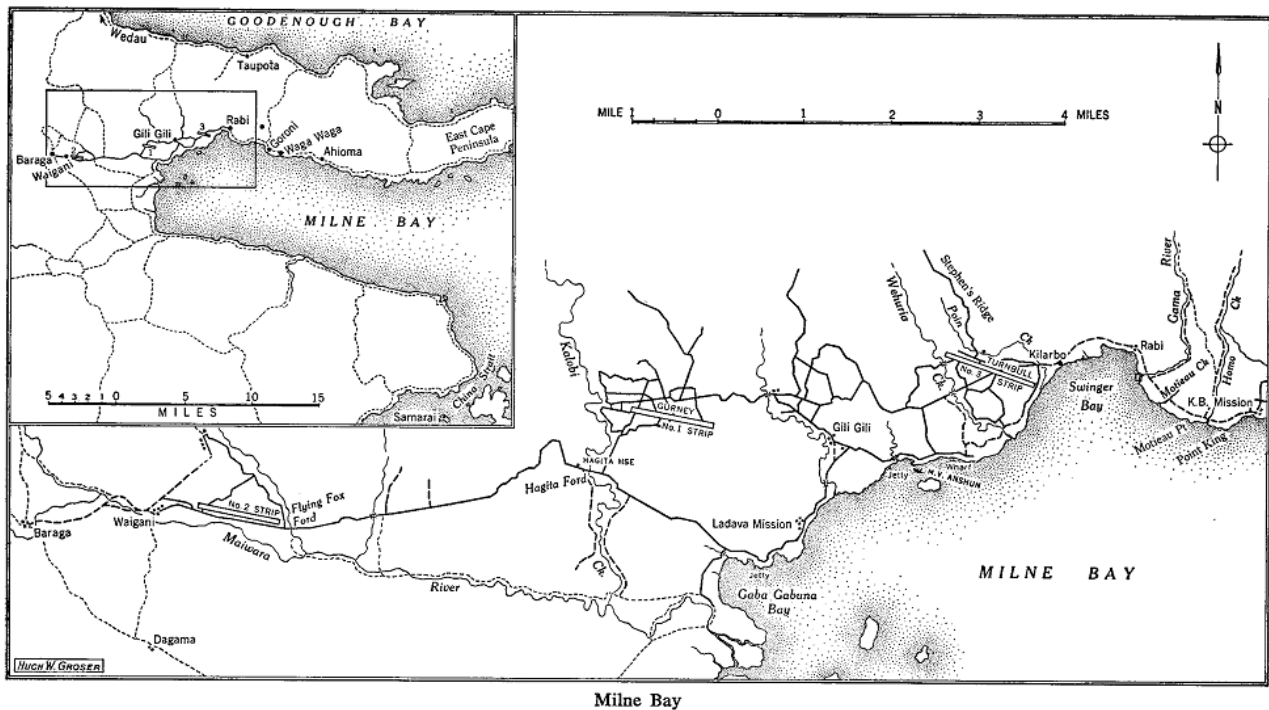
The relay post at the ford was taken over by an "A" Company detail under S/Sgt Raine.

Rainwater catchments had to be established, as water supply was difficult, while creek water was used for cooking and washing. The hospital had by now been extended to 99 beds, with wards being accommodated in native style huts, brigaded U.S. style tents and a marquee. The operating theatre was accommodated in an E.P.I.P. tent

On 30<sup>th</sup> August, Capt. Lavarack was promoted to Major. The A.D.M.S. advised that, as the roads were impassable between 10th. C.C.S. and the 2/5<sup>th</sup> M.D.S. we were to expect no further patients for the time being.

On Sept, 1<sup>st</sup> plans were discussed for the evacuation of patients from "B" Company A.D.S. at Gili Gili. The 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion had established its R.A.P. at Rabi. Maj. Lavarack, Capt. Holmes and stretcher bearers had followed the battalion, and evacuated by stretcher. Later, it was found more convenient to evacuate by water, and a ketch, with stretcher bearers under A/Lt. Leeder, called at Rabi to collect two wounded. During the evacuation, the Japanese attacked, and eventually 12 patients were brought back.





Milne Bay

This water transport of wounded was found to be satisfactory, and it was decided to continue it unless R.A.P.'s moved inland, when light sections would be established at either Rabi or K.B. Mission about 2 miles south east.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September, the C.O. and Capt. McLellan started off on foot to try to reach the "B" Company A.D.S. at Gili Gili. A 3 ton 4 WD truck also started out, but could not reach the ford. When they reached the ford relay post, it was found they were holding 5 battle casualties who were rescued when a 10 wheel truck attempted to cross the ford. Only 3 inches of the top of the cabin was now showing above 7 feet of water!

By the 4<sup>th</sup> September, hospital accommodation had been expanded to 148 beds, of which 127 were occupied. Many cases of malaria were now being admitted, and the suppressive dosage of quinine had to be doubled.

The A.D.M.S. phoned on 5<sup>th</sup> September to say 38 patients were to come from 10th. C.C.S., but as the roads were impassable, stretcher bearer teams would have to be sent to form relay posts.

The following day, 24 stretcher bearers under Sgt. G. Muir, helped transfer patients on board the hospital ship "Manunda" for evacuation to Australia. That night, a Japanese cruiser and destroyer entered the harbour and turned it's searchlights on the Manunda, which was anchored out in the harbour, brightly lit. Everyone held their breath, in anticipation of a catastrophe; but the Japanese respected the Red Cross and did not fire.

The "Anshun", tied up at the wharf, was not so lucky however, and a couple of broadsides sank it at the wharf, where it rolled over, so that one side was exposed above water. The exposed side served as a wharf for the rest of the war.

There is an interesting side-light to this episode. I was one of 10 members of the unit who travelled to Milne Bay on the "Anshun" after having been left behind in hospital in Australia. The "Anshun" was escorted by H.M.A.S. "Arunta" on the voyage to New Guinea, and was halted in the lee of the island of Samarai, when approaching Milne Bay. The "Arunta" pulled alongside and gave the following order over the "loud hailer", to preserve radio silence; "There is a Japanese cruiser in the vicinity, and we are going to look for it. Remain here off Samarai overnight. Under no circumstances should you enter port while the cruiser is in the area."

Once the "Arunta" had left, the "Anshun", ignoring these orders, continued on its way to Milne Bay, tying up at the wharf at Gili Gili, and was sunk a couple of hours later. Fortunately, all troops had disembarked prior to the arrival of the cruiser. However, "B" Company stretcher bearers evacuated one killed and 12 wounded after the shelling, and were complimented by the captain of the ship on their efficiency.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September, the C.O. went on board the Manunda, to inspect it, but had to leave in a hurry when there was an air-raid, and the "Manunda" had to move out. During this raid, several bombs were dropped on the airstrip, resulting in 3 killed and 15 wounded.

As the Japanese had now been cleared out of the North Arm area, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade was withdrawn. "B" Company still remained under 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade command, but went into reserve, apart from leaving the light section at Gili Gili pier.

The 2/1<sup>st</sup> C.C.S. had arrived on the "Manunda" and set up in a rubber plantation about 3 miles from the 2/5<sup>th</sup> M.D.S.

The A.D.M.S. congratulated Major Lavarack and "B" Company on their work during the action.

On 25<sup>th</sup> September, Sgt. Muir reported back, after having been attached to "C" Company of 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion during a trip to Normanby Is by destroyer to clear out a pocket of Japanese. Many prisoners were taken, including eight wounded.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, the "A" Company light section at the ford was flooded out after ten hours of torrential rain. With waist-high water on both sides of the ford, all gear had to be stowed in the 3-ton truck to keep it out of the water. Bridges were washed away, and though the "Manunda" was waiting to sail, no evacuations were possible, as the roads were impassable.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, Lt. Col. Crakanthorp was admitted to hospital with malaria, and Major MacIntosh took over administration of command of the unit during his absence.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October, a detachment of 20 OR's under Capt. Edelman was attached to 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion for duty with WEDAU-TAUPOTA detachment.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> October, the unit held a dinner, followed by a concert, to celebrate the second anniversary of our sailing. Also on this day, we received orders from the A.D.M.S. concerning detachments to be provided for "DRAKE FORCE", an operation planned to recapture Goodenough Island, approximately 70 miles north-west of Milne Bay.

A Japanese detachment from Buna had been seen landing on Goodenough Island. The R.A.A.F. attacked the landing site, destroying their barges, and stranding the landing party, who were now being supplied by submarine.

The 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion was being despatched to recapture the island, and clear out the Japanese. Two detachments, one of 14 men from "A" Company and 2 from H.Q. Company under Capt. J.L.D. Scott, and one of 6 men from "B" Company under Capt. R.A.G. Holmes, left to take up duties with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion as part of "Drake Force".

For details of this action I feel that I can do no better than to reproduce the reports from both Capt. Scott and Capt. Holmes:

## **REPORT ON ACTIVITY OF "B" COY PERSONNEL ATTACHED TO DRAKEFORCE**

### **1. PERSONNEL**

#### **Nursing Orderlies**

Capt. HOLMES

Cpl. ELLIS

Pte. FOWLER )

Cpl. HEWETT V.R.

Pte. MARRIOTT

Pte. BLACKBURN

Pte. MILES B.D.

Sgt. HUGHES C.J. and 4 bearers from 2/12 Bn.

### **2. OPERATION**

These details supported one Coy 2/12 Bn, and travelled by HMAS "STUART", disembarking at TALEBA at 0130 hrs. 23rd Oct 42. The Coy moved off to meet the JAPS in KILIA village at 0300 hrs, and attacked at 0610 hrs. The action lasted until

1045 hrs, when the Coy withdrew 3/4 mile as neither contact with Bn by wireless nor evidence of its presence through sound of gun-fire could be established, and a considerable force of Japs was free for counter-attack.

Perimeter defence was formed and a message was sent for the ketch in TALEBA BAY to come round with reserve ammunition and evacuate wounded. When a dinghy had rowed ashore, the Japs opened fire with heavy machine gun, and the ketch was forced to retire-with several holes in her. The Japs were observed to be digging mortar trenches, and since the Coy had no means of digging in, it was decided to withdraw a further 2 miles where we disembarked on two ketches at about 1700 hrs, and travelled to MUD BAY joining Capt. Scott's party with H.Q. Coy of Bn on the morning of 24 Oct. 42.

The return trip to MILNE BAY on HMAS "WARREGO" was made on 29-30 Oct. I should like to express our appreciation of the extraordinarily generous hospitality of Lt.Comd. Inglis and his crew.

### **3. OWN CASUALTIES**

Ptes. BLACKBURN and MILES going forward to bring back wounded, received a burst from an enemy mortar. MILES was killed instantly, and BLACKBURN died a few minutes after being brought back to RAP.

Pte. MARRIOTT received 2 GSW's in the back shortly before this.

Sgt. Hughes of 2/12 Bn. received SW's of arm and back.

### **4 CARE OF WOUNDED**

Extremely fine work was done by all stretcher bearers in bringing back to RAP thirteen casualties. This was of great assistance to the morale of the infantry, who saw that the wounded were brought out of the line in the shortest possible time, in spite of continual machine gun and mortar fire. Pte MARRIOTT, despite his wounds, had to be forbidden to continue his work.

The work of the nursing orderlies, though less spectacular, was very good. Their conditions were bad, and they were continually under machine gun fire in a not very well protected spot.

The evacuation of the wounded was difficult as there were more stretcher cases than stretchers, and both time and opportunity were lacking for improvisation. Here Cpl. HEWETT showed great stamina by carrying a very big man on his back over the 3/4 mile to our first perimeter, and later, a considerable part of the further distance back to the ketch, at times under fire. An impossible task for the five bearers - the evacuation of 11 wounded (2 having died of the 13) along 3 miles of sandy beach was managed with the help of the infantry.

Next morning, the casualties were despatched from MUD BAY on the "McLAREN KING". While yet in the bay, the ketch was strafed by 3 enemy aircraft. Sgt. Hughes was amongst those re-wounded, so that their care was the entire responsibility of Pte. MARRIOTT. By his courageous example and prompt medical attention, I am told, he further impressed those who had witnessed, the day before, the job he had more than well accomplished."

(Signed) R.A.G. Holmes

Capt. O/C "B" COY

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### **REPORT ON MEDICAL SERVICES ATTACHED TO DRAKE FORCE**

Personnel from 2/5 Aust. Fd Amb: (1 Offr, 4 Nursg Ord. 12 OR's)

Capt. J.L.D. SCOTT	A/Cpl CUSHING F.H.	Pte BECKWITH R.D.
	Pte. SQUIRE L.R.W.	Pte. CHURCHILL M.J.
A/Sgt BOURCHIER J.E.	A/CPL DAVIS J.	Cpl. DUNCAN D. McL
L/Cpl FORBES A.R.	Pte. BALBOMBE D.	Pte. BARRIE N.C.
Pte .LANG H.C.	Pte. STACK W.C.	Pte. SCHWEBSCH H.A.
Pte. WARD H.A.	Pte. WILLIAMS W.	Pte. WALKER H.F.

#### ***INTENTION***

To establish an ADS on the beach and to evacuate wounded and sick from GOODENOUGH ISLAND.

#### **OPERATION**

Party embarked with main body 2/12 Aust Inf Bn on HMAS ARUNTA at 1000 hrs 22 Oct 42, from New Wharf GILI GILI, and disembarked 2100 hrs 22 Oct at MUD BAY, GOODENOUGH ISLAND, in rear of main body of Bn. After bridge-head had been established without opposition, two stretcher parties of 4 men each under A/Sgt BOURCHIER were sent forward with remainder of Bn to aid in the evacuation of wounded from forward areas to the beach. A light ADS was then established in a native hut within the perimeter of the defence. Two small running streams close to the area were both tested, and gave good results with the Horrocks Box. These streams both ran through unoccupied native villages and gardens, and all water taken for drinking purposes was chlorinated. Message received from forward area 1900 hrs 23 Oct stated that up to that time their casualties were 4 killed and 5 wounded, but that they were unable to evacuate wounded to ADS.

Party from TALEGA BAY arrived in MUD BAY 2400 hrs 23 Oct with Capt Holmes and 4 OR's from 2/5 Aust Fd Amb. This party, on receiving no response from the beach, left and sheltered for the night in a neighbouring bay. At 0700 hrs 24 Oct they returned to MUD BAY and transferred 10 wounded to the "McLaren King". They

reported 2/5 Aust Fd Amb casualties as 2 killed and one wounded. I evacuated 3 sick from the beach to the "McLaren King" at the same time. The wounded were in fairly good condition, except one man who was given 1000 ccs saline intravenously. The "McLaren King" left MUD BAY at approximately 1030 hrs and message was sent by wireless to GILI GILI to expect arrival of wounded 2400 hrs 23 Oct 42. Message was also sent by the "McLaren King" to ADMS MILNE FORCE and CO 2/5 Aust Fd Amb.

Capt Holmes and party of 3 OR's were then landed at MUD BAY and remained there for remainder of operation. While leaving the bay, the McLaren King was strafed by MG fire from 3 enemy raiders. A launch was sent out to assess damage, but the ketch did not stop, and so no information could be gained regarding casualties.

Communication with forward party was very scant and difficult to maintain, so that we could not gain any information regarding further casualties. At 2200 hrs 24 Oct 42, 11 cases as follows were brought to ADS by native carriers and stretcher bearers: 5 lying wounded, 3 walking wounded, 3 sick. These cases were transferred to the Minerva and "Tieryo" with 3 sick from rear party. One nursing orderly was sent with this party and ships left MUD BAY at 2400 hrs 24 Oct.

In view of the possibility of an attack on our own perimeter, a tent was erected on the beach and medical equipment was split between the two positions. Most of the Field Ambulance personnel were armed at this stage for self-protection, as the perimeter defence was of extremely small diameter.

At 2000 hrs 25 Oct, 2 sick were evacuated from forward party. These were held in the ADS. forward party arrived back at 1600 hrs 26 Oct without further casualties.

All remaining Field Ambulance personnel with the exception of two nursing orderlies, who were left with the Bn, left MUD BAY. 8 SBs under A/Sgt Bouchier left on "Tieryo", the remainder with 14 sick on HMAS "Warrego" and arrived at GILI GILI at 1030 hrs 30th Oct 42.

**(Signed) J.L.D. Scott Capt**

**2/5 Aust Fd Amb.**

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Meanwhile the M.D.S. was being expanded to 300 beds. Arrangements were made for a team of 30 natives to work for several weeks building additional native style huts to accommodate the extra patients.

Further light sections were being organised to take part in other campaigns being carried out using Milne Bay as a base. A section of 2 nursing orderlies and 4 stretcher bearers under Capt. K.J.M. King was attached to "HAT FORCE" leaving on 2<sup>nd</sup>

November, while Capt. Holmes with 2 nursing orderlies and 6 stretcher bearers was attached to "DRAKE FORCE" leaving on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November, Capt. King arrived back from "Hat Force" with a dislocated shoulder, and was replaced by Capt. Edelman, with a further 3 OR's. On 17<sup>th</sup> November, Lt. Col. Crakanthorp was evacuated to Australia from the 2/1<sup>st</sup> C.C.S. with "P.U.O. for investigation". Maj. MacIntosh to admin Command.

A further light section was requested, to be attached to "Hanson Force"; Capt. Scott and 7 OR's were selected, and left on 30<sup>th</sup> November; and on 12<sup>th</sup> December, Maj. Lavarack with 11 OR's moved out for attachment to "HAMMER FORCE", and was joined a few days later by Lieut. Raine. On 21<sup>st</sup> December, Cpl. F.W. Ellis with 6 men, left to join the "DRAKE FORCE" section.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> December, Major MacIntosh was admitted to the M.D.S. as a patient with M.T. Malaria, leaving Capt. Edelman acting as adjutant.

With so many light sections and detachments serving in different areas, we were a very small unit to celebrate Christmas Day. However, we did our best to maintain tradition. Christmas dinner was served in the men's mess; and as usual, the officers and sergeants waited on the men, having their dinner later. The cooks put on quite a spread under difficult circumstances, as the following menu will show: Chicken Broth; Roast Ham and Chicken, with Roast Potatoes, Baked Onions and Cabbage; followed by Plum Pudding with Brandy Sauce. Christmas greetings were sent to, and received from, all neighbouring units.

Statistics for patients treated by the Unit for 1942, were as follows:

Aleppo	1	-	15 January	51 patients
Tenterfield	14 Apr,	-	23 May	438
Kilcoy	22 May	-	10 August	1,228
Waigani	28 Aug.	-	31 December	1,458
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,175 Patients</b>

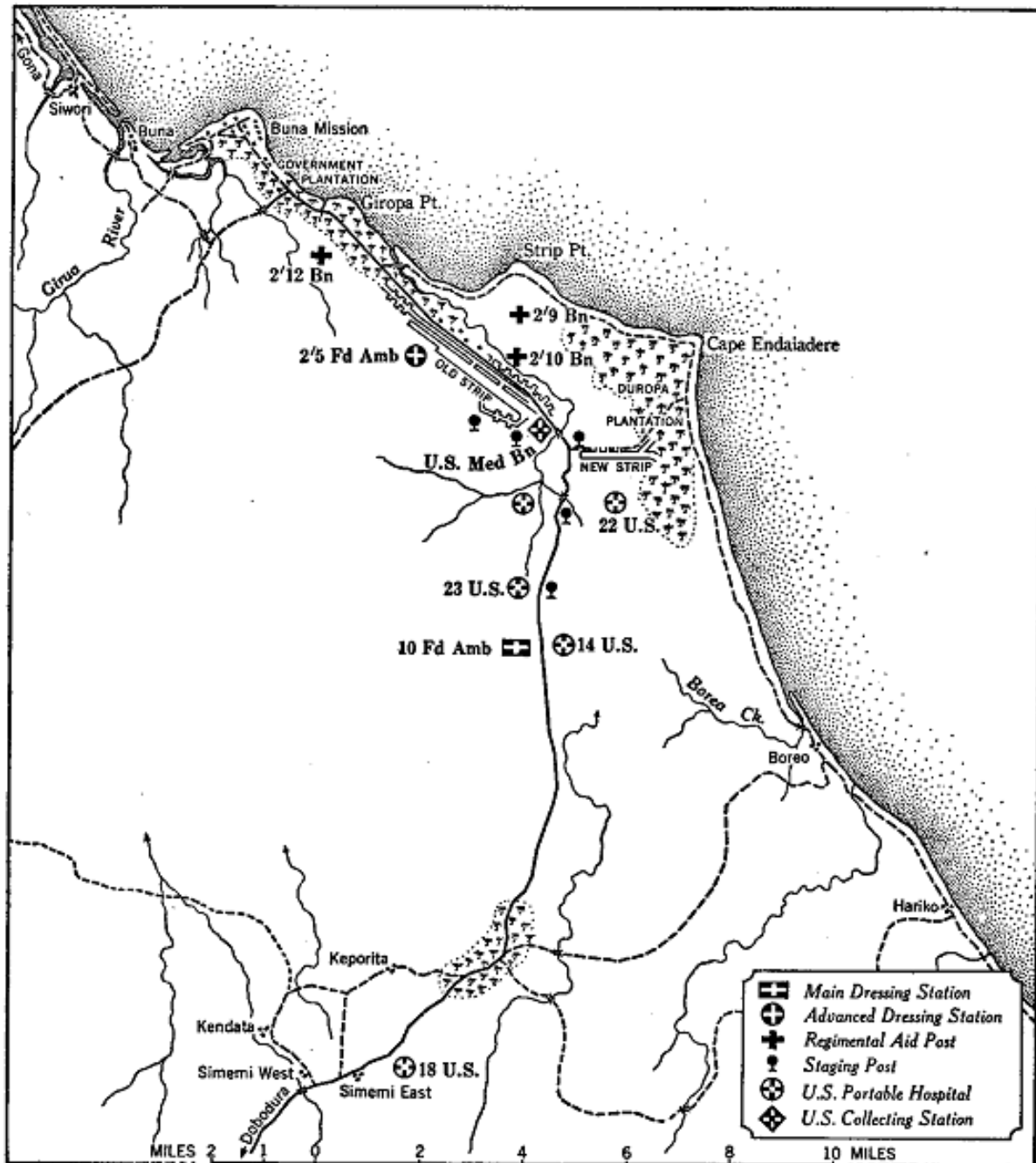
These figures do not include sick and wounded passing through, or receiving treatment at light sections and A.D.S's, or treated at sea. Of this total, 238 patients were evacuated from Milne Bay to Australia.

Meanwhile, the centre of action had moved to the BUNA/SANANANDA area, on the North East coast of New Guinea, and it was to this region that "HAMMER FORCE" was headed.

Maj. Lavarack's section left Milne Bay with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 12<sup>th</sup> December, on the corvette "COLAC", arriving at CAPE ENDIADERE around midnight on 13<sup>th</sup> December. Disembarkation of the Battalion Command Group had commenced, when enemy aircraft dropped flares, and reports were received from ashore of a superior

enemy naval force only a few hours away. This caused the landing to be abandoned; and the corvettes retired down the coast to an inlet in the CAPE TUFU region, where they spent the night.

The following night, the corvettes returned up the coast to ORO BAY, and our detachment disembarked with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and began a march up the coast. Cpl. J. Davis with one OR was left behind to bring up the equipment. The march took 24 hours continuous travelling through jungle, and included fording several streams up to shoulder depth.



Buna area



Many of the troops were exhausted, and some fell out with high temperatures and symptoms of malaria. These had to be given quinine, and left to follow in groups. The battalion group reached HAIRIKO about 2200 hrs, and bivouacked for the night. Major Lavarack was appointed S.M.O for the area.

It was obvious that evacuation of casualties in the area would rely heavily on co-operation of units in the area, particularly the American 14 and 22 portable hospitals. A message was received that the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance with a surgical team would form an A.D.S. at DOBODURA. This involved a carry of about 10 miles of jungle track, which the Americans were accomplishing with native bearers provided by A.N.G.A.U., using two staging posts.

It was decided to set up beside the U.S. 14<sup>th</sup> Portable Hospital, and the following plan was proposed:

1. Cpl. Davis and bearer squad to be stationed at the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion R.A.P. attached to R.M.O.
2. Cpl. Davis to organise evacuation of battalion casualties by all returning jeeps and bren carriers to 2/5<sup>th</sup> A.D.S. - about 500 yards. American stretcher bearers to be called on in an emergency.
3. Casualties to be evacuated by returning transport as available from A.D.S. to 22 U.S. Portable Hospital (about 3/4 mile), and taken over by native bearers in stages to cover the 10 miles to Dobodura aerodrome.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, the equipment was brought up from Hairiko. It was hoped that Capt. Scott and party would arrive before zero hour, so that Capt. Scott could help with surgery.

The attack on Cape Endaidere was launched on 18<sup>th</sup> December, and approximately 120 casualties passed through the A.D.S. on the first day. Jeeps were very useful, and the American bearers were of great assistance. The worst cases were operated on at the 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Portable Hospital. Maj. Johnson and Capt. Copeland with a detachment from the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and Maj. Yeates with a surgical team arrived from Dobodura.

Capt. Scott, Lt. Raine, and party of 15 OR's, and Capt. Edelman arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> and Lt. Raine with a bearer squad went forward to the 2/9<sup>th</sup> R.A.P. and took over liaison with the R.M.O., and organisation of evacuations from Cpl. Davis. He carried on this work tirelessly for the rest of the action.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Capt. McGregor (R.M.O. 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion) was wounded and Capt. Scott took over the R.A.P. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Col. Palmer of 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance

arrived, and took over as S.M.O. from Maj Lavarack. On 24<sup>th</sup> Capt. Copeland of 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance relieved Capt. Scott at the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, Capt. Holmes and seven OR's arrived from Goodenough Island to join the detachment. The A.D.S. was taken over by the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

Maj. Lavarack's section was now augmented by the fusion of the three groups from the north coast and islands, to form almost company strength, - 3 M.O.'s, 1 bearer Officer, and 32 OR's:

(1) Maj. Lavarack and 10 OR's from Milne Bay with 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (arrived Buna 15<sup>th</sup> December).

(2) Capt. Scott and Lieut. Raine and 15 OR's from Wanegila and Porlock with 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion (arrived Buna 17<sup>th</sup> December).

(3) Capt. Holmes and 7 OR's from Goodenough Island with 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion (arrived Buna 30<sup>th</sup> December).

On 31<sup>st</sup> December, reconnaissance was made of the area with the view of forming a forward post in support of 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion who were to attack Giropa Point, and to evacuate to 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance A.D.S. A section of Maj. Lavarack, Capt. Scott, Lieut. Raine and 32 OR's moved up to a position south of the main strip, and set up two tents as a staging post.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943, the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion attacked Giropa Point. Over 100 casualties were passed through this section in 24 hours. Pte J. Rhodes of "A" Company was killed while actually in the 2/12<sup>th</sup> R.A.P.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January, both Giropa Point and Buna Mission were occupied by the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion. This ended the Buna phase of the operation, but it was known that the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade group would move on to Sanananda next. During the next week, equipment was sorted and packed, and deficiencies made up in readiness.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> January, the detachment marched in battle order to Soputa, in 8 hours, where the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade re-joined 7 Aust. Division. Major Lavarack reported to A.D.M.S., and came under his command. All personnel of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance detachment were attached by the A.D.M.S. to 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance M.D.S. at Soputa for duty. Capt. Scott worked there with a surgical team throughout the following action.

On 10<sup>th</sup> January, a light section of 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance was formed by Capt. Holmes, with equipment from 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and moved forward on the Sanananda Track to join a forward section of the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance under Capt. Marchant near 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade H.Q.

This section had the assistance of bearers of 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and proposed to follow up the brigade attack along the Killerton Track. They were to evacuate to Soputa by jeep to 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance M.D.S.

On 12<sup>th</sup> January, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group attacked along the Sanananda Track. Following up the brigade advance, Capt. Holmes' light section moved up the Killerton Track, and established again in a coconut grove. This post consisted of 4 RD tents on the jeep head. Forward of this, there was no track suitable for jeeps, and as the brigade had split into 3 battalions, working on 3 tracks towards Killerton and Sanananda, evacuation became more difficult. Bearer squads were attached to each moving R.A.P.

On 17<sup>th</sup> January, Capt. Holmes was reinforced by the remainder of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance detachment at Soputa. This post then functioned as a forward A.D.S. for the remainder of the action; evacuating from the 3 Battalion R.A.P's over distances extending to 4,000 yds through the worst jungle country we had seen, and in the case of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, through mangrove swamps to the coast.

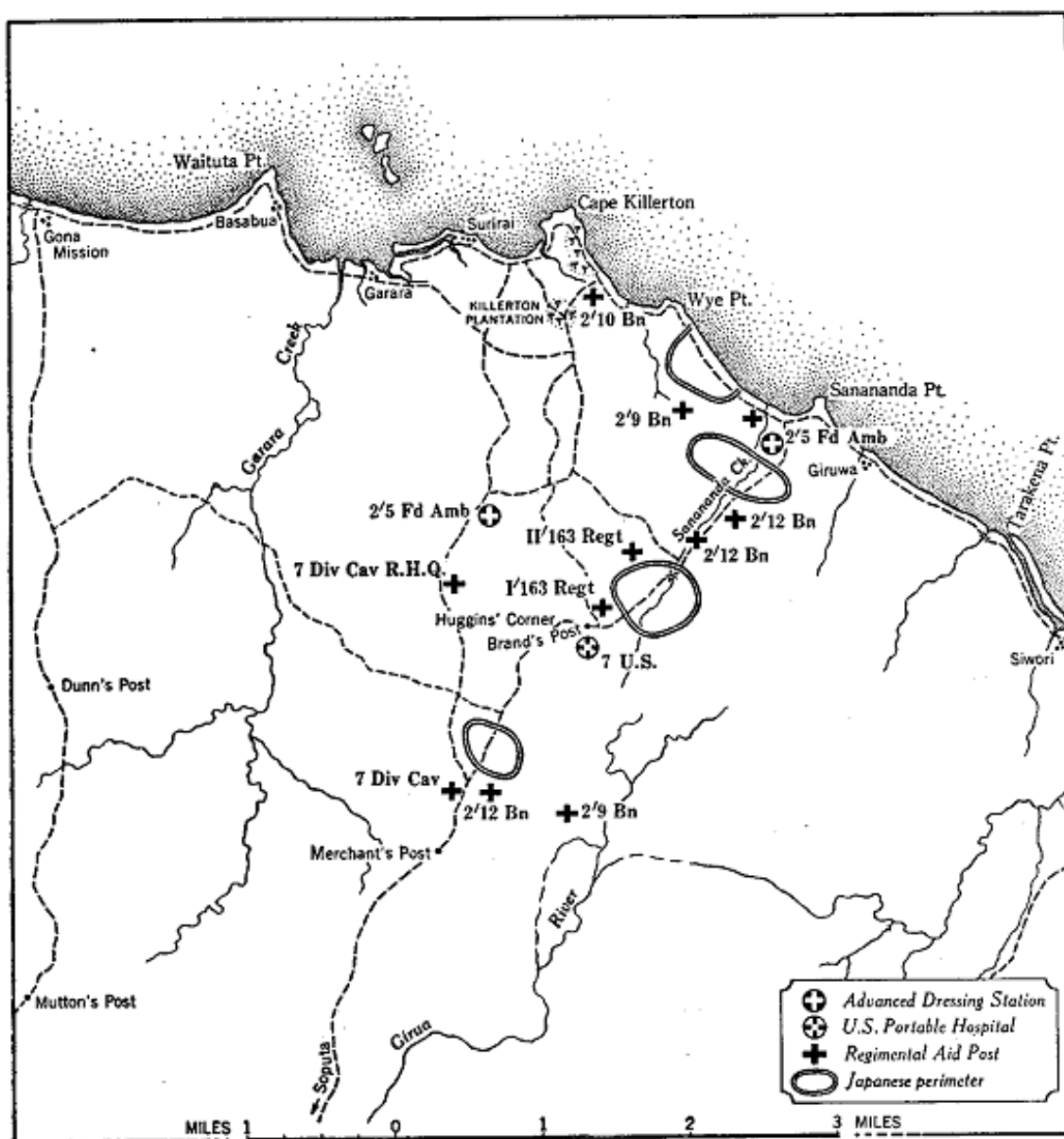
The 2/5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulances accomplished many of these carries, but as time went on, more and more was being done by native bearers, who would go up once or twice a day with supplies and ammunition, and clear each R.A.P. as they returned. In the intervening period, any urgent cases were brought out by our bearers.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> January, the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion occupied Sanananda Point, but the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion was held up on Sanananda Road. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion cleared the last coastal pocket, and joined the 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalions at Sanananda. The following day the A.D.S. moved to Sanananda Point, and on the 30<sup>th</sup> January, the attachment moved with brigade to the Soputa area.

Over the next week, most of the equipment was handed over to ordnance, and essential equipment was packed. On 11<sup>th</sup> February the detachment moved with brigade to Dobodura, and on 15<sup>th</sup> January, moved by air transport to Port Moresby.

Meanwhile, back at Milne Bay, the main body of the unit carried on the M.D.S. with several detachments serving locally. On the 20<sup>th</sup> January, enemy planes were overhead 5 or 6 times, but without causing any problems.

On 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February a concert party gave performances in the unit lines. The 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Field Hospital also attended. On 11<sup>th</sup> February, we were instructed by the A.D.M.S. to concentrate the unit at Waigani, and run a 200 bed hospital.



Sanananda area

Major MacIntosh, as acting C.O., lodged a report on 14<sup>th</sup> February as follows:

"The general position at present is most unsatisfactory. Major Lavarack and party left with 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Hammer Force) on 12<sup>th</sup> December. Lt. Raine and party left on 16<sup>th</sup> December. These two parties joined, and were later joined by Capt. Scott and party (Hanson Force), Capt. Holmes and party (Drake Force), and the OR's of Capt. Edelman (Hat Force).

The total strength of the party was 4 officers and 33 OR's. The remainder of the unit, consisting of H.Q. and parts of "A" and "B" Companies have remained in the area under the command of MILNE FORCE, which later became 11 Aust. Division, and finally, under 5 Aust. Division.

Viewed from all angles, and especially from that of morale, a more unsatisfactory position is difficult to imagine. We are detached from:

(1) Our Division - 7. Aust. Division

(2) Our Brigade - 18<sup>th</sup> Aust. Inf. Brigade.

(3) Portion of our own unit

On the night of 21<sup>st</sup> December, a signal was received by A.D.M.S. from D.D.M.S. N.G. Force that the remainder of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance be relieved from Milne Bay to 18 Inf. Brigade; a previous request having been made by Brigade H.Q. Due to the malaria situation, the A.D.M.S. refused to release the unit unless a company of another field ambulance could be sent to take over the M.D.S. Rather naturally, nothing more was heard."

The D.D.G.M.S. and D.A.D.M.S. N.G. Force called on the unit in response to this report, and D.D. G.M.S. informed the Acting C.O. that the unit would be reunited in the near future.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, enemy aircraft raided during the night. One bomb dropped in the unit area, causing some damage, but no casualties. On the 28<sup>th</sup> February, word was received from Major Lavarack, that he and his party were resting in Port Moresby and that most of his party had symptoms of malaria.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, we took over the running of the M.A.C. evacuating from the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance M.D.S. daily. We also fostered in the 4th. Field Ambulance to 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance lines.

On 5<sup>th</sup> March, came the long awaited news; a warning to be ready to leave Milne Bay, and advice that our destination would be the Atherton Tableland.

On 9<sup>th</sup> March, we were warned to be ready to embus at 1000 hrs, and embark on the "KARSIK". All personnel, (8 officers and 151 OR's) with 15 cubic tons of gear were loaded on one barge. Great difficulty was experienced in embarking and loading gear, but we were completed by 1600 hrs, and sailed immediately.

## CHAPTER 9

### RAVENSHOE & PORT MORESBY

The voyage from Milne Bay to Australia, though eagerly awaited, was far from being a pleasure cruise. The "KARSIK" was a cargo vessel, with no accommodation for troops, with the result that all personnel slept on deck, on hatches, or anywhere that could be found. The fact that it poured rain for the two days of the trip did nothing to add to our enjoyment.

However, we arrived at Townsville at 1200 hrs on 12<sup>th</sup> March, disembarked, and were taken to a transit camp, before entraining at 2200 hrs for the Atherton Tablelands. We arrived at Ravenshoe on 14<sup>th</sup> March, and were accommodated temporarily in the R.A.E. lines. There, also, we were reunited with Major Lavarack's party, who had arrived independently.

Home leave was being granted, and in preparation for this, those personnel selected to form the rear party, left for 4 days leave to Lake Barrine on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On 19<sup>th</sup> March, Major MacIntosh left to attend a C.O.'s school, and the unit moved to our own camp area, where the next week or so was spent settling in.

On 29<sup>th</sup> March, the main body of the leave party moved out at 2100 hrs for 5 weeks home leave, proceeding south by train. During the absence on leave of most of the unit, Lt. Col. Crakanthorp re-joined the unit from hospital.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the leave party returned to camp after a well earned break; and on 5<sup>th</sup> our R.S.M., W.O.(1) Berry was admitted to 2/2<sup>nd</sup> A.G.H. "for investigation". S/Sgt. R. Hewett was promoted A/W.O.(1), and appointed Acting R.S.M.

Maj. Gen. G. Vasey (G.O.C. 7 Division) visited the camp with the A.D.M.S. on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, and the same day, the C.O. left with Brig. Chilton and 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade officers on a recce of the Mt. Garnet area, in preparation for an exercise to be held later.

Routine training and fitness programs occupied most of the time over the next few weeks. The camp area was improved by sending out work-parties to quarry gravel for paths throughout the camp; and an area of scrub and light timber alongside the camp was cleared for an oval for Australian Rules football.

In one week, 2 officers and 25 men were evacuated to hospital with suspected malaria, all within about a fortnight of ceasing taking suppressive Atebrin.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> May, a B.B.Q. was held in the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance lines, to commemorate the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the formation of the 2/4<sup>th</sup>, 2/5<sup>th</sup>, and 2/6<sup>th</sup> Aust.

Field Ambulances. The A.D.M.S. attended, and commended the work done by the 7 Div. A.A.M.C. units, and the A.A.S.C. sections attached.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> May, Lt. Col. Crakanthorp attended 2/2<sup>nd</sup> A.G.H. for a medical board, as a result of which, he was found unfit to carry on with a field unit.

During the month of May, a total of 4 officers and 56 OR's were evacuated to hospital with malaria.

In early June, we held exercises in river crossing methods, building rafts capable of carrying stretcher patients from tarpaulins and bush materials, in preparation for future actions.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June, Lieut. J.H. Loney marched in to take over as O.C. Transport Section from Lt Little, who returned to the A.A.S.C. On 14<sup>th</sup> June, WO (2) Ted Taplin (R.Q.M.S.) marched out, having been boarded B Class, and A/W.O.(2) Bill Irvin was appointed acting R.Q.M.S.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June, we were officially advised that VX 20960, Pte. Roy Marriott had been awarded the D.C.M. for courage and devotion to duty in the Goodenough Island campaign.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> June, the football ground having been completed, we held our first match on it, against the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and celebrated with a comfortable win.

Lt. Col. Crakanthorp was appointed A.D.M.S. S.E. Command, and Maj. MacIntosh was appointed to administer command of the unit.

On 29<sup>th</sup> June, a ceremonial parade was held for the three 7 Division Field Ambulances. The D.D.M.S. (Brig. F.K. Norris) inspected the parade and handed the units over to Col. Beare, who had been appointed A.D.M.S.

Two new M.O.'s marched in to join the unit, Capt. E.D. Holman and Capt. J. Rutherford.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July, we played 2/6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance at football, and again won - 15-15 to 11-16.

On 5<sup>th</sup> July, instructions were received for a divisional exercise to the Mt. Garnet area;

1. Tactical exercise 12 - 14 July
2. Ceremonial Revue by C in C and picnic race Meeting 17 July.

3. 7 Division Rodeo 18 July,
4. Return to Camp 20 - 21 July.

For the period 15 - 19 July, the unit would be bivouacked in the Mt. Garnet area..

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July, Maj. A.M. MacIntosh was promoted to Temp. Lt. Col. and appointed to command the unit. I understand that at this stage T/Lt. Col. MacIntosh was the youngest Lt. Col in the Australian army.

Capt. N.H. Walker marched in, and was appointed to temporarily act as O.C. "A" Company., and the A.D.M.S. gave us first notice of a move to a "tropical operations area".

The unit moved out on manoeuvres as planned on 12<sup>th</sup> July, taking part in an exercise by the whole 7<sup>th</sup> Division, in the Mt. Garnet area. At the picnic race meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> July, Lt. Col. MacIntosh took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the senior officers' hack race, and was presented with a cup by Lady Blamey.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> July, the remainder of the exercise was cancelled, and all units returned to their camp areas.

With a move imminent, we had to report that we were definitely not ready for an operational role, as we were well below war establishment requirements:

W.E. 3 Majors - Held - Nil

Shortage - 40 A.A.M.C. Personnel, and 13 A.A.S.C. personnel.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July, 30 reinforcements marched in however, none had A.A.M.C. training. On 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> July, another 20 reinforcements arrived from 2/9<sup>th</sup>, 2/10<sup>th</sup>, and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalions, in response to a request to brigade from the C.O.

On 29<sup>th</sup> July, a training shoot was held for "A" and "B" Companies under the supervision of Lieut. Loney. H.Q. followed suit the next day. On the 1<sup>st</sup> August, further instructions were received from brigade re the forthcoming move to an operational area.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August, "A" and "B" Companies left for a 2 day bivouac, while H.Q. and Transport Section had a one day exercise only. During this bivouac, most of the time was spent with the better swimmers teaching the non-swimmers to swim, in preparation for possible future amphibious operations.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August, a unit sports meeting was held, and the following day, the officers and sergeants played "The Rest" at cricket. They were soundly trounced. Tents were then pulled down, ready to move.



On 15<sup>th</sup> August, the Unit moved by M.T. to Innisfail, then by train to Oonoonba Transit Camp at Townsville, and bedded down in the open, and were thoroughly soaked by heavy rain.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> August, we entrained at Oonoonba, and embarked on HMT "KATOOMBA", sailing to NEW GUINEA; where we arrived at PORT MORESBY, and disembarked on 20<sup>th</sup> August; being fostered in by the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance. The water position was acute, and washes were banned.

The C.O. again discussed our critical officer shortage with the A.D.M.S. He was put in the picture regarding future operations, and advised we had probably 4 weeks to prepare for the move, but in the meantime, we were to provide one officer and 8 OR's to form a light section, to prepare to move by air.

Capt. Edelman and "A" Company men were selected. Their job would be to "render first aid, and evacuate casualties to an airstrip." This party left on 24<sup>th</sup> August. For a full report on this operation, I here reproduce Capt. Edelman's report on the "Nadzab Operation":

"Herewith report on work of section since being detached from the unit. All personnel did magnificent work in bringing their supplies over an extremely arduous trail".

On arrival at Nadzab Airstrip the section was under the command of Maj. Gall, senior surgeon of 503 US Bn. The first day they carried in jump casualties and evac same to airstrip; also built the Regimental Medical Aid Station, and were highly commended by Maj. Gall and his officers for their work.

The health of the section has been good, apart from 3 cases of diarrhoea, instantly checked with sulphaguanadine.

Section now under command 2/4<sup>th</sup> Aust Fd. Amb. and operating medical staging post.

**REPORT COVERING PERIOD 24 AUG 43 - 9 SEPT 43**  
**DET "A" COY' 2/5 AUST FD AMB**

<b>A. PERSONNEL</b>	Capt. H.J. EDELMAN	(MO)
	Cpl. WALKER H.F.	SB Duties)
	L/Cpl LANG H.C.	
	Pte. MANSON W.R.	
	KRAFFT R.	
	PEARCE K.	
	HART J	
	WILLIAMS W	(Nursing Duties)
	RECK F	(General Duties)

## **C. FUNCTION**

To accompany and assist 2/2 Pioneer Btn and 2/6 Aust Fd Coy by road to NADZAB AIR STRIP and during occupation of strip.

**D. DIARY** 0530 hrs Section moves from camp Port Moresby.

0915 hrs Take off from 7 Mile AIRFIELD. This is the first time in history that an Australian medical detachment has moved from its base on the initial stage of a military operation by air.

1100 hrs Detachment landed at TSILI TSILI STRIP - this strip is now highly developed, although the initial clearing was made only ten weeks ago. Bivouac 1 mile into jungle to NE of strip.

## **25 AUG 43**

Capt. H.J. EDELMAN contacts Maj THOMAS OC detachment 9 Aust Fd Amb and arranges reception of casualties.

## **26-27 AUG 43**

3 Lectures given to some of Pnr Btn Coys.

Native carrier loads reasserted and loads of personnel lightened as fifth carrier allotted to US.

## **28 AUG 43**

Trial waterproof packs of equipment made in preparation for river crossings.

## **29 AUG 43**

WATUT RIVER crossed, bivouac on further bank.

## **1 SEP 43**

To this date 4 men of 2/2 Aust Pnr Btn evac - 2 Mal. 1 Herpes Zosta, 1 Haemoptysis.

**1100 hrs** Detachment begins march with BHQ; six miles covered and bivouac at BABWUF.

## **2 Sep 4**

Detachment moves to rear of column 2/6 Aust Fd Coy and native carriers. Consequently, we do not move until **1000 hrs**, the leaders having started at **0730 hrs** - very bad marching with frequent halts at short intervals owing to concertina effect from those in front.

Personnel are feeling their loads - it is quite apparent that on a march of this nature they cannot carry 20 lbs of medical equipment in addition to personal gear. Extra native carriers are asked for.

**1745 hrs** Bivouac at end of approx 12 miles - at WAIME. Our rations for 2 days have been sent forward to BHQ so we have to beg for some from rear. BHQ is asked to arrange this but can only advise to draw from rear. Hence we get hard rations only

and no tea or sugar. Fortunately, we have a small reserve of this. Making camp is very difficult in the dark - another penalty of being in the rear.

### **3 SEP 43**

**0730 hrs.** March starts and there are 2 long hold-ups in the next 11-2 hrs due to a high hill in front. An additional carrier arrives and takes some equipment from us.

**1100 hrs.** We start to climb a steep hill - approx 1000 ft. in less than 1 mile. Frequent halts necessary. Gradient 30 to 45 degrees in places.

Climb down other side almost as bad - narrow slippery track with bad footholds. Every step has to be watched and planned ahead.

**1640 hrs.** Bivouac at WAIME sheet 210442. BHQ is about 5 miles ahead. We do not attempt to catch the Btn rear (4 miles ahead) as :

(a) It would mean marching after dark - impossible on this track, and

(b) It appears that this is the last good creek for several miles.

First good swim and wash for several days is enjoyed by all.

### **4 SEP 43**

**0700 hrs.** March starts with no hindrances in front. In principle we have been marching 80 mins and resting 10, but in effect, it has been very irregular in the rear. The first lap, we march 50 mins, before halting.

**0855 hrs.** Rear Coy of Btn contacted - all sitting on ground waiting for those in front to clear the next big hill. (leaders also started 0700 hrs). There is sufficient time to make several billies of tea.

**1115 hrs.** We finally move again and soon start climbing a hill almost as steep as the one past WAIME. The maps are somewhat approximate, as this hill was at least 800 ft. high. There are frequent halts owing to those in front being held up. The descent is far worse than the one yesterday and much more protracted. It appears we climb down some 1200 -1500 ft.

**1330 hrs.** Halt for lunch. We have managed to make tea at each meal to date, and this has proved invaluable in refreshing the men and keeping up their spirits. Salt is being freely taken, with marked effect.

**1600 hrs.** NEW NARAGOOMA reached.

**1730 hrs.** Bivouac for night with BHQ at KIRKLAND'S DUMP.

### **5 SEP 43.**

Der Tag; or in other words, Day Z.

**0700 hrs.** Left Kirklands, reached point near MARKHAM RIVER, crossing at **0845 hrs.**

**0915 hrs.** The sky begins to fill with fighters and medium bombers darting in all directions.

**1005 hrs.** A smoke screen is laid east of jump-fields, and wave after wave of tpts arrive.

**1010 hrs.** US parachutists begin to drop. At same time, first 2 Coys wade channels of MARKHAM and finish deep third channel in assault boats.

**1045 hrs.** This section begins to cross near rear, - equipt placed in folding rubber boats, and personnel wade first two channels, dragging boats. We wait on last island for pontoon bridge to be made, taking this opportunity to have lunch, and several mugs of tea.

**1330 - 1400 hrs.** Crossing by pontoon bridge. Section moves independently in search of BHQ. Long muddy trail with many halts due to the concertina effect. Judging from map and photo map, we are going too far north, also several miles too far.

**1630 hrs.** The mistake is discovered, and the long line turns back on itself.

**1745 hrs.** We reach US Regt] Comd Post and this section is attached to RACP (Regt Aid Station) reporting to Capt Bradford in absence of Major Gall who is still on the way in.

## **6 SEP 43**

**0700 hrs.** Section badly needs a rest, but spends a full and heavy day bringing in some of the jump casualties through 1 1/2 miles of jungle and high Kunai, and evac most of these to airstrip to be flown out on empty tpts. In addition they clear an area for RACP; built an operating table, and improvise stretchers. US personnel all full of admiration for way in which our men can improvise in the field, and work hard and efficiently without much supervision. Apparently there is an abundance of supervision in this US medical detachment, and enlisted men seem to resent it. Hence they do not work so well. All hard track rations used, and we start dehydrated emergency ration today, supplemented by some C and K rations from US personnel.

## **7 SEP 43**

Less work today, but enough to keep section on the move. More jump casualties brought in - a further supply of C rations keeps us going.

Capt. H.J. EDELMAN meets ADMS on latter's arrival at strip, and gives him information to date.

A Medical plane evac is established on edge of strip. Arrangements are made for 20 natives to build a hut - this is started late in the afternoon,

A full supply of rations arrives later in the afternoon. Apparently desire of US personnel is to dive in and eat all the jam, fruit, and fruit-juice, leaving nothing but meat and biscuits. At the suggestion of several US officers, Capt. EDELMAN takes charge of rations, and makes an approximate breakdown for 10 days, as this supply is to last till more supplies come in. Ptes Manson and Reck are installed as cooks, with full control of rations and a list of daily rations is made out.

## **8 SEP 43**

The rations seem adequate, and all personnel enjoy well cooked meals, - eg. breakfast of pineapple juice, fried bacon and green peas, preserved fruit and coffee.

**1800 hrs.** A US soldier with severe compound fracture both arms arrives. The Allied medical teams spend the next 5-51-2 hrs inserting plasma, excising the wound, controlling haemorrhage, and keeping the patient alive. All ranks working hard at boiling water, sterilizing instruments, making hot drinks etc.

Cpts. BRADFORD (MO).and APLEMAN (DO) in particular did very fine work.

**9 SEP 43**

**0800 hrs.** Patient carried to airstrip for evacuation, more attention was given to him during the night, consequently everyone feels tired.

**0845 hrs.** ADMS met near Div HQ; he instructs Capt'. EDELMAN to come under command 2/4th. Fd Amb. form light section and advance some 4-5 miles along OLD MUNNUM track to establish Medical Staging Post, hereafter to be MSP.

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(Diary will be continued later)

## **SUMMARY**

- 1.** Medical personnel in this country cannot carry 20 lbs medical equipment in addition to personal equipt if they are required to march far.
- 2.** Carrying side haversack and pack is difficult, the bulk of the equipt being distressing as well as the weight. Infantry personnel can manage better as they have the basic pouches and rifles. The pouches help balance the load on the back, and the rifle, being compact is easier to carry. Personnel of this unit had basic pouches withdrawn before leaving Australia.
- 3.** It is strongly recommended that extra medical equipt is NOT carried in the pack; that medical personnel carry haversack and bedroll only, and that medical equipt is carried in 2 sandbags tied together and slung over the shoulder.
- 4.** Mosquitoes were abundant along the trail, and some anopheles were observed biting in the daytime in thick jungle. There were a few cases of scrub itch, but no recognised scrub typhus to date.  
From the overland force of some 1100 men, 4 were evac from TSILI TSILI and 2 more from BABWUF 6 miles along the trail.  
Some 8-12 men developed Malaria on the march, and were treated and completed the march. Approx 20-30 cases of diarrhoea were checked with sulphaguanadine. The low incidence of diarrhoea was probably due to rapid treatment of developed cases, thus reducing fouling of the track for those who followed.

**(Signed) H.J. EDELMAN Capt.**  
**2/5 Aust Fd. Amb.**

**Diary of period 9 Sep 43 - 23 Sep 43**

(Note this continues direct from previous diary up to 9 Sep 43)

## **9 SEP 43**

**0830.** Warning received to move section from US Reg Aid Stn to M.D.S. 2/4 Aust Ed Amb (Gabmatsung Mission) re-equip there, and proceed along Markham Valley Rd. to road junction 485553 where a light section post is to be established by 1400 hrs. Personnel and equipt being designed for their previous function of moving by road with 2/2Pnr Btn Group are unsuitable for this purpose, and on reaching M.D.S. extra equipt required is drawn and 10 AASC personnel from 2/4 Aust Fd Amb are attached for general duties.

No transport is available apart from handcart loaned by 2/4 Fd Amb, and with equipt loaded on this, section moves forward, arr. 1215 hrs. For part of the journey jeep tpt is found along the track, but owing to delays while bridges are being built, post is not reached ready to receive casualties until 1730 hrs.

The site is an excellent one, on the banks of a creek, with a D.I.D. directly over the road. The post is known officially and successively as MSP (Medical Staging Post) Mimum RD, ADS 5 Mile (+Edelman) and Medical Post 6 Mile Edelman. By a curious feat of mensuration, the D.I.D. some 30 yds away is known successively as the 6 mile and later the 7 mile D.I.D. The actual distance of Medical Post from M.D.S. was 4 1/2 miles, and from Div HQ, 5 miles.

## **10 SEP 43**

All personnel busy preparing site. The G.O.C. called in about 1700 hrs and had a cup of tea. During the day we also entertained the ADMS and the AQ.

## **11 SEP 43**

Battle casualties begin to flow through, fighting having begun at Whittacker's Plantation. Capt Tucker, 2/4 Aust Fd Amb, leap frogs our post, taking with him in passing, the 10 AASC personnel, Capt Walker, Ptes Pearce, Hart and Krafft to establish a medical post at VALU.

## **12 SEP 43**

Capt Tucker's post moves forward to 557528. The battle is believed to be moving satisfactorily towards Heath's Plantation, which is said to be an enemy stronghold.

## **14 SEPT 43**

The flow of casualties increases - only 11 battle casualties went through this post in last three days, but with the fighting now in Heath's Plantation, more are expected. We note with interest that the Pnr Btn, after a difficult encircling move through swamps, were first in to the Heath's Plantation Maj LOVE and "A" Coy 2/4 Fd Amb, move forward to establish forward ADS at 21 mile.

Owing to delay in movement of tps by A/C, a full ADS was not available previously.

There is also an operating team attached to ADS. With the battle so far forward, this post has degenerated into a wayside cafe, apart from a small amount of RAP work. In addition to the official title in present use, I have considered putting out a sign

**"EDELMAN's ROAD HOUSE".** We have everything but liquor, floor-show and orchestra.

Our main function seems to be feeding odd hungry bodies that call in.

### **15 SEP 43**

Elements of 25 Bde reported to be within 5000 yds of LAE, and 9 Div a similar distance NE. 16 SEP 43 LAE falls, 7 Div beating 9 Div by 2 hours.

### **17 SEP 43**

Capt Edelman pays unofficial visit to LAE, thereby probably being the first of 18 Bde into that malodorous village. The work of our A/C is very evident, with a general flattening of the landscape. Many craters and a variety of not too subtle smells. The return journey (21 miles each way) took 7 hours by jeep. It is amazing that the casualties who came over that track arrived in such good condition.

### **18 SEP 43**

Note received to move section back to MDS tomorrow. CO and Adj. of 2/2 Aust Pioneer Batn are our guests at a closing dinner.

### **19 SEP 43**

Personnel arrived at MDS at 0900 hrs. The other four of the detachment moved back to MDS about 14 SEP 43, rested 2 days and then began duties as SB's attached to MDS.

### **20 SEP 43**

Capt. Edelman is inaugurated as Honorary Malariologist, thereby freeing the CO and OC MDS for more medical work.

### **23 SEP 43**

Col. Littlejohn arrives on one of his surprise visits, but cannot satisfy our longing to hear news of the movement of our own unit. It seems that this detachment will now sink into obscurity until such time as the unit reaches us here, or we reach the unit elsewhere. The MDS is at present plentifully stocked with a rich variety of medical officers, representing some 6 different units. These are made up of 2 surgical teams, patiently waiting another war, one battalion RMO having a rest, and odd passers-by who stay a few days and then pass on. It is anticipated that nothing of interest will happen for some time; hence no further diary will be sent.

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**DIARY DET SEC - CAPT EDELMAN**  
**25 SEP - 26 OCT 43**

**25 SEP 43**

**2000 hrs.** Section warned to be ready to move to KAIAPIT next morning to function as staff of Med Emplaning Post. "B" Coy of 2/4 Aust Fd Amb to move with us.

**26 SEP 43**

No movement today. Pte HART JC admitted to MDS probable scrub typhus.

**27 SEP 43**

Pte HART evacuated by air.

**28 SEP 43**

Section and "B" Coy still standing by to move. It is learned from a reliable source that the HQ knows nothing of our projected movement. Little wonder that we are still here.

**4 OCT 43**

Div HQ known as GUSAP. Move to KAIAPIT cancelled. Picture shows are beginning to appear at various American camps, just 4 weeks after the Para Troops jumped and the Pioneers swam.

**12 OCT 43**

Capt. EDELMAN attended lecture given by Col. HAMILTON-FAIRLEY at 2/11 Aust. Gen. Hosp. Subject: Malaria Dysentery, Typhus.

**19 OCT 43**

111 CCS have taken over from 2/4 Aust Fd Amb which is standing by to move fwd.

**21 OCT 43**

**1455 hrs.** Section left NADZAB by air and landed at DUMPU

**22 OCT 43**

MDS position established west of FARIA River. Personnel of this -section still attached to MDS for duty.

(Signed) **H.J. EDELMAN Capt.**

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Meanwhile, back at our camp at Port Moresby, life went on. On 31<sup>st</sup> August, S/Sgt J.J. Easton was promoted A/Lieut Pharmacist, the W.E. having been altered to upgrade the position.



On 1<sup>st</sup> September, we commenced a program of all day route marches to improve fitness and stamina, varying the routine with an occasional march to the beach and a swim.

At 0430 hrs on 7<sup>th</sup> September, heavy explosions were heard, and we received an urgent call for all M.O.'s to report to the marshalling yards. A Liberator bomber, with full load of bombs had crashed into a convoy of 2/31<sup>st</sup> Battalion troops. Approximately 100 casualties.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> September, our cricket team played a match against the R.A.A.F., but we were beaten. Capt. Arrowsmith was detached for duty with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion for a week.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September, we were advised that as LAE had been captured, the role of our unit in the immediate future was uncertain.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, "A" Company left for a 3 day bivouac on the LALOKI RIVER. "B" Company followed suit a week later, while H.Q. left to bivouac on the beach. "B" Company and H.Q. were recalled to camp, as the unit was placed on one hour's notice to move. The following day, we were advised the projected move had been delayed.

On 27<sup>th</sup> September, the officers and sergeants defeated "The Rest" at cricket, thus avenging their defeat at Ravenshoe.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October, the C.O. sat on an Officer's Pre-selection Board. Some members of our unit did well. Sgt. M.R. FitzGerald, Sgt. L.A. Tann Cpl. E. Bilger and L/Cpl. H. Hopkins were selected to appear before an L.H.Q. Board for selection for O.C.T.U.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October, W.O.(2) C. Stevens was added to the list.

The move of the brigade group was cancelled for at least 2 weeks as the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force was unable to move troops and equipment. On 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. the C.O. explained the strategic position, and the reason for the delays to all troops. This was greatly appreciated by the men, as nothing is more damaging to morale than the lack of knowledge as to what is going on.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October, "A" Company left at 2000 hrs to march to RIGO Rd. about 11 miles, in full marching order; - arrived about 2400 hrs. On 12<sup>th</sup> "B" Company left for 2 days march to LUX LANE above ROUNA FALLS, stopping overnight with "A" Company. The C.O. and Q.M. visited both companies at their bivouac sites.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, we were advised that brigade will probably remain at least another month, due to the problems of supply to the RAMU VALLEY.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October, at a conference at Brigade H.Q., the C.O. advised that, owing to a widespread vitamin B deficiency, training should be less vigorous. It was decided to do less marching, but to play more sport, and organise amenities.

On 19<sup>th</sup> October, H.Q. Company marched out to bivouac, and practised river crossings at LALOKI RIVER at RIGO ROAD.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October, Sgt C.P. Jacobs was appointed Stretcher Bearer Lieutenant for "B" Company. L/Sgt R.A. Armitage was appointed Orderly Room Sergeant. Today was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the unit's sailing, but as it was impossible to get the necessary supplies, it was decided to skip the celebrations.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> October, administration of vitamin B began, with all troops taking 6 tablets daily. We held a delayed 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary celebration on 24<sup>th</sup> October, with an excellent meal, and a performance by the 7<sup>th</sup> Division Concert Party. Many former members of the unit attended the celebrations, including Col. A.H. Green and Lt. Col. J.M. Blair.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October, a brigade cricket competition started. In our first game, we were defeated by 2/4<sup>th</sup> Fd. Regt by 60 runs.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November, the 7 Div commander, Maj. Gen G. Vasey, and Brig. Chilton visited the unit, and advised that they hoped to have a job for us shortly.

In a number of cricket matches, "B" Company defeated H.Q.; 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd. Ambulance defeated 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Supply defeated 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November, the C.O. left for an unknown destination; returning on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He had been to DUMPU in the RAMU VALLEY. He was convinced we were better off in our present camp for the time being.

A brigade sports meeting was held on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Our unit won the 220 yds, 440 yds, 1 mile relay, and overhead and straddle ball; gained 2<sup>nd</sup> place in hop, step and jump and 100 yds relay. We gained most points from the athletics events, but our absence from such events as "platoon guard mounting", bayonet, grenade and mortar competition caused us to finish in 4<sup>th</sup> place overall, out of 7 competing units.

On 26<sup>th</sup> November, the unit had a very lucky escape. Air Force bombers taking off from Jackson's Strip early each morning, used to fly along our valley, before banking to climb as they went out over the sea. On this occasion, a fully-loaded Liberator bomber turned too soon, over our camp, just skimming the top of the hill, clipping the tops of stunted trees before crashing into the next hill a couple of hundred yards away. The ensuing explosion, had it caught our camp, would have almost wiped out the unit.

In early December, all companies took part in practice shoots, using rifle, Bren, and Owen guns. Limited ammunition however, restricted the amount we could use.

For many weeks, a working party from "B" Company under Sgt. L. Tann had been constructing a tennis court. Excavating into the side of the hill, and quarrying the gravel proved quite an undertaking. However on 16<sup>th</sup> December, the court was completed, and the first game was played.



**Tennis Court Port Moresby 1944**

On 21<sup>st</sup> December, Capt, Edelman and party returned from Dumpu, where they had been attached to 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, after completing their task at NADZAB.

Christmas Day was celebrated in the usual fashion. The cooks turned on an excellent meal, and most tents had an adequate supply of "home brew" to make up for any shortage of canteen supplies.

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, the C.O. advised that a move was close, and he expected we would be taking over from the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, who were running an M.D.S. at Dumpu.

On New Year's Day 1944, a divisional sports meeting was held in Port Moresby. Sgt. Dick Armitage won the 446 yds and long jump; Capt. Arrowsmith won the 880 Yds, and the unit team won the relay. All units in the Port Moresby area were represented.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January we were advised that movement was imminent.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **DUMPU & SHAGGY RIDGE**

Between New Year's Day and the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1944, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade was flown to Dumpu in the Ramu Valley, to relieve the 25<sup>th</sup> Aust. Inf. Brigade.

The move to Dumpu was the first time our unit as a whole, had moved by air. Previously, only detachments and light sections had travelled in this manner.

Major Walker and H.Q. Company left at 0300 hrs on 4<sup>th</sup> January, taking off from Jackson's Strip, and flying over the Owen Stanley Ranges to Dumpu, where they proceeded to take over the M.D.S. from the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance. The takeover was simplified as no patients were held. Capt. H.J. Edelman and 8 OR's took over an A.D.S. at SADDLE in the vicinity of 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade H.Q., while an N.C.O. and 2 men took over a medical post at Kumbaru Con. Camp. The remainder of the unit followed on the following day.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January, the first 24 patients were admitted, and over the next few days the M.D.S. rapidly filled, as patients flowed in.

The C.O. visited brigade H.Q. on 10<sup>th</sup> January to receive advice regarding an impending action. He prepared a Medical Appreciation, which the A.D.M.S. did not like. However, as he was unable to offer anything better, he finally approved the plan.

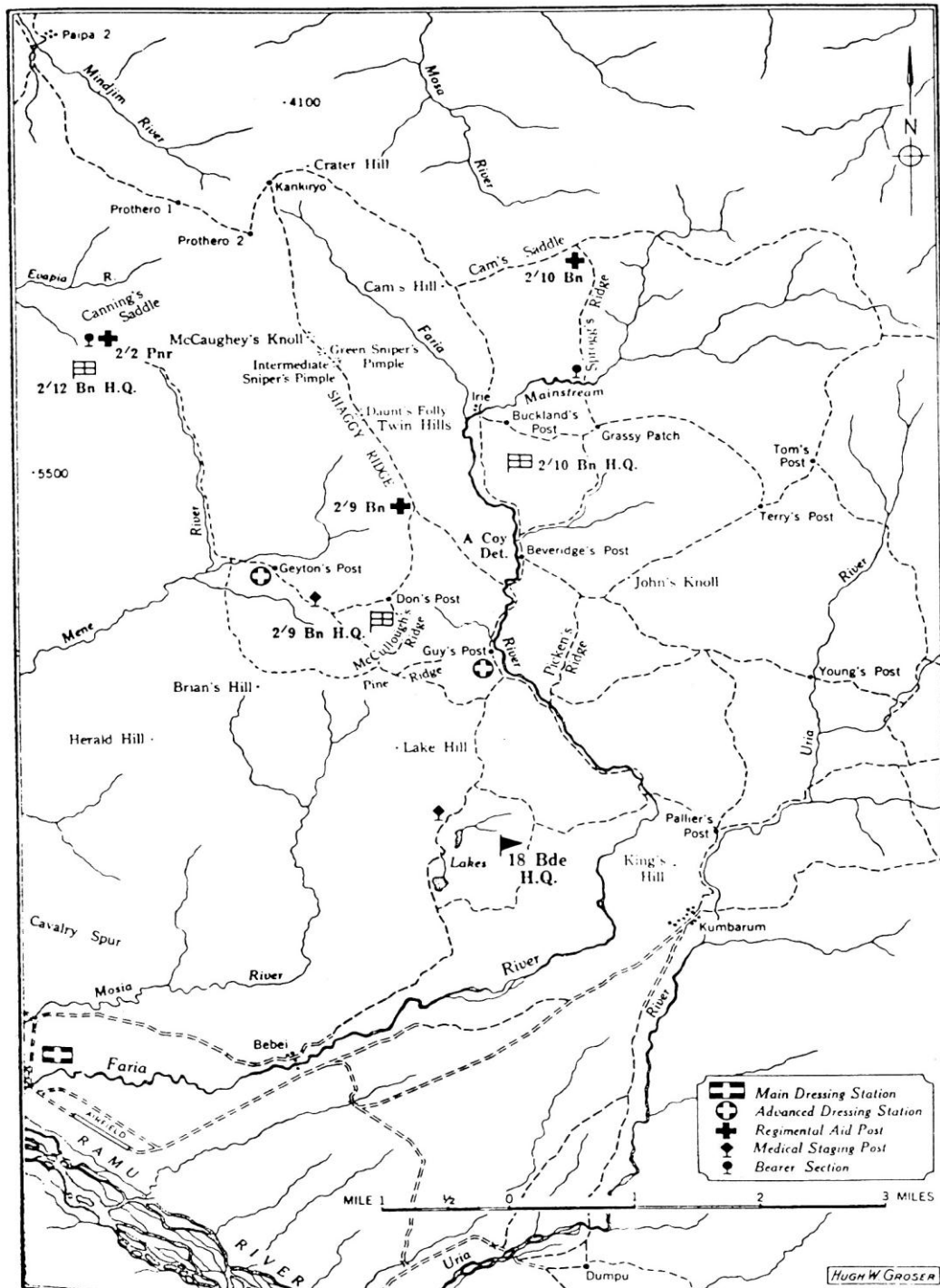
The Japanese were entrenched on a feature known as SHAGGY RIDGE, and KANKIRYO SADDLE, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade was given the task of dislodging them and clearing the area. Also in the area was the 15<sup>th</sup> Aust. Inf. Brigade, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion and the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Squadron.

Whilst the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade was settling in, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion was carrying out reconnaissance patrols, seeking out the best route to the Mene River, and the area from CANNINGS SADDLE to PROTHERO. On the left flank, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Squadron was patrolling extensively.

The plan was for the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion to attack on the right flank from the direction of CAM's SADDLE, a diversionary attack, whilst the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion attacked from the left flank from the GAYTON's HILL area, aiming to capture the feature known as PROTHERO, when the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion would then attack KANKIRYO and MAINSTREAM. These features were of great tactical value. In the meantime, the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion would attack along Shaggy Ridge.

The attack took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> January, but on the night of the 19<sup>th</sup>, torrential rain fell, washing out 6 of the 7 bridges between Guy's and Beveridge's Posts, and the main bridge between Guy's Post and the M.D.S. at Dumpu.

The task of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance was to support the 3 battalions with stretcher bearer teams working with the battalions, and from the battalions back to the advanced A.D.S.'s. The line of evacuation would then be from the advanced A.D.S. back to the A.D.S. at Guy's Post, and from there to the M.D.S. at Dumpu by jeep.



Shaggy Ridge

The Shaggy Ridge area was probably the worst terrain in which we were ever called on to work; dense jungle and precipitous slopes, so steep it was almost impossible to walk without holding trees for support. The task of carrying stretchers under these conditions was a mammoth one. The army type stretcher was found to be unsuitable, as patients had to be tied down to prevent them from falling off. The improvised stretcher made from hessian palisade bags on saplings was found to be far superior. Also, by using elongated side rails, eight or more men could handle a stretcher under extreme conditions. This type was also used by the native bearers.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January, the companies moved into positions in preparation for the attack. At 1030 hrs. "A" Company detachment, under Capt. Pullin and Lieut. Raine, left Dumpu with 4 jeeps and trailers, passing through Guy's Post to GRASSY PATCH. While at Guy's Post, they conferred with the R.M.O's of 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalions, contacting the R.M.O.'s of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> and 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion, to discuss plans and arrangements for the evacuation of casualties.

At 1400hrs, the "B" Company detachment to the left flank, under Capt. Rutherford and Lt Jacobs, reached Guy's Post and bivouacked for the night. This detachment was strengthened by the addition of surgeon, Captain Leggett. A final conference of all brigade commanders was held at Guy's, and was attended by Lt. Col. MacIntosh.

Early on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> the "B" Company detachment left with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> battalion for the GAYTON's POST area; only about 5 miles, but an exhausting 8 - 10 hour march. From 5 hours out, Lt. Jacobs sent a message back, recommending that, in view of the difficult terrain, a coffee rest post be established between Gayton's and Guy's. Ptes Pattie and Pengelly were sent to establish this rest post.

At 2000 hrs, a message was received from Capt. Leggett to say "B" Company had arrived at Gayton's Post, tired but safe.

Capt. Edelman arrived at Guy's Post during the day of the 19<sup>th</sup> to take charge of the A.D.S.

January 20<sup>th</sup> was "D" Day for the attack, but this had to be delayed due to heavy cloud and mist, however, the artillery opened up about 0900 hrs. At 0930 hrs the C.O. departed for the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Command Post at Grassy Patch. Due to the torrential rain overnight, he found the river crossing very difficult, and it took an hour to reach BEVERIDGES where Capt. Pullin and party were set up. This post had been washed away, but the party were O.K.

The track from Beverages' to Grassy Patch had suffered severe damage, making an extremely difficult carry for stretcher bearers. He arrived at Grassy Patch about noon, to find Lieut. Raine had established his party about 200 yds from the battalion command post.

The C.O. of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion did not expect the FARIA L of C to be open for another 36 hours, so Lt. Col. MacIntosh and the 2 I/C of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion tried in vain to find an alternative track down the Faria River to Beveridges. Due to the difficult 3 hour carry, it was decided to move Capt. Pullin's party to Grassy Patch until the Faria L of C was open.

Late in the day, a message was received from the C.O. of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, *"Everything O.K. Your boys behaving magnificently."*



### **M.D.S Dumpu - Ramu Valley 1944**

At 1700 hrs. a message was received from Capt. Leggett to say the A.D.S. at Gayton's Post was established, and would be receiving patients as from 0800 hrs the following day.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the C.O. left for Gayton's Post, arriving about 1930 hrs, to find the A.D.S. well set up. Native bearers did a carry in the dark, leaving Canning's at 2000 hrs, and reaching Gayton's at 2230 hrs. Other casualties had to wait overnight at Canning's. He also found that the carry from Gayton's to Guy's by native bearers was a full day's difficult carry in good conditions, and almost impossible after rain.

The C.O. returned to Guy's, where he reported to the A.D.M.S. who was there, and he was quite happy with all arrangements and progress.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the C.O. visited the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion to inspect the area. With the R.M.O. he went forward with the forward platoons over Shaggy Ridge. It was considered that a route over Shaggy Ridge was not possible to carry at that time. The ridge was a razor-back, with precipitous falls on both sides. The 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion was working on the construction of a track.



## **“B” Company Stretcher Bearer Party under Lt Jacobs Ready to leave Gayton’s Post**



**Prothero Jan 1944**

**Top L-R** Sgt Vic Hewett, Ptes Danny EDWARDS , s. Ferguson, Geo Balderson, Brian Chandler

**Second Row** Ptes Max Lee, Pat Cunningham LEW Burton, Richards, Colin Blood, Lcpl Kay,

Ptes Porter, Geoff Miles, Lt Chas Jacobs

**3<sup>rd</sup> Row** Ptes Rex Masters, Leo Johnston

**4<sup>th</sup> Row** Pte Bill Crogden, Cpl Terry Wade, Ptes Max Bushell, Tony Clarkson, Steve Phillips, Alf Blades,  
Late as usual L/cpl Ernie Waugh, Ted Harper & Dummelow

On the 24<sup>th</sup> January, the adjutant of 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion contacted the C.O., suggesting that as Lt. Jacobs and party were exhausted, they should be relieved. Lt. Jacobs was contacted, but assured the C.O. that they could carry on for the time being.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January, it was decided the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion would launch their attack the next day, and the line of evacuation would be over Shaggy Ridge. Capt. Arrowsmith with a party from the M.D.S. would form a post at the site of the previous 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion R.A.P. on Shaggy Ridge. The R.M.O. would move forward towards Kankiryo Saddle. Lt. Jacobs' party would transfer from 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion to 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion. However, later that day, a message was received from Lieut. Jacobs that, "owing to exhausting carrying today, the section needs relief."



WO(2) Stevens was instructed to form a party to relieve Lieut. Jacobs. They were to go via Shaggy Ridge, and report to R.M.O. 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Lt. Jacobs was instructed to return to Guy's Post as soon as possible.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January, the C.O. visited Capt. Pullin and Lt. Raine's post at the rear of 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion H.Q. It was arranged that Capt. Arrowsmith would relieve Capt. Pullin. As the post was badly sited, it was decided, after a reconnaissance, to move to a spot at the rear of "C" Company 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion at the Faria / Mainstream junction.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January, Gayton's Post was closed, as the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion had cleared the area, and no more casualties were expected. The A.D.S. party returned to Guy's Post, bringing all remaining patients with them, with the assistance of native bearers. This was an extremely difficult operation, as many of the patients were not really well enough for the trip, and required frequent medication on the way. However, all arrived in good condition, and were greeted by the A.D.M.S. who had visited Guy's to welcome the party.

By the beginning of February, this part of the war was over, all Japanese having been cleared from the Shaggy Ridge area, and the bearer sections returned from their duty with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalions.

Because of the nature of this operation, with numerous detachments working at different points, it has been impossible to give a single coherent report on all aspects. For this reason, the fore-going has been written from the H.Q., or administrative view.

I was with the Gayton's Post party, and can fill in some of the details from my own recollections, but for details of the other detachments I will have to rely on the reports by the officers in charge, which are reproduced later in this chapter.

On the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> January, the "B" Company detachment was ready by about 0600 hrs to leave Guy's Post, with all our equipment packed into "man loads". Our allocation of native porters arrived to pick up our gear, and move with the long train of battalion porters.

Lt. Col. MacIntosh called me out and said, "Sgt. Tann, are you feeling fit?" Like a fool, I said, "Fit as a Mallee bull Sir. Why?" I soon found out; I was landed with the job of accompanying the "Boong Train", to Gayton's Post. I was last man of the mile long line, and with the usual concertina effect under these conditions, found it very tiring, being stopped one minute and practically running the next to keep up.

We arrived, almost without a rest, about 1030 hrs, and I collapsed in a heap; it must have been an hour before I could stir enough to take off my pack!! The main body of the party staggered in about 1700 hrs, exhausted, and we bivouacked for the night on a flat patch of ground beside the Mene River.

That night the heavens opened! Torrential rain poured down all night. We were camped on the only flat patch of ground, and within an hour or so, it had turned into a lake. Despite our exhaustion after the long trek, no one had any sleep that night.

The following morning, Lt. Jacobs and his bearer party left for duty with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, while the rest of us, with valuable help from a party of natives, set up the A.D.S. Using bush timber and 2 man tents, we erected an operating theatre and two wards, as well as our own tents and the cookhouse.

In the original planning for the post, it was not envisaged that we would do any major surgery, but mainly first aid, and emergency surgery to get casualties back to Guy's Post as quickly as possible. For the same reason, it was not anticipated that patients would be held longer than overnight.

Unfortunately, casualties were far more numerous and more serious than expected (a Jap mountain gun saw to that) and the extremely difficult terrain on the trip back to Guy's Post meant that many of the patients could not stand the trip for some time. We had to hold more and more patients for several days before evacuating them.

This meant that as the demand for beds grew, we had to extend the wards; and often in the middle of the night, with torches and machetes, we would be out in the jungle cutting saplings and vines to extend the roof, build extra beds, back rests and supports for Thomas splints, as they were required.

This episode also pioneered new uses for the anaesthetic "Sodium Pentothal". This was a fairly new product at the time, and it was considered suitable only for operations lasting a maximum of 15 - 20 minutes. As it was the only anaesthetic we had, it was used for all operations, even those lasting several hours, without any ill effects.

I cannot speak highly enough of the work done by Capt. Leggett, the surgeon attached to us. His operating theatre was 6 half tents slung over the branch of a tree; the operating table was an army stretcher sitting on four forked sticks, and the only lights, a Tilley lamp and a torch. Often when he had been standing in the one place for some time, he was unable to lift his feet out of the mud without assistance. With Capt. Rutherford as anaesthetist, Capt Leggett was on duty for 22 hours each day. At around 0500 hrs each morning, he said to me, "Call me at 0700", and he would snatch a couple of hours rest. I would call him at 0700, and we did the rounds, doing any necessary dressings and sorting out those for evacuation. By about 0900 hrs when we were finishing, the native bearers would be arriving, and we would supervise the evacuation.



**Lunch at Gayton's Post  
Harold Shipway, Joey Wade, Steve Hart, Alf Virgo,  
Gordon Dommel, and Lloyd Tann**

By that time, the daily casualties would be starting to arrive, so it was back to the operating theatre where he was ably supported by the orderlies, Ptes. Joe Hughes and Norm Ely, and would then work through till around 0500 hrs the next morning.

All personnel at Gayton's Post worked tirelessly, under difficult conditions, with little or no rest during this period, and when the C.O. brought up a fresh team to assist us on the 24<sup>th</sup>, I had not shut my eyes since leaving Guys Post five days earlier, on the 19<sup>th</sup> and I was not the only one.

I reproduce here, the reports by Capt. Rutherford and Capt. Leggett of the operation of the A.D.S. at Gayton's Post, followed by that of Lieut. Jacobs with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and WO(2) Stephens who took over from Lieut. Jacobs, and worked with the 2/9<sup>th</sup>. Battalion. These are followed by the reports by Capt. Pullin and Lieut. Raine who were attached to the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and ran the posts at Beveridges, Grassy Patch, and Mainstream; and Capt. H.J. Edelman and Capt. Ryan (Surgeon attached) at Guy's Post.

## **REPORT OF "B" COY ADS SEC GAYTONS**

The following is a report of the activities of the above section

of this Company, which consisted of 1 Offr and 14 OR's with Surg. team attached.

### **1. Personnel:**

1 Officer (MO)	2 L/Cpls Gen. Duties
1 S/Sgt	2 Cooks
1 Nursing Sgt	6 General Duties
1 Nursing Orderly	1 Cpl. Clerk

### **2. Equipment :**

I do not propose to list this here.

### **3 Movement:**

18 Jan. Left MDS Dumpu in two parties at 1300 and 1500 hrs respectively. Travelled by jeep. Accompanied by Lt Sec under Lt. Jacobs, and surgical team consisting of Capt. Leggett C and 2 orderlies.

On foot from ADS Saddle to Guys Post, staging there for the night with 2/12 AUST INF BN.

### **19 Jan 0830 hrs.**

Party of 2 Offrs and 38 OR's travelled with Bn men carrying average load of Coy stores of 15 lbs, remainder of stores being carried by native train. Track followed was made over entire distance, being well graded up to B Ech 2/9 Aust Inf Bn. Thence the track became a succession of steep rises and sharp downward slopes, alternating with lower stretches of deep sticky mud. Arrived at Gaytons Post 1530 hrs. Hot meal provided-by 2/12 AUST INF BN.

### **20 Jan**

Party under Lt Jacobs left at 0830 hrs travelling forward with RAP 2/12 Aust Inf Bn. ADS Sec under Capt. Rutherford together with surgical team remained at Gaytons Post.

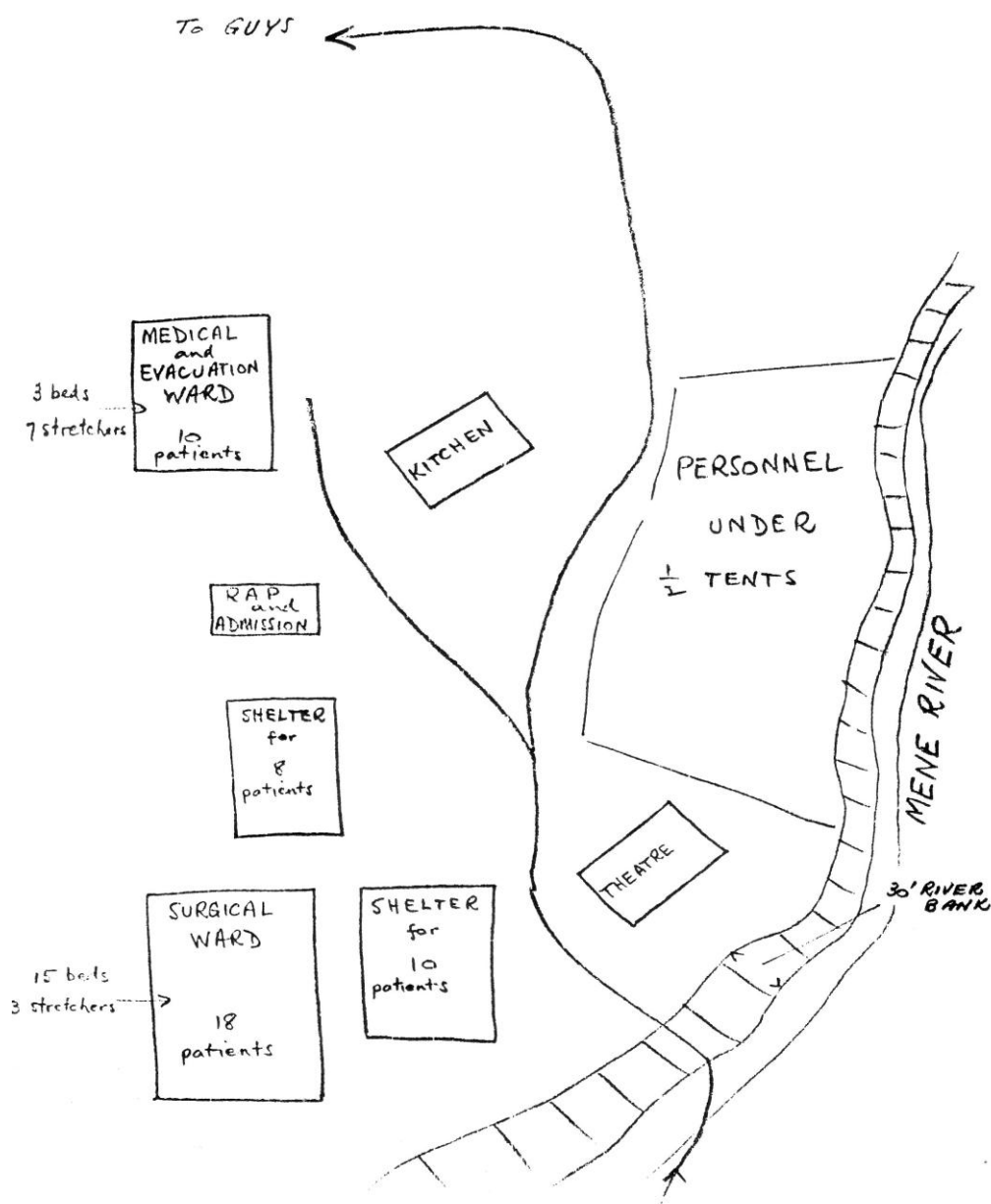
### **3. Site**

The ADS was set up on a broad ledge above the MENE RIVER, with adequate cover from air observation, and a good water supply close at hand. ADS personnel assisted with erection of theatre for surgical team. A surgical ward was built (from 1/2 tents) on a framework erected by natives. A small medical ward was built and roofed with a half tarpaulin. General layout of ADS together with maximum holding shelter as shown in Appendix A.

ADS  
GAYTONS  
20 Jan 44 - 27 Jan 44

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Appendix A.



The theatre was completed and the surgical team ready to operate by 1200 hrs 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 44. Two wards were completed on the following day, and on 21st Jan two more wards were completed with the aid of personnel of 2/12 Aust Inf Bn and Tk/A who were stationed in the area. 5 Admissions etc:

#### (a) Battle Casualties:

Date	Admit Lying	Admit Walking	Admit Total	Ops Total	Redressings Total	Evac Lying	Evac Walking
21 Jan	3	--	3	3	--	--	-

22 Jan	12	30	42	19	21	1	2
23 Jan	13	--	13	17	--	11	20
24 Jan	--	--	--	2	--	9	-
25 Jan	--	--	--	--	--	5	-
26 Jan	--	--	--	--	--	3	-
27 Jan	--	--	--	--	--	7	-
<b>TOTALS</b>	28	30	58*	41	21	36	22

Of these, 45 were inflicted by mountain gun, 13 by small arms fire.

#### (b) Sick

Date	Admit Walking	Evac. Walking	Evac. Lying
20 Jan	18	16	
21 Jan	7	4	
22 Jan	10	5	
23 Jan	4	12	
24 Jan	10	10	
25 Jan		1	
26 Jan			1
<b>TOTALS</b>	49	48	1

#### (c) Admissions by Units:

Unit	Admit Sick	Admit Battle Cas.	Admit Total
2/12 Inf Bn	45	53	98
2/2 Pnr. Bn	4	2	6
2/4 Fd Reg Sigs		3	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	49	58	107

#### 6. Line of Supply and Evacuations:

Supplies as delivered by native carriers from Guys Post to ADS GAYTONS were satisfactory. Evacuation of lying cases from ADS GAYTONS to ADS GUYS was by native bearers, carry varying from 3 to 41-2 hours. Walking casualties, taking with them one meal for the trip, reached ADS GUYS between 5 and 6 hours after departure from GAYTONS.

## **7. DUTIES OF PERSONNEL:**

- (a) Building of theatre, wards and shelters from ½ tents and two half tarpaulins.
- (b) Nursing Duties. It was found that the two nursing personnel were insufficient for post-operative treatment of number of battle casualties greater than expected. This difficulty was overcome by supply of two experienced orderlies from ADS GUYS.
- (c) Water carrying, stretcher bearing, and general duties in connection with operation of surgical team.
- (d) Valuable assistance in erection of wards and shelters was given by groups of 2/12 AUST INF BN and TK/A who were in the area.

## **8. GENERAL NOTES:**

Due to shortage of stretcher bearers and native carriers, many casualties did not reach ADS for two days after wounding, and due to the same shortage of natives and supply difficulties, it was not possible to send to the BN RAP sufficient blankets or cover. Consequently, most of these casualties were suffering from exposure on admission, having slept for two nights in mud and without shelter.

**(Signed) J. Rutherford Capt.**  
**Dated 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 44**  
**CO ADS GAYTONS**

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### **SURGICAL TEAM'S REPORT PERIOD 19 JAN - 27 JAN 44**

#### **1. PERSONNEL & EQUIPMENT:**

- (a) Capt. Legget C  
Pte. Ely N.T. (2/5 Aust Fd Amb)  
“ Hughes J.K. ( “ “ “ “ )

#### **2. MOVEMENT:**

**19 JAN 44 1300 hrs**, departed MDS DUMPU, travelling by jeep with 2/5 AUST FD AMB. Spent night at GUYS POST.

**20 JAN 44:0830 hrs.** departed GUYS POST travelling forward with 2/12 AUST INF BN and sec 2/5 AUST FD AMB.

1530 , reached GAYTONS POST, and spent night with BN

### 3. SITE:

GAYTONS POST: Site good, both as regards nearness to adequate water supply, and cover from view.

After departure of 2/12 INF BN, who moved forward at 0830 hrs, theatre was set up, and the team was ready to operate by 1260 hrs, sec of B COY 2/5 AUST FD AMB setting up an ADS beside theatre for holding of post-operative cases unfit for immediate evacuation to ADS GUYS POST.

### 4. ADMISSIONS, OPERATIONS, EVACUATIONS:

DATE	ADMIT LYING	ADMIT WALKING	ADMIT TOTAL	OPNS TOTAL	RE- DRESSINGS	EVAC LYING	EVAC WALKING
21 Jan	3	--	3	3	-	-	-
22 Jan	12	30	42	19	21	1	2
23 Jan	13	-	13	17	-	11	20
24 Jan				2		9	
25 Jan						5	
26 Jan						3	
27 Jan						7	
<b>TOTALS</b>	28	30	58	41*	21	36	22

(Note \* Of these, 4 casualties required two operations each)

### 5. TRANSPORT OF WOUNDED:

(a) From RAP 2/12 AUST INF BN to POST CANNINGS SADDLE - Lt Sec 2/5 FD AMB.

(b) " CANNINGS SADDLE to GAYTONS POST Native bearers

(c) " GAYTONS POST TO ADS GUYS POST Native bearers

### CONDITION OF PATIENTS ON ARRIVAL:

Patients arriving at GAYTONS 36 hours and more after wounding showed evidence of exposure and strain of travel.



## **7. OPERATIONS PERFORMED:**

<b>(a) TYPES OF WOUNDS:</b>	Abdomen	3
	Trunk	6
	Leg	19
	Arm	12
	Compd Fract	13
	Head & Neck	6

<b>(b) MISSILE:</b>	SW (Mountain Gun)	24
	GSW (Jap Rifle)	12
	GSW (Jap LMG)	1

(Note: Of the 21 Casualties whose wounds were dressed without operation, the following applies:

SW (Mountain Gun) 21)

## **(c) ANAESTHESIA:**

PENTOTHAL in majority of cases, including one abdominal exploration for which the anaesthetic was perfect. Pentothal seemed to vary in potency, and this seemed to bear a relation to the time the solution had been mixed. It seems inadvisable to mix solution at any time except immediately prior to use in this climate.

## **8. THEATRE STAFF & INSTRUMENTS:**

The work of Ptes. ELY N.T. and HUGHES J.K. was very good. Instruments were satisfactory.

## **9. SUPPLIES:**

Supplies and replacements were prompt and satisfactory.

## **10. GENERAL:**

No deaths occurred after admission. No amputations were performed. No cases of gas gangrene occurred. There were an unusually large number of severe injuries involving the knee joint, and being infected, necessitated drainage of that cavity. A large number of the wounds were inflicted by JAPANESE MOUNTAIN GUN, and many of these wounds were very serious. Field Ambulance staffing surgical posts in which serious abdominal and other cases are to be held indefinitely, should consider the high nursing requirements necessary for the proper post-operative treatment. Nursing orderlies should be adequate, both in numbers and training. The co-operation of the various elements of the Field Ambulance was all that could have been desired,

and the work of the Ambulance personnel working in conjunction with the surgical team was carried out with enthusiasm and efficiency.

(Signed) C. LEGGETT Capt.

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**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF LT SEC, B COY, 2/5 AUST FD AMB,  
DURING PERIOD 18-26 JAN 44**

**1. STRENGTH OF SECTION:** 1 Bearer Officer and 24 OR's.

Lt. C.P. JACOBS I/C L/Sgt HEWETT VR. Cpl. WADE FT, L/Cpl WAUGH EA, Ptes. CONGDON, PORTER, BALDERSON, CUNNINGHAM, JOHNSTON, RICKARDS, BUSHELL, FERGUSON SW, BLOOD CR, CHANDLER, MILES GFX, EDWARDS, KAY, CLARKSON, PHILLIPS, LEE, MASTERS, MILLS, HARPER, BLADES, BUTLER. On 24<sup>th</sup> Jan, Ptes EDWARDS and RICKARDS dropped out sick, and Pte CHANDLER was sent to ADS GAYTONS who were short of nursing orderlies. Ptes. DOWER and DUMMELOW were received as replacements, and final strength was then 1 and 23.

**2. DIARY:**

**18 JAN:**

1500 hrs. Capt. RAG HOLMES and Lieut JACOBS interviewed RMO and CO 2112 Bn, and discussed evacuation problems. CO agreed to have 100 half blankets at CANNINGS SADDLE for construction of stretchers. Section was attached to 2/12 Bn for rations and duty.

**19 JAN:**

0800 hrs. Moved out with BHQ on march to GAYTONS JUNCT. and arrived at 1600hrs after climb over muddy and difficult track. At halfway mark made arrangements with QM of Bn for provisions for establishing a tea post for walking wounded. Camped for night at GAYTONS. As the track ahead was said to be worse than today's, and Bn members were travelling very light, decided to discard part of our personal gear.

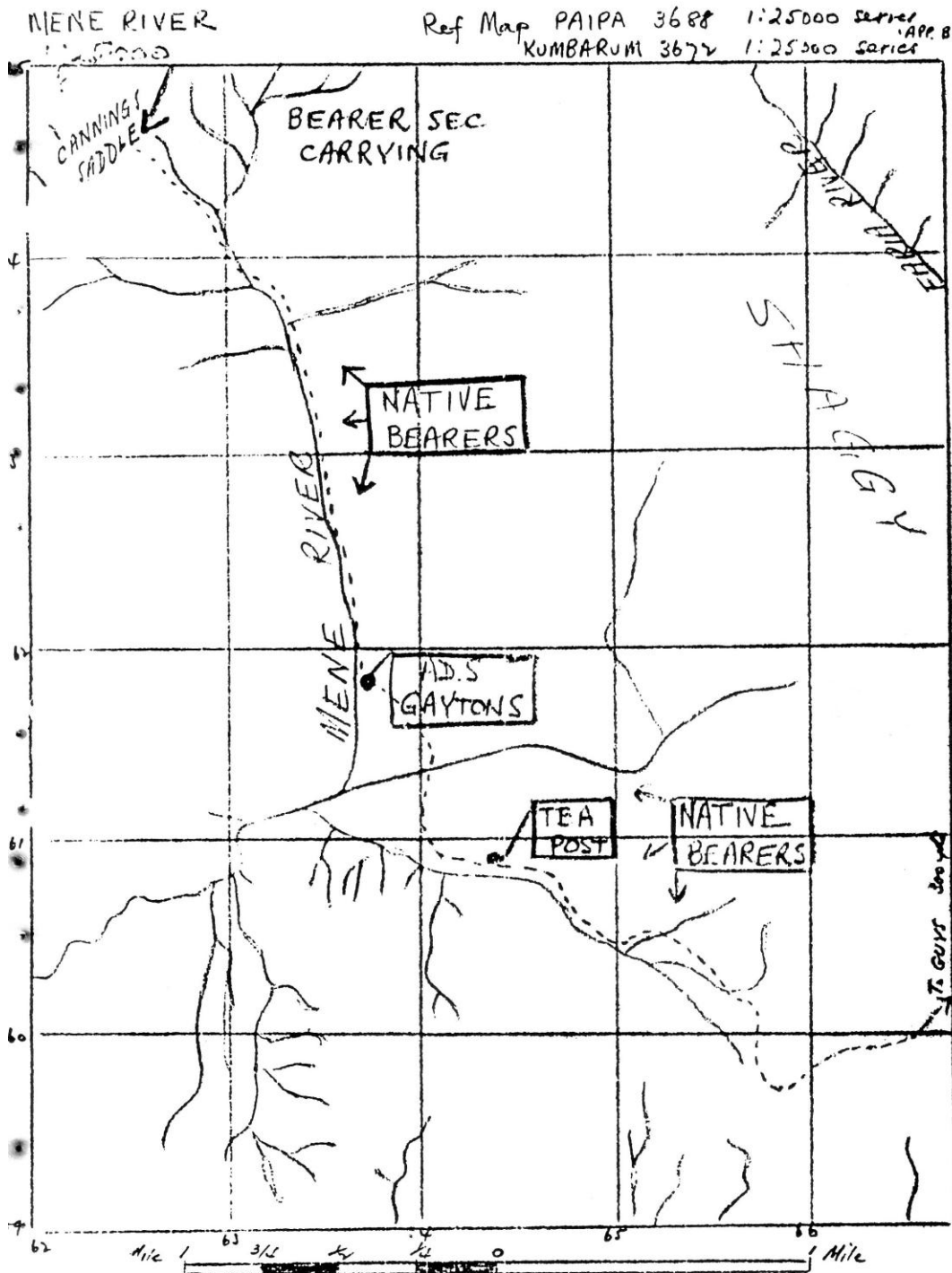
Spare clothing, mosquito nets, half tents, and half of each man's blanket were therefore left at GAYTONS ADS in salvage dump.

Our men were thus carrying similar personal gear to the inf, except that the inf carried gas-capes and pullovers, whereas we carried groundsheets and half blankets. The only other gear carried was a ball of twine and 2 bagging needles.

**20 JAN:**

1030 hrs. Moved out along MENE RIVER to CANNINGS SADDLE, reached at 1500 hrs. Going reasonable. The whole of 2112 Bn, portion of 2/2Pnr Bn, and

ourselves camped here for the night, and RMO of the Pnrs (Capt. Chenowith) set up RAP.



AWM 52, AIF and Militia unit war diaries, 1939-1945: Item no. 11/12/14  
2/5 Field Ambulance. Jan-Mar 1944

To illustrate Report ADS GAYTONS

## 21 Jan

0700 hrs. Bn moved out to climb Mt PROTHERO 1. Our sec followed near rear with HQ Coy. Before moving out from CANNINGS, each member of Lt Sec picked up half a blanket from dump provided by the Bn. A few half blankets were left behind as

we were informed by RMO that there were said to be more of them dumped along the trail to PROTHERO.

This info proved to be wrong, and I do not know what happened to the remainder of the 100 half blankets promised by the CO of the Bn.

In the order of march, our Sec was placed with HQ Coy placed between us and the RMO. The track was very bad, being unformed and slippery, and so steep that in places personnel had to pull themselves up by means of ropes tied to trees. These ropes later proved very useful when carrying stretcher cases down.

At 1430 hrs. a call was received for Fd Amb SBs to move fwd immediately. All 24 SBs were immediately taken through HQ Coy of Bn to RMO on PROTHERO 1, where casualties were being inflicted by enemy mountain gun. Formed the men into 3 squads of 8 men.

Constructed three stretchers with poles and blankets, and evacuated first 3 casualties at about 1530 hrs, including CO 2/12 Bn, Lt. Col BOURNE.

These were carried, under escort, for about 1 hour down the track, where 3 native squads of 16 men each took over. Natives would not come further fwd that day. Our carry had been further delayed for a while by enemy snipers who were cleared by the escort. On returning to PROTHERO 1 found that mountain gun had been captured. There were at least 15 stretcher casualties and many walking wounded.

No more natives were available, and insufficient light remained for any more casualties to be carried by white bearers to CANNINGS SADDLE.

Helped RMO and his staff to make casualties comfortable for the night, using our own blankets for the purpose. Spent night in open under steady rain and got very wet. We had only one third of an OP ration each for the day's food, and no water is available.

## **22 Jan**

Constructed about 16 stretchers during the day. Obtained 5 squads of Inf bearers, and 2 of Pnrs to assist in evacuating wounded. Our own 3 squads carried part way down track, where 1 Inf and 2 Pnr squads took over and carried to CANNINGS. Other 4 Inf squads carried wounded whole way from PROTHERO 1 to CANNINGS.

Natives arrived at PROTHERO 1 at 1400 hrs, and there were sufficient to carry 12 more lying cases. The walking wounded having left earlier with the Inf bearers.

Several lying cases were still awaiting evac, and on our return to PROTHERO 1 stretchers were made for them. 2 more stretcher cases were then reported from a Coy on SHAGGY RIDGE just beyond PROTHERO 2.



**Operating Theatre and Surgical Ward – Gayton's Post**



**Pte Schollick & Lt. Col Bourne (CO 2/12 Btn) in surgical Ward  
Gayton's Post**

Despatched 12 of our men to relieve Bn SBs and later took remaining 12 to relieve them. Cases took about 3 hours to bring to PROTHERO 1 where they stayed the night. During the day, our stock of twine was exhausted, and Jap sig cable was found very suitable in the construction of stretchers.





### **Native Stretcher Bearers leaving Gayton's Post for Guy's Post**

#### **23 Jan**

Our 3 squads plus 1 Pnr and 1 Inf squad carried out the remaining casualties with further walking wounded, from PROTHERO 1 to CANNINGS SADDLE. The carry stayed the night there, obtaining much needed food and the first tea for 2 days. Also obtained another ball of twine.

#### **24 Jan**

Returned to PROTHERO 1, helping carry rations and water for Bn. On arriving, found that our gear had been mistaken for salvage, and many of the Sec lost what little personal gear they had.

#### **25 Jan**

Section taken to bottom of KANKIRYO SADDLE to evacuate 2 casualties which occurred at 0800 hrs. They were at the bottom of a steep hill, up which, not even native bearers could have carried. The A/CO of the Bn offered a platoon of inf as escort for us to carry these cases down the FARIA RIVER line of evacuation. This was about to be done, when considerable firing was heard in the vicinity. The A/CO deemed the route unsafe, so I obtained about 70 men from B Coy of the Bn, and with their help, we took the stretchers up the hill to SHAGGY RIDGE by the "chain" method of passing from hand to hand along 2 rows of men.

Fd Amb bearers then carried them along SHAGGY RIDGE to RAP of 2/9 Bn where natives took over from us. Returned to 2/12 Bn HQ reaching there at 1900 hrs. As the Sec was now in an exhausted state, a signal was sent to CO 2/5 Aust Fd Amb asking for relief.

## **26 Jan**

Received order from our CO to return to GUYS POST. Bn Adjt having been consulted, and informing us that there were no casualties requiring evac, we left at 0930 hrs, and returned along SHAGGY RIDGE.

Met WO(2) STEVENS and his section, when they had still a little over an hour's trip to 2/9 Bn RAP. Notified him that we had left twine and bagging needle for him there. 1600 hrs. Arrived at GUYS POST.

### **3. GENERAL:**

(a) During early part of action, we had insufficient material for making stretchers. Beside the 24 half blankets picked up at Bn dump at CANNINGS, we had to use all our own half blankets, and most of our own groundsheets for making stretchers and keeping patients warm. In the construction of about 34 stretchers, we used up 1 ½ balls of twine, and a fairly large quantity of Jap sig cable.

(b) The shortage of above materials meant that our personnel were too cold to sleep at night, and we had very little sleep over the 8 day period.

(c) All members of the section worked well and honestly. The three N.C.O's set a fine example.

(d) It is desired to commend the courage and coolness of L/Cpl Waugh EA, who was I/C one of the stretcher squads. On 21 Jan 44 when under fire from Jap mountain gun at point blank range, he constructed a stretcher while in an exposed position, a job which took about 15 minutes, during which time he did not take cover once, although men were being killed and wounded by shrapnel within a few yards of him. During this period he also found time to attend to the wounds of an inf man who had been hit nearby.

Although in a more sheltered position, it should also be mentioned that other members risked themselves helping to make other stretchers.

Noteworthy in this regard were L/Sgt HEWETT, Cpl WADE, Ptes BLOOD CR, MILES, and BALDERSON.

**(Signed) C.P. JACOBS Lieut.  
Bearer Officer 2/5 Aust Fd Amb B Coy**

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## **REPORT OF BEARER SECTION ATT 2/9 AUST INF BN**

**26 Jan - 1 Feb 44**

## **26 Jan 44**

Section of 24 men I/C WO(2) STEVENS left GUYS POST 0745 hrs to relieve Lt JACOBS' Section – 2/12 Aust Inf Bn. Route was via SHAGGY RIDGE MT PROTHERO. Party found track difficult owing to heavy rain which fell during the

morning. Met Lieut JACOBS on SHAGGY RIDGE at 1130 hrs, and finally arrived at Battle HQ 2/9 Aust Inf Bn at 1500 hrs. It was found that section would be attached to 2/9 Aust Inf Bn as 2/12 Aust Inf Bn were not expecting any further battle casualties. RMO 2/9 Aust Inf Bn was contacted at 1600 hrs - situation KANKIRYO SADDLE at the headwaters of the FARIA RIVER. The men were very tired and wet, but immediately commenced work and carried one case (appendicitis) down slopes of PROTHERO to the RAP. Heavy rain during the night drenched everyone and made tracks ankle deep in mud.

#### **27 Jan 44:**

Morning quiet - spent in improving and waterproofing positions and making bush stretchers. In the afternoon, 2 carries were undertaken; one down from PROTHERO (accidental wounding) and the other a battle casualty from the forward Coy of the Bn. Situated on the northern slopes of feature 4100, back to RAP. This was the first time a stretcher had been carried along this track, and it was found necessary to use 20 men on the job, plus an infantry escort. The trail had to be widened with axes, and ropes were used to lower stretchers down steep sided banks. The time taken to carry this casualty back to RAP was 2 ½ hours. The infantry escort was necessary, as the enemy L's of C crossed our track in several places. (2 enemy were killed at a creek 10 minutes after the bearer party had passed). Night very wet, but party more comfortable now.

#### **28 Jan 44**

One carry this morning along the same track. Soldier wounded as a result of enemy ambush the previous night. On way up to collect wounded, forward infantry escort to bearers killed three enemy, lying in ambush on side of track. Enemy dead well clothed and looked to have been in good condition. Afternoon quiet and was spent in making stretchers. Very wet night, and sleep impossible owing to incessant artillery fire. Capt. Arrowsmith visited section during the day.

#### **29 Jan 44:**

Morning quiet. - stretchers made - dive bombing attack on enemy's position, - heavy artillery. CO visited Section. Afternoon was extremely busy. An attack by "B" Coy 2/9 Aust Inf Bn on enemy position and several shells from our artillery on "A" Coy 2/9 Aust Inf Bn causing casualties (9 all told - 5 stretcher cases). Party of 100 men including our bearers organised by OC "D" Coy 2/9 Aust Inf Bn to collect wounded. Strong escort provided and all carried bags of rations up to the forward Coys. Our bearers did the bulk of the carry and were exhausted at the finish. English officer mortally wounded; died on the stretcher, half an hour after being received. Party attempted to bring the body in, but were forced to abandon the attempt in order to assist other sections. Pte Nayler C was evacuated sick during the day.

#### **30 Jan 44:**

Sgt Ellis arrived with reinforcements, and Cpl BROWN, L/Cpl FIELDS, and 2 men were returned to the unit for a spell. New men settled in and bearer squads revised.



Strength now 25 Dvrs. Carter and Joy S.J reported that a quantity of Jap grenades and ammunition stored in an old hut some 300 yds down the track had been removed during the night, and that fresh enemy tracks were found around the hut. This information was passed on to the OC "D" Coy. The OC was grateful for the information. Men happy and refreshed after quiet day.

### **31 Jan 44:**

Morning quiet. Men assisted in improving RAP position, drainage etc. "C" and "D" Coys occupied enemy position on forward slopes of feature 4100, and advanced up slope during the morning. At 1345 hrs, 12 bearers were called out to bring wounded back from D Coy, and approx 15 minutes later, the remainder of the section went up to the same position for a further casualty. Enemy snipers very active, and section under Sgt Ellis was fired on 6 times while collecting wounded. All near misses. These carries were not as exhausting as the previous ones, being along a shorter though very steep line. One soldier was hit at 1345 hrs, collected at 1415 hrs, and was carried into RAP at 1445 hrs. Capt. Edelman visited section today.

### **1 Feb 44:**

News was received that enemy had vacated feature 4100 during the early morning and that the 2/9 and 2/10 Inf Bns had occupied the enemy positions. As no further battle casualties were expected, the section was ordered to return to unit by CO 2/9 Aust Inf Bn. Approval was obtained from CO 2/5 Fd Amb by WO(2) Stevens and the Section left the SADDLE at 1245 hrs arriving back at MDS 1700 hrs.

In summing up the operations, I am happy to say that the NCO's and men did an excellent job. The work was strenuous and exhausting, but the bearers showed stamina and initiative, and were never lacking in anything they were called on to do. Special mention could be made on the section leaders, Cpls Stone, Brown, and Joy and L/Cpl Fields, who co-operated with me to the fullest extent. Dvr. Beckett was outstanding during the heavy work, and thoroughly exhausted himself.

I would respectfully suggest that all transport personnel be trained further in stretcher bearing with emphasis on the correct method of arranging a wounded man on a stretcher. The Tpt Coy personnel who were with the section are now thoroughly interested in AAMC work of this nature, and they fully realize the importance of this work. I consider that 2/9 Aust Inf Bn was satisfied with the work done by the section. The 2 I/C, RMO and OC D Coy, all expressed their thanks and said that the services rendered were both valuable and timely.

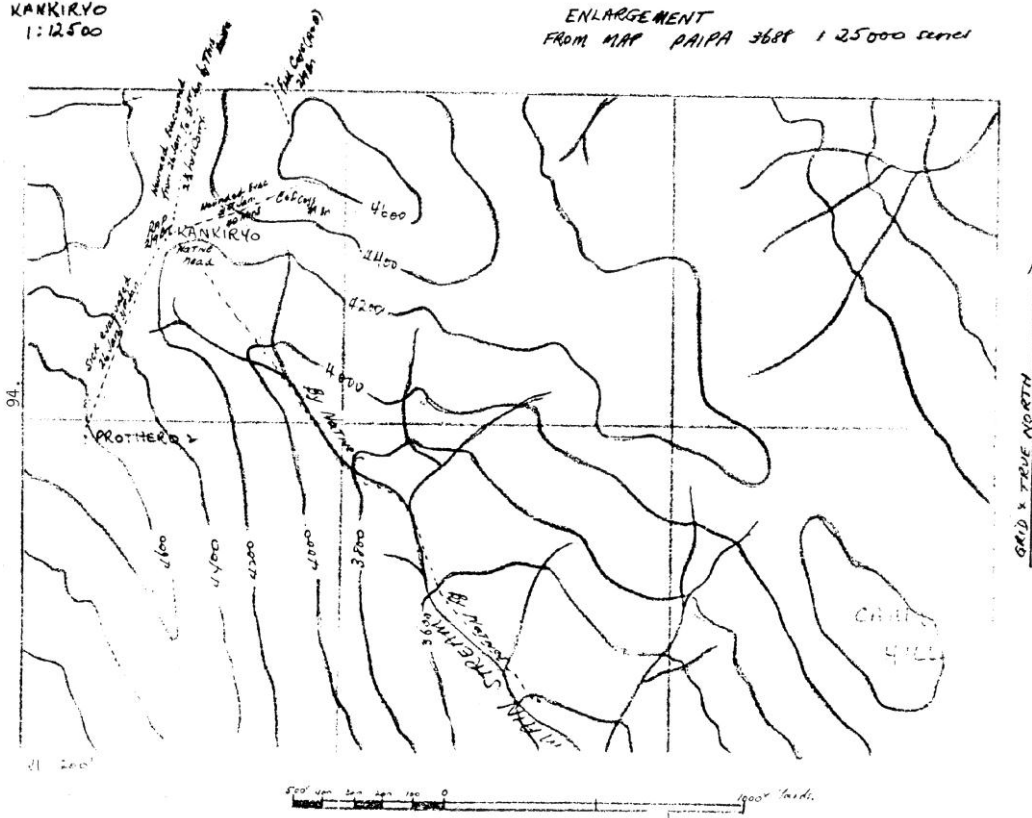
**EQUIPMENT:** Any equipment such as spare blankets etc, that could not be carried back with the section, were left with the RMO 2/9 Aust Inf Bn.

**(Signed) C. STEVENS WOM**  
**NCO I/C Bearer Section**

AWM 52, AIF and Militia unit war diaries, 1939-1945: item no. 11/12/14  
 2/5 Field Ambulance. Jan-March 1944

KANKIRYO  
 1:12500

ENLARGEMENT  
 FROM MAP PAIPA 3688 1:25000 series



Sketch Map showing lines of evacuation of wounded and sick by Lt Section 2<sup>nd</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Fd Amb 26 Jan 44 to 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1944

Handwritten note: "Sketch Map showing lines of evacuation of wounded and sick by Lt Section 2<sup>nd</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Fd Amb 26 Jan 44 to 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1944"

(AWM 52 AIF and Militia unit diaries 1939 – 1945: item no. 11/12/14

2/5 Field Ambulance - Jan – March 1944

Kankiryo 1:12500

Enlargement from Map PAIPA 3688 1:25000 series.

Sketch Map showing lines of evacuation of wounded and sick by Lt Section 2<sup>nd</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Fd Amb 26 Jan 44 to 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1944)

## REPORT OF DETACHMENT "A" COMPANY

12-27 Jan 44

**12 Jan 44:** Detachment from A Coy 2/5 Aust Fd Amb. comprising Capt. Pullen Sgt. DAVIS and 7 OR's left the MDS 2/5 Aust Fd Amb by jeep at 0930 hrs.

Only the minimum of equipment was taken, as it was anticipated that everything would have to be carried on the man. There had been considerable rain the previous night and the section had a taste of future difficulties when it had to push the jeep up the sharp muddy inclines. It was finally necessary to detach the trailer, and make two trips. On arrival at the ADS SADDLE at about 1130 hrs, the section bivouacked for the night with Capt. EDELMAN and maps and information were obtained.

**13 Jan 44:** The Section left ADS SADDLE at 0930 hrs with 4 carriers detailed by Capt. EDELMAN and marched to HQ 2/10 Aust Inf Bn (KUMBARUM 718629)

Arriving at 1230 hrs. After discussion with CO and 2 I/C 2/10 Aust Inf Bn and after consulting CO 2/5 Aust Fd Amb., it was decided to move the section back along the track some 20 mins to BEVERIDGES POST (KUMBARUM 707619). This was necessary because had the section estab at 2110 Aust Inf Bn BHQ, it would have serviced only C Coy 2/10 Aust Inf Bn and would have been off the direct L of C for the early part of the ensuing battle. The section bivouacked for the night at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ.

**14 Jan 44:** Light Section moved back to BEVERIDGES POST and established alongside the track some 20 yds from the FARIA RIVER. The RAP was set up under a tent fly and Capt ROYLE, RMO 2/10 Aust Inf Bn was contacted.

**15 Jan 44:** The section settled in completing their bunks and the RAP. The OC walked up some 1900 steps to JOHNS KNOLL and obtained a panoramic view of the country, and much useful information about the proposed tactics to be used.

**16-17 Jan 44:** A quiet period - opportunity was taken to familiarise personnel with the surrounding country, and every man made at least to GRASSY PATCH (KUMBARUM 720637) journeying up along the river bed. The journey unloaded took approx 1 ½ hrs up to GRASSY PATCH and ¾ hr back under dry conditions. This time was doubled with a load, especially if much rain had fallen in the previous 24 hours.

**On 17 Jan 44,** Lt Raine and Jacobs passed through to GRASSY PATCH. GRASSY PATCH was to be the Battle HQ of 2/10 Aust Inf Bn for the early part of the battle, and it was separated from SPROGGS RIDGE (PAIPA 7265) and CAMS SADDLE (PAIPA 7264) by the deep intervening valley of the main stream.

On the latter 2 features, the early part of the action was to be fought, and Capt. Royale was to move onto these features and establish his RAP just in rear of fwd Coys leaving his 2 rear Coys to be attended by the detachment 2/5<sup>th</sup> Aust Fd Amb. Since the stretcher coming from the forward RAP to the rear RAP (GRASSY PATCH) via the valley, MAIN STREAM was estimated in travelling time to be between 3 and 4 hours, and that from GRASSY PATCH to BEVERIDGES POST, 2 hrs, and since it was anticipated that native bearers might have to remain in rear of GRASSY PATCH if Jap shell fire was encountered, it was recommended that Lt Raine and as many bearers as possible from A Coy should be sent to GRASSY PATCH to tpt casualties and sick back to the Boong Head from the forward RAP.

**18 Jan 44:** Lt Raine and 24 bearers passed through the section at 1415 hrs on their way to GRASSY PATCH. The strength of the Light Section was increased from 1 Offr and 8 OR's to 1 Offr and 12 OR's. 4 OR's under Sgt. Cummins were also attached. These men were to form a staging post when the light section moved closer to the battle field. S/Sgt Behan replaced Sgt Davis at the Light Section, and Sgt Davis went fwd with a detachment under Lt Raine.

**19 Jan 44:**

A quiet day.

**20 Jan 44:**

12 bearers under Sgt Davis have moved fwd to fwd RAP 2/10 Aust Inf Bn under Capt Royle and Lt Raine and 12 bearers remained at GRASSY PATCH. During the afternoon, the first casualties received by the 2/10 Aust Inf Bn were retained at RAP overnight. At this juncture, it was necessary for a casualty to leave from fwd RAP by 1300 hrs to be able to reach the ADS GUYS POST by nightfall. During the previous night, a particularly violent storm had occurred, and a small stream nearby overswept its banks and flooded the RAP area to a depth of 1 foot. The personnel who were on higher ground were unaffected and fared very much better than the troops in their immediate vicinity.

**21 Jan 44:**

On order from CO 2/5 Aust Fd Amb, Capt. PULLEN and his batman moved up to rear RAP 2/10 Aust Inf Bn at GRASSY PATCH in anticipation of holding casualties and sick overnight, and joined Lieut RAINE and the 12 bearers already at the post. 4 bunks were constructed under 2 tent flies and 2 sick personnel were held overnight. The remainder of the detachment remained at BEVERIDGES POST under Sgt CUMMINS,

**22 Jan 44:**

A quiet morning. Some casualties and sick passed through the post and it was necessary to hold 4 sick overnight, including Sgt DAVIS who was diagnosed provisionally as DENGUE. S/Sgt BEHAN had moved fwd to take his place at fwd RAP with Capt. ROYLE. At 1900 hrs, firing was heard and on enquiring at the command post, it was learned that B Coy of the 2/10 Aust Inf Bn put over an attack on the "barb wire position" (PAIPA 707647). Since this was off the direct L of C through Capt. ROYLE and in all probability, the casualties would not be seen by an MO before reaching ADS GUYS POST, the OC Light Section and Pte. FENNEY hurriedly left in an attempt to reach BHQ 2/10 Aust Inf Bn in anticipation of casualties moving that night. However, before half the distance had been covered, it became obvious that BHQ could not be reached before dark and in view of the dangers inherent in movement at night, these two personnel staged for the night at an ANGAU camp. It was a welcome change to again see a hurricane lamp.

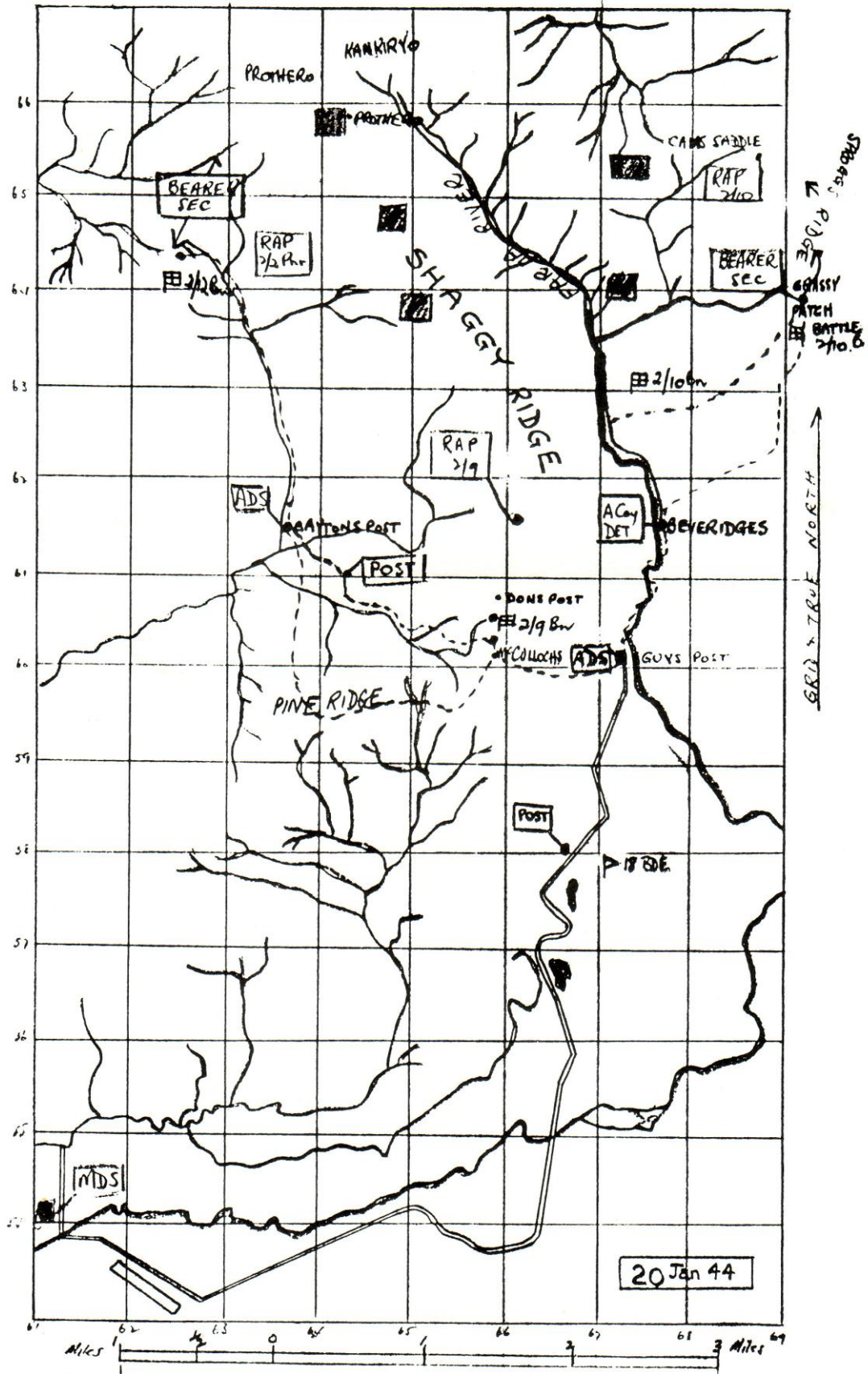
**23 Jan 44:**

The remainder of detachment at GRASSY PATCH moved down during the morning to the new position of 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ (KUMBARUM 718629). OC Light Section and a detail of Sgt CUMMINS and 12 bearers drawn from BEVERIDGES POST with some OR's from 2/10 Aust Inf Bn moved fwd to native camp (KUMBARUM 708634) to meet casualties sustained by B Coy 2/10 Aust Inf Bn on previous evening.

50000

96.

KUMBHUM 3672  
PAIPA 3688



Medical Posts • (as of 20 Jan 44)  
LoFC — FAKIN.  
Enemy —

— DIAGRAM 2 —

However, the first casualties did not reach the native camp until 1200 hrs and the last stretcher case did not pass through the Light Sec. until 1645 hrs; since the distance traversed by the cases since early morning was only about 2 miles, this will give an adequate idea of the difficulties of evacuation involved. With the success of the B Coy attack during the morning, the L of C was changed and now proceeded down the FARIA RIVER. The light section at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn was now situated about 2 hours stretcher carriage from GUYS POST, It had not been found necessary to use Amb personnel to carry between the fwd RAP and GRASSY PATCH during the previous 3 days as native bearers were able to go forward.

#### **24 Jan 44:**

During the morning, Sgt Cummins and 11 OR's joined the Light Section at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn from BEVERIDGE'S POST leaving 4 personnel there to act as a staging post. This brought the total personnel at the Light Sec to 2 Offrs and 21 OR's. It was known earlier in the morning that casualties including 4 stretcher cases and 5 walking wounded had been kept at the fwd RAP overnight. These casualties left this RAP with the native train at 1300 hrs and reached the Light Section between 1600 hrs and 1830 hrs. It was obvious early that the late arrival of these casualties would mean that Aust troops would have to carry them on to the ADS at GUYS POST. The first 3 stretchers were accordingly despatched with 7 bearers to each drawn from 2/5 Aust. Fd. Amb personnel at the post with Lieut RAINE accompanying the first stretcher squad. To carry the 4<sup>th</sup> stretcher case, 10 men were drawn from the 2/10 Bn and with Sgt Cummins I/C left the post at 1840 hrs. All cases reached ADS GUYS POST in daylight (by 2000hrs) and the bearer personnel did an excellent job. Unfortunately, one case died soon after reaching ADS GUYS POST.

#### **25 Jan 44:**

A quiet day. The OC journeyed back to GUYS POST to see CO 2/5 Fd. Amb about the advisability of moving a section fwd as the 2/10 Inf Bn were getting further away and the track to GUYS POST had been considerably improved. Unfortunately, the CO was out.

#### **26 Jan 44:**

CO 2/5 Fd Amb and Capt. Arrowsmith arrived at the post about 1400 hrs and a small party including Lt Raine and OC Section recce'd fwd as far as the junction of the FARIA RIVER and MAIN STREAM and decided to move the section forward to this position, which was adjacent to C Coy 2/10 Aust Inf Bn.

**27 Jan 44:** Capt. Pullen handed over command of the section to Capt. Arrowsmith and the section moved fwd to the position decided upon on the previous day and estab at the junction of the tracks serving the 2/10 Inf Bn and the valley of MAIN STREAM. Capt Pullen and his batman journeyed to fwd RAP 2/10 Inf Bn and saw Capt Roule, who, although tired, was very cheery and was treating a number of feet sodden from continuously wearing wet boots. S/Sgt Behan and his party of 11 bearers were very happy and in good fettle and their work won much praise from Capt.



Royle. Capt. Pullen proceeded back to GUYS POST, then on to MDS DUMPU, arriving about 2000 hrs. Throughout the whole of this period, the work done by Lt Raine and the NCO's was of a high standard, and the men did cheerfully whatever was asked of them. In particular, I would like to mention the work of Pte D. Macintosh who volunteered repeatedly for tasks, many of which involved long journeys over difficult tracks.

**(Signed) Capt. PULLEN**  
**OC Detachment "A" Coy 2/5 Aust Fd Amb.**



**“Bluey” Berwick in Thomas Splints**

## Gayton's Post



**Shaggy Ridge 1945**

### **REPORT "A" COY 2/5 AUST. FD. AMB. BEARER SECTION**

**18 Jan 44:** Bearer Section of Lt TJ Raine and 24 OR's left MDS for 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP GRASSY PATCH. 1 and 18 arrived GRASSY PATCH 18173 181730L - 6 bearers left at BEVERIDGES POST to continue on next morning.





**Crater Pimple - Shaggy Ridge**

**19 Jan 44:**

Sgt Davis and Cpl Walker with 2 squads moved fwd with 2/10 Aust Inf Bn  
Cpl Walker to return to GRASSY PATCH the following day.

Lt Raine with remainder of section established Medical Post at GRASSY PATCH  
using 2/10 Aust Inf Bn medical equipment.

One patient - appendicitis - was being held. 6 bearers arrived from BEVERIDGES  
POST.

**20 Jan 44:**

4 wounded coming in from D Coy 2110 Aust Inf Bn. Sgt DAVIS sick, replaced by  
Cpl Walker. The CO came up to GRASSY PATCH - he is arranging for Capt Pullen  
to move up and take over the Post.

1 stretcher case arrived.

**21 Jan 44:**

S/Sgt BEHAN moved up to 2110 Aust Inf Bn RAP from GRASSY PATCH.

1 stretcher case and some walkers passed through the post.

Capt. Pullen and batman arrived.

**22 Jan 44:**

Lt TJ Raine and Pte Ward went up to contact Capt Royle at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP -  
returned with 5 PUO's including Sgt. Davis and Pte Worthington. Capt Pullen and  
batman moved to 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ. No further battle casualties.

**23 Jan 44:**

At 0845 hrs the Section moved from GRASSY PATCH to join Capt Pullen at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ. 7 natives were required to move the medical equipment. A medical post was established at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ - 3 stretcher cases and 6 walkers from 2/10 Aust Inf Bn passed through.

**24 Jan 44:**

Lt TJ Raine visited CO at GUYS POST. 4 stretcher cases were carried from 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ to GUYS POST by bearers from the section. 3 teams sent fwd to 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP.

**25 Jan 44:**

The section remains at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn HQ.

**26 Jan 44:**

The CO, Capt Pullen, Capt Arrowsmith, and Lt TJ Raine, visited C Coy 2/10 Aust Inf Bn and selected possible site for Medical Post near junction of MAIN STREAM and FARIA RIVER. 4 bearers returned to GUYS POST.

**27 Jan 44:**

Capt Pullen and batman went up to 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP. Capt Arrowsmith, Lt T.J. Raine, and remainder of section moved from 2/10 Aust Inf Bn BHQ to site selected on 26 Jan 44. A medical post was established - an excellent spot; good water, pleasant surroundings, and, in hours, about half way between Bn RAP's and ADS, section mounting own guard. Some sick and wounded arrived - we held 3 PUO's overnight. Capt Pullen, plus batman, plus mud passed through the section in the twilight, returning to GUYS POST. Drawing rations from C Coy 2110 Aust Inf Bn. 3 more bearers returned to GUYS POST - section now 2 and 13.

S/Sgt Behan with Cpl Walker and 10 bearers still forward with Capt Royle.

9 PUO's and 1 battle casualty through section today.

**28 Jan 44:**

Capt Arrowsmith went fwd to 2/9 and 2/10 Aust Inf Bn's RAP's Party ambushed on return - one shot was fired - no casualties on either side in spite of Capt. Arrowsmith's endeavours.

Three battle casualties and 9 sick through the section today.

Held some patients at the post for the night.

**29 Jan 44:**

CO called on section on his way through to 2/9 and 2/10 Aust Inf Bns. Lt TJ Raine contacted Capt Royle at 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP. 2/5 Aust Fd Amb teams with 2/10 Aust Inf Bn seem fit and happy, but would appreciate some socks. It is a 2 ½ hr trip unloaded, from med. post to 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP. 1 ¼ hr to return.

3 Battle Casualties and 10 sick through the post today.

**30 Jan 44:**

8 Battle casualties and 14 sick through today. The section received a comforts issue from the Bn.

**31 Jan 44:** Capt. Arrowsmith went fwd to 2/10 Aust Inf Bn RAP. 2 sick through Post up till 1200 hrs. Capt, Edelman called in on the way to 2/9 Aust Inf Bn.

(Signed) T.J. RAINE    Lieut.  
Bearer Offr "A" COY 2/5 Aust Fd Amb.

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**REPORT OF ADS's SADDLE & GUYS POST**  
**6 Jan - 1 Feb 44**

**6 - 9 Jan 44:**

ADS estab B Ech 18 Inf Bde Bns - Bde HQ. All front line cas passing through - method of evac jeep. Took over from 2/4 Aust Fd Amb on 5 Jan 44. HQ of 2/5 Fd Amb sent out one Offr (Capt Edelman) and 5 men. Replaced by A Coy personnel on morning of 6 Jan 44 - one Cpl, one NCO, one cook, and 6 OR's. Capt Edelman remains OC. Working in conjunction with Surg Team from 2/9 AGH, Capt RYAN and 2 OR's, one of whom was evac to MDS on 8 Jan 44. Being replaced by one of our personnel.

**10-18 Jan 44:** Medical posts estab at GUYS POST and BEVERIDGES POST. GUYS estab 6 Jan 44, Cpl Bilger, nursing Cpl, and 2 OR's. Working in conjunction with Bn RAP stationed there. Capt Pullen, MO A Coy, with 8 OR's estab Med Post BEVERIDGES on 12 Jan 44.

Line of evac from fwd area through BEVERIDGES to GUYS and so to ADS. Jeep head nearing GUYS, but restricted traffic only.

Still necessary to bring patients direct to SADDLE ADS. Sgt Pfitzner, Surg Team att. returned from Hosp, our OR remaining to assist Surg Team. nursing orderly, Pte Jenkins evac to Hosp 18 Jan - DENGUE FEVER. Most PUO's evac to hosp have been diagnosed DENGUE, particularly from DID area, down in a hollow - 8 out of 9 men evac.

**19 - 20 Jan 44:**

ADS moved fwd to GUYS POST at approx 1100 hrs 19 Jan 44. Necessary Surg equipment and other gear for estab of ADS was loaded on 3 jeeps and trailers. Joined by 1 jeep and trailer from unit with extra equipment needed. The ADS Gpe arrived at GUYS POST approx 1130 hrs; unloaded gear at jeep head approx 500 yds from site. Native carriers assisted in transporting equipment to site, everything being conveyed to site approx 1300 hrs. On 18 Jan, at 1045 hrs, rest of A Coy moved fwd from MDS. The party consisted of one section under command Lt Raine, S/Sgt Bearer, 2 I/C and 5 bearer teams, each of 4 men, and 3 general duties.

Total personnel 1 Offr and 24 OR's. Extra personnel were taken for Capt Pullen's Light Section. Lt Raine's bearer section moved fwd to GUYS POST on 18 Jan, staged there the night of 18-19 Jan, moving fwd to GRASSY PATCH on 19 Jan. Their objective to serve the 2/10 Inf Bn. Capt Pullen's Light Section, Sgt Davis 2 I/C made mobile, and strength increased; total personnel 1 Offr and 12 OR's.

To move wherever necessary, stationed at BEVERIDGES POST at present. A MSP I/C of Sgt Cummins with 3 OR's will be stationed permanently at BEVERIDGES. Its purpose to act as resting place for patients and bearers en route. Coffee stall will be in service also. An RAP staff was left at SADDLE ADS site, I/C Cpl Bilger with 4 OR's. Capt J. Fairley will act as RMO.

It will continue to service 18 Inf Bde Rear Details Group. ADS GUYS POST Gpe consists of Surg Team, Capt Ryan OC, Capt Smith, Sgt Pfitzner, Ptes Briggs, Bingham, and Pte Maddock of A Coy. Capt Edelman OC ADS, nursing staff of 4 OR's - Ptes. Cushing, Park, McGregor, & Pte Nind replacing Jenkins evac on morning of 19 Jan 44. Cpl Fitzgerald admission clerk, Cpl Brown I/C general duties - 4 men. Cooks Cpl Wagner and 2 OR's. Total personnel - 1 Offr and 12 OR's.

Attached reserve bearers, consisting of 2 parties, one I/C WO(2) Stevens, with 8 AASC personnel, other under Sgt Stock B Coy with 12 OR's to be ready for instant fwd mvt if necessary. 2 huts were under course of construction on arrival at ADS site at GUYS POST. One, as an operating theatre, and the other for use as a surgical ward. These were completed and ready for operation at 1700 hrs, everything set up, the theatre staff working very hard. All personnel co-operated well and worked most satisfactorily to have ADS ready. Word was received that an urgent acute appendicitis case was on the way down, passing through BEVERIDGES POST at 1800 hrs, an hours stretcher carry from GUYS. Patient was admitted at 1900 hrs, operated on by 2030 hrs, within 4 hours of completion of ADS. Personnel attached for rations at GUYS include 5 war correspondents, also 4 Sigs who are operating the switchboard at post. Present ration strength 3 Offrs and 52 OR's.

**21 Jan 44:** Morning spent completing fitting of wards and general work on site-. d received that casualties were expected, the first received at approx. 1600 hrs; continual stream from then on, total admissions being 14 wounded and 6 sick. All wounded were operated on, the surgical team working extremely hard, completing the last operation at 0300 hrs 22 Jan. One patient died on the table. ADMS visited ADS.

#### **22 Jan 44:**

All wounded evacuated to air strip, with one exception who went to 2/5 MDS, as did the sick, One abdominal patient died at approx 0900 hrs, otherwise all did well. Casualties at this stage - 2/9 Inf Bn 10 wounded, 2/10 Inf Bn 4 wounded. GAYTONS POST ADS reported casualties heavy from 2/12 Inf Bn being 10 KIA, 4 Offrs and 43 OR s WIA. Rush expected, but evacuation from GAYTONS to GUYS most difficult, - as was evac from forward areas to GAYTONS. Actual patients admitted GAYTON's night 21 Jan - 22 Jan 44 4 BC's Others kept at fwd RAP and MSP run by



2/2 Pnr Bn in support, Capt Chenoweth OC. Lt Col MacIntosh arrived GAYTON's POST late afternoon 21 Jan and later assisted surgical there with operation on Lt Col Bourne, CO 2/12 Inf Bn, WIA. More wounded from 2/9 Inf Bn arrived at GUYS odd intervals 22 Jan 44; also sick from both 2/9 and 2/10 Inf Bns.

No more wounded received from 2/10 Inf Bn; the first evac from GAYTONS POST received - 3 WIA and 5 PUO's. With advance of infantry, new evac line through SHAGGY RIDGE will be opened making things much better. Quiet night, last operation being done by 2110 hrs.



**Bearer Section and Patient leaving Guy's Post for M.D.S. DUMPU**



**Lt Raine's Staging Post at Mainstream – Shaggy Ridge**



### **Operating Theatre Gayton's Post**

#### **23 Jan 44:**

**AM** GAYTONS ADS sent advice that 18 WIA walking and 15 WIA stretcher will be leaving their ADS for GUYS POST this morning.

Advice also received from 2/9 Inf Bn that several cas have left their fwd RAP for this ADS. 12 native loads of urgent requisites for GAYTONS POST left this AM, this ADS developing into a "Clearing House" for all further advance posts. Surgical team expect a further 15 WIA this AM -GAYTONS - over and above cas evac to GUYS.

#### **24 Jan 44:**

Quiet morning, ADS being cleared of any cas still remaining with one exception, a chest case, who will remain for approx a week, it is anticipated; middle of the afternoon, expected evac from GAYTONS POST started arriving, most of whom were already "cleaned up" by GAYTONS Surg Team, and were therefore sent straight on to the air-strip. The war correspondents moved on. Cas received from 2/10 Inf Bn, two of whom were serious, one an abdominal, dying later. The other is progressing favourably and will be held for some days. As usual, the surgeons work was at night, they did not finish until 0200 hrs, as they did likewise night of 23 Jan 44. Cpl Bilger moved fwd from SADDLE MSP to GUYS as surgical nurses are needed here, and SADDLE POST needs only an RAP staff. Likewise, at GAYTONS ADS, 2 nursing personnel were sent from MDS to there, being replaced at MDS by 2 B Coy personnel from Sgt Stock's team.

#### **25 Jan 44:**

Urgent requisites were sent to GAYTONS, per "Boong Train", after evacuation of patients held. The morning remained quiet. GOC 7 Division Maj. Gen. VASEY and

Lieut Gen SMART, British Amy, visited ADS. One BC, an abdominal, died at 250300 hrs.

An acute appendicitis was evacuated direct to Strip. During the afternoon, cas came in from both 2/9 and 2/12 Inf Bns in a steady stream, mainly PUO's, 5 BC's in all, including 3 transfers from GAYTONS. The surgical team redressed them, and had their first quiet night for some time.

At 1930 hrs a bulldozer from the engineers arrived, and commenced a through track from the road, which, when in operation, will greatly assist in the evacs from this ADS. Previously, it meant a carry of some few hundred yards. Signal received from Lt Jacobs, bearer sec att 2/12 Inf Bn, that his section needed spelling. They had some most arduous carries, in very difficult country, their performance being most creditable. Decided to send party out under WO(2) Stevens to relieve them.

#### **26 Jan 44 :**

WO(2) STEVENS and party moved out at 0700 hrs, party consisting of 24 OR's all told. To report to RMO 2/9 Inf Bn for further instructions.

During morning, the usual sick arrived and were evac. In the afternoon and evening, 10 BC's arrived, including 3 from GAYTONS POST, the remainder being operated on at this POST. Lt Jacob's section arrived back, looking pretty worn, and went back to the MDS after partaking of refreshments. Capt. Rutherford and batman accompanied the patients down from GAYTONS, plus Pte Ferguson, nursing orderly, This party of 1 Offr and 2 OR's standing by here in case needed further fwd at any time. 4 OR's marched in from Capt Pullen's ex section, attached GUYS.

#### **27 Jan 44:**

As usual, a quiet morning was spent, after evac the cas, most BC's going from here direct to the Air Strip. During the early and late afternoon, the remainder of GAYTONS marching in; it taking 183 Boongs to do the shift, - 8 patients, (7 BC's and 1 sick), and all their equipment.

Capt. Legget supervised their transportation, all arriving in good condition. 3 of them are on the DI List, and 4 of them on the SI List. Capt Leggett remained with the Surg Team here, his detachment moved back to MDS - all B Coy personnel with the exception of 2 nursing orderlies from HQ. ADMS visited ADS during the afternoon, and saw arrival of GAYTONS patients.

Brig. Chilton visited Lt Col Bourne of 2/12 Inf Bn - one of the arrivals. Capt Pullen and batman arrived from BHQ 2/10 Inf Bn, being replaced by Capt Arrowsmith, Capt. Pullen moved to MDS after tea-ing. 3 personnel marched in from Lt Raine's, attached for duty here. The coffee stall post on GAYTONS evacuation route closed with return of personnel, and returned to MDS.

#### **28 Jan 44:**

ADMS endeavouring to acquire special plane for bad casualties, patients to be flown direct to MORESBY. Capt Smith, Surg Team attached returned to 15 Fd Amb on



ADMS instns - so ended a beautiful friendship, temporarily only, we trust. Patients sent to air strip - ADMS being there and supervised loading - all travelled well.

Quietest day yet - one BC only coming in. The usual PUO's came through and also some DIARRHOEA all being evac to MDS in order to prevent spreading in this area.

**29 Jan 44;**

CO left at 0900 hrs to visit MSP FARIA - MAIN STREAM JUNCTION now under comd Capt Arrowsmith, Lt Raine 2 I/C and 13 OR'd. Also went fwd to 2/9 Inf Bn RAP and saw WO(2) Stevens' party working from there. Sec of Lt Raine's original bearer team are still with 2/10 Inf Bn fwd, I/C of S/Sgt Behan, who went fwd when Sgt Davis was evac ? MALARIA. 4 BC's only received, 3 from 2/9 Inf Bn, 1 from 2/12 Inf Bn. ADMS and Col Littlejohn, Consulting Surgeon, visited ADS., Col Littlejohn staying overnight in order to make some experiments with penicillin.

**30 Jan 44:**

6 HQ's personnel marched in en route to WO(2) Steven's section to replace some men there.

Left at 0800 hrs - their exchanges arriving here late this evening. 8 BCs arrived 24 to 30 hrs since injury. The type of treatment being investigated in this series of cases, under supervision of Col. Littlejohn is similar to the type on trial in ITALY, under Dr. FW Florey. Instead of the standard method of wide excision without suture, these cases are receiving wide excision, local application of 20,000 units of penicillin dusted on with sterile sulphanilamide powder as the vehicle, and primary suture with undercutting of skin edges if required. CO returned to unit.

**31 Jan 44:**

OC ADS visited fwd RAP 2/9 Inf Bn; WO(2) Stevens and party appeared to be in good health. Quiet morning; 1 BC - victim of a booby trap which had been missed. Col. Littlejohn and Capt. Ryan visited SHAGGY RIDGE area, staying the day. ADMS visited ADS. Col. MacIntosh later joined him for conference. Some BC's arrived during the evening, including one head case, which on arrival, proved serious.

**1 Feb 44:**

BC (head) died at approx 0210 hrs. Col. Littlejohn returned to Div.

Quietest day yet; 1 BC only being received - a superficial SW of foot.

Many PUO's and DIARRHOEA cases are arriving from Bns; men saying they have been unable to wash either themselves or their food containers for anything up to 14 days. With the local battle reaching a conclusive stage, decided to withdraw WO(2) Stevens' Bearer Section from 2/9 Inf Bn. They marched in en route back to the MDS during the late afternoon.

(Signed) H.J. EDELMAN Capt.

OC GUY'S POST DUMPU

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## **REPORT OF SURGICAL TEAM ATT. 2/5 AUST FD. AMB. GUY'S POST**

This surgical team moved to SADDLE ADS from DUMPU on 19 Jan 44, and six hours after arrival, the first patient, suffering from acute appendicitis was operated on by Capt SMITH. The personnel of the team consisted of the surgical team **previously attached** to 2/4 Aust Fd Amb, less Cap.t CAC Leggett who was replaced by Capt F. Smith. The theatre staff was aided by an orderly from Maj. Ryan's surgical team and an orderly from 2/5 Aust Fd Amb. This extra assistance was invaluable as it provided a 24 hour service for treatment of wounded.

Anaesthetics and resuscitation were under care of Capt. Edelman assisted during periods of heavy work by Capt JH Fairley of 2/4 Aust Fd Regt and Capt Bracken of 15 Aust Fd Amb.

Whilst at GUY'S POST ADS, this team performed 82 operations; 81 of which were battle casualties, and the other an acute appendicitis. Of these cases, four patients died, - two of these were perforating abdominal wounds over 24 hours old, one a compound fractured skull, and the last, a compound fractured humerus who died during the anaesthetic and prior to the operation. The cause of this death was not ascertained.

Throughout the campaign, this team received the utmost consideration and help from the CO and personnel of 2/5 Aust Fd Amb. Supplies were kept up well and the patients were nursed after operation, and transported to the jeep head with the minimum of discomfort. It is hoped that the opportunity will again arise to work with this Fd Amb as there is no doubt that a smoothly run show, such as this has been, results in better treatment for the wounded which is all that matters.

**(Signed) William A RYAN Capt,  
OC Surgical Team**

Following the cessation of hostilities in the SHAGGY RIDGE area, the 15<sup>th</sup> Aust Fd. Amb gradually took over all forward posts, allowing the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Aust. Fd. Amb to be concentrated at the M.D.S. at DUMPU.

In early March, it was suggested by "higher authorities" that nurses should be attached to work in the M.D.S. This suggestion was strongly opposed on the grounds that:

- (a) There was no work requiring their skills, and
- (b) They upset the male orderlies.

Divisional Command was determined that the nursing sisters would be attached; and engineers commenced the task of building quarters for them, as well as replacing some of the wards, which had deteriorated badly.

On 27<sup>th</sup> March, we were advised that the sisters would NOT be arriving. Our officers were able to move into the new quarters, which were designed to hold 6 nurses, but were now expected to take 15 - 17 officers!!

On 30<sup>th</sup> March, we were advised the change-over by 18<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Brigades would not take place for some time, and this would necessitate our taking over 2 or 3 Advance Medical Posts. "B" Company was warned to be ready.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April, 7 Aust. Div HQ flew out from DUMPU and 11 Aust. Div. assumed command of all units in the RAMU VALLEY. On 21<sup>st</sup> April, we were advised that the brigade change-over had been cancelled, and 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade were moving to the coast. 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade would be moving out in the near future, but the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Aust Fd Ambulance would probably have to remain until the area was evacuated.

All patients needing more than 7 days hospitalisation were evacuated over the next few days in preparation to close, but in the meantime, the ADMS instructed us to take over a Jeep Loading Post, and MSP at KANKIRYO from the 15<sup>th</sup> Aust. Fd. Ambulance. Capt. Rutherford with 12 men took over at KANKIRYO, and Sgt. L. TANN and 4 men took over the Jeep Loading Post.

By the end of April, only 45 patients remained in the M.D.S. at DUMPU, and the whole operation was being scaled down. The 2/10 Aust. Inf. Battalion flew out on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April, and the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Aust. Inf. Battalion followed on the 6<sup>th</sup> May.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> May, the posts at Jeep Head and KANKIRYO were closed, and Capt. Rutherford, and Sgt. Tann and parties returned to camp. By 7<sup>th</sup> May, only 12 patients remained.

To relieve the boredom over this period, it was arranged for each company to have a 2 day bivouac and rifle shoot.

On 14<sup>th</sup> May, came the news we had been waiting for.- Move out at 0600 hrs on 15<sup>th</sup> May 44.

## CHAPTER 11

### STRATHPINE & KAIRI

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1944, the unit flew from DUMPU to LAE, on the north coast of NEW GUINEA; with 10 planes carrying personnel, and a further 5 taking stores and equipment. There we were accommodated in a transit camp until boarding the "DUNTROON" (a former interstate passenger liner) for the voyage to Australia.

After sailing at 1000 hrs on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, we arrived at Townsville at 1300 hrs on the 20<sup>th</sup>, disembarked, and encamped for a few days at a transit camp where we were outfitted with fresh clothes etc. in preparation for home leave.

By 1<sup>st</sup> June, all troops were on leave; with the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Aust. Fd. Ambulance looking after our stores during our absence.

On our return from leave, we went straight to our new camp area at STRATHPINE, a few miles north of BRISBANE; and from here liberal leave was granted, 24 hours, day leave, or weekend. This was largely a period of rest and relaxation after the strenuous Shaggy Ridge campaign, and gave us all a chance to "recharge our batteries".

Hospitality was extended from many organisations within the civilian population. A number of members (including myself) accepted an invitation from a group at Ascot, to play tennis one weekend. We were made so welcome, that this became a regular weekend fixture for as long as we remained at Strathpine.

During July, a number of activities and changes took place. The C.O. attended a staff school for instruction on amphibious warfare. Q.M. Lt Ted Lones, one of our original N,C,O.'s left us on transfer to 2/14<sup>th</sup> A.G.H.; and Lt Jack Easton, one of our original pharmacists, transferred to 12 Aust. Camp Hospital at the Sydney Showground. Two new Officers joined as replacements, Capt. A.D. Fitch as Q.M. and Lt. Owens as Dispenser.

A letter of farewell was also received, addressed to all Officers, N,C,O.'s and men of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, from Maj. Gen. George Vasey. Due to ill health, Gen Vasey was being relieved of his command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division and Maj. Gen. Milford was to take over.

Since mid-July, we had been practising for a ceremonial march through the city, and after a full dress rehearsal on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, the march by the whole 7<sup>th</sup> Division took place in Brisbane on 8<sup>th</sup> August.

On 10<sup>th</sup> August, we received warning of an impending move to the Atherton Tablelands area for the 7<sup>th</sup> Division. This commenced on the 15<sup>th</sup> August, with the 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade being first to move.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, we held a unit dance in the Strathpine hall. Partners were supplied from 2 W.A.A.F. Barracks. This proved quite a novelty, and was well received.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> August, the advance party of the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, moved out, with the main part of 18 Brigade following on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The advance party of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd. Ambulance accompanied the main Brigade party.

The main body of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> moved out on 1<sup>st</sup> September, arriving at KAIRI on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

Training cadres for N.C.O.'s started on the 18<sup>th</sup> with instructors being supplied from Brigade, with 2 cadres, each of a week's duration. Most of the N.C.O's considered that they had benefitted from this training.

Capt. H.J. Edelman was promoted to Major; and Capt. V Sampson joined us early in October, taking over as O.C. 'B' Company.

With specialised amphibious training imminent, stores were being sorted and packed into "man loads" of approx. 20 lbs per man. This was quite a complicated operation, as each group needed to be self-supporting, with all essential equipment'

In view of the writing of this history, the following extract from Routine Orders of 25th. September 1944, will prove of interest:

### **UNIT WAR HISTORIES**

1. It is suggested that units take preliminary steps towards compilation of unit war histories after the cessation of hostilities, as was done by many units after the 1914 - 1918 war.
2. A ballot will be held to ascertain how many members of the unit desire that a war history should be eventually produced, and how many will undertake in writing to purchase a copy thereof on publication.
3. It is anticipated that units will be authorised to transfer from Regimental Funds to a special MNIT WAR HISTORY TRUST FUNV, provided that 60% of unit members agree, an amount not exceeding 5/- per member. (Such agreement to be ascertained by ballot).
4. It is realized that special problems will confront small units.

5. A ballot will be held on Tuesday 26th. September 1944, in which every member of the unit may vote. The following questions will be answered with "Yes" or "No".

- (a) Do you desire that a unit war history be produced?
- (b) will you undertake in writing, to purchase a copy of the unit war history if produced?
- (c) Do you agree to the transfer from regimental funds to a unit war history trust fund, the sum of 5/- per member of posted strength?

No result of this poll could be found among the records, or any further reference to it, nor any record of the Unit War History Trust Fund ever having been established.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October, the unit held our usual anniversary party, to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our embarkation for overseas service.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October, Lt. Col. MacIntosh handed over command of the unit to Lt. Col. J.S. Peters, at a formal parade; and the following day, both Lt. Cols proceeded to Planning H.Q. at Trinity Beach near Cairns, in connection with the projected amphibious training exercise.

On 4<sup>th</sup> November, at 2300 hrs, all personnel and stores, (except for a small rear party) moved out in 2 waves, to CAIRNS, to take part in amphibious training; arriving at our bivouac area at 0400 hrs.

Training commenced immediately, with a review of man-loads, and jeeploads. Each man was to carry personal gear, mosquito nets, blanket, and groundsheet, plus a pack containing specified medical equipment weighing 20 lbs.

On November 6<sup>th</sup> a party from each company embarked on L.S.I.'s; "A" Company on the "EMPIRE SPEARHEAD" with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Aust. Inf. Battalion, and "B" Company with the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Pioneer Battalion on the "GLENEARN" for 3 days' training. This training consisted of practice assault landings from A.L.C.'s to the beach at UNITY BEACH.

Due to a shortage of L.S.I.'s, H.Q. Company had to do their training from an "earthbound" L.S.I., the "H.M.A.S. PARK"

On 13<sup>th</sup> November, Exercise "OCTOPUS" was held, when our recent training was put into practice, as follows:

1. 0600 hrs - Landing at Unity Beach
2. The battalions move forward, followed by our bearer companies in support, establishing A.D.S. and medical posts as required.
3. An M.D.S. was established at the Beach Head

4. 1600 Hrs. The exercise concluded.

The unit was commended on their performance the following day, by Brigade, Div. H.Q., and Corps, so we must have done something right!

On 16<sup>th</sup> November, we returned to Kairi, where our load tables were reorganised over the next few days, to conform to lessons learned during operation "Octopus".

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, we received 9 reinforcements, the first we had received since August 1943 - 15 months earlier. As the reinforcement position was now acute, being about 40 personnel short of W.E., the C.O. visited both the A.D.M.S. and D.A.A.G. 7 Aust. Div. to request further reinforcements to bring the unit up to full strength. As a result, we were to receive our full complement of reinforcements over the next few weeks, mainly from the now, disbanded Armoured Regiment.

In late November, a 2 day company exercise was carried out, with full man loads carried, to profit from the lessons learned during "Octopus".

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, Capt. Sampson was appointed Major. This was the first time for years, that we had our full complement of 3 Majors; with Majors Pullen, Edelman and Sampson on strength.

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December, the unit took part in a brigade exercise, codenamed "FESTIVE", and on the 20<sup>th</sup> took part in a divisional sports meeting, where we combined with the 2/4<sup>th</sup> and 2/6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulances, to form a combined A.A.M.C. team. We came fourth.

**Christmas** 1944 was the first Christmas we had spent in Australia since sailing in 1940 and we made the most of it. Our new beer garden was opened just in time and this improved the amenities for the men considerably.

After Christmas, all those with large leave entitlements were sent on leave, and in the meantime, routine training continued in an effort to keep the men fit, and prevent them from becoming bored, as no further action was in prospect at present.

In early January 1945, we opened our new "Snack Bar", which, as an adjunct to the beer garden, proved very popular. Hot Dogs, bullburgers and spaghetti on toast sold very well.

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, sgt. R.A. Armitage was promoted to W.O. (1), and appointed R.S.M., replacing W.O. (1) Hewett, who had been boarded out.

Having been advised that the Duke of Gloucester (Governor General at that time), would be visiting the area on 13<sup>th</sup> February, special arrangements were made; roads

graded etc. and troops lined the road to welcome him. He drove past at about 15 mph in a closed car, and barely looked out!!'

We had a long period of very heavy rain in early March, which caused our training routine to be revised. The C.O. and Maj. Sampson gave a series of lectures on amphibious training; also gas training was intensified, but once the rain cleared, we held a number of 2 and 3 day exercises, and long route marches.

A brigade exercise "WESTWARD" was planned for 9 - 25<sup>th</sup> April, and the C.O. was appointed medical umpire. The exercise commenced on time, but on the completion of phase 1, when we were bivouacked at WONDELLA, sudden orders were received to cancel the remainder of the exercise and return to camp. There, we went through a hurried process of inoculation, cholera injection, TAB and vaccination. Obviously, something new was in the air, and we waited impatiently for orders.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> the unit was reviewed by Col. A. Hobson, A.D.M.S. 7 Aust. Div, who complimented the unit on their "splendid performance". The marching was greatly assisted by Pte. Tony Clarkson playing the kettledrum.

S/Sgt. H. Shipway was promoted to W.O. (I) and appointed R.S.M., to take over from W.O. (1) Armitage.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, warning was received of movement overseas, but we awaited details.

May 9<sup>th</sup> 1945 was observed as a day of rest to celebrate V.E. Day. With the war in Europe now over, we could at last see the end approaching. After five years, it seemed hard to believe.

Movement orders were finally received on 14th. May; tents were struck and gear packed in readiness.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May, Lt. Col. Peters relinquished command of the unit, and marched out. Maj. Pullin administered command of the unit until a new C.O. was appointed.

At 0700 hrs on 19<sup>th</sup> May, the first party moved out to REDLYNCH staging camp, by train from TOLGA. The second party left at 2000 hrs. Preparations were made for embarkation the following day; and M.O.'s were allocated to various ships in the convoy.

## CHAPTER 12

### BALIKPAPAN

At 1000 hrs on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1945, the main body of the unit embarked on LST 456; three of our M.O's being allocated to separate LST's as S.M.O's, while a rear party of 2 officers and 94 O.R.'s remained at Redlynch. The LST's of the first wave moved into midstream and anchored there for several days.

The rear party embarked on 25<sup>th</sup> May, and the convoy sailed the following day. The LST's all had pontoons slung over the sides, and as we struck extremely rough weather almost immediately after sailing, these pontoons took quite a hammering, necessitating a visit to Milne Bay for repairs. This took several days and the convoy finally left Milne Bay on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Our next port of call was at BIAK ISLAND, which we reached on 8<sup>th</sup> June, and stopped to replenish the supply of fresh water. After the confinement of shipboard life, many of the troops enjoyed a swim while this was being done. I can still remember donning goggles to see the thousands of tiny blue fish which swarmed in the water. Without goggles, the water looked blue, but with them, the water was clear but full of these tiny fish.

After a 24 hour stop, we sailed for MOROTAI, arriving on 12<sup>th</sup> June, disembarking, and camping at 1 Aust. Corps Transit Camp, whilst the massive convoy was assembled for the invasion of BORNEO.

On 14<sup>th</sup> June, we were joined by our new commanding officer, Lt. Col. Munro S. Alexander.

Between 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June, embarkation of all troops and equipment took place, with the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Aust. Fd. Ambulance commencing their embarkation on the 18<sup>th</sup> but being spread over several vessels: the "MANOORA", "KANIMBLA" NEWMAN", "TITANIA", LST's 911, 740 and 938, LSM 22, and LSM 21. The bulk of the unit were on board the "KANIMBLA" and LST 938.

With the gradual clearing of the Japanese from New Guinea, the H.Q. of the South West Pacific Area had been moved from Brisbane to HOLLANDIA, on the north coast of New Guinea, and with General MacArthur's eyes firmly fixed on the Philippines, the clearing of other areas was left to the Australians.

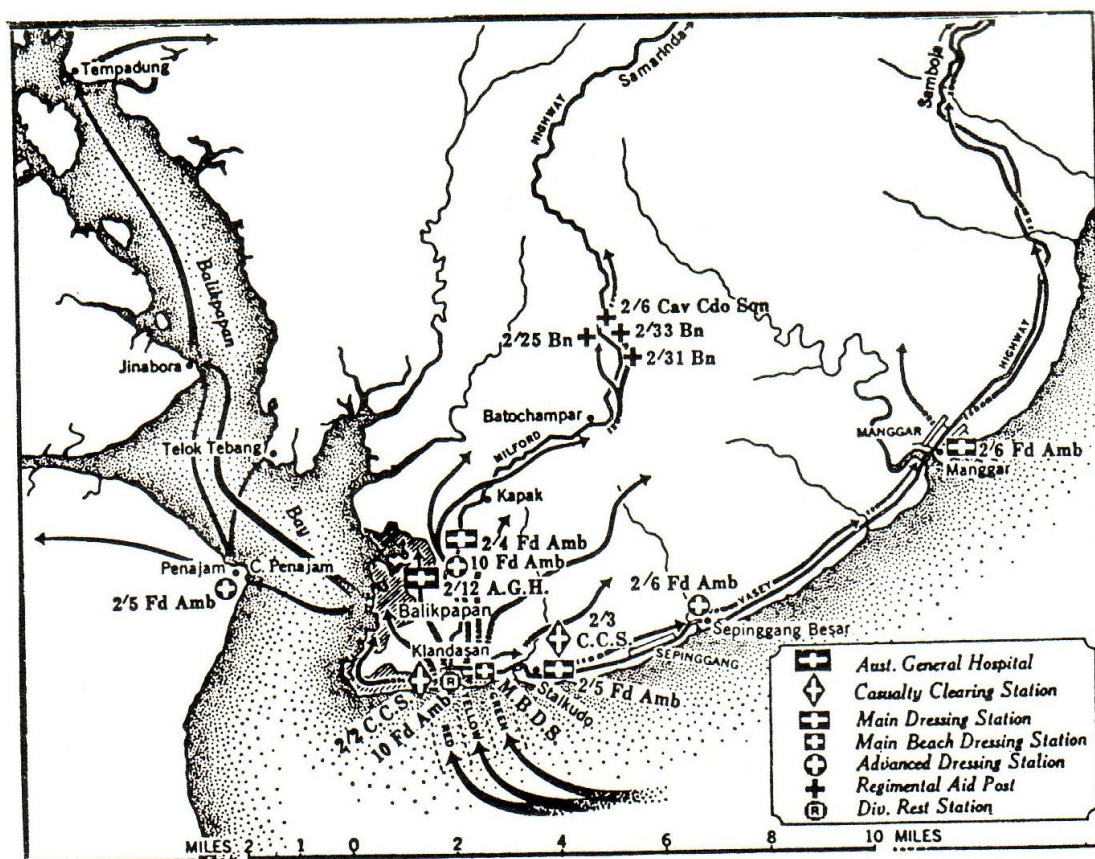
Our next target was Borneo, which was to be a large - scale operation involving both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division was to capture TARAKAN, BRUNEI, and LABUAN IS. to the north, whilst the 7<sup>th</sup> Division was to take BALIKPAPAN at the southern end of the Island.



Balikpapan was, after PALEMBANG in SUMATRA, the most productive oil port in S.E. Asia, and a vital target. This was to turn out to be the last large - scale operation of the war.

The plan provided that the landing be made at 0900 hours on 1<sup>st</sup> July, on a 2000 yard section of the beach near KLANDARSAN. The beach was divided into 3 sections, - from Right to Left, - GREEN, YELLOW AND RED beaches.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade with one battalion was to land on Green Beach, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade with two battalions on Yellow and Red Beaches. The 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade was to remain in reserve, and land on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.



## Invasion area at Balikpapan

The assault convoy of more than 100 ships sailed from Morotai on 26<sup>th</sup> June, arriving at its appointed area, about 8 miles S.E. of the landing beach about 11/2 hrs before sunrise. Preliminary mine sweeping, aerial bombing, and naval bombardment had preceded the arrival of the invasion force.

In the 20 days before the landing, the Balikpapan area received 3000 tons of bombs, 7361 rockets, 38,052 shells ranging in size from 3 inch to 8 inch, and 114,000 rounds

from automatic weapons. In the hour before 0830, 62 Liberators attacked, and for the rest of the day, 4 to 8 bombers circled overhead to attack prearranged targets as required.

From 0700 hrs. five cruisers, including H.M.A.S's HOBART and SHROPSHIRE, and 14 destroyers, shelled the landing beaches and the defences behind them, until the first wave of landing craft were within 1300 yds. of the beaches. About an hour before the landing, there was a combined rocket barrage and low level air strike, and 10 minutes before the landing, a second rocket barrage was delivered.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade plan was for the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion to land on Yellow Beach, the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion on Red Beach, with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion in reserve.

This was our first action with the 7<sup>th</sup> Division as a whole, and we were joined by the following A.A.M.C. units, to form a co-ordinated medical service for the Division: 2/4<sup>th</sup>, 2/6<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Field Amb's 2<sup>nd</sup> AAMC Beach Group, 2/2<sup>nd</sup> and 2/3<sup>rd</sup> C.C.S.'s 2/12<sup>th</sup> A.G.H. and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Malaria Control Unit.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, under Brig. Chilton, landed with the task of clearing the high ground, and this was nearly all under control by the end of the first day.

0900 hrs. was "H" Hour for the landing, with the infantry assault parties in the first wave. Eight minutes later ("H + W") the first of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> landed, Lt. Bob Leeder with 2 OR's from 'W' Company landing with the RMO and R.A.P. of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, while Lt. Smith (from 2/4<sup>th</sup> Fd. Amb.) and 2 OR's from "B" Company accompanied the RMO and R.A.P. of the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

At "H + 48", the main body of 'W' Company landed under Maj. Edelman and Capt. Wright to arrange evacuation to B.D.S. as necessary from the 2/10 Battalion. At the same time, "B" Company's main party under Maj. Sampson landed to liaise with the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion R.A.P.

This landing was an exhilarating experience, with rockets and shells screaming overhead as the assault craft headed for the shore. Everyone was keyed up for the moment the craft beached, the drawbridge dropped and we dashed ashore, wondering what awaited us.

In my case, I received a nasty shock. Being first off from my side of the craft, and expecting to step into about 6 inches of water, I was unable to stop before plunging headlong into a 12 foot deep bomb crater full of water. The weight of the pack of medical equipment on my back, took me headfirst to the bottom.

Had this happened to a poor swimmer, the result could have been disastrous, but I was able to extricate myself, wet and bedraggled, but otherwise O.K. The men following me had time to diverge to the other side of the ramp, and hardly even got their feet wet.

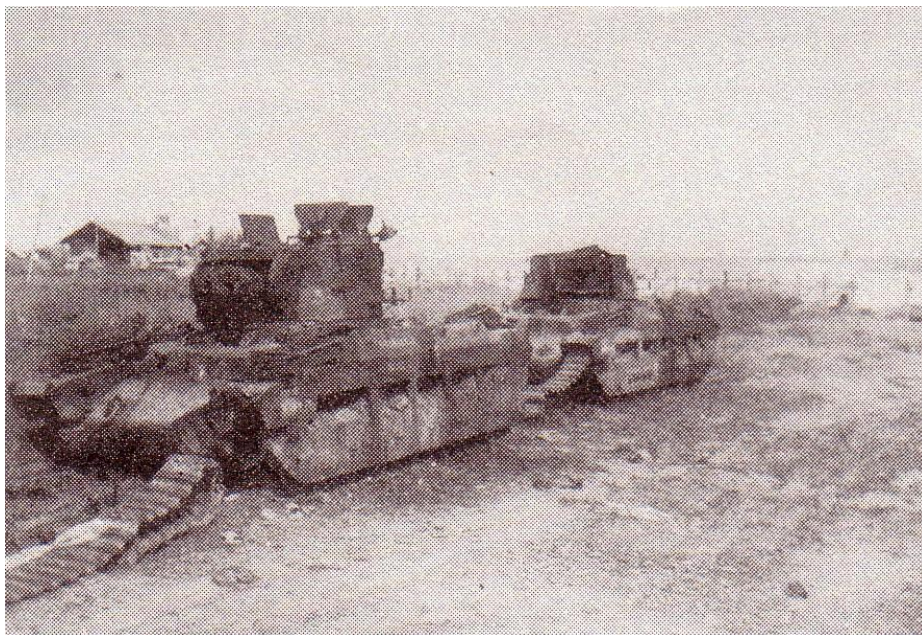
H.Q. Company and a reserve party from "B" Company landed the following day, and set up the M.D.S., to cater for casualties from both 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Brigades, and accepted the first casualties from the B.D.S. on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. A light section from 2/2<sup>nd</sup> C.C.S. were quartered with H.Q.

In the meantime, "A" and "B" Companies accompanied their respective battalions in different directions and as it is not possible to tell their stories simultaneously, I will concentrate first on "B" Company.

The first battle casualties were received about 1000 hrs. The track was impassable to jeeps, so bearer squads had to carry patients back to the jeep head. However, by 1650 hrs, our party had moved with the R.A.P. to the vicinity of RATION. More casualties were handled here, 7 wounded, and one died; plus 21 Jap casualties.

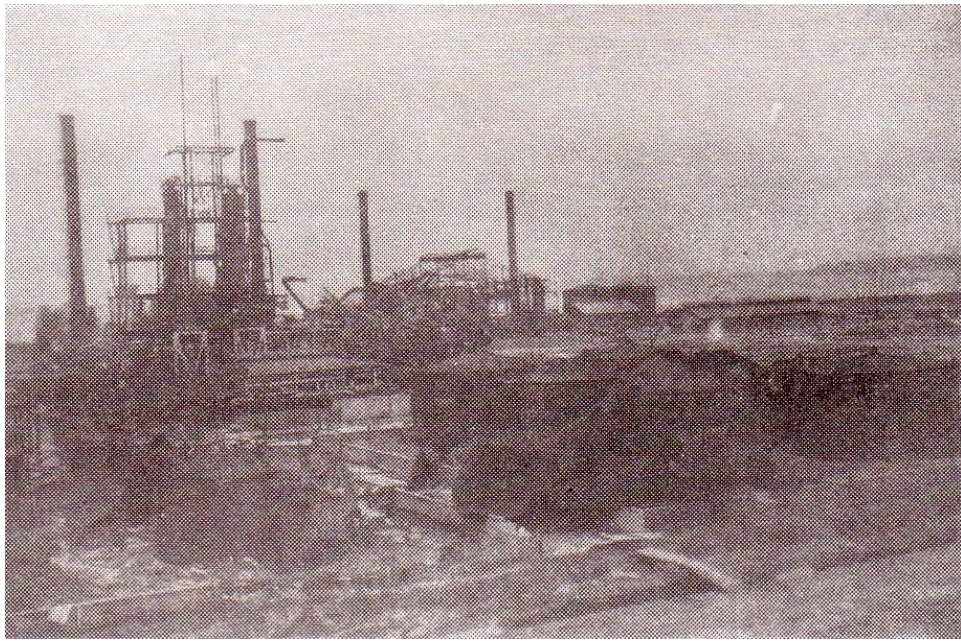
The route of evacuation from here was by bearer squad to H.Q. "C" Company, thence by jeep to a large shell hole blocking the VALLEY RD. Bearer squads then had to by-pass the shell hole, and transfer patients to another jeep on the other side.

At midday on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, B.H.Q. was moving to a position near POTTS or PORTEE. The bulk of the party moving across country with the R.A.P., but leaving their stores and jeeps behind at the jeep head. Once the R.A.P. was established, a new route was found for evacuation. No further casualties were suffered, and the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion position was taken over by the 2/25<sup>th</sup> Battalion with the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance in support.



**2 of our tanks destroyed by Jap guns Balikpapan 1945**





**Refinery area after Bombardment  
Balikpapan 1945**



**Oil Storage Tanks after bombardment  
Balikpapan 1945**

I would like to include here, a couple of interesting episodes from my own experiences;

On the second day, the 'V' Company bearers were in need of relief, and I was instructed to take a party out to relieve them. Cpl. Ted Stone came in to H.Q. with a jeep and trailer to provide transport and guidance to their position. We arrived at a cutting through a ridge in the refinery area, to find the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion troops retreating from where our group had been positioned. Leaving the rest of the party with the jeep, Cpl. Stone and I climbed the cutting, and proceeded along the ridge to find the R.A.P.

After covering the full length of the ridge (about 1/4 mile) without finding them, we were returning when we spotted a team of our bearers at the foot of the ridge. They called us down, and informed us that the Japs had recaptured the ridge an hour ago. Fortunately for us, the Japs had not occupied the ridge, or we would have been in real trouble.

Anyway, acting on our information, the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion re-occupied the ridge.

The following day, I was instructed to take 2 men, and form a dressing station in one of a row of suburban houses nearby, to service some local detachments. Picking out one that seemed most suitable, we scrounged through neighbouring houses for odds and ends to make ourselves comfortable, and we finally had ourselves fairly well set up.

A couple of days later, two Dutch sailors entered, and started looking through the various rooms. Thinking they were trying to pinch some of our hard-earned comforts, I grabbed one of them and told him that if they did not require medical attention, to clear off and look elsewhere.

Imagine my surprise when he told me that he was the owner of the house, and had lived there with his family until being called up into the navy. He had called in to see what was left after the Japanese occupation.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, Lt. Smith, with 10 bearers, was at the summit of PORTEE with the rear R.A.P. of the 2/12<sup>th</sup> Battalion; the remainder of the company forming a staging post at QUARRY. The R.M.O. with a forward R.A.P., was set up at a spot designated NEWCASTLE, and our bearers were carrying from there to the jeep head at PARRAMATTA.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, a medical staging post was opened, holding a few minor cases, and on the following day, a beach medical post was established at SANTOSA HILL, staging evacuations from the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion by LCT across Balikpapan Bay from PENAJAM.

By this time, 'B' Company's task was almost finished, and on 7<sup>th</sup> July the company was withdrawn to the M.D.S. area to remain in reserve with H.Q.



Meanwhile, 'A' Company were accompanying the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, as they fought their way through the area allocated to them. At HILL 87, "C" Company sustained 6 casualties, and our bearer squads evacuated them to the B.D.S. Some casualties were also being evacuated by sea, but by midday the enemy L of C, covering the PETERSHAM JUNCTION, was cleaned out, and this allowed jeeps to move up to the R.A.P. and take over the evacuation.

At this stage, Capt. Wright and his party were attached to 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the Petersham Junction area, while Lieut. Leeder and his party were supporting the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the Parramatta / Hill 87 area.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion took SIGNAL HILL, and moved up the coast to their next objective, PIER 4. Capt. Wright was withdrawn, leaving one section of bearers with jeep and trailer to move with the R.A.P. while Capt. Wright and the balance of "A" Company established an A.D.S.

Lieut. Leeder's party was held up for an hour by sniper fire, while evacuating patients and evacuations by jeep were troubled by snipers for about three hours.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, "A" Company prepared for embarkation with the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, to cross Balikpapan Bay and land at PENAJAM. This landing, the following day, was unopposed, and "A" Company established a temporary A.D.S. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, the A.D.S. was moved to a more suitable and permanent position.

Back at the M.D.S. area, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> C.C.S. had arrived, and begun to prepare a site for their operations. On 8<sup>th</sup> July, our M.D.S. was closed; all patients being transferred to the C.C.S. "B" Company moved to our new M.D.S. area at STALKOEDO, and began to prepare the site. The beach post at Santosa Hill was taken over by 2 AAMC Beach Group.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July, the new M.D.S. opened, with building continuing, to increase the bed capacity. By the 12<sup>th</sup> July, 75 beds were equipped, and by 13<sup>th</sup> 100 beds. On 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> there were air-raids, with bombs being dropped close to our headquarters, but there was no damage or casualties.

With the Balikpapan operation now virtually completed, moves were started for the release of long-service personnel, those with five years' service.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July, returns had to be submitted to 7 Division Headquarters of all those due for priority release. Points were to be allocated, according to length of service, marital status, and number of dependant children.

Suddenly, the war against Japan had taken on a more optimistic outlook, as the allies began to push the enemy back on all fronts. Japan itself was being pounded from the air, while allied naval forces were punishing shipping in Tokyo Bay.

The end of the war came with brutal suddenness. On the 5<sup>th</sup> August, came the news of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, followed by the destruction of Nagasaki on 9<sup>th</sup> August. It was no surprise to learn that Japan was making offers to surrender; which finally came on 14<sup>th</sup> August.

When Emperor Hirohito broadcast to his nation on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945 the terms of an unconditional surrender, and ordered his troops everywhere to lay down their arms, allied troops everywhere celebrated VJ Day with joy and thankfulness.

For troops who had seen the horrors of 5½ years of war, who had read of the mass bombings of European cities, who had seen the effects of massive bombardments of occupied Pacific Islands, who knew something of the slaughter and destruction in the campaigns in which they had participated, the sudden end of the war came with feelings of relief. In a sense, it was an anti-climax. Many had expected months of fierce fighting ahead, and many more casualties. It was expected that the Japanese would defend each island desperately, and that an invasion of the Japanese home islands may be necessary before the war could be ended.

We knew nothing of this new super weapon, the atomic bomb, and while we were appalled at the destruction they had caused, we all realized they had prevented thousands more casualties had the war dragged on.

Following the cessation of hostilities, the unit gradually consolidated at the M.D.S. Maj. Edelman, with 24 OR's, and Lt Leeder, with 20 OR's, returned from Penajam over the next few days, and on 20<sup>th</sup> August, the first batch of 5 year veterans marched out to return home for discharge.

There was much discussion as to our future. The C.O. was advised by the A.D.M.S. that should 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade be given a role with the occupation forces in Japan, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Fd Amb would definitely go too. However, nothing was known for certain at this stage.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August, that well known entertainer, Gracie Fields visited the area with a concert party, and put on a wonderful show, which was much enjoyed by all who saw it.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September, at 1200 hrs, the formal surrender of the Japanese forces in the area took place. Vice Admiral KAMADA, commanding all Japanese forces in the Balikpapan area, signed the Instrument of Surrender on board the H.M.A.S. BURDEKIN. WO (1) Lin Lancashire was sent to represent all 7<sup>th</sup> Division A.A.M.C. units at the surrender. He took some historic photographs, two of which are reproduced herein.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September, "B" Company took over the running of the convalescent camp, and on the 12<sup>th</sup>, the first batch of 20 sick Japanese P.O.W.'s was admitted to the M.D.S.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September, we were warned to prepare to stage approx. 150 Australian P.O.W.'s being released from CHANGI and other Japanese P.O.W. camps. These men began to arrive on 20<sup>th</sup> September and it was our privilege to feed and clothe them, and look after them for a few days, to make them a little bit stronger and more presentable before they flew home to be reunited with their families. This must have been one of the most pleasing tasks we were called on to perform.

On 29<sup>th</sup> September, the last of the released P.O.W.'s was flown out to be reunited with their families.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October, we were in the most unusual position that "B" Company was completely without an officer. Major Peach, from 2/31<sup>st</sup> Batt., took over as acting O.C. "B" Company.

On 7<sup>th</sup> October, the A.D.M.S. held a conference with the C.O's of Field Ambulances and C.C.S.'s to discuss the future. The C.O. was advised that the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance would become redundant in the very near future, and be absorbed into the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

Over the next few days, all equipment was handed over to the 20<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, which was to be the Field Ambulance attached to the Japan Occupation Force.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October, the last unit parade was held. The parade was inspected and addressed by the C.O. The following day, the convalescent camp was closed and on 12<sup>th</sup> October, the order for disbandment was received, with instructions to hand over to the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Aust. Fd. Ambulance.

At 1800 hrs. on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1945, the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance closed its books and ceased to exist.

**FINIS**





**Vice Admiral Kamada laying down his sword in token of surrender  
on board HMAS Burdekin 8<sup>th</sup> September 1945**



**Signing the instrument of Surrender on  
HMAS Burdekin 8<sup>th</sup> September 1945**

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **THE UNSUNG HEROES**

In researching the records and compiling this unit history, I have been very conscious of the many omissions, and the unbalanced picture presented by both the unit war diary and the official war history books.

These reports all focus on the "Headline" or more spectacular activities by the bearer companies, such as light sections, and detachments with the infantry battalions. Without wishing to detract in any way from the magnificent work done by these detachments, I consider that the more routine work done by the remainder of the unit has been largely overlooked. I would like to do what I can to correct this oversight, by devoting this final chapter to what could be called "The Unsung Heroes".

#### **1. TRANSPORT SECTION**

The contribution by this section to the overall achievements of the unit have been most significant, yet the only entries I could find in recognition of this was the odd phrase, such as "evacuation to the A.D.S. was by jeep!"

From the dust and heat of the Libyan desert, to the snows of Aleppo, and the mud and rain of the Pacific Islands, our transport section provided the mobility so essential under modern warfare conditions.

Whether it was transporting the unit from one campsite to another, carting the vital supplies and rations without which we could not function, or carrying the wounded back to dressing stations or hospital, the section performed admirably.

They had the dubious honour of suffering our first battle casualty, when Dvr. Harold Crockett was wounded by shellfire in Tobruk, while serving with a light section attached to the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

At times, in the islands, the difficult terrain severely restricted the use of vehicles. This freed many of the men, who would normally have been driving, for other duties. Many of them served with distinction as stretcher bearers on Shaggy Ridge, despite the fact that they had not been trained for this task.

The C.S.M. of the section, WO(2) Stevens, commanded a light section of stretcher bearers, composed largely of men from his section, attached to the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion on Shaggy Ridge. In his report, he strongly recommended that the transport personnel be trained further in AAMC work so they could increase their contribution to the overall effort.

I know I can speak on behalf of all of the AAMC personnel of the unit in saying "Thank you" to the transport section for their contribution to the overall achievements of the unit.

## **2. HEADQUARTERS**

There are many Divisions and Specialists attached to H.Q. on which I will comment separately:

### **(a) H.Q. Company:**

Very little has been recorded about the work done by this company. In most actions, H.Q. ran the M.D.S. and man-power was geared to this task. I found the occasional item in the records that the M.D.S. had been increased in capacity to 100 beds, or 200 beds, or even occasionally, to 300 beds. What must be realized is that an M.D.S. is just that, a MAIN DRESSING STATION, not a hospital.

Even though they often had to operate as a hospital, (with no increase in nursing staff) resources had to be stretched to the limit in both men and equipment to cope with the number of casualties they were expected to handle.

However, whatever task was allotted to them, they performed efficiently, despite the long hours and monotonous routine, often under difficult conditions.

### **(b) DISPENSARY:**

This section was always run so efficiently by Jack Easton and Ted Heriot (and later by their successors) that they were largely taken for granted. Very few stopped to think of the amount of care and dedication necessary for the efficient operation of the dispensary. Supplies had to be kept up, so that whatever medication was prescribed by the M.O.'s was available. In addition, numerous R.A.P's and A.D.S's had to be kept supplied, and every light section or detachment sent out needed medical panniers or satchels. As these detachments were often sent out at a moment's notice, there was no time for advance preparation. I cannot recall ever having heard that they were unable to supply whatever was required.

### **(c) QUARTERMASTER STORE:**

The Quartermaster Store is another section that is taken for granted, but if someone needed a new pair of boots, a pick and shovel, a tent, or any one of a hundred other items, the QX was expected to have it readily available.

Very few people stop to think of the organisation involved in running a QX Store, not only in having the supplies, but in being able to put a hand on whatever is required at a moment's notice. The amount of work involved in packing and unpacking every

time we moved was also considerable, and I am pleased to be able to acknowledge their contribution.

#### **(d) ORDERLY ROOM:**

There is an old saying that the army fights a paper war, and there is a lot of truth in the saying, but the reports and records do not just happen. I do not think anyone not working in the Orderly Room realizes the amount of paper work that is necessary. I spent a fortnight in Canberra researching the records to compile this history and I was both amazed and thankful for the amount of detail on record.

Copies of all returns had to go to about 8 or 10 destinations, Brigade, Division, Echelon, War History etc, and though at the time we often thought it was so much "bumph", I am sure that everyone whoever had to look up his service record or medical history when applying for a pension, would be thankful for the system.

Records of all admissions to, and discharges from, our hospitals also had to be kept, plus all sick parade records, promotions, movements into and out from the unit, duty rosters, routine orders, and many others.

This is an aspect of the army routine which very few members of the unit know about, but although largely unseen and unsung, the orderly room staff were a vital cog in the machine, and deserve acknowledgement.

#### **(e) SUNDRY:**

Various other specialists also deserve to be mentioned, such as pathology, chiropody, dental, paymaster, postal, hygiene, cooks etc.

These all had a vital role to play in the overall picture, and though their work is always in the background, and they receive no publicity, they should not be forgotten in this history.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to the wonderful spirit of co-operation that existed right through all branches of the unit. Though there was always a friendly rivalry between the companies, all members realized that we were inter-dependent, and co-operation by everyone was essential to attain the high standard of performance expected of us.

## EPILOGUE

A unit cadre remained attached to the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance to assist in the winding up of any outstanding business, and the repatriation for discharge of the unit members continued.

With the end of the war, members of the unit went back to their homes and families, and took up their chosen professions and occupations once more. These men went back to civilian life, enriched by their experiences of the war, and carrying with them memories of places, events and people that will never fade.

Those who served with the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, can hold their heads high in the knowledge that they did their duty, and created a tradition of which they can feel proud.

After the war, former members of the unit formed a 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Association, and a reunion is held each year on Caulfield Cup Eve, the anniversary of our sailing for overseas on the Mauretania on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1940.

Our ranks are thinner, after 47 years, but the comradeship forged during the war years still flourishes.

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As a matter of interest, I append the Embarkation Roll, ex Morotai to Balikpapan.

It is interesting to note that, of the 245 officers and men who sailed on the "Mauretania" in October 1940, only 42 names appear on this final roll.

# EMBARKATION ROLL - EX MOROTAI TO BALIKPAPAN

## Per MANOORA

VX 38724	WO(2)	Wallace	W.J.	*
WX 17797	Pte.	Martain	G.F.	

## Per ISM 22

VX 15947	Pte	Scholes	J	*
VX 20788	L/Cpl	Julien	S.J.	*

## Per LST 911

VX 83740	Pte	Rainbow	J.G.
VX 87532	"	Dangaard	A.E.
VX 128724	"	Keamy	P.E.
SX 6971	"	Appleton	R.J.

## Per NEWMAN

VX 19410	Pte	Harper	H	*
VX 116742	"	Cotter	J.R.	
NX 32400	L/Cpl	Larkin	J.V.	
TX 10795	Pte	Barber	V.C.	

## Per LSM 21

QX 19872	Pte	Rees	N.C.
QX 38589	"	Link	P.
VX 77072	"	McLean	D.M.
TX 11534	"	Barber	J.C.

## Per TITANIA

QX 19513	Pte	Davis	D.A.	
VX 20759	"	Woolcock	C.R.	*
VX 23401	"	Mills	J.R.	*
VX 23441	"	Pritchard	T.P.	*
SX 28609	"	Prime	L.F.	

# Per LST 740

QX 14665	Pte	Kirk R.C.	
QX 17617	Cpl	Martin A.L.	
QX 20628	Pte	Duggan T.S.	
QX 25464	"	Medew R.L.	
QX 32162	L/Cpl	Gordon C.	
QX 35658	Pte	Arnold F.W	
QX 37632	"	Roach H.H.	
QX 37740	"	McGuire W.L.	
QX 37862	"	Kirk G.E.	
QX 38619	"	Perhouse R.R.	
QX 46553	"	Bishop H.	
QX 47252	"	Floyd C.C.	
QX 49014	"	Whitred V.T.	
QX 50540	"	Lax C.A.	
QX 58777	"	Gordon F.L.	
NX 6127	"	Hubbard F.	
NX 22817	Sgt	Druhan L.R.	
NX 140187	Pte	Jeffrey A.J.	
NX 140494	"	Evans K.H.	
NX 148933	"	Kent A.J.	
NX 148935	"	Davy K.B.	
NX 161351	"	Jones W.A.	
NX 162657	"	Shields R.J.	
NX 203012	"	Callow A.L.	
VX 17592	Sgt	Wagner R.K.	*
VX18322	Pte	Spokes R.A.	*
VX 18400	L/Sgt	Milne C.E.	*
VX 19880	Pte	Ellis T.G.	*
VX 20784	Sgt	Bowden T.A.	*
VX 21315	L/Cpl	Wiltshire R.H.	*
VX 22382	Pte	Cumming L.L.	
VX 2347	"	Short R.A.	
VX 34204	L/Cpl	Hughes B.A.	
VX 34340	Pte	Hughes J.K.	
VX 42022	"	Ireland L.W.	
VX 42321	"	Manser J.A.	
VX 44409	Cpl	Moore R.P.	*
VX 50539	Pte	Bowden F.E.	
VX 50769	"	Cunningham J.C.	
VX 63542	"	Thompson J.R.	
VX 69821	Cpl	Cunningham F.	
VX 110159	"	Oates L.G.	
VX 127220	"	Miles F.L.	

VX 128130	Sgt	Shaw R.G.
VX 146452	Pte	Ainsworth D.W.
SX 18585	L/Cpl	Freeman A.E.
SX 25942	Pte	Hope I.E.
VX 125011	"	Rozynski J.A.
VX 68958	"	Kirk J.K.

### Per LST 938

QX 16185	Pte	Arnold S.G.	
QX 41658	"	Wolens A.P.	
QX 54256	"	Arnold J.	
NX 15482	Cpl	Marriott V.N.	
NX 98089	Pte	Williams W.A.	
NX 105994	"	Bright E.C.	
NX 122292	"	Kelly R.T.	
NX 145946	L/Cpl	Brown J.F.	
NX 165260	Pte	Allen G.B.	
\VX 11525	WO(1)	Shipway H.C.	*
VX 17150	L/Cpl	Smith A.J.	*
VX 23179	Sgt	Ellis R.J.	*
VX 20578	Pte	Barrie N.C.	*
VX 21036	L/Sgt	Joy D.S.	*
VX 23554	Sgt	FitzGerald J.D.	
VX 28775	Sgt	FitzGerald M.R.	
VX 41351	Cpl	Waugh E.A.	*
VX 44646	Pte	Morris L.H.	
VX 53452	"	Thomlinson J.	
VX 54012	Cpl	Wagner H.P.	
VX 54190	"	Hopkins H.F.	
VX 60958	Pte	Davis V.A.	
VX 73153	"	Ferguson H.R.	
WX 28809	S/Sgt	Archer R.K.	
QX 3392	Pte	Davis C.	
QX 48929	"	Wretham W.E.	
NX 110248	"	Vidler J.G.	
NX 129224	"	Carroll E.R.	
NX 140092	"	Jones R.	
NX 151367	"	Gimbert M.B.	
NX 154006	"	Gordon J.T.	
NX 154521	"	Nichols E.H.	
NX 161356	"	Hutchison K.W.	
NX 164621	"	Thompson J.L.	
VX 16901	"	Naylor A.J.	*
VX 18566	Sgt.	Tann L.A.	*



VX 18802	Pte	Ball	H.G.	
VX 26175	Sgt	Shaw	A.G.	*

### Per LST 938

VX 22834	Pte	Chandler	B.C.	*
VX 34139	Cpl	Morrow	H.T.	
VX 36643	Pte	Ferguson	S.W.	
VX 38703	"	Hewitt	H.J.	
VX 46303	"	Packer	J.C.	
VX 46319	L/Cpl	Dower	L.D.	
VX 84355	Pte	Johnston	R.N.	
VX 67186	"	Cunningham	P	
VX 84887	"	Mellier	G.A.	
VX 110898	"	Dunn	R.B.	
VX 116462	"	Brown	C.H.	
VX 144078	"	Blair	R.E.	
vX 35594	"	Cook	R.A.	
TX 9028	"	Rickards	D.	
TX 14950	"	Harrison	T.V.	

### Per KANIMBLA

QX 35178	Pte	McCallum	L.G.	
VX 4654	L/Cpl	O'Grady	W.A.	
VX 17160	"	Murray	A.E.	*
VX 35642	Pte	Lunn	P.F.	
VX 113013	"	Farrant	R.V.	
SX 13568	"	O'Callaghan	R.P.	
SX 13995	"	Longbottom	D.J.	
WX 12274	"	Carter	A.E.	
QX 16787	"	Luckel	P.	
QX 29948	L/Cpl	McNamarra	K.	
QX 37561	Pte	Gorman	J.B.	
QX 37594	"	Kraft	R.F.	
QX 42998	"	Dodd	E.H.	
QX 49320	"	Glindman	R.	
QX 50742	"	Clark	C.A.	
QX 51982	"	Meissner	I.W.	
QX 53076	"	Lange	A.W.	
NX 31114	"	Park	C.H.	
NX 78736	"	Worthington	W.T.	
NX 98359	"	Welsh	H.J.	
NX 99860	"	Hickey	G.C.	

NX 106828	“	Harvey W.H.	
NX 114259	Cpl	Hammond C.M.	
NX 115204	Pte	Hart J.C.	
NX 115334	“	Goodman G.C.	
NX 128993	“	Fosdyke E.J.	
NX 150798	“	Hinton J.T.	
NX 151006	“	Smith J.S.	
NX 154469	“	Selby D.	
NX 169920	“	Worthington F.J.	
VX 16885	“	Balcombe D.	*
VX 17924	S/Sgt	Davis J.	*
VX 18225	Pte	Knuckey R.	*
VX 18476	“	Reed R.W.	*
VX 18942	Sgt	Cummins T.A.	*
VX 19906	L/Cpl	Ward H.A.	*
VX 21756	Pte	Foster G.	
VX 21863	“	Stack W.C.	*
VX 22470	Cpl	Brown A.H.	*
VX 22850	L/Cpl	Jenkins R.T.	*
VX 35312	Pte	Forbes W.G.	*
VX 36682	L/Sgt	Bilger E.	*
VX 42027	Cpl	Schwebsch H.A.	
VX 42448	Sgt	Walker H.F.	
VX 42996	Pte	Cushing F.H.	*
VX 42997”	“	Matthews J.F.	
VX 53928	Pte	Marx A.G.	
VX 67833	“	Harper M.G.	
VX 75643	“	Southall E.A.	
VX 75644	“	McGregor J.	
VX 78264	“	Morison A.N.	
VX 81324	“	Wagner W.R.	
VX 85506	“	Herbert .L.	
VX 85555	“	Hunt A.G.	
VX 85566	“	Kenny J.J.	
VX 85566	“	Kenny H.R.	
VX 91440	“	Maddock A.V.	
VX 112878	“	Evans A.K.	
VX 126524	“	McGuinness J.L.	
VX 127178	“	Dickson E.G.	
VX 136465	“	Merrington R.J.	
SX 1730	“	Lang A.C.	
SX 30015	“	Young S.A.	
QX 22584	“	Edge-Williams T.E.	
QX 37778	“	Balderson G.	
QX 47526	A/Cpl	Radditz E.	

NX 99843	Pte	Bushell H .G.	
NX 103769	L/Cpl	Kay C.	
NX 106055	Pte	Nicholson J.C.	
NX 107560	"	Garred W.E.	
NX 155227	"	Miller D.J.	
NX 158002	"	Kay H.	
NX 161456	"	Brown N.A.	
VX 19884	"	Pattie S.A.	*
VX 21472	L/Cpl	Ball A.E.	*
VX 30912	S/Sgt	Hewett V.R.	*
VX 32877	Pte	Edwards L.	
VX 37759	"	Dummelow G.R.	
VX 41342	Cpl	Stone V.E.	*
VX 44473	L/Cpl	Harrey R.T.	*
VX 50884	Pte	Miles G.F.	
VX 84376	Sgt	Lancashire L.	
VX 86797	Pte	Barnes V.C.	
VX 100691	"	Watson L.	
VX 106143	"	Green C.E.	
SX 18152	"	Lang K.H.	
SX 25107	A/Cpl	Virgo A.G.	
WX 39598	Pte	Burgess A.R.	
TX 15780	"	Fulton D.A.	

\* Denotes Original Member of Unit.

## APPENDIX

### WADI AUDA BLUES

Roy Nicholas, the unit balladist, who composed such classics as "The Balloon's Gone Up", and "Arthur, Don't Take Us Back to Tobruk", also wrote and put to music, the song "Wadi Auda Blues", which goes as follows:

*Oh! I can feel them coming on,  
I've got those Wadi Auda Blues again!  
Can't sleep at night,  
The fleas they bite  
They leave me heartbroken and sore;  
Everywhere you roam'  
There's just sand and stone,  
Everybody's wearing a fed-up frown,  
Oooh! I can feel them coming on,  
I've got those Wadi Auda Blues again!*

(Contributed by C.P. Jacobs)